

MINERAL IMAGERY IN THE PARADISE POEMS OF KUAN-HSIU

by EDWARD H. SCHAFER

You were in Eden, the garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering,
carnelian, topaz, and jasper,
chrysolite, beryl, and onyx,
sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald;
and wrought in gold were your settings
and your engravings.

.....

you were on the holy mountain of God;
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.

Ezekiel, 28 (Revised Standard Version).

I. Introduction

The life and work of the Buddhist poet-painter Kuan-hsiu (secular surname Chiang) are known chiefly from the following writings:

(1) *Ch'an-yüeh chi*.¹ Modern editions have a preface written by Kuan-hsiu's friend, the poet Wu Jung, originally for a collection made at Chiang-ling by the master himself. This lost collection, compiled in A.D. 896, was entitled *Hsi yüeh chi*. Wu Jung's prefatory essay was written in 899. Its successor, the posthumous *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, first printed in Szechwan in 923, survives. This now has also a postface by the master's disciple, the monk T'an-yü, which is the oldest biography of Kuan-hsiu.²

(2) A biography of Kuan-hsiu in Tsan-ning, *Sung kao seng chuan* (Tōkyō Daizōkyō, vol. 50, p. 897).

(3) His poems preserved in *Ch'üan T'ang shih* (han 12, ts'e 3, in 12 *chüan*).

(4) A thorough study of his life and work: Kobayashi Taichirō, *Zengetsu daishi no shōgai to geijutsu* (Tokyo, 1947). For his sources, see especially pp. 7, 12, 13.

¹ My page references are to the *Ts'ung shu chi ch'eng* edition, since the superior *Szu pu ts'ung k'an* is not paginated.

² *Ch'üan T'ang wen*, 922, 1a-3b, has both a *hsü* "preface" (1a-2b) and a *hou hsü* (3a-3b) "postface" by T'an-yü. These are combined in the postface of *Ch'an-yüeh chi*.

(5) Three poems discovered among the Tun-huang manuscripts, and preserved in the Pelliot collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. See Wu Chi-yu, "Trois poèmes inédits de Kouan-hieou", *Journal Asiatique*, 247 (1959), 349-74. None of these appears in the *Ch'üan T'ang shih* collection. Wu also lists (pp. 369-74) other poems of Kuan-hsiu which are missing from the "complete" collections but are quoted in other books.

Kobayashi's excellent biography makes detailed remarks on Kuan-hsiu's life unnecessary here. Suffice it to recall that the talented monk left the northland during the disasters of the end of the ninth century, stayed in Hang-chou until he lost the favour of the lords of Wu-yüeh, got the patronage of Ch'eng Jui, warlord of Ching-nan in the central Yangtze region (where he met Wu Jung, and talked with him of poetry and philosophy), and finally moved to Shu (Szechwan), where he was loaded with honours and given the title *Ch'an-yüeh ta-shih* by Wang Chien, the master of that realm, in 907. There he died.³

Kuan-hsiu's reputation as a poet was high during his lifetime; Wu Jung believed him the only worthy successor of Li Po and Po Chü-i.⁴ Tsan-ning's hagiography reports the opinion that his style was not inferior to that of the two Lis—Li Po and Li Ho.⁵ Yen Yü, at the beginning of the twelfth century, though he placed Chiao-jan (died 789/90) first among the monkish poets of T'ang, listed Kuan-hsiu among nine others of great merit.⁶ His fame seems then already to have been declining. Critics of the fourteenth and later centuries saw only a strange coarseness in his writing.⁷

II. Kuan-hsiu as Syncretist

The set of four quatrains on which the present study is a commentary may seem to the reader to have a purely Taoist character. If this seems strange in verses written by a distinguished Buddhist master, it should be remembered that Taoist-Buddhist syncretism was at its height in the ninth and tenth centuries, especially in mystic and esoteric practice and belief. The symbols of both "religions" were interchangeable. A believing Buddhist could recognize holy arhats in the forms of winged Taoist angels even more easily than a Renaissance pope could find his God behind the image of Olympian Jove. Many manuscripts found at Tun-huang, for example "an apocryphal Buddhist sūtra with admixture of Taoist elements, and some

³ See Wu Jung's preface; Tsan-ning's biography; Wu Chi-yu, "Trois poèmes", p. 350.

⁴ Preface to *Ch'an-yüeh chi*.

⁵ *Sung hao seng chuan*, loc. cit.

⁶ Günther Debon, *Ts'ang-lang's Gespräche über die Dichtung; Ein Beitrag zur chinesischen Poetik* (Wiesbaden, 1962), p. 91.

⁷ Kobayashi, p. 508. Kobayashi attributes this attitude of early modern critics to a failure to comprehend the delicacy and remoteness of the poet's allusions.

cabalistic characters",⁸ testify to the reality of this fusion. But it was not just on the level of "popular religion", as we see it at Tun-huang, that the mingling took place. It was also evident on the highest levels of society, as we see it with the tenth-century kings of Min in Fukien⁹ and among the most prominent of the shaven priests themselves, especially those influenced by the beliefs of the Ch'an sect. Kuan-hsiu expressed it this way: "We hear tell that within a transcendent one (*hsien*) there is also a [Buddhist] monk (*seng*)",¹⁰ with the implication "and we may well believe it". For Kuan-hsiu a Buddhist holy man was a Man of the Way (*tao jen*). Thus the primitive identity of the Buddhist and the Taoist, characteristic of the earliest days of Buddhism in China at the end of the Han, was restored. But Kuan-hsiu went even further than this: he adapted beliefs and images imported from India to the orthodox cult which we call "Confucian", with its divine sovereigns (like the *theoi adelphoi* of the Ptolemies and the deified Caesars of Rome), and its primordial golden ages. "Our Yao [-like] Heavenly One is no other than Brahmadeva" (*Yao t'ien chi Fan t'ien*)¹¹—for "Heavenly One" (*t'ien*), substitute "Son of Heaven" and simultaneously "*Deva*". In a single poem, significantly named "Great Exaltation of the Three Doctrines",¹² Kuan-hsiu wrote: "Effulgent hangs the Buddha-sun!" (*t'ung t'ung hsüan fo jih*), "Feathered visitors attend the levee at Unicorn Isle" (*Lin chou yü k'o ch'ao*), and "Our Illustrious [ruler] is no other than the God-king Yao" (*wu huang chi ti Yao*). All divine beings are alike.

III. The Paradise Dream Poems

Now consider the four poems called collectively *Meng yü hsien* "Dream of a Journey to Sylphdom", or perhaps "Dream of an Excursion among the Transcendents", or perhaps "Dream of a Stroll in Fairyland", always implying "the migration of the soul to paradise". Several English versions, some plainly parodies and burlesques, are given here, to hint at the possibilities of the exploration of imagery in depth, and equally to suggest the folly of too much deference to contemporary taste in translations of poetry, having Pope, *ΠΕΡΙ ΒΑΘΟΥΣ* much in mind:

But the beauty and energy of it [the "Pert Style"] is never so conspicuous, as when it is employed in *Modernizing* and *Adapting* to the

⁸ No. 5214 in Lionel Giles, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Manuscripts from Tunhuang in the British Museum* (London, 1957). Note also No. 6842 (=6922) "A Buddhistic-Taoist treatise containing numerous occult secrets"; No. 6932 "A Buddhistic-Taoist text on anti-demon magic"; No. 6935 "Taoist Text dealing with the subdual of demons, with quotations from Buddhist as well as Taoist sources".

⁹ E. H. Schafer, *The Empire of Min* (Rutland and Tokyo, 1954), p. 95.

¹⁰ Kuan-hsiu, "Su Ch'ih sung shan kuan t'i tao jen shui ko chien chi chün shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 12, 126.

¹¹ Kuan-hsiu, "Ho Wei hsiang kung chien shih hsien wo", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 6, 68.

¹² Kuan-hsiu, "Ta hsiang san chiao", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 9, 95.

Taste of the Times the works of the *Ancients*. This we rightly phrase *Doing* them into English, and *Making* them English; two expressions of great Propriety, the one denoting our *Neglect* of the *Manner how*, the other the *Force* and *Compulsion* with which it is brought about. It is by virtue of the Style that Tacitus talks like a Coffeehouse Politician, Josephus like the British Gazetteer, Tully is as short and smart as Seneca or Mr. Asgill, Marcus Aurelius is excellent at Snipsnap, and honest Thomas à Kempis as Prim and Polite as any preacher at court.

But now Kuan-hsiu's *Meng yu hsien*:

A. WORD FOR WORD

1.

dream	reach	sea	midst	mountain
enter	certain	white	silver	house
meet	see	one	way	gentleman
state	he is	Li	eight	sire

2.

three	four	transcendent	woman	child
body	garb	lapis-lazuli		dress
hand	hold	luminous	moon	bead
hit	fall	gold	hue	pear

3.

go	nacre	land	lack	dust
	arrive	gem/ turquoise?	pool	shore
white	thicket	cedrela	tree	below
	water-spirit	come	smell	human

4.

palace	royal hall	high-piled ¹³	cage	purple	vapour
gold	canal	jade	sand	five	hue
protect	door-keeper	transcendent	slave-girl	each	lean on
steal	pluck	coil	peach-tree	other	sleep
			almost	fall	ground

¹³ This is a poor rendering of the binom *cheng-jung*, a "gestalt-word", giving the impression of craggy, precipitous masses of rock. The expression has an ancient association with Taoist paradises. E.g. Yang Hsiung, "Kan ch'uan fu", *Wen hsian* (*Szu pu ts'ung k'an ed.*, 7, 8b): "The rocky heights (*cheng-jung*) of the Purple Palace".

B. PLAIN

1.

I came in a dream to a mountain in the sea,
Entered a certain house of white silver,
Chanced to see a Gentleman of the Way,
Who said he was Li, Eighth Sire.

2.

Three or four young sylph women,
Bodies garbed in ultramarine dress,
Held in their hands luminous moon beads,
To knock down golden-hued pears.

3.

The nacreous land had no dust—
I went on, and came to the shore of a gemmy pool:
Under the thicket cedrela trees
A white dragon came to smell a man.

4.

Palace halls loomed high, encaged in purple vapour,
In golden canals, sanded with jade, was five-coloured water,
The guardian doorkeepers, sylphine maids, lay asleep, one on the other;
Stealthily I plucked from the coiled peach-tree, and almost fell to the ground.

