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Symphonies of Voices:
A New Approach to Du Fu's Allusive Art

PhD Thesis
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22 September, 2008
Introduction: Allusion as Key to Deeper Significance 3-43

a. Thesis Abstract
b. Acknowledgements
c. Abbreviations
d. Methodology and Argument: The Mimetic and the Semiotic
e. Literature Survey: Du Fu as a Collection of Earlier Voices
f. Thesis Outline

Chapter 1: Fan Li's Boat in Du Fu's Sea of Allusion 44-95

Chapter 2: Allusive Stones in the “Eight Phalanx Design” 96-124

Chapter 3: Du Fu's Encyclopedic Poetics on Rain and the Divine Woman 125-166

Chapter 4: The Southern Marchmount: Allusive Transcendence of Ritual and Lament 167-212

Thesis Conclusion 213-217
Introduction

a. Thesis Abstract: Allusion as a Key to Deeper Significance

One of the earliest recorded assessments of Du Fu (杜甫, 712-770 CE) is that he “combined the concentrated spirit individually achieved by all previous writers.” The modern reader may suspect that a claim like this belies a judgment of Du Fu’s mastery of imitation, echo, and, in particular, allusion. Indeed, the commentarial tradition attached to Du Fu’s poetry reflects a thoroughness of attention to allusion and precedented language matched only in commentaries to canonical texts like the *Wenxuan* 文選. When looking to Du Fu’s commentarial tradition for guidance in understanding a poem’s allusions, however, the modern reader is easily confounded by a lack of distinction made between allusion and precedented language, and is rarely guided in the integrating of multiple allusions into a holistic interpretation of a given poem.

In this thesis, I propose that Du Fu’s “combination of the concentrated spirit individually achieved by all previous writers” is an effect that emerges from his careful orchestration of inherited texts. This critical approach to Du Fu’s poems enables me to propose concrete ways in which his poetry achieves allusive mastery. Specifically, I argue that this mastery is founded not primarily upon density of allusion, but rather upon the variety of ways that allusions may combine with each other and with other poetic elements to form distinct and mutually enriching semiotic layers. Each layer emerges from an iterative re-situation of allusive intertexts against one another and the rest of the poem. In the reading strategy practiced here, allusion remains a prominent, evolving, and interrelated feature throughout the line-by-line reading and re-reading of the poem. Distinct layers of meaning harmonize with other layers, all of which may be brought together into a “global” interpretation. With a dozen or so examples read in this new awareness of the global effects of allusion, I attempt to show that in Du Fu’s poetry, harmonized relationships between allusive layers are keys to the author’s highly individual distillation of poetic expression.
b. Acknowledgements

I owe a great debt to my two PhD supervisors, Dr. Derek Herforth and Dr. Tim Chan. A wise man once told me that the best teachers are the strictest, and my supervisors have been unrelentingly critical from the first days of planning and dreaming up to the last days of editing. They have always, at the same time, endeavoured to provide the moral support and practical means of achieving the difficult aims set forth for this project. I am grateful to them for improving my judgement and instilling in me the drive to always inquire deeper and express more carefully.

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The main arguments in each chapter in this thesis were presented in department seminars and various conferences in Australia and North America. I would like to extend my thanks in particular to Professor Jeffrey Riegel, Dr. Lily Lee, and Dr. Hoyt.
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My external examiners, Professors Robert Ashmore, Jia Jinhua, and Chen Zu-yen, read my thesis more carefully than any Ph.D candidate could have ever hoped for, and caught many errors of style and substance. More importantly, they provided suggestions at a level of detail that reflected enormous wisdom and experience. Within the body of this final version of the thesis, I have acknowledged their contributions wherever possible, but these citations cannot possibly reflect their enormous impact on my work.

Finally, my thanks and devotion go to Swamiji, Tamsin, my parents, and Pam.
c. Abbreviations

Cxj: Xu Jian 徐堅 (659-729 CE) and Wei Shu 韋述 (?-757 CE). Chuxue ji 初學記.

Ctsj: Cai Mengbi 蔡夢弼 (fl. 12th cent. CE), comm. Du Gongbu caotang shijian 杜工


Dsxz: Qiu Zhao'ao 仇兆鰲 (1640-1714 CE), ed. & comm. Du shi xiangzhu 杜詩詳

Dsyd: Guo Zhida 郭知達 (jinshi 1193; d. 1226 CE), comm. Jiu jia jizhu Du shi 九家
集註杜詩. Reprinted by William Hung, ed. A Concordance to the Poems of
Tu Fu (Du shi yinde 杜詩引得; Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index

Dy: Wang Sishi 王嗣奭 (1566-1648 CE), comm. Du Yi 杜臆. Shanghai: Shanghai
guji, 1983.

Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1980.

Yfjs: Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (fl. 12th century), comp. Yuefu shiji 楊府詩集. Beijing:

All dynastic histories refer to the typeset versions printed by Zhonghua shuju.

Quan Tang shi (abbreviated below CTS) is also the Zhonghua typeset edition.
All modern romanizations in texts translated by other scholars have been converted to Pinyin.

Medieval Chinese transcriptions in this thesis are not drawn from a systematic reconstruction of the sounds of early spoken Chinese, but rather rely on David Branner’s philological transcription of the “received Chinese scheme of medieval phonology in the abstract” as may be derived from the two rhyming dictionaries Guangyun 广韵 (1008 CE) and its predecessor Qiyeun 切韻 (of 601 CE).¹


d. The Mimetic and the Semiotic

To discuss the power of allusion to create and harmonize many layers of meaning in Du Fu's poems implies a distinct approach to the interpretation of poetry as multi-tiered compositions. The reader actively seeks beyond the relatively "topical" features, such as those required by genre convention, for indications of deeper tiers of poetic significance. Of course, experienced readers of poetry perceive multiple tiers at the same time, but this distinction remains useful because it serves a wide variety of critical agendas. It has, therefore, been voiced in a variety of different ways in traditional works of poetry criticism.

Yan Yu 嚴羽 (fl. 1200 CE), for example, proposed a mundane / divine duality, and argued that Du Fu's poems in particular integrated but also moved beyond "texts" (shu 書) and "rational principles" (li 理) into a poetic realm akin to Chan sudden enlightenment, a process which he called "entering into the divine" (ru shen 入神).²

The role of the poetry critic, under this rubric, is to identify the divine within the

² See Canglang shihua 滄浪詩話 (Canglang's Remarks on Poetry), in Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874-1952 CE), Lidai shihua xubian 歷代詩話續編 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983), 687-88. (Modern scholars observe that his work was actually called Canglang shibian 詩辨 before the compilation of the Siku quanshu 四庫全書 (begun in 1771); see Timothy Wai Keung Chan, "Yan Yu zì hào 'Canglang Buke' kaobian" (嚴羽自號《滄浪遊客》考辨 ("An examination of Yan Yu’s self-styled sobriquet ‘Canglang Buke’"), Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies 27, no. 2 (1997), 227 n.51.) In the section of Yan Yu's study referenced above, he is not disputing the important role of precedented language or rational principles in poetry, but rather the relative lack of enlightened aperçu, or "wondrous perception" in poets of his own time.
mundane. A different duality demarcates between the *medium* of writing (taken to be a poem’s patterned language) and deeper *intentions* of the poet. This distinction emerges from the traditional formula, *shi yan zhi* 詩言志 (‘lyric poetry articulates [the poet’s] aims’), which was originally applied to the *Shijing* 詩經 (*The Book of Odes*), but later more broadly accepted as the animating force behind all well-written lyric poetry.³ Here, the deeper layers of a lyric shi poem are recast as a literary embodiment of the poet’s true intentions (*zhi* 志).⁴ Accordingly, the literary critic’s role is to perceive the *zhi* within the *shi*.

These variations on the duality between “deep” and “topical” within a given poem are aesthetically appealing but still highly dependent on the sensibility and experience of the reader. Put another way, while it was made explicit that the role of the reader is to perceive the deeper layers in a poem, the Chinese tradition did not elaborate many theoretical frameworks or objective criteria to help identify how a particular text achieves its depth. Although the interpretation of poetry is not an observational science, the modern reader seeks methodologies that reveal more objective information about how a poem can function on one or more deeper levels.

In particular, we require a methodology that provides objective means of understanding the spectrum of ways allusion does (or does not, as the case may be) enable Du Fu’s poems to function on a deeper level. A step in this direction was

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⁴ Throughout this dissertation, “lyric poetry” refers to writings traditionally classified as *shi* 詩.
taken by Julia Kristeva, who observed that any complex text is built upon the
"transposition" between two or more sign-systems.\(^5\) This is essentially an
"intertextual" transposition of the kind reflected in Blaktin’s conception of the novel
as a rewriting of the carnival.\(^6\) In Michael Riffaterre’s elaboration on this concept, he
distinguishes between a poem’s “mimesis” and “semiosis.”\(^7\) Mimesis refers to a
poem’s literal meaning, whereby readers call upon their own linguistic competence
and historical (textual) knowledge to comprehend the poem’s direct representations of
feelings, phenomena, and historical and geographical detail, as well as of the stylistic
features on the surface of the text.

The semiotic reading, on the other hand, is a process (similar to Kristeva’s
“transposition”) triggered by the reader’s awareness of a range of elements in the
poem that alter, or in some cases undermine, the mimetic reading. The semiotic

Press, 1984), 59-60.


\(^7\) Michael Riffaterre was perhaps the first to draw a formal distinction between these two terms; see his
poetics is based on the semiotics of C.S. Peirce, who wrote: “Logic will here be defined as formal
semiotic. A definition of a sign will be given which no more refers to human thought than does the
definition of a line as the place which a particle occupies, part by part, during a lapse of time. Namely,
a sign is something (A) which brings something (B), its interpretant sign determined or created by it,
to the same sort of correspondence with something, (C) its object, as that in which itself stands to C.”
See Charles S. Peirce, “Application of C.S. Peirce to the Executive Committee of the Carnegie
Institution, July 15, 1902,” in *The New Elements of Mathematics by Charles S. Peirce*, ed. Carolyn
process is one in which the reader attempts to integrate these unanticipated elements into a coherent logic system. Unlike the “mundane / divine” duality and the “topical / deep” duality, the semiotic is not valued over the mimetic; the reader’s second approximation of the overall significance of the poem results from an integration of all semiotic processes and mimetic elements. Defined in this way, semiotic readings of poems also do not have to be radically “deconstructionist” in the tradition of Jacques Derrida. The construal of allegory, for example, is a familiar example of a semiotic process easily performed by readers.

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9 Since at least as early as the time the poems collected in the *Chuci* anthology were first composed (ca 3rd century BCE), allegory has been a common semiotic transformation made by readers. In allegorical poems, even when allusion is present, it is often not a key interpretive index. An example of a famous poem by Du Fu that lends itself easily to a semiotic reading dominated by allegory rather than allusion is his “Fine Lady” (“Jia ren” 佳人, Dszx 7.552). The poem can be read mimetically as a sympathetic description of the circumstances of a woman raised from birth to serve a husband who has tragically abandoned her, and semiotically as an allegorical “depiction of [Du Fu’s] own feelings,” to quote Wang Sishi 王嗣奭 (1566-1648 CE); see Dy 3.84. The reader easily transposes the tragedy of the lady’s circumstances onto Du Fu’s own tragedy; he also was well bred and from a family of high status. Just as she was married and then abandoned, Du Fu was briefly employed (at the court of Suzong 唐肃宗 [r. 756-752 CE]), and later sent away from the capital. For an excellent study on the conventional allegorical or metaphorical elements in Du Fu’s poems about palace gardens, see David McMullen, “Recollection without Tranquility: Du Fu, the Imperial Gardens, and the State,” *Asia Major* 14, no. 2 (2001), 189-252.
In what follows, I rely on this distinction between mimetic and semiotic interpretive processes in order to clarify the complex role of allusion in Du Fu’s poetry. Allusion is read mimetically when perceived as a feature contributing to a reading of a poem as a straightforward description of a scene, a circumstance, and/or a direct depiction of a feeling. A semiotic reading of allusion is one in which an intertext or collection of intertexts create or contribute to an indirectly expressed poetic message or feeling.10 Du Fu’s most engaging allusive poems are built upon allusive layers that harmonize in semiotic ways.

Allusion and the Risks of Over-interpretation

Any strategy that endeavors to read more into Du Fu’s allusions than previous scholars have done may be open to accusations of reading poetry in ways unintended by Du Fu. Is it fruitful, or simply contrived, to provide semiotic readings of poems written for valedictory occasions, for example? Are we taking things too far when we offer complex readings of poems that have always hitherto been read as historical commentaries, such as the suites of long, ancient-style verses like “Eight Laments,” (“Ba ai shi” 八哀詩, Dsxz 16.1372) or short regulated quatrains like “Eight Phalanx Design” (“Bazhen tu” 八陣圖, Dsxz 15.1278)? While traditional scholars have provided some of these poems with semiotic readings, sometimes these readings are

10 In this study, I use the term “intertext” in the general sense of any written material, external to a poem, which is considered by the reader to be relevant to an interpretation of that poem. For “intertextuality” I make use of the technical conception advocated by Julia Kristeva, i.e., the manner in which a sign system in a text may be transformed into a parallel sign system; see citation below.
seen as speculative or contentious. In other cases, suites of poems like the “Eight Laments,” for example, no unified readings seem possible.

Although it is of dubious value to inquire into a poet’s intentions, it is certainly important to provide context for an interpretation, insofar as this contextualizing information may be reconstructed from sources contemporary with the poet. An informed reader considers, for example, whether an interpretation is in any way anachronistic, or presents the poem in ways that forces it into conflict with conventional poetic praxis. To this end, I support my semiotic readings with frequent reference to other poems and poetry writing manuals that circulated during Du Fu’s time. With some exceptions, traditional Chinese poetry (even more than modern Chinese poetry, for example) was meant to be read as a faithful record of experience. It is also useful, therefore, to also juxtapose an interpretation against the historical circumstances of the poet, addressee, and any other persona mentioned in a poem, while at the same time acknowledging that these histories are often themselves reconstructed in a speculative way. There are, of course, many excellent attempts at biography for Du Fu, and I cautiously avail myself of the two best modern works in this vein.

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11 Even the seemingly straightforward reading of “Fine Lady” presented above is contested by David Hawkes, who argues that the poem actually contains no elements of allegory, and is in fact a faithful description of a real situation that may have been experienced by Du Fu; see Hawkes, A Little Primer of Tu Fu, 81.

With regard to the basic process of identifying individual allusions, I propose to avoid speculating about authorial intention, while at the same time steering clear of overinterpretation, by relying on the concept of “verifiability”. In this way, the literary phenomenon of allusion may be couched as “the verifiable and meaningful linkages between a poem and its intertexts.”

13 The presence of allusion is “verifiable” when two or more of the following conditions are met: a. the syntax of the alluding line does not make sense unless a particular intertext is recalled; b. the specific phrasing in the alluding line is identical to the phrasing in a number of other earlier texts that all allude to the same intertext; c. the interpretive implications of the tentatively identified allusion strongly reinforce other allusions, imagery, ideas, and expressions in the alluding poem; d. the poem elsewhere makes direct reference to a specific historical period to which the intertext also belongs; e. the intertext is echoed or alluded to again elsewhere in the alluding poem.

14 My definition of allusion is a simplification of the oft-quoted formulation by Ziva Ben-Porat: “literary allusion is a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts. The activation is achieved through the manipulation of a special signal: a sign (simple or complex) in a given text characterized by an additional larger “referent.” This referent is always an independent text. The simultaneous activation of the two texts thus connected results in the formation of intertextual patterns whose nature cannot be predetermined.” See Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature 1 (1976), 170. My reduced version of Ben-Porat’s definition may be contrasted with that of Earl Miner, who sees the figure in line with authorial intention: allusion is “a poet’s deliberate incorporation of identifiable elements from other sources, preceding or contemporaneous, textual or extratextual.” Earl Miner, “Allusion,” in The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 39. Pucci points out the problem with this kind of definition that is based on authorial intention: “the connection of the two phrases that compose the allusion can only occur in the mind of the reader, who is reminded by virtue of shared language of a connection between a later set of words and an earlier set, and who configures on his own terms the interpretive outcomes of this
e. Du Fu as a Collection of Earlier Voices

It may seem that allusion is an unlikely candidate on which to base an entire interpretive strategy, but Du Fu’s earliest readers also sensed that this figure, or something like it, was central to his poetic representation. Before we embark on detailed semiotic readings of his poems underpinned by a critical focus on allusion, then, it is important that we learn what we can from these traditional perspectives.

Du Fu’s tomb inscription, by Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831 CE), represents one of the earliest extant generalizations about Du Fu’s contribution to the literary tradition, and heralds the beginning of a long tradition of perceiving him as an intertextual poet.

[Du Fu] combined the concentrated spirit individually achieved by all previous writers.

兼人人之所獨專矣。15


Du Fu may be compared.\(^{16}\) Because of the lauditory context in which we find Yuan’s famous statement, one may argue that it is simply elliptical praise, and does not represent reasoned literary judgement. What is, however, unique about Yuan’s famous claim is his emphasis that Du Fu’s accomplishments emerge through a “combination” of the qualities of earlier writers, rather than just saying he was better than, or as good as, his predecessors.

The converse of Yuan’s claim is that Du Fu’s poetry actually contained traces of the spirit of earlier writers. There is no way of knowing exactly what Yuan considered a manifestation of “spirit,” but we might assume it can be perceived as a textual trace: if not through quotation, echo, or allusion, then through an appropriation of generic style. We may be tempted to borrow a Bhaktinian concept to translate Yuan’s view: for Du Fu, the preceding literary masters are seen as “texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them.”\(^{17}\)

**Allusion and the Sage of Poetry**

The most famous reformulation of the line from Yuan’s inscription was penned by the *ci* poet Qin Guan 秦觀 (1049-1100 CE). Qin Guan christened Du Fu a sage modelled after Confucius:

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\(^{16}\) A tombstone epigraph, according to Lu Ji 魯楫 (261-303 CE) in his “Rhapsody on Literature” (*Wen fu* 文賦), should contain a balance of *wen* (here “patterned ornamentation,” i.e., prosodic flattery) and *zhi* 質 (i.e., what is “substantial” or factual); see *Wenxuan*, 17.766.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
Without gathering the strengths of prior literati, even Du Fu could not arrive at this by himself. Did [his accomplishment] not owe itself to his making [what he gathered] appropriate and relevant to his own times? Mencius said, “Bo Yi was the sage who was unsullied; Yi Yin was the sage who accepted responsibility; Liu Xia Hui was the sage who was agreeable; Confucius was the sage who was timely. This is why it is said Confucius gathered together [the qualities of the other sages] into a grand achievement.” Alas, Du Fu and Han Yu are perhaps the ones who gathered together [the qualities of earlier masters’] poetry and prose into great accomplishments!

不集諸家之長，杜氏亦不能獨至於斯也。豈非適當其時故邪？
孟子曰：伯夷，聖之清者也；伊尹，聖之任者也；柳下惠，聖之和者也；孔子，聖之時也。孔子之謂集大成。嗚呼，杜氏、韓氏，亦集詩文之大成者歟！

This passage resulted in the now common honorific ji da cheng shi ren 集大成詩人 (“the poet who gathered [the qualities of earlier masters] into one great accomplishment”) as well as the appellation shi sheng 詩聖 (“poet-sage”), both of which have been applied liberally to Du Fu up to the present day.  

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18 For Qin Guan’s 淮海集 (1049-1100) “Lun Han Yu” 論韓愈, see Hua Wenxuan, Du Fu juan, 1: 139, citing Huaihai ji 淮海集, juan 22. The portion of my translation quoting Mencius is modified from D.C. Lau, Mencius (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 150.

19 After it was repeated in Yan Yu’s Canglang Shihua – see Ding Fubao, Lidai shihua xubian, 693 – the appellation became nearly synonymous with Du Fu’s name.
In the *Mencius*, as Qin Guan was aware, the sagely characteristic of being “timely” is predicated on an awareness of the ritual appropriateness of when to act. This kind of sagacity is held to be superior to, and a synthesis of, the sagely virtues of being “unsullied,” “accepting of responsibility” and “easygoing.” Although Qin Guan is not primarily concerned with Du Fu’s knowledge of ritual, he compares Confucius to Du Fu in order to emphasize the latter’s “timely” appropriation of the tradition he inherited.

Both Yuan Zhen and Qin Guan make explicit what sources Du Fu appropriated. Here is the lineage from which Qin proposed that Du Fu “gathered” his literary qualities:

As for Du Fu’s poetry: he truly accumulated the strengths of the many literati, and made it appropriate and relevant to his own time. In previous times, Su Wu’s [2nd century BCE] and Li Ling’s [?–74 BCE] verse was strong in lofty excellence; Cao Zhi’s [192–232 CE] and Liu Gonghan’s [Liu Zhen; ?–217 CE] poetry was strong in untrammelled abandon; Tao Qian’s [365–427 CE] and Ruan Ji’s [210–263 CE] verse was strong in tranquillity and simplicity; Xie Lingyun’s [385–433 CE] and Bao Zhao’s [414–466 CE] verse was strong in noble purity; Xu Ling’s [507–582 CE] and Yu Xin’s [512–580 CE] verse was strong in ornate elegance. And then Du Fu’s verse exhausted the style of lofty excellence, reached the ultimate in the spirit of untrammelled abandon, encapsulated the taste of tranquillity and simplicity, completed the manner of noble purity,
and fully set forth the appearance of ornate elegance. This is the reason all prior literati could not reach his [accomplishment].

These early landmarks of Du Fu’s historical reception heralded a long tradition of searching for traces of other texts, and the spirit of other writers, within Du Fu’s poetry. This sort of project was certainly not unique to the study of Du Fu’s poetry, but there was among traditional critics a special vigour and intensity of focus on the search for figures such as allusion in Du Fu’s work, figures seen to encapsulate the ways in which an author had appropriated his masters.

Allusion as Craft or Organizing Principle?

The idea that something about Du Fu’s poetry requires extra attention to the intertextuality of his writings has spawned a small collection of well-known studies on allusion in his poetry. In the following pages, I argue that although these studies are important in various ways, they all focus on the limited resonances that allusion may have with the alluding line, rather than expanding the analysis to situate allusion within the context of the whole poem. I will begin with Chou Shan’s modern study, and then proceed to discuss some interesting commentaries on allusion found in

Hua Wenxuan, *Du Fujuan*, 1: 139.
shihua texts, a form that focuses on various fine points of poetic craftsmanship rather than on holistic interpretations of texts.

**A Taxonomical Approach to Du Fu’s Use of Allusion: The “Eight Laments”**

Chou Shan’s PhD dissertation on Du Fu’s “Eight Laments” is an ambitious effort to catalogue the individual effects of different kinds of allusions within a given couplet. My study shares with Chou’s basic impulse to find in allusion a unifying principle that enables the reader to make sense of difficult poems, but differs greatly in methodology and conclusions drawn. The distinction between Chou’s couplet-focused approach and my approach that constantly seeks to integrate allusion with the whole poem is important and deserves elucidation.

Rather than pursue allusion as a possible unifying element in other difficult poems, as my study attempts to do, Chou drills down into the “Eight Laments” in order to explore the nature and range of allusion within the context of the alluding lines. The “Eight Laments,” when considered as a suite of poems, have resisted previous efforts to discover semiotic unity between them. Chou rightly proposes that, because of its preponderance in this suite of poems, allusion should play a unifying role, but the only feature of allusion that she settles on in this regard is allusion’s contribution to unity in poetic texture. Her focus is therefore on the couplet rather than the poem as a whole. She argues convincingly that these poems do not invite reductive efforts at making them cohere, but rather serve as emotional “journal entries,” which were meant to be read alongside the historical records of the men they elegized.21 She

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21 Her argument here should be distinguished from the central theory of her later book, in which she argues that Du Fu intentionally “juxtaposed” divergent material in the works that he wrote late in life;
nicely describes Du Fu’s achievement in these poems, which is characterized by
lyrical diversity instead of concord:

He did not exclude sentiment for an ideal of consistency. His sense
of poetic unity was commodious – or loose – enough to include in
the “Eight Laments” intense, directly stated emotion and
declamatory, oblique narration; pathos and dignity; descriptions of
simple pleasures and stylized references to emperor, state, and to
civic virtues. 22

She generalizes about the poetry in her conclusions, in an effort to discover the
generic features of allusion within the langue of Tang poetry. The result is a range of
taxonomies of allusion and “periphrasis,” the latter term framed as the larger parent
category to which allusion belongs.

see Eva Shan Chou, Reconsidering Tu Fu: Literary Greatness and Cultural Context (Cambridge, MA:
Cambridge University Press, 1995), 109-110 and passim. The latter point is an expansion of one made
earlier in Hirose Tansō 幹朝淡窗 (1782-1856 CE), Tansōshiwa 淡窗詩話 (Tanso’s remarks on
poetry), reprinted in Nihon shiwa sōho 日本詩話叢書, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Tokyo Bunkaido, 1920), 4: 18,
cited in Chou, Reconsidering Tu Fu, 117.

22 See Chou Shan, “Tu’Fu’s ‘Eight Laments’: Allusion and Imagery as Modes of Poetry” (PhD diss.,
Harvard, 1984), 27. The sections of her dissertation dealing with allusion were later published as Chou
Shan, “Allusion and Periphrasis as Modes of Poetry in Tu Fu’s ‘Eight Laments,’” Harvard Journal of
Asiatic Studies 45, no. 1 (1985), 77-128. For the reader’s convenience, I refer to the latter publication
instead of the earlier dissertation wherever possible.
Chou's taxonomical contribution is useful, because the larger effort to discover the role that allusion plays within a whole poem is founded upon an understanding of how it functions within the couplet. Within the confines of the line or couplet, Chou argues, the effects of allusion are unpredictable, and may range from shallow to deep. By “unpredictable,” she means a situation in which a poem creates a “need for the reader to derive his own balance” between “expository fact” and allusion, in such a way that cannot be predicted by a reader familiar with earlier examples of the same allusion.\(^23\) Shallow allusions (for example those in many poems of praise) include those that serve only to praise a contemporary man as “another X,” where X is a famous historical figure.\(^24\) Chou observes that traditional critics measure the quality of allusions of this kind by measuring only the degree to which the comparison is realistic; Qiu Zhao’ao 仇兆鰲 (1640-1714 CE), for example, criticizes an allusion that compares Yan Wu to Zhuge Liang as praise that is out of step with known biographical details about the former.\(^25\)

In contrast, Chou observes that some praise allusions go further than simply comparing one man to another; a deeper element of emotion may accrue to them. The example given by Chou is an allusion comparing Zhang Jiuling 張九齡 (678-740 CE)...

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\(^{24}\) The examples given by Chou in her section on the shallow allusions of praise are not what most Western scholars would call “allusion” in the strictest sense. They are more accurately called “historical references,” because they directly name historical personalities and do not require the reader to discover resonances with any particular written text – neither in the sense of a written document (like a biography in a dynastic history), nor of a widely held opinion identifiable in other texts concurrent with Du Fu’s poems.

to two imperial tutors in the Han dynasty, who retired after successfully and honourably completing their work. The events described in this portion of Du Fu’s poem on Zhang Jiuling involve a demotion from which Zhang’s career was never to recover. Zhang is thus not primarily praised in the comparison (although an element of praise is present); rather, his unhappy circumstances are made more tragic when contrasted with the earlier model of honourable retirement. The reason that this allusion is deeper, Chou argues, is because the additional emotional element enables the alluding line to convey more complexity.

Such allusions of praise, initiated by historical reference, are only one of many similar examples that illustrate the varying degrees of depth of impact that a given allusion might have within the alluding line. Chou identifies another spectrum of shallow to deep allusions within lines that contain imagery. Shallow allusions include the phrase “buzzing blue flies,” (qing ying fen yingying 青蝇紛營營) which acts as a simple metaphor for slanderers at court, and which Du Fu borrowed allusively from the Shijing (Mao 219). In the case of Du Fu’s poem, the flies are not represented as a physical presence within the scene as it is described in the poem, and so the reader replaces “flies” with “slanderers.” There is no further resonance between the poem and the intertext.

Allusions, according to Chou, take on deeper significance when they bring poignant emotional elements from the intertext, which causes the reader to reconfigure their

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26 Dxxz 16.1379.

semantic or syntactic understanding of the images in the alluding line in the poem. 28 This is in fact a common procedure when reading allusions, and limits our appreciation of the origins of "depth" in Du Fu's allusions. Chou's examples include a "white feathered fan," which seems to describe a real object in the tomb of Li Guangbi (708-764 CE), the subject of the second of the "Eight Laments."

The specificity of the white feathers in the fan causes the reader to recall an intertext: namely, a legend demonstrating Zhuge Liang's skill at conducting military manoeuvres through minute movements of his own white-feathered fan. 29 The imagery contained in the alluding line is preserved (the reader is still able to imagine the chilling image of a fan in Li's tomb), and the allusion animates this image with an expressive scene from the legend of Zhuge. This and many other examples of "deeper" allusions contained in Chou Shan's study contribute a taxonomy of allusion which, although providing a useful resource to readers, does not demonstrate how allusion may serve the reader in developing interpretations of entire poems. She therefore stops short of discovering the broader reasons why Du Fu's allusions are "deep."

A similar kind of taxonomical approach was taken earlier by Chou's mentor, James Robert Hightower, in his pioneering study of allusion in Tao Qian's poetry. 30 Hightower's focus is on the range of functions, or kinds of resonance, an apparent

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28 Ibid., 119.
29 Ibid., 118.
30 Chou Shan acknowledges her debt to Hightower's taxonomy, and proposes that her interests correspond to his second and third categories; see "Allusion and Periphrasis," 128. Her study actually restricts itself to Hightower's second category only, even when the allusions may seem to have a more global effect.
allusion can have within an individual poem. He proposes seven categories of allusion:

(1) The allusion is the subject of the 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 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 does not contribute 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.31

Clearly, students of allusion would be most attracted to examples that fall within the first four categories, because they involve contribution to the poem’s “meaning,” however this word may be defined.

In summary, the taxonomic approach adopted by Chou and Hightower adequately accounts for allusions in isolation, but not in the context of the whole poem.

Hightower’s first category would seem to explore the more global effects of allusion, but does not accommodate allusions that do not serve as the subject of a poem, but which have implications for the interpretation of the poem as a whole. Similarly, his third category, though helpful, still limits the interpretation of allusion to the level of the line; after the allusive code is cracked within the line, the resultant reductive meaning is then situated within the poem.

*Allusion with No Marks: Key Concerns of Song Shihua*

In the earliest phases of the study of Du Fu’s poetry, in the *Shihua* of the Northern Song period (960-1127 CE), allusion is discussed as an ornamental add-on rather than an integral part of poetic composition. This was a natural consequence of the genre tendencies of the *shihua*, which invited commentary on the craftsmanship of the couplet and did not encourage over-arching interpretations of entire poems.³² This focus on the couplet is, of course, a valid concern of literary criticism, with its origins in the *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*Pattern, Mind, and the Carving of Dragons*).³³ But

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³² See Ronald Egan, *The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 101. Egan’s principal argument, in this refreshing essay on the generic features of “remarks on poetry,” is that such remarks were an “alternate space that allowed for the consideration and exploration of literary topics that would be hard to pursue in more formal genres, such as the essay or treatise” (107).

³³ The “Li ci” 風什 chapter, for example, is devoted to the vagaries of the couplet; see *Wenxin diaolong* (SBCK) 7.8. For a discussion of the couplet “as a lyric in miniature,” see Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-
the writings of this very early period offer us little assistance when attempting to interpret the often complex manner in which allusions may have a global effect on the poem's interpretation. Only gradually did scholars expand their views on the role of allusion in poetry, as we will see in the following section.

**Allusions Concealed in the Couplet: Huang Che's Views**

The first extant explicit analysis of the types and quality of Du Fu's allusions was written by Huang Che 黄徹 (*jinshi* 1124 CE) in his *Gongxi shihua 碧溪詩話* (*Gong Creek's remarks on poetry*). His comments on Du Fu's use of allusion also form the bulk of the material in the section on "allusion" (*yong shi 用事*) of Ruan Yue's 阮閱 (fl. 1126 CE) influential *Shihua zong gui 詩話總龜* (*General Compendium of Remarks on Poetry*).

Whereas the bulk of the present dissertation pursues the capacity of Du Fu's allusions to provide an understanding of the deeper significance of his poems, scholars of the Northern Song period have proposed that his most significant achievement with allusion (as an element of his craft, rather than as a unifying force) resides in the fact that it was "concealed." In the Chinese poetic tradition (see examples below), the


34 There is some debate about the correct graph for Huang Che's given name and his *jinshi* dates. I follow Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, *Song shihua kao 宋詩話考* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979), who argues that *Gong 碧* is the correct graph in the title of Huang's work, in spite of the prevalence of the variant *Bi 碧* in many early citations.
notion of concealment enjoys a higher degree of importance as an indication of good poetic craftsmanship than is indicated by either Chou’s or Hightower’s taxonomies.

Huang Che’s taxonomy, by comparison, identifies the manner in which allusion may denote a high degree of skill, and as such functions quite unlike the “spectrum of allusions” identified by Chou Shan. Huang’s taxonomy highlights Du Fu’s ability to “conceal” allusions:

Xiao [Bin 薛] (zi Wenhuan, fl. 514) could write and paint well. He drew landscapes on fans in very small scale, but one still senses a distant span of tens of thousands of miles. Du Fu’s “Xi ti shanshui tu” [“Playfully Written on a Landscape Painting,” Dszx 9.754] says: “This artist excels even the ancients in the painting of distant landscapes / There must be tens of thousands of miles to the foot.” It would seem there is no allusion [to Xiao] on cursory reading. Consider also, “Since my son is in armour and helmet, I perform the salute to part with the high officials.” This alludes to the line “knights in full armour do not make obeisance [to the Emperor].” The couplet “If women are amongst the troops, I am afraid it does not support the martial mood” alludes to “are there women

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35 See Du Fu’s “Chuilao bie” (Parting Song of He Who is No Longer Young,” Dszx 7.534).
36 See the biography of General Zhou Yafu 周亞夫, d. 143 BCE. (Shiji 57.2074). On the occasion of the Emperor touring the General’s military camp, which had been prepared against an imminent attack by the massed Xiongnu’s, Zhou did not put down his weapons, but rather performed a normal military salute to the Emperor and purportedly made the comment quoted here.
amongst my troops?" These both allude to the meaning but conceal the language. 這些都寓言語，於扇上圖山水，咫尺之內，便覺萬里為遙。老杜《戲題山水圖》云：「尤工遠勢古莫比，咫尺應論須萬里。」乍讀似非用事。如「男兒既介胄，長揖別上官」，用「介胄之士不拜」；「婦人在軍中，兵氣恐不揚」，用「軍中豈有女子乎」。皆用其意而隱其語。 

Thus, although my study is primarily concerned with allusion in the context of entire poems, the subtleties of the craft of creating allusive couplets is an aesthetic effect that should not be ignored. The concealing impulse described by Huang Che, however, is not as clearly manifested in Du Fu’s oeuvre as in that of his predecessors Wang Wei and Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689-740 CE). Although some of Du Fu’s poems, such as “Eight Phalanx Design” (discussed in Chapter 2) and “Gazing at the [Eastern] Marchmount” (discussed in Chapter 4), evidence allusions that are seamlessly woven into the poem, it is more common for Du Fu’s allusions to be “well marked” (a feature that I discuss in Chapters 1 and 3), and sometimes even to be highly conventional.

Thus, in highlighting the existence of Du Fu’s concealed allusions, even though he does not consider them the principal strength of Du Fu’s poetry, Huang does seem to be part of the project, common in the Northern Song tradition, of elevating Du Fu above all other poets. The art of “concealing” allusions was indeed one of the most

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38 In Han shu 54.2453 this comment is attributed to General Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 BCE), upon inquiring about the lack of enthusiasm in his camp.

39 See Ruan Yue 司閑 (fl. 1126), Shi hua zong gui 詩話總敘 (SBCK), hou ji 22.1b.
praised qualities of High Tang poetry; the idea that allusions may be “concealed” is equivalent to an alternative expression: the poet left behind “no marks” (wu henji 無痕迹), which is an epithet typically applied to a brilliantly allusive couplet.

The provenance of this latter term as praise for allusion or imitation in poetry goes back at least to the late Tang. Wang Dingbao 王定保 (870-after 954 CE), 40 for example, writes that a finely wrought imitation weaves the old into the new “like gold thread tied and pressed into silk embroidery, without any marks” (可謂鍊金結織，而無痕跡). 41 The lack of “marks” refers to a seamless union between the imitator and the imitated. Later, this kind of praise was also put in more general terms: Yan Yu’s famous dictum praises writers’ capacity to manipulate the mechanics of their craft “like the antelope that hangs [from a tree] by its horns, leaving no traces to be found” (羚羊掛角, 無跡可求). 42

Huang Che also extended Huang Tingjian’s 黃庭堅 (1045-1105 CE) famous statement:


In Du Fu’s composing of verse and Han Yu’s composing of essays, there is not one word that does not come from a certain source. Probably because later generations do not read enough, they say that Han Yu and Du Fu made these expressions up themselves. Those of old who were able to compose literature were able to model the myriad phenomena. They took the expressions of the ancients and entered them into brush and ink – it was like a pill of Spirit Cinnabar; it touches iron and turns it into gold.

