

Allusion and Vision: Chiang K'uei's Twin Poems on Plum Blossoms in the *yung-wu* (Poetry on Objects) Tradition

Chiang K'uei 姜夔 (1152-1221) is an important figure in *tz'u* (song lyric) poetry, even though the corpus of his poems is small (about 80 altogether).¹ One of his outstanding contributions to the development of the *tz'u* tradition is expanding the potential of the subgenre of *yung-wu* 詠物 (poetry on objects).² By definition, a "poem on an object" takes the object in question as its nominal or virtual focus, as opposed to the dominant *yung-huai* 詠懷 (poem on the innermost), which is expressly about the inner state of the lyrical poet. Relying on his art of allusion that systematically taps into the function of culture, Chiang K'uei transforms the otherwise narrowly focused *yung-wu* poem into an encompassing verbal form capable of articulating multifarious inner experience. The formal transformation, which is to have profound influence on the *tz'u* poets of the later Southern Sung, is exemplified most vividly in his famous twin poems on plum blossoms, "An-hsiang" 暗香 (Subtle Fragrance) and "Shu-ying" 疏影 (Sparse Shadows).³

¹ Sung Hsiang-feng 宋翔鳳, considered Chiang K'uei's status in the *tz'u* genre comparable to that of the Tang poet Tu Fu 杜甫 (712-770) in the *shih*: "Carrying on earlier traditions and path-breaking for his successors, he is pivotal in the literary tradition" 詞家之有姜白石，猶詩家之有杜少陵，筆往開來，文中關鍵。 This comparison involves undoubtedly a great measure of exaggeration, but Sung is insightful in recognizing Chiang K'uei's unique position in the *tz'u* tradition. See Sung, *Yueh-fu yü-lun* 樂府餘論, in T'ang Kuei-chang 唐圭璋, ed., *Tz'u-hua ts'ung-pien* 詞話叢編, 12 vols. (Taipei: Kuang-wen, 1967), 7/2473.

² I follow Grace Fong, who uses the terms genre and subgenre in Stephen Owen's definitions: genre designates the formal metrical classification, and subgenre refers to the classification by subject matter and occasion. See Fong, *Wu Wenying and the Art of Southern Song Ci Poetry* (Princeton U.P., 1987), p. 78. Owen defines the two terms in *Poetry of the Early Tang* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1977), p. 443, n. 13.

³ While Chiang K'uei created the tune patterns for these two poems himself, the titles for the twin poems are metonymic images of plum blossoms borrowed from a *shih* poem by Liu Pu 林逋 (967-1028).

Subtle Fragrance (An-hsiang) 暗香

- 1 The moonlight of the old days –
I wonder how many times it has shone
upon me
Playing the flute by the plum trees.
2 I called my jade lady to rise,
Ignoring the chill, to pick the blossoms
with me.
3 Ho Hsün, now ageing,
Has totally forgotten his pen-brush of
“Spring Wind.”⁷
4 He’s but bemused by the few flowers
past the bamboos,
Whose cold fragrance enters the banquet hall.
- 5 The River Country
Is now still and lonely.
6 I sigh that the road is too long to send
a branch,
And the evening snow begins to pile up.⁸
7 Tears freely drop in front of the green
wine cup;
The red-calyxes are speechless, roiled
by thoughts of longing.
8 Long shall I remember the places where
we held hands:
A thousand trees press against the
West Lake’s cold green.
9 Petal by petal, all blown away,
When shall I see them again?⁹
- 舊時月色
算幾番照我
梅邊吹笛
喚起玉人
不管清寒與攀摘
何遜而今漸老
都忘卻春風詞筆
但怪得竹外疏花
香冷入瑤席
江國
正寂寂
嘆寄與路遙
夜雪初積
翠尊易泣
紅萼無言耿相憶
長記曾攜手處
千樹壓西湖寒碧
又片片吹盡也
幾時見得

⁷ The author of “Spring Wind,” Ho Hsün (?-518) also wrote a poem entitled “Early Plum Blossoms,” for which Tu Fu likened his friend Pei Ti 裴迪 to Ho Hsün in response to Pei Ti’s poem written upon seeing plum blossoms. For Tu Fu’s poem, see Ch’iu Chao-ao, ed., *Tu-shih hsiang-chu* 杜詩詳注, 5 vols. (rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1985), 2/78f.

⁸ An echo to Lu K’ai’s 陸凱 (circa 430) poem “To Fan Yeh,” which mentions a branch of plum blossoms sent from the south as a gift to the friend in the north. See Yü Kuan-ying 余冠英, *Han-wei liu-ch’ao shih-shüan* 漢魏六朝詩選 (Peking: Jen-min, 1958), pp. 237-38.

⁹ Except for a few changes I have made, the translation is by Lin Shuen-fu. See Lin, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition* (Princeton U.P., 1978), pp. 137-38. For the original poem, see T’ang Kuei-chang 唐圭章, ed., *Ch’üan Sung-t’zu* 全宋詞, 5 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua, 1965), 3/2181-2182 (henceforth, *CS7*).

Sparse Shadows (Shu-ying) 疏影

- 1 The mossy branches adorned with jade –
Tiny, tiny greenbirds
Roost side by side.⁷
2 A chance encounter on a journey
At dusk, by a corner of the fence,
Wordless, she leans on slender bamboos.⁸
3 Chao-chün, unused to the barbarian sands
far away,
Longed in secret only for the land on the
Yangtze.⁹
4 Her jade pendant must have returned
in the moonlight
Transformed into this blossom, hidden
and solitary.¹⁰
5 Still comes to mind – the old tale of
the secluded palace:
That woman was asleep,
When one alighted near her green
moth-eyebrows.¹¹
- 苔枝綴玉
有翠禽小小
枝上同宿
客裡相逢
籬角黃昏
無言自倚修竹
昭君不慣胡沙遠
但暗憶江南江北
想佩環月夜歸來
化作此花幽獨
猶記深宮舊事
那人正睡裡
飛近蛾綠

⁷ A story titled “Plum Blossoms in Mount Luo-fu” tells of an encounter of a man from the Sui Dynasty named Chao Shih-Hsiung 趙師雄 with a graceful lady in Mount Luo-fu. He and the mysterious lady drank wine while a child in green clothes danced for them in the moonlight, but he woke up the next morning to find himself under a blossoming plum tree with green birds chirping on a branch. The lady, allegedly the goddess of plum blossoms, is nowhere to be seen. The story is included in “Lung-ch’eng lu” 龍城錄, which was erroneously attributed to Liu Tsung-yüan 柳宗元, but is more likely a work by Wang Chih 王銍. For the story, see Wang Wen-ju 王文儒, comp., *Shuo-k’u* 說庫 (Shanghai: Wen-ming shu-chü, 1915), vol. 4, vi, 2a/b. For the identity of the mysterious lady, see also the explanation by Wang Shuang-ch’i 王雙啟 in “T’ang-Sung tz’u chien-shang tz’u-tien” 唐宋詞鑒賞辭典 (Shanghai: Tz’u-shu, 1987), p. 1756.

⁸ In the poem “The Fair Lady” (Chia-jen 佳人) by Tu Fu, a woman of noble family origin leans lonely on a slender bamboo at sunset after being abandoned by her husband and driven to the mountains by the war. See Ch’iu Chao-ao 仇兆鰲, *Tu-shih hsiang-chu* 杜詩詳注, 5 vols. (rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1985), 2/552-55.

⁹ Chao-chün, the courtesy name of Wang Ch’iang 王嬪, was a court lady in the palace of Liu Shih 劉爽, Emperor Yüan (r. 48-33 BC) of the Han Dynasty. She was given to the king of the Hsiung-nu when he came to the Han court in 33 BC demanding a Chinese lady as his bride. See *Han shu* 漢書 (SPPY edn.), 94B, 6a.

¹⁰ In Tu Fu’s “On the Ancient Ruins, 3” (詠懷古跡. 三), a poem reminiscing the Bright Consort (Chao-chün), the court lady’s jade pendant finds its way back to her homeland on a moonlit night. See Ch’iu Chao-ao, 4/1502-5.