C. SELF-EXPLANATORY

1.

In a dream I visited the Isles of the Immortals in the Eastern Ocean.
There I visited a house of purest silver,
And discovered a venerable Taoist adept
Who claimed to be the ancient healer Li Pa-po!

2.

I saw a bevy of fairy beauties there,
Clad in rich emerald-studded robes;
They were throwing magical moon-tinted pearls,
To knock down magical golden pears.

3.

It was a lovely, pearly place, shimmering white and clean,
And so I walked on to the side of a jadelike pond,
Where long-lived *ch'un*-trees (*Cedrela sinensis*) grew in thick profusion:
A white dragon came out of the water to sniff at me.

4-

The palaces of the immortals were heaped high, bathed in mysterious purple mist,
Iridescent water flowed through their golden, jade-sanded waterways,
Fairy maidens, the guardians of the Garden of Life, lay fast asleep at their posts, hugged in each others arms.
But when I tried to steal a Peach of Immortality—I almost fell and killed myself.

D. MOCK HEROIC

1.

Dreaming I came to Orient's verdant Isle,
And searched in vain each silv'ry domicife.
I found a learned mage from China's shore,
Who said, "Great Laocius, I—so search no more!"

2.

Behold a group of fairy maidens there,
Blue as the skies their gowns—and just as fair!
Each slender hand takes up a shimm'ring pearl,
At lovely fruit of golden hue to hurl.

3.

No dust defiles that porcellaneous land,
All clear the road to Crystal Lake's bright strand—
Shadowed beneath a rare Cathayan tree,
A hoary dragon comes to sniff at me.

4-

Those matchless halls, like alpine peaks, in crimson splendour soar;
O'er gemmy sands, by golden banks, the tinted waters pour;
At royal gate, in disarray, angelic sleepers sprawl,
But he who steals their holy fruit, alas! is doomed to fall.

E. BEATNIK

1.

A dream: offshore rocks—out of this world!
A stranger's hut—white-painted, glistening.
The man comes—he's real, he feels, he *knows*:
"I'm Hipster Lee."

2.

Women—bright, unspoiled, no bankers' sluts;
Plain blue-jeans are enough.
They heave old white billiard balls
At gilded church fronts, lying billboards.

3.

The land of the Jewel in the Lotus—pearlville—uncorrupted!
Seeming to be at lakeside—the water shines—
Sitting, Zen-wise, under great shadowing trees.
An apparition: a colourless emanation of my own heart, there on the bank,
watching me!

4-

Upstairs—good, uncluttered pads, freshly, freely painted;
Nearby—fresh, free water—jingling, glassy pebbles;
All the chicks are sleeping—
Shall I snatch a fresh, free onion? Hopeless.

IV. The Transcendent Hsien

The *hsien* who populate these poems and others like them are both "ascended" and "transcendent" beings.¹⁴ A conventional and widely employed equivalent of *hsien* is "immortal", emphasizing one of the attributes of these ethereal creatures. Aside from its narrowness, this translation suffers from inevitable echoes of the deathless Olympians—Zeus, Apollo and the rest. If, on the other hand, we employ "plain" English "fairy", as many writers do in some contexts, especially feminine ones, we alter these winged figures into elfin replicas of Oberon and Titania, delicate, mischievous, nocturnal forest-dwellers. We might equally as well call the *hsien* "angels" since both are symbolized visually with the pinions of birds, to illustrate their freedom from the ties of physical and spiritual gravity. I have myself suggested "sylphs" and "sylphmen", comparing these incorruptible creatures of the Far East, who subsist on air and dew, and harness the clouds to range the distant skies, to the elemental spirits of the air in the Western tradition. But as so often in the case of words which are close to the heart of Chinese belief no English equivalent is quite right.¹⁵

¹⁴ The etymology of *hsien* is well explained in Stephen S. Wang, *Tsaur Jyr's Poems of Mythical Excursion* (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1962), especially p. 6. I have borrowed his word "transcendent". A more accessible report of the *hsien* is in Max Kaltenmark, *Le lieh-sien tchouan* (Peking, 1953).

¹⁵ For some men of T'ang, at any rate, a *hsien jen* "transcendent person" was a high but not the highest being in the Taoist hierarchy, being inferior to a *chen jen* "true person". See Tuan Ch'eng-shih, *Yu yang tsa tsu* (*T's'ung shu chi ch'eng ed.*), 2, 15.

At any rate, for more than a thousand years these beings had been visualized as pure, refined, spiritual, ageless, passionless, detached, free, white, clean, feminine, supple . . . the book of *Lieh tzu* says that they know neither love nor fear, and that they have

Hearts like eddying springs,
Figures like cloistered girls.¹⁶

In such ideal creatures it was easy to see qualities also admired in Buddhism—especially liberation from the grossness and folly of our crude world of passions.

A special poetic genre, to which the four poems of Kuan-hsiu belong, had developed during Han times. This was the poem about the journeys of the soul, ultimately derived from ancient shamanistic chants. It is usually called *yu hsien* poetry. One modern critic, Chu Kuang-ch'ien, discovers three subtypes concealed beneath the imagery of transcendental paradises which they all share.¹⁷ One of these, representing the main stream, is the poem of protest against the horrors of the real world, the corruption of society, and the debasement of the individual. This variety, in which the flight of the soul symbolizes the rejection of an intolerable environment, finds its exemplar in Ch'ü Yüan, and its chief exponents in Hsi K'ang, Juan Chi and T'ao Ch'ien. The second, the romantic fantasy, easily shading into the erotic,¹⁸ takes the rhapsodies attributed to Sung Yü as its prototypes, and is exemplified in the fairy poems of Ts'ao Chih, Fu Hsüan and Pao Chao.¹⁹ Thirdly, there are the truly religious Taoist writers, who try to capture in literary symbols the ecstatic vision of the divine world. Chang Hua, Kuo P'u and Ts'ao T'ang belong to this class.

¹⁶ *Ch'ung hsiu chih te chen ching* (Szu pu ts'ung k'an ed.), 2, 1b.

¹⁷ Chu Kuang-ch'ien, "Yu hsien shih", *Wen-hsüeh tsa-chih*, 3 (1948), No. 4, 1-14.

¹⁸ This tendency was particularly well developed in T'ang times, though we find earlier foreshadowings. *Hsien* becomes a frequent epithet of women of magical, glamorous beauty. Court belles become sublunary incarnations of the transcendent ones. Even Wang Wei wrote, in a poem about a great illumination festival in the capital, of "Transcendent (fairy) geisha [*hsien chü*] coming to the golden halls" ("Feng ho sheng chih shih wu yeh jan teng chi i pu yen ying chih", *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, han 2, ts'e 8, ch. 3, 2b). So the sexual merged with the supernatural, and "light" women appeared much like "ascended" women, ladies of the divine court like mundane courtesans. But perhaps this is not too surprising in a Taoist milieu. Accordingly, it has been suggested that the title of the famous T'ang novel *Yu hsien k'u* be rendered "A Visit to the Lodge of Beauties", since "neither the title nor the content necessarily suggest anything supernatural". Chung-han Wang, "The Authorship of the *Yu-hsien-k'u*", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 11 (June 1948), 156. In style and feeling, therefore, some elegant and splendid *yu-hsien* poetry of T'ang times is closely akin to "court poetry". Though Ts'ao T'ang was a believing Taoist, his verses are formally and imagistically very much like the *kung ts'u* of Wang Chien. See Chu Kuang-ch'ien, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 10, and Wen I-to, "T'ang shih tsa lun", *Wen I-to ch'üan chi*, III (Shanghai, 1948), 13.

¹⁹ Probably none of these fits entirely into this single category. See Chu Kuang-ch'ien, *op. cit.*, p. 2, and Chung-han Wang, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 9 on this mixing of aims.

Kuan-hsiu, writing in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, represents a new phase in the development of this literary tradition. In the brilliance of his imagery, he seems closest to the writers of the second group. In the sincerity of his belief, he can be compared to those of the third. Conditions of instability, inequity and terror at the close of the T'ang dynasty's rule may explain why he, like poets of the third and fourth centuries, found the genre attractive, and so he may also be placed in the first group. The new element in his writing is the syncretic one. The old symbols have been universalized. All faiths are one. All aspirations of the soul aim at the same goal. The native linguistic modes, made classical by Ts'ao Chih and Pao Chao and other great forerunners, serve admirably to represent a simple, international metaphysics, temporarily but beautifully clad in Chinese dress.

The "transcendent women" (*hsien nü*) of Kuan-hsiu's verses (seen first striving to obtain the fruit of eternal life, and then asleep—probably dreaming—at the gate of the eternal garden) are angels or peris, not goddesses. They are clothed in the colours of earth, and share the limitations of noumenal entities. They are searchers and dreamers, as is Kuan-hsiu himself, and are encountered on the outskirts of paradise. They are lovely, but not completely realized. In Dante's scheme they would not have been placed in the Empyrean but in the crystalline sphere of the moon.

As for Li Pa-po, the male *hsien* who is the first living creature encountered in the dream-journey of Kuan-hsiu, he is well known in Taoist tradition, an immortal in human guise, who appears occasionally among men, magically healing the sick.²⁰ His given name "Eight Hundred", which refers to his longevity, unaccountably becomes "Eighth Sire" (the two are homophonous in Chinese) in Kuan-hsiu's verses. Kobayashi sees in him a literary type of one of the arhats of Kuan-hsiu's famous paintings.²¹ In any case, he is represented to us as the first person discovered in the dream-paradise, a mysterious and ambiguous envoy, or perhaps a guide—indeed he seems at first to be the only living thing in a puzzling, silvery emptiness, like someone encountered in the frightening solitude of a Chirico painting. But he is a benign rather than a malignant being. We imagine that he had some special meaning for Kuan-hsiu.

Elsewhere in the poems of Kuan-hsiu we often find the word *hsien* used attributively, not only of anthropoid beings but of many features of the natural world. He writes of "*hsien* aromatics", "*hsien* pines",²² "*hsien*

²⁰ His biography is in the *Shen hsien chuan* (*Han Wei ts'ung shu*), p. 4b. A late avatar as a healer is mentioned in *Chin shu*, 58, 1236c (dynastic history page references are to the *K'ai ming* ed.).