Huang Che developed this into specific praise for Du Fu’s concealed allusions:

Du Fu wrote, “In feelings and behaviour, I am pleased by double clarity,” and “Tea and melons retain the guest a long time.” These lines seem not to contain allusions. Observe Xie Lingyun’s “Zhai zhong shi” (“Lyric Written in my Study,” Wenxuan 30.1398), which says: “What is more, I am back among mountains and streams, and both my mind and body are empty.” The King of Jingling, [Xiao] Ziliang (460-94 CE), was courteous towards good


45 See “Si shangren maozhai” 已上人茅齋 (“The Thatched Study of Reverend Si,” Dszx 1.16).
men of talent, and when guests arrived during summer months he would arrange to provide them with melon juice and sweet fruits. These two poems allude to these texts. As for Du Fu’s “Zong fuzi” (“Palm wood feather duster,” *Dsxz* 12.1030), which says: “the flies gnaw on my skin and I tire of battling with them; I rely on you, marvellously brushing them away in front of me;” although it is a mundane topic, not one word is without a textual source. 

杜「心跡喜雙清」、「茶瓜留客遠」，似非用事。觀靈運《齊中詩》云：「矧乃歸山川，心跡雙寂寞。」竟陵王子良禮才好士，愛(夏)月客至為設瓜飲甘果。二詩蓋用此，至若《搆拂子》云：「啣膚倦撲滅，賴爾甘服膚。」雖等閒題目，無一
字無出處。⁴⁶

Huang Tingjian’s broad assertions about the precedented language of Du Fu’s poetry, and Huang Che’s contention that allusion is a subset of this phenomenon, reveal more about the Northern Song poetic agenda than they do about Du Fu’s poetry.⁴⁷ Their call to seek for precedents in Du Fu’s lines where often should be found had wide-ranging effects upon readers. However, it seems that Huang Che, for one, was not prone to intertextual over-interpretation. The examples he cites in the above two passages, as with the two translated below, are all verifiable allusions. They are not,

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⁴⁶ Ruan Yue, *Shihua zong gui*, 22.1b.

however, very useful for our project to situate Du Fu’s allusions within the semiotics of the structure of entire poems.

On the other hand, Huang Che introduces another concept that, although falling short of situating allusion within the context of the poetry as a whole, nevertheless offers a useful starting point for the quest to understand the relationship between intertexts and couplets. His principle observation, similar to the one cited above, was that Du Fu’s allusions are often preceded and conditioned by earlier poems that allude to the same intertexts.

Regarding the composition of poetry, just as there are textual sources for historical allusions, there may also be different sources for the language used to evoke those allusions. [Du Fu’s third quatrain in “Autumn Meditations” contains] an example, “By the Five Mausoleums in light cloaks they ride their sleek horses.” Although the allusion is from the Analects [6.2], Fan Yun (451-502 CE) encapsulates these words: “furs and horses are all light and fat.”

This aspect of Huang’s taxonomy is crucial to the study of allusion because it provides us with a means of understanding allusive nuances that would have been immediately obvious to readers within the Tang elite reading community, because they would have been familiar with vast numbers of earlier allusive precedents in the

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48 Ruan Yue 阮閱 (fl. 1126 CE), Shihua zong gui, houji 22.3b.
way that Huang suggests. I will rely on this point in establishing my arguments in Chapter One in particular. In pointing out this important quality — that some allusions are tempered by earlier precedents — Huang Che is at odds with many modern scholars of Tang poetry. Chou Shan, for example, argues that “the [allusive] relationship... is not based on associations created by the poetic conventions of the poet’s period; it is created by a chain of connections between the situation in the poem and the situation in the allusion-story.”

The eminent scholars Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin also viewed allusion as expressing a simple relationship between a later poem and an earlier one; so straightforward is this relationship, they believe, that when the earlier text “is located, there is no need to do further research. The poet has that passage in mind when he uses the allusion. When we know that passage, we know as much as the poet, and that is enough.”

On the contrary, it is crucial for readers separated by so many centuries from the poet whose work they read to understand how allusion may have been tempered and nuanced by conventional praxis. As I argue in Chapter One, readers benefit from developing a sense of how a poet like Du Fu depends upon the reader’s perception of some allusions as “stock” and cliché. By trading on such assumptions, Du Fu is able to reorganize the presentation of allusion in order to communicate nuances such as irony.

More Allusive Taxonomy: Hu Yinglin

The taxonomic approach reached its pinnacle in the most famous and often-quoted evaluation of allusion in Du Fu’s poetry, by Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602 CE).

Basing his system on Huang Che’s fourfold taxonomy, Hu Yinglin created a pithy set of categories that encompasses a wide range of characteristics of the allusive couplet. Hu proposed that there are seven types of allusion in Du Fu’s poetry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>zheng yong 正用</th>
<th>allusion or reference whereby a comparison is made between one or more historical figures and a character in the poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fan yong 反用</td>
<td>contrastive reference/allusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ming yong 明用</td>
<td>(the couplet cited by Hu to illustrate this category does not seem to be qualitatively different from the couplet cited to explain zheng yong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an yong 暗用</td>
<td>concealed allusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bing yong 並用</td>
<td>juxtaposed allusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dan yong 單用</td>
<td>single allusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fen yong 分用</td>
<td>allusions that reflect separate intentions and effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chuan yong 串用</td>
<td>series of allusions (again, this seems to overlap with the bing yong category)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although this taxonomical approach to allusion may be relevant to the scholar of the couplet, it is not of primary importance to the reader focused on interpreting the poems as a whole. Like Huang Che, Hu Yinglin’s analysis presents only lines or

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couplets taken from Du Fu's poetry, and he does not speculate on the wider resonances within the rest of the poems from which the lines are drawn. The interpretive focus of both these scholars implies a concern only with the precise relationship between couplet and intertext. Of course, if they were writing for an audience interested in their views on the mechanics of Du Fu's poems, each in its entirety, one imagines that a taxonomical study of allusion would have far less importance than a study of the manner in which each allusion relates to other elements in the poem.

*The Pseudo-Su Shi Commentary: Pursuit of Allusive Minutiae*

Before developing my general approach to allusion in Du Fu's poetry, I wish to highlight the potential pitfalls of overzealousness in pursuing minor or unverifiable allusions. Huang Tingjian's idea that "there is not one word that does not come from a certain source" created tendencies in his own time of one-upmanship amongst scholars seeking to explain the origins of Du Fu's language. This should be kept in mind when we read important statements like that made by Wang Qi 王琪 (fl. 1059 CE), in his post face to the *Du Gongbuji* 杜工部集 compiled by Wang Zhu 王洙 (997-1057 CE):

Du Fu's broad knowledge and study of things ancient made it so that few know or knew the sources of Du Fu's allusions, except for old scholars and erudites. Therefore, errors and omissions have long persisted.
Although Wang Qi and Wang Zhu produced the first authoritative anthology of Du Fu's poetry, on which all modern editions are based, they did not include commentary that might have rectified the misunderstandings they identified among other scholars' readings of Du Fu's allusions. This certainly does not mean that such commentaries were not in circulation; besides the well-known one by Zhao Yancai 趙彥材 (fl. ca. 1131-1144 CE), a fascinating commentary falsely attributed to Su Shi 蘇軾 (sobriquet Dongpo 東坡, 1037-1101 CE) was also in wide circulation in the 12th century. This work, lost before the Qing dynasty, was known under various titles, including *Su Dongpo’s Commentary on Allusion in Du Fu* (Dongpo Du shi gushi 東坡杜詩故事), *Su Dongpo’s Explanations of Du Fu’s Poems* (Dongpo Du shi jie shi 東坡杜詩解), and then finally *The Bogus Su Dongpo Commentary* (Jia Po zhu 假坡註).  


53 There is controversy about Zhao's dates; my estimate is derived from the convincing argument put forth by Lin Jizhong, to the effect that Zhao lived during the early period of Shaoxing’s reign (1131-1162 CE) in the Southern Song period, and that his commentary on Du Fu was presented sometime between 1131-1144 CE. See Li's introduction to Zhao Yancai 趙彥材 (fl. Southern Song), *Du shi Zhao Cigong xianhou jiejijiao 杜詩趙次公先後解輯校*, ed. Lin Jizhong 林繼中 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1994), 1-3. Zhou Caiquan places him much earlier; see Zhou Caiquan 周采泉, *Du ji shu lu 杜集書錄*, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986), 1: 30.

**Huang Tingjian and Qiu Zhao’ao’s Commentarial Approach**

The fascination with the intertextuality of Du Fu’s poetry during the Northern Song period resulted in a long tradition of commentaries that are far more useful than the pseudo-Su Shi commentary in identifying allusions. Here I will mention the two most famous examples. Huang Tingjian’s *Du shijian* (Commentary on Du Fu’s Poetry), which is still extant and widely quoted in later commentaries, consists primarily of citations from intertexts that explain allusions or trace verbal echoes. This work may be seen as a practical application of Huang’s famous formulation about the extent of preceded language in Du Fu’s poetry. Although in *Du shijian* he does not explain if or how the intertexts he cites were “turned into gold” by Du Fu’s allusions, his work does evidence an overriding attention to the figure.

Qiu Zhao’ao’s *Du shi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳著 reflects a citation method that resembles that of *Du shijian*. His annotations also consist of prefaces to each poem and post faces to each major section within longer poems, which provide historical information about the poet’s circumstances relevant to the poem’s composition, lucid elucidations of how poems are structured and what each constituent element contributes to an interpretation, and an extensive compendium of previous commentaries. His major contribution to allusion scholarship lay in his running commentary to explain difficult lines of Du Fu’s poems. In this extensive scholarly effort, consisting mostly of

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55 See Hua Wenxuan, *Du Fujuan*, 1: 123-127. There is controversy about the authenticity of this work, but Zhou Caiquan presents convincing evidence for Huang’s authorship; see *Du ji shu lu*, 1: 447.
citations that identify allusions and precedented language, he resembles but goes far beyond the *Du shi jian*; indeed, other scholars did not equal the extent and accuracy of his citations before or since. Many of Qiu’s citations involve only a vague whisper of the earlier texts that he perceives to be present in Du Fu’s lines. In these cases, the tenuousness of the connections renders it unfruitful for the reader to consider all the narrative, literary, and/or historical implications of each citation in order to get a full mastery of appreciation of the aesthetic appeal in Du Fu’s poems. But the majority of Qiu’s citations do constitute real allusions, in the sense that the recollection of the original context and the import of the cited text contribute to the mimetic or semiotic effects of the poem. Readers who do not have an encyclopaedic knowledge of the pre-High Tang textual tradition may feel confident that the kind of scholarship of which Qiu’s work is the pinnacle has resolved most puzzles of reference presented by Du Fu’s difficult poetry.

Nonetheless – and returning to the main point of this dissertation – we can observe that, despite the sophistication of his work, Qiu is also unconcerned with the broader effects of allusion as they affect each poem in its entirety. Unlike many of his predecessors, mentioned above, Qiu does make invaluable observations about entire poems, observations that are usually oriented around the traditional polarity of scene versus emotion (*jing* 景/*qing* 情). I can find no instances where Qiu, or any other traditional critic, assigns allusion a pivotal place in their recorded interpretations. This is not to say that allusion did not, for these scholars and traditional readers, serve as a key interpretant. It is just that they did not see fit to assign allusion this role.
Once an intertext was cited, the integration of its meaning was presumably thought to be *bu jie er ming* 不解而明 – clear without elucidation.\(^{56}\)

**Towards a Broader View of Allusion in Du Fu – Global Allusion**

Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin’s work represents the most significant effort in Du Fu scholarship to characterize allusions that have global effects within Du Fu’s poems.

They define a global allusion as follows:

The effect of an 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. In the latter case, historical allusion also becomes an organizing principle.\(^{57}\)

Kao and Mei provide only one example of this phenomenon of global allusion. In an innovative analysis of Du Fu’s “Temple of Yu” ("Yu miao" 禹廟, *Dsxz* 14.1225), they conclude:

The poem then has two levels of meaning. At one level, every line is about the Temple of Yu or its immediate surroundings, and this physical focus unifies the poem. At another level, almost every line

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\(^{56}\) This is how modern scholars have assessed Qiu Zhao’ao’s citations of intertexts (to which he provides no explanation, as I have pointed out); see for example Zeng Yulian 曾亞蘭 and Zhao Ji 趙季, "Qiu Zhao’ao yi Chuci zhu Du shi 仇兆巋以楚辭注杜詩 ("Qiu Zhao’ao’s citations of the Chuci to annotate Du Fu’s poetry"), *Du Fu yanjiu xue kan 杜甫研究學刊* 60, no. 2 (1999), 34.

speaks to a momentous event in the past in terms of its present effect. The figure of Yu looms large behind all these events, and therefore serves as another unifying focus. Unlike the local use, the global use of historical allusion is capable of generating a new level of meaning for the entire poem as well as serving as an organizing principle.  

Here we see a perfect example of the kind of semiotic reading that I espouse in this dissertation, where allusion serves as the key to perceiving that the poem is much more than a sorrowful portrait of a neglected temple. Through allusion, the poem looks beyond the dead temple to the living presence of the mythological Great Yu [or Yu the Great One]. This effect is a common one in the poetry of Du Fu (see, for example, my analysis of his “Four Poems on Rain” in Chapter Three) and therefore well worth exploring further.

e. Thesis Outline

This study takes up Kao and Mei’s concept of a “global allusion” and develops it in order to promulgate a general approach to Du Fu’s allusive poems. In focusing on his allusive art, where most of my predecessors have not, I hope to achieve three goals. First, for poems long accepted as masterpieces, I aim to draw renewed attention to the

\[58\] Ibid., 331.
implications of allusion, which offer readers new dimensions for interpretation and, enable us to gain a clearer sense of how these poems differ from others not so highly regarded. Second, I argue that allusion is the basis on which some less studied poems may be re-evaluated. Third, I argue that Du Fu's mastery is founded not upon density of allusion but rather upon the variety of ways that allusions combine with other poetic elements to form distinct semiotic layers. These layers consist of networks of multiple allusions and other elements relevant to an informed reading of the whole poem. Each layer emerges from an iterative resituation of allusive intertexts against one another and the rest of the poem. In this reading strategy, allusion remains a prominent, evolving, and interrelated feature throughout the line by line reading and re-reading of the poem.

The study consists of four chapters, in which I explore the above claims, employing a twofold methodology. For each poem, or suite of poems, by Du Fu, I explore the role that allusion plays relative to the other signs of indirection in the poem, and examine how these signs combine to facilitate a semiotic interpretation. Second, I contextualize Du Fu's allusive technique by comparing his allusive poems with other poems from the High Tang period or earlier that allude to the same intertexts; and, whenever possible, I discuss allusive conventions, as depicted in early poetry composition manuals.

Chapter One demonstrates how even stock allusions of praise, plonked ostentatiously within occasional poems, can have both a global effect and pervasive semiotic implications. Chapter Two develops this idea further, by way of a detailed analysis of a famous quatrain ("Eight Phalanx Design") on a historical topic that has never been
read with attention to the subtle allusion contained within it. Chapter Three discovers wide-ranging resonances between allusion and imagery throughout a suite of *yongwu* poems ("Rain"), with the result that the poems may be seen for the first time as expressions of the deeply sensual. The last chapter finds, in a long-neglected Marchmount poem ("Gazing at the Southern Marchmount"), the crowning achievement of Du Fu's formidable powers of global allusion.
Chapter 1

Fan Li’s Boat in Du Fu’s Sea of Allusion

Introduction

One of Du Fu’s most characteristic figures is the boat. In the writings of few other Chinese poets do boats occur with such frequency as they do in his work, and they appear in some of Du Fu’s most famous poems: often moored or sailing alone, usually acting as metaphors for an authorial self. Perhaps the most famous (and un-allusive) of the couplets in which he imbues the image of a boat with his feelings appears in the first poem in the “Autumn Meditations” (“Qiu xing” 秋兴) suite. Following a description of the “desolate” scenery of the Three Gorges in autumn, Du Fu expresses his thoughts of home in the following couplet.

Clustered chrysanthemums have opened twice, in tears of other days:

The forlorn boat, once and for all, tethers my homeward thoughts.60

59 Among the several general terms for boats, it is illustrative to note that there are 249 occurrences of the zhou 舟, chuan 船 and fan 帆 in Du Fu’s 1457 lyrics. In comparison, the 1004 poems attributed to Li Bai, who spent a significant number of years wandering by boat in the intensively maritime south and south-east, contain only 113 occurrences of these same words.

The ambiguity here enables two readings of the authorial persona’s relationship to the boat, but it is clear in both cases that this image of a lonely vessel on the river is pregnant with feeling. In Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin’s words: “In the one case, the grammatical structure emphasizes the contrast between the boat tied up and the thoughts racing homeward, and in the other, the casual connection between two kinds of immobility, the boat being moored and the poet being tied to the boat.”\(^61\) Kao and Mei see Du Fu’s tethered “forlorn boat” as a physical object in the poet’s purview, something to which he is metaphorically tied. Kurokawa Yōichi 黒川洋一 takes this reading one step further, proposing that the boat itself is a “symbol of the poet’s loneliness, and as such appears frequently in poetry of his later years.”\(^62\)

\(^{61}\) The contrast between “racing” thoughts and a “tethered” boat is not present in Du Fu’s poem, but is the invention of Mei and Kao; see Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin, “Tu Fu’s “Autumn Meditations”: An Exercise in Linguistic Criticism,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 28 (1968), 78. A.C. Graham and others made the same observations earlier; see Graham, Poems of the Late Tang, 20.

\(^{62}\) See Kurokawa Yōichi, To Ho no kenkyū 杜甫の研究 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1977), 98. Kurokawa’s study on the “Autumn Meditations” (Kurokawa Yōichi, To Ho no kenkyū, 84-116) forms the third of a triumvirate of magisterial studies on this famous series of poems, along with Kao and Mei’s work cited above, and the “Jiaying commentaries” (Jiaying an 嘉業按). The latter is found in Ye Jiaying 葉嘉 espa, Du Fu ‘Qiuxing ba shou’ ji shuo 杜甫秋興八首集說 (1967; reprint, Shanghai guji, 1988), esp. 31-52 for interpretations of the whole suite. Since the publication of these studies, the “Autumn Meditations” have become the most intensely studied of Du Fu’s poems. Two recent studies, for example, address the issue of “scrambled syntax” in very different ways. Jiang Ruoshui 江曙水, in “Duyu yu mingxiang: Qiuxing bashou de xiandai guan” 獨語與冥想: 秋興八首的現代觀 (“Solitary Words and Meditations: a Modernist Perspective on the “Autumn Meditations”),” Wenxue yichan 文學遺產, no. 3
Whereas the boat in “Autumn Meditations” serves as a strong image, in other poems it appears not as a physical part of the landscape, but rather as an allusive link. The three poems that form the backbone of this chapter are less famous than this one, but nevertheless provide an ideal set of materials for analysis. In these poems, Du Fu gives his boats an allusive undercurrent, and I explore the different degrees to which these allusions are woven into a semiotic unity with the other allusions in the poems to present a focused message. The three poems are all occasional pieces: “Evening Banquet in the Zuo Family Villa” (“Ye yan Zuoshi zhuang” 夜宴左氏莊, Dszx 1.22), “Sending Pei Qiu to Assume his Post as Pacificator of Yongjia” (“Song Pei er Qiu wei Yongjia” 送裴二虬尉永嘉, Dszx 3.201), and “Presented to Admonisher Wei, the Seventh Son in the Wei clan” (“Zeng Wei qi zanshan” 賦韋七贊善, Dszx 22.2064).63

The composition dates of these poems, according to traditional estimates, span several decades, and the poems themselves are stylistically quite different. They do, however, share one particular allusion: to the legend of Fan Li (fl. 475 BC), a Warring

(2007), 70-71, explains that Du Fu’s difficult lines intentionally undermine the reader’s expectations of coherence. Daniel Hsieh, in “Fragrant Rice and Green Paulownia: Notes on a Couplet in Du Fu’s ‘Autumn Meditations’” (unpublished manuscript), on the other hand, finds new ways for the reader to reconstruct the grammatical structure of difficult lines by making extensive comparisons with other early Chinese writings on capital cities. I would like to thank Hsieh for sending me a draft version of this working paper in November 2007.

63 “Pacificator” is Paul W. Kroll’s translation of wei 銜; see Paul W. Kroll, “Basic Data on Reign-Dates and Local Government,” T’ang Studies 5 (1987), 103. All other translations of official titles in this dissertation are from Charles O. Hucker, A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), unless otherwise noted.
States period statesman who sailed off one day on a skiff (pian zhou 布舟) to live out his life away from politics. Fan Li makes frequent appearances in the poetry of the Six Dynasties period, and by the time of the High Tang, allusions and references to him had become so common that only a small fragment of the original legend – his skiff – was required to invoke his story.

I have selected this group of occasional poems, which all allude to the legend of Fan Li, because they illustrate an important aspect of Du Fu’s allusive art. The principle argument in this chapter is that, whereas in “Evening Banquet” allusion functions in the conventional manner of genteel, gentlemanly court poetry, in the other two poems allusion is enriched by being woven into a dense fabric of additional mutually reinforcing allusions. Furthermore, when reading the latter two poems, a steady critical focus on the interactions between the Fan Li legend and the other allusions rewards the reader with a clear sense of a unitary expressive force. The art of the poems is grounded in allusion.

I consider each poem separately, with a full analysis of its mimetic structure and semiology, and a focus on the contributions of allusion to both. In addition, I contextualize the unique artfulness of Du Fu’s manipulation of allusion in this way, by citing a number of other poems by Du Fu’s predecessors that also allude to a circle of legends. I will also discuss a poetry-writing manual that illustrates the conventional application of allusions in Du Fu’s time.
1. A Genteel Allusion at an Evening Banquet

I present the first poem as a foil to the relative semiotic complexity of the other two poems in this chapter, and a text to which they may be fruitfully compared. This first piece is a finely wrought but much less successful work of art than the other two, because of its failure to generate any deep meaning.

"An Evening Banquet at the Zuo Family Villa" 夜宴左氏莊

(Dsxz 1.22)

1. Gentle forest breeze, the slender moon sets,
   Robes wet with dew, a quiet zither is taken out.
2. A hidden brook flows beneath the flowery path.
   Spring stars hang from our thatched hall.
   Examining the sword, taking time to drink long.
4. As our poems finished, we hear Wu chanting.
   Our feelings for the skiff are not forgotten.

林風纖月落，衣濕靜琴張。
暗水流花徑，春星帶草堂。
檢書燒燭短，看劍引杯長。
詩罷聞吳詠，扁舟意不忘。

Mimetic Reading - Making Sense of Swords, Books, and Wu Chanting
This regulated pentasyllabic lyric is the product of a poetry contest held at the holiday villa of a wealthy family named Zuo. The existence of a contest can be inferred from the phrase “candles burn short,” referring to a standard timing mechanism for events such as poetry contests, combined with the mention of a book and a sword, which are most readily interpreted as family heirlooms brought out to serve as inspiration for the versifiers.64 While it is possible that this poem was instead composed by Du Fu in some other, perhaps more private occasion that involved reading and drinking alone until the candle burned short, we can find no way to derive any significance from his mention of the sword. One implication of reading this poem as a depiction of a poetry writing contest is that Du Fu’s poem was itself most likely a contribution to the contest, and would have been collected into a set, graced by a preface, designed to commemorate the occasion.

This organizing principle would have generated many points of similarity and contrast between the poems in the contest, and one of the most interesting interpretive implications involves Du Fu’s mention of “Wu chanting.” One way of interpreting this poem’s last line is that the completed poems at the contest were chanted in Wu dialect. This would imply that the poems were all most likely composed in south-eastern mode (Wu diao 吳調, sometimes referred to as Wu ge 歌 or Wu sheng 聲, but distinguished from Wu ti 體, the latter implying a particular prosodic pattern rather than the adoption of regional expressions or rhymes).65 Another interpretive


65 Guo Shaoyu describes the characteristics of the Wu ti form in “Lun Wu ti” 論吳體 (“On Wu ti”) in his Zhaoyu shi gudian wenxue lunji 照隅室古典文學論集, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1983), 2:
possibility requires that we imagine the poem to have been composed in China’s south-east, and that the final line implies that Wu chanting was heard somewhere in the vicinity after the poems were completed. William Hung follows this reading, and argues that this allows us to identify “Evening Banquet” as the earliest extant writing in Du Fu’s corpus, because Du Fu traveled extensively in the south-east when he was young. According to this idea, which is highly speculative, the contest took place sometime between 722 and 735 CE.

The mere mention of the Wu dialect, however, does not necessarily mean that the contest took place in south-east China. I see no reason not to follow the traditional estimate for this poem’s composition, i.e., 741 CE, which was a time when Du Fu was probably living in the suburbs of Luoyang. Following this dating, we surmise that the mention of Wu chanting relates to the terms of the contest: it is likely that the poets were required to demonstrate some affinity with the south-eastern mode of diction. As Qiu Zhao’ao suggests, Wu yin 吳音 (the Wu dialect) would have been an appropriate dialect in which to chant the finished products of the poetry competition.

466-67. On the characteristics and origins of the Wu diao and the Wu ti, and their influence on Du Fu, see Kuang Jianxing 鄭健行, Du Fu xin yi ji 杜甫新議集 (Taipei: Wan juan lou, 2004), 127-140. Kuang argues that, whereas Wu diao originated in south-eastern folksong, Wu ti did not.

66 A variation on Hung’s theory, put forward by Pu Qilong, involves the speculation that Wu chanting may have meant lowbrow songs sung by servants or passers by, heard by the party goers. This unlikely theory does not require that the party was set in the south-east, but it fits the theory better if it were; see Ddx3 3.342. This is also the view of Wang Sishi; see Dy 1.7.

67 See Hung, Tu Fu: China’s Greatest Poet, 24.

68 See Chen Yixin Du Fu ping zhuang, 1: 65.
mandating adherence to the south-eastern mode. While it may seem unlikely that northerners would be at all familiar with the Wu dialect, Stephen Owen observes that the “south-eastern literary mode,” involving colloquial phrases and music associated with the south-east, was very popular and influential throughout China in the eighth century as a counterpoint to court poetry. The poem may thus be read as a mimetic description of a banquet one clear evening at an estate garden, probably near Luoyang, at which fine gentlemen are competing with each other at composing poetry in the popular south-eastern mode.

**“Evening Banquet” as Estate Poetry**

“Evening Banquet” also follows the conventions of what Stephen Owen calls “estate poetry,” by focusing its imagery on the borders between man and nature, in order to emphasize the poetic conceit of reclusion from elite society. Recognizing the ease with which the poem follows these established conventions necessarily involves an admiration of Du Fu’s craftsmanship, an acknowledgement of the skill with which he describes just the right elements of the garden scene to develop a mood. This mood, along with the circumstances of the poem’s composition, suggests that the “Evening Banquet” may indeed be classified as an estate poem. Owen summarizes the estate poet’s approach to imagery as follows:

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69 For Qiu’s observations, see Dszz 1.22. It is not clear if poems in this mode could also be written in regulated verse, as “Evening Banquet” is, yet it is not surprising that a poet like Du Fu would adapt formulaic conventions to his own purposes.


...there is a particular attention to junctures where something of Nature meets something artefactual and human. The poets are drawn to such margins where something of Nature leans on, presses against, bounces off, or tugs at the human presence. Active verbs in the “eye” of the line bear special weight. The architecture is not simply “in” the landscape: it is construed in an active relation-bending, avoiding, touching its natural surroundings.\(^{72}\)

These remarks precisely describe Du Fu’s second couplet, with the “hidden brook” flowing beneath one of the walking paths on the Zuo estate, and “spring stars” so bright and close they appear to “hang” from a thatched garden pavilion. Du Fu has followed the conventions of estate poetry by focusing on the subtle blend of the human elements in this banquet scene with the night-time sights and sounds of nature. His skill is such that the beautiful language of the first two couplets has been widely praised and imitated. Chen Yixin reinforces an idea originally put forward by Gu Chen 顧宸 (fl. 1663 CE) when he notes that “Evening Banquet” is one of Du Fu’s many poems that “depicts fine details while leaving no traces.”\(^{73}\)

**Semiotic Reading – the skiff**

As Qiu Zhao’ao notices (without commenting on the intertext he cites), the term “skiff” in Du Fu’s last line recalls the pivotal sentence in Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (ca. 145-86 BCE) retelling of the Fan Li legend: “[After proclaiming the dangers of

\(^{72}\) Ibid.

\(^{73}\) Chen Yixin, *Du Fu ping zhuan*, 1: 65. Gu Chen’s remarks are found at *Dxzz* 1.23.
remaining too long in office] he then boarded a skiff and drifted upon the lakes" (乃乘扁舟浮於江湖). According to the Shiji 史記, Fan Li was a general in the service of King Gou Jian 句踐, King of Yue 越 (r. 497–465 BCE). He was instrumental in ensuring the King's victory over the neighbouring state of Wu 吳.

What Qiu was certainly aware of, but did not acknowledge, was that the central gist of Tang poetic allusions to Fan Li is his response to his own success: he is reputed to have cast aside his official career at its apex and to have sailed off in a skiff. He did so, as the story goes, not out of disloyalty, but because he believed that any further efforts in the service of his king would inevitably result in his downfall at the hands of greedy opponents at court. Before he left, the king threatened him and his family with punishment if he were to leave, and so Fan Li changed his name several times to avoid recognition (one of the more interesting names he assumed was “Mr. Bodybag”

74 Shiji 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 129.3257. Similar versions of the story exist in Guoyu 國語 (SBCK) 21.9b, and Wu Yue chunqiu 吳越春秋 (SBCK), 10.264.

75 Shiji 41.1745.

76 No Tang poem that I am aware of contains a Fan Li allusion that primarily recalls his “military conquest of Wu,” as David Lattimore suggests in his précis of this poem. If Du Fu were alluding to Fan Li’s service to his king, rather than to his virtuous retirement, the implication must be that he was hyperbolically likening the poetic achievements at the banquet to Fan Li’s military success. Lattimore’s (to my mind, incorrect) interpretation of the Fan Li allusion in “Evening Banquet” causes him to conclude that Du Fu’s poem is “indifferent to decorum,” as well as simply “peculiar” and “arrogant.” See David Lattimore, “Tu Fu,” in The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature, ed. William H. Nienhauser Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 815.
The King repeatedly sent emissaries to find him, but to no avail, and Fan Li devoted his time to trade and fish farming, and became famously wealthy. The legend locates Fan Li’s reclusive life in and around the Yangtze and its tributaries, and particularly to the Dongting Lake in Hunan and the lower Yangtze delta area. Most of Du Fu’s Fan Li allusions invoke Fan’s bold decision to retire from politics and become a materially successful man in reclusion.

The Fan Li allusion may be considered “stock” in view of how often it appeared in poetry involving the south-eastern regions of the Tang empire. Indeed, any informed reader of classical Chinese poetry would naturally bring Fan Li to mind upon encountering a mention of the Wu area and a skiff. The most famous early-eighth-century poem still extant that uses the “skiff” to allude to Fan Li was by Zhang Ruoxu 張若虛 (fl. 705 CE), a poem written in Wu mode under the yuefu title “Flowers, Moonlight, and the River by Night in Spring” (“Chun jiang hua yue luo” 春江花月夜). Zhang seamlessly weaves the allusion into a larger narrative about the relationship between man and the impersonal flow of the river. Du Fu would have been familiar with this highly influential adaptation by the most famous south-eastern

77 Another name he took, according to Shiji, 41.1752–53, was Tao Zhugong 陶朱公. From the early seventh century onwards, Fan Li’s fame as a recluse grew to the extent that he was sometimes identified as the famous Fisherman in the Zhuangzi. See Timothy Wai Keung Chan, “The Fisherman and the Wood Gatherer on Retreat from the World,” in “Termination and Determination: The ‘End’ in Poetic Representation in Early Medieval Chinese Literature” (unpublished manuscript, 2008), in which he cites Cheng Xuanying’s 成玄英 view, quoted in Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, Zhuangzi jishi 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1978), 10A.1024, n. 1.

78 Yfōj 47.678.
poet of the first half of the eighth century.\textsuperscript{79} As I argued above, the most likely explanation as to why the poems in the poetry contest held near Luoyang were chanted in the Wu dialect is because they were composed in the south-eastern style. If these poems were anything like Zhang’s poem, or any of the other surviving poems written in a south-eastern style, then a few of them probably alluded to Fan Li.\textsuperscript{80} We can imagine that these other poems, composed on the same night in a Wu style, served as a bridge to Du Fu’s own simple allusion to Fan Li.

Although Du Fu’s allusion is simple, it provides a sense of emotion to the other possible meanings of the line in which it occurs. Erwin Von Zach, for example, read the line as a recollection of Du Fu’s youthful travels, and accordingly translates it in this way:

\begin{quote}
Dabei kann ich den Wunsch, wieder einmal auf kleinem Boot jenes Land zu bereisen, nicht vergessen.\textsuperscript{81}
\end{quote}

This reading interpolates that the skiff serves primarily as a reminder for Du Fu of his own travels in the south-east. Most interpretations of Du Fu’s line as recollection of

\textsuperscript{79} Zhang, from Yangzhou (modern Jiangsu province), was one of the six famous southerners whose names “shook the capital” when they arrived there in 705 CE; see \textit{Jiu Tang Shu} 190.5035.

\textsuperscript{80} Allusions found in other Wu mode poems collected in the \textit{Yuefu shi jji} also involve local intertexts from the south-east; see, for example, Zhang Zirong’s 張子容 (fl. 713 CE) poem of the same title, which alludes to the legend of the beauty, Xi Shi 西施, who supposedly eloped with Fan Li; \textit{Yfsj} 47.679.

his youth seem to be following Zhao Yancai, who suggested that the skiff is a “stimulus” (xing 興) designed to evoke a set of emotions tied to boats and travelling brought on by the Wu chanting. This idea was expanded by Zhu Heling 朱鶴齡 (1606-1683 CE) who commented on Du Fu’s poem as follows: “When Du Fu was young he once travelled to the south-east, thus when he heard the Wu chanting he thought of this place.” In reading Du Fu’s skiff as a reminder of youthful journey, Von Zach’s and all modern translations I am aware of reflect the direction given by Zhu’s commentary.

In my view, the skiff is much more than a reminder of a youthful voyage; indeed it is much more meaningful in this poem’s context when we incorporate the allusion to Fan Li. In “Evening Banquet,” as in many other poems that employ the same allusion, Fan Li’s skiff serves as a reminder of the possibility of virtuous retirement. In this way, it reinforces the banqueters’ celebration of their collective escape from the urban, dusty world, and their sense of reclusion – however temporary – in nature. As Owen notes, poets often described the genteel weekend retreat, such as those vast and

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82 Zhao’s comments are found in Dsyd 18.9, and also recorded in Lin Jizhong’s reconstruction of Zhao’s full commentary; see Zhao Yancai 趙彥材 (fl. ca. 1131-1144 CE), Du shi Zhao Cigong xianhou jie jiao 杜詩趙次公先後解輯校, ed. Lin Jizhong 林繼中 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1994), 1.20.

83 Zhu’s commentary is in Dsq 1.7 and was subsequently given without citation by Qiu Zhao’ao in Dszx 1.22.

elaborately built properties near Luoyang or Chang’ an, “not in the glittering terms of court and immortal hierarchies, but as the dwelling of the recluse in the wilderness.”

And yet, although we may appreciate this poem for its exquisite imagery and mood, we will be disappointed if we hope to find in it the unitary strength of personal expression demonstrated in Du Fu’s later work, such as the other poems that allude to Fan Li, discussed below. In other words, the allusion in “Evening Banquet” is not constructed around the presentation of complex meaning. The reason for this is that the only indirection in the poem is an allusion that merely celebrates, rather than subtly nuances, the gentility of the occasion; evidencing a nod to the conceit of pretending at such occasions that one longed to leave it all behind and attend to a life of virtuous exile. That is to say, the mimetic expression of the poem outweighs the semiotic. Du Fu’s use of the Fan Li allusion is not much more than a conventional nod to the south-eastern style. It is, in conclusion, an application of a stock allusion.

2. “Sending Pei Qiu”: A Stock Allusion within an Allusive Network

Whereas the Fan Li allusion in “Evening Banquet” does not contribute to a complex layering of emotions and intertexts, the allusive skiff forms a key thread in the fabric of several of Du Fu’s later poems. The art in “Sending Pei” and “Presented to

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Wei"—poems discussed in detail below—is anchored in allusive networks, and my interpretation of them is accordingly based on a sustained and comparative focus on the interactions between Fan Li and the other intertexts.

The "allusive networks" in these two poems involve groupings of allusions along syntactically parallel lines, a traditional practice that may be traced back to parallel prose (pianwen 駢文 and rhapsodies (fu 賦) composed in the Han period and afterwards. 86 In this tradition, Yu Xin (513-581 CE) was considered the poet who most fully subsumed the pianwen styles of allusion in a lyric form, for which he was admired by some and severely criticized by others. 87 By Du Fu’s time, the creation of simple allusive clusters had become standard praxis for lyric poets, and was even codified into poetry composition manuals. Therefore, rather than making detailed comparisons of Du Fu’s allusive poems to those by Yu Xin or other early poets, the modern reader can attempt to understand the great difference between the conventional treatment of such allusive clusters and Du Fu’s more ramified approach in the poems discussed below by turning to eight century poetry composition manuals.

86 A number of examples are given in Luo Ji Yong 羅積勇, Yongdian yanjiu 用典研究 ("Study on Allusion") (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 2005), 227. Luo refers to this practice as "overlapping allusion" (die yin 堆引).

87 An early statement of extreme disapproval of Yu Xin’s style is found in Linghu Defen’s 令狐德芬 (583-661 CE) Zhou shu 周書, in which Yu is called a “criminal of the rhapsody” (See Zhou shu 41.2326). An excellent analysis of the roots of Yu’s allusive technique in rhapsody and pianwen is offered by Peter Michael Bear, “The Lyric Poetry of Yu Hsin” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1969), 118-122 and passim.
The compilation of one such manual, the *Chuxue ji* (“Records for Elementary Learning”), was overseen by two minor historian-officials Xu Jian 徐堅 (659-729 CE) and Wei Shu 韋達 (?-757 CE) at the order of Li Longji 李隆基 (r. 712-756 CE, posthumously Xuanzong 玄宗) to whom the completed volume was submitted within a few years after he acceded to the throne. As a repository of lore, the *Chuxue ji* is more limited than its predecessors, such as the *Yiwen leiju* (comp. 620). Although both manuals are organized by category, for example, the *Yiwen leiju* contains more than three times the material for each topic. The usefulness of the *Chuxue ji* comes from the practical guidance it offers in elementary poetry composition, rather than from its comprehensiveness, and particularly from its guidance on the use of appropriately paired allusions for use in creating syntactically parallel lines of regulated verse.

