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Roaming into the Beyond:

The Theme of Immortality in Early Medieval Chinese Verse

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	i
Introduction	1
1. Religious Background	2
1.1. The ideal of <i>xian</i> -ship	2
1.2. Overview of the historical development of immortality cult	3
1.3. Methods of achieving immortality	8
1.4. Transition to immortality	10
1.5. Prose accounts on immortality	11
2. Poetry on Immortals	14
2.1. The term <i>youxian</i>	14
2.2. The scope of the material	15
2.3. Chronology	18
2.4. Historical overview of the development of immortality verse	19
2.5. Literary criticism on <i>youxian</i> verse	24
2.6. The scope and aims of the present study	27
Chapter I: The <i>Xian</i> -Immortals	30
1. Immortal Personages in Poetry (Han - Six Dynasties)	
1.1.1. Xi Wangmu	30
1.1.2. Laozi	36
1.1.3. The Yellow Emperor	37
1.1.4. Wang Ziqiao, Chi Songzi and other immortals	41
1.1.5. Transformations of the pantheon	44
1.2. Images of the Immortals in Poetry	51
1.2.1. The nature of the <i>xian</i> -immortals in early immortality verse	51
1.2.2. The regimen and fare of immortals	60
1.2.3. The visual image of the immortals	63
1.2.4. Transformations of the image of the immortals in the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties	66
1.3. The Far-off Journey	68
1.3.1. Methods of levitation and fantastic steeds (Han – Southern Dynasties)	70

I.3.2. The vocabulary of the immortals' flight (Han - Southern Dynasties)	75
I.3.3. Flight through the cosmos	77
I.3.4. Looking back to earth	81
I.3.5. New developments of the celestial flight theme in the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties	84
I.4. Feasts	88
I.5. Eternity	94
I.6. Immortals and Recluses	98
Chapter II: The World of the Immortals	109
II.1. Overview	109
II.2. Topography	112
II.3. Paradise Mountains and Paradise Gardens	119
II.4. Features of Descriptions of Paradise Landscapes in Poetry	122
II.5. Further Developments of Paradise Landscapes	132
II.6. The Courtly Dulcification of Otherworldly Nature	142
Chapter III: The Way into Immortality	145
III.1. The <i>Yuanyou</i> poem of the <i>Chuci</i>	145
III.2. The Distant Journey in the Han Immortality Verse	154
III.3. The Journey Theme in the <i>Yuefu</i> Tradition	157
III.4. The Distant Journey in post-Han Verse on Immortality	158
III.5. Sun Chuo and the Transformation of the Celestial Journey	163
III.6. The Elixir Way	173
Chapter IV: Relations between the Human World and the World Beyond	188
IV.1. Juxtaposition between the Two Realms	188
IV.1.1. The human world in the <i>Chuci</i>	189
IV.1.2. The <i>tristia</i> in the Han rhapsodies <i>fu</i>	192
IV.1.3. <i>Tristia</i> in the late Han <i>yuefu</i> tradition	194
IV.1.4. Reflections on the transience of human life in early immortality verse (3 rd - 4 th centuries AD)	198
IV.1.5. The Social world in the post-Han immortality verse (3 rd - 4 th century)	205

IV.1.6. Philosophical aspects of the discrepancy between the human world and immortality	210
IV.1.7. The distance between the world of the poet and the realms of immortality	211
IV.1.8. Confucianism, hedonism or immortality seeking?	214
IV.2. The Public Current of <i>Youxian</i> Verse	
IV.2.1. Compositions with a ritual function	223
IV.2.2. Feasting songs	227
IV.3. The Receding of the Human World in the Lyrical Poetry	231
IV.4. The Passion for Allusions in the Court <i>Youxian</i> Poetry	237
IV.5. <i>Youxian</i> Verse, Eulogies <i>song</i> and Encomia <i>zan</i>	240
IV.6. Court Poetry on Immortality and Daoist Ritual Hymns	248
Conclusion	258
Appendix: Preserved verse treating the theme of immortality	267
Bibliography	276

Abstrakt

V období Šesti dynastií (222-589) vznikl a nabyl zralé podoby básnický žánr „toulky po nesmrtelnosti“ (*jou sien*), jenž v antologii *Wen-süan* z 6. stol. byl vydělen jako jeden z tematických okruhů lyrické poezie ʃ'. Přestože básně o nesmrtelnosti pocházely od předních básníků té doby, v dějinách literatury Šesti dynastií zůstává tento proud podnes většinou přehlížen. Tradiční kritici a komentátoři pohlíželi záporně na fantastické popisy rajských zázraků a mystických cest vesmírem, a považovali je za námět nedostatečně vážný, nehodný samostatného básnického zpracování. Tento proud však představuje méně známou, mystickou a imaginativní stránku čínského básnického myšlení a nabízí možnost důležitého přehodnocení tradičního pojetí básnického vývoje a významu básnictví v raně středověké Číně.

Jedním z problémů, s nímž se musíme vyrovnat při studiu „básní o toulkách po nesmrtelnosti“, je úzké vymezení žánrů de facto vždy jen na konkrétní básnickou formu, přičemž vztahy mezi různými formami jsou přehlíženy. Tento přístup, hluboce zakořeněný v čínské literární historii, brání pohledu na konkrétní literární díla v širších souvislostech poezie, či dokonce literatury, jako takové. Při svém zkoumání poezie věnované „toulkám po nesmrtelnosti“ jsem se pokusila překonat tuto překážku a vedle sebe pojednávám jak díla v básnickém žánru ʃ', tak i široký záběr skladeb tradičně řazených do odlišných – a pro tradiční čínskou kritiku nesouměřitelných – literárních kategorií, jako popisná báseň *fu* nebo chvalo zpěvy *sung* a *can*. Základním kritériem výběru literárních děl ve studii bylo hledisko tematické, tj. zabývám se nejrozličnějšími skladbami, které zpracovávají téma nesmrtelnosti. Vzhledem k tomu, že se vesměs jedná o veršované útvary, používám pro ně souhrnný název „*youxian* verse“, který v čínské terminologii nemá obdoby.

Cílem studie je podat co možná nejúplnější popis veršované literatury věnované tématu nesmrtelnosti v rozmezí 2. stol. př.n.l. – 6 stol. n.l., a to na základě jejich tematického rozboru a rozboru jejich metaforiky a básnických konvencí. Každá ze čtyř kapitol pojednává o jedním širším tematickým okruhu: obraz nesmrtelných, jejich rajske světy, cesta k nesmrtelnosti a konečně proměňující se vztah mezi lidským světem básníka a říše nesmrtelných. Této témata jsou rozdělena na užší motivy a aspekty, se snahou postihnout jejich původ, vývoj a transformace v průběhu studovaného období. Tento popis si klade za cíl odpovědět na otázku, o čem vlastně tato literatura hovoří, jaký je její smysl, jak se vztahuje ke známějším

básnickým proudům dané doby a také jaký je její vztah k náboženství, zejména možných vlivů zázračných „zjevených textů“ taoistického náboženství.

Abstract

During the Six Dynasties (220 – 589) there evolved a distinct poetic current of “roaming into immortality” (*youxian shi*), which is distinguished as a sub-genre of lyrical poetry *shi* in the 6th century anthology *Wenxuan*. The *youxian shi* concern higher realms of nature, inhabited by divine immortal beings, replete with paradisaical marvels and ecstatic cosmic flights. Although poetry on immortality was written by the leading poets of the age, it remains even today much neglected in the literary history of the Six Dynasties, having been consciously marginalised by generations of later critics and commentators. And yet, considerations of this “otherworldly” poetic current not only reveal the other, more imaginative and mystic side of Chinese poetic vision, but also allow us to make significant additions to and re-evaluate traditional notions of poetic developments and the meaning of poetry in early medieval China.

A major problem in the study of the poems on “roaming into immortality” is the narrow definition of genres on the basis of concrete verse form, whereby the connections between the various forms are largely neglected. This approach, deeply rooted in traditional Chinese literary history, does not allow us to perceive the concrete literary works in the wider context of poetry, or even of literature as such. In the present study I attempt to go beyond the narrowly defined *youxian shi* genre limited to *shi* lyric poetry written mostly in pentasyllabic verse, and to consider a broad range of literature which treats the theme of immortality, although bearing different titles and traditionally anthologised under different genre categories. Thus, although the central focus of the study is on lyric poetry *shi*, it is discussed within the context of other contemporary genres such as rhapsody *fu*, eulogia *song* and encomia *zan*. These genres are traditionally classified among the prose writings *wen* and apart from the rhapsody they so far attracted little attention of literary history. Yet they were written by the same members of the intellectual elite, using mostly polished versified form and dealing with similar topics as the *youxian shi* and thus exhibit close connections with the genres generally accepted as poetic. That is why, disregarding the traditional genre

classification, we will for the purpose of this study consider all the variety of versified texts dealing with the *youxian* theme as “verse on roaming into immortality”.

The study aims to trace the rise and transformation of the verse on immortality on the basis of themes, plots, imagery and poetic conventions that were central to it in its formative stages prior to the Tang dynasty. Each of the four chapters is devoted to one rather broad thematic aspect of the “roaming into immortality“ verse: the image of immortals, their paradise worlds, the way to attain immortality, and finally, the changing relations between the human world of the poet and the otherworldly realms. These themes are further subdivided into more specific motifs and images, with a view of tracing their origins, evolution and continuous transformations during the period in question.

This analysis aims to elucidate the major features of the *youxian* verse and its meaning in the context of early medieval Chinese literature through considering its complex interactions with other, more famous poetic currents of the period. Because the themes it deals with are essentially religious, it is also important to take into account the relationship of the *youxian* verse to the developments of Daoist religion. Especially significant in this regard is the interrelation between the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties and the “celestial“ verse contained in records of Daoist revelations, which has been generally excluded from the discourse on Chinese poetry.

INTRODUCTION

Among the twenty-three sub-genres that Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501 – 531) distinguished in the *Wenxuan* 文選 („Selections of Refined Literature“) anthology as thematic variations of lyrical poetry *shi* 詩, there is a category named *Youxian* 遊仙 (“Roaming into Immortality“).¹ The *Wenxuan* section on *youxian* is far from being extensive. It contains works by only two poets – one poem by He Shao 何劭 (236 – 301) and seven poems by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276 – 324). These works are but a small fragment of a much wider poetic current, which during the Six Dynasties paralleled the more famous literary developments of the period, such as eremitic poetry (*zhaoyin shi* 招隱詩), landscape poetry (*shanshui shi* 山水詩), poetry of objects (*yongwu shi* 詠物詩), etc.² The *youxian* poems open up worlds different from the mundane reality of their authors and their ordinary experiences. They concern higher realms of nature, inhabited by sublime figures possessed of divine powers, replete with paradisaical marvels and ecstatic cosmic flights. The verse on immortality can be regarded as the other side of the Chinese poetic vision – the more imaginative, the more mystic and exalted. Nevertheless, even today it remains much neglected in the literary history of the Six Dynasties period, having been consciously marginalised by generations of traditional critics and commentators. Its undeniable religious inspiration meant that it was consciously eschewed by later literati critics. On the other hand, as a part of “secular” poetry it never attracted the serious attention of scholars of Daoist religion. The aim of the following study is to trace the constitution and transformation of the verse on immortality on the basis of themes, plots and imagery that were central to it in its formative stages prior to the Tang dynasty. Considerations of the “other-worldly” poetic current allow us to make significant additions to and re-evaluate traditional notions of poetic developments and the meaning of poetry in early medieval China.

Before turning to the treatment of the theme of immortality in poetry, it is necessary, however, to take a brief look at the religious notions connected with *xian* 仙- immortality, since an apprehension of these is indispensable for proper understanding of the *youxian* verse.

¹ *Wenxuan* (completed between the years 526 and 531) is the oldest surviving anthology of Chinese literature arranged by genre and the primary source for pre-Tang literature. It contains 761 compositions in prose and verse by 130 writers, covering the period from late Zhou and right through the Liang dynasty (ca. 4th cent. BC – 6th cent. AD). On the content, scholarship and editions of *Wenxuan* see Knechtges 1982: 21-70.

² Later anthologies and compendia contain more specimens of *youxian* verse. The most important sources for the Six Dynasties poetry on immortality are the early seventh century *leishu* collectanea *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚, “Categorized Collection of Literary Writing” (*juan* 78, *Xiandao* 仙道 [“The Way of Immortality”]), and *Chuxue ji* 初學記, “Records for Early Learning” (*juan* 23), compiled at the beginning of the eighth century.

1. Religious Background

1.1. The ideal of *xian*-ship

Although the hope of longevity and avoidance of death has been an integral part of Chinese culture since early times³, the concept of *xian* immortality was developed consistently and theoretically grounded within the context of Daoist religion from the late Han dynasty. The major aspiration of Daoist adepts was to become a *xian* – a perfected, higher-than-human being, enjoying an enduring life of purity, freedom and bliss. The concept of *xian* involved a specific notion of eternal life in which not only the spiritual components of man survive, but his physical body as well – although much purified and sublimated through the successive stages of a course of various alchemical, physiological and ritual practices.⁴ It was believed that *xian*-immortality could be achieved during a man's lifetime, without an inevitable passage through death. The adept who rose to the state of a *xian* could ascend as a perfected immortal into the ranks of the heavenly bureaucracy, or choose a terrestrial life among picturesque earthly landscapes. Liberated from the anxieties of old age, death and dissolution, he could enjoy a finer and eternal life which still included all the pleasures of human existence.⁵

The established translation of *xian* as “immortals/ immortality” is rather misleading. Immortality in the sense of “not passing away” (*bushi* 不死) is only one aspect of the *xian*-state, which more fundamentally involved a transformation of the psycho-spiritual complex of the individual and thereby a change in the very state of his being. Many texts explicitly emphasize the distinction between *xian* and mere longevity or not-dying.⁶ Sometimes the achievement of longevity is conceived as a preliminary stage of attaining *xian*-ship, while sometimes the two are presented as separate options. Another translation of *xian*, which has gained currency in the last two decades, is “transcendents“, which emphasises their exalted

³ Yu Yingshi 1964-65: 87 has pointed out that the wish that death might be avoided altogether was already expressed in bronze inscriptions from the eighth century BC on.

⁴ In ancient China the notion of the survival of the individual self and hence the concept of eternal life was intricately bound to the preservation of the body. The soul was never perceived as an invisible spiritual counterpart to a visible, corporeal body. Both soul and body were simply aspects of the same primordial breath *qi* 氣 (translated also as pneuma or vital energy), condensed to different degrees. Moreover, every person possessed not one but many souls, or more precisely, spiritual components, roughly divided into two groups – generally, three superior *hun* 魂 and seven inferior *po* 魄- souls, which scattered at death. It was the physical body which held the numerous souls and spirits together, like a thread holding beads, and provided them with a habitat, which thereby ensured the individual personality of every human being. Hence only through preservation of the body could one achieve an everlasting continuation of the living personality without allowing it to disintegrate into fragments with existences of their own.

⁵ For overviews of *xian*-immortality see Campany 2002: 18-97, Needham vol. II: 139 – 154, Penny 2000. On pre-Han and Han concepts of immortality see Yu Yingshi 1964.

⁶ For example, *Zhen'gao* 真告 12/3a7 ff.

status but has the disadvantage of being imbued with western implications of a radical metaphysical gap with the world of man. In the Chinese universe, organized into a hierarchical continuum which united all levels of being from mortal men to the supreme divinities, the *xian* have simply ascended to a level higher than the ordinary humans.⁷ In fact the term *xian* designates a variety of different beings, from “earth-bound *xian*” (*dixian* 地仙), existing on the terrestrial plane or under it in the cavern-heavens to celestial beings proper. “One quality these beings share is that they have been “transferred”...from the common human state to a more subtilized form of existence, closer to the nature of the Dao. There is thus not a single chasm between mortals and immortals, but a chain of being, extending from non-sentient forms of life that also experience growth and decay to the highest reaches of the empyrean”.⁸

In the following pages I tentatively adopt the traditional translation of *xian* as “immortals”. Although aware of the shortcomings of this rendition, I am led in my choice by two main considerations. In the Six Dynasties poetry the theme of *xian* is often treated in the light of human transience, and aspects of longevity, endurance, “existence equal with that of sun and moon”, if not eternity, receive much emphasis. Even more important is the fact that, as will be demonstrated in many places below, the state of *xian*, although much more sublime, is nevertheless continuous with human experience and with the human world. This important aspect would be obliterated in the rendition “transcendence”.

1.2. Overview of the historical development of immortality cult

Although the roots of the immortality cult are still the subject to much controversy, scholars agree that it was formed at the end of the 4th century BC in the eastern Chinese states of Qi 齊 and Yan 燕. In general, it can be said that the cult comprised traditional longevity concerns, traditions of ecstatic shamanism, philosophic-meditative currents and, probably, some foreign influences. This complex also incorporated cosmological, astrological and medical theories, which had developed independently but were absorbed into the immortality teaching early on.

⁷ See the discussions in Bokenkamp 1997: 21-23 and Campany 2002: 4-5. Terms like “otherworldly”, “supernatural”, “beyond this world”, which are at times used in the present study, should be taken with caution – they do not mean a radical chasm with the human world, but simply suggest a level of being higher than that of mortal men.

⁸ Bokenkamp 1997: 22-23. J. Campany 2002: 5 suggests in passing an alternative rendering as “ascendants”, which seems to convey best the connotations of the term *xian*.

The arts of immortality were the domain of the so-called *fangshi* 方士 (literally “masters of recipes” or “masters of techniques”, but commonly translated as “magicians”) who specialised in cosmological and esoteric practices such as astrology, divination, geomancy, medicine, alchemy and above all, the quest for immortality. The princes and lords of the coastal regions showed special enthusiasm for the pursuit of longevity and immortality and widely employed the services of the *fangshi*.⁹ With the unification of the empire in the 3rd century BC the originally local cult received a warm welcome at the imperial court. The search for immortality found fervent patrons in the emperors and a tight link with the imperial court remained a hallmark of the *xian*-cult until the end of the Han dynasty. Both the First Emperor of Qin, Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝 (r. 221 - 210 BC) and Emperor Wu of Han, Han Wudi 漢武帝 (r. 141 - 87 BC) were notorious patrons of *fangshi* and ardent searchers for eternal life. Both rulers are known to have sent large-scale maritime expeditions to search for the divine islands in the Eastern Sea in the hope of communicating with the immortals who dwelled there. In addition, Emperor Wu extended his search westwards - towards the mythic Kunlun mountains, legendary abode of the Queen of Immortals Xi Wangmu 西王母. The preoccupation of emperors with prolonging their lives provoked much criticism from the Confucian-minded scholars of the Eastern Han, who condemned it both as vain waste of state resources and as an activity that diverted the ruler from the much more important affairs of the state.¹⁰

The quest for immortality as practiced at the imperial court, about which we have a fairly comprehensive picture because of the historical records, apparently was only one of the forms taken by the pursuit of immortality during the Han dynasty. The data preserved on cults of immortality on a more popular level are, however, extremely scanty. Immortality teachings inspired salvation peasant cults, such as the one dedicated to the Queen Mother of the West which swept across China's north-eastern provinces in the first years AD.¹¹ Some recent studies of epigraphic sources have brought new insights into local cult, connected with

⁹ Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145 – c. 85 BC) provides information about their pursuits in many places in the *Shiji* 史記 (“Records of the Historian”).

¹⁰ Wang Chong 王充 (27-97) devoted a chapter of his treatise *Lunheng* 論衡 (“Discussions Weighed in the Balance”) to criticism of the immortality aspirations of emperor Wu and wittily argued that immortality in the sense of transformation of the body and its transcendence was not possible.

¹¹ The activities of this cult are recorded in three separate entries in the *Hanshu*: in the “Annals of Emperor Ai 哀 [r. 7-1 BC]”, in the “Monograph on Celestial Patterns” and in the “Monograph on Strange Phenomena”. See also Dubs 1942 and Loewe 1979: 98 – 101.

immortal figures.¹² The textual and pictorial material found in tombs also reveals that besides the classical notion of immortality there existed a concept of a certain “post-mortem” immortality achieved after death through the preservation of the body and proper rituals.¹³

The plethora of Late Han pictorial representations of *xian* immortals shows how widespread their cult was. Images of immortals, represented as winged, feathered beings, adorn tomb paintings, stone reliefs, bronze mirrors and lacquer ware dating from the first centuries AD and later.

At the end of the Eastern Han period the first organized Daoist ecclesia was formed - the Way of the Celestial Masters (Tianshi dao 天士道). In the tradition of the Celestial Masters, who emphasized communal liturgical and ethical structures, eternal life was conceived as bestowed by gods only to persons of exceptional merit as a reward to their moral endeavours. The realm of immortals was regarded as an extension of the human world - a nine-fold hierarchy of spiritual advancement connected lower mortal men with the most accomplished celestial beings, the *xian* immortals being relegated “only” to the fourth level. The surviving “Scripture of Great Peace” (*Taiping jing* 太平經), parts of which probably date from the 2nd century AD, contains many features current in the later immortality teachings, such as instructions on dietics, breathing techniques, partaking of drugs, and strong emphasis on moral behaviour.¹⁴

Along with the hierarchically organized and highly centralized ecclesia of the Celestial Masters, there existed, especially in the south, numerous traditions of more individualistic practitioners. Their teachings were transmitted in small circles consisting of a master and his disciples. These lineages, largely independent of one another, carried on and further developed the legacy of the Han *fangshi*. A comparatively coherent picture of the immortality theories within one such line of transmission is provided by Ge Hong 葛洪 (284 – 364) in his treatise *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇 (“The Master who Embraces Simplicity, Inner Chapters”)¹⁵. This is the first extant work to discuss at length and in detail immortality and

¹² See Holzman 1991 on the “Wangzi Qiao Stele” (*Wangzi Qiao bei* 王子喬碑) of 165 AD, Schipper 1991 on Tang Gongfang Stele (*Tang Gongfang bei* 唐公訪碑) and 1997 on the Fei Zhi Stele (*Fei Zhi bei* 肥致碑) of 169 AD.

¹³ See especially Seidel 1982, 1985, 1987a and 1987b, Brashier 1995.

¹⁴ On the notion of immortality in *Taiping jing* see Lin Fushi 1998.

¹⁵ Ge Hong was an aristocratic scholar-official and religious practitioner, member of an important clan in the southeastern state of Wu. “Master who Embraces Simplicity” (*Baopuzi*) was the sobriquet Ge Hong chose for himself. His treatise consists of “Inner Chapters”, which deal with esoteric matters, considered to by him the most fundamental part of human knowledge, and “Outer Chapters”, devoted to exoteric issues concerning society and Confucianist thought. A complete Russian translation of the “Inner Chapters” is provided by Torchinov 1999, in English the somewhat outdated translation by James R. Ware 1966 is

methods of its attainment in the general context of Daoist religion. Ge Hong extensively quoted, summarized or alluded to many older Daoist texts, which he had collected during his frequent travels throughout China, none of which, however, is now extant. Ge Hong outlines a hierarchy of states of *xian*-transcendence, consisting of three distinct classes – heavenly *xian* (*tianxian* 天仙), abiding in the highest known heaven of the Grand Purity (Taiqing 太清), earthly *xian* (*dixian* 地仙) who, although having the power for heavenly ascent, still dwell on earth, and corpse-liberated *xian* (*shijie xian* 尸解仙), who have undergone a false death. He argued that immortality can be attained through personal effort and practice, and provided numerous instructions in dietics, breath cultivation, proper rituals, plant and mineral medicaments and above all in alchemy, which he considered to be the highest and most efficient art of immortality.

Shortly after Ge Hong, and in the same southern region and in the same aristocratic milieu, a series of celestial beings, who called themselves True or Perfected Ones (*zhenren* 真人), appeared in nocturnal visions to a certain Yang Xi 楊羲 (330 - 386) – a retainer of the aristocratic Xu 許 family.¹⁶ Although the True Ones had also been human at an earlier point, they were by far more subtle and spiritual beings than the older *xian*. They came from heavenly spheres much loftier than anything known to that time – from the heaven of the Supreme Purity¹⁷ (Shangqing 上清), which stretched above the Grand Purity (Taiqing 太清) heaven known to Ge Hong. Between 363 and 370 they dictated to Yang Xi a series of texts, instructions and a number of poems, directed particularly at the Xu, especially at Xu Mi 許謐 (303 - 373) and his son Xu Hui 許翮 (341 - ca. 370). The True Ones were accomplished poets – much of their revelations came in the form of verse, describing landscapes of the highest empyrean and breathtaking cosmic journeys. The outstanding literary qualities of this revealed verse, and the remarkable calligraphy with which Yang Xi transcribed in lowly

available. From the rich secondary literature on *Baopuzi* the monographic studies of Hu Fuchen 1989 and Schmidt 1996 should be mentioned.

¹⁶ The Xu family was originally from the north but had emigrated to the south around 185 AD. They had originally been affiliated to the Way of Celestial Masters.

¹⁷ Alternative translation of *Shangqing* adopted by E. Schafer and S. Bokenkamp, is Upper Clarity. However, R. Campney argues that in Daoist contexts the primary sense of *qing* 清 is not "clarity", but "purity", lack of defilement, "always connoting proximity to the original conditions of things as they emanate from the Dao" (Campney 2002: 7, n. 13). The adjective *shang* 上 refers to the relation of the Shangqing heaven to other celestial realms – it is the second of a series of Three Pure Heavens (Sanqing 三清), above the Grand Purity (Taiqing), and below the Jade Purity (Yuqing 玉清), therefore, the rendition of *shang* as "upper" is rather imprecise.

human script their divine words, helped them to gain and hold the attention of the highly literate aristocracy of the period.¹⁸

At the beginning of the 5th century the texts transcribed by Yang Xi began to be dispersed among other aristocratic families, becoming so successful that soon forgeries started to appear. Several eminent Daoists attempted to reassemble the original corpus of texts. The most renowned among them was Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456 - 536) – a personal friend of many aristocrats, Buddhist thinkers and emperor Wu 武 of Liang (464 – 549) himself, who was otherwise inclined towards Buddhism. In 492 Tao Hongjing left his official career and retired to Maoshan 茅山 (southeast of present day Nanjing), where, working under direct imperial protection, he directed a community of Daoists and devoted himself to the collection and compilation of original Shangqing manuscripts. One of the results of his efforts was the *Zhen'gao*, 真告 (“Declarations of the True Ones”), completed in 499. This work consisted of a retelling of Yang Xi's visions, a transcript of the incantations of divinities, instructions and revelations dictated by the deities of the Shangqing heaven.

In 397, soon after the Shangqing revelations and no doubt inspired by their success, Ge Chaofu 葛巢甫, a grandnephew of Ge Hong, circulated a new corpus of revelations – the so-called “Numinous Treasure” (Lingbao 靈寶) scriptures.¹⁹ These represented a conscious attempt to synthesize Daoist and Buddhist ideas, whereby the new ideal of universal cosmopolitical salvation substituted the individual quest for immortality. The goal of the earlier quest, the avoidance of physical death, was replaced by belief in a post-mortem purification and restitution of the body through a process of smelting in the nether-worldly realm of the Grand Yin (Taiyin 太陰). Although emanating from the same southern aristocratic milieu as the Shangqing teachings, the Lingbao dispensations became much more a religion of the people. They developed a more institutionalized clergy, codes, collective liturgies and rituals for the state, which to a large degree replaced the individualistic longevity practices of meditation and alchemy.

¹⁸ Among the numerous studies in Western languages concerning the Shangqing Daoist tradition see especially Strickmann 1977, 1979 and 1981, Robinet 1984 and 1993.

¹⁹ On the Lingbao tradition see especially Bokenkamp 1983, 1989, 1990.

1.3. Methods of achieving immortality

The striving for the metamorphosis of the mortal body was directed both to making it immune to the physical disintegration caused by disease and death, and to purifying it and lightening it to the utmost. There was never a single, unified prescription on how to achieve these goals. The techniques employed vary greatly, - not only by time and author, but also with regard to individuals who managed to attain immortality. Certain traditions emphasized individual cultivation of life, others communal rituals and prayers, some stressed physiological practices, others attributed importance to mental images. What they have in common is that they involve cultivation of the breath *qi* 氣 (also translated as pneuma, vital breath, vital energy) in one or another form – either purification and circulation of one’s own *qi*, or absorption of the pure *qi* of certain plant and mineral substances and cosmic exudations. They also emphasize, as a prerequisite for successful pursuit of immortality, the need for moral behavior, for withdrawal from the corrupting influence of the world and the maintenance of tranquility and purity.

Various breathing exercises (*xingqi* 行氣 [lit. “circulating the breath”], *tuna* 吐納 [“expelling and absorbing”], or *taixi* 胎息 [“embryonic breathing”]) which date back to deep antiquity, were considered to be very important. The natural processes leading to death were believed to be caused by the loss of pneuma *qi*. It was therefore essential to keep the pure *qi* within the body, learn how to circulate it, how to bring forth its condensation and intensification and let it nourish the body from within. The modification of *qi* within the human body was also achieved through sexual practices that focused on the preservation and regulated circulation of the seminal essence (*jing* 精) – the most concentrated and powerful, yet immensely refined form of *qi* within man.²⁰

Besides refining one’s own *qi*, the absorption of the pure concentrated *qi* of various products – plants and minerals above all - was also very important. First, however, the adept should keep to a certain diet, which involved abstinence from grains²¹ Ordinary food had to

²⁰ On Daoist breathing techniques and gymnastics see Maspero 1981: 443-553, Despaux 1989, on breathing and sexual practices in early texts see Harper 1998.

²¹ This involved abstinence from grains (“cutting-off grains, *duangu* 斷穀), which is related to the notion of the powers of physical corruption and death abiding within the body. The Three Worms (*sanchong* 三蟲) or the Three Cadavers (*sanshi* 三尸), which cause decay and death dwell within the three cinnabar fields and feed on cereals. Abstinence from these would weaken them to a point where they could easily be eliminated with the help of certain drugs. Moreover, in the context of Chinese society, which linked the rise of culture with the origins of agriculture, the alternative immortality diet implied a critique of the corrupting culture and return to primordial nature. On the different aspects and connotations of Daoist diet in early medieval China see especially Campany 2001 and 2005.

be replaced by a diet of various herbs, mushrooms and minerals, the efficacy of which was cosmologically or mythically grounded. The final objective was to subsist solely on purest forms of *pneuma-qi* – breath and light, morning dew and astral radiance.

The human body should not only be purified to the utmost, but also made invulnerable to decay through the absorption of different mineral substances. Only stones and ore that never corrode were able to confer their durability on the body. Much more effective than natural minerals and ores, however, were alchemically produced elixirs of immortality that contained the *qi*-*pneuma* of their ingredients in purer and more concentrated form. Since its origins Chinese alchemy ever had striven for the transmutation of immortality elixirs, which were exempt of the universal cycle of changes and allowed the adept who ingested them to return to the perfect primordial state of non-differentiation and timelessness.²²

Besides the methods based on modification of breath *qi*, a wide range of various practices can be subsumed under what Campany calls “the bureaucratic idiom”.²³ Through various apotropaic techniques and spirit-deceiving subterfuges the adept could command, petition or manipulate the administrative officials of the divine world to take action for his benefit – such as deleting his name from the registers of mortal men and inscribing it into the books of immortality.

Although consistent with the notions of immortality outlined above, the Shangqing tradition enriched them with a more mystical and cosmic dimension. The elite background of the Shangqing adepts expressed itself in a new emphasis on meditation and on visionary communication with an entirely new pantheon, mostly of stellar divinities. Central to Shangqing practice was visualization and invocation of the gods and paradises, absorption of astral radiance (not merely breath *qi*) and nourishment of pure light, ecstatic roaming amid the stars, and visits to various heavenly paradises where the adepts could taste fruits and juices of immortality. Through visualisation the adept could also cause the gods to descend in his chamber and into his body, where they nourished him with cosmic ethers.²⁴

²² Of the numerous studies on Chinese alchemy see especially Sivin: 1976 and 1980, Pregadio 2000, on the alchemical tradition of the Grand Purity see especially Pregadio 1991 and 2006 and a good summary in Campany 2002: 31-47.

²³ Campany 2002: 47.

²⁴ On Shangqing meditation techniques see especially I. Robinet 1993 and 1989.

1.4. Transition to immortality

What happened to the adept after his body had been etherialised and made incorruptible by taking alchemical substances or by following other procedures? The transition from mortal life on earth to the enduring, perfected mode of being was generally conceived as an ascent to heaven. There were different ways to effect this. The fully accomplished immortals succeeded in refining their form sufficiently and transforming it into an immortal during their lifetime, and rose in a perfect body without passing through death. The highest goal was to soar up in broad daylight by means of a celestial chariot, or on a dragon's back. By the time of Ge Hong these celestial immortals were imagined as a part of an extended bureaucracy that governed the divine world. They served in administrative system paralleling the one on earth, had their respective titles, ranks and numerous duties, and were subject to the benefits of promotion or the threat of demotion.

Less advanced adepts, who had not succeeded in rendering their bones and flesh immortal, "who had not enough breath, but too much flesh"²⁵, had to carry out the final transformation by means of faked death. This method is known as *shijie* 尸解 ("corpse deliverance" or "deliverance by the means of false corpse"). This is probably one of the most complex and baffling aspects of immortality arts, and has provoked differing explanations and misunderstandings ever since the Han dynasty.²⁶ The adept who availed himself of *shijie*, seemingly succumbed to death, but what appeared to be his corpse was later replaced by either a bamboo staff, sword or sandals. If it remained a body, it would stay as fresh as if it was still alive, in some instances even lacking bones. During the Six Dynasties period the most popular method of corpse deliverance was by means of miraculous alchemical elixirs, which often were highly poisonous. Michael Strickmann suggests that in certain cases *shijie* could be a ritual suicide to escape periods of troubles or external conditions that did not allow the adept smooth progress in his practices.²⁷ Such adepts would become immortals of an inferior grade, abiding in mountains or in the underworld where they could peacefully continue their spiritual pursuits and gradually advance in the heavenly hierarchy.

The *xian*-immortals did not remain in the distant celestial heights forever inaccessible by the common men. Not only the terrestrial immortals who still dwelled in the mountains of this

²⁵ *Yunji qiqian* 109:10b, CT 1032.(the abbreviation CT refers to the number of a certain *Daozang* text according to the title concordance by K. Schipper, ed. 1975. *Concordance du Tao-tsang. Titres des ouvrages*. Paris: EFEO.)

²⁶ For review of the differing explanations and a stimulating new interpretation of the notion and practices of *shijie* see Cedzich 2001. On *shijie* in the context of Shangqing tradition see also Robinet 1979.

²⁷ Strickmann 1979: 132-33.

world, but also their celestial counterparts often descended to earth and entered into contact with ordinary men. Even if for a certain time the immortals might dwell among mortals, their extraordinary powers and minds set them apart from the human crowd. They could change their appearance at will, appearing as old men, lads, or alluring beauties, or take on the appearance of tree, stone water, animals, etc. They could accelerate natural processes of change and transform other objects at will. They also possessed the art of ubiquity, the art of dividing the form (*fenxing* 分形) and could be simultaneously present at many different places. The *xian*-immortal was liberated from any temporal-spatial limitations – he was able to travel thousands of miles in an instant, fly as a bird to the furthest reaches of the cosmos, and pace the void at will. Immortals had also mastered the art of invisibility – they could vanish or appear at will, freely fading away and then making themselves visible once again. The stories of their extraordinary exploits among men were a favorite subject in the many “accounts on strange phenomena” (*zhiguai* 志怪) that circulated widely from the Eastern Jin onwards.

1.5. Prose accounts of immortality

The surviving scriptural evidence on the origins and early developments of the immortality cult is sparse and fragmentary. Major sources include some passages of *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Huainan zi* 淮南子, *Mutianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳 (“Biography of Son of Heaven Mu”, 4th century BC). The earliest textual layers of *Zhuangzi*, dating back to late 4th century BC, already contain descriptions of perfected beings (variously called “divine men” [*shenren* 神人], “utmost men” [*zhiren* 至人] or “true / perfected” men [*zhenren* 真人]) who subsist on cosmic exhalations, freely roam through the cosmos invulnerable to calamities and decay, and exert a beneficial influence on all existence. Although none of these accounts appears in the context of discussion of immortality,²⁸ they are consistent with the classic image of the *xian*-immortal which was to develop in the subsequent centuries. More numerous and extensive passages are found in *Huainanzi* – a text compiled ca. 140 BC at the court of Liu An 劉安 (d. 122 BC), Prince of Huainan 淮南王. This compendium represents the apogee of the Huang-Lao Daoist synthesis of the Han dynasty and introduces a broad spectrum of esoteric knowledge in a highly developed cosmological framework.²⁹ Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145 – c.

²⁸ Throughout the book they are used as anecdotes to illustrate arguments over other issues.

²⁹ Huang-Lao is commonly explained as the philosophy of Huangdi and Laozi, representing a synthesis of Legalist and Daoist ideas. It was, however, more encompassing than that, including also cosmology, self-cultivation and immortality ideas and Confucian ethics. In the second century BC it was promoted as

85 BC) in *Shiji* (“Records of the Historian”) provides a wealth of information about the activities of the *fangshi* and the pursuit of immortality at the late Warring States, Qin and early Han courts.

Among the early sources we should mention *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (“The Classic on Mountains and Seas”), probably from the 4th century BC with later additions.³⁰ It describes a mythical geography of the ancient world, extending outwards from the known realm to increasingly remote and fantastic lands. It systematically presents regions and landmarks, their mythical animals, peoples and spirits, various plants and drugs and their uses as cures and portents. Although reflecting ancient layers of myths and beliefs that much precede the formation of the immortality cult, it is an indispensable source for the present study, for it provides the earliest descriptions of lands, deities, fantastic flora and fauna that were later transformed into immortality lore, such as Xi Wangmu 西王母, the Queen Mother of the West and her abode – the Kunlun 崑崙 mountains.

In the first centuries AD numerous texts circulated about the lives, achievements and exploits of *xian*-immortals, many of them now lost. The earliest extant collection of *xian* biographies – *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 (“Biographies of Arrayed Immortals”) is ascribed to Liu Xiang 劉向 (77 - 6 BC), but it might well be slightly later.³¹ It contains the lives of seventy immortals, chronologically ranging from deepest antiquity to the more recent personages of *fangshi* active at the Han courts. The accounts are very terse and laconic, presenting basic data rather than a consistent life story.

The major extant source on the beliefs and practices connected with immortality in 4th century southern China is the treatise *Baopuzi neipian* by Ge Hong, already mentioned above. Ge Hong is also credited with the authorship of *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (“Biographies of Divine Immortals”) – a hagiographical collection, which contains the most extensive material on immortals in early medieval China.³² The more than 100 biographies included in *Shenxian*

government’s official ideology. For Early Han scholars such as Sima Tan and Sima Qian, Huang-Lao stood for Daoist thought (*daojia*) in general.

³⁰ The present edition is accompanied by a preface by Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 BC) stating that he edited the text in eighteen chapters *pian* 篇. The *Shanhai jing* is mentioned by Sima Qian in *Shiji* 123: 3179, and is listed in *Hanshu*, *Yiwen zhi* with thirteen *pian* under *xingfa* 形法, geomancy (30: 1774-75), which suggests that it was used for divination. Modern scholars have identified several textual layers from the early 4th century until the beginning of the Han Dynasty and have concluded that it originated in the southern Chinese region of Chu. See Yuan Ke 1978 and 1979, Mathieu 1983. The earliest surviving commentary was written by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276 – 324).

³¹ Translated and studied by Kaltenmark 1953. The attribution to Liu Xiang is not certain but most scholars agree that it is a work of the Eastern Han period.

³² Translated and studied by Campamy 2002. All the extant versions of the text are in fact reconstructions undertaken after the destruction of the Song Daoist canon. On the questions of authorship, textual versions

zhuan present much longer and complex narratives with structured plot lines, and often contain different episodes in the life of certain immortals. They offer an unusually lively and multifaceted picture of the Daoist immortals – their powers, their activities, their relations with humans, and their methods of achieving immortality.

Miracles and magical exploits on the part of immortals fell into the category of stories of strange and anomalous phenomena which during the Jin dynasty circulated and were gathered by courtier-scholars interested in the “broad learning” (*boxue* 博學) beyond the orthodoxy of the Confucian canon. Accounts of various immortals were included in the early medieval collections of out-of-the-ordinary phenomena and events (*zhiguai*): in *Bowuzhi* 博物志 (“Monograph on Broad Phenomena”) by Zhang Hua 張華 (232 – 300), *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (“Record of an Inquest into the Spirit-Realm”) by Gan Bao 干寶 (fl. 320), *Shiyi ji* 拾遺記 (“Gathering Remaining Records”) of Wang Jia 王嘉 (d. ca. 324), *Xuanzhong ji* 玄中記 (“Records from within the Recondite”) by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276 – 324).³³ Information on adepts and immortals is also contained in some of the collective biographies and treatises in the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (“History of the Latter Han”), compiled by Fan Ye 范曄 (398 – 445). Li Daoyuan’s 酈道元 (d. 527) *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (“Annotated Classic on Waterways”) preserves a great deal of data on cultic sites associated with immortals.

With the Shangqing revelations in the second half of the 4th century we move into spheres much higher than those of the *xian* immortals. Among the numerous religious texts belonging to the Shangqing tradition several should be mentioned as relevant to the topic of Six Dynasties *youxian* poetry. First and foremost is the *Zhen’gao* compiled by Tao Hongjing in 499. Especially important for the purposes of this study are the poems that it contains which had been dictated to Yang Xi by Shangqing divinities.³⁴ An important source on Daoist mythical geography of the period is *Shizhou ji* 十洲記 (“Records of the Ten Continents”) – a text traditionally ascribed to Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154-93 BC) but evidently originating in the milieu of the Shangqing tradition in the 5th – 6th century AD.³⁵ It consists of detailed and colourful descriptions of ten paradisiacal regions at the ends of the human world where

and dating see *ibid.*: 118 – 128. R. Campany has concluded that the material pertaining to 87 immortals is reliably attested in pre-Tang and Tang texts.

³³ None of these early compilations survives in original form, and have been reconstructed from their quotations in *leishu* and commentaries by Ming editors and subsequent scholars. For a brief introduction see Nienhauser 280-83. On *Soushen ji* see also Menshikov 1994: 22-24.

³⁴ On the poetry of *Zhen’gao* see Russell 1985 and Lin Shiyue 1991. The first chapter of *Zhen’gao* has been translated and studied by Hyland 1984. Partial translations of *Zhen’gao* poetry are provided in Kroll 1996 and 2003 and Bokenkamp 1996.

³⁵ Translated by Smith 1990. Studied by Li Fengmao 1986b: 123-85.

immortals have their abode, with further accounts of the mythical mountain Kunlun and the three islands of immortals in the Eastern Sea. This text had originally been part of a longer work together with two more compositions that are now preserved as separate works - *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 (“The Inner Story of Emperor Wu of the Han”) and *Han Wudi waizhuan* 漢武帝外傳 (“Extraneous Stories on Emperor Wu of the Han”). They narrate the legend of the visit of the queen of the immortals Xi Wangmu 西王母 to Emperor Wu and biographies of several immortals, and were often quoted in the literature of the late Six Dynasties and Tang periods.

2. Poetry on Immortals

2.1. The term *youxian*

The term *youxian shi* is commonly rendered in English as "poems of wandering immortals"³⁶, "roaming immortal"³⁷ or "poems on roaming with immortals"³⁸. However, such translations often do not correspond to the actual content of the poems bearing this conventionalized title. Cosmic excursions are one of the important themes in *youxian* poetry, especially in the earlier periods but in many instances the journey theme is absent and more static scenes in paradise are depicted instead. Sometimes a poem with the title *Youxian* does not even present any scenes of immortal life but merely voices the poet's wish to attain the perfected state. The subject of the poem also varies – it might be either the *xian*-immortals described from an observer's point of view, or the very persona of the author, who pictures himself as a blissful immortal. Therefore I interpret the compound *youxian* as the name of a poetic subgenre in a broader sense and translate it as "Roaming into Immortality".³⁹ The word *xian* should be understood as denoting not a persona but a state of being – "*xian*"-ship (immortality or transcendence). The verb *you* 遊 (also written 游) has general connotations of leisurely, easy and playful roaming. In relation to poetry on immortality I expand the meaning of *you* beyond the concrete poetic descriptions of celestial journeys, either those of the immortals or of the poet, and understand it to refer to mental, spiritual journeys in general, to the wanderings of the authors' thoughts and aspirations into the higher realms of the *xian*-immortals.

³⁶ Frodsham and Cheng Xi 1967: 92.

³⁷ Ronald C. Miao in Lin Wu-chi and Irving Yucheng Lo 1975: 48.

³⁸ Wai-lim Yip 1997: 143.

³⁹ Schafer 1977: 242-43 and 1983 and Kroll 1996: 655 translate the expression *youxian* in a similar way: as "Saunters in Sylphdom" and "Roaming to Transcendence" respectively.

2.2. The scope of the material

The present study deals with the theme of "roaming into immortality" in early medieval Chinese literature with special focus on lyric poetry *shi*, and in addition discusses in some detail other versified genres such as rhapsody *fu*, eulogia *song* and encomia *zan*. The terms "immortality poetry", "verses on immortals" or "roaming into immortality" are used in the present study in a much broader sense than the poetic category *youxian shi* in the *Wenxuan* 文選 anthology. Approximately fifty poems or fragments of poems with the title *Youxian* from the period 3rd – 6th century are extant. The number of verses dealing with the theme of immortality, however, is much higher. Among them are compositions with titles that are explicit in terms of content, such as "Divine immortals" (*Shenxian* 神仙), "Ascending to Heaven" (*Shengtian* 升天), "Ascending to Immortality" (*Shengxian* 升仙), "Arrayed Immortals" (*Liexian* 列仙), "Skimming the Empyrean" (*Lingxiao* 凌霄), "Immortal Guest" (*Xianke* 仙客), "Treading the Void" (*Buxu* 步虛), etc. In addition, the theme of immortality is treated in a large number of *yuefu* 樂府 songs with conventionalized titles, such as "The Tune of Qiuahu" (*Qiuahu xing* 秋胡行), "Mulberries along the Path" (*Moshang sang* 陌上桑), "Song of Languid Music" (*Huansheng ge* 緩聲歌), to name but a few. Furthermore, many poems dealing with immortality border on other sub-genres such as on "Singing of one's Heart" (*yonghuai* 詠懷), on "Beckoning the Recluse" (*zhaoyin* 招隱) or on "Sightseeing" (*youlan* 遊覽). The following discussion therefore takes into consideration not only poems with the explicit title *You xian* or *Youxian shi*, but all those that are infused with the spirit of immortality seeking even if they have different titles and are traditionally anthologized under different thematic categories. I believe that only by tracing the presence and transformations of the theme of immortality in this broader range of poetry can the meaning of the *youxian* verse be properly evaluated.

The mere appearance of immortal personages and paradise imagery in a certain poem, however, is insufficient for it to be regarded as a specimen of "roaming into immortality" verse. The splendid imagery of immortality had pervaded a broad range of poetry in the Six Dynasties, and was adopted as conventional metaphor in descriptions of earthly landscape, or even in descriptions of objects (*yongwu* 詠物). In the early poetry where paradise realms are conjured up as an antithesis to the human world of the poet (see below, ch. IV), it is relatively easy to see when a certain trope is being used simply as a poetic embellishment, or to evoke

the ideal otherworld as a whole (as often the case of many Ruan Ji's *Yonghuai* poems). After the fourth century, however, and especially in the court poetry of the southern aristocrats, the boundaries of the *youxian* current become increasingly blurred and many compositions cut across thematic categories. In the broadest sense, the guideline for choosing a certain composition for discussion is neither its title nor simply the imagery, but the degree to which the work as a whole "implies the attainment of some paradisiacal vision or ecstatic state" (to borrow E. Schafer's formulation⁴⁰), or the yearning for such attainment.

The category *youxian* in *Wenxuan* is limited to specimens of lyrical *shi* 詩 poetry. This has meant that studies dealing with the "otherworldly" poetic current focus so far exclusively on the forms of *shi* and *yuefu* songs and discuss them in isolation from the rest of contemporary literary production. In fact, the origins and early developments of the verse on immortality were connected not with lyrical poetry, but with the poetic tradition of *Chuci* and with forms like elegy *sao* 騷 and rhapsody *fu* 賦.⁴¹ In addition, ever since its origins during the Han dynasty, the rhapsody *fu* existed in two equally mature and well-developed forms, i.e. long descriptive rhapsodies (*santi fu* 散體賦) and shorter, more lyrical and expressive rhapsodic compositions (*saoti fu* 騷體賦). Furthermore, lyrical poetry from the Southern Dynasties period tended to be more descriptive.⁴² The forms of rhapsody *fu* and *shi* shared similar themes and imagery and conformed to common poetic conventions and aesthetic values, and so instead of drawing rigid division lines between them, we should consider them in their continuous interchange and mutual influences. This applies not only to "lyrical" and "descriptive" poetry, but also to other forms written in verse like eulogies *song* 頌 and encomia *zan* 贊, which were widely attempted by the Six Dynasties authors. Their inclusion in the present study might seem rather arbitrary because they have been traditionally anthologised among prose writings (*wen* 文). Yet during the Six Dynasties these versified forms were in constant interplay with the genres generally accepted as poetic and at times trespassed into the area of poetry to the degree that a composition might be variously

⁴⁰ Schafer 1977: 244.

⁴¹ During the early Han dynasty no clear distinction was made between the *fu* and the *sao* forms, from which the rhapsody *fu* partly derived, and the *sao* were often referred to as *fu*. See Watson 1962: 254.

⁴² The principle that the function of *shi* poetry is to express, while that of *fu* rhapsodies is to describe, is voiced by Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303) in *Wenfu* 文賦 ("Rhapsody on Literature"). He defines lyrical poetry according to its generic differences from other forms and particularly from the rhapsody *fu*: "Poetry *shi* follows from the affections and is sensuously intricate; rhapsody *fu* gives the normative forms of things and is clear and bright" 詩緣情而綺靡，賦體物而瀏亮 (*Wenxuan* 17: 766, based on the translation of Owen 1992: 130; for a discussion of the terms *qing* and *tiwu* see *ibid*: 130-131). That this division is often arbitrary becomes especially evident after the fifth century in the Palace Style poetry (*gongti shi* 宮體詩), which deliberately strove to confuse the generic differences and largely replaced the expressive function of poetry with the descriptive function of the rhapsody *fu*. See Fusheng Wu 1995: 128-29.

classified in different anthologies either as an encomium *zan* or as an *yuefu* song or even as a *shi* poem. Furthermore, these forms are less concerned with the expression of personal thoughts and feelings, employ the theme of immortality for its own sake and are, therefore, more explicit in their testimony.

Western discussions of *youxian* poetry often speak about it as a genre⁴³ but I understand the term “genre” to refer to literary forms as outlined in the Chinese anthologies and theoretical discussions, i.e. rhapsody *fu*, lyric poetry *shi*, elegy *sao*, sevens *qi* 七, edict *zhao* 詔, etc.⁴⁴ In the *Wenxuan* anthology, which established the norm of generic classification, the rhapsody *fu* and lyric poetry *shi* are further subdivided into a number of sub-genres, most of which represent specific thematic categories: “Supplying Lost Poems” (*bu wangshi* 補亡詩), “Recounting Virtue” (*shude* 述德), “Exhortation and Encouragement” (*quanli* 勸勵), “Poems of Presentation” (*xianshi* 獻詩), “Lord’s Feast” (*gongyan* 公讌), “Farewell Banquet” (*zujian* 祖餞), “Recitations on History” (*yongshi* 詠史), “One of One Hundred” (*baiyi* 百一), “Roaming into Immortality” (*youxian* 遊仙), “Beckoning the Recluse” (*zhaoyin* 招隱), to name but the first ten categories of lyric poetry *shi*, listed there.⁴⁵ Because the present study deals with the treatment of the *youxian* theme in various forms of versified literature (*shi*, *fu*, *song*, *zan*) and, moreover, in different “thematic categories” as outlined in *Wenxuan*, I try whenever possible to avoid established terms like “genre” and “sub-genre”, and use more neutral expressions, i.e. “current of poetry”, “verse on immortality”, “immortality poetry”, “roaming into immortality verse”.

2.3. Chronology

The following study covers the period from the 2nd century BC until the 6th century AD – that is to say from the Western Han (206 BC – 8 AD) through the period of disunion after the collapse of the Han dynasty up to the re-unification of the Chinese empire under the Sui 隋 (581 - 618) dynasty. The terminology employed for the periodisation of the literature

⁴³ Holzman 1994: 116; Fusheng Wu 2000 alternately uses “genre” and “poetic mode”. E. Schafer prefers the term “*youxian* mode”, while at times he also uses “genre” (1977: 243).

⁴⁴ Early Chinese attempts at systematic arrangement of literary genres were far from being consistent. Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) in *Lunwen* 論文 (“Treatise on Literature”) discusses eight literary genres, Lu Ji in “Rhapsody on Literature” lists ten items. Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465 – ca. 522) in *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (“The Literary Heart and Carving of Dragons”) established thirty-four general generic categories. In the preface to the *Wenxuan* Xiao Tong distinguishes thirty-eight forms and divides the content of the anthology into thirty-seven categories. However, the actual content of *Wenxuan* does not exactly correspond either to the one outlined in the preface, or to the earlier categories of Liu Xie. See Hightower 1957.

⁴⁵ The *fu* has fifteen sub-genres and *shi* twenty-three. On the generic categories and sub-categories of *Wenxuan* see Knechtges 1982: 21-52; on the theory of genres in early Chinese literary criticism see Hightower 1957.

of this era of turmoil is far from consistent. Chinese critics traditionally classify the poetry of this period with reference to the successive dynasties, no matter how short-lived they were, and speak accordingly about the poetry of Western (Former) Han 前漢 (206 BC - 8 AD), Eastern (Latter) Han 後漢 (25 - 220), Wei 魏 (220 - 265), Jin 晉 (265 - 420), Liu-Song 劉宋 (420 - 479), Southern Qi 南齊 (479 - 502), Liang 梁 (502 - 557), Southern Chen 南陳 (557 - 589), Northern Qi 北齊 (550 - 577), Northern Zhou 北周 (581 - 618), etc. Often the literary developments are more narrowly outlined by reign period: poetry of the Jian'an 建安 (196 - 220) period, of the Zhengshi 正始 (240 - 249), of the Taikang 太康 (280 - 290) periods, etc. Such narrow periodisation, however, is irrelevant for the needs of the present work, since the developments in poetry that it traces are much slower and continuous, overstepping the dynastic changes. In western historiography the term "Period of Disunity" is commonly used for the centuries after the fall of the Han dynasty, when China was first divided into the Three Kingdoms of Wei 魏 (220 - 265), Wu 吳 (222 - 280) and Shu 蜀 (221 - 263) and later into the "barbaric" North, ruled by non-Chinese, and Chinese South (that is to say from 220 until 589). The alternative terms are Six Dynasties or Southern Dynasties, applied to all dynastic houses that took as their capital Jiankang (present day Nanjing) – Wu, Eastern Jin, Liu Song, Southern Qi, Liang and Chen. At times, however, the term "Six Dynasties" is used to denote the six successive Chinese dynasties from the Western Jin (265 - 317) to the Chen, thus excluding the Wu kingdom from the list.⁴⁶ In literary criticism the term Southern Dynasties is commonly used to designate the four dynasties following the fall of the Eastern Jin in 420: Liu-Song, Qi, Liang and Chen, that is to say the period from 420 to 589.⁴⁷ In the following chapters I tentatively adopt the term "Southern Dynasties" in the latter meaning for the period Liu-Song – Chen.

The material considered in the present study shows three distinct periods in the development of the verse on immortality. First, there is a period of origination of the *youxian* verse, from the earliest surviving compositions of the 2nd century BC until the early 3rd century AD (Western-Eastern Han); followed by a period of mature subjective poetry, which covers the end of the Eastern Han, the Wei, Western Jin periods and fades away during the Eastern Jin; and finally, a period of court poetry from the fifth century up to the Sui dynasty. These three periods are outlined on the basis of the transformations of themes and imagery

⁴⁶ The term "Six Dynasties" can be even extended to cover the whole period from Western Jin up to the Tang dynasty (265 - 618). This particular convention is followed, for example, by Yan Kejun in his *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* and by Lu Kanru in his *Zhongguo shishi* (1999: 279).

⁴⁷ Nienhauser 1986: xliii.

and they do not precisely correspond to the dynastic changes. For the sake of precision, I prefer to use centuries instead of dynastic houses and reign periods.

2.4. Historical overview of the development of immortality verse

The earliest surviving poems that treat the theme of immortals are contained in the ancient anthology *Chuci* 楚辭 (“Songs of Chu”), which was compiled in its present form and provided with its most influential commentary by Wang Yi 王逸 (d. 158 AD). This anthology consists of poetry in the *sao* form composed between the 3rd century BC and the 2nd century AD, and connected with the poetic tradition of the southern Chu kingdom and with the name of Qu Yuan 屈原 (340? – 278 BC). The *youxian* theme is not present in the earliest layers - we do not find it in the “Nine Songs” (*Jiuge* 九歌) nor in the “Encounter with Sorrow” (*Lisao* 離騷), traditionally ascribed to Qu Yuan.⁴⁸ Although the mythological figures and motifs that appear in them are part of earlier, pre-Daoist beliefs, these poems are extremely important for the later development of the immortality verse. They developed a whole range of themes, imagery and poetic conventions that were adopted by the later poetry on immortality. In addition, *Lisao* exerted a far-reaching influence of a more general kind on the immortality verse. The ancient theme of a cosmic journey, which is probably of shamanistic origin, became transformed in the *Lisao* into a political allegory of the search for the virtuous lord. This kind of allegorism provided a precedent and model for many later applications of the “roaming into immortality” theme, and for the prevalence of allegorical interpretations of the immortality verse in general among the traditional critics.

The search after *xian*-transcendence received its first elaborate treatment in the poem “Distant Journey” (*Yuanyou* 遠遊) which dates back to the second half of the 2nd century BC.⁴⁹ *Yuanyou* is often characterised as the Daoist answer to the *Lisao*. Lacking the elaborated symbolism and political allegory of the *Lisao* this poem describes the mystical journey of a Daoist adept through all quarters of the cosmos which takes him away from the sorrows and afflictions of the human life on earth and ends in ecstatic oneness with the Dao itself.

⁴⁸ Still, H. Maspero and some other scholars insist that the *Lisao* is a Daoist work, depicting an ascent to the paradise of immortals and symbolically describing the “Mystical Union” (Maspero 1981: 414-416). However, I find nothing specifically Daoist in the *Lisao*, nor any connection with the ideas of immortality.

⁴⁹ This poem has been traditionally considered to be an authentic part of the “Works of Qu Yuan”. D. Hawkes, however, ascribes its authorship to the circle of poets and philosophers at the court of Liu An 劉安, Prince of Huainan 淮南王 (d. 122 BC), which combined Daoist mysticism with an enthusiasm for Chu poetry, and which also produced the first edition of the *Chuci*. See Hawkes 1985: 191.

The theme of the immortals, the search for them and the description of the joys of immortal life appears in many other pieces from the *Chuci*: “Sorrow for Troth Betrayed” (*Xishi* 惜誓, 2nd half of 2nd century BC), “Oppressed by Grief” (*Zibei* 自悲) from the “Seven Remonstrances” (*Qijian* 七諫, 2nd half of 2nd century BC) cycle, “Alas that my lot was not cast” (*Aishi ming* 哀時命) by Zhuang Ji 莊忌 (fl. 154 BC), the “Nine Regrets” (*Jiuhuai* 九懷) by Wang Bao 王褒 (1st cent. BC), the “Nine Laments” (*Jiutan* 九歎) by Liu Xiang 劉向 (77 – 6 BC).

The present study considers the *Chuci* as major texts that stood at the origin of the *youxian* poetic current. My aim is not, however, to analyze the *Chuci* phenomena as such, but to elucidate the origins of various tropes, motifs and imagery common in the immortality verse and the ways in which they are adopted and transformed in the subsequent “roaming into immortality”. Although *Chuci* poetics will receive much attention in the pages below, it is always discussed from the perspective of the later poetic developments and its contributions to the otherworldly poetic current.

With the rise of the *fu* rhapsody as an imperially-centred genre, designed to entertain and dazzle the listener with ornate and extravagant descriptions, fantastic cosmic journeys among deities naturally became one of its themes. Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179 - 117 BC), the court poet of Emperor Wu, answered his patron’s obsession with the pursuit of immortality by creating “Rhapsody on the Great Man” (*Daren fu* 大人賦). Consciously modelled on the *Yuanyou*,⁵⁰ this rhapsody takes as its subject not a Daoist adept or a frustrated official, but the emperor, the Great Man himself, who triumphally travels to the larger other-worlds of gods and immortals. Extant *fu* rhapsodies from the Han dynasty that are concerned with the theme of immortality are not numerous – the surviving works of this kind are the “Rhapsody on Looking at the Immortals” (*Wangxian fu* 望仙賦) by Huan Tan 桓譚 (ca. 43 BC - 28 AD), “Rhapsody on Viewing the Sea” (*Lanhai fu* 覽海賦) by Ban Biao 班彪 (3 – 54) and “Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery” (*Sixuan fu* 思玄賦) by Zhang Heng 張衡 (78 - 139). It is remarkable that the most extensive and comprehensive poetic treatments of the theme of

⁵⁰ The apparent linguistic similarities between the two poems have generated a discussion among the scholars about the relationship between them. Thus Guo Moruo suggested that *Yuanyou* is Sima Xiangru’s earlier draft of *Daren fu*. Others believed that *Daren fu* was the original poem, and the author of *Yuanyou* borrowed a great deal from it, as well as from *Lisao*. Most scholars agree, however, that the *Yuanyou*, written at the beginning of the Western Han, was the original poem and the *Daren fu* was written in imitation of it. See the discussion in E. Hervouet 1964: 288 ff.

immortality during the Han dynasty come from the brush of Confucian scholars, who are otherwise noted for their rationalistic scepticism in supernatural matters.⁵¹

Another genre in which the theme of immortality appears during the Han dynasty are the *yuefu* songs, the majority of which are literary imitations of folk songs. Stylistically, the *yuefu* songs form a separate literary current distinct from the *sao* and *fu* tradition. Their imagery is less exotic and ornate, their diction is much plainer or even colloquial. In imagery and diction they exhibit a close link with the inscriptions on bronze mirrors from the period 50 BC - 250 AD, many of which describe scenes from the life of immortals.⁵²

The decline of the Han dynasty did not simply mean the passing of yet another dynasty, but involved a crisis on more fundamental philosophical and cosmological levels. The collapse of the Han shattered confidence in the Confucian values that had provided the ideological basis of the Han state. The dramatic change in the intellectual atmosphere brought a novel concern with man's fate as an individual in the place of the former prevailing interest in state, politics and objective order of the universe. Towards the end of the Han dynasty immortality-seeking became a subject of poetic reflection in the light of the intensified perception of transience of life and imminent approach of death, as indicated by the "Nineteen Old Songs" (*Gushi shijiu shou* 古詩十九首). The theme of immortality is discussed in poems by Cao Cao 曹操 (155 – 220), the founder of the Wei dynasty, and his two sons Cao Pi 曹丕 (186 – 226) and Cao Zhi 曹植 (192 - 233), who were the most important poets of the early third century. Cao Cao has left four songs (two of them are in fact *yuefu* cycles) in which the theme of immortality appears: "Song on Vital Breath Exhaled" (*Qichu chang* 氣出唱, 3 pieces), "The Tune of Qiuhe" (*Qiuhe xing* 秋胡行, 2 songs), "Mulberries along the Path" (*Moshang sang* 陌上桑) and "Dissolution of the Essence" (*Jinglie* 精列). Cao Zhi devoted ten songs to immortals - almost one quarter of his *yuefu* compositions. He is, moreover, the first author known to have used the expression *youxian* as a title of poetic composition.

Liu Xie notes in *Wenxin diaolong* that "during the reign of Zhengshi (240 - 248) of the Wei the trend was to explain Dao and the poetry of this period contains elements of the cult of

⁵¹ Huan Tan was an important philosopher, scholar and politician and held quite important posts during four successive reigns. Unfortunately, all his works, the most important of which was the treatise "New Reflections" (*Xinlun* 新論) have been lost and exist only in the form of reconstructed fragments from ancient books and encyclopaedias. From these preserved passages Huan Tan appears as a rationalistically oriented scholar who tried to find a reasonable explanation for all strange phenomena. See Pokora 1961.

Besides being outstanding poet, Zhang Heng was a famous scientist, the inventor of a seismograph and an astronomer.

⁵² On late Han bronze mirrors see Loewe 1979: 60-85 and Zhang Jinyi 1981.

immortality” (乃正始明道，詩雜仙心).⁵³ The Jian'an and the Zhengshi period can indeed be considered a turning point in the treatment of immortality theme in poetry. In comparison with earlier verse the poets employ the theme less formally and allegorically, and transform it into a means of exploring existential dilemmas. Over one quarter of Ruan Ji's 阮籍 (210 - 265) eighty-two “Poems Singing of my Heart” (*Yonghuai shi* 詠懷詩) take immortals as their theme. Xi Kang 嵇康 (223 - 262) has also left a number of poems dealing with the theme of immortality – besides a poem explicitly titled *Youxian* it appears in approximately ten of his poems. During the late 3rd and early 4th centuries the theme of immortality established itself as an autonomous subject for poetic treatment. Important poets of the period like Chenggong Sui 成公綏 (231 - 273), Zhang Hua 張華 (232 - 300), Zhang Xie 張協 (d. 307), Yu Chan 庾闡 (286 - 339) all wrote poems and poetic cycles on “roaming into immortality”. Guo Pu's 郭璞 (276 – 324) poems on “Roaming into Immortality” (*Youxian shi*), some of them included in the *Wenxuan*, are generally conceded to represent the high point and masterpiece of the *youxian* verse.⁵⁴ Later critics praised Guo Pu's compositions for their balance of lyrical self-expression, vivid landscape description and bold flights of fantasy.

After the fall of the Han dynasty the theme of immortality was also widely taken up in *fu* rhapsodies. Although only two rhapsodies exclusively devoted to immortality survive from this period (“Rhapsody on Arrayed Immortals”, *Liexian fu* 列仙賦, and “Rhapsody on Skimming the Empyrean”, *Lingxiao fu* 陵霄賦, both by one of the most important writers of the period, Lu Ji 陸機 [261-303]), the theme appears in rhapsodies recounting journeys (Sun Chuo's 孫綽 [fl. 330 - 365] “Rhapsody on Roaming the Celestial Terrace Mountains”, *You Tiantai shan fu* 遊天台山賦), fantastic cosmic wanderings (Zhi Yu's 摯虞 [ob. 312] “Rhapsody on Pondering a Journey”, *Siyou fu* 思遊賦), in rhapsodies on rivers and sea (Mu Hua's 木華 [fl. ca. 290] “Rhapsody on the Sea”, *Hai fu* 海賦), on natural phenomena (Lu Ji's “Rhapsody on Floating Clouds”, *Fuyun fu* 浮雲賦), etc.

Legendary immortals, especially those included in the *Liexian zhuan*, were also a popular object of praise in the post-Han eulogies *song* and encomia *zan*. Approximately hundred eulogies *song* and encomia *zan* are extant, but there apparently existed many more. Surviving examples include two encomia by Sun Chuo on immortals from *Liexian zhuan*, probably part of larger series (*Liexian zhuan zan* 列仙傳讚), a series of twenty-two eulogies

⁵³ Shih, Vincent Yu-chung: 35-36.

⁵⁴ Only ten of Guo Pu's *Youxian* poems are extant in their complete length and seven of them are included in the *Wenxuan*. Lu Qinli: 867 presents fragments of nine more *Youxian shi*.

on various immortals by Lu Yun 陸雲 (262 - 303) under the common title “Eulogies on Climbing the Distant” (*Dengxia song* 登遐頌), a series of seventy encomia, written to accompany the respective hagiographies of *Liexian zhuan* by Guo Yuanzu 郭元祖 (4th cent.), and some single preserved pieces by Qian Xiu 牽秀 (? - 305) and Lu Ji.

Guo Pu’s poems are generally considered to represent not only the climax in the development of the *youxian* verse, but also its end. The poetry on immortals written in the centuries after Guo Pu is dismissed as a decline and weakening of the genre, degeneration into mere “imitation”, “lacking any new developments”.⁵⁵ One of my purposes in the present study is to offer a re-evaluation of the immortality verse of the Southern Dynasties period, demonstrating the novel turns it took that were crucial for its subsequent flowering during the Tang dynasty.

The poetry on immortality of the 5th and 6th centuries was connected with the court culture of the Southern Dynasties, most clearly represented by the poetry of Qi and Liang dynasties. Although some Liang poets, such as Yu Xin 庾信 (513 - 581) and Wang Bao 王褒 (500 – 563?), who spent their late years as captives at the court of the Northern Zhou, are traditionally classified among the poets of the Northern dynasties, their “roaming into immortality” verse reflects the features and aesthetic concerns of the Southern court poetry, and so they should properly be considered as southern poets.

A grasp of the social context and religious background is essential for the proper understanding of the poetry on immortals of this period. During the Southern Dynasties *youxian* poetry was composed within and consumed by narrow elite circles, in the literary salons of the southern aristocrats presided over by imperial princes and emperors. Surviving poems on immortals came from the brushes of renowned court poets such as Shen Yue 沈約 (441 – 512) and Wang Rong 王融 (466 – 493), Jiang Yan 江淹 (444 – 505), Wu Jun 吳均 (469 - 520), Yu Jianwu 庾肩吾 (ca. 487 – 551) and Yu Xin, Wang Bao, Zhang Zhengjian 張正見 (6th cent.), Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531 – after 590), Lu Sidao 盧思道 (535 – 586).⁵⁶ Among the authors of *youxian* verse we even find emperors and princes, like Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (464 – 549) and Liang Jianwen di 梁建文帝 (502 - 551). Their “roaming into immortality” were generally created in the context of mutual poetic exchange – as “matching”

⁵⁵ See for example Zhu Guanqian 1948: 9, Lin Wenye 1996: 13.

⁵⁶ The terms “court culture” and “court poetry” are used here not in their literal meaning, but as established terms in literary criticism in connection with the poetry of the Qi, Liang and Chen dynasties. The verse on immortality composed in the court circles of the Han dynasty is specified below as Han court poetry. On the social context of the court poetry of the Yongming period see Lomova 2003.

(he 和) pieces harmonizing with poems on the same theme by other authors, as answers to their literary friends and patrons. Many of them were extemporized at specific occasions – particular outing or court feast.

Many of the poets, who are known as devoted Buddhists, like Wang Rong, also composed poetry on Daoist immortality. Even Emperor Wu of Liang, the ardent patron of Buddhism, who had issued edicts suppressing Daoism, also tried his brush at Daoist themes. Princes and courtiers were in close contact both with Buddhist and Daoist masters, knew their teachings quite well, and, moreover, often took a personal interest in the quest for eternal life. In addition, by the 5th- 6th centuries the southern aristocracy was familiar with the records of Shangqing revelations and with the exalted, consummate verse they contained.⁵⁷ The impact of the revealed verse on the literary developments of the period still remains to be fully evaluated and is one of the questions that will be touched on at many occasions in the present study.⁵⁸

2.5. Literary criticism on *youxian* verse

Although poems on immortality were written by the leading poets of the age, not much has survived. A large number of *Youxian shi* are extant merely in fragments and the treatises and anthologies contain scattered remarks about poems that are now completely lost. This poetic current remained for centuries on the periphery of Chinese literary criticism, which did not consider descriptions of fantastic vistas and mystical explorations to be serious, justifiable poetic subject. Indeed, orthodox critics felt the need to validate the composition of such verse by denying its possible religious undertones and interpreting them as allegories of the poets' frustrations, imbued with deep political overtones, and distant from the pursuit of immortality as such.

As early as the 2nd century AD Wang Yi, in his preface to *Chuci*, denied that there was any expression of religious experience in the *Yuanyou* poem, and claimed that the “distant journey” in the poem was only an allegory similar to that of *Lisao*, expressing the grief of a

⁵⁷ On the circulation of the Shangqing texts among the aristocratic families of the South see Strickmann 1977, and especially his translation of Tao Hongjing's account of the diffusion of the original manuscripts (p. 41 ff.).

