

Research on Li Shangyin Outside Mainland China Since 2010

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Abstract: In the last decade, research on Li Shangyin's poetry outside mainland China has notably shifted away from the traditional biographical interpretation method of "knowing the author's life and analyzing the work." A select few of these papers critically scrutinize the historical facts associated with Li Shangyin, unveiling fallacies in past biographical narratives and challenging the veracity of certain deeds. The majority of recent articles take a departure from the biographical approach, choosing instead to delve directly into the imagery, poetic artistic conception, and writing skills inherent in the text. These article provide in-depth analysis of the meaning and use of language, vocabulary and literary allusion. In some of them, emphasis is placed on the emotional and aesthetic value of Li Shangyin's poetry, with some scholars even regarding its "incomprehensibility" as an achievement rather than a shortcoming. In general, "what does the text of poetry express" has become an more and more important question.

Keywords: Li Shangyin, Outside Mainland China, After 2010, Obscure Poetry

1. Introduction

Li Shangyin, an eminent poet of the late Tang Dynasty, has long been a subject of intense debate and disagreement among subsequent generations of researchers. From the Northern Song Dynasty through the 20th century, assessments of Li Shangyin have undergone fluctuations that not only mirror the shifting zeitgeist but are also contingent upon the diverse aesthetic sensibilities of individuals within the same historical epoch. Remarkably, from the Qing Dynasty onwards, the commentaries on Li Shangyin's verses have witnessed a gradual proliferation, with a growing number of scholars extolling his poetic prowess. These accolades, however, extend beyond the realm of artistic expression to elevate Li Shangyin's character and morality to the status of a refined gentleman—a marked departure from contemporaneous judgments that deemed him "frivolous and incompetent." Furthermore, these scholars have approached Li Shangyin's poetry through a lens of moral and ethical scrutiny, a perspective that has significantly influenced the research and interpretation of his works throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries. Whether catering to the general public with poetry popular science readings or delving into specialized research monographs, the prevailing characterization of Li Shangyin's poetry continues to emphasize its ornate language, elusive meanings, and an overarching sense of sublimity. This evaluative tone has cast a long shadow on overseas research, shaping the trajectory of Sinology investigations that have emerged over the past decade.

To comprehend the recent advancements in Li Shangyin research, it is imperative to contextualize them within the broader landscape of previous achievements. Owing to regional disparities in Sinology research, the current focus on Li Shangyin is primarily concentrated in East Asia, Europe, and the United States. In the ensuing sections, this paper will delineate a comprehensive overview of Li Shangyin's research outside the mainland before 2010, categorized by regions, namely Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Japan, North America, and Europe.

2. Literature review

2.1. Hong Kong and Macao

As elucidated in Deng Guoguang's "Historical Narrative of Contemporary Literature Research in Hong Kong and Macao," these regions evolved into pivotal hubs for literary research during the Tang Dynasty post-1949, owing to the migration of a substantial number of literati southward. However, initial scholarly attention on Li Shangyin was relatively sparse. Between 1949 and 1969, a mere ten articles delved into Li Shangyin, predominantly offering personal interpretations of poems such as "Untitled" and "The Sad Zither," with minimal innovation or transformative insights. Notable among early contributions was Zeng Keduan's "Li Shangyin's Poems and His Style and Moral." After 1970, under the sway of Western "New Criticism" ideologies, Li Shangyin research in Hong Kong and Macao pivoted towards an intensified focus on the inherent aesthetic appeal of the text and perceptual analyses thereof. The 1990s witnessed a diversification of research approaches, yielding substantial results. Noteworthy contributions include Zheng Zibin's "Research on Li Yishan's 'Untitled' Poetry," which underscores the pivotal role of the text itself in unraveling poetic nuances. Monographs, such as Liang Xihua's "Ye Shuo The Sad Zither" and "Li Shangyin's Sadness Biography" (1993), along with Deng Zhonglong's "Translations and Annotations of Li Shangyin's Poems" (2000), have further enriched the scholarly discourse. Deng Zhonglong's work, in particular, "Translations and Annotations of Li Shangyin's Poems," has garnered considerable acclaim within the academic community for its meticulous scholarship and insightful contributions.

