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Seeing with the Mind's Eye: The Eastern Jin Discourse of Visualization and Imagination

This paper explores a series of acts of the mind in its interaction with the physical world, or more specifically, with landscape, during the intellectually coherent hundred-year period coinciding with the dynasty known as the Eastern Jin (317–420). Chinese landscape poetry and landscape paintings first flourished in the Six Dynasties. Landscape was an essential element in the so-called "poetry of arcane discourse" (*xuanyan shi* 玄言詩) of the fourth century, a poetry drawing heavily upon the vocabulary and concerns of the Daoist philosophy embodied in *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* as well as upon Buddhist doctrine; the earliest known record of landscape painting also dates to the Eastern Jin.[1] How was landscape perceived by the Eastern Jin elite, and how was this unique mode of perception informed by a complex nexus of contemporary cultural forces? These are the questions to be dealt with in this paper.

Exploring Eastern Jin texts about landscape or about the representation of landscape, we discover that one word is repeatedly associated with the appreciation of "mountains and waters," and that word is *xiang* 想: to visualize the object of contemplation in one's mind, to bring up the image of the object to the mind's eye. A late-second-century definition clearly shows the difference between *si* 思 and *xiang* (which later were combined into a compound *sixiang* 思想 meaning "thought" or "to think") and highlights the visual nature of the latter: "Where one lodges one's thoughts is called *si*; when it is as if one sees the form [of the object of contemplation] right in front of one – this is

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[1] This is Gu Kaizhi's 顧愷之 (ca. 345–406) "Account of Painting the Cloud Terrace Mountain" 畫雲臺山記, which will be discussed below.

called *xiang*" 意所存曰思, 彷彿如睹其容之處前曰想.[2] The concept of *xiang* is closely related to form, or image (*xiang* 相, *xiang* 象/像) and provides the key to Eastern Jin cultural and aesthetic thought. For the Eastern Jin elite, landscape was essentially a grand image 象, and the perception, interpretation, and indeed construction of this image were contingent upon the workings of the individual mind. Imagination was therefore a full verb indicating image-making, and so in many ways, the rise of landscape representation in the fourth century was a movement inward rather than outward. That is, the heightened interest in physical nature was but an extension of the primary engagement with the inner world of the individual. It is for this reason that imaginary landscapes are such a prominent motif in Eastern Jin literature.

This paper will examine the diverse manifestations and significance of *xiang* 象, a mental seeing and image-making, during the Eastern Jin. Through analyzing a series of secular and religious texts, I will demonstrate how this concept became dominant in the cultural discourse of the time, and why it is significant for our understanding of early-medieval China.

INNER LIGHT/OUTER REALITY:
THE INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

Buddhist scriptures introduced into China beginning in the late-second century emphasize the lack of self-nature of all things. That is, things do not have a definitive nature, but are all contingent on causes and conditions. The *Sūtra of Perfect Wisdom* 道行般若經 (also known as *Xiaopin banruo jing* 小品般若經 (Skt. *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*), an important Mahāyāna scripture first translated by Lokakṣema 支婁迦讖 in 179, then again by Zhiqian 支謙 (fl. 222–254), and finally by Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–413) in 408, contains a long passage explicating "causes and conditions" by way of many metaphors, one of which makes use of the phenomenon of echo:

> It is like the echo in the mountains: it is not realized with one factor, or with two factors. There has to be a mountain, there has to be a person, there has to be a shout, there has to be an ear listening to it: when all these factors are brought together, an echo is realized.[3]

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[2] Chen Hui's 陳慧 commentary on the *Yin chi ru jing* 陰持入經 (Skt. *Skandadhātvāyatana sūtra*) translated by An Shigao; *T* 1694, vol. 33, p. 11c.

[3] The *Sūtra of the Perfect Wisdom*; trans. Zhiloujiachen, *T* 224, vol. 8, p. 476c.

The echo metaphor brings together material as well as subjective conditions of the physical phenomenon: without mountain, person, and shout, there is no echo; and yet, without an ear to hear it, it may not be said to exist either. The world of matter thus depends on the cognitive subject to be realized.

The significance of the cognitive subject is further elaborated in one of the most popular Buddhist scriptures of the Eastern Jin period, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra* 維摩詰所說經.[4] In the first chapter, titled "Buddha's Kingdom" 佛國, Śākyamuni Buddha asserts that the Buddha's kingdom is not a place far beyond mortal reach, but is located right here and now, in this secular world, "the land of people and creatures walking or crawling with their feet and breathing with their mouths." When a bodhisattva is engaged in creating the pure land of the Buddha's kingdom in the mortal world, he must purify his mind, for "the Buddha's kingdom is only pure as a result of the purity of the bodhisattva's mind." Śāriputra 舍利弗, who is among the vast audience listening to the preaching of Śākyamuni, wonders to himself:

> "If the Buddha's kingdom is only pure as a result of the purity of the bodhisattva's mind, then when Śākyamuni Buddha was being a bodhisattva, wasn't his mind impure? Otherwise, how could this Buddha's kingdom be so impure?"
>
> Śākyamuni immediately knows Śāriputra's thought, and says to him: "What do you think, Śāriputra, is it the fault of the sun and moon that those who are blind cannot see that the sun and moon are pure?"
>
> Śāriputra replies: "No, World Honored One. It is the fault of those who are blind, not that of the sun and moon."
>
> The Buddha says: "Śāriputra, [in the same way,] the fault lies with those people who are sinful and hence cannot see the splendor and purity of the Buddha land of Tathāgata; it is not the fault of Tathāgata. Śāriputra, my land is pure, but you cannot see it."
>
> At this point Brahma Śikhin jumps in, saying to Śariputra: "Why, I see the Buddha's kingdom is splendid and pure, just like the highest abode of the dhyāna heavens!"

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[4] This scripture was translated four times from the third century to the early fifth century, by Zhiqian, Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 (239–316), Zhu Shulan 竺叔蘭 (fl. third-fourth centuries), and Kumārajīva; Zhi Mindu 支敏度 (fl. third-fourth centuries) combined Zhi Qian and Zhu Shulan's translations into a version of his own. See Zhi Mindu's preface preserved in Sengyou's 僧佑 (445–518) *Collection of Records of Translated Tripitaka* 出三藏記集; Su Jinren 蘇晉仁 and Xiao Lianzi 蕭鍊子, eds. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995) 8, p. 310. For the popularity of Vimalakīrti in the Six Dynasties, see Richard B. Mather's article "Vimalakīrti and Gentry Buddhism." *History of Religions* 8.1 (1968), pp. 60–73.

> Śāriputra retorts: "When I look at this land, I see its hills, knolls, hollows, chasms, thorns, sands, pebbles, soil, rocks, and various mountains; it is littered with filth and rubbish" 我見此土, 丘陵坑坎, 荊棘沙礫, 土石諸山, 穢惡充滿.
>
> Brahma Śikhin answers: "It is because you, my benevolent one, have highs and lows in your mind and do not adhere to the Buddha's wisdom that you see this land as impure."
>
> Thereupon the Buddha touches the earth with his big toe, and suddenly the universe is shown as magnificently bedecked with thousands of jewels and gems, and everyone in the audience sees himself or herself as sitting on a throne of a jeweled lotus. As Śāriputra marvels at the revelation of the radiance of the Buddha's land, Śākyamuni reiterates his lesson: "Śāriputra, this Buddha's kingdom is always thus pure. It is only for the sake of helping those inferior beings to achieve enlightenment that it is shown as an impure land with many imperfections. It is like the heavenly gods all eat from the same jeweled vessels but the rice changes color according to the merits of each and every one of them."[5]

Sengzhao 僧肇 (384–414), one of Kumārajīva's most brilliant disciples, wrote in his commentary on the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*: "The pure land is but the shadow and echo of one's mind 淨土蓋是心之影響耳."[6]

This *Vimalakīrti* story, which teaches that what you are determines what you see, illustrates the power of the mind in an unequivocal way. Śāriputra's observation of the mortal world is fascinating in its matter-of-fact frankness: "When I look at this land, I see its hills, knolls, hollows, chasms, thorns, sands, pebbles, soil, rocks, and various mountains; it is littered with filth and rubbish." Interestingly, Śāriputra's description presents the very picture of a landscape. It is up to the viewer to see how marvelous it truly is.

The emphasis on the identity of the viewer as the crucial factor in seeing the landscape "correctly" was shared by early-medieval Chinese Daoist adepts looking in the mountains for herbs or minerals as ingredients of immortality drugs.[7] For the Daoist adept, to be able

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[5] This translation is based on Kumārajīva's version. *T* 475, vol. 14, p. 538C. Also see Burton Watson's translation, *The Vimalakirti Sutra* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1997), pp. 29–30. The description of the changing colors of the rice can be found in *Dīrghāgama Sūtra* 長阿含經: "For those with the greatest merits, the color of the rice is white; for those with average merits, the color is blue; for those with the least merits, the color is red"; *T* 1, vol. 1, p. 134A.

[6] Sengzhao, *Zhu Weimojie jing*; *T* 1775, vol. 38, p. 337B.

[7] In early-medieval China, although Buddhists and Daoists might offer different solutions to an intellectual problem, they were more often than not confronted with a common set of issues, and many concepts they dealt with belonged to a coherent category of meaning. En-

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to find the magical plant did not just require a trained eye; it was a subtle practice demanding much more preparation, without which the seeker would fail to see the magical plant even if it was right in front of him. The Eastern Jin Daoist thinker Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343) made this point amply clear in his *Inner Chapters of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity* 抱朴子內篇. In the chapter entitled "Drugs of Immortality" 仙藥, he described a variety of "fungi exudations" 菌芝 (in Robert Campany's translation) which would grant immortality or at least a thousand years of life to those who ingested them.[8] These exudations grew "in the deep mountains, or beneath some grand tree, or beside a fountain. Their shapes may resemble palaces and chambers, carriages and horses, dragons and tigers, human figures, and flying birds." Ge Hong also tells his readers:

> Famous mountains often have these exudations, but ordinary, mediocre Daoists whose minds are not focused, whose actions are defiled and virtues few, and who do not know the techniques of entering the mountain properly will not be able to know the forms of the exudations even if they get hold of their pictures, and consequently will not obtain the exudations. No matter whether a mountain is big or small, it always has spirits and deities [residing therein]; *if the spirits and deities do not want to give the zhi to a person, then even when he steps on it, he will not see it*" (my italics).[9]

For instance, a "Stony Elephant Exudation 石象芝" was said to be so radiant that one could see its glow "three hundred paces away from it in dark night," and yet, "unless one has purified oneself and is utterly focused, and unless one carries Laozi's Five Talismans of Numinous Treasure for Entering the Mountains, one will not get to see it."[10] Ge Hong's discussion illuminates the point made in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* from yet another angle: the efflorescence of the landscape is not available to everyone; it is only revealed to those who are worthy of it.[11] This worthiness, as Ge Hong shows, first of all consists of one's attitude – a focused mind.