⁵⁸ The influence of the Shangqing verse on later poets from the Tang dynasty, such as Li Bai, Li He, Wu Yun, Cao Tang has been studied by E. Schafer (see especially 1981, 1983b and 1985) and P. Kroll (1997 and 1999). On the possible impact of Yang Xi's outstanding calligraphy on the style of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303 – 361) and Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344 – 388) see Ledderose 1984.

rejected courtier.⁵⁹ Like Wang Yi, subsequent critics have been much concerned with proving the “political correctness” of a type of verse, which, although written by socially involved statesmen and officials, undeniably possesses religious themes. Much critical ink has been spilled over the last millennium to purge the images of Cao Cao and Cao Zhi of what was perceived by the Confucianists as a dangerous and irresponsible penchant, and to prove that the interest in immortality expressed in their poetry was allegorical.⁶⁰ Even the poetry of Guo Pu, the acclaimed master of *youxian* verse, has been the subject of continuous controversy.⁶¹ As early as the 6th century Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (? - 518) claims:

“But even though [Guo Pu’s] compositions on “Roaming into Immortality” have words highly charged with emotion, they are inconsistent with and removed from the mystical tradition. When he says, “What use in the fine figure of the tiger and leopard” and “I fold my wings and perch in thickets and thorns” [n.b. neither of these lines is found in Guo Pu’s extant corpus], this is none other than singing his feelings out of frustration, and has nothing to do with any interest in immortals”
但遊仙之作，辭多慷慨，乖遠玄宗，而云「奈何虎豹姿」又云「戢翼棲榛梗」乃是坎壈詠懷，非列仙之趣也。（Wang Shumin 1992: 247）

Ming and Qing dynasty scholars such as Lu Shiyong 陸時雍, Chen Zuoming 陳祚明, He Zhuo 何焯 (1661 - 1722) or Shen Deqian 沈德潛 subscribed to this opinion, which interprets the theme of immortality as a solace and means of voicing Guo Pu’s sorrows.⁶² The critics who admit intrinsic mystic value in Guo Pu’s poetry are less outspoken and much less numerous. In *Wenxin diaolong* Liu Xie, although focusing more on the literary qualities of Guo Pu’s verse, seems to recognize mystic exaltation as such when he comments that Guo Pu’s verse is “floating and soaring, skimming the clouds” (飄飄而凌雲矣).⁶³ Some later

⁵⁹ *Chuci buzhu*: 163. See also below, ch. IV.1.1, p. 192.

⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion of the various interpretations of Cao Zhi’s *youxian* verse see Holzman 1988.

⁶¹ His biography is contained in *Jinshu* 72.1899-1910. Guo Pu was probably the most learned man of the Six Dynasties, well grounded both in classical scholarship and in occult arts. He wrote commentaries to *Shanhai jing*, *Erya* 爾雅, *Mutianzi zhuan*, *Fang yan* 方言, *Chuci*, to Sima Xiangru’s “Rhapsody on Sir Vacuous” (*Zixu fu* 子虛賦) and “Rhapsody on the Imperial Park” (*Shanglin fu* 上林賦). In addition he was also a prolific writer of rhapsodies. Guo Pu held several posts as military adviser and as a gentlemen of the secretariat, but he was mostly renowned as an outstanding diviner. His ability to explain various portents, however, brought his end – he was executed by the rebellious Wang Dun 王敦 (266 – 324) after foretelling that the latter would fail to usurp the Jin throne. Although Guo Pu has been known more as a literary figure and a master of esoterica than as a practitioner of the arts of immortality, the Daoist tradition elevated him to the status of *xian*. His hagiographies are attested from the 10th century on – the earliest are contained in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (completed 978) and *Sandong qunxian lu* 三洞群仙錄 (completed 1154).

⁶² Lu Shiyong, *Gushi jing* 古詩鏡 9, referred to in Chen Daogui 2000: 13; Chen Zuoming, *Caishu tang gushi xuan* 采菽堂古詩選 12 and He Zhuo, *Yimen dushu ji* 義門讀書記 46 cited in *Wei Jin Nanbei chao wenxue shi cankao ziliao*: 331; Shen Deqian 1997: 129.

⁶³ *Wenxin diaolong* ch. 47 “On Literary Talent” (*Cailue pian* 才略篇), *Wei Jin Nanbei chao wenxue shi cankao ziliao*: 330.

critics like Ye Jiaoran 葉矯然 and Zhang Yugu 張玉谷 express the view that Guo Pu's *Youxian shi* do not merely vent his feelings but contain truly mystic aspirations.⁶⁴

The last few decades have been marked by an increased interest in the poetry on immortals among both Chinese and Western scholars. Following the lead of Zhu Guangqian (1948), modern critics began to explore these poems as an autonomous subject. Thus, apart from a number of articles on individual poets, several overviews of the development of this sub-genre have appeared – during the Six Dynasties (Li Fengmao 1983, Hong Shunlong 1985), throughout the Tang (Tang Yizhang 1975) and on its evolution until the Qing dynasty (Xiong Xiaoyan 1996). Among the Western scholars the articles of Donald Holzman (1988, 1994) on the *youxian* poetry of the Han and Wei dynasties have elucidated some of the ways in which the theme of immortality was employed in the first centuries AD. In addition, many valuable insights have been provided in monographic studies of particular poets (for example Holzman 1976 on Ruan Ji and 1983 on Cao Zhi; Mather 1994 on Shen Yue). Nevertheless, their biographical focus means that these studies treat the poems as a window on the poets' life and personality and say little of the developments in the sub-genre as a whole. On the other hand, the studies of the historical evolution of the *youxian* poetry are too general and are not backed by a systematic formal and structural analysis of particular works that can reveal the evolving poetic configurations and their complex meaning. As Chinese critics, following the tradition of “expressive theory” (James Liu), take as a prime criterion for the poetic values of a poem the sincerity and depth of the authors' feelings, the poets who enjoy the continuous attention of critics and translators are Cao Zhi, Ruan Ji and Guo Pu, who transformed the subgenre into an autonomous medium for the exploration of personal emotional conflicts and religious dilemmas.

In a pioneering article on the *youxian* poetry, Zhu Guangqian (1948) acknowledges that the *youxian* verse has more than one dimension and distinguishes three major types of poetry on immortals. The first, which he considered the orthodox type, is a tradition of protest and escapism, represented by poets such as Qu Yuan, Xi Kang, Ruan Ji. In his view, these poets are not true believers in immortality, but use the theme allegorically to voice their feelings, their frustrations from the corrupted world which they detest. The second type of poems uses the *youxian* theme as an artistic fiction because of the beauty of language and fantastic themes.

⁶⁴ Ye Jiaoran, *Longxing tang shihua chuji* 龍性堂詩話初集 and Zhang Yugu *Gushi shangxi* 古詩賞析, cited in Chen Daogui 2000: 13. The debate over the meaning of Guo Pu's poems on immortality has not been unanimously resolved even today. Chen Qianfan 1984: 299, You Guo'en 1963: 239 and Ye Jiaying 1997: 534 hold the orthodox opinion that Guo Pu borrows the theme of roaming into immortality to express his dissatisfaction with the real world and voice his anguish and protest. On the other hand, Lin Wenyue 1996: 10-11 recognizes genuine attraction to immortality.

Zhu Guangqian assigns the poets Song Yu 宋玉 (3rd cent. BC), Cao Zhi, Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217 – 278), Lu Ji, Bao Zhao 鮑照 (ca. 412 – 466), Yu Xin to this aesthetic, romantic tradition. Thirdly, Zhu Guangqian recognizes a religiously tuned, Daoist tradition, represented by Zhang Hua, Zhang Xie, Guo Pu, Ge Hong. Nevertheless, Zhu Guangqian adds that his threefold categorisation is rather idealised and many poems fall into more than one category – for example Cao Zhi and Yu Xin from the second type and Guo Pu from the third might also be included in the first tradition. More recently, Hong Shunlong (1985) has modified the tripartite division of Zhu Guangqian by formulating the categories of “imaginary gratification of earthly desires”, “aspirations for eternal life” and “voicing of frustrations”. These he applies to individual works rather than to their authors as a whole.

The problem with such attempts at categorization is that the individual poets and poems are too complex to allow neat pigeonholing into a single, well-defined category. The identification of these three traditions is, nevertheless, helpful if we do not perceive them as preconceived slots into which the works should be fitted, but rather as major concerns, which to differing degree are present in most of the poems.

2.6. The scope and aims of the present study

The following study of the immortality theme in early medieval Chinese poetry is based on two major premises. First and foremost, the verse on immortality is a literary phenomenon, with its own dialectics of development, although it is not unaffected by historical background and ideological presumptions. As such, the poems on immortality should also be discussed in their literary context, in their connections to other poetic currents. Only on the basis of their interplays and interconnections with other literary phenomena can one trace their peculiarities and their complex, changing meanings.

My second premise concerns the much neglected religious aspect of the “roaming into immortality” verse. While written by court poets and a part of “secular” poetry, the themes, motifs and imagery it employs are essentially religious. Hence, poetry on immortality should be also regarded in the light of its religious background – that is to say religious beliefs, cults, hagiographies, and comparable religious verse. Yet with the exception of a revealing article by Li Fengmao (1983), the question of the relationship of these poems with the development of religious Daoism has been largely neglected. The studies of Edward Schafer (especially 1977, 1980, 1981) and of Paul Kroll (1983, 1985, 1986) on Tang poetry have demonstrated

the importance of Daoist canonical texts and especially those written in verse for a proper understanding of the work of many Tang poets. Moreover, much of the Shangqing and Lingbao revelations of the mid- and late fourth century were written in verse, the literary artistry of which attracted the attention of their highly erudite readers. It is therefore important to consider the possible influences the revealed Daoist verse exerted in conditioning the imagery and vocabulary of the then contemporary court poets.

Instead of conducting a chronological overview of the *youxian* verse as a whole, or classifying poets and works according to their presumed message, I will attempt to trace the development of this poetic current in terms of imagery, vocabulary and poetic conventions. This will be done on the basis of some major themes and motifs, recurrent in the verse on immortality and their subsequent transformation. Working with narrower subjects such as tropes and imagery makes it possible to demonstrate more clearly the transformations that took place within the sub-genre on one hand, and on the other the interplay with other thematic currents and literary genres where the same or comparable motifs and conventions occur.

Each of the following chapters is devoted to one rather broad thematic aspect of the "roaming into immortality" verse, which is further subdivided into particular motifs. The first chapter considers the image of the *xian* immortals as conjured up by the poets. It traces the changes of the pantheon of immortals, the evolving perceptions of their spiritual aspects and visual images, and further discusses the transformations of such re-current tropes as cosmic journeys, feasts in paradise, and eternity. The changing relationship between the *xian* immortals and Daoist recluses, protagonists of the *zhaoyin* poetry, is also considered.

The second chapter describes the idealised and beautiful world of the immortals. Besides outlining the changing topography and imagery of paradise realms, it traces the "naturalisation" of the otherworldly scenery during the Eastern Jin dynasty and its further transformations in the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties. In this chapter I will draw attention to both the religious and symbolic significance of these paradise sceneries and their aimed aesthetic impact as highly artificial, decorative scenes.

The third chapter discusses the ways in which the poets imagined that the realm (or rather state) of immortality could be reached. Two major, albeit closely interweaving approaches are distinguished - transporting oneself to a paradisiacal realm by taking a distant journey, and transforming oneself into an immortal through physiological and alchemical practices. In regard to the former theme, the "journey into immortality", I trace the transformations of the *Chuci*-type cosmic journey into the mystical exploits of distant Daoist

paradises on the one hand and into excursions into the much closer world of earthly mountains on the other. The “elixir” method is discussed against the religious background of the period and the actual alchemical pursuits of the aristocrats.

The final chapter deals with a rather broad range of issues which can be subsumed under the general topic of the changing relations between the human world of the poet and the realm of immortals. Here is the place to take a closer look at the ways in which the poets exploited the theme of immortality as a means of reflecting socio-political, philosophical and existential concerns. Besides personal, lyrical poetry, another current of poetry having a public function is identified – hymns, works of praise and banquet songs. Special attention is devoted to the interplay between the literary forms – between lyrical poetry *shi* and genres like eulogies and encomia, which are included among the prose writings. The interconnections between “religious” and “secular” poetry of the Southern Dynasty will be illustrated using the example of religious Daoist hymns and their imitations written at court.

The present study attempts to reach beyond the generic boundaries and focus on the mutual influences and interconnections between poetry on immortality and other poetic currents of the period. My hope is not to exhaust all aspects of the "otherworldly" current of poetry, but rather to provide a starting point for further discussion and more general re-evaluations of the development of poetry in early medieval China.

Chapter I: The *Xian*-Immortals

1. Immortal Personages in Poetry (Han - Six Dynasties)

I.1.1 Xi Wangmu

Written and pictorial records from the Han dynasty testify that by far the most venerated deity of immortality during this period was Xi Wangmu 西王母, the Queen Mother of the West. During the Warring States and early Han she had gradually transformed from a therianthrope ancient goddess of disease and death into a divine beauty, dwelling in the paradise of Kunlun Mountains, who presided over and bestowed immortality. Her numerous images appeared predominantly in funerary contexts - in tombs and in ancestral shrines - thus expressing hopes for an immortal afterlife in paradise. The Queen Mother was often depicted in a pair with her male counterpart – Dong Wanggong 東王公, the King and Sire of the East.⁶⁵

During the Han dynasty the Queen Mother was not only worshipped by the elite, as her numerous representations in tombs attest, but also became the maternal saviour of a messianic peasant cult, which erupted in China's north-eastern provinces in the first years AD.⁶⁶ Preparing for the coming of the Queen Mother, the cult followers engaged in fervent and passionate religious activities. Regarding themselves as her envoys and servants, they claimed that the goddess would bestow immortality upon the faithful and bring death to unbelievers.

The Queen Mother remained neglected in the texts of the early Celestial Masters, probably because of her association with the popular cults so condemned by this Daoist school, but in the Shangqing Daoist tradition she rose as a leading female divinity, secondary only to the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Commencement, Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊 and supreme over most of the other deities of the Supreme Purity Heaven. Known under her official Daoist title “The Ninefold Numinous Grand and True Primal Ruler of the Purple Tenuity from the White Jade Tortoise Terrace” (*Ziwei yuanling baiyu guitai jiuling taizhen yuanjun* 紫微元靈白玉龜臺九靈太真元君)⁶⁷, from the end of the 4th century onwards she appears as a teacher to Daoist masters and bestower of divine scriptures to both gods and humans, as a controller of access to immortality and as a divine matchmaker between men and celestials.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Also called Dong Wangfu 東王父, King Father of the East. His image was constituted during the Han dynasty.

⁶⁶ See *Hanshu*, *juan* 11, 26 and 27. See also Dubs 1942 and Loewe 1979: 98 -101.

⁶⁷ This is the title given in Tao Hongjing's *Zhenling weiye tu* 真靈位業圖 (“Tableau of the Ranks and Functions of the Perfected and [Other] Numina”) 5b (CT 167).

⁶⁸ See Cahill 1993, especially ch. 1.

Given the religious significance of Xi Wangmu and her numerous pictorial representations, her relative lack of prominence in the early poetry on immortality is striking. There are almost no poems or eulogies wholly dedicated to the goddess, and even when she is mentioned, the authors rarely dwell on her transcendental qualities at length, as they do with the lesser immortals.⁶⁹ In fact, the earliest poetical portrayal of the Queen Mother by Sima Xiangru is even rather unflattering. In *Daren fu* 大人賦 (“Rhapsody on the Great Man”) Sima Xiangru describes the sight perceived by the Son of Heaven at the westernmost point of his cosmic flight:

鬖然白首戴勝而穴處兮	With her hair of silvery white, crowned with a headdress, she lives in a cave!
亦幸有三足鳥為之使	Fortunately she has the three-legged crow as her messenger.
必長生若此而不死兮	Yet if she must live in this state forever, never dying,
雖濟萬世不足以喜	Though it be for ten thousand ages, what joy can she find? ⁷⁰ (<i>Quan Han fu</i> : 92)

The details of this account - the *sheng* 勝 hairdress, the bird messenger and the cave dwelling - accord with the description of the goddess in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (“Classic of Mountains and Seas”) ch. 12 and ch. 16.⁷¹ The somewhat mocking portrayal of Xi Wangmu served the particular task of the court poet, who wrote the rhapsody as a celebration of his patron, Emperor Wu of Han, depicted here as a heavenly immortal. According to Sima Qian, “Xiangru felt that the traditional picture of the immortals, dwelling amidst mountains or marshes, their bodies emaciated with fasting, did not correspond to the royal idea of immortals, and his *Rhapsody on the Great Man* was written to suit the requirements of the latter.”⁷² It was not the ascetic, restricted, albeit endless life of the immortals that attracted the emperor, but the aspects of glory and splendour associated with the *xian* immortals. In the context of the rhapsody, the description of Xi Wangmu, conceived in the “ascetic” vein, glorifies through contrast the all-mighty emperor - the very queen of the immortals does not match his majesty, freedom and cosmic potency.⁷³

The motif of the constrained existence of the queen of immortals was never taken up again, however, by the subsequent poets, whose aims were other than praising a royal patron. Throughout the Han and post-Han poetry the Queen Mother appears as a courteous hostess,

⁶⁹ Notable exceptions are the 5th century poems by Tao Yuanming and Wang Rong, translated below.

⁷⁰ Contained in *Shiji* 117 and *Hanshu* 57B. Based on the translation by B. Watson 1962, vol II: 335 with slight alternations.

⁷¹ Yuan Ke 1980: 306 and 407.

⁷² *Shiji* 117: 3056.

⁷³ D. Knechtges 1976: 39 suggests that this unflattering portrait was intended as a reprimand to the emperor, who was indulging in pursuit of elixirs of immortality and in search of immortals, but I believe that these lines are in full accord with story of the presentation of the “Rhapsody on the Great Man”. Sima Xiangru is diminishing the traditional image of the immortals and creating instead a picture of immortality to appeal to a glorious emperor.

amusing the hero with music and dance and offering him divine food and immortality elixirs at the culmination of his journey (Zhang Heng's *Sixuan fu* 思玄賦 ["Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery"]) and *Ganquan fu* 甘泉賦 ["Rhapsody on the Sweet Springs"], Cao Cao's *Qichu chang* 氣出唱 ["Song on Vital Breath Exhaled"] II, Zhang Hua's *Youxian shi* I, etc.).⁷⁴

Most often, however, the Queen Mother is just mentioned, often in a pair with Dong Wanggong, as an inhabitant of the divine lands reached by the traveller into immortality (Ban Biao's *Lanhai fu* 覽海賦 ["Rhapsody on Watching the Sea"]; the *yuefu* song *Buchu xiamen xing* 步出夏門行 ["Going out of the Summer Gate"]; Cao Cao's *Moshang sang* 陌上桑). The Queen Mother's accompanying animals - the hare and the blue bird - are at times mentioned in poetry, either side by side with the goddess, or as allusions to her (Sima Xiangru's *Daren fu*; *Dongtao xing* 董逃行; Ruan Ji's *Yonghuai shi* 22, Tao Qian's *Du Shanhai jing* 讀山海經 5 ["On Reading the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*"]). The immortal paradise of Kunlun is often evoked by expressions like "Queen Mother's tower", *Wangmu tai* 王母臺 (Cao Cao's *Qichu chang* III), "Queen Mother's lodge", *Wangmu lu* 王母廬 (Cao Zhi's *Xianren pian* 仙人篇 ["Immortals"]), "Queen Mother's hall", *Wangmu tang* 王母堂 (Zhang Hua's *Youxian shi* II). The male partner of Xiwang mu - Dong Wanggong - appears in poetry either as an evocation of the eastern paradise on Penglai (Cao Zhi's *Yuanyou pian* 遠遊篇 ["Distant Roaming"]), or of the eternal life of the immortals (Cao Zhi's *Pingling dong* 平陵東 ["East of Pingling"]).

From the late fourth century on the image of the Queen Mother acquires some novel aspects and greater importance in the poetry on immortality. The poets from the Southern Dynasties were especially inspired by the legends of the Queen Mother's encounters with humans and above all by the complex of legends concerning King Mu 穆 (1001 - 946 BC) of Zhou, as developed in *Liezi* 列子 (probably 3rd century AD) ch. 3 and in the *Mu tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳 ("Biography of Mu, the Son of Heaven", variously dated from the 4th cent. BC to the late 3rd cent. AD)⁷⁵. In his circuit of the world King Mu reaches the Kunlun mountains, where, beside the Azure-gem Pond (Yaochi 瑤池), he pays a ceremonial visit to the Queen

⁷⁴ See also below, especially I.4. and III.2.

⁷⁵ The text was discovered in a tomb in 279 AD along with other ancient works. R. Mathieu 1978 dates the text to the beginning of the fourth century BC. On the other hand, S. Cahill 1993: 49 considers the text to be a late third-century AD work, incorporating early materials. The first three chapters are most probably close to the original version, the fourth chapter seems to be an early interpolation (before the text's burial), while the last two chapters were probably composed after the discovery of the text in the third century AD (see Nienhauser 1986: 632-633).

Mother. They toast each other with wine and exchange promises and melancholy poems. Because these are often evoked by later poets they deserve to be cited here in their full length.

“On the *yizhou* day, the Son of Heaven toasted the Queen Mother of the West beside the Azure-gem Pond. The Queen Mother composed a ballad for the Son of Heaven:

白雲在天	White clouds are in the heavens;
丘陵自出	Mountains and mounds emerge of their own accord.
道里悠遠	Our ways and byways are distant and far-off;
山川間之	Mountains and rivers separate them.
將子無死	If I take you and make you deathless,
尚能復來	Perhaps you will be able to come again.

The Son of Heaven replied to her:

予歸東土	I will return home to the eastern earth,
和治諸夏	To harmonize and set in order the various Chinese tribes.
萬民平均	When the myriad people are peaceful and equitable,
吾願見汝	I will turn my head back to see you.
比及三年	Three years from now,
將復而野	I will return to this wild place.

The Queen Mother of the West chanted again for the Son of Heaven:

徂彼西土	I am going off to that western land,
爰居其野	Where I reside in its wild places.
虎豹為群	With tigers and leopards I form a pride;
於鵲與處	Together with crows and magpies I share the same dwelling place.
嘉命不遷	Fortune and destiny cannot be transcended,
我惟帝女	I am the Thearch's daughter.
彼何世民	Who are these people of the world,
又將去子	Who can take you up and make you depart?
吹笙鼓簧	Blow the pipes and sound the reeds!
中心翱翔	My heart is soaring and wheeling!
世民之子	Oh, son of the people of the world –
惟天之望	You are what is looked at from afar in heaven!”

(*Mu Tianzi zhuan* 3: 15-16, tr. by Cahill 1993: 50 - 51)

The king, although unwillingly, has to return to his earthly duties without attaining immortality, and, despite his promise, he never comes back again.

It was not by chance that out of all the lore surrounding the Queen Mother this particular story captured the imagination of the poets. It centres around time-honoured themes in Chinese poetry – the old theme of the quest of the goddess, well developed in the *Chuci* tradition; the fleeting love encounters between mortals and divine women, rhapsodised in Song Yu's 宋玉 (ca. 290 – ca. 223 BC) *Gaotang fu* 高堂賦 and Cao Zhi's *Luoshen fu* 洛神賦, and finally the pursuit of immortality. The theme of man's brief meeting with the divine and the ultimate impossibility of transcending his human condition is, moreover, constantly recurring in the early verse on immortality, and voiced in different ways by the authors (see also below, ch. IV.1.7). One very important feature is the “humanisation” of the goddess in King Mu's story. Although immortal, transcendent deity, she is pictured as possessing human

emotions and engaged in human activities: she drinks wine, composes and chants poetry, falls in love and promises to reveal her arts of immortality to the man she loves. In the guise of a human woman she is much more accessible and appealing to the poetic imagination than as an almighty cosmic deity. Moreover, she could easily be associated by the poets with the image of the lonely woman – a theme that appeared at the end of the Han dynasty in the *Gushi shijiu shou* 古詩十九首 (“Nineteen Old Songs”) and became extremely popular in the southern court culture.

After the *Mu tianzi zhuan* text was discovered in a grave in 279 AD, the story of King Mu’s meeting with the goddess was quickly taken up by the poets. This theme started to appear occasionally in the immortality verse from the end of third century AD on, although not yet with a frequency that equalled the plethora of poetical references to come during the Tang dynasty. An early reference to the legendary encounter is provided by Lu Yun 陸雲 (262 - 303) in his *Xiji fu* 喜霽賦 (“Rhapsody on the Joy from Clearing [the Sky]”):

望王母於弱水兮 I would watch the Queen Mother at the Weak Waters,
咏白雲之清歌 And chant the clear air of the White Clouds. ⁷⁶ (Yan Kejun, vol. 5: 1023)

Tao Qian 陶潛 (365 - 427) not only mentions the story repeatedly in his poetical cycle “On Reading the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*”, but, probably for the first time, makes the Queen Mother the sole subject of a poem. In the second poem of the cycle he visualizes the goddess in her sky-piercing tower:

玉堂凌霧秀 Where Jade Tower rises up fairly through the mist,
王母拾妙顏 Wang Mu’s fabulous face shines with delight.
天地共俱生 She was born together with heaven and earth,
不知幾何年 I do not know how many years ago.
靈化無窮已 Her numinous transformations are inexhaustible,
館宇非一山 Her lodging and shelter no single mountain.
高酣發新謠 High and intoxicated she puts forth a new ballad;
寧效俗中言 How could one liken it to the words of this world?” (Lu Qinli: 1010; tr. by Cahill 1993: 52)

Tao Qian’s perception of the goddess foreshadowed the image she would acquire in the Shangqing Daoist scriptures – she is a transcendental deity, co-eternal with the cosmos, a mistress of ceaseless transformations who is omnipresent. At the same time she is a beautiful woman, taking delight in poetry and wine and communicating with mortals (the last two lines allude to the poems she exchanged with King Mu).

⁷⁶ The Weak-water river, Ruoshui 弱水, is a part of the topography of Kunlun. The song of the White Clouds, *Baiyun* 白雲, is the farewell ballad which the Queen Mother chanted to the king at the Azure-gem pond. See above, p. 33.

In the third poem of the cycle, after describing the Queen's paradise on Kunlun, Tao Qian melancholically sighs:

恨不及周穆 I regret I cannot get the King Mu of Zhou
託乘一來游 To take me with him on his journey there. (*ibid.*)

This last couplet echoes the old *Chuci* theme of quest of the goddess – the seeker here is the poet, the object of his quest – Xi Wangmu, and, as in *Lisao*, his search is futile.

During the Southern Qi dynasty Wang Rong poetically elaborated on the story of King Mu's encounter with the Queen Mother:

命駕瑤池隈 I command my harness to a cove of Azure-gem Pond,
過息嬴女臺 Far off I rest at the Terrace of the Comely Maiden.⁷⁷
長袖何靡靡 Long sleeves – such grace and beauty,
簫管清且哀 Flutes and pipes – both clear and sad.
璧門涼月舉 From the jade gates a cold moon rises,
珠殿秋風迴 In the pearl hall the autumn wind whirls.
青鳥驚高羽 The Azure bird surges on soaring wings,
王母停玉杯 The Queen Mother stops the jade goblet.
舉手暫為別 Raising hands, we part for now,
千年將復來 In a thousand years I will come again (*Youxian shi* III, Lu Qinli: 1398)⁷⁸

The encounter at the Azure-gem pond here takes the form of a lavish feast entrancing the guest with dance and music. The delicate splendour of the divine precincts is, however, contrasted with the images of the cold moon and the autumn wind – conventional metaphors for passing time - which draw a veil of melancholy air over the blissful scene. The sadness at the inevitable separation is mitigated by the promise of coming back expressed in the last two lines. The conclusion of the poem might be interpreted as a melancholy sigh at the impossibility of the fulfilment of the love between the goddess and the mortal. Another reading is also possible, however, especially in the light of the particular title of the poem - "Roaming into Immortality", *Youxian shi*. While King Mu had failed to attain immortality and return to his divine lover, Wang Rong's hero lives in the time-frame of the immortals, where a thousand years are but a brief parting. Regardless of which reading one would prefer, this poem demonstrates the interweaving of several poetic traditions: the *youxian* current, the ancient theme of the quest of the goddess and theme of the lonely woman, pining in her luxury boudoir for her absent lover, which was conventional in court culture.

⁷⁷ The Comely Maiden, Yingnü 嬴女, is the immortal Nong Yu 弄玉, whose story appears in *Liexian zhuan* 35. She was the daughter of Duke Mu 穆 of Qin 秦 (r. 659-621 BC), and wife of the immortal Flute Master, Xiao Shi 蕭史. She flew away together with her husband on the back of a pair of phoenixes (Wang Shumin 1995: 80 - 84; Kaltenmark 1987: 125-26).

⁷⁸ This poem from the cycle of five *Youxian shi* is also included in *Yuefu shiji* 64: 924 under the title *Shenxian pian* 神仙篇 ("Divine Immortals").

I.1.2. Laozi

Another god much venerated by the immortality seekers was Laozi. The inscription on Laozi, *Laozi ming* 老子銘 from 165 AD by the chancellor Bian Shao 邊韶, testifies to his deification and intimate association with the immortality arts at the end of Han.⁷⁹ In this inscription Laozi is praised as the central cosmic deity presiding over the universe. He was born as an emanation of the primordial energy, and descended to earth only to return as an immortal to Heaven. A hagiography of Laozi was also included in the *Liexian zhuan* 9, which recapitulates the information, provided by Sima Qian in *Shiji* 63.⁸⁰

Despite being associated with the immortality teachings, Laozi hardly appears at all in the subsequent *fu*, *yuefu* and *shi* poetry.⁸¹ On the other hand, he was praised in the Jin dynasty eulogies *song* and encomia *zan*. There are surviving panegyrics on Laozi by Qian Xiu (? - 305), Sun Chuo (fl. 330 - 365), and Guo Yuanzu (4th cent.), which are part of a larger series on the immortals from *Liexian zhuan*. A typical example is the encomium on Laozi written by Guo Yuanzi, which closely follows the earlier *Laozi zan* by Sun Chuo:

老子無為	Laozi practised non-activity,
而無不為	And nothing was left undone.
道一生死	His Way unites life and death,
跡入靈奇	His traces enter the numinous and wonderful.
塞兌內鏡	Blocking up the holes, internally mirroring,
冥神絕涯	Obscuring his spirit, he went across the margins.
德合元氣	His virtue merges with the primordial breath,
壽同兩儀	His longevity matches the Two Principles. (<i>Laozi zan</i> , Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1445)

In this encomium Guo Yuanzu reverts to the metaphysical Daoist terminology developed in sources like *Daode jing*, *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi*, and flourishing in the *xuanyan* discussions of his time. He employs concepts such as Dao, “non-activity” (*wuwei* 無為), “primordial breath” (*yuanqi* 元氣), and “two Principles” (*liangyi* 兩儀 [Heaven and Earth]). Moreover, his first two lines allude to the text of *Daode jing* ch. 3: “Acting through non-activity, nothing would be without control” (為無為，則無不治). This couplet also repeats almost verbatim Sima Tan’s 司馬談 characterisation of the Daoist school (*daojia* 道家) cited in the postface to the *Shiji*: “The Daoists [act through] non-activity, but also say that nothing is left undone” (道

⁷⁹ Yan Kejun vol. 2: 595-96. For a study of the text see Seidel 1969, where a translation is also provided (pp. 121- 128).

⁸⁰ Wang Shumin 1995: 18-20, tr. by Kaltenmark 1953: 60-65. For Sima Qian’s account see *Shiji* 63: 2139-2143, annotated translation in Nienhauser 1994, vol. VII: 21-23.

⁸¹ He is mentioned at one occasion by Xi Kang, who in his *Youxian shi* speaks of the Hanging Gardens of Kunlun, where “the ways of Laozi and the Yellow Emperor meet”.

家無為，又曰無不為) (*Shiji* 130: 3292). The “blocking up the holes” (*saidui* 塞兌) in l. 5 refers to *Daode jing* ch. 52, where one is advised to “block up the holes, shut up the doors! And until the end of life there will be no toil” (塞其兌，閉其門，終身不勤). Although written to accompany Laozi’s hagiography in *Liexian zhuan*, this encomium, and the similar panegyrics written before by Sun Chuo and Quan Xiu, has little to do with the popular features of immortality cult as reflected in *Liexian zhuan*, but draws directly on the ideas and terms of Daoist philosophical teachings.

Although Daoist religious traditions had transformed Laozi into a central cosmic deity by the 2nd century AD, no references to him as a Daoist god are to be found in the immortality verse during the subsequent centuries. Only towards the end of the Southern Dynasties does Laozi makes his appearance in the poetry on immortality in his deified form as Laojun 老君, Lord Lao:

玉山侯王母	At the Jade mountain call on the Queen Mother, ⁸²
珠庭謁老君	At the Pearl Courtyard pay a visit to Lord Lao. ⁸³ (Lu Sidao <i>Shengtian xing</i> , Lu Qinli: 2629)

In a manner typical for the 6th century “roaming into immortality”, Lu Sidao 盧思道 (535 – 586) pairs the novel (in this type of verse) figure of Lord Lao with the Queen Mother of the West - the time-honoured goddess of immortality.

I.1.3. The Yellow Emperor

From the middle of the second century BC the teachings of immortality were intimately associated with the name of the Yellow Emperor, Huangdi 黃帝 – the very first man believed to have become a *xian*-immortal.⁸⁴ Moreover, his triumphal rise to Heaven on a dragon’s back together with his whole entouragee, as described in *Shiji*, became the paragon of subsequent

⁸² The Jade mountain (Yushan 玉山), in the far west, is the residence of Xi Wangmu. See, for example, *Shanhai jing* 2 (Yuan Ke 1980: 50)

⁸³ The expression Zhuting 珠庭 (“pearl courtyard”) denotes the divine palaces of immortals. Pearls commonly figure in Daoist depictions of divine architecture. It is very likely that Zhuting figures here as a specific toponym. The phrase also occurs in Shen Yue’s *Liangfu yin* 梁甫吟 (“A Liangfu Chant”): “The Pearl courtyard cannot be reached” (珠庭不可臨). R. Mather 2003, vol. 1: 38 suggests that in Shen Yue’s poem the character *zhu* 珠 should be amended for *shu* 殊 (“special”). The Special Courtyard (Shuting 殊庭) is a palace of immortals on Penglai. On Shuting see also below, p. 235, n. 82.

⁸⁴ In *Hanshu. Yiwenzhi* of the ten works classified under the category School of Immortality (*shenxian jia* 神仙家) four bear the name of the Yellow Emperor (*Hanshu* 30.29a). His name is also associated with all the schools in which the *fangshi* were involved, such as the Daoist school (道家), the Yinyang school (陰陽家), the Schools of the Five Phases (五行家), of Divination (雜占家), of Medicine (醫經家), of Recipes (經方家) and of Sexual Techniques (房中家).

ascensions to immortality and was adopted almost without alteration into the *Liexian zhuan*.⁸⁵ This makes it rather surprising that his place in the early *youxian* verse does not match the importance that was attached to him in the religious cults. Although the Yellow Emperor is briefly mentioned in connection with immortality in the *Chuci Yuanyou* poem, in the subsequent Han rhapsodies *fu* he still appears in the traditional image of a sage sovereign of the past – inventing sacred music and leading mythical battles. Zhang Heng seems to be the first poet after *Yuanyou* to refer to the Yellow Emperor in the context of immortality. In his *Xijing fu* 西京賦 (“Rhapsody on the Western Metropolis”) he alludes to Huangdi’s ascension to heaven in connection with emperor Wu’s fruitless efforts to achieve eternal life and “to mount a dragon on Cauldron Lake” (想升龍於鼎湖), as Huangdi had done before (*Wenxuan* 2: 60). Only after the end of Han does the Yellow Emperor start to figure more often in poetry as an immortal, although never equaling in popularity immortals like Wangzi Qiao and Red Pine. In his poems on immortality Cao Zhi often turned to him as model for emulation. In the *Youxian shi* he expresses his wish to rise as an immortal from the Cauldron Lake like the Yellow Emperor did. In *Xianren pian* (“Immortals”) Cao Zhi describes how the Yellow Emperor lingers in the heavens, waiting for the poet to become immortal and join him as a companion. In *Quche pian* 驅車篇 (“Speeding My Carriage”) Cao Zhi describes at length Huangdi’s apotheosis into immortality:

軒皇元獨靈	But Xuan the August was the primary, unmatched numen. ⁸⁶
餐霞漱沆瀣	He partook of the aurora, rinsed his mouth with Drifting Flow ⁸⁷ ,
毛羽被身形	And fur and feathers then mantled the form of his body.
發舉蹈虛廓	Rising up and away, he trod the outskirts of emptiness;
徑庭升窈冥	Aloof and high he ascended to sequestered tenebrity.
同壽東父年	Equal in span of years to the Father in the East,
曠代永長生	He spends the ages now in perpetual prolongation of life.

(Lu Qinli: 435; based on the translation by Kroll 1983: 238 with slight alternations)

This is the first extended poetical description of the Yellow Emperor as a Daoist immortal. Cao Zhi departs from the Han tradition on the apotheosis of Huangdi as recorded in *Shiji* and *Liexian zhuan* and portrays the legendary ruler as an immortality adept who partakes of ethereal fare of auroras and cosmic essences (like the protagonist of *Yuanyou*, see below, ch. III.1.). While in the classical version of Huangdi’s legend his transition to the celestial realm

⁸⁵ *Shiji* 12: 465 and 28: 1394; Wang Shumin 1995: 9. It was probably at the court of emperor Wu of Han that the transformation of the Yellow Emperor from a legendary sage-king to a *xian* immortal took place. According to modern scholars the legend of the Yellow Emperor’s ascension to Heaven originated in the time of emperor Wu. See Yu Yingshi 1964-65: 104-05.

⁸⁶ The given name of Huangdi was Xuanyuan 軒轅 (*Shiji* 1.1). Medieval authors often respectfully altered it to Xuanhuang 軒皇, Xuan the August.

⁸⁷ Drifting Flow (*hangxie* 沆瀣) is the cosmic essence of the North and of midnight.

is always by means of a divine dragon, in Cao Zhi's poem he makes his final ascent totally unaided, carried by his own wings. He undergoes a bodily transformation into a winged and feathered being, becoming one of those "bird-immortals", whose images embellish late Han mirrors and tombs. Moreover, the place of his apotheosis is identified here not as the usual Mount Jing 荆山 in Henan, but as Mount Tai 泰山 – the sacred mountain of the East, abode of Daoist divinities and a place for *xian*-transformation in the post-Han poetry.

In the centuries after Cao Zhi the Yellow Emperor seldom appears in the *shi* and *fu* verse on immortality, being overshadowed by other immortal personalities. Like Laozi, he is more often encountered in eulogies *song* and encomia *zan* from the 4th century onwards. There are preserved eulogies on him by Cao Pi 曹毗 (4th cent.) [translated and discussed below, ch. IV.5., pp. 246-47] and Quan Xiu, and an encomium *zan* by Guo Yuanzu (within the cycle of encomia on *Liexian zhuan*). These compositions refer to the legend of Huangdi's ascent to heaven as described in *Shiji* and in *Liexian zhuan*, and additionally embellish the traditional account with some esoteric terminology and references to Daoist techniques current at the time.

An encomium *zan* by Yu Xin 庾信 (513 – 581) illustrates the new dimensions with which the figure of the Yellow Emperor was invested in the early medieval Daoist religion. Thematically it is devoted to the famous meeting between the Yellow Emperor and Guang Chengzi 廣成子⁸⁸ as described in *Zhuangzi* 11 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 379 – 384):

治身紫府	Ruling the body at the Purple Prefecture,
問政青丘	Inquiring about government at the Green Mound. ⁸⁹
龍湖鼎沒	At the Dragon lake the cauldron has disappeared,
丹灶珠流	In the cinnabar stove pearls flow.
疏雲即雨	Sparse clouds, nevertheless it rains,
落木先秋	The trees shed before the autumn. ⁹⁰
至道須極	The utmost Way should [first] be attained,

⁸⁸ Guang Chengzi has lived to the age of 1 200 years by closing himself to the outside world, thereby preventing the scattering of his vital energies. As a way to achieve ultimate immortality he postulates ecstatic merging with the Dao and expanding oneself to become the universe.

⁸⁹ The toponym Qingqiu 青丘 (Green Mound) has appeared in Sima Xiangru's *Zixu fu* 子虛賦 ("Rhapsody on Sir Vacuous"), as the name of a land in the Eastern Sea. In Daoist mythical geography it was identified with Zhangzhou 長洲, one of the ten paradise islands of immortality as described in *Shizhou jing*. The association between the Yellow emperor with the Green Mound is found in *Baopuzi* 18: "In the East the Yellow Emperor reached the Green Mound, and met the Sire of the Purple Prefecture (紫府先生, cf. the first line of Yu Xin's encomium, where Purple Prefecture is mentioned) and received the "Inner Writ of the Three Sovereigns" (*Sanhuang neiwen* 三皇內文), to control the ten thousand spirits" (Wang Ming 1985: 323).

⁹⁰ A paraphrase of the reply Guang Chengzi gave the Yellow Emperor at their first meeting: "Ever since you have been ruling the empire, it has rained before the clouds even gathered, the plants and trees have shed their leaves before they were even yellow, the light of sun and moon has got dimmer and dimmer. You of shallow fawner's heart, why should you deserve to be told about the utmost Way?" 自爾台天下，雲氣不待凝而雨，草木不待黃而落，日月之光益以荒矣，而妄人之心翫藏者，又奚足以語至道 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 380, tr. by Graham 1981: 177)

長生可求 Long life [then] can be pursued.
(*Huangdi jian Guang Chengzi zan*, Yan Kejun vol 9: 206)

In this encomium Yu Xin deliberately plays with the wording of the original account in *Zhuangzi* 11 and infuses it with the Daoist lore of the 6th century AD. He adopts many of *Zhuangzi*'s formulations - the instructions of Guang Chengzi had revolved around the notions of "ruling the body" (*zhishen* 治身), the attainment of the Utmost Way (*zhidao* 至道) and Long life (*changsheng* 長生). The third couplet of Yu Xin's encomium is even a paraphrase of Guang Chengzi's words as recorded in *Zhuangzi*. However, the images that in the original text were meant as a critique of the Yellow Emperor's government that had overturned all nature, here become transformed into a strange landscape pertaining to the numinous. In a similar way, the original meaning of *Zhuangzi*'s text is twisted and made ambiguous in almost every line of the encomium. On the one hand the first couplet refers through the expressions *zhishen* ("ruling the body") and *wenzheng* ("inquiring about government") to the Yellow Emperor's inquiry about the art of government and of ruling the body, as described in *Zhuangzi* 11, but through the toponyms Green Mound and Purple Prefecture Yu Xin also alludes to Huangdi's circuit of the world as described in *Baopuzi* 18 whereby he obtained the most sacred Daoist scriptures. The Green Mound is associated with the Yellow Emperor's reception of the *Sanhuang neiwen* 三皇內文 ("The Inner Writ of the Three Sovereigns") - one of the most powerful texts (or rather set of talismans) in early medieval Daoism.⁹¹ In addition, the cauldron, initially a symbol of the Heavenly Mandate, which according to the *Shiji* account the Yellow Emperor had cast before his heavenly ascent, here becomes associated with the art of alchemy. The "Cinnabar stove" (*danlu* 丹灶) in the next line is the stove of an alchemist, and the flowing pearl (*liuzhu* 流珠, inverted in this encomium) is a covert name for mercury, one of the major alchemical ingredients. The Yellow Emperor, who in *Zhuangzi*'s account had been initiated into Daoist mysticism and spiritual cultivation, is pictured in Yu Xin's encomium as an adept of religious Daoism, receiving celestial scriptures, and as a master of the arts of alchemy.

I.1.4. Wang Ziqiao, Chi Songzi and other immortals

⁹¹ For Ge Hong this text and its compliment *Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五岳真形圖 ("The Map of the True Form of the Five Sacred Mountains"), were the most powerful of all Daoist talismans (*Baopuzi* 19, Wang Ming 1985: 336).

More appealing to the poetic imagination than the high gods of the immortality teaching were the figures of mortal men from the distant or more recent past who had risen to the state of *xian*-immortals. Having once shared the human condition and, according to their legends, still appearing to mortals as initiators and instructors, they seemed much closer and approachable than the distant, transcendental deities. They, rather than the celestial divinities, embodied the ideal of perfected being and the possibility of “ascendance”, open to human beings. As the hero of *Yuanyou* puts it poignantly:

軒轅不可攀援兮 Xuan Yuan may not be caught up and equalled -
吾將從王喬而娛戲 I shall follow, then, Wang Qiao for my pleasure and amusement.
(ll. 53-54; *Chuci buzhu*: 166)

The immortals who appear in the *Yuanyou* are Chi Songzi 赤松子 (Master Red Pine), Wang Ziqiao 王子喬, Fu Yue 傅說, Han Zhong 韓眾 - all common figures in the Han and Wei poems on immortals to follow. Among them the figures of Wangzi Qiao and Chi Songzi, included in the *Liexian zhuan* enjoyed the greatest popularity. Chi Songzi was reputedly the Rain Master (Yushi 雨師) at the time of the mythical ruler Shennong 神農 (trad. dating 2838 - 2698 BC). He consumed a solution of jade and taught this diet to Shennong. He could enter fire and burn himself down and could ascend and descend on the wind and rain. He often travelled to Mount Kunlun where he resided in the stone chamber of the Queen Mother of the West.⁹² Wang Ziqiao (also known as Wang Jin 王晉 or Wang Zijin 王子晉) was the heir-apparent to King Ling 靈 of Chu (reg. 571-545 BC). Following a Daoist master, he retreated for thirty years into the Song 嵩 mountains (the central Marchmount). He played masterfully on the mouth organ (*sheng* 笙) and could imitate the call of the phoenix. At the end of his earthly sojourn he invited his family to witness his apotheosis on the mountain top, and ascended in broad daylight to Heaven, mounting a white crane.⁹³

There are no surviving records of the religious activities connected with the two immortals during the Former Han, but without doubt towards the end of the first century BC they became objects of both imperial and popular cults. The epigraphic evidence indicates that towards the end of the Later Han Wang Ziqiao was fervently venerated both by the common people and the imperial court. A stela inscription from 165 AD, attributed to Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133? - 192)⁹⁴, commemorates the unofficial and official ceremonies that took place

⁹² Wang Shumin 1995: 1; Kaltenmark 1987: 35-42.

⁹³ Wang Shumin 1995: 65; Kaltenmark 1987: 109-114.

⁹⁴ Cai Yong was considered to be the greatest of the early writers of stela inscriptions. Thirty inscriptions attributed to him are still extant (Yan Kejun vol. 2, *juan* 75-79) and two are even included in the *Wenxuan* 58: 2500 - 2507.

at Wang Ziqiao's family tomb north of the city of Meng 蒙 in Henan. In 137 AD he had appeared at his ancestors' tomb during the La 臘 festival of the twelve lunar month. After Wangzi Qiao's re-appearance, the tomb became the site of passionate religious activities:

"Thereupon those who took delight in the Dao came from distant places to assemble there. Some strummed zithers and sang of the Great One; others practised meditation to visit their Cinnabar Fields. Those who were sick or crippled and who silently bowed and prayed for good fortune were granted it straight away, but those who were lacking in respect were struck down immediately."⁹⁵

The emperor himself sent an envoy in 165 AD to offer a sacrifice and perform a ritual, and the stele was set up "to commemorate and glorify the great acts of the past and for the inspection of those men who have set their hearts on the Dao".⁹⁶

In the few pieces of the *Chuci* anthology which deal with the theme of immortality, Wang Ziqiao and Chi Songzi are evoked almost exclusively (*Xishi* [2nd cen. BC]; *Aishi ming* [mid. 2nd cent. BC]; Liu Xiang's *Yuanyou*). Likewise, they are often referred to in the Han rhapsodies *fu* (Zhang Heng's *Sixuan fu* and *Qibian* 七辯 ["Seven Arguments"]; Ban Biao's *Lanhai fu*) and whole poems are devoted to them (Huan Tan's *Wangxian fu* 望仙賦; several *yuefu* songs under the title *Wang Ziqiao*).

Besides this venerated pair of immortals from the distant past, historical figures from more recent times entered the poetry on immortals during the Han dynasty. These were famous *fangshi* magicians, believed to possess the arts of immortality, who were connected with the imperial pursuit of eternal life - Han Zhong, Xianmen Gao 羨門高, Zheng Boqiao 正伯僑, An Qi Sheng 安期生. With the exception of An Qi Sheng they were not included in *Liexian zhuan*, but they were often mentioned in the *Shiji*. Xianmen Gao and Zheng Boqiao were *fangshi* masters from the state of Yan 燕, who knew how to "break up, dissolve and transform their form".⁹⁷ It was Xianmen Gao who was later to be assiduously searched for on Penglai by the expeditions of Qin Shi Huangdi.⁹⁸ Han Zhong was one of the *fangshi* whom the First Emperor had sent to sea to look for the herb of immortality. Having "departed and never reported back", he was assumed to have found the herb and consumed it himself, thus becoming an immortal.⁹⁹ He is already evoked as an honoured immortal half a century later in the *Yuanyou* poem of *Chuci* (l. 30). In the *Zibei* 自悲 ("Oppressed by Grief") poem from the *Qijian* 七諫 ("Seven Remonstrances") cycle of *Chuci*, which dates from the 2nd century BC,

⁹⁵ Yan Kejun vol. 2: 706, translated by D. Holzman 1991.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*: 81.

⁹⁷ *Shiji* 28: 1368-69.

⁹⁸ *Shiji* 6: 251.

⁹⁹ He is mentioned twice in the *Shiji* 6, in the annals of Qin Shi Huangdi under the years 215 BC and 212 BC respectively (*Shiji*: 251 and 258).

Han Zhong assumes the role of the initiating master and instructs the hero on the Heaven's Dao (*Chuci buzhu*: 250). An Qi Sheng, according to modern scholars, was probably a *fangshi* of the 3rd century BC from the state of Qi 齊, who was versed in the Huang-Lao teachings as well.¹⁰⁰ In the time of Emperor Wu of Han he was raised to the status of a *xian* immortal by the *fangshi* from Qi, who were active at the imperial court. His name appears in the *Shiji* in connection with Han Wudi's expeditions in search of the Blessed Islands in the Eastern Sea.¹⁰¹ The hagiography of An Qi Sheng in *Liexian zhuan* 30, on the other hand, connects him with the immortality pursuits of the First Emperor of Qin.

Only a few of the 70 immortals included in the *Liexian zhuan* appear in the Han poetry; they are Master Red Pine, Wangzi Qiao, An Qi Sheng, Lingyang Ziming and Woquan. On the other hand, in the Han rhapsodies *fu* we found figures who do not appear in *Liexian zhuan* but whose cult was prominent at the Qin and Han imperial courts: Xianmen Gao, Zheng Boqiao and Han Zhong. Being renowned for their mastery of immortality arts, these *fangshi* had been elevated to the status of immortals themselves. It seems that the immortals who entered the poetry of the Han dynasty were above all figures with whom the court associated its pursuits of immortality and who were objects of imperial ceremonies and sacrifices.

Outside the Han court poetry another historical figure of the then recent past became popular – namely Liu An 劉安, the Prince of Huainan 淮南王 (died 122 BC), who was known as a great patron of *fangshi*. He had been forced to commit suicide after being accused of plotting a rebellion against the emperor Wu. After his death a legend arose that he had not really died but ascended to Heaven as an immortal. Allegedly he had been visited by eight immortals disguised as old men, who presented him with the drug of immortality. Not only he personally, but all his household “together with his dogs and cocks” were said to have followed him to Heaven as a result of consuming the rest of the immortality elixir.¹⁰² It is only natural that the rebellious Prince of Huainan should not be mentioned in the Han court poetry, but he is the immortal most often referred to in the anonymous *yuefu* songs from the late Han

¹⁰⁰ See Wen Yiduo 1997: 185-86, n. 12. In *Shiji* 80: 2436 the name of An Qi Sheng appears in a long lineage of masters and disciples involved in the transmission of the Huang-Lao teachings – An Qi is the disciple of the patriarch of this school, Heshang Zhangfu 河上丈夫 (identified as Heshang gong 河上公 [River-Dwelling Sire] - the author of the first extant, “religious” commentary to *Daode jing*). Furthermore, according to the 3rd century *Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳 (“Biographies of Eminent Masters”) 2/10b by Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215 – 282) the River-Dwelling Elder (Heshang zhangren 河上丈人) transmitted his work to Master An Qi and thus became a progenitor of the Daoist lineage, *daojia zhi zong* 道家之宗 (cited in Campany 2002: 307).

¹⁰¹ *Shiji* 12: 455.

¹⁰² Forke 1907, vol. I: 335; Ying Shao 應劭 (ca. 120 - ca. 206) *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 (“Comprehensive Meaning of Customs”) 2.15b-16a.

period (*Huainan wang* 淮南王 ["The Prince of Huainan"], *Bagong cao* 八公操 ["The Tune of the Eight Sires"], *Shanzai xing* 善哉行 ["How wonderful!"]).

In the *Chuci* anthology and in the Han rhapsodies *fu* (*Daren fu*, *Sixuan fu*) the *xian* immortals appear side by side with the older pantheon of mythical emperors and ancient deities of directions and natural phenomena. For example, in the *Daren fu* the emperor is accompanied both by immortals like Ling Yangzi, Zhan Boqiao and Xianmen Gao and by ancient deities like the Lords of the Five Directions (Wu Di 五帝), the Grand Unity (Tai Yi 大壹), Xuanming 玄冥 (attendant spirit of the god of the north and director of water), Qianlei 黔雷 (according to the commentators a "creator spirit"), Zhurong 祝融 (fire god and guardian spirit of the south) and many others. However, in the course of the Han dynasty gods from the ancient mythical lore gradually disappear from among the immortals. Thus in the *Lanhai fu*, which continues the *Chuci itineraria* tradition, Ban Biao refers only to immortal figures – Wang Qiao and Master Red Pine, Han Zhong, Qipo and Xi Wangmu, pictured as queen of the immortals.

The emancipation of the immortal personages is most obvious in the Han *yuefu* songs that deal with the theme of immortality – only immortal personages like the Prince of Huainan or Master Red Pine are mentioned in them. Moreover, in the Later Han whole poems – both rhapsodies *fu* and *yuefu* songs – start to be dedicated to a particular immortal (*Wangxian fu*, *Huainan wang*, *Wangzi Qiao*). In the post-Han poetry on immortals the ancient deities connected with natural phenomena and spatial directions recede, and only occasional imitations of *Yuanyou* exhibit the Han syncretic tendency.¹⁰³

I.1.5. Transformations of the pantheon

Not only were the immortals gradually parting company with the ancient gods, but more and more deities of antiquity were re-interpreted by the post-Han poets and transformed into immortal figures. The poetry here reflects the ongoing process in the religious thought of the period, in the course of which the Yellow Emperor and the Queen Mother of the West had early come to be perceived as immortals. One good illustration of the post-Han reinterpretation of ancient mythology is the commentary of Guo Pu on *Shanhai jing*, which transforms archaic mythical images into immortality cult lore. Guo Pu also wrote a set of encomia on the illustrations of *Shanhai jing* (*Shanhai jing tu zan* 山海經圖贊), which closely

¹⁰³ An illustrative example of this anachronistic current is Zhi Yu's 摯虞 *Siyou fu* 思遊賦 ("Rhapsody on Pondering a Journey").

follow his own commentary and which reflect the new perception of the ancient myths. The encomium on Lu Wu 陸吾 is an excellent instance of the flexibility with which ancient, zoomorphic deities could be transformed into *xian* immortals:

肩吾得一	Jian Wu attained the One,
以處崑崙	And abides on Kunlun.
開明是對	He faces the Opener of Light [Kaiming],
司帝之門	And presides over the Gates of the Lord.
吐納靈氣	Exhaling and inhaling numinous breath,
熊熊魂魂	Dazzling, dazzling, blazing, blazing. (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1248)

According to *Shanhai jing* 2 the deity Lu Wu has a tiger body with nine tails, a human face and tiger claws. He presides over Kunlun and manages the Nine Heavenly regions and the Garden of the Seasons of the Lord.¹⁰⁴ In his commentary Guo Pu, however, identifies Lu Wu with Jian Wu 肩吾, who appears several times in *Zhuangzi* as a friend of Jie Yu 接輿, the madman of Chu (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 26-27, 289-291). He draws a passage from *Zhuangzi* ch. 6 which says of Jian Wu that "Jian Wu attained it [the Way] and abides on Taishan" 肩吾得之[道], 以處太山 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 247). The opening two lines of Guo Pu's encomium refer to this very sentence from *Zhuangzi* – replacing only Taishan with Kunlun so as to conform to the text of *Shanhai jing*. Having transformed Lu Wu into an immortal, Guo Pu moreover pictures him engaged in the breathing practices of the immortality adepts.

In the post-Han poetry the process of re-evaluation of some ancient deities is especially obvious in the figures of the female companions of the immortals, who serve and entertain them with music and dance at the divine banquets. This was how the ancient goddess of river Xiang – Xiang E 湘娥 (Xiang Beauty) – was transformed from a shamanistic female deity into an immortal woman accompanying the immortals in their feasts.¹⁰⁵ In the *Yuanyou* she, together with Fu Fei 宓妃 – the goddess of the Luo 洛 River – entertains the hero during the last stage of his cosmic circuit. In the post-Han poetry she appears in a similar context as a female attendant but the scenes in which she takes part are feasts of immortals. In the *Xianren* 仙人 ("Immortals") poem by Cao Zhi she, together with the female immortal Nong Yu 弄玉¹⁰⁶, entertains the gathered immortals on the slopes of Mount Tai. In Zhang Hua's *Youxian shi*

¹⁰⁴ Yuan Ke 1980: 47.

¹⁰⁵ One of the two daughters of the mythical ruler Yao 堯 (trad. dating 2333 – 2234 BC) and a wife of Shun 舜 (trad. dating 2233-2184 BC), she drowned together with her sister in the Xiang river after Shun's death, and the two become river divinities. One of the hymns of the *Jiuge* cycle of *Chuci* – *Xiangjun* 湘君 – is presumably devoted to her.

¹⁰⁶ On Nong Yu see above, n. 13.

II she appears in a banquet scene at the palace of the Queen Mother of the West, performing music with the two nymphs of the Han 漢 river to the gathered immortals.

Another example is the transformation of the ancient moon goddess Heng E 姮娥. According to one of the first extant versions of her legend, Heng E (also known as Chang E 常娥) was the wife of the archer Yi 羿, the mythical hero who shot down the nine suns. After the archer Yi obtained the elixir of immortality from the Queen Mother of the West, Heng E stole it and fled to the moon, where she turned into a toad and became the spirit of the moon.¹⁰⁷ In the post-Han legends, however, she figures as an immortal. Thus, the commentary of Gao You 高誘 (3rd century AD) to *Huainanzi* 6 explains:

“Heng E is the wife of archer Yi. Yi requested the elixir of immortality from the Queen Mother of the West. However, before he could eat it, Heng E stole it and consumed it by herself. She attained immortality (*dexian* 得仙) and fled to the moon where she became the moon essence (*yuejing* 月精).” (Liu Wendian 1923: 217)

In Xi Kang’s poetry Heng E even becomes the immortal who bestows the drug of immortality upon the hero (*Wuyan shi* 五言詩 “Five-syllable poems” III). In *Youxian shi* VI Guo Pu pictures her as a beautiful immortal lady dwelling on Penglai and participating in a divine concert there.

In the course of the Han dynasty and especially in the subsequent centuries an increasingly large number of immortal personages appear in poetry. While in the *Yuanyou* poem of *Chuci* only Wang Ziqiao, Master Red Pine, Fu Yue and Han Zhong are mentioned, soon afterwards Sima Xiangru refers to immortals associated with Emperor Wu’s pursuit of immortality – Zheng Boqiao, Xiamen Gao, Lingyang Ziming. The immortals who appear in the poetry of the third and fourth century AD are mostly personages whose biographies are included in the *Liexian zhuan* - the Flute Master (Xiaoshi), Master Floating Hill (Fu Qiu 浮邱), Qiong Shu 邛疏, Ning Fengzi 甯封子, and Qin Gao 琴高. Moreover, when referring to them the poets often closely follow the recorded version of their hagiographies. The inspiration which the legends from the *Liexian zhuan* provided to the Jin poets is probably most evident in the series of ten *Youxian shi* by Yu Chan 庾闡 (286-339).

邛疏鍊石髓 Qiong Shu smelts stone marrow,

¹⁰⁷ *Huainanzi* 6, Liu Wendian 1923: 217. The transformation of Chang E into a toad is found in a citation from *Huainanzi*, missing in the present version of the text but preserved in *Chuxue ji* 初學記 1. The mythology of the moon goddess Chang E goes back to deep antiquity, the legend found in *Huainanzi* being relatively a late version. Apparently the image of Chang E developed from a more ancient myth in which she (under the variant name Chang Xi 常羲) figures as the mother of the twelve moons. She had been a counterpart to the mother of the ten suns Xihe 羲和, both being wives of the god Dijun 帝俊, the progenitor of the Shang 商. Gradually, as the god Dijun lost on importance in the Chinese pantheon, Chang E became the wife of the archer Yi, and from her initial position as mother of the moon, she was transformed into an inhabitant and spirit of the moon. See Allan 1991: 33-34.

赤松漱水玉 Red Pine rinses his mouth with liquid jade.
憑煙眇封子 Master Feng is glimpsed amid thick smoke,
流浪揮玄俗 Xuan Su soars through the surging waves.¹⁰⁸ (*Youxian shi* III, Lu Qinli: 875)

Liexian zhuan says of Qiong Shu that he could circulate his breath-*qi* and smelt his form (*lianxing* 鍊形), and that he was boiling and consuming "stone marrow" (*shisui* 石髓 [stalagmites]) and called it 'stone-bell milk' (*shizhong fu* 石鍾乳). The "liquid jade" (or "water jade", *shuiyu* 水玉), with which Red Pine rinses his mouth, is also one of the specific attributes of Red Pine in the *Liexian zhuan* – this is his special fare of immortality. Yu Chan also speaks of the self-combustion of the immortal Ning Fengzi, as described in the *Liexian zhuan*: "Ning Fengzi was gathering fire and burning himself and he ascended and descended along the smoke. When one looked at the ashes, only the bones were left among them" (Wang Shumin 1995: 4). The immortals Red Pine and Ning Fengzi also appear in the sixth poem of the cycle, where they are once again depicted according to the *Liexian zhuan* legend:

赤松遊霞乘煙 Red Pine travels on clouds and rides on mist,
封子鍊骨凌仙 Master Feng smelts his bones and rises as an immortal. (*ibid.*)

Yu Chan again refers to Ning Fengzi's "smelting" (*lian* 鍊) or refining his bones through fire. In the case of Red Pine he chooses another specific detail of his hagiography – his ability to ascend and descend on the wind and rain. In the fourth poem of the cycle Yu Chan focuses on the miraculous mounts of the immortals Ling Yangzi Ming and Qin Gao, again as described in the *Liexian zhuan*:

白龍騰子明 A white dragon bore Master Ming on high,
朱麟運琴高 Crimson scales carried off Qin Gao. (*ibid.*)

It was on the back of the white dragon, which he had caught in the waters of the Xuan 旋 river and then released, that Ling Yangzi Ming ascended to Heaven.¹⁰⁹ The "crimson scales" denote the crimson carp, on the back of which, according to the hagiography, Qin Gao appeared in front of his disciples.¹¹⁰

The acclaim enjoyed by the *Liexian zhuan* during the third and fourth centuries is also attested by the eulogies *song* and encomia *zan* on various immortals. The immortal personages from the *Liexian zhuan* were especially favoured objects of praise – Sun Chuo wrote a series of encomia *zan* on *Liexian zhuan*, from which only those on Shang Qiuqi 商丘子 (otherwise not attested in the *shi* and *fu* poetry) and on Laozi survive. Another series of

¹⁰⁸ Xuan Su 玄俗 was a Han dynasty *fangshi* who specialised in the concoction of herbal medicines which he sold in the market places. His hagiography is also found in *Liexian zhuan* 70. See Wang Shumin 1995: 165; Kaltenmark 1953: 191-193.

¹⁰⁹ Wang Shumin 1995: 158-160, Kaltenmark 1953: 183-187.

¹¹⁰ Wang Shumin 1995: 60-62, Kaltenmark 1953: 104-107.

encomia on each of the immortals from *Liexian zhuan*, seventy in total, was written by Guo Yuanzu. These (with the exception of the encomia on Laozi and the Yellow Emperor) are verse elaborations of existing hagiographies of the immortals, closely following the already existing prose accounts of their lives. They are therefore much more concrete, richer in anecdotal details and generally lacking the abstract Daoist air often encountered in the Jin eulogies.

While the post-Han poets generally drew on legends recorded in Han prose sources such as *Liexian zhuan* and *Shiji*, from the end of the fourth century the poets turned to more contemporary accounts of extraordinary phenomena like *Bowu zhi*, *Shenxian zhuan*, *Baopuzi*, and *Soushen ji*. During the Southern Dynasties the immortals, who had become popular in the fourth century prose sources, overshadowed the older, Han personages. Thus Zhang Zhengjian 張正見 (6th cent.) in his *Shenxian pian* 神仙篇 (“Divine Immortals”) alludes to Fei Changfang 費長房 (appears in *Shenxian zhuan*, *Houhan shu*, *Baopuzi*, *Soushen ji*) and Feng Junda 封君達 (mentioned in *Bowu zhi*, *Houhan shu*, *Han Wudi neizhuan*). In his *youxian* poems Yu Xin 庾信 (513 - 581) enumerates immortals from the *Shenxian zhuan* like Chen Anshi 陳安世 and Li Yiqi 李意期, and refers to the figures of Master White Stone, Baishi xiansheng 白石先生 (appears in *Shenxian zhuan* and *Baopuzi*), Wang Lie 王烈 (hagiography in *Shenxian zhuan*), Yin Gui 尹軌 (hagiography in *Shenxian zhuan*). Sometimes a well-known immortal from antiquity is referred to through legendary element recorded no earlier than in the fourth century. Thus, when Yin Keng 陰鏗 (d. ca. 565) alluded to Wangzi Qiao, he chose not the *Liexian zhuan* account, but a much later elaboration of his legend:

聊持履成燕 Changing for amusement sandals into swallows,
戲以石為羊 Transforming, in a play, stones into sheep...
(*Fuyong de shenxian shi* 賦咏得神仙詩; Lu Qinli: 2456)

The story of Wangzi Qiao’s sandals flying away as swallows is not found in *Liexian zhuan* but appears in the fourth century in the *Soushen ji* (1.9 and 1.17). The transformation of stones into sheep is, on the other hand, an allusion to the immortal Huang Chuping 皇初平 from *Shenxian zhuan* – he used to transform the sheep he was tending into stones so as not to be disturbed in his study of the Dao.¹¹¹

The “roaming into immortality” verse of the third and fourth century draws on accounts on immortals as recorded in Han dynasty prose sources. The Southern Dynasties poets turn away from the Han dynasty accounts and employ 4th century sources instead. The fact that the

¹¹¹ Campany 2002: 309.

new immortals and some novel developments of older legends enter poetry only a century or two after being set down in prose suggests that a continuing oral tradition did not serve as an immediate source for the poets - instead they drew their information “second-hand” from the literary codification of the popular lore.

The poetry of the Southern Dynasties exhibits a close link not only with the fourth-century records of the supernatural, but also with the revealed Supreme Purity scriptures. For example, Liang Wudi (464 – 549) devoted the second poem of his *Shangyun yue* 上雲樂 (“Music of the Supreme Clouds”) cycle to Wangzi Qiao, but referred to the ancient immortal not by name, as in the preceding poetry, but by his new, Shangqing title – the True One of the Pawlonia-Cypress Mountain (Tongbo zhenren 桐柏真人).¹¹²

With the flourishing of the Daoist religion during the Southern Dynasties more and more contemporary Daoist masters and recluses, believed to have achieved immortality, came to be praised in eulogies and encomia. Two eulogies on the Daoist recluse Shan Daokai 單道開 (d. after 359), whose biography is found in *Xuanpin lu* 玄品錄 (compiled 1335)¹¹³ are good examples. After his death his body was found uncorrupted in his cave on the Luofu mountains, which is why he was considered to have become an immortal, liberated from the corpse. Very soon after his death he was celebrated as an immortal in encomia *zan* by Yuan Hong 袁宏 (328-376)¹¹⁴ and by Kang Hong 康泓 (4th cent.).

Another Daoist master praised as an immortal was Chu Boyu 褚柏玉 (394-479) from the Qi dynasty, to whom a stele inscription was dedicated.¹¹⁵ It was written by his disciple, the

¹¹² *Zhengao* 1.2b gives his full title as “Wangzi Qiao, Attendant at Divine Rulers’ Dawn, Director of the Five Marchmounts, Regal Commander, Right Straightener, True One of Mt. Tongbo” 桐柏真人右弼王領五嶽司侍帝晨王子喬. Located in the Henan province, Mt. Tongbo in Supreme Purity lore was believed to contain the Golden Court Palace (Jinting gong 金庭宮) and was described as “a blessed frontier for nourishing Truth; a numinous mound for bringing the spirit(s) to completion” 養真之福境 成神之靈墟 (*Zhen’gao* 11.5b)

¹¹³ Shan Daokai was originally from Dunhuang and led a reclusive life in the mountains. He is famous for his dispute with the Buddhist monk Fotucheng 佛圖澄, during which the Buddhist master recognised his wisdom. After 359 Shan Daokai withdrew to the Luofu mountains near Canton and departed as an immortal when he was over a hundred years old. (*Daojiao dacidian*: 689; see also Bumbacher 2000: 416-420). His biography is also included in Buddhist disguise in the “Biographies of Eminent Monks” (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 9.387b) from the first half of the 6th century.

¹¹⁴ Known as a historian above all, having edited the “Records of the Latter Han” (*Hou Han ji* 後漢記).

¹¹⁵ His official biography is found in *Songshu* 93.2296, *Nan Qi shi* 926-7 and *Nan shi* 75.1873-4. More information on his life is provided by *Daoxue zhuan*, fragments 71-74 (Bumbacher 2000: 199-204). Chu Boyu lived in reclusion on mountain Pubu 瀑布 (present-day Shengxian in Zhejiang) for more than thirty years, cultivating the Dao and nourishing his life. He had also played a role in the transmission of the Maoshan manuscripts that had been in possession of the Xu family. When the emperor Gaodi 高帝 of Qi (reigned 479-482) ascended the throne he wanted to grant Boyu an audience and welcome him to the capital with courtesy and presents, but Boyu declined on the grounds that he was sick. Shortly afterwards he passed away, and the grieving emperor ordered the Monastery of the Great Peace (Taiping guan 太平館)

calligrapher Kong Zhigui 孔稚珪 (447-501).¹¹⁶ In the prose section of the epitaph he puts his master on a par with the famous immortals of antiquity like Wangzi Qiao, depicts him as sprouting wings, and in the concluding inscription *ming* 銘 celebrates him as a Daoist immortal who has achieved unity with the Supreme Obscurity (*Shangxuan* 上玄) and with the Grand Creation (*taizao* 太造).

The death of Tao Hongjing, the foremost Daoist master of the period, was commemorated in at least three steles attributed to members of the imperial family of the Liang dynasty.¹¹⁷ All of these epitaphs end with inscriptions *ming* on Tao Hongjing, where he is praised as a *xian* immortal. Earlier on, Shen Yue – an ardent admirer of Tao Hongjing, had addressed to his Daoist friend a number of *shi* poems rich in immortality lore (“Master Tao of Huayang Has Climbed his Loft Never to Come Down Again”, *Huayang Tao xiansheng denglou bufu xia* 華陽陶先生登樓不復下; “Respectfully Offered to [General of] Outer Troops Wang of Huayang”, *Feng Huayang wang waibing shi* 奉華陽王外兵詩, etc.). In these Tao Hongjing is celebrated as a heavenly immortal who ascends the sky in a cloud chariot, and who “descries in the distance the trees on the Azure Mound, and looking back beholds the sun on the Fusang tree” 眇識青丘樹, 迴見扶桑日 (Lu Qinli: 1638). This seems to be a more general approach in the poetic exchange with Daoist masters. Another of the poets from the literary circle of the Prince of Jingling, Fan Yun 范雲 (461 - 503), in a *shi* poem written as an answer to Tao Hongjing (*Da Juqu Tao xiansheng shi* 答句曲陶先生詩), in a similar vein depicts him as one of the True Ones (*zhenshi* 真士), who ascends the sky and roams on the Milky Way (translated below, I.6., pp. 106-107).

to be established at the foot of mount Pubu, in honour of Chu Boyu. The stele, whose inscription is partly preserved in *Yiwen leiji* 37.659 was erected at the side of this monastery.

