

THE SECRETS OF WEN TINGYUN'S LIFE AND POETRY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an investigation into the secrets of the life and poetry of a major late Tang poet, Wen Tingyun (798-866?).

Traditional Chinese literary criticism has subjected Wen to such misunderstanding that even many modern studies are not immune from age-long prejudices. This fact can be regarded, in a sense, as a continuation of the slanders Wen suffered in his lifetime, though it results from misconstruing Wen's poetry and ignoring the political implications of his life. A complete and careful restudy of Wen Tingyun the man and Wen Tingyun the poet is therefore a pressing academic necessity.

By means of factual investigation and textual annotation, and with recourse to the mutual evidence of history and poetry, this study probes the political intricacies of the major events of Wen's lifetime and explores the artistic complexities of his "inexplicable" verses. The result is that it finds a series of hitherto uncovered facts, reveals the unreliability of Wen's official biographies and reconstructs a chronology of Wen's life. Meanwhile, in eliciting the biographical information via unraveling Wen's poetic puzzles, it reaches hold of the key to going in and out of Wen's artistic labyrinth and thus paves the way for a reevaluation of his poetry.

With respect to Wen's life, this study consists of the following findings: Wen's birth year (798); Wen clan's marriages with the royal family and hostility with the eunuchs; Wen's marriage to a singer-prostitute (836); his secret attendance upon the Heir Apparent (837-8); his change of name in an effort to pass the civil service examinations (839-40); his numerous failures and final "success" in becoming a Presented Scholar (847-59); and his "cheating" (helping others) when sitting for the examinations. These findings spell out a new understanding of Wen's life that underlies his poetry. Drawn from Wen's poetry, they will unfold more secrets of his poetry and then lead to more discoveries of his life.

Since Wen used his poetry as elaborate representation of himself, it is only natural that he wanted to express, rather than hide, his experiences, feelings and ambitions, however ambiguous they might be, because of the political pressure of the time. In this sense, to know Wen Tingyun the man is to understand Wen Tingyun the poet, and vice versa.

In brief, Wen was deeply involved in the palace and court struggles of his time, especially at odds with the power-entrenched eunuchs. Some of the events he witnessed were too sinister to be recorded by histories, and his poems reflecting the truth too incomprehensible for casual readers, despite his efforts to put his secrets into them. These contradictory factors caused a long-lasting misunderstanding before he could be seen in his true light. Now it is high time Wen were rehabilitated.

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Abbreviations

CS--Yao Silian: Chenshu.

DKJK--Xu Song: Dengke Jikao.

HHS--Fan Ye: Hou Hanshu.

HS--Ban Gu: Hanshu.

JS--Fang Xuanling: Jinshu.

JTS--Liu Xu et al: "Jiutangshu" (The Old Tang History).

Liji--Liji Zhengyi.

LS--Yao Silian: Liangshu.

Lunyu--Lunyu Zhengyi.

Maoshi--Maoshi Zhengyi.

Mengzi--Mengzi Zhengyi.

NQS--Xiao Zixian: Nanqishu.

NATW--Richard. B. Mather, trans. A New Account of Tales of the World.

NS--Li Yanshou: Nanshi.

QTS--Cao Yin: Quantangshi.

QTW--Dong Gao: Quantangwen.

SGZ--Chen Shou: Sanguozhi.

Shangshu--Shangshu Zhengyi.

SS--Shen Yue: Songshu.

TFZNB--Wu Tingxie: Tang Fangzhen Nianbiao.

WFQ--Wen Feiqing Shiji Jianzhu.

XTS--Ouyang Xiu: Xintangshu (The New tang History).

Zuozhuan--Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi.

YFSJ--Guo Maoqian: Yüefu Shiji.

Zhouyi--Zhouyi Zhengyi.

ZZhTJ--Sima Guang: Zizhi Tongjian.

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The mistakes that still might exist in the texts are mine and mine alone.

Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to rediscover Wen Tingyun (溫庭筠, 798-866?) the man, which includes a reevaluation of Wen Tingyun the poet. Researches of the man and the poet are aspects of the same question, but because of limitation of space, our emphasis will be put on the former. Our task thus has two major components: to find out what Wen writes about in his poetry and how he writes it. We will take pains to unravel most of Wen's characteristic works, especially his autobiographical poems, since the annotation and explanation of these poetic puzzles, apart from manifesting their motifs, will uncover the techniques the poet employs in their composition. In other words, in our efforts to discover the secrets of Wen's life, we will also find the secrets of his poetry. These secrets of Wen's life and poetry, in turn, will enable us to expose more secrets of his poetry and life. This dissertation is thus entitled "The Secrets of Wen Tingyun's Life and Poetry."

Most of Wen's life was lived in the late Tang era, a time filled with troubles both internal and external, but also well-known for its cultural exuberance and prosperity. The Tang Empire had fallen irrevocably from the summit of its past glory, despite the endeavors of numerous ambitious and talented men to restore it. It is through the activities of many of these men representative of the era, that we gain insight into the realities of this time in all its complexity and vividness. Wen is just such a representative character. By probing the secrets of his life, we will be better equipped to understand some important events of the late Tang history. At the same time, we will comprehend the role Wen played in these events. As a result, his undeniable stature as an outstanding poet, especially during the rise of a new poetic subgenre, *ci* poetry, will be brought into full relief.

The Eunuch Problem and the Literati Society

Of all the social contradictions of Wen's time, the eunuch usurpation of court power will figure prominently in this dissertation. A political problem conspicuous in the late Tang era and closely linked with Wen's life, the eunuch power was an outgrowth of the highly

centralized imperial power and had much to do with the An-Shi Rebellion (755-763).¹ In the decades after the Rebellion the Tang emperors seem to have learned a wrong lesson from it; they put much less confidence in their court officials and entrusted more power to their "household slaves", the eunuchs. Once this transfer of power was institutionalized, the eunuchs gradually seized control of all important governmental apparatuses. Not only did they take control of religious and economical affairs, but they also had a hand in military manipulations and political decision-making at the top level. In the end they were able to enthrone and dethrone the emperors, and had the lives of emperors at their disposal.²

The ultimate cause that led to the eunuchs' power lay in the monarchic polity itself. Emperors had always thought of themselves as absolute dictators to dominate everything "under heaven." However, contrary to their wishes, the lifeline of the empire was to fall into the hands of the most contemptible party--household slaves--the last group they had suspected of coveting their power. By the time the eunuch problem became a *fait accompli*, emperors were at the end of their resources and the eunuchs no longer isolated palace slaves at their mercy. This usurpation of court power greatly accelerated the downfall of the dynasty. In such circumstance, the eunuch infiltration of the power structure was painfully felt in every sphere of political and social life, as the court officials made every attempt to save the empire from ruin, despite political discord among themselves.

¹ See Pulleyblank: The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-Shan, 24-74. See also Denis Twitchett, ed. The Cambridge History of China, vol. 1, 374-681.

² Starting from Emperor Xianzong (r. 805-20), until Emperor Xizong (r. 874-89), the eight Tang emperors, Xian-, Mu-, Jing-, Wen-, Wu-, Xuan-, Yi- and Xizong were all chosen and put on the throne by the eunuchs. Some of them were subsequently murdered by the eunuchs directly or indirectly. It is an accepted conclusion that the downfall of the Tang Empire was largely brought about by the eunuchs' usurpation of court power. See Zhao Yi: Ershier Shi Zhaji, 383-8, "The Disaster of the Tang Eunuchs".

Inasmuch as the eunuchs had the emperors under control and used them as an emblem of their supremacy, they exacerbated the contradictions among the court officials and intensified factional strife. In its struggles with the "Northern Office" (the eunuchs), the "Southern Offices" (court officials) polarized into two factions, the Nius and the Lis, which were, in the last analysis, the political representatives of different responses to the eunuchs in the Yongzhen Reform (805). Once present, these struggles could be perpetrated through the influence and manipulation of the eunuchs. Whatever their factional proclivities might be, court officials in power always adopted a vacillating, if not ambiguous, attitude towards strong measures to deal with the eunuchs, out of a concern for their vested interests. This vacillation can account in part for the failures of the Yongzhen Reform and the Sweet Dew Incident (836), the two events most representative of the court officials' efforts to curb the eunuchs. The former showed a resolution to get rid of eunuch power, while the latter set directly as its aim the annihilation of the eunuchs themselves--the former affair implicated Wen's father, the latter Wen himself. In both cases, however, the court officials never closed ranks, but remained at odds with one another over the effectiveness of radical actions. As a result, the participants of the two events had too few political allies to be a match for the eunuchs, even though they succeeded in enlisting the support of the emperors; most of the Yongzhen reformers were condemned to life-long banishment, and all the Sweet Dew Incident plotters suffered clan extermination, with no rehabilitation for them until toward the end of the dynasty.³

In such circumstances, seldom did anybody dare voice strong protests against the eunuchs. To do so would court neglect, if not disaster for the protester. One striking example is Liu Fen (劉惔 fl. 832), who, for all his fearlessness in expressing the general indignation against the eunuchs, brought more disgrace than glory upon himself. Judging

³ Absolution came in the form of an "Act of Grace" in 901, more than sixty years after the incident; see Song Minqiu: Tang Da Zhaoling Ji, 5: 31-3.

from Wen's experiences, we can suggest that he was a second Liu Fen.

The eunuchs existed in a kind of symbiosis with the Tang royal clan. Some of the court officials were willing to join forces with them in order to gain a favorable official position, while anyone in office had to come to terms and cooperate with them; to do otherwise was to invite failure. The following are two cases in point.

There were sporadic achievements that temporarily alleviated tensions and prolonged the dynasty's survival. These have been highly praised by the orthodox Song historiographers, and the two foregoing political events downplayed. They are the so-called "Yuanhe Restoration" effected by Emperor Xianzong (r. 805-20) and Pei Du (裴度, 765-839), and the Governance of Huichang accomplished by Li Deyu (李德裕, 787-850)⁴ and his followers. In both cases the Tang court succeeded in recapturing territories occupied by semi-independent satraps, somewhat reanimating a body politic that was near collapse. In neither instance, however, was the eunuch problem addressed. Rather, it was because Pei and Li refrained from stirring up the "hornets' nest" of the eunuchs that they were able to enjoy a measure of success in the military campaigns they led. Their military operations were in fact approved by the eunuchs, because, after all, the eunuchs' parasitic benefits depended on a viable Tang state power.

Thwarted by the eunuchs from above or checked by the court officials from various sides, many ambitious statesmen had to surrender their hope of political reform before they achieved anything substantial. Pei and Li's official careers illustrate this. Adamant and ironhanded as Li Deyu was in rendering meritorious services to the empire, he was thrown out of the political arena directly after the eunuchs set a successor upon the throne, Emperor Xuanzong (宣宗, r. 846-859); and he died in exile a victim of factional strife, or, more accurately, of eunuch politics. Pei was luckier than Li, but effective as he was in his official

⁴ For a comprehensive study of this important statesman of the late Tang time, see Fu Xuanzong: Li Deyu Nianpu.

duties, he was not always successful when dealing with the eunuch Army Super-visors, during the campaigns he led against the rebellious satraps. Almost half of his official life was spent after suffering demotions that resulted from political pressures from the opposing factions, with the connivance or at the instigation of the eunuchs.

In such circumstances there were few court officials really determined to do something for the moribund empire who did not court troubles for themselves. Seen from this viewpoint, a man with the character and talent of Wen Tingyun was destined to be at odds with fate.

Starting from the Middle Tang, along with the Ancient Prose Movement and the New Music Bureau Movement⁵ in the literary domain, there was a concerted effort to invigorate Confucianism ideologically. Many outstanding representatives of the literati's society, such as Han Yu (韓愈, 768-824),⁶ Liu Zongyuan (柳宗元, 773-819),⁷ Liu Yuxi (劉禹錫, 772-842) and Li Ao (李翱, 772-841)⁸ contributed to the revitalization of the Confucian doctrine and left to posterity rich cultural heritage. Their collective effort blazed a trail for Song dynasty Neo-Confucianism that crystallized to become the dominant ideology for the next thousand years. The late Tang theoretical summary of Confucianism was remarkable with its profound philosophical, ethical, social and political thought. However, it offered no miraculous cure for the political disorders of the empire, and had no effect in curbing eunuch power. Always concerned about his country and people, Wen Tingyun was also

⁵ For an English study of this movement, see Waley: Life and Times of Po Chuyi.

⁶ For an appraisal of Han's role in revitalizing Confucianism, see Hartman: Han Yu and Tang Search of Unity.

⁷ For the role Liu played in the history of restoration of Confucianism, see Jo-shui Chen: Liu Tsung-yuan and Intellectual Change in T'ang China.

⁸ For a research of Li Ao's representative works, see Barrett, Buddhist, Taoist or Neo-Confucian?

involved in this revitalization of Confucianism, as can be shown by his works and his social connections.

Disillusioned by the grim realities, the late Tang literati, though they would still make contributions when chances offered, adopted a pragmatic and worldly stance and resigned themselves to the uncontrollable historical forces. Apart from the Confucianism they espoused in their official or political life, they were more addicted to religious philosophies, such as Buddhism and Taoism. Chan Buddhism prevailed at this time in tune with the time's needs.⁹ There is hardly a literary figure of the time who was not influenced by Buddhist or Taoist thought, even though he might declare himself to be against them. It is therefore no surprise that Wen was closely connected with many Buddhist monks.

As regards their private life, the late Tang literati are well-known for their hedonism. It was common practice for a literatus to wallow in heavy drinking or to abandon himself to any object of novelty. Such was the vogue that few men could resist it. Even great statesmen or poets famous for their concern about the country's plight and the people's livelihoods were no exception. Both Pei Du and Li Deyu had sumptuous gardens. Bai Juyi (白居易, 772-846), the chief leader of the New Music Bureau Movement, now became a devout Buddhist layman, enjoying wealth and rank and surrounded by singers and servants, having long since forgotten his dauntless remonstrances with Emperor Xianzong in his capacity as Attending Censor. Bai's friend Yuan Zhen (元稹, 779-831), his partner in the New Music Bureau Movement, managed to become Prime Minister with the help of the eunuchs, and was held in scorn by his contemporaries and later orthodox literati. Li Shen (李紳, 771-846), another initiator of the same movement, assembled quite a bevy of singers in his retinue.¹⁰ One of the main participants in the Sweet Dew Incident, Wang Ya (王涯, 765?-835) became notorious after his death by execution, because of the great fortune he

⁹ See E. Zürcher: The Buddhist Conquest of China.

¹⁰ See Wen's "Fifth-Rhyme Poem", part of which is to be discussed in chapter two.

had amassed, a fact illustrative of a pervasive indulgence in wealth on the part of the literati. In light of this, we need not find it strange that many poets, like Wen, while trying to do everything they could to realize their political ideals, did not hesitate to enjoy life to the hilt.

Biographies: the *Status Quo* of the Studies of Wen Tingyun

Concerning the state of studies about Wen Tingyun, we must point out that both his poetry and his personality have been misunderstood, to a very serious degree. As a result of slander from his political enemies, chiefly the eunuchs, Wen's reputation suffered badly and the major events of his life were distorted or at least covered up, offering historio-graphers unreliable materials to deal with. Not even Wen himself dared record the relevant events in clear terms.

In the compilation of histories, official documents, especially when closely concerned with the eunuchs' clandestine affairs, were drafted under the eunuchs' supervision, while the original materials surviving the chaos of the Five Dynasties (907-60) were only remnants of the originals. Few who knew the inside story at the time would necessarily leave to posterity any writings, while those who wished to give a more realistic account of Wen's life at a later time often had no access to the most reliable first-hand sources. As a result, the records left to later generations concerning Wen became very scanty and confusing. What is more, these surviving sources were subjected to the biased dispositions of the Song dynasty (960-1279) official historiographers. "The Biography of Wen Tingyun" in The Old Tang History by Liu Xu et al, is just such a sample. The New Tang History by Ouyang Xiu et al, is hardly any better than "The Old".

The two Tang Histories contain too many oversights and mistakes to serve as a ground for our study, even though they are considered the main source for Wen's biography. More a refraction than reflection of Wen's life, the early biographies ignore the eunuch problems, and thus fail to give an acceptable account of Wen's life. This is not, in the main, due to a lack of source materials or prejudices on the part of Wen's biographers. The main cause is that Wen's poetry and prose, which contain important information, are too difficult for the

casual historiographer-readers to fathom, and hence make use of. Most of Wen's autobiographical works, either poetry or prose, is too obscure or multivocal for easy understanding, though they are understandable in the last analysis.

In view of this paucity of historical sources, we must turn to the unofficial histories for reliable information. The earliest available sources touching on the important events in Wen's life, however, furnish only scattered, fragmentary episodes. They are contained in the anecdotal literature by some authors between the Tang and the Song dynasties. These unofficial histories, especially those produced prior to the two Tang Histories, though they sometimes contradict one another, often contain grains of truth. They are a source upon which the compilers of the two Tang Histories drew from. Getting at the essential information they contain can help us to clarify mistakes in the standard histories.

Because of the problems in Wen's biographies and other source materials, the ambiguous nature of Wen's works, and the contemptuous attitude of orthodox literati towards his person and thus his works, no Chinese scholars since the Song dynasty have made a thorough study of this major late Tang poet. Up to now, Wen's true features are enveloped in a twofold veil of historical prejudice and literary obscurity. Therefore, further research concerning Wen Tingyun the man and thus the poet is of a pressing academic necessity. In this study, attention will be focused on the search for any traces indicative of the eunuch problem in both the standard histories and Wen's own works.

Influenced by Song dynasty biographers and many orthodox critics, modern scholars generally accept the view that Wen was a libertine and a dandy, a poet of aestheticist originality capable of every mischief, but incapable of any concern for his country and people. It is generally believed that there is no great artistic value to be found in his works, whatever form they might assume. There is a tendency to devaluate Wen's works because of his problematic personality. As a consequence, many of his works have been misinterpreted or simply excluded from serious studies.

However, these same works often assert themselves in one way or another in favor of their author as a poet engagé. Readers of them can sense to some degree that they reflect, elegantly and honestly, Wen's experiences and feelings. There is a unique and profound beauty in his poetry that must have at its root some foundation in reality, compelling a serious reading of it. Recognition of this has given rise to another approach, by critics who sense the fine artistic expressions in many of Wen's poems, and disregard former criticisms of all shades. These critics do not hesitate to praise Wen in the highest terms, likening him to Qu Yuan or Li Bai,¹¹ poets who enjoyed the highest honor in Chinese literary history. In the eyes of the orthodox critics, however, such critics overestimate Wen's poetic attainments.

To mediate between the two extreme tendencies, there is a third approach that eschews the efforts to seek conformity between the personality of the poet and the works, and is interested only in passing judgment on Wen's individual works. This approach, while seeming justifiable, may lead to another kind of falsehood.

To judge which of these three tendencies is the more reasonable, it is indispensable for us to make an exhaustive study of Wen's complete poetic works. However, confronted with Wen's ambiguity, readers from the Song dynasty to modern times have had difficulty in grasping the motifs of many of his poems. The Annotations and Explanations of Wen Feiqing's Collected Poems (henceforward The Annotations or WFQ),¹² undertaken by the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) scholar Zeng Yi (曾益) and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) scholars Gu Yuxian (顧予咸) and his son, Gu Sili (顧嗣立, fl. 1697), is the only effort heretofore aimed at understanding all of Wen's collected poems. Unfortunately, it contributes little to the deeper study of Wen's life.

¹¹ See Zhang Huiyan, Ci Xuan, 1; Xue Xue, Yipiao Shihua, 26 in Li Dai Shihua.

¹² It is the *Xiuye Caotang* (秀野草堂, title of Gu Sili's study) version of Wen's collected poems and contained in *Sibu Congkan*.

The first eight *juan* of The Annotations follow the original Song manuscript, as Gu Sili pointed out in his "Postface," while the ninth *juan* includes Wen's scattered poems that Gu collected from various sources. After comparing the important bibliographical works after the Tang dynasty, we can be sure that since the Song dynasty, Wen's oeuvre has not suffered much loss.¹³ During the Song dynasty, however, his works did suffer considerable losses, as can be inferred from Lu You's "Postscript to Wen Feiqing's Poetic Works" in Weinanji:

My late father used to have a copy of this poetic works with "The Huaqing Palace Poem" at the beginning [Twenty Two Rhymes On Passing the Huaqing Palace, 華清宮二十二韻, j. 6. WFQ], and in the works there was the poem "Departure Early at Mount Shang in the Morning" (商山早行, j. 7, WFQ), the one with the couplet "The rooster's crow: a moon over the cottage-inn \ The travelers' footprints: the frost on the plank bridge"--it has long been lost. Now I have found this volume in Sichuan, and the poem of "Departure Early" is already not in it. I cannot refrain from sighing (Lu You Ji, 26: 2232).

In The Annotations, poems are roughly classified according to stylistic criteria, such that even in the same *juan*, earlier and later poems are mixed up and appear in random order. It is likely that the original manuscript was lost, or that Wen had left his poetic works to the hand of an indiscreet compiler. By all accounts, what we have been left is a mass of enigmatic language, glittering with puzzling beauty and entangled in a secret history. Here Wen's poems require a logical and chronological rearrangement.

With the idea that in Wen's poetry, as in that of Du Fu, every word has its origin, and under the influence of "knowing as much as possible while leaving the question open" (多聞闕疑),¹⁴ the three above-mentioned scholars focused their attention on a semantic or at most a syntactic plane, i. e., they only sought to find out the origins of terms and allusions in

¹³ For this conclusion, see Gu Xuejie Lunwenji, 207-8.

¹⁴ See *Lunyu*, 2: 2462.

Wen's poetry. We cannot say that their efforts are insignificant, for it is impossible to understand any poetry without grasping the denotation and connotation of every line and word in it. The problem is that semantic and syntactic annotation unguided by a historical study can hardly prove effective in explaining poetry. As is shown clearly by The Annotations, the three scholars contribute nothing new to Wen's biography, and even make quite a few mistakes in their semantic and syntactic studies, the forte of all old-styled Chinese annotations. Except in a couple of problematic cases, they generally fail to point out what each poem they annotate is about, leaving the reader in darkness to find his own way. I cannot give The Annotation a better evaluation although my dissertation benefits considerably from it.

Since Wen's life experiences are so deeply obscured in the shadows of history and the late Tang literary practice that even the Qing annotators have failed to make heads or tails of them, few modern scholars have bothered to take up the study of his life, and fewer of these have made significant breakthroughs.¹⁵ Notwithstanding all this, the artistry of Wen's *ci* poetry is too remarkable to be ignored, and has attracted generations of admirers. As a result, scholars have attached more importance to his *ci* than to *shi* poetry, in confronting the general tendency of studying his works without adequate knowledge of his life.

As we can easily see in Wen's extant works, Wen was capable of writing with both simple and complex artistic expressions. So it is only logical that he adopted an ambiguous style when dealing with subtle political taboos, especially the eunuch problems. The late Tang is one of the most notorious eras in Chinese history for its eunuch problems. It is strange that there should be extremely few examples of works, in the entire corpus of Tang poetry, indicative of the eunuch's secrets. This situation, however, was not unique in Chinese history. In exposing the eunuchs' behind-the-scenes activities, Wen's poetry fills in

¹⁵ Among the few studies on Wen's life are those of Xia Chengtao, Gu Xuejie, Chen Shangjun and Huang Kunyao, as we will have occasion to discuss in this study.

this historical gap, as very precious source materials. This explains why some of his poems are extremely obscure.

Of course, we must make full allowance for Wen's ambiguous artistic expression. Though this ambiguity is responsible for keeping his secrets unknown and leading to his being misunderstood, it was the only option Wen could make, in order that his secrets would not die with him and that he could await future understanding. Where we have to sigh for Wen is that some of his literary creations have misled even most of his readers, exceeding and going counter to his expectation. In order to give him a relatively pertinent reappraisal, we must first try to restore his true colors.

Approach and Methodology

To redress the errors in Wen's official biographies in the standard histories, we have tried the following approaches.

First, the key to clarifying Wen's life lies in maximum utilization of the limited sources available, which in themselves are potentially a veritable history, if we can manage to explain them correctly. When dealing with historical materials of varying credibility, we must make choices by eliminating the false and retaining the true. That is, we must supply the missing links of history with the information found in Wen's works and explain these works in the light of the historical contexts in which they were produced. In a sense, what we are doing is mining the historical ore deposited in Wen's poetic oeuvre. To do so we will have to identify the import in each of Wen's individual works by following his unique ways of artistic expression.

In reading Wen Tingyun, we are convinced that history has a logic of its own that must needs find expression in literature. The key task confronting us is to make a breakthrough in the study of his most ambiguous poems that are closely linked with history. This done, we can uncover some of Wen's secrets.

The most ambiguous points in Wen's poetry, to be sure, are bound up with the most sensitive parts of history. As our study will demonstrate, there is ample information

concealed beneath the thought-provoking clues found in Wen's poetry and prose. If we let these clues pass unexplained--turning a deaf ear to the call from the bottom of the poet's heart--we will miss an opportunity to gain access to his confidences. If, however, by analogy and reasoning from various angles, we persevere in clarifying the implications of Wen's clues, the true color of his life will be brought to light, bit by bit. Fortunately for us, all of Wen's important secret experiences, although couched in the most ambiguous terms, have nonetheless been recapitulated by an insistent mind, by recourse to the most traditional literary expressions. For, after all, Wen wanted to reveal, rather than conceal, his secrets. Otherwise he would not have written about them over and over again, as though he had a premonition that his poetry would be misunderstood. Once we succeed in over-coming the barriers the poet deliberately set up to prevent easy understanding or misunderstanding, the main secrets of his life will be exposed. His attempt to hide but not to obliterate his secret was, in general, successful, such that once these secrets are elicited from one or two of his works, it becomes much easier to decode his other messages.

Second, in order to make what we call a breakthrough, we pay special attention to Wen's prose works and narrative poems (or poems with narrative elements). To arrive at the hidden imports of the clues found in these works, we have to unravel the full texts of Wen's most recondite works. The difficulty consists in how to decipher Wen's unique lyric-poetic language into clearly defined biographical information. We will have to depend on the narrative poems as well as narrative details and contents in the lyric poems, for the messages we need. Though most of Wen's extant works are lyrics, there are rich sources for narrative scattered everywhere, and above all, there are more than twenty epistles and several long autobiographical poems available for our study. Our task will be to weave together all the narrative threads, exposed in his epistles and autobiographical poems, into a biography that can stand close scrutiny.

Therefore, considerable space has been devoted to the study of Wen's epistles (啓文), a rich source of his experiences, but heretofore little studied.

All of Wen Tingyun's prose works are preserved in *juan* 656 of the Song-dynasty encyclopedia Wenyuan Yinghua, and were edited as *juan* 787 of Quantangwen. The texts of the epistles, however, are as allusive and sophisticated as are those of his poems.

The following passage by one of Wen's best friends, Duan Chengshi (段成式, 805-63), attests to the difficulty of Wen's essays:

You, Feiqing, have exhausted the lore of the ancient books, and boasted the fame of a laureate poet. Along and against the branches of the nine schools, you revised and expounded the hundred scholars (飛卿窮素緇之業, 擅雄伯之名 沿溯九流 訂詮百氏. "Letters Sent to Feiqing, along with a Calabash-tube Brush," 寄溫飛卿葫蘆管筆往復書, QTW, 787: 10391).

In Liu Chongyuan's Jinhuaizi (37), we read:

(Feiqing) was on good term with Duan Chengshi. They matched each other with their learning of the classics. Duan once sent an ink stick to Wen, with the result that letters kept flying between the two expressing gratitude and good will; the nine letters they sent to each other were full of allusions about ink.

It is only natural that a considerable portion of the erudite and allusive language the two men used failed to find its way into the later encyclopedias. Besides, in all Wen's epistles, there is no chronological order. Occasional textual corruptions in Wen's works make reading them even harder. Considering all these, the first obstacle to reach a chronological grasp of Wen's works is that there is seldom a clear date given that enables us to decide what the poet is referring to, and when what he is referring to took place. To probe the depth of Wen's poetry, we will have to find a reliable fulcrum upon which to support our frame, lest our rewrite of the poet's life become a castle in the air.

It is for the purpose of establishing some time coordinates that we have made a detailed study of Wen's longest autobiographical poem, which contains a good deal of the biographical information concerning his life up to its composition. All of the major events of

Wen's life before the fifth year of Kaicheng (840), as well as many consequences he had to face after that year, are implied in it. The following is its lengthy title:

In the Autumn of the Fifth Year of Kaicheng, Because of Contracting A Kind of Disease in the Suburban Wilds of the Capital, I Could Not Go to the Princely Establishment¹⁶ in the Company of the Local Representative. I Was about to Betake Myself to A Far Place. Amidst Feelings of Self-pity in the Depths Of the Winter, I Unbosomed Myself in One Hundred Rhymes And Sent them to Palace Censor Xu [Shang], Investigating Censors Chen [Gu] and Li [Yuan], Attending Censor Su of Huizhong, And Defender of Yu County, Wei; And also I Presented the Poem to Three Friends of Mine: Yuan Jiao, Miao Shen And Li Yi.¹⁷ (開成五年秋, 以抱疾郊野, 不得與鄉計偕至王府。將議遐適, 隆冬自傷, 因書懷奉寄殿院徐侍御, 察院陳李二侍御, 回中蘇端公, 縣韋少府, 兼呈袁郊, 苗紳, 李逸三友人一百韵)。

This work ("The Hundred-Rhyme Poem") is almost the only poem in Wen's complete works that can be clearly dated. A long regulated poem (pailü --排律), it poses more difficulties than any of Li Shangyin's "untitled" (無題) poems. Because of the intricacies

¹⁶ "The Princely Establishment" refers here to the Ministry of Rites (禮部) that was to administer the Presented Scholar examination.

¹⁷ Xu, refers to Xu Shang (徐商), Wen's intimate friend since their student days in Luoyang National University, who helped Wen gain his last official position, Instructor in the State Son's University, twenty years later. See chapters one and three. Chen (Gu, 陳珪), Li (Yuan, 李遠), Yuan Jiao (袁郊) and Miao Shen (苗紳), are all well-known poets of the time. Su (蘇), Wei (韋) and Li Yi (李逸) are unknown. 端公, is an unofficial reference to Attending Censor. Attending Censors Xu, Chen, Li and Su are most probably members of the coterie attending the Heir Apparent mentioned later in the poem. To avoid digressions and save space, we will not discuss these men in detail in this study.

involved in every couplet and every line, it is one of the most difficult works in the entire corpus of Chinese poetry.

To elicit the truth it conceals, it is necessary to consult voluminous original materials--many of which have not yet been translated into English. Seldom are any other poet's works more dependent on earlier Chinese literature than are Wen's; his literary and historical allusions cover almost all important works prior to his time.

My original plan was to make the textual annotation and stylistic definition of this long poem the subject of this dissertation. Since, however, this poem is characteristic of only one of Wen's styles, this plan was revised with a view to revealing all of Wen's poetic styles in the course of adumbrating his life. However, most of the couplets from the poem designated by the number of the rhyme, appear and reappear in the following chapters. For the readers' convenience, a complete translation of the poem with a brief note is put in Appendix I. This dissertation, then, concentrates on unraveling many of the allusions Wen used, so as to clarify the basic connotations of his works. Except in several cases, various modern criticisms of Wen's writings will not be discussed.

In all, we will be concerned with most of Wen's epistles (about twenty), more than one hundred poems and numerous other source materials. To clarify a fact, identify an epistle, appraise a poem, or paraphrase a couplet--to reach the ultimate information the poet means to imply--the first thing we have to do is always to unravel some literary and historical allusions. As Wen's works are dense with all kinds of allusions, this dissertation has to be dense with many paraphrases of Wen's allusions. It is these allusions that boil down the main secrets locked in Wen's works for more than a thousand years.

As a reflection of his life, it is reasonable that Wen's poetry is complex; to regard him as one who played with words or who was unable to express himself clearly, is to misunderstand him. Few other Chinese poets had so many ups and downs, turns and twists to their lives, all closely linked to the concurrent political situation and reflected in the poet's

personality. Some of Wen's poems regarded inexplicable by tradition, we have to stress repeatedly, are undoubtedly explicable. Wen's writings are never so bizarre as are some of Li He's, nor so strained as some of Han Yu's. He only followed the traditional path of *belles lettres*. Along that path, however, he reached the summit--a summit that is at the same time a dead end. In Chinese poetic history, few poets have made poetry so beautiful and elegant as his, and that is why we say that Wen has reached the summit of poetic beauty. Meanwhile, few poets resorted so heavily to erudition and literary artifices as he did, to the bewilderment of later readers, and that is why we call the summit Wen reached a dead end. To understand him, however, is to fathom the profundity of the entire hoard of the late Tang poetic lore.

The Secrets of Wen's Life and Poetry

Against such a historical and historiographical background we begin the study of Wen's life. We find it very interesting that Wen was, in one way or another, linked with all the important figures of the time mentioned earlier. It is even more interesting that the secrets of his life and poetry are closely related to the major political events of his day. Wen did, after all, leave in his works all the key information that enables us to recover a historical past which would have otherwise fallen into oblivion forever, and he did this quite deliberately. Once put in comparison with the contradictory accounts recorded after Wen's death, they serve to help us find out some hidden historical truth.

The major conclusions of this dissertation are as follows:

(1) Proofs are found to bear out that Wen was an imperial relative by marriage, which supplements the accepted view that Wen was the scion of a declined aristocratic family. Wen carried on a family feud against the power-entrenched eunuchs, who had brought his family into disgrace. These are hitherto unknown facts of Wen's family history that decided his political orientation and will serve to reveal more of his secrets throughout his troubled and dramatic life (chapter one).

(2) By means of a time coordinate system established on the series of clearly-datable events in the Kaicheng era (836-40), and an exact age of 42, implied in the allusion "The Year of Having the Way" (有道之年), Wen's birth year is determined to be 798. As the starting point for a study of Wen's life, this is a far cry from the accepted date 812, a conjecture by Xia Chengtao (chapter two).

(3) The first half of Wen's life is outlined, covering his reclusion in Tonglu, studies in Luoyang, services at the frontier, a stay in Sichuan, and travels down the Yangtze River valley, in search of and in preparation for an official career. To avoid persecution from the eunuchs, the youth Wen Tingyun had to make a living by seeking patronage in the provinces rather than in the capital (chapter 3).

(4) Wen married a singer-prostitute during his sojourn in Yangzhou of the Jianghuai region in the first year of Kaicheng (836). Such a marriage typifies the "misconduct" that brought him no end of troubles in his lifetime, behavior that contravened social convention and was exploited by the eunuchs and other enemies of his to block any political advance on his part. Contrary to the conventional derogatory account of what happened to Wen in Jianghuai, we have found in him an honest and courageous man who dared face social pressure occasioned by his decision to love and marry a prostitute-singer (chapter 4).

(5) One of the veteran prime ministers of the time, Li Cheng (李程), Wen's professional teacher, recommended Wen, as an honest and talented man, to Emperor Wenzong to be a literary attendant to Li Yong (李永, 827-38), the Heir Apparent. Thus Wen found an opportunity to serve his country and lord. As a result of this appointment, he became deeply involved in a series of inner palace infighting that was connected with ongoing factional strife and the struggles between the Southern and the Northern Offices. By comparing clues strewn throughout Wen's poems and prose works with the historical records, we expose a story the standard histories fail to touch on, and at the same time provide an important key to the understanding of this secret in Wen's life and of a considerable portion of his works (chapter 5).

(6) Among Wen's extant works concerning his attendance upon the Heir Apparent, we analyze and paraphrase the most fascinating example, his *magnum opus*, "The Twenty-Two Rhymes on the Arched Gate" (洞户二十二韵). Besides having further identified the details of the Heir Apparent Incident, we have also defined the unique skills that attend Wen's characteristic poetry, and a solution to much of the poetic ambiguity and stylistic sophistication of Wen's poetry is proposed (chapter 6).

(7) In the year following the Heir Apparent's death, the fourth year of Kaicheng (839), Wen participated in the Metropolitan Prefecture Examination. With the help of powerful recommendations, he changed his name to sit for it, so as to avoid the eunuchs' hostile supervision, and achieved at one stroke "Equivalent to Passing" (等第). However, when the change of his name came to light, he "failed to pass" (罷舉) and was forced to run for his life (840). Throughout the Huichang era (841-6), Wen sought political asylum in the south. The whys and wherefores of his name change provide food for thought, and bear out once more the fact that Wen was Li Cheng's student, and that the eunuchs were his implacable enemies. This is another of unknown fact that had a great impact on Wen's life (chapter 7).

(8) Scholars have mistakenly followed the unreliable judgment of Wen's biographers in the two Tang Histories, that Wen had never passed the civil service examination, despite repeated attempts. Herein we bring to light another hidden fact that, in the thirteenth year of Dazhong (859), after years of persistent effort, Wen *passed* the Presented Scholar Examination, and *passed* with a demotion. To our amusement, we also find an extremely fascinating example from among Wen's extant poems that attests to the fact that Wen really "cheated" when taking the examinations.

Finally, we also come to a new understanding of Wen's *magnum opus*, the series of the Fourteen Pusaman *ci* poems (菩薩蠻十四首), whose explanation has long been a matter of academic controversy. Basing our arguments on the newly discovered facts concerning Wen's life, taking into consideration the cultural and political background against which the Pusaman series was composed, and equipped with an understanding of Wen's poetic

techniques, we compare the series of *ci* poems with its counterpart in his *shi* poetry, and confirm that Wen had more than one subject matter in mind when he set his brush to paper. In other words, this series is much more than merely a group of palace-style poems.

Judging from the fourteen poems themselves, their shared leading actress, melancholy mood, and evasive and eager manner, all point to a hidden common motif. When we look more carefully into each line, examine the metaphors, analyze the subtle shades of meanings in every word and allusion, we find implications in every line that suggest more than the typical palace-style poems. It is no accident that throughout the series we find passages redolent of the details of Wen's life. Here Wen writes about the political affairs in the guise of love, rather than describes love only. Although we should not take the poems as exclusively autobiographical, there are ample autobiographical elements in them. Hence, more than the hardly viable explanation to the series that it consists only of an objective description of a court lady in the palace-style, the series is also Wen's lamentation of his own life, a life characterized by unyielding pursuit of love and truth (chapter 8).

A Case of Criticisms of Wen Tingyun

I will take a newly-published book, Paul Rouzer's Writing Another's Dream--The Poetry of Wen Tingyun, as an example, to show how Wen is understood and misunderstood, and why we must know about Wen's life before we can appreciate his poetry.

Rouzer quotes Wang Fuzhi's (王夫之, 1619-92) Jiangzhai Shihua (薑齋詩話):¹⁸

"A monk knocks on a gate under the moon" is only a random guess or a false speculation, as though speaking of another's dream. Even if you make the description vivid, how could it ever affect the heart? Those who know this will know that brooding over the choices of "push" or "knock" is only speculating on the behalf of some other person.

Then he comments:

¹⁸ See Rouzer: 9-10. For the quotation from Wang, see Ding Fubao: Qing Shihua, 9.

"Wang's criticism here, though negative, summarizes precisely a major characteristic of Wen Tingyun's verse: an ability to stand outside of the self and to 'speculate on the behalf of some other person.'

"For a later imperial reader, then, Wen's poetic vices could be summarized as twofold. First, when he wrote of morally dubious experiences, he brought into question the important role poetry was meant to play in society. Second, and more important, as a historical actor he was often "unreadable" for later generations. Frequently he left behind only the poem (a morally ambiguous aesthetic artifact) or, at most, an image of a sophisticated versifier manipulating language for pure entertainment. Poetry of surface, when written by men like Wen, is not just empty; it actually conceals the immoral mind that frames it. It is deceptive and fraudulent."

Rouzer takes Wang's comment on one of Jia Dao's (779-843) couplets "as though speaking another's dream" as "a major characteristic of Wen Tingyun's verse." Thus he uses it in the title of his book. Most learned readers will frown at this title, because it is based on a kind of biased summary of Wen's poetry. The approach Rouzer assumes seems problematic, though there are many insightful and trenchant points in his book.

Legend has it that Jia was pondering his couplet, hesitating as to whether he should use the verb "push" or "knock," when he came across the retinue of Han Yu, who expressed his preference for "knock."¹⁹ As any reader will know at first glance, the couplet "The birds roost in trees by the pool \ A monk knocks on a gate under the moon" (鳥栖池邊樹, 僧敲月下門) in Jia's poem serves only as scenic description. It is common sense that any scenic couplet in a lyric poem does not necessarily reflect objective reality. Rather, it reflects the writer's subjective reality. It presents an empathic objective world, by combining fragmentary images of a poet's vision into meaningful pictures. Therefore Wang's criticism

¹⁹ See Meng Qi: Benshi Shi, 4: 19.

that Jia's choice of terms is "only a random guess or a false speculation, as though speaking of another's dream" is not to the point. As to whether the whole poem "could ever affect the heart" or not, it is quite another matter. It is unreasonable to demand that Jia be faithful to what was really there, when writing a scenic description. Taking this comment as "a major characteristic of Wen's poetry" is too far from both Wang's criticisms and Wen's actual poetics alike, and also a far cry from the general response of Chinese scholars to Wen's poetry. As seen from Wen's works, contrary to Rouzer's judgment, whatever he is writing about always relates to his own mental reality rather than to another's dream. The preciseness and vividness of his descriptions demonstrate his penetrating observation and subtle representation, indispensable in any major poet.

According to Rouzer, for the imperial reader, Wen's poetry never accomplishes "the important role poetry was meant to play in society;" moreover, as it is "unreadable" and was composed by "a sophisticated versifier manipulating language for pure entertainment," "it actually conceals the immoral mind that frames it. It is deceptive and fraudulent" (10). Fully aware that "this is judging Wen's works not by his own personal standards but by the calcified laws of composition that grew up after his death," Rouzer chooses to "look at Wen's work on its own terms" (10), a tendency we have pointed out. However, in his reevaluation of Wen's works, we can hardly see "a new appreciation of a neglected Tang master " as he promises. He does not seem to notice that Wen has had a good many of admirers, including quite a number of "imperial readers,"²⁰ who spoke highly of his poetry, though they have not bothered to clarify matters in Wen's life. Rather, in more than one case, he seems to identify himself with "the calcified laws" he disagrees with and go even further in "the frequent choruses of disapproval" of Wen's poetry and person, despite his intention to pass favorable comment on this poet.

²⁰ For example, see records in Wei Hu, *Caidiaoji*, 479-94; Wei Zhuang, *Huajianji*, chapter 1-2 (*Among the Flower*, 37-55); Liu Kezhuang, *Houcun Shihua*, 205-6.

"In spite of our difficulty in bridging language and cultural distances," Rouzer declares, "we are comfortable with two concepts that might still seem strange to late classical Chinese: (1) that a poem can be read as a product of an age and a personality without relating it explicitly to events in the poet's life; and (2) that a writer may still produce fine work despite his moral failings" (10). These concepts can be convenient when there is no special difficulty, semantic, syntactic or otherwise, in understanding the poetry, lyric poetry in particular. But when the poem is essentially narrative, and the reader does not even grasp the outline of the narration, as in so many cases of Wen's works, how will he make any pertinent reevaluations or pass any valid judgments concerning it? As a result of knowing too little about Wen's life--we have to emphasize once more--neither praise nor censure of him can be convincing. In Wen's extant works, there is not even one poem that does not have to do with his own life and feelings, about politics and love. How can we say that Wen is "writing another's dream" even though Wen has "an ability to stand outside of the self" (10)?

Rouzer still has to ground himself "in the few facts known about the poet's life," that is, unfortunately and naturally, "a few minor details in both Tang Histories" (11) and other unofficial histories. As can be expected, the unreliable information about Wen's life provided in the two Tang Histories are not a help, but a hindrance for reevaluating him.

To illustrate how Wen's poetry is deceptive and fraudulent, Rouzer cites Wen's "Carefree Wandering" (偶游, j. 4, WFQ, 21-2 in his book, p. 151-2 of this thesis) Rouzer's reading of this poem leads him to the comments that "We can see how Wen's tendencies toward objectivity and lush descriptive language naturally move him toward a sort of voyeuristic eroticism, in which a woman is described in fetishistic detail from a seemingly dispassionate distance." Our reading of this poem, based on a series of discoveries, testifies to the contrary that the woman described is none other than the singer-prostitute that Wen fell in love with and married.

The third couplet of this poem reveals Wen's passionate familiarity with his lover: "The butterfly on your cloud coiffure is almost captivated by fragrant herb \ The hill of your forehead-yellow will not limit the setting sun" (雲髻幾迷芳草蝶, 額黃無限夕陽山).²¹ The couplet can be read in reverse order. That is, "The fragrant herb almost captivates the butterfly on your cloud coiffure \ The setting sun is not limited by the hill of your forehead-yellow" (芳草幾迷雲髻蝶, 夕陽無限額黃山). "The butterfly on your cloud coiffure" (雲髻蝶), a synecdoche, here stands playfully for the woman [since it is a part of her hair decoration]. "Fragrant herb" (芳草) is a metaphor Wen frequently used for a worthy man like himself. "The hill of [your] forehead-yellow" (額黃山) is a set term for a fashionable makeup for Tang ladies, hence another synecdoche for the woman. "The setting sun" (夕陽) can also be understood as a metaphor for the poet, who, compared with his lover, was an old man. Between the two pairs of nouns are inserted the verbs "almost captivate" and "not limit" [or not refuse], which, no matter whether in active or passive voice, demonstrate the mutual love between the two lovers.

Since in the last couplet the poet declares that "You and I are just mates like mandarin ducks \ So don't [or I won't] seek any other companion in the human world" (與君便是鴛鴦侶, 休向人間覓往還), there is not much sense in Rouzer's assertion that "Wen describes the woman from a seemingly dispassionate distance." Here Rouzer's translation is "With you I'm surely paired just like mandarin ducks \ So don't seek to go back and forth out there in the human world." Even if he suggests that these lines are spoken by the woman, instead of by Wen, where is the dispassionate distance?

To sum up, since Wen wanted to make himself understood, he is, in the final analysis, understandable. To understand him, however, we have to overcome the historical obstacles

²¹ It is modeled on Du Fu's famous couplet: "From the fragrant rice stalks, pecked and dropped by parrots \ on green wutong tree branches, which the perching phoenix aged" (香稻啄余鸚鵡粒, 碧梧栖老鳳凰枝). See Grehem: Poems of the Late Tang, 55.

that create misunderstandings, the literary barriers that frequently baffle, and long-standing misconstructions that frustrate better understanding. After overcoming all the difficulties, we will reach a fuller understanding of our poet, which will in turn facilitate deeper insight into his poetry.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about how I felt while writing this dissertation. I have repeatedly emphasized the difficulties involved, such as the scarcity and inexactness of the historical sources, the ambiguity and abstruseness of Wen's poetry and the lack of academic studies on this topic. However, the main problem is that I am not competent enough to handle this topic to my own satisfaction. I know that I am dealing with something quite beyond my ability. Although I have tried my best, there remain a number of problematic points in my approaches to many primary sources. Having gone through the onerous task of explicating the historical texts, paraphrasing Wen's poetry, unraveling his highly sophisticated allusions, and elaborating my own understanding of the happenings that constitute the major events of Wen's life, I am fully aware that I have always resorted to inferences to reconstruct Wen's life, though in the study of Wen's life, only reasoning and inference can help us to know more. I may have blundered upon some hitherto unexposed historical facts; at the same time, other mistakes and drawbacks must exist that I have been unable to detect and overcome.

In preparing this dissertation, another difficulty for me is that Wen's poems and prose works often defy translation. There are terms that, if translated literally, do not make sense; if translated freely, the English loses most of the subtle shading and implication of the Chinese, with other unforeseen meanings accrued. The task I have set for myself requires that I be an expert in two domains: Tang poetry with a mastery of Chinese classics prior to the Tang; and Chinese-English translation with a perfect proficiency in English. To undertake the former may be something for which I can strive all my life. For the latter, I know I can never adequately write English, since having started to write it a little too late in

life. As a result, besides the crabbed English translation I made, I have been forced to depend on voluminous footnotes. My awkward translations fail to conjure up the beauty of the original. I only wish that, with the help of the footnotes, they can retain in most cases the basic meanings of their Chinese originals.

I will end this introduction on a Chinese note. Just like the priceless pearl under the neck of the black dragon (驪珠), the information concealed in Wen's works cannot be reached without some danger of misconstruction. And like the precious jade of Chu enwrapped in hard stone, the Jade of *Heshi* (和氏璧), the value of Wen's works and true character can be exposed only after long-standing misunderstandings. It is high time that Wen Tingyun no longer be misunderstood. My greatest wish is that the "discoveries" in this study can help to pave the way to a comprehensive reevaluation of Wen Tingyun. I would also gladly and thankfully look forward to any comments and criticisms of this study.

Chapter One Family Background

During Wen Tingyun's lifetime, the Tang Empire was steadily on the wane, tottering toward an inevitable downfall despite desperate efforts to avoid it. Meanwhile, the aristocratic clans, one of the mainstays of its rule, were also in decline. Coming to the fore in the political arena were: eunuchs, who had usurped state power on an unprecedented scale and gained control of the imperial succession; military satraps, who maintained a semi-independent position, defying the authority of the central bureaucracy in Chang'an; factions, whose contention rendered the decision-making process all the more inefficient. It was against such a general situation that the Wen clan witnessed its own vicissitudes of life. Most noteworthy in this respect will be the political attitude of Wen Tingyun's father and especially of Wen himself, in response to the power of the eunuchs. A study of Wen's family background, therefore, will serve not only to initiate our efforts to reveal hitherto unknown facts concerning him, but will also present a particular case probing into the most persistent problem of the late Tang, the power of politically entrenched eunuchs.

The texts in the official or "standard" histories, "The Biographies of Wen Tingyun" in The Old Tang History and in The New Tang History,¹ are too inadequate and misleading for drawing a clear picture of Wen's life. Hence, to elicit the information indispensable for knowing Wen as he really was, we will contemplate every detail about his family and experiences by consulting various sources, especially his own works.

Wen's Clan Origin and Native Place

Clan Origin (郡望)

A relatively easy starting point is Wen Tingyun's clan origin and his native place. These

¹ See JTS, 190: 5079-80 and XTS, 91: 3788-9. Also see Biographies of Wen Daya (溫大雅), JTS, 61: 2359 and XTS, 91: 3781, to which are attached the Biographies of Wen Yanbo (溫彥博, 573-636), Wen's fifth generation forefather.

facts, along with various bits of information scattered among his works, will begin our process of unraveling many of his poetic puzzles and probing into his secrets.

As indicated in "The Biography of Wen Tingyun" in The New Tang History, Wen Yanbo, the great grandfather of Wen Tingyun's grandfather, was a native of Qi County of Taiyuan (太原祁人). This account corresponds fairly well with one of Wen's notes to the fifth rhyme in "The Hundred Rhyme Poem":

My forefathers were dukes and ministers of our state dynasty, and after having helped effect the Heavenly Mandate in Jinyang, they were enfeoffed in the commanderies of Bing and Fen (余先祖國朝公相, 晉陽佐命, 食采于并汾也).

Jinyang was where the first emperor of Tang, Li Yuan (李淵, 566-625, r. 618-625), rose up in arms against the Sui, and in the Tang dynasty, it was the locale of the administration of Taiyuan Commandery (太原府). It was the Wen clan's native place, where Wen Tingyun's forefathers had rendered their meritorious services to the founding emperors and had been enfeoffed. Descendants of the Wen clan had lived there for generations, until some branches, such as Wen's grandfather or father, emigrated elsewhere.

Qi County, an ancient place name not used in Tang times, must be the Qingyuan County (清源縣) that Wen mentions in his "Epistle Presented to the Vice Minister Jiang" (上蔣侍郎啓), which tells how he decided to leave his reclusion and go to the capital in pursuit of an official career: "Thereupon I left the 'Qingyuan' in the southern country, and had a commoner's audience in the eastern plain" (遂揚南紀之清源, 因效東臯之素謁).²

² 南紀, Alludes to "The Fourth Month" of *Maoshi*, 13: 462, "Surging forward are the Jiang and the Han Rivers / Main-threads of the southern country" (滔滔江漢, 南國之紀). For the translation, see Waley, no. 140. It designates the region to the south of the Yangtze River in subsequent literary writings. 東臯, The eastern plain, refers to the place where a recluse lives. 素謁, "A commoner's visit," here is used of Wen's own audience with some politically powerful men.

"Qingyuan" ("pure source"), in addition to being an elegant reference to his reclusion, was the name used in the Tang dynasty for the county under Taiyuan Commandery where the eminent families of Wen's forefathers lived.³ It indicates a second homeland established, after Wen's direct progenitors emigrated to the South, which we shall examine next.

Since the aristocratic clans still had considerable influence at this time, a Tang literatus would not take the locale of his immediate family as his native place, unless the family had lived there since the time of his preeminent ancestors; instead, he would identify his origins with the place where the family's famous forefathers lived, however distant the forefathers might be. Song dynasty historiographers, when dealing with Tang biographies, followed the same habit. In Wen Tingyun's case, therefore, they took the ancient name of Qingyuan county, Qi, as Wen's native place, and we ought to take Taiyuan and Qingyuan County as nothing more than the place of Wen's clan origin (郡望). Indeed, an eminent clan with the surname Wen had lived in Qi County of Taiyuan since the Western Han dynasty, when Wen He (溫何, fl. 170, BC) settled there.⁴ In the intervening millennium, members of the Wen clan had moved to many other places, though the main branches might have remained around Taiyuan.⁵

During the Tang dynasty the Wens continued to spread all over China. From Wen's extant works we can infer that Wen regarded himself as a native of the southern Yangtze delta (江東), i. e., the regions of Wu (吳) or Yue (越), because Wen's father or grandfather had moved there after the An-Shi Rebellion (755-762). To determine more exactly Wen's "native place," we shall have to cite more of his works.

³ See Li Jifu: Yuanhe Junxianzhi, 8-9; or XTS, "The Geographical Records", 39: 1003.

⁴ See Shiji, "Annals of the Merited Officials and Marquis of Emperor Gaozu", 18: 937.

⁵ Wen Xian (溫羨, d. 308), offspring of Wen Xu (溫序, date unknown), the Han dynasty Director against the Qiang Tribe (護羌校尉), was a native of Qi County of Taiyuan. See JS, 44: 1266-68. Here we see the Wen clan had remained influential for centuries.

Native Places

In his "Fifty-Rhyme Poem" that was presented to Li Shen (李紳)⁶ in the spring of the second year of Huichang (842), Wen writes:

When Ji Shao was a lad with tufts hanging down his forehead,	嵇紹垂髫日,
It was the year Shan Tao began his official service.	山濤筮仕年. ⁷
Your lute and wine-pot were placed between the seats.	琴尊陳座上,
I, in silk and brocade, prostrated myself in front of your couch.	紉綺拜床前.

Li Shen was a Presented Scholar (進士) of the first year of Yuanhe (806) and began his official career as a secretary for Li Qi (李錡),⁸ the Surveillance Commissioner of Zhexi Circuit (浙西道) at the time. The locale of administration of the Zhexi Circuit was Runzhou (潤州, present-day Zhenjiang) and Wen may have lived somewhere nearby in his childhood, where he would have had easy access to Li Shen. Another of Wen's poems, "Sent to Scholar Lu" (寄盧生, j. 9, WFQ), supports this inference, because it mentions an estate that Wen had inherited in that locale:

⁶ The poem, with the full title of "Fifty Rhymes Inspired by the Begone and Pouring My Heart, Devoted to Chancellor Li of Huainan" (感舊陳情五十韻獻淮南李僕射, j. 6, WFQ), was written in 842 and presented to Li Shen. See chapter two. Li (773-846) is a famous late Tang poet and statesman of the Li Faction, see JTS, 137: 4497 and XTS, 181: 5347.

⁷ Ji Shao (253-304, see JS, 2298-301) is the son of Ji Kang (223-262, JS, 49: 1369-74, and SGZ, 21: 605-7), who wrote a letter to Shan Tao (205-283, JS, 43: 1223-28) "to entrust his children to Shan," some time before Shan was executed.

⁸ Li Qi (?-807) held the position of the Surveillance Commissioner of Zhexi Circuit during the years 800-7, but later he was executed for treason, see TFZNB, 750-51, as well as JTS, 112: 3341 and XTS, 224a: 6381.

Close to the ancient capital, my inherited estate laid waste, 遺業荒涼近故都,

In front of the gate, the dyke road stretched across the lake. 門前堤路枕平湖。

The so-called ancient capital described here can only be Jinling, where Wen's late father had once lived and where Wen was born, but it is not the place to which Wen frequently refers with an emotion of nostalgia.

When narrating his early experiences in his "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Pei" (上裴相公啓),⁹ Wen says:

Since the days when my ancestors were bestowed with the imperial favor and conferred fiefs, our family reputation spread by being inscribed on the imperial tripod. Then I took my registered residence in Liaoxi, before I studied the classics in Jixia (自頃爰田錫寵, 鏤鼎傳芳, 占數遼西, 橫經稷下).¹⁰

Here, in giving a brief account of his family, Wen mentions Wen clan's ancestral glory which had lasted for generations, the emigration of the clan branch to which he belonged, and his experience of being a student at the National University of Luoyang. Since the last two sentences here give information about his native place and early career by recourse to elegant historical allusions, we cannot take seriously that he really lived in Liaoxi, the modern region covering a part of Hebei and Liaoning provinces in the north; nor can we believe that he studied in Jixia, a state school set up in Linzi, the capital of the Qi King-dom of the Warring States. "Jixia" refers to the National University of Luoyang, where Wen once had the honor of being a student, while "taking up registered residence in Liaoxi" alludes verbatim to the

⁹ An annotated translation of this epistle is in chapter two.

¹⁰ King Xuan of Qi was fond of scholars of literature and of eloquence; he made 76 men of letters Senior Masters, all of whom had no governmental post, but commented on and discussed the affairs of the country. They were called Jixia Academicians (稷下學士). See Shiji, "Hereditary Eminent Clan of Tian Jingzhong" (田敬仲世家), 70: 2300.

"Biography of Zhao Zhi" (趙至, fl. 310, JS, 92: 2377-80):

[Zhao] went to Luoyang at the age of fourteen,...and traveled to Ye city at sixteen... He then went to Weixing to call on Zhang Sizong, and was favorably accepted. After the death of Zhang, he went to Liaoxi to take registered residence there.

Evidently Wen uses the allusion to Zhao Zhi to speak of his own residence, because there were similarities between Zhao's life and his own. As far as can be determined from Wen's works, the so-called "Liaoxi" should be somewhere close to Yuezhou (越州) where Wen lived for most of his early years. We can cite the following evidence:

(1) Throughout Wen's literary works we have some 20 poems and essays showing that Wen cherished a special feeling toward the Yuezhou district.¹¹ For example, in "Presented to the Yue Monk Yue Yun" (贈越僧岳雲, j. 7, WFQ), we have lines such as: "Filling your room is the moonlight of my home mountain" (一室故山月) and "A former lecturer in Lanting \ Now what do you feel today" (蘭亭舊都講, 今日意若何)--The place "Lanting"

¹¹ Wen's poems indicating his nostalgia or special link with the Yue district include at least the following, all in WFQ, "Ode of the Southern Yangtze" (江南曲, j. 2), "Ode of Su Xiaoxiao" (蘇小小歌, j. 2), "Ode of Burning the Wild Grass" (燒歌, j. 2), "Ode of Qian-tang" (錢唐曲, j. 2), "Written in the Villa of Senior Li" (李先生別墅, j. 7), "Inscribed in the Temple of Mount Xiao" (題蕭山廟, j. 7), "The Seclusion of Recluse Chen*" (陳處士幽居, j. 7), "Seeing Off Secretary Guo of Bingzhou*" (送并州郭書記, j. 7), "Inspired by Some Happenings before the Cold Food Festival*" (寒食節前有懷, j. 8), "Inscribed in He Zhizhang's Residence" (題賀知章故居, j. 8), "Responding with Respect to Senior Li*" (敬答李先生, j. 9), "Mailing to Senior Cui" (寄崔先生, j. 9), "Bidding Farewell to a Friend on the River*" (江上別友人, j. 9), and "Lodging in a Monastery of Fengqu" (宿豐曲僧舍, j. 9) etc. In the above-cited poems, ones marked with "*" are specially related to Tonglu County in Muzhou (睦州), a prefecture adjacent to Yuezhou.

which Wen considered as his "home mountain" (an elegant reference to a recluse's homeland) was in Yuezhou, the present Shaoxing of Zhejiang province.

(2) In Wen's "Epistle Presented to Master Cui" (上崔大夫啓)¹² we read:

I, your humble servant, feel like I am seeing the spirited and charming Mount Ji, and the lucid and bright Lake Mirror, when looking upward to your august loftiness, which stands firm and unique (伏想嵇山靈爽, 鏡水澄明, 仰止尊高, 居然勝絕). Secluded in my poor abode, I sit and listen to stringed and wind instruments played; you, the transferred immortal, upon leaving, have banners and flags flying (隱貧居而坐聞絲管, 調仙家而行有旌旗).

Both Mount Ji and Lake Mirror are in Shaoxing; therefore, even without a further investigation of the epistle, we can say with certainty that Wen Tingyun's place of reclusion was not far from Yuezhou.

(3) In his poem "Li Yu the Recluse Sends Me His Newly Brewed Wine, I Playfully Thank Him With An Impromptu Verse" (李羽處士寄新醞走筆戲酬, j. 4, WFQ), Wen likened himself to "Xie the Guest"--an appellation for Xie Lingyun, who, an orphan since infancy, had been entrusted to a relative in the Yue region. This is further evidence suggesting that Wen might have taken his registered residence in Yue by relying on a certain relative there, as had Xie Lingyun.¹³

(4) In Yanlingji (嚴陵集)¹⁴ by the Southern Song Dynasty writer Dong Fen (董), we

¹² We identify this Grand Master Cui as Cui Xian (崔咸, ?-834), see JTS, 190: 5059; XTS, 177: 5273. Also see Gu Xuejie: 218.

¹³ For the allusion to Xie Lingyun as Xie the Guest, see Shipin (詩品), "Xie Lingyun, the Magistrate of Linchuan of Song," in Ding Fubao: Lidai Shihua, 9.

¹⁴ See "The Category of Literature" of *Congshu Jicheng Chubian* (叢書集成初編文學類). Dong Fen, date unknown; see Wang Chongmin, 502.

find one lost poem written by Wen Tingyun:

Yearning for My Old Abode in Tonglu, I See Off the Noble Monk Jian

(思桐廬舊居便送鑒上人)

Don't you say the southeast is not far away,	莫道東南路不賒,
A mere step is a great distance in my nostalgia.	思歸一步是天涯。
The forest of night, the two terraces, in the moonlight,	林中夜來雙臺月, ¹⁵
Spring in its prime, the blossoms on the Nine Li Isle.	洲上春深九里花。 ¹⁶
Containing a fine drizzle, round the village: the green trees,	綠樹繞村含細雨,
Rolling the level sand, against the city wall: a cold tide.	寒潮背郭卷平沙。
Knowing that you, my master, are going into the hills,	聞師卻到山中去,
Apologize earnestly for me, to the tavern owner there.	爲我殷勤謝酒家。

This poem, one of Wen's representative works, presents the transparent side of his poetic personae. The information implied in it is very easy to catch. The third couplet was also taken as one of Wen's most outstanding poetic lines for its "picturesqueness" (入畫).¹⁷ In fact, Yanlingji contains only the compositions of poets from the vicinity of Mount Yanling (嚴陵山) and Torrent Yanling (嚴陵瀨), both named in memory of the famous recluse of the Eastern Han, Yan Guang (嚴光, 37 BC-AD 43, HHS: 83: 2763-4). These facts add to the authentication that this poem was written by Wen.¹⁸ Since Wen had an old residence in

¹⁵ The poet's note: "In the Fishing Isle of Yan Guang, there is an eastern terrace and a western terrace" (原注:嚴光釣渚有西臺東臺)。

¹⁶ The poet's note: "In Tonglu there is Nine Li Isle" (原注:桐廬有九里洲)。

¹⁷ See Wei Qingzhi, 3: 61.

¹⁸ The poem is also collected in Li Fang: Wenyuan Yinghua (223: 1116) and designated as one composed by Fang Gan (方干, date unknown), Wen's contemporary. Since two

Tonglu to which he was eager to return, he must have lived there long enough to call the place his homeland. Hence, "Liaoxi" in his allusion probably means Tonglu County of Mu Zhou (睦州), which was adjacent to Yuezhou.

Remaining Prestige of an Aristocratic Family

Genealogical Status

Wen was descended from Wen Yanbo, Prime Minister of Emperor Taizong (r. 627-649). During the next 200 years, the Wen clan had tried to maintain its social position, though it dropped constantly. This was so because the clan, though prolific, shared in the general disintegration of all aristocratic clans. The following statement in "the Biography of Wen Yanbo", however, gives a clear idea of the role the Wen clan played in its heyday:

Originally the Yans and the Wens were the most powerful surnames during the Sui dynasty. Now Yan Silu and Wen Daya both served in the Eastern Palace, while Yan Minchu and Wen Yanbo both served in the Secretariat, and Wen Dayou served in the Palace Library as proofreader. In the Tang dynasty the Yan clan distinguished itself by its academic achievements, and the Wen clan by its official rank (XTS, 91: 3783).

Such was the importance and distinction that the Wen clan had enjoyed. Apart from the fact that the three brothers, Wen Daya, Wen Yanbo and Wen Dayou, all held official posts as high as Prime Minister (with title of duke) at the beginning of the seventh century, the clan had produced other famous figures. According to Yuanhe Xingcuan by the Tang genealogist Lin Bao (fl. 812-840), from the time of Wen Yanbo's father, Wen Junyou of the Sui dynasty, through Wen Yanbo and Wen Daya, and on down to the seventh year of Yuanhe (812), the Wen clan had gone through seven generations, from which we get the following table:¹⁹

other sources cite this poem as written by Wen, and the information in it fits quite well with the internal evidence we find in Wen's entire works, we do not follow the attribution.

¹⁹ For the sources, see Cen Zhongmian: "Yuanhe Xingcuan Sijiaoji", 351-352.

Wen Junyou's (溫君攸) Seven-generation Descendants

1	Wen Daya (溫大雅)	Wen Yanbo (溫彥博)
2	Wen Wuyin (溫無隱)	*Wen Ting (溫挺)
3	Wen Kerang (溫克讓)	Wen Weng'gui (溫翁歸)
4	Wen Jingqian (溫景倩)	Wen Mian (溫緬)
5	Wen Jie (溫佺)	*Wen Xi (溫曦)
6	Wen Zao (溫造)	*Wen Xi'hua (溫西華)
7	Wen Zhang (溫璋)	Wen Yang (陽)

In this table, we give the name of only one clansman for each generation, who in most cases was the representative of the Wen clan in the corresponding time, indicated by Lin Bao as one of the main branches of the genealogical tree,²⁰ of which Wen Tingyun claimed to be an issue. In Yuanhe Xingcuan and "the Genealogical List of the Prime Ministers" (XTS, 72: 2661-65), many of these names have official titles of considerable distinction, though none of the titles ranks as high as those of Wen Yanbo (Prime Minister). By Wen Tingyun's time, it seems that the Wens produced no clansman of great distinction, especially in Wen Yanbo's line. No wonder that when Wen spoke of his ancestral glory in "the Hundred-Rhyme Poem," his remarks betray his dismay:

- 5 The [ancestral] enfeoffment in the forlorn wild is left waste, 采地荒遺野,
And our fief by the old capital has long been disclaimed. 爰田失故都.

From Wen's note to this couplet, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, it is easy to see that after the enfeoffment in the first generation, the later Wens failed to equal the achievements of their forefathers. We know very little about the clan branch of Wen Tingyun himself,

²⁰ The Yuanhe Xingcuan does not provide a complete family tree of the Wens, only a list of the most famous Wen clansmen. Most of those who might have to do with Tingyun are included in our brief list, though their dates can only be roughly estimated.

except that by the time of his birth, it had long emigrated elsewhere. Fortunately, we have in our possession some important information that helps to identify Wen's genealogical status.

"Commanders of the Reserved Horses" (駙馬都尉)²¹

From the extant sources we find that the Wen clan had for generations made marriages with the imperial family.

First, we find there are three Wen clansmen who married imperial princesses and became imperial sons-in-law, with the official title of Commander of the Reserved Horses. All three were the offspring of Wen Yanbo, as was Wen Tingyun: Wen Ting (Wen Yanbo's son) married Princess Anding (安定公主), the daughter of Emperor Gaozu (r. 618-626); Wen Xi (a fourth-generation offspring of Wen Yanbo) married Princess Liang'guo (梁國公主), the daughter of Emperor Ruizong (r. 711-712), and Wen Xihua (Wen Xi's son) married Princess Song'guo (宋國公主),²² the daughter of Emperor Xuan-zong (r. 712-756). These marriages indicate that Wen Yanbo's descendants had kept the imperial favor to a remarkable degree.

Second, some internal evidence, in the form of allusions, can be found in Wen's poems proving that Wen was an imperial relative. In "The Western Pool of the Heir Apparent" (太子西池二首, j. 3, WFQ), we find the following allusion that refers to Wen himself:

Do not believe that Prince Zhang,	莫信張公子,
Will cancel his secret rendez-vous before the window.	窗間斷暗期.

And in "Ode to a Night Feast" (夜宴謠, j. 1, WFQ), we find the same allusion:

The Prince of Zhang family at night heard the rain fall,	張家公子夜聞雨,
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²¹ All are marked with "*" in the table. See XTS, "The Biographies of the Princesses", 83: 3644-59, and *Tanghuiyao*, "The Princesses", 6: 63-4.

²² See XTS, 83: 3659. Princess Song'guo did not die until well into the Yuanhe era. She seems to be Wen Tingyun's aunt, if not mother.

And at night, thought of the Chu dance in the Orchid Hall. 夜向蘭堂思楚舞.²³

In the above two examples "Prince Zhang" alludes to the Fuping Marquis, Zhang Fang (富平侯張放),²⁴ a well-known imperial relative of Emperor Yuan of Han (漢元帝, r. 48-33 BC). Moreover, we have another example from "Sent to Chuwang On the Cold Food Festival" (寒食節寄楚望二首, j. 9, WFQ).

Only the Marquis of Royal Blessing,
Returns to watch the Chu dance.

獨有恩澤侯,
歸來看楚舞。

Wen calls himself "the Marquis of Royal Blessing," which, according to "Annals of the Imperial Relatives, Marquis of Royal Blessing" (外戚恩澤侯年表, HS, 18: 677-720), was an appellation used exclusively for imperial relatives. Considering the fact that Wen Ting, and especially Wen Xi and Wen Xihua had been imperial sons-in-law, Wen's self-glorification was not groundless. If he was not a near kinsman of Wen Xi or Wen Xihua, how could he call himself an imperial relative?

Though little is known about Wen's father, we can try to find out Wen's genealogical status by tracing his relations with Wen Zao (溫造 766-835, JTS, 165: 4314 and XTS, 91:

²³ 楚舞, The Chu dance, alludes to a remark of Liu Bang (256-195 BC), Emperor Gaozu of the Han, who said to his Consort Qi (戚姬)--"Please perform a Chu dance for me, and I will sing a Chu song in turn"--when both knew that it was impossible to substitute the Prince of Zhao, Ruyi (born of Qi) for the Heir Apparent (born of Empress Lü, 呂后). See Shiji, "The Biography of Marquis Liu" (留侯列傳), 55: 2047. By alluding to "the Chu dance", Wen hints at the tragedy of Virtuous Consort Wang and his son, that will be discussed in chapters five and six.

²⁴ For Zhang Fang's biographical information, see HS, 1395, 2654-57, 3721-33 and 3999; an imperial relative, Zhang often accompanied Emperor Yuan both when going out incognito and sleeping.

3784.), Tingyun's clan uncle, and foster father. Wen's "Epistle Presented to the Prime Minister of the Honor Seat" (上首座相公啓),²⁵ as we shall prove, was addressed to Wen Zao. Since Wen Zao once told Emperor Dezong "Your subject's fifth generation ancestor is Wen Daya" (XTS, 91: 3783), we can say with certainty that Wen Tingyun, as Wen Zao's nephew, was the sixth generation offspring of Wen Daya's brother, Wen Yanbo. Thus Wen Tingyun was most probably a nephew of Wen Xihua, if not his son, and there is no doubt that he was the grandson of Wen Xi. In our later discussions, we will find more evidence supporting this conclusion.

Family Tradition

The Wens played an important part in helping the first two Tang emperors, Gaozu Li Yuan (r. 618-26) and Taizong Li Shimin (r. 626-649), found and consolidate the Tang dynasty's state power, by rendering both civil and military service to the royal family. As can be seen from "The Biography of Wen Daya," the three Wen brothers all reached very high official rank, in one case the position of Prime Minister, and were enfeoffed as dukes. Wen Yanbo on his death was even honored with burial in the imperial tomb, Zhaoling (陪葬昭陵). In acknowledgment of the meritorious service of the Wen clan, Emperor Gaozu once said to Wen Daya: "It was by the support of all your clan that I could rise up in arms in Jinyang against the Sui" (我起兵晉陽，爲卿一門耳，XTS, 58: 3781). This is no overstatement. It was because of this kind of flesh and blood connection that Wen Tingyun took the prosperity and decline of the Tang empire as his own affair and made every endeavor to bring about a restoration of the dynasty's past grandeur.

Besides the meritorious service recorded in the biographies, we can see from "The Records of Literary Works" (j. 58) of The New Tang History, that both Wen Daya and Wen Yanbo were well-known writers as well as important ministers. Works of Wen Daya recorded in "The Records" are: Jinshang Wangyeji (A Record of the Present Emperor's

²⁵ For an annotated translation and analysis of this epistle, see chapter 2.

Imperial Enterprise, 今上王業記, 1467), Datang Chuangye Qijuzhu (The Imperial Diary of the Great Tang in Its Founding, 大唐創業起居注, 1471)²⁶ and Da Chengxiang Tangwang Guanshuji (The Subordinate Officials of the Grand Prime Minister, The Prince of Tang, 大丞相唐王官屬記, 1477). Works of Wen Yanbo are Gujin Zhaoji Sanshijuan (Anthology of Imperial Edicts of All Times, Thirty Juan, 古今詔集三十卷, 1473).

Wen Tingyun often refers to his family with a feeling of mingled pride and anxiety: what he is proud of is his ancestors' past glory, and what he is anxious about is the opportunity to distinguish himself so as to restore the family's position. In "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem", there are such lines as

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 7 | For generations the Wens partook of the Zhou emoluments,
As family tradition, we used to emulate the Lu Confucians. | 奕世參周祿,
承家學魯儒. ²⁷ |
| 8 | The family feats and merits are shown in remaining swords and shoes,
With inscriptions and admonitions borne on plates and basins. | 功庸留劍舄,
銘誠在盤盂. ²⁸ |

The lines show Wen's pride in his family: the Wens served the country for generations by adhering to the Confucian principles and by rendering remarkable services to the empire. Tingyun himself, however, was born too late, for the family past of which he often boasted obliged him to *restore* its glory, by reanimating the Confucian tradition. In other words, he

²⁶ Among the extant "Imperial Diary", this is the earliest. See j. 42, *Wanwei Shantang* version Shuofu (宛委山堂本說郛, all later references of it will be briefed as Shuofu).

²⁷ Zhou (周) is used to replace Tang (唐). To imitate the Lu Confucians, is a declaration of being the adherent of the sage.

²⁸ 劍舄, Sword and Shoes, is the highest imperial honor given to an official, to attend the court wearing a special sword and a special pair of courtly boots. 盤盂, Refers to "The Writings in the Plate and Basin" (盤盂書), legendarily attributed to Kongjia (孔甲), the Yellow Emperor's historiographer, with what the emperor should do on the vessels he used daily. See HS, Ying Shao's exegesis to "The Biography of Tian Fen", 52: 2378.

wanted to devote himself to the restoration of the country and to reglorify his family at the same time, as his family was somehow in a state of political disgrace. In his "Epistle Presented to the Prime Minister Pei", Wen tells us: "I was thinking of sewing up the broken drapery of the Confucian House, and restoring the magnificence and grandeur of the Constant Norm" (思欲紐儒門之絕帷,²⁹ 恢常典之休烈). What happened to Wen's forefathers that made them lose their hereditary honors and titles? From "The Hundred- Rhyme Poem", we have only the following hint:

6 Having lost the sheep, I still toss the dice,
Letting go the horse, I weary of shouting for stakes.

亡羊猶博塞,
牧馬倦呼盧.³⁰

²⁹ In ancient China, before starting an academic lecture, one was to pull down the drape-ry in the room (下帷), hence the term came to mean to study Confucian doctrines; by analogy, to "sew up the broken drapery" means to restore the declining Confucianism.

³⁰ Having the sheep lost, alludes to Zhuangzi, "Webbed Toes": "Zang and Gu feed the sheep together, but they both lose their sheep....It turned out that Zang had brought a book to study, Gu had been idling away the time tossing dice." See Legge, Texts of Taoism, 273 and Watson, Chuang Tzu, 202-3. The line also refers to an axiom in Liu Xiang: Zhanguoce, "It is not too late to hail the hound when the hare started, nor to repair the pen when the sheep has bolted." See Crump: Chan-Kuo Ts'e, 264. 牧馬, should be 放馬; the error is caused by the similarity of the Chinese characters 放 and 牧. Cf. Shangshu (11: 184): "[The King] hushed all the movements of war and proceeded to cultivate the arts of peace. He sent back his horses to the south of Mount Hua, and let loose the oxen in the open country of the Peach Woods" (乃偃武修文, 歸馬于華山之陽, 放牛于桃林之野. See Waltham, Shu Ching 121). 呼盧, Refers to the game called *Shupu* (蒲), which was played by tossing five black-white dice on a chessboard; and if after a toss the dice were all black, which was called *Lu* (盧), the player would get the highest prize; the players usually shouted (呼) when they made a *Lu*. See JS, 85: 2205-11. For

The implication of the first line is that even though Wen's ancestors had lost their official positions (亡羊) for some reason (博塞), Wen refused to mend his ways and still adhered to the family tradition; the second line expresses his tendency, at the time he wrote the poetry, to give up his efforts in his political life (倦呼盧). Now we must ask: what is the family tradition to which Wen always adhered, even after repeated rebuffs?

After a thorough reading of Wen's works, we conclude that it must be *the straight way* (直道), i. e., straightforwardness, a dauntless spirit daring to speak against any social injustice, as Confucian doctrine advocates. It was *because of* this moral principle that Wen's forefathers had lost their official positions, and it was *with* this principle that Wen confronted his troubled life filled with turns and setbacks. Another example that under-scores this point is found in Wen's "Epistle Presented to the Bureau Director Han of the Ministry of Personnel" (上吏部韓郎中啓):

My wisdom is different from comprehensive mastery, my ability lacks a proficiency in any particular line. Fortunately I took over the august instruction [of the Sage], so as not to lose the pure fragrance [of my ancestors] (某識異旁通, 才無上計. 幸傳丕訓, 免墜清芬).³¹

The term "comprehensive mastery" (旁通) originates from Ji Kang's "Letter for Breaking Relations with Shan Juyuan",³² in which Ji said: "Your Excellency is a talent of

examples that use the game as a metaphor for political speculation, see NS, 36: 932. "Yang Xuanbao played chess with Emperor Wen of Song (r. 424-53) and won the prize, the position of magistrate of Xuancheng."

³¹ "August instruction" means "the teaching of the sage." "Pure fragrance" alludes to Lu Ji's (陸機, 261-303) "Rhapsody on Literature" (*Wenxuan*, 17: 239-44): "Sing the loftiness of the hereditary moral, and praise the pure fragrance of our ancestors."

³² See *Wenxuan*, 43: 600-03. And for the biographical materials about Ji Kang, quoted later, see JS, 49: 1369-74.

comprehensive mastery, hence in most cases you say 'yes' and seldom show discontent" (足下旁通, 多可而少怪). "August instruction" and "pure fragrance" both refer to the lofty and praiseworthy morals of Wen's ancestors. Since the Bureau Director Han was one of Wen's father's friends Wen compared to Shan Tao, Wen's father probably was not a man of "comprehensive mastery", but he must, instead, have been a man of strict principles and strong eccentricity, like Ji Kang. Wen is here saying that it was from his late father that he inherited a character that made him a worthy scion of the Wens, as he wanted to keep the family tradition and retain its reputation. Just as he says in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem":

77 Among my compeers I was honored as a good friend, 時輩推良友,
Of my pedigree, I have carried on an honest fame. 家聲繼令圖.

Judging from the extant writings of Wen's contemporaries such as Li Shangyin, Zhang Hu (張祜, 805-860?), Ji Tangfu (紀唐夫, fl. 860), Duan Chengshi (段成式, 805-863) and Pei Tingyu (裴庭裕, fl. 820-60),³³ all famous poets of the late Tang times, the self-evaluation in this couplet is no exaggeration.

A Metaphorical Mention of Wen's Father

Wen's allusions to Ji Kang merit particular study.

Few historical records can be found of the rise and fall of the Wen clan, even in Wen's works. But the way Wen mentions his father is suggestive enough for us to infer what kind of person he was, or at least how he died. There is nothing about Wen's father in all Tang and Song dynasty sources. Wen himself seldom mentioned him explicitly, but when he did refer to him implicitly in his writings, he alluded to Wang Zun (王尊, fl. 20, BC), Lu Ji

³³ Li Shangyin's "Thinking of Zaimeng Feiqing" (有懷在蒙飛卿), *Yuxisheng Shiji Jianzhu*, 2: 524); Ji Tangfu's "Sending Wen Feiqing to Be the Defender of Fangcheng" (送溫飛卿尉方城, QTS, 542: 6257), Zhang Hu's poem of the same topic (QTS, 511: 5837), Duan Chengshi's "The Sixth Letter to Wen Feiqing" (與溫飛卿書, QTW, 787: 10391) and Pei's *Dong'guan Zouji* (5: 17), all praise Wen's personality.

(陸續, 187-219) and Xie Lingyun (謝靈運, 385-433), all of whom were, perhaps by unhappy accident, orphans in their childhood,³⁴ as was Wen himself, "a distant scion and orphan of Wen Yanbo" (彥博裔孤).³⁵ Most noteworthy is that he repeatedly alludes to the trio of Ji Kang-Shan Tao-Ji Shao (嵇康山濤嵇紹), such that by likening himself to Ji Shao, who sought help from Shan Tao, he metaphorically likens his late father to Ji Kang. Ji Kang entrusted his son Ji Shao to Shan Tao before he was executed by the Jin dynasty ruler. Wen's repeated use of the allusion no doubt tells us something about his father and should not be allowed to slip by carelessly:

When Ji Shao was a lad with tufts hanging down his forehead, 嵇紹垂髫日,
It was the year Shan Tao began his official service. 山濤筮仕年.

The above lines suggest that when Wen was a mere child like Ji Shao, his late father's friend Chancellor Li of Huainan had just begun his official service, like Shan Tao. In addition to this, we have the following examples that refer to different aspects of the same allusion, all likening his late father to Ji Kang. We will examine each of them to illustrate how Wen uses the allusion.

(1) "Epistle Presented to the Prime Minister Linghu" (上令狐相公啓): "The boy of the Ji clan, eight years of age, is under the protection of an old friend" (嵇氏則男兒八歲, 保在故人). Ji Kang in his "Letter for Breaking off Relations with Shan Juyuan" said: "My daughter is thirteen and my son is eight years of age." He was as good as entrusting his

³⁴ For Wang Zun, Lu Ji, and Xie Lingyun's being orphaned in their childhood, see respectively "The Biography of Wang Zun" in HS, 3226-38, "The Biography of Lu Ji" in SGZ, 1328-29, and "The Biography of Xie Lingyun" in SS, 1743-88.

³⁵ That Wen was Yanbo's "distant scion and orphan" (裔孤) was originally correctly recorded. The term was, however, "corrected" to "distant scion" (裔孫), by some proof-readers of the book, to conform to Wen's Biography in XTS, which is, unfortunately, unreliable. See Ji Yougong's *Tangshi Jishi*, 53: 822.

orphans to Shan Tao. Here "the boy of the Ji clan, eight years of age" must refer to Wen, and the "old friend," to an old friend of his late father, who played the role of Shan Tao.

(2) "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem":

Whom shall I, a helpless man, seek asylum from?	有客將誰托?
Without a mediator, I inwardly have pity on myself.	無媒竊自憐
Falling and rising is the melody of the Palace Leisure,	抑揚中散曲, ³⁶
Drifting and wandering is the ship of Filialty and Honesty.	飄泊孝廉船. ³⁷

In the first couplet Wen is unburdening himself of his grievances to Chancellor Li (see p. 30, note 6), saying that in his frustration, what he needs most is the recommendation of a powerful mediator; but the fact is that, to his dismay, almost nobody could help him. But to what does the second couplet refer? It must have something to do with Wen's personal situation. If in the fourth line Wen expresses a disappointment that, unlike Zhang Ping, he has as yet met nobody who could set store by his talent, then the third line is a poetic description of the cause that had led to all his misfortunes. With this in mind, the implication of the third

³⁶ According to JS, 49: 1369, "The Biography of Ji Kang", Ji, the Grand Master of Palace Leisure (中散大夫), was taught the exquisite tune *Guanglingsan* (廣陵散, the Guangling Lute Tune) by a superman (奇人--sic.). In the end, right before he was to be executed, Ji asked for a zither on which to play *Guanglingsan* for the last time; then, he heaved a sigh and said: "*Guanglingsan* from now on is extinct."

