LI SHANGYIN: THE POETRY OF ALLUSION

By

TERESA YEE-WAH YU

B.A., The University of Hong Kong, 1973
M.A., The University of British Columbia, 1977

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Asian Studies)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
August 1990
© Teresa Yee-wah Yu, 1990
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date

DE-6 (2/88)
ABSTRACT

A major poet of the Tang period, Li Shangyin is highly regarded yet criticized because his work is densely allusive. Dazzling and rich in meaning, it is also difficult and obscure because of its pervasive allusiveness.

Chapter I reviews critical opinion of Li's use of allusion. Many traditional critics see allusion as an ornamental rhetorical device and consider Li's profuse allusiveness an idiosyncrasy to be tolerated in an esteemed poet.

Chapter II studies allusion broadly and precisely as a literary concept: generally, allusion is a "connector" of texts, a link between a poet's work and his literary heritage; specifically, it is a linguistic device serving metaphorical functions. Allusion viewed as extended metaphor generates multiple meanings. An approach to reading allusion is here developed to interpret allusive texts on literal, allegorical, and symbolic levels. The chapter concludes that it is a misconception to say that the heavy use of allusion necessarily leads to inferior poetry.

Chapter III relates Li's allusions to major motifs in his work, finding that his historical and mythological allusions fall into clusters and patterns. The profusion of mythological allusions yields symbolic meanings, both in individual poems and in the larger context of his collected works. Examining Li's characteristic use of allusion, the chapter shows how it functions as a major stylistic signature and is the principal reason for the plurisignation and ambiguity in his poetry.
Chapter IV interprets several typical poems by Li Shangyin in the context of the theoretical and historical framework of the foregoing chapters. It highlights some of the major functions of allusion in these poems. A positive response to the plurisignation of Li's allusive mode allows for an inclusive critical approach to diverse interpretations and discards those readings failing the standards of consistency, coherence, and completeness.

Chapter V concludes that Li's presumed vice is his virtue: his allusive texture makes his work difficult but gives it a rewarding richness. His unique use of allusion is organic. Far from being a mere ornamental device, allusion is the very poetry itself. He creates his own poetic mode, the Poetry of Allusion.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
Introduction.................................................................1

CHAPTER II
On Allusion

The Psychology of Allusion..............................................11
Allusion as a Literary Concept........................................21
Setting the Terms..........................................................22
Allusion as Metaphor........................................................28
The Reading of Allusion...................................................34
On ge and buge and the Use of Allusion.........................38

CHAPTER III
Li Shangyin and His Use of Allusion

Background to Li’s Use of Allusion.................................49
Allusion and the Poetic World of Li Shangyin.............68
Allusion and Plurisignation............................................106
Distinctive Features and Strategies.........................140

CHAPTER IV
Characteristically Allusive Poems: An Interpretive Study

"Intricately-Painted Zither".................................163
"Emerald Walls".........................................................176
"The Jade Pool"..........................................................197
"Peonies".................................................................202
"The Maoling Mausoleum".......................................209
"Five Casual Pieces"..................................................218

Chapter V
Conclusion.................................................................237
APPENDIX

(I)  Li Shangyin: A Chronology..........................242
(II)  Chinese Texts......................................246

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.................................261

NOTES.....................................................263

BIBLIOGRAPHY............................................325
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My primary debt is to Professor C.Y. Yeh Chao, whose scholarship and insight inspired me to read Chinese poetry. Her sensitive response to the work of Li Shangyin kindled my interest in his work and guided me through this study. I am grateful to Professors E.G. Pulleyblank and Jerry Schmidt for their generous and helpful comments on my work. I should also like to thank Professor Chen Yixin of Peking University for his thoughtful and ready response to my inquiries. Professor James Hightower has more than my deep gratitude for kindly giving me the benefit of his profound scholarship in his consistently detailed criticism of my work. I also wish to thank Professor F.H. Candelaria for his unfailing good humor and editorial advice.
EXPLANATORY NOTE

1. The text used in this study is Fen Hao’s edition of Li Shangyin’s poetry: *Yuxisheng Shiji Jianzhu* edited & annotated by Feng Hao. 1763. Shanghai: Classical Texts Publishing Press, 1979. 2 vols. Each poem cited in full in the text will be given its page number in Feng Hao under the abbreviation, FH, followed by the appropriate number.

2. The Chinese texts of Li’s poems, if cited in full, are found in Appendix II. Chinese texts of parts of poems are provided in the footnotes.

3. The Beijing *Pinyin* System is used for the romanization of Chinese names, titles and terms. When a book or article is cited which uses the Wade-Giles system of transcription, the title is given in its original form. Passages quoted from books or articles using Wade-Giles spelling will, however, be converted into *pinyin*.

4. Character scripts for all Chinese names, titles and terms are given in the text, immediately after their *pinyin* transcriptions. Except for Emperor Xuánzong 玄宗 and Xuānzong 宣宗, all other *pinyin* spellings are followed by Chinese script only the first time they occur in the text.

Chapter I
Introduction

Generally considered to be the leading poet in the late Tang, and one of the finest in the history of Chinese poetry, Li Shangyin's 李商隐 (813-858) unique vision, sensitivity, and his colorful, intricate use of language all help to set him apart from other major poets so that he occupies a very special place in Chinese literary history. Despite this recognition, however, Li remains today one of the most difficult and controversial Chinese poets.

One bewildering phenomenon surrounding Li Shangyin's poetry is the diversity of its interpretations and the many conflicting responses it generates in its critics and readers. It is not unusual to find half a dozen very different, even divergent readings of the same poem in his collection. Often, within a single poem, such interpretations can range from a reading of the piece as an appeal for political patronage, a documentation of his romantic liaison with Daoist nuns, a satire on the love life of Tang princesses, a reference to certain political situations in the court, to a critical comment on the Tang emperors' futile pursuit of immortality. While some critics do offer different interpretations for different poems, most are inclined to read his pieces based on certain preferred schools of interpretation, to the exclusion of other readings.

Apart from interpretation, other aspects of Li Shangyin's
poetry have received similarly mixed responses. Poets such as Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), Yuan Yishan 元遗山 (1190-1257), traditional critics such as Wu Qiao 吴乔, He Zhuo 何焯 (1661-1722), Weng Fanggang 翁方纲 (1733-1818), among others, are said to have enjoyed his work and thought very highly of his poetry. He Zhuo, for example, describes Li’s poetry as "filled with rhythms and turns, sounds and colors, feelings and tastes," rating him highly above that of Du Mu 杜牧 (803-852). Zhu Heling 朱鹤龄, in the preface to his annotation of Li Shangyin’s poetry, writes, "Li’s poetry has the resonance of the ancient airs and the echoes of Qu Yuan 屈原 and Song Yu 宋玉, for he has grasped what is most profound in Du Fu 杜甫 and yet created something of his own." Feng Hao 阮浩, too, thinks that Li’s poetry is "dazzling in its colors, sonorous in its tones, complex in its constructions and profound in its meanings." On the other hand, however, Li’s poetry has been typically criticized as being "too ambiguous and difficult." It has also been described as "not having one word to do with the governing of State, not having any thoughts of moral encouragement." He is the "talented philanderer" whose poetry is read "in the same way as Xu Ling’s 徐陵 Yutai Xinyong 玉台新咏 and Han Wo’s 韩偓 Xianlian Ji 香奁集 are read." Clearly, these critics are taking a moralistic approach, at the same time ignoring any allegorical or symbolic readings of his poetry. This approach to Li’s work even carries
over to some contemporary Marxist critics. In his evaluation of Li Shangyin, for example, Wang Shiqing 王士青 thinks that Li's poetry may have "relatively high artistic achievements," but many of the emotions found in his poetry are "unhealthy" and should be "discarded."\textsuperscript{11}

A principal reason for the many diverse interpretations and mixed responses to Li's poetry lies, I believe, in his use of allusion. Li Shangyin has left behind a fairly large body of poems, totalling about six hundred.\textsuperscript{12} Written often on a non-realistic plane, his poems are evocative and sensuously dazzling.\textsuperscript{13} They reveal an artistic vision that takes us to realms of delicate beauty and subconscious emotions. While his pieces are extremely attractive, they are also highly enigmatic, crowded with allusions and shifting imagery. Both in the broader and narrower sense, Li's poetry is allusive. We find generic and stylistic echoes of past models and usages with traditional associations.\textsuperscript{14} His collection includes historical poems, poems celebrating objects, poems with titles typical of Qi-Liang verses, poems which consciously imitate the styles of Du Fu, Li He 李贺 and Han Yu 韩愈.\textsuperscript{15} It is, however, his profuse and characteristic use of metaphorical allusions which has made his poetry distinctly different from that of other poets,\textsuperscript{16} at the same time, generating mixed feelings among his readers. Such feelings are best illustrated in the following well-known comment by Yuan Yishan:
Emperor Wang, his spring heart entrusted to the cuckoo.
A fine lady, an intricately-painted zither, laments of blossoming years—
Poets have always loved the beauty of the Xikun verses, yet they regret that there is no Zheng Xuan around to do the annotations!

By quoting and paraphrasing lines from Li's famous poem, "Jinse" (The Intricately-painted Zither), Yuan is expressing his bafflement over its allusive images strung together without any obvious connectives. In the face of what he recognizes as elusive and inexplicable beauty, Yuan could only sigh at the lack of knowledge over many of the allusions. The need for a good, reliable annotation of Li's poetry was not only acknowledged by Yuan Yishan, the Ming critic Hu Zhenheng, but also wrote: "Tang poetry need not [in general] be annotated. Unlike the poems collected in the Wen Xuan, Tang poems depict immediate scenery, allude to readily comprehensible stories. Annotating such poems can only take away their flavor....There are, however, poems which cannot do without annotations....the profundity and obscurity of Li Shangyin's verses....require careful annotation and explanation....So far, however, no one has yet been able to handle this task." Since these famous pleas for a scholarly annotation, over the next few centuries the various annotated editions of Li Shangyin's poetry gradually emerged.

With the vast effort expended on tracing the sources of Li's allusions and all the annotations available to him, Liang
Qichao (1873-1929) could still wonder about the interpretation of many of Li's poems:

What Li Shangyin's "Jinse" (The Intricately-painted Zither), "Bicheng" (Emerald Walls), "Shengnü Ci" (Holy Lady's Shrine) really mean I fail to grasp. If you ask me to take the poems apart and explain each single line, I have problems even with the literal meaning. Yet I feel the beauty of his poetry. It gives me a fresh sense of delight to read his works...²²

It is clearly not the obscurity of the allusions alone which creates difficulty in interpretation. Often, the elliptical and unusual way these allusions are used also contributes to the ambiguity and complexity of his poetry.

Although many critics have remarked on the allusiveness of Li's poetry and much research has been devoted to his poetry in general, no extensive study has as yet been written on Li Shangyin's use of allusion. Let us first examine the scattered comments traditional critics have made on this aspect of his poetry.

More often than not, Li's allusions are looked upon as excessive and obscure, a negative element in his poetry:

Li Shangyin is fond of piling up allusions in his poetry... in his poem "Xixue" (Delight in Snow), as many as seventeen to eighteen sources are alluded to. (Gongxi Shihua 碧溪詩話)²³

Li Shangyin's allusions are difficult and obscure. His
language is skillful yet his meanings tend to fall short.
(Cai kuanfu Shihua 蔡寬夫詩話)24

Former critics have often deprecated the excessive use of allusions. If a poet simply puts together allusions suggested by his title, he is just compiling stories. Other than demonstrating his skill, how does this sort of thing improve his poetry? Li Shangyin's "Renri" (Written On the Seventh Day After the New Year) is exactly one such poem. (Duichuang Shihua 對床詩話)25

When Li Shangyin writes, he usually consults his library. He lines up his books, like an otter displaying his catches of fish before devouring them. (Yang Wengong Tan-yuan 楊文公談苑)26

Li's poetry is elegant and dense. Like the house with a hundred treasures and dangling frills, or an iron web made of a thousand delicate wires, it is anything but a spontaneous poetry. (Shi Ping 詩評)27

On the other hand, some critics have remarked favorably on his use of allusion:

His allusions seem obscure, yet the meanings they carry are far-reaching. (Suihantang Shihua 坐寒堂詩話)28

From the time of The Book of Songs to the present day, all the poems that managed to survive are works of genuine spirit, not the mere lumping together [of beautiful words and knowledge]. Although Li Shangyin's poetry is allusive, his allusions are used with great skill and fused with emotions. They are not artificially put together.
Since critics tend to look upon the heavy use of allusion as something pedantic and artificial, Li Shangyin's allusions are considered to be, at best, functionally decorative, and at worst, difficult, mannered, obscure and superfluous, an idiosyncrasy to be tolerated in an otherwise highly-regarded poet.  

It is true that a few of Li's poems show an unsuccessful "collage" effect in the use of allusion. Poems such as "Xi-xue" and "Renri Jishi" are padded with allusions, suggesting indeed bookishness and artificiality. Other pieces such as "Sheyu Qu" (Song of Fish-spearing) and "Shaoxiang Qu" (Song of Incense-burning) remain largely an enigma to us today because of the strange and private manner the allusions are put together. However, allusion is so overwhelmingly pervasive in Li Shangyin that we simply cannot deny that it plays a vital role in the shaping of his poetry. Statistically, each of his quatrains contains an average of three allusions, his regulated verses an average of seven. His longer pieces—the five-character pailü as well as his ancient-style verses—are even more allusive. His yongwu poems and the few memorable pieces relatively free of allusions make up only a small portion of his entire collection. The majority of Li's poems, and they include his most characteristic as well as his finest pieces, are highly allusive.

When we try to reconcile the characteristic beauty of Li
Shangyin's poetry with its prevalent use of metaphorical allusions, we begin to see that this allusiveness is really central to his individual aesthetics. It is also his use of recurrent allusive images that reveals his unique and consistent perception of the world. Indeed, allusion is such an internalized part of Li's consciousness and aesthetics that if we were to eliminate his allusions we would also eliminate his poetry. A study of Li's allusions in relation to the major motifs of his work and the different ways he uses them constitutes, therefore, an important and fruitful approach to understanding and evaluating his poetry.

While contemporary critics recognize the allusiveness of Li Shangyin, those few who have studied this aspect of his poetry tend to perceive his allusions as no more than a frequent device rather than his central mode of expression. Consequently, they have overlooked the profound and complex underlying effects of allusion in his work.35

In the following chapters of my thesis, I shall begin by studying allusion as a literary concept, both in its broad and narrow sense. I shall consider the psychological and aesthetic implications of allusion, and examine its use as an extended metaphor. In the process of studying Li Shangyin's poetry, I have also developed an approach to reading allusive texts in a way that illustrates the rich potential of allusion in generating multi-layered meanings. Chapter II ends with a discussion of the use of allusion in relation to the notion of ge 隔
Chapter III begins with a discussion of the historical, biographical and literary background underlying Li Shangyin's heavy use of allusion. This is followed by a study of his recurrent clusters of allusive imagery, their relationship with the dominant motifs of his work and their role in shaping the inner world of his poetry. I shall also investigate the special ways in which allusions are used in connection with other elements, especially in the creation of multiple meanings in his poetry. The chapter concludes with an overview of allusion as a major stylistic factor underlying some of the most distinctive features of Li Shangyin's poetry.

While Chapter III provides an overview of Li Shangyin's use of allusion, citing examples to illustrate the distinctive features identified in his poetry in general, Chapter IV is devoted to an in-depth study of some of Li Shangyin's successful poems which are characteristically allusive. The poems represent the spectrum of Li's poetry, covering a variety of subjects, and showing, at the same time, many of the stylistic features resulting from his use of allusion.

It is not my intention in this study to propose yet another exclusive school of interpretation. I demonstrate, instead, the centrality of allusion to Li Shangyin's poetics. Through an
investigation of allusion as extended metaphor and, in Li's case, allusion as a literary mode, I hope to achieve a more comprehensive approach to reading his poetry and a better understanding of his accomplishment as a poet.
Chapter II
On Allusion

The Psychology of Allusion

Poetic language is no ordinary language. Building on the shared code of everyday language, poets are constantly struggling to create new meanings and fresh perceptions. They are constantly trying to achieve the most suggestive, original and heightened use of language.

As the literature of a culture accumulates, instead of drawing from ordinary language alone, poets can allude to the past, taking images, phrases, stories, events and impressions from the rich storehouse of the literary tradition. With time, this common heritage shared by the poet and his readers grows to include not just an individual’s thoughts and emotions but all poetic and aesthetic experience. And the poet continues to create fresh perceptions and new poetic worlds by drawing from this cumulative heritage. In so doing, he further modifies the tradition by adding to it something of his own. T.S. Eliot puts it this way:

What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The
existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new.¹

Seen in this light, all great poets are at the same time traditionalists and individualists. A poet may, occasionally, write without echoing past literary works, yet few poets can ignore the silent workings of previous generations. Indeed, no poet can be considered a fine poet who does not write with what Eliot calls "the historical sense," a sense of "the timeless as well as the temporal."² He must have an acute awareness of his own place in time, of his contemporaneity in the context of tradition. In this sense, although a great poet always has something significantly new and individual to offer, no poet can have complete meaning alone.

This tendency for poets to draw from the past does not only mean that they can enrich their works by utilizing the creative experience of earlier writers, it also explains a deeper psychological need—the need to go beyond one's finite self by being connected to that bigger, collective consciousness which is one's own tradition. In a study of poems on the Double Ninth festival, A.R. Davis describes the poet's use of allusions as a means "to link his particular poem to the general stream of Chinese poetry."³ David Lattimore further likens this to an effort in attaining what Robert Lifton calls "symbolic immortality," which
is seen as man's need, "in the face of inevitable biological death, to maintain an inner sense of continuity with what has gone on before and what will go on after his own individual existence."^4

In their early historical classic the *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳 , the Chinese first mention the act of writing as one of the three ways to immortality, the *sanbuxiu* 三不朽. Later, in the Jian'an period, Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) echoes this same idea in his essay, *Dianlun Lunwen* 論論文:

Literature is no less noble an activity than the governing of a state; it is also a way to immortality. The years pass and one's life runs out its natural course. Honours and pleasures cease to be with one's body. Against these inexorable facts, literature lives on to eternity.  

Although the Chinese are by no means unique in recognizing the act of writing as a means to immortality, it seems that the Chinese writer is, on the whole, even more conscious of himself as part of a whole. He is more keenly aware of attaining what David Lattimore calls, a "corporate immortality." Indeed, this notion of corporate immortality, of blending oneself with a bigger whole, is an important aspect of Chinese culture. The Chinese have, for centuries, sought a kind of symbolic immortality through a conscious perpetuation of the family line and ancestor worship. Chinese mystics find individual transcendence through a spiritual oneness with Nature. In the realm of literature, nothing explains the use of allusion better than the belief
that one's writings will also, one day, become a source of value, a part of the immortal past being alluded to. Thus Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (321-379) concludes in his famous "Lanting Xu" 蘭亭序:

People in the future will look upon us the same way we now look upon those in the past...Although things will change and the world will be different, what touches the heart will be the same. Those who read this in the future will be moved by what we write.  

Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), the famous Song poet echoes the same sentiment in his ci poem to the tune of Yongyule 永遇樂, written after spending a night at an historical site:

....Past and present are but a dream
From which none will ever be awakened--
A dream of old joys and new sorrows.
Some day someone facing this night view
over the Yellow Tower
Will sigh for me!  

While Su's poem is inspired by the story of Guan Panpan 閔盼盼 and the Swallow Tower, he believes that his own contemplations at this famous historical site will in turn be remembered and alluded to in the future. Again and again, Chinese poets have expressed their belief in the eternalizing power of art. No wonder they look to works of the past as a source of value and inspiration. No wonder allusion becomes a significant part of their poetic tradition.

Related to the notions of tradition and immortality, the use
of allusion is also an appeal to authority. Even in everyday expository writing, we quote historical facts and sayings to support and to strengthen our arguments. Reverence for things old and established, a general receptiveness to quotations and words tinged with time are, naturally, part of the psychology underlying the use of allusion. This is exactly what Liu Xie (刘勰, ? - 520) is suggesting when he writes, in his very definition of "allusion," in *Wenxin Diaolong* 大心雕龍:

Allusion is, external to one's own writing, the adducing of a fact or event to support some generalization, the citing of an ancient example to support a present statement....it is the rule of the Sages and their general practice in the Classics to cite old sayings to clarify general principles and to allude to human stories and events to illustrate ideas.^{12}

Then there are those poets who use allusions for personal and political reasons. During the Wei Jin and between the Ming and Qing periods, poets generally wrote in a more allusive style because they lived in a politically dark and treacherous era, when any slight disapproval, not to mention open criticism, of the ruling regime could lead to persecution and death. The Wei Jin, especially, is a time when despairing intellectuals turned to Neo-Daoism, displayed strange, eccentric and unruly behavior, and in poetry, resorted to a complex, ambiguous and highly allusive modes of expression in order to communicate their frustrations and hidden emotions. Instead of writing directly
what he feels or thinks, a poet can deliberately mystify by mixing images drawn from nature with those drawn from a story or an historical event. The reader is left with just a nuance of feeling, a suggestion, a hint, while the poet escapes the baleful notice of the authorities, at the same time satisfying his honest, artistic impulses. It has often been said that many of the poems by Li Shangyin are allusive for political and private reasons. This is certainly true, although I believe various other factors have contributed to the complexity and allusiveness of Li Shangyin's poetry, as I shall point out in Chapter III.

In the West, the use of allusion has many other psychological implications, many of which have to do with our response to it as a linguistic device. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "to allude" is defined, considering the Latin origin of the verb, as "to play with, joke, or jest at, dally with," "to refer by the play of words," "to refer by the play of fancy." The key words here are "play, joke, dally, fancy." "To allude" is not simply "to refer," but to do so in a playful, sportive manner. Wit and fancy are, therefore, two key notions underlying the use of allusion. Instead of stating or describing a situation directly, a poet uses an allusion as a concealed reference. Like the sharing of an inside joke, the reader is challenged to jog his memory, to stretch his imagination, and to make the necessary connections between the allusion, its context and the situation in the poem. And when the recognition comes, it comes with a distinct sense of pleasure and delight in discovering what Freud
calls "something familiar where one expects to find something new instead." At this point, the reader feels as if he alone has been privileged to hear the clown's aside, or that he has been let into some kind of private club where only the clever and the knowledgeable are granted admittance. On the other hand, should he fail to recognize the allusion, the whole experience can be very frustrating and baffling.

Since one of the long recognized functions of literature in the West is to please, wit and fancy have been popular notions among western writers. As a rhetorical device, allusion has served this purpose very well. In the Chinese tradition, one may argue, literature and poetry are usually seen as a serious affair, the functions of literature being "to propagate the dao" and "to express the mind's/heart's intent." Yet the Chinese are in reality no less sensitive to the idea of wit (jizhi) and the clever play of words. During the Spring and Autumn period, princes, noblemen and ambassadors of states knew the poems in The Book of Songs by heart so that they could allude to them as an indirect means in reproving a superior, or a face-saving device in diplomatic discourse. In such cases, allusion is, in Lattimore's words, the means to "a war of wits." This linguistic playfulness is also evident in the Chinese practice of writing lianju (linked verse), huwen shi (palindromic verse), and in the implicit wit of using shuangguan yu (puns) in poetry.

Almost synonymous with wit and fancy is the idea of brevity.
"Brevity is the soul of wit" and one of the most important reasons for using allusion in poetry. Even in everyday language, we try to achieve economy by using short, allusive expressions. English phrases such as "Scylla and Charybdis," "Gordian knot," "Pandora's Box" allude to stories in Greek mythology to describe typical human situations in figurative language. The Chinese language, too, is rich in the use of chengyu, or proverbial expressions, which are made up mostly of four-character phrases. Examples such as shouzhu daitu (watching underneath a tree to wait for a hare to run into it), huashe tianzu (painting a snake and adding legs to it), yugong yishan (a silly old man moving mountains) or yamiao zhuzhang (pulling the seedlings to help them grow) are all common sayings, each condensed from a well-known story or fable. In four characters, an entire story is evoked; a great deal is said and said in the most concrete and vivid way. The use of allusion in poetry does similarly interesting things with language. Not only can allusions help to economize what one wants to say in the short space of a poem, they also link the piece with other works from the past, stretching both the spatial and temporal dimensions of a poem.

Another important effect of the use of allusion is the creation of aesthetic, "psychical distance," between a reader and what is described in a poem. According to E. Bullough, aesthetic experience or feeling in the appreciation of art comes about because we have a disinterested relationship to such works,
because we are not concerned with our own personal gain or loss when we engage ourselves in the act of appreciation. As the famous saying goes, "what in life doth grieve us, in art we gladly see," thus many of the events we see on stage or read about in poems and novels would be too painful to contemplate if they took place in real life. Similarly, within the framework of a poem, a certain sense of distance both in space and time creates a more heightened aesthetic feeling in a reader. We know, for example, that people generally enjoy meditating on the past. Crude and unsophisticated handicrafts unearthed from the past are treasured simply because they are antiques. Things that were almost trifling and insignificant are often contemplated with interest and nostalgia. Misfortunes which took place a long time ago often come back as much more bearable, if not altogether heart-warming memories. A good example of a tragic historical event which would have been most shocking and unbearable if it were to come to us as a piece of news today is the story of Emperor Xuanzong and his favorite consort Yang Guifei. Yet, the gruesome death of this classic beauty has been transformed, over time, into a sad, but appealing memory, celebrated most notably in the long poem "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow" by Bai Juyi and in hundreds of other works by subsequent poets.

Other than temporal distance, spatial distance also enhances our sense of aesthetic pleasure. In one of his many essays on this subject, Zhu Guangqian, the Chinese scholar and dedicated student of aesthetics, writes:
There was a small river leading to the River Rhine behind where I lived. I used to take evening strolls there, walking over there along the eastern bank of the river, and coming back, after crossing the bridge, along the western bank. When I was on the east side of the river, I always felt that the scenery on the west side looked lovelier, and vice versa. The trees and houses on the other side of the river bank usually appeared more beautiful to me. Yet they could not compare with their own reflection in the river. The trees themselves looked a little ordinary. Their reflection, on the other hand, suggested colors and sights from a different world....

Why would the reflection of a tree look more beautiful than the tree itself? Because a reflection suggests a world's distance from us. It belongs to a more fanciful, imaginary world, one that is removed from real life. When a poet alludes to a story, a legend, a myth or an historical event in the past, he is stretching the sense of space and time in his poem. Like the reflection of a tree upon a river, what he wants to convey comes across to us through a "psychical distance," and the feeling we derive from it is more aesthetic and pleasurable.

There are, as we can see, many positive motivating factors behind the use of allusion in poetry, among which looms a possible vice: the use of allusion as a sheer display of knowledge. Too often, critics have frowned upon poetry crowded with allusions which serve no more than a decorative function, or worse still, impede the meaning of a piece with learned phrases culled from books. Is the use of allusion necessarily bad or good?
When does an allusion cease to be effective and functional? What are the criteria for a successful allusive poem? What special stylistic effect does the profuse use of allusion usually impart to a poem? Later in this chapter, I shall deal with some of these central questions. Other related concerns will be made clear in my discussion of Li Shangyin's poetry.

Allusion as a Literary Concept

Since T.S. Eliot suggested that poets should be thoroughly familiar with and make use of works of the past in order to establish their place in the tradition, other critics such as Walter Bate and Harold Bloom have pursued the question of the past as the burden of the modern writer. Bloom, particularly, speaks of the poet's "anxiety of influence" and his struggle to make room for his own creation by performing a deliberate act of "misreading" or "misprision" on the texts of his precursors. Like an Oedipal revision of the father, according to Bloom, the poet frees himself from the past by purposely misreading it, attaching new meanings to it for his own use. And it is the function of the critic to study this "misreading," this peculiar fusion of the old and new in the creation of literary works.

With such a growing interest in the subject of influence and inter-textuality, it is inevitable that the study of allusion and allusive strategies has come to assume an increasingly important
place in literary theory and criticism. As Carmela Perri comments in her preface to an annotated bibliography on the subject: "Allusion is a perfect focal point for studies bent on explaining both the particular linguistic expression of a text as well as its relationship to literary and social history."  

Setting the Terms

Before discussing the literary functions of allusion, it is necessary to agree on a definition of the term. In the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, Earl Miner defines "allusion" as "(any) tacit reference to another literary work, to another art, to history, to contemporary figures, or the like." M.H. Abrams, in A Glossary of Literary Terms, describes it as "a reference, explicit or indirect, to a person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage." Carmela Perri has already rejected Miner's "tacit reference" as an inadequate description, while showing us how this reference can both be overt or covert (which is really an echo of Abrams' "explicit or indirect"). She then goes on to offer her own encompassing definition:

Allusion in literature is a manner of signifying in which some kind of marker (simple or complex, overt or covert) not only signifies un-allusively, within the imagined possible world of the alluding text, but through echo also denotes a source text and specifies some discrete, recoverable pro-
property(ies) belonging to the intension of this source text (or specifies its own property(ies) in the case of self-echo); the property(ies) evoked modifies the alluding text, and possibly activates further, larger inter- and intra-textual patterns of properties with consequent further modification of the alluding text.24

As Perri sees it, "literary allusion" as a linguistic device serves a double signifying function.25 It is a referent for one level of meaning within the text itself. Beyond this text, through echo, it also refers to a source text and brings into our imagination the meanings and properties associated with this text. Instead of the single reference in ordinary language, literary allusion gives us double reference, hence richer reverberations in meaning. And when we see this alluding text in turn as a source text for future alluding texts, we have a picture of the possible rippling, cumulative effect of tradition on the individual talent that Eliot speaks of. Thus this definition of allusion takes care of the concept of allusion both in its narrower sense as a linguistic device and in its broader sense as a connector of texts and literary experience.

Then there is the matter of classification. Perri groups all allusions into three major categories according to the observable forms their markers may take. These she calls: Proper names (which include both proper names and direct quotations), Definite descriptions (which include simile or narrative asides), and Paraphrase.26 I find her classification unsatisfactory because it focuses more on allusion itself as a speech act than
on its relationship to and the effects it may have on a text.

In his article, "Allusion in the Poetry of T'ao Ch'ien," James Hightower outlines a scheme for the classification of the different uses of allusion as they apply to Tao's poetry and to poetry in general. The seven categories he distinguishes range from the allusion which is the subject or excuse for a poem to "the wholly fortuitous resemblance which is only a trap for the too conscientious exegete or the too learned reader." These various uses of allusion he describes as follow:

1. The allusion is the subject of a poem. Unless it is identified, one does not know what the poem is about.
2. The allusion is the key to a line; one cannot understand the line without knowing the allusion.
3. The line makes sense, but not in context; the allusion provides another reading that makes the line meaningful as a part of the poem.
4. The line makes perfect sense; the allusion, when identified, adds overtones that reinforce the literal meaning.
5. An expression or phrase in the line also occurs in a text undoubtedly familiar to the poet, but it makes no contribution to the reader's appreciation of the line, and it is impossible to say whether the poet's adaptation of it was conscious or not.
6. A word is used in a sense familiar from a Classical
text. It makes no difference whether one (or the poet) learned the meaning of the word from a dictionary or from its source.

7. The resemblance is fortuitous and misleading if pressed.²⁶

What Hightower is concerned with is the exact relation an allusion has to a text or parts of a text. He describes an allusion in terms of our need to identify and to understand it for the interpretation of a poem. In the rest of the article, he devotes himself to elucidating the interpretative dimension of individual allusions, especially in connection with their sources. The scheme he has devised is certainly useful for our understanding of this aspect of the use of allusion by any poet, but it does not explain the various functions and effects the use of allusion might have in a poem.

In addition to Hightower's categorization, I would like to draw attention to Earl Miner's classification. Miner distinguishes five types of allusions: Topical, Personal, Imitative, Structural and Metaphorical.²⁹ These include references to recent events and facts concerning the poet himself; the parodying of linguistic, stylistic and generic features of previous works; and the use of an echoed element "as a vehicle for the poetic tenor that it acquires in the new context," in other words, as metaphor.

All of Miner's categories can also be found in the Chinese
literary framework. Being particularly historically minded and prizing of the tradition, the Chinese are perhaps even more conscious than Westerners of alluding to the past. Traditional shihua 詩話 and cihua 詞話, for example, are filled with scattered remarks tracing the stylistic and generic models of different poets. Annotations, prefaces, marginal notes and textual comments often identify the sources echoed directly or indirectly in the works of individual writers. Knowledge of and an implied reference to works of the past are part-and-parcel of a poet's creative process, as Lu Ji 陸機 writes in his Wen Fu 文賦 (Rhapsody on Poetry):

Lingering at the centre of the universe, contemplating its dark mysteries,
Nourishing his sentience on the Classics...

Having traversed the forest of literary achievements,
And witnessed, in admiration, the bounteous graces of embellished writings...

Although reference to the tradition is also made in style, genre and other respects, the Chinese equivalent of the term "allusion" (diangu 典故), refers specifically and only to yongshi 用事, reference to stories and events from previous works, and yongci 用辭, direct or indirect borrowing of lines from earlier writings, two concepts first formally stated by Liu Xie in his definition of allusion which I would like to quote again:

...It is the rule of the Sages and their general practice in
the Classics to cite old sayings [ci] to clarify general principles and to allude to human stories and events [shi] to illustrate ideas.³¹

Basing myself on Miner's categories and incorporating the traditional Chinese classification, I suggest a final re-grouping of allusions into the following types:

(1) Reference to tales, myths, anecdotes, stories of human and other events from past historical, literary and philosophical writings. This is largely similar to the Chinese idea of yongshi, and it also means, in most cases, the use of allusion as a metaphor or an extended metaphor. I shall call these (as they have been described in the Princeton Encyclopedia), Metaphorical Allusions.

(2) Reference to recent events or facts concerning the poet himself. I shall call this, after Miner, Topical and Personal Allusions.

(3) Reference to lines of writing containing plain or isolated images from previous texts, involving no specific stories or events. This is equivalent to the Chinese idea of yongci. I shall call these Textual Allusions.³²

(4) Reference to poetic conventions instead of to a specific text or texts--the choice of a particular genre, style, title or meter which may remind one of traditional associations. I shall call these Stylistic and Generic
Allusions.  

What interests me most here is the first kind of allusion, the use of allusion as metaphor or extended metaphor. Because this particular use of allusion is the most complex in function and the richest in meaning, and because the most interesting use of allusion in Li Shangyin is metaphorical in nature, I shall later focus my study on the use of metaphorical allusions in his poetry. Occasionally, however, where topical, textual or stylistic and generic allusions serve a metaphorical function in Li's poetry, they will also be dealt with in my discussions.

Allusion as Metaphor

Before discussing the metaphorical nature of allusion, I would like to review some salient features of the simple metaphor. Of all that has been said about metaphor, Middleton Murry's "precision" and "revelation" sum up best its two essential qualities. "Try to be precise and you are bound to be metaphorical," writes Murry. This is close to Max Müller's view which Norman Friedman describes as follows:

Man, as he develops his conceptions of immaterial things, must perforce express them in terms of material things because his language lags behind his needs--the literal mode becomes ineffective, inexact, or incomplete. That is
to say, figurative image often makes for greater precision of expression; thus language, as it seeks exactitude, grows through metaphor.36

"Precision" goes naturally with a "sensuous particularity."37 The poet is, therefore, constantly giving the general and the spiritual "a physical turn."38 He does so by looking for similarities in other spheres of existence for the thing that he wants to describe. Murry explains:

What happens...is that a perceived quality in one kind of existence is transferred to define a quality in another kind of existence....A great creative writer must have a vast store of these perceptions of quality upon which to draw at will. The more he has, the more precise will his writing be; the more exactly will he be able to communicate the quality of his own emotion, and to arouse a kindred emotion in his readers...39

But, according to Murry, the connection between the two existences must be a fresh one:

What we primarily demand is that the similarity should be a true similarity, and that it should have lain hitherto unperceived, or but rarely perceived by us, so that it comes to us with an effect of revelation.40

A physical concreteness and an implicit analogy between two terms constitute, therefore, the essential nature of a metaphor. In the case of Chinese poetry, as Yu-kung Kao and Tzu-lin Mei
have demonstrated, the two elements—tenor and vehicle—in a metaphor also relate frequently through contrast to bring about a new meaning. The metaphoric relation which operates both on the basis of similarity and dissimilarity has been developed by Kao and Mei in their application of Jakobson’s Principle of Equivalence to Chinese poetry.41

All that we have just described is also true of the allusion. Like the simple metaphor, an allusion also operates on the Principle of Equivalence, involving tenor and vehicle in the images drawn from its source. But, to put in this context what I have mentioned earlier, allusion also includes the source text, and through association, brings with it all the meanings and properties connected to this text and other related texts. Not only does an allusion provide the economy and the vivid precision of the simple metaphor, but it also sends out ripples of association and links the piece to other works from the past, embodying many small worlds both in space and time, stretching the potential richness of a poem to its fullest.42 More than that, as Kao and Mei point out, an allusion differs from a simple metaphor in that it can also provide circumstances, motives and personal relations, bringing in, therefore, complex ideas and events, as well as implications of moral action.43

Because an allusion usually encompasses a set or network of events and relationships, it functions essentially as an extended rather than a simple metaphor.44 Quite often the related images, unified on one level, can be interpreted, in their implications,
on another level. For this reason, allusion as extended metaphor is closely akin to allegory.

Another function of allusion as extended metaphor is served when it becomes the subject of an entire poem. I refer here, particularly, to the genre of allusive poetry known as yongshi or huaigu (poetry on historical events, sites or personalities).

The use of historical references in yongshi poems may not strike one immediately as allusion in the strictest and narrowest sense. But as Hans Frankel has observed, the past is a convenient counterpart of the present. Exploiting the analogies and contrasts between past and present situations is a kind of "detour" and "circumlocution." Instead of proceeding in a straightforward manner, it helps to demonstrate a point, to convey an emotion by indirection, an important strategy in poetry. This is true of the use of historical allusion as a metaphor in any given line of a poem. It is also true when the allusion extends to form the subject matter or sustained narrative of the poem. Occasionally, when historical allusions are used as the subject matter of poetry, they are written as meditations on a single event, or as a eulogy of a particular person, showing interest in the subject for its own sake. Yet such purely nostalgic exercises are relatively scarce. Typically, contemplation of the past is used as analogy or contrast to serve the following purposes:
1. As a means of expressing human transience, change and decay, especially against the permanence of Nature. An example is Meng Haoran's "Yu Zhuzi Deng Xianshan" (Ascending Mount Xian with Several Gentlemen).

2. As a means of expressing personal concerns and grievances, especially when alluding to historical personalities. Examples are Tao Yuanming's "Yong Pinshi" (In Praise of Poor Scholars), and Du Fu's "Yonghuai Guji" series (Thoughts On Historical Sites).

3. As satire and commentary on present social and political situations. An example is found in Chen Zi'ang's "Jiqiu Langu Zeng Lu Jushi" series (Viewing the Past at Ji Hill: To the Recluse Lu Cangyong).

In such cases the particular historical event or figure becomes the vehicle which, together with the tenor—the immediate personal or political context of the poet—generate a new meaning for the poem. Much of Li Shangyin's poetry illustrates an effective use of allusions to serve the last two functions of historical poems just cited.

Yongshi or huaigu poems are a major genre in the Chinese poetic tradition, and they involve the metaphorical use of historical allusions. Allusions from myths or legends, too, can be
used as subject matter in poetry. The story of the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid, for example, has been sung over and over again, both in *shi* 詩 and *ci* 詞 poetry, to the extent that it has become a conventional topos. In most cases, when a mythological allusion is used as the subject of a poem, the story is retold for its own sake, without being used as a comparison for a more immediate situation. On the whole, mythological allusions (whether used as metaphors in individual lines, or as vehicles to create meanings for entire poems) play a relatively less important role in Chinese poetry. This, however, is not true in the case of Li Shangyin.

So much for allusion as extended metaphor, because it is more complex in nature, an allusive image is likely to be slippery in its meaning. An allusion is by its very nature "other-directed." When an allusive image is selected, as a vivid detail, a reader is likely to speculate on what it really stands for. Because of the range of associations connected with the allusion in its source text, as well as in its use in subsequent texts, various signals may be picked up by the reader, depending on the way the allusion is drawn from its source and how it is made to interact with the poem. There is, however, one guiding principle that one must abide by in the reading process; that is, despite the different resonances, each of the "local" meanings generated by the use of an allusive image must ultimately be shown to support a coherent reading of the entire poem; that is, it must serve a larger, "global" meaning. William Empson puts
it this way when he deals with the question of manifold meanings in a poem:

Evidently all the subsidiary meanings must be relevant, because anything (phrase, sentence, or poem) meant to be considered as a unit must be unitary, must stand for a single order of the mind. In complicated situations this unity is threatened; you are thinking of several things, or one thing as it is shown by several things, or one thing in several ways. A sort of unity may be given by the knowledge of a scheme on which all the things occur; so that the scheme itself becomes the one thing which is being considered. More generally, one may say that if an ambiguity is to be unitary there must be 'forces' holding its elements together.  

Thus the echoes given out by the many images in a poem must hold together to support a coherent reading. When several readings are offered for the same poem, each of the readings must also be independently consistent; that is, they must each be held together, although perhaps in different ways, by the various elements in a poem.

The Reading of Allusion

Since allusion as a device is essentially oblique in nature, it is often used to convey an idea or attitude the writer does not want to express directly. Different allusions can also be used to express the same idea in a variety of ways to add color, imagistic and textural density to a work. On the whole, there-
fore, an allusive poem tends to be more complex. In a manner similar to the medieval tradition of scriptural interpretations, I see the various meanings offered by an allusive poem as working simultaneously on several levels, namely, the literal, the allegorical and the symbolic.\(^4\)

The literal level refers to the explicit, surface meaning. It involves taking a poem at its face value, as when an historical or mythological allusion is used as its ostensible subject. A literal reading is the first and the most accessible reading of an allusive poem. It is rarely the only meaningful interpretation. When a piece is interpreted on other levels, however, the literal level is always implicitly acknowledged as the vehicle from which other metaphorical meanings are generated.

Before considering the allegorical and symbolic levels, I should explain my use of the terms in the Chinese context. First, to distinguish what an allegory is and what constitutes an allegorical reading in Chinese poetry: In the Western sense, we have an allegory when "the events of a narrative obviously and continuously refer to another simultaneous structure of events or ideas, whether historical events, moral or philosophical ideas, or natural phenomena."\(^4\) Narrative progression is, therefore, a key element in the conception of a Western allegory. Chinese allegory, *bixing jituo* 比興寄托, is also a mode of writing which assumes a projected analogy of ideas, events or network of relationships which parallels the use of associated images in a poem. However, since long narratives are rare in Chinese poetry
and most Chinese poems are essentially lyrical in nature, an allegory in Chinese, though consistent in its analogy, does not in general have a narrative progression. Also, an allegorical poem in Chinese is usually given a political and moral interpretation. In this present study, however, I would like to stretch the traditional conception of a typical Chinese allegory a little further to include any poem which refers implicitly, through a network of analogous images, to a specific set of events, whether personal, social or historical in a poet's life.