¹¹ Princess Shou-yang 壽陽公主, a daughter of Liu Yü 劉裕, the Emperor Wu of the earlier Sung Dynasty (r. 420-423), was taking a nap in the courtyard of the palace when a falling plum blossom landed on her forehead and left a blossom-shaped mark on her

- 6 Don't be like the spring wind
Heedless of the delicate and dainty;
The golden house ought to be
prepared early.¹²
- 7 Let one more petal drift away with
the waves,
One can only complain of the sad tune
of the Jade-Dragon.¹³
- 8 By the time one seeks again the furtive
fragrance,
It will have entered the horizontal scroll
by the small window.¹⁴
- 莫似春風
不管盈盈
早與安排金屋
- 還教一片隨波去
又卻怨玉龍哀曲
- 等恁時重見幽香
已入小窗橫幅

CONVENTIONS AND INNOVATIONS

Since Chiang K'uei's achievements cannot be appreciated apart from the *jung-wu* tradition, a brief review is in order. Originated by the *fu* writers of the Han Dynasty and adopted to the *shih* genre later on, the *jung-wu* became established in the *tz'u* genre when Su Shih 蘇軾 (1037-1101) began to compose *tz'u* poems on objects as a socializing activity in the circle of his scholar-official friends.¹⁵ In general, the *jung-wu tz'u* are oriented toward one of two ends—expressive of a subjective viewer or descriptive of the external objects in question. Broadly speaking, the *jung-wu tz'u* typical of the Northern Sung period lean toward the former and those of the early Southern Sung toward the latter. In an expressive *jung-wu* poem, the object is presented to prompt a lyrical response or is described in a particular manner so as to convey a subjective attitude or mood specific to the lyrical

eyebrow, which came to be admired as the "plum-blossom fashion" emulated by the ladies in the palace. *Tsa-wu-hsing shu* 雜五行書, quoted in Li Fang 李昉 et al., *Tai-p'ing-yü-lan*: Shih-hsiü 太平御覽, 時序部, 30.1/b (rpt., Peking: Chung-hua, 1962), vol. 1, p. 140.

¹² Liu Ch'e 劉徹, better known as Emperor Wu (r. 140-88 BC) of the Han Dynasty promised at an young age that he would have a golden house built for his cousin/sweetheart if he could marry her when they grew up. See *Han-wu ku-shih* 漢武故事, attributed to Pan Ku, in Wang Wen-ju, comp., *Shuo-k'u*, vol. 1, iii, 1b/2a.

¹³ A kind of flute is called "the Jade-Dragon," and there is a flute piece titled "Falling Plum Blossoms 梅花落." See the headnote to the group of poems under the same title in *Yue-fu shih-chi* 樂府詩集 (SPPY edn.), vol. 24, 1a.

¹⁴ *CST* 3/2182. I base my translation on Shuen-fu Lin's rendering as well as Grace Fong's. See Lin, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition*, pp. 171-72; Fong, pp. 41-42.

¹⁵ There were some isolated cases of *jung-wu tz'u* prior to Su Shih's time. For a succinct review of the *jung-wu tz'u* development, see Yeh Chia-ying 葉嘉瑩, in Yeh Chia-ying and Miao Yueh 繆鉞 *Ling-hsi tz'u-shuo* 靈鷲詞說 (Shang-hai: Ku-chi, 1987), pp. 537-50.

poet. Sometimes both processes are present. As Grace Fong observes, a typical Northern Sung *jung-wu tz'u* poem maintains a poetic voice independent of the object, and a frequently employed technique is that of sustained personification. By conceiving of the objects as having human traits, the poet asserts his own self as the lyrical consciousness musing on the object.¹⁶ By contrast, a descriptive *jung-wu* poem strives for verisimilitude, meticulously depicting or evoking sensory details and physical attributes particular to the external object. In addition, because *jung-wu* poems are written often on the occasions of social gatherings for entertainment, a lot of them tend to be artifices. On the most elementary level, "the poet readily subscribes to the conventions of the subgenre by manipulating the common lore of poetic images, allusions, and stock symbols associated with the particular object in fashioning his lyric. Inevitably, a great many insipid descriptive pieces were produced."¹⁷

Neither "An-hsiang" nor "Shu-ying" bears the trite trademark of the descriptive *jung-wu tz'u*. The details in "An-hsiang," presumably referring to the poet's personal experience in the past and present, are expressive of lyrical feelings, and the constituent images of "Shu-ying," though derived largely from pre-established frameworks in the cultural tradition, have been transformed into integral elements of lived experience. Instead of piling up stock images to fill out the space or show off the poet's adroitness at word play, both poems boast an articulate, "bony" structure that accounts for the relevance of the constituent elements, either individually or amalgamated as a new whole.¹⁸ Admittedly, even the seemingly realistic details in "An-hsiang" could be faint verbal echoes to earlier poems. The jade lady picking plum blossoms in the moonlight, for example, is prefigured in an earlier *tz'u* poem.¹⁹ Just as James R. Hightower points out, no *tz'u* poet could avoid stereotypes and clichés completely.²⁰ This is particularly true in the case of a

¹⁶ Fong, *Wu Wenying*, p. 88.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

¹⁸ Chang Yen's 張炎 comments in *Tz'u-yuan* 詞源 that both poems are not only "transparent" (ch'ing-k'ung 清空) in style, but also "gracefully subtle in complaint" (sao-ya 騷雅) suggest the distinction of the two poems from the "insipid" ones commented on by Fong. For a contextualized discussion of Chang Yen's concepts, see Fong Chih-fan 方智范 et al., *Chung-kuo tz'u-hsiieh p'i-p'ing shih* 中國詞學批評史 (Peking: Academy of Social Science, 1994), pp. 90-101.

¹⁹ See Ho Chu 賀鑄 (1052-1125), "To the Tune of 'The Sands of Washing Stream,'" *CST* 1/537.

²⁰ Hightower made this remark in respect with Chou Pang-yen, who happens to be a forerunner in developing the mature, evolved style of the *man-tz'u* form typical of the

poem on the plum blossom because of the numerous antecedents in the poetic tradition.²¹ But the very fact that the plum blossom has a large *yung-wu* portfolio makes the unaffected tone and manner of both poems all the more remarkable.

However, "An-hsiang" and "Shu-ying" are not identical twins, even though they were written on the same occasion and traditionally praised or criticized alike.²² While the articulate structure delineates a process of thought and feeling in a temporal domain in "An-hsiang," it contours a multifarious inner state in "Shu-ying" in an epiphanic instant out of time. This discrepancy is related to the difference in formal design between the two poems. Composed of nine and eight strophes respectively, both "An-hsiang" and "Shu-ying" are in the *man-tz'u* 慢詞 form ("supple, long song"), later known as *ch'ang-tiao* 長調 (long-tune). Conventionally, the *man-tz'u* form, as opposed to the more restrictive *hsiao-ling* 小令 (short-song), tended to have a temporal dimension. In addition to the mostly hypotactic construction of strophes, the more or less contiguous arrangement of the constituent strophes yields some sense of sequentiality. Moreover, the cohesion is enhanced by the use of function words as *ling-tzu* ("leading-words").²³ Occupying the beginning position of some lines or strophes, these function words serve to indicate a semantic unity between images, lines or strophes and suggest the logical transition between sets of ideas. Some of the early poets used this form to express feelings of different times, either in retrospection or in time sequence, but Chiang K'uei turns the *man-tz'u* form into a vehicle for introspection of considerable complexity, as evidenced in "Shu-ying."²⁴ In contrast with "An-hsiang," where a discern-

ible movement of consciousness flows back and forth across different time frames, the more innovative "Shu-ying" enacts a nuanced inner state pertaining to an extremely interiorized experience. Devoid of the verbal elements and formal features necessary to a coherent reference, the poem conspicuously foregoes a formulated self-expression. Its articulate structure is shaped through orchestrating referentially discrete elements on the basis of their shared qualities or mutually complementary attributes, in accordance with an underlying logic of sensibility. In other words, whereas "An-hsiang" lyricizes the lived experience in an exterior world approachable through visual imagination, "Shu-ying" evokes an inner experience available only in a state of visionary intensity. Contingent on retrieving a range of pre-established systems of meaning, the provisionally established inner vision transcends the temporal boundary of one referential world or another. The difference between the twin poems marks a breakthrough in the development of the *yung-wu* subgenre.²⁵

Examining the two poems separately vis-a-vis the *yung-wu* tradition helps to illustrate the fundamental transformation Chiang K'uei rendered. "An-hsiang," the first of the twins, retains some key features typical of the conventional *man-tz'u* form. First of all, it contains some informational details of a tempo-spatial coordinate, which helps toward constructing a referential context of the poem. The very first strophe, for example, sheds some light on the human situation. The poetic act to "wonder" (算 literally to "reckon/count") how many times the moon has shone on "me" implies a temporal relationship between now (experience of recalling and reflecting) and then (experience recalled). Pushing the lyrical consciousness back in time, it registers instantly a perspective anchored in the present in relation to that personal past. The register of temporality helps locate a first-person, though faceless, speaker in time and particularizes the lyrical consciousness. At the same time, the geographical specifics such as the River Country and the West Lake serve as coordinated spatial markers to define a recognizable horizon, thus locating the lyrical experience on a visual map. This empirical-narration of a human situation.

