THE IMAGERY IN LI HO'S POETRY

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摘　要

李賀之詩作深受楚辭影響，呈現出與楚辭類似之時空意識。本文即以此爲出發點，探討李賀詩中意象之奇。全文重點如下：

一、楚辭中之世界實爲一超越空間，但仍受時間控制之世界；李賀詩中之世界亦然。

二、因無空間限制，李賀選取意象之範疇十分廣闊：選自自然界與超自然界之意象並陳，顯得十分繁富與奇特；但所有意象均受同一時間規律控制。

三、李賀處理意象之方法有三，均受其時空觀念影響：(1)加强超自然意象之具體性；(2)擴大自然意象之語意範圍；(3)給予各種意象動感。

Li Ho 李賀(791－817)，styled Ch'ang－chi 長吉，is a unique figure in Chinese poetic tradition.[1] He died young——at the age of twenty－seven by Chinese reckoning——but left behind him a corpus of verse which has continually fascinated as well as puzzled poetry lovers.[2] A weird, exotic, and even unearthly quality is always manifest in Li Ho's poetry. For one thing, the imagery Li Ho uses usually impresses one as odd and strange. Some literary critics attribute this "strangeness" to Li Ho's obsession with death;[3] others explain it through Li Ho's special interest in heavy and metallic matters.[4] But none can really satisfactorily account for it. The present paper attempts to approach the problem from a different angle: it tries to analyze the "strangeness" of Li Ho's imagery in terms of Li Ho's sense of time and space which, by its very nature, is directly derived from *Ch'u Tz'u* 楚辭(The *Songs of Ch'u*).

The influence of *Ch'u Tz'u* on Li Ho's poetic imagination is evident. Li Ho himself makes it clear in his poems that he tries hard to imitate *Ch'u Tz'u*; for example, "Mournfully chanting, I study the sighs of Ch'u" （因因學楚吟）;[5] "The *Songs of Ch'u* are piled up behind elbows"(楚辭繫肘後，p. 111); and "I hack away at their green lustre to inscribe my *Sons of Ch'u*" (斫取青光寫楚辭，p. 89). Examples such as these are indeed many in Li Ho's poems.[6]

Literary critics of course never fail to notice this indebtedness. Tu Mu 杜牧(803-852), a famous T'ang poet who wrote a preface for the first edition of Li Ho's collected poems, has observed, " [Li Ho] is in the tradition of the *Li Sao.* Even though he does not come up to it in high seriousness, he sometimes surpasses it in expression"(蓋騷之苗裔，理雖不及，辭或過之).[7] Tu Mu's view has been generally endorsed by later critics whenever they talk about the sources from which Li Ho draws his inspiration.[8] But strangely enough, they all just give it a passing mention without going deeper to probe into the nature as well as dimension of Li Ho's indebtedness to *Ch'u Tz'u*. We propose here that what Li Ho owes most to *Ch'u Tz'u* is his concept of time and space: Li Ho learns the concept from *Ch'u Tz'u* and expresses it unmistakably in his poetry. Let us first take a look at the concept of time and space as shown in *Ch'u Tz'u.*

A recurrent theme in *Ch'u Tz'u* is one of journey, or in David Hawkes's phrase, of "itineraria."[9] But the journey in *Ch'u Tz'u* is of no ordinary kind. It is often made by the poet or a shaman going from the actual world to the imaginary, or from the human society to one inhabited by supernatural beings or shamanistic deities. In a journey of this nature, the limit of space is in effect broken, and things which cannot coexist are brought together.

Every journey takes time; so does the journey in *Ch'u Tz'u*, even though it is an imaginary one. Let us have a glimpse of Ch'ü Yüan's 屈原(ca. 340B.C.-278B.C.) journey to the imaginary world of the supernatural:

> In the morning I started on my way from Ts'ang-wu;
> In the evening I came to the Garden of Paradise.
> I wanted to stay a while in those fairy precincts,
> But the swift-moving sun was dipping to the west.[10]
> 朝發軔於蒼梧兮，夕余至乎縣圃。
> 欲少留此靈瑣兮，日忽忽其將暮。

Here, the phrases "in the morning" and "in the evening" definitely signal a passage of time. Moreover, as the last two lines indicate, time plays a role in the "fairy precincts" as important as the role it plays in the actual world: it marches forward and waits for no one, human or supernatural. Thus the human world and the supernatural world, however different in appearance they may be, show similar living patterns, because the inhabitants of both are ruled under the same law of time. Chen Shih-hsiung 陳世驤 has observed:

> ...the Chinese cosmos for Ch'ü Yüan wears a completely human and naturalistic cast. Even his supernatural world is but an extension or reflection of the natural and human, all subsumed under human subjective temporality. Neither God nor the Fates could dominate any part of the drama, but the stream of Time does.[11]