Because of the longstanding practice of reading *The Book of Songs* allegorically, the strong personal-lyrical tradition in the writing of poetry and the need of the poet at times to mask his naked intent, traditional Chinese critics have been only too ready to look for allegorical meanings. But when do we know what such readings are truly called for? I suggest the following criteria:

1. There must be probable allegorical intentions on the part of the poet.
2. There must be certain key images or guiding words in the poem which suggest a specific, external reference.
3. There must be an appropriate tone of voice which either suggests something personal, concrete or specific.
4. There must be a coherent use of imagistic associations throughout the entire poem which supports that particular reading.
C.Y. Yeh Chao in her article, "Wang I-sun's tz'u" cautions that for a poem to be given an allegorical reading, there must be "the probability that the poem was written with allegorical intent."\textsuperscript{51} Kang-i Sun reiterates the same idea when she discusses the allegorical significance of the \textit{Yuefu Buti} poem series, quoting Northrop Frye:

> Allegorical interpretation...begins with the fact that allegory is a structural element in narrative: it has to be there, and is not added by critical interpretation alone.\textsuperscript{52}

That authorial intention is imperative is implicit in the very nature of the allegorical mode of writing. The importance of a text's historical intentionality in this respect is recognized by Western and Chinese critics alike.

But "probable intention" is only the most basic thing to look for. A background which can be established from external evidence is of great value in knowing how to read a poem. But the poem itself provides equally useful hints in its key images and tone of voice which can point to a specific external reference. These hints become valid evidence when all the imagistic associations in the poem consistently support a particular reading.

So much for the allegorical level of reading. Because of its other-directed nature, allusion can be used to generate symbolic meaning as well.

A symbol, in the broadest sense, is anything which signi-
fies something else. In literature, (following M.H. Abrams), a symbol occurs when a word or phrase is used in such a way that it has "a further range of suggested but unspecified reference,"\(^5\) that it "suggest(s) a direction or a broad area of reference rather than, like an item in an allegorical narrative, a specific reference."\(^4\) From this, we can infer two distinct differences between the allegorical and the symbolic. First, the symbol must have broad associations of meaning, perhaps of universal, even archetypal, instead of specific significance. Second, in symbolism, unlike in allegory, the author's intent is irrelevant.

Keeping these three levels of interpretation in mind, namely, the literal, the allegorical, and the symbolic, we should be able to read any allusive texts comprehensively.

On _ge_ (隔) and _buige_ (不隔) and the Use of Allusion

In his famous collection of critical remarks on _ci_ poetry, _Renjian Cihua_ (人間詞話), the late Qing scholar and critic Wang Guowei proposes the concept of _jingjie_ (境界) as the essence of poetry. By _jingjie_, Wang means, of course, the inner world of poetry, as opposed to _shijie_ (世界), the external, objective world of reality.\(^5\) _Jingjie_ is really the fusion of the poet's subjective self with the external, objective world. A good poem, according to Wang, must possess such an inner world.\(^6\)
Wang goes on to describe the success of a poem based on a poet's ability to make this inner world available to his readers. He further proposes a distinction between poetry which is \textit{ge} (obstructed by a veil) and \textit{poetry which is buge} (not obstructed by a veil). Because his remarks are, in the usual manner of traditional criticism, sketchy and aphoristic, a great deal of speculation has been generated which focuses on explaining the true meaning of \textit{ge} and \textit{buge}. It is not my concern here to detail all the scholarly debate and interpretations offered by various critics over these two concepts. C.Y. Yeh Chao has already written an excellent overview of this in her book \textit{Wang Guowei and His Literary Criticism}.\footnote{57} I agree with Chao's interpretation that, according to Wang, poetry which is "\textit{ge}" is the result of "a lack of genuine emotions" or "the lack of ability to convey such emotions" in a poet.\footnote{58} I would like, however, to add to this by suggesting that by "\textit{ge}," Wang also refers to poetry which does not have a readily communicable inner world, while that which is "\textit{buge}" refers to poetry which does.

The main thrust of the argument which concerns us here is whether the use of allusion necessarily creates poetry which is \textit{ge}. Part of Entry 40 of \textit{Renjian Cihua} reads:

If I were asked to explain the differences between poetry which is \textit{ge} and that which is \textit{buge}........... Let us consider examples of \textit{ge} and \textit{buge} within one poem alone. The first stanza of Ouyang Xiu's \textit{ci} to the tune of "Shaonian You,"
subtitled "A Song of Spring Grasses," contains the lines:

Against the twelve zig-zagged railing
    I lean alone in spring,
The clear azure stretches far as the clouds
The second month, the third month.
The sight of parting saddens my heart.

Each word is right there directly in front of the eyes and thus not ge. But when we come to the lines [in the same poem]:

Beside the pond of Xie,
    On Jiang Yan's banks and shores,

it is ge indeed...\(^5\)\(^9\)

In a similar vein, Wang writes in Entry 57:

If a man is able in his shi and ci not to write verses whose purpose is to praise or blame or to be presented as gifts to friends, if he does not write lines in which historical allusions are strung together, or use words that are merely decorative, he will have covered more than half the road [to good poetry].\(^6\)\(^0\)

And in Entry 58:

It shows an overabundance of genius that the only historical allusions used in the whole grandeur and brilliance of "Changhen Ge" (Song of Everlasting Sorrow) are Xiaoyu and Shuangcheng. On the other hand, Wu Weiye could not get along without stringing many allusions together in his verses. The superiority of the one and the inferiority of the other is brought out by this [difference]. Not only is
this true of *shi* writers, but *ci* writers too must understand.\(^6\)

According to Wang, obviously, allusion works against good poetry. This is explicitly stated in the last two quotations and implied in the first, where lines containing allusions are considered *ge*.

Indeed, the question of allusion has been taken up by many a traditional critic. One must, however, make clear that "allusion" is used here only in its narrower sense, as a poetic device, as metaphor. Since almost all Chinese poets are allusive textually, generically or stylistically, when a critic describes a certain poet's works as particularly allusive, he is really referring to his abundant use of allusions as metaphor.

Is it, then, good or bad to write allusively? Is an allusive poem necessarily better or worse than one which uses no allusions? What good or adverse effects, if any, can allusions have on a poem? Chinese critics have, over the years, expressed different opinions on this question. Liu Xie, for example, says in his *Wenxin Diaolong*:

The Classics and ancient historical records are deep and profound, and they are voluminous in quantity. They are the profound source of all writings, and the spiritual realm in which talent and imagination make their abode. Writers like Yang [Xiong], Ban [Gu], and others all drew upon them as their sources. In them they tilled and farmed with all their might, and they fished and hunted as they wished. Anyone who is able to hold a knife and do some cutting will
surely be among those who enjoy the riches of these sources. When a writer's allusions to past events are appropriate to the situation in question, it is as if he himself has created them.\textsuperscript{62}

Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727-1814) also writes in his *Oubei Shihua* 南 北 詩話:

Poetry is an expression of one's innate feelings and emotions. It should not, one would think, rely on the use of allusions. On the other hand, since all past events have in effect become allusions, each allusion contains in itself, therefore, a human experience. When a poet uses this experience to express his own emotions, the effect is naturally more compelling. That explains why later poets resort to past learning and sources.\textsuperscript{63}

Nevertheless, few critics are as positive about the use of allusion as the ones we have just cited. On the whole, most have considered it a liability, advocating a more direct use of language devoid of allusions. Zhong Rong 鍾嵘 (468?-518) writes in his preface to *Shi Pin* 詩品:

...The melodic expression of what one feels does not become more valuable for its bookish references.

'My thoughts for you run on like the stream,' is no more than a record of what appeals to the eye.

'Many are the winds of sorrow on the high terrace,' is merely what the poet sees.

'In the freshness of morning I climb the low mounds,' does not contain any literary echo, and

'The bright moon shines on the heaped snow,'
is in no way derived from either the Classics or the Histories. It seems to me that the best lines of poetry, ancient and modern, have nothing by way of ornamentation to do with earlier literature: instead they are results of the direct fathoming of [the poet's own] mind.64

Yan Yu also writes in his Canglang Shihua 沧浪詩話

Lately, some have tried to ... play with words, with their learning, with an argumentative style in poetry.... And most of them are fond of using allusions... so that their every word alludes to some sources... after reading and re-reading, one still wonders what they are trying to express...65

Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), too, in his advocacy of vernacular literature, condemns most severely the use of allusion in poetry. Allusion is one of the eight "don'ts" which he calls upon all writers to observe in their writings.66

What really typifies the opinion of critics in general, is, however, the following comment from Jiao Ran’s 皎然 Shi Shi 詩式:

There are five ranks of poetry:

Rank I: Those which contain no allusions.

Rank II: Those which use allusions creatively.
This category also includes those without allusions which are, nevertheless, not extraordinary poems.

Rank III: Those which use allusions directly.
This category also includes those poems which contain no allusions and yet are relatively
inferior in quality.
Rank IV: Those which may or may not contain allusions but are of quality below Rank III.
Rank V: Those which may or may not contain allusions but are of very inferior quality...

According to Jiao Ran, a first rate poem can only be one which is completely free of allusions. As soon as a poet starts to allude, he automatically degrades his own work.

It seems that each time there was a particularly strong reaction against the use of allusion in poetry, it was connected with an effort to launch a conscious movement against writing which was too recondite or against a prevailing style of writing which was becoming increasingly stylized, artificial or inaccessible. It was the case with Zhong Rong, with Yan Yu as well as with Hu Shi.

It is true that the heavy use of allusions often leads to a more complex and opaque style of writing, but it does not necessarily undermine the success of a poem. In other words, a fine poem need not be transparent and readily available. A good case in point is the contrast between the poetry of Robert Frost and T.S.Eliot. If we use Jiao Ran's grading scheme, Eliot's work would never stand a chance of being considered first class poetry, while Frost's would.

In proposing the concept of ge and buge, Wang Guowei has generated a great deal of debate and controversy over the criteria for evaluating poetry. As C.Y. Yeh Chao has pointed out, Wang contradicts himself when he openly opposes the use of
allusion, yet praises the work of Xin Qiji 其疾 (1140-1207), one of the most allusive ci poets. If we study carefully the two examples of allusive poetry which Wang has variously considered as "ge" and "having a jingjie in every line," we would have a better understanding of the true nature of the problem.

The two lines from Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) which Wang considers ge:

Beside the pond of Xie,
On Jiang Yan's banks and shores.

definitely show a poor use of allusions. Xie in the first line quoted here refers to Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433) who has written a poem titled "Ascending Tower by the Pond," and Jiang Yan in the second line alludes to his rhyme-prose "On Parting." In the first case, there is a very remote suggestion of personal grievance, a possible echo of Xie's poem. In the second case, Ouyang Xiu is probably suggesting sentiments of parting. In both instances, the connection seems strained and convoluted. Nor do these images work very readily with the emotions in the poem to create a strong coherent effect.

On the other hand, the poem by Xin Qiji which Wang praises as "having a jingjie in every line" (the ci to the tune of He Xinlang 賀新郎, subtitled "Parting with Twelth Brother Maojia") contains as many as four allusions, all very appropriately used. The poem has also been applauded by Chen Tingzhuo 陳廷焯 (1853-1892) as "Xin Qiji's crowning piece."
It seems, therefore, that one cannot say whether the use of allusion in poetry is necessarily good or bad. Imagery, whether natural or allusive, is the means or medium through which emotions in a poem could be realized in more vivid and concrete terms. We have already discussed how critics consider "precision" and "revelation" as the two essential qualities of the metaphor. C.D. Lewis, in *The Poetic Image*, also thinks that what one should look for in imagery is "freshness," "intensity" and "evocative power":

Freshness [refers to] the potentiality of an image through the novelty of its diction, its material, or both, to reveal something we had not realized before...Intensity [means] the concentration of the greatest possible amount of significance into a small space...Intensity is achieved not only in the separate image, but through the closeness of the pattern within which a poem's images are related. Evocativeness is the power of an image to evoke from us a response to the poetic passion.71

If these are the important things to look for in imagery, we wonder why one should make a difference between images drawn from nature and those drawn from literary experience. It is not so much whether one uses allusion in poetry, but whether one uses it effectively, with creative imagination. Just like any other images in a poem, for an allusion to be functional and effective, it must work very closely with the other elements in the piece to form an organic whole. The allusion must be congruent with the rest of the poem and not be seen as an unnecessary appendage.
If we only recall Tao Yuanming's famous poem, No. 5 of his series of "Twenty Poems After Drinking Wine," and compare it with Li Shangyin's "Intricately-Painted Zither," we would realize how two equally excellent poems expressing equally ineffable thoughts and feelings (Tao's poem ends with "In these things is a fundamental truth/I would like to tell, but lack the words"; Li's poem ends with "Could such feelings ever wait to become a memory? /Only that at the moment you were already at a loss.") can be treated so differently. Except for the established symbol of longevity in "South Mountain," which has an associative link with The Book of Songs, there is not a single allusion in Tao's poem. Li Shangyin's piece, on the other hand, has as many as seven allusions in an eight-line regulated verse. Yet these are equally great poems which have given centuries of readers endless delight.

What one must look for in a poem is not whether it uses allusion or not; but, to come back to Wang Guowei, whether it possesses a jingjie (inner world). A good poem must invite its readers to such an inner world, so that his mind may confront it and his heart contain it. A good poet makes us see, not just look, for anything can make us look--any chance movement in a room, a paper bag uncrumpling in the sun, the wind in the willows, a falling leaf--but only art makes us see. The test of a good poem, regardless of the presence or absence of allusion, is its ability to make us see. In such a revelation, the fusion between a poet's subjective self and the external, objective
world must be complete so that all images, whether allusive or natural, become successfully integrated in his creative consciousness.

There is, however, a distinct stylistic difference between a successful poem which is dense and intricate and one which is transparent and accessible. A complex and allusive poetry, if it is good poetry, has a beauty and virtue of its own. In the case of Li Shangyin, especially, where allusion is the predominant mode of expression, where form and content are one and the same, style has become assimilated to the extent that it lies at the very core of his poetry.
Chapter III
Li Shangyin and his Use of Allusion

Background to Li's Use of Allusion

Four major factors have contributed to the allusiveness of Li Shangyin's poetry. I shall start with two of them which not only account for his heavy use of allusion but also provide essential background for an understanding of his poetry: one is the political environment in which he wrote, the other is private and personal. I do not propose to provide a detailed historical background of the late Tang period nor a biographical account of Li Shangyin, but will concentrate on those factors which I believe have a direct effect on his poetry. ¹

Li Shangyin lived at a time when the Tang Dynasty, after some two hundred years of glorious reign, was fast declining. Culturally, politically and economically the Tang was one of the great periods of Chinese history. The cosmopolitan capital of Chang'an 長安 was filled with traders from the Middle East and other parts of Asia where many Asian vassal states sent envoys to pay tribute. The empire covered a vast territory, the largest yet in the history of China. The nation, under the reign of Emperor Gaozu 高祖 through Taizong 太宗 , Empress Wu 武后 to the time of Xuanzong 玄宗 , steadily grew to the height of its prosperity. After the An Lushan Rebellion, however, the political and economic structure of the country began to disintegrate
and the Dynasty went rapidly into decline. The rebel generals fighting against the Tang court during and after the An Lushan Rebellion were allowed to surrender and given military governor posts even after the leaders of the rebellion were vanquished. Peace and stability over the entire area of Hebei was heavily bought by a compromise settlement. These provincial governors paid only lip service to the central government. The court, now weak and impotent, tolerated their growing independence, wary also of the aggression of the Tibetans to the north-west who posed a constant threat to the capital. During the subsequent years, military governors repeatedly challenged imperial authority with attempts to claim hereditary succession, resulting in revolts and bloodshed.²

Apart from this loss of control over the provincial military leaders and other problems at the frontiers, the Tang court was internally plagued by the increasingly powerful eunuchs and the fierce Niu-Li factional strife.

The eunuchs first gained political influence as a group when Gao Lishi 高力士 helped Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 in his rise in power.³ Later, Li Fuguo 李輔國 also helped to put Suzong 順宗 on his throne. By gaining royal patronage eunuchs gradually controlled personal access to the emperors and participated in the business of the central government. They also involved themselves with provincial appointments, at times, even intervening with armed forces in disputes over imperial successions. By the time of Li Shangyin, the emperors had allowed the
eunuchs to become fully entrenched both militarily and politically. After Xianzong, all Tang emperors (except Jingzong) were put on the throne by the eunuchs.

In 835, the infamous "Sweet Dew Incident" occurred during the reign of Emperor Wenzong. A palace coup designed by Li Xun (the prime-minister) and Zheng Zhu (the military governor of Feng Xiang) in support of Wenzong's effort to overthrow the eunuchs failed. The eunuchs, led by Qiu Shiliang, slaughtered the clans of many high officials and chief ministers. A great many other innocent people were killed in connection with this event. The eunuchs whose power had been growing out of control now completely dominated the Emperor and the affairs of state.

Apart from the eunuchs, the Niu-Li factional strife was another destructive internal force haunting the Tang court. The Niu and Li factions were not organized political parties, but two groups of rival politicians, hostile toward each other as a result of some personal animosity. The head of the Niu faction was represented by Niu Sengru and Li Zongmin, and the Li faction by Li Deyu. In the 830s, the two contending factions created much turmoil in court through the reigns of Muzong, Jingzong, Wenzong, Wuzong, and Xuanzong, a period coinciding almost exactly with Li Shangyin's life. According to Chen Yinke, the struggle was also due to a difference in social background between the two groups, one representing the traditional ruling
class of North China, and the other, the newly risen class of scholar-officials who reached their positions through the civil service examinations. In any case, many intellectuals and high officials were involved in this struggle. Whenever members of one faction were in power, people associated with the other faction would be demoted, or out of favor. The factional strife kept court officials from uniting against the increasing power of the eunuchs. The emperors, rendered completely helpless, tried to play one force against another. It was some fifty years after Li Shangyin's death that the eunuchs were finally eradicated with the help of the military governors, precipitating the downfall of Tang. The forty-five years of Li Shangyin's life covered the reign of six emperors. Among them, Xianzong and Jingzong were murdered by the eunuchs. Muzong, Wuzong and Xuanzong indulged in escapist practices, dying, in the case of Wuzong, of an overdose of elixir drugs.

Living in a time of political turmoil, incompetence and decline, Li Shangyin registered his indignation and concerns in his poetry while protecting himself by writing allusively. He wrote over sixty historical poems and poems of political commentary. If we also include some of his yongwu poems and other more elusive pieces which may be interpreted as subtle political satires, we have close to a hundred poems devoted to this purpose. Among them are attacks and satires on almost every political ill of his time. Poems such as "Jingluo" (The Jingluo Stars) and "Shou'an Gongzhu Chuxiang"
(Princess Shou'an's Marriage of Appeasement) are critical of some of the provincial military leaders. Others such as "Yougan Ershou" 有感二首 (Thoughts: Two Poems), "Chong You'gan" 重有感 (More Thoughts) express his grief for the victims of the "Sweet Dew Incident" and his indignation against the eunuchs. The series of poems lamenting the death of Liu Fen 刘樊 is really another attack on the eunuchs and the pathetic ineptitude of the Tang court. Li also wrote many satires on the various emperors ruling during his time, for example, "Fuping Shaohou" 富平少侯 (The Young Duke Fuping), a criticism of the lavishness and licentious indulgence of Jingzong. One yongshi poem also censures the extravagance of Wenzong, at the same time expressing sympathy for his powerlessness in face of the eunuchs. "Maoling" 茂陵 (The Mao Mausoleum) is directed against Wuzong, deploring, among other things, his indulgence in elixir drugs.

To be openly critical of the emperors and the political issues of his time was impossible. His more transparent pieces such as "Yougan Ershou," "Chong Yougan" and "Xingci Xijiao Zuo Yibai Yun" 行次西郊作一百韵 (One Hundred Rhymes Written While Travelling Through the Western Suburbs) are said to have infuriated the eunuchs, causing setbacks in Li Shangyin's career, and after the series of poems in which he lamented the misfortune of Liu Fen, Li's writing on political issues became more and more allusive. The Qing scholar Qian Qianyi 錢谦益 once quoted a remark by Monk Daoyuan which explains the elusiveness of Li Shangyin's poetry:
...Li Shangyin lived at a time when eunuchs and court officials were fiercely battling one another, when the government was rendered helpless both by internal and external forces. Seemingly inarticulate yet longing to speak, haunted by nightmares he sought the right words to express himself. It was impossible for him not to hide his true feelings, to make strange his expressions, to write in riddles or resort to associations and analogies. His is the imaginative language of the satirical poet...

Indeed, to speak his mind about current events, to convey his message without incurring the wrath of the emperors or offending those he criticized, Li Shangyin's only recourse was the heavy use of allusion. None of his poems on Jingzong, Wenzong or Wuzong, for example, refers directly to the emperors themselves. Instead, they are filled with concealed references. Written mostly in the form of yongshi poems ostensibly about a certain historical figure or episode, Li's many political poems are allusive satires provoked by a contemporary incident, "Jiu Jiangjun" (The Former General), "Jiasheng" (Scholar Jia), "Sui Shidong" (The Sui Army Travels East), "Jingyang Jing" (The Well at Jingyang Palace) and "Jingyang Gongjing Shuangtong" (The Two Wutong Trees at Jingyang Palace) are only some of such pieces.

Some of Li Shangyin's poems are allusive for obviously political reasons; others are equally so for private and personal ones. To understand the complexity and elusiveness of much of his poetry, we must review some important episodes and relation-
ships in his life.

Li Shangyin's writing, both prose and poetry, shows that he cared a great deal about the success in an official career. He was a typical traditional Chinese intellectual who wanted to play a significant role in serving the state. He was also concerned to revive the fortunes of his family that had declined into obscurity from a distinguished past through a prominent official career. Li's path was, however, troubled by entanglements, conflicts and complex relationships which left him with a sense of frustration, remorse and anxiety—emotional currents reflected in his poetry.

Orphaned at the age of nine and being the eldest son in the family, Li has assumed the grave responsibility of supporting his family, at the same time working hard towards rebuilding the family name. By sixteen, he was already known in Luoyang for his exceptional talent and skill at writing classical prose. Before he turned twenty, he had met and become friendly with two potential patrons, Linghu Chu and Cui Rong. However, both Linghu and Cui died before they could exercise any significant influence on Li's behalf. The death of Linghu Chu and Cui Rong not only meant the loss of two patrons, the early affiliation with Linghu also had far-reaching effects on Li's subsequent career.

The year Li Shangyin obtained his jinshi degree, Linghu Chu died. The same year, Li also married Wang Maoyuan's daughter, an event considered by many to be an important turning
point in his life. Since Wang was a prominent member of the Li faction and Linghu Chu a leading member of the Niu faction, Li Shangyin's marriage to Wang's daughter and his working for Wang immediately after Linghu Chu's death was looked upon, according to official historians, as a betrayal by Linghu Chu's son Linghu Tao and many others who belonged to the Niu camp. The *Jiu Tangshu* says that Li Shangyin was "heavily criticized by Li Zongmin's faction," while Linghu Tao "hated him for his lack of moral integrity." The *Xin Tangshu* also records that members of the Niu faction considered his character "treacherous" and that Linghu Tao dismissed him as "ungrateful, willing to go with whoever offers him profit or gain." Linghu Tao, with whom Li Shangyin himself was more than personally familiar, later rose to the influential position of prime-minister, but did very little to help Li Shangyin in his political career.

In order to fully understand the conflicts that Li Shangyin had to live with and the various delicate and allusive ways with which he expressed them in his poetry, his being caught as a victim of the Niu-Li factional strife must not be underestimated. Scholars disagree about Li Shangyin's true political affiliation. It is nevertheless impossible to label him a member of either camp. It seems that, from the writings he has left us, Li Shangyin shows no special allegiance to any one political faction. Apart from his close relation with the Linghu family, personally, Li had relations with many considered to be members
of the Niu faction—people such as Du Mu, Yang Sifu, Du Zong, Xiao Huan, and Yang Yuqing. At the same time, he was connected with Li Hui, Zheng Ya, and Wang Maoyuan, all members of the Li faction. He has expressed sympathy for the misfortunes of Li Deyu, the political adversary of Niu Sengru and prominent leader of the Li faction, when Li Deyu was demoted to Chaozhou and then to Yazhou during the reign of Xuanzong. On the other hand, he wrote poems mourning Xiao Huan and Yang Yuqing, who suffered mistreatment along with other members of the Niu faction when Zheng Zhu was in power. While many suggest that Li Shangyin married Wang Maoyuan's daughter in order to advance his political career, there is reason to believe that he was genuinely in love with her.

Despite Linghu Tao's displeasure over Li's marriage to Wang Maoyuan's daughter, Li Shangyin tried to maintain his relationship with him. This is partly because of his desire for Linghu Tao's patronage, but largely also because of his deep sense of bond and gratitude for the Linghu family. From the year he met Linghu Chu at the age of sixteen to the year Linghu Chu died when Li Shangyin was twenty-six, for ten years, Li had developed a very close relationship with his patron. Linghu treated him no less than a son and a close friend. He passed on to Li the art of writing parallel prose. He provided Li Shangyin with the money to support his family and to take the civil service examination. He also offered Li opportunities to work under his
office and encouraged Li to socialize with his own sons. It was also because of the recommendation of Linghu Tao and the influence of Linghu Chu that Li Shangyin finally succeeded in obtaining his *jinshi* degree.\(^{29}\) As he writes in a poem to Linghu Tao:

> Such rich and beautiful brocade (I have received) I know I am unable to repay. There should not, however, be any doubt of my being a Qing-ping sword."\(^{30}\)

On the other hand, Li Shangyin's early connection with members of the Niu faction and his occasional appeals to Linghu Tao were likely viewed with mistrust by Wang Maoyuan himself. As Xu Fuguan has pointed out, there are suggestions in Li's poetry of a strained relationship with his father-in-law.\(^{31}\) In any case, marrying the daughter of a prominent official did not help Li Shangyin at all. Some of his poems suggest that because of his failure in his career, he thought himself slighted in the Wang household.\(^{32}\)

While not playing the political games of the time, Li nevertheless desired and needed support from various people in his career. At the same time, he had a strong sense of empathy for those who suffered injustices. He failed, consequently, to extricate himself from all the conflicts and entanglements.

Li Shangyin wrote a total of ten poems addressed directly to or explicitly for Linghu Tao.\(^{33}\) There are also many other *wuti*
poems (poems labelled "Without Title"), pseudo-titled and yongwu pieces which could possibly have been written for Linghu.³⁴ Because it was difficult to express what he had to say in these poems in direct language without exposing himself too much or offending Linghu Tao, Li Shangyin used allusions. This heavily allusive style is not only found in the poems for Linghu Tao; whenever there is a need for indirection, for expressing himself in a more subtle, or tactful manner, Li Shangyin would write allusively. To cite just a few examples, a poem such as "Xieshu" (A Letter of Thanks) in which Li expresses his open praise and profound gratitude for Linghu Chu, another piece "Ren Hong-nongwei Xian Zhoucishi Qijia Guijing" (A Letter to the County Prefect Requesting Leave to return to the Capital from the Office of the District Defender) in which he voices his indignation at being treated unjustly by his superior, or in "Bingzhong Zaofang Zhaoguo Lishi Jiangjun Yu Qiejia You Qujiang" (A Visit with General Li of Zhaoguo District During my Illness When the General and His Family Went On a Sight-seeing Trip Along the River Qu) where Li Shangyin pleads for General Li Qianniu to act as his go-between in marriage—all these poems are allusive because of the need to express something otherwise too embarrassing or crude in simpler and more direct language.

There is yet another facet in Li Shangyin’s private life, much speculated upon, which may have prompted his use of allusion. I am referring here to his many alleged love affairs
with Daoist nuns, palace ladies, and also with Liu Zhi柳枝. The only explicit reference to Liu Zhi in Li Shangyin is found in the preface to a series of poems bearing her name.\textsuperscript{35} She is presented as a romantic character who appreciated Li’s poetry and took a strong fancy to him on the occasion of their one, formal meeting. Li Shangyin seems sorry to have missed his second meeting with her. He also regrets their different social background and laments her marriage to some Lord of the East.\textsuperscript{36} There is, however, no suggestion whether in the preface or in the poems themselves that he has a deep romantic relation with her. Nor was there any reason to hide those feelings if he did have them. His relationship with Daoist nuns and palace ladies is—if indeed he had any—a different matter.

Three major factors support the speculation of Li’s illicit affairs with Daoist nuns and palace ladies: (1) Li studied Daoism as a young man at Mt. Yuyang and made friends with Daoist priests and nuns.\textsuperscript{37} (2) Because of their relative freedom and social contact, Daoist nuns in the Tang were known to have had secret romantic liaisons. Many Tang princesses chose to leave the court and enter Daoist convents for this reason, bringing to live with them other ladies from the palace.\textsuperscript{38} (3) Li Shangyin’s poetry is filled with Daoist mythological images, heavy with romantic and, sometimes, even erotic overtones.

According to Su Xuelin蘇雪林, Li Shangyin had illicit relations with two palace ladies named Feiluan飛鷺 and Qingfeng輕鳳 as well as secret liaisons with two sister
Daoist nuns by the last name of Song 宋. Unfortunately, her reconstruction of Li’s love relationships is based almost exclusively on her own tortuous reading of the poems, with only a few occasional yet distorted reference to historical sources.

While agreeing with Su’s basic premise, Chen Yixin 陈贻彬 recently proposed a much more attractive argument and re-reading of Li’s poems using a similar approach. Quoting a passage from "Song Zongweng Cong Dongchuan Hongnong Shangshu Mu" (Sending an Uncle to Serve Under the Office of Minister Yang Rushi in Eastern Sichuan) in which Li describes his early days at Mt. Yuyang using romantic images and allusions to female immortals, Chen suggests that Li Shangyin had a liaison with a Daoist nun when he was at Mt. Yuyang. The nun and a sister, he believes, were palace ladies living with a Tang princess in a royal convent across from Li Shangyin’s monastery. Chen also suggests that Li’s lover conceived a child by him which she aborted, and when the whole incident was discovered, the sisters were sent back to the palace.

Building on Chen Yixin’s hypothesis, Ge Xiaoyin 葛晓音 further speculates that Li’s lover later drifted to the Jiang-Xiang area (around present-day Hunan province). She believes that Li’s Jiang-Xiang visit in 840 was meant not only as a business trip, but as an excuse to look for his lover again. Both Chen and Ge interpret Li’s elusive poems exclusively as love lyrics inspired by this alleged romance in his life. They have done so by highlighting certain recurrent images in the poems.
which suggest specific romantic references. Chen, particularly, has ingeniously connected many of Li's poems in great detail and his readings are, within that hypothetical framework, consistent and appealing. There is, however, no external evidence which supports their conjectures and the details of their hypothetical reading. It is dangerous to follow this particular school of reading too closely because it involves too many concrete details which are circumstantial and hypothetical, and it can easily result in an exclusive and reductive interpretation, using the poems as a footnote to Li's imagined biography. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge the possibility that illicit affairs with Daoist nuns might have inspired some of Li's more ambiguous poems, that the romantic element must be given consideration in reading his poetry.

Still, there are those critics who believe that many of Li's poems are not personal lyrics but veiled attacks on the undisciplined love life of the Tang princesses, another reason why Li Shangyin would be writing allusively. Personally, I think that the very few poems which might be interpreted as Li's observations about the conduct of Daoist nuns are more like light, at most, cautionary comments rather than heavy, moralistic censure.

Undoubtedly, Li Shangyin has shown, time and again, an effort to assume a distance, to mask something too personal or too politically sensitive by creating a sense of elusiveness in his poetry. The use of non-titles and pseudo-titles for his poems, or titles such as "Niyi" (Assuming an Idea), "Dai-
zeng" 代贈  (Writing for Someone Else), "Daida" 代答  (Answering for Someone Else) and above all, his heavy use of allusion, are all indicative of this intention to conceal, making ambiguity one of his major characteristics.

There are two other significant reasons for Li Shangyin's use of allusion. The first of these is his training in the writing of parallel prose. The second has to do with the literary trend in late Tang toward a more elaborate and allusive style of poetry than had been common earlier in the dynasty.

Parallel prose or pianwen  马骈文  is a form of writing which took its initial shape from the fu  赋  of the Han period. It became fully established as a conscious style in the Six Dynasties, reaching the height of its development from the Wei-Jin through High Tang. Because of the revival of classical prose during the Mid-Tang, pianwen went through a period of eclipse, but it became prevalent again during the time of Li Shangyin. As a prose style, it varies slightly from period to period, but on the whole, it is a florid and euphuistic manner of writing, characterized by the systematic exploitation of the parallel couplet, the heavy use of allusion, exuberant word-play, with alliteration, tonal balance, euphony, and other similar "conscious uses of language to achieve artistic effects." Because of its early connection with the fu, it is essentially an expansive, elaborate mode of writing predisposed to the display of erudition and the ornate and elegant use of language. The use of allusion crept in early in the writing of parallel prose.
After the Wei-Jin period, it became an indispensable feature of this particular style of writing.

Li Shangyin's early training in prose writing was in the classical style. As mentioned earlier, his talent in writing fine classical prose at a very early age attracted attention and brought him the friendship and patronage of Linghu Chu. Since the popular prose style and the style used in most official writing at the time was pianwen, of which Linghu Chu himself was a great master, Li Shangyin soon learned the art of writing parallel prose from his patron. It is ironic that although he never thought highly of his pianwen compositions, it was his ability to write fine parallel prose that he relied on for a living as he drifted from one secretarial post to another, working for military governors and commissioners most of his life.

His practice of writing pianwen undoubtedly had an influence on Li Shangyin's poetic style. The Siku editors characterize his prose as "subtle and elegant," a style which "distinguishes itself from the work of other Tang writers." Chen Mingqing also writes: "When Li Shangyin writes to grieve for someone else, he grieves [movingly]; when he writes to flatter for someone else, he flatters [beautifully]." Whether the purpose of his writing is to implore, to chide, to complain, to explain, to praise or to defend, he seems always to express himself in the most appropriate language. Examples such as "Wei Puyanggong Chenqingbiao" and "Wei Yingyanggong
Xieci Dongyi Zhuang" 太尉衙公會昌一品集序 "Taiwei Weigong Huichang Yipin Jixu" and "Wei Puyanggong Yu Liuzhen Shu" all illustrate a subtle, refined and artful use of language which conveys a graciousness and sensitivity in communicating what is otherwise difficult to express in plain writing. A great part of this success lies in his effective use of allusions, especially in the characteristic way he intertwines them with the lyrical, the expository as well as the argumentative in his writing.

This habitual use of allusion to write in an indirect, delicate and sophisticated manner is also evident in Li Shangyin's poetry. And the special ways allusions are used together with other elements in his prose writing to achieve certain effects is also found in his poetry.

In a letter to a friend, Qian Zhongshu once remarked that Li Shangyin "writes his poetry in the manner of parallel prose," a most penetrating observation about a salient characteristic of Li Shangyin's poetry.

Besides the influence of parallel prose, the literary fashion of the time called for a new poetic style to which Li Shangyin responded. The development of poetic style took several turns during the Tang Dynasty. From the poetry of Shen Quanqi and Song Zhiwen, to Chen Zi'ang who championed a return to the spirit of the Han, Wei and Jian'an period, from the deceptively simple
landscape imagery of Wang Wei, the unbridled genius and soaring language of Li Bo, to the all-encompassing, cultivated and innovative Du Fu, among a host of other excellent and original poets, versification and poetic styles had by Mid-Tang been fully explored and developed. Subsequently, poets such as Bai Juyi and Han Yu sought to write differently, each proposing his own theory of poetics. In a limpid style, Bai Juyi advocated a renewed tradition of *yuefu* and narrative poetry. Han Yu sought inspiration from his revival of classical prose and wrote a more prosaic verse with occasional bizarre diction. Li He, who came after them, also made his mark by writing a uniquely fanciful and visually-oriented language.

By the time of Li Shangyin, the need was felt for something more complex, ornate and sophisticated. Li Shangyin responded by synthesizing and further developing some of the characteristics of Du Fu, Han Yu and Li He, but more importantly, by drawing from the techniques and styles of Six Dynasties poets. There are many conscious imitations of the Qi-Liang style in his collection, but the influence of Qi-Liang poetry on Li Shangyin is much more subtle and pervasive than direct imitation.

In an article in which he touches upon the essential features of Qi-Liang poetry, Ji Yong identifies in the works of Six Dynasties poets many elements of the *fu*. As a genre, the *fu* usually involves the expansive and elaborate delineation of some physical objects. There is no doubt that Qi-Liang poetry incorporated some of these essential characteristics of the *fu*. 
As Liu Xie wrote in *Wenxin Diaolong*:

At the beginning of the Song (420-479) some development in the literary trend was evident....Writers vied in weaving couplets which might extend to hundreds of words...⁵³

And Jiaoran in his *Shi Shi*:

Jian’an poets are not allusive. Qi-Liang poets use [a great many] allusions.⁵⁴

To write in an increasingly elaborate, subtle and elegant manner, it is only natural that one resorts to allusion, an important technique of *indirection*, variation and amplification. This is one characteristic of Qi-Liang poetry that one also finds in Li Shangyin. A natural offshoot of an allusive and indirect style of writing is *yongwu* and *yongshi* poetry, two favorite genres found in Li Shangyin’s work as well as the works of the Six Dynasties period. It is not by coincidence that the parallel prose which flourished during the Six Dynasties was popular again in late Tang, shaping in turn the poetic style of Li Shangyin. Although there is much more in Li Shangyin’s poetry than can be found in Qi-Liang poetry, its influence on Li is obvious.

Whether it is for political, private and personal or literary reasons, allusion is an indispensable poetic device for Li Shangyin. He uses it so naturally and so frequently in his poetry that it becomes part and parcel of his poetics. As we shall see after reviewing his poetry, allusion is not a mere
technical resource for Li Shangyin; it has become his literary mode, his manner of perception and poetic expression.

Allusion and the Poetic World of Li Shangyin

In the preface to his second collection of parallel prose, Li Shangyin writes:

This business [of writing parallel prose] is not something I devote myself to or specialize in. These pieces were mostly written in haste in answer to other's requests, certainly nothing to speak highly of...⁵⁵

This is too modest a statement, for critics have generally recognized that Li wrote some of the finest specimens in the history of parallel prose.⁵⁶ The comment, however, does explain something about the way he relates to this form of writing as opposed to the much more personal way he relates to his poetry.⁵⁷ Indeed, over 70% his parallel prose consists of memorials, letters, petitions, epitaphs and eulogies written for his superiors and patrons, and so does not, therefore, speak really for himself. It is in his poetry, a more personal form of expression, that we look for a deeper revelation of the man through his art.

This fact is clearly evident when we compare Li Shangyin's use of allusion in his prose and his poetry. On the whole, Li uses rather different allusions in his parallel prose from those
in his poetry. The allusions in his prose works are also to more scattered and random sources while those in his poetry fall into clusters and patterns. The recurrent use of certain allusions in his poetry seems to suggest a coherent inner world, a consistent perception and vision which is characteristic of our poet. This recalls what Caroline Spurgeon said in *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*:

> The imagery a poet instinctively uses is a revelation, largely unconscious, given at a moment of heightened feeling, of the furniture of his mind. The channels of his thought, the qualities of things...⁵⁸

Quite apart from the style and method of forming an image, which is a study in itself, Spurgeon believes that each writer has a certain range of images which are characteristic of him. The recurrent use of such images helps to raise, to develop, to sustain and to repeat those emotions which are dominant in his poetry. Literature is the verbal transcription of an individual's coherent human experience. It is not the objective reality itself, but reality experienced and organized by an individual author.

Li Shangyin's poetry is characterized by the conflict between his ideal of the world as it should be and the stark reality of the world as it is. The yearning for an ideal society is fundamental to his vision, his quest. To aspire to beauty and self-realization in an unjust and imperfect world, to love
intensely and deeply, to search for an emotional and spiritual sanctuary—all these yearnings enable one, if only momentarily, to go beyond one's limited self. Indeed, the notion of life as an endless but futile quest permeates all of Li Shangyin's poetry. He writes about it consciously, touches upon it implicitly, probes its essence privately. I believe it is this dominant perspective, expressed variously, which 'describes' his poetic world.

It is against this background that I propose to study the allusive imagery of Li Shangyin's poetry.

Traditionally, poets draw their allusions largely from the Dynastic Histories, the Confucian Classics, and other early books of philosophy. Li Shangyin uses a great many historical allusions (drawn mostly from biographies and anecdotes) but alludes to the Classics and other philosophical texts only sparingly. He also uses a large number of mythological allusions, something found only occasionally in the works of other poets.59

Before examining the correlation between Li's use of allusion and the various motifs and different levels of meaning in his poetry, I would like to offer an overview of Li's poems in terms of their themes and their degree of plurisignation. Li Shangyin's poems fall conveniently into what we could call the more 'public' and the more 'private' ones. By 'public' poems I mean those which deal with themes of political and historical satire, with occasional themes as well as autobiographical themes which are made relatively explicit. By 'private' poems I mean
those which describe the more personal, obscure and nearly-inexplicable emotions. Whether any particular events have inspired these emotions, most of these contexts are not readily identifiable. The two dominant schools of interpretation on these poems include a reading of the pieces as: (1) personal, career-oriented poems directed as appeals for patronage mostly to Linghu Tao; (2) as private, romantically focused pieces on Daoist nuns. A third interpretation sees some of these as poems censuring the indulgence of Tang Princesses and the Emperors' vain pursuit of physical immortality. Li's 'private' poems include most of his pseudo-titled pieces, those labelled "Without Title," as well as some of his yongwu poems.

On the whole, we find a concentration of historical allusions in Li's 'public' poems, and a similar concentration of mythological allusions in his more 'private' ones. His more 'public' pieces are written largely on a literal or allegorical plane, usually with one or two levels of possible interpretation. His 'private' poems, because of the abundant use of mythological allusions, are not only allegorical (the only interpretative approach adopted by traditional critics), but also, as I shall demonstrate, symbolic, with multiple levels of meaning.

A study of the clusters of recurrent allusions in relation to the major motifs in these two groups of poems should help to demonstrate the complexity of the inner world of his poetry.
Li Shangyin's historical allusions are drawn from sources which cover a wide span of history, ranging from events taken from the Spring and Autumn and Warring states periods down to and including Tang itself. One notable group of allusions has to do with the demise of last-reigning monarchs. The list includes King Fucha of Wu 吴王夫差, King Xiang of Chu 楚襄王, Emperor Fei of Southern-Qi 南齊廢帝, Emperor Yuan of Liang 梁元帝, the last ruler of Northern-Qi 北齊後主, the last ruler of Chen and Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty 隋煬帝. He also writes about the downturn of Tang during and after Emperor Xuanzong's 玄宗 reign.

It is not difficult to understand the prominence given these 'twilight' monarchs in view of the political background of Li Shangyin's time. Caught in factional struggles, defied and ignored by provincial military governors, controlled by the eunuchs, threatened by invaders and haunted by economic problems, the Tang court seemed well on its road to decline. Coping with the situation would have been a challenge to an exceptionally able and enlightened ruler, but the six emperors who reigned during Li's lifetime were degenerate, or simply powerless and incompetent.

Li Shangyin expresses allusively his frustration with what he witnessed of the conduct of the Tang emperors and the general affairs of state. The allusions to last-reigning monarchs illus-
trate several major concerns in his historical poems. The first is that the fall of a dynasty is usually related to the extravagance, depravity and indulgence of its emperors. Poems such as "Chenhonggong" 陳後宮, (The Inner Palace of Chen) "Suigong" 隋宮 (The Sui Palaces), "Suigong Shousui" 隋宮守歲 (Staying Up On New Year's Eve In the Sui Palace), "Nanchao" 南朝 (The Southern Dynasties), "Qigongci" 齊宮詞 (Lyric On Qi Palace) and "Beiqi Ershou" 北齊二首 (Two Poems on Northern Qi) are but a few of such examples. Before going into any detailed analysis of individual poems, I shall briefly survey Li Shang-yin’s choice of allusions in relation to this aspect of his historical poems. Let us first consider this poem:

"Lyric On Qi Palace"

The Palace of Longevity was wide open the evening the soldiers arrived,
Now, no more golden lotus marks the centre of the court.
When the sounds of midnight pipes and songs have died down over the Terrace of Liang,
The nine jade chimes continue swaying in the wind.
(FH: 550)

Altogether three related allusions from the Nan Shi 南史 are used in this poem: (1) The Palace of Longevity was one of the extravagant projects Emperor Fei of Southern-Qi built for his favorite Concubine Pan.⁶⁰ (2) The emperor also had golden lotuses carved at the centre of his court so that his concubine
could dance upon them. (3) When the troops admitted by his own rebellious officials raided his palace one evening, the emperor, caught unguarded in his revels, was killed by the rebel troops. A fourth allusion records that nine jade chimes were stolen from the famous Zhuanyan Temple to decorate Concubine Pan's palaces during their construction.