²¹ Kobayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 510.

²² "Pi ti pi'ling shang wang tsao shih chün", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 7, 79.

mountains",²³ "hsien birds",²⁴ and "hsien flowers",²⁵ and, of a painting, that its climate or atmosphere possesses "shen and hsien"—"divinity and transcendence".²⁶ In all instances, *hsien* means "of surpassing refinement", "wonderful beyond mundane standards", and above all "reflecting the true world of the spirit".

V. Paradise

The land of the *hsien* is remote, and it is not in any one place. It is in the sky, beyond the great wastes of air, it is in the sea, across barren leagues of ocean, it is high in the mountains, cut off by sand and snow, it is deep in rocky caverns, beyond a maze of murky tunnels. But there can be no question that the divine garden of the Taoists is related to the Indic, Iranian and Semitic paradises. Even more remotely it is akin to the one in the far West where, by the River Oceanus, dwelt the Daughters of Evening, the Hesperidēs, guarding the golden apples with the help of a dragon. We see another version in the dirge for the king of Tyre,²⁷ which shows us primeval man "... in the garden of God, situate not in a desert plain but on the mountain of God. He wears glorious apparel, studded with gems." This paradise continues to exist, and may be rediscovered.²⁸ The northern Valhalla and the paradise of Islam, like the divine garden of the Chinese, are inhabited by eternally pure wish-maidens, outwardly indistinguishable from earthly beauties.²⁹ For the Indians there was Uttarakuru, the abode of the pious, a well-watered park covered with gems and flowers.³⁰ The Garden of Eden theme has continued strong in European tradition, reaching a high point in the zoological paradises of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, such as Cranach's *Earthly Paradise* and Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, with its "golden-fruited trees and crystalline air", and was still visible, in erotic and courtly transformation (as in late T'ang *yu hsien* poems) in the *Fêtes Galantes* of the eighteenth century.³¹

The favourite location for a paradise, whether in Far East or Far West, was the summit of an inaccessible mountain. For the Chinese, this world-mountain was identical with the home of the Indian gods, Mount Meru. Sometimes this was identified with Mount K'un-lun in Central Asia, near the sources of jade, where the daughter of God, the leopard-tailed "Royal

²³ "Huai Wu i shan ch'an shih", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 7, 82.

²⁴ "Chi Han lin Lu hsüeh shih", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 9, 96.

²⁵ "Shu wang teng Fu kan szu t'a, san shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 10, 99.

²⁶ "Shan Feng shih chün shan shui chang tzu", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 6, 70.

²⁷ *Ezekiel*, xxviii.

²⁸ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1956 ed., "Paradise".

²⁹ Stephen Wang, *Thesis*, pp. 120, 121; Wen I-to, *op. cit.*

³⁰ *Rāmāyana*, IV, 43, from O. Mānchen-Helfen, "The Later Books of the Shan-hai-king, with a translation of Books VI-IX", *Asia Major*, I (1924), 570.

³¹ See Jacques Combe, "Paradise in Paint", *The Selective Eye*, 1956/57 (New York), p. 172.

Mother of the West", kept the peaches of immortality.³² Sometimes, however, it was a rocky island in the Eastern Sea, often called P'eng-lai. So it is shown to us in these dream-poems of Kuan-hsiu. Elsewhere in his verses it is: "Within the sea—purple mists—P'eng-lai Isle!"³³

The paradise of the *hsien* was also conceived as a beautifully appointed palace (whose lofty buildings we have seen already in Kuan-hsiu's quatrains). These halls may be placed high in the aether, as in another of Kuan-hsiu's verses: "All go towards the palace of the *hsien*, above the sky . . ." ³⁴

Or a mountain itself might be conceived in the form of a palace: "The mountain is a palace of 'water germ' [crystal]." ³⁵ This identity between mountain and holy palace is also familiar in the Indic tradition—in Indo-China the palaces and temples of the ancient *devarājas* (such as the Bayon at Angkor) were replicas of Mount Meru, and indeed temples are still called *meru* in Bali. In this and other respects, the paradise legends of China are very close in form and colour to those of India.³⁶ In Kuan-hsiu's poetry they are also Buddhist. The Taoist imagery he uses stands for the Mahāyāna heavens—such epithets as "the silver land" are familiar in both Taoist and Buddhist traditions.

"Gardens of the *hsien*" are found often in Kuan-hsiu's poetry, and not always with reference to the distant paradise. He writes of an actual garden of pink camellias as a *hsien yu*³⁷ (strictly a *yu* is a walled garden, to retain specimens of wild animals), and of a southern garden that it bloomed as vividly as a *hsien p'u*³⁸ (*p'u* being strictly a *hortus*, a vegetable garden, or orchard). He even saw an apparition of the palace of the transcendents in the midst of an earthly garden: "The peach flowers seem to open up on a palace of the sylphs."³⁹ But these figures of speech are no mere empty compliments—Kuan-hsiu saw impressed on the gardens of this world the image of the deathless garden of the spirit.

VI. Golden Fruit and Jewelled Trees

The golden pears of Kuan-hsiu's dream, whose theft is a perilous venture of the soul, are the peaches of immortality in another guise. These

³² E. H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand; A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), p. 224, from the *Shan hai ching*. In the latter book, the goddess is actually placed on "Jade Mountain", one of the many names under which the world-mountain appears in *Shan hai ching*.

³³ "Liao hsien yao", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 11.

³⁴ "Yang ch'un ch'ü", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 1.

³⁵ "Shan chung tso", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 3, 30.

³⁶ Mānchen-Helfen, *op. cit.*, p. 579.

³⁷ "Shan ch'a hua", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 2, 18.

³⁸ "Yü tzu Chiāng tung", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 3, 29.

³⁹ "Ho Yang shih chün yu Ch'ih sung shan", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 3, 28.

last are sometimes golden peaches. Magnificent earthly peaches might be likened to them: the City-state of Samarkand sent the T'ang emperor specimens of both golden peaches and silver peaches, which were planted in the royal park,⁴⁰ and the poet Tu Fu wrote of "parrots pecking golden peaches" at a Buddhist temple in the mountains.⁴¹ Sometimes they are jade peaches, as those of the pharmacological "Canon of Shen Nung" which give eternal life: "even if you do not find it possible to swallow some early, if you take some on the day when death draws near, your corpse will not decay as long as heaven and earth shall last".⁴² Jade peaches may be found with jade plums and jade melons and many other jewel-like fruits at K'un-lun Mountain (so we are told in *Pao p'u tzu*). These are true mineral fruits, lustrous and translucent, which must be washed in the water from the Well of Jade before they will become soft enough to eat.⁴³ They are the divine originals of the earthly "sylphman's peaches" (*hsien jen t'ao*), red on the outside, and translucent on the inside, which grew even in a Chinese garden—these ripened only after a severe frost.⁴⁴ Tuan Ch'eng-shih reported the presence of these same "sylphine peaches" near a Taoist altar in Ch'en-chou in the ninth century—they had the power to cure all illness and evil.⁴⁵

The magical peaches appear in the fourth stanza of Kuan-hsiu's dream poem, poorly guarded by sleeping girls. Here they hang on a "coiled" tree. These coiled peach-trees ("coiled" for a word that suggests the sinuosity of serpents) appear often in Kuan-hsiu's verses—in a "coral land",⁴⁶ for instance, and in a Taoist paradise picture in word-figures typical of Kuan-hsiu: "snow-garbed women", "dragon palace", "silver basilica", and "black dragon".⁴⁷ The coiling peach is one form of the tree which bears the fruit of eternal life—it is a tree of incredible antiquity whose snaking branches have spread a thousand miles,⁴⁸ an idealized Far Eastern variant of the Indian banyan.⁴⁹ In one tradition it is ghost-haunted, and it fits well in the eerie atmosphere of Kuan-hsiu's vision. In his poem,

⁴⁰ Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, p. 117.

⁴¹ "Shan szu", *Chiu chia chi chu Tu shih*, ch. 12, p. 323 (Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series: Concordance to the Poems of Tu Fu).

⁴² *Shen nung ching*, quoted in *T'ai p'ing yü lan*, 967, 3b.

⁴³ *Pao p'u tzu* (*Szu pu ts'ung k'an* ed.), 20, 6b-7a.

⁴⁴ Yang Hsüan-chih, *Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi* (*Hsüeh chin t'ao yüan* ed.), 1, 18b.

⁴⁵ *Yu yang tsa tsu*, 18, 147.

⁴⁶ "Pieh hsien k'o", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 3, 37. See also "Huai Wu-i hung shih tzu, erh shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 4, 45.

⁴⁷ "Huan chü jen ko hsing chün", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 7. See below for more on the black dragon.

⁴⁸ *Han chiu i*, quoting *Shan hai ching*, as cited in *T'ai p'ing yü lan*, 967, 4a.

⁴⁹ For Taoist traditions of banyans, see E. H. Schafer, "Li Kang: A Rhapsody on the Banyan Tree", *Oriens*, 6 (1953), 347, 348. The name *p'an t'ao* "coiled peach" is given to *Prunus compressa* "Flat peach; Saucer peach" in modern botanical nomenclature.

Kuan-hsiu, the peach-thief, identifies himself with a dwarf of the time of Han Wu Ti who was banished to earth for having stolen the divine fruit.⁵⁰ This little creature appears elsewhere in Kuan-hsiu's verses,⁵¹ and seems, like Li Eight Hundred, to have had a special relationship to the poet. Probably he symbolized the sincere seeker of the pearl of wisdom, the fruit of eternal life, prepared to risk all in his venture.