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forcing an absolute division between Buddhist and Daoist thoughts in this period would be anachronistic.

[8] Robert F. Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 2002), p. 27.

[9] Wang Ming 王明, annot., *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985) 11, p. 202.

[10] Ibid. 11, pp. 197–98.

[11] The rigid class hierarchy in early medieval China was behind the conviction that only a select group could get to see the truth of things, a notion that had gained wide currency in the fourth century and was translated into various forms in Buddhist and Daoist discourses.

The focused mind acquired a special resonance in Buddhist teachings of meditation, with which two basic concepts are associated: *śamatha* 止 (calm abiding) and *vipaśyanā* 觀 (clear observation). The former refers to the stopping and stilling of actions and passions in order to achieve a serene concentration; the latter to the application of the concentration power to an enlightened observation of the impermanent nature of reality and seeing things as they really are.[12] *Guan* is often used with specific technical connotations, such as in *guanxiang* 觀想, to visualize the object of contemplation in one's mind. One may contemplate the thirty-two forms of the Buddha, or the Pure Land, or even a corpse (so as to recognize the impermanence of the world). The importance of *guanxiang* lies with the belief that visualization itself is realization. In other words, the Buddha himself is no more than a product of one's mind, a figment of imagination. The mind is so powerful in its highly focused state that it can literally bring the Buddha and his kingdom to realization; and yet, this realization itself is empty, unreal, just as dharma and "dharma-body" (the true nature of Buddhahood) are fundamentally empty. This ingenious formulation – that visualization is realization, and realization is unreal – testifies to the reality *and* the unreality of the Buddha, an essential teaching of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The *Pratyutpannasamādhi Sūtra* 般舟三昧經, translated at least three times before the Eastern Jin, gives a wonderful discussion of the formulation. In this sutra, the Buddha teaches that if a person thinks of the Pure Land for seven days and nights, it will be revealed to this person.

> It is just like what one sees in a dream: it does not matter whether it is day or night, whether it is inside or outside; one will be able to see it even if shrouded in the darkness. Bhadrapāla 颰陀和, a bodhisattva should think like this: that within the realm of the various Buddha lands, at the various great mountains, including Mount Sumeru, all places of veiled darkness will open up, and there shall be no covering or closure whatsoever. So the bodhisattva does not need to see with the Divine Eye, nor listen with the Divine Ear, nor go to the Buddha land with the Divine Power of Unimpeded Bodily Function, nor be born there; no, but the bodhisattva will see it right here, on this very seat.

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[12] See Neal Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of the First Chapter of Chih-i's Mo-ho chih-kuan* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1993).

The metaphor of the dream underscores the unreal nature of the visualized image as well as the immediacy of the vision.

Śākyamuni went on to say that seeing the Buddha is like seeing one's own visage in a mirror:

> "It is like a young, nice-looking person wearing beautiful clothes and desiring to see himself. If he holds a mirror as bright as sesame oil, clear water, or crystal, and sees his own face in it, then shall we say that there is a reflection coming from outside into the mirror, or the sesame oil, or the water, or the crystal?"
>
> Bhadrapāla answered: "No, God of all gods, it is because of the purity of the mirror, the sesame oil, the water, or the crystal that one sees one's own reflection. The reflection does not come from inside or from outside."
>
> The Buddha said: "Good, Bhadrapāla. Since the color is clear and pure, what it shows is clear and pure. If one desires the Buddha, then one immediately sees the Buddha."[13]

In the last analysis, the Buddha neither exists beyond the human mind nor can be perceived by a clouded mind. If one's mind is as purified as a bright mirror, it naturally reveals the image of the Buddha–if one just looks into it.[14] The bright mirror reflecting the true form of everything clearly took hold of the imagination of the famous Eastern Jin monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416), who was intensely interested in the power of meditation and visualization. In the preface to a group of poems on "Meditating on the Buddha and Achieving Samādhi" 念佛三昧詩集序, he elaborated on the mirror metaphor:

> So he who enters this meditation will become oblivious [to the world around him] and forget [secular] knowledge. He will take the object of his contemplation as a mirror; when the mirror is bright, his inner light shines forth, their rays joining, and myriad images are thus born, so that even without the help of ears and eyes, hearing and seeing are accomplished 故令入斯定者, 昧然忘知. 即所緣以成鑒, 鑒明則內照交映, 而萬像生焉; 非耳目之所暨, 而聞見行焉.[15]

And yet, since the *Pratyutpannasamādhi Sūtra* often makes use of the metaphor of dream to describe the visualized image in one's meditative contemplation, Huiyuan, ever troubled by the Mahāyāna teaching about the lack of reality of the Buddha and the dharma-body, addressed an inquiry to Kumārajīva about the nature of the image rising from the dark recesses of one's mind during meditative visualization of the Buddha. Huiyuan felt that if the Buddha being visualized in one's mind was indeed a vision of the Buddha, then it would be inappropriate to use the metaphor of dream to describe such an experience, for dream represented "the sphere of a common person 夢是凡夫之境." For Huiyuan, who believed in the ontological existence of the Buddha, there was a clear distinction between the Buddha established by the illusion of a real subjective "I" 我想之所立 and "the Sage [i.e. the Buddha] beyond dreams 夢表之聖人," who had come to the meditating person from outside. In other words, what Huiyuan had wanted to achieve by meditative contemplation of the Buddha was a "real" vision sent by the Buddha, not an empty image generated by his own mind.

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[13] *T* 417, vol. 13, p. 899B.

[14] Eugene Y. Wang gives a fascinating account of the mirror as a compositional device and a particular mode of visual perception in the medieval Chinese transformation tableaux in chap. 5 of his book, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2005), pp. 238–316.

[15] Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762–1843), ed., *Quan Jin wen* 全晉文 162, in his *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), p. 2402.

In his response, Kumārajīva explained to Huiyuan that the metaphor of dream was merely an expedient way of teaching people about the power of meditation; and that the Buddha had no definitive image that truly existed 決定相, but any definitive image of the Buddha that truly existed was a product of thoughts, conjectures, speculations, and discriminations (Skt.: *sañjñā-vikalpa*).[16] Kumārajīva's lengthy reply, like his answers to Huiyuan's other questions, once again manifests the profound gap between the two thinkers, a gap that to a certain extent may be construed as a fundamental difference between Huiyuan's background in "arcane learning 玄學" and Kumārajīva's much more radical teachings about the fundamental emptiness of dharma, the expediency and essential emptiness of language, names, and concepts.[17] The "arcane learning" based on the works of Laozi and Zhuangzi postulates a Non-being or Absence (*wu* 無) as the fundamental substance (*ti* 體) of the world, and "Being" or Presence (*you* 有) as the functions (*yong* 用). Both Non-being and Being are considered to possess an ontological reality, with which a Mahāyāna Buddhist, especially one like Kumārajīva, who stressed the absolute emptiness of all things including the Buddha and his teachings, would not agree. The "arcane learning" also claims that image (*xiang* 象, such as a hexagram) conveys the meaning (*yi* 意) of the

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[16] *Jiumo luoshi fashi dayi* 鳩摩羅什法師大義 (also known as *Dacheng dayi zhang* 大乘大義章); *T* 1856, vol. 45, pp. 134C–35A. For a lucid summary of the major issues discussed by Huiyuan and Kumārajīva, see E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959), pp. 227–29.

[17] Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, ed., *Zhongguo Fojiao shi* 中國佛教史 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1985) 2, pp. 676–701.

Sage and language elucidates image, and so both image and language may be discarded after one "acquires the meaning."[18] The "meaning" itself is, however, believed to be something real and constant, which again conflicts with the Buddhist teaching. Many members of the Eastern Jin elite were well-versed in Buddhist sutras or were fervent Buddhist believers, but their understanding of Mahāyāna Buddhism was often blurred by the concepts and concerns of the "arcane learning." In a way, Huiyuan's divergence from Kumārajīva was typical of his age, as Huiyuan was pursuing something solid, real, permanent, an ultimate truth behind the diverse, transitory, and constantly changing phenomena of the universe. What stood out in Huiyuan's writings was his fascination with meditative visualization and with the power of image – mental or otherwise. From the bright mirror which is both the contemplative mind and the object of contemplation, a light radiates that illuminates for Huiyuan the "myriad images" of the phenomenal world – including, first of all, the vicissitudes of the landscape. For Huiyuan, as long as one possessed the ability to see correctly, landscape was definitely not "littered with filth and rubbish," but was a grand image that embodied the ultimate truth he was seeking.

MIND AND LOCALE

The foregoing section delineated the intellectual background of the discourse of perception in the fourth century, which revolved around the central issue that what you are determines what you see. It is against such a background that we must understand the key passage in the preface for the "Poems on An Excursion to the Stone Gate" 遊石門詩序, which was authored by a member of the group of monks and laymen believed to have been led by none other than Huiyuan himself. In the year 400, this group went on an outing to the Stone Gate Mountain in the Mount Lu area, where Huiyuan had resided for over thirty years. After a detailed description of the extraordinary scenery of the Stone Gate as well as of the intense pleasure felt by those witnessing the beauty of the landscape, the author reflects on the source of their pleasure:

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[18] See, for instance, Wang Bi's 王弼 (226–249) "Elucidation of the Image" ("Mingxiang" 明象) in his *Zhouyi luehli* 周易略例, a commentarial work on the *Classic of Changes*. As Stephen Owen points out, *xiang* is "neither the particular thing .... nor the 'idea' of a thing, but rather a sensuous schematization of the normative thing. In literary usage, beginning in the Southern Dynasties, *hsiang* became strongly associated with 'appearances;' and thus the term is sometimes used imprecisely to refer to the phenomenal world"; Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Asia Center P., 1992), p. 587.