Thus Emperor Fei of Southern-Qi lost his kingdom because of his infatuation with Concubine Pan and his endless pursuit of pleasure. His extravagance in pleasing her is implicit in the poem through the use of allusions. The poem ends on an ironic note, suggesting that the emperors of Liang, the immediate successors of Qi, continued to conduct their lives in a similar fashion.

In the following two poems the fall of Gao Wei, the last emperor of the Northern-Qi is the subject:

"Two Poems on Northern-Qi"

(1)

One winning smile is enough to topple the nation.
Who needs to wait until brambles grow in the palace before starting to grieve?
The night Xiaolian's jade-white body lay across the bed,
They announced that the Zhou troops had entered Jinyang.
Her enchanting smile is enough to rival the myriad affairs of state.

Her city-toppling charm is at its best when she dresses in military attire.

Jinyang has already fallen, do not bother looking back!

Please, your Majesty, another round of hunting!

(FH: 709)

Two allusions are used in the first poem. The expression "qingcheng" (topple-city), which is now no more than a part of the vocabulary, a cliche, is taken from Li Yan’nnian’s 李延年 song which celebrates the beauty of his sister (beauty enough to topple a city) who later became a favorite of Emperor Wu. The first real allusion from Wuyue Chunqiu 蘇越春秋 mentions that when Fucha, the King of Wu, listened to slander, he was told by his minister that if he continued mistaking the good for the bad, the nation would soon be destroyed by the rival state of Yue. The city would be in ruins and the palace overgrown with brambles. The second allusion refers to the fall of Jinyang and the emperor’s retreat to Ye, when Zhou Wudi’s troops stormed the city.

In the second poem, an allusion is made again to Gao Wei. When the troops came to storm the city of Jinyang, the emperor was hunting at Sandui. His return to the court was delayed by his concubine Shufei, who urged him to go on
yet one more round of hunting. 67

Again, the reign of the last emperor of Northern-Qi ended in frivolity and indulgence.

Another major concern in Li Shangyin's historical poem is the incompetence of the emperors, their mishandling of important affairs and their failure to recognize and to employ men of virtue and talent. Examples are "Suishidong" (The Sui Army Travels East), "Yongshi" (On a Historical Event) and "Jiu Jiangjun" (The Former General).

"The Former General"

Over the Cloud Terrace opinions run loud and high.
Who was to decide then who got merits for driving out our enemies?
Hunting over the plains of Baling in the evening twilight, General Li was [just] a former general!
(FH: 328)

Two allusions to the Han Dynasty are used in this poem which is read as a comment on a contemporary event: (1) The Cloud Terrace was part of an Eastern Han palace to commemorate the outstanding merits of past officials, the emperor Ming had their portraits painted on the wall of the terrace, and there must have been arguments about who deserved a place there. This is the source of the first line.68 (2) Baling was the mausoleum of Emperor Wen (Western Han) to the east of Chang’an. One evening, when the famous Western Han General Li Guang
his retirement hunted on the plains near Baling, he was stopped by a drunken guard. When Li Guang’s followers reminded the guard that it was the former General Li he was speaking to, the guard said, "Even present generals are not allowed to pass by here at night, let alone former generals!" Li Guang had fought the Xiongnu all his life and won many victories but was never properly rewarded for his merits.69

According to Cheng Mengxing and Feng Hao, this poem is a satire on the mistreatment of Li Deyu.70 Another commentator, He Zhuo, believes that it also refers to General Shi Xiong.71 During the reign of Wuzong, Li Deyu, as Chief Minister, carried out a number of policies against the provincial military leaders. Upon his recommendation, General Shi Xiong was sent to crush the Uighurs.72 Shi Xiong was also instrumental in putting down the revolts incited by the military leader Guo Yi.73 When Emperor Xuanzong came to the throne, the outstanding merits of the officials and generals during Wuzong’s reign were completely ignored. Li Deyu was demoted to Yazhou, and Shi Xiong soon died of despair. Later, when Xuanzong ordered the portraits of some thirty-seven generals and officials to be painted on the wall of Lingyan Terrace, no one came forward to speak for these two worthy men.

Most of the Tang emperors during Li Shangyin’s lifetime were deluded by the promises of physical immortality offered by Daoist elixir drugs. Their gullibility not only made them neglect the serious affairs of the state, it also caused a few of them to die
prematurely. Li expressed his concern in poems such as "Jiasheng," "Guo Jingling" and "Maoling." In "Jiasheng" (Scholar Jia), he directly criticized the eagerness of Han Wendi to discover the ways of the ghosts and spirits to the neglect of his duty, no doubt intending the rebuke for the reigning emperor:

"Scholar Jia"

In Audience Hall, seeking worthy men, he received the
exiled subject--
Scholar Jia, whose talents were indeed unrivalled.
Too bad that in the middle of the night he should,
to no purpose, lean forward,
Asking, not of the people but about ghosts and spirits.
(FH: 314)

The main allusion here draws upon the biography of Jia Yi in the Shi Ji: Jia Yi was a talented scholar and one-time royal tutor during the reign of Emperor Wen in the Han Dynasty. After being slandered and demoted to a position in Changsha, far away from the court, he was recalled for an imperial audience. The emperor spent the entire evening asking him about ghosts and spirits, instead of consulting him on matters concerning the state. Wendi was described as being so eager that he crept forward on the mat, listening attentively to Jia Yi.74

This allusion ridicules the emperor's interest in the wrong things and deplores the neglect of men of talent.
The allusions Li Shangyin has used in these historical poems tend to have a negative overtone. He chooses decadent, inept rulers instead of citing stories of able, enlightened monarchs for the current emperors to emulate. All these allusions to last-reigning monarchs, stories of Li Guang and Jia Yi depict, within their own realm of consciousness, a misgoverned and unjust world. There is a tradition of writing historical and political poems in a satirical, and therefore, negative light, but Li Shangyin's satires are particularly poignant, and have even been criticized as "pungent." Feelings of negativity as well as inevitability are especially strong in his poetry, emphasized through his choice of allusions.

Allusion to historical figures also falls into certain patterns in Li Shangyin's poetry. His favorites include Sima Xiangru, Jia Yi, Qu Yuan, Song Yu, Ren Fang, Cao Zhi, and Yu Xin. Several common threads run through the lives of these historical figures. Most of them have a place in history as writers; some, notably Song Yu and Sima Xiangru, won the attention and favor of their rulers through their exceptional literary skills. Jia Yi even had his political views taken seriously. It is not difficult to understand why Li Shangyin alludes so often to this group of people. He always wanted actively to serve the State. His early essays "Sheng Lun" (On Sages) and "Cai Lun" (On Talent), are no longer extant, but in a number of other essays, he expressed the idea that everybody has a contribution
to make to society. Ideally one should serve as a court official, working close to the emperor, making concrete policy suggestions, drafting memorials and important imperial documents. He hoped to achieve such a position through his literary talents. There is no lack of precedent for such a career. Li's own patron, Linghu Chu, for example, became known to Emperor Dezong through his literary skills. He was appointed a member of the Hanlin Academy, later promoted to the position of Drafter of the Secretariat, and even became Chief Minister. Most high positions were filled through the civil service examinations which tested candidates' literary skills. This is why Li Shangyin switched to writing pianwen soon after he met Linghu Chu, pianwen being the preferred prose style for official writing at the time.

Many of the historical figures Li Shangyin alluded to in his poetry succeeded in gaining access to the court and to their emperors. Song Yu, for example, was personally close to King Xiang (of Chu). Sima Xiangru was recommended to Emperor Wu (of Han). Jia Yi was several times made a senior advisor to Emperor Wen (of Han). Cao Zhi's poetic ability made him a favorite of his father, Cao Cao 曹操. On the other hand, they were mostly looked upon as court poets whose main purpose was to please and entertain the ruler, like Song Yu and Sima Xiangru. Others, such as Qu Yuan and Cao Zhi ended their lives in disgrace despite earlier success.

It is obvious that these historical figures appealed to Li
Shangyin. He too was recognized for his literary talents in his early youth. He envies them the opportunities they had for advancement while sympathizing with those who, though recognized, were misused.

The different ways Li Shangyin alludes to these individuals reflect the complexity of his responses toward them. His personal concerns are also evident through the particular stories and anecdotes he selects. On the whole, Li tends to refer to the misfortunes in which these characters were involved. Whether it is Jia Yi's demotion to Changsha, Ren Fang's failure to fulfill his early ambition to become a Chief Minister, or Yu Xin's exile working for an alien dynasty, there was always something that the lives of these characters had in common with his own situation. Whether he is responding to their successes or setbacks, however, his allusions serve a negative end, expressing mainly the frustrations he experienced in his own career. His various allusions to Sima Xiangru will serve as a typical example.

Stories concerning Sima Xiangru's life are found mostly in his biography in the Shi Ji as well as in the Han Shu. One of Li's favorite allusions is to Sima Xiangru's illness (xiaoke bing), an illness characterized by thirst, and presumed to be diabetes. This "thirst" in Li's poem symbolizes a very strong need. Often it is the poet's unfulfilled desire over his own career:

His servant is suffering from the thirst of Xiangru,
Why does his Majesty not grant him a cup of heavenly dew
Li Shangyin also uses Sima Xiangru’s illness and retirement from office to describe his own ill health and the neglect he experiences in contrast to the attention he used to receive under Linghu Chu:

Ask no more of this old guest from King Liang’s garden,
At Maoling, in the autumn rain, an ailing Xiangru.

As a young man Sima Xiangru was well-treated by his patron King Xiao of Liang, as was Li Shangyin by Linghu Chu. He is gently reminding Linghu Tao of this in this poem written in response to an inquiry about his sickness.

In the following poem, the poet’s frustration over his unfulfilled career and his inability to do anything significant for the state is expressed with a touch of irony. This time, the allusion he uses concerns the story of Sima Xiangru and the wine-shop he operated with Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君:

Fine wine in Chengdu, enough to help spend my old age,
Over there by the stove is Zhuo Wenjun!

After their elopement to Chengdu in Szechuan, Sima Xiangru and his wife had no means of livelihood. They opened up a tavern there, with Wenjun serving wine over the wine-stove. These two lines just cited are part of an occasional poem written during the late years of Li’s life. He had just finished his assignment
in Chengdu. The poem was written at a farewell banquet before he returned to his post at Zizhou 梓州. In those last few years Szechuan had witnessed a number of local uprisings as well as skirmishes in the frontiers. The allusion to Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun is used here for certain images and an analogous situation it provides: (1) That the story took place also in Chengdu during a low point in Sima Xiangru's life when he had to struggle to make a living which had little to do with serving the state; (2) That the seemingly carefree life of wine and women is consoling enough in one's old age. The underlying ironic meaning suggests, instead, a deep personal disappointment at not being able to do anything for the state at a time when service is most needed.

Many of the allusions to Sima Xiangru, as we can see, draw upon the less fortunate aspects of his life. Even when Li Shang-yin referred to something positive concerning Sima Xiangru, he would turn it around to bring out his own unhappy situation:

I see no Xiangru at Zitong.
Wishing to head south to ask for the tavern,
I end up at Baxi, looking for Qiao Xiu—
But at Baxi, one finds only cold and desolation.
(FH: 365)

The first allusion here is again about Sima Xiangru and the tavern he operated with his wife in Chengdu. The second hidden allusion has to do with Emperor Wu's discovery of Sima's talent.
after reading one of his works. Greatly impressed by what he had read, the emperor was delighted when he found out that Sima Xiangru was actually a contemporary writer living in Szechuan. Sima was at once summoned to the court, an event which marked an important turning point in his career. That is why, figuratively speaking, the poet says that he fails to find Xiangru at Zitong.

There is also a third allusion to Qiao Xiu. According to his biography in the Jin Shu, Qiao Xiu was living as a recluse in Baxi when Huan Wen discovered him and recommended him to the court.

According to Zhang Ertian, this poem was written in 848.

Zheng Ya, whom Li Shangyin had been working under in remote Gui Zhou had just been demoted. Having lost his post, Li wandered briefly in the area of Szechuan, hoping to secure some appointment. Failing that, he finally returned to Chang'an. He was then thirty-five, with ten unsuccessful years behind him, going from one minor post to the next, working farther and farther away from the court.

The story of Sima Xiangru alluded to here is a happy one, but the theme it serves in the poem is clearly negative. Sima was going through a difficult time in his life when he was living in Szechuan. By a stroke of fortune, he was recommended to the court. Li Shangyin had no such luck. The story of Qiao Xiu too, is used as a contrast to bring out that same sense of despair in our poet.
When we turn to an examination of the female historical figures in Li Shangyin's poetry, we discover something even more complex. Li's favorite female characters include Yang Guifei, Wang Zhaojun, Zhang Lihua, and Lady Li. Except Lady Li whom Li Shangyin alludes to when he laments the death of his wife, all of the other women are alluded to in very similar ways, or they are referred to because they share something in common. Most of these characters came to a sad or tragic end. Wang Zhaojun was the victim, first of Mao Yanshou's misrepresentation, and then of the Emperor's foreign policy toward the Xiongnu when she was sent away to be married in a foreign land. Yang Guifei, Emperor Xuanzong's favorite consort, was strangled by mutinous imperial guards. The Emperor sacrificed her in exchange for his own safe flight to Szechuan during the An Lushan Rebellion. Zhang Lihua, favorite concubine of the last ruler of the Chen Dynasty, was dragged out of a well where she was hiding together with another palace lady and the Emperor himself when Sui troops raided the court. The Emperor was taken away but the ladies were executed instantly.

Li Shangyin shows great sympathy for all these women. However, there is a subtle paradox in his responses to many of them. When the poem is written as a political satire or commentary, the woman herself is usually condemned as a *femme fatale*, a source of decadence and corruption. Whether it is the story of Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei, Chen Houzhu and Zhang Lihua, or Emperor Fei of Southern-Qi and Concubine Pan, the women in these
stories are depicted as the culprits. Yet when the theme of the poem is love and betrayal, these women are portrayed as innocent victims. Compare, for example, the following two poems on Xuanzong 玄宗 and his concubine:

"Huaqing Place"

Up at the Chaoyuan Pavilion, the whirling dresses of kingfisher-feathers are new,
Rising to the music is our First Lady of the Zhao-yang Palace.
Had she not danced to such height in those days,
How could our Empire be filled with foreign dust?
(FH: 591)

"Two Poems on Mawei" (No.2)

Beyond these seas, so they say, there are nine other lands,
Future lives are uncertain, yet this life you had together has come to an end.
Now one hears only the travelling guards sounding the night gong,
With no more cockcrow-man to announce the morning watches--
Today, six royal troops at once halted their horses,
Back then, on the Seventh Night, how you both laughed at the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid!
How could he who ruled more than four decades,
Fail to keep her even as Never-Grieve is kept in the Lu family?
(FH: 604)
In the first poem Yang Guifei is described as a distracting influence on the emperor, causing the near-downfall of Tang. In the second poem, she is the victim of a heartless lover who vowed to love her and then betrayed her. The death of Yang Guifei can be viewed from two perspectives. Where politics is concerned, the public good is served by her death. When it comes to love, however, her brutal death is the result of a shameful betrayal on the part of the emperor. Li Shangyin believes in the primary responsibility of the emperor to his people and his not succumbing to corrupt influences. But Li also believes in the bond between two lovers. As an idealist, he responds to the story of Xuanzong and his concubine from two different standpoints, and he is saddened by both.

This is just one of many of Li Shangyin's paradoxical uses of allusion. Quite often the different attitudes to the same allusion perplex his reader, conveying the impression of irregularity and complexity. Yet within the given poem, the interpretation is always consistent; and when we go beyond the surface contradictions, we discover that even these seemingly paradoxical uses of the same allusions reflect a coherent underlying outlook in our poet.

The world of Li Shangyin's 'public poems' is readily reflected in the many clusters of historical allusion he uses and the characteristic ways he uses them. Whether it is an attack on injustice, an outcry in defence of the deserving or the weak, a satire on the ineptitude of an emperor, or a struggle for
personal realization, Li Shangyin is constantly hoping for a better and more ideal society. Such a vision of the world is, of course, not unique to Li Shangyin, but the intensity of his emotions, the singularity of his devotion as well as the elaborate, allusive manner with which he expresses himself all come together to give his poetry a sensibility and tonality not found in the works of other poets. Although much of what Li Shangyin represents or strives for can be paraphrased in simpler and plainer language, his abundant use of allusions contributes to that remarkable sense of intricacy and variety unique to his poetry.

Li Shangyin's many concerns for the state as well as his own personal frustrations conveyed in his 'public' poems gain an aesthetic distance through his historical allusions. The stories and anecdotes which communicate these concerns remind us of other individuals in different times and places sharing the same predicaments. Yet the emotions remain 'realistic' because they are both personal and particular. It is in his more 'private' and elusive poems, largely through the use of mythological allusions, that we see a transcendence of these personal emotions into something universal, and much more powerful.
Li Shangyin's Use of Mythological Allusions

Li Shangyin is unusual among Chinese poets in that he uses a very large number of mythological allusions in his poetry. The colorful world of mythology not only offers him a treasure house of images; it evokes an otherworldly realm, a realm where his fancy can take flight and his idealism find its imaginary sanctuary.

There are clusters of coherent images in his poetry drawn from myths and legends. Each of them can, in turn, be associated with a variation on the theme that life is a hopeless and endless quest which predominates Li Shangyin's 'private' poems. Because the substance of myths, as we have learned from C.G. Jung, is representative of basic human emotions and universal archetypes, whether or not it is Li's intention to write symbolically, his abundant use of mythological allusions naturally leads to a more symbolic poetry.89

The variations on Li's central theme include: (1) a yearning for love and all that is beautiful and unattainable, as well as a search for self-fulfillment through a better career; (2) a perpetual struggle to find meaning in a world which is absurd and unfeeling; (3) an inability to cope with life's changes and impermanence; (4) a sense of loss, of disorientation and a need to find a spiritual and emotional resting place.

One of the most outstanding groups of images associated with the first two motifs is that of the moon. Rather than see it as
a natural image (as many poets do), Li Shangyin's vision of the moon is made up of a Chang E (also known as Heng E or Su E) pounding elixir, a Wu Gang cutting down his cassia tree, a White Maid rivalling in beauty with the Goddess of Frost, a cassia which sends out the purest fragrance—all colorful images, tales and figures drawn from the world of mythology.

Ancient myths about the moon date back to the Warring States period. The earliest extant record about Chang E's flight to the moon is found in the *Huainan Zi* . By late Han, in Zhang Heng's *Lingxian* , this simple story was further elaborated:

Houyi asked for an elixir from the Queen Mother of the West. Heng E stole it and fled to the moon. Just before she left, she consulted a sorcerer for a divination. The sorcerer said, "It is a good omen. A graceful lady, alone on her flight toward the West. On your way home, do not be afraid of the vast, dark sky. Things will all turn out fine." Heng E thus found her home in the moon, in the form of a toad.

After the Han, stories about Chang E and her flight to the moon continued to evolve. The toad later became a hare. Soon, both the toad, the hare and Chang E herself were said to co-exist in the moon. By the Jin period, Fu Xuan's "Ni Tianwen" says:
What is there in the moon? A white hare pounding the elixir.

Gradually, the story of an immortal being and a cassia tree in the moon began to emerge. During the Tang, Duan Chengshi's 《酉陽杂俎》 records the myth of Wu Gang cutting down the cassia tree on the moon.

As Yuan Ke 袁柯 has suggested, from its very beginning during the Warring States period, the entire moon mythology was closely connected to the popular cult which sought immortal life. In fact, a great many other Chinese myths (including many that Li alludes to) are linked to this immortality cult or the Daoist religion of which it became a part.

As is commonly known, the Daoist faith and all its practices were prevalent during the Tang among royalty and intellectuals alike. We have seen how Tang emperors pursued physical immortality through elixir drugs. Many Tang princesses became Daoist nuns, though often for the social freedom the nun's life afforded rather than out of religious conviction. Young scholars too lived in the mountains as Daoist hermits to make themselves a name for wonder working or austerity, hoping thereby to gain quick access to a political career. Li Shangyin himself was said to have studied Daoism for a while at Mt. Yuyang in 835, after he had failed his civil service examination for the second time.

In any case, in Li Shangyin's poetry, Chang E's flight to the moon has that obvious association with the Daoist search for physical immortality which comes with the myth:
"Master Fang's Coral Elixir"

I do not see the shadow of Chang E
Guarding the moon's wheel in the clear autumn.
Inside the moon, leisurely, with her pestle and mortar,
The cassia seeds are pounded into powder.
(FH: 726)

But the moon often stands for something transcendental in his poetry:

"Frosty Moon"

With the first sounds of migrating geese, there are
no more cicadas,
Beyond this hundred-foot tower, a shimmering water
meets the sky.
The Blue Lady and the White Maid can both endure the chill,
Rivalling for beauty amidst the frost in the moon.
(FH: 545)

The Blue Lady here refers to the Goddess of Frost, and the
White Maid to Chang E, the Moon Goddess herself. Through these
two mythological figures Li Shangyin makes two natural images--
the moon and the frost--come to life. The personification helps
to bring out the symbolic meaning of the piece while the shining
glow of the moon and the chill of the snow-white frost suggest
the triumph of human virtues in the face of adversity. Up high,
the world is lovely and pure, but it is also very cold. Yet,
both the Moon Lady and the Goddess of Frost continue to look their best, sending out a beautiful light and creating the purest frost on a deep autumn night. The struggle to do one's best and to stay lofty and pure in the most adverse conditions is symbolized in the last two lines of the poem.

With all this striving and pursuing, will one ever reach the ultimate land of bliss? Li Shangyin questions this seriously, as he pictures Chang E living all alone on the moon:

Chang E must regret stealing the magic pill.  
The emerald sea—the blue sky—her heart, night after night.  

Apart from the moon, many other-worldly lands in Chinese mythology—Yushan (Jade Mountain), Yaochi (Jade Pool), Shi' er Yaotai (the Twelve-level Jade Terrace), Pengshan (Peng Mountain), Bicheng (Emerald Walls), Langyuan (the Garden of Lofty Gates), Juntian (Mid-Heaven) and Danqiu (Vermilion Hill)—are used by Li Shangyin to symbolize that ideal state of existence. These imaginary places are described in various mythological and popular Daoist texts as either high up in some celestial sphere, or far away in the remote west, above the mysterious mountain of Kunlun. They are the land of the fairies and immortals. In Li Shangyin's poems, they represent a range of aspirations and ideals: from the more realistic and personal but unfulfilled worldly desires to the transcendental world which ours is not and
will never be.

In many of his love lyrics, the land of the immortals is the place where his lover is:

The Peng mountain is not far from here,
Pray, Blue Bird, diligently seek news of her for me! \(^9\)

Sometimes, it represents the impossibility of union with his lover:

Young Liu already regrets that the Peng Mountain is far,
You are ten thousand times more removed than the Peng Mountain! \(^8\)

In other instances, it is used to represent the Daoist convent:

It is difficult to steal both the peaches and the elixir of life,
Within the Twelve City Walls, the variegated toad is imprisoned! \(^9\)

In "Yushan" (The Jade Mountain), the object of the poet's pursuit is much more ambiguous:

1 The Jade Mountain towers high as the peak of Lofty Wind.
The Jade River runs clean and clear of sediment.
Where else will the sun chariot reverse its course?
Here also we find the stairs to Heaven.

5 With pearls that fill a hundred pecks, the Dragon had better not sleep.
Over wutong branches trailing eight-thousand feet above
ground, phoenixes want to roost.
A talented scholar, I heard, lives among immortals.
After playing on his red flute, pray let him take me along!
(FH: 319)

The last line alludes to the familiar story of Xiao Shi
, a legendary figure described in Liexian Zhuan列仙傳.
Xiao Shi was said to be such an exceptional flutist that he could
attract the rarest birds by the sound of his playing. King Mu of
Qin had his daughter marry him. After their marriage, Xiao
taught his wife to play the call of the phoenix on the flute.
Phoenixes started to come and roost atop their roof. The King
then built a Phoenix Terrace for the couple to live in. One day,
the two took flight together with a phoenix and never return-
ed.¹⁰⁰ Both the "Jade Mountain" (玉山 Yushan) and the "Jade
River" (玉水 Yushui) are described in the Shanhai Jing as in
some faraway mythological land.¹⁰¹ According to Chen Yixin's
hypothetical reading, the "Jade Mountain" here is used as a
concealed reference to Mt. Yuyang玉陽山, where Li Shangyin
studied Daoism as a young man. The "Jade River" refers to the
Jade Stream (玉溪 Yuxi) which he believes, runs between Li's
monastery and the royal family convent where his lover lives.¹⁰²
The "Dragon" in line 5 is a reference to the Daoist-nun Princess
heading the convent at the time (the dragon being possibly a
female is supported by a cross-reference to the "female dragon"
in the "Yantai Series").¹⁰³ The poem, in Chen's final analysis,
is a romantic lyric which expresses the poet’s desire to reach his lover—to steal the Princess’ pearl when she is unaware. The poet also pleads for someone to help facilitate his meeting with his beloved.

Within the hypothetical context which he supplies for the poem, Chen Yixin’s reading is coherent. Partly because of the traditional association of the emperor and the imperial court with the "sun" and with "heaven," but also because of the usual association of Dragon with the male rather than the female, I also agree with critics such as Qu Fu, Cheng Mengxing and Feng Hao that this could be read as another poem which pleads for political patronage.¹⁰⁴ This poem is an interesting example of a shift in manner of expression. The piece starts off on a more general and symbolic plane, gradually becoming allegorical, as something more concrete and specific is suggested by the phrases: "the Dragon had better not sleep" and "a talented scholar...pray let him take me along!"

In the following poem ("To Academician Linghu), however, there is no ambiguity in what another celestial image, the "Mid-Heaven," truly stands for:

Although Mid-Heaven’s music is not entirely barred from us mortals,
I am lost in my dreams amid ranks of celestial gates!¹⁰⁵

"Mid-Heaven" as described in a story in the Shi Ji that part of the celestial realm where the myriad gods wander and
where the most beautiful music is endlessly played.\textsuperscript{106} Here, Li is implying that the position Linghu occupies is as high as Mid-Heaven. Li wishes to hear some of that music, but he needs guidance in order to get through those well-guarded gates of Heaven. He needs Linghu's help to get there.

Given the title and the text, there is no doubt that this poem should be read allegorically. Here, Heaven stands for some promising career in court, and the need for patronage is expressed as a yearning for guidance.

Often, where there is no indication of specific reference, the mythical lands in Li's poems represent something transcendental and symbolic:

There is no news of the Vermilion Hill thousands of miles away,

Time and again, at the sight of a wutong, I muse on the phoenix.\textsuperscript{107}

The "Vermilion Hill" is where the legendary purple phoenixes roost, a mythical hill filled with wutong trees that the magical birds feel at home with. Here, however, Li is suggesting that such an ideal land probably never exists, and the wutong tree will never have its phoenix.

We have seen how the mythological world is constantly alluded to to represent a whole range of impossibilities. Depending on the tone and the specificity of personal references, these poems can be read either literally, allegorically or
symbolically. A literal reading sees these poems as satires on the futility of the pursuit of immortal life. An allegorical reading usually interprets these poems either as personal love lyrics or poems pleading for political patronage. A symbolic reading, on the other hand, sees in these pieces the universal human quest for all that is unattainable. Sometimes Li’s poems can have more than one possible level of interpretation, and many possible readings. Sometimes, within a single poem, there are shifts in the manner of expression, switching, for example, from a symbolic plane to an allegorical one. The openness of these poems to interpretation is a direct result of the allusions and the elliptical way Li Shangyin has used them in his poetry.

One important feature which further illustrates the interesting role allusions play in Li’s poetry is the seemingly paradoxical and multi-faceted world which they help to create in his poems. We have noted how the different points of view taken in Li’s treatment of the same historical allusions contribute to a sense of complexity. His use of mythological allusions works in a similar way in his poetry. I am referring here again to the many different meanings "the pursuit of immortality" may have in his poems, as a result of his varied use of these allusions.

In many of these poems, the idea of qiuxian 求仙 (in search of immortality) is equated with, or rather, is used to symbolize the idea of qiushi 求仕 (in search of an official career). This is not something entirely new that Li Shangyin invented. Expressions such as "zhegui" 折桂 (plucking the
cassia twigs) and "tiant意" (stairs to heaven) are common Tang literary expressions meaning "passing the civil service examination" and "the way to a successful career in court." This use of the meaning of qiuxian is sometimes very explicit in Li Shangyin's poems, as is the case with the following lines from an occasional poem celebrating the promising careers of two brothers, Yang Dai 杨戴 and Yang Rong 杨戎:

A cassia tree in the height of day,
For three generations, following the tradition of pure breeze and clover-fragrance.
Pity it is I cannot ride on the same fairy boat with this handsome pair,
How can we all wear the same colorful official robes? 

The "cassia tree" here is a reference to Yang Dai's acquiring his jinshi degree. The "pure breeze and clover-fragrance" refer to Yang Rong's post in the Imperial Library. The "fairy boat" suggests that the brothers are both on the road to an illustrious official career.

Li Shangyin was the first poet to make extensive use of this metaphor for the desire of a prominent official career. At other times, however, the desire to reach out to some immortal land represents a yearning for his beloved. When the notion of qiuxian is used in this way, often allegorically in his poetry, the "pursuit of immortality" appears as something positive.

On a symbolic level, when the search for immortality stands for a universal human need to go beyond one's limited self, or a
yearning for an ideal other-worldly existence, the quest itself, even though ultimately fruitless, is also perceived as something positive and natural.

On a literal or realistic level, however, Li Shangyin's personal attitude toward Daoist practices is ambivalent. The Daoist religion was patronized by Tang emperors and Daoist adepts often enjoyed special political privileges and greater social freedom. We know that before Li obtained his jinshi degree, he had studied Daoism, and in his poetry he occasionally expressed longing for the life of a Daoist recluse, free from the entanglements and anxieties of a worldly existence. Yet it is clear from many of his poems that he did not really believe in the Daoist version of salvation, that is, immortality of the flesh through religious rituals and elixir pills. He continually ridiculed the emperors' foolish pursuit of immortal life.

Because of the many possible meanings he attaches to the idea of "qiuxian," Li creates often contradictory nuances which leaves his readers with an overall feeling of unsettling complexity. When critics are uncertain, or when they disagree, they conclude that his poetry is "ambiguous." Few of them seem to be aware that this is due to the different levels of interpretation (whether literal, allegorical, symbolic, or two or even three levels all at once) when reading Li's poems.

A second related motif in Li's poetry—man's perpetual struggle to find meaning in an absurd world devoid of feeling—is also communicated through mythological allusions. These include
a Heng E 姨娥 "endlessly pounding to make elixir," a Jade Maid
玉女 who "never stops throwing her arrows," a Blue Lady
青女 "diligently weaving her evening frost," a Xi He
"laboring to send off the morning sun," and a talented Ling
Lun 倪倫 who "blew till his solitary bamboo cracked." The futility and absurdity of life and man's interminable
toil are also illustrated by the allusion to Wu Gang in the
following poem:

"My Classmate the Daoist Master Can Liao"

Do not envy the elevated realm of the immortals.
A temporary demotion from Heaven will last a thousand
springs.
How tall is the cassia tree in the moon?
You may ask the woodcutter from Xi He.
(FH: 548)

According to a story in the Youyang Zazu, Wu Gang was
condemned by the Gods to cut down the cassia tree in the moon
because he had committed an offense when training to become an
immortal. Yet everytime he cut a notch on the tree, the tree
immediately grew back again, so that he was forever doomed to
meaningless labor.

Since this poem is written for a friend, it takes on a
strong personal voice. Qu Fu reads this poem on a literal level
and concludes that it is a satire on those who seek Daoist
salvation. Feng Hao believes that it expresses the poet's
repeated failure to attain his civil service degree. Cheng Mengxing, on the other hand, thinks that it refers to the poet's frustration in failing to rise to any significant position after passing his civil service examination. Because of the suggestiveness of the allusion and the way it has been effectively used in the poem, these three approaches to reading the poem are, within their own frameworks, consistent, and therefore, plausible. I would, however, suggest that we interpret this poem symbolically to yield a more interesting and universal meaning.

Through the story of Wu Gang, which strikingly resembles the myth of Sisyphus, Li Shangyin seems to suggest that the world of the immortals offers no escape from earthly suffering and in fact is just as cruel and devoid of meaning as life itself. Human life is a perpetual, absurd struggle, but so is the life of the gods. Read this way, the poem rejects any vision of a better world beyond.

The use of mythological allusions also communicates a third related motif, one which describes man's inability to cope with life's vicissitudes.

An allusion which is used again and again to help generate images of flux is the story of canghai sangtian (the vast sea changing into mulberry fields):

Even if you had the Magu Fairy to scratch your back for you,
How could you live to see the mulberry fields?

When will the seas all turn into mulberry fields,
To prevent the Yi River from flowing east?\textsuperscript{117}

Wishing to buy up the vast sea from the Magu Fairy,  
A glass of spring dews chilled as ice.\textsuperscript{118}

A story in *Shenxian Zhuan* \textsuperscript{神仙傳} records that Magu, a female deity, once told a person whom she was receiving that during their brief meeting she saw the Eastern Sea on earth changing back and forth thrice into mulberry fields.\textsuperscript{119} The desire to secure a sense of permanence, to cope with life's ever-changing events is expressed effectively through this allusion.

A fourth related motif in Li Shangyin's poetry is also revealed through the use of a special group of allusive images. This time, the allusions are drawn from historical as well as mythological sources. I refer here to the notion of life as a wearisome journey in which the individual often finds himself disoriented, and carried forth by forces beyond his control. At other times, he would feel completely at a loss, or of being trapped in a deadend road.

The travel imagery in the following is taken from an allusion to *Zhuang Zi* \textsuperscript{莊子}:

The Pool of Heaven is far— who will wait for me there?  
Day after day, I ride in vain on a gale of ninety-thousand miles.\textsuperscript{120}

The "gale of ninety-thousand miles" is the famous wind which
carries the big Peng bird to the Pool of Heaven. Li himself seems to feel that he is also being carried along by a powerful gale over which he has no control.

In the following poem, the poet declares that he is not afraid of the long-drawn voyage, but he is uncertain which route will take him to his destination:

I wish to follow the winds and waves for a thousand miles,
But I do not know the way to the Dragon Ford.

The Dragon Ford is an allusion to the River Ford, also known as the Dragon Pass, an extremely dangerous and difficult passage, perhaps a rapid or cataract. Fish that succeed in passing it are transformed into dragons. The journey to the Dragon Ford here refers to the difficult and uncertain road to a career, a familiar theme in Li Shangyin. In many other instances, however, the journey imagery could be interpreted more symbolically.

The story of Yang Zhu 杨朱 crying at the crossroad is another favorite allusion:

North, south, east or west—wherever I turn I cannot help shedding tears—
Yang Zhu is indeed my true master!

In the Huainanzi, Yang Zhu is said to weep when he reaches a crossroad which splits into nine different possible routes and is unable to choose the right way. Li Shangyin considers Yang
Zhu his true master because he imagines himself in Yang Zhu's position.

Apart from a sense of loss and aimless drifting, Li also expresses the feeling of being at a dead end:

"Scattered Rocks"

Tigers crouching, dragons coiling--all the way and across,
The lustre of these stars gradually fades as rain leaves its mark.
No need to block all the roads east and west.
Before Commandant Ruan, the head chef, dies of tears!
(FH: 331)

Two allusions to Ruan Ji, the Jin Dynasty poet, are used here. Trying to avoid persecution without compromising his integrity during a dark and treacherous time, Ruan Ji asked to serve as Infantry Commandant, with the excuse that he heard the cook in that department made a good wine. Another story says that Ruan would on occasion go out alone in his carriage. Avoiding the main roads, he would keep driving aimlessly until he came to a deadend, burst into tears and returned home.

The four related motifs we have just examined make up the variations of Li's central poetic theme--that life is a hopeless and endless quest. This outlook which permeates the "private" poems of Li Shangyin is consistent with the one we find in his more "public" pieces. In both cases, the inner world of Li's
poetry is made available to us through his own application of these stories. A unified vision comes through from the repeated use of an allusive imagery which produces symbolic effects and reinforces the same or related motifs. Between the pursuit of a better career, the search for an ideal society and for love, and a quest for spiritual and emotional sanctuary, the world of Li Shangyin hovers constantly between hope and despair, between colorful fantasies and stark reality. On the other hand, the poems also project a sense of variety and complexity through the numerous allusions and their intricate interplay.

Allusion and Plurisignation

A major source of the ambiguity or plurisignation in Li's work is his prevalent use of allusion. In some poems, his allusions are open and available; in others, they are more recondite. But it is usually the application of the allusion rather than the obscurity of their sources which leaves the reader uncertain of their significance. It is his creative use of allusion that makes his poems, even the more accessible ones, rich in multiple meanings.

As defined by William Empson, "ambiguity" is "any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language." This originally pejorative word has, since Empson's study, acquired special
positive connotations as a literary term, especially with reference to poetic language. Empson sees the very nature of poetic language as multiple; that is, it tends to function simultaneously on several levels. Because the term "ambiguity" is also used to criticize a lack of clarity in expository prose, Philip Wheelwright argues that "plurisignation" is more appropriate than Empson's "ambiguity" since plurisignation suggests a "both-and," rather than an "either-or" relation in the many-sided character of poetic language. I see these terms as but two sides of the same coin. When we can successfully argue that a poem has more than one viable reading, we say that it is plurisignative. When the images in a poem send off different signals but do not always hold together to support more than one meaning, we say that the poem is ambiguous. In both cases, the reader has to deal with a wealth of possibilities to arrive at the final interpretation(s) because the language in the poem is rich in multiple implications. The process of reading which involves the reader's knowledge, his intelligence, power of association and discrimination is decidedly a fascinating one. It is in this context that "plurisignation" and, sometimes, "ambiguity," are used in my present study. I also believe that this positive approach toward the "plurisignative" or "ambiguous" use of language should be reflected in our appreciation and evaluation of Li Shangyin's poetry.

In his article, "Ambiguities in Li Shangyin's Poetry," James Liu also mentions allusion as a source of ambiguity, along with
ambiguities in reference, attitude, grammar, imagery and symbolism. Liu's article discusses specific and isolated cases of ambiguities in Li Shangyin. Because he perceives allusion as no more than a frequent device rather than a central mode of expression in Li Shangyin, his analysis of the relation between allusion and ambiguity is, consequently, inadequate.

Having examined allusion as an extended metaphor and the three levels of interpretation in the reading of allusion, I shall now discuss three poems by Li Shangyin which illustrate his characteristic use of allusion and its relation to the plurisignation of his poetry: "Chang E"嫦娥, "Shengnü Ci" 聖女祠 (Holy Lady's Shrine) and "Wuchou Guo Youchouqu Beiqi Ge"無愁歌有愁曲北齊歌 (Song of Northern-Qi: Melody of Never-Grieve Turning Out to be One of Grief." The poems are discussed in order of their increasing complexity.

"Chang E"

The candle glows deep inside the mica screen.
The Long River gradually descends, the morning stars
sink low.
Chang E must regret stealing the magic pill.
The emerald sea--the blue sky--her heart, night after night.
(FH: 717)

There is no mention of Chang E's loneliness in early
mythological texts. It occurred to Du Fu, however, that she would be lonely living on the moon by herself:

One can imagine Chang E, all alone,
Rivalling the chill of late autumn.\textsuperscript{131}

Li Shangyin is obviously echoing Du Fu here as well as in the following lines from two other poems:

The hare is chilled, the toad cold, the cassia blossoms a pale white,
Tonight, Heng E must be deeply forlorn and disconsolate.\textsuperscript{132}

The Blue Lady and the White Maid can both endure the chill, Rivalling for beauty amidst the frost in the Moon.\textsuperscript{133}

Yet in "Chang E," Li makes her plight more interesting when he imagines that she must "regret stealing the magic pill" now that she is faced with eternal solitude. By so doing, Li Shangyin adds an ironic twist which enhances the psychological complexity as well as the interpretive potential of the poem. By introducing new elements into the story, he underscores three stages of a chain of events which together depict an archetypal human situation:

(1) Attainment

(Chang E steals a magic pill which gives her instant immortality);
(2) Alienation

(She feels lonely and chilled, living all by herself on the moon);

(3) Remorse

(She regrets that she has become her own nemesis).

Since these three phases constitute a typical chain of events in human experience, by singling out just these three phases, Li Shangyin has shaped the allusion in a way that leaves his poem open to plurisignation.

Indeed, although this is one of the most "transparent" and linguistically accessible poems in Li Shangyin's collection, five different readings have been offered by traditional commentators:

(1) A reading which interprets the poem on its surface level; that is, Chang E regrets the loneliness she has to endure after her successful pursuit of immortal life;\textsuperscript{134}

(2) A reading which interprets Chang E to be the poet's beloved, object of his longing;\textsuperscript{135}

(3) A reading which depicts the poet's lament for his deceased wife, written from the point of view of her lonely departed soul;\textsuperscript{136}

(4) A reading which interprets Chang E as a Daoist nun who regrets her religious vows, finding the life of the cloister too lonely to bear;\textsuperscript{137}
(5) A reading which interprets Chang E to be the poet himself, who regrets his "opportunistic" marriage to Wang Maoyuan's daughter and his subsequent alienation from Linghu Tao and members of the Niu faction;138

A review of these interpretations shows that the first is really a literal reading while the others are allegorical; that is, readings 2-5 all interpret the poem by referring to a specific event, whether personal, social or historical, in the poet's life.

Of the five interpretations, the second by Tang Zhongyan 唐仲言, Huang Sheng 黄生 and Qu Fu is vague and unconvincing since the three stages—attainment, alienation and remorse—conveyed in the allusion are not identified or addressed. The third reading is probably arrived at because the expression shengxian "ascending to immortality" (an echo of the Chang E allusion in the poem) is often used as a euphemism for "death." Assuming that after her death, Li Shangyin's wife must feel lonely (or more accurately, he must feel lonely), she must regret having left him (or is it he who regrets?). But, as some critics have already pointed out, this is an extremely tenuous if not tortuous reading because it is difficult to argue that Li's wife chooses to die or actively causes herself to die and ultimately regrets it.139

The fourth and fifth readings, however, support a consistent though different interpretation of the piece.
Let us now examine the poem itself. "Chang E" is a quatrains, made up of two lines of realistic setting juxtaposed with two lines of allusive images drawn from the world of imagination. The opening lines depict an indoor scene, late at night. Against the exquisite but cold mica screen a candle glows and casts its flickering shadow. The passage of time is suggested by the burning candle, the movement of the Milky Way and the sinking of the morning stars outside the window. Without any explicit reference, the poem intimates the presence of an individual in lines 1-2. The person is placed in an elegant but lonely setting. He or she is apparently in anguish, staying awake throughout the long night. Line 2 provides a smooth transition to the world outside, to the Heavenly Constellations and finally to Chang E, the moon lady who is imagined in her lonely celestial setting, facing eternally the immensity of a dark blue sky.