¹¹⁶ *Nan Qi shi* 54.927: “Kong Zhigui followed him [Chu Boyu] and received the laws of the Dao”. Kong Zhigui was son of Kong Lingchan 孔靈產, who figures among the famous Daoists in *Daoxue zhuan* (fragments 161-65; Bumbacher 2000: 275-79). Kong Zhigui led Daoist discussions with Gu Huan 顧歡 [420 - 483] (*Nanshi* 75.1875) and also wrote a biography of the famous Daoist Lu Xiuqing, *Lu xiansheng zhuan* 陸先生傳 in one *juan* (*Suishu* 33.979). He is renowned above all as a master of parallel prose.

¹¹⁷ These are: *Huayang Tao xiansheng muzhi ming* 華陽陶先生墓志銘, also known as *Huayang yinju mu ming bei* 華陽隱居墓銘碑 by Liang Jianwendi (sometimes wrongly attributed to Xiao Tong, Heir Apparent Zhaoming of the Liang): *Yiwen leiji* 37, *Maoshan zhi* 21.10a, Yan Kejun vol. 7: 144; *Yinju xiansheng Tao Hongjing bei* 隱居先生陶弘景碑 by Liang Yuandi 梁元帝 (508 - 555): *Yiwen leiji* 37, Yan Kejun vol. 7: 194; *Yinju zhenbai xiansheng Taojun bei* 隱居貞白先生陶弘景碑 (also known as *Liang jie zhen zhong san dafu Zhenbai xiansheng Tao Yinju bei ming* 梁解真中散大夫貞白先生陶隱居碑銘) by Xiao Lun 蕭綸, Prince of Shaoling 邵陵王 (507? - 551): *Maoshan zhi* 21.5a-10a, *Yiwen leiji* 37, *Wenyuan yinghua* 873, Yan Kejun vol. 7: 237-239.

I. 2. Images of the Immortals in Poetry

The immortal personages described above appear in poetry as objects of quest and of praise, as models for emulation, as venerable instructors and bestowers of sacred drugs and scriptures. The accounts of their nature, activities and attributes generally exhibit an interweaving of several different traditions: *Chuci* imagery, Daoist ideas as developed in *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi*, popular immortality lore and religious and esoteric practices of the time. The emphasis might change with time, genre and author, and new religious concepts were constantly absorbed into the poetry, but the overlapping of these elements can be discerned in all verses under discussion.

I.2.1. The nature of the *xian*-immortals in early immortality verse

One of the earliest poetic accounts of immortals is contained in the *Yuanyou* 遠遊 (“Distant Journey”) poem of the *Chuci* anthology, a composition which dates back to the second half of the 2nd century BC. The poem commences, in typical *Chuci* manner, with a long lament over the restrictions of the human life, after which the poet recollects famous immortals of past ages. He honours their wondrous powers, and presents them as an alternative to mortal existence:

貴真人之休德兮	I honoured the perfected power of the True Ones,
美往世之登仙	And those of past ages who had ascended to immortality
化去而不見兮	They departed in the flux of change and vanished from men's sight,
名聲著而日延	Leaving a famous name that endures after them.
奇傳說之託辰星兮	I marveled how Fu Yue lived on a star;
羨韓眾之得一	I admired Han Zhong for attaining Oneness.
形穆穆以浸遠兮	Their forms grew dim and faded in the distance;
離人群而遁逸	They left the human crowd behind and withdrew themselves.
因氣變而遂曾舉兮	Adapting to the breaths's transformations they rose upwards,
忽神奔而鬼怪	With godlike swiftness miraculously moving.
時髣髴以遙見兮	Sometimes men see them, in remote, uncertain glimpses,
精皎皎以往來	As their bright essences dart across the sky.
絕氛埃而淑尤兮	Leaving the dust behind they shed their impurities,
終不反其故都	Never to return again to their old homes.
免眾患而不懼兮	Escaping all life's troubles they had no more need to fear them:
世莫知其所如	But no one in the world knows where they went to.”

(*Chuci buzhu*: 164-165; translation based on Hawkes 1985 with slight alternations)

The term for perfected immortals used here is *zhenren* 真人, True Ones or Real Ones.¹¹⁸ The opposite of *zhen* is *jia* 假 (false, fabricated, borrowed), and the term *zhen* thus suggests that this perfected state was the original state of humanity before it turned away from the Dao. The expression *zhenren* goes back to *Zhuangzi*, where it is employed as the ideal of human personality (especially in ch. 6, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 226 - 235). The description of the immortals also resembles the True Men, Divine Men (*shenren* 神人), or Accomplished Men (*zhiren* 至人), as depicted in *Zhuangzi*. It centres upon such qualities as purity, etherialisation of the physical body, attainment of the Dao, ultimate freedom and unrestrained flight through space. The True Ones have disengaged themselves from the human throng, withdrawn themselves and are no longer bound by any of the concerns of this world. Becoming pure radiance, they flit through the sky like heavenly divinities. According to Yu Yingshi the *Yuanyou* poem presents one of the finest descriptions of the otherworldly qualities of the *xian* personality and is evidence for the transcendental nature of the *xian* immortals in pre-Han and early Han times.¹¹⁹

After *Yuanyou* the first extensive poetic description of immortals is to be found in the *Wangxian fu* 望仙賦 (“Rhapsody on Looking at the Immortals”) by Huan Tan 桓譚 (ca. 43 BC - 28 AD).¹²⁰ This small rhapsody was written probably in 14 or 13 BC on the occasion of a great procession to the Ganquan 甘泉 (Sweet Springs) Palace, organised by the emperor Cheng 成 (r. 32 – 7 BC).¹²¹ Prompted by his desire to be blessed with an heir, the emperor Cheng imitated the procession and sacrifices performed by his great predecessor emperor Wu of Han at Ganquan in 125 BC. On this occasion the emperor Cheng remembered the “assembled immortals like Wang Qiao and Chi Songzi”, naming a hall as the “[Hall of] Present Immortals” (*Cunxian* 存仙). Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BC – 18 AD) and Huan Tan, who both participated in the ceremonies, presented rhapsodies *fu* on the event. Huan Tan’s composition is solely devoted to the praise of two popular immortals, Wangzi Qiao and Chi

¹¹⁸ In western works on Daoism there are alternative renditions of *zhenren* as “Perfected ones” (or “Perfected persons”, “the Perfected”) and “Realised ones” (“Realised Persons”, “the Realised”). These expressions, although easier to use in literary translations, can be misleading in relation to the real connotations of the term *zhenren*. As S. Bokenkamp 1997: 27, n. 30 points out, “the Realised” carries with it the connotations of mental realisation, whereas Daoist perfection is always both mental and physical. The Perfected, on the other hand, fails to convey the idea that the perfection attained is, in fact, a return to the original state of unity with the Dao.

¹¹⁹ Yu Yingshi 1964-65: 92.

¹²⁰ The text is contained in two seventh century encyclopaedias - *Yiwen leiju* 78.16b and *Beitang shuchao* 102.4a. An English translation is provided by Pokora 1960.

¹²¹ For the problems connected with the dating of this particular procession see Pokora 1960: 359 – 360.

Songzi. He states his purpose in the preface: “I wrote on the wall a small rhapsody *fu* to eulogise and praise (*songmei* 頌美)”. It reads:

<p>夫王喬赤松 呼□□則出故 翁則納新 夭矯經引 積氣關元 精神周洽 高塞流通 乘凌虛無 洞達幽明 諸物皆見 玉女在旁 仙道既成 神靈攸迎 乃驂駕青龍赤騰 為歷踏玄厲之擢嶸 有似乎鸞鳳之翔飛 集乎膠葛之宇， 泰山之臺， 吸玉液，食華芝 漱玉漿，飲金醪 出宇宙，與雲浮 洒輕霧，濟傾崖 觀倉川而升天門 馳白鹿而從麒麟 周覽八極 還崦華壇 汜汜乎濛濛 隨天轉璇，容容無為 壽極乾坤</p>	<p>□ Oh, Wang Qiao and Chi Song! You have exhaled and got rid of the old [breath], You contracted and entered the fresh [breath] into you; You stretched your bodies, pulling your arteries, Amassed the breath and conserved the original. Your essence and spirit united and harmonised, Reached through every hindrance, flowing and penetrating.¹²² You mounted and skimmed the empty void, And penetrated both the obscure and the bright. Everything was visible for you, The Jade Woman waited upon you.¹²³ When now your road to immortality was accomplished, You were welcomed by spiritual and divine beings. Now you mounted a vehicle with harnessed azure dragons and red horses, And came over the big and sharp black stone. Soaring up, your flight resembled that of the female and male phoenix, And you assembled in the realm of the purest vapour, At the terrace of Taishan.¹²⁴ You inhaled the jade juice and ate the efflorescent mushroom, You rinsed your mouth with jade liquors and drank the wine of gold. You left the universe and floated together with the clouds, Sprinkling light mists you crossed over sloping cliffs. Looking on the vast streams you rose to the Gate of Heaven, Riding on white deer you accompanied the unicorns. Everywhere you inspected the eight extremities, And returned to the splendour altar of the (sun setting) mount Yan. Oh, how unsettled you were, how overflowing! Together with Heaven you revolved and came back enjoying your inactivity. Your longevity reaches that of Heaven and Earth.</p>
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(*Quan Han fu*: 248; translation based on Pokora 1960: 363-64 with slight alterations)

¹²² According to the *Neiye* 內業 (“Inward Training”) chapter (4th cent. BC) of the *Guanzi* treatise, the essence *jing* 精 is a highly concentrated form of the vital breath *qi*, residing in the heart: “The essence *jing* is the essence of the breath *qi*” (精也者，氣之精也). The essence *jing* is not permanently linked with the body – it settles there if the heart-mind (*xin* 心) is calm and pure, but when the mind is disturbed, it cannot abide there and leaves the body. The spirit *shen* 神 is the spiritual, numinous power within the heart-mind. It is the basic conscious power within man, the deepest level of consciousness. For a discussion of the concepts of *qi*, *jing* and *shen* see Roth 1996: 123 - 128.

¹²³ A Daoist deity, presumably identical to the Hairy Maiden (Maonü 毛女) from *Lixian zhuan* 54 (commentary of Li Shan to *Wenxuan* 15.5b) The Hairy Maiden was once a palace lady of Qin Shi Huangdi. After the fall of the Qin dynasty she fled to the mountains where, feeding on pine needles, she prolonged her life. Her sobriquet was Jade Lady, Yu Jiang 玉姜. Very probably the Jade Woman was a goddess of mountain Hua 華.

¹²⁴ The expression *jiaoge* 膠葛 is often used as an alliterative binome by the *fu* poets. Commentators see in the binome the sense of wild, unrestrained and confused movement (*Yuanyou*; *Daren fu*). Other meanings are “vast, stretching in the distance” (*Shanglin fu*) and “cloud vapour, lightly floating upwards” (Yang Xiong’s *Jiehan*). On the other hand, Pokora speculates that in Huan Tan’s *fu* the two characters might denote Mount Jiao in Shandong and Mountain Gexian in Zhejiang, the latter being famous as a centre of immortals.

This is the earliest preserved rhapsody dedicated solely to legendary immortals - Wangzi Qiao and Chi Songzi, without including any of the older nature deities like the poems of the *Chuci* tradition. It is significant that the description of the two immortals differs greatly from their hagiographies as recorded in the somewhat later *Liexian zhuan*. There are no anecdotal details of their life, nor any of the popular visual imagery, as in the late Han *yuefu* songs. Huan Tan instead reflects on the spiritual aspects of the *xian*-immortality - withdrawal from the world, purity, simplicity and return to the Dao, unrestrained flight through the cosmos – the same features that had been celebrated in the *Yuanyou*. At the beginning the poet describes a system of gymnastics, breathing exercises and spiritual cultivation (harmonising the essence and the spirit), connected with Wangzi Qiao and Red Pine. The expelling of the old and the inhaling of the new breath-*qi* (*chugu naxin* 出故納新) is a method of breath cultivation referred to in *Zhuangzi* 15 and in *Huainanzi* (especially ch. 11 and 20). It seems that the early *xian* cult attributed its macrobiotic and respiratory traditions to Wangzi Qiao and Red Pine.¹²⁵ Two important passages in *Huainanzi* evoke them as masters in breath cultivation and as embodiment of the ideal of *xian*-immortality:

“Wangzi Qiao and Chi Songzi exhaled and inhaled, spat out the old [breath] and took in the new, they abandoned their bodily form and discarded wisdom, embraced pristinity and returned to the true. They travelled through the distant and obscure, above penetrated the cloudy sky.”
今王喬，赤誦子，吹嘔呼吸，吐故內新，遺形去智，抱素反真，以游玄眇，上通雲天 (ch. 11, Liu Wendian: 361)

“Wang Qiao and Red Pine abandoned the worldly dust and parted with the complications of the worldly troubles. They inhaled the harmony of yin and yang, consumed the essence of Heaven and Earth, exhaled, expelling the old and inhaled, taking in the new. Treading the void they rose with lightened bodies, mounted the clouds and roamed on mists.”
王喬赤松去塵埃之間，離群惡之紛，吸陰陽之和，食天地之精，呼而出故，吸而入新，蹠虛輕舉，乘雲游霧。 (ch. 20, Liu Wendian: 676).

The accounts in *Huananzi* emphasise breath cultivation (spitting out the old, stale breath and inhaling the new, pure breath), absorption of the most subtle cosmic essences, lightening of the body and abandoning the solid, physical form of the body, embracing simplicity, return to the true Dao, heavenly ascent on clouds and mists and unrestrained roaming through the cosmos. In fact, Huan Dan’s rhapsody sounds like a poetic elaboration of the passage on the two immortals in *Huainanzi*, using the same vocabulary and expounding the same ideas.

The physiological and spiritual cultivation leads to the attainment of *xian* immortality, perceived as transformation of the state of being rather than simple longevity. The immortals

¹²⁵ According to Sima Qian, Zhang Liang 張良 (d. 187 BC) wished to “abandon affairs among men to wander with Chi Songzi”, which led him to study “avoidance of grain” (*bigu* 辟穀, “guiding and pulling” (*daoyin* 導引), i.e. Daoist gymnastic and “body lightening” (*qingshen* 輕身) (*Shiji* 55.12b: 2048). Later in the Six Dynasties it was to Chi Songzi and Wangzi Qiao that two sets of gymnastic exercises were attributed, which, when performed properly, could make the practitioner live as long as Heaven and Earth (*Taiqing daoyin yangsheng jing* 太清導引養生經 CT 817, see also Maspero 1981: 543-548).

are able to spread over the whole world, to penetrate everywhere, to grasp both the obscure and the bright (*yin* and *yang*, life and death). Their cultivation culminates in ascension to Heaven in a carriage with azure dragons. In the highest reaches of the cosmos the immortals consume divine food – jade juice and efflorescent mushrooms, jade liquors and wine of gold. Strengthened by this divine diet, they rise even higher, above the universe, reach the Gate of Heaven, inspect the eight extremities of the cosmos, and ultimately become equals of Heaven and Earth. The poem reflects an interweaving of the dominating Daoist concept of spiritual cultivation (similar to the one outlined in *Zhuangzi* and the *Neiye* 內業, “Inward Training” chapter of *Guanzi* 管子 from the 4th century BC) with certain medical and *xian* ideas, much in the vein of the syncretistic cultivation program reflected in *Huainanzi*.

The interest in the spiritual aspects of the *xian*-immortals and the methods of “nurturing life” (*yangsheng* 養生) remained a major feature of the *youxian* verse from the Han and throughout the fourth century. A very similar understanding of the immortality is reflected in Lu Ji’s 陸機 (261 – 303) *Liexian fu* 列仙賦 (“Rhapsody on the Immortals”):

夫何列仙玄妙	Oh, how obscure, how subtle the immortals are!
超攝生乎世表	Excelling in nurturing life, they are far beyond this world
因自然以為基	Relying on spontaneity as their basis,
仰造化而聞道	They gaze up to the creative transformations and listen to the Way.
性沖虛以易足	With nature calm and empty, they step lightly,
年緬邈其難老	Advanced in years, never getting old.
爾乃呼翕九陽	Thus, they breathe in and out the pure <i>yang</i> ,
抱一含元	Embrace the one, contain the primordial,
引新吐故	Absorb the new and expell the old,
雲飲露餐	Clouds provide their drink, dew to rinse the mouth with,
遠品物以長盼	Distanced from the things, they are forever looked up to
妙群生而為言	Surpassing all existence, they give rise to talks.
爾其嘉會之仇	And thus, mates in a wonderful assembly,
息宴遊栖	Roaming and resting,
則昌客弄玉	Like Chang Rong, Nong Yu,
洛宓江妃	The consort of river Luo, the nymphs of Yangzi, ¹²⁶
觀百化於神區	They observe the hundred transformations from the divine presincts,
覲天皇於紫微	Visit the Celestial Lord at the Purple Tenuity.

¹²⁶ Chang Rong is one of the immortals included in *Liexian zhuan* (Wang Shumin 1995: 122-24; Kaltenmark 1987: 152-53). She was a Daoist from Mount Chang 常, and claimed to be a daughter of a king of the Yin dynasty. She was seen at an age of more than two hundred years, and still she had the looks of a twenty-year-old girl. She could procure groomswell (*Lithospermum officinale*) and sell it to be used as a dye. The money thus obtained she donated to the orphans and the poor for many generations. The people who worshipped her numbered tens of thousands.

The two nymphs of the Yangzi River are also included in the *Liexian zhuan* (Wang Shumin 1995: 52-57; Kaltenmark 1987: 96-101). The hagiography tells the story of their meeting with a certain Jiao Fu 交甫. Upon seeing them Jiao Fu took a fancy in them, and, unaware that they were immortals begged for their pendants. He was granted this present, but before he managed to take few steps, both the pendants and the girls disappeared. Guo Pu’s commentary to *Shanhai jing* 5 equates the two daughters of the Lord 帝二女 living at the mountain of Tongting, with the two nymphs of the Yangzi River (Yuan Ke 1980: 176).

過太華以息駕 Cross the Grand Mount Hua and stop their carriage.
越流沙而來歸 Traverse the Flowing Sands and come back. (Yan Kejun vol. 5 : 994)

The immortals here are conceived in purely transcendental terms; they are far "beyond this world" (*shibiao* 世表), distanced from all beings, surpassing all existence. Lu Ji abandons the fanciful imagery and paraphernalia of the *Chuci* tradition, and the stock phrases used to characterise the immortals instead draw on Daoist texts like *Daode jing*, *Zhuangzi* and *Huananzi*: "embrace the One" (*baoyi* 抱一), "contain the primordial" (*hanyuan* 含元), "absorb the new and expel the old" (*yinxin tugu* 引新吐故), drink clouds and dew. The expression "breathe the pure yang" (*huxi jiuyang* 呼翕九陽), on the other hand, probably denotes some of the numerous techniques for absorption of the sun essence developed during the Six Dynasties. The only immortals mentioned by name are the female mates of the assembly – Chang Rong, Nong Yu, the nymphs of Luo and Yangzi. The female goddesses, once the object of a frustrated quest in the *Chuci* poetry, are now partners of the immortals in their roamings and amusements. As in Huan Tan's rhapsody the account on the spiritual cultivation is here followed by description of the immortals' unrestrained flight through the cosmos. This rhapsody is very close in content, terminology and attitude of praise to the poetic accounts of the immortals in the *Yuanyou*, in Huan Tan's *Wangxian fu*, to Cai Yong's *Wangzi Qiao bei* and to the Jin dynasty eulogies *song* and *encomia zan*.

These early examples of immortality verse show that the image of the Accomplished Man (*zhiren* 至人) or Divine Man (*shenren* 神人), developed in *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi* provided the main inspiration for the post-Han poets. The immortals are unfailingly perceived as remote and obscure, withdrawn from the human world. The terms that appear throughout the poetry in connection with the immortals indicate their transcendence of the earthly existence – they have "rejected the common world" (*qi shisu* 棄世俗) (*Wangzi Qiao bei*), and they "discard the things and reject the tethers of the vulgar world" (*yiwu qi bilei* 遺物棄鄙累) (Xi Kang *Da Er Guo* 2). Rising beyond the human world of dust they have discarded all their human ties and forgotten their earthly identity – a concept often expressed through the image of "cutting off the traces". The word *ji* 跡 or *cong* 蹤, traces, serves as a Daoist symbol for "overt physical acts" tying the poet to the phenomenal world.¹²⁷

蟬蛻同松喬 Like Red Pine and Wang Qiao slough off my old shell.
翻跡登鼎湖 Rising out of tracks, climb up from the Cauldron Lake. (Cao Zhi *Youxian*, Lu Qinli: 456)

¹²⁷Mather 1969-70: 171, n.34

願投若人蹤 Wishing to discard his human traces,
高步振策杖 Treading on high, he strikes with his staff. (Zhi Dun *Yonghuai shi* III, Lu Qinli: 1081)

In the couplet from *Youxian*, cited above, Cao Zhi uses another frequent image associated with immortal, i.e. the cicada leaving behind its shell (*chantui* 蟬蛻). The *locus classicus* for this metaphor might be found in *Huainanzi* 7:

“Those people [the Accomplished Ones] embrace plainness and preserve their essence, like cicadas leaving their shells or snakes separating [themselves from their skin] they wander off into the Grand Purity, rising up with lightened bodies, they roam alone, and suddenly enter the obscure”.
若此人者 [至人], 抱素守精, 蟬蛻蛇解, 遊於太青, 輕舉獨往, 忽然入冥 (Liu Wendian: 235)

In Daoist texts the cicada metaphor is commonly applied to attainment of immortality through "corpse deliverance" (*shijie* 尸解). The new, physical yet immortal self of the *shijie* immortals, leaving the adept's old, polluted and degradable body, was often compared to a moulting cicada shedding off its old shell, or to a snake slipping out of its old skin.¹²⁸ In the poetry the image of a cicada emerging from a chrysalis is, however, often applied even to immortals, who according to their hagiographies did not have to pass through faked death, but achieved an apotheosis of a higher class. In *Laozi ming* from 164 AD Laozi himself is said to “slough off his old shell and transcend the world” (*chantui dushi* 蟬蛻渡世). The phrase *chantui* as used by the poets does not necessarily refer *stricto sensu* to the shedding of the carnal husk of the physical body. It is adopted more as a conventional metaphor for discarding the worldly dust and pollution, for leaving behind all traces of the old, mortal self, and becomes synonymous with expressions like “cut off the traces” or “discard the dust”:

蟬蛻棄穢累 I will slough off my old form and discard the tethers of dust,
結友家板桐 I would make friends and dwell at Bantong. (Xi Kang *Youxian shi*, Lu Qinli: 488)

Another expression associated with the attainment of immortality is *yixing* 遺形 (“abandon the bodily form”), which in the Jin poetry is often used as a synonym for the “shedding of the cicada shell”:

遺形靈岳 He abandoned his form at the Numinous Mound,
顧景忘歸 Gazing at sky-lights, he forget about return.
(Lu Yun *Dengxia song*, Wang Ziqiao, Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1052)

Fabrizio Pregadio 2004 has demonstrated that in early Daoist texts the concept of form, (*xing* 形) is a cosmological notion, variously representing “the threshold between the Dao and the objects”, a stage in cosmogony before the rise of matter, the first degree of materialization

¹²⁸ The cicada metaphor is used by Wang Chong for a quite different purpose. In *Lunheng* 7 he wittily analyses the implications of the “cicada shedding its shell” to prove that “postmortem immortality” is impossible. For a critical discussion of the cicada image in connection with *shijie* and the problems involved see Cedzich 2001: 12-17.

of the images, and a lodging for spirit. As a definite stage in cosmogony it is not permanent and should be transcended (or “refined”) in order to attain the Dao which is above it. It is always the form that in Daoist texts is the locus of refining and smelting, either during one’s life or in the afterworld.

Having abandoned all earthly entanglements, having purged all impurities, the immortals are pictured in poetry as indifferent and calm, possessing no attachments, no hatred, no strivings:

飄飄雲日間 Whirling about between the sun and clouds,
邈與世路殊 They keep far from the way of the world.
榮名非己寶 They treasure neither glory nor fame,
聲色焉足娛 Nor do the senses [sounds and sights] provide them pleasure.
(Ruan Ji *Yonghuai shi* 41; Lu Qinli: 504, tr. by Holzman 1976: 180)

甄有形於無欲 “though revealing their forms, they have no desires” (Mu Hua *Haifu; Wenxuan*: 551)

In the poetry of the 3rd and 4th century the retreat from the world is pictured not only as a discarding of worldly concerns and attachments, but also as a retreat from one’s senses (sight and hearing). Thus Ruan Ji, inspired by *Zhuangzi*, writes:

豈若遺耳目 It is so much better to leave behind the senses,
升遐去殷憂 And to ascend to distant heights, far from sadness and sorrow. (*Yonghuai shi* 28, Lu Qinli: 502)

The phrase “discard hearing and sight” (*yi ermu* 遺耳目) appears in *Zhuangzi* 6 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 268). It echos other concepts from *Zhuangzi* teachings, such as “fasting of the heart-mind” (*xinzhai* 心齋)¹²⁹, “sitting in forgetfulness” (*zuowang* 坐忘)¹³⁰, or the advice Guang Chengzi 廣成子 gave to the Yellow emperor:

“Do not look, do not listen, embrace your spirits in quietude, and your body will be correct of its own accord; ... if your eyes see nothing, if your ears hear nothing, if your heart-mind knows nothing, your spirits will preserve your body, and your body will live long.”
无視无聽，抱神以靜，形將自正 ... 目无所見，耳无所聞，心无所知，女神將守形，形乃長生。
(Ch. 11, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 381)

Such mystical withdrawal is also reflected in Guo Yuanzu’s “Encomium on Laozi”, cited above:

塞兌內鏡 Blocking up the holes, internally mirroring,
冥神絕涯 Obscuring his spirit, he went across the margins.¹³¹ (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1445)

¹²⁹ On *xinzhai* see ch. 4, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 147: “Do not listen with your ears but with your heart-mind, do not listen with your heart but with your breath”.

¹³⁰ On *zuowang*, whereby one “abandons his body and its parts, rejects perceptual sharpness, leaves his form, drives away his knowledge, and becomes one with the Universal Greatness” see ch. 6, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 284.

¹³¹ This eulogy is almost identical with Sun Chuo’s “Eulogy on Laozi”. In Sun Chuo’s variant the first line reads: 塞關內境 “Shutting up the passes to his interior realm” (the character 境 realm, might be corruption for 鏡 mirror).

The phrase “blocking up the holes” (*saidui* 塞兌), as already pointed out, is a quotation from *Daodejing* 52. It also echoes Guang Chengzi’s instruction in *Zhuangzi* 11 to “take care of your interior, shut yourself off from the exterior” (慎女內, 閉女外) (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 381). Shutting out the exterior world, the world of senses, means the closing of the narrow world of the individual, the world limited by his sensual perceptions and his own thoughts. The image of the internal mirror (*neijing* 內鏡) evokes Zhuangzi’s metaphor of the pure and undisturbed mirror of the heart that can reflect the whole world in its entirety without distortion.¹³² Empty of form, yet capable of holding any form, it is a symbol of that which “neither precedes, causes, or retains”.¹³³

The state of purity, when the immortals have purged themselves of all earthly contamination, is often emphasized by the poets. Ruan Ji, drawing on Zhuangzi’s description of the Divine men from the Guye Mountain, fashions a poetical image of their immaculate nature:¹³⁴

寢息一純和 Their repose is all pure and harmonious;
呼噏成露霜 Their respiration becomes dew and frost. (*Yonghuai shi* 23, Lu Qinli: 501)

The perception of the immortals in the mystical vein of the Divine, *shen*, or Accomplished, *zhi*, Men from *Zhuangzi* in the poetry of the third and fourth centuries was sustained by the flourishing of the *xuanxue* discussions in this period. In many cases, like the poetry of Zhi Dun, motifs and images typical for the poetry on immortals interweave so closely with the “philosophical” *xuanxue* vocabulary that the borderline between the *youxian* and the *xuanyan* poetry vanishes:

中有尋化士 Within is one, pursuing transformation,
外身解世網 His outer body is free of worldly nets.
抱朴鎮有心 Resolved to guard the simplicity he embraces.¹³⁵
揮玄拂無想 Soaring into Obscurity, he brushes over on Non-thought.
隗隗形崖頽 Menacingly, the cliffs of Form loom over him,
罔罔神宇敞 Brightly shining, the expanse of Spirit opens before him.

¹³² Ch. 7, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 307: “The Accomplished Man uses his heart-mind as a mirror; he does not escort things as they go or welcome them as they come, he responds and does not store”; *Zhuangzi* ch. 13, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 457: “his heart-mind is still, ... a reflection of Heaven and Earth, a mirror of the ten thousand things”; ch. 33, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 1094 “his stillness is like that of the mirror, his responses like those of an echo”.

¹³³ Robinet 1986: 90. On the symbolism of mirror in the Daoist thought of the Six Dynasties see *ibid*: 90-94.

¹³⁴ “Far away on the mountain of Guye 姑射 there live Divine Men (*shenren* 神人). Their flesh and skin are [as pure and white] as ice and snow, their manners - elegant and graceful as that of maiden. They do not eat any of the five grains, but inhale the wind and drink the dew; ride on clouds, drive flying dragons, and roam beyond the four seas...” (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 28 - 31).

¹³⁵ “Embracing Simplicity” (*baopu* 抱朴) is an allusion to *Laozi* 19: “Manifest plainness and embrace simplicity” (見素抱朴). The word *pu* 朴 literally means “uncarved block of wood”. This is a metaphor for the Dao, which appears in few more passages of *Laozi* (sections 28, 32, 37, 57). It represents the natural state of unadorned simplicity, lack of desires, of undifferentiatedness but containing also limitless potential.

宛轉元造化	Twisting and turning, he goes back to the Fashioner of Mutations, ¹³⁶
縹暫鄰大象	Swiftly soaring, he nears the Great Image. ¹³⁷
願投若人蹤	Wishing to discard his human traces,
高步振策杖	Treading on high, he strikes with his staff. (<i>Yonghuai shi</i> III, Lu Qinli: 1081)

The vocabulary and the motifs of liberation from worldly nets, cutting-off the traces, soaring on high, are recurrent in the poetry on immortals of the period. However, the major feature of the ascent to immortality – the cosmic journey, in this particular poem takes place neither in a real nor in a mythical universe, but solely in the realm of abstract philosophical thought. The poet skims over “Non-thought” (*wuxiang* 無想), soars among the threatening “Cliffs of Form” (*xingyan* 形崖), enters the “Realm of Spirit” (*shenyu* 神宇) and approaches the Great Image (*daxiang* 大象) at the mystic source of existence. The title of Zhi Dun’s poem assigns it to the poetic current of *yonghuai*, “voicing one’s feelings” but the content, with its interweaving of *youxian* and *xuanyuan* motifs, testifies to the fluid boundaries between the thematic categories of poetry, and in addition shows the difficulty of strictly separating philosophical from religious currents of thought.

I.2.2. The regimen and fare of immortals

In the poetic accounts of immortals a great deal of space is devoted to the various methods of “nourishing life” (*yangsheng* 養生), which formed an important part of the Daoist regimen from the Han dynasty onwards.¹³⁸ At the beginning of his rhapsody Huan Tan refers to the system of gymnastics and breathing exercises attributed to the immortals Wang Ziqiao and Chi Songzi. Centuries later Lu Ji similarly writes about breathing the pure *yang* together with expelling the old and inhaling the new breath-*qi* (*Liexian fu*, see above). Cao Zhi in

¹³⁶ “Fashioner of Mutations” is a translation, suggested by E. Schafer for the term *zaohua* 造化 [*zhe*者], (also called *zaowu zhe* 造物者 or *huawu zhe* 化物者) – a “coagulating, specifying principle”, “the generator of the perceptible world”. See Schafer 1977: 23-24.

¹³⁷ The Great Image (*Daxiang* 大象) is the Dao. In *Laozi* 41 Dao is called “the Great Image that has no form”, *daxiang wuxing* 大象無形

¹³⁸ By the 1st century BC the macrobiotic and spiritual cultivation techniques that were initially standard prescriptions for daily hygiene and long healthy life popular among the elite (see for example the medical texts from Mawangdui, translated and studied by Harper 1998), became intimately associated with the *xian* cult. This merging is formalised in the bibliographical section of *Hanshu*, where the macrobiotic hygiene literature (with the exception of sexual cultivation texts, which formed a separate category) is included in a category entitled *shenxian* 神僊 “Divine Immortality” (*Hanshu* 30). The summary appended to this category says that *shenxian* literature “provides the means to secure the real nature of life and to roam into and explore what lies beyond it” 神僊者，所以保性命之真，而游求於其外者也 (*Hanshu* 30: 1780). It makes it clear that the transcendent “exploration of the beyond” was considered a part of the definition of macrobiotic hygiene.

Feilong pian 飛龍篇 (“Flying Dragon) speaks of another important art of immortality – the regulated circulation of seminal essence (*jing* 精) within the body:

教我服食□□□□□□□□ They taught me how to ingest and eat,
還精捕腦□□□□□□□□ How to return my essence, nourishing my brain. (Lu Qinli: 421-422)

The expression *huanjing bunao* 還精捕腦 (“return the essence to nourish the brain”), occurring time and again in the texts on Daoist cultivation, refers to a method of preventing the ejaculation of semen and consequent diminution of *yang*-essence, of diverting its flow towards the brain.¹³⁹

The ethereal diet of the immortals receives considerable attention in the “roaming into immortality” verse. The immortals are often pictured as absorbing various cosmic exhalations, and as sustained entirely on pneuma-*qi* and light, on morning dew and astral radiance. Cao Zhi’s immortals become instructors in the arts of consuming solar essence (*fushi rijing* 服食日精) (*Guizhi shu*). In *Quche pian* the ultimate transformation of the Yellow Emperor into an immortal is induced by the absorption of aurorae (*xia* 霞) and of the “drifting flow” (*hangxie* 沆瀣) – the essence of midnight. The absorption of solar, lunar and stellar essences, as well as auroras and dew, are not merely beautiful metaphors for the purity and ethereality of the immortals, but are all actually an important part of the Daoist regimen of the period.¹⁴⁰

Besides this subtle rarified fare, immortals partake of a more tangible diet as well – one consisting of precious stones and gold, and of “magic mushrooms” of immortality:

吸玉液,食華芝 You inhaled the jade juice and ate the efflorescent mushroom,
漱玉漿,飲金醪 You rinsed your mouth with jade liquors and drank the wine of gold. (*Wangxian fu*)

Although in the present work I adopt the traditional translation of *lingzhi* 靈芝 as “magic mushrooms” for convenience, the expression is clearly not confined to mushrooms or fungi. It

¹³⁹ The essence *jing* represents that mysterious and elusive aspect of the pneuma *qi*, responsible for the generation of life and for maintaining the vitality of living beings. Although the essence came to be commonly identified with the semen, in Daoist texts it is understood in a much broader sense as the basis of both prenatal and postnatal vitalities. “On the one hand, it appears as the male or female reproductive essence, thus representing the power at the origin of life that carries vitality from parent to offspring; on the other, it is the essence that the body takes from food before it is assimilated to the individual’s vital processes, thus standing for the basis of physical growth and development” (Engelhardt 2000: 98-99).

¹⁴⁰ For example, in *Baopuzi* 19 Ge Hong enumerates books such as the “Scripture of Absorbing the Essence of Sun and Moon” (*Shi riyue jing jing* 食日月精經), “Scripture of Absorbing the Six Breaths” (*Shi liuqi jing* 食六氣經). Especially important was the absorption of solar essence (*rijing* 日精). Many later Shangqing scriptures describe at length various methods of consuming solar rays – either by physical partaking of the sun’s exhalations, captured in exposed water (*Dongzhen taishang basu zhenjing fushi riyue huanghua jue* 洞真太上八素真經服食日月皇化訣, CT 1323 from the Eastern Jin period), or by meditation and visualisation (see Robinet 1993: 199). The exercises often conclude with setting the whole person of the adept ablaze, to the point that he becomes light himself.

is “a generic word for protrusions or emanations from rocks, trees, herbs, fleshy animals or fungi (including mushrooms)”.¹⁴¹ They all have striking, anomalous shapes, grow in distant, inaccessible places and are believed to have marvellous effects on the body, imparting it with longevity and immortality. The various kinds of *lingzhi* were considered to be the product of the sublimation of precious metals in the earth (notably gold and cinnabar) and as such were regarded as natural alchemical products - as the essence of these very minerals.

Stones and ore, particularly gold, which do not corrode, were generally believed to confer their glowing incorruptibility on the body if ingested. As the result of the slow gestation of ores in the earth’s womb, gold does not succumb to further transformation and decay. A central place in the cuisine of immortality was devoted to cinnabar, considered to be a highly concentrated form of solar, *yang* energy, which bestowed life on all forms of beings and which could remedy any decay. Also preferred by the immortals are various kinds of jade elixirs (*yujiang* 玉漿 and *yuye* 玉液), gold potions (*jinye* 金液), cinnabar liquors and numerous varieties of precious stones. Two enigmatic archaic gems commonly figure in the immortals’ diet: the *qiong* 瓊 (“rose-gem”) – a semiprecious red stone, possibly an old name for carnelian, and *yao* 瑤 (“azure-gem”) - probably turquoise or malachite. Many of these are believed to be fruits or blooms of mythical gem trees growing in the paradise realms (the rose-gem tree, *qiongsu* 瓊樹, the rose-gem flowers, *qiong hua* 瓊華), or the waters of magic springs on Kunlun (the Jade spring, *yuquan* 玉泉). By partaking of precious stones the bodies of the immortals become infused with purity, brilliance and durability.

It is hard to determine what exactly the exotic names of this immortality cuisine referred to – they may denote both concrete substances, actually consumed by the adepts of that time, or simply be general, beautiful images of divine fare. Some of the metal and gem potions consumed by the immortals were, in fact, names of powerful elixirs, the formulas and effects of which were given in the Daoist texts. For example the “Golden Fluid”, or “potable gold” (*jinye* 金液), which often figures in the immortals’ diet, was considered by Ge Hong to be one of the most powerful of immortality elixirs.¹⁴² Nevertheless, in most instances the Han, Wei and Jin poets seem to use these alchemical terms interchangeably as conventional images for the extraordinary divine regimen to which the immortals have access. In the poetry of the

¹⁴¹ Campany 2002: 27. A detailed account on the various kinds of *zhi*, on their magical properties and usage is found in *Baopuzi* 11 (Wang Ming 1985: 197 – 202) where five classes are distinguished: “stone *zhi*” (*shizhi* 石芝), tree *zhi* (*muzhi* 木芝), herb *zhi* (*caozhi* 草芝), fleshy *zhi* (*rouzhi* 肉芝) and fungi *zhi* (*junzhi* 菌芝).

¹⁴² Guo Pu himself was in a possession of a precious text, called *Jinye danjing* 金液丹經 (“The Elixir Scripture of Golden Fluid”), the transmission line of which went back to Zuo Ci 左慈 (fl. early 3rd century AD). In *Baopuzi* 4 he provides two formulae of its preparation, which had been handed down to Laozi by the Primordial Lord (Yuanjun 元君) herself (Wang Ming 1985: 82 - 83).

Southern Dynasties, however, a novel tendency can be observed in the cuisine of immortality which will be discussed separately in ch. III. Starting from the Liang dynasty, the poets refer more explicitly to concrete alchemical substances of their time, to the formulas and methods of their preparation, demonstrating considerable knowledge of alchemy arts.

I.2.3. The visual image of the immortals

While in the early immortality verse discussed up to this point the poets elaborate on the spiritual qualities of the immortals and on their activities, they rarely dwell at length on their physical features. Distant from the world, subtle to the utmost degree, the immortals remain forever unapproachable by the eyes of the mortal men - those "walking corpses" (行尸之人)¹⁴³. To profane eyes they reveal themselves as dazzling entities of pure light. In the *Yuanyou* passage cited above the immortals are briefly sighted "in remote, uncertain glimpses" as bright lights, flashing across the sky. The luminous brightness is a quality the *xian* immortals share with the ancient celestial deities celebrated in the *Jiuge* cycle of *Chuci*:

靈連蜷兮既留 The god, sinuously swirling, has halted,
爛昭昭兮未央 Splendidly shining with endless radiance....
與日月兮齊光 Together with sun and moon - equal to their light... (*Yunzhong jun, Chuci buzhu*: 58)

This brilliant radiance, pertaining to the divine, remained a major and permanent feature of the visualisation of the immortals in poetry. In Cao Cao's *Qichu chang* I Wangzi Qao appears in a blaze of light, and a century later Lu Yun likewise beholds Master Red Cliff surrounded by pure radiance (*qinghui* 清輝) (*Yiming fu*, Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1025). The immortals often become dazzling like the sun and moon:

沐浴丹淵中 They bathe in the Cinnabar Depths
照耀日月光 And then sparkle like the rays of the sun and the moon. (Ruan Ji *Yonghuai shi* 23)

Ability to radiate light is characteristically attributed to immortals in the prose accounts in *Zhuangzi*, *Baopuzi*, and popular hagiographies and at the end of the 4th century would be held out as a promise to the Shangqing adepts. Many Shangqing texts describe methods of meditation and the visualisation of the celestial bodies in the course of which the whole person of the adept is set ablaze, to the point that he becomes light himself.¹⁴⁴ Connected with the ability to emit radiance is the motif of concealing one's light and internally shining, which

¹⁴³ *Baopuzi* 2, Wang Ming: 15.

¹⁴⁴ See for example Robinet 1993: 197 ff. On the features of light and shadow, mirroring and radiating see Robinet 1986.

appears in poetry from the Han dynasty onwards. In Cai Yong's inscription Wangzi Qiao "shone with internal brightness" (*han guangyao* 含光耀). According to *Laozi ming* Laozi "holds his light within and hides his body" (*hanjing ruoxing* 含景匿形), and in Lu Yun's eulogy on Wangzi Qiao the immortal "following his will, submerged his light" (*suizhi jianhui* 遂志潛輝). Hiding or interiorizing one's light was in fact, an important esoteric practice in the Six Dynasties Daoism, often referred to in the religious scriptures.¹⁴⁵ According to Isabelle Robinet this was a method by which the adept turned "the light inside by his inner vision, *neizhao* 內照, thus casting light on his internal organs... He absorbs the light of the celestial bodies and interiorizes the light of his eyes, the stars of his own body, and shines inside."¹⁴⁶

Yet another kind of description of immortals outlook is to be found in the Han *yuefu* songs, which represented a separate tradition from the *Chuci* poetry and the court rhapsodies *fu*. The *yuefu* accounts draw on popular imagery:

仙人騎白鹿	The immortal riding a white deer,
發短耳何長	Has short hair and ears so long.
導我上太華	As he leads me up the Great Mount Hua,
攬芝獲赤幢	He grasps the magic mushroom, seizes red-fringe fungus. (<i>Change xing</i> ; <i>Yuefu shiji</i> 30: 442)

The scene involving immortals which Cao Zhi beholds on the slopes of Mountain Tai is similar:

忽逢二童	Suddenly I meet two youths,
顏色鮮好	Of fresh and fair features.
乘彼白鹿	Riding white deer,
手翳芝草	Holding magic mushrooms for a shade. (<i>Feilong pian</i> , Lu Qinli: 421-22)

This image of the immortals is much more casual and down-to-earth, lacking the transcendental aura of the celestial travelers from *Chuci* or the *fu* rhapsodies. They appear riding on white deer – the favoured steed of the Daoist immortals, when they roam on earth, and holding magic mushrooms of immortality. Nevertheless, these accounts provide few

¹⁴⁵ In *Baopu zi* 19 Ge Hong mentions a "Scripture on Interiorizing the Light" (*Hanjing jing* 含景經). *Huangting neijing jing* 黃庭內景經 ("The Scripture of the Interior Landscape of the Yellow Court") 24 from the Eastern Jin period (CT 331) treats the art of "concealing the light" (*yingjing* 隱景), and the *Dijun jiu zhen zhongjing* 帝君九真中經 9b-10b from the 4th century (CT 1376) describes a method of achieving "corpse deliverance", whereby the adept should submerge his light, take on common appearance and abruptly enter the realm of Great Darkness. Very similar are expressions like "hiding one's light and concealing one's brilliance", *ruojing cangguan* 匿景藏光 (*Shenzhou qizhuan qibian wutian jing* 神州七轉七變舞天經, from the Six Dynasties, CT 1331), which are connected with the art of invisibility. The biography of Xia Tong 夏統 in *Jinshu* 94.3a mentions two magicians which could make themselves invisible through "concealing their forms and hiding their light" (*yingxing ruojing* 隱形匿景)

¹⁴⁶ Robinet 1986: 92.

details of the immortals' appearance. The authors highlight - as the most weird corporeal signs - long ears or the fresh and beautiful faces, which allude to the possession of eternal youth. The youthful appearance of the immortals is, paradoxically, an indication of their extreme age:

奇齡邁五龍 Wondrous in age they surpass the Five Dragons,
千歲方嬰孩 Of thousand years – just newborn babes. (Guo Pu *Youxian shi* VI; Lu Qinli: 866)

The semblance of extreme youth is not a sign of frailty but reflects the unspoiled energy and life-potential of the newly born life. In other cases the immortals might take on the external appearance of old age – for example in Cao Cao's *Qiu hu xing* I and Cao Zhi's *Kusi xing* they appear as sage and venerable Daoist masters.

From the popular immortality cults the poets also adopted the complex of bird imagery. Since early Han it had been the general belief that through appropriate practices the body of the adept would start to grow feathers and his arms would be transformed into wings.¹⁴⁷ Late Han tomb carvings and bronze mirrors depict the immortals as fantastic, winged beings and in the hagiographies the immortal is covered with feathers, his sandals (which take the place of his missing body in the coffin) turn into birds, and his sword or staff – his alter egos – fly away.

The affinity between the *xian*-immortals and birds remained a permanent feature of the *youxian* poetry, reflected not only in the popular *yuefu* songs, but also in the *shi* and *fu* poetry.

In many of his poems Cao Zhi refers to the bird features of the immortals:

下有兩真人 Below there are two Perfect Ones,
舉翅翻高飛 Who raise their wings and soar on high. (*Kusi xing*, Lu Qinli: 439)

In *Quche pian* he departs from the traditional account of Yellow's Emperor triumphal ascent into heaven and pictures him undergoing zoomorphic transformation:

餐霞漱沆瀣 He partook of the aurorae, rinsed his mouth with Drifting Flow,
毛羽被身形 And fur and feathers then mantled the form of his body. (Lu Qinli: 435)

¹⁴⁷ It is hard to establish the origin of this belief, but apparently it was already current in the time of Emperor Wu of Han, for Sima Qian reports that the notorious *fangshi* master Luan Da 樂大 wore robes made out of feathers to show his kinship with the winged immortals (*Shiji* 28: 1391). M. Kaltenmark suggests that the notions of the feathered immortals were directly inherited from religious concepts regarding the Eastern barbarians, the Yi 夷 (Kaltenmark 1953: 13-17). Since antiquity the Eastern Yi were considered to look like birds. The various Yi tribes shared a common legend of the origin of their progenitor from an egg, and this tradition was taken over by the Shang-Yin dynasty, which rose from the Yi tribes. These Bird-barbarians inhabited the eastern coast of China – the region where the belief in the islands of immortals arose and from where most of the early Han *fangshi* came. The concept of the winged immortals is also linked to the tradition of ecstatic shamanism, which played a key part in the formation of the immortality cult. All over the ancient world feathers and wings are a mark of a shaman and a symbol of his ability to transcend the world and communicate freely between the cosmic spheres.

Mu Hua's immortals likewise appear on Penglai dressed in "plumes and pinions, dangling and drooping" (被羽翮之縹纒)(*Haifu, Wenxuan*: 551). Quan Xiu, while picturing Wang Qiao and Red Pine in abstract philosophical terms, endows them with wings to carry them in the celestial heights:

乃翔靈墳 And now they hover above the Numinous mound,
鳥象人聲 With bird features and human voices. (*Wang Qiao Chi Song song Yan Kejun* vol. 5: 878)

So intimate was the connection between the *xian* immortals and birds that from the 2nd century BC the expression *yuren* 羽人 ("feathered person" or "winged person") became a standard phrase denoting heavenly immortals. Throughout early medieval poetry plumes and wings remained a hallmark of the immortals' appearance. Feathers, which facilitate and symbolize flight, also commonly figure in the dress of the immortals, and in the canopies and banners surrounding their chariots.

I.2.4. Transformations of the image of the immortals in the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties

A change in the depictions of the immortals in poetry can be observed during the 4th - 5th century. Accounts of spiritual cultivation, breath control or gymnastics in the vein of *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi*, such as the ones found in the *Yuanyou*, *Wangxian fu* and *Liexian fu* cited above, gradually diminish. The poetic vocabulary shifts away from abstract philosophic terms to more concrete, tangible and splendid images. From the 4th century onwards the poets seldom dwell on the spiritual qualities of the immortals and their mystic regimen, but focus instead on rich, visually appealing descriptions of immortal's processions and feasts. The otherworldly beauty and splendour of these scenes is conveyed through sensuous description of divine clothing and paraphernalia rather than of the physical features of the immortals. The tendency towards ornate, sensually appealing and suggestive descriptions of immortals throngs can be traced back to poets like Zhang Hua and Yu Chan:

雲霓垂藻旒 Clouds and rainbows hang as jeweled pendants,
羽袿揚輕裾 Feathered robes trail airy skirts. (*Zhang Hua Youxian shi* 1, Lu Qinli: 621)

瑤臺藻構霞綺 Azure-gem terraces, ornate structures, laced with aurora,
麟裳羽蓋級纒 Scaly robes, canopies of plumes, an array of streamers.
(*Yu Chan Youxian shi* 8, Lu Qinli: 875)

The immortals are no longer depicted as hybrid, bird-creatures; now they wear plumed robes in lieu of actually growing feathers on their bodies like the immortals of old. Furthermore,

their robes and paraphernalia are identified with elements of the cosmic domain, such as stars, mists, auroras. This is how Zhang Hua pictures a gathering at the halls of the Queen Mother:

玉佩連浮星 Jade pendants are strung of floating stars,
輕冠結朝霞 Light headdresses are wreathed of dawn auroras.¹⁴⁸ (Zhang Hua *Youxian shi* II, Lu Qinli: 621)

The headgear and the girdle were among the most important symbols of office in ancient China. Caps and girdle pendants, symbolical of the attainment of otherworldly status are here associated with stars, dawn and auroras.

In Shen Yue's visions the immortals likewise adopt atmospheric elements as their garb and harness:

霞衣不待縫 Auroral robes need no stitching,
雲錦不須織 Cloud brocades require no weaving. (*He Liu Zhongshu xianshi* I, Lu Qinli: 1660)

霓裳拂流電 Rainbow skirts brush the floating lightning,
雲車委輕霰 Cloud chariots trail light sleet. (*He Liu Zhongshu xianshi* II, *ibid.*)

The cosmic dimension of the immortals is emphasised not only by the atmospheric phenomena transformed into precious attire, but also by their close interaction with celestial bodies – their robes brush the lightning and their chariots are hung with hail pendants.

The imagery of these dazzling sights reveals the dominating influence of the *Chuci* poetics: the immortals appear in the guise of the old *Chuci* deities, similarly garbed in rainbow skirts, cloud coats, surrounded by cloud banners.¹⁴⁹ The poets of the Southern Dynasties, however, strive for increasingly sensuous, visually powerful images and more exalted diction. They increasingly emphasise the luminous splendour and sumptuousness of the immortal multitudes, to the point that descriptions of the splendid celestial procession or banquets of the immortals often constitute a whole *youxian* poem (for example Shen Yue's *He Jinglingwang youxian shi*, Wang Rong *Youxian shi*, see below). This shift in the perception and description of immortals during the Southern Dynasties will be discussed in more detail below, in connection with scenes of immortals' equipage, entourage and feasts.

¹⁴⁸ The text of the poem does not indicate whether this is a description of a single immortal or of immortal throngs during a feast.

¹⁴⁹ Compare, for example with the *Chuci* description of the Lord of the East, Dongjun:

駕龍輶兮乘雷 I ride a dragon car and mount the thunder,
載雲旗兮委蛇 With cloud banners, swirling and whirling.
青雲衣兮白霓裳 In a coat of azure clouds and skirt of pale rainbow,
舉長矢兮射天狼 I aim my long arrow and shoot the Wolf of Heaven (*Dongjun, Chuci buzhu*: 75)

I.3. The Far-off Journey

The immortals' ascent from the human "world of dust" is unequivocally conceived as an ecstatic climb into the higher reaches of the universe. The theme of spatial travels was considered to be of such importance that it ultimately defined the whole subgenre. When the first poems under the title *Youxian* were written, their hallmark beside immortality was considered to be journeying – either of the poetic hero towards the paradise world or of the immortals themselves. Besides the title *Youxian*, verses on immortality often bear titles indicative of cosmic roaming, such as *Yuanyou* 遠遊 ("Distant Journey") (two pieces contained in *Chuci* and one by Cao Zhi), *Wuyou* 五遊 ("Five-fold Roaming" by Cao Zhi), *Shengtian* 升天 ("Ascending to Heaven" by Cao Zhi, Bao Zhao, Liu Xiaosheng, Lu Sida), *Lingxiao* 凌霄 ("Skimming the Empyrean", one rhapsody by Lu Ji), *Dengxia* 登遐, ("Climbing the Distant", series of eulogies *song* by Lu Yun), *Qingju* 輕舉 ("Rising with a Lightened Body" by Wang Bao), *Shengxian* 昇仙 ("Rising to Immortality" by Liang Jianwen di). The attainment of immortality is commonly designated by phrases like *dengxian* 登仙 ("climb to immortality"), *dengtian* 登天 ("climb to heaven"), *shengxia* 升遐 ("ascend the distant"), which indicate upward movement from earth to the higher heavenly zones.

The sweeping cosmic flights of the immortals are prefigured in the poetry of *Chuci*. Descriptions of distant journeys through the cosmos, which David Hawkes calls *itineraria*, are one of the major themes in the *Chuci* poetical tradition.¹⁵⁰ In its basic form the *itineraria* involves a magic flight through the sky in a chariot drawn by flying dragons or a phoenix, with a retinue of gods and spirits that the traveller commands at his will. This theme is well developed in the most ancient poems - in the *Jiuge*, which were apparently designed to accompany a ritual of invocation, perhaps a religious dance or pantomime.¹⁵¹ The magic journey there is intimately connected with the major theme of these hymns - namely the shaman's quest of the deity. The motif of magic-making journey was taken over and further developed in the *Lisao* poem, along with the fantastic imagery and with the theme of the quest for a "Fair One". In this long poem, however, the ancient theme of shamanistic travel is no longer connected primarily with a religious ceremony but has been partly secularised and transformed into an allegorical expression of the poet's resentments and sorrows and of his "flight from a corrupt society and a foolish and faithless prince".¹⁵² In the *Yuanyou* the

¹⁵⁰ Hawkes 1967.

¹⁵¹ Hawkes 1985: 95-97, Peng Yi 1999: 187 ff.

¹⁵² Hawkes 1967: 87.

itineraria theme is further transformed into the cosmic circuit undertaken by a Daoist adept which leads to his ecstatic merging with the Dao. In it the celestial journey is immediately connected with *xian* immortality, which makes it the direct precursor of the poetry on immortals to come. As this poem is of crucial importance for the subsequent development of the *youxian* verse, the journey theme in it will be discussed in detail in a separate chapter below. In the court milieu of the Han emperors the *itineraria* theme was further elaborated and adopted for the flattery and delectation of rulers, depicting them as omnipotent masters of the cosmos, moving through it with utmost ease, surrounded by splendid retinues and numerous deities (Sima Xiangru's *Daren fu*).

Many of the post-Han verses on immortality consciously draw on the *Chuci* poetics, but limited by the more concise *shi* form they adopt and develop only a single motif of the cosmic *itineraria*. In some cases this is the description of the hero's splendid celestial entourage. The traveller to immortality often rises into Heaven in a *Chuci* fashion - in a dragon harness, surrounded by a dazzling retinue:

羽化華岳	I grow feathers on Mount Hua,
超遊清霄	And journey through the clear heavens.
雲蓋習習	The cloud canopy softly rustles,
六龍飄飄	My six dragons whirl and soar.
左配椒桂	To the left I match pepper and cassia flowers,
右綴蘭茝	To the right I hang orchids and trumpet creepers.
凌陽讚路	Ling Yang leads the way,
王子奉輶	Wang Zi escorts my chariot... (Xi Kang <i>Siyuan shi</i> 10, Lu Qinli: 485)

The exotic imagery – cloud canopies, dragons' harness, aromatic plants, divine entourage - all go back to the *Chuci* poetics. The left-right sides formula of the 5th and 6th lines is recurrent in the *Chuci* and in the Han rhapsodies *fu* as a standard device for orderly enumeration and positioning in space. Xi Kang however transposes the *Chuci* celestial wanderings onto the four-syllable *shi* form, and his account is much more condensed.

Of equal, if not even more crucial importance to the “roaming into immortality” are the descriptions of the unrestrained wanderings of the Accomplished Men, which appear time and again throughout the whole book of *Zhuangzi*. To cite but two examples:

“He [the Divine Man, *shenren*] rides on clouds, drives along the flying dragons and wanders beyond the Four seas” 乘雲氣，御飛龍，而遊乎四海之外 (ch. 1, *Zhuangzi jishu*: 28)

“He [the Accomplished Man, *zhiren*] drives on clouds and breath, rides astride sun and moon and wanders beyond the Four seas” 乘雲氣，騎日月，而遊乎四海之外 (ch. 2, *Zhuangzi jishi* 96)

These images of unrestrained freedom and cosmic potency are further developed in works like *Huainanzi* and *Liezi*:

“Lightning is his lash, thunder makes the wheels of his chariot. Above he wanders in the wilds of the silent empyrean, below he emerges from the door of the Formless”

電以為鞭策,雷以為車輪,上游於霄霓之野,下出於無垠之門 (Liu Wendian: 9)

1.3.1. Methods of levitation and fantastic steeds (Han – Southern Dynasties)

In the poetry on immortals it is the ascension to heaven that denotes the transition from mortal life on earth to the eternal, perfected mode of being. It could be achieved in various ways. Very often the immortals soar up in the distant void totally unaided, lifted by their own wings or by the virtue of physical and spiritual perfection alone:

輕舉翔區外 Lightened I rise, soar beyond the world,
濯翼扶桑津 And wash my wings in the Sun Tree ford...
毛羽翕光新 ... Down and feathers (smoothed), fresh and glossy,
一縱發開陽 I beat them and dash off to the Dipper's star. (Xi Kang *Wuyan shi*, Lu Qinli: 489)

飛仙凌虛□□□ Flying immortals skim the void,
隨風游騁□□□ Along the wind they roam and race. (Lu Yun *Fuyun fu*, Yan Kejun vol. 5: 982))

A recurrent phrase in the descriptions of the flight of the immortals in poetry is *qingju* 輕舉 (“to rise with a lightened body”). This already appears in *Yuanyou*, where the hero expresses the wish to “rise lightened and roam afar...” (*yan qingju er yuanyou* 願輕舉而遠遊).

Numerous other examples are found throughout the Six Dynasties verse:

獻酬既已周 When toasting each other went a around,
輕舉乘紫霞 Lightened they soar, mount the purple auroras. (Lu Ji *Qian huansheng ge*, Lu Qinli: 665)

輕舉觀滄海 Rising lightened, I regard the sweeping sea,
眇邈去瀛洲 I travel to the distant island of Yingzhou. (Yu Chan *Youxian shi* IV, Lu Qinli: 875)

子喬好輕舉 Zi Qiao loved to rise lightened,
不待鍊銀丹 He did not wait to transmute silver and cinnabar.
(Jiang Yan *Wangzi Qiao zan*, Yan Kejun vol. 7: 390)

The expression *qingju* in Daoist texts denotes a certain technique of lightening the body, which enables it to float through the air. In *Baopuzi* 4 the effects of the Cold Elixir (*handan* 寒丹) of Immortality are described as follows: “Take one spatula a day for one hundred days and you will become an immortal. Boys and girl immortals will come to wait upon you, you will rise with lightened body (*qingju*) without using wings.” (Wang Ming 1985: 75)

Similar to this expression is the phrase *chengqiao* 乘蹻, translated freely below as “with soaring steps”, - another common way for the hero to go beyond the human world.¹⁵³

乘蹻萬里之外□□□□□□□□ With soaring steps beyond ten thousand leagues,
去留隨意所欲存□□□□ □ Stay or leave at will, whatever we wish becomes actual.¹⁵⁴
(Cao Zhi *Guizhi shu*, Lu Qinli: 437 - 38)

不凡陽侯 Without drifting on Lord Yang's billows,
乘蹻絕往 One may break away with soaring steps. (Mu Hua *Haifu, Wenxuan*: 551)

Baopuzi 15 describes the method of *chengqiao* as a kind of levitation resulting from mental concentration, which allows the adept to pass twelve thousand leagues in a single day and a night without being hindered by mountains or rivers.

When the ultimate ascent is effected by some more tangible means, then it is commonly dragons (*long* 龍 or the female hornless dragon *qi* 螭) that carry the immortals away:

淮南八公 The King of Huainan and the eight lords...
參駕六龍□□□□ Driving a carriage of six dragons,
遊戲雲端□□□□□□□□ They rove and play in cloudy limits. (*Shanzai xing, Yuefu shiji* 36: 535-36)

王喬棄我去 Wang Qiao abandoned me and took his leave,
乘雲駕六龍 Mounting the clouds with six dragons. (Xi Kang *Youxian shi*, Lu Qinli: 488)

齊駕飛龍駢赤螭 Together, we mount flying male dragons, harness crimson female dragons,
逍遙五岳間 Roam and ramble among the five great mountains.
(Fu Xuan *Yunzhong baizi gao xing*, Lu Qinli: 564)

The dragon-drawn equipage is a common image in the poetry and religious belief of *Chuci*. A carriage harnessed with flying dragons is the usual means of transportation for the deities and shamans in the *Jiuge* and for the celestial travellers on their magic-making journeys in the *Chuci itineraria* tradition.¹⁵⁵ It is interesting that the immortals prefer a harness of six dragons

¹⁵³ The phrase *chengqiao* has been interpreted in varying ways. Most commentators agree that the stilts *qiao* are a kind of magic sandals, or seven-league boots, that carry one over great distances in no time. Consequently, the phrase *chengqiao* is usually translated as “mount the magic stilts”. M. Kaltenmark 1953: 46-47 and 111-14, and D. Holzman 1998: 39 follow this interpretation. On the other hand, the commentary to *Baopuzi* 15, where the method of *chengqiao* is described, makes it clear that it does not mean wearing some sort of sandals or mounting on stilts. The passage in question reads: “The one who masters the *chengqiao*, could go around all under Heaven, not being obstructed by mountains or rivers. There are altogether three kinds of the art of *chengqiao*: the first is called dragon *qiao* (*longqiao* 龍蹻, the second tiger *qiao* (*huqiao* 虎蹻) and the third – deer *qiao* (*luqiao* 鹿蹻). If talismans *fu* are taken and the thoughts are purified (*jingsi* 精思), and you want to pass one thousand leagues, you should concentrate upon it for one hour. If you keep the concentration for all the twelve watches of a day and a night, you could pass in one day and a night twelve thousand leagues. You cannot go more than this distance. If you want to overcome it, you should repeat the concentration as described above.” (Wang Ming 1985: 275 and 282, n. 63)

¹⁵⁴ In Daoism the verb *cun* 存 has the technical meaning of “to visualise”, or more precisely, “to actualise through concentrated visualisation”.

¹⁵⁵ The Lord Within the Clouds (*Yunzhong jun* 雲中君), the Greater Master of Fate (*Da Siming* 大司命), the Lord of the East (*Dongjun* 東君), the God of the Yellow River (*Hebo* 河伯), the shaman looking for the princess of Xiang – they all soar and wander round the sky in dragon-drawn cars. Dragon mounts seem to be typical for the *Chuci* tradition – they hardly appear at all in *Zhuangzi* or *Huainanzi*. On the other hand,

(in *Chuci* their number is usually eight). This might be an allusion to the six *yang* lines of the first hexagram, *qian*, of the Book of Changes:

“Because he sees with great clarity the end and the beginning, he completes the six steps at the right time and mounts toward heaven on them as though on six dragons.”¹⁵⁶ 大明終始六位時成時乘六龍以御天

The six *yang* lines thus represent a moment auspicious for mounting to heaven.

Besides the images of dragon mounts from the *Chuci* tradition, another favoured steed of immortals – the crane (*he* 鶴) – was adopted from later Han popular sources. The white crane is generally an attribute of Wang Ziqiao – he appeared to his family mounted on a white crane.

Quite naturally, in poetry he is often depicted riding a crane:

乘螭龍 He would ride on a hornless dragon,
載鶴軒 Or drive in a car pulled by a crane. (*Wangzi Qiao bei*, Yan Kejun vol. 2: 706)

Wang Can 王粲 (177 - 217) has devoted a whole rhapsody *fu* to the white crane, surrounding the bird with immortality lore and praising its transcendental nature.¹⁵⁷

Occasionally, the immortals use other divine animals as their mounts, such as phoenixes (*feng* 鳳) and unicorns (*qilin* 麒麟 or simply *lin* 麟)¹⁵⁸:

丹丘乘翠鳳 On the Cinnabar hill mount a halcyon phoenix
玄圃馭斑麟 At the Mystic gardens drive a motley unicorn. (Yu Xin *Daoshi buxu ci* 5, Lu Qinli: 2349)

The immortals commonly ride more ethereal harnesses as well – whirling clouds, mists and haze, auroras. All these are potent forms of the cosmic breath *qi*. Not only are they consumed by the adept as supreme nourishment, but their numinous energies carry him into the spheres beyond.

乘雲去中夏 Mounting clouds, I leave the Central land,
隨風濟江湘 On the wind I cross the Xiang and Yangzi rivers. (Zhang Hua *Youxian shi* III, Lu Qinli: 621)

some mirror inscriptions from the Han dynasty describe the immortals as harnessing dragons. (See for example Loewe 1979: 200, C 4311).

¹⁵⁶ Wilhelm 1967: 4.

¹⁵⁷ *Baihe fu* 白鶴賦 (“Rhapsody on a White Crane”). Only six lines from this rhapsody survive (see *Quan Han fu*: 678).

¹⁵⁸ The traditional translation of *feng* as “phoenix” and *lin* as “unicorn” might imbue these divine animals with Western connotations that are quite alien to their meaning in Chinese mythology. The *feng* bird (or *fenghuang* 鳳凰) belongs to a group of related mythical birds such as *huang* 凰 (often interpreted as the female “phoenix”), *luan* 鸞 *yuanzhu* 宛鴟 According to some of the oldest descriptions found in *Shanhai jing* 1, *feng* is a bird with feathers of the five colours and embodies the five Confucian virtues. The ornament on the head reads as the character *de* 德 (“virtue”), the one on its wings – as *yi* 義 (“rightness”), the ornament on its back as *li* 裡 (“ritual propriety”), the one on the breast as *ren* 仁 (“benevolence”), and the ornament on its belly as *xin* 信 (“trustworthiness”). Its appearance is a portent of peace in All under Heaven (see Yuan Ke 1980: 16). The *feng*, together with the unicorn (*qilin* 麒麟), the dragon *long* and the tortoise forms the group of the Four Numena, *siling* 四靈 - The *qilin* 麒麟 commonly rendered as “unicorn”, is a hybrid creature, described as having the body of a deer, the tail of an ox and one horn (*Shuowen* 10). In some accounts it is of white colour and its body is covered with fish scales. The *qilin* is considered as an embodiment of benevolence (*ren*), and, like the *feng* bird, is an auspicious omen.

赤松遊霞乘煙 Red Pine travels on clouds and mounts the haze,
封子鍊骨凌仙 Master Feng smelts his bones and rises as an immortal.
(Yu Chan *Youxian shi* VI, Lu Qinli: 875)

乘彼六氣渺茫 Here I mount the Six Breaths into the Infinite,
輜駕赤水崑陽 My carriage drives to the Crimson Waters, at the southern slope of Kunlun.
(Yu Chan *Youxian shi* VII, Lu Qinli: 875)

These accounts resemble the atmospheric mounts of the divine men described in *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi*. The celestial deities in the oldest *Chuci* poems had likewise moved on clouds, whirlwinds and thunder:

廣開今天門 Open wide the door of heaven!
紛吾乘兮玄雲 On a black cloud I ride in splendour,
令飄風兮先驅 Bidding the whirlwind drive before me,
使凍雨兮灑塵 Causing the rainstorm to lay the dust.”
(*Jiuge. Da Siming, Chuci buzhu*: 68, tr. by Hawkes 1985: 110)

The immortals prefer to ride on auspiciously coloured clouds and mists in all hues of the red, which are all forms of fiery *yang* breaths, the energizing potency of which propels the adept even higher.

駕虹蜺 I harness a colourful rainbow,
乘赤雲 And ride on crimson clouds. ¹⁵⁹ (Cao Cao *Moshang san*, Lu Qinli: 348)

The image of the rainbow suggests the prismatic colours that symbolize totality in all its aspects. The crimson colour of the clouds is associated with the *yang* energies of the sun. The immortals might also “mount the purple haze” (*cheng ziyān* 乘紫煙 [Guo Pu *Youxian shi* 3]), “mount the purple auroras” (*cheng zixia* 乘紫霞 [Lu Ji *Qian huansheng ge*]), “mount the cinnabar breath” (*cheng danqi* 乘丹气 [Yu Xin *Daoshi buxu ci* 2]). The epithet “cinnabar” associates the breath *qi* with the solar essence and moreover carries alchemical overtones. Purple in Daoist literature is the colour of the zenith, which unites in itself the two opposing poles of the spectre and thus symbolizes cosmic totality and fulfilment. “Purple haze” (*ziyan* 紫煙) are pure emanations of the celestial pole of the Purple Tenuity¹⁶⁰, the purple auroras (*zixia* 紫霞) are the visually perceptible *yang* emanations, streaming from the source of sunlight in the eastern sky.

In the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties the elusive atmospheric phenomena are often “tamed” and given more tangible and concrete form. The image of a cloud chariot,

¹⁵⁹ Compare with similar passages in *Chuci*, for example Wang Bao’s *Jiuhuai* IX: “Harnessing steeds of rainbow to my chariot, I ride transfigured above the clouds” 乘虹蜺兮，載雲變化 (*Chuci buzhu*: 279; Hawkes 1985: 277)

¹⁶⁰ See Kroll 1997.

yunche 雲車 (no longer merely clouds) appears throughout Shen Yue's Daoist verse. Liang Jianwen di and Lu Sidao 盧思道 (535 – 586) similarly transform atmospheric imagery into chariots and horses:

雲車了無轍 A cloud chariot leaves no tracks,
風馬詎須鞭 Wind horses need no lash. (Liang Jianwen di *Shengxian pian*, Lu Qinli: 1916)

雲軒遊紫府 The cloud chariot roams in the Purple Prefecture,
風駟上丹梯 Wind harness ascends the cinnabar stairs. (Lu Sidao *Shengxian pian*, Lu Qinli: 2629)

The image of cloud chariot was not, in fact, an original invention of the Southern Dynasties poets. The expression can be traced back to *Huainanzi* 1, where Feng Yi 馮夷 (identified with the River Earl, Hebo 河伯) is said to “mount a cloud chariot, enter the clouds and rainbows, travel through the light mists” (乘雲車, 入雲蜺, 遊微霧, Liu Wendian: 5). In the earlier poetry somewhat similar phrasings might also be found, as in a song by Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217 - 278):

雲為車兮風為馬 Clouds are the chariot, winds are the horses
(*Wuchu ge* 吳楚歌, Lu Qinli: 562)

Nevertheless, from the Liang Dynasty onwards the images of riding in cloud chariots and on wind harnesses (in lieu of simply clouds and wind) become preponderant in the verse on immortality. The sheer number of their appearances seems to be indicative of a general tendency in the court immortality poetry. The poets increasingly employ more concrete and tactile imagery, which immediately appeals to the senses. This development towards a kind of court "realism" in the "otherworldly" poetic current of the Southern Dynasties will be further discussed many times and in different aspects in the pages below.

