An Allegorical Reading of Han Yü’s[1]
"Mao-Ying Chuan"[2] (Biography of Fur Point)*
by William H. Nienhauser, Jr.
(University of Wisconsin)

Every allusion . . . has somewhat the character of an inside joke. But where T'ang times are concerned, we are all more or less outsiders.

David Lattimore

Introduction

In the millennium since Han Yü (A.D. 768-824) wrote his Mao-ying-chuan (hereafter MYC) there have been numerous discussions of the work. Most of the traditional notices, however, concerned themselves primarily with the morality of the piece and its author’s lack of propriety. We shall try rather to determine an aesthetic reading of this biography. In so doing we will perhaps be forced back upon this question of morality, but it shall not be our major concern.

* I would like to express my gratitude to Professors Liu Mau-Tsai, Chow Tse-tsung, and Karl Kao for their suggestions. I am also grateful to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin under whose auspices this study was written.


3 The idea that MYC is a pseudo-chuan is also discussed in some detail by Herbert FRANKE in his "Literary Parody in Traditional Chinese Literature: Descriptive Pseudo-Biographies", Oriens Extremus, 21 (1974), pp. 23–31. FRANKE feels that MYC is "a kind of literary riddle . . . written originally with no other purpose in mind but to amuse the educated reader . . .", and that allegorical interpretations of the work are "quite in harmony with the age-old tendency of Chinese literati to read a moral or political meaning into normal poetic productions . . . [p. 24]." He cites the Book of Odes as an example of this tendency. Yet the allegorical interpretations of this anthology were often quite specific and thus differ from our reading of MYC. Moreover, the example of this genre (the pseudo-biography) provided by FRANKE, Kao Ming’s[10] (A.D. 1310–1380) "Wu-pao chuan"[11] (Biography of Mr. Black Treasure) [see pp. 27–31], has "a definite moralistic and socio-critical tendency." This study attempts to point out a similar tendency in MYC.

On the date of the MYC see MA, "Prose Writings", pp. 202–203, n. 30. MA cites traditional opinions, but feels the piece was written at the beginning of the Yün-ho reign period (A.D. 806–820). The information from Liu Tsung-yüan’s postface and the conclusions of this study support MA’s dating.


When one attempts a close reading of MYC it becomes obvious that Han Yu, as one early critic, Liu Tsung-yün[14] (A.D. 773–819), has already pointed out in his defense of the work entitled "Tu Han Yu so-chu 'Mao-ying chuan' hou-t'i"[15] (A Postface on Having Read the "Biography of Fur Point" Written by Han Yu)[6], took great care in writing the piece. It is filled with allusions, allusions in a sequence which tend to produce several matrices of meaning. In this way the initial metaphor of Mao Ying (Fur Point) = Rabbit/Brush = Minister = ? may be traced fairly consistently throughout the biography.

Such a consistent metaphor is commonly termed "allegory"[5]. Moreover, not forgetting Professor Lattimore’s warning (cited as epigraph above) that we are all outsiders, we shall proceed to suggest that there are topical references of the allegory (the "?" in the equation above). It will become evident, one hopes, that many of the passages labeled "hybrid and unfounded"[6] by contemporaries of Han Yu were intentional and necessary to maintain the allegory. The cover or screen story of Mao Ying (the tenor) had to be shaped to fit the facts of the writing brush (a first vehicle), and, perhaps, even these facts were edited to allow a deeper and more central topical message (a second vehicle). But such subjects are best discussed after one has read the text itself. Let us, therefore, turn to a translation of the work. Since numerous notes will be necessary to understand completely the narrative and subsequent critique, commentaries indicating the major allusion and figures are infixed throughout the translation.

The Biography of Fur Point?

Paragraph I – Fur Point was a native of Central Mountain. His patriarch, Bright Sight, aided Yu in bringing order to the lands of the East, and he had some success in nourishing nature. Therefore, he was enfeoffed with the lands of Mao. When he died, he became one of the twelve immortals. He once said "My descendants will be the posterity of a spirit-illuminate and cannot be the same as normal beings. They will be born by being vomited." And, indeed, that is how it was!

---


[15] The understanding of allegory in this study is similar to that of David LATTIMORE in his "Allusion", p. 438: "... a consistently maintained metaphor, in which the ‘more real’ depiction must as a whole be seen through the transparent screen of a more immediate but less real depiction." The key concepts are consistency, for it distinguishes allegory from mere metaphor, allusion or ambiguity, and depiction, since an allegory is by definition an extension of the text intended to depict some event, idea, or phenomena; cf. Northrop Frye, "Allegory", in Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, Alex PREMIGER, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 12.


This passage is almost a formulaic beginning to a genealogy. However, not only the content, but also the syntax call to mind a specific chapter of a specific work. The sentence concerning the aid to "Yü in bringing order to the lands of the East" (i.e., in draining the flood waters which covered the eastern lands) parallels Ssu-ma Ch'ien's opening lines to his "Ch'i T'ai-kung shih-chia"[20] (Genealogy of the Grand Duke of Ch'i), Shih-chi (Records of the Grand Historian) (2nd printing; Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962), vol. 5, ch. 32, p. 1477.

Aside from this allusion there are several other important developments in these opening lines. The first is, of course, the initiation of the basic allegory: Mao Ying, the subject of the biography on the basic level of significance, and the writing brush (clearly explicated by the name Mao Ying itself). The relationships of the hare in the cosmological system of wu-hsing (five elements) control the structure of the first several lines: the direction east, the second lunar month during which plants begin to sprout again ("success in nourishing nature"), and the fourth of the twelve terrestrial stems. mao[31] ("Twelve immortals" and "lands of Mao"), are all so associated. This allegorical tie is further highlighted semantically, for "Bright Sight" (ming-shih[32]), is a literary metonomy for the rabbit. In the Li-chi, ch. 1, fol. 25a (SPTK) one finds the gloss: "The rabbit is called 'Bright Sight'."[33] The Erh-ya i[34] [Wings of the Erh-ya], ch. 21, fol. 6a (Hsüeh-chin t'ao-yüan ed.) provides the logical source of this epithet: "When a rabbit gazes at the moon, it will have offspring. Its eyes are exceedingly keen. Therefore, it has been named 'Bright Sight'."[35]

Another semantic suggestion is provided by feng, translated here as "enfeoffed", which can also mean to "heap up earth" as a rabbit might in digging its warren, allowing the line to also be read: "Therefore, he built a mound in the mao earth." Mau*, moreover, is a homonym for the surname [Mau*][36] of the protagonist Mao Ying[11].