> In our feelings of peaceful contentment there was indeed a special flavor, and yet we found it difficult to articulate, so we withdrew and reflected on it. Among the slopes and valleys, we encounter these phenomena without governing subjectivity, and our response to them was not through emotion; and yet, they initiated our elated mood and drew us on, bringing us to such depths as this. It must have been that Emptiness and Brightness illuminated our understanding, and a sense of serenity and distance deepened our feelings. We talked about this over and over again, yet it remains obscure and not fully grasped. Soon afterward, the sun announced the evening, and that which we had lodged our hearts in disappeared [from our view]. Only then did we become enlightened to the profound vision of the recluse, and comprehended the greater sense of what is constant in phenomena. The appeal was one of spirit, and not merely of mountains and waters. 當其沖豫自得, 信有味焉, 而未易言也. 退而尋之, 夫崖谷之閒, 會物無主, 應不以情, 而開興引人, 致深若此, 豈不以虛明朗其照, 閑邃篤其情邪? 並三復斯談, 猶昧然未盡. 俄而太陽告夕, 所存已往, 乃悟幽人之, 達恆物之大情. 其爲神趣, 豈山水而已哉?[19]

This passage shows that "Emptiness and Brightness 虛明" as well as "a sense of serenity and distance 閑邃" are the basic ingredients in their perception and appreciation of the landscape. Indeed, without the right state of mind, the beauty of the landscape would not have been revealed to them. In the last analysis, it is not landscape per se that appeals to the viewer, but the "profound vision 玄覽" that has the capacity to shed light on the myriad images of the phenomenal world, even after or particularly after the images are shrouded in the descending darkness.

Such a sentiment was widely shared by the Eastern Jin elite. The famous writer Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314–371), in his "Stele Inscription for the Grand Marshall Yu Liang [289–340]" 太尉庾亮碑, praises the deceased minister for being able to "face the mountains and waters with *xuan* 以玄對山水."[20] *Xuan*, an important concept in *Laozi* that has been variously translated as dark, profound, abstruse, mysterious, esoteric, or arcane, was broadly applied in the general religious, philosophical, and cultural discourse in the fourth century, indicating the attribute of the ultimate truth, or, as in Sun Chuo's inscription, the mental state of residing in the ultimate truth. For the Eastern Jin elite, facing the

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[19] *Quan Jin wen* 167, p. 2437. For a complete translation of the preface, see Richard E. Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1994), pp. 68–71.

[20] *Quan Jin wen* 62, p. 1814.

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mountains and waters alone was not enough; one must be equipped with the “correct” mind-set. Sun Chuo once went on an excursion to the White Stone Mountain with Yu Liang and one Wei Cheng 衛承. Sun Chuo made a contemptuous comment about Wei Cheng: “This fellow’s spirit has nothing to do with mountains and waters – how can he produce any piece of writing!”[21] For Sun Chuo, placing a man in front of mountains and waters did not necessarily entail the existence of a relation between the man and the landscape: only the right spirit of the man was capable of establishing such a relation.

Indeed, the mind was considered so powerful that it could override the physical environment. The Western Jin poet Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) had written in his “*Fu* on Responding to Praising Reclusion” (“Yingjia fu” 應嘉賦): “If one can forget one’s body, why does he have to cast his hairpin among the valleys [i.e. become a recluse]? The high mountain may be compared to a tiny hill, and the cloudy forest lodged in a single tree” 苟形骸之可忘, 豈投簪其必谷? 方介邱于尺阜, 託雲林乎一木.[22] An anecdote from the fifth-century compilation *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 relates that when emperor Jianwen of the Jin (r. 371–372) entered the Flowery Grove Park, he told those in attendance: “The spot that suits the mind does not have to be far away. By any shady grove or stream one may quite naturally have a mental image of the Rivers Hao and Pu [of which Zhuangzi wrote]. I feel that animals, birds and fish come of their own accord and become endeared to me” 會心處不必在遠, 翳然林水, 便自有濠濮閒想也. 覺鳥獸禽魚自來親人.[23] A similar sentiment is conveyed in the calligrapher Wang Xizhi’s 王羲之 (321–379) poem composed at the famous gathering of Lanting in 353:

三春啓羣品	The spring months have heralded in various things,
寄暢在所因	My sense of expansiveness is lodged in what I encounter.
仰望碧天際	I gaze up at the limits of the blue sky,
俯瞰渌水濱	Then look down at the edge of the clear waters.
寥朗無厓觀	All is open and bright in a boundless view;
寓目理自陳	As the world meets my eyes, the truth is naturally revealed.
大矣造化功	How great are the accomplishments of the Creation!

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[21] Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, annot., *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993) 8, p. 478. Wei Cheng should have been Wei Yong 衛永.

[22] *Quan Jin wen* 96, p. 2012.

[23] *Shishuo xinyu* 2, pp. 120–21. The translation is based on Richard Mather’s with modifications, *A New Account of Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 60.

萬殊莫不均　Ten thousand different things, but all on an equal level.
羣籟雖參差　Although sounds of nature are various and uneven,
適我無非親　They are all endearing upon reaching me.[24]

This poem echoes Zhuangzi's discourse on "All Things Being on the Same Level" 齊物論, but it also stresses the importance of the subject "I" (*wo* 我): it is *his* gaze that reveals the hidden truth, and *his* listening that perceives the sounds of nature as endearing.

For the masters of "arcane learning," the ideal monarch, who is supposed to be "a king without and a sage within 內聖外王," embodies the principle that spiritual freedom may be achieved regardless of one's status and locale.[25] Indeed, "a lesser recluse goes into reclusion in the mountains and marshes 小隱隱陵藪, / a great recluse, in the court and marketplace 大隱隱朝市."[26] Such an outlook coincided with the Mahāyāna Buddhist teaching that the destiny of a bodhisattva lies within the secular world, not beyond, and a bodhisattva's duty is the salvation of all people, not just oneself. The *Wisdom Sūtra of the Emission of Light* 放光般若經 states: "If one resides alone, away from people, in the mountains and under the trees, that is not necessarily the way of vivarjana [keeping distance from worldly defilements]." But "for those who carry out my teaching of peace in the secular world, even if they live beside the city wall, it will not be any different from living in the mountains and marshes."[27] It is not difficult to associate such a statement with the Eastern Jin poet Tao Yuanming's 陶淵明 (365?-427) famous lines, which sum it up so well:

結廬在人境　I built my cottage in the human world,
而無車馬喧　Yet there is no noise of horse and carriage.
問君何能爾　How then did you manage to achieve this?
心遠地自偏　When the heart is faraway, the locale naturally becomes remote.[28]

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[24] Lu Qinli 逯欽立, ed., *Quan Jin shi* 全晉詩 13, in his *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 895. There is a textual variant for the last character of the poem: *xin* (new or fresh) for *qin* (endearing, intimate).

[25] Wang Xianqian 王先謙, ed., *Zhuangzi jijie* 莊子集解 (Taibei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1988) 33, p. 287.

[26] Wang Kangju 王康琚 (of the Jin dynasty), "Against Summoning the Recluse" 反招隱詩, *Quan Jin shi* 15, p. 953.

[27] *T* 221, vol. 8, p. 96C–77A. *Fangguang banruo jing* was translated by Zhu Shulan and Wuluocha 無羅叉 (or Wuchaluo 無叉羅) in 291. It was also known as *Mahāprajñāparamitā sūtra* 大品般若經.

[28] *Quan Jin shi* 17, p. 998. In the fourth century, one of the six major Buddhist schools flourishing in the South was the so-called "Principle of the Free Mind 心無宗." This school, founded by Zhi Mindu 支愍度 in the 320s, elevated the power of the mind to a new height. It believed that only so long as the mind did not become attached to things, things retained their empty

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Tao Yuanming's couplets exemplify the importance attached to the mind, not to the locale, but there was also an emphasis on physical detachment as a precondition for spiritual transcendence in contemporary discourse. Ge Hong complained that even though he did not go about paying visits, people would call on him, distracting him from his pursuit of spiritual matters. "Mountains and forests do not possess the Way," he said, "and yet those ancients who searched for the Way had to enter the mountains and forests, because they desired to keep their distance from noise and clamor and protect their peace of mind."[29]

The two different strands of thought about mind and locale, one stressing the importance of the mind over the locale and the other that of the locale over the mind, seems to be best illustrated by a fascinating group of poems exchanged between Zhang Yi 張翼 (*z.* Junzu 君祖, fl. ca. 344–361), one of the earliest known "forgers" whose copy of Wang Xizhi's calligraphy almost fooled the great calligrapher himself,[30] and the monk Kang Sengyuan 康僧淵 (ca. fl. 300–350). Zhang Yi's initial set of three poems was addressed to a monk called Zhu Fajun 竺法頵. In the preface to the poems, Zhang Yi explained that Zhu Fajun was going to withdraw to the western mountains for spiritual cultivation, and so he wrote the poems both to say farewell and to "tease 嘲" him. The first poem begins with praising the beautiful scenery of the mountains but ends with questioning Zhu Fajun's choice:

外物豈大悲	Is it Great Compassion to leave the world of things?
獨往非玄同	Going alone is not the way of Profound Sharing.
不見舍利弗	Don't you see that Śāriputra
受屈維摩公	Has submitted to Vimalakīrti?[31]

Zhang Yi's point is that one should stay within the secular world like Vimalakīrti and work for universal salvation, rather than going

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nature; in other words, it was the mind that made the phenomenal world empty. The theory had enjoyed a great popularity in its day, especially in the area of Jingzhou 荊州 (modern Hubei). Liu Chengzhi 劉程之 (ca. 354–410), a devout Buddhist layman, composed "An Explication of the Principle of the Free Mind" 釋心無義. Although it is no longer extant, the title is kept in Sengyou's *Chu sanzang ji ji* 12, p. 429. Liu Chengzhi, better known as Liu Yimin 劉遺民, was one of Tao Yuanming's close friends, to whom Tao Yuanming had addressed two poems. It is only natural that the two of them shared certain intellectual and spiritual concerns, including the conviction that the mind influenced and defined the locale, not vice versa.

[29] Yang Mingzhao 楊明照, ed., *Baopuzi waipian jiaojian* 抱朴子外篇校箋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991) 50, p. 694.

[30] See Yu He's 虞龢 "Memorial on Calligraphy" 論書表, presented to emperor Ming of the Song in 470; Yan Kejun, ed., *Quan Song wen* (in Yan, ed., *Quan shanggu sandai*) 55, p. 2731.

[31] *Quan Jin shi* 12, p. 893.

off to beautiful, remote locales to make spiritual progress which only benefits one's own self. As was typical of his age, Zhang Yi used both Buddhist and Daoist terms in arguing his case: *dabei*, or Great Compassion (Skt.: *mahā-karuṇā*), is an attribute of the Buddha; it differs from ordinary compassion in that it is not only the sympathy for the act of saving others but also accomplishes the very act of saving; by contrast, the phrase *xuantong* (Profound Sharing) is taken from *Laozi*.[32] Vimalakī rti was a Buddhist layman, but his understanding of the Buddha's teachings proved greater than that of the monk Śāriputra. The reference to the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is particularly relevant, for the sutra is characterized by its exaltation of dwelling in the midst of the secular world (like Vimalakīrti himself) to achieve enlightenment and help others achieve enlightenment, as opposed to the view that one should stay away from the human realm for one's own spiritual progress. Zhang Yi's reference to these two well-known figures, Vimalakīrti and Śāriputra, playfully implied a parallel situation between himself, a layman, and Zhu Fajun, a monk. He made his point more explicitly at the end of the third poem by appealing to the rhetoric of the self-styled Mahāyāna ("Great Vehicle" 大乘) Buddhism that advocated universal salvation over self-cultivation. Although the differentiation between the "Great Vehicle" and so-called "Small vehicle" is debated in modern times, it was a rhetorical move made by the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* itself, and Zhang Yi was clearly making use of it in his argument against going off to the mountains.

