

Distant Roaming and Visionary Ascent: Sun Chuo's "You Tiantai shan fu" Reconsidered*

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Sun Chuo 孫綽 (ca. 314 – ca. 371) was one of the most prominent and influential writers of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420) period.¹ Together with Xu Xun 許詢 (300?–356?) he is considered a major exponent of the *xuanyan* 玄言 (“neo-daoist”) poetry which extensively discoursed on Daoist concepts in diction close to philosophical texts. Flourishing during the Eastern Jin, this type of didactic verse has been held in very low esteem ever since the early 6th century. To later readers these poems sounded abstruse, “flat and insipid,” “more philosophy than poetry”.² Although Sun Chuo was a prolific author, very little of his works remains – only 37 poems *shi* 詩 and 45 pieces and fragments of prose *wen* 文 attributed to him survive.³ The best known work among his corpus is “You Tiantai shan fu” 遊天台山賦 (Rhapsody on Roaming the Celestial Terrace Mountains). Its literary qualities were appreciated by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), who included it as the only composition by Sun Chuo in the *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature) anthology. Echoes of this composition are perceptible in later poetry and prose ac-

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- 1 Sun Chuo's birth and death dates are extremely controversial. Alternative datings are discussed in Cao Daoheng 曹道衡, “Jindai zuojia liukao” 晋代作家六考, *Wenshi* 20 (1983), 187 and Li Wenchu 李文初, “Dong Jin shiren Sun Chuo kaoyi” 東晉詩人孫綽考議, *Wenshi* 28 (1987), 208–211.
- 2 Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (ca. 465–518), *Shi pin* 詩品, in Wang Shumin 王叔岷 (ed.), *Zhong Rong Shi pin jian zheng gao* 鍾嶸詩品箋證稿 (Taipei: Zhongjuyuan Zhongguo wenzhi yanjiu suo, 1992), 62. In his ranking of poets Zhong Rong relegates Sun Chuo to the third grade, which reflects his low assessment of the *xuanyan* in general. Similar opinions on *xuanyan* poetry are expressed by Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465 – ca. 522) in *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (“The Literary Heart and Carving of Dragons”) and Shen Yue 沈約 (441–512) (*Songshu* 67). For overviews of the 6th century criticism on *xuanyan* verse see Donald Holzman, “Landscape Appreciation in Ancient and Early Medieval China: The Birth of Landscape Poetry,” in *Chinese Literature in Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Ashgate: Variorum Collected Studies Series, 1998): 125–130 and John D. Frodsham, “The Origins of Chinese Nature Poetry,” *Asia Major* 8 (1960–1961), 68–73.
- 3 *Suishi* 35.1067 lists an edition of his collected works in 15 *juan*, and the commentary mentions a Liang edition that had amounted to 25 *juan*. The fifteen *juan* edition is also entered in the bibliographical sections of *Jiu Tangshu* (47.2065) and of *Xin Tangshu* (60.1588), but does not appear in later dynastic bibliographies. Sun Chuo's surviving compositions are collected in Lu Qinli 逯欽立, *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 897–902 and Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762–1843), *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyi chubanshe, 1997), vol. 4: 633–649. Cao Daoheng questions Sun Chuo's authorship of several late encomia *zan* 贊 on Buddhist monks, and of one early poem (Cao, “Jindai,” 187–188).

counts, for example in the landscape poems of Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433). Nevertheless, even today this rhapsody remains much neglected in the literary history of the Six Dynasties period, evading more serious attention of scholars of the history of Chinese literature. If studied, it is mentioned above all in the context of discussions of *xuanyan* 玄言 verse, especially to illustrate the blending of Buddhist and Daoist philosophies typical of the 4th century *xuanyue* 玄學 currents of thought.⁴ Recent scholars have also recognized elements of novel appreciation of landscape in this composition and even regard it as an early harbinger of the landscape poetry, *shanshui shi* 山水詩.⁵ Nevertheless, these occasional references to "You Tiantai shan fu" appear almost exclusively in discussions of broader literary or ideological issues and, while emphasising certain aspects of the rhapsody, they do not attempt to provide a consistent analysis of the text with a view of its literary context. The present study aims to reconsider the "You Tiantai shan fu" in terms of motifs, imagery and poetic conventions and their broader connections to the poetic traditions of Sun Chuo's time. It will examine the central theme of the rhapsody – the "roaming" *you* 遊 – and explore some of the literary and religious traditions that had informed Sun Chuo's unique adaptation of it. A better understanding of the significance of the journey theme can help us evaluate the complex meanings of the rhapsody and its place in the literary developments of the Jin dynasty.

Actual travels and spiritual journeys

Sun Chuo's rhapsody is included in the *Wenxuan* category "Youlan" 遊覽 (Sightseeing, *juan* 11). This thematic category contains two more compositions – Wang Can's 王粲 (177–217) "Denglou fu" 登樓賦 (Climbing a Tower) and Bao Zhao's 鮑照 (414–466) "Wucheng fu" 蕪城賦 (Weed-covered City). Quite similar is the category titled "Jixing" 紀行 (Recounting Travels, *Wenxuan*, *juan* 9–10), which comprises three personal travel narratives by Ban Biao 班彪 (3–54), his daughter Ban Zhao 班昭 (ca. 49 – ca. 120) and by Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300): "Beizheng fu" 北征賦 (Northward Expedition); "Dongzheng fu" 東征賦 (Eastward Expedition) and "Xizheng fu" 西征賦 (Westward Expedition) respectively.⁶ All these rhapsodies record actual travels undertaken by the poets and recount places charged with historical meaning which they had visited. They develop the *langyu* 覽古 (looking into antiquity) theme, with the sites visited evoking famous events or heroes from the past and reflection upon them. The memories of the past are often aroused by the ascent to a high place – a hill, wall or tower – and by gazing into the distance from the top, and are interspersed with personal expressions of melancholy, homesickness

4 See for example Bi Wanchen 毕万忱, "Lun Wei Jin Liuchao fu de dao jia qingxiang" 论魏晋六朝赋的道家倾向, *Shibui kexue zhanxian* (1997.1), 116–118. The pioneering article of Richard B. Mather, "The Mystical Ascent of the T'ien T'ai Mountains: Sun Ch'o's Yu-t'ien-t'ai-shan fu," *Monumenta Serica* 20 (1961): 226–245, remains, to my knowledge, the only study of this rhapsody in Western language. Prof. R. Mather similarly focuses on the philosophical implications of this composition. A commented translation is provided in David R. Knechtges (trans.), *Wen Xuan or Selections of Refined Literature*, Vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 243–253.

5 For example Gu Nong 顾农, "Dong Jin xuanyan – shanshui shifu de qishou – Sun Chuo" 东晋玄言 – 山水诗赋的旗手 – 孙绰, *Jimei daxue xuebao* 5.2 (2002), 59; Wang Jianguo 王建国, "Lun Sun Chuo de wenxue gongxian" 论孙绰的文学贡献, *Shandong shifan daxue xuebao* 51.5 (2006), 51; Holzman, "Landscape Appreciation," 138–139.

6 All translated in Knechtges: *Wen Xuan*, vol. II, 165–261.

or unfulfilled ambitions. Sun Chuo's rhapsody, although similarly recording an ascent of an actual mountain, is very different from this travelogue tradition. In the preface to the rhapsody the poet emphasises that his journey is purely imaginary, taking place in the mind alone. Furthermore, in the course of the rhapsody the depiction of travels among real mountainous nature is transformed into a spiritual journey whereby his mind soars beyond the physical aspects of landscape. In this respect we should consider the relation of Sun Chuo's ascent to another type of travels, prominent in early medieval poetry – namely imaginary journeys through the cosmos. The ancient theme of celestial journey, called by David Hawkes *itineraria*,⁷ appears in different modifications in early Chinese poetry. By the time of Sun Chuo it had been adapted to the theme of quest of Daoist *xian* 仙 – immortality – and had become a hallmark of the *youxian* 遊仙 (roaming into immortality) verse, which was later distinguished in the *Wenxuan* anthology as a special thematic category of the *shi* poetry. Most generally, the *youxian* verse described mental journeys, free wanderings of the poets' thoughts and aspirations into the higher realms of the *xian*-immortals, perceived as a religious, intellectual or aesthetic experience.⁸ Considerations of the evolving of the mystic journey theme in early Chinese poetry and its transformations within the *youxian* verse might provide us a key to a better understanding of Sun Chuo's rhapsody and of its relation to the literary developments of the Eastern Jin period.⁹

The mystic journey in the *Chuci* poetry

Descriptions of distant celestial journeys had been one of the major themes in the ancient *Chuci* 楚辭 anthology. In its basic form the *itineraria* involves a magic flight through the sky in a chariot drawn by flying dragons or a phoenix, with a retinue of gods and spirits which the traveller commands at his will. This theme is well developed in the most ancient poems – in the “Jiuge” 九歌 (Nine Songs) which are believed to have been designed to accompany a ritual of invocation, perhaps a religious dance or pantomime.¹⁰ The magic journey is intimately connected with the major theme of these hymns – namely the shaman's quest of the deity. “Lisao” 離騷 (Encounter with Sorrow) attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (late 4th – early 3rd century BC) took over and further developed the motif of magic-making journey, along with the fantastic imagery and with the theme of the quest of a “Fair One,” *meiren* 美人 (here symbolically representing a worthy lord). Of course, in Qu Yuan's long autobiographical poem the theme of celestial travel is no

7 David Hawkes, “The Quest of the Goddess,” *Asia Major* 13 (1967), 71–94.

8 A good overview of the development of the *youxian* poetry during the Six Dynasties period is provided by Li Fengmao 李豐楙, “Liuchao daojiao yu youxian shi de fazhan” 六朝道教與遊仙詩的發展, *Zhonghua xueyuan* 28 (1983).