For a locus classicus of the belief involving the unusual birth of rabbits, see Lun-heng:

---

8 For Yü's efforts in taming the flood see T'ai-p'ing yü-lan, ch. 82, fol. 1a-7a (SPTK).
9 Although Ssu-ma Ch'ien was certainly one of Han Yü's models (see inter alia MA, "Prose Writings", pp. 218-219, n. 90), it is interesting to note that Ssu-ma rejected the use of "empty tales" as bases for allegories, see Burton WATSON, Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Grand Historian of China (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 138-139.
10 I am not sure such excellent vision is related to the brightness of the eyes (as in the early Western concept of sight as a projection of a beam of light). Joseph NEEDHAN finds no such theory in the history of Chinese science, but points out that Paul DEMEYVILLE has referred to a visual ray emission; see NEEDHAN, Science and Civilization in China (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962), vol. 4, p. 86.
"Hares conceive by licking the pubescence of plants. When the leveret is born, it issues from the mouth of the hare."[37]

Finally, one finds first here the setting of much of the piece, Chung-shan[41] (Central Mountain). It is Mao Ying’s home place, the site of the subsequent hunt, and, according to the epilogue, the home of one of the Mao clan-lines. In the standard reference works, however, one finds that there are several "Central Mountains". One, in modern P‘iao-shui County[43], Kiangsu (about thirty miles southeast of Nanking), was, according to the commentaries, a place well known for producing rabbits whose fur was especially suited for writing-brush tips13. The Central Mountain located near modern Ting Country[45] in Hopei (northeast of the city of Shih-chia-chuang[46]) is, however, more likely that which Han Yu intended here. It, too, has been mentioned as a supplier of rabbit hair for writing-brush tips14. A later passage in MYC, which asserts that Mao Kung[50] and Mao Sui[51] were both "of the Central Mountain line", supports this hypothesis, since both of these actual historical figures came from the Warring States land of Chao[52] in modern Hopei.

Paragraph 11—The eighth generation descendant of Bright Sight was Bunny, who, so popular tradition has maintained for ages, lived in Central Mountain during the Yin dynasty and learned the artifices of the spirit immortals so that he was able to hide in a bright light and bring other beings under his control. He stole Heng O and rode a toad to the moon. His posterity, therefore, withdrew from government service, so it is said.

This paragraph, ostensibly penned to explain the paucity of ancestors in Fur Point’s genealogy, is structured about the story of Heng O[53] in the Huai-nan Tzu (ch. 6, fol. 10a [SPTK]). Nevertheless, the events are somewhat at variance with the original passage. Shimizu Shigeru feels that these changes were the creation of Han Yu himself. But Shimizu does not speculate as to why Han Yu might have altered the story.

---


The association of rabbit thui[38] and vomiting thui[39] originated in the phonetic similarities of the words. In the Po-wu chih, ch. 4, fol. 1a, Chang Hua repeats the association in the form of the "old story" that rabbits disgorge their young through their mouths. The characters stand alongside one another in the Kuang-yün[40] (ch. 4, fol. 18a [SPTK]) and are still today used as phonetic glosses for each other (see their respective Tz’u-hai entries for example).

13 CH’EN Ching-yün’s[49] (A.D. 1670-1747) discussion of this problem reveals that early geographical works, and even Po Chü-i, mentioned the Central Mountain in P’iao-shui County as a source of writing-brush fur; see Han Ch’ang-li chih[44] (Peking: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1958), pp. 88-89.


15 SHIMIZU, p. 172. Edward H. Schafer, in his "A Trip to the Moon", Journal of the American Oriental Society, 96.1 (January-March, 1976), p. 35, points out that the legend of Heng O’s flight to the moon has several variants and deserves further research. It would seem, however, that Han Yu is following the Huai-nan Tzu version. There in Hsu Shen’s[48] note one reads: "Heng O stole and ate it, attained the status of a spirit-immortal, and fled to the moon..." The phrase[53] here rendered "attained the status of a spirit-immortal", could also be read "found/encountered a spirit-immortal" (i.e., Bunny).
The general association of rabbit, toad, and moon is found already in the "T'ien wen"[56] (Heaven Questioned). The translation is tentative here. Whether "ni kuang"[57] means "to hide one's light" (the light of the rabbit's "bright eyes") or "to hide in a bright light" (i.e., to live in the dark part of the moon, or, perhaps, even to cause the moon to turn dark) is uncertain. The "being" controlled here may be either Heng O or the toad. It is apparent, however, that Bunny's talents are related to Taoist "spirit-immortal" magical practices.

Paragraph III - One of them named Wiley, who lived near the eastern city-wall, was crafty and a skilled runner. He put his talents to a test against Han Lu. Lu could not catch him. Since he was angry, he plotted with Sung Ch'üeh to kill Wiley and then tore his family to ribbons.

The story of Chün[58] or "Wiley" and Han Lu[59] or "Blackie" Han is taken from the Chan-kuo ts'e (ch. 4, fol. 11 a [SPTK]; James J. Crump, Jr., translation, from Chan-Kuo Ts'e [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970], pp. 159-160):

"Ch'i wished to attack Wei so Ch'un-yü K'un said to the king of Ch'i: 'Han-tzu Lu was the swiftest hound in all the world and Tung-kuo Chün the wiliest hare on earth. Han-tzu Lu once started Tung-kuo Chün. Around the mountain he chased him five times, the hare straining in the lead, the hound stretched to follow him, until both hound and hare dropped dead in their tracks from exhaustion. Then an old peasant came by and with no effort at all appropriated them both for his dinner.

"'Today Ch'i and Wei can stand each other off for a long time. They will tire their troops and weaken their citizenry until I fear that mighty Ch'in or massive Ch'u will come behind them and profit as did the old peasant.'"

"The king of Ch'i was frightened. He dismissed his generals and rested his troops.

Han Lu appears in various other classical texts17, but is mentioned together with Sung Ch'üeh[60] ("Magpie Sung'?) in Chang Hua's[61] (A. D. 232-300) Po-wu chih[62], ch. 6, fol. 4 a (Tzu-shu pai-chia ed.; Hupei: Tsung-shu-chü, 1875): "In the country of Han there was a black dog named Blackie, in Sung there was a swift dog named Magpie."[63]

Han Yu employs here again the familiar allegorical device of interpreting proper names literally. The passage seems generally intended to further ground MYC in historical reliability by alluding to several well-known classical works.