²⁵ Some other scholars also single out "Shu-ying" for its innovative linguistic approaches or the resultant new aesthetics. Grace Fong cites the poem as an exemplar of the newly emerged poetic sensibility. See Fong, *Wu Wenying*, 32-77. In *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition*, Lin Shuen-fu regards "Shu-ying" as an important landmark in the evolution of the *tz'u* aesthetics. In his recently published article, Lin emphasizes from a different angle the unique position "Shu-ying" occupies in the *tz'u* tradition. See Lin, "Space-logic in the Longer Song Lyrics of the Southern Sung: Reading Wu Wen-ying's *Ying-t'i-hsü*," *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 25 (1995), 169-91.

Southern Sung period. See Hightower, "Songs of Chou Pang-yen," *HJAS* 37 (1977), p. 271.

²¹ Including the twin poems, Chiang K'uei himself authors about 14 poems that focus or touch on the plum blossom. Even the few poems on the same object by some other authors cited later in this paper offer a glimpse at the popularity of this particular object among Chinese literati: the diverse social positions and political backgrounds of these authors suggest its "universal" appeal.

²² As indicated in the preface to the twin poems, Chiang K'uei wrote the two poems during his month-long visit to the estate of Fan Ch'eng-ta 范成大 (1126-1193) in 1191.

²³ The elements or phrases functioning as *ling-tzu* belong to largely two groups: one of particles or adverbs that help indicate the syntactic relationship or logical transition, the other of the verbs or verbal phrases of cognition or perception. Lin Shuen-fu redefines function words in two types: the semantically light type, mainly the particles, and the semantically solid type, including the adverbial-and-descriptive function words. Since the perceptual and cognitive verbs cannot establish semantic content for image-making, they therefore belong to the second type of function words. See Lin, 1978, pp. 133-41.

²⁴ Liu Yung 柳永 (984?-1053?), for example, was among the first literati poets to adopt this form from the popular culture for an elaborate description of a natural scene or

ly grounded sense of place, in conjunction with the temporal dimension, contributes to a general frame of reference of "An-hsiang" anchored in the realm of the poet's lived experience.²⁶

The poem as a whole is akin to the expressive mode of *yung-wu tz'u*. As is common to the *yung-wu* of the Northern Sung style, the lyrical self reigns supreme. First, the plum blossom, referred to as a realistic object, serves mainly to prompt the speaker's feeling and triggers his reminiscence of the past and his reflection on the present.²⁷ Second, even though the experiencing subject and the experienced object remain distinct throughout the poem, some descriptive details of the object are clearly colored by human emotions: the image of red-calyxes "speechless, roiled by thoughts of longing" asserts the primacy of a lyrical self. Third, accordingly, a distinct first-person singular point of view unifies the various aspects of lyrical experience. The human acts from different time frames, be it contemplated or contemplating, are all commanded by the first-person perspective "here and now." With this unspecified yet distinct lyrical speaker as the central point of reference, the verbs depicting mental acts in a sequence highlight the turns in the process of the poet's feeling. The first verbal phrase beginning with "wonder," for example, brings out personal memory of a previous experience, and the next two mental verbs in the first stanza, "has forgotten" and "is bemused," the awareness of the loss of his poetic talent, and of enthusiasm for blossoms.²⁸

That the allusion to Ho Hsün's loss of talent refers to the poet's own loss is established in the context of the poem. As the movement of consciousness is consistently oriented by and centered on the lyrical self that responds to the focal object, the overt allusion to Ho Hsün evokes unambiguously a self-image. It suggests that Chiang K'uei considers himself a blossom-loving poet like Ho Hsün (who modestly confessed that he could not write a good poem about his favorite blossoms), and a *yung-wu* master

²⁶ Biographical studies suggest that Chiang K'uei lived in the Yangtze delta area for an extended period of his life. For the general biographical information of Chiang K'uei, see Hsia Ch'eng-t'ao 夏承焘, *Chiang Po-shih tz'u pien-nien chien-chiao* 姜白石詞編年箋校 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1961), pp. 223-338. See also Lin Shuen-fu, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition*, especially pp. 48-58.

²⁷ This use of an object to prompt the lyrical response recalls Chou Pang-yen's "To the Tune of 'The Prince of Lan-ling': the Willow," which begins with a presentation of the willows but shifts its focus to the lyrical self later. See *CST* 2/611.

²⁸ Lin Shuen-fu makes this observation. For a detailed analysis of the poem, see Lin, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition*, pp. 137-41.

like Ho Hsün, who was known for his clever use of visual images to evoke the invisible aspects of an elusive object, the spring wind.²⁹ In other words, the more or less readily available frame of reference delimits the referential range of the allusive elements in "An-hsiang." With the lyrical self reigning supreme, the allusion to the earlier poet functions as an unequivocal person-to-person substitution on the basis of shared aesthetic tastes and literary interests.

In all the aspects surveyed above, "Shu-ying" stands in a striking contrast to its twin poem. The first impression it gives forth is a pronounced obscurity of reference. As mentioned earlier, a conventional *yung-wu* is oriented toward a descriptive and/or expressive end. But the eight strophes of "Shu-ying" do not constitute a sequence that is well-oriented one way or another. Out of the eight constituent strophes, seven contain allusions in the form of unacknowledged quotation, verbal echo, or tacit reference to earlier poems or mythological/historical frameworks, or the like. Obviously, the poem professes no mimetic commitment to the object as a physical entity. There are no realistic details that describe the plum blossom as a physical object; the allusive fragments do not evoke sensory particularities of the plum blossom but activate only associative ideas or abstract qualities several times removed from the physical object. In this aspect, Chiang K'uei differs even from Chou Pang-yen 周邦彥 (1056-1121), his predecessor in stylistic innovation of *man-z'u*. In Chou's well-known poem on the pear blossom, "To the Tune of 'Water Dragon's Song' (*Shui-lung yin*)," for example, allusions--proper names of places, echoes to earlier poems and references to palace ladies in history--are structured no less densely. But they are at least indirectly representative of the physical object: by alluding to some orchards or geographical locality specializing in pear trees, the rainy season of the year, and the pure white skin of the palace ladies associated with the pear blossom in the poetic or mythopoeic tradition, they confirm the identity of the pear blossom as a physical object.³⁰ In "Shu-ying," however, the sensual appeal of the plum blossom is only vaguely suggested with some metaphorical images: the jade pieces that adorn the mossy branches, the envisioned solitary blossom transformed from a jade pendant of a court-lady, and the horizontal scroll that captures the fragrance. If these

²⁹ For Ho Hsün's poem, "The Spring Wind" 詠春風, see *Yu-t'ai hsün-yung* (Shanghai: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1935), p. 281.

³⁰ For this poem by Chou Pang-yen, see *CST* 2/610.

images purport to describe the object at all, it is one that has been increasingly divested of its physicality and transformed into an elusive non-entity.