9 To my knowledge, only Xu Gongchi has pointed out the connection of “You Tiantai shan fu” to the *youxian* poetry. In a brief discussion of this rhapsody he regards it as a blending of the *youxian* and *xuanyan* currents of verse. See Xu Gongchi 徐公持 (ed.), *Wei Jin wenxue shi* 魏晉文學史 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1999), 499. Chen Wancheng has studied the relation of this composition to Daoist religious beliefs and practices. While drawing on relevant texts from the Daoist canon he, nevertheless, does not consider the links of “You Tiantai shan fu” to the *youxian* theme or any other related themes in early medieval Chinese poetry. See Chen Wancheng 陳萬成, “Sun Chuo You Tiantai shan fu yu daojiao” 孫綽遊天台山賦與道教, *Dalu zazhi* 86.4 (1993), 187–192.

10 David Hawkes (trans.), *The Songs of the South. An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and other Poets* (Penguin Books, 1985), 95–97.

longer connected primarily with a religious ceremony; rather, it has been partly secularised and transformed into an allegorical expression of the poet's resentments and sorrows. A further transformation of the theme of cosmic flight can be observed in the "Yuanyou" 遠遊 (Distant Journey) which dates back to the second half of the 2nd century BC.¹¹ Lacking the elaborated symbolism and political allegory of the *Lisao* this composition describes the mystical journey of a Daoist adept through all quarters of the cosmos which takes him away from the sorrows and afflictions of the human life on earth and ends in ecstatic oneness with the Dao itself. As this poem provided the model for many early medieval accounts of mystic travels and, as our analysis will show, has deeply influenced Sun Chuo's rhapsody, it deserves special consideration here.

In a manner typical for the *sao* 騷 tradition the cosmic travels in the "Yuanyou" are intimately linked with the protagonist's afflictions in the human world of his time, which provide an immediate stimulus for searching an escape into the realms beyond. The poet apprehends the corruption of the present world, feels isolated from his contemporaries and is aware of the continuing advance of time. As an alternative to the restrictions of human existence he recollects famous immortals of the past ages, such as Fu Yue 傅說 and Han Zhong 韓眾, and declares his determination to follow their example. In this way the beginning of the poem juxtaposes two distinct modes of being and presents two separate conflicting worlds.

Thereafter the "Yuanyou" delineates the successive stages by which the adept perfects himself in order to leave the world of men and set off on a cosmic journey. "Yuanyou" describes actual methods of Daoist self-cultivation of the period: concentration and self reflection, absorption of cosmic exudations and respiratory exercises. In the course of these the mortal human body is shed away, the spirit is strengthened and released for the upcoming journey. The hero ultimately becomes able to visit the great immortal Wang Ziqiao 王子喬 in the South and to hear from him instructions on the nature of Dao and on nurturing the vital breath. Being initiated into the secrets of the Dao, the poet is capable of reaching the lands of immortals and meeting the Feathered immortals (*yuren* 羽人) on Cinnabar Hill, Danqiu 丹丘. He then wanders to the mythical lands of sunrise and sunset, appropriating the animating energy of sun, which further strengthens his spiritual being.¹² With his body purified and etherealised to the utmost, the poet is transported to the higher realms of nature. He rises on a floating cloud to the Changhe 閭闔 Heavenly Gate and beyond to the Taiwei 太微 (Great Tenuity) starry palace. The Changhe Gate became a permanent landmark in the subsequent descriptions of cosmic journeys, where it always tests the visionary travellers at the transitory point to Heaven and indicates a passage between planes of being.

Having successfully passed the trial of the Changhe gate, the poet embarks on the celestial journey proper. The account exploits the conventions of the *itineraria* theme as developed in the earlier poetry of the *Chuci* anthology. The poet advances surrounded by a magnificent entourage of ten thousand chariots, riding an eight-dragon harness, with cloud banners and rainbow stan-

11 This poem has been traditionally considered to be an authentic part of Qu Yuan's literary corpus. D. Hawkes, (*ibid.*, 191) however, ascribes its authorship to the circle of poets and philosophers at the court of Liu An 劉安, Prince of Huainan 淮南王 (d. 122 BC), which combined Daoist mysticism with an enthusiasm for Chu poetry, and which also produced the first edition of the *Chuci*.

12 A visit to the sites of ancient solar mythology – the Valley of Dawn, Tanggu 湯谷, and the Fusang 扶桑 tree, both situated in the East – became a recurrent trope in the later poetry which treated the quest of Daoist immortality. East was generally considered to be the locus of nascent life, the cardinal direction of inception and animation for all living beings.

dards flapping in the wind and phoenixes soaring above, commanding numerous gods and deities in his retinue. In contrast to the older *Chuci* poems, however, the “Yuanyou” journey is performed in a highly regular and symmetrical space. It takes the form of a cosmic circuit, during which the traveller approaches the guardian powers of the four directions in due order, before the culmination in the centre. From the Court of Heaven the poet sets off to visit the realm of the East, presided over by the god Tai Hao 太皓 and its tutelary spirit Gou Mang 句芒, and thence to the westernmost quarters, ruled over by Xi Huang 西皇 and the deity Ru Shou 蓐收. His aerial flight takes him then to the Fiery God 炎神 of the South and its guardian Zhu Rong 祝融, and finally to the northern end of the world where he meets the god Zhuanxu 顓頊 and the attendant spirit Xuan Ming 玄冥.¹³ From the four quarters of the world the poet then rises to the summit of the celestial vault – to the lightning’s fissures, and descends deep down to the Great Abyss (Dahe 大壑) to conclude his journey in the centre, where all distinctions dissolve in the Unity of the Grand Primordium.

The protagonist of “Yuanyou” successively traverses a clearly outlined, mandala-like cosmos, defined by the four cardinal points and the six co-ordinates. This highly schematised space is reduced to the abstract cosmographic pattern prevalent in Han thought and art.¹⁴ The fantastic lands through which the poet passes are not described but are evoked through their presiding divinities. Nor is there any account of the experience of reaching these distant quarters. Only the significant points that define the cosmos are of intrinsic interest to the poet, not the passage between them. Although the poem records movement taking place in some sort of time, the narrative development is conceived not as a temporal progression but above all as a spatial order. In this “recitation of an action”¹⁵ the journey proceeds with sudden leaps from one point in space to another.

As at the end of “Lisao,” in the middle of his ecstatic journey the hero of “Yuanyou” glimpses his old home below and his heart is overwhelmed by nostalgia and longing for all he has left behind. In “Yuanyou” the facing of the old home with all it represents is conceived as one of the last obstacles in the journey towards the Dao – namely, the overcoming of one’s earthly identity and casting away of all human affections. And after the hero has brushed his tears away, “suppressing the wilful thoughts, in control once more,” he rises even higher.

13 The presiding gods of the cosmic directions and their tutelary spirits are the same as those given in the treatise *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (*juan* 3 and 5), which dates back approximately to the same period as *Yuanyou*. See Liu Wendian 劉文典, *Huainan bonglie jiji* 淮南鴻烈集解 (Taipei: Wenshi zhe, 1992), 87–89 and 185–186.

14 The unified cosmographic system, dominating the Western Han thought can be visually illustrated by the so-called “ILV” system of decoration of the contemporary bronze mirrors. It represents a highly symmetrical and unified symbolic microcosm, reconciling two views of the cosmos based on the Five Phases and Twelve divisions respectively. See Michael Loewe, *Ways to Paradise: The Chinese Quest for Immortality* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), 60–85.

15 D. Knechtges hesitates to use the term “narration” for this type of verse and introduces the expression “recitation of an action” instead. See David R. Knechtges, “A Journey to Morality: Chang Heng’s Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery,” in *Essays in Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Fung Ping Han Library (1932–1982)*, ed. Ping-leung Chan (Hong Kong, 1982), 165. D. Hawkes similarly argues that the language of the *Chuci itineraria* is not narrative, but enumerative, and sees in the principle of orderly enumeration an archetype which is in origin essentially magical and religious. He traces it back to the shaman’s orderly enumeration of parts of the cosmos, as exemplified by two other poems from the *Chuci* – “Zhaohun” 招魂 (Summoning the Soul) and “Dazhao” 大招 (The Great Summon) (Hawkes, “The Quest,” 89–90).

One of the last stages of the mystical progress is a feast with music and dance in the company of goddesses. The positioning of this musical interlude immediately before the climax of the cosmic peregrination is typical of the *itineraria* plot in the *sao* and subsequent *fu* tradition. Only through the rapture of music and dance the poet is transported beyond all bounds and limits. Paul Kroll links the euphoria produced by this interlude with the ecstasy achieved through the dance of the shaman.¹⁶ Music's ability to exalt the listener to zones beyond linguistic or rational distinctions here takes the form of an abrupt, intuitive breakthrough to the pre-beginnings.

The scene of the feast also includes the only appearance of women in the "Yuanyou" – the river goddess of the Luo and the Xiang. In contrast to "Lisao" the goddesses here are not the object of a frustrated quest but are present as equal partners in mutual entertainment. It is important to note that, unlike the *itineraria* in the "Jiuge" and in the "Lisao," the cosmic journey in "Yuanyou" is motivated neither by a search for a divine mate nor for an appreciative ruler, but is an intrinsic part of his way towards immortality. The ecstatic circuit through the heavens and the four directions becomes in itself a means of knowing and possessing all Under Heaven.