Paragraph IV - During the time of the First Emperor of Ch'in (246-210 B.C.), General Meng T'ien (d. 210 B.C.) led an expedition south against Ch'u and camped at Central Mountain, intending to undertake a great hunt to intimidate Ch'u.
Several threads of the allegory are wound together in this paragraph. Leaving the late Warring States period, the narrative now enters the reign of the First Emperor of Ch'in. The ancestry of Fur Point completed, it remains only for Han Yü to have him captured by General Meng T'ien[64], the reputed inventor of the writing brush[18]. The scene also shifts. The reader is returned to Central Mountain with General Meng's expeditionary force. This has again caused the commentators anguish, for the Central Mountain in Hopei province lies northeast of Ch'in, and thus not at all in the direction of Ch'u, whereas the Central Mountain in Kiangsu lies far beyond the extent of the Ch'in realm and one hundred or more miles to the southeast of the then Ch'u capital of Shou-ch'un[70] in modern Anhwei. Moreover, one finds the first mention of a command for Meng in 221 B.C. (vs. the state of Ch'i[1]), whereas Ch'u had been annexed by Ch'in two years earlier[19]. However, the Shih-chi also records Meng's conquests of territory south of the Yellow River in a single year (214 B.C.)[20], and, if one insists on an accurate historical basis for this event (it was undoubtedly more important to Han Yü that Meng T'ien be introduced and that he go to Central Mountain), is should be fixed ca. 214 B.C. Again, however, the allusion seems to dominate and structure the events of this passage, for the entire divination-hunt-discovery of an advisor sequence brings one back to Lü Shang[73] and his genealogy (Shih-chi, ch. 32) with which MYC began. There one reads[21] that once before a hunt, King Wen (founder of the Chou dynasty) divined and learned that his catch would include no dragons, tigers, or bears, but a great advisor. Indeed, during the hunt he came upon Lü Shang fishing and took him into his retinue. Lü then guided the overthrow of the tyrant Chou Hsin[74] and his Yin dynasty as well as the reigns of the first two kings of Chou.

**Paragraph V** – He summoned his stewards of the left and right and his staff to divine [concerning the prospect of the hunt] with the Lien-shan. He obtained the oracle "heaven will give man culture".

---


The diviner congratulated him:
In today's catch,
no horns or fangs to match,
but a fellow dressed in coarse clothes,
with a harelip and long whiskers 'neath his nose.
With eight holes sitting legs in flat,
you'll only take the hair from his head,
and with it on bamboo and wooden slat,
unify the empire's scripts to be read;
And thus Ch'in will unite the feudal lords instead.

This enigmatic passage continues to be dominated by the allusion discussed above. The Lien-shan[78] was an ancient method of divination (and also presumably a book explicating the method) so named because it took the hexagram ken[79] (associated with the character shan[80] "mountain") as primary. It suggests, therefore, both Central Mountain and a natural environment in which to find Fur Point. Moreover, since the work was lost long before Han Yu wrote, it proved, as an unknown, all the more malleable in the "cover story". The oracle could also be read "heaven will give man writing", but wen[81] seems to be used here in the sense of civilization or culture (cf. commentary appended to the final section of Liu Tsung-yüan's postface below). The "eight holes" is a seemingly less important allusion to the Chuang-tzu, eh. 22 (Peking: HYISIS, 1947), p. 58, which simply refers back to the rabbit giving birth by vomiting and thus having no need of the ninth normal bodily aperture (i.e., the vagina). To take the "hair from the head" (mau*[82]) refers paronomastically to the capture of Mao (Mau*) Ying. The unifying of the writing system under the First Emperor is, of course, well known (see Shih-chi, ch. 6, p. 239).

Paragraph VI – Then the hunt began. They surrounded all of Mao's clan, picked out their chieftains, and, taking up Point, returned. Meng T'ien presented him as a captive at the Platform for Essays Palace. His clansmen were gathered together and bound. The Emperor of Ch'in ordered that he be granted a hot cleansing bath, and invested him in Tube City, naming him "Master of Tube City". Daily he gained favor and was employed in more and more posts.

In this passage several levels of meaning continue to operate, tying together Fur Point the 'man' and servant of the emperor to Fur Point the rabbit turned writing brush. The word for "chieftains", hau*[83], for example, must certainly refer to hau*[84], "hair", a commonly used epithet for brush or brush tip.

Platform for Essays Palace was an actual palace[24], but here seems to have been used because of the literal meaning of the semantic components of its name. "Tube City"
refers, of course, to the bamboo stem of the writing brush, but also to the custom of assigning each feudal lord or regional chief a city within the imperial domain in which he could bathe and wash his hair when he came to court.

Paragraph VII — Point was the sort of man who had a strong memory and an easy understanding of things. From the "era of rope knots" down to the events of Ch'in [s rise to power], there was nothing he did not compile. The works of the yin-yang school, of the diviners, of the physiognomists, of physicians and pharmacists, genealogists, geographers, local historians, calligraphers, painters, of the nine schools, the one hundred philosophers, the gods, and even the theories of Buddha, Lao-tzu, and other foreigners, were all among those things he knew in detail. He was also versed in contemporary affairs, administrative records, accounts and records of market transactions, and whenever the emperor wanted to take note of something, he always stood at his service. From the Ch'in emperor himself to the Crown Princes Fu-su and Hu-hai, the Grand Councillor Li Ssu, the Keeper of the Chariots Chao Kao, and on down to the people, everyone loved and respected him. He was, moreover, expert at following a man's intent and in demonstrating uprightness or deflection, skillfulness or clumsiness, always taking the cue from the other. Even if forsaken by someone, he would not allow even an inkling of anything to leak out. Soldiers alone he did not like, but, if invited, he would also go to them from time to time. His ranks rose until he was made "Officer Fit for Composition". He became even more intimate with the emperor, so that the latter took to calling him "Lord Fit for Composition". The emperor personally decided all matters and weighed everything himself with a scale and weights. Even his personal staff was not permitted to stand in attendance. Only Fur Point and Candle Holder served him always, put out only when the emperor retired.

This passage provides a consistent extension of the parallels between Fur Point as protagonist and as writing brush. The ridiculously hyperbolic description of Fur Point's polyhistorical knowledge (itself a parody of standard historical topoi) is perfectly accurate when applied to the writing brush. And, if one were to search through Chinese literature for a description of a model imperial advisor, Fur Point would certainly rank high on any listing. By playing upon this paradoxical dichotomy — vastly overstated on one level of meaning, yet quite proper on another — Han Yü is able to develop a portrait of a nearly perfect ruler-advisor relationship, based upon an advisor who seems independent of ideological (he was familiar with Confucian, Taoist, and even Buddhist thought) or political (he was admired by courtiers of various factions)

---


25 Li-chi, ch. 4, fol. 17a (SPTK); see also James Legge, Li Ki (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), vol. I, p. 247.

26 A general term used to describe the period prior to the development of writing when various methods of knotting ropes were used as records.

