ABSTRACT

Li He (李贺), styled Changji (长吉) (790-816), was a descendant of the Tang imperial family but he belonged to a distant branch that had declined. He was a talented poet of the mid-Tang Dynasty, earning himself the name of "ghost-genius" (鬼才) and his literary style being known as "Changji ti" (长吉体).

The poet led his life in poverty. His state of mind underwent a great change when he was deprived of the chance of taking the imperial examinations by those jealous of him. Thereafter, the sickly poet devoted all his time and effort to writing poems.

In most of his poems, he exhibited the dark, cold side of life, offered sharp sarcasm on political issues and reflected his pessimistic, morbid state of mind. He is very concerned with the tragic passage of time, the theme on the tyrannical power of time is usually seen in his works. In several of his poems, he also mock at those who were obsessed with the idea of immortality.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore Li He's literary and artistic style and it will be done using the ancient Chinese literary concept on imagery (意象). In Chinese literary criticism, image is defined as a binary coherence between subjective feelings (意) and objective image (象). Images in Li He's poems will be divided into simple and compound images. The distinguishing features of these images, such as their colour and language characteristics, will be discussed. Next, the integration of these images and the characteristics this integration displays (colour combination, temporal and spatial structure etc.) will be looked into, too. An evaluation will be made after the analysis of his poetry.