In many ways, the situation of Chang E parallels and echoes that of the individual in lines 1-2 and the Moon Lady eventually becomes identified as that very persona. Cheng Mengxing and Feng Hao believe that Chang E in this poem represents a Daoist nun who regrets her religious vows, finding the life of the cloister too lonely to bear (Reading 4). Zhang Ertian and Hu Ciyan, on the other hand, interpret Chang E as the poet himself, who regrets his "opportunistic" marriage to Wang Maoyuan's daughter and his final alienation from Linghu Tao and members of the Niu faction (Reading 5). There are historical and biographical backgrounds which support both interpretations. At
the same time, we are also aware that the concerns reflected in these two readings have been more than occasional subjects in Li Shangyin's poetry. But, more than that, in both cases the allegorical readings correspond with the three main phases in the allusion, and the interpretations are consistent.

Other than the literal as well as the two allegorical interpretations we have just examined, this poem can also be read with broader associations on a symbolic level. C.Y. Yeh Chao's essay on this poem was the first attempt at such a reading. In her analysis, Chang E's solitude represents the inevitable loneliness of any fine poet because of his acute sensitivity. I would like to add that, in an even more universal sense, Chang E's flight to the moon can symbolize any attainment which, although apparently rewarding, separates one from the crowd, leaving one with a complete sense of alienation. When we focus our reading on the paradox of Chang E's immortality and her solitude, we may arrive at yet another interpretation. Since the moon, which represents that beautiful and unattainable world of the immortals, appears cold and desolate, with the elixir and her flight to the moon, Chang E, though acquiring eternal life, suffers intense loneliness. Read in this way, the poem questions the existence of ultimate bliss.

The skillful use of allusion has helped to generate numerous possible meanings for this apparently simple poem. There are other poems in Li's collection (such as "Hai Shang" 海上, "Jun Tian" 鈞天, "Dan Qiu" 丹邱, "Yao Chi" 瑶池 and
"Ye Shan" which, like "Chang E," are relatively simple and accessible yet creatively allusive with multiple meanings. But Li Shangyin's plurisignative poems are typically more complex and elusive. The individual allusive lines tend to send off a whole range of signals and possibilities, yet the overall interpretation of the poem is not as readily accessible and requires a great deal of discrimination in our reading. For example:

"Holy Lady's Shrine"

1 Amidst the hazy mists I encounter traces of the goddess,
   A traveller delayed on a vague and distant journey--
   In what year did she return to the azure heavens?
   This road leads to the imperial capital.

5 For news, I must wait for the Blue Sparrow,
   To meet her is unlike meeting the Purple Lady.
   My insides turn because of my dreams of Chu.
   My heart breaks for the shaman of the Han palace.
   Her retinue rides on cold bamboo canes.

10 Her carriage is shaded by white elm trees.
   Once the Star Lady is gone,
   Will Sister Moon ever come again?
   A widowed crane lost in the dark ravine,
   A fettered phoenix laments atop a verdant wutong.

15 Only that under the green peaches
   Fang Shuo was a wild man!\textsuperscript{144}
   (FH: 92)

There are two other poems with the same or similar title in Li Shangyin's collection written apparently at different times.\textsuperscript{145} All three poems on the Holy Lady's Shrine are "am-
biguous" in many ways and have generated critical controversy. I have chosen to examine this particular piece because it is the most complex and interesting of the three in its use of allusion.

"Holy Lady’s Shrine" is the shrine of a local deity on the slope of Mt. Qingang (in present day Lüeyang county, Shaanxi province). The opening lines of the poem suggest that this piece was written when the speaker was travelling through the region. It was an area within Guanzhong, a much travelled locale during the Tang Dynasty, which makes it hard to assign the poem to a specific date in Li Shangyin’s life, assuming him to be the speaker in the poem. Commentators such as Xu Zhanyuan, Feng Hao and Zhang Ertian speculate that Li wrote this poem in 837 after Linghu Chu’s death, when he escorted his patron’s remains from Xingyuan to Chang’an for burial. There is one poem in his collection ("Zi Nanshan Beigui Jing Fenshui Ling") written during this trip to Chang’an in which he explicitly mourns the loss of his patron. These commentators consider "Holy Lady’s Shrine" to be a more private, allegorical piece written for a similar purpose.

On the other hand, Zhu Yizun suggests that this is a romantic piece which expresses longing for a loved one or possibly laments her death.

Cheng Mengxing and Ji Yun go one step further to suggest that this is no ordinary love poem, but one which satirically depicts the licentiousness of Daoist nuns.
James Liu, although usually disputing Su Xuelin's romantic interpretations, also reads this poem as reflecting Li's affairs with Daoist nuns.\textsuperscript{151} Chen Yixin likewise sees this as a nostalgic piece lamenting Li's lost love.\textsuperscript{152}

Because the tone of the poem is one of earnest longing and anticipation, not of censure, I find Cheng and Ji's reading largely unconvincing. Yet the poem does not seem to suggest exclusively the longing for a beloved. It seems that the critics were prompted by certain associations connected with the allusions, yet they did not take into consideration other interpretations of some significant images in the poem.

A close reading shows that the allusions in "Holy Lady's Shrine" seem to create a path into the poem on two dominant levels:

1. A literal level on which the poem describes the speaker's romantic response to the Holy Lady and his concern for her whereabouts;

2. An allegorical level with two possible interpretations, reading the piece either as a pursuit of a beloved or the pursuit of an official career.

On the literal level, the poem opens with a realistic setting. Journeying to the capital, the speaker passes by the Holy Lady's Shrine. Amidst the deep mists and the dense growths which crowd the mountain paths, he encounters traces of the Holy
Lady. The mysteriousness surrounding her in the first line is paralleled immediately by the uncertainty the speaker feels about his own journey. The third line comes back to the goddess again as the speaker wonders when it was that she actually left for the heavens, and this is paralleled in turn by the reality of the speaker's own journey to the capital, which, in metaphorical terms, can be understood as the land of the chosen few (court officials), the land of the "celestials." Thus, in two neatly-balanced couplets, Li Shangyin successfully sets a physical as well as metaphorical background for his poem. His own destiny seems to be somehow connected to the Holy Lady's whereabouts. His journey can be taken in both the literal and allegorical sense.

From lines 5 and 6 on, the rest of the poem consists of corresponding couplets made up entirely of allusive images. Each of these couplets uses allusions in such a way that they seem, in most cases, to support a reading of the poem on two levels simultaneously. The "Blue Sparrow" in line 5 is the famous messenger of the Queen Mother of the West mentioned in the *Shanhai Jing*. The "Purple Lady" is the Goddess of the Privy whose story is told both in the *Yiyuan* and the *Jingchu Suishi Ji*. In lines 5-6, the speaker states explicitly that he is awaiting news of the Holy Lady, but she is very difficult to meet with, certainly not as easy to invoke as the Purple Lady.

Lines 7-8 express the speaker's profound longing for his
goddess. At this point, the poem takes on strong romantic overtones as the poet alludes to his favorite story of King Xiang (of Chu) and the Goddess of Mt. Wu. While King Xiang enjoys the favors of his goddess in a dream, the speaker has failed to meet his Holy Lady in the same way. Or, perhaps the speaker did have an affair with his "goddess" in the past, but that is now only a memory. His yearning has become so intense that it makes his insides turn. Line 8 also strikes a romantic note when he says that his heart breaks, failing to obtain the help of a shaman to communicate with the goddess. On the literal level, these lines simply describe a deep and passionate longing for the goddess. Is this deity the same Holy Lady spoken of at the beginning of the poem? Is the poet simply musing romantically about a local deity whose shrine he happens to pass by as a traveller, inspired perhaps by the mysterious and erotic story of King Xiang? So far, the intensity of the emotions, the somewhat sombre tone of the poem, as well as the reference to a metaphorical journey with the court as destination suggest that more is implied. There are two possibilities. The goddess may represent a lover the speaker wholeheartedly pursues, or she may represent a political patron, someone who can help him on his road to an official career.

Since it has been a tradition among Chinese poets to compare their relationship with their patrons to that of a pair of lovers, the use of allusions with romantic associations in an allegorical context is readily justified. If one should question
why the speaker is not cast as a woman yearning for special favor
and affection from her male lover (the patron), as was the usual
practice, one only has to remember that in "Li Sao," the proto-
type of this sort of allegory, Qu Yuan alternates between a
female role and a male one. On the one hand, he plays the King's
estranged lover. In other instances, to symbolize his quest, he
reverts from a female persona to that of a chivalrous male
courting the goddesses. Whether "Holy Lady's Shrine" be inter-
preted as a love poem or one which expresses the speaker's
longing for a successful official career, the goddess clearly
stands for someone other than the Holy Lady herself. In both
cases, the allusions would have specific references and the poem
would have to be interpreted allegorically.

One of the most difficult and decisive factors in reading Li
Shangyin and, indeed, poetry of such a highly allusive nature, is
to establish the context. Since an allusive text naturally works
by indirection, "the implicit other" in the poem is really the
context. An allegorical reading is possible only if it is
provided with a context. Since many of Li's poems are labelled
"Without Title" or deliberately given pseudo-titles, a reader has
to supply his own frameworks when reading his poetry. As long as
the contexts are legitimate and the images in the poems are read
coherently, one could claim that the reading is consistent and,
therefore, plausible. The reason why most scholars read Li
Shangyin's poems either as "romantic" or "career-oriented"
allegories is that they are the more probable contexts, consider-
ing Li's biography, the historical background, certain cues taken from his more explicit poems, and the tradition of allegorical reading in Chinese poetry.\textsuperscript{155}

The poem can indeed be read allegorically. From his biographical data, we gather that Li Shangyin obtained his jinshi degree in 837, apparently with some help from his patron's son, Linghu Tao. Like all candidates holding this degree, Li had to go through another examination to be assigned a position, and the help of an influential official could make a decisive difference. On the eleventh month of that same year, Linghu Chu died while serving as military governor of Xingyuan. Before his death, Li Shangyin, his favorite protege, was called to his bedside to draft a final memorial for him. Li escorted the remains of Linghu Chu from Xingyuan to Chang'an for burial.\textsuperscript{157} In spite of the presence of strong romantic images, considering the setting of the poem and the Chinese allegorical tradition, it is very likely, as Xu Zhanyuan, Feng Hao and Zhang Ertian have suggested, that Li is mourning the death of his patron and at the same time expressing uncertainty over his own career after Linghu's death.

The allusions in lines 9-10 support such a reading while continuing to operate on two levels. In the *Hou Han Shu Fei Changfang Zhuan* 后漢書費長房傳, Fei Changfang is said to have been given a bamboo cane by the Genie of the Wine Pot. Riding on the magic cane, he could roam and soar anywhere he wanted.\textsuperscript{158} In the ancient ballad, "Longxi Xing" 龍西行, the constellations in the sky are likened to "white elms."\textsuperscript{159} Another source
in *Li Ji* mentions that the sap from the white bark of the elm tree is used to lubricate the wheels of funeral carriages. On a literal level, therefore, the allusive image of attendants riding on "bamboo canes" and a carriage travelling under white elm trees is an appropriate picture of the Holy Lady and her followers escorting her on her journey to heaven. On an allegorical level, the same images in lines 9-10 can be seen to depict Linghu Chu's funeral procession on its way to the capital. If one were to consider the Holy Lady a representation of the speaker's lover, these lines may suggest the death of the beloved, a signal Zhu Yizun responds to in his interpretation of the poem.

The Star Lady in line 11 refers to the Weaving Maid, and Sister Moon in line 12 to Chang E, the Moon Lady. If we take the "Star Lady" to represent the Holy Lady herself, the poet is wondering whether, after her departure, another deity will ever descend to earth. On the allegorical level, the poet laments the death of his patron. He doubts very much if another person as influential as Linghu Chu would come his way again. If we were to read this as a love poem with special, personal reference, these two lines strike a slightly discordant note because it would be difficult to conceive of the speaker contemplating the possibility of a new lover while still grieving the death of his beloved. On the other hand, if we were to respond to it as a romantic lyric written with no specific reference in mind, the Star Lady and the Sister Moon could both be seen as symbolic of
an idealized love which, once gone, will never come back again.

Lines 13-14 are two melancholic lines with, again, strong romantic associations. The "widowed crane" echoes an allusion in *Lienü Zhuan* 列女傳 which mentions a young widow and her song of the yellow crane crying mournfully at the loss of its partner. Together, lines 13 and 14 paint the picture of a solitary crane lost in a deep, dark ravine, unable to find his way out; and a sad and helpless phoenix tied to its *wutong* tree, unable to take flight. The very strong romantic overtones of these lines may prompt a reader to think of them initially as images of a forlorn lover, but the phrase *mi canghe* 迷蒼壑 (lost in the dark ravine) and *ji huang* 羣鳯 (fettered phoenix) also depict, allegorically, a disconcerted young scholar who has just lost his patron and mentor.

Lines 15-16 contain two allusions on Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, the writer and favorite court jester serving Emperor Wu (of Han) who figures in numerous anecdotes with Daoist mythical settings. In one of them, the Queen Mother of the West was offering Emperor Wu one of her magical peaches when Dongfang Shuo peeked in through a side window. Casting a glance at him, the Queen Mother told Emperor Wu that "the little rascal" had managed thrice before to steal her peaches. Another allusion to Dongfang Shuo in the *Shi Ji* reports that he repeatedly married and then divorced some of the finest women in Chang'an. The money granted him by the emperor eventually went to these women. Others serving the emperor called him "the wild man."
The various ways these allusions have been understood have inspired very diverse interpretations of the poem. Cheng Mengxing argues, for example, that the "peaches" in line 15 are "peach blossoms" used as a metaphor for the beautiful Daoist nuns, and "Dongfang Shuo," the "wild man" refers to their bold, illicit lover(s). Two contemporary critics, Liu Xuekai and Yu Shucheng also speculate that Dongfang Shuo refers to the lover of a nun in a cloister, possibly the same shaman mentioned in line 8 who presumably works in the Tang court. I think that Cheng was misreading the word "peaches" when he takes it to mean the blossoms rather than the fruit. At the same time, all three critics tend to emphasize the romantic association in the reference to "wild man." Since the notion that Dongfang Shuo is a "wild man" in the poem is clearly used in connection with Dongfang Shuo stealing the peaches, it seems that there are two possible ways that one can reconcile these two lines:

1. The focus of the two lines is on Dongfang Shuo being a "wild man" and his romantic associations with women. In this case, the "peaches" are seen as the women and the two lines support a reading of this piece as a love lyric and the speaker as the bold lover.

2. The focus of the two lines is on the stealing of the "peaches" and the association of attaining immortality or
some kind of "celestial status." An allegorical meaning of this "celestial status" is a successful official career in the imperial court. In this case, the "wild man" can be understood simply as a general description of Dongfang Shuo, the clever, mischievous man who dared and actually succeeded in stealing the most treasured peaches of the Queen Mother; and in an allegorical sense, the man who dared to ask for and actually attained the most desirable position he could dream of. The last two lines suggest, therefore, that the poet, in passing by the Holy Lady’s Shrine, contemplates obtaining grace from the goddess, like Dongfang Shuo, who stole the magical peaches from the Queen Mother.

In our final analysis, we must say that Li Shangyin uses allusion successfully to create a poem that simultaneously moves on two levels. On the one hand, the allusions shape the reader’s response to a romantic lyric, and on the other hand, the allusions resonate in such a way as to become autobiographically suggestive. It is quite probable that, using the convention at least as ancient as the "Li Sao," Li Shangyin masks this lyric of his hope for preferment behind an allusive complex of seemingly romantic suggestions. It is also likely that, passing by the Holy Lady's Shrine and inspired by the romantic story of King Xiang, Li muses on the mysteriousness of the Holy Lady and decides to write a romantic lyric to mark the occasion. Chen Yixin provides, again, a more specific context for an inter-
pretation of this as a love poem. According to Chen’s hypothetical reading, the "Holy Lady’s Shrine" is not the shrine on the slope of Mt. Qingang, it refers to the convent where Li’s Daoist nun-lover used to live, presumably with a Tang Princess. After their illicit affair was discovered, Chen suggests that the lady, together with her sister and other nuns were sent back to the court. "This road leads to the imperial capital" in line 4 suggests that Li recalls how his lover was sent on the same road back to the court. The "dreams of Chu" is a reminiscence of the sexual encounters they had in the past. Since Chen argues that Li’s beloved was a palace lady, Li also alludes to her appropriately as the "shaman of the Han Palace." Lines 11-12 refer to Li’s lover and her sister, wondering if they will ever come back again. Lines 13-14 describe the two ladies in the palace, lonely and confined. Chen also suggests that the poet regrets the pain he has caused the two sisters. It was all due to his behaving like the wild and bold Dongfang Shuo that the ladies were shamed and sent back to the palace.¹⁶⁶ This interpretation is coherent within the framework which Chen has constructed. However, his reading involves too many speculative details which he has herself reconstructed from the various cues in the poems and inferred from disparate sources. Though many of these details seem plausible, they are not supported by external evidence. Nevertheless, all this serves to demonstrate how strong the romantic strain is in "Holy Lady’s Shrine" and in Li Shangyin’s poetry in general.
The allusions in "Holy Lady's Shrine" create a strong tension between the surface of the poem and its probable underlying intention. It also creates an overall sense of intangibility and uncertainty which is very much in keeping with the dramatic situation and the mood of the poem.

Having discussed "Holy Lady's Shrine," I would like to move on to another example--the most bizarre of the three pieces I have set out to analyze:

"Song of Northern-Qi: Melody of Never-Grieve Turning Out to be One of Grief"

1 To the East, the Azure Dragon--to the West, White Tiger. The Centre holds one blessed star, overseeing the earthly cycle. The waters of Wei in the Jade Vessel laugh at the clear pool. Digging at Heaven, failing to reach the Cowherd's place.

5 As the Magical Steeds trample clouds, and Heavenly Horses charge fiercely, The Ox Mountain in pieces, the sound of shattering coral. Autumn ladies in drips and drops, not forming tears. The Twelve Jade Towers--not an old nail left. Shoving mists, spitting moon--hurled over a thousand miles.

10 Ten times over red wutongs have died in a row. By the white birches, in the other houses, ghosts haunt. In vain, leaving behind dark memories like silkworms on papers. In the dim twilight short silk threads sway in the breeze, As blood gathers and disperses, who can one now recognize? (FH: 245)
Together with half a dozen other pieces ("Shaoxiang Qu" 香曲, "Sheyu Qu" 射魚曲, "Heyang" 河陽, "Henei" 河內, "Yantai" 燕台 and "Haishang Yao" 海上謠), this is one of Li Shangyin's most notoriously difficult and enigmatic poems. Yet there is, one must say, a clear sense of an overall structure:

Lines 1-2 provide the court setting;
Lines 3-10 intimate some kind of bloody and catastrophic events;
Lines 11-14 conclude with a scene of the aftermath of disaster and a sense of lament and nostalgia.

At the same time, even the most difficult images in the poem are vivid enough to provide the reader with some kind of direction for his imagination:

Lines 3-4 suggest some abortive effort to reach some special place or to clean out something;
Lines 5-6 describe the marching in of horse troops and the destruction of something precious;
Lines 7-8 depict beautiful ladies unable to shed tears and the annihilation of elegant buildings;
Lines 9-10 indicate that a great many people have died and something has been cast a thousand miles away.

However, the exact meaning and significance of the poem
appear uncertain. There are, I believe, three factors which contribute to this sense of mystery. First, there are many allusive images (seventeen in all) in the poem, and they resonate with various possibilities. Second, and more importantly, a great number of these images are incompatibly joined together. The middle lines of the poem—particularly lines 3 and 4, 6 and 7, 9 and 10—contain phrases which, though colorful and evocative, convey a sense of strangeness and unreality. Yet there are connections. The "clear pool" in line 3 is somehow related to "digging at" in line 4. The word "trample" in line 5 is connected to "in pieces" in line 6. The "moths" in line 7 in the conventional figurative sense of "beautiful ladies" can also be associated with the "Twelve Jade Towers" in line 8. And third, since the poem was written within a specific historical and political framework, we need to relate the many evocative but fragmented images to some historical episode to make coherent sense of them.

These are characteristics also peculiar to Symbolist poetry. A.G. Engstrom characterizes Symbolist poetry as one of "indirection," one in which "ideas...are characteristically presented obliquely through a variety of symbols and must be apprehended largely by intuition and feeling." In his book, The Techniques of Strangeness in Symbolist Poetry, J. Kugel also uses expressions such as, "haziness," "mysteriousness," "strangeness," "allusiveness," "suggestiveness" and "disjointedness" to describe the essential nature of Symbolist poems. Kugel even
goes as far to conclude after attempting to analyze a poem by Nerval that we should simply accept the haziness of the poem as its force and urgency, that the point of the poem is not to try to understand everything but that "we read it again and again... until we can get so much into the poem that we can accept all its words and love their mystery," something which reminds one of the kind of comments Liang Qichao made on Li Shangyin's poetry.

Despite the mysteriousness and apparent impenetrability of "Song of Northern-Qi," I still believe that its deeper meanings can actually be grasped. I shall start with a review of the several hypotheses offered by traditional and contemporary critics:

1. This poem is a satire on Gao Wei, the last emperor of Northern-Qi during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period;\(^{172}\)

2. This poem is a satire on Emperor Jingzong of Tang;\(^{173}\)

3. This poem is written in memory of Liu Congjian, military governor of Zhaoyi, who expressed support for Emperor Wenzong by questioning the eunuchs' slaughter of court officials after the Sweet Dew Incident;\(^{174}\)

4. This poem is about the Sweet Dew Incident as well as a lament on the murder of Concubine Yang, Princes An and Chen after the death of Em-
peror Wenzong;\textsuperscript{175}

5. This poem refers to a series of purges and deaths of court ladies and entertainers in the Tang palace;\textsuperscript{176}

Let us start by considering the first reading, one which is immediately suggested by the title. The last emperor of Northern Qi (550-577), Gao Wei, was known in history as a most extravagant and decadent monarch.\textsuperscript{177} Gao Wei was interested in music and is said to have composed a tune which he titled "Never-Grieve." People have since called him "Emperor of Never-Grieve."\textsuperscript{178}

Li Shangyin gives the title an ironic twist in suggesting that the Melody of Never-Grieve in fact turned out to be one of grief. If we should take this poem for what its title says, it is, on one level, a poem about the death of Gao Wei and the downfall of his kingdom.

The poem opens with the images of two mythological creatures, the "Azure Dragon" and the "White Tiger," which traditionally represent the Heavenly Constellations of the East-West poles of the universe.\textsuperscript{179} Line 2 suggests that one blessed star (here alluding to the \textit{suixing} 岁星 Jupiter) presides in the centre, overseeing the movements of the earthly cycle. Since the ancient Chinese believed that where the \textit{suixing} resides, it will bring good fortune to the monarch ruling below it, it has been considered a lucky star, and one which is associated with the emperor, the Son of Heaven.\textsuperscript{180} Furthermore, the harmonious workings of the heavenly bodies have always been seen to reflect
what should be the organized state of human affairs on earth. Thus the images in the initial lines—with the blessed star in the centre and the other constellations properly balanced on its two sides—suggest the exalted status of the emperor and his divine duties in managing the affairs of his nation. The Azure Dragon and the White Tiger may be seen to symbolize all the mandarins and guards who support and look up to him in the imperial court.

The "Jade Vessel" in line 3 echoes a reference to a line in a poem by Bao Zhao 鮑照 : "Clear as ice water in a Jade Vessel"\(^{181}\) and to another by Wang Changling 王昌齡 : "A heart of (pure) ice water in a Jade Vessel."\(^{182}\) In both cases, the Jade Vessel is a symbol for purity filled with the clearest, cleanest waters. The Wei River, too, has always been considered very clean and pure, as opposed to the murky Jing River, the other tributary of the mighty Huang He.\(^{183}\) "The waters of Wei in the Jade Vessel" must, therefore, be so clean that they laugh at the clear pool for not being clear enough. So much for the literal sense of line 3. We shall consider its possible significance after we have examined the next line. "Digging at Heaven" in line 4 is really not a strange image if we recall the expression "zao hundun" (digging at Chaos) in Zhuang Zi and the famous mythological tale of Nü Gua mending the cracks of Heaven.\(^{184}\) But "Heaven" here, as well as "the Cowherd's place"—the Milky Way—most likely refers to the seat of the imperial court, the capital. Since Sanfu Huangtu 三輔黃圖 says that
"the Wei River is used to symbolize the Milky Way because it passes through the capital,"¹⁸⁵ we may equate the pure "waters of Wei in the Jade Vessel" with the sanctity of the imperial court. Let us consider, at this point, the geographical position of Northern Qi in relation to its rival nation, Northern Zhou. The capital and imperial residence of Northern Qi (Ye and Jinyang) were located in present day Hebei and Shanxi while that of Northern Zhou (Chang'an) was some distance away in Shaanxi province. When the speaker in the poem says: "The Jade Vessel and the Wei River laugh at the clear pool, / Digging at Heaven, failing to reach the Cowherd's place," he is possibly assuming the complacent voice of Gao Wei in dismissing the threat of the Northern Zhou presence in Chang'an.¹⁸⁶ "The clear pool of Northern Zhou," he seems to say, "even if it were to try to expand by digging at Heaven, will never reach where we, the true celestials are!"

At this point, the poem takes a conspicuous turn. We are presented with a series of images which suggest some bloody and apocalyptic event, and it is here that the notion of "Never-grieve" begins to turn dark and sombre. In line 5, both the qilin (Magical Steeds) and tianma (Heavenly Horses) are exceptional breeds with almost magical prowess.¹⁸⁷ The tianma has further appropriate association since it was brought to the court of Han from its native Ferghana, a region in Central Asia.¹⁸⁸ Thus, when the armies of Northern Zhou marched into Jinyang and then into Ye, their sudden arrival took the form of
fierce steeds descending from the far west. "Ox Mountain" in line 6 was located in Qingzhou 徐州, in present day Shandong province. According to the History of Northern Qi, when the capital of Ye fell, Gao Wei abdicated in favor of his young son and fled with him and the empress to Qingzhou. The imperial family was finally captured by enemy troops in Qingzhou, marking the end of Northern Qi. With such an historical background in mind, the line "The Ox Mountain in pieces, the sound of shattering coral" becomes at once vividly clear and suggestive. But more than that, the images of "Ox Mountain" and "shattering coral" have other allusive associations which may enhance our appreciation of this line. In the Liezi, it is recorded that during the Warring States period, once Duke Jing of Qi mounted atop the Ox Mountain where he surveyed the beautiful bountiness of his fiefdom. The Duke lamented that he should die one day, leaving behind all this loveliness. With this in mind, we can say that "The Ox Mountain in pieces, the sound of shattering coral" depicts the violent destruction of a nation and all its cherished beauties.

Lines 7-10 develop the imagery of tragic deaths and destruction. Line 7 probably refers to the concubines and palace ladies in their last moments of glory. If one recalls what Li Shangyin alludes to in "Northern-Qi," Gao Wei's favorite concubine Feng Shufei 順淑妃 urged him to go on one more round of hunting even after they received news of the enemy troops storming the city of Jinyang. Unaware of the catastrophe
threatening the nation, Gao Wei’s ladies shed no tears. Line 8 suggests that there was total destruction in the imperial cities. The "Twelve Jade Towers" in line 8 stand for the twelve magnificent palace quarters the emperor built in Jinyang. As an allusion to mythological buildings, they acquire special connotations of heavenly pleasure and luxury. Yet such pleasures are not eternal. It is implied that not so much as a nail remained of Gao Wei’s palaces in Jinyang.

After being captured in Qingzhou, Gao Wei and his entourage were taken to Ye, and then finally to Chang’an where he was later executed. With one or two exceptions, the entire imperial family was put to death. The images in line 9, "Shoving mists, spitting moon--hurled over a thousand miles," probably refer to nostalgic memories of a past from which Gao Wei and his followers were being torn, as they were taken by force over a long distance to Chang’an. Since the wutong is a noble tree and the character tong also puns on "children"，the wutong has often been used by writers and poets to refer to a nobleman’s offspring. One can therefore interpret line 10--"Ten times over red wutongs have died in a row"--as a reference to the tragic deaths of the imperial children of Gao Huan, the founding father of Northern-Qi. The color "red" here conjures both the notion of "nobility" and the images of blood and death.

The ending of the poem is more direct, hence more transparent than the immediately preceding lines. Line 11 presents a picture of white birches by graveyards, a scene of haunting
desolation. Line 12 seems to lament those who have died in the catastrophic events suggested earlier. I have translated line 12, "kongliu anji ru canzhi" (literally "in vain-to leave behind-secret-memories-like-silk-worm-papers") as "In vain, leaving behind dark memories like silkworms on paper." While "silkworm paper" is paper made from the cocoons of the silkworm, and there is also an ancient calligraphic script known as the "silkworm script" (which has silkworm-like strokes), I have included in my translation the suggestion that the dark memories of the past have been recorded on paper in a script which looks like sleeping silkworms; that is to say, such memories, although recorded in history books, are rarely read, and hence remain an inactive or nearly forgotten part of our memories. Such an association is not only appropriate but also justified since silkworms do "sleep" during the periods of time when they shed their skins before they start spinning silk to form their cocoons.

Line 13 depicts a quiet, ordinary twilight scene, with soft grasses swaying in the breeze. The peace and permanence of Nature provide a subtle contrast to man's atrocities as the speaker muses on the transience of human existence.

As we can see, our first reading of this poem is consistent all the way through and should therefore be convincing. Very much like the series of two poems on Northern-Qi, this piece is about Gao Wei and his downfall, probably written as a warning for the Tang emperor at the time. But readers have looked beyond the
reading prompted so directly by the title for other possible interpretations. Su Xuelin argues that this poem is about the purge of palace ladies and entertainers by Emperor Wenzong for their illicit romantic liaisons, to which the poet himself was party.\textsuperscript{201} I find her reading hard to support. The \textit{Biography of Prince Zhuang Ke} mentions the execution of a number of court musicians and entertainers, stating clearly that it was for their part in Concubine Yang's conspiracy to slander the prince.\textsuperscript{202} Su Xuelin's hypothesis is based purely on her conjectural interpretation of certain selected images in the poem.

As for the other three suggested readings (Nos. 2, 3 and 4) cited earlier, they all seem on the surface plausible because they all involve historical events surrounding tragic deaths connected with the court.

In reading 2, for example, Cheng Mengxing as well as Yu Shucheng and Liu Xuekai, believe that Emperor Jingzong is being satirized.\textsuperscript{203} Since Jingzong was described in the Tang Histories as frivolous, fun-loving and immature when he came to the throne at the age of sixteen, he is, among Tang emperors, the one most deserving of the epithet "Never-Grieve."\textsuperscript{204} For this reason, critics have categorically considered most poems in Li's collection which refer to some "Never-Grieve Emperor" to be about Jingzong.\textsuperscript{205} On the whole, because the images in lines 1 and 2 are descriptive of the position of any emperor, and those in lines 11, 12, 13, 14 are generally applicable, they could be taken as a lament on Jingzong's murder by imperial guards and
eunuchs. Since after Jingzong's death, there were some skirmishes and bloodshed in the court over his succession, we could also accept such a reading for line 10. It would, however, be difficult to explain many of the other images, particularly those in lines 5, 6 and 9, since Jingzong's death was not caused by any foreign invasion. He was not taken miles away from his capital before he was murdered, nor did his death topple the nation.

Then, there is the possibility that this poem was written in memory of Liu Congjian. Many of the images in the poem do seem to match the historical details. Feng Hao suggests, for example, that lines 3-4 refer to Liu Congjian's efforts to counter the control the eunuchs exerted over the emperor, that lines 5-10 refer to the court's military campaign against his nephew Liu Zhen (who declared himself heir to his uncle's post, against the order of the court) and the subsequent bloodshed over Zhaoyi. However, there remain a few discordant notes. The "Ox Mountain" image with its royal connotation is not appropriate for a rebellious military governor. Also, in other poems and prose essays Li Shangyin wrote about the Zhaoyi expedition he condemns Liu Zhen's defiance of the court. The generally grieving tone of the poem does not support Feng Hao's reading.

Finally, Zhang Ertian suggests that this poem is about the tragic events of the Sweet Dew Incident during Wenzong's reign as well as the executions of Concubine Yang, Princes An and Chen after Wuzong's succession to the throne. The images in the opening lines do match the situation of Wenzong and his serious
attempts to curb the rising power of the eunuchs, but he hardly deserves the label "Emperor of Never-Grieve," nor can one make much sense out of line 3 in such a context. Since there are no detailed accounts of how Concubine Yang and the two princes were killed, we have no means of understanding how the very specific images in the poem would work in Zhang Ertian's reading.

A poet is free to make any associations with his subject, and a reader can also respond with his own associations. For a poem with an obvious historical reference such as this one, what is accessible to interpretation is open to the imagistic associations suggested in the poem as well as our knowledge of the poet's experience. The complexity of this poem lies not only in its heavily allusive language, but also in the unusual way the images are combined and the many subtle and intricate connections that one has to make between the allusions and the historical references in the reading process. Although the middle lines in the poem are particularly strange and seemingly disjunctive, if we respond to the immediate effect created by the images, we sense an inner logic which unifies the poem. It is this inner logic which directs the reader's imagination while leaving room for ambiguity or plurisignation.

Allusion, as we can see, works paradoxically in poetry. On the one hand, it can obscure the meaning of a poem, but on the other hand, more than any other single literary device, it can enrich a poem. To unify the different levels on which allusions simultaneously function, a reader must react with all his
intellect as well as all his intuitive faculties, for some allusions yield to logical analysis, but others, more elusive, rely more on feelings for interpretation.

Li Shangyin's poetry of allusion, his unique mode, employs and deploys allusions in every possible way. Sometimes his allusions are to familiar materials, woven together with the more conventional subjects and images of traditional poetry; but more often, his allusions are not immediately accessible. At his most challenging, he writes in a highly concentrated and distilled form, stretching Chinese imagistic technique to its utmost; that is, his allusions are almost wholly self-contained essences in themselves, line-by-line so that reading from one line to another becomes an intuitive "leap of faith."

To the extent that allusions are "public" and available, open to most readers, as in our first poem, they readily expand the range of the poem in the reader's imagination. We have at hand not only the literal texts, but also the sub-texts(s) of the work. To the extent, however, that allusions are "private," learnedly difficult, and elliptical or elusive in their use, they are likely to obscure the meaning of a poem. However, as Empson suggests when discussing the different levels of ambiguity in various texts and the corresponding pleasures that one can derive from the reading:

Ambiguities....may be divided into those which, once understood, remain an intelligible unit in the mind; those in which the pleasure belongs to the act of working out and
understanding, which must at each reading, though with less labor, be repeated; and those in which the ambiguity works best if it is never discovered...\(^{212}\)

Paradoxically, therefore, the more complex and elusive the allusion, the more rich and intricate the poem. Li Shangyin's allusiveness does allow us sometimes to experience his poems on a simpler level, but more often, they are complicated, dense, difficult, and yet at the same time fascinating and rewarding.

**Distinctive Features and Strategies**

Having reviewed Li Shangyin's recurrent allusions and the general plurisignative nature of his poetry, I shall study some of the characteristic strategies he employs in the use of allusions. Shen Deqian 沈德潛, the Qing critic, says:

> When alluding to stories, it is important to make them come to life. When alluding to familiar lines, it is important to imbue them with freshness, so that whatever one alludes to comes out as if it is one's own creation, without any trace of artificiality. This is truly freeing oneself from the ancients.\(^{213}\)

It is not only what is alluded to, but also how the allusion is used that makes the difference. What Middleton Murry has suggested as the two essential qualities of the metaphor--
"precision" and "revelation"—must also be found in the successful use of an allusion. The allusion must share a true similarity or be made to be seen to share a true similarity with the situation evoked in the poem; the "revelation" comes from the newness with which that similarity is perceived. All this requires, of course, a great deal of creative imagination.

Li Shangyin employs distinctive strategies in his use of allusion:

**Extending the Allusion**

There are various ways in which a metaphorical allusion could serve to bring out the message or the emotional import of a poem. The story or event alluded to may be complex and hence ambiguous. One might accompany the allusion with a statement or comment that would specify how the reader is to understand the allusion. Li Shangyin's allusions often stand on their own without any direct, explicit comments. However, he usually incorporates a word here or there which guides a reader's interpretation of the stories in relation to the rest of the poem:

"The Vermilion Hill"

The Blue Lady diligently weaves her evening frost,
While Xi He labors to send off the morning sun.
There is no news of the Vermilion Hill thousands of miles away,
Time and again, at the sight of the wutong, I muse on the phoenix.

(FH: 663)

In ancient mythology, the Blue Lady is described as the Goddess of the Frost. Xi He, a male God, on the other hand, is the charioteer responsible for the daily round of driving the sun up in the morning and down again at dusk behind the Yanzi Mountain. In Li's poem, however, the two stories are reproduced in a way that they evoke certain emotional responses from the readers. Both "diligently weaves" (dingning jie) and "labors to send off" (xinku song) are key phrases used creatively to supply extra meanings and to suggest the particular way Li wants to perceive these stories. The word "evening" is also added to match and to contrast with "morning" in the second line. It is through the incorporation of these "guiding words" that Li succeeds in moulding the allusions into the context of his poem. Put together in a parallel position, the lines suggest endless toiling and hardship—whether it is day ("morning") or night ("evening"), male ("Xi He") or female ("Blue Lady"), no one could deny the instinctive desire to live on, to create meaning and to strive for the bright and beautiful ("diligently weaves...frost"/"labors to send off...sun"). Yet this effort proves ultimately futile because it fails to lead to any land of bliss or promise, symbolized here by the "Vermilion Hill," the mythical place where magical phoenixes rest only on their wutong trees. To serve his own poem, Li Shangyin has
infused the story of the Blue Lady and that of Xi He with fresh meanings not found in their original sources.

A similar strategy is used in "Mid-Heaven":

Up in Mid-Heaven god assembled his myriad spirits.
Long ago a dream took someone to the blue empyrean.
While Ling Lun blew till his solitary bamboo cracked,
None heard him who knew his tune.
(FH: 318)

The first two lines of the poem allude to a story in Shi Ji:

Zhao Jianzi was sick and unconscious for five days. The doctors were afraid for him. Doctor Bian Que examined him. When Dong Anyu asked about Zhao, Bian Que said, "...in no more than three days, he will definitely turn around and start to talk intermittently again." After two and a half days, Zhao awoke and told the doctor, "I have been up where the celestial emperor is. I had a wonderful time wandering in Mid-Heaven with all the spirits. The Great Music was played to accompany the nine-fold performance and the wan dances. Unlike anything from the Three Dynasties, its sound was more moving than any earthly music."²¹⁶

Without making any effort, Zhao Jianzi was privileged to hear the most wonderful music in heaven. In lines 3-4, the story of Ling Lun is given extra meaning not found in its original context. In the Lushi Chunqiu, it is recorded that the Yellow Emperor ordered Ling Lun to create the musical scales. Ling Lun did so by seeking out the best bamboo stem from the most
obscure valley, cut it into the exact length he wanted, blew on it and drilled in twelve holes. Based on the calls of the phoenix, he differentiated twelve different keys.217

Ling Lun is clearly a talented and professional musician. There is, however, no mention of his having blown his bamboo pipe till it cracked. The "gusheng zhu" 孤生竹 echoes a textual reference to a "guzhu zhi guan" 孤竹之管 (a kind of pipe made from a bamboo grown by itself) in the Zhou Li 周禮. 218

There are meanings added to or implied in the stories not found in the original sources. These include: (1) A Ling Lun who blew with all his heart and his might on his bamboo pipe; (2) That Ling Lun's pipe is made out of a bamboo that grows by itself, which underscores a sense of "alienation." By emphasizing that a dream alone transports Zhao Jianzi to Heaven, and by juxtaposing it with his own version of Ling Lun's story, Li succeeds in bringing out a sense of cosmic absurdity and irony in the poem.

Fusing the Allusions

A second characteristic strategy involves the creative fusion of two or more allusions in a poem, sometimes the combining of an allusion with other images. In the following examples, the same "vast-sea-mulberry-field" story is fused with another allusion in one case and with a natural image in the other to create a distinct meaning in each poem:
"To Someone Faraway"

Heng E is forever pounding to make elixir,
While the Jade Maid never stops throwing her arrows.
When will the sea turn into mulberry fields
To keep the Yi River from flowing east?
(FH: 749)

In this poem, the idea that the eternal cycle of the vast sea changing into a mulberry field and back again is put aside. Instead, Li seizes on just one phase of the story—of the sea turning into a mulberry field. By cleverly linking this familiar sea with the image of the river forever flowing east, he succeeds in conveying an eagerness to halt the flow of time. In the context of the rest of the poem (which contains a repeated image of futile labor), we re-experience his longing to put an end to all of life's perpetual toiling.

The creative fusion of various allusions is even more complex in the following poem:

"Broken Mirror"

The limpid light in the jade box no longer holds together.
The water caltrop petals are scattered, the moon in eclipse.
Once the mountain cock was mirrored at the Qin Terrace,
The solitary phoenix ceased to dance.
(FH: 190)
The "water caltrop" in line 2 is a metaphor for mirror, a reference to the "water caltrop mirror" Lady Flying Swallow once received as a gift.\textsuperscript{219}

There are three more allusions in the last two lines of this poem: (1) When Liu Bang first entered the Qin Palace in Xianyang, he found a large bronze mirror. A person standing directly in front of it would be able to see his own image upside down. If he should stand with his hand covering his chest, the mirror would show his internal organs;\textsuperscript{220} (2) A mountain cock fell in love with its own feathers and danced whenever it saw its own reflection in the water. It was brought as a tribute to Emperor Wu (of Wei). When a mirror was placed in front of the cock, it danced until it died of exhaustion;\textsuperscript{221} (3) Once the king of Jibin (around present-day Kashmir) caught a phoenix but was unable to make it sing. His wife suggested that he try putting a mirror in front of the phoenix, since most birds would sing at the sight of their own kind. When the phoenix saw her own reflection, she uttered a piercing cry and flew away.\textsuperscript{222}

These three stories come from three entirely different sources but they are variously connected. First, there is a mirror in all of them. The second and third stories are further connected by their both having a bird responding to its own reflection in a mirror. From the abundance of detail in the stories, however, Li Shangyin draws only upon those elements he needs and fuses them to create something new for his poem. "The
Qin Terrace" he draws from the first story. "The mountain cock" from the second, and "the solitary phoenix" from the third story. Instead of referring to its "singing," or its "ceasing to sing," Li says that the phoenix "ceased to dance," which relates it to the mountain cock's dances. The three images are connected by the word "mirrored" and the single connectives *yizhao...hou, bianshi.....shi* (一照......後，便是.....時；once after...was mirrored, it was when.....). Together, they symbolize, through the image of the uncompromising phoenix, a dedication to perfection. The mirror (a special one, one would suppose, since the phrase "Qin Terrace" gives it a royal touch) does not have to be physically shattered to be considered broken. Once it has been used to mirror the mountain cock, no phoenix will ever want to dance before it again. By cleverly combining the story of the mountain cock with that of the phoenix, and putting the two together in front of the mirror at the Qin Terrace, Li creates a new story with a special meaning for his poem. This is possible because of the many associations he shares with his readers through his intertwining use of these allusions.