³⁷ This line alludes to the story of Zhang Ping (張憑, fl. 370), who began his official career by passing through the Civil Service Recruitment of The Filial and Incorrupt (孝廉), and whose talent was not appreciated until Liu Shan (劉惔, fl. 360-80) discovered him on his ship. See JS, 75: 1992; also see NATW, 119.

line nearly comes to light. The "melody of the Palace Leisure" is "falling and rising,"³⁸ but allusively it refers to something almost extinct--a particular principle that scarcely anybody of the day still adhered to. Set against the background of the late Tang political environments and Wen's family, "the melody of the Palace Leisure" of Ji Kang's famous anecdote is used as a metaphor for "the straight way" (直道) Wen's father had adhered to. "The straight way" of Wen's time was the political courage to stand up against the eunuchs, heedless of personal safety. The "falling (and rising)" of "the melody" is thus a reflection of the historical reality, in the face of which people could at most sporadically raise their voice against the eunuchs. We can further infer that, after Wen's father's death as a result of his straightforward criticism of the eunuchs, political protest was rendered almost inaudible except in a few instances, such as the Sweet Dew Incident of 835 (which, however, met with complete failure).

(3) "Epistle Presented to the Prime Minister" (上宰相啓): "The former dependent of Shanyang will not be heartbroken alone" (山陽舊曲, 不獨傷心). As "The Biography of Xiang Xiu" (向秀, JS, 49: 1374-75) relates, Ji Kang for a time irrigated a vegetable garden with Lü An (呂安) in Shanyang. After Ji was executed, Xiang Xiu once passed by Ji's old residence and heard Ji's neighbor playing the flute, thereupon he wrote his "Rhapsody on Yearning for Old Days" (思舊賦, *Wenxuan*, 16: 229). "The dependent of Shanyang" refers to Wen himself, and here again Wen likens his late father to Ji Kang, without mentioning him directly.

(4) "Epistle Presented to the Bureau Director Han of the Ministry of the Personnel": "Then a wretched orphan will find something with which to shelter himself, by always relying on the friendship of Shan Tao." This line shows clearly that Wen assumed the role of Ji Shao, hoping Han would be like Shan Tao and help him. The allusion once more caps his late

³⁸ 抑揚 (falling and rising) in this context is a case of *pianyi fuci* (偏義復詞); that is, despite the parallel juxtaposition of the paired words, stress is put on one of the pair, while the other has only a structural function.

father in the role of Ji Kang.

In all the above cases, Wen's implication is the same: Wen's father was a man like Ji Kang. We know that Ji Kang was executed by the Sima clansmen when they usurped the power of the Wei state, because of his reluctance to cooperate with them. According to "The Biography of Shan Tao" in the Jinshu, prior to his execution Ji Kang said to Ji Shao, his son: "So long as Juyuan [Shan Tao] survives, you are not an orphan." Thus Ji Kang entrusted his orphans to Shan Tao; and it was in this sense Wen used the allusion.

Normally one can derive no substantial information from one casual use of an allusion, but the frequency with which Wen used this allusion to the same person forces us to probe more deeply the factual basis for his repeated use of it. Even the fact that Ji Kang was the son-in-law of the Cao-Wei royal family suggests an analogy to Wen's case: that Wen's father or uncle might have been son-in-law of the Li-Tang royal family. The fact that Wen so frequently likens his late father to Ji Kang amounts to a confession that his late father was put to death for political reasons. Had the father not been similar to Ji Kang, how could Wen Tingyun have so insistently adhered to this peculiar way of mentioning him? This unusual choice of allusion must be highly suitable to Wen's personal life-experience. It is unlikely that he used the comparison repeatedly without careful consideration of its connotations. On the contrary, we can conclude that this was a deliberate choice intended to bring to light the very idea he wanted to express.

Such is the premise for further research with the limited materials available. By analogy, Wen was virtually comparing the Sima usurpers at the end of the Wei dynasty to the eunuchs who had usurped almost all court power during his time. These, then, are the basic facts: Wen's father died from the persecution of the eunuchs because of his straight-forwardness; as to the exact way he died, though it seems to have been death by execution, it was, more probably, death by exile. That would explain why Wen never speaks of his father explicitly, and why in his childhood, after being orphaned, he still enjoyed some degree of inherited privilege. In our later discussions we will find more hints that corroborate this inference.

When did Wen's father die? From the many allusions Wen uses, we have come to the conclusion that he was orphaned during early childhood. Since "When Ji Shao (himself) was a lad with tufts hanging down his forehead / It was the year Shan Tao (Li Shen) began his official service" (in 806), we can calculate the approximate time of Wen's father's death as no later than 806, the first year of Yuanhe.

History tells us that just prior to 806 was the year of the Yongzhen Reform (805). This was an effort on the part of the court officials, "the Southern Offices", to restore the empire's normal functioning by seizing back imperial prerogatives from the eunuchs, "the Northern Offices".³⁹ That the organizers and the main participants of the Yongzhen Reform--"the two Wangs and the eight prefectural assistants" (二王八司馬)--should be more positively evaluated than they were by the Song dynasty's prejudiced historio-graphers, is increasingly emphasized by modern scholars.⁴⁰ What interests us here is Wen's connection with the Yongzhen Reform participants. Since his father died about the time of the persecution from the eunuchs, the father and thus the son must have had some relationship with the Yongzhen reformists, and based on the few traces that time has fortunately not yet effaced, we can come to such a conclusion. When the Yongzhen Reform took place, Wen was a mere child. That political event, however, had a far-reaching effect on his life, through the death of his father. We will have to reach some important conclusions by making maximum use of the limited sources available.

Financial Status in Wen's Early Years

Wen's early childhood was passed in a wealthy and influential family. His "Epistle Presented to the Prime Minister" compares his past luxurious life to his present poverty:

[The mansion of] adorned pillars and towering lintels turned into a hut like a snailshell where only I dwell; the brocade jacket and silk trousers (that I wore) became a cattle's

³⁹ See Denis Twitchett: The Cambridge History of China, 600-9.

⁴⁰ See, Chen Jo-Shui: 33-66.

[grass] coat for me to rest upon (梓柱雲楣, 獨居蝸舍; 綺襦紈袴, 已卧牛衣).

While we cannot imagine precisely how rich his family used to be, we can, more readily, paint a picture of Wen's "poverty." In his "Epistle Presented to the Bureau Director Han of the Ministry of Personnel," he says of himself: "Like Ji Shao, I had an old mansion in Xingyang." In "Sent to Scholar Lu" (寄盧生, j. 9, WFQ) he tells us: "My inherited estate is laid waste, close to the ancient capital." The title of another poem, "Sent to An Intimate Friend from my Villa of the Yu County Suburbs" (鄆郊別墅寄所知, j. 8, WFQ), tellingly offers information that Wen had some estates in Yu county (of the Metropolitan Prefecture). All the above references indicate that, as the scion of a declining aristocratic family that had estates in several places, Wen's poverty was not as great as his frequent complaints suggest. He still enjoyed considerable privilege left to him from his ancestors, despite his father's untimely death. An aristocratic family in decline could still afford him a comfortable life, a life that Wen called "poverty," because different from that of the rising powerful families of the time and degraded from the Wen clan's past heyday. To give an exact description of the financial status of Wen's early life in Wen's own terms, there is the following couplet from his "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem":

45 My loom shuttle is unlike that of <i>the mulberry lady</i> ,	機杼非桑女,
And my grove and garden differ from <i>the Wood Slaves</i> .	林園異木奴. ⁴¹

⁴¹ For 機杼, literally loom shuttle, its derivative meaning, unique or original way of writing, or more generally, of doing anything, is more frequent in use. And here it should be understood as "(my) way of living". The meaning of 桑女, *the mulberry lady*, can be traced back from Wang Chong, *Lunheng*, 74. "Somebody says Heaven lets the five grains grow so as to feed the people, and produces silk and hemp so as to clothe them. This is as good as saying that Heaven serves the people as if it were the like of farmers and mulberry ladies" (或說天生五谷以食人, 生絲麻以衣人, 此謂天爲人作農夫桑女之徒也). 木奴,

Wen need not work in the field like a mulberry lady to earn his daily bread, though he does not think he had as much inheritance as "the wooden slaves". The family's economic situation was neither so bad as to force him to engage in field labor nor so good as to separate him completely from husbandry. With such social status, it would not be difficult for Wen to make an ordinary well-to-do living. The problem was that Wen wanted to restore his family's glory by advancing himself as a successful court official, and he would not rest content with what his seniors had left him. With his family glory and literary talent, he was proud and confident of himself. But the character he inherited from his forebears involved him in no end of troubles.

From Wen's poems and prose works, we can see that he still enjoyed relations with a wide circle of people of rank and fashion, including many high officials and noble lords, and even members of the imperial family. Unlike Li Shangyin, who had no more than two or three patrons at most, Wen was closely connected with many of the influential and powerful court officials of the time. Indeed, we find that it was through the remaining family influences that he was introduced into the circle of the *élites societes*. In his own terms in "Epistle Presented to the Prime Minister Linghu" (上令狐相公啓), it is:

I extensively sought help from my ancestors' favored subordinates, and have indeed undergone many ups and downs (某旁征義故, 屢歷星霜)

Given such social relations, as well as his own reputation, he made every effort to open the way for a successful official career when the situation was favorable to him, and sought

Literally *wood slaves*, i.e., orange tree, alludes to Sheng Hongzhi's (盛弘之, of the Jin dynasty, date unknown) *Jingzhouji* (荊州記); the extant text of it can be found in *Shuofu*, j. 61: Li Heng had planted a thousand orange trees in Longyang Isle, and, on his deathbed, he bid his son saying: "On my isle there are a thousand *Wood Slaves* by which you can annually get a thousand bolts of silk."

protection and refuge when he was in adversity.

Special Social Connections

Relationship with Liu Yuxi (772-842)

Of the dirges on Liu Yuxi's death, only those of Bai Juyi (772-846) and Wen Tingyun are extant. Wen's poems give a clear account of the friendship between the two men.

Two Elegies for the Late Minister Liu, Director of the Palace Library

(秘書劉尚書挽歌辭二首,⁴² j. 3 WFQ)

Like Wang's calligraphy, yours is as vivid as live phoenixes,	王筆活鸞鳳,
And like Xie's poetry, yours is as charming as blooming lotuses.	謝詩生芙蓉. ⁴³
Before the crimson curtain, you presided over academic lectures,	學筵開絳帳,
And like a huge bell sounding, you talked with eloquence.	談柄發洪鐘. ⁴⁴
But when in the whitewashed office appeared a flying owl,	粉署見飛鵞,

⁴² That Minister Liu Director of the Palace Library is Liu Yuxi is attested by Cen Zhongmian (*Tangshi Yushen*, 4: 251) and Bian Xiaoxuan (*Liu Yuxi Congkao*, 295-6).

⁴³ Liu Yuxi was a famous calligrapher, so Wen likened him to Wang Xizhi (王羲之, 321-379). See Zheng Qiao, *Tongzhi*, "Tang Dynasty Famous Calligraphers", 73: 751. Yan Yanzhi (顏延之, 384-456) once asked Bao Zhao (鮑昭, 422-465) whose poetry was better, his own or the poetry of Xie Lingyun; Bao replied: "Xie's five syllabic poetry is like a lotus just blooming with a natural charm; yours, like a display of brocade and embroidery, can as well greet the eyes with colors and patterns." See NS, 34: 877.

⁴⁴ Ma Rong (馬融, 79-166), a well-known scholar on Confucian classics, was said "to sit in a big hall and set up a crimson gauze screen, in front of which he was to teach his students, and behind which he had his singers give performances," so as to see if any of his students failed to concentrate his mind on his studies. See HHS, 58: 1952. 談柄 [talking-holder], refers to the duster held in hand as eminent scholars of the six dynasties engaged in "pure talk" (清談).

On the jade mountain was slandered a sleeping dragon.
 You left to us a shining image with spotless integrity,
 As the pines in the Nine Plains stand in towering seclusion.

玉山猜卧龍。⁴⁵
 遺風灑清韻，
 蕭散九原松。⁴⁶

Poem Two

A deer-tail duster in hand, you were a priceless jade,
 And, in the breeze, the crane-down of your robe waved.
 Like Yin Hao, demoted for failing to renovate the royal grave,
 Like Xie An, in his spring villa playing chess with ease.
 And what a noble prince of Jingkou you were,
 Also many a beautiful girl of Xiangyang you praised.

塵尾近良玉，
 鶴氅吹素絲。
 壞陵殷浩謫，
 春墅謝安棋。⁴⁷
 京口貴公子，⁴⁸
 襄陽諸女兒。⁴⁹

⁴⁵ "Whitewashed office" is a conventional term referring to bureaus under the Department of State Affairs (尚書省) whose walls were whitewashed with pepper powder. "A flying owl" alludes to Jia Yi's (賈誼, 200-168, BC) "Preface to the Rhapsody On the Owl" (鵩鳥賦序, *Wenxuan*, 13: 198-200): Once an owl flew into his room and landed on the seat, Jia Yi took it to be an inauspicious omen. The allusion is used to herald Liu's banishment. Both "jade mountain" and "sleeping dragon" refer to Ji Kang. For the former, see NATW, 14: 309: Shan Tao said: "As a person, Ji Kang is majestically towering, like a solitary pine tree standing alone. But when he's drunk he leaned crazily like a jade mountain about to collapse." For the latter, see "The Biography of Ji Kang": "Zhong Hui said to Emperor Wendi: 'Ji Kang is a sleeping dragon and should not be promoted. Your Majesty need not worry about the whole country, but Ji Kang is indeed a cause of anxiety.'" Wen's allusion to Ji when speaking of Liu Yuxi is evidence that he regarded Liu with respect, as he would a father.

⁴⁶ The Nine Plains was a cemetery, where the Grand Master (大夫) of the Jin Kingdom, Zhao Dun (趙盾) was buried; Zhao once said "If the dead should come to life once more, whom am I to befriend?" (死者如可作，吾誰與歸). See *Liji*, 10: 1316.

Even now, picking flowers or dancing in the moonlight,

折花兼蹋月。

People are singing Liu's lyrics for his blessed memory.

多唱柳郎詞。⁵⁰

Liu Yuxi was one of the most preeminent poets and scholars of his day, a famous calligrapher as well as expert in music and chess. He took an active part in the Yongzhen Reform, and consequently was banished for many years. During his banishment in Lang-zhou and Kuizhou, he wrote a number of verses in the style of folk song, by drawing from and

⁴⁷ When Yin Hao (?-356) led an army into Luoyang to renovate the imperial tombs, his soldiers rebelled; Huan Wen (312-373), a haughty minister, then discharged Yin from all of his posts. See JS, 77: 2043-48. Xie An was the well-known Jin dynasty Prime Minister who organized the counter-attack against the Former Qin ruler Fu Jian (苻堅, 338-385). It was said that when the Jin army defeated Fu Jian, Xie was playing chess and did not look surprised at all. See JS, 79: 2072-77. Liu Yuxi's "Watching A Chess Game" (觀棋歌, QTS, 356: 4005) shows that Liu was indeed a good chess player.

⁴⁸ Liu assumed a noble family origin by claiming to be the offspring of Liu Sheng, the Han dynasty Prince of Zhongshan (中山靖王劉勝, HS, 53: 2422-26), though he was descended from the Huns. Even Yuanhe Xingcuan mistakenly took Liu's family origin to be Pengcheng, from the Han dynasty's Prince Ding of Changsha, Liu Fa (長沙定王劉發, HS, 53: 2426-27). See Bian Xiaoxuan, Li Yuxi Nianpu, 1-3. Wen takes Jingkou as Liu's family origin, because the Jingkou Liu clan was descended from the Han dynasty Prince Yuan of Chu, Liu Jiao (楚元王劉交, ?-179 BC, HS, 37: 1921-27).

⁴⁹ This line alludes to the Music Bureau poem "Xiangyangyue" (襄陽樂), which, according to YFSJ (48: 705), was composed by Liu Dan, Prince Sui (隨王劉誕) of the Liu-Song dynasty, upon hearing the song: "In the morning I set out from Xiangyang / In the evening I lodged by the Big Dike / Many girls of the Big Dike / Are pretty as flower, to their lovers' surprise" (朝發襄陽城, 暮至大堤宿。大堤諸女兒, 花艷驚郎目)。

⁵⁰ 柳郎, refers to the Jin dynasty poet Liu Yun (柳惲, 465-517). See LS, 21: 331-2.

revising the popular ballads. "The Ballads of Bamboo Branches" (竹枝詞) are among the best known of these works. Almost all of Liu's accomplishments are reflected in Wen's dirges, and from our vantage point, Wen's evaluation of Liu is comprehensive and fair.

The Qing dynasty commentator Wang Mingsheng found in the above poems an indication of the profound friendship between Wen and Liu.⁵¹ In fact, Liu was Wen's senior and superior. With respect to political standpoint, literary career and poetic style, they had much in common, and in particular it was their shared political orientation that caused Wen to hold Liu in great esteem.

In Wen's extant works, we can find traces proving Liu's influences:⁵²

Passing the Residence of the Late Hanlin Academician Yuan

(經故翰林袁學士居 (j. 5, WFQ)

The jade was in the dust, the sword gone with the surging waves,⁵³ 劍逐驚波玉委塵,

⁵¹ See Wang Mingsheng: *Eshubian*, part 3, "Shuoji", 77: 1205-9.

⁵² Fan Zhen said in *Qianxi Shiyān* (潛溪詩眼, j. 80, *Shuofu*): "Tang poets such as Liu Mengde [Yuxi] and Wen Feiqing often spoiled their pure style with beautiful descriptions of wind and flowers; their failure lies in that their poetry lacks principle and is excessive of diction." But Lu You said in his "Postscript to *Jinlianji*" (跋金奩集): "The eight pieces of 'Nanxiangzi' by Feiqing, with their refined language and exquisite implication, are no less masterful than Mengde's 'Ballads of Bamboo Branches'." See *Lu You Ji*, 26: 2243.

⁵³ Both "jade in the dust" and "sword gone with the surging waves" are metaphors for the death of a talented and worthy man, the latter alluding to the story about Zhang Hua (232-300), who was said to have observed that between the Altair and the Plough constellation, there was purple air (*qi*, 氣), at which his friend Lei Huan remarked that it was the light of a precious sword soaring skyward. Later in the corresponding region to the constellations, they found a pair of swords and each took one. When Lei's son obtained the sword after

Now under Xie An's patronage, what soul could still stay? ⁵⁴	謝安門下更何人。
Outside Xizhou city, the blossoms of a thousand trees,	西州城外花千樹，
Are all in spring after Yang Tan was drunk. ⁵⁵	盡是羊壇醉後春。

The poem laments Wen's deceased friends, the late Hanlin Academician Yuan and a Prime Minister. How did they die? Wen's dirge implied that they died in some political incident; otherwise he need not vainly have shed his tears. "Outside Xizhou city, the blossoms of a thousand trees" is a reference to the political upstarts in the capital after the incident in which both Yuan and the Prime Minister died. Since Wen compared himself to Yang Tan, he might even be a relative of the dead minister. Who this Prime Minister was will become clear. For now let us compare this poem to the following one by Liu Yuxi:

In the Tenth Year of Yuanhe, I Was Called Back from Langzhou to the Capital, and I Jokingly Presented This Poem to Several Noble Men Who Were Enjoying the Flowers (*Liu Yuxi Ji*, 24: 218, 元和十年自朗州承召至京, 戲贈看花諸君子)

The red dust in the purple alleys caresses my face,	紫陌紅塵撲面來，
"Back from admiring the flowers," they all said.	無人不道看花回。
In Xuandu Monastery, a thousand peach trees,	玄都觀里桃千樹，

his father's death, it changed into a dragon and leapt into the surging waves, when he was crossing the Yanping Ferry. See JS, 36: 1068-77.

⁵⁴ The deceased one must have been a Prime Minister since he is referred to by an allusion to Xie An. The late Hanlin Academician Yuan would also have been under the Prime Minister's patronage.

⁵⁵ The son of Xie An's sister, Yang Tan, after Xie An's death, ceased merrymaking for years, and did not walk in the lanes and roads near Xizhou (locale of the administration of Yangzhou), where Xie An died of disease. Once he was heavily drunk in Shitou (石頭), and sang all the way home, arriving unexpectedly in Xizhou, upon which his servants told him: "This is the gate of Xizhou." Yang burst into tears. See JS, 79: 2077.

All transplanted after Sir Liu has left.

盡是劉郎去後栽。

After Liu Yuxi's participation in the Yongzhen Reform, he was banished to Langzhou in Hunan for ten years. When he was called back to the capital, he did not show deference to the hostile forces at court. For this poem, a satire on the ruling clique, he was once again banished, to an even more remote region. It is clear that this poem was the prototype for Wen's, particularly the third and the fourth lines of Wen's, which are modeled on Liu Yuxi's corresponding lines.

We can find other similarities between Wen's and Liu's poetry, as well as traces showing that Wen learned from Liu, which reinforce our belief that Liu was not only Wen's senior and teacher, but also a political forerunner. There being such a close relation between the two, we will next try to discover the explanation of an allusion in Wen's works by recourse of a poem by Liu.

"The Junior Party of Ganling" (甘陵下黨)

In his "Epistle Presented to the Censor-in-Chief", Wen once called himself "the junior party of Ganling", an ambiguous allusion. In attempting to explain it, let us first consult one of Liu Yuxi's poems that uses a similar term:

The Drafter Bai Condescended to Answer My Clumsy Poem, And I Sent This Poem to Express My Gratitude

(白舍人見酬拙詩因以寄謝, Liu Yuxi Ji, 31: 261)

For all my presence in the company of the third rank sinecures,	雖陪三品散官中, ⁵⁶
I had, from the very beginning, different records and qualifications.	資歷從來事不同。
My name, to make up the number, was carved on the stone pillar.	名姓也曾鐫石柱,
My poetry, a failure, cannot be written on the imperial screen.	詩篇未得上屏風。 ⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Liu was appointed as Adviser to the Heir Apparent, a third rank post, as was Bai's.

⁵⁷ In the Tang dynasty, all those having obtained an official post of supernumerary gentleman had the honor of having their names carved on a particular Stone Pillar (郎官石

The former party of Ganling is all withered and decayed,	甘陵舊黨雕零盡 ⁵⁸
While my new friend at court shows high courtesy to me	廟堂新知禮數崇。
If ever I could find a partner in the misty-water of the Five Lakes,	烟水五湖如有伴
To be an old fishing man, I think, could yet suit my taste.	猶應堪作釣魚翁。

Twenty years after Liu Yuxi's participation in the Yongzhen Reform, he was called back to the capital and offered the position of Adviser to the Heir Apparent (太子賓客). As a man who had survived his long-year political exile, Liu wrote this poem to Bai to express his feelings. To understand the meaning of this poem we have to ask: What is "the former party of Ganling"? Ganling alludes to the Filial Prince of Qinghe (清河孝王), Liu Qing (劉慶, 78-106) of the Han dynasty,⁵⁹ who was for a time appointed Heir Apparent, but after four years, was deposed because the Empress Dowager Dou had an aversion to him, and substituted his brother Liu Zhao for him as Heir Apparent. When Liu Zhao succeeded to the throne (as Emperor He, r. 89-105), he treated Liu Qing very amiably. After Emperor He's death, it was Liu Qing's son, Liu You, who came to the throne (Emperor An, r. 107-125). Subsequently, Emperor An honored Liu Qing's tomb as Ganling, where Ganling County was established. Another account of this term is: Emperor Huan (r. 147-167) of Han once studied under Du Mi (杜密, fl. 150-60), a native of Ganling County, and after ascending the throne, he promoted Du as minister. Du's fellow townsman Fang Zhi (房植, fl. 150-60), the magistrate of Henan, also enjoyed great fame at the time. The retainers of the two households took each other as objects of mockery and jealousy, and developed a mutual hostility. Thereupon the

柱) in the capital. A successful minister might have his remarks written on the imperial screen as a sign of the imperial favor for his worthy services.

⁵⁸ For 下黨, literally "the lower party", a very ambiguous term found only in Wen's diction, we understand it as "junior party" keeping the meaning of "下", namely, lower, with respect to generation.

⁵⁹ See HS, "Biographies of the Eight Princes of Emperor Zhang", 55: 1799.

mutual hostility. Thereupon the two men from Ganling and their followers were known as the Southern and the Northern Party of Ganling.⁶⁰

Understood in the historical context in which the poem was composed, Liu Yuxi evidently referred in this poem to all those participating in the Yongzhen Reform as "the former party of Ganling". For, during the short period when Wang Shuwen's party was in power, it was Emperor Shunzong who was on the throne, and who, because of his support of the new policies of the reforming party, was forced by the eunuchs to abdicate in his son's favor, dying soon after. Shunzong's role in the royal succession bore a strong resemblance to Liu Qing's. Hence Liu Yuxi chose the allusion to express his idea. In the allusion, he used Liu Qing to hint at Shunzong; and with "the former party of Ganling," he referred to those who had taken part in the Yongzhen Reform--by the time Liu wrote his poem (the ninth year of Dahe, 835), almost all of them had died, excepting Liu himself. By the same token, the Southern and the Northern parties of Ganling resembled the Niu and the Li factions of the late Tang, in that they were at odds with each other about all important decisions at court, especially the eunuch problem. In a word, Liu's allusion is a hint that the late Tang factional strife had its origin in the Yongzhen Reform.

In their studies of the origin of the Niu-Li factional strife, many modern scholars prefer to follow the biased Song historiographers' records in the standard histories handy that: it originated in the different responses to an event caused by Li Jifu (李吉甫, 758-814, JTS, 148: 3992 and XTS, 146: 4738)); Li showed favoritism toward some candidates (for the Presented Scholar degree) at the cost of some others, during his tenure as examination administrator (知貢舉) in the middle of the Yuanhe era; as a result, the court officials and the candidates who later became court officials polarized into two antagonistic factions, between which an incessant strife plagued the court for the next 40 years.

The accepted version of the bitter and prolonged conflict between the two factions is

⁶⁰ See HHS, "The Biographies of the Imprisoned Factionalists", 67: 2185-86.

not convincing. As the political history of the Tang indicates, the eunuchs grasped control of the imperial succession to such a degree that they were able to manipulate officialdom through their control of the emperors. Their strategy can be viewed in two ways. First, it was a case of "seizing the emperor so as to command his subjects," a favorite trick of earlier usurping chieftains in Chinese history. Second, it implemented a "divide-and-rule" policy towards the court officials, with the eunuchs operating behind the scenes, provoking animosity and creating conflicts. Taking Liu Yuxi's allusion into consideration, we can say safely that the rise of the Niu-Li factional strife must have been subordinated to the struggle between the court officials and the eunuchs. For the alignment of each party was, in the last analysis, decided by its attitude towards the eunuchs,⁶¹ and thus had to do with the Yongzhen Reform.

If Liu Yuxi was one member of the "former party of Ganling", whereas Wen called himself the "junior party of Ganling", they must not only have had political viewpoints in common, but also common backgrounds. We know that Liu's self-label of the "former party of Ganling" came from his involvement with the Yongzhen Reform; would the "junior party" have nothing to do with this same political event? Junior by a generation, Wen was too young to be a member of the "former party of Ganling", so when identifying himself with the Yongzhen Reform participants, he called himself the "junior party of Ganling". If he is one of the "junior party", a senior member of the "former party" is implied, that is, his late father.

⁶¹ One more fact meriting our attention is that Yuan Zi (袁滋, 749-818, JTS, 185b: 4830), who assumed the office of Prime Minister right after the Yongzhen Reform, wrote the "Postface to the Rhapsody Grieving for the Ganling" (悲甘陵賦後序). On Yuan's death, Liu Yuxi wrote "Three Elegies For the Late Hunan Inspection Commissioner and Prime Minister Yuan" (湖南觀察使故相國袁公挽歌詞三首, *Liu Yuxi Ji*: 30: 1004). It is a pity that Yuan's Rhapsody is no longer extant, leaving the true complex causes of the Niu-Li factional strife unknown.

As a result of eunuch interference in all document drafting, few materials revealing the true color of the Yongzhen Reform, and especially of Niu-Li factional strife, have survived. Hence the names of many who had a role in the events are not recorded. Taking all these factors together, it is not far-fetched to regard Wen's father as a participant in, or at the least a supporter of, the Yongzhen Reform. Only from such a perspective can Wen's life-long bitter hatred of the eunuchs be understood.

Special Connection with Li Cheng (李程, 765-841)

Liu Yuxi played a considerable role in the formation and growth of Wen's personality. In Liu's works, there are some ten poems and prose works addressed to or written for Li Cheng,⁶² the man who, as Wen's teacher, had exercised an immense influence over his personality and political orientation. The friendship between Li Cheng and Liu Yuxi may throw light on Li's attitude toward the Yongzhen Reform, and suggest influences that Wen accepted from his teacher.

Though they did not have much chance to be together, Liu Yuxi and Li Cheng maintained a friendship for more than forty years, throughout the difficult time of Liu's exile, when many of his friends kept their distance from him for fear of being implicated in the Yongzhen Reform. The two friends made each other's acquaintance in Chang'an in the eleventh year of the Zhenyuan era (795). Liu passed the Presented Scholar Examination in 795 and Li was the Principal Graduate (狀元) of 796. During the time when the Yongzhen Reform party was in power, Li was promoted⁶³ from the position of Investigating Censor to

⁶² For Li's biographies, see JTS, 167: 4372 and XTS, 131: 4511; Li's relations with the two Lius, see Liu Yuxi Nianpu, 36-103 and Liu Yuxi Congkao, 73-5. See also chapter five.

⁶³ "Li Cheng, on September 27 of the 20th year of the Zhenyuan era (804), was promoted (to Hanlin Academician) from the position of Investigating Censor. On March 17th of the 21st year of Zhenyuan (the first and only year of Yongzhen), he was appointed to the

that of Vice Director of the Bureau of Waterways and Irrigation. Liu's poems reveal that, in the tenth and fifteenth years of Yuanhe (814 & 819), the first year of Changqing (820), and the fifth and eighth years of Dahe (831 & 834), Liu and Li exchanged poems. Li Cheng at least acquiesced in the Yongzhen policies, as can be seen from his attitude toward Liu Yuxi and Liu Zongyuan. After Liu Zongyuan's death in 814, Liu Yuxi wrote on Li Cheng's behalf in the following year a "Condolence Essay Written for the Grand Master Li of Ezhou as an Offering for the Supernumerary Gentleman Liu" (爲鄂州李大夫祭柳 員外文),⁶⁴ which includes a full account of the friendship between Liu Zongyuan and Li Cheng. The two men had passed the Erudition and Eloquence Examination (博學宏詞科) together in the twelfth year of Zhenyuan (796), and became Proofreaders of the Academy of Scholarly Worthies (集賢書院) at the same time. Then they worked together as Defenders of Lantian County (藍田尉) before both were promoted to the post of Investigating Censor. Above all, both men shared the same political ideals. That is why the essay, though written by Liu Yuxi, sings Liu Zongyuan's praises for his political career as well as for his literary talent, and even expresses a determination to raise Liu Zongyuan's orphan as his own son. Since Li was the good friend of both Liu Yuxi and Liu Zongyuan, the two most talented participants in the Yongzhen reforms, his political standpoint toward the event can be imagined. As a royal scion and minister of great importance who served the Tang empire for about half a century, Li Cheng certainly saw fully the problems of the Li-Tang dynasty, especially the disasters brought about by the eunuchs. Like Bai Juyi, Li in his later career had adopted a self-protecting philosophy when confronted with turmoil of the age, but this political pose never

concurrent post of Vice Director of the Bureau of the Waterways and Irrigation. On March 23rd of the first year of the Yuanhe era (806), Li was transferred out of the Hanlin Academy and appointed Magistrate of Suizhou." See Ding Juhui's Chongxiu Hanlin Xueshi Bijì, 3375 in *Zhibuzu Congshu*.

⁶⁴ See Liu Yuxi Ji, 40: 403.

prevented him from having a decisive say at crucial moments. When and how Wen became Li Cheng's student is yet to be determined. The fact that they were teacher and student was the result of mutual choice. Wen's choosing Li Cheng as his teacher surely had to do with Li's political orientation and personality.

To sum up, Wen Tingyun was born into an aristocratic family that had enjoyed great privilege and renown for several generations up until his infancy, but the family had gradually lost its power. After his father's death at the hands of the eunuchs, the family fell into disgrace. This change left a deep impression on the boy Wen Tingyun, and from very early in his life he felt the urge to restore his family's glory and to do something significant to effect the revitalization of the empire. Confronted with the reality that the eunuchs monopolized all state power and blocked his way to success, and that even the imperial family was under the eunuchs' yoke, Wen faced enormous difficulties in achieving his ambitious goal. And if he succeeded in doing anything, he must have paid a much higher price, and followed a much more tortuous path, than had anybody else, in spite of his talent and social connections. With this in mind, let us explore his early life.

Chapter Two Wen's Birth Year

A Most Abstruse Allusion to the Eunuchs

As we have seen in chapter one, eunuchs played an extremely important role in shaping the family's fate from the outset of Wen's life. In fact, throughout Wen's life eunuchs remained an insurmountable threat precluding him from attaining any political success. Although Wen often manifested his responses to the eunuchs' crimes, we can never find the word "eunuch" in his works. If he had to mention the eunuchs, he did so using abstruse and rarely-used historical allusions, or subtle metaphors, many of which are very misleading. In order to clear the way for further research and avoid many digressions, we shall have to unravel one of his most difficult allusions and clarify why Wen had to refer to the eunuchs in such an ambiguous manner.

Let us first examine a couplet in Wen's poem "Angling by the Pond of the Xue Family" (薛氏池垂钓, WFQ, j. 9), to see how he alludes to the eunuchs directly, in "outspoken" terms and without disguise.

Zhu Yu vainly stole the water of the Imperial Ditch,	朱瑀空偷御溝水, ¹
The brocade scale with red tail belongs to Yan Guang.	錦鱗紅尾屬嚴光。

In all examples where Wen refers to the eunuch this is the most clear. Zhu Yu is a eunuch of the Eastern Han dynasty, who, like the Tang eunuchs, amassed great wealth, set up his own mansion equal in luxury to the imperial palaces, and even channeled water from the Imperial Ditch into his own pond, in defiance of the royal authority. Yan Guang had been the classmate and best friend of Liu Xiu, i. e., Emperor Guangwu (6 BC-AD 57, r. 25-57), the founder of the Eastern Han dynasty, before the latter ascended the throne. However, when Liu asked him to serve in the court, he refused with the excuse that he preferred a life as a recluse. The above lines reveal Wen's attitude towards the eunuchs: even when

¹ For Zhu Yu, see HHS, "The Biographies of the Eunuchs", 78: 2526.

forced to go into reclusion, he still led a life spiritually superior to that of the eunuchs, who were but "vainly" powerful. However, if asked about this couplet, Wen could answer that he was only commenting on the Han eunuch Zhu and the recluse Yan, with no interest in the affairs of his own time. Thus we see why and how Wen availed himself of historical allusions to refer to something he would not express in clear terms. He wanted to make indirect some of his most pointed castigations of the eunuchs, whereas the allusion, often possessing more than one explanation, can just serve this purpose. It meets Wen's requirements both to express his true feelings and avoid hostile readings (thus literary persecution). This peculiar trope of Chinese classic versification, though in ordinary cases highly effective, did a disservice to some of Wen's poems, when he had to resort to it too often. That some of Wen's autobiographical poems have remained ignored or misunderstood by scholars accounts for his "failure" in this respect, since few readers possess the knowledge or patience to make sense of them through analyzing the ambiguous allusions.

Now let us turn to a very obscure allusion to the eunuchs, an allusion to Du Zhi (杜摯), in the following couplet from Wen's "Hundred-Rhyme Poem". It means to say that [from the outset of his office-seeking life], Wen was faced with such a predicament:

52 In my loves and hates I took precautions against Du Zhi [Kui], 愛憎防杜摯,

In my laments and sighs I felt melancholy as did Yang Zhu. 悲嘆似楊朱.

Even before we know to what the name alludes, Du Zhi must refer to Wen's enemy, hence most probably the eunuchs, though it is an insinuating reference to them. We have to find out what kind of a figure this Du Zhi is, since this will enable us to identify the precise connotation of Wen's poems as well as some prose passages. Among pre-Tang historical characters, we find two remarkably famous men bearing this name. In Shiji (68: 2229), "The Biography of Shang Yang" (商鞅, 390-338 BC), we find mention of a Du Zhi in one short sentence. The other Du Zhi is found in Sanguozhi (21: 604-5). Whatever we try, he must be excluded as a referent, based on the information in his biography. As neither of the two Du Zhis seems to have anything to do with the context, two possibilities suggest

themselves: some other Du Zhi (related to eunuchs) Wen alluded to was recorded in a historical text that is no longer extant; or there may be a textual corruption, and the name Du Zhi was originally something else. The latter possibility turns out to be the case, after further investigation.

In Wen's "Epistle presented to Prime Minister Pei", we find another mention of the same Du Zhi:

Later on, I spent many years at one or another Marquis' before I traveled to the valley of the Huai River, where I presented myself by writing letters, and sought recognition while holding a calling card. But I had not expected that Du Zhi was to make a false charge and Zang Cang to harbor a bitter hatred against me.

In this context, Du Zhi is clearly the same kind of person as was Zang Cang, who, as luck would have it, is easier to identify. In *Mengzi*, "King Hui of Liang" (16: 2682), we have a story of Duke Ping of Lu (魯平公) who was about to give audience to Mencius (390-305 BC) when his favorite, Zang Cang by name, stopped him from doing so by speaking evil of Mencius. Zang Cang was a favorite (嬖人) of the Duke, analogous to the eunuchs habitually regarded as playthings or house-slaves of the monarch. So, we come nearer to our expected conclusion: besides being Wen's enemy, the Du Zhi in question must be the *like* of the eunuchs.

In "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem", the twenty-eighth rhyme provides decisive evidence for the identification of Du Zhi. Since Wen directs his castigation exclusively at the eunuchs throughout this poem, his manner of using historical and literary allusions should, very naturally, be consistent from beginning to end. Between the couplet cited above and the one we are going to discuss next there is just such conformity, as they both hint at the eunuchs by alluding to the same historical episode. The difference is that the earlier one alludes to the name of the man, while the later one alludes to what the man did:

28 Letting drop my bowcase, I was ashamed to finish the cup,

垂橐羞盡爵

Raising the goblet, they insulted me for drawing the bow.

揚觶辱彎弧。

This is an unusual couplet in that both lines consist of two verb-object units, with a verb inserted in between. The four verb-object units designate men who act, instead of an action, as would be more common.

垂橐 (gao1), Letting drop the bowcase, originates in *Zuozhuan* ("Duke Zhao the First Year", 1: 2019): "Wu Ju, knowing that they had taken precautions against him, asked to enter by letting drop his bowcase" (伍舉知其有備也, 請垂橐而入). Du Yu's (222-284) annotation elaborates: "To let the bowcase drop shows that he had no bow with him" (垂橐示無弓也). As a term related to archery, a frequent metaphor for literary competition, this reference is used here ironically for Wen himself, the subject of the line. For that Wen "had no bow with him," the metaphorical meaning is that he had no ambition or energy to declare himself against the injustice he suffered upon being rejected as a Presented Scholar. 盡爵, To finish the cup, refers either to the action of finishing a cup drunk as a forfeit (because of his failure) or to those successful candidates, who were drinking their fill at the banquet; in the translation, the second meaning is used, but we should not ignore the first. The first line thus gives a vivid picture of how Wen failed to be passed as a Presented Scholar in 839, despite his being an "Equivalent to Passing" (等第), and he was too perplexed and ashamed to face those who had passed.

In the second line, 揚觶, raising the goblet, is a term taken from *Liji* (9: 1305): "Viscount Zhi Dao (智悼子) died, and was not buried yet. Duke Ping of Jin (晉平公) had one of his drinking parties with his musician Shi Kuang (師曠) and favorite sycophant Li Diao (李譙) attending, and enjoyed striking the bell. Now, the official cook (膳宰), Du Kui (杜蕢), entered from outside." After some arguments, the cook succeeded in proving that both Shi and Li were to blame because of their dereliction of duty, for, on a day when an important minister had just died, they failed to dissuade the Duke from drinking. In

consequence, both were given a forfeit of wine. Then the cook proceeded to give himself a forfeit since he had overstepped his official responsibility by speaking out in this way. Upon hearing and seeing all this, the Duke said: "I, too, am to blame. Pour the wine and drink me the forfeit" (寡人亦有過焉, 酌而飲寡人); upon which, "Du Kui, after washing it, raised the goblet [to the Duke for a forfeit]" (杜蕢洗而揚觶).² Wen's teacher Li Cheng once also used this allusion: "As to a case where *The Rites* failed to scorn what it should, it is in the narrative of Du Kui raising up the goblet" (禮失所譏, 想杜蕢之揚觶).³ Like his teacher Li Cheng, and unlike most orthodox commentators of the classics,⁴ Wen took Du Kui as a negative figure, representing the usurping eunuchs of his time. This is because Du Kui's post, official cook, was always taken by eunuchs throughout the imperial times. It was therefore not by sheer coincidence that on another occasion Wen used "royal cook", 膳宰, to speak of the eunuchs: in his "Epistle Presented to the Academician-Drafter" (上學士舍人啓), he says: "I was downcast and haggard, at the bottommost of retainers; humiliated and distressed, in the presence of the royal cook" (委悴館人之末, 摧殘膳宰之前). Therefore, "raising the goblet" alludes to the royal cook Du Kui, a disguised appellation for the eunuchs.

Similarly, 彎弧, drawing the bow, a term for archery, points to the doer (Wen himself) through an allusion to Guan Zhong (管仲, ?-645, BC). To annotate this line, the Qing

² A similar story is also told in *Zuozhuan*, "Duke Zhao the Ninth Year", 45: 2057.

³ Li Cheng: "Rhapsody on Striking the Bell in the Palace" (鼓鐘于宮賦, QTW, 632: 8107).

⁴ Du Yu's annotation (注) and Kong Yingda's sub-annotation (疏) to *Zuozhuan*, as well as Zheng Xuan's annotation and Kong Yingda's sub-annotation to *Liji* hold that what Du Kui did serves as a model that embodies the Confucian rites and morals. Defying the traditional exegeses, Li Cheng regarded this passage as a misrepresentation of *The Book of Rites*; and Wen followed his teacher in using the ancient topic to level an attack on the eunuchs, by innuendo.

annotator Gu Sili correctly quoted Ban Gu's (班固, 32-92) "Rhapsody On Communion with the Mystic" (幽通賦, *Wenxuan*, 14: 208-13): "Guan, with his bow drawn, was to shoot his foe, and the foe, after ascending the throne, became his own fulfillment" (管彎弧 欲斃仇兮 仇作后而成己). Here is implied an allusion to the *Zuozhuan* ("Duke Zhuang the Ninth Year", 8: 1766): Before Guan Zhong became the chief minister of Duke Huan of Qi (齊桓公 ?-643 BC), he had been the Mentor of Prince Jiu (公子糾), Duke Huan's brother. When the two brothers were vying for the throne, Guan Zhong in a battle shot an arrow straight at Prince Xiao Bai (Duke Huan before he became the king), and almost took his life. Later Prince Jiu was defeated and killed by Duke Huan. Guan Zhong, by dint of the recommendation of his bosom friend, Bao Shuya (鮑叔牙), who had served Xiao Bai as Mentor, was spared by Duke Huan and promoted as Prime Minister. Wen had some reason to use this allusion to Guan Zhong to mean himself,⁵ for, as a loyal attendant of Emperor Wenzong's (文宗, r. 827-36) Heir Apparent Li Yong (827-38), he could have never dreamed that it would be Emperor Wuzong (武宗, r. 840-846), one of Wenzong's inconspicuous younger brothers, who would succeed to the throne, with the ulterior support of the eunuchs. In his speeches and the previous year's (839) examination paper, he may have expressed his hostility towards the eunuchs' monopolizing imperial succession, a hostility that could easily have been taken up by the eunuchs as blaspheming the succeeding monarch. In a word, at a time when the throne was shifting, the eunuchs used Wen's devotion to the former emperor as a weapon to thwart his possible promotion in the new court. In the allusion "drawing the bow", Wen likened himself to Guan Zhong, and declared his allegiance to the new emperor, in an effort to clarify the confusion created by the eunuch's slanders.

⁵ Yang Sifu (楊嗣復, fl. 805-40) asked Emperor Wenzong: "When Duke Huan of Qi promoted Guan Zhong from among his foes, did he worry that he gave him the handle of Tai'e [a famous sword] with the blade toward himself?" See JTS 173: 4494.

After clarifying the meaning of this difficult couplet, we find that the 杜摯 so baffling us should be 杜蕢 (Du Kui). It is likely that the Chinese ideograph 蕢 corrupted and was mistakenly discerned as 摯, while 杜摯 is a more well-known name than 杜蕢. The corrupted form appeared as early as in Wenyuan Yinghua, a Song dynasty encyclopedia, that includes most of Wen's extant epistles. On every account, the name Du Zhi must refer to the eunuchs in the context.

Through this example we realize that, under the terrifying pressure of the eunuch rule, Wen made use of his erudition to speak out the truth without inviting troubles on himself. What gives us confidence to work on his writings is that the way in which he composes his poetry and prose works is peculiarly logical, such that once we succeeded in discovering the origin of his diction and allusions, the factual threads are laid bare.

"Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Pei" (上裴相公啓)

About the Study of Wen's Birth Year

The accepted birth year of Wen Tingyun, 812, was worked out by Xia Chengtao in his "Chronicle of Wen Feiqing" published in the 1930s and reaffirmed by Gu Xuejie's "Revision and Supplement to 'Biographies of Wen Tingyun' in the two Tang Histories"⁶ published in 1940s. However, Xia meant it as no more than a guess⁷ and it would have been overthrown

⁶ Xia's essay is collected in his Tangsong Ciren Nianpu, 383-424. Gu's is collected in Gu Xuejie Wenxue Lunji, 188-260. Xia and Gu, both pioneers in studying Wen's life, had collected a wealth of first-hand information in their works, which are, to date, the most important references for studying Wen's life, though there remains much to restudy.

⁷ According to the line in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem": "Though my retirement is not in a mulberry and elm year" (收迹异桑榆), Xia infers that "it means that Wen was not yet an aged man; but at the time he was at least about thirty. If we subtract thirty from 840 (the fifth year of Kaicheng when the poem was composed), Wen's birth year falls in the Yuanhe era of Emperor Xianzong (806-20). Since the Yuanhe era has 15 years, we can suppose it

long ago but for the fact that it is the earliest study of this difficult and seemingly unrewarding topic, and that thereafter not much interest has been focused on it. However, making clear Wen's birth year is of crucial importance in gaining a correct starting point for research on his life and poetry. Otherwise one cannot understand to what Wen's works refer, much less reevaluate him properly.

Gu reached his conclusion mainly on account of the following couplet in "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem": "When Ji Shao was a lad with tufts hanging down his forehead \ It was the year Shan Tao began his official service." Taking this couplet at face value, we can be sure only that by the time Wen had audience with the so-called Chancellor Li (李僕射, as hinted in the poem by the allusion to Shan Tao), he was yet a boy of about eight.⁸ Wen's birth year cannot be decided unless we can pinpoint who Li was, on which year Wen had his audience with him, and finally what age Wen had in mind by the year "when Ji Shao was a lad with tufts hanging down his forehead."

Unfortunately, with its archaic and erudite allusions, "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem" does not present an easy account for such identification. One must decode the poem's difficult language and work out a picture of Li's life, then compare this with various biographies of men bearing the surname Li, and find the one that is identical with the picture. Such a task is both unrewarding and fruitless. For, there can be more than one "Chancellor Li" that roughly fit in with the inexact definition of the "Ji Shao-Shan Tao" allusion, and each will elicit a different conclusion. Moreover, in ancient China a child under or above age ten can always have "tufts hanging down his forehead" (垂髻), so the phrase indicates no exact age, only

for the time being to be in the middle, i. e., the seventh year of Yuanhe (812)." Evidently this inference is groundless. See Xia (389).

⁸ It was some years after Ji Kang wrote the "Letter for Breaking Off Relations with Shan Juyuan" (in which he says "My son is eight years of age"), that he was executed. Hence Ji Shao's biography says he "became an orphan at the age of ten."

that one is still a child. We have no reason to suppose the age it denotes is eight, even though it has to do with Ji Shao's childhood. Thus, we cannot be sure that Wen had such a number in mind when he availed himself of the term. Simply put, all academic efforts to use this term to calculate Wen's birth year hardly bear fruit, including Gu's.⁹

In order to ascertain Wen's birth year Xia and most Chinese scholars touching on the topic strain at this same poetic hint, and it is only natural that their conclusions vary considerably.¹⁰ With respect to this issue, we will finally arrive at the conclusion that the Li here referred to is Li Shen, that Wen saw him in 806, and that therefore Wen was born some time around the turn of the century. We wish to avoid a fruitless discussion as to who the Chancellor Li was, merely from the poem, and to find more solid evidence in the extant sources on which to rebuild our conclusion. By happy coincidence, we do find another important hint, "the year of Having the Way", in the following epistle.

Wen's epistles (啓文), in a manner characteristic of late Tang parallelist prose style, are dense and full of literary and historical allusions. Most of them are so saturated with important information about the major events of his life that any study of Wen's life and poetry cannot afford to ignore them. Therefore, in dealing with this epistle, we have no choice but to decipher the whole text, so as to get at the hidden truth. The exposed truth will not only help towards a clarification of his birth year, and an understanding of Wen's situation in 839, but will also provide an outline for further exploration of his life.

⁹ Out of many possibilities Gu decides Li Deyu to be the "Chancellor Li", without strict logical inference. Then, he guesses that "since in the fifth year of Kaicheng (840) Li's age (787-849) is fifty four, Feiqing was probably twenty nine, and that the difference of Li's and Wen's age is about twenty-five years." See Gu Xuejie *Lunwenji*, 190.

¹⁰ All the different conclusions about Wen's birth year appeared in the 1980s and differed from Xia's: 801 (Chen Shangjun), 817 (Huang Zhenyun), 827 (Wang Dajin) and 798 (Mou Huaichuan).

An Annotated Translation

Your humble servant wishes to say: I hear that he who wants to offer a precious treasure must first go to Marquis Sui and Bian He, and he who hopes to cure his dis-ease must ask instructions from Lord Cang and Doctor Bianque (某啓: 聞效珍者先 詣隋和, 蠲養者必求倉扁).¹¹ Without an unusually powerful potion, it is hard to expect a perfect cure (苟無懸解, 難語奇功): I have now come to the age of Having the Way, while still harboring the remorse of a wronged innocent (至于有道之年, 猶抱無辜之恨).¹² It is

¹¹ Sui, refers to Marquis Sui (隋侯); He, refers to Heshi. According to Gao You's (Eastern Han) exegesis to "Lanmingxun", Huainanzi (Ershierzi, 6: 1231), the Marquis of Sui saved a badly-wounded snake. Later on the snake, to reward him, got for him a pearl from the River, which thus was called the pearl of the Marquis of Sui. A native of Chu, Bian He, got a jade-enfolding stone and presented it to the kings of Chu. The first two kings, however, thought that He was deceiving them, and had his feet cut off. It was not until King Wen came to the throne that He's jade-enfolding stone was appreciated, when the King had the "stone" carved and found therein a most precious treasure, named the Jade of Heshi." 倉公 (Lord Cang) and 扁鵲 (Doctor Bianque), are both well-known ancient doctors; see Shiji, 105: 2785.

¹² "The age of Having the Way" alludes to the age at which Guo Tai (郭太, 128-169) died, i.e., forty-two years. "Having the Way" was originally the name given to a kind of civil recruitment in the Han dynasty for men of moral value. Toward the end of the Eastern Han, however, this system became so corrupt that many of those who really "had the way," men such as Guo Tai, refused to take part. Guo was thus universally respected with the title "Having the Way Guo" (郭有道). Cai Yong (132-92), a well-known writer of epitaphs, composed his "Epitaph for Having the Way Guo" (郭有道碑文), after Guo's death "at the age of 42," saying: "I have written epitaphs for so many individuals, all of

sure that even though I perish, I will become a miasmal cloud, to trouble your most impartial Excellency, and I will scatter myself into the voice of the wronged ones, to be circulated forever (斯則沒爲瘴氣, 來撓至平; 敷作冤聲, 將垂不極). For such matters, the princes, dukes and ministers have raised their righteous indignation, while men of rectitude and honor can only sigh and shed tears (此亦王公 大人之所慷慨, 義夫志士之所噓唏).

My nature, truly, is that of an idiot, and my personality one of stubbornness (某性實顛蒙, 器惟頑固). With regard to succeeding to my ancestor's undertakings, I am ashamed of comparing myself to Kong Lin, distant in the past; and in taking up the family tradition, I am not the equal of Zhang Dai nearer to the present (纂修祖業, 遠愧孔琳; 承襲門風, 近慚張岱).¹³ Since the days when my ancestors were bestowed imperial favor and granted fiefs, our family had enjoyed everlasting glory, which was inscribed on the imperial tripod (自頃爰田錫寵, 鏤鼎傳芳). Then I took my registered residence in Liaoxi, before I studied the classics in Jixia (占數遼西, 橫經稷下)¹⁴. There I respectfully studied all the lore my teacher handed down to me, and engaged in the composition of

whom are unworthy of my compliments, save Having the Way Guo, who truly need not be ashamed of my praise." See HHS, 68: 2225-2331 and Wenxuan, 58: 800.

¹³ Kong Lin, refers to Kong Linzhi (孔琳之, 369-423), who, like his grandfather Kong Qun, was famous for selflessness when he held the office of Palace Aide to the Censor-In-Chief. See NS, 27: 731 and SS, 56: 1559. Zhang Dai may be the grandson of Zhang Yue (張說, 667-730), Prime Minister during the Kaiyuan (712-740) era, see XTS, 31:1750. Even though we are not sure who Zhang was, it is clear Wen failed to carry on the family glory like him, because Wen adhered to the hereditary orientation of his forefathers.

¹⁴ 橫經, To put the classics across the knees, is a kenning for studying hard.

poetry and prose (因得仰窮師法,¹⁵ 竊弄篇題). I was hoping to sew up the broken drapery of the Confucian house, and to restore the magnificence and grandeur of the Constant Norm (思欲紐儒門之絕帷, 恢常典之休烈).

Soon after, it happened that I was reduced to a traveling orphan, drawing the wagon, hardly able to manage my daily coarse food (俄屬羈孤牽軫, 藜藿難虞).¹⁶ Like Chumo, having no comforter, I hopelessly sighed at night, and like Xiuling, running out of rice, with what was I to make my breakfast (處默無衾, 徒然夜嘆; 修齡絕米, 安事晨炊)¹⁷

¹⁵ From "my teacher" we can infer that it was when Wen was studying in the Luoyang National University that he met his life-long teacher Li Cheng. When exactly they began their teacher-student relation must await further examination.

¹⁶ Wen offered no clear account as to what reduced him to a traveling orphan, except that he had to give up his studies and face a much harder life. What the Chinese term 牽軫 suggests is hard to ascertain: it can mean "drawing the wagon," or "feeling very grievous." "The wagon" might refer to a funeral wagon carrying his late father's coffin (to be buried in the Wen clan's ancestral graveyard), in which case we can infer that Wen's father died during his banishment. This is the only proof we find in all Wen's works that might relate to his father's burial, hence we cannot use it for the purposes of further argument.

¹⁷ "Chumo" is the style name of Wu Yinzhi (吳隱之, of the Jin dynasty). It was said that Wu was so frugal and incorruptible that he had no bedclothes for the winter. See NATW. 23. "Xiuling" is the style name of Wang Huzhi (王胡之, of the Jin dynasty), who "once lived in the Eastern Mountain in extreme poverty and want. Tao Fan, who was serving as magistrate of Wucheng Prefecture [Zhejiang], sent him a boatload of rice as a present, but he declined, responding bluntly, "If Wang Huzhi is hungry, naturally he'd go to Hsie [--sic] Shang to ask for food. He has no need of Tao Fan's boat." See NATW, 174. Both allusions imply that he, Wen Tingyun, was a man poor but noble. Note the punning nature of the two names: "Chumo" can mean living in seclusion, and Xiuling means long years.

Later on, I spent many years at one or another Marquis' before I traveled to the valley of the Huai River (既而羈齒侯門, 旅游淮上), where I presented myself by writing letters, and sought recognition while holding a calling card (投書自達, 懷刺求知). But I had not expected that Du Zhi was to make a false charge and Zang Cang to harbor a bitter hatred against me (豈期杜摯相傾, 臧倉見嫉). In consequence, the local magistrates became increasingly hostile towards me, regardless of their past friendship, and, in response, those in power at court added slanders to my distress (守土者以忘情積惡, 當權者以承意中傷). A forsaken orphan with an insecure life, I was crudely bullied and mistreated (直視孤危, 橫相陵阻). My route of flying and galloping was blocked, and my means for drinking and pecking was impeded (絕飛馳之路, 塞飲啄之途). It is an unjust charge that I ever shot [blaspheming] blood, and there is no way for me to call [the attention of] Heaven (射血有冤, 叫天無路).¹⁸ Such is my experience that the sagacious ministers have shown their commiseration and many an official has heard of (此乃通人見憫, 多士具聞). Nevertheless, all have vainly sighed over the case, and none could exonerate me of the wrong charge (徒共興嗟, 靡能昭雪).

In my humble opinion, in the first years when Emperor Xuanzong ascended the heavenly throne, His Majesty's royal heart immediately came to be filled with compassion for the people (竊見玄宗皇帝初融景命, 遽側宸襟). Thereupon, he took to correcting drawbacks and mistakes and redressing the wronged (收拭瑕疵, 申明枉結), when Prime Minister Liu helped bring forth the imperial edicts, and the Duke Xu Su added radiance

¹⁸ 射血, To shoot blood, an allusion to Shiji, "The Yin Annals", 3: 104: "The tyrannical emperor Wuyi (帝武乙) filled leather bags with blood and shot upwards at them, calling it Shooting Heaven" (射天). The meaning of this term in this context is "blaspheming the emperor," and because of this, Wen says that "it is indeed an unjust charge." For tonal reasons, the poet used 射血 instead.

to the royal plan (劉丞相導揚優詔, 蘇許公潤色昌謨).¹⁹ In the five decades [of his reign], customs and mores among the people could not be more honest and pure (五十年間, 風俗敦厚). Nowadays, however, when neither the flying nor the swimming [various ranks of officials] could have their peaceful settlement, and both the rainfall and the sunlight cannot follow each other in harmony (逮及翔泳未安其所, 雨陽不得其和), every man and woman in the country heaves grievous sighs, and each community and each village is in melancholy distress (匹夫匹婦之吁嗟, 一聚一鄉之幽鬱). To look forward to a prosperous time of restored order, all must depend upon a great statesman with great statecraft like you (欲期昭泰, 必仰洪鈞).

Now if I advance in my official career, I harbor fear lest I should be in danger; if I retreat, I will have nothing to fall back upon (某進抱疑危, 退無依據). With my name secretly listed for arrest, I could hardly benefit from imperial favor (暗處囚拘之列, 不沾渙汗之私). Together with the embers I am to be thrown away, and compared with insects, I have hardly any more hope (與煨燼而俱捐, 比昆蟲而絕望). There are parallel highways and thoroughfares, but I am weeping at a dead end; there are the sun and the moon hanging high in the sky, and it is only I that am trapped in the darkness (則是康莊并軌, 偏哭于窮途; 日月懸空, 獨障于豐部).

I know your Excellency the Prime Minister did meritorious service to Yao and set up valuable feats in assisting Yu (伏以相公致堯業裕, 佐禹功高). All people have benefited from your kindness, and none was forced to go against its nature (百姓咸被其仁, 一物不違于性). Were you to heave a compassionate sigh when meeting me on the

¹⁹ "Prime Minister Liu" refers to Liu Youqiu (劉幽求, 655-715), who helped Emperor Xuanzong do away with the usurping Princess Taiping and inaugurated an era of prosperity. See JT, 97: 3039 and XTS, 121: 4327. Duke Xu Su refers to Su Ting (蘇頌, 670-727), who was also a Prime Minister during Xuanzong's reign and was famous for his elegant style in writing imperial edicts. See JTS, 88: 2880 and XTS, 125: 4399.

road, you would then cast loose the horse yoked at the right; or should you hear my song while tapping on my sword, you would move me to the guest house (倘或在途興嘆, 解彼右驂; 彈劍有聞, 遷于代舍).²⁰ I divine for myself by looking on the wind, and am convinced that you will follow the example of antiquity (瞻風自卜, 與古爲徒). Since this Way of Confucianism is not false, pure and bright governance will not be far away (此道不誣, 貞明未遠).

I respectfully hold in my arms my prose, poetry and rhapsody works, each in one *juan*, all presented to Your Excellency (謹以文賦詩各一卷率以抱獻). My scrolls and papers are in poor condition, and my calligraphy and handwriting are dense and in a mess, therewith I venture to beg your condescending attention, while my anxiety and yearning are beyond expression (縑緇儉陋, 造寫繁蕪. 干冒尊高, 無任惶灼).

Important Clues

This epistle offers a brief, if not clear, description of what had happened to Wen's family and to himself up to the time he presented it to Pei. It concentrates on telling the story of how Wen found himself in a dilemma, to the degree that his name was secretly listed by the eunuchs for arrest and even execution, as a result of the role he had played in the political arena. After introducing very briefly the reasons that he, in his desperation, had come to Prime Minister Pei for help, Wen recapitulates what had happened to him by mentioning his experiences in the following order.

²⁰ When on the road, Yan Ying (晏嬰, ?-500 BC), Chief Minister of Qi, came across the worthy man Yueshi Fu (越石父) who had been taken prisoner; he untied from the right yoke of his carriage a horse for the latter's ransom, and accepted him as a guest. See *Shiji* 62: 2134. Lord Mengchang's (孟嘗君) retainer, Feng Xuan (馮諼), chanted while tapping at his sword, to express his discontent that there was no fish for his dinners and no carriage for his travel. The Lord met all his demands and moved him to the best guest house, whereupon Feng performed good service for the Lord. See *Shiji*, 75: 2531.

1 He attended the Luoyang National University,²¹ coming from the so-called Liaoxi.

2 A misfortune befell his family, and he found himself reduced to the situation of a *traveling orphan*, no longer with means to support his life, not to mention his studies.

On the occasion of presenting an epistle to a senior guardian, Wen must go briefly to the point. It was inappropriate to give a full-length account of what had happened to him, and Prime Minister Pei was meant to have been able to understand what was left unsaid. Suggestively, after discussing his attendance at the National Academy in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem", Wen describes the situation that forced him to embark on a precarious office-seeking career, in the following couplet, comparable to the account here.

50 The noisy swallows were shrieking in the short eaves,	短檐喧語燕,
While a hungry squirrel fell from a tall tree.	高木落饑鼯.

Though the metaphor is intricate, its implication is easy to see: besides describing a scene, it indicates that Wen underwent a fall in his family's social status. The shrieking swallows are reminiscent of those who vied for wealth and fame on an unsteady and crowded stage, where Wen, at the time, had to start his political career. The hungry squirrel is the natural counterpart for himself, who had "fallen" from a relatively high position to lead his precarious life. In any event, Wen was forced to give up his studies, probably because of some changes in his family's fortunes. Considering that his father died long before he quit the Luoyang National Academy, we can infer that at this time the remaining family prerogatives he still enjoyed were stripped away.

3 The result was that Wen Tingyun began a life of traveling all over the country, "spending many years in one or another marquis'."²²

²¹ We will give a detailed discussion on this issue in chapter three.

²² Wen's travels will also be dealt with in chapter three.

And, as noted in the quotation already given from "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem," from the very beginning of his vagrant life, he had to be on guard against the tyranny of the eunuchs, Du Zhi so-called.

4 Next he "traveled the valley of the Huai River."²³

As fate would have it, he met the eunuchs face to face on a narrow path and suffered most miserably from them. This is the first time Wen was personally involved in some incident with the eunuchs, the cause of a series of subsequent setbacks and adversities.

5 It was some time after this confrontation with the eunuchs that something more complex and serious drove Wen to a dead end,²⁴ and the injustice he suffered forced him to turn to the powerful and friendly Prime Minister Pei for support, to tide him over his crisis and allow him to pass the year's civil recruitment examination.²⁵

For our future study we will follow the order of topics provided in this epistle.

Wen's Birth Year

Since Wen clearly says his age is forty-two by alluding to "Having the Way [Guo]", the key to deciding his birth year is to date this epistle, and in passing we will also identify Prime Minister Pei. From Wen's own accounts, we know it was while traveling in the Huai River valley that Wen confronted the attack from the eunuchs. What Wen refers to here is the Jianghuai Incident that occurred in the first year of Kaicheng (836). We therefore date this epistle as presented to Prime Minister Pei sometime after the Jianghuai Incident (836).

Wen gained access to the Heir Apparent through the recommendation of his minister teacher Li Cheng, in the autumn of second year of Kaicheng (837), and served the Heir until his sudden death in the tenth month of the following year (838). This fact is also subtly implied in this epistle. It must have been after his attending the Heir Apparent that Wen

²³ Wen's experiences in the valley of the Huai River (836) are discussed in chapter four.

²⁴ Wen's service to the Heir Apparent will be studied in chapters five and six.

²⁵ Wen's examination performance will be discussed in chapters seven and eight.

presented this epistle to Pei Du; otherwise, he would not have said that "If I advance in my official career, I harbor fear lest I be in danger; if I retreat, I will have nothing to fall back upon." To be given the opportunity to attend the Heir Apparent, within direct access of the emperor, was for Wen an unusual advance and unexpected imperial favor, though it turned out tragically. Moreover, in the face of such a highly confidential appointment, Wen's sense of honor called forth his courage to "advance" without hesitation. After the Heir Apparent's death, however, Wen could not escape from his political entanglements, but had to brave the many dangers the eunuchs had in store for him. The situation he had to confront, as described in the epistle, is thus a reflection of the reality he faced after the Heir Apparent's death in the tenth month of 838.

Although in this epistle Wen made no explicit mention of his attendance upon the Heir Apparent, this information is implied in the context. Prime Minister Pei, who was specially concerned with the issue of the imperial heir [as we will find out immediately after we identify him], would understand this and not need a precise reference to it. Wen praised the governance of Emperor Xuanzong and attributed his own misfortune to the situation in which "neither the flying nor the swimming [court officials] could have their peaceful settlement, and both the rainfall and the sunlight cannot follow each other in harmony." This is a circuitous castigation of the eunuchs who had gained ground during Xuanzong's reign, and hence a mild criticism of Xuanzong himself.²⁶ After Xuanzong's reign the eunuchs

²⁶ Here is implied, very possibly, another important inkling. Throughout this epistle, Wen dwells on his family's adversities and his own misfortunes, but here he abruptly turns to speaking about only Emperor Xuanzong. This might indicate the close relation of the latter with the Wen clan as we have proved in chapter one, Wen's father (or a direct uncle?) was one of Emperor Xuanzong's son-in-laws. Considering the age of Wen's uncle Wen Zao (765-836), Wen's father as well as the Song'guo Princess (d. between 805-820) might have been born in 750s; this is another justification of Wen's birth year as 798.

usurped more and more power, until they seized control of the Divine Strategy Army (神策軍), during Emperor Dezong's reign (785-805). Eunuch command of the imperial army finally precipitated the disaster of the Sweet Dew Incident of 835. Both the Heir Apparent's death (838) and Wen's sorry plight represented in this epistle were results of the eunuchs' interference at court, in an aftershock of the Incident.

As if to add one more proof to our argument, at the end of this epistle, Wen says: "I respectfully hold in my arms my prose, poetry and rhapsody works, each in one *juan*, all presented to Your Excellency." This is the so-called "presenting one's scrolls" (投卷), or "warming the scroll" (溫卷), by which late Tang literati sought to impress those who were politically powerful and influence them to speak on their behalf to the examination administrators. In fact, in the autumn of the fourth year of Kaicheng (839), for the first time in his life, Wen sat for the Examination held by the Metropolitan Prefecture (京兆府試) and succeeded in obtaining an "Equivalent to Passing" (等第). Were it not for this appealing epistle that succeeded in enlisting the help of Prime Minister Pei, any gain in the examination would likely have been impossible for Wen. Therefore this epistle must have been presented to Pei no later than the autumn²⁷ of the fourth year of Kaicheng when the examination of the Metropolitan Prefecture was held. Thus we can date it to sometime between the tenth month of 838 and the autumn of 839.

The only Prime Minister bearing the surname Pei under such circumstances, was Pei Du. Pei Du was one of the most outstanding prime ministers in the late Tang period, famous for his service to the Tang court since Emperor Xianzong's time (憲宗, r. 805-820), when he led a victorious military campaign that crushed the recalcitrant warlord Wu Yuanji (吳元濟,

²⁷ Throughout the Tang dynasty the civil service autumn examination was held before the tenth month of the year, when all the candidates gathered in the capital.

783-817), and laid the groundwork for the Yuanhe Restoration (元和中興).²⁸ In the succeeding reigns of Emperors Muzong (r. 821-24), Jingzong (r. 825-27), and Wenzong (r. 827-40), Pei distinguished himself by most effective local governance and fierce allegiance to the court. Wen's remark in the epistle--"I know Your Excellency the Prime Minister did meritorious service to Emperor Yao and set up ample feats in assisting Emperor Yu"--is closer to hard truth than to conventional flattery. As the most influential veteran court official at the time, Pei was the only man who had the power to help Wen somehow, by offering "an unusually powerful potion."²⁹

According to his biographies, Pei was sent out to be the Military Commissioner of Taiyuan in the fifth month of the second year of Kaicheng. "You just sleep there and guard well the north gate for me," Emperor Wenzong bade him when Pei begged for retirement. In the twelfth month of the following year, Pei was called back to the capital to be Director of the Secretariat; and in the fourth year (839) of Kaicheng, "In the first month, Du came [from Taiyuan] for a court audience"--in the third month of the same year, he died, three months after his last audience³⁰ (the first month of that year, 839, was an intercalary month). If we reconsider Wen's statement that "I now come to the age of Having the Way (42)," we believe

²⁸ The role Pei played in the Yuanhe Restoration is universally recognized. For a representative English work on this topic, see *The Cambridge History of China*, 611-20.

²⁹ For Pei Du's biographical materials cited later, see JTS, 170: 4413 and XTS, 173: 5209. If we take the whole late Tang period for our survey, there was another Prime Minister, Pei Xiu (裴休, ?-864, JTS, 177: 4593 and XTS, 182: 5371), who, for all his connections with Wen on other occasions, does not fit in the texts and facts related in the epistle. Pei Xiu was holding the position Prime Minister from 852 to 855 when Wen definitely had no such urgent crisis like the one related here. Xia Chengtao and Gu Xuejie both held that this Prime Minister Pei was Pei Xiu. See their works given in note 6.

³⁰ See Wu Tingxie, TFSNB, 4: 427.

more firmly that it was in the first month of 839 that Wen took the opportunity to present this epistle to Pei. With the Chinese way of calculating age, therefore, Wen was born in the year 798. This conclusion is identical with the one inferred from the "Ji Shao-Shan Tao-Ji Kang" allusion, and we have more evidence to support it. Seen separately, the individual statements may seem confusing and ambiguous, but once considered together they are instrumental in bearing out the major events in Wen's life. This conclusion is applicable in explaining any of Wen's experiences and can thus stand up to any challenge. It can also be justified by the following "circumstantial evidence."

Other Evidence Supporting the Conclusion

Relationship with Pei Du

"The Biographies of Pei Du" further relate that, in his late years, because of the literati-officials' failure to curb the eunuchs' power, Pei "after dealing with his official routines, often spent his time drinking with the poets Bai Juyi and Liu Yuxi, regardless of the worldly affairs; most of the renowned men of letters of the time came to join him." For a time Wen was among Pei's retainers, though we are not sure whether this was brought about through Liu Yuxi. His friendship with Pei is attested by the following poems.

Two Elegies For the Director of the Secretariat, Lord Pei³¹

(中書令裴公挽歌詞二首, j. 3, WFQ)

You were a Wang Jian, a model of virtue and style,

王儉風華首,

You were a Xiao He, a leading subject of the empire.

蕭何社稷臣.³²

³¹ My understanding of these poems agrees with that of Wang Mingsheng, who also took the poems as evidence that Wen enjoyed Pei's friendship, see *Eshubian*, 77: 1211.

³² Wang Jian (452-489), a Prime Minister in the Southern Qi dynasty, was famous for his erudition and administrative achievements. See NS, 22: 590. Xiao He (?-193, BC) served Emperor Gaozu of the Han dynasty, as Prime Minister

A cloth-robe commoner from Danyang,	丹陽布衣客,
You spent your life in the Lotus-isle till white-haired.	蓮渚白頭人. ³³
Inscriptions engraved when Mount Yanran was in dusk,	銘勒燕山暮,
A stele sunk into River Han in its spring tide.	碑沈漢水春. ³⁴
From now on I vainly drink and eat my fill,	從今虛醉飽,
And will no longer defile your carriage-mat.	無復污車茵. ³⁵

Poem Two

With your arrow flying, the evil star fell,	箭下妖星落,
In the breeze, the killing air turned back.	風前殺氣回.
When the State's Redolence, Director Xun, departs,	國香荀令去,

³³ 丹陽布衣, A self-styled name of Tao Hongjing (陶弘景, 452-536), who, in his late years, was called "a Prime Minister in the Mountain" (山中丞相), see LS, 51: 742-44. The "Lotus-isle" is a euphemism for the official position of Prime Minister, that Pei occupied until very late in life.

³⁴ Dou Xian (竇憲, ?-92), after defeating the Huns, ascended Mount Yanran and inscribed on stone his military exploits; see HHS, 23: 812. Du Yu made two steles to assure his reputation for posterity; one was sunk in River Han, and the other was set up on the summit of Mount Xian; see JS, 34: 1025-33. The allusion praises Pei's leading role in crushing Wu Yuanji. However, because of factional objections, "The Monument for Quelling Huaixi" (平淮西碑, QTW, 561: 7205-7), written by Han Yu, had to be rewritten by Duan Wenchang (段文昌, 773-835, QTW, 617: 7918) so as to favor Li Su (李朔, JTS, 133: 3678, XTS, 154: 4874), a Tang general who captured Wu Yuanji.

³⁵ Bing Ji's (丙吉, ?-55 BC) cabman, because of overdrinking, vomited on the Prime Minister's carriage; Bing Ji pardoned him, saying that it was no more than spoiling the Prime Minister's carriage-mat. See Bing's biography in HS, 74: 3142-52. This is clear evidence that Wen was once a retainer under Pei Du's patronage.

For the Tower's moonlight, Lord Yu will never return.	樓月庾公來。 ³⁶
The jade seal will eventually be in no danger,	玉璽終無慮,
But your golden case will not be opened, forever.	金滕竟不開。 ³⁷
I emptily sigh over the road of recommending the worthies,	空嗟薦賢路,
While the fragrant herbs fill the Yan Terrace.	芳草滿燕臺。 ³⁸

In identifying "the Director of the Secretariat" as Pei Du, we must emphasize the fact that in Wen's time Du was the only man bearing the surname Pei and this official title.

In the two elegies, apart from paying homage to the merits Pei had performed for his country, Wen also recalls his elegant manners when he was with his subordinates and

³⁶ Xun Kai was said to leave a fragrance lasting for three days wherever he sat, see JS, 39: 1150-52. "The State's Fragrance" is also another name for the orchid, conventionally a symbol of the noble man (君子). Yu Liang (庾亮, 289-340) once ascended the Southern Tower (南樓), joining his subordinates there to enjoy the moonlight; see JS, 73: 1915-24.

³⁷ The jade seal (玉璽) is the royal seal, a synecdoche for the imperial power. Before his death, Duke Zhou (周公) put in a golden case (金滕) letters and memorials to be presented to King Cheng of Zhou (周成王), see *Shangshu*, 13: 195. The allusion functions here as a metaphor for Pei's statecraft at a time when he was old and the Tang court needed him badly. According to the two *Tang Histories*, Emperor Wenzong in his last years increasingly appreciated Pei's loyalty as an old and most influential minister, to the degree that he consulted Pei about everything important. He even wrote a poem expressing his admiration for and confidence in Pei--an extraordinary honor--right before Pei's death.

³⁸ The Yan Terrace (燕臺), also called Gold Terrace (黃金臺), was believed to be the spot where King Zhao of the Yan Kingdom (燕昭王, ? -279, BC) accepted worthy men by placing a great mass of gold on it; see *Zhanguo*, 1065-6. From this last couplet, we can infer that Wen once had won Pei's promise of recommendation.

retainers. Wen does not limit himself to praising Pei's contributions (of which the feat of wiping out Wu Yuanji was the most remarkable), but he also expresses his sorrow at losing a good guardian who knew him well and would probably, if he had not died so soon, have helped him advance in officialdom and contribute to the revival of the country.

Comparing the Epistle, in which Wen counted on Pei to tide him over the crisis, with the two poems, in which Wen admired and bemoaned the dead Pei, we believe that "the Prime Minister Pei" of the Epistle was certainly Pei Du. Considering the fact that Wen could have managed to obtain an "Equivalent to Passing" in the autumn of that very year, we are all the more convinced that this must have been effected at Pei's recommendation, otherwise Wen would not have had the chance to take the examination, and "the road of recommending the worthies" would have been totally blocked.

Married Year

Clarifying the time when Wen was married can provide further evidence to bear out the birth year we have determined. In Wen's extant works, we have three apparent statements regarding his marriage. The first one is in "the Hundred-Rhyme Poem":

82 Coming as guest, I poured the green-ants,

客來斟綠蟻,

Trying for a wife, I trod the blue-beetles.

妻試踏青蚨.³⁹

³⁹ This is a very important couplet whose connotation points exclusively to Wen's experience of being insulted in the Jianghuai region, i.e., his involvement in love with a singer and marriage with her. The first line says Wen himself was drinking in pleasure quarters; and the second line means squandering his money like dirt, he bought the singer as his wife. 綠蟻, Literally the green-ant, is another name for wine, as the floating foam on the surface looks like ants. Blue-beetle, is another rarely used name for money. It was said that when the blood of the mother beetles and of their young is respectively applied to eighty-one coins, the coins, no matter which is spent first, will fly back to the owner to

Even before we get at the exact connotation of this couplet, we can say with safety that it is telling about his marriage before the fifth year of Kaicheng when he wrote the poem.

Further evidence concerning Wen's marriage is in "the Fifty-Rhyme Poem", written in the second year of Huichang (842).

To seek an official post, I had no appointment as that of Mao Yi, 宦無毛義檄,

In dealing with marriage, I had no money like that of Ruan Xiu, 婚乏阮修錢.⁴⁰

Wen said that he did not have the luck of Mao Yi to get an official post. Nor did he have the fortune of Ruan Xiu to collect donated money for his marriage. Ruan Xiu was not married until his forties because of poverty. Wen's marriage was nearly as late as that of Ruan Xiu.

A third proof is found in his "Epistle Presented to Bureau Director Han of the Ministry of Personnel:" "Like Zhongxuan, I am a traveler constantly moving; and like Zhuge, I am afraid of taking a wife too early" (仲宣之爲客不休. 諸葛之娶妻怕早). Comparing himself to 王 Can and Zhuge Liang,⁴¹ this once more emphasizes that his marriage took place rather late in life, only when in his forties, the age at which Zhuge Liang was married.

look for its mother or her young. For the bizarre witchery, see Xu Jian: *Chuxueji*, 27: 654, quoting *Soushenji* (搜神記) by Gan Bao (干寶) of the 晉 dynasty.

⁴⁰ Mao Yi was a recluse of great renown, especially famous for his filial piety. For the sake of his old mother, he received an official appointment; but after his mother's death, he repeatedly refused the government's offer of higher offices. See HHS, 27: 946. Ruan Xiu, because of poverty, did not get married until he was well into his forties. Before he was married, a group of influential men collected donations for his wedding, and many failed to donate their shares simply because they were not famous enough. See JS, 49: 1366-7.

⁴¹ Zhongxuan, was the style of Wang Can (王粲, 177-217), who led a vagrant life until he was well into his thirties. See SGZ, 21: 597-9. Zhuge, here antithetical to Zhongxuan,

"The Fifty-Rhyme Poem" (感舊陳情五十韻獻淮南李僕射)

The topic of the poem tells us that Chancellor Li was a former senior acquaintance and friend of Wen's, and was holding the post of the Military Commissioner of the Huainan Circuit at the time Wen presented it to him. Its poetic account of Chancellor Li's life⁴² is in highly sophisticated language characteristic of the late Tang literati's virtuosity. Rather than bother the reader with a paraphrase of the whole poem, we pick out and study a few key lines, testifying to the accuracy of our conclusion of Wen's birth year.

First, in "Hundred-Rhyme Poem" (composed 840) after the eighteenth rhyme:

18 My answer could be "a rare playing of the lute,"

對雖希鼓瑟，

should refer to Wang's contemporary Zhuge Liang (諸葛亮, 181-234), who married late, as can be inferred from his biography in SGZ, 35: 911-30.

⁴² Gu Sili identified him as Li Wei (李蔚, XTS, 181: 5353; JTS, 178: 4624), while Xia Chengtao (389) and Gu Xuejie (188-91) agreed that he should be Li Deyu (787-849); Chen Shangjun agrees with Mou that this Li is none other than Li Shen.

⁴³ "A rare playing (revised from "the remaining notes") of the lute" alludes to the following story (*Lunyu*, 11: 2500): Confucius asked each of his disciples to speak out their wishes, and Zeng Dian was the last to be asked

"the remaining notes faded away (as he stopped playing on his lute), while it was yet twanging. (Zeng Dian) laid the instrument aside, and rose. 'My wishes,' he said, 'are different from the cherished purposes of these three gentlemen,' 'What harm is there in that?' said the master; 'do you also, as well as they, speak out your wishes.' Dian then said, 'In this, the last month of spring, with the dress of the season all complete, along with five or six young men who have assumed the cap, and six or seven boys, I would wash in the Yi River, enjoy the breeze among the rain altars, and return home singing.' The master heaved a sigh, 'I give my approval to Dian'" (*The Four Books*, 11: 51).

Last autumn I sat for the Metropolitan Prefecture Examination, and got my name recommended on the supplementary list (原注: 余去秋試京兆, 薦名, 居其副).⁴⁴

Hence Wen sat for the examination in the fourth year of Kaicheng (839). While "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem," when referring to the same experience of being recommended by the Metropolitan Prefecture (京兆薦名), says:

Not knowing where the carp should jump,

未知魚躍地,

I was vainly ashamed to hear *Deer Singing* played.

空愧鹿鳴篇.⁴⁵

"To be passed among those playing the flute" alludes to the story in Hanfeizi, of a Gentleman Nanguo (南郭先生), who pretended to know how to play the flute and passed himself off as one of the players in the ensemble.

⁴⁴ The footnote here about Wen's sitting for the examination of the Metropolitan Prefecture adds to the authenticity of the record of Tangzhiyan (2: 15-6), under the item of "Equivalent to Passing but Failed to Passed" (等第罷舉): "In the fourth year of Kaicheng (839), Wen Qi" (溫岐). Wen Qi is the assumed name that Wen used for the examination, as will be explained in chapter seven.

⁴⁵ This couplet means that Wen vainly became an "Equivalent to Passing", but he had no chance to become a Presented Scholar. "Where the carp should jump" alludes to a legend that says that all carp move against the River until they arrive at the Dragon Gate, which they vie to jump over so as to transform themselves into dragons; it is used as a metaphor for a literary man becoming a Presented Scholar. "Deer Singing" is the title of a poem in Shijing (*Maoshi*, 9: 405; for the translation, see Waley: no. 183); according to "The Small Preface", it was used to "feast the court officials as distinguished guests." During later dynasties, it was kept as music for festival occasions, while in the civil service recruitment system of the Tang, the music was used in the ceremony for accepting new Presented Scholars; see XTS, 44: 1159-62, "The Records of Selection and Recommendation": "Every year in the middle of the winter, the commanderies, the counties, the institutes and

Now again it's approaching the Jixia date,

稷下期方至

But my Zhang-Riverbank disease is not yet healed.

漳濱病未痊⁴⁶

Between the two couplets, there is a footnote by Wen: "I was once recommended by the Metropolitan Prefecture, and had my name on the supplementary list" (余嘗忝京兆薦, 名居其副). Then, at the end of the second couplet, there is another note by Wen: "For two years I have contracted a disease, hence did not respond to the local recommendation, to be examined by the office concerned" (二年抱疾, 不赴鄉薦試有司).

the universities recommend those who have finished their studies to the Department of State Affairs, but those who were not recommended by the institutes or universities were called the provincial contributions. All of the above-mentioned, having brought with them their calling cards, presented themselves to the commanderies and the counties. After the examination, the administrator of the capital, with the ceremony of The District Symposium (鄉飲酒禮) had audience with their subordinate clerks, as though they were host and guests, while having sacrificial utensils and stringed and wind instruments ready, offering lamb to the spirits, and singing the poem of the "Deer's Singing" before they ranked themselves with the young and older officials in order of seniority..." For the District Symposium, see *Yili Zhushu*, 8: 980 and Steele, *The I-Li*, 74.

⁴⁶ The so-called Jixia date should be understood as the examination date. Every winter, the universities of the state as well as of the prefectures sent their graduates as candidates for the upcoming state-managed examination. "Zhang Riverbank disease" alludes to a poem by Liu Zhen (劉楨, ?-217): "Presented to Leader of the Court Gentlemen For Miscellaneous Uses" (贈五官中郎將, *Wenxuan*, 23: 336). It shows Liu's and hence Wen's disease was a political one:

I contracted a disease chronic and incurable,

余嬰沈痼疾,

And fled to the bank of the clear Zhang River.

竄身清漳濱。

Since in the winter of the fifth year of Kaicheng (840) Wen had to flee to the south, the year 840 was the first year in which he "failed to respond to the local recommendation." The following year, the first year of Huichang (841) is then the second. Although the focus in each case is different, both "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" and "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem" mention Wen's experience of being recommended by the Metropolitan Prefecture, while his political "disease" remained the same. The "two years" thus should include 840 and 841, when Wen remained unable to "respond to the local recommendation".