27 It should be noted that individuals representing several opposing factions are mentioned here to emphasize Fur Point's universal popularity.
ties. But, as a proper bureaucrat (to Han Yü's mind at least)\(^\text{28}\), he has his difficulties with the military. The title "Fit for Composition" (Chung-shu ling\(^\text{[87]}\)) is also that of the President of the Secretariat, an important post during the T'ang, which, since it was created during the Han, is used anachronistically here. Toward the end of this section the mention of the emperor's attention to establishing uniform weights and measures and his assiduity to all bureaucratic matters is taken from actual historical records of the First Emperor and serves to support the verisimilitude\(^\text{29}\). Descriptions of Fur Point's submissive behavior ("uprightness or deflection") and his refusal to "allow even an inkling . . . leak out" are certainly artistically pleasing, but such irreverent passages may have been those which most displeased Han's critics.

The introduction of one other allegorical figure, Candle Holder, foreshadows the description of the personified figures of the subsequent paragraph.

Paragraph VIII – Fur Point was a close friend of Spread-out Black from Chiang, Porcelain Pool from Hung-nung, and Mulberry Tree from Kuei-chi. They recommended one another, and when one would go out or stay in, the others had to go along.

If the emperor summoned Fur Point, the other three did not wait for a command, but came directly together and the emperor never reprimanded them for it.

This passage, although perhaps in accordance with the required standard biographical descriptions of a man's colleagues, functions primarily on the metaphorical level. "Spread-out Black" or Ch'en Hsüan\(^\text{[88]}\) is, of course, the ink stick and Chiang\(^\text{[89]}\) (modern Shansi) was known during the T'ang dynasty for its ink. Ch'en, like the first characters of all these personifications of the "Wen-fang ssu-yu"\(^\text{[90]}\) (Four Friends of the Study), is also a common surname. T'ao Hung\(^\text{[91]}\) ("Porcelain Pool – ink stone)

Paragraph IX – Later during an audience, the emperor, who had a task he wanted Fur Point to undertake, tried to rub up to him. Therefore, he removed his cap to express his gratitude. The emperor saw his bald spot, and, since in his copying of paintings he was no longer able to reach the standard desired by the emperor, the latter chided him: "Lord Fit for Composition", you are old and balding and can no longer perform useful service. I have called you 'Fit for Composition'. Can it be

\(^{28}\) Whether the comments regarding Fur Point's problems with the military were meant in fun is difficult to determine. In some ways, though, Han Yü and his generation mark another change – this a social rather than literary development – for they seem to have been the precursors of the specialized bureaucracy of the Sung dynasty (A.D. 960–1278) which no longer functioned as scholars-soldiers-statesmen as had their Six Dynasty and early T'ang counterparts. This bifurcation was undoubtedly precipitated in part by the increasing reliance on foreign and eunuch military leaders in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.


Fur Point replied, "I am one who has 'Worn out his heart' for you." Thus he was called for no more, but returned to the city of his fief and came to his end there in Tube City.

This paragraph describes simply and straightforwardly the emperor's discovery that an old trusted brush/servant is too worn out to prove of further service. The passage contains only one allusion and is, perhaps, the easiest section of MYC to understand. It is, however, the climax of Fur Point's "life" and, as will be seen in the discussion below, the most vital passage with regard to the allegorical levels of meaning, for here, though the story of the writing brush remains constant, the fortunes of Fur Point change radically. The emperor's callous dismissal of his ancient advisor is underlined by the solitary allusion - to Meng-tzu: "Mencius said, 'When one wears out his heart, you can learn his nature. When you have learned his nature, then you can understand heaven.'"31

The ironic implication in MYC being that by "wearing out his heart" Fur Point should have been able to demonstrate his excellent character to the emperor and have been retained rather than dismissed. The reader's heretofore amusement with the allegory is exchanged for a sudden empathy for Fur Point. The passage ends in accordance with the biographical formulae by recording the death (and location of the demise) of Fur Point.

Paragraph X - His descendants were very numerous. They spread out through the empire and into barbarian lands, all taking the title of Tube City for themselves. But only those who lived in Central Mountain were able to continue their ancestor's profession.

The description of Fur Point's posterity, again following standard biographical requirements, needs little comment. The final sentence, however, is somewhat of an enigma on the primary level of meaning. Perhaps only fur from Central Mountain was used in brushes at court (tribute), or perhaps some topical meaning is intended.

Paragraph XI - The Grand Historian comments: in the Mao clan there were two lineages. The first took the surname Chi32 and was enfeoffed by the son of King Wen (i.e., King Wu) in Mao - the Mao of the expression "Lu, Wei, Mao and Tan"33. During the Warring States period (403–221 B.C.) Mao Kung34 and Mao Sui35 were of the Central Mountain line, but the origin of their lineage is not known.

---

32 Regarding the use of two surnames by aristocrats in ancient China, see Herrlee G. Creel, The Origins of Statecraft in China, vol. I: The Western Chou Empire (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1970), pp. 333–334, n. 56. Under this system each man had a hsing[95] surname derived from his earliest clan ancestor, and a shih[96] surname taken from the rank or fief of some newly ennobled member of the clan (such as Fur Point's patriarch, Bright Sight).
33 See Tso-chuan, ch. 6, fol. 13a (SPTK).
34 Mao Kung was a recluse in and a native of the state of Chao. On his advice the Lord of Hsin-ling[97] ended his sojourn in Chao and returned to save his country, Wei, from Ch'in armies: see Shi chi, ch. 77, pp. 2382–2383. Hoshikawa's note (p. 422) identifies Mao Kung with the Han dynasty Shih-ching commentator clan, but this would be anachronistic ("They all came to an end with Confucius") in this context.
35 Mao Sui, another citizen of Chao, is famous for recommending himself to the Lord of Ping-yüan[98] for inclusion in a diplomatic mission to convince Ch'u to ally itself with Chao.

[93] 孟子曰，眾其心者，知其性，知其性，則知天矣。
Their descendants were most numerous, but with the completion of the *Spring and Autumn* they all came to an end with Confucius, through no fault of their own. When General Meng pulled out their heir on Central Mountain and the First Emperor installed him in Tube City, the name at last came back to the world. But as to the line named Chi-Mao, nothing can be learned.

The commentary is yet another required component of the traditional biography. It is only here (although the discerning reader would no doubt have suspected as much from the style and structure of the preceding) that one learns the text is ostensibly the work of none other than Ssu-ma Ch’ien.

After some discussion of a legitimate and historical branch of the Mao clan (verifiable in the *Tso-chuan*), the narrative returns to Central Mountain and two further historical personages: Mao Kung and Mao Sui. Both served in the state of Chao (which, as mentioned above, supports the interpretation that Central Mountain is in Hopei), and both were able men whose abilities were perceived, albeit not without some difficulties, by their sovereigns.

The temporary end of the family came about when Confucius supposedly broke his brush and ceased to work upon the *Ch’un-ch’iu* with the discovery of a unicorn in 481 B.C.

Paragraph XII – Fur Point was first presented as a captive and finally became a trusted servant. When Ch’in annihilated the feudal lords, he played a role in the success. But his rewards did not require his toil and because of his age he was estranged. Ch’in was truly wanting of gratitude!