Reverse Use of Allusions

Li Shangyin's use of allusions to generate opposite or surprise effects in a poem is a characteristic strategy. Often, it creates an anti-climax, a sense of tension and irony in a poem.
"Blue Hill Tower"

By the Blue Hill Tower the sun casts its slanted shadow.
A virtuous soul from the ancient past leans against
the evening twilight--
Do not be alarmed to see Han Pin, now the butterfly,
Flying to seek out casually another flower!
(FH: 618)

This poem alludes to the old legend of Han Pin and his wife in the Soushen Ji. The story has it that the King of Song seized his minister Han Pin's wife. Han consequently committed suicide. His wife, hearing of his death, killed herself by jumping off the Blue Hill Tower, asking in a note to be buried with Han Pin after her death. The King wilfully buried the two devoted lovers separately. The day after the burial, two trees began to grow out of the graves to entwine each other, while a pair of mandarin ducks perched on the branches, their necks around each other, calling mournfully. Another version of the story has the souls of the lovers transformed into two butterflies that fly from the graves, searching for each other.

In the last two lines of this poem, Li strikes a satirical note when he questions the permanence of even such a strong relationship. Han, he suspects, may one day fly off to another flower, seeking another lover. While the first two lines of the quatrain define the setting by identifying the allusion, the concluding lines introduce an unexpected twist in complete
contradiction to the original story of conjugal devotion.

Similar uses of allusions are found in the poem "Chang E," and "Yaochi" (The Jade Pool). "Yaochi" will be discussed in full in the next Chapter. In "Chang E," Chang E's ascent to the moon is an act of transcendence, an attainment of immortal life, yet Li Shangyin changes that around by suggesting that she is remorseful of her flight to the moon, where she lives in eternal solitude.

Deliberate Misreading of Allusion

In the earlier examples we have cited, there are occasions when Li changes an allusion slightly by discarding certain parts of the story, adding meanings to it or modifying it to suit his particular needs.

In the following poems, however, the misreading of allusion is drastic and deliberate:

"As Privately Written by Someone in the Wei Palace"

When he was here, the Western Pavilion barred us from our good times.
After he left, the Zhang River kept our dreams apart.
So long he was aware of Lady Fu's infinite longings,
Need Spring pines and autumn chrysanthemums coincide?

(FH: 626)
"As a Secret Answer by Prefect Wu of the Yuan County"

Returning to his domain, with Mt. Yijue behind him, the road begins to split. By the breezy riverside, half the sun dips west. The King of Chu never did dream upon his pillow, Do not waste those clouds upon the Sun Terrace. (FH: 627)

These two poems are apparently related. Written in the dai-zeng (writing for someone else), daida (answering for someone else) mode, they make up an imagined dialogue between the poet and a lady who expresses special feelings for him. The first poem is written for some palace lady serving Empress Zhen in the Wei Palace. It is addressed to Cao Zhi, in the voice of the empress herself. The second poem is a reply to the first poem, written by Prefect Wu Zhi of the Yuan county for Cao Zhi.

The dominant allusions in these poems are all, as Harold Bloom might say, deliberately "misread." The legendary story between Empress Zhen and Cao Zhi is quoted in a note by Li Shan, the annotator of Wen Xuan. The story says that Cao Zhi and Empress Zhen, his sister-in-law, had been in love before her marriage to Cao Pi and remained secretly so afterwards. After her death, Cao Pi gave Cao Zhi an embroidered pillow belonging to the empress herself. On his way back to his own fief, Cao Zhi passed by the River Luo. There, deeply grieving and yearning for the empress, he saw her spirit appearing to him.
in person. Thereupon Cao Zhi wrote his famous "Ganzhen Fu" (A Rhapsody In Memory of Zhen), which Emperor Ming later renamed "Luoshen Fu" (A Rhapsody on the Goddess of River Luo).

While alluding to this romantic legend in the first poem, Li Shangyin changes it drastically from a mutual love between the lovers to a one-sided love on the part of Empress Zhen. In the voice of the empress, the speaker suggests that if Cao Zhi had been aware of her love for him, it did not matter even if they were inevitably apart.

The same is true of the second poem. In Cao Zhi's own preface to the "Luoshen Fu," he says that while passing by the River Luo and recalling its River Goddess, Fufei, he was inspired to write his piece by Song Yu's Rhapsody on the Goddess of Mt. Wu. Again, Li Shangyin draws a number of images from "Luoshen Fu" itself, but his main allusion is to the romantic interlude between King Xiang of Chu and the Divine Goddess. Instead of writing about that encounter, however, the person on whose behalf he imagines himself writing says that there is in fact no encounter, or that he harbours no romantic dreams.

Read together, the two poems suggest that a lady has fallen in love with a man and suggests they get together, but the man tells her that he is not interested. As Shen Zufen has pointed out, these pieces are unusual both in their setting, their intent as well as in their twisted use of allusions. The poems are also purposely convoluted in the way they are titled
(We know, for example, that Wu Zhi was much more a friend to Cao Pi than to Cao Zhi) probably because they are meant to be read as a concealed reference to the poet's own experience; or, possibly, to that of someone he knew.\(^2\)

Both the choice of the allusions (the love stories being historical legends) and their convoluted use create a sense of elusiveness and ambiguity. Although the dramatic situation as well as the emotional intent of the poem are clear, one is left with a sense of bafflement over the possible reference behind these pieces.

**Allusions and the Dramatic**

Another distinctive feature in Li Shangyin's use of allusion is for the creation of dramatic effects in his poetry. This is especially prominent in his historical and political satires. Instead of commenting directly on an historical figure or event, he selects the most pertinent elements from his sources, and recreates them through dramatization, avoiding, as much as possible, any explicit statements. The reader, having visualized and lived through the dramatized events, is left to his own conclusions. Poems such as "Two Poems on Northern-Qi," "Nan Chao" (The Southern Dynasties), and "Young Duke Fuping" are just a few examples. We have briefly discussed the use of allusion in "Two Poems on Northern-Qi" in relation to one of Li Shangyin's favorite motifs; so, let us reconsider the second poem
of the series from this perspective:

An enchanting smile is enough to rival the myriad affairs of state.
Her nation-toppling charm is at its best when she dresses in military attire.
Jinyang has already fallen, do not bother looking back!
Please, your Majesty, another round of hunting!

(FH: 709)

The last emperor of Northern-Qi's hunting trip with his concubine Shufei is recorded in the *Beiqi Shu*. The episode is recreated effectively in this poem through the voice of the concubine herself. As Zhou Zhengfu has pointed out, by juxtaposing the casual triviality of "another hunting round" with the grave incident that "Jinyang has already fallen," Li Shangyin is in fact making an implicit comment through his dramatization of the event. Also, by coupling "an enchanting smile" together with "the myriad affairs of state," and by suggesting that her "nation-toppling charm" is at its best when she dresses in "military" (meaning, of course, "hunting") attire, Li makes ironic contrasts and sets a strong satirical tone for this poem.

In another poem, "Dragon Pool," the satire is even more subtle. The irony is achieved, again, through dramatization rather than explicit comment:

By the Dragon Pool, wine is bestowed in front of a spreading mica screen.
The Tartar drums rumble as other music comes to a halt. Back from the banquet at midnight, the palace water-clock dripping--

Prince Xue is fast asleep while Prince Shou lies awake! (FH: 598)

Emperor Xuanzong 延宗 built the Xingqing Palace by the Dragon Pool in Chang'an. There, he constantly revelled in song and dance with his favorite concubine Yang Guifei and other members of the royal family. He was particularly fond of the sound of the Tartar drums. Prince Xue 薛 in the last line was his nephew, son of his late brother Li Ye 李業, and Prince Shou 櫆 was his own (eighteenth) son. The biography of Yang Guifei in the Xin Tangshu says that Yang was originally Prince Shou's concubine. Later, Emperor Xuanzong took her into his own harem and made her his own concubine.230

Throughout this poem, there is no mention of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 or Yang Guifei. Their presence is hinted at by the setting of the poem. By contrasting a Prince Xue coming home from the night banquet falling fast asleep right away, probably the result of hearty drinking, and a Prince Shou who lies awake, acutely aware of every drip of the palace water-clock, Li Shang-yin is suggesting that Prince Shou has had a most uncomfortable and unhappy evening. He was unable to enjoy himself, drinking freely the way his cousin did. The dramatization of this entire event is accomplished with great skill and subtlety; and the satire on Xuanzong 玄宗 is poignant and effective.
Allusions and Poetic Structure

We have seen how Li Shangyin successfully works his allusions into the poems through analogy, contrast, repetition and other juxtapositions. These, together with the use of 'guiding words' which helps to bring out the persona's tone of voice, often turn out to be the major clues for our interpretation of the poems.

Since Li uses a huge number of allusions in his poetry, he seems fully aware of the role they could play in shaping the internal structures of individual poems. With the ancient-style verse and the five-character pailü, the relationship between allusion and poetic structure is generally less marked. In the more compact quatrains and regulated verses, however, one often detects a close connection.

One of Li's most common strategies when writing in the regulated verse form is the profuse use of allusive images in the two middle couplets. These heavily allusive and imagistic lines are usually preceded by two other non-allusive and 'propositional' lines which lay the setting for the poem. Because the prosodic rules which govern the middle couplets (dictating a structure which is both parallel and antithetical) lend themselves readily to the compact use of imagistic and perceptual language, Li's abundant use of allusion in these lines is particularly effective. They help to develop and concretize those moods, emotions and thoughts vaguely introduced or hinted at in the
first two lines. Again, the last two lines of the poem are usually non-allusive. They either raise a question or make a propositional statement which echoes the emotions evoked in the middle couplets. Poems such as "Jinse," "Tanzhou" and "Choubi Yi" all illustrate such a connection between the allusions and the internal structures of the poems.²²

This strategy is the most natural and effective in the regulated verse form since the middle couplets of regulated verse are usually imagistic in language and discontinuous in rhythm, while the two final lines are propositional in nature and continuous in rhythm. Yet Li's use of allusive images is not bound in any way by the rigidly defined, external structure of any particular poetic form. He seems always able to create his own internal structures for the individual poems while working within these given frameworks. In the yongwu poem "Mudan" (Peonies), for example, the first six lines of the poem contain each an objective, isolated, allusive image which describes the beauty of the peony blossoms in their various movements and shapes. The last two lines round out the poem, still with an allusion in each case, but delivered in a propositional/continuous language and a personal tone of voice. Similar internal structures are found in the poem "Lei" (Tears) and "Lisi" (Thoughts on Parting).

Li Shangyin's creative use of allusive images in the quatrain form plays a similar role in shaping the poetic structures of these poems. In "Jiyuan" (To Someone Faraway),
for example, the first two lines present two parallel but independent allusive images of incessant labors. The concluding lines end in a half-interrogative, half-exclamatory mode, using declarative and less allusive language.

In the poem "Xieshu" 謝書 (A Letter of Thanks), the entire poem is written in a declarative mode. However, there is an allusion in almost every line of this poem. The combination of both the imagistic and propositional gives these lines a simultaneously perceptual and conceptual meaning:

Have I ever felt a feather's tip of your very fine thought? In vain, I brought my brush and ink-stone to await your Dragon Strategy.

Ever since I had the honor of receiving the Patriarch's gown you passed on to me, I no longer envy Wang Xiang's acquiring his precious sword.

(FH: 19)

There are three allusions in this poem: (1) The "Dragon Strategy" in line 2 refers to one of Jiang Taigong's 姜太公 six famous military strategies. 233 (2) The Fifth Patriarch of the Chan School of Buddhism visited Huineng 萬能 one day in the middle of the night and handed him his gown. He told him to head south to spread the teaching of the School. 234 (3) In the Jinshu, it is said that Lü Qian 呂覲 had obtained a very fine sword which he learned was only befitting of someone who would eventually become one of the Three Dukes. Lü offered it to Wang
Xiang, humbly saying that he himself was not worthy of it. Wang Xiang later did rise to the position of Grand Guardian. This poem is written as a letter to Li's early patron, Linghu Chu. It was composed soon after Li failed his civil service examination for the first time. The poem, though filled with allusive images, assumes a strong personal voice and a continuous, flowing rhythm. Propositionally the poem has a syntactic flow that goes from beginning to end, but we are brought up short by phrases like "Dragon's strategy," the reference to the "abbot's gown" and to "Wang Xiang's sword," adding perceptual meaning to something basically conceptual.

Other examples of the use of allusion to create similar effects can be found in poems such as "Zeng Yuwen Zhongcheng" (Written for Prime-minister Yuwen) and "Yougan." The inter-connections between the use of allusions and the creation of internal structures for individual poems range as far as a poet's imagination can take them. More examples of Li Shangyin's creative use of allusion in this respect will be dealt with in my discussions of his individual poems in the next chapter.

The three central stylistic features of Li Shangyin's poetry, density, complexity and ambiguity, are the direct result of his use of allusion.
The prevalence of allusions creates a primarily imagistic language. Many of Li's poems are made up of one, sometimes even two allusions compressed in a single line, juxtaposed without any connectives. Such a compact use of images naturally weakens the syntax and heightens the texture of his poetry. Allusion to proper names and mythological images such as "Purple Lady," "White Maid," "Emerald Walls," "Jade Mountain" also adds color, a sense of the rich and the exotic, as well as a "sensuous particularity." All these give his poetry a strong physical quality which appeals to our senses.

Other than being texturally dense in the physical sense, Li's poetry is also complex and challenging to the intellect. His poems are immensely intricate textual webs, rich with associative resonances. His allusiveness creates an indirect, periphrastic mode of expression, one which works by suggestion and variation.

Much of the beauty of Li's poetry is the beauty of paradox, the result of a tension between the intensity of his emotions and the allusive and circuitous manner in which he expresses them. Other paradoxes include the use of colorful allusions to express sadness and disillusionment, the use of a variety of images to express repeatedly the same motifs and unified vision, the use of the particular and the concrete to symbolize what is universal, and the use of one dramatic situation in a poem to generate multiple meanings.

Despite its textural density, however, Li Shangyin's poetry
has a fluidity and a graceful rhythm of its own. This is part of the result of his sensitive use of verbal music, much of which is lost in translation. The 'propositional' lines and many of the adverbial phrases which he uses as links and signals to guide his reader's interpretation also contribute to this sense of movement. Above all, as Coleridge puts it, "Images, however beautiful.....do not themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion, or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion;" it is Li's emotional depth and creative imagination which breathe life into his poetry.

The complexity and suggestive sensuousness of Li Shangyin's poetry, his often elliptical and ambiguous use of language, the undercurrent of paradox, and his use of conceit-like allusions—all contribute to a poetry which accords with our modern interest in Western baroque and symbolist poetry.
Chapter IV

Characteristically Allusive Poems: An Interpretive Study

Following my general discussion of Li Shangyin's use of allusion, I propose to demonstrate specifically how his use of allusion plays a shaping role in his poetry, so much so that his work could well be called the Poetry of Allusion. Since I have already examined the various ways in which allusions are used in relation to their sources and the manner in which Li Shangyin adapts them creatively for his particular purposes, I shall now concentrate on examining the major functions of allusion and its special effects in his poetry.

I have selected six characteristically allusive poems for close reading, the allusions in each poem contributing in large measure to the success of the piece.

To illustrate the pervasive use of allusion in Li's poetry, my selections also represent the spectrum of Li Shangyin's successful poems--poems which are generally acknowledged as among his best pieces. These include his more 'private' compositions which are mostly pseudo-titled (錦瑟 "Intricately-painted Zither," 碧城 "Emerald Walls," 瑤池 "Jade Pool") as well as a yongwu poem (牡丹 "Peonies"); a more 'public' piece which represents his historical and political commentaries (戊陵 "The Maoling Mausoleum") as well as an autobiographical series written in less elusive language (漫成五章 "Five Casual Pieces"). Some other important pieces which I do not discuss
here have already been cited earlier to illustrate individual aspects of allusion.

As demonstrated earlier, Li Shangyin's abundant and characteristic use of allusion has contributed largely to the plurisignation of his poetry. In the following discussion, while noting the various responses Li's allusions have generated in the individual poems, I shall concentrate on a close reading based on what I consider to be the best interpretation. The poems are analyzed mainly from the point of view of the metaphorical function of the allusions, both "locally" in the generation of special associations and textural effects and "globally" as an organizing principle for the entire piece. The use of allusion in relation to the various dimensions of the poem--its setting and dramatic situation, its theme, structure and the voice of its persona--will also be examined.

Although the allusions tend to fuse organically with other elements to create many effects, serving simultaneously a number of different functions, I shall highlight, as much as possible, one major characteristic function of the allusions in each poem.
In "Jinse" 锦瑟 (The Intricately-Painted Zither), considered by many as Li's crowning achievement, we have an example of his symbolic use of allusion at its most rarefied. Here, the allusions function to create images which build up a mood, a state of feeling rather than point to any specific episode or event. The images are so suggestive and encompassing that they simply cannot be restricted to any one concrete interpretation.

"The Intricately-Painted Zither"

1 The intricately-painted zither, for no reason, has fifty strings.
   Each string, each bridge, recalls a blossoming year.
   Master Zhuang, in his morning dream, was dazzled by the butterfly.
   Emperor Wang, his spring heart, he entrusted to the cuckoo.
5 Over the vast sea, a bright moon, pearls have tears.
   At Blue Field, under a warm sun, jade gives off mists.
   Could such feelings ever wait to become a memory?
   Only that at the moment you were already at a loss.
(FH: 493)

This oft-quoted poem is truly an artistic tour de force. It is also one of the best known, most appreciated yet traditionally most baffling pieces by Li Shangyin. The poem is literally explicit and transparent in its opening and concluding lines, but the rest of the poem is heavily allusive. There are seven
allusions, six of them concentrated in the two middle couplets. Despite the profuse use of allusion and an exquisitely balanced structure, this poem does not read like a consciously crafted piece. Rather, its images strike one as spontaneous flashes from the deepest recess of the poet's subconscious experience. Yet it is exactly the interpretation of these almost dream-like strings of allusive images which has generated the most curiosity and controversy among Li's critics. Over the years, numerous interpretations of this poem have been proposed:

1. That "Jinse," the title of the poem, is the name of a nobleman's concubine. From this is derived the further suggestion that jinse is the name of a maidservant in the household of Linghu Chu.¹

2. That this is a yongwu piece, an artistic description of the four melodic qualities the zither is capable of rendering—these qualities being represented by the two middle couplets in the poem.²

3. Su Xuelin argues that this poem is about Li's love for two palace ladies. Supposing that a zither and a jade plate (which is said to hold pearls of tears in a legend) are tokens of love between the poet and his lovers, Su believes that the reference to the zither and the pearls of tears in this poem supports her interpretation.³

4. Many traditional commentators (Zhu Yizun, Zhu Heling,
Cheng Mengxing, Feng Hao) as well as the modern critic Meng Sen interpret this poem as a lament on his wife's death. Meng also explains the number 50 as the combined age of the poet and his wife at the time of their marriage.⁴

5. Ye Congqi suggests that this poem was written shortly after the demotion of Zheng Ya, when Li Shangyin had lost his post in Guilin and was wandering in the Szechuan area, thinking longingly of his wife at home.⁵

6. Since this poem is the first piece in the Song edition of Li's collected works, He Zhuo believes that its position suggests a special symbolic significance—that it is a poem lamenting in general the poet's unhappy life.⁶ In support of this, Zhang Ertian goes on to find specific situations in Li's life to try to explain every line in this poem. According to Zhang, line 3 refers to the fast changing political climate of the time, and in line 4, the poet reflects upon the futility of basing career on his talents as a writer. In line 5, he grieves over the unfortunate death of Li Deyu. Finally, in line 6, the poet celebrates the political career of Linghu Tao. Zhang further suggests that this poem was written not long before Li's death as a final reflection upon his own life.⁷

7. Prompted by He Yimen's suggestion, Qian Zhongshu
sees the poem as a preface to Li's collected poems. According to Qian, lines 3-4 describe Li's poetics, which is one of comparison and evocation rather than literal depiction. Because Li expresses himself in allusions, he speaks of "tuo" (entrusting) his emotions; because his words are subtle and his meanings concealed, he speaks of them as being "mi" (dazzling). Lines 5-6, on the other hand, describe Li's own poetic style in much the same kind of figurative language that Sikong Tu uses in his Shi Pin.  

8. Xu Fuguan interprets "Jinse" as a recollection of Li's wife as well as all the subsequent disappointments in his political career as a result of his marriage.  

9. James Liu interprets the poem as a description of life as a dream--"a meditation on the apparently unreal nature of life in general and of love in particular."  

Of these interpretations, traditional scholars have long ago dismissed the first two as being too far-fetched. I also find Su Xuelin's reading unacceptable because it is based on a purely imagined context which she first presupposes and then tries to prove by stretching the images in the poem to match her presuppositions. Because lines 1-2, 7-8 all imply a strong sense of loss and a past that is irretrievable, Ye Congqi's suggestion that Li wrote this poem when travelling and thinking of his wife...
at home also does not hold up.

To begin with, let us consider the title of the poem. "Intricately-painted zither," or simply the zither itself, is an image used frequently in Li's poems. In two instances, it is described as a real object:

When I returned, she was no longer to be seen.
The intricately-painted zither lay there, longer than her person.\textsuperscript{12}

How good they were, those newly-married days,
Her intricately-painted zither, lying by the red window casement.\textsuperscript{13}

Perhaps because the zither appears in both these instances in connection with the memory of Li's deceased wife, a number of critics suggest that "Jinse" is a poem of lament Li wrote for her. However, the poem does explicitly state that each of the fifty strings and bridges of the zither reminds the speaker of a beautiful year that is past. Meng Sen's diligent attempt to prove that Li Shangyin was twenty-five when he married is admirable, but to assume that Li's wife must also be twenty-five in order to make up the combined age of fifty at the time of their marriage is definitely strained and unconvincing.\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, we do not necessarily have to see the zither as a reference to the poet's wife. In this poem, for example, the zither has been used non-realistically:

Tears splashing over the jade plate break one's
heart repeatedly;
The startled strings of the intricately-painted zither
over and over again shatter one's dreams.¹⁵

Here, the rain which causes the premature fading and falling
of the peonies is compared to "tears splashing over a jade plate"
and the "startled strings" of a richly-painted zither. Both the
plate and the zither seem to suggest something delicate, beautiful,
and precious being destroyed.

In yet another poem, Li Shangyin uses the image of the
precious zither to represent himself and his talents:

A reputation--fine lines I have;
This life and self--a jade zither lying there.¹⁶

It is very likely, just from a consideration of the zither
as the title and the opening image in "Jinse," that Li is con-
templating his own life in the past as well as life in general.
This approximates the interpretations offered in readings 6, 8
and 9. And if we consider Li's poetry as a reflection of his
many responses to life, we can even incorporate Qian Zhongshu's
reading into our understanding of this poem, but I would not
accept it as the exclusive reading. In fact, I would argue that
because "Jinse" demands to be read symbolically rather than
allegorically, any detailed, line by line, matching of images
with specific incidents in Li Shangyin's life is not only
unnecessary, but it also limits the broad significance of the
poem.
"Jinse" is a pseudo-title taken from the first two characters of the piece, but the zither has, I believe, both realistic and symbolic functions in this poem. The poet may have been inspired to write by the sight of a beautifully crafted instrument, making the zither the cause of this evocation, but throughout the poem, the zither also symbolizes life. Let us consider this possibility by analyzing the symbolic meanings created by the allusions:

1. The zither/Life is beautiful and precious:

According to a reference found in the *Li Ji* 禮記, a zither decorated with jade is called a *baose* 寶瑟, one which is painted with rich patterns is called a *jinse* 錦瑟. However, the character *jin* 錦, translated as "intricately-painted" here, implies a number of other qualities in Chinese that cannot be rendered easily into one word in English, namely: rich, beautiful and precious.

2. The zither/Life is something the poet treasures:

Each string and bridge on the instrument remind the poet of a blossoming year in his life.

3. But the zither/Life plays a sad and complex melody:

Not only are the decorative patterns on the zither intricate, but its music is also complex. This is suggested by a hidden allusion to *Su Nü* 素女 (White Maid) in the opening line
of the poem. In the *Shi Ji*, it is said that the Chinese zither had originally fifty strings. Emperor Tai once ordered Su Nü to play on the instrument. The music of the zither was so moving that the emperor could not bear it. He therefore ordered that the zither be cut into halves to reduce its number of strings.\(^8\)

Thus a description of the zither in connection with the story of Su Nü immediately sets a melancholic and retrospective tone for the poem. The zither, a beautifully crafted instrument which is capable of producing the most heart-breaking music, has come to symbolize life itself. Following lines 3-6, the poet's impressions of life are played out in a series of independent but densely packed allusive images, all strikingly vivid and sensuous.

Without going immediately into the background of the allusions, we can readily identify two distinct emotions conveyed by these images. On the one hand, there is a sense of attachment and longing for the beautiful things in life, suggested by words such as "entrusted" "the spring heart" "blossoming year" "each string, each bridge" "pearls" "jade" "the bright moon" "a warm sun". On the other hand, there is also a sense of loss and bewilderment, conveyed by the images "dream" "tears" "mists" and further made explicit by phrases such as "for no reason" and "at a loss".

The character *mi* 迷 (translated as "dazzled" here), above all,
encompasses both emotions: a strong sense of attachment as well as a feeling of bewilderment.

These two predominant feelings clearly alternate from lines 3-6 in the poem, with each line following an upward and then a downward turn in its emotions. In line 3:

Master Zhuang, in his morning dream, was dazzled by the butterfly.

The images in this line are drawn from an anecdote in Zhuang Zi. It is said that Master Zhuang woke up once from a dream, wondering whether he had been Zhuang Zhou dreaming that he was a butterfly, or whether he had actually been, all his life, a butterfly dreaming that he was Zhuang Zhou. In its original context, the story conveys a sense of confusion over the ultimate reality, illustrating Zhuang Zi’s notion of the "equalness of all things." Li Shangyin has adapted this allusion very skillfully by the clever use of the word 迷 so that he seems to suggest that the Master is lured by the colors and the beauty of the butterfly and yet at the same time is unable to have a clear notion of it because the butterfly confuses his sense of reality. The fact that what Zhuang Zhou had was a "morning" dream (The word "morning" is not found in Zhuang Zi) also suggests that it would not last too long, hence adding a sense of transience and intangibility to the line.

Aside from this, however, the "dream" in this line calls to mind many cross references to Li’s other poems such as "The life..."
of the Goddess is but a dream," as well as the colorful and psychologically symbolic poem Li wrote after a dream following a rainy evening he shared with some friends. All these associations enhance, in some way, the strong symbolic significance of the dream image in this poem.

In Line 4:

Emperor Wang, his spring heart, he entrusted to the cuckoo.

Emperor Wang was a legendary King of Shu (present-day Sichuan) from the Zhou period. He had an amorous relationship with his official's wife. Out of shame, he later abdicated in favor of his official. When the emperor died, his spirit was transformed into the cuckoo, a bird which the Chinese believe sheds blood and cries mournfully in late spring. Li Shangyin has heightened this already sad and beautiful story by using the words "spring heart" and "entrusted." A "spring heart" is a heart of desires, longings and burgeoning hopes. The image recalls a line from another poem: "Do not let your spring heart vie with the flowers in blossoming, One inch of yearning--one inch of ashes." At the same time it echoes Li's numerous references to the notion of shangchun (lament for spring) --that feeling of sadness for all things beautiful and precious about to pass away--but with particular reference to the decline of the state as well as a sense of personal waste. Because of
these associations, the "spring heart" here takes on a broad, symbolic significance. All these feelings--of love, remorse, hope and despair, concern for one's own country and more--could only find expression through the cuckoo's mournful cry and tears of blood.

Line 5:

Over the vast sea, a bright moon, pearls have tears.

In the *Bowu Zhi* 博物志, there is an account of some mer-people living beyond the South Sea, whose tears are pearls. It is also believed that when the moon is bright, pearls form in the oysters, but when the moon wanes, the oysters are empty. The images from these stories are creatively intertwined here to evoke a vivid and powerful feeling of intermingling beauty, sadness and mutability. First, the "vast sea" 瀛海, while directly related to the allusion of the mer-people, also recalls Li's favorite allusion to "the vast sea turning into mulberry fields" 瀛海桑田, an association which adds to the line a feeling of endless mutation. Instead of writing "tears exude pearls," or "tears turn into pearls," Li departs from the text to write, "pearls have tears." This dislocation and surrealistic turn of the phrase not only breathes fresh life into an old image, it also generates a special effect--of lamenting something lovely and precious that evaporates and disappears.
Blue Field is the name of a mountain in present-day Shaanxi province known for its jade. This line also alludes to another story related to Princess Yu (Jade), the daughter of King Wu. It is said that Jade died of heartbreak when her father refused to let her marry the young man she loved. After her death, her spirit returned to greet her grieving lover at the grave. After inviting him to spend three days and nights with her in the underworld, Jade gave her lover a large pearl as a parting gift. When the young man showed her parents the gift, they accused him of looting their graveyard treasures. The Princess had to reappear again to tell her parents the truth, but when her mother tried to touch her, Jade's ghostly body quickly dissolved into mist. This particular line from "Jinse" may not, however, be entirely original. The poet and critic Sikong Tu was said to have quoted a line by the High Tang poet, Dai Shulun: "At Blue Field, under a warm sun, fine jade gives off mists" for the comment, "this describes the kind of world created by a poet." Even if borrowed, Li Shangyin's adaptation of the line blends perfectly with the rest of his poem.

The worlds explored in these several lines are varied and complex, ranging from the mythological, to the historical and the natural. Because the images are so vivid and sensuous, even
without any knowledge of their sources, one cannot fail to recognize the emotional pattern of the poem which they have created:

A colorful dream which ends in confusion and bewilderment;
A burgeoning spring heart which finds expression in the sorrowful cry of the cuckoo;
Pearls that shed tears;
Jade which dissolves into mists...

Such a pattern clearly conveys the feeling that life is both beautiful and illusory; that it is a perpetual quest, full of yearnings and aspirations which invariably end in disappointment -- a major motif in the poetry of Li Shangyin. And as the concluding lines of the poem suggest, the constant longing and sense of loss will continue to recur without "waiting to become a memory."

Although the images do communicate readily on their own, they are validated by the allusions and given more significance in the poem. It is exactly this combination of the surface level of the images which demands one's direct, intuitive response, and the deeper level of the allusions which points to something obviously "other" and unrealistic which gives these lines their powerful symbolic effect.
Li Shangyin presents the following poems as a group—and rightly so, because they do constitute an organic unit. Once the very elliptical nature of the allusions is understood and their shifting imagery identified and connected, the poems unfold not just as a series of lyrics but as a sequence so interrelated as to be a miniature drama. In composing this one piece in three acts, Li Shangyin uses allusions predominately as a structural device. Allusions in this sequence are the very architecture of the series.

In the first act, so to speak, the allusions function to create the setting (the exposition) of this mini-drama. In the second, they take the reader into the action (the development) of the play. And in the third, the allusions dramatically work to resolve the conflicts (the denouement) of this subtle and intricately compressed drama.

"Emerald Walls"

(1)

1 Twelve railings wind their way within the Emerald Walls. Rhinoceros horn wards off dust, jade wards off cold. Letters from the Lofty Garden are entrusted frequently to cranes. Upon Lady’s Bed, phoenixes perch on every tree.

5 Stars sinking to the bottom of the sea—seen in front of the window.
Rain passing over the river's source—viewed from across the seat.
If the morning pearl could stay not only bright but also constant,
All life long, one would gaze at the crystal plate.

(2)

1 The sight of [her] shadow, the sound of [her] voice already arouse tender feelings.
Over the Jade Pond lotus leaves are spreading large and round--
Unless you meet Xiao Shi, don't you turn your head.
Nor ever pat Hong Ya on his shoulder.

5 The purple phoenix displays her charm, with a Chu-pendant in her mouth.
The red fish dances wildly to the music of the strumming Xiang-zither.
Gazing wistfully from his night boat,
Under an embroidered quilt, with incense burning,
Prince E sleeps alone!

(3)

1 On the Seventh Night, [he] came as previously promised.
The curtain in [her] bed-chamber has not been lifted since.
The hare in the jade wheel is beginning to grow a soul.
The coral in the iron net has not sent forth any branches.

5 Look for a magical prescription to stay [her] youth,
Collect phoenix paper to record [her] longings.
What is in Emperor Wu's Private Biography is plain for all to see,
Do not say that no one ever knows about it!
(FH: 570)
On first reading, this series of poems presents considerable difficulty in interpretation. As Liang Qichao's comment quoted earlier illustrates, it is one of Li's poems in which most readers take great delight without knowing exactly what to make of it. The series is heavily allusive. It involves 23 allusive images: ten in the first poem, nine in the second and four in the third one. Their sources are not obscure, nor is there any great difficulty in understanding the literal meaning of the individual lines where these allusions occur; it is rather the deeper meaning of the series that is hard to pin down. Even on the surface level the poems do not easily lend themselves to a coherent reading because the lines, organized in couplets, present in each case allusive images which are not readily connected. Because of the general lack of "guiding words," the reader has to supply the links between lines of shifting images. He also needs to listen attentively to the persona's voice which seems to change from poem to poem and sometimes even within a single poem. Is the persona cast throughout in the third-person? When does it become the first-person? And is this first-person or third-person consistently male or female, or does the speaker shift from poem to poem or several times within one poem alone? These are all questions one must address in order to achieve a consistent interpretation of this sequence.

Most of the allusions are drawn from Daoist mythology. In this sense, the allusions do serve collectively to provide an interpretive framework, a superstructure for the poems. Togeth-
er, they project an imaginary world filled with colorful, sensuous, and dream-like images.

What can one make of the supernatural frame of reference running throughout the series? Should we read it literally as a fanciful depiction of an other-worldly realm? Are there pivotal images which indicate a reference to the realistic or the specific? The poet seems deliberately to cultivate ambiguity when he gives this sequence a pseudo-title, using the first two characters of the first poem.

Altogether six distinct readings have been offered by commentators and critics:

1. A reading which interprets the sequence autobiographically as having to do with the poet's disappointment in failing to secure a better official position and his appeal for promotion and patronage.\(^3^2\)

2. A reading which interprets the sequence simply as an exercise on the topic of "wandering immortals" (youxian).\(^3^3\)

3. A reading which interprets the sequence as a love lyric using exotic imagery—nothing more, nothing less.\(^3^4\)

4. A reading which interprets the sequence as stemming from Li's clandestine liaison with Daoist nuns.\(^3^5\)

5. A reading which interprets the sequence as depicting the famous love story between Emperor Xuanzong and his favorite consort Yang Guifei.\(^3^6\)
6. A reading which interprets the sequence as depicting the secret love affairs of Tang princesses who have become Daoist nuns.²⁷

Of all the readings, the first one proposed by Xu Dehong 徐德弘 and Yao Peiqian 姚培谦 is the most far-fetched. Even the parallel between what Xu describes as the persona's longing for a beautiful and lofty land and the poet's appeal for promotion is extremely strained and tenuous because it applies just to the first poem in the sequence and only partially to it. The stance and the tone of the third-person persona at the end of the series together with the intermittent references to lovers' meetings and partings simply do not support this first interpretation.

Because of the strong hints of specific reference—the vivid immediacy of the drama depicted in the second and third poems (despite the shifting images), the persona's tone of voice as well as a suggested sense of concrete place and time—I would also rule out readings 2 and 3. In short, I believe this poem should be interpreted allegorically, with the assumption that the narrative in the poem, told largely through the sustained use of allusions, is a concealed reference to some external set of events. But what possibly could he be referring to? The Emerald Walls and the recurring use of Daoist mythological images hint strongly at a Daoist cloister as the setting. At the same time, allusions to stories with romantic associations as well as the
use of images with powerfully sensual and erotic connotations all suggest a romantic liaison with someone in the cloister.

Readings 4, 5 and 6 are probably arrived at as a result of just such an analysis. Reading 5 is suggested by Zhu Yizun and several other critics because: (1) Yang Guifei was a Daoist nun before she became the famous consort of Emperor Xuanzong ; (2) She and Xuanzong were said to have pledged a love vow on the Seventh Night of the Seventh Month of the year; (3) Tang poets often refer to Emperor Wu of Han when speaking of Xuanzong. These critics are prompted by allusions to "the Seventh Night" and "Emperor Wu" as well as the repeated use of Daoist mythological imagery to read the love story of Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei into this series. Despite these isolated instances of possible association, I find this improbable because some of the descriptions and the tone of voice assumed in the poems (such as the jealous admonition of lines 3-4, and the pathetically dejected "Prince E" in lines 7-8, poem 2) are not that of an emperor. Also, the love story between Xuanzong and Yang Guifei was well-known during as well as after their lifetimes, a fact which contradicts the last line of the series. Using Su Xuelin's basic premise, Chen Yixin again interprets this as a personal love lyric referring to the poet's own affairs with Daoist nuns. Although the relationship is vividly dramatized and the persona intermittently assumes the voice of the first-person, there is no trace of any strong, underlying personal emotion. The overriding voice throughout is
that of the observer, the third-person narrator. This is especially prominent in the final lines of the series. Whether he is writing about Daoist nuns who are also Tang princesses, or he is, as Chen Yixin speculates, writing of a personal experience, Li Shangyin is clearly being circumspect, protecting himself by the heavy use of allusion. He also distances himself to the extent that the entire series reads like an impersonal drama.

It is possible, however, that Li Shangyin is writing about Daoist nuns who are also Tang princesses, considering how often during Li's time that Princesses entered the cloister in order to seek more social and sexual freedom. The Ming critic Hu Zhenheng first suggested this interpretation. Cheng Mengxing, Feng Hao and Zhang Ertian generally support this view. Hu Zhenheng writes:

In early Tang, princesses often asked to enter the cloisters. Many were intimate with the people in the two religious orders. At the time of Li Shangyin, Princesses Wen-an, Xunyang, Ping'’en, Shaoyang, Yongjia, Yong’an, Yichang, and Ankang had all pleaded to become Daoist nuns, building their cloisters outside of the court. Historians have not spoken of their shame. There were, however, subtle censuring remarks about their having to be recalled by the court to avoid scandals.

Apart from this consideration, the exalted images throughout the poem—the Emerald Walls, the Lofty Garden, phoenixes—and
finally, the hidden reference to the mythological story of Princess Nongyu (through "Xiaoshi") as well as the allusion to *Emperor Wu's Private Biography* all support such a reading.

Seen in this light, the supernatural framework of these poems takes on significance and the three "Emerald Walls" poems can be understood as a unified sequence. They are linked by the deployment of allusions to imply a narrative, or better, a carefully structured, if only suggested drama. This lyrical sequence is perhaps best read as a visionary poem in which the persona, here a speaker, a narrator rather than a participant, creates a setting, evokes a theme, develops motifs, and brings the sensual, miniature drama to an end with a cautionary note. All this is accomplished primarily through the use of allusion.

There are ten allusions in the first poem, or, more accurately, ten instances in which the use of a certain image rings with allusive resonances. "Emerald Walls," the title of the sequence as well as the dominant image in the first line of poem, is itself allusive. According to the *Shangqing Jing* 上清經, the Daoist god, Yuanshi Tianzun 元始天尊 (The Primeval-Heavenly-Venerated-One), lives in a pavilion of purple clouds, surrounded by walls of emerald-colored mists. The "twelve winding railings" also echo a line from an earlier folk ballad, but the image can stand on its own even without knowledge of its source. Together, the two allusive images depict a beautiful, celestial setting with intricate winding paths which lead to something mysterious and alluring.
Line 2 consists of two parallel images. In *Lingbiao Luyi* 嶺表錄異, Liu Xun 劉向 describes different kinds of rhinoceroses which possess special qualities. One of these is the *bichenxi* 磚璽犀 whose horn is said to be used for making ladies’ barrattes because it helps to keep away dust. In *Shuyi Ji* 述異記, there is also a reference to using the horn of the *bichenxi* to keep away dust from seats and couches. The reference to jade as an agent against cold echoes the "fiery jade" worn by the deity Lady Shangyuan 上元夫人 in *Wudi Neizhuan* 武帝內傳. Taken as it is, however, the jade (yu 玉) also conjures up what is smooth and warm, something suggestive of the sensual and the romantic. While "rhinoceros" is an image rich with associations of the exotic and "jade" with what is precious, they have yet other reverberations when read in their particular contexts. As Feng Hao has aptly suggested, "Rhinoceros horn wards off dust" implies that the nuns are supposed to have renounced the world of dust (chenshi 香示) and chosen to live in a place free from the impurities of earthly entanglements. "Jade wards off cold," on the other hand, suggests that they are in fact sensual beings filled with human desires.

Lines 3 and 4 are parallel lines which together form the first middle-couplet of the poem. They are connected not only structurally but also by the similarity of their images: Cranes which carry letters inside the Lofty Garden, land of the Immortals; and phoenixes which perch on trees upon Lady’s Bed, a
mythological mountain mentioned in the *Shanhai Jing*. These images are not only colorful, but they are also rich with suggestions of the romantic and the erotic. And when Li Shangyin further emphasizes by writing: "Langyuan youshu *duo* fuhe" (Letters from Lofty Garden are entrusted *frequently* to cranes as messengers) and "Nüchuant *wushu bu qiluan*" (Upon Lady's Bed, phoenixes perch on *every* tree), he is saying that these liaisons are in fact rather common within the city of the Emerald Walls; or in our analysis, the Daoist cloister.

The exact visual description presented in lines 5 and 6: "Stars sinking to the bottom of the sea..." and "Rain passing over where the river rises..." has been variously interpreted. Feng Hao thinks that line 5 alludes to the three Magic Mountains under water and line 6 to the story of a man travelling to the Yellow River's source on a raft where he met the legendary Cowherd and the Weaving Maid. As James Liu has already pointed out, the reading of the three Magic Mountains is largely untenable because it does not explain why the stars are at the bottom of the sea. I take the "sea" here to mean simply "a sea of clouds." While Liu views these lines as a description of an "upside down world," I see in them a picture of the fabled movements of the constellations and heavenly elements, suggesting a dream-like intangibility and a sense of the passing of time and event. The "rain" in line 6 (an erotic image originating from the famous story of King Xiang and the Goddess of Mt. Wu) also intimates some kind of sexual encounter. All this, however,
has come to an end now ("passing over"). The "sinking of the stars" too can be understood as the beginning of dawn and a return to the duties and routines of the day, a parting of the lovers.\(^5\) The ending phrases in both lines: "seen in front of the window" and "viewed from across the seat" also imply a kind of distancing, a looking back over past events.

The last two lines of this poem have traditionally been considered most puzzling. Many allusions have been suggested for the explanation of "morning pearl" and "crystal plate." One such allusion is the lustrous pearl mentioned in *Feiyan Waizhuan* which, when allowed to shine on any individual, enhances that person's beauty.\(^5\) "Morning pearl" has also been interpreted as "the essence of the yang forces" and hence the sun itself.\(^5\) "Crystal plate," on the other hand, has been traced to the story of Lady Flying Swallow (Zhao Feiyan) who was so delicate and light that the Emperor ordered a crystal plate to be held up for her to dance on.\(^5\) Another reading links it to the story of Dong Yan who received a crystal plate as a gift from Emperor Wu (of Han).\(^5\) Then there is the suggestion that "crystal plate" is simply a reference to the moon itself.\(^5\) None of the allusions identified for "morning pearl" makes convincing sense to me. It is not surprising that with a poet as allusive as Li Shangyin an attempt will be made to trace every image in his poems to some kind of allusion, but I agree with Chen Yixin that "morning pearl" here is best read as a simple metaphor for "morning dew."\(^5\) The "crystal plate," however, is an appropriate
reference to the story of Zhao Feiyan. Together, the last two lines suggest that if the romantic love experienced within the cloister were not only beautiful but constant and long-lasting, (if the glistening morning dew would never evaporate!) one would be content to face one's beloved (who is as delicate and lovely as Lady Swallow) all life long.