In a section on “lakes,” the following pair is offered with commentary.

“Selling medicines / Sailing skiff” 【賣藥 浮舟】

Liu Xiang’s (ca. 79 – ca. 6 BCE) *Biographies of Immortals* says:

“Dongfang Shuo (193-154 BCE) was from Chu, and during the time of Emperor Wu of Han (r. 141-87 BCE) he served as a Gentleman in Attendant. Afterwards he was seen at Guiji, selling medicinal herbs around the five lakes.” *Biographies of Former Worthies of Xuzhou* [Eastern China] (lost; attributed to Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 [403-824])

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444 BCE] says: After destroying the state of Wu, King Gou Jian (496–465 BCE) told Fan Li, ‘I intend to split the state with you.’ Fan Li replied, ‘the lord makes his orders, his vassal obeys his intentions.’ He thereupon set out on a skiff and sailed the five lakes, never again to return.89

The reader is encouraged to compare the author (or a named contemporary of the author) to Fan Li and Dongfang, who serve as examples of virtuous retirees. One imagines countless numbers of such allusive pairs being constructed in schoolrooms and subsequent exam environments. This may be evidenced by the degree to which the Chuxue ji pair was constructed to be prosodically user-friendly. “Selling medicines,” alluding to Dongfang Shuo’s retirement pastime, incorporates two deflected (ze 爾) tone phonemes (*meiH yak), and the phonemes in “Sailing skiff” (*bou tsyou) are rhyming level tones (ping 平). This mirroring of tones and the shared verb-object syntax would enable an aspiring young poet to fit the pair nicely into the middle couplets of regulated verse (solid circles representing deflected tones, hollow circles are level tones):

89 Ccj 7.141. The account of Fan Li’s departure is nearly identical to that in Shiji 41.1752.
Or, for a pattern beginning with a *ping* tone, the allusive pair might be positioned as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{○ ○ ○ ● ●, ● ● ● ○ ○}
\end{array}
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In summary, the practice of layering clusters of allusions to historical persons in syntactically parallel couplets had become very common from the Han period onwards, and the allusive groupings themselves were frequently recycled.\(^90\) These allusive clusters invited a standard response from the reader, who was simply required to seek out the common denominators between the men's biographies and apply these findings to the poem's context. The poet maximizes the poetic depth of his work by ensuring that the men alluded to have much in common, because only these commonalities contribute to the poem's meaning.\(^91\)

With this background in mind, let us turn to the first of the two poems by Du Fu that contain more sophisticated allusions, including allusions to Fan Li. This first piece

\(^90\) It is not surprising that no examples of poems containing this allusive pair, with this exact wording, survive from the Tang period or earlier, according to a search of the QTS and Lu Qinli's *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983). Although poetry-writing manuals were used by both children and adults as aids to poetry composition, one imagines that copying their diction exactly was frowned upon.

\(^91\) Allusive parallelism is only one of the many such principles, called *zheng dui* 稱對; see *Wensin dialong* 7.588-89. The *Bunkyo hifuron* 文鏡秘府論 lists 29 different kinds of parallelism; see
was composed for a friend who was departing Chang’an for an unpleasant posting far away from the capital, in Yongjia 永嘉 (modern Wenzhou 温州). The poem is traditionally dated to a period when Du Fu was living in the Chang’an area, just before An Lushan took the capital in 756 CE (see below for discussion on the dating of this poem).

“Sending Pei Qiu to Assume his Post as Pacificator of Yongjia”
送裴二虬尉永嘉
(Dsxz 3.201)

1. Where is the Orphaned Islet pavilion?
   In water vapour at the edge of the sky.
2. My old friend, your office takes you here;
   With whom will you share the stimulation of a detached realm?
3. Concealing your official position, you encounter Mei Fu;
   Wandering in the hills, you recall Duke Xie.
4. My skiff has already been hired.
   Fishing gear in hand, I await the autumn wind.

In the following paragraphs, I introduce biographical details about Du Fu and Pei Qiu that are relevant to an informed reading of the poem, and then proceed to explore two layers of reference and allusion. The first layer consists of specific references and
obvious allusions that contribute to the topical reading of the poem as a valedictory piece. The second layer comprises allusions—including the stock allusion to Fan Li—best interpreted through a semiotic reading that identifies a counter-current in the poem: a stratum of meaning that draws the reader’s attention away from Du Fu, Pei Qiu, and the occasion that inspired the poem’s composition. Separating the interpretive process in this way is artificial, as well-educated, experienced readers of classical poetry may of course consider the interactions between allusions at the same time she identifies the allusions. This artificial separation does, however, enable me to illustrate that the crux of Du Fu’s allusive achievement in this poem lay in the interactions between allusions rather than in the large number of clever allusions and references—seven—packed within eight lines.

**Biographical Details: Why does Du Fu invoke Fan Li?**

Because “Sending Pei” was composed at a sending-off party, and was (presumably) presented there as a gift to the addressee, we need to fill in the biographical details about both sender and recipient in order to better understand how the poem may have been read on this occasion.⁹² The most important observation to be made is that neither Du Fu nor his addressee was at a high point in their career at this time. Qiu Zhao’ao proposes 768 CE as the *iterminus ante quem* for this poem, noting that the two other poems that Du Fu addressed to Pei Qiu can be reliably dated to a period

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⁹² Tim Chan discusses the Early Tang context of “valedictory prefaces” in “Dedication and Identification in Wang Bo’s Compositions on the Gallery of Prince Teng,” *Monumenta Serica 50* (2002), 219-236. Chan argues that there was usually a gathering dedicated to the valediction, and that participants contributed their works to a small collection as a gift for the parting individual. Du Fu’s two valedictions, discussed in this chapter, were likely to have been produced in this setting, and were later extracted (or copied by himself) from the small collection.
several years after Pei had been promoted to higher ranking positions in the Hunan area of the Yangtze River valley, and a line from one of these poems recalls a time in the past when Pei Qiu was in Yongjia. From this, Qiu proposes that Pei’s promotion to Prefect of Dao Prefecture (Daozhou, modern Daoxian, Hunan province) occurred in 768 CE, and that, therefore, the current poem must have been written some years before. Long before Qiu made his argument, Huang He bases his dating of the poem to 753 CE on the semantic similarities between this poem and other writings by Du Fu that may be dated with confidence to that year. Therefore Qiu’s dating in fact accords with Huang’s. Accepting this date means that the poem was written during the period when Du Fu lived in Chang’an, newly married and with several young children to support, but with no income to support them, while he awaited in vain for an official appointment after successfully catching Xuanzong’s attention with three rhapsodies submitted in the Imperial Hope Chest (Yan en gui). 96

93 “I remember when you had just gone to be Pacifier of Yongjia” 僣子初尉永嘉去 in the poem “Mu qiu wang Pei Daozhou shou zha shuaier qian xing ji di cheng Su Huan shi yu” 兩秋杖裴道州手札率爾遺興寄邇蘇涣侍御, Dsxz 23.2016. The other poem addressed to Pei is “Xiangjiang yanjian Pei er duangong fu Daozhou” 湘江宴裴二端公赴道州, Dsxz 22.1990.

94 Qiu produces this date based on a reasonable guess that Pei succeeded Qui Huan (d. 768 CE) to this position; see Dsxz 22.1990.

95 Dsxz 3.201.

96 For these three rhapsodies, see Dsxz 24.2103. “Imperial Hope Chest” is Hung’s translation; Hung, *Tu Fu: China’s Greatest Poet*, 67.
Although it might, at first glance, seem positive that Du Fu caught the emperor’s attention, this initial good fortune never materialized into a significant appointment. Several other poems that Du Fu wrote in this period demonstrate his sense of desperation with the years of long delays while waiting in Chang’an with no income. He finally received a low-ranking and unappealing appointment some years later, after making several more submissions to the Imperial Hope Chest.

This brief biographical sketch explains Du Fu’s use of the Fan Li “skiff” allusion in the last couplet of “Sending Pei” (“My skiff has already been hired / Fishing gear in hand, I await the autumn wind.”) His addressee is leaving Chang’an for the south-east, and Du Fu, frustrated with his own circumstances, wishes to declare to his addressee that he longs to follow him and join him in the life of an exemplary recluse. The Fan Li allusion is a convenient but (as discussed above) flatly conventional means of communicating this desire, particularly since Du Fu’s addressee is traveling to the south-east.

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97 I follow Hung’s account of the events in Du Fu’s life during this period; ibid., 58-89.

98 The Fan Li allusion fits in with a convention in valedictory poems: conjuring up a transcendental means of traveling, to be with a friend who is journeying far away. We are reminded of the closing couplet of Li Bai’s “A Song of Ming-gao: Sending off Mr. Cen, a Gentleman in Retirement Who Was Summoned to Court,” which, in Stephen Owen’s translation, reads: “I resolve to forsake Earth and Heaven, / To leave this body behind: / When a white gull comes to you flying, / I will join you forever as friend.” See Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 377. Whereas Li Bai imagined becoming a bird in order to traverse the distance between him and his friend, Du Fu proposes a more allusive means of transportation. Like Li Bai’s bird, Du Fu’s skiff is a poetic rather than an actual means of re-connecting with his friend.
The mention of “autumn wind” in the last line enriches the couplet somewhat, complementing the Fan Li allusion by calling forth the story of a different historical recluse: Zhang Han 张翰 (fl. 239 CE). For Zhang, the autumn wind reminded him of the seafood, fishing, and good life of his home, which was not only in the south-east, but also near Yongjia. In his biography in the Jin shu 省書, the memory of home triggered by the wind inspired him to make a sudden and unanticipated departure from the chaos of public life in dangerous times; he started back for home that same moment. The allusion of the autumn wind blends well with the Fan Li story, and particularly one element of the version of the story recorded in the Chuxue ji (“After destroying the state of Wu, King Gou Jian told Fan Li, “I intend to split the state with you.” Fan Li replied, “The lord effects his orders, his vassal effects his intentions.” He thereupon set out on a skiff and sailed the five lakes, never again to return.”) Both allusions clearly involve a sudden rejection of civic duty in favour of reclusion. Both Fan Li and Zhang Han were prudent because they could foresee the danger if they stay in politics.

99 Jin shu 92.2384. The Jin shu indicates also that this was perhaps the most corrupt time in Chinese history. In a coup let by King Zhao 趙 (named Sima Lun 司馬倫, r. 301 CE), who usurped the throne to eliminate Empress Dowager Jia (賈, 257-300 CE), many adherents to Jia and her group including Zhang Hua 张華 (232-300 CE), Shi Chong 石崇 (249-300 CE), Pan Yue 潘岳 (247-300 CE), etc. were killed. Zhang Han witnessed the massacre and made an excuse (homesickness, eating the seabass in his hometown) to flee. With this in mind, it is easy to imagine Du Fu empathising with Zhang Han, and wondering if he may be mired in the same political situation. Zhang Han’s poem describing his feelings at the time, “Si wu jiang ge” 思吳江歌, is in Lu Qinli, Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi, 738.
Further Biographical Details – Why is Pei Qiu Compared with Mei Fu and Xie Lingyun?

There is much less biographical information about Du Fu’s addressee, but what can be pieced together indicates that his journey and new appointment would have been a considerable disappointment to him. Pei Qiu was a friend of Du Fu, and a descendant of the Hedong (modern Shanxi Province) branch of the famously powerful Pei clan. Pei would not have been pleased to be departing Chang’an to take up a lowly position in a place so distant from Chang’an. The “Pacificator” (wei 尉) of a District was the lowest rank (Consequent Ninth Grade cong jiu pin 従九品) in the Tang bureaucracy. Yongjia, a south-eastern port prefecture, was of no great strategic importance, except as a source of tax income for Chang’an. In 742 CE, Yongjia recorded 40,210 households, but was only one of several of similar size in Jiangnan north-east province. Neither was it a provincial seat; the Jiangnan east province government general seat was Guiji, which in the Tang was called Yuezhou 越州. Also, Yongjia would not have been of great military concern to the central government at this time. It was not a central power base, nor was it under much threat.

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100 Also called the “Xian Ma Pei” 洗馬裴 branch; see Xin Tang shu 新唐書, 71.2188. According to Chen Guanning 陳冠明 and Sun Suting 孫愫婷, Du Fu qinjuan xingnian kao 杜甫親眷行年考 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2006), 40-41, Pei’s zi was Shenyuan 深源. Tim Chan illustrates the fame of the different branches of the Pei clan in the Early Tang in his study of one of Pei Qiu’s famous ancestors, Pei Xingjian 裴行儉 (619-82 CE). Xingjian, as Chan notes, was from one of the other four branches, the Zhongjuan 中眷; see Tim Chan, “Literary Criticism and the Ethics of Poetry: The ‘Four Elites of the Early Tang’ and Pei Xingjian,” T’ang Studies 15-16 (1997-1998), 176-77.


102 Jiu Tang shu 40.1597.
of attack. Although it was susceptible to being sacked by pirates,\textsuperscript{103} it was not touched by war during the Tang period until after the An Lushan rebellion.\textsuperscript{104} Pei Qiu was not, therefore, likely to have been sent for any strategic military purpose.

Later, Pei did manage to escape this low-ranking appointment located so far away from the capital. According to his entry in the Pei family lineage in \textit{Xin Tang Shu}, he was eventually promoted to Grand Master of Remonstrance in Chang'an, commissioned with advising the emperor, and seems to have executed his duties bravely, at least according to an epitaph written for his son by Han Yu (768-824 CE).\textsuperscript{105} But at this earlier stage in his life, both he and Du Fu would have been very conscious of the fact that his circumstances called for the expression of sympathy, rather than a note of congratulations for a man whose career was on the rise.

Because demotion and banishment were often euphemistically described as "voluntary reclusion," we can imagine that Pei Qiu would have found it appropriate

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Xin Tang shu} 5.143 reveals that Yongjia was sacked by the "pirate" Wu Lingguang 吳令光 in 743 CE.

\textsuperscript{104} The Yuan Chao 収晁 rebellion in 763 CE, which resulted in the takeover of Yongjia (then Wenzhou), was provoked, according to Denis Twitchett, by harsh attempts by the provincial authorities to levy taxation. See Denis Twitchett, \textit{The Cambridge History of China}, vol. 3, Sui and T'ang China, 589-906 (London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 482. Twitchett does not cite a source in this case; see \textit{Zizhi tongjian} 資治通鑑 222.7132, 222.7142; \textit{Xin Tang shu} 170.5172, 136.4569.

\textsuperscript{105} See Han Yu, "Henan shaojin Pei jun muzhiming" 河南少尹裴君墓誌銘, in Ma Tongbo 馬通伯\textit{Han Changli wen ji jiao zhu} 韓昌黎文集校注, 6 vols. (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 6: 208-9.
for Du Fu to suggest that he would “encounter Mei Fu” and, wandering carefree in the hills, “recall Duke Xie.” A comparison between these famous retirees from official life and Pei is implied. Mei Fu, an official in the Nanchang area during the Han dynasty, left his family one morning in the year 3 CE because of misrule in the government, and became a virtuous hermit in the Guiji mountains. His biography in the *Hanshu* includes a legend that he became an immortal.\(^{106}\) Du Fu’s depiction of Pei wandering in the mountains, “recalling Duke Xie,” allusively draws from the biographical account of Xie Lingyun (345-433 CE), which describes him as “roaming” in the mountains and lakes of the Yongjia area after he was appointed the governor of Yongjia in 422 CE, also a post of banishment for him.\(^{107}\)

**Mimetic Reading: Valediction and Xie Lingyun**

If we read Du Fu’s poem mimetically, likening Pei to Xie is only a gesture of friendly flattery, demanded by the conventions of “valedictory” poetry. For his part, Pei Qiu would have taken this comparison between himself and Xie Lingyun as the highest compliment, in spite of the allusive implication that Pei was experiencing virtual banishment. Both Pei and Xie were descended from great, wealthy clans; both experienced – or were experiencing – ill fortune in their careers. Although Xie’s career never recovered from his banishment to Yongjia (as “governor” in 422 CE, he went on to produce his most brilliant and time-honoured poems and Buddhist

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\(^{106}\) *Hanshu* 67.2927.

writings there, which resulted in his enduring fame among the literati class of which Du Fu and Pei Qiu were part, with this poem a living enactment of those values. We might imagine, then, that Pei may have taken solace in the implicit comparison between himself and someone who overcame his predicament through his contributions in poetry. Pei Qiu was not, however, very successful with the brush. The only piece we have from him is an inscription of average literary quality. Poets of the Tang period produced endless amounts of conventional, flattering poetry, not only on valedictory occasions, but also in the often overlapping genre in which flattery was elevated to an art form: “appeals for an audience” (ganye 干竭). Du Fu’s valediction, read only superficially in this way, is not yet seen as a masterful ganye piece, but rather a simple, conventional piece of (literary) flattery.

This sketch of the poem, revealing its conventional sentiments and a concatenation of relevant south-eastern references and allusions, will be significantly enhanced below, but my final conclusions on the poem’s “message” will not change significantly. Instead, what I demonstrate in the following analysis is that a full appreciation of this poem only emerges from an understanding of the interaction between the more obvious and the more subtle allusive layers contained within it.

**Semiotic Reading: The Literary Legacy of Xie Lingyun as the Organizing Principle**

Whereas a mimetic reading of Du Fu’s poem reveals it to be a clever confection of diverse but thematically similar references and allusions to exemplary south-eastern recluse, mustered in order to compliment and show sympathy with Pei Qiu, a semiotic reading demonstrates that the real art in the poem revolves around the figure

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108 See his “Yi Ting Ming” 恰亭銘 in Quan Tang wen 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983) 482.19b.
of Xie Lingyun himself, while Du Fu and Pei Qiu fade into the background. This new reading of the poem hinges around the first couplet ("Where is the Orphaned Islet pavilion? / In the breath of the water at the edge of the sky"). Superficially this couplet both initiates and encapsulates a link between Yongjia and a surreal utopia, an ideal place for Pei to forget his worldly frustrations. Orphaned Islet (guīyù 孤嶼) was a well-known landmark in Du Fu's day, situated in the centre of a wide part of the Yongjia River near Yongjia prefecture, with small hills rising on the eastern and western sides of the islet.\textsuperscript{109} The pre-allusive reading of this couplet interprets the Orphaned Islet Pavilion as metonymy for the entire Yongjia area.

An allusive reading of this first couplet generates new significance by bringing to mind Xie Lingyun's famous poem, "On Climbing 'Orphaned Islet' in the River" ("Dengjiang zhong guīyù 登江中孤嶼").\textsuperscript{110} A number of factors help to verify that Xie Lingyun's poem is activated in Du Fu's poem. First, "On Climbing" was the earliest and most famous poem in the transmitted sources to immortalize this little islet in verse.\textsuperscript{111} Second, Du Fu's first couplet contains an unmistakable verbal echo of Xie's poem's title and third couplet, which reads:

\begin{quote}
Hurriedly as I cut cross the current,
[I discover] an orphaned islet, beautiful in mid-stream.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{109} See Dszx 2.203.

\textsuperscript{110} Wenxuan 文選 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1977), 26.26b.

\textsuperscript{111} Along with being canonized in the Wenxuan, the most important material studied by exam takers in the eight century, Xie's poem is also recorded in the poetry composition manual Yiwen leiju 28.502.
Du Fu’s and Xie’s couplets both invoke the islet by name, situating it in the middle (zhong) of the river / water vapor. Du Fu also appropriates Xie’s zheng jue (literally “straights and bifurcations”, i.e., “currents”), incorporating it into the fourth line of “Sending Pei” (“With whom will you share the stimulation of a detached realm?” 絕境興誰同). Although Du Fu’s intended meaning of the word jue (“detached”) differs from Xie’s (“crossing”), the borrowed element still serves to intensify the reader’s attention on Xie’s poem.

In Xie’s poem, and by association also in Du Fu’s poem, the island represents both a physical place as well as a realm that corresponds to instantaneous enlightenment (dunwu 頓悟). Xie Lingyun emphasizes this non-physical reading of the islet by suggesting that it “conceals arhats” (yun zhen 蘊真); its visage is like “the beauty of Kunlun” (Kunlun zi 崑山姿), and it is connected to the “arts of Anqi” (Anqi shu 安琪術). These supernatural descriptions translate the material islet into spiritual terms,


113 Note that the eighth-century version of Xie’s poem in the Commentaries of the Five Officials includes a variant version of this line: 亂流趨孤嶼; see Wen xuan wuchen jizhu 文選五臣注 (SBCK) 26.35b. This version is preferred by Frodsham in The Murmuring Stream, 1: 128; 2: 135 n. 5.


115 Wenxuan 26.26b, Li Shan’s commentary.
encouraging the reader to see it as much more than just a place where Xie “rested.”

Similarly, Du Fu describes the islet pavilion to which Pei was travelling as surrounded by “water vapour,” using *shui qi* 水氣 rather than the ordinary term for mist, *wu* 霧, thus imbuing the line with increased sense of mystery. The islet’s location at the edge of the sky sets it at an impossible distance from “here” (Chang’an), and suggests that it is accessible only via otherworldly (imaginary) travel. The otherworldliness of the landscape is doubly emphasized by referring to it as a “detached realm” (*jue jing* 绝境), a phrase originating in Tao Qian’s “Preface to the Peach Blossom Spring” 桃花源記序 as a locale of Tao’s imaginary utopia.

Having now made the additional connection between Du Fu’s poem and Xie Lingyun’s “On Climbing “Orphaned Islet” in the River” (in which the islet is both a physical place and a realm of enlightenment) we can draw new conclusions. Du Fu’s line, “Wandering in the hills, you recall Duke Xie,” has grown in importance, having become a signpost for the functioning of the whole poem. With the reader’s attention (and that of the poem’s addressee) now fixed on Xie Lingyun, it is easy for us to recall yet another poem by this famous poet, one which happens to contain the first extant reference to Fan Li in a *shi* text. Xie Lingyun’s “Song of Guiji” (“Gui
yinxing” 會吟行) situates Fan Li amongst a densely intertextual series of references to other south-eastern recluses.

Fan Li went out on the rivers and lakes,
While Mei Fu went into this city market-place.
Dongfang Shuo came here as a sojourning recluse,
And Liang Hong left his home of mulberries and catalpas.

With references patched together I write about local culture,
Words exhausted, but my thoughts not yet ended.

范蠡出江湖。梅福入城市。

東方朔旅逸，梁鴻去桑梓。

牽織書士風，辭罷意未已。 118

Given the connections I established at the beginning of this chapter between Fan Li and verse written in the Wu mode, it is no surprise that these three concluding couplets are drawn from a poem that Xie set to a local Wu tune. According to Guo Maoqian, the gist of “Gui yin xing” is the same as that of “Wu qu xing” 吳曲行, a tradition of songs in which “The Wu people sang of their local [history].” 119 When Xie composed this poem, he was, like Fan Li, settling into reclusive life after his dramatic and controversial retirement from his official post in Yongjia. 120 Unlike Fan

118 Xie Kangle shi zhu, 1.5a.
119 Ysfj 64.934-935.
120 Gu Shaobo says there are no facts that help date the poem, but he speculates that it was written in 423 CE; see Gu Shaobo 魯紹柏, Xie Lingyun ji jiaozhu 謝靈運集校注 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1987), 239, n. 1.
Li, however, Xie made no effort to obscure himself (his enemies preferred that he was out of politics), and retired to his ancestral estate near Guiji (modern Shaoxing), where he wrote the exuberant lyric celebrating Guiji’s natural beauty and history.

The biographical details of the four recluses referred to in Xie’s poem are similar, and are all characterized by their localized affinities within the south-eastern cultural tradition. Like Du Fu, Xie appears to be “reading the world through texts,” to borrow Stephen Owen’s words. Fan Li and Mei Fu appear in Du Fu’s poem, as described above; Dongfang Shuo (ca. 154-93 BCE) disappeared under mysterious circumstances from his position at court, and was later seen in Guiji selling herbs. Liang Hong (fl. 75 CE) was yet another virtuous retiree from genteel society who, like Fan Li, changed his name in order to elude recognition, and spent time in the Guiji area, where he eventually died. These four men have in common that they retired in order to protect themselves from the barbs of official life, and subsequently made appearances in or around Guiji in various guises. And now Xie was visiting this very area; perhaps inevitably, he began to gather information about

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121 Stephen Owen, “The Librarian in Exile: Xie Lingyun’s Bookish Landscapes,” *Early Medieval China* 10-11, no. 1 (2004), 203. Owen’s insight into Xie’s allusive technique was that his poetry displays a pattern of evaluating physical landscapes against remembered texts. In itself this is perhaps common poetic practice, observable in Han rhapsodies on metropolises. But, as Owen notices, Xie’s poems are unique in that they often conclude with his disappointment that physical reality does not measure up to the allusive landscape. The last couplet quoted above reflects this sentiment: the references to the various recluses are not able to fully express Xie’s thoughts about his own retirement, nor about his feelings for the Guiji area.

122 *Han shu* 83.2768.
the historical figures closely related to the locale. By recalling these men instead of others (either within the area or elsewhere), he generates a character portrait to aspire to, and for the reader to compare him with.  

None of this new information about Xie Lingyun helps the reader to create a stronger network of relationships between Xie and Pei or Xie and Du Fu. Rather, Xie Lingyun merely grows in significance as a poetic topic in his own right, as one of several undercurrents in the poem. Instead of drawing the conclusion that Du Fu’s poem lauds his recipient as a man comparable in circumstance or talent to Xie Lingyun, the reader feels that the poem takes the occasion of valediction as an opportunity to celebrate Xie. One might argue that, from a compositional perspective, perhaps Du Fu simply had Xie in mind when composing the valediction, with the natural result that the elements derived from the earlier, revered poets’ works subconsciously found their way into such a large portion of this poem. From the reader’s perspective, however, Xie demands a prominent place in our interpretation.

Du Fu’s injunction to the reader to “recall Duke Xie” is, to borrow an idea from Christopher Ricks’ analysis of Dryden, “allusion alluding to itself.” This is, in Rick’s view, the crowning achievement of an allusive poem, such that

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123 Xie Lingyun was, himself, an expert of enumerating historical figures in poems on given topics as a means of describing his feelings about his own predicament. Whereas the focus of this enumeration of men in “Gui yin xing” is the common locale, in other poems the historical figures are gathered together by theme; see Timother Wai Keung Chan, “Written on the Verge of Unnatural Death” (Unpublished manuscript, 2008), 264-67.

the subject-matter of an allusion is at one with the impulse that underlies the making of allusions at all... it is characteristic of art to find energy and delight in an enacting of that which it is saying, and to be rendered vigilant by a consciousness of metaphors and analogies which relate its literary practices to the great world.\textsuperscript{125}

This observation nicely describes the allusive technique in Du Fu's poem. The "subject matter" of the allusions to Xie Lingyun's biography and poetry, discussed in detail above, are reinforced by Du Fu when he highlights the "impulse that underlies the making of allusions" and imagines that Pei Qiu (and his other, future readers in posterity) will "recall Duke Xie."

What sets "Sending Pei" apart from the conventional valedictory or appeal poem, or indeed from the estate poem "Evening Banquet," is precisely this semiotic gravitation towards Xie Lingyun. In taking advantage of the valedictory occasion as a pretext to meditate on fragments of the life and works of Xie Lingyun, who is naturally brought to mind by Pei Qiu's destination, "Sending Pei" appropriates the stock Fan Li allusion into a poetic texture far more complex than that of "Evening Banquet." Xie Lingyun's presence moves the emphasis in the poem away from the stock Fan Li allusion and hackneyed flattery of Pei, and turns the poem into a complex allusive symphony.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 9.
3. "Presented to Admonisher Wei"

In the 750s and 760s CE, allusions to Fan Li frequently appear in poetry by other poets, particularly valedictory works composed in the capital for men being sent away to the south or south-east. Attraction to Fan Li in these poems may be explained by the fact that they were written after the An Lushan rebellion, when political fortunes were as unstable as they were in Fan Li's day, and when the idea of voluntary honorable retirement grew in appeal. Du Fu's "Evening Banquet," and other poems set to south-eastern tunes, were notable exceptions to this trend, in which the Fan Li legend carries local flavour and symbolises virtuous retirement, but does not yet have universal appeal to poets regardless of their geographical affinity.

Later in Du Fu's career, his allusions to the legend of Fan Li acquire more ambiguity and complexity. Thus, whereas Xie Lingyun himself was the unifying intertext in Du Fu's poem to Pei Qiu, in the next poem I shall look at, the unifier comes in the concept of gui (which in this poem means both "return" and "converge inevitably towards the place of belonging"). Gui and its allusive context in various intertexts, complements and eventually overshadows the Fan Li allusion in this poem.

"Presented to Admonisher Wei, the Seventh Son in the Wei Clan"

贈韋七賢善

126 Examples from the QTS number in the hundreds; see for example Qian Qi's 錢起 (c. 722- c. 780 CE)
"Song Chu da luo di dong gui" 送褚大落第東歸 (QTS 236.2605), "Song Bao He dong you" 送包何東遊 (QTS 236.2616), "Song Li xincai luo di you Jin g Chu" 送李秀才落第遊荊楚 (QTS 238.2654).
1. Our home districts lack not worthy men of cap and cloak—
   Du Mausoleum and Wei Nook at the foot of Weiyang Palace.
2. Your clan is nearest the high three constellations;
   And it was unanimously said you would converge on heaven’s closest rank.
3. But now, you rush north to the passes and peaks,
   Where the skies open up with rain and snow;
   While I wander south among the blossoms and willows,
   Stifled by clouds and smoke.
4. In the spring colors of Lake Dongting I lament [separation from]
   you;
   On Fan Li’s boat, the seafood puts returning out of my mind.

鄉里衣冠不乏賢，杜陵韋曲未央前。
爾家最近魁三象，時論同歸尺五天。
北走開山開雨雪，南遊花柳塞雲煙。
洞庭春色悲公子，蝦船忘歸范蠡船。

This is clearly another valedictory poem, and as such, it invites us to delve into the biographical circumstances of both poet and addressee. “Heaven’s closest rank,” my loose translation of chi wu tian 尺五天 (literally, “one foot and five inches from Heaven”), indicates the high expectations placed on Wei’s career prospects, based on his clan pedigree. Du Fu also associated himself in line one with the crop of worthies from their neighboring ancestral towns, and so Du Fu’s own failure to live up to early promise is, in comparison to Wei’s, strongly implied. The second line in the first couplet boldly insists upon the equality in their relationship and their equally high
status, recalling the location of the home of their two clans "at the foot of Weiyang Palace" 末前. This is simple metonymy for Chang’an, as Weiyang Palace was the power centre of the first Han emperors. The second line in the second couplet continues this theme by paraphrasing what was, according to traditional commentators, a contemporary saying about the two families: "Wei and Du in the city’s south are inches from heaven" (城南韋杜, 去天咫尺). Du Fu and his clan are implied by this line, which echoes the old saying; furthermore, the family backgrounds of both men predict great things for them as career officials and pillars of the state. But the rest of the poem explores their very different roles or fates.

**Admonisher Wei and his Illustrious Relative**

Scant biographical details survive about Admonisher Wei, except that he was probably a nephew or grandson of Wei Jiansu 韋箑素 (d. 762 CE), the famous imperial advisor to Xuanzong at the time when the court was evacuated from Chang’an during the early stages of the An Lushan rebellion. After Wei Jiansu died in 762 CE, he was promoted to the position of Grand Minister of Works (司空), making him one of the "Three Dukes" (San gong 三公), the highest advisory positions in the empire. The "Three Stars" (San tai 三台 or San xiang 三象), a constellation that makes up the ladle of the Big Dipper, was another name for the "Three Dukes." This information establishes 762 CE as the terminus a quo for the composition date of Du Fu’s poem, because Du Fu writes: "The rank of your clan has

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127 Dszx 23.2064.

128 Xin Tang shu 118.4269, trans. Hung, in *Tu Fu: China’s Greatest Poet*, 95. Wei Zanshan, "the seventh son in the Wei clan," may have been an offspring of Wei Jiansu, but this seems unlikely, because the *Xin Tang shu* (74.3099) lists only four sons born to him.
recently been lifted to the highest constellations (三象)." Noting that the poem’s seventh line locates Du Fu in the (Hunan) Dongting lake area, Qiu Zhao’ao sensibly dates the poem to 770 CE, when Du Fu was in Tan Zhou 潭州 (modern Changsha 長沙). 129

What kind of northward mission was Wei about to embark on? The couplet, “But now, you rush north to the passes and peaks / Where the skies open up with rain and snow” would seem to describe a destination in China’s far north or north-west. During this time, there were continuous incursions and threats of invasion in the north-west by Tibetans, and it is a possibility that Du Fu’s line exploits the informed reader’s awareness of these and other northern conflicts in this period of Tang history. 130 Throughout the post-An Lushan period, the north-west frontier was a highly sensitive area, and thus it is possible that Du Fu’s addressee was transferred from his post as Admonisher (a post in the prince’s palace in Chang’an) to some role in the north-west.

By Du Fu’s time, however, the term guanshan 關山 (“passes and peaks”) had ceased to be understood in the limited martial sense, as a stock representation of inner China as a “fortress” which must be sealed off from potential marauding invaders. By the

129 Dsxz 23.2064.
130 An example of the precariousness of Chang’an’s suzerainty in the northwest is found in the fact that Yuan Zai 元載 (d. 777 CE), Daizong’s 代宗 (r. 762-779 CE) chief minister from 764-777 CE, considered that the most urgent concern of the empire was defense of the country against these enemies on Tang’s northwestern borders; see Twitchett, The Cambridge History of China, 3: 496-497.
eight century, guanshan had evolved into a generic term used to describe northern China.

Therefore, rather than (or in addition to) speculating that Du Fu’s third couplet contains clues that Wei was heading northward on some unspecified military appointment to the border areas, Du Fu’s third line serves to impart a certain sorrowful tone to his poem that emphasizes the anguish of their impending separation. An understanding of what kind of “tone” is being struck here requires reference to poems in the early yuefu tradition. Many yuefu that contain similar depictions of rushed northward journeys may be cited, but by Du Fu’s time, perhaps the best known were those that accrued commentary by Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca. 690-ca. 756 CE). In one of his famous commentaries Wang proposes that the title “Moon over Passes and Peaks” (“Guan shan yue” 關山月) refers to poetry that “bemoans departures” (shang li bie ye 傷離別也), which Wang illustrates by citing a few couplets from the following yuefu poem, associated with the legend of Mulan 木蘭.

Approaching war from ten thousand miles,
She fords the passes and peaks as though flying.
She hears war bells on the northern winds,
and sees the armour reflecting cold light.

萬里赴戎機，關山度若飛。
朔氣傳金柝，寒光照鐵衣。

\(^{131}\) Wang’s quotation recorded at Yfsj 23.334.
This poem depicts Mulan’s parents wailing with grief at her departure.\(^{132}\) Thus Wang Changling’s point in citing these lines is that the sad departure scene encompasses an awareness of the dangers of Mulan’s upcoming voyage, with its passes and peaks to be crossed. *Yuefu* are in fact rarely read as descriptive or biographical pieces; in Du Fu’s lines, which were imitations of these couplets from the Mulan lyric, there was no requirement for the poet or any addressees actually to have been traveling to war. Rather, as with most *yuefu* poems, the theme and language were freely recycled to evoke the general mood of the genre, i.e., the sadness of separation.\(^{133}\)

\(^{132}\) The couplets quoted by Wang are identical to the equivalent parts of the “Lyric of Mulan,” ("Mulan shi" 木蘭詩), *Yfj* 25.373-374. I am grateful to Jia Jinhua for pointing out to me that this poem was most likely modified during Wang’s time or earlier to suit the prosodic tastes of the Early Tang. Evidence of this kind of editing is in the fact that some of the couplets contain perfectly antithetical parallelism in tones and meanings (Jia Jinhua, personal correspondence, 2008).

\(^{133}\) There are always exceptions, of course. Li Bai’s imitation, for example, also called “Guan shan yue,” concludes with an imagined vision of the stock image of northern passes and peaks in snow:

White snow, distant passes and peaks,
Dusty yellow clouds, lost in seas of armaments.
Wielding my horsewhip to depart on a ten thousand mile journey
How will I manage to pine for my lady’s boudoir?

As his commentators note, Li Bai is reversing the usual sense of the sorrowful departure, saying instead that he will not miss home when he is away. He is not, of course, indicating that he is setting off on an actual military mission to the north-east. Li Bai never traveled to the north-east, nor was he ever appointed to any military postings. For the poem, see *Yfj* 24.355; I have replaced *shu* 樹 with the suggested variant *rong* 戟, because the line clearly describes the dusty clouds of the northern steppes where trees would not figure into the landscape. This is also the interpretation of Zhan Ying 詹瑛, in
The phrase *yuxue* 雨雪 ("rain and snow") in the same line also reinforces the bitterness Du Fu perceived in Wei's northward departure. There is a long tradition, with its origins in the "Lesser Elegancia" ("Xiao ya" 小雅) in the *Shijing*, of using "rain and snow" as stock images of the travails of northern military campaigns, or as metaphors for any difficult mission. Mao 167, for example, uses these words to describe a campaign against the Xiongnu tribes; the ode finishes with the lament, "the year is ending / we have no house, no home," "our sad hearts burn / we are hungry and thirsty," "the year is running out / the King's business never ends."\(^{134}\)

Subsequently, "Yu xue" became a *yuefu* tune title under which a variety of variations on the theme of cold northern military campaigns were written.\(^{135}\) Du Fu is not specifically alluding to this ode in his poem, but his use of the images of rain and snow emphasizes the sadness of the sending off occasion by relating it intertextually to the pain of a forced march.