By rising beyond the world and ecstatically traversing the quarters of the sky the protagonist develops special powers – he is transported to the Grand Primordium (Taichu 太初), to the mysterious pre-beginnings of the universe prior to phenomenal differentiation, where the Dao is found in its most essential form.¹⁷ At the culmination of his journey the hero enters the paradoxical totality which stands beyond all dualities:

下崢嶸而無地兮	In the sheer steepness below, earth was no more –
上寥廓而無天	In unending infinity above, heaven was no more;
視儻忽而無見兮	As I beheld the flickering instant, there was nothing to be seen –
聽惝怳而無聞	Giving ear to the humming hush, there was nothing to be heard.

In the mystic void of the pre-beginnings the hero enters a timeless, spaceless state of being, and merges with the Dao. It is significant that what is described here is not merely a mental state of mystic insight or a temporal (rather pre-temporal) stage of the evolution of phenomena, but also a realm situated in space. Generally in Daoist texts there is a fluid boundary between temporal and spatial notions. The names of cosmogonic phases in many cases do not merely denote temporal stages from the primordial past, but also cosmic regions or heavens.¹⁸

16 Paul W. Kroll, "On Far Roaming," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116.4 (1996), 658.

17 Daoist cosmology perceived the movement from the undifferentiated Dao to the multiplicity of the world as a sequential process, consisting of several cosmogonic stages. A comprehensive list of cosmogonic periods is provided in *Liezi* ch. 1: 6 with Taichu being the second: Grand Change (Taiyi 太易), Grand Primordium (Taichu 太初), Grand Inception (Taishi 太始), Grand Simplicity (Taisu 太素). Taiyi is the period, when the *qi* is still not visible (*wei jian qi* 未見氣); Taichu, the second period is defined as the "inception of *qi*" (*qi zhi shi* 氣之始); Taishi is the inception of the forms (*xing zhi shi* 形之始) and Taisu is the inception of the matter (*zhi zhi shi* 質之始). The same list had, in fact, appeared in the *Qianxiao du* 乾鑿度 (Chiselling Out the Laws of *qian*), an apocryphon on the *Yijing* from the 1st or 2nd century AD. On Taichu see also *Zhuangzi* 12 [Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (ed.), *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Taipei: Wanjuan lou, 1993), 424].

18 Such are, for example, the Grand Simplicity (Taisu 太素), the Grand Void (Taikong 太空), the Grand Non-being (Taiwu 太無).

The mystic journey in the Han rhapsodies *fu*

The model of “Yuanyou” underlies most of the Han *sao* and *fu* poems, which treat the theme of mystic celestial flights – Sima Xiangru’s 司馬相如 (179–117 BC) “Daren fu” 大人賦 (Rhapsody on the Great Man), Liu Xiang’s 劉向 (77–6 BC) “Yuanyou” 遠遊 (Distant Journey), Zhang Heng’s 張衡 (78–139) “Sixuan fu” 思玄賦 (Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery), etc. These compositions adapt the theme of imaginary journeys to ends different from those of the “Yuanyou” in *Chuci*, e.g. for glorification and delectation of the imperial patron, as in “Daren fu,” or as a rhetorical device, as in “Sixuan fu”. In plot, diction and vocabulary, however, they are closely modelled after it.

The celestial travels in them are detached from the quest topos and take the form of a smooth ritual circuit of the cosmos. In all of them it is the process of journeying by itself that imparts the traveller with transcendental powers. At the key points of his cosmic circuit the hero acquires additional knowledge and powers which propel him to the next phase of his pilgrimage. Essential stages are a preliminary instruction from an ancient sage or an immortal, purification and transformation of the body through physiological practices, ethereal diet and absorption of elixir substances, association with the animating essence of the sun, successive exploration of all the coordinates of the universe, thus acquiring power over their divinities, ritual banquet in the presence of divine women and heavenly music, which exalts the hero to the highest spheres. The ultimately achieved transcendence in the “Yuanyou” and the later compositions modelled on it, is conceived both as a state of being and as a realm situated in space, which has been reached by the hero.

Post-Han developments

The theme of distant celestial flights was adopted and further developed in the poetry that described the quest of immortality and otherworldly paradise realms. While in the *Chuci* tradition it is possible to discern a fairly uniform *itineraria* plot, the post-Han *youxian* verse presented a variety of topics and motifs that can hardly be subsumed under one single scenario. In their accounts of mystic exploits poets such as Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–233), Xi Kang 嵇康 (223–262), Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300) and Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) freely mingled *Chuci* mystic quest poetics, early Daoist descriptions of free and easy roaming (*xiaoyao you* 逍遙遊), Daoist techniques of levitation and more “popular” imagery from the *yuefu* songs. Often the cosmic journey interweaves with the theme of elixir quest. A common feature shared by these poetic works is that the experience of reaching the higher realms and higher states of being is no longer important. The transition, earlier conceived as a graduated progress of acquiring powers and transforming the self, in the 3rd and 4th centuries often becomes compressed in the volitional expressions *yuán* 願 (“I yearn”), *yù* 欲 (“I wish”), *xiǎng* 想 (“I imagine”) which indicate that it is the conscious act of imagination that transports the poet beyond the confines of his limited and limiting human existence. These verbs not only imbue the accounts of “roaming into immortality” with strong personal presence, but also suggest a certain interiorisation of the journey, whereby the flights into the beyond are undertaken in the mind alone, being perceived more as a spiritual experience rather than a distant pilgrimage.

During the 4th century another significant transformations of the “roaming into immortality” theme can be observed. Instead of leading into distant otherworldly realms, the fantastic journey in search of immortality often unfolds on the scale of earthly mountains.

For a proper understanding of this new turn it is important to note that the very ideal of immortality had undergone a significant change by that time. Authors such as Ge Hong 葛洪 (284–364) privileged the concept of the terrestrial immortal (*dixian* 地仙) who lingered in absolute freedom and everlasting life in this world amid the great mountains and rivers instead of rising at once to Heaven.¹⁹ Although in the divine hierarchy he belonged to an inferior grade, compared to the Heavenly immortals (*tianxian* 天仙), he enjoyed more freedom and bliss than his celestial counterparts, who were burdened by a number of tedious bureaucratic duties.²⁰ The immortals who chose to remain on earth, evading celestial service, were, in fact, the recluses of the divine spheres, and they took the same attitude towards the heavenly administration that the social recluses took towards the terrestrial one. About the same time there was formed the concept of the “grotto-heavens” (*dongtian* 洞天). These were perfect worlds in miniature, contained on earth within certain sacred mountains and interconnected by means of underground passages. The immortals roamed for pleasure in these subterranean paradises, but only a few initiated mortals could find their elusive passageways and penetrate them.²¹

Furthermore, side by side with the “roaming into immortality,” the theme of life in reclusion (*zhaoyin* 招隱, “beckoning the recluse”) achieved prominence during the third century. Although it is possible to single out typical poems on reclusion and typical poems on journeys into immortality, no clear-cut boundary exists between them, and both were coloured by the ideas and language of the *xuanyan* poetry. It was the setting above all that determined the thematic category under which a poem was later classified in traditional nomenclature, as can be seen in the *Wenxuan* anthology. While the *zhaoyin* poetry describes the alluring wilderness of remote mountains, the *youxian* verse is generally set in higher otherworldly realms.²² Both themes of *youxian* and *zhaoyin*, however, offered poetic stylizations of idealised worlds, and in the course of the 4th century the rather artificial borderline between them became increasingly blurred. In the poetry of the period the images of the transcendental immortal and of the Daoist recluse, sharing the same mountainous surroundings and the same attitude towards “mandated” service, often merge

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- 19 On Ge Hong's ideal of “terrestrial immortals“ see Chi-Tim Lai, “Ko Hung's Discourse of Hsien-immortality: a Taoist Configuration of an Alternate Ideal Self-identity,” *Numen* 45 (1998), 203ff.; Hu Fuchen 胡浮琛, *Wei Jin shenxian daojiao: Baopuzi neipian yanjiu* 魏晉神仙道教:抱朴子內篇研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1989), 162–164.
- 20 See for example the stories of the immortals Peng Zu 彭祖 in Wang Ming 王明 (ed.), *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), *juan* 3, 52; and Master White Stone, Baishi xiansheng 白石先生 in *Shenxian zhuan* 2, translated by Robert F. Campney, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: a Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 294.
- 21 On the notion of grotto-heavens, see especially Franciscus Verellen, “The Beyond Within: Grotto-heavens (*dongtian*) in Taoist Ritual and Cosmology,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 8 (1994–1995), 101–126.
- 22 Nevertheless, the “naturalness” of the landscapes described in the *zhaoyin* poetry is questionable. In an illuminating article A. Berkowitz discusses the *zhaoyin* poems in the context of court poetry and points out that rather than describing actual scenes or actual excursions into the natural world, they “more likely were poetic stylizations of an idealized ‘nature’ or, perhaps, euphuistically embellished descriptions of the landscaped estates of the rich and famous”. See Alan J. Berkowitz, “Courting Disengagement: Beckoning the Recluse Poems of the Western Jin,” in *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Cultural History. In Honor of Richard B. Mather and Donald Holzman*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, Utah: T'ang Studies Society, 2003), 111.

together. Simultaneously, the paradise landscapes of the world beyond are increasingly projected onto the scale of the earthly mountains.