A review of this first poem shows that it is made up of a succession of allusions. The individual couplets, if taken as they stand, are incoherent; that is to say, each line does not appear to relate to the next. Yet when taken as the setting for the succeeding poems, the eight lines do form an organic unit. This setting, suggesting a Daoist cloister, is one of rich, sensuous and exotic imagery deriving from the mythological allusions. The first line sets the physical background of this poem and of the entire series. The second line sets the mood and atmosphere in which the activities of lines 3 and 4 are depicted. Lines 5 and 6, while describing literally the movements of the clouds and stars in this celestial place, also suggest metaphorically the passing of time and certain romantic interludes. The final couplet concludes by musing on the transient nature of such encounters. The poem is delivered in the voice of the third-person, with the last two lines probing into the consciousness of one involved in the drama.

After suggesting the setting and evoking his theme, the poet proceeds to develop in poems 2 and 3 a miniature drama. Both poems are made up of strings of allusive images which tell of the
meetings and partings between two lovers, possibly one of many such pairs within the walls of the cloister. Although the story is told largely through the third-person narrator, poem 2 is presented from the point of view of the male lover, at times even assuming his voice. On the other hand, poem 3 is presented from the point of view and dramatic situation of his female counterpart.

Altogether nine allusive images are used in the second poem. The "Jade Pond" in line 2 is an example of No. 5 on Hightower's scheme of allusions. It is found in a poem by Shen Yue, but the word "Jade" is used simply as an epithet implying something "precious," suggesting a beautiful setting. The rest of line 2 also echoes a line from a popular ancient ballad which describes lotus leaves spreading large and round on a pond—an image suggestive of good times.

Since "the sight of [her] shadow, the sound of [her] voice already arouse tender feelings," it must be a great joy to have a rendezvous with her. Lines 3 and 4 are parallel lines in the imperative mode. In them, the narrator assumes the voice of the male lover, telling his lady to be faithful to him. Xiao Shi in line 3 is the famous flutist mentioned in Liexian Zhuan. It is said that he married Princess Nongyu and flew off with her on the back of a phoenix he had attracted with his flute-playing. Hong Ya in line 4 is the name of a male immortal in Shenxian Zhuan in which the Immortal "Red Pine" holds Fu Qiu's sleeve with one hand and claps the other
on Hong Ya's shoulder as they soar through space." It is quite clear here that the speaker is referring to himself as Xiao Shi and his potential love rivals as Hong Ya. "Unless it is me," he says to his lady, "do not turn your head; and don't pat any other men on the shoulder!" The allusion to Hong Ya is appropriate because, as a male immortal, he could be used to represent rivals loitering within the Emerald Walls. The reference to Xiao Shi also leads one to speculate that the speaker's lover is a princess who now lives in the land of the immortals.

The Chu-pendant in line 5 recalls the story of Zheng Jiaofu 鄭交甫 in the Liexian Zhuan. Zheng is said to have encountered two ladies by the Yangtze River in Chu. Not knowing that they were goddesses, he made advances to them. The ladies left him their pendants. When he turned around, the pendants disappeared and the ladies too were nowhere to be seen. The Xiang-zither in line 6 refers to the goddesses of the River Xiang, once the loving wife and the concubine of the legendary Emperor Shun, who played that instrument. It was said that the two ladies died of grief after failing to find their missing husband in the wilderness of the Chu region. They later became the goddesses of River Xiang. Apart from this, line 6 also echoes the legend of Hu Ba 侯芭: when he plays on his zither, the fish come out to listen. When Li Shangyin calls this fish "red" (the actual phrase he uses is "red scale(s)," "scale" being a metonomy for fish), it not only adds color to the poem and provides a parallel for "purple" in the previous line, at the
same time it rings a bell for readers familiar with a line from Jiang Yan's "Biefu" (Rhapsody on Parting) which mentions the "red fish (scale)" surfacing from the depths of the sea. All these allusions—the music of the Xiang-zither, the story of Hu Ba and the fish attracted by his music as well as the reference to the red fish surfacing—are connected through association. Starting from the music, it moves on to the fish in the allusion to Hu Ba and finally to the "redness" of the fish. The resonances from these stories and textual references all come together to enrich Li Shangyin's line. But what makes the allusive images in line 6 as well as their counterpart in line 5 so effective and powerful is the way Li has juxtaposed the two lines and the way he has brought the images together. The two stories alluded to in "Chu-pendant" and "Xiang-zither" conjure associations of romantic goddesses; and the two lines,

The purple phoenix displays her charm, with a Chu-pendant in her mouth,
The red fish dances wildly to the music of the strumming Xiang-zither,

along with other sensuous images—such as "purple phoenix" and "red fish" ("purple" and "red" being passionate colors; phoenix and fish being symbols of femininity and fertility), as well as words and phrases such as "displays her charm," "dances wildly," "with .... in her mouth," "strumming" (bo 撥, literally "plucking," "stirring" or "arousing")—all conjure associations of passionate love-making. Joined in a couplet, these parallel
lines suggest that those emotions are shared by both lovers.

A review of the second poem so far shows that it is again made up of a succession of heavily packed allusive images. The initial couplet describes the male persona's excitement at being in love and his joy over actually meeting his beloved. Lines 3 and 4 assume his voice in the first-person as he speaks directly to her. Lines 5 and 6 are two picturesque lines which seem unconnected with the rest of the poem until we realize that they are images of romantic passion and love-making and their place in the poem becomes immediately evident. There is an apparent inconsistency between the last couplet and the preceding lines. However, I do not think that Feng Hao and James Liu's reading of the last two lines as the description of a frustrated onlooker is convincing. I believe that the first three couplets should be read as flashbacks and patches of happy memories, with the narrative shifting abruptly to the reality of the present in the final lines. The lovers are now no longer together. Unlike the lucky Prince E who was able to take the woman who admired him into his boat and embrace her under his quilt, the disappointed lover is now left to sleep in solitude.

As a counterpoint to the second poem, the third poem, I believe, is written in the voice of the third-person describing the state of mind and condition of the female lover. The first couplet recalls the lovers' last rendezvous in her chamber, possibly the same meeting mentioned in the second poem. Yet the man has failed to return. Perhaps the situation at the cloister
has not made it easy for him to return. Perhaps their illicit romance has to come to an end. Lines 3 and 4 are self-contained, and their connection with the rest of the poem is not immediately apparent. The "hare in the jade wheel" refers to the moon. "It is beginning to grow a soul" implies that it is starting to wax. In the Bencao Gangmu, the coral is described as harvested by deep-sea divers with iron nets. But the coral in line 4 is not yet mature with all its branches ready for harvesting. Considering the vividness of these images and the context of the entire sequence, it is difficult to dispute with Feng Hao that these lines vaguely suggest the possibility of pregnancy. On the other hand, it seems that one can also read them as a description of the first blossoming of love between two people, one which has failed to come to fruition. Meanwhile, lines 5 and 6 suggest that the lady's youthful beauty is waning, and her longings find no means of expression. During the Tang Dynasty, "phoenix paper" was used as writing paper in the imperial palace. It was also used by Daoists to record prayers for their religious rituals. The suggestion that this paper be used to record feelings of love further supports our interpretation of the sequence as concerning princesses turned Daoist nuns.

Emperor Wu's Private Biography is a work detailing the fictitious life of Emperor Wu (of Han) and his encounter with the Queen Mother of the West. There are many references to Daoist goddesses but no explicitly romantic or erotic accounts in the Biography. Perhaps the narrator is simply suggesting that
Tang princesses' private lives are by no means completely private. Just as others have collected stories about Emperor Wu, there are those who will do the same about the princesses who, though living in cloisters, lead rather licentious lives.

As our reading has shown, allusion serves a vital function in providing the structure for the "Emerald Walls" series. The sequence is built almost entirely on a succession of allusive images. Because the allusions are drawn predominantly from Daoist mythology, they further provide the poems with a superstructure, a kind of supernatural framework; and it is within this framework that the individual allusive images operate. Although each poem can stand very well on its own as a lyrical piece, the three together inter-relate to create a dramatic unity.

Allusions also create the time, the space, the color and the mood which make up the settings for the individual pieces. Examples include references to the Emerald Walls, the twelve winding railings; the rhinoceros horn which wards off the dust, the jade which wards off the cold; the Jade Pond and its large, round lotus leaves; the Seventh Night which marks the meeting of the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid.

It is also through the use of allusion that the major dramatis personae are sketched and created and their relationships defined in the poems. Allusions to Xiao Shi, Hong Ya, Prince E all help to identify the male lover in the series, while reference to Lady's Bed, purple phoenix, the crystal plate
suggest the presence of a female persona as his counterpart.

The narrator's point of view, which functions almost like the chorus in a play, is shaped largely through the use of certain pivotal words and phrases in conjunction with the allusions:

Letters from Lofty Garden are entrusted frequently to cranes as messengers.
Upon Lady's Bed, phoenixes perch on every tree.

Unless you meet Xiao Shi, don't you turn your head.
Nor ever pat Hong Ya on his shoulder.

Prince E gazes wistfully from his night boat.
Under an embroidered quilt, with incense burning, he sleeps alone!

What is in Emperor Wu's Private Biography is plain for all to see,
Do not say that no one ever knows about it!

The voice that comes through is not so much moralizing as cautionary, with a slightly ironic tone in its admonition. Despite the seriousness of these poems, I find the lines "Unless you meet Xiao Shi..." and the ones in which the narrator depicts the lover as a Prince E mildly amusing and somewhat pathetic. It is this interestingly detached and bemused point of view which prompts me to rule out reading this sequence as autobiographical.

Apart from the characters and point of view in the poems,
the main actions and events too are suggested through the use of allusion. This is especially noticeable in the following lines from the series:

Letters from the Lofty Garden are entrusted frequently to cranes as messengers.
Upon Lady's Bed, phoenixes perch on very tree.

The purple phoenix displays her charm, with a Chu-pendant in her mouth.
The red fish dances wildly to the music of the strumming zither.

The hare in the jade wheel is beginning to grow a soul.
The coral in the iron net has not sent forth any branches.

In short, the drama in the series unfolds, builds up to a climax and reaches a resolution, all through the use of allusive images.

Because the allusions are presented as independent strings of images instead of a smooth-flowing, evolving discourse, there is an inevitable ambiguity which creates tension in the poems. Because the lines communicate predominantly through "association" and "suggestion", the reader has to be involved in a special way, certainly much more actively, when experiencing this kind of poetry. He has to supply, so to speak, much more "glue" in the reading process, constantly bridging gaps to resolve the tensions and to achieve a coherent reading of the series.

The allusions also generate multiple levels of reader response. One may initially interpret a line such as "Over the
Jade Pond lotus leaves are spreading large and round—"simply as a realistic setting. However, as soon as one recognizes that both the "Jade Pond" and the "lotus leaves spreading large and round" are textual allusions, one will reconsider the significance of these images in the poem. Maybe the lovers never met by a pond at all. The allusions are used only to hint at the blissfulness of the meeting and the excitement of the lover when he is with his beloved. This is true also of the allusion to Prince E. The allusion is used probably because the poet, writing of the loneliness of the lover, recognizes a striking contrast between his situation and that of Prince E. It is not necessary that the entire setting of "the night boat," "the embroidered quilt" and the "burning incense" be taken literally. In achieving a coherent reading of this series, the reader must be able to recognize its major chords and melodic lines which unfold as he interprets the allusions. The many minor echoes and associations resulting from the same allusions are like the ornamentations and flourishes in a piece of baroque music. While they enrich the poems by adding color, mood, tension, texture and overall complexity, they should not be taken too literally, or be so overread that we lose ourselves in the ornamentation at the expense of hearing the whole piece.
"Yaochi" (The Jade Pool) is an example in which a group of mythological allusions drawn from the same source makes up both the subject and the narrative of a poem. The allusions are interwoven in such a way that they not only tell an interesting legend evocatively, but at the same time present a universal human situation through the poem's implied narrative and comment on it.

"The Jade Pool"

Over the Jade Pool, Mother's lovely window opens wide. The wailing songs of Yellow Bamboo rock the earth. His eight divine horses running at thirty thousand miles a day, Why is King Mu not back again?

(FH: 268)

There are three allusions in this poem, all to the Biography of King Mu 穆天子傳. They are examples of No.1 on High-tower's scheme of allusions because they are connected in such a way that, together, they make up the subject of the poem. The first story is that King Mu (of Zhou) once visited the Fairy Queen Mother of the West and feasted at her palace over the Jade Pool, a mythical paradise on Mt. Kunlun. Before he left, the Queen Mother extended her invitation in a song: "With white clouds in the sky, and mountains rising from among them, this
road is far and wide, interrupted by rivers and mountain ranges. If you do not die, you should be able to come back again." The King promised the Queen Mother that he would return in three years.\(^7\)

Another story tells of a tragedy the King witnessed when he passed by Yellow Bamboo, a place within his own domain. Many of his people died of severe cold and hunger in a snowstorm, and the King wrote a poem in three stanzas to mourn their death.\(^5\)

The third reference is to the eight famous horses of King Mu which were supposed to run three thousand miles in a day.\(^6\)

Traditional commentators such as Zhu Yizun, Yao Fengyuan and Qu Fu think that this poem is a general satire on the Daoist pursuit of immortal life.\(^7\) Others such as He Yimen and Cheng Mengxing believe that it is directed specifically against Wuzong, and written soon after he died of an overdose of elixir drugs.\(^8\) These two are both plausible interpretations since Li quite overtly criticized the emperors in poems such as "Jiasheng" (Scholar Jia), "Guo Jingling" (Passing the Jing Mausoleum), and "Maoling" (The Mao Mausoleum), particularly Wuzong's interest in spirits, ghosts and immortality drugs.\(^9\)

Yu Shucheng and Liu Xuekai have offered a consistent and interesting reading of this poem based on the first interpretation. Because they identify the speaker throughout the poem with the Queen Mother, their reading suggests that even the Goddess herself wonders why King Mu is not back again. In other words, she is, ironically, as uncertain, or has as little control over
the destinies of men as men themselves! Since King Mu never returned to the Jade Pool, it is obvious that he had died and failed to attain immortal life. To support their reading, Yu and Liu suggest that line 2 indicates the death of the King, interpreting, therefore, the "wailing songs of Yellow Bamboo" as the cries of the people mourning the death of their King rather than vice versa. They have completely contradicted and misread the source meaning of the allusion, something which, if ever intended by the poet, is not readily apparent in the text.

So much for these readings. Because of the suggestiveness of the allusions and the lack of a specific reference, I believe that this poem also warrants a symbolic interpretation.

The poem opens with a very inviting scene, with images drawn from the first allusion. At the Jade Pool, the Queen Mother (affectionately addressed as "Amu" "Mother" here) is pictured as sitting by her wide-open window, as if awaiting eagerly the king's return. The scene also suggests an expectant and caring Fairy Godmother, looking from out of the window of her celestial home to view the human world.

Yet all this may very well be just the imagination of our poet. Does the Queen Mother actually exist? Is there really an immortal land, an ultimate state where happiness and perfect harmony can be attained? Line 2 is a stark answer to line 1—the two lines being juxtaposed to bring out the irony in the first one. Together they imply that if a Queen Mother did exist, and if she did have feelings for the human world, men would not have
to endure all of life's sufferings. Lines 3 and 4 are again two contrasting lines put side by side to bring out the same question. King Mu's horses are known to be the swiftest in the world. If his steeds could run thirty thousand miles a day, why then is he never back at the Jade Pool again as he promised? Does that ideal state really exist, or have we been going through life chasing after an illusion?

The allusions in this poem also bring out two parallel situations. While the common lot struggles just to survive cold and hunger, the King, immune to all this suffering, has yet his own yearnings and desires to fulfill. Whether it is a striving for basic worldly needs, for physical immortality, or ultimate spiritual transcendence, as long as there is life, men are forever caught in a web of endless and hopeless longings, as Li Shangyin puts it in another poem:

When lotus leaves sprout, spring sorrow starts to grow;
When lotus leaves wither, autumn sorrow is full;
Knowing full well that emotions will last as long as life remains,
Wistfully gazing at the river, I hear the river's flow.81

Yet, their endless yearnings and pursuits are doomed to frustration because the ultimate ideal is by definition unattainable.

In sum, allusion has been used as the subject of this poem; that is, the very substance of Li Shangyin's implied narrative. By piecing together and organizing creatively three unrelated
allusions to King Mu, Li accomplishes three things--tells a story, presents a human situation, and comments on it--all at the same time. The question in the concluding line, which is also part of the narrative, forces the reader to make the connections among the allusions so as to come to an understanding of the poem's significance.
In "Mudan" (Peonies), we have a prototype of later yongwu poems in which an object is celebrated obliquely through allusions. Without making any explicit reference to the flowers themselves, the poet presents through vivid allusive images a complex personification of the peonies, sketching their shapes, movements, colors and scents. Although this poem has been disparaged by some critics, it is in fact a successful piece, unusual and ingenious in its allusive effects. While in most other cases an allusion is used to bring out the analogy or comparison between two human situations, Li uses, in this poem, images from stories and human events to re-create certain perceived qualities in a natural object. With this technique, the poet has achieved through the use of allusion what a painter does with colors and paint-brush. Further, the beauty of the peonies is given more than literal significance when it comes to represent a whole range of possibilities through the use of allusion, a feature which became more and more prominent in the development of the yongwu genre.

"Peonies"

1 The newly raised brocade curtain reveals a Lady Wei. The embroidered coverlet still heaps over Prince E of Yue. Hanging hands, freely swaying carved jade pendants. Bending waists, dancing rival skirts of lush gold.

5 Candles of the Shi Family--have they ever been trimmed?
The incense burner of Prefect Xun—who needs that for perfume?
I am the magic color-brush which comes in a dream,
Wishing to sketch blossoms and leaves to send to the morning cloud.

(FH: 24)

There are eight allusive images in this poem, one in each line. Lines 1-6 present a verbal picture of the peonies, highlighting their various aspects. The different qualities of the peonies, their shapes and arrangements, their dance and movements in the wind, their resplendent colors and permeating fragrances come alive by means of comparisons and personification through the use of allusions. In the concluding lines, the speaker offers to send this vignette as a gift to someone special.

Because of its prominent size and variety of colors, the peony has traditionally been considered as "King of the flowers" by the Chinese. After years of careful cultivation, it has become a flower which is grown specifically for leisure viewing, hence its association with nobility, elegance and affluence. Accordingly, Li's poem opens with two appropriate allusions, Lady Wei and Prince E—a beautiful woman and a handsome man—both from noble backgrounds. In the Shi Ji the ravishing Nan Zi 南子, married to Duke Ling of Wei 衛靈公, is said to have asked to meet with Confucius, saying: "Gentlemen from the four corners of the world have all, without exception, come to pay me visits." The Master, unable to decline, went to visit her. As Lady Wei sat behind her brocade curtain, Confucius, bowing deeply, greeted
her with utmost respect. Thereupon she returned his greeting from behind the screen, and the jingling sounds of her jade pendants could be heard. In the Analects, it is said that Zi Lu was critical of the Master's visit to Nan Zi. Confucius answered by implying that he had committed no impropriety. All of this, of course, enhances the suggestion of how captivating Lady Wei was. Thus when the peony in its initial bloom is compared to Lady Wei's newly raised brocade curtain, revealing her true beauty, the loveliness of the flower is personified.

In line 2, an allusion is made to the story of Prince E which we encountered in "Emerald Walls." The Prince was floating along one day in his luxurious pleasure boat. As the music came to a stop, a woman of Yue who was then at the tiller courted him with a love song. The Prince thereupon embraced her and took her in under his quilt. Because Prince E was the brother of King Chu, both traditional and contemporary critics think that Li Shangyin should have referred to him as "Chu Ejun" (Prince E of Chu) rather than "Yue Ejun" (Prince E of Yue). They have unanimously criticized Li for making a mistake or simply alluding inaccurately because he wants to create a matching parallel ("Yue Ejun" for "Wei Furen") in the first two lines. This criticism is really invalid because Li could easily have substituted "Chu" for "Yue" in line 2, considering that they are both place names that could be used adjectivally, and that they both belong to the oblique tone. There are, however, two reasons why Li Shangyin's phrase "Yue
"Ejun" is readily justified. First, it could be understood as "Prince E at Yue" since the story that Li is concerned with here very likely took place at Yue. More importantly, a reference to "Yue" makes more poetic sense than one to "Chu" because it incorporates the romantic background of the allusion into the line, suggesting that the petals of the peonies are heavily layered, like the pretty coverlet heaping over both the Prince and the girl from Yue.

In lines 3-4, the shapes, movements and colors of the peonies are simultaneously evoked when they are personified in the bustling and picturesque dance of some splendidly dressed ladies. While "hanging hands" (chuishou) alludes to a particular type of dance, both "hanging hands" and "bending waists" (zheyaot) describe the movements of the dances as well as the varied poses and arrangements of the peonies. The phrases "freely swaying" (luanfan) and "rivalling in dance" (zhengwu) not only imply that there are many peony blossoms, but that they are all vital and alive. The "lush gold" (yujin) in line 4 is a reference to an herbal plant of that name which is often used as a dye. Together, the images of "carved jade pendants" and "skirts of lush gold" not only impart a feminine beauty to the flowers, they also suggest a variety of rich and resplendent colors.

In lines 5-6, the poet further depicts the sights and scents of the peonies. In the Shishuo Xinyu, the affluent and notoriously extravagant Shi Chong of the Jin Dynasty
is said to have flaunted his wealth by using candles as firewood. Because the candles are used as firewood, they are, as Li suggests, never trimmed. While refined and well-to-do Chinese families usually wore clothes perfumed over incense burners, in the Xiangyang Ji, it is said that Xun Yu, a certain Shangshu Ling (Prefect of the Masters of Writing) during the Later Han, scented his clothes so heavily that wherever he went, his perfume would linger for more than three days. Together, these two allusions suggest that the peonies offer both a blazing sight (the candles, usually red in color, used as firewood) and a lasting fragrance (scent which lingers for more than three days). The lavish imagery from the two stories fills our imagination with the superlative beauty of the flowers. In using the two allusions in these lines, there is also the suggestion that these peonies may have been brought to full bloom by some artificial warming effect (the verb for this process in Chinese is xun, the same verb which describes the process of "scenting").

Although this poem is written in the regulated verse form, which typically consists of two balanced middle couplets enclosed in the beginning and at the end by two sets of relatively direct and less densely imagistic lines, Li Shangyin has created his own internal structure here within the prescribed framework. By constructing an extra, balanced opening couplet, he provides a total of three paired lines (Lines 1-6) devoted to the sketching of the peonies. This objective and disinterested depiction of
the flowers is given significance in the last two lines when the speaker steps in to offer his poem to "the morning cloud."

In line 7, the poet takes pride in his talent by alluding to the story of Jiang Yan in the Nan Shi. Jiang once dreamed that someone demanded the return of a five-colored brush which Jiang Yan had borrowed from him many years ago. After his dream, Jiang is said to have completely lost his writing ability. In this poem, however, Li Shangyin is only concerned with the fact that he has such a magic brush, implying that he is a greatly gifted writer who wishes to offer his talent in sketching the peonies and sending the poem as a gift to the "morning cloud." Since this is a reference to the spirit of the Goddess described in King Xiang's romantic dream, one possible meaning of lines 7-8 could be that the poet wants to send this poem to a woman he loves and admires. Or, further still, as Cheng Mengxing has suggested, the personification of the flowers could also be understood conversely as a comparison of the lady to the peonies.

If we review some pertinent background in Li Shangyin's biography, we may even identify other possible meanings for the last two lines. We mentioned earlier that Li studied the art of parallel prose and consciously cultivated his writing skills as an artist under Linghu Chu. In one of his poems to his patron, he went as far to refer to this gift as "the abbot's gown" which Linghu had passed on to him. If we reconsider lines 7-8 in this light, we may understand it to mean that Li has obtained his skill as a fine writer from Linghu. With this special gift, he
would now like to offer his talent in writing to Linghu himself, since Linghu is said to be particularly fond of the peonies.\textsuperscript{97} Or, it might be a gift he is offering to anyone who could help him in his career. A poem to the "morning cloud" would, in that case, represent an encounter with someone special and influential. In such an analysis, the beauty of the peonies could be equated with the poet's own talents (which have been made to bloom through careful cultivation) which he has vividly personified. Although critics differed in their exact dating of this poem,\textsuperscript{98} considering its confident tone and the allusion that Li uses to describe his own talent, there should be little doubt that this poem was written during the earlier years of his life.\textsuperscript{99}

This poem illustrates particularly well how Li Shangyin uses allusion in a highly complex metaphorical process which creates effects of personification. The flowers are endowed with life and their qualities suggested not by simple, isolated metaphors, or the direct use of verbs which personify, (for there is no actual animistic projection), but by subtle analogy, through a network of associations drawn from allusive sources. The allusions are carefully chosen to create an aura of richness, elegance and sophistication, which befits the image of the flowers. The two references at the end of the poem also elevate the piece from its objective and literal level to give it personal and allegorical significance.
Contrary to the impression of many casual readers and critics, Li Shangyin does not concern himself "solely with the anguish of love and the beauty of women." Neither does he "ignore society" nor "fail to discuss the ordering of the State." Close to a hundred of Li's poems, as mentioned earlier, may be classified as "historical," or "social and political" commentaries, many of which contain direct reference to current issues.

The following is an example of Li's many successful yongshi pieces written in the seven-character regulated verse form. What is worth noting here is not only the allegorical meaning the poem generates and the subtle comparisons it makes on a contemporary figure and events—something not uncommon in yongshi poetry. More importantly, it is the way his allusions unify the descriptive, the narrative, the satirical and the lyrical elements in the poem.

These intermingling effects are reminiscent of what we have discussed earlier in "The Jade Pool." This "historical poem" is in effect the counterpart of the "mythological" one in that they both demonstrate a similar use of allusion to create multiple effects. In the case of the "historical" poem, however, this technique has special implications. What Li Shangyin has done in the following example is to offer a balanced tribute to a historical figure by critically assessing his strengths and
weaknesses, using a series of allusions to form that biographical framework. He has done it not in the direct, objective language of expository prose, but through the subtle suggestion of a descriptive lyric. In other words, he uses allusion to infuse poetry with critical, biographical commentary, so that he serves his role simultaneously as a lyricist and a historical critic.

"The Maoling Mausoleum"

1 The Han Family's Heavenly Horses came from Pushao. Alfalfa plants and pomegranate flowers spread all over neighboring fields. The Inner Imperial Gardens knew only of licking phoenix beaks, The entourage of carriages no longer flies a feathery cock banner.

5 For stealing jade peaches, Fang Shuo was especially favored. Building a golden chamber, Ajiao was extravagantly housed. Who could foresee that when Su Wu returned to his country an old man, Amidst birches and pines, desolate and forlorn in the rain, a Maoling Mausoleum.

(FH: 264)

Although this poem is ostensibly about Han Wudi (Emperor Wu of Han), critics have generally agreed that it was written as a concealed reference to Tang Wuzong (Emperor Wu of Tang), and there are good reasons to support such an interpretation. 103

The title of the poem "Maoling" (literally "Luxuriant
Mausoleum") is the name of Wudi's Mausoleum. There are altogether ten allusions, evenly distributed throughout the poem. Each allusion in lines 1-3, 5-7 brings out an anecdote or historical fact which illustrates one aspect of Wudi's reign, while line 4 and line 8 each makes a reference to the emperor's death, with the last line echoing the title of the poem.

Han Wudi is probably one of the best known of Chinese monarchs. He did a great deal to consolidate the power of the court and the internal stability of the country, at the same time, launching an outward-looking and expansionist foreign policy. Much trading and cultural exchange took place after his conquests of a number of countries outside of the western frontier of China as well as his development of the famous Silk Road. Because of his active administration, as well as his energetic personality, his obsession with the pursuit of immortal life, many anecdotes and colorful stories have been told about him, some factual, some fictional.

Lines 1-2 in "Maoling" contain three references which suggest Wudi's military strength and his policy of aggrandizement. "Pushao" in line 1 is the name of a special breed of horses brought back from Ferghana after the conquest of that country in Central Asia. From the "Pushao," the Han court later bred the famous "Heavenly Horses" to fill the imperial stable. According to the Han Shu, the neighboring areas of Ferghana were filled with alfalfa plants that its horses loved to feed on. In order to raise the horses properly, the emperor had alfalfa seeds
brought back to the capital and planted all over the fields surrounding the imperial residences. Other than this, the Bowu Zhi also mentions a variety of exotic fruits and plants introduced into China for the first time by Zhang Qian after his official expeditions to the far west via the Silk Road. Among them is the pomegranate which Li Shangyin cites in line 2.

Thus in two lines and three allusions, Li Shangyin presents the diplomatic and military glories of Han Wudi in a vivid and picturesque landscape.

According to a mythological tale in the Shizhou Ji, the immortals living on the (Island of Phoenixes and Unicorns) make a special glue by boiling the beaks of phoenixes. It is said that a western vassal state offered some such magic glue to Han Wudi as an official tribute. When Wudi went hunting one day in his imperial park, an ambassador from that state accompanying him at the time helped the emperor fix his broken bow by wetting some of the magic glue in his mouth. Thus when the poet writes, "The Imperial Gardens knew only of licking phoenix beaks," he is obviously suggesting that the emperor spends a great deal of his time hunting.

The "entourage of carriages" in line 4 refers to the royal procession which, according to the Hou Hanshu, consisted as many as eighty-one carriages. "The feathery cock banner" refers to the banner made up of colorful feathers of rare birds hung upon an imperial carriage (which the people mistakenly took to be made
up of cock feathers).\(^\text{109}\) When the poet says that the banner is no longer seen on the royal entourage, he is symbolizing the death of the emperor.

At this point, the poet moves back in time to relate other aspects of Wudi's life. Line 5 alludes to the story of Dongfang Shuo mentioned earlier.\(^\text{110}\) The focus here, however, is on the emperor's pursuit of physical immortality suggested in the special relationship between him and his favorite court jester.

In line 6, the poet alludes to an anecdote in the *Hanwu Gushi* 漢武故事. When Wudi was only a few years old, he was asked in jest if he wanted to take in a wife. The young Wudi pointed at the little daughter of a Grand Princess, saying, "If I could marry Ajiao 阿嬌, I will build a golden chamber to house her!"\(^\text{111}\) Although the story of Ajiao is just an extravagant image taken from Wudi's childhood anecdote, it does suggest the emperor's indulgence in satisfying the pleasures of his women.\(^\text{112}\)

Lines 7-8 conclude with an allusion to Su Wu 蘇武 who was sent by Wudi as an ambassador to negotiate with the Xiongnu, a nomadic people threatening the northern frontier of China. Su Wu was forcibly detained by the Xiongnu for nineteen years before he was finally released. When he returned to the Han court, Wudi had been dead for a few years.\(^\text{113}\)

On its first level, therefore, "Mao'ling" is a critical biography of Han Wudi. Since the title of the poem is Wudi's Mausoleum, the idea of his death seems to be what inspires this poem. It is possible that the piece was written when Li Shangyin
was actually passing by "Maoling," which makes this a huaigu as well as a yongshi poem. On the other hand, it could have been inspired by the death of a Tang emperor, which Li Shangyin wishes to write obliquely using the analogy of Wudi. In any case, the notion of death is touched upon half way through the poem and repeated again at the end, echoing the title of the piece, and the entire poem is structured in such a way that it is almost like a double quatrain. The first three lines suggest the military and diplomatic exploits of the emperor and comment on his fondness for hunting. The first quatrain closes on an ominous note that contrasts the pomp of the past with the omnipresent reality of death. Lines 5-6 parallel lines 1-2 by opening with glowing colors, suggesting, but not altogether endorsing, Wudi's vain religious pursuits and lavish pleasures. The seventh line undermines not only the preceding three lines, but, in fact, subverts the entire poem by introducing Su Wu as an image of Time who returns to oversee Death, as he contemplates the imperial Mausoleum, which is now no more than a desolate, forlorn monument in the rain.

Is this poem only a meditation on the vanities of life as seen in the biography of Wudi? An allegorical reading is also possible. Since the Han is a prominent era in Chinese history, it was a common practice among Tang poets to compare their own emperors to those of Han. As one of the last rulers of a declining regime, it seems hardly appropriate to compare Tang Wuzong to Han Wudi, but there are certain aspects and traits
common to those two monarchs.

Among the few emperors ruling during Li Shangyin’s time, Wuzong was the one who showed the most promise, perhaps even revitalizing the court and reasserting its power. When Wuzong came to the throne, he appointed a capable administrator, Li Deyu, as chief minister. Time and time again, he took Li’s sound advice against the views of the majority. During his reign, the Tang court managed to defuse the border tension created by Uighur settlers encroaching on its northern frontier, and in two years time, eliminated the Uighurs completely. Under Wuzong, the court also crushed the rebel forces at Zhaoyi when, after Liu Congjian’s death, Liu Zhen claimed the military governorship as his uncle’s heir, in defiance of the court’s order. The “Biography of Wuzong” in the Jiu Tangshu has this to say about his achievements: "Astute in his strategies and brave in his decisions, (Wuzong) recovered much of that royal presence lost in the past....Under him, things were restored to their proper order, and the court regained its stature." Despite his strengths and military triumphs, Wuzong had his personal weaknesses. He had a passion for hunting, to the extent that he was often absent from the court and had to be reminded of his responsibilities by his advisors. Wuzong was also a Daoist devotee, who believed in the pursuit of physical immortality. He was especially fond of the Daoist adept Zhao Guizhen 趙歸真, arranging for him and other Daoist priests to work full-time, conducting religious rituals and producing Daoist
amulets for him. It was also because of an over-indulgence in elixir drugs that Wuzong died at the age of thirty-two, only five years after he came to the throne.

Li Shangyin wrote a series of three poems with the explicit title of "Zhaosu Huangdi Wangeci" to mourn the death of Wuzong. The series is a eulogy on the emperor, praising his military achievements. Without being critical, it also laments Wuzong's death as a result of his Daoist religious pursuits.

With all this in the background, it does seem possible to interpret "Maoling" on a second level as an indirect reference to Wuzong, a critical assessment of his life as opposed to the eulogy of the "Zhaosu..." poems.

In this case, lines 1-2 refer to his military accomplishments; line 3 to his passion for hunting; line 4 to his early death; line 5 to his special treatment of Zhao Guizhen and his pursuit of Daoist immortality; line 6 to his fondness for Consort Wang and his intentions to make her Empress. The Qing critic Xu Fengyuan suggests that Su Wu in line 7 is a reference to five eminent officials of the Niu faction: Li Zongmin, Yang Sifu, Niu Sengru, Li Jue, and Cui Gong, who were demoted during the reign of Wuzong and recalled to the court when Xuanzong came to the throne. This is not too convincing, since Li was not personally close to these people nor did he particularly identify himself with the Niu faction. According to Zhang Ertian's biography of the poet, Li
had just obtained his first official post as Sub-editor of the Imperial Library during the second year of Wuzong's reign when his mother died. Li resumed office after serving three years of mourning for his mother, living away from the capital. He had barely returned to his post when, a few months later, the emperor died.123 I tend to agree with Zhang that Su Wu in line 7 is better read as a reference to Li Shangyin himself.124 In so doing, we are not only reading the poem politically on an allegorical level, but we also incorporate the poet's personal concerns into the poem, something which occurs frequently in his poetry.

In choosing to present and juxtapose appropriate allusive details from the biography of Han Wudi, Li Shangyin blends these specifics to create a critique of the emperor imagistically through suggestion and description.

Although "Maoling" might have been written as a balanced commentary on Wudi when Li Shangyin was passing by his Mausoleum, it can also be understood on another level as a mixed tribute to Wuzong, revealing the poet's complex feelings about him and the role he played as Emperor.
If the poem "Jinse" represents Li Shangyin's symbolic use of allusion at its most suggestive, the following series, "Mancheng Wuzhang" (Five Casual Pieces), certainly demonstrates his allegorical use of allusion at its most encompassing. Modelled apparently on Du Fu's "Xiwei Liu Jueju" (Six Quatrains Written in Jest), the series assumes the same frivolous title as Du's poems. Like Du Fu's sequence, however, it is actually serious and engaging, and it uses a sequence of quatrains as its unifying structure. But that is where the similarity between the two groups of poems ends. Du Fu's poems are an expression of his views on literary criticism and a proper attitude toward past and present writers. He cites a number of names from the past, not as allusions, but as examples for direct, open discussion. Li's series, on the other hand, is an autobiographical review and political commentary, expressed covertly throughout, by means of allusion.

"Five Casual Pieces"

(1)
Tailoring their verses, Shen and Song prided themselves on changing our prosody.
Putting words on paper, Wang and Yang became good friends.
At the time, I thought I had found a model in a fine master.
Today, that is all but skill in writing parallel couplets.
Li and Du are equal in their talent as writers.
The three universal strata and myriad images were revealed.
Alas, over the Immortals' Palace and the Golden Bell Palace,
The morning cock was confused with the flies.

As for bearing fine sons, the ancients had a Sun Zhengluo.
To marry off one's daughter, there is no more Wang Youjun.
Well, how could spending a whole life together amidst lutes
and books,
Be compared to one surrounded by tasseled carriages and the
regard of one-third of the empire?

North of the Dai Prefecture, leading a regiment, he
took the title of Commissioner.
East of the Pass, the minor general built his outpost.
Ignoring how he would usually be sneered at--
It pleases one to see wild rushes used on the battle front.

Councillor Guo never advocated a militant policy.
The Duke of Han meant only to keep peace on the frontiers.
Seniors from both capitals shed tears--
As they witness, in their late years, northern airs in
the Central Plain!

This series is a documentation and assessment of some of the
most important events and aspects of Li Shangyin's life. Critics
such as Feng Hao and Zhang Ertian believe that it was written in 849, during the third year of Xuanzong's reign, just after Zheng Ya and Li Deyu were demoted and exiled to Ya Zhou.

More than ten years after obtaining his jinshi degree, Li Shangyin had experienced countless personal setbacks while witnessing political turmoil in the court. The sequence starts with a review of the poet's own personal life, his aspirations and disappointments, his relationships with his patron Linghu Chu, his wife and father-in-law Wang Maoyuan, as well as other adverse forces threatening him and all those like him at the time. From the personal level, the series moves on to the political, launching an eloquent statement in defence of the policies and exceptional merits of Li Deyu, a statement which very much reflects Li Shangyin's political beliefs and ideals and his concern for the State. All these are expressed obliquely, again, through the use of allusion.

The first poem alludes to four personalities: Shen Quanqi, Song Zhiwen, Wang Bo, and Yang Jiong, all early Tang poets. Shen and Song were known to have furthered the prosodic sophistication of Qi-Liang poetry and contributed particularly to the final maturation of the seven-character quatrains and regulated verses. Wang Bo and Yang Jiong, usually named together with Luo Binwang and Lu Zhao-lin, were two of the "Four Talents of Early Tang." All four poets—Shen, Song, Wang and Yang—mentioned in Li's poem had commanded attention and praise in the early Tang. From Du
Fu's reference to the kind of criticism the "Four Talents" received, it is clear that by High Tang, these poets had already fallen into disrepute. Certainly, by the time of Li Shangyin, they were all overshadowed by the many outstanding poets who came after them.

If we consider this poem in relation to the other pieces in the series as well as the poet's personal history, Shen, Song and Wang, Yang could be likened to Li Shangyin and his patron, Linghu Chu. As mentioned earlier, Li Shangyin had, ever since his teens, prided himself of his ability to write. His fine classical prose attracted much attention when he was at Luoyang, and he was able to become friends with Linghu Chu. Li Shangyin learned from Linghu the art of writing parallel prose, the most prevalent style of official writing at the time. Since Linghu's eminent career was largely a result of his remarkable skill as a writer, Li Shangyin probably entertained hopes that the same would happen to him one day. Instead, however, he spent the rest of his life mostly outside of the court, as a junior official or secretary to some military governors. With this in the background, it is possible to understand this poem as one in which Li expresses disappointment over his own career. Although a young protege of Linghu Chu, Li Shangyin nevertheless thinks very highly of his own writing. By using the allusions of Shen, Song and Wang, Yang, he not only implies a close, friendly relationship between himself and Linghu Chu, he is also putting his own talent on the same level as his patron's. When we interpret the
allusions in the poem in the biographical context of Li Shangyin and Linghu Chu, we can recognize two possible meanings. From a writer's point of view, Li Shangyin is slighting the parallel prose as a literary form, a view which he expresses explicitly in his later years.\textsuperscript{129} From a personal point of view, the prospect of a promising career through writing parallel prose turned out to be an illusion. The poem ends, therefore, on a note of self-mockery of his early naivete and a sense of being let down by his patron. The piece recalls what Li Shangyin writes in the preface to his first prose collection:

Later, I was favored by the Yunzhou Minister (Linghu Chu) and the Governor of Huazhou (Cui Rong). When I was under their patronage, I worked on official documents and memorials, and began to master the current style of writing for ten years I lived in cold and hunger in the capital...the letters and memorials of Duke Pengyang (Linghu Chu), the poverty and chill of Fan'nan (Li himself).\textsuperscript{130}

In the second poem, Li Shangyin expresses his frustration and anger over the negative forces working against him and other talented writers. The poem alludes to Li Bo and Du Fu, the two most celebrated Tang poets. The "three universal strata" refer to "Heaven, Earth and Man" mentioned in the Classic of Change.\textsuperscript{131} Together with the "myriad images," they represent all aspects of life and phenomena. In lines 1-2, Li Shangyin suggests that Li Bo and Du Fu were so extraordinarily gifted as writers that the various aspects of universal existence are revealed through their
In line 3, the "Immortals' Palace" refers to the story of Du Fu being called in by Xuanzong for an imperial examination in which he demonstrated his ability to write. The "Golden Bell Palace," on the other hand, refers to Li Bo's first meeting, also with Xuanzong, when he was granted a special audience by the emperor in the palace. Xuanzong discussed with Li Bo matters of State, and attended to him personally. Both incidents marked the height of these two poets' careers. Using the image of the two palaces, Li Shangyin summarizes in one line the special recognition Li Bo and Du Fu received from the emperor. Despite their exceptional talents and unusual reception by Xuanzong, however, the two poets did not stay long in favor. Li Bo was ousted when Gao Lishi incited Yang Guifei to speak ill of him in front of Xuanzong. Du Fu angered Emperor Suzong when he spoke up in defense of Fang Guan, the Chief Minister, whom he believed had been unfairly demoted. The inability of the emperors to recognize real talent and good counsel is expressed in line 4 through an allusion to a poem in *The Book of Songs*, in which the buzzing of flies is mistaken for the crowing of the morning cock. The morning cock represents, therefore, Li Bo and Du Fu, while the flies stand for all the subversive forces which led to their disappearance from the court.

In an allegorical context, Li Shangyin identifies himself with Li, Du and the morning cock. He also identifies the
insidious opposition against him and those like him with the buzzing flies. Li Shangyin experienced numerous difficulties in his career because of slander, conflicts with superiors, the sheer injustice of the system, and as a victim of striving factions. His name was dropped, for example, from the list of successful candidates during the "Grand Rhetoric" examination because a senior official in the central secretariat disapproved of him, most likely because of his marriage to Wang Maoyuan's daughter; or, possibly, also because of his criticism of the eunuchs. Li also offended his superior, Sun Jian, when he lightened the verdict of several prisoners already sentenced to death. Severely reprimanded by Sun, Li held on to what he believed was just and resigned from office. These are but two of the many incidents of mistreatment and injustice Li Shangyin experienced in his life. The allusion to Li Bo and Du Fu in this poem echoes, in a way, the same sense of personal frustration, indignation and despair which permeates his poetry:

Tender leaves and sweet, tasteful shoots—newly harvested from the bamboo grove .........
How can one bear to cut down even one inch of their aspiring hearts?