苟能夷冲心	If one can calm one's mind,
所憩靡不淨	Wherever one dwells is the pure land.
萬物可逍遙	In myriad things one may roam free,
何必棲形影	What is the need to rest one's form and shadow?
勉尋大乘軌	I urge you to seek the tracks of the Great Vehicle,
練神超勇猛	Cultivate your spirit, and surpass in being courageous.[33]

"Courageous" (*yongmeng*) is the trait of a bodhisattva, a sentient being of great enlightenment in vigorous pursuit of Buddhahood through the salvation of self and others. In the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, Mañjūśrī Bodhisattva used a powerful metaphor to convey the importance of residing within the secular world to achieve enlightenment: "The plateau or the highland cannot produce the blue lotus; only in the lowland, in mud, can the lotus grow."[34] Similarly, in Zhang Yi's vision, spiritual progress was not something to be sought in reclusion; one's state of mind was more important and might transform a locale.

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[32] Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之, ed., *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984) 56, p. 228.

[33] *Quan Jin shi* 12, p. 893.

Zhu Fajun, who probably was not skilled in poetry composition, did not respond to Zhang Yi's exhortations. It was Kang Sengyuan, a monk of Sogdian ancestry but who was born in Chang'an and spoke perfect Chinese, who replied to Zhang Yi's playful challenge in verse. Defending Zhu Dajun's choice of reclusion, and hinting at the superiority of entering into religious orders, Kang Sengyuan retorted, though not very effectively:

幽閑自有所	There is naturally a place for seclusion,
豈與菩薩并	How can one be the same as a bodhisattva?
摩詰風微指	Vimalakīrti revealed the Buddha's subtle intent;
權道多所成	His expedient means accomplished a great deal;
悠悠滿天下	And yet, of all the people filling the whole world,
孰識秋露情	Who understood the feelings of Śāriputra?[35]

Zhang Yi wrote a reply, which again affirmed his preference for Vimalakīrti, an enlightened layman, and his conviction that "discarding conception" (*xiang* 想, here referring to one of the five skandhas, the function of the mind in distinguishing and formulating concepts) was of primary significance in the pursuit of enlightenment:

三法雖成林	Although the three dharmas constitute a grove,[36]
居士亦有黨	A layman also has his community.
不見虬與龍	Don't you see the krakens and dragons,
灑鱗凌霄上	That extend their scales, and ascend into heaven?
冲心超遠寄	A calm mind is better than lodging oneself faraway;
浪懷邈獨往	Letting one's mind roam takes one further than going off alone.
眾妙常所晞	All wonders are what I constantly desire,
維摩余所賞	And Vimalakīrti is whom I admire.
苟未體善權	If you have not understood the principle of expediency,
與子同佛髣	Then you and I shall share the same mere approximation.
悠悠誠滿域	There are indeed people filling the whole world–
所遺在廢想	What they neglect is to discard conception.[37]

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[34] *T* 475, vol. 14, p. 549B.

[35] *Quan Jin shi* 20, p. 1075.

[36] The three dharmas refer to *sūtra* 經, *vinaya* 律, and *abhidharma* 論; or the three aspects of dharma: teaching 教, practice 行, and realization 證.

[37] *Quan Jin shi* 12, p. 894.

Kang Sengyuan did not give up. It seems that he finally had the last word in this spirited game of witty exchange, not by any subtle reasoning, but by sheer persistence and rhetorical flourish. For this reason the poem deserves to be cited in its entirety:

遙望華陽嶺	I gaze afar at the Huayang Ridge,
紫霄籠三辰	The purple heaven embraces the sun, moon, and stars.
瓊巖朗璧室	Alabaster cliffs open up a jade chamber;
玉澗灑靈津	Waters of jade splash over the numinous ford.
丹谷挺樛樹	In the valley of cinnabar grow trees with overhanging boughs,
季穎奮暉薪	Even the tiniest tip of a plant strives in the daily-refreshed light.[38]
融飆衝天籟	Harmonious wind dashing against the flutes of Heaven;
逸響互相因	Their trailing echoes follow one after another.
鸞鳳翔迴儀	Simurghs and phoenixes soar and linger;
虯龍灑飛鱗	Krakens and dragons extend their scales in the air.
中有沖漠士	In the midst there is a gentleman of serenity,
耽道玩妙均	Indulging in the Way, and playing with the wondrous equality of things.
高尚凝玄寂	High-minded, noble, and focused on the profound stillness,
萬物忽自賓	Myriad things suddenly submit of their own accord.[39]
棲峙遊方外	Resting in the mountains, roaming outside the secular realm,
超世絶風塵	He transcends this world, beyond the wind and dust.
翹想晞眇蹤	My mental images rise up, desiring his distant tracks;
矯步尋若人	Raising my steps, I will seek out that person.
詠嘯舍之去	Chanting, whistling, I shall leave this world behind –
榮麗何足珍	Glory and luxury are nothing to be treasured.

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[38] Here *xin* 薪 is exchangeable with *xin* 新, and *huixin* 暉薪 is an abbreviated form of the phrase *huiguang rixin* 暉光日新: daily renewed and refreshed light. See Zhang Hua's 張華 (232–300) "Encouraging Aspirations" ("Lizhi shi" 勵志詩: "Improve one's virtue and cultivate one's accomplishments 進德修業, / and one's light is renewed every day 暉光日新"; *Quan Jin shi* 3, p. 615.

[39] This line is an allusion to *Laozi* 32: "If princes and lords may hold fast to it [i.e. the Way], then myriad things will submit of their own accord 王侯若能守, 萬物將自賓"; *Laozi jiaoshi*, p. 130.

濯志八解淵 Cleansing my mind in the canyon of the Eight Kinds of Liberation,
遼朗豁冥神 I become enlightened, opened up, receptive to the mysterious spirit.
研幾通微妙 Studying the subtle truth and grasping the refined essence,
遺覺忽忘身 Discarding the senses, suddenly I forget my body.
居士成有黨 A layman indeed has his community;
顧盻非疇親 But as I look around, the former associates are no longer intimate.
借問守常徒 Let me ask those people who keep to the ordinary:
何以知反真 How do they know about returning to the genuine?[40]

Structurally, Kang Sengyuan's poem may be divided into four parts. The first ten lines present an attractive picture of the landscape, and the next six lines situate the reclusive monk right in the midst of it. The poet then claims that he will follow the footsteps of such a person, leave the secular world behind, and obtain enlightenment. While Zhang Yi's poem stresses casting off conceptions, Kang Sengyuan underscores the importance of "discarding the senses" and "forgetting the body."[41] The last four lines oppose Zhang Yi's exaltation of the lay community with the Buddhist clerical way of life. Kang Sengyuan gave a clever twist of the word *chang*, used in Zhang Yi's poem in the sense of "constant" ("All wonders are what I constantly desire"), asking how people holding on to the "ordinary" (also *chang*) could ever hope to "return to the genuine." In a way, Kang Sengyuan and Zhang Yi's poetic exchange may be viewed as "arcane discourse" carried out in verse, and demonstrates the two opposing attitudes about the mind and locale.[42]

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[40] *Quan Jin shi* 20, p. 1076.

[41] It must be pointed out that such a progressive structure is hardly novel in the poetry of early medieval China: many "poems of wandering immortals 遊仙詩" and poems on reclusion share the same feature, and the grammatical structure of "zhong you X shi" ("in the midst there is an X gentleman," X being an attribute such as "high-minded," "serene," or "who pursues the Way") is a standard way of portraying a transcendent figure, be it a recluse or an immortal or often both, who is located in the mountains and waters; vowing to seek and follow such a transcendent man is also a common trope. For a discussion of the influence of "poetry of wandering immortals" on the Eastern Jin poetic descriptions of Buddhist monks, see also Xiao Chi 蕭馳, *Fofa yu shijing* 佛法與詩境 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), pp. 29–30.

[42] Zhang Yi and Kang Sengyuan's poems are preserved in *A Continuation of the Collection of Expanding the Light* (*Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集), a collection of Buddhist writings compiled by the monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) in 664. This collection also includes three poems "Singing of My Feelings" ("Yonghuai shi" 詠懷詩) by Zhang Yi, the first of which contains the

IMAGINARY MOUNTAINS

Xie Daoyun 謝道韞 (fl. ca. late-fourth century), a female member of the illustrious Xie clan whose name has become synonymous with "talented woman 才女," left a poem titled "A Song of Mount Tai" 泰山吟:

峨峨東嶽高	How lofty is the Great Peak of the East,
秀極沖青天	So very striking, rising all the way to the blue sky.
巖中間虛宇	Among the crags is an empty chamber,
寂漠幽以玄	Quiet, serene, profound, and mysterious.
非工復非匠	Created neither by workers nor craftsmen,
雲構發自然	Its cloudy structures issue forth from what is naturally so.
器象爾何物	What sort of things are you – you vessels and images,[43]
遂令我屢遷	That you should so frequently move me back and forth?
逝將宅斯宇	I promise that I will take residence in that chamber,
可以盡天年	So that I may live out my natural life's span.[44]

This is a poem about Mount Tai. Even if the title might not be reliable, the first line of the poem, which makes a reference to the "Great Peak of the East," leaves no doubt as to which mountain the poet was writing about. The only problem is: did Xie Daoyun ever set eyes on Mount Tai?

A couplet like "What sort of things are you–you vessels and images, / that you should so frequently move me back and forth?" seems to suggest that she did set eyes on Mount Tai. And yet, through most

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following lines: "What is the need for dwelling in seclusion, / wearing the black robe as a sign of leaving the secular world?" The black robe is the monk's attire. It stresses that even if one finds oneself among unworthy people, one should "forget the mixture of pebbles and jade," and the point is to "soothe the inner workings of the mind 要在夷心曲"; *Guang hongming ji* (SBCK edn.) 30, p. 496; *Quan Jin shi* 12, p. 892.

[43] "Vessels and images" was a contemporary term for the things of the phenomenal world; see n. 52.