[The original text appears below as Appendix I].

This concluding passage is again quite without allusion. It should, however, be noted that it echoes paragraph IX, for while it would be a great disappointment and an unjust fate for a personification (or an actual minister) to be let go from service after years of loyal toil, for a writing brush it would only be normal and would not require one to question Ch’in’s magnanimity.

---

against Ch’in. Although at first reluctant to include a man with no guarantor other than himself, the Lord of P’ing-yian finally assented to take him. When the King of Ch’u vacillated and held up the discussions, Mao Sui won him over by “reason” of his naked sword; see Shih-chi, ch. 76, pp. 2366–2368.

36 See Tu Yü (A. D. 222–284), *Ch’un-ch’iu ching-chuan chi-chieh*, ch. 30, fol. 1a (SPTK). This passage shows clearly that Han Yu was aware that the writing brush had not, in fact, been invented by Meng Tien, but such contradictions do not play a significant role with regard to the “meaning” of this piece.

37 Although Franke (Tusche, p. 21) claims a reader would only discover after some lines that Mao Ying actually referred to a brush and not a real person, he is undoubtedly speaking of a contemporary reader.

It is interesting to note that Han Yu has not (whether or not he intended to) written in a style similar to that of Ssu-ma Ch’ien. Among other stylistic elements rarely used by Ssu-ma Ch’ien but employed in MYC are: chu (for chu) [102] as in feng chu Kuan-ch’eng [103] “installed him in Tube City” (paragraph VI) and chien [104] used as a passive marker (as in sui chien fei-ch’i) [105] even if forsaken and chien-ch’ing [106] “if invited” (both paragraph VIII). Cf. Bernhard Karlsgren, “Sidelights on Si-Ma Tsin’s Language”, *BMFEA*, 42 (1970), pp. 297–310, especially pp. 300–301 (chien) and p. 303 (chu).

38 See *Ch’un-ch’iu*, ch. 6, fol. 13a.

---

In contrast to this final paragraph, it should be apparent that most of the piece is laden heavily with allusions. It was written for fellow literati (or perhaps for their classical prototypes\textsuperscript{39}), and only for the more discerning of them—nothing to be understood by Po Chü-i's old peasant woman. For this reason a contemporary reader is likely to remain an outsider in his reading of some passages, but, nevertheless, can still sense some aspects of the "inside joke".

The structure, as mentioned repeatedly above, is based upon the classical prototype of the biography, the 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Paragraph(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>I–III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>&quot;Education&quot; and &quot;Presentation&quot;</td>
<td>IV–VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>VII–IX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Death and Posterity</td>
<td>IX–X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>XI–XII</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aside from this primary structure based upon the content, however, there is also a structure or system to the allusions. One finds first of all a "divergent" series of allusions, all tied to a single subject in the text, but referring to many secondary supportive texts. The allusions to rabbit lore in the Erh-ya i, Li-chi, Lun-heng, Po-wu shih, Huan-nan tsu and Chan-kuo is' e provide an example. They are intended to indicate the general validity and historicity of their subject, and, in this piece, to provide verisimilitude. The allusions concerning the writing brush itself (the reception at the Platform for Essays Palace, the inventor Meng Tien, the ritual bath, etc.) form a second divergent series. It is primarily these two consistent series which (along with numerous instances of paronomasia or other types of word play) establish the basic allegory: Mao Ying/Fur Point = the writing brush. The allusions in a body are so manifest that either the then contemporary reader or his modern counterpart could discover the allegory without recognizing each and every allusion—indeed, they become obvious even in Mao Ying's name, in the five-element-theory-based first paragraph, and in the numerous epithets for rabbit employed in paragraphs I–III (ming-shih\textsuperscript{[107]}, nou\textsuperscript{[108]}, chün\textsuperscript{[109]}, pa-ch'iao\textsuperscript{[110]}).

"Convergent" allusions, those which have no fixed referent in the text itself, but always refer to a particular locus classicus or subject in their allusive references, though not present as often in the individual semantic aspects of the narrative, are consistently present in each structural unit.

There are two such series of allusions interwoven into our text, intended to illustrate the widespread validity of the facts upon which this biography is based. The first begins with a near quotation from the "Genealogy of the Grand Duke of Ch'i" (Lü Shang) in

\textsuperscript{39} Cf. note 54.

\textsuperscript{40} Peter Olbricht in his "Die Biographie in China", Saeculum, 8 (1957), pp. 224–235, has extracted the most important structural components of a traditional Chinese biography.
the initial section of MYC. It is reconvened in paragraphs V–VI (hunt-divination). In the "Genealogy" King Wen of Chou also divines prior to a hunt and learns he will encounter an advisor. During the hunt he indeed comes upon an old man, Lü Shang, who becomes "the preceptor of Kings Wen and Wu". This theme, of an elder advisor who is unemployed or unappreciated becoming the mentor of a dynastic founder, is reflected in the relationship between Fur Point and the First Emperor of Ch'in (which is also based upon passages from the Shih-chi) and is possibly the basis for a topical reference to Han Yu's personal situation as he wrote this piece.

The other continuous convergent allusive references are to the area around the modern county of Ting. This area was known at various times as Central Mountain and belonged to the ancient state of Chao. The series can be traced from Mao Ying's native place through the hunt to the two historical Mao's of the epilogue.

From the above summary of allusive series in MYC one can see the care Han Yu applied to the writing of this work. One can also determine the allegorical levels and their bases:
1. The biography of Fur Point – fiction.
2. The "history" of the rabbit-writing brush – divergent allusion.
3. A story of a leader from Central Mountain who surrenders to a ruler, helps him establish order, and is nevertheless abandoned in his old age – convergent allusions.

All three levels lend themselves easily to general allegorical understanding. Yet there are some textual clues aside from those involved in these series which point to a fourth system of allusions, one with both explicit and topical references. These clues were also apparently noticed by Liu Tsung-yüan and used as part of his defense of MYC. In order to incorporate Liu's arguments concerning the allegorical nature of MYC, a translation of his postface is provided (again such commentary and notes essential for a understanding of the translation are inserted inter-textually):

A Postface on Having Read the "Biography of Fur Point" by Han Yu

Since I have lived among the barbarians I have not corresponded with people in the capital area. Of those who have come south, now and then one would mention that Han Yu had written a "Biography of Fur Point". They were not able to produce the text, but only laughed as they felt it to be strange. Thus I was not able to see it for a long time. When Yang's [Yang Ping's] son Hui-chih came, he first brought the piece. I asked him for it and read it through.