2.2. Taiwan

Within Fu Xuancong and Luo Liantian's "Collection of Research Treatises on Tang Dynasty Literature," spanning the years 1949 to 2000, five seminal works on Li Shangyin are highlighted. Of these, Gu Yiqun's "Critical Biography of Li Shangyin" and Yan Kunyang's "Methodology of Interpretation of Li Shangyin's Poems and Notes" stand out as particularly influential, while the remaining three by Zhang Shuxiang, Fang Yu, and Li Yixue contribute significantly to Li Shangyin scholarship. Zhang Shuxiang's "New Theory of Li Yishan's Poems," Fang Yu's "Analysis of Three Poems of the Middle and Late Tang Dynasty - Li He, Li Shangyin and Wen Tingyun," and Li Yixue's "Study on the Relationship between Li Shangyin and the Poems of 'Flowers' - with a female narrator as the 'Inspection of the Lord'" enrich the academic exploration of Li Shangyin's poetry. Furthermore, three additional papers merit attention: Huang Yongwu's "Li Shangyin's Distant Mentality," Gong Pengcheng's "Li Shangyin and Buddhism," and Lu Zhenghui's "Talking with 'boudoir resentment' works in Li Shangyin's poems and Wen Tingyun's poems and their relationship with the tradition of 'Vanilla Beauty' Relationship." Notably, the research directions of Li Yixue and Lu Zhenghui both pivot towards examining the connection between Li Shangyin's poetry and the evolution of tunes and lyrics in the late Tang Dynasty. During this period, Taiwanese scholars exploring Li Shangyin's works began to question the interpretive methods employed in Su Xuelin's "Yuxi Poetry Mysteries," specifically the approaches of "knowing people and discussing the world" and "using one's will to counter one's will." Instead, these scholars advocated for a more nuanced analysis grounded solely in the text itself, particularly when unraveling the intricacies of Li Shangyin's ambiguous and enigmatic

compositions, such as the untitled poems. They posit that delving into the author's original intention is unnecessary and even cautioned against, as it may lead to analytical deviations.

2.3. Japan

Within the Japanese Sinology community, Li Shangyin commands a considerably higher degree of attention compared to North America and Europe. Since the post-war era, a wealth of research outcomes has emerged, prominently featuring works such as Takahashi Kazumi's "Li Shangyin" and Yabuki Shigeru's "Li Shangyin and Xikun Style." Notably, Takahashi Kazumi's "Li Shangyin" meticulously selects and interprets 85 poems by Yishan, employing a micro-fiction approach to unveil the nuances of these poems and reconstruct the contextual landscape as authentically as possible. Concurrent with and subsequent to these pivotal works, a plethora of scholarly articles has arisen, including Arai Ken's "A Short Examination of Li Shangyin's Poems - Unknown Song Version" and "Reexamination of Li Yishan's Poems," which delve into the intricacies of Yishan's poem circulation. Kyoto University hosted a dedicated research class on Li Shangyin, resulting in the publication of "Li Yishan Seven-character Octave Collection" and Matsuo Yoshiki's "Li Yishan Poetry Rhyme Score." The former focuses specifically on Li Shangyin's seven-character octave. In the 1990s, Kirishima Kaoruko contributed the treatise "An Examination of the Poets of the Late Tang Dynasty—A Comparative Study of Li Shangyin, Wen Tingyun, and Du Mu." In the 21st century, Japan has witnessed a surge in works dedicated to the study of Li Shangyin, including Zhan Manjiang's "Research on Li Shangyin" and Kawago Kozo's "Chinese Love Poems - From the Book of Songs to Li Shangyin." The research scope of these publications is notably extensive, encompassing fields such as Li Shangyin's poetry, parallel prose, miscellany, and beyond.