On the other hand, the poem lacks expressivity in comparison with the *yung-wu* poems of the Northern Sung style. Since there is no visible speaker nor physical object, there is no outburst of lyrical expression in response to the object to speak of. Neither is there emotionally colored description or personification of the object to assert an overly subjective viewer. The calculated reticence is effected through Chiang K'uei's innovation of the verbal form correlated to his systematic use of allusion. Insofar as the allusively engaged frameworks are unconnected to one another in reference, the allusiveness of the constituent strophes presupposes a discontinuity. For example, there is no inherent logical link or sequentiality between a man's mysterious encounter with the Goddess of Plum Blossoms (alluded to in the first strophe) and Tu Fu's portrayal of a female figure (in the second). If these allusions serve to personify the plum blossom because the frameworks they engage involve one female character or another, the dissonance in their referential backgrounds precludes a projection of a unitary lyrical self on a personified object. All one gets is a disembodied voice.

Some other aspects of the formal innovation help to strip the poem of its expressivity. In contrast with "An-hsiang," the unifying perspective is conspicuously absent. Not only the explicit reference to the first-person speaker is absent, but little information can be gleaned from allusive elements to suggest a distinct center of lyrical consciousness. Indeed, the poem lacks the basic formal conditions necessary for words to perform the referential function. There is no inferrable spatio-temporal coordinate on which to establish a particularized perspective. Details that would define a visualizable scene, i.e., the place markers that localize the lyrical experience such as West Lake in "An-hsiang," are austere excluded. Instead, the "barbarian sands" or the "secluded palace" of earlier dynasties are remote from the Sung poet's personal experience. Pointing to disparate periods in history, these spatially dislocated and temporally dispersed landmarks cancel out each other rather than complement each other to analogously locate a lyrical self on a visual map.

Erased also from the verbal pattern is the temporal dimension common to the *man-tz'u* form. The erasure is effected not so much by the omission of explicit references to time as by the lack of sequentiality in the

arrangement of the eight strophes. The constituent strophes, being mostly allusive, therefore disparate, contain no strong verbs, such as to "play" the flute, to "wake up" the jade lady and "pick" plum blossoms with her, as found in "An-hsiang," which indicate external actions by the same human agent in a sequence and offer some clue to a temporal relationship. Instead, the various acts, external or internal, either recalled, imagined or prophesied, are generated by or attributed to different agents, human and non-human. Even though the verbal phrase "*yu chi*" ("still remember," translated as "still comes to mind" because of its free-floating status and impersonal tone in context) in the fifth strophe seems to suggest the act of looking back from the present, it does not establish any depth in time. With the constituent elements retaining their diversity in reference, the poem as a whole yields no unified sense of "here and now" as a basis for defining a relationship to one moment or another in the past.

In this sense, Chiang K'uei's peculiar use of *ling-tzu* partakes of the formal innovation. As mentioned earlier, the *ling-tzu* in the *man-tz'u* form often facilitates establishing continuity between lines or strophes, or indicating the logical transition between sets of ideas. In addition, the perceptual or mental verbs as *ling-tzu* implicate a human agent or subjectivize the lyrical consciousness. In "Shu-ying," however, the *ling-tzu* do not actively perform these referential functions. In the *ling-tzu* position of the first strophe of "Shu-ying," for example, is an impersonal, factual *yu* 有 ("there is," a weak verb sometimes omitted in the English translation), which does not implicate a subject, as does its counterpart in "An-hsiang," to "wonder/reckon." Even though two mental verbs introduce the fourth and fifth strophes respectively, their occurrences (separated by the stanzaic division), do not constitute a continuous process of thought and feeling. The human agency they suggest is impersonal and inconsistent. To "think" in the fourth strophe, translated here as "must have," for example, is equivalent to "one may surmise" and can be attributed to any third-person party as a general supposition.

The innovative features of the verbal form account for the opacity of "Shu-ying." As Lin Shuen-fu observes, a reader of "Shu-ying" has little difficulty in grasping the meaning of an individual line or strophe, but is left guessing the overall message of the poem as a whole.³¹ However, the poem

³¹ Lin, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition*, p. 177.

is by no means deficient in feeling or in human significance, as was otherwise suggested by some scholars, the most notable among them being Wang Kuo-wei.³² In lieu of a clear message or an outburst of feeling, "Shu-ying" enacts a multifarious inner experience that defies ordinary language. To articulate the ineffable, Chiang K'uei employs language in the reflexive mode: the formal design of "Shu-ying" rigorously divorces its constituent elements from connections with external entities by doing away with the arbitrary logical transitions between strophes or sets of ideas, and by withholding a unifying perspective. The austere exclusion of these formal conditions dictates the interdependence of the constituent elements and induces them to comment on one another. In other words, the reflexive mode serves to "dislocate language into the poet's meaning," as T. S. Eliot postulates when he talks about the necessity of a "comprehensive, indirect and allusive" language for coping with complex experience.³³

The constituent images or strophes divorced from their connections with external entities are particularly potent as they are allusive by nature or design. Because of their built-in capacity for engaging a pre-established frame of reference outside the text, each allusion is capable of bringing a multi-dimensional system of meaning to bear upon the poem. The second strophe, with the image "Wordless, [she] leans on slender bamboos" alluding to Tu Fu's poem "The Fair Lady," for example, carries a wide evocative ring. It may suggest that the plum blossom is comparable to the title character of Tu Fu's poem in that the blossom is as solitary and tenacious of purity. On the other hand, it has the potential to evoke a general state of desolation because "The Fair Lady," a poem of twenty-six lines, contains a compressed narrative scheme about the plight of a woman of noble origin, who, having lost her brothers to the war and been abandoned by her fickle-minded husband, was driven from home into the isolated mountains to fend for herself. And the immediate context of Chiang K'uei's allusion is

³² Wang Kuo-wei praises the style of Chiang K'uei's *tz'u* poetry but finds his poems inferior in content. For example, he asserts: "No other *tz'u* poet can surpass White Stone (Chiang K'uei) in terms of lofty style and tone. It is a pity he does not concentrate on creating an ideational state (*i-ching* 意境). As a result, there is no flavor beyond words, no sound beyond the string, which fails him in becoming a first-rate writer." See Yao K'o-fu 姚柯夫, ed., "Jen-chien *tz'u*-hua chi p'ing-lun hui-pien" 人間詞話及評論彙編 (Peking: Shu-mu wen-hsien, 1983), p. 19. Also by Wang Kuo Wei: "White Stone has style but no feeling." *Ibid.* And more specifically, "although the style of 'An-hsiang' and 'Shu-ying' by White Stone (Chiang K'uei) is lofty, not a single phrase hits the target." *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³³ See T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, 1932), p. 248.

amenable to this association: the conceptual images of being away from one's home (*ko-li* 客里) and alone at sunset also connote uprootedness and desolation in tradition. Given this multi-faceted system of meaning, the second strophe implicates a spectrum of emotive and intellectual ideas, encompassing the admiration for the dignity and integrity preserved despite the adverse circumstances, and sorrow and pathos associated with the personal misfortune beyond one's control.³⁴ Such preordained multivalence is common among the allusive elements of "Shu-ying."

Moreover, Chiang K'uei's innovative form brings about the maximum release of the energies pre-ordained in the allusive elements. As is known, the potency of allusion is a matter of potentiality rather than a given: while allusions vary in efficacy according to the pre-established implicative systems of their sources in tradition, the function of an allusion, including its emergent meaning and its range of implication, is shaped by the context of the alluding poem.³⁵ In "Shu-ying," the structural context is conducive to maximizing the potential of multivalent allusions. The interdependence it prescribes between the constituent strophes entails a coordination of actualizing simultaneously the multiple allusions. While each allusion provides a context for its surrounding elements, it has to derive its emergent meaning from the context provided by other allusions. In this sense, the verbal form of "Shu-ying" operates on the "principle of coordination" observed by Yu-kung Kao: the various pre-established systems of meaning engaged by the allusions are weighted equally; only the relevance of their formal attributes to the emerging lyrical quality determines their share in the overall structure.³⁶ The coordinated actualization of these multiple allusions, in turn, brings to the fore the mutually complementary formal qualities embedded in the pre-established systems of meaning. Insofar as each of these external systems is multi-dimensional, the interacting allusive strophes can relate to one another on multiple levels. They may be, for example, comparable in one aspect and contrastive in another.