It is Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324), the most renowned author of *youxian* poetry, whom the modern literary critics unanimously credit with bringing the immortals down from the celestial heights into the human world, even though many earlier poems point towards this transformation. Although some of Guo Pu's poems of the "Youxian" cycle describe paradise sceneries and distant journeys (VI, IX, X), many of the pieces take as their locus "mountains and forests" (*shanlin* 山林), which are identified as beautiful and pure lands of immortality, far away from worldly profanity.²³

The Tiantai Mountains in 4th century literature

Sun Chuo's rhapsody is the most important early poetical tribute to the Tiantai Mountains. Situated in eastern Zhejiang, the Tiantai Mountains extended through five prefectures of the Guiji 會稽 commandery: Yuyao 餘姚, Yin 嶺, Juzhang 句章, Shan 剡 and Shining 始寧. In the first half of the fourth century the mountain has already become an important Buddhist and Daoist centre, though its religious significance was yet to be achieved in the following centuries.²⁴ Ge Hong had included it in his list of 28 sacred mountains, suitable for meditation and preparation of the immortality elixir. He wrote that these sacred mountains were all inhabited by real spirits and terrestrial immortals and that on their slopes there grew potent herbs and magic mushrooms.²⁵

At the time of Sun Chuo the image of the Tiantai Mountains had started to appear in poetry and in prose accounts. Sun Chuo's friend, the Buddhist monk Zhidun 支遁 (314–366), wrote an inscription on Mt. Tiantai, "Tiantai shan ming" 天台山銘, from which a single line survives.²⁶ The Tiantai Mountains are also the imaginary locus of the third poem of Zhidun's "Yonghuai" 詠懷 cycle. The poem opens in the idyllic setting of a spring garden, where the poet leisurely reflects on the passage of time and, "moved by things" (*gan wu* 感物), lets his thoughts soar up to the sacred realm of the Celestial Terrace Mountain:

尚想天台峻	And then I envision Celestial Terrace ridges,
髣髴巖階仰	As if I dimly gaze up its steep stairs.
冷風灑蘭林	A cool breeze sprinkles a forest of orchids,
管瀨奏清響	The piping creek plays clear tunes.
霄崖育靈藹	Empyrean cliffs nurture numinous mists,
神蔬含潤長	Divine plants, holding moisture, grow.
丹沙映翠瀨	Cinnabar sand shimmers in the turquoise stream,
芳芝曜五爽	Fragrant mushrooms sparkle with the five brilliances.

23 See especially poems I, II and III in *Wensuan*, *juan* 21, 1019–1020. All poems and preserved fragments from the cycle are contained in Lu Qinli: *Xian Qin*, 865–867.

24 In the early 5th century the Lingbao 靈寶 Daoist tradition connected the Tiantai mountains with the figure of Ge Xuan 葛玄 (164–244), the great-uncle of Ge Hong, who allegedly was the first recipient of the Lingbao revelations. In the late 6th century the mountain became the centre of the Tiantai Buddhist school.

25 *Baopuzi neipian* 4 (Wang Ming: *Baopuzi*, 85).

26 Preserved in a citation by the *Wensuan* commentator Li Shan 李善 (?–689) in his comments to "You Tiantai shan fu".

蒼蒼重岫深	Spiring and soaring, the layered peaks stretch afar,
寥寥石室朗	Empty and quiet, the stone chamber is bright.
中有尋化士	Within is a gentleman, pursuing transformation,
外身解世網	Placed beyond, he unbinds the worldly net,
抱朴鎮有心	Embracing Simplicity, he quells the thoughts of Actuality. ²⁷
揮玄拂無想	Brandishing the Mystery, he skims over notions of Non-actuality. ²⁸
隗隗形崖頽	Tall and towering, the cliffs of Form crumble down,
罔罔神宇敞	Brightly shining, the expanse of Spirit opens up.
宛轉元造化	Adapting to the changes, he [reaches] the source of creative transformation,
縹緲鄰大象	Swiftly soaring, he becomes a neighbour of the Great Image. ²⁹
願投若人蹤	I wish to follow this man's steps,
高步振策杖 ³⁰	Treading on high, wielding my staff.

The structure of this section follows a model typical in the 4th century poetical treatments of the themes of immortality or reclusion: description of a landscape setting; appearance of a transcendental figure (recluse or immortal), introduced by the conventional phrase "in the midst there is ..." (*zhong you* 中有); account of his activities and the final proclamation of the poet's wish to follow his example. It is significant that the scenery of the Tiantai Mountains is evoked as a purely mental image – it is the power of contemplative vision (*xiang* 想) that transports the poet from his idyllic spring garden into the numinous landscape. The mountains are envisioned as a sublime and sacred realm of purity and beauty. Their description mixes images and diction typical of the *zhaoyin* poetry (the cool breeze, the clear tunes of the creek), and of fantastic paradise depictions, pertaining to the theme of immortality (eternal divine plants, cinnabar sand, magic mushrooms, or rather exudations *zhi* 芝 of immortality). Though being purely imaginative, the landscape is rendered almost tangible through vivid, sensuously powerful details (the music of the creek, shimmering cinnabar sand in the azure stream, fragrant sparkling *zhi*, etc.)

The description of the recluse dwelling therein stands in contrast to his alluring surroundings. His activities do not unfold on the plane of this idealised mountain (as in the *zhaoyin* and some of the *youxian* poems) nor in a mythical universe (as in "Yuanyou"), but solely in the inner world of his spirit. From the rich sensory perceptions Zhidun moves into the realm of abstract philosophical thought – the recluse embraces Simplicity and wields the Mysterious, casts off conceptions of Actuality to explore Non-actuality, breaks down the Form (*xing* 形) and opens up the realm of the Spirit (*shenyu* 神宇) and, finally, similarly to "Yuanyou," merges with the Dao, entering the neighbourhood of the Great Image (*daxiang* 大象) at the mystic source of existence.

27 "Embracing Simplicity" (*baopu* 抱朴) is an allusion to *Daode jing* 19: "Manifest plainness and embrace simplicity" (見素抱朴). The word *pu* 朴 literally means "uncarved block of wood". This is a metaphor for the Dao, which appears in few more passages of *Daode jing* (sections 28, 32, 37, 57). It represents the natural state of unadorned simplicity that also contains limitless potential.

28 The Mysterious (*xuan* 玄) is the favourite neo-daοist term for the absolute reality, which is beyond and anterior to the names, shapes and events. It is defined by Wang Bi as "dark, silent and non-actual" (冥也默然無有) (commentary to *Daode jing* 1).

29 The Great Image (*Daxiang* 大象) is the Dao. In *Daode jing* 41 Dao is called "the Great Image that has no form," *daxiang wuxing* 大象無形.

30 Lu Qinli, Xian Qin, 1081.

A prose account of the Tiantai Mountains is found in the commentary to Gu Kaizhi's 顧愷之 (ca. 345–406) *Qimengji* 啟蒙記 (Records for Dispelling Ignorance), a no longer extant lexicon, extensively cited by Li Shan in his comments on “You Tiantai shan fu”. Though apparently heavily drawing on Sun Chuo's poetic description, this somewhat later account deserves attention here for it develops at length the perception of the Tiantai Mountains as a sacred paradise, the current perception of that time:

天台山去人不遠，路經福溪，水險清冷，前有山石橋，路逕不盈尺，長數十丈，下臨絕冥之澗。惟忘其身然後能濟。濟者梯巖壁，捫蘿葛之莖，度得平路，見天台山蔚然綺秀，列雙嶺於青霄，上有瓊樓玉閣天堂碧林醴泉，仙物畢具。晉隱士白道猷得過之，獲醴泉紫芝靈藥。³¹

The Tiantai Mountains are not remotely distanced from men. The path crosses the Fu Stream, the waters are dangerous, clear and cold. To the front there is the mountainous Stone Bridge, its path is not a full foot wide and several tens of paces long. It looks down on a brook of absolute darkness. Only after forgetting one's body one can cross over. Crossing, one clings to the cliff wall, grasps the stalks of creeping fig and grape vines. After this passage the path levels and one can behold the Tiantai Mountain's lush thickets and ornate beauty. Twin ridges are arrayed in the midst of the dark empyrean, above there are rose-gem towers and jade pavilions, heavenly halls, cyan forests and sweet-water springs, attributes of immortals, all complete. The recluse Bai Daoyou of the Jin dynasty managed to pass there, and obtained sweet-water, purple exudations and numinous herbs.

Here Tiantai Mountains are depicted as a sublime and beautiful divine land, hosting trees of gems, ornate palaces and lodges constructed from precious ores and stones. Their inaccessibility is emphasised – one has to “forget his body” in order to pass the trial of the Stone Bridge and enter the sacred realm of the mountains. These two motifs – the paradisiacal wonders of Tiantai Mt. and the difficult passage therein – are further augmented in 5th century sources, such as Liu Jingshu's 劉敬叔 (5th cent.) *Yiyuan* 異苑 (Garden of the Strange) and Kong Lingfu's 孔靈符 (?–465) *Guiji* 會稽記 (Records of Guiji), both cited in the commentary of Li Shan.

The preface to “You Tiantai shan fu”

Sun Chuo's rhapsody is preceded by an extensive preface written in prose, in which the author explains the circumstances of composition and elucidates the religious significance of Mt. Tiantai. Similarly to the accounts mentioned above he elaborates on the aspects of sacredness, paradisiacal wonders and distance from the profane world.

At the very beginning Sun Chuo establishes the mountains as a counterpart of the paradise islands of the immortals in the Eastern Sea:

天台山者，蓋山嶽之神秀者也。涉海則有方丈蓬萊，登陸則有四明天台。皆玄聖之所遊化，靈仙之所窟宅。³²

The Celestial Terrace Mountains indeed are the divine eminence of all mounts and peaks. Cross the sea and there will be Fangzhang and Penglai. Climb the plateaus and there will be the Four Luminaries and

31 *Taiping yulan* 41.

32 *Wenxuan* 11, 493; tr. by Knechtges 1987, 243. The text of “You Tiantai shan fu” is contained in *Wenxuan* 11, 493–500. All quotations used here are based on the translation of Knechtges: *Wen Xuan*, vol. II, 243–253, with occasional terminological alterations.

Celestial Terrace. All are places where mystic sages roam and transform themselves, sites of grotto dwellings of numinous immortals.

Access into their numinous realm is granted only to a few, and whoever manages to climb the mountain has cut off himself free from the world behind.