2.4. North America

Research on Li Shangyin in North America is notably limited. Sinologist Liu Ruoyu played a pivotal role in introducing Li Shangyin and his poetry to Western readers through the book "The Poems of Li Shangyin - China's Baroque Poets of the Ninth Century." This publication marked a significant milestone as the first comprehensive study of Li Shangyin in North America. Liu Ruoyu also undertook the pioneering task of translating a substantial selection of Li Shangyin's poems. Despite these initial contributions, there has been a dearth of subsequent research on Li Shangyin in North America. Over the past few decades, the absence of monographs on Yishan poetry is striking, and scholarly papers on the subject have been scarce. During this period, only three papers authored by Ye Jiaying have emerged: "Starting from the Poetry of Li Yishan's 'Chang'e'," "New Performance of Old Poems - Li Yishan's 'Four Poems from Yantai'," and "Li Yishan's 'Ballads from the Sea' and the Landscape of Guilin and the Political Situation of that time." Ye Jiaying's articles offer targeted analyses of three specific poems by Li Shangyin, with "New Performance of Old Poems" standing out for its significance. In this particular work, Ye Jiaying sets aside Li Shangyin's realistic background, delving wholly into the text to interpret the poet's pursuit of lofty ideals, beautiful encounters, unfulfilled dreams, and the melancholy embedded in the "image" and "language code" of the poem. This methodological approach provides crucial insights for interpreting the poem "Yantai" and offers a fresh perspective for understanding Li Shangyin's other erotic poems with ambiguous meanings.

It wasn't until 2006 that the next significant contribution related to Li Shangyin emerged in North America: Stephen Owen's "Late Tang: Chinese Poetry in the Mid-Ninth Century." Although this book encompasses a comprehensive treatment of poetry from the late Tang period, Stephen Owen singles out Li Shangyin for detailed analysis and interpretation. Notably, when scrutinizing Li Shangyin's "Misty Poetry," Owen hypothesizes on the impact of changing the title from "Drinking Banquet Opera

to the Fellow House" to "Untitled" or "In the Cave," revealing the mystery and uncertainty evoked by the term "Untitled." Owen also introduces a fitting method for analyzing Yishan's cryptic poems in his interpretation of "Hayang": "We should put aside the issue of some ultimate referent of experience and regard poetry as a process of meaning formation." In alignment with Yuwen Suo'an's broader studies, Owen examines the dissemination of Li Shangyin's poetry and the evolution of Li Shangyin's image as a poet. He elucidates the shifts in the assessment of Li Shangyin's poetry across different historical epochs and offers insights into the reasons underlying these evaluations. Owen identifies variations in ancient appraisals of Li Shangyin, attributing them in part to discrepancies in the texts available to different readers in antiquity.

2.5. Europe

Research on Li Shangyin within European sinology circles is notably scarcer compared to North America, with a concentration primarily in France. One influential contribution comes from French scholar Wu Deming's paper, "Short Title Poems in Li Shangyin's Poems." This article meticulously dissects the significance of titles in Li Shangyin's short poems and draws comparisons between Li Shangyin's short poems and those of Du Fu. Additionally, the French-Chinese sinologist Cheng Baoyi, in his exploration of the language of classical Chinese poetry, interpreted two poems by Li Shangyin, delving into their poetic language structure and spatiotemporal dimensions.

Broadly speaking, prior to 2010, research on Li Shangyin outside mainland China yielded more substantial results from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and Japan, while North America and Europe contributed comparatively fewer works. This discrepancy may be attributed to the relative ease of translating Li Shangyin's poems into Japanese, both linguistically and culturally, in contrast to the challenges posed by translation into Western languages. However, it is crucial to note that despite the modest quantity of papers and books on Li Shangyin in North America and Europe, their quality remains commendable.