In "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem", Wen adds:

In my vagrant life, I meet again the end of spring,	旅食逢春盡,
When something forces me to travel without end.	羈游爲事牽

The so-called "end of spring" could not be of the first year of Huichang, for, at that time, he had "failed to respond to the local recommendation" only for that once in the previous winter. Therefore, it should be the spring of the second year of Huichang.

And, in "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem", among many a laudatory description of the Chancellor Li's personal experiences, there are two couplets about Li's official prospects that deserve our special attention:

After having raised your wings made for soaring on high,	既矯排虛翅,
You are to hold the power of Heaven's creation.	將持造化權.
The myriad beings will look forward to your molding,	萬靈思鼓鑄,
And various talents will be subject to your cultivation.	群品待陶甄.

We can infer that Chancellor Li of Huainan was about to assume the post of Prime Minister. Li Deyu did become Prime Minister, when he was leaving the post of Military Commissioner of Huainan (XTS, 72: 2479) with the title of the Honorary Right Chancellor (檢校尚書右僕射), but it happened in the September of the fifth year of Kaicheng, when Wen had not yet composed "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem". Another Military Commissioner of

Huainan, Li Shen, who succeeded to Li Deyu's post in Huainan, held the same official title of Chancellor (僕射). According to "The List of the Prime Ministers" (XTS, 72: 2480) and Kong Wenye's "Edict for Appointing Li Shen as Prime Minister" (李紳拜相制),⁴⁷ Li was appointed Prime Minister on the twelfth day of February, the second year of Huichang. Therefore it was just before Li Shen was appointed Prime Minister that Wen presented "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem" to him in Huainan, in the hope that Li could manage to help him through his political impasse.

As we have seen from the Ji Shao-Shan Tao-Ji Kang allusion, the study of Li Shen's relationship with Wen certainly serves to strengthen our conclusion concerning Wen's birth year given that Li's identity as the subject of the poem is corroborated.

"Having Many Calamities in My Middle Age"

In Wen's "Epistle Presented to Secretary Du" (上杜舍人啓), we find the following remark: "I used to have great ambition in my juvenile years, but I suffered many calamities in my middle age" (某弱齡有志, 中歲多虞). This epistle was composed toward the end of the Dazhong era (847-860) and presented to Du Shenquan (杜審權, JTS, 177: 4160 and XTS, 96: 3863). But even without taking into consideration when it was composed, we can get a clear idea as to what Wen's "middle age" refers to. Wen was seriously injured and insulted by the eunuchs and was involved in a scandal because of his marriage with a prostitute-singer. After he gained access to the Heir Apparent, he also became the target of the eunuchs' persecution, and had to change his name so as to sit for the examination held by the Metropolitan Prefecture. However, he was rejected once his name change was divulged. All these disastrous incidents happened in the Kaicheng era when Wen was in his forties--if "forties" is not his "middle age", what age could it be? Throughout Wen's life his unfortunate experiences in the Kaicheng era should be highlighted; no other period of his life was filled with so many misfortunes.

⁴⁷ See Lu Xinyuan, Tangwen Shiyi, 30: 442.

In conclusion, to ascertain Wen Tingyun's birth year is possible, because Wen left behind some particular works bearing concrete information. By following the clues⁴⁸ Wen arranged in them, we can work out a reliable conclusion, and thus a correct starting point for the study of his life.

⁴⁸ Another clue: many of Wen's fictions in Qianzhuanzi (乾鑿子) are kept in the Song encyclopedia Taiping Guangji. Of particular interest to us is one titled as "Li Xibo" (李僊伯), which starts the story by the following remarks (343: 2722):

Li Xibo of the Longxi, who held the post of magistrate of Wen County in the ninth year of the Yuanhe era (814), once told me the following story (隴西李僊伯, 元和九年爲溫縣, 嘗爲余說).

In "the ninth year of Yuanhe (814)" when Li Xibo held the post of magistrate of Wen County (in present-day Henan), or a little later, how could Wen be talked to if he was not old enough?

Chapter Three Before the Year of "Having No Doubts"

Very few experiences of Wen Tingyun's early years are clear and plain facts. Basing our arguments upon dozens of Wen's extant poems and essays that contain important information, and upon other sources available, we can only work out, by inference and reasoning, a broad outline of what Wen underwent before he came to be embroiled in the political events of the time. Simply put, before Wen was forty, "the year of having no doubts" (不惑之年), he studied for some length of time at the National University of Luoyang, lived a reclusive life and wandered all over the country. For each of these experiences, we can at best determine an approximate date, though none of the happenings is insignificant for a complete picture of Wen's life.

In the last chapter, we touched upon the topic of Wen's having been a student in the National University of Luoyang (洛陽太學). Here we will supply conclusive evidence supporting this fact and clarify some details about it.

Days of Diligent Studies

A Student of the National Academy in Luoyang

Three Proofs

In all of Wen's extant works, we find three pieces of evidence that prove that he attended the National University in Luoyang. This is all the internal evidence we can find, and each example, in addition to corroborating the others, presents a new aspect of the same fact. The reasons why we identify the school where Wen studied as the National University in Luoyang are evident from the following comparison of three statements.

First, in "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Pei" we read:

Then I took my registered residence in Liaoxi, before *I studied the classics in Jixia*.

Thereupon I looked up to and exhausted the teachings of my teacher, and engaged myself in the composition of poetry and prose. I was thinking to sew up the broken

drapery of the Confucian house, and to restore the grandeur of the Constant Norm.

"Jixia" is where Wen studied the classics under the instruction of his teacher. As the allusion quoted earlier indicates, it was a state-managed university where Wen studied strenuously, with high expectations for a successful future political career.

This same experience is once more referred to in Wen's "Epistle Presented to the Censor-In-Chief".

I, one of the students of the Luo River and a member of the junior party of Ganling, *once attended the National University*, but failed to recognize a Cheng Gong; when I happened to go to the frontier, I luckily met with a Zhong Gao (某洛水諸生,¹ 甘陵下黨. 曾游太學, 不識承宮; 偶到離庭, 適逢种嵩).²

It follows that the National University in Luoyang is the very "Jixia" where he studied as a registered student. Throughout the Tang dynasty, being accepted as a student of the National Universities in the capital(s) remained an extraordinary honor, which would almost guarantee a successful future career. That is why Wen always mentioned it with a sense of self-conceit.

Then, the following couplet (the 47th rhyme) in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" tells how

¹ "Luo River" refers to Luoyang, through which the Luo River flows, and where the National University students (諸生) once argued vehemently about state affairs. See HHS, 67: 2185-6. 諸生, Originally refers to the Confucians of Lu (魯儒). See *Shiji*, 99: 2720. By the allusion Wen refers to himself as a student of the National University of Luoyang.

² Cheng Gong (承宮, ?-76) was a famous Confucian official of the Eastern Han. See HHS, 27: 944. Zhong Gao 种嵩, 104-164) was also a successful minister of the Eastern Han, who, without changing his basic stand of opposing the eunuchs, made a great contribution to the court. See HHS, 56: 1826 and SGZ, 1: 2. Both allusions are meant as compliments to Xu Shang, the subject of this epistle.

Wen brought his literary talents into full play when studying in Luoyang:

47 I yearned for the taste of *water-cress at the Semi-circular Pool*, 泮水思芹味,³

I found the source of *ricefield rent in Langya Commandery*, 琅琊得稻租.⁴

"Semi-circular pool" in the first line can only refer to the National University of Luoyang; "to yearn for the water-cress taste" may imply Wen's great expectation of himself, that is, to help his country attain ideal governance by his extraordinary talents. The allusion to Li Baiyao in the second line means that Wen, when attending the National University of Luoyang, was as clever as Li had been. This couplet lends credibility to what is also recorded

³ For "Semi-circular Pool," see *Maoshi* 21: 342-3 and Waley. no. 250: "Merry the waves of the Pan \ Come, pluck the water-cress" (思樂泮水, 薄采其芹). The "Semi-circular Pool" was a pond by which an official school of Lu Kingdom, the Semi-circular Palace (泮宮), was located; it was said that people went there to pluck water-cress, and to observe the good order of the school and hence of the country. Thus, 泮水 and 泮宮 both refer to universities or academies of the dynasty.

⁴ "The ricefield rent" is a rarely used term alluding to *Zuozhuan*, "Duke Zhao the Seventeenth Year" (48: 384) and its annotation by Du Yu: "The Monarch of Yu engaged himself in registering the ricefield." Du Yu annotates: "The Kingdom of Yu is situated in present Kaiyang County of Langya Commandery." Gu Sili's supplementary annotation to WFQ quotes an anecdote from *Shishuo* [(世說), should be *Xushishuo* (續世說), ed. by Kong Pingzhong, which includes an anecdote from "The Biographies of Li Baiyao" (李百藥, 565-648, JTS, 72: 2571; XTS, 102: 3973): When Li Baiyao was seven years old, it happened that someone read an essay by Xu Ling (徐陵, 507-583, CS, 26: 325, for his essays, see Yan Kejun, *juan* 10, the line not found). At this line: "Reap the rice of Langya" (刈琅琊之稻), none of the guests present knew what it referred to, but Baiyao offered the answer quoted above, and was admired by all for his cleverness.

in various other sources,⁵ that Wen did attend the Luoyang National University and since then had become famous as a prodigy.

When and How Long Was Wen in the University

According to "The Records of Selections and Recommendations" (XTS, 44: 1159), students of the imperial universities in Chang'an and Luoyang must be sons of officials not inferior to the fifth rank, and admission was granted only to those who were between 13 and 19 years of age. Since Wen was born in 798, the time when he was a student in Luoyang must have fallen between the years 810 and 816. Since the year 807, the total number of students in the Eastern Capital Academy was stipulated as one hundred, and student-enrollment in Luoyang National University (洛陽太學) was limited to only 15 (XTS, 44: 1164). No wonder, then, that Wen did everything in his power to use this chance to realize his ambitions. However, he did not stay long in the Luoyang Academy, perhaps at most one or two years, before he was forced to quit his studies.

Of course it was Wen's family status that had provided him the opportunity to attend the Luoyang National University. In like manner, it was the changes happening in his family that forced him to quit. With reference to the Luoyang National University, we should stress that Wen had there a teacher, Li Cheng, for whom he developed a lifelong admiration, because of the man's academic erudition and political orientation. Thinking himself second to none in literary talent, Wen seldom yielded to anybody, except his beloved and respected teacher. It was most probably in the National University of Luoyang that they first formally became teacher and student. Yet Li Cheng held office in the capital more than once,⁶ before he was appointed as Examination Administrator (知貢舉) in 817. Unless we can find more records,

⁵ For example, Xin Wenfang (8: 135) says: "Having a gift for quick-witted literary composition, he could finish a ten-thousand-character essay impromptu."

⁶ See Xu Song, DKJK, 18: 20.

it is hard to say in which year exactly the two met each other for the first time.

Diligent Study and Bucolic Reclusion In Tonglu

Wen's Own Account of His Reclusive Life

What did Wen do after quitting the Luoyang National University? Hints can be found both in his "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Pei" and in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem", as is the case with many other events of his life. According to the former, something disastrous befell Wen's family and Wen was turned into "a traveling orphan"; now the situation deteriorated so much that life became hard for him even before he reached adulthood. Comparing this status with corresponding descriptions in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" that follow the above-cited couplet (the 47th rhyme),⁷ we find it all the more likely that Wen at this age had no option but to return to his reclusive life in Tonglu:

48 The light rattan cane was gnarled and bumpy,
My lotus attire was disheveled and shabby.

杖輕藜擁腫,
衣破芰披敷。⁸

⁷ In "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem", from rhyme 30 to 46 is a lengthy description of Wen's reclusive life, before a disaster befell his family. See Appendix I.

⁸ The first line alludes to a legend recorded in HS, "Biography of Liu Xiang" (劉向, 77-6 BC), 36: 1928: One night, Liu Xiang, a great man of letters, was sitting alone reading and proofreading books in the Tianluge (天祿閣), when there came an old man, the spirit of Taiyi (太乙), dressed in yellow with a cane of green rattan. The old man blew on the end of his cane, and set it aflame. Then he taught Liu the learnings about the creation of the universe. The line also alludes to the Zhuangzi: "Huizi says: I have a big tree named ailanthus. Its trunk is too gnarled and bumpy to apply a measuring line to, its branches too bent and twisty to match up to a compass or square" (吾有大樹, 人謂之樗, 其大本擁腫不中繩墨, 其小枝卷曲不中規矩). See Legge, Texts of Taoism, 174. 芰衣, lotus attire,

- 49 I was sad for the shrike with his fragrant spirit,
And empathized with the cicadas in their mournful chirps.
50 The noisy swallows were shrieking on the short eaves,
While a hungry squirrel fell from a tall tree.
51 Urged by pressure, I had to leave my calm solitude.
And driven by destitution I ventured upon the fearful way.
52 In my loves and hates I took precautions against Du Kui,
In my laments and sighs I felt melancholy as did Yang Zhu.
- 芳意憂鵓鵒，
愁聲覺蟪蛄。⁹
短檐喧語燕。
高木落饑鼯。
事迫離幽墅，
貧牽犯畏途。
愛憎防杜蕢，
悲嘆似楊朱。

Here we read a vivid recollection of Wen's youthful days before he sets out on a journey across the country. To grasp the implications some explanation is necessary.

In the forty-eighth rhyme, "the gnarled and bumpy" "light rattan cane" is an epithet for Wen's unique personality that was out of keeping with the time; "the disheveled and

token of recluse, alludes to *Lisao*: "I made a coat of lotus and water-chestnut leaves \ And get lotus petals to make myself a skirt." See Hawkes: 25.

⁹ "The shrike's fragrant spirit" alludes to *Lisao* (Hawkes: 32):

Beware lest the shrike sound his note before the equinox,
Causing all the flowers to lose their fine fragrance.

恐鵓鵒之先鳴兮，
使夫百草爲之不芳。

According to Wang Yi's (王逸) notes to *Chuci* (*Chuci Buzhu*, 64), the cry of the shrike is heard between the spring and the autumn equinoxes, and signals the fading of all flowers. "The cicada in his mournful chirpings" alludes to "Zhaoyinshi" ("Summons For A Gentleman Who Became A Recluse") of *The Songs Of the South* (Hawkes: 119):

At the year's evening, comfortless,
The cicada sings with a mournful chirp.

歲暮兮不自聊，
蟪蛄鳴兮啾啾。

On the other hand, the summer cicada was believed to be unable to know spring from autumn (Watson, *Chuangtzu*: 25), a reminder of the ephemeral grandeur of human life.

into poverty and disgrace. The forty-ninth rhyme voices Wen's sadness on hearing the cry of the shrike and the summer cicadas because he was eager to serve his country before it was too late. The fiftieth rhyme, as pointed out before, brings to a close the account of his reclusive life by implying the reason that forced him to give up that life. The change in his family was the shock of his father's death from eunuch persecution. The fifty-second rhyme: from the very beginning of his office-seeking career, Wen found himself in a sorry plight, as a result of the eunuchs' threatening power.¹⁰

Despite the dazzling diction and obscure allusions, it is still possible to pick out the narrative threads linking Wen's Luoyang period to his reclusive and wandering years. After being forced to give up his studies in Luoyang (between 810-816), in the following years he continued a life of study in bucolic seclusion, which could only be in Tonglu, his old residence. Then, driven by poverty and urged on by a desire to serve his country, he was forced to bid farewell to his hermitage and adopt a vagrant and precarious existence.

A Breeding Ground for Wen's Personality and Style

While constantly studying hard and enjoying all that a quiet seclusion could offer him, Wen cultivated two tendencies that would last all his life. On the one hand he was eager to achieve his political ideal to help his country and people. On the other hand, he enjoyed nature and valued individual freedom. He had acquired all the qualifications requisite for an official career, but was innately endowed with an unfettered spirit that was diametrically opposed to any official hypocrisy. Thus all his life Wen was torn between the predilection to be a recluse and the aspiration to realize his political ambition. This inner conflict may partly

¹⁰ Yang Zhu's anecdote is recorded in *Huainanzi*, "The Discourse on Forests" (17: 1289): "Yang Zhu weeps on coming to the forked road, for it can lead to both the south and the north; Mo Zhai grieves on seeing the dyed silk, for it can be either white or black" (楊子見歧路而哭之 爲其可以南可以北, 墨翟見練絲而泣之, 爲其可以白可以黑). For more implications of this couplet, see chapter five.

account for the retarding of his office-seeking journey.

Having returned to Tonglu, Wen lived there for about ten years, from some time between 810 and 816 to about 822, when he thought himself too old to remain in his reclusion and set out on his long journey. In about 822, he returned to the Guanzhong region once more and stayed there for about five years until he set out for the Shu region in 827. It was just as his good friend Li Shangyin said of him: "Formerly for long you lived in oblivion and isolation" (當年久索居).¹¹ In a sense, Wen was content with his reclusion and would not have given it up if not for the pressure of poverty. Even after he made up his mind to begin his office-seeking career, despite his literary talent, he found himself unable to follow the common course of entering into officialdom by passing the Presented Scholar examination, and chose instead to travel all over the country to look for his chance. Evidently, there were political reasons that underlay his decision. It was his family background that always subjected him to persecution from the hostile eunuchs; and out of consideration for this fact that he had to go to the provinces instead of the capital.

During his Tonglu years, as a scion of an eminent clan and a prodigious talent, he associated with the local literati-officials and became famous for his literary brilliance. "The landscape of Guiji has been surpassing and unique from time immemorial,"¹² and during the Tang dynasty, the region of Wu and Yue was also one of the centers where the provincial poets gathered¹³ and prepared themselves for their future political career in the capital. As can be seen from his "Epistle Presented to the Grand Master Cui", quoted in chapter one (p.

¹¹ See *Yuxingsheng Shiji Jianzhu*, 2: 524 and p. 270 of this study.

¹² See Quan Deyu (權德輿, 759-818): "Preface to Seeing off Yunsan, the Superior Man" (送雲散上人序, QTW, 483: 6426).

¹³ Stephen Owen in his excellent book *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry* uses "capital poets" and "provincial poets" to distinguish those official-literati gathered in Chang'an from the local literati; I follow his idea here.

33), young recluse that he was, Wen already enjoyed the friendship of the local élites including Cui, the Grand Master whom Wen addressed as "my twenty-third elder brother," who very possibly was the magistrate of Yue Prefecture for a time.

One more point we should note here is that it was in Tonglu, a fascinating place of seclusion since the Eastern Han dynasty, that Wen Tingyun's poetic style took shape, a style known as "licentious and luxurious" (淫靡), and for which he has been frequently criticized and misunderstood in Chinese literary history. Considering that Yuan Zhen held the position of Surveillant Commissioner of Zhedong Circuit for quite a few years (823-829), and that during his tenure, he "promoted many men of letters to serve in his secretariat" (JTS, 166: 4336), Wen may very possibly have had a connection with Yuan's literary coterie and earned great fame for his poetry during his Yuezhou years. While Yuan made a considerable contribution to the formation of the so-called Yuanhe Style (元和體), the Yuezhou provincial poets and Yuan Zhen must also have had an influence on Wen's early poetic practices. We can infer from the following statement (Li Zhao: 57) that Wen must have received Yuan's influence from the beginning of his poetic career, since the critics labeled Yuan's style as "licentious and sensual", and called Wen's verses "gorgeous and gaudy".

Since the era of Yuanhe, in composing prose writings, people have tried to follow the style of Han Yu's strangeness and abruptness, and of Fan Zongshi's awkwardness and obscurity; in composing Music Bureau verses, people followed the style of Zhang Ji's fluency and smoothness; in creating poetry, people followed Meng Jiao's sophistication and fondness of extremes, Bai Juyi's simplicity and vividness and of Yuan Zhen's license and sensuality. All labeled their writings "Yuanhe style".

(元和已后，爲文筆則學奇詭于韓愈，學苦澀于樊宗師；歌行則學流蕩于張籍，詩章則學矯激于孟郊，學淺切于白居易，學淫蕩于元稹。俱名曰元和體)。

By all accounts, at the time Wen entered society, he was already well-known as a remarkable poet standing at the forefront of his time and having great self-confidence for his ambitious goals. But he knew the way before him would not be smooth.

Wandering Years

A General Description

After Wen was forced to give up his reclusive life, he spent many years wandering around the country. It was a common practice for Tang literati to make long and constant journeys, in order to see the world and look for opportunities for entering official service, as a preparatory step for their future political careers. Among the important spots Wen set foot on were first, the Metropolitan Prefecture, where he lived for about five years (during which period he once went to the Western frontier); Sichuan, where he lived for several years; many scenic spots downstream along the Yangtze River, and again Luoyang (where he had an audience with Wen Zao). Then he went back to the Jianghuai region--the place where he first became involved in a political scandal. What follows is a tentative attempt to illustrate each of these experiences.

Wen's experiences after the Luoyang National University days are told in his "Epistle Presented to the Prime Minister Pei" by the following remarks:

Later on, I *spent many years at one or another Marquis'* before I traveled to the valley of the Huai River, where I presented myself by writing letters and sought recognition holding a calling card.

The "many years" he spent "at one or another marquis" relying upon quite a few local patrons, in fact spanned nearly 20 years and this state of affairs would have continued until his death were it not for the sensational events that took place in the Huai River valley in the first year of Kaicheng (836). Wen must have seen a great deal of life during these years, but in the epistle he purposely avoids dwelling on any of his minor experiences, and instead goes straight to the main point--his distress in the Jianghuai region.

First of all, by means of eliciting various pieces of information about his travels from his works, we shall deal with this period of "many years" and rearrange his travels in a chronological order, though few of his writings bear clear dates. In "The Hundred-Rhyme

Poem," we find several couplets that relate to these same experiences: from the beginning of his wandering years to his Huainan misadventure.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 53 | Traveling for a living, I often passed by the country of Wei, | 旅食常過衛 |
| | And tarrying in my journey, I almost crossed the River Lu. | 羈游欲渡瀟。 ¹⁴ |
| 54 | On the frontier I lamented "the Song of the Protector-General", | 塞歌傷督護, |
| | By the border I meditated on the horn "Tune of Chanyu". | 邊角思單于。 ¹⁵ |
| 55 | At the military fords lances and spears were clashing, | 堡戍標槍架, |
| | In the Pass River boats and ships were blockaded. | 關河鎖舳艫。 |

The narrative threads in these lines are clear and easy to follow. Wen had traveled many places by depending on one or another patron; he might have spent some time on the (western) frontier, and he certainly stayed in Shu (Sichuan) for some years. At any rate, after coming of age, and unable to find a position in Chang'an (until 837), he could only try to make a living under some local patrons, what he called his "many years with one or another marquis'." From among these "many years," we shall first discuss his stay in the capital region, and next pick out his journey to Shu for closer study.

¹⁴ "Pass the country of Wei" alludes loosely to Confucius' trouble in Wei (Shiji, 47: 1905).

Wei is an ancient kingdom located in Hua Prefecture of the He'nan Circuit in Tang times.

"Cross the River of Lu" is a set phrase borrowed from Zhuge Liang's (諸葛亮)

"Chushibiao" (出師表, Wenxuan, 37: 516-7). The River Lu is at the southernmost end of Shu, but it is unlikely that Wen ever crossed it.

¹⁵ "The Song of Protector-General Ding" (丁都護歌, YFSJ, 45: 659) is a traditional Music Bureau title, singing of the hardship of wars. 單于, Chanyu, i. e., Khan in later time, is the ancient title for the chieftain of the northern nomadic tribes, especially the Xiongnu (匈奴); the horn tune of the Xiongnu that was transmitted into central China, a tune saturated with emotions against war, also bore this title.

Five Years in "the Fertile Land"

In Wen's "Epistle Presented to the Prime-Minister-Duke at the Honor Seat", Wen wrote how, before his journey to the Shu region, he spent "five years" "in the fertile land," i.e., the Guanzhong region around the two capitals, Chang'an and Luoyang.

Before this [that is, before coming to see the Prime-Minister-Duke], I spent five years in *the fertile land*, and went ten thousand *li* from Sichuan along the River bank.

"The fertile land" must be understood as another name for a specific place, otherwise Wen would not have used it in this manner. Judging from his fondness for historical allusions, we will likely find the solution in literary sources prior to Wen's time. The first source is in "The Biography of Business and Goods", in *Shiji* (129: 3261): "There are thousands of *li* of *fertile land* in the Guanzhong region." The second is Fu Xuan's (傅玄, 217-278) "Rhapsody on the Date Tree" (棗賦, *Chuxueji*, 20: 677): "There are beautiful trees of Penglai, planted in the *fertile land* of the Spirited Prefecture" (有蓬萊之嘉樹, 植神州之膏壤). Since even in the Tang dynasty the Chang'an region, or the Metropolitan Prefecture, was called the "Spirited Prefecture" (神州), *the fertile land* also must be another name for the Metropolitan Prefecture, or more broadly, the Guanzhong region.

Wen's statement thus indicates that before he presented the epistle to Wen Zao, the so-called "Prime-Minister-Duke at the Honor Seat", he had first spent five years in Guan-zhong, and then had gone to Shu, from whence he had just come to the place where the Prime Minister held his official post, in order to present his epistle. Wen traveled to the Shu region in about the year 827; thus the time he spent in Guanzhong would roughly cover the period from 823 to 827. This is the second time Wen had come to and stayed in the capital region in search of a chance for his official career. Although we know very little about his whereabouts during this period, we can infer from the following poems that he once visited the western frontier, and had lived somewhere close to the capital.

Writing My Feelings On My Journey to the West (西游書懷, j. 7, WFQ)

The Wei River valley leads to a deserted pass,	渭川通野戍,
Where I find my way to the Sanggan River.	有路上桑乾.
A lonely bird hovers in the blue evening sky,	獨鳥青天暮,
And a startled deer strays before a wornout wildfire.	驚麋赤燒殘.
In high autumn, I bid farewell to the old country,	高秋辭故國,
With a dream about Chang'an from last night.	昨日夢長安,
Such is a traveler's mood of itself,	客意自如此,
That has nothing to do with "the road is hard".	非關行路難.

This is almost the only poem in Wen's extant works expressive of a young mind filled with ambition and confidence to serve his country, untainted by the gloomy political frustration that permeates most of his later poems. This kind of mood is rare even in his early years, but we can only date it to this early period.

Another poem with the title "Luoyang" (洛陽, j. 8, WFQ) must have been written during the same period.

The Gong trees first see spring, twigs laden with "snow,"	鞏樹先春雪滿枝,
On the Shangyang Palace willows, the orioles are warbling.	上陽宮柳嚀黃鸝.
How could Huan Tan so easily forget smiling westward,	桓譚未便忘西笑.
Just because in Chang'an there is a phoenix pool?	豈爲長安有鳳池? ¹⁶

As the topic of the poem shows, Luoyang, as the Eastern capital of the Tang dynasty, might have been a place that had interested Wen very much. All his life, Wen would once

¹⁶ In Huan Tan's *Xinlun* (新論, *Shuofu*, j. 59), we have such a remark: "He who hears that it is happy in Chang'an will smile westward." "Smiling westward" is thus a witticism for seeking fortune and fame at the capital. Phoenix pool, 鳳池, is another name for the Department of the State Affairs (尚書省).

remember "smiling westward" to show his political concern. This poem hints at something else that oriented Wen to Chang'an: it was not (solely) because Chang'an was the political center of the empire. Since the poet is reticent about the exact reason for "smiling westward," we may venture a guess: besides his political ambitions, what drew him to Chang'an, the symbol of imperial power and glory, was that he was an imperial relative. Actually, as we have noted, he has some houses in Yu County, which is located right in the Metropolitan Prefecture.

The Time of Journey to Shu

The exact year in which Wen began his Shu journey is hard to fix. In an attempt to approach the solution, we will study a group of poems that have to do with Shu.

Mailed to Assistant Du of He'nan Prefecture

(寄河南杜少府, j. 4, WFQ)

After ten years, I'm back, my temple hairs not yet grey,	十年歸來鬢未凋,
Hawksbill hairpins and pearled boots--meet an ordinary clerk.	玳瑁珠履見常僚. ¹⁷
How can fame and wealth separate us on the glorious way,	豈關名利分榮路,
But my talent and gift will raise me to auspicious clouds.	自有才華作慶霄.
Shadows of the birds lingered over the Shanglin Garden,	鳥影不飛經上苑,
Clatter of hooves, in close succession, crossed Middle Bridge.	騎聲相續過中橋. ¹⁸

¹⁷ "Hawksbill hairpin and pearl boots" refer to those who had been promoted to conspicuous positions during Wen's ten-year absence from the capital; their bright uniform a sign of high rank; "ordinary clerk" refers to Wen himself.

¹⁸ 上苑, Shanglin Park, is the well-known Imperial Park set up in the East Han dynasty to the east of Luoyang. The Middle Bridge is on the Wei River, which flows through Chang'an. Both names are used here as a symbol of the capital(s).

Below the Setting Sun Pavilion the mountain is picturesque, 夕陽亭下山如畫,¹⁹
 You may think about my rustic and lonesome songs. 應念田歌正寂寥

It is evident that this poem was written in the capital region after a ten-year separation from it. At the time, though a mere "ordinary clerk," Wen seems to have had a hopeful perspective on his official career, and his hair was not yet grey. All the descriptive details prove the uniqueness of the occasion: there is only one such time in Wen's life, the second year of Kaicheng (837), when Wen had come all the way from Huainan to the capital, where he would live for the following three years. In other words, he last left the capital (region) ten years before, in about 827 or so. Actually his tour to Sichuan fits broadly within these ten years, as is indicated more clearly in the following poem.

Presented to A Shu General (贈蜀將, j. 4, WFQ)

The poet's note: He had considerable success against the *Nanman* (the southern barbarians), who entered the city of Chengdu (蠻入成都, 頗著功勞).

It was autumn on Sword Pass that we parted ten years ago,	十年分散劍關秋,
Myriad happenings have all followed the Brocade River's flow.	萬事皆從錦水流
Courage and statecraft have proved you worthy of a Han Staff,	志氣已曾明漢節,
Yet distinction and eminence are still far away, with your Hook of Wu.	功名猶自滯吳鉤. ²⁰
By the fallen hawk you regained your arrow, as cold clouds thickened,	雕邊認箭寒雲重,
On horseback we heard a reed-horn, with border grasses in sorrow,	馬上聽笳塞草愁.
Today's meeting with you makes me doubly disheartened:	今日逢君倍惆悵,

¹⁹ Setting Sun Pavilion, a well-known spot in Changan since the Han dynasty.

²⁰ "Han staff" refers to the story of Su Wu (蘇武, fl. 100-70 BC), who, with a tally staff, the symbol of Han state dignity, was detained for nineteen years among the Huns, and never lost his loyalty to Han. See HS, 54: 2459. 吳鉤, Hook of Wu, a sharp sword produced in Wu, is a symbol of the Shu general's extraordinary military talent.

Both Han Xin and Guan Ying [but not us], are made Marquis.

灌嬰韓信盡封侯。²¹

Historical records indicate that, before the Xiantong era (860-873), an event such as "southern barbarians entered Chengdu" happened only once: "On the *Bing-shen* day of the eleventh month of the third year of Dahe (829), the *Nanman* reached Chengdu....They stayed in the western city of Chengdu for ten days."²² It was some years before Kaicheng, during Wen's stay in Sichuan that he made the acquaintance of the Shu General. Therefore, it must be around the year 829 that the Shu General rendered remarkable military services to the Tang court by warding off the *Nanman* assault on Chengdu.

Inferred from this poem, a little earlier than the year 829 Wen had been already in Shu. For, when Wen bid farewell to the Shu General, the latter may not yet have accomplished his military feats; hence the time when he arrived in Shu and first made the General's acquaintance could have been one or two years earlier prior to 829. Comparing the first line of "Mailed to Assistant Du of He'nan Circuit" (composed in 837) with the first line in this poem (composed in 836 or 837), it is therefore clear that the "ten years" in the two cases differ only slightly, and cover virtually the same period. Adding this information to our finding that Wen had last left the capital in about 827 or so, we can conclude that soon after Wen had left Chang'an, he arrived in Shu. In other words, he left Chang'an for Shu.

In "Respectfully Mailed to A Few Intimate Friends When Lodging in Xinjin" (旅泊新津卻寄一二知己, j. 8, WFQ), after describing the landscape and his feelings during his stay in Xinjin County in Shu Prefecture, Wen ends the poem with this couplet: "As sentimental as was Wang Can in a troubled life / My heart is being broken when I ascend the tower" (王粲平生感, 登臨幾斷魂). Here Wen likens himself to Wang Can (177-217), who also led

²¹ Guan Ying (灌嬰) and Han Xin (韓信, ?-196 BC) were Liu Bang's generals and both installed as marquises, though with different abilities. See HS 95: 2667 and *Shiji*. 92: 2609.

²² See ZZhtJ, "The Fourth Year of Dahe" (830), 244: 7868-9.

a wandering life for almost twenty years. Wen's age when traveling to the Shu region is quite similar to that of Wang Can in his wandering (see p. 87), another example of how Wen uses historical allusions with more than one aspect of their implications.

Wen's stay in Shu was not short, no less than two or three years. He could not have made such a long journey into the center of the Sichuan without a purpose; he must have had more than one motive in mind: to go sightseeing, to make a living, to look for a way to establish himself, and even to seek political refuge under the patronage of some local officials. Serving at the frontiers was a commonly accepted preparatory step for Tang literati to seek recognition and distinguish themselves in their political careers. Together with the Shu General, Wen might have served for a time on the frontier, as the subalterns of a Military Commissioner. He says in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem": "And tarrying in my journey, I almost crossed the River Lu"--i. e., he almost decided to go to the southernmost border. Although we cannot say exactly when he left Shu, we know that in the sixth year of Dahe (832), he was continuing his journey eastward along the Yangtze River Valley.

A Representative Work Written in Shu

The following poem is the most representative work Wen wrote while in Shu, a poem that reflects the complex mentality of the young traveler, the orphan of a persecuted loyal court official from a traditional aristocratic family.

Ode of the Brocade City (錦城曲, j. 1, WFQ)

The mountains of Shu, a mass of dark-shaded eyebrows,	
hold the unmelted snow of a fine day,	蜀山攢黛留晴雪,
As if the bamboo shoots and the bracken sprouts	
wind themselves into the Nine-Turn Slope.	簌簌蕨芽縈九折.
When the River breeze adroitly uses scissors	
to cut a brocade of colored cloud,	江風吹巧剪霞綃,
The flowers ascend a thousand boughs,	

As red as the cuckoo's tears of blood

花上千枝杜鹃血。²³

The Cuckoo hovers and flies

into the groves at the foot of the cliff,

杜鹃飞入^岩下丛,

It sends forth a homesick cry at night,

Amid the mountains, in the moonlight.

夜叫思归山月中。

The Ba River is flowing with this feeling,

And this feeling will be everlasting.

巴水漾情情不尽,

While Wenjun is weaving her yearning

into the red brocade on a spring loom.

文君织得春机红。²⁴

The soul of the wronged one has not returned

and the fragrant herbs are dead.

怨魄未归芳草死。

At the River's head I can only learn

to sow seeds of the lovelorn tree.

江头学种相思子。²⁵

When the tree grows up and bears fruits,

²³ In Chinese tradition, *Dujuan*, the cuckoo, was tragic symbol. It was said that the bird wept blood from its beak, and that its cries sounded the words "better be back" (不如归去), hence it was also called Zigui (子归)--you [must] return.

²⁴ Wenjun was the mistress of the famous poet Sima Xiangru (司马相如, 179-118 BC), who fell in love with her, eloped with her, but later forsook her. See *Shiji*, 117: 2999. Here the name bears the metaphorical meaning of a loyal and frustrated court official.

²⁵ Another ancient Chinese legend has it that a man by name of Du Yu (杜宇) became the King of Shu, or Emperor Wang, and after his death, his soul transformed itself into the cuckoo, called *Dujuan*, or Du Yu, or Zigui. In *Chuci*, the fragrant herbs (芳草) are used as metaphors for worthy court officials. The "lovelorn tree" (相思树), another name for the "red bean" (红豆), is traditionally regarded as a symbol for the yearning of lovers for each other, and here a metaphor for the loyalty of a court official.

I will send it to those who yearn for home,
 But the forlorn city of the White Emperor
 is five thousand *li* away.

树成寄与望乡人,
 白帝荒城五千里.²⁶

The information implied in this poem can help us trace what motivated Wen to tour the Shu region. Whether because he wanted to lament his late father or because he went in search of a patron, there is some profound emotion underlying the heartbroken tone. The deep feeling and powerful appeal of the poem are too thought-provoking for the reader to misunderstand it as a poem on a trivial subject.

The opening scenic depiction is startling and ingenious when, against a background of the threatening Sichuan hills, all of a sudden the glaring red flowers are thrown into bold relief, with the colored cloud as their natural counterpart. Through the red flowers the legendary and tragic *Dujuan* (杜鹃) is introduced into the poem and subsequently plays the leading role. Why is the *Dujuan* unable to go home, and why is he called a "wronged soul"? Beyond evoking the *Dujuan* image itself, the poet has some deeper reason for relating the *Dujuan* story to himself. Since the *Dujuan* (the soul of the wronged one) is a symbol for a wronged emperor (such as Emperors Shunzong, Xianzong or Jingzong, all of whom died at the hands of the eunuchs), and "the fragrant herbs" is symbol of worthy and honest court officials, the line "The soul of the wronged one has not returned and the fragrant herbs are all dead" must have some relevance to a situation in which both the emperor and the ministers loyal to him have subjected themselves to a great injustice. Wen even declares of himself that he followed

²⁶ "Those who yearn for home" (望乡人) refers, somewhat nebulously, to those homeless, demoted ministers and dethroned emperors. But there did exist in Chengdu a building called "the Terrace of Yearning for Home" (望乡台). See Gu Sili's annotation quoting *Chengduji* (成都记). The City of the White Emperor was located to the east of modern Fengjie County, Sichuan. The name White Emperor is used here as a metaphoric substitute for an unsuccessful emperor, c. f., p. 243, note 29.

the example of somebody (possibly, a man like Liu Yuxi), sowing the seeds of red beans in memory of the dead with the earnest hope of consoling those exiled ones who yearned for home. Thus, it is only logical to infer that the "wronged ministers" were killed or banished following the death of the emperor(s), the wronged soul(s). These tragic elements commingle in this poem, leaving its subject matter elusive, for the readers to imagine. For all its gorgeous diction, however, this poem does not express lovesickness, but rather it is a political poem with covert personal feelings hidden between and behind the lines. The manner in which Wen mourns the death of "the fragrant herbs" is an attractive clue, and it might have something to do with his late father, who, very possibly, died in exile to the Shu region. In brief, only by understanding Wen's early life can we probe into the deeply-hidden meaning of this poem, while this poem in turn enriches our knowledge of that early life.

A Distinguished Uncle

To find out more about Wen's earlier life, we shall peruse the following epistle.

An Annotated Translation of "The Epistle Presented to the Prime-Minister-Duke at the Honor Seat"

(上首座相公启)

I hear that Wang Ji's recommendation avoids none of his own clansmen; I also hear that Xie Xuan's advancement is because of his being a near kinsman [of Xie An] (某闻举不违宗, 得于王济; 近因其族, 闻自谢玄).²⁷ Such are the models by which a successful man shows his kindness, and also the way the former worthies lived in harmony with their clan (虽通人与善之规, 亦前哲睦亲之道).

²⁷ Wang Ji recommended his uncle Wang Zhan (王湛, 249-295) to Emperor Wu of Jin (晋武帝, r. 265-290). See JS, 42: 1205. Xie An recommended his nephew Xie Xuan (谢玄, 343-388) to the position of Military General, to resist the invasion of Fu Jian (苻坚, 338-85). See JS, 79: 2072-86. The two allusions both imply a relationship of uncle and nephew between the so-called Prime-Minister-Duke at the Honor Seat and Wen.

I fortunately partake of your eminent genealogical line, and was able to shelter myself under our ancestral protection (某謬參華緒得庇餘蔭). Consequently I was favored by your fatherly benefaction, just as Kong Li passed below the hall; and I received your promise of tacit approval, just as Ruan Xian lived in the southern alley. Thereupon I had my flesh and bones grafted [to this branch of ours], so as to uphold the trunk and make the blossoms [of our family tree] flourish (固已鯉庭蒙翼長之恩, 阮巷辱心期之許.²⁸ 遂得迂肌改骨, 拥本扬英). Hence, like a hard-pressed bird flying into your arms, I should not look elsewhere; and, as a migrating bird circling a tree, what other twig but this one shall it perch upon (則窮鳥入懷, 靡求他所; 羈禽繞樹, 更托何枝)?

Before this I spent five years in the fertile lands, and went ten thousand *li* from Sichuan along the River bank (昨者膏壤五秋, 川途万里). Far away from your fatherly instruction, I found myself this poor shelter (遠違慈訓, 就此窮栖). I will divine a good date [to sit for the examination], and the end of the year is approaching. This adds to my sighs and sorrow, when I stay in the hostel of the metropolitan port (將卜良期, 行當杪歲.²⁹ 通津加嘆,³⁰ 旅舍傷懷). Your Excellency Minister-Duke, your river-like nourishment has provided more than munificent benefaction; and your cloud-like movement has distributed widespread kindness. The taste in the soup you season, however, has not benefited a clansman; the surplus benevolence in your care for the

²⁸ 鯉庭, abridged form of 孔鯉過庭 [Kong Li (532-483 BC) passed the hall], an allusion to *Lunyu* (16: 2522), here it is used to refer to Wen's accepting the fatherly patronage of the Prime-Minister-Duke. 阮巷, alludes to the story of Ruan Xian (阮咸), NATW, 375: "Ruan Xian and Ruan Ji (阮籍, 210-63) lived on the south side of the street, and all the other Ruans lived on the north side. The northern Ruans were all wealthy, while the southern Ruans were poor." Xian was nephew of Ji, see JS, 49: 1359-63.

²⁹ In the end of the year, candidates were busy preparing for the spring examination.

³⁰ 通津, The Metropolitan Port, here refers to Luoyang (where there is the Luo River).

people will, I hope, favor the young and weak (相公河润馀津, 云行广施. 调羹之味,³¹ 未及宗亲; 育物之余, 希沾幼弱). If I could avail myself of one word of your recommendation, I would be able to follow the awakening to life of the hundred hibernating animals. Then, the shade of the drooping boughs could offer equal safekeeping to all beneath them; and the seeds of the pepper-plant would thus be enabled to flourish. (倘或假一言之甄发, 随百蛰之昭苏. 庶令葛之阴, 均其煦育; 椒聊之实, 遂彼扶疏).³² I could then follow the example of Zhong Yi, in performing the Southern music, and relieve myself of the anxiety of Gu Ti, kneeling before the letter from his father. My humble feelings are beyond expression (成鍾仪操乐之规, 宽顾悌拜书之恋.³³ 下情无任).

³¹ "Season the soup" (调羹) is a metaphor for holding the Prime-Ministership. The term originates from *Shangshu* (10: 175): "Be to me as the salt and the prune in making agreeable soup." For the translation, see Waltham, *Shu Ching*, 98.

³² The twining creeper (葛垒), is a term from *Maoshi* "Drooping Boughs" (蓼木): "In the south is a tree with drooping bough / The twining creeper binds it" (南有蓼木, 葛垒累之; Waley, no.163). The line is given an explanation in *Zuozhuan*, "The 7th Year of Duke Wen" (19: 1845): "The clans of dukes are the branches and leaves of the royal family; and if they are cut off, there will be left nothing to protect the trunk and root [of the royal family tree]. As the twining creeper can protect its trunk and root, the noble man therefore takes it as a metaphor." The Pepper-plant (椒聊), is also the title of a poem of *Maoshi*, one line of which reads: "The seeds of the pepper-plant \ overflowed my pint-measure" (椒聊之实, 繁衍盈升; Waley, no. 8). According to Kong Yingda's annotation, this is a metaphor for the king of the Jin Kingdom who had numerous offspring.

³³ The musician Zhong Yi, a native of Chu, once fell prisoner to Jin, and when the Marquis of Jin asked him to perform a piece of music on his zither, Zhong played the southern music. See *Zuozhuan*, "Duke Cheng The Ninth Year" (26: 1905). Gu Ti used to kneel and

An Analytical Study of the Epistle

Wen's Clansman Wen Zao (温造, 766-835)

After a careful examination of this epistle, we find out that the so-called "Prime-Minister-Duke at the Honor Seat" was one of Wen's clansmen, though a distant uncle. Wen Tingyun lived for a time with this man under his fatherly patronage, and was appreciated by him. Because the uncle and nephew remained on friendly terms, the uncle adopted Wen as a foster-son by moving his name to the genealogical records of his own branch of the clan.

As is revealed in the title as well as the contents of this epistle, "the Prime-Minister at the Honor Seat" was at the time a figure of no small renown, so the histories could not afford to ignore him. Among those who bore the surname Wen, the most famous person in the ninth century who has a biography in either of the standard histories is Wen Zao. Referring to Zao's biographical records (JTS, 165: 4314; XTS, 91: 3784) and other sources, we find the following reasons to identify him with the subject addressed here.

"The Prime-Minister-Duke at the Honor Seat"

The position of "Honorary Minister of Finance, Imperial Deputy of the Eastern Capital, in Charge of the Chancellery in the Eastern Capital" (检校户部尚书东都留守判东都尚书省事), held by Wen Zao in the fifth year of Dahe (831), was high sufficiently to be called Prime-Minister Duke (相公).³⁴ After he was promoted in 833 to Censor-in-Chief, which, in

weep when reading letters from his father. See his biography in SGZ, 52: 1228. By alluding to Gu, Wen extends to Wen Zao, his foster-father, the wish to be offered a post in Luoyang and to live close to him.

³⁴ The term *xianggong* (相公) is translated in this paper as Prime Minister. However, depending on the context, it can refer to such official positions as the Director or Vice-Director of the Chancellery (门下侍郎, 仆射), the Grand Councilor (中书令), the Censor-in-Chief (御史大夫), the Left or Right Assistant of the Department of State

most cases, preceded promotion to Prime-Ministership in Tang times, he was all the more qualified to be thus addressed. Censor-in-Chief, like Councilor-in-Chief (丞相) and Defender-in-Chief (太尉), was one of the Three Dukes (三公) during the Qin and Han dynasties. During the Tang Dynasty the case was similar, as can be proved by Fengshi Wenjianlu:³⁵ "Ever since the founding of the Tang, most of the Prime Ministers ascended to power from the censorship, thus Censor-in-Chief is called Prime-Minister too."

As a junior clansman, Wen need not use the surname in his epistle to address Zao.

"The Honor Seat" (or First Seat) originally refers to the seat at the head of the table for the most senior or respected man to take in a feast or assembly. The term is also used as a proper name for the head monk in a monastery, who, as chief preacher, was responsible for giving lectures on Buddhist doctrine. According to Sengshilue (僧史略) and Shishi Yaolan (释氏要览),³⁶ Emperor Xuanzong (宣宗, r. 847-859) once appointed the monk Bianzhang (辨章) as the Honor-Seat [preacher] for the Three Religions (三教首座). This epistle provides the only example in any historical sources where "the Honor Seat" (a Buddhist title) and "the Prime Minister" are combined to form a title. We know that Wen Zao once discussed the Buddhist doctrine with Zongmi (宗密, 779-840),³⁷ the well-known Buddhist master of the time. Zao, called as Minister Wen of Shannan (山南温尚书) in the discussion, raised a question that Zongmi answered at great length, and Zongmi then also summed up the main points of his argument with a Buddhist verse (偈) that he later chanted for Zao. It is apparent that Wen Zao in his late years became devoted to the Buddhist faith and, after

Affairs (尚书 左右丞), the Examination Master (座主) and Commissioner Prime Minister (使相).

³⁵ The book was written by Feng Yan (封演) of Tang, see j. 46, Shuofu.

³⁶ For the two works, see Dazhengzang (大正藏), j. 54, no. 2126 & 2127.

³⁷ For Zongmi's biographies, see Shi Daoyuan: Jingde Chundenglü, 13: 18-19 and Zan Ning: Song Gaoseng Zhuan, 6: 13a.

completing his official routine, might on some occasions preach the Buddhist doctrines to his subordinates or retainers. Thus, imaginably, he may have received the appellation "the Prime-Minister-Duke at the Honor Seat" from his auditors.

Wen Zao's Person

In his official career, Wen Zao more than once organized the people to dig canals to irrigate their fields: both when he was the magistrate of Langzhou and when he held the post of Military Commissioner of Heyanghuai Circuit. It was for this that Wen praised him for his "River-like nourishment" in his epistle.

Moreover, Wen Zao was well-known for his courageous actions, while holding the post of the Military Commissioner of the Western Circuit of Shannan (the capital of which was Xingyuan, 兴元), to execute without hesitation those who had murdered Li Jiang (李绹, 764-830), the former Military Commissioner. Liu Yuxi on that account praised Wen Zao's heroic deeds in the following terms: "Henceforth all common people opened their eyes / To know that an outstanding general rose up from among men of letters" (从此世人开耳目, 始知名将出书生).³⁸ From this, as well as from other details in Wen Zao's biographies, we can see his political tendencies and actual influences, both of which could possibly have enabled Wen to enter into the officialdom without recourse to the ordinary route of sitting for the civil examination. Such an expedient and privileged approach is illustrated in the case of Wen Zhang (温璋, ?-869), Wen Zao's son, who began his official service by dint of family privilege (以荫入仕). Herein lies the true reason why Wen begged for a chance "to follow the example of Zhong Yi, in performing the southern music," i. e., to bypass the examination and take up directly a similar post to that of his late father, very possibly, to work in the

³⁸ See Qu Tuiyuan: *Liu Yuxi Ji Jianzheng*, 24: 743 and QTS, 255: 4118. "Sending a Poem, Congratulating Minister Wen for His Quelling the Mutiny in Xingyuan" (美温尚书镇定兴元, 以诗寄贺).

palace library, because Wen Xihua once was Director of the Palace Library (秘书监).³⁹

Therefore, the "Prime Minister at the Honor Seat" is Wen Zao, Wen's clan uncle.

When and Why Wen Came to Call on Wen Zao

As far as we can see from this epistle, after a long vagrant life, first for five years around the Guanzhong region (the so-called fertile land), then "ten thousand *li* from Sichuan along the River bank," Wen came to the place he called the Metropolitan Port, most probably Luoyang, where Wen Zao lived.⁴⁰ He hoped that, by the recommendation of this uncle and foster-father, he could benefit from the family's prerogative and advance in the political world, with the coming of the spring. Wen Zao held the position of Military Commissioner of the Western Circuit of Shannan from the fourth to the fifth year of Dahe (830-1, TFZNB, 4: 663), but only after he was promoted to be in charge of the Chancellery in the Eastern Capital (831), could he have been called Prime Minister [as he still was when he was Censor-in-Chief (833), until his death (835)]. This epistle was undoubtedly presented between 831 and 835. As it was within Zao's tenure as Military Commissioner of the Heyanghuai Circuit (from the eighth month of 831 to the eleventh month of 834) that he helped organize the people to dig canals (in 833), this epistle most probably was written sometime around the end of 833 or of 834.

"Ten Thousand Li from Sichuan along the River"

Keeping his special relationship with Wen Zao in mind, we know that toward the end of the Dahe era, Wen traveled back to Luoyang, in the capital region. Then, prior to this, between his audience with Wen Zao (833?) and his sojourn in Shu (827--), there were years of constant wandering, that is the so-called "ten thousand *li* from Sichuan along the River bank." While he had to change patrons from time to time, he wandered from one place to

³⁹ See Yuanhe Xingcuan quoted above, and XTS, "Genealogical Lists for the Prime Ministers (新唐书宰相世系表), 83: 3659.

⁴⁰ According to XTS, 91: 3786, Wen Zao had a residence for reclusion in Luoyang.

another, sailing down from Sichuan along the Yangtze River.

Going Out of the Three Gorges

Wen first sailed down the Yangtze River through Qian and Kui Prefectures (黔州, 夔州), in the east of Sichuan, as can be inferred from the first couplet of the following poem.

Sending Off Bureau Cui to Military Service (送崔郎中赴幕, WFQ, j. 4)

Having parted company in Qian and Wu, we were like broken strings,	一别黔巫似断弦,
My old friend now is going eastward, and I am all in tears.	故交东去更潸然.
My mind distracted, my gaze blurred, a distance of three thousand <i>li</i> ,	心游目想三千里
The rain scattered, the clouds flown, a separation of twenty years.	雨散云飞二十年.
To gain promotion we need no cassia in the Heavens,	发迹岂劳天上桂,
To compose writings we attain lotuses inside the curtain.	属词还得幕中莲. ⁴¹
While missing each other, don't say Chang'an is far away,	相思莫道长安远, ⁴²
A bright and full moon will always shine on your way.	明月随人处处圆.

This poem was composed at the beginning of Dazhong era (847-859), and its first two couplets recall the poet's having company with the Bureau Director Cui twenty years earlier, in Qian and Wu prefecture. Likewise, the title of another of his poems, "The Temple of the Goddess of Mount Wu" (巫山神女庙, j. 7, WFQ), indicates that Wen sailed through the Three Gorges on his way from Sichuan to Hubei. Mount Wu is situated on the eastern border of Sichuan province at the entrance to the Three Gorges.

Sojourn in the Yangtze-Han River Valleys

Wen next arrived in the Eastern Shannan Circuit (Yangtze-Han River Plain), and left to

⁴¹ "To break a cassia branch" is a synonym for getting the Presented Scholar degree; "lotus inside the curtain" means the post assistant or secretary of a high-ranked official.

⁴² When Emperor Ming of the Jin was a child, his father asked him which of the two, Chang'an or the sun, was further away from them. See JS, 6: 158. Here "Chang'an is far away" is a metaphor for having no access to the emperor.

posterity nearly twenty poems,⁴³ written in prefectures such as Xiangyang, Jiangling and Wuchang, from which we learn that he traveled to these places more than once. The last time he came to the Yangtze-Han region was in his late years, and the poems he wrote are easily discernible as those of an old man who has survived the hardships of a lifetime; the voyage of his early years along the Yangtze River from Sichuan must necessarily have passed through this region, though we cannot fix the exact time of his stay there, nor the exact date of any of his poems written during this period.

Basing himself in the area of the Yangtze-Han Valley, Wen may have made many side-trips. We know, for example, that he once went to the south of Dongting Lake (洞庭湖), far into modern Hu'nan. However, since this is a clear fact (see note 43), we will concentrate on his journey to the Hongzhou Prefecture (modern Jiangxi Province) that has not yet been ascertained.

Study Atop Mount Lu

In his poem "Sent to Someone in the Mountains" (寄山中人, j. 8, WFQ), Wen wrote: "Why do the scholars of Mount Sumen \ Hand in hand, roam atop the South-Eastern Peak?"⁴⁴ This couplet indicates that, enchanted by the landscape, he did tour Mount Lu and study there for a considerable length of time. The Tang writer Li Zhenggu's (李徵古, of 10th century) reaffirms this fact by remarking in his "Gatherings and Feasts on Mount Lu" (庐山宴集记):⁴⁵

On the Ji-chou year of Qianfu [929], I wandered to this spot, and found the relic of the reading hall of Wen Tingyun, the Four Gate Erudite of our state dynasty.

⁴³ See Gu Xuejie, 245

⁴⁴ The poet Ruan Ji once ascended Mount Sumen where he met with Sun Deng, a Taoist recluse and whistled together with him. See JS, 49: 1359-62. "Masters of Sumen" therefore refers to recluses. "The South-eastern Peak" is one of the peaks of Mount Lu.

⁴⁵ See QTW, 872: 11507, first quoted by Huang Kunyao in his Wen Tingyun (30).

It is only after having ascertained Wen's experience of studying at Mount Lu that we can come to a full understanding of the following account in Wen's "Epistle Presented to Minister Feng" (上封尚书启).

I am in a muddy quagmire, and have none to act as my mediator (某迹在泥途, 居无绍介). I always try to encourage myself, so as to rid myself of disgrace and humiliation (常思激励, 以发湮沈). Though endowed with a dull mind, I have long had a predilection for poetry (素稟颡愚, 夙耽比兴). *Consequently I built my cottage on the summit* and weeded the grasses in the wild (因得诛茅绝顶, 雉草荒田). Concentrated meditation overworks my mind, devoted absorption marks me to the marrow of my bones (默想劳神, 冥搜刻骨). All this has the consequence that, looking in the mirror in the morning, I know that my robust years are fading; and wearing my cap crookedly, on a day of leisure, my raven hairs have become white (遂使崇朝览镜, 壮齿成衰; 暇日欹冠, 玄髻变白).

If Wen had not had the personal experience of studying on Mount Lu, he would not have talked of his "cottage on the summit [of Mount Lu, evidently]." According to Wen's own account, it seems that he had resided there for some time. The following of Wen's poems gives the approximate time of Wen's stay in the vicinity around Mount Lu:

Presented to Appointed Scholar Zheng (赠郑徵君, WFQ, j. 5)

Wen's note: (Zheng) abided in Mount Kuang [Mount Lu] and exchanged visits with Prime Minister Duke of Zanzhuang, in the beginning of spring (家匡山, 首春与丞相赞皇公游止)⁴⁶

⁴⁶ "Duke of Zanzhuang" refers to Li Deyu (787-849), see JTS, 174: 4509 and XTS, 180: 5327. After having been promoted to the Prime-Ministership and enfeoffed as the Duke of Zanzhuang in the seventh year of Dahe (833), Li was demoted to the post of Aide Prefect (长史) of Yuanzhou Prefecture (袁州), near Mount Lu. Li once held the post of Surveillance Commissioner of the Zhexi Circuit from 822 to 829, and of the Military

Given up orchid paddle and followed swallows and wild geese, 一抛兰棹逐燕鸿, Amid
 rivers and lakes, I once acquainted myself with Lord Xie. 曾向江湖识谢公.
 Passing by his red gate, I always look in with grief 每过朱门还怅望,
 For my home mountain was often drawn on his painted screens. 故山多在画屏中.⁴⁷

Wen's footnote shows that sometime after the second month of the seventh year of the Dahe era, when Li Deyu was demoted to Jiangxi, Wen might have met him there. This is one more proof that Wen had traveled Hongzhou region and Mount Lu.

Liaisons with Buddhist Monks

At this point, a discussion of Wen's close friendship with Zongmi (宗密, 780-840) will be useful for a complete understanding of our poet.⁴⁸

Zongmi is the fifth patriarch of the Hua Yan Sect and the seventh patriarch of the Chan School. As a Buddhist master, he had played a political role of considerable importance and showed an anti-eunuch tendency. In the Dahe era (827-35), he "was called to the court. The emperor more than once asked him about the essentials of the law....Only Pei Xiu [Prime Minister during 852-6] understood and gained a deep insight into his lore, so he received the precepts as an outside patron of the Buddhist religion." Despite his capacity as a monk, Zongmi once tried to save Li Xun (李训, ?-835), the leading figure of the abortive coup d'état against the eunuchs in the Sweet Dew Incident, and was almost put to death by Qiu Shiliang (仇世良, 779-841). However, a Buddhist disciple himself, Qiu spared Zong Mi's life after some hesitation (Zan Ning, 6: 13a).

Commissioner of Jian'nan-Xichuan Circuit from 830 to 832. In both cases Wen may have had access to him, in addition to their later possible contact in Chang'an.

⁴⁷ It might suggest that on Li's screens were painted the landscape of Kuaiji where Wen's home was located.

⁴⁸ About this topic, see Xu Tao's essay: "An Investigation of Wen Tingyun's Participation in the Association Led by the Chan Master Zongmi". *Wenshi*, 28:312-8.

Wen maintained a constant connection with Wen Zao, Liu Yuxi and Pei Xiu (?-864), all of whom were among Zongmi's best friends.⁴⁹ This is only one fact bespeaking Wen's intimate relationship with Zongmi. In Wen's works we can find more evidence that reveals the nature of Wen's contact with the Buddhist religion.

Revisiting the Pure Abode of the Chan Master Zongmi on the Eastern Peak

(重游東峰宗密禪師精廬,⁵⁰ j. 4, WFQ)

Atop a hundred-foot black cliff, a three-foot grave,	百尺青厓三尺墳,
Your subtle words are gone, never to be heard again.	玄言已絕杳難聞.
A Dai Yong of today became a Buddhist layman,	戴顒今日稱居士,
The Zhi Dun of old knew the Army Commander.	支盾他年識領軍 ⁵¹
Firs, pines and I unite, as if forming an association,	暫對杉松如結社,
Occasionally joining the deer we are of the same herd.	偶因麋鹿自成群.
Your disciple of the old mountain looks back in vain,	故山弟子空回首,

⁴⁹ Pei Xiu wrote "The Tomb Inscription of the Chan Master of Gui Peak" (圭峰禪師碑銘, QTW, 743: 9730-2), "Chuanxin Fayao" (傳心法要, Taish: Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo, no. 2012, 48: 370-87) and "Sending off the Senior Zongmi to the Cottage Temple of Mount Zhongnan" (送宗密上人歸終南草堂寺, QTS, 563: 6530).

⁵⁰ According to Zong Mi's biography in Jingde Chuandenglü, Zongmi lived in the Cottage Temple of the Eastern Peak [the Gui Peak, 圭峰] of Mount Zhongnan.

⁵¹ Dai Yong's father Dai Kui and elder brother Dai Bo were well-known Buddhist laymen in Tonglu County. See NS, 75: 1866 and SS, 93: 2276. Zhi Dun (支遁, 314-366) was a famous Jin dynasty monk; here his name is used to refer to Zongmi. Army Commander, an official post once held by Zhi Dun's lay friend Wang Qia, here it hints at a secular friend of Zongmi's, most probably Li Xun (?-835).

On Onion Ridge perhaps you meet with Song Yun?

葱岭还应见宋云。⁵²

First we must point out that in this poem, Wen calls himself Zongmi's "disciple of the old mountain." Other examples include "Lodging in the Yunji Temple" (宿云际寺, j. 8, WFQ), where he more clearly refers to himself as "the disciple of the Eastern Peak," and "Visiting the Senior Zhixuan" (访知玄上人, j. 9, WFQ), where he calls himself "a disciple of Mount Zhong." Thus, Wen confesses that he was a Buddhist lay disciple and had once followed Zongmi studying Buddhism on Zhongnan Mountain.

Actually, Wen had some estates in Yu County, as can be seen from his poems "Living in the Suburbs of Yu and Du County" (鄆杜郊居, j. 4, WFQ) and "Sent to a Friend from the Villa of the Yu County Suburbs" (鄆郊別墅寄所知, j. 8, WFQ). Zongmi's Biography in Shi Daoyuan's *Jingde Chuandenglu* (13: 12b) says: "[Zong] traveled north to the Pure and Cold Mountain [清凉山, another name for Mount Wutai, 五台山], then returned to live in the Cottage Temple of Yu County, and soon afterwards, he entered the Gui Peak Aranya, to the south of the Cottage Temple." Comparing Zongmi's biography with Wen's traces, we can be sure that for a considerable length of time Wen had access to Zong Mi and remained a disciple of the Buddhist master.

Second, we must pay special attention to the fifth line of the above poem: "Firs, pines and I unite, as if forming an association." We find that there was a certain kind of association, centered around the group of monks headed by Zongmi, and formed by some half dozen literati, including Wen Tingyun himself. The association was more than merely a religious one, as it had to do with literary and even political matters. We have more examples of Wen's

⁵² According to Shi Daoyuan, *Jingde Chuandenglu* (3: 9), in the year the Buddhist Patriarch Bodhidharma died, a missionary of the Wei, Song Yun, came back from Onion Ridge, and met Bodhidharma on the way holding one shoe, saying that he was going to the Western Heaven. When Song came back and told of this, Bodhidharma's disciples opened his grave, only to find the coffin empty with only one shoe left.

lines having similar implications, such as "If people in the White-Lotus Association asked me" [白莲社里如相问--"Sent to the Monks in the Pure and Cool Temple" (寄清凉寺僧, j. 4, WFQ)], and "I will ask those from the White-Lotus Association \ To wait for me in front of the pines and osmanthus" [应共白莲客,⁵³ 相期松桂前--"Sent to the Yue Monk Yue Yun" (赠越僧岳云, j. 7, WFQ)].

Third, the second couplet of the poem also contains noteworthy information. The allusions used in this couplet can also be found elsewhere, for example:

From Wu or from Heng, my way can be different	衡巫路不同,
But you have your cottage on the Eastern Peak.	结室在东峰.
When the year approaches its end, I come upon a Zhi Dun,	岁晚得支遁,
And as the night turns cold you meet a Dai Yong.	夜寒逢戴颙

"Lodging in the Mount Study of A Monk of Qin" (宿秦僧山斋, j. 9 WFQ)

Another example:

A bamboo path, with no dust, opens on the stony road,	石路无尘竹径开,
Where in old days, accompanied by you, Dai Yong came.	昔年曾伴戴颙来,

"Sent to the Monk in the Pure Cold Temple" (寄清凉寺僧, j. 4, WFQ)

The allusion to Dai Yong (378-441) is meant to refer to Wen himself as a pious lay Buddhist and a native of Tonglu, like Dai Yong. Besides, there might be a certain resemblance between his own family status and that of Dai's. Dai's father Dai Kui was a famous Buddhist laymen, so was Wen's foster father Wen Zao, quite like Dai Kui.

If Wen likens himself to Dai Yong to illustrate his relationship to Zongmi, then it follows that by alluding to Zhi Dun he was referring to Zongmi, but to whom does he refer when he uses the title "Army Commander". By analogy, it should be somebody other than Wen

⁵³ White-Lotus Association (白莲社) is the famous association presided over by Hui Yuan (慧远, 523-592) and eighteen other literati such as Tao Qian (陶潜, 372-427) and Xie Linyun. See Sengshilue (僧史略), no. 2126: 250, in Daizokyo.

himself, a special figure to be picked out among Zongmi's friends. Considering Zongmi's particular political capacity as a Buddhist master, it must refer to Li Xun! That is to say, in following Zongmi to learn Buddhism, and ranking himself a member of Zongmi's Association, Wen's purpose, in addition to consoling his frustrated self, must have had to do with the current political situation. Even when he chose to be a follower of the Buddhist religion, discussing dharma and emptiness with the Buddhist masters, he did not let go of his worldly concerns, for example, how to deal with the eunuchs, though we cannot be certain of the degree to which he was involved in the activities of the Buddhist association centered on Zongmi or whether he ever realized any political aim by associating himself with this Buddhist master.

Chapter Four Wen's Marriage--A Case of Scandal

As Wen Tingyun's uncle and foster-father, and as an official of considerable political influence, Wen Zao had been kind to Tingyun. But he could at most recommend him to other influential ministers for a local subordinate post, and was not able to introduce him directly into officialdom within the central bureaucracy, as Tingyun had hoped. There are no clear records of what came of his audience with his uncle. Soon afterwards, Wen Zao died (in the sixth month of the ninth year of Dahe, 835). By that time, Tingyun had traveled back to Huainan (the Yangtze-Huai River valleys). There he began his more troubled years, and the notorious Jianghuai Incident took place.

What Happened during Wen's Stay in Jianghuai

Relationship with Wang Ya (766?-835)¹

It so happened that one of the victims of the tragic "Sweet Dew Incident", Wang Ya, had been Wen's guardian. And most probably, it was right before the Jianghuai Incident and the Sweet Dew Incident that Wen had served under Wang's protection. Since the two men were on such friendly terms, when we examine Wen's tribulations in the Jianghuai Incident, we have every reason to set them against the background of the Sweet Dew Incident, and consider the overwhelming power of the eunuchs and Wen's hostility to them. We will first study Wen's relation with Wang Ya through the following poems:

Two Poems Written in the Forest Pavilion of Prime Minister Wang

in Feng'an Alley (題豐安里王相林亭二首, j. 7, WFQ)

The poet's footnote: His Excellency is conversant with the Taixuan Scripture.

(原注: 公明太玄經)²

¹ For Wang Ya's biographies, see JTS, 169: 4401; XTS, 179: 531 /.

² See XTS, "The Records of Art and Literature", 59: 1512: "Three *juan* of the Taixuan Scripture annotated by Wang Ya." See also Wang Dang: Tangyulin, 1: 18, "Prime Minister

In the filmy dust of flowers and bamboos,	花竹有薄埃,
At exquisite parties once gathered talented men.	嘉游集上才.
Either it was amidst the white duckweeds on the Isle of Anshi,	白蘋安石渚,
Or the red leaves on the Terrace of Ziyun.	紅葉子雲臺. ³
By the vermilion door, now sparrow-nets can be set,	朱戶雀羅設,

Wang Ya annotated the Taixuan scripture, and often used it to augur, saying it worked better than the divination in The Book of Changes."

³ This couplet is composed after the model of Liu Yuxi's "Inscriptions to My Humble Chamber" (陋室銘, QTW, 608: 7803): "It is the cottage of Zhuge [Liang] in Nanyang; it is the pavilion of [Yang] Ziyun in Xishu" (南陽諸葛廬, 西蜀子雲亭). It depicts Wang Ya's abodes in Huainan and Shu, comparing Wang to Xie An (謝安, 320-85, style Anshi, a Jin dynasty famous statesman) and Yang Xiong (揚雄, 53-18, BC, style Ziyun, a well-known Han dynasty writer). Anshi Isle (安石渚) was believed to be the place where Xie had once lived. According to JS, "The Biography of Ruan Yu" (49: 1368): "Several friends had made an appointment to gather on Mount Fang, but they failed to meet. Liu Shan (劉惔) sighed: 'Since I have come to the east, I prefer to anchor by the foot of Anshi Isle;'" Anshi Isle is thus near Mount Fang [Jiangning County, a part of present-day Nanjing]. Liuchao Shiji (六朝事迹, ed. by Zhang Dunyi 張敦頤 of the Song Dynasty, see Shuofu, j. 68) says Xie's residence was on the Earth Mountain (土山) of Shangyuan County (上元縣), or on Mount Zhong (鍾山); both were later called Eastern Mountain, and must have been close to Anshi Isle. Anshi Isle is thus near present-day Nanjing, which was part of Yangzhou (揚州) in the Tang dynasty. According to XTS (179: 5317) and Tanghuiyao (87: 1592 & 1600), Wang Ya was the Salt and Iron Commissioner from 830 to 835 in Yangzhou. Yang Xiong was a native of Chengdu in Sichuan (HS, 56: 2358), whereas Wang once was Military Commissioner of Jian'nan Dongchuan Circuit (eastern Sichuan) from 820 to 823 (TFZNB, 1001-2).

While the Yellow Gate's carriages come along.

黄门驭骑来。⁴

Alas you did not know the Huai River grew turbid,

不知淮水浊,

Now for whom does the pink lotus bloom?

丹藕为谁开。⁵

Poem Two

By chance I betook myself to Raven Robe Alley,

偶到乌衣巷,⁶

With emotion unexpressed, I felt all the more lost.

含情更惘然。

In the Western Prefecture there are the curved-bank willows,

西州曲堤柳,

In the Eastern Mansion there is the old pond lotus.

东府旧池莲。⁷

⁴ "To catch a bird by one's door" is an allusion to HS, 50: 2323, "The Biography of Zheng Dangshi", meaning that there are very few visitors to the house. After Wang Ya's clan extermination during the Sweet Dew Incident, few dared to visit his old residence. Yellow Gate, short for official titles such as Director of (Eunuch) Attendance (黄门令) and Palace Attendant (中黄门), official titles taken in most cases by the eunuchs.

⁵ When glossing this line, Gu Sili in WFQ quotes Genealogy of the Wang Clan (王氏家谱): "At the beginning when Wang Dao (王导, 267-330) was about to cross the Huai River, he asked Guo Pu (郭璞, 275-321) to divine for him. Guo said: 'All is well, no harm. The River Huai is dry and the Wang clan extinguished'" (吉, 无咎. 淮水绝, 王氏灭). The citation is found in JS, "Biography of Wang Hui" (65:1760). We should at least consult another allusion to Shiji, "Biography of Guan Fu" (107: 2845): "The Ying River is pure, the Guan clan is secured; the Ying River is turbid, the Guan clan is extinguished" (颖水清, 灌氏宁; 颖水浊, 灌氏灭). Besides being a piece of scenic and lyrical description, "pink lotus" is a metaphor for the poet himself, a retainer of the late Prime Minister.

⁶ 乌衣巷, The Raven Robe Alley, is located south of the Qinhuai River in Jiankang, near the Red Bird Bridge (朱雀桥) where the Jin dynasty eminent families such as the Wangs and the Xies lived. Here it refers to the quarters where Wang Ya lived.

The star crashes down to lament the senior statesman,	星坼悲元老
Clouds return, to see off the "ink immortal."	云归送墨仙。 ⁸
Who would have thought the river-crossing boat,	谁知济川楫, ⁹
Today becomes a rustic's skiff?	今作野人船。

Wang Ya was Wen's Taiyuan fellow townsman and was enfeoffed as Viscount of Qingyuan County. Very possibly, Wen may have been Wang Ya's kinsman.¹⁰ Their connection probably began in Wen's early years in the capital, continued in the Shu region, and was sustained until before Wang's death. It was likely due to Wang's support that Wen came to Huainan in search of an official post. For a time, Wen might have been counted among the "talented men" gathered at "exquisite parties" and he may have been a "lotus in the old pond"--i. e., a retainer under Wang's patronage. Wen held Wang's political state-craft and literary skills in high esteem, hence his comparison of Wang to Yang Xiong and Xie An, with the implication that he had access to Wang's abodes both in Shu and in Huainan. When Wen revisited the remains of Wang's residence in Huainan, he could not hold back his deep sorrow for and fond memory of the deceased man. Against the dark backdrop of the political

⁷ The Western Prefecture used to be the locale of administration of Yangzhou in the Jin dynasty. The curved-bank willows might hint at Wang Ya, because Wang was cut into halves under the Isolated Willow (独柳树) in the Sweet Dew Incident. The Eastern Mansion (东府) was habitually used to refer to the mansion of Prime Minister. "The old pond lotus", as the pink lotus, refers to Wen himself.

⁸ An old Chinese tradition assumes that, when an important statesman dies, his star in the Heavens crashes down. "The ink immortal" refers to Wang Ya, a good calligrapher.

⁹ "River-crossing boat" alludes to *Shangshu* 10: 174, "Suppose me crossing a great stream, I will use you for a boat with its oars." For the translation, see Waltham: *Shu Ching*, 96.

¹⁰ c. f., chapter one, p. 55, note 55.

upheavals of the time, scarcely anybody dared speak on Wang Ya's behalf after the extermination of his clan. But Wen's poems boldly protest the injustice Wang suffered, and each of his two poems ends with the rhetorical questions: "You did not know the Huai River grew turbid \ Now for whom does the pink lotus bloom" and "Who would have thought the river-crossing boat \ Today becomes a rustic's skiff"? Here the poet appears to grieve over Wang's ignorance of the impending disaster that finally destroyed him, despite his familiarity with the fortune-telling skills of the Taixuan classic. But he expresses a profound insight into his age, a time when even the life of a veteran minister like Wang Ya hung in the balance at any moment. Meanwhile, Wen's somber reflections on Wang's death reveal his bitter hatred of the eunuchs.

In "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem," we can pick out some narrative threads that may hint at Wen's relationship with Wang Ya; there is, for example, the following couplet:

56 I venerated the august bearing of General Big Tree,	威容尊大树,
And tried to shun <i>Autumn-Tu</i> , the law and penalty.	刑法避秋荼. ¹¹

In Wen's wanderings over the country, it was after having taken shelter under the protection of a "Big Tree" (serving in the secretariat of a patron) that he committed some "misconduct" and evaded the penalty by fleeing to the capital (by 837). Evidently, the "Big Tree" must have fallen. In view of Wen's long friendship with Wang, the "General Big Tree" very possibly refers to him. If so, "the penal law of *Autumn-Tu*" indirectly satires the eunuchs' brutal abuses of the law to purge their opponents after the Sweet Dew Incident. Wen's subsequent return to the capital is related in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem":

57 From afar I gazed back beyond a thousand leagues,	远目穷千里,
------------------------------------------------------	--------

¹¹ The "General Big Tree" is the designation the army men used to address Feng Yi (冯异, ?-31), see HS, 17: 639. 荼, *Tu*, or *sonchus oleraces*, is a bitter-tasting wild herb, used here as a metaphor for harsh and exacting orders and regulations.

And my returning heart flew to the Nine Highways.

歸心寄九衢。¹²

Since, at the latest, the year of Wen's return to the capital was the second year of Kaicheng (837), Wen's stay in Huainan would have ended prior to that, possibly in 836. But what happened in Huainan that forced him to flee to the capital? Of all the events in Wen's life, this is one of the most noteworthy and complicated; without clarifying it, no lucid account of his life is possible.

The Earliest Records of the Jianghuai Incident

By the Jianghuai Incident we mean that while Wen was in Huainan, he was on one occasion whipped and seriously injured. The incident itself is rather confusing, and fraudulent accounts of it in various sources have been frequently cited to disparage Wen's personality. Since even the earliest records in the Tang and the Song anecdotal literature are contradictory and misleading, we shall have to take a careful look at them one by one and, by comparison and contrast, distinguish truth from fallacy, so as to make out the time, the place, the cause and the result—all the particulars of the whole event.

From each of the early important records, we shall try to draw forth all the detailed information in order to find out the grains of truth it contains.

In Tongxin (桐薪, quoted in WFQ, 257) by an unknown Tang author, we read:

Wen Qi in his young days was whipped in the Yangtze-Huai River valleys by his senior relative, hence he changed his name to Tingyun (庭雲), with the style name Feiqing. But some other books refers to him as Tingyun (庭筠), I really cannot understand what sense there is in referring to him like this (溫岐少曾于江淮爲親表檟楚, 故改名庭雲, 字飛卿. 而他書或作庭筠, 不曉所謂).

Sun Guangxian's Beimeng Suoyan (4: 29) says the following about the same event:

¹² 九衢, literally the nine highways, refers to the capital Chang'an (長安), where the emperors live, as things regarding the emperor are often marked with the number NINE, such as 九重, 九門, etc.

Shen Hui of Wuxing said: My maternal uncle Wen once was whipped in the Yangtze-Huai River valleys by one of his senior relatives, and thereafter changed his name" (吳興沈徽曰: 溫舅曾于江淮爲親表橫楚, 由是改名焉).

The Tongxin and the Beimeng Suoyan records indicate:

- (1) that the event happened perhaps when Wen was as yet "young";
- (2) that it happened in the Jianghuai region;
- (3) that Wen was whipped;
- (4) that his senior relative whipped him;
- (5) that no reason was given for the whipping;
- (6) and that the incident might have had something to do with Wen's change of his name to Tingyun (庭筠) or Tingyun (庭雲).

In Yuquanzi (11) by another unknown writer of the late Tang period, the story becomes longer and more details are provided:

Wen Tingyun had a considerable reputation for composing poems and rhapsodies. At an earlier time, when he was about to follow the local recommendation, he went traveling between the valleys of the Yangtze and the Huai Rivers. Yao Xu (姚勛, fl. 830-850), the imperial representative of Yangtze County [the locale of the Salt and Iron Monopoly Commission], offered him a handsome sum of money. Tingyun, still a young man at the time, however, squandered the money in the brothels. Yao, infuriated by this, gave Wen a good whipping and drove him away. Subsequently, Wen could not pass the Presented Scholar examination, despite all his efforts. His elder sister, who was the wife of Zhao Zhuan, often gnashed her teeth and blamed Yao for this. One day there was a guest at the district office, and she happened to ask who it was. When the servants told her it was Yao Xu, Madame Wen burst into the office, took hold of Yao's sleeve, and cried loudly. Yao was more startled than confused. What is more, she grasped his sleeve so tightly that he could not get free, and was at a loss for what to do. It was some while before Madame Wen found her

tongue: "My younger brother was young, and it is a common human desire to indulge in pleasure-seeking. How could you, just for that reason, flog him? Is it not you who caused him to have been unsuccessful up to now?" Then, she wept loudly again. Only after a long time did Yao manage to free himself. Yao went home enraged and bewildered; he fell ill on account of this and died

(温庭筠有词赋盛名。初，将从乡里举，客游江淮间，扬子留後姚勣厚遗之。庭筠年少，所得钱帛多为狭邪所费。勣大怒，笞且逐之，以故庭筠卒不中第。其姊，赵颢之妻也。每以庭筠下第，辄切齿于勣。一日，厅有客。温氏偶问客姓名。左右以勣对。温氏遂出厅事前，执勣袖大哭。勣殊惊异；且持袖牢固不可脱。不知所为。移时，温氏方曰，我弟年少宴游，人之常情，奈何笞之？迄今无有所成，得不由汝致之？复大哭。久之，方得解。勣归愤讶，竟以此得疾而卒)。

The Yuquanzi record includes the following points:

- (1) The event happened right before Wen was about to follow the local recommendation, when he was "young";
- (2) It took place in the Jianghuai region;
- (3) Wen was given a good whipping and driven from the Yangzi County Salt and Iron Monopoly Office;
- (4) It was Yao Xu, the imperial representative of Yangzi, who punished Wen;
- (5) The reason Yao punished Wen is that Wen squandered in the pleasure quarters the money Yao bestowed on him, money that was likely bestowed to facilitate Wen's studies for a Presented Scholar degree;
- (6) According to the author, the resulting scandal also accounts for Wen's life-long failure to get the Presented Scholar degree, though Madame Wen's performance smacks of late Tang factional prejudices and fabrications.

Similar statements can also be found in most of the later "poetry talks" or other anecdotal literature. Particulars about Wen's flogging contained in them may differ some-how or not from what we already know. Only as a kind of echo of the early accounts, these works often

epitomize the political fallacies of Wen's lifetime, though they may suggest the truth in one way or another. Wang Dingbao's Tangzhiyan (11: 121), Ji Yougong's Tangshi Jishi (54: 822) and You Mao's Quantang Shihua (4: 36), are just such examples. By comparing the contradictory pictures they provide for the Jianghuai Incident, we can discover some grains of truth.¹³ As we will point out later, gossip about Wen's scandal in Jianghuai finds its most absurd expression in Wen's biographies in the standard histories, The New Tang History and The Old Tang History.

A Preliminary Analysis of All the Early Records

The notes and anecdotes produced between the Tang and Song dynasties about Wen Tingyun, especially the earlier works such as Tongxin and Yuquanzi, certainly have their value as historical data, granted they are read with a historical perspective, for even Wen Tingyun's biographies in the standard histories are based on them.

Basic Points Shared by All Sources

Each in itself containing aspects of truth, the details of the above-mentioned records may differ from one another, though they are clearly related to the same incident. That Wen was whipped by Yao Xu (Yuquanzi) refers to the same whipping by one of his senior relatives (Beimeng Suoyan)--though we cannot prove by other sources that Yao was one of his relatives. Such a notorious scandal could not have happened to Wen a second time, even though for the time being we have to accept "the first time" as our starting point for further research. We can, however, try to elicit some more basic points from our sources.

We can know from the accounts that Wen involved himself in a scandal of the pleasure quarters, most probably brought on by his relationship with a singer, or courtesan, and that he was badly lashed as a result. But the fact is of greater intricacy than the fictions

¹³ They mix the Beimeng Suoyan records with those of Tangzhiyan, confusing the two events: Wen's changing his own name to take the examination and his assuming the names of others to take the examinations on their behalf. See chapters seven and eight.

concerning it suggest, and requires further investigation before we can arrive at any conclusion. At this stage of discussion, we have to regard many details of the accounts as questionable and ask: Did Wen spend his money in the pleasure quarters just to satisfy his sexual desire? Judged by Tang moral standards, what was wrong with Wen's consuming his money in this way? Why did Yao Xu first give Wen money and then chastise him so seriously? How much credibility can we expect of accounts in Yuquanzi and like sources?

As a result of the whipping, Wen was forced to change his name--this, too, sounds extremely doubtful, and we will gather more evidence to clarify what is meant here. What would a change of his name do for him--salvage his reputation or indicate a determination on his part to change his ways? Neither alternative seems plausible.

The statement that attributes all of Wen's failures in the Presented Scholar examination to this whipping also needs explaining.

As for the minor plots in the story--that Shen Hui called Wen (maternal) uncle, and that Wen's elder sister held Yao Xu to blame--they need not concern us. In fact, since Wen Tingyun for a time became the target of much vilification, it was only natural that all kind of hearsay was bruited about him. Though we have no reason to question the relationship between Shen Hui and Wen Tingyun, it is difficult to give full credence to Madame Wen's performance, which is too theatrical to be credited as fact.

Notwithstanding the uncertain nature of the materials in hand, we can believe that the Jianghuai Incident took place just before Wen first "followed the local recommendation," i. e., before his first participation in the Presented Scholar examination. To judge by his extant works and other sources, Wen's first participation in the Metropolitan Prefecture examination took place in the fourth year of Kaicheng (839). The incidents we are concerned with, therefore, could have happened no later than 839.

Corroboration in Yao Xu's Biographical Materials

Information concerning Yao Xu's official career in the corresponding period compels the same conclusion. Yao "was repeatedly recommended by the local commissioners or

magistrates and promoted to Investigating Censor before he took to assisting in the affairs of the Salt and Iron Commissioner" (XTS, 124: 4388); "In May of the fourth year of Kaicheng, Yao Xu, the Assistant Commissioner in the Salt and Iron Monopoly, by dint of his capability in dealing with difficult lawsuits, was promoted to the position of Honorary Bureau Director of the Ministry of Rites, Concurrent with the Previously-held Title of Assistant Commissioner in the Salt and Iron Monopoly" (检校礼部郎中依前盐铁推官, ZZHTJ, 246: 7939); "The Assistant Commissioner in the Salt and Iron Monopoly, Yao Xu, as the director of the Heyin Salt and Iron Monopoly Bureau,¹⁴ excelled in rehabilitating wronged cases; the Salt and Iron Commissioner Cui Gong (崔珙) reported this to the throne, to reward and encourage him for his merits" (XTS, 206: 5843). We thus know that up to May of the fourth year of Kaicheng (839), Yao Xu was still assisting in the affairs of the Salt and Iron Commissioner, and as director of the Heyin Salt and Iron Bureau, he had been advancing well in his official career. Subsequently, in the Huichang era (840-846) and after, Yao Xu "assumed the posts of magistrate of Hu and Chang Prefectures" (XTS, 124: 4389), and according to Tan Yao's Jiatu Wuxingzhi (14: 30a), "Yao Xu was appointed magistrate [of Wuxing Commandery--Hu Prefecture in Tang dynasty] in the third year of Huichang (843) from his former post Left Bureau Director of the Department of State Affairs (尚书左司郎中); later he was promoted to Bureau Director of the Ministry of Personnel" (吏部郎中). These records add to the credibility of the story that it was during Yao's tenure as Assistant in the Yangzi Salt and Iron Monopoly Bureau (扬子盐铁院)--several years before the fourth year of Kaicheng--that he bestowed money on Wen. Once again we come to the conclusion that the Jianghuai incident happened some time before 839.