非夫遺世翫道，絕粒茹芝者，烏能輕舉而宅之？³³

If one is not a man who abandons the world to play with the Dao, who shuns grains to dine on mushrooms, how can he levitate in order to dwell in them?

Sun Chuo's prose account extensively draws on Daoist religious concepts and terminology. The practices of "shunning of grains" and dining on "magic mushrooms" are part of the special diet of immortality adepts and figure in most Daoist prescriptions for "nourishing life" (*yangsheng* 養生).³⁴ The expression *qingju* 輕舉 (to rise with a lightened body) in Daoist texts denotes a certain technique of lightening the body, which enables it to float through the air.³⁵ This expression is also recurrent in the *youxian* poetry in descriptions of the flight of the immortals.

In the preface Sun Chuo dwells also on the scarcity of records on the Tiantai Mountains, explaining it with their seclusion and inaccessibility to ordinary mortals. Their sacred realm is, however, rendered in numerous "charts and illustrations" (*tuxiang* 圖象):

然圖像之興，豈虛也哉！非夫遠寄冥搜，篤信通神者，何肯遙想而存之？³⁶

Yet, the flourishing of charts and illustrations, how could this be fanciful? Unless one confers himself afar and delves into the abstruse, steadfastly and sincerely communicates with the gods, how dare he presume to actualise [存] them in distant visualisations?

The expression "charts and illustrations" most probably refers to Daoist maps of the "True form" (*zhengxing* 真形) of sacred mountains which in the Shangqing and Lingbao Daoism of the fourth and fifth century became aids to mystical orientation, allowing the adept to visit these sites in meditation. The charts accompanied with text presented labyrinthine map-drawings that "open up" access to the mountains for the one who possessed them. They had already been current in the time of Ge Hong – in *Baopuzi neipian* 19 he mentions the *Wuyue zhengxing tu* 五岳真形圖 (Maps of the True Form of the Five March-Mountains) as one of the most important and potent Daoist scriptures.³⁷ The term *cun* 存 used by Sun Chuo denotes a specific Daoist visualisation technique, whereby the meditating adept can not only behold, but also make present, actualize and "preserve" divinities and paradise realms. Meditation and visualisations that take

33 *Ibid.*

34 On the alternative cuisines of immortality see Robert F. Campany, "The Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence in Late Classical and Early Medieval China," *T'oung Pao* XLI (2005), 1–57.

35 This expression had already appeared in "Yuanyou," where the hero expresses the wish to "rise lightened and roam afar" (*yuán qīngjǔ ér yuányou* 願輕舉而遠遊). In *Baopuzi neipian* 4 the effects of the Cold Elixir (*bandan* 寒丹) of immortality are described as follows: "Take one spatula a day for one hundred days and you will become an immortal. Boys and girl immortals will come to wait upon you, you will rise with lightened body (*qingju*) without using wings" (Wang Ming; *Baopuzi*, 75).

36 *Ibid.*

37 Wang Ming; *Baopuzi*, 336–337. Later Daoist texts elaborate: "The True Form of the Five Peaks is the image of mountains and seas and the configuration of the tortuous and labyrinthine mountain summits ... If you possess the True Form of the Five Peaks in its entirety, you will travel back and forth between Earth and Heaven and will circulate throughout the four directions" (*Yunji qiqian* 79/1a. CT 1032).

mountains as their object are described at many occasions in Daoist texts, as in the following passage taken from the *Xuanlan renniao shan jingtu* 玄覽人鳥山經圖 (Scripture and Chart for the Mysterious Contemplation of the Man-Bird mountain):

人鳥之山，有人之象，有鳥之形。峰巖峻極，不可勝言。玄臺寶殿，尊神所居，林澗鳥狩，木石香花。芝草衆藥，不死之液，又難具陳 ... 玄達之思，閉目見之。周覽既畢。行久有徵 ... 久鍊得妙。肉去妙充，其翔似鳥，出遊三界之外 ... 學者遊山，緣山至道，永保常存。³⁸

The Man-Bird Mountain has the image of a man, the form of bird. Scarping ridges, steep and lofty, cannot be fully told. Mysterious terraces, precious halls where venerated spirits dwell. Forests and streams, birds and beasts, trees, stones, aromatic flowers, fungi and all kinds of magic herbs, fluid of immortality – it is hard to describe them all ... With thought that penetrates the Mysterious, close your eyes and behold it. Looking in all directions, exhaust it in entirety ... If you exercise for long you will achieve the Subtle, discard the flesh and fill yourself with the Subtle, soar like a bird, go out to roam beyond the Three worlds. The one who studies [this method] when roaming in the mountain encompasses the mountain and achieves the Dao, forever existing, eternally preserving.

In the preface to the rhapsody Sun Chuo in fact speaks of the Tiantai mountains as an object of Daoist meditation and visualisation with the aid of mountain maps and illustrations. Their sacred realm, though hardly accessible by physical journey, may open up to the adept through contemplative visualisation (*xiang*) and actualisation (*cun*). Furthermore, Sun Chuo states that the journey he is about to describe is not based on any actual experience, but takes place in his mind alone, and in the short interval between “a downward and an upward glance” he seems to have ascended the mountain twice. In this respect the rhapsody echoes the above cited poem by Zhi-dun, where the poet, still sitting in his modest garden, is transported in his mind into the imaginary space of the Tiantai Mountains. The text of Sun Chuo’s rhapsody can be regarded as an account of spiritual exercise, of meditative journey that might be of the kind described in the *Xuanlan renniao shan jingtu*. In his rendition of this mystic experience Sun Chuo, however, employs poetic conventions and topoi developed in earlier poetry and also extensively avails himself of the philosophical vocabulary of the 4th century *xuanxue* discussions.

The mystical progress through the mountains

The text of the rhapsody proper presents a spiritual journey directed not into far distance, as in the older *itineraria*, but in depth, beyond the concrete features of the physical nature. Although Sun Chuo turns his thoughts towards real mountains, he remoulds and re-interprets many tropes from the *Chuci* tradition of celestial journeys. Many time-honoured formulae and motifs find their place in his poem. As in the *Chuci* travelogues, the journey starts with a preliminary initiation from those, already in the possession of the Dao:

仍羽人於丹丘	I meet the Plumed men on Cinnabar Hill,
尋不死之福庭	Search for the blessed chambers of immortality. ³⁹

38 *Xuanlan renniao shan jingtu*, CT 434, cited according to the version in *Yunji qiqian* 80/19b/5–20a/5.

39 ll. 25–26; Knechtges, *Wen Xuan*, 247.

Sun Chuo repeats almost verbatim the lines from "Yuanyou" that precede the cosmic journey of the hero. Thus he seems to connect his own journey to the circuit of the cosmos described in "Yuanyou". The next two lines, however, shift away from his honoured precedent:

苟台嶺之可攀	As long as the Terrace range can be scaled,
亦何羨於層城	Why yearn for the Storied City? ⁴⁰

Having hinted that he is embarking on a kind of mystical journey similar to the one in "Yuan-you," Sun Chuo stresses that it now takes place on the plane of the real mountains. His rhetorical question echoes the opening poem of Guo Pu's "Youxian" cycle:

靈谿可潛盤	The Magic Gorge is fitting for withdraw,
安事登雲梯	What need to climb the Cloud-ladder? ⁴¹

Zhan Fangsheng 湛方生 (late 4th – early 5th cent.) similarly asks at the end of his "Lingxiu shan ming" 靈秀山銘 (Inscription on Mount Lingxiu):

可以養生	One can nurture life,
可以棲翔	One can dwell and soar.
長生久視	Long life forever –
何必仙鄉	Why should it be in the immortal realm? ⁴²

When the temporal aspect of eternal life is favoured over the spatial aspect of celestial flight, and when, moreover, the world beyond is contained in the very mountains and forests, what need is there to ascend into the distance of the empyrean, seeking celestial immortality? The rhetorical questions of Guo Pu and Zhan Fangsheng similarly give preference to eternal life in this earthly paradise instead of a celestial flight to the worlds beyond.

A few decades earlier Guo Pu had replaced the immortals from the far-off imaginary realms with hermits abiding among the earthly mountains. Sun Chuo goes even further than Guo Pu and recognises the metaphysical dimension of nature itself. For him the natural world is not simply the surroundings of the "Men of the Way," but becomes the visible expression of the Dao itself:

40 ll. 27–28; *ibid.* The Storied City (Cengcheng 層城) is mount Kunlun, residence of the Queen of the immortals Xiwangmu.

41 Lu Qinli, *Xian Qin*, 865. According to Li Shan the Magic Gorge (Lingxi 靈谿) is the name of an actual river, 靈谿水, whereas the expression to "climb the cloud-ladder" (*deng yunti* 登雲梯) refers to the search for *xian* immortality (*Wensuan* 21, 1019).

42 Yan Kejun, *Quan Shanggu*, vol. 5, 1461.

太虛遼廓而無闕	The Grand Void, vast and wide, unhindered, ⁴³
運自然之妙有	Propels subtle Actuality, which is naturally so.
融而為川瀆	Melting, it forms rivers and waterways,
結而為山阜	Coalescing, it forms mountains and hills. ⁴⁴

Similar lines appear often in the 3rd – 4th century verse. For example, in “Siyou fu” 思游賦 (Rhapsody on Pondering a Journey) Zhi Yu 摯虞 (ob. 312) expounds:

陽降陰升，一替一興。流而為川，滯而為陵。⁴⁵

Yang descends, Yin ascends, one declines, the other rises. Flowing, they form streams, staying still, they form hills.