In a word, the cosmos manifested in *Ch'u* Tz'u is space-transcending but time-bound. Li Ho has unmistakably inherited this sense of time and space. On the one hand, his poems are populated with beings from both the human world and the supernatural, which form a cosmos similar to that of *Ch'u Tz'u*; on the other, the all-ruling time makes his cosmos also wear "a completely human and naturalistic cast." In his cosmos all beings, human or supernatural, animate or inanimate, show up, live actively, and die inevitably. This sense of time and space, to be sure, will exert great influence on Li Ho's use of imagery. The following is an analysis of Li Ho's imagery in relation to his sense of time and space. Attention will be focused mainly on the so-called simple imagery.[12]

Li Ho's sense of time and space has an essential bearing on the range of his image selection. He seems to have kept a larger reservoir of imagery exclusively for his own use——larger in the sense that it contains much more things than those used by other poets. The images that fill the pages of most great T'ang poets are primarily drawn from nature: ordinary or splendid natural views, plants, flowers, animals, and the simple way of life.[13] But with Li Ho, the situation is different. Li Ho's cosmos, as has been indicated, is composed of the world of actuality as well as an imaginary world of the supernatural; therefore side by side with the images we usually find in T'ang poetry are those which will strike one as "strange." To illustrate this point, an example from Li Ho's poems is needed:

Wildly Singing

The south wind has blown away the mountains, making level land,
In the Sovereign's service, T'ien Wu has shifted the sea waters.
When the Queen Mother's peach-blossoms a thousandth time redden,
How many deaths will P'eng Tsu and Wu Hsien have died ?
The dark hair of my piebald horse form a pattern of diverse circles,
Tender spring willows cradle the fine mist,

A guitar player coaxes me with a gold – handled goblet,
Before this spirit and blood congealed, whose was this body ?
No need for stormy drinking, Governor Ting!
In our age the most talented men are truly without patrons.
If we buy silk, let's embroider a portrait of the Lord of P'ing – yüan,
When we have wine, we should only pour libations on the soil of Chao.
Quickening drops of the water–clock choke the jade moon–toad,
The Wei maiden's hair thins, unable to support her comb.
Autumn eyebrows are dabed with a new tinge of green,
Why this striving and constraining of young men at twenty ? [14]

浩歌

南風吹山作平地，帝遣天吳移海水。
王母桃花千遍紅，彭祖巫咸幾回死。
青毛驄馬參差錢，嬌春楊柳含細烟。
箏人勸我金屈巵，神血未凝身問誰。
不須浪飲丁都護，世上英雄本無主。
買絲綉作平原君，有酒唯澆趙州土。
漏催水咽玉蟾蜍，衛娘髮薄不勝梳。
看見秋眉換新綠，二十男兒那刺促。

(pp.54 – 55)

This poem is characteristic of Li Ho's style——the so – called Ch'ang – chi style 長吉體.[15] The title of the poem is another indication of Li Ho's indebtedness to *Ch'u Tz'u*: it is borrowed from "Shao ssu ming"少司命, one of the nine songs (*Chiu Ko* 九歌) written in the *Ch'u Tz'u* genre. "Shao ssu ming" describes a shaman uttering his invocatory prayer to the god of fate. He invites the god to appear before him and bestow upon him favors. All his efforts, however, turn out to be vain: "I watch for the Fair One, but he does not come,/ Wildly I shout my song into the wind" (望美人兮未來，臨風怳兮浩歌) .[16] Like the shaman, Li Ho must have felt that he was unfavored by fate; therefore, like the shaman again, he expressed his frustrated desire through "Wildly singing." Yet his song is much more sophisticated than the shaman's: he sarcastically comments on the vain attempts of human beings to secure fame and positions, and ponders over the power of time that renders all human

efforts futile.

The images that Li Ho uses to support and vivify such a theme are certainly striking: they demonstrate adequately his image–selection range which encompasses both the actual world and the imaginary world of the supernatural. In the first couplet, the poet immediately steps, and also makes the reader step, into a world of wonder. We find mountains, winds, and sea waters in this world; but they are all beyond ordinary human experience. The mountains are blown flat, "making level land," and the sea waters are shifted from one place to another. The appearance of the mythological figure, T'ien Wu,[17] who undertakes the job to shift the sea waters, puts the tremendous change of natural phenomena entirely on the supernatural level. This supernatural note is greatly heightened in the next couplet by the introduction of more mythological beings: the peaches of the "Queen Mother," which are said to ripen once every three thousand years,[18] and the two legendary figures usually associated with longevity if not immortality, P'eng Tsu and Wu Hsien.[19] All these fabulous happenings and figures serve in the poem as images of time. Time is measured here on an immensely large scale——by the wearing down of mountains, the shifting of sea waters, the ripening of the peaches of the "Queen Mother," and the deaths of men of longevity.

With the third and fourth couplets, we return to the actual world where the poet is having a picnic and drinking wine with friends. Now we have a new set of images: the black–haired and piebald horse, "The tender spring willows," "the fine mist," and "the gold–handled goblet." Compared with those in the first and second couplets, these images seem more familiar and less striking to us; they are the kind of images that we may amply find in ordinary T'ant poetry. They are all derived from common and natural scenes, and serve to build up an atmosphere of leisure life.