Political Persecution entangled with Private Affairs

The Jianghuai Incident, which made Wen notorious, deserves our special attention. We shall have to expose the truth of a matter obscured in various confusing records that were

¹⁴ Heyin was a county in He'nan Circuit, where the Salt and Iron Bureau was located.

composed after (though in a sense, *before*) Wen's death--all of which reflect the gossip and rumors fabricated either by eunuchs or by pro-eunuch literati. In fact, the Jianghuai Incident had much to do with both the existing political situation and Wen's private life. In it, we find a tangled skein of eunuch interference in a man's affairs with a singer of the pleasure quarters. As for the political background, we should remember what Wen had said in his "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Pei": when he "traveled to the valley of the Huai River," he "had not expected that Du Zhi was to make a false charge and Zang Cang harbor a bitter hatred against" him. As we have already demonstrated, "Zang Cang" and "Du Zhi" were Wen's life-long enemies--the eunuchs who had played a leading role in starting rumors and fomenting trouble against him. Owing to the fact that the histories have hardly recorded anything substantial about the behind-the-scenes activities of the eunuchs during the Kaicheng era, the case at hand seems all the more difficult to handle. Moreover, concerning his private life, Wen himself was not a poet to make his researchers' job easy. Yet if we failed to exhaust the extant details about the Jianghuai Incident, Wen's sub-sequent behaviors recorded in the standard histories, along with his posthumous reputation, will do him great disservice.

In order to find the solution to these difficulties, we will have to give a thorough explanation to the following epistle, which will not only support our conclusion that Wen Tingyun traveled to the Huai River valley several years before 839, but will also guide us to the bottom of the entire problem.

Epistle Presented to the Bureau Director

Han of the Ministry of Personnel (上吏部韩郎中启)

An Annotated Translation of the Epistle

My wisdom is different from comprehensive mastery, and my ability lacks proficiency in any particular line (某识异旁通, 才无上技). Fortunately I took over the great instruction [of the sages], so as not to lose the pure fragrance [of our ancestral glory] (幸传丕训, 免坠清芬). But when the beam of the wagon moves closer to the yoke I am sadly on the downslope and if I cannot take a look at the string and the bow, is my case different from

what happened in the former era of our dynasty (衡轭相逢, 方悲下路;¹⁵ 弦弧未审, 可异前朝)?¹⁶ Like Guo Fan, I have not inherited land in "Jianye," and like Ji Shao, I have an old mansion in "Xingyang" (郭翻无建业先畴,¹⁷ 嵇绍有 荥阳旧宅). A burden to friends of old, I am offered barely a piece of pig liver; my poor skill survives to become the rib of a chicken (故人为累, 仅得猪肝; 薄技斯存, 殆成鸡肋).¹⁸ When the wheels of time constantly revolve, my tears of sorrow can hardly be held back (分阴屡转, 尺涕难收). I am a Zhongxuan, a traveler constantly moving; I am a Zhuge, fearful of marrying a wife early (仲宣之为客不休. 诸葛之娶妻怕早). What I live on is but several acres of land that can hardly support my life of leisure; and my wisdom is adequate to fill

¹⁵ 衡 is the beam at the front end of the shafts of a wagon, and 轭 is the yoke, whose rear end is attached to the beam while the front end to the horse's head. When the carriage is on the downslope, the front end of the yoke moves backward to "meet" the beam. Here Wen takes the horse pulling a wagon down a slope as a metaphor for his worsening situation.

¹⁶ "To take a look at the string and the bow," is a metaphor for getting ready to participate in the civil examination. "The former era of our dynasty" referred to the reigning period Dahe (827-835) of Emperor Wenzong, when Liu Fen's (刘 昫) failure to pass the civil examination on account of his castigation of the eunuchs created a sensation. For Liu's biographies, see JTS, 190: 5064 and XTS, 178: 5293.

¹⁷ Guo Fan was a famous Jin dynasty recluse who owned no land; see JS, 94: 2446.

¹⁸ Min Zhongshu (闵仲叔) was too poor to afford pork, so every day he bought only a piece of pig liver. The governor of Anyi ordered one of his subordinates to respond to Min's daily need. See HHS, 53: 1740. The rib of a chicken, something that would cause regret if one throws it away, though there is really not much taste in it, is a metaphor for Wen's literary skills. For the source, see "The Annals of the Emperor Wu" in SGZ. 1: 1.

office, but I can never obtain such a favor (居惟數畝, 不足栖遲; 智效一官,¹⁹ 靡能沾沃). [I resemble] a desolate oak tree standing by the village shrine, lagging along at the dead end of my way (荒涼散社,²⁰ 流寓窮途). No longer high halls, now even a vat room is hard to maintain; I live only in the lower marsh, where the paths are easy to count up (高堂之甕社難充, 下澤之津蹊可見). I humbly think that a "forsaken mat" that is reminiscent of the past can inspire profound charity (竊以弃茵懷舊, 尚動深仁);²¹ and that "to angle together while pouring out one's heart" can lead to a promising friendship (投釣言情, 猶牽末契).²² That is why I venture to unfold my confidential feeling for your wise consideration (敢將幽懇, 來問平衡).

To have a recommendation letter from a Prime Minister during a time of peace would be an honor (升平相公, 簡翰爲榮);²³ but the kerchief box forever conceals the secret

¹⁹ A phrase borrowed from *Zhuangzi*, for the translation, see Watson, *Chuangtzu*, 25.

²⁰ "In the World of Men" of *Zhuangzi* (Watson 59-61) describes "a desolate oak tree standing by the village shrine" of great worth, because of its uselessness. Wen uses the term to say he is out of keeping with the time.

²¹ When Duke Wen of Jin returned to his own country [from his banishment], he threw away his mats. One of his subjects, Jiufan, said: "The mat is something you used for a long time to sleep on, but now you throw it away;" and, bowing, he wanted to quit [service of the Duke]. The Duke, then, stopped him from going by taking back the thrown mats. See *Hanfeizi*, 11: 1157, in *Ershierzi*. Wen wishes he could be "taken back" in the same fashion as the forsaken mat.

²² "To angle together while pouring out one's heart" evidently refers to the past friendship between Wen and Han, though it also contains an unidentified allusion (since it is antithetical to the previous phrase which includes an allusion).

²³ "Prime Minister during a time of peace," very possibly, refers to Wang Ya, who, as a patron of Wen's and as Commissioner of the Salt and Iron Monopoly for many years, may

his recommendation] (巾箱永秘).²⁴ His condescension in encouraging and his recommending me, however, will hopefully give me a chance (颇垂敦奖, 未至陵夷). Were Your Excellency to speak my name and show consideration for me, so as to allocate me a position among the [Salt and] Iron Bureau's minor clerks, and let me rank myself among the ordinary officials of salt and sauce (倘蒙一话 姓名, 试令区处; 分铁官之琐吏, 厕盐酱之常僚), then you will not be obliged to offer me food and clothes, and I need not conceal my ability and quality (则亦不犯脂膏, 免藏缣素). A hard-pressed monkey who finds a tree, or a fish in a dry rut who flings itself into a stream, could not be more fortunate than this (岂惟穷猿得木, 涸辙投泉)!²⁵

Thereafter, the poor orphan will find shelter, by always depending on the friendship of Shan Tao and never begs brazenly at the door of Cheng Xiao (然后幽独有归, 永托山涛之分; 赫曦无耻, 免干程晓之门).²⁶ My humble feelings are beyond expression

have recommended him by writing a letter. Since Wang was killed in the Sweet Dew Incident, all references of him in this epistle would of necessity be very equivocal.

²⁴ When Wang Jian was Prime Minister, he ordered that kerchief boxes and miscellaneous adornments be prepared as prizes, and that those academicians who succeeded in composing more couplets be given more of the gifts. See NQS, 39: 681. As a metaphor the kerchief box might refer to the contents of a letter from the above-mentioned Prime Minister. Here, the text is corrupt and at least one sentence missing, we can infer no more.

²⁵ "A hard-pressed monkey who finds a tree" alludes to Li Chong's (李充) remarks, see NATW, 67: "Li said: The sighs of the Songs, 'The Northern Gate', have long been heard on high. Does a hard-pressed monkey fleeing through the forest have the leisure to pick his tree?" "A fish in a dry rut who flings itself into a stream" alludes to "What Comes From Without", Zhuangzi, See Legge, The Texts of Taoism (131-41).

²⁶ Cheng Xiao (程晓, fl. 260), antithetical with Shan Tao, must refer to some historical figure of the Wei or Jin dynasty; since Wen took Cheng as his enemy, we can quote only

(下情无任).

The Gist of the Epistle

Like most of Wen's epistles, this one is replete with allusions and hidden motifs, and contains textual corruptions besides. It has never received the scholarly attention it deserves, because of its archaisms and obscurity. However, we must try to understand the basic gist of the text. In it, Wen first boasts of his family's glory and complains about his poverty, hinting at the fact that it was the constant persecution of the eunuchs that led to his disgrace. Wen's purpose in presenting this epistle was to induce Han to recommend him as a subordinate clerk in the Salt and Iron Monopoly, by emphasizing the hardships and ill luck of his life. That way he might earn himself a decent living, as opposed to shamelessly currying favor with the eunuchs.

We find in this epistle the following vitally important points:

The Jianghuai Incident: Identical Time and Place

"I am a Zhongxuan, a traveler constantly moving; and I am a Zhuge, fearful of marrying a wife early." As demonstrated in chapters two (p. 87) and three (p.110), this sentence shows that, after many years of wandering and until in his forties, Wen still was not married, but perhaps was about to marry soon (thus he asked Han for a post). Since Wen married several years prior to the fourth year of Kaicheng, and in this epistle seems to be preparing to get married, it should also be datable a few years prior to the fourth year of Kaicheng. In other words, the composition of this epistle fell in the period of Wen's Jianghuai stay and was almost contemporary with the Jianghuai Incident.

Since in his epistle, Wen asks Han for a minor post in the Iron and Salt Monopoly

the following sentence: "During the era of Jiaping, Xiao assumed the official position of Vice-minister of the Yellow Gate Ministry" (黄门侍郎), and understand it to be an insinuation about the eunuchs. See SGZ, "The Biography of Cheng Xiao", 14: 425.

Bureau, and since there is no possibility that he could have been involved with more than one Iron and Salt Monopoly Bureau at same time, the Monopoly Bureau in question must have been the Yangzi Court located in Yangzi County of the Huainan Circuit. Yao Xu was said to have been the imperial representative there, though the Bureau Director Han more likely held the post. In fact, Wen's asking a favor from Han is a clear indication that Han must have been in charge of the Salt and Iron Monopoly in Yangzhou. We regard therefore this epistle as an important document that reflects the true character of the Jianghuai Incident. The more we scrutinize it, the more substantial is the information uncovered.

Composed in the First Year of Kaicheng

At such a juncture, Wen's declaration that "I cannot take a look at the string and the bow" implies that he did not have even the chance to sit for the civil service examinations, not to mention pass them. Indeed, Wen's experience presents a striking contrast to what happened in "the former era" of the Tang dynasty, the Dahe era, when Liu Fen (JTS, 190: 5064), candidate of "Straightforward Criticism and Daring Remonstrance" (直言敢諫) leveled a drastic attack on the evil rule of the eunuchs. At the time, Liu's memorial to the throne was widely circulated and admired, but "the Examination Administrator dared not accept him for fear of the eunuchs' revenge." Wen Tingyun's case, on a par with Liu Fen of "the former era," was emblematic of the struggle between the southern and northern offices (court officials and eunuchs), and must also have been well-known. As a result, he would not have spoken more plainly, since the rhetorical question "is it different from what happened in the former era of our dynasty?" is indication enough of the unspoken allusion to Liu Fen. Thus we can conclude that this epistle was presented in the Kaicheng era (836-840); only then could Wen have referred to Liu Fen's event as have taking place in "the former era of our dynasty." Taking into consideration the fact that from 837 on, Wen was in Chang'an attending the Heir Apparent, the Jianghuai Incident under discussion most probably took place in the first year of Kaicheng (836), immediately after the Sweet Dew Incident, when the

eunuchs rode roughshod over every aspect of political life.

The Bureau Director: Han Yi (韩益, fl. 820-40)

We cannot be sure that Yao Xu was the man who whipped Wen, because there is doubt that he ever was an imperial deputy of the Yangzi Court. We know that when Yao was assisting in the affairs of the Salt and Iron Commissioner, he was successively promoted; yet to move from the post of Imperial Deputy (留後) of the Yangzi Court to that of Director of the Heyin Court was a kind of demotion. The Salt and Iron Monopoly Bureau located in Yangzi County was the national headquarters of all branch offices of the Salt and Iron Monopoly Bureau.²⁷ After the An-Shi rebellion, Yangzhou became the center for the transportation of grain and other products from south of the Yangtze River, and the Salt and Iron Commissioners themselves often had to live in Yangzhou for considerable periods of time. Yao very possibly was holding a post in the Yangzi Court, such as that of Assistant Commissioner, which the author of *Yuquanzi* mistook for Imperial Deputy of the Yangzi Court. On the other hand, the so-called Bureau Director (upper fifth rank) Han, whose official rank was much higher than that of Yao, must have been in charge of the Yangzi Court, for it was as late as the fourth year of Kaicheng that Yao was promoted to the post of Acting Bureau Director of the Ministry of Rites (检校礼部郎中), a position still lower than Han's. However, neither Yao nor Han seems likely to have given Wen a beating merely because he squandered his money in the pleasure quarters; inferring from Wen's own account, it must have been the eunuchs who framed him by taking advantage of his liaison with a prostitute.

According to Wang Tang's *Tanghuiyao* (87:1593), after the Sweet Dew Incident in which

²⁷ See Hu Sanxing's notes to ZZhtJ, 237: 7560: "Since the era of Dali, the Salt and Iron Transportation Commissioners had set up an inspection office in Yangzi County of the Yangzhou Circuit and established the official post of the Imperial Deputy."

Wang Ya was killed, his position of Salt and Iron Commissioner was filled first by Linghu Chu (令狐楚, 765-836), and then, in the first year of Kaicheng, by Li Shi (李石, fl. 820-50). During Li Shi's tenure as Salt and Iron Commissioner (836), he promoted Han Yi (韩益), the then Supernumerary of the Treasury Bureau (金部员外郎), to the post of Supervisor of Affairs for the Ministry of Revenue (判度支) in charge of financial affairs.²⁸ We can thus judge that the Han addressed in this epistle is in all likelihood Han Yi.

Wen's Hostility to the Eunuchs

As we have already observed, Wen in this epistle likened the Bureau Director Han to Shan Tao, with the implication that his late father was like Ji Kang and he himself Ji Shao. This hidden analogy runs through the whole epistle. When at the very beginning Wen says "My wisdom is different from comprehensive mastery," he is quoting Ji Kang's letter to Shan Tao, thus hinting that he adhered to his dead father's political stance against the eunuchs. When referring to his financial status, Wen also expresses his idea by alluding to Ji Shao. At the end of the epistle, when voicing his purpose in presenting this epistle, he addresses Han as Shan Tao and adds one more allusion: "never brazenly begging at the door of Cheng Xiao." As we have pointed out, the fact that for a time "Cheng Xiao assumed the official position of Minister of the Yellow Gate Ministry" is the only reason why Wen would take this name as

²⁸ See "The Biographies of Gui Rong": JTS, 149: 4020 and XTS, 164: 5039; "The Biographies of Li Shi": JTS, 172: 4483 and XTS, 131: 4512. See also Tanghuiyao, 88: 1606-7, "The Edict of the Second Year of Dahe" [828]: "All the Branch Inspection Courts of the Ministry of Revenue east of Tongguan be incorporated into the court of the imperial representative of Jianghuai and Heyin." "The Edict of the Tenth Month of the Second Year of Kaicheng": "Under the three commissioners of the Salt and Iron Monopoly, the Ministry of Census (户部) and the Ministry of Revenue, the posts of the Director of the Bureaus must be held by Bureau Directors or Censors, and their posts will not be removed even when the commissioners are."

an insinuation about the eunuchs. In Ji Kang's "Letter for Breaking Off Relations with Shan Juyuan," we find the following remarks: "Since I have so many diseases and ailments, I really want to get rid of [political] affairs in order to protect myself. What I lack is just this purity. How can I call myself pure after seeing the Yellow Gate?" Having excused himself from seeing the "Yellow Gate," Ji Kang finds a pretext for his reluctance to serve the usurping Sima clan, the Jin dynasty royal family, in the hope of keeping his "purity." "Yellow Gate" originally referred only to the palace gate, but the term derived from its original meaning a range of connotations: from inner palace official institutions and positions such as the Yellow Gate Ministry (黄门省) and Minister of the Yellow Gate, to professional positions such as Yellow Gate Director of Attendance (黄门令) and Palace Yellow Gate of Attendance (中黄门), which were assumed exclusively by the eunuchs. Here it refers quite clearly to the eunuchs. That Wen used the last meaning so covertly was simply because under the despotism of the eunuchs, he could not attack the eunuchs openly. Confronted by their rampant actions in the political arena, he wanted to have his say but could not voice his opinions freely; such is the psychogenic complexity that underlies most of his political poems. When dealing with Wen's accounts of the eunuchs, we must pay particular attention to this point, whereas the details of how the eunuchs planned to whip him are not our central interest.

From "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" we know that Wen, from the very beginning of his vagrant life, was in such a predicament that "In my loves and in my hates I took precautions against Du Kui \ In my laments and sighs, I felt melancholy as did Yang Zhu." In his "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Pei," he says in regard to his experiences in Jianghuai: "I had not expected that Du Zhi (Kui) was to make a false charge and Zang Cang to harbor a bitter hatred against me." Now when Wen presented this epistle to Han, he had not yet entered officialdom, not married or had the chance to attend upon the Heir Apparent, still less did he have any experience taking the civil examination. Even so, he asked help from his late father's friend, and disdained to curry favor with the eunuchs. This fact adds to the persuasiveness of

the argument that the eunuchs were his deadly foes who had murdered his father, so the rancor he bore against the eunuchs began early, and was not based only on his own experiences. Had it not been for the eunuchs, there would not have been a Jianghuai Incident; it was they who fabricated it and raised a hue and cry about it, in order to block Wen's way to possible advancement.

How A Marriage Became A Scandal

The Truth of the Matter

Now let us return to the Jianghuai Incident itself and try to make out what Wen did in the pleasure quarters, and who plotted his persecution. Since the whole event has much relevance both to his marriage and to his struggles with the eunuchs, we will try to make a breakthrough by paying particular attention to these two facts from various angles.

In "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem", Wen confesses reluctantly that something he had done, like a flaw that obscures the whole jade, had occasioned him endless distresses from slanders. He attributed the slanders he suffered:

83 By incessant aspersions, even bones are destroyed,	积毁方销骨,
I fear that a slight blemish would spoil the whole gem.	微瑕惧掩瑜

to the following behavior on his part, stating clearly the fundamental cause of his failures in the examination, and bringing the causality of the poem into a strict logical whole:

82 Coming as a guest, I poured the green-ant	客来斟绿蚁,
Trying for a wife, I trod the blue-beetles.	妻试踏青蛱.

--It was the eunuchs who blocked his way from the beginning to the end. Here Wen lays out the details of the event that caused him so many troubles: he was drinking in a brothel, and, squandering his money, he redeemed a singer to be his wife. Comparing this with the tale of Yuquanzi, the whole truth comes to light through the many layers of misapprehensions and misconstructions. When reading Yuquanzi, we already wondered why Wen wasted his money

in this manner, doubting that he could really be a poor but generous patron of the brothels. Now we know that what Wen did was to spend the money he acquired from the Salt and Iron Monopoly Bureau on the purchase of a wife from among the singers in the brothel. This was the handle the eunuchs made use of, first to inflict a humiliating attack on Wen, and then to rain all kinds of abuse upon him, both for the sake of precluding his success in an official career.

This fact that Wen had purchased a singer to be his wife can also be discerned in his "Epistle Presented to the Vice-Minister, the Salt and Iron Commissioner",²⁹ where he articulates the idea in the following unusual manner:

I tried to tame my nature of moose and deer, to emulate the character of mandarin-ducks (强将麋鹿之情, 欲学鸳鸯之性).³⁰ As a result, the solitary orchid in the nine acres [i. e., himself] had to endure much anguish for rumors and slander (遂使幽兰九畹, 伤谣诼之情多);³¹ and the avenue to picking one twig of the

²⁹ Pei Xiu was the subject of the epistle, see Mou: "On Some Problems of Wen Tingyun's Life", Shanghai Shifan Daxue Xuebao, no. 2, 122-8, 1985.

³⁰ "Nature of moose and deer" connotes a spontaneous and wild disposition; specifically, it hints at a licentious and sensual character; see *Liji*, 17: 1383: "The moose-deer shed their horns." And Kong Yingda's annotation: "The moose [Pere David's deer] is a wild animal of *Yin*, that, in its lewd impulse, loiters about in the marshes; the deer is a wild animal of *Yang*, that, in its lewd impulse, loiters about in the mountains" (麋为阴兽, ...情淫而游泽; 鹿为阳兽, 情淫而游山). For the translation, see Legge: The Li Ki, SECT. IV, 305.

³¹ Likening himself to a "solitary orchid" in "the nine acres" that suffered from "rumors and slander," Wen alludes to *Lisao*: "I had tended many an acre of orchids \ And planted a hundred rods of melilotus" (余既滋兰之九畹兮, 又树蕙之百亩); also "All your ladies were jealous of my delicate beauty \ they chatted spitefully, saying I loved wantonness"

crimson osmathus [passing the Presented Scholar examination] was unexpectedly blocked" (丹桂一枝, 竟攀折之路断).

That is to say, Wen stubbornly transformed his merry-making and dalliance with the prostitute into a serious conjugal affection. Defying the prejudices of the Tang social estate system under which men of aristocratic or gentle family never married beneath them, he took the liberty of taking for his wife a singer-prostitute, a creature who ordinarily serves merely to satisfy the sexual desire of any patron of the brothel. Such was the fundamental cause of endless rumor-mongering to which he was subjected, which, in turn, led to his numerous failures to pass the Presented Scholar examination.

The Love Affair Reflected in Wen's Poems

For a late Tang literatus, to frequent the pleasure quarters was quite common. Tang literati in general lacked a sense of morality in their behavior towards the opposite sex. To take a singer as a playmate, or to desert a girl after robbing her of her chastity, was regarded as something quite usual. Even serious poets such as Bai Juyi and Li Shen kept singers for private service. Du Mu, representative of his time, went so far as to boast of his sexual conquests in the well-known line: "After ten years, I awake from my dream of Yangzhou \ Only to win renown for heartlessness in the brothels" (十年一觉扬州梦, 赢得青楼薄倖名).³² However, to take a prostitute as wife, as Wen did, is virtually without parallel. Comparing Wen's case with the prevailing attitude expressed in The Story of Yingying (莺莺传),³³ by Yuan Zhen, we cannot but regard him as a man who bravely

(众女嫉余之蛾眉兮, 谣诼谓余以善淫). For the translation, see Hawkes, 23 & 25.

"Mandarin-duck" is a conventional metaphor for passionate conjugal affection.

³² See Feng Jiwu: Fanchuanshi Jizhu, 369.

³³ See Taiping Guangji, 488: 4012-7. Actually the scholar Zhang of the story was Yuan Zhen himself while Yingying was his cousin. See Wang Bijiang, 140-4.

challenged the accepted absurdities of his time. In the story, Yingying, daughter of a distinguished lineage and a second-cousin of Scholar Zhang (张生), having been lured by Zhang into a secret rendez-vous and having lost her chastity, believes herself to be unqualified to be Zhang's wife. At the same time, Zhang, hard upon his importunate infatuation with Yingying, finds an excuse to abandon her, when she has offered him all she has and is waiting longingly for him. And many of Zhang's contemporaries applaud "the skill with which Zhang extricates himself from this entanglement." Seen in the historical context, the personalities of Scholar Zhang and Wen Tingyun stand in bold contrast to each other. For Wen, the problem was just that he took his love affair too seriously. The son of a declined aristocratic clan, he decided to marry a singer at the expense of his reputation and in defiance of the prevailing bias in favor of family power and influence. It was precisely this unconventional behavior that brought in close succession many troubles upon him later in his life. Ironically, it should have been the eunuchs, most contemptible to convention, who took the lead in brandishing the traditional Confucian weapon against Wen. Of Wen's poems that refers to his marriage with the singer, let us first examine the following:

A Casual Encounter (偶游, j. 4, WFQ)

In a curved lane slanting over a stretch of river,	曲巷斜临一水间,
The small gate all day long remained unopened.	小门终日不开关.
Like a red pearl canopy--the cherries are ripe,	红珠斗帐樱桃熟,
With his golden-tail screen--the peacock is at leisure.	金尾屏风孔雀闲.
The butterfly on your cloud coiffure is almost captivated by fragrant herb,	
	云髻几迷芳草蝶,
The hill of your forehead-yellow will not limit the setting sun,	额黄无限夕阳山.
You and I are just mates like mandarin ducks,	与君便是鸳鸯侣.
So don't seek any other companion in the human world.	休向人间觅往还.

This is one of the very few poems in Wen's works expressing his true feelings for his

prostitute-lover. Here Wen describes what he experienced in a brothel. Towards the heroine addressed in it, as is shown in the second last line, Wen indeed demonstrates "the character of a mandarin-duck," that is, a conjugal love, though we must explore the poem at greater length to identify her as the singer-prostitute that he later married. Wen has been portrayed as a libertine who gave free rein to his passions and destroyed his career prospect by his unrestrained conduct, but there is no evidence that he went any further than most of his famous contemporaries, such as Yuan Zhen and Du Mu, in this respect. Quite contrary to the implications of most of the critiques, Wen was more faithful in his love, and more extreme in his affection than many of the figures in the contemporary romances. In matter of love he was really an exception to his times.

The following poem is his love song written for that singer.

Heartbroken Lovesickness (懊恼曲, j. 2, WFQ)

With silk of lotus root to make thread,

it is hard to apply a needle,

藕丝作线 难胜针。

With pollen of pistils as dye,

how can the yellow become deep?

蕊粉染黄 那得深？

With a pair of subtle metaphors, the first couplet ushers the reader into an agonizing and captivating world of love. The fine silk drawn from the lotus root is too fragile to be used with a needle, and pollen of pistils which is unsuitable for use as a yellow dye augments the sense of impossibility. Understood literally, these images are already redolent with the depression and persistence of love. If we realize that the term "silk of lotus root" (藕丝) and "needle" (针) are homophonic puns for "yearning for the lover" (思偶) and "true affection" (真情), the first line also means something like "the yearning for love is hard to bear when emotion is strong and honest," while the dainty image of pollen in the second line implies that such love is unacceptable according to the conventions of the society.

When neither the "white jade" nor the "fragrant orchid"

was allowed to set her affection on the other,

白玉蘭芳不相顧

A charming smile in the green tower,

makes a thousand taels of gold seem slight.

青樓一笑輕千金。

Our poet and the singer fell into love with each other, but there were yet difficulties for them to be united in wedlock. For that purpose, he spent all the money [said to have been bestowed on him] for the sake of the woman's favor, "a smile in the green tower." The so-called "thousand pieces of gold [spent] for a mere smile" is an old epithet meaning that in order to win the favor of a beauty, one is willing to pay whatever price. In Wen Tingyun's eyes, only this is true love.

Don't say that since time immemorial,

things were always like this,

莫言自古皆若此,

A sharp sword that strikes a bell

can coil round a finger like a piece of lead.

健劍拂鐘鉛繞指。

Such love has been praised since antiquity, but very few dare really to put it into practice. Yet even a man of iron can be softened in the face of true affection.

At the end of autumn,

all the courtyard green yields to the frost,

三秋庭綠盡迎霜,

But the lotus flower

keeps its red, until death.

唯有荷花守紅死。

This love will yield to no pressure, not even to death. The image of the lotus flower that keeps its red color even when withered is a symbol of such devoted feeling.

The minor clerk of Lujiang

drove out his [carriage with] ruby wheels,

廬江小吏朱斑輪,

When the willow twigs sent forth their sprouts

the fragrant[orchid and white] jade were in spring. 柳縷吐牙香玉春。

To protest against the injustice of an arranged marriage, both Jiao Zhongqing (焦仲卿) and his wife died as martyrs to their love.³⁴ Wen alludes to the story to voice his determination to marry the singer, despite the consequent pressures he had to confront. The two lovers, "the fragrant orchid" and "the white jade," are enjoying the blessing of their union to their hearts' content.

Since the two halves of a golden hairpin
were the token of mutual affection, 兩股金釵已相許,
How could the one bear to let the other
turn to dust alone and in vain? 不令獨作空成塵,

This is not merely a declaration of devotion, it is Wen's pledge of action to sustain their conjugal felicity until death. Neither will let the other die alone.

On and on goes the Chu river
flowing like a galloping horse, 悠悠楚水流如馬,
Grieving purples and distressed reds,
Are spread all over the level plain. 恨紫愁紅滿平野。

How many lovers could not marry each other, and how many tragedies constantly occurred throughout the country, to which the River of Chu [Yangtze] is witness and of which the flowers on the vast plains retain sad memories!

The soil of the fields, for thousands of years,
Bears a grudge against the injustice, 野土千年怨不平,
And up to now, is fired
into mandarin-duck tiles. 至今燒作鴛鴦瓦

³⁴ See Anne Birrell, The New Songs of Jade Terrace, a translation of Xu Ling's Yutai Xinyong, "A Peacock Southeast Flew" (孔雀東南飛), 1: 53.

Generation after generation, the affection of love and its protest against injustice are undying, and the mandarin-duck tiles, its everlasting substantiation.

After reading this poem we are convinced that Wen Tingyun was a devoted lover. There are more poems attesting to the credibility of this fact.³⁵ The profound sorrow and resolution given expression here have their realistic basis--namely, his anti-traditional behavior in marrying a singer with whom he had fallen deeply in love.

As far as we can determine from the extant materials, Wen on another occasion also ransomed a singer-prostitute, as is shown by his best friend Duan Chengshi's (805-864) three poems "On the Occasion that Rouqing Annulled Her Registration of Prostitute, I Playfully Presented This to Feiqing" (柔卿解籍戲贈飛卿, QTS, 584: 6769).

Wen's Anti-Traditional Attitude Toward Love

Wen's marriage with a singer-prostitute and love for her, though not equivalent to modern conjugal affection, constitutes a striking contrast to the prevailing norms. What Wen did was also in defiance of the Tang dynasty penal law, which, though never forbidding a literary man from patronizing brothels, did lay down strict regulations that people of different social stocks should not marry one another. Marriages between members of aristocratic families and those of the low classes of society were definitely proscribed.³⁶

³⁵ Other poems in Wen's works on the same topic may include "Song of Spring Field" (春野行) and "Ode of Three Islets" (三洲詞, j. 2, WFQ).

³⁶ See Zhangsun Wuji *Tanglü Shuyi*, 4: 257, "Household Marriage" item 39: "Marriage of Elders and Betters with the Mean and the Low." "Artisans, musicians, miscellaneous households, official households, private retainers, female tenants and public and private slaves must be married to those of the same rank." "In cases where the official households or the miscellaneous households marry with good citizens in defiance of the law, the penalty is 100 lashes or two years of banishment." "Scholars, peasants, artisans and merchants are called the good citizens; those who have been involved in some crime and

Wen's family status, though already in decline, was at least that of the "scholar class," while a singer (courtesan) at most belonged to the category of "official household." In some sense, Wen's marriage to a singer can be taken as a sign of his betrayal of the privileged social stratum to which his family belonged. It must have elicited strong distaste in many powerful ministers of aristocratic origin and been one more factor in his conspicuous failure to pursue official career, and, some traditional Chinese critics surely assumed, in his failure to be a decent man.

Nevertheless, Wen Tingyun's love story was not completely forgotten by later Chinese, especially by discriminating scholars. It is no wonder that the great author of A Dream of the Red Chamber, Cao Xueqin, once ranked Wen as one of the most anti-traditional figures in Chinese history.³⁷

are forced to do service for the government are called miscellaneous households, and those in still lower position are the slaves."

³⁷ In an argument Jia Yucun (賈雨村) responds to Leng Zixing (冷子興) in chapter two (26-8) of A Dream of the Red Chamber (trans. Yang Hsien-Yi and Gladys Yang), Cao puts forward the following theory: "All men, apart from the very good and the very bad, are much alike. "The very good are born at a propitious time when the world is well governed, the very bad in times of calamity when danger threatens. Examples of the first are Yao, Shun, Yu and Tang, King Wen and King Wu [the sage kings], Duke Zhou and Duke Shao, Confucius and Mencius [the sages]...."Examples of the second are Kong Kong, Chieh, Chou, Chin Shihuang [the evil kings], Wang Mang, Tsao Tsao, Huan Wen, An Lushan and Chin Kuai" [conspirators or evil ministers]. But there is another kind of human being that are gifted with an ambivalent spirit of both the good and the evil. "The pure intelligence with which they are endowed sets them above their myriad fellow creatures, but their perversity and unnatural behavior sink them lower than other men too." "Born into rich and noble families, such people will become romantic eccentric; born into

Yet the basic details mentioned above concerning Wen's romance have gone out of circulation after a thousand years; consequently, in this regard as in many other respects, Wen has been enduringly misunderstood.

A Reflection of the Jianghuai Incident

Now that we are sure about Wen Tingyun's marriage with a singer-prostitute and his endless troubles thereafter, we should be able to scrutinize the Jianghuai Incident in a clearer way. In Yangzhou, the biggest commercial center of the late Tang times, the eunuchs, political representatives of the rising merchants and of miscellaneous urban residents, wielded great influence and power that should on no account be underestimated. As seen from "The Epistle Presented to the Bureau Director Han", Wen begged Han, who was in charge of the Yangzi Court over which the eunuchs also exercised a considerable influence, for a minor post. Han, and Yao Xu as well, seemed friendly toward Wen, at least at the beginning, and they may have helped him in some way. But the eunuchs did not let Wen procure the lucrative post so easily. Right at the time when Wen spent the money to buy his future wife's freedom, the eunuchs, ever alert, saw their opportunity and sent their agents to give Wen a warning: do not dream of laying your hand on this or put too

poor but cultured families, they will become high-minded scholars or recluses. Even if born into luckless and humble homes, they will never grow up into yamen runners or servants at the beck and call of the vulgar--they'll turn out celebrated actors or courtesans. "People of this type in the past were Xu [Ling], Yu [Xin], Tao Qian, Ruan Ji, Ji Kang, Liu Ling, the two families of Wang and Xie, Gu Hutou [Gu Kaizhi, the painter], Chen Shubao [Later Monarch of the Chen], the Tang Emperor Minghuang [Xuanzong], the Song Emperor Huizong, Wen Feiqing, Mi Fei, Shi Yannian, Liu Yong and Qin Guan [high minded scholars]...All of these, in their different fields, were essentially the same." Cao Xueqin actually places Jia Baoyu, the protagonist in his novel into this category and gives the highest praise to figures like Baoyu, including Wen Tingyun.

much hope on it. So, Wen suffered a beating and certainly failed to take the post.

Wen gave an account of the eunuchs' persecution of him in the Jianghuai region, as already noted, in his "Epistle Presented to the Prime Minister Pei":

In consequence, the local magistrates became increasingly hostile towards me, regardless of their past friendship, and in response, those in power in the court added their slander to my distress. A forsaken orphan with an insecure life, I was crudely bullied and mistreated. My route for flying and galloping was blocked, and my way for drinking and pecking was impeded. It is indeed an unjust charge that I ever shot [blasphemous] blood, and there is certainly no way for me to call [the attention of] Heaven. Such is my experience that the sagacious ministers have shown their commiseration and many an official has heard of. Nevertheless, all vainly sigh over the case, and none can exonerate the wrong charge against me.

Not only was Wen's advance by means of the civil service examination utterly blocked, but his chances of obtaining a post in the Yangzi Court were also spoiled. Thus wronged, he could not be rehabilitated, and even the many powerful and sympathetic ministers to whom he appealed were at their wit's end about the case. How could it not have been the eunuchs who were responsible for the wrongful accusations? With regard to Wen's disastrous encounter in Jianghuai, we have no choice but to believe his own accounts; with Wen's family background and political orientation, it is only natural that he would have been a thorn in the eunuchs' flesh and have suffered from their retaliation.

For the Jianghuai Incident, we have so far succeeded in discovering the following details: Wen's begging at the Yangzi Court for a post, his receipt of money and spending of it on the purchase of a singer-prostitute to be his wife, his subsequent humiliation and whipping, and the eunuchs' backstage maneuvers in the whole affair. The event took place in the year 836. Wen suffered from the eunuchs' vindictiveness implemented by a certain official (not necessarily Yao Xu). One cause of the event was that Wen recklessly tried to obtain a lucrative post in the Yangzi Court controlled by the eunuchs. The result was that it

became a scandal. Many writers between the Tang and the Song dynasties believed the scandal forced Wen to change his name and spoiled his future official career.

There remains a train of questions to be answered: Did Wen really change his name merely because he was whipped in Jianghuai? Did the event prevent him from passing the Presented Scholar examination? If so, how? If not, what happened next, after he went to the capital? These questions will be taken up in our later discussions.

Throughout the affair, there were men who sympathized with Wen. There would also have been those who were forced to act at the eunuchs' behest and attack Wen. There may even have been a scapegoat who had to bear the charge of unfairly insulting him. The true culprits, the eunuchs, however, were always behind the scenes. The inside story has never been completely revealed. On the contrary, the true nature of the event was obscured in Wen's lifetime, by all kinds of rumors and gossip; after Wen's death, it was distorted by various records based on hearsay that was spread while he was still alive. We have already reached some understanding of Wen's complex net of social relations which were woven through the multiple oppositions of the Southern-Northern Offices and the Niu-Li Factions. More often than not, these complicated alliances make it difficult for us to identify many of those with whom Wen was linked. In treating Wen's biographical materials, we must above all bear in mind the disparaging tone of the Song dynasty historiographers, who never deigned to attempt a full and accurate record of the eunuchs' deeds, but who wantonly criticized such unorthodox figures as Wen Tingyun, simply ignoring the anti-eunuch import of many events in Wen's life.

Untrustworthy Accounts of the Standard Histories

In order to clarify what role this event played in Wen's whole life, and what has been its role in shaping Wen's posthumous reputation, we shall have to deal with Wen's biographies in The Old Tang History and The New Tang History. Only after refuting these seemingly veritable records can Wen's true face be revealed. Records in these "standard histories" usually hold particular sway over the thinking of traditional Chinese chroniclers, and with

respect to Wen's biographical studies, these untrustworthy records have proved extremely detrimental to the reevaluation of his life. With this in mind, let us take a look at the picture the standard histories give of the Jianghuai Incident. As a matter of fact, both depart so far from the truth, that none of the fictions composed in the Tang and Song dynasties can surpass them in absurdity. The Old Tang History says (190: 5082):

In the middle of Xiantong, frustrated and disappointed, he returned to Jiangdong by way of Guangling.³⁸ As Wen still harbored complaints that Linhu Tao had not helped him to become a Presented Scholar during his long tenure as Prime Minister,³⁹ after arrival, and in company with young parvenus, he reveled crazily in the brothels, and for rather a long while did not have audience with Linghu.⁴⁰ What was worse, he begged and importuned for money in the Yangzi Court,⁴¹ and violated the curfew law by going out intoxicated at night. He was attacked by the police patrol, having several of his teeth knocked out and his face disfigured.

38 Only the two "Tang Histories" take the Jianghuai Incident as has occurred in the Xiantong era, Wen's late years; all other sources upon which they draw take it as having happened in Wen's earlier years. "Guangling" was Yangzhou, where Linhu Tao (令狐綯, 795-872), after being dismissed from the Prime-Ministership, occupied the position of Military Commissioner of the Huainan Circuit from 862-869, see TFZNB, 735-736.

39 Linhu Tao was Prime Minister from 850 to 860. Whether Wen became Presented Scholar or not during this period is quite another problem, as we shall discuss in chapter eight. Linhu Hao did frequent the pleasure quarters, see Sun Qi: Beilizhi, 41.

40 Passing Linhu's mansion without a visit was regarded as discourteous, because Wen had once been under Linhu's patronage.

41 Comparing this statement with Wen's "Epistle Presented to Bureau Director Han of the Ministry of Personnel", we can understand the degree to which Wen's request for help from Han was misinterpreted by his biographers.

Thereupon he returned to Yangzhou to appeal his case. Linghu Tao put the police patrol on trial, but the police patrol spared no effort in speaking about Tingyun's scandals in the brothels, and Linghu Tao had to set both sides free.⁴² Henceforth gossip about Tingyun's immoral behavior spread even to the capital.⁴³ Tingyun now personally went to Chang'an, presenting letters to various ministers in the hope of clearing himself of the false charges laid against him.⁴⁴

According to The New Tang History (91: 3792):

...he left to return to the Jiangdong region. At this time, Linghu Tao was in charge of the garrison of Huainan Circuit. Tingyun, harboring the complaint that Linghu during his tenure as Prime Minister did not help him to become a Presented Scholar, passed by the gate of Linghu's mansion without paying a visit. Moreover, he begged for money at the Salt and Iron Monopoly Bureau in Yangzi County, and became so drunk at night that he was beaten by the patrol soldier, and his teeth were broken before he went back to Yangzhou to appeal to Tao. For Wen's sake, Tao accused a clerk, who in turn laid all the blame on Wen's debauched manners. Tao had to set both of them free. The incident was heard about even in the capital,

⁴² Here again we have vivid details that sound more like fiction than history. Linghu had indeed something to do with the incident. See chapter eight.

⁴³ The way Wen's "immoral behavior" in Yangzhou was made known to the capital, several thousand miles away, was through Wen's own activities to rehabilitate himself.

⁴⁴ The affirmative and narrative tone of Wen's biographers, with many a small detail given but no causality supplied for the major events in Wen's life, is specious but not true. Notice here that the depreciatory tone of his biographers undergoes an unnoticed turn: now Wen was to clear himself of the false charge upon him. Namely, all the black painted on his face is vilification, otherwise, what false charges were there for Wen to clear himself of? The contradictory accounts give the story away.

where Tingyun tried to have audience with almost all the high-ranking officials in an effort to unburden himself of the clerk's vilification and slander.

From these narratives, other than discovering that the details in The New Tang History are but a copy of those in The Old Tang History, we can elicit the following main points:

- (1) that Wen came to Huainan again;
- (2) that the event happened in the middle of Xiantong (860-73), i. e., almost thirty years after the "first" Jianghuai incident (836), and a short time before Wen's death;
- (3) that Wen was attacked and beaten, his face disfigured, and his teeth broken;
- (4) that it was a police patrol (虞候) or a patrol soldier (邏卒) who inflicted such rude and humiliating blows on him;
- (5) that Wen, old as he was, "reveled crazily in the brothels" with young parvenus and "importuned for money in the Yangzi Court, and violated the curfew";
- (6) and that, having failed in his appeal to Linghu Tao in Huainan, Wen "personally went to Chang'an, presenting letters to various ministers in the hope of clearing himself of the wrongful charge laid against him".

Comparing the time, place, interested parties and the causes and results of the event with those recorded in Tongxin, Beimeng Suoyan and Yuquanzi, we find:

The event happened in the same place Huainan and once more Wen was subjected to personal attack and injury, though this time it is a police patrol or a patrol soldier that dealt the blows to him instead of Yao Xu or a senior relative. In both versions the beating had something to do with Wen's improper behavior in the pleasure quarters, as well as some matter in the Yangzi Court, where Wen was said to have brought troubles on himself. In addition to changing his name and causing a life-long failure in his political career, the whole affair now becomes entangled with Linghu Tao. Finally, it was after having been attacked in Huainan that Wen went to Chang'an to clear himself of the charges laid against him. Except for the statement that the incident happened in the middle of Xiantong, we can observe not only that the contour of the event completely conforms to that of the "first" or

"earlier" account, but there are also more concrete details that serve to support our conclusion that the narratives in Tongxin, Beimeng Suoyan and Yuquanzi all refer to the same event.⁴⁵ Now we have to add this one further record to the chain of extant sources.

It is inconceivable that such a scandalous event could have happened to Wen twice. Judging from the internal evidence in Wen's works and external evidence in various sources, especially the exactly identical particulars recorded in them, we must point out that the two Tang Histories commit a serious mistake in their handling of the Jianghuai Incident. Misdating an event of 836 as in the 860s is by no means an accidental phenomenon. Rather, it is the necessary product of the combined function of rumors spread by the eunuchs and then recorded in the forms of anecdotes, and of prejudices cherished by indiscriminating historiographers. In other words, the Song historiographers saw the miscellaneous anecdotes, disbelieved them but were unable to surpass them in truthfulness, with the limit of their own time. Only by exposing the mistakes in the standard histories, can we view the Jianghuai Incident in its true light.

As for how and to what a degree Linghu Tao could be involved in the Jianghuai Incident, we will take this up in chapter eight, an account of Wen's secret experiences in the later part of his life. The fact that the aftermath of the Jianghuai Incident could extend over thirty years is sufficient to show what a far-reaching role it had in Wen's life and how necessary it would be for us to clarify the matter and re-illuminate his life, penetrating the dual obscurities of the histories and of literature.

All accounts agree that, after the Jianghuai Incident, Wen Tingyun went to the capital. It was in the capital that more evils befell him which bring to light yet more adventures, experienced by a misunderstood poet engagé in the turmoil of his times.

⁴⁵ Ruan Yue's Shihua Zonggui (4: 27) says that Wen received a beating from a patrolling soldier *before* Wen served in the secretariat of Xu Shang (860). See also Xia: 410.

Chapter Five Attending upon the Heir Apparent (I)

An Introduction to the Problem

Back to the Capital

Despite the anachronisms found in the two Tang Histories regarding the Jianghuai Incident, their account of Wen's return to the capital after the Incident tallies with the actual events. This can be seen clearly in the following couplet of "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem", as already cited earlier:

57 From afar I gazed back beyond a thousand leagues,	远目穷千里,
And my returning heart flew to the Nine Highways.	归心寄九衢。

which provides the information that after Wen ended his long journey, of which the last destination was Jianghuai, he returned to the capital.

What motivated Wen to go to the capital once more? In the black and white terms of the two Tang Histories, he did so "to unburden himself of the clerk's slander and vilification" (JTS, 190: 5079) "in the hope of clearing himself of the false charges laid against him" (XTS, 91: 3787). In other words, he wanted to escape the eunuchs' persecution and to find a way out of his predicament. As we know, it was precisely because of his unfavorable family background that Wen purposely avoided a career in the capital, the political center, preferring instead a vagrant life under various local patrons. Now in desperation, he found himself in such a tight corner that he was forced to give up his life in the provinces and to go to the capital for support, without regard for the danger he had to risk "at the feet of the emperor." The following lines give a vivid description of what Wen faced before he succeeded in obtaining any opportunity in capital society.

58 To enjoy sound sleep the price is to suffer long depression,	寝甘诚系滞,
-----------------------------------------------------------------	--------

- To be served free soup, I have to act with caution and attention. 浆馈贵睢盱.¹
- 59 A calling card in my pocket, my name was ruled out before a visit, 怀刺名先远,
To help the time, my Way was appreciated by few. 干时道自孤.²
- 60 By molars and incisors I was repeatedly recommended and praised, 齿牙频激发,
With umbrella and bookcase my road was yet rugged and rocky. 簞茭尚崎岖.³

It was not likely that he would find any position in aristocratic circles in the capital, if he were to follow his own bent; to gain any promotion into fashionable society he had to look attentively about him for an opportunity, perhaps at any cost. Then, in the second couplet quoted above, Wen reminds us that, endowed with a nature similar to that of Ni Heng, and counting the eunuchs among his mortal enemies, it was hard to make any headway. Few officials in the capital were willing or courageous enough to accept him, given his fame and infamy. What was his Way, and why was his Way appreciated by so few? Apart from an unyielding loyalty and rectitude, his Way with respect to the state policy asserted itself as an ambition to curb and even to wipe out the eunuchs. This was the dream of many an honest

¹ 馈浆, "To be served free soup," a metaphor for being offered an official position, alludes to "Lie Yukou" in *Zhuangzi*: "Lie Yukou went to Qi, but came back when he was half-way to it, saying: I was frightened, ... as I went into ten soup-shops to get a meal, and in five of them the soup was set before me before I had paid for it.... Vendors of soup treated me as I have said, how much more would the lord of ten thousand chariots do so." For the translation, see Legge: *The Texts of Taoism*, 202-3.

² Pocketing calling cards, means to have audience with a powerful official. Ni Heng (衺衡, 173-98) once went to the Wei capital Xuchang, pocketing calling cards, but would visit nobody until the characters on his cards were worn illegible. See SGZ, 10: 301.

³ By molar and by teeth, means to be commented upon by different people. Umbrella and bookcase make up the outfit of a traveling literary man, hence are synecdoche for the man himself.

literatus in his time, but after quite a few disastrous failures, it proved to be unfeasible; therefore also "appreciated by few."

Subsequently, Wen tells us how, in his adversity, he attempted to make some headway in the central bureaucracy of the capital, but without success. Nonetheless, he was in high favor with several important statesmen, including his teacher Li Cheng who at one time was Prime Minister, and Pei Du, the most influential and excellent minister of the late Tang period. But under the eunuch politics, he became a black sheep in the eyes of his snobbish contemporaries, and was denied any opportunity for promotion through normal channels. For this reason the way before him remained "rugged and rocky".

The Question We Confront

Following the couplets cited above of "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" is an extremely obscure account of Wen's attendance upon the Heir Apparent, the central topic of this chapter. It will be necessary to inquire into the details of all the relevant records about it, despite the baffling difficulties such inquiry entails. For the moment, however, we can give only a brief introduction.

Prior to my attempts to bring to light Wen's attendance on the Heir Apparent,⁴ there was no discussion of this topic in Chinese or Western research, with the exception of an essay by Zhan Antai.⁵ Zhan suggested that there must have been a close relationship between Wen and the Heir Apparent, but his argument is brief, short of evidence and thus unconvincing. As we are to uncover this experience as Wen's secret personal history, we will have to commit ourselves to numerous investigations into the complexities of both the historical and literary sources. In the late Tang period, poetic artistry had fully matured; meanwhile, eunuch politics

⁴ See Mou: "On Wen Tingyun's Secret Experience of Attending the Heir Apparent, A Victim of the Eunuchs' Power".

⁵ See Zhan Antai: "Reading Xia Chengtao's 'Chronicle of Wen Feiqing'" in Xia Chengtao: 520-1.

forced Wen to make maximum use of his scholastic ability to express political ideas without incurring persecution. "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" is just such a unique composition created against this historical and literary background. The true circumstances of Wen's attendance upon the Heir are lost in the perplexing labyrinth of Wen's poetic contrivances and in the maze of the histories. In particular it is deeply obscured behind the camouflage of the abstruse artistic expressions of this long poem.

Before we go into the details of our study, we must, first and foremost, reach of perforce a basic understanding of the general situation in which the Heir Apparent Incident took place, so as to get a better look at Wen's particular role on this historical stage. By "the Heir Apparent Incident," we mean the incident in which the Heir Apparent, Li Yong (827-838, or Zhuangke (庄恪), as he was posthumously honored), became a victim of eunuch power. Wen's performances during this incident alone, once clarified, will provide evidence sufficient to undo most, if not all, of the traditional prejudices towards him. In order to reverse the verdict and fill in the missing link of history, however, we must exercise great caution and consult as many historical sources as possible.⁶

The Records in "The Standard Histories"

After the Sweet Dew Incident of 835, as the eunuchs revenged themselves upon Emperor

⁶ Sources on the Heir Apparent Incident include: "The Annals of Emperor Wenzong" (文宗纪, JTS, 17: 522-35; XTS, 8:229), "The Annals of Emperor Wuzong" (武宗纪, JTS, 18: 583; XTS, 8: 239), "Biographies of the Scions of the Eleven Emperors" (十一宗诸子传, XTS, 82: 3633-5), "Biographies of the Two Sons of Emperor Wenzong" (文宗二子传, JTS: 175: 4540), Biographies of Yang Sifu (杨嗣复, JTS, 176: 4555; XTS, 174: 5238), Li Jue (李珣, JTS, 173: 4503; XTS, 182: 5359), Zheng Tan (郑覃, 173: 4489; XTS, 165: 5066), Chen Yixing (陈夷行, JTS, 173: 4494; XTS, 181: 5345), and Pei Du etc.; also see ZZhtJ, *juan* 246; Fan Zuyu, Tangjian; Wang Fuzhi, Du Tongjian Lun and Fan Wenlan, Zhongguo Tongshi Jianbian (205-225).

Wenzong (808-840, r. 827-840) for his participation in the machinations against them, the emperor became even more subject to their control. Having lost almost all his power and hopes, Wenzong now tried in every way possible to set up his Heir Apparent, Li Yong, in a desperate effort to save his dynasty. He chose famous Confucian scholars to be his son's mentors⁷ in the vain hope that training him to be a worthy successor would finally tide his empire over its impasse. Unfortunately, conflicts arose between two imperial consorts: Worthy Consort Yang (杨贤妃, d. 840) and Virtuous Consort Wang (王德妃, d. 838), Li Yong's mother. Taking advantage of these conflicts, the eunuchs clandestinely took the Heir's life. Before exposing the details of this aftershock to the Sweet Dew Incident at greater length, we will first introduce the relevant records in the official histories, showing how the incident developed, step by step, to its inevitable end.

The eldest son of Emperor Wenzong, Li Yong was designated Heir Apparent in the sixth year of Dahe (832). His mother, Wang, was given the title Virtuous Consort in the eighth month of the second year of Kaicheng (837), and Worthy Consort Yang accepted her title at the same time. Perhaps because Yang was younger and possessed of more ingratiating glamour, she succeeded in monopolizing the emperor's favor. As a result, Virtuous Consort Wang fell prey to her slander and jealousy, and in the eighth month of the third year of Kaicheng (838), she was ordered by the emperor to commit suicide. Worthy Consort Yang, fearing that the Heir Apparent would subsequently do her harm, spared no efforts to slander him and to effect his deposal. She spread gossip that the Heir "knew nothing but immoderate entertainment while disregarding proper etiquette and decency."

⁷ The following is an incomplete list of those famous scholars who served the Heir Apparent, drawn from "Biographies of the Scions of the Eleven Emperors" and other sources: He Yuanliang (和元亮), Yu Jingxiu (庾敬休), Zheng Su (郑肃), Dou Zongzhi (窦宗直), Zhou Jingfu (周敬复, JTS, 175: 4541); Chen Yixing (陈夷行), Gao Yuanyu (高元裕, JTS, 177: 5285; JTS, 171: 4452); and Wei Wen (韦温, ZZhTJ, 245: 7929).

Li Yong was too young to answer these charges. Emperor Wenzong, having been led astray by his favorite consort, decided to depose the Heir Apparent for his faults. He convened a conference to discuss the matter, giving audience to all his court officials of the fifth rank or higher. This meeting took place in the Yanying Palace (the royal meeting hall for great occasions), on the Ren Xu day of the ninth month of the third year of Kaicheng (Oct. 25, 838). At the meeting, many important and influential ministers, including perhaps Pei Du and prime ministers belonging to the Li Faction, tried their uttermost to consolidate the young Heir's position. Consequently, quite a few ministers and all of the attending officials agreed with one voice that the Heir Apparent was still very young and could be expected to mend his ways. Most impressive was the Censor-in-Chief, Di Jianmo's (狄兼) vehement and tearful remonstrance against Wenzong's intended course of action, which brought the emperor to his senses. On the following day the Heir was ordered to return to his normal residence, the *Shaoyangyuan* (少阳院), and the trouble seemed for the moment to have come to an end. However, the Heir unexpectedly died on the Geng Zi day of the tenth month of that year (Dec. 5), about forty days after the convening of the Yanying conference. In the following year, Wenzong put to death a musical officer and a palace lady, saying that "It is your like that entrapped my heir." Concerning this event, Song dynasty historiographers remark only that "The Heir Apparent after all did not mend his ways, but his death was not a normal one," and "affairs in the inner palace remained a secret, to which none of the outsiders could know the details."⁸

An Analysis

As to the cause and the result, and many details surrounding the Heir Apparent's death as well, there are many questionable points.

⁸ See ZZHTJ, 246: 7936. The Japanese monk Enin (圆仁) arrived at Yangzhou at just this time. In his diary, he recorded a rumor he heard about the event: Li Yong secretly hatched a plot to murder his father, and so he was executed. See Enin: 1: 9.

First, the opposing factions, Niu and Li, held clearly different attitudes toward the two imperial consorts. Worthy Consort Yang was a clan aunt of Yang Sifu, one of the chiefs of the Niu Faction, who, it was said, had tried to persuade his aunt to follow the example of Wu Zetian (武则天, 624-705, r. 684-701), and "administer the state's affairs from behind the curtain" (垂帘听政, i.e., to become the second female-ruler of the empire). At the Manying Palace conference, however, the court officials had spoken with one voice. This is an indication that events had developed to such a point that the eunuchs would undoubtedly put their hand in, such that the two factions for the moment had to join forces against the eunuchs, despite the conflicts amongst themselves.

Secondly, "Since the Heir Apparent's death, the emperor felt deep regret" [for his own mistake]. His regret was not because he had adopted the suggestion of his ministers (that "the Heir Apparent, as the most important basis of the empire, should never be removed without serious consideration"), but because he had recklessly made a fuss about nothing, and offered an opportunity to the eunuchs, who were always on the lookout to revenge themselves upon him and to realize their ulterior purposes. In the tenth month of the fourth year of Kaicheng (839), the emperor remarked to one of his ministers: "I, honored as the Son of Heaven, could not even protect my own son" and "I am under the sway of my house-slaves, in a much worse status than King Nan of the Zhou [周赧王, r. 268-56, BC] and Emperor Xian of the Han dynasty [汉献帝, r. 190-219]." From such recorded remarks we can infer that those who dared murder his Heir Apparent were the eunuchs and the eunuchs only, not the musical officer or palace lady who had been put to death as scapegoats.

Thirdly, the Li Faction had supported the Heir Apparent more effectively than had the Niu faction, but after the Heir Apparent's death, Emperor Wenzong entrusted more confidence to Yang Sifu and Li Jue, prime ministers from the Niu Faction which had the upper hand at the time. Thus factional strife was renewed in a different situation. The two factions vied for power by vying for the emperor's favor, but neither had ever gone so far as to murder the successor to the throne, as the eunuchs had. It was out of the question to

suspect either faction, both knew far better than to do such a thing in the face of their common enemy.

Fourthly, the eunuchs had been displeased with Wenzong for a long time, and ever since the Sweet Dew Incident, they had conspired to substitute another royal clansman for him. Two days before Wenzong died an untimely and wretched death,⁹ the eunuchs sped up the coup d'état; regardless of the fact that another crown heir had been named, they positioned Li Chan, one of Wenzong's inconspicuous younger brothers, to assume the throne, with the bizarre title Imperial Fraternal Heir (皇太弟), who was known as Emperor Wuzong (r. 840-846). Immediately after Wenzong's death, the eunuchs incited the newly-enthroned Wuzong to slaughter Worthy Consort Yang, Prince An and Prince Chen. The Niu Faction prime ministers Li Jue and Yang Sifu were dismissed from office in close succession, and the Li faction, in its turn, rose to full power.

Even after Wuzong's ascension to the throne, the eunuchs still "bore grudges against" the dead Wenzong, because Wenzong had not resigned himself to their control and would have them wiped out once and for all. They chose and set up Wuzong in the hope that by so doing he would be grateful to them and become a puppet emperor at their beck and call. They instigated him to kill Consort Yang, not merely because the hearsay charge of "plotting to administer the state's affairs from behind the curtain," but also because they wanted Yang alone to bear the blame for murdering the Heir, thus deceiving the public. As to why they killed Prince An and Prince Chen, it was part of their conspiracy to do away with any witnesses to their secret crime, as well as to aggravate the contradictions between the Niu

⁹ Wenzong died at the age of 33, because of mental breakdown, or more likely as a result of poisoning, as had been the case with Emperor Xianzong. Had the eunuchs not ensured that Wenzong would die at a scheduled time, how could they have chosen the Imperial Fraternal Heir to succeed him in such a planned fashion, despite the fact that there was already a new Heir Apparent, Prince Chen?

and Li Factions, making it easier to take control of the new emperor and to monopolize all court power. Therefore, though Worthy Consort Yang ought to bear responsibility, for the death of the Heir Apparent the true culprits were the eunuchs. The eunuchs, however, did not murder the Heir to help Consort Yang; they had their own ax to grind. Of course they did not want to effect the murder openly, which would be a disservice to their political goal, rather, they desired to tighten their control on court power by exploiting the conflicts between the imperial consorts and the attending factional strife. The Zhuangke event thus was an extension of the Sweet Dew Incident, and focused various contradictions within the ruling clique.

The Heir Apparent Incident was intricately implicated in what went on behind the scenes in the inner court, and it also had to do with the struggles between the Southern and the Northern offices, and with the factional strife. If Wen did indeed become entangled in any of these intricacies, his experiences must have much to do with the political taboos of his day, and any works he wrote that reflected the relevant truth concerning them must needs be obscure, otherwise they would not have been able to circulate, not to mention be handed down. However, this analysis of the secret history of the inner court is more inference than proven conclusion, unless we can find something more substantial in Wen's works to bear testimony to it.

Clues Found in Wen's Works

Two Dirges

The following dirges are the only poems in Wen's works that clearly recount something about the Heir Apparent.

Two Dirges for the Late Heir Apparent Zhuangke

(庄恪太子挽歌词二首, WFQ, J. 3)

Amidst the fast drumbeats your soul is leaving the palaces,	迭鼓辞宫殿,
While grief-laden reed-notes descend from the gloomy firmament.	悲笳降杳冥.
The shadow is detached from the sun behind the clouds,	影离云外日,

And the light is extinguished on the Star in Front of the Fire,	光灭火 前星
The retainers of Ye looked up to the Qin Garden,	邶客瞻秦苑,
Then the Seniors of Shang came down to the Han court.	商公下汉庭.
Heartbreaking is the color of the trees on your tomb,	依依陵树色,
That vainly remains green surrounding the Nine Plains.	空绕九原青.

In this dirge saturated with profound sorrow, the poet not only laments Li Yong, but he meditates on the causes that precipitated the young prince's untimely death. The second and the third couplets are more than scenic descriptions.

In traditional usage, "The sun behind the clouds" is a metaphor for a deluded emperor, hence it hints that Wenzong was controlled by his "house-slaves" and duped by his favorite consort. In the same fashion, "Shadows are detached" refers to the young heir's helpless alienation from his emperor-father. "The light is extinguished" plainly refers to the death of Li Yong: besides referring to the sparks in front of a fire of burned paper, "the Star in Front of the Fire" (火 前星, a star near Mars),¹⁰ or, "the Front Star of the Heart Constellation" (心宿前星) of the Twenty-Eight Constellations (二十八宿), is the heavenly counter-part of the Heir Apparent in Chinese traditional astrology.

The third couplet recalls the situation before Zhuangke died: how, many court officials, especially those serving him, supported the Heir as much as they could. "The retainers of Ye" (邶客), here used in antithesis to "the Seniors of Shang" (an allusion), must allude to something. As Ye City was one of the five capitals of the Cao Wei dynasty (220-65), the allusion must concern the literati of Ye City (邶下文人), i. e., the famous Seven Masters of the Jian'an Era [建安(196-219)七子], here used to refer to the assistants of the Heir Apparent, including Wen. Logically, the line has no implication that Wen was traveling in

¹⁰ See Ouyang Xun: *Yiwen Leiju*, 16: 291, quoting *Shangshu Hongfan Wuxingzhuan*: "The Great Star of the Heart Constellation is [the symbol of] the Heavenly Emperor; and its Front Star, the Heir Apparent."

Ye;¹¹ rather, it means that as an assistant of the Heir Apparent, Wen looked to Emperor Wenzong for an act of grace to his young lord.

In "The Imperial Memorial Essay for the Late Heir Apparent Zhuangke" (庄恪太子哀册文, JTS, 175: 4540-1), by Wang Qi (王起, 760-847), we read:

Now the waves of *Shaohai* have vanished, and the canopy of the Western Garden no longer flie (有少海之波逝, 无西园之盖飞).¹² The assistants and aides from Mount Shang have dispersed, and the guests of Bowang Park have all gone 商山之羽翼已散 望苑之宾客咸归).¹³

In this passage, "Western Garden" and "the assistants and aides from Mount Shang" both allude to an heir apparent. Similarly, in Wen's poem, "the retainers of Ye" and "the Seniors of the Shang" allude to the Heir Apparent.

"The Seniors of Shang" refers to the veteran ministers who were against Wenzong's move to depose his heir, Zhuangke; they were the well-known Four White-haired Seniors of Mount Shang (商山四皓), who came down from their seclusion on Mount Shang to dissuade

¹¹ For example, see *Gu Xuejie Wenxue Lunji*. 218.

¹² 少海, *Shaohai*, is used to refer to an Heir Apparent, see *Chuxueji*, 10: 229. 西园, The Western Garden, here substituting for the official institutions of the Heir Apparent, is a famous garden of the Han dynasty, where Cao Pi (曹丕, 187-226) and Cao Zhi (曹植, 192-232) amused themselves with their retainers. See Cao Pi's "Poem on the Lotus Pool" (芙蓉池诗, *Wenxuan*, 27: 311): "Riding my chariot I went for a night tour \ Carefree I rambled in the Western Garden" (乘辇夜行游, 逍遥步西园); and Cao Zhi's "Poem on Public Feast" (公宴诗, *Wenxuan*, 20: 282): "In a cool night I toured in the Western Garden \ With flying canopy following me" (清夜游西园, 飞盖相追随).

¹³ 望苑, i.e., 博望苑, Bowang Park, was a park Emperor Wudi (汉武帝, 140-89, BC) built for his Crowned Heir Li (戾太子), who in the end fell victim to slander. See HS, 63: 2741-9.

Emperor Han Gaozu from deposing his Crowned Heir.¹⁴

Poem Two

At the Eastern Mansion there are honor guards in vain,	东府虚容卫, ¹⁵
To the Western Garden I send my yearning dream.	西园寄梦思。
When a phoenix was hung, t'was the night to play tunes,	凤悬吹曲夜,
As the cock-crow interrupted, the time to salute your parents.	鸡断问安时。 ¹⁶
On the dusty road the capital people feel resentful,	尘陌都人恨,
In the frosty suburbs the mourning horses neigh sadly.	霜郊踟马悲。
What is left is only the land where the jade was buried,	唯馀埋璧地,
Where misty grasses encroach upon the crimson steps.	烟草近丹墀。 ¹⁷

If Wen had no memory of personally visiting the "Western Garden", it would make no sense for him to mention sending his "yearning dream" there. The second couplet just

¹⁴ See *Shiji*, "The Biography of Marquis Liu", 55: 2048.

¹⁵ 东府, The Eastern Mansion, would have been 东宫, the Heir Apparent's palace, were it not for the tonal requirement that the second syllable bear an oblique sound.

¹⁶ 凤, Phoenix, is the short form for 凤管, the phoenix pipe, i. e., *Xiao*, 箫, a vertical bamboo flute, which, it was said, resembles in shape the wing of the legendary phoenix. Wang Ziqiao, Heir Apparent of King Ling of Zhou (周灵王), liked playing the *Sheng* (笙, a wind pipe) to imitate the cry of the phoenix, and ascended the Heaven as an immortal, see *Yiwen Leiju*, 44: 792, quoting *Liexian Zhuan*. 问安, is the conventional etiquette for the royal heir to observe; when King Wen was the Royal Heir, he went to ask about his parents' health three times everyday. See *Liji*, 20: 1403.

¹⁷ The place where the jade is buried, alludes to *Zuozhuan*, 46: 2070, "Duke Zhao the Thirteenth Year": King Gong of Chu (楚恭王) decided to let gods choose his successor from among his sons; he buried a jade in the palace courtyard, and ordered that the one among his sons who prostrated himself just over the jade be set up as heir.

represents scenes of the past days that often haunted his dreams. It shows how the Heir Apparent saluted his parents, as a synecdochic description for a legal and qualified imperial heir. It is certainly not the Heir Apparent playing (the pipe) at the time, to the exclusion of "the retainers of Ye". To play the *Xiao* or *Sheng* at night at the Heir Apparent's palace is just something idiosyncratic of Wen, who "could play all stringed and wind instruments that come to his hands."¹⁸ There is no reason to doubt that Wen was familiar with the etiquette the Heir followed when paying respects to his parents early in the morning. He even witnessed the occasion.

A careful examination of Wen's choice of words will disclose some more subtle implications of the lines. "Interrupted" (斷) also means "broken" or "cut off," that is, the formality the Heir followed came to an end. Even the verb "hung" (懸) has a melancholy overtone: the bygone happy get-togethers, now suspended, had vanished like mist and fog, never to come back.

These two dirges, besides expressing the poet's deep emotions towards the imperial heir and a gloomy reflections upon his death, give the readers an inkling that Wen might have been on special and familiar terms with him. There is a unique quality of feeling to these poems that far surpasses in depth the ordinary "resentment" harbored by the "capital people." The poems voice the profound grief of a close attendant to the Heir, on whom all hopes were placed and whose tragic death has fatally ruined the poet's prospects.

Similar Hints That Call for Further Meditation

The clues in the above two poems should by no means be ignored. But even if we for the time being set aside the proofs found here, we can still find ample clues--or proofs, once correctly analyzed--that bear out these conclusions. This is the case because Wen was bound to vent his feelings and opinions on this issue, though he did so in very obscure terms. Consider the following examples:

¹⁸ See WFQ, 257, quoting *Tongxin* (桐薪), an already lost book.

I do not worry that it takes me long to meet my "spring," 不虑见春迟,
I vainly grieve for having presented myself in the wrong way. 空 伤致身错.

(Ancient Idea--古意, WFQ, j. 3)

That is to say, what has disheartened Wen is not the fact that he found his chance too late in his political career, but that he followed the "wrong" way to begin with, and, once mistaken, was doomed to misfortune all his life. If it was not his attendance upon the Heir Apparent that once briefly opened and then forever blocked his way to any promotion, what could it be?

Another example is from "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem":

11 I was indeed seeking fish by climbing a tree, 定为鱼缘木,
And for a second rabbit, by the stump I waited. 曾因兔守株¹⁹

Here Wen hints at the fruitless efforts he once made for gaining an official advancement. Again we are compelled to connect the "impossible" hinted in this couplet to the Heir Apparent Incident, which excludes him from political success once and for all. Hints like these found throughout Wen's existing works are too ample to ignore. Another example is the following couplet:

I had taken the wrong way to present myself, 投足乖蹊径,
And then I absorbed myself in the classics and scriptures. 冥心向简编.

By any account, this secret event happened right before Wen decided to take the civil recruitment examination, the fourth year of Kaicheng. Taking into consideration the information offered in his two dirges, we are at least given to understand that his political

¹⁹ Climbing a tree to seek for fish, is an allusion to a remark in *Mengzi*. For the translation, see Legge *The Four Books*, 460. To wait by a stump for a second rabbit to come, is a metaphor for waiting for the impossible to occur. For the fable, see *Hanfeizi*, 19: 1183.

secrets very probably had something to do with his liaison with the Heir, uncertain as we are at the moment about the exact nature of the relationship between the two. The following epistle can place our question in a clearer light.

Epistle Thanking Minister Li of Xiangzhou (谢襄州李尚书启)

Annotated Translation of the Epistle

Your humble servant wishes to say: endowed with the trite material of an altar oak-tree and the useless qualities of Void-space Village,²⁰ I had really no merits to serve your wise and beneficent Excellency (某启: 某栎社凡材, 芜乡散质, 殊无绩效, 堪奉恩明). Would that I could pull [His Majesty's] sleeve in the Purple Polar [palace], and carry the writing brush on the crimson steps. Thinking about my shallow and futile person, I know it certainly goes too far to wish so (曷当紫极牵袂, 丹墀载笔.²¹ 顾循虚浅, 实过津涯).

How could I know that while following you in the decorated boat I was all of a sudden promoted to the Cassia Garden ((岂知画舸方游, 俄升于桂苑);²² and without betaking myself to the Orchid Gate, I already took hold of the irid ink-paste (兰扃未染, 已捧于芝

²⁰ "An altar oak-tree" is something big but good for nothing. 芜乡, a variant for 无何有之乡, "a tract where there is nothing else" (literally, void-space village), c. f., Zhuangzi's advice to Huizi to plant an Ailantus tree--Legge: *The Texts of Taoism*, 174 & 217.

²¹ "Pull the sleeve" alludes to Xin Bi's (辛毗) obstinate remonstrance against Emperor Wendi of Wei (r. 220-6) and means being to an honest and daring court official; see SGZ, 25: 697. 载笔, To carry the brush, refers to the Left and the Right Historiographers, i. e., the two Imperial Diarists (起居舍人, 起居郎). See Wang Tang: *Tanghuiyao*, 56: 963.

²² "The decorated boat" alludes to the story of Liu Shan (刘) and Zhang Ping (张凭): Liu invited Zhang to enter his own boat and recommended Zhang to the emperor, see NATW, 119. 桂苑, Cassia garden, refers to the Cassia Area (桂坊), the Editorial Service under the Left Secretariat in the Household of the Heir Apparent (太子左春坊司经局). For more proofs, see the texts later in this chapter.

泥).²³ All this is because of the favor of ascending your hall and the honor of being recorded and registered. The tiny being of a swan's down was revitalized by riding on a whirlwind of sheep-horn (此皆宠自升堂, 荣因著录.²⁴ 励鸿毛之眇质, 托羊角之高风).²⁵

The daily blessing I got from you is boundless, and I will forever look up to your loving kindness of rebirth; and the coming of this chance follows its own course, how could I know the way to go ahead (日用无穷, 常仰生成之德; 时来有自, 宁知进取之规)? In my awe and fear and hesitation, I know not what to say. And until I find an opportunity to express my gratitude in your presence, my yearning and reverence for you are vainly deep and everlasting (兢惕 彷徨, 莫知所喻. 未由陈谢, 攀恋空深).

An Analytical Study of the Epistle: Three Questions

We must pay particular attention to the fact that this epistle was gathered in the Song dynasty encyclopedia Wenyuan Yinghua (653: 3357), under the subtitle *Xieguan* (谢官), "Thanks for Having Obtained an Official Position." That is, Wen was appointed to a position that we ought not to ignore. From this text we do see that Wen is extending his deepest gratitude to Minister Li, at whose recommendation, he, with his "useless qualities," was

²³ 兰扃, "The Orchid Gate" or 兰台, the Orchid terrace, is another name for the Censorate (御史台). "Palace Aide to the Censor-In-Chief" is concurrently in charge of the Secretariat of the Orchid Terrace." See Xu Jian: Chuxueji, 12: 291 & 295.

²⁴ Both 升堂, "ascending (your) hall", and 著录, "being recorded and registered", mean to be the disciple of somebody. The former alludes to the remark of Confucius: "As to You, he has ascended the hall, but has not yet entered the chamber." See *Lunyu*, 10: 2499. The latter is a phrase from "The Biography of Zhang Xing", "Zhang Xing has a far-reaching reputation; the number of his disciples coming from far away and being recorded and registered reaches almost ten thousand." See HHS, 79a: 2552.

²⁵ "A sheep-horn" is an epithet for whirling and rising wind, having its origin in *Zhuangzi*. It means rapid advancement in one's official career.

unexpectedly put into an important position. Moreover, Wen also demonstrates his determination to devote himself to that position, to live up to Li's expectation, despite the precarious nature of the position and menacing situation he faces.

Wen's Teacher

The first question we must ask is: what relationship was there between Minister Li and Wen such that Li was willing to sponsor him? Minister Li must have been Wen's teacher. This can be understood from the phrase "the favor of *ascending your hall* and the honor of *being recorded and registered*." Because Wen was Li's student, and, we might add, an excellent student, Li recommended Wen to an important position, offering him an opportunity for rapid and direct advancement. "Teacher" here must be understood as much more meaningful than its modern counterpart. In the late Tang period a teacher was somebody who chose and instructed his disciples in all learning necessary for passing the civil recruitment examination; he was more important than an Examination Administrator (座主) in that from beginning to end, the students and teacher shared a common political orientation. In other words, the teacher usually exerted immense influence on his students. This was particularly so when he was at once the student's patron and official superior, as was the case between Wen and this Li. As our later studies will bear out, Wen and Minister Li were truly an extraordinary teacher-student pair.

As Literary Attendant of the Heir Apparent

Our second question is: what exactly was this position which elicited both ecstasy and scruples on the part of our poet? This question might be more baffling. In order to find its answer, let us try to follow Wen's own train of thought as manifested in the epistle.

With his "trite material" and "useless qualities," Wen really had not expected that he would be offered such a position as the one for which Li recommended him. That is to say, never before had he dreamt of becoming an official directly serving His Majesty, such that he would "pull the sleeve [as Remonstrator, say, an Attending Censor]" or "carry the writing-brush [as an Imperial Diarist]." Nevertheless, Wen would not have mentioned these two

official titles without rhyme or reason. The implication is that the position he was appointed to was somewhat similar to the ones alluded to here. He tells us that while he was accompanying his teacher and waiting for a chance of official appointment, he was, to his surprise, promoted to "the Cassia Garden"; and, without troubling himself to go to the "Orchid Gate", was directly raised to such a status that he could "take hold of the irid ink-paste" (已捧于芝泥).

We must proceed to finding out the solution of the following question: what did Wen mean by "the Cassia Garden" and "Orchid Gate"?

"Cassia Garden" could be nothing else but "the Cassia Area", i. e., the Editorial Service under the Left Secretariat in the Household of the Heir Apparent (太子左春坊司经局). The reasons for this inference are as follows:

(1) "Promoted to the Cassia Garden" itself strongly suggests that "the Cassia Garden" is an official institution.

(2) According to "The Records of the Hundred Officials" (XTS, 49: 1294-5), "In the third year of Longshuo (663), the Editorial Service was changed to Academy of Cassia Fragrance" (桂芳馆), which was also called "the Cassia Area" (桂坊). Apparently, in these terms, the Chinese characters *Fang* (坊, area), *Yuan* (苑, garden) and *Guan* (馆, academy) are terms that were used interchangeably during the Tang dynasty, as they had similar meanings in the context. The Cassia Garden is none other than the Editorial Service.

(3) The official institutes of the Heir Apparent are related to "Cassia", as can be traced as far back as the Han dynasty. According to "The Annals of Emperor Cheng": "Emperor Xiaocheng, the Heir Apparent of Emperor Yuan, originally lived in the Cassia Palace" (HS, 45: 984). This Cassia Palace is just the Cassia Garden where conventionally the Heir Apparent was supposed to abide. "Cassia Garden" used in place of "the Cassia Palace", besides alluding to history, is exact reference to fact.

(4) There are precedents showing that poets prior to the Tang substituted "Cassia Garden" for the palace where the Heir Apparent lived. Yu Xin's (庾信, 513-581) "Poem on

the Topic of the Painted Screen" (咏畫屏風詩, *Yiwen Leiju*, 69: 1202) has the lines: "Easygoing and carefree we are playing in the Cassia Garden \ Single and alone I come to the Peach Spring" (逍遙游桂苑, 寂寞到桃源). Zong Guai's (宗夬, 456-504) poem "Bidding Farewell to Consular Xiao" (別蕭諮議, *ibid*, 29: 521) states how: "Dismally and glumly I come over to the Cassia Garden \ Pityingly and Calmly I look on the beautiful pond" (悵焉臨桂苑 \ 憫默瞻華池). Yu Xin's poem was written when he served in the Eastern Palace whereas Zong Guai's poem was the product of his service as the Western Mansion Academician under the Jingling Prince of Qi (齊竟陵王).²⁶

Taken together, this evidence furnishes virtual proofs that Wen once served in the Editorial Service under the Left Secretariat in the Household of the Heir Apparent. This will be more clear once we find out the exact meaning of "Orchid Gate".

What precisely was the institutional nature of the "Orchid Gate"? "Orchid Gate" in this context should also refer to an official institution, an official institution closely connected with and similar to that of "the Cassia Garden." As the Censorate (御史臺) was also called "the Orchid Terrace" (蘭臺), it is logical that we take "Orchid Gate" as a variant for "Orchid Terrace" and thus for the Censorate. But what did the Censorate have to do with the Editorial Service under the Left Secretariat in the Household of the Heir Apparent?

According to "The Records of the Hundred Officials" (XTS, 49: 1294-5), "In the third year of Longshuo (663), the Editorial Service was changed to the Cassia Area (桂坊), no longer subordinate to the Left Secretariat of the Heir Apparent, having under it the Academy for the Veneration of Worthies" (崇賢館); and as a governmental institution in the service of the Heir Apparent, compared with those official apparatuses in the entire system of the emperor, it "resembled the Censorate"; one of the two Supervisors of the Household of the Heir Apparent (太子詹事) was made its director and resembled the Censor-In-Chief (比御史大夫); it had two rectifiers, resembling the Attending Censors

²⁶ For the two men's biographical information concerned, see Lu Qinli, 1554 & 2357.

(比侍御史), and four Literary Assistants (文学)... In the second year of Xianheng (671), the Cassia Garden again was made subordinate to the Left Secretariat of the Heir Apparent."

Hence the Editorial Service could also be called the "Orchid Gate", though in Wen's descriptive term there is a little too much exaggeration. Be that as it may, this institution bore resemblance to the Censorate yet was no Censorate, that is why Wen, while serving in the Editorial Service, says that, "without betaking myself to the Orchid Gate, I already took hold of the irid ink-paste" (芝泥). The implication is that, originally, one did need go to "the Orchid Gate" "to take hold of the irid ink-paste"; thus what Wen had now reached was not the "Orchid Gate". Since nonetheless he managed to "reach hold of the irid ink-paste," he is telling us that he had obtained an appointment in the Editorial Service. A governmental institution pertaining to the Heir Apparent, the Editorial Service has its counterpart the Censorate in the whole official system under the emperor.

Since Wen "took hold of the irid ink-paste" in the Editorial Service under the Left Secretariat of the Heir Apparent, he is telling us that he served in that institution as a literary attendant. "Irid ink-paste" is a laudatory reference to the sealing ink-paste of more recent times, which was originally something so rare and precious that it related directly to the emperor,²⁷ or at least to the confidential attendants of the emperor. On the other hand, the Tang literati used the irid as a metaphor for the Censorship or Censors.²⁸ All of this can be boiled down to one statement: Wen Tingyun did attend on the Heir Apparent at one time,

²⁷ See *Yiwen Leiju*, 12: 232, Yu Xin: "Eulogy to Emperor Wu of Han's Gathering Books" (汉武聚书赞): "Stamped on a paper strip with irid-paste, and sealed in a jade box."

²⁸ See Tao Hongjing: *Zhengao*, 5: 14, "For the immortal officials, those who take doses made of ordinary iris are censor" (仙官食众芝为御史). In Shangguan Yi's (上官仪, 616-664) "Presented to Duke Gaoyang" (和赠高阳公, QTS, 40: 507), we have such lines: "Among the censor-perfuming censors comes the immortal, with cloudy saddle and feather canopy going down from the iris field" (薰炉御史出神仙, 云鞍羽盖下芝田).

holding a post somewhat like that of an Attending Censor.

The Identity of Minister Li of Xiangzhou

Since no standard history or sinologist has ever touched on this question, we must guard against unwarranted assumptions in our effort to substantiate our conclusion about this man's identity. Who is the Li who could have power to raise Wen to such a height?

Because Wen came to the capital Chang'an after the Jianghuai Incident, which took place no later than the first year of Kaicheng (836), and because the Heir Apparent Li Yong died on December 5 of the third year of Kaicheng (838), to date this epistle, we must focus our search within these three years (836-838), the period when Wen gained access to the Heir by means of Li's recommendation.

As is shown in the title of the epistle, Minister Li must have been one of the Military Commissioners in the garrison of Xiangzhou, the headquarters of administration for the Eastern Circuit of Shannan (山南东道). According to the Tang Fangzhen Nianbiao (4: 636-7), those who held the position of Military Commissioner of the Eastern Circuit of Shannan from 836 to 838 are Li Ao (772-841, from the eighth month of 835 to some time before the seventh month of 836), Yin You (殷侑, from the seventh month of 836 to the third month of 837) and Li Cheng (from the third month of 837 to sometime before the eighth month of 839). After careful deliberation between Li Ao and Li Cheng, we have to exclude Li Ao; his tenure as Military Commissioner of Xiangzhou would admit too short a time for Wen to make the long trip from Jianghuai to the capital or Xiangzhou to appeal to various ministers. Therefore, Minister Li of Xiangzhou ought to have been Li Cheng. Our arguments are as follow:

(1) Li Cheng was a person powerful enough to recommend Wen to an important and confidential position like that of attendant to the Heir Apparent. In the Tang dynasty Li was one of the few prime ministers issued from the imperial clan (宗室丞相)²⁹ who enjoyed the

²⁹ See ZZhtJ, "The First Year of Yongzhen (805)", 236: 7929.

full confidence of the emperors. Furthermore, after obtaining the Presented Scholar degree as the first candidate in 796, Li Cheng held many important official positions in his official career of almost fifty years, both in the central bureaucracy and in various circuits. As a result, in his late years during the Kaicheng era, he was one of the most influential and respected veteran officials of his time.