The trees which bear golden pears and peaches, like the coiled tree, are only instances of the universal gem-tree, which is the tree of wisdom, the tree of life, the world-tree. It is described under many forms in the *Shan hai ching*.⁵² In *Pao p'u tzu* it is shown in its natural home on K'un-lun: "Whenever a wind comes up, the branches and twigs, flowers and leaves of the Tree of Pearls and Jade knock and clash one against the other, achieving of themselves the Five Tones, so clear and mournful that they move the heart."⁵³ The historical romance *Hsi ching tsa chi*, which portrays the brilliance and luxury of the court of Han Wu Ti, displays the imperial hunting park, a huge verdant diagram of the cosmos, planted with ten trees of white silver and ten of yellow silver⁵⁴—the royal park, like the royal palace, is akin to the abode of the blessed ones. Chien Wen Ti, ruler of Liang, whose verses ring with gemmy, metallic figures, wrote of jade peaches and silver trees,⁵⁵ and in the "Mystic Garden" (*hsüan p'u*) of K'un-lun he pictures

The sun reflected from roots of gold,

The wind shaking herbs of silver.⁵⁶

Such mineral trees are rarely found on earth, and then in miniature: they are the coral trees of Ocean, which made rich and royal gifts in the Far East. Wei Ying-wu, the T'ang poet who wrote many poems in praise of minerals, puts the branching sea-jewel in its proper place:

A crimson tree, lacking flowers and leaves,

Neither stone nor yet a gem-mineral,

In what place may the men of our age find it?—

For it grows on the summit of P'eng-lai.⁵⁷

The gem-tree appears a third time in Kuan-hsiu's dream sequence, as Kobayashi has rightly suggested, as the *ch'un* tree, *Cedrela sinensis*, sometimes "Chinese mahogany", famed since antiquity for its longevity.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ *Han Wu ku shih* (*Li tai hsiao shih*, ch. 4).

⁵¹ "Shu Ch'en ch'u shih wu pi, erh shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 17.

⁵² Mänchen-Helfen, *op. cit.*, p. 572.

⁵³ *Pao p'u tzu* (*Szu pu ts'ung k'an* ed.), 20, 6b-7a.

⁵⁴ *Hsi ching tsa chi* (*Szu pu ts'ung k'an* ed.), 1, 6a.

⁵⁵ "Nan chiao sung hsü", *Liang Chien Wen Ti chi*, in *Han Wei Liu ch'ao ming chia chi*, 5, 6a.

⁵⁶ "Hsüan p'u yüan chiang sung", *ibid.*, 5, 8b.

⁵⁷ *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, han 3, ts'c 7, ch. 8, 12a. This translation appeared earlier in Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, p. 246.

⁵⁸ *Chuang tzu*, "Hsiao-yao yü"; Kobayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 513; Schafer, *Li Kang*, p. 352.

The tree of jewels, like the heavenly garden, is widely known in the other great civilizations of Asia. Probably its Indian form, such as one with "silver trunk, gold branches, emerald leaves, pearls for fruits", was most directly influential in China.⁵⁹ But we find it again, more secular but not less enchanted, in the story of Aladdin, who found, in an underground grotto, an orchard whose trees "... bare for fruitage costly gems . . . in lieu of common fruits the produce was of mighty fine jewels and precious stones, such as emeralds and diamonds; rubies, spinels and balasses, pearls and similar gems astounding the mental vision of man".⁶⁰ This is also the Tree of Life in Milton's Eden, with its miraculous streams:

High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit

Of vegetable gold . . .

. . . from that sapphire fount the crisped brooks,

Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold.⁶¹

This Christian vision is almost identical with Kuan-hsiu's poetic dream of paradise. But Kuan-hsiu could also envisage the jewelled tree, with leaves of jade and branches of gold, in the garden of his royal patron the king of Shu.⁶² As we have seen already, he often had apprehensions of divinity in scenes of earthly beauty. But he saw the ultimate vision best in his dreams.

VII. The Land of Dreams

Kuan-hsiu's biographer, Kobayashi, has rightly made much of the role of dreams in the poet's thought and writing. Daydreaming was an important part of his life; he hardly distinguished between his experiences in the "real" world and those in the worlds of his dreams. This conception of a larger universe which includes both the everyday world of the senses and the land of dreams, reinforced by the idealist epistemology of the T'ien-t'ai sect (which had been important in Kuan-hsiu's native town), gives a unique flavour to his verses. They are full of dream visions of nature, the seasons, earlier incarnations, and the divine world. He represents these phantasmal twilight scenes in the language of Taoism:⁶³

⁵⁹ Such is one from Indian oral literature, noted, along with a diamond tree, an iron tree, a tree with leaves of jewels, golden fruits, golden flowers, etc., in Stith Thompson and Jonas Balys, *The Oral Tales of India* (Bloomington, 1958), pp. 194, 195. Similar trees are found in Indian literature, and "in the mediaeval romance of King Alexander". N. M. Penzer, *The Ocean of Story; being C. H. Tawney's Translation of Somadeva's Kathā sarit sāgara*, IV (London, 1925), p. 128, n. 2.

⁶⁰ Richard Burton's translation of "Aladdin; or, the Wonderful Lamp".

⁶¹ *Paradise Lost*, IV.

⁶² "Yao ming", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 3, 25. Written for the king's birthday.

⁶³ Kobayashi, *op. cit.*, pp. 509, 512, 517, 523, 526, 527. Kobayashi believes that the existence of a copy of the four *Meng yu hsien* stanzas in the poet's own calligraphy in Sung times (reported in *Hsüan ho shu p'u*) indicates that this set had a special meaning for him, distilling, perhaps, the essence of his belief in the interpretation of the two worlds.

I burn incense, and invoke the spirits of the sea—

I open my eyes, and move about within a dream.⁶⁴

Kuan-hsiu often feels the approach of mysterious and spectral apparitions; these supernatural presences prove the closeness of the unseen world:

At Black Mountain, the sunset clouds do not redden;

Under the white sun, ghosts follow men.⁶⁵

Or again: "The mountain gods move about in white sunlight."⁶⁶ Above all, the divine land, the focus of his spiritual aspirations, could be visited in dreams.

The theme of the dream-journey to *hsien*-land was well developed in late T'ang poetry. Two other good poets of the early tenth century, Hsü Hsüan and Han Wo, both wrote sequences on this theme. Kobayashi does not think that either writer was able to convey the atmosphere of the all-enveloping dream world as well as Kuan-hsiu.⁶⁷ However that may be, Kuan-hsiu's interchangeable worlds have respectably ancient antecedents in the dream parables of Chuang-tzu. Or they can be traced back to the shamanistic soul voyages of the *Ch'u tz'u*, an ever-renewed source of inspiration to the poets of China, for whom the theme of escape from the vexations of life has had a perpetual appeal.⁶⁸

Another way of seeing Kuan-hsiu's vision of life is in terms of the Taoist theory of the spiritual world. In this, the inner world of each man, populated by a hierarchy of deities, was a replica of the eternal macrocosm outside. One might search for the immortals in the mountain solitudes, or find them in one's own body in an ecstatic trance.⁶⁹ Kuan-hsiu found them also in dreams. But his belief is paradoxical. On the one hand, "real" life, the world of ordinary experience, is illusory. On the other hand, the "more real" world—whether hidden deep within the personality or placed far beyond the external sensory world—is also a fantasy and illusion. The solution must be that our earthly dreams give us glimpses of the genuine nature of things, and so are no illusions after all. Or better yet, both visions, those of the inner and the outer eye, grant us some inkling of the ultimate vision, so that in the end, the earthly garden and the garden of K'un-lun are the same. Both are actualizations of the ideal Platonic form—mere lithographic or photographic impressions of the radiant world of eternity.

Kuan-hsiu was physically infected by his philosophy. To some of his

⁶⁴ "Sung seng kwei Jih-pen", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 6, 65.

⁶⁵ "Sung yu jen hsia ti yu pien", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 5, 49.

⁶⁶ "Wen Wu-hsiang tao jen shun shih, wu shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 5, 49.

⁶⁷ Kobayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 511, 512.

⁶⁸ On this subject, see especially David Hawkes, "The Supernatural in Chinese Poetry", *The Far East: China and Japan (University of Toronto Quarterly Supplement)*, 5, 1961, especially p. 323.

⁶⁹ H. Maspero, *Le Taoïsme (Mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l'air la Chine)*, II; Paris, 1950), p. 137.

contemporaries he seemed himself to be a dream image. His friend Wu Jung wrote of him: "Departing or coming, he is like a dream, or even like a cloud."⁷⁰

VIII. The Colours of the Unseen World

Colour words have an important role in Kuan-hsiu's poems, as they do in the writing of many of his contemporaries and predecessors. The *language* of colour appeals to the mind more vigorously than the *sense* of colour.⁷¹ In literary creations, it may "... be compared to a vague resonance, an undertone, which gives the description a note of mysterious depth but defies definition".⁷² Or rather, it defies final definition. The chromatic aura of a poem can be partially analysed, and its spiritual meaning partially identified, even though all such analyses, like all commentaries and explications, can at best be only relative and suggestive.

In Kuan-hsiu's four-stanza dream of the transcendental world, three colour images are used, other than those plainly derived from metals and minerals. These three are "purple", "pentachromatic", and especially "white". Let us look at each in turn.

"Purple" translates Chinese *tzu*, though our classical purple, closer to crimson than the modern, was more like the medieval Chinese word. Both derive from the name of a dye (in the West from the mollusc *Murex*, in the East from the herb *Lithospermum*), and both western and eastern words have long since lost the connotation of "pigment".⁷³ Kuan-hsiu saw the heavenly halls wreathed in "purple vapour", and indeed both the word and the phrase are common in his poetry, and both are favourite images in the Taoist tradition. They suggest magical auras and unearthly radiance. "Purple" is the colour of ectoplasms and spectral visitations. Of a potent sword in "Song from above the Frontier", Kuan-hsiu writes: "The sword is broken, but can still give out a purple vapour",⁷⁴ which reminds us of a ghostly line in a similar poem of border warfare, in which the hue of the emanation is

⁷⁰ Wu Jung, "Chi Kuang-hsiu shang jen", *T'ang ying ko shih*, in *T'ang szu ming chia chi* (*Szu pu ts'ung k'an*), a, 6b.

⁷¹ Sigmund Skart, "The Use of Colour in Literature; A Survey of Research", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 90 (1946), 174: "'Colour sense' is not given physiologically or psychologically, but to a great extent depends upon language training and language tradition. [quoting L. Weisgarber:] 'We never find man as a natural creature, only as a language creature, grown into a world of ideas which belongs to his mother tongue.'"

⁷² Skart, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁷³ A great many Chinese colour words come from pigment names, especially textile dyes—particularly common are green (*lü*), scarlet (*chiang*), and red (*hung*). All of these had become general colour words before T'ang times, and no new pigment-words seem to have come into use as colour names in that era. Colour words derived from minerals are not uncommon, but few seem to have been drawn from other parts of nature—words originating in plant names, for instance, comparable to our "violet", "orange", and "rose", seem to be very rare.