³⁴ On whether the lady is a real person Tu Fu once encountered or a self-image of the poet created in an allegorical mode, a debate among the Tu Fu scholars dating back to the Ch'ing dynasty at the latest remains inconclusive.

³⁵ That the formal context shapes the function of allusion is evidenced in the case of "An-hsiang," as the overt allusion to Ho Hsün has an unambiguous, unitary referent mentioned earlier.

³⁶ See Yu-kung Kao, "Chinese Lyric Aesthetics," in Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, ed., *Words and Images* (Princeton U.P., 1991), p. 58.

Unconstrained by a linear logic, the constituent elements of "Shu-ying" cohere by complementing one another on the level of formal attributes and abstract qualities. The structural form thus constituted is fluid and supple enough to absorb or accommodate the various shades of meaning embedded in the pre-established frames of reference, shades of meaning that would be mutually exclusive in the linear form of a clear referential context. Accordingly, the form of "Shu-ying" is at once simple and complex, in that all elements are condensed into one and at the same time retain their interrelating qualities.³⁷ Instead of referring to a unitary object, person, or event, the verbal form of multi-leveled structure constituted by the interrelated shades of meaning intimates a manifold inner experience.

"THE POWER OF EMPTINESS"

To decipher the patterned images of "Shu-ying," one needs to uncover the multifarious structure of underlying interrelationships defined by the abstract qualities or attributes.³⁸ On the most discernible level, all the constituent strophes are interrelated by means of connecting, in one way or another, to the plum blossom. Some of them are related to the object because the stories they allude to feature one female figure or another who has something to do with plum blossoms, such as the Goddess of Plum Blossoms in the first strophe and Princess Shou-yang in the fifth. Some others are metaphorically related to the object because of the earlier poems they allude to: the third strophe referring to Wang Chao-chün (c. 34 BC), a court-lady of the Han palace, for example, is linked to the object via an implied metaphorical relationship established in a poem by Wang Chien (circa 767-830, discussion to follow). Still some others are related to the plum blossom by means of a metaphorical projection that can be inferred from the context of "Shu-ying." The second strophe, alluding to Tu Fu's poem "The Fair Lady," promises a comparability between the plum blossom and the title character of Tu Fu's poem.³⁹ Likewise, building on a story

of a young prince's vow to cherish his future consort, the sixth strophe suggests a comparability between women and plum blossoms in their ephemeral beauty or fragility. In this sense, the allusive fragments are tenuously strung on a thread provided by the ostensible focus of the poem. On this more accessible level, the qualities associated with the female characters constitute an ethereal, anthropomorphic identity of the plum blossom traditionally respected by Chinese for its elegance in fortitude and endurance. The poem composed mostly by interrelated allusions thus objectifies the anthropomorphic spirit of the plum blossom as a symbolic object. On the other hand, another layer of the metaphoricity also holds: the various qualities realized in the name of the focal object complement one another to evoke a general mood associated with the urgent desire to cherish the memory of delicate and ephemeral beauty, be it floral or feminine, literal or metaphoric.⁴⁰

The versatility of metaphor testifies to the encompassing capacity of the fluid verbal form composed of orchestrated allusions of multivalency. As long as they are sustained by an emerging interrelationship in the structural context, the attributes or qualities embedded in a preestablished system of meaning can surface and be materialized into a strain of meaning. Operating on the aforementioned principle of coordination, a cluster of interrelated allusions in the third and fourth strophes tap into the cultural memory to generate yet another possibility of meaning. The two strophes are centered around Wang Chao-chün, the legendary court-lady in the Han palace:

Chao-chün, unused to the barbarian sands far away,
Longed in secret only for the land on the Yang-tze.
Her jade pendant must have returned in the moonlight
Transformed into this blossom, hidden and solitary.

Tune of "The Stream in the Mu-shan": the Plum Blossom," Ts'ao Tsu combines an image from Su Shih's poem "Harmonizing Ch'in T'ai-hsü's Poem on Plum Blossoms" and the one borrowed from Tu Fu into the following: "A slanting branch beyond the bamboos: / One recalls the fair lady at sunset on a chilly day." For Ts'ao Tsu's poem, see *CST* 2/801.

³⁷ That the poem reticently verbalizes the poet's nostalgia for a female personality is regarded as the most plausible possibility of meaning by some twentieth-century scholars. Hsia Ch'eng-t'ao, for example, believes the sentiment being evoked is related to one of Chiang K'uei's former lovers. See Hsia Ch'eng-t'ao, ed., *Chiang Po-shih 12'u pien-nien chien-chiao*, p. 49.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The phrase "power of emptiness" comes from Simon Leys's discussion of the Chinese aesthetic principle that governs the formal configurations of emotive and intellectual energy in various art forms, including painting, calligraphy, poetry. See Leys, "Poetry and Painting: Aspects of Chinese Classical Esthetics," in *The Burning Forest: Essays on Chinese Culture and Politics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1986), pp. 3-34.

³⁹ Ts'ao Tsu 曹組 (who passed the chin-shih examination in 1121 after five failed attempts) sets a precedent for comparing the plum blossom to Tu Fu's "Fair Lady." In "To the

The two-strophe cluster exemplifies most clearly the palimpsest nature of Chiang K'uei's poetic language. Strands of intertextuality are intricately interwoven into an underlying web of interconnections. First of all, the reference to Chao-chün by itself compresses a range of emotional energy through poetic associations. Allegedly the most beautiful woman in the Han palace, Chao-chün was often remembered as an ill-fated court lady unwittingly given away to a Tartar tribal leader due to the negligence of the Han emperor.⁴¹ In the ensuing centuries since her story began to accrete in and outside historiography, many Chinese literati – Chiang Yen 江淹 (444-505), Yü Hsin 庾信 (512-580), Li Po 李白 (701-762), Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072), Wang An-shih 王安石 (1021-1086), to name only a few, have been writing about Chao-chün or allude to her in their poems repeatedly. Some of them seem to be making subtle political comments by tapping into the common lore of Wang Chao-chün.⁴² Some others seem more likely to be lamenting her fate out of sympathy and empathy, especially when they were suffering political setbacks or experiencing frustration in their careers, as in the cases of Tu Fu and Wang An-shih.⁴³ The impulses of self-identification implicit in these male scholar-officials' poems, then, do not arise from a perceived comparability in the referential specifics of her story, i.e., the unmatched feminine beauty Chao Chün possesses or her refusal to bribe the portraitist so that she could be favorably presented to the emperor. Rather, the self-identification is an implied self-comparison on an abstract, generalized level, on the basis of unappreciated virtue, wasted talent, unrealized potential, and tenacious loyalty.⁴⁴ Given this tradition of

male literati's empathy and self-identification, the reference to the legendary figure evokes a range of feelings of archetypal significance.

Specifically, the Han court lady is metaphorically linked to the plum blossom in a poem by Wang Chien mentioned earlier:

By the road of Mount T'ien-shan, a plum tree	天山路邊一株梅
Blossoms year after year under yellow clouds. Chao-chün being dead, the envoy of the Han returned,	年年花發黃雲下 昭君已歿漢使回
The way-farers of various times can only tether their horses. ⁴⁵	前後征人惟繫馬

Engaged by Chiang K'uei's invocation of Chao-chün in the poem about the plum blossom, Wang Chien's poem could interject a two-fold possibility of meaning in "Shu-ying." It suggests a comparability between the court lady long forgotten in her grave and the plum tree blossoming all by itself far from the Han capital (Mount T'ien-shan refers to the one located in today's Outer Mongolia rather than Hsin-chiang). At the same time, it implies an additional sentiment through a contrast – while Chao-chün died unappeased in an alien land with no envoy from the Han court to claim her, the plum tree blossoms annually indifferent to human vicissitudes.

On the basis of the associative motifs of frustration, displacement, and alienation, the third strophe interacts with the fourth, which engages Tu Fu's famous poem "On the Ancient Sites, 3." Immortalizing the legendary court lady, Tu Fu's poem is marked by the empathic energy invested in evoking her grievance. Its second couplet, parallel in structure, for example, presents some contrastive images in a taut form: "Once she was gone, the crimson terraces merged into the northern desert, / Only a green grave remains, facing the dusky dimness." * Drawing on the various versions of

shih yi-pai shou (Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1978), pp. 22-23.