(2) Prior to being appointed Military Commissioner of the Eastern Shannan Circuit, Li had held the position of the Honorary Minister of the Ministry of Military Affairs. That is why Wen addressed him as "Minister." Actually Li Cheng as a veteran court official enjoyed a prestige even greater than that of a Prime Minister after his tenure in that position (825-7). We can further note that Li had once held the position of Examination Administrator; thus his influence and prestige through his students was also great.

(3) In the late Tang period, it was customary that successful scholars accepted students as a means of spreading their ideas. Li Cheng was an influential teacher. According to his Biography (JTS, 167:4372), he was a man

with excellent and profound scholarly insight. But he had an unconventional and unrestrained character, and paid little attention to trivial formalities. Moreover, as a teacher and senior court official, he was humorous and fond of making jokes, thus he incurred censure from some people.

Such a famous teacher accepted such a famous student. And what great similarities there were in the criticisms, if not the personalities, of teacher and student!

(4) According to Li's biography (XTS, 131:4511), Li

possessed a nature of quick witticisms and eloquence. He had a simple and unpretentious style, and because he lacked an impressive and dignified manner, despite the many confidential and distinguished appointments he had won, he did not have a particularly good reputation. However, he was greatly appreciated by Emperor Wenzong, who once remarked:

The birds flying on high have their senior take the lead, and you are the senior one

in my court (高飞之翮, 长者在前, 卿朝廷羽翮也).³⁰

It is not by sheer accident that, when referring to his manner of composing poetry, Wen wrote in one of his two "Epistles Presented to Vice-Minister Jiang" (上蒋侍郎启):

I have acquired a thorough mastery of the fair designs of the former worthies, because I heard the discriminating remark of the senior one (颇识前修之懿图, 盖闻长者之余论).

Obviously "the senior one" means an individual person. We suggest that it refers to Wen's teacher Li Cheng by quoting Emperor Wenzong.

(5) We have an additional reason to bear out our identification of Li Cheng as Wen's teacher. Among his contemporaries, Li was regarded as an exemplar in literary writing, as a late Tang author Zhao Lin says of him (3: 16, *Yinhualu*):

From the era of Yuanhe onwards, among those who excelled in both literary and applied writings are Magistrate of Liu Prefecture Liu Zongyuan, Minister Liu Yuxi and Lord Yang; the latter two, in addition, were conversant with poetry. Beside these, Course Director Zhang Ji was good at composing songs and ballads, while Li He was adept in making new Music Bureau verses; all those having a fondness for songs and poems model themselves on these two. However, **Prime Minister Li Cheng**, Joint Director Wang Qi, Junior Mentor Bai Juyi and his brother and Drafter of the Secretariat Zhang Zhongsu excelled in writing poems and prose works for examinations, those speaking about literary form and style follow the example of these five men.

In conclusion, taking everything into account, Minister Li must be Li Cheng. Nobody else but Li Cheng would have been willing and competent enough to be Wen's teacher. In our later discussion concerning how Wen changed his name, we will find more evidence that

³⁰ As the character 翮 (he4) can mean either, synecdochically, the bird or the feathers of the wings, the phrase 长者 acquires two possible meanings: "senior" or "the longest".

points to the immense influence Li exerted upon Wen, his disciple.

Since the fact that Wen once served the Heir Apparent has by and large remained undiscovered, readers of later generations have known nothing about it. In this regard, none of Wen's contemporaries seems to have left even a clue to posterity. Therefore, our discovery about Li Cheng becomes more meaningful than it appears to be at first sight. It opens a wider scope of inquiry into the details of Wen's secret relationship with the Tang imperial clan in general, and with Wenzong and his son Li Yong in particular.

Epistle Thanking Prime Minister Hegan (謝紇干相公啓)

Emperor Wenzong in his later years became a puppet in the hands of the eunuchs and the Tang imperial clan lost most of its power. This, however, does not mean that gaining access to the imperial heir would be any easier. Wen's success in obtaining the chance to attend the Heir Apparent was the result of a long and cautious process. As an imperial relative with an imperial-clan Prime Minister as his teacher and mediator, Wen still had to pass a special civil service examination, and his appointment had to be authorized by the emperor personally. All these details are revealed in Wen's poetic or prose works, but never in clear and unequivocal terms. They constitute our story--history--of Wen's attendance upon the Heir Apparent.

The study of Wen's following epistle discloses more of his secrets and would seem confusing had we not found out his relationship with Li Cheng.

Annotated Translation

Your humble servant wishes to say: My talent [timber] cannot compare with trees such as teak and oak, and my literary compositions are neither brocade nor embroidery (某啓: 某材謝梗楠, 文非綺組). Having roamed about thousands of *li*, I was appointed as no more than Aide to the Man-barbarian headquarters (間關千里, 僅爲蠻國參軍); having frittered away my time within a hundred years, I rested content with the rank of Clerk of

Jingzhou Prefecture (荏苒百齡, 甘作荊州從事).³¹ I never dreamt that I would get wings and soar up with wind and cloud (寧思羽翼, 可勵風雲). How could I have expected that, in my trite and indolent person, I would find myself posted among the most confidential and privy [royal office] (豈知持彼庸疏, 栖于宥密).³² Looking back, I am going further and further from dirt and dinginess; going up on high, I am approaching the zenith of the blue heavens (回顧而漸離緇垢, 冥升而欲近烟霄). The glory far exceeds my original expectation, and the position surpasses my initial wish (榮非始圖, 事過初願). All this is a consequence of promoting the fragrance [value] of literary worthies, allowing me to rise up from within our teacher's door and wall (此皆

31 Both "an aide in the Man-barbarian headquarters" and "clerk of Jingzhou Prefecture" allude to *Shishuo Xinyu*; see NATW, 415 & 135. "While Hao Long was serving as Huan Wen's aide to the Commandant of the Southern Man Barbarians, there was a gathering on the third day of the third month, at which everyone composed poems....After drinking the three dipperfuls (of forfeit), he seized a brush and wrote: 'The Juyu leaps in the clear pool' (鰕螭躍清池). Huan Wen asked, 'What on earth is a Juyu?' Long replied, 'The Man barbarians called fish Juyu.' Huan asked, 'Who ever heard of using the Man language to compose poetry?' Long replied, 'I came a thousand *li* to serve under your Excellency's command, and only got to be an aide in the Man-barbarian headquarters, so how can I avoid using the Man language?'" "Xi Zuochi's ability as a historian was extraordinary. Huan Wen valued him highly, and even before Xi was thirty employed him as keeper of the central documents in his administration of Jing Prefecture. In his letter of thanks on receiving the appointment, Xi said, 'If I had never met your Excellency, I should have remained in Jing Prefecture a perpetual clerk, and nothing more.'"

32 宥密, "The most confidential and privy," is a term borrowed from "High Heaven Has a Firm Charge" (昊天有成命) of *The Book of Songs*, see *Maoshi* 19: 587; for the translation, see Waley, no. 219, quoted later at p. 190.

揚芳甄藻,發迹門牆). Now in the year when the School of Kong Qiu is making use of the rhapsody, Xiangru will enter the chamber; on the day when the Kingdom of Chu is appointing its officials, Song Yu will ascend the platform (丘門用賦之年 相如入室;) 楚國命官之日,宋玉登臺³³ The glory of a single day will brighten my life of a hundred years (一日光陰,百生輝映). Before I manage to extend my gratitude to you, I prostrate myself here at your feet, in reverence and awe (未由陳謝,伏用兢惶).

The Contour of the Epistle

Another Revelation of Wen's Secret

This epistle was put, together with "The Epistle Thanking Minister Li of Xiangzhou," under the subtitle of "Thanks for Having Obtained an Official Position" in Wenyuan Yinghua. It must therefore also have something to do with Wen's appointment as the Heir Apparent's attendant, expressing Wen's thankfulness to Hegan who helped him gain the position. The most evident reason is that, in Wen's life filled with distresses, there could not have been in his official career a second rapid advancement.

After many years' wanderings and having resigned himself to his destiny, something surprising now occurred. Wen found himself "approaching the zenith of the blue heavens." What can this mean but gaining direct access to the emperor? Actually, to "post in the most confidential and privy [royal office]" means to serve in a particularly important official institution, and in this case, to serve in the relevant office under the Editorial Service in the Household of the Left Secretariat of the Heir Apparent.

To further confirm this inference let us read "High Heaven Had a Firm Charge":

High heaven had a firm charge;

昊天有成命,

³³ See Yang Xiong: Yangzi 2: 6. "Were the disciples of Confucius to make use of the rhapsody, Jia Yi would ascend the hall and Xiangru would be able to enter the chamber." Song Yu, Chinese ancient poet, reputed disciple of Qu Yuan, was a literatus of Chu.

Two monarchs received it.

二后受之。

Nor did King Cheng stay idle,

成王不敢康，

Day and night he buttressed that charge

夙夜基命宥密。

Here "two monarchs" refers to King Wen and his son King Wu who conquered the Shang and founded the Zhou dynasty. King Cheng, as King Wu's son and the successor, carried on his forefathers' enterprise and "buttressed that charge." Waley's translation does not reflect the exact connotation of the original text in *The Book of Songs*, to which Wen alludes. The phrase 夙夜基命 according to Zheng Xuan's annotation and Kong Yingda's sub-annotation, should mean to exercise leniency and peacefulness. It is in this sense that the term 宥密 takes on the meaning "lenient and peaceful governance" (i. e., of the succeeding king), linked by Wen with the Heir Apparent's official institution, even though as a set phrase during the Tang, it already acquired the meaning "confidential and privy [governmental institution]."

Another reason we can add to our argument is found in Wen's statement that "All this is a consequence of promoting the fragrance [value] of literary worthies, allowing me to rise up from within my teacher's door and wall." This suggests that Wen's promotion through Prime Minister Hegan was closely related with his teacher Li Cheng's recommendation. Here we can infer that Li Cheng, as a senior minister, recommended Wen to Hegan, who happened to be partly in charge of the selection of the Ministry of Personnel. And we are justified in saying that to become a member in the Heir Apparent's retinue is not so simple--without the consent of the emperor himself, such an important appointment as aide to the Heir Apparent would be impossible.

Other Hints: Sima Xiangru and the Kingdom of Chu

When Wen says "Now in the year when the School of Kong Qiu is making use of rhapsody, Xiangru will enter the chamber", he is likening himself to Sima Xiangru, the Han dynasty literatus of eminence, and declaring that if only opportunity presents itself, he will be employed by dint of his literary talent. Wen prided himself on his literary talent, as one of the

reasons to proclaim himself Xiangru incarnate. Another reason for this boast is that throughout the Heir Apparent Incident, Wen played a role somewhat similar to that of the Han dynasty poet--he composed poems sympathetic to Virtuous Consort Wang, in an effort to dissuade the fickle emperor from abandoning her and help her to regain His Majesty's favor. This will become apparent in our later discussions of this topic.

Wen's remark that "on the day when the Kingdom of Chu is appointing its officials, Song Yu will ascend the platform" is also noteworthy. Wen compares himself to Song Yu of Chu, thus intimating that the official institution of the Heir Apparent is something analogous to the Chu Kingdom. Since in Wen's works, we find terms about "Chu" in frequent use, here we can draw out an important clue for unraveling other enigmas in his works: "Chu" stands for the Heir, and through the Heir, the whole empire.

This conclusion is instrumental in clarifying many textual ambiguities in Wen's works, such as the following passage from "Epistle Presented to Minister Feng" (上封尚書啓):

Although I was unable to accompany Your Excellency wherever you went when the Kingdom of Chu was in need of talented men, as a student entrusted to you from inside the Confucian house, I had lived up to the expectation of my teachers....Consequently, silly orphan that I am, I frequently found shelter or refuge (雖楚國求才, 難陪足跡; 而丘門托質, 不負心期...顧惟孤拙, 頻有依投).

Based on the conclusion reached via the "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Hegan", we immediately understand what Wen is saying here: he was chosen to be an attendant of the Heir Apparent, thus he could not have followed Feng to where the latter held his official position. Recommended as an honest and competent attendant for "the Kingdom of Chu"--to serve the Heir Apparent--Wen had lived up to the hopes of his teacher. This is the reason why quite a few officials, including this Minister Feng, appreciated Wen's person and were willing to lend him the shelter of their name and position. This in turn is another consequence of his attendance on the Heir Apparent.

In our later discussion we will find more examples that substantiate Wen's resemblance to Xiangru. But what interests us most now is:

Who Hegan Was

In the first half of the ninth century, there was a man of considerable reputation by the name of Hegan Qi (紇干_紇 fl. 820-50), who, though he has no biography in the two Tang Histories, is mentioned in various Tang historical sources. About this Hegan Qi, there is an interesting anecdote recorded in Zhao Lin's Yinhualu (3: 18):

In the third year of Kaicheng, I, to make up the number, was accepted as a Presented Scholar. The Examination Supervisor, Sir Hegan, the Vice Director of the Ministry of Justice (考官刑部員外郎), used to be a student of Prime Minister Cui Qun (崔群, 772-832). When Hegan acquired the Presented Scholar degree, he joined others gathering in the small hall in Xinchang, to have audience with the Examination Administrator Cui. Now that he was appointed an Examining official, he borrowed Prime Minister Cui's old mansion to accept his own students....The first candidate, Sun Jue of He'nan, later became Assistant to Councilor, before the Duke of Yanmen. Hegan was transferred as Inspection Commissioner of the Jiangxi Circuit, then returned [to the capital] to be Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Works, and was appointed Military Commissioner of Nanhai. He ended up being enfeoffed as the Duke of Yanmen.

We are given to understand that in the third year of Kaicheng Hegan Qi was the Examination Supervisor, concurrently holding the post Vice Director of the Ministry of Justice. The same fact is also seen in Tangyulin (4: 135) by Wang Dang:

In the third year of Kaicheng, the examination supervisor of calligraphy and judgment (書判考官) Sir Hegan, the Vice Director of the Ministry of Justice, was a student of the Prime Minister Cui...

From the position Hegan Qi held in the third year of Kaicheng, we can roughly guess what kind of position he held in the previous year. Though we cannot name it exactly, we can safely say that it must have had something to do with the selection of civil official, held by the Ministry of Personnel, the so-called "promoting the fragrance [value] of literary worthies." Otherwise Wen could not have thanked him for gaining the position as referred to in the Epistle. The civil official selection presided over by the Ministry of Personnel has as its purpose the choosing of eligible officials, rather than Presented Scholars, who were chosen by the civil service examinations. In the late Tang period, on the one hand, the Presented Scholar Examination was the most popular; on the other hand, many would by-pass it and go directly into official employment by dint of "hereditary privilege" (蔭). Though Wen's family was in disgrace, theoretically Wen was still in a position to enjoy his "ancestral privilege," and it was also for this reason that there were people willing to allow Wen the chance to make his headway without sitting for the examination.

According to the "Biography of Gao Yuanyu (高元裕, XTS, 177: 5283)", Gao in his tenure as Left Assistant Chancellor (尚書左丞) in the second year of Kaicheng, was in charge of the selection for the Ministry of Personnel. About that time, Hegan Qi was holding the post of Vice Director of the Left Chancellor (左司員外郎), whereas Feng Ao (封敖) was holding the office of the Director of the same office (左司郎中). Both might have played a part in the selection.³⁴ But we may logically raise the question: if we cannot find a Hegan Qi in "The List of Prime Ministers" (of XTS), why is Hegan Qi addressed as "Prime Minister" (*Xiang'gong*, 相公)? Let us examine his official experiences and any possible relationship that might have existed between Hegan and Wen.

Although Hegan Qi has no biographies in the two Tang Histories, we can determine the

³⁴ See Lao Ge: Langguan Shizhu Timingkao, 2: 29a and 22: 18a. For more biographical information about Feng Ao, see XTS, 177: 5287; JTS, 168: 4392.

following about him from extant sources: his style-name was Xianyi (咸一);³⁵ he was a Presented Scholar of the tenth year of Yuanhe (815);³⁶ in the third year of Dahe (829), when the Southern Barbarians entered the city of Chengdu, Hegan, then Assistant Commissioner of Jian'nan and Xichuan Circuit, was demoted to Chief Executive Official (長史) of Yingzhou Prefecture,³⁷ as a result of his dereliction of duty; during the Kaicheng period, he took the posts of Director of the Treasury Bureau (金部郎中) and Director of the Left Office (左司郎中);³⁸ in the beginning of Huichang, he was shifted to the post of Director of the Granary Bureau (庫部郎中);³⁹ later, in the middle of Huichang (841-846), he became Drafter in the Secretariat (中書舍人);⁴⁰ Towards the beginning of Dazhong, as Palace Aide to the Censor-In-Chief (御史中丞), he was sent out to be the Inspection Commissioner of the Jiangxi Circuit;⁴¹ then he reentered the court in the position of Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Works;⁴² then he became Minister of a ministry in the central bureaucracy;⁴³ finally, he went out to be the Military Commissioner of the Lingnan Circuit.

Judging from the records available, there are two possibilities, either of which might have qualified Hegan to be a so-called *Xiang'gong* (相公). First, in Zhao Lin's account of

³⁵ See XTS, "Records of Art and Literature", 59: 1522.

³⁶ See Xu Song DKJK, 18: 11a.

³⁷ See "Biographies of Du Yuanying" (杜元穎), XTS, 96: 3862 and JTS, 163: 4263.

³⁸ See *Langguan Shizhu Timingkao*, 7: 21 & 15: 20.

³⁹ See JTS, "Records of Law and Penalty" (舊唐書刑法志), 50: 2156.

⁴⁰ See "Biographies of Liu Zhongying" (柳仲穎), JTS, 165: 4305; XTS, 163: 5023.

⁴¹ See Cui Gu (崔嘏): "Edict Appointing Hegan Qi as Inspection Commissioner of Jiangxi Circuit" (授紇干象江西觀察使制), QTW, 726: 9472,

⁴² See Shen Xun (沈詢): "Edict Appointing Hegan Qi as Military Commissioner of Lingnan Circuit" (授紇干象嶺南節度使制). QTW, 723: 9426.

⁴³ See "Biographies of Pei Xiu", JTS, 177: 4593 and XTS, 182: 5371.

Yinhualu, Sun Jue "became Assistant Councilor prior to "The Duke of Yanmen" [Hegan Qi]; that is to say, Hegan Qi once held the position of Left or Right Assistant to the Councilor, a position that qualified him to be addressed as "*Xianggong*" which we translate as "Prime Minister" in most cases. Second, since Hegan presented himself as Examination Supervisor, in charge of the civil official selection for the Ministry of Personnel, and Wen Tingyun, through Li Cheng's recommendation, succeeded in being chosen through Hegan, the relationship between Hegan and Wen now became one of Examination Administrator and candidate student (座主門生). It was common practice during Tang times for students to call their Examination Administrator *Xianggong*, in which case the term *Xianggong* loses its original meaning as "Prime Minister."

Therefore, the "Prime Minister Hegan" so-called is Hegan Qi.

If we pay attention to the fact that Li Cheng was appointed Examination Administrator in the twelfth year of Yuanhe (817), while Hegan Qi, Feng Ao and Pei Yizhi (裴夷直, to whom Wen also presented an epistle appealing for rescue),⁴⁴ were all Presented Scholars of the tenth year of Yuanhe (815), we can understand what a veteran minister Li Cheng must have seemed in the eyes of his junior contemporaries such as Hegan Qi, Pei Yizhi and Feng Ao, even though they had gained remarkable distinction themselves.

The Story Hidden in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem"

A Poem that Demands Decoding

If Wen Tingyun really had such an unusual experience and played a role in the events that led up with the death of the young prince, he could not have left the story out of his insightful and powerful representation in his autobiographical "Hundred-Rhyme Poem" written in the winter of the fifth year of Kaicheng (840). Now it is time that we pick up anew the thread of

⁴⁴ For Pei's biographies, see JTS, 163: 4268; XTS, 148: 4772. After Li Yong's death, for a time Wen had to hide himself in Pei's, see chapter seven, p. 251-2.

the central topic in this chapter. We have to offer a relatively satisfying annotation of this poem. Among the very few critics who have mentioned this poem in their researches, there is none as yet who have succeeded in determining its basic purport, not to mention its precise implications.

One can presume to attribute the dissatisfying status quo of Wen's study to the imperfect Annotations to Wen Feiqing Shiji, by Zeng Yi, Gu Yuxian and Gu Sili, but any modern scholar who wishes to explore the topic of Wen Tingyun cannot leave this important work misunderstood and unexamined.

To paraphrase "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem", we must take cognizance of two facts. First, in this poem, we find an abundance of erudite allusion and archaic diction, in addition to numerous terms used only in certain circles of the late Tang literati society, the connotations of which are not accessible through modern reference works. Consequently, painstaking effort is needed to coax out the rich implications of each line. Once those obstacles, which the poet deliberately erected for his readers, are overcome, we find that a way to the solutions is opened up, and that we are in a position to grasp more exactly the poet's meanings.

Second, "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" is in the full sense an autobiographical account, in which every line has a direct bearing on the author himself. We know that, the syntax of Chinese prosody, especially that of regulated poetry, requires that personal pronouns, particularly first person pronouns, be avoided in most cases. This practice finds its unique expression in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" in that, no matter how complicated the connotations of each line are, the grammatical role played by poet, either as subject or as object or as anything else, is always implied but not stated, to be understood and filled in by the discriminating reader. In the meanwhile, the poem as a whole maintains an intrinsic logical consistency of its own. In a sense, the poem becomes an artifice in which its author tells his story without referring to himself by pronouns such as "I," "me," or "my" etc. To

paraphrase "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem", we must be careful to insert the first person pronoun wherever desirable. In our paraphrase we will see how the poet constantly shifts his roles, in the front of the stage, then behind the scenes, among others or all alone, making his voice heard as an aside or monologue, then in chorus with other voices.

An Exposition of the Poetic Account

The following is our explanation of the passage extending from the sixty-first to the seventy-fourth rhyme of "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem," which supplements and complements our story of Wen's secret attendance upon the Heir Apparent in many respects. For convenience' sake, our discussion of the passage will be under several subtitles.

Emperor Wenzong's Consent to Wen's Appointment

61 By dint of the lotus mansion I was valued by the Marquis' gates, 蓮府侯門貴,
To the Frost Terrace came the consent of the royal mandate. 霜臺帝命俞.

The first line of this couplet tells very clearly that it was through the favor of "the lotus mansion" (蓮府), i. e., by the help of a Prime Minister, that Wen was valued by "the Marquis' gates" (侯門). In view of our findings, we can say without hesitation that the Prime Minister referred to here was Li Cheng. As a result of Li's recommendation, the emperor's behest was issued to the Frost Terrace (霜臺, an unofficial name for the Censorate), to grant Wen a position there. As we know, in the Tang official system the Editorial Service of the Left Secretariat in the Household of the Heir Apparent presented itself as something similar to the Censorate (比御史臺), since as a component part of the miniature empire of the Heir Apparent, it functioned as the Censorate did in the state apparatus of the Empire. Therefore, it was to the appointment of Wen Tingyun as one of his son's assistants in the Editorial Service that Emperor Wenzong gave his consent. Do not forget that Wen came from a family of imperial relatives who had shared weal and woe with the royal clan. It would be impossible for Wen to serve Li Yong without Wenzong's personal approval.

62 Now the steed's hooves began to run swifter than gale, 驥蹄初躡景,
And the roc's wings were about to spiral up to the zenith. 鵬翅欲搏扶.

A detailed account of what Wen witnessed as an attendant to the Heir Apparent begins with this couplet. Here both "hooves of the steed" and "wings of the roc" are metaphors for Wen himself, as he himself boasted, a man of great talent and expectation.

What impresses the reader first is Wen's reaction to his sudden promotion, that gave him direct access to the Heir Apparent, connected directly to His Majesty himself. Now the poet envisaged his undreamed-of chance to serve his young lord and his country, and he would do all within his power to serve His Majesty's heir, which opportunity would normally open a bee-line to great distinction and high office.

How the Heir Apparent Gave Audience to His Palace Subjects

63 Having stayed on duty, I returned on my dapple horse, 寓直回 驄馬,
Sitting in different sections, we faced the dusky crows. 分曹對冥鳥.⁴⁵

Here we are shown the official routines Wen witnessed and participated in, articulated in elegant historical allusions. As to what kind of official routine is indicated here, from the mere face of the couplet, we would say it is that of the Censorate, especially of the Attending

⁴⁵ 寓直, Means spending the night on official duty in a palace office. 驄馬, Light colored horse with blue spots, an allusion to the censor: when Huan Dian was appointed Attending Censor, he often rode such a horse. See HHS, 37: 1258, "The Biography of Huan Dian". 分曹, Sitting in different sections, refers to the officials posted in different bureaus of the Department of the State Affairs; in this context, it is a reference to the officials of different positions serving the Heir. 冥鳥, Dusky crows, again alludes to Censors: when Zhu Bo was the Censor-In-Chief, on the cypresses in front of his mansion there used to be thousands of wild crows coming in the evening and going in the morning, which were thus called morning-evening-birds. See "The Biography of Zhu Bo", HS, 83: 3398.

Censors. However, since the Editorial Service in the Household of the Heir Apparent "resembled the Censorate" and "the two Rectifiers" of the Editorial Service "resembled the Attending Censors," Wen is simply referring to some officials under the Editorial Service, such as the Rectifiers (including Wen himself), rather than Attending Censor under the Censorate.

The unusual frequency with which "the Attending Censor" appears in this poetic passage adds more conviction to our argument: Wen need not have mentioned it so frequently, unless the title hints at his own official position in the Editorial Service, where he spent his most unforgettable days.

64 The Hundred Spirits attended, as it were, enjoying offerings, 百神歆仿佛,
Isolated Bamboo was sending notes, dim and lost. 孤竹韵含胡.⁴⁶

Now we are invited into the Editorial Service where, as demonstrated in the first line, a solemn and imposing atmosphere reigned when "the Heir Apparent gave audience to his palace subjects" (皇太子朝宮臣). If we remember that the Heir Apparent was once enfeoffed as Prince of Lu, it is likely that Wen is intentionally reminding his reader of the topic he was writing about, by alluding to "The Rhapsody on Ling'guang Palace of Lu".

The "Isolated Bamboo" is a flute made from a kind of bamboo that grows in isolation, which was said to give a sound peculiarly pleasant to the ear; thus it was used in the sacrificial rites venerating the spirits. Here, antithetical with "the Hundred Spirits", it suggests the pomp with which affairs were conducted in the Editorial Service; the "dim and lost notes" seem to betoken the Heir Apparent's death.

⁴⁶ The line that begins with "The Hundred Spirits" alludes to "Rhapsody On Ling'guang Palace of Lu" by Wang Yangshou (王延壽: 魯靈光殿賦, *Wenxuan*, 11: 168): "As if the ghosts and spirits were there" (若鬼神之彷彿). For the explanation of the "Isolated Bamboo", see *Zhouli*, "Major Musician", 22: 789.

65 In the Phoenix Hall we stood in line to each side, 鳳闕分班立,
From the egret rows with sword erect we paced forward 鴛行竦劍趨.⁴⁷

Here the poet places the scene in the Heir's giving audience to his palace subjects, with all majesty of the occasion. Wen was among the subjects in the "Phoenix Hall" and "egret rows". At the court audience, the military and the civil officials stand in separate groups to pay reverence to their monarch; some of them, Rectifiers on duty, solemnly hold (wooden) swords erect, as a token of performing their official duty.

66 At confidential behest we butted against evil, 觸邪承密勿,⁴⁸
On behalf of the royal plan we maintained the law. 持法奉訏謨.
67 With jades clanging we strutted up and down, 鳴玉鏘登降,
And the pendants' soundings lingered on here and there. 衡牙響曳婁.⁴⁹

47 鳳闕, Phoenix Hall, is an unofficial title for the Secretariat, or a more common reference to royal palaces in general. 鴛行, Egret row, refers to the strict order of officials at a court audience, perhaps because egrets have good discipline when moving.

48 觸邪, Butting against Evil, was the name of official cap for Censors. It was said that the King of Chu once capture a legendary divine sheep, *Xiezhi* (解豸), which could differ right from wrong and butt against evil people; he thus ordered that the Censor's cap be fashioned after it. The Censor's cap, also called "Behind the Shaft" (柱後), of which the shaft was made of iron, to symbolize the holder's irresistible and incorruptible power. See JS, "The Records of Carriage and Attires", 25: 768.

49 衡牙, Here inexactly translated as "pendants," is a kind of small pendant hung at the lower end of the jade adornment (佩玉) the court officials wore; as the wearer moved, it struck against the jade adornment and made a sound. According to the text of "Yuzao" in *Zhouli* (30: 1482): 佩玉有衝牙, 衡牙 should be 衝牙. But in *Peiwen Yunfu* (3500), the quotation from the same text has 衡牙; so does the quotation from *Zhouli* by Zeng Yi,

These two couplets are a representation of how the Attending Censors, i. e., the Rectifiers including Wen, carried out their official duties. In Wen's account, they were honest officials who held firmly to justice and to the imperial law without yielding to any unorthodox power. In Wen's representation, all the officials serving the Heir Apparent assumed a demeanor even more imposing and important than those ministers and dukes in the emperor's court. Such rhetorical touches, we must point out, indicate Wen's intention to commemorate the late Heir Apparent in a grand and spectacular way, all the more so because his miniature court had such a fleeting existence. At the same time such gestures justified his own efforts in supporting the Heir.

The Lad Monarch and His Attendants

68 His Worship showed intimacy with Heshi's Jade,

祀親和氏璧,

The Fragrance was attached to Boshan Censer.

香近博山爐.⁵⁰

This is the most difficult couplet in "The Hundred-rhyme Poem"; to understand it correctly, however, is of paramount importance for understanding the poem as a whole, and proving our conclusion. We must reemphasize that this passage is exclusively relating the story of Wen's attendance upon the Heir Apparent. In the verses leading up to it, we find vivid pictures of how court etiquette was performed in the palace where the Heir Apparent gave audience. In the verses after it, we will find more minute representations of the imperial pomp and grandeur Wen witnessed when the Heir Apparent and his subjects had meetings. Logically speaking, it would be very strange if in this passage there should be

even though 衝牙 is the correct form.

⁵⁰ "Boshan Censer": according to *Xijing Zaji*, a crafty artisan, Ding Huan by name, made a nine-layer incense censer in the shape of Mount Bo (Boshan) in the sea, with carvings of strange birds, rare beasts and other wonders on its body and water in its nethermost layer. See *Chuxueji*, 25: 606.

no mention of the Heir Apparent himself, the key figure of the scene. And indeed, this couplet itself is designed just for the purpose of referring directly but subtly to the late Heir Apparent, about whose death at the hands of the eunuchs it had become taboo⁵¹ to speak. Wen was forced to resort to roundabout language and to make up a most sophisticated artistic expression of the whole story--all the more so because he had been the Heir's personal attendant and knew the ins and outs of the matter. It was lucky for Wen that he succeeded in escaping the eunuchs' censorship thanks to his many subterfuges; but, as a result of them, he was also unlucky, because the truth of the matter remained hidden from generations of readers.

A first step towards a solution of this enigmatic couplet is to suspect that the unusual usage of the verbs 親 (show intimacy with) and 近 (be attached to), which are ordinarily applied to human-subjects or personifications, betokens some problems, in which deeper meaning must be discovered. This is because the Chinese character *si* (祀), a rite for offering sacrifices or paying worship to the spirits or divinities, grammatically serves as the subject of the line; and such a subject should have as its predicate the verb-object structure 親和氏璧, "showed intimacy with Heshi's Jade." It is apparent that both 祀 (Worship) and 和氏璧 (Heshi's Jade) are substitutes for unnamed human figures. In all probability, they are the Heir Apparent and his subjects. In like manner, the "Fragrance" (香) and the "Boshan Censer" (博山爐) must also imply a hidden metaphor. Our task, however, is to offer proofs, instead of any guesswork, to bring out what metaphors they are.

⁵¹ By "taboo" we mean not only that the murderers of the Heir Apparent, the eunuchs, would never allow their conspiracy to be exposed, but that the succeeding Emperor Wuzong turned a deaf ear to this ignominy, without which he could not be enthroned at all. The court officials, in no position to interfere in "the family affairs" of the emperors and unable to contend with the eunuchs, were forced to remain reticent about this event or feign ignorance of it. Whoever blurted out the truth invited trouble to himself.

We can tentatively suggest that this couplet represents a ceremony of worship (祀) performed during a court audience: in the palace where the audience was held, joss-sticks were burned in an exquisite Boshan Censer, from which fragrant smoke (香) curled upward; this was for paying homage to "Heshi's Jade" (和氏璧), namely, the hereditary imperial seal that was made of precious jade and handed down as the symbol of royal power. This might be what really happened in the palace. But a paraphrase of this kind leaves obscure the purport of "show intimacy with" (親) and "be attached to" (近), both verbs that metaphorically represent human actions of some kind. A more careful scrutiny into the complex picture of this couplet focuses our interest on the two pairs of nouns linked by the two verbs. Let us examine them one by one.

"Heshi's Jade" is richly charged with metaphorical meanings of which the primary one is derived from the original story in Hanfeizi: as the precious jade carved from the jade-enfolding stone, it is often used as a symbol for the worthy and virtuous officials. Judging from historical records, it may even have had something to do with the assistants of an Heir Apparent.⁵² In the text under discussion, even if limited to serving as a metaphor for worthy

⁵² For the particular association of the term "Heshi's Jade" with the crown prince, see HS, 65: 2841. Among Dongfang Shuo's (東方朔) works recorded in his biography are "Reproaching Heshi's Jade" (責和氏璧), "The Crown Prince's Birth" (皇太子生賦), "Blessing Prayers for The Crown Prince" (皇太子禱祝) and "Screen" (屏風), all of which provide interesting contrasts with Wen Tingyun's "Song of A Screen of [the Heir Apparent's] Birth and Blessing Prayers" (生禱屏風歌, j. 1, WFQ). In Wen's lifetime, Dongfang Shuo's works might yet have been extant, and "Reproaching Heshi's Jade" might have had as its motif a reproach of the attendants of the Heir Apparent Li (戾太子), who fell victim of slander (see HS, 63: 2741), using Heshi's Jade as a metaphor for Li's attendants. In Wen's poetry, Li was likened to the Heir Apparent Zhuangke, see j. 4, WFQ, "Written at the Wangyuan Post" (題望苑驛).

and virtuous officials, it takes on a personified meaning as the attendants of the Heir Apparent including Wen.

To further illuminate this reading, we ought to refer back to the tenth rhyme in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" where Wen compares himself to Heshi's Jade.

10 Not in a position to sound the Jade of Chu,	未能鳴楚玉, ⁵³
In vain I desired to hold the Pearl of [Marquis]Sui.	空欲握隋珠。

This couplet is a confession of his failure, hinting at his secret experiences. The literal meaning is that, he was vainly a worthy man of insight and talent, since he did not even have a chance to be a court official and nobody appreciated his value. Deeper meanings are implied in the phrase "the Jade of Chu", a variant name for the Heshi's Jade. In Wen's diction, to refer to himself using any language relevant to Chu, as we have pointed earlier, was to give an inkling that the line has something to do with the Heir. Now in the tenth thus in the sixty-eighth rhyme, the Jade of Chu--namely, the Jade of Heshi--becomes the embodiment of Wen's unappreciated genius; in other word, "the Jade of Chu" as well as the Heshi's Jade is a metaphor for himself as the attendant of the Heir Apparent.

Since that which "Worship" "showed intimacy with" is metaphorically the Heir Apparent's competent and honest attendants or assistants, the term "Worship" should be interchangeable with some term referring to the Heir. Is "Worship" really an insinuation of, a pun on or a homonym for some term equivalent to "the Heir Apparent"? The answer is: YES. The Chinese character 祀, translated here as "Worship," refers to the etiquette of offering sacrifices to the spirits. In Chinese imperial times, such sacrifice was looked upon as one of

⁵³ 鳴楚玉, To sound the Jade of Chu, has in it two allusions. "To sound the jade" alludes to Zuo Qiuming's Guoyu (國語), 18: 579, "Zhao Jianzi (趙簡子), sounding his jade, became the prime minister"; in this context it means distinguishing oneself as an honorable court official attending court audience. The "Jade of Chu" refers to the Heshi's Jade.

"the Eight Essentials" (八政) of the royal dynasty, and synecdochically, it could substitute for all government affairs.⁵⁴ Moreover, the character 祀 (si4) is homonymous with 嗣 (si4),⁵⁵ the heir, hence in this context it becomes a euphemistic reference to the Heir. Therefore, the purport of this couplet is that the Heir Apparent showed intimacy with worthy men, his assistants.

Since the first line has the implication that the Heir Apparent showed intimacy to his attendants (assistants), logically the next line should bear the meaning that the worthy attendants were attached to the Heir Apparent.

Fortunately, beside its literal meaning of "fragrance" or "joss stick," *xiang* (香) is homonymous with *xiang* (相), which can, if used as noun, be glossed as assistant, i.e., the worthies around the Heir. To substantiate this point and understand Wen's punning techniques, we can look at the following lines that employ similar homonymous puns:

The musk, even though it is smashed into powder,	
will not abandon its fragrance,	搗麝成塵香不滅,
And the lotus, even when it is broken into pieces,	
will not forsake its silk	拗蓮作寸絲難絕。
("Melody of Damozhi"--達磨支曲, j. 2, WFQ)	

Occupying the fifth syllable of both lines, *xiang* (香, fragrance) and *si* (絲, silk) combined are a homonymous pun on *xiangsi* (相思), love-yearning (metaphorically, political loyalty). This is a frequently used pun in the poems of Li Shangyin and Wen Tingyun, both of whom

⁵⁴ See *Shangshu*, 12: 189.

⁵⁵ The Tang pronunciations of 祀 (zi) and 嗣 (zi) are identical with each other. See Karlgren: *Analytical Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese*, 241-2.

followed the examples in the Music Bureau poems of the southern dynasties.⁵⁶ Making *xiang* (香) and *si* (祀, worship) pun on *xiang* (相, attendant) and *si* (嗣, the heir) in the case at hand is, therefore, only a variant use of the *xiangsi* (相思) pun.

As a special adornment-utensil for the nobility, the Boshan Censer was first brought into use in the Han dynasty, and it seems that the term does not have anything special to do with the Heir Apparent. The last difficult question, then, is why the Boshan Censer eventually could become a metaphor for the Heir Apparent in this context.

From sources prior to the Tang dynasty, we find some literary texts to be compared with Wen's usage of the term, all stemming from and pointing to an origin to the effect that the Heir Apparent is related with the Boshan Censer in a special way.

(1) During and after Han, in various dynasties, a Boshan Censer became an indispensable article in the officially-regulated adornment-utensils of the Heir Apparent. The Song dynasty encyclopedia *Taiping Yulan*⁵⁷ quotes "The Memorial of Presenting Miscellaneous Articles" (上雜物疏) by Emperor Wu of the Wei dynasty: "The Imperial Heir had four censers of pure silver." It also quotes from *The Former Anecdotes of the Eastern Palace of Jin* (晉東宮舊事): "When the Heir Apparent was just appointed and set up, he had in his possession one brass Boshan Censer."

(2) There are some remaining precedents in pre-Tang literature for the Boshan Censer referring to the Heir Apparent. Examples are "Song of the Boshan Censer" (咏博山香爐詩, *Chuxueji*, 25: 606) by Liu Hui (劉繪, 458-502): "On the upper part is carved the Crown Heir of Qin \ Who, riding a crane, is soaring to the blue cloud" (上鏤秦王子, 駕鶴凌青烟). And

⁵⁶ For example, see YFSJ, 46: 677, "Song of Reading the Music" (讀曲歌): "I was grieved to see the weaving of the spiders \ Thinking over it until dawn" (愁見蜘蛛織, 尋思直到明). Herein "尋思" (thinking over it) puns on "尋絲" (looking for silk).

⁵⁷ For our evidential citations, except otherwise noted, see *Taiping Yulan* 703: 3138-9.

the Zhaoming Heir Apparent, Xiao Tong (昭明太子蕭統, the compiler of Wenxuan) once wrote "Rhapsody On the Brass Boshan Censer" (銅博山香爐賦).

(3) Even in the Tang dynasty, for the carriage and attire of the Heir Apparent there still remained a kind of crown-decoration that "resembled Mount Boshan in the ocean," for example, "Part Six of the Imperial Heir's Attires" of "The Records of Carriage and Attires" in "The New Tang History" (車服志 皇太子之服六, 24: 517) states: "For the Far-Trip Crown [a special crown for the Heir], it ought to have three shafts plus a golden Boshan."

All the above evidence suggest that Boshan Censer originally was an allusion in special conjunction with the Heir, though its earliest source seems to have been lost.

(4) The following lines from the Music Bureau poem "Yang Pan'er" (楊叛兒, YFSJ, 49: 720): "My love is the joss-stick plunging into the water \ and I am the Boshan Censer" (歡作沈水香, 儂作博山爐) use *xiang* (香) and Boshan Censer (博山爐) as metaphors for the love between lovers. Wen Tingyun was adept at using the love affairs between man and woman as metaphors for the political relationship between the monarch and his subject. Here the line "The Fragrance is attached to the Boshan Censer" (香近博山爐) is just such a recreation from the lines of the Musical Bureau poem, keeping its original diction *xiang*, "fragrance" (or joss-stick) and "the Boshan Censer" as euphemisms not for lovers, but for the Heir Apparent and himself. This adds a finishing touch to our explanation of Wen's metaphor.

(5) Furthermore, perhaps for fear that later readers fail to understand what he meant, Wen wrote another poem entitled simply as "Boshan Censer" (博山香爐, j. 8, WFQ). This poem was written to vent his everlasting grief and can serve to remind us of reading into it his political frustrations; as can be understood from the title of the poem and inferred from its last couplet, the frustration in this case was caused by his attendance on the Heir:

I hear say that Yang Zhu had no end of tears to shed,

見說楊朱無限泪,

Yang Zhu wept on coming to the forked road, for it leads both south and north. Wen shed his tears not solely the way Yang Zhu did; he, and he thought Yang Zhu as well, had his own torment to weep over. As we have read in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem": "In my laments and sighs I felt melancholy as did Yang Zhu"--Wen's frustrations are always bound up with his political experiences, especially with his enemy the eunuchs, and now, with the Heir as well. When we notice that in the second line quoted above there is the character *qi* (岐), the very character Wen used as his changed name for participating in the Metro-politan Prefecture examination [after attending the Heir], we can infer that "the Boshan Censer" poem must be a work of extreme complexity. It is just so, as we shall see.

Now at long last, we have found and proved our explanation of this couplet. The remaining task, hopefully, will be less challenging.

69 Auspicious sunshade grew dense on the green trees,

瑞景森瓊樹,

A light piece of ice brightened the jade pot.

輕冰瑩玉壺。⁵⁸

Having grasped the preceding couplet, this couplet is much easier to paraphrase. At the literal level it is still a vivid portrayal of objects in the palace: the fine jade-like trees growing luxuriously under auspicious sunlight, and pieces of ice for dispelling the heat put inside a jade pot. But, as with many other couplets, apart from the face value of the language there is a layer of hidden meanings: Jewel trees, besides referring to real objects, is a metaphor for the attendants around the Heir Apparent. A light piece of ice, as a metaphor for a pure and

⁵⁸ Jewel tree, is a metaphor for men of good manner and virtue. Ice in jade pot, a metaphor for the purity and innocence of mind, as can be seen from Bao Zhao's poem "A Song On the White Hair Wedlock" (白頭吟, *Wenxuan*, 28: 404): "As straight as a red silk string, as pure as a piece of ice in a jade pot" (直如朱絲繩, 清如玉壺冰), and Wang Changling (王昌齡) "Seeing Off Xin Jian On the Lotus Tower" (芙蓉樓送辛漸, QTS, 140: 1420): "A piece of icy heart in a jade pot" (一片冰心在玉壺).

transparent heart, refers to the naiveté and artlessness of the youthful Heir, who, about ten years old at the time, was aptly described in these lines.

The Role Wen Played in the Heir's "Miniature" Court

70 To my divine-sheep cap, an iron shaft is clasped, 豸冠簪鐵柱,
Atop the Dragon Head, the Golden bureau. 螭首對金鋪.⁵⁹

If, before the appearance of the Heir Apparent, the descriptions in the couplets present a picture of the environment of his court, from this couplet on the poet purposely turns the readers' attention to his own part in this miniature court.

As we have seen in the sixty-sixth rhyme, the divine-sheep cap was worn by the Attending Censor; in this context, it betokens the Rectifier in the Editorial Service, an official position Wen assumed. Since the "Golden Bureau on the Dragon Head" refers to the Left and Right Historiographers or Diarists, its corresponding position in the retinue of the Heir Apparent might be something like the Remonstrator (司議郎).

71 The Administrator's calligraphy, numbered a thousand scrolls, 內史書千卷,
The General's paintings, one cabinetful. 將軍畫一廚.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ 螭首 or 螭頭, The "Dragon Head", a kind of ornamental stone columns lined up along the two sides of the palace hall. According to *Tanghuiyao* (56: 963), "On each side of the palace-hall, at the second dragon head, i. e., the spot where the dragon heads are hollowed, the Left and the Right Diarists stand when court audiences take place, with ready ink and brush [to write down what the emperor and the court officials say], and they are called the Golden Bureaus on the Dragon Head" (左右史分立殿下, 直第二螭首, 和墨濡筆, 即螭首坳處, 號螭頭金鋪).

⁶⁰ 內史, "The Administrator", refers to the Jin dynasty calligrapher Wang Xizhi (王羲之, 321-379), who once held the official position of Administrator of Kuaiji Commandery

Wang Xizhi's calligraphy and Gu Kaizhi's paintings were highly valued as imperial treasures during Tang times. If Wen had gained access to or even taken charge of these imperial treasures during his attendance, his official position would be something like the Academician of the Institute for the Veneration of Literary Worthies (崇文館學士).

What, then, was Wen's official position? Was he a Rectifier, a Remonstrator (司議郎), or an Academician? If we set aside the exaggerated elements in the poetic language and take into consideration the concrete historical milieu, the above-mentioned three positions could be occupied by one person. The reasons are:

(1) Just as there are the Probationary Censors, who, inferior to the Attending Censors, "are not formal officials, and not limited to a fixed number" (無定員), Rectifiers, as officials for Heir Apparent homologous to the Attending Censor, might also have their alternate members or sinecurists. And, with the precedent that Emperor Taizong had promoted Ma Zhou (馬周) from commoner directly to the Probationary Attending Censor (監察御史里行),⁶¹ Wen could lawfully have been promoted to a similar position. In addition, Wen was an imperial relative, enjoyed powerful recommendation, and above all, possessed talents and pledged loyalty to the dynasty. All these factors add up to the objective possibility for Wen to "ascend the heavens with one step" from a commoner.

(2) Most of the emperors of middle and late Tang era were short-lived rulers who died before they could set up a son as heir. Because of the eunuchs' usurpation of state power, even though the emperor on the throne had sons, none of them could be set up as heir in accordance with usual practice. As a result, the position Heir Apparent had lain vacant for a long time. On the other hand, Emperor Wenzong's inconsiderate demeanor towards his

(會稽內史). 將軍, "The General", here refers to Gu Kaizhi (顧愷之, 392-467), a well-known painter, who held the official position of Tigerhead General (虎頭將軍).

⁶¹ See Ma Zhou's Biography, JTS, 74: 2612 and XTS, 98: 3894.

son gave rein to the jealousy of Worthy Consort Yang, while as a result of the factional strife, the court officials failed to offer effective protection for the Heir. As a consequence, the subordinate official institution of the Heir was far from adequate and complete. Emperor Wenzong, himself only a little more than thirty years of age, at best wanted only to provide his son with good Confucian instruction and chose many famous scholars to be his tutors, but he had no mind yet to let the boy practice to be an emperor.

(3) Wen was writing an autobiographical poem, not filling out his own curriculum vitae. As a result, we cannot take what he says too seriously. Comparing the accounts of his official positions in this poem, with that in the "Epistle Thanking Minister Li of Xiangzhou" ("I already reach hold of the irid ink-paste"), it is highly possible that Wen functioned as an alternate Rectifier, concurrently serving as an Academician, a position we can only call approximately literary assistant with no fixed duties, or "without portfolio."

Wen's Afterthoughts

72 My eyes were dazzled by the surprising display,

眼明驚氣象,

And my heart awe-stricken at the grand scale.

心死伏規模.

73 I never expected to look at the imperial treasury,

豈意觀文物,

If it was useless to carve a crude jadeite like me.

何勞琢砮砮⁶²

The splendor of the imperial hoard was for Wen an eye-opener; meanwhile, he redoubled his allegiance to the Tang empire. Never before had Wen dreamed of gaining such a promotion as that of attendant to the Heir Apparent, but even a chance like this proved fruitless. He was indeed, just as he ironically states here, no jade to be carved--i. e., for all the support he had enlisted, he suffered yet another failure. The Heir Apparent's untimely death brought to an end all his endeavors to make a career through serving him. Wen does not recount directly

⁶² To look at the imperial treasure, is a euphemism for becoming a close attendant. 砮砮, which we tentatively translate as a crude jadeite, is a kind of jade-like stone.

how the young heir met his end, because, to those he addressed this poem (see p.15), that story was already known and unnecessary to retell.

74 Grasses are luxurious--fit for grazing the *Yaoniao* Steed, 草肥牧騷馬,
Mosses rough--proper for tempering the *Kunwu* Blade. 苔澀淬昆吾.⁶³

Finally, reviewing the whole history of his attendance on the Heir, Wen understood that a favorable political environment is requisite if talented men are to accomplish great feats for the empire; to his dismay, his failure to serve the Heir successfully to the end was because both he and the Heir were born at an ill time. Nevertheless, Wen was not a man easily downcast; on the contrary, in undergoing adversity he would become even firmer and better equipped to serve his country. Although Wen had to swallow his mortification for the time being, having experienced a major political event, he was better trained to play a role in the political arena. It was only natural that he would not resign himself to this abrupt failure.

Now we are in possession of more details of Wen's story, which opens a topic of considerable interest and attraction. It was by the recommendation of Li Cheng, through an examination by the Ministry of Personnel, and only after the personal consent of Emperor Wenzong that Wen was chosen to be an attendant of Li Yong, the Heir Apparent Zhuangke. By taking this bee-line, Wen entered directly into the service of the highest ruler of the empire. In the literary tropes and historical allusions, we learn how Wen tried to make the best of his chances. Unfortunately, in the late Tang period, the eunuchs were always bent on monopolizing the candidate for imperial succession, so that the Heir Apparent was for the

⁶³ "Grasses are luxurious" is a metaphor for "political conditions are favorable." 騷馬, *Yaoniao*, is the name of a spirited steed, which, it was said, appears only when a sage king is ruling, and here it is a metaphor for a successful minister. "Mosses [are] rough" is a term of Wen's own coining, which refers to difficult situations. 昆吾, *Kunwu*, is the name of legendary sword that could cut jade as easily as cutting butter.

eunuchs a thorn in their flesh, and his days as designated Heir were numbered, all the more so because he was the legitimate successor to the throne.

There remain many questions to answer: how did the young prince die? What was Wen's attitude towards all the roles in the event? What happened to Wen in the process and what were the consequences of the events to his later life (and poetry)? "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" provides answers for only some of these questions, as it is unnecessary to answer all of them for the persons in the know, those addressed in the poem's title. These are Wen's friends and colleagues, many of whom attended the Heir Apparent with him. What Wen wanted to recount to them was the affliction he felt at the time. To answer these other questions, we will have to read other poems.

Chapter Six Attendance upon the Heir Apparent (II)

The Enigma of the Sphinx

Introduction of the Poem

The following is, I venture to say, one of the most perplexing poems in the entirety of Chinese classic poetry, and, one of the most enchanting. Had Wen written it in a less mystifying and appealing manner, it would not have survived his own time, still less have been handed down for us to study. Moreover, its explanation is indispensable for a complete picture of Wen's secret attendance upon the Heir, and for a full view of Wen's life and poetry. It is a full account of the "Heir Apparent Incident", a political poem in the deceptive guise of a love song, with all its imagery, symbolism and labyrinth-like complexity. Most fascinating and surprising is its exquisite verbal structure, in which elegant allusions and diction flow smoothly while intimating an intricate poetic world.

The Twenty-Two Rhymes of the Arched Door (洞户二十二韵, j. 6, WFQ)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1 To an arched door was attached a net of pearls, | 洞户連珠網, |
| A square latticed-window lay hidden in the thick of green. | 方疏隱碧濤. |
| 2 Into the candle-tray the wick-ash dropped scattered, | 燭盤烟墜燼, |
| Through lowered curtain moonlight filtered covertly in. | 簾壓月通陰. |
| 3 Powdered-white were the bureaus of the Immortal Lad, | 粉白仙郎署, |
| Frosty cold came the fulling sounds of the Jade Lass. | 霜清玉女砧. |
| 4 The home of drunkenness was aloft and aloof [from the world], | 醉鄉高窈窕, |
| And the games of chess were intense and quiet. | 棋陣靜愔愔. |
| 5 A pale hand held a crystal-clear fan, | 素手琉璃扇, |
| Raven tufts were set with a hawks-bill-shell pin. | 玄髻玳瑁簪. |
| 6 Seeing the tile-pines I was aware of my precarious position, | 昔邪看寄迹, |
| Singing the gardenia I praised two similar hearts' affections. | 梔子咏同心. |
| 7 Trees were arrayed with Thousand-Years' flowers, | 樹列千秋勝, |

- In palace chambers were hung needles of the Double Seventh,
 8 I rewrote the old words of "White Hemp",
 Into new verses in exchange for yellow gold;
 9 When the crying crane tuned the barbarian drum,
 And the frightened cicada responded to the precious lute.
 10 The dance, I suspect, was hard and could not be easily fulfilled;
 The song, modulated, was cut short and hardly audible.
 11 Withered in dew, the flower fell a victim of jealousy,
 Shaken by wind, the willow could not withstand its sharpness.
 12 The bridge stood curved, its two pillars set further apart,
 The pond was so swollen it's as one oar's length deep.
 13 Now the road was cleared for an imperial hunt,
 And the yellow banners came to the Shanglin Park.
 14 The spirited hawk presented itself in the feather garden,
 And the heavenly horses splashed over the muddy hoof puddles.
 15 Lord Military Storehouse was choosing worthy men,
 And Sir Literary Garden saw a good omen.
 16 The pinkish stalk of the magic iris was flourishing,
 The vermilion cinnamon twigs are about to become sparse.
 17 Then you went back to the jade-like mat behind royal curtains,
 Where a lamp shed its glare over the brocade quilts.
 18 From the picture you took fright at "the Ferocious Beast",
 In the copybook was written "the Attracted Bird".
 19 Now dawn came to the River, shining into the Qin chamber,
 Atop the Hill cleared up overlooking the Wei Palace.
 20 An Empress Zhao, with a green bag, was encountered,
 While there appeared a Wang Shen inside the azure gate.

樓懸七夕針。
 舊詞翻白苧，
 新賦換黃金。
 唳鶴調蠻鼓，
 驚蟬應寶琴。
 舞疑繁易度，
 歌轉斷難尋。
 露委花相妒，
 風倚柳不禁。
 橋彎雙表迥。
 池漲一篙深。
 清蹕傳恢囿，
 黃旗幸上林。
 神鷹參翰苑，
 天馬破蹄岑。
 武庫方題品，
 文園有好音。
 朱莖殊菌蠢，
 丹桂欲蕭森。
 敲帳回瑤席，
 華燈對錦衾。
 畫圖驚畏獸，
 書帖得來禽。
 河曙秦樓映，
 山晴魏闕臨。
 綠囊逢趙后，
 青瑣見王沈。

- 21 With philosophy and abandon I gave up my lonely indignation, 任達嫌孤憤,
 In my laxity and laziness I was tired of remonstrance. 疏慵倦九箴.
- 22 Why on earth is the man who has fled to the south, 若爲南遁客,
 Still chanting his song of the Sleeping Dragon? 猶作卧龍吟?

The Qing dynasty annotator of Wen's poetry, Gu Sili, quoted a certain Mr. Xu's notes: "This work has the same purport as the previous poem." He then cited Yu Yang's (俞場) remark: "This is a work written in retrospect about the author's past wanderings; it picked up the first two characters as its title, thus it resembles such works as Li Shangyin's 'Brocade Threshold' (錦檻).¹

By "the previous poem," Xu meant "The Twenty-Two Rhymes on Passing the Huaqing Palace" (過華清宮二十二韻, j. 6, WFQ), which takes as its theme the story of Emperor Xuanzong and tries to draw some historical lessons from it, so that its gist is easy to discern, unlike the poem at hand. Similar to Li Shangyin's "Brocade Threshold", however, "The Arched Door" is in fact an "untitled poem" (無題詩) in that its title tells nothing about the story told in the poem. Yu Yang's remark demonstrates that he sensed something hidden behind the lines that he could not define. Another Qing scholar, Du Zilun, also held that the poem has a "hidden motif" (寄托)² remaining to be discovered.

If we take a closer look at the whole poem, we will find that most of its lines are composed in extremely exquisite parallelism and are permeated with a heavy sentimentality. In the face of its suggestiveness and mystery, any reader would be forced to think though usually he lacks the means to penetrate it. With the seemingly true-to-life descriptions of a rendez-vous, this poem appears to be a love song; but the poet's mental state reflected in this poem is far from lovesickness. For, misleading as the tricky lines are, we can deny the love-song hypothesis as soon as we read the last two couplets.

¹ See WFQ, 143; for the poem, see Feng Hao: *Yuxisheng Shiji Jianzhu* 1: 136.

² See Du Zilun: *Zhongwantang Shi Koutanji*, 75.

Important Hints

Making Manifest the Motif at the End of the Poem

After reading the twenty-first rhyme, we might very naturally raise questions such as: what is Wen's "lonely indignation" that he had to force himself to give up? And why was he "tired of remonstrance" (with the emperor)? Then at the end of the poem, it is Wen's turn to ask himself: why, as a man who has fled to the south, are you still chanting "the Song of the Sleeping Dragon"?

The so-called "Song of the Sleeping Dragon", though here referring to this very poem, alludes to the "Liangfu Yin" (梁甫吟), originally a Music Bureau topic that gives expression of the righteous indignation against worldly injustice and serves as a dirge to mourn the dead. The famous statesman Zhuge Liang, it was said, was fond of chanting it in his early years, hence it is titled after his sobriquet, the Sleeping Dragon.³ Here as a finishing touch, the poet suddenly throws away all the sophisticated masks, and manifests his true self-image with vehemence and wrath: he was a noble-minded man concerned about and involved in political events. And, as a result of a political event, he has fled to the south as a refugee. This reminds us not only of Wen's remark in the long title of "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem"--"to betake myself to a far place"--but also of a couplet in that poem:

86 Between right and wrong--waking or dreaming, I was confused, 是非迷覺夢,

From Qin for Wu, I planned a travel. 行役議秦吳.

That is to say, in the winter of the fifth year of Kaicheng, Wen was forced to leave Qin (the capital Chang'an) for Wu (roughly the delta of the Yangtze River). In recounting his flight to the south, "The Twenty-Two-Rhyme Poem" and "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" are in conformity with each other.

For convenience' sake, we will leave for the next chapter a detailed discussion of Wen's experiences directly after attending the Heir Apparent. For our purposes here we can simply

³ For the explanation of this Music Bureau topic, see JFSJ, 41: 605.

note that as a direct political consequence of serving the Heir, Wen became entangled in some other court struggles, which eventually precipitated his escape from the capital and decision to quit the political arena altogether. Now from the last two couplets of the poem we shall trace backward for more details to round off the story of Wen's attendance on the Heir.

The "Open Sesame" to A Poetic Wonderland

We do find something of paramount importance in the twentieth rhyme:

20 An Empress Zhao, with a green bag, was encountered, 綠囊逢趙后,
While there appeared a Wang Shen inside the azure gate. 青瑣見王沈.

The first line alludes to the story of Empress Zhao (Feiyan, 趙飛燕) and Beauty Xu (許美人), both consorts of Emperor Cheng (r. 32-7, BC) of the Han dynasty. According to the "Biographies of the Imperial Relatives" in the *Hanshu* (97b: 3973-88), when Beauty Xu gave birth to a son, Empress Zhao was so jealous that she refused to take dinner, crying and beating her head against a wall. Then she ordered a eunuch, Qi Yan by name, to send Beauty Xu a letter in a green bag. Threatened by Empress Zhao, Beauty Xu put her newborn baby in a straw case, which, together with the letter in the green bag, she surrendered to Qi Yan; immediately Empress Zhao killed the baby.

The allusion to Empress Zhao and Beauty Xu is quite obviously a reference to Worthy Consort Yang and Virtuous Consort Wang respectively, in which Beauty Xu's son is analogous to the Heir Apparent Li Yong. The eunuch Qi Yan certainly has a role to play as well, though only a minor one. To this end, the poet adds a supplementary allusion that completes his idea. Wang Shen was a Jin dynasty chief eunuch in the court of Liu Cong (?-318), who usurped all of Liu's power and persecuted Liu's court officials.⁴ "Wang Shen" is a clear reference, through a seldom-used allusion, to the eunuchs who were running wild in the court. However, the fact that in the *Jinshu* there are three men of this name, has baffled

⁴ See JS, "The Annals of Li Cong" (劉聰載記), 102: 2567.

the Qing dynasty scholars who annotated Wen Tingyun's poetic works. They mentioned the other two Wang Shens,⁵ both irrelevant to the case, but let slip the eunuch Wang Shen, as a result, their annotation of this line is wide of the mark.

Therefore, this couplet means that there appeared in the inner palace an imperial consort as merciless as Empress Zhao, who deliberately planned to take the imperial heir's life, and, with the help of a chief eunuch as domineering as Wang Shen, finally attained her goal. The two allusions of this couplet refer to the whole story of Worthy Consort Yang, Virtuous Consort Wang and her son Li Yong and furnish strong evidence that Virtuous Consort Yang was an accomplice of the eunuchs in murdering the Heir Apparent, though neither side is accused of the crime in the standard histories. Wen offers with his poetry a surprising fact that the histories fail to record.

The fact that the Heir Apparent was murdered and Wen had to flee to the south suggests strongly that there was a close relationship between the two. Therefore, as inferred from the last three couplets, the whole poem must be a shrouded representation of the Heir Apparent Incident. And the descriptions of the first nineteen rhymes, which appear to be about a love affair, are an elegantly camouflaged political narrative, with subtle and rich implications concealed in every line.

This is both a unique narrative poem and an "untitled" lyric poem. Throughout the poem, in elegant and attractive parallel couplets, imagery and metaphors are deployed that constitute the main narrative. As empathized nature, its scenic representations convey the subtle feelings of the poet; meanwhile, as metaphors for particular aspects of the event, the scenic representations "narrate" the complex details of the story. By the same token, it always

⁵ Gu Sili annotated: "JS: One Wang Shen was the Marquis of Boling; another seen in 'Biographies of the Literary Men'; to neither of them is 'Azure Gate' explicable." He ignored in JS there is a eunuch Wang Shen. The Wang Shen in SGZ (4: 144) seems also worth considering, an accomplice in murdering the Wei emperor Cao Mao (r. 254-5).

presents one thing in the likeness of another, never showing clear what is veiled metaphor and what is simple realistic narration. The import of each line seems either covert or overt. In-so-far as it is covert, there are always clues that throw a ray of light on the author's intention, while in-so-far as it is overt, the subject matter is too elusive to grasp. As a *magnum opus* in the palace style poems, the structure of this poem can be compared to the architecture of imperial palaces, with their labyrinths and tunnels, myriad windows and countless gates. But in the final analysis, the riddle can be solved, since we can take hold of the historical key for us to explore the literary labyrinth, otherwise the poet would have written his poem in vain.

Decoding of the Cipher

Now, let us attempt to give a detailed explanation of the poem in the order of the original text, couplet by couplet; and in cases where problems crop up, we will set them aside for the moment, so as to avoid too many digressions. Again, we will put subheadings on the different paragraphs in the poem.

The Entrance of the Labyrinth

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | To an arched gate is attached a net of pearls, | 洞户連珠網, |
| | A square latticed-window lay hidden in the thick of green. | 方疏隱碧澗. |
| 2 | Into the candle-tray the wick-ash dropped scattered, | 燭盤烟墜燼, |
| | Through lowered curtain the moonlight filtered covertly in. | 簾壓月通陰. |

The two starting couplets immediately usher the reader into picturesque surroundings, a world of mysterious pomp. The scattered wick-ash of candle is silent testimony to a story of which only the moonlight was witness. Here it is an abode of wealth and rank, a haunt of heartbreak, in which the woe of fallen flowers was carried away by flowing water, and the dream of "holding a candle for a night excursion" was ruined.

In the laconic delineation of the scenery, a hidden clue is skillfully planted in advance (*fubi*, 伏筆), which prepares the reader for what follows. Simply put, in addition to being a direct scenic description, these opening lines are a covert reference to the Heir Apparent's

residence, the *Shaoyangyuan*. Here as a most confidential assistant Wen attended, for about one year, the young Heir Apparent, Li Yong. The three Chinese characters *Shao-yang-yuan* are not found here, but to conclude that the *Shaoyangyuan* is referred to follows logically from a reading of the whole poem.

The First Encounter: Time and Place

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 3 | Powdered-white were the bureaus of the Immortal Lads,
Frosty cold came the fulling sounds of the Jade Lass. | 粉白仙郎署,
霜清玉女砧。 ⁶ |
| 4 | The home of drunkenness was aloft and aloof [from the world],
And the games of chess were intense and quiet. | 醉鄉高窈窕,
棋陣靜愔愔。 |

The poet next represents a social occasion, from which we are given to understand that the place and time of Wen's first encounter with Li Yong. The scene is set in one of the "powdered-white bureaus" where the "Immortal Lads" (i. e., bureau directors) are on duty. The time is the beginning of autumn, when the Jade Lass fulls her clothes. As we have already demonstrated, a "powdered-white bureau" refers to an office in the Editorial Service under the Left Secretariat of the Heir Apparent, and the time in question is at the beginning of the autumn of the second year of Kaicheng (837). At such a time and in such a place, many of those present were inebriated, while others were calmly playing Chinese chess. Matched with "the Jade Lass" "the Immortal Lad" in this couplet is, in addition to the aforementioned meaning, a metaphor for Wen himself in relation to the Heir. Here the technique is the so-called "using the feelings of lad and lass to speak about the affair between the monarch and the his subjects." Service to the monarch (albeit a young monarch) is

⁶ "Immortal Lads of Powdered-white Bureaus" (粉署仙郎) is a laudatory title for the section directors of the Department of the State Affairs. "The fulling sound of the Jade Lass" alludes to a folk legend of the Tang times: Atop Mount Song there was a stone on which the Jade Lass fulls her brocade, and every year at the beginning of the autumn, people hear the Jade Lass fulling. See WFQ, 143, quoting XTS.

compared with wooing of a girl, a well-developed trope that can be dated as far back as The Songs of the South. The application of that trope here indicates the close relationship between Wen and the Heir Apparent.

"The Jade Lass"--A Dramatic Pose

5	A pale hand held a crystal-clear fan, Raven tufts were set with hawks-bill-shell pin.	素手琉璃扇, 玄髻玳瑁簪.
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At this point, the protagonist of the poem comes upon the scene. He is none other than the Heir Apparent Li Yong with his "raven tufts," a lad of about ten at the time. We need not mistake the figure as a female because of the slender and pale hand. It would be in fact normal for a male child born into the imperial family to have an appearance like a girl. Thus, although our poet compares Li Yong to "the Jade Lass", we can nevertheless recognize him even though he is depicted in feminine disguise.

Not only do "pale hand" and "raven tufts" show us the youthful appearance of the Heir Apparent, "crystal-clear fan" and "hawks-bill-shell pin" are also designed to reveal the special identity of the wearer.

Made of a glass-like plastic substance called *liuli* (琉璃), the crystal-clear fan was sent as a precious tribute from central Asia to the Chinese emperor, hence originally it was available only to the royal family. Almost equally valuable were hawks-bill-shell hairpins, which were by custom given as betrothal gifts to the consort of the Heir Apparent.⁷

It is out of the question that the figure here referred to is a consort of the Heir. The Heir at the time was no more than ten years old, too young to have a consort. According to Taiping Guangji (184: 1379) quoting Lushi Zashuo (盧氏雜說), Emperor Wenzong once did try to choose a consort for his son, but "the official and eminent families felt great disquiet

⁷ "When the Heir Apparent takes a consort, among his betrothal gifts there are a hair-pin of hawks-bill-shell and a carved dressing mirror." See Taipingyulan 703: 3139, quoting Zhang Chang's (張敞) Jin Donggong Jiushi (晉東宮舊事).

about it," as no family was willing to send its daughter on the road to ruin. Regretting that his subjects "were reluctant to become related in marriage to my family," Wenzong could however well understand the reason and "gave up his plan." Furthermore, if we were to explain this figure as a palace lady, or even the consort of the Heir, the whole poem would make no sense at all, as can be seen from any of the remaining couplets, including the one immediately following:

- 6 Seeing the tile-pines I was aware of my precarious position, 昔邪看寄迹,
Singing the gardenia I praised two similar hearts' affections. 梔子咏同心.⁸

Wen compares himself to the tile-pines, because his relationship with the Heir Apparent was accidental and lacked a solid foundation. Our poet played up to the powerful families, with the intention only of finding a decent life. But now something unexpected had happened, and after having come across "the Jade Lass", he found that the two of them were of one heart and mind, and for a period of time became inseparable companions.

In His Vain Efforts: Wen Played Sima Xiangru

- 7 Trees were arrayed with Thousand-Years' flowers, 樹列千秋勝,
In palace chamber were hung needles of the Double Seventh. 樓懸七夕針.

Now we see what Wen witnessed after he became an aide of the imperial heir. It has the appearance of a narrative account, but contains several layers of meanings.

First, the poet reminds his reader once more of the approximate time when he began his service to the Heir Apparent. It happened to be the Double Seventh, the eve of which was believed to be the time when the Weaving Girl and the Herd Boy of the legend had their

⁸ The tile-pine is a kind of slender, moss-like, but drought-enduring plant that grows on the roof-tiles of old houses; here it is used as a metaphor for Wen, who finds himself in a high place on very unstable ground. Ancient Chinese thought that the gardenia, with its pistil and stamen (心) growing together, symbolized the constancy in love, here it stands for the mutual confidence between the Heir and Wen.

yearly reunion. This was an occasion when court ladies would hang up needles with nine eyes and try to thread them under the moonlight, to pray for a happy future.⁹ Then came the "Thousand-Years Day," the fifth day of the eighth month in the Chinese calendar, which marked Emperor Xuanzong's (r. 712-756) birthday, established as a national festival since the year 728 (JTS, 8: 167). On this day, it was customary for the court ladies to adorn trees with paper flowers and have various entertainment.

To pray for happiness on the Double Seventh Eve was just what "the Immortal Lad" and "the Jade Lass" sought after with their "two similar hearts' affections." "Thousand-Years", i. e., thousands of years' everlasting good governance, speaks to Wen's wish that the Heir Apparent be free of disasters and the harmonious monarch-subject relationship between the Heir and himself remain as long as possible.

However, the Weaving Girl and the Herd Boy themselves meet only briefly; how could they come to the aid of those helpless lovers in the human world? Emperor Xuanzong's dream of ruling for thousands of years had long come to nothing. Therefore, this couplet meanwhile hints at some oncoming disaster.

It is worth noting that in this couplet the Thousand-Years Day and the Double Seventh Eve are mentioned in reversed chronological order. In other words, the two festivals fell in the same year of 837. For, from the autumn of 837 when Wen gained access to the Heir to sometime before the ninth month of 838 when the Heir died, it was only a little longer than one year that could not cover two peaceful autumns, as proved by the following couplets.

8 I rewrote the old words of "White Hemp",

舊詞翻白苧,

⁹ See WFQ, 144, quoting *Jingchu Suishiji* (荆楚歲時記) and *Kaiyuan Yishi* (開元遺事). Those who succeed in threading the needles are believed to be skillful (巧), a word that puns on "happy coincidence" (巧遇), namely, a happy marriage.

Into new verses in exchange for yellow gold.

新賦換黃金。¹⁰

This couplet suggests the role Wen played when he was attending the Heir. First, he must have been a literary attendant writing verses to music that was to be performed in the inner court. In Wen's extant works can be found many poems written during this period that often perplex modern readers; once we know of Wen's attendance on the Heir, however, these poems become explicable, as valuable samples of late Tang palace style. Second, it is no accident that we find Wen once more playing the role of Sima Xiangru. In the allusion at hand, Xiangru wrote poems for Empress Chen "in exchange for yellow gold," and we can infer that Wen is here referring to his personal experiences of writing poems on behalf of Virtuous Consort Wang, the Heir's mother, in an effort to dissuade Emperor Wenzong from abandoning her. Thus we can see, until up to Consort Wang's death in the eighth month of the third year of Kaicheng (838), Wen had tried to prevent Wenzong from abandoning his old consort (he himself just thirty years of age), though his efforts were fruitless.

The Bell Tolls

9 When the crying crane tuned the barbarian drum,
And the frightened cicada responded to the precious lute.

唳鶴調蠻鼓，
驚蟬應寶琴。¹¹

¹⁰ "White Hemp" is the title of a dance melody of the "Music Bureau", matched with words. According to "The Records of Music" in XTS (29: 1064), "Emperor Wudi of Liang made Shen Yue rewrite its words and retitled it "Song of the White Hemp of the Four Seasons". Wen's couplet also alludes to the story of Empress Chen and the famous court poet Sima Xiangru. It was said that Empress Chen, Emperor Han Wudi's consort, asked Xiangru to write for her a love poem, which she presented to the emperor in order to win back her favor. She paid Xiangru a hundred taels of yellow gold as reward. See Sima Xiangru: "The Preface to Changmenfu" (長門賦序) *Wenxuan*, 16: 227.

¹¹ When Cai Yong (132-92) was invited to attend a feast at which a guest was playing the lute, Cai stopped at the door listening. He said to himself: "Why is there a murderous note

According to legend, there was a huge drum in the prefecture of Kuaiji, into which a crane flew, which set the drum to beating, such that the noise could be heard all the way to Luoyang.¹² Note that here the crane that flew into the drum is a crying one, so that the sound the drum produces must be sad and heartrending, an ill omen portending some catastrophe. As for the "killing mind" manifested in the music of the precious lute, Chinese music theory since antiquity has held that all worldly order and disorder, fortune and misfortune are embodied in music. "The way of music is homologous with that of government."¹³ Although, superficially speaking, these two lines are representations of the performances of drum and lute, we sense that amidst the cacophony, an ulterior murdering intrigue was at work--the conspiracy of Worthy Consort Yang, bent on taking the life of the Heir's mother. In the last couplet, "new verses in exchange for yellow gold" suggests that the situation might change for the better, but in this couplet, things take a sudden turn for the worse. Worthy Consort Yang was pressing on, sparing no efforts in vilifying her rival, and, as implied in these and following veiled references, her plan was fulfilled in the short span of a single year.

10 The dance, I suspect, was hard and would not be easily fulfilled; 舞疑繁易度,
The song, modulated, was cut short and hardly audible. 歌轉斷難尋.

Now not only was the "dance" not "easy to fulfill," but the "song" was "modulated" to another tune, then "cut short and hardly audible." By using singing and dancing as metaphors

mind in the music, since they have invited me for fun?" He decided not to enter and returned. The host ran up to him and asked what had caused him to go back instead of coming in. When Cai Yong told him the reason, the lute player answered: "I saw a mantis stalking a cicada, who was about to flee but had not yet done so. I was afraid that the mantis would lose his chance. Is this the murdering mind that was embodied in the music?"

See Yiwen Leiju, 97: 1678, quoting Hanshu by Hua Qiao (華嶠).

¹² See Yiwen Leiju, 90: 1564.

¹³ See Shiji, "The Records of Music", 24: 1181.

for Virtuous Consort Wang's predicament, this couplet insinuates that any hope for her to survive this intrigue was extinguished--as a victim of Yang's slander and the Emperor Wenzong's fickleness, Consort Wang met her end. Neither Consort Wang nor Wen had ever anticipated that, as the mother of the Heir Apparent and a senior imperial consort, she would die such a tragic death from Consort Yang's bitter jealousy, even though Yang might succeed in currying more imperial favor. Now that the mother was dead, her son's position was no longer secure. The young heir found himself in increasingly dire straits and totally defenseless in the face of a crisis:

An Abyss of Disappointment for the Heir:

- 11 Withered in dew the flower fell victim to jealousy, 露委花相妒,
Shaken by wind, the willow could not withstand its sharpness. 風倚柳不禁。

Here we are given a supplementary account of the political situation. After the Heir Apparent's mother's death, the child himself fell into an abyss of disappointment. The flower that withered in the chilly dew and the willow that shook in the sharp wind symbolizes Virtuous Consort Wang, who died, and her son, who was in a precarious state and to die soon after. Having succeeded in taking Wang's life, now by hook or by crook, Consort Yang made an attempt on Wang's son.

The eunuch usurpation greatly weakened the governmental functions. Factional strife further sapped the Empire, and the muddleheaded and fatuous Emperor Wenzong bestowed his conjugal favors exclusively on a merciless and ambitious consort. All these spelled the Heir Apparent's ruin.

- 12 The bridge stood curved, its two pillars set further apart, 橋彎雙表迥。
The pond was so swollen that it was one oar's length deep. 池漲一篙深。

What are the connotations of this couplet in the concrete context of the poem?

First, from the perspective of scenic description, the pond was swollen because the rainy season had come. Excessive rain, accompanied by wind and dew mentioned in the last couplet, registers the arrival of another autumn. Comparing this with the "frosty-cold"

of the third couplet, and "the Double Seventh Eve" and "Thousand Years" that represent the previous autumn, we can see that a year had passed since Wen began to serve the Heir.

Secondly, read in light of the clues placed later in this poem and our understanding of the political situation of the time, we can understand this couplet as an elaborately designed metaphor. Up to this couplet, we see how Consort Yang took Consort Wang's life; after this couplet, we will learn how Wang's son, the Heir Apparent was murdered by Yang in collaboration with the eunuchs. As the logical sequence of the poem, this couplet must, therefore, metaphorically represent the situation just before the Heir Apparent died.

Thirdly, the relationships among various objects described in this couplet deserve special attention. It was because "The pond was so swollen it was one oar's length deep," that the poet observes how "The bridge stood curved, its two pillars set further apart." And, too, it was because "The pond is swollen" that "it was one oar's length deep;" and because "The bridge stood curved" that "its two pillars [seemed to be] set further apart." The way the scenic objects are arrayed bears the obvious traces of the poet's empathy. The poet projects his feelings onto the objects he describes--the bridge, the two pillars, the pond and the one oar--such that all the images become metaphor for person or a group of persons who played a role in the Heir Apparent Incident.

"The curved bridge" stands for Emperor Wenzong who, as the intermediary connecting the imperial consorts Wang and Yang, the eunuchs and officials, Niu and Li factions, and Wen Tingyun and the Heir Apparent, is just like a bridge. But he was not a straight bridge, as he was not wise enough to be called a good emperor.¹⁴ During the Kaicheng era (836-40), the opposition of the two factions reached the height of intensity. Emperor Wenzong was to a great extent responsible for this fact. Therefore, the connotation of "the two pillars set further apart" is transparent: the two contending factions were all the more hostile to

¹⁴ See also "Song of the Double Seventh Eve" (七夕歌, j. 3. WFQ), that uses "the curved bridge" as a metaphor for Emperor Wenzong.

each other in any political affairs at court. As to why the two factions, instead of the Southern and Northern Offices, are presented in the likeness of the two pillars, it is because Wen was so contemptuous of the eunuchs that he could never regard them as a pillar of the court, not even in a metaphor.

Turning to the second line, "the pond was swollen" hints at the increasing imperial favor shown to the Niu Faction. We ground this reading in the historical reality that in the latter part of the Kaicheng era, the Niu Faction had gained overwhelming superiority over the Li Faction. Connected with this, "one oar's length deep" adds to the rich implication of the line: it was Consort Yang alone who, supported by the Niu Faction, was in high favor with the emperor. Here we ought not to turn a deaf ear to the indelicate overtone (a sexual indelicacy) implied in the line, an infelicity in this poem, though it does no harm to the artistic expression of the poem as a whole.

Wen does not directly implicate the eunuchs, but they are involved in the context. The autumn wind and excessive rain symbolize eunuch tyranny. Now, viewing things in the concrete historical milieu, we can take a careful look at the next two couplets:

An Imperial Hunt--The Yanying Conference

13 Now the road was cleared for an imperial hunt,
清蹕傳恢囿,
And the yellow banners came to the Shanglin Park.
黃旗幸上林。

Should the emperor, at this critical moment, be in a mood to go hunting? It would *seem* so! Behold, how he ordered that the road be cleared (of passengers and pedestrians), and, how, with his retinue, he really came to Shanglin, the imperial park--

14 The spirited hawk presented itself to the feather garden, 神鷹參翰苑
And the heavenly horse splashed over the muddy hoof puddles. 天馬破蹄沔

The flying hawk and galloping horses make up a magnificent spectacle of imperial hunting. However, in a context filled with symbolism and metaphors, such a direct description seems out of place and therefore strange. If we find that the term *Hanyuan* (翰苑, feather garden) is another name for *Hanlinyuan* (翰林院, "literary forest academy"),

an official institute that in general represents important ministers, we will then notice that the "spirited hawk" is an accepted metaphor for censors¹⁵ and the figurative meaning of this couplet immediately comes to light. The "spirited hawk" refers to Di Jianmo the Censor-in-Chief, who, at the Yanying Palace Conference (p. 169), vehemently and anxiously remonstrated with Emperor Wenzong over his absurd decision to depose his son. Similarly, "heavenly horse" is a metaphor for a particularly important official, who opposed the removal of the Heir Apparent by refuting Consort Yang's slander and thus prevented Emperor Wenzong from going too far in acting the fool.¹⁶

Here we see how the poet, for fear that his poem would be misunderstood, uses highly suggestive diction, with a view to preventing the reader from going astray in the labyrinth of his poetic world.

When we reread the thirteenth couplet in the light of this understanding of the fourteenth, we find that the imperial hunting is a metaphor for the Yanying Conference! The poet substitutes the spectacle of an imperial hunt for that of a palace conference. At first glance, such a reading might seem far-fetched, but the more we examine it, the more we find the metaphoric correspondences to be both appropriate and ingenious (For, in imperial China, it was very common to refer to court officials as hawks, horses or even hunting dogs of the emperors--metaphors so natural that they have no pejorative overtone at all). To our satisfaction, we find that historical references and poetic description tally with each other to

¹⁵ See HS, 77: 3523, "The Biography of Sun Bao": "Now the hawks are starting to soar in the sky, and we should follow the weather and wipe away the evil, to complete our penalty of stern frost." Also see *Shiji*, "Biography of Zhang Tang", 59: 2637-46, Zhang Tang, Censor-In-Chief, was nicknamed as "black hawk" (蒼鷹).

¹⁶ For instances that "heavenly horse" is used as a metaphor for outstanding ministers, See *Shiji*, 24: 1178, "The Song of the Heavenly Horse" (天馬歌) and HS, 22: 1060-1, "The Song of the Western-most Heavenly Horse" (西極天馬歌).

perfection.

The strong opposition from his subjects sounded an alarm for Wenzong, and restored him to his senses. He must therefore have regretted what he had done, and as a result things for a brief time took a turn for the better, both for the Heir Apparent and for Wen.

Unexpected Good Tidings

15 Now Lord Military Storehouse was choosing worthy men, 武庫方題品,
And Sir Literature Garden naturally saw a good omen. 文園有好音.¹⁷

At the Yanying Palace Conference, there was a "Lord Military Storehouse", an influential minister like Du Yu, who was entitled to recommend qualified candidates for the civil service official examination. This man must have appreciated very much Wen's talents and political courage, and once recommended by him, our poet Wen Tingyun, as a Sima Xiangru incarnate (the prefect of "Literature Garden"), now could at last "see a good omen," i. e., hearing good tidings in his official career after so many hardships.

16 The pinkish stalk of the magic iris was flourishing, 朱莖殊菌蠢,
The vermilion cinnamon twigs are about to become sparse. 丹桂欲蕭森.

"Magic iris" is Taoist jargon for censors.¹⁸ Here Wen likens himself to "the magic iris" because he had served in the Editorial Service in the Household of the Heir Apparent under the Left Secretariat as a Rectifier, an official post somewhat similar to that of an Attending Censor, though with lower rank. In any events, when the "Lord Military Storehouse" was choosing worthy men, Wen presented himself as an excellent aide to the Heir Apparent, deserving an even higher position.

"To pluck a vermilion cinnamon twig" is a conventional metaphor for obtaining the

¹⁷ Du Yu is a well-known Jin dynasty Prime Minister, who got this appellation for his all-embracing erudition; see JS, 34: 1028. For Sima Xiangru's occupation of the position the Prefect of Wenyuan (文園令), literally Prefect of Literary Garden, see *Shiji*. 117: 2999.

¹⁸ See p. 183, note 28.

Presented Scholar degree. "The vermilion cinnamon twigs are about to become sparse," because some of the twigs would be plucked, that is to say, at the moment Wen saw his wish to be passed as Presented Scholar, as a result of powerful recommendation.

To sum up, ever since the Yanying Palace Conference, Wen had been appreciated by a powerful minister and was hopeful of being accepted as a Presented Scholar in the upcoming examination. As to the identity of this man, it must be Pei Du or someone under Pei's influence. Here, we learn the underlying reason why, after Li Yong's death, Wen was capable of obtaining the academic degree "Equivalent to Passing" in the following year.