Thinking that the rotten rat is a tasty treat,
They have been endlessly suspicious of the phoenix!

The days when wings and feathers are damaged.
The time when this countryside garden is quiet and desolate...
Yet such experience was certainly not unique to Li himself, but something shared by many others like him in the traditional society, under that particular system of government. It is possible that, by alluding to Li Bo and Du Fu, Li Shangyin had in mind not only himself as a comparison, but people such as Liu Fen, Yang Yuqing 杨虞卿, Li Deyu and all those whom he believed had suffered injustice and personal setbacks during his time.143

From a review of his false expectations and broken dreams, Li Shangyin moves on to his relationship with his wife and father-in-law, two other important persons in his life. The third poem alludes to two historical figures, Sun Quan 孙权 and Wang Xizhi. Sun was head of Wu, one of the three contending kingdoms at the end of the Han Dynasty. In the Biography of Sun Quan, it is said that Cao Cao thought very highly of Sun, saying at one time that if one were to bear a son, he should be brilliant like Sun Quan.144 Before establishing himself, Sun Quan was once given the title of General Taoluo (讨虏 Quelling Enemies) by Cao Cao.145 Li Shangyin changes the epithet "Taoluo" to "Zhengluo" (征虏 Conquering Enemies) here probably because it sounds better and it meets the tonal requirement of the line. The reference to "Zhengluo" also enhances the image of Sun Quan as a military man.

The second historical figure referred to in this poem is Wang Xizhi, or Wang Youjun, the famous calligrapher. According to Wang’s biography in the Jin Shu, Defender-in-Chief Xi Jian 鄧
asked his disciple to seek out a son-in-law for him at Wang Dao's place. Wang Dao invited the disciple to meet with all his sons and students whom he had gathered in one of his chambers. The disciple reported to Xi Jian later that the young men he met all looked careful and respectful, that Wang Xizhi alone was leaning casually on a couch with a bare belly and eating at the same time. Thereupon Xi Jian decided to take Wang as his son-in-law.\textsuperscript{146}

By using these two allusions, Li brings into bearing his relationship with his wife and father-in-law. He is suggesting that a son as brilliant as Sun Quan and a son-in-law as extraordinary as Wang Xizhi are both hard to find. At the same time, he is also contrasting Wang, the accomplished artist, with Sun, the outstanding militarist. A life with Wang is one surrounded by lutes and books. A life with Sun is, on the other hand, one "surrounded by tasseled carriages"—an image taken from Sun's biography.\textsuperscript{147} It is also one which commands the regard of one-third of the empire. Although Li Shangyin says in lines 1-2 that he is, in all modesty, no Sun Quan or Wang Xizhi, he is really identifying himself with Wang in line 3. There is, however, a certain ambiguity about the last two lines. Depending on how one reads these lines, one could detect two slightly different tones of voice. Recognizing perhaps both sets of values, Li may be stoically and objectively accepting the fact that, being a man of letters, it is difficult to achieve the type of glory and national acclaim of a successful military man. On the other
hand, the line could be read almost as an apology to his wife. Li is sorry for her that she should be married to a husband who, though cultivated and talented as a writer, achieves no official status and remains poverty-stricken all his life. Although Li Shangyin puts Wang Xizhi and Sun Quan together in the first couplet, and his deep sense of pride as a fine poet shows himself occasionally in his writing, he has, indeed, time and again expressed his envy and appreciation for the military man.\textsuperscript{148}

As Zhang Ertian suggests, Li’s wife came from a family of powerful and influential military background, both her father and grandfather being military governors.\textsuperscript{149} Considering the high regards Wang Maoyuan had for Li Shangyin when, just after Li obtained his jinshi degree, Wang decided to have him marry his daughter, the failure of Li to rise in his career must have been a big disappointment to his father-in-law.\textsuperscript{150} On the other hand, Li’s marriage did not help him in his career, as many might have thought. Instead, it marked a negative turning point in his life—the beginning of alienation from Linghu Tao and the uncomfortable position of being caught between the Niu and Li camps. From a practical point of view, Li’s marriage was an obstacle to his political career. From a personal point of view, however, it was most comforting and supportive.\textsuperscript{151} The allusions Li uses in the poem, together with the tone of voice in the last two lines certainly express the complex feelings he has toward his wife and father-in-law.

A reference to the military man serves as a transition to
General Shi Xiong 石雄 and the military strategies of Li Deyu in the two final poems of the series. Because of the connection between Wang Maoyuan and Li Deyu, this shift from Wang to Li is also a natural one. From his personal concerns, Li Shangyin moves on to the accomplishments of Li Deyu and the political issues of the day.

The "Dai Prefecture" in Poem 3 is around present-day northern Shanxi Province. Line 1 refers to Shi Xiong's military success in crushing the Uighurs in that area during the reign of Wuzong. Leading his own selected calvary, Shi swept away the Uighurs in one swift battle and recovered the land they had occupied for several years. Shi was promoted to the position of Chief Defense Commissioner as a result of this military triumph. "East of the Pass" in line 2 probably refers to Zezhou 漳州 and Luzhou 潮州, to the east of Hangu Pass 汉谷關. When Liu Zhen defied the court and tried to succeed his uncle as military governor of Zhaoyi, Shi Xiong was again instrumental in crushing Liu's forces and bringing the Zhaoyi Incident to a close. He was promoted several times, from his position as Tiande's Chief Defense Commissioner 天德防禦使 to, eventually, that of a mobile-brigade governor at Jin Xiang 晋絳節度使. As a minor general of humble origin from Xuzhou , Shi Xiong was finally able to build his own outpost as a military governor.

The "wild rushes" in line 4 echoes a textual reference in Han Shu in which Cai Yi 蔡義 says that he was just "someone
from the wild rushes of Shandong. Line 4 suggests, therefore, that Shi Xiong came from a humble background. Since it was Li Deyu who used Shi Xiong in the battle against the Uighurs and the one against Liu Zhen, lines 3-4 applaud Li Deyu for his ability to recognize and to use an especially capable person against all social opinion about his lowly origin. Since Li Shangyin did not come from a prominent family, he naturally appreciates someone like Li Deyu whom he sees could promote a special talent regardless of his background.

Before we analyze the last poem, it is important to bear in mind that there are two levels of allusion running through this series of poems. The first level is the use of individual references—historical figures and events—as metaphors for comparison. The second level involves hidden allusions to the poet's own context and recent events in his life, what I have classified, after Earl Miner, as "personal and topical allusions." In the final poem of this series, it is the immediate political context that is being alluded to. It is important that we have a clear understanding of that background in order to make full sense of the poem.

In this particular piece, Li Shangyin further applauds Li Deyu and his ministerial record. The time Li Shangyin wrote this series Li Deyu had just been demoted to remote Yazhou. Apparently, he was being severely criticized in the court for mishandling many political situations, especially those involving frontier regions.
The first of such incidents took place in 831 under the reign of Wenzong. Xi Damou, a Tibetan General at Weizhou, offered to surrender his city to Tang by bringing his people to Chengdu. Li Deyu sent some troops into Weizhou and asked for the court's instructions. Niu Sengru, his political adversary, objected strongly to the move on the ground that the court had just made peace with Tibet. To appease Tibet, the court ordered Li to return Weizhou. Xi Damou as well as the Tibetan troops and civilians who had already surrendered to Tang were all sent back to Tibet, where they were brutally tortured and killed. According to Li Deyu's argument at the time, Weizhou, situated on high land with river on three sides, commanded a very strategic position between Szechuan and Tibet. During Dezong's time, the court had in fact tried for years but failed eventually to capture Weizhou. If Tang should take control of this city, many neighboring peoples would gladly make peace and pay tribute to Tang instead of having to constantly fight the Tibetans. Accepting Xi Damou's offer would mean not only a territorial gain for China at no effort, but long term peace and strategic control in the area.

The second series of events occurred between the reigns of Wenzong and Wuzong. One of the subject peoples of the Uighurs, the Qirqiz, swept down from their own base in southern Siberia and chased the Uighurs out of their capital, killing their qaghan. A large group of Uighur survivors fled south to settle along the northern frontier of China. While the Tang Commissioner
in that area asked for an order from the court to wage war and members of the court all supported that, Li Deyu alone pleaded tolerance and self-control. Instead, Li released the tension at the border by ordering gifts of food and clothing to the Uighurs, at the same time reinforcing fortresses and rebuilding the Tang troops. It was only a year later, after some civil strife among the Uighurs which led to their occupation of Shuozhou that Li Deyu decided to launch a counter-attack.

Since Xuanzong succeeded the throne in 847 and brought back to the court members of the Niu faction, Li Deyu was stripped of his position as Chief Minister and demoted. Senior officials such as Bai Minzhong, Linghu Tao and Cui Xuan, motivated largely by personal and factional animosities, attacked Li Deyu’s political records. Even ten years later, the court still echoed the same criticism directed against Li Deyu: "The Uighurs have served us well, and have, for generations, been linked to us through marriage. They pay us tribute and keep our northern frontier peaceful. During the era of Wuzong, because of civil strife, their qaghan had to flee. At that time, a vile minister was in control and decided to launch his massacres." In any case, Li Deyu was exiled to Yazhou in 849, where he died one year later.

Li Shangyin had always thought highly of Li Deyu and commended his extraordinary skill in managing the political situations during Wuzong’s era. When he thought Li Deyu was mistreated and wrongfully assessed for what he had done, Li
Shangyin decided to vindicate him. To write a very forceful defense of Li Deyu at a time when it was quite unpopular, perhaps even dangerous to do so, Li managed to express his critical opinions behind the protective shield of allusion.

Two recent historical figures are alluded to in this poem. Councillor Guo in line 1 refers to Guo Ziyi, the eminent general during the reigns of Xuanzong and Suzong. Duke of Han in line 2 refers to Zhang Renyuan, who served under Zhongzong. Guo Ziyi was, of course, known for his achievement in destroying the forces of Shi Siming and saving Tang from the An Lushan Rebellion. During the years of Suzong and Daizong, time and time again, he rescued the court from the imminent attacks of the Uighurs and Tibetans, not by fierce counter-attacks but by clever strategies and diplomatic persuasion. Hence Li Shangyin's comment that he "never advocated a militant policy." As for Zhang Renyuan, he was sent by Zhongzong to deal with the problems of the Turks who constantly came south to loot in the Shuofang region. Taking advantage of the Turks' massive attack on a western neighbor, Zhang sent troops in to their area north of the Yellow River. Building three strategic fortresses there in sixty days, he managed to cut off permanently the Turks' access into Chinese territories down the river. Thus all of Zhang (Duke of Han)'s maneuverings were "meant only to keep peace on the frontiers."

When Li Shangyin cites the examples of Guo Ziyi and Zhang
Renyuan, two prominent and well-respected generals in earlier Tang, he is suggesting that Li Deyu's strategies with the Tibetans and the Uighurs were in fact no different from those of Guo and Zhang. Whether he was accepting the peaceful surrender of Weizhou, or fighting a fierce battle with the Uighurs at Shuozhou after tolerating them for several years at the border, his ultimate intention was to maintain a peaceful, but strong foreign policy, to the best interest of the people of Tang.

Another event in 849 served as an immediate background to this poem. Because of internal problems and pressures from the conquered local Chinese, Tibet voluntarily returned to Tang several Chinese prefectures in the He-Huang region, which the Tibetans had occupied since after the An Lushan Rebellion. Chinese soldiers and civilians in these areas were able to live under Tang jurisdiction once again. The court considered this such a victory on their part and decided to confer special posthumous titles to two emperors to mark the occasion. As the court rejoiced over this event, Li Shangyin's poem reminds them subtly that recovery of the He-Huang area was actually long overdue. In fact, if Li Deyu's earlier suggestion to launch a military campaign (right after Shi Xiong's defeat of the Uighurs, at a time when the Tibetans were distracted by civil wars) had been followed, the people from both capitals of China would not have had to wait all these years for Chinese ways of life to return to these areas.

By using the most appropriate allusions in a sequence of
structured quatrains, Li Shangyin conveys successfully in five short lyrics some of his most deeply-felt feelings and critical views. The first part of the series touches upon two major turning points which defined the course of the rest of his life. It also expresses his sense of frustration and outrage over the forces of corruption symbolized by the buzzing flies. Poem 3 serves as a transition from more private, to larger, political issues, moving from a discussion of his own lack of accomplishment as a man of letters to the success of General Shi Xiong and Li De Yu.

Although there are those who take Li's title more literally, thinking that the poems are casually and incoherently pieced together because they incorporate both personal and public concerns, I tend to agree with several Qing critics that this is really the most encompassing autobiographical piece in Li Shangyin's collection. I believe that personal and public concerns are intricately bound in Li Shangyin, so much so that they are but two different manifestations of the same thing. For Li, (perhaps not untypical of traditional Chinese intellectuals), his lifelong quest for a successful personal career is, at the same time, an aspiration to serve the State. His needs to see his life fulfilled are the same as his desire to see his country prosper. While personally frustrated by the adversity confronting him, he also laments the injustice done to a fine talent such as Li De Yu. Even when his own career languished, he still continued to fulfill his duty as a political critic through his
poetry. His concerns over political issues are but an extension of his personal aspirations.

The allusions in this series succeed in blending these two most important aspects of Li Shangyin's life: the public and the personal. The continued reference to historical figures—figures such as Li Bo, Du Fu, Guo Ziyi and Zhang Renyuan—not only makes use of the allusions metaphorically, in the larger perspective of the entire sequence it also creates a connection between the historical figures, Li Shangyin (the speaker of the poem) and Li's contemporaries, (particular that of Li Deyu and Shi Xiong) who are all part of the poem's context. The injustice experienced by Li Bo, Du Fu is, for example, seen to be shared both by Li Shangyin and Li Deyu. The recognition gained by Guo Ziyi and Zhang Renyuan is, however, not part of Li Deyu's ultimate destiny. The allusions provide an interconnecting effect which ties individuals, past and present, together in a network of shared experience. It also gives Li Shangyin's biography a larger and more universal significance.

Through his skillful use of allusion, Li Shangyin also conveys a complex of emotions ranging over pride, envy, frustration, disappointment and indignation, responses so intricately mixed that they would be inexpressible in plain language.

Although many critics have tried to explain "Jinse" by matching its allusions to various events and relationships in Li Shangyin's life, it is really this particular series which should be read against his biography. While "Jinse" expresses the
essence of Li's experience powerfully through the symbolic use of allusions, "Mancheng Wuzhang" demonstrates his allegorical use of allusion at its most encompassing.
Chapter V
Conclusion

Li Shangyin's poetry has long been recognized as allusive. Because critics usually view allusion as only a technical, rhetorical device and, indeed, frown at the heavy use allusion, they have overlooked the vital role allusion plays in shaping his poetry. In constructing a theoretical framework for my investigation of Li Shangyin's use of allusion, I have brought together the few previous studies on allusion. Built on these foundations, I have developed a broader awareness of the implications of the use of allusion, examined its concept as extended metaphor and evolved a systematic approach to reading allusive texts.

Because of his all pervasive and organic use of allusion, Li creates his own mode by taking the use of allusion to its extreme. His poetry can, for this reason, be truly called the poetry of allusion. While most other poets use allusion metaphorically, to serve a local function, Li's allusions are often the very structure, substance and implied narrative of his poems. They are both the form and the content of his works, the very architecture of his poetry. By forging the allusions together with subtle artistry, he creates the substance of his poems. We see in "Emerald Walls" how the entire mini-drama is staged by the piecing together of allusive images which implies a setting, sketches the characters, provides a temporal and narrative move-
ment by juxtaposing the various dramatic situations suggested by the use of allusions. Again, in "Peonies," each one of the allusive lines in the poem does not say anything about the flowers. Put together, however, and unified by the title, the pieces give shape and become organic parts which create a larger, global meaning. Just as one cannot separate the shape of a building from the building itself, Li Shangyin's allusion is much more an internalized and core element in his poetry than that of any other poet. It is not a mere technical resource, but a mode of perception and expression central to his poetry.

Because Li Shangyin does not explain his allusions but simply juxtapose them side by side, leaving them to interact on their own, or rather, inviting his reader to make the necessary connections (at most with one or two guiding words), he is using imagistic language in its most distilled form. Chinese poetry is by nature already particularly 'imagistic,' generating rich meanings by implicit analogy and contrast through the juxtaposition of images. Li Shangyin further heightens this effect by putting together not only successive simple images, but composite, allusive ones. Sometimes, at his most rarefied, and assimilating some of Li He's technique of combining the strange and the incompatible, Li Shangyin turns out poems made up of bizarre, private and disjunctive images—images which, because they are also allusive, make heavy demands on his reader, both intuitively and intellectually.

Another important aspect of Li Shangyin's allusion is his
deliberate use of it as Mask. While most poets use allusion to express themselves with greater subtlety, to give their expressions, so to speak, a metaphorical turn, the majority of poets do try to make their hidden meanings understood, either by supplying them with connectives, comments, or explicit titles. Few would deliberately conceal to the extent that Li Shangyin does. Li's profuse and elliptical use of allusive images, his wuti 無題 and pseudo wuti titles, his writing in the daizeng 代贈, daida 代答, niyi 擬意 and yongwu 詠物 modes all contribute to a uniquely periphrastic and ambiguous style of poetry.

All this, however, also explains one fascinating and positive aspect—the very richness of Li's poetry. Of all Chinese poets, one can say Li Shangyin generates the greatest abundance of meanings in his poetry. We have seen how his "Five Casual Pieces" create, through his use of allusion, the most encompassing allegorical meanings, connecting his public and personal lives, giving them a greater significance by linking them with other historical personalities. It also communicates his complex emotional responses to various people in his life. His "Intricately-Painted Zither," too, expresses what is essentially ineffable, and achieves the most powerful symbolic effects through the use of allusion. I have explained how the heavy use of allusion usually generates allegorical and symbolic meanings, and how Li Shangyin's poetry is typically plurisignative. Often, a single poem (as we have demonstrated in "Chang E," "The Jade Pool" and other lyrics) yields meanings on all three levels--
literal, allegorical and symbolic. On the allegorical level, there can also be more than one possible reading.

By developing an approach to reading allusion, I have arrived at some useful criteria for discriminating the various levels on which we could read Li’s poetry. This is important in determining whether a poem should be read allegorically, just allegorically, or that it may also have symbolic meanings. Because of the "other-directed" nature of allusion, Li Shangyin’s heavy, disjunctive and deliberately obscure use of it, his poetry creates the most difficulty when it is read allegorically. Whatever interpretation(s) one may offer for a poem, the reading(s), I maintain, must be consistent, coherent and complete.

Since traditional critics have oversubscribed to allegorical interpretations, my study emphasizes the symbolic reading of Li’s poetry. It shows that not only can allusions function on that level within individual poems, but the recurrent use of allusive images also create strong symbolic meanings in the context of Li’s entire collected poems. Without subscribing to any exclusive school of interpretation, I have instead emphasized and demonstrated the plurisignative nature of Li Shangyin’s poetry as a result of his use of allusion. The study provides a comprehensive approach to Li’s works which includes rather than excludes the various possible readings.

When we question why we must re-evaluate Li Shangyin’s work in our modern critical context, we find that the sources of our satisfaction in reading him include those qualities that modern
criticism has taught us to prize in poetry. Our study of Li Shangyin's use of allusion illuminates many of these qualities. It highlights and explains its tension, paradox, its textural density, its plurisignation and indirect mode of expression—in short the very stylistic features which led to the modern revival of interest in the metaphysical, the baroque, and the continued response to symbolist poetry.
APPENDIX (I)

Li Shangyin: A Chronology

813 Emperor Xianzong's reign. Born in Huojia County (in present-day Henan Province).

Han Yu is 45, Bai Juyi is 41, Li He is 22, Du Mu is 10 and Wen Tingyun is 1 year old.

814 Father Li Si appointed staff under Meng Jian, Prefect of Yuezhou (present-day Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province).

Li Ji continues to serve for some seven years, moving between eastern and western Zhejiang.

820 Xianzong murdered by eunuchs. Muzong succeeds him, with the support of the eunuchs.

821 Li Shangyin is eight years old.

Li's father dies. Mother takes the family back to Zhengzhou (in modern day Henan Province) where the Lis have lived since grandfather moved from Henei (also in modern day Henan).

Beginning of the Niu-Li Factional Strife.

823 The family moves to Luoyang, the eastern capital of Tang.

824 Muzong dies from elixir drugs. Jingzong succeeds him at the age of 16.

826 Jingzong killed by eunuchs and palace guards. Wenzong succeeds the throne.

829 At sixteen, becoming known in Luoyang for his fine classical prose. Meets Linghu Chu.
Works as Inspector, a junior staff under Linghu Chu, then military governor of Tianping Region (in modern day Shandong Province).

Niu-Li Factional Strife grows more intense.

Li Shangyin sits for his first civil examination at Chang'an.

Works as secretary to Cui Rong, who has just been appointed Commissioner of Yanzhou and Haizhou (present-day Shandong and Jiangsu Province).

Cui Rong dies. Li sits for civil service examination for the second time and fails again.

Returns to Zhengzhou.

"Sweet Dew Incident."

Probably meets Liu Zhi this year.

Probably studies Daoism at Mt. Yuyang during these few years.

Li works under Linghu Chu again.

Li passes the civil service examination.

Linghu Chu dies at Xingyuan (in present-day Shaanxi province).

Joins the staff of Wang Maoyuan, military governor of Jing and Yuan (modern day Gansu province).

MARRIES WANG MAOYUAN'S DAUGHTER.

Presents himself at the Ministry of Civil Office for selection but fails the "Grand Rhetoric" examination.

Appointed Collator in the Imperial Library.
Transferred soon to Hongnong (in modern day Henan province) to be the District Sheriff.

840
Wenzong dies of ill health. Wuzong succeeds him.
Li resigns from office because of conflict with superior.
Travels south to the Yangtze Region under the invitation of Yang Sifu, Commissioner of Hunan.

842
Passes the "Outstanding Talent" examination.
Appointed Sub-editor of the Imperial Library.
Mother dies.
The court sends expeditions to crush the Uighurs on the frontiers.

843
Liu Congjian, military governor of Zhaoyi, dies. His nephew Liu Zhen claims hereditary title. The court sends troops to crush Liu's forces.
Wang Maoyuan dies.

844
Li conducts several family burials.
Moves family to Yongle District (Shaanxi province) to resume mourning for his mother.

845
Returns to Luoyang. Resumes office as Sub-editor of Imperial Library.

846
Wuzong dies from elixir drugs. Xuanzong succeeds him.
Li's son is born.

847
Li follows Zheng Ya, newly appointed Commissioner for Guiguan and Prefect of Guizhou (in present-day Guilin, Guangxi province).
Li works as clerk with honorary title of Secretary in the Department of Waterways, Ministry of Works.
Compiles the first collection of his prose work, *Fan'nan Wenji*.

848

Zheng Ya demoted. Li loses his post. Li Deyu 李德裕 exiled to Yazhou 岳州.

Visits Li Hui 李回 and stays with him briefly at Tanzhou 潭州. Failing to secure a position there, returns to Chang'an.

849

Returns to Chang'an. Appointed Sheriff to Zhouzhi in the metropolitan area, a demotion from his previous position.

Joins the staff of Lu Hongzheng 邱弘正, military governor of Wuning Region with headquarters in Xuzhou 徐州 (Jiangsu province). Li serves post of supervisor with nominal title of Imperial Censor.

851

Linghu Tao made Chief Minister, with concurrent title of Under-Secretary of Central Secretariat.

Lu Hongzheng dies. Li leaves Xuzhou to return to the capital.

Appointed at University College, with the help of Linghu Tao. Li's wife dies.

Li joins staff of Liu Zhongying 柳仲郢, military governor of Eastern Szechuan. Li serves with honorary title of Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Works.

853

Compiles the second edition of his prose works.

854

Dabbles in Buddhist practices.

856

Follows Liu Zhongying back to the capital. Liu secures for him the post of Salt and Iron Assessor.

857

Travels to the lower Yangtze River region.

858

Loses his position as Salt and Iron Assessor.

Returns to Zhengzhou. Dies at 45 of ill health.
APPENDIX (II)

Chinese Texts of Poems Cited in Full

<齊宮詞>  "Lyric On Qi Palace" (p. 73)

<北齊二首> (pp. 74-5)

(1) 一笑相傾國便亡，何勞荆棘始堪傷．
小憐玉体横陳夜，已報周師入晋陽．

(2) 巧笑知堪敌萬機，傾城最在著戎衣．
晉陽已臨休迥顧，更請君王獵一圍．
<舊將軍>(p. 76)
雲臺高議正紛紛，誰定當時蕩寇勳。
日暮灞陵原上獵，李將軍是舊將軍。

<賞生>(p. 78)
宣室求賢訪逐臣，賞生才調更無倫。
可憐夜半虛前席，不問蒼生問鬼神。

<梓潼望長卿山至巴西復懷詠秀>(p. 83)
梓潼不見馬相如，更欲南行問酒籠。
行到巴西見詠秀，巴西惟是有寒燕。
<華清宮>
（p. 86）
朝元宮迴羽衣新，首按昭陽第一人。
當日不來高處舞，可能天下有胡塵。

<馬嵬二首>之（三）（p. 86）
海外徒聞更九州，他生未卜此生休。
空闻虎旅鳴宵柝，無復鴉人報曉鴦。
此日六軍同駕馬，當時七夕笑牽牛。
如何四紀為天子，不及盧家有莫愁。
<房君珊瑚散> (p. 92)
不見嫦娥影，請秋守月輪，
月中秋桂四，桂子搗成塵。

<霜月> (p. 92)
初聞征雁已難蝉，百尺樓南水接天，
青女素娥俱耐冷，月中霜里閨婵娟。

<玉山> (pp. 94-5)
玉山高有風鈞齊，玉水清流不貯泥，
何處更求回日駘，此中兼有上天梯。
珠客百斛欒休睡，桐拂千尋鳳要棲。
聞道神仙有才子，赤巖吹罢好相携。
<同学彭道士参寥> (p. 101)
莫羡仙家有上真，仙家暂谪永千春。
月中桂树高多少，试问西河斫树人。

<乱石> (p. 105)
征路就尊行复横，星光渐减雨痕生。
更须停礙东西路，哭殫疑从阮步兵。

<嫦娥> (p. 108)
云母屏风透影落，长河渐落晓星沉。
嫦娥应悔偷灵药，碧海青天夜夜心。
<重女祠>  (p. 114)

昔邁逢仙跡，茫然涕若途。
何年歸碧落，此路向皇都。
消息期青雀，逢迎異紫姑。
腸廻楚國夢，心斷漢宮巫。
從騎列寒竹，行車陰白榆。
星娥一去後，月姊更來無。
寡鶴迷荒墳，羈凰怨翠梧。
惟應碧桃下，方朔是狂夫。
東有青龍西白虎，中含福星包世度，
玉壟渭水笑清潭，編天不到牽牛處，
麒麟驕雲高馬鳴，牛山殞碎珊瑚聲。
秋蛾點點不成淚，十二玉樓若故釘，
推煙唾月拋千里，十番紅樹一一行死，
白楊別屋鬼迷人，空留暗記如蠟紙。
日暮向風牽短絃，血凝血散今誰是。
<丹邱>（p. 142）

青女宁零售夜雾，义和辛苦送朝陽。
丹邱万里失消息，幾对梧桐憶鳯凰。

<鈞天>（p. 143）

上帝鈞天會眾美，昔人因夢到青冥。
伶倫吹裂孤生竹，却為知音不得听。

<寄遠>（p. 145）

姮娥持药玄时已，玉女授巋未肯休。
何日桑田俱变3，不教伊水向东流。
<破鏡> (p. 146)

玉匣清光不復持，菱花散亂月輪虧。
秦台一照山鶴後，便是孤鷓冑舞時。

<青陵台> (p. 148)

青陵臺畔日光斜，萬古此魂倚暮霞。
莫訝韓憑為蛻蛺，等閒飛上別枝花。

<代魏宮私贈> (p. 150)

未時西館阻佳期，去後漳河隔夢思。
知有宓妃無限意，春松秋菊可同時。
<代元城吳令暗為答> (p. 150)

背闌歸蕩路欲分，水邊風日畔西塵。荆王枕上元無夢，莫枉陽台一片雲。

<北齊二首>之二 (p. 153)

巧笑知堪敵萬機。傾城最在著戎衣。晋陽已隔休遊顧，更請君王獵一圍。

<龍池> (p. 154)

龍池賜酒敞雲屏，羯鼓聲高羣樂停。夜半宴歸宮漏永，薛王沉醉帝王醒。
<謝書>  (p. 157)
徵意何曾有一毫，空攜筆硯奉龍轡，
自蒙半夜傳衣後，不羡王祥得佩刀。

<錦瑟>  (p. 163)
錦瑟無端五十弦，一弦一柱思華年。
莊生曉夢迷蝴蝶，望帝春心托杜鵑。
滄海月明珠有淚，藍田日暖玉生烟。
此情可待成追憶，只是當時已惘然。
<碧城三首> (pp. 176-7)

(一) 碧城十二曲阑干，犀辟犀蹙绣衣寒。
阁花有香多附鹤，女妆云树不栖莺。
星沉海底当窗见，雨过河源隔座看。
若是晓珠明又定，一生长对水精盘。

(二) 对影闻声已可憐，玉池荷叶正田田。
不逢箫史休回首，莫见洪崖又拍肩。
紫凤放娇衔楚佩，赤麟狂舞揭湘弦。
鄂君悽望舟中夜，缕被焚香独自眠。
(三) 七夕未完先有期，洞房中年至今垂．
玉轮照水初生魄，铁网珊瑚未有枝．
检点神方教驻景，收将凤纸写相思．
武皇内传分明在，莫道人间终不知．

<瑶池> （p. 197）
瑶池阿母绮窗开，黄竹歌声动地哀．
八骏日行三万里，穆王何事不重来．

<牡丹> （pp. 202-3）
锦帐初卷衡衣人，绣被鸠雏越鄂君．
垂手乱翻彤玉佩，折腰争舞鬬金裙．
石家蜡烛何曾剪，荀令香爐可待薰．
我是梦中傅彩笔，欲写花叶寄朝云．
〈茂陵〉
(p. 210)

汉家天马出蒲梢，苜蓿榴花偏近郊。
内苑只知含凤箫，属车去复插鸡翘。
玉步偷得憀于朝，金屋修成贮阿娇。
料料苏卿老归国，茂陵松柏雨萧萧。

〈漫成五章〉
(pp. 218-9)

(一) 李杜操持事略齐，才杰万象共驰逐。
　当时自谓宗师妙，今日惟观属对能。

(二) 沈宋裁辞矜麦秀，王杨落笔得良朋。
　当时自谓宗师妙，今日惟观属对能。
(三) 生兒古有孫征虞，嫁女今無王右軍。惜聞琴書終一世，何如擧蓋仰三分。

(四) 代北偏師銜使節，關東裨將建行台。不妨常日饒輕薄，且喜臨戎用草萊。

(五) 郭令素心非黽武，韓公本意在和戎。兩都耆舊偏垂淚，臨老中原見朔風。
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMX</td>
<td>Li Yishan Shiji Jianzhu (Cheng Mengxing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>李義山詩集箋注 (程夢星)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FH</td>
<td>Yuxisheng Shiji Jianzhu (Feng Hao)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>王轍生詩集箋注 (馮浩)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QF</td>
<td>Yuxisheng Shiyi (Qu Fu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>王轍生詩意 (岳復)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHS</td>
<td>Li Yishan Shiji Jiping (Shen Houshuang)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>李義山詩集輯評 (沈厚煇)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZET</td>
<td>Yuxisheng Nianpu Huijian (Zhang Ertian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>王轍生年譜會箋 (張爾田)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZHL</td>
<td>Li Shangyin Shiji (Zhu Heling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>李商隱詩集 (朱鶴齡)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJXS</td>
<td>Biji Xiaoshuo Daguan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>笔記小說大觀</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNBB</td>
<td>Fan’nan Wenji Bubian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>樊南文集補編</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNWJ</td>
<td>Fan’nan Wenji Xiangzhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>樊南文集詳注</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HJAS</td>
<td><em>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEPP</td>
<td><em>Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td><em>Jiu Tangshu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JXS</td>
<td><em>Jiu Xiaoshuo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBCK</td>
<td><em>Sibu Congkan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGJJ</td>
<td><em>Li Shangyin Shige Jijie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKQS</td>
<td><em>Siku Quanshu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCXS</td>
<td><em>Wuchao Xiaoshuo Daguan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XTS</td>
<td><em>Xin Tangshu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZTJ</td>
<td><em>Zizhi Tongjian</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES: CHAPTER I

1. For a chronology on Li Shangyin's life, see Appendix (I). My chronology is based largely on Zhang Ertian's *Yuxisheng Nianpu Huijian* (henceforth ZET) (rpt. Taiwan: Zhonghua Press, 1979). For more sources on Li Shangyin's biography, please see the first footnote to Chapter III. The year of Li's birth has been variously dated. Although Zhang Ertian dates it 812, I find Cen Zhongmian's 813 more convincing. See Cen Zhongmian, *Yuxisheng Nianpu Huijian Pingzhi*, collected in ZET, pp. 218-21.

The two major "schools of interpretation" concern the reading of most elusive pieces:

a) as appeals to Li's patrons, or potential patrons, especially to Linghu Tao, Wu Qiao, Feng Hao, and Zhang Ertian are inclined to adopt this view.

b) as concealed reference to illicit liaisons between Li and some Daoist nuns or palace ladies. Su Xuelin, Chen Yixin, and Ge Xiaoyin represent this view.

Another common interpretation involves the reading of these poems as satires on court politics, on the Tang emperors' pursuit of immortal lives, on the undisciplined love life of princesses, etc. Cheng Mengxing, Gu Yiqun, and Su Zhentao generally subscribe to these interpretations.


Also see Weng Fanggang Shizhou Shihua Congshu Jicheng Chubian ed.), juan 2, 29.


5. He Zhuo, Yimen Dushu Ji, quoted in Feng Hao, Yuxisheng Shiji Jianzhu, quoted


7. FH, p. 819.


9. Li Fu 李涪, quoted in introductory note, CMX, 5a, p. 37.

10. ZHL, p. 8.


12. Li Shangyin never collected his own poetry, nor did others do so for him soon after his death. By the end of the Tang Dynasty, therefore, his poems were scattered and many were lost. A sudden surge of interest in his writing during the early Song prompted an effort to recover his works. More than 400 poems were gathered during this period, and over the years another two hundred or so poems were added to the corpus, some of them of doubtful authenticity.

13. By "non-realistic," I am referring to the possibility of "allegorical" and "symbolic" meanings. For a discussion on these two levels of meaning, see pp. 35-8.

14. For a definition of "generic" and "stylistic" allusions, refer to p. 27.
Some poems with titles reminiscent of Qiliang poetry are:
"Qiliang Qingyun" (Qiliang Clear Clouds), "Youxiao Jiangnanqu" (Another Imitation of a Jiangnan Melody), "Dai Yuegongfangji Chao Xugongzhu" (Chiding Princess Xu On Behalf of a Song Girl from Yuegong's Household) and "Xiao Xulingti Zeng Gengyi" (A Poem for a Lady-in-Waiting, After the Style of Xuling).

Some poems showing a conscious imitation of Du Fu are:
"Xingci Xijiao Zuoibai Yun" (One Hundred Rhymes Written While Travelling in the Western Suburb), "Jingluo" (Jingluo), "Choubi Yi" (The Choubi Station), "Shou'an Gongzhu Chuxiang" (On Princess Shou'an's Exile Marriage) and "Chong Yougan" (More Thoughts Written After a Special Event).

Some poems showing a conscious imitation of Li He are:
"Haishang Yao" (Ballad of the Sea), "Shaoxiang Qu" (Song of Incense-Burning), "Bicheng" (Emerald Walls), "Jingyang Gongjing Shuangtong" (The Two wutong Trees by the Jingyang Palace Well).

Some poems showing a conscious imitation of Han Yu are:
"Hanbei" (The Memorial Inscription by Han Yu) and
"Li Xuan Suowei Huasongshi Shu Liangzhi De Sishiyi Yun" （Forty-one Rhymes Written After Receiving a Painting and a Poem On a Pine Tree from Li Xuan).

16. For a definition of "metaphorical allusions," see p. 27.

17. The Xikun poets are a group of early Song poets who consciously emulated the manner of Li Shangyin's poetry. Led by Yang Yi, Liu Kun, and Qian Weiyan, these poets had their works compiled into an anthology known as Xikun Chaochangji. Lacking the emotional depths and creative imagination of Li Shangyin, what they could produce in their imitations are but largely the external trappings of Li Shangyin. It is unfortunate that their poetry has come to be associated with his name; and in this case, even mistakenly equated with his works.


19. For my analysis of this poem, see Chapter IV, pp. 163-75.


21. According to the bibliographic note in the Siku Quanshu Catalogue, two Ming scholars, Liu Ke and Zhang Wensi, were the first to annotate the poetry of Li Shangyin, followed at the end of the Ming period, by
the monk Daoyuan, but these editions are no
longer extant. The earliest surviving annotated version of
Li’s poetry is one by the early Qing scholar Zhu Heling, apparently built on Daoyuan’s. Zhu questioned the
historians’ traditional moral judgement on Li Shangyin and their interpretation of his poetry and was the first to
suggest an allegorical reading of Li’s works. After Zhu,
a number of scholars have supplied a commentary on Li’s poetry: Cheng Mengxing, Yao Peiqian, Qu Fu, He Zhuo, Zhu Yizun, and Ji Yun. They have
all contributed to our understanding of Li Shangyin. Based
on Zhu Heling’s version, while drawing upon all other
previous editions available to him, the late Qing scholar
Feng Hao produced the most comprehensive and copiously
annotated edition of Li Shangyin’s poetry under the title of
Yuxisheng Shiji Jianzhu, where he also identified all the variant readings found in the
different versions of Li’s poems.
22. Liang Qichao, Zhongguo Yunwennei Suo Biaoxiande Qinggan, in Yinbingshi Wenji (Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1926), juan 71, p. 38.
25. Fan Xiwen 范晞文, *Duichuang Yeyu 對床夜語* (Congshu Jicheng ed.), *juan* 4, pp. 30-1.


This comment was intended to describe Li's practice when writing parallel prose. Since Wang Shizhen mistook it to refer to Li's habit in writing poetry, critics have at large spoken of the allusiveness of Li's poetry in a similar manner.

27. FH, p. 828.


30. For a discussion of traditional critical attitude toward allusiveness in poetry, see pp. 41-4.

31. By this, I mean the stringing together of allusions in a way analogous to the "collage" technique in painting. Sometimes, an entire poem is made up of lines containing one or more allusions suggested by the title or the theme, the allusions being discrete and failing to fuse together into a unified poem. Poems such as "Xixue" and "Renri Jishi" have been heavily criticized for this reason. There are, however, other poems which successfully employ similar techniques. A very good example is the poem "Mudan" (Peonies).
32. FH, p. 248 and p. 660.

33. Ibid., p. 383 and p. 609.

34. Li's memorable, non-allusive pieces are mostly quatrains. Examples are: "Yeyu Jibei" 夜雨寄北 (Letter to Send North on a Rainy Night), "Duanju" 端居 (The Average Day), "Muqiu Duyou Qujiang" 暮秋獨遊曲江 (A Visit to the Meandering Stream Alone in Late Autumn) "Leyou Yuan" 樂遊原 (The Leyou Height), "Huaxia Zui" 花下醉 (Drunk Under the Flowers) and "Xingci Xijiao Zuo Yibai Yun." 行次西郊作百韻 Li's yongwu pieces are relatively unallusive, yet yongwu as a genre exploits fully the idea of suggestion. These poems are full of concealed references, a technique which produces effects similar to the use of metaphorical allusions.

35. So far, I have only been able to locate three articles which deal exclusively with Li Shangyin's use of allusion. Please refer to the article titles cited in the Bibliography under "On Allusion." Other critics such as James Liu, Wu Tiaogong 吳調公 and Zhang Shuxiang 張淑香 who have written on Li Shangyin have all dealt with his use of allusion briefly in their discussions. On the whole, all of Li's critics treat his allusion as just a rather frequent poetic device. No one has yet discussed his allusions in relation to his major motifs, as an important stylistic factor in his poetry, and as a central element of his poetics.
CHAPTER II


2. Ibid., p. 4.


Cited in Lattimore, p. 411.


7. The idea of achieving immortality through writing is a

8. Lattimore, p. 412.

9. Hugh Baker, in his study of the Chinese kinship system, points out an underlying assumption in Chinese thinking on the family which he calls a "Continuum of Descent."

Descent is, according to Baker, "a unity, a rope which began somewhere back in the remote past, and which stretches on to the infinite future....the individual alive now is the manifestation of his whole Continuum of Descent. His existence as an individual is necessary but insignificant beside his existence as the representative of the whole."


10. See the biography of Wang Xizhi, in Jinshu (Beijing: Zhonghua Press, 1974), juan 80, p. 2099.


15. Lattimore, p. 407.


The Bibliography provides a good, relatively comprehensive list of books and articles on or related to the subject of allusion in English and American Literature. Other entries include works on French, Italian, Scandinavian, Spanish & Spanish-American as well as Russian Literature. Nothing on Chinese Literature has been included, except a reference to David Lattimore's article in the general entry.

As far as I am aware of, no extensive or exclusive research have been done on the subject of allusion in Chinese literary studies. Please refer to my bibliography at the end of this thesis for the few essays related to this subject.

24. Ibid., p. 295.
25. Ibid.

poeti e sistema letterario: Catullo, Virgilio, Ovidio, Lucano (Einaudi: Turin, 1976).

26. Ibid. p. 304.


28. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

29. PEPP, p. 18.


31. See Note 12.

32. Broadly speaking, most allusions (except in cases of "self-echo" and reference to oral literature) are "textual" in that they refer to some source texts. I am using "Textual Allusion" here in the narrow sense of the term.

33. As Perri has suggested, the use of poetic conventions may have allusive force, since the conventions maintain their unique 'characters.' Whether it is the echo of a genre, style, meter or even title, as long as the convention evokes traditional associations, it should warrant recognition as an allusion. See Perri, p. 305.

   Also refer to John Middleton Murry, Countries of the Mind: Essays in Literary Criticism, 1st series (Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 4.

39. Ibid., p. 92.
40. Murry, Countries of the Mind, p. 4.
42. Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 makes a similar analogy of the rippling effect of allusive language. See Xu, "Shici De Chuangzuo Guocheng Ji Qi Biaoxian Xiaoguo--Youguan Shici De Ge Yu Buge Ji Qita" 詩詞的創作過程及其表現效果有關詩詞的隔而不隔及其他 in Zhongguo Wenxue Lunji 中國文學論集 (Taipei: Minzhu Pinglun She, 1966), p. 128.
Although Kao and Mei specify that it is "historical allusion" which can provide such a dimension to a poem, I believe that any allusion to a story or event (e.g. mythological allusions) can do the same thing. Perhaps only textual allusions in which references are made to the simple images of a previous text do not serve this purpose.
44. This recalls the term "objective correlative" which Eliot coined and defined as follows:
"The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion." (T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems," in *Selected Essays*, pp. 124-5). I prefer not to use this term not only because the wording in his definition has been criticized and debated, but because I believe the concept is essentially no different from that of an extended metaphor, which I define as "a series of related images which creates a unified effect."


46. Kao and Mei make a distinction between two kinds of allusion according to the different types of effect they create in a poem: "The effect of allusion is local if the double meaning accrues only to the line containing it, and global if the added meaning affects not only its vehicle but the whole poem as well." See "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion," *HJAS* p. 330.