Sun Chuo further develops this idea:

理無隱而不彰	No noumenon is so obscure to remain ever unmanifest; ⁴⁶
啟二奇以示兆	By unfolding the Two Wonders it reveals its form. ⁴⁷

The Two Wonders are the Scarlet Wall (Chicheng 赤城) peak of the Tiantai mountains and the Cascade (Pubu 瀑布) Waterfall cascading from the Scarlet Wall. Sun Chuo here develops the idea, expressed in the Xiang Xiu/Guo Xiang commentary to *Zhuangzi*, that the *Li* 理 (the innate principle of things) mystically unites the *nei* 內 and the *wai* 外, the “inframundane” and the “ultramundane”. It is through the physical appearance of nature that the ultimate reality becomes manifest.

The description of the traveller’s paraphernalia had been an important topos pertaining to the cosmic *itineraria*. It is also present in Sun Chuo’s account of the mountainous ascent. Here, however, the fantastic trappings of the cosmic travellers are replaced by attributes of Daoist and Buddhist hermits – a coarse woollen robe (*maobe* 毛褐)⁴⁸ and a metal staff, which is carried by

43 The Grand Void (*taixu* 太虛) is the undifferentiated state of the universe before the emergence of forms. *Miaoyou* 妙有 (Subtle Actuality) designates the latent actuality that is contained in non-actuality (*wu* 無). The commentary of Li Shan explains: “One wishes to speak of Actuality (*you* 有) but cannot see its form (*xing* 形). Since it is not [true] Actuality, one calls it Subtle. One wishes to speak of things being produced by it. Since it is not Non-actuality (*wu* 無), one calls it Actuality. This is none other than Actuality within Non-actuality, one calls it Subtle Actuality.” 欲言有，不見其形，則非有，故謂之妙；欲言其物由之以生，則非無，故謂之有也。斯乃無中之有，謂之妙有也。 (*Wenxuan*, 495; Knechtges: *Wen Xuan*, 244, l. 1)

44 ll. 1–4; Knechtges, *Wen Xuan*, 245.

45 Yan Kejun: *Quan Shanggu*, vol. 4, 786.

46 A paraphrase of a line from Liu Xiang’s *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (Biographies of Women) 5.19b, referring to the Loyal Concubine of the Lord of Zhou: “There was nothing so slight in her reputation that could not be made known; there was nothing so obscure in her conduct to remain unmanifest” (名無細而不聞，行無隱而不彰).

47 ll. 19–20; Knechtges, *Wen Xuan*, 245–247.

48 The expression *maobe* 毛褐 might be an allusion to Cao Zhi’s “Qiqi” 七啟 (Seven Communications). The protagonist of the composition – the Daoist recluse Sir Mystic Tenuity (Xuanwei zi 玄微子) – says that “he likes his coarse wooden robe (*maobe*) in answer to the description of precious weapons and clothing by one of the persuaders.” (*Wenxuan* 34, 1581)

Buddhist monks. The account of the journey that follows is again stylised on the *Chuci itineraria*: it is written in the *sao*-style metre of "Yuanyou," omitting the refrain-particle *xi* 兮.

披荒榛之蒙籠	I push through a murky mass of wild thickets,
陟峭嶠之崢嶸	Scale the soaring steepness of scarps and cliffs,
濟楸溪而直進	Ford You Stream and straightway advance, ⁴⁹
落五界而迅進	Cross the Five Boundaries and swiftly push on. ⁵⁰

Sun Chuo narrates his journey in the mode prevailing in the *Chuci* and Han rhapsodic *itineraria*, which, following David Knechtges, I have termed "recitation of an action". He moves forward at a quickened pace, not having time to reflect on the vistas that appear before his eyes: he pushes through the thickets, climbs the cliffs, fords the stream, crosses the Five Boundaries. The wild mountainous landscape is vividly rendered, and yet, the impression of the surrounding nature is given solely through the actions of the hero. Each line introduces a different action and a separate point in space where it takes place. Again the reader is reminded of the swift progress of the heavenly travellers in "Yuanyou". Here, however, the mythical cosmic landmarks, the power-nuclei defining the cosmos, are replaced by actual elements of the mountain landscape.

In the middle of the journey, as in most *itineraria*, comes the decisive moment of the spiritual test of the traveller. Unlike the earlier cosmic journeys where it takes the form of a passage through the Changhe gate and of overcoming the wave of nostalgia, here it is the actual crossing of the narrow Stone Bridge spanning a "myriad fathom"- deep ravine. According to the commentary to Xie Lingyun's "Shanju fu" 山居賦 (Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains),⁵¹ "among the perils of the human pathways, nothing surpasses this [the crossing of the You Stream and of the Stone Bridge]" (人跡之艱, 不復過此也), and the commentary to *Qimengji*, cited above, explains that only "after forgetting one's body one can cross over". Sun Chuo evocatively renders this breathtaking passage:

踐莓苔之滑石	I tread slippery stones covered with moss,
搏壁立之翠屏	Cling to the Azure Screen that wall-like stands,
攬樛木之長羅	Grasp the long fig creepers on bending trees,
援葛藟之飛莖	Snatch flying stalks of trailing grape. ⁵²

49 The You 楸 (also written 油) Stream was located thirty *li* east of Tiantai prefecture. It was a dangerous barrier every traveller had to cross on his way to the mountain.

50 ll. 33–36; Knechtges, *Wen Xuan*, 247. Li Shan explains the expression "Five Boundaries" (*wujie* 五界) as the boundaries of the five prefectures through which the Tiantai mountains stretched: Yuyao, Yin, Juzhang, Shan and Shining.

51 *Songshu* 67, 1758.

52 ll. 39–42; *ibid.* The crossing of the Stone Bridge in its own turn became a motif to be alluded to in the later poetry. Thus, Xie Lingyun in the poem titled "Around My New Lodge at Stone Gate on All Sides are High Mountains, Winding Streams and Rocky Rapids, Lush Woods and Tall Bamboo" (石門新營所住四面高山迴溪石瀨修竹茂林詩) writes:

披雲臥石門	I parted the clouds and repose on Stone Gate:
苔滑誰能步	The moss is so slippery, who can tread on it?
葛弱豈可捫	The creepers are flimsy – what can one grasp?

Wenxuan 30, 1399. The crossing of the Stone Bridge and of the You Stream is also evoked in his "Shanju fu". These two landmarks indicate points beyond which ordinary mortals cannot venture.

However realistic it seems, the crossing of this forbidding natural barrier acquires new meaning in the context of the rhapsody. Here it represents the “dangerous passage” that lies on the way of every adept seeking entry into paradise. It marks the passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to the real and eternal. The image of the “dangerous passage” is a common motif in both funerary and initiation mythologies throughout the ancient world. It finds numerous modifications in the images of a “sword-bridge” or of a bridge “narrow as a hair”; of the pass between colliding rocks, through the jaws of a monster, or, in Chinese context, through the portals of the Changhe heavenly gate. All these symbolic images express the need to transcend opposites, to abolish the polarity typical of the human condition in order to attain absolute reality.

This trial once passed, the poet proclaims:

雖一冒於垂堂	Though once imperilled at the brink,
乃永存乎長生	I shall exist forever in eternal life. ⁵³

Beyond the Stone Bridge the path levels and opens into a clear vista of purity and harmony. The poet is no longer a hurried traveller, but becomes a reflective observer. With a cleared vision and mind, he for the first time perceives and contemplates on the surrounding landscape:

藉萋萋之織草	Spreading tender grasses, lush and luxuriant,
蔭落落之長松	Shaded by tall pines, stalwart and stately,
靚翔鸞之喬翥	I view the graceful gliding of the soaring simurghs,
聽鳴鳳之嚶嚶	Hear the concordant chorusing of singing phoenixes. ⁵⁴

From an active actor in a poetic drama, the author becomes a perceiver: the scenery is introduced through verbs like “I view,” “I hear”. He washes himself in the waters of the Numinous Stream (Lingxi 靈溪) which cleanse the “residual dust” (*yichen* 遺塵) and the Five Hindrances (*wugai* 五蓋).⁵⁵ The theme of the ritual bath is again an integral part of every initiation. The water is the universal symbol of the undifferentiated and virtual, containing all potentialities,

53 ll. 43–44, Knechtges, *Wen Xuan*, 249.

54 ll. 53–54, *ibid.*

55 The Five Hindrances (*wugai* 五蓋) are the Chinese equivalent for Nīvarana: *tanyin* 貪淫 (*kaṃacchanda*, desire and licentiousness), *chenhui* 瞋恚 (*vyāpāda*, rage and anger), *chenhun* 沈昏睡眠 (*styanamiddha*, dullness and drowsiness), *tiaoxi* 調戲 (*aundabhatyakanṭhya*, frivolity) and *yi* 疑 (*vicikitsā*, doubt). See Erick Zürcher, *The Buddhist conquest of China: the spread and adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), vol. 2, 375, n. 43. Li Shan equates the “residual dust” with the Buddhist “six dusts” (*liuchen* 六塵) or *gunas* (senses): *se* 色 (*rūpa*, sight), *sheng* 聲 (*śabda*, sound), *xiang* 香 (*gandha*, smell), *wei* 味 (*rasa*, taste), *chu* 觸 (*sparsā*, touch) and *fa* 法 (*manas*, thought). However, throughout the rest of the poem Sun Chuo always pairs a Daoist and a Buddhist concept in the parallel lines of his couplets (see the text below). From the structure of the couplets it can be inferred that the expression “residual dust,” which is parallel to the Five Hindrances, should be a Daoist equivalent of the Buddhist Five Hindrances. Indeed, the employment of the word *chen* as denoting the profane world much precedes the Buddhist translations, and is often employed in the early poetry – see for example the “Aishiming” 哀時命 poem from *Chuci* (second half of the second century BC):

概塵垢之枉攘兮	I have brushed away the dust and disorder,
除穢累而反真	Purged unclean attachments and returned to the True.