⁷⁴ "Se shang ch'ü, erh shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 2, 15.

not stated: "Rotten bones let out a spectral light."⁷⁵ I suspect that it was purple.

Water of "five colours" is a liquid which displays the gamut of values, the total spectrum of reality. The pentachromatic image is very old in China, and always refers to objects of the greatest physical beauty, such as "five-coloured parrots" from the Indies, or to rainbow symbols of the greatest spiritual worth, such as "five-coloured clouds". The two categories are hard to distinguish and often intermingled—thus "five-coloured birds" were always heaven-sent portents of great good fortune. For Kuan-hsiu, "five-coloured" also means preternaturally gifted, unusually sensitive to values, as was the five-coloured writing brush of the poet Chiang Yen,⁷⁶ or it is symbolic of the divine, as when it describes the marrow of the "phoenix" (*feng-huang*),⁷⁷ or the auroral hues of an interstellar crisis.⁷⁸

White is the most prominent of the colour-images which Kuan-hsiu uses to create the sense of divine apparitions. His poems are strikingly white-washed. They shine with white peonies,⁷⁹ white fungi,⁸⁰ white unicorns,⁸¹ white monkeys,⁸² and white water.⁸³ Not only is the moon white,⁸⁴ but the rain is white,⁸⁵ and of course frost and snow occur abundantly. Moreover, white is for Kuan-hsiu the colour of marvellous gems, stones full of mana, crystals of holiness.⁸⁶ Our dream-journey tetralogy is luminous with white things: the silver house, the moon-pearl, the land of nacre, the ghostly dragon, the jade sand, and perhaps even Li Pa-po, the final syllable of whose name contains the "white" phonogram.

The folkloristic basis of this performance is easily found in the multitude of early Chinese historical records of white creatures which were omens of divine blessings. As for the Chinese Elysium in P'eng-lai, "... its creatures, both birds and beasts, are all white".⁸⁷ Other poets, notably Li Ho, have exploited the spirituality of whiteness,⁸⁸ and it is possible that Kuan-hsiu was indebted to Li Ho, whose writing has been compared to his. But the white of Li Ho is a wavering, feverish, will-o'-the-wisp white, while the white of Kuan-hsiu is a steady, spiritual, angelic white.

⁷⁵ "Ku ch'ü shang ch'ü, ch'i shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 5, 59.

⁷⁶ "Shang Chiang-nan-fu chu san jang te cheng pei", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 3, 33.

⁷⁷ "Ni chün tzu yu so szu, erh shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 2, 21.

⁷⁸ "Wen ying chen shen", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 11, 109.

⁷⁹ "Fu kuei ch'ü, erh shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 5.

⁸⁰ "Chi Chiang lin pieh shu Hu chin shih hsiung ti", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 8, 88.

⁸¹ "Sung li pu Liu hsiang kung ch'un tung ch'uan", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 6, 66.

⁸² "Tsai yu Tung lin szu tso, wu shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 11, 112.

⁸³ "Ch'un wan hsien chü chi Ch'en Sung-po", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 10.

⁸⁴ "Po ch'iu Chiang", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 2, 20.

⁸⁵ "Chi Wang ti", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 2, 20.

⁸⁶ See especially "Ku i, chiu shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 5.

⁸⁷ *Shih chi*, 28, 0115a.

⁸⁸ See Arai Ken, "Ri Ga no shi—toku ni sono shikisai ni tsuite", *Chügoku bungaku hō*, 3 (1955), 61-90.

Among all peoples and in all times, by far the holiest and most widespread ceremonial colour is white, or, with metallic sheen, silver. As the symbolic colour of diffused light and reflection, of light and what is bright in general, of the supermundane and celestial, the absolute and the pure, white is the sign of the supreme gods of heaven and the things of nature and of culture that are assigned, dedicated, and consecrated to them (sacred natural sites or holy ways of life; garments; edifices). Since the dead are often considered to be connected with the celestial powers, white is also, by the law of correspondence, the symbolic colour of death, and so of mourning, among many simple and higher nature-religions. . . . In present-day nature-religions of Asia, white marks out the scene of shamanistic ceremonies, which in northern Asia is usually a lonely clearing in the birch forest where white hares' pelts and bleached white horse skulls hang, and white or lightly coloured animals, mostly horses, are sacrificed.⁸⁹

Kuan-hsiu's white images, perhaps remotely inspired by Li Ho's magical palette, are also, on a different level, distantly related to the white Siberian birches and the bleached horse skulls of Mongolia.

IX. The Dragon

Kuan-hsiu's dragons are never the conventional blue or green dragons of the formal symbology. He prefers the ghostly white dragon of his personal vision, a creature realized in a hypnotic trance. It appears elsewhere as a black dragon. The white version of the water-spirit, a weird, uncanny beast, is nevertheless friendly. There is no menace in him, though he is somewhat sceptical of the mortal's intentions. He is the Dragon Ladon, guarding the apples of the Hesperides. He is also the disguised fish caught by an ancient Taoist angler,⁹⁰ and a symbol of the secret world which is not easily apprehended; he is the white dragon frequently reported in historical records as a portent of good government⁹¹; he also takes the form of a rainbow-maiden, a white-sleeved dancer, an avatar of the ancient goddess of rain.⁹²

We find the sinuous draconiform lady in one of the many poems in which Kuan-hsiu conjured up an image of the distant past.⁹³ He associates many of his most characteristic images with her: gold, white jade, chalcidony, silver peach-trees; and also typical aural images, which are reinforced

⁸⁹ Paul Fickeler, "Fundamental Questions in the Geography of Religions", *Readings in Cultural Geography* (Chicago, 1962), p. 99.

⁹⁰ *Lieh hsien chuan* (*Pi shu nien pa chung*), b, 9b. This same dragon appears also in Li Po, "Liu pieh ts'ao nan ch'un kuan chih Chiang-nan", *Li T'ai-po wen chi*, 13, 2b.

⁹¹ Abundantly reported in Chin times, for instance. See *Sung shu*, 20, 1502c.

⁹² Kobayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 510.

⁹³ "Ku i, chiu shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 6.

by the bell-like rhyme—*yang, t'ang, t'ang, ch'uang, hsiang*. This antique belle is shown, as in a mural painting, posed with a magic sword in her hand before a fairy hall, her long gown of ancient design trailing behind her, as if she were dancing or flying through the air.

The lovely person is like a roving dragon,
Cloaked in a costume of golden wood-ducks;
In her hand she holds a foot-long ancient sabre—
There she is, by that white jade hall!
A banded, fretted gown⁹⁴ tugs and pulls behind,
Chalcedony belt-bangles cry "ting! tong!"
A pleasant wind blows the peach blossoms—
Flake by flake they fall on the silver bed.

* * * *

What hinders me from lifting⁹⁵ feather and quill—
From soaring away in the distance, in pursuit of the Vermilion
Bird?

In the dream-voyage poem she becomes a white dragon, guardian of the ultimate secret, and also an initiated spirit inspecting a neophyte.

In his (or her) black version, the dragon derives from the *li lung* of *Chuang tzu* (*li* is the glossy black of animal fur; it is the black of royal horses; "sable" describes it well)—the numinous animal in the deep abyss, which keeps a wonderful pearl under its chin.⁹⁶ We have already seen this sable basilisk (n. 47), and we shall see him later in Kuan-hsiu's verses, as protector of the "luminous moon bead", the pearl of great price. Kuan-hsiu sometimes fits the pearl to the beast, and makes it a "sable bead". Black or white, he (she) is Argus, Cerberus, and St. Peter.

X. Gold and Silver

Kobayashi observed that Kuan-hsiu's verses are full of ringing metals. He made much of the aural effect—the clanging of swords and bells—which he thought of as vividly intensified sounds from the world of dreams.⁹⁷ No doubt this is true, as far as it goes. My own impression is there are two important kinds of metallic image in Kuan-hsiu's writing: first, the metaphorical sheen of gold and silver, emblems of beauty, worth, and incorruptibility; and second, the charm, mystery, and resistance to time of archaic artifacts—old bronze mirrors, bells from forgotten temples encrusted with patina, the swords of ancient heroes. The important

⁹⁴ The word here is *shen* "deep", which I take to stand for *shen i*, the name of a Chou dynasty robe.

⁹⁵ *Chü*. Some editions have *hsüeh* "study".

⁹⁶ *Chuang tzu*, "Lieh Yü-k'ou".

⁹⁷ Kobayashi, *op. cit.*, pp. 414, 415.

physical attribute is lustre rather than resonance; the eternal spirit shines through.

Though we find both tin and iron in the poems, both appear rather casually. But gold and silver are very important:

In the silver land there is no dust—gold chrysanthemums open;
Purple pears and red jujubes fall on the moss and lichen;
One deep of autumn waters—one wheel of moon—
Will he come this night, my old friend, or not come?⁹⁸

There is some doubt about the identity of the author of this quatrain. It appears in the *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, but has also been attributed to Yü Fu, Kuan-hsiu's little known contemporary.⁹⁹ In any event, the imagery is of a kind congenial to Kuan-hsiu, and the poem shows, as well it might for him, a man longing for the presence of a friend in his garden, envisaged as a co-dweller in paradise. Paradise had always been a land of gold and silver: the palaces of the sacred sea-isles were made of gold and silver,¹⁰⁰ and tradition had Lao-tzu holding court in high buildings of gold and halls of jade, whose stairways were of silver.¹⁰¹

The poems of Kuan-hsiu are richly embellished with gold: swords, tiles, statues, cauldrons, saddles, tables, pillars, mountains, bones, writing, *hsien*/*ryi*, a lion, an osprey (!), a bush-warbler. And he wrote this excellent couplet in a poem about the soldiery:

Yellow gold chain mail armour—

The wind blows—its colour is like iron.¹⁰²

Gold came from Tibet, which was also K'un-lun;¹⁰³ the Taoist immortals were golden, and gold was essential to the brews of the alchemists, for whom it was a sovereign tonic and life-lengthener.¹⁰⁴ Moreover gold, the uncontaminated metal which never reacts to the crasser substances of this world, stood for the Buddha, the "golden Man", all of whose divine attributes were "golden".¹⁰⁵ "Golden" is an intensified form of "yellow". In many parts of the world it is the colour of the sun, symbolizing wisdom and faith,¹⁰⁶ though this usage was unimportant in China. There it was rather the colour of holy images and potent elixirs.