Outside the mainland, there is a limited corpus of research on Li Shangyin, with topics scattered across various fields and a notable concentration in specialized domains. If there is a common thread among these studies, it is their contribution to our appreciative understanding of Yishan poetry from a purely artistic perspective or their assistance in analyzing Yishan poetry from a more aesthetic viewpoint. In comparison to earlier research, recent investigations over the past decade have placed less emphasis on the morality and reality of Li Shangyin's poetry. In some instances, new research has even challenged or partially denied these aspects.[1]

3. Deconstruction of "Historical Facts"

In his re-examination of Li Shangyin's personal moral and political ideologies, Yu Jingxi scrutinizes prevailing notions.[2] Since the Qing Dynasty, most commentators on Yishan's poetry have portrayed Li Shangyin as possessing high moral character, expressing concern for the nation and its people, and demonstrating devotion and affection toward his wife, Wang. However, Yu's paper critically analyzes the ethical imperfections in Li Shangyin's private life, addressing issues such as whether Li Shangyin pursued utilitarianism and the motivations behind his marriage to Wang Maoyuan's daughter. This reevaluation, especially when applied to his love poems, diminishes the moral attributes but elevates the prominence of erotic expression and poetic craftsmanship. Additionally, Yu identifies shortcomings in Li Shangyin's political thought and acumen. He asserts that Yishan's epic and satirical poems lack ideological depth, with political cognition deemed narrow and outdated, particularly notions such as "beauties are disaster." This stands in contrast to earlier appraisals that fervently praised Li Shangyin's political insights. The paper prompts a reconsideration, suggesting a shift in focus from emphasizing moral critique and admonishing those in power to appreciating Li

Shangyin's epic and satirical poems through a different lens. Rather than emphasizing moral sharpness, the emphasis should be on Li Shangyin's use of poetic language and the refinement of words and sentences to achieve the artistic effect of "simple words but deep meanings." However, as the article simultaneously challenges Li Shangyin's "high morals" and "political talent," it introduces some contradictions. For instance, the article initially portrays Li Shangyin as vigorously pursuing wealth and power, citing his actions of aligning with influential figures, including marrying into the Wang family. Yet, later in the narrative, it contends that Li Shangyin adhered firmly to the Li Party's Zheng Ya, even when the Niu Party gained power, suggesting he "didn't know how to adapt." These conflicting portrayals not only create internal inconsistencies but also seem to judge historical figures for not conforming to modern ideals.

Noteworthy among Taiwanese studies is Yu Jinlong's paper, [3] this article analyzes Li Shangyin's relationship with members of the Niu Party and Li Party, and whether the officials Li Shangyin interacts with belong to the Niu Party or Li Party, and raises doubts about some highly influential traditional views since the Qing Dynasty. For example, the traditional view is that Li Shangyin was originally attached to Linghu and his son of the Niu Party. After becoming a Scholar, he married the daughter of Wang Maoyuan, who belonged to the Li Party and was therefore marginalized by Linghu and other Niu Party members. Feng Hao of the Qing Dynasty and contemporary scholar Wu Hui held this theory. [4] However, Yu's paper pointed out that Wang Maoyuan was probably not a member of the Li Party, and Li Shangyin maintained contacts with Niu Party officials throughout his life. Another example is the traditional view that Zheng Ya, who Li Shangyin insisted on following when the Niu Party gained power, belongs to the Li Party. For example, Ye Jiaying believes that "Gui Guan Observer" Zheng Ya and Li Deyu get along well. [5] However, the article pointed out that Zheng Ya may not be Li party. If the point of view in this article is more likely, many narratives about Li Shangyin's life experience will no longer be credible. For example, the statement that "Li Shangyin fell in love with Wang's daughter at first sight and was misunderstood by Linghu Qi" cannot be established. As a result, many traditional views on the political interpretation of Li Shangyin's obscure poetry may become difficult to establish. I think it is important to realize that some "historical facts" that have been circulated for a long time may not be true. This makes it easier for us to put aside the specific plot and talk about Yishan poetry from the universality of emotion and beauty.