[44] *Quan Jin shi* 13, p. 912. "A Song of Mount Tai" ("Taishan yin") is a *yuefu* title; two poems to the title are recorded in *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (13th c.), but Xie Daoyun's poem is not one of them. The poem initially appears in the early-Tang encyclopedia *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (comp. 624) with no title (Taibei: Zhengda yinshuguan, 1974) 7, p. 123. The Ming anthology *Gushi ji* 古詩紀, edited by Feng Weine 馮惟訥 (*js*. 1538), has it under the title "Ascending the Mountain" 登山; see *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書, vol. 1379 (Taibei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), *j*. 47, p. 389. The poem also appears in *A History of Mount Tai* 岱史, compiled by Zha Zhilong 查志隆 (*js*. 1559) and edited by Zhang Jinyan 張縉彥 (*js*. 1631); Hu Daojing 胡道靜, Chen Liansheng 陳蓮笙, and Chen Yaoting 陳耀庭, eds., *Daojiao yaoji xuankan* 道教要籍選刊 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1989), vol. 7, *j*. 15, p. 83.

of the fourth century, Mount Tai was in the much contested northern territory. Xie Daoyun's poem might very well have been inspired by a real historical event, as the Eastern Jin army, led by none other than her brother Xie Xuan 謝玄 (343–388), had briefly claimed the Mount Tai region in 384. Later, it was again recovered by Liu Yu 劉裕 (363–422) during his northern campaign in 410. Ten years before that, however, Xie Daoyun's husband Wang Ningzhi 王凝之 (?–399) was killed in the Sun En rebellion, and Xie Daoyun "had lived in Kuaiji as a widow ever since."[45] It is highly unlikely that Xie Daoyun would have traveled to Mount Tai in person.

Indeed, Xie Daoyun did not have to go to Mount Tai to write those lines. There had been a number of literary precedents before her. The most notable example would have been Sun Chuo's "*Fu* on Roaming the Heavenly Terrace Mountain" ("You Tiantai shan fu" 遊天台山賦), which was already a famous piece of writing in its own time.[46] Sun Chuo, however, had not been to Mount Tiantai when he wrote it, which we learn from his preface, an account of the occasion of the composition. After explaining that the inaccessibility of Mount Tiantai was the main reason why it was rarely scaled and not listed among the Five Great Peaks, Sun Chuo was given to reflection on the paintings of Mount Tiantai, which seemed to have inspired him:

> Even so, should we think it for nothing that there is such an abundance of pictures and illustrations of them [i.e. the mountains]? Unless a man gives up the world and practices the right Way, quitting common grains and feeding on asphodel, he cannot lift off in lightness and lodge there. Unless a man gives himself over to things remote and delves into dark mysteries, unless he is someone utterly sincere and in contact with the gods, he can never envision that remote place and hold it fast. It was for this reason I sent my spirit rushing and worked my thoughts, sang by day and stayed waking by night. And in the interval of a nod, it was as if I had gone up the mountain more than once. Now I will untie

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[45] *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 96, p. 2516.

[46] Sun Chuo took such great pride in this *fu* that he reportedly told his friend Fan Qi 范啓 (style name Rongqi 榮期): "Try throwing it against the floor–you will hear the sound of bells and chimes." Fan Qi answered: "I am afraid these sounds of bells and chimes would not fit the *gong-shang* scale." And yet, whenever he reached a felicitous line, he would say: "This truly is the sort of thing articulated by people like us!" See *Jin shu* 56, p. 1544; *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 4, p. 267. For English translations of this *fu*, see Richard B. Mather, "A Mystical Ascent of the T'ien-t'ai Mountains: Sun Ch'o's *Yu-T'ien-t'ai-shan Fu*," *MS* 20 (1961), pp. 226–45; David R. Knechtges, *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1987) 2, pp. 243–53; Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), pp. 185–88.

> these bands of an officer's cap to lodge forever on these crests. I cannot resist the full force of such visions and spontaneous chanting, so let me here make a show of fine phrases to disperse these concerns. 然圖像之興, 豈虛也哉? 非夫遺世玩道, 絕粒茹芝者, 烏能輕舉而宅之? 非夫遠寄冥搜, 篤信通神者, 何肯遙想而存之? 余所以馳神運思, 晝詠宵興, 俛仰之間, 若已再升者也. 方解纓絡, 永託茲嶺, 不任吟想之至, 聊奮藻以散懷.[47]

Sun Chuo has made it clear that the *fu* was not based on any actual experience, but on *xiang*: seeing the place in one's mind with the help of "spirit" and "thoughts" and by intensely contemplating the mountain day and night. Furthermore, the reference to "pictures and illustrations" appears to indicate that Sun Chuo was using visual images as an aid in his envisioning of the mountain. Although the *fu* itself describes in great detail the author's "ascent," the framework was established at the very beginning: it is a spiritual, not physical, pilgrimage.

The *fu* begins with recounting the beginning of landscape: "Utter Void, hollow magnitudes, lacking all limit 太虛遼廓而無閡, / there worked elusive presence: What Is Naturally So. 運自然之妙有/ It liquefied and formed the streams and channels 融而爲川瀆; / it hardened and formed the mountains and knolls 結而爲山阜." It then moves on to a specific spot, namely the Heavenly Terrace Mountain. Besides extolling its loftiness and superiority compared to the other famous mountains, the author takes care to tell the reader about its actual geographical location. The Heavenly Terrace Mountain is situated in the region of Yue, which falls under the province of the Herder star: "It shadows the Herder star with glowing peaks 蔭牛宿以曜峰, / lodged in Yue the Holy for well-set foundation 託靈越以政基." It is so far away, so secluded, that either people with no imagination do not go there, or people undertaking the physical journey cannot find access to it: "Remote are these tracts, far flung 邈彼絕域, / secret recesses well sequestered 幽邃窈窕. / Stuck within senses, short-sighted wisdom goes not thither近智者以守見不之; / since paths run out, those who would go never can know it 之者以路絕而莫曉."

The author expresses his scorn for such people, and voices his longing "to mount upward." It seems that all one needs is to desire it intensely enough and then one may take off in a fantastic flight. Such a spiritual ascent proves to be a more gratifying experience than entering the immortal realm: "If only I might climb to Tiantai's crest苟台嶺之可

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[47] *Quan Jin wen* 61, p. 1806. The translation is Stephen Owen's, *Anthology*, pp. 185–88.

攀, / what craving then would be left for Tiered Walls Mountain 亦何羨於層城?" Tiered Walls was the highest peak of the mythical Kunlun Mountain in the west. In early-medieval poetry, it was often used to indicate the enchanted world of the Undying. Then, on the peak of the Heavenly Terrace Mountain, the author experiences mystical transportation and enlightenment, until finally, "I blur the thousands of images by dark observation 渾萬象以冥觀, / my body, insensate, identical with What Is Naturally So 兀同體於自然."

Interestingly, the monk Zhi Dun 支遁 (314–366), an acquaintance of Sun Chuo, wrote a poem on the same subject: an imaginary ascent of the Mount Tiantai. A comparison of the *fu* and the poem highlights the different generic conventions of *fu* and poetry, while showing that both pieces belong to the same cultural discourse of the Eastern Jin that is much concerned with the issues of visualization and imagination. Structurally, the poem proceeds in the typical configuration discussed earlier in the case of Kang Sengyuan's poem: first a description of the landscape; then the appearance of a transcendent figure in the landscape, punctuated by the familiar line: "In the midst there is a gentleman who seeks the Transformation 中有尋化士"; finally, the poet expresses the wish to follow the footsteps of such an immortal/recluse. The description of the landscape is, however, preceded by an opening in a modest, ordinary setting, and this setting turns out to be vital for establishing the tone for the poem. The reader is given to understand that the landscape to be portrayed in such great detail in the following lines is but a figment of the poet's imagination. The grand, sublime, and mystical mountain exists in an imaginary space, and the poet has never left his spring garden, where he is touched by the eternal return of the spring, the passage of time, and the non-cyclical progress of human life:

晞陽熙春圃	The gentle sun shines on the spring vegetable garden,
悠緬歎時往	At leisure, with far-off thoughts, I sigh about the passage of time.
感物思所託	Touched by things, I long for that in which I lodge myself,
蕭條逸韻上	And the air of lofty detachment rises upward.
尙想天台峻	In my mind I see the loftiness of the Heavenly Terrace Mountain;
髣髴巖階仰	Dimly I seem to be gazing at its steep stairs.
泠風灑蘭林	A cool breeze spreads in the magnolia grove,
管瀨奏清響	A stream is piping out a clear sound.

霄崖育靈藹	Cliffs touching the sky nurture a numinous mist;
神蔬含潤長	Divine vegetables, moist within, are growing.
丹沙映翠瀨	Cinnabar sand shining in the azure brook,
芳芝曜五爽	Fragrant exudation shine in five-colored brilliances.
苕苕重岫深	Towering and soaring, the layers of peaks recede afar;
寥寥石室朗	Tranquil is the revealed stone chamber.
中有尋化士	In the midst there is a gentleman who seeks the Transformation,
外身解世網	Placing himself beyond the mortal realm, disentangled from the net of the world.
抱朴鎮有心	Embracing simplicity, he suppresses the thoughts of Being;
揮玄拂無想	Wielding the Mystery, dipping in conceptions of Nothingness.
隗隗形崖頹	Steep and towering, the cliffs of his body crumble away;
冏冏神宇敞	With a radiant light, the house of the spirit opens up.
宛轉無造化	Changing with things and transcending Transformation,
縹瞥鄰大象	He suddenly drifts off and becomes a neighbor to the Great Image.
願投若人蹤	I wish to follow that man's tracks,
高步振策杖	Walking with big strides, raising my staff.[48]

While a *fu* about a place or an object aspires to be all-encompassing and general, early-medieval Chinese poetry increasingly focuses on specific circumstances and individual situations, until it finally culminates in the intense absorption in single moments, as in the poetry of the Liang dynasty (501–557). The unexpected, dramatic effect of Zhi Dun's poem depends almost entirely on its opening framework. It defines the physical locale of the poet and brings out the contrast between the spiritual and the mundane, embodied in the steepness and loftiness of the Heavenly Terrace Mountain, with all its exotic, numinous vegetation, and the little vegetable garden bathing in the spring sun. It is *xiang* 想, a mental seeing and envisioning, that connects the two vastly different worlds. The transcendent figure in the visualized landscape is literally the "spirit," "soul," or "god" (*shen*) of the mountain; to seek and find him symbolizes the achievement of transcendence – both *dedao*

[48] This poem is no. 3 of a series titled "Singing of My Feelings" 詠懷; *Quan Jin shi* 20, p. 1081.