1.3.2. The vocabulary of the immortals' flight (Han - Southern Dynasties)

From its very origin, the “roaming into immortality” verse emphasises the immortals' absolute freedom of movement which transcends all spatial confinements. The state of immortality is commonly visualised as an unrestrained flight through the cosmos.

The journeys of the immortals are perceived in the spirit of *Zhuangzi*'s “free and easy wandering” (*xiaoyao you* 逍遙遊):

遨遊八極
乃到崑崙之山
Over the Eight Limits we roam and ramble,
Until we reach Kunlun mountain. (Cao Cao: *Qichu chang* II, Lu Qinli: 345)

齊駕飛龍驂赤螭
逍遙五岳間
Together, we mount flying male dragons, harness crimson female dragons,
Roam and ramble among the five great mountains.
(Fu Xuan *Yunzhong baizi gao xing*, Lu Qinli: 564)

遺物棄鄙累
逍遙遊太和
Discard the things, reject the worldly tethers,
Wander free and easy in the Grand Harmony.
(Xi Kang: *Da Er Guo* II, Lu Qinli: 487)

The expression *xiaoyao* 逍遙, also written 消搖 is commonly translated as “free and easy”, “footloose and fancyfree”. It carries the connotation of ‘directionless’ or ‘random’, as in *Huainanzi* 1: “In ten thousand directions, with a hundred changes, wandering [without direction] (*xiaoyao*), without a place to settle” 萬方百變, 消搖而無所定 (Liu Wendian: 34).

Such spontaneous and unpredictable motion appears everywhere in *Zhuangzi*:

“The Accomplished Ones of Old ... travelled through the void of purposeless motion (*xiaoyao*)... Purposeless motion, *xiaoyao* is non-action, *wuwei*”
古之至人, ... 以遊逍遙之虛, ... 逍遙, 無為也. (ch. 14, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 519).

It has no direction, no intent, and is therefore empty or void, retaining the infinity of unrealised possibilities.

The free and spontaneous character of these wanderings is reflected in the verbal compounds commonly used to describe the movement of the immortals – *piaopiao* 飄飄 or *piaoyao* 飄颻 (connotations of soaring, carried by the wind, whirling), *fu* 浮 (drifting, carried by water), *liulang* 流浪 (floating along, carried by the waves):

飄颻雲日間
邈與世路殊
Whirling and soaring between the sun and the clouds,
They keep away from the way of the world. (Ruan Ji *Yonghuai shi* 41, Lu Qinli: 504)

飄飄靈仙
流浪巖津
He soars and drifts as a numinous immortal,
He roams and rambles among cliffs and fords.
(Kan Hong *Shan Daokai zan*, Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1380)

飄颻入倒景
出沒上煙霞
Drifting and soaring they enter the upturned lights,
Now coming forth, now gone, they rise into the hazy auroras.
(Yu Xin *Daoshi buxi ci* VI, Lu Qinli: 2350)

At the same time the flight of the immortals is wild and dizzying, imbued with extreme dynamic charge. The immortals typically flash across the heavens with poignant briefness:

忽神奔而鬼怪
時髣佛以遙見兮
精皎皎以往來
With godlike swiftness miraculously moving.
Sometimes men see them, in remote, uncertain glimpses,
As their bright essences dart across the sky. (*Yuanyou*, ll. 34-36)

The word *shuhu* 倏忽, “in a blink, in a flash, instantly”, is often used to convey the abrupt and instantaneous nature of their movement through the cosmic levels:

輕舉乘浮雲 Lightened you’ll soar, mount the floating clouds,
倏忽行萬儀 In a blink you’ll travel millions of miles. (Cao Pi *Zhi yangliu xing*, Lu Qinli: 393)

曜靈未移景□□□□□□□□□□ The blazing spirit has not moved its rays yet□□,
□□□□□□□□□□倏忽造昊蒼 As instantly we reach the grey-green sky. (Cao Zhi *Wuyou yong*, Lu Qinli: 433-34)

Ability to travel great distances in a short time is a primary sign of the immortals’ mastery over space and time and is an important topoi in their hagiographies. Moreover, in ancient Chinese poetry it pertains to the numinous in general. Such unexpected, sudden movement had also characterised the *Chuci* deities:

靈皇皇兮既降 The god had just descended in bright majesty,
焱遠舉兮雲中 When off in a whirl he soared again, far into the clouds...
(*Jiuge. Yunzhong jun, Chuci buzhu*: 58; transl. by Hawkes 1985: 104)

The extreme dynamism of the immortals’ flights is expressed through the image of splitting asunder everything in their way - they “sprinkle the light mists” (*sa qingwu* 洒輕霧 [Huan Tan *Wangxian fu*]), they “split the rain apart” (*lie zhi yu* 列之雨 [Cao Cao *Qichu chang* II]), they “scatter the everlasting wind” (*sa changfeng* 灑長風 [Cao Pi 曹毗 *Huandi zan*]). Especially the verb *pai* 排 (‘to push away’, ‘push aside’, or ‘push open’) is frequently used in this type of poetry to indicate the passage from one level of the universe to another.

意欲奮六翻 I wish to spread my six wings,
排霧陵紫虛 Push aside the mists and skim the purple void. (Cao Zhi *Youxian*, Lu Qinli: 456)

神僊排雲出 Divine immortals push aside the clouds and come forth,
但見金銀臺 Suddenly I behold terraces of gold and silver. (Guo Pu *Youxian shi* VI, Lu Qinli: 866)

松子排煙去 Master Red Pine pushed the haze and took his leave,
英靈眇難測 As for his brilliant numen straining eyes peered after it in vain.
(Shen Yue *Chi Songzi jian*, Lu Qinli: 1639)

A favoured verb to describe the immortal’s flight through the heavens is *ling* 凌, translated here as “to skim”. Belonging to the group of synonymous expressions such as *deng* 登 (climb), *sheng* 升 (ascend), *ju* 舉 (rise up), it more specifically conveys lightness and smoothness of upward movements. It indicates a “light-footed, scendent passage, as over rising waters, crests of hills, billows of clouds, a tripsome grazing or skating above the surface of one’s footing” (Paul Kroll 1997: 28). That which the immortals skim over is usually of an ethereal nature - they might “skim the auroras” (*ling xia* 凌霞), “skim the empyrean” (*ling*

xiao 陵霄 [Lu Ji's *Lingxiao fu*]), even “skim beyond the empyrean” (*ling xiaowai* 陵霄外 [Guo Pu's *Youxian shi* 3]), “skim the Grand Purity” (*ling taiqing* 凌太清 [Guo Pu's *Youxian shi* 11]). The immortals are often depicted as they “skim the void”, *lingxu* 陵虛 – lightly passing over the most mystic, ineffable realms of the cosmos. They “skim the Purple Void” (*ling zixu* 陵紫虛 [Cao Zhi's *Youxian*]), “mount and skim the Empty Void” (*chengling xuwu* 乘凌虛無 [Huan Tan's *Wangxian fu*])¹⁶¹, “skim the Grand Void” (*ling taixu* 凌太虛 [Cao Zhi's *Xianren pian*]).¹⁶²

I.3.3. Flight through the cosmos

The celestial travels of the immortals, combining both Zhuangzi's “free and easy” roaming (*xiaoyao*) and the flashing suddenness of the divine, is cosmic in scope and eternal in duration. The immortals freely traverse the cosmic zones, communicating between the levels of existence, between the worlds of man and gods. Their voyage takes them not only upwards but extends on a horizontal plane as well, carrying them to the most distant quarters of the world and to the mythical places described in *Shanhai jing* and *Chuci*.

東觀扶桑曜	□□□□□□□□□□	□ In the East I'll watch the blaze of the Fusang tree,
西臨弱水流		In the West approach the Weak Water's stream.
北極登玄渚		Advancing in the North, climb the Dark Islet,
南翔陟丹丘		Soaring in the South, ascend the Cinnabar Hill. (Cao Zhi <i>Youxian</i> , Lu Qinli: 456)

The mulberry tree of the sun, Fusang 扶桑, and the Weak-water river, Ruoshui 弱水, are the mythical landmarks of the farthest east and of the western Kunlun mountains. The Dark Islet, Xuanzhu 玄渚, had previously appeared in Zhang Heng's *Xijing fu* 西京賦 (“Rhapsody on the Western Capital”) among the mythical haunts of the immortals¹⁶³. The Cinnabar Hill, Danqiu 丹丘, appears in the *Yuanyou* poem of *Chuci* as the home of the winged immortals in the far south. The poet, picturing himself as an immortal, freely traverses a symmetrical

¹⁶¹ In Daoist cosmology the term *xu* 虛, meaning “empty, void, barren”, implies a realm where the categories and distinctions of our world are not relevant. The Empty Void (*Xuwu* 虛無) is a term for the Dao considered as the ultimate source of all being, or “the place where Dao resides” (*Huainanzi* 2), a realm or state of mind where being and non-being are indistinguishable. This is some kind of remnant of the primordial monad or cosmic egg that had been Totality before the differentiation of form and matter (Schafer Sinological Papers 5: 6).

¹⁶² The term Grand Void (*Taixu* 太虛) appears for the first time in *Zhuangzi* 22 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 758) where it represents a vague wilderness at the limits of the sky. E. Schafer suggests that for the medieval Daoists it possessed a specific active and generative character. He describes the Grand Void (translated by him as Grand Barrens) as an eternal reservoir of the Primal Breath (*yuanyi*), as undifferentiated zone of creativity, which secretes, precipitates or exudes energetic breath *qi* (Schafer 1981: 400 n. 91 and Schafer Sinological Papers 5: 13).

¹⁶³ *Wenxuan* 2: 60, translated by Knechtges 1982: 201

cosmos schematically defined by the landmarks of its cardinal directions. The visit in due order of the four directions is modelled on the cosmic *itineraria* described in the *Yuanyou* poem of *Chuci* and Zhang Heng's *Sixuan fu* (see below, ch. 3.1.). The “distant roaming” here becomes a smooth ritual circuit of the cosmos, which engenders special powers and affirms the traveller as lord of All Under Heaven (see also below, *ibid.*)

Ruan Ji's immortal hero is similarly pictured as unrestrained master of space:

朝起瀛洲野	At dawn he rises from the wilds of the Isle of Ying, ¹⁶⁴
日夕宿明光	And at evening he lodges in the Luminous Rays. ¹⁶⁵
再撫四海外	Twice he brushes against the four seas beyond the world, ¹⁶⁶
羽翼自飛揚	As up he flies, carried by his own wings. (Ruan Ji <i>Yonghuai shi</i> 7, Lu Qinli: 498)

The immortals cross the surface of the whole earth twice in a single day, skimming the four seas, encircling the world and visiting the mythical landmarks of the east and south-east

The mythical eastern quarters of the dawn are preferred by the immortals – the Tang valley 湯谷, the bathhouse of sun, from the waters of which it emerges renewed every morning and the tree Fu Sang 扶桑, on the branches of which the sun roosts and from which it rises¹⁶⁷:

摠轡扶桑枝	They tie the reigns up to a branch of the Fusang tree,
濯足湯谷波	And wash their feet in the Dawn Valley waves. (Lu Ji <i>Qian huansheng ge</i> , Lu Qinli: 665)

These ancient solar quarters are the source of invigorating cosmic energy, which imparts eternal life.

The power of divine omnipresence is also a metaphor for omniscience - being everywhere means seeing all and knowing all:

乘凌虛無洞達幽明 You mounted and skimmed the empty void, penetrated both the obscure and the bright,

¹⁶⁴ One of the three Islands of the Immortals in the Eastern Sea.

¹⁶⁵ The mythical place called Luminous Rays (Mingguang 明光) occurs earlier in the *Tonglu* 通路 poem of the *Jiuhuai* 九懷 cycle from the *Chuci*, where it is glossed as being located at the “Cinnabar peak of the Eastern pole” 東極之丹巒 (*Chuci buzhu*: 270). Wang Yi's commentary on *Yuanyou* identifies it with the Cinnabar Hill, home of the winged immortals (*ibid.*: 167)

¹⁶⁶ A quote from *Zhuangzi* 11: “It [man's heart-mind, *renxin* 人心] is so swift, that between a glance up and a glance down it has twice brushed against the four seas and beyond” 其疾俛仰之間而再撫四海之外 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 371).

¹⁶⁷ Tang 湯 has the meaning of ‘hot water’. Variant names are the homophones Yanggu 陽谷 and Yanggu 陽谷.

Fusang, the Mulberry tree in the East, from which the sun rises, is often referred to and described in ancient Chinese sources (*Huainanzi*, ch. 3 and 4, Liu Wendian: 108 and 149, etc.). The most explicit descriptions are in the *Shanhai jing*: “Above the Tang valley 湯谷 is the Fusang. It is where the ten suns bathe. It is north of the Black Tooth people. In the swirling water there is a large tree. Nine suns dwell on its lower branches; one sun, on its upper branch” (ch. 9, Yuan Ke 1980: 260) and “On the top of a mountain named Nieyao jundi 孽妖謹地 is the Fu tree. Although its trunk is three hundred *li*, its leaves are like those of mustard. The Valley there is called the Warm Springs Valley 溫源谷. Above the Tang valley 湯谷 is the Fu tree 扶木. When one sun reaches it, another sun goes out; all of them carried by birds” (ch. 14, *ibid.*: 354). For a discussion of the Fusang see Allan 1991: 27 ff.

諸物皆見玉女在旁 Everything was visible for you, the Jade Lady waited upon you. (Huan Tan *Wangxian fu*)

The far-off roamings of the immortals ultimately lift them out of the polarities typical of the human condition:

桴弱水 They sail the Weak waters,
越炎氛 Cross the fiery mist (Zhang Heng *Qi bian, Quan Han fu*: 491)

The Weak waters, *Ruoshui* 弱水, and the Blazing Fire are formidable barriers lying on the way to Kunlun, described in *Shanhai jing*. In the Weak-water River even a hair sinks immediately, the Fire Mountain scorches every single being. These mythical landmarks reflect a cosmographic vision of the universe as polarised between the two opposites of water and fire. The two dangerous milieux where the cosmic traveller must learn to survive are thus the two poles of creation. Mastery over water and fire remains a constant motif in all accounts of the immortals. Zhuangzi writes about the Divine Man:

„There is nothing in the world that can harm him, even if the ocean rises to the heaven, he will not drown, even in the greatest fire, which melts stones and metals, burns the earth and the mountains down to ashes, he will not burn.“

之人也,物莫之傷,大浸稽天而不溺,大旱金石流土山焦而不熱 (Zhuangzi *jishi*: 30 - 31)

The immortals' mastery of water and fire symbolically expresses the transcendence of opposites, the abolition of the polarity typical of the human condition through which a higher, unconditioned mode of being is attained.

Ruan Ji conveys the transcendental state of the immortals through the image of the Heavenly Net:

六龍服氣輿 Six dragons there draw a chariot of breath,
雲蓋切天網 Whose cloud canopy covers the Net of heaven. (Ruan Ji *Yonghuai shi* 23, Lu Qinli: 501)

The skies in ancient China were sometimes thought of as nets of increasingly finer weave. Ruan Ji here probably refers to *Laozi* 73: “Heaven's net is broad and, although its mesh is wide, nothing escapes it” (天網恢恢, 疏而不失). The fact that it is covered (or “cut-off”, *qie* 切) by the cloud canopy of the immortals' carriage implies that the immortals are beyond the bonds not only of human laws and customs, but of natural or temporal transformations as well. The same image is used in a similar way by Liang Wudi:

耆如玄羅 Long-lived like the Mystic Net,¹⁶⁸
出入遊太清 They go in and out, wandering through the Grand Purity.
(*Shangyun yue. Yigui qu*, Lu Qinli: 1525)

¹⁶⁸ Both *Yuefu shiji* and *Shiji* remark that 耆 is also written as 壽 “long-lived”.

The bird-immortals can ascend freely through the heavenly nets - those inanimate celestial guardians, darting through their interstices up to the highest spheres.

Having quartered the world and transcended all polarities, the immortals gain access to the highest reaches of the cosmos. Their domain is in the mystical heights, far above the heavens.

翱翔九天上 Hover above the Nine Heavens,
騁轡遠行遊 Loose the reins and wander afar. ¹⁶⁹ (Cao Zhi *Youxian shi*, Lu Qinli: 456)

Some poets more specifically place the immortals in the lofty heights of the Grand Purity heaven, Taiqing 太清 – the highest known heaven in the Daoist tradition preceding the Shangqing revelations.

譬若王僑之乘雲兮 Like Wang Qiao mounting the clouds,
載赤霄而凌太清 Charioting the crimson empyrean, skimming the Grand Purity.
(Liu Xiang *Jiutan. Yuanyou, Chuci buzhu*: 309)

翔雲霄 Soaring in the cloudy empyrean,
浮太清 Drifting in the Grand Purity. (Cai Yong *Wangzi Qiao bei*, Yan Kejun vol. 2: 706)

The domain of the immortals may be in the starry region of the Purple Tenuity (Ziwei 紫微) as well.

上游紫宮 Above they roam in the Purple Palace,
下棲崑崙 Below they nest on Kunlun. (Zhang Heng *Qibian*, Yan Kejun vol. 2: 531)

遂升紫庭 I rise up to the Purple Court.
逍遙天衢 At the Crossroad of Heaven I rove and ramble¹⁷⁰
(Xi Kang *Siyuan shi* VII, Lu Qinli: 485)

乘雲倏忽 Mounting the clouds in an instant,
飄飄紫微□□□ He floats and soars in the Purple Tenuity. (Lu Ji *Wangzi Qiao zan*, Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1006)

The Purple Tenuity, also known as the Purple Palace (Zigong 紫宮), is the great circumpolar constellation, consisting of a part of the Draco constellation between the Big and the Small Dippers and many other smaller stars. It includes the Pole Star and is the residence of the deity Taiyi 太一, the Great Unity. It is the heavenly region into which the Changhe starry gate - the final trial for all cosmic travellers, ultimately opened. ¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ The notion of Nine Heavens goes back to Chinese antiquity. These are segments of the sky corresponding to the four cardinal directions, the four intercardinals and the central axial position. The set of Nine Heavens became characteristic of Daoism, carrying a plethora of esoteric connotations (Schafer *Sinological Papers* 5: 4)

¹⁷⁰ Although the expression *tianqu* 天衢 (crossroads of Heaven) might be used here mainly for its figurative value, it has a particular astronomical meaning. *Tianqu* is an asterism, consisting of “four stars in Scorpio, situated in the belly of the Dragon, whose horns are Spica and Arcturus, and whose heart is Antares. The crossroads are the ancient intersection of the celestial equator and the ecliptic, that is, the spring quinox of antiquity” (Schafer 1983b: 334).

¹⁷¹ Purple is the ritual colour of the zenith, and in the Daoist texts often has the connotation of “celestial”, “otherworldly”, “sacred”. On Purple Tenuity see Schafer 1977: 47 and Schafer *Sinological Papers* 5: 5 - 6.

After the Shangqing revelations broadened out the celestial topography and disclosed even loftier heavenly spheres, the immortals in the more religiously tuned *youxian* verse took these newly opened reaches as their haunts.

迎九玄於金闕 Invited through the Nine Mysteries into the Golden Pylons
謁三素於玉清 On a pilgrimage through the Three Immaculates into the Jade Purity¹⁷²
(Tao Hongjing *Shuixian fu*, Yan Kejun vol. 7: 456)

The Jade Purity (Yuqing 玉清) is the highest of the Three Heavens, or Three Purities (Sanqing 三清), known to the Maoshan Daoists. It is the ultimate celestial zone inhabited by divine beings who never endured life on earth in a corruptible body. The Golden Pylons (*Jinque* 金闕) are the ceremonial gateway to the Jade Capital (Yujing 玉京) - the supreme celestial city of the Shangqing gods. A ceremonial visit to the palace of the supreme deities was an occasional prerequisite for the True Ones (*zhenren*) from the Grand Purity Heaven.

Yu Xin' Daoist adept similarly soars up into the remote and powerful regions of unbounded light of the Shangqing divinities, like the Jade Void (Yuxu 玉虛):

寂絕乘丹氣 In utter silence mount cinnabar breath,
玄明上玉虛 In mystic radiance rise to the Jade Void. (*Daoshi buxu ci* 2, Lu Qinli: 2349)

The Jade Void is a special powerful zone on the rim of the all-highest Jade Purity heaven.¹⁷³

I.3.4. Looking back to earth

Ever since the origins of poetry on immortality a common trope in the descriptions of immortals' flights is the motif of looking back down to the earth from the heavens. This had been a constant image in the *Chuci itineraria*, where it usually marked the turning point of the narrative development. During his unrestrained celestial roaming the hero glimpses his old home below and is overpowered by a wave of nostalgia for the world he has left behind, resulting in his willing descent back to earth (cf. *Lisao*). This time-honoured motif is, however, re-evaluated in the "roaming into immortality" verse. In the *Yuanyou* poem the glimpsing of

¹⁷² The expression *sansu* 三素, Three Immaculates, designated three pure and fine essences, partly visible as the pure soft colours of the morning sky in spring, usually thought of as white, yellow and purple pastels. They were personified as three celestial sisters, who could be approached by the Daoist adept to nourish his inner self. See Schafer Sinological Papers 5: 3 – 4.

¹⁷³ Tang dynasty authors state that "in the Jade Void there is neither day nor night", or describe it as a place of total, eternal luminosity. See Schafer Sinological Papers 5: 7.

the earth still causes nostalgic pain, but only to be overcome by the poetic hero and to take him even higher:

涉青雲以汎濫游兮	Traversing the blue sky, I was wandering freely,
忽臨睨夫舊鄉	When suddenly I glimpsed my old home below me.
僕夫懷余心悲兮	My groom was homesick and my own heart downcast;
邊馬顧而不行	The trace-horses looked back and would not go forward.
思舊故以想像兮	I pictured my dear ones in imagination,
長太息而掩涕	And, with a heavy sigh, I brushed the tears away.
汎容與而遐舉兮	The slowly I drifted on, rising even higher,
聊抑志而自弭	Suppressing these wilful thoughts, in control once more.

(*Chuci buzhu*: 172, tr. by Hawkes 1985: 197 – 98)

In the context of the journey towards the ultimate Dao, pictured in *Yuanyou*, the look back to earth becomes one of the final and most crucial tests for the adept – it means overcoming his human affections and all attachments to the ones he holds dear.

The motif of sadness amidst the heavenly ramblings provoked by the look back to earth also appears in the conclusion of the ninth poem of Guo Pu's *Youxian* cycle:

東海猶蹄沲	The Eastern Sea seems hoofprint full of water,
崑崙螻蟻堆	Kunlun – a swarm of locusts and ants.
遐邈冥茫中	Far, far below, into the boundless dark,
俯視令人哀	A look down makes one grieve. (<i>Youxian shi</i> IX, Lu Qinli: 866)

Guo Pu provides no explanation for the grief, which unexpectedly comes at the culmination of his triumphant ascent when even the mythical cosmic mountain looks like an insects' dwelling. From the context of the poem it seems that his sadness is far from being nostalgic pain. A more likely explanation is that Guo Pu is grieving at the lot of the mortal, profane men left behind in the "boundless dark" far below. Such an interpretation is backed up by a very similar situation occurring in a poem of very different origin. On the the night of the seventeenth day of the twelfth month of 365 Yang Xi was presented by his divine visitors with a poem of the Right Lady of the Mystic Purity of the Grand Tenuity (Taiwei Xuanqing You furen 太微玄清左夫人), which was reputedly sung in the inner chambers of the Palace of the Azure Lad (Qingtong 青童). The poem, which describes the heavenly exploits of the goddess and splendid vistas of mystic celestial regions, concludes in a manner similar to Guo Pu:

超輓竦明刃	In our carriage we leap over the lustrious blades, ¹⁷⁴
下盼使我惋	A look down makes me grieve.
顧哀地仙輩	I gaze back in sadness at the ranks of the earthly immortals,
何爲栖林澗	Why do they nest amidst forests and streams? (<i>Zhen'gao</i> 3/16a/ 4)

¹⁷⁴ The meaning of this line is not clear to me. I adopt the explanation of T. Russel 1985: 394, who speculates that the expression "lustrious blades" (*mingren* 明刃) might be either a reference to a celestial tower or an allusion to mountains.

In the middle of her breathtaking progress through the heavens the goddess glimpses the world below and is overcome by pity for lowly earthly immortals (*dixian* 地仙), not accomplished enough to experience the bliss of the True Ones. These two examples, one from a learned scholar and poet, the other (presumably) of divine origin, illustrate how the time-honoured motif came to be invested with completely new meaning during the fourth century. The nostalgia initially aroused by the glimpsing of the world below, is now replaced by a feeling of pity and compassion for those who remain bound to earth – mortal man for Guo Pu, earthly immortals for the True Ones of the Grand Purity heaven.

From the fourth century onwards the look back to earth generally appears in the verse on immortality as an indication of the loftiness and delights of the travels of the immortals. During their celestial ramblings the immortals often enjoy the sweeping panorama far below them:

三山羅如粟 The three mountains appear like scattered grains of rice,
巨壑不容刀 Great ravines as though a knife won't pass. (Yu Chan *Youxian shi* IV, Lu Qinli: 875)

高翔五岳小 Soaring high, the Five Mountains are small,
低望九河微 Looking down, the Nine Rivers so tiny.¹⁷⁵ (Liang Jianwen *di Xianke*, Lu Qinli: 1934)

The later immortals soar to cosmic regions so lofty that the earth is no longer visible to them and they even leave the celestial lights deep below them:

俯觀雲似蓋 I view from above the clouds resembling a canopy,
低望月如弓 I gaze below the moon looking like a bow. (Wang Bao *Qingju pian*, Lu Qinli: 2331)

始餐霞而吐霧 At first ingesting auroras and spewing mist,
終陵虛而倒景 At last I skim the void and look down on the sky-lights
(Shen Yue *Jiaoju fu*, Chen Qingyuan: 9)

The expression *daojing* 倒景 (literally "upturned, reversed sky-lights"), used by Shen Yue, means the sun and moon as seen shining *below* by the celestial traveller. This figure, apparently adopted from Daoist texts, becomes increasingly common in the "roaming into immortality" of the 6th century. The motif of looking down – no longer to earth, but to stellar vistas, further emphasises the exalted status that the immortals have acquired during the Southern Dynasties.

I.3.5. New developments of the celestial flight theme in the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties

¹⁷⁵ The Five Mountains are the Five Marchmounts of China. The Nine Rivers are the nine tributaries of Huanghe in the time of Yu the Great. This expression generally denotes Huanghe.

The terms describing the immortals' cosmic flights and the images of their mounts and paraphernalia remain much the same throughout the Southern Dynasties, but from the 5th century onwards a subtle change in poetic focus can be observed. The spiritual aspects of the cosmic wanderings, such as absolute freedom, spontaneity, omnipresence and omniscience, which had been at the core of early verse on immortality, are no longer emphasised. Instead the stress is placed on the splendour and grandeur of the celestial processions and on the immortals' access to the loftiest heavenly spheres.

Images of magnificent divine processions had formed an important part of the *Chuci itineraria* tradition. Initially accompanying celestial divinities, they were adopted and further developed in the later *Chuci* poems and in the Han rhapsodies *fu*. The fantastic imagery, surrounding the celestial traveller – dragon mounts, divine companions and precious paraphernalia, often served as a metaphor for the hero's supernatural powers and virtues (see for example *Yuanyou*, *Xishi*, Liu Xiang's *Yuanshi* and *Yuanyou* from the *Jiutan* cycle, etc.). The Han rhapsodies *fu* centered on the figure of the emperor likewise describe sumptuous imperial corteges, adopting the *Chuci* imagery as a flattery of the ruler, of his divine powers, splendour and glory.

During the Southern Dynasties descriptions of splendid processions increasingly featured in the celestial travels of the immortals, who were assuming a more and more exalted status within the divine hierarchy. Like their mundane counterparts they did not travel alone but were escorted by numerous retinues, in richly decorated carriages, accompanied by music. From the 6th century onwards these dazzling sights became a constant feature in the poetry of immortals and a major descriptive device. Most often these exalted, visually powerful verses are inserted as a polished parallel couplet in the longer narrative of the poem, or at its very beginning:

鳳旂亂煙道 Phoenix flags clutter on the road of haze,
龍駕溢雲區 Dragon chariots overflow the cloud realm. (Wang Rong *Youxian shi* II, Lu Qinli: 1398)

旌翻玉華暉 Banners billow out, darkening the jade efflorescence,
神轉雲光移 Spirits turn, shifting the cloudy rays. (Lu Huishao *Youxian shi*, Lu Qinli: 1463)

Alongside the renewed interest in the *Chuci* literature and its growing impact on court poetry, a no less important influence may have been the Shangqing religious poetry, which had surrounded the True Ones with all the celestial splendours befitting their exalted rank. The revelations abound in vivid descriptions of the celestial retinues of the True Ones, perceived as sublime heavenly lords. They travel in chariots of clouds and light, surrounded

with coloured haze, carrying precious paraphernalia, accompanied by celestial guards, fantastical horsemen and divine lads. This is how Lady of the Right Bloom of the Palace of Cloud Forest (Yunlin gong youying furen 雲林宮右英夫人, or simply Lady Youying) depicts her progress through the heavens in the poems that she chanted to Yang Xi in 365 AD¹⁷⁶:

騰躍雲景轅	Bounding upwards in a chariot of clouds and light,
浮觀霞上空	Drifting I survey the Void above the auroras.
霄駟縱橫舞	Empyrean carriages dance to and fro,
紫蓋託靈方	Purple canopies tarry in the numinous realms.
朱煙纏旌旄	Vermilion haze envelops banners and pennants,
羽帔扇香風	Feathered cloaks fan the scented breeze... (<i>Zhen'gao</i> 3. 5a, CT 1016)

響景落滄浪	Reigning-in the sky-lights, I descend over the Whatchet Whitecap,
騰躍清海津	Bounding upwards over the fords of the Blue Sea.
絳煙亂太陽	Scarlet haze throws the Grand Yang in disarray,
羽蓋傾九天	Feathered canopies turn the Nine heavens upside down.
雲輿浮空洞	Cloud chariots drift in the Hollow of Space,
倏忽風波間	In a flash and flicker - amid the wind and waves ... (<i>Zhen'gao</i> 2.16b, CT 1016)

While the poetry of the Shangqing revelations itself extensively drew on *Chuci* imagery, the wide diffusion of these texts among literary circles profoundly influenced the secular poets' perception of the highest immortals and the ways in which they were described. A good example of this influence is Liang Wudi's cycle *Shangyun yue*. The first poem of the cycle exhibits Shangqing imagery and diction in the depiction of the immortals:

鳳臺上	On the Phoenix Terrace
兩悠悠	Chariots steadily stream
雲之際	To the edge of the clouds.
神光朝天極	Divine light gathers at the Heavenly poles.
華蓋過延州	Flowery canopies obscure the whole land.
羽衣昱耀	Robes of plumes brightly shine,
春吹去復留	The spring breathes out and stays on. (Lu Qinli: 1524)

All the individual details dissolve in a eery vision of light and colours. The startled eye indistinctly perceives a disarray of billowing canopies and banners, glittering robes and dragon chariots, which fill up the whole Heaven. Undulating ensignia enhance the visual splendour of the procession and in addition announce the high rank of the immortals.

Besides conveying the majesty and numinosity of the immortals, these descriptions of ethereal and luminous attire have an important aesthetic function. Canopies, standarts, robes, pendants, are in constant movement, sparkle with light and undulate, creating an array of

¹⁷⁶ These poems were addressed to Xu Mi, the patron of Yang Xi, whom Lady Youying attempted to lure into a "mystical union" with her. Yang Xi acted as an intermediary, conveying her lofty words to Xu Mi.

colour and light that overwhelms the listener. These polished, sensually appealing images accord with the general pursuit of visual beauty in the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties.

Even more instrumental was the context of the composition of these *youxian* poems, which, like the Han rhapsodies *fu* came from the court milieu. Many of them are occasional pieces composed on command or as poetic exchange during court gatherings, banquets and outings. Examples include two poems on wandering in immortality by Shen Yue, harmonizing with poems on the same theme by Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良 (d. 494), Prince of Jingling (竟陵王):

天矯承絳仙	In whirls and twirls ride the rose-gold immortals, ¹⁷⁷
螭衣方陸離	Their dragon robes – so brilliant and bright.
玉鑿隱雲霧	Jade bells are muffled in mists and clouds,
溶溶紛上馳	Dashing upward in majestic multitudes.
瑤臺風不息	On the Azure-gem terrace winds never cease, ¹⁷⁸
赤水正漣漪	Crimson Stream is rippling gently by. ¹⁷⁹
崢嶸玄圃上	At the craggy heights above the Mystic Gardens,
聊攀瓊樹枝	Leisurely [we] [I] pluck the rose-gem boughs.

朝上閭闔宮	In the morning [we][I] ascend the palace of Changhe, ¹⁸⁰
暮宴清都闕	By mightfall [we][I] feast within the pylons of the Pure City.
騰蓋隱奔星	Flying canopies obscure the rushing stars,
低鸞避行月	Low chariots evade the coursing moon.
九疑紛相從	The host of Jiuyi accompanies [us][me] in grandeur,
虹族乍升沒	Rainbow banners emerge and submerge now and then.
青鳥去復還	Azure birds fly off and then return,
高唐雲不歇	At Gaotang clouds never cease.
若華有餘照	By Ruo Hua remains lingering light ¹⁸¹
淹留且晞髮	Where [we][I] still dally and dry [our][my] hair.

(He Jing Lingwang *Youxian shi er shou*; Lu Qinli: 1636-37)

¹⁷⁷ In *Yiwen leiju* 78 and *Guanwen xuan* 9 the phrase *yaojiao* 天矯 is given as *tianqiao* 天躡. - The term *jiang* 絳 renders some hue between scarlet and orange. Also defined as the “colour of the emerging sun” this flamelike colour repeatedly appears in Daoist poetry and scriptures and figures in the dress of the highest deities. According to Schafer *jiang* “represents, in the symbolic language of the religion, a rutilant, divine colour, the visible energy of the solar energy *yang*” (Schafer 1981: 402).

¹⁷⁸ The Azure-gem terraces are located on the summit of Mt. Kunlun. Wang Jia 王嘉 (4th cent.) in “Record of Gathering Overlooked Information” (*Shiyi ji* 拾遺記) 10 writes: “On its [Kunlun’s] slopes are twelve Azure-gem terraces, each one-thousand paces across, and all built on foundations of five-coloured jade.” (cited in Mather 2003, vol. 1: 260)

¹⁷⁹ The Crimson Stream (Chishui 赤水) flows down the southeast slope of Kunlun.

¹⁸⁰ There are no personal pronouns to indicate whether the poet is describing his own actions or speaks in the plural, “we”. Therefore, both possible readings “I” and “we” are provided.

¹⁸¹ The flowers of the Ruo tree (*ruohua* 若華), represent the sunset. *Shanhai jing* 17.5a: “In the midst of the Great Wilderness (Dahuang 大荒) are Flat Rock Mountain (Hengshi shan 衡石山), Nine Shadows Mountain (Jiuyin shan 九陰山) and Cavernous Wilds Mountain (Dongye shan 洞野山). Growing on the summits of these mountains are red trees with azure leaves and red flowers, called Ruo trees (Ruoshu 若樹). The commentary of Guo Pu explains: “The Ruo tree grows on the farthest western part of the Kunlun range. The light of the flowers is red and shines downward (共華光赤下照)” (Yuan Ke 1980: 437). In other sources it is also conceived as the “place where the sun sets down” (日之所入處, *ibid.*, n. 2).

These two pieces consist of elegant, condensed *itineraries*, which are presented as independent entities, free of personal reflections. The first poem takes place at the Kunlun paradise, indicated by toponyms such as Azure-gem terrace (Yaotai 瑤臺), Crimson Stream, (Chishui 赤水), and the Mystic Gardens (Xuanpu 玄圃, = the Hanging Gardens, Xuanpu 懸圃) of the Queen Mother. The second poem echoes the *Yuanyou* poem of *Chuci* in its diction and topography. The first couplet employs the *Chuci* morning-evening formula as a way of describing a sequence of events. The divine sites mentioned – the Changhe celestial gates, the Pure City (Qingdu 清都), the Ruo 若 tree of the sunset, all go back to the *Lisao* and *Yuanyou*.¹⁸² The expression “host of Jiuyi” (Nine Doubts Mountain, 九疑紛), is again borrowed from the *Chuci*.¹⁸³ Lines 7 and 8, on the other hand, subtly allude to royal encounters with divinities. The azure birds are the messengers of the Queen Mother of the West, which she had sent to the Emperor Wu of Han. The eighth couplet refers to the amorous encounter between King Huai of Chu (r. 328 - 299 BC) and the Goddess of Mountain Wu, described in Song Yu’s *Gaotang fu* (*Wenxuan* 19: 875 - 885). Before departing the goddess of Mountain Wu promised that “in the morning I will come as morning clouds, in the evening I will be evening rain”.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² See *Yuanyou* ll. 91-92:

集重陽入帝宮兮 “Passing through the Bright Walls I entered the House of God,
造旬始而觀清都 Visited the Week Star and gazed on the Pure City.”

(*Chuci buzhu*: 169, tr. by Hawkes 1985:196).

For the Ruo tree see for example *Lisao*, ll. 195-96:

折若木以拂日兮 “I broke a sprig of the Ruo tree to strike the sun with,
聊逍遙以相羊, First I would roam a little for my enjoyment (*Chuci buzhu*: 28, tr. by Hawkes 1985: 73).

The motif of drying one’s hair goes back to the *Shao Siming* poem of the *Jiuge*:

與女沐兮咸池 “I will wash my hair with you in the Pool of Heaven,
晞女髮兮陽之阿 You shall dry your hair on the Bank of Sunlight.” (*Chuci buzhu*: 93, tr. by Hawkes 1985: 112).

See also *Yuanyou* ll. 73-74:

朝濯髮於湯谷兮 “At dawn I washed my hair in the Sunrise valley,
夕晞余身兮九陽 In the evening dried my body in the ninefold sunlight” (*Chuci buzhu*: 167)

¹⁸³ See for example *Xiang Furen* from the *Jiuge*:

九嶷竇兮並迎 “In hosts from their home on Doubting Mountain,
靈之來兮如雲 Like clouds in number the spirits come thronging” (*Chuci buzhu*: 68, tr. by Hawkes 1985: 109).

An almost identical line appears in *Lisao* ll. 281-82:

百神翳其備降兮 “The spirits came like a dense cloud descending
九嶷竇兮並迎 And the host of Doubting Mountain came crowding to meet him”

(*Chuci buzhu*: 37, tr. by Hawkes 1985: 76).

¹⁸⁴ *Wenxuan* 19: 875-76: “As [King Xiang (r. 298-263 BC)] gazed at the Gaotang Tower, above it uniquely there appeared a cloudy vapour (*yunqi* 雲氣), abruptly rising straight upwards. Suddenly it changed its appearance, and in the space of a moment it went through endless transformations. The King asked, ‘What kind of vapour is this?’ Song Yu answered, ‘This is called the Morning Cloud’ (*zhaoyun* 朝雲). . . [After your father, King Huai, had spent the night with the Goddess,] she said before leaving: I dwell on the sunny

At first sight these two poems sound like conventional descriptions of immortals' splendid processions, modelled on *Chuci* prototypes. The title, however, identifies them as occasional poems written to match a now lost *Youxian* poem by the Prince of Jingling. Moreover, on that occasion Wang Rong and Fan Yun also submitted their own matching poems (not extant). Rather than testimonies of religious vision, they should be regarded as thematic compositions written in response to his noble patron and for the appreciation of his literary friends. The particular occasion on which they were written is opened to speculation – it may have been a poetry gathering (probably at the Western Villa, Xidi 西邸, of the Prince of Jingling northwest of the palace in Jiankang between 487 and 494), but also an outing to a park or private estate, which is celebrated as roaming of the immortals. The prince and his suite are complimented as “rose-gold immortals”, the grounds of the excursion are extolled as paradise lands, and the allusions to encounters with female deities might simply refer to the accompanying palace ladies. In their purpose the court “roaming into immortality” poems of the Six Dynasties thus come close to some rhapsodies *fu* of the Han dynasty, which applied similar imagery to the similar end of flattering the royal patron, of providing amusement and delectation.

I. 4. Feasts

Abiding in eternal time in the highest celestial reaches, the immortals are pictured as enjoying a mystical bliss, as participating in a perpetual feast. Banquet scenes with music, dance and divine food had formed an integral part of the *Chuci itineraria* and of the grand Han *fu*-poems. Early descriptions of immortal feasts are to be found in the *Yuanyou* and *Xishi* poems of the *Chuci*, and in the *Sixuan fu* of Zhang Heng, where they mark the climax of the celestial journey undertaken by the poetic hero. These banquets consisted of feasting, drinking, song and dance to the accompaniment of various instruments, performed by deities and immortals. Music was a means of exaltation to the highest spheres, beyond all rational distinctions, and it is no coincidence that banquet scenes typically occur at the turning points of the narrative – immediately before the celestial traveller achieves the ultimate breakthrough the existential planes.

Besides the *Chuci* tradition, the theme of feasting had occupied a significant place in the late Han and Wei *yuefu* songs. Songs performed during banquets often transpose the festive

slope of Mt. Wu, at the precipices of the high hill. At dawn I become morning clouds, in the evening I change into driving rain. Morning after morning, evening after evening, I will be beneath the Sunny terrace." See also Ringrose 1999: 51.

occasion into the paradise of immortals. While in the longer *itineraria* feast scenes typically appear at the climax of the narrative, in the *yuefu* tradition they often expand to form the sole theme of such “drinking” songs.

仙人欲來	Immortals come and go at will,
出隨風，列之雨	On the wind, splitting the rain apart.
吹我洞簫鼓瑟琴	Blowing bamboo flutes, striking strings of lutes.
何閤閤	How soft and sweet!
酒與歌戲	A delight of wine and music!
今日相樂誠為樂	Today we rejoice together – a true joy!
玉女起	Jade maidens rise,
起舞移數時	Rise to dance, turning again and again.
鼓吹一	Drums and pipes mingle –
何嘈嘈	How resonant, resounding! (Cao Cao <i>Qichu chang</i> II, Lu Qinli: 345)

The music exalts to even higher spheres, to a journey to the Kunlun, the residence of Xi Wangmu. A new feast is prepared, this time at the gates to the stars, a feast attended by the immortals Red Pine and Wangzi Qiao and lasting into eternity.

乃德旋之門	Then, at the Gate to the stars of Virtue and Jewel, ¹⁸⁵
樂共飲食到黃昏	In merry company we eat and drink till dusk.
多駕合坐	In swarms we ride, we sit together.
萬歲長	For ten thousand years, forever,
宜子孫	Benefiting sons and grandsons. ¹⁸⁶ (<i>ibid.</i> : 346)

The conventional felicitation formula at the end identifies this ballad as a banquet song, addressing a blessing to the host or to the guests. Many *yuefu* songs like Cao Cao’s poem or earlier anonymous pieces like *Changge xing* or *Dongtao xing* 董逃行, abounding in immortality imagery, were sung at court banquets as an elegant expression of flattery, gratitude and good wishes to the merry company. The immortality lore, corresponding to the rulers’ desire for longevity, power and grandeur, seems to be particularly suitable for such occasions.

In his highly personal *youxian* verse Cao Zhi adopts festive scenes as the ultimate expression of the immortals’ bliss, which contrasts with human confinement and transience.

仙人攬六著	Immortals grasp six game-slats,
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¹⁸⁵ According to Zhu Jiazheng 朱嘉徵 (*Han Wei yuefu guangxu* 漢魏樂府廣序, cited in von den Steinen 1939-40: 172) the expression *dexuan* 德旋 (“virtue-circle”) means perfect virtue, endless in itself. Von den Steinen follows this interpretation, adding that this is a name of a hall. On the other hand, Huang Jie 1958: 4 speculates that De 德 xuan 旋 and men 門 are names of stars: De is the Dexing 德星, Star of Virtue, which designates Saturn, but might be applied to other stars as well. Xuan 旋s equal to xuan 璇 the second star of the Great Dipper - Merak. Men stands for the Nanmen xing 南門星, which consists of two stars – the alfa and ypsilon of the Centaurus (Needham vol. III: 238).

¹⁸⁶ For a discussion of the phrase *yi zisun* 宜子孫 see von den Steinen 1939-40: 172-3. It often occurs in the *Shijing* and in the bronze inscriptions. Von den Steinen demonstrates that the word *yi* describes a peaceful harmonizing influence or behaviour sometimes stated as a fact, sometimes expressed as a wish – something that can be translated as “blessing influence”.

對博太山隅	They gamble amongst each other on the slopes of Mount Tai. ¹⁸⁷
湘娥拊琴瑟	The Xiang Beauty strums a lute,
秦女吹笙竽	The Qin Maiden blows the pipes. ¹⁸⁸
玉樽盈桂酒	Jade goblets overflow with cassia wine,
河伯獻神魚	The River Earl presents a divine fish.
四海一何局	How much do the Four Seas confine!
九州安所如	Where to go in the Nine Lands? (<i>Xianren pian</i> , Lu Qinli: 434)

In the post-Han verse on immortality, scenes of immortal feasts become conventional vignettes, which sometimes constitute an independent poem. Thus, Zhang Hua visualises the life of the immortals as a splendid feast and concert at the Queen Mother's paradise:

玉佩連浮星	Jade pendants are strung of floating stars,
輕冠結朝霞	Light headdresses are wreathed of dawn auroras.
列坐王母堂	In ranks [we][they] sit in Queen Mother's hall,
豔體滄瑤華	To beautify [our][their] bodies [we][they] feast on azure-gem blossoms. ¹⁸⁹
湘妃詠涉江	The Lady of Xiang chants the Crossing of the River ¹⁹⁰ ,
漢女奏陽阿	The Girl of Han plays the Southern Slope. (Zhang Hua <i>Youxian shi</i> II, Lu Qinli: 621)

The immortals feast and revel in utmost splendour with music both augmenting and expressing the exaltation of the participants. Throughout the Six Dynasties poetry music formed an integral part of the paradise landscapes and of the descriptions of immortals' processions. It helped create and maintain the time-space of eternity in which the immortals lived. Yu Xin, for example, conjures a dizzying vision of the starry heavens, resounding with cosmic music:

雲度絃歌響	Clouds pass, strings and songs resound,
星移宮殿迴	Stars shift, palaces and halls turn. (<i>Daoshi buxu</i> ci I, Lu Qinli: 2349)

An important feature of these immortals' feasts is the integration of the opposite sex. As in *Yuanyou*, the female deities are no longer the object of a frustrated quest, but partners in the eternal bliss. Their incorporation might be grounded in the more general philosophical tradition of the *yin* and *yang* – the opposite forces should meet and unite in order to recreate

¹⁸⁷ The game referred to is the *liubo* 六博 game, current in China from the Zhanguo period until the Six Dynasties. It was played with dices and sticks on a special board. An account of the game occurs in the *Zhaohun* poem of *Chuci*. The Han immortals showed a special inclination towards this game. Representations of winged and feathered immortals playing the game occur in many Han tombs and on bronze mirrors. For a description of the game see Yang 1947 and 1952.

¹⁸⁸ The Qin Maiden (Qinnü 秦女) is the immortal Nongyu, wife of the Flute Master, Xiaoshi. See n. 13 above.

¹⁸⁹ In *Yiwen leiju* 78 the line reads 豔食瓊瑤華

¹⁹⁰ "Crossing of the River" (*Shejiang* 涉江) is the title of a poem from the *Jiuzhang* 九章 ("Nine Pieces") cycle of *Chuci*, attributed by Hawkes to a poet from a generation later than Qu Yuan. It is mentioned in the *Zhaohun* 招魂 ("Summons of the Soul", dated by Hawkes some time between 277 BC and 248 BC) as one of the "latest songs", which were sung by girl musicians at a lively party.

the original state of undifferentiated unity that represents the climax of spiritual development. In *Yonghuai shi* 23 Ruan Ji more explicitly pictures his immortals as “taking their ease in an orchid chamber” (*xiaoyao yan lanfang* 逍遙晏蘭房) – practising bedroom arts to maintain the proper equilibrium of their *yin* and *yang* elements. In the *Daren xiansheng zhuan* 大人先生傳 (“Biography of Master Great Man”) he describes at length such an amorous meeting at the end of a feast at the Purple Palace:

召大幽之玉女兮	I summon the Jade Woman of Great Darkness.
接上王之美人	And meet the Beauty of the King Above.
體雲氣之迢暢兮	Their bodies are as soft and pliant as cloud vapours,
服太清之淑貞	And their clothes, the chaste truth of Great Purity.
合歡情而微授兮	We unite our happy passions and communicate subtly;
先豔溢其若神	In an overflow of voluptuousness we become like spirits...

(Yan Kejun vol. 3: 468, tr. by D. Holzman 1976: 201)

In the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties the imagery and major characteristics of the immortals' feasts remained much the same, but they become increasingly common, often constituting the sole theme of a poem, and often even replace the cosmic journey as a hallmark of immortality. The extended treatment of the feast theme is symptomatic of a more general change in the perception of immortality – what the court poets emphasised was not so much the unrestrained freedom of the immortals as the bliss and splendour of their existence. Moreover, being themselves preoccupied with the pursuit of beauty, they seem to focus on those aspects of immortal life that are immediately connected with aesthetic experience. The immortals, who in Ruan Ji's verse had discarded “eyes and hearing”, are now indulging in delightful sensual experiences like songs and dance. A splendid feast, spreading from the westernmost Kunlun Mountains to the immortals' paradises in the far East, becomes the major theme of Wang Rong's second *Youxian shi*:

獻歲和風起	With the new year mild breeze springs up, ¹⁹¹
日出東南隅	The sun rises in the south-east corner. ¹⁹²
鳳旂亂煙道	Phoenix flags clutter on the way of haze,
龍駕溢雲區	Dragon chariots overflow the realm of clouds.
結賞自員嶠	Gathered [we][they] admire the Circle Peak,
移讌乃方壺	and move the banquet to the Square Pitcher. ¹⁹³
金卮浮水翠	Golden cups float on liquid turquoise,
王罍挹泉珠	Jade goblets scoop up pearls from the spring. (Lu Qinli: 1398)

¹⁹¹ *Xiansui* 獻歲 "Presentation of the Year", is the first day of the New Year. According to the "Rites of Zhou" (*Zhouli* 周禮) 3.17b on the first day of the first month the weather starts to grow mild (正月之吉, 始和).

¹⁹² The whole line is a traditional *yuefu* title. Songs with this title are preserved in *Yuefu shiji* 28: 419 -423.

¹⁹³ The Circle Peak (Yuanqiao 員嶠) and the Square Pitcher (Fanghu 方壺) are two of the five islands of immortals in the Eastern Sea (Bohai 渤海) described in *Liezi* 5: 151 - 52, the other three being Daiyu 岱輿 Yingzhou 瀛州 and Penglai 蓬萊. See also Graham 1960: 97.

A poem by Yuan Tuan with the title *Youxian shi* (“Roaming into immortality”) likewise describes only a banquet of the immortals:

羽客宴瑤宮	Winged guests feast in the Azure-gem palace,
旌蓋乍舒設	Banners and canopies billow out.
王子洛浦來	Wangzi comes from the banks of the Luo,
湘娥洞庭發	Xiang E sets off from Dongting Lake.
長引逐清風	Lingering melodies follow the fresh breeze,
高歌送奔月	Piercing songs send off the one fleeing to the moon. ¹⁹⁴
並馭排帝闕	Driving in pairs, [we][they] push open the gates of the Lord,
連吹入天關	Piping in unison [we][they] enter Heaven’s court. (<i>Youxian shi</i> I, Lu Qinli: 1471)

In these two poems it is not clear whether the feast is described from an onlooker’s point of view, or whether the poet pictures himself as one of the immortals (hence the two possible translations provided above as “we” or “they”). Moreover, the exclusion of personal reflections and feelings makes it hard to determine whether the poem expresses a genuine religious vision, or whether it is a convention for court banquets, flattering and masking the identities of those down on the earth.

Many of the *Youxian* poems from the court literary circles were written as occasional pieces, composed at social gatherings. Ornate and light-hearted, they seem to adopt the immortality imagery for decorative purposes, as a trope for courtly elegance and glory. On the other hand, poems on themes very different from Daoist immortality freely employ religious imagery. A poem by Yu Xin, titled “Being Honoured by Wine” (*Mengci jiu* 蒙賜酒) demonstrates the degree to which the immortality lore has become a part of the court decorum:

金膏下帝臺	Golden brew pours down the Lord’s terrace, ¹⁹⁵
玉曆在蓬萊	Jade wine is at Penglai. ¹⁹⁶
仙人一遇飲	The immortals, when chancing to drink,
分得兩三杯	Each gets two or three goblets.
忽聞桑葉落	Suddenly I hear mulberry leaves falling. ¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ An allusion to Chang E, who after stealing the elixir of immortality, escaped to the moon and became the lunar goddess.

¹⁹⁵ The expression Ditai 帝臺 (Lord’s terrace) occurs several times in *Shanhai jing* 5 (Yuan Ke 1980: 141, 142, 167). According to Guo Pu this is the name of a divinity. *Shanhai jing* 5: 167 mentions a certain liquor of Ditai (Ditai jiang 帝臺漿), the consumption of which disperses heart ache. In the Yu Xin’s poem, however, the expression Ditai is juxtaposed to Penglai in the next line of the parallel couplet, and is apparently meant as a toponyme.

¹⁹⁶ The Jade Calendar (*yuli* 玉曆) is a divine tablet mentioned in *Soushen ji* 8. It was found in a cave by Shun, while plowing at Lishan. Thereafter he knew he had obtained the Mandate of Heaven. Some scholars claim that this mythical tablet contained all the critical dates of dynastic and era changes to come. According to others, it contained the precise time of day for beginning of the New Year. On the other hand the phrase *yuli* 玉曆 in this particular poem most probably should be read as 玉歷 (jade wine), which is the “white jade brew” (*baiyu gao* 白玉膏), mentioned in Guo Pu’s commentary to *Shanhai jing*.

¹⁹⁷ Play of words. *Sangluo* 桑落 (“mulberry [leaves] falling”) is a kind of wine, brewed by a certain Liu Duo 劉墮 (*Shuijing zhu*).

正值菊花開	Just now chance upon chrysanthem blossoms opening. ¹⁹⁸
阮籍披衣進	Ruan Ji, lifting his skirts, enters,
王戎含笑來	Wang Rong with a smile arrives.
從今覓仙藥	From now on when I search for the immortals drug,
不假向瑤臺	I won't have to face the Azure-gem terrace. (Lu Qinli: 2378)

Like the Han and Wei “drinking songs” that employ immortality lore (see for example Cao Cao’s *Qichu chang* II, cited above), Yu Xin celebrates his merry company as a blissful feast of immortals. Moreover, he compares his elegant circle to the gatherings of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, who since the end of the fourth century has been much admired as an unconstrained company of free people.¹⁹⁹ The wine he is offered by his patron is extolled as an elixir beverage from the paradise of immortals. Thus, through the employed immortality imagery, Yu Xin expresses his gratitude for the wine in a playful, witty and flattering manner.

While the scenes of feasting immortals appearing in the court poetry might often be open to differing interpretations, some of the descriptions of immortals’ gatherings have an explicitly religious intenton. In the poetry influenced by Daoist verse the immortals are often depicted as taking part in grand celestial ceremonies or heavenly court audiences:

縱金集瑤池	Striking gongs, they gather by the Azure-gem Pond,
步光禮玉晨	Treading on light, they worship the Jade dawn.
霞蓋容長肅	Aural canopies appear so profuse and grand,
清虛伍列真	In the Pure Void the True Ones are ranged. (Liang Wudi <i>Shangyun yue</i> IV, Lu Qinli: 1526)

Liang Wudi depicts the immortals as solemn courtiers worshiping supreme cosmic deities at Kunlun. According to Schafer the term *chen* 晨, the first flush of dawn in the eastern sky, symbolizes “the ultimate source of *yang* energy, which appears as the auroral flush, *xia*”.²⁰⁰ Jade Dawn occurs in the titles of the very high deities, with the implication of “seated at the very source of creative power” – for example The Great Dao Lord of Mystic Glory at the Jade Dawn (Yuchen Xuanhuang Dadao jun 玉晨玄皇大道君).²⁰¹ In the seventh poem of Liang Wudi’s cycle the immortals likewise appear as mighty celestial bureaucrats:

揖玉板	Collecting their jade tablets,
登金門	They ascend through the Golden Gates (<i>ibid.</i>)

The jade tablets held by the immortals as they advance to their audience through the celestial Golden Gates indicate their mystic ranks and heavenly positions. The motif also shows the

¹⁹⁸ A reference to chrysanthemum wine (*juhua jiu* 菊花酒) which according to *Xijing zaji* was traditionally drunk on the 9th day of the 9th month to bring longevity. Chrysanthemum flowers were mixed with millet and left to ferment for one year.

¹⁹⁹ The depictions of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, often found in tombs, suggest that they might have been associated also with immortality.

²⁰⁰ Schafer 1981: 403.

²⁰¹ Tao Hongjing’s *Zhenling wei yetu* 2a, CT 167.

development of the immortality verse towards court “realism” during the Southern Dynasties, whereby the immortals become celestial counterparts of the earthly imperial officials.

I. 5. Eternity

Since the beginning of the *xian* cult a special relationship to time had been one of the most important attributes of the immortals and occupied an important place in immortality verse from its origins. In early poetry it is generally conveyed by stereotype, straightforward expressions that stress the endless prolongation of life:

“He lives for ever and ever, without end” 壽億齡 (*Wangzi Qiao bei*),

”Prolonging life, ensuring no end” 延壽保無疆 (*Cao Zhi Wuyou yong*),

“For thousands of years, alive forever” 千載長生 (*Xi Kang Zhongzuo qi siyan shi* VII).

Also typical is the comparison of the life-span of the immortals with the most durable cosmic phenomena:

“Longlived like Heaven and Earth” 壽極乾坤 (*Huan Tan Wangxian fu*),

“Longlived like the Southern Mountain” 壽如南山 (*Cao Cao Moshang san*)

Liu Xiang writes in similar vein:

欲與天地參壽兮 I wish my years to equal those of earth and sky,
與日月而比榮 My splendour to be like that of sun and moon. (*Yuanyou; Chuci buzhu: 309*)

In most cases these formulaic expressions go back to the felicitation formulas of the odes in the “Book of Songs” (*Shijing*). The odes often addressed blessings to kings and lords, such as: “Like the age of the Southern Mountain, never waning, never falling,... May such be thy succeeding line” (如南山之壽... 無不爾或承).²⁰² The *Shijing* formulations, which initially voiced wishes for long life and continuation of the family line through numerous descendants, are transformed by the *youxian* poets into expressions of physical immortality for one single person rather than “immortality” achieved through the generations to come.

The drinking songs of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD that employ the theme of immortality, typically end with a wish for long age, voiced in the same formulaic language:

萬歲長 For ten thousand years, forever,
宜子孫 Benefiting sons and grandsons. (*Cao Cao Qichu chang* II, Lu Qinli: 346)

主人當行觴 When the host passes the goblet,
坐者長壽 This company will live forever,
遽何央 How could it perish?
長樂甫始宜孫子 The start of eternal bliss accords with sons and grandsons.

²⁰² *Xiaoya* I. 6 (Mao 166 *Tianbao*), Legge: 256-7.

常願主人增年 Constant is our wish: may our host increase his years,
與天相守 Together with that of Heaven! (Cao Cao *Qichu chang* III, *ibid.*)

The immortals' triumph over time is achieved not only through eternal prolongation of their physical life, but also through their ability to stop, or rather control, cosmic time. One common feature of the the earlier poetry is the trope of harnessing the sun and moon, whose movement causes the change of day into night, or of controlling the forces of *yin* and *yang* – the two cosmic aspects, whose successive waxing and waning bring forth the succession of seasons. A popular image, adopted from *Chuci* is the stopping of the course of the sun charioteer Xi He 羲和 or turning her back.²⁰³ At the end of *Shengtian xing* (“Ascending to Heaven”) Cao Zhi voices his transcendental yearnings through the wish to

願得紆陽轡 tug on the reins of the sun,
回日使東馳 Veer it back, make it race to the east²⁰⁴ (Lu Qinli: 433)

Guo Pu's triumphal rise as an immortal culminates in stopping the sun chariot altogether, in a way that recalls the poetic hero of *Lisao*:

手頓羲和轡 My hands pull back Xi He's reins,
足蹈閭闔開 My feet step over Heaven's Gate.²⁰⁵ (Guo Pu *Youxianshi* IX, Lu Qinli: 866)

An original and evocative metaphor for the triumph over the passage of time is used by Ruan Ji in *Yonghuai shi* 10, where Wangzi Qiao is depicted as “riding the clouds, circling above Deng Forest” (乘雲翔鄧林, Lu Qinli: 216). The Deng Forest 鄧林 is an allusion to the story of Kua Fu 夸父, who died of thirst attempting to win a race with the sun. Before his

²⁰³ As early as the Shang period in one variant of the solar mythology, the sun was thought of as a glowing chariot, driven across the sky by a female charioteer Xi He. For *Chuci* images of stopping Xi He see for example *Lisao* ll. 189-90:

吾令羲和弭節兮 “I ordered Xi He to stay the sun-steeds' gallop;
望崦嵫而勿迫 To stand over Yan-zi mountains and not go in.” (*Chuci buzhu*: 27, tr. by Hawkes 1985:73)

²⁰⁴ D. Holzman observes in connection with this poem that the wish to turn back the sun, thus altering its natural course, is not fitting for a true Daoist immortality seeker, because his immortality comes from living in harmony with nature. As an explanation of these lines he adopts the interpretation suggested by Zhao Youwen 1984: 267 – Cao Zhi wants to turn back the sun (and time) because he “felt the times were against him” (Holzman 1988: 39). He follows the traditional reading of the poem as a lament for the “lack of success in the world of politics”. Although Holzman is right in pointing out that the plea to stop the sun might not be motivated by religious feeling, I believe that the poem should not be necessarily interpreted as an allegory of Cao Zhi's political aspirations. By the 3rd century AD the passing of time is reflected in poetry in the general light of the human condition, detached from political concerns. Cao Zhi's lines express not political concerns but rather a general grief over the inexorable passage of time and life's transience – the same melancholic feeling that pervades the *Gushi shijiu shou* from the end of the Han. Moreover, the motif of stopping the sun chariot had become a conventional trope by the time of Cao Zhi. (see also below, ch. IV.1.7.).

²⁰⁵ Unlike the *Lisao* plot here the hero is admitted through the Changhe heavenly gate.

death he threw away his staff and it was transformed into the Deng Forest.²⁰⁶ The race with the sun is a metaphor for the human unsuccessful race with the time, of which the Deng Forest is a reminder. The immortal Wangzi Qiao, however, soars beyond the forest, thereby transcending time.

While in the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties the emphasis on spiritual purity and freedom, on unrestrained cosmic flights, which had been the focus of the early immortality verse, gradually subsided, the motif of eternal life became one of the major topics in the poetry on immortals. The theme of the immortals' triumph over time is increasingly emphasised and is moreover conveyed through much more varied and evocative images drawn from stories recorded in 4th - 5th century prose sources. A change in the perception of immortality can also be observed: the stress is not so much on the static incorruptability of the immortals or on stopping time altogether, as on the radically different meaning of time for the *xian*. In these poems the *xian* appear as dwelling in parallel realms of space and time with dimensions of their own. The poets focus on the disparity between human time and *xian*-time and through various metaphors juxtapose the two in order to demonstrate that time for the immortals is protracted, passing much more slowly than in the human world.

The image of the magical peaches of the Queen Mother of the West, which ripen once in a thousand years, became a favourite metaphor for the immortals' time, measured in aeons. According to the story, first recorded in Zhang Hua's *Bowu zhi*, the Queen Mother brought the peaches to the emperor Wu of Han. When the emperor wanted to keep their kernels and plant them, the goddess told him with a laugh that they bear fruit once in three thousand years.²⁰⁷ Although in later poetry the peaches of immortality became a cliché image, for the Liang poets this allusion was still novel and original. These authors emphasise not the peaches' magical properties, but the long time period needed for the peaches to grow, which is but a brief moment for the eternal immortals:

酒闌時節久 The time to spent the wine is forever,
桃生歲月稀 The years and months for the peaches to grow are few. (Liang Jianwen di *Xianke*, Lu Qinli: 1934)

非止靈桃實 Not only will the Magic Peach bear fruit,
方見大椿凋 But you will see the Great Cedrela shed its leaves.
(Shen Yue *Hua Yang Tao xiansheng denglou bufu xia*, Lu Qinli: 1638)

²⁰⁶ *Shanhai jing* 8, Yuan Ke 1980: 238.

²⁰⁷ *Bowu zhi* offers the earliest association of the Queen Mother with the peaches of immortality, which had been an independent auspicious and protective symbol during the Han.

The Great Cedrela, *dachun* 大椿, mentioned in *Zhuangzi* 1, which “takes 8 000 years to be a springtime and 8 000 years as an autumn”, is another metaphor for the eternal time of the immortals.²⁰⁸

The story of the immortal Ma Gu 麻姑, recorded in *Shenxian zhuan*, who saw the Eastern Sea turn into mulberry fields and back into sea again three times, also captured the imagination of the poets.²⁰⁹ Images of the “fields of the Eastern Sea” (*donghai tian* 東海田), of either the sea or the mountains of immortals turning into dust, start to appear from the Liang dynasty onwards and became one of Yu Xin’s most favoured metaphors conveying disparity of temporal realms:

試取西山藥 Attempting to get the elixir from the Western Mountain,
來觀東海田 Coming to watch the fields of the Eastern Sea.
(Yu Jianwu *Daoguan shi* 道館詩, Lu Qinli: 2001)

蓬萊暫近別 For a while take my leave from Penglai,
海水遂成塵 The sea water thereafter will turn into dust. (Yu Xin, *Xianshan shi* II, Lu Qinli: 2403)

海無三尺水 The sea contains less than three *chi* of water,
山成數寸塵 The mountain became few *cun* of dust. (Yu Xin *Daoshi buxu ci* V, Lu Qinli: 2349)

From the 4th century AD onwards a novel plot appears in the prose sources which plays with the disparity in the passage of time between home and paradise. An ordinary man by chance, even unknowingly, comes into the world of immortals. When he re-enters the space and time of ordinary humans he discovers that a vast amount of time, sometimes even generations, has elapsed back in the mortal world. In the late Six Dynasties the poets start to employ allusions to the story of a certain Wang Zhi 王質, who came upon a cave while gathering wood in the Xin’an 信安 mountains. Wang Zhi entered it and saw two immortal lads playing *liubo*. He watched the game for some time, but when he turned around he found that his axe had meanwhile decayed, and upon returning to his village, it existed no more.²¹⁰ Alluding to this story in one of his immortality poems, Wang Bao dramatises the contrast

²⁰⁸ *Zhuangzi jishi*: 11.

²⁰⁹ *Shenxian zhuan* tells of the meeting of Wang Fangping 王方平 (Wang Yuan 王遠) and Ma Gu. Arriving upon his invitation at a party in Cai Jing’s 蔡經 house, Ma Gu told Wang: “Since I entered your service, I have seen the Eastern Sea turn to mulberry fields three times. As one proceeded across to Penglai, the water came only up to one’s waist. I wonder whether it will turn to dry land once again” Wang answered with a sigh, “Oh, the sages all say that the Eastern Sea will once again become blowing dust” (Campany 2002: 262).

²¹⁰ An early source for this story is *Zhilin* 志林 by Yu Xi 虞喜 (307 -338) from the beginning of the Eastern Jin dynasty. It is recorded somewhat later in *Shuyi ji* 述異記 10 by Ren Fang 任昉 (460-508) and in *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 10 by Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (?-527). The two later versions enrich the basic plot with the motif of Wang Zhi’s consumption of divine jujubes given to him by the immortals. See also Li Fengmao 1997: 110 ff.

between the “non-elapsing” time of the immortals and the devastation caused meanwhile in the human world:

看棊城邑改 While watching a game of chess cities have changed,
辭家墟巷空 Since I parted from my family villages have emptied. (*Qingju pian*, Lu Qinli: 2331)

The 6th century poet Zhou Hongzheng 周弘正 strings together allusions to various stories in order to demonstrate the different temporal dimension of the immortals:

桃花經作實 The peach flowers often bear fruit,
海水屢成田 The sea waters become fields over and over again.
逆愁歸舊里 In anticipation of grief return to the old village,
追問斧柯年 And inquire the age of the wood-axe (*He Yu Jianwu ru daoguan shi*, Lu Qinli: 2362)

The thousands of years needed for the magic peaches to ripen, the Eastern Sea turning into fields, the generations that have elapsed in the village of Wang Zhi, are to the *xian* no more than the passing of a brief moment. Basically, this device of the *youxian* poets in no way differs from the time parables of *Zhuangzi*, where the time frames are juxtaposed for the “morning mushroom” (*chaojun* 朝菌) which does not know old and new moon, for the summer cicada, which does not see spring and autumn, for the Mingling 冥靈 tree south of Chu which takes five hundred years as a spring and five hundred years as an autumn, and the Great Cedrella (*dachun* 大椿) which sheds its leaves once in 16 000 years (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 11).

I. 6. Immortals and Recluses

As demonstrated above, since the Han dynasty the immortals had been perceived as distant and seclusive, rejecting the “vulgar herd” and cutting off their human ties. Moreover, the necessity of leading “reclusive life in absolute contemplation” is emphasised by most texts on Daoist cultivation as the basic prerequisite of achieving immortality.²¹¹ It seems only natural that when the eremitic poetry *zhaoyin* 招隱 arose as a distinct sub-genre in the Western Jin dynasty, poetry on immortals came to share much in common with the verses praising life in reclusion.²¹²

²¹¹ For example *Baopuzi*, especially ch. 2.

²¹² In Western literature the title *zhaoyin* has been translated in various ways: “Summons to a Retired Gentleman” (Mather) and “Summoning the Recluse” (Frodsham); or “Seeking the Recluse” (Knechtges), “Seeking the Hermit” (Holzman), “Invitation to Hiding” (Watson). The difference in renditions is caused not so much by an inherent ambiguity of the phrase *zhaoyin*, but rather by a change of its connotations in the course of history. During the first three centuries AD the expression *zhaoyin* underwent a fundamental shift of meaning – while originally it meant “calling (summoning) back the recluse”, in the Western Jin poetry it acquired the sense of “calling to life in reclusion”. The translations of Mather and Frodsham

Yet although the Han immortals had been pictured as being far beyond the human crowd, they were never conceived as hermits. Reclusion in the mind of the earlier Han poets had connotations different from those that it would acquire during the Jin dynasty. The titular precursor of the Jin dynasty *zhaoyin shi* 招隱詩 is *Zhao yinshi* 招隱士 ("Summoning the Gentleman in Hiding") from *Chuci*. In this piece, written around the mid 2nd century BC and attributed to the circle of Liu An, the mountainous surroundings of the recluse are pictured as hostile zones of sacred horror, full of perils and unsuitable for the human beings. The prince who has gone there (it is not clear whether in reclusion of his own free will or in exile) is called to return home to the welcoming and civilized mundane realm.²¹³

During the Han dynasty the state of mystical withdrawal and detachment from the world, although emphasized throughout the poetry (*Yuanyou*, *Wangxian fu*, *Wangzi Qiao bei*, etc.), is never described as an actual hermitage amidst mountains and forests. In Zhang Heng's *Qibian* 七辯 ("Seven Arguments") the immortal and eremitic ways of existence are even directly juxtaposed:

"Mister Non-action emulated the immortals. Turning his back to the world and distanced from the profane, he did nothing but recited Daoist texts. His form emptied, his age brought decrepitude, only his resolve did not wither. And then seven persuaders talked him over. They said: „ Mister Non-action lingers on obscure shores, muffling the sounds, obscuring the light. Burning away his traces, he lives in poverty. Trying to compel him didn't work. Why not go and persuade him? "

無為先生，祖述列仙·背世絕俗，唯誦道篇·形虛年衰，志猶不遷·於是七辯謀焉，曰：
無為先生，淹在幽隅·藏聲隱景，滅跡窮居·抑其不韙，盍往辯諸

The poem then presents, one after the other, the arguments of the seven orators aiming to leer the hermit back from his reclusive life: a description of lofty and rich mansions, exquisite meal and wine, music and songs, enchanting female beauty, a magnificent chariot. After these sensual indulgements the vision of immortality paradoxically comes as the sixth enticement:

依衛子曰：	Yi Weizi said:
若夫赤松王喬羨門安期	Like the Red Pine and Wang Qiao, Xianmen and Anqi,
噓吸沆瀣	Inhaling and exhaling the Drifting Flow,
飲醴茹芝	Drinking sweet brew, eating magic mushrooms.
駕應龍	They harness flying dragons,
戴行雲	Raise a floating cloud.
桴弱水	They sail the Weak waters,
越炎氛	And cross the fiery mist.
覽八極	Observing the eight quarters,
度天垠	They ford the shores of Heaven.
上游紫宮	Above they roam in the Purple Tenuity,
下棲崑崙	Below they nest on Kunlun.
此神仙之麗也	This exquisiteness of the divine immortals,

reflect the older sense, while those of Knechtges, Holzman and Watson are in the latter line of meaning. More neutral translations are suggested by Stephen Owen - "Calling to the Recluse", and A. Berkowitz - "Beckoning the Recluse".