**Du Fu and Seafood**

Because Wei is "rushing" northwards, the Fan Li allusion in the final couplet applies primarily to Du Fu, who is represented as the speaking subject in the last line ("the
It is Du Fu who "wanders south among the blossoms and willows," with no stated desire for or possibilities of employment, whereas Wei importantly "rushes north to the passes and peaks."

The Fan Li stock allusion in the final line takes on an ironic sense, rather than functioning in the traditional way depicted in the Chuxue ji and also described in my analysis of "Evening Banquet." The standard way to read any Fan Li allusion, as discussed earlier, is to take Fan Li or his boat as a symbol of the rejection of officialdom after a successful career, and the seclusion of oneself away from the dusty world. Given the context of the rest of the poem as analysed thus far, however, Du Fu's closing line reads more like a form of affected resignation. "The seafood puts returning out of my mind" does not fit with the feelings of abandonment or anguished separation prevalent in the mimetic and allusive elements of the rest of the poem. Instead, the allusion decisively highlights how far Du Fu feels from the Fan Li ideal; it emphasizes the distance between Fan Li's virtuous reclusion, which comes at the end of a successful career, and Du Fu's stifling, hopeless state of unemployment. The feeling of the poem is ironic, desperate, and self-pitying, rather than encouraging and forward-looking as it is in "Sending Pei."

This sets up a strong contrast between Du Fu and Admonisher Wei. There is thus a clear progression in the poem, from the beginning, when Du and Wei are both

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136 I am not aware of any examples of the use of gui as a causative verb, and so this line cannot probably be taken to mean "forget to return Fan Li's boat [to its rightful owner/mooring]." The Zhao commentary takes the subject of the last line to be the poem's addressee, rather than Du Fu, but this reading is not followed by any subsequent extant commentaries or modern translations that I am aware of. Zhao Yancai's commentary is at Dsyd 36.563b.
“converging” (gui 鎖) on high-ranking employment, to the end, where Wei is heading northwards while Du Fu wallows uselessly in the south, “putting returning out of his mind” (wang gui 忘歸). The speaking subject is in a “stifled” state of mind in the deceptively beautiful southern springtime, and he can see no way of returning to a meaningful career path that would lead him back to Chang’an in the north.

The ironic undercurrent is highlighted by the traditional literary convention of the phrase wang gui, in which a man is rapt with divine pleasure, to the extent that he puts all thoughts of returning out of his mind. Perhaps the most famous story of this kind is the famous tryst between King Mu of Zhou 周穆王 (r. c. 976 - c. 922 BCE) and the Queen Mother of the West 西王母, during which King Mu was “so pleased he put returning out of his mind” (樂而忘歸).137 The implication is that Wei still remains on track for a meaningful career, whereas Du Fu feels he has fallen out of favour forever.

The contrast between Du Fu and Wei is further deepened by the syntactic opposition between the phrases “the skies open up with rain and snow” (kai yu xue 開雨雪) and “stifled by clouds and smoke” (sai yun yan 塞雲煙). Most commentaries follow Wang Sishi’s commentary here: “the mutual interaction between two words ‘open’ and ‘stifle’ is genius.”138 The genius that Wang and subsequent commentators saw involves the way in which semantic contrasts highlight the oppression inherent in Du Fu’s own predicament. Wang interprets the poem as an illustration of the opposing fortunes of Du Fu and Admonisher Wei: one moving towards a career “opening” in

137 See Mu Tianzi Zhuan 穆天子傳 (SBCK), 3.15a.

138 Dy 10.387.
the north, and the other “stifled” in the south. Of course, the positive sense of the word *kai* does not necessarily relate only to Admonisher Wei’s actual career prospects; it also refers to the actual climactic differences between the dry, wind-swept north-east and the muggy, humid south. But the most important point is that Du Fu is following the valedictory convention, in which the one left behind is bereft at his friend’s departure, and deepening it to explore the personal and social reasons behind this sadness.

Therefore, reading this poem through Admonisher Wei’s eyes, as a valedictory piece and parting gift, Du Fu himself emerges as somewhat self-pitying. The combined elements of flattery and sympathy in Du Fu’s valediction to Pei Qiu are much less evident in this poem to Wei. The poem does not therefore work well as a valediction in the strict sense, and reads more like a lament lyric, testament to the unfortunate state of Du Fu’s career at this time.

**Semiotic Reading: Regenerating the Emotion of Valediction through Allusion**

The main intertexts that have defined Du Fu’s feelings about the contrast between himself and Wei are the “Guan shan yue” and “Yu xue” yuefu traditions and the Fan

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139 Wang also suggests that the words *xia cai* 鮮菜 (translated above as “seafood”) do not denote a luxurious diet, but rather indicate that Du Fu was at the end of a desperate and long path (*Dy* 10.387). Qiu Zhao’ao (*Dsxz* 23.2065) contradicts Wang on this point, and cites Ma Yongqing 馬永卿 (*jinshi* 1109 CE), who wrote that *xia cai* was local dialect in the lower Yangtze area for “seafood, which they could not do without even for one meal.” All commentators, however, agree that Du Fu’s poem describes the Dongting lake near Tanzhou in modern Hunan, rather than the lake by the same name further downstream, in modern Zhejiang province. Therefore, Qiu must have been thinking that, at this time, *xia cai* was local dialect for “seafood” in Hunan as well.
Li allusion, both of which serve to emphasize the differences between Du and Wei rather than their shared fates or feelings. But the other allusions in this poem, thus far unexplored, give the poem a new undercurrent that restores the unity between Du Fu and his addressee’s circumstances. This undercurrent involves a longing to return to a peaceful and meaningful career in Chang’an. Although the mimetic reading, given above, puts Wei’s flight northwards in a positive light, in the semiotic reading that follows, Wei’s circumstances are framed as being equally unpleasant as Du Fu’s own.

This new unifying undercurrent is highlighted by the conspicuous repetition of a word that encapsulates their shared longing: gui 馷. Among several prominent features of this heptasyllabic regulated lyric, the one that stands out most is the repetition of this word, in lines four (“converge on”) and eight (“return”), both times in precisely the same pivotal position, before the caesura. This achieves a striking effect, and demands closer attention by the reader. This word also figures prominently in the two remaining allusions that generate my semiotic reading.

The first allusion thus far unexplored encapsulates my semiotic reading of the poem, functioning as it does as an expression of longing to return to Chang’an, the imperial power center. The poem opens with this allusion, whose force is proportional to its covertness. In the line “Our home district lacks not worthy men of cap and cloak,” the combination of “in our home district” (xiang li 向里) and “men of cap and cloak” (yi guan 衣冠) reminds the reader of the two most famous “worthies” in Luoyang in the latter Han period, Guo Tai 郭泰 (zi Linzong 林宗, d. 169 CE), and Li Ying 李膺 (d. 169 CE).
The portions of the legend of Guo and Li recalled by Du Fu’s poem are found in Guo Tai’s biography in the *Hou Han shu* (the phrases in bold text contain the close verbal relationship with Du Fu’s poem):

> [Guo] traveled to Luoyang, when he met with the Governor of Henan, Li Ying. Ying found him marvelous, and thereafter they were friendly and kind to each other. Because of this, Guo’s name resonated around the capital. Afterwards *Guo returned to his home quarter, and there were thousands of chariots of men of cap and cloak and various scholars to send him to the bank of the [Yellow] River.*

*游於洛陽。始見河南尹李膺，膺大奇之，遂相友善，於是名震京師。後歸鄉里，衣冠諸儒送至河上，車數千兩。* 140

Du Fu’s poem has both a semantic and syntactic relationship with this quotation: in particular, the emphasis on the word *gui* in the poem causes the reader to focus on the phrase *gui xiang li* in the intertext. On first reading, Du Fu’s allusion seems to activate only this much, relating Du and Wei to Guo and Li. The association with homecoming would be all the more poignant for someone writing, as Du Fu was, from so far away from home. But the most memorable element of the Guo Tai story for Tang readers, and one more directly recalled in allusions made by other poets, is in the final line:

140 *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, 68.2225.
Only Li Ying set off on the boat ferrying across with Linzong (Guo Tai). To the sending off party gazing out at them, they looked like divine immortals.

The *Hou Han shu* gives the reader the perspective of the officials in the sending off party, having us gaze out at Guo and Li as they leave, and admire their greatness from a distance. This, the most powerful and memorable part of the account of Guo Tai, would be recalled when reading line one of Du Fu’s poem.

There is a sense of danger implied here, of course, because soon after returning to Luoyang, both Guo and Li Ying were caught up, in different ways, in various bloody political fights later called the “Partisan Supression” (*Dang gu* 黨綱), which ultimately resulted in Li Ying’s execution. In later times, these men provided models for different virtuous approaches to the dangers of politically corrupt times. Guo Tai was offered an official appointment, but declined it, aware of the impending dangers if he accepted; whereas Li Ying remained in office, fighting against the negative elements in the corrupt Eastern Han court, a struggle for which he was eventually executed. (The sources do not specify how Guo died, though we can presume that he was not executed for his affiliation with Li Ying).

The effect of this first allusion, then, is to establish a close association between Admonisher Wei and Du Fu. Like Guo and Li, Du and Wei are both portrayed as

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141 Ibid.

142 *Hou Han shu* 67.2197.
having enormous talent, which has not been utilized by the state because of destructive political forces. Because Du Fu was out of office at the time of composition, and Wei was traveling northwards on official duty, we can easily map Du and Wei onto Guo and Li Ying, respectively.

The second allusion further strengthens the implied spiritual and emotional bonds between Du Fu and Wei. Du Fu’s line, “In the spring colors of Lake Dongting I lament [separation from] you” (洞庭春色悲公子) encourages the reader to recall the Chuci楚辞 family of texts. The first and more obvious Chuci intertext relevant to Du Fu’s couplet is “The Lady of Xiang” 湘夫人, the relevant lines of which read, in David Hawkes translation:

Gently the wind of autumn whispers; On the waves of the Dongting lake the leaves are falling...And I think of my lady, but dare not tell it.

姍姍兮秋風， 洞庭波兮木葉下 ...... 思公子兮未敢言。143

This association between “my lady” (gong zi 公子) – i.e., the Lady of Xiang, a Goddess – and Du Fu’s “you” (also公子) serves to flatter Du Fu’s addressee, and to continue to emphasize Du Fu’s own sense of bereavement at their separation. Whereas in the beginning of the poem they are intimate and of equal status, both

appearing like immortals, and close to the Son of Heaven, in lines six and seven their paths separate, with Du Fu being left behind.

Du Fu’s line invokes another Chuci intertext that reinforces the sadness of separated lovers, this time with himself in the guise of the bereaved male suitor, and Wei as the desired lady:

A prince went wandering and did not return.
In spring, the grass grows lush and green...
Baboons and monkeys and the bears seek for their kind with mournful cries.

Both Du Fu’s poem and these lines from “Summons for a Gentleman Who Became a Recluse” (“Zhao yinshi” 招隱士, a song that takes on the perspective of a lover left behind) involve themes of wandering (you 遊) in the lush spring landscape, and the sadness of not returning to “one’s own kind.” The concept of “returning” (gui 归) is again highlighted, reflecting and intensifying the theme of failure to return that is so fundamental to Du Fu’s poem.

Whereas the Guo Tai / Li Ying allusion created a touching picture of two men (Du and Wei) bound together in a noble, almost divine friendship and alliance, formed in

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the dark and destructive political atmosphere that prevailed in the decades following
the An Lushan rebellion, the *Chuci* allusions provide an added emotional dimension
to that relationship. The *Chuci* gives intensity to Du Fu’s anguish over their
separation, and his longing for reunion and their shared desire to return to Chang’an.

It is worth noting here that the Guo/Li and *Chuci* allusions contribute layers of
meaning that run completely counter to the sense of self-pity and alienation
established and encapsulated in the Fan Li allusion. Earlier, I had argued that
“Presented to Wei” could be read more as a self-pitying lamentation lyric rather than a
valediction. But the more subtle allusions that I have uncovered link together the
various elements in the poem to generate an extremely powerful statement of
valediction that surely would have been quite moving to Admonisher Wei, the poem’s
intended recipient. And from the perspective of the modern reader familiar with the
various intertexts identified above, Du Fu’s poem becomes a multi-layered
composition full of feeling and depth. The deeper layers (created by the Guo/Li and
*Chuci* allusions) contrast strikingly with the topical layers (represented by the Fan Li
allusion), revealing the range and sophistication of Du Fu’s allusive technique.

**Conclusion**

When read in juxtaposition, Du Fu’s three poems “Evening Banquet,” “Sending Pei,”
and “Presented to Admonisher Wei” enable the modern reader to perceive the degree
to which the same allusion could be handled in vastly different ways. Although all
three poems incorporate an allusion to Fan Li, the two more emotionally complex poems wrap the allusion into a larger symphony of allusive voices. Our steady focus on the allusive aspects of these two more complex poems also enables the reader to
discover how allusion serves as the foundation of artistic structure, rather than just an efficient means of communicating information indirectly.

Whereas "Evening Banquet" incorporates the Fan Li allusion in the staid and conventional manner of early- to mid-Tang estate poetry, "Sending Pei" and "Presented to Admonisher Wei" demonstrate a much more original treatment of this familiar trope. The renovation of the stock allusion in these latter two poems comes from the creation of a dense circle of references built around a single focal point, the power of which transforms the stock allusion into something new. In these more sophisticated poems, new meanings emerge from the web of allusions intersecting each other. "Sending Pei" situates the Fan Li allusion within a network woven around the figure of Xie Lingyun. There is a similar level of allusive complexity in "Presented to Admonisher Wei," with its centre of gravity being the concept of "returning." But rather than enhancing a traditional reading of the Fan Li allusion, the allusive network in "Presented to Admonisher Wei" gives it an ironic meaning representative of the darker personal circumstances of the poet when he composed it.

Another contrast between "Evening Banquet" and the other two poems involves the degree to which allusion is used to express a distinctive authorial presence, and to help to articulate his feelings. To some degree, this is to be expected: the products of poetry contests are unlikely to be as deeply felt or emotive as poems of valediction. But the comparison is useful in demonstrating how emotion, feeling, and the artistic beauty of compositions may hinge on allusion. In "Sending Pei" and "Presented to Admonisher Wei," the central focus of the circle of allusions is an authorial presence, whose overpowering emotions serve as their transforming force. In the former, the
semiotic effect undermines the poem's function as valediction, and in the latter it reinforces it.
Chapter 2

Allusive Stones in the “Eight Phalanx Design”

Introduction

Whereas the last chapter examined the mechanics and interpretive implications of dense circles of allusions, this chapter shifts our attention to single allusions, which are paradoxically more easily missed. The principal allusion under scrutiny in this chapter occurs in Du Fu’s famous quatrain “Eight Phalanx Design” (“Bazhen tu”八陣圖). This poem has always been read mimetically as a statement of admiration for the historical figure Zhuge Liang諸葛亮 (181-234 CE), whose greatness is traditionally contrasted with the fallibility of his lord. I argue that this reading may be supplemented by looking deeper at the poem’s allusivity. The focus on allusion enables us to create a closer mapping between Zhuge Liang and Du Fu, and through this mapping we perceive the poem as a very personal lament about the weakness of leadership in post-An Lushan Chang’ an, rather than as merely a moving expression of admiration for Zhuge.
There are three principle arguments in this chapter. First, I endeavour to reverse the long trend of reading Du Fu’s poem un-allusively. I argue that, not only is allusion relevant to the poem, it is central to its interpretation. By this, I mean that it bears the majority of the expressive weight of the poem’s semiotic structure, something which has been overlooked in many previous studies. Second, I make the case that this poem is a fine example of the allusive technique most highly praised by Wang Dingbao and later by Huang Che and others: the poet weaves the old into the new “like gold thread tied and pressed into silk embroidery, without any traces” 鉤金結緞，而無痕跡. Finally, I discuss an inscription that may date from the fourth century CE, which bears a close resemblance to Du Fu’s poem, reinforcing my allusive reading of it.

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The Eight Phalanx Design

Sometime after Du Fu arrived in Kuizhou (modern Fengjie County, Sichuan Province) in 765 CE, he visited a local landmark, and wrote the following quatrain of regulated verse.

“The Eight Phalanx Design” (“Bazhen tu” 八陣圖)
(Dszx 15.1278)

Your achievements eclipsed [all others] in the divided Three Kingdoms;
Your name is synonymous with the Eight Phalanx Design.
The river flows on, stones unturned;
Lingering regret over the failed plan to swallow Wu.

功蓋三分國，名成八陣圖。
江流石不轉，遺恨失吞吳。

Mimetic Reading: Zhuge Liang the Tragic Hero

Du Fu not only names the Eight Phalanx Design (to be described in detail below) in his title, but also uses three of the twenty characters which constitute the poem to name the relic again, in the second line. Although the career of Zhuge Liang (thought to be the architect of the design, as we will see) is the subject of the poem, this heavy emphasis on the relic deserves careful consideration. Indeed, the focus of many traditional commentaries and studies is on the geography and history of the relic.
Whereas the sources point to a number of different geographic sites where Zhuge may have built the eight phalanx designs, Du Fu’s commentaries extrapolate from line three that the poem concerns the most famous site, the only design known to have been located in a riverbed, where the Mei Creek 梅溪 meets the Yangzi.\textsuperscript{146} The facsimile of a military formation implied by the poem’s title, “Eight Phalanx Design,” which is repeated in line two and impressionistically described in line three, is, in all surviving geographical writings, always connected with Zhuge Liang.\textsuperscript{147} These “designs,” attributed to Zhuge Liang, were, according to the \textit{Shuijing zhu} 水經注,\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{146} Li Daoyuan 鄭道元 (d. 527 CE), \textit{Shuijing zhu} 水經注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1984), 27.878.

\textsuperscript{147} In Tang times, it is unlikely that the historical laying out of the Eight Phalanx Designs could have been attributed to anyone besides Zhuge Liang. There are a large number of surviving Tang and pre-Tang writings that herald the creation of the designs as a defining part of the Zhuge Liang legend, and we may assume that these represent only a fraction of the total number of comparable texts circulating in the Tang. Among the texts that may pre-date Du Fu, there are a number of detailed descriptions of the Eight Phalanx Design sites; see Li Daoyuan, \textit{Shuijing zhu}, 27.878; 33.1060-1061. Another early reference is contained in Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔 (d. ca. 468 CE), \textit{Yi yuan} 北堂書鈔, quoted in Yu Shinan 廖世南 (558-638 CE), comp., \textit{Beitang shuchao 北堂書鈔}, reprinted in \textit{Nanhai Kong shi kanben tu 南海孔氏刊本}, ed. Kong Guangtao 孔廣滔 (fl. 1860 CE) (Taipei: Wenhai, n.d.), 96: 6a. The most frequently cited texts by Du Fu commentators include a fragment of the \textit{Jingzhou tuji 荊州圖記}, which also goes by the name of the \textit{Jingzhou tu fu 荊州圖記}, collected in \textit{Yue Shi 楊史} (10\textsuperscript{th} century CE), \textit{Taiping huanyuji 太平寰宇記} (Gazetteer of the World during the Taiping Period, 976-83) (Taipei: Wenhai, 1963), 148.4b. The Wenhai edition differs slightly from the version cited in \textit{Daxz} 15.1278. Also frequently cited is a fragment of the \textit{Chengdu tujing 成都圖經}, as collected in the \textit{Yudi jisheng 興地紀勝} (Records of Famous Places). The relevant \textit{juan} on Kuizhou has been missing at least since the time of Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728-1804 CE); see Zou Yilin’s 鄭逸麟 modern preface to Wang Xiangzhi 王象之 (\textit{jin shi} 1196 CE), \textit{Yudi jisheng} (original preface dated 1221) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1992), 9.
formed of rock cairns eight by eight, laid out with various subtleties of design, to
demonstrate different battle tactics: "These all charted the fleeting contingencies of
military formations—something that could not be fully fathomed afterwards, even by
men of profound understanding" (皆圖兵勢行藏之權，自後深識者所不能了).\(^{148}\)

Readers, therefore, will readily supply the name of Zhuge Liang as the implied
subject of lines one and two, and the first couplet therefore carries a simple expository
meaning, which may be paraphrased as: "Zhuge Liang was a great man of his times,
and his Eight Phalanx Design may be seen as a symbol of his greatness." I note here,
as a preface to my own reading adumbrated below, that Du Fu's own circumstances
do not seem to be relevant to the first two lines.

On first reading, line three is a similarly literal statement of the curious longevity of
the stone cairns that make up the design: the stones somehow do not roll away
downstream in spite of the relentless current of the river. The poem therefore taps
into a legend concerning the design's supernatural longevity in spite of the passage of
time and the natural forces of erosion. In connection with this reading, most
commentaries cite the following fragment from the *Jingzhou tu fu*.

Altogether there are sixty four assemblages [of stones in the Mei
Creek Design]. Some have been scattered. As for those submerged
in the summer floods, when the waters recede in winter time, they
all return exactly as they were before.

\(^{148}\) Li Daoyuan, *Shuijing zhu*, 27.878.
A stone resisting the flow of a river is also an obvious metaphor for perseverance and resilience over time. Although this view may surprise readers familiar only with Zhuge Liang’s fame as a good general, it does in fact fit in with the wider legend, which speaks of Zhuge Liang’s magical mastery over nature. This legend was well established by the early Tang period, when Li Shan (7-689 CE) wrote: “After Zhuge Liang went to view the fire well at Linqiong, the fire waxed full” 臨邛火井，諸葛亮往視，後火轉盛. “Fire wells” probably refers to natural gas deposits used in ancient China to produce salt. Li’s words were offered as a commentary on the following lines in Xie Huilian’s 謝惠連 (ca. 407-433 CE) “Rhapsody on Snow”:

The significance of snow with respect to the seasons is far-reaching indeed! Please allow me to speak of its beginnings: ... Fire wells are extinguished, while hot springs ice over.

雪之時義遠矣哉！請言其始。...火井滅，溫泉冰. 151

149 Note that this part of the Jingzhou tu fu does not appear in the Taiping huanyu ji version cited above. My citation is drawn from Dszx 15.1278.

150 Wen xuan 13.9b, Li Shan’s commentary.

Li Shan (citing an earlier source) takes the phrase about the unnatural extinguishing of fire wells to be more than just an exaggerated depiction of a cold winter; the fire wells represent an imbalance in nature that can be rectified only by the magical presence of Zhuge Liang. In emphasizing the resilience of the stones against the flow of the river, Du Fu is asking the reader to recall the mysterious, even pretumnatural aspects of Zhuge Liang's legend.

Therefore, the first three lines ("Your achievements eclipsed all others in the divided Three Kingdoms / Your name is synonymous with the Eight Phalanx Design / The river flows on, stones unturned") function as an historical commentary on the legend of Zhuge Liang, but reveal nothing about the emotion, borne partially of historical judgment and partially of human empathy, that made this poem so justly famous.

Chen Shih-Hsiang finds meaning in "Eight Phalanx Design," beyond its value as a historical commentary, by seeking "the many-sided secret relationship" between its parts, by which he means the interaction between the structural and prosodic features of the poem, over and above the surface complexities of its diction. But Chen's emphasis on prosodic features diverts attention away from what, to me, is surely a key to the true meaning of Du Fu's poem: understanding the allusion in the third line and the ambiguity of the last line ("Lingering regret over the failed plan to swallow Wu"). About this last line in particular, other critics have written much throughout the ages, but no concensus has been reached.

Qiu Zhao'ao takes the most syncretic approach to the ambiguity of line four:

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What is “regretted” is a miscarriage in the “swallowing of Wu,” which caused [Shu Han’s] division of effort into three different fronts to meet with calamity.153

This explanation sensibly takes shi 失 in the sense of “failure,” referring to a military campaign conducted by Zhuge Liang’s Shu Han against the neighbouring kingdom of Wu. This interpretation does not, however, explain who is feeling the regret so strongly, nor why the regret itself is so strong that it has “lingered;” surely the most important questions relating to the emotive power of the poem remain unanswered by Qiu’s explanation.

Qiu notes that his own reading of the last couplet is based on four previous streams of interpretation of this quatrain, which go further to explain the source of regret in the line:

[First] the old interpretation [that preceded Su Dongpo] holds that the “regret” is caused by inability to destroy Wu. [Second] Dongpo’s interpretation in his Dongpo zhi lin 東坡志林 then said that the “regret” owed itself to the Former Ruler [Liu Bei] making an expedition against Wu [instead of maintaining the status quo between the two states through diplomacy]. [Third] the Zhu Commentary [Zhu Heling 鴻齡 (1606-1683 CE)] and the Du Yi [by Wang Sishi] interpretation says that it was Zhuge Liang’s own

153 See Dsxz 15.1278.
regret that he was unable to restrain his lord from launching an eastern expedition [as revenge for the murder of his sworn brother Guan Yu (d. 219)]. [Fourth] Liu’s [Chuo 迪, fl. Ming] interpretation holds that the effort [by Liu Bei] to “swallow Wu” lacked instruction and was unable to employ [Zhuge Liang’s] phalanx design. 154

These explanations are all equally plausible, but equally unsubstantiated by the rest of Du Fu’s poem. The second, third, and fourth interpretations all specifically assign blame to Liu Bei for the military disaster, but there seems to be no evidence that Du Fu felt this way about the Former Ruler. These interpretations, as I shall argue below, fail to account for how the poem relates to Du Fu’s own world. The key to this extra level of interpretation is found in Du Fu’s use of allusion.

**Semiotic Reading**

The mimetic analysis of Du Fu’s poem engages with one small comer of the textual landscape surrounding the historical site of the Eight Phalanx Design, and Zhuge Liang’s role in it. In the following pages I will argue for a new reading of this very famous poem, seeing it as a lamentation on the persistence of weak, unenlightened leadership. The cues to such a reading lie hidden in the intertextuality between this poem and other texts, which have been insufficiently explored by Du Fu scholars.

The process that leads to this more comprehensive understanding of the significance of the poem involves the search for intertextual relationships that bypass and/or contradict the mimetic sense of the poem described above. There are three semiotic

154 See Dxxz 15.1279.
markers in this poem, which the following analysis explores one at a time. The first two have been noticed by previous scholars, but have not been integrated into a single interpretation; the third has gone completely overlooked. It is this third piece of evidence that most conclusively leads us to grasp the greater subtleties of Du Fu’s poem.

First semiotic element: Allusion to “Cypress Boat”

Du Fu’s poem, as Qiu Zhao’ao almost alone seems to have noticed, contains an allusion to an ode of the Shijing, Mao 26 “Cypress Boat” (“Bozhou” 柏舟), which contains the following line.

My heart is not a stone, It cannot be turned.

我的心石，不可轉也。\footnote{Mao shi zhushu 2.28c.}

The relationship between Du Fu’s line and this ode is clear, with the magically permanent stones in Zhuge’s design mapping seamlessly onto the metaphorical stones in Mao 26. The effect of the allusion is to assert the loyalty (i.e., resistance to being “turned”) of Zhuge Liang’s heart. We would perhaps be more comfortable with the connection if Du Fu had also appropriated the word “heart” from the ode, but there is a strong connection nevertheless, which shall be strengthened further in the analysis that follows.
Although the speaking subject of this ode is female, any educated person in traditional China would have immediately recalled the canonical contextualization of Mao 26 created by the Mao Preface (2nd cent. BCE):

“Cypress Boat” speaks of benevolence unappreciated. In the time of Duke Qing of Wei (ca. 6th BCE), benevolent gentlemen failed to meet (with appreciation), while petty men served at the lord’s side.

This political reading put forth by the Mao Preface, and supported by the canonical Mao and Zheng commentaries, was, of course, common knowledge in Du Fu’s time.\(^{157}\)

Mao 26, as contextualized in the Mao Preface, contributes two things to my reading of the poem thus far. First, as Chou Shan also notices, the stones in the river directly correlate to Zhuge Liang’s unswervingly “loyal” heart.\(^{158}\) Before noticing the allusion, readers may have found within image of the immovable stones in the river a symbol of Zhuge’s loyalty, particularly because loyalty plays a strong role in Du Fu’s other

\(^{156}\) Ibid., 2.28c.

\(^{157}\) The Mao commentary (mid 2nd century BCE) reads: “Although a stone is firm, it may still be turned. Although a mat is even, it still may be rolled.” 石雖堅尚可轉席，席平尚可卷。 (2.28c-29a). Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200 CE) elaborates: “He is saying that in his own heart, his intentions are more firm than stones, more even (i.e., constant) than mats.” 言己心堅平於石席。 (2.29a).

\(^{158}\) Chou Shan, “Allusion and Periphrasis,” 97. As far as I know, Chou is the only modern critic to read the line allusively, but she discusses the allusion only in passing (her principal concern being the “Eight Laments.”)
poems on Zhuge Liang. This mapping of the canonical depiction of loyalty from Mao 26 into Du Fu’s poem is therefore not problematic, and represents only a slight enhancement of the un-allusive impact of Du Fu’s line.

The other element from Mao 26 that requires attention is the strong theme of “frustration,” or frustrated loyalty; does this also play a role in Du Fu’s poem? Frustration implies a force against which the loyalty, when discovered in Du Fu’s poem, becomes more poignant and commendable. On a basic level, the stones resist the force of the river. As discussed above, this image has been interpreted as a metaphor of resistance of fame against the power of time. We may also wonder if Du Fu is referring to an environment of slander and political maneuvering at court during the lives of both Zhuge Liang and Du Fu himself. Unfortunately, Du Fu’s poem does not contain any specific information about such matters, and therefore this line of thought is speculative.¹⁵⁹ We might recall the interpretations cited by Qiu Zhao’ao, which assign blame to Liu Bei; could this be the cause of Zhuge’s frustrated loyalty? The answer seems to be “yes,” but the reader nods only with reservation.

Second Semiotic Element: A Poem Attributed to Huan Wen

¹⁵⁹ Several possible references come to mind. Du Fu may be referring to Zhuge Liang’s “Memorial upon Mobilizing my Forces” (“Chu shi biao 出師表”), in which Zhuge warns the young Emperor Liu Shan 劉禪 (207-271 CE) to avoid “petty men” (Wen xuan 37.1672). This, however, does not acknowledge that Zhuge Liang himself faced such difficulties. In Du Fu’s own time, he may have been thinking of An Lushan and his colleagues. He may also have been referring to the eunuch official Li Fuguo 李輔國 (704-762 CE), whom, according to William Hung, Du Fu considered to be a slanderer at the court of Suzong; see Hung, Tu Fu: China’s Greatest Poet, 109-110. But again, none of these references seems to be linked directly to Du Fu’s “Eight Phalanx Design.”
There is another intertext that relates to our understanding of the significance of “Eight Phalanx Design.” In the pages that follow, I will demonstrate that there is an imitative relationship between Du Fu’s poem and a long lost quatrain on the Eight Phalanx Design, possibly composed in the fourth century CE. It is irrelevant to this discussion below whether this poem pre-dates by three centuries or post-dates by three centuries Du Fu’s “Eight Phalanx Design;” either way, for a modern reader it sheds light on how the relic and its history was portrayed by another early lyric poet, and therefore nudges us towards a particular reading of Du Fu’s poem. Specifically, the relationship between the two poems directs the reader to interpret Du Fu’s version as a powerful lamentation over the failures of Liu Bei, and, by association, with the failures of either Xuanzong or Suzong.

The *Tang yulin* 唐語林, by Wang Dang 王讬 (ca. 1040 - ca. 1105 CE) contains a collage of earlier commentaries on the Eight Phalanx Design legend. Most relevant to the current discussion are certain passages concerning the Eastern Jin general, Huan Wen 桓溫 (312-372 CE). One such record reads:

Huan Wen of the Eastern Jin passed this site on a campaign against Shu-Han (346 CE), and said: “This is the phalanx of the snake of Mount Chang. If you strike at its head the tail responds, strike at its tail and the head responds, strike at the middle and both head and tail respond.” Mount Chang is a place name; two-headed snakes come from there. The phalanx just happens to resemble the two heads of this snake, which is why he named it so.
This resembles a passage in the official history of the *Jin shu*, a text compiled in the early Tang:

At that time, Li Shi (d. 361 CE) was in decline and weakening. Huan Wen aimed at establishing a meritorious exploit into Shu [then called the state of Cheng Han 成漢]. In the second year of the Yonghe regnal period (346 CE), he led his troops west on expedition. ... Earlier, Zhuge Liang had made the Eight Phalanx Design on level sandbanks in Yufu (modern Fengjie 奉節, Sichuan), which stacked up into eight rows, the rows two *zhang* apart. [Huan] Wen saw it and said, “This is the strategic posture of the Mount Chang snake.” No one among the literati and military men could make it out.

時李勢微弱，溫志在立勳于蜀，永和二年，率眾西伐。初，諸葛亮造八陣圖於魚復平沙之上，矗石為八行，行相去二丈。溫見之，謂「此常山蛇勢也」。文武皆莫能識之。161


161 *Jin shu* 98.2569.
This passage in the *Jin shu* establishes an important precedent for reading any subsequent texts (including Du Fu’s poem) that concern the Eight Phalanx Design. The *Jin shu* account establishes Huan Wen firmly within the legends surrounding the Eight Phalanx Design, and therefore well-educated Tang readers would have had Huan Wen’s name in mind when reading Du Fu’s poem.

In addition to describing Huan’s visit to the site, Wang Dang records that Huan Wen inscribed a quatrain in stone to commemorate the occasion. This important quatrain is not anthologised in any other extant pre-Qing anthology that I am aware of.

Gazing at the ancient relics I know their essence;
Approaching the source I cherish vestiges of the past.
Lest your lord overlook facts and details,
To that purpose you laid down these stones from South Mountain.

There is little evidence that Huan actually composed this text (hereafter referred to as ‘the inscription’ for sake of simplicity), or indeed that it pre-dates rather than post-dates Du Fu’s “Eight Phalanx Design.” I shall take Wang Dang at his word and read it as an inscription by Huan Wen on the occasion of his march against Li Shi. It may

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also simply be an anonymously authored text written at a later date and put in the voice of Huan Wen, or even a text unassociated with Huan Wen at all that was borrowed by Wang Dang in his account. From a literary perspective, this lack of certainty in the compositional date of the inscription is less important than its literary features. In the analysis below, in order to deepen our understanding of Du Fu’s poem, I explore the literary qualities of this inscription and demonstrate its strong affiliation with Du Fu’s “Eight Phalanx Design.”

As in Du Fu’s poem, the voice of the speaking subject in the inscription is ambiguous. I have translated the first couplet in the first person, but in the second couplet, the speaking subject seems to be imagining Zhuge Liang’s own situation. The “lord” (jun) in the third line is thus Zhuge’s king and employer, Liu Bei, and the stones refer to the cairns in the Eight Phalanx Design: this poem clearly focuses on Zhuge Liang’s strategic prescience in establishing this magical military design. We may then imagine that the “overlook[ed] facts and details” relate to the strategic mishaps that led to Liu Bei’s defeat by Lu Xun’s 項遠 (183-245 CE) armies, which, according to the Sanguo zhi, pursued him up through this area. Liu Bei died after this defeat, and his son lost the kingdom soon afterwards.

The mention of the “South Mountain” in the last line marks the presence of an allusion, because no South Mountain, or indeed any south-facing mountains, appears in any other early text describing the geographical area surrounding any of the Eight Phalanx Designs. A different intertext must therefore be found to help make sense of this line, and one can be found: a Lesser Elegantia (Xiao ya 小雅) ode in the Shijing

163 Sanguo zhi 58.1346–47.
- Mao 191: “Towering Southern Mountain” (“Jie nan shan” 節南山) – which opens with the following couplets.

  Towering is that Southern Mountain; those stones are piled high.\(^{164}\)
  You are illustrious and magnificent, Officer Yin; it is on you that the people’s eyes are fixed.
  Anxiety is burning in their hearts, and none dare speak even in jest.
  The fate of the state is broken; how can you not see?
  
  節彼南山，維石巖巖。
  赫赫師尹，民具爾瞻。
  憂心如惔，不敢戯談。
  
  國既卒斂，何用不懲。\(^{165}\)

As with Du Fu’s allusion to Mao 26, the correspondence between Huan Wen’s poem and the ode is unmistakable, with all three characters from the title of Mao 191 appearing in the last couplet of Huan Wen’s inscription. Zheng Xuan’s commentary on Mao 191 interprets the “Southern Mountain” as an evocative stimulus (xing 崇)，a metaphor for the magnificence and high respect afforded Officer Yin because he occupied one of the top positions in Western Zhou polity.\(^{166}\) The allusive stones (nanshan shi 南山石) in the inscription thus relate to Zhuge’s design, and, by

\(^{164}\) There are various interpretations of yan yan 嶧巖; I follow the Mao commentary, which glosses it as “piled up stones.” See Kong Yingda, Maoshi zhengyi, 12.172a.

\(^{165}\) Ibid.

\(^{166}\) Ibid.
association, to Zhuge Liang himself, along with Officer Yin, both of whom ranked as high as the stones of South Mountain.