4. Research on the Relationship between Religion and Li Shangyin

In the landscape of Sinology studies, Southeast Asia has historically yielded limited research results. However, a notable contribution in the past decade is the paper titled "Li Shangyin and Female Taoist Priest Poems" by Malaysian Chinese scholar Lin Huixiang, deserving special attention. [6] Previous research often interpreted Li Shangyin's poems about female Taoist priests as either love poems or satirical works, frequently indulging in excessive speculation regarding a supposed romantic entanglement between Li Shangyin and the Song sisters, such as Song Huayang. Feng Hao, for instance, annotated the poem "Heyang" by suggesting it expressed Li Shangyin's longing for the female Taoist priest he loved during his studies with the immortal Yuyang. Wu Hui has questioned this approach and pointed out previous inappropriate speculations about the relationship between Li Shangyin and the Song sisters. [7] However, Wu Hui is still limited to researching facts and is not as open-minded as Lin's article. Lin Huixiang separated female Taoist priest poems as a major category and analyzed them separately. This highlights the difference between the poem about the female Taoist priest and other poems about immortals or love poems, and also highlights the particularity of the image of the female Taoist priest between gods and mortals. Lin Huixiang's definition of "female Taoist priest poetry" is straightforward: if the object of the poem is a female Taoist priest, then it is a female Taoist priest poem. However, in practice, due to the obscure and vague characteristics of Li Shang's poetry, it is difficult to identify whether the object of a large number of poems is a female

Taoist priest. For example, Lin's paper included "Yantai" in the category of female Taoist priest poems, but I do not completely agree. In this article, the author does not dwell on the historical facts of Li Shangyin's association and love with female Taoists but focuses on the mythological images used by Li Shangyin and uses Western mythology to explain Li Shangyin's use of Taoist mythological allusions. Lin Huixiang sorted out the development process of mythological allusions and images commonly used in Li Shangyin's poems, such as the Goddess of the Gaotang Dynasty, Chang'e, Xiangfei, and other stories and images. He meticulously analyzed the specific cases of these allusions in Yishan poems. This approach is more helpful for us to analyze the kind of poetic realm that Yishan female Taoist priest poetry creates artistically.

Yang Suli's research also started from the perspective of religious and cultural symbols, but he chose to analyze the Buddhist symbols in Li Shangyin's poems. [8] Yang's paper pointed out that Li Shangyin's poems with hidden Buddhist symbols reveal the contradictory mentality of hoping to rely on Buddhist ideas to save himself but being unable to convert because of love. It's similar to how the Taoist myths written by Li Shangyin are often secular, and he even directly uses Taoist allusions to write erotic poems.

5. Translation of Chinese Classical Poetry and Research on Li Shangyin

American scholar Lucas Klein delves into the intricate challenge of translating Li Shangyin's poems. In his exploration, Klein adopts two distinct perspectives: annotation and pseudo-translation. [9] His study delves into the varied attitudes of Western poets and sinologists toward annotations, offering an insightful lens for analyzing the use of allusions in Yishan's poetry. Klein references the opposing views of Brendan O'Kane and fellow British translators on footnotes, counterbalanced by the support expressed by Eric Hayot and others. He extends this discourse to the broader debate between "academic translation" and "literary translation," incorporating different translation methods such as "thick translation" and "pseudo-translation." These methods reflect the diverse ways in which Western readers engage with Li Shangyin's poems. Observing these translation approaches provides an opportunity to uncover the true essence of Li Shangyin's poetry through the perspective of "stones from other mountains." Additionally, Klein explicitly expresses his skepticism regarding the translation approach employed by renowned sinologist Liu Ruoyu.

In another paper, Klein undertakes a comparative analysis of Yishan Poems alongside some challenging poems from the history of English poetry and their English translations. [10] This study introduces the attitudes of Western scholars toward translating and interpreting obscure poems, exploring how the Western poetry world embraces Li Shangyin's unconventional approach. The article commences with T.S. Eliot's reflections on difficult English poetry, outlining the interplay between the translation history of Li Shangyin's poetry and the development of challenging English poetry in modern times. It elucidates the perspectives of Western poets and scholars such as Prynne, Pound, and Liu Ruoyu on the translation of Li Shangyin's poetry. Many of these figures advocate for preserving the ambiguity of these poems, viewing it as a shared value with similar English poems—a form of rebellion against mainstream values.