In the remainder of the poem, we find other clues that confirm the particulars of the Heir Apparent Incident.

Transient Peace Before Disaster

17 Then you went back to the jade-like mat behind royal curtains, 敲帳回 瑤席,
Where a lamp shed its glare over the brocade quilts. 華燈對錦衾.

In this couplet, things are viewed from the Heir Apparent's perspective; as in any other stage of the event, the poet is also presumed to be a witness. Like the first two couplets of this poem, this one is a scenic presentation without ambiguity, if only we understand it in the context of the whole event. It demonstrates what the Heir felt after being ordered back to his residence, the *Shaoyangyuan*, where the danger that lurked around him caused him sleepless nights, despite the luxury and comfort.

18 From the picture you took fright at the "Ferocious Beast", 畫圖驚畏獸,
In the copybook was written "the Attracted Bird". 書帖得來禽.¹⁹

¹⁹ "The Painting of Ferocious Beast" (畏獸圖), according to Pei Xiaoyuan's *Zhenguan Gongsu Huashi* (Book 8, p. 4), was drawn by Wang Yi (王蒯). For "Attracted Birds" (來禽), see Gu Yuxian's annotation quoting *Shangshu Gushi* (尚書故實) by Li Chuo (李綽, of the Tang). During the Tang dynasty, Wang Yi's painting and Wang Xizhi's calligraphy, in all probability, were kept as treasure in the imperial hoard. c. f., p. 209-10, note 60.

Highlighting a famous painting and piece of calligraphy in the Heir Apparent's abode, this couplet is a symbolic description of the ominous situation Li Yong faced. We can also understand it as a reflection or afterthought of the Incident on our poet's part.

"Ferocious Beast" refers to a kind of picture believed to have the power to dispel evil spirits; hence the pictures are often used as adornments hung on the wall of a bedroom. In the eyes of the child Heir, the frightening beast in the picture perhaps presented itself more in the shape of a monster than as something that could dispel evil spirits. "Attracted Birds" (來禽), refers to the handwriting by Wang Xizhi in a letter about the cherry that, because of its delicious taste, *attracts birds*. Here, the poet alludes to the position of the Heir Apparent, something that many coveted for, and that could bring ruin to its holder.

19 Now dawn came to the River, shining into the Qin chamber, 河曙秦樓映,
Atop the Hill cleared up overlooking the Wei Palace. 山晴魏闕臨.

"Qin Chamber" in antithesis to "Wei Palace" here refers to the palace where the Heir Apparent lived, while Wei Palace refers to Emperor Wenzong's court. "River" and "Hill" may refer to the Wei River (渭水) and the Mount Zhongnan (終南山), which were close to Chang'an; or they may function together as one term *shanhe* (山河), and stand for the Tang empire. Note that it is morning, a fine morning that might betoken peace and prosperity for the empire. However, this was to be no more than a fleeting appearance, and, for the Heir Apparent, it is just like a brief respite before the tiger springs on the lamb. Disaster was imminent.

The Death of the Heir

The twentieth rhyme: as analyzed before (p. 218-9), Li Yong was murdered by the eunuchs in collaboration with Wenzong's favorite Consort Yang.²⁰ But it finally came out

²⁰ The Qing dynasty scholar Wang Mingsheng surmised, not without reason, that the Heir Apparent Zhuangke must have died as a result of the eunuch's persecution; see *Eshubian*, 77: 1209.

that Yang destroyed herself in the event and was not held in much honor for what she had done and the manner of her death.²¹ The eunuchs, however, were undiscovered with all their conspiracies. Involved in this incident from beginning to end, Wen could not bear to keep quiet, but if he spoke the truth he ran the risk of losing his life. For having attended on the Heir Apparent and for voicing his protest against the eunuchs, Wen indeed was in great danger more than once. After a few more desperate efforts, he was forced to flee the capital to the south.

The last two couplets:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 21 With philosophy and abandon I gave up my lonely indignation, | 任達嫌孤憤, |
| In my laxity and laziness I was tired of remonstrance. | 疏慵倦九箴. |
| 22 Why on earth is the man who has fled to the south, | 若爲南遁客, |
| Still chanting his song of the Sleeping Dragon? | 猶作卧龍吟? |

Now Wen did flee to the south and stayed there, composing this poem as one of his contributions to the making of a veritable history. In his political refuge he never admitted defeat or gave up his ambition to help his country. Far from being a mere dirge that laments the late Heir Apparent, this poem also presents a vivid account of the complex political situation in the late Tang times, and of the poet's inner world. Since in the entire extant corpus of Tang poetry there are very few reflections of the intrigues of the eunuchs, poems like this one are all the more significant and valuable to our understanding of the late Tang political history and poetry. Beyond our expectation, we find a complex story within the labyrinth of a seemingly "immoral" poem.

²¹ See Feng Hao's annotation to "The Jingyang Well" (景陽井) of Li Yishan Shishi (1: 146): "Heartbreaking is the river outside the Wu king's palace \ Lucky enough was Xishu to be buried in its turbid mud" (腸斷吳王宮外水, 濁泥猶得喪西施), an ironic dirge for Yang, who, after being executed, was thrown into Qujiang River. See also Wang Ming-sheng Eshubian (77: 1210) where he castigated Yang by quoting Li's poem.

Wen's Theory of His Poetry

Unique Literary Creation

In searching information about Wen's life, especially his secret experiences, we have studied quite a number of his poems. In abstracting facts from the elegant, lyric, allusive and often hyperbolic lines, we find that Wen's poetry is highly sophisticated, to such a degree that he seldom lets his readers understand his poetry easily. The more confidential the affairs he is couching in his verse, the more oblique becomes his artistic expression. Had he not written his poetry under particular political pressure, his obscurity would be difficult to account for.

Unfortunately, after Wen's death, few readers have understood or appreciated the artistic devices he designed for his unutterable political frustrations. Seldom anybody, even a scholar, would expect that Wen had any secrets, still less that he has to cudgel his brains to find out the secrets. Fortunately, however, once we find the key to his poetry in the secret experiences of his life and his unique artistry, it becomes possible to explore the richness and complexity of his poetic world. In fact, Wen's poetry is no more ambiguous than is the poetry of many of his contemporary poets, because major events, the essential parts of his life, are repeatedly couched in his surviving works from different angles, and thus facilitate inquiring studies. Faced with Wen's poetry so paradoxically abstruse yet explicable, it is imperative that we pay close attention to his artistic technique.

Wen's literary theory has never attracted academic interest before, but since it is the natural outcome of his life and provides the key for revealing the secrets in his works, it deserves further study.

Topic: The Political in the Shape of the Private

On more than one occasion, Wen mentioned his method of composition, such as in the following remarks (Two Epistles Presented to Vice-Minister Jiang, 上蔣侍郎啓二首一)

I ruminated over the richness and beauty of Xie Lingyun; I played with the brocade and embroidery of Yan Yanzhi.... Though my inborn gifts are not great such that my compositions are no match for the *Airs and Elegantiae*; my craftsmanship has reached

such an extreme degree, however, that my poetry is very close to the chants and songs (味謝氏之膏腴, 弄顏生之組綉...雖天分不多, 尚慚于風雅; 而人工斯極, 劣近于謳歌).

Wen had a predilection for beautiful diction and flowery expression, to such an extent that, whatever he wrote about could, at the least, greet the eyes with a flash of beauty at first sight. In this regard, masters of parallelism and description, such as Xie Lingyun and Yan Yanzhi, were the models he chose to follow. In Wen's estimation, the masterpieces in The Book of Songs are matchless only because they are products of inborn gift (天分), the natural revelation of the poet's feelings free of any artificial adornment. By comparison, this category of Wen's works are far less natural as a result of too many techniques. Wen seems to have this self-knowledge to understand this fact.

The so-called "chants and songs" (謳歌) is not a general term for poems, but must refer to something special; in this context, in contrast to "The Airs and the Elegantiae" (風雅), it refers to The Songs of the South, the counterpart of The Book of Songs in Chinese literary history. Therefore, the only reasonable explanation of the term is that it alludes to *Lisao* (離騷): "Ni Qi *chanted* his songs \ Duke Huan of Qi heard him and took him as his minister" (甯戚之謳歌兮, 齊桓聞以該輔).²² Wen means here that his poems are like Ning Qi's "Feeding the Bull" or *Lisao* itself. They give expression to the hurt of an honest man who cherished high aspirations to serve his country but was misunderstood and maltreated by his

²² "謳歌", Here translated as "chants and songs", functions in Wen's citation as a noun phrase, rather than a verb-object unit, as Hawkes translated it. Ning Qi was a merchant before he gained access to Duke Huan of Qi. When the Duke was on a night tour, to show that he was a worthy man who had not yet met his lord, Ning chanted a song (謳歌) called "Feeding the Bull" (飯牛歌) to vent his complaints. See Wang Yi's annotation (63-4) to *Lisao* quoting *Huainanzi* (淮南子) and *Sanqiji* (三齊記). See also Hawkes, 32 (modified slightly).

times. In this sense, to say his works are "something close to the chants and songs" was to claim that his poetry, though seemingly concerned only with the poet's private "debauched" life, in fact teems with references to politics.

Style: The Ornate in Preference to the Simple

Another of Wen's important self-appraisals is the following (The first of the "Two Epistles Presented to Vice-Minister Jiang, 上蔣侍郎啓二首一):

As to the way by which the simple and the ornate (styles) differ from and transform into one another, and as for the causes for which black or white (colors) come into vogue with the passing of time (質文異變之方, 驪翰殊風之旨),²³ I have, roughly, taken up the approach of my teacher, and I never dare forget his instructions (粗承師法, 敢墜緹緇).

Wen here tells us that he has taken his teacher Li Cheng as his exemplar; hence he has a good command of the technique of alternating a simple style with an ornate, and is familiar with the ways in which literary fashions change with the time. We do see in Wen's poetic works a preference for ornate expression with gorgeous diction, difficult tropes and erudite allusions. But we also find many *magnus opera* that show Wen to be the master of simple and transparent style. Hence we have to emphasize the fact that Wen is capable of either straight or circuitous representation, and conversant with both simple and ornate styles. Necessity decided Wen's choice of pattern for expression. And while poems with ornate style are far more numerous than those with simple style among Wen's extant works, it was the reality of politics that forced Wen into ornateness and ambiguity.

By "ambiguity", however, we do not mean Wen failed to convey clearly his ideas, but that he was good at disguising his motifs, so as to avert as much as possible hostile reading.

²³ 驪翰, Originally referred to black and white horses that were used in war. It was said that the Xia dynasty set great store by the black, while the Yin dynasty by the white; hence the term acquires its meaning of "a changed vogue."

At the same time as he was bent on telling the truth, he had to guard against his political enemies. Wen wrote for his contemporary friends and future readers who are discriminating and appreciative enough to know what tune he was playing, even though such works might appear "unreadable" to some would-be critics.

Motif: The Covert in Subtle Interchangeability for the Overt

This artistry of concealment and exposure, deployed for the skillful artistic expression of his innermost feelings has much to do with the so-called "*xing*" (興) in traditional Chinese poetic theory. It also has as its theoretical basis the literary conception of The Book of Changes. The following is Wen's self-confessed indebtedness to this Chinese classic (Epistle Presented to Secretary Du, 上杜舍人啓):

I have become rather conversant with the way to choose pertinent diction; and I have attained a passable mastery of the art of making the covert overt (頗識甄藻之規, 粗達顯微之趣)

Over and above self-acknowledgment of his skillful control of the various colors and flavors of language, Wen lays special emphasis on his knack for both hiding and showing his subject matter. In order to avoid persecution, he had to hide the motifs of his political poems; whereas the fundamental purpose in writing about his secret experiences was to assert himself. Without concealment, Wen's works could not be handed down; but with too much concealment, his true meanings would be obscured altogether. Here Wen found himself in such a predicament that he must have a total command of the artifice of concealment and showing. "To make the overt covert," a borrowing from The Book of Changes, is a perfect solution, so to speak, to the problem:

"The Book of Changes makes manifest what was in the past and foresees clearly what will be in the future, and consequently the covert is made overt and the subtle is rendered apparent" (夫易彰往而察來, 而微顯闡幽).²⁴

²⁴ See Zhouyi, "The Attached Words" (系辭下), 8: 89.

In contrast to Wen's "ways to choose pertinent diction," his "art of making the covert overt" takes expression in his poetry as a means for hiding but not tarnishing the motifs of his literary creations. By constantly varying his pictures as a camouflage, he would first attract the reader into his artistic contrivance, then distract him with a variety of perplexing and even seemingly unreasonable lines. Throughout this process, he would deliberately give clues that would allure the reader into seeking for an answer. Wen proved very adept at showing that there was something hidden while hinting broadly that whatever was hidden could be found out. Such is the ambivalent nature characteristic of Wen's poetry, the dialectic of his artistry.

A Few More Examples

Although we have unraveled many of Wen's poems on the topic of his secret attendance upon the Heir Apparent, many others, with their tantalizing puzzles, await discovery and identification. As pointed out before, all of Wen's works on this topic can be divided into two groups, verses written during his attendance on his young lord, and dirges deploring the dead and recalling the aftermath of the event. We do not have enough space in this dissertation to unravel all these enigmas one by one; a list enumerating all relevant works is found in Appendix II. In Wen's extant works consisting of about 330 *shi* poems, more than 60 *ci* poems and over twenty epistles, more than 40 *shi* poems, at least 15 *ci* poems and ten epistles focus on expressing and illuminating his liaison with the Heir Apparent.

Even though we can proceed on the basis of the already elucidated poems, it proves no easy job to identify the motif of many of the entries in this list, and it will take no less labor than that expended on "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" and "The Twenty-Two Rhymes on the Arched Gate", to elucidate all the entries. We will choose a few additional examples that substantiate our discovery with more details. We already know when and how Wen gained access to Li Yong, why Emperor Wenzong gave his consent to appointing Wen as his son's assistant, what role Wen played in the whole process and how Li Yong was murdered. But we have not discussed the consequences Wen had to suffer, nor have we adduced more facts to clarify Wen's standpoint towards the different roles the persons interested played

throughout the incident.

Song of the God of Marquis Jiang (蔣侯神歌) 𪛗

It is Wen Tingyun who originated this New Music Bureau title.²⁶ It seems to recount the story of Jiang Ziwen, but the details of the story betray a worldly concern with no eulogy to the deity. Amongst the awe-inspiring and confusing displays of the supernatural, we find that Wen's interest is focused on special figures of the human world, who stood for some roles closely connected with Wen's political life.

Here is the last couplet of the poem:

- 6 Atop the blue cloud there naturally came
the descendant of the black dragon,
Consort Pan, you had better not
knot the lilacs.

青雲自有黑龍子,

潘妃莫結丁香花.²⁷

The suggestion that Consort Pan should not knot the lilacs is a satire on her person, effected by means of an ambiguous metaphor that seems to have something to do with the imperial succession. The implication of this couplet can be explicated as follows:

(1) Consort Pan was a devout disciple of Marquis Jiang, and by praying day and night to him, she sought to hold forever the imperial favor. Unable to give birth to a child, she mothered an imperial prince and intended him to succeed to the throne at the expense of

²⁵ Marquis Jiang, also Emperor Jiang (蔣帝), is a title imperially bestowed on one Jiang Ziwen (蔣子文), a legendary figure who, after death, became the God of Mount Zhong (also Mount Jiang) and the object of popular idolatry, from the end of the Han to the Tang dynasty. See WFQ, 25-7, quoting various records in JS, NS, *Yiyuan* (異苑), *Jinlingzhi* (金陵志) and *Soushen Ji* (搜神記).

²⁶ See Ren Bantang, *Tangshengshi*, 107.

²⁷ For all the biographical information about Consort Pan and Precious Spouse Huang, see NS, "The Annals of the Marquis Donghun" (r. 499-501), 5: 151-5.

Precious Spouse Huang (黄貴妃). Besides, in her worship of Marquis Jiang, she acted in close collaboration with a eunuch called Zhu Guangshang (朱光尚).

Comparing these facts about Precious Consort Pan with the situation of Worthy Consort Yang, we immediately recognize that Pan is designed as a substitute for Yang. As a favorite imperial concubine, Yang was as jealous, ambitious and venomous as Pan; she also mothered an imperial prince, the Prince An, in a vain bid to have the Heir Apparent replaced; she took the lives of Virtuous Consort Wang and her son Li Yong in collaboration with the eunuchs. There are too many similarities between the two for Wen not to be using Pan as an historical counterpart to Yang.

(2) "Knot the lilacs" must have to do with Consort Yang's prayers for being blessed with having a son, since one thing characteristic of lilac was to bear seeds (子, a pun on "son"). Yang's attempt to attain her purpose, however, was to show partiality to a certain imperial son, out of many princes. Since the flowers of the lilac by nature grow in clusters, there is no need to "knot" together any of them. The imperial princes, from among whom Consort Pan (or Yang) wanted to select an imperial successor, are, interestingly, a group that "clusters" on the royal family tree. And it was not up to Yang to have a hand in the matter. This similarity between the lilac flowers and the imperial princes supplies the vehicle for Wen's metaphor, the tenor of which is that it was all in vain for Yang to show favoritism towards one imperial son at the expense of the other.

(3) "Descendant of the black dragon" refers to Emperor Wuzong, who, as a result of the inner court struggle and the eunuchs' political conspiracy, came to the throne by a fluke after Wenzong's death. As we have known, after Emperor Wenzong rejected Consort Yang's request and crowned as Heir Apparent Prince Chen, instead of An, the eunuchs set on the throne another imperial heir--Emperor Wuzong, who, in Wen's honorific terms, "naturally appeared atop the blue clouds," as "the descendant of the black dragon," though nothing more than a survivor of the palace coup. If Wuzong is "the descendant," it is clear that "black dragon" stands for an imperial ancestor.

Since the last couplet of this poem carried such a burden of worldly concern, the rest of it, like "The Twenty-Two Rhymes of the Arched Gate", must conceal in it Wen's attitudes towards the inside story of the Tang court, despite all its misleading appearances. We can justify our paraphrase of the last couplet by finding out the details of that story, a story so familiar because we already know the facts, and so strange because the way Wen couches it is too unusual to be recognized.

1 The God of Chu, riding on armored horse

with golden adornments,

楚神鐵馬金鳴珂

Agitated from the dragon's pool at night,

and set pale billows surging.

夜動蛟潭生素波。²⁸

At night, Jiang Ziwen, deified as the God of Chu, and in the shape of a black dragon, is aroused on behalf of the Tang Empire.

"Chu" in Wen's works invariably presents itself as a special term for the Heir Apparent, or via the Heir Apparent, for the Tang Empire. The "God of Chu" appears on the scene, therefore, as a legitimating might of the Tang imperial power that acts to shield the throne from harm. More to the point, he acts as an imperial ancestor (particularly Emperor Xianzong, who succeeded in effecting the Yuanhe Restoration) and a guardian deity of his imperial offspring. Now this god soars up from his dragon pool, with divine grandeur and irresistible wrath,

2 When the autumn gust, stirring up the waters,

²⁸ "The God of Chu" refers to Jiang Ziwen who was once given the title King of Chu of Wuxing (吳興楚王), see NS, 51: 1269. The "dragon's pool" refers to the Black Dragon Pool (黑龍潭) of Mount Zhong, where a black dragon was believed to have appeared as Marquis Jiang incarnate. See WFQ (26) quoting *Jinlingzhi*. Since Emperor Xianzong, the grandfather of Wenzong and Wuzong, once bore the title Prince of Guangling (廣陵王, JTS, 14: 411) before he succeeded to the throne, "Marquis Jiang" should stand for him.

tolls the death of the Western Emperor,
In front of his temple on the ancient tree is
coiled a white snake.

商風刮水報西帝，
廟前古樹蟠白蛇。²⁹

A storm--a great political disturbance--results in the death of the Western Emperor, who, now as a slain dragon, takes the images of a white snake, and coils itself (mortally wounded) on the tree in front of the temple of its ancestor, the God of Chu. This couplet thus suggests the death of Emperor Wenzong.

Both "Western Emperor" and "white snake" have pejorative meanings. The former is a sobriquet for the monarchs of Qin, while the latter is an image symbolic of the Qin dynasty on the verge of downfall. Not that Wen uses the two terms regardless of these meanings, he uses them euphemistically in this poem, to voice criticism of Wenzong, who had a considerable share of responsibility for the death of his son, and who then in his desperation died a tragic death. Meanwhile, more than referring to the Tang dynasty capital with the term "Qin," as in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem," we can sense here an overtone Wen reluctantly implies: the Tang dynasty was approaching its end.

3 The Red Hatchet of the King of Wu

cut the cloud array,
And in the Painted Hall was a forest
of halberds and frosty blades.

吳王赤斧砍雲陳，
畫堂列戟叢霜刃。³⁰

The King of Wu, in accordance with the revelation from Marquis Jiang, carried out a

²⁹ It was said that when Liu Bang rose in arms against the Qin, he killed a white snake, son of the White Emperor and symbol of the Qin Empire. See *Shiji*, 8: 341. The "Western Emperor" originally means an emperor throned in Chang'an, see *Shiji*, 85: 2587.

³⁰ 畫堂, Painted Hall, short for the Painted Hall of the First Abode of the Heir Apparent (太子甲觀畫堂), is where Emperor Cheng of Han was born, and the imperial consorts lived, see HS, 10: 301.

massacre "in the cloud array," and threw the Painted Hall into a blood bath. This couplet hints at the purge conducted by Wuzong in which Consort Yang, Princes An and Prince Chen were all put to death.

"King of Wu" (not Chu), here does not refer to Marquis Jiang, but to Emperor Wuzong in the guise of Jiang. The reason Wen had Wuzong play the role, we can suggest, is that he believed, or at least pretended to believe that, Wuzong's massacre at the beginning of his reign was sanctioned by the deity of a former sage emperor of the dynasty. "The Red Hatchet" was a symbol of Wuzong's ironhanded policy, while it is the name of an immortal.³¹ "The cloud array," an array as untouchable as the clouds, is a metaphor for the scramble over the succession within the royal clan, provoked by Consort Yang and aggravated by the eunuchs. Therefore, the meaning of the first line is: to clear up the messy situation created by Wenzong, Wuzong "cut the Gordian knot," in an efforts to assert himself as the orthodox successor of the throne. As a result, the Painted Hall was turned into a forest of halberds and frosty swords, i. e., all those who lived there were killed. As the residence of the imperial consorts and princes, the Painted Hall deserves repeated scrutiny: if the words here only refers to a common boudoir, why are there so many weapons in it that it looks like an arsenal?

Although Wen retained his affection for his late young lord, he had no choice but to pledge allegiance to Wuzong. Wuzong mounted the throne through a palace coup staged by the eunuchs, and he might not be so friendly towards Li Yong as well as his attendants. That is why Wen no doubt felt the need to represent all Wuzong's political measures in positive, if not an ambiguous language.

Notwithstanding this, Wuzong, in a sense, did exact vengeance from Worthy Consort Yang on behalf of Li Yong and Virtuous Consort Wang. If Wang's soul in the nether regions had sense, how would she react to the changes in the human world?

³¹ See Liexianzhuan, in Shuofu, *juan* 58.

Here Wen offers a poetic answer to this question:

4 The Goddess of Mount Wu

conveys her feeling with a touch of sad strings, 巫娥傳意托悲絲,
And, amidst the clangorous notes of bells,
fingers her temple hairs. 鐸語琅琅理雙鬢.³²

In this couplet, Virtuous Consort Wang strikes a pose. She was grieved and perplexed, perhaps with the mixed feelings of gratitude and anxiety, as a wronged imperial consort who was subsequently rehabilitated, and as a loyal imperial spouse who feared that the cruel slaughter of Wuzong instigated by the eunuchs would be the ruin of the empire.

In Wen's imagination, Wang plays the lute to give vent to her sorrow, and she then performs an elegant bell dance, in her capacity as an imperial consort. Possibly, in her life time, Virtuous Consort Wang was adept at both lute and bell dance, which, with their symbolic features, also fit her status as an imperial consort.

5 The Xiang smoke was swept green

and the Xiang mountains stood slanted, 湘烟刷翠湘山斜,
At sunrise in the east
the divine ravens were flying. 東方日出飛神鴉.

After Emperor Wuzong came to the throne, the Tang Empire for a time took on a new look, while this new equilibrium temporarily prevailed, there appeared a peaceful and thriving atmosphere.

³² 巫娥, The Goddess of Mount Wu, was the legendary fairy maiden who offered herself to King Xiang of Chu, see Song Yu: "Rhapsody of Gaotang", *Wenxuan*, 19: 265; here, she appears as the incarnation of Virtuous Consort Wang. 鐸語, The notes of the bells, is music played in the performance of "The Bell Dance", a dance melody of the Han dynasty. It was said that a wooden bell (木鐸) was used to give orders to the whole country. See YFSJ, 54: 784.

Xiang (湘), a river of the Chu (楚) region, equates with "Chu" which in Wen's poetic vocabulary is a metaphor for the Tang Empire. The divine ravens at sunrise are emblematic of the imperial authority and heaven-blessed prosperity.

Then, as explained above, all of this poem boils down to the aphorism stated in the last couplet: that for the imperial succession Marquis Jiang has his own choice, and all of Consort Pan's (i. e., Consort Yang's) attempts are in vain.

In addition to a complementary account of Wen's incisive attack on the eunuchs in other poems, this poem shows clearly his political attitude towards the participants in the Heir Apparent Incident. Wen of course sided with Li Yong and his mother; while towards Emperor Wenzong, besides showing a submissive loyalty and support, he also expressed veiled criticisms. As to Worthy Consort Yang, Wen's stance is one of castigation and satire, but not without sympathy for her tragic end, which was to be put to death once she outlived her usefulness. To Emperor Wuzong, the "orthodox" successor to the throne who ruled with an iron hand and might become a catastrophic force in Wen's political life or even life, Wen dared show nothing but an awe-stricken allegiance.

Damozhi ³³ (達摩支, j. 2, WFQ)

1 The musk, even though it is smashed into powder,

will not abandon its fragrance,

搗麝成塵香不滅,

And the lotus, even when it is broken into pieces,

will not forsake its silk

拗蓮作寸絲難絕.

The first couplet, as we have quoted earlier (p. 205), gives expression to a grief or yearning that was engraved on Wen's bones and printed in his heart. However, if isolated from the context, it reads like an aphorism of a love song.

2 The red tears of Wenji,

the spring over the Luo River,

紅氎文姬洛水春,

³³ "Damozhi" is the title of a Music Bureau verse, see YFSJ, 80: 1137.

The white hair of Su Wu,
and the snow atop the Heavenly Mountain.

白頭蘇武天山雪³⁴

Finding the start inadequate to manifest his emotions, and fearful lest readers misunderstand it as an expression of lovesickness, the poet complements two more allusions that guide our scrutiny into the poet's anxieties and anguish about his political life.

The first is to Cai Wenji, who, when at last she was offered to return to her homeland, was forced to part forever from her flesh and blood--sons borne to the chieftain she had been forced to marry--with a sorrow that tore her heart to pieces. This reminds us of the awkward political situation Wen had to face, as consequence of having attended the Heir Apparent. He became a sensitive figure, a "forbidden meat" (禁臠) that none would dare to touch; and whatever course he adopted for his career, he always had too many difficulties and frustrations. Neither the Li nor the Niu Faction would wish to employ him, and Wen found it impossible to please either party, though during the Heir Apparent Incident he had sided with the Li Faction.

The second allusion is to Su Wu, who was in the custody of the Huns for nineteen years, and whose unswerving loyalty to his country makes him an exemplar of political constancy even to modern Chinese. This is Wen's self-affirmation that his loyalty to the Tang state

³⁴ Wenji, i. e., Cai Wenji, was the daughter of Cai Yong. After her first husband died, in the chaos of the time, she was captured by northern horsemen and made the wife of the chieftain of the Huns for twelve years, giving birth to two children, until Cao Cao sent for and ransomed her, to leave her own flesh and blood and marry a third husband. See HHS, 84: 2800. Su Wu was sent on a mission by Emperor Wudi to the Huns; he was detained there for nineteen years but remained faithful to the Han and did not yield under any humiliation and torment. During his detainment, he was made to tend the sheep in the Qilian Mountain (in the language of the Huns, Heavenly Mountain) in the snow, and was not permitted to return, before he-sheep could give birth to lambs. See HS, 54: 2459.

dynasty remained unchanged, whatever humiliation he had suffered.

3 Don't you see

君不見

Gao Wei "*sans soucis*"

buried himself in a sea of flowers,

無愁高緯花漫漫,

But after his carousals by the Zhang River

only the dewdrops, pure and chilly, remained.

漳浦宴餘清露寒.³⁵

4 Once together with his aides and assistants

he was taken prisoner,

一旦臣僚共囚虜,

Before he could play the Nomad flute

he was all in tears.

欲吹羌笛泪丸瀾.

After broaching the topic with this powerful and impressive start, Wen turns "directly" to the main subject, which seems to be one of "meditating on an ancient event" (懷古), that takes the form of a lament for the debauched life of Gao Wei, the Latter Monarch of the Northern Qi. In his poetic representation of the historical events concerning Gao, however, Wen does not dwell on the causes for the fall of this young and naive monarch "*sans soucis*," nor does he endeavor to draw a historical lesson from it. Instead, Wen deplores the anguish the monarch and his subjects felt in their confinement.

5 His former subject's temple hairs

turned an untimely frost-white.

舊臣頭髮霜華早,

What a pity his heroic ambition

died amidst bouts of drunkenness.

可惜雄心醉中老.

6 From time immemorial spring returns

³⁵ "*Sans Soucis*" is the nickname of Latter Monarch (後主, r. 565-9) of the Northern Qi, Gao Wei, who addicted himself to pleasure-making and brought ruin to his country. See Li Baiyao, *Beiqi Shu*, 8: 97. "By the Zhang River" refers to Linzhang (臨漳), i. e., Ye City, the capital of the Northern Qi situated on the bank of the Zhang River.

but never the bygone dream,

萬古春歸夢不歸，

Amidst the winds and rains of Ye City

Forlorn grasses reach to the sky.

鄴城風雨連天草。

Then, Wen elaborately turns his attention to the afflictions Gao Wei's "former subjects" had to endure, when they were getting old with their frustrated ambitions. The image Wen painted of those "former subjects" is of men who fell victim to their lord's downfall, like slaves buried along with their deceased master. This is nothing more and nothing less than Wen's self-portrait after the death of Li Yong. We will be all the more convinced of this understanding once we read the end of the poem. For, if the second last couplet is still something the poet speaks for Gao Wei's "former subjects," when it comes to the last couplet, he throws off his mask and reveals his own keenly felt pain, no longer feigning to play any other roles.

In all the sources available to us, we cannot find anything about Gao Wei's "former subjects." We are thus thrown into doubt as to whether Wen is taking history as a "footnote" to himself or taking himself as a footnote to history. Nevertheless, if we notice that the carousing Gao Wei indulged in took place near the Zhang River at Linzhang, i. e., Ye City, we can immediately commune with our poet with an understanding smile. It was in Ye City that Cao Zhi feasted and enjoyed the company of his attendants before finally suffering imperial persecution from his brother, Cao Pei. Cao Zhi did have his "former subjects such as the brothers Ding Yi (丁儀) and Ding Yee (丁翼), who were put to death after Cao Pei took the throne,³⁶ while Cao Zhi was placed under house-arrest. In understanding this poem, however, it does not really matter if Cao Zhi had other "former subjects" or if the "former subjects" referred in the context served Gao Wei instead of Cao Zhi. Because, in the final analysis, Wen grafts a "twig" of one event into a "trunk" of another historical fact--he subtly substitutes one thing for another--to make his historical allusion both ambiguous and all-

³⁶ For biographies of Ding brothers (?-220), see SGZ, 19: 561-2.

embracing. In any case, what he stresses is to identify himself with such "former subjects." Evidently, Wen's approach to history is not historical, but literary, and his technique of artifice is ingenious, though puzzling.

Evidently, Wen is "using other's wine, to drown his own sorrows." In other words, he empathizes with the "former subjects", and projects all his emotions onto them, because the lifelong frustration and sorrow of the "former subjects" touched the string of Wen's innermost feelings, those of a confidential assistant who had once pinned his hopes on Li Yong and then lost them forever.

This poem is quite different from poems that "Meditating on an Ancient Site" (懷古) and "Singing of History" (咏史). Both connect the past events to the author's contemporary affairs, in that in order to manifest his own affairs, Wen conceals them behind the guise of an historical event. This is one more pattern of his "making the covert overt".

By this point, the basic facts of the Heir Apparent Incident are recorded history and should help us to unravel more of Wen's baffling works. This incident is, however, only the prelude to a political career that was filled with dramatic events. A number of unsettled questions about that career and Wen's later life still remain. We will leave them to the following chapters.

Chapter Seven Changing Name And Taking the Examination

After the Heir Apparent's death, Wen was forced to go to Prime Minister Pei for help. In fact, it was during his attendance upon Li Yong that Pei recognized Wen's worth and tried to support him by facilitating his passing of the civil service examination. The result was that, in the autumn of the fourth year of Kaicheng (839), Wen, for the first time in his life, took the civil service examination, one held by the Metropolitan Prefecture. As a result, he was rewarded the academic title "Equivalent to Passing" (something on a par with the Presented Scholar degree under most circumstances), yet "failed to pass" (as a very rare exception). For all his efforts, he found himself once more completely frustrated, and had to flee to the south. To illustrate these basic facts, we will look into the political situation after Li Yong's death for more details.

"Equivalent to Passing" (等第) Yet "Failed to Pass" (罷舉)

Wen's Predicament

We begin by reviewing a portion of Wen's "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Pei":

With my name secretly listed for arrest, I could hardly benefit from imperial favor. Together with the embers I am to be thrown away; and compared with insects, I have hardly any more hope....(see p. 76)

Wen came to a most critical turn in his life. The eunuchs would conspire against him all the more because he was a most confidential assistant of the Heir Apparent, and a potential witness to their crimes. A man of outspoken nature, Wen would have undoubtedly divulged what he knew to his friends and foiled the eunuchs' attempt to keep their murder of the Heir a secret. As a result, nursing new hatreds piled upon old for Wen, the eunuchs were impatient to take his life. It was under such circumstances that Wen's name was put on the blacklist for arrest, forcing him to make every effort to escape. In his "Epistle Presented to Drafter Pei" (上裴舍人啓, c.f. p. 195, 208), Wen hinted once more at this state of affairs, telling us what

he had to do in order not to fall victim to the eunuchs:

Since my "eastern host" could no longer be depended upon, and the southern wind could not last through to the end, I felt like as though I had fallen into an abyss and was cast adrift on a vast sea (某自東道無依, 南風不競¹ 如擠井谷, 如泛滄溟). I did not know how I could find one to seek refuge with, nor where I might ask for a lodging (莫知投足之方, 不識栖身之所). By risking the lives of Sun Song's hundred domestics, I clung to my precarious existence (孫嵩百口, 系以存亡);² and like the solitary man Wang Zun, I fell into the traps laid by the scandal mongers (王尊一身, 困于賢佞).

As we will learn later (p. 269), that Wen likens himself to Zhao Qi tells us about more than simply his seeking asylum with Drafter Pei. Wen changed his name to Wen Qi when taking the examination, in token of his admiration for Zhao Qi and his determined opposition against the eunuchs. Here the allusions to Zhao Qi and Wang Zun present a picture of the insecure life Wen led under the eunuchs' political persecution. For Wen the main problem now was how to escape with his life rather than how to search for political advancement.

The Metropolitan Recommendation And Wen's Efforts

Thus blacklisted, it was impossible for Wen to take the examination openly. But Wen was

¹ "Eastern host" here hints at the Heir. "The southern wind" alludes to *Zuozhuan*, "Duke Xiang the Eighteenth Year", 33: 1966: "Musician Shikuang divined the result of the war between Chu and Jin by singing the southern and the northern airs, saying: "The southern airs [wind] cannot last through to the end, and are filled with dead voices, so Chu will certainly have no achievement" (南風不競, 多死聲, 楚必無功).

² Sun Song saved Zhao Qi (110?-201) from eunuch pursuance, saying: "I am Sun Binshi (his style) of Beihai, and with the hundred domestics of my family, I will certainly help you." He then hid Zhao in his double partition wall. See HHS, 64: 2121.

not a man easily reconciled to failure. By unstinting effort he was able to enlist the help of a few ministers. What ensued from this was another climax in his life: he was permitted to sit for the Metropolitan Prefecture Examination under a changed name and recommended by the Metropolitan Prefecture (achieved the academic title "Equivalent to Passing"), and then was rejected by the Ministry of Rites ("Failed to Pass" as a Presented Scholar). To be accepted as "Equivalent to Passing" was no ordinary success. It illustrates Wen's unremitting tenacity in his struggle against adversity and appeal for social justice to his contemporaries. Before proceeding to the details of how Wen changed his name, we need to clarify the degree to which a Recommendation from the Metropolitan Prefecture spelled political success in the late Tang period.

In the late Tang times, among the Presented Scholars, i. e., the so-called "Scholars Presented as Local Tribute" (鄉貢進士), those recommended by the Metropolitan Prefecture were considered special. In "Metropolitan Prefecture Recommendation" of the Tangzhiyan (2: 13) by Wang Dingbao, we read:

The Divine Prefecture Recommendation is the so-called "Equivalent to Passing" and ever since the eras of Kaiyuan (713-41) and Tianbao (742-56), all the first ten examinees in order of excellence have been so designated. It is required that the title be well-deserved so as to help to promote the Confucian teachings. The Examination Administrator shall make his choice among them, and he might even accept all, or at least seven or eight out of ten [as Presented Scholars]. If things differed from this, the Metropolitan Prefecture would send an official letter to the Examination Administrator's office asking for the reasons why the recommendations were denied (神州解送, 自開元天寶之際 率以在上十人 謂之等第 必求名實相副, 以滋教化之源 小宗伯倚而選之 或至渾化 不然 十得其七八 苟異于是, 則往往牒貢院請落由).

From this we can elicit three important points.

(1) To be recommended by the Metropolitan Prefecture meant having a much better chance to be passed as a Presented Scholar than via the "local tribute" in general. Such was the case because the Metropolitan Prefecture, the capital area, was where the final decision was made about accepting Presented Scholars. Here, most candidates strove to influence the decision-making process, by "paying respects to and asking favor from patrons of authority and power" (造請權要) or, in the parlance of that time, they tried "to straighten the key links" (通關節).³ As a result of such mechanisms, "Those having gained [the recommendation] soared to the Heavenly Precincts and advanced towards 'the Orchid Ministries'--for these, it was really a start of 'six month's ascension'" (得之者搏躍雲衢, 階梯蘭省, 即六月衝霄之漸也).⁴ This Recommendation thus became a beeline to advancement for many candidates to follow, because of its high proportion of accepted Presented Scholars to the recommended candidates.

(2) This Recommendation was definitely not easy to obtain, but once it was obtained, it would not be easily denied by the Ministry of Rite, since the Metropolitan Prefecture might address inquiries to the Examination Administrator about why the denial was made of any candidate it had recommended. To be recommended by the Metropolitan Prefecture was the expected outcome of the "straightening" of all "key links", thus in due course it was very naturally considered to be "Equivalent to Passing" as a Presented Scholar.

(3) In the fourth year of Kaicheng, among all candidates recommended by the Metropolitan Prefecture, only Wen was rejected. This was a remarkable exception to the general rule, and must have had its unique causes. Given the power of the eunuchs, to become a

³ See Tangzhiyan, 1: 4. "To straighten the key links" means to smooth away obstacles and get powerful support on one's way towards achieving the Presented Scholar degree.

⁴ See Tangzhiyan, 2: 13. "Six month's ascension" alludes to the roc in Zhuangzi, that ascends upwards 90000 *li*, on a whirl-wind, resting only at the end of six months. For the translation, see Legge, Texts of Taoism, 165.

Presented Scholar one would also have to "straighten the key links" with them, or at least not be at odds with them, for although the eunuchs were not in direct charge of examination matters, their influence over the acceptance or rejection of the candidates should not be underestimated. Wen's failure certainly had to do with the eunuchs' unwillingness to let him succeed. By investigating Wen's particular case, apart from understanding his special efforts to obtain a Presented Scholar degree, we can also see his deep-rooted connections in the central bureaucracy, and, above all, the eunuch influence that always succeeded in thwarting his efforts.

The Metropolitan Prefecture Recommendation was so controversial that during the late Tang times it was not always in effect.⁵ Gaining the chance to be recommended, Wen came to grips with numerous difficulties; failing to be accepted as a Presented Scholar, he had quite a few new frustrations. Such was the tragicomedy of Wen's life. To sit for this Examination, Wen had first to prepare by studying the classics hard. "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" writes down this fact in the following passage:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 11 It was indeed seeking fish by climbing a tree, | 定爲魚緣木, |
| And for a second rabbit, by the stump I waited. | 曾因兔守株. |
| 12 Up to five carriages were piled my books, | 五車堆縹帙, |
| Within three paths I closed my strung gate. | 三徑闔繩樞. ⁶ |
| 13 I then joined company with many an eminent soul, | 適與群英集, |

⁵ It was abolished in 836 and in the next year restored; it was then again annulled in 852, only to be restored in 877, see *Tangzhian*, 2: 13-5.

⁶ "Five carriages" is a set phrase for great erudition, from the "Tianxia" chapter (33) of *Zhuangzi*. See Legge, *The Texts of Taoism*, 229. "Three paths" is a synecdoche for the courtyard of a recluse.

Only for the offer of a good price, I stipulate.

將期善價沽。⁷

It was after Wen's attendance upon the Heir ("seeking fish by climbing a tree" and "waiting for a rabbit by the stump;" see p. 177) that Wen stepped up his preparations for the Metropolitan Prefecture Examination. He concentrated on studying, with a view to looking for "the offer of a good price." Normally, people with great talent would be the most successful candidates, though in Wen's case, it could be quite another story.

In order to be recommended for the Metropolitan Examination, Wen of course had to "straighten the key links." After Pei Du's death in the spring of 839, powerful help such as his was no longer available. Consequently, Wen must have sought special favor with other authorities, especially the Governors of the Metropolitan Prefecture (京兆尹), who supervised the examination. In extant sources there is some evidence that he did this. Prior to becoming "Equivalent to Passing", Wen had asked help from men such as Vice-Minister Jiang (Jiang Xi, 蔣系), Secretary Academician (Zhou Chi, 周墀) and Prime Minister Cui (Cui Gong, 崔珙).⁸ All of these men might have helped in Wen's efforts to obtain the title "Equivalent to Passing", as are suggested in the following passages.

In the "Epistle Presented to Secretary Academician" (上學士舍人啓), we read:

Now, having been recommended by the Divine Prefecture, I am to compete with other men of letters for excellence; however, holding in vain my inkstone and mat, I do not know where to go (今乃受薦神州, 爭雄墨客, 空持硯席, 莫識津途).

⁷ This line, like the proverb 待價而沽, wait for the right price to sell, alludes to Lunyu, 9: 2490: Zigong said: "There is a good gem here. Should I lay it up in a case and keep it? or should I seek for a good price and sell it?" The Master said: "Sell it! Sell it! But I would wait for one to offer the price." See Legge, The Four Books, 114.

⁸ For Biographies of Jiang Xi, see JTS, 149: 4028 and XTS, 132: 4534; of Zhou Qi, JTS, 176: 4571 and XTS, 182: 5370; of Cui Gong, JTS, 177: 4587 and XTS, 141: 4656.

We see that after Wen was recommended by the Metropolitan (Divine) Prefecture" (839), he was at a loss what to do next.

In his "Epistle Presented to Vice-Minister Jiang" (上蔣侍郎啓), Wen wrote:

I once visited you with the calling card of a student, and presented you with a letter to a teacher (頃常撰刺門人, 投書齋師). I was fortunate to be in your good graces and thus won others' high praise (蒙垂盼飾, 致在褒稱). Then I sought in the literary garden for recognition and subjected myself to the Divine Prefecture's selection (既而文園求知, 神州就選). I was subsequently able to express my gratitude to you with a bundle of fodder, like a decayed broom just refurbished (遂得生刍表意,⁹ 腐帚生姿).

It is apparent from this letter that Jiang had appreciated Wen's talent, and helped him to be recommended by the Metropolitan Prefecture. That is why, when recalling the past in this epistle, Wen still cherished a heartfelt gratitude for his help. The same fact was recounted in his "Epistle Presented to the Prime Minister Cui" (上崔相公啓):

...When I came for your Bright Mirror and looked up to your Great Excellency (既而仰竊洪鈞, 來窺皎鏡)....It surpassed my wish that you would help an awkward orphan like me and take pains to recharge me with hope and life (豈謂不遺孤拙, 曲假生成). You chose and promoted me from the mud and dust, and raised me up to hazy Heavens (拔于泥滓之中, 致在烟霄之上)....Thus for a time I was revived at the Dragon Gate, no longer a cornered fish (遂使龍門奮發, 不做窮鱗); and like an oriole soaring out from his valley, was enabled to be in company with those

⁹ 生刍, "Fresh fodder", alludes to HHS, 53: 1749, Xu Zhizi (徐稚子) visited Guo Tai and departed, leaving a bundle of fresh fodder in the mourning hut. Guo Tai then said "Is not there a saying in The Book of Songs: 'With a bundle of fresh fodder \ Though you, its master, is as fair as jade'" (生刍一束, 其人似玉). For the poem, see Waley, no. 185.

flying on high (鶯谷翩翻, 終陪逸翰).¹⁰...Nevertheless, I have vainly rejoiced in the occasion of changing the music scale, but have not yet seen any omen that I can offer my devoted service (空乘變律之機,¹¹ 未得捐軀之兆).

Again this passage makes reference to the fact that, having surmounted all political difficulties, Wen succeeded in becoming "Equivalent to Passing". It also shows that Prime Minister Cui had rendered Wen great service towards gaining this academic title. But after this initial achievement, Wen fell short of success in the decisive final stage, for lack of more influential support. Therefore, we can infer that it was after Wen became "Equivalent to Passing" (in the autumn of the fourth year of Kaicheng), and before Wen finally gave up his hope (in the winter of the fifth year of Kaicheng), that he presented this epistle to Cui. Since it came to be "the occasion of changing the music scale" (Cui had just ascended to the Prime-Ministership), Wen hoped to enlist more of Cui's help; but to his frustration, he "vainly rejoiced in the occasion," because Cui could do him no more favor. According to "The List of Prime Ministers" (XTS, 72: 2795), Cui Gong was appointed Prime Minister in the fifth month of the fifth year of Kaicheng, and he was the only appointment of Prime Minister who bore the surname Cui pending Wen's efforts for the Presented Scholar degree (between the autumn of 839 and the winter of 840). This Prime Minister Cui addressed should therefore be Cui Gong.

The friendship between Cui Gong and Wen can be traced to an earlier year, because, while Wen was serving the Heir Apparent (837-8), Cui held the post of the Magistrate of

¹⁰ This alludes to a poem in The Book of Songs: "Leave the darky valley \ Mount the high tree" (Waley, no. 195), a metaphor for obtaining the Presented Scholar degree.

¹¹ 變律, Changing the pitch of music scale by pitch-pipe, was believed in ancient China to be a sign to change the governance; hence the term is traditionally used to refer to the time when a new Prime Minister takes office.

Metropolitan Prefecture.¹² We do not deviate far from the facts if we surmise that during Wen's attendance upon the Heir, Cui, as Magistrate of Metropolitan Prefecture under the influence of the so-called "Lord Military Storehouse", already offered Wen support. Far from a casual kindness, Cui's attitude to Wen was one of political sympathy. He had to brave the pressure from the eunuchs and bear considerable responsibility, if he permitted Wen to be awarded the academic title "Equivalent to Passing".

The above examples demonstrate that in order to open a way to becoming "Equivalent to Passing", Wen had made full use of all his social links to the capital's aristocratic society. But this was not sufficient. Wen had yet to surmount the obstacle presented by the eunuchs to his success in the examination. To avoid attracting the eunuchs' hostile attention when he was taking the examination, Wen resorted to the drastic step of changing his name. To make clear what Wen underwent in the course of these events, we shall first elucidate the relevant details related in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" written in the winter of 840, picking out the passage about the examination for our scrutiny.

A Poetic Account of the Story

The Opening of an Autobiographical Poem

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | All the winged hooves go before on the way,
Only I, a cornered dragon, am to weep: | 逸足皆先路,
窮郊獨向隅 ¹³ |
| 2 | Like a stubborn fugitive in <i>broad-willow</i> I have escaped, | 頑童逃廣柳, ¹⁴ |

¹² See JTS, 177: 4589.

¹³ 先路, "Go before on the way", is a set phrase from *Lisao*, see Hawkes, 22. 郊, Literally suburb, in this context should have been 蛟, a dragon, antithetical with the horse implied in the first line. 向隅, Literally facing the corner, refers to the proverb "Weep alone in a corner" (向隅而泣), that means "to be sad alone."

¹⁴ 頑童, Literally an obstinate man, is an antiphrasis meant for the poet himself. 廣柳, *Broad willow*, is the name for a kind of funeral wagon with a cover of willow-twigs, and

Now a fatigued horse, in flat wilderness, lay prostrate.

羸馬卧平蕪。

The first two couplets go directly into the subject and establish a strong contrast between what happened to the others and to the poet. All others were well on the way of advance, but only he must run away like a fugitive. Before Wen states any direct or indirect causes that had led to his failure, he first presents a picture of the consequence he suffered. He was in great danger, and the allusion to Ji Bu revealed that it was by a special ruse that he succeeded in escaping with his life.

This is the start of a long autobiographical poem, which recounts all the important events of Wen's life up to the time of its composition, the fifth year of Kaicheng (840).

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 3 | As for the yellow scrolls, who, alas, asks about my erudition?
With the red strings I amuse myself on this occasion. | 黃卷嗟誰問，
朱弦偶自娛 ¹⁵ |
| 4 | "Deer's Singing" played, for all successful candidates.
But I, unlike a true man, should lie low as a woman. | 鹿鳴皆綴士，
雌伏竟非夫。 |

Since his great learning could earn him no Presented Scholar degree, Wen at least might use it to articulate his feelings about the injustice he suffered. The "red string" on which he played his tune is a symbol for the subject of this very poem, which tells the complex story of his efforts and frustrations, and was written both to express his indignation and to "amuse himself," so to speak.

How Wen Was Recommended

14 Lord She's Dragon pictures are truly bright,

葉龍圖天矯，

alludes to Ji Bu (季布), Xiang Yu's (項羽, 232-202 BC) military assistant, who escaped Liu Bang's arrest by hiding in a friend's *broad-willow* wagon. See HS, 37: 1975.

¹⁵ The "yellow scrolls" refers to the classics, the teachings of the sages. The "red string" is a term from "The Records of Music", standing for the orthodox music (正聲), thus serious literature; here it refers to this very poem. See *Liji*, 19: 1528.

The counterfeit, the Yan rat, I believe, will make itself a sight.

燕鼠笑胡盧.¹⁶

Like Lord She's fondness for dragons, the examination officials could leave no room for any true talent, since they could not tell the worthy man from the unworthy. In addition to taking a Yan stone for a treasure, those in charge of the examination might even take a rat for a jade-enfolding stone--how could Wen not be failed by them?

15 I knew my innate gift to be preordained,

賦分知前定,

But my disappointed mind was in fear of infamy.

寒心畏厚誣.

Wen was proud of his literary talent, but afraid of the calumny of the eunuchs. He wished to display his literary talent while freeing himself somehow from the eunuchs' slander. The following couplet suggests a solution to this problem, though in very misleading language.

16 I scurried swifter than Qingji, throwing the dust behind,

躡塵追慶忌,

I follow the model of Lu Ban, wielding sword in hand.

操劍學班輸.¹⁷

¹⁶ "Lord She was fond of dragons, so for all adornments in his house he had the images of dragon. But when the Heavenly Dragon heard it and descended for a visit, he was almost frightened to death." See HHS, "The Biography of Cui Yin", 52: 1703. For 燕鼠, Yan rat, see Taiping Yulan, 51: 250, quoting a lost book Que Zi: A foolish man of the Song got a Yan stone and stored it up as a treasure; a traveler from Zhou asked to see it and laughed: "This is only a Yan stone and no more than a piece of tile." It also alludes to the story about rat and *pu* (鼠璞): a Zhou merchant, who called a dried seasoned rat *pu* (璞), went to sell his rat in Zheng, where people called a jade-enfolding stone *pu*. See Liu Xiang, Zhanguo, 201 and Crump, Chan-Kuo Ts'e, 113.

¹⁷ 慶忌, Qingji, a famous warrior said to have the legs of a wild beast to be able to catch flying birds with his bare hands and outrun good steeds. See Suoyin to Zhao Ye, Wuyue Chunqiu, 4: 11. 班輸, refers to 公輸般, also called 魯班, well-known craftsman who was capable of all kind of ingenious designs and inventions by applying his sword and ax.

To avoid the eunuchs' slander, he ran "swifter than Qingji"; to show his literary talent, he followed "the model of Lu Ban." As the logic result of the last couplet, this couplet tells how Wen took the examination, and how well he did in it.

The allusion to Qingji is a metaphor of Wen's expedient of sitting for the examination by changing his name. Whatever means he might use before the examination, how could he outrun Qingji and what sense did it make to say so? In fact, Wen did manage to "run" sufficiently fast that at least for the moment he outpaced the rumors and avoided the eunuchs' slander, participating in and passing the examination. Only by changing his name could he have done this. It was this logic of his political adventure that Wen interpolated into the allusion to Qingji and made it difficult to discern. But this paraphrase of the metaphor is the key to the hidden tenor of the line.

The comparison with Lu Ban stresses his literary talent and excellent performance in the examination. Wen wielded his sword skillfully as Lu Ban had--Lu was the master in the domain of handicraft, as Wen was in the competition of literary composition. In this metaphor the master artisan stands for a surpassing literary talent; that is to say, as an outstanding writer of his time, Wen could handle the examination topics with great ease.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 17 In the Literary Garden I attended many a candidate, | 文園陪多士, |
| Taking the Divine Prefecture Examination for the A 1 place. | 神州試大巫。 |
| 18 My answer could be "a rare playing of the lute", | 對雖希鼓瑟 |
| My name was passed off as those who blew the flute. | 名亦濫吹竽。 |

Poet's footnote: Last autumn I sat for the Metropolitan Prefecture Examination and got my name recommended on the supplementary list (原注: 余去秋試京兆, 薦名, 居其副)。

After all necessary preparations, Wen took the Metropolitan Prefecture Examination; and, as he elegantly declares here, his performances were remarkable and he succeeded in becoming an "Equivalent to Passing" (which caused many controversies in his lifetime and

many misunderstandings after his death). Here the footnote verifies the reliability of the record in the Tangzhiyan (2: 15) about Wen's being equivalent to passing in the fourth year of Kaicheng (c. f. p. 88, note 43).

Wen's Failure to Pass

- 19 [This served] only to make men suspect I desired profit and fame, 正使猜奔競,
 Though I took no account of whether I won or failed. 何嘗計有無.
 20 A Liu Shan had looked for and found me--it was useless, 劉惔虛訪覓
 The Wang Ba I imitated was mocked, to my dismay. 王霸竟揶揄¹⁸

Being thus recommended brought no good fortune. Rather, Wen fell into troubles. Here we can infer from the context that his temporary expedient, the change of his name, was exposed and he became the topic of gossip. He found it hard to vindicate himself, in an awkward position. The recommendation of someone (likened to Liu Shan, very possibly Cui Gong) finally proved fruitless, and despite his loyalty to the Tang state, he was held up for ridicule as Wang Ba once had been.

- 21 To buy fealty, someone had burned the tallies, to no avail, 市義虛焚卷,
 I was derided at the pass, for having thrown the silk credential away. 關譏漫弃襦.¹⁹

¹⁸ Liu Shan once recommended Zhang Ping, a talented literatus, to Emperor Jianwen (r. 550-1). See p. 178, note 22, JS, 75: 1992 and NATW. 119. Wang Ba tried to conscribe men to fight Wang Lang, who had offered a reward for the capture of Liu Xiu [Emperor Guangwu]. But Wang Ba was made a mockery of. See HHS, 20: 734.

¹⁹ "To buy fealty" alludes to the story of Feng Xuan, a retainer of Lord Mengchang (fl. 320, BC), who went to gather rent, but burned up all the tallies, saying he was buying fealty (by burning the tallies) for Mengchang. See Chan-kuo Ts'e. 189-192. When Zhong Jun (fl. 130. BC) went westward into the Pass, he threw away the silk credential the clerk

22 The best remarks, by now, I came to believe,

至言今信矣,

And my humble ambition was, for sure, a grief!

微尚亦悲夫.²⁰

To allow Wen to conceal his identity so as to escape the eunuchs' hostile attention was something like Mengchang's acquiescence to letting Feng Xuan burn the tallies, though it had proved to be of no avail. Only when failure opened his eyes to reality did Wen realize he had underestimated the political difficulty of gaining the Presented Scholar degree. He could only lament all his previous efforts and had to swallow his humiliation.

23 Let me tune the pitch for the White Snow aria,

白雪調歌響,

And enjoy dancing by the Rain Altar in the pure breeze.

清風樂舞雩.²¹

24 I could not raise my shoulders [to adulate anyone] affectedly,

脅肩難黽勉

But I had to scratch my head, sighing in agony.

搔首易嗟吁²²

Wen would stick to his lofty moral principle, isolated as he was in his political stand. Since he regarded himself as a first-rate Confucian scholar as Zeng Dian had been, he would take delight in following Zeng's example of noble reclusion and poverty. Unable by nature to curry favor with those in power, especially the eunuchs, he had to resign himself to being petty and low, and living in depression.

The Unfairness of the Selection And Wen's Predicament

offered him, thinking he would not need it when he returned [with great success]. See HS, 64: 2814-2.

²⁰ "Best remarks" may refer to a friend's warning against Wen's taking the examination.

²¹ "White Snow", an exquisite tune that few were able to sing, is a metaphor for Wen's moral principle. See Song Yu: "Answering the Questions of the King of Chu". *Wenxuan*, 45: 627. "Dancing by the Rain Altar" refers to Zeng Dian's remark, see p. 89, note 45.

²² To keep the shoulders shrugged, means to fawn on a person. "Scratch my head, pace up and down" is a line from *The Book of Songs*, see Waley, no 22.

- 25 To vie for winning I was not a competent man, 角勝非能者,
But to see who is the worthy, was this decided in archery? 推賢見射乎.²³
- 26 When the "horn pitcher" contains in it more dread and fright, 兕觥增恐悚,
The "cup" will lose its share of water, little and slight. 杯水失錙銖.²⁴

Wen confesses that he was not competent enough in the examination, which was more of a political rivalry than a competition of literary talents. If the official quarters were, in the last analysis, frightened by the threatening eunuchs and swayed by political prejudices, their judgments of the candidates unavoidably became unfair. Now because "the examination officials were afraid of the eunuchs," Wen was rejected.

- 27 The white target is withdrawn, no longer red and bright, 粉堞收丹采,
While the golden whistling arrows, I have to hide. 金柝隱僕姑
Letting drop my bowcase, I was ashamed to finish the cup, 垂銜羞盡爵,
Raising the goblet, they insulted me, for drawing the bow. 揚觶辱彎弧.²⁹
Clumsy [as I am], I should not talk of drawing a tiger, 虎拙休言畫,
Nor wish to imitate [the action of] butchering a dragon. 龍希莫學屠.²⁵

²³ The Master said: "The noble man has no contentions. If he has to compete, shall this be in archery? But he bows complaisantly to his competitors; thus he ascended the hall, descends, and exacts the forfeit of drinking. In his competition, he is still a noble man" (子曰: 君子無所爭, 必也, 射乎? 挹讓而升, 下而飲, 其爭也君子). See *Liji*, 62: 1689 or *Lunyu*, 3: 2466. For the translation, see Legge, *The Four Books*, 21.

²⁴ "The cup will lose its share of water" is a metaphor for Wen's having lost what he deserved. Just as wine is poured into each cup from the pitcher, the degree is conferred to each candidate by the examination administrator (for whom, the pitcher is a metaphor).

²⁵ "Failure to picture a tiger makes it, instead, resemble a dog," is an axiom from HHS, 24: 827. It refers to Wen's allegiance to the court, which was, against his hope, distorted

Though his performance in the examination was superior, Wen was forced to quit the competition and conceal his talent. He found himself in an awkward predicament humiliated and under suspicion. By trying to get around the eunuchs, he had made a show of himself, and in the end he had to give up his unfeasible political plans.

To sum up this portion of "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem": after the Heir Apparent's death, Wen tried everything he could to open up an avenue to the Presented Scholar degree. As an expedient, he changed his name and succeeded in having his name recommended. Unfortunately, his behavior was purposely misconstrued, and everything turned against him. Even those who had been friendly to him could no longer help.

The Change of Name

The information drawn from the above passage places in a clearer light the truth of Wen's experiences in the examination. But some points requires further clarification. For example, did Wen *really* change his name just for taking the Metropolitan Examination?--our eliciting of this important fact seems too simple to be convincing. We should not, after all, put too much credit in a single poetic couplet. Interpreted in isolation, the sixteen rhyme allows of explanations other than we have offered, unless we can provide more proof. We need to make out what new name he took, and why he assumed such a name. At least, we have a responsibility to give a more detailed account of such problems.

How the Question Was Raised

The question of Wen's change of name arises when we study the records in the two Tang Histories. Wen's Biography in The Old Tang History (190: 5079) says:

His original name is Qi, and his style name Feiqing (本名岐, 字飛卿). ...His younger

as disloyalty. 屠龍, [The skill of]slaying dragons, a term borrowed from "Lie Yukou" (33) of the Zhuangzi, means something impractical, such as Wen's plan to annihilate the eunuchs. For the translation, see Legge, The Texts of Taoism, 206.

brother was Tinghao (弟庭皓).

And Wen's Biography in The New Tang History (91:3787) is identical on this point:

His original name is Qi, and his style name Feiqing (本名岐, 字飛卿). His younger brother, Tinghao (弟廷皓).²⁶

Here we discern a problem. To say that Wen's original name is Wen Qi is to affirm that the name Tingyun was used only as the changed name. But since Tingyun had a younger brother named Tinghao, how could it be that the elder brother changed his name to be in conformity with his young brother, when the brothers in the family always shared a character in their names? If Wen never changed his name, Wen's biography in The Old Tang History need not mention Wen's "original name," but if Wen ever did change his name, the records in the two Tang Histories will prove hardly plausible. That Wen did undergo a name-change is frequently mentioned and made a mess of in the notes and anecdotes written about him between Tang and Song times; we have quoted some of them earlier and shall study them further. The discrepancies in the two Tang Histories can just serve as a starting point for our further studies.

When and Why Wen Changed His Name

The Beimeng Suoyan account indicates that the change of Wen's name took place as a consequence of the Jianghuai Incident. The Yuquanzi record, with its own interest, tells that the Jianghuai incident happened right before Wen was about to follow the local recommendation [and thus to take the examination]. Conceivably, the change of name might have something to do with the local recommendation. Wen's first "following of the local recommendation" was, without a doubt, his following of the Metropolitan Prefecture Recommendation in the fourth year of Kaicheng (839). However preferential, this was a kind of local recommendation. It is for this fact that we affirm that Wen's change of name happened in 839, just before his participation in the Metropolitan Examination. And it is on

²⁶ As the first character in Wen's name, Ting (庭) or Ting (廷), is interchangeable.

this inference that we ground our argument that in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" (written in 840) there must be some record to that effect. This recommendation would, for many years thereafter, qualify Wen to take the Presented Scholar examinations held by the Ministry of Rites, as he later did in the Dazhong era (847-860).

On the other hand, however, as far as we can determine, in all of the extant works of Wen's contemporaries, Wen is addressed as "Feiqing" or "Tingyun." For example, Li Shangyin's "Hearing Zhuming's Death, Mailed to Feiqing with Tears" (聞著明凶問哭寄飛卿, *Yuxisheng Shiji Jianzhu*, 2: 524), Ji Tangfu's "Sending Wen Feiqing to the Appointment of Fangcheng Defender" (送溫飛卿尉方城, QTS, 542: 6257), Zhang Hu's poem with the same topic (QTS, 542: 6257), Duan Chengshi's "Teasing Feiqing" (嘲飛卿, QTS, 584: 6766) and "Eight Letters Sent to Wen Feiqing" (與溫飛卿書八首, QTW, 787: 10391). All of these were written after the fourth year of Kaicheng, indicating that after that date, Wen's name remained Wen Tingyun. Even the official edict written by Pei Tan (裴坦, fl. 830-60) in the thirteen year of Dazhong (859)--"Edict for Demoting Wen Tingyun as Defender of Fangcheng" 貶溫飛卿隋縣尉制²⁷--addressed Wen as "the Former Local Tribute Presented Scholar Wen Tingyun," rather than Wen Qi, although it was under the name Wen Qi that Wen took the Metropolitan Prefecture Examination and was registered as a qualified "Local Tribute Presented Scholar." This is a clear indication that even those in official quarters regarded Wen's true name as Tingyun, despite his ruse in changing his name to Qi.

Regarding this problem, Xia Chengtao once surmised (390), "After Wen was insulted [in Jianghuai] he changed his name to Qi, and soon resumed his original name [Tingyun]." This is not far from the facts of the matter, save that it fails to peel away the last layer of the mask. The fact is that Wen changed his name to Qi only to gain the Presented Scholar degree, and, when the name change was divulged and he met with failure, it was no longer necessary to keep the changed name. Actually, even if he really had succeeded in passing with this one

²⁷ See DKJK, 22:1434-5.

stroke, none would have failed to recognize Wen Qi as the famous and infamous Wen Tingyun! Wen Qi was a makeshift name assumed for taking the Metro-politan Examination and nothing more. It is no wonder that none of Wen's contemporaries formally addressed him using it. This changed name, however, was recorded in the "Records for the Equivalents to Passing of the Spirited Prefecture Recommendation" (神州 等第錄), under the heading "Equivalent to Passing but Failed to Pass." The records of the Tangzhiyan presented for us a modern peephole for glimpsing the hidden truth.

We have already mentioned that Wen likens himself to Zhao Qi (p. 208, 252), while he changed his name to Wen Qi (溫岐), using the same character Qi (岐). This was not accidental. In Wen's extant works, we can find other examples where Zhao Qi is alluded to, all of which indicate that Wen's use of this character in his name was a deliberate allusion. For example, in his "Epistle Presented to Vice Minister Jiang" (上蔣侍郎啓二首之一), Wen wrote:

What kind of person was Yueshi Fu that you appreciate the essays he left behind; how could Zhao Taiqing make a fool of me since I respectfully follow the example that he set up (越石父彼何人也, 夙佩遺文; 趙臺卿敢欺我哉, 敬承餘烈).

By the allusion to Yan Ying who rescued Yueshi Fu (p. 77, note 20), Wen expressed his gratitude for Jiang's appreciation, likening himself to Yueshi Fu; then he showed his reverence for this ancient model, Zhao Taiqing (style of Zhaoqi). Another example is found in Wen's "Epistle Presented to Secretary Du" (上杜舍人啓):

Out of the carriage of Sun Bin [Shi], you stooped to recommend me, the ordinary man (孫賓車上, 欲引凡姿).

Here Wen likens Secretary Du to Sun Song, with the implication that, he himself was a Zhao Qi looking forward to Du's protection and promotion, against the eunuchs. The reason Wen took Zhao Qi as his model and encouraged himself by Zhao's spirit was very clear: Zhao also firmly opposed the eunuchs. According to "The Biography of Zhao Qi" in the Houhanshu, Zhao Qi's original name was Jia, with the style name Binqing (卿); it was only in his later

exile that he changed his name. He named himself Qi, and, as he was born in the Censorate (御史臺), he styled himself Taiping (臺卿). Zhao had been a child prodigy and versatile writer,²⁸ as was Wen. All these coincidences served for Wen as a direct inspiration to adopt Zhao's name as his own, with the implication that as a man of rectitude, he was opposed to the eunuchs.

What Li Shangyin's Poem Reveals

Since Wen for a time changed his name to Qi, it is likely that he also gave himself a new style name corresponding to the new name Qi. We have indeed found some records indicative of Wen's style-name other than Feiqing, in a poem of Li Shangyin, Wen's intimate friend. The following is the poem:

Yearning for Zaimeng Feiqing

(有»吃諉煞汕ă, Yuxisheng Shiji Jianzhu, 2: 524)

Frequently transferring with your minor posts with diseases,	薄宦頻移疾,
Formerly for long you lived in oblivion and isolation.	當年久索居.
Your grief resembles that of Area Commander Yu [Xin],	哀同庾開府,
And your emaciation is as that of Minister Shen [Yue].	瘦盡沈尚書. ²⁹
The city is green with new shades of distant [trees],	城綠新陰遠,
The River is pure and the afterglow is faint.	江清反照虛.
To express my yearning, I resort only to my brush and ink,	所思惟翰墨,
Following the ancient model I look forward to a pair of carp.	從古待雙魚. ³⁰

²⁸ As shown in our Bibliography, Zhao Qi's Correct Meanings to Mencius is the earliest authoritative annotation to Mencius that is still extant and intact.

²⁹ Yu Xin's (513-81) last official post is Area Commander. One of his most famous works is "Lament for the South of the River" (哀江南賦). See Wenyuan Yinghua, 129: 590. Minister Shen refers to Shen Yue (441-513), who in one of his essays complained that his waist was growing thinner. See LS, 13: 236.

The title of the poem is somewhat problematic. In his annotation, the Qing dynasty scholar Feng Hao (1719-1801) quoted Beimeng Suoyan with some uncertainty:

Wen Tingyun is styled Feiqing. Some say "Yun" (雲) should be "Yun" (筠), [and his] style [should be] Zaimeng (溫庭雲, 字飛卿; 或 雲作筠, 字在蒙)....It cannot be ascertained (無考).³¹

But in any version of Beimeng Suoyan (juan 10) extant today, the text that corresponds to the above-cited passage reads:

Wen Tingyun is styled Feiqing. Some say "Yun" (雲) should be "Yun" (筠), [and his] style...original name should be Qi (溫庭雲, 字飛卿; 或 雲作筠, 字舊名岐).

Besides Li's poem, the Beimeng Suoyan text Feng Hao quoted is the only source available to us that documents that Wen has anything to do with Zaimeng. Feng Hao lived earlier than we, and he may have seen a version of Beimeng Suoyan that is not available to us. Compared to the passage Feng quoted, the present versions of Beimeng Suoyan have some key characters missing, which results in the ungrammaticality of the sentence. With these missing characters reinserted, we will have a restored text as follows:

Wen Tingyun is styled Feiqing. Some say "Yun" should be "Yun," [and his] style name [should be] Zaimeng, while his original name is Qi (溫庭雲, 字飛卿; 或 雲作筠, 字在蒙, 舊名岐).

Such is the original text of Beimeng Suoyan, valuable even though it contains mistakes. In trying to explain the title of Li's poem, we must not commit the blunder of taking "Meng"

³⁰ "Pair of carp" is a kenning for letters, alludes to "Watering My Horse in the Pool of the Great Wall" (飲馬長城窟): "The guest coming from afar \ Bestows on me a pair of carp\... and find a one foot letter of silk. See Wenxuan, 27: 389.

³¹ See Gu Xujie Wenxue Lunji, 194. Reasoning that one cannot call a friend by combining his old and new style names, Gu thought Zaimeng must be the style of someone else.

as a place name.³² Likewise, to suppose Zaimeng to be the style of another person proves to be untenable. We agree with the Beimeng Suoyan record, and take Zaimeng as Wen's style. Feng Hao's comment on it ("It cannot be ascertained") only serves to suggest once more that Zaimeng is not the style of any other person, but a style name that matches Qi. The Beimeng Suoyan record cannot be totally groundless, but it must have its earlier sources and contains many grains of truth.

How can "Zaimeng" be understood as matching Qi? Starting from the most frequently-used meaning of the character *meng*--to be covered (with something from light or justice) or to suffer, we reach its ultimate definition--as one of the names of Divination of the Eight Diagrams (八卦). In fact, it is from this definition that the most frequently-used meaning of Meng is derived and the phrase "Zaimeng" acquires its complex but suggestive connotations: that of being endangered or frustrated, but still in hope of turning the corner by surmounting all difficulties.

If we understand Zaimeng in the title of the poem as another style-name that Wen adopted, grammatically it is apposite to Feiqing; that is, both Zaimeng and Feiqing address the same person. At that, the meaning of Zaimeng is rendered immediately transparent, as is the title of the poem. Feiqing has the literal meaning of "an honorable man in flight" or "a man of soaring ambition." Addressing Wen as Zaimeng-Feiqing is equivalent to calling him a frustrated man of soaring ambition, who resembled a bright pearl thrown into darkness, a swan pinioned and no longer able to soar on high. In such familiar banter we can sense the intimacy and sympathy of a bosom friend. There are, indeed, no precedents for addressing a friend using the old and new style-names together, but neither is there any reason to believe

³² It is a dead end to understand "Meng" as a name of place, because not only were there too many places in China with identical names, but the poem does not imply any information about a place. There are scholars such as Wang Dajin who try to identify the place, but fail, see Wang's essay in Nankai Daxue Xuebao.

that Li Shangyin could not contrive to do so.

A careful reading of the poem itself, which has much to do with its title, supports this inference. The poem expresses Li's deep concern for Wen, and attests to the depth of friendship between the two most talented and unlucky poets of their time. Most noteworthy is how Li's poem strictly keeps to the title words line by line, a basic requirement for the composition of any Chinese classic poem.

In the first couplet, Li expresses his compassion and understanding (*youhuai*, 有懷) for the injustices and hardship Wen suffered, both in his present official transfers and in his former lonely reclusion (*zaimeng*, 在蒙). He then focuses on Wen's poetic endowments in relation to his personal feelings (*youhuai*, 有懷), likening Wen to Yu Xin and Shen Yue, both most brilliant poets (*feiqing*, 飛卿) in adversity (*zaimeng*, 在蒙). Next, in a symbolic depiction of the scene Li remembers Wen with longing (有懷), blocked as they are from each other (在蒙). In the last couplet, longing becomes yearning for Wen's letter (有懷).

The above explanation of Li's poem does no more than explain it in the manner that Li composed it: starting (起)--entering into the topic; proceeding (承)--further elaborating the connotations of the topic; turning (轉)--shifting to another aspect of interest intrinsic to the topic; responding (和)--eliciting the poetic conclusion, the emphasis throughout is to explore the implication of the title: Li's yearning for a frustrated talent (*zaimeng*), who is a kindred spirit (*feiqing*). These feelings expressed in the poem are clearly addressed to one person, and one person only--Wen Tingyun. Li plays with the meanings of Wen's two style-names, which encapsulate the ambivalent quality of Wen's official career with its lofty ambition and long-lasting adversity. The phrasing of the title is redolent of Li's poetic style and his profound friendship with Wen. We therefore reject the hypothesis that the poem might address two persons at the same time.

Wen's Names and Style Names

Comparing the records in the Beimeng Suoyan with those of the two Tang Histories, we raise the following questions:

- (1) Is Wen's name Tingyun (庭雲) or Tingyun (庭筠)?
- (2) Is his style name Feiqing (飛卿) or Zaimeng (在蒙) or both?
- (3) What is Wen's original name?

Before attempting answers, we must understand how Chinese literati had a name matched with a style name. This practice began about the era of Emperor Wudi of Han (r. 140-87 BC). The name (名), or taboo (諱), was something to be avoided when addressing its bearer. Instead, the style name, or the courtesy name [literally *expressing character(s)*, 表字], was used in place of the name when addressing the person politely. Thus the style name expressed the meaning of the name while avoiding the inconvenience of directly addressing a person by his name. Depending on different eras and aesthetic tastes, the ways people matched name with style-name differed. More often than not, people could make some changes in their own name or style-name, for whatever reason.

We may first concentrate on the second question, and try to find out what Wen's style-name should be, Feiqing or Zaimeng, to match with his given name Tingyun or Qi. Once this question is answered, the others can be readily solved.

Qi and Zaimeng: Name and Style-name

Since "Feiqing" means "a man of soaring ambition," that is, one who can fly as high as the clouds (*yun*, 雲), it does "express" the meaning of "*yun*" in a way. Similarly, the name-character *yun* (筠) is a synecdoche for the bamboo, which, with its strong joints (節, a homonym for moral integrity), can also grow as high as the clouds and symbolizes the lofty moral principle of noble men; it is a more elegant and implied meaning for "Feiqing" to convey. Therefore, between the style name Feiqing and either of the two homonymic characters *yun*³³ (regardless of their different meanings), there exist solid semantic connections. We have no reason to reject either.

As to Zaimeng, the case becomes different. There is no meaning whatsoever in it that has

³³ Their Tang pronunciations are identical, see Karlgren's dictionary, 108.

to do with *yun* in either form. The only possibility left is that it is a style-name for Wen's changed name, Qi, if it is a style-name at all. Feng Hao already involuntarily suggested that *Zaimeng* is Wen's style-name. But before we can agree, we must provide a convincing proof of this assumption.

Actually, the compound expression *Zaimeng* does occur, though extremely rarely. What is most fascinating is that it appears in the "Rhapsody On the Meng Spring",³⁴ by none other but Li Cheng, Wen's beloved teacher. There we can trace its original meaning and uncover the basic clue as to why Wen chose it as his style-name:

At the foot of the Eastern Mountain, there is a Meng Spring. It has no good fortune to devote itself to irrigation, but boasts its freshness and transparency in vain. (蒙彼東山, 山下有泉. 運未逢于茨澮, 色空濟于澄鮮). Empty and bright, it is like a mirror; lucid and clear, it is simply itself (虛明可鑒, 澹泊自然). It's good to be accustomed to Kan as its virtue, and why should it stop in front of Gen and go no further (宜習坎以爲德, 胡止艮而莫前 ³⁵...Moreover, were it silted up, it would stop, while when it is dredged, it flows through (且夫壅則止, 理則通). It can go either farther or nearer, regardless of whether it flows west or east (能致遠邇, 任決西東). With the balance of the four seasons' breezes, it possesses in silence its pretty algae (荷四氣之平均, 潛生麗藻); subject to coverings of overlapping gloom,

³⁴ See QTW, 632: 8103. There is a Meng Spring in Jingmen, Hubei Province, however, the rhapsody focuses on its symbolic nature, so does its title.

³⁵ Both Kan (坎, ䷜) and Gen (艮, ䷳) are one of the eight trigrams of the *Yijing*. The two constitute image of Meng, one of the 64 hexagrams, with Gen, the mountain, in the upper and Kan, the water, at bottom. Kan is the symbol of danger, while Gen, of keeping away from the danger. This line informs the Meng Spring with the personality of a noble man in distress, as is the basic point of "The Attached Words" (易系辭) to the Meng Divination in *The Book of Changes*. See *Zhouyi*, 1: 20.

it was blocked from a pure air (處重陰而蒙蔽, 尚阻清風)....All others have to depend on people and ask favors from them, only this spring remains intact in its existence of "*meng*" (彼皆因人而有托, 此獨居然而在蒙).

This rhapsody is a profound representation of Li Cheng's philosophy, and his feelings about how to deal with but not to mix with the corrupt world. Li did this by means of *yongwu* (咏物). That is, personifying the Meng Spring as an ideal character who retains his lofty virtue in defiance of the hardship and dangers of life. This passage brims over with the wisdom of The Book of Changes. Its first sentence alludes to the following remarks:

Meng: A danger presents itself at the foot of the mountain. To face the danger and stop, that is Meng (蒙, 山下有險, 險而止, 蒙). A spring wells up at the foot of the mountain; that is Meng. Thus the superior man fosters his character by thoroughness in all that he does (...山下出泉, 蒙. 君子以果行育德).³⁶

These remarks illuminate the fundamental purport of Li Cheng's rhapsody, especially the term Zaimeng. As Wang Bi explained the term Meng: "If one retreats, he will fall into a dire straits; if he advances, the mountain is blocking his way, and one is at a loss as to where to go--such is the meaning of Meng." Therefore, Zaimeng means to be in the state of being Meng, that is, finding it difficult either to go ahead or to retreat. It also means that, even in such a plight, a noble man can be at ease, with his personality intact. We suggest that such were the meanings of the term Zaimeng Wen had in mind when he adopted it as his style-name. He borrowed the term from Li Cheng, as a token of his admiration for his teacher and his tenacity of purpose under political pressures.

This example provides a case in point for our further reflection. When investigating Wen's secret attendance upon the Heir Apparent, we found out that Li Cheng was Wen's teacher. Now we see in Wen's behavior the influence of his teacher. If the courses we are pursuing

³⁶ See *Zhouyi*, 1: 20. Wang Bi's explanation is on the same page. For the translation, see Wilhelm, Book of Changes, 20-1.

concerning Wen's life did not accord with what happened in history, we would not be so fortunate as to uncover interconnected facts of the puzzle such as this.

Now we turn to the meaning of *qi* (岐, the crossing point of a forked road) that Wen used as his changed name.

In "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" (p. 64), we read:

In my laments and sighs I felt melancholy as did Yang Zhu. 悲嘆似楊朱.

and in "The Boshan Censer" (p. 208), we again read:

I hear say that Yang Zhu had no end of tears, 見說楊朱無限泪,

In both cases Wen avails himself of the allusion to Yang Zhu, who "wept on coming to the forked road (岐路), for it could lead both south and north." Here we must see Yang Zhu as more than the embodiment of a frustrated Wen Tingyun; it is suggestive in that Yang Zhu's tears were shed on the "forked road" (岐路) that literally contains the very character Wen used for his changed name, *qi* (岐). In Wen's expression, Yang Zhu's weeping is not only a symbol of his political frustration in general, but it points directly to the causes and effects of his change of name, which marked the climax of his troubles. Substituting *qi* for "forked" [road], the poetic implication of the couplet became doubly rich.³⁷ Now we see, the character *qi*, besides being Zhao Qi's name, has connotations that tally with those of *meng* couched in The Book of Changes. We cannot but conclude that Qi and Zaimeng as name and style-name are in the full sense an ideal pair.

Wen adopted Zaimeng as his style name, to match his name Qi. The name and the style name bring into relief each other's connotations: even under the power and the hot pursuit of the eunuchs, Wen would never admit defeat. As shown in the above examples, Wen's distress was always linked with his political experiences (his frustration under the eunuch power)

³⁷ Another example of Wen's using *qi* as a pun on his name is found in his "My Feelings On Returning to the East" (東歸有懷, j. 8, WFQ): "No end of tears for a high autumn \ On my small skiff I come to the end of the forked way" (無限高秋淚, 扁舟極路岐).

such as the Heir Apparent Incident and his performances in the examinations. We also recall the accounts of Tongxin and Beimeng Suoyan--that it was because Wen was whipped that he changed his name. These are not totally reliable, but they suggest that Wen's change of name also had something to do with the Jianghuai Incident. In a word, Wen's name change is linked with all his past political experiences and would influence his future life career.

Yun (筠) and *Yun* (雲): Supplementary Evidence

It is also in Li Cheng's works that we find something that goes to the root of the account in Tongxin.

Tongxin asserts that Wen's original name was Qi, and the name-change from Qi to Tingyun (庭雲) resulted from a whipping by his senior relatives (p.133). This account certainly departs from the historical truth. But its earnest argument that "other books" should call Wen as Tingyun (庭雲) instead of Tingyun (庭筠) poses a question with all seriousness: which is the right name? The solution of this question will provide us a supplementary historical truth.

As our analysis above demonstrates, the two characters *yun* (雲) and *yun* (筠), besides being homonymous, both match with the style-name Feiqing. As it is, there is nothing in the shape or literal meanings of the two characters that would cause them to be confused with each other, thus we cannot impute the discrepancy to the error of block-printings during the circulation of Wen's works. Nor is it likely that contemporary writers just invented the name on Wen's behalf. No. Such a subtle name choice could only have been Wen's own, just like the name and style-name Qi and Zaimeng.

Passed as the first candidate in the twelfth year of Zhenyuan (796), Li Cheng had composed during the examination a poem and a rhapsody both of which were entitled "The

Bamboo-Arrow Has Its Cuticle" (竹箭有筠).³⁸ From the latter we read:

People observing the rites, is just like the bamboo-arrow having its cutis (喻人守禮, 如竹有筠)....If only it has its constant nature, the hardy bamboo fears no shifts of the seasons; never changing his mind, a man of virtue is always concerned about keeping the Way (苟常其性, 寒竹何患于時移; 不易其心, 志士常懷于道在). The bamboo cannot protect its joints (節) without its cuticle, nor can people be established as the model of the time by abandoning the rites (竹無筠不能固其節, 人舍禮何以法于時). The wise teachings of the former sages are the lasting lessons for the generations to come (伊先哲之善喻, 作後代之元龜)....When it springs up as a shoot, it has already a protective sheath enveloping its body; when its sparse stalks grow, as expected, it towers above the cloud in due time (苞本之時, 已包周身之防; 疏莖之勢, 更叶凌雲之期)....Therefore we know that my observing ritual resembles my having disciples; and the bamboo having the cuticle is just like my having my skin... (是知禮之于己, 如我有徒; 筠之于竹, 如我有膚).

The whole of Li's rhapsody focuses on the key word *yun* (筠), with *li* (禮) as its motif. Personified as a noble man, the bamboo-arrow with its cuticle has a sense of honor and shame. The cuticle of the bamboo (筠) offers protection to its joints. In like manner, the rites enable the noble man to protect his own rectitude. The bamboo shoot's armor-like envelope is emblematic of the wisdom of a noble man to protect himself in the chaos of the time, while the lonely and straight pole towering above the clouds is symbolic of the worthy achieving

³⁸ This title alludes to the following: "[The vessel for performing the rites] to the people is like the cutis to the bamboo pole, and the heart [that fears no cold] to the pine and the cypress" (其在人也, 如竹箭之有筠也; 如松柏之有心也). See *Liji*, 23: 1430. "Bamboo-arrow" was name of reputed bamboo pole; *yun* (筠), here designates the shiny cuticle of the bamboo pole, hence its more general, synecdochic use for bamboo. For Li's rhapsody, see QTW, 632: 8109.

their ambitions. Finally, Li concludes that the cuticle (筠) has more importance to the bamboo than do the rites to himself, by comparing the former with his having skin, and the latter with having disciples. Skin, of course, is more indispensable than disciples. It is just here that we discover why Wen took *yun* as his name--he must be a student on particularly close terms with Li Cheng.