(attaining the Way) and *dexian* (attaining immortality). And yet, as the "cliffs of his body" collapse and the "house of the spirit" opens up, one realizes that what is to be found is not and should not be a physical human being in the "stone chamber." For all his vivid visual imagination, what the poet sets his heart on is the approximation to the Great Image (*da xiang* 大象), which, according to Laozi, "has no shape" (*wuxing*).[49] The last couplet does not necessarily indicate a physical journey: following the footsteps of the transcendent figure is a spiritual exercise, and entails no more than "suppressing the thoughts of Being" and "dipping in conceptions of Nothingness." The "stone chamber" turns out to be, after all, an image of the poet's mind and mere appearances, which may be shed after the attainment of enlightenment.

In many ways, Zhi Dun's poem on contemplative visualization and flights of imagination opens the path for Tao Yuanming's series of thirteen poems on *Reading the Classic of Mountains and Seas* 讀山海經.[50] This series begins with the poet's reading in an early summer garden, amidst a warm, ordinary, everyday setting, and goes on to a cosmic journey undertaken in the imagination and inspired by the poet's reading of exotic, fabled geography as well as of King Mu of Zhou's legendary tour to fantastic lands.[51] These poems, along with Sun Chuo's *fu*, had all descended from the ancient tradition of the heavenly wanderings of the *Chu ci*; and yet, in these Eastern Jin texts, the roaming is always carried out in the mind. Tao Yuanming's genius is manifested in his unique articulation of the experience of reading. It is as a reader, and by words, that he is transported to a different place – a place no more and no less real than Sun Chuo's, Zhi Dun's, and Xie Daoyun's imaginary mountains.

PAINTED MOUNTAINS

In her poem, Xie Daoyun used the phrase "vessels and images" (*qixiang* 器象) to describe the landscape. In an Eastern Jin text, this phrase always appears in the context of the Way or the Mystery, as the concrete manifestation or the physical embodiment of the latter.[52]

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[49] *Laozi jiaoshi*, p. 171.

[50] Among Zhi Dun's extant poems there is also one on reading. It is no. 2 of "Singing of My Feelings"; *Quan Jin shi* 20, pp. 1080–81.

[51] I give a detailed discussion of these poems in *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture: The Record of A Dusty Table* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2005), pp. 148–67.

[52] For instance, Yu Chan's 庾闡 (fl. ca. 339) "Encomium on the Portrait of Yu Shun": "The ultimate Way is mysterious and wonderful, not something that can be conveyed by vessels and images" 至道玄妙, 非器象所載; *Quan Jin wen* 38, p. 1680. The monk Daoheng's 道恆 (ca. 4th–5th cc.) "A Defense of Buddhism" 釋駁論: "The wind of the Way is mysterious and

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If real mountains and waters are no more than "images," then painted landscape is even more so. The Eastern Jin was not only an age in which Buddhism, the Doctrine of Images (*xiangjiao* 像教), flourished (the term *xiangjiao* being used for the first time in the fourth century), but was also a time when visual arts, such as painting, sculpture, and calligraphy, thrived.

At first sight, the painted landscape seems to be more "real" than the imaginary landscape, for painting is executed on paper and with ink, visible to the eye and tangible to the touch. And yet, when the *Sūtra of Perfect Wisdom* teaches "causes and conditions," it uses painting as an example:

> Again, listen to me, the Worthy One. It is like a painter: there is a wall, there are colors, there is the craftsman, and there is a brush. Only when they all come together is a painted figure accomplished.[53]

In the sense that painting depends on various conditions and causes to exist, it has no "self-nature," and so it cannot be real. In the sense that it represents the likeness of a person, a horse, or a mountain, but is not the person, the horse, and the mountain itself, a painting is again unreal. A Buddhist story of the painter and sculptor fooling each other with their art work demonstrates clearly the illusory nature of paintings. In this story, a famous sculptor decided to play a practical joke on a well-known painter by inviting him over to his house and presenting him with a wonderfully made wooden statue of a girl. Thinking that it was a real maiden, the painter fell in love with her. After he found out the truth, he decided to get back at his sculptor-host by drawing a painting in which he hanged himself. The next morning, as the host saw the painting through the window, he thought his houseguest had committed suicide and was terribly frightened. Only later did he realize his mistake. This incident served as a catalyst for the two artists, who were enlightened to the illusoriness and vanity of the secular life and became monks.[54]

The contemplation of painted images therefore leads to the attainment of enlightenment in several ways. The illusory nature of a painted

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distant, not something that can be illustrated by vessels and images" 道風玄遠, 非器象所擬; *Quan Jin wen* 163, p. 2406.

[53] *T* 224, vol. 8, p. 476c.

[54] This story is anthologized in the Buddhist encyclopedia *Differentiated Manifestations of Sutras and Laws* 經律異相, commissioned by emperor Wu of the Liang (r. 502–549) and compiled in 516; *T* 2121, vol. 53, p. 229A.

image inspires thoughts of emptiness in the viewer; moreover, the content of the painting is also a meaningful object of reflection. A painted image of the Buddha helps a person achieve enlightenment, for it is an invaluable aid for meditative visualization (*guanxiang*), not to mention that producing such images is considered to be of great religious merit. The contemplation of painted landscape is no less powerful in enabling the viewer to attain transcendence. Zong Bing 宗炳 (374–443), a Buddhist layman and a landscape painter, claimed that "the substance of mountains and waters belongs to the world of physicality, and yet they incline towards numinous 山水質有而趣靈."[55] He painted the landscape of every place he went and hung all the paintings in his room, saying: "Old age and sickness come to me together, and I am afraid that I cannot get to see all the famous mountains. I can only purify my mind and observe the Way, taking recumbent journeys 唯當澄懷觀道, 臥以游之."[56] Here, seeing the famous mountains and observing the Way are one and the same. Recumbent journeys are, however, conducted with one's spirit, not with one's body. Although bodily eyes and Earthly Vision 肉眼 are important, they are secondary. The landscape paintings in this case serve the same purpose as the images of the Buddha: they help achieve meditative visualization. Looking at them intensely, all of a sudden one is transported to the real places, just as the person who thinks of the Amitābha Buddha with absorption will find himself or herself in the Pure Land.

In light of the acknowledged illusiveness of paintings, painted landscape is not only no more real than the landscape visualized in one's mind, but indeed furnishes the best illustration of such imaginary landscape: the former is *xiang* 相/象, images and appearances, while the latter is *xiang* 想, images of the mind, products of imagination. On the other hand, imaginary landscape and painted landscape are just as real as the real landscape, because the real is, after all, transient, empty, and so unreal. Zong Bing goes so far as to state in his "Preface to Painted Landscapes" that painted mountains and waters are on an equal footing with, perhaps even superior to, real mountains and waters, for what one seeks in mountains and waters is a higher principle or the "spirit" of the landscape; if one can grasp the principle and is transported to a higher plane of reality by gazing at a landscape painting, then "even if one vainly seeks among the secluded cliffs, what more could one obtain?"[57]

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[55] From his "Preface to Painted Landscape" 畫山水序; *Quan Song wen* 20, p. 2545. For a complete translation of Zong Bing's preface, see Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, eds., *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1985), pp. 36–38.

[56] *Song shu* 93, p. 2279.

The famous Eastern Jin painter Gu Kaizhi's "Account of Painting the Cloud Terrace Mountain" presents a doubly illusive landscape, for it is both a painted landscape and an imaginary one. Here the Cloud Terrace Mountain is the one in the modern Sichuan; Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (or Zhang Ling, d. 156), the founder of the Daoist "Way of the Celestial Masters," had supposedly tested the faith of his disciple Zhao Sheng 趙昇 on this mountain, and this story is the theme of Gu Kaizhi's painting.[58] For all we know, Gu Kaizhi might have never set foot on the Cloud Terrace Mountain in Sichuan. Furthermore, from the way the narrative is being carried out, it seems that the author is envisioning how to paint the Cloud Terrace Mountain instead of describing an accomplished picture. This brings to mind the *Imagines*, whose author, Philostratus, was a Greek living in Rome in the third century. This work describes paintings from the gallery of a wealthy art-lover in the city of Neapolis, but whether the paintings discussed in great detail in this work were real or imaginary is still an unsolved question. As the art historian Norman Bryson puts it, "If the paintings were non-existent, what the *Imagines* in fact describe are codes of viewing in a remarkably pure form: protocols, expectations and generic rules governing the viewing of pictures, almost in abstraction from its empirical objects. If, on the other hand, the paintings described actually existed in the collection of a Neapolitan amateur, those rules of viewing become anchored in the context of actual Roman art production."[59] This statement is surprisingly pertinent to Gu Kaizhi's text, separated from the *Imagines* by a mere century.

Preserved in Zhang Yanyuan's 張彥遠 (ca. 847) *Record of Famous Paintings of All the Dynasties* 歷代名畫記, this text was already quite corrupt by the ninth century. Modern editions punctuate the text rather differently, and yield different readings.[60] But even in its imperfect form, Gu's "Account" is nevertheless a fascinating text. The imaginary painting it describes does not so much represent Nature in a "naturalistic" or "realistic" manner as depict an artificially constructed fantasy realm of Daoist immortals and adepts. This is a landscape that no one can see with Earthly Vision, but can only see with the mind's eye.

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[57] *Quan Song wen* 20, p. 2546.

[58] The story is recorded in Ge Hong's *Biographies of Immortals* 神仙傳; see Campany, *To Live as Long*, p. 353.

[59] *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P., 1990), p. 18.

[60] Shio Sakarish, trans., *The Spirit of the Brush* (London: Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1939), pp. 30–33; Michael Sullivan, *The Birth of Landscape Painting in China* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1962), pp. 94–101; Bush and Shih, eds., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp. 34–36; Chen Chuanxi 陳

The account begins thus:

> The mountain has a face, and so its back has shadows. I shall make the auspicious clouds to arise from the clear eastern sky and stretch westward. 山有面, 則背向有影. 可令慶雲西而吐於東方清天中.

The physical substance of the mountain is brought out in the very first sentence with its emphasis on light and shadow. Shadow, "the obstruction of light," eloquently demonstrates the opaqueness and solidity of the mountain, as well as indicates a particular point of time during the day. Thus the Cloud Terrace Mountain immediately assumes a spatial-temporal dimension that grants it a sense of "reality." The second sentence is a startling statement: we know, of course, that the author is talking about making a picture, but the way in which the statement is uttered sounds as if he were going to order the clouds about. The painter in his capacity to cause things to appear and disappear is truly acting as the Creator.