Silver is even more important than gold in Kuan-hsiu's colour imagery. It is a brightened white, and Kuan-hsiu is very fond of white. He uses

⁹⁸ "Chao yu jen su", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 11, 116. Also in the *Szu pu t'sung k'an* ed. ch. 22. Also in *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, han 12, ts'ê 3, 11, 8a.

⁹⁹ Yü Fu (fl. 841), "Chüeh chü", *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, han 8, ts'ê 10, 9b.

¹⁰⁰ *Shih chi*, 28, 9115a.

¹⁰¹ *Pao p'u tzu* (*Szu pu t'sung k'an* ed.), 15, 11a.

¹⁰² "Chan ch'eng nan", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 3.

¹⁰³ Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, p. 254. The Golden Chersonese, Suvarnadvipa, seems not to have been very important in mediaeval China.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁰⁶ Fickeler, *Fundamental Questions*, p. 100.

"silver", like gold, both naturalistically and metaphorically. He writes of silver melons, silver rivers, and silver waves,¹⁰⁷ and, in the context of the supernatural world, of silver houses, silver palace halls, and the silver hair and beards of the transcendent *hsien*. Silver was of some importance to the Taoists, though it contained less *mana* than gold: the alchemists had achieved, it seems, a paste called "silver tallow", an amalgam of silver, tin and mercury, which was prescribed even in the official government pharmacopoeia as a tonic for heart and spirit; and they had other strange and magical kinds of silver.¹⁰⁸ Even the Taoist alchemist himself is silvery, though stained with pink. Kuan-hsiu wrote of an old hermit, possibly a man surviving from an earlier age, whose magical crucible gave off "purple vapour", and whose flesh looked like "red silver".¹⁰⁹ But Kuan-hsiu's silver is more a Buddhist than a Taoist metal. He tells repeatedly of the "silver land", which though it is sometimes the isles of the sylphmen, is also and more often the paradise of the Buddha, and at the same time a place at the great T'ien-t'ai monastery. He writes of this last in a poem addressed to a friend leaving for T'ien-t'ai: "It is pleasant to search out the Buddha's Cave, and stroll to the Silver Land".¹¹⁰ Here, as always, an earthly garden reflects the image of the eternal world.

XI. Minerals and Gems

The dream world of Kuan-hsiu is weighted and illuminated by stones, mainly precious stones. Kobayashi noticed this, and commented that this tendency was already present in the monk's youthful work "On Reading the *Li Sao Ching*", in which the waves of the Hsiang River are silver, and the bones of Ch'ü Yüan altered to precious jade.¹¹¹ The four dream-poems also display this typical stony coloration. And besides the minerals found there, other poems glitter with coral, crystal, ice, red salt, sulphur, amber, diamond, orpiment, as well as archaic minerals whose identity was long since forgotten. Kuan-hsiu used even faded mineral names in full concreteness: he employs *tan* "cinnabar (vermilion)" not just as an attributive colour-word, but as a substantive in the ancient manner, rather than the more usual *tan-sha*: "The courtyard fruit is coloured like cinnabar."¹¹² A single poem contains "Seven jewelled couch", "jade", "yellow gold

¹⁰⁷ But compare Li Po, "Szu-ma Chiang chün ko", *Li T'ai-po wen chi* (in T. Hiraoka, *T'ang Civilization Reference Series*, 9; Kyoto, 1958), 4, 6b, which has this line: "The white waves in the River are like silver houses".

¹⁰⁸ Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, p. 256.

¹⁰⁹ "Chiang pien tao shih", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 7, 67.

¹¹⁰ "Han yüeh sung hsüan shih ju T'ien t'ai", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 3, 27. Cf. a poem of Hsü Ni (fl. 813), "T'ien-t'ai tu yeh", *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, han 7, ts'ê 10, 2a, which tells of "Silver Land" and "Stone Bridge" at T'ien-t'ai.

¹¹¹ Kobayashi, *op. cit.*, pp. 513-17.

¹¹² "Chi Wu lung shan Chia t'ai ch'u shih", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 7, 81.

chain", and "great waves like silver mountains".¹¹³ Another has "purple gold walls", "pearl house", "beryl/glass gate", "crystal portiere", "jade", and "stone bridge".¹¹⁴ Matched phrases like "jade image; pearl niche"¹¹⁵ are common, as are matched verses like

Silver wheels follow precious horses,
Jade pools reveal golden turtles.¹¹⁶

The splendid palace of Kuan-hsiu's patron, the king of Shu, provided him with an abundance of mineral images. In a poem written in 938, he calls it a crystal palace, hears "jade tallies and gold bangles echoing like thunder", and sees orpiment-throated (or as we would say, "silver-tongued" or "golden-throated") philosophers offering rare gems to the great king.¹¹⁷ All of this is a vision of paradise as it was reflected in the sublunary world. Not only the urban world but the world of nature is stonier than the familiar one of our everyday experience. Like the Tibetans, who could envisage a mountain as a pile of gems, "where diamond rocks glitter" near "a lake with a mirror like turquoise and gold",¹¹⁸ Kuan-hsiu visualized a harder than normal landscape: "In front of the window the old snow is like white stone."¹¹⁹

Now let us inspect the mineral images of the four dream-journey poems more closely, beginning with the lapis lazuli or ultramarine dresses of the fairy women. Kobayashi thought that the word *se-se* in this verse stood, as often, for blue gemstones, and compared this tableau of gem-studded gowns to the jewelled visions of Edgar Allan Poe's stories.¹²⁰ But in fact *se-se* is here not the name of a gemstone but of a colour, a usage introduced by Po Chü-i and much exploited by poets at the end of the ninth century. These are not dresses decorated with lapis lazuli beads,¹²¹ but azure dresses or ultramarine dresses ("azure" in English once meant "lapis lazuli"; ultramarine is a pigment made of powdered lapis lazuli). *Se-se* is an intensification of the blue dresses (*ch'ing i*) habitually worn by the servant girls in T'ang romances. Blue was traditionally contrasted with reddish hues in Chinese poetry, to carnelian for instance, and in the ninth

¹¹³ "Ku i, chiu shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 1, 6. Cf. n. 107 above for the silver waves of Li Po, who is actually named in Kuan-hsiu's stanza, and has presumably been borrowed from directly.

¹¹⁴ "Sung Yang hsiu ts'ai", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 3, 31.

¹¹⁵ "Tsai yu Tung lin szu tso, wu shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 11, 112.

¹¹⁶ "Shou ch'un chieh chin", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 8, 85.

¹¹⁷ "Shu wang ju Ta tz'u szu t'ing chiang", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 10, 99.

¹¹⁸ B. Laufer, *Notes on Turquoise in the East* (Field Museum of Natural History, Publication 169, Anthropological Series, Vol. 13, No. 1; Chicago, 1913), p. 10, n. 3.

¹¹⁹ "Chiang ju K'uang shan pieh fang chou erh kung, erh shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 3, 31.

¹²⁰ Kobayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

¹²¹ For the identification of this mineral (the name also seems to stand for similar deep blue stones, as sodalite, and sapphire), see Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, p. 333.

century frequently to a crimson dye called "gibbon's blood". All of this goes back to the faded old cliché *ch'ing tan*, originally "azurite and cinnabar", become merely "blue and vermilion".¹²² For this azure/vermilion contrast, Kuan-hsiu substitutes an azure/gold one, the dresses matching the pearls in the second stanza of *Meng yu hsien*.

The "luminous moon pearls" which the blue-garbed maidens toss with such impunity are the true dragon-pearls, concretions of *mana*, externalizations of the inner light. The girls (who are also dragons) use them to knock down the fruit of Eden, the food of immortality. The moon-pearls appear in a number of Kuan-hsiu's poems, once in the possession of a sable-black dragon,¹²³ and again in the hands of mysterious beings who ride white elephants into the clouds.¹²⁴ They are moons reduced to pearl size, and they contain the lunar essence. In popular lore the moon-bead was the plaything of the rain-dragon, and, under Indian influence, was the *cintāmani*, the wish-fulfilling jewel. In the Taoist materia medica, it was placed among the life-extending drugs.¹²⁵ This Far Eastern pearl-of-great-price, which shone of itself, was actually known all over Asia, from the Manichaeans of Serindia, for whom it was the first among the jewels, to the temple of the Dea Syrica at Hierapolis, where it shone in the night.¹²⁶ An old Chinese tradition placed a gigantic version of it in the Far West, reporting a luminous moon bead two feet in diameter in a remote golden tower—it shed its light over a distance of 2000 *li*.¹²⁷ The actual materials from which models of these pearls of majesty and wisdom could be manufactured were mostly, it seems, the phosphorescent organs of marine animals, especially the eyes of whales (that is, of sea-dragons!), and pieces of the greenish luminescent mineral chlorophane.¹²⁸

Kuan-hsiu reveals the untainted world of the spirit as an untinted nacreous land; its colour is pearly white. It is constructed of *musāragalva*, one of the "Seven Precious Substances", the Indian *saptaratna*. The Chinese word seems most often to have referred to the shining white shell of a giant mollusc, which we call Neptune's Cradle. In antiquity the substance, imported by merchants, had been regarded as a rare stone, and used to make wine-cups.¹²⁹ Along with silver houses, moon pearls, and jade sand, this skeletal pelagic material constitutes the divine white landscape of P'eng-lai.

¹²² See Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, pp. 233, 234.

¹²³ "Ni chün tzu yu so szu, erh shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 2, 21.

¹²⁴ "Sung seng ju shih huang", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 6, 71. They appear again, metaphorically, in "Shang Sun shih chün", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 2, 18.

¹²⁵ Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, pp. 237, 243, 245.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 237, 238.

¹²⁷ *Shen i ching* (in *Han Wei ts'ung shu*), p. 10b. This text is traditionally attributed to Tung-fang Shuo, but actually seems to be a work of the first or second century A.D. See Herbert Franke, "Zur Textkritik des Shen-i ching", *Oriens Extremus*, 8 (1961), 131.