(ll. 137–138; *Chuci buzhu*, 266; tr. by Hawkes: *The Songs*, 267)

the primordial substance from which all forms are born and to which they return again through regression. In the water everything dissolves, every form disintegrates, every history is abolished, nothing of what has existed before exists after the immersion. Destroying history, reconstituting if only temporarily the initial integrity, waters purify and regenerate because everything that has been immersed in them "dies," and rising from them resembles a newborn baby without history, entering a new life.⁵⁶ The poet emerges from the Numinous Stream with a cleared vision and mind, freed from the sensuous and emotional bonds of the human existence. The paradise city of the immortals then opens up in front of him:

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 61 | 陟降信宿
迄於仙都
雙闕雲竦以夾路
瓊臺中天而懸居 | I climb up and down for one night, two nights,
Until I reach the City of Immortals.
Twin gateways, thrusting into the clouds, flank the road,
Carmelian terraces, mid-sky, hang overhead, |
| 65 | 朱闕玲瓏於林間
玉堂陰映于高隅
彤雲斐疊以翼樞
曠日炯晃於綺疏
八桂森挺以凌霜 | Vermilion pavilions stand lucent and lustrous through the woods,
Jade halls dimly shine from high nooks.
Rose clouds, streaked and striped, glide into lattices;
The dazzling sun fulgently flares through silken filigree.
Eight Cinnamon, thick and tall, brave the frost; |
| 70 | 五芝含秀而晨敷
惠風佇芳於陽林
醴泉湧溜於陰渠
建木滅景於千尋
琪樹璀璨而垂珠 | Five Polypores, laden with blooms, unfold at dawn.
Gentle breezes store fragrance in sunny groves,
Sweet springs bubble and burble from the shady moats.
The Standing Tree erases shadows for a thousand <i>xun</i> ,
Gem trees glittering and gleaming, hang with pearls. |
| 75 | 王喬控鶴以冲天
應真飛錫以躡虛 | Wang Qiao, driving a crane, pierces the sky,
"Correspondents-to-truth," their staves flying, tread the void ..." ⁵⁷ |

A fundamental change in the method of description can be observed in the depiction of the paradise realm as compared to the earlier account of the mountainous ascent. The poetic self is no longer present amidst the described landscape, but remains and observes it from the outside. The vista of paradise is no longer an object towards which the poet's actions or senses are directed; it is presented as an independent entity, free of references to the self of the poet. The understood first-person subject "I," which until now had dominated the narrative progress, here completely disappears: the poet is for a moment absorbed in the vista of the transcendental world and loses his own self. This shift of perception was to be later used in the landscape poetry of Xie Lingyun, where the "grammatical liberation from the self" indicates the beginning of transcendental communion with nature.⁵⁸

Moreover, the straightforward progress through the mountains, described until now, in the description of paradise becomes replaced by a closed-in-itself circular movement. In the initial three couplets of Sun Chuo's paradise vision, cited above (ll. 63–68), the poet's eyes move along a vertical axis – from the clouds and the sky they descend to the hills and forests and

56 On the symbolism of water and purification through water see especially Mircea Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions* (Editions Payot, 1949), ch. 5.

57 ll. 61–76; Knechtges, *Wen Xuan*, 249–251.

58 Francis A. Westbrook, "Landscape Transformation in the Poetry of Hsieh Ling-yun," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 100 (1980), 239.

further down to the fine filigree of the buildings. Simultaneously the third couplet (ll. 67–68) makes a loop back to the sky-heights – to the clouds and the sun, which are this time brought down through the windows. Thus an enclosed, circular inner motion is produced, which in itself partakes of eternity. The subsequent couplets introduce the magical flora of the paradise, the elemental forces of wind and water, and with the seventh couplet (ll. 75–76) the poet’s vision rises to the sky once again, following the flight of the Daoist immortals and of the Buddhist Arhats. The circular movement that permeates the first three couplets also applies on the scale of the picture of paradise as a whole. While up to this point the poem has created the impression of a straight, linear progression through the mountains, here the motion becomes enclosed in the perfection and perpetuity of the circle.⁵⁹

The feeling of closed-in-itself harmony, wholeness and timelessness is further enhanced through the parallel couplets. The carefully paired adjectives, nouns, verbs and objects complement each other. The lines of every couplet unite phenomena of a single category: gateways – terraces, pavilions – halls, clouds – sun, lattices – filigree, eight cinnamon – five polypores (or exudations 茸), breeze – springs, Standing Tree – gem trees, Wang Ziqiao – arhats. The symmetry of the mandala-like cosmographical space in which the hero of the Han dynasty *itineraria* in the *Chuci* and in the *fu* rhapsodies used to move, is here reflected in the paired complementary lines of the individual couplets.

After the lengthy account of the paradise realm, the first-person subject appears again to describe the state of inner clarity and calmness he has acquired through the contemplation of this sacred land. The account is full of allusions to *Zhuangzi*, borrowing phrases from him verbatim. The hero has rejected all worldly affairs and excessive activity – that “which harms the horses” (*haima* 害馬).⁶⁰ In perfect accord with the Dao, like the Cook Ding 丁 in Zhuangzi’s famous parable, he perceives with his spirit, “eyeing the ox, but not as a whole” (*miniu wuquan* 目牛無全).⁶¹ At noon he joins the immortal hosts for an audience of the Celestially-venerated (Tianzong 天宗).⁶² Enveloped by incense fragrance and resounding

59 It might not be too far-fetched to find parallels to the two different movements which mark the stages of Sun Chuo’s mystical ascent – the straight progression through the earthly landscape and the closed circular motion of the divine sphere – in Daoist religious practice. Both Daoist ritual and alchemy are structured on the distinction of two types of time – progressive, “outer” time as exists in Creation after the diversification of chaos, and “inner” time before that division, which is exempt from the *yang* – Five Phase cyclic changes and is therefore, balanced and enduring. Different in nature and duration, these two times nevertheless proceed simultaneously and the goal of the Daoist priest, as demonstrated by K. Schipper, is to enter from the outer time cycles into the hidden inner time. See Kristofer Schipper, and Wang Hsiu-huei, “Progressive and Regressive Time Cycles in Taoist Ritual,” in *Time, Science and Society in China and the West*, ed. J.T. Fraser, N. Lawrence and F.C. Haber (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 185–205. I am grateful to Achim Mittag for suggesting this connection.

60 *Zhuangzi* 8.14a (Guo Qingfan: *Zhuangzi*, 833). The Yellow Emperor asked a young horse herder how to govern the empire. The boy answered: “Governing the empire, how could it be different from herding horses? All you need do is to get rid of what harms the horses.”

61 Cook Ding explains his mastery as follows: “When I began cutting an ox, what I saw was nothing but an ox, but after three years I no longer saw a whole ox. Now I encounter things with my spirit, and I do not look with my eyes.” Therefore, he never met with any obstacles in cutting and carving (Guo Qingfan: *Zhuangzi*, 119).

62 The expression *tianzong* 天宗 (equivalent of 天尊) is a translation of the Sanskrit *Bhagavat* and initially designated Buddha. However, the Daoists very early adopted this title for their highest heavenly gods –

with dharma drums (*fagu* 法鼓) this celestial assembly, if in a somewhat Buddhist garb, is an analogue of the divine banquets of the *Chuci* poetry, which take place towards the end of the cosmic peregrinations. Like the ancient travellers the poet scoops up black Jade nectar (*xuanyu zhi gao* 玄玉之膏) and rinses his mouth in the Floriate Pond (Huachi 華池), both said to be found on Kunlun. Similarly to the *itineraria* plot this divine assembly takes place immediately before the final culmination, which in the "Yuanyou" had the form of an ecstatic breakthrough to the pre-beginnings. In Sun Chuo's rhapsody this climax is marked by a sudden leap beyond the phenomenal world into the realm of pure *xuanyan* philosophy. This transition is similar to the structure of Zhidun's "Yonghuai shi" 3, where the poet moves from the physical (though fantastic) nature to the immaterial plane of abstract concepts. The poet looks for illumination in the Daoist doctrines of the Dao which is "beyond the images" (*xiangwai* 象外)⁶³, beyond names and shapes, and in the Mahayana doctrines of "non-origination" (*wusheng* 無生) of the dharmas, or data of consciousness.⁶⁴ Sun Chuo's philosophical explorations smoothly blend together Daoist and Buddhist concepts and terms, which are paired in the parallel lines of the couplets.

He becomes aware that he has not completely dismissed Actuality (*you* 有) – the inconstant realm of phenomena, and that his passage into Non-actuality (*wu* 無) is still interrupted. The final illumination then comes – there is no dichotomy between Actuality and Non-actuality, between Form (*se* 色) and Emptiness (*kong* 空). Sun Chuo elaborates on the current Mahayana doctrine that *se* (*rupa*, form, matter) is empty (*kong*; void and illusory). He equals this insight with the Daoist attainment of the Mysterious (*xuan*) through the Actuality, of which it is the source and through which it becomes manifest. This done, he is able to reduce the "Three banners" (*sanfan* 三幡) of Form (*se*), Emptiness (*kong*) and contemplation (*guan* 觀) to a single and indivisible Non-actuality.⁶⁵ With this mystical insight the myriad phenomena merge into One, and the poet himself is unconsciously identified with the "Naturally-so" (*ziran* 自然), with the Dao. He experiences spiritual transformation, whereby he achieves the common goal

such as the Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊, the Celestial Worthy (or Celestially-venerated) of Primordial Commencement. Li Shan comments that *tianzong* refers to Laojun, the deified Laozi.