"Auspicious clouds" are clouds of five colors, associated with the appearance of the divine (*shen*). These clouds hint at the presence of transcendent beings (i.e. the Celestial Master), and so are a sign for people who can recognize it as such. There is nothing in this envisioned landscape that is accidental or fortuitous. Everything is planned out carefully as a part of the whole, contributing to the symbolic significance of the entire scenery.[61]

> The sky and waters should all be painted with blue, which should cover the silk above and below, reflecting the sunlight. As for the mountain range stretching westward, one should take care to bring out a sense of its distance. One should begin painting the mountain from its eastern base. Before reaching the midpoint of

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傳席, *Liuchao hualun yanjiu* 六朝畫論研究 (Taibei: Xuesheng shuju, 1991), pp. 81–93; Okamura Shigeru, *Lidai minghua ji yizhu* 歷代名畫記譯注, trans. Yu Weigang 俞慰剛 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), pp. 290–97. The text referred to in this paper is based on the one given in Yu Jianhua 俞劍華, ed., *Zhongguo hualun leibian* 中國畫論類編 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), pp. 581–82. I have, however, modified the punctuation of the text as given there.

[61] As contemporary scholar Cai Zhenfeng 蔡振豐 argues, in this painting, figures, landscape, and objects exist in a web of inseparable relations. This world of correspondences and relations comprises an important part of the meaning of this painting. Cai Zhenfeng, "Gu Kaizhi lun hua de meixue yiyi" 顧愷之論畫的美學意義. In *Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* 中國文學研究 9 (June 1995), p. 143. The vision of nature as "architectural, purposefully structured, luminously intelligible, and with each part contributing to the whole" was a distinctly medieval experience; Stephen Owen, *The End of the Chinese "Middle Ages": Essays in Mid-Tang Literary Culture* (Stanford: Stanford U. P., 1996), p. 37.

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> the mountain, I will paint five or six purple rocks which resemble hardened clouds buttressing the ridge, which should go up amidst the rocks. I will make the momentum of the ridge to twist and coil like a dragon, and it will rise abruptly, straight and high, enfolding the summit. Below I will make piled-up hills in such a way that one shall see it as swelling up, burgeoning, and yet solidifying and escalating. 凡天及水色儘用空青, 竟素上下以映日. 西去山, 別詳其遠近. 發跡東基, 轉上未半, 作紫石如堅雲者五六枚夾岡, 乘其間而上, 使勢蜿蟺如龍, 因抱峰直頓而上. 下作積岡, 使望之蓬蓬然凝而上.

It is interesting to notice how the painter attempts to regulate the viewer's response and indeed instruct him or her about how to view the picture: "I will make piled-up hills in such a way that one shall see it as swelling up, burgeoning, and yet solidifying and escalating." The combination of movement and stillness in the phrase "solidifying and escalating" is striking, as the painter tries to convey the dynamism as well as the sheer physical volume of the hills. This same impulse is also manifested in the description of the purple rocks, which echo the color and texture of the "auspicious clouds." In the surprisingly poetic comparison of rocks to "hardened clouds," the motion of the clouds is frozen into the solidity of rocks, which nevertheless retain the momentum of the flowing clouds. Indeed, throughout the whole passage the verb "escalate" or "rise" (*shang*) recurs with regularity, and the impression left on the reader is one of active ascension: it is as if the landscape were moving of its own accord. The painter's active engagement of the brushwork is hardly distinguishable from the animation of the landscape.

Gu Kaizhi then moves on to the story on which the projected painting is based:

> Then there will be another rocky peak. To the east it confronts a steep crest; to the west it is linked with a west-facing cinnabar-red cliff. Below is a deep ravine. I will paint the cinnabar cliff as overlooking the ravine. I will make it magnificently towering and lofty, and bring out the effect of its extreme steepness. The Celestial Master sits on the top [of the cliff]; the rock on which he sits should extend to the shades. The peach tree in the ravine should grow sideways from amidst the rocks. I will paint the Celestial Master as emaciated in form and yet noble in spirit. He overlooks the cliff and points to the peach tree, turning around and addressing his disciples. Two of his disciples bend over and look into the ravine, so terrified that they are sweating and turning pale. I will paint Wang Liang as serenely sitting there and answering the Ce-

> lestial Master's question; Chao Sheng is dignified and alert, leaning over to gaze at the peach tree. 次復一峰, 是石, 東鄰向者峙峭, 峰西連西向之丹崖, 下據絕澗. 畫丹崖臨澗上, 當使赫巘隆崇, 畫險絕之勢. 天師坐其上, 合所坐石及蔭. 宜磵中桃旁生石間. 畫天師形瘦而神氣遠, 據磵指桃, 迴面謂弟子. 弟子中有二人臨下到身, 大怖流汗失色. 作王良穆然坐, 答問, 而超昇神爽精詣, 俯眄桃樹.

The scene depicted here is the seventh trial Zhao Sheng ("Chao 超" being a copyist's error) had to go through. The Celestial Master told his disciples that he would reveal the essence of the Way to those who could obtain peaches from a peach tree growing sideways from the cliff; none except for Zhao Sheng had the courage to carry out the task. The tension-filled moment right before Zhao Sheng jumped off the cliff was clearly chosen for its dramatic potential, as demonstrated by the contrast between Zhao Sheng and Wang Liang and the other disciples.

After Zhao Sheng came back from the peach tree, the Heavenly Master said that he would like to pick a peach himself; everyone protested, but Zhao Sheng and Wang Liang (also known as Wang Chang) remained silent. The Celestial Master threw himself into the ravine but ostensibly missed the peach tree. Zhao Sheng and Wang Liang, instead of moaning and grieving like the other disciples did, leapt into the ravine after their master, and found themselves landing in safety right in front of him. Zhao Sheng and Wang Liang's leap is portrayed in the next passage of Gu Kaizhi's "Account." It is, however, not immediately clear whether Gu Kaizhi was suggesting this as an alternative scene to the one described above, or if he had intended to place the two scenes within the same painting, or if he was talking about making a separate picture altogether. If it was his intention to juxtapose the two consecutive scenes within one painting, it would seem that, as Michael Sullivan said, he was influenced by "the typically Indian method of continuous narration."[62] Such a method introduces different temporal frames into one painting space; the relation between time and space consequently becomes much more complicated, and the painted landscape is further removed from "naturalism" or "realism."

> Then again I will draw Wang and Zhao hastening [after their master]. One is partially hidden by the slanting rock face of the western cliff, with only the hems of his robe visible; the other is entirely within view in the air,[63] and I will make him seem wondrously

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[62] Sullivan, *Birth of Landscape Painting*, p. 97.

[63] I follow Kobayashi Taichirō's emendation of the character *shi* 室 (chamber) to *kong* 空 (air, void); *Chūgoku kaigashi ronkō* 中國繪畫史論攷 (Kyōto: Ōyashima, 1947), p. 54.

> weightless and light. When painting seated figures, one should make them seven-tenths [of their full heights], and the colors of their clothes should be sparing and delicate. This is because the mountain is high and the figures distant. 又別作王趙趨, 一人隱西壁傾巖, 餘見衣裾, 一人全見室中, 使輕妙泠然. 凡畫人, 坐時可七分, 衣服彩色殊鮮微, 此正蓋山高而人遠耳.

The phrase *lingran* 泠然 was used in *Zhuangzi* to describe the lightness of Liezi's flight in the wind. Its usage here suggests that by taking the courageous leap, Zhao Sheng (or Wang Liang) was well on his way to achieving transcendence.

> In the middle section, to the east side there is a cinnabar-colored precipitous peak casting its shadow. I shall make it soaring, beautiful, with a solitary pine tree planted on its top. It faces the cliff where the Celestial Master [sits] to form a gorge. The gorge should be very narrow, so that between the two cliffs is created an affective, sublime, and pure ambience, which helps establish the dwelling place of the divine and luminous. 中段東面, 丹砂絕崿及蔭, 當使嵃㠊高驪,孤松植其上. 對天師所<>壁以成磵, 磵可甚相近. 相近者,欲使雙壁之內,悽愴澄清, 神明之居, 必有與立焉.

Both cinnabar, the most important ingredient in making elixir, and the pine tree which symbolizes integrity as well as longevity contribute to the symbolic nature of the landscape. The divine and luminous may be a reference to the gods, transcendents, and Daoist adepts: they are the spirit (*shenming*) of the mountains and waters.

The next passage is textually problematic. The text vacillates between the author/painter's vision of his creation and something that reads like a pragmatic tour guide through an actually existing landscape:

> I will then set up a purple rock on the summit of the next mountain ridge. The rock stands erect to represent a left watchtower flanking the towering, precipitous peak [i.e. the one described above]. To the west it is linked with the Cloud Terrace and a path is thus indicated.[64] The left-watchtower peak has a crag as its base, beneath which there is sheer void. The rocks pile up to support the crag, and so together they face the eastern gorge. To the west [of the watchtower peak] again a stream amidst rocks appears, and I follow the contour of the steep edges to make it flow through the

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[64] The character *lu* (path) appears twice consecutively, and I follow Okamura Shigeru's suggestion that one of them may be a superfluous character, a copyist error; *Lidai minghua ji yizhu*, p. 295.

> hills; the hidden currents descend out of sight, but after a while emerge again in the east. It pours downward into the gorge as a rocky creek and thus disappears into the abyss. The reason why I cause the water to flow downward in the west and then east is to make the painted image seem natural. 可於次峰頭作一紫石, 亭立以象左闕之夾高驪絕崿. 西通雲臺以表路. 路左闕峰似巖爲根, 根下空絕. 並諸石重勢, 巖相承. 以合臨東磵. 其西石泉又見, 乃因絕際作通岡, 伏流潛降, 小復東出. 下磵爲石瀨, 淪沒於淵. 所以一西一東而下者, 欲使自然爲圖.

The painter's eye penetrates the surface of things and sees the hidden course of the stony brook. Such an arrangement shows what Xie He 謝赫 (fl. 500–535) means by "planning and positioning 經營位置" (one of his Six Laws of painting),[65] but the purpose of such artifice is, as Gu Kaizhi says, "to make the painted image seem natural."