47. Empson, p. 234.

48. The medieval tradition of scriptural interpretation offers typically four levels of meaning: the literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogic. See M.H. Abrams "Interpretation: Typological and Allegorical" in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, p. 88. Pauline Yu also refers to this hierarchy of interpretation when she discusses the reading of allegory


50. Pauline Yu presents a full and suggestive discussion of the evolution of Western concepts of allegory. She also gives an account of the evolution of Western thinking with regards to symbol and symbolism. She traces the changing views of symbol and allegory through the nineteenth century to the present—all this as a context for her discussion of Chinese imagery. See Pauline Yu, pp. 19-30.


54. Ibid.


58. Ibid., p. 255.

To be more precise, I would rephrase Prof. Chao's lines to
suggest that poetry which is *ge* is the result of "the lack of a deeply felt inner experience," or "the failure to communicate such a deeply felt inner experience."

59. *Renjian Cihua*, p. 27.

60. Ibid., p. 38.
Translation by Adele Rickett, p. 64.

61. Ibid.

Translation by Vincent Shih, p. 205.


Translation by Siu-kit Wong, p. 96.


69. *Wen Xuan*, *juan* 22, p. 300; and *juan* 16, pp. 221-2.


CHAPTER III

1. Apart from the biographical accounts found in the Jiu Tangshu (henceforth JTS 藝唐書, Xin Tangshu 新唐書 (henceforth XTS) and Tang Caizizhuan 唐才子傳, other biographical studies on Li Shangyin include the following works by Qing scholars:

Zhu Heling, Li Yishan Shipu 李義山詩譜 in ZHL, pp.1-7;
Feng Hao, Yu Xisheng Nianpu 玉谿生年譜 in FH, pp. 839-880; Zhang Ertian, Yuxisheng Nianpu Huijian 玉谿生年譜會箋.

The modern historian Cen Zhongmian has, however, refuted a number of points put forward by Zhang, and in most cases Cen's argument and findings are convincing. His work has been published as Yuxisheng Nianpu Huijian Pingzhi 玉谿生年譜會箋平質 and collected in ZET, pp.213-262.


3. JTS, juan 184, p. 4757; also, XTS, juan 270, p. 5858.

4. JTS, juan 17, p. 562; also, XTS, juan 270, p. 5873.

5. For a detailed historical account of the Niu-Li Factional Strife, see Zizhi Tongjian (henceforth ZZTJ) (Beijing: Guji Publishing Press, 1956), juan 243, p. 7851; juan 244, pp. 7866, 7869, 7871-2, 7880-2.

For a discussion of the Niu-Li Factional Strife, see H.


6. Chen Yinke, p. 87.

7. JTS, juan 11, p. 472 and juan 17, p. 522.

8. JTS, juan 18, p. 610. Also see ZZTJ, juan 243, p. 7830 and juan 250, p. 8079.

9. According to the biography of Liu Fen in the JTS, Liu passed the jinshi examination in 826. (JTS juan 190, p. 5064) Two years later, he took an imperial examination during which he wrote a fierce attack on the eunuchs in his essay. The writing, lengthy and shockingly bold in its criticism of the eunuchs, spoke the minds of many and created a great stir among the intellectuals and court officials. The examiners, though secretly applauding Liu Fen, dared not pass him. A few years later, Liu was exiled to Liu Zhou, a distant place in modern day Guangxi province. He died there one year later. Li Shangyin was Liu's friend and admirer. Liu's misfortune and death inspired a series of deeply
moving poems.

10. Most traditional critics agree that this poem is a satire on Jingzong. See Feng Hao, p. 10. Also see SGJJ, pp. 4-6.


14. This is evident in many of his prose works as well as his poetry. Examples of his more transparent poems which reveal this concern include pieces such as: "Yougan" FH, p. 141; "Zeng Yuwen Zhongcheng" FH, p. 29; "Chushisun Cheng Zuozhong" FH, p. 26; and "Song Zongweng Cong Dongchuan Hongnong Shangshumu" FH, p. 72.

15. Several times in his own writings, Li Shangyin has claimed the same lineage with the royal house of Tang. And as Zhang Ertian has pointed out, it went as far back as Li Hao, the founder of the Western Liang in the fourth century (Zhang, p. 2). By the time of his great-great grandfather, however, the family had gone down considerably in its stature and fortune. Li’s great grandfather, grandfather, as well as his father all died at a young age, having served only minor positions in the local governments.

17. Cui Rong died in 834, soon after he was appointed Commissioner of Yanzhou and Haizhou (in present day Shandong province). Li Shangyin, at twentyone, had just worked under him for a few months and had not yet passed his civil service examination. Linghu Chu died in 837, soon after Li Shangyin obtained his jinshi degree. Li, therefore, lost an important patron and mentor who could have helped him immensely in his subsequent postings in court.

18. JTS, juan 190, p. 5078.

19. Ibid.

20. XTS, juan 203, p. 5793.

21. Ibid.

22. Both Zhu Heling and Zhang Ertian have argued that Li Shangyin belonged to the Li faction. (Zhu, p.15; Zhang, p.146) Xu Zhanyuan, on the other hand, thinks that Li belonged to the Niu faction. He was pro-Niu both at the beginning and at the end of his career, while belonging to the Li faction sometime in between only because of the need to find employment where it was offered. (Quoted in Feng Hao, p. 877). A number of contemporary critics, among them Wu Tiaogong, Yang Liu and Zhang Shuxiang, all argue that Li was caught between the two factions, but he did not truly affiliate himself with any particular camp. See Wu Tiaogong, Li Shangyin Yanjiu.
23. Li Shangyin has written poems showing genuine appreciation for Du Mu as well as poems mourning the misfortune and death of Xiao Huan and Yang Yuqing. Li was familiar also with Yang Sifu and Du Zong, likely through Linghu Tao's connection.

24. Li Shangyin was highly regarded by Li Hui who, together with Zhou Chi praised him profusely after the Grand Rhetoric Examination, before Li Shangyin was ousted by some senior members in the bureaucracy. There are, in his prose collections, officials letters and memorials Li Shangyin wrote for Li Hui.

25. See "Jiu Jiangjun" 蓬将軍, FH, p.328; and No.4 of "Man-cheng Wuzhang" 漫成五章, FH, p. 402.


29. It was because of Linghu Tao's recommendation of Li to Gao Kai 高锴, the chief examiner of the jinshi exam in 837, that Li Shangyin was awarded his degree. See "Yu Taojinshi Shu" 與陶進士書, FNWJ, juan 8, 5a-b. Also see Li's letter of thanks to Linghu Chu in Fan'nan Wenji Bubian
32. See such poems as "Chongrangzhai Dongtinghou Mianran You-zuo" 秭讓宅東亭後沔然有作, FH, p. 172; "Zhengyue Chongrangzhai" 正月秭讓宅, FH, p. 539; and "Wang Shi’erxiong Yu Weizhi Yuanwai Xiangfang Jianzhao Xiaoyin Shi Yuyi Daowangrijin Buqu Yinji" 王十二與畏之員外相訪見招小飲時予悼亡日近不去因寄 , FH, p. 455.

34. Seventeen poems in the collection of Li's works are titled
"Wuti" (Without Title). Some forty-one others are named after a word or a phrase in those poems or in such a way that their titles have little direct bearing on the overall meaning of the poems themselves. I call these "poems with pseudo-titles." Most of Li's untitled and pseudo-titled pieces are ambiguous, with multiple levels of meaning. Li Shangyin was the first to write a considerable number of poems of this kind, and wuti poems have become almost a sub-genre associated with his name.

Yongwu poems (poems celebrating certain objects) had been around for a long time before Li Shangyin. Li wrote many poems in this mode. Although they are generally less allusive, they also work by indirection, that is, by means of concealed reference (writing ostensibly about one thing while referring on a different level to something else).


36. Ibid.

37. Li apparently studied Daoism for a few years as a young man, before obtaining his jinshi degree. See ZET, p. 40. Li also refers to this in his poem, "Li Xuan Suowei Huasongshi-shu Liangzhi De Sishiyiyun" 李軾所遺畫松詩書兩紙, FH, p. 65 and "Tongxue Peng Daoshi Canliao" 同學彭道士參寥, FH, p. 548. He has also written poems for his Daoist friends. See, for example, "Ji Yongdaoshi" 寄永道士, "Yueye Chongji Song Huayang Zimei" 月夜重寄朱華陽姊妹, Zeng Huayang Songzhenren
Su Xuelin suggests that many Tang Daoist nuns actually conducted their lives like courtesans. She cites the example of poetess and Daoist nun, Yu Xuanji and her love poems, Li Shangyin’s own poem, "Zuozhong Cheng Linghugong" as well as a passage in Dongguan Zouji which depict nuns in heavy makeup and glamorous attire. See Su Xuelin, Li Yishan Lian-ai Shiji Kao 李義山宠爱事迹考 (Shanghai: Beixin Book Co., 1927), pp. 7-9. See Dongguan Zouji, ed. Gu Xiang (Xiaoshi Shanfang Congshu 石山房叢書, 1874), juan 1, 6b.

Tang princesses whose husbands had died and who had children from their marriages were not allowed to remarry again. They were not socially restricted, however, if they became Daoist adepts. During Li Shangyin’s life time alone, two of Xianzong’s daughters, two of Muzong’s, three of Jingzong’s, four of Wenzong’s and seven of Wuzong’s daughters turned Daoist nuns. See Tang Huiyao 唐會要 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935), juan 6, and 50.

Duyang Zabian 杜陽雜编 mentions "Feiluan" and "Qingfeng" as the names of two dancers Jingzong received as tributes. Su Xuelin’s suggestion that they later became Li’s lovers because Li’s poems is replete with images of "luan" and
"feng" (phoenixes) is a pure speculation.

See Su, pp. 69-73.


41. Ibid. p. 283.

42. Ibid., p. 298, pp. 302-3, p. 322.


44. Sun Zhentao 孙飙陶, "Li Shangyinshi Tanwei" 李商隐诗探微, *Xinya Xuebao 新亚学报*, vol. 4, p. 204.

The Ming scholar Hu Zhengheng, in his commentary on certain poems by Li Shangyin, also expresses a similar view. Quoted in CMX, 27a.


47. Li Shangyin learned to write classical prose from his uncle,
who, according to Li's own description, never wrote any modern style verse or prose. See "Qing Lu Shangshu Zan Gu-chushi Guzang Limou Zhiwenzhuang" 謝盧尚書撰校處士 姑臧李某誌文状 in FNBB, juan 11, 1b.

54. Jiaoran 晉然, Shi Shi 詩式 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1959), juan 5, p. 66.
55. "Fan'nan Yiji Xu" 琅南乙集序, FNWJ, juan 7, 27a.
56. Li Shangyin's parallel prose was regarded very highly during the early Song period. His work was also highly esteemed when the writing of parallel prose became popular again in the Qing period. Qing critics such as Yuan Mei and Sun Mei 阮梅 all had very special words for Li's achieve-
57. This is discernible even in his own poems. See, for example, "Xie Xianbeifang Jinian Zhuoshi Shenduo Yiri Ouyou Ciji" 謝先輩防紀念拙詩甚多異日偶有此寄, FH, p. 603.


59. Qu Yuan and Li He being obvious exceptions.


61. Ibid., p. 154.


63. Ibid., pp. 153-4.

64. *Han Shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Press, 1962), juan 97, p. 3951.


70. CMX, *juan* 中 , 64b, p. 522. FH, p. 329.


73. Ibid., p. 4236.

74. *Shi Ji*, *juan* 84, p. 2492, 2502.

75. See comments on his "Huaqing Gong" 華清宮 by Qu Fu, He Zhuo and Ji Yun. QF, *juan* 7, 2b, p. 362; SHS in ZHL, *juan* 中 , 8b, p. 120.

76. These essays are mentioned in "Fan'nan Jiaji Xu," *FNWJ*, *juan* 7, 24a.

77. See, for example, his essays "Duan Feishengren Shi" 断非聖人事 and "Duan Feixianren Shi" 斷非賢人事, *FNWJ*, *juan* 8, 34b-5a.

78. See, for example, his "Wei Duzhi Lushilang He Bixueshi Qi" 為度支盧侍郎賢學施, *FNBB*, *juan* 7, 24a.


87. ZET, p. 149.


89. C.G.Jung writes, "The primordial image or archetype is a figure, whether it is a daemon, man, or process, that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative phantasy is freely manifested. Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure." *Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, tr. H.G. and C.F. Baynes, quoted in *PEPP*, pp. 48-9.


92. The mentioning of a hare in the moon first appeared in "Tianwen" 天問 in the *Chuci* 楚辭. The two characters in "Tianwen"—顧菟 (a watchful hare)—are, according to Wen Yiduo 韓一多, borrowed for the characters in (toad), because of their phonological proximity. See Wen Yiduo, "Tianwen Shitian" 天問釋天 in *Wen Yiduo Quanji* 全集 (Shanghai: Kaiming Book Co., 1948), p. 329.

94. Duan Chengshi, Youyang Zazu 酉陽雜俎 (Baibu Congshu ed.), juan 1, 9a-b.


97. Feng Hao, No. 1 of "Wuti Sishou" 無題四首, p. 399.

98. Ibid. "Wuti" 無題, p. 386.


103. Ibid., p. 290.

104. QF, juan 4, 20a, p. 249. CMX, juan 上, 70a, p. 347. FH, p. 320.
105. "Ji Linghu Xueshi" 寄令狐學士，FH，p. 316.


109. See, for example, his poem "Dongxuan"  東還，FH，p. 39.


111. "Danqiu" 丹邱，FH，p. 663.


113. QF, juan 7, 44a, p. 445.

114. FH, p. 549.

115. CMX, juan 7, 45a, p. 483.


118. "Yeshan" 謝山，FH，p. 375.

欲就麻姑買滄海，一杯春露冷如冰。

120. "Dongxia Sanxun Kuyu Fengtu Mashang Xizuo" 東下三旬苦於風土馬上戲作, FH, p. 422.

121. "Xiaoyaoyou" 消遙遊, Zhuang Zi 莊子 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1909), juan 1, 1a.


125. "Shuolin Xun" 說林訓 Huainan Zi, juan 17, 15b, p. 636.


127. Ibid., p. 1361.


131. "Yue" 月, Du Shaoling Ji Xiangzhu 杜少陵集詳註 annotated by Qiu Zhao'ao 仇兆鰲 (rpt. Hong Kong: Taiping
Book Co., 1966), juan 17, p. 59.

132. "Yue Xi" (Moonlit Night), FH, p. 602.

133. "Shuang Yue" (Frosty Moon), FH, p. 545.

134. See Xie Fangde, quoted in SGJJ, vol. 4, p. 1694.

135. QF, juan 7, p. 41.

136. See SHS, in ZHL, juan 7, p. 33a, p. 325.

137. FH, p. 718. CMX, juan 7, 40a, p. 473.

138. ZET, p. 206. Also see Hu Ciyan, quoted in SGJJ, p. 1694.

139. See, for example, Liu Xuekai and Yu Shucheng, SGJJ, p. 1696.

140. See Note 137.

141. See Note 138.

142. The possibility of Daoist nuns regretting their religious vows was an occasional subject in Li's poetry. See for example, "He Han Lushi Song Gongren Rudao" and 韓錄事送 客入道, FH, p. 120.


144. Translation of lines 3, 4, 7, 8 is adapted from J. Liu. See James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, p.96.

145. The other two poems are "Shengnü Ci" (Holy Lady's Shrine) and "Chongguo Shengnü Ci" (Revisiting Holy Lady's Shrine). See FH, p. 693 & 369.
Both poems are generally dated later than the one under discussion.

146. According to the *Shuijing Zhu* 水经注, on the slope of Mt. Qingang was the image of a woman deity referred to by most people as the "Holy Lady". The goddess was said to have responded to the prayers of many in the neighbourhood. The text of *Shuijing Zhu* does not mention any shrine on Mt. Qingang, but it is evident from the poem that a shrine had already been built by the time of Tang. See Li Daoyuan 李道元, *Shuijing Zhu* (Siku Quanshu ed.) (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1975), juan 20, 11.

147. Xu Zhanyuan 徐湛園, quoted in FH, p. 94. Also see ZET, p. 48, and Feng's own comment, FH, p. 94.


149. See SHS in ZHL, juan 中, 32a, p. 323.

150. CMX, juan 中, 38b-39a, pp. 470-1. For Ji Yun's comment, see ZET, p. 396.


153. See "Dahuang Xijing" 大荒西經, *Shanghai Jing* Ch. 16 (Shanghai Classical Texts Publishing Press, 1980), p. 399. The text itself mentions three blue birds, one of
which is actually called by that name. Guo Pu's commentary says: "All (three birds) run errands for the Queen Mother of the West." Ch. 12 of Shanhai Jing also refers to three blue birds gathering food for the Queen Mother. See p. 306.

154. A concubine during her lifetime, the Purple Lady died of grief and mistreatment (another version in the Xianyi Lu suggests that she was murdered) at the hands of the wife who made her do the dirtiest chores around the house. After her death, she was deified and on the anniversary of her death—the fifteenth of the first month every year—people made images of her to be placed around privies and pigstys. They prayed for her to come down, assuring her that neither her husband nor the wife were not around. When they felt that the images were getting heavier, they believed that she had descended; thereupon sumptuous food and wine were laid out to welcome her spirit. See Yiyuan (Baibu Congshu ed.) juan 5, 5a. Also in Jingchu Suishi Ji, JXS, I, jianji, 1, pp. 40-1.

155. According to the Han Shu, shamans were granted positions in the palace since the times of Emperor Gaozu. See "Jiaosi Zhi" , Han Shu, juan 25, p. 1211. The "Han Palace" (Han Gong) is not only a convenient parallel for the "Chu (Country)" (Chu Guo) in the preceding line, it could be understood as a go-between for the speaker
and the Holy Lady, whether she is interpreted as a patron in the court or a lover in the court.

156. The only difference between the two readings is that the probable intent in the "career-oriented" reading is supported by a recognized relationship between Li and Linghu Tao while Li's alleged romantic relations with Daoist nuns cannot actually be verified.

157. See ZET, p. 43.
Also refer to Linghu Chu's biography in the JTS, 172, p. 4464.

158. Hou Han Shu 俊漢書, juan 82, p. 2744.
164. See CMX, juan 中, 39a, p. 471.
165. See SGJJ, p. 1688.
167. The imagery in this poem, with its predominantly striking red and white colors, its haunting ghosts, deaths, blood and
tears, its beautiful images of jade and coral, as well as the unusual way they are put together, reminds one very much of Li He. However, Li Shangyin's images have two additional qualities:

(1) They are even more fantastic and strange than Li He's. Compare, for example, Li Shangyin's,

"The Ox Mountain in pieces the sound of shattering coral," 牛山撼碎珊瑚聲

with Li He's,

"Kun mountain's jade in pieces, phoenixes cry,"

"Li Ping Konghou Yin" 李憑箜篌引, See Li He Shige Jizhu 李賀詩歌集注 (Shanghai: Renmin Wenzue Publishing Press, 1977), p. 31.

Li Shangyin's line is more strained and also more fantastic.

(2) Li Shangyin's line is more mysterious and suggests more depth and significance because "Ox Mountain" is allusive, while "Kun mountain" in Li He's line simply suggests the exotic.

168. Su Xuelin was the first to mention Li Shangyin in connection with French Symbolists such as Verlaine and Maeterlinck. See Su Xuelin, Tangshi Gailun 唐詩概論 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1934), p. 158.

Zheng Zhengduo also mentions Li Shangyin in connection with French symbolist poets Mallarme and Gautier. See Zheng,


171. Ibid., p. 38.


173. CMX, juan, 5b, p. 500.

Also, see Yu Shucheng and Liu Xuekai, SGJJ, pp. 20-1.


175. ZET, p. 75.

176. Su Xuelin, p. 92.

177. During the twelve years of his reign, Gao Wei depleted the national treasury by building numerous luxurious palaces and gratifying his most expensive and exotic tastes and desires. His indulgence in entertainment and the pleasures of his concubines has been vividly depicted and satirized by Li Shangyin in two other poems entitled "Northern-Qi." See "Biography of Gao Wei", Bei Shi, juan 8, pp. 300-1. For Li's two other poems on Northern-Qi, see FH, p. 709.

178. Bei Shi, juan 8, p. 300.

179. See "Tianguan Shu"天官書 Shi Ji, juan 27, p. 1295, 1304, 1306.

181. Bao Zhao, "Dai Baitou Yin" 代白頭吟 in Baoshi Ji

182. Wang Changling 王昌齡, "Furonglou Song Xinjian Ershou"
芙蓉樓送辛渐二首, No. 1, Wang Changling Shizhu 王昌齡
詩注, annotated by Li Yunyi 李雲逸 (Shanghai

183. See, for example, Du Fu's "Qiuyu Tan" 秋雨詠:
去馬來牛不復辨, 虚淫清渭何當分
"The coming and going of horses and oxen are hard to
distinguish,/ Why must one make a distinction between
the murky Jing and the clear Wei?" See Du Shaoling Ji
Xiangzhu 杜少陵集詳註 (rpt. Hong Kong: Taiping

184. "Yingdiwang" 應帝王, Zhuang Zi, juan 1, 21b.
Also see Huainan Zi, p. 217.

185. Sanfu Huangtu 三輔黃圖, in Zhongguo Fangzhi Congshu
中國方志叢書 (Taibei: Chengwen Publishing Press, 1970),
juan 1, p. 22.
The capital referred to in this quotation was the old city
of Xianyang .

186. This interpretation has also been suggested by Ye Congqi.
See Ye, p. 404.

187. Qilin 麒麟 is the name of a magical steed.
See Shang Yang  商鞅, Shangjun Shu 商君書, annotated
by Yan Wanli 廉萬里 (Taibei: Commercial Press, 1965), juan
4, p. 34.
188. See "Dayuan Liezhuan" 大宛列傳 in Shi Ji, juan 123, p. 3170.

189. See Bei Shi, juan 8, p. 299.


192. Bei Shi, juan 8, p. 301.

193. See Shuijing Zhu, juan 1, 20b.

194. Bei Shi, juan 8, p. 299.

195. See, for example, the following from Bai Juyi’s poem:

(Written On the Third Day After the Birth, Happily, of a Male Grandchild, of the Tan Family--A Piece Also Dedicated to Mengde In Jest): 諨氏外孫生三日喜是男偈吟成篇兼戏呈夢得Bai Xiangshan Ji 白香山集 (Taibei: Commercial Press, 1965), juan 68, p. 64.

196. White birches have been traditionally associated with graveyard scenes, as in the following lines from one of the Nineteen Ancient Poems:

馬蹄上東門,  遥望郭北墓, 白楊何蕭疏, 松柏夾廣路

See Wen Xuan, juan 29, p. 403.

197. See He Yanzhi 何延之, Lanting Shimo Ji 蘭亭始末記 collected in JXS, IV, yiji 乙集, 2, p. 38.


199. The image could be seen as a cross reference to the last line in Li Shangyin’s "Haishang Yao" 海上譜 in which he

200. As Zhu Heling pointed out, the "short silk threads" (短絳) in line 13 is an echo of Li He's: "Henan Fu Shi Shi'eryue Yueci" ("Henan府試十二月樂詞"), but the image probably refers just to tender grass blades rather than to the "silken hair" of women as Zhu has suggested.

Also see Ye Congqi, p. 404.

201. See Note 175.


Also, XTS, juan 82, pp. 3633-4.

203. See Note 172.


205. Examples of such poems are "Fuping Shaohou" 富平少侯 and "Chen Hougong" 陳後宮, FH, p. 8 and p. 14.

206. JTS, juan 17, p. 522.

207. Ibid., pp. 522-3.

208. See Note 173.


Also see JTS, juan 161, p. 4233.

210. Examples are "Deng Huoshan Yilou" 登霍山驛樓, "Xingci Zhaoyingxian Daoshang Song Hubu Li Langzhong Chong Zhaoyi Gongtao" 行次昭應縣道上送戶部李郎中充昭義攻討, FH, p. 214, 216.

See also the letter Li drafted for his father-in-law, Wang
Maoyuan, addressed directly to Liu Zhen, in which he censures Liu's disrespect of the court and warns him of impending doom if he should persist in defying the court. See "Wei Puyang Gong Yu Liu Zhen Shu" 為濮陽公與劉稹書, in FNWJ, juan 8, 7b-16a.

211. See Note 174.

For background on Prince Chen, Prince An and Concubine Yang, see JTS, juan 175, pp. 4538-40.

212. Empson, p. 57.


215. See "Li Sao" 離騷 Quyuan Fu Jiaozhu 屈原賦校注 (Taiwan: Shijie Book Co., 1961), p. 82.

216. Shi Ji, juan 43, p. 1787.


219. Zhao Feiyuan Waizhuan 趙飛燕外傳, WCXS, 2a, p. 33.


221. Yiyuan, juan 3, 1a.


223. Sou Shenji 搜神記 (Shanghai: Saoye Shanfang 傳葉山房, 1929), juan 11, p. 6.

225. Annotation to Wen Xuan, Wen Xuan, juan 19, p. 254.

226. Ibid.

227. The phrases "beique" (with Mt. Yijue behind me), "guifan" (returning to my own fief), "riji xiqing" (the sun already dipping west) are taken either word for word from "Luoshen Fu" or slightly adapted from it. See "Luoshen Fu" in Wen Xuan, juan 19, p. 254.


230. XTS, juan 76, p. 3493.

231. In their article "Syntax, Diction, and Imagery in T'ang Poetry," Yu-kung Kao and Tsu-lin Mei refer to Ernst Casirer's distinction of language into two poles, the imagistic and the propositional. The imagistic use of language is also identified as being primarily 'perceptual' and 'discontinuous' in meaning, while the propositional use of language is 'conceptual' and 'continuous.' See HJAS, No. 31, 1971, pp. 51-133.

232. FH, p. 493, 182, 463.


Also see FH, p. 19.

234. See FH, p. 19.


237. Without his emotional depth and creative imagination, the *xikun* poets of early Song, in their conscious imitation of Li Shangyin, could only turn out a poetry which is mannered and morose, with all his external trappings and none of his essences.
CHAPTER IV


   Also mentioned in Hu Zai, *Tiaoxi Yuyin Conghua Qiangji 苦淡漁隱叢話薈* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1937), juan 22, p. 146.


4. For Zhu Yizun’s comment, see Shen Houshuang’s collected commentaries in *ZHL*, juan 上, 1a-b, pp. 105-6.
   For Zhu Heling’s own comment, *ZHL*, juan 上, 1b, pp. 106.
   For Meng Sen’s argument, see "Li Yishan Jinse Shi Kaozheng 李義山鈞瑟詩考證" collected in *Li Shangyin Shi Yanjiu Lunwen Ji 李商隱詩研究論文集* (Taibei: Tiangong Book Co., 1984), pp. 681-92.

5. Ye Congqi, p. 2.

   He Zhuo’s comment collected in Shen Houshuang, on the other hand, suggests that "Jinse" is a poem of lament Li wrote after his wife’s death.
7. ZET, p. 199.


11. See, for example, ZHL, p. 106 and FH, p. 494.

12. From "Fangzhong Qu" (Chamber Song): 隊末已不見, 錦瑟長於人.

13. From "Yumu" (View), 新知他日好, 錦瑟倚朱欄.
   FH, p. 288.


15. From the second poem of "Huizhong Mudan Weiyu Suobai Ershou" (Peonies At Huizhong Battered By Rain):
    王盤泣淚傷心数, 錦瑟驚、絃破夢頻
   FH, p. 117.

16. From "Chongrangzhai Dongting Zuihou Mianran Youzuuo" (Written After Getting Drunk East of the Chongran Residence):
    聲名佳句在, 旬世玉琴張.
   FH, p. 172.
20. "神女生涯无是夢"
21. "戰功高後数文章，悵我秋容夢蝴蝶．
   "Oucheng Zhuanyun Qishi'erju Zeng Si Tongshe," 舊成軔
   韵七十首贈同舍, FH, p. 426. The line describes
   Lu Hongzheng’s concern for Li’s idleness at home
   because of his lack of career prospects.
22. See "Qiyue Ershibariye Yu Wang Zheng Erxiucai Tingyuhou
   Mengzuo" 七月二十八日夜王鄭秀才聽雨後夢作.
   FH, pp. 190-1.
   Also quoted in the Li Shan’s annotation to "Shudu Fu" 蜀都
   賦 in *Wenxuan*, juan 4, p. 62.
24. From "Wuti" (Without Title):
   春心莫共花爭發，一寸相思一寸灰．
   FH, p. 386.
25. See, for example, the poems "Qu Jiang" (Meandering
   River), "Liuyin" (Wandering Oriole) and "Qinghe" (Clear River), FH, p. 145, 705 and 547.
27. See *Dadai Liji* (Congshu Jicheng Chubian ed.) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1937), juan 13, p. 226.

The same story is collected under the name "Wunü Ziyu Zhuan" 吳女紫玉傳 in *JXS*, I, jiaji 甲集, 1, p. 14.
31. See Chapter I, p. 5.
32. See Xu Dehong and Yao Peiqian's comments quoted in *SGJJ*, pp. 1669-70.

Also see Jiang Bingzhang 姜炳章, *Xuan Yuxisheng Shi Bushuo* 選元緯生詩補說, ed. Hao Shifeng 趙世峰 (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 1985), pp. 73-4.
33. Lu Minggao 陸鳴皋, quoted in *SGJJ*, p. 1669.
34. *ZHL*, pp. 210-211.

Also Su Xuelin, p. 23.

Also Qian Liangze 錢良擇, quoted in *SGJJ*, pp. 1667-8.

Another Qing critic Lu Kunceng 魯昆曾 suggests that this poem is about Emperor Xuanzong's effort to recall the

37. Hu Zhenheng, Tangyin Wuqian, quoted in SGJJ, p. 1665. Also, see CMX, juan 65b-66a, pp. 338-9; FH, p. 573, and ZET, p. 203.

38. See JTS, juan 51, p. 2178.

Also see Yang Taizhen Waizhuan, in Shuo Fu (Commercial Press), juan 38, vol. 4, p. 2560.

39. This was widely believed during the Tang Dynasty.

See, for example, Bai Juyi's "Changhen Ge" 長恨歌, Baixiangshan Shiji, juan 12.


43. The poem alluded to is "Xizhou Qu" 西洲曲, Yuefu Shiji, juan 34, vol. 4, p. 1027.

44. Liu Xun, Lingbiao Luyi, in Shuo Fu, juan 34, vol. 4, p. 2380.


For the story of Zhang Qian being sent on a mission to trace the "river's source" by Emperor Wu of Han, see Zhang Qian's biography in the *Han Shu*, *juan* 61, p. 2696.

The story of a man travelling on a raft to the source of the Milky Way and meeting the Weaving Maid and Cowherd there is found in *Bowu Zhi* 博物志, *juan* 10, in *BJXS*, third series, vol. 2, p. 875. For some reason, this story has become confused with that of Zhang Qian. In *Jingchu Suishi Ji* 荊楚歲時記, the man travelling on the raft is said to be Zhang Qian himself. This has already been pointed out by C.Y. Yeh. See Yeh's *Du Fu Qiuxing Bashou Jishuo* 杜甫秋興八首集說 (Taiwan: Zhonghua Congshu Bianshen Weiyuanhui, 1966), pp. 136-7.


51. The story of King Xiang and the Goddess of Mt. Wu is found in Suma Xiangru's "Gaotang Fu," in *Wen Xuan* 文選, *juan* 19, p. 249.

52. Feng Hao also believes that the line suggests a parting of the lovers in the morning. See FH, p. 573.


54. *Yi Cantong Qi* 易參同契, quoted in FH, p. 571.

55. *Yang Taizhen Waizhuan*, *Shuo Fu*, *juan* 38, 10a, p. 2567.
56. *Sanfu Huangtu* 三輔黃圖, juan 3, 2a, p. 49.

57. Yao Peiqian, quoted in *SGJJ*, p. 1663.


67. FH, p. 574; James Liu, p. 92.


70. *Bencao Gangmu* 本草綱目 (Shanghai: Commercial Press,
1933), juan 8, p. 617.

71. FH, p. 574.

72. Tianzhong Ji 天中記, quoted in FH, p. 573.

73. Jixian Zhan 集仙傳, quoted in Zhou Zhenfu, p. 132.


75. Ibid, juan 5, p. 30.

76. Ibid. juan 4, p. 21.

In Liezi, King Mu's horses is said to be able to run "ten thousand miles a day" instead of "thirty thousand". See Liezi, juan 3, p. 37.

77. QF, juan 7, p. 30; Zhu Yizun, in Shen Houshuang, ZHL, juan 上, 77b, p. 258; Yao Peiqian, quoted in SGJJ, p. 569.

78. He Yimen, see Shen Houshuang's collected commentaries in ZHL, juan 上, 77b, p. 258.

Also see CMX, juan 上, 93a, p. 393.

79. See these poems in FH, p. 314, 269 and 264.

80. SGJJ, p. 569.

81. "Muqiu Duyou Qujiang" (Wandering Alone by the Meandering River in Late Autumn), FH, p. 728.

82. Zhu Yizun considers this poem a total failure, a worst example of yongwu poetry. Ji Yun, on the other hand, thinks that the poet exhibits extraordinary skill and ingenuity in his use of allusions in this poem. See Shen Houshuang in ZHL, juan 上, 58b, p. 220.
83. Zhou Lianxi Ji (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936), juan 8, p. 139.


85. Ibid.

86. Lunyu (Hong Kong: Guangyi Book Co.), p. 104.


88. See Ma Wei, Qiuchuang Suibi in Qing Shihua (Shanghai Classical Texts Publishing Press, 1963), p. 833.


92. Quoted in FH, p. 25.

93. A reading suggested by Lin Geng, quoted by Chen Yixin, "Tan Li Shangyin De Yongshi Shi He Yongwu Shi" 諏李
95. CMX, juan 上, 71b, p. 350.
96. See "Xieshu" (A Letter of Thanks), FH, p. 18.
97. The Chang’an Zhi quoted Youyang Zazu in saying that Linghu's household in Chang’an has the most well-known peony garden. See Chang’an Zhi, juan 7, p. 160. This source is not found in any current editions of Youyang Zazu available to me.
98. Feng Hao assigns this poem to 829, the year Li Shangyin met Linghu Chu when the latter was serving as Regent of Luoyang. See FH, p. 25.
Zhang Ertian assigns this to 834, when Li was serving under Cui Rong, and Linghu Chu had just been appointed as Vice-Director of the Imperial Secretariat. Zhang believes that the letter was written as a note of congratulation upon Linghu’s return to an eminent position at the court. See ZET, p. 36.
99. In his later years, Li Shangyin showed disillusionment over what his talent as a writer could do for his official career. See, for example, No. 1 of his "Mancheng Wuzhang" 漫成五章 (Five Casual Pieces), FH, p. 402.
101. Ibid.

102. Li Fu 李浩, quoted in CMX, Prefactory Note, 6a, p. 39.

103. These include critics such as Zhu Heling, Yao Fengyuan, Qu Fu, Feng Hao and Zhang Ertian. See, respectively, ZHL, juan 中 , 23b, p. 306; SGJJ, p. 556; Qu Fu, juan 5, p. 287; FH, p. 264; ZET, p. 115.

104. Shi Ji, juan 24, p. 1178.

105. Ibid. juan 123, pp. 3173-4.

106. Quoted in FH, p. 264.


109. Ibid. juan 29, p. 3649.


111. "Han Wu Gushi" 漢武故事, in Gu Xiaoshuo Gouchen 古小說鉤沉, p. 287.

112. "Han Wu Gushi" contains stories of some such extravagances. See Gu Xiaoshuo Gouchen, p. 302.


114. JTS, juan 18, p. 588, 590-3.


116. JTS, juan 18, p. 610.

117. Ibid. p. 593. Also see XTS, juan 8, p. 244 and ZZTJ, juan
246, p. 7968.

118. JTS, juan 18, p. 585 and 587. Also see ZZTJ, juan 247, p. 8000.

119. JTS, juan 18, p. 610.

120. See FH, p. 259.

121. ZZTJ, juan 248, p. 8020.

122. Quoted in FH, p. 266.

123. ZET, p. 86, p. 112.

124. Ibid. p. 115.

125. FH, p. 869; ZET, p. 164.


127. See, for example, Du Fu's reference to the kind of criticism the "Four Talents" received during his time. "Xiwei Liu Jueju", no. 2, Du Shaoling Ji Xiangzhu, juan 11, p. 54.

128. Linghu Chu became known to Emperor Dezong through his extraordinary writing skills. He was called in as a member of the Hanlin Academy and later promoted to the position of Drafter of the Secretariat. See "Biography of Linghu Chu," JTS, juan 172, p. 4460.

129. See, for example, Li's preface to his second prose collection, FNWJ, juan 7, 27a.

130. FNWJ, juan 7, p. 24a.

131. Yijing (Commercial Press, 191?), juan 3, p. 15.

(集仙閣) to Palace of Gathering Sages (集賢殿).

See JTS, juan 97, p. 3054. Du Fu was received by Xuanzong in the Palace of Gathering Sages, but Li Shangyin is alluding here to its older name.

134. Ibid.
136. "Ji Ming", Shi Ji Zhuan 詩集傳, annotated by Zhu Xi 朱熹. (Hong Kong: Zhonghua Book Company, 1961), p. 58. The lines alluded to are:

鵞既鳴矣, 朝既盈矣, 邪鵞則鳴, 慘鸚之聲

137. See "Yu Tao Jinshi Shu" 與陶進士書 FNWJ, juan 8, p. 6.
138. Li wrote a number of poems criticizing the eunuchs especially after the Sweet Dew Incident. Examples are "Yougan Ershou" 有感二首 and "Chong Yougan" 重有感. FH, p. 40, 46.
139. See ZET, p. 60. Also see his poem "Ren Hongnongwei Xian Zhoucishi Qijia Guijing" 任弘農尉献州刺史兼假歸京 FH, p. 143.

嫩箨香苞初出林⋯⋯忍剪凌雲一寸心.

不知腐鼠成滋味, 猜意鵞鴨竟未休.

羽翼摧殘日, 郊園寂寞時
143. Li has written about the injustice these three (repeatedly on Liu Fen and Li Deyu) have suffered. See some of those poems in FH, p. 85, 196, 198, 199, 314.


145. Ibid. juan 47, p. 1116.


147. "Wu Shu" 吳書, quoted in the annotation to "Biography of Sun Quan," Wu Zhi, juan 47, p. 1132.

148. See, for example, his "Jiao'er Shi" 騎兒詩, FH, p. 414.

149. ZET, p. 164.

150. Li Shangyin has an account of his special relationship with his father-in-law before his marriage in "Chongji Waijiu Situgong Wen" 重祭外舅司徒公文, FNWJ, juan 6, 27b-28a.

151. Li had, apparently, a very fine relationship with his wife which was both comforting and supportive. See, for example, the poem "Wuti" (Zhaoliang chuyou qing... 無題): 照梁 初有情... as well as the many later poems he wrote to lament his wife's death. Examples are "Fangzhong Qu" 房中曲, "Wang Shier Xiong Yu Weizhi Yuanwai Xiangfang Jianzhao Xiaoyin Shi Yu Yi Daowang Rijin Buqu Yinji" Wangzhi 王十 兒 5 畏之 員外相訪見招小飲時子以悼亡日近故因寄 and "Daoshang Hou
152. Wang Maoyuan was connected with Li Deyu. He was also involved in Li's military combat of Liu Zhen during the Zhaoyi Rebellion. See ZZTJ, juan 247, pp. 7990-1.


154. Ibid. juan 161, p. 4236.

155. Ibid.


158. "Biography of Li Deyu" 李德裕 , JTS, juan 174, p. 4519. Also ZZTJ, juan 244, p. 7878.

159. Ibid. juan 174, p. 4524.

160. ZZTJ, juan 246, pp. 7952-4.

161. JTS, juan 174, pp. 4521-2; XTS, juan 180, p. 5336.

162. ZZTJ, juan 259, p. 8059.

163. JTS, juan 174, p. 4528.


166. ZZTJ, juan 248, pp. 8037-8.

167. Ibid. p. 8040.

169. See, for example, Zhu Yizun's comment collected in Shen Houshuang, *ZHL*, *juan* 247, 62b, p. 384. Also see Ye Congqi, p. 472.

Editions: Poetry (Arranged chronologically)

Li Yishan Shiji 李義山詩集 . Zhu Heling 朱鶴齡 .
1659. rpt. together with the collected commentaries of Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊, He Zhuo 何焯, and Ji Yun 紀昀 by Shen Houshuang 沈厚裳 under the title of Li Yishan Shiji Jiping 李義山詩集輯評 . rpt. Taiwan: Xuesheng Book Co., 1967.

Li Yishan Shiji 李義山詩解 . Lu Kunzeng 陸昆曾 . 1726.


Prose


Historical & Biographical Sources


Zhu Heling 朱鹤龄, Li Yishan Shipu 李義山詩譜, in Li Yishan Shiji 李義山詩集, pp. 1-7.

Sources of Li Shangyin’s Allusions Cited *


Hanshi Waishuan 韓詩外傳 . BJXS. 3rd series.


Jingchu Suishi Ji 紹楚歲時記. JXS. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1933.


"Li Sao" 鄰騄, Quyuan Fu Jiaozhu 屈原賦校注. Taiwan: Shijie Book Co., 1961.

Lienü Zhuan 列女傳. SBCK ed.

Liexian Zhuan 列仙傳. JXS.


Luyi Zhuan 錄異記. Gu Xiaoshuo Gouchen 古說鈎沉.


This list only includes the sources referred to in my discussion of Li Shangyin's poems. Although by no means an exhaustive list, it nevertheless reflects Li's favorite allusive sources.
Studies on Allusion

On Li Shangyin:

Chen Shengchang, "Li Yishan Shizhong Suojian Zhi Mochou". Gudian Wenxue. 8th series. pp. 159-76.


Other:


Critical Studies On Li Shangyin

In Chinese:

Chao Yeh Chia-ying 葉嘉莹. Jialing Lunshi Conggao 迷陵論詩集稿. Beijing: Zhonghua Press, 1984, which contains the following articles:

"Cong Yishan Chang E Shi Tanqi" 從義山嫦娥詩談起, pp. 135-146.

"Jiushi Xinyan: Li Yishan Yantai Sishou" 講詩新演: 李義山燕台首, pp. 147-209.


Chen Yixin 陳怡欣.

"Li Shangyin Lian’aii Shiji Kao Bian" 李商隱愛事迹考辨, pp. 283-324.

"Shuo Li Shangyin Bicheng Sanshou Qiyi" 講李商隱碧城三首其一, pp. 279-81.

"Tan Li Shangyin De Yongshi Shi He Yongwu Shi" 談李商隱的咏史和咏物詩, pp. 257-78.

"Guanyu Li Shangyin" 閒於李商隱, pp. 233-256.


articles on Li Shangyin's poetry).


In English:


General


Bao Zhao 鲍照. *Baoshi Ji 鲍氏集*. SBCK ed.


Li He 李賀. Li He Shige Jizhu 李賀詩歌集注. Shanghai

Liang Qichao 梁啟超 . *Yinbingshi Wenji* 饮冰室文集 .
Shanghai: 1926.

*Lidai Shihua Xubian* 历代诗话续编 . ed. Ding Fubao 丁福保 .


Liu Dajie 劉大杰 . *Zhongguo Wenxue Fazhan Shi* 中國文学發展史 .

Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1937.


Yale University Press, 1981.

Qian Muzhai 錢牧齋 . *Youxue Ji* 有學集 . SBCK ed.


Qing Shihua Xubian 清詩話續編. Taiwan: Yiwen, 1985.


Wen Xuan 文選. ed. Xiao Tong 蕭統. Taibei: Wenhua Book