So far, this is entirely complimentary towards Zhuge. The next two lines, quoted above from Mao 191, proceed, however, to criticize Officer Yin. Later in the ode this criticism is shown to be primarily directed at Officer Yin’s king, for neglecting the welfare of the people. The Mao Preface names this ruler as King You (r. 781 BCE - 771 BCE), who is blamed for bringing about the end of the Western Zhou dynasty. The allusion in the inscription probably does not extend to a criticism of Zhuge Liang, because there appear to be no other texts, either in the Jin or later, that contain criticisms of Zhuge Liang’s character. It is, however, reasonable to read the allusion as mapping a relationship between Liu Bei and King You. Although Liu Bei was revered in later times as the founder of the Shu Han, Huan Wen would have felt no love for Liu Bei, as the latter was (like King You) ultimately responsible for the downfall of his kingdom. An additional point that causes the reader to suspect that Huan’s poem is allusively criticising Liu Bei is that Huan Wen was on his way to destroy Cheng Han, which was, like Liu’s own Shu Han, based in Chengdu (equivalent to Chengdu in modern Sichuan province).

If we artificially disassociate the inscription from the legendary visit that Huan Wen made to the site of the design, or if we attempt to read the poem without any concern for Huan’s predicament at the presumed time of composition, then the poem (like Du Fu’s poem, when read mimetically) reads like a dry critique of Liu Bei’s limited vision, in contrast to Zhuge’s prescience. But the opening two lines emphasize the

167 Ibid.
speaking subject’s own capacity to recognize these historical “truths,” and this assertion of a self-aware speaking subject must be compared to the history depicted in the second half of the inscription. In other words, if Huan Wen is assumed to be the speaking subject, then the reader must attempt to map the poem’s historical observations with Huan’s own circumstances.

As in Zhuge Liang’s situation, centralized authority was weak in Huan Wen’s kingdom: a series of poor leaders unsettled the Eastern Jin during Huan Wen’s lifetime. In Huan’s case in particular, many of the senior ranking officers in the administration were ambitious for influence and power. After Emperor Kang died in 344 CE, he left behind a one-year old emperor, Emperor Mu 穆帝, and a power vacuum.168 This unstable political situation forms the backdrop to Huan’s expedition to Cheng Han and his visit en route to the Eight Phalanx Design. The additional historical details about Huan, cited above, also remind us that when he was passing by the Eight Phalanx Design, Huan was setting out on a journey that we now know (with hindsight) resulted in the trouncing of Li Shi and the acquisition of Cheng Han by the Eastern Jin imperial armies. But this mission (and indeed many of Huan’s later missions as well) was undertaken without the full backing of his superiors.169 The Jin shu tells us that, much later, Huan Wen considered staging a coup and replacing another weak leader, but in this earlier period all the information suggests that he was acting out of loyalty to the Eastern Jin cause and the royal family’s best interests.170

168 Jin shu 8.191.
169 Ibid., 98.2569.
We read this inscription, therefore, not only as a conveyance of praise for Zhuge Liang and criticism of Liu Bei, but also as an expression Huan Wen’s empathy towards Zhuge because of Huan’s similar political situation, i.e., his misfortune at living under a weak ruler. Therefore, although the allusion in the final line is not pivotal to the semiotic aspects of this reading, it both encapsulates and emphasizes it.

Historical relics call up a repertory of allusions when they become the subject of poetic composition. The repertory invoked by the Shijing allusions, used both in Huan’s and Du’s compositions, tells of one common theme: the prescience of Zhuge Liang, who, fearing that Liu Bei would neglect some element of his battle plan, established the Eight Phalanx Design. Furthermore, in both poems, the lines that describe the stones that make up the design are markers of allusions to the Shijing.

These resemblances cannot be coincidental, and we must conclude that one is a derivation of the other, though there is no firm evidence as to which came first.

political process involved in Eastern Jin historiography that ultimately leads to Huan Wen being labeled an usurper. Andrew Chittick, on the other hand, identifies clear faultlines in early historical accounts of Huan Wen’s career. See Andrew Chittick, “Dynastic Legitimacy During the Eastern Chin: Hsi Tso-ch’ih and the problem of Huan Wen,” Asia Major, 3rd ser., 11, no. 1 (1998), 34-35 and passim.

In the Huan Wen anecdotes in the Shishuo xinyu, for example, Huan is loftily praised at a time when he was a successful general, working to unify the Chinese cultural sphere. This period comprises the majority of his career, from 345-369 CE. Only the period in which he devoted himself exclusively to court politics, from 369-373 CE, is painted in famously negative hues (eg., he is described as “leaving behind a stench for ten thousand years”; see Yu Jiaxi 余嘉锡, (1883-1955 CE), ed. and comm., Shishuo xinyu 世說新語 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1993), xxxiii/13, 904 [translated in Richard B. Mather, Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 476-77]).
Whether or not we believe Wang Dang, who attributes the inscription to Huan Wen, it resembles Du Fu’s “Eight Phalanx Design” in several ways. Formally, this inscription is a pentasyllabic quatrain, although it does not of course demonstrate any of the tonal features of regulated verse. More importantly, the main point I would like to emphasize here is that juxtaposing the two poems supports my reading of both as veiled laments about the lack of enlightened leadership in the speaking subjects’ own times.

From a compositional point of view, one may wonder exactly what event in Du Fu’s life may have inspired him to compose this lament about weak, uninspired leadership. I have claimed that his own target was either Xuanzong or Suzong, but is it possible to determine which, and/or to establish a clear idea of Du Fu’s own circumstances and state of mind when he wrote “Eight Phalanx Design”? There are many possible ways— all necessarily speculative— of answering this question. The two best possibilities can be summarized as follows. First, it may be that Du Fu was criticizing Xuanzong’s fatal trust in Yang Guozhong 楊國忠 (d. 756 CE), which may have directly led to the An Lushan rebellion. Second, perhaps Du Fu was lamenting the complex circumstances leading to demotion from his only significant post, as Suzong’s

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171 The poem must at least pre-date Wang Dang, and I suspect it pre-dates Du Fu as well. There is at least one echo of the last couplet of the Huan Wen poem in a couplet of Du Fu’s pentasyllabic old-style “Northern March” (‘Bei zheng’ 北征, Dszx 5.395): “Although I lack the natural endowments to make persuasions, I fear my lord has overlooked errors” 雖乏諫諍姿，恐君有遺失。It is, of course, also possible that the Huan Wen inscription was derived in part from this couplet in “Northern March.”
"Reminder of the Right," Suzong’s lack of faith in Du Fu’s capabilities as a
"Reminder," and Du Fu’s subsequent banishment from Chang’an. But these will
always remain speculative ideas without any means of connecting them directly to Du
Fu’s “Eight Phalanx Design.” Without such evidence we remain with the more
general conclusion that the poem is a powerful lamentation about weak leadership.

Third Semiotic Element: “Eight Phalanx Design” and Other Du Fu Poems that Du
Fu Wrote about Zhuge Liang
Du Fu’s other poetry about Zhuge Liang provides a set of intertexts that reinforce the
mapping between Zhuge’s and Du Fu’s circumstances that we have seen takes place
in “Eight Phalanx Design.” Hoyt Cleveland Tillman was probably the first to assert
that, because all of the other Zhuge poems by Du Fu present the general as a cipher
for communicating something of Du Fu’s feelings about his own situation, the same
must be true of “Eight Phalanx Design.” Tillman’s reading of these Zhuge poems is
underpinned by his observation that there seems to have been a lack of interest in

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172 For a discussion of Xuanzong, Yang Guozhong, and the An Lushan rebellion, see Hung, Tu Fu:
China’s Greatest Poet, 90-101. Hung’s discussion of the circumstances surrounding Du Fu’s dismissal
from Suzong’s court is at pp. 109-111.

173 I do not consider such intertextual relations ‘allusive,’ but this kind of mutually reinforcing
intertextuality among Du Fu poems is a useful interpretive tool. Surely Du Fu could not in all cases
have expected his addressees to be familiar with his other writings in order to fully comprehend the
poem at hand. In elite Tang society, however, the poem’s addressee would have been familiar with the
poet’s general reputation and, in some cases, some biographical information that modern readers may
be able to glean from research into the poet’s other writings. For the modern reader to approximate
the level of knowledge about the poet that was possessed by an occasional poem’s addressee, the
juxtaposition of poems by the same author is as important as the full identification of relevant allusive
intertexts.
Zhuge Liang in other Tang poetry and historical writings, as compared to in pre- or post-Tang writings. Furthermore, Du Fu’s own poems note that the contemporary monuments to Zhuge were in a state of disrepair. These observations lead Tillman to read Du Fu’s poems on Zhuge as conspicuously hyperbolic portraits, wherein Du Fu uses exaggeration to emphasize his complaints about his own lack of recognition among his contemporaries. Although Tillman can find no explicit relationship within “Eight Phalanx Design” between Zhuge Liang’s circumstances and Du Fu’s own, he writes that the poem’s “somber tone suggests that he perceived the scene through the eyes of frustrated loyalists, like himself, who had failed to get and keep Tang rulers focused on restoring good government.” This observation is certainly insightful, if we accept the arguments that I have presented above.

Tillman observes that Du Fu shows a wide range of divergent feelings towards Zhuge Liang in his poems; in particular, there seems to be a kind of evolution in Du Fu’s thought, from his original position in which he “identifies” with Zhuge. As Tillman notes, the most explicit connection that Du Fu draws between himself and Zhuge Liang is in “Ascending the Tower” (“Deng lou” 登樓, Dszx 13.1130). The poem is presented here in David Hawkes’ prose translation, because this version nicely emphasizes the coexistence of the Zhuge Liang legends and Du Fu’s predicament.

Flowers near the high tower sadden the heart of the visitor. It is at a time when the Empire is everywhere beset by troubles that he has

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175 This is the main point of Tillman’s article; see Tillman, “Reassessing Du Fu’s Line,” 295-313.
climbed up to see this view. The Brocade River scene, dressed in spring’s colors, brings a whole universe before his eyes, whilst the floating clouds above Marble Fort Mountain seem to unfold all time in their mutating shapes. The Court of the Northern Star remains unchanged. Let the marauders from the Western Mountains cease their raiding! Even the poor Second Ruler still has his shrine. As evening falls I shall sing a song of Liang-fu.¹⁷⁶

花近高樓傷客心，萬方多難此登臨。
錦江春色來天地，玉壘浮雲變古今。
北極朝廷終不改，西山寇盗莫相侵。
可憐後主還祠廟，日暮聊為梁甫吟。

This poem may be read, as Yu-kung Kao notices, as a “self portrait in a historical context.”¹⁷⁷ The allusion to Zhuge Liang is in the final couplet, on which Kao elaborates as follows.

In this particular poem, Du Fu’s admiration of Zhuge Liang... was expressed through his singing Zhuge’s favorite dirge. After all, the Last Ruler of Shu... still had his own temple in Chengdu, a reminder of the survival of the regime. The couplet points to the precarious state of the new emperor, Daizong 代宗 (r. 762-779 CE), who in his reign of less than two years had already once been forced to leave Chang’an. Could this new emperor be like the Last Ruler,

¹⁷⁶ Hawkes, *A Little Primer of Tu Fu*, 128.
entrusting his government to some loyal and intelligent statesman like Zhuge? By this time, Du Fu had lost his heroic dream of becoming a responsible official, but his identification with Zhuge had in no way diminished. On the contrary, this identification became all the stronger, centering on the contrastive circumstances between the two, particularly in the trust Zhuge received from the two rulers he assisted and in the complete ignorance of Du Fu’s value on the part of his contemporaries.¹⁷⁸

Even though the relationship between Du Fu and Zhuge is clear in the above poem, it is still quite an interpretive leap to apply the same idea to “Eight Phalanx Design.” It is, however, possible to draw closer parallels than Tillman does here between another Zhuge poem and “Eight Phalanx Design,” in order to support his argument that the latter poem reflects the same sentiments as the other Zhuge poems. Du Fu’s most famous poem on Zhuge Liang is the fifth of the “Thoughts on Ancient Sites” (“Yonghuai guji” 詠懷古跡, Dxxz 17.1506). Here is my translation of the poem:

Zhuge Liang’s great name hangs across the world,
This superior subject’s portrait is majestic and pure.
Triple division and separate states twisted his plans,
A single feather in a sky of ten-thousand ages.
Not better nor worse was he than Yi [Yin 禹, trad. 17th century BCE],] and Lü [Shang, trad. 11th century BCE];

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 383.
Had his strategy succeeded, he would have bested Xiao [He 何, d. 163 BCE] and Cao [Can 参, d. 190 BCE].

As revolving fate shifted the fortunes of Han, they could not be restored;

His purpose was cut off and his body destroyed as he toiled with the army. 179

The parallels between this poem and “Eight Phalanx Design” are clear: both begin with a description of Zhuge Liang and his lofty reputation, (here literally “hanging” above the world like a “feather”; in “Eight Phalanx Design” his reputation is “overarching” [gai]). Both poems also conclude with his “tragic” failure. 180 The heroes in the other poems in the “Thoughts on Ancient Sites” series are all clearly presented as ancient symbols of a struggling and unacknowledged Du Fu, as Chen Yixin also notices in his famous study of the suite. 181


180 Ch’en Shih-hsiang was probably the first to refer to this poem as “tragic”; see Ch’en, “To Circumvent ‘The Design of the Eightfold Array,’” 42-43 and passim.

181 Tillman approaches the material in a similar way to Chen Yixin (Chen Yixin, Du Fu ping zhuan, J050-54), in that both read the allusions and references in “Thoughts on Ancient Sites” as allusive descriptions of Du Fu himself; see Tillman, “Reassessing Du Fu’s Line on Zhuge Liang,” 307 and
It is, therefore, in the relationship between “Thoughts on Ancient Sites” and “Eight Phalanx Design” where we find a clear guide to the semiotic undercurrents within the latter poem. The “lingering regret over the failed plan to swallow Wu” now reads, not only as a quasi-historical elaboration of Zhuge Liang’s feelings, but also as an expression of Du Fu’s own disenchantment with the precarious political environment in post-An Lushan China.

The Contrast between Du Fu’s and Huan Wen’s Poem: Allusion without Marks
Although the primary significance of Du Fu’s poem has been identified in the discussion above, the aesthetic appeal of Du Fu’s allusion to “Cypress Boat” has not yet been addressed. A convenient means of evaluating Du Fu’s craftsmanship is to compare his allusion with the extremely similar one in the Huan Wen poem. Du Fu’s allusion to “Cypress Boat,” is made in a subtle, concealed way, to the extent that the syntax and import of the line may even be successfully be read without recourse to the Mao Shi intertext. In fact, the allusive line encourages the reader to suspect the presence of an allusion because of the plainness of the description: this plainness contradicts with the reader’s desire to read the line as a “transition” that contributes something new to the unfolding of the poem. The covert nature of this allusion is further demonstrated by the fact that even highly skilled modern readers like Ch’en Shih-hsiang and Suzuki Torao — both of whom presumably had full access to Qiu’s commentary and his citations from Mao 26 — either do not notice the allusion...
themselves, or elect not to emphasize it. In the case of the inscription, the allusive line (“To that purpose you laid down these stones from South Mountain”) requires the reader to recall Mao 191 in order to piece together the meaning of the line. The relationship between poem and intertext is an obvious one in that it demands a simple one-to-one mapping. Du Fu’s allusion, on the other hand, is much more carefully inscribed into the line in a way commensurate with the famous saying, “like gold thread tied and pressed into silk embroidery, without any traces.”

Conclusion

The allusive reading of Du Fu’s “Eight Phalanx Design” proposed in this chapter not only resolves the question of where the artistic impact resides in the poem, but also contributes significantly to our understanding of Du Fu’s allusive craft. The mimetic reading of the poem merely sees history in verse – a brilliantly concise and structurally symmetrical account of Zhuge Liang’s talent, balanced against the tragic failure of his lord to reunify China, in spite of Zhuge’s support. A deeper reading, initiated by the reader’s familiarity with the explicit comparison that Du Fu makes in other poems between himself and Zhuge Liang, takes the allusion to Mao 26 as a cue to understanding the manner in which “Eight Phalanx Design” sets up this intertextual

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182 In Ch’en, “To Circumvent ‘The Design of the Eightfold Array,’” 50, the allusive intertext is only cited in a footnote, and credited to a colleague who pointed it out while proofing his manuscript. Suzuki Torao does not mention the allusion; see Suzuki Torao 鈴木虎雄 (1878-1963), To shi 杜詩, 8 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1963), vol. 6, 23-24. The focus in this formative Japanese study is on the tragedy of the simultaneous military talent of Zhuge and the failures of Liu Bei.
mapping. The mapping between Zhuge and Du Fu is moderated by the Mao Preface’s assertion that Mao 26 implies frustrated loyalty. This generates a strong platform for Du Fu’s expression of lamentation about his own frustrations. This reading of “Eight Phalanx Design” as a lamentation is reinforced by juxtaposing it with the poem attributed to Huan Wen, which communicates exactly the same kind of lamentation about the misery of a career in the service of weak rulers.
Chapter 3

Du Fu’s Encyclopedic Poetics on Rain and the Divine Woman

Introduction

In this chapter I argue that the complexity of some of Du Fu’s finest poems comes from the presence of a symphony of voices derived from the tradition of the Chuci (Songs of Chu). Readers have long been aware of the importance of the Chuci in Du Fu’s poetry. Huang Sheng (1622-? CE) wrote, somewhat elliptically: “The source of Du Fu’s poetry is the Chuci. The ‘billowing waves’ [of his verse] thus naturally possess ‘mature vigor’” 公詩發源於楚詞，波瀾故自老成. Qiu Zhao’ao, for example, cited lines from the Chuci on 260 occasions in his commentary.

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183 Cited in Dsxz 22.1986. Huang’s second line echoes a couplet by Du Fu that describes a perfect balance between the fine points and broad strokes in poetry: “The fine hairs leave behind no regrets, the billowing waves are particularly mature” 毫髪無遺憾，波瀾獨老成. Dsxz 2.110.
on Du Fu. Modern scholars have also proposed various taxonomies to explain the kinds of relationships that exist between Qiu’s citations from the *Chuci* and the individual lines of Du Fu’s poetry. The specific focus of this chapter is a detailed analysis of the allusive layers of a number of *yong wu* 詩物 poems on the topic of rain, written in 766 and 767 CE, when Du Fu and his family were living a rural life in the wet and humid Kuizhou (modern Sichuan) area.

On one level, these poems on rain are fine descriptions of southern rain, containing simple allusions that enhance the description of various aspects of the rainy scene, and convey the poet’s feelings of sadness. The apparently generic nature of the sadness expressed in the poems may explain why critics do not count them among Du Fu’s poems.

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184 This statistic is cited in Zeng Yalan 曾亞蘭 and Zhao Ji 趙季, “Shuo Qiu Zhao’ao yi Shijing zhu Du shi” 說仇兆鳌以詩經注杜詩 (“Discussion of Qiu Zhao’ao’s Shijing Annotations of Du Fu’s Poetry”), *Du Fu yanjiu xuekan* 杜甫研究學刊 62, no. 4 (1999), 33.

185 Zeng and Zhao propose a six-fold taxonomy that includes jieci 借詞 (“borrowed language”), gaixie 改寫 (“revised language”), jinsuo 繁縮 (“compressed/summarized language”), yanhua 衍化 (“elaboration”), guyi 取意 (“extraction of meaning”), bianhua fazhan 變化發展 (“revision and development”); ibid., 34-36. The usefulness of this taxonomy is reduced by the large overlap between categories.

186 The five poems that serve as the focus for this chapter are all entitled “Rain” (“Yu 雨”). There are twelve poems with this title in Du Fu’s surviving corpus, all traditionally dated to 766-767 CE: *Dszx* 14.1247, 15.1323-24, 15.1325-26, 15.1326-28, 15.1333, 15.1338, 19.1671, and 20.1798-800. These include poems of regulated verse and old-style verse of varying line lengths. Du Fu did, of course, write many other poems in which rain serves as a central topic. The period of Du Fu’s life during which these poems were probably written is described in Hung, *Tu Fu: China’s Greatest Poet*, 216. Hung does not, however, translate the five poems on rain that are the focus of this chapter.
best, but I would argue that a deeper significance of these poems goes unappreciated if the reader fails to examine the intricate effects produced when the allusions are considered together as a concert of voices. What emerges through analysis of the allusive relationships is that the poems consistently move from generic sentiments to distinctively sensual, almost sexual, statements of both veiled desire and political alienation.

**Methodology**

In this chapter I rely to some extent on the encyclopaedic *leishu* 類書 ("thematic manuals"), compiled in the Early Tang period, because they help us to identify in what respects Du Fu's allusions exceed conventional expectations. The *leishu* are a cache of literary conventions, detailing in particular those conventions regulating the tasteful use of historical allusion. This chapter focuses on one particular *leishu*, the *Chuxue ji* 初學記.

Scholars of Tang poetry rarely admit to relying on Early Tang *leishu* in order to understand poetic convention. Indeed, many scholars regularly deride books like the *Chuxue ji*. In a famous essay, Wen Yiduo approaches Early Tang *leishu* from the perspective of a literary historian, describing them as writings of low status that epitomise the literary ethos of the first four decades of the Tang.¹⁸⁷ Although the *Chuxue ji* was compiled later than that, Wen still sees it as representative of the same

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¹⁸⁷ Wen Yiduo 龔一多 (1899-1946 CE), "Leishu yu shi" 類書與詩, in *Wen Yiduo quan ji* 龔一多全集 (Kowloon, Hong Kong: Nan tong tu shu gong si, 1982), 3: 5.
literary strategy,\textsuperscript{188} which, he argues, involves treating literature as a form of scholarship.\textsuperscript{189} Wen asserts that poets like Li Shimin 李世民 (posthumously Emperor Taizong 太宗, r. 626-649 CE) thought that poetry could be written mechanically, using basic formulae. Wen insightfully suggests that these poetic formulae were outlined in books like \textit{leishu}, which he understands to have been poetry-writing manuals rather than general-purpose encyclopedias.

To take the example of the \textit{Chuxue ji}, Wen proposes that each paired allusion in this text represents a proto-poem in which most of the poet’s work has already been done: “all that is left to do is to turn each paired allusion into a nicely paired pentasyllabic couplet, tack on a rhyme scheme, add a head and a tail and that is it.”\textsuperscript{190} This leads him to conclude that Early Tang \textit{leishu} were “poetry in the rough,” and that Early Tang poems were simply “refined \textit{leishu}.”\textsuperscript{191}

In this chapter, then, I demonstrate how it is possible for the modern reader to use the \textit{Chuxue ji} as a source of basic allusive praxis – a conventional baseline against which to compare strategies of allusion employed by skilled poets. The \textit{Chuxue ji} was not

\textsuperscript{188} The compilation and editing of the \textit{Chuxue ji} was overseen by two minor historian-officials, Xu Jian 徐巿 (659-729 CE), and Wei Shu 韋述 (7-757 CE), at the order of Li Longji 李隆基 (r. 712-756 CE, posthumously Xuanzong 玄宗) to whom it was submitted within a few years of his accession to the throne. See Liu Su 劉肃 (fl. 806-820 CE), \textit{Da Tang xin yu} 大唐新語 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984), 9.131.

\textsuperscript{189} See Wen Yiduo, “Leishu yu shi,” 5.

\textsuperscript{190} 剩餘的工作，無非是將“事對”裝潢成五個字一幅的更完整的對聯，拼上韻腳，再安上一頭一尾罷了。 Wen Yiduo, “Leishu yu shi,” 7.

\textsuperscript{191} Wen Yiduo, “Leishu yu shi,” 7.
itself an indispensable guide for the great Tang poets to create the kind of complex, deeply sensual poetry that I see in Du Fu’s compositions on rain, but it is a convenient source of basic tropes that were common knowledge during the time in which he was writing. In addition to arguing for new readings of Du Fu’s poems on rain, I compare Du Fu’s allusions to those that appear in the Chuxue ji, and thereby gain a perspective on how the poet relies on convention in the process of exceeding it.

1. Fine Rain and the Sadness of Song Yu

I begin with a moody poem, one typically neglected by scholars in favour of his more famous four-lyric suite on rain (to be discussed later in this chapter). This shi poem, in pentasyllabic verse, describes the muggy hot rains in early springtime near the Shaman Mountains (Wushan 巫山).

“Rain” (“Yu” 雨)

(Dsxz 14.1247)

On jiazi day, dark and obscure are the rains,
Which have persisted already through the first day of spring.
I tire of squaring off with the light fan,
I am worried and self-conscious in these light garments.¹⁹²
Only visible when enshrouded in mist

¹⁹² To be forced by the unseasonable weather to “wear clothes without taking the season into account, this is the [cause of the] suspicion” 以服不以時，故疑也。Yang Lun, Du shijing quan, 12. 580.
Even more silk-like when drawn by the wind.
I even sense the dusk of Shaman Mountain,
At the same time urging the sorrow of Song Yu.

冥冥甲子雨，已度立春時。
輕箋煩相向，繚緜恐自疑。
煙添纔有色，風引更如絲。
直覺巫山暮，兼催宋玉悲。

*Mimetic Reading: Which Jiazi Day?*

The first couplet draws the reader's attention to the exact time of the year, and, accordingly, most existing interpretations focus on situating this poem within the timeline of Du Fu’s life. Because Du Fu rarely makes gratuitous references, it is indeed an important first step for the reader to consider the time of year that he mentions, and analyse their relationship to the imagery and allusions found elsewhere in the poem.

Most traditional scholars disagree in identifying which of the two possible jiazi days is implied in the first line of Du Fu’s “Rain”: the winter jiazi day, i.e., the second day of winter in the lunar calendar, or the spring jiazi day, i.e., the second day of spring. Adherents of the winter theory assert that the rains described by Du Fu may have begun on winter jiazi day and have lasted through the winter until the first day of spring. If this were the case, these persistent and cold winter rains would certainly have caused Shaman Mountain residents great discomfort, and thus would probably have been recorded in a local gazetteer. Although I can find no evidence that there were any unusually rainy winters during the 750s and 760s, the Shaman Mountain
area is, even today, notoriously wet and rainy, and so this theory is certainly plausible. Nevertheless, my translation follows Qiu Zhao’ao and Yang Lun in siding with the spring jiazi day interpretation, which imagines a two-day, hot, muggy rainstorm in spring. 193 Du Fu’s biographers put Du Fu in the Shaman Mountains area (i.e., Kuizhou) in 766; 194 working through historical lunar calendars enables us to determine that during that year, the spring jiazi day fell on 21 February. 195

Guo Zhida 郭知達 (jinshi 1193, d. 1226), who also believes that Du Fu is describing the spring jiazi day, quotes a “Tang ditty” in his commentary: “Rains on spring jiazi day mean bare earth for thousands of miles” 春甲子雨，赤地千里. 196 This expression was indeed current in Du Fu’s day, as evidenced by its appearance in many early texts, including Zhang Zhuo’s 張鶴 (ca. 658- ca. 730 CE) Chaoye qianzai 朝野僉載 (“Complete Record In and Out of Court”). 197 If indeed Du Fu is describing rains on the spring jiazi day, then these rains would have been interpreted by his contemporary readers as omens of drought. Unfortunately, traditional scholarship does not extend beyond making the kinds of mimetic observations about the compositional context of the poem that I have outlined here; nevertheless, they do set the stage for a deeper reading.

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193 For a summary of this debate, see Dsxz 14.1247. Yang Lun puts his case in Dsq 12.580.
194 See Hung, Tu Fu: China’s Greatest Poet, 219-231.
196 See Dsyd 32.517b.
197 See Chaoye qianzai (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979), 1.19.
Semiotic Reading: Omens and Song Yu

The first step towards such a deeper interpretation hinges on the words yi and bei, and the complexities of their intertextual relationships. I have translated zi yi 自疑 (literally “naturally suspicious,” “himself suspicious,” “suspect (one)self”) as “self-conscious,” to reflect the kinds of feelings I imagine are portrayed in Du Fu’s second couplet; it is only late February, but it is already muggy and hot enough to force an elite gentleman like Du Fu to adopt his light, ko-hemp summer clothing. He is being forced to wear light clothes in February, which makes him feel uneasy and awkward, and to be concerned about the unseasonable turn in the weather. Another interpretation is possible but less likely: the poet, fan in hand, thought it would be warm enough to don summer clothes, but he is unsure if he has made the right wardrobe decision. 198

The reader may wonder at Du Fu’s uncharacteristic concern about the unseasonable rainy weather. It is also uncharacteristic of our poet to be obsessive about his own wardrobe choices. Is this really a poem concerned only with physical discomfort, or

198 While I have taken Du Fu’s poem to describe a particular day in February, it is possible that his poem imagines a span of annual seasons. Pursuant to this reading, the second couplet (“I tire of squaring off with the light fan / I am worried and self-conscious in these light garments”) describes summer, because the poet is imagining the heat of the upcoming drought predicted by the local saying about ominous rains on jiasi day. The subsequent two couplets (“Only when enshrouded in mist does [the rain] have beauty / even more silk-like when taken by the wind / Straight-away awakening to the dusk of Shaman Mountain, at the same time urging [in me] the sadness of Song Yu”) are then read as describing a rainy autumn. The word “dusk” (mu 黄) provides an autumnal feeling of waning light and gradual decline.
are these features emblematic of broader concerns? Indeed, the central question about
the meaning of this poem is: what is the relationship between Du Fu’s unease and the
seemingly incongruous mention in the last line of “the sorrow of Song Yu”? The
answer is complex, and involves the ways in which this poem initially relies upon,
and then finally breaks from, allusive convention.

In the discussion that follows I will take some pains to introduce those intertexts
relevant not only to a reading of this poem, but also to an interpretation of the more
complex series of “Four Poems on Rain,” to be discussed in the second section of this
chapter. Most pertinent to our understanding of Du Fu’s poems on rain are two
elements conventionally associated with rain as a literary topic: the Divine Woman
(Shen nü 神女), and the correspondences between agriculturally beneficial or
damaging rains and the prevailing political order, both of which are closely related to
Du Fu’s mention in the first poem of Song Yu’s sorrow.

The Cosmic Correspondence between Rain, Imperial Virtue and Order

We begin with a set of intertexts that connect Du Fu’s reference to the “sorrow of
Song Yu” with political lamentation, and determine the crucial role of these texts in
identifying the literary force of Du Fu’s poem. The phrase, “Song Yu’s sorrow,” in
the last line, adduces the famous “Nine Disputations” (“Jiubian” 九辯) in the Chuci
anthology, in which Song Yu rhapsodises sorrowfully on the painful decay
dsymbolized by the autumn season.

Sorrowful, numinous Autumn,

Wan and drear: flower and leaf flutter, fall and decay;
Sad and lorn: as when on journey far...
One climbs a hill and looks down on the water, speed a returning friend...
Afflicted: the poor esquire has lost his office and his heart rebels;
Desolate: on his long journey he rests with never a friend;
Melancholy: he nurses a private sorrow...
悲哉秋之為氣也
蕭瑟兮草木搖落
憭慄兮若在遠行
登山臨水兮送將歸
...
坎壈兮貧士失職而志不平
廓落兮羁旅而無友生
惆悵兮而私自憐
...

This poem reflects a central theme of early Sao-style writings: grief over a failed career, and the associated lack of understanding from friends and patrons. While it is of course reductive to read the diverse family of Chuci poems as converging only towards ‘official complaint’ (what came to be called guanyuan 官怨) but such concerns are surely central to the anthology. The archetypal expression of this theme

199 Wang Yi, Chuci buzhu 楚辭補注, with appended annotations by Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090-1155) (SBCK), 89.182. Translation adapted from Hawkes, The Songs of the South, 209.
is found in “Encountering Sorrow” (“Lisao” 離騷), in which the failed career stems from slander at court and the absence of an enlightened lord.

The political relationship between Song Yu’s sorrow and the main topic of Du Fu’s poem (i.e., rain) may be further detailed by looking in more depth at Du Fu’s first couplet (“On jiazi day, dark and obscure are the rains / Which have persisted already through the first day of spring”), and the folk saying associated with it (“rains on spring jiazi day mean bare earth for thousands of miles”). In the preceding discussion I read these lines simply as a portent of coming drought, but do they also carry a political subtext?

Taking the first step towards answering this question requires that we recall the long-standing convention in rain poetry, which associates bad weather with poor governance. This convention is clearly detailed in the Chuxueji: in the “rain” section of the manual, the discussion on language appropriate to a yongwu poem on rain begins with the following quotation from the Book of Documents.

When the good sign is that [the ruler] is respectful, then timely rains result. (Xiu means “good,” jing means “respectful,” ruo means “to follow.”) A gloss by Kong Anguo says: “when the ruler behaves respectfully then timely rain follows.”) When the bad omen is that [the ruler] is arrogant, long lasting rains result. (Jiu means “bad.”) A gloss by Kong Anguo says: “when the ruler behaves with rash arrogance then lasting rains follow.”
This is followed by a quotation from Jing Fang’s 京房 (77 - 37 [or 33?] BCE) lost manual of divination, Yi hou 易候 (“Changes and Condition of Things”), which elaborates on the Book of Documents passage quoted above:

In peaceful times it rains once every ten days, thirty-six rains a year altogether. This is the cosmic response that [the Book of Documents refers to as] “good omens and timely results.”

Jing Fang’s quotation elaborates on the belief, expressed earlier in Documents, that there is a natural correspondence between weather events and human actions.

Most of the rest of the “rain” section in the manual is devoted to elaborating on this correlation. It further develops the cosmic correspondence between beneficent rains and good leadership with a paired allusion, “branch washer, leaf moistener” (zhuo ji 濯枝; run ye 潤葉), quoting the relevant sources as follows.

Zhou Chu (242-297 BCE) says in his Records on the Land and Customs: “In the sixth month there is a big rain, called a “branch washer.””
[by Liu Xin 劉歆 d. 23 CE], Dong Zhongshu (ca. 179 - ca. 104 BCE) is quoted as saying: “In times of peace, rain does not destroy arable land, moistening stems and rinsing leaves only.”

The common strand in the two passages is that timely rains are beneficial to crops and other flora, and that this signifies that all is well in the empire.²⁰⁰

The strength of this long tradition means that Du Fu’s readers would certainly have drawn political meaning from the ominous rains that fell on jiazi day, as well as simply recognizing the portents of terrible drought for the year to come. Put simply, ominous rains signify problems in the empire. We may speculate on the detailed historical nature of these problems: perhaps the ominous rains reminded Du Fu of some deficiency in Suzong’s rule, or maybe the poet felt a general sense of unease over the lack of central control and the decline in economic prosperity following the An Lushan rebellion. This kind of overly specific speculation is not central to the

²⁰⁰ This allusive pair occurs frequently in medieval poetry. Two examples by poets hailing from sixth century Chen 陳 are the “Lyric in Response to Imperial Instruction: On Being Bestowed with a Light Rain in a Plum Grove” 賦得梅林輕雨應教詩, by the minor poet Zhang Zhengxian 張正見 (? - 575 CE) and the second of Yin Keng’s 隱鶴 (fl. mid-sixth century CE) “Lyric on Facing the Rain While Living in Idleness” 閒居對雨詩. See Lu Qinli 劉欽立, Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983), 2496 and 2454 respectively.
emotional power of the poem, however; the main point is that Du Fu’s poem draws on the common trope linking rain, politics, and feelings.

The Divine Woman: Sensual Presence or Political Allegory?

In addition to the rain/political allegory, there is a subtler yet even more powerful theme in Du Fu’s poem – an invocation of the famous “Divine Woman,” whose legend has a long and complex history. The strands of her legend most relevant here involve Song Yu. The penultimate line of Du Fu’s poem (“Straight-away awakening to the dusk of Shaman Mountain”) invokes the Divine Woman through a relationship with the following lines from an ancient rhapsody (fu) attributed to Song Yu (with the key line highlighted in bold):

King Xiang of Chu and Song Yu were strolling about the terrace of cloud dreams, and they sighted the Gaotang shrine. Above it there was only a cloudy vapour... The king asked Song Yu, “What manner of vapour is this?” Song Yu replied, “It is what is called Dawn Cloud... Once when a former king was visiting Gaotang, he became tired and took a nap. In a dream he saw a woman who said to him, “I am the maiden of Shaman Mount. Having heard that my lord is visiting Gaotang, I wish to offer him pillow and mat.” The king then favoured her with his bed. When she left, she bade farewell saying: “I live on the sunny side of Shaman Mount, Among the defiles of a lofty hill. At dawn I am Morning Cloud,
Evenings I am Moving Rain. Morning after morning, dusk after dusk, below the sunlit platform.”

楚襄王與宋玉遊於雲夢之臺，望高唐之觀，其上獨有雲氣……

王問玉曰：此何氣也？玉對曰：所謂朝雲者也……昔者先王嘗遊高唐，怠而晝寐，夢見一婦人曰：妾巫山之女也……聞君遊高唐，願藉枕席。王因幸之。去而辭曰：妾在巫山之陽，高丘之阻，旦為朝雲，暮為行雨，朝朝暮暮，陽臺之下。

By alluding to this rhapsody, Du Fu’s poem asserts the Divine Woman’s sensual presence as dusk and rain around Shaman Mountain. We are mistaken if we overlook the sexual aspects of Du Fu’s reference. His “Rain” does not necessarily depict a real physical union between man and woman, but nevertheless a sexual union of some sort, however figurative, is certainly implied. We may be reminded by Edward Schafer, who, like Wen Yiduo before him, saw in Song Yu’s Divine Woman

an ancient fertility goddess whose ritual mating with a shaman-king was necessary to the well-being of the land. The poet makes her responsible for the generation of the myriad creatures. All phenomena spring from her. She

201 From the “Rhapsody on Gaotang” (“Gaotang fu” 高唐賦; Wenxuan 19.1b – 2a). Translation adapted from Knechtges, Selections of Refined Literature, vol. 3, 326-27, and Edward H. Schafer, The Divine Woman: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens in T’ang Literature (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 35-36. The importance to Tang poets of these particular lines from “Rhapsody on Gaotang” is underscored by their inclusion in Cṣj 10.240, 19.455. (The middle lines of the rhapsody, which I have omitted because they are not relevant to my argument, were coincidentally also left out of the citation in the Chuxueji.)
is a literary version of an ancient cosmic myth – a nameless goddess of the formless mists, pregnant with possibilities.  