The last two sections of the painting contain two mythical creatures, the phoenix and the white tiger; and a concluding passage sums up some general points about this projected painting:

> The west and north sides of the Cloud Terrace should be surrounded by hills. Above [the Cloud Terrace Mountain?] I shall make a pair of boulders to represent left and right watchtowers. On one boulder I will paint a solitary roaming phoenix. It looks as if it were dancing, with beautiful, carefully painted plumage. It raises and spreads its tail feathers and gazes into the deep gorge. The last section has red rocks, which should have fissures and crevices like cracking lightening bolts. Facing the cliff where the phoenix to the west of the Cloud Terrace overlooks, there will be a ravine. Limpid water flows therein. On the side of the cliff there is a white tiger crouching on the rock and drinking from the stream. Thereafter I shall create a descending effect and come to a close. 雲臺西北二面可一圖岡繞之. 上爲雙碣石, 象左右闕, 石上作孤遊生鳳, 當婆娑體儀, 羽秀而詳. 軒尾翼以眺絕磵. 後一段赤岍, 當使釋弁如裂電, 對雲臺西鳳所臨壁以成磵, 磵下有清流, 其側壁外面, 作一白虎, 匍石飲水, 後爲降勢而絕.
>
> Altogether there are three sections of the mountain, which, although extended in length, should be painted in a compact manner; otherwise it would not be suitable. From time to time one may make use of birds and beasts, which should have an appropriate pose. In the ravine below, the reflections of things should appear as inverted. A pure vapor should be made to girdle the mountain

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[65] *Quan Qi wen* 25, p. 2931.

> at about one third of its height or more, so that the mountain is clearly divided into two layers. 凡三段山, 畫之雖長, 當使畫甚促, 不爾不称. 鳥獸中時有用之者, 可定其儀而用之. 下爲磵, 物景皆倒. 作清氣帶山下三分倨一以上, 使耿然成二重.

Thus ends Gu Kaizhi's envisioned painting of a completely imaginary landscape, whose fantastic, mystical nature is underlined by its realism in details such as inverted reflections in the water or the winding course of the stony brook. What Gu Kaizhi's "Account" exemplifies is a sort of "in-sight" – achieved not so much by the eyes as by the mind. That the fissures of the rocks should resemble lightening bolts is both a vividly visual metaphor and a psychological effect he intends to produce on the viewer. It is for this reason that the vision of this painting must always surpass its execution, for it is an internally self-sufficient realization, by means of words, of what the painting is *and* how it should be perceived by an ideal viewer.[66] It seems almost inevitable that the textual execution of a painting remains superior to its visual counterpart, for it incorporates within itself the effect of the painting as no actual painting does.

It is interesting to note that the sixth-century art critic Xie He complained of Gu Kaizhi's actual paintings, saying that "his brushwork did not match up to his intent, and his fame exceeded the reality 跡不迨意, 聲過其實." Modern scholars have chimed in, lamenting "the sharp contrast between the grand description by Ku K'ai-chih of *How to Paint the Cloud Terrace Mountain* and the relatively feeble pictorial accomplishment seen in the mountain section of his painting in the British Museum."[67] Zhang Yanyuan, who got to see some of the Six Dynasties landscape paintings, severely disparaged the landscape painting of this period in a perhaps unintentionally comic description:

> As for famous paintings since Wei and Jin that are still extant, I have seen them all. In the landscape paintings, the effect of the peaks is like that of filigree ornaments or horn combs. Sometimes the water does not seem enough to sail on; sometimes the figures

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[66] The best known execution based on Gu Kaizhi's "Account" was carried out by the famous painter Fu Baoshi 傅抱石 (1904–1965) in 1941. The prominent writer Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978) composed four quatrains on it. Fu Baoshi also wrote a paper entitled "A Study of the *Account of Painting the Cloud Terrace Mountain* by Gu Kaizhi of the Jin Dynasty" 晉顧愷之畫雲臺山記之研究 published in 1940; Ye Zonggao 葉宗镐, ed., *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji* 傅抱石美術文集 (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1986), pp. 413–28. Guo Moruo, *Guo Moruo wenji* 郭沫若文集 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1982) 2, pp. 322–23.

[67] Sherman E. Lee, *Chinese Landscape Painting* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1954), p. 17.

> are larger than the mountains. The landscapes all have trees and rocks attached to them, which form some sort of girdle. The rows of plants are like stretching arms and spreading fingers. 魏晉以降,名迹在人間者, 皆見之矣. 其畫山水, 則羣峰之勢, 若鈿飾犀櫛, 或水不容泛, 或人大於山, 率皆附以樹石, 暎帶其地, 列植之狀, 則若伸臂布指.[68]

The contrast between such an account and Gu Kaizhi's grand vision is dramatic, even painful, and once again demonstrates that nothing in reality can quite match up to imagination. If, however, we look at it in the context of the Eastern Jin discourse on mind and locale, it was perhaps not the paintings themselves that were inferior or clumsy; using his "Earthly Vision," Zhang Yanyuan simply failed to perceive the splendor of early paintings, just as Śāriputra was unable to see the magnificence of the Buddha's kingdom, seeing only "rocks and dirt" instead.

CONCLUSION: IMAGES OF VISUALIZATION

In this paper we have explored a variety of issues around this central concept, *xiang*: to visualize, to see images in one's mind, and to achieve "in-sight" with the mind's eye. Why was *xiang* of such vital importance to the Eastern Jin elite? Perhaps as Yu Chan said in the "Encomium on the Portrait of Yu Shun" 虞舜像贊: "If we abandon tracks and reflections, and penetrate the mysterious truth, then even if one's observation that illuminates the darkness is alone resplendent, where would the people of the world fix their ears and eyes 若乃廢其軌景, 洞其玄真, 雖冥照之鑒獨朗, 天下惡乎注其耳目哉"?[69] In other words, Truth needs concrete, material means to be manifested.

Indeed, even visualization, *xiang*, itself must be visualized as images, and revealed by means of words. The best example is Zhi Dun's poem "On a Buddhist Monk in Meditation" 詠禪思道人, which is based on a painting by Sun Chuo (Marquis of Changle 長樂侯). This poem is not only a meta-contemplation of sorts but may also be considered as a prototype of "poetry on paintings *yonghua shi* 詠畫詩," which is differentiated from "encomiums on paintings 畫贊" because the latter is usually centered on figure paintings and therefore on the character of the person being painted, instead of on any clearly-defined visual quality of the painting. Zhi Dun's poem is to a large extent still devoted to appraising the person in the painting, but since the person is situated in nature, the poem gives considerable space to the description of the landscape, and enables us to catch a glimpse of what the painting was like.

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[68] *Zhongguo hualun leibian*, p. 603.

[69] *Quan Jin wen* 38, p. 1681.

In the preface to the poem Zhi Dun explains the occasion for the composition:

> The Marquis of Changle made a painting of a monk sitting in meditation, and composed an encomium on it. He may be said to have lodged his sincerity by means of bending over and facing [the painted image], and to seek to always see [the principles by looking at the image]. He sketched the precipitous effect of cliffs and forests, and visualized the presence of the [meditative] person. I marvel at the exquisiteness of his painting, and admire his fine writings. Unable to remain silent, I composed a poem to succeed him. 孫長樂作道士坐禪之像, 并而讚之. 可謂因俯對以寄誠心, 求參焉於衡軛; 圖巖林之絕勢, 想伊人之在茲. 余精其制作, 美其嘉文, 不能默已, 聊著詩一首, 以繼于左.[70]

"To seek to always see [the principles]" is an allusion to an *Analects* passage: "Zizhang asked the Master about conducting oneself. The Master said, 'Let his words be sincere and trustworthy and his actions be honest and respectful. If so, even in the barbarian states of the south or the north, one's conduct will be appreciated. If one's words are not sincere and trustworthy and his actions not honest and respectful, how can he be appreciated, even in his own hometown? When he is standing, he should see these two [principles] in front of him; when he is in a carriage, he should see them attached to the yoke. And then he will be appreciated.' Zizhang wrote this advice on his sash."[71] In this passage, "seeing" (*jian*) is the key word. As Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) annotation makes clear, "This means that one should be thinking of sincerity, trustworthiness, honesty, and respectfulness all the time; *wherever he goes, he always seems to be seeing them,* and cannot keep away from them even for one instant" 言其於忠信篤敬念念不忘, 隨其所在, 常若有見, 雖欲頃刻離之而不可得 (my italics).[72] Zhi Dun's allusion to this *Analects* passage is therefore directly pertinent to what the painting intends to convey: the painting is about meditative visualization, about seeing (*jian*) the Buddha and his kingdom with the mind's eye; to make an image of a monk sitting in such meditative visualization is itself a visualization of meditation, which is designed to keep the painter/viewer himself in constant vigilant awareness of the Buddhist way.

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[70] *Quan Jin shi* 20, p. 1083.

[71] *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏 (rpt. Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1955) 15, p. 138.

[72] *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 162.

The preface shows that the meditating monk is sitting in a landscape, perhaps on a towering cliff with trees around him. Zhi Dun uses the word *xiang* 想 to describe Sun Chuo's visualization of the monk in such an environment. In the poem itself, we are given to understand that *xiang* is the only way of seeing the monk, for he is located in a humanly inaccessible spot where even birds are scarce:

雲岑竦太荒	Cloudy peaks rise sharply in the great wilderness,
落落英岊布	Many and continuous are the tortuous bends of the hills.
迴壑佇蘭泉	A winding ravine gathers in sweet springs,
秀嶺攢嘉樹	On the steep summit clusters a grove of lovely trees.
蔚薈微遊禽	The vegetation is luxuriant, admitting few roaming birds;
崢嶸絕蹊路	The mountain so precipitous, trails and paths are cut off.
中有沖希子	In the midst there is a person of serenity and subtlety,
端坐摹太素	Sitting upright, emulating the Great Plainness.

"Great Plainness" refers to the original state or the source of the world of Being, but "Plainness 素" is also as much a painting term as *mo* 摹: *su* is the plain background on which a painting (of colors) is to be drawn, while *mo* means sketching out the outline of an object (before applying colors).[73] By employing these two painting terms, Zhi Dun is making a comment on Sun Chuo's visualization of the meditative state, a state that recalls the unadorned and undifferentiated state of the universe, even as Zhi Dun himself is delineating the meditative state of the monk with language.

The poem goes on to a lengthy description of the monk's meditative state – his breathing technique, his intense concentration and absorption. The second part of the poem, except for the metaphor that compares the monk to the "cold pine," is abstract and devoid of images. Such a movement from the tangibility of physical landscape to the immateriality of meditation and spiritual progress illustrates the idea expressed in the ending couplet: "Going with Emptiness, with Presence as his vehicle 逝虛乘有來, / forever and ever, he is the master of contingencies 永爲有待馭." As the Buddhist monk observes myriad phenomena and reflects on their empty nature, Zhi Dun stresses that "presence" or "Being" (*you*) is the very means by which one arrives at spiritual freedom. In the same way, the ability to visualize (*xiang*) the precipitous effects of cliffs and forests and the presence of the mediating person therein is the road to enlightenment.

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[73] In the *Analects*, Confucius and his disciple Zixia 子夏 had a conversation about *su* and *hui* 繪 (drawing). See *Lunyu zhushu* 3, pp. 26–27. For the definition of *mo* as a painting term, see *Han shu* 漢書 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1970) 1, p. 81.