It is clear that Wen took all the meanings of "*yun*" in Li's rhapsody when making a revision in his name. Such a habit of substituting a homonym for one's existing name persists even today in China and cannot be taken as a formal change of name. Though we do not know the exact time Wen did this, it must have been some time after he became Li's student. Considering that *yun* (雲) was also well-known to some extent, the substitution of *yun* (筠) could not have been made too early in Wen's life. Anyway, in deference to Wen's own decision, we will call him Wen Tingyun (溫庭筠).

We are already well-informed about Wen's final failure to pass. Throughout, it was just the power of the eunuchs that thwarted his plans and spoiled his chances time and again. The official histories fail to be veritable records about many important affairs involving these eunuchs. By comparison, miscellaneous notes and anecdotes, in works such as Yuquanzi, Tongxin and Beimeng Suoyan, biased though they be, can contain grains of truth, if examined with a discriminating historical approach. With this in mind, we have reexamined some of them and will restudy others in the pages that follow.

How "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" Reviews the Whole Event

Hidden References to the Eunuchs (rhymes 75-85)

75 My yearning for home, a branch-nesting bird,
The passage of time, a crevice-crossing horse.

鄉思巢枝鳥，
年華過隙駒。³⁹

³⁹ "A branch-nesting bird" alludes to a line of the first of "The Nineteen Ancient Poems:" "The Tartar horse is attached to the northern wind \ And the Yue bird nests on a southward branch" (胡馬依北風，越鳥巢南枝，Wenxuan, 29: 409). A "crevice-crossing horse"

- 76 Harboring gratitude [to emperors] I vainly accompany my shadow, 銜恩空抱影,
 I have no chance to devote myself to repay the imperial grace. 酬德未捐軀.
 77 Among my compeers I've been honored as a good friend, 時輩推良友,
 Of my pedigree I have carried on an honest fame 家聲繼令圖.
 78 I grieve my wings were too short to find me a position, 致身傷短翮,
 You, with raised head, looked back at me, a worn-out horse. 驤首顧疲驚⁴⁰

Many years passed in vain, while Wen's dream to serve his country and to "repay" his indebtedness to the imperial clan remained unrealized. A social literary man with an honest family fame, Wen failed because of his political background and his honest personality.

- 79 Now Ban and Sima are galloping forth together, 班馬方齊驚,
 While Chen and Lei are, also, driving neck and neck. 陳雷亦并驅.⁴¹
 80 In the past each of you told his wishes, 昔皆言爾志,
 By now, I likewise regard my disciples with awe. 今亦畏吾徒.⁴²

is a term derived from the ancient saying "The passing of a man's lifetime is as swift as a white colt [the sun] crossing a crevice [in the clouds]."

⁴⁰ "Short wings" is a metaphor for lacking the means to advance in the official echelon. "Raised head" (of horse or dragon) is a metaphor for those who "go before on the way", namely, Wen's friends to whom the poem is addressed.

⁴¹ Ban [Gu] (班固, 32-92) and Sima [Qian] (司馬遷, ?-145 BC), both great historiographers, refer to some friends to whom Wen addressed his poem to, so are Lei [Yi] (雷義) and Chen [Zhong] (陳重). When Lei was recommended as an Excellent Talent, he yielded the honor to Chen. Hence the ballad: "Glue and varnish are closely attached to each other, but less solid than are Lei and Chen" (膠漆自謂堅, 不如雷與陳). See HHS, 81: 2686-7.

⁴² This line alludes to *Lunyu*, 9: 2451: "The Master said: Those born later than I are to be regarded with awe. How can I know that their future will not be equal to my present?" For the translation, see Legge, *The Four Books*, 118-9.

- 81 The energy I possess to Altair and Plough can soar, 有氣干牛斗,
But where is the man to know the Lulu sword? 無人辨轆轤.⁴³

Most of Wen's peers, either classmates under the same teacher, or his own students, were pushing forward in their official career, but nobody in power could really appreciate Wen. The crux of the problem is implied in the lines that follow:

- 82 Coming as guest, I poured the green-ant, 來斟綠蟻,
Trying for a wife, I trod on the blue-beetles. 妻試踏青蚨.
83 By incessant aspersions, even [flesh and] bones are destroyed, 積毀方銷骨,
And I fear that a slight blemish would spoil the whole gem. 微瑕懼掩瑜.

As we have pointed out (p. 148), he squandered his money to ransom the singer and married her. He then had to face the consequences of his marriage, opprobrium from orthodox literati and the calumnies of eunuchs. Wen confessed that the marriage was for him like a "slight blemish" that obscures the splendor of the whole gem, which is to say that rumors spread by the eunuchs would spoil his official career thoroughly. Here Wen attributes his failure to the Jianghuai Incident, but ever since he entered society, he had never succeeded in freeing himself from the eunuchs' ubiquitous influence.

- 84 As the snake-spears are still involved in shifting wars, 蛇矛猶轉戰,
"The [one in]fish disguise" is in detainment and thrall. 魚服自囚拘.⁴⁴
85 By such tricks they intended to delude the world, 欲就欺人事,

⁴³ 轆轤, name of precious sword. See JS, 36: 1068. c.f., p. 54-5, note 53.

⁴⁴ The snake-spear, spear with a spiral head like a snake, is here a synecdoche for the Tang armed forces. "Fish disguise" alludes to the "Rhapsody of the Eastern Capital" (東京賦) by Zhang Heng (張衡, 78-139): "A white dragon in the disguise of fish, is harassed by Yu Ju" (白龍魚服, 見困豫且). See *Wenxuan*, 3: 66; the dragon refers here to Wenzong.

But how can the ghost's execution be dodged?

何能這鬼誅。⁴⁵

The military satraps were recalcitrant and the Tang state army had to fight them. Emperor Wenzong was under virtual house-arrest. These facts are consequences of the eunuchs' seizure of the state power and show how the eunuchs were bringing affairs in the Tang empire into political crisis. Such is Wen's indignant accusation: though *they* might succeed in deluding the world, how could they evade the retribution of the ghosts?

To sum up, frustrated as he was, Wen had not lost his political nerve and verve. He attributed all his failures to, and aimed his veiled attacks at the eunuchs, showing a laudable political courage and insight.

The Consequence: Political Refuge in the South

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 86 Between right and wrong--waking or dreaming, I was confused, | 是非迷覺夢, |
| From Qin to Wu, I planned a travel. | 行役議秦吳. |
| 87 In the piercing cold the wind was wailing, | 凜冽風埃慘, |
| In the desolation, plants were withered. | 蕭條草木枯. |
| 88 Reluctant departure made me heartbroken, | 低回傷志氣, |
| Braving the cold, my skin and flesh were frostbitten. | 蒙犯變肌膚. |
| 89 Only the cries of migrating wild geese were heard, | 旅雁唯聞叫, |
| A hungry falcon came to me without being called. | 饑鷹不待呼. |
| 90 The shuttle of my dream was hastened like the cries of crickets, | 夢梭拋促織, ⁴⁶ |
| The cocoon of my yearning heart was modeled on those of spiders. | 心繭學蜘蛛. |

Wen knew there was no way to justify himself, since right and wrong were all mixed up.

⁴⁵ The ghost's execution: It was said that one who does something evil openly will be executed by man; and who does evil clandestinely, by ghosts. See "Gengsang Chu" of *Zhuangzi*; for the translation, see Legge, *The Text of Taoism*, 83.

⁴⁶ The cricket's chirping is believed to sound like hastening weaving on the loom (促織).

On his way back from Chang'an to Wu in the piercing cold, he was downcast. He grieved over his unsteady life, and was impatient for a chance to serve his country. Thoughts crowded into his dreams and made him sleepless. Despite his knowledge of what was happening behind-the-scenes, he had to imitate the spider and enveloped his heart in a cocoon--the basic cause of this poem's uniquely dense and ambiguous language.

- 91 How can *their* tricks, again, be hard to foresee? 寧復機難料?
 But wasn't such petty faith too trifling to be trusted? 庸非信未孚?⁴⁷
 92 Furious and wild, I'm a tiger shot by an arrow, 激揚銜箭虎,
 In doubt and fear, I'm a fox listening on the ice. 疑懼聽冰狐.

In addition to anonymously querying the eunuchs--are not your tricks like that of Sima Zhao, known even to any nonchalant passengers?--Wen directed an undefined criticism at some one individual: isn't such petty faith too trifling to be trusted? Very possibly, Wen's involvement in the inner court struggles might have had something to do with the political susceptibility of the new emperor Wuzong. By all accounts Wen was infuriated at the eunuchs' dirty tricks, but he had to be on his guard against further harm from them. A wounded tiger or suspicious fox, such is the portrait he painted of himself.

- 93 For saving myself, I will dig one more burrow, 處己將營窟,
 Such is my heart that tallies with that of the sage. 論心若合符.
 94 Don't say that I am in my "brother's" grace, 浪言輝棣萼,

⁴⁷ After having grasped all power at the Wei court, Sima Zhao (司馬昭, 211-265), adopting the ploy of the Wei dynasty founder and Han usurper Cao Cao, let his son become emperor instead of himself. His plan was known even to any passers-by. See SGZ, 4: 144. 信未孚, Alludes to "Duke Zhuang the Tenth Year", in *Zuozhuan*, 8: 1767. The Duke of Lu said that in his sacrificial rites, he never dared reduce his offerings. But Cao Gui (曹蒯) said that such petty faith was too trifling to be trusted or blessed by the spirits.

Where can a remote kinsman like me entrust his life?	何所托葭莖? ⁴⁸
95 From a tall tree the oriole can [carol to] seek for friends,	喬木能求友,
In a dilapidated nest, the owl had best not scare the phoenix.	危巢莫嚇雛. ⁴⁹
96 I'd rather assume a lofty demeanor as a leading figure,	風華飄領袖,
Than bow to shirt and skirt with the Poetry and Rites.	詩禮拜衾襦. ⁵⁰

⁴⁸ 棣萼, The calycle of *Di*, *Prunus Japonica*, is a metaphor for brotherhood, and alludes to "Changdi" (常棣), in *Maoshi*, 2: 408-9 and Waley, no. 194. The thin white coating inside the tube-like stalk of the reed is called 葭莖, which is used as a metaphor for distant relatives; Wen possibly hints here at his distant relations with the imperial clan.

⁴⁹ 喬木求友, Alludes to "Felling the Tree" (伐木), in *Maoshi*, 9: 410-2 and Waley, no. 195: "Coming out a calm dale \ moving to a tall tree \ The oriole is caroling \ To seek the response of his friend" (出于幽谷, 遷于喬木. 鶯其鳴矣, 求其友聲), hinting that Wen had made many politically successful friends. 危巢, A dilapidated nest, is a metaphor for the precarious fame and wealth many desired to get. 嚇雛, To scare the phoenix, alludes to the *Zhuangzi*: An owl got a dead rat; when the phoenix came by, the owl looked upward at him and cried "he" (嚇) to frighten it away. See Legge, *The Text of Taoism*, 391.

⁵⁰ 領袖 Collar and sleeve, the main parts of a robe, hence its derivative meaning "leader;" here both meanings, concrete and abstract, are implied. The archaic form of 裙 (*qun*) is , which is easily confused with 衾; hence, 衾襦, should have been 裙襦, which alludes to "Waiwu" of *Zhuangzi*; see *The Texts of Taoism*, 134-5: The Confucianists sack tombs with [what they learn in] *The Book of Songs* and *The Book of Rites*: The major Confucian spoke down: "Day is breaking in the east, how is our business going on?" The minor Confucian answered: Not yet take off the shirt and skirt, but there is a pearl in the mouth, as is said in *The Book of Songs*: "Green, green is the wheat \ growing on the slope of the hill \ When alive offered nothing for the relief \ why after death keep in mouth a

Faced with a critical situation, Wen had to prepare for himself more than one means for survival. His retreat, he declares here, tallied with the Sage's teachings. He knew better than to ignore such a common-sense way of self-protection. When in need, however, neither his "brothers" nor his relatives could help him. Though he failed, Wen had kept a good reputation among those who really knew him. Likening himself to a phoenix that unwittingly scares the owl at its rotten rat, Wen was declaring to the political speculators that he was above vying for fame and wealth. As a first-rate writer of his time, Wen had his own peculiar insight, and the way he chose to behave was sometimes contrary to the hypocritical teachings of orthodox Confucianism. Toward them, Wen showed a kind of doubt and irony, as often reflected in the text of *Zhuangzi*.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 97 When I recline on pillows, my feelings are immensely bitter, | 欹枕情何苦, |
| In the same boat, how can their Way differ from mine? | 同舟道豈殊。 |
| 98 Let me abandon myself to caressing melilotus and angelica, | 放懷親蕙芷, |
| Though my retirement is not at the "mulberry and elm" year. | 收迹勞桑榆。 ⁵¹ |
| 99 As a gift to my distant friends, I'll break off a willow twig, | 贈遠聊攀柳, ⁵² |
| And to make a letter I will cut the bulrushes. | 裁書欲截蒲。 |
| 100 Gazing into the air with endless tears, | 瞻風無限泪, |
| I turn my head back, even more hesitant. | 回首更踟躕。 |

The more Wen thought about his failure, the more he wondered why people in the same boat could have different Ways, and why somebody had turned against him by divulging the

pearl (儒以詩禮發冢。大儒臚傳曰: "東方作矣, 事之何若?" 小儒曰: "未解裙襦, 口中有珠。詩固有之曰: 青青之麥, 生于陵陂。生不布施, 死何含珠?")。

⁵¹ 蕙 and 芷, melilotus and angelica, are fragrant herbs frequently referred to in *Lisao*, here used to represent the reclusive life. 桑榆, a metaphoric term for the evening of life.

⁵² To snap a willow twig and send it to a parting friend is an old Chinese custom. "Cutting the rushes" is an alternate for setting pen to paper.

"secret" of his name change. Now, though not yet in his old age, he had to return to his old reclusive way of life. At the last, Wen expresses his affection for his friends and his reluctance to leave, looking back at Chang'an in tears.

After a painful reflection of the causes and consequences concerning his failure, Wen still had his anger and pride and, of course, his sorrow and distress. For the time being, however, he had to return to the south, quitting the political arena altogether.

We must stress repeatedly: there is one constant factor underlying all of Wen's frustrations: the deliberate persecution imposed on him by the eunuchs. The most important factor that drove Wen into political refuge was, again, their hostile influence. Emperor Wuzong mounted the throne during the terror of a palace coup launched by the eunuchs. To guarantee his right as a legitimate emperor, he, once enthroned, would follow the eunuchs' advice of his own will. That is why, without any hesitation, he executed Worthy Consort Yang, Prince An and Prince Chen shortly after his ascension. It is easy to imagine that Emperor Wuzong simply could not show any favor to Wen, who had assisted the late Heir, all the more so because Wen pledged allegiance to the latter.

From another perspective, the ups and downs of Wen's political career can, to some degree, be taken as a barometer of the struggles between eunuchs and court officials on the one hand, and the Niu and the Li Factions on the other. For example, the Heir Apparent's death was a result of the court officials' failure in their rivalry with the eunuchs; at the same time, the death evinces that the Niu had gained the upper hand over the Li Faction. By the same token, Wen's failure was a part and parcel of the Li Faction's failure in its struggle against the eunuchs, since it was mainly this group that had supported Wen in his effort to pass the examination. During this process, however, in order to meet the demands of the changed situation, the eunuchs had helped the Lis come to full power at the expense of the Nius. Therefore, at the same time when the Lis were losing the war against the eunuchs, they were winning a battle over the Niu Faction. For all that Wen sided with the Lis, the latter

could not help him when coming to power, because it would not be wise to promote such a politically sensitive figure and entail the risk of offending the eunuchs.

Therefore, throughout the Huichang era (841-6), Wen could not try his hand at any civil service examination. Confining himself to the Wu and Yue regions, he might have found some minor local post, or else lived a semi-reclusive life on his inherited estates. For him this was a period of political hibernation, during which he had never forgotten his youthful dreams. His whereabouts during this period, however, are not a central concern of this dissertation.

Chapter Eight Highlights in the Dazhong Era

Renewed Efforts at the Dragon Gate

A New Situation

Wen did not return to the capital until the end of the Huichang era,¹ when Emperor Xuanzong (宣宗, r. 847-60, not to be confused with the emperor of Kaiyuan and Tianbao, r. 712-56) ascended the throne, with the "support" of the eunuchs.

A son of Emperor Xianzong and an uncle of both Wenzong and Wuzong, Emperor Xuanzong cherished a bitter hatred against Wuzong for the oppression and humiliation he had suffered from him. In addition, he harbored the utmost loathing for Li Deyu, the powerful Prime Minister throughout Wuzong's reign and leader of the Li Faction. The Huichang era was remarkable for its military feats and civil successes, which paved the way for the last period of relative stability of the Tang Empire. However, while benefiting himself from what had been achieved by his predecessors, Emperor Xuanzong purposely abandoned most of the important policies pursued in the Huichang era and implemented a set of measures of his own. One of the results was that those who formerly could not take the civil service examination at all, such as Wen, now faced more favorable circumstances. Most conspicuously, Xuanzong offered particular patronage for the recruitment of Presented Scholars,² according to the *Beilizhi* (1: 2) by the Tang author Sun Qi:

The Dazhong Emperor was fond of Confucian statecraft, and he set the greatest

¹ Wen has "A Song for the Bingyin Harvest Year of Huichang" (會昌丙寅豐歲歌. j. 2, WFQ), written near the capital in the Bingyin year (846).

² According to Wang Tang: *Tangyulin* (4:134), he called himself a "Local Tribute Presented Scholar" (鄉貢進士) and inscribed the title on a pillar in his palace.

store by the civil service examination. As a result, the degree of Presented Scholar became popular on an unprecedented scale (大中皇帝好儒術, 特重科第. 故進士此道尤盛, 曠古無儔).

Thus there appeared a glimmer of hope for Wen to remount the "dragon's gate." However, the policies Emperor Xuanzong adopted were in no way a rehabilitation of his case. Despite a drastic change in the political balance within the decision-making circle, one of the most important obstacles--the eunuchs' bitter hostility--remained as powerful and persistent as before, and prevented him from passing.

As a consequence of Xuanzong's ascension, the Niu Faction took its final turn in full power in place of the Li Faction, while the eunuchs' power remained as stable as ever before. In dealing with them, the Niu Faction, too, had to exercise extreme caution. Seen from the perspective of the factional conflicts, the new state of affairs was hardly any better for Wen's political prospects than the old one. Despite his constant efforts at campaigning for patronage, as a politically sensitive figure, Wen could please neither Faction. Nor was it easy to make any headway in the narrow political space between the factions. Put in his own words (Epistle Presented to the Vice-Minister, Salt and Iron Commissioner), Wen was in such an awkward situation:

I, with the common quality of cogongrass and reeds, and from a debased stock like that of Zhu or Teng, have given up a life of ploughing and weeding in my humble town, and come to observe the rites and music in the Metropolitan capital (某菅蒯凡姿, 邾滕陋族,³ 釋耕耘于下邑, 觀禮樂于中都).

³ According to *Zuozhuan*, 26: 1906, "Duke Cheng the Ninth Year": "Although you have owned silk and hemp, don't throw away cogongrass and reed" (雖有絲麻, 無弃菅蒯). "Cogongrass and reeds" (菅蒯) are both wild grasses used for their tough fibre, which can serve as a stopgap for silk and hemp; the term is hence a metaphor for Wen himself in his

In Wen's metaphor, to earn official standing in the aristocratic society and between the contending factions is something like a small feudal state such as Zhu or Teng maintaining a precarious existence between the contending powers of Qi and Chu. For all his remaining family influence and his good relationships with some figures in office, Wen's efforts had hardly any effect. In fact, as far as the factional struggles were concerned, Wen subordinated himself to neither group, though he had to appeal from time to time for help from members of both. And even though more than once he enlisted the support of (or more exactly, was made use of by) one faction, to his dismay, it was often done at the expense of offending someone on the opposite side, nullifying his endeavor. This is a second cause of Wen's repeated failures.

Nevertheless, Wen's efforts were not entirely fruitless. It took him more than ten years before he finally "succeeded" in earning himself a mere and bare Presented Scholar degree, after having taken an extremely tortuous path.

From Wen's epistles presented to various ministers during the Dazhong era, letters such as his "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Linghu", "Two Epistles Presented to Vice-Minister Jiang", "Epistle Presented to Minister Feng", "Epistle Presented to the Vice-Minister, Salt and Iron Commissioner", "Epistle Presented to Secretary Du" and "Epistles Presented to the Prime Minister",⁴ we can obtain a full picture of Wen's unremitting

unemployed state. And in *Zuozhuan*, 38: 1996, "Duke Xiang the Twenty-Seventh Year", we read: "The messenger of Viscount Jiwu told Gongsun assuming the behest of the Duke (Xiang): 'Comparing ourselves to Zhu and Teng' (視邾滕). Du Yu's annotation is: "If [Lu is] subordinated to both Qi and Chu [the two most powerful kingdoms of the time], it must needs be doubly taxed, in this manner Lu is likened to small kingdoms" (兩屬齊楚則貢賦重, 故欲比小國也).

⁴ These epistles are respectively presented to Linghu Tao (850), Jiang Shen (蔣伸, 851), Feng Ao (封敖, 852), Pei Xiu (裴休, 852), Du Shenquan (杜審權, 856) and Linghu Tao

efforts. He had tried everything he could to appeal to any minister who might help open up a way to an official career. Although things sometimes might become more hopeful for our poet, the official would sooner break faith with Wen than promise to help. For, in the complex political struggles in which the eunuchs had the upper hand, if any minister did try to redress Wen's injustice, he would run the great risk of his own career and let himself fall victim to yet another injustice. Such was the lesson the political realities had taught any late Tang official to whom Wen might have appealed.

What Accounts for Wen's Repeated Failures?

To make better use of limited space, we will bypass a lengthy textual and factual investigation of the above-mentioned epistles, and go directly to Wen's experiences in the era by inquiring into his biographies in the standard histories.

One of the incorrigible defects of Wen's biographies is that their authors rely on the information provided by unofficial histories, but fail to discriminate between what is true and what is false in them. In the face of the baffling firsthand information, the biographers were too constrained by their own factional and hierarchical biases to do Wen justice; in addition, they were misled by the contradictory Tang sources. Wen's biographies in The Old Tang History (190: 5078-9) and The New Tang History (91: 3787-8) fail even to give a clear account of such basic information as Wen's names and style names. We thus cannot expect much of their accounts of Wen's life. However, in order to repudiate the slander that has found general acceptance with later generations, and to clarify Wen's experiences during the Dazhong era, we will make a study of these biographies.

In fact, Wen's biographies in the two Tang Histories, apart from some comments written with a contemptuous tone, present concrete details for only three affairs in Wen's life, all of which are frequent topics in unofficial histories written between the Tang and

(859 & 862?). See Mou: "Change Name".

Song dynasties. The first of these concerns Wen's performances in the Presented Scholar examinations in the Dazhong era, namely, the cheating incidents in which Wen took the examination on others' behalf and his repeated failures. The second is a garbled version of the Jianghuai Incident, misdated as in the middle of the Xiantong era (860-873) and related to Linghu Tao. The third relates how Wen rushed about seeking for an official position in the Xiantong era, the last years of his life. Since these amount to no more than a sketchy account of Wen's experiences allegedly during the Dazhong era and later, Wen's biographies in the two Tang Histories are both incomplete and inaccurate. We will concentrate here on Wen's performances in the examinations.

The following is the first paragraph of Wen's biography in The Old Tang History (190: 5078), which, a little later, gives an account of why he had to suffer many failures in the Dazhong era:

In the beginning of the Dazhong, he took the Presented Scholar examination. Due to his painstaking studies and practices, he was particularly conversant with the compositions of poetry and rhapsody. On his first arrival at the capital, he was appreciated and held in high esteem by many men of eminence (大中初, 應進士. 苦心研習, 尤長于詩賦. 初至京師, 人士翕然推重).

The above record attests to Wen's literary attainment and fame, a fact even the biased Song biographers did not deny. However, it contains a serious mistake in chronology. The correct way of expressing the fact is that, in the beginning of Dazhong era, on Wen's arrival (rather than on his first arrival) at the capital, he once more took the Presented Scholar examination. By beginning Wen's biography in this manner, The Old Tang History produces the false impression that Wen just embarked on his life career in the beginning of the Dazhong era. This false impression accounts for a fallacy in determining Wen's birth

year, counting it to fall much later than it really did.⁵ Even were the remaining details all correct, we could not be contented with a biography that begins from the time when its subject was already almost fifty years of age.

The biography continues as follows:

But his behavior as a scholar was improper and impure, and he disregarded small niceties. In addition, he was capable of matching the music of stringed or wind instruments to obscene and florid words; and he often drank and gambled with the dissolute sons of high-ranking officials, such as Pei Cheng, Linghu Hao, and their ilk, dead drunk for whole day at a time. Therefore, for many years, he failed in the Presented Scholar examination.

(然士行塵雜, 不修邊幅. 能逐弦吹之音, 爲側艷之詞. 公卿家無賴子弟裴誠⁶令狐滈之徒, 相與藉飲, 酣醉終日, 由是累年不第)

This passage (the only account about Wen's taking the examination in the biography) emphasizes Wen's repeated failures and leaves to readers the misrepresentation that for his entire life he did not pass the presented Scholar examination. To testify to its falsehood, we will examine both the causes of Wen's failures and the results of all his efforts.

As we have seen clearly from Wen's life hitherto, the only reason Wen's biographers might have for condemning his behavior as "improper and impure" is the distorted knowledge of the Jianghuai Incident. It was chiefly because of Wen's unconventional marriage with a singer-prostitute and the many rumors that were spread on account of it, that Wen's fame was stained. As for Wen's disregard for "small niceties," this was characteristic of the late Tang literati, and not a viable reason to account for his failures. In the eyes of the biased and snobbish Song historiographers, to neglect "small niceties" was

⁵ See Wang Dajin: "Tan Wen Tingyun Shengping de Ruogan Wenti".

⁶ Pei Cheng should be written as Pei Xian (裴誠), see Fang Jiliu, *Suoyin*, 117-8. Pei Xian is Pei Du's son, see XTS, 71: 2243; QTS, 563: 6540.

virtue in a powerful figure, but spelled ruin for a wretch such as Wen. For one such like Wen, moreover, skill in music and expertise at composing verses, "obscene and florid" so-called, could be taken as "evidence" of misdeeds and a cause of failure. Obviously, these reasons, the products of fabrication, cannot be credited.

As for the claim that Wen often drank and gambled with the dissolute sons of high-ranking officials, these cannot hold water either, not only because the records themselves are problematic, but because of logical confusions they contain, as can be seen from the following example:

Fan Shu's *Yunxi Youyi* (65-6) records a story about Pei Xian and Wen, which goes as follows: Pei and Wen were good friends because of their shared fondness for poetry, music and humor. Zhou Dehua (周德華), a famous singer, sang the poems of many celebrities of the time at a party, but she refused to sing either Wen's or Pei's version of "Branches of the Willows" (楊柳枝, see j. 9, WFQ) and embarrassed both on the spot.

We cannot give full credit to this story, nor can we credit the said virtuosity of a legendary singer, though very possibly this anecdote is one of the sources upon which Wen's biographers drew. Pei Xian's poems written for the occasion were particularly indelicate, as can be seen from the following example:

The sole ovary of lotus seeds none could eye,	獨房蓮子没人看,
To pick a lotus on the quiet will exhaust all my might.	偷折蓮時命也拼.
If anyone has a reason and asks you why,	若有所由來借問,
Tell him the lotus stealer is a low-ranking official, I.	但道偷蓮是下官.

Any modern connoisseur of poetry can surely see that this is written in the worst of taste. Stripped of the obscene punning homophones,⁷ the poem is an indecent joke, a nakedly

⁷ The "sole ovary of lotus seeds" refers to female private parts. A "low-ranking officer" in Chinese puns on the lower organ.

sexual depiction and nothing more.

Wen's poem subjected to the same censure, however, is a model of poetic originality:

I light a lamp in the bottom of the well--deeply illuminate it:	井底點燈深燭伊，
With my lad I'd prefer "long travel" to "encircling chess."	共郎長行莫圍棋 ⁸
Do you know that a dainty die with red beans engraved	玲瓏骰子安紅豆，
Is a love-yearning that penetrate to the bones?	入骨相思知不知？

"The bottom of the well" (井底) is a "deep" (深) place; for the speaker, "lights a lamp" (點燈) is to "illuminate it" (燭伊); "deeply illuminate it" (深燭伊) puns on "affectionately exhort him" (深囑伊). Thus "I light a lamp in the bottom of the well" (井底點燈) spells (elicits) the message implied in "affectionately exhort him" by means of homophonic puns.

How does the lass express her love to the lad? Certainly there is something more to the point behind the seemingly irrelevant remark of the second line. Substituting 違期 (*weiqi*), "miss the date [for return]" for its homophone 圍棋, "encircling chess," as the poet's note suggests, we will understand 共郎長行 as "[together] with my lad for a long travel" in lieu of our earlier translation "With my lad I'd prefer 'long travel'". Thus the second line as a whole is the lass' extortion that she would go with her lad in the long travel, [and if she could not], her lad must not miss the date for return [and come back too late].

In the second couplet, the die, a small cube with different numbers (from one to six) of spots, fits for the poet's artistic imagination because of its two traits. First, it is made of bone (骨); and second, engraved into the bone (入骨), its spots are dyed red and look like red beans (紅豆)--the seeds of love pea--symbol of love-yearning (相思). Through such semantic and syntactic links, the red spots that are carved into the bone-made die become the synonym and pun for a love-yearning that penetrates to the bone (入骨相思).

⁸ The small Chinese characters, probably the poet's note, are attached to the poem in WFQ, telling the reader that they are the homophones the original terms pun on.

Every and each line of this poem can please both the eye and, on second thoughts, the heart of its reader: the punning homophones and double meanings are handled with masterful dexterity; the images are fresh and rich, teeming with resources and vitality; the poetic taste is refined and delicate. The poem exemplifies Wen's proficiency in poetry, *ci* poetry par excellence, a result of his imitating and surpassing the urban folksong, drawing from and excelling the Southern Dynasties Music Bureau verses, an artistic creativeness that really deserves to be called original.

A comparison of the two works immediately brings to light their great differences in taste and quality. Pei's composition can hardly be called a poem. The fact is that, even though Pei's work is "indecent," to compose such works never prevented him from having a pretty successful official career, as is told in *Yunxi Youyi* and other sources. In addition, we can be sure that Pei would have been more a friend contributing to Wen's success than a bad companion adding to his failures. Then, too, hardly any of Wen's poems have the kind of indelicate implications found in Pei's example. Otherwise, as "a scholar without virtue" giving a ready-made handle to hostile gossips, Wen would have been subjected all the more to moral censure than he was. Neither his "indecent" poems nor his friendship with Pei could have hindered him from gaining the Presented Scholar degree.

Wen's associating and drinking with Linghu Hao is also a fiction.

Linghu Hao was the son of Linghu Tao (803-80), and grandson of Linghu Chu (令狐楚, 765-836), whom Wen also knew personally.⁹ It was just during Linghu Tao's long tenure as Prime Minister (850-859) that Wen failed to pass as a Presented Scholar. In the meantime, Linghu Hao became a "white-robe Prime Minister" (白衣宰相) assuming and

⁹ For the biographies of the Linghus, see JTS, 172: 4459-68; XTS, 166: 5098-105. For Wen's connections with the Linghu family, also see chapter four, p. 146. Linghu Chu was Wen's senior, and Hao his junior.

abusing his father's power, but never rendered Wen any help. Thus the two men had totally different backgrounds and careers, and whether or not one of them was bad had nothing to do with the other.

Linghu Hao was said to have frequented the pleasure quarters of the capital as was then the vogue (see Sun Qi, 41). This is perhaps one of the reasons The Old Tang History puts his name in Wen's biography, to draw attention to Wen's debauched way of life. However, as his biographies speak of him, Linghu Hao, too, was a man of letters, who had more to do than idle away his time in drinking all day, like a "dissolute son." The problem with The Old Tang History is that, piecing together scattered disparaging accounts concerning Wen, it tends to paint even Wen's friends black, or indiscriminately regard people of seemingly bad renown as Wen's friends.

Therefore, the biography gives no sound reasons to account for Wen's repeated failures. The self-righteous biographers hardly offer anything plausible, and their sketchy biographies are full of inconsistencies and contradictions. But then the question is raised once more: what on earth was it that caused Wen to fail many times on end? We can neither find out nor need to seek for any other "right" answers, because, as we have repeatedly stressed, it was always the eunuchs who blocked Wen's way.

Wen's Final Pass As A Presented Scholar

We thus have good reason to discredit the tale told in The Old Tang History, concerning *why* Wen failed many times to pass the examinations. Moreover, we will also disprove the notion that Wen failed to acquire the Presented Scholar degree *all his life*, a fallacy for which we hold The Old Tang History responsible. To this end, we can cite as evidence the following clear and exact sources:

It is in Tangzhiyan (2: 16), under the subtitle of "Pass the Presented Scholar Examination Only Long After Becoming Equivalent to Passing" (爲等第後久方及第), that we

find: "Wen Qi fled helter-skelter as a commoner" (溫岐濫竄于白衣). We are given to understand that after a long period of frustrations earning no official position, Wen with great difficulty at last procured a Presented Scholar degree. Wen's biography in The Old Tang History stresses his numerous failures but ignores his final pass, though a very special and narrow pass.

In Wen's "Epistle Presented to the Censor-In-Chief," presented to Xu Shang in about the fourth year of the Xiantong era (863), he also related in clear terms that he had gained the Presented Scholar degree indeed, and had he not had the degree in hand, it would have been ridiculous for him to refer to himself in the following manner:

It was by hanging burned reeds to illuminate the characters and weaving rushes to make writing paper that I succeeded in acquiring the state examination degree and benefited with an imperial salary (懸蘆照字, 編葦爲資. 遂竊科名, 才沾祿賜).¹⁰

When, then, did Wen gain the degree? We must look into Wen's biography in The New Tang History (91: 3788) for the information The Old Tang History fails to include:

As a man of marvelously quick wit, he often made compositions for others. Toward the end of the Dazhong era, he sat for the examination held by the government. As the invigilation was especially exacting, Tingyun was unhappy about it; but he presented a memorial of more than a thousand characters, while having stealthily helped eight persons. Those in power held him in contempt for his behavior, and appointed him Defender of Fangshan County (庭筠思神速, 多爲人作文. 大中末, 試有司, 廉視尤謹. 庭筠不樂, 上書千余言, 然私相占授者已八人. 執政鄙其所爲, 授方山尉¹¹).

¹⁰ "Hanging burned reeds" and "weaving rushes" are set phrases, meaning to study hard. "Imperial salary" here implies that Wen occupied an official position.

¹¹ 山, is a corruption of 城, as given in JTS. In the Dazhong era Wen was demoted to Defender of Suixian, not of Fangcheng, which post Wen occupied in Xiantong era.

In The New Tang History, this passage comes after an account similar to that found in The Old Tang History about Wen's repeated failures in the examinations. It is a supplement to Wen's experiences in the period, the only supplement The New Tang History contributes to improving The Old Tang History. Here the first point calling for our attention is that the repeated blows fate dealt Wen finally provoked in him a kind of abnormal protest. Knowing he was far superior to those who had passed while he was always rejected, Wen decided to give vent to his discontent by helping others to pass and thus making his protest heard. To do Wen justice, he was determined to fight to the end of his life against the eunuchs' persecution, to let his actions serve as a denunciation of the imperial state machine which had buckled under the pressure of the eunuchs' power.

Here, however, the story becomes more baffling than interesting: it is strange that Wen should be able to gain a position by fraud in the examinations. If this was the case, the more he cheated, and the more those in power held him in contempt, the higher the position he would find! We will quote more details concerning Wen's performance in the civil-service recruitment-system, and then be able to put this question in a clearer light.

The story that Wen cheated in the examinations by mischievously helping others is also confirmed by records in Tangzhiyan (13:146):

In the year when Vice-Minister Shen¹² from Shanbei held the position of Examination Administrator, knowing that Feiqing used to be fond of helping others, he specially called him to be examined in the examination carrel. It so happened that Feiqing was unhappy on this day, and in the evening asked that the door be opened to let him out, whereupon he submitted a memorial of over a thousand characters. Some said that he had secretly managed to help eight candidates

¹² Shen Xun (沈詢) was the examination administrator for the ninth year of Dazhong (855). See 22: 1429, DKJK, quoting Nanbu Xinshu 73.

(山北沈侍郎主文年，特召溫飛卿于簾前試之，爲飛卿愛救人故也。適屬翌日庭筠不樂，其日晚請開門先出，仍獻啓千餘言。或曰潛救八人矣)。

Similar records can be found in Tangshi Jishi (54: 822) and Beimeng Suoyan (4: 29), with more details added. All verify the credibility of the fact that Wen's eccentric cheating efforts in the examinations had become widespread and created troubles for the authorities. Of course, it was not Wen's cheating that caused his failures, rather, it was his repeated failures that gave rise to his cheating.

Beimeng Suoyan contains the following account of the same fact:

Moreover, in every year's examination, Tingyun often wrote for others. When Vice Minister Shen Xun was Examination Administrator, he put Tingyun in a seat not adjacent to those of the other examinees. On the following day, he told Tingyun in front of the examination carrel, "There have been a number of examinees attaining their goal with the aid of the essays and rhapsodies written by you, Academician. This year the examinations are in my charge, and I will permit no interference from you, Academician. Mind yourself." Therefore he rejected him and Wen never realized his ambition (庭雲又每歲舉場，多爲舉人假手。¹³侍郎沈詢知舉，別施鋪席授庭筠，不與諸公鄰比。翌日于簾前請庭筠曰：向來策名者，皆是文賦托于學士；¹⁴某今歲場中，并無假托學士。勉旃。因遣之，由是不得意也)。

Prior to the ninth year of Dazhong, Wen had already cheated many times and annoyed

13 "Write for others" can mean writing something at other's request, either outside or inside the examination carrel; in the latter case, it refers to even assuming other candidate's name and taking his place in the examination.

14 Shen addressed Wen as "Academician" (學士), which would be inexplicable had he not indeed held the title, a title that cannot be used as an honorific for anybody without it; had Wen held the title, it must have been during his attendance upon the Heir Apparent.

the examination officials. What is represented in the above account is only one instance out of many in Wen's persistent mischiefs, taken as the basic cause of his failure.

From the following record of Dongguan Zouji,¹⁵ we find a full and exact account of how Wen made a stir among those concerned with the examinations, by writing on other examinees' behalf.

In the beginning, Pei Shen was concurrently in charge of supervising the candidates and presiding over the two special examinations, the Erudite Literatus (宏詞) and the Preeminent Talent (拔萃). In that year there was a great number of Presented Scholars vying for these honors....Shen was of a lenient and beneficent nature, and it was rumored that the topic of examination rhapsody had been divulged. The Presented Scholar Liu Han was the son of Liu Xi, Magistrate of the Metropolitan Prefecture. In accordance with the established rule, the examination of Erudite Literatus chose only three candidates, but Han was among them. Those who had failed to pass complained that Han had laid hold on the rhapsody topic by way of Shen and then asked the writer Wen Tingyun to compose the rhapsody for him. After Han was chosen, an incessant racket was made, and words of the affair reached His Majesty (初, 裴諗兼上銓. 主試宏拔二科. 其年爭名者衆....諗寬豫仁厚, 有賦題不密之說. 前進士柳翰, 京兆尹柳熹之子也. 故事: 宏詞科只三人. 翰在選中. 不中者言翰于 諗處先得賦題, 托詞人溫庭筠爲之. 翰既中選, 其聲聒不止, 事徹宸聽).

For convenience' sake, we will call this contretemps the Dazhong Ninth Year Incident. Ever since Wen renewed his attempt for the Presented Scholar degree in the beginning of the Dazhong era, and as a result of quite a few frustrations, he had acquired the

¹⁵ See Pei Tingyu: Dongguan Zouji, 18. Pei Tingyu was Pei Du's grandson and Pei Shen's (裴諗) son; his records about his father's experiences should therefore be reliable.

"dishonorable" habit of helping other examinees take the examinations. His actions in this respect precipitated a dramatic climax to the Dazhong Ninth Year Incident. By now Wen's voice was loud enough to get a nationwide hearing, and those in power could no longer shun the question Wen raised with his actions: were the examinations controlled by the eunuchs or court officials loyal to His Majesty? In fact, Wen succeeded at this time in enlisting quite extensive support and sympathy from within the literati-officials' group. His actions also served to arouse those whose sense of righteousness had not yet been obscured by the ruthless and chaotic realities, to stand up for social justice. Of course enabling some to pass with assistance was not fair to those who lacked such assistance. But people might as well ask: since those helped by Wen could pass even the Erudite Literatus examination, one of the most difficult and advanced examinations, what were the special reasons that always prevented Wen from passing as a mere Presented Scholar?

The Dazhong Ninth Year Incident at the time had far-reaching consequences. It was recorded in The Old Tang History that because the candidates for the Erudite Literatus examination had learned the topic ahead of time, the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Rites, Pei Shen, was impeached by the Censorate and demoted.¹⁶ This irregularity was even taken as a manifestation of Heaven's warning against human injustice.¹⁷ Wen's persistent efforts created a stir and at last succeeded in shocking the ruling clique. As we have stated before, the fundamental political situation at the time remained largely unchanged. The eunuchs still exercised close control over court power and had the emperor in their hands. Try as he could, Wen could not rehabilitate himself and remained

¹⁶ See JTS, "The Annals of Emperor Xuanzong", 18: 93, and ZZHTJ, "The Ninth Year of Dazhong", 246: 8060.

¹⁷ According to Pei, Dongguan Zouji 18, "At an earlier time, the Imperial Astrologer reported to His Majesty that the Literature Star had dimmed, presaging that there would be troubles in the examinations. Now what the Astrologer had reported proved true."

in disgrace for a long time. No Examination Administrator dared pass him, since he was a thorn in the side of the eunuchs. Under such circumstance, by his tricky performances Wen amazed the world and in effect appealed his case forcefully to those in power who had hitherto avoided touching it, and demanded a reasonable settlement.

Among those in power there must have been disputes as how to handle Wen's case. To leave Wen unpassed or allow his cheating to go unchallenged was no solution, in view of the ambivalent responses such actions evoked. But to pass Wen, in addition to offending the eunuchs, was to defy the imperial dignity, because Wen's cheating was, after all, a violation of the law. So, to pass him was not a wise decision either. After about three or four years' hesitation, in the thirteenth year of Dazhong (859), Pei Tan, the then Secretariat Drafter, issued the following edict on behalf of the emperor in spite of Wen's cheating,

Edict For Demoting Wen Tingyun As the Defender of Suixian County

(貶溫庭筠隋縣尉制)¹⁸

An imperial behest to the Local Tribute Presented Scholar Wen Tingyun:

At early age you followed the local representative and had long since built up a great reputation. You have vainly boasted of your unrestrained talent, which can scarcely suit the needs of the time. Therefore we send a Qu Yuan into exile by the banks of the Xiang River, and demote a Jia Yi at the marshes of Changsha. You can look forward to the day when the imperial mat will be moved forward, and there is no hindering you from wielding your brush. Your appointment to Defender of Suixian County, Suizhou Prefecture is approved. (敕鄉貢進士溫庭筠，早隨計吏，夙著雄名。徒負不羈之才，罕有適時之用。放騷人于湘浦，移賈誼于長沙。尚有前席之期，¹⁹未爽抽豪之思。可隋州隋縣尉)。

¹⁸ See *Dongguan Zouji*, 22, and DKJK, 22:1435.

¹⁹ Qu Yuan, the author of *Lisao*, was said to have been demoted to the banks of the

Herein the following points merit our consideration:

First, as a result of Wen's numerous participations in and failures of the examinations, especially his notorious episodes of cheating, and in view of the nationwide repercussions of his actions, those in power finally agreed to confer the Presented Scholar degree on him, so as to calm the clamor of public opinion.

This would have been much clearer than it is now, had the conferment of the Presented Scholar degree not been made public simultaneously with a demotion. Whatever demotion Wen had to suffer was at the same time an official appointment that, as a rule, was conferred only upon those who had passed the Presented Scholar examination and become a Presented Scholar, though Wen's pass did present itself as a very particular case.

Secondly, the imperial edict announcing the conferring of the degree is accompanied by the emperor's behest that Wen be appointed as Defender of Suixian County, intended as a demotion on account of his lack of restraint. Wen's demotion to a remote county post would at the same time be acceptable to the eunuchs.

Be that it may, this edict is indeed confusing without further explanation. Prior to the late Tang times, it was normal for a successful Presented Scholar to begin his official career with a low post such as Defender or something similar. How, then, had things progressed to the point that appointing a just passed Presented Scholar, who did not yet have official standing, to the post of Defender, amounted to a *demotion*? We shall find out the underlying reasons immediately below.

Thirdly, Pei Tan's "Edict Demoting Wen Tingyun" sounds more like a eulogy than an

Xiang River. See Wang Yi's Chuci Zhangju, 96. When Emperor Wendi granted an audience to Jia Yi, inquiring of him only about the ghosts and spirits, the emperor moved his mat forward to him (前席), expressing his imperial favor; later Jia Yi was demoted to Mentor of the King of Changsha. See HS, 48: 2221-66.

edict blaming Wen for his faults. The only expression of censure, that Wen "can scarcely suit the needs of the time," hits the nail on the head--with his unruly and unconventional character, never yielding to the eunuchs, Wen was born in the wrong time and his talent could only be wasted, despite his ambition to cure the maladies of his country.

Fourthly, the contradictory implications of the edict have their historical context. As we have seen, to meet the political demands of the contending sides, the drafter Pei Tan was facing a painful decision, and he was at pains to redress the balance for Wen's particular case. In Tangzhiyan (11: 121), there is a passage concerning this:

Among those in power, there was one who had an aversion to Wen and reported to His Majesty about his making trouble in the examination carrels, and Wen was demoted to Defender in Suizhou. At the time, it was Secretariat Drafter Pei Tan who was to draft the imperial edict. Pei, hesitating and flustered, held his writing brush for quite a while, before he consulted an old clerk by his side, on the promotion and demotion in question. The clerk replied: "Your Excellency ought to make some terms of reproach. Why? A Presented Scholar presenting a memorial [to His Majesty] is hardly inferior to an Assistant Prefect or Aide Magistrate of superior prefectures." Only then did Tan feel relieved. Therefore there appeared in his edict metaphors such as "Banks of the Xiang River" and "Marshes of Changsha".

(執政間復有惡奏庭筠攪擾場屋，黜隨州縣尉。時中書舍人裴坦當制，忸怩含豪久之。時有老吏在側，因訊之升黜，對曰：舍人合爲責辭，何者？人策進士，與望州長馬一起資。坦釋然，故有澤畔長沙之比)。

Here an old clerk conversant with the general rule governing official appointments came to the rescue of Pei Tan, who was at a loss as how to draft the edict. For the first official appointment of a successful Presented Scholar, however, minor the position might be, the edict ought to be filled with praise and encouragement. In Wen's case, however, the appointment was too disappointing and repulsive, as Pei Tan was fully aware. It defied

common sense to use only positive language in an edict announcing such an appointment, while it was also contrary to the established rule to employ terms of reproach when appointing a Presented Scholar for the time. Since the old clerk pointed out bluntly the crux of the matter, namely, Wen's attainment of Presented Scholar degree was more a demotion than a promotion, Pei Tan need no longer hesitate as how to balance his praise and blame. Consequently, Pei Tan criticized Wen as one who "can scarcely suit the needs of the time"; then, to make up for this, he likened Wen to Qu Yuan and Jia Yi. This accounts for Dongguan Zouji's meaningful comment after quoting the edict: "His Majesty (Xuanzong) is a wise emperor, yet Tingyun, quite unexpectedly, is demoted just because of his talent....Isn't it because His Majesty attached so much importance on literature that he became stingy when granting the degree? It is really something we cannot ask and know." To put it bluntly, Pei Tingyu had in mind something which it would be awkward to disclose, since he would lay the blame on neither Emperor Xuanzong nor Tingyun.

The old clerk's remark suggests that, at least in a period covering the Dazhong era, the Presented Scholar degree had risen to such an unprecedented height that most of those who succeeded in grasping hold of it had much better official prospects than had been true hitherto. In the light of this development, Wen's passing was purposely undervalued; indeed it was no more than a trick or an expedient resorted to deceive the public. Nevertheless, the fact remained that Wen was passed, though in essence he was demoted. Pei Tan's edict, however, was and is taken as evidence of Wen's failure, and the clear record to the contrary, of Tangzhiyan, has been left unaccountably neglected.

For all his efforts to avoid being conscience-stricken at his handling of the case, Pei Tan nevertheless was the dupe of those who pulled the strings behind the scene, as can be seen from the following passage in Tangyulin (7: 244):

During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong, Wen was demoted to Defender of Suixian County. The edict said: "We send into exile a Qu Yuan to the banks of the Xiang

River, and demote a Jia Yi to the Marshes of Changsha." This was Drafter Pei's remark which men of the time found laughable (宣宗時, 謫爲隨縣尉。制曰, "放騷人于湘浦, 移賈誼于長沙。" 舍人裴坦之詞, 世以爲笑)。

Dongguan Zouji also records that "noble men held up Pei's remarks to ridicule." People seemed to have ignored the dilemma Pei faced when drafting the edict: he was exposed both to criticisms from public opinion and to pressure from his superiors. Not knowing the inside story, those who mocked Pei were apt to have the preconception that Pei ought to speak on behalf of the empire, whereas the allusions to Qu Yuan and Jia Yi do imply that Wen is a talented man wronged by the officials responsible. Pei's wording of the edict was a confession, without duress, that the officials were in the wrong. As a result, he was held up to ridicule. However, thanks to his conscientiousness, we have in hand a picturesque literary sample reflecting the realities that would otherwise have sunken into oblivion.

A Poem That Reflects His Cheating

There is one poem of Wen's, the only extant poetic proof that Wen "cheated" in the examination carrels, that is too interesting to leave out of our discussion.

On A Casual Topic (偶題, j. 7, WFQ)

A peacock is sleeping in the tall tree,	孔雀眠高樹,
A cherry is touching the short eaves.	櫻桃拂短檐。
The picture is bright with a golden sheen,	畫明金冉冉,
The <i>zheng</i> is set murmuring by a slender jade .	箏語玉纖纖。 ²⁰
A fine drizzle does no harm to the candle[light],	細雨無防燭,
A gentle cold filters in through the curtain.	輕寒不隔簾。 ²¹

²⁰ 箏, *zheng*, is a 25-stringed instrument similar to a zither; a "slender jade" may refer to the jade plucker or the fingers of the one who plucks the strings.

²¹ Candidates sitting for the examination worked in a separate small room like a carrel.

I would like to mail a bolt of red brocade,
To Jiang Yan in his dream.

欲將紅錦段，
因夢寄江淹。²²

The last couplet of this poem declares in unequivocal terms Wen's wish to help, with his outstanding aptitude, those literary men who could not write well. The allusion to Jiang Yan reflects Wen's conceit and condescension when it came to doing so. According to Wen's habitual practice to manifest the motif of a poem only at the end of it, the lines that go before the last couplet must be a veiled account paving the way for the Jiang Yan allusion, namely, an account of where, why and how Wen rendered his help.

The third couplet, though literally it seems foreign to the question, offers an inkling by the images of candle and curtain, which serve to call the reader's attention to the examination carrels. Since it involves no allusions while certainly having hidden meanings, we strongly suggest that Wen's forte, the employment of punning homophones, is at work here. "Fine drizzle" and "gentle cold," though at first glance they seem to speak about the weather, have some link with "candle" and "curtain" and must be in a veiled way speaking about what happens in the examination carrels. Indeed exceeding our expectation, the whole couplet should be a pun!

"Fine drizzle" (細雨) punningly refers to whispers (細語) exchanged among the examinees;²³ "candle" (燭) puns on "to tell" [others about how] (囑, cf. p. 296); the

Candlelight (*zhu*, 燭, for lighting) and a door and curtain (*lian*, 簾, used for separating the examinees from one another) are something synecdochic for the examination hall.

²² It was said that the famous poet Jiang Yan (444-505) once dreamed that a person had him return the bolt of brocade he owed him. Since then, Jiang's compositions became increasingly poor. See LS, 14: 247; NS, 59: 1447.

²³ Ancient pronunciations of 雨 and 語 are homophonic with each other; see Karlgren's dictionary 363 & 374. And, the two characters rhyme to each other, for example, see

Chinese term for "does no harm to" (無妨) also means "does not matter." Hence, the punned meaning of the line is that "it does not matter to *tell* others in whispers."

"Gentle cold" (輕寒) might punningly refer to slips with prepared answers written on them (輕函),²⁴ which the curtains cannot hinder from passing secretly among the carrels. We may also understand "gentle cold" as a metaphor in itself for the perfunctory invigilation system that could not prevent candidates in different carrels from transmitting messages to one another "through the curtains."

In so far as we can imagine a metaphorical reading of the first couplet, we find that the peacock sleeping leisurely in a tall tree is a humorous image of Wen himself, a brilliant talent overlooking the examination affairs from a superior vantage-point. The cherry, as we have explained in "The Twenty-Two Rhymes of the Arched Gate" (p. 232, note 20), presents itself as something attractive, say, the desired Presented Scholar degree. "Short caves", a term we have met once in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" (p.78 & 99), stands here for a small and somewhat contemptible space for the exercise of Wen's literary capacities, the civil service examination system as a whole.

But for its being found in this context, the second couplet might seem irrelevant to the topic of the examinations. Its description hardly suits the poetic milieu, for both a bright picture and a performance on the *Zheng* seem out of place in the examination hall. Guided by this exposed motif, we offer the following tentative explanation, even though we can dispense with it.

"The picture is bright" (畫明) puns on 化名,²⁵ to assume another's name and take his

Wen's "The Bowl Music of the Recluse Guo" (郭處士擊甌歌. j. 1, WFQ).

²⁴ The Tang pronunciations of 寒 and 函 are [yam] and [yan], basically identical with each other; see Karlgren's dictionary, 53 & 233.

²⁵ 畫明 and 化名, pronounced as [ɣw ai miw 'ong] and [ɣaw miang], see *ibid.* 60 & 199.

place [in the examination], as recorded in various sources. "With golden sheen" (金冉冉) in Chinese may also be understood as "money comes constantly." The line then tells of how Wen "made his literary composition as a kind of commodity" (以文爲貨, *Tangzhiyan*, 11: 121). That is to say, in exchange for his literary service to others in the examination, Wen earned money. As for "The *zheng* is set murmuring by a slender jade" (箏語玉纖纖), the whole line might be a pun on 諍語愈謙謙,²⁶ that is, for all his engagement in "cheating," the ideas Wen expressed in his composition written on behalf of the others were, as remonstrance to the emperor, all the more cordial and to the point.

Only by paraphrasing the couplets in the light of puns such as we discern above, can the last couplet, as a logical conclusion of the whole poem, stand on firm ground.

To sum up, since the fourth year of Kaicheng (839), after the death of Li Yong, it took Wen a good twenty years to earn himself the Presented Scholar degree, along with the minor post of Defender of Suixian County (the lower ninth rank). This was a position much lower than the ones he had held in the Cassia Area, and could be easily surpassed even without any degree. Thus it was only natural that Wen would not rest contented with it, and, having earned the degree, he embarked upon new efforts to obtain a better position he thought he deserved.

The Last Years of Wen's Life

The New Tang History records that after Wen was demoted to Defender of the Suixian County,

When Xu Shang was appointed to be in charge of the garrison of Xiangyang,²⁷ Wen

²⁶ The Tang pronunciation of 箏語玉纖纖 should be something like [tsong ngi (w)o' ngi (w)k sium sium]; while 諍語愈謙謙 read as [tsong ngi (w)o'iu kiem kiem]. See Karlgren's dictionary, p. 341, 363, 371, 375, 366 and 131. Here I am not quite sure about my guess.

²⁷ Xu Shang held the position of Military Commissioner of the East Circuit of Shannan

went there to depend on Xu, who assigned him the post of local inspector.²⁸

Thereafter, Wen continually appealed through those in power to the throne. As far as the extant records can show, he finally succeeded in finding a position in the capital, that of Instructor of the State Sons' University (國子助教). Shortly after, as a result of his sympathy for literati of humble origins, he was once more sent into exile, and died while in the exile.

We do not have space to cover every detail of Wen's experiences in this period, each of which presents a challenging problem before it can be confirmed. We will, however, consider one additional example that shows what came of Wen's efforts in the third year of Xiantong (862), when he was demoted to Defender of Fangcheng. This is the following poem by Ji Tangfu (紀唐夫, fl. 862):

Seeing Off Wen Feiqing to Be Defender of Fangcheng

(送溫飛卿尉方城, QTS, 542: 6257, *Yunxi Youyi*, 47)

Why, in a bright age, do you frequently weep over the jade?	何事明時泣玉頻,
In Chang'an, you cannot see the Apricot Garden in spring.	長安不見杏園春. ²⁹
Though the Phoenix Edict came down, conferring on you a degree,	鳳凰詔下雖沾命,

(山南東道) from the 10th year of Dazhong (857) to the first year of Xiantong (860). See TFZNB, 641-2 & 1387, quoting Li Zhi (李鷺): "Epitaph of the Magistrate of Xiangzhou Commandery, Xu" (徐襄州碑), from QTW, 724: 9430. Also see "Biographies of Xu Shang" in JTS, 179: 4666 and XTS, 113: 1192.

²⁸ There gathered around Xu in Xiangyang a small literary coterie that included Wen Tingyun, Wen Tinghao (溫庭皓, Wen's younger brother), Duan Chengshi, Zhou You (周繇), Wei Chan (韋蟾) and others. See *Jinhuaizi Zabian*, 37 and *Tangshijishi*, 54: 822.

²⁹ "Apricot Garden" was, during the Tang, the spot in Chang'an where, after passing the examination in spring, the Presented Scholars gathered and congratulated one another.

"The Parrot" with its brilliant talent brought upon you mischief.	鸚鵡才高卻累身。 ³⁰
Please drink Green Wine, to assuage your pent-up rage,	且飲綠醕銷積恨,
Don't refuse the Yellow Ribbon trailed in the dust of journey.	莫辭黃綬拂行塵。 ³¹
How can Fangcheng be as distant as Changsha?	方城若比长沙远?
But it's still a thousand hills and ten thousand streams away.	猶隔千山與萬津。

Ji likened Wen, with his unrecognized talent and loyalty for the empire, to the heartbroken Bian He. Though Wen at last narrowly passed as a Presented Scholar, what came after was only demotions. All these misfortunes, Ji points out, were because of Wen's unrestrained character, a character that was above flattering the influential and the powerful. In his efforts to comfort Wen, Ji suggests that he pour the Green Wine to assuage his grief, namely, to swallow the humiliation down with the wine, and that to make the best of a bad situation, Wen accept the demotions. For, in Ji's words, Fangcheng was after all not so far away as Changsha where Jia Yi, with whom Wen often identified, had been demoted to.

As a very insightful summary of Wen's life, Ji's poem represented public sympathy with Wen, and was very popular in Wen's day. "When Wen went to the post of Defender of Fangcheng, men of letters and poets vied with one another in addressing him with poems as a farewell gift. Ji Tangfu's poem was the most outstanding" (庭筠之任, 文士詩人爭爲辭送, 惟紀唐夫得其尤. *Tangzhiyan*, 11: 121). "Either that Tingyun became Defender, or that Ji Tangfu won fame, was a result of his literary compositions" (庭筠作尉, 紀唐夫得名, 蓋因文而致也. *Yunxi Youyi*, 47). These provide evidence that Wen was popular

³⁰ "Phoenix Edict" is a laudatory title for the edict issued by the Secretariat (also called the Phoenix Pool). "The Parrot" refers to Ni Heng's (櫛衡) "Rhapsody on the Parrot" (鸚鵡賦, *Wenxuan*, 13: 200). Ni was killed because of his unrestrained and haughty character. See HHS, 80: 2562.

³¹ 錄醕, was a kind of famous wine. The yellow ribbon was a part of the official uniform for those of lower positions of the ninth grade such as Defender.

among those who were out of power and had a sense of justice, and unwelcome among those who were in power and had no such sense. To depreciate Wen's character while ignoring this telling fact, therefore, amounts to accepting the historical biases.

The Truth of the Fourteen Pusaman

Relationship With Linghu Tao

In chapter four, we already quoted accounts in the two Tang Histories, which are a misrepresented Jianghuai Incident--not only misdated as happened in the Xiantong era but mistaken as related to Linghu Tao. Now we need to clarify Wen's relationship with the Linghu family, and, if possible, clarify the basic causes that led to the aforementioned fallacy in the standard histories.

In records such as Tongxin or Yuquanzi (p. 133-5), the earliest sources about the Jianghuai Incident (836) and Wen's change of name (839), the two affairs, which actually took place three years apart, were already mixed together. Having initiated this confusion, these two sources of information about Wen's life were quoted over and again, confounding the false report with fact.

In other sources, such as Wang Dingbao's Tangzhiyan (11: 121), we read:

During the Kaicheng years, Wen Tingyun became notorious because of his talent, but he rarely limited himself to small niceties, and made his compositions a kind of commodity. Men of good taste held him in contempt. Before long, among those in power, there was one who had an aversion to Wen and reported to His Majesty about his making trouble in the examination carrels (開成中，溫庭筠才名藉甚。然罕拘細行，以文爲貨。識者鄙之。無何，執政間復有惡奏庭筠攪擾場屋)。

Despite the correct statement that Wen became notorious in the Kaicheng era, Wen's experiences at that time are all thrown into a mess, blended together with the affairs occurred more than twenty years later in the Dazhong era. Similar mistakes also appear in

Ji Yougong's Tangshi Jishi (54: 822). Most probably, confusion occurred because the authors made no distinction between sitting for the examination by changing his own name and assuming someone else's name. The former behavior was Wen's attempt to escape the eunuchs' hostile supervision and earn himself the degree, the latter, as we have pointed out, can be regarded as his special way of protesting long years of injustice. In any event, records in Tangzhiyan and elsewhere only succeeded in creating more confusion.

The authors of the two Tang Histories failed to make discriminating use of the above-mentioned sources. Facing various distorted reports already circulating and wishing to establish their own version of Wen's life, they went wide of the mark in disposing of their sources. As a result, the standard histories, originally intended to excel the anecdotal sources in accuracy, instead provide a glaring counterfeit that is inferior in authenticity to any earlier accounts of Wen's life.

According to the editors of Siku Quanshu Zongmu Tiyaoyao, the fundamental causes of the mistakes in the two Tang Histories are as follows:³²

Ever since the Changqing (821-4) era, the state historiographers were no longer functioning [as a result of the chaos of the time], and there were no reliable records [for composing the biographies]. [Liu] Xu et al (the authors of The Old Tang History), had to avail themselves of miscellaneous fiction or biographies in other sources, which, after some rearrangements, were compiled into the biographies of their works (長慶以後, 史失其官, 無復善本. 煦等自采雜說, 排纂成之).

This being the circumstances under which The Old Tang History was edited, small wonder that there are errors in the biographies of many men of the time, including Wen.

Most of the crucial events in Wen's life took place just after the Changqing era. These events, though they were closely connected with corresponding political situations, were

³² See Yongrong, 45: 1003.

covered up in the shadow of the struggles between the Southern and the Northern Offices and the strife between the Niu and the Li Factions. Even though some of the anecdotes about the factional strife occasionally touched on some aspects of Wen's secrets, more often than not, owing to the limited quantity of sources and the prejudices of their authors, the accounts of Wen's actions must have appeared more confusing than credible. When the sources were contradictory, they left readers at an utter loss as to what to believe. This is the congenital deficiency afflicting Wen's biographies.

What is more, if they attempted to gather more information from Wen's own surviving works in an effort to make up for the scarcity of historical materials, the biographers were faced with an extremely ambiguous poet who burdened his works with the behind-the-scenes affairs of the political arena, and made it difficult for the historiographers to compose his biography.

Neither The Old Tang History nor The New Tang History contains a reasonable account of Wen's life. It is incumbent upon modern scholars to come up with one. The misinterpretation of the Jianghuai Incident by two Tang Histories resulted from a failure to make effective use of historical materials and from an overemphasis of the factional strife to the neglect of the struggle between the court officials and the eunuchs. The picture the Song historiographers offered for the Incident therefore totally loses its true color, with the maneuvering eunuchs in the dark and only one individual of the Southern Offices--Linhu Tao--left in the limelight. The persons interested as we found before, such as Yao Xu, Han Yi, Linhu Chu and Li Shi, disappear altogether.

When the Jianghuai Incident occurred, Linhu Tao had passed his Presented Scholar examinations only a few years earlier,³³ and he could not even play a role in the Incident. What have involved him in the Incident may be the influences of his father Linhu Chu,

³³ Linhu Tao became a successful Presented Scholar in 830. See DKJK, 21: 1318.

who succeeded the office of the murdered Prime Minister Wang Ya, as Salt and Iron Commissioner. Since Li Shi and Han Yi, both officials in the Salt and Iron Monopoly Bureau in about the same period, were implicated in the Incident (see p. 145), we can hardly exclude Linghu Chu, who might have also become the target of rumors during the event. In the Song historiographers' sketchy work of Wen's biography, it was not strange that the father be mistaken for the son.

On the other hand, Linghu Tao rose to power in the Dazhong era, just when Wen suffered his successive failures, so Wen might have raised his complaints against him. Since Linghu Tao frustrated Wen's good friend, Li Shangyin,³⁴ he could have treated Wen much in the same manner; at least the biographers might think so.

Actually, before the Kaicheng era, Wen might for a time have been connected with Linghu Chu somehow.³⁵ After Linghu Tao ascended to the Prime-Ministership (in 850), at first Wen was accepted as a distinguished guest at Linghu's mansion, when he came to the capital once more. As Xin Wenfang's Tang Caizizhuan has it (8:135): "Wen frequented the study of Prime Minister Linghu and was very favorably received."

This being the case, why could Linghu Tao not help Wen to become a Presented Scholar? For Wen's part, he could not have been contented with the status of idle guest of the Prime Minister's. Linghu Tao for his part could not let even his own son Linghu Hao pass during his long tenure as Prime Minister, for fear of hostile responses from among the court officials. In Wen's case, the situation was more complex. When the two men were on

³⁴ See Li's biographies, JTS, 190: 5077; XTS, 203: 5792.

³⁵ According to Wen's remark in his "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Linghu [Tao]" (上令狐相公啓), "I cherish a feeling to ask favor from [my family's] old friend" (蓋牽求舊之情), we suggest that Wen's friendship with the Linghus began much earlier, in his acquaintance with Tao's father, Linghu Chu.

good terms with each other, Linghu simply could not help, but after there appeared problems in the friendship, he neither could nor would help. As to why he could not help, it was because Wen was a thorn in the side of the eunuchs; as to why he would not, it was because Wen had a sharp tongue and often satirized the abuses of the time; whether in good humor or bad, he frequently laid bare contradictions that Linghu Tao tried to cover up. In the eyes of many people in authority, Wen showed no understanding of the political affairs of the time, and though he was a talented poet, he was thought incapable of accomplishing anything.

Therefore, the vicissitudes of Wen's relations with the Linghus were not merely a question of personal relationships, but were tainted with the factional strife and shadowed by eunuch power. As to the degree of the deterioration of their relations, it was possible that Wen might pass Linghu's mansion without a visit, or that Linghu might cold-shoulder him as an unwelcome guest. Whatever might have happened between, they were not enemies, and Linghu should not be held responsible for Wen's failures in his career.

The Background and Nature of the Pusaman Series

As a natural outcome of all our study on Wen's life and poems, we will come to one of our conclusions through a restudy of the Pusaman series, a subject of lasting controversy and fascination, a question of immense importance in Chinese literary history. Sun Guangxian's Beimeng Suoyan (4: 29) says:³⁶

Emperor Xuanzong liked the singing of Pusaman. Prime Minister Linghu Tao took and secretly presented to His Majesty Wen Tingyun's twenty compositions to the tune. Linghu warned Wen not to leak out the affair, but soon after, he told others. Because of this, Linghu estranged himself from Wen. Thereupon Wen remarked:

³⁶ Ji Yougong's Tangshi Jishi (54: 822), You Mao's Quantang Shihua (4: 79) and Wang Dang's Tangyulin (8: 135), have similar records.

"In the Hall of the Secretariat there sits a general," satirizing Linghu for his lack of learning (宣宗愛唱菩薩蠻詞。丞相令狐綯假溫庭筠手，撰二十首密進。戒令勿泄，而遽言于人，由是疏之。溫亦有言，"中書堂內坐將軍，"譏相國無學也)。

From this record, we observe the following points:

First, we must stress that this record is trustworthy. The Tang emperors often ordered their literary servants to compose poems to be matched with music and sung in the inner court. There are numerous similar examples: Li Bai wrote "Qingping Yue" (清平樂) for Emperor Xuanzong (玄宗); Wang Jian presented one hundred "palace verses" (宮詞); Yuan Zhen's poems were popular among the palace ladies, who nicknamed him "Talented Literatus Yuan"; Bai Juyi, while holding the position of Hanlin Academician, composed at the emperor's order some palace-style verses. It was not strange that Xuanzong (宣宗) ordered his Prime Minister to gather words to sing to Pusaman, his favorite tune.³⁷

Responding to the imperial order, Linghu Tao found in Wen the right man, having the wisdom to recognize Wen's talent. As his attendance on the Heir had demonstrated, Wen was adept at composing exquisite palace-style poems. Linghu Tao's submission of Wen's Pusaman poems indicates how much he appreciated Wen's aptitude for writing; he must have also sympathized with Wen in his depression, and regarded Wen as one of his confidential retainers. But why did he present the compositions to the emperor secretly and warn Wen against leaking out the affair?

During the Tang dynasty in general, to present poems to the emperors to be sung in the palaces was nothing clandestine, nor did the emperors keep such presentations a secret from other officials. A court official who received the imperial commission to create such poems was not doing anything wrong if he divulged the affair to the public. Moreover, if the verses were to be sung in the palaces and thus brought into fashion, it was only natural

³⁷ See *Gu Xuejie Wenxue Lunji*, 247.

that the world would know the author, just as in the cases of Li Bai, Bai Juyi, Wang Jian and Yuan Zhen. In Wen's case, there must have been other causes for the secrecy.

Turning to Linghu Tao's personal background and situation, we must first make out whether it was likely that he wanted to take credit for the authorship of Wen's works, so as to curry more imperial favor. Though this possibly can be inferred effortlessly from the story, it was definitely not the case. According to his biographies, Linghu Tao ascended to the Prime-Ministership by dint of his partisanship, as the son of Linghu Chu, one of the most influential leaders of the Niu Faction. More as an expert politician than as an outstanding literatus, he was already in high favor with Emperor Xuanzong, a favor on no account earned, or in need of buttressing, by his literary talent. On the contrary, as the leading Prime Minister throughout Xuanzong's reign, he had been doing all he could to recommend eminent poets to His Majesty, since this was part of his official obligations and he wished to show that he deserved credit for occupying the post of Prime Minister. Examples include his recommendation to Emperor Xuanzong two famous poets, Li Qunyu (李群玉) and Li Yuan (李遠),³⁸ the latter of whom was Wen's good friend. There is no reason to believe that Linghu wished to plagiarize Wen's works as his own.

Obviously, Linghu Tao's secrecy suggests that he wished to make use of Wen's literary talent but not to let the outside world know of it. Nobody at the time dared to promote him--to provoke in vain the eunuchs' political hostility and sensitivity--not even the influential Prime Minister, who was also in great fear of the eunuchs, as was Emperor Xuanzong.³⁹ To permit Wen's compositions to enjoy great popularity by having them

³⁸ According to QTW, 759: 9971, Linghu Tao's "Memorial for Recommending the Recluse Li Qunyu" (薦處士李群玉狀); and ZZhtJ, 249: 8073, "The Twelfth Year of Dazhong" (858), Linghu Tao recommended Li Yuan (李遠) to be Prefect of Hangzhou Prefecture. Li Yuan was one of the addressees of "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem".

³⁹ Emperor Xuanzong once said that he remained in great fear of the eunuchs, and

circulate in the palaces, and to make known to everybody who the author was, would inevitably enrage the eunuchs, for, Wen was the foe of the eunuchs, and a foe who wished to rehabilitate himself for the injustices they had visited on him and to avenge himself. In his compositions, whatever form they took, Wen asserted himself by literary means, both overt and covert, investing them with deeply personal feelings that were excited by the frustrations of his political life. We have seen such a point from quite a number of his representative works. Could the Pusaman series be an exception?

When we notice that Wen composed the Pusaman poems while he was still on good terms with Linghu, that is, in about the middle of the Dazhong era, we realize that he was impatient to rid himself of political pressures from the eunuchs, which had frustrated him for so many years. Since now his poems would be circulated in the palaces and he could use them to serve the emperor directly, he, very understandably, thought his chance had come. Unlike Linghu Tao, who wanted only to delight the emperor with exquisite works while attaching little importance to who the author was, Wen wanted to give voice to his feelings with his poems. It is small wonder that he, as the author, would not keep his identity hidden. To meet the demand of the emperor, he tried to the utmost of his power to cater to the palace taste, bringing into full play his consummate literary skills so as to court imperial favor. At the same time, he took the opportunity to give expression to his painful feelings and lay bare his heart to His Majesty, just as if he were presenting a memorial or rhapsody (獻賦), to explain himself. In these circumstances, a group of most exquisite, delicate, subtle and circuitous Pusaman *ci* poems were brought into being.

planned secretly with his Prime Minister Linghu Tao to get rid of them. Tao suggested that "Whenever they are guilty of any crime, don't spare them; whenever any of the posts they occupy is vacated, don't fill it with another eunuch. In the natural course of thing, the eunuchs' resources will be drained and exhausted." This plan, however, was divulged, only to make the situation worse. See ZZhtJ, "The Ninth Year of Dazhong", 246: 8055.

However, the divulgence of the secret that Wen wrote these poems created troubles, which sowed the seeds of discord between the two friends, one a Prime Minister and the other a commoner.

As Chinese literary appreciation and comments of more than a thousand years have evidenced, without knowing the authorship of the Pusaman poems, even Wen's contemporary connoisseurs could hardly make heads and tails of the deep implications that the series contains. They could at most reach an understanding that the author, as a frustrated man of letters, was proficient at representing the palace ladies' life and mentality. To readers of later generations, who have remained ignorant of the secrets of Wen's life, Wen's *magnus opera* are most attractive and baffling, and a matter of lasting controversy. It is attractive because of its exquisite design and sentimental mood. It is baffling because it challenges trite reading with its aesthetic mystery. From the perspective of the palace-style poetry, it can be said to be "consummate exemplar of all times",⁴⁰ with its picturesque depiction of the palace-lady and penetrating revelations of her mentality. But because this series of poems is more densely conceived, it transcended the palace-style and was enduringly appreciated by later generations of readers.

We have every reason to take the fourteen pieces as a series. The techniques of composing *shi* poems in series had matured since Du Fu's time, though it was Wen who was the trail-blazer in the domain of *ci* poetry. He was the first poet to use *ci* poems in series to express his personal feelings while covertly telling his story. Wen's Pusaman series originally contained twenty pieces. Each poem in the series had to conform to the form of

⁴⁰ See Chen Tingchuo, 7: "The fourteen Pusaman of Feiqing, all modeled on and changed from *Lisao*, are a consummate exemplar of all times. It is mistake if the reader only appreciates the freshness and beauty in them." In Chen's terms, Wen's masterpieces, such as the fourteen Pusaman poems, "have reached an unattainable height, and none of the later writers can compose anything comparable to them."

"palace-style verse" and be easy to sing; meanwhile, each poem in the series must be independent, and the series as an artistic whole must have a consistent style. To put into the series the aesthetic burden of a lifetime, with every line saturated with feelings, and even experiences, imprinted on the poet's mind by life, required great feats of elaboration.

It can be imagined what the various responses were like after "Wen told others," that is, "told others" after the series was circulating inside and thus outside the palaces. First, Wen's having done this contravened Linghu Tao's wishes, since it invited trouble from the eunuchs. Second, the eunuchs would certainly oppose leaving the matter at that. Since what had been done could not be undone, several pieces of the series, most probably the less veiled ones, were ruled out of circulation to stall the eunuchs off. What we have available today are only fourteen Pusaman pieces, like a Venus without arms.

Another question can be raised: "Were these compositions (the fourteen pieces) presented as a series to the throne during Wen's lifetime or were they simply an ensemble of all his works under the same topic composed at various moments of his life?"⁴¹ This seems easy to answer, for, in *Jinlianji*, there is another Pusaman piece (beginning 玉纖彈處真珠落, WFQ, 228), which, despite being about a palace lady, was never put together with the fourteen pieces under discussion here. Moreover, the fourteen Pusaman poems first appeared as a series in *Huajianji*, a collection edited by Zhao Chongzuo in the third year of Guangzheng of the Latter Shu dynasty (940), only some seventy years after Wen's death. No matter viewed from what perspective, there is no gainsaying that the fourteen Pusaman poems could not have been combined without rhyme and reason and are an inseparable artistic unity. In the series, first, midst and last, the narrative threads, subjective feelings, the thought of image, linguistic style, the prototype (of a palace lady) and even the mood and diction, are all consistent with one another.

⁴¹ See Xia Chengtao, 405, quoting Li Bingruo's (李冰若) *Xuzhuang Manji* (栩莊漫記).

Politics and love are the two major concerns that ran through Wen's life. Wen is an "orthodox" figure, because all his life he never gave up his ambition to serve his country and secure his fame for later generations, by dint of his literary talent, loyalty, conscientiousness and integrity. At the same time, Wen is also an unorthodox figure, because, for true love, for the object of his affections, he might have behaved himself like a man of modern times, regardless of the so-called niceties and decencies and in defiance of social conventions of his day. It was politics that intruded into his private life, while it was his private life that became in turn the ruin of his political career. Private love affairs and public political affairs were uniquely interwoven throughout his life, and found expression in Wen's peculiar technique: "to speak about the affairs between monarch and subject by means of the feelings between lad and lass" (以兒女之情, 言君臣之事). Grounding ourselves on our observations in chapter six, we can further define Wen's representative and characteristic poetic style: his preference for ornate appearances, in the shape of private love affairs, as vehicles for subtle ideas and feelings about his political experiences. "The Twenty-Two Rhyme of the Arched Gate" has provided a most convincing example of this style. In Wen's extant works, there are other examples even more revelatory of this style, listed in Appendix II, among the poems on the topic of the Heir Apparent.

A Precursor of Pusaman

Before explicating the labyrinthine Pusaman series, let us study the following poem:

Jiangnan Air (江南曲, j. 2, WFQ)

My abode is on White-Fern Bank,	妾家白蘋浦, ⁴²
Day after day I board a Hibiscus skiff.	日上芙蓉楫.
Row upon row, bending over my oars,	軋軋搖槳聲.
4 I move the vessel amid the wild-rice leaves.	移舟入茭葉.
The stream is long, the wild-rice deep,	溪長茭葉深,

42 白蘋浦, White-Fern Bank, is a place near to Wen's native town, Tonglu.

- Try as you can, it's hard to find me. 作底難相尋。
 To avoid being seen by any man, 避郎郎不見,
 8 I watch the wild-ducks swim and dip. 鸕鷀自浮沉。
 I pick the duckweeds, duckweeds without root, 拾萍萍無根,
 I collect the lotus, lotus with seeds. 采蓮蓮有子。⁴³
 I would rather die as a lotus flower, 不作浮萍生,
 12 Than live as floating duckweed. 寧爲藕花死。
 There is a riding lad near the bank, 岸傍騎馬郎,
 In black gauze cap, a purple-roving-rein in hand. 烏帽紫游繩。⁴⁴
 With unspoken sorrow and a forced smile, 含愁復含笑,
 16 I turn away, to look for Cross Pond. 回首問橫塘。⁴⁵
 I used to live in Jinling riverside, 妾住金陵步,
 In front of my door was Red Bird Ferry. 門前朱雀航。⁴⁶
 With colored tassels decorating my bed-curtains, 流蘇持作帳,
 And Hibiscus timber making the house beams. 芙蓉持作梁。
 In and out went my carriage of golden calf canopy, 出入金犢轡,

⁴³ The lotus with seeds, 蓮有子, puns on 憐有子, loving someone.

⁴⁴ "Purple-roving-rein" alludes to "The Records of Five Elements", JS, 28: 847. During the Taihe era (366-71, identical with the era title of 827-35) there was a folksong among the people: Green, green are the poplars on the imperial way \ There are your white horse and a purple-roving-rein \ Since you are not the imperial crowned prince \ How can you gain the libation of sweet dew (青青御路楊, 白馬紫游繩. 汝非皇太子, 哪得甘露漿)?

⁴⁵ Cross Pond, 橫塘, name of the place where lived the female lover often described in the Southern Dynasty Music Bureau verses.

⁴⁶ 朱雀航, Red Bird Ferry, was a famous spot in Jinling (present-day Nanjing), where the eminent Wang and Xie clans once lived; thus it is a mark of distinction.

- 22 All of my elder and younger brothers were ministers. 兄弟侍中郎。⁴⁷
 In years past I learned to sing and dance, 前年學歌舞,
 All to obtain my lad's affections. 定得郎相許。
 My eyebrows, dim and nice, curved like distant hills, 連娟眉繞山,
 26 My waist, slender and dainty, hardly thicker than a handspan. 依約腰如杵。
 The phoenix pipe was so mournful it seemed to sob, 鳳管悲若咽,
 The simurgh string with its fragile chord was about to speak. 鸞弦嬌欲語。⁴⁸
 The fan is thin, the red powder on my face shown through, 扇薄露紅鉛,
 30 The silks are light, weighed down with golden threads. 羅輕壓金縷。
 The bright moon shone over the Southwestern Palace, 明月西南樓,
 Where were the pearled-curtains, hooked with hawks-bill-shell. 珠簾玳瑁鉤。⁴⁹
 Bright waves in my eyes are capable of captivating smiles, 橫波巧能笑,
 34 My curved moth eyebrows were laden with grief. 彎蛾不勝愁。
 After the flower withered, the fruits were left on the tree, 花開子留樹,
 And when grasses grow, their roots would be attached to clay. 草長根依土。
 Had I known the Golden Ditch was this far away, 早知金溝遠,⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Lines 19-22 are an imitation of the Music Bureau "Mulberry Up the Lane". See New Songs from the Jade Terrace, 33.

⁴⁸ "The simurgh string" is a string broken and rejoined using "string-sticking glue"; it was said the immortals made the glue by cooking simurgh-beaks and unicorn-horns.

⁴⁹ "The Southwestern Palace" alludes to Bao Zhao's "Enjoying the Moon" (玩月詩, Yiwen Leiju, 1: 8)--"It first appears to the Southwestern Palace \ Slender and slim, it looks like a jade hook \ Not yet shining on the northeastern step \ Fine and dainty, like a moth eyebrow" (始見西南樓, 纖纖如玉鉤. 未映東北墀, 娟娟如蛾眉)--very possibly, here it refers to the *Shaoyangyuan*. For 珠簾玳瑁鉤, see p. 220 and 222.

⁵⁰ "The Golden Ditch" refers to an imperial ditch.

Why would I have married myself off to my lad?	何事歸郎許?
But I won't follow the example of White Flower Yang,	不學楊白花,
40 And shed tears like showers of rain, day after day.	朝朝淚如雨。 ⁵¹

This is a Music Bureau verse of a considerable narrative content. We will first take an overall look at the story the poet is trying to tell.

At her first appearance, as a native of "the White-Fern Isle", the lotus-gathering lady is paddling her dainty "Hibiscus" skiff into the depths of the water grasses to hide herself. She is a devoted lover who would rather die for her affection than indiscreetly change her resolution. When a riding lad with "purple-roving-rein in hand" comes in sight on the bank, she purposely turns away from him, then recounts a story of her glorious past: she used to live in an extremely rich family of the capital Jinling and was in great favor with her beloved and eminent husband; but great joy begot sorrow, and it so happened that she was reduced to her old way of life not without regret. The life of the heroine can be divided into three stages: early maiden days, married happy days and present reflective days. Each of these "stands for" a period in Wen's life: early years before serving in the court, attendance of the Heir and forced retreat to the south in the Huichang era.

This story might sound somewhat ambiguous when we try to discern the identity of the lady's husband. But toward the end of the poem, we read: "Had I known the Golden Ditch was this far away \ Why would I have married myself off to my lad?" The Golden Ditch, the name of an imperial ditch, is used synecdochically here as a substitute for the imperial palaces or the royal family. Thus, this lady's former husband is a man of royal stock living

⁵¹ Yang Baihua, a person after whose name a Music Bureau verse took of title, was said to have been a handsome and valiant man of the Western Wei, who fled and surrendered himself to the Liang dynasty, in order to escape the love of Empress Hu. For the loss of Yang's love, it was said, Hu composed the song, see YFSJ, 73: 1039-40.

in the imperial palace.

Tracing back a little further, we find the evidence becomes clearer: The bright moon shone over the Southwestern Palace \ Where were the pearled-curtains, hooked with hawks-bill-shell"--here there is no mistaking that the lady in her former days lived in one of the palaces. The second line is even reminiscent of the *Shaoyangyuan* in "The Twenty-Two Rhymes of the Arched Gate," the residence of the Heir Apparent. It is no wonder that her surroundings were so luxurious and sumptuous.