¹²⁸ Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, p. 238.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 245, and p. 337, n. 254.

The sacred dragon appeared beside a gemlike pool. "Gemlike" translates *yao* rather weakly. In T'ang times *yao* stood for "antique gem material, identity uncertain, but very precious and supremely beautiful". The word occurs often in Kuan-hsiu's verses, as in those of other poets of the age. He writes realistically of "*yao* stairs" (steps of handsome stone), and metaphorically of "*yao* herbs" (plants of gemlike beauty). But the magic pool of *hsien*-land gets its real meaning from the lake of K'un-lun, the residence of Hsi Wang Mu, where that divine queen entertained the "Well-disposed Son of Heaven" (*Mu T'ien tzu*), the far-wandering king of Chou.¹³⁰ Above all, *yao* is an epithet of water in its many forms, and it may be that all such images derive finally from the gemmy lake of K'un-lun. The mysterious *yao*, which resembles especially the colour of water, is as commonly used of herbs and grasses—in short, it may be an archaic word for blue, green, or glaucous stones—we find it often in the *Chou li* and *Tso chuan*, where it describes the minerals which ornament ritual bronze vessels, and archeology indicates that we may have to do with turquoise or malachite, or both. Though it is uncertain whether this colour association actually survived in language, and whether the link between *yao* and water had become an unquestioned stereotype, it was much used by the poets of the centuries between Han and T'ang. Chiang Yen and Yü Hsin come to mind, but Pao Chao was especially fond of the word. His "gemmy (*yao*) waves",¹³¹ "gemmy (*yao*) tarn",¹³² and "gemmy (*yao*) whirlpool"¹³³ are typical. But perhaps these phrases are better rendered as "turquoise waves", "turquoise tarn", and "turquoise whirlpool". In either case, all are reflections of a pond of paradise.¹³⁴

The eternal river flows over jade sand. In Kuan-hsiu's poetry "jade" is descriptive of rich halls and their stairways, of a zither, of a tree, of beautiful faces, of dew, of frost, and even of poetry. None of this is too startling, since "jade" is always the epithet of perfection—especially of clear, translucent white, of ultimate purity. Jade was the product of Khotan, near the home of the gods in the Tibetan massif, and it was appropriate that the lustrous stone should be the building stone of the heavenly halls. It was a moonstone, and its characteristic hue was suet-white, which stood equally for the beauty of women's flesh and the pure truth and sincerity of elevated minds.¹³⁵ Kuan-hsiu's jade sand appears in another of his poems, typically in the landscape of a dream: "Once I dreamed of blue lotuses reflected on

¹³⁰ *Mu t'ien tzu chuan* (*Han Wei ts'ung shu*), 3, 1a; cf. *Shih chi*, 123, 0269a.

¹³¹ Pao Chao, "Fei po shu shih ming", *Pao shih chi* (*Szu pu ts'ung k'an* ed.), 10, 7a.

¹³² Pao Chao, "Fu-jung fu", *Pao shih chi*, 1, 5b.

¹³³ Pao Chao, "Po yün", *Pao shih chi*, 5, 5a.

¹³⁴ Tu Fu also wrote of this pool: "He looks off to the west, to the turquoise pool", referring to the legendary journey of Lao-tzu into the far west. Tu Fu, "Chiu hsing", ch. 13, p. 48.

¹³⁵ Schaffer, *Golden Peaches*, pp. 224, 225.

jade sand."¹³⁶ It appears frequently in the verses of other eighth and ninth-century poets. Wei Shu (?-757) matches "jade sand" with "gold pylons".¹³⁷ Tan Wei (fl. 773) pairs it with bricks of ice,¹³⁸ while the ninth-century Taoist poet Ts'ao T'ang, of whom we shall have more to say later, couples it with flowing water in an environment of turquoise herbs and peach flowers.¹³⁹ Jade is the candid mineral—it is just right in the stream-beds of paradise.

XII. Influences and Comparisons

Among the sources and inspirers of Kuan-hsiu's concrete images and their imaginative overtones, aside from the authors of the almost anonymous shamanistic poetry of the remote past, we note particularly, between Han and T'ang, Pao Chao, whose mineral waters we have already mentioned, and Chien Wen Ti, the poetic monarch of Liang, whose metallic shrubbery has also been alluded to. Indeed the emperor-poet seems to have been even a greater source of inspiration to Kuan-hsiu than was Li Po, whose authority was repeatedly acknowledged by the Buddhist fantast.

Here is a sample expression of Kuan-hsiu's reverence for Li Po, taken from a poem written about a portrait of his great forerunner (the "solar horns" were conventional iconographic signs of divinity):

His solar horns float in purple vapour,

Icily pure, beyond our grime;

Though we name him "Li, Great White One" [planet Venus],

I know he is the quintessence of that star . . .¹⁴⁰

Kuan-hsiu, deeply conscious of the spirituality of whiteness, thought of Li Po's given name as richly significant of that poet's spirit.

Many anticipations of Kuan-hsiu's writing can be found in the poems of Li Po, or, contrariwise, many reflections and even imitations of Li Po can be detected in Kuan-hsiu's compositions. Although Li Po's verses are not so richly mineralized as those of Juan-hsiu, mineral images can readily be found in them, particularly "jade" used in a Taoist context, as in "the crane seems to fly to the Jade Capital".¹⁴¹ But the supernatural content of these images is often very faint—many of Li Po's "trees of jade" are simply handsome earthly trees; we do not sense the divine in his verses to the

¹³⁶ "Ch'ou Chou hsiang kung chien tseng", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 10, 102.

¹³⁷ Wei Shu, "Feng ho sheng chih sung Chang Yüeh shang chin hsien hsüeh shih szu yen", *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, han 2, ts'e 6, 5a.

¹³⁸ Wei Tan, "Kan ch'ün shih", *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, han 4, ts'e 10, 6a.

¹³⁹ Ts'ao T'ang, "Hsien tzu tung chung yu huai Liu Juan", *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, han 10, ts'e 2, 1, 2b. The "jade sand" was not merely poetic: the geographical sections of *Sung shih* and *Chin shih* tell of it, presumably referring to some kind of alluvial deposits, either of jade, or chalcedony, or some other semi-precious stone.

¹⁴⁰ "Kuan Li Han-lin chen, erh shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 4, 39.

¹⁴¹ Li Po, "Ti Sui-chou Tzu-yang hsien sheng pi", *Li T'ai-po wen chi*, 23, 4b. And cf. "The yellow crane shakes its wings of jade", in "Chiang hsia sung yu jen", *ibid.*, 16, 3a.

degree that we do in those of Kuan-hsiu. But one of Li Po's jade figures seems to have directly influenced the second quatrain of Kuan-hsiu's dream voyage sequence. The earlier master wrote of his journey to T'ai-shan in 742 as an allegory of a trip to a Taoist paradise: on the way he encounters "four or five jade women".¹⁴² Unquestionably these became the pearl-throwers of Kuan-hsiu's vision.

Li Po's love of the transcendents is apparent in very many of his poems. The line "I am going to study how to go away to sylphdom"¹⁴³ is one of many such. He often writes of sky-roving,¹⁴⁴ and he is fascinated by the world of dreams. One of his most famous poems, set to music by Gustav Mahler in *Das Lied von der Erde*, begins (in Arthur Waley's translation) "Life in the world is but a big dream . . .",¹⁴⁵ and elsewhere he says that he "climbed to Heaven on a ladder of dark clouds", "looked down on a bottomless void of blue; // Where the sun and moon gleamed on a terrace of silver and gold", (again Arthur Waley's version).¹⁴⁶ He writes "in dreams, time after time, I journey in the mountains of the *hsien*",¹⁴⁷ and looking over the Eastern Sea towards Fu-sang he says, "Its silver terraces and golden pylons appear as in a dream."¹⁴⁸ Like Kuan-hsiu, Li Po owed his dream symbolism ultimately to *Chuang tzu*, and he even devoted a poem to that ancient's butterfly dream.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, we find the same Buddhist-Taoist syncretism in Li Po's work that we do in Kuan-hsiu's.¹⁵⁰

But, as Arthur Waley has shown, Li Po had to confess ". . . that he had not in him the stuff of an immortal . . ." ¹⁵¹ And indeed, compared with Kuan-hsiu, Li Po is earthbound, though his imagery is superficially similar. His Taoist poems are more immediately personal and emotional, less transcendently visionary and ideal than Kuan-hsiu's. Li Po's gem-trees are lovely objects in natural gardens—not symbols of the tree of life and wisdom. While Li Po constructs intense, radiant landscapes to express the aspirations of his heart, Kuan-hsiu paints polished, luminous mirages to objectify his vision of eternity. Li Po cannot describe the Eternal City—he longs for it, but he has not seen it.

¹⁴² "Yu T'ai shan, liu shou", *ibid.*, 17, 8a.

¹⁴³ "Ju P'eng li ching Sung men kuan shih ching. . .", *ibid.*, 20, 9b. And compare "Ku yu so szu", 4, 4b; "Ts'ao ch'uang ta huan tseng Liu kuangti", 9, 7a; "An lu pa chao shan t'ao hua yen chi Liu shih yu wan", 11, 9a.

¹⁴⁴ "Tseng Chang kung chou ko ch'u shih", *ibid.*, 8, 1b.

¹⁴⁵ A. Waley, *The Poetry and Career of Li Po A.D. 701-762* (London and New York, 1950), pp. 48, 49.

¹⁴⁶ Waley, *op. cit.*, pp. 42, 43.

¹⁴⁷ "Hsi t'u kwei shih men chiu chü", *Li T'ai-po wen chi*, 20, 1b.

¹⁴⁸ "Teng kao ch'iu erh wang yüan hai", *ibid.*, 4, 1a.

¹⁴⁹ "Ku feng, wu shih chiu shou", *ibid.*, 2, 2b. It is translated by Waley in *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹⁵⁰ Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 17.