This first passage introduces the author, Liu Tsung-yuan, as a man in disfavor serving in the provinces (at Yung-chou in modern southwest Hunan) and relates

---


how he obtain MYC from his brother-in-law Yang Hui-chih⁴⁴ who visited him ca.
808 A.D.⁴⁴

It was like catching a dragon or a snake,⁴⁵ going against a tiger or a leopard – I wrestled with it with all my strength and did not dare to ease up. I have come to believe in Master Han's sense of the strange in writing.

This passage suggests in quite visual images that Liu found the text of MYC most difficult and yet significant. It also hints that Han Yü may have already at this time earned the reputation for the "strange" (kuai[¹²]) in his compositions by which his poetry has also achieved notoriety.

That those contemporaries who have imitated and plagiarised, taken a black and matched it to a white, laid thick skin and fat meat on weak sinews and brittle bones, and considered this elegant, read it and laughed was indeed natural.

Here Liu attacks those contemporary writers (and presumably critics of Han Yü⁴⁸) who still wrote p'ien-wen[¹¹⁹] euphuistic works and had not yet "joined" the ku-wen[¹²⁰] (neo-classical) movement.

But have not [other] contemporaries who have laughed at it done so because of its sport? And sport was not at all rejected by the sages of old. The Book of Odes says [⁵⁵]: "He is clever at jokes and chaffs, but he does not chafe."⁴⁷ In the Book of the Grand Historian⁴⁸ there is the "Biography of the Wits". Both of these are taken from those writings which have benefitted the world.

The jist of this paragraph is simply that the classics, specifically the Book of Odes, which was to serve as a basis for facile and learned speech, and the Shih-chi, which was designed as a guide to polite and proper behavior, contain humor.

Therefore a student spent the entire day discussing and interrogating, chanting and reviewing, making proper replies and learning how to approach and withdraw, taking water and sprinkling the floors, until he was weary and wasted.

This is the classical description of the duties of a student (cf. inter alia the Lun-yü, ch. 19.12 [Peking: HYISIS, 1940], pp. 39–40).

---

⁴⁴ This postface has played an important role in helping to date MYC. For further details on its composition, see Liu's letter to Yang Hui-chih, Liu Ho-tung chi, ch. 33, pp. 524–525: "I truly marvel at the writing in Mr. Han's "Biography of Fur Point" which you brought. Fearing that contemporaries have opposed it, I have now put together a few hundred words in the knowledge that sages of former times did not condemn sport."[¹¹⁵]

⁴⁵ At about this same time Liu wrote a satirical piece entitled "P'u-he-hui"[¹¹⁶] (Persuasion of a Snake Catcher): Liu Ho-tung-chi, ch. 16, pp. 294–296. There is no apparent connection, however, between that work and this passage.

⁴⁶ Unfortunately it is impossible to know precisely who these critics are. Although both Chang Chi and P'ei Tu[¹¹⁸] (A.D. 765–839) berated Han Yü for certain tendencies in his writings (see MA, "Prose Writings", pp. 202 ff.), they do not specifically mention MYC.

⁴⁷ The translation is mine, but based upon Bernhard KARLGREN, Book of Odes (Goteborg: Elander Boktryckeri, 1950), p. 37.

⁴⁸ The Shih-chi was originally known as the T'ai-shih-kung chi[¹²¹] (Book of the Grand Historian), see WATSON, Su-ma Ch'i'en, p. 199, n. 1. Han Yü's title seems to be a variation of this original title, although it is not one commonly used.

---

⁴³⁴⁴⁴⁵⁴⁶⁴⁷⁴⁸
For this reason there is the theory of "resting upon" and "taking pleasure in a subject". "If one has not studied the various fingerings of modulation, one cannot easily play a stringed instrument." There are those [strings] which must be held firmly, and those which must be more lax.

There are two allusions in this passage to the "Hsüeh-chi" [122] chapter of the Li-chi. The section referred to reads as follows: "If one has not studied the various fingerings of modulation, one cannot easily play a stringed instrument; if one has not studied how to extend a simile, one cannot easily make poetry . . . Therefore, when a gentleman studies something, he first collects his materials, then cultivates them, then rests upon them, and finally takes pleasure in them." [123] The suggestion that Liu felt many of Han Yu's critics had not mastered the basics of study, and were therefore incapable of either composing or appreciating literature.

The grand broth and the dark wine or body-and-joint repasts are the ultimate in flavor. And one could also set out as curiosities tiny insects, seaweeds, sour hawberries, citrus fruits. The bitter, the salty, sour or acrid, though they sting the mouth and split the nose, shrivel the tongue and mangle the teeth, there are those who will bite into them with sincere fondness: King Wen's irises, Ch'ü Tao's water-chestnuts, Tseng Hsi's sheep-dates. Only having eaten them has one exhausted the flavors of all under heaven and satisfied one's tastes. How is literature alone different? 49

In this passage Liu moves his defense away from the critics and their incomplete understanding, to the question of taste. "Grand broth and dark wine", an allusion to the "Yüeh-chi" [128] chapter of the Li-chi, 51 are two examples of bland foods which are compared to music in which "there was much flavor left undeveloped" [126]. "Body and-joint repasts" refer to a Ch'un-ch'i passage in which meats were served not properly (i.e., not according to ritual) cut 52. This may reflect back upon the Li-chi citations above, and suggest that here, in the methods of "reading" MYC, things have not been properly carried out (see the passage beginning "If one has not studied . . .", above). Following the list of exotic foods and flavors are three more allusions. The first is to the Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu (ch. 14, fol. 20a [SPTK]) anecdote of Confucius trying to eat irises in emulation of King Wen. For three years he wrinkled his brow to wallow them before he finally overcame the taste. This suggests not only that Confucius, too, had (even though acquired) a taste for the exotic, but also that some tastes must be learned.


51 Li-chi, ch. 11, fol. 7a; Couvreur, vol. II, pp. 51-52; Legge, vol. II, pp. 95-96.

52 Ch'un-ch'i, ch. 11, fol. 13b-14a.
The implicit comparison of Han Yü to King Wen would also not have escaped the careful reader. Ch’ü Tao’s predilection for water-chestnuts (Kuo-yü, ch. 17, fol. 3a [SPTK]) and Tseng Hsi’s filial avoidance of the sheep-dates his father had loved (Meng-tzu, ch. 14B, fol. 4a-4a [SPPY]) are more instances of palates inclined toward the fantastic. This passage stresses that even refined and elegant flavors such as those of the classics can tend to dull the senses when taken in excess and that more pikant dishes such as MYC are required to complete one’s frame of reference.

In what Master Han has written, didn’t he relax in it and yet not chafe? Didn’t he take pleasure in it and in places indulge? Didn’t he exhaust the flavors of the six classics in order to satisfy his tastes? If this is not so, then it is as if the words of Master Han were a large river dammed up. They must be broken open and let got into the lands, they have to be propagated:

Han Yü is here measured against previously cited classical passages or allusions. The exhaustion of the six classics is evident in the rich allusiveness of MYC. The image of Han Yü’s language resembling a dammed-up river alludes to the Kuo-yü (ch. 1, fol. 5a-5b), where it is said that stopping the mouths of the people is like trying to damn up a river.