⁴⁵ This is the first half of an eight-line poem, "The Plum Blossoms on the Border 塞上梅" by Wang Chien. For the full text, see *Ch'üan T'ang Shih* 全唐詩 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1985), p. 3376.

⁴⁶ The translation does not reproduce adequately the textural density and emotional intensity of the original, partly due to the irreconcilable linguistic discrepancy between English and the classical Chinese language. One of the sources of energy Tu Fu's images draw on should be the *Hou-Han shu* version mentioned earlier. Another allusive detail incorporated in this couplet is that Chao-chün's lone grave remains green in the steppes, where the grass is white and withered. The color green is believed to be indicative of her

⁴¹ One of the sources responsible for this vein of the lore about Chao-chün is apparently Fan Yeh's 范曄 (389-445) *Hou-Han shu* 後漢書, which relates that the Emperor Yüan of the Han is smitten with remorse upon the sight of the dazzling Chao-chün but has to keep his promise of giving the court-lady to the Ch'an-yü. See *Hou-Han shu* (SPPY edn.), 119, 2b.

⁴² See for example Ou-yang Hsiu's "Tsai ho 'Ming-fei ch'ü'" 再和明妃曲, in *Ou-yang Hsiu ch'üan-chi* 歐陽修全集 (Hong Kong: Kuang-chih shu-chüi, 1965), vol. 1, p. 59.

⁴³ Eugene Eoyang traces the genealogy of the Wang Chao-chün legend from the Han to the Yüan dynasty and reveals the transformations which the court lady's story undergoes in different historical contexts and from various perspectives of individual writers. Here, I am focusing mainly on the significance of the Chao-chün legend evolved during the Sung period, which Eoyang's survey skips. For Eugene Eoyang's discussion, see "The Wang Chao-chün Legend: Configurations of the Classic," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 4 (1982), 3-22.

⁴⁴ In "The Song of the Bright Consort," one of his poems about Wang Chao-chün, for example, Wang An-shih invokes the grievances of not only Chao-chün but also the consort of the Emperor Wu of the Han (also alluded to in the sixth strophe of "Shu-ying"), only to draw a conclusion on frustrations as a human condition in general. For the poem, see *Sung*

the Chao-chün legend, these parallel line-contained contrasts, between the crimson terraces (palaces) and the desert, between the lone green speck and the vast dim brownness of the foreign land, evoke a deep sense of regret and loss. The compressed energy suggests the experiential intensity of the empathizing T'ang poet, which helps perpetuate the archetypal significance of Chao-chün's personal circumstances for scholar-officials subjected to the grievances of exile, displacement, frustration, or lifetime disappointment. With its indeterminate referential context and structure of multiple inter-relationships, "Shu-ying" is able to entertain the spectrum of feelings activated by the allusion to Tu Fu's poem.

The archetypal significance of Chao-chün's grievance is played out further in the intricate web of intertextuality. In the densely textured two-strophe cluster, the desolation of a forlorn Chao-chün pining for homeland is underscored by the "barbarian sands." A synechdochic image of the vast desert beyond the northern border inhabited by nomadic tribes, who since the Han times often posed a potential or real threat to the Chinese, the "barbarian sands" has become another emotionally charged image through repeated use in poetry, often symbolic of displacement by war or political exile.⁴⁷ This charged image, in turn, constitutes an intertextual link to a *tz'u* poem by Chao Chi 趙佶 (1082-1135), better known as Hui-tsung 徽宗 (r. 1101-1126), one of the two Sung emperors captured by the Jurchen invaders when the Sung capital succumbed to the Jurchens' siege. The poem was written when the emperor was taken away from the Sung capital to the north, along with his heir to the throne and the ladies of both palaces in 1127:

The jade capital - I recall its bustling grandeur of old days,	玉京曾憶舊繁華
The imperial residence ten thousand miles away,	万里帝王家
With the jasper towers and marble halls Filled with the music of strings and pipes in the morning,	瓊樓玉殿 朝噫弦管

undying loyalty to her native southland, which is lush with green. Ts'ai Yung's 蔡邕 "Ch'in ts'ao" 琴操 is one of the early sources of the green tomb motif. For a discussion of Ts'ai Yung's contribution to the Chao-chün lore, see Eugene Eoyang, pp. 6-9.

⁴⁷ In fact, the northern area Chao-chün was sent to for marriage is steppe rather than desert. But this association of barbarian sands with the northern border and beyond, hence exile and alienation, has been disseminated in poetic consciousness.

And the <i>sheng</i> flutes and <i>p'i-p'a</i> lutes arrayed in the evening.	暮列笙琶
---	------

The flowering city, its residents gone, is desolate.	花城人去今蕭索
---	---------

The spring dream hovers over the barbarian sands.	春夢繞胡沙
--	-------

The family hill, where is it to be seen? One can only endure the Ch'iang flute ⁴⁸ Sounding "Falling Plum Blossoms" to the last note. ⁴⁹	家山何在 忍听羌管 吹徹梅花
--	----------------------

With its harrowing tone of lament resonating with the "sad tune of the Jade-Dragon" in "Shu-ying," the Sung emperor's poem is intricately enmeshed in the intertextual network underlying Chiang K'uei's poem written some sixty-odd years later. While the exiled Sung emperor's "spring dream" over the "barbarian sands" corresponds with Chao-chün's longing for the Yang-tze from the "barbarian sands" far away, the contrast between the emperor's captivity in the barbarian land here and now and his glittering palace there and then parallels the poignant contrast in Chao-chün's experience so vividly envisioned by Tu Fu. This intertextually realized sense of loss and regret is in turn reinforced by the unstated lament embedded in Wang Chien's poem juxtaposing the unclaimed Han court-lady in her grave and the blossoming plum tree beyond the border. In such an intricate web of multifarious intertextuality, the allusive images in the two-strophe cluster evoke multiple interpersonal parallels to establish a transpersonal dimension of the inner vision: the poignant sense of loss encompasses several levels of lived experience, be it a personal state of desolation, the disintegration of a political order, or the cultural decline of one's country.

The context of the poem characterized by a reciprocal interrelationship as a whole sustains the associations of displacement and alienation activated by the archetypal allusions.⁵⁰ Gravitating toward the two-strophe

⁴⁸ A kind of flute originally associated with an ancient tribal people called Ch'iang, who inhabited beyond the northwestern border of China, mostly in today's Ch'ing-hai and Hsin-chiang.

⁴⁹ See Chao Chi, "To the Tune of 'The Charm of the Eyes,'" in *CST* 2/898.

⁵⁰ The cluster of interrelated images centered on Chao-chün is pivotal in another sense: a hotly contested interpretation of the poem as an allegorical reference to the capture of the Sung emperor or his concubines, shared among Chinese scholars since the Ch'ing Dynasty, hinges upon the allusion to Chao-chün. My view differs from the earlier scholars' in that I do

nexus of multifarious intertextuality, the other two allusive strophes in the first stanza yield also some complementary abstract qualities by drawing on the pre-established systems of meaning they respectively engage. The first strophe, alluding to the mythic narrative about the goddess of plum blossoms, evokes not only wistful longing for the ephemeral experience, but also a sense of loss, as suggested by the mysterious disappearance of the graceful lady encountered by the man, who wakes up next morning to find only green birds perched on the tree. On this note, it resonates with the second strophe to bring out the unspecified sense of loss that permeates Tu Fu's "Fair Lady."⁵¹ Structured in the network of interrelationship, these allusive images, though less charged than those in the two-strophe cluster, contribute to the emerging lyrical quality of the poem.