Du Fu is tapping into exactly this vision of her as a fertile rain goddess, an object of desire.

The Divine Woman as fertile “mists,” object of desire, and formless except when present as rain or clouds, is further reinforced in Du Fu’s third couplet (“Only when enshrouded in mist does [the rain] have beauty, / Even more silk-like when drawn by the wind”). The reader grasps that the rain described in these lines, enshrouded in mist and taken by the wind, is more than scenery; Du Fu is imagining the rain as a “beautiful” and “silk-like” feminine presence.

What, then, does this sensual depiction of the Divine Woman have to do with the omen implied by the rains on jiazi day? The last step of my interpretation unifies the two principle elements in Du Fu’s “Rain” identified above (namely the political and the sensual), by discussing yet another intertext: Song Yu’s “Rhapsody on the Divine Woman” (“Shennu fu” 神女賦). In this sister text to the “Rhapsody on Gaotang,” we find a bridge between Du Fu’s depiction of the Divine Woman’s “silky beauty” and “Song Yu’s sorrow.” The “Rhapsody on the Divine Woman” concerns a dream vision of the same Divine Woman who shared a mat with the King in “The Rhapsody on Gaotang.” In the “Rhapsody on the Divine Woman,” however, she almost engages

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202 Schafer, _The Divine Woman_, 37. Wen Yiduo was the first to notice her presence in the _Shijing_; see Wen, “Gaotang shennu chuanshuo zhi fenxi” 高唐神女傳說之分析 (“Analysis of the Legend of the Divine Woman of Gaotang”), _Qinghua xuebao_ 10, no. 4 (1935), 842-849.
in sexual congress with the poet-official, Song Yu himself, before courteously taking her leave of him (thus preserving her chastity), and leaving Song Yu bereft:

All was cloudy and dark,
And suddenly I did not know where I was.
My feelings hidden in my breast,
To whom could I confide them?
Sad and sorrowful, with tears falling down my face,
I sought her till the light of dawn.

闇然而瞑，忽不知處。情獨私懷，誰者可語？惆悵垂涕，求之至曙。²⁰³

The cause of Song Yu’s “tears falling down” is traditionally taken to be unconsummated love, and, as with other poems in the Chuci tradition, this unconsummated love is often interpreted as political allegory. As with “Encountering Sorrow” (“Lisao” 離騷), the archetype for “Rhapsody on the Divine Woman,” we may interpret unconsummated love as allegory for an official lamenting abandonment by a powerful patron, and the ensuing sadness derives from an inability to serve the noble causes of the state.

This reading of sao-style poetry as political allegory is not always warranted, of course. In other poetry depicting dreamlike erotic encounters with divine females, political allegory is decidedly absent. The descriptive language in early Daoist poetry is often cryptographic depiction of meditative experience or spiritual

accomplishment. For example, the quest for a fair lady in Ruan Ji’s “Rhapsody on Purifying My Thought” (“Qingsi fu” 清思賦) and Tao Qian’s “Rhapsody on Pacifying My Passions” (“Xianqing fu” 閑情賦) becomes, as Tim Chan argues, a discourse on calming one’s passion.

Du Fu’s quest for the Divine Woman in his poem does not refer primarily to meditative experience. Rather, the sensuality of the Divine Woman allusion (generated by his reference to “the dusk of Shaman Mountain”) dovetails with the reference to the “sadness of Song Yu” and encourages the reader to explore the family of double meanings present in the earlier rhapsodies. There is an interesting play between presence and absence in Du Fu’s lines: on the one hand, the ominous rains celebrate the beautiful presence of the Divine Woman, but the drought portended in the first line also implies her absence (i.e., the absence of rain), which in turn compounds Du Fu’s sorrow. This sorrow is personal, which explains Du Fu’s unease as he frets over his wardrobe. But the deeply personal nature of his unease does not seem to concern love or loneliness per se, but rather is surely related to a conviction that, like the unpredictable rains in the Shaman Mountain area, and like the fragility of imperial unity during this period, his career prospects as an official within the Tang polity are also unstable. His concerns are therefore essentially political.

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205 See Timothy Wai-Keung Chan, “Jade Flower and the Motif of Mystic Excursion in Early Religious Daoist Poetry” (Unpublished manuscript, 2008), 18. For the poems, see Ruan Ji jiaozhu, 1.38-39; Tao Yuanming ji 陶淵明集, comm. Lu Qinli 魯欽立 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979), 5.155-56.
The Sterilization of the Divine Woman in the Early Tang

Before discussing Du Fu’s suite, “Four Poems on Rain,” which also depict the sensual and politically allegorical aspects of rain, it is worth mentioning that Du Fu and other poets of the High Tang were breaking new ground by alluding to the parts of the Divine Woman legend that celebrated her as an object of sexual desire. In spite of what seems to be a celebration of ritualized sexual union between king or Song Yu and the Divine Woman in the rhapsodies about her collected in the *Wen xuan*, Li Shan 李善 (?-689 CE) argued that the overtly sexual behaviour demonstrated by King Xiang was not becoming of a morally enlightened ruler. Li Shan accordingly read the “Rhapsody on Gaotang” as Song Yu’s critique of the king’s licentious behaviour, and the Divine Woman merely represented those nameless women at court with whom a king should not indulge in sexual relations.206

Many Early Tang poems tend to reflect Li Shan’s sexually moralizing view of the Divine Woman legends. Although Early Tang poets continued to create allusions to the two Divine Woman rhapsodies discussed above, these allusions were usually cleansed of their sexual overtones, perhaps with the same moral justification given by Li Shan. An example of a simplistic, sanitized treatment of the Divine Woman is Li Jiao’s 李峤 (644-713 CE) “Rain” 雨, written in the style of court poetry:

1. Clouds merge like turning hands from the Northwest;
   Rains come like stepping feet from the South-east.

2. The Spirit Lad rises up from the sea and appears,
   the Divine Woman goes back towards the towers.

206 *Wenxuan* 19.1b.
3. Slanting shadows join ahead of the winds;
circular patterns radiate on the water.

4. For hundreds of days there has not been a crop-destroying rain;
everywhere in the nine lands is truly peaceful.

西北雲霧起，東南雨足來。
靈童出海見，神女向臺回。
斜影風前合，圓文水上開。
十旬無破塊，九土信康哉。{207}

Here the allusion to the tradition of rhapsodies on the Divine Woman is executed adequately, but without the slightest shred of genius, and without any reference to the sexually colourful elements of the rhapsodies. In this poem the Divine Woman is poised to “return” to her towers, where she takes the shape of rain.

The reader would certainly recall Song Yu’s rhapsodies, and guess that perhaps Li Jiao’s Divine Woman was returning after a tryst with the King, but this element is conspicuously absent from Li’s allusion. The divine lady is now used as a poetic kenning for rain, devoid of any other sexual references. It is because Li wrote this poem as an exercise to demonstrate how to write poetry and how to use poetic kennings per se. Li Jiao’s poem combines this image of the Diving Woman “returning” with an allusion to a legend recorded in a Han dynasty work, Shenyi jing 神異經 (as quoted in the “Rain” section of the 10th century Taiping yulan 太平御覽)

{207} Zhang Tingfang 張庭芳, Ricang guchao Li Jiao Baiyong shi zhu 日藏古抄李嶠詠物詩注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1998), 14.
This text (Shenyi jing) involves the “Spirit Lad” (lingtong 靈童), an androgynous emissary of a northern underwater deity called the Sire of the Yellow River (He Bo 河伯), travelling on top of the Western Sea, followed closely by rains. The Spirit Lad is clearly not an object of desire in this source text, and therefore the juxtaposition of this figure with the Divine Woman allusion serves to further deemphasize any themes of royal desire in Li Jiao’s poem.

The combined message of the two allusions in Li Jiao’s “Rain,” when they have been stripped of gender and sexuality in this way, is simply: “we know that inclement weather is coming, because divine beings are harbingers of rain.” The final couplet (“For hundreds of days there has not been a crop-destroying rain / everywhere in the nine lands is truly peaceful”) confirms for the reader that the operating principle operating behind Li Jiao’s poem has nothing to do with the emotional complexity that surrounds the Divine Woman and Song Yu in the original rhapsody, and which is picked up in Du Fu’s “Rain.” Rather, this is merely one of many court poems that take regular rains to signify that all is well in the empire.

More evidence of the uniqueness of Du Fu’s approach to a yongwu on rain can be found in the Chuxue ji, which illustrates a standard approach resembling that

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208 The relevant lines from the Shenyi jing (Canon of the Divine and Anomalous, a work attributed to Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 [193-54 BCE]) are quoted in Li Fang 李昉 (925-96) et al., Taiping yulan 太平架覽 (submitted to the throne 984; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1960), 11.4.
employed by Li Jiao in his rain poem. The manual suggests a simple paired allusion by juxtaposing two phrases as follows.

"Pavilions of Jing / Lofty altar of Guan"

【荆台，灌壇】

The Chuxue ji then explains the pair of allusions by first citing the "Rhapsody on Gaotang" as the intertext explaining the "Pavilions of Jing" allusion ("Jing" being another name for the Chu region (the replacement is necessitated by the rules of prosody; Chu is a deflected-tone word; jing is level-tone.). The second allusive phrase ("Lofty altar of Guan") is then explained with the following lines from the fourth-century Book of Broad Knowledge of Nature (Bowu zhi 博物志) (with the line most relevant to the allusion highlighted in bold).

The Book of Broad Knowledge of Nature says: "Duke Tai [i.e., the mythical Li Shang 呂尚 (Western Zhou)] was the Commander of the Lofty Altar of Guan." King Wen dreamed he saw a woman

209 Although Ge Xiaoyin 葛曉音, with convincing evidence, argues that Li Jiao's 李巖 (644-713 CE) one-hundred and twenty yongwu poems can be read as an implementation of the guidelines on the use of allusion in the Chuxue ji, this particular poem on rain does not seem to derive from the manual. For her excellent treatment of the subject, see Ge Xiaoyin 葛曉音, Shi guo gaochao yu Sheng Tang wenhua 諧國高潮與盛唐文化 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), 235-51.

210 This pair of allusions and explanations is found at Cxj 2.24.

211 Here Guan 灌 is translated as a place name, because this phrase must be grammatically parallel with the following one, "Pavilions of Jing." Whilst the editors of the Chuxue ji understand Guan to be a
crying in the road and upon asking her what was wrong, she replied: 

“I am the Divine Woman of Mount Tai, and have been betrothed to become the woman of the Western Sea. I must travel by means of violent wind and rain, but the [rain-repelling virtuousness of the] Commander of the Lofty Altar at Guan has blocked my path; I dare not pass by means of gales and torrents.” After he awoke from the dream, he called Duke Tai and told him about it. Three days later, gales and torrents really did pass by.”

《博物志》云：太公為灌壇令，文王夢見婦人哭當道，問其故，日：“吾太山神女，嫁為西海婦。吾行必以暴風雨，灌壇令當吾道，不敢以疾風暴雨過也。”夢覺，召太公語焉。三日，果疾風暴雨過。212

The common denominators between the two allusions are easily drawn out from these quotations: both involve a female mountain spirit in the avatar of a beautiful corporeal woman, who appears to an ancient king in his dreams, and thereafter re­appears as rain. It is immediately clear that the allusive pair in the Chuxue ji calls upon only a limited set of elements from the two source texts. The lack of any emotional relationship between King Wen and the Divine Woman in the Bowu zhi place, and although it was indeed a relatively common place-name in post-Han times, there are no sources locating this place in the Zhou period, and I suspect that the Bowu zhi uses it not as a place-name, but rather to refer to a ritual function; there were of course libations (guan 灌, lit. “pour”) performed in Zhou times. See Li ji zhengyi 禮記正義 31.261 a.

212 A nearly identical version of this legend of King Wen’s dream is recorded in the fourth-century text “In Search of the Supernatural,” Soushen ji 搜神記 4.27.
citation suppresses the sexual tension, and its associated poetic possibilities, present in
the Song Yu rhapsody. Paired as they are, any poem that employs the two 'Chuxue ji'
allusions would communicate a single, coherent idea: the presence of a goddess in a
rainstorm. And yet, the two intertexts belong to different genres of writing, and the
Song Yu legend was much more famous than the story of King Wen’s dream. This
degree of incongruence between two texts was inappropriate to a “textbook” set of
paired allusions, and therefore the presence of the Bowu zhi intertext is somewhat
forced, revealing a kind of duplicate motivation on the part of the Chuxue ji compilers:
on the one hand, they acknowledge the importance of the “Rhapsody on Gaotang” to
the world of Tang poetry, but on the other hand they were motivated to sanitize the
rhapsody dream tryst by combining it with a text that involves a completely platonic
dream, even if the latter text was not a perfect match with the former.

Not long after the Chuxue ji was presented to the throne, however, the original, un-
sanitized sexual tension contained in the rhapsody began to make its way back into
the allusive references made by poets, and it is in this context that we should read Du
Fu’s references and allusions to the Divine Woman. Important examples of her full-
bodied sexual presence in High Tang poems include the yuefu poems written under
the title “The Heights of Wushan” (“Wushan gao”巫山高). A typical example that

213 The fifth century examples of “Wushan gao” songs allude to the already famous “Rhapsody on
Gaotang” when writing about Shaman Mountain. Wang Changling 王昌龄 (ca. 690- ca. 756 CE)
asserted that in early times, poets only write homesick poems under the “Heights of Wushan” yuefu
title, but starting with Wang Rong 王融 (468-494 CE) and Fan Yun 范雲 (451-503 CE), “most poets
used the allusion of the Divine Woman of the sunny pavilion, no-one went back to the meaning of
gazing afar, longing to return home.” 雖以陽臺神女之事，無復遠望思歸之意也。Wang’s
expressed the re-emergence of the sensual side of the rhapsody is the following
"Wushan gao" song by southern scholar and official Zhang Jiuling 張九齡 (678-740 CE).

1. Shaman Mountain comes close to the sky,
A misted scene with a stretch of blue sparkle.

2. Here it was that the King of Chu dreamed,
Dreamed that he won the soul of the Divine Woman.

3. The Divine Woman has long since gone away;
Clouds and rain are gloomy, dark--and empty.

4. Here is only the wail of the monkeys of Ba--
The note of sorrow cannot be borne by the ear.

巫山與天近，煙景長青瑤。
此中楚王夢，夢得神女靈。
神女去已久，雲雨空冥冥。
唯有巴猿嘯，哀音不可聽。\(^{214}\)

comments are recorded in Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (fl. 12th cent.), *Yuefu shiji* 楽府詩集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979), 16.228. Early Tang poems, such as Lu Zhaolin’s 虞照邨 (ca. 634- ca. 683 CE) "Wushan gao," (QTS 42.522) combined both elements of the tradition, but in a way still devoid of eroticism.

\(^{214}\) QTS, 47.565; translation adapted from Schafer, *The Divine Woman*, 83-84. Schafer’s translation of the last line is “no note of sorrow can be heard,” to fit his argument that the poem is part of a tradition that sees the Divine Woman as a relic rather than a living Goddess. This poem, however, seems to me to say the opposite. The phrase *bu ke ting* 不可聽 is commonly used by Tang poets to emphasize the unbearably sad sound of gibbons, rather than the absence of sadness in their cries. Of the eighteen attestations of the phrase *bu ke ting* in the QTS, thirteen involve gibbons or apes, and the context of all of these thirteen instances makes it clear that they should be all understood to mean that gibbon calls
The allusion to “Rhapsody on Gaotang” in this poem is, as in many “Wushan gao” poems, not meant to be subtle: the second couplet firmly grounds the poem in the earlier rhapsody. In the “Wushan gao” tradition, notices Schafer, crying gibbons are a conventional symbol for the king who is imagined crying out for his lover, who has resumed her rain form and is therefore physically inaccessible. The poem thus recalls the larger emotional sense of the two rhapsodies, and particularly the aftermath of the romantic interlude with the Divine Woman.

are so sad that one cannot bear to listen to them. Of the thirteen, three of the more famous examples include Cen Shen’s 岑参 (715-770 CE) “Emei dōng jiao lín jiāng tīng yuán huái ér shì jìu lù” 峨眉東 蹲臨江聽猿懷二室舊廬 (QTS 198.2046), Meng Haoran’s 孟浩然 (689-740 CE) “Hu zhòng lǐ po jì yuán jìu sì hu fāng” 湖中旅泊寄聞九司戶防 (QTS 159.1618), and Wang Wei’s 王維 (701-761 CE) “Song He sì yuān wài wáishēng” 送裴遂昇外甥 (QTS 126.1272).

215 Schafer, The Divine Woman, 84-86 and passim.
2. The Sensuousness of Allusion: Four Poems on Rain

Having come to grips with the sensual appropriation of the Divine Woman in Du Fu’s “Rain” discussed above, which reflects an approach to the topic that was innovated by High Tang poets after a long period of sanitization of her legend in the Early Tang, we turn now to Du Fu’s well-known four-poem suite on rain. This suite is worthy of our attention because it takes the poetic relationship between the Divine Woman and rain as a model by which to craft other allusions and figures in the suite, weaving them all together into an allusive complex.

“Four Poems on Rain” (“Yu si shou” 雨四首)

(Dszz 20.1798):

I.

1. Rains so fine they do not slicken the path;
   The clouds disperse then continue.
2. Where [a cloud shadow] hastens, purple cliffs darken;
   Bordering [the shadow’s] departure, a white bird gleams.

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216 I follow Qiu Zhao’ao in taking “clouds” to be the subject of ben 奔 and qu 去. Qiu Zhao’ao 仇兆鰲 (1640-1714 CE), ed. & comm., Du shi xiangzhu 杜詩詳註 28 juan. 5 vols. (first presented 1693, presented again 1714; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1999), 20.1798. Du Fu’s exquisite image in this couplet, of a distant bird gleaming in the sun, against a dark background, is not unprecedented in Chinese poetry, but is nevertheless widely praised. See the discussion in Chen Yixin, Du Fu ping
3. Of the autumn sun, newly moistened rays,
   From the cold river, its former falling sound.

4. My thatched gate is near the rustic trip-hammer mill,
   Where the hulled fragrant rice sits half dampened.

微雨不滑道，斷雲疏復行。
紫崖奔處黑，白鳥去邊明。
秋日新霜影，寒江舊落聲。
柴扉臨野碓，半濕搗香粳。

II.

1. Yangzi River rains, as usual, are never regular;
   The sky is clear and then suddenly scattered silk.

2. In dusky autumn it soaks everything with coldness,
   As today the passing clouds go late.

3. I mount my horse, return home and go out no more;
   I see the gulls, sitting and moving no longer.

4. My lofty apartment faces Yanyu island,

zhuan, 1173. Various alternative translations have been suggested for this couplet. An interesting alternative is to imagine, with Suzuki Torao (1878-1963 CE), that “[the rain] is dark where the purple cliffs hasten” and “[the rain] gleams on the edges of departing birds”; see Suzuki Torao, To shi, 7: 202. Nienhauser’s “At the horizon the white birds - bright” is unlikely, given that the hilly topography of the region and the presence of rains would make it impossible for Du Fu to see the horizon; see William H. Nienhauser Jr., “Rain, Four Poems: Two Selections,” in Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry, ed. Liu Wu-chi and Irving Yucheng Lo (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975), 137.
Whose moist beauty pacifies the curtains in my study.\(^{217}\)

III.

1. The scene indicates that the year is growing late,

   While from the edge of the sky I have yet to return home.

2. Northern winds whistle, soughing and sighing,

   And the cold rain falls thick and fast.

3. For my many illnesses I have long had to increase nourishment,

   Looking frail in the winter clothes fresh from storage.\(^{218}\)

4. Perils of our time awaken mournful heavy heart,

   Even short letters from old and dear friends are growing rare.

\(^{217}\) The image of a lofty apartment *gao xuan* 高轩 facing Yanyu island 燕予 on a bend of the Jiang gives Chen Yixin, who is nonplussed about this particular stanza, reason to concur with Huang He's 黄鹤 (fl. Song) dating of this series of poems to the period when Du Fu lived in Nangxi 橘西. See Chen Yixin, *Du Fu ping zhuan*, 1173.

\(^{218}\) There seems to be no internal evidence in this cycle of poems to support Wang Sishi's perception of a positive tone to this couplet; Wang Sishi's translation reads: "he is pleased that after a long period of illness and increased nourishment his health is going to improve; his appearance is weak in new winter clothes but there is a turn for the better." Wang Sishi 王嗣奭 (1566-1648 CE), *Du Yi* 杜臆 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1983), 9.335.
1. Rains of Chu make the stone mosses flourish,
   While news from the Capital-in-Bloom is late.
2. The mountains are so cold that the blue rhinoceros bellows,
   The Yangzi River turns to evening and the white gull is hungry.
3. The Divine Woman’s bindi falls,
   And the Shark Ladies’ loom shuttles are sorrowful.
4. My multiplying anxieties cannot resolve themselves,
   All day [my rainy tears] sprinkle down like silk.

Rains in Different Seasons and their Emotional and Political Implications

The four poems were, according to Huang He, written in the winter of 767 CE, but they describe the changes of seasons across the span of a year, rather than depicting the winter scene experienced at the time of writing. In the first poem, we find the clear presence of the conventional relationship between gentle rains and positive political circumstances. For the reader familiar with the conventions of a rain poem,
the way Du Fu describes the rain here arouses expectations of happy circumstances. Indeed, we find in the fourth couplet (“My thatched gate is near the rustic trip hammer mill, where the hulled fragrant rice sits half dampened”) a description of a peaceful, bucolic scene. This image of a trip hammer mill is reminiscent of a number of Yu Xin’s imitations of Tao Qian, which all depict idyllic scenes of retreat.219 In addition, the presence of the rare and expensive xiang jing (japonica fragrant rice) in the trip hammer mill is further proof that the poem is bowing to convention: this kind of rice was only available under ideal growing conditions.220 We therefore understand that in this first poem, Du Fu is writing about things going well.

The second poem continues to employ the sensory imagery of rain as being like silk, and the poet exquisitely describes a scene of “moist beauty” that “pacifies the curtains in my study.” But these descriptions are juxtaposed with notes of complaint: “Dusky autumn soaks everything with cold [rain] as today the clouds linger rather than pass by.” This coldness seems to contrast with the gentleness of the first poem. The poet seems annoyed enough by the rains that he mounts his horse, returns home and goes out no more. The “coldness” (leng 冷) with which everything is soaked begins to alert the reader to the changing mood of the poem, which seems to have taken a turn for the worse.


220 Xiang jing 是 described in Song Yingxing 宋應星 (b. 1587), Tian gong kai wu 天工開物 (presented to the throne 1637; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 1.3a as “a kind of fragrant rice, taken for its sweet fragrance, supplied to elite men. Its harvest is very precious.” 香稻一种，取其芳香，以供貴人，收實甚少.
The third poem continues this downward trajectory in mood, by making an explicit bow to the conventional association between bad rain and bad politics. The whistling northern winds, and the cold rains “falling thick and fast,” *feifei* 霏霏, link up with the overt statement that the times are perilous. *Feifei* comes from a song in the *Shijing* (Mao 167) in which the poet-soldier complains about his harsh life on a military campaign. The rain in Du Fu’s suite of poems is therefore no longer gentle, and bad things are afoot both in the empire and in the poet’s life.

The last poem contains very little mimetic information; the little that can be gleaned from it may be presented as follows. Communications have been disturbed, leading to “no news from the Capital-in-bloom.” One imagines this may happen if there is military conflict around the capital, or if Du Fu feels he has been abandoned to his fate as a wanderer with no political usefulness. Combined with the unpleasant rains, this presumably leads to the speaking subject’s “multiplying anxieties” and “tears.” But this reading of the fourth poem leaves the reader feeling unsatisfied with the whole suite, which seemed to be progressing towards something more.

In his analysis of the fourth poem in Du Fu’s series, Qiu Zhao’ao reveals that the middle couplets in this last poem (“The mountains are so cold that the blue rhinoceros bellows / The Jiang turns to evening and the white gull starves / The Divine Woman’s bindi falls / And the Shark Ladies’ loom shuttles are sorrowful”) have indeed frustrated many scholars:
Scholars recognize only that the first and last couplets are interrelated, lines two and seven respond to each other, lines one and eight respond to each other, but they fail to appreciate that in between [Du Fu] lodges his intentions within the scene; all this has double reference.

We may infer from this quotation that, according to Qiu, other scholars have failed to recognize how the fourth poem's complexity contributes to at least a double interpretation— one literal and one oblique. Qiu does not, however, spell out his interpretation.

In spite of the appeal of Qiu's idea that the fourth poem involves double meanings, which I shall turn to again in my interpretation, the majority of modern scholars do not make much of the possibility of complex intentions here. At most, the imagery is taken to depict Du Fu's moods provoked by different kinds of rainstorm. The famous modern authority on Du Fu, Chen Yixin 陈贻焮, for example, reads these couplets as imagistic depictions that serve to support the general gloominess of the whole poem:

The middle two couplets write about the sights, sounds and imaginings in rain, which are beautiful yet desolate and bitter. In this sense they support the expression of gloom in the first and last

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221 Qiu Zhao'ao 仇兆鳌 (1640-1714 CE), ed. & comm., Qiu Zhao'ao, Du shi xiangzhu, 20.1800.
couplets. But if we, like Wang Sishi, misunderstand "the middle couplets as metaphor that evil-doers have achieved their aims while the impoverished knights do not; widows and the impoverished peasants bitterly suffer from fierce soldiers and pressing taxation," we are not only reading too much into these lines out of line with the facts, but also we have destroyed the poems' artistic concept. This is certainly not worthy of consideration.

Here, Chen—I think rightly—takes aim at Wang Sishi, whose views are usually met with approval elsewhere in Chen's *Du Fu ping zhuan*. Wang's view seems to be focused on the symbolism of the third couplet, but it is hard to disagree with Chen Yixin when he says that this kind of symbolic interpretation is purely speculative. Wang interprets the rhino in the "cold mountains" as representing nameless "evildoers" (presumably the rogue elements who oppose the Emperor), and the "starving white gull" as representing the less fortunate people in the land. Putting the rhino in metaphorical opposition to the gull has little basis in the tradition, and in fact both are often used in early poetry within the same couplet to refer to the same thing: the lonely forelorn poet himself.\(^{223}\)

\(^{222}\) Chen Yixin, *Du Fu ping zhuan*, 1174.

\(^{223}\) See, for example, Wang Can's 王粲 (177-217 CE) much imitated "Deng Lou fu" 登樓賦 (*Wenxuan* 11.2a).
Other modern scholars have, on the other hand, attempted to flesh out the hidden meanings suggested by Qiu’s commentary, but, in my view, their explanations fall short because they fail to give proper attention to the complexity of the allusions. David McCraw, for example, notices many of the fine linked threads of descriptive diction that run throughout the series of four poems. For instance, he draws our attention to the important contrast between the “ominous” great bellowing animal of the second couplet and the “plight of good, free spirits like the gull.” McCraw, like Chen Yixin, sees nothing special in the fourth poem’s third allusive couplet, and he goes so far as to make light of the poetry in this section (his free translation reads: “the rain goddess herself has run for cover; / even underwater dwellers are worried about the downpour”).

Semiotic Reading: Presence and Absence of the Divine Woman

My reading pursues Qiu’s awareness of the presence of double meaning in this suite of poems, but not Wang Sishi’s particular reading that the poem’s “rhinos” are evil politicians and “white gulls” are victimized scholar officials. The complexity of the suite comes from the ways in which Du Fu creates double meanings by extending the possibilities of the Divine Woman allusion.

This semiotic reading is underpinned by the strong sensuality that Du Fu confers on the Divine Woman allusion in the fourth poem. The Divine Woman “dances” (which

224 The running and worried goddesses seem to be McCraw’s invention; see David McCraw, Du Fu’s Laments from the South (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 146-147.

225 Ibid.
on the mimetic level only means that it is raining), causing her “bindi” to fall. This is an allusive image with boldly sexual connotations. The use of the term hua tian 花钿 (often mistranslated as “hairpin”, but more accurately a decorative stone pasted between the eyebrows, i.e., a “bindi”) may be seen within the larger tradition of High Tang Chinese poetry and lore, in which it was a symbol for a beautiful and sexually alluring woman.226

In poetry of the mid-Tang, bindis are often portrayed falling from wildly dancing beautiful women, and often in a rainstorm. Writing about the same time as Du Fu, for example, Liu Changqing 劉長卿 (ca. 710 – after 787 CE) composed the following lines: “The beauty of the night brought cold smoke, the lamp flame flickers and then burns again. Incomplete makeup is added with stone eyeliner, and bindis fall during an exquisite dance.”227 Some years later, Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 described a dancer as follows: “returning dress back in floating mist and rain, wild abandon, falling petals of jade,” where qiong ying 瓊英 (“jade petals”) is used here as another term for a bindi.228

226 See Meng Hui 孟暐, Pan Jilian de faxing 潘金蓮的髮型 (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2005), 5-20 and passim. Meng Hui goes so far as to assert that bindis were traditionally considered the sexiest feminine image in all of Chinese poetry. Edward Schafer cites a number of other Tang poets who see the ornaments of the Divine Woman in the landscape of Shaman Mountain; see Schafer, The Divine Woman, 52-53.

227 夜色帶寒煙, 燈花挾更然, 殘妝添石黛, 豔舞落金钿。“Watching the dancing girls in the rain with Zhang of the Tenth Residence in Yangzhou” 揚州雨中張十宅觀妓 (QTS 197.2019, ll. 1-4).

228 回裙飄霧雨, 快節動瓊英, “Seventy Rimes Passing by Record Keeper Yang” 歷陽書事七十韻 (QTS 363. 4101, ll. 43-44).
Du Fu’s image may also tie into the convention that saw the fallen bindi as a seductive reminder of a woman who has departed. Yin Yaofan 殷堯藩 (fl. 827 CE), for example, wrote: “The King of Wu loved song and dance, drunk of graceful beauties night after night. The red candles are extinguished when the sun appears, emerald bindis swept up with the dust.” Classical poetry’s most famous falling bindi was also the most tragic: in his “Song of Everlasting Sorrow” 長恨歌, Bai Juyi 檀之 Islands imagined that beautiful Yang Guifei’s 杨貴妃 bindi fell to the ground during her struggle with her executioners.

The fallen bindi in Du Fu’s poem does not belong to any ordinary woman: the Divine Woman, perhaps dancing, is not physically but spiritually present as rain, donning the bindi of the natural flowers in the landscape. This is a boldly sexual treatment of the Divine Woman, and one that is extremely rare in High Tang poetry. In presenting the Divine Woman in this way, Du Fu is clearly asking the reader to recall the Song Yu rhapsodies’ treatment of her as an object of desire. What is not yet clear is how much of Song Yu’s professed sadness, or its associated political allegory, is present in Du Fu’s allusion.

The Shark Ladies’ Pearly Tears

The combination of this reference to the Divine Woman’s bindi with the next allusion, which comes in the fourth poem, makes it clear that Du Fu is indeed drawing more

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229 吴王爱歌舞, 夜夜醉婵娟。见日吹红烛, 和塵扫翠钿。“Wu Palace” 吴宫 (QTS 492.5563 ll. 1-4).

230 QTS 435.4820, ll. 39-40.
from the complex sadness that runs through the Song Yu rhapsodies. Du Fu’s line, “the Shark Ladies’ loom shuttles are sorrowful,” recalls the famous Shark Ladies who appeared in poems from at least as early as Zuo Si’s “Wu Capital Rhapsody.” These were creatures dwelling deep underwater, where they created luxurious silk fabrics. These aquatic fabrics were said to have been highly sought-after in early times, but they were not the only things that the Shark Ladies produced: lore has it that they cried platefuls of pearls when they took leave of the dry-land customers who bought their silk. This story reveals that the cause of the Ladies’ sadness is related to their departure from the mortal world and return back to the depths. Du Fu adds another element to the story, namely that their sadness extended back even to the original weaving of the silk. Cleverly, the allusion also evokes rain, both in the form of tears and the water of their underwater otherworld.

Thus, the sorrow expressed in the Shark Lady allusion also causes the reader to search for sorrow in the Divine Woman allusion. This is because any allusive pairing derives meaning from the elements in the intertexts that they have in common. Both allusions involve divine female beings. Both allusions also involve a relic of a divine being that persists in the mortal world: the rain is a reminder that the Divine Woman was once present, just as the Shark Ladies’ pearl tears are a reminder that they were in the mortal world.

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232 This extended version of the legend is cited from the *Bowu zhi* in Liu Kui’s commentary (*Wenxuan* 5.11b), but does not occur in transmitted versions of the *Bowu zhi*. 
Du Fu’s allusions to the Divine Woman and the Shark Ladies are picked up again in the final couplet in the fourth poem (“My multiplying anxieties cannot resolve themselves / All day [my rainy tears] sprinkle down like silk”). Here the poet appropriates the rain and the tears, evoked in the previous couplet, as his own. This tightens the connection between the sadness of departure, previously only alluded to (in Song Yu’s bereavement over the Divine Woman’s departure and the Shark Ladies’ tears at their own departure from their dry-land hosts), and the poet’s own openly proclaimed sorrows.

These sorrows may be seen to emerge in the first couplet of the fourth poem (“Rains of Chu make the stone mosses flourish / While news from Capital-in-Bloom is late”). Recalling that Qiu identified double meaning here, we note that “multiplying anxieties” may refer both to worries and to rain itself; the rain is external manifestation of Du Fu’s internal anxiety. The lack of news from Chang’an implies that the poet is lamenting his abandonment by the state: no appointments have come his way for a long time. This sense of loneliness is emphasized by the fact that mosses are flourishing on the steps leading to the poet’s home, a familiar trope that indicates a prolonged lack of visitors. In all cases, these descriptions carry both a literal and a figurative meaning.

The sense of rain as a platform for lodging complex, personal meanings in this last poem also, I believe, feeds back into the first three poems in the suite. The rains of all four poems may be seen as evidence of the Divine Woman’s presence, and also, by

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233 On this convention, see CXJ 27.669-670.
association, of Song Yu’s sorrow and political allegory. Just as the Divine Woman is lyrically present in the Shaman Mountain area in the form of rain, so the Shark Ladies are present in the same scene, in the sad sound of the river. In this suite of poems, therefore, Du Fu consistently reminds the reader of the presence of these divinities within the natural scene, but also suggests the possibility that a less observant person may fail to notice them. Although the divinities are so clearly visible to Du Fu, their intertextual origins are even more present to him. It is Song Yu’s expression of bereavement over the Divine Woman’s departure that colors Du Fu’s references to her in this suite in particular, and allows the reader to conclude that the poems are underwritten by a strong personal, and probably also political, lament.

Another Semiotic Layer – Du Fu and the Birds

The last observation I would like to make concerns the conspicuous presence of a bird (or at least the imagery of flying) in all four poems. Poem one speaks of a “white bird on the edge [of the darkness].” In poem two the poet says: “I see the gulls, [while] sitting and moving no longer.” The third poem portrays the poet’s remoteness from the vantage point of a bird (“from the edge of the sky I have yet to return home.”) And the last poem contains the foreboding image of the hungry white gull late in the evening. Birds or images of flight are the only other elements besides rain that occur in all four poems.

Yet the birds are different in all four poems, and echo the moods of the poet himself in each poem. The first bird soars in the distance, gleaming in the sun, reflecting the pleasant mood at the beginning of the suite. The gulls in the second poem are possibly also hampered by the rains, like the poet. In the third poem the poet
describes himself as being far away from home, like a migratory bird flying south for the winter. The bird in the fourth poem is “hungry” ji 饥, perhaps because the rains have hampered its scavenging. The fact that this bird is hungry also resonates with the reference to “increasing nourishment” (jia fan 加饭) in poem three, and therefore serves to heighten Du Fu’s identification with the bird.

It is possible to make an additional interpretive leap, and propose that Du Fu is portraying himself as the bird in the scene in all four poems. The allusive transformation of the Divine Woman from her spirit form into her rain form serves as an “interpretant” (to borrow Charles Peirce’s term) or interpretive key that facilitates the author’s transformation into a bird. In other words, her presence as anthropomorphized rain in all four poems encourages the reader to find other elements in the scene that have human qualities. The birds, as in other poems by Du Fu, are emblematic of the poet’s own evolving feelings and moods in the cycle.

Conclusion

While the topical message of Du Fu’s “Four Poems on Rain” closely follows the conventions laid out in the Chuxue ji – worsening rains corresponding to trouble in the empire – the allusive complexity of the suite as a whole gives the poems a deeper significance, which comes from a continuous inter-play of presence with lack. The physical form of the Divine Woman is absent, but she is present as rain and flowers in the imagined scene. The King / Song Yu are unable to meet with her physically, but
they do manage to meet with her in symbolic form in the rain scene. The poet, in sympathy with all of them, is not able to be present in the capital, and, like Song Yu, is thereby prevented from realizing his aims, but he is nevertheless able to experience the scene vicariously as a gull in the mythical world of Shaman Mountain, and so to experience the tears of the divine residents of this world.

What makes the allusions in these poems unique, and more sophisticated than the basic techniques encouraged by the *Chuxue ji*, is that they are expansive rather than reductive (as in Li Jiao). The first poem on “Rain” (“The rain is dark and obscure on *jiazi* day...”) demonstrates how a single allusion can involve multiple intertexts at once, as a means of enhancing the emotional expressivity of the allusion and opening up new vistas of interpretation. The “Four Poems on Rain” then demonstrate how an allusion may act as a semiotic key that unlocks the symbolic nature of multiple images elsewhere in the alluding text.
Chapter 4

The Southern Marchmount: Allusive Transcendence of Ritual and Lament

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that some of Du Fu's best-known poems contain allusions that have very much in common with the prescriptive style of poetry-writing manuals, but that in every case, the elements that seem to denote conventional praxis are actually signposts for the presence of deeper, personal levels of significance. A detailed examination of the allusions that Du Fu's poetry makes to Sao-style verse offered us a fuller and more sensual experience of these poems than that provided by traditional mimetically focused commentaries.