The last line of the fourth couplet marks a shift of tone. At the moment when the poet is drinking and enjoying the beauty of nature with friends, he asks a startling question: "Before this spirit and blood congealed, whose was this body ? " He is here concerned with his frustration in gaining favors from men in power. He seems to ask himself: before death takes over my life, where can I find a patron who will appreciate my talent and bestow upon me favors ? This question moves the poet directly into a general reflection upon the human striving for success, which is dealt with in the last four couplets. The

images that appear in the reflection of the poet are predominantly historical. Since in his own age, "the most talented men are truly without patrons," the poet longs for the time when the great patron of talented men in history, the Lord of P'ing-yüan, lived.[20] The actions of embroidering the portrait of this lord, and pouring libation on his hometown Chao become vivid images for the poet's reverence to a lost memument of patronage.

But the Lord of P'ing-yüan passes soon into history, and there is little time for talented men like the poet to wait for another great patron to appear. It is again time that is at issue. We have seen at the beginning that time is measured by the great change of natural phenomena and supernatural beings; we now see it measured on a much smaller scale——by the "quickening drops of the water-clock," the hair of a historical beauty turning thin,[21] and the seasonal change such as summer being replaced by autumn. The strong sense of change set forth at the beginning of the poem is taken up again at the end. All things, supernatural, natural, and human, are undergoing a continuous and quick process of change with time; in consequence, all sorts of existence are merely transitory. If this is the case, what is the use of the "young men at twenty" striving for success ? Success, as a sort of existence, can never last long because time will change it and reduce it to oblivion.

The images Li Ho uses, as demonstrated above, are indeed varied. They are drawn from different sources and put together in juxtaposition to form a strange picture which forcefully catches the reader's attention. In writing poetry, Li Ho frequently allows his imagination to soar high to search for beings residing in remote mythical realm or Toaist paradise. He sometimes even invites ghosts, witches, or mountain demons to haunt his pages; for example,

> By an autumn grave a ghost sits chanting the poems of Pao's,
> A thousand years in earth makes emerald jade that rancorous blood.
> 秋墳鬼唱鮑家詩，恨血千年土中碧 (p.55)
> When mountain-goblins come to eat, men are breathless and hushed.
> 山魅食時人森寒 (p.151)
> A ghost mother wails loudly in the autumn wild.
> 嗷嗷鬼母秋郊哭 (p.44)

The range of Li Ho's image selection reaches far beyond the world of actuality; thus nothing is impossible in his poems. It seems appropriate to say

that the cosmos as shown in Li Ho's poems, like that in *Ch'u Tz'u*, is indeed space – transcending. Equipped with such a cosmos, Li Ho has virtually become a mystic who always keeps one eye open to the things between heaven and earth, and the other to those beyond heaven and earth. This double vision undoubtedly enables him to have an image – selection range wider than the poets who draw images primarily from the world of actuality.

In addition to the wide range of image selection, Li Ho has a particular way to handle his imagery. This particular way gives his imagery a special outlook, which accounts partly for the impression of "strangeness" that his imagery makes on the reader. In dealing with the images taken from different worlds, Li Ho tends to render his supernatural images in vividly concrete terms, to extend the semantic domains of his natural images, and to give all his images, supernatural or natural, a dynamism which makes them wear "a completely human and naturalistic cast." All these characteristics are more or less revealed in the poem below:

Li P'ing at the Vertical Harp

1 Silk from Wu, paulownia from Shu,
Open high autumn.
2 Congealed clouds around empty mountains
Falling, not floating.
3 Ladies of the River weeping among bamboos,
The White Girl mournful;
4 Such is Li P'ing playing his harp
In the Middle Kingdom.
5 Jade from Mount K'un is shattered,
Phoenixes shriek.
6 Lotuses are weeping dew,
Fragrant orchids smile.
7 Before the twelve gates of the city
The cold light melts.
8 The twenty – three strings have power to move
The Purple King.
9 The goddess Nu Kua smelts her stones
To weld the sky.

10 Stones split asunder, the sky startles,
Autumn rains gush forth.
11 He goes in dreams to the Magic Mountain
To teach the old goddess.
12 Old fishes leap above the waves,
Gaunt dragons dance.
13 Even Wu Kang, unsleeping still,
Leans on his cassia tree,
14 While wing – foot dew drifts wetly
Over the cold hare.[22]

李憑箜篌引

吳絲蜀桐張高秋，空山凝雲頹不流。
江娥啼竹素女愁，李憑中國彈箜篌。
崑山玉碎鳳凰叫，芙蓉泣露香蘭笑。
十二門前融冷光，二十三絲動紫皇。
女媧煉石補天處，石破天驚逗秋雨。
夢入神山教神嫗，老魚跳波瘦蛟舞。
吳質不眠倚桂樹，露脚斜飛濕寒兔。

(pp.35-36)

Like "Wildly Singing," this is a poem typical of the Ch'ang – chi style. The wide range of image – selection which we have discussed above is evident in the poem. In describing music, Li Ho travels back and forth in a flash of imagination.[23] And in so doing, he draws images from both. We have natural things such as mountains, clouds, and flowers on the one hand, and a host of supernatural beings like mythical personages, fabulous happenings, and a close view of the moon on the other. But more impressive than this is the outlook the images demonstrate: they are so vivid and striking that one is left with the impression that they are alive, moving or acting before one's eyes. How can Li Ho accomplish such a feat ?