Besides, that all things old or new, pro or contra, from the six classics or the one hundred schools, whether general or detailed, threading through or boring into, are still being employed and have not lapsed is due to the merit of Fur Point. Master Han is steeped in the writings of old. He was fond of this literature and admired Point’s ability to exhaust its intent. Therefore, he was roused to write a biography for him to let out his pent-up emotions. Since those students who obtain it are encouraged, is it not beneficial to the world? Indeed, the theme certainly speaks to those of a different era. Thus for those who covet the norm and cherish the petty to still vulgarly move their snouts, have they not burdened themselves unnecessarily?

[See Appendix II for the original text.]

This final section, although practically free from allusion, is a difficult one. After a defense centered primarily around allusion, Liu Tsung-yüan here enters into Han Yü’s

---

53 Cf. Liu Tsung-yüan’s apology for Ch’ü Tao’s request that water-chestnuts be sacrificed to him after his death, “Fei Kuo-yü” (Contra Conversations of the States), Liu Ho-tung, ch. 45, pp. 786–787.

54 The liu-i [(128)] (here rendered as “six classics”) could also refer to the six classical fields of learning for the shih class: archery, chariotereering, ritual, music, writing, and mathematics.

55 This passage could also be read “is the merit of Mao Ying [chuan]”, implying that it is actually the merit of Han Yü.

56 In a letter written ca. A.D. 811 to his old friend Feng Su[(129)] (A.D. 767–836), who had graduated together with Han in A.D. 792, Han Yü confesses that often what he considers to be his best works are not prized by others, and what is ashamed of others often praise. He also confides that ancient-style prose may not be suited to contemporary (ninth-century) tastes or comprehension. He then relates, in a passage remarkably similar to Liu’s postface, how Yang Hsiung[(130)] (53 B.C.–A.D. 18) Tai-hsüan ching[(131)] was also met by contemporary readers with derision and laughter. Yang Hsiung also wrote an allegorical piece, the “Ch’ang-yang fu”[(132)] (Wen-hsüan, ch. 9, fol. 1a–11a [SPTK]), centering upon a fictional dialogue between a personified brush (Han Lin[(133)]) and his guest, Master Ink (Tzu-mo[(134)]). See Han Ch’ang-li chi, ch. 17, fol. 17b–19a and Han Ch’ang-li wen-chi, ch. 3 p. 115.
allegory to continue his argument. He no longer talks of humor or sport, but speaks of Fur Point's ability to exhaust the significance of the classics. Whereas his arguments above dealt with the personification of the writing brush, here they speak of Fur Point as if he were the legitimate subject of a biography. This last paragraph and its ramifications upon the preceding pleas is one of the strongest evidences for being able to read MYC allegorically. The power the piece had for Liu can be seen in his comparing it to various wild beasts. His rejection of effusive writings with "weak sinews" and "brittle bones" suggests allegorical depth and strength would have been more to his liking, and yet beyond the comprehension of critics who produced such feeble writings. The allusions to the Li-chi passage, which urge the mastering of basic techniques (such as extended simile - i.e., an allegory) before attempting more difficult feats (such as interpreting an allegory), and the suggestion that the best music, food, and writings leave "much flavor undeveloped", imply the necessity of a careful and thorough interpretation of all fine arts. The comparison of Han Yu's writings to dammed waters, and finally, the acceptance of the Fur Point-Brush-Neglected Minister extended metaphor in the concluding sentences, leaves little doubt as to Liu Tsung-yuan's overall allegorical reading of the piece and his opinion that other contemporaries had failed to understand this aspect.

Furthermore, there is in this postface even the suggestion that Liu Tsung-yuan, himself an abandoned man like Fur Point, may have understood yet a fourth level of significance in MYC. Aside from the statement that Liu struggled with the work, which suggests a degree of difficulty beyond the fairly obvious three primary levels of allegory, one notices a remarkable resemblance between the accomplishments which Liu attributed to Fur Point and those of its author Han Yu. Certainly the transmission of all classical works, the exhaustion of their intent, and the transmission of "this [ancient] literature" or "culture" (ssu-wen57)[135] could easily apply to either figure. Through the entire passage, in fact, it is often difficult to determine whether Han Yu or Fur Point is the antecedent of a pronoun (the sentence - "Therefore, he was roused to write a biography for him to let out his pent-up [Whose? Han Yu's? Fur Point's?] emotions"[139] - provides an example). Indeed, the lines indicating strong ties between Han Yu and his love and deep learning of the past and Fur Point are drawn clearly here.

But before pursuing such possible topical allusions too far afield, it may be useful for a moment to compare MYC with Lu Hsün's[140] (A.D. 1881-1936) Ku-shih hsien-pien[141] (Old Stories Retold). In both works the authors have employed or recreated ancient myth or lore. Each work maneuvers through allusions, which, although not universally identifiable, are nevertheless evident often enough to create a general

57 An allusion to the Lun-yü, ch. 9, fol. 2 b (SPTK). The text concerned reveals Confucius' opinion that the ancient literature, culture, or "way" (wen is often glossed lue[136] in commentaries to this passage) had been neglected (at least in the state of K'uang[137]); since King Wen's time. The hunt-oracle in MYC which prophesizes that heaven will give man wen (both "culture" and "writing" - the two are intricately bound in Chinese thought) is a similar usage. Han Yu clearly feels literature (and thus Fur Point) can transmit (and even revive) ancient culture. Unfortunately, no comments on this alluded to passage remain in Han's Lun-yü pi-chieh[138] (Pai-ch'uan hsüeh-hai ed.).