The underlying pattern of interrelationship cuts across the stanzaic boundary, even though the strophic constructions of the second stanza seem to have a more continuous flow. In particular, the fifth and sixth strophes (the first two of the second stanza), alluding to two unrelated historical anecdotes respectively, stand out from the rest and apart from each other. First of all, an allusion to a factual anecdote, in contrast with a densely textured poem, has no pre-established ambience of symbolization to benefit from; the fifth strophe, anecdotal in tone, in particular, seems to promise a linear narrative. Secondly, compared with the other constituent images, the two anecdotal stories seem more incongruous. That the plum blossom once favored a princess's forehead does not add to the ethereal qualities of the blossom evoked in the first stanza, and the innocent game of a young princess's cosmetic fashion-setting is a far cry from the displaced court lady's longing for her homeland. The allusion to another palace tale about falling in and out of the emperor's favor is equally outlandish, if not more so. The two historical allusions, however, are not as recalcitrant to assimilation as they seem to be. Chiang K'uei's own concept of allusion helps to illuminate the significance of his allusions in this context. In an essay on poetry Chiang K'uei advocates the "empty use of familiar referen-

not think there is necessarily a unitary word-world correspondence between a historical figure alluded to and a particular personality or event the poet might be thinking about.

⁵¹ This allusion to "The Fair Lady" illustrates the fecundity of Chiang K'uei's art of allusion in comparison with Ts'ao Tsu's use of the same borrowed image mentioned earlier. In Ts'ao's poem on the plum blossom, the allusive image derived from Tu Fu's "Fair Lady" evokes unambiguously the unadorned beauty and secluded fragrance. The context of Ts'ao's poem does not permit the emotive associations with the sorrow over the female character's personal misfortune and the desolation afflicted by war so prominent foregrounded in Chiang K'uei's "Shu-ying."

ces" (*shu-shih hsü-yung* 熟事虛用).⁵² Apparently, Chiang K'uei considers a familiar frame of reference engaged by an allusion amorphous and malleable once it is emptied of its referential specificities.⁵³ Interpreted in terms of Chinese lyrical aesthetics, the "empty" use implies the function of allusion not as a sign of a unitary referent, but as a symbol of multifarious import. As Stephen Owen enunciates, the Chinese word empty, or plastic, is "in the sense of something that takes the form of whatever 'solid' it encounters.... In poetics, *hsü* (empty) is the attribute of feeling."⁵⁴ In the light of this aesthetic concept, Chiang K'uei's "empty use" of the historical allusions is to extract the symbolic import from the quotidian or commonplace familiar to all members of the Chinese reading community. Using the familiar events emptied of their referential specificities and divested of their temporal particularity is to tap into their connotational capacity; it constitutes another way to "dislocate language into the poet's meaning."

And the "empty" use of the allusions to the two palatial anecdotes is predicated on the non-linear structure of interrelationship they are patterned into. Even though each of these two hypotactical strophes seems semantically self-sufficient, the two adjacent strophes do not yield a clear point of reference when read consecutively. The tone of the modal construction of the negative imperative in the sixth strophe does not obviously follow from the reminiscing mood professed in the fifth. This dissonance in viewpoint induces the two strophes to relate to one another by counterpointing, coordinating, complementing. Such a mode of textual activity, as mentioned earlier, brings to the fore the shared qualities on the abstract

⁵² The complementary point in his advocacy is the "familiar use of obscure references," which emphasizes equally the need of defamiliarization, thereby dislodging words into the poet's meaning. See *Po-shih tao-jen shih-shuo* 白石道人詩說 in Hsia Ch'eng-t'ao, ed., *Po-shih shih-tz'u chi* (Hong Kong: Shang-wu, 1961), p. 66. While the essay is about *shih*, the precepts Chiang K'uei advocates in the essay are implemented more faithfully in his *tz'u* poems than in his *shih*. Kuo Shao-yü 郭紹虞 made a similar observation: "Regarding Chiang K'uei's treatise on *shih*, his actual writing does not measure up to his own insights. As to his *tz'u* poetry, he does not need to expound his insights, but he can be said to have implemented the principles [he advocated]." 所以姜氏論詩，見到此而未能進乎此：姜氏作詞：不必見到此，而可說已能進乎此。See Kuo, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing shih* 中國文學批評史 (Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1979), p. 259.

⁵³ Philip J. Ivanhoe calls my attention to the fact that when read out of the context, the translation of *hsü* as "empty" can potentially mean a "vacuous" reference, in contrast with "vacuating" the reference, which is what I think Chiang K'uei probably means.

⁵⁴ Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 588.

level and relegates the referential specifics to the background, thus emptying the familiar references of their referential particularities such as where and when. The particular, factual details derived from different time frames thus function in a similar way as the allusions in Li Shang-yin's "Inlaid Zither" ("Chin se" 錦瑟): they reach back "not to the linear time of history but... to archaic models which can be integrated into the present moment and lift that moment out of the linear flow of historical time into timelessness."⁶⁵

One of the generalized ideas activated through the coordinated actualization of the two allusions is the imperial magnitude, associated with the secluded palaces of two emperors, both posthumously entitled "Wu" (militarily distinguished). This distinction of the imperial status is sustainable in the underlying interrelationship within the second stanza: the "sad tune of the Jade Dragon" in the seventh strophe contains another nexus of intertextuality that reinforces the associative ideas generated by the historical allusions. On the surface, the "Jade Dragon" refers to a kind of flute, and its "sad tune" echoes some earlier poems about a plaintive piece of flute music known as "The Falling Plum Blossom." The auditory image in poetry is associated almost always with remote, borderland areas and often with sorrow.⁶⁶ In this sense, the seventh strophe is strung together with other disparate strophes, though several times removed from the physical object of the plum blossom. The feelings of displacement and desolation it evokes contribute to the general mood of melancholy evoked by other allusive strophes. On a highly symbolic level, the seventh strophe complements the previous strophes in establishing the layer of meaning of the cultural ramification: the "sad tune of the Jade Dragon" engages the same poem by the imprisoned emperor Hui-tsung, who ends his poem with a harrowing lament that he had to "endure the Ch'iang flute / Sounding the 'Falling Plum Blossoms' to the last note." Reduced to a prisoner of the barbarians, the onetime Son of Heaven could do nothing but complain about the flute

music lamenting falling/fallen plum blossoms. The auditory image in "Shu-ying," resonating with the sad tune of the deposed Northern Sung emperor, may very well be a metaphor of the deposed emperor's poem.⁶⁷ Thus the seventh strophe finds its own context among the allusions to other emperors and imperial palaces in "Shu-ying."

All in all, as it turns out, the second stanza contributes to the underlying structure of meaning of the poem as a whole. The various strands of meaning realized through the coordinated intertextual engagements in the second stanza reinforce the cultural dimension of the inner experience, expanding the scope of the inner vision. Reverberating in the echoing chamber of the poem is a dominant overtone of nostalgia, longing, and regret, over some un verbalized loss, un verbalizable, perhaps. Unspecified as it is, the sense of regret and loss encompasses multiple levels: a personal sense of loss exemplified by the grief-stricken Chao-chün, which is empathized by generations of male literati, and the cultural sense of loss epitomized by the Sung emperor's drastic reversal of fortune, which has seared the collective consciousness of the Southern Sung Chinese up to Chiang K'uei's time.⁶⁸

The knowledge of the prescribed interstanzaic relationship sheds light on the resonance between the allusions across the stanzaic boundary. The coordinated signification by the allusive images and fragmentary details in

⁶⁵ I am not asserting an allegorical link between the "dragon" and Sung Hui-tsung even though the image is traditionally emblematic of an imperial ruler. An antecedent of the dragon's lament in Ts'ao Kuan's 曹冠 poem, "To the Tune of 'Spring in the Han Palace (Han-kung ch'un)': the Plum Blossom," however, is tantalizingly suggestive of the deposed emperor's poem. With "the mellow soup (ho-keng 和羹)" used in the same poem apparently as a metaphor for political harmony within the court, Ts'ao Kuan dismissively refers to the "dragon's groans": "The river city, the borderland flute-- / Let the dragon groan. / What if it sounds the last note?" The self-assured tone suggests that the poem is from Ts'ao Kuan's earlier career, when he served under Ch'in K'uai 秦檜 (1090-1155) in varied capacity, including being the tutor to Ch'in's grandson, and before his exile after Ch'in K'uai's death. Given Ts'ao Kuan's close tie to Ch'in K'uai, the pacifist prime minister who insisted on appeasing the Jurchens at any cost, and the political resonance of his poem, his disparaging reference to the "dragon's groan" has the potential for allegorical signification. For Ts'ao Kuan's poem, see *CSL*, 3/1531.