First, he renders his supernatural images in concrete terms. Supernatural objects, as they come from human conceptions, are relatively vague in evoking perceptive impressions. For instance, it is hard to decide what kind of sensory responses one may have with a supernatural image such as a dragon, a ghost, or an immortal, because we have not actually seen one in our experience. To

overcome this vagueness, Li Ho frequently resorts to qualitative modifiers for vivid presentation, and the usual method is to bring the visual effect into focus. In the poem quoted above we have an image "gaunt dragon" (瘦蛟，line 12). The adjective "gaunt" is a visual quality, specifying the shape of the dragon. A "gaunt" dragon is certainly more concrete than a dragon without any qualifications.

Let us consider for a moment another image in the quoted poem: the "purple king" (line 8). This term refers to the second of the three foremost rulers in heaven——the "T'ai－huang"太皇，the "Tzu－huang" 紫皇(the purle king), and the "Yü－huang" 玉皇.[24] Why does Li Ho choose the second instead of the first or the third ? Some critics assert that the choice implies Li Ho's reserved attitude toward Li P'ing's music——it is good but not perfect, for it fails to move the highest of the three rulers in heaven.[25] This is of course a far －fatched guess. We do not know exactly why Li Ho chooses the second rather than the other two, but the word "tzu" (purple) may have some bearing on his choice. The color manifested on "Tzu－huang" qualifies the term more as a concrete image than the other two. It may be asked that the word "yü" (meaning "jade" or "white") in "Yü－huang" can also designate color; why does Li Ho not choose it? A possible explanation for this is that "Yü-huang" is a term frequently cited in Chinese society; its visual appeal thus becomes vague, at least, vaguer than the term "Tzu－huang."

In fact, Li Ho is noted for his interest in colors. In talking about Li Ho's "evocative use of colour to symbolize emotion," Frodsham has pointed out, "White, gold, silver, black, red, green, yellow, blue－green, emerald, vermilion, scarlet, purple, turquoise and cinnabar run riot through his work."[26] With all these colors, Li Ho's supernatural world turns out to be something like Walt Disney's "wonderful world of colors," in which we can see "Colorful dragons coil and writhe up to the purple clouds" (花龍盤盤上紫雲，p.136), "The blue lion kowtows and calls to the palace spirits" (青霓扣額呼宮神，p.48), or "A white fox barking at the moon calls out the mountain wind" (白狐向月號山風，p.157). As visual appeals, the colors painted on Li Ho's supernatural images compel the reader to accept them as vividly real.

But equally, if not more, vivid are those supernatural images strongly tinged with Li Ho's sense of time and space. Note that in the quoted poem the goddess in the magic mountain (line 11) and the fishes leaping above the

waves (line 12) are both "old"; and the hare in the moon is "cold" (line 14). The word "old" definitely indicates time, while "cold," as a word traditionally associated with loneliness, hints at space——the hare is "cold" owing to its living in a space far from the warmth of human world. Examples of this kind can be found throughout Li Ho's poems:

The old hare and the cold toad weep sky tears.

老兔寒蟾泣天色　(p.46)

Old cassia on the mountain top blow old scent.

山頭老桂吹古香　(p.56)

In the cold night among waves an old dragon roars.

凉夜波間吟古龍　(p.60)

The blue racoon weeps blood and the cold fox dies.

青狸哭血寒狐死　(p.150)

All these examples testify to what we have proposed before: Li Ho's supernatural world, like that in *Ch'u Tz'u*, though space-transcending, is nevertheless time-bound. Specified by this sense of time and space, these images immediately become vivid.

In dealing with the images drawn from the natural world, Li Ho adopts a different strategy: he tries to make them vivid by extending their semantic domains. Let us take a line from the poem quoted above as an example:

Congealed clouds around empty mountains

Falling, not floating.

空山凝雲頽不流

The images "congealed clouds" (凝雲) and "empty mountains" (空山) merit careful consideration. Generally speaking, the function of the modifying words ——adjectives or nouns——is to make the modified objects more vividly concrete by specifying or intensifying certain qualities pertaining to the objects referred to.[27] For instance, in phrases that often appear in Chinese poetry such as "green mountains" (青山), "snow peaks" (雪峰), "floating clouds" (浮雲), and "long rivers" (長河), the modifying words are all qualities usually associated with the modified objects. Their appearance makes the objects more concrete. But in the case of "congealed clouds" and "empty mountains," we will be hesitating to take it for granted that "congealed" and "empty" are qualities pertaining respectively to clouds and mountains, and thus make the two objects more concrete.