- 63 What "lies beyond images" (*xiangwai* 象外) is the Dao. In Daoist texts *xian* 象 denoted a stage of the sequential transformations leading from the formless undifferentiated Dao to the "ten thousand things". This was a cosmological level immediately above or before the form *xing* 形 (see Pregadio, "The Notion of Form"). *Huainanzi* 7 writes that "when there were not yet Heaven and Earth, there were only images without form" (古未有天地之時，惟像無形). These theories were further elaborated in later Daoist texts. For example in his commentary to *Daode jing* Du Guanting 杜光庭 (850–933) says that "the first tokens of forms are called images; they are the beginning of the birth of things" (兆形曰象，生物之首也), the "commencement of form and matter" (象之，形質始) (*Daode zhenjing guangsheng yi*, CT 725, see also Pregadio, "The Notion of Form," 104–105). See also the debate recorded in Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 (360–439) *Sanguo zhi* commentary (10.319–320) and translated in Mather, "The Mystical Ascent," 244, n. 108.
- 64 For a brief discussion of the Buddhist doctrine of "non-origination" see Mather *ibid.*: n. 109. He cites *Vimalakirtinirdesa* 9 (version of Zhiqian 支謙, ca. 250 AD): "Since [the dharmas] neither arise nor originate, therefore there is no duality [between origination and dissolution]. To attain acquiescence in the non-originating dharmas is the entrance to non-duality."
- 65 The term *sanfan* 三幡 (Three banners), apparently current among fourth-century Chinese Buddhists, is explained by Li Shan as referring to form *se*, emptiness *kong*, and contemplation *guan* 觀. See also the discussions in Mather *ibid.*, n. 113 and Knechtges: *Wen Xuan*, vol. 2, 252, n. 102.

of both Buddhist and Daoist adepts – communion with the ultimate, constant reality, which is beyond Form or Actuality.

Sun Chuo's redefinition of the mystical journey theme

I believe that it is no exaggeration to characterise Sun Chuo's "You Tiantai shan fu" as the fourth century answer to "Yuanyou". At first such an assertion might seem far-fetched, for the differences are much more apparent than the features shared by the two compositions. Gone is the greater cosmos of ancient deities with its comprehensible symmetric pattern, gone is the magic-making celestial circuit, gone are the fantastic paraphernalia and entourage of the cosmic traveler, and there is no mention whatsoever of the various physiological practices leading to immortality. Sun Chuo's journey takes place in his mind alone, being achieved through the power of intensive contemplation. Even if purely imaginary, it unfolds on the scale of an earthly mountain, which besides its mystical dimension retains much of its real nature. The poet takes on the appearance of a Daoist or Buddhist hermit instead of that of an ancient magician commanding the forces of nature, and he discourses at length on philosophical *xuanxue* issues.

Nevertheless, the two poems describe the attainment of the same goal – a mystical union with an ineffable but mysteriously potent reality, which transcends all dualities. In both poems the road towards the ultimate reality is a process involving successive stages, and in both of them this process becomes concrete through the image of the journey. Sun Chuo's rhapsody is the only extant poetic work after the "Yuanyou" that not only comprehensively traces all the consecutive phases of such a mystical progress, but also describes that process for its own sake, devoid of allegorical concerns. In addition, both compositions share a common sequence of similar topics: preliminary initiation, journey, trial at the passage to the sacred, a mystic roaming through the divine world, ritual feast, followed by the ultimate break-through in existential plane and ecstatic attainment of the Dao.

While in "Yuanyou" the journey takes the form of a ritual, power-engendering circuit of a highly regular cosmos, successively traversing its four directions and achieving culmination in the centre, Sun Chuo's progress involves a gradual rising above the concrete features of physical nature. The progress takes place simultaneously on two levels: the description of the inward process of expelling the human passions and vexations, of breaking the bonds of senses and emotions, of rising beyond dualities, is mirrored on the outer plane of the poet's physical (albeit purely imagined) surroundings.

Recent scholars have pointed out that this poem heralds the aesthetics of the landscape poetry to come.⁶⁶ It is only in the first phase of the journey, however, that the poet moves through a real mountainous landscape, concretised through vivid naturalistic details (slippery moss, long creepers, trailing grape, etc.) and the names of actual scenic sites (the Scarlet Wall peak and the Cascade Waterfall, the You Stream, the Stone Bridge). After the crossing of the Stone Bridge – the passage to the sacred –, the landscape becomes more ambiguous, functioning simultaneously on two levels. The Numinous Stream (Lingxi) is both an actual river and a topographic feature of the otherworld; resting on the lush grasses, shaded by the tall pines, the poet views and listens to the divine phoenixes. In the vision of paradise the real features of nature are further negated: the colours are unusual (cinnabar clouds), living and nonliving

66 See n. 5 above.

nature merge together (trees of gem, bearing pearls).⁶⁷ It is through this place, where the usual human distinctions and categories are being turned upside down, that Sun Chuo passes into a realm beyond the sensory perceptions, beyond the shapes and colours – into a realm of pure ideation, of pure metaphysical discourse. The three distinct spheres discerned in Zhidun's "Yonghuai shi" 3 above – the earthly nature, the mountainous paradise, the world of abstract concepts – here become the consecutive stages of a single meditative process. The transformation of landscape from tangible physicality to the abstract and spiritual thus reflects the regression from the multiplicity of natural phenomena towards what is beyond their physical configuration and ultimately refers to the transformation of the self.

While the "Yuanyou" is pervaded by the dramatic contrast between the vulgar and inconstant world of men and the realm of the pure and eternal Dao, which has a spatial location somewhere far above, this does not constitute such a poignant dichotomy for Sun Chuo. For him it is transformed into a contrast between the "shallow knowledge" and limited vision of profane men, tied by passions and bound to their senses, and the metaphysical insight of the sage. Although the Tiantai Mountains are time and again characterised as distant, secluded and inaccessible, they remain a part of the earthly landscape. It is not their physical nature that is unapproachable by ordinary men, but their true, mystical form, underlying the physical configuration. One is reminded in this respect of the potent charts of the "True forms" of the mountains, mentioned in the preface. Likewise, Sun Chuo's journey takes place in the mind alone, reminding one of the Daoist visualisations (*xiang*) that actualised and materialised (*cun*) transcendent deities and places. For him the hidden mountainous world can be approached not only by those, who physically "abandon the world to play with the Dao" (*yishi wandao* 遺世翫道), who "shun grains to dine on mushrooms" (*jueli ruzhi* 絕粒茹芝), but also in the mind alone, which is mystically detached and probes the Mystery. Therefore, the radical breaking with worldly existence and one's human identity postulated in "Yuanyou," is not a prerequisite for Sun Chuo. His communion with the transcendent, his merging with the ultimate reality is not sought somewhere far beyond in space, but is a state of mind penetrating beyond the physical configurations of the earthly phenomena. In an anecdote, preserved in the commentary to *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, Sun Chuo is reported to have said:

體玄識遠者，出處同歸

The one who embodies the Mysterious and understands the Remote, no matter if he leaves the world behind or remains in it, returns alike [to the Dao].⁶⁸

The differences between the "Yuanyou" and Sun Chuo's rhapsody can be explained by what Tu Weiming has called "the ontological turn" during the 3rd – 4th century, and the shift that it brought about in issues of interest and methods employed. The poetic transformation can be accounted for by the Wei-Jin style of thought which probed "the underlying structure and prin-

67 Paradoxical world order that defies human categorisations is a typical feature of paradise descriptions in the *youxian* poetry. I have dwelt on this theme in more detail elsewhere (Zornica Kirkova, "Landscapes of Paradise – the Otherworldly Current of the Six Dynastic Landscape Poetry," *Archiv Orientální* 73 (2005), 477–478).

68 *Shishuo xinyu* 4.91 in *Han Wei Linchao biji xiaoshuo daguan* 漢魏六朝筆記小說大觀 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 825.

ceptle of things instead of casting one's gaze outward in search of the grandiose design"⁶⁹, as during the Han dynasty. While the mandala-like space in the "Yuanyou" reflects the "constructing mode" of Han cosmological thinking, which strives to embrace all existence in one rigid, comprehensible pattern, Sun Chuo starts from the things at hand and proceeds in depth to uncover the hidden reality beyond them. This turn made it possible to perceive the ultimate significance inherent in the natural world itself. It is because the non-Actual (*wu*), the source and end of existence for Sun Chuo and for the Wei-Jin thinkers in general, "becomes actual through a myriad shapes, names and events and then returns back to non-actuality, and whoever has the eyes to see, can trace the temporal configurations back to their timeless source"⁷⁰. In order to unearth the ultimate reality no magical circuit of the cosmic quarters is necessary; it is the single mountain that holds in its landscape the underlying principle of things.

The implications of Sun Chuo's redefinition of the mystic journey theme were to be fully evaluated a century later in the landscape poetry. In his excursions into the mountains Xie Lingyun climbs a self-contained cosmos which needs not be transcended with the extravagant fantasy of cloud chariots and heavenly journeys. His encounter and interaction with the myriad manifestations of nature bring a flash of insight, like the sudden enlightenment in Buddhism. Through the ability to "appreciate" (*shang* 賞) landscape beauty, one can attain the *li* 理 – a term in his usage quite similar to Dao, indicating a higher, undifferentiated Natural Order.⁷¹ The ultimate understanding of it is not therefore to be sought somewhere in a distant realm, but in the physical features of the scenery around the poet. And it is Sun Chuo's "You Tiantai shan fu" that can be regarded as a bridge between the older cosmic *itineraries* and the newly emerging landscape poetry on mountains and rivers.

69 Tu Wei-ming, "Profound Learning, Personal Knowledge and Poetic Vision," in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 7.

70 Mather, "The Mystical Ascent," 231.

71 See especially Westbrook, "Landscape Transformation," 241.