²¹³ *Chuci buzhu*: 232 – 234; tr. in Hawkes 1985: 242 -245. See also Lomova 1996.

子盍行而求之

Why don't you come and pursue it?

The mister then rose and said: How wonderful, indeed! Your instruction, my dear Sir, is as peaceful as fresh breeze, it opens up wonderful visions and soothe my mind. Lifting my head and gazing up, I cast a slanting look at the Obscure Gardens. I raise my arms and unfold my wings, I wish to soar, but cannot rise up from the ground."

先生乃興而言曰：吁美哉！吾子之誨，穆如清風，啟乃嘉猷，寔慰我心。矯然仰首，邪睨玄圃。軒臂矯翼，將飛未舉。（Yan Kejun vol. 2: 530 - 531）

In tune with the tradition of the *Sevens* (*qi* 七)-genre, it is only the seventh argument – an exposition of the ancient wisdom of the Confucian texts, that shatters the hermit's resolve and turns him to classical learning instead.²¹⁴

It is significant that Zhang Heng presents immortality as something different from Daoist reclusion, as something meant to lead the ascete away from his life of non-action. The enticement leaves out the more mystical aspects and dwells on the conventional, outer sides of the immortal life – the diet of subtle essences and magic mushrooms, dragon-drawn equipages, unrestrained freedom of movement encompassing the whole cosmos. That vision of mmortality not only contrasts with Mister Non-action's contemplative and secluded existence, but is even regarded as belonging to the same series of worldly delights described by the previous speakers. This paradox might reflect the phenomenon, which Yu Yingshi called the "worldly transformation" of the initially transcendental, "otherworldly" cult of immortality.²¹⁵ In his inspiring article Yu Yingshi claims that during the early Han the reclusive, transcendental nature of the *xian*-immortals from the end of the Warring States was totally replaced by the "worldly" cult of immortality, equated with the "way of no death" (*busi* 不死). However, the verses considered up to now lead one to a more moderate standpoint, for it seems that the older, "otherworldly" concept of immortality had not disappeared altogether, since it is reflected in Han dynasty verse such as *Yuanyou*, *Wangxian fu*, *Laozi ming* and even the *Qibian* discussed here. The two concepts of immortality, "this-worldly" and "other-worldly", apparently continued to exist side by side.²¹⁶ The "worldly transformation" of the immortality cult seems to have been typical for the Han imperial courts. It was not the quiet

²¹⁴ The name *Sevens* (*Qi* 七) refers to the seven enticements presented by the persuader (s), which are quite similar in the various poems (e.g. food, hunting, pretty women, music, gardens and palaces, excursions, precious weapons, atd.). The person to whom they are addressed varies from piece to piece. While in the first of the *Sevens*- poems – the *Qifa* 七發 ("Seven Stimuli") by Mei Cheng 枚乘 (?-140 BC) - and a few other Han dynasty *Sevens* this is an ailing prince, in other Han – Western Jin pieces the persuaders attempt to "convert" a Daoist recluse to social life (Fu Yi's 傅毅 [? – ca. 90] *Qiji* 七激 ["Seven Pressures"], Zhang Heng's *Qibian*, Wang Can's *Qishi* 七釋 ["Seven Explanations"], Cao Zhi's *Qiqi* 七啟 ["Seven Communications"], Zhang Xie's *Qiming* 七命 ["Seven Commands"] [the last two compositions contained in *Wenxuan* 34-35]). On the generic conventions of the *Sevens* see Knechtges and Swanson 1969.

²¹⁵ Yu Yingshi 1964: 88 ff.

²¹⁶ It is very likely that more than two differing views on immortality existed during the Han dynasty. It seems that the popular, messianistic movements, such as the one centred on Xi Wangmu, had developed their peculiar perceptions of immortality, about which, however, insufficient data has survived.

withdrawal and mystical insight - hallmarks of *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi* and *Yuanyou* immortals, - that appealed to a mighty ruler, but the promise of such benefits as eternal blissful life and omnipotence. The same contradiction between transcendence and this-worldly delights had earlier been expressed by Sima Xiangru in the introduction to *Daren fu* – feeling that the traditional, emaciated image of the immortals dwelling amidst mountains and marshes did not correspond to the royal idea of immortality, the poet conjured up visions of cosmic potency, freedom and glory to suit the requirements of his patron.

By the time of the Taikang 太康 (280 – 289) era, however, the incompatibility between immortal life and reclusion felt by some Han court poets and their patrons had completely vanished. During this period the poetry written in praise of living in reclusion (*zhaoyin shi*) developed as a distinct sub-genre. Mountains and waters were no longer regarded as unwelcoming and dangerous surroundings, as in the early *Chuci* poem “On summoning the Gentleman in Hiding”, but as wondrous realms of purity and peace, to which the noble mind, disgusted with the vulgarity of the mundane world, naturally inclined. Both the Western Jin *youxian* and *zhaoyin* poetry are rooted in the mystical Daoism of the period, and the lives of the immortals and hermits are described in similar terms – as a state of simplicity and pristine purity, of absolute freedom and harmony with all beings, of return to the primordial and to the One. The major difference seems to lie in the respective settings: while the exemplary *zhaoyin* poetry speaks about seeking the Dao in the “natural” setting of secluded mountains and forests, the immortals of *youxian* verse frolicked in much loftier, otherworldly spheres.

For a proper understanding of the new turning taken by verse on immortality at the beginning of the 4th century it is important to note that the very ideal of immortality had undergone a significant change by that time. This was the development of the concept of the terrestrial immortal (*dixian* 地仙) who lingered in absolute freedom and everlasting life in this world among the great mountains and rivers instead of rising at once to Heaven. Although in the divine hierarchy he belonged to an inferior grade compared to the Heavenly immortals (*tianxian* 天仙), he enjoyed more freedom and bliss than his celestial counterparts, who were burdened by a number of tedious bureaucratic duties. Ge Hong reports that once Peng Zu 彭祖 said that “in the heaven there are numerous respected high-ranking deities, therefore the new immortals can only receive low positions. Their duties are various and often are far more difficult and burdensome than those they had on Earth”. Therefore, he did not strive to ascend to Heaven, and lived on earth more than 800 years.²¹⁷ The attitude of Mr. White Stone, Baishi

²¹⁷ *Baopuzi* 3, Wang Ming 1985: 52.

xiansheng 白石先生 was similar. After spending 2 000 years on earth he was still not willing to cultivate the Dao of rising into heavens, but just wanted to be immortal as such, not intending to dispense with the joys and delights of life among men. When Peng Zu asked him why he did not take the drug that could make him rise into the heavens, he is said to have replied: “Can the joys of the heavens really compare with those that are found among men? If one can go on living here below without getting old and dying, one will be treated with the greatest respect; would one be treated any better in the heavens?”²¹⁸ The immortals who chose to remain on earth, evading celestial service, were, in fact, the recluses of the divine spheres, and they took the same attitude towards the heavenly administration that the social recluses took towards the terrestrial one.

Quite naturally, the poets of the period, who perceived immortality not simply as an eternal life but above all as a symbol of unrestrained freedom and release from human cares, embraced this new ideal. In the poetry the images of the immortal and of the hermit, sharing the same mountainous surroundings and the same attitude towards “mandated” service, often merge together. They embody the same ideal of rising above the worldly affairs, of purity and return to simplicity, of unfettered freedom and harmony with all beings. Consequently, in the course of the 4th century, the rather artificial borderline between the *zhaoyin* and *youxian* sub-genres became increasingly blurred.

It is Guo Pu whom the literary critics unanimously credit with bringing the immortals down from the celestial heights into the human world, but many earlier poems point towards this transformation.

In Cao Cao’s *Qiu hu xing* the True Man (*zhenren* 真人) from Kunlun not only appears in the wild landscape of the Sanguan 散關 mountains in the guise of an old, wisened hermit, but in his admonition he equates the roads of immortality and reclusion:

道深有可得 Profound is the Way – yet it can be achieved²¹⁹
名山歷觀 Ascend and survey the great mountains,

遨遊八極 Rove and ramble to the Eight Extremities!
枕石漱流飲泉 Let your pillow be of stones, your bath - in streams, let springs provide your drink!²²⁰

²¹⁸ *Shenxian zhuan* 2, Campany 2002: 294. It is interesting that the sobriquet of Master White Stone was Concealed Immortal (*yindun xian* 隱廬山). This expression explicitly connects his attitude to that of the hermits and recluses, commonly called *yinzhe* 隱者, *yinshi* 隱士 or *yinren* 隱人 (Hidden/Concealed Ones).

²¹⁹ Ding Fubao points out that *you* 有 in this line is probably in the sense of *you* 有.

²²⁰ This passage has been interpreted in various ways. E. Balacz 1964 translates these lines as “My Way leads far, and has led many to behold the high mountains, wander to the utmost limits, resting on stones, bathing in brooks, drinking from springs”. This translation is however rather imprecise. Von den Steinen (1939-40: 155) and P. Kroll (1976: 258) interpret these words as referring to the immortal himself: “I

(Lu Qinli: 349-50)

In *Kusi xing* 苦思行 (“Bitter Thoughts”) Cao Zhi similarly connects within a single poem the ideal of immortality and the image of the hermit, teaching Zhuangzi’s wisdom (see the text below, p. 105).

Some years before Guo Pu, Lu Yun (262 – 303), in his rhapsody *Yimin fu* 逸民賦 (Rhapsody on the One Living in Reclusion”), had also partly replaced the landscape of the immortal world with that of the hermit’s surroundings. In the epilogue *luan* of his rhapsody the border-line between the *zhaoyin* and the poetry on immortality becomes particularly thin. Here Lu Yun assumes the first-person voice and speaks of his journey in search of the recluse. Thematically, the conclusion of the *fu* belongs to the *zhaoyin* category:

乘白□□駒兮皎皎	Mounting a snowy horse of pure white,
游穹谷兮藹藹	I roam in the deep gorge, lush and dark.
尋峻路兮崢嶸	Searching for the steep path, leading to the heights,
臨芳水兮悠裔	I scan the fragrant stream, in the far-off distance.
槃丘園兮暇豫	I linger among mounds and parks, at idle leisure,
翳翠葉兮重蓋	Shadowed by a manifold canopy of emerald leaves,
瞻洪崖兮清輝	□□ I gaze at Master Vast Cliff in pure radiance,
紛容與兮雲際	Utterly free and easy at the rim of clouds.
欲陵霄兮從之	I wish to mount the sky and pursue him,
恨穹天兮未泰	And am anguished that the heavenly dome has dimmed. (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1025)

The scenery through which the poet travels is the earthly landscape of mountains. The epilogue becomes a eulogy to the quietude and piece of reclusion in the midst of alluring, marvelous nature that finds parallels in the *zhaoyin* poetry of the Jin dynasty. From the context of the rhapsody it appears that the poet is searching for the hermit but the being he beholds is the immortal Vast Cliff (Hong Ya 洪崖). The images of the hermit and the immortal seem to merge together, or the immortal appears to be a companion of the hermit, and in a typical *youxian* manner, Lu Yun speaks of his desire to soar in the sky and follow him. The mountains and the world of the immortals are brought closely together to the very point of merging. The road through the earthly gorges and groves seems to open into the land of immortals.

The tendency to merge the transcendental realm of the immortals with the world of the hermit was, therefore, gradually developing in the post-Han poetry, but it reached its peak in Guo Pu’s verse at the beginning of the fourth century. In the second poem of his *Youxian*

crossed and looked at the great mountains...”, “I have crossed over and gazed afar from fabled mountains...”. The situation in this poem repeats the model of meeting a master and receiving from him instructions how achieve immortality – as, for example, the teaching received from Wang Ziqiao in *Yuanyou*. I believe, therefore, that the words of the immortal are directed as an instruction towards the hero: “to obtain the Way you should do this and this”. Another possible interpretation is that they describe a person who has already attained the Way.

cycle his hero is not a celestial immortal, quartering the cosmos, but a recluse, quietly practicing the Dao in his wondrous mountain surroundings:

青谿千餘仞	Green Gorge mountains – over eight thousand feet tall,
中有一道士	A Daoist master dwells within.
雲生梁棟間	Clouds are born amid the beams and ridgepoles,
風出窗戶裏	Wind issues from his windows.
借問此何誰	May I ask who he could be?
云是鬼谷子	They say he is the Master of Demon Ravine. (Lu Qinli: 865)

In the third poem of the cycle the shift from the immortals' heavens to the hermits' earthly realm is even more remarkable. The hero of this poem is a Daoist recluse hidden amid beautiful mountainous landscape and at the same time a companion of the heavenly immortals, soaring with them beyond the clouds:

翡翠戲蘭苕	Kingfishers play among orchids,
溶色更相鮮	Shapes and colours brightening each other.
綠蘿結高林	Green vines entwine tall trees,
蒙籠蓋一山	A dense profusion covering an entire mountain.
中有冥寂士	Amidst all this, a man – cloaked and quiet,
靜嘯撫清絃	Softly whistling, he strums clear notes.
放情陵霄外	Feelings unleashed, he skims beyond the empyrean
嚼蕊挹飛泉	He chews flower stamens, drinks from the Flying Spring.
赤松臨上遊	Red Pine oversees his ramble upwards.
駕鴻乘紫煙	Riding a stork, he mounts the purple mist.
左挹浮丘袖	To his left he pulls at the sleeve of Floating Hill,
右拍洪崖肩	To his right he slaps the shoulder of Vast Cliff.
借問蜉蝣輩	May I ask the mayfly's kind,
寧知龜鶴年	How could you know of the years of turtles and cranes? (Lu Qinli: 865)

The seemingly mimetic depiction of landscape at the beginning of the poem has prompted critics to consider this piece one of the earliest harbingers of the *shanshui* poetry.²²¹ Yet through subtle use of allusions Guo Pu manages to create another, otherworldly dimension, which lurks behind his seemingly straightforward lines. His third poem is, in fact, a variation on Cao Zhi's *Kusi xing* ("Bitter Thoughts"), mentioned above. The intricacy of Guo Pu's verse can be fully appreciated only when we read it with its prototype in mind.

綠蘿緣玉樹	Green vines entwine jade trees,
光曜粲相暉	Their brilliance illuminates each other.
下有兩真人	Below there are two Perfect Ones,
舉翅翻高飛	Who raise their wings and soar on high.
我心何踴躍	How my heart leaps!
思欲攀雲追	I wish to mount the clouds and pursue them.
鬱鬱西岳顛	So lush and verdant, the summit of the Western Mount, ²²²
石室青葱與天連	A dark stone chamber connects to Heaven. ²²³

²²¹ Lin Wenye 1976: 8-12.

²²² The sacred Mount Hua 華

中有耆年一隱士 鬚髮皆皓然 策杖從吾遊 教我要忘言	In it there is an ancient hermit, His beard and hair of shining white. Leaning on his staff he follows as I wander, And teaches me I should forget words. ²²⁴ (Lu Qinli: 439)
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Although the images and the worlds of the immortals and the hermit are brought closely together in the Cao Zhi's poem, they still remain two separate entities – the winged lads among the jade trees who soar to Heaven, and the ancient hermit amidst his dark cave, teaching the principles of Zhuangzi.

Guo Pu, however, while closely following Cao Zhi's verse at the beginning of his poem, takes a step further. His first four lines immediately refer to Cao Zhi's opening couplet, repeating almost verbally his formulations (compare "green vines entwine jade trees" 綠蘿緣玉樹 with "green vines entwine tall trees" 綠蘿結高樹; "their brilliance illuminates each other" 光曜粲相暉 with "shapes and colours brightening each other" 溶色更相鮮). Although Guo Pu uses simpler diction and replaces the supernatural aura of the Cao Zhi's lines, conjured up by the image of the jade trees, with sensual description of a mountainous landscape, the unambiguous reference to Cao Zhi would for readers of the period evoke the otherworldly scenery in which two immortal lads open their wings and fly up to the heights. The next lines increase the tension: instead of the expected winged immortals, it is the figure of a hermit (Cao Zhi's hero from the second part of *Kusi xing*) who makes his appearance. Again an identical phrasing introduces the recluse in the two poems: "Amidst it there is" (*zhongyou* 中有). He is engaged in activities that by Guo Pu's time had become conventional tropes for eremitic life - consuming flowers, drinking from springs, whistling and strumming strings, but the expression "flying springs" (*fei quan* 飛泉) is once again ambiguous, since it might refer to an actual cascading font, but also to the mythical springs of immortality on Kunlun. The chewing of flowers' stamens (*huarui* 華蕊) also reminds one of the red-gem stamens (*qiongrui* 瓊蕊) on which the immortals love to feast. And finally, the whistling (*xiao* 嘯) is not an innocent pastime but in fact an important Daoist art of breath cultivation. Initially associated with the Queen Mother of the West, in the post-Han period the mastery of

²²³ The stone chamber (*shishi* 石室) is most probably a cave. For a discussion of the symbolic significance of caves in ancient China see Bauer 1974: 265-272. Caves were perceived not simply as enclosed, dark subterranean spaces, but rather as passageways to the heavenly realms and places of rebirth. In W. Bauer's words "it was not the darkness of the cave that attracted attention [in the later Daoist tradition], but rather the light of day shimmering far away at its end, which promised a new world". From the very beginning caves were the places where Daoist adepts met with immortals and found elixir ingredients, elixirs and revealed texts.

²²⁴ A citation from *Zhuangzi* 26: "Words are there to preserve meaning; when you get the meaning, you must forget the words" 言者所以在意，得意而忘言 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 944).

whistling was believed to give the practitioner magical powers, especially over atmospheric phenomena like wind and rain.²²⁵ The readers, who most probably knew Cao Zhi's poem by heart, were increasingly mystified by the unexpected turns the poem took, as they compared the original in their memories with Guo Pu's new version of it. At last, after the ninth line, the poetical riddle is solved: the major personages of *Kusi xing* – the immortal lads and the hermit, turn out to be identical. Like Cao Zhi's immortals, the hermit soars on high – in an even loftier fashion, carried by a crane mount, and having for companions immortals like Red Pine, Floating Hill and Vast Cliff.

Guo Pu does not simply replace the paradisaical vistas with an actual landscape. Instead he conjures up scenery in which the two worlds interweave in a complex relationship, fusing together while retaining their self-sufficiency. The otherworldly dimension is subtly implied, present, as it were 'in absence' – in the echoes of Cao Zhi's poem. The seemingly simple, transparent verses throb with inner tension as the reader is constantly pushed to and fro between the two dimensions – as he glimpses the silhouettes of Cao Zhi's jade trees behind the 'real' orchids and vines.

In the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties the images of the immortals and the hermits remained closely interwoven, but this time the sides became reversed. It is no longer the transcendent immortals who are brought down to join the hermit in his mountainous surroundings, but it is rather the Daoist recluses who are surrounded with the splendour of the celestial immortals. The somewhat overblown Daoist imagery became the standard descriptive mode in the encomia on Daoist masters (for example the preserved pieces on Shan Daokai and Zhu Boyu) and in poems addressed to Daoist friends.

The poetical 'immortalisation' of the contemporary recluses is especially pronounced in poems devoted to Tao Hongjing – the foremost Daoist of the period and personal friend of many court poets and of emperor Wu of Liang himself. Fan Yun 范雲 (461-503), one of the poets from the literary circle of the Prince of Jingling, addressed the following poem as an answer to Tao Hongjing:

終朝吐祥霧	All morning spewing out auspicious mists,
薄晚孕奇煙	In the approaching evening it is pregnant with wondrous haze.
洞潤生芝草	The grotto stream bears magic mushrooms,
重崖出醴泉	The layered cliffs pour out sweet springs.
中有懷真士	Amidst there is nurtured a True man,
被褐守沖玄	Robed in coarse cloth he keeps the profound mystery.
石戶栖十祕	In the Stone grotto he nests within the Ten secrets,

²²⁵ Chenggong Sui 成公綏 (231-273) has written a "Rhapsody on Whistling" (*Xiaofu* 嘯賦), contained in *Wenxuan* 18.

金壇謁九仙 At the Golden Altar he pays a visit to the Nine immortals.²²⁶
 乘鶴方履漢 Mounting a phoenix, he is about to stride the Milky Way,
 響鶴上騰天 Reining-in cranes he leaps upwards to the Heaven.
 (Da Gouqu Tao xiansheng shi, Lu Qinli: 1545)

The first half of the poem describes the numinous landscape of the Gouqu 句曲 mountain – the highest peak of Maoshan, on the western slope of which Tao Hongjing has built his Huayang hermitage (Huayang guan 華陽館). It was also the site of one of the ten major grotto-heavens, the Huayang Golden Altar Heaven. The structure of the poem somewhat resembles the *zhaoyin* mode – describing the natural setting in the first half and then turning to the recluse dwelling there. The scenery described, however, is not an idyllic landscape but a highly numinous realm, pregnant with potent mists, bearing mushrooms and springs of immortality. The Daoist master, although cloaked in coarse robes like a hermit, is seen as paying ceremonial visits to heavenly immortals at the golden altar within the grotto-heaven. The last two lines depict him as one of the heavenly immortals, riding phoenixes and cranes, treading the Milky Way.

A poem by Shen Yue, commemorating Tao Hongjing's withdrawal to his Huayang retreat in the Maoshan Mountains after 499, even more explicitly glorifies the Daoist master:

側聞上士說 I hear rumours of the lofty gentleman,
 尺木乃騰霄 That with you *chimu* topknots you have mounted the empyrean.²²⁷
 雲駟不展地 Your cloud chariot will roll no more on earth;
 仙居多麗譙 In your transcendent home are many splendid towers.
 臥待三芝秀 Recumbent, you await the triple fungus bloom,
 坐對百神朝 And seated, face the hundred-spirit court.
 銜書必青鳥 The one who brings you letters in his beak must be Azure Bird,
 嘉客信龍鑣 Your handsome guest is none but Dragon Bit.²²⁸
 非止靈桃實 Not only will the Magic Peach bear fruit,
 方見大椿凋 But you will see the Great Cedrela shed its leaves.
 (Huayang Tao xiansheng denglou bufu xia; Lu Qinli: 1638;
 translation based on Mather 2003: 270 with slight alternations)

²²⁶ The Golden Altar probably indicates the grotto-heaven, hidden within the Gouqu Mountain. Known as the Huayang Golden Altar Heaven (Jintan huayang tian 金壇華陽天), it is one of the ten great grotto-heavens (*Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji* 3b-4b; see also Verellen 1995: 289). According to *Zhen'gao* 11.2b within it there is a golden altar, hundred *zhang* 丈 in height.

The expression "Nine immortals" probably refers to the nine classes of immortals inhabiting the Taiqing heaven. In *Yunji qiqian* 3: 6b/ 6-8 they are listed in ascending order of perfection as follows: (1) supreme immortals (*shangxian* 上仙), (2) eminent immortals (*gaoxian* 高仙), (3) great immortals (*daxian* 大仙), (4) mystic immortals (*xuanxian* 玄仙), (5) celestial immortals (*tianxian* 天仙), (6) perfected immortals (*zhenxian* 真仙), (7) divine immortals (*shenxian* 神仙), (8) numinous immortals (*lingxian* 靈仙) and (9) utmost immortals (*zhixian* 至仙).

²²⁷ The *chimu* 尺木 is the flame-like topknot on the cap of a Daoist priest, which is said to symbolise the island paradise of the immortals.

²²⁸ Dragon Bit (*longbiao* 龍鑣) is a metonym for an emperor who rides a dragon steed. In this case it probably refers to Emperor Wu of Han, who was visited by the Queen Mother of the West herself (*Bowu zhi* 3.17; *Han Wudi neizhuan* 8: 6087a)

In Jin poetry such an occasion was likely to be celebrated by a eulogy of hermitism in the *zhaoyin* mode. Shen Yue, however, pictures Tao Hongjing's retreat from the world as a triumphal ascend into immortality – mounting the sky in a cloud chariot to dwell in the heavenly mansions, where he – the recluse! – ceremonially attends divine courts. The Daoist hermit becomes a companion of the Queen Mother – he is served by her Azure birds and participates in her meetings with Emperor Wu of Han.

In a poem, titled *Gaoyou* 誥遊 (“Announcing a Journey”) Tao Hongjing describes his personal spiritual pursuits in a similar lofty fashion. He pictures himself as attaining an immortal body (*xianshen* 仙身) and befriending the blissful inhabitants of the islands of immortality.

I believe that it is not far-fetched to connect such transformations with the religious climate of the period. At the end of the 4th century the Shangqing scriptures had brought a promise of immortality much loftier than anything known up to that time. As the revealed texts spread among the southern aristocracy, this novel vision of immortality captured the imagination of the court literary circles. The individualistic earthly immortals, who shunned celestial service, could not withstand the appeal of dazzling magnificence, refined and mannered, which surrounded the Shangqing True Ones. Here we might remember the look of pity that the Right Lady of the Mystic Purity of the Grand Tenuity casts down on the earthly immortals, still “nesting among forests and springs” (*Zhen'gao* 3.16a, see above, p. 83). The ideal of utmost freedom, which was at the core of the perception of immortality during the 3rd and 4th centuries, was replaced by a vision in which transcendental majesty and courtly decorum blended together. One might superficially be reminded of the transformation of the immortals in the Han court poetry more than five centuries earlier when the reclusive, “emaciated from fasting” immortals were replaced by grand visions of celestial corteges and cosmic ramblings. During the Liang dynasty, however, this change was not only induced ‘from the outside’ by the requirements of court poetry, but also took place within Daoist religion itself, and is generally connected with the new, more sublime perception of immortals and True Ones.

Chapter II The World of the Immortals

II.1. Overview

While descriptions of the *xian* immortals and cosmic journeys were already prominent in the poetry of the Han dynasty, accounts on the paradisiacal worlds where these immortals lingered were much rarer in the verse of that period. The *Chuci* poets generally focus on the actions, movement, and attributes of the hero, while the divine realms he visits are merely enumerated as defining points of the universe. In these *itinerarias* no scenery is ever described, no details on places or persons visited are provided. On the other hand, the *Chuci* poems abound in natural and magical imagery – but the various aromatic or magic plants, gem trees, divine waters are mostly not presented as elements of one single landscape²²⁹. Reduced to their magical or symbolical aspects, they are subject to the ritualized actions of the protagonist: he breaks an agate branch, bedecks himself with orchids, sips water from the Flying Spring, etc.

The extraordinary and fantastic figured prominently in the Han rhapsodies *fu* but here it did not pertain to some distant, inaccessible otherworld of immortals. Having as their goal the glorification and delectation of the ruler, the court poets made paradise wonders part of the imperial domain and subjected them to the potency of the Son of Heaven. The imperial gardens, hunting grounds and capitals and their verbal replicas in rhapsodic form were conceived primarily as pictures of the cosmos in all its entirety and profusion – including the exotic, precious and fantastic. The emperor was extolled as an omnipotent cosmic master, lord of the worldly and otherworldly realms that included deities, paradise lands and innumerable miracles.²³⁰

Some of the earliest descriptions of the islands of immortals, Penglai 蓬萊, Yingzhou 瀛洲 and Fangzhang 方丈, are in fact found in the grand *fu*-rhapsodies on the capital Chang'an - Ban Gu's 班固 (32 - 92) *Xidu fu* 西都賦 ("Rhapsody on the Western Capital", *Wenxuan* 1) and Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78 - 139) *Xijing fu* 西京賦 ("Rhapsody on the Western Metropolis", *Wenxuan* 2).²³¹ However, these are not imaginary visions of the elusive paradises in the

²²⁹ Some of the *Jiuge* 九歌 shamanistic songs are exceptions. In the *Xiang furen* 湘夫人 ("Lady of the Xiang") the shaman describes the halls he will build out of aromatic plants for the goddess (*Chuci buzhu*: 66-67). In the *Hebo* 河伯 ("River Earl"), the water palace of the river god is concisely described (*ibid*: 77).

²³⁰ There is yet another type of *fu*-rhapsody that incorporates fantastic imagery - namely the *fu*, depicting imaginary journeys of the scholar-official through the universe, such as Zhang Heng's *Sixuan fu* 思玄賦 ("Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery"). These, however, follow the *Chuci itineraria* model, simply enumerating but not describing mythical paradises and personages.

²³¹ Both translated in Knechtges 1982: 99 - 145 and 181 - 242.

Eastern Sea, but actual sights of their earthly simulacrum constructed by Emperor Wu in 104 BC near his Jianzhang Palace.²³² These vistas, although seen in the imperial capital rather than conjured up by poetic imagination, were themselves forms of depicting the world of immortals, and quite naturally, the imagery of their description in rhapsodic form was part of immortality lore.

Because the imperial parks and the constructions therein were designed both as an image of All-Under-Heaven and as an earthly paradise, the imagery and descriptive models developed in the early Han rhapsodies could easily be transposed to the depiction of the higher realms of the immortals. Such is the case with Ban Biao's 班彪 (3 – 54) *Lanhai fu* 覽海 (“Rhapsody on Viewing the Sea”), which seems to be the earliest preserved poetic record of the ‘world beyond’. Unlike the *Chuci* itineraries, Ban Biao combines the theme of an imaginary cosmic journey with an extended account of the visited lands - the floating islands of the immortals.

<p>... 指日月以為表 索方瀛與壺梁 曜金璆以為闕 次玉石而為堂 萸芝列於階路 涌醴漸於中唐 朱紫彩爛 明珠夜光 松喬坐於東序 王母處於西箱...</p>	<p>... Pointing to the sun and moon to be my compass, I search for Fangzhang, Yingzhou and Huliang. Of scintillating gold and jasper are the gate towers, Of storied jade the halls. Calendar bean and magic mushroom grow along the steps, Bubbling sweetwaters stream in the central yard. Vermillion and purple splendidly shine Luminous pearls glow at night. Red Pine and Wang Qiao sit in the eastern chambers, The Queen Mother resides in the western wing... (Yan Kejun vol. 2: 231)</p>
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The elements of this paradise landscape are all wonders that had been enumerated in the accounts of the imperial parks. Moreover, the account is structured according to the model of the Han rhapsodies on imperial parks and palaces. It consists of balanced parallel couplets which successively introduce various aspects of the vision – gemmed structures seen from distance, the magic flora and waters inside them, colours and light during the day and during the night, and finally – the immortal residents of these quarters. Many lines immediately echo Sima Xiangru's (ca. 179 - 117 BC) *Shanlin fu* 上林賦 (“Rhapsody on the Imperial Park”). For example, the grandeur and the enormous size of the palaces of the immortals are suggested through the spatial co-ordinates of east and west, recalling Sima Xiangru's formulas such as:

<p>青龍蚺於東箱 象輿婉憚於西清</p>	<p>A green dragon curls and coils in the eastern chamber, The elephant carriage twists and turns through the western repose. (<i>Shanlin fu</i>, <i>Wenxuan</i>: 367, tr. by Knechtges 1987: 89 - 91)</p>
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²³² *Shiji* 12: 482 and 28: 1402.

If it were not for the specified location and the immortal personages of Wangzi Qiao, Red Pine and Xiwangmu, this account could easily pass for a description of any of the imperial palaces.

The late Han *yuefu* songs often incorporate brief glimpses of an otherworldly landscape within the broader *itineraria* framework – examples the ballads *Dongtao xing* 董逃行 and *Buchu xiamen xing* 步出夏門行 (“Going out of the Summer Gate”). In the immortality poetry of Cao Cao 曹操 (155 – 220) and Cao Zhi 曹植 (192 - 232) brief reflections of otherworldly vistas frequently appear as couplets or quatrains, squeezed into the peripeteias of the cosmic journey. Thus, after rising above the clouds, after ascending the Grand Void and approaching the Purple Tenuity starry palace, the protagonist of *Xianren pian* 仙人篇 (“Immortals”) catches sight of the celestial edifices before he continues his course over the four seas:

閭闔正嵯峨	The Changhe gate looms above,
雙闕萬丈餘	Its two towers soar one hundred thousand feet.
玉樹扶道生	Jade trees grow along the road,
白虎夾門	White tigers flank the gates. (Lu Qinli: 434)

In Cao Cao’s and Cao Zhi’s songs the dreams of eternal life are more commonly evoked, however, through scenes of immortal inhabitants and the feasts taking place at these locations, rather than through description of their scenery.

From the fourth century onwards the cosmic journey in the “roaming into immortality” verse gradually loses its importance as a hallmark of immortality and the *itineraria* theme recedes into the background, as the first chapter has demonstrated. Many of the poems titled “Roaming into immortality” (*Youxian*) no longer present the poet’s imaginary flight after the immortals, but autonomous visions of otherworldly landscapes or of splendid festive scenes in paradise (the *Youxian* cycles of Zhang Hua, Wang Rong, Yuan Tuan). Side by side with their relative emancipation from the *itineraria* framework and from the personal reflections of the poet, descriptions of the divine lands become more extended, more detailed and visually powerful. Early examples of such vivid paradise visions appear in the preserved fragments of Zhang Xie’s 張協 (d. 307) and Yu Chan’s *Youxian* poems.²³³

Descriptions of paradise landscapes at times appear in the post-Han *fu* rhapsodies as parts of wider themes. Otherworldly vistas were naturally incorporated into the rhapsodies describing the sea, for it encompassed the elusive islands of the immortals that so inspired the

²³³ Not having the complete poems, it is, however, hard to decide to what degree Yu Chan’s and Zhang Xie’s descriptions were autonomous or had been incorporated into a wider *itineraria* framework.

hopes of immortality seekers and the imagination of the poets.²³⁴ Sun Chuo's 孫綽 (314 – 371) *You Tiantai shan fu* 遊天台山賦 (“Rhapsody on Roaming the Celestial Terrace Mountains”) also contains a description of an otherworldly paradise, hidden in the recesses of the mountains.

In the eulogies *song* and encomia *zan*, composed in praise of certain sacred mountains, fantastic imagery is commonly adopted to exalt their numinous quality. These panegyrics disclose the real form and the true landscape of the earthly mountains, which are conceived as divine paradises accommodating numerous wonders, and the abodes of immortals and deities.

II.2. Topography

The absence of a specific “immortality topography” is evident in all Han treatments of the celestial journey theme. The poetry written in the *Chuci itineraria* tradition constructs the divine realm according to the ancient mythical geography as recorded in *Shanhai jing* (“Classic on Mountains and Seas”) and *Huainanzi*. In the *Yuanyou* the remote quarters successively traversed by the traveller are not mythical lands of immortality, but the significant points that defined the universe in the cosmographical speculations of the time. These, moreover, are not even directly named in this poem, but simply evoked by their presiding deities - the god Tai Hao 太皓 and Gou Mang 句芒, ruling over the realm of the East, Xi Huang 西皇 and the deity Ru Shou 蓐收, presiding over the West, the Fiery God 炎神 and Zhu Rong 祝融 of the South and Zhuanxu 顓頊 with Xuan Min 玄冥 of the North. The pairs of presiding gods and tutelary spirits are the same as those given in *Huainanzi* - a treatise originating approximately from the same period and probably from the same circle of scholars as the *Yuanyou*.²³⁵ The only immortality land mentioned is the Cinnabar Hill, Danqiu 丹丘 – the home of the winged immortals (*yuren* 羽人) in the south, where the hero purifies and strengthens his body for the forthcoming cosmic journey.

In the course of the Han dynasty more sites of immortality lore became incorporated into the ancient mythical scheme of the cosmos, which still provided the overall spatial framework. Thus, in Zhang Heng's *Sixuan fu* (“Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery”), in the

²³⁴ The only completely preserved sea rhapsody is Mu Hua's 木華 *Haifu* 海賦, the others survive mostly in fragments contained in the early Tang anthology *Yiwen leiju* (8. 152-54).

²³⁵ *Huainanzi* ch. 3, “On the Patterns of Heaven” and ch. 5, “On the Seasonal Rules” (Major 1993: 70 - 73 and 258 - 261). In *Huainanzi* the system of the four guardian divinities is adapted to the standard theory of the five phases (*wuxing* 五行) and the god of the centre has been added - the Yellow Emperor, Huangdi and his assistant deity Hou Tu 后土 (Sovereign of the Soil).

east the hero visits not only the traditional sites of solar mythology – the Fusang tree and the Dawn valley, but also the immortals’ islands Penglai and Yingzhou, and in the west he attends a banquet at the silver terrace of Xi Wangmu at Kunlun. In the poetry of the later Han period a specific universe of immortality is gradually being constituted. Already in Ban Biao’s *Lanhai fu*, the imaginary journey takes place within a cosmos of pure immortality lore in which none of the ancient mythical sites or their guardian spirits make their appearance. The space in which the hero moves in this particular rhapsody is defined solely by the fairy islands of the Eastern Sea, the realm of Grand Purity (Taiqing), the Changhe 閶闔 heavenly gates and the Purple Palace (Zigong) in the highest reaches of the sky.

Daoist paradise has **been** generally envisaged as a remote land at the ends of the human world, inaccessible to ordinary mortals. The islands of the immortals in the Eastern Sea and the western Kunlun Mountains, home of the Queen of Immortals, Xi Wangmu, remained the prime landmarks of the universe of immortality in the post-Han poetry. High above, beyond the Changhe starry gate, spread the heavenly realm of the Purple Tenuity (Ziwei 紫微), seat of the Celestial Lord.

Certain sacred mountains of China, above all Mount Tai 泰 and Mount Hua 華 - the Eastern and the Western Marchmounts, also came to be regarded as the mystical haunts of immortals. In the Han mirror inscriptions these two mountains had often been mentioned as lands of immortals’ paradises:

“If you climb Mount Tai, you may see the immortal beings. They feed on jade blossoms (*yuying* 玉英), they drink from sweet springs (*liquan* 醴泉). They yoke scaly dragons to their carriage, they mount the floating clouds...”

“If you climb Mount Hua, phoenixes and simurghs gather, you may see the divine immortals (*shenxian* 神仙).”²³⁶

While in the *fu* and *sao* forms these two mountains seldom appear as lands of immortality, in the *yuefu* songs from the end of Han it is they rather than the distant paradises of Penglai or Kunlun that almost exclusively host immortals. In the *Buchu xiamen xing* the hero, on his way to Heaven, visits the Royal Father and Mother at their joined dwelling at the slopes of Taishan, and there meets the immortal Red Pine who escorts him up the heaven. In *Changge xing* 長歌行 (“Long Song”) an immortal leads the hero up the Great Mount Hua to obtain the divine drug. In the post-Han *yuefu* poetry Mount Tai and Mount Hua are referred to time and again as lands of immortality. Cao Cao in *Qichu chang* I describes a scene, taking place on Taishan, which is very close in imagery and language to the late Han mirror inscriptions:

²³⁶ Zhang Jinyi 1981: 71.

行四海外	Roaming beyond the Four Seas,	
東到泰山	In the east I reach Mount Tai.	
仙人玉女	Immortals and Jade Maidens,	
下來翱翔	Descending, soaring,	
驂駕六龍	Harnessing teams of six dragons,	
飲玉漿	Sipping Jade Brew.	(Lu Qinli: 345)

The hero is then given a draught of this jade brew, which strengthens him for a subsequent journey to Penglai and eventually to the Gates of Heaven. In the second poem of the *Qichu chang* cycle a similar scene is set on the slopes of Mount Hua.

Mount Tai appears time and again in the poetry of Cao Zhi. It is where he beholds feasting and gambling immortals – a scene which resembles many Han pictorial depictions of immortals:

仙人攬六著	Immortals grasp six game-slats,	
對博太山隅	They gamble amongst each other on the slopes of mount Tai	
		(<i>Xianren pian</i> , Lu Qinli: 434)

Mount Tai is also the place where the hero of Cao Zhi's *Feilong pian* 飛龍篇 ("Flying Dragon") meets two True Ones (*zhenren*) who initiate him in the teachings of the Way.²³⁷ Finally, in his *Quche pian* ("Speeding my Chariot"). Mount Tai is the place from where the Yellow Emperor ascended to heaven – the last point of contact with the human world (see above, ch. I.1.3., p. 38).

In the post-Han poetry on immortality Mount Tai and Mount Hua generally figure as abodes of Daoist divinities and sacred zones, where immortals reveal themselves to humans, where men are initiated in the immortality arts and whence they can venture into higher realms of the divine.²³⁸

Besides the islands of immortals in the Eastern Sea, the Kunlun mountains and the sacred Mounts Tai and Hua, various other sites of immortality occasionally appear in poetry, although never achieving a dominant position. For example Ruan Ji, in two poems (*Yonghuai shi* 23 and 78) places his immortals on the distant Guye 姑射 Mountain - the abode of Zhuangzi's Divine Men (*shenren*)²³⁹:

²³⁷ A very similar encounter and initiation by two immortal lads in Cao Pi's *Zhe yangliu xing* 折楊柳行 ("Breaking a Willow Branch") takes place on Mount Hua.

²³⁸ On the image of Taishan in the Chinese poetry prior to the Tang period see P. Kroll 1983. He also provides a synopsis of the ancient religious ideas connected with Mount Tai – as a protector of the state and an intermediary between the emperor and Heaven, as a presider over the transmutations of life and death and arbiter of fate.

²³⁹ "Far away on the mountain of Guye 姑射 there live Divine men (*shenren* 神人). Their flesh and skin are like ice and snow, their manners - elegant and graceful as that of maiden. They do not eat any of the five grains, but inhale the wind and drink the dew; ride on clouds, drive flying dragons, and roam beyond the

東南有射山	Mount Ye lies in the southeast,
汾水出其陽	And the River Fen flows from its southern slope.
六龍服氣輿	Six dragons there draw a chariot of breath,
雲蓋切天綱	Whose cloud canopy covers the Net of Heaven... (<i>Yonghuai shi</i> 23)

During the Jin dynasty the number of distant immortality lands mentioned in prose sources increased rapidly. Many of them also found their place in the poetry of the period. Thus, Guo Pu in *Youxian shi* VII writes:

圓丘有奇草	On the Round Hill grow magic herbs,
鍾山出靈液	On Bell-Mount sacred liquids issue. (Lu Qinli: 866)

Shizhou ji 十洲記 (“Records of the Ten Continents”, 5th - 6th cent. AD) situates the Bell mountain (Zhongshan 鍾山) to the north of the Northern Sea. A mountain of immense height (13000 *li*), it is the Celestial Lord Emperor’s seat of government and abounds in more than forty kinds of jade mushrooms and divine herbs, as well as containing golden terraces and jade gate-towers, which store up the primal breath *qi*.²⁴⁰

The other location in Guo Pu’s verse, the Round Hill (Yuanqiu 圓丘), is described in Zhang Hua’s *Bowu zhi*: “On the Round Hill there is the tree of immortality, when one eats it, he will be long-lived; there is the Crimson spring (*chiquan* 赤泉), when one drinks from it, he will never grow old”.²⁴¹ This very passage was quoted by Guo Pu in his commentary on the Non-dying People (*busi min* 不死民), described in *Shanhai jing* 6.²⁴² Tao Qian in the poetical cycle “On Reading *Shanhai jing*” immediately draws on Guo Pu’s commentary (and on *Bowu zhi*) saying:

赤泉給我飲	The Crimson Spring provides my drink,
員丘足我糧	The Round Hill supplies my food. (<i>Du Shanhai jing shi</i> 8, Lu Qinli: 1011)

In the post-Han poetry many of the mythical sites from the “Classic on Mountains and Seas”, which in early Han times had nothing to do with the immortality teachings, became assimilated into the topography of the immortality realm. This process parallels the transformation of ancient, zoomorphic deities into immortals in the course of which, for example Lu Wu 陸吾 became an immortal in Guo Pu’s encomium on *Shanhai jing* (see ch.

four seas... (If Yao) had gone to the distant Guye Mountain, to the sunny side of the Fen river 汾水, and seen the four men, he would have dropped the affairs of state at once” (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 28 – 31).

²⁴⁰ Wang Guoliang 1993: 88.

²⁴¹ The *Wenxuan* commentary 21/27a and 31/29a attributes this passage to the Han dynasty work *Waiguo tu* 外國圖 (“Maps of Foreign States”), surviving in quotations. Before Guo Pu, Xi Kang in his *Youxian shi* had visualised the Bell Mountain as a site of divine herbs and of transformation into an immortal.

²⁴² Yuan Ke 1980: 196 - 7.

I.1.5., p. 45 above). In the tenth poem of his *Youxian* cycle Guo Pu describes divine landmarks from this ancient geographical work:

璇臺冠崑嶺	The Gem Terrace crowns the peak of Kunlun,
西海濱招搖	The Western Sea borders on Mount Zhaoyao.
瓊林籠藻映	The rose-gem forest spreads a veil of iridescent shimmer,
碧樹疏英翹	Cyan trees shed blossom plumes.
丹水漂朱沫	The Cinnabar Stream raises crimson foam.
黑水鼓玄濤	The Black River swells with inky waves. (Lu Qinli: 866)

Zhaoyao 招搖 Mountain, bordering on the Western Sea, is the very first site described in *Shanhai jing*.²⁴³ The Cinnabar 丹 and Black 黑 rivers appear at many points in *Shanhai jing* – the Black River being explicitly associated with the Kunlun Mountains.²⁴⁴

Very early the topography of the immortality realm incorporated sites of ancient solar mythology – the Valley of Dawn, Tanggu 湯谷, and the Fusang 扶桑 tree. Thus, in his *Baihe fu* 白鶴賦 ("Rhapsody on a White Crane") Wang Can 王粲 (177-217) writes:

接王喬於湯谷	[the white crane] meets Wang Qiao at the Valley of Dawn,
駕赤松於扶桑	And carries Red Pine to the Fusang tree. (<i>Quan Han fu</i> : 678)

Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303) similarly places the immortals in the eastern lands, from where the sun emerges every day renewed:

摠轡扶桑枝	They tie the reigns up to a branch of the Fusang tree,
濯足湯谷波	And wash their feet in the Dawn Valley waves. (<i>Qian huansheng ge</i> , Lu Qinli: 665)

The mythic lands of dawn had been favourite destinations of the cosmic travellers of *Chuci*, but in the context of immortality the ancient solar lore acquired new significance. East was generally considered to be the locus of nascent life, the cardinal direction of inception and animation for all living beings. The sun, moreover, was the utmost concentration of *yang* energy, which bestowed life on all existence. The image of the sun, lifting itself daily from its subterranean chamber, refreshed and renewed, might have provided a parallel to the adepts' own transition to eternity, which according to certain methods involved a passage through the dark and formless realm of Grand Darkness (Taiyin 太陰).²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Yuan Ke 1980: 1.

²⁴⁴ Guo Pu's commentary, *ibid*: 369.

²⁴⁵ See the *Xiang'er* 相爾 commentary (2nd century AD) to *Daode jing*, section 16, line "Their bodies obliterated, they do not die". It explains that those who have accumulated the Dao refine their forms in the realm of Grand Darkness [*Taiyin* 太陰] in the northernmost reaches of the universe. "When there is no place for them to stay in the world, the worthy withdraw and, feigning death, pass through Grand Darkness to have their images [*xiang*] reborn on the other side. This is to be 'obliterated without perishing'." (Rao Zongyi 1991: 22, translated by Bokenkamp 1997: 102).

The image of the dawning sun often appears in the poetry on immortality as embodying the mysterium of eternal regeneration and everlasting life.

南海納朱濤 The Southern Sea swells with crimson billows,
玄波灑北溟 Inky waves scatter over the Northern Ocean.
仰盼燭龍曜 I look up at the brilliance of the Illuminating Dragon,
俯步朝廣庭 And step down into the wide hall of dawn. (Yu Chan *Youxian shi* II, Lu Qinli: 875)

Entering the hall of sunrise is stepping into the wellspring of cosmic life, whence the adept will emerge purified, refined and eternal.

Guo Pu opens the eighth *Youxian* poem with a vivid picture of dawning nature that interweaves mythical with natural imagery. The brilliance of the re-born morning sun induces in the poet “distant thoughts” about human transformation into an immortal being.

暘谷吐靈曜 The Sun Gorge spews divine radiance,
扶桑森千丈 Fu Sang’s thickets extend for many leagues.
朱霞升東山 Crimson auroras mount the Eastern Mountain,
朝日何晃朗 How brilliant and dazzling is the morning sun!
迴風流曲櫺 When the whirling wind streams through secluded windows,
幽室發逸響 [My] hidden chamber resounds with wondrous tunes.
悠然心永懷 Remoteness my heart forever harbours,
眇爾自遐想 So aloof, I have distant thoughts. (Lu Qinli: 866)

During the Liang dynasty paradise realms increased rapidly in number as many new and loftier sacred sites became known through the Supreme Purity (*Shangqing* 上清), revelations at the end of the 4th century. The court poets often refer to divine locations such as the seamount Fangzhu 方諸, the Mystic Island [Continent] (Xuanzhou 玄洲), the Purple Prefecture (Zifu 紫府), etc., which are all prominent in the Daoist topography of the *Shangqing* tradition.²⁴⁶ The songs from Liang Wudi’s cycle *Shangyun yue*, except the sixth poem on “Gold and Cinnabar”, all bear as their titles the names of a different immortality locale or sacred mountain. Except for the Fangzhang island and the Phoenix Terrace (Fengtai 鳳臺), well-known from earlier poetry, these are locations prominent in the *Shangqing* texts – Fangzhu, the Pawlonia and Cypress Mountain (Tongbo shan 桐柏山), the Jade Turtle mountain (Yugui shan 玉龜山).²⁴⁷ Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513) pairs the time-honoured

²⁴⁶ These sites are not mentioned in earlier mythical geographies but figure prominently in *Zhen’gao* 真告 (dat. 499, CT 1016) and *Shizhou ji* 十洲記 (5th or 6th cent., CT 598). T. Russel speculates that these lands belonged to the mythology indigenous to the lower Yangzi region, but became widely known only through their *Shangqing* adaptation (Russel 1985: 30).

²⁴⁷ Fangzhu is the home of the Azure Lad (Qingdong 青童) – the *Shangqing* lord of the East who presided over elixirs of life and over the transmission and practice of religious knowledge. Fangzhu is described for example in *Zhen’gao* 9/20-21b: “There are many strange numinous beings and treasure creatures. There is a wine of white jade and Gold liquor. The Azure Lord’s accumulation of heaven-treasure utensils and

Cinnabar Hill, home of the winged immortals from the *Chuci Yuanyou* poem, with a novel Daoist realm:

清旦發玄洲 In the pure dawn [I][we] set out from the Mystic Island,
日暮宿丹丘 At sunset [I][we] spend the night at the Cinnabar hill“
(*He Liu zhongshu xianshi*, Lu Qinli: 1660)

Dai Gao 戴嵩 (6th cent.) similarly writes:

玄都宴晚集 At the Mystic Capital [we][they] meet for an evening feast,
紫府事朝看 At the Purple Prefecture [we][they] look at the morning audience²⁴⁸
(*Shenxian pian*, Lu Qinli: 2099)

The Mystic Island (Xuanzhou), located it in the Northern Sea, was one of the highest-ranking paradises of Immortals in the Shangqing tradition.²⁴⁹ The Mystic Capital (Xuandu 玄都) might be the City of Great Mystery (Taixuan du 太玄都), situated on this continent.²⁵⁰ A palace of the Purple prefecture (Zifu gong 紫府宮) is mentioned in *Shizhou ji* as situated on the Zhangzhou 長洲 continent in the Southern sea - heavenly perfected beings and immortal maidens sport there.²⁵¹

From the Liang dynasty onwards the *youxian* poets also start to refer to the Daoist grotto-heavens, *dongtian* 洞天, and the Lands of Bliss, *fudi* 福地 (Liang Wudi's *Jinling qu* 金陵曲 from the cycle *Shangyun yue* 上雲樂, Dai Gao's *Shenxian pian* 神仙篇).²⁵² These were

creatures are all located here. There are also many immortals who eat the herb of immortality and who drink this wine and liquor. Their bodies are made of gold and jade, their appearance is fresh, they mostly play on the flute of the Nine Numinous Powers to amuse themselves...多奇靈寶物, 有白玉酒金漿. 青君畜積天寶之器物. 盡在於. 亦多有仙, 食不死草, 飲此酒漿. 身作金玉色澤. 常多吹九靈簫, 以自娛樂“. See also Hyland 1984: 189.

The Paulownia-Cypress Mountain (Tongbo shan 桐柏山), located in the Henan province, is one of the blessed lands (*fudi* 福地) of the Shangqing lore. It contained the Golden Court Palace (*jinting gong* 金庭宮) and in *Zhen'gao* 11/5b is described as "a blessed realm for nourishing Truth, a numinous mound for bringing the spirit to completion" 養真之福境, 成神之靈墟. In *Zhen'gao* 14/19a it is said to be 8 000 *zhang* in height, eight levels tall (recalling *Huainanzi*'s eightfold division of the world) and 800 *li* in circumference, being all of pentachrome gold (metal) (See also Hyland 1984: 193).

²⁴⁸ The meaning of the last line is not absolutely clear. Prof. Achim Mittag has suggested that the character *kan* 看 could be miswritten – more appropriate would be *zhong* 眾 ("gather") or *chong* 重 ("stand one foot above the other", i.e. "stand in awe") (personal communication).

²⁴⁹ "On this continent there are many mansions of the immortal officials of the Great Mystery; each palace and chamber is unique. There is an abundance of golden fungi and jade plants." (Wang Guoliang 1994: 62; Smith 1990: 92) The Mystic Island prefigures the judgmental and purificatory Mt. Luofu of the Shangqing tradition, purgatory and land of the death, which is also situated in the north.

²⁵⁰ On the other hand, the Lingbao Daoist tradition situates the Mystic City in the highest Heaven of Grand Veil (Daluo tian 大羅天). Called the Mystic City on Jade Capitoline Mountain (Yujing xuandu 玉京玄都), it is the residence of the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Origin (Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊).

²⁵¹ Wang Guoliang 1994: 65; Smith 1990: 95.

²⁵² The systems of grotto-heavens and lands of bliss were developed within the Shangqing Daoist tradition, although the roots of these notions can be traced back to the Han *chenwei* 讖緯 apocrypha. There are generally considered to be thirty-six grotto-heavens (earliest attested in *Zhen'gao* 11) and seventy two lands of bliss (*Yunji qiqian* 27). See also Li Fengmao 1997: 93-142.

perfect worlds in miniature, contained within certain sacred mountains and interconnected by means of underground passages. The immortals roamed for pleasure in these subterranean paradises, but only a few initiated mortals could find their elusive passageways and penetrate them.

Zhang Zhengjian's 張正見 (6th cent.) poem *Shenxian pian* 神仙篇 ("Divine Immortals") illustrates the eclecticism of the topography of the immortality realm during the late Southern Dynasties. Besides the ancient islands of immortals Penglai and Yingzhou, the Langfeng peak of Kunlun, references are made to specific Shangqing sites, such as the Mystic Capital (Xuandu 玄都) and the Lands of Bliss (*fudi* 福地), to earthly localities connected with legends of immortals, such as the lake Ge 葛 in Henan and the Purple Parasol peak 紫蓋山 of Hengshan, to the Milky Way, and even to the utopian realm of Tao Yuanming:

潯陽杏花終難朽 The apricot flowers of Xunyang never wither,²⁵³
武陵桃花未曾落 The peach blossoms of Wuling have never fallen.²⁵⁴ (Lu Qinli: 2482)

The peach blossoms of Wuling 武陵 evoke the simple, pristine world, untouched by historical development, described by Tao Qian in the "Records of the Peach Blossom Spring" (*Taohua yuan ji* 桃花源記).

II.3. Paradise mountains and paradise gardens

Regardless of its location, the paradise of immortals is always conceived as a mountain of immense height, *axis mundi* and communicator between the cosmic zones. The descriptions of immortality lands in poetry often emphasise their height and loftiness. The literary figures which they employ do not simply convey physical altitude, but present these realms in their mythical and spiritual aspect as intermediaries between the cosmic spheres.

In his description of the floating islands of the immortals Mu Hua depicts them as "tall and towering", "pointing to the Grand Purity 太清", and writes of underwater coals that "cast their fulgour into the Nine Springs (*jiuquan* 九泉)" (*Wenxuan* 12: 549). The divine islands are thus seen as a locus of contact between the three cosmic zones – below they communicate

²⁵³ Allusion to Tao Yuanming. He, Zhou Xuzhi 周續之 and Liu Yimin 劉遺民 were called the three recluses of Xunyang 潯陽三隱 (Xiao Tong: *Tao Yuanming zhuan* 陶淵明傳).

²⁵⁴ In his description in *Taohua yuan ji* of the peach forest *outside* the grotto Tao Qian explicitly speaks about peach flowers fallen and fluttering in the air (落英繽紛). The fact that in Zhang Zhengjian's line the blossoms are said "never yet to have fallen" might indicate that the pristine world within the grotto is not yet discovered by men.

with the Nine Springs of the underworld, above they connect to the Heaven of Grand Purity – the highest heaven known in Mu Hua’s time.

Zhang Zhengjian envisages the loftiness and remoteness of the Eastern and Western paradises in the following terms:

瀛洲分渤海 Yingzhou divides the gulf of Bo
閼苑隔虹蜺 The Lang gardens cut through the rainbows....²⁵⁵ (*Shenxian pian*, Lu Qinli: 2482)

The phrase, translated here as “rainbows”, in the Chinese original reads *hongni* 虹蜺 – *hong* being the more conspicuous, colourful rainbow, conceived as a “male”, while *ni* is its paler, “female”, counterpart. The two were regarded respectively as “the embryonic essences of *yang* and *yin*, and their mating produced rain, snow, frost, thunder, and lightning”.²⁵⁶ The image of the Langfeng peak of the Kunlun range thus acquires cosmological significance – it is transformed into a division-line between the two major cosmic powers.

As scholars of religion have demonstrated, it is a universal phenomenon that the archetypal image of the Cosmic Mountain, centre and pillar of the world, tends to multiply and to identify itself with features of the real landscape.²⁵⁷ Not only the mythical lands at the ends of the world, but also real mountains in this world are envisioned in Chinese poetry as Cosmic Mountains. This is how Shen Yue pictures the Golden Floriate Mountain, Jinhua shan 金華山²⁵⁸:

天倪臨紫闕 From the Celestial Bourne it looks down on the Purple Pylons,
地道通丹竅 Its subterranean passages reach caves of cinnabar. (*You Jinhua shan*, Lu Qinli: 1633)

Shen Yue presents the mountain as rising through the Purple Pylons (*zique* 紫闕) of the Purple Tenuity Heaven and reaching the Celestial Bourne (*tianni* 天倪), where all opposites blend together.²⁵⁹ Downwards the mountain penetrates into subterranean grottoes, which in ancient China are conceived as embodying the undifferentiated mode of being preceding creation. Moreover, these mystical grottoes are all of cinnabar – of a highly concentrated form of life-conferring *yang* energy. Thus, the Golden Floriate Mountain rises from the mystic source of life in the primordial chaos and reaches the point where all entities merge again in unity. It is

²⁵⁵ Yingzhou is one of the floating islands of immortals in the Bohai Sea. The Lang gardens denote the highest Langfeng 閼風 peak of Kunlun.

²⁵⁶ Schafer 1977: 86.

²⁵⁷ See especially Eliade 1949: ch. 10; 1952: ch. 1; 1957: ch. 1.

²⁵⁸ Jinhua shan, situated near Dongyang in Zhejiang province, was one of the sacred Daoist mountains. It is associated with the persona of the immortal Red Pine (Chi Songzi 赤松子), who had practiced immortality arts on it. Its caves were included in the network of thirty-six grotto-heavens under the name of The Primordial Grotto-heaven of the Golden Floriate Grottoes (Jinhua dong yuan dongtian 金華洞元洞天).

²⁵⁹ *Zhuangzi jishi* 2.52.

not only an *axis mundi*, which vertically connects all three cosmic spheres, but an axis starting from and ending in primordial non-differentiation, thus completing in itself the cosmic cycle.

This mythical cosmic mountain is moreover conceived as a magical garden. Kunlun itself is commonly referred to as the Hanging Gardens (Xuanpu 懸圃), or the Mystic Gardens (Xuanpu 玄圃). The wonderful groves of paradise contain beautiful, aromatic plants like orchids, cinnamon and artemisia, which in the *Chuci* had bedecked divinities. Blooming forever, they provide a nesting place for sacred birds like cranes and phoenixes:

靈液飛素波	The Magic waters fly in white waves,
蘭桂上參天	Orchids and cinnamon pierce the sky.
玄豹遊其下	Black leopards roam beneath,
翔鸞戲其巔	Soaring cranes frolic on its crown. (Cao Zhi <i>Shengtian xing</i> I, Lu Qinli: 433)

Even the magnificent image of the starry heaven could be transformed into a garden landscape. This is what the hero of *Buchu xiamen xing* beholds when the immortal Red Pine leads him up into the sky:

天上何所有	Up in Heaven what is there?	
歷歷種白榆	White elms clearly planted out.	
桂樹夾道生		□Cinnamon trees growing on which side of the
road,□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□		
青龍對伏蹠	Green dragons facing each other as they crouched. (<i>Yuefu shiji</i> 37: 545)	

This *yuefu* song from the end of Han contains a humorous play of words: 'white elms', 'cinnamon' and 'green dragons' are also names of constellations in the sky. The pun produces a landscape on two simultaneous levels – both worldly and cosmic.

The wonderland of immortals is always covered with lush, ever-green vegetation of magical herbs, mushrooms and incorruptible jewels, irrigated by springs of sweet water or jade brew. Both its plants and waters bestow eternal life. One peculiar feature of these descriptions of immortality lands are trees made of gold or jewels, bearing gem fruits and flowers.

若靈園之列樹	And now, the trees aligned in the numinous park,
攢寶之炳燦	Brilliant gems, heaped high, gleam and glow.
金柯分	Golden boughs spray out,
玉葉散	Jade leaves scatter,
綠翹明	Green thickets shine,
巖英煥	Towering flowers sparkle. (Lu Ji, <i>Fuyun fu</i> ; Yan Kejun, vol. 4: 982)

Metals and precious stones, which are immaculate, luminous, changeless and endless, are proper symbols of incorruptibility and imperishableness. Moreover, in the image of plants and trees of jewels living and non-living nature merge together. Endowed both with the eternity of

the inorganic universe and with the life and regeneration potential of the organic world, they become symbols of totality and perfection.

It is important that the immortals' paradise is not a pristine world of wild nature, but a garden of pleasures, carefully moulded by human (or rather superhuman) hand – it houses splendid palaces and lodges, exquisitely carved and decorated. These castles might be placed high in the aether, floating on the banks of clouds and mists, as in Fu Xuan's 傅玄 (217 - 278) verse:

閶闔闕	The Changhe Gate opens:
見紫微絳闕	I behold the vermilion towers of the Purple Tenuity,
紫宮崔嵬	Purple palaces, grand and lofty,
高殿嵯峨	High halls, steeply rising,
雙闕萬丈	Two towers soar up thousands feet,
玉樹羅	trees of jade enfold their veil. (<i>Yunzhong baizi gaoxing</i> , Lu Qinli: 564)

Paradise not only hosts trees full of gems, but is itself a land of jade, gold and silver. Its divine terraces and palaces are usually constructed from precious ores and stones.

羅浮銀是殿	On Luofu silver builds up pavilions,
瀛洲玉作堂	On Yingzhou jade makes halls.

(Yin Keng, *Fuyong de shenxian shi*, Lu Qinli: 2456)

Similarly, Wang Rong (*Youxian shi* 3) at the Kunlun Azure-gem Pond pictures jade gates and pearl halls, and Dai Gao writes of quiet chambers of gold and a dewy altar of silver (*Shenxian pian*).

II.4. Features of descriptions of paradise landscapes in poetry

The conception of paradise as a distant cosmic mountain, as a magic garden of gem vegetation and as a sumptuous and elegant palace, which we have singled out in the descriptions in poetry, is articulated in much more detail in the prose accounts of mythical geography of the period – from *Shanhai jing* to the Daoist *Shizhou ji*. In the “roaming into immortality” verse, however, the symbolic and religious connotations inherent in the imagery are further enhanced and modified through the formal devices and the point of view in the descriptions.

The visions of paradise are generally introduced as independent entities, free of references to the self of the poet. Unlike the earthly mountains in the landscape poetry of the period, this is not a realm within which one travels; the poet remains and observes it from the outside. These two contrasting modes of perception can be illustrated using the example of Sun Chuo's “Rhapsody on Roaming the Celestial Terrace Mountains” (mid. 4th century

AD)²⁶⁰. The first stage of the poet's mystic ascent leads through real and vivid mountainous landscape (ll. 33-43). In this part the features of surrounding nature are conducted solely through the poet's actions – he pushes through a “murky mass of wild thickets”, scales “the soaring steepness of scarps and cliffs”, etc.

The perspective changes after the crossing of the forbidding Stone Bridge (Shiqiao 石橋) over a bottomless ravine, which in the context of Sun Chuo's mystic journey acquires the meaning of the "dangerous passage", testing every adept on his way towards paradise. From an active actor in a poetic drama, the author becomes a perceiver: the scenery is introduced by verbs like "I view", "I hear":

觀翔鸞之裔裔 I view the graceful gliding of the soaring simurghs,
聽鳴鳳之嚶嚶 Hear the concordant chorusing of singing phoenixes. (ll. 53-54)

However, when the City of Immortals (*Xiandu* 仙都) finally appears in front of the traveller, the understood first-person subject "I" completely disappears:

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

(*Wenxuan*: 498)

The vista of paradise is no longer an object towards which the poet's actions or senses are directed, but is presented as an independent entity. This shift of perception was to be later used in the landscape poetry of Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385 – 433), where the “grammatical liberation from the self” indicates the beginning of transcendental communion with nature.²⁶¹

In many other instances the poetic self is still present amidst the paradise landscape – but no longer as a questioning or reflecting mind. The poet commonly pictures himself as engaged in ceremonial activities, familiar from the *Chuci*:

²⁶⁰ Contained in *Wenxuan* 11. The passages from this rhapsody cited below are given as translated by Knechtges 1987: 243 – 251.

²⁶¹ Westbrook 1980: 239.

上採瓊樹華
下挹瑤泉井

Above I gather the blossoms of the rose-gem tree,
Beneath it I scoop up water from the Azure-gem Spring.
(Yu Chan *Youxian shi* I, Lu Qinli: 875)

朝漱雲英玉蕊
夕挹玉膏石髓

At dawn I rinse my mouth with cloudy mica and jade stamens,
At dusk I scoop up jade liquor and stony marrow.
(Yu Chan *Youxian shi* 8, *ibid.*)

The actions of the personage are presented in the *Chuci*-type ritual formulas, echoing those of the ancient shamans. It seems that the sacred order of paradise absorbs in itself and “dissolves” the persona of the poet, allowing only ritually proper, depersonalized and timeless gestures.

This world of paradise, independent of the perceiver, is moreover complete and closed within itself. The impression of fullness and totality, which in Han rhapsodies was achieved through exhaustive enumeration of all aspects of the world, in the condensed *shi* form is attained by more subtle devices - through shifts in the focus, and carefully moulded parallelism.

Constantly changing their perspective, the poet’s eyes incessantly traverse the cosmos from high and distant to the low and close. Illustrative examples of such all-embracing cosmic vistas include Guo Pu’s tenth *Youxian shi*, cited above, or Zhang Xie’s preserved passage from a poem with the same title:

崢嶸玄圃深
嵯峨天嶺峭
亭館籠雲構
脩梁流三曜
蘭葩蓋嶺披
清風綠隙嘯

Sky-high – the Mystic Garden’s thickets,
The Heaven Ridge towers, steep and tall.
Pavilions and palaces, structures cloaked in clouds,
And the three heavenly radiances float among the lengthy beams.
Orchid blossoms blanket ridges,
Gentle breezes whistle in green clefts. (Lu Qinli: 748)

In the opening lines the poet’s sight ascends gradually up into the skies – from the mountain ridges to the clouds and further to the stars, to descend abruptly in the last couplet back to the starting point in the mountains. The viewer this time focuses on concrete, closely observed natural details as orchid blossoms, green clefts and the whistling breeze, which contrast with the distant, overall and abstract vision of the graduated heights. Such changes of perspective bringing together panoramic, almost cosmic vistas and close, tangible and audible elements of nature are not exclusive to the *youxian* verse, but are typical of the early *shanshui* poetry in general and were to be exploited fully by Xie Lingyun.

The vision of paradise not only encompasses all scales and directions, but is permeated by a closed-in-itself circular movement. In the initial three couplets of Sun Chuo’s paradise vision, cited above, the poet’s eyes move along a vertical axis – from the clouds and the sky they descend to the hills and forests and further down to the fine filigree of the buildings.

Simultaneously the third couplet makes a loop back to the sky-heights – to the clouds and the sun, which are this time brought down through the windows. Thus an enclosed, circular inner motion is produced, which in itself partakes of eternity. The subsequent couplets introduce the magical flora of the paradise, the elemental forces of wind and water, and with the seventh couplet the poet’s vision rises to the sky once again, following the flight of the Daoist immortals and of the Buddhist Arhats. The circular movement which permeates the first three couplets, also applies on the scale of the picture of paradise as a whole. While up to this point the poem has created the impression of a straight, linear progression through the mountains, here the motion becomes enclosed in the perfection and perpetuity of the circle.²⁶²

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

While landscape poetry, emerging during the Liu-Song period, exploited the art of parallelism to unveil the structure and patterns incarnate in nature, in the “other-worldly” paradise visions the complementary, object-oriented parallelism serves above all to freeze the scene into a timeless and harmonic stasis:

白日三重階	The white sun – threefold stairs,
黃金九層路	Yellow gold – the ninefold road.
采煙拂紫薨	Bright mist brushes purple eaves,
芳風搖碧樹	A fragrant breeze sways cyan trees. (Yuan Tuan <i>Youxian shi</i> II, Lu Qinli: 1471)

The absence of verbs in the first couplet (although "threefold stairs" and "ninefold road" might well be thought of as verbal constructions), and the artful balancing of words and images in the parallel lines hold this charming vignette into a dimension beyond change. At

²⁶² I believe that it is not too far-fetched to find parallels to the two different movements which mark the stages of Sun Chuo’s mystical ascent – the straight progression through the earthly landscape and the closed circular motion of the divine sphere - in Daoist religious practice. Both Daoist ritual and alchemy are structured on the distinction of two types of time – progressive, “outer” time as exists in Creation after the diversification of chaos, and “inner” time before that division, which is exempt from the *yinyang* - Five Phase cyclic changes and is therefore, balanced and enduring. Different in nature and duration, these two times nevertheless proceed simultaneously and the goal of the Daoist priest, as demonstrated by K. Schipper 1986, is to enter from the outer time cycles into the hidden inner time.

the same time the rigid, as if carved-down, pattern allows for graceful inner movement introduced by atmospheric phenomena – breeze and mist.

While striving for all-embracing spatial vision, in their “roaming into immortality” the poets deliberately exclude temporal and seasonal imagery from the paradise descriptions. This is a major difference from the landscape poetry of the period, to which time and its passing are of central importance. If natural (or supernatural) details of paradise scenery bring any temporal information at all, their lushness and freshness suggest eternal spring and everlasting light. Also absent are all the temporal adverbs like *jian* 漸 (“gradually”), *wei* 未 (“not yet”), *yi* 已 (“already”), etc., so typical for the landscape poetry, where they indicate temporal processes and change. The occasional adverbs instead convey repetition and endless duration:

九莖日反照 The nine stalks daily shine,
三葉長生花 The three leaves forever bloom.²⁶³
(Wu Jun 吳均[469-520], *Caiyao Dabu shan shi*, Lu Qinli: 1739)

The *Chuci* morning-evening formula is very common, but it likewise suggests continuation and cyclical recurrence rather than a single occurrence at a specific moment or the passing of time.