We will be startled, at least for a moment, by the terms, and try to figure out what they really mean. This may be exactly what Li Ho wants his readers to do——to be startled and to think. We are startled because the semantic domains of the two objects have been extended—— "mountains" change from a concrete existence to something abstract, and "clouds" from a watery vapor to something solid. perhaps, Li Ho's use of "congealed clouds" and "empty mountains" might not seem very strange to some sophisticated readers, because "empty mountains" has been used by other poets——for example, by Wang Wei 王維 (699－759) in his line "empty mountains without a man seen" (空山不見人) ——and the phenomenon of watery vapor changing into solid state is not an unusual one. But these two images at least let us have a glimpse of how Li Ho tries to render natural objects into vivid images. The following is a more "strange" example:

The Southern hills, how sorrowful:
A ghostly rain sprinkles the empty grass.
南山何其悲，鬼雨灑空草 (p.96)

"The Southern hills" refers to Mount Chungnan 終南山, located on the southern outskirts of the city Ch'ang－an 長安. Li Ho is here describing the atmosphere of the graveyard area on the hills. Rain and grass in this couplet are certainly familiar natural objects, but the two modifiers—a noun "ghost" (鬼) serving as an adjective, and an adjective "empty" (空) ——certainly have nothing to do with the qualities usually associated with rain and grass. In other words, the quality indicators "ghost" and "empty" do not fulfill their proper function of specification or intensification; instead, they extend the semantic domains of rain and grass from the usual to the exotic. In one sense, the concreteness——after all rain and grass are concrete objects one often finds in the natural world－－of the two objects suffers impediment; but in another sense, the two images "ghostly rain" and "empty grass" become striking, and they immediately catch the reader's eyes because this metaphorical extension has put them into the foreground. Thus the effect Li Ho wants to convey——possibly the unusual and exotic sorrow pervading on the graveyard——is properly brought out by these two images.[28]

This extension of semantic domains may account for another type of images we often find in Li Ho's poetry. It is the so－called synaesthetic image, which consists of two different sense appeals. In the poem quoted above, we

may find an image of this type in line 7: "Before the twelve gates of the city, the cold light melts" (十二門前融冷光). The image "cold light" refers to the moonlight shining over the gates of Ch'angan city in a cold autumn night. "Light" is a visual appeal, while "cold" is a tactile quality. By combining them together, the visual appeal of "light" is extended to cover tactile quality. Furthermors the visual and tactile appeals of the image "cold light" are greatly intensified by the word "melt" (融). The image seems to compel us to see or feel it. Synaesthetic images run throughout Li Ho's poems; let us have two more examples:

In the stony ravines frozen is the sound of lapping waves.

石澗凍波聲 (p.133)

Cold reds weep dew with graceful crying color.

冷紅泣露嬌啼色 (p.80).

In the first line, the auditory image "the sound of lapping waves" (波聲) is extended to take on tactile quality by the modifier "frozen" (凍). In the second line, the visual appeal "color" (色) is extended to cover auditory quality by the modifier "crying" (啼). How can the sound of waves be frozen, and how can a color cry? One would ask. To answer these questions, the readers have to sharpen their senses and use their imagination. This is exactly why the two images are striking: they demand intellectual as well sensory participations from the readers.

Some critics of Li Ho have pointed out his fondness for kennings,[29] but seldom do they notice that most of Li Ho's kennings involve extensions of semantic domain. In Li Ho's poems, a kenning is usually formed by two components, selected for their strong perceptive appeals.[30] The term "cold reds" (冷紅) in the second example cited above is a case in point. This term, being a kenning for flowers, consists of two components. The first one "cold" is a tactile quality and the second one "red" a visual appeal. The two words, when put together, assume a new meaning: flower. Now consider the kennings in the following lines:

Slender greens and *round reds.*

細綠又團紅 (p.127)

Sweet dew washes the *empty greens.*

甘露洗空綠 (p.50)

What hungry beetles would not eat piles up in *broken yellows.*

飢虫不食摧碎黃　(p.85)

Flying fragrance, running reds——It seems spring fills the sky.