Is her late husband really an Heir Apparent? One more clue in the poem will bring home the fact that he is. Why does the lady under the poet's brush "turn away" from the "riding lad?" As a poetic clue, this offers much food for thought. Our answer is that, the "riding lad" holding the "purple-roving-rein" from whom the lady "turns away" is not the imperial crown prince, as the allusion shows clearly. In other words, the man the lotus-gathering lady devotes her affections to is none other than the Heir Apparent.⁵² As to why the lady lived in Jinling, the ancient capital of the Six dynasties, instead of Chang'an, this substitution is one of Wen's frequently used tropes to demonstrate rather than cover up his true meaning.

It might seem strange that a beautiful lady, having served in the palace, should have

⁵² In JS, 28: 847, after the song (we quoted in p. 325, note 44), the text reads: "Those who understood the song said: White (白) is a color pertinent to the metal. Horse (馬) means the royal surname (司馬). Purple is a color that assumes the place of the orthodox color (紫爲奪正之色). Soon later, Duke Haixi was forced to abdicate. The three princes, who were not his sons, were then strangled using reins (繯). The day after their death the south sent sweet dew (甘露) as tribute." Thus the folksong Wen alludes to has to do with the death of the imperial heir. "Purple is a color that assumes the place of the orthodox color" alludes to *Lunyu*, 17: 2524. For the translation, see Legge, 148.

come back to her native place in the Yue region to engage once more in lotus-gathering. We only know that, on the contrary, there had been a famous beauty Xi Shi⁵³ who was sent from the Yue countryside to the Wu palace. Now the lady in question even has had the remarkable experience of serving an Heir Apparent, about whose death she is reluctant to speak. Put in the context of the late Tang times, such a tale is hardly imaginable. Even if such was the case, Wen's life experiences give the poetic subterfuge away. Wen finds it convenient to lay bare his feelings through such a story. The title of a Music Bureau topic provides him more freedom to compose poetry so as "to await collecting and recording."⁵⁴ Like the director of a film, he wants his actress to play the part he intends her to play. As a result, the beautiful lady was from the Yue region, like Xi Shi, and went into the palace in the service of the Heir Apparent, then returned to her old way of life. Thus she was made a "refurbished version" of Wen's life. It becomes transparent that the lotus-gathering lady is an embodiment of Wen's self-image, and the story of her entering the palace and coming back to Yue hints obliquely at Wen's attendance upon the Heir and return to Jiangnan. In view of this, we infer that this poem must have been written during the Huichang era.

Closer scrutiny of each line uncovers the metaphorical details. We offer one more example here: "The phoenix pipe was so mournful it seems to sob \ The simurgh string with its fragile chord was about to speak." This couplet also hints that the lady's late husband is a crowned prince. In the mournful music of the flutes and chords, we sense the lady's deep grief resulting from her futile attempts to retrieve her failure, that is, grief resulting from Wen's futile efforts to find any remedy for his situation.

Therefore, by pursuing the trail of poetic hints in the poem and comparing the narrative

⁵³ Xi Shi was a famous ancient beauty, a native of the Yue Kingdom, who was sent into the palace of King Fuchai of Wu.

⁵⁴ See WFQ, 13, "The Preface" (序) to "The Song of Zhang Jingwan Collecting Lotus" (張靜婉采蓮曲).

details with Wen's actual experiences of attending the Heir Apparent, and by then taking into consideration the blank spaces in the poem's narrative structure, we come to realize the poem's ingenuity and grasp its hidden motifs. After having understood this, it is worth our while to glance back at the image of the lotus-gathering lady. Among the elements that constitute the image, some characteristics are unrealistic or idealized; while individual aspects might be realistic, the combined effect is surrealistic. A lady might have served in the palace, and she might have lived in the Yue region, but it is inconceivable that she could, after having served an Heir Apparent, come back to Yue region with all her remarkable past. After all, seen in its entirety, the image of the lotus-gathering lady has more realistic characteristics. Because, her peculiar experiences and mentality mirror exactly the poet's life experiences; to such a degree that even the concrete particulars in the poet's political experiences were made manifest through the dramatic performance and exposure of the lady's inner world. The unrealistic, idealized characteristics or the realistic, specific ones are the different sides of the same coin. The poet secretes in his poem a seemingly inscrutable riddle that forces the reader to cudgel his brains, for an answer only arrived at after painstaking labors.

We remember that in "The Twenty-Two Rhymes of the Arched Gate", Wen likened himself to "The Immortal Lad", and the Heir Apparent to "The Jade Lass". Here, with reference to the same affair, he changes his part by playing the female. Historically, in pre-Qin Chinese poetry, there is a tradition of likening courtship of a girl to serving one's monarch. In poetry after the Tang dynasty, as a result of the centuries-old moral demand that a wife serve her husband and that an official serve his monarch, it was more frequently the case that the poet likens himself to the woman. The fact is that a court official was more subject to the wanton domination of his monarch than a woman was to the fickleness of her husband. In Wen's poetry, however, even though he might assume the part of a woman, that role could hardly muffle his spirited, masculine voice. Nevertheless, pursuing

the narrow artistic path of "speaking about the affairs between monarch and his subjects by means of the feelings between lad and lass", Wen had arrived at an extreme point that was an insurmountable peak and thus also a dead end. With respect to sublimity of verbal beauty, richness of imagery and profundity of subject matter, we can say that Wen has really reached an insurmountable peak. However, faced with the narrative details cloaked in metaphors and allusions, that were so dense and subtle, readers could not always follow the ideas Wen meant to express. Such poetry, more often than not, was too obscure for uninitiated readers to fathom. In this sense, we think that Wen has gone too far down his literary path and found himself at a dead end.

An Overall Explanation

According to the current state of studies of this series, there are four theories concerning it. Zhang Huiyan (1761-1837) and the Qing dynasty Changzhou School of *Ci*-poetry represented by him maintained that the series must have deeper theme than it shows in appearance (*jituo*, 寄托),⁵⁵ something about the author's political experiences.⁵⁶ Scholars represented by Wang Guowei (1877-1927) were very opposed to Zhang's theory;⁵⁷ some of them even said that Wen "was nothing more than a frustrated literary man, so how could

⁵⁵ For *jituo* (寄托), an untranslatable term, we may use "hidden motifs" as a makeshift.

⁵⁶ See Zhang Huiyan, 1-4. In the sixteen *ci* poems Zhang selected from Wen's works to discuss, which include the Pusaman series, Zhang maintained that the Pusaman series contains a motif in which "a scholar laments not meeting his lord" (此感士不遇也). As to the artistry used in the poem, Zhang felt that "there are flashbacks along with the unfolding of every stanza" (用節節逆叙). Throughout the series runs the main thread of a dream, just as the series "opens with a scene of waking from the dream" (從夢曉後領起). In this multi-act dream all the hidden yearnings of the heroine are implied, with an idea [as lofty as that] of *Lisao*'s "original raiment" (離騷初服之意, Qu Yuan's innate virtue).

⁵⁷ See Wang Guowei, *Renjian Cihua*, 37 & 93.

he have had such breadth of vision as to bewail the times and pity the people?"⁵⁸ In order to discredit the "*jitu*" theory, even the authorship of the series was groundlessly denied. The third theory was represented by professor Shi Zhecun (施蟄存), who thought that the "hidden-motifs" theory can be justified as a kind of normative reading, in that it tallies with Chinese literary tradition. However, he continued, "It is a mistake to suppose that Wen had the intention to express his 'hidden motifs' when he set brush to paper".⁵⁹ A fourth tendency is to enjoy and value of this series without bothering to make out whether or not it has any hidden motifs at all, and, perhaps to make the readings easier, simply to regard the poetry as "purely objective".⁶⁰ These four theories share a common shortcoming: none of them is based on a sufficient understanding of Wen's life and Wen's literary theory. Though few critics have endorsed Zhang's theory, we will see that he was basically right, though we regret that he made no investigation of Wen's life.

Unlike any of the above theories, our general understanding of the series can be summarized in the following two points:

First, we should observe the series not only as a lyric entirety, but also as a narrative whole. The moment we weave the narrative threads together, we will see the story that the series tells. We find that the heroine is a frustrated court lady as beautiful as Xi Shi. Originally, she "took residence in the curve of a Yue stream" (家住越溪曲, no. 9); she and her husband "Met each other in the season of the peonies \ But too soon were we forced to part" (相見牡丹時, 暫來還別離; no. 3); and she had to return to her native place: "From the painted tower no more news was heard \ Amid the fragrant herbs, by the southern bank of the River" (畫樓音信斷, 芳草江南岸, no. 10); she cherished a heartrending memory of the past: "In those days I knew to treasure myself \ but the past events I cannot bear to

⁵⁸ See Xia Chengtao: *Tangsong Ciren Nianpu*, 405, quoting Li Bingruo.

⁵⁹ See Shi Zhecun: "Du Wen Feiqing ci Zhaji." *Zhonghua Wenshi Luncong*, 8: 273-81.

⁶⁰ See Ye Jiaying: *Jialing Lunci*, 13: 54.

recollect" (當年還自惜, 往事那堪憶, no. 12); now that "The messages from the jade pass are scarce" (玉關⁶¹音信稀, no. 4), she can only lament the fact that "Wu Palace in my old country was far away" (故國吳宮遠, no. 14); and "When I was yearning for you, I dreamed no dream" (相憶夢難成, no. 8). There is no mistaking the fact that all these particulars are strikingly similar to the experiences of the lotus-gathering lady in "Jiangnan Air," and it is irresistible to infer that the two poems share a same subject matter. We also find in the case of this lady a three-staged life similar to that of the lotus-gathering lady--her early years, service at the court and forced retreat to the south--hence yet another version of Wen's life, though the narrative details here are scattered through the series, which serves to divert the reader's attention from finding out the story itself.

Second, the series is more than a palace style poetic account of the yearning lady's feelings, it is also a political allegory of the frustrated Wen Tingyun.

Throughout the series, the man who is the object of the heroine's affections never appears on the scene, as in "Jiangnan Air". There are, however, enough hints to suggest that he is no ordinary lad but the late Heir Apparent. As more examples will reveal, there are ample clues in the series that bring out the hidden motifs, such that they could not be understood as an unintentional revelation of the author's persona. Meanwhile, when reading the poem, we cannot rest contented with enjoying the beauty of the heroine and being touched by the affective power of the images surrounding her, but we should probe into the depths of her inner world, to find out why we respond to the poem involuntarily with sympathetic inspiration. In Wen's poetry, the surface appearance of the poem often serves to create an ambience that at the same time moves and baffles the reader. Only by penetrating the surface, can we find the buried aesthetic treasure to our satisfaction,

To illustrate these points, our first example is the following couplet:

⁶¹ Jade pass, 玉關, is not short for 玉門關, a frontier pass in Tang times, as many scholars suggest, but hint at the palace or the court.

In my languorous dream, I recall the Golden Hall,
Facing a courtyard covered with luxuriant daylilies.

閑夢憶金堂，
滿庭萱草長(no.13).

Understood literally, when the lady dreams of her past in "the Golden Hall," the moving sight of the palace court with exuberant daylilies appear before her eyes. To grasp the figurative meaning of this couplet, we must trace the implications of the "daylilies." The daylily, *Hemerocallis*, was also known in ancient China as *yinan*, "good-for-bearing-sons herb" (宜男草), or *wangyou*, the "forgetting-sorrow herb" (忘憂草). In The Book of Songs, we have: "Where can I get a daylily \ To plant behind the house" (焉得萱草，言樹之背); Kong Yingda's annotation reads: "The daylily makes people forget their sorrow."⁶² According to Yiwen Leiju quoting Zhou Chu's (周處) Fengtu Ji (風土記) (81: 1396): "*Yinan* is the name of an herb,...with flowers like those of the lotus. Wearing it (at the belt) is good for a pregnant woman, who will be sure to give birth to a boy" (宜男，草也。花如蓮。宜懷娠婦人佩之，必生男). In the same page of Yiwen Leiju, is also found Xiahou Zhan's (夏侯湛, of the Jin dynasty) "Rhapsody on the *Yinan* Flower" (宜男花賦), and Cao Zhi's hymn (贊) on the same topic. In the former, there are lines such as these: "As a perfect herb it grows tall and graceful \ Imbued with the virtue of wood at the Shaoyang. Served as the luxuriant adornments of the palace ladies, it ascends the inner chamber of the Purple Subtlety" (冠衆卉而挺生兮，承木德于少陽。⁶³ 充后妃之盛飾兮，登紫微之內堂). Briefly put, "daylily" has a wide range of meanings encompassing matriarchal affection, matrimonial harmony, imperial conjugal love and finally the blessings from Heaven for the

⁶² See *Maoshi* 3: 327. For the translation, see Waley, no. 49.

⁶³ Here, very suggestively, Xiahou Zhan attributes to the daylily the virtue of wood, one of the Five Elements corresponding to the direction east, which tallies with the Heir Apparent's residence in the eastern palace; Xiahou located the virtue of wood in *Shaoyang*, not accidentally identical with *Shaoyangyuan*, the Heir Apparent's residence. For the definition of *Shaoyang* as the Eastern Palace, see Wenxuan, 46: 645.

imperial prince. In Wen's unique diction, it becomes a poetic substitute for the Heir.

Wen uses the same designation on another occasion in his "Song on A Screen of [the Heir Apparent's] Birth and Blessing" (生祿屏風歌, j. 2, WFQ): "Good-for-bearing-sons herb, being as it is an inner palace-herb \ Cannot be as red as the thousand fruits of the cherry" (宜男漫作後庭草, 不似櫻桃千子紅). Professor Zhan Antai (詹安泰), who hypothesized that Wen had served the Heir Apparent, provided this poem as one of his proofs. "If the *yinan* herb could not even compare in redness to the cherry's thousand seeds, is this not to say that the Heir Apparent was in a condition worse than that of the other princes" (Xia Chengtao: 520-1)? Professor Zhan's conjecture is well-made, but he failed to support his inference with stronger proofs.

Now we can understand "Facing a courtyard covered with luxuriant daylilies"--the "court lady" recalls with nostalgia the days when the Heir Apparent and his mother both enjoyed imperial favor. These are the feelings that Wen imparts to the lady's "languorous dream," as a part of recollection of the "Golden Hall". In reality, this was his own dream.

The next example is the exact explanation of the term "painted tower" (畫樓). This term is used several times in the series, as in the following couplets:

For long I've been yearning for the painted tower, where	畫樓相望久,
Beyond the balustrades, were drooping the silky willows.	欄外垂絲柳. (no. 4)
A spring love sickness is felt to the depths of my heart, amid	春恨正關情,
The remaining drippings of the clepsydra in the painted tower.	畫樓殘點聲 (14)
From the painted tower, no more news was heard,	畫樓音信斷,
Amid the fragrant herbs, by the southern bank of the River.	芳草江南岸. (10)

If "the painted tower" is the place where the court lady now lives, she should not say that "For long I've been yearning for" it, nor that she hears "no more news" from it. But if it was her boudoir in days past, why, in her present longing, does she say that she hears

"The remaining drippings of the clepsydra in the painted tower?" In this series, even such common terminology forces us to seek out some deeper meaning.

We will read "painted tower" in conjunction with the following lines: "The Painted wall in the gloomy Hall of the Nine Sons" (畫壁陰森九子堂 in "Song of A Screen of [the Heir Apparent's] Birth and Blessing Prayer", c. f. p. 203); "In the Painted Hall was a forest of halberds and frosty blades" (畫堂列戟叢霜刃, in "Song for the God of Marquis Jiang", see p. 244). It is not far-fetched to understand "painted tower" as a variant or a synonym for "painted hall," which is short for "Painted Hall of the First Abode of the Heir Apparent" (太子甲觀畫堂, see p. 244, note 30), an inner-palace residence where the imperial sons and consorts lived. Both "painted tower" (畫樓) and "painted hall" (畫堂) are very common terms, referring to a boudoir where the heroine lived. Since our poet used "painted hall" to refer to "Painted Hall of the First Abode of the Heir Apparent," we have no reason to exclude "painted tower" from similar usage.

Only by tracing to the root the term's connotations, can we reach the hidden information it contains. If we understand it merely at its face value, however, we can still feel its rich connotation with all its links in the context, though from a relatively superficial level. For, after all, Wen was writing in the palace style, and he must in the first place be able to cater to the palace taste, which was anything but a show of erudition. We know that Wen seldom completely exposes his intention, instead, he always keeps it under some disguise; allowing for his performance with "make-up," when his persona is behind the disguise of a palace lady, his choice of words such as "painted tower" is understandable. The term both retains its underlying definition (as residence of the Heir Apparent) and fits well in with a palace-style poetic environment.

Therefore, we emphasize once more that, apart from reading into the series Wen's political experiences and feelings, we should also treat it as characteristic of palace poetry. What we face is a poetry that is both pleasing to the eye and appealing to the mind.

Our third example is the following couplet:

Simurgh mirror and the flowering twig,

鸞鏡與花枝,

This feeling of mine, who can get to know it?

此情誰得知? (no. 3)

The simurgh mirror alludes to a tragic story:⁶⁴ It was said that a king obtained a simurgh and tried to make him sing; despite the golden cage and delicate food the king offered him, the bird was even more grieved and refused to sing; when placed before a mirror, however, he thought he met his like, and, watching his image in the mirror, he sent forth a sad cry that resounded through to the skies, then, with a last struggle for life, died. The image has a strong sentimental burden, that of losing one's "understanding friend" (知己), and in "Simurgh mirror and the flowering twig," implies that the husband of the lady was dead, otherwise she would not be in such a melancholy mood. The mirror before her and her own beautiful image in it bring out in stark relief a grief that, in view of the story alluded to, can be understood as occasioned only by the death of her husband. As to who the lady's husband was, it is none other than the Heir Apparent, as we will adduce with more proofs. The court lady herself is an incarnation of the poet, who designed this image to stand and speak for himself.

Apart from the above examples, just as Zhang Huiyan suggested (*Cixuan*, p. 1): "The blue palace gate, the golden hall, the old country and the Wu palace disclose an inkling to the effect that there are hidden motifs" (青瑣, 金堂, 故國, 吳宮, 略露寓意). Indeed, every line and every term in the series is rich with ore waiting to be mined. Even the names of flora and birds are emblematic of affections and tragic happenings. Willow (柳), appearing eight times in the series, is charged each time in contents with the longings of separation at various occasions. Other plants, such as apricot (杏, a token for passing the Presented Scholar degree), pear (梨, puns on 李, plum, and also the royal surname), cordate telosma (夜合, also 合歡, symbol of happy married life), daylily, bamboo (metaphorical substitute for a noble man, 君子) and fragrant herbs (symbolic of worthy

⁶⁴ See *Yiwen Leiju*, 90: 1560, Fan Tai's "Preface to the Simurgh Poem" (鸞鳥詩序).

gentleman), all abound in literary suggestiveness. As to birds such as the mythical phoenix (鳳凰, imperial consort), simurgh (鸞, frustrated noble man), mandarin duck (鴛鴦, symbol of conjugal love), cuckoo (杜鵑, spirit of tragedy), oriole (鶯, a sign of passing the Presented Scholar degree) and swallow (燕, the messenger of spring or political favor), wild duck (鶻鵒), partridge (鸚鵡), halcyon (翡翠), none is devoid of symbolic import related to the concrete experiences of Wen's life.

To sum up, in this series Wen assumes the persona of a beauty, speaking through her about his life experiences and feelings up to the Dazhong era. The brilliance and inventiveness of the series lies in the fact that Wen not only subtly puts all his political experiences into the narrative of a frustrated court lady, but manages also to depict her truer than life, with all her apparel, makeup, mood, yearnings and dreams. We can suggest that Wen's own life, a political life frustrated to a considerable degree by his marriage with a prostitute-singer, enabled him to obtain a deep insight into both his own feelings and those of the opposite sex. He differs from many of his contemporaries in that he regarded the woman not as a temporary object of pleasure, but as a human subject whose fate was similar to his own. By fusing his own character and personality with that of the heroine, he sympathized and empathized with her. The Pusaman series is a consummate example of this practice since the poet's personality and spirit merge with the court lady, to such a degree that the empathizer and the one empathized with are almost indistinguishable. At the same time, barriers of time and space, past and present, night and day, and dream and reality, become confused, so that all description and narration have a single referent--Wen's feelings and the experiences that underlie the feelings.

A Few Sample Poems

Limited by space, we cannot analyze all fourteen poems, and instead will examine a few specimens.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ For the translations, I have consulted the following published sources: Lois, Among the

Within beaded crystal curtains are a cool porcelain pillow,	水晶簾里頗黎枕,
And warm scented mandarin-duck brocade that courts dreams.	暖香惹夢鴛鴦錦.
On the opposite river bank, willows appear smoke-like,	江上柳如烟,
Wild geese wing across the waning moon in the sky.	雁飛殘月天.

A lotus-silk skirt in a light hue of autumn,	藕絲秋色淺,
And a headpiece of colored lace, in cunning pattern.	人勝參差剪. ⁶⁶
On each temple are flowers fragrant and red,	雙鬢隔香紅,
Waving over the hair in a gentle breeze, a jade pin.	玉釵頭上風.(no. 2)

The first stanza (上闕, including the first four lines) depicts a very sumptuous boudoir. The cool porcelain pillow and mandarin-duck brocade (quilt) are not only objects that once coaxed our heroine into her dreams in the former days, they are the images that emerge in her present dream--of a past when she was in possession of such things. "Mandarin-duck brocade" (鴛鴦錦) also appears in "Weaving Brocade" (織錦詞, j. 1, WFQ), written for the Heir Apparent. In that poem, it is the emblem of the weaving lady's affections for her husband, a metaphor for Wen's loyalty to the Heir. But here it is the token of the heroine's everlasting love. Even if we ignore all this background information, we are at the least ushered into a highly suggestive ambiance where the exquisiteness of the objects throws into relief the captivating beauty of the heroine even before she appears on the scene.

When we read the next couplet, we find to our puzzlement that the scene shifts to a vast natural setting by the River. Zhang Huiyan was correct in taking it to be a dreamscape

Flowers, 37-54; Liu Wu-chi, *Sunflower Splendor*, 248-50; Cyril Birch. *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 336-7.

⁶⁶ Lotus-silk, 藕絲, is a kind of fine silk-fabric in light yellow color, which was often used as an alternate designation for feminine apparel made of the material. 人勝, is a kind of paper-made flower that ancient Chinese women often used when dressing their hair.

of the heroine (3), though he failed to point out that the first couplet is also what emerges in her dream, a dream about her past experience in the palace. Since both the first and the second couplets are but parts of a dream deliberately designed, we have to consider the realistic foundation on which it is constructed and take the shift from inside the palace to the banks of the river as an oblique hint at Wen's returning to the south from the capital after serving the Heir Apparent.

A dream, in its own right, can defy logic. The poem becomes all the more lively because the dream is in a jumble, despite the logic behind it by which the poet wields control of the whole series. Whether this reality is a dream of his heroine or his own, given literary expression, at least this is Wen's own creation. In fact, it is in such lines as the description of the dreamscape that Wen ignores the confinements of palace poetry and gives himself away as a writer whose ultimate concern is politics. For Wen, to put this unforgettable memory into the dream of his lady is an spontaneous revelation of his innermost feelings, rather than the lady's.

It is not until the second stanza that we have a direct description of the heroine. Time and again, we are struck by the realistic and vivid depiction of her beauty (internal and external), conventionally understood as metaphor for virtue and ability of an honest subject. In general, the lady is now living in widowhood, as bereft as an honest subject who has lost his lord. Every line hints at her loneliness. For example, "lotus-silk" (藕絲) in line 5, puns on "yearning for spouse" (偶思, i.e., 思偶); her spouse, in any event, never materializes, but only serve as a foil to set off her beauty and sorrow. In comparison to what is dreamed of (expressed in the first stanza), the image of the heroine (described in the second stanza) in her daytime dress seems a little pale. Because, a dream, dreamed at night, is emblematic of her past; while awakening from the dream, or her status during the daytime, stand metaphorically for her present situation. Her dream might have been a nightmare, a reverie. Whatever the case, her awakening means to suffer anew her bereavement. Most of the fourteen poems of the Pusaman series follow this pattern, in which past

and present, night and day, and dreaming and awakening, are interwoven and interdependent.

Using the same approach, we will find the next example easier to fathom:

Stamen's gold brightens the forehead, limitlessly fair,	蕊黃無限當山額,
In night dress, inaudible laughter, from behind gauze windows.	宿妝隱笑紗窗隔.
We met in the bloom of the peonies,	相見牡丹時,
Only too soon we bid each other farewell.	暫來還別離.

To the golden-stem is attached a hairpin of jadeite,	翠釵金作股,
Atop the hairpin, frozen in flight, are two butterflies.	釵上蝶雙舞.
Who knows the innermost secrets of my heart?	心事竟誰知,
Flowers covering the branches in the moonlight.	月明花滿枝.(no. 3)

Like the case in the last example, this poem starts with a scene in the woman's dream, which is of her unforgettable past in her better days. We see her dressed in her best, enjoying wedded bliss with her husband, whose appearance in the dream, however, is only implied. To her regret, she met him very late in life, and their married life together was too brief. They met each other during "the bloom of the peonies," namely, towards the end of spring.⁶⁷ This suggests, metaphorically, that the woman was then no longer young. Considering Wen's age when he served the Heir Apparent, namely, forty (837), we find the seasonal metaphor precise and effective. As to the shortness of the marital union, it figuratively refers to the brevity of Wen's encounter with the Heir. We can see once more that all Wen's feelings concerning his political experiences are fully articulated by the image of the court lady. Examples like this are too numerous to ignore.

⁶⁷ During the late Tang times, it was the fashion to enjoy the blossoming of the peonies in Chang'an and Luoyang. Emperor Wenzong was fond of doing this, see Qian Yi, *Nanbu Xinshu*, 9. The peony blooms at the end of the third month on Chinese calendar.

As is in other examples, the second stanza shifts to the lady's makeup and activities when she is awake. The image of "two butterflies" on her hairpin symbolizes a perfect couple in a happy marriage. But they are "frozen in flight" and cannot really fly wing to wing on high. This is precisely the lady's "innermost secrets" that nobody around her knows or cares about. In her sleepless nights she can only empathize with the flowers that bloom in the moonlight.

Here literary technique of using "the feelings of lad and lass to express the affairs between monarch and his subject" has reached a peak of perfection. The image is a highly realistic and picturesque representation of the court lady in her disappointment and love sickness, meanwhile it is subtly and nimbly expressive of the poet himself, who cherishes the memory of the dead Heir Apparent, with his political frustrations. Wen's mastery of this traditional artistry is faultless; nobody in Chinese literary history, either before or after, ever pursues such a cryptic artistic trail as far as Wen did. It is no wonder that few readers of later generations can really follow him to the innermost recesses of his secrets or that many scholars think that he is writing about a court lady, rather than anything about himself.⁶⁸

To do Wen justice, however, we ought to say that he is *indeed* writing about a court lady, *so as* to write about himself. We have to agree that the lady imaged in his portrait is true to life, but this is no reason to infer that he is only writing about the lady. On the contrary, behind every line and every word apparently describing the lady, there is a hidden import relating to himself. This is where the Pusaman poems surpass conventional palace poetry and where Wen distinguishes himself as a master of *ci* poetry. If we say there are hidden motifs (寄托) in Wen's *ci* poetry, what he hides behind the apparently "fragrant and gorgeous" (香艷) motif about a woman, more than his ambitions and frustrations, are his concrete experiences and his responses to them.

The following example can more clearly illustrate this point:

⁶⁸ See Ye Jiaying: *Jialing Lunci*. 13.

In the moonlit jade tower, I always think of him,	玉樓明月常相憶,
The silken willows were delicate, the spring is lethargic.	柳絲裊娜春無力.
Over the grasses growing lush and green outside the gate,	門外草萋萋,
I sent you off, hearing the horses neigh.	送君聞馬嘶.
By the painted drapery patterned with golden kingfishers,	畫羅金翡翠,
Fragrant candles melt into tears.	香燭銷成淚.
Amidst the falling blossoms, the complaints of the cuckoo,	花落子規啼,
Behind her green-gauze window, her dream was dazed.	綠窗殘夢迷. (no. 6)

The moonlit jade tower and silken willow always haunt the lady's dream. The former, as we have seen repeatedly, is located somewhere in the palace. The image of "silken willows" is an image which is saturated with the sense of reluctance to part company with someone; in Wen's poetry in particular, it is a cipher used frequently to symbolize his yearning for the Heir Apparent.⁶⁹

The first line in the next couplet, besides presenting a general parting scene of the dream, alludes to "Summons for A Recluse" (招隱士) in The Songs of the South:

A prince went wandering and did not return,	王孫游兮不歸,
In spring the grasses grow, lush and green.	春草生兮萋萋. ⁷⁰

Who was this prince? Since "Summons for the Recluse" was composed by one of the retainers of Liu An (劉安, 179-122, BC), the Prince of Huainan (淮南王), in a mournful endeavor to "summon the soul" for him after his death, the prince should naturally refer to Liu An,⁷¹ as an allusive surrogate here for the Heir Apparent whom Wen had served. In

⁶⁹ Examples in which Wen uses the silk willow in the same way include "Written at the Wangyuan Post" (題望苑驛), "Written for the Willow" (題柳) and "The Old Residence of Recluse Li Yu" (李羽處士故里). See WFQ, j. 4.

⁷⁰ For the translation, see Hawkes, 119.

⁷¹ See Ma Maoyuan, Chucixuan, 257-8.

reading Wen Tingyun we cannot afford to neglect such oblique implications.

"I sent you off, hearing the horses neigh" hints back to another poem of Wen's, the second of "Two Dirges for the Late Heir Apparent Zhuangke" (see p. 175):

On the dusty road the capital people feel resentful,	塵陌都人恨,
In the frosty suburbs the mourning horses neigh sadly.	霜郊賸馬悲.

This is no ordinary horse, but the so-called "mourning horse" (賸馬). Hence "I sent you off" (送君) in this context can also mean as "I took part in your funeral procession" (送葬). We immediately see in the reference a covert expression of Wen's sad recollection of the late Heir's funeral ceremony.

Of course, the reader can read something different into the couplet, depending on his or her own experiences rather than knowledge of these hidden allusions, because the work in its own right is an open artistic world to explore. However, according to the aesthetic standards of the late Tang literati, the reading or composing of poetry was quite another matter, and here we are seeking to reveal Wen's original intention when he set about to create this series, which is anything but an occasion to give free rein to imagination.

Turning to the second stanza of poem no. 6, again the images are so arranged as to voice the lady's present desire in contradistinction to her past dream. "Golden kingfishers", like the image of the two butterflies in the previous example, symbolize an unrealized marriage, our heroine's vanished dream. "Fragrant candles melt into tears" is similar to Li Shangyin's "The candle will not dry its tears until it turns to ashes" (蠟炬成灰淚始乾), and both lines refer to a profound sorrow that the lover would consume his \ her life away with tears. Now amidst the fallen flowers, which drifted away with the flowing water, is heard again the cuckoo; "Emperor Wang's amorous heart in spring is entrusted to the cuckoo" (望帝春心托杜鵑).⁷² The cuckoo, spirit of tragedy, with its bleeding beak and grievous cries, now laments the heroine's heartrending dream. The more she thinks, the more she

⁷² For the translations of the two lines of Li Shangyin, see James Liu, 66 & 52.

dreams; the dream is broken, and there is only some debris "left over;" her thought is confused, her dream is "dazed." Here dream and reality, past and present, and what was craved for at night and during the daytime are all merged into one, suggesting a yearning and anxious mind. This poem is more a revelation of Wen's inner world than that of the court lady, though it is always presented in the guise of the latter.

The next example will show more signs to prove this point:

Willow floss, piled up, covered the ground of the south garden,	南園滿地堆輕絮,
Sadly I listen to the torrents of rain in the Pure Bright season.	愁聞一霎清明雨.
After the rain, was the slanting sun,	雨後卻斜陽,
Apricot blossoms, though withered and fallen, were more fragrant.	杏花零落香.
Silently I made up my sleepy face,	無言勻睡臉,
About the pillow, behind the folding screen.	枕上屏山掩.
The time of day is nearing the dusky twilight,	時節欲黃昏,
Listless and alone, I leaned by the gate.	無聊獨倚門. (12)

The first stanza is a recall or dream of some particular moment in her past, while the second stanza returns to her present situation. Her past is something always haunting her present dreams, while her present concerns are just the consequences of her past.

In the first stanza, the spring season's splendor has nearly ended. The willow floss, all fallen, covers the ground. A shower of the Pure Bright season adds to her sorrow. This in itself presents a pessimistic picture of the end of spring, which may awaken in a beautiful woman regretful feelings of having spent her youth in vain (美人遲暮), a metaphor for a noble man's aspiration to serve his country before it is too late.

There is more hidden import in this apricot blossom image. If we notice that during the late Tang times, all the successful candidates who had passed as Presented Scholar would gather in the Apricot Garden to congratulate one another, we will naturally link this image

with Wen's experiences in the examinations.⁷³ Now after the wind and rain when it turned fine again, the apricot blossom in the slanting sun was devastated, though it still kept its fragrance. Apparently this is a description of what happened in the natural world. But essentially, it gives at the same time an account of what happened in Wen's life. Thus behind the metaphorical guise, we see how after the trials and tribulations of a political accident, when the situation became calm once more, Wen, at the age of near sixty years, failed many times to attain his ambition of becoming a Presented Scholar, while at the same time, his reputation as an honest and talented man was widespread.

The second stanza compares the lady's past frustration with her present distress. Perhaps Wen feared that he was putting too much of himself into the series, so now he turned back again to the beauty herself and her languorous air. Why is she so downcast? Her own answer is that: "The time of day is nearing dusky twilight \ Listless and alone I leaned by the gate." It is to say, she is growing old. Clearly, in the Dazhong era (847-60) Wen was already well into his fifties (birth year 798). All his life was wasted in pursuit of official recognition—in his striving for a Presented Scholar degree and an official post. This tragedy of a "worthy man" has strong resemblance to that of an abandoned beautiful woman in her everlasting sorrow.

Summary

To sum up, the Pusaman series definitely has something to do with Wen's unique experiences, or, there are "hidden motifs" to be found in it. As we have demonstrated,

⁷³ Wen once mentioned Apricot Garden in his poem "On A Spring Day, I Was About to Return to the East, and Mailed This to the Newly-Passed Presented Scholar, Miao Shen" (春日將欲東歸, 寄新及第苗紳先輩, j. 4, WFQ): "I know the Apricot Garden though I found no access to enter it \ To my chagrin, in front of my horse red blossoms are all over the branches" (知有杏園無計入, 馬前惆悵滿枝紅). This poem was composed in the middle of Dazhong era after one of Wen's failures to pass.

there are many clues closely connected to major upheavals in Wen's life. Had it not been for his efforts to arrange clues in all kinds of disguises throughout the series, we could never have so easily "found" them out, because, however we try to force the language, we cannot create a story out of nothing. Our reading of the series, however, is not meant to deny the traditional readings. Rather, it can enrich these readings by taking into account more of the writer's personal background and general poetic style. This dissertation has concentrated on the study of Wen's life rather than his poetic style, thus we have not concerned ourselves with the complex hermeneutic theories of the modern West.

In concluding, we wish to add one more argument to those already made. As mentioned earlier, Zhang Huiyan, and later, Chen Tingchuo, put forth the theory that the fourteen Pusaman poems must have some hidden motifs related to Wen's personal experiences. Rejecting this theory, however, some of the modern treatments of this series identify it as nothing more than an objective and picturesque description of a court lady. In so doing, however, they fail to offer a convincing account of the series' aesthetic contents. Wang Guowei, an outstanding critic, once commented on Zhang's theory: "How obstinate was Zhang Gaowen (Zhang's style name) in making his running commentary! The fourteen Pusaman poems of Feiqing are nothing more than impromptu creations possessing some undefined mood, how can there be any special hidden motifs in them."⁷⁴ In Wang's view, Zhang's mistake was that he used "the hereditary approach to The Book of Changes handed down from his family" (說易家法) to study the literary pattern of Wen's *ci* poems. Broadly speaking, academic approaches to philosophical texts such as The Book of Changes, perhaps are best not used for research on literature. Different objects of studies require different approaches. Aside from the fact that Zhang Huiyan was indeed an expert in the study of The Book of Changes,⁷⁵ the point needs to be made that Wen Tingyun was

⁷⁴ See Wang Guowei, Renjian Cihua, 25.

⁷⁵ See Shanghai Library, Congshu Jicheng Zonglu, Book II, 959.

much influenced by this text. Indeed, The Book of Changes was a source of literary inspiration for countless generations. For the study of literature in general, and Wen's *ci* in particular, we ought to avail ourselves of as many approaches as possible; why, then, should we exclude an approach related to that used in the study of The Book of Changes? Our only regret is that Zhang Huiyan did not make an analytical study of Wen's life, leaving it for modern scholars to undertake.

Conclusion

It is by the "mutual evidence" of history and poetry that we have made our way through the distorted reports in extant sources and reconstructed the substantial of Wen's life. That is to say, guided by a general understanding of the historical background, we set about to study Wen's poetry, and facilitated by concrete details found in Wen's poetry, we have obtained a better grasp of the historical background. In doing so, we have discovered, in Wen's poetry and prose, the secrets of his life. The secrets in turn have enriched our knowledge of history and helped us explain many of his other works and life experiences. In this sense, to understand Wen's life is to fathom his poetry, and vice versa.

With the secrets of Wen's family background and unique experiences, his romance and his adventures exposed, we now have a fuller picture of his life than heretofore was the case. Born into an aristocratic clan in decline and related to the imperial family by marriage, since childhood Wen had received a Confucian education and made up his mind to contribute to the restoration of a powerful state dynasty and the retrieval of his family's glory. Unfortunately, because of his family's ongoing feud with the eunuchs, and Wen's unyielding integrity as well, the power-entrenched eunuchs would not tolerate any political gains on his part, nor did either of the two opposing factions offer him any easy opportunities for political promotion.

Consequently, even in his attempts to find a living under local patrons, Wen suffered severely from the eunuchs' persecution. The Jianghuai Incident, especially his marriage to a prostitute-singer should be highlighted. The whole story reflects how both the eunuch power and social convention worked against him, turning an unconventional marriage into a scandal. Rumors were spread in Wen's lifetime by the eunuchs. Tales were recorded and retold by many authors after his death, and, worst of all, were taken up by the Song dynasty historiographers. For our poet, this amounted to a political frame-up that cast him into a notoriety for more than a thousand years. However, what blocked Wen's way to a

favorable official career in his lifetime was not his "moral failings," but in larger part the eunuchs' hostility. Moreover, if we compare Wen with many of his eminent contemporaries, we find the claims that Wen was to any degree "immoral" are dubious. On the contrary, we suggest that his affection for a prostitute-singer evinces a remarkable humanity that transcends class and gender bias and thus was rare for his time. As for his unrelenting resistance against the eunuchs, it shows a political courage and tenacity, that was among the most admirable cases of his day.

That Wen was chosen as attendant of the Heir Apparent makes it clear that he was regarded as a man of great talent and honesty by most of his contemporaries, including the emperors. According to the standard histories, Emperor Wenzong acted with care and effort to select "honest and serious literati and court officials to be mentors and attendants" for his son¹. In the face of these facts, all slander of the eunuchs and biased censure of the Song dynasty historiographers, and their later echoes as well, collapse of themselves. Wen's attendance upon the Heir and his political stand towards each of the interested parties in the Heir Apparent Incident speak eloquently to what kind of man he was.

Furthermore, we should do justice to Wen's behavior of changing his name to sit for the examination. He was forced to do so, otherwise he could not even take, still less pass the examination. This ruse, which marked the crux of Wen's protracted efforts to get around the eunuchs and pass the examination, was a typical instance of late Tang times, characteristic of the strife between "the Southern Office" and "the Northern Office". It also illustrates the degree to which Wen struggled with adversity. As to his "cheating"--his taking the examinations for others, there is nothing blameworthy in it. It was an "abnormal" form of protest engendered in a normal but frustrated individual. If there is anything to blame, it is perhaps that Wen was a little too insistent in his desire to realize his political ambitions.

¹ See JTS, "Biography of Gao Yuanyu", 171: 4452.

To sum up, Wen's marriage, his attendance upon the Heir Apparent, his change of name and his "cheating" in the examination--all his involvements in the political troubles of his day, one after another--serve to present before our eyes a man who was true to himself as well as to others, a soul who revolted against social injustice and prejudice, a figure who defied brute force and the would-be authorities, and a poet who was concerned about the fate of his country and the well-being of his people. Of course, Wen was not perfect, and just because he was not perfect, and never pretended to be that, he was a genuine and sincere man in no sense inferior to any men of eminence in Chinese history.

The following discoveries, as a chain of causes and effects, contain the irresistible logic of facts, verify and complement one another, and thus forcefully justify themselves.

In dealing with Wen's "Two Dirges for the Late Heir Apparent Zhuangke," we discerned Wen's particular relationship with the Heir Apparent (p.172-6). However, different readers can have different readings, and others need not agree with our reading if they read this poem in *isolation*. When, from the "Epistle Thanking Minister Li of Xiangzhou" (p. 178-87), we found out that Li Cheng was Wen's teacher and that it was he who introduced Wen to Emperor Wenzong to be attendant of the crowned heir (something unheard-of), we confirmed Wen's liaison with the Heir in more details. Now although we were still less than fully confident, with the same fact rediscovered and complemented, we were enabled to successfully expound a long obscure passage in "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" (p. 195-213), while once more finding strong evidence for the event. Later we exposed at length the riddle of the Sphinx posed by "The Twenty-Two Rhymes of the Arched Gate" (p.214-37), and were making good progress in rounding off the whole picture, though still unsure as to whether we really had found something. However, upon finding out that Wen's makeshift style name, Zaimeng (在蒙), is a term borrowed from none other than the same Li Cheng, as a token of Wen's reverence for his teacher and enmity against the eunuchs, we were amazed and amused at the coincidence--indeed, the logical necessity--of history. The two findings--that Minister Li of Xiangzhou was Wen's

teacher Li Cheng and that Wen's style name was Zaimeng, a term coined by the same person--could not both be in the wrong. For, in each case, we followed a strict sequence of logical inferences that cannot be faulted. Even if we might be mistaken in some way unknown to us, it is highly unlikely that two such mistakes would both point to the same person, in each case out of a multitude of options. Therefore, the life experiences of Wen Tingyun are a kind of logical sequence, of which all terms interdepend on and confirm one another; once we succeed in finding out a key link in the chain, we will follow the clues to track down the inside story, until we see the whole picture.

For all our "discoveries," however, there are still a number of questions that require further illustration.

We have always imputed Wen's repeated failures to the eunuchs, but we cannot further ascertain who the particular eunuch (s) might be. It is quite clear that Wen could not have the energy and strength to confront the eunuchs *en masse*, though the eunuch or eunuchs he regarded as his sworn enemy must have been sufficiently influential to be able to block his way to any easy advancement. Since Wen had to change his name to take the examination of the year 839, whereas from the beginning of Dazhong (847) onward, he was able to take the examinations openly as many times as he wished, the particular eunuch opposed to him must have quit the political arena during the Huichang era (841-6), though his influence could not yet be ignored. Therefore we conjecture that Wen's particular enemy was the arch eunuch Qiu Shiliang (仇士良, 761-843), or at least his like.

Qiu was the chief culprit for massacring the court officials in the Sweet Dew Incident; he also plotted the assassination of the Heir Apparent and drove Emperor Wenzong to death. He was more than powerful enough to take Wen's life if Wen really offended him and dared come within his reach by emerging into the limelight. After Li Yong's death, Wen had to conceal himself in Secretary Pei's house to escape arrest. Similarly, after the divulging of his change of name, what faced him was not only failure, but a threat to his life that forced him to take to his heels. Taking these things into consideration, Qiu in all

probability, was the prime architect of Wen's ruin. In fact, just any minor eunuch was too insignificant to influence the decision-making process (such as choosing successful Presented Scholars), and thus could not have spoiled Wen's political career altogether. Nonetheless, we lack conclusive evidence to pinpoint Qiu as Wen's personal adversary.

If we turn our attention to the eunuchs' activities, we find that in specific historical situations, there were different factions even among the eunuchs. As an unwelcome but powerful social force to the traditional literati, the eunuch-clique must have had a much more complex history than the orthodox historiographers present. To our regret, the standard histories only provide extremely scanty records for very few arch eunuchs, from which we cannot manage to learn how they leagued together among themselves, still less how they inflicted blows on Wen. Considering all these factors and Wen's radical stance towards the eunuchs, we can only confirm the animosity between them. Beyond a doubt, it was the eunuchs who found fault with Wen at the slightest provocation. But that is as far as we can go.

Another problem we have not fully explicated is Wen's political relations with the Niu and the Li factions, a problem essentially subordinate to the one of the eunuchs.

Since we cannot focus our efforts on identifying the partisanship of every individual Wen had come into close contact with, we still lack a better grasp of the various situations Wen encountered. To our relief, thanks to the fact that Wen belonged to neither faction, and guided by the wealth of information Wen's works have preserved, we might be able to start a more detailed study of the factional strife of the late Tang times from a fresh perspective. There is certainly much to find out.

There are other important facts we have no space to deal with in this thesis but we must point out. Wen was much concerned with people's life and frontier defense. Moreover, he died in exile as a direct consequence of his speaking out on behalf of some literati of humble origin in his tenure as Instructor in the State Son's University, an official post gained after the effort of a lifetime.

At the same time that we have reconstructed Wen's life, we have also reached a new understanding of his poetic style, its formation and its expression.

Born into late Tang times, when the dominant literary trend favored ornateness and sophistication, as a young poet in the south-eastern region, Wen accepted the influence from a style that was called licentious and sumptuous, represented by Yuan Zhen. In his long years of travel all over the country in search of patrons, Wen developed a more mature artistic style to both represent nature and express himself with appealing power. He constantly drew from his brilliant predecessors, poets such as Li Bai, Du Fu, Han Yu and Bai Juyi (especially Li Bai), and also received more direct instruction from his teacher Li Cheng. His attendance on the Heir Apparent enabled him to add more exquisiteness and artistic charm to his poetry, when catering to the palace taste. After this period, his poetic style underwent a radical change. In a life filled with political dangers and frustrations under the eunuchs' reign of terror, he fulfilled the poet's duty to record what he witnessed in life, concealing the facts behind an ornate artistic expression while not tarnishing his motifs. To use his own terms, his knack was "to make the overt covert". Such is Wen's poetic style, which presents itself as political (affairs) in the guise of private (love). It is along a particular path of life that Wen's unique style of poetry took such a shape. As for the puzzling beauty of Wen's poetry, even the authors of The Old Tang History, who did not quite understand him, described his style as "pure and surpassing".

This study focuses on discovering the facts of Wen's life through his poetry, hence it is not an all-round study of his poetry. We can, nonetheless, still make a few summary remarks about the major characteristics of Wen's poetic style measured against the general trends of the late Tang poetry's development and in comparison to some of the most influential Tang poets. After the High Tang, often called the golden age of Chinese poetry, it became very difficult for poets to break new ground. As we know from Tang literary history, in the Yuanhe era (806-20), an era that compares favorably with or even surpasses

the High Tang, there were two major poetic schools--one headed by Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen, the other represented by Han Yu and Meng Jiao--and each had a great number of followers. In a sense, the two poetic schools respectively inherited "the mantle and alms bowl" of Li Bai and Du Fu, but each deviated from its models considerably, as a consequence of "the general tendency of Yuanhe that advocated strangeness" (元和之風尚怪).² No late Tang poet could detach himself from the trends of his time. Wen must have also absorbed considerable influence from the two poetic schools (patterns), when forming his own.

As seen from the examples we have used for reconstructing his biography, Wen was a versatile poet who excelled in composing almost all the poetic sub-genres that were in use in his day. In Wen's poems there is indeed a variety of aesthetic expressions and artistic techniques that are intermingled and thus defy a simple stylistic classification. Our typology for Wen's poetry is, therefore, according to his attitudes during the composition, rather than types of versification. Wen's poems can be thus divided into three categories.

(1) Poems composed extemporaneously and quick-wittedly (率意之作) to show his mood at a particular moment: Most of this group are straightforward, natural and simple but elegant verses that bear the clear traces of Bai Juyi or Yuan Zhen, though in the long run, they take even more after Li Bai and the Music Bureau folksong of the Six Dynasties.

(2) Poems composed with great elaborateness and deliberation (刻意之作), in good earnest and with serious theme. Among this category are "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" and "The Twenty-Two Rhymes on the Arched Gate" that have beguiled Wen's readership altogether, contrary to his original intention. After we succeed in unraveling them, however, we find that none of his artistic techniques are abnormal, save that many of his allusions are too archaic for ordinary readers to understand. Unlike other poets, even in long regulated poems (排律), the most serious and highly sophisticated of the poetic

² See Li Zhao: *Guoshi Bu*, 57.

genres, Wen sometimes resorted to homophonic puns. In general, this category of his poems bears the traces of influence from Han Yu and Du Fu.

(3) Poems written with great pains, yet poems in which he takes pride (得意之作), such as his Music Bureau verses and the Pusaman series, Wen's representative works. Poems of this category reach such a consummate unity of content and form and of truth and beauty that made the later Chinese writers stare upward with fascination, incapable of following in Wen's step. They might look simple but they are rich with implication. At first appearance they seem to be poems about women; under scrutiny, however, they present their deeper import of political affairs. Viewed simply from the perspective of love poetry, they are already matchless, while they enjoyed a high reputation mainly as love poetry. It is small wonder that some critics are all at a loss when they are presented with another layer of the truth implied in Wen's poetic language. In these works, the "fragrant" diction and gorgeous lines contrast in perfect harmony with the subtle mood and deeply hidden motifs. With the language uttered and the meanings unuttered, Wen's serious subject emerges from out of minute objects. It was with these kinds of masterpieces that Wen made a special contribution to poetry in Chinese literary history, by establishing the role of a new poetic subgenre--the *ci* poem. Such a contribution was preordained to a poet of unique personality and artistic characters, a poet such as Wen Tingyun.

Qian Zhongshu has pointed out that Wen is one of the few late Tang poets who rid his poetry completely of the influence of Li He (李賀, 790-816).³ We suggest that, compared with Li He, Wen, while enjoying the same extraordinary talent, was a poetic genius more full-fledged and more developed in profundity and dimension, for, after all, Wen saw much more life than the short-lived and somewhat abnormal young poet Li He. In the search of the true, the good and the beautiful, his poetry is more immersed in deeply-felt life experiences, with insistent worldly concerns, positive outlook on life and admirable

³ See Qian Zhongshu: *Tanyi Lu*, p. 55, 56 and 62. Hongkong Longmen Bookstore, 1965.

courage when facing all the hardship fate prepares for him. It was in his brave suffering and struggle that we see the undying spark of life.

In contrast to his counterpart Li Shangyin, while sharing a style with subtle motif, puzzling trope and elegant diction, Wen's poetic voices are more masculine and powerful, infused with the spirit of *Yang* rather than *Yin*. Most of Li's "untitled" poems are so full of feminine tenderness amidst which the reader can no longer discern a controlling masculine mind; while in Wen's poetry there is an unrestrained and heroic spirit that, even though he assumes the role of a woman, the unique performance of the heroine often gives his director (Wen Tingyun) away. This is not a problem of artistic superiority or inferiority between the two poets. This difference results from the two men's different political lives. Wen's is one of drastic rise and fall while Li's is much less tumultuous.

What is the intrinsic relationship between Wen's personality and the personae depicted in his works? We need no longer disparage his works to find conformity between a debauched person and a licentious style. Nor need we, on some pretext or other, enhance his personality at every turn in accord with a favorable assessment of his poetry. Rather than divorcing his works from his life, or simply dubbing many of them "ambiguous" or "aestheticist," we can base our understanding on our discoveries and recognize in Wen's work a unity of politics and literature, reality and art. As a master of Chinese poetic language, Wen chose to write ambiguously, because without ambiguity, he could not protect himself and his poetry. However, his "ambiguity," different from the usual connotations of that term, conveys hard and clear-cut truths, disguised by historical allusions and literary tropes. As a result, his political poems survived the wear and tear of time and are all the more worthy of our attention.

In the long run, then, contrary to the conventional disparagement of him, Wen has his own praiseworthy idiosyncrasies—a consistent style as well as an insistent personality. He was an honest man and outstanding poet whose work is both understandable and capable

of touching our heartstrings, with elegance and sentiments.

Actually, in the past millennium, Wen has never lacked for admirers, including those critics who basically denied his personality. When we browse through the voluminous "talks on poetry" (*shihua*), we find that from the Song dynasty onward, quite a few of his extant poems are cited as exemplars of the best *shi* poetry.⁴ Furthermore, Wen has been acclaimed as the first great literati *ci* master and the founder of the Graceful and Restrained (*Wanyue*, 婉約) School of *Ci* Poetry.

After the death of the two major poets, the poetic reputations of Wen and his good friend Li Shangyin underwent a drastic change. Originally the two enjoyed equal fame in poetry as well as in prose. They were paired as Wen-Li. Pi Rixiu (皮日休, 834-883), their younger contemporary, once remarked that: "Wen Feiqing and Li Yishan are the laureates of recent decades" (近代稱溫飛卿李義山爲之最).⁵ And Chao Gongwu's (晁公武) *Junzhai Dushuzhi* (4: 8) records that Wen's poetry enjoyed a fame equal to that of Li Shangyin. In the Song dynasty, even orthodox critics thought that Wen and Li were a match for each other: "Compared with each other, Wen and Li each has his superior and inferior points."⁶ The two of them were thus ranked alongside each other in poetic fame from their own time up to now. Literary appraisals like this on behalf of generations of readers cannot be easily denied. However, it is also from the Song dynasty onward that the evaluation of the two poets began to differ. "The Biography of Li Shangyin" in *The Old Tang History* (190: 5077) stresses that "Li Shangyin's literary compositions are pure and

⁴ For examples, see Lu You: *Weinanji*; Ouyang Xiu: *Liuyi Shihua*; Liu Kezhuang: *Houcun Shihua*; Qing dynasty anonymous author: *Buganju Shihua*; Xue Xue: *Yipiao Shihua*; Zhang Huiyan: *Cixuan* and Chen Tingchuo: *Baiyuzhai Cihua*.

⁵ See Pi Rixiu: "Preface to *Songlingji*", QTW, 796: 10535-6, composed in 869, by which time, most probably, both Wen and Li had died.

⁶ See Zhang Jie: *Suihantang Shihua*, p. 5, in *Lidai Shihua*.

beautiful but Tingyun's surpass them" (詩思清麗, 庭筠過之). "The Biography of Li Shangyin" in The New Tang History (203: 5792), however, says the contrary--"Li's compositions are pure and beautiful and surpass Tingyun's" (詩思清麗, 視庭筠過之). Things continue to change until today to such an effect that Wen only deserves the shadow of his reputation alongside Li Shangyin.

Later critics are entitled to prefer one poet at the expense of another, depending on the criteria specific of their own times. Nevertheless, without a correct understanding of the poet's works, they are not really qualified to talk in high language about what the poet and his poetry should or should not be like. How can we accept their critical judgments of a poet whose works they have never fully fathomed? Faced with the consistently depreciatory appraisal of Wen still at work today, we feel the injustice done to him since his lifetime.

Another factor contributing to the substantial difference in the current literary appraisals of Wen and Li is that for Li's extant works there exists more than one annotation of considerable academic quality--Yuxisheng Shiji Jianzhu by Feng Hao and Li Yishan Shi Jianzhu by Zhu Heling and Qu Fu; for Wen's works, the only annotation, Wen Feiqing Shiji Jianzhu by Zeng Yi et al, is woefully a failure.

One more reason for Li Shangyin's better posthumous fortune may be that in their lifetimes, Li was "unluckier" than Wen, since he never had such chance to directly serve the highest ruler of the empire. As a result, he did not become involved in the secret political struggles at the top, as did Wen. To the "Besieged City" from which Wen could not escape, Li remained all his life an outsider, an onlooker without a net, standing at the edge of a pool longing for fish.

Subsequent to Feng Hao and Zhu Heling's relatively successful studies of Li Shangyin's works, first Chinese scholars, then western scholars in their wake, have produced an immense number of publications on Li Shangyin--something we can call a Li Shangyin craze, while both groups have been largely indifferent to Wen's works. We do not wish to

stress Wen's poetic achievements at the expense of Li's, rather, we feel that Li's poetic achievements have been overemphasized to the detriment of Wen's accomplishments. We have sought in this study to restore Wen's reputation as a major poet in the history of Chinese literature, a reputation in no way inferior to Li Shangyin.

Our next question is: what can account for the fact that Wen's collected works, very easy to obtain for any scholar or even casual reader, should hold and hide all his secrets in black and white terms for more than a thousand years?

Even for a poet whose life is clear and whose works are easy to understand, totally different appraisals can be made from a variety of approaches. How much more is the case like this to an unrecognized and secretive poet such as Wen Tingyun! Fundamentally speaking, the reasons for Wen's being misunderstood can be attributed to the decline of classic Chinese culture. In the ages of the declining "great unified" (大一統) empires since the Song dynasty, few scholars admired, still less bothered to find out, a noteworthy personality in Wen Tingyun. Wen went beyond his time with his conception and action in his handling of his marriage and surpassed his predecessors and contemporaries in the degree of suffering the ordeal of life, as well as in the ambiguity in his poetry.

In the study of any poet, there are two components of equal importance: the study of the life and the study of the poetry. The more remote the poet's time from our own, the less we are likely to know about his life, hence the more we will have to rely exclusively on his works. If, on the other hand, the works are burdened with lengthy scholiums by earlier scholars, that can help or frustrate better understanding, what are we to do? We can put faith in these earlier scholars, because they were better equipped with the knowledge about the poet's life, or, at the least, with more linguistic lore necessary to explain the poet's language. In the meantime, we cannot completely accept their conclusions because their views are marked by the biases of their own time. Confronted with an accumulation of all the received opinions, we must decide what to accept and what to reject. In Wen's case, to

our regret, there is little to accept from the Qing annotators, who did not have access to more source materials than we do, and whose scholarship is so obviously deficient in this case, to fathom Wen's profundity.

Penetrating and successful analyses of a poet's works presuppose an accurate grasp of his or her psychological realities, the necessary result of a deep insight into the circumstances of the poet's life. This study of Wen Tingyun undertaken here, however, has taken the opposite course. The singularity lies in the fact that it is in Wen's own poetry rather than in any other sources that the secret truths of Wen's life are to be found. Although my discoveries must await general acceptance, I feel encouraged that I have uncovered the logic inherent in the history itself. The basic details of the poet's life, once discerned, will not change; whereas the explanation of his poetic style can be more flexible and variable depending on the theoretical approaches taken. An analogy can be made with the computer before me: once the hardware is manufactured, one can install various softwares in it. It is my wish that the hardware I have fashioned for Wen's life in this thesis will remain compatible with the softwares that have been and will be written for his poetry.

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Appendix I

The Hundred Rhyme Poem (abbr. for the following title)

In the Autumn of the Fifth Year of Kaicheng, Because of Contracting A Kind of Disease in the Suburban Wilds of the Capital, I Could Not Go to the Princely Establishment in the Company of the Local Representative. I Was about to Betake Myself to A Far Place. Amidst Feelings of Self-pity in the Depths of the Winter, I Unbosomed Myself in One Hundred Rhymes And Sent them to Palace Censor Xu [Shang], Investigating Censors Chen [Gu] and Li [Yuan], Attending Censor Su of Huizhong, And Defender of Yu County, Wei; And also I Presented the Poem to Three Friends of Mine: Yuan Jiao, Miao Shen And Li Yi.

開成五年秋，以抱疾郊野，不得與鄉計偕至王府。將議遐適，隆冬自傷，因書懷奉寄殿院徐侍御察院陳李二侍御回中蘇端公鄆縣韋少府，兼呈袁郊苗紳李逸三友人一百韻

This long title spells the complex situation Wen encountered in the winter of 840. He had to give up his efforts for the Presented Scholar degree and took flight to the south. All those addressed in the title were friends who knew Wen's story; some of them even shared with him the experience of attending the Heir Apparent.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1 All the winged hooves go before on the way, | 逸足皆先路， |
| Only I, a cornered dragon, am to weep: | 窮蛟獨向隅 |
| 2 Like a stubborn fugitive in <i>broad-willow</i> I have escaped, | 頑童逃廣柳， |
| Now a fatigued horse in flat wilderness lay prostrate. | 羸馬卧平蕪。 |

Unlike his friends, after the political storm, Wen still could get no opportunity to advance in the world, but instead had to flee for his life (rhyme 1-2).

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 3 As for the yellow scrolls, who, alas, asks about my erudition? | 黃卷嗟誰問， |
| With the red strings I amuse myself on this occasion. | 朱弦偶自娛。 |

4 "Deer's Singing" played, for all successful candidates.

鹿鳴皆綴士，

But I, unlike a true man, should lie low as a woman.

雌伏竟非夫。

Now that he was rejected, nobody cared for his insight and talent. He could only use this poem ("the red string") to "amuse" himself, namely, to give vent to his complaints. Compared with those who were honored with the Presented Scholar degree, Wen felt all the more humiliated (rhyme 3-4).

5 The [ancestral]enfeoffment in the forlorn wild is left waste,

采地荒遺野，

And our fief by the old capital has long been disclaimed.

爰田失故都。

Poet's footnote: My forefathers were dukes and ministers of the state dynasty, and after helping (the first emperors of Tang dynasty) effect the Heavenly Mandate, they were enfeoffed in the commanderies of Bing and Fen (原注: 余先祖國朝公相, 晉陽佐命, 食采於并汾也).

6 Having lost the sheep, I still toss the dice,

亡羊猶博塞，

Letting go the horse, I weary of shouting for stakes.

放馬倦呼盧。

Turning from his own affairs to his family, Wen first tells us that his forefathers had rendered outstanding service to the royal family in founding the Tang dynasty, but the lineage had now lost its past glory. Wen then hints at what had led to this state of affairs, suggesting that the family's tradition of honesty and outspokenness had brought disgrace to his forefathers and now was the cause of his own failures (rhyme 5-6).

7 For generations the Wens partook of the Zhou emoluments,

奕世參周祿，

As family tradition, we used to emulate the Lu Confucians.

承家學魯儒。

8 The family feats and merits are shown in remaining swords and shoes,

功庸留劍舄，

With inscriptions and admonitions borne on plates and basins.

銘誠在盤盂。

As to his family, Wen gives a proud description of his clan's glorious past with its privilege and prestige. We may take Wen's statements with a grain of salt (rhyme 7-8).

9 For statecraft, I have good designs,

經濟懷良畫，

As regards retreat and advance, far-sighted plans.

行藏識遠圖。

- 10 Not in a position to sound the Jade of Chu, 未能鳴楚玉,
In vain I desire to hold the Pearl of [Marquis] Sui. 空欲握隋珠.

As to himself, Wen expresses his aspiration and insight to serve his country and lord. However, his talent and his loyalty were not yet recognized (rhyme 9-10).

- 11 I was indeed seeking fish by climbing a tree, 定爲魚緣木,
And for a second rabbit, by the stump I waited. 曾因兔守株.

Wen here drops a very subtle hint about his first performance in the capital political arena--his attendance on the Heir Apparent, which, despite his sincere efforts, had proved an impassable road for him to realize his high political ambitions.

- 12 Up to five wagonfuls were piled my books, 五車堆縹帙,
With three paths I closed my strung gate. 三徑闔繩樞.
13 I then joined company with many an eminent soul, 適與群英集,
Only for the offer of a good price, I stipulate. 將期善價沽.

However, Wen was enabled to pursue the ordinary course for entering officialdom--to sit for the Presented Scholar examination. To this end, he studied very hard to prepare for it, and looked forward to a chance to stand out among his fellow candidates (rhyme 13-4).

- 14 Lord She's dragon pictures are truly bright, 葉龍圖天矯,
The counterfeit, the "Yan rat", I believe, will make itself a sight. 燕鼠笑胡盧.

Even before his participation, he was apprehensive that the examination administrators would not be able to tell the worthy, true talent from the false, though he wished that his talent would be accepted after all.

- 15 I knew my innate gift to be preordained, 賦分知前定,
But my disappointed mind was in fear of infamy. 寒心畏厚誣.
16 I scurried swifter than Qingji, throwing the dust behind, 蹶塵追慶忌,
I followed the model of Lu Ban, wielding sword in hand. 操劍學班輸.

Despite his excellent literary talent (as preeminent as the handicraft of Lu Ban), he had to

keep clear of the slander from the eunuchs (to run faster than Qingji, a miraculous racer!)--
he had to change his name to take the examination (rhyme 15-6).

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 17 In the Literary Garden I attended many a candidate, | 文囿陪多士, |
| Taking the Divine Prefecture Examination for the A 1 place | 神州試大巫。 |
| 18 My answer could be "a rare playing of the lute", | 對雖希鼓瑟, |
| My name was passed off as those who blew the flute. | 名亦濫吹竽。 |

Poet's footnote: Last autumn I sat for the Metropolitan Prefecture examination, and got my name recommended on the supplementary list (原注: 余去秋試京兆, 薦名, 居其副).

It came out that, as expected, he passed the Metropolitan Prefecture Examination and became "Equivalent to Passing" (rhyme 17-8).

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 19 [This served] only to make men suspect I desired profit and fame, | 正使猜奔競, |
| Though I took no account of whether I won or failed. | 何嘗計有無? |
| 20 A Liu Shan had looked for and found me--it's useless, | 劉惔虛訪覓, |
| So the Wang Ba I imitated was mocked, to my dismay. | 王霸竟揶揄。 |
| 21 To buy fealty, someone had burned the tallies, to no avail; | 市義虛焚卷, |
| I was derided at the pass, for having thrown the silk credential away. | 關譏漫弃襦。 |
| 22 The best remarks, by now, I came to believe, | 至言今信矣, |
| And my humble ambition was, for sure, a tragedy! | 微尚亦悲夫。 |

The repercussions, however, created a sensation. Wen became the topic of gossips. Those vying with him never hesitated to smear his reputation, while those who once lent him a hand could do nothing now. Wen's allegiance to the empire was purposely contorted into ridicule. Confronting the situation, he had to confess failure. Evidently, Wen "failed to pass," because of the divulgence of his name change (rhyme 19-22).

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 23 Let me tune the pitch for the White Snow aria, | 白雪調歌響, |
| And enjoy dancing by the Rain Altar in the pure breeze. | 清風樂舞雩。 |
| 24 I could not raise my shoulders [to adulate anyone] affectedly, | 脅肩難黽勉, |

- But I had to scratch my head, sighing in agony
 搔首易嗟吁.
- 25 To vie for winning, I am not a competent man,
 角勝非能者,
 But to see who is the worthy, was this decided by archery?
 推賢見射乎.
- Since he was above flattering the eunuchs, and since to accept or reject examinees was in no sense a fair play, Wen had to use philosophy to console his frustrated self. This is the price he had to pay for his pride (rhyme 23-5).
- 26 When "the horn pitcher" contains in it more dread and fright,
 兕觥增恐悚,
 "The cup" will lose its share of water, little and slight.
 杯水失錙銖.
- 27 The white target has been withdrawn, no longer red and bright,
 粉堞收丹采,
 While the golden whistling arrows, I have to hide.
 金鵲隱僕姑.
- 28 Letting drop my bowcase, I was ashamed to finish the cup
 垂橐羞盡爵
 Raising the goblet, they insulted me for drawing the bow,
 揚觶辱彎弧.
- 29 Clumsy [as I am], I should not talk of drawing a tiger,
 虎拙休言畫,
 Nor wish to imitate [the action of] butchering a dragon.
 龍希莫學屠.
- Next, Wen hints at the political causes of his failure--that the officials in charge of the examination feared the eunuchs and that the succeeding monarch, Emperor Wuzong, showed a distaste for him (rhyme 26-9).
- 30 A fluff whirled up, I was used to slackness and leisure,
 轉蓬隨款段,
 And I weeded the grass to erect my earthen shelter.
 耘草辟墁墟.
- 31 I received my academic lessons in a village called Zheng,
 受業鄉名鄭,
 I hid myself with my wisdom in a vale named Fool,
 藏機谷號愚.
- 32 Of the simple style or the refined, I had an equal command,
 質文精等貫,
 Tune of lute and lyre each responded to my ready hand.
 琴筑韻相須.
- 33 I built my dwelling adjacent to the vast fields,
 築室連中野,
 By cutting the bulrush close to the Upper Fertile Land.
 誅茅接上腴.
- 34 With flowers of weeds interlacing the bamboo-hedge,
 葦花綸虎落,
 And gnarls of pines embellishing the pillars and beams.
 松癭斗欒櫨.

- 35 I conversed with the warbling orioles in tranquillity,
Or shared a nap with the divine cranes at their ease.
- 36 When stamens were ample, overworking the powdered-wings,
And intoxicating aroma made bee's whiskers break.
- 37 The fragrant herbs were redolent of the Three Islands,
And lucid ripples were similar to those of the Five Lakes.
- 38 There were jumping fish frolicking out of the waterweeds,
And gloomy egrets slumbering beneath the bulrushes.
- 39 Nesting on the dim islet were wild-ducks,
Perching before my quiet screen, partridges.
- 40 I toiled and moiled for the field care,
For "sweetness and fat" came from the season's crops.
- 41 Laughing and muttering, I pointlessly held oranges in my sleeve,
In poverty and in grief, I, too, leaned against a *wutong* tree.
- 42 Able yet to be content with a half dinner of beans,
I dared not slight the green sheaf.
- 43 My angling rock was covered with green moss,
And the fragrant paths, decorated with purple calyces.
- 44 I planted the orchids encircling the parcels,
And passed through bamboos, by a winding road.
- 45 My loom shuttle is unlike that of *the mulberry lady*,
And my grove and garden differ from *the wood slave*.
- 46 I looked out warily for the red carps, stretching out my rod,
And was on watch for the black cormorant, holding camouflage.
- 47 I yearned for the taste of water-cress in "*the Semi-circular pool*",
I found the source of "*ricefield rent in Langya Commandery*".
- Life forced him to retreat to his old way of life, for which Wen takes to a lengthy
- 靜語鶯相對，
閑眠鶴浪俱。
蕊多勞粉翅，
香酷墜蜂須。
芳草迷三島，
澄波似五湖。
躍魚翻藻荇，
愁鷺睡葭蘆。
溟渚藏溪鷁，
幽屏卧鷓鴣。
苦辛隨藝殖，
甘旨仰樵蘇。
笑語空懷橘，
窮愁亦據梧。
尚能甘半菽，
非敢薄生刍。
釣石封蒼蘚，
芳蹊艷絳跗。
樹蘭畦繚繞，
穿竹路縈紆。
機杼非桑女，
林園異木奴。
橫竿窺赤鯉，
持翳望青鸕。
泮水思芹味，
琅琊得稻租。

poetic description: his young days and his early reclusive years, including his studies in the National University of Luoyang. This description is also a display of his skill at composing pastoral poetry (rhyme 30-47).

In this descriptive passage, he tells the readers of his diligent studies under a famous tutor (30-2), his taste and pleasure enjoying nature as a recluse (33-9), his cultivation of his personality and formation of moral principles (40-4), his financial status in seclusion (45), his aspiration to serve his country since his adolescent years (46), and his reputation as a precocious talent in the National University of Luoyang (47).

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 48 The light rattan cane was gnarled and bumpy; | 杖輕藜擁腫, |
| My lotus attire was disheveled and shabby. | 衣破芰披敷. |
| 49 I was sad for the shrike with its fragrant spirit, | 芳意憂鵲鳩 |
| And empathized with the cicadas in their mournful chirps. | 愁聲覺蟬姑. |
| 50 The noisy swallows were shrieking on the short eaves, | 短檐喧語燕, |
| While a hungry squirrel fell from a tall tree . | 高木落饑鼯. |
| 51 Urged by pressure, I had to leave my calm retreat, | 事迫離幽墅, |
| And driven by destitution I ventured the frightful way. | 貧牽犯畏途. |

Later it was his eagerness to serve the country and the poverty of his family after his father's death that drove him to embark on the precarious official career (rhyme 48-51).

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 52 In my loves and hates I took precautions against Du Kui, | 愛憎防杜摯, |
| In my laments and sighs I felt melancholy as did Yang Zhu. | 悲嘆似楊朱. |

To his dismay, the eunuchs--the nightmare of his life--threatened him from the very beginning of his social life (52).

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 53 Traveling for a living, I often passed by the country of Wei, | 旅食常過衛, |
| And tarrying in my journey, I almost crossed the River Lu. | 羈游欲渡瀘. |
| 54 On the frontier I lamented "the Song of the Protector-General", | 塞歌傷督護, |
| By the border I meditated on the horn "Tune of <i>Chanyu</i> ". | 邊角思單于. |
| 55 At the military fords lances and spears were clashing, | 堡戍標槍槊, |

In the River Pass boats and ships were blockaded.

關河鎖舳艫。

Thus, Wen had to travel all over the country, and even go to the frontier, instead of going to the capital, to avoid encountering the eunuchs directly (53-55).

56 I venerated the august bearing of General Big Tree,

威容尊大樹，

And tried to shun *Autumn-Tu*, the law and penalty.

刑法避秋荼。

57 From afar I gazed back beyond a thousand leagues,

遠目窮千里，

And my returning heart flew to the Nine Highways.

歸心寄九衢。

At the end of this period of travel, Wen went to the capital to rehabilitate himself--as is hinted here, he had suffered a great injustice already (rhyme 56-57).

58 To enjoy sound sleep, the price is to suffer long depression,

寢甘誠系滯，

To be offered free soup, I have to act with caution and attention.

漿饋責睚眦。

59 A calling card in my pocket, my name was ruled out before a visit;

懷刺名先遠，

To help the time my Way was appreciated by few.

干時道自孤。

60 By molar and incisor I was repeatedly recommended and praised,

齒牙頻激發，

With umbrella and bookcase my road was yet rugged and rocky.

簞笠尚崎嶇。

Wen recounts his unsuccessful efforts in the capital for a position. Despite the recommendations on his behalf, there was not yet a result. Apparently, with his political orientation and personality, it was not easy for him to be accepted during the time (rhyme 58-60).

61 By dint of the lotus mansion, I was valued in the Marquis' gate:

蓮府侯門貴，

To the Frost Terrace, came the consent of the royal mandate.

霜臺帝命俞。

62 Now the steed's hooves began to run swifter than gale,

驥蹄初躡景，

And the roc's wings were about to spiral up to the zenith.

鵬翅欲搏扶。

63 Having stayed on duty, I returned on my dapple horse,

寓直回驄馬，

Sitting in different sections, we faced the dusky crows.

分曹對冥烏。

64 The Hundred Spirits attended, as it were, enjoying offerings,

百神歆仿佛，

Isolated Bamboo were sending notes, dim and lost.

孤竹韻含糊。

65 In Phoenix Hall we stood in lines to each side,

鳳闕分班立，

- From egret rows with swords erect we paced forward. 駕行竦劍趨。
- 66 At confidential behest, we butted against evil, 觸邪承密勿,
- On behalf of the royal plan we maintained the law. 持法奉訂謨。
- 67 With jades clanging we strutted up and down, 鳴玉鏘登降,
- And the pendants' clangings lingered on here and there. 衡牙響曳婁。
- 68 His Worship showed intimacy with Heshi's Jade, 祀親和氏璧,
- The Fragrance was attached to the Boshan Censer. 香近博山爐。
- 69 Auspicious sunshade grew dense on the green trees, 瑞景森瓊樹,
- A light piece of ice brightened the jade pot. 輕冰瑩玉壺。
- 70 To my divine-sheep cap, an iron shaft is clasped, 豸冠簪鐵柱,
- Atop the dragon head, the Golden Bureau. 螭首對金鋪。
- 71 The Administrator's calligraphy numbered a thousand scrolls, 內史書千卷,
- The General's paintings were one cabinetful. 將軍畫一廚。
- 72 My eyes were dazzled by this surprising display, 眼明驚氣象,
- And my heart awestruck at the grand scale. 心死伏規模。

However, unexpectedly, by the recommendation of a Prime Minister and the consent of the emperor himself, Wen gained a chance to serve the Heir Apparent. This is one of the major secrets of Wen's life, and one of the most ambiguous passages in this poem. The passage here provides a detailed description of how he served the Heir Apparent and what he witnessed during his attendance (rhyme 61-72).

- 73 I never expected to look on the imperial treasury, 豈意觀文物,
- If it was useless to carve a "crude jadeite" like me. 何勞琢礧砮。
- 74 Grasses are luxuriant--fit for grazing the Yaoniao Steed, 草肥牧褭驪,
- Mosses are rough--proper for tempering the Kunwu Blade. 苔澀淬昆吾。

Wholehearted as he was, all his efforts came to naught. Time was not favorable (73-4). The information implied, which was needless to point out to those addressed in the title of the poem, is that the Heir Apparent died as a victim of the eunuchs.

- 75 My yearning for home, a branch-nesting bird, 鄉思巢枝鳥,
The passage of time, a crevice-crossing steed. 年華過隙駒。
- 76 Harboring gratitude [to the emperor] I vainly accompany my shadow, 銜恩空抱影,
For I had no chance to sacrifice myself to repay the imperial grace, 酬德未捐軀。
- 77 Among my compeers I've been honored as a good friend , 時輩推良友,
Of my pedigree I have carried on an honest fame 家聲繼令圖。
- 78 I grieve my wings were too short to find me a position, 致身傷短翮,
With raised head, you look back at me, a worn-out horse. 驥首顧疲驚。
- 79 Now Ban and Sima are galloping forth together, 班馬方齊驚,
While Chen and Lei are, also, driving neck and neck. 陳雷亦并驅。
- 80 In the past, each of you told his own wishes, 昔皆言爾志,
By now I likewise regard my disciples with awe. 今亦畏吾徒。
- 81 The energy I possess to Altair and Plough can soar, 有氣干牛斗,
But where is the man to know the Lulu sword? 無人辨轆轤。

At this point, once more taking up the thread of return, Wen laments his bad luck. He could not "repay the imperial grace," and seeing that many of his friends, including his students, well advanced in their official careers, he sighed mournfully over his frustrations and the waste of his talent (rhyme 75-81).

- 82 Coming as a guest, I poured the green-ants, 客來斟綠蟻,
Trying for a wife, I trod the blue-beetles. 妻試踏青蚨。
- 83 By incessant aspersions, even bones are destroyed, 積毀方銷骨,
And I fear that a slight blemish would spoil the whole gem. 微瑕懼掩瑜。

The fundamental cause of his failure was his marriage with a singer-prostitute and the slanders from the eunuchs on that pretext, as hinted in rhyme 56 (rhyme 82-3).

- 84 As the snake-spears are still involved in shifting wars, 蛇矛猶轉戰,
The "[one in]fish disguise" is in detainment and in thrall. 魚服自囚拘。

85 By such tricks they intended to delude the world, 欲就欺人事,
But how can the ghost's execution be dodged? 何能這鬼誅.

It was the eunuchs who had done all the mischief clandestinely--they seized control of the emperor and threw the country into confusion--at least Wen thought that they did. And it was also the eunuchs who forced Wen into such a tight corner. Here the poet addresses the question to the eunuchs by referring to their crimes instead of their names (rhyme 84-5).

86 Between right and wrong--waking or dreaming, I got lost, 是非迷覺夢,
From Qin to Wu, I planned a journey. 行役議秦吳.

87 In the piercing cold the wind was wailing 凜冽風埃慘,
In the desolation, plants were withered. 蕭條草木枯.

88 Reluctant to leave, I was heartbroken, 低回傷志氣,
Braving the cold, my skin and flesh were frostbitten. 蒙犯變肌膚.

89 Only the cries of migrating wild geese were heard, 旅雁唯聞叫,
A hungry falcon came to me without being called. 饑鷹不待呼.

Wen went back to Wu from the capital in the cold winter. Here the migrating wild geese and hungry falcons are self-portraits for himself (rhyme 86-9).

90 The shuttle of my dream was hastened like the cries of crickets, 夢梭拋促織,
The cocoon of my [yearning] heart was modeled on those of spiders. 心繭學蜘蛛.

91 How can *their* tricks, again, be hard to foresee? 寧復機難料?
But wasn't such petty faith too trifling to be trusted? 庸非信未孚?

92 Furious and wild, I'm a tiger shot by an arrow, 激揚銜箭虎,
In doubt and fear, I'm a fox listening on the ice. 疑懼聽冰狐.

93 For saving myself, I will dig one more burrow, 處己將營窟,
Such is my heart that tallies to that of the Sage. 論心若合符.

Suspicious of the danger around him, and angry at the eunuchs' evils, Wen wanted to have his say, but he could not speak out openly, and had to take care of his life (rhyme 90-3).

- 94 Don't say that I am in my "brother's" grace,
Where can a remote kinsman like me entrust his life?
95 From a tall tree the oriole can [carol to] seek friends,
In a dilapidated nest, the owl had best not scare the phoenix.
96 I'd rather assume a lofty demeanor as a leading figure,
Than bow to shirt and skirt with the Poetry and Rites.
Helpless but unyielding, Wen still keeps his pride and shows a kind of skepticism of
sanctimonious Confucian doctrines (94-6).
- 97 When I recline on a pillow, my feelings are immensely bitter,
In the same boat, how can their Way differ from mine?
With a confusing rhetorical question by which he blamed somebody who betrayed him,
Wen once more expresses his deeply-felt sorrow (97).
- 98 Let me abandon myself to caressing melilotus and angelica,
Though my retirement is not in a "mulberry and elm" year.
99 As a gift to my distant friends, I'll break off a willow twig,
And to make a letter I will cut the bulrushes.
Gazing into the air, with endless tears,
I turn my head back, even more hesitant.
- Wen ends the poem with a reluctant and forced withdrawal, accompanied by all his
frustrations and sadness (rhyme 98-100).

浪言輝棣萼，

何所托葭莩？

喬木能求友，

危巢莫嚇雛。

風華飄領袖，

詩禮拜衾襦。

欹枕情何苦，

同舟道豈殊。

放懷親蕙芷，

收迹異桑榆。

贈遠聊攀柳，

裁書欲截蒲。

瞻風無限泪，

回首更踟躕。

Appendix II

A List of Wen's Works about the Heir Apparent Incident

Although we do not have enough space in this dissertation to unravel all Wen's works on the Heir Apparent one by one, I present a list of them, as the result of my research awaiting for future criticism or further evidence.

Wen's extant works consist of about 330 *shi* poems, more than 60 *ci* poems and over 20 epistles, while there are at least more than 40 *shi* poems, 15 *ci* poems and 10 epistles focusing on expressing and illuminating his particular liaison with the Heir Apparent.

Shi Poetry

J. 1: "Chant for Weaving Brocade" (織錦詞), "Ode to A Night Feast" (夜宴謠), "Song of A Screen of (the Heir Apparent's) Birth and Blessing" (生襍屏風歌), "Melody for A Dancing Robe" (舞衣曲), "Song of Plucking Lotus for Zhang Jingwan" (張靜婉采蓮曲), "Song for the Palace Lady of Xiang" (湘宮人歌), "Don't Cross the River, My Lord" (公無渡河), "Song of the Terrace of Yong" (雍臺歌), "Song of the God of the Marquis of Jiang" (蔣侯神歌).

J. 2: "Ode for the Old City" (故城曲), "Midnight Air at the Running Horse Tower" (走馬樓三更曲), "Melody Damozhi" (達摩支曲), "Song for a Feast of Eastern Xiang" (湘東宴曲), "Jiang'nan Air" (江南曲), "Regrets for the Passing of Spring" (惜春曲).

J. 3: "Hunting Horses" (獵騎), "Writing My Bosom" (寓懷), "Poem Composed on Admiring Orchids" (觀蘭作), "Song for the Double Seventh Eve" (七夕歌), "Presenting to A Friend" (酬友人), "The Golden-Tiger Terrace" (金虎臺), "Lord Guo of Handan (邯鄲郭公詞), "Ancient Feeling" (古意), "Two Dirges for the Late Heir Apparent Zhuangke" (莊恪太子挽歌詞二首). "Two Poems Written at the Western Pool of the Heir Apparent" (太子西池二首).

J. 4: "A Spring Day Impromptu" (春日偶作), "Written at the Wangyuan Post" (題望苑驛), "Written for the Willow" (題柳), "The Old Residence of Recluse Li Yu" (李羽處士故里), "The Double Seventh Eve on the Pond" (池塘七夕).

J. 5: "Contracting Malaria in the Middle of Summer" (夏中病作), "The Four White Seniors" (四皓).

J. 6: "The Hundred-Rhyme Poem" (百韵), "The Fifty-Rhyme Poem" (五十韵), "The Twenty Two Rhymes on the Arched Gate" (洞户二十二韵).

J. 7: "Written at the Temple of Almighty God" (題谷神廟).

J. 8: "The Boshan Censer" (博山香爐).

J. 9: "Sent to a Friend, Written on An Evening" (晚坐寄友人), "Seeing off the Prince of Bohai to Return to His Own Country" (送渤海王子歸本國), "Angling on the Pool of the Xue Family" (薛氏池垂釣). "Bitter Jian Flower" (苦楝花).

Ci Poetry

Fourteen "*Pusaman*" (菩薩蠻十四首); *Qingpingyue* (清平樂, the first of the two).

Epistles

"Epistle Presented Thanking Minister Li of Xiangzhou" (謝襄州李尚書啓), "Epistle Thanking Prime Minister Hegan" (謝紇干相公啓), "Epistles Presented to Vice-Minister Jiang" (上蔣侍郎啓, the second of the two), "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Pei" (上裴相公啓), "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Linghu" (上令狐相公啓), "Epistle Presented to Prime Minister Cui" (上崔相公啓), "Epistle Presented to Minister Feng" (上封尚書啓), "Epistle Presented to Secretary Pei" (上裴舍人啓), "Epistles Presented to the Academician Secretary" (上學士舍人啓) (the first of the two), "Epistle Presented to secretary Du" (上杜舍人啓).