⁶⁶ The major sources of this general sense of loss are the collapse of the Northern Sung in 1127 and the Jurchens' continuous occupation of the northern territory ever since. About 20 years before Chiang K'uei's visit to his estate, Fan Ch'eng-ta, for example, went as the envoy of the Southern Sung court to the former Sung capital under the Jurchens' occupation, and wrote a number of poems transcribing the agony of the cultural loss he experienced or witnessed. See for example Fan's poem "The Bridge of Chou 州橋" in *Sung-shih yi-pai shou* (Shanghai: ku-chi, 1978), p. 96.

⁶⁵ See Andrew Walsh, *Roots of Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1978), p. 93.

⁶⁶ In an earlier poem titled "Falling Plum Blossoms" (梅花落), the auditory image evokes sorrow: "Hairs turn grey before the thrice-played tune ends" 三奏未終頭髮白. In Li Po's poem, for another example, "Listen to the Flute Music with Shih Ch'in on the Yellow Crane Tower" 與史郎中欽聽黃鶴樓上吹笛, the flute piece about falling plum blossoms is also associated with the sorrow of demotion and exile. See Wang Ch'i, ed., *Li Tai-po ch'üan-chi* 李白全集 3 vols. (rept. Peking: Chung-hua, 1985), 2/1076-77.

the two stanzas of the poem is predicated on a generic expectation. In a two-stanza *tz'u* form, the stanzaic transition is supposed to indicate a paradoxical "continuity in discontinuation" (斷而不斷).⁷⁹ In "Shu-ying," this generic expectation is exploited to create a relationship of incremental repetition between the two stanzas. While the second stanza reinforces what the first stanza sets out to accomplish, expands the scope of the vision the first stanza is to establish, and deepens the theme or intensifies the experience, it has to accomplish all this by exploring new channels of energy. When the two stanzas of "Shu-ying" are read in light of each other, the underlying pattern of interrelationship between the disparate allusive strophes becomes more evident: the structural context of the poem induces a systematized resonance, with its two stanzas as mini-echoing chambers complementing one another. The real focus of the poem on plum blossoms is interiority. When the disembodied voice makes an uncharacteristic appeal on behalf of the delicate and ephemeral, the concern is not about the drifting of the blossoms but its dire human consequences. The ending of the first stanza and that of the second are the same in signification but varied in the degree of intensity, and the climax reached in the second is expected, even though it is reached through understating. The last and lasting image is but a reflection of displaced memory; "the horizontal scroll over the small window," a crystalline form of patterned energy, teases us out of thought as does Li Shang-yin's "Inlaid Zither."

Likewise, "An-hsiang" and "Shu-ying" constitute a macropoetic structure of thematic harmony. Granted that the two poems exemplify a watershed difference in linguistic approach and the lyrical or inner visions they evoke vary in scope, the two poems complement each other. Pertaining to retrospection and introspection respectively, they project a multi-dimensional experience resulting from two complementary forms of lyrical consciousness. In this sense, the relationship between the two poems is also that of a "continuity in discontinuation," with the latter broadening and deepening the experience established in the former.

⁷⁹ While this kind of stanzaic transition characterizes two-stanza *tz'u* poems in general, its best manifestations in the *man-tz'u* poems before Chiang K'uei's time can be found in Liu Yung and Chou Pang-yen. For a general discussion of the interstanzaic relationship in the mature two-stanza form of *tz'u*, see Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Evolution of Chinese Tzu Poetry* (Princeton U.P., 1980), esp. pp. 30-32.

CHIANG K'UEI'S DISTINCT ACHIEVEMENTS: EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF VISION WITH ALLUSION

To use words in the reflexive mode is not merely a matter of changing the style of the *yung-wu tz'u*. A more fundamental impact is on empowering words; freeing words from a unitary connection to a singular referent allows for the maximum release of their multivalent energy. In the reflexive mode, "the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named or an outburst of emotion... words and their composition, their meaning, their external and inner form, acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality."⁸⁰ Specifically in "Shu-ying," the metaphorical and allusive images are neither a mere representation of the plum blossom or an outburst of emotion. The fragmentary images, likewise, "acquire a weight and value of their own." Ultimately, the collage form of "Shu-ying" as a whole refers to lived experience. But the complex reality of the inner world, not informed by one particular set of external circumstances or another but forged in the matrix of various planes of experience all at once, is intimated only in tantalizing uncertainty.

Relying on allusion to evoke an extremely interiorized experience of historical and cultural ramifications, "Shu-ying" illustrates a correlation between allusion and vision. As Yu-kung Kao observes: "Lyrical imagination belongs to an intimate and narrowly defined world, a world with the poet's own perception and memory as its baseline, a much limited one when compared with the narrative world. What emerges from this imagination is the poet's anticipation of the future, which is closely conditioned by one's own experience of the past and present; it has a very narrow angle of field, unless the past includes the experience, which one has absorbed through readings."⁸¹ In other words, the horizon of an inner vision can be vastly expanded by internalizing the intellectual and emotive energy preserved in the voluminous textual sources of the humanistic tradition. As allusion opens lyrical imagination to an infinite vista, the poem composed of interrelated allusions strung together by the focal object at the same time adheres to the aesthetic principle of the *yung-wu* subgenre that lyrical feelings should be intimated in the aura of the object.

⁸⁰ This is Roman Jakobson's definition of "poeticity." See Jakobson, *Language in Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1987), p. 37^B.

⁸¹ Yu-kung Kao, "Aesthetic Consequences of the Formal Quality of *Tz'u*," typescript, p. 24.

Indispensable to establishing a multifarious inner vision, Chiang K'uei's art of allusion distinguishes him from many other allusive poets, including his contemporary Hsin Ch'i-chi 辛棄疾 (1140-1207), who is known for piling allusion upon allusion only to draw parallels between the particulars alluded to and his personal situation. This distinction of Chiang K'uei can be illuminated by Charles Taylor's observation of the "interspatial epiphany" in Anglo-American modern poetry. Defined in a secular sense, the epiphany in modern poetry is "the revelation of something higher, not reducible simply to a subjective response through the work or what it portrays," and the "interspatial" mode of epiphany cannot be understood in expressivist terms.⁶² Without insisting on perfect trans-cultural concordance, one may argue that the intertextually realized vision in "Shu-ying" "happens not so much in the work as in a space that the work sets up; not in the words or images or objects evoked, but between them."⁶³ By the same token, the plum blossom evoked by the allusive images in "Shu-ying" is an epiphanic object. Indeterminate as it is, it stands out in its full opacity to frame an epiphanic space; the very disruption and tension in what is evoked sets up a space so that the interspatial epiphany comes through presentation.⁶⁴

Chiang K'uei's experiments with the poetic idiom and form in *yung-wu tz'u* has a profound impact on the later development, shifting *tz'u* poems on objects from the external, referential layer of reality to an inner, abstract depth. His systematic use of allusion as a symbol of multifarious import rather than a sign of unitary reference would come to characterize the *yung-wu tz'u* from the later Southern Sung period. In 1279, the year the Southern Sung Dynasty was toppled by the invading Mongols, fourteen poets gathered to condemn the looting of the Sung imperial tombs and mourn over the desecration of the bodies of the late Sung emperors. Using allusive language in the reflexive mode exemplified by Chiang K'uei's "Shu-ying," the poets expressed their finely nuanced feelings about the personal and

cultural disasters in their poems focusing on five objects respectively.⁶⁵ The *yung-wu* subgenre thus reached its final stage of transformation, from an idiom of limited capacity and scope to a versatile vehicle well-adapted to articulating manifold inner experience, integrating the past and present, the personal and cultural, the mythic and historical.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CST Ch'üan Sung-t'zu 全宋詞

⁶² See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1989), pp. 47-76.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 477.

⁶⁵ This is not to say that the late Southern Sung *yung-wu* poems stylistically copy "Shu-ying." Further stylistic variations take place in the later poetry. For a discussion of this later group of *yung-wu* poems, see K'ang-i Sun Chang, "Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the *T'ieh-fu pu-t'i* Poem Series," *HJAS* 46, (2, 1986), 353-85. See also Chia-ying Yeh Chao, "On Wang I-sun and His *Yung-wu Tz'u*," *HJAS* 40 (1980), 55-91.