飛香走紅滿天春　(p.136)

The second components of the italicized kennings are apparently picked up for their perceptive appeals——"red" stands for flowers, "green" for grass, "yellow" for wood, and "fragrance" also for flowers. But the first components in the modifying positions always specify qualities not usually associated with such perceptive appeals. "Red," "green," and "yellow" are not shapes but colors, therefore they cannot be "slender," "round," "empty" or "broken." Nor are "red" and "fragrance" animate objects; they cannot actually "run" or "fly." By yoking together two incompatible words, such as "slender"and "green," Li Ho is able to create an image that retains the meanings of its components and, more importantly, extends to gain new semantic dimension. "Slender green" is thus created, which represents a kind of *gras*s that is both *slender* and *green.*

Li Ho's natural objects, as seen from the images discussed above, are not exactly the ones we usually find in nature. They seem to be distorted, misplaced, and different from those we encounter in experience. To appreciate them always requires imagination. The reason is that, while Li Ho tends to render his imaginary world of the supernatural in concrete terms, he tries not to be so concrete in dealing with natural objects. As a result, the boundary between what is imaginary and what is real becomes somewhat blurred. But this is not to say that Li Ho's natural world is not real; it is as vividly real as his imaginary world——real to the senses.

The third method Li Ho employs to handle his images is to give them an air of dynamism. The notion of dynamism implies action, which in turn points to the function of verbs. In the quoted poem, as we can see, almost every image is followed by a verb, and every verb specifies an action. The agents that the images refer to, natural or supernatural, are moved by Li P'ing's music into perceptible actions——weeping, shrieking, smiling, dancing, etc. It seems that no action appears in lines 2, 13, and 14, but in fact these lines imply even greater actions: the agents are moved to stop doing what they were supposed to do——the floating clouds stop floating, the sleepy Wu Kang forgets his sleepiness, and the hare is charmed by the music to the extent of being unaware of the wetting dew.[31]

The actions in Li Ho's poems usually function to activate the images and

thus make them more specific and vivid. Take lines 5 and 6 from the quoted poem for example:

Jade from Mount K'un is shattered,
Phoenixes shriek.
Lotuses are weeping dew,
Fragrant orchids smile.
崐山玉碎鳳凰叫，芙蓉泣露香蘭笑。

We have four images here——"jade from Mout K'un," "phoenix," "lotus," and "fragrant orchid." As isolated images, they all represent certain qualities usually associated with them. But qualities tend to be general or universal; unless they show certain actions at a certain time, they will not have any specific reference. A phoenix is a kind of mythical birds with certain qualities that appeal to our senses; but when a phoenix shrieks at the time when Li P'ing plays his music, the phoenix becomes specific, and different from other mythical birds that possess the same qualities as it does. Likewise, the actions of shattering（碎）, weeping dew（泣露）, and smiling（笑）, taking place at the time when Li P'ing plays his music, make "jade from Mount K'un," "lotus," and "fragrant orchid" different from their kinds, and thus more specific than their kinds.

An action can be normal or weird, mild or violent. When specified by a weird and violent action, an image shows stronger dynamism than it does by a normal and mild action. To shatter a precious stone like the "jade from Mount K'un" will not startle us because the action is normally conceivable. To see a lotus weep or an orchid smile, however, is relatively startling for such an action is beyond our experience. Line 10 of the quoted poem contains several violent actions: "Stones split asunder, the sky startles, autumn rains gush forth"（石破天驚逗秋雨）. These violent actions——"split asunder," "startle," and "gush forth"[32]——make the images "stone," "sky," and "autumn rain" come alive. We feel that a sense of dynamism forces them upon us. Now consider the following lines:

Brandished swords will not pierce the foggy sky.
揮刀不入迷濛天 (p.148)
Hsi Ho whips the sun that tinkles like glass.
羲和敲日玻黎聲 (p.56)

In the first example, the image "foggy sky"（迷濛天）would be a rather

ordinary image if it were not activated by the extraordinary action of using swords to pierce the fog. The weird action makes us feel the thickness of the fog. The second example is actually a strange and impressive dramatic performance: Hsi Ho, the charioteer of the sun,[33] is whipping the sun as if it were a glass; and more strangely, the sun really tinkles.

Indeed, the poems of Li Ho, especially those of the so-called Ch'ang-chi style, are always dramatic because there are always actions involved. The actors——supernatural figures, natural objects, and human beings, which constitute the reservoir of Li Ho's imagery——always act and interact: "I call to the dragon to plough the mist and plant the jasper herb" (呼龍耕烟種瑶草，p.54), and "Drunk, I order the moon to course backward" (酒酣呼月使倒行，p.57). These situations remind us of certain lines of similar nature in *Ch'u Tz'u*, such as:

> I ride a dragon car and chariot on the thunder,
> With cloud-banners fluttering upon the wind.
> 駕龍輈兮乘雷，載雲旗兮委蛇。
> Then, beckoning the water-dragon to make a bridge for me,
> I summoned the God of the West to take me over.
> 麾蛟龍使津梁兮，詔西皇使涉予。[34]

But the drama manifested in Li Ho's poems, like that in *Ch'u Tz'u*, is basically a human drama. The actors, though transcending the limit of space, is still time-bound. Under the domination of time, all of them show similar life pattern——the pattern we consider as human——they live, change, and die:

> The owl a hundred years old, which changed to a goblin of the trees,
> Hears the sound of laughter as green flames start up inside its nest.
> 百年老鴞成木魅，笑聲碧火巢中起 (p.151)
> Withering orchids escort me along the Hsien-yang road:
> If heaven too had passions, even heaven would grow old.
> 衰蘭送客咸陽道，天若有情天亦老 (p.67)
> The Yellow River's ice closes, fish and dragons die.
> 黃河冰合魚龍死 (p.148)
> How many times have the immortals been buried in heaven ?
> 幾回天上葬神仙 (p.166)

It is precisely this anthropomorphous manifestation on Li Ho's heterogeneous stage that makes his imagery seem "strange." But Li Ho does not invent

it by himself; he learns it from *Ch'u Tz'u*, and reveals it in most of his characteristic poems.