Some of Kuan-hsiu's contemporaries wrote poetry which shows resemblances to his. One of these was Ts'ao T'ang (fl. 860-73), most of whose surviving verse is in the *yu hsien* style.¹⁵² His elegant "seven word regulated" poems are decorated with familiar imagery derived from Taoist legend, but have, as a new feature, figures of speech taken directly from the Taoist canon, including even the cabalistic literature of alchemy.¹⁵³ Like Kuan-hsiu and other Taoist poets he uses many mineral images—his verses abound in jade trees, gemmy/turquoise/*yao* herbs, and silver beards. Here is one of his ninety-eight "little stroll to sylphdom" (*hsiao yu hsien*) poems; this one shows an alchemist in his hidden cave:

In stony grotto, by sandy stream—twenty years!
The sun, ferrying towards daylight, dawns in a night sky.
Smoke from white alum is used up, the quicksilver is cold—
He is not aware that a small dragon sleeps beneath his couch.¹⁵⁴

Though well mineralized, in a rather straightforward way, this poem is not typical. Most of Ts'ao T'ang's stanzas resemble the popular "court style poems" (*kung ts'u*). They show dainty, coloured fairylands, where gorgeous princes and exquisite maidens hold court, as if in lotus-land.¹⁵⁵ These lines lack the dreamlike quality of Kuan-hsiu's transcendental scenes—the lurking presences are not there. The atmosphere is enchanting rather than enchanted. Ts'ao T'ang's paradises are opaque, phenomenal, Watteau-like—Kuan-hsiu's are transparent: we slide through the sensuous texture of sounds and colours into the ultimate, blinding reality, whose symbols all these bright images are.

If we look hopefully for similarities to Kuan-hsiu's verses in the work of his good friend Wu Jung (fl. 889), which sometimes has a Taoist flavour and frequently displays the rich colours characteristic of this sunset age, we look in vain. Wu Jung's imagery is very unlike that of Kuan-hsiu's—rather than stones and gems, Wu Jung prefers peonies, bush-warblers, butterflies, and the simple joys of wild nature.¹⁵⁶

XIII. The Minerals of Paradise

Kuan-hsiu's dream-journey quatrains, despite their specialized mineral imagery, are comparatively plain, uncomplicated poems. They do not present us with intricate linguistic puzzles, as do some of the poems of Wen T'ing-yün, for instance. They show a quietly shining silvery paradise, set against the background of the decomposing culture of T'ang. This world of dreams

¹⁵² Chu Kuang-ch'ien, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ch'uan T'ang shih*, han 10, ts'e 2. I am not sure that I have understood the second verse of this poem rightly. However, *hang jih* "ferrying sun" makes a fine image, accidentally suggesting the barge of the Egyptian sun-god.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. n. 18 above.

¹⁵⁶ Wu Jung, *T'ang ying ko shih* (in *T'ang szu ming chia chi*).

reminds us (to take comparisons from painting) more of the simply radiant pictorial allegories of William Blake, than of the gorgeous erotic fantasies of Hieronymus Bosch or of the richly jewelled fabrications of Gustave Moreau.

At first we might recall the gnome-activated mineral world of Erasmus Darwin:

Hence silvery Selenite her crystal moulds,
And soft Asbestos smooths his silky folds;
His cubic forms phosphoric Fluor prints,
Or rays in spheres his amethystine tints.
Soft cobweb clouds transparent Onyx spreads,
And playful Agates weave their colour'd threads;
Gay pictured Mochoes glow with landscape-dyes,
And changeful Opals roll their lucid eyes;
Blue lambent light around the Sapphire plays,
Bright Rubies blush, and living Diamonds blaze.¹⁵⁷

Despite the skill and imagination which have gone into their composition (they are regularly underrated as illustrating the pathetic fallacy and violating Pope's fundamental canons, and held up as supreme examples of "bad" poetry), these eighteenth-century couplets are not really akin to the fantasies of Kuan-hsiu. This is no paradise scene—it is a transformation of the findings of natural science into the language of fancy and mythology.

Neither are Kuan-hsiu's mineral images isolated metaphors of the ordinary kind. They are not to be compared with our "golden hours", "flinty heart", "marble cake", "ruby lips", or "clouded sulphur"—let alone to such decayed mineral images as "azure sky" and "adamant will". They do not simply transfer colour, lustre or some other physical attribute of a segment of the natural world to another part of that world or to some part of the mental world. They are elements and qualities of a whole crystalline structure which symbolizes the longed-for paradise, where the heart is content. These are such qualities as permanence and vivid coloration and radiance, which stand for the complete realization of the total human personality. Minerals—metals and precious stones in particular—are immortal, always fresh, bright, hard, sharp, unsusceptible to mould and decay. Kuan-hsiu reveals an untarnished world to us. It shines with the original lustre of the first day of creation.

It must be remembered too that the gems which make up the heavenly halls of Kuan-hsiu's dream are not the faceted, glittering, transparent jewels of modern times. He takes his images from *medieval* gems, which we would regard as "semi-precious"—they were flat slabs and rounded cabochons, or spherical beads—in any case, smoothly polished, opaque,

¹⁵⁷ Erasmus Darwin, "The Economy of Vegetation", in *The Botanic Garden*, Canto II.

coloured stones. His is not a sparkling world of tinted ice, but a solid world of coloured stone.

But Kuan-hsiu's mineral world, despite its superficial rigidity, seems to me to show the quiet and slow fluidity of petrological process. The entities which populate this dreamland are realized stalactites, coagulated salts, or gems crystallized out of the primordial magma. Instead of giving us a marble frieze, an agate cameo, or a sculpture in ice, the poet-priest seems rather to show us a world which shares the qualities of such fluid materials as quicksilver and the soft gold of the alchemists. His dreams are not frozen pictures. They are alive, but with the immensely slow life of rocks.

Appendix: A Word on the Arhat Pictures

Kuan-hsiu was a renowned painter, as much in his lifetime as he is now, and although his pictorial art is beyond the limits of my competence, we may observe certain affinities between his work with paint and his compositions in words. Of the portraits of arhats which he painted on the commission of a pharmacist in Hang-chou in the state of Wu-yüeh, he remarked: "Whenever I depict an Honoured One (*Ārya*), I always pray that I will get a reflection of his true image in a dream. Then I will achieve it."¹⁵⁸ The true nature of divine beings can be discovered in dreams.

Many arhat paintings attributed to Kuan-hsiu survive in Japan, the best known being a series of sixteen in the Imperial Household Collection in Tokyo. There is some difference of opinion about the authenticity of this set, and, if they are copies or imitations, about how close they may stand to the originals.¹⁵⁹ One authority, Max Loehr, believes it highly probable that they are the original work of Kuan-hsiu.¹⁶⁰ If this is so, it is worth remarking that each saintly figure is shown on a rocky seat or in a bizarre niche, either in the face of a cliff or under an overhanging rock. Here we have the mineralogical or geological side of Kuan-hsiu's fancy again.

Caves and grottoes were, of course, a regular part of the paraphernalia of Taoist mythology. The sacred mountains were permeated with tunnels leading to "grotto heavens" (*tung t'ien*), haunted by every kind of spirit. In the supposed Kuan-hsiu paintings we find gnarled Buddhist supermen sitting in jagged stone niches which are in fact amalgams of the great Buddha-enclosing sacra of Bamiyan and Lung-men with the traditional spirit-caverns of the Taoist wonder tales. In his poetry, Kuan-hsiu often

¹⁵⁸ *Sung kao seng chuan* biography, and see Kobayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 529. For other anecdotes about the arhats as seen in dreams see Wu Jen-ch'en, *Shih kuo ch'ün ch'ü*, 47, 3b-4a.

¹⁵⁹ S. Shimada, "Concerning the I-p'in Style of Painting—II", (translated by James Cahill), *Oriental Art*, n.s. 8/3 (1962), 8, does not grant the authenticity of any of the arhat paintings, and indeed Shimada thinks that those in the Imperial Household Collection are less representative of his style than some in private collections.

¹⁶⁰ Max Loehr, "Chinese Paintings with Sung Dated Inscriptions", *Ars Orientalis*, 4 (1961), 220.

alludes to the latter, especially as "grottoes of the transcendentals" (*hsien tung*)¹⁶¹ and "caverns of the transcendentals" (*hsien k'u*).¹⁶² Here is a couplet describing such a stony netherworld:

In the obscure depths there is a byway which communicates with
the caverns of the transcendentals;

Still and quiet—there is no man there—but strange flowers fall.¹⁶³

Kuan-hsiu also wrote of a holy man in his niche—"lodged upright in a room of purple stone"¹⁶⁴—in a way which makes it difficult to know if he is describing a real saint in a trance or only a stone image. But perhaps the painter did not find the difference too important. Indeed the arhats of the Kuan-hsiu paintings seem themselves to be carved in stone. They have been sculptured from eroded, lichen-infested limestone. Their craggy brow-ridges and rocky ribs suit their rugged, misshapen crypts very well. But these Buddhist "transcendentals", in their narrow, mineral utopias, have as little to do with the ethereal maidens in jewelled orchards which we encounter in Kuan-hsiu's poems as with the angels of the flaming, adamant heaven of the Christians. But perhaps their grottoes were conceived as splendid fairy caverns, dripping with calcite stalactites, which are familiar in the Taoist tradition. These would be closer to the paradise scenes of the poems. In any case, they seem right for Kuan-hsiu—they could well represent an Indianized version of his immortal, mineralized world, shown in carbon-black ink, standing in contrast to the native Chinese version displayed in the polished vocabulary of the Taoist poets.

GLOSSARY

<i>Persons</i>		Yen Yü	嚴羽
Ch'eng Jui	成汭	Yü Fu	俞允
Chiang	姜	<i>Books</i>	
Chiao-jan	皎然	Ch'an-yüeh chi	禪月集
Han Wo	韓偓	Hsi yüeh chi	西岳集
Hsü Hsüan	徐鉉	<i>Words</i>	
Hsü Ni	徐凝	cheng-jung	嵒嶸
Kuan-hsiu	貫休	ch'un ("cedrela")	椿
Li Pa-po	李八百(百)	chü-ch'ü ("nacre")	車渠
Tan Wei	耿漳	se-se	瑟瑟
T'an-yü	曇域	shen (i)	深[衣]
Ts'ao T'ang	曹唐	yao	瑤
Wei Shu	韋述	yu hsien	遊仙
Wu Jung	吳融		

¹⁶¹ *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 5, 53.

¹⁶² *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 5, 56.

¹⁶³ "Shan chü, erh shih wu shou", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 12, 117.

¹⁶⁴ "Shu wu-hsiang tao-jen an", *Ch'an-yüeh chi*, 6, 64.