This self-contained world has an order of its own, which defies the human categories. Paradise is perceived as a wondrous, paradoxical realm which abolishes our rational distinctions. Its colours and light are unusual – there are cinnabar clouds, crimson billows, crimson foam. The favourite colour is purple (*zi* 紫), the Daoist colour of the zenith. It represents the merging of the opposite ends of the spectrum (red and blue), and thus in Daoist poetry signifies “cosmic totality and wholeness” and spiritual fulfilment.²⁶⁴

This is a place where the natural characteristics of the phenomena turn into their opposites – at Penglai Mu Hua pictures *yang* 陽 ice, that never melts, and *yin* 陰 fire, burning underwater (*Haifu*, ll. 165-166). In Sun Chuo’s description of paradise the groves, which are naturally shady, are characterized as *yang*, “sunlit”, whereas the opened, exposed to the light moats, are designated as *yin*.²⁶⁵ There is a tree that casts no shade, and cinnamon, enduring the winter.

The entities which constitute the otherworldly scenery themselves present a striking straddling of taxonomic divisions. It has already been pointed out that in the image of plants

²⁶³ The expression *jiujing* 九莖 probably designates angelica. The three leaves (*sanye* 三葉) might refer to *Capsula bursa-pastoris* (shepherd’s purse) or to the likened species of *Thlaspi arvense* and *Draba Nemoralis*.

²⁶⁴ Kroll 1997: 36 and 1999: 6. See also Porkert 1961: 439 - 40.

²⁶⁵ The image of *yang* forests and *yin* moats is also a common topos in the descriptions of idealised nature in the *zhaoyin* poetry of that period.

and trees of jewels, living and nonliving nature paradoxically blend together. The free-flowing springs and rivers of paradise are commonly also made of gems – there are azure-gem (*yao* 瑤) pond, spring and waves, springs of jade (*yu* 玉) and cinnabar (*dan* 丹). Not only are vegetation and waters more solid than the earthly ones, but conversely minerals can be endowed with qualities of growth, fluidity and vitality. In a poem titled *Caiyao shi* 採藥詩 (“Gathering Herbs”) Yu Chan animates a petrified, purely mineral world:

採藥靈山	I gather herbs on the ridge of the Spirit Mount,
結駕登九嶷	I harness my chariot and scale Jiu Yi.
懸巖溜石髓	From the overhanging cliffs stone marrow flows,
芳谷挺丹芝	Cinnabar mushrooms sprout in the Fragrant Gorge.
冷冷雲珠落	Softly jingling, cloud pearls fall
漣漣石蜜滋	Abundant, ample, stony honey grows... (Lu Qinli: 874)

Yu Chan replaces the natural elements of landscape by ores and stones - instead of streams of water, it is “stone marrow” (*shisui* 石髓) flowing down from the cliffs, and the only kind of flora seen are the cinnabar mushrooms of immortality, which themselves are on the border between the mineral and plant realm. The scene chimes with the jingling of “cloudy pearls” (*yunzhu* 雲珠) raining down, and shines with the gloss of the “stone honey” (*shimi* 石蜜). The constituents of this stony landscape are all precious natural substances, searched for in the great mountains by the immortality pursuers: stalagmites (stone marrow), mica (cloudy pearls), magic fungi.²⁶⁶ Despite the purely mineral imagery, this surreal paradise is not rigid and frozen. Ores and stones become endowed with a life of their own – they grow, flow, fall down.

The otherworldly landscapes of the immortality verse have mythical and religious roots – gem vegetation and mineral waters had been a major feature of the divine lands ever since *Shanhai jing*. The earliest accounts on Kunlun in *Shanhai jing* enumerate many varieties of jewel trees that are all instances of the universal Gem-tree – which is also the World Tree, the Tree of Life, the Tree of Wisdom. Moreover, many of these miraculous plants and elixir waters figured in the pharmacopoeia of the early alchemists and immortality seekers, and were believed to impart eternal life.²⁶⁷ The poets not only further develop their symbolic connotations of incorruptibility, eternity and perfection, but constantly emphasize the way they are endowed with growth and vitality. The combination of mineral durability with the movement, life and growth of the organic world is in itself a symbolic expression of fullness and totality of being. In addition, it accords with the *youxian* poets’ penchant for blurring

²⁶⁶ These are all discussed at length by Ge Hong, who in ch. 11 of *Baopuzi* provides description, location, methods of usage and effects.

²⁶⁷ See *ibid.*

rational distinctions, for inverting the natural qualities of the phenomena to reflect the paradoxical world order of paradise, which has been observed above. This inversion of human categorizations often results in striking and beautiful imagery, in which mineral, floral and animal kingdoms blend together, as in Guo Pu's image of "cyan trees, shedding blossom plumes" 碧樹疏英翹 (*Youxian shi X*).

Besides its religious and symbolic connotations, the gem imagery of the immortal lands has an important aesthetic function. The gems of Daoist paradise are smoothly polished, opaque and coloured semi-precious stones – varieties of jade, agate, turquoise, cinnabar, pearls. In the poems we often encounter enigmatic names of archaic gems, whose specific identity had been forgotten since Han. Most common are the *qiong* 瓊 (translated here as "rose-gem") and the *yao* 瑤 (rendered as "azure-gem"), which have already been mentioned at many points above. Although the precise references of these two gem names were lost, their chromatic associations were retained in the post-Han poetry. The *qiong* gem was a favoured material for the fruits and flowers of paradise, while the *yao* was reserved for grasses and waters. In the descriptions of divine gardens these enigmatic gems not only serve to suggest their glittering, colourful lustre, but surround them with an archaic and mysterious aura.

These chromatic stones, together with precious metals, imbue the paradise vistas with striking coloration and vivid radiance. The poets consciously strive for visually powerful and sensually appealing images. The carefully matched phrases enhance the colour effects – in Yu Chan's *Youxian* cycle cinnabar clouds (*danxiao* 丹霄) and snowy ridges (*xueling* 雪嶺), rose-gem trees (*qiongshu* 瓊樹) and azure-gem spring (*yaoquan* 瑤泉), purple (*zi* 紫) and cinnabar (*dan* 丹) are juxtaposed in the parallel lines of the couplets. The pursuit of verbal artistry is in line with the Eastern Jin trend towards "artful structure and descriptive similitude" (*qiaogou xingsi* 巧構形似)²⁶⁸, which involved a predilection for more ornate imagery and complex diction.

The scenery of paradise is harder than a normal landscape and held in a timeless dimension, but it is never rigid; the descriptions are filled with movement, sounds and aromas. The gem leaves and flowers attractively chime and clink in the wind, their metallic trunks and boughs reflect and scatter light. In the Mystic Garden (Xuanpu) of Kunlun emperor Jian Wendi of Liang pictures:

²⁶⁸ On *xingsi*, "descriptive similitude" and related expressions like "skilful expressions and precise descriptions" (*qiaoyan qiezhuang* 巧言切狀) see *Wenxin diaolong*, especially ch. 46 (Vincent Yu-chung Shih 1983: 280). The expression *qiaogou xingsi* comes from Zhong Rong's *Shipin* (Cao Xu 1994: 149). See also the discussion by Kang-i Sun Chang 1986: 105-111.

日映金根 The sun reflected from roots of gold,
風搖銀草 The wind shaking herbs of silver. (*Xuanpu yuan jiang song*, Yan Kejun vol. 7: 134)

Although the paradise landscape is more solid than its earthly counterparts, the poets suggestively blur its contours in shimmering light or evanescent mists:

瓊林籠藻映 The rose-gem forest spreads a veil of iridescent shimmer,
碧樹疏英翹 Cyan trees shed blossom plumes. (Guo Pu *Youxian shi* 10, Lu Qinli: 867)

Light and atmospheric imagery contribute to the sense of liveliness - elusive mists, auroras, breeze bring random, fleeting movement to the scene.

采煙拂紫薨 Bright haze brushes purple eaves,
芳風搖碧樹 A fragrant breeze sways cyan trees. (Yuan Tuan *Youxian shi* 2, Lu Qinli: 1471)

朱霞拂綺樹 Crimson aurora strikes silken trees,
白雲照金楹 White clouds shine on golden pillars. (Wang Rong *Youxian shi* 4, Lu Qinli: 1398)

These couplets, moreover, betray the merging of aesthetic and religious sentiments in paradise sceneries. Mists and auroras not only enliven and soften the landscape, but are themselves imbued with a high degree of numinosity; they were thought to be mystic emanations from the sacred mountains, their very quintessence.²⁶⁹

Shimmering with reflected light, the heavy mineral and metal objects are made ethereal. This paradoxical merging of opposing qualities seems to be an effect specifically sought in many poetic descriptions. On the scale of paradise mountains as a whole it finds expression in the common antimony of a “hill standing on clouds”, an image that conveys the convergence of weight and weightlessness:

神岳竦丹霄 The Divine Mount stands on cinnabar clouds,
玉堂臨雪嶺 The Jade Hall looks down to snowy ridges (Yu Chan *Youxian shi* 1, Lu Qinli: 875)

石梁雲外立 The Stone Ridgepole stands beyond the clouds,
蓬丘霧裏迷 The Peng Hill is hidden inside the mist
(Zhang Zhengjian *Shenxian pian*, Lu Qinli: p. 2482)

Sturdy and stable, they simultaneously appear to be afloat above the mists and clouds.

While in the majority of immortality verse the vistas of paradise gardens and palaces are sharply defined, with details meticulously outlined, on certain occasions these visions can be

²⁶⁹ See for example the following passage: "Mists are the floral emanations of the marshes, lakes and fires of the mountains, and the excess vapours of the metals and rocks. If you consume them for a long time, you can disperse your material form to enter the emptiness and attain the body of clouds and mists" 霧是山澤水火之華,金石盈氣。久服之,能散形入空,與雲霧合體 (*Yunji qiqian* 115/5a).

much hazier, vaguely revealed through mystic mists and coloured smokes. In *Haifu* 海賦 ("Rhapsody on the Sea") Mu Hua dimly visualises:

若乃雲錦散文於沙汭之際
綾羅被光於螺蚌之節
繁采揚華
萬色隱鮮
陽冰不冶
陰火潛然
燿炭重燔
吹炯九泉
朱焰綠煙
暎眇蟬蛸

□□
And now, a cloudy brocade spreads a pattern along sandy shores,
A gauzy gossamer casts luster over the seams of mussels and snails,
Manifold colours brandish their splendour,
A myriad hues conceal their brilliance:
Sunlit ice that does not melt,
Shadowy fires burning underwater;
Glowing coals that rekindle themselves,
Casting their fulgour into the Nine Springs;
Vermillion flames, green smoke,
Dark and dense, curling and swirling upward.

(*Wenxuan*: 549; tr. by Knechtges 1987: 315)

The description centres exclusively on different aspects of light and colour – no concrete details of lofty buildings, vegetation or fauna are perceived by the viewer. All details seem to dissolve in an eerie vision of brilliant flames, mists and coloured smoke. Mu Hua writes:

且希世之所聞
惡審其名?
故可仿像其色
襲襲其形

Moreover, for things rarely heard of in this world,
How can one discern their names?
Thus, one can only vaguely visualize their features,
Dimly depict their forms.

(*Wenxuan*: 548; tr. by Knechtges 1987: 315)

Mu Hua's mode of description, which is rather uncommon in the "otherworldly" poetic current, evocatively conveys the elusive apparitions of the numinous islands, partly revealed to profane eyes over expanses of water and mists.

In their paradise visions the poets create an autonomous, self-enclosed world, total and timeless, with a paradoxical order of its own. At the same time they animate its crystalline perfection with elusive light, movement and growth. These sceneries embody not only the dream of eternal life, rooted in Daoist religion, but also the ideal of beauty and harmony – and this is one of a highly artificial, ornate and patterned elegance. The striving for sensual appeal, for luminous and colourful depiction, for original formulations and formal perfection is constantly increasing from the Eastern Jin onwards.

Before considering some further developments in depiction of immortals' paradises in the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties, we should, however, mention the expansion of the known celestial landscape brought by the Shangqing divinities in the second half of the fourth century. The True Ones (*zhenren* 真人) who were visiting Yang Xi in his nocturnal visions, were much more exalted celestial denizens than the *xian* immortals. They opened up for earthly men loftier, unknown before tracts of heaven and provided lengthy accounts of the true appearance of these regions. Of the some seventy poems recorded by Yang Xi and later

included in the *Zhen'gao*, almost all contain references and descriptions of the Shangqing divine lands.²⁷⁰ As demonstrated above, the secular poets of the 3rd and 4th centuries AD generally turned to paradises situated on the horizontal plane of earth – the islands of the Blessed, Kunlun, some sacred mountains. Although some poets like Cao Zhi and Fu Xuan describe paradises set in Heaven, beyond the Changhe gates, the more ethereal celestial zones were never explored systematically and in full detail. The overwhelming majority of the *Zhen'gao* poems, on the other hand, are set in the highest reaches of the empyrean. These mystic visions radically dispense with all earthly features – they abound in esoteric Daoist terms and names, in paradoxical figures, defying the human categories. The celestial landscapes of the True Ones are viewed from an all-embracing panoramic perspective, and exist in a highly dynamic state, alive with motion and colour. Their most conspicuous feature is the pure, blazing light in all its variety, which becomes the very building material of paradise. The long descriptions of the heavenly landscape often solely employ terms of radiance and colours.

瑋灼清暉	Bright-beaded and vivid, the clear radiance –
潛光翳眞	Covert light that screens the Realized Ones.
二景落鋒	As the Two Phosphors let fall their rays,
飛霞流纏	Volant auroras wrap round, streaming...
儀璘洞煥	"Regalia" and "Spangles" sparkle unobstructed ²⁷¹ –
玉標玄金	As jade guidepost and mystic gold. ²⁷² (<i>Zhen'gao</i> 4.14a, tr. by Kroll 1999: 6 - 7)

One question that naturally arises is what degree these exalted descriptions influenced the paradise visions of the earthly poets of the period. The problem of the possible impact of revealed poetry on the *youxian* verse of the period has already been touched on in other connections above, and we will return to it in the chapters below. No simple answer can be provided, for the form and style of the *Zhen'gao* poetry itself were to a large degree determined by the “secular” poetry on immortality of the period.²⁷³ Any attempt to distinguish between possible impacts of the revealed poetry and the independent stylistic development of the “otherworldly” poetic current must therefore be highly tentative. As already shown above,

²⁷⁰ Most often descriptions of the celestial decor constitute the opening lines of a poem, providing background for the instructions that follow in the later sections of the poems.

²⁷¹ “Regalia” (*yi* 儀) and “Spangles” (*lin* 璘) are short for “Shadowed Regalia” (*yuyi* 鬱儀) and “Knotted Spangles” (*jielin* 結璘), which are Daoist esoteric names for the sun and moon respectively. On *yuyi* and *jielin*, the transcendental spirits of sun and moon see *Shangqing huangting neijing jing* 上清黃庭內景經 in *Yunji qijian* 12.8a; Bokenkamp 1997: 370, n. 35; Robinet 1979: 30-32.

²⁷² This poem is dated to 22 January 368. It comes from Mao Ying 茅盈, the eldest of the three divinized Mao brothers from the Han period, after whom the sacred mountain Mao 茅山 was named. A somewhat different translation is provided by T. Russel, who understands the poem as describing not a celestial landscape, but Xu Hui and his destiny as a True One (Russel 1985: 423).

²⁷³ See Russel 1985: 258 – 261.

the “secular” poets of the fourth and fifth century were increasingly moving towards more visually powerful and sensually evocative, more exalted and luminous descriptions, which were in line with the general aesthetic pursuits of the period. The Shangqing influence on court *youxian* poetry is most obvious in the broadening of the poetic topography of the immortals’ realm, which came to incorporate many new divine localities from the revealed scriptures (such as Fangzhu, Xuanzhou, Xuandu). While referring to the relatively closer Shangqing lands of sea-paradises or mountains’ grotto-heavens, however, prior to the Tang dynasty the poets did not dare to venture so far upwards, into the ethereal celestial zones. Some lines of poems by Tao Hongjing and Yu Xin speak of the poet’s journey through these transcendental realms (the Jade Purity heaven, the Golden Pylons, the Jade Void, see ch. I.3.3., p. 81), but in a manner reminiscent of the *Chuci itineraria*, they simply enumerate these mystic reaches and never dwell on their luminous scenery. The paradise landscapes described in the immortality poetry, moreover, were observed from a much closer and slower-moving perspective than the accelerated cosmic visions of the True Ones. None of the southern court poets could attain the transcendental diction and the mystic rapture of the revealed verse, and none exploited in such detail the spectrum of celestial light and colour; even poems that show Shangqing influences, such as Liang Wudi’s cycle *Shangyun yue*, remain in comparison much subdued despite their splendid imagery.

II.5. Further developments of paradise landscapes

At the time when the True Ones of the Shangqing heaven were disclosing to Yang Xi in verse the sublime “starscapes” of the highest empyrean, the poets of this world were increasingly turning their attention in the opposite direction – towards landscapes on earth. During the third century *youxian* poetry had been developing parallel to the currents of neo-daoist *xuanyan* 玄言 verse, which expounded the concept and workings of Dao, and poetry written in praise of living in reclusion (*zhaoyin shi* 招隱詩). Although it is possible to single out typical poems on reclusion and typical poems on journeys into immortality, no clear-cut boundary exists between them, and both were coloured by the ideas and language of the *xuanyan* poetry. It was the setting above all that determined the sub-genre under which a poem was classified in traditional nomenclature, as can be seen in the *Wenxuan* anthology. While the *zhaoyin* poetry describes the alluring wilderness of remote mountains, the *youxian*

verse is set in higher otherworldly realms.²⁷⁴ Both *youxian* and *zhaoyin*, however, offered poetic stylizations of idealised worlds, and in the course of the 4th century, as already mentioned above, the rather artificial borderline between them became increasingly blurred.

A poetic plot typical for the early *yuefu* and *shi* poems on immortals involved meeting an immortal on one of the sacred mountains of China (Taishan and Huashan above all), who subsequently leads the hero into a paradise beyond this world – at Kunlun, Penglai, or to the Gates of Heaven. In the fourth century, however, this plot was often transformed, with the journey in search of the immortals leading the poet not into otherworldly realms, but into the famous mountains of China:

遐舉遊名山	Ascending far-off, I roam the famous mountains,
松喬共相追	Following Red Pine and Wangzi Qiao.
層崖成崇館	Layered cliffs make storied mansions,
巖阿結重闈	Stern slopes interweave in manifold-halls (Lu Zijing 盧子諱 <i>Shi</i> ; Lu Qinli: 885)

The mountains are not merely the starting point of the travel towards immortality, a place of transition and transformation, but become the very goal of the voyager and are identified with the lands of immortality. The second couplet goes even further in merging the world of paradise and the world of nature. The magnificent palaces of immortals – a hall-mark of paradise, – are not hand-made constructions of gold and gems, but “natural” formations, made out by the elements of the wild alpine landscape – cliffs and rocks.

In the preceding chapter we have already discussed how, in the poetry of this period, the image of the transcendental immortals and of the Daoist hermit gradually come close together – a tendency that culminates in the poetry of Guo Pu. Similarly, the landscapes of the world beyond increasingly tend to merge with the mountainous surroundings of the Daoist recluses.

Although some of Guo Pu’s poems of the *Youxian* cycle describe paradise sceneries and distant journeys (VI, IX,X), most of the pieces take as their locus “mountains and forests” (*shanlin* 山林). A typical example is the opening poem of the cycle:

京華游俠窟	The capital is a cave for wandering knights-errant,
山林隱遯棲	Mountains and forests are nest for the concealed recluses.
朱門何足榮	The Vermillion Gates – how can they be splendid enough?
未若託蓬萊	They are no equal to a sojourn on Penglai
臨源挹清波	By a spring scooping up clear waters,
陵岡掇丹雘	On a ridge gathering cinnabar buds.
靈谿可潛盤	The Magic Gorge is fitting for withdraw,
安事登雲梯	What need to climb the Cloud-ladder? (Lu Qinli: 865)

²⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the “naturalness” of the landscapes described in the *zhaoyin* poetry is questionable. In an illuminating article A. Berkowitz discusses the *zhaoyin* poems in the context of court poetry and points out that rather than describing actual scenes or actual excursions into the natural world, they “more likely were poetic stylizations of an idealized ‘nature’ or, perhaps, euphuistically embellished descriptions of the landscaped estates of the rich and famous”. See Berkowitz 2003: 111.

In the first couplet the capital (*jinghua* 京華) – the stage of mundane vainglory, is juxtaposed with the mountains and forests – places where recluses lead a quiet life of integrity. The next couplet reinforces this contrast: the Vermillion Gates (Zhumen 朱門), symbol of power and wealth, are set in opposition to Penglai – the traditional abode of the immortals. The capital and the vermilion gates both refer to the mundane world with its vanity and corruption, and one is led to believe that their respective counterparts – the mountains and forests, and Penglai – the residence of the divine immortals – signify the same contrasted location. Lines 5 and 6 describe the ideal life, which one leads on this location, far away from worldly profanity, which might be both on Penglai and amid the earthly mountains. Guo Pu dispenses with the mythical lore of immortality – cosmic flights, transcendental beings, gemmy elixirs, – and refers instead to conventional activities in the eremitic poetry – drinking from clear springs and gathering herbs. The herbs in question, however, still retain a double meaning as natural plants and magical elixirs: cinnabar might simply refer to the red colour of the young herbs, but at the same time the cinnabar buds might be an immortality drug of the kind found on Penglai. After picturing the simple life he might enjoy amid the mountains, Guo Pu announces its sufficiency. According to Li Shan the Magic Gorge/Stream (Lingxi 靈谿) is the name of an actual river, whereas the expression to “climb the cloud-ladder” (*deng yunti* 登雲梯) refers to the search for *xian* immortality. Such an interpretation would mean that Guo Pu, in the very first poem of his *Youxian* cycle, in fact renounces the necessity of the *youxian* – of the quest and distant roaming after the immortals. This paradoxical clash with the title of the poem has caused much uneasiness in modern literary history. Yuan Qing 元青, for example, tries to avoid this discrepancy and argues that the phrase “cloud-ladder” should be a metaphor for political advancement (which makes these lines synonymous to the second couplet of the poem).²⁷⁵

Li Shan’s interpretation, however, is not so incompatible with the title as it might seem at first glance. In fact, Guo Pu’s statement becomes perfectly consistent when one reads it in the light of the changes that the ideal of immortality underwent during the fourth century. It has already been pointed out above that writers like Ge Hong privileged the image of the earthly immortals (*dixian*) who preferred the free and eternal life amid the earthly mountains to bureaucratic advancement in the celestial hierarchy. About the same time the concept emerged of the “grotto-heavens” (*dongtian*), mentioned above, which were contained on earth within the Daoist mountains. Moreover, in the preceding lines of the poem Guo Pu has

²⁷⁵ In *Han-Wei Liuchao shi jianshang cidian*: 439 - 41. W. Kubin adopts the same interpretation and translates the line in question very freely as “Wozu nach Rang und Namen streben?” (Kubin 1985: 171)

equated the distant lands of paradise with the natural settings of the hermit. When the temporal aspect of eternal life is favoured over the spatial aspect of celestial flight, and when, moreover, the world beyond is contained in the very mountains and forests, what need is there to ascend into the distance of the empyrean, seeking celestial immortality?

Such an interpretation is reinforced by similar, even more explicit passages found in the fourth century verse. At the beginning of his *You Tiantai fu* Sun Chuo, for example, establishes the Tiantai 天台 mountains as a realm of the sacred par excellence, a counterpart of the divine islands of the East: ²⁷⁶

“The Celestial Terrace Mountains indeed are the divine eminence of all mounts and peaks. Cross the sea and there will be Fangzhang and Penglai. Climb the plateaus and there will be the Four Luminaries and Celestial Terrace. All are places where mystic sages roam and transform themselves, sites of grotto dwellings of sacred immortals...”

天台者，蓋山嶽之神秀者也。涉海則有方丈蓬萊，登陸則有四明天台。皆玄聖之所遊化，靈仙之所窟宅。（*Wenxuan* 11: 493; tr. by Knechtges 1987: 243）

Access to their sacred realm is not granted to everyone:

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

非夫遺世翫道，絕粒茹芝者，烏能輕舉而宅？（*ibid.*）

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

太虛遼廓而無闕
運自然之妙有
融而為川瀆
結而為山阜

The Grand Void, vast and wide, unhindered,²⁷⁷

□□□□□□ Propels sublime Existence, which is naturally so.

Melting, it forms rivers and waterways,

Coalescing, it forms mountains and hills

（*Wenxuan* 494 - 95; tr. by Knechtges 1987: 245）

²⁷⁶ The Tiantai mountains situated in eastern Zhejiang, extended through five prefectures of the Guiji 會稽 commandery: Yuyao 餘姚, Yin 茵, Juzhang 句章, Shan 剡 and Shining 始寧. In the first half of the fourth century the mountain became an important Buddhist and Daoist centre, and Ge Hong included it in his list of 28 sacred mountains, suitable for meditation and preparation of the immortality elixir. He writes that these sacred mountains were all inhabited by real spirits and terrestrial immortals and that on their slopes there grew potent herbs and magic mushrooms (Wang Ming 1985: 85).

²⁷⁷ The Grand Void (*taixu* 太虛) is the undifferentiated state of the universe before the emergence of forms. *Miaoyou* 妙有 (“sublime Existence”) designates the potential existence that is latent in non-existence. The commentary of Li Shan explains: “One wishes to speak of Existence (*you* 有) but cannot see its form (*xing* 形). Since it is not [true] Existence (*you* 有), one calls it sublime Existence. One wishes to speak of things being produced by it. Since it is not Non-existence (*wu* 無), one calls it Existence. This is none other than Existence within Non-existence.” 謂之為妙有者，欲言有，不見其形，則非有，故謂之妙；欲言其物由之以生，則非無，故謂之有也。斯乃無中之有，謂之妙有也（*Wenxuan*: 495; tr. by Knechtges 1987: 244, l. 1）

These lines echo a passage from Zhi Yu's 摯虞 (ob. 312) *Siyou fu* 思游賦 ("Rhapsody on Pondering a Journey"): "Yang descends, Yin ascends, one declines, the other rises. Flowing, they form streams, staying still, they form hills" 陽降陰升, 一替一興. 流而為川, 滯而為陵 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 786).²⁷⁸ This is in fact an elaboration of the ancient formulaic statement of the arising of the "myriad things" of this world from the undifferentiated Dao:

"The Dao gave birth to one. The one gave birth to two. The two gave birth to three. The three gave birth to the myriad things." 道生一, 一生二, 二生三, 三生万物. (*Laozi* ch. 42).

However, only now have its far-reaching implications been fully realised by the *xuanyan* poets, and it made possible the turn to physical nature as the concrete manifestation of the Dao. In the following lines Sun Chuo further develops this idea:

理無隱而不彰 No Noumenon is so obscure to remain ever unmanifest;
啟二奇以示兆 By unfolding the Two Wonders it reveals its form.
(*Wenxuan*: 495; tr. by Knechtges 1987: 245 - 46)

In the first line of the couplet Sun Chuo subtly manipulates a line from Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 ("Biographies of Women") 5.19b, referring to the Loyal Concubine of the Lord of Zhou: "There was nothing so slight in her reputation that could not be made known; there was nothing so obscure in her conduct to remain unmanifest" (名無細而不聞, 行無隱而不彰). The Two Wonders are the Scarlet Wall (Chicheng 赤城) peak of the Tiantai mountains and the Cascade waterfall (Pubu 瀑布) cascading from the Scarlet Wall. By replacing Liu Xiang's *xing* 行 (conduct) for *li* 理 (the innate principle of things), Sun Chuo develops the idea, expressed in Xiang Xiu/Guo Xiang commentary to *Zhuangzi*, that the *Li* mystically unites the *nei* 內 and *wai* 外, the "inframundane" and the "ultramundane". It is through the physical appearance of nature that the ultimate reality becomes manifest.

In Daoist texts in general the cosmogonic phases are not merely temporal stages from the primordial past, but have a spatial dimension as well; they are situated in the present space, at the ultimate points of the cosmos. For Sun Chuo these pre-beginnings become embodied in the physical landscape of the mountains.

The rest of his poem presents a spiritual journey taken not into the far distance, but in depth, beyond the concrete features of the physical nature. From vivid naturalistic details the poet proceeds through the paradise realm contained within the mountain and described as defying human categories and distinctions, and then further beyond the images into the realm

²⁷⁸ Similar statements are found also in the late Han stela inscriptions, for example: "Yang coalesces and turns into mountains, yin gathers and makes streams" 陽凝成山, 陰積為川 (Yan Kejun vol. 2: 964).

of pure ideation, where the poet moves in a world of abstract philosophical concepts (see below, ch. III.4). Sun Chuo's mystic journey through the Tiantai Mountains is evidence that in 4th-century poetry the land of paradise is no longer inevitably situated at the ultimate points of the cosmos, but could be discerned by the initiated eye in the sacred landscape of the earthly mountains. One has only to be attuned to the "true geography" of the great mountains in order to discover the immortal land within it. He poses a question similar to that of Guo Pu:

苟台嶺之可攀 As long as the Terrace range can be scaled,
亦何羨於層城 Why yearn for the Storied City?²⁷⁹ (*Wenxuan*: 496)

This rhetorical question is echoed throughout 4th-century poetry. For example Zhan Fangsheng 湛方生 (late 4th – early 5th century AD) asks at end of his "Inscription on Mount Lingxiu" (*Lingxiu shan ming* 靈秀山銘):

可以養生 One can nurture life,
可以棲翔 One can dwell and soar.
長生久視 Long life forever –
何必仙鄉 Why should it be in the immortal realm? (Yan Kejun, vol.5: 1461)

This statement similarly establishes the self-sufficiency of the Lingxiu mountains and gives preference to eternal life in this earthly paradise over celestial flight to the worlds beyond.

Although the lands of paradise increasingly tend to change their location to places within the human world, the poets did not simply replace paradise vistas with the landscape of mountains and rivers. Early landscape poetry was never conceived as a description of nature *per se*, but above all an authentic testimony of the poets' subjective feelings and thoughts when moved by natural scenery. By comparison, in those poems on immortality that take as their setting mountainous nature, the lyrical self-expression of the poet is much weakened. In these nature retains a more religious dimension as a sacred zone, surrounded with awe and mystery. These verses do not describe actual scenery undergoing temporal changes or record the poet's spatial travel inside it. Nor does nature move the poet to reveal his emotions, except for his feeling of sacred awe. Mountains had been revered since ancient times as phenomena endowed with magico-spiritual power, but now they are additionally charged with the Daoist arcana developed in the poetry on immortality. In fact, they develop the same complex of lore that in the early poetry surrounded the images of Taishan and Huashan. In the late fourth century a whole range of Daoist mountains acquired this sacred climate, which is conveyed through lengthy descriptions of their idealised landscape. The famous mountains are not regarded merely as natural formations, but are rhapsodized as numinous realms beyond time, abodes of Daoist divinities, places of encounter with immortals and of Daoist transformation.

²⁷⁹ The Storied City (Cengcheng 層城) designates Kunlun.

Such supernatural encounter is recorded in Zhan Fangsheng's preface to his *Lushan shenxian shi* 廬山神仙詩 ("Poem on the Immortal from Mount Lu"). Dated 386, this preface is one of the finest examples of early landscape parallel prose, written fifteen years earlier than the famous essay on Mount Lu from the Buddhist circle of Master Hui Yuan 慧遠 (334-416). The preface, much more remarkable than the rather conventional quatrain which follows, is almost exclusively devoted to the extolment of mystic alpine nature, which is an appropriate setting for an epiphany of the divine:

"In the Xunyang district there is a Mount Lu. Its foothills twist to the west of Pengji marsh. Soaring peaks, steep and lofty, divide the light of sun and moon. Hidden streams, deep and limpid, gather clarity for hundreds of feet. And then: abrupt crags, sharp and sheer, with no trace of men's travels. Remote and quiet, deep, it forever holds auroras and gathers mist. It can truly be called a realm of luminous spirits, a park of True men. In the eleventh year of the era Supreme Origin a wood-gatherer was on its southern slope. And then fresh aurora rose in the forest, and the slanting rays lit the peak. He saw a monk, cloaked in a canonical (monastic) robe, alone on the cliffs. In a short while the monk shook his skirts and waved his staff. He flew straight up the cliff and, parting the cinnabar clouds, rose with a lightened body."

尋陽有廬山者·盤基彭蠡之西·其崇標峻極·辰光隔輝·幽澗澄深·積清百仞·若乃絕阻重險·非人跡之所遊·窈窕冲深·常含霞而貯氣·真可謂神明之區域·列真之苑囿矣·太元十一年·有樵採之陽者·于時鮮霞襄林·傾暉映岫·見一沙門·披法服·獨在巖中·俄頃振裳揮錫·凌崖直上·排丹霄而輕舉·
(Lu Qinli: 943)

Zhan Fangsheng's preface shows the difficulty of every attempt to draw a clear-cut line between "realistic" and "transcendental" landscape in the Eastern Jin poetic vision. It is the poetic diction and selection of imagery that constructs the mountain as a paradise realm. This is not a description of actual mountain scenery, but an ideal construction, which despite its natural setting and imagery retains the sacred climate of paradise.

The "otherworldly" poetic current stresses the sacred, mystic qualities inherent in the scenery and focuses on elements that possess a highly numinous charge, such as rivers, heavenly bodies, magic herbs and ores, potent mists and auroral emanations. Mountains contain natural drugs of immortality (as in Yu Chan's *Caiyao shi*) – powerful herbs, fungi and minerals. Many of the poems on the theme of immortality written during the period of disunion actually take as their title "herb gathering" (*cai yao* 採藥): Yu Chan's *Caiyao shi*, Wu Jun's 吳均 [469 - 520] *Caiyao Dabu shan* 採藥大布山 ("Picking Herbs on Mt. Dabu"), Liu Shan's 劉刪[6th cent.] *Caiyao you mingshan* 採藥遊名山 ("Picking Herbs, I Roam the Great Mountains"), etc. Even some of the poems under the title "Roaming in immortality" speak about collecting herbs and minerals in the mountains: Chengong Sui's 成公綏 [231 - 273] *Xianshi* 仙詩 ("Poem on Immortals"), Yu Xin's *Fenghe Zhaowang youxian* 奉和趙王遊仙 ("Respectfully Matching a Poem by King Zhao on Roaming into Immortality").

The mountains are not only the source of natural elixirs and herbs, but are the locus of revelation of transcendental knowledge and the celestial texts that were of central importance

to the Shangqing Daoist tradition. An encomium *zan* composed by emperor Xiaowu 孝武 of Song (r. 453 – 464) during an excursion into the Gushu 姑孰 mountains, transforms them into a Daoist paradise and generator of sacred scriptures²⁸⁰:

絳紀山瑞	Scarlet records – mountain felicities,
紫志川靈	Purple chronicles - stream numina,
金膏溢曜	Golden nectar sprays brilliance
玉樹含英	Jade trees bosom blooms
端巖毓泉	Sublime cliffs nurture springs,
挹祥吐禎	Scooping auspicity, emitting bliss
彪彬仙牒	Elegant and harmonic, the immortals' tablets
揮翕詭經	Spreading and folding, transmitted scriptures ²⁸¹

(*Dongjing zan* 洞井贊, Yan Kejun vol. 6: 77)

Being composed during a court excursion, this encomium does not describe the real surrounding scenery but evokes a purely imaginative landscape, resembling the distant paradises of Penglai and Kunlun with its trees of jade and golden nectar. Nature itself is charged with sacred powers to engender auspicious signs, bring forth divine writings of the highest rank and reveal them to human beings.

From the Liang dynasty onwards, the border between the otherworldly landscapes and real alpine nature becomes ever thinner. The fantastic imagery of otherworldly paradises is often incorporated into descriptions which emphasize the actuality of the experience of travelling in the mountains. One example is Jiang Yan's 江淹 (444-505) poem "Accompanying the General Commander of the Troops, the Prince of Jianping, I Ascend the Incense-Burner Peak of Mount Lu" (*Cong Guanjun Jianping wang deng Lushan Xianglu feng* 從冠軍建平王登廬山香爐峯)²⁸²:

廣成愛神鼎	Guang Cheng cherished the divine tripod,
淮南好丹經	The King of Huainan was fond of cinnabar scriptures.
此山具鸞鶴	This mountain is full of phoenixes and cranes,
往來盡仙靈	Those coming and leaving are all immortals and spirits.
瑤草正翕純	Azure-gem grass so brilliant and bright,
玉樹信蔥青	Jade trees of such lavish lustre.
絳氣下縈薄	Scarlet vapours fall upon coiling thickets,
白雲上杳冥	White clouds rise into inscrutable faintness.
中坐瞰蜿蜒	Sitting here, I look down at a twisting rainbow;
俯伏視流星	Crouching, with lowered eyes I behold a floating star.
不尋遐怪極	No need to pursue the limits of distant wonders,
則知耳目驚	I know already what startles sight and hearing.... (<i>Wenxuan</i> 22: 1058)

²⁸⁰ On the circumstances of composition see the biography of Xie Fei 謝朓 in *Liangshu* 15: 261.

²⁸¹ The text as provided in Yan Kejun reads *gui* 詭 ("strange scriptures"). It is possible, however, that the character *gui* 詭 is miswritten for *jue* 訣 - oral instructions, which complemented many of the sacred scriptures.

²⁸² The Prince of Jianping is Liu Jingsu 劉景素 (452 – 476), great-grandson of the Song emperor Wen 文 (r. 424 – 453). Jiang Yan joined his entourage in 466. This poem was written in 470, when Liu Jingsu became governor of Xiang 湘 province and Jiang Yan accompanied him on his assignment.

The extensive title is explicit about the concreteness of the location and circumstances of excursion, but the description that follows at once suppresses all realistic features of an earthly landscape. The first couplet immediately transports the reader into the realm of immortality seekers and alchemy adepts. In the account of the scenery it is religiously significant elements that draw the attention of the poet – divine birds, spirits, gemmy herbs and trees, potent scarlet vapours and clouds. The poet is present within the landscape, but in the paradoxical act of looking down at a rainbow and a comet below him. This is not merely a metaphor for the extreme altitude of his mountain lookout; such blurring of spatial distinctions is typical of the way one perceives within the paradise realm. In a zone which is beyond human rational differentiations, conventional patterns of perception are transcended.²⁸³ As in Zhan Fangsheng’s “Inscription on Mount Lingxiu” Jiang Yan questions the necessity to strive after distant mythical paradises – for the divine world can be much closer, discernible in the mountainous landscape itself. The poem ends on a more personal note with the image of the poet, overfilled with emotion against the wind, proclaiming his wish to emulate the example of the “pine and cypress” recluses.

Many of the Southern Dynasties poems follow a similar structure, i.e. the vivid mountainous scenery in which the poet roams, calls up reminiscences of immortals who had cultivated life, or linger on the mountain in question. For example, in Yu Xin’s 庾信 (513 – 581) *He Yu Wen neishi chunri youshan* 和宇文內史春日遊山 (“Matching a Poem by the Inner Secretary Yu Wen on Roaming on a Spring Day in the Mountains”), a lively description of alpine nature is followed by recollection of the Daoist Feng Junta 封君達 and the immortal Ding Lingwei 丁令威, who “on this place boiled the elixir, departing, never to come back again” (Lu Qinli: 2355).

²⁸³ Deliberate blurring of spatial distinctions is also found at many points in Xie Lingyun’s mountainous worlds. Although critics tend to provide “realistic” interpretations of this feature, it might reflect the paradoxical air of the sacred otherworldly sceneries. In *Shanju fu* 山居賦 (“Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains”) Xie Lingyun writes, like Jiang Yan, of looking down at shooting stars from his lodge (Yan Kejun vol. 6: 305). Even more pronounced is the abolition of spatial directions achieved through a play on the conventional formula of looking up and down:

俛視喬木杪 “Below I see the tips of towering trees;
仰聆大壑淙 looking up I hear the great valley’s roar” (*Yu Nanshan wang Beishan jing huzhong zhantiao*
於南山往北山經湖中瞻眺 [“Looking in the Distance as I Cross the Lake Going from the South Mountain to the North Mountain”], Lu Qinli: 1172).

Elsewhere Xie Lingyun disorients the reader through inverting the east – west coordinates:

眷西謂初月 “I look west – there’s supposed to be the rising moon;
顧東疑落日 then turn east, wondering about the setting sun” (*Deng Yongjia Lüzhang shan* 登永嘉綠嶂山
[“Climbing Mt. Green Cliff in Yongjia”], Lu Qinli: 1163)

Furthermore, evocations of Daoist paradises are commonly integrated into poems that describe visits to Daoist temples – a novel theme, which appears in the poetry of the late 5th-6th century. The temples are transformed into Daoist lands of bliss (*fudi*), full of paradise wonders, and the priests dwelling there are praised as heavenly immortals. Examples include “Roaming to the Temple of the Daoist Priest Shen” (*You Shen Daoshi Guan* 遊沈道士館詩) by Shen Yue; “Daoist temple” (*Daoguan* 道館) by Yu Jianwu 庾肩吾 (487 – 551); “Matching a Poem by Yu Jianwu on Entering a Daoist Temple” (*He Yu Jianwu Ru Daoguan* 和庾肩吾入道館) by Zhou Hongzheng 周弘正 (6th cent.); “Entering a Daoist Temple” (*Ru Daoguan* 入道館) by Yu Xin; “Roaming in the Temple of Original Establishment” (*You Shixing Daoguan shi* 遊始興道館詩) by Yin Keng 陰鏗 (6th cent.).

In the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties not only are earthly mountains transformed into immortals’ paradises, but what should be otherworldly landscapes often turn into descriptions of mountain nature. How thin the borderline between worldly and “otherworldly” realms has become by the end of the Southern Dynasties is evident in the poetry of the 6th century poet Yu Xin. One of his poems, which takes as its location the Hanging Gardens of Kunlun, describes a vivid mountainous landscape not a fantastic vision of golden towers and jewel trees.

聊登玄圃殿	I casually ascend the Mystic Garden halls,
更上增城山	Further climb the Storied Walls mountain.
不知高幾里	Do not know how many miles it is high,
低頭看世間	Lowering my head I look into the world.
唱歌雲欲聚	As I chant a song, clouds start to gather,
彈琴鶴欲舞	As I strum a lute, cranes start to dance.
澗底百重花	At the stream bottom – hundred-tiered flowers,
山根一片雨	At the mountain roots – a single patch of rain.
婉婉藤倒垂	Curling and coiling, creepers hang down in cascades
亭亭松直豎	Lofty towering, pines stand upright. (Lu Qinli: 2355)

The *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 anthology (completed 1557) contains a remark about this *Youxian* 遊仙 (“Roaming into Immortality”) poem indicating that the title in other editions is *Youshan* 遊山 (“Roaming in the Mountains”). Only the first couplet points to the other-worldly location of the scenery described - the Hanging Gardens and the Storied Walls of Kunlun, Not only is the preceding journey towards them absent, however, but the poet ascends them “casually” (*liao* 聊) – at a pace more suitable for a pleasant excursion into the mountains than for the treacherous road to Kunlun. The second part of the poem presents an evocative description of alluring mountain nature instead of an otherworldly land of gold and precious stones. In the fourth couplet the parallel lines elegantly bring together the images of flowers and the rain,

paradoxically viewed from above. Not only is the divine land transformed into a natural setting, but this scenery is elegant and harmonious, a source of aesthetic delight above all. The ambiguity of the title and content of the poem indicate that its actual theme might even be not the paradise of Kunlun but the mountainous scenery itself, which is celebrated through its oblique equation with the land of immortality.²⁸⁴

II.6. The courtly dulcification of otherworldly nature

Another of Yu Xin's poems, titled *Xun Zhou chushi Hongran shi* 尋周處士弘讓詩 (“Looking for the Recluse Zhou Hongrang”)²⁸⁵, is an example of the late Southern Dynasties re-evaluation and interweaving of several poetical traditions: the *youxian*, the *zhaoyin* and the landscape poetry of Xie Lingyun.

試遂赤松遊	I try to voyage after Red Pine,
披林對一丘	Parting the forest, we/ I face a hill.
梨紅大谷晚	The red of pears – night falls in the deep valley,
桂白小山秋	The white of cassia - autumn comes to the small mountain.
石鏡菱花發	A stone mirror blooms with water chestnuts,
桐門琴曲愁	Within paulownia gates the tune of lute saddens
泉飛疑度雨	The spring shoots up - like a passing rain,
雲積似重樓	Clouds heap - like storied towers.
王孫若不去	O Prince, do not leave!
山中定可留	In the mountains you can stay. ²⁸⁶ (Lu Qinli: 1988)

The title of the poem seemingly places it within the current of eremitic poetry. On the other hand, it commences in a typical *youxian* manner with a journey in search of an immortal. While in earlier poetry the immortal master would lead the hero into some paradise realm beyond our world, here Master Red Pine opens up a scene of mountainous beauty and harmony. Unlike the earlier tradition of otherworldly sceneries, which retained the scenes in

²⁸⁴ By the 5th century parallels between real landscapes and Kunlun mountains have become a common figure in the landscape poetry. For example, in his preface to *You xiechuan* 游斜川 (“Excursion to the Meandering stream”), Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427) looks to the hills of the Stories Walls 曾城 hills in the distance and associates them with the Kunlun mountains (Lu Qinli: 975). In *Deng jiangzhong guyu* 登江中孤嶼 (“Climbing a Solitary Islet in the River”) Xie Lingyun also relates the lonely island to the Kunlun mountains, but paradoxically reverses the relation, stating that it is the Kunlun which looks like the earthly mount:

想象昆山姿 “I imagine the beauty of mountain Kun,
緬邈區中緣 its forms come from the world of men” (Lu Qinli: 1162).

²⁸⁵ Zhou Hongrang 周弘讓 (ca. 498 – ca. 561) lived in retirement on Maoshan, refusing official appointments. Nevertheless, later he accepted an office from the usurper Hou Jing 侯景 (d. 552) as vice director of the secretariat.

²⁸⁶ In *Yiwen leiju* 36 this poem is attributed to Yu Xin's father – the poet Yu Jianwu 庾肩吾 (487 – 551).

timeless stasis, Yu Xin introduces a temporal dimension – the time of the day, suggested by the reddened pear trees, and the early autumn season, indicated by the white blooms of the cassia. Here, however, the references to autumn and evening, which are conventional metaphors for the decline of life, do not bring any frustrated reflections on the ephemerality of being. The prevailing mood is delectation at the beauty of the scene, mingled with a slight touch of elegant melancholy. This couplet, moreover, contains subtle literary allusions. The pears in the Great Gorge (Dagu 大谷) refer to certain unique pears of Lord Zhang from the Great Gorge, Dagu, which had appeared earlier in Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247 - 300) *Luoyang ji* 洛陽記 ("Luoyang Records") and *Xianju fu* 閒居賦 ("Rhapsody on Living in Idleness"). The expression Xiaoshan 小山 (Small mountain) in the second line, brings to mind the name of Huainan xiaoshan 淮南小山 – allegedly the author of the *Zhao yinshi* piece from *Chuci*. The refined play of words and allusions simultaneously creates an evocative picture of autumn twilight, and links the verse to older poems on living in the mountains – *Xianju fu* and *Zhao yinshi*.²⁸⁷

The next couplet faintly echoes lines from Xie Lingyun's *Ru Pengli hukou* 入彭蠡湖口 ("Entering the Mouth of Pengli Lake"):

攀崖照石鏡 Climbing cliffs, I viewed myself in the stone mirror,
牽葉入松門 Holding myself to leaves, I entered the Pine Gates" (*Wenxuan* 26: 1249)

The stone mirror in the fifth line of Yu Xin's poem is explained in earlier records as a round stone, found on the Mountain of the Stone Mirror, which reflects the human image like a mirror.²⁸⁸ Water chestnut (*linghua* 菱花) is a common epithet for mirrors, their frame being decorated with a water chestnut design. In Yu Xin's polished figure natural and man-made realms merge together – an element of nature is transformed into an elegant human object, while retaining its natural endowment of growth and blooming. The second line of the couplet is a playful elaboration of the image of the lute – made of paulownia wood, the lute *qin* is often referred to as paulownia. At the same time the phrase "paulownia gates" (*tongmen* 桐門) corresponds to Xie Lingyun's "pine gates" (*songmen* 松門).

²⁸⁷ Yu Xin infuses his allusion to the *Chuci Zhao yinshi* poem with the meaning that the notion of *zhaoyin* had acquired in the Western Jin poetry. In contrast to the *Chuci* piece, mountains and waters in the *zhaoyin* poetry are no longer full of perils and unsuitable for the human beings, but realms of purity and peace, to which the noble mind naturally inclined.

²⁸⁸ Zhang Sengjian's 張僧鑒 *Xunyang ji* 尋陽記, cited by Li Shan (*Wenxuan* 26: 1249). It seems that by the Liang dynasty the image of the stone mirror has already entered the poetical vocabulary of the court poets. See for example Liang Jianwen di's *Xing yushan ming* 行雨山銘 ("Inscription on Traveling in the Rainy Mountain"):

芸香馥逕 "Rue fragrance perfumes paths,
石鏡臨墀 Stone mirrors look down at platforms" (Yan Kejun vol. 7: 139)

The last couplet turns back to the *Zhao yinshi* poem of the *Chuci*, but completely reverses its meaning. While the *Chuci* poet summons the exile back into the human world, calling: “O Prince, return! In the mountains you cannot stay long!” (王孫兮歸來, 山中兮不可以久留), Yu Xin urges the recluse to remain forever in his alpine realm and calls for withdrawal to the mountains. The world that the immortal Red Pine opens up is no longer the frightful, inhuman realm of the *Chuci* poem, but neither is it the classic *shanshui* nature of Xie Lingyun, which still appears in Yu Xin’s verses. Nor is it the awe-inspiring sacred realm of the earlier mountainous abodes of immortals, nor the eremitic world of purity and simplicity, as the title seemingly suggests. Here it is nature cultivated, turned into precious man-made objects - the mountain stones become mirrors carved with flowers and paulownia trees are made into *qin* lutes.

The tendency to transform nature and natural phenomena into elegant human products was typical for Qi - Liang poetry in general. Yu Xin even remoulds entities of the divine realm:

石紋如碎錦	Stone patterns like patches of brocade,
藤苗似亂絲	Creepers sprouts like silk in disarray.

(Fenghe Zhaowang youxian shi 奉和趙王遊仙詩, Lu Qinli: 2362)

The curious merging of artificial otherworldly vistas with actual natural scenery that we observed in the last two poems by Yu Xin can to a large degree be explained by the poetic developments from the Qi dynasty onwards, which are associated with the Yongming style (*Yongming ti* 永明體).²⁸⁹ From the dramatic mountainous nature of Xie Lingyun’s poetry the Qi – Liang poets turned to the elegant, man-made scenery of the private garden, in which aristocrats embodied their vision of harmony and beauty. In this poetry of intimate landscape, description is directed towards the outer charm of nature, without being necessarily a means of philosophical reflection or emotional outpouring. As in the verse on immortality the poet is above all an outside observer, who tries to discover unusual, sensually appealing details, or surprising relations between the familiar elements of nature. In this sense outer descriptivism, complemented with a striving for formal perfection and original poetic formulation could provide the meeting ground for this-worldly and other-worldly landscapes. Moreover, in the court poetry of the late Southern Dynasties both earthly nature and otherworldly sceneries had undergone significant change, as evidenced by Yu Xin’s poems. They had become, one might say, less “natural” and less numinous; they had been refined and tamed, turned into exquisite products of courtly elegance, which provide aesthetic delight above all.

²⁸⁹ On the Yongming style see Lomova 2003.

Chapter III. The Way into Immortality

The preceding chapter has demonstrated that in the immortality verse from the Han to the 4th century the worlds of immortals and of humans were considered to be two distinct realms, and distant from one another. The most easily conceivable way to overcome the gap between the two was, therefore, to embark on a long journey through space. In the early poetry on immortality the process of achieving immortality was described as a journey far away, which lifted the hero from the ordinary mortal world and transported him to a land of paradise.

III.1. The *Yuanyou* poem of the *Chuci*

Of key importance for the further development of the immortality verse is the *Yuanyou*, (“Distant Journey”) poem of *Chuci*, dating back to the second half of the second century BC. *Yuanyou* is modelled on an older poem of the *Chuci* anthology – the *Lisao* 離騷 (“Encounter with Sorrow”) attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (late 4th- early 3rd century BC). This long autobiographical poem narrates how the hero, slandered by his political enemies and banished from court, undertakes a fantastic journey through the skies in search of a virtuous lord. The *Yuanyou* poem further transforms the theme of cosmic flight (which is probably of shamanistic origin) from the political allegorism of *Lisao* into the mystical cosmic journey of a Daoist adept. The heavenly exploits of the poet, narrated in the first-person voice, are aimed at the achievement of immortality, perceived here as merger with the Dao. The way to his ultimate fulfilment consists of a successful course of various physical and mystical techniques, encounters with immortals and deities and successive peregrination through the universe in all the cardinal directions.

Similarly to *Lisao*, the first part of the *Yuanyou* has the general tenor of the so-called *tristia*.²⁹⁰ The poet apprehends the corruption of the present world, feels isolated from his contemporaries and is aware of the continuing advance of time. As an alternative to the restrictions of human existence he recollects famous immortals of past ages and declares his wish to follow their example (see above, ch. I.2.1., pp. 51-52). In this way the beginning of the poem, in a manner typical for the *sao* tradition, juxtaposes two distinct modes of being and presents two separate conflicting worlds.

²⁹⁰ The term *tristia* has been introduced by D. Hawkes to designate the expression of "the poet's sorrows, his resentments, his complaints against a deluded prince, a cruel fate, a corrupt, malicious and uncomprehending society". See Hawkes 1967: 82.

Thereafter the poem delineates the successive stages by which the adept perfects himself in order to set off on a mystical journey through the universe. In outline this structure resembles the *Lisao*, where the poet also undergoes a process of self-cultivation before embarking on his cosmic journey. The protagonist of the *Lisao*, however, cultivates his moral virtues and in no way aims to overcome his human, physical nature. This process, moreover, is expressed through allegories and plant symbolism, pointing to moral values. In contrast to the earlier poem, *Yuanyou* describes actual esoteric practices and physiological exercises, in the course of which the mortal human body is shed and the spirit is strengthened and released for the coming journey.

The process begins with quietening down, concentration and self-reflection. The poet tells us how he found serenity in emptiness and stillness (*xujing* 虛靜), how he gained true satisfaction by going along with the moving energies of the world, and not doing what is contrary to them. Furthermore, he enumerates various exercises in physiological alchemy that he undertook. He sups the Six Breaths (*liuqi* 六氣), drinks the Drifting Flow (*hangxie* 沆瀣), rinses his mouth with the True Yang (*zhengyang* 正陽), savours the Dawn Aurora (*zhaoxia* 朝霞), conserves “the pure fluid of his spiritual light (*shenming* 神明)”, absorbs essence *jing* 精 and breath *qi* 氣 and rejects the grosser parts.²⁹¹ The three mentioned types of *qi* – Drifting Flow, True Yang and Dawn Aurora, are the beneficial *qi* of midnight, midday and dawn respectively. These are references to actual respiratory exercises and phototherapeutic practices undertaken by the immortality adepts of that time.

²⁹¹ The Six Breaths (*liuqi* 六氣), mentioned here as a class, are the essences of the four times of the day and of Heaven and Earth. *Ling Yangzi mingjing* 陵陽子明經, cited by Wang Yi, explains them as follows: “In the spring eat the Dawn Aurora (*zhaoxia* 朝霞). It is the Vermillion-yellow breath *qi* of the daybreak. In the autumn eat the Sinking Darknes (*lunyin* 淪陰). It is the vermilion-yellow breath of the sunset. In the winter drink the Drifting Flow (*hangxie* 沆瀣). It is the breath of the North and of the midnight. In the summer drink the True Yang (*zhengyang* 正陽). It is the breath of the South and of the midday. To them are added those of the Heaven and Earth - the Dark breath (*xuan* 玄), and the Yellow breath (*huang* 黃)”. They are also mentioned in the first chapter of *Zhuangzi*, where Liezi is said to “to guide the changes of the Six Breaths (*liuqi*)”. These are explained either as the breaths described above (only the breath of the sunset is called Flying Springs, *fei quan* 飛泉, instead of Sinking Darkness), or as the *yin* and *yang*, wind and rain, darkness and brightness. The term *liuqi* also designates six ways of exhaling the breath, each of them being set in relation to one of the organs of the body and having a name of its own. On the *liuqi* in the latter sense see H. Maspero 1981: 496-499. - J. Needham sees in the phrase *jingqi ru er cuhui chu* 精氣入而粗穢出 (“absorbing the subtle essence and rejecting the grosser parts”) a reference to *coitus thesauratus* and also to the circulation of the *qi*, namely to the respiratory practice known as *chugu naxin*, “breathing out the old and breathing in the new”. See Needham vol. V: 2, p. 100.

The poet's reflections, the account of his training in mysticism and his ethereal diet are pervaded by a strong Daoist air and adopt much of the current Daoist language.²⁹² Many of the expressions describing the poet's aims and inner cultivation are directly borrowed from *Zhuangzi* and *Laozi* - as *zhengqi* 正氣 ("the primal/true breath"), *xujing* 虛靜 ("emptiness and stillness"), *tianyu* 恬愉 ("serenity"), *wuwei* 無為 ("nonaction"), *zide* 自得 ("true satisfaction"), *deyi* 得一 ("attain Oneness"). The poem also exhibits parallels with some of the ideas and terminology of the *Neiye* ("Inward Training") chapter of *Guanzi*, especially those regarding *jing* 精 (essence) and *qi* (vital breath). Devoting himself to various esoteric practices that conduce to etherialisation, the hero ultimately becomes able to visit the great immortal Wang Ziqiao in the south and to hear instructions on the nature of Dao and on nurturing the vital breath from the master himself. The instructions that the poet receives from the Master Wang are also strongly reminiscent of the teachings of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*:

道可受兮	The Way can only be received,
不可傳	it cannot be given.
其小無內兮	Small, it has no content;
其大無垠	great, it has no bounds. ²⁹³
無滯而魂兮	Keep your soul from confusion,
彼將自然	and it will come naturally.
壹氣孔神兮	Unify the breath, strengthen the spirit;
於中夜存	preserve it inside you in the midnight hour.
虛以待之兮	Remain empty, to receive things thereby, ²⁹⁴
無為之先	Let non-action be priority.
庶類以成兮	All other things are thus brought to completion:
此德之門	This is the Door of Power. ²⁹⁵

(*Chuci buzhu*: 167; based on the translations of Hawkes 1985: 195 and Kroll 1996: 661)

The understanding of the Dao as omnipresent and yet ineffable, uniting in itself all oppositions, and of its attainment through inner concentration and meditation, is similar to the ideas developed in *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*.

²⁹² Among the poems in the *Chuci* there is yet another composition connected with Daoist thought - namely the *Yufu* 漁夫 ("The Fisherman"), probably from mid 3rd century BC. It is a parable, structured as a dialogue between Qu Yuan and a fisherman. The words of the fisherman about not being chained to circumstances and moving with the changes correspond to the teaching of *Zhuangzi* and *Laozi* about spontaneity and non-resistance to the flow of nature. However, this piece does not directly employ words and expressions from the Daoism of the time.

²⁹³ This is an echo of the paradoxes of *Daode jing*. See especially ch. 14, 25, 34, 41.

²⁹⁴ Compare with a similar passage in *Zhuangzi* 4: "As for the breath *qi*, it is that which, while empty, receives phenomena" 氣也者，虛而待物者也 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 147).

²⁹⁵ *De* 德, translated here as "power" and commonly rendered as "virtue", is a kind of inner spiritual potency or charisma, a sort of crystallisation of the Dao within man, achieved through cultivation of his *qi*. Through this charismatic power the accomplished person can exercise magico-moral influence on the whole universe.

Wang Ziqiao's speech, consisting mostly of tetrasyllabic, formulaic lines with the refrain-word *xi* 兮, stands out sharply from the standard hexametric prosodic pattern of the poem. This initiation into the secrets of the Dao becomes a transforming event for the poet. Inspired by the master's teaching, he is finally capable of reaching the lands of immortals and meeting the Feathered immortals (*yuren* 羽人) on the Cinnabar Hill. He then wanders within the space of a day to the mythical lands of sunrise and sunset, appropriating the animating energy of sun, which further strengthens his spiritual being.²⁹⁶

His cultivation continues - he sips the subtle liquor of the Flying Springs (*feiquan* 飛泉) and holds in his bosom the radiant jade *wanyan* 琬琰.²⁹⁷ Precious stones become edible fare for the poet, infusing him with their brilliance and incorruptibility. At the end his body is purified and etherealised to the utmost:

玉色頰以腕顏兮	My jade-like countenance flushed with radiant colour;
精醇粹而始壯	Purified, my vital essence started to grow stronger;
質銷鑠以澆約兮	My corporeal parts dissolved to a soft suppleness;
神要眇以淫放	And my spirit grew lissom and eager for movement.

(*Chuci buzhu*: 168; tr. by Hawkes 1985: 196)

The term *xiaoshuo* 銷鑠 used in the third line of the above quoted quatrain is drawn from the domain of metallurgy and suggests smelting, while the poet's body is defined as if it were the "raw material" (*zhi* 質) of this smelting process. These lines reflect a specific conception of metamorphosis into immortal, according to which the essence *jing* is purified and strengthened, while the physical body is melted away releasing the spirit.

At this point the poet leaves his southern homeland and is transported to the higher realms of nature. He rises on a floating cloud to the Changhe heavenly gate and beyond to the Great Tenuity (Taiwei) and to the palace of Gods. While in a very similar passage in *Lisao* the

²⁹⁶ The expression *Jiuyang* 九陽 ("Ninefold Sunlight") is rather problematic here. It generally designates the place of sunrise in the east, more specifically the Fusang tree, which housed the nine suns. However, it appears in a couplet based on the morning-evening formula, and is antithetical to the Valley of Sunshine in the preceding line, therefore, it should indicate the sun's setting-place. Wang Yi simply glosses it as the „margin of heaven and earth“.

²⁹⁷ The expression *feiquan* 飛泉 is explained in different ways by the commentators. *Chuci buzhu* cites Zhang Yi, according to whom *feiquan* designates the Flying Gorge (Feigu 飛谷), situated in the south-west part of the Kunlun mountain. *Feiquan* is also one of the names of the Six breaths *liuqi* – it is the pneuma of the sunset. On the other side Needham sees in the expression *feiquan* a clear reference to alchemical elixirs, especially as *fei* ("flying") was the technical term for sublimation and distillation. – *Wanyan* 琬琰 may mean a kind of precious jade, which is also mentioned in the *Shanglin fu* of Sima Xiangru. *Wan* and *yan* are kinds of ancient jade discs (Laufer 1912: 93 - 97). According to Guo Pu, king Jie, the last ruler of the Xia dynasty, named two precious jades after the beautiful maidens Wan and Yan who were captured during his expedition in the Min mountains. However, some commentaries of *Yuanyou* make it clear that the poem refers here to the swallowing of saliva, which is also called "Metallous wine" (*jinli* 金瀝) or "Jade flowers" (*yuying* 玉英).

traveller is turned away from the gates of heaven, here the heavenly guard pushes open the portals of the Changhe gate.²⁹⁸ 'The Changhe Gate deserves special attention, for it will remain a permanent landmark in subsequent *youxian* poetry. Through a conceptual analysis of the components *chang* 闔 and *he* 闔 Elyzabeth Hyland characterises this gate as the "Chinese version of the Greek Symplegades" – a coincidence of opposites, which always tests the visionary travellers at the transitory point to Heaven.²⁹⁹ Successful passing through the conflicting opposites presented by the gate, means ability to transcend all the dualities typical of human condition and enter the mystical state beyond distinctions. The verb *pai* 排, "push open", which suggests a dramatic action, will appear often in the subsequent poetry on mystical flights where it suggests transition between planes of being (see above, ch. I.3, p. 76).

The description of the celestial journey beyond the mundane realm exploits the conventions of the *itineraria* theme as developed in the earlier poetry of the *Chuci* anthology.. The chariot and the train of the poet strongly remind one of the divine equipages that carried gods and shamans in their flights across the sky. The poet advances surrounded by a magnificent entourage of ten thousand chariots, riding an eight-dragon harness, with cloud banners and rainbow standards flapping in the wind and phoenixes soaring above. He commands numerous gods and deities in his retinue - the wind god Fei Lian 飛廉 clears the way ahead for him, the star gods Xuan Wu 玄武 and Wen Chang 文昌 serve and marshal the procession, the Rain God Yushi 雨師 guides the way and the Thunder God Leigong 雷公 is a bodyguard. The poet's cosmic potency extends even to the stars - he takes hold of the Broom Star to use it as a banner, and brandishes the Dipper's Handle as a baton. The portrayal of the Perfected Man resembles the description of the ancient celestial deities as depicted in the *Jiuge* - masters of clouds, wind and rain. The entire account of his paraphernalia and entourage is based on conventional imagery and formulae constantly recurring through the *Jiuge* and *Lisao*. The "descriptions" of the poet's celestial retinue are not truly descriptive, in the sense that the poet's purpose is not to provide an accurate impression of his equipage and companions. Instead, his account is an enumeration of the different manifestations and aspects of the transmundane powers possessed by the adept.

²⁹⁸ The *Lisao* passage is almost identically phrased – compare "He pushed the Changhe gate open and looked at me" 排闔闔而望予 (*Yuanyou*) with "He leaned on the Changhe gate and looked at me" 依闔闔而望予 (*Lisao* l. 208).

²⁹⁹ E. Hyland examines the word families related respectively to *chang* 闔 and *he* 闔 as listed in Karlgren's *Grammata Serica Recensa* (p. 190 and p. 170). According to Hyland the words related to *chang* „share the common element of abundance or leadership“ and are an "extroverted" group of words. On the other side, the words close to *he* have the connotation of closing, of concealing and are "introverted". Therefore, E. Hyland translates Changhe as "Openshut" or even "Out-in" (Hyland 1984: 160-61, n. 59).

His celestial wanderings are also shrouded in conventional language. One example is the “morning-evening” formula employed in the *Jiuge* and in *Lisao* to convey the great length of the journey and the miraculous speed of the traveller by referring to the passage of time in a single line:

朝發軔以太儀兮 In the morning I set off from the Court of Heaven,
夕始臨乎於微闈 In the evening Wei-lü came in sight below. ³⁰⁰ (ll. 93-94; *Chuci buzhu*: 169)

Many time-honoured phrases through which the shaman described his quest for the deity and their meeting made their way into the *Yuanyou*: the poet wants to “roam about, footloose and fancy-free” (聊仿佯而逍遙), his road stretches far, far, “endlessly onward” (路曼曼其修遠), he slows his pace (*mijie* 弭節), and “forgets about returning” (*wanggui* 忘歸).

In contrast to the older *Chuci* poems, however, the *Yuanyou* journey is performed in a highly regular and symmetrical space. It takes the form of a cosmic circuit, during which the traveller approaches the guardian powers of the four directions in due order, before the culmination in the centre. If we go back to the text of *Lisao*, the absence of such unified symmetrical spatial structure becomes obvious at once. The magic-making progress of the poet in *Lisao* takes place in an undefined cosmos; not even his route is precise. In contrast, the protagonist of *Yuanyou* successively traverses a clearly outlined, mandala-like cosmos, defined by the four cardinal points and the six co-ordinates.³⁰¹ From the Court of Heaven the poet sets off to visit the realm of the East presided over by the god Tai Hao 太皓 and its tutelary spirit Gou Mang 句芒, and thence to the westernmost quarters ruled over by Xi Huang 西皇 and the deity Ru Shou 蓐收. His aerial flight takes him then to the Fiery God 炎

³⁰⁰ For comparison see:

朝發軔於蒼梧兮 “I started out in the morning on my way from Cang-wu;
夕余至乎懸圃 By evening I had arrived at the Hanging Gardens.” (*Lisao* ll. 185-186);
晁騁騫兮江皋 “In the morning I race by the bank of the river;
夕弭節兮北渚 At evening I halt at this northern island.” (*Jiuge. Xiangjun*, ll. 29-30);

朝馳余馬兮江皋 “In the morning I drive my steeds by the river
夕濟兮西澨: In the evening I cross to the western shore.” (*Jiuge. Xiangfuren*, ll. 15-16)

³⁰¹ The origins of the Chinese cosmographical structures, governed in orientation by the four cardinal points and designed on the principle of rectilinear symmetry, can be traced back to Shang (see especially Allan 1991, ch. 4; Henderson 1984, ch. 2). However, the cosmological explanations for such structures were not developed, or recorded, until centuries later. In the texts dating from the Warring States period the guarding divinities of the four directions make their appearance. In *Shanhai jing* the four gods residing at the edges of the world in each direction are described: these are Zhu Rong 祝融 in the South, Ru Shou 蓐收 in the West, Yu Qiang 禺疆 in the North and Gou Mang 句芒 in the East (*Haiwai jing, juan* 6,7,8 and 9, Yuan Ke 1980: 206, 227, 248 and 265). The same group of gods also appears in *Lushi chunqiu* 7.1 where they have been incorporated into a cosmological system, each of the spirits belonging to a certain emperor (Di 帝) and season, among a variety of elements corresponding to each direction (*Lushi chunqiu, Mengqiu pian* 孟秋篇).

神 of the South and its guardian Zhu Rong 祝融, and finally to the northern end of the world where he meets the God Zhuanyu 顓頊 and the attendant spirit Xuan Min 玄冥. As already pointed out above (ch. II.2, p. 112), the presiding gods of the cosmic directions and their tutelary spirits are the same as those given in *Huainanzi*, which dates back to approximately the same period as *Yuanyou*. From the four quarters of the world the poet then rises to the summit of the celestial vault - to the lightning's fissures, and descends deep down into the Great Abyss (Dahe 大壑) to conclude his journey in the centre, where all distinctions dissolve in the Unity of the Grand Primordium.

The space traversed by the hero of the *Yuanyou* is highly schematised and reduced to the abstract cosmographic pattern prevalent in Han thought and art.³⁰² The fantastical lands through which the poet passes are not described but are evoked through their presiding divinities - very much as in the Han dynasty mirror depictions. Nor is there any account of the experience of reaching these distant quarters. Only the significant places, the "power-nuclei", that define the cosmos are of intrinsic interest to the poet, not the passage between them. Although the poem records movement taking place in some sort of time, the narrative development is conceived not as a temporal progression but above all as a spatial order. In this "recitation of an action"³⁰³ the journey proceeds with sudden leaps from one point in space to another. It is also important to note that the movement between this world and the higher realms is not a gradual passage, but takes place suddenly: "Spirit now flicks forth in a flash, not to turn back again" (神儻忽而不反兮), "Suddenly I glimpsed my old home below" (忽臨睨夫舊鄉), "As I beheld the flickering instant..." (視儻忽...). Paul Kroll has pointed out the religious implications of the element of suddenness - the transitions between the two planes of being are like spontaneous mystic insights, which typically occur abruptly.³⁰⁴ The abrupt nature of the transition between the profane and the supernal is an image that came to be commonly used in the later "roaming into immortality" verse.

³⁰² The unified cosmographic system dominating the Western Han thought can be visually illustrated by the so-called "TLV" system of decoration of the contemporary bronze mirrors. It represents a highly symmetrical and unified symbolic microcosm, reconciling the two views of the cosmos based on the Five Phases and Twelve divisions respectively. See Loewe 1979: 60 - 85.

³⁰³ D. Knechtges 1982a: 165 hesitates to use the term "narration" for this type of verse and introduces the expression "recitation of an action" instead. D. Hawkes similarly argues that the language of the *Chu itineraria* is not narrative but enumerative, and sees in the principle of orderly enumeration an archetype which is in origin essentially magical and religious. He traces it back to the shaman's orderly enumeration of parts of the cosmos, as exemplified by two other poems from the *Chuci - Zhaohun* 招魂 ("Summoning the Soul") and *Dazhao* 大招 ("The Great Summon") (Hawkes 1967: 89 - 90).

³⁰⁴ Kroll 1996: 657.