In this chapter, I shift my attention to another heavily allusive poem that, like the "Rain" poems, contains global allusions to Sao-style intertexts. This poem, which Du Fu wrote about Hengshan 衡山, the Southern Marchmount, is much more interesting than his other poems on sacred mountains.\(^{234}\) It has never been the subject of much analysis, perhaps because, as I shall argue, its level of sophistication emerges only

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through careful, sustained attention to the allusive layers of meaning and the interactions between them. This is the first extant Marchmount poem in the Chinese tradition to combine three modes of expression, namely: "roaming to transcendence" (you xian 遊仙), ritual hymn, and Sao-style lamentation. These three layers, I argue below, are all invoked by allusion.

We have seen in previous chapters how Du Fu masterfully incorporates a sub-stratum of Sao-style elements into his poems through the use of complex allusions, and so he does in his poem on Hengshan. But the most fascinating aspect of his allusive strategy in this poem is how he establishes an ironic contrast between this Sao layer and the other two layers (i.e., those of ritual and transcendence). In the analysis that follows, I offer a mimetic reading of the poem that focuses on the ritual layer, and then move to a semiotic analysis that brings in the other layers, one at a time, to create what I believe to be the most comprehensive reading of the poem, one which truly encapsulates Du Fu’s "symphony of voices." In my discussion of each layer, I cite examples from the established tradition to demonstrate Du Fu’s reliance upon, and departures from, poetic convention in order to more precisely locate the mastery of this poem.

Here is the poem, with my translation:
“Gazing at the Marchmount” (“Wang Yue,” 望嶽235)

(Dsxz 22.1983)

1. Vermilion Bird is matched to the Southern Marchmount,236

The sacrificial protocols here originate with the ancient kings.

南嶽配朱鳥，秩禮自百王。

2. The earthly spirits are quickly marshalled,

In boundless vastness it fills half the blazing quadrant.

攸吸領地靈，鴻洞半炎方。

3. The sacrificial ceremonies employed by the state,

Inhere in charismatic virtue, not in redolent aromas.

邦家用祀典，在德非馨香。

4. How rare are imperial perambulatory tours,

Contemporary readers would have noticed that the word wang 望 contains a double meaning: in addition to “gazing afar,” it also refers to an ancient and orthodox way for a head priest (the King or Emperor) to conduct state sacrifices to distant landmarks without having to incur the cost of physically travelling there. See Documents (3.14b, 3.15b and passim), the Shijing (Mao 273), the Zhou Li (18.126a, 19.128a and passim), Zheng Zhong’s 鄭眾 [fl. 1st century CE] commentary on Zhou Li 18.126a, cited and elaborated upon by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200 CE) and Jia Gongyan 賈公彥 (fl. 655 CE) (Zhou Li zhushu 18.126a). For a more detailed compendium of quotations regarding the wang sacrifice, see the late sixteenth century work “History of Mount Tai” (“Dai shi” 峯史) preserved in the Dao Zang 道藏 (HY1460) 7.1.

On this sense of pei and its history, see Howard J. Wechsler, Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T’ang Dynasty (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 109 and passim. Wechsler notes that it was common in Han times to appoint stars as pei; it is in this context that we should see the Vermilion Bird in Du Fu’s poem.

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Since King Shun has, alas, perished.

巡守何寂寥，有虞今则亡。

5. I rush swiftly, through the dangerous worldly net,

In my wide wanderings I pass over the Xiao and Xiang rivers.

汩吾隘世網，行邁越瀟湘。

6. The thirsty sun emerges from the precipice,

Instead of yu 行，most editions mistakenly read ji 行(*khwet-3bx, “extending to, arriving”); see Dsxz 22.1983, Dayd 16.247-248, Ctsj 37.1101, and Dsjg 19.974; also Zhao Yancai (fl. approx. 1131-1144 CE), Du shi Zhao Cigong xianhou jie ji jiao 杜詩趙次公先後解輯校, ed. Lin Jizhong 林繼中 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1994), 6.4.1394, Wang Zhu 王洙 (997-1057 CE) comp. and ed. Wang Qi 王琪 (fl. 1059), Du Gongbu ji 杜工部集 (1059; reprint, Songben Du Gongbu ji 宋本杜工部集 Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1957), 8.17b, Qian Qianyi 錢議益 (1582-1664 CE), Qian zhu Du shi 錢注杜詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1958), 8.259. I follow Pu Qilong (Dsdxj 16.204) prefers, without explanation, the variant yu/yue 行 (*ghwet-3bx, “to rush swiftly”). Writing a few decades after Pu Qilong’s commentary was presented to the throne, another authority singled out Du Fu’s couplet as an example of a common textual error in transmitted Tang texts, and identified 行 as the correct graph here, arguing that 行 was a mistake; see Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818), Shizhou shihua 石洲詩話, Su zhai congshu 蘇齋叢書 (Shanghai: Bo ge zhai, 1924), 1.42. My own reason for selecting yu over ji 行 stems from Du Fu’s placement of the pronoun wu 吾 after the verb in question, which constitutes an allusion; see below for a detailed discussion of the well-known lines that begin with “rushing, 1...” (yu wu or yu yu 余) in the Chuci, and their allusive relationship with Du Fu’s lines. Conversely, ji is rarely found before a pronoun. The earliest occurrence I have found of ji 行 at the head of a phrase and before a pronoun is in mid-Tang prose, cf. Bai Juyi’s preface to his “On the Pond” (“Chi shang pian” 池上篇): “in the meeting of four men, it is upon me to be the one without talent” (四人所與，治吾不才身), alluding to Luruy 7.22. See Bai Juyi ji 白居易集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985), 69.1450. The language in Bai’s preface seems to be distant from Du Fu’s poem.
My rocking boat sidles up to its clear light.

7. Zhurong is senior among the five peaks;
The rest are ranked in order of height.

8. Only Purple Cap peak does not submit herself to him,
Vying for supremacy, standing high, gazing at each other from a distance.238

9. With reverence I hear Lady Wei,
Soaring high, flanked by a cortege of immortals.

10. At times the numinous essence of the five peaks
Scatters winds like flying frost.239

11. Tangled and pressed on dangerous long paths,
I have not yet had time to set my cane to climbing your lofty ridge.

238 Chen Tianfu 陳田夫 (fl. 12th century) explains Du Fu’s line in terms of the geography of the area, observing that the Zi Gai peak is the only major peak in the Heng Shan range that appears to face south, away from Zhurong peak in the north, whereas all the other peaks appear to be bowing north, to Zhurong; see Nanyue zongsheng ji HY 606 and T. #2097. This geographical observation does not, however, explain Du Fu’s emphasis on the competition between the peaks. I suspect that there is a syllepsis that involves the name “Purple Cap Peak,” but I can find no reference to satisfactorily support this apparent double meaning.

239 Du Fu refers to the caves on the various peaks of Hengshan that were said to emit mysterious winds that carried to mortals the sounds of bells, scripture chanting, and heavenly music; see Chuxue ji 5.98.
12. On returning I long to command a carriage,
Bathe and retire in your Jade Hall.
歸來觀命駕，沐浴休玉堂。

13. Thrice sighing I ask the local magistrate,
How may I assist my August Lord?
三歎問府主，曷以贊我皇。

14. The tools of sacrifice tolerate the decline of our customs,

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240 There is some debate concerning the meaning of fuzhu 府主 in this line. I follow Qiu, who took it to refer not to the spiritual denizens of the mountain, but rather to the Governor of Hunan prefecture, who was responsible for making sacrifices to the Marchmount (perhaps in coordination with powerful local Daoist abbots, whose “Dragon Tally Tossing” rite [tou long 投龍] seemed to have replaced other state sacrifices at Hengshan in the middle of the 8th century; see footnote below). Qiu writes: “The end of the poem concludes with the idea of sacrificing to the Marchmount. As for the rivers and streams within the borders of his region, the governor is responsible for sacrificing to them. [Du Fu, in this poem] asks by what means he should praise and assist this august potentate [the mountain god]. As for the offerings of sheng and bi, how could one bear to follow the customs of a depraved age, treating such things as mere empty bureaucratic formalities, and still say “may the divinity shower down blessings?” [No, rather] in this case one must use sincere piety to bring the god to presence.” Du Fu considered the then-governor of Hunan (Wei Zhijin 韋之晉, d. 769 CE) a friend, but I do not think it is necessary in this case to imagine a real dialogue with a specific governor. I am grateful to Robert Ashmore for his guidance in understanding and translating this difficult passage of Qiu’s commentary.

241 The language and content are again drawn from the Canon of Shun, where both animal sacrifice (sheng) and jade discs (bi) were focal points of the ritual worship on the Marchmounts; see Shangshu zhengyi 3.15c. The sheng served as offerings, whereas bi were returned to the local officials after the
May the divinity be willing to bestow blessings.
犛璧忍衰俗，神其思降祥。

The Marchmount mentioned in the poem’s title is Hengshan, a short range of mountains that runs 100km along the Xiang River 湘 between Hengzhou 衡州 (modern Hengyang city 衡陽) and Tanzhou 潭州 (modern Changsha 长沙).

Hengshan had lost its designation as the Southern Marchmount in Han times, but was given this title again in 589 CE. Of the five traditional Marchmounts, Hengshan was the most distant from Chang’ an, and was located in an area notoriously resistant to control by the central Tang government. It was a place to which officials were demoted or exiled from the centre as an extreme punishment; Edward Schafer identifies the area far south of the Yangzi River as a wild hinterland that struck fear into the hearts of Northerners like Du Fu.

Du Fu roamed the vicinity of this sacred mountain from spring 769 until his death late in 770, an ailing, grey-haired old man. Some recent studies argue that when Du Fu ceremonies were over. “Sheng bi” became synecdoche for all ritual implements for Marchmount ceremonies.

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242 Both Heng (i.e., 衡) and Nan Yue were names applied to a number of different mountains throughout history, and there is much room for debate about which mountain is referred to in various different traditional texts; James Robson charts this history in “Imagining Nanyue: A Religious History of the Southern-Marchmount Through the Tang Dynasty” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2002), 101-157. The Hengshan that served as the topic for Du Fu’s poem was the one in modern south-central Hunan, 100-150 km south of Changsha.

composed this poem on Hengshan, he was on a spiritual journey to seek the elixir of longevity and Taoist cures for his ailments.\textsuperscript{244} William Hung presents the traditional, and probably more accurate, belief that the poems that Du Fu wrote during this period reveal that he had long since given up any hope of career success, and was only venturing so far south in order to search for charity from friends and relatives to support his family.\textsuperscript{245}

Layer One: Poetry of Ritual and Shun’s Marchmount Tour

While the main focus of the poem as a whole, at least on a topical level, appears to be on the natural environment of the Hengshan range (couplets 6-8, -11) and Du Fu’s spiritual interaction with its divine residents (couplets 2, 9), these dominant elements are contextualized within the imagined realm of ritual sacrifice, supported with

\textsuperscript{244} There is a growing body of scholarship in China that supports this view, but the evidence seems speculative and hasty. Two essays in a recent book, for example, make the case for Du Fu’s Daoist tendencies; see Guan Qiaoling 管巧龄, Daojiao yu Nanyue 道教與南嶽 (Daoism and the Southern Marchmount) (Changsha: Yueli shushe chubanshe, 2003), 173-185. The first finds evidence in other poems by Du Fu to suggest that he undertook a life-long search for a Daoist master, and that late in life he had reason to believe that a suitable candidate was living at Hengshan. The second offers a brief summary of “Gazing at the [Southern] Marchmount” as a purely Daoist poem, citing the references to the Vermillion Bird, Lady Wei, and the spirit of the mountain as evidence. In my view, these positions oversimplify the issue by failing to account for other elements in Du Fu’s complex poems, “Wang Yue” in particular, that contradict the idea that he saw himself as a Daoist aspirant.

\textsuperscript{245} See Hung, Tu Fu: China’s Greatest Poet, 260, 263-64.
ritually appropriate language. The first couplet ("Vermilion Bird is matched to the Southern Marchmount. / The sacrificial protocols here originate with the ancient kings") dignifies the mountain by citing the importance of its sacrificial rituals, but the poem seems to contain few means by which the reader can draw connections between these rites and Du Fu's personal experience of the mountain. The couplet alludes to the legend, recorded in *The Documents*, of the performance of the *chai* and *wang* sacrifices (later known as the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 sacrifices) at the Southern Marchmount, ordered by the sage King Shun 舜.\(^\text{246}\)

While the allusion is clear, the word *zhili* 秩禮 used to mark the allusion is highly uncommon in Tang poetry, and would have been familiar to readers only in prose references to the *Documents* (Shangshu 3.15), such as edicts, memorials, inscriptions, formal ritual hymns, and the like.

The ritual emphasis in this first couplet is further emphasized, in contrast to the tone in much of the rest of the poem, by Du Fu's use of the word *pei* 配, translated above as "is matched to." Here, Tang readers would also have been aware of the ritual meaning of *pei*, namely, "to act as an coadju tor spirit in state sacrificial rites;" this is clearly the primary meaning in Du Fu's line. Whereas the Emperor's ancestors were

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\(^{246}\) *Shangshu* 3.15c. Sacrifices were thought to have been "ordered" *zhī* 秩 by the Zhou kings according to their relative degrees of importance (presumably in the context of the astral pantheon); see Du Yu's 杜預 (222-284 CE) commentary on *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 19.141c (*Wen* 6). Although the word *zhī* may refer to a specific sacrifice of that name, by Han times knowledge of this sacrifice was lost, and occurrences of the word in ritual texts came to be interpreted in the adjectival sense of "[state sacrifices] performed in the right order"; see, for example, Zheng Xuan's commentary on *Shangshu* 3.15b. Knowledge of the correct order was available only to an enlightened ruler.
placed in the holy seat of the pei for ceremonies at Taishan, Du Fu’s poem imagines that the Lord of the Southern skies would himself play this role at Hengshan.247

Under its pseudonym Fire-red Bird (chi niao 赤鳥), the Vermilion Bird (zhu niao 朱鳥) was the resident lord of the southern quadrant of the night sky, which corresponded to the lands south of the Yangzi River. This bird was also the red emblem of the “blazing” southlands.248 In this couplet, therefore, the reader imagines the pomp and ceremony of the feng and shan sacrifices, adapted to suit the deities of the south. The reference to the Vermillion Bird and the allusion to Shun, along with the archaic language used in this first couplet, are strange in the context of a lyric poem on Hengshan (many examples of non-ritual poems on Hengshan are discussed below). Without close attention to allusion, there are few clues that point towards Du Fu’s purpose.

Another couplet in which the archaic language and ritual emphasis add an unexpected

247 Xuanzong’s inscription, marking his performance of the feng and shan ceremony at Taishan in 726 CE, reads that Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618-625 CE) was the ceremonial pei. This inscription is still legible; the relevant lines can be found in Wang Chang 王昶 (1724-1806 CE), Jin shi cui bian 金石萃編 (preface dated 1805), 76.11b, translated by Edouard Chavannes in his Le T’ai Chan (Paris: Leroux, 1910), 176. See also Chavannes’ discussion of the term pei in Le T’ai Chan, 177, n. 535, where he notes that some commentators argue that the pei should instead be taken to refer to Gaozu’s father.

248 See Schafer, Pacing the Void: T’ang Approaches to the Stars, 75. The Vermillion Bird was also known as the phoenix-like emblem of the southern Fire-red God (chi di 赤帝), and in this guise it was known variously as Chang Li 長離, Zhu Que 朱雀, Ling Niao 靈鳥, among other names; see Schafer, The Vermilion Bird: T’ang Images of the South, 261-65 and passim. Schafer sees all early mentions of terrestrial or heavenly birds described with a red hue as collective manifestations of the Vermillion Bird, a symbol of the Southlands.
context to the imagery and divine figures depicted in the poem occurs in Du Fu’s third
couplet (“The sacrificial ceremonies employed by the state / Inhere in charismatic
virtue, not in redolent aromas” 邦家用祀典, 在德非馨香). My translation falls
short of capturing the archaic tone of these lines. Locutions such as bangjia 邦家
and sidian 祀典, for example, occur very rarely in Tang lyric poetry, and are frequent
only in early official prose or ritual hymns (examples follow). Likewise, the allusion
in these lines is a stock figure in ritual prose and hymn, but highly unusual in Tang
lyric poetry. The oldest extant source of the allusive intertext is Mao 290, the relevant
lines of which are:

When sweet the fragrance of offering,
Glory shall come to the fatherland.
When pungent the far-travelling scent,
The blessed elders are at rest.249
有釀其香, 邦家之光。
有椒其馨, 胡考之寧。

This ancient Zhou hymn was portrayed by the Mao Preface, and by the commentaries
of the three schools, as a song commemorating the ritual sacrifices and banquets held
after a successful harvest. The scents are therefore both a literal description of the
fragrance of sacrificial offerings, and a vehicle for a metaphorical depiction of
political glory.

249 I have only added the words “far-travelling” into what is otherwise Waley’s translation. See Waley,
This metaphor was further developed in the apocryphal Jun chen 君陳 chapter of the

guwen 古文 Book of Documents:

I have heard it said: “The fragrance (xiang 香) and the far-travelling
scent (xin 馨) of perfect governance are perceived by divine intelligence.” It is not the millet but only [the ruler’s] bright charismatic virtue that issues this far-travelling fragrance.

至治馨香感于神明，黍稷非馨，明德惟馨。250

This allusion (usually in the form of a (near-)verbatim citation) is commonly found in other, state-ritualistic writings, but is somewhat out of place in Tang lyric poetry. The Quan Tang Shi contains only a handful of instances of feixin or weixin in poetry that is not written to accompany or commemorate ritual. In ritual hymn, rhapsody, and prose accounts of sacrifice matters, however, this allusion is ubiquitous, and even obligatory. Du Fu’s use of the far-travelling scent allusion does not contribute much to the depth of the ritual layer of his poem, but rather reinforces the unconventionally archaic tone of the poem.

A final place in “Gazing” where ritual language is given a seemingly incongruous emphasis is in the last couplet, which contains a solemn prayer (“May the divinity be

250 Shangshu 18.125a. Note that the latter part of this passage is also recorded in Zuozhuan Xi 5. Although the latter is probably the older of the two textual attestations, Du Fu would have followed conventional wisdom of the day and considered the old text version of Shangshu older and therefore primary.
willing to bestow blessings" 神其思降祥). This kind of language is more reminiscent of Western Zhou prayer inscriptions rather than lyric poetry of the Tang. The archaism is clear in his use of the modal auxiliary *qi* 其, which carries the meaning “may, would that” in the *Shijing* (Mao 269, 271, 272, 273) and in inscriptions on Western Zhou bronze vessels.\(^{251}\) The word *si* 思, which is interpreted here as a verb that means “to be willing,” also has a meaning derived from its use in a divinatory context: “we hope that, would that, may.”\(^{252}\)

Why has Du Fu employed these and other archaisms and emphasized ritual events related to Hengshan? Indeed, why was Du Fu writing of state sacrifice at all upon his visit to this place, and what relationship does this issue have with the chaotic circumstances of Du Fu’s own life at the time, and with the chaotic political environment of 769-770 CE?

We can go some way towards answering these questions by observing that, in its reliance on archaic ritual language, Du Fu’s poem resembles other lyrics written on the Eastern Marchmount, Taishan 泰山.\(^{253}\) In Paul W. Kroll’s analysis of the characteristics of Taishan poems, he suggests that there was a traditional mode of writing that made use of solemn diction (often borrowed from the *Shijing*) to depict


\(^{253}\) It does not, however, resemble Du Fu’s famous “Gazing at the [Eastern] Marchmount” (“Wang yue” 望嶽, *Daxi* 1.3), discussed in the conclusion to this chapter.
the natural grandeur of the Marchmount, and which sought to deify the Marchmount as a ritual intermediary between Heaven and man. Kroll then identifies a separate tradition of Taishan poems that portray elements of personal transcendence and transformation akin to experiences often portrayed in the Daoist canon. As shall be argued below, Du Fu’s poem is unique in its trans-generic synthesis of these and other modes of writing on Marchmounts. A satisfying reading of Du Fu’s poem lay in its intertextuality with ritual hymns written or commissioned by Tang emperors, with the Chuci, and with “roaming to transcendence” poetry. Below, these layers will be discussed each in turn.

“Wang Yue” and Ritual Hymns

A brief comparison between “Gazing at the Marchmount” and some typical samples of ritual hymn, in all their archaic reiterations of the symbolic significance of the rituals they commemorate, will illustrate how Du Fu’s borrowing of ritual language and allusion provides an ironic commentary on the inadequacy of contemporary ritual activities, and so initiates a strong note of criticism of his Emperor Suzong. Du Fu’s poem far exceeds the amount of archaism present in other non-ritual Marchmount Poems, even those which Kroll reads as “Confucian.” This poem is not, however, completely without precedent. While archaic diction and poetic figures are uncommon in lyric poetry on Marchmounts by famous poets of the Tang, at least to the extent seen in Du Fu’s poem on Hengshan, they are quite appropriate to a body of hymns, rarely studied by modern readers, written to commemorate Tang state

sacrifices.

Tang ritual hymn as a genre descends from the “Hymns” (“Song” 鳣) of the Shijing, and typically involves a pastiche of quotations that call up allusions to kingly virtue and stately rites. In this aspect, we can see an obvious correspondence between these hymns and Du Fu’s “Gazing.” The most famous High Tang example is Xuanzong’s own inscription to commemorate his sacrifices to Taishan in 726 CE.

In order to establish some of the formal features of this style of writing, I quote here some representative couplets of the rhymed tetrameter verse portions of Xuanzong’s “Inscribed Record on Taishan” (“Ji Taishan ming” 纪泰山銘).

Zhongzong continued evolution [begun by Gaozu高祖 (r. 618-626 CE) and continued by Taizong太宗 (r. 626-649 CE)]

The territories are old but [the mandate] is renewed.
Ruizong [r. 684-690 CE] continued glorious work;
The whole empire considers benevolence to be his.
He held himself in respectful posture and turned towards the South, [Heaven and Earth] mesh together [myriad things] in a transforming simplicity.
Ceremony to announce the success,
Left in the care of those who come after.

中宗紹運，舊邦惟新，
睿宗繼明，天下歸仁。
恭己南面，氤氳化淳
This inscription is not about the mountain at all, but rather serves to demonstrate to the spirit of the mountain (and to all Tang subjects who may travel there) the merits of Xuanzong and his imperial lineage, and support their credentials to sacrifice to the mountain. It was, after all, a sacred mountain in the system of beliefs about the natural world that long preceded the foundations of what later came to be called "Confucianism" and "Daoism."

Xuanzong’s pastiche of quotations and paraphrase enables him to compare his ancestors’ virtue (and, by association, his own virtue) with that of the heroic kings of the past. This firmly establishes his credibility to perform the feng and shan sacrifices, thus legitimizing his rule of the empire. Xuanzong’s first couplet serves to ally his ancestors with King Wen, through a paraphrase of “Wen wang” 文王 (Mao 235): “Zhou is an old people, but its charge is new.” The second couplet suggests a parallel between Ruizong and Confucius, through a quotation from Analects 12.1: “if for a single day a man could return to the observance of the rites through overcoming himself, then the whole Empire would consider benevolence to be his.” The next line, in the second couplet, allies Xuanzong’s ancestors to Shun through a paraphrase of Analects 15.5: “if there was a ruler who achieved order without taking any action, it was, perhaps, Shun. There was nothing for him to do but to hold

255 Wang Chang, Jin shi cui bian, 76.13a.
256 Some of these references and allusions are mentioned in Chavannes, Le T’ai Chan, 174-180.
himself in a respectful posture and to face due south." Finally, the sixth line proposes that Xuanzong's ancestors have achieved harmony with all spiritual agencies, like the kings of old, making this connection by quoting *Zhouyi* 8.171: "Heaven and Earth mesh together, and the myriad things develop and reach perfect maturity; male and female blend essences together, and the myriad creatures are formed and come to life." All of these interconnecting references lent authority to Xuanzong and his sacrifices by honouring his ancestors, who served as coadjutor spirits at the sacrifice, and by drawing parallels between his ancestors and the greatest sages in the canonical tradition.

Du Fu seems to be employing the same kind of convention in his poem, but for reasons that are much less obvious. He alludes to the sage king Shun's sacrifices to Hengshan in the first couplet, and in the final couplets presents himself as a ritual invoker on behalf of his lord, Suzong. As with Xuanzong's inscription, Du Fu's references invite the reader to draw comparisons between an historical figure and a present-day one: in this case, either between Shun and Du Fu himself (which is unlikely), or between Shun and Du Fu's lord Suzong (more likely, but only implied). Even if we suspect that Du Fu is comparing Shun with Suzong, the implications of the comparison are unclear without looking closer at the other allusions in the poem.

Du Fu's poem even more closely resembles a Tang ritual hymn, and it is this resemblance that finally helps to explain the nature of the comparison between Shun

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259 Ibid., 132.

and Suzong. Ritual hymns were in fact exaggeratedly ornate in Tang times, carefully crafted and then posted for public viewing to establish the authority of the ruler among men and spirits. The ruler who most carefully manipulated the language of public ceremony was arguably Empress Wu 武后, whose ritual hymns were, in Norman Rothschild’s words, particularly “grandiose and gaudy.” By this, he meant that her compositions, as well as her regnal titles and other official language, were not merely crafted in an ornate and flamboyant way, but also served to highlight her own personal legitimacy at the top of the imperial power structure.

A ritual hymn of Wu Hou that resembles “Gazing” was composed on the occasion of a suburban sacrifice to the August Lord on High (Haotian shangdi 昊天上帝), as part of her feng and shan sacrifices performed in the second month of 696 CE on Mount Song. The ceremony either involved an offering to the August Lord of burned sacrifices, or a commemoration of one of her regular sacrifices to the August Lord on High at the round altar near Luoyang.

...How reverent the sacrificial ceremonies,

   How harmonious the sacrificial protocol.

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261 See Norman Rothschild, “Rhetoric, Ritual, and Support Constituencies in the Political Authority of Wu Zhao, Woman Emperor of China” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2003), 299 and passim. Rothschild’s thesis presents a convincing portrait of Wu Hou’s masterful appropriation of ritual language to lend authority to her reign.

262 The hymn is not dated. In a line not cited above, the hymn refers to her famous talisman, the baotu 寶圖, which was disgorged from the Luo River 洛 in 688 CE (cf. Jiu Tang shu 6.119), and so the hymn must postdate this event. For Wu Hou’s “Baotu” see Stephan N. Kory’s forthcoming article in T’ang Studies 26 (2008).
The three wine offerings are already complete,
the nine completions hereby conclude.
The zu vessels are moved and withdrawn,
Their contents are carried and moved.
some ascend, some descend, yea! sincere! yea! authentic.
The rites are complete with the four lei rites,
the music ends with the nine completions.
Relying solely on bright virtue,
Daring to offer that which is not fragrant....

The first couplet describes the sacrificial ceremonies and rites by borrowing the very words used to describe King Wen’s behaviour in “Sizhai” 思齊 (Mao 240):

“Harmonious was he in the palace, Reverent in the ancestral hall, Glorious and regarded by Heaven, Causing no discontent, protected by Heaven.” 

The last couplet paraphrases Documents 18.125 (the same allusion made in Du Fu’s poem),

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263 Quan Tang shi 10.88.

264 Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs, The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry*, 236. I have replaced Waley’s “affable” with “harmonious” for yongyang (written 雅雅 in the Mao shi), because the term is usually used to describe the cries of mating birds.
and in doing so highlights the virtue of Wu Hou. Rather than celebrating her ancestors, who presumably served as coadjutor spirits at this suburban sacrifice, Wu Hou emphasizes her own virtue and the correctness of the rites themselves. Referring to rites by name in ritual hymns was not taboo, and in fact it is common in other hymns to see references to the “three wine offerings” and the musical suite “nine completions.” Naming the rites in this way directs the reader’s attention towards their sequence. To a ruler such as Wu Hou, whose power was constructed on the clever manipulation of people, words, and rites, the correct ritual sequence was crucial to the perception of successful execution of the rites, and thus to the stability of her power base. The same, of course, may be said of other more “legitimate” rulers.

There are many semantic correspondences between Du Fu’s poem and Wu Hou’s hymn, which are indicative of the extent to which Du Fu relies on the long hymnal tradition in his choice of diction and poetic figures. Both texts call attention to “sacrificial ceremony” (si dian 祀典) and “[ordered] sacrificial protocol” (li zhi 禮秩 / zhi li 秩禮). Both also employ the same trope of the aroma of kingly virtue, in the lines “The sacrificial protocols here originate with the ancient kings,” and “The sacrificial ceremonies employed by the state / Inhere in charismatic virtue, not in redolent aromas,” respectively. These similarities combine to illustrate a stylistic similarity between the two texts (and many other hymns as well).²⁶⁵ A contemporary reader familiar with the garish aesthetic in either Wu Hou’s compositions or other

²⁶⁵ Hymns collected in the Yōj and in the QTS contain numerous examples of the phrases ming de 明德 and fei xin 非馨. There are, for example, 7 occurrences of the latter in the Yōj, 6 of which were by Tang writers; and numerous occurrences of the former, most of which were from the 6-dyn period and some from the Tang. The phrases are comparatively rare in lyric poetry.
ritual hymns would likely have identified the same reliance on archaic, ritualized diction in Du Fu’s poem.

I must emphasize that Du Fu’s reliance on ritualized diction here is rare in a lyric poem written in the Tang, and would have created a strong effect, emphasizing the cross-genre and multilayered nature of Du Fu’s composition. In works collected in the *Quan Tang shi* that pre-date Du Fu, the phrase *zhi dian* appears in only one other *shi* poem; *zhi li* or *li zhi* occur in only one; and *fei xin* or *fei xiang* occur in no other *shi* poems.²⁶⁶ Du Fu’s diction flows naturally from his choice of topic: namely, the lack of ritual proffering at a sacred mountain. This choice pulls Du Fu’s poem closer in some formal ways to the hymnal traditions of ritual commemorations of sacrifices. The ritual lyric tradition is, of course, far older than the Zhao Empress, though the examples cited above from her reign are perhaps the closest to hand for this period in Du Fu’s life. In the long, history of sacred mountain worship in “China”, what is relatively new on the scene in the medieval period (starting roughly with Xie Lingyun?) seems to be the composition of non-ritual texts “on the Marchmounts,” lyrics that exploit them not just as a sort of numinous backdrop, but as vehicles for the expression of individual poets’ issues/ personalized messages, the co-opting, in other words, of the ancient ritual associations by individual personality and “creativity.”

In “Gazing,” the main function of this formal resemblance to ritual hymn is to enable the reader to recognize a strong contrast between the ritual reality of Du Fu’s day,

²⁶⁶ Collected in the *Quan Tang shi*; see Li Qi’s 李颀 “Yu zhugong you ji du fan zhou” (與諸公遊濟濟泛舟, *QTS* 132.1342), and Shen Quanqi’s imperially commissioned “Hucong chu chang’an ying zhi” (扈從出長安應制, *QTS* 97.1044).
relative to that in earlier periods. In other words, whereas ritual hymns highlight the presence of virtue and the rightness of the rites being commemorated, the effect of Du Fu’s appropriation of archaic, ritual language is to invite the reader to consider the presence or absence of virtue in the practice of the rites in Du Fu’s day. Du Fu gives us his answer, in the fourth couplet (“How rare are imperial perambulatory tours,/Since King Shun has, alas, perished”) and the last couplet (“The tools of sacrifice tolerate the decline of our customs”): Du Fu openly declares the lack of virtue and proper observance of the rites in his time.

Therefore, the function of the ritual layer of Du Fu’s poem is to contrast the reigns of Shun and the current Emperor of the time, with the aim of creating an oblique criticism of the latter. This conclusion, drawn initially from the allusions and diction alone, is supported by observing, with Suzuki Torao, that “my Lord” in the thirteenth couplet may also refer to the current Emperor rather than the resident divinity.²⁶⁷ At this stage in his life, Du Fu was certainly not in the company of the Emperor Suzong as he gazed upon Hengshan; in any case, Suzong never recorded any sacrifices at the Southern Marchmount. The poem does not seem to be a piece of commissioned writing. Rather, the language in Du Fu’s poem, and the allusion in couplet three in particular, offers an ironic commentary on the contemporary lack of sacrificial expertise and Imperial virtue.

At the time Du Fu wrote his poem on Hengshan, the most recent high-profile state sacrifice at Hengshan that we know of was Xuanzong’s commissioning of the Daoist

²⁶⁷ Suzuki Torao, To shi, 8: 92.
"Dragon Tally Tossing" rite (tou long 投龍), in 738 CE. I can find no evidence in poems or official histories that any major state sacrifices were performed at Hengshan between 738 and the period Du Fu visited the area. This seemingly unusual fact can be explained by noting that the Tang Empire was fragmented and under constant threat of invasion by the Tibetans at this time, and Hunan province was also racked with internal problems. A local rebellion in the Hunan provincial seat of Tazhou, in May 770 CE, demonstrated how tenuous Tang sovereignty was in this area. The note of irony in Du Fu's archaisms: rather than highlighting the presence of virtue, Du Fu implies virtue's absence, and the truthfulness of his observations can readily be assumed from the lack of sacrificial activity noteworthy of official documentation and the presence of political instability in the area at the time the poem was written.

The decline in the observance of traditional customs would have been viewed as a corollary to a decline in central control; this relationship, between the decline in ritual custom and an increase in political instability, appears a number of times in historical writings. The Jin shu, for example, specifically notes that the rites at the Southern Marchmount were not maintained during the Yongjia disturbances (311-317 CE) of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420 CE), at which time the title of Southern Marchmount was still in its temporary position at Huoshan 霍山 in Anhui. Indeed, it may be that,

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268 The bronze tally recording this sacrifice was unearthed in the mid 19th century; see the discussion of this rite in Liu Yang, "Images for the Temple: Imperial Patronage in the Development of Tang Daoist Art," Artibus Asiae 61, no. 2, 199-200. Clear photographs of the recovered bronze tally are reproduced in Liu Yang, "Images for the Temple," 216.

269 See Hung, Tu Fu: China's Greatest Poet, 263-64.

270 See Jinshu 舊書 19.598.
subsequent to the Han dynasty, the Southern Marchmount sacrificial rites were never
fully restored according to the prescriptions of tradition. If this was indeed the case,
the lack of well-documented high level sacrifice would have pained a man like Du Fu
desirous of serving the cause of Tang unity and prosperity.

Layer Two: *Chuci* and the Poetry of Lament

The first layer in Du Fu’s poem, detailed above, involves both mimetic (i.e., the
appropriation of the style of ritual hymns) and semiotic (i.e., criticism of Suzong)
elements, which combine to form an ironic contrast between the language used and
the historical reality implied. This sense of irony is continued and strengthened in this
second layer, which is initiated by a chorus of allusions to poems in the *Chuci*.

The first indication of the presence of this *Chuci* layer is in Du Fu’s fifth couplet (“As
I rush swiftly, I am restrained by the worldly net / In my wide wanderings I pass over
the Xiao and Xiang rivers” 汨吾槀世網，行邇越瀟湘). These lines initiate an
allusion to the *Chuci* that causes the reader to notice a departure from the solemn tone
of the first four couplets. The allusion is to the coda of “Summons of the Soul”
(“Zhao hun” 招魂):

In the beginning of spring, rushing swiftly (*yu, *ghwet-3bx*) on my
southward trek.
This line in “Summons” in turn alludes to its archetype, “Encountering Sorrow” (“Li sao” 隋騷):

I rush swiftly, as if unable to reach the goal, fearful that time would leave me behind.

The pronoun in both these lines was understood by Wang Yi to refer to Qu Yuan. The coda of “Summons,” according to the generally accepted reading, describes the route of Qu Yuan’s trek southward, in springtime, on the way to exile and suicide. Wang’s reading of the line from the “Li sao” has Qu Yuan concerned that he will grow old without ever having achieved his goal of serving his lord. Both lines (from “Zhao huy” and “Li sao”) involve a double metaphor: swiftly rushing water (yu 浏) stands both for time speeding by and also for a swift trek undertaken by the lachrymose Qu Yuan, who felt that his time was short and his talents unrecognized. Du Fu’s line replicates the strange grammar of the couplet in “Encountering Sorrow”

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271 Chuci buzhu 9.213. 浏 is glossed by the Five Officials (Wu chen 五臣) thus: “yu means sudden” 浏，疾也.

272 Chuci buzhu 1.6. David Hawkes opts for “Swiftly I sped” as his translation of yu yu 浏余 (cf. Hawkes, The Songs of the South, 68) while uncharacteristically leaving the appearance of 浏 in “Summons” untranslated; see Hawkes, The Songs of the South, 229. In Chuci buzhu 1.6, Wang Yi provides this gloss: “yu means departing, quickly like flowing water.” 浏，去貌，疾若水流也.
quoted above, in which the adverb precedes the definite subject. 273

Du Fu’s echo of the coda of “Summons” also recalls the gist of that line and the family of legends surrounding Qu Yuan. Du Fu, like Qu Yuan, lament the absence of the model suzerain. In the section of “Encountering Sorrow” that directly follows the line “I rush swiftly, as if unable to reach the goal,” Qu Yuan contrasts the glory of Yao or Shun with the folly of the infamous Kings Jie and Zhou, who were traditionally held responsible for the fall of the Xia and Shang dynasties, respectively. Later, Qu Yuan describes his desire to be near Shun’s posthumous resting place, near the Yuan and Xiang rivers:

Crossing the Yuan and the Xiang in order to trek southwards,

I get near Double Brightness [Emperor Shun] and present my words.