[139]故奮而為之傳, 以發其鬱 [140]魯迅 [141]故事新編
allegory. Since by taking a previously known legend or myth as a base the syntax or structure may have been to a large extent inflexible, both authors were forced beyond structural variation to semantical or etymological word play (Lu Hsün’s farcical analysis of Ku Chieh-kang’s name in “Li shui”[142] and the name Mao Ying itself provide the most salient illustrations) or allusion. Thus some of the problems encountered already in Lu Hsün’s work, with regard to identifying obscure topical references, are certain to be found to a greater extent and frequency in Han Yü’s ninth-century efforts.60

Moreover, as in Lu Hsün’s writings, although there is no definite method of determining Han Yü’s topical targets, one does sense that they exist. More precisely, there are several tendencies in MYC which point to a topical-allegorical interpretation. First of all, one cannot but be amazed at Han Yü’s consistent and yet literate maintenance of the basic Fur Point-brush-minister relationship. There are portions of the text which are integrated upon only two levels, but generally through context and allusion all three levels are continuous and interrelated. Therefore, when this relationship breaks down, when an allusion (such as Heng O’s being kidnapped) does not fit either the fictional-biographical meaning (level one), the divergent-allusive history of the rabbit-brush (level two), the convergent-allusive depiction of the leader-advisor pair (level three), or the original story (in the case of Heng O, the Huai-nan tzu version), one is compelled to conclude that some outside force has taken over. There are two explanations for such occurrences. First, that Han Yü was incapable of maintaining these metaphorical levels consistently (even Homer nods!). But the very superfluity of the events or allusions which do not fall into the three levels of meaning (such as the altering of the Heng O allusion, the mention that only those Mao’s still at Central Mountain could continue Fur Point’s profession, the statement in the epilogue concerning the original Chi hsing of the clan, or the constant references to the state of Chao, especially vis-à-vis Ch’ìn) argues against this possibility. Any of these discrepancies could easily have been omitted. Their omission, moreover, would only have tightened the intricate in-


59 Aside from the obvious parallel of retelling ancient stories or myths in their creative works, the similarities betwee Lu Hsün and Han Yü are striking. Each was a leader of a vast language reform (the ku-wen and May–4th movements), each had numerous disciples yet felt discontent with his life, each became (after his death) the most important literary figure of the age for some time, etc. Lu Hsün was renowned for his use of humor, and he, too, sensed that humor was not easily accepted by his readership (see “Ts’un-feng-ts’in-tao-yu-mo”[148] [From Satire to Humor]. Lu Hsün ch’üan-chi, vol. 5, pp. 35–36). Finally, Lu Hsün has also written a satirical piece on the writing brush (see ibid., vol. 6, pp. 312–314).

60 Perhaps one can best sense the importance and the obscurity of Chinese topical allegory in the light of contemporary examples. The present clamon concerning the opera “San-shang T’ao-feng”[149], which is seen as a disguised attack by supporters of Liu Shao-ch’i against Mao Tse-tung himself (cf. Oskar Wegel, “Klassenkampf unter einer Glocke von Symbolismus und esoterischer Kommunikation”, China Aktuell, April, 1974, pp. 173–174), might prove a base for such investigation.

terrelationship of the first three levels of meaning. But they were not. Therefore, the alternative explanation, that another level of meaning, a topical level with references which must undoubtedly remain indeterminate, was controlling the text at certain points, seems likely. It is of interest to note that this fourth topical level of meaning (together with the first and third levels) became primary at the climax of MYC where the basic level of meaning, the life of Fur Point, turned from comic to tragic and thereby terminated abruptly the secondary level in a chiastic and transitory unification of the levels of meaning. There is no significance for the writing-brush metaphor in the final exchange between Fur Point and the First Emperor, although this is a powerfully ironic scene (especially when seen in light of the Mencius allusion) when read on any of the other levels. Indeed, one might suspect Han Yü sought to emphasize, for whatever reason, the capriciousness of a ruler-minister relationship and felt he could do so most effectively by reducing the levels of meaning at this point.

Numerous constructions could be presented to try to discover this fourth level of topical meaning (there are some interesting facts which suggest an equation between Fur Point and Han Yü, himself, for example), but without the unlikely discovery of further factual support needed to sustain such arguments, these speculations are useful only in suggesting that there may have been topical meanings in this text which Han Yü would not have felt safe in expressing explicitly. That Liu Tsung-yüan shared this suspicion seems likely from his comments in the postface.

One might conclude that in his use of the chuan[153] formulaic structure, Han Yü voluntarily brought the limitations of a relatively fixed structure and, to some extent, regulated syntax, to his work. Thus he was forced to vary suprastructural aspects (semantic changes, allusions, allegory, etc.) in order to express certain ideas. The argument concerning the seriousness or propriety of Han Yü’s MYC must, perhaps, be renewed here, for it seems that the work is a sincere piece (although humor is certainly present), and one of the more carefully written allegories in Chinese literary

---

61 The terms "tragic" and "comic" are used here to indicate isolation from society and reconciliation to society, respectively (cf. Tzvetan Todorov, The Fantastic, A Structural Approach to Literary Genre [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975]. Richard Howard, translator, p. 11).

62 Certain topical identifications would have been so readily apparent to an early ninth-century reader that they deserve mention. The identification of either Te-tsung (r. A.D. 780–805) or Hsien-tsung (r. A.D. 806–820) with the First Emperor of Ch’in and the comparison of the provincial situation after the rebellions of the mid-eighth century to late Warring States times is to be found in various writings of this period. Other more speculative relationships might be those of Central Mountain (Hopei) to the rebel headquarters during several late eighth-century revolts (see Jennings Mason Gentzler, “A Literary Biography of Liu Tsung-yüan, 773–819”, [Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1966], pp. 199–211, and Jonathan Mirsky, “Structure of Rebellion: A Successful Insurrection during the T’ang”, Journal of the American Oriental Society, 89 [1969], pp. 67–87), the relationship Mao-Han-Han[150] (Mao Ying’s surname/brush – pencil-Han Yü’s surname interchangeable with the immediately preceding), the fact that the Han family line’s original clan-surname was also Chi (see Hsin Tang-shu, ch. 73, fol. 8b [PN]), and the several striking resemblances between the life and career of Han Hui[150] (d. A.D. 781), Han Yü’s elder brother who had raised Han, and those of Fur Point (see Chiü Tang-shu, ch. 130, fol. 6a–7a [PN]); Hsin Tang-shu, ch. 222, pp. 2007–2008; and Liu Tsung-yüan, “Hsien-chün shih-piao-yaun hsien-yu chi”[152]. Liu Ho-tung chi, ch. 12, p. 188.

Nevertheless, it must be reiterated that allegorical characters are best identified by their
history. It is of the same tradition as Liu Tsung-yüan's "Niu fu" [154] (Prosepoem on the Ox) or Han Yü's "O-yü wen" [155] (The Crocodile). Although it may be impossible for us to enjoy the "inside joke" within MYC, we should at least notice the "laughter" of a contemporary (Liu Tsung-yüan) and acknowledge that it exists.

ABBREVIATIONS not noted in the text
BMFEA – Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities
ch. – chüan [156]
HYISIS – Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series
MS – Monumenta Serica
PN – Po-na [157]
SPPY – Ssu-pu pei-yao
SPTK – Ssu-pu ts'ung-k' an

actions and their relationships, and that this identification may then only be sustained (but not initiated) by paronomastic or etymological interpretations of proper names; see Geoffrey HARTMANN, "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Faun: A Brief Allegory", in Beyond Formalism (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 173–192, esp. p. 180.

APPENDIX II The Original Text of "Tu Han Yü so-chu 'Mao Ying chuan' hou-t'i" (Liu Ho-tung chi [Peking, 1961] ed.)