As at the end of *Lisao*, in the middle of his ecstatic journey the hero of *Yuanyou* glimpses his old home below and his heart is overwhelmed by nostalgia and longing for all he has left behind (see above, ch. I.3.4., p. 82). For the protagonists of *Lisao* and some of the *Jiuzhang* poems these reminiscences cause an abrupt descent from the celestial heights back into the human world. In *Yuanyou* the facing of the old home with all it represents is conceived as one of the last obstacles in the journey towards the Dao - namely, the overcoming of one's earthly identity, and casting away of all human affections. And after the hero has brushed his tears away, "suppressing the wilful thoughts, in control once more", he rises even higher.

One of the last stages of the mystical progress is a feast with music and dance in the company of goddesses. The positioning of this musical interlude immediately before the climax of the cosmic peregrination is typical of the *itineraria* plot in the *sao* and subsequent *fu* tradition. It is only after this revel of music and dance that the poet breaks free of all bounds and is transported beyond all limits. Paul Kroll links the euphoria produced by this interlude with the ecstasy achieved through the dance of the shaman.³⁰⁵ Music's ability to exalt the listener to zones beyond linguistic or rational distinctions here takes the form of an abrupt, intuitive breakthrough to the Pre-beginnings.

The musical interlude also includes the only appearance of women in the poem – the river goddess of the Luo and the Xiang. In contrast to *Lisao* the goddesses here are not the object of a frustrated quest but become equal partners in mutual entertainment. The protagonist does not fruitlessly yearn for the feminine principle, but, at the end of his path, is capable of symbolically integrating it into his cosmos. This is an important difference between the cosmic journey of the *Yuanyou* and the *itinerarias* in the *Jiuge* and in the *Lisao* - the theme of the quest of a goddess / god or of the Fair One (*meiren* 美人, allegorically representing a worthy ruler) is missing in *Yuanyou*. The breathtaking journey through the universe is not motivated by a search for a divine mate or an appreciative prince, but by a desire to go beyond the human lot. If there is some kind of quest in *Yuanyou*, it is a quest for higher realms and higher state of being. Even more crucial is that the celestial wanderings are not merely a means to soothe the poet's sorrow at worldly existence, as in *Lisao* – for here they lead him to break free from the "world of dust". The journey through the four directions and six coordinates is an intrinsic part of his way towards immortality. The ecstatic circuit through the heavens becomes a means of knowing and possessing all Under Heaven.

I believe that it is not too far fetched to make a parallel between the *Yuanyou* type of cosmic journey and the journeys of ancient monarchs through the four corners of the empire

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*: 658.

and their sacrifices, all designed to gain or affirm supernatural sanctions for their rule.³⁰⁶ In both cases special powers are acquired through the pilgrimage. In this respect the celestial travels of the *Yuanyou* are much closer to these power-asserting and power-generating journeys through the empire than to the shamanistic quests of *Jiuge* or to the allegorical *itineraria* of *Lisao*.

By rising beyond the world and ecstatically traversing the quarters of the sky the protagonist develops special powers – he is transported to the Grand Primordium (Taichu 太初), where the Dao is found in its most essential form.³⁰⁷ Having reached the realm of space and time prior to the differentiation of all forms and phenomena, the hero enters the paradoxical totality which contains and transcends all dualities.

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

(*Chuci buzhu*: 174; tr. by Kroll 1996: 663)

In the mystic void of the pre-beginnings the distinct categories of time and space, self and the other are abolished and the hero enters a timeless, spaceless state of being. It is important to note that what is described here is not merely a mental state of mystic insight or a temporal (or rather pre-temporal) stage of the evolution of phenomena, but rather a realm situated in space. This is a typical example of the fluid boundary between temporal and spatial notions in Daoist texts. The names of cosmogonic phases in many cases do not merely denote temporal stages from the primordial past, but also cosmic regions or heavens.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ See the discussion in Hawkes 1967: 83 – 86.

³⁰⁷ The term *Taichu* 太初 (Grand Primordium) refers to the pre-beginnings of the universe, to space and time prior to phenomenal differentiation. Daoist cosmology perceived the movement from the undifferentiated Dao to the multiplicity of the world as a sequential process, consisting of several cosmogonic stages. A comprehensive list of cosmogonic periods is provided in *Liezi* ch. 1: 6 with Taichu being the second: Grand Change (Taiyi 太易), Grand Primordium (Taichu 太初), Grand Inception (Taishi 太始), Grand Simplicity (Taisu 太素). Taiyi is the period when the *qi* is still not visible (*wei jian qi* 未見氣); Taichu, the second period is defined as the "inception of *qi*" (*qi zhi shi* 氣之始); Taishi is the inception of the forms (*xing zhi shi* 形之始) and Taisu is the inception of the matter (*zhi zhi shi* 質之始). The same list had, in fact, appeared in the *Qianzuo du* 乾鑿度 ("Chiseling Out the Laws of *qian*"), an apocryphon on the *Yijing* from the 1st or 2nd century AD. On Taichu see also *Zhuangzi* 12 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 424).

³⁰⁸ Such are, for example, the Grand Simplicity (Taisu 太素), the Grand Void (Taikong 太空), the Grand Non-being (Taiwu 太無).

III.2. The Distant journey in the Han immortality verse

The model of *Yuanyou* underlies most of the Han *sao* and *fu* poems that are concerned with the theme of immortality - Sima Xiangru's *Daren fu*, Liu Xiang's *Yuanyou*, Zhang Heng's *Sixuan fu*, etc. Most of the subsequent accounts of journeys into the world of immortals and gods drew on the *Yuanyou* version of the *itineraria* trope where the mystical travels were detached from the quest theme and took the form of a smooth ritual circuit of the cosmos. In all of them it is the process of journeying itself that imbues the traveller with transcendental powers. At the successive stages of his cosmic circuit the hero receives further initiation by mythical personages, extends his might over more and more divinities, and consumes miraculous drugs, herbs and essences that purify and transform his body into an immortal one. Fascinating as these accounts are with their unrestrained fantasy and verbal artistry, it would be redundant to dwell on them in length here. Nevertheless, it is useful to recapitulate the celestial progress in *Sixuan fu*, for Zhang Heng outlines even more comprehensively than in *Yuanyou* the successive stages of the path beyond this world.

In line with the honoured *Chuci* tradition the peregrination of the cosmic traveller starts with divination and instruction from an ancient sage. Before embarking on his journey, the hero travels first to Mount Qi 岐, the site of the old Zhou capital, where king Wen of Zhou, the reputed compiler of the "Book of Changes", performs a divination for him and urges him to "fly away and hide to preserve his good name". There follows purification and strengthening for the coming departure: like the voyager of *Yuanyou* the hero washes his hair in a limpid spring and dries it at the Morning Brightness (*chaoyang* 朝陽), and partakes of magical elixirs - he sips the liquor of the Flying Springs and chews the petals of the stone mushrooms 石菌.³⁰⁹ After this preparation the hero acquires the swiftness of a bird and is able to embark on the distant journey. His travels proceed in a ritually proper order: east, south, west and north,³¹⁰ and take him both to traditional mythical lands and to specific immortality sites. In the east, on the islands of the immortals, the hero gathers magic

³⁰⁹ Stone mushrooms (*shijun* 石菌) are probably a kind of "magic mushrooms" (*zhi*), said to induce immortality. Although Feiquan 飛泉 (Flying Spring) is part of the landscape of Kunlun, the expression here, in conjunction with the stone mushroom, very probably refers to an alchemical elixir.

³¹⁰ D. Knechtges suggests that this sequence of the four directions, which is common in the Han rhapsodies, is derived from the solar cycle, "in which the sun rises in the east, reaches midpoint in the south, sets in the west, and rests in the north at night" (Knechtges 1982: 170). It also corresponds to the Mutual Production order of the Five Phases (in this case four): wood = east, fire = south, metal = west, water = north (See Needham vol. II: 254 - 255). This sequence differs from the one in the *Yuanyou*, but is present in the two "Summons" poems (*Zhaohun* and *Dazhao*) of the *Chuci*. Sima Xiangru also follows the same sequence in his "Rhapsody on the Imperial Park" (*Shanglin fu*) and in *Daren fu*.

mushrooms to prolong his life. The traditional sites of the solar myths are also visited: he spends the night at the Fusang tree, and travels in the morning to the Dawn Valley, appropriating the regenerative powers of the nascent sun.³¹¹ Further magical substances and essences are consumed at this point: he drinks Jade liquor (*yuli* 玉醴) from Qingling 青嶺 and absorbs the Drifting Flow (*hangxie* 沆瀣). Following the course of the sun the hero proceeds to the south, which is connected with the ancient legendary figure of Yu the Great (the Guiji 會稽 mountain), and pays a visit to the emperor Shun (Chonghua 重華), and the Fire Regulator 火正 (Zhu Rong), buried at the mountain Heng. On his way to the west he stops at the Standing Tree (Jianmu 建木), which marks the centre of the world, picks the flowers of the Ruo 若 tree, on which the sun sets in the west, and traverses the state of Xuanyuan (the Yellow emperor), where the people reputedly enjoyed longevity of one thousand years. In the west another metamorphosis takes place – his spirit is suddenly transformed and the hero sheds off his old body (*chantui* 蟬蛻), becoming a “companion of the pure essence” (朋精粹). The journey into immortality does not, however, end with this transformation. After the passage through the White Portal (*baimen* 白門) in the farthest southwest, where the metal *qi* is generated ³¹², and the fording of the Weak Water River, the hero meets the Yellow Emperor, and receives further instructions from him. Thereafter he finds himself in a sealed chamber in the realm of the Grand Darkness (Taiyin 太陰). According to Daoist texts of the period the Grand Darkness was a mysterious realm in the extreme north, where the body-soul complex of a sage underwent transmutation after his faked death to be renewed in a more sublime form. The image of the sealed chamber (probably a cave) strengthens these religious connotations, for caves are symbolically associated with the undifferentiated, primordial state of being from which all life is born. ³¹³ Thereafter the poet is carried by a whirlwind through a cavern at mount Buzhou 不周 (the site of the Gate of Darkness, Youdu zhi men 幽都之門³¹⁴) to the subterranean world - to the realm of stillness, shadows and formless potentiality. The way

³¹¹ On the symbolical meaning of the solar imagery in the context of immortality see above, ch. 2.

³¹² *Huainanzi* 4.4b (Liu Wendian: 139). See also Major 1993: 162-163.

³¹³ According to texts from the same period, the realm of Taiyin 太陰 (Grand Darkness) at the northernmost end of the world, was the place where the body and the souls of certain individuals underwent refinement after their death to attain "post-mortem" immortality. The *Xiang'er* commentary to *Daodejing*, ch. 16 ("Their bodies obliterated, they do not die") and 33 ("The one, who dies without being extinguished, has a continuous existence [*shou* 壽]") explains that the worthy, who had accumulated the Dao, seemingly die like ordinary mortals, but in fact they are transferred to the realm of Taiyin, where they are purified and come to life again. The realm of the Grand Darkness is like a cauldron, in which the body-soul complex undergoes refinement. It is significant that only after passing through the northernmost quarters of the Grand Darkness, through the sealed chamber and a cavern, is the hero transported to the Queen of the Immortals.

³¹⁴ *Huainanzi* 4.4b (Liu Wendian: 139).

towards the higher spheres thus comprises both the immediate partaking of concentrated life energies in the east and a symbolic return to the formlessness of the pre-beginnings in a hermetically closed space. Only after the hero emerges back from the darkness of the depths does a radical break-through occur on the existential plane – he is transported to the silver terrace of the Queen of Immortals, Xi Wangmu. The circuit, which initially proceeds on a horizontal plane through the cardinal directions, is transposed after the passage through the abysmal depths onto a vertical axis – Kunlun, Langfeng 闔風, the Gate of Heaven, the Purple Palace (Zigong 紫宮), the court of the Grand Tenuity (Taiwei 太微) and the constellations. At Kunlun the hero attends a banquet with jade mushrooms (*yuzhi* 玉芝) and enjoys the company and songs of Fu Fei and the Jade Maiden of Mount Taihua 太華玉女. On the highest Kunlun peak Langfeng he builds himself a bed from the tree of immortality and grinds rose-gem stamens (*yaorui* 瑤蕊) for his provision (a common image in the later *youxian shi*). Another instruction follows – this time from the shaman Xian, Wu Xian 巫咸. The poet gathers an entourage of deities and soars up to the Gate of Heaven and the Rose-gem Palace 瓊宮 of the Celestial Lord. There he attends another divine concert, and is lifted through the rapture of heavenly music to even further heights. From the Purple Palace 紫宮 he arrives at the court of the Grand Tenuity (Taiwei 太微)³¹⁵, and makes a circuit of the heavenly constellations, before his voluntary return to earth. (Knechtges: 133-35).

Basing our analysis on the depictions in *Yuanyou* and *Sixuan fu* we can conclude that the way to immortality in the Han poetry was conceived as a graduated progress at the key points of which the hero acquired additional knowledge and powers, propelling him to the next phase of his pilgrimage. The essential stages were preliminary instruction from an ancient sage or an immortal, purification and transformation of the body through physiological practices, ethereal diet and absorption of elixir substances, association with the animating essence of the sun, successive exploration of all the coordinates of the universe and thus the acquisition of power over their divinities, and the ritual banquet in the presence of divine women and heavenly music, which exalted the hero to the highest spheres. It is important that the access to various elixir substances, the shedding off the mortal form, the visit to the Queen

³¹⁵ Taiwei 太微 (Grand Tenuity), is one of the three great star-palaces of the Chinese sky (the other two being Ziwei gong 紫微宮 and Wenchang gong 文昌宮). It consists of more than ten stars situated in the constellations Leo, Veronica's hairs, Virgo and Sextant, at the autumn equinox. It is considered to be the southern palace of the polar sovereign and is an astral administrative centre, as distinct from the Purple Tenuity (Ziwei) in the north, which is a grand audience hall above all (Schafer Sinological papers 5: 11). *Huainanzi* ch. 3 says that "the Taiwei constellation is the hall of the Son of Heaven; the Purple Palace is the residence of the Taiyi (the Grand Monad)".

of the Immortals and to the Lord of Heaven are not ends in themselves but mere stages of the distant journey. The ultimately achieved transcendence in the *Yuanyou* and the later compositions modelled on it, is conceived both as a state of being and as a realm situated in space, which has been reached by the hero.

III.3. The journey theme in the *yuefu* tradition

Another genre of the Han period in which the journey theme was developed, was that of *yuefu* songs. The late Han *yuefu* tradition presents a much abbreviated and simplified version of the *itineraria* theme, which is here reduced to its basics and loses the fantastic and overwhelming nature of the cosmic journeys. Moreover, instead of conducting a long ritual circuit of the whole cosmos, which in itself transforms and empowers the traveller, the *yuefu* pilgrim journeys after one single objective – the acquisition of the drug of immortality. Thematically, this search with one single goal recalls the ancient quest theme that was absent in the Daoist cosmic *itineraries* of the *Yuanyou* tradition. In the *yuefu* ballads, however, the ancient quest of a deity is transformed into a quest for the elixir of immortality.

A typical pilgrimage in search of the drug is outlined in the *Dongtao xing* 董逃行 song, which some scholars date to the time of emperor Wu of Han³¹⁶. It presents a sequence of stock situations: the ascent of a mountain, journey in search of the elixir, encounter with the immortals, and subsequent instructions and receiving of the elixir from them. In the last couplets the poem, which until now has sounded like a personal journey towards immortality voiced in the first person of the author, abruptly shifts to a eulogy of the emperor: the pilgrim ceremonially offers the elixir of long life to the ruler and promises him longevity, happiness, victory over neighbouring states, and the protection of guardian spirits as long as Heaven endures. *Changge xing* 長歌行 (“Long Song“, translated below, p. 227) describes a similar journey in search of the immortality drug, this time under the guidance of an immortal. It likewise ends with the final presentation of the elixir to the Master through a conventional felicitation formula.

The aim of the search for immortality in these songs is not to go beyond the human world, not to attain utmost freedom and purity, or ecstatic journey through the cosmos, but simply to achieve an endless prolongation of the life in this world. Unlike the *Yuanyou* type of *itineraria*, these songs reflect the concept of immortality prevailing at the Han courts – immortality in the sense of ultimate avoidance of death. Access to elixir substances, which in

³¹⁶ See Xiao Difei 1984: 68. The title “Dongtao” is interpreted as a name of an immortal.

the *Yuanyou* and the Han rhapsodies *fu* had been merely a preliminary stage on the way towards transcendence, here becomes an end in itself. The themes of the journey towards the drug, the encounter with immortals who bestow the drug and the following presentation to the lord, accord with Han emperors' somewhat 'mechanical' perception of the process of attainment of immortality. One had to search for the immortals already residing in paradise, receive from them divine elixirs and by consuming them prolong one's years in this world.

4. The Distant journey in post-Han verse on immortality

Accounts of celestial travels continued to be a major part of the poetry on immortals after the fall of Han. While in the *Chuci* tradition and in the Han *yuefu* songs it is possible to discern a fairly uniform *itineraria* plot, the subsequent verse presents a variety of situations and topoi that can hardly be subsumed under one single scenario. These verses draw both on the *yuefu* and the *sao* traditions and freely incorporate *Chuci* and popular imagery.

One example of this syncretic tendency in the *youxian* poetry of the 3rd century is Cao Zhi's 五遊詠 *Wuyou yong* ("Five-fold Roaming"):

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|---|
| 1 | 九州不足步
願得凌雲翔□□□ | The nine continents are not worthy of my steps,
I wish to soar above the clouds, ³¹⁷ |
| | 逍遙八紘外
遊目歷遐荒 | Roam and ramble beyond the eight wastelands, ³¹⁸
To cast my wandering gaze across the distant deserts. |
| 5 | 披我丹霞衣
襲我素霓裳□□□ | Clad in robes of cinnabar aurora,
Garbed □□ in skirts of pure rainbow. |
| | 華蓋紛旒藹
六龍仰天驤 | The floral canopy spreads its fragrance,
My six dragons, heads uplifted, soar into heaven. |
| | 曜靈未移景 | The blazing spirit has not moved its rays yet, |
| 10 | 倏忽造昊蒼
闔闔啟丹扉 | As instantly we reach the grey-green sky.
The Changhe gate opens with cinnabar doors, |
| | 雙闕曜朱光 | The twin towers blaze with a crimson light. |
| | 徘徊文昌殿
登陟太微堂□ | □□□□□□□□□□□□□□ I linger in the palace of Literary Brilliance, ³¹⁹
And ascend the hall of Grand Tenuity. |
| 15 | 上帝休西櫺
群后集東廂 | The Lord on High rests behind the western lattice,
Courtiers gather in the eastern chamber. |

³¹⁷ This line echoes the second line of *Yuanyou*:

願輕舉而遠遊 I wish to rise up lightly, to roam far off. (*Chuci buzhu*: 163)

³¹⁸ *Bahong* 八紘 are the eight outlying regions, situated beyond the eight distant regions, which surround the nine continents. Their names are provided in *Huainanzi* ch. 4, sec. VI (Major 1993: 161). *Hong* literally means string or rope. The commentary of Gao Xiu explains that these are the ropes connecting heaven and earth.

³¹⁹ *Wenchang* 文昌 (Literary Brilliance) is a cluster of six stars in Northern Dipper. See *Jinshu*, "Treatise on Astronomy": "The six stars of Wenchang are in front of the head of the Northern Dipper, forming the Six Departments (*liufu* 六府) of Heaven. They govern the computations of the Dao of the heavens" (cited in Major 1993: 82). Among them is the *Siming* 司命 star, the star of the Director of Destiny.

帶我瓊瑤佩	Decked with pendants of azure and red-gem,
漱我沆瀣漿	My mouth rinsed with drifting flow.
踟躕玩靈芝	□□□□□□□□□□ I dally, toying with a magic mushroom,
20 徒倚弄華芳	And loiter, playing with fragrant blooms.
王子奉仙藥	Wangzi presents the drug of immortality,
羨門進奇方	Xiamen offers rare nostrums.
□□ 服食享遐紀	If I consume them, I will enjoy long years,□□
延壽保無疆	Prolonging my life, ensuring no end. (Lu Qinli: 433 – 34)

Most critics agree that in this song Cao Zhi is imitating the *Yuanyou* poem of *Chuci*. The poet imagines his immortal transformation purely in terms and images drawn from the *Chuci* tradition: he rises to heaven in *Chuci* fashion, garbed in robes of rainbows and aurora, in a dragon chariot, shaded by a flowery canopy. The activities described by Cao Zhi not only resemble those of the *Yuanyou*, but are phrased in identical vocabulary. He bedecks himself with gemstones, drinks Drifting Flow (*hanxie*), dallies and plays with divine herbs. The celestial places he visits – the Changhe gates, the Grand Tenuity, the Wenchang constellation have figured prominently in the poetry of *Chuci*. Ll. 15-16 on the other hand, echo the Han rhapsodies on palaces and parks by adopting the east-west formula to suggest the grandeur of the celestial edifices and to position them in space. Although this song might be regarded as a scaled-down version of *Yuanyou*, the differences from its prototype are evident at once. It does not trace a comprehensive, sequential process of attaining a higher state of being. The travels it presents do not take the form of a cosmic circuit; they even lack a precise itinerary. Unlike *Yuanyou*, here the journey is not enough in itself to make the hero immortal – rather, at the culmination of his journey, in the heavenly heights, he receives the elixir that imparts eternal life. The journey ends not with a mystical union with the Dao, but, as in the *yuefu* tradition, with the reception of immortality drugs from divinities in paradise. Like the *yuefu* songs, Cao Zhi's poem finishes with conventional felicitation formula. This poem is evidence of the intermingling of the *Chuci* tradition with the *yuefu* type of elixir quest, which is typical for the post-Han poetry. The tenor of the whole composition is set by the verb *yuan* 願 ("I wish to"), which appears in the second line to introduce the subsequent narration. The agent that transports the poet to higher spheres is thus no longer spiritual and physiological self-cultivation, but the power of his imagination alone.

The theme of spatial travels lies at the core of the immortality verse of Cao Cao, Cao Zhi, Xi Kang. Like *Wuyou yong*, most of these poems are voiced as wishful thinking, expressed through verbs such as *yuan* 願 ("to wish, think of, long for"), *yu* 欲 ("to desire"), *si* 思 ("to think, brood, long for"). These volitional verbs indicate that the visionary travels are conceived not as a way to immortality, but rather refer to a state the poets aspire to attain – a

state of everlasting life and of absolute freedom, unconditioned by spatial and temporal limitations.

Although it is not possible to discern one uniform model for the cosmic journey in the *yuefu* and *shi* poetry, the authors resort to a fairly standard set of motives and situations, which presupposes the existence of an underlying plot. Three key phases can be discerned:

1. Preparation for the journey: spiritual and physical cultivation, ascent to a half-way place (usually a sacred mountain), initiation.
2. Rising to heaven and celestial flight
3. Arrival in a paradise land, where the adept joins the company of immortals and often feasts with them. Revelation of ultimate secrets, or bestowing of wondrous drugs.

This sequence of events is identical with the plot that had been fully realised in the *Yuanyou* and in the *fu* rhapsodies. In the much condensed *shi* form some elements of this underlying scenario are exploited at length, while others are briefly mentioned or omitted.

Some of the poems refer to ascent of a sacred mountain, which typically forms the first stage of the journey into the otherworld of immortals. Still belonging to the topography of this world, the sacred mountains are intermediary zones and loci of contact between the mundane beings of this earthly realm and the heavenly powers. From there the hero is propelled into higher spheres. Thus, in Cao Cao's *Qichu chang* I the hero first flies to Taishan, where he encounters immortals and Jade Girls, and is given Jade brew, which strengthens him and transports him to the next stage of Penglai. In *Qiuwu xing* II the stepping stone to Heaven is Mount Hua - the holy marchmount of the West:

願登泰華山	I wish to climb the Great Hua Mountain,
神人共遠遊	Together with divine men wander far...
經歷崑崙山	Pass over Kunlun mountain,
到蓬萊	Reach Penglai. (Lu Qinli: 350)

In the preceding discussion of the *Chuci* and *fu* tradition the theme of preliminary teaching and initiation has been identified as an important constituent of the journey towards immortality. This motif continues to occur occasionally in the post-Han verse on immortality. While in most rhapsodies *fu* it is a mythical emperor who instructs the hero (like in *Lisao*), in the *yuefu* and the *shi* tradition this role is almost without exception played by an immortal (as in *Yuanyou*). On certain occasions a whole poem on immortality might consist merely of the instructions bestowed by immortals – as in Cao Zhi's *Kusi xing* (cited above, pp. 104 - 105) and *Guizhi shu*.

The celestial rambling of the poetic hero occupy a central place in the “roaming into immortality” verse of the 3rd and 4th century. At times he travels surrounded by the splendid

processions and paraphernalia of the *Chuci itineraria* tradition, and at times he uses Daoist techniques of mastery over space like growing wings, “rising with a lightened body” (*qingju*), or the *chengqiao* levitations, all discussed above. In these scaled down versions of the *itineraria* the unified cosmographic system that informed the Han *fu* poetry, is loosened. A successive progress through the cosmic landmarks is likewise lacking and the transition from one cosmic level to another gains in importance instead, being emphasised by verbs such as *pai* 排, “push open”. The systematic exploration of the four directions on a horizontal plane comes to be replaced by a clear-cut movement along a vertical axis from the world of men to the heavens. A cosmic landmark from the earlier poetry that continues to figure prominently in the poetry of Wei-Jin is the Changhe gate, guarding the passage into the highest heavens. It typically confronts the traveler at the final stage of his journey. As in *Yuanyou*, in the subsequent poetry on immortality the heavenly gate unflinching opens wide in front of the cosmic voyager:

閶闔開 The Changhe gate spreads open,
天衢通 The Road to Heaven is free. (Cao Zhi *Pingling dong*, Lu Qinli: 437)

遂造天門將上謁 I arrive at the Gates of Heaven to visit its Lord,
閶闔關 The Chang He Gate opens. (Fu Xuan *Yunzhong baizi gao xing*, Lu Qinli: 564)

Once the traveler has passed through this ultimate trial, he gains access to the loftiest reaches of Heaven, to the palaces of the highest gods and immortals. The journey to the world of immortals commonly culminates with the hero joining the immortal throngs in the paradise realms, sharing their bliss, receiving initiation and elixirs. The culmination of the journey in the *yuefu* and *shi* poetry could at times be described in more liturgical and courtly fashion. In the heaven, among the stars, the adept might be honoured by an audience with the Celestial Lord:

因王長公謁上皇 I follow lord Wang Chang to pay a visit to the August One.
鈞天樂作不可詳 The music of Heaven is indescribable.
龍仙神仙 Dragon immortals, divine immortals,
教我靈祕 Teach me divine secrets. (Fu Xuan *Yunzhong baizi gao xing*, Lu Qinli: 564)

迴駕觀紫薇 I turn my carriage back to view the Purple Tenuity,
與帝合靈符 And join magic tallies with the Lord.³²⁰ (Cao Zhi *Xianren pian*, Lu Qinli: 434)

³²⁰ Originally the tally *fu* 符 was a tablet on which contracts were written. The tablet was thereupon split in two and each of the contacting sides kept one half as a guarantee. Only if the two halves fitted was the contract valid. Most known such contracts were between feudal lords and their vassals – at periodical reunions the loyalty of the vassals was tested by joining the contract tallies. The Son of Heaven, moreover,

In Daoism the tallies *fu* were powerful diagrams, which derived their efficiency from their divine half kept by the god who had conferred them upon the adept. They empowered and protected their owner and served as a pass-key into the mystic regions.

The poetry on immortality seldomly postulates a mystical union with the Dao as the goal of the distant journey, as in *Yuanyou*. Nevertheless, certain accounts of distant journeys refer indirectly to the mystical state, which the hero has attained. Thus, in the course of Cao Zhi's ecstatic journey all temporal and spatial distinctions disappear

驅風遊四海	□	Driving on the winds, I roam the Four Seas,
東過王母廬		In the east I pass the Queen Mother's lodge. ³²¹
俯觀□□□□□□□□□□	五嶽間	I look down amid the Five Peaks,
人生如寄居		Man's life is but a brief sojourn. ³²²
潛光養羽翼		I dim my light and raise my wings,
進趨且徐徐		Confidently I proceed, but falter.
不見軒轅氏	□□□□□□□	Have you not seen the Yellow Emperor,
乘龍出鼎湖	□	Mounted on a dragon, emerging from the Cauldron Lake?
徘徊九天上		He lingers above the Nine Heavens,
與爾長相須		Forever waiting for you. (Xianren pian, Lu Qinli: 434)

Cao Zhi's wishful travels liberate him from the bonds of space to such an extent that spatial categories, the means of human orientation, lose their meaning. His flight abolishes the major cosmographic division into east and west, for the Queen Mother, whose residence is on the Western Kunlun Mountains, is surprisingly pictured as dwelling in the East. In Donald Holzman's words, Cao Zhi's "cosmic view of the universe is so all-enfolding and unifying that east and west no longer have any meaning".³²³ As has been demonstrated above, a radical negation of human categories and dualities is a typical feature of the immortality realm and of the return to the Dao.

The last couplet is rather ambiguous. I understand it to be voiced by an unspecified speaker in answer to Cao Zhi's question, and to refer to the Yellow emperor: "He lingers above the Nine heavens..." but different interpretations are also possible. In his translation D. Holzman suggests that it is voiced by the poet himself: "I will pace back and forth above the Nine Heavens, And await his [of the Yellow Emperor] coming as long as it takes". This reading would mean that Cao Zhi abolishes not only the distinction between spatial divisions,

verified his mandate of Heaven by confronting his terrestrial and celestial talismans. For a detailed account of the tallies *fu* and the connected with them registers *lu* 籙 in Daoism see Seidel 1983: 310ff.

³²¹ Zhao Youwen quotes a text from *Wuyue mingshan tu*, which says that the Queen Mother's palace is in the eastern corner of the Kunlun mountain. However, this explanation does not resolve the obscurity of the line.

³²² A paraphrase of a line from the *Gushi shijiu shou* 13: 人生忽如寄 "Man's life is as transient as a sojourn" (*Wenxuan*: 1348).

³²³ Holzman 1988: 35

but temporal sequence as well. The accomplishment of immortality, which is yet to take place, would thus be relegated to deep antiquity, i.e. the poet is transported back before the time of the Yellow Emperor, the very first immortal, and waits for him to rise to heaven and join him as a companion. Here the distant journey does not simply transport the hero into an immortality paradise, but carries him beyond the bounds of space and time – into that paradox mode of being that the hero of the *Yuanyou* had attained at the Grand Primordium.

As already noted several times above, the *itineraria* in the “roaming into immortality” verse is generally emancipated from the quest theme of the *Chuci* tradition, or rather the quest for the “True One” is transformed into search for the immortality elixir (the *yuefu* ballads), or for ultimate transcendence. In the poetry of Xi Kang there is a further shift of the object of the traveller’s yearnings. The shamanistic quest of the goddess or the official’s search for a worthy lord often becomes a quest for a soul mate:

乘風高遊	I mount the wind and journey high,
遠登靈丘	I climb the far-off Spirit Hill.
託好松喬	Befriending Red Pine and Wang Qiao,
攜手俱遊	Together we travel, hand in hand.
朝發太華	At dawn we set out from Mount Great Hua,
夕宿神州	At night we lodge in the Divine Land.
彈琴詠詩	Strumming lutes, reciting poems,
聊以忘憂	Anyhow, forgetting my sorrow.

(*Ceng xiong xiucai rujun* XVI, Lu Qinli: 483)

The phrase *tuohao* 託好 in the third line has the connotations of courting, wooing a wife, and it imbues the relation between the poet and the immortals with profound intimacy. The feeling of close affection is further emphasised by the expression *xieshou* 攜手 (“to hold each others hands”) in the next line. It is in the realm of immortals that Xi Kang finds soul-mates who really understand him – and the delights of such intimate friendship are one of the characteristics of the paradise realm.

III.5. Sun Chuo and the transformation of the celestial journey

As has been demonstrated in the chapters above, during the fourth century a new tendency in the current of *youxian* verse appeared: the images of the immortals and the hermits started to merge, while the paradise worlds were increasingly projected on the scale of earthly mountains. This process was paralleled by similar developments of the *itineraria* theme: from a cosmic circuit the adept’s journey was transformed into mystic travels in mountainous realms. The best illustration in this respect is Sun Chuo’s *You Tiantai shan fu*

(“Rhapsody on Roaming the Celestial Terrace Mountains”), which has already been discussed in other connections at several points above.

Since the Eastern Han the *fu* poets had started to portray not only imaginary journey through the cosmos, but actual trips as well. The *Suichu fu* 遂初賦 (“Rhapsody on Fulfilling my Original Resolve”) by Liu Xin 劉歆 (ob. 23 AD), the *Beizheng fu* 北征賦 (“Rhapsody on a Northward Journey”) by Ban Biao 班彪 (3 - 54) and the *Dongzheng fu* 東征賦 (“Rhapsody on Eastward Journey”) by Ban Zhao 班昭 (ca. 49 – ca. 120), all record actual journeys undertaken by the poets and recount historical places they had visited.³²⁴ They all develop the *langu* 覽古, or “contemplation of antiquity” theme, with the places visited evoking famous events or heroes from the past and reflection upon them. The memories of the past are often invoked by the ascent to a high place, a hill, wall or tower, and by looking into the distance from the top. Sun Chuo’s rhapsody, although also recording a trip in actual scenery, is very different from this tradition. In the preface he makes it clear that his journey takes place in the mind alone, in the short interval between “a downward and an upward glance”. Being purely imaginative, it does not, however, take him to the large universe of astral and directional deities, as in the old *Chuci* tradition of power-engendering circuits of the cosmos, but to a landscape of real mountains. The text of the rhapsody demonstrates that in fact the space in which the poet moves is not as real as it might seem. The landscape unfolds simultaneously on two planes – real scenery and its sacred, mystical dimension.

As pointed out earlier, in his preface Sun Chuo praises the Celestial Terrace Mountains as a sacred and mysterious realm, equalling the paradises of the immortals. Further in the poem he recognizes the mountain landscape as a physical manifestation of the Dao. Access into their sacred realm is granted only to a few and whoever manages to climb the mountain has cut off himself free of the world behind.

Sun Chuo’s poem remoulds and re-interprets many tropes from the *Chuci* tradition. Many time-honoured formulae and motifs find their place in his poem. As in the *Chuci* travelogues, the journey starts with a preliminary initiation from those already in the possession of the Dao:

仍羽人於丹丘 I meet the Plumed men on Cinnabar Hill,
尋不死之福庭 Search for the blessed chambers of immortality. (ll. 25-26; *Wenxuan*: 496)³²⁵

³²⁴ For the text of *Suichu fu* see *Quan Han fu*: 231-233. *Beizheng fu* and *Dongzheng fu* are contained in *Wenxuan* 9: 425 - 438 and are translated in Knechtges 1987: 165 – 180. See also Knechtges 1989 for a study of the poetic travelogue in the Han rhapsodies.

³²⁵ All quotations from the *You Tiantai shan fu* are based on the translation of Knechtges 1987: 243 – 253, with occasional slight alternations to comply with the terminology used in the present study.

Sun Chuo repeats almost verbatim the lines from the *Yuanyou* that precede the cosmic journey of the hero. Thus he connects his own journey to the circuit of the cosmos described in the *Yuanyou*.

The next two lines, however, shift away from his honoured precedent:

苟台嶺之可攀	As long as the Terrace range can be scaled,
亦何羨於層城	Why yearn for the Storied City? (ll. 27-28, <i>ibid.</i>)

Having hinted that he is embarking on a kind of mystical journey similar to the one in *Yuanyou*, Sun Chuo stresses that it now takes place on the plane of the real mountains.

As in all cosmic itineraries, Sun Chuo also describes his paraphernalia. The fantastic trappings of the cosmic travellers are, however, replaced by attributes of Daoist and Buddhist hermits – a coarse woollen robe (*maohe* 毛褐)³²⁶ and a metal staff, which is carried by Buddhist monks. The account of the journey that follows is again stylised on the *Chuci* *itineraria*: it is written in the *sao*-style metre of *Yuanyou*, omitting the refrain-particle *xi*.

披荒榛之蒙籠	I push through a murky mass of wild thickets,
陟峭嶠之崢嶸	Scale the soaring steepness of scarps and cliffs,
濟樞溪而直進	Ford You Stream and straightway advance, ³²⁷
落五界而迅征	Cross the Five Boundaries and swiftly push on. ³²⁸ (ll. 33-36; <i>ibid.</i>)

Sun Chuo's verse adopts the syntactic structure of the *sao*-lines describing celestial travels. The first two lines, cited above, are composed of verb on the first position, followed by five-syllable extended locative object with the empty word *zhi* 之 on the fourth position (compare with "I roamed on the drifting waves of fleeting mist" 遊驚霧之流波, *Yuanyou*, l. 118). The pattern of the last two lines again follows that of *Yuanyou*: verb, followed by a two-syllable locative object, the particle *er* 而 and a two-syllable adverb-verb construction (compare with "Pointing to the Fiery God, I straightway galloped" 指炎神而直馳, *Yuanyou* l. 139)

Sun Chuo narrates his journey in the mode prevailing in the *Chuci* and Han *fu* itineraries, which following David Knechtges I have already termed "recitation of an action". He moves forward at a quickened pace, not having time to reflect on the vistas that appear before his eyes; he pushes through the thickets, climbs the cliffs, fords the stream, crosses the Five Boundaries. The impression of the surrounding nature is given solely through the actions of

³²⁶ The expression *maohe* might be an allusion to Cao Zhi's *Qiqi* 七啟 ("Seven Communications"). The protagonist of the composition – the Daoist recluse Sir Mystic Subtlety (Xuanwei zi 玄微子) - says that "he likes his coarse wooden robe (*maohe* 毛褐)" in answer to the description of precious weapons and clothing by one of the persuaders (*Wenxuan* 34: 1581).

³²⁷ The You 樞 (also written 油) Stream was located thirty *li* east of Tiantai prefecture. It was a dangerous barrier every traveller had to cross on his way to the mountain.

³²⁸ Li Shan explains the expression "Five Boundaries" (*wujie* 五界) as the boundaries of the five prefectures through which the Tiantai mountains stretched: Yuyao, Yin, Juzhang, Shan and Shining.

the hero. Each line introduces a different action and a separate point in space where it takes place. Here, however, the mythical cosmic landmarks, the power-nuclei defining the cosmos, are replaced by actual elements of the mountain landscape.

In the middle of the journey, as in most *itinerarias*, comes the decisive moment of the spiritual test of the traveller. Unlike the earlier cosmic journeys where it takes the form of overcoming the wave of nostalgia and the earthly bounds, and a passage through the Changhe gate, here it is the actual crossing of the narrow stone bridge spanning a „myriad fathom“ deep ravine. The commentary on Gu Kaizhi’s 顧愷之 (ca. 345 – 406) *Qimengji* 啟蒙記 (“Records for Dispelling Ignorance“, a no longer extant lexicon) cited by Li Shan, explains that the path of the Stone Bridge “is not a full foot wide and several tens of paces long. Each step is extremely slippery. It looks down on a brook of absolute darkness”. According to Xie Lingyun (*Songshu* 67.1758), “among the perils of the human pathways, nothing surpasses this” [the crossing of the You Stream and of the Stone Bridge] Sun Chuo evocatively renders this breathtaking crossing:

踐莓苔之滑石	I tread slippery stones covered with moss,
搏壁立之翠屏	Cling to the Azure Screen that wall-like stands,
攬樛木之長羅	Grasp the long fig creepers on bending trees,
援葛藟之飛莖 ...	Snatch flying stalks of trailing grape... ³²⁹ (ll. 39-42; <i>Wenxuan</i> : 497)

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

³²⁹ The crossing of the Stone Bridge in its own turn became a motif to be alluded to in the later poetry. Thus, Xie Lingyun in the poem titled “Around My New Lodge at Stone Gate on All Sides are High Mountains, Winding Streams and Rocky Rapids, Lush Woods and Tall Bamboo”(石門新營所住四面高山迴溪石瀨修竹茂林詩) writes:

披雲臥石門	I parted the clouds and repose on Stone Gate
苔滑誰能步	The moss is so slippery, who can find their footing?
葛弱豈可捫	The creepers are flimsy – what can one grasp?” (<i>Wenxuan</i> 30: 1399)

These places mark points beyond which ordinary mortals cannot venture.

absolute reality. The path leading up the Tiantai Mountains evokes the difficult and crooked road leading to Kunlun. Whoever wants to climb Kunlun's cliffs should pass through the Flowing Sands, through fire and water (the Fire mountain, which scorches every being, and the Weak-water River, in the waters of which even a hair sinks immediately.) In line 47 Sun Chuo speaks of successfully scaling the "Nine switchbacks" (*jiu zhe* 九折)³³⁰ which again may be a projection of Kunlun's mythical topography onto the real Tiantai mountains. The ancient sources tell us that the Kunlun Mountains rise to heaven in nine steps like a ziggurat, thus representing the nine-fold heavens and the nine cosmic zones.³³¹

The Stone Bridge and the Nine switchbacks once passed, the road levels and opens into a clear vista of purity and harmony. The poet is no longer an active, hurried traveller, but becomes a passive observer. With a cleared vision and mind, he for the first time perceives and reflects on the surrounding landscape:

藉萋萋之織草	Spreading tender grasses, lush and luxuriant,
蔭落落之長松	Shaded by tall pines, stalwart and stately,
觀翔鸞之裔裔	I view the graceful gliding of the soaring simurghs,
聽鳴鳳之啾啾	Hear the concordant chorusing of singing phoenixes. (ll. 53-54, <i>ibid.</i>)

He washes himself in the waters of the Numinous Stream (Lingxi 靈溪) which cleanse the "residual dust" (*yichen* 遺塵) and the Five Hindrances (*wugai* 五蓋).³³² The theme of the ritual bath is again an integral part of every initiation. The water is a universal symbol of the undifferentiated and virtual, containing all potentialities, the primordial substance from which all forms are born and to which they return again through regression. In the water everything dissolves, every form disintegrates, every history is abolished, nothing of what has existed before exists after the immersion. Destroying history, reconstituting if only temporarily the

³³⁰ The expression *jiu zhe* 九折 had previously appeared in by Du Du's 杜篤 (d. 78 AD) *Shouyang shan fu* 首陽山賦 ("Rhapsody on Mt. Shou Yang"). See Li Shan's commentary, *Wenxuan*: 497.

³³¹ *Huainanzi* 4.2b (Liu Wendian: 133). See also Major 1993: 150 ff.

³³² Li Shan equates the residual dust with the Buddhist "six dusts" (*liuchen* 六塵) or *gunas* (senses): *se* 色 (*rūpa*, sight), *sheng* 聲 (*śabda*, sound), *xiang* 香 (*gandha*, smell), *wei* 味 (*rasa*, taste), *chu* 觸 (*sparsa*, touch) and *fa* 法 (*manas*, thought). The Five Hindrances (*wugai* 五蓋) are the Chinese equivalent for Nīvarana: *tanyin* 貪淫 (*kāmacchanda*, desire and licentiousness), *chenhui* 瞋恚 (*vyāpāda*, rage and anger), *chenhun* 沉昏睡眠 (*styānamiddha*, dullness and drowsiness), *tiaoxi* 調戲 (*auddahatyakautrya*, frivolity) and *yi* 疑 (*vicikitsā*, doubt). See E. Zürcher 1959, vol. 2: 375, n. 43. However, throughout the rest of the poem Sun Chuo always pairs a Daoist and a Buddhist concept in the parallel lines of his couplets (see the text below). From the structure of the couplets it can be inferred that the expression "residual dust", which is parallel to the Five Hindrances, should be the Daoist equivalent of the Buddhist Five Hindrances. Indeed, the employment of the word *chen* as denoting the profane world, much precedes the Buddhist translations, and is often employed in the early poetry – see for example the *Aishiming* 哀時命 poem from *Chuci* (second half of the second century BC):

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

(ll 137-8; *Chuci buzhu*: 266; tr. by Hawkes 1985: 267).

initial integrity, waters purify and regenerate because everything that has been immersed in them “dies” and rising from them resembles a new-born baby without history, entering a new life.³³³ The poet emerges from the Numinous Stream with a cleared vision and mind, freed from the sensual and emotional bonds of the human existence. The paradise city of the immortals, which we have discussed above (p. 123), then opens up in front of him and the poet is for a moment absorbed in the vista of the transcendental world and loses his own self.

After the lengthy account of the paradise realm, the first-person subject appears again to describe the state of inner clarity and calmness he has acquired through the contemplation of this land. The account is full of allusions to *Zhuangzi*, borrowing phrases from his parables verbatim. The hero has rejected all worldly affairs and excessive activity - that “which harms the horses” (*haima* 害馬)³³⁴. In perfect accord with the Dao, like the cook in Zhuangzi’s parable he moves freely and spontaneously through the hollows of nature, “eyeing the ox, but not as a whole” (*muniu wuquan* 目牛無全)³³⁵. At noon he joins the ecstatic immortal hosts (*tongxian* 通仙) for an audience of the Celestially-venerated (Tainzong 天宗).³³⁶ Enveloped by incense fragrance and resounding with dharma drums (*fagu* 法鼓) this celestial assembly, if in a somewhat Buddhist garb, is an analogue of the divine banquets of the *Chuci* poetry, which take place towards the end of the cosmic peregrinations. Like the ancient travellers the poet scoops up black Jade nectar (*xuan yu zhi gao* 玄玉之膏) and rinses his mouth in the Floriate Pond (Huachi 華池), both said to be found on Kunlun. These time-honoured ritual actions, however, are followed by a sudden leap into the realm of pure *xuanyan* philosophy. The poet looks for illumination in the Daoist doctrines of the Dao which is “beyond the

³³³ On the symbolism of water and purification through water see especially Eliade 1949, ch. 5.

³³⁴ See *Zhuangzi* 8.14a (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 833). The Yellow Emperor asked a young horse herder how to govern the empire. The boy answered: “Governing the empire, how could it be different from herding horses? All you need do is to get rid of what harms the horses.”

³³⁵ An allusion to the famous parable of Butcher Ding 丁: “When I began cutting an ox, what I saw was nothing but an ox, but after three years I no longer saw a whole ox. Now I encounter things with my spirit, and I do not look with my eyes.” Therefore, he never met with any obstacles in cutting and carving. (*Zhuangzi* 1.1b-2b, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 119)

³³⁶ The expression *tianzong* 天宗 (equivalent of 天尊) is a translation of the Sanskrit *Bhagavat* and initially designated Buddha. It derives from the first words Buddha uttered after his birth: “Above the Heaven and under the Heaven, only I am worthy”. However, the Daoists very early adopted this title for their highest heavenly gods – especially the Yuanshi tianzong 元始天尊, the Celestial Worthy (or Celestially-venerated) of Primordial Commencement. As this Daoist deity became more and more popular, the translators of Buddhist sutras had to revert to a different title for Buddha, and they adopted *shizong* 世尊, “Venerated in the World”, instead. Li Shan comments that Tianzong refers to Laojun, the deified Laozi. On the other side, the *Wenxuan* commentator Zhu Jian 朱珔 (1769 – 1850) points out that the term Celestial Worthy appears in the *Yueling* chapter of *Liji* as the name of the heavenly bodies (sun, moon and the stars), worshipped by the Son of Heaven in the tenth month (*Wenxuan jishi* 文選集釋 12.3b, referred to in Knechtges 1987: 250, n.91).

images“ (*xiangwai* 象外)³³⁷, beyond names and shapes, and in the Mahayana doctrines of “non-origination“ (*wusheng* 無生) of the dharmas, or data of consciousness.³³⁸

At this point he becomes aware that he has not completely driven out the Existence/Actuality, (*you* 有) – the profane realm of illusion and desire, and that the ecstatic experience with the Non-existence/Non-actuality (*wu* 無), as he is now experiencing it has been constantly interrupted. The final illumination then comes – the dichotomy between Existence and Non-existence, between Form (*se* 色) and Emptiness (*kong* 空) is but a delusion. Sun Chuo elaborates on the current Mahayana doctrine that *se* 色 (*rūpa*; form, matter) is empty (*kong* 空; void and illusory). If one understands that form is emptiness, then even the distinction between form and emptiness can be obliterated. Sun Chuo equals this insight with the Daoist attainment of the Mystery (*xuan* 玄) through the Existence/Actuality (*you*), of which it is the source and through which it becomes manifest.³³⁹ This done, he is able to unravel the common source of “that having name“ (*youming* 有名) and the “nameless“ (*wuming* 無名), epithets for Existence and Non-existence respectively³⁴⁰. He rejects any distinction between the „Three banners“ (*sanfan* 三幡) of Form (*se* 色), Emptiness (*kong* 空) and contemplation (*guan* 觀), and reduces them to Non-existence (*wu*) which is single and indivisible³⁴¹. Having achieved this mystical insight, delightful conversation

³³⁷ What “lies beyond images“ (*xiangwai* 象外) is the Dao. In Daoist texts *xiang* 象 denoted a stage of the sequential transformations leading from the formless undifferentiated Dao to the “ten thousand things“. This was a cosmological level immediately above or before the form *xing* 形 (see Pregadio 2004). *Huainanzi* 7 writes that “when there were not yet Heaven and Earth, there were only images without form“ (古未有天地之時，惟像無形). These theories were further elaborated in later Daoist texts. For example in his commentary to Laozi Du Guanting 杜光庭 (850-933) says that “the first tokens of forms are called images; they are the beginning of the birth of things“ (兆形曰象，生物之首也), the “commencement of form and matter“ (象之，形質始) (*Daode zhenjing guangsheng yi*, CT 725, see also Pregadio 2004: 104-05). See also the debate recorded in Pei Songzhi’s 裴松之 (360 – 439) *Sanguo zhi* commentary (10.319-20) and translated in Mather 1961: 244, n. 108.

³³⁸ See Mather *ibid.*: n. 109. The acquiescence in the doctrine of non-origination (*wusheng* 無生) came with the first stage of the bodhisattva’s career and enabled him afterwards to equate phenomenal existence (*samsāra*) with the Absolute (*nirvāna*). Mather cites *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* 9 (version of Zhi Qian 支謙, ca. 250 AD): “Since [the dharmas] neither arise nor originate, therefore there is no duality [between origination and dissolution]. To attain acquiescence in the non-originating dharmas is the entrance to non-duality“.

³³⁹ *Xuan* 玄 is the favourite neo-daoist term for the absolute reality, which is beyond and anterior to the names, shapes and events. It is defined by Wang Bi as “dark, silent and non-actual“ (冥也默然無有) (commentary to *Laozi* ch. 1)

³⁴⁰ Allusion to *Laozi* 1: “The nameless is the beginning of Heaven and Earth, the named is the mother of the myriad things. These two come from a common source, but differ in name.” 無名，天地始；有名，萬物母。

³⁴¹ The term *sanfan* 三幡 (“Three banners“), apparently current among fourth-century Chinese Buddhists, is explained by Li Shan as referring to form *se*, emptiness *kong* and contemplation *guan* 觀. He cites a letter from the Buddhist layman Xi Chao 郗超 (336-377) to the hermit Xie Qingxu 謝慶緒: “Nowadays those

becomes equivalent to silent meditation³⁴², the myriad phenomena merge into One, and the poet himself is unconsciously identified with the “Naturally-so” (*ziran* 自然), with the Dao. Thus, he achieves the common goal of both Buddhist and Daoist adepts - communion with the ultimate, constant reality, which is beyond Form or Existence.

I believe that it is no exaggeration to characterise Sun Chuo’s rhapsody as the fourth century answer to *Yuanyou*. At first such an assertion might seem far-fetched, for the differences are much more apparent than the features shared by the two compositions.. Gone is the greater cosmos of ancient deities with its comprehensible symmetric pattern, gone is the magic-making celestial circuit, gone are the fantastic paraphernalia and entourage of the cosmic traveller, and there is no mention whatsoever of the various physiological and meditative practices leading to immortality. Even the two other themes intimately connected with the Han *itineraria* – namely the *tristia* and the *nostalgia* tropes have disappeared. Sun Chuo’s journey, even if only imaginative, takes place on the scale of an earthly mountain, which besides its mystical dimension retains much of its real nature. The poet takes on the appearance of a Daoist or Buddhist hermit instead of that of an ancient magician commanding the forces of nature, and he discourses at length on metaphysical *xuanyan* issues.

Nevertheless, the two poems describe the attainment of the same goal – a mystical union with an ineffable but mysteriously potent reality, which transcends all dualities. In both poems the road towards the ultimate reality is a process involving successive stages, and in both this process becomes concrete through the image of the journey. Sun Chuo’s rhapsody is the only poetic work after *Yuanyou* that not only comprehensively traces all the consecutive phases of such a mystical progress, but also describes that process for its own sake, devoid of allegorical concerns. In fact, Sun Chuo himself gives small hints that identify his famous precedent – like the motif of meeting the Feathered people at the Cinnabar Hill, or the syntactic structure of the verses describing his movement through the mountains.

who discuss the Three Banners are still full of desire. Having contemplated form and emptiness, they proceed separately to contemplate consciousness *shi*. Although they all reside in a single existence, they are subject to two contemplations”. Li Shan concludes: “In Xi Chao’s view form, emptiness and contemplation are the Three Banners; consciousness, emptiness and contemplation are also the Three Banners”. According to Mather, the point is that some took the term to apply to all the five *skandhas*, or personality components (form *se* 色, sensation *tong* 痛, concepts *xiang* 想, acts *xing* 行 and consciousness *shi* 識) together, and others separately. Sun Chuo goes further and rejects any distinction between them, reducing them to a single principle of Non-existence (*wu*) (Mather *ibid.*, n. 113).

³⁴² An allusion to *Zhuangzi* 27: “If one speaks without speaking, his whole life long he has never yet spoken. And if his whole life long he does not speak, never yet has he not spoken“ 言無言，終身言，未嘗不言；終身不言，未嘗不言 (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 949; tr. by Mather, *ibid.*: 245, n. 114)

It is significant that both in the *Yuanyou* and in Sun Chuo's rhapsody the land of paradise is not the final goal of the traveller but a mere stage in his journey towards the Dao – one of the last stages that take him closer to the ultimate mystical understanding.

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

It is a long established notion that this poem heralds the aesthetics of the landscape poetry to come. It is only in the first phase of the journey, however, that the poet moves through a real mountainous landscape, concretised through vivid naturalistic details (slippery moss, long creepers, trailing grape, etc.) and the names of actual scenic sites (the Scarlet Wall [Chicheng 赤城] peak and the Cascade [Pubu 瀑布] Waterfall, the You Stream, the Stone Bridge). After the crossing of the Stone Bridge – the passage to the sacred, - the landscape becomes more ambiguous, functioning simultaneously on two levels. The Numinous Stream is both an actual river and a topographic feature of the otherworld; resting on the lush grasses, shaded by the tall pines, the poet views and listens to the divine phoenixes. In the vision of paradise the real features of nature are further negated; the colours are unusual (cinnabar clouds), living and unliving nature merge together (the trees of gem, bearing pearls). It is through this place, where the usual human distinctions and categories are being turned upside down, that Sun Chuo passes into a realm beyond the sensual perceptions, beyond the shapes and colours – into a real of pure ideation, of pure metaphysical discourse. The transformation of landscape thus reflects the regression from the multiplicity of natural phenomena towards what is beyond their physical configuration and ultimately refers to the transformation of the self.

While the *Yuanyou* is pervaded by the dramatic contrast between the vulgar and inconstant world of men and the realm of the pure and eternal Dao, which has a spatial location somewhere far above, this does not constitute such a poignant dichotomy for Sun Chuo. For him it is transformed into a contrast between the "shallow knowledge" and limited vision of profane men, full of passions and bound to their senses, and the metaphysical insight of the sage. Although the Tiantai Mountains are time and again characterised as distant, secluded and inaccessible, they remain a part of the earthly landscape. It is not their physical nature that is unapproachable by ordinary men, but their true, mystical form, underlying the

physical configuration. One is reminded in this respect of the potent charts of the “True forms of the Five Marchmounts” (*Wuyue zhengxing tu* 五岳真形圖) which in the Shangqing and Lingbao Daoism of the fourth and fifth century became aids to mystical orientation, allowing the adept to visit the sacred mountains in meditation.³⁴³ In his preface Sun Chuo actually mentions abounding “charts and illustrations” (*tuxiang* 圖象) of the Tiantai mountains, which may be a reference to the kind of Daoist charts of the Five Marchmounts. Likewise, as mentioned in the preface, his journey takes place in the mind alone, reminding one of the Daoist visualisations that actualised and materialised transcendent deities and places. For him their hidden world can be approached not only by those who physically abandon the world to “play with the Dao” (*yishi wandao* 遺世翫道), “who shun grains to dine on mushrooms” (*jueli ruzhi* 絕粒茹芝)³⁴⁴, but also in the mind alone, which is mystically detached and probes the Obscure. Therefore, the radical break with worldly existence and one’s human identity postulated in *Yuanyou*, is not a prerequisite for Sun Chuo. His communion with the transcendent, his merging with the ultimate reality is not sought somewhere far beyond in space, but is a state of mind penetrating beyond the physical configurations of the earthly phenomena. In an anecdote of *Shishuo xinyu* he is reported to have said: “For one who embodies the Mysterious and understands the Remote (*tixuan shiyuan* 體玄識遠), living in the world or remaining in retirement amount to the same thing”³⁴⁵.

The differences between the *Yuanyou* and Sun Chuo’s rhapsody can be explained by what Tu Weiming has called “the ontological turn” during the 3rd - 4th century, and the shift that it brought about in issues of interest and methods employed. The poetic transformation can be accounted for by the Wei-Jin style of thought which probed “the underlying structure and principle of things instead of casting one’s gaze outward in search of the grandiose design”³⁴⁶, as during the Han dynasty. While the mandala-like space in the *Yuanyou* reflects the “constructing mode” of Han cosmological thinking, which strives to embrace all existence in one rigid, comprehensible pattern, Sun Chuo starts from the things at hand and proceeds in depth to uncover the hidden reality beyond them. This turn made it possible to perceive the ultimate significance inherent in the natural world itself. It is because the non-Actual (*wu*), the source and end of existence for Sun Chuo and for the Wei-Jin thinkers in general, “becomes

³⁴³ These maps consisted of graphic charts and accompanying text. They were already current in the time of Ge Hong – in *Baopuzi* 19 he mentions the “Maps of the True Form of the Five Marchmounts” (*Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五岳真形圖) as one of the most important and potent Daoist scriptures (Wang Ming 1985: 336-37).

³⁴⁴ Sun Chuo’s preface, *Wenxuan* 11: 494.

³⁴⁵ *Shishuo xinyu* IB.35a cited in Mather 1961: 233.

³⁴⁶ Tu Weiming 1986: 7.

actual through a myriad shapes, names and events and then returns back to non-actuality and whoever has the eyes to see, can trace the temporal configurations back to their timeless source”³⁴⁷. In order to unearth the ultimate reality no magical circuit of the cosmic quarters is necessary; it is the single mountain that holds in its landscape the underlying principle of things.

Sun Chuo’s “Rhapsody on Roaming the Celestial Terrace Mountains” can be regarded as a bridge between the older cosmic *itinerarias* and the newly emerging landscape poetry on mountains and rivers. In his excursions into the mountains Xie Lingyun, the *shanshui* poet *par excellence*, climbs a self-contained cosmos which needs not be transcended with the extravagant fantasy of cloud chariots and heavenly journeys. His encounter and interaction with the myriad manifestations of nature bring a flash of insight, like the sudden enlightenment in Buddhism. Through ability to “appreciate” (*shang* 賞) landscape beauty, one can attain the *li* 理 - a term in his usage quite similar to Dao, indicating a higher, undifferentated Natural Order. The ultimate understanding of it is not therefore to be sought somewhere in a distant realm, but in the physical features of nature around the poet. Moreover, in these mountainous worlds, where the poet’s links with the world behind him are severed, normal time and space relationships are often obliterated, distinctions are often blurred, imagery often disorients the reader – a feature that may be an echo of the paradoxical order of the worlds beyond.³⁴⁸ Xie Lingyun’s poetry, although deeply influenced by Daoist thought, stands outside the current of immortality verse and yet reflects many features and concerns of the “otherworldly” poetic current as redefined in the 4th century.

III. 6. The elixir way

In the *itineraria* tradition of the *Yuanyou* the ability to embark on a distant journey was directly connected with the hero’s spiritual and physical cultivation. As demonstrated above, the early poets referred mainly to practices outlined in sources from the Han period: various methods of breath cultivation, gymnastics and sexual arts. These, however, gradually gave place to the imbibing of various elixirs of immortality – either natural, found in the mountains, or alchemically refined. Consumption of such elixirs became so important that in the immortality verse of the Southern Dynasties it almost completely replaced the distant journey theme as a means to and prerogative of immortality.

³⁴⁷ Mather 1961: 231.

³⁴⁸ See especially Westbrook 1980.

For the practitioners of immortality arts of the Jin period, mountains were important less as physical embodiments of the Dao and sites of mystic illumination than as mysterious sources of nourishing herbs and minerals. Ge Hong sends immortality seekers out to the mountains and wilds where the adept may not only escape harmful social entanglements, but can find marvelous natural substances. He devoted a chapter of *Baopuzi* to the description, location and usage of various potent mineral and plant substances and another to the art of entering the dangerous mountainous realm where they could be found.³⁴⁹

In the poetry of the period, the conflation of the immortals' paradises with earthly mountains, is paralleled by the frequent replacement of the image of the cosmic voyager by that of a herb-gatherer. From the late third century onwards the theme of gathering herbs and mineral drugs either in mythical or earthly mountains was adopted in the poetry on immortals. The search for divine herbs or mineral substances able to cure disease, prolong life and even provide immortality, was one of the major activities of the immortality seekers of the period. It was not exclusively the domain of Daoist adepts, for layman aristocrats as well spent much time searching for herbs that might increase their lifespans. John D. Frodsham even suggests that the passion for wandering in the mountains, so essential to the *shanshui* poets, might have had its origin in this practical pursuit of herbs and drugs.³⁵⁰ According to *Jinshu*, Xi Kang used to roam in the mountains and marshes gathering herbs.³⁵¹ It also records that Xi Kang went into the mountains with Wang Lie 王烈, who was believed to have later attained immortality. Wang Lie found a stalagmite, "stone marrow" (*shisui* 石髓), like a cake and he himself ate half of it.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ *Baopuzi* ch. 11, Wang Ming 1985: 196-223 and ch. 17, *ibid.*: 299-322.

³⁵⁰ Frodsham 1960: 75. For example, the Buddhist monk Zhi Dun 支盾 (314-366) writes in his preface to the *Baguan zhai* 八關齋 poems: "Once I loved the quiet of a hut in the wilds and had ideas about digging up herbs. So I dwelt alone there. .. I climbed mountains and gathered herbs, and centred my joy on cliffs and streams" 余既樂野室之寂。又有掘藥之懷。遂便獨住...登山採集巖水之娛 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 157, cited by Frodsham *ibid.*). The biography of Wang Xizhi in *Jinshu* 80 says of him that "together with the Daoist master Xu Mai he practiced dietics; when picking medical stones he did not consider a thousand *li* as being too far to go. He travelled to all the districts in the east, visited all the famous mountains, and even sailed on the blue sea. He said with emotion: 'When I face the end, I can die happily.'" : 又與道士許邁共修服食, 採藥石不遠千里, 遍遊東中諸郡。窮諸名山, 泛滄海。歎曰: 我卒當以樂死 (*Jinshu* 80: 2101).

³⁵¹ *Jinshu* 49: 1370 : 康嘗採藥游山澤。

³⁵² *Ibid.*. *Shenxian zhuàn*, which contains a hagiography of Wang Lie, presents a more detailed record of this episode. In it Wang Lie, while roaming alone on the Taihang mountains, came upon a cleft in the rock from which greenish mud was issuing like marrow. It was like warm wax, and Wang Lie made balls out of it, which smelled and tasted like cooked rice. He gave them to Xi Kang, who was very delighted, but when Xi Kang joined him to have a look at the site, the cleft had disappeared (Campany 2002: 339). Thus, it is Xi Kang, the representative of the more philosophically inclined naturalism, who spoils the revelation of the mountain's numinous contents.

In fact, one of the early references to the practice of gathering herbs in a poem on immortality occurs in Xi Kang's *Youxian shi*:

採藥鍾山隅 On the corners of Bell Mountain I gather "herbs",
服食改姿容 Eating them will change my appearance. (Lu Qinli: 488)

In his *Youxian* cycle Guo Pu similarly unites the themes of immortality and herb-gathering in the mountains:

登嶽採五芝 Ascending the marchmounts, I pick up the five fungi,
涉澗將六草 Forging streams, I obtain the Six herbs. (*Youxian shi* XV, Lu Qinli: 867)

In the 9th poem of the *Youxian* cycle Guo Pu combines the new theme of herb-gathering with the conventions of the *Chuci*-type cosmic *itineraria*:

採藥遊名山 Picking "herbs", I wander the famous mountains,
將以救年頹 Wishing to remedy the decrepitude of age.
呼吸玉滋液 Inhaling and exhaling the jade fluid,
妙氣盈胸懷 Wonderful breath fills my breast.
登仙撫龍駒 I rise, an immortal, pet my dragon steeds,
迅駕乘奔雷 Swiftly I ride, mounting the roaring thunder.
鱗裳逐電曜 Garbed in scales, I overtake the lightning's blaze.
雲蓋隨風迴 Cloud canopies eddy in the wind,
手頓羲和轡 My hands pull back Xi He's reins,
足蹈閭闔開 My feet step over Heaven's Gate.
東海猶蹄沔 The Eastern Sea seems hoofprint full of water,
崑崙螻蟻堆 Kunlun – a swarm of locusts and ants.
遐邇冥茫中 Far, far below, into the boundless dark,
俯視令人哀 A look down makes one sad. (Lu Qinli: 866)

The fantastic journey which is described in the second part of the poem is the result of the partaking of herbs and physiological exercises mentioned at the beginning. It is not a progress towards immortality, but a journey as an immortal, displaying the achievement of ultimate freedom, loftiness and triumph over time (the pulling back of the reins of the sun chariot). So sublime is the state of being attained that the poet becomes a master of the natural phenomena, and from his lofty viewpoint even the paradises of the immortals in the Eastern Sea and on Kunlun seem to be miniscule and trivial, like a "swarm of locusts and ants".

In the course of the fourth century the theme of herb-gathering is increasingly emancipated from the cosmic journey. It becomes an independent practice, sufficient in itself to confer immortality. One is reminded of the *yuefu* tradition of the elixir quest, only now it is a natural elixir found in the mountains rather than in the distant paradise lands. Many of the poems from the fourth century onwards that deal with the theme of immortality have as their title "herb gathering" (Yu Chan's *Caiyao shi* ["Gathering Herbs"], Wu Jun's *Caiyao Dabu shan* ["Gathering Herbs on Mt. Dabu"]). Similarly, some of the poems under the title

“Roamings in immortality” speak about collecting herbs in the mountains. This is how Yu Xin’s poem *Fenghe Zhaowang youxian* 奉和趙王遊仙詩 (“Respectfully Matching a poem by King Zhao on Roaming into Immortality”) starts:

藏山還採藥 Hidden in the mountain, I turn to gather “herbs”... (Lu Qinli: 2362)

These poems no longer take the theme of distant journey but centre on the absorption of natural substances as the way to prolong one’s years into eternity.

What were these *yao* 藥, so highly desired by the poets, for which we have tentatively adopted the traditional translation as “herbs”? If we look closer at the content of the poems dealing with the theme of *caiyao*, we see that the *yao* in question rarely belong to the floral kingdom. The petrified nature of Yu Chan’s elixir mountain, described in his “Poem on Gathering herbs” has already been mentioned above (ch. II.4., p. 126 - 127). The “stone marrow” (*shisui* 石髓), which flows through the landscape denotes stalagmites, the “cloudy pearls” (*yunzhu* 雲珠) raining down are one of the five kinds of *yunmu* 雲母, mica. The term “fungi” (*zhi* 芝) does not refer to mushrooms but is a generic word for protrusions or emanations from rocks, trees, herbs, fleshy animals, or fungi.³⁵³ The “stone honey” (*shimi* 石蜜) probably refers to the juice of one kind of stone exudations, called stone honey mushroom, *shimizhi* 石蜜芝 – one of the most inaccessible and most efficacious of the natural elixirs.³⁵⁴ It seems that the word *yao*, as appearing in poems on immortality, is used as a generic term for naturally found elixirs of immortality, which might be of plant, but are more commonly of mineral origin. Therefore, “natural drugs” would be a much more appropriate rendering, although rather unwieldy in poetic translations.

Starting with the Liang dynasty, the search for natural drugs and elixirs in the mountains is replaced by the higher art of alchemy. Already Ge Hong had insisted that natural substances lack the efficacy of methodically synthesized elixirs. “If you do not obtain gold or cinnabar, but only ingest medicinals from herbs and trees (*caomu* 草木) and cultivate other minor arts, you can lengthen your years and postpone death, but you cannot attain transcendence“, “Only

³⁵³ Campany 2001: 127 - 128.

³⁵⁴ According to Ge Hong, it grows on the Lesser Chamber Peak (Shaoshi 少室) of Mount Song, the central Marchmount. The mushroom emits stone honey, which drips into a basin on the top of a stone column. The mushroom never stops emitting juice, but the basin never gets full and never overflows, which is why it is almost impossible to get hold of the juice. Yet, it seems that earlier adepts had managed to accomplish this feat - an inscription in the stone just above the outcropping reads that if someone drinks a *dou* of the stone honey, he will live for ten thousand years. Ge Hong adds that all Daoists dream of this place, but they understand that it is beyond their reach (*Baopuzi* 11, Wang Ming: 198). In addition, extant fragments from *Shenxian zhuan* (contained in *Taiping yulan* 988/5b and 857/2a) mention two otherwise obscure adepts, the masters Xian Men 羨門 and Feihuang zi 飛黃子, who had procured some of the stone honey (see Campany 2002: 289 and 358).

gold fabricated by transformation harbours the essences of various medicinal substances and in this it is superior to the natural sort”.³⁵⁵

Even poems with the conventionalised title *Caiyao* (“Gathering natural drugs”) often speak about transmuted elixirs. Guo Pu’s first line from his 9th *Youxian shi* was adopted by the Chen dynasty poet Liu Shan 劉刪 as a title of his poem *Caiyao you mingshan* 採藥遊名山 (“Picking “Herbs”, I Roam the Famous Mountains”). This piece, however, not only makes no mention of a magic journey, but has more to do with alchemy than with collecting natural substances:

獨馭千年鶴	Alone harnessing a crane of thousand years,
來尋五色丸	Coming to look for the pellet of five colours.
石牀新流乳	The stone bed starts to pour out milk,
金竈欲成丹	The gold stove is about to transform the elixir. (Lu Qinli: 2547)

The pellet of five colours (*wuse wan* 五色丸) refers to some kind of alchemical elixir. An elixir with the name Grand Purity Five-coloured Elixir (*Taiqing wuse dan* 太清五色丹) is mentioned in *Yunji qiqian* 71/3b, and a similar one – Grand Purity Five-coloured Divine Drug (*Taiqing wuse shenyao* 太清五色神藥) occurs in *Chi Songzi zhangli* 赤松子章曆 3/22a (“The Petition Almanac of Chisongzi”, CT 615) from the Six Dynasties period. Ge Hong describes the appearance of the compound just before its transformation into “returned elixir” (*huandan* 還丹) as sparkling with a five-coloured divine light (*shenguan wuse* 神光五色) (Wang Ming 4: 77). Although it is not clear what exactly the expressions stone bed (*shizhuan* 石牀) and milk refer to, most probably it was some kind of stalagmite formation. The gold stove might be a reference to a golden tripod (*jinding* 金鼎), which in *Yunji qiqian* 68/8b is listed as one of the five kinds of tripods, the others being silver, copper, iron and clay tripods.

Partaking of different mineral mixtures and alchemical preparations and a lay knowledge of alchemical processes became a part of court life during the Southern Dynasties. Especially popular was the consumption of a mineral mixture, known as *hanshi san* 寒食散 (“cold-food powder”), or *wushi san* 五石散 (“five-mineral powder”). After the philosopher He Yan 何宴 (? - 249) first took it to gain relief from depression, it was claimed to be effective in curing diseases and continued to be widely consumed by scholars and aristocrats until the Tang. The Jin poet Xi Han 嵇含 (264 - 307) wrote a rhapsody on the *hanshi san* after he managed to cure his 10-month-old son with it. Besides its supposedly curative effects, the drug was believed to clarify the mind, increase strength, beautify the looks and prolong life. The monk

³⁵⁵ Wang Ming 13: 243 and 16:286. Similar statements are found throughout the book.