濟沅湘以南征兮，就重華而獻詞。274

Likewise, Du Fu’s poem portrays a sad journey southward in these lands distant from the Tang centres of power. Thus the “trek south,” in both the quoted Chuci lines and in Du Fu’s poem, is a righteous but sad and defeated trek away from the world of court politics. They paint a portrait of a traveller emboldened and comforted by the presence of the spirit of Shun.

273 In terms of the grammar of pre-Han prose, an adverb (assuming yu 汝 is such) preceding a definite subject (吾，余 here) is distinctly odd. However, the pattern is well attested in the language of Chuci, as shown by Liao Xudong 廖序东, Chuci yufa yanjiu 楚辞语法研究 (Studies on Chuci Grammar) (Beijing: Shangwu, 2006), 108-111. Liao suggests three factors which, together or separately, might be thought to account for this perturbation in the syntax: emphasis, prosody, and/or “stylistic variation”.

274 Chuci buzhu 1.20.
Du Fu’s sadness over ineffective, benighted rulership, created by intertextuality with the *Chuci*, is reinforced with an allusion to another ancient text, the *Shijing* ode “Shu li” (黍离, Mao 65). The allusion occurs in Du Fu’s fifth couplet, “In my wide wanderings I pass over the Xiao and Xiang rivers.” (沬世網，行邇越瀟湘。) The ode to which this line alludes is construed by the Mao preface as a bitter and righteous lament made by nobles dislocated from their sacked capital Hao 鎬 of the Western Zhou. The relevant lines from the ode are: “Endless journeying painfully slow, with anxiety suppressed in the heart” (行邇靡靡，中心搖搖). The allusion deepens the growing sense of lamentation in Du Fu’s poem.

And taken as a whole, this *Shijing* allusion combines with the *Chuci* allusions to continue to develop the ironic contrast between the imagined circumstances of a virtuous leader in ancient times and the reality of the fragmented Tang of 769-770 CE. The contrast creates a feeling of tension against which the rest of the poem plays itself out. Du Fu’s allusions to the *Chuci*, and his sympathy with Qu Yuan, give his poem a mournful tone, reflecting the poet’s sorrow at the absence of the ritual mastery and charisma of Shun (and the lack of these qualities in his current times), which, in its turn, implies a judgement of relative contemporary incompetence.

We must, however, still account for the remainder of poem, which contains references and allusions that do not seem to directly involve the first two layers. In the next section, I will discuss the elements of transcendental flight that Du Fu has borrowed from the Hengshah tradition and synthesized with the “Li sao” elements discussed.

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275 *Maoshi zhengyi* 4.62b.
above to create a marvellous and unique structure, designed to put the speaking subject (Du Fu) into a privileged position as Shun’s lover.

Layer Three: “Roaming to Transcendence”

Soaring Daoists and the Hengshan Poetry Tradition

Having come to grips with the first two layers of meaning in Du Fu’s “Gazing,” the reader is confronted with the problem of integrating a reference in Du Fu’s “Gazing” that does not seem to mesh with the meaning(s) the poem, with its associated allusions, has generated thus far. In his ninth couplet (“With reverence I hear Lady Wei / Soaring high flanked by a cortege of immortals” 恭聞魏夫人：群仙夾翱翔), Du Fu refers to an avian spirit, the Daoist deity Wei Huacun 魏華存. Contemporary readers would have been familiar with her ability to descend as a bird to visit (male) Daoist aspirants on Hengshan and take them away to Heaven forever, but nowhere in this linguistically and generically diverse poem by Du Fu is the reader prepared for her seemingly incongruous appearance.

276 See especially the biography of the Daoist immortal Deng Yuzhi 邓欲之 (?-515 CE), who was perhaps her earliest documented passenger (Nanshi 南史 76.1896). See also Robson’s discussion, with detailed references, of Deng’s encounter with Lady Wei, in “Imagining Nanyue,” 257-60. Robson also notes the relationship between the fact that Lady Wei appeared to Deng in the form of a blackbird, and the actual blackbirds that were usually pictured accompanying the Queen Mother of the West (ibid., 259).
By referring to an encounter with the likes of Lady Wei, Du Fu associates his poem with the long tradition of “roaming to transcendence” style poetry written about Hengshan. In keeping with the archetype of the “roaming” genre, namely the Han poem “Far Roaming” (“Yuan you” 逰遊) collected in the Chuci anthology, the early Hengshan poems depict meetings with Daoist transcendents capable of flight. These encounters often transfer some of the transcendents’ capabilities to the speaking subject, who proceeds to participate in a soaring journey.

Lady Wei herself did not figure prominently in Hengshan poetry, rather, the divine beings encountered by poets at Hengshan are usually portrayed as nameless transcendents or mythical birds. Below, I proceed by tracing the key strands in the

277 On the nature of “Far Roaming” as the fountainhead of the “roaming to transcendence” genre, see Kroll, “On ‘Far Roaming,’” 653-660.

278 According to James Robson, cults of the Lady Wei (Wei Huacun) were not transplanted to Hengshan from other mountains where she was worshipped until the 7th century. Robson, “Imagining Nanyue,” 342-92. Her late arrival at Hengshan may explain why she does not appear in the Hengshan section of the Chuxue ji, but her absence from this manual may also be due to the fact that she seems not to have enthralled Tang poets at all: she is mentioned only two other times in the Quan Tang shi. See also Li Bai, “Afloat on the Yangzi River, Sending Off the Nun Chu Sanqing to Travel to the Southern Marchmount” (“Jiang shang song nu daoshi Chu Sanqing you Nanyue” 江上送女道士褚三清遊南嶽, QTS 177.1805), and Li Zhong’s 李中 (dates uncertain) “Altar to Lady Wei” (“Wei Furen tan” 維夫人壇, QTS 747. 8496). Du Fu’s is the only Hengshan poem I am aware of that refers to her. She was, however, worshipped at many sites throughout China; see Edward H. Schafer, “The Restoration of the Shrine of Wei Hua-ts’un at Lin-ch’uan,” Journal of Oriental Studies 15, no. 2 (1977), 124-37. Isabelle Robinet, La Révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du Taoisme, 2 vols. (Paris: Publications de l’École Francaise d’Extrême-Orient, 1984), 399-405, is the authoritative survey of hagiography on Lady Wei.
Hengshan poetry tradition inherited by Du Fu, discussing “Gazing” only. Insofar as it relies on this tradition. In the last part of this chapter I move back to a close reading of elements of Du Fu’s poem that go beyond the traditional treatment of Hengshan deities. This final step in the analysis elucidates how his more original reappropriation of the “roaming to transcendence” material enables him to make a very personal statement about Sage King Shun and the Saq-style political allegory.

The strongest parallel “Gazing” shares with the traditional poems on Hengshan involves how his encounter with Lady Wei serves to position Du Fu in a privileged position as interlocutor with a divine being. An important example of an earlier Hengshan poem involving an encounter with divine beings is Xie Lingyun’s 謝靈運 (385-443 CE) “Lyric on Hengshan,” in which the speaking subject is blessed to witness a scene in which an old Daoist sage teaches “four or five young men” from a book that is “not of this world.” Soon after Xie wrote this poem, these four or five young students were recouched as winged transcendents in Liu Jingshu’s 劉敬叔 (fl. 424-454 CE) Garden of the Paranormal (Yiyuan 異苑). Liu’s story tells of a number of mysterious young men studying on the mountain, who fly away into the air when approached by a mortal traveller, leaving behind a book for the lucky traveller. (The book is, however, illegible to him, containing only “bird script.”) Allusions to Xie’s poem and Liu’s story were commonly grouped together; in the Chuxue ji, for example, they occur as a pair. The common denominator between the two allusions determines the message of the allusive pair, namely that Hengshan is the home of

279 The only extant early source for Xie’s short poem Hengshan shi 衡山詩 is Chuxue ji 5.98; it is not included in authoritative anthologies of Xie’s poetry.
280 Ibid.
supernatural bird spirits that, like their Daoist neighbours on the mountain, are scholars of mysterious texts.

Du Fu’s encounter with Lady Wei also recalls the encounter with phoenixes in the tradition’s most famous early poem involving Hengshan (“most famous” by virtue of its inclusion the *Wen xuan*). In this piece, Liu Zhen 刘桢 (d. 217 CE), one of the “Seven Masters of Jian’an” (*Jian’an qi zi 建安七子*) sees phoenixes gathering above the Southern Marchmount that will deign to descend and land on the mountain terrain only in the presence of worthy witnesses.

> Phoenixes gathering on the Southern Marchmount
> Circle around the solitary bamboo root.
> In their hearts they are not fastidious,
> They open their wings and soar to the purple atmosphere.
> Why are they so rarely industrious?
> They are too shy to flock with the pine siskins.
> In what season will I see the Phoenix Arrival ceremony?
> I await a sagely and illumined lord.
> 鳳皇集南岳。徘徊孤竹根。
> 於心有不厭。奮翅凌紫氛。
> 豈不常勤苦。羞與黃雀群。

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281 Other references in the *Wen xuan* to the Southern Marchmount as a spiritual protector of the Southlands, or a buttress against spiritual or mundane incursions from the south, are discussed in Robson, “Imagining Nanyue,” 191-95. Robson does not mention the lyrics by Liu Zhen, Yu Chan, or Xie Lingyun in his dissertation, however.
In the *Wenxuan*, Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-31 CE) calls Liu’s poem “Presented to My Cousin (no. 3)” (“Zengsong congdi shi” 贈送從弟詩), but the same text is referred to in the *Chuxue ji* as “Lyric on the Phoenix” (“Fenghuang shi” 鳳皇詩). The poem should not be considered a poem about Hengshan, so much as a poem about the phoenix: it elaborates on the common belief that the phoenix will only eat bamboo roots, and that, like Lady Wei in Du Fu’s poem, the supernatural bird only descends in the ceremonial presence of an “illumined Lord”. 283

Du Fu’s privileged opportunity to hear the soaring Lady Wei recalls also Yu Chan’s 庾闕 (fl. 317-339 CE) “Lyric on Hengshan” (“Hengshan shi” 衡山詩), in which Hengshan facilitates in the speaking subject a similarly privileged experience of attenuation and contentment (*xu tian* 虛恬) achieved amidst a spiritual flight: 284

Gazing northward to the head of Hengshan,

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282 Lu Qinli 魯欽立, *Xianqin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983); *Wei shi* 3, which is based on the earliest extant sources of the poem in *Wenxuan* 23.1115; *Chuxue ji* 30.726; *Yiwen leiju* 90.1559.

283 See Li Shan’s 李善 commentary to this poem in *Wenxuan* 23.1115, citing the “Phoenix Arrival ceremony” (*lai yi* 來儀) in *Shangshu* 5.32a.

Looking askance southward at the tip of the Five Ridges, Sitting peacefully drawing deeply of attenuation and contentment, My eyes wandering and my essence open to all sides, My soaring hornless dragons approach the ninefold heavens, [Far below me] The beached fish struggle for moisture and froth. If one has yet to experience the expanse of rivers and lakes, how can one know the breadth of the remote seas in the South?

北眺衡山首。南瞰五领末。
寂坐挹虚恬。運目情四豁。
翔虬凌九霄。陸鱗困濡沫。
未體江湖悠。安識南溟阔。286

This early example of a “roaming to transcendence”-style poem portrays Hengshan as a spiritual rather than merely physical locale, where one can “know” (ti 體) the kind of true “contentment” (tian 悅) that is unknowable by people in the mundane world. In fact, Yu criticizes worldly minded people, who do not have access to his soaring state of consciousness, comparing them to the beached fish described in the outer

285 It would seem that Yu Chan refers to the same Hengshan in Southern Hunan province that inspired Du Fu’s poem, because the poem portrays Hengshan’s primary peak Zhurong looming to the north, and its other five major peaks to the south. This is not, however, a descriptive landscape poem of the kind that we might expect from Yu Chan. Rather, the focus is on the spiritual state of mind that Hengshan has facilitated in him.

286 Lu Qinli, Xianqin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi, Jin shi 12, which is based on Chuxue ji 5.98 and Yiwen leiju 7.133.
chapters of the Zhuangzi 莊子; just as beached fish enjoy the intimacy of resuscitating each other by spitting froth back and forth, thereby forgetting the vast joy of swimming in great expanses of water, so a man without knowledge of the infinite Dao has only the capacity to enjoy worldly intimacy with other humans. ²⁸⁷

In addition to their references to religious experience, we sense in both Yu Chan and Du Fu’s poems a framework of political allegory built upon the Chuci tradition. Like Du Fu, Yu Chan was not himself a monk, but rather was a well-traveled senior official in the Eastern Jin 晉 (317-420 CE) court, based in the Changjiang River delta. Although Yu would have been keenly aware of the strong Daoist tradition at Hengshan, the style and diction of his poem is more naturally derived from the allegorical Chuci poem “Far Roaming” (“Yuan you” 遠遊, discussed above) rather than with reflecting any actual spiritual traditions based within the flourishing temples at fourth century Hengshan.²⁸⁸ Yu alludes to “Far Roaming” a number of times in this poem and refers particularly to the earlier poem’s practice of taking a celestial journey drawn by “hornless dragons.” Yu Chan’s poem includes the celestial journey as an allegorical escape from the “squalor and filth” of the political world. For Yu Chan, the “roaming” tradition influenced him to see Hengshan as representing an alternative to the corrupt world of court, and an opportunity to voice a general criticism about political corruption.

²⁸⁷ Zhuangzi jishi 5.522. The allusion is continued in lines seven and eight: the “expanse of rivers and lakes” and the “Southern Seas” represent the dao, which worldly men have forgotten, just as the beached fish have forgotten what it was like to swim in the depths.

²⁸⁸ As James Robson notes, Hengshan was already an area full of flourishing and prominent Daoist temples and monasteries by the third century; see Robson, “Imagining Nanyue,” 207 and passim.
Semiotic Reading – Dangerous Liaisons

Having established that Du Fu’s privileged encounter with a flying divine resident of Hengshan is a familiar feature in “roaming to transcendence” poetry, and particularly in the examples of “roaming” writings in the Hengshan poetry tradition, my interpretation of “Gazing” now requires that Lady Wei is contextualized within the rest of Du Fu’s poem. In this last section, I endeavour to tie the Lady Wei reference in with the lament, communicated through the other layers in Du Fu’s poem, that late seventh century China lacked an enlightened leader like sage King Shun; I accomplish this by looking carefully at a few more unexplored allusions in Du Fu’s poem.

Du Fu’s sixth couplet (“Thirsty sun emerges from the precipice / My rocking boat sidles up to its clear light” 溯日絕壁出，漾舟清光旁) provides a more explicit allusive link to the other layers in the poem, by further marrying the lament for lost glory of Emperor Shun with the theme of a Daoist tryst with an immortal. These lines allude, as Qiu Zhao’ao notes, to a poem associated with the legend of Huang E 皇娥, recorded in Wang Jia’s 王嘉 (d. ca. 324 CE) collection of mostly Daoist tales, “Gathering Records Left Behind” (“She yi ji” 拾遺記):

Huang E, the mother of Shao Hao (one of the Five Sage Kings) fell in love with the son of the White Lord. To the accompaniment of her zither, she sang a clear song: “The world’s myriad phenomena grow etiolated day by day, and as for transforming them, there is no recipe. At the murky sky in its immensity I gaze and feel terribly cold, and taking my raft lightly rocking, sidle up close to the sun. At which place? [We will] go to Qiong Sang [“Ultimate Mulberry”],

“Gathering Records Left Behind” (“She yi ji” 拾遺記):
where our minds will know harmony and happiness, delight without end.” Custom refers to places of idle dalliance as “amongst the mulberries.” Poems in the *Wei Airs* of the *Shijing* such as “Wait for me in the mulberries” (Mao 48) are of the same kind.²⁸⁹

少昊母親皇娥與白帝之子戀愛：“皇娥倚瑟而清歌曰：‘天清地曠浩茫茫，萬象日薄化無方。浩天蕩蕩望滄滄，乘桴輕漾著日旁。當其何所至窈桑，心知和樂悅未央。’俗為遊樂之處為桑中也。《詩》中《衛風》云‘期我乎桑中’，蓋此類也。

In the intertext, the fading sun at dusk is personified as a celestial lover, which can be “sidled up to” via a raft across the Milky Way. Likewise, the sun in Du Fu’s poem is personified as a “thirsty” light peering over the precipices of the mountain, and Du Fu, like Huang E, sidles his boat up to the solar presence. Through allusion, Du Fu is encouraging his reader to imagine that the traveler engages in a ritual tryst with Hengshan divinities.

Du Fu’s lines quoted above also resonate with an old saying recorded in the *Shiji*: “Sage King Yao is Heaven, harmonizing the records; Sage King Shun is the sun, spreading brightness” (堯天協紀，舜日揚光。).²⁹⁰ Shun is frequently likened to the sun in pre-Tang and Tang texts, laying the ground for the possibility that Du Fu’s allusion to Huang E’s tryst carries an additional sense. Following this possibility further, we recall that in the fifth couplet of “Gazing,” Du Fu specified on the places

²⁸⁹ I am grateful to Robert Ashmore for his translation of the bulk of this passage, provided to me in personal correspondence, which is presented here in only slightly modified form.

²⁹⁰ *Shiji* 138.3245.
through which he was sailing when gazing at Hengshan ("In my wide wanderings I pass over the Xiao- and Xiang rivers.") These lines refer to the legend that, after Shun died, his consorts pursued him to their own deaths, at which time they were both deified as Goddesses of the Xiao and Xiang-river systems. Du Fu’s lines call up a comparison between Du Fu and Shun’s consorts, all of whom are in pursuit of unity with the divinity of Hengshan. Indeed it is likely that an educated contemporary reader would have had Shun and his consorts in mind because of the geography and textual history invoked by the poem from the start.

Du Fu continues the discourse of Daoist trysts in the eleventh and twelfth couplets ("Tangled and pressed on dangerous long paths / I have not yet had time to set my cane to climbing your lofty ridge / On returning I long to command a carriage, bathe and retire in your Jade Hall."). The very last line quoted here alludes to the tryst at the Jade Pool (yaochi 瑤池) between King Mu of Zhou 周穆王 and Lady Wei’s divine ancestor and avian sister, the Queen Mother of the West. Following this famous tryst, King Mu had promised to return to her someday. The locus classicus for this story, and the source of endless numbers of Tang allusions, is the pre-Qin Mu Tianzi Zhuan 穆天子傳. Like King Mu, Du Fu imagines that he will return someday to bathe and retire with his divine object of desire.

\footnote{See Mu Tianzi Zhuan (SBCK), 3.15a.}

\footnote{Edward Schafer also discusses some instructions given by the Azure Lad to aspirants, to the effect that Lady Wei can be summoned to appear in the mortal world to those who bathe regularly. See Schafer, The Restoration of the Shrine of Wei Hua-ts’un at Lin-ch’uan, 128.}
The blurring between the Lady Wei, the Queen Mother of the West, and King Shun occurs seamlessly, with Shun emerging as the dominate avatar and object of desire in Du Fu’s poem. Du Fu’s poetic license in erasing the boundaries between these divinities, and the expansion of the Queen Mother’s Jade Pool into a “Jade Hall,” is not unprecedented. Wang Rong 王融 (468–494 CE), for example, composed a poem that opens with a line nearly identical to Du Fu’s:

Spirits and Immortals 神仙篇

**I order my carriage to the side of the [Queen Mother of the West’s] jade pool.**

pass by and rest at Ying’s Terrace.\(^{293}\)

How waving are her long sleeves,
and her panpipe sounds, clearly and sadly,
Through the disc-shaped door the cold moon eddies,
and the autumn wind swirls in the pearly hall.
A blue bird seeks to take high flight,
the Queen mother halts for her jade cup.
I raise my hand in ashamed goodbye,
only to return in a thousand years.

命駕瑶池側，過息嬴女臺。
長袖何靡靡，簫管清且哀。
璧門涼月舉，珠殿秋風迥。
青鳥驚高羽，王母停玉杯。

\(^{293}\) This line alludes also to the Phoenix Platform 凤凰台 of Xiao Shi and Nong Yu.
This poem refers to the Girl of Ying Tai (Ying tai nü 嬴臺女), who also appears in Chen Zi’ang’s famous “Long Bamboo” ("Xiuzhu pian" 修竹篇), itself a poem related to Hengshan. It is clear that the poets were free to allow the various goddesses in the Daoist pantheon to exchange roles with each other.

Du Fu expands this interrelationship even further in his poem, creating a web of correspondences between the various divine-tryst narratives, and positioning himself as the one desiring to transcend the mortal world and engage in a relationship with the Goddess of the mountain (Lady Wei), who is, for Du Fu, a symbol of his true desire for the sage King Shun.

294 Yuefu shiji 楊府詩集 64.924.

295 Chen Zi’ang’s “Long Bamboo” imagines that Hengshan produced the bamboo which was turned into panpipes for Nong Yu 弄玉 (referred to in Chen’s poem as the “Girl of Ying Tower.”) She used them to play heavenly music that would summon phoenixes. Chen’s poem also depicts Nong Yu and her music master and husband ascending into heaven and dancing like the mythical black crane (xuan he 玄鶴), thereby also joining the ranks of avian deities associated with Hengshan. “Long Bamboo” is found at Quan Tang shi 83.896. The source of the Nong Yu legend is the Han dynasty “Biographies of Immortals” 列仙傳 1.15a-b (see the Linlang mishi congshu 琳琅秘室叢書 version in Baibu congshu 百部叢書 65). Xiao Shi 蕭史 and Nong Yu were lovers and pan-pipe players who could summon male and female phoenixes. Nong Yu’s father, Duke Mu 契穆公 built a Phoenix Tower for the couple, and they remained in it, and never left, and soon thereafter flew off together with the phoenixes. See also the discussion of Nong Yu as she appears in the Tang tales, in Nienhauser “Creativity and Storytelling in the Ch’uan-ch’i: Shen Ya-chih’s T’ang Tales,” CLEAR 20 (December 1998), 60.
Conclusion

I observed above that there are three layers of meaning that interact with each other in Du Fu’s “Gazing at the Marchmount” on Hengshan. Each layer builds on the previous one, and takes the reader deeper into the significance of Du Fu’s encounter with the Southern Marchmount. The first layer consists of a reference to Emperor Shun’s southern tour of inspection, and an allusion to the age-old idea of virtue being superior to the fragrance of grains presented as sacrificial offerings, all couched in archaic language. The resemblance of this layer to ritual hymns creates an incongruity with the reality of Du Fu’s historical moment as it might be treated in “lyric poetry” and causes the reader to search for clues elsewhere in the poem for the poet’s real meaning. In the second layer, Du Fu finds a Qu Yuan-voice for his lament through allusions to “Summons of the Soul,” “Encountering Sorrow,” and Mao 65, all of which decry the degeneracy of the times.

Finally, layer three recalls the “roaming to transcendence” style of poetry, itself grounded in the “Yuan you,” a Han-authored Daoist retelling of “Encountering Sorrow.” Here, Du Fu draws upon Hengshan’s strong Daoist tradition, garbs himself (figuratively) as an aspirant, and seeks to transcend vulgar reality by achieving a tryst with a Daoist deity (Lady Wei). This Daoist encounter may be related back to the previous layers in “Gazing” by noticing that Du Fu guises his pursued divinity as the sun, the familiar symbol of sage King Shun, the traditional model of perfect rulership.
The interactions between these three layers occur in a poetic space created by allusion. The complexity of this allusive tapestry is an achievement that is certainly unprecedented in the tradition of Marchmount poetry, and must be seen as a fascinating accomplishment in the art of allusion within the Chinese tradition. It is therefore a puzzle why Du Fu’s “Gazing at the Marchmount” has received relatively little scholarly attention. Even Du Fu’s most authoritative and respected modern scholar, Chen Yixin 陳贻焮, apologizes for Du Fu’s “inability to write about the situation on the mountains because he never ascended it himself.”296 And yet the poem does involve a deep and manifold engagement with Hengshan. This engagement is not expressed through accurate and finely wrought imagery, which Chen seems to have been expecting when he read Du Fu’s poem; rather, the poem explores Hengshan through layers of allusions to powerful narratives, drawn from the canonical lore devoted to this range of peaks and other sacred or mythical mountains. To be fair, Chen Yixin does acknowledge that the poem’s description of the overall scene and its associated mythos is, in spite of its lack of specific imagery, “graceful, lively and powerful.” But the real source of the poem’s combined power and grace does not, as Chen suggests, come from how the poet describes the overall scene, but rather from the ways in which the layers of allusive narratives are developed and interwoven by the poet.

Comparison: The Art of Allusion in Du Fu’s Other “Gazing Poems”

It is possible to be more precise about what constitutes Du Fu’s success with his allusions in this poem, by comparing Du Fu’s “Gazing at the [Southern] Marchmount” with his other two Marchmount poems, one of which is justly famous,

296 Chen Yixin, Du Fu ping zhuan, 1266.
Zhong Xing 鍾惺 (zi Bojing 伯敬, 1574-1624 CE) formulates under what conditions a Marchmount poem may be considered worthy of its topic:

When describing that looming Marchmount, Taishan, with the clear and subtle language of (high-resolution) landscape writing [where both the *shan* 山 and *shui* 水 are captured close up], and the powerful language of panorama, it is as if it were no more than a hill and a gully; as if it were merely seen from the perspective of a literatus as he climbs [observing details of shan and shui] and gazes out [across the broad vista, *jing* 景]. What one needs is a breast packed with allusions, a brush both bold and all-encompassing, the aura of hymns, floating skywards from sacrificial altars... only then does the poem begin to measure up [to the sacred stature of a Marchmount].

These comments are appended, without analysis, to most traditional commentaries and glosses on Du Fu’s poem on Hengshan. It may be observed that Du Fu’s poem indeed measures up to Zhong Xing’s criteria: “Gazing” is highly allusive, natural and composed, and recycles the archaic phrasings of ritual hymns. But in this case, the

presence of all three of these elements is still not enough to account for the complex art of the poem. In contrast to other poems that have been prized as among the tradition’s finest Marchmount poems, “Gazing” is innovative in how the layers of diction and allusion combine and contrast with each other in order to communicate a manifold sense of sorrow. And, as with many of Du Fu’s later poems, the ghost of Qu Yuan is ever-present, strengthening Du Fu’s own voice of lamentation.

This complex, allusive poem may be contrasted with Du Fu’s two other poems with the same title, which are also allusive, but much less complex and cross generic compositions. In the final couplet of his celebrated poem on Mount Tai, for example, Du Fu allusively imagines that someday he may survey the landscape from the mountain’s peak, as Confucius does in *Mencius* 7A.24:

“Gazing Afar at the Marchmount” (“Wang yue” 望嶽)

*(Dsxz 1.3)*

Tai the Revered – now, what to compare it with?

Over Ch’i and Lu, its azure never ending.

In it the Shaping mutator concentrated the flourishing of divinity;

Shaded and sun-lit it cleaves the dusk from the dawn.

A heaving breast—giving rise to cumulus clouds;

Bursting eye-sockets — giving entrance to homing birds.

Someday I will surmount its comparable crest –

And in a single scan, dwindle the host of hills!298

岱宗夫如何，齊魯青未了。造化鍾神秀，陰陽割昏曉。

298 Trans. adapted from Kroll’s in “Verses From on High: The Ascent of T’ai Shan,” 178–79.
Kroll has subjected the relationship between Du Fu’s poem, quoted directly above, and the Mount Tai literary tradition to careful intertextual analysis, and he has discovered a large number of recycled allusions in Du Fu’s material: one poem, by Li Bai, about Mount Tai concludes with the very same allusion to Confucius, even though it communicates a sentiment very different from that of Du Fu’s poem. Kroll notes these allusions, but chooses to focus specifically on the relationships between the imagery of Du Fu’s and Li Bai’s poems, and how this imagery relates intertextually to the Mount Tai religious tradition. His conclusions therefore center on how poets see Mount Tai as a platform for metaphysical transcendence.

We can agree with Kroll, that the full “magic and dignity” of individual poems only emerges through awareness of the many traditions that may be seen to overlap in them. Yet, whereas Kroll’s focus was on the overlapping of the religious and poetic traditions in relation to the mountain, it is clear that Du Fu’s poem relies more on a simple but powerful allusion to Confucius’ fabled ascent. The allusion gives focus to the poem’s powerful portrait of Taishan as an extraordinary living being – similar to Confucius himself – a terrestrial sage of incomparable stature within the textual tradition.

In 758 CE, Du Fu wrote another short lyric on the Western Marchmount, Huashan 華山:

“Gazing at the Marchmount” (“Wang yue” 望岳)

(Dsxz 6.485)
Towering, protruding Western Marchmount, senior in this quaking place;

The various other peaks standing arrayed are like his sons and grandsons.

How may I obtain the nine-knot cane of transcendent,  
To brace me up all the way to Nong Yu’s hair washing basins.

Once a Carriage Canyon is entered there is no return,  
Arrow Foot Pass is the only gateway that reaches heaven.

Wait a little until after the bitter cold autumn winds have passed,  
I will seek the White God on high to inquire about the pure origins.  
西岳崚嶒竦处尊，諸峰羅立似兒孫。  
安得仙人九節杖，拄到玉女洗頭盆。  
車箱入谷無歸路，箭栝通天有一門。  
稍待秋風涼冷後，高尋白帝問真源。

Compared to the Taishan “Gazing,” this poem is clearly closer in form to the conventional “roaming to transcendence”-style Marchmount poems that were already being written before the High Tang. As this poetic convention dictates, here Du Fu begins with a solemn depiction of the mountain’s height and stature as it is situated within the immediate area; then, in the second couplet, the poet himself lingers with the spirit residents. The infamously harrowing narrow and steep way up to the North

299 The mountain, 130 km east of Chang’an, was a legendary spot for earthquakes; Aat Vervoom notes that Huashan is located on a fault line. See Aat Vervoom, “Cultural Strata of Hua Shan, the Holy Peak of the West,” Monumenta Serica 39 (1990), 1.
Peak is referred to in the third couplet, and the poem closes with the poet making a familiar oath to return someday to commune again with the mountain.

It is also clear that this poem is composed of fewer poetic layers than either of Du Fu's other two "Gazing" poems. The art of this poem requires him to put little effort to create a vivid depiction of the actual scene (cf. Zhong Xing's shan shui 山水, jing 景) of this imposing granite mountain, which rises 1997 meters above sea level, and focuses instead on the mythical scene. But the mythical scene is not presented vividly. The poem contains no allusions, but only references, leaving the reader away from meditation on the exalted history of the mountain. Although Nong Yu is again given center stage, she is present only in name, not in person. Her "hair washing basins" are simply a series of rock pools near her Huashan temple. No music or birds accompany her. The authorial subject is one dimensional: he is only a climber who wishes to chat with the spirits of the mountain, like so many poets before him. There is no apparent personal agenda to communicate, no speaking against or across the grains of what is expected of a "Marchmount poem." The additional layers of this poem are either absent or unavailable to the modern reader failing the discovery of additional material contextual with this particular poem.
Thesis Conclusion

I began this dissertation with the suggestion that there was a long-standing need to shift the critical focus of scholarship onto the global effects of allusion in Du Fu’s poetry, those effects constituting a defining quality of his poetic mastery. This has been achieved by consistently applying to his poems a twofold reading process, which moves from the characterization of images, references, and conventional features to the identification of the allusive interpretants (to use C.S. Peirce’s term) that point to a deeper layer of significance. The most important result of this meticulous transposition of thought, which moves from studying mimesis to applying other underlying systems of signification, is the production of new readings of Du Fu’s poems, revealing a strong authorial presence in which his emotional message is fully exposed in all its complexity. In spite of the 20th-century origins of my methodology, derived in part from the poetics enunciated by Bhaktin, Kristeva, and Riffaterre, the fuller picture of poetic expression provided by my approach, relative to past scholarship, testifies to its applicability to classical verse.

In each chapter, I have identified poems that are composite and multi-layered, and within which the deeper layers depend upon either one allusion or clusters of allusions. The poems selected for analysis in Chapter One (“Sending Pei Qiu to Assume his Post as Pacifier of Yongjia” and “Presented to Admonisher Wei, the Seventh Son of the Wei clan”) belong to a valedictory genre, which conventionally invites expressions of flattery. Some use of allusion, effective or otherwise, is expected and even de rigueur in such formal genres. But in neither poem are Du Fu’s allusive clusters mere
ornamentation, nor do they represent merely clever ways of supporting primary messages through mere passing references to older texts. Rather, they exceed the expectations of “stock” images and serve as keys to the poems’ deeper meanings; meanings which are completely unnecessary for the poems to function successfully as valetudinary, but essential to their functioning as art. A third poem (Du Fu’s “Evening Banquet at the Zuo Family Villa”), which also employs the same stock allusion as that in “Sending Pei” and “Presented to Wei,” is contrasted with the other two poems, and shown to exemplify a poetically less effective style. The contrast demonstrates the degree to which allusion, when linked effectively with the rest of the poem, has an often unrecognized potential to express a distinctive authorial presence, and articulate particular feelings.

Du Fu’s reputation was not, of course, built on achievements in the occasional verse of the type examined in the first chapter, and so, in an effort to explore poems more central to his reception as one of China’s greatest poets, the second chapter shifts attention to the famous poem “Eight Phalanx Design.” The historical relic that forms the topic of this ubiquitously anthologized poem summons up a repertoire of legends about Zhuge Liang, as well as making a subtle allusion to an ode of lamentation from the Shijing. Once again, I argue that the allusion opens up semiotic possibilities that enable the reader to map Zhuge Liang’s tragic circumstances onto Du Fu’s own. Although this transposition implies criticism of Emperor Suzong, and Du Fu elsewhere rarely censures the emperor, my reading is strengthened by juxtaposing Du Fu’s poem with a long-neglected inscription inspired by the same relic and written in a similar manner. This inscription recalls the same Zhuge Liang legends, and, like Du
Fu’s quatrain, contains an allusion to a *Shijing* lamentation, but it more clearly implies direct criticism of the emperor.

Du Fu’s most famous and innovative poems are his interrelated suites, but their varied allusions have never been treated by scholars as underpinned by a deeper unity. It is easy to see how a single allusion can generate entire new layers of meaning in short quatrains like “Eight Phalanx Design,” but my third chapter also demonstrates the role of allusion in a famous suite, Du Fu’s “Four Poems on Rain.” Here, a powerful allusion to the legend of the Divine Woman transforms the suite from a series of conventional *yongwu* poems on the weather into extremely personal and sensual meditations on the desire to serve a virtuous lord. The same kind of allusion achieves a similar effect in another, lesser-known composition, “Rain.” His approach provides a stark contrast to standard *yongwu* approaches to the topic of rain, as demonstrated by a poem by Li Jiao.

All of the complexity observed in the poems analyzed in the first three chapters blossoms in a single poem that Du Fu wrote on the Southern Marchmount. “Gazing at the Marchmount” appears to have been neglected in recent times because of insufficient attention to its layers of allusions. The poem only reveals its depth(s) when due attention is paid to the multiple levels of allusive practice and their integration into a manifold construal. Each layer builds on the last, with allusion serving both as the defining feature within each layer and the bridge between them. One consequence of a deeper understanding of Du Fu’s poem is to see it as yet another critique of Emperor Suzong.
This approach may well not suit all readers or all poems. And yet, a deeper immersion in the intertexts surrounding a poem surely brings us closer to the reading praxis of Du Fu's contemporary readers. If the Chuxue ji is any indication, after poetry was instituted as a major feature of the imperial exams in the Early Tang, allusion became central to the art of verse composition. It was in the nature of a manuscript culture that a huge amount of textual memorization was required of poets. Expert readers would have had correspondingly large numbers of possible intertexts in mind when reading poetry on any given topic. In such an environment, it is not at all surprising that allusion should play a central role in poetry. When reading poetic relics of ancient Chinese culture, we should always be prepared to pay close attention to allusion in order to rediscover the art embedded in these works.

It could be said that the number of poems examined in depth in this dissertation (thirteen) is too small to sufficiently represent Du Fu's range. For how many other of his 1390-or-so extant poems does allusion not only have a global effect, but also invite semiotic readings of the sort pursued here? For example, Du Fu's intensely studied, but highly enigmatic, "Autumn Meditations" have never been analyzed with close attention to their webs of allusion, and it is possible that such a study may reveal new layers of unity in this series of lyrics. This dissertation is just the beginning of a potentially very fruitful project to uncover the allusive range of Du Fu's poetry.

A related line of questioning would explore whether Du Fu was unique in his capacity to use allusion to create such highly interwoven and complex poems. Although I have cited a small number of Tang poems by other writers as points of comparison with Du Fu's treatments of similar topics, my coverage of these poets has been in no way
comprehensive. Would it be easy to find other poems written in the High Tang period that display the same allusive depth? Similarly, can we find examples of allusively semiotic poems written in earlier times? The most likely places to search would have to include the writings of other famously allusive poets, such as Xie Lingyun, Tao Qian and Yu Xin, all of whom I have touched upon in this dissertation but not studied in any detail. Late Tang writers such as Li Shangyin provide a wealth of material for further exploration of this “allusion-focused” approach. And one may wonder how successful Du Fu’s many imitators in the Song dynasty, such as Chen Yuyi and Chen Shidao, were at reproducing the global effects of his allusive practice. Finally, is global, multilayered intertextuality exclusive to lyric poetry, or was it common to other allusive genres, such as rhapsody, parallel prose, or the ci poetry of later times?

These questions and others await further study, but even the small sample of poems surveyed here is sufficient to raise our awareness of the major role that allusion can play in Tang poetry, as something more than a clever means of presenting ideas in couplets. Applying an intertextual methodology such as the one advocated in this dissertation involves the full integration – wherever possible – of large numbers of relevant intertexts into a chorus of voices brought into harmony by a powerful, unitary subtext or message.
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