In a separate work, Klein highlights Michelle Yeh's unexpected comparison of the translation of the Chinese modern poem "Street" with Li Shangyin's "On the Plain of Imperial Tombs." Yeh's approach to translating "On the Plain of Imperial Tombs" is scrutinized for potential modernization and deviation from Li Shangyin's medieval poetic intentions. [11] Similarly, American scholar Andrew Gudel embarks on a comparative analysis of English translations of Tao Yuanming and Li Shangyin. [12] This comparison is noteworthy due to the stark differences in the poetic styles of Tao and Li. There appears to be minimal connection in terms of language style and writing content, and the difficulty of their translation also varies significantly. However, Andrew Gudel discerns a link between Yishan's "Autumn Arrives" and Tao Yuanming's "Cloudy Skies." He interprets the "Distant

southern friends" in the second sentence of Li Shangyin's "Autumn Arrives"—"Distant southern friends stick in my thoughts."—as resonating with the weather imagery in Tao Yuanming's "Cloudy Skies." In essence, "Distant southern friends" penned by Li Shangyin harbors subtext, drawing from the sentiments expressed in the poem "Cloudy Skies." For readers of the late Tang Dynasty familiar with the latter poem, the hidden meaning behind "Distant southern friends" becomes palpable. This analysis not only contributes to the discourse on the dissemination and translation of Li Shangyin's poems but also serves as a fresh perspective for delving into Li Shangyin's language and artistic style.

6. New Perspectives on Obscure Poetry

In his analysis titled "A Failure to Communicate: Li Shangyin's Hermetic Legacy", [13] Bowden explores Li Shangyin's creative skills, unearthing potential theories that may underlie Li Shangyin's poetic practice. These proposed "Li Shangyin's theories" reveal a facet of rebellion against the mainstream of ancient Chinese poetry. For instance, many of Li Shangyin's enigmatic poems can be seen as a form of resistance to the traditional emphasis on "poetry expressing ambition." Bowden posits that traditional Chinese poetics often values poems inspired by external factors or external inspiration, while Li Shangyin's obscure poems predominantly emanate from internal artistic motivation. In contrast, Ka Wong introduces the concept of "desire" to analyze Li Shangyin's untitled poem, offering a perspective that appears more lucid and comprehensive than Bowden's notion of "internal artistic motivation." Wong employs Lacan's psychoanalytic methods to scrutinize the flow of desire in Li Shangyin's untitled poem, explaining that "just as desire can never be completely fixed or realized, the language and meaning of poetry can never be closed or restricted. As desire can never be fully fixed or fulfilled, the language and meaning of a poem can never be closed or confined." This elucidates the rationale behind the untitled poem's lack of a title. [14]

The paper by Slovenian scholar Maja Lavrač delves into a detailed explanation of the English translations of three representative poems by Li Shangyin—"The Sad Zither" and two "Untitled" poems. [15] The article ambitiously attempts to fully translate the image information, allusion details, and ambiguity in these three poems. Moreover, it aims to elucidate Liu Ruoyu's perspectives on the "obliqueness" of Li Shangyin's poetry through these selected works. However, some Western scholars express skepticism about the appropriateness of continuing to uphold and interpret Liu Ruoyu's research direction. Canadian scholar Massimo Verdicchio asserts that Li Shangyin was not solely a great Baroque poet but also a significant modern poet. In the discussion of Li Shangyin's quintessential obscure poem "The Sad Zither," Verdicchio utilizes it as a case study in the debate between the "historical hermeneutic method" and the "poetic method that avoids exploring meaning," delving into the potential modernity embedded in Yishan poetry.

7. Research on the Allusions in Yishan Poetry

Nipon Sasipanudej's paper delves into the mythical allusions present in Li Shangyin's poems. [16] According to this article, the mythological allusions employed by Li Shangyin are fundamentally a "ritual." Through this ritualistic use of allusions, the text of Yishan's poetry transcends the secular world, constructing a unique poetic flavor.