Shi Huiyi 釋慧義 (372 - 444) from the circle of master Hui Yuan wrote of it that, “The Five Stones Powder is among the supreme drugs. One can prolong his years, nourish his life and harmonise his mind. How could one say that it only cures diseases?”³⁵⁶ Wang Xizhi writes that after taking the mixture (called by him Five-Coloured Stone Paste Powder, *wuse shigao san* 五色石膏散) his body “became light and he felt as if flying”.³⁵⁷ The cold-food powder consisted of both mineral and herbal components, but there seem to have been no standard formulas for its preparation. It induced a feeling of heat, and so the consumer was supposed to bathe in cold water, wear light clothes and eat cold food. After taking the drug a person did not feel hungry, but was supposed to drink some warm wine and walk, probably to facilitate better absorption of the mixture.³⁵⁸ By the 4th and 5th centuries the consumption of the drug has spread even to Buddhist monasteries. A number of the most important treatises on the *hanshi san* were in fact written by Buddhist monks.³⁵⁹

Despite the toxic nature of the drug, which often caused disease and even death, its consumption increasingly spread among aristocrats. There were parties organised with consumption of the mineral mixture and wine, accompanied by music and dance, and probably poems were also composed under the influence of the drug.³⁶⁰ One might speculate on the degree to which the conventional *youxian* imagery of some of the poems might in fact reflect feelings of lightness, flight and clarity induced by the drug.

A poem by Bao Zhao 鮑照 (421? - 463?), contained in *Wenxuan* 22, in the chapter on “Sightseeing” (*Youlan* 遊覽), is titled *Xingyao zhi chengdong qiao* 行藥至城東橋. According to Rudolf Wagner the phrase *xingyao* 行藥 is synonymous to *xingsan* 行散, which means to be under the influence of the *hanshi san*. The title, therefore, might be translated as “Under the Influence of the Drug, I approach the Bridge to the East of the City Wall”. In the early morning the poet is hurrying to leave the town and on his way he meets crowds of students coming in the city to strive for an official position and of villagers, hoping for high profits at the market. In the state of clarity induced by the drug, the poet feels estranged from the worldly aspirations of his contemporaries for office and wealth. He clearly perceives the meaningless of these lowly strivings in the face of the transience of life. Instead, he

³⁵⁶ Cited by Wagner 1973: 134 on the basis of Tamba Yasuyori, *Ishimpo*, 19.426b.17f.

³⁵⁷ *Zatie* 雜帖, *Quan Jinwen* 26 (Yan Kejun, vol. 4: 273).

³⁵⁸ See Akahori 1989: 74.

³⁵⁹ R. Wagner provides a list of treatises written on *hanshi san* up to the Tang period (1973: 162-171). See especially entries 12-16, which list texts by Buddhist monks.

³⁶⁰ See Wagner 1973: 118-135.

impatiently looks towards the natural world, spreading behind the city walls – lush grass on the slopes and high willows along the pond.

The close link between immortality verse and the daily court life of the Southern Dynasties, which involved fascination with alchemy and drugs, is evidenced by occasional compositions on elixirs written as mutual poetical exchange. The corpus of poetry of Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464 – 499) contains a poem on *hanshi san* powder that stands somewhat apart from the rest of his work in terms of content and imagery. This is a matching poem, “Harmonizing with a Poem by Adjutant Ji on Gaining Benefit from Consuming (*hanshi*) Powder” (*He Ji canjun fusan desheng shi* 和紀參軍服散得益詩)³⁶¹

金液稱九轉	The Golden Fluid is praised as Nine-cycled, ³⁶²
西山歌五色	[In] the Western Mountain singing of the Five-coloured [elixir] ³⁶³
鍊質乃排雲	Transmuting one`s substance, push the clouds apart,
濯景終不測	Cleansing the radiances, be forever unfanthomable. ³⁶⁴
雲英亦可餌	Cloudy mica too, can be consumed
且駐羲和力	For the time being it halts Xi He`s vigour
能令長卿卧	It could make [one], [in the manner of] Sima Xiangru, lie down [and retire] ³⁶⁵
暫故遇真識	So as to encounter for a while true awareness. ³⁶⁶ (Lu Qinli 1447)

In this poem Xie Tiao adopts the typical *youxian* imagery and diction of the period. There are references to alchemical elixirs as the Golden Fluid, the Nine-cycled elixir, the five-coloured drug, to immortality techniques like *lian zhi* 鍊質 (smelting, transmuting the corporeal parts)

³⁶¹ The identity of Adjutant Ji is unknown, and the poem to which this one responds, is lost.

³⁶² The Golden Fluid (*jinye* 金液) is an alchemical compound made of gold filings (*jinfen* 金粉), mercury (*hong* 汞, Hg), realgar (*xionghuang* 雄黃, As₂S₂) and orpiment (*cihuang* 雌黃, As₂S₃). See Sivin 1968: 185.

³⁶³ This line might be an allusion to the song *Zhe yangliu xing* 折楊柳行 (“Breaking a Willow Branch”) by Cao Pi. It commences with a scene of immortals on the Western mountain, who present the protagonist with an elixir pellet of five colours:

西山一何高	The Western Mountain – how high is it!
高高殊無極	High, high, beyond all limits!
上有兩仙童	On its crest are two immortal lads
不飲亦不食	Who neither drink, nor eat.
與我一丸藥	They offered me a pellet of a drug
光耀有五色	Bright and radiant, of five colours... (Lu Qinli: 393)

³⁶⁴ Mather understands this line as describing the drug and translates it as “Its gleaming brilliance never can be fathomed” (Mather 2003, vol. II: 278). However, the expression *zhuojing* 濯景 (“cleansing the radiances”) denotes a certain esoteric technique of the Maoshan tradition. In this sense it is used in *Zhen`gao*: “he [Li Dong 李東] received the Teaching and transformed his bodily form, cleansed the radiances, changed the breath” 受學化形, 濯景易氣 (*Zhen`gao* 13/2a/5). The “radiances” (*jing* 景, also translated as “phosphors”) here are the radiances within the human body, which are microcosmic counterparts of the lights of the heavenly bodies. See also Maspero 1981: 553-54. Such an interpretation would be more fitting for this poem, especially as *zhuojing* is used here in conjunction to *lian zhi* 鍊質, (“smelt one`s substance”).

³⁶⁵ Changqing 長卿 was the courtesy name of Sima Xiangru (179-117 BC).

³⁶⁶ A somewhat different translation (and understanding) of this poem is provided in Mather 2003, vol. II: 278-79.

and *zhuojing* 鍊質 (cleansing the radiance of the body). The poet also employs the conventional images of celestial flight and of stopping the flow of the time by halting the sun-charioteer Xi He. The last couplet alludes to Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 - the most accomplished poet of the early Han period. His biography in *Shiji* 117 records an illness he suffered towards the end of his life, which made him retreat from the capital Chang'an and move his residence to Maoling 茂陵. However, Sima Qian does not mention any medications he took. Neither is there any clue to what event in Sima Xiangru's life the "true awareness" (*zhenshi* 真識) might refer to. Richard Mather speculates that the true awareness he encountered might have been his death.³⁶⁷ Such an interpretation would mean that this poem might actually be intended as a subtle critique of the then current consumption of *hanshi* powder. If the image of the five-coloured elixir on the Western Mountain in l. 2 is not merely a conventional *youxian* image, but is indeed intended as an allusion to the *Zhe yangliu* song of Cao Pi, which criticizes the seekers of immortality, this line of interpretation would be strengthened. On the other hand, given the title and the context of composition of this poem, it might be too far-fetched to read it as veiled reprimand. It is more likely that Xie Tiao is using the reference to Sima Xiangru in the literal sense of leaving public service on the pretext of illness and retreating into the countryside, where the "true awareness" (the expression has Buddhist connotations) can be found. In this connection the character *wo* 卧 is very significant. It means not only "lying down" or "sleeping", but refers to the idea of withdrawal from the world: as in the expressions *wolong* 卧龍 ("sleeping dragon") indicating a man of noble character who lives in seclusion and is yet to be discovered; *wo mingli* 卧名利 ("to cease the pursuit of fame and wealth"); *gaowo* 高卧 ("to lay, to sleep on high"), referring to a lofty man who has retired from service. The word *wo* also evokes the concept of *woyou* 卧遊 - "roaming in the mountains while lying down" - introduced by Zong Bing 宗炳 (375 – 443). Zong Bing believed in the power of landscape painting to transpose one in imagination into the mountains in order to nourish one's spirit and bring forth the mystical insight induced by being in nature, and Xie Tiao similarly refers to the attainment of "true awareness" through the act of *wo*. It is remarkable that such an exemplary poem on immortality is composed by a court poet otherwise noted for the absence of Daoist themes and motifs in his poetry. This poem is not only indicative of the degree to which the elixir culture had permeated daily court life, but also illustrates the conventional employment of the "roaming into immortality" theme in connection with the consumption of the *hanshi* drug.

³⁶⁷ Mather 2003, vol. II: 279

Many Chinese emperors from the period of disunion, attracted and fascinated by the elixir of life, set up and maintained alchemical laboratories. Liang Wudi (464 - 549) is known as the patron of the alchemical pursuits of Tao Hongjing and is recorded as having consumed some of the elixirs presented by the master. In addition, he commissioned Deng Yu 鄧郁, a Daoist master from mountain Heng 衡 to produce an alchemical elixir (*Nanshi* 76: 1896). Nevertheless, when the master submitted the life-giving drug to the emperor, he could not summon up enough courage to consume it. A poem, titled *Youxian shi*, written by Liang Wudi, probably reflects this very episode:

水華究靈奧	Water blossoms explore spiritual secrets,
陽精測神祕	The essence of <i>yang</i> measures divine mysteries.
具聞上仙訣	I have fully heard the instructions on rising to immortality, ³⁶⁸
留丹未肯餌	I possess the elixir, but never dared to eat it.
潛名遊柱史	Hiding my name, I wander on the star of Court Historian, ³⁶⁹
隱迹居郎位	Concealing my tracks, I dwell on the star of Court Guards' Leader ³⁷⁰
委曲鳳台日	Understanding that day on the Phoenix Terrace, ³⁷¹
分明柏寢事	Clearly distinguishing the affairs of Cypress Rest Terrace. ³⁷²
蕭史暫徘徊	The Flute Master briefly falters,
待我升龍轡	Waiting for me to mount the dragon chariot. (Lu Qinli: 1530)

In the second couplet Liang Wudi states that he has acquired the alchemical elixir and has heard the secret oral instructions for becoming an immortal, but has never dared to break away from his earthly existence. The third couplet contains a clever play of words – the expressions Zhushi 柱史 and Langwei 郎位 designate both official titles and stars. It emphasises that despite his transcendental wishes, the emperor is dragged back by the worldly affairs of the court – while the immortals freely tread the stars, he lingers among constellations of courtly titles and ranks. The poem concludes indecisively: the immortal Flute Master still waits for the emperor to summon up his courage, consume the elixir and mount the dragon chariot into the sky (becoming a “corpse-liberated” immortal).

³⁶⁸ Or "the instructions of the supreme immortals"

³⁶⁹ Play of words. Zhushi 柱史 is a title of the Court Historian. At the same time this expression designates a star - the Y of the Dragon

³⁷⁰ Play on words. The phrase Langwei 郎位 is the same as Langjiang 郎將 (Oshanin 3596). During the Qin and Han dynasties it designated the leader of the court guards. At the same time langjiang is a cluster of 15 stars in the constellation Veronica's hair.

³⁷¹ The Phoenix Terrace (Fengtai 鳳台) is the terrace made by duke Mu of Qin for his daughter Nong Yu and her immortal husband Flute Master, Xiaoshi. From this terrace the two departed on the backs of phoenixes into the heavens. See *Lixian zhuan* 35 (Kaltenmark 1987: 125).

³⁷² The Cypress Rest (Boqin 柏寢) was a grand terrace in the ancient kingdom of Qi 齊. *Shiji* 12 records an episode in which the court *fangshi* Li Shaojun 李少君 correctly identified a copper vessel as the one kept by Duke Huan 桓公 of Qi on the Boqin terrace in 676 BC (*Shiji* 12: 454). Emperor Wu of Han therefore started to believe that Li Shaojun was a divine man, who had lived several hundred years. It is not clear if the “affairs of the Boqin terrace” might refer to this episode.

One of the songs from the cycle *Shangyun yue*, written or commissioned by emperor Wu, bears the title *Jindan qu* 金丹曲 (“Tune of Gold and Cinnabar”) and has a purely alchemical content:

紫霜耀	Purple frost shines,
絳雪飛	Scarlet snow flies.
追以還	I strive to bring it back,
轉復飛	Once reverted, it flies again.
九真道方微	The way of the Nine Perfections is subtle,
千年不傳	For a thousand years it is not transmitted.
一傳 齋雲衣	Once transmitted, clouds will rim your robes. (Lu Qinli: 1525)

Although it is not possible to determine the exact nature of the “purple frost” and the “scarlet snow”, these are likely to have been alchemical compounds of some kind, which the emperor could even have personally tried. One of the first elixirs that Tao Hongjing prepared for the emperor, a Sublimated Elixir (*feidan* 飛丹), was said to have the appearance of frost and snow, and upon ingestion rendered the body weightless. The emperor had personally consumed it and found it effective.³⁷³ Frost and snow in alchemical texts refer to crystals grown from solutions or sublimated. The purple frost is mentioned in *Yunji qiqian* 65/15b/7 as a substance, formed on the cover of the cauldron, which is a “divine elixir” (*shendan* 神丹). In the Shangqing texts the expression “scarlet snow” is used together with “dark frost” (*xuanshuang jiangxue* 玄霜絳雪) denoting some kind of immortality elixir (*Yunji qiqian* 69/22a/6 and 114/11b/1; *Wushang biyao* 78/3a/5).³⁷⁴

The term “flying up” (*fei* 飛) in alchemical texts denotes a complete process of sublimation, that is “vaporisation with condensation above in solid form”³⁷⁵, which parallels the adepts’ transformation and upward flight into the heavens. The word “bringing back” (*huan* 還) refers to the method of repeated transmutations, which enhanced the efficacy of an elixir. The expression might even denote a concrete compound – the Nine-reverted elixir (*jiuhuan dan* 九還丹 or *jiuzhen shendan* 九真神丹), with which Tao Hongjing was experimenting all his life. This was a lethal concoction inducing immediate deliverance from the corpse, and it could even have been, according to Michael Strickmann, the agent in Tao

³⁷³ *Nanshi* 76 : 1899.

³⁷⁴ See also the 7th cent. *Danjing yaojue*’s 丹經要訣 catalogue of immortality elixirs, which contains entries such as Crimson Snow and Flowing Pearl Elixir (*zhuxue liuzhu dan* 朱雪流珠丹), White Cloud and Crimson Snow Elixir (*baiyun zhuxue dan* 白雲朱雪丹) (See Sivin 1968: 155 and 158).

³⁷⁵ Needham, *Science* 5.4:9

Hongjing's ritual suicide in 536.³⁷⁶ The Nine-reverted elixir is mentioned in connection with Tao Hongjing by Shen Yue in one of his poems devoted to the Daoist master:

若蒙九丹贈 If I should ever get a gift of the Nine-[reverted] Elixir,
豈懼六龍奔 Why should I fear the Six-fold Dragon's flight? (*Chou Huayang Tao xiansheng*, Lu Qinli 1637)

The close link of the Liang poetry on immortals with contemporary esoteric practices is also evidenced by reference to specific drugs that became known only with the revealed Shangqing scriptures at the end of the 4th and in the 5th century.

玉壺白鳳肺 In the jade jar - the lungs of a white phoenix,
金鼎青龍胎 In the golden tripod - the embryo of a green dragon. (Wu Jun *Caiyao Dabu shan*, Lu Qinli: 1739)

Dragon Embryo (*longtai* 龍胎) is the name of a formidable elixir inducing instant corpse deliverance. This elixir seems to be specially connected with the Shangqing revelations, which promised that it would give access to the loftiest heavens of the Supreme Purity.³⁷⁷ The nature of "white phoenix lungs" is not clear, but evidently it refers to some immortality drug – either alchemically concocted or naturally found.³⁷⁸

In these few examples it is the very alchemical concoctions that alchemists were attempting to transmute under imperial patronage that enter poetry as major agents of immortality and immortal fare. From the fourth century onwards references to various breathing and physiological practices decline and are replaced almost exclusively by the higher art of alchemy.

Besides alchemical elixirs, from the fifth century onwards the poets regularly refer to sacred scriptures as agents of immortality. Revealed celestial texts were of crucial importance

³⁷⁶ See Strickmann 1979: 146 - 159 and 191. In the year 536 Tao Hongjing was exactly 81 years old. Strickmann points out that the number eighty-one, as 9 x 9, was considered to be the product of ultimate Yang, and as such was the preferred age for the deaths of saintly recluses.

³⁷⁷ The "Dragon Embryo" elixir often occurs in the texts of the Shangqing tradition, such as *Zhen'gao* (3:15b, 6:2b) and in the "Life of Lord Pei" (*Qingling zhenren Pei jun zhuan* 清靈真人裴君傳), contained in *Yunji qiqian* 105 (CT 1032). A poem of *Zhen'gao* contains the following lines:

龍胎嬰爾形 "Dragon Embryo will bestow on you an infant's form,
八瓊迴素旦 Eight Rose-gems will return your pure dawn" (*Zhen'gao* 3.15b-16a)

In *Zhen'gao* 14 the "Dragon Embryo" is said to have been consumed by Wang Yuan 王遠 (the master of the perfected immortal Mao Ying 茅盈), by Zhao Boxuan 趙伯玄 and Liu Zixian 劉子先 (the last two personages remain unidentified) (*Zhen'gao* 14:16b; see also Strickmann 1979: 131). In addition, at several points in *Yunji qiqian* there are mentions of the Dragon Embryo Elixir of the Grand Harmony (*Taihe longtai dan* 太和龍胎丹), and a scripture on the Dragon Embryo Elixir of the Grand Harmony (*Taihe longtai danjing* 太和龍胎丹經) in two *juan* (*Yunji qiqian* 71/3a/2, 105/8b/6, 105/23a/7).

³⁷⁸ In the Shangqing texts there figures a substance called Phoenix Brain (*fengnao* 鳳腦). This is presumably a variety of fungi *zhi* (of five or nine colours), which enabled the adept who ate it to fly as a phoenix. It is mentioned for example in *Zhen'gao* 3/7b, *Wushang biyao* 20/ 6b and 78/ 5b (CT 1138). In *Zhen'gao* 6/2b the Phoenix Brain even occurs in conjunction with the Dragon Embryo.

to the Shangqing Daoist tradition. Born spontaneously from the Void at the cosmic beginnings and stored in jade on golden tablets in the Celestial Palaces, the sacred Shangqing scriptures were believed to be endowed with primordial energy. The heavenly writings in their original form as celestial scripts were neither accessible nor could be read by humans. Transcripts of the original celestial writings were believed to have been handed down in Heaven in a series of steps from the Celestial Worthy of the Primordial Commencement to the lower ranks of gods and immortals until the texts were, finally, passed on to elected men. Those who owned the scriptures and were able to read the script could succeed in prolonging their lives and eventually becoming immortals by practicing what was described in these texts. Indeed, not only practicing the content of a scripture, but even repeated recitation of it could make one immortal. Given the divine nature of these texts that could render their owners immortal, and given the social prestige the possession of scriptures ensured to their owners, in the 5th century aristocrats and scholars systematically searched for revealed Daoist scriptures. The fascination with sacred writings is also reflected in verse on immortality. From the Liang dynasty onwards there are numerous references to golden books, jade texts, emerald tablets and various other kinds of divine texts, written in exquisite calligraphy on precious materials.

綠帙啟真詞 The Green book reveals true words,
丹經流妙說 The Cinnabar scripture pours out wondrous sayings. (Wang Rong *Youxian shi* I, Lu Qinli: 1398)

金書發幽會 The golden scripts were issued by the Hidden assembly,
碧簡吐玄門 The emerald tablets were spewed out from the Mystic Gate.³⁷⁹
(Liang Wudi *Fangzhang qu*, Lu Qinli: 1525)

玉題書仙篆 Jade inscriptions are written in immortals' seal-script,
金榜燭神光 Golden tablets radiate divine light.
(Liang Yuandi *He Bao Changshi Longchuan guan shi*, Lu Qinli: 2038)

The scriptures and texts mentioned above refer generally to divine scripture of the immortals. In certain instances, however, there are references to concrete scriptures transmitted among the humans:

五圖發金記 The Five Charts issue golden records,
九籥隱丹經 The Nine-fold casket conceals the Elixir scripts. (Bao Zhao *Shengtian xing*; *Wenxuan* 28: 1329)

The Five Charts most probably means the Charts of the True Form of the Five Marchmounts (*Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五岳真形圖) – one of the most sacred and potent Daoist scriptures. The commentators explain that the expression *yue* 籥 means a casket or a box and refers to the jade casket, concealed deep within the Kunlun Mountains, in which the alchemical scriptures

³⁷⁹ The expression “Mystic Gate” (*xuanmen* 玄門) denotes the Daoist teaching (*Daojiao da cidian*: 408)

“Nine-Reverted elixir” (*Jiuzhuan dan* 九轉丹) and the “Scripture of Golden Liquor” (*Jinye jing* 金液經) had been kept.³⁸⁰

In the poems on immortality sacred scriptures often appear in conjunction with alchemy. The practical pursuits of the alchemists were intimately connected with the possession of the scriptures, which contained the recipes and instructions for the preparation of the elixirs.

道人讀丹經 Daoists read elixir scriptures,
方士鍊玉液 Magicians refine the Jade Fluid. (Jiang Yan *Guo Hongnong Pu youxian*, Lu Qinli: 1575)

壇邊逢藥銚 Beside the altar I come upon elixir pots,
洞裏閱仙書 Within the cave read immortality books. (Yin Keng, *You Shixing daoguan shi*, Lu Qinli: 2453)

The second line of Yin Keng’s poem refers to a theme common in the Six Dynasties hagiographies of immortals – namely, the finding of sacred texts in the depths of caves, or sacred writings appearing on the walls of the cave.³⁸¹

In the poem *Chi Songzi jian* 赤松子澗 (“The Stream of Master Red Pine”) Shen Yue expresses a wish to obtain not a ready-made drug of immortality, but simply the recipe for its alchemical preparation:

願受金液方 I wish I might obtain the Golden Fluid recipe,
片言生羽翼 And with one word sprout feathered wings! (Lu Qinli: 1659)

In a poem titled *Huashan guan wei guojia ying gongde* 華山館為國家營功德 (“In a Temple on Mt. Hua Establishing Merit on Behalf of the State and Royal Family”) Shen Yue refers to sacrifices and prayers performed in the hope of getting supernatural assistance for the faltering Qi dynasty and longevity for the ruler.³⁸² Then he speaks of the elixir that would effect this end and the scriptures that contain its recipe:

丹方緘洞府 The formula for the elixir is sealed within a grotto storehouse,

³⁸⁰ Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127 – 200) *Yiwei zhu* 易緯注 (“Commentary to the Apocryphon of the Book of Changes”), cited by Li Shan (*Wenxuan* 28: 1330). Zheng Xuan further explains that it is called Nine-fold casket (*jiuyue* 九籥) because the elixir has nine cycles. The description of this casket is found in *Baopuzi* 18, where a certain “Scripture of Immortals” (*Xianjing* 仙經) is cited: “The Nine-Reverted elixir (*Jiuzhuan dan* 九轉丹), the Scripture of the Golden Liquor (*Jinye jing* 金液經) and the Instructions on Holding the One (*Shouyi jue* 守一訣) are found within the five walls of Kunlun, hidden in a jade casket, carved in golden letters, sealed with purple mud, stamped with the Middle seal” (Wang Ming: 324).

³⁸¹ See for example the story of Wang Lie who found two scrolls in a cave (Campany 2002: 339), of Zuo Ci similarly finding the alchemical scriptures *Jiudan* and the *Jinye jing* in a rock-cave (*ibid.*: 279), of Bo He 帛和 seeing the words of the “Scripture of Grand Purity”, *Taiqing jing*, written on the cave wall after he had looked at it for three years (*ibid.*: 135).

³⁸² R. Mather supposes that this poem was composed soon after the enthronement of Xiao Baojuan 蕭寶卷, Marquis of Donghun 東昏侯 (r. 498-501) on the Southern Qi throne in the eighth month of 498 (Mather 2003, vol. I: 268).

河清時一傳 When the Yellow river clears it is but once transmitted:³⁸³
錦書飛雲字 In brocate script, in flying clouds characters,
玉簡黃金編 On jade tablets bound together with a golden cord.
(Lu Qinli: 1660, translated by Mather 2003, vol. I: 268)

In the poetry of the period the immortals no longer figure as oral instructors, but above all as transmitters of texts and written formulas. The transition in the fifth century from the older, semi-oral Daoist tradition to one that is almost totally written and codified is thus reflected even in the court poetry of the time.

It should be emphasised that the stronger esoteric air perceptible in the poetry on immortality of the 5th and 6th centuries also accorded with the aesthetic pursuits of the court poetry. The sacred celestial scriptures that captured the imagination of the aristocrats not only revealed divine knowledge, but were splendid objects in themselves, possessed of the allure of the exotic, precious and beautiful. The dazzling images of golden books, emerald tablets, jade caskets, divine cloud characters, betray the poets' fascination both with the esoteric and the beautiful. At certain points the poet's preoccupation with verbal artistry might even outshadow the religious connotations, as in the following verse by Yu Xin:

玉京傳相鶴 From the Jade Capital the "Crane Physiognomy" is transmitted,³⁸⁴
太乙授飛龜 The Grand Monad transmits the "Flying Tortoise".³⁸⁵
(Yu Xin *Fenghe Zhaowang youxian*; Lu Qinli: 2362)

³⁸³ Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127-200) "Apocrypha on the Book of Changes: Penetration into the Hexagram Qian" (*Yiwei qian zuodu* 易緯乾鑿度), now surviving in fragment collections, says that "When Heaven is about to send down an auspicious omen, the waters of the Yellow River clear for three days" 天之將降嘉瑞應，河水清三日 (cited in the *Ciyuan*).

³⁸⁴ A reference to a certain "Scripture on Crane Physiognomy" (*Xianghe jing* 相鶴經), connected with the immortal Master Floating Hill [Fu Qiu 浮丘] (Ni Fan's 倪璠 (fl. 1705) commentary in *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 218). According to *Taiping fuzhi* 太平府志 (cited in *Daojiao da cidian*: 835), Floating Hill gave this scripture to Wangzi Qiao to hide it on Mount Song. When Liu An, the King of Huainan was gathering herbs there, he found the book and thereupon the scripture was transmitted among men.

³⁸⁵ Ge Hong mentions a chapter of the *Lingbaojing* 靈寶經 called "An Array Transmitted by the Flying Tortoise" (*Feigui shouzhi* 飛龜授秩) (*Baopuzi* 12, Wang Ming: 229). The same, under the name "Scripture of the Flying Tortoise taking off" (*Feigui chenjing* 飛龜振經) is found as a separate scripture in the list of Daoist books in ch. 19 of *Baopuzi* (Wang Ming 1985: 333). According to *Shenxian zhuan* 華子期 received certain "Mountain-Concealed Numinous Treasure Methods" (*Shanyin lingbao fang* 山隱靈寶方), one of which was called "Yi Luo's Array [from the] Flying Tortoise" (*Yiluo feigui zhi* 伊洛飛龜秩) With the elixir, prepared according to these methods, he returned to his youth and could travel 500 miles per day (Campany 2002: 307, see also the *Lingbao wufu xu* 靈寶五符序 ["Five Numinous Treasure Talismans"], CT 388/1-11a-b) These writings were allegedly found in a stone and consisted of gold plaques with purple characters. This text had been sealed in a stone box by Yu the Great before he attained transcendence. (Wang Ming 1985: 229; CT 388 1/11a-b, translated by Bokenkamp 1986: 67-68) - The Grand Monad (Taiyi 太乙) in Daoist texts figures as the lord of the northern polar asterism and a high deity, and moreover, in the alchemical tradition of Ge Hong was considered to be an important patron of alchemical work. Ge Hong speaks of altars raised by alchemists to Tai Yi, the Primal Lord (Yuanjun 元君) and to Laozi (Wang Ming 1985: 4/84, 16/292)

The “Crane Physiognomy” refers to a certain “Scripture on Crane Physiognomy” (*Xianghe jing* 相鶴經), and the “flying tortoise” – to the “Scripture on the Flying Tortoise”, listed by Ge Hong in *Baopuzi*. In a manner, typical for the late Southern Dynasties poetry, Yu Xin uses the reference to these sacred scriptures to create a witty play of words; while retaining their association with texts, the two expressions literally denote fantastic animals, connected with immortality. It seems that Yu Xin chooses these particular scriptures not because he wants to highlight their teaching, but for the startling verbal effect alone.

Chapter IV

Relations between the Human World and the World Beyond

Reading *youxian* verse in the widest sense including variety of generic forms (*fu*, *shi*, *yuefu*, *song*, *zan*), we can identify in them different relationships between the human world of the poet and the paradise realms of the immortals. Two major approaches can be discerned: either the realm of immortality is conjured up in contrast to the corrupted and limiting world of the mortals, or it is presented as an entity independent of the human world, which at times might even merge with the surroundings of the court poet. This difference in approach is immediately connected both with the function of the poems (personal reflections, poetry of praise, banquet songs and occasional poems), and with more general change in poetic pursuits during the period of disunion.

IV.1. Juxtaposition of the two realms

In the poetry on immortality from its origins during the Han dynasty and throughout the fourth century AD, the visions of the immortals and their lands that have been discussed in the preceding chapters, are seldom presented as something self-sufficient and independent, but are almost exclusively conjured up in relation to the human world of the poet. The contrast between earthly existence, connected with the feeling of frustration (the *tristia* trope in D. Hawkes terminology), and the liberating flight into the realm of immortality (conceived within the broader *itineraria* theme) remains a hallmark of the whole range of early poems on immortality. The only exceptions are some of the late Han – Wei *yuefu* songs, falling into the category of banquet song, and the poetry of praise (eulogies *song* and encomia *zan*), the generic conventions of which excluded the voicing of personal sorrows. As will be demonstrated below, the causes of frustration might change depending on which aspects of human existence gained importance in different periods, and the ratio between the *tristia* and *itineraria* elements might vary in terms of length and importance. Despite these variations, however, the juxtaposition of the world of man and the world of immortality seems to lie at the very core of the subjective current of early “roaming into immortality” verse.

IV.1.1. The human world in the *Chuci*

The beginnings of the *tristia* theme go back to the *Chuci* tradition and are connected with the poetry traditionally ascribed to Qu Yuan. Constant oscillation between *tristia* and *itineraria* modes provides the structure of *Lisao*. Human life in the *Lisao* is perceived in its socio-political aspects above all; this is the existence of the pure and honest official in the midst of a world of injustice where his virtues are not recognized and his lofty aspirations remain unfulfilled. The intimate connection between the *itineraria* and the *tristia* theme will remain a major feature in the later *Chuci* poetry and in much of the post-Han verse on immortality. Furthermore, *Lisao* articulates an inner conflict that would be elaborated in subsequent poetry - the urge to leave the world of dust behind and escape into a pure and ideal realm on one hand, and the deeply engrained feeling for moral responsibility, for a mission in this human world on the other.³⁸⁶

In most of the later *Chuci* poems in which the theme of immortality appears, the flight into the realm of immortals is connected with the notion of the human world as both a corrupted and a confining place, from which the poet wants to break free through a distant journey. An example of the interdependence between the *itineraria* and *tristia* tropes in *Chuci* is *Xishi* 惜誓 (“Sorrow for Troth Betrayed”) - an anonymous poem written at the same date or a little later than *Yuanyou*.³⁸⁷ The poem is composed of two antithetical halves: the first is a description of a breathtaking cosmic journey, while the second part consists of *tristia*. The immediate cause for the far-off journey is stated at the very beginning:

惜余年老而日衰兮	Oppressed by each day's new signs of age and decay,
歲忽忽而不反	By the swift, irreversible passage of the years,
登蒼天而高舉兮	I climbed the blue heaven, mounted up on high,
歷眾山而日遠	And, passing over a myriad peaks, farther and farther I flew...

(*Chuci buzhu*: 227, tr. by Hawkes 1985: 240)

It is the painful realisation of the swift passing of time that provokes the hero to rise into the celestial heights, far away from its misery. The lament over the passing of the years is not so much grief over the physical deterioration of the body itself, however, as sorrow over the loss of time needed for self-fulfilment. Time is perceived as hostile, not permitting the poet

³⁸⁶ In his pioneering article on the poetry on immortals Zhu Guangqian formulates this conflict of the Confucian scholar by taking two citations from *Lunyu*: “If nobody follows the Dao, I’ll sail into the sea” and “If I am not with my disciples, then who will be?” (Zhu Guangqian 1948: 3). This dilemma underlies much of the early poetry that deals with the theme of immortality, and it occasionally also appears during the Southern Dynasties.

³⁸⁷ On the dating and authorship of *Xishi* see D. Hawkes 1985: 238-239.

to complete great accomplishments and make a name.³⁸⁸ This understanding of time is made clearer in the second part of the poem, which laments the plight of an honourable, pure and devoted official surrounded by dishonesty and slander. He is like the phoenix and the *qilin* evoked in the *luan* of the poem, legendary beasts that are symbols of pure men, and can live only in virtuous surroundings, not being bound and constrained. A pure and blissful world of this kind is represented by the realm of immortals. By his imaginary trip there the poet declares his desire to leave the world of corruption and evil - but only because he is slandered and misunderstood, not because he is interested in the pursuit of immortality itself. Thus we are left in no doubt regarding the real intentions of the poet – he wishes not to transcend the world, but rather reconfirms the value of his human existence.

The contrast between the immortals' bliss and the hostile times that limit the hero underlies the structure of many other *Chuci* pieces, such as the fifth poem of the *Qijian* 七諫 (“Seven Remonstrances”) cycle, entitled *Zibei* 自悲 (“Opressed by grief”).³⁸⁹ The poem opens with a long lament over the lack of recognition of the poet's virtues and over his banishment from court:

居愁慙其誰告兮	Living in misery, to whom can I make my plaint?
獨永思而憂悲	Alone I long ponder, sad and melancholy.
內自省而不慚兮	When I look within myself I am not ashamed:
操愈堅而不衰	My fortitude is firmer and knows no diminution.
隱三年而無決兮	Three years in obscurity – and still no remission!
歲忽忽其若頽	My time runs out swiftly as a collapsing wall.
憐余身不足以卒意兮	I grieve that I have not life enough left to fulfil my wish:
冀一見而復歸....	I long to return for a single glimpse of him..... (ll. 1-8)
恨離予之故鄉	... I grieve that I may not return to where I used to dwell,
悲不反余之所居兮	I lament to be separated from my home. (ll. 17-18)

(Chuci buzhu: 248; tr. by Hawkes 1985: 252-53)

Here the motif of the quick flow of time is openly connected with the social aspirations of the hero; his life is quickly passing away while he still lives in exile, unjustly banished by his lord. The second half of the poem consists of a cosmic journey, in the course of which the hero receives instructions in Daoism from the immortal Han Zhong, and dines on immortals' food. The images of the immortal joys and spiritual purity become an allegorical device allowing the poet to praise his own virtues, while the lofty withdrawal of the immortals expresses his desire to part with the world of disgrace.

The omnipresent contrast between the bliss of the immortals and the political adversities of the human world in the *Chuci* suggests that the theme of immortals might be being

³⁸⁸ On the perception of time in the *Chuci* and in early philosophical texts see Cai Zongqi 1996: 67-74.

³⁸⁹ Ascribed by D. Hawkes to an anonymous author from the circle of Mei Cheng (?–140 BC). See Hawkes 1985: 246.

employed as an allegory for a pure official retreating from public life, unable to bear the corruption of the court or the lack of understanding of his sovereign. What the poet is interested in is the fulfilment of his life as a social, moral being rather than transcendence of his earthly existence. The breathtaking cosmic flights, the diet and the joys of the immortals may also be understood as allusions to the poet's integrity and purity.

The *Yuanyou* poem, which has been discussed at length in the preceding chapter, stands somewhat apart from this current of political allegorism. Nevertheless, the search for transcendence in *Yuanyou* also remains firmly grounded in the context of the human world. As with the *Lisao*, the first part of *Yuanyou* is in the general tenor of the *tristia* - the main motive for the “far-off journey” is the wish to escape from the “pressing constraints of the world's vulgarity” (*shisu zhi po'e* 時俗之迫厄), from the “time of foulness and impurity (*shenzhuo er wuhui* 沈濁而汙穢), in which the protagonist lives. However, the theme of the “time's fate” (the times are unlucky, fate is hostile) is used in a rather conventional way and is not so broadly treated as in *Lisao*. The *Yuanyou* poem lacks the latter's complicated allegory and rich floral imagery, which had expressed the poet's virtues, the sorrows and resentments of the rejected loyal courtier, the evil and slander of his adversaries. The language is much more straightforward and unadorned. Instead of shrouding his sorrows in elaborated symbolism the poet directly voices his inner thoughts.

Unlike in the *Lisao*, the *tristia* element is dominated here not by the personal afflictions of the poet in a cruel and corrupted society, but by a much more universal and philosophical reflection on the human condition on earth. The poem begins with verses pervaded by a generalised grief over the passing of time and the limits of mortal life.

惟天地之無窮兮 哀人生之長勤 往者余弗及兮 來者吾不聞…	I thought of the limitless vastness of the universe; I wept for the long affliction of man's life. Those that had gone before I should never see; And those yet to come I should never know of... (ll. 9-12)
恐天時之代序兮 耀靈擘而西征 微霜降而下淪兮 悼芳草之先零	I came to be fearful of the passing of seasons, Of the Bright God's relentless journey to the west. It grieved me to think that when the fine frost descended, All my fragrant flowers would prematurely fade.” (ll. 41-44) (<i>Chuci buzhu</i> : 163-64, tr. by Hawkes 1985: 194-95)

Contemplation of the restrictions of human existence and the inevitability of death combines with reflections on the “limitless vastness of the universe” and on “those of past ages who had become Immortals” (*wangshi zhi dengxian* 往世之登仙) - “escaping all life's troubles they had no more need to fear them” (*mian zhong huan er bu ju* 免眾患而不懼). The impetus for

the mystic journey here is not the quest for the “Fair One”, but the striving to surpass the human condition, to “leave the dust behind” and attain the utmost freedom.

Traditional critics tended to see *Yuanyou* in terms of the same political allegorism as the *Lisao* and the rest of the *Chuci* poems modeled on it. Wang Yi, who ascribed *Yuanyou* to Qu Yuan, writes in his preface to the poem that Qu Yuan, although pure and honest, was calumniated and rejected from the court:

“Although he still wanted to save the world, he felt frustrated in his heart and, expanding colourful words, set forth his marvelous thoughts. He pretended to accompany the immortals in their playful wanderings, traveling through the entire universe, visiting every corner. But he kept his native country of Chu in his heart and thought longingly of his old friends and relatives: he was truly loyal, thoroughly good and righteous”.

思欲濟世，則意中憤然，文采鋪發，遂敘妙思，託配仙人，與俱遊戲，周歷天地，無所不到。然猶懷念楚國，思慕舊故，忠信之篤，仁義之厚也 (*Chuci buzhu*: 163)

In the discussions of *Yuanyou* above, I have attempted to show that this particular poem has religious and mystical dimensions which far surpass the conventional plaint of a rejected loyal courtier.³⁹⁰

IV.1.2. The *tristia* in the Han rhapsodies *fu*

While in the *Chuci* poems, discussed above, the *tristia* component predominates and establishes the overall plaintive tone of the poems, in the court milieu of the Han introspective grief over the corruption of the world loses much of its importance. The Han court poets strove to provide entertainment and delectation above all, to flatter their imperial patrons and to enchant the listener with unrestrained flights of fantasy, including the joys of immortals. Quite naturally, under the brush of these poets, enjoying emperor’s favour, the protests against injustice and corruption, so typical of the *sao* poet, could occupy only a secondary place. Thus, in the Han court poetry the *tristia* element is overshadowed by the much more appealing *itineraria*, by magic journeys through the cosmos in the vein of *Yuanyou*.

Nevertheless, so strong was the convention of *tristia* that even authors like Sima Xiangru and Wang Bao felt the necessity to contrast, be it superficially, their enchanting descriptions with an expression of frustration. Thus, Sima Xiangru starts his *Daren fu* 大人賦 (“Rhapsody

³⁹⁰ Later Chinese critics have also recognised that the meaning of *Yuanyou* cannot be reduced to a political message. Perhaps the boldest interpretation was provided by Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619 – 92), one of the greatest philosophers, classical scholars and literary critics of the seventeenth century. In his *Chuci tongshi* 楚辭通釋 (“Comprehensive Explications of the *Chuci*”) he reads the poem as a kind of manual on inner alchemy and consistently uncovers esoteric references in every line. See Wang Fuzhi 1975: 101-114.

on the Great Man”) - a praise of Emperor Wu,- with a couplet which almost literally repeats the opening lines of *Yuanyou*:

悲時俗之迫隘兮 Grieving at the pressing constrictions of the age’s vulgarity,
揭輕舉而遠遊 He goes away to rise up lightly and roam far off. ³⁹¹ (*Shiji* 117: 3056)

In his rhapsody, however, Sima Xiangru shifts the emphasis. Here the reason for the emperor’s flight into the distance is not grief over the “parlous state of the world”, but because the Son of Heaven finds his earthly abode too narrow and confining for his powers. It is significant that the word *yuan* 願 (“I wish”) from the opening lines of *Yuanyou* is replaced by *qie* 揭 (“to go away, to embark”). Thus the flight into the greater cosmos of deities and immortals comes not as a wishful thinking, but as an actual display of imperial might.

In Ban Biao’s *Lanhai fu* 覽海賦 (“Rhapsody on Watching the Sea”), which contains the first extensive description of immortality paradises, it is again the standard motif of dissatisfaction with the contemporary world that serves as an immediate impulse to search for solace in the world of immortals. The *tristia* trope, is, however, merely hinted at through the allusion to Confucius, who had said that he would like to sail off to the sea on a raft if nobody followed the Way:

余有事於淮浦 Sacrificing on the shores of river Huai,
覽滄海之茫茫 I viewed the azure sea, broad and boundless.
悟仲尼之乘桴 Aware of Confucius embarking on a raft,³⁹²
聊從容而遂行 For a time I’ll follow him, calm and carefree. (Yan Kejun vol. 2: 231)

This opening paradoxically equates the “calm and carefree” (*congrong* 從容) roaming into the realm of immortality with following the example of Confucius. The rest of the poem does not offer any expression of frustration and sorrow, but is devoted instead to a smooth progress, first to the islands of the immortals in the Eastern Sea, and subsequently throughout the cosmos, which culminates at the Purple Palace (Zigong 紫宮). Inspired by reminiscences of Confucius’ wish to abandon the world if it does not follow the Way, the wishful roamings in

³⁹¹ Compare with:

悲時俗之迫隘兮 Grieving at the pressing constraints of the age’s vulgarity,
願輕舉而遠遊 I wish to rise up lightly, to roam far off. (*Yuanyou* ll. 1-2, *Chuci buzhu*: 163)

³⁹² Allusion to *Lunyu* 9: “The Master said: ‘If the Way should fail to prevail and I were to put to sea on a raft, the one who would follow me would no doubt be Yu.’ Zi Lu, on hearing this, was overjoyed. The Master said, “Yu has a greater love for courage than I, but is lacking in judgement” 子曰：道不行乘桴浮于海。從我者其由與？子路聞之喜。子曰：由也好勇過我，無所取材 (Cheng Shude 1990: 299; Lau 1979: 76-77).

Naformátováno: Čeština

Naformátováno: Písmo: 10 b., Čeština

Naformátováno: Čeština

the realm of immortals are, at least superficially, equated with the self-imposed retreat of the honest Confucianist. Both are ways of renouncing a corrupted and corrupting society.

IV.1.3. *Tristia* in the late Han *yuefu* tradition

In the Han court poetry the contrast between the realm of immortals and the human world, perceived in its socio-political and socio-ethical aspects above all, gradually loses its poignancy as the *tristia* became merely a conventional introduction to the flight to the cosmos of gods and immortals. This process is paralleled by a quite different re-evaluation of the *Chuci tristia* and *itineraria* tropes within the *yuefu* tradition. All the *yuefu* songs dealing with the theme of immortality express a wish for longevity, which is removed from concrete social concerns.

While the *itineraria* component in the late Han *yuefu* is much shortened and simplified, taking the form of a journey in search of the drug of immortality (see above, ch. III.3.), the *tristia* theme is in many cases missing. Some of the songs are simply celebrations of the ideal world of the immortals (*Buchu xiamen xing*, *Wangzi Qiao*, *Bagong cao*, *Dongtao xing*, *Changge xing*, etc.). In cases where the human world is evoked, this is not in order to express the poet's dissatisfaction with the world of politics. Instead of social concerns we find a general melancholy over the brevity and misery of human life or nostalgia for the earthly home and friends left behind.

The motif of homesickness has traditionally been linked with the *Chuci* cosmic journeys, usually providing the transition from the *itineraria* to the concluding *tristia* part of a poem. In the middle of his exhilarating flight the hero either catches a glimpse of his old home below, or remembers his earthly life, and quickly descends from his illusory escape back to his moral and social concerns. This plot has its honoured precedent in *Lisao*, where, amidst the rapture of music and dance in the splendour of heavens the poet sees his old home, and can proceed no further in his liberating celestial ramblings. Similarly, in the *Xishi* poem discussed above, at the very culmination of the hitherto successful journey, amidst the joys of music in the company of immortals, a sudden access of nostalgia causes an abrupt turn back to the human life on earth:

念我長生而久僊兮	But then I thought that this immortal life of the blessed,
不如反余之故鄉	Was not worth the sacrifice of my home-returning. (Chuci buzhu: 229)

Having descended from the celestial heights, the poet then laments (for the whole second part of the poem) the corrupt, vulgar and unappreciating world, in which he lives.

In some of the *yuefu* ballads the themes of immortality and homesickness are also interwoven. In these however, the nostalgia is removed from the socio-political context and is identified instead with the homesickness of the wanderer, longing for his old village, which is one of the major themes of the Han *yuefu* in general.

One such example is the *Huainan wang* 淮南王 (“The King of Huainan”) song, devoted to Liu An, king of Huainan, who towards the end of early Han became elevated to the status of immortal:

King of Huainan		淮南王	The
自言尊	Is naturally noble:		
百尺高樓與天連	Hundred foot high mansions reach the sky		
後園鑿井銀作床	In his rear courtyard a carved well, its crib made of silver, ³⁹³		
金瓶 素綆汲寒漿	A gold bucket’s pure white rope draws up Cold Brew ³⁹⁴		
汲寒漿	Draws up Cold Brew		
飲少年	Drinking it, he becomes a young boy		
少年窈窕何能賢	Young boy of tender grace, so capable and wise,		
揚聲悲歌音絕天	Lifts his voice in sad song, music pierces the skies.		
我欲渡河河無梁	I want to ford the river, the river has no bridge. ³⁹⁵		
願化雙黃鸝 還故鄉	I long to become two brown swans, return to my old hometown,		
還故鄉	Return to my old hometown,		
入故里	Enter my village;		
徘徊故鄉	To linger in my old hometown,		
苦身不已	Wounds my body endlessly.		
繁舞寄聲無不泰	Colourful dance, marvellous sounds, all so splendid,		
徘徊桑梓遊天外	I linger amid mulberry and catalpa trees, roam beyond the skies. ³⁹⁶		

(*Yuefu shiji* 54: 792)

The ballad consists of two parts. The beginning introduces the blessed life of the king and some of his practices through which he becomes an immortal and attains eternal youth. The second half of the poem, taking the form of a “song within the song”, may be interpreted as the thoughts of the king after his rise into immortality. In his blissful and eternal existence as

³⁹³ A. Birrell (1988: 73) points out that the rear compound of the king’s mansions was usually the residence of the ladies. Therefore she believes that the setting introduces the sexual aspect with which some immortality cults were connected. The image of the well in erotic poetry has also sexual implications.

³⁹⁴ The phrase *hanjiang* 寒漿 is translated by A. Birrell as “cold frost”, but very probably it denotes some kind of immortality drug. It may even be a variant of the *hanshi* powder which had been a popular drug among the elite at least starting from the later Han.

³⁹⁵ Bridgeless water is a common image in the Wei-Jin poetry, expressing the poet’s distance from his desire. The same line appears almost *verbatim* in Cao Pi’s *Zashi* 雜詩 (“Miscellaneous poems”) I: 欲濟河無梁, “I want to ford, the river has no bridge”. The river might refer to the “River of Heaven” (Tianhe 天河), the Milky Way, which is said to have no bridge.

³⁹⁶ According to Cui Bao 崔豹 (fl. 300) this ballad was written by disciples of Liu An, known as the Xiaoshan 小山, Small mountain, group, who were longing for their master after the king departed as an immortal (*Gujin zhu* 古今註, cited in *Yuefu shiji*: 792). My translation and the interpretation resulting from it differs substantially from that of A. Birrell. She suggests that the “cold brew” (*hanjiang*) is consumed not by the king of Huainan but given to young boys to drink. The second part of the ballad is, according to her, a song voiced by the choir of boys rather than the thoughts of the king himself. See Birrell 1988: 73-74.

an immortal there suddenly comes a strong wave of nostalgia for the old abode he has left behind. It is emphasised through the repetition of the phrase *guxiang* 故鄉, “old hometown” (three times, and a variant *guli* 故里, “home village”) and through the repeated expression *paihuai* 徘徊 (“to linger indecisively”), which in poetry often implies nostalgia. The homesickness and the inability to go back are expressed through the images of a bridgeless river and a pair of swans flying back to their old home. The final couplet describes a vision of paradise, alluded to through divine dance and celestial music, and the king’s distant roamings beyond the heavens.

Towards the end of Han the theme of human transience emerges prominently, becoming one of the major concerns of both the *yuefu* and *gushi* genres. The feeling of despair often expressed by the poets is connected not so much with the chaotic situation of the world or with the personal lack of success, but rather with the ultimate pointlessness of human existence, evanescent and full of sorrow. A generalised melancholy of this kind permeates *Shanzai xing* 善哉行 (“How wonderful”) song:

來日大難	The days to come will be so hard,
口燥唇乾	My mouth parched, lips dry.
今日相樂	Today let’s delight each other,
皆當喜歡	Let’s all be merry and gay.
經歷名山□□□□	I pass through famous hills,
芝草翩翩	Magic mushroom whirls, whirls.
仙人王喬	The immortal Wang Qiao
奉藥一丸	Offers a pill of drug.
自惜袖短	I pity my sleeves so short -
內手知寒	Though tucked in, my hands feel cold.
慚無靈輒	I’m ashamed not to be like Ling Che, ³⁹⁷
以報趙宣	To repay Zhao Xuan.
月沒參橫	The moon sinks, Orion slants,
北斗闌干	Northern Dipper tilts.
親交在門	Close friends are at my gates;
飢不及餐	Though hungry, there’s not enough for a meal.
歡日尚少	Happy days grow still fewer,
戚日苦多	Wretched days grow cruelly more.
以何忘憂	With what to forget despair?
彈箏酒歌	Playing my lute, wine, song!
淮南八公	The King of Huainan and his eight lords,
要道不煩	The crux of their Way is not complicated:
參駕六龍	Driving a carriage of six dragons,
遊戲雲端	They rove and play in cloudy limits.

³⁹⁷ Ling Che 靈輒 was a historic figure from 7th century BC, who was rescued from starvation by Zhao Xuan 趙宣. Later, when Zhao’s kingdom was attacked by Duke Ling of Jin with Wei state troops, Ling Che was among them and he rescued Zhao Xuan from death.

(*Yuefu shiji* 36: 535-36; based on the translation of Birrell 1988: 80-81 with slight alterations)

The loose structure of this poem, which consists of six self-sufficient quatrains with abrupt thematic shifts between them, has provoked differing interpretations.³⁹⁸ Some critics regard this ballad as a feasting song, based on the conventions of compliments and responses between host and guests. According to Yu Guanying the first two stanzas are sung by the host – the first being an exhortation to the guests to be happy, and the second to wish them long life. The third stanza is the answer of the guests, who refer to their penury and shame at being unable to repay their host's hospitality. Stanza four is the observation of the host that the night is ending and his invitation to the guests to stay with him. The last two stanzas are the response of the guests, who compare their host with King Liu An of Huainan and wish him long life.³⁹⁹

A different reading is proposed by Zhang Junli, who views the song as a unified *youxian* poem, voiced by a single person. According to him the first quatrain introduces the impulse for seeking immortality, i.e. the awareness of the sadness and transience of human life. The second develops the theme of immortality – the hero travels through the famous mountains and sees the magic mushroom, which mesmerizes him. He meets Wangzi Qiao, who offers him the drug of immortality. The third quatrain describes the feelings of the hero after accepting the drug – his shame that he is not able to repay the benevolence of the immortal. Up to now the song has proceeded as a coherent narrative. The fourth stanza, however, makes an abrupt shift to the human world. The hero becomes aware of the misery of the friends he left on earth. He is already in possession of the drug, which will make him immortal, but filled with compassion and longing for his kin, he is not able to enjoy its effect alone. Such a turnaround resembles the theme of homesickness, discussed above, which causes the hero to return to earth. He chooses to share the fate of his fellows, and faced again with the sadness and despair of human existence, he tries to find solace in wine and music. The evocation of the eternity and freedom of immortals through the reference to the king of Huainan and the eight immortal lords in the last quatrain expresses a longing which, nevertheless, is not enough to make the hero leave this world.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ Dieny observes that the random thematic design of the song is counterbalanced by a perfect regularity of rhyme, stanzaic length and metre, which is tetrasyllabic. The meaning of each stanza is sufficient in itself and there is no apparent connection between the stanzas. Dieny suggests that a melodic line, using musical schemes would, in a performance, have imposed logic and coherence to the song as a whole (Dieny 1968: 125).

³⁹⁹ Yu Guanying 1954: 23.

⁴⁰⁰ Zhang Junli 1987: 10. The motif of nostalgia continues to appear now and then in the post-Han immortality verse – we find it in poems by Xi Kang, Fu Xuan, Guo Pu.

No matter which reading one prefers, this song unites several differing themes, popular since late Han poetry: the theme of melancholy at the transience and misery of human life, the theme of search for immortality (*youxian*), and the theme of pursuit of sensory delight as the only solace in the face of the otherwise hopeless human condition (*Carpe diem*). The two contradictory themes of immortality and *carpe diem* are present simultaneously without either dominating. The singer stands between longing for immortality and disbelief in an alternative for the human life, which makes the feverish enjoyment of the day the only solace. This irresolution creates the song's ambiguity and tension.

IV.1.4. Reflections on the transience of human life in early immortality verse (3rd- 4th centuries AD)

At the end of the Han dynasty grief over human transience, over physical deterioration itself, was voiced with unprecedented existential anxiety in the poetic cycle *Gushi shijiu shou* 古詩十九首 (“Nineteen Old Poems”). These poems focus on their authors' inner experience of the fleetingness of life, the sadness of parting, the pointlessness of fame and glory. In this cycle the laments about human transience are usually presented in declarative tone, often using a simile that compares human life to evanescent phenomena like dew, dust, a short sojourn, a hurrying traveller. At other times human existence is juxtaposed unfavourably with things firm and durable like metal or stone:

人生天地間 Between heaven and earth is man's life,
忽如遠行客 Rushing like a traveller with a long way to go. (No. 3, Lu Qinli: 329)

人生非金石 Man is not made of metal or stone;
豈能長壽考? How can he hope to live for long? (No. 11, *ibid*: 332)

年命如朝露 The years allotted to man are like morning dew.
人生忽如寄 Man's life is as transient as a sojourn,
壽無金石固 His longevity is not as firm as metal or stone. (No. 13, *ibid*: 332)

These similes and imagery became stock elements in the Wei and Jin poetry.⁴⁰¹

Some of the *gushi* poems (No. 13, 14) present gloomy and melancholic descriptions of graveyards and visits to the desolate world of death. Similar expressions of sorrow at life's

⁴⁰¹ Critics have noted that such statements on the brevity of human life do not occur in pre-Han poetry (Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 [1582-1664] *Muzhai yu xueji* 牧齋有學集 19.22a cited in Cai Zongqi 1996: 72). They are occasionally found only in historical or philosophical works. For example, in *Zhuangzi* 22 and *Shiji* 55 the brevity of life is compared to a galloping white colt seen through a hole (*Zhuangzi jishi* 746: 人生天地之間，若白駒之過郛，忽然而已; *Shiji* 2048: 人生一世間，如白駒過隙，何至自苦如此乎!) However, neither in *Zhuangzi*, nor in *Shiji* human transience in itself is a primary cause for sorrow as it is in the “Nineteen Old Poems”.

evanescence had been found in some of the Han *yuefu*, such as the two famous funeral songs *Xielu* 薤露 (“Dew on the Shallot”) and *Haoli* 蒿里 (“The Wormwood Village”). With the “Nineteen Old Songs” these elegiac laments occur in contexts other than that of a funeral, and evolve into one of the central themes of highly personal verse. The theme of immortality appears in several of them, and always in the context of the general theme of transience of human life. The possibility of immortality is questioned, and always rejected as unachievable (see below) - which only deepens the pain over life’s passing and inevitability of death.

Human existence, perceived in its temporal limitations, and the feeling of frustration connected with them, is the backdrop against which the theme of immortality is set against in most of the “roaming into immortality” poems of the 3rd and 4th centuries.

In Cao Zhi’s poetry the underlying impetus for the imaginary distant journeys comes from an intense feeling of helplessness about the inherent limits of human life. A constant juxtaposition of the world of men and the world beyond, and of the *tristia* and *itineraria* tropes connected with them, provides the model for most of his poems on immortality. In the opening lines of his *Youxian* poem – the very first poem to bear this title, the grief is connected with the awareness of the brevity of human life, which is voiced through almost literary quotation of the opening line of *Gushi shijiu shou* 15:

人生不滿百□□□□ Human life never fills a hundred years,⁴⁰²
歲歲少歡娛□□□ □ Year after year one’s joys abate.⁴⁰³
意欲奮六翮 □□□□ I wish to spread my six wings,
排霧陵紫虛 Push the mists apart, skim the Purple Void. (Lu Qinli: 456)

For Cao Zhi the lot of men is not only mortality but also gradual loss of happiness. Some of his other poems on immortality broaden the concept of human existence; it is not only temporally limited, but spatially confined as well. Thus, the ecstatic flight beyond in *Wuyou yong* is prompted by the poet realising his spatial constriction:

九州不足步 The nine continents cannot hold my steps,
願得陵雲翔 I wish to soar above the clouds.⁴⁰⁴ (Lu Qinli: 433)

In the *Xianren* poem the visions of immortal joys are likewise reiterated time and again with condensed reflection on the human condition on earth, characterised by confinement and transience. This poem does not open with the typical expression of frustration but starts

⁴⁰² Compare with:

人生不滿百 Human life never fills a hundred years,
常懷千歲憂 Yet forever harbours sorrows of a thousand years (*Gushi shijiu shou* 15, Lu Qinli: 333).

⁴⁰³ *Yiwen leiju* 78 writes *qiqi* 戚戚 (“sad”) instead of *suisui* 歲歲 (“year after year”).

⁴⁰⁴ This line echoes the second line of *Yuanyou*: “I wish to rise up lightly, to roam far off” (願輕舉而遠遊).

immediately with a description of an immortals' feast on the slopes of Mount Tai. The sight of this blissful scene provokes the poet to a sudden awareness of the constraints of his ordinary life:

四海一何局	How much the Four Seas confine!
九州安所如	Where to go in the Nine Lands?
韓終與王喬	Han Zhong and Wang Qiao
要我於天衢	Invite me on to the road to Heaven.... (Lu Qinli: 434)

The contrast between the two realms is enhanced by the contrasting mode of expression, as the calm and descriptive onlooker's voice in the first stanza is suddenly replaced by a first person bitter exclamation and a rhetorical question. Cao Zhi decides to follow the immortals far away into the highest reaches of the empyrean, casually leaping over thousands of miles, traversing the entire cosmos. In the middle of the exhilarating celestial flight there comes once again an abrupt shift back to the world of men, a sudden awakening from his transcendental reverie as the poet glimpses the world below:

俯觀五嶽間	I look down amid the Five Peaks
人生如寄居	Man's life is but a brief sojourn. (<i>ibid.</i>)

Having experienced absolute freedom, he once again confronts the transience and anxiety of mortal life. The juxtaposition of the two realms is again emphasised by the contrast between the narrative mode of the cosmic journey and the direct, lapidary comment on the human condition, which is, in fact, a paraphrase of *Gushi shijiu shou* 13 ("Human life is as transient as a sojourn", 人生忽如寄). Immediately afterwards it becomes clear that the preceding description of the cosmic journey, which has lacked volitional verbs such as *yuan* 願 or *yu* 欲 ("I wish to..."), has taken place merely in the poet's fantasy. What has seemed to have already taken place, is something that has yet to be accomplished: Cao Zhi declares his resolve to "submerge his light and grow immortal's wings" (潛光養羽翼).

Cao Zhi's *Yuanyou pian* ("Distant Journey"), is also structured in terms of constant movement between the world of men and the world beyond. Like *Xianren pian*, the first half of the poem pictures paradise scenery at the edge of the world, this time on the Isles of the immortals. The poet is not merely an onlooker, but a voyager and participant in the perfect bliss – he is on his far-off cosmic journey over the Four Seas, and together with the immortals he dines on rose-gem flowers and morning auroras. In the very middle of the poem, however, an abrupt shift takes place, as the poet directly proclaims:

崑崙本我宅	Kunlun mountains were once my dwelling,
中州非我家	The Middle Continent is not my home. (Lu Qinli: 434)

Amidst the blissful reverie he once again faces his human life in the Middle Continent – the ecstatic journey turns out to be nothing but a wishful play of fantasy, or a distant memory. Nevertheless, it provokes the awareness that he does not belong to the human world. Another vision of a distant journey follows, but this time conceived as a wish in the future. The poem ends with a direct proclamation:

金石固易弊	Metal and stone decay so easily,
日月同光華	Like the sun and moon my radiant splendour shall be!
齊年與天地	When years match Heaven and Earth,
萬乘安足多	A state of ten thousand carriages – how can this be enough? (<i>ibid.</i>)

Metal and stone are the things, noted for their durability, against which the transience of human life is contrasted in the *Gushi shijiushou* (poems 11 and 13). Donald Holzman notes that they are also the material upon which most ancient texts were preserved. He suggests that in becoming an immortal Cao Zhi will have more lasting and more brilliant glory than the greatest historical figures whose deeds are inscribed on metal and stone.⁴⁰⁵ In the last line the rejection of all earthly glory is complete: even the imperial rank is rejected in the name of eternal life and absolute freedom in the world beyond.

A number of analogous laments on the transience, misery and confinement of human existence that prompt a similar desire to escape from mundane life into the realm of immortals can also be found in the poetry of Xi Kang and Ruan Ji.

Most of Xi Kang's poems on the theme of immortality are structured according to a common pattern. They start with the voicing of deep sorrow connected with the human condition, followed by a dramatic shift to the freedom, eternity and purity that the poet finds in the realm of immortals, and they end with a comment or reflection which again relates to human life. A typical example is the seventh poem from his cycle "Eighteen Songs, Presented to My Elder Brother, the *Xiucai*, on his Entry into the Army" (贈兄秀才入軍詩十八首):

人生壽促	A man's life - a brief abode,
天地長久	Heaven and Earth - forever.
百年之期	A span of hundred years -
孰云其壽	How can this be longevity?
思欲登仙	I wish to rise to be immortal,
以濟不朽	By crossing over I'll not rot.
攬轡踟躕	I gather my reins, but falter,
仰顧我友	Looking up and back at my friends. (Lu Qinli: 482)

The poem opens with a reflection on human mortality, which is compared to the eternity of Heaven and Earth in diction similar to the "Nineteen Old Songs". Lines 5-6 contrast the

⁴⁰⁵ Holzman 1988: 48.

limited lifespan of men with the incorruptibility of the immortals and express the poet's wish to escape into the world of immortals. However, at the point where the dramatic persona prepares to detach himself from the mundane world and grasps the reins to embark on his final journey to the world beyond, comes the motif of hesitation. The motif of faltering had appeared time and again in the cosmic wanderings of *Lisao*.⁴⁰⁶ For Xi Kang this hesitation is caused by his human attachments - it is not easy for him to leave his friends behind. Thus, the last two lines bring us back to the world of men – this time to our affections and to those we hold dear. The dilemma is left open: the poet stands between the two worlds, and it is not clear if the poet will depart from or return to the mortal world and his friends.⁴⁰⁷ Such hesitation can be regarded as a modification of the nostalgia theme, which had been closely connected with the cosmic ramblings in *Chuci* and prominently figured in the Han *yuefu* songs (*Huainan wang*, *Shanzai xing*, *Changge xing*).⁴⁰⁸

The evanescence of human life is a central theme of Ruan Ji's *Yonghuai* cycle as well. His immortality visions are set against a world of transience and frailty. To underline the inconstancy of human life Ruan Ji traces this impermanence on all levels of being - the temporal aspects of nature, the life of plants and animals, as well as its manifestation in the physical conditions and emotional life of man. His poetic cycle unfolds a world in constant change, advancing towards inevitable death: the sun and moon in their courses, the changing seasons, morning superseded by evening, transitory phenomena like dew and frost, annual plants and blooms on the verge of decay, fragile insects.

The heightened perception of the passage of time drives the poet to search for escape into the realm of immortals, as in the following poem:

殷憂令志結	My grief is so deep it has fettered my will,
怵惕當若驚	I live in anguish, as if constantly frightened:
逍遙未終宴	Before my pleasures have ended,
朱陽忽西傾	The red sun will fall headlong in the west.

⁴⁰⁶ See for example:

結幽蘭而延佇 “Knotting orchids, I waited in indecision” (l. 210);

心猶豫而狐疑兮 “My mind was irresolute and hivering,
欲自適而不可 I wanted to go, and yet I could not.” (ll. 241-42);

欲從靈氛之吉占兮 “I wanted to follow Ling Fen's auspicious oracle,
心猶豫而狐疑 But I faltered and could not make my mind up” (ll. 277-78).

⁴⁰⁷ For an interpretation of this poem within the context of the whole cycle see Rushton 1979. The friend in question might be the recipient of these poems – Xi Kang's elder brother Xi Xi.

⁴⁰⁸ It should be noted that in the poetry of Xi Kang the search for immortality often interweaves with another of his central themes – the search for a true friend. Xi Kang finds his true friends in the ancient immortals, unstained and unbridled by the world. See above, ch. III.3.

蟋蟀在戶牖	The crickets are at my window,
螿蛄鳴中庭	And the cicada cries in the courtyard.
心腸未相好	My own passions have not yet found their peace:
誰云亮我情	Who would say he knew my true heart?
願為雲間鳥	I would like to be a bird among the clouds,
千里一哀鳴	And, when a thousand miles away, give one cry of pain!
三芝延瀛洲	The three magic mushrooms spread over the Isle of Ying,
遠遊可長生	A distant roaming there can give long life.

(*Yonghuai shi* 24, Lu Qinli: 501; tr. by Holzman 1976: 153-54)

The poem opens with the expression of deep anguish and frustration. Ruan Ji heaps up vaguely defined emotive words that lift his grief out of a specific setting – his anguish lacks a concrete situation, a concrete cause. Lines 3-6 link this generalized sorrow to his perception of the rapid passage of time and human transience. The image of the setting sun is part of the group of astronomical and meteorological imagery favored by Ruan Ji to suggest the impermanence of human existence.⁴⁰⁹ In the next lines Ruan Ji traces his own human frailty in the life of insects: crickets are the harbingers of autumn (*Shijing* 154), and the cicada is a symbol of ephemeral life (*Zhuangzi* ch. 1).⁴¹⁰ While in the opening lines Ruan Ji strings together elusive emotive words, here he piles together concrete natural images, which are all metaphors for transience and inevitable dissolution into nothingness. Up to this point the poem is elaborating on the theme of fleeting life, well known from the “Nineteen Old Songs”, but in lines 7 and 8 it becomes more complicated. Ruan Ji states that his heart (mind) and his passions (contained in the entrails) are at war with each other. The causes of this inner conflict between reason and emotion are once again not specified, and it takes place on the same abstract, general level as the anguish in the opening two lines.

The last two couplets convey a yearning for some kind of escape from both the temporality of the world and his inner contradictions, whatever they may be. The world beyond is evoked by the paradise realm of Yingzhou, covered by mushrooms of immortality which defy decay and death. Ruan Ji’s yearn for transcendence is conveyed by the image of a bird soaring among the clouds, which might be a metaphor for the winged *xian* immortals. This is not, however, a blissful apotheosis, for even his imaginary escape is permeated by grief and contradictions. In Donald Holzman’s words “his doleful cry shows us his flight from

⁴⁰⁹ Victor Mair estimates that in the *Yonghuai* cycle images of sun and moon occur 25 times; seasonal changes 47 times; dew, frost and wind 27 times; and morning and evening 61 times (Mair 1987: categories 212-13, 152-53, 215-17, 147-48). Plant images occur 67 times and insects and birds 64 times (Mair 1987: categories 240-44; 142-43, 236).

⁴¹⁰ *Shijing*, *Binfeng* 蟋. *Qiyue* (Mao 154): “In the tenth month the cricket enters under our bed” 十月蟋蟀入我床下 (Legge: 230). The cicada, which knows neither spring nor autumn, is, together with the “morning mushroom”, one of *Zhuangzi*’s images of transience (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 11)

the world is not a blissful rising up to the immortals' paradise, but an allegorical quitting of an unbearable world".⁴¹¹

Like Ruan Ji, Guo Pu also contrasts his immortality visions with images of universal transience, which are, however, much more concrete and unambiguous than the highly elusive mental landscapes of the Ruan Ji's *Yonghuai shi*.

晦朔如循環	The moon wanes, is born anew, on and on,
月盈已見魄	Full, it sinks back into shadow,
葶收清西陵	Rushou purifies the Pleiades in the west,
朱羲將由白	The sun's charioteer follows the path of moon.
寒露拂陵苕	Cold Dew sweeps away trumpet wine blooms,
女蘿辭松柏	Dodder creepers cleave from cypresses and pine.
薜榮不終朝	Hibiscus blossoms do not survive the day,
蜉蝣豈見夕	How can mayflies behold the dusk?
圓丘有奇草	On the Round Hill grow magic herbs,
鍾山出靈液	On Bell-Mount sacred liquids issue.
王孫列八珍	Wang Sun lays out the eight delicacies,
安期鍊五石	Anqi smelts the five stones.
長揖當塗人	Bidding forever farewell to those in power,
去來山林客	Leave and amidst mountains and forests come to dwell.

(*Youxian shi* VII, Lu Qinli: 866)

More than half of this poem is devoted to reflections on transience on various cosmic levels. In the first two couplets Guo Pu conjures up sweeping vistas of the cyclical movement of the cosmos, of the stars, sun and moon, only to trace afterwards how their relentless pace towards the west - the phase of autumn and of waning, - causes decline on lower planes of existence – blooms and creepers which do not survive the year, and hibiscus flowers and mayflies whose life is limited to a single day. Their inconstancy contrasts with the vision of the herbs and springs in the distant immortality lands, which defy time and bestow eternity. The closing couplet introduces a social dimension as well; the poet proclaims that he leaves those in power, thus equating the world of transience with the world of political glory.

A similar awareness, even obsession with the passage of time and life's brevity permeates the preserved rhapsodies *fu* of Lu Yun (262 - 303). In two of them – *Choulin fu* 愁霖賦 (“Rhapsody on Grieving the Torrent”) and its sequel *Xiji fu* 喜霽賦 (“Rhapsody on the Joy from Clearing [the Sky]”) - the immortality theme appears at the end of his meditations as a wishful escape from the universal transience. Lu Yun expresses the same kind of sorrow, initially voiced in the “Nineteen Old Songs”, but develops it at length and with recourse to the broader and more abstract vocabulary of the *xuanyan* poetry. Like Xi Kang, Ruan Ji and Guo

⁴¹¹ Holzman 1976: 154.

Pu, through the flight to the realm of immortals the poet tries to find an imaginary escape from the inherent limitations of his mortal life.

IV.1.5. The Social world in the post-Han immortality verse (3rd- 