Notes

1. Li Shang-yin 李商隱(812-858), a celebrated T'ang poet, has written a short biography of Li Ho entitled "Li Ch'ang-chi hsiao-chuan" 李長吉小傳 in which Li Ho is described as a frustrated man with "prodigious talent"(chi-ts'ai 奇才); see *San chia p'ing-chu Li Ch'ang-chi ko shih* 三家評註李長吉歌詩(Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959), pp. 12-13. Li Ho's official biographies can be found in *Chiu T'ang shu* 舊唐書(*po-na* ed.), 137. 8 a, and *Hsin T'ang shu* 新唐書(*po-na* ed.), 203. 7b. The former is very brief, containing only a few bare historical accounts about Li Ho; the latter is richer in details because it has incorporated almost all the material found in Li Shang-yin's work. For English equivalents of these two biographies, see J. D. Frodsham's introduction to his English translation of Li Ho's poems, *The Poem of Li Ho 791-817* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. xv-xvi. The introduction itself is a comprehensive account of Li Ho's life and works, in which the uniqueness of Li Ho has been discussed.

2. In this respect, Li Ho reminds one of John Keats who also produced many poems of unique quality before his death at the age of 26. For a comparative study of the two poets, see David Y. Chen, "Li Ho and Keats: Poverty, Illness, Frustration and a Poetic Career,"*Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 清華學報，New Series 6 (1965): 67-84.

3. The word "death" appears in Li Ho's poems with high frequency; much more are those indirectly hinting at "death," such as "grave," "ghost," "blood,"etc., which usually serve as images. In discussing Li Ho's style, Frodsham observes, "On an average there are three expressions concerned with death or unhappiness in every poem......During T'ang the weird tale or ghost story (*ch'uan-ch'i*) enjoyed a great vogue; but these stories are certainly not obsessed with death and decay as is Ho's verse" (pp. xxxix-xl).

4. Cf. Ch'ien Chung-shu 錢鍾書, *T'an yi lu* 談藝錄(Hong Kong: Lung-men Book Co., 1965), pp. 57-58.

5. See *San chia p'ing-chu Li Ch'ang-chi ko shih*, p. 77. This book includes notes of Li Ho's poems made by Wang Ch'i 王琦(preface 1760), Fang Shih-chü 方世舉(preface 1751), and Yao Wen-hsieh 姚文燮(preface 1657). It will be cited throughout, and further references to it appear in the text.

6. Chu Chün-i 朱君億 has singled out from Li Ho's poems almost all the lines that show traces of influence from *Ch'u Tz'u*; see his "Li Ch'ang-chi ko-shih yüan-liu chü-ou"李長吉歌詩源流舉偶 in *Tung-fan Magazine* 東方雜誌 5.ll (1972): 55-57.

7. Tu Mu, "Li Ch'ang-chi ko-shih hsu" 李長吉歌詩敘，in *San chia p'ing-chu Li Ch'ang-chi ko shih*, p.12.

8. This view runs through the sixty short criticisms on Li Ho's poetry made by traditional chinese scholars; see Ch'en Hung-chih 陳弘治，*Li Ch'ang-chi ko-shih chiao-shih* 李長吉歌詩校釋(Taipei: Chia-hsin Cultural Foundation, 1969), pp. 380-85.

9. David Hawkes classifies the content of *Ch'u Tz'u* into two main categories: one is "tristia," which expresses the poet's sorrow, and the other is "itineraria," which describes the poet's journeys; for detail, see "The Ouest of the Goddess," in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, ed. Cyril Birch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 42-68. Li Ho is influenced by both. The impact of the latter shows clearly in his characteristic poems——this is just the point we intend to prove in this study.

10. *Li Sao* 離騷，in *Ch'u-tz'u pu-chu* 楚辭補注(*Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* 四部叢刊 ed.; hereafter SPTK ed.), 1.27ab. The English equivalent is from David Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u*: *The Songs of the South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 28.

11. "The Genesis of Poetic Time: The Greatness of Ch'ü Yüan, Studied with a New

Critical Approach," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, New Series 10.1 (1937): 30 – 31.

12. Cf. James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 102.

13. Cf. Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 122 – 137.

14. This translation is from Michael B. Fish, "The Striving of Young Man at Twenty: Li Ho's Poem Wildly Singing," in *Critical Essays on Chinese Literature*, ed. William H. Niennhauser, Jr. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University, 1976), p.65.