Additionally, it is crucial to mention a paper published by Li Zeng in 2008, [17] as it shares certain research similarities with post-2010 investigations. Li Zeng presents a distinctive perspective on the artistic characteristics of Li Shangyin's obscure poetry and his utilization of allusions. The author contends that the vagueness and incomprehensibility found in Yishan's poems are deliberate artistic effects actively pursued by Li Shangyin. Using "Jinse" as an example, Li Zeng analyzes how Li Shangyin employed allusions, concluding that he intentionally crafted a subtle and obscure poetic realm, employing allusions as a strategic tool. This echoes some of the insights put forth by Emily

Bowden. When confronted with such viewpoints that cannot be disregarded, one must ponder: Why did Li Shangyin consider "obscure" poetry worth pursuing? This question may necessitate exploration in connection with other facets of Li Shangyin's thoughts, such as his pronounced pessimism.

8. Other Aspects

Shijia Nie, an American Chinese scholar, appears to draw inspiration from Stephen Owen's "What Will the Willow Branch Heard: Inspired by 'Yantai' Poetry and Romantic Culture of the Mid-Tang Dynasty." [18] Building upon the image of willow branches in Li Shangyin's preface to the poem "Willow Branch," Nie analyzes Willow Branch's response to "Yantai" and the text itself.[19] Owen contends that, from Willow Branch's perspective, "Yantai" could be seen as a romantic love lyric. [20] This interpretation broadens the ambiguity of "Yantai" poems, inspiring subsequent scholars to view Li Shangyin's obscure poems within the cultural context of the late Tang Dynasty. In Nie's article, the search for Li Shangyin's creative mode and the approach to reading Yishan poems is rooted in the prevalent "romantic culture" of the late Tang Dynasty. Nie not only analyzes the link between Yishan poems and Tang legends but also explores potential mutual influences between Li Shangyin's works and the widely popular "Melody Lyrics" of the late Tang Dynasty. Nie suggests that Li Shangyin's re-creation of "poetry" within "romantic poetry" significantly impacted early literati poetry like "Huajian Ci," playing a pivotal role in the shift from "romantic poetry" to "romantic lyric." This analysis introduces a fresh perspective for interpreting Yishan's poems, suggesting reading Li Shangyin's obscure erotic works as lyrics without tags, and comparing them with the contemporaneous literati lyrics, such as Wen Tingyun's. While Nie believes Li Shangyin's poetry influenced literati lyrics, he does not thoroughly consider the possibility of reverse influence, which may warrant further examination.

Lui Yaoshen's paper undertakes a comparative analysis of the epic poems of Du Fu and Li Shangyin. [21] Lui's paper aligns with the traditional view but introduces novel ideas. Through systematic comparisons in the epic poem category, it illustrates that Yishan epic poems are highly literary but weak in authenticity. Summarizing Li Shangyin's epic poem characteristics, Lui points out that "Yishan's epic poem does not adhere to facts and excels in inventing historical events," creating an effect of "the complementarity of reality and fiction." For example, the poem "Dragon Pool Feast," depicting "Come back at midnight to hear the waterclock's song, The prince not drunken lay awake all the night long." is sharp in literature but implausible in historical facts.[22] Lui also notes Li Shangyin's inclination to speculate and imagine history, citing "The Sui Palace" as an example.[22] While this invention enhances the literary quality, it weakens authenticity. These conclusions underscore the need to appreciate the Yishan Ode epic for its skill and poetic flavor without exaggerating its ideological depth, emphasizing that profound criticism should be grounded in facts. Furthermore, it prompts reflection on a pertinent question: Since many of Li Shangyin's epic poems don't correspond to real events, how can his erotic poems, especially obscure ones, be entirely linked to reality?

9. Conclusion

In summary, the research on Li Shangyin outside mainland China after 2010 has displayed a discernible shift towards aestheticism. These new perspectives not only preserve but also reinforce Li Shangyin's enigmatic poetic domain, seeking to dispel the "facts" asserted by their predecessors. While some of these studies strive for a more precise analysis of historical facts, others aim to explore Li Shangyin's poetry purely through the lens of poetic expression and language usage. Objectively, these endeavors have effectively widened the gap between Yishan's poetry and actual events, bringing it closer to abstract emotions and artistic conception.

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