15. The term Ch'ang – chi style is rather vague; it usually refers to some, not all, of Li Ho's poems, which contain unconventional syntax and imagery; cf. Chou Ch'eng – chen 周誠真, *Li Ho lun* 李賀論(Hong Kong: Wen – i shu – wu, 1971), pp. 208 – 215.

16. "Shao ssu ming," in *Ch'u – tz'u pu – chu*, 2.20ab; the English translation is from Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South*, P.41.

17. T'ien Wu, according to *Shan hai ching* 山海經(SPTK ed.), 9. 46b, is a monster with eight heads, human faces, eight feet, eight tails, and his back is colored green and yellow; he serves as the water god (Shui Po 水伯).

18. The story about the peaches of the "Queen Mother" is found in "Han Wu – ti nei – chuan" 漢武帝內傳(*Ssu – k'u ch'üan – shu* 四庫全書 ed.; hereafter SKCS ed.), p.4a.

19. P'eng Tsu is said to have lived for about 800 years, and become an immortal after he died; for details, see Ko Hung 葛洪(284 – 363), *Shen – hsien chuan* 神仙傳(SKCS ed.), 1.3a – 8 a. Wu Hsien was a shaman in ancient times, and was usually associated with prophecy and immortality; see *Shan hai ching*, 7.42a, and *Li Sao*, 1.38a.

20. The Lord of P'ing – yüan is recorded as a noble prince famous for his patronizing talented men; for his biography, see *Shih chi* 史記(po – na ed.), 76.1a – 6a.

21. The reference to the wei maiden (Wei niang 衛娘) is rather vague: she might be the queen of Han Wu – ti or an ordinary beauty that Li Ho knew. Wang Ch'i is in favor of the latter explanation (p.55).

22. Frodsham's translatioin (pp. 10 – 11). We have made some revisions on it in order to bring up clearly the interpretations of certain phrases or lines that we propose.

23. In this respect, this poem can be compared with Samuel T. Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" in which the tremendous power of music to arouse human imagination is rendered. Yu Kwang – chung 余光中 has made a tentative comparison of these two poems; see his "Hsiang – ya – t'a tao pai – yü lou "象牙塔到白玉樓 in *Hsiao yao yiu* 消遙遊(Taipei: Wen – hsin Book Co., 1965), pp.87 – 88.

24. See *T'ai – p'ing yü lan* 太平御覽(SPTK ed.), 659.3a.

25. Cf. Chou Ch'eng – chen, p.31.

26. Frodsham, p. lviii.

27. Cf. Kao Yu – kung and Mei Tsu – lin 高友工，梅祖麟，"Syntax, Diction, and Imagery in T'ang Poetry, "*Harvard Journal of Asiastic Studies* 31 (1971): 69 – 79.

28. Cheng ch'ien 鄭騫 has made an excellent discussioin of the poem in which these two images appear; see his "Li Ho kan – feng – shih ti – san – shou chi ch'i ying – i" 李賀感諷詩第三首及其英譯, *Modern Literature* 現代文學 33(1967): 29 – 33.

29. For example, Yu Kwang – chung, p.92 – 93.

30. For the use of kennings in Chinese poetry, see James J. Y. Liu, pp. 115 – 117. Liu does not really use the word "kenning" but he is actually discussing it in his treatment of the substitution and transference of imagery.

31. Wu Kang 吳剛 or Wu Chih 吳質 is said to be an immortal in the moon where he must try forever to cut down a cassia tree growing there; the tree re – assumes its original shape the next morning, and Wu Kang has to re – assume his work too. See Tuan Ch'eng – shih 段成式(d.863), *Yiu Yang tsa – tsu* 酉陽雜俎(SPTK ed.), *Ch'ien chi* 前集，1.8b. It is also believed that in the moon there is a hare always pestling herb for making medicine. Ch'ü Yüan refers to the hare in the moon in his *T'ien Wen* 天問; see *Ch'u – tz'u pu – chu*, 3.5a.

32. Yao K'o 姚克 believes that the verb 逗 should mean "stop short," and he translates "逗秋雨"as "autumn rain in mid air stops short." If Yao is right, the action of the autumn rain is even more violent and startling than "gush forth." See Yao K'o, "Li Ho ko-shih san－lun"李賀歌詩散論, *Shih Hsüeh* 詩學 2 (1976):189—192.

33. Hsi Ho first appears in *Shan hai ching* (15.71b) as the mother of ten suns, but is chiefly represented in later works as the charioteer of the sun; see, for example, *Li Sao*, 1.27b－28a.

34. Of the two quotations from *Ch'u Tz'u*, the first is from "Tung Chün"東君 in *Chiu Ko*; see *Ch'u－tz'u pu－chu*, 2.21b. The second is from *Li Sao*, 1.46b－47a. English translations are from Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South*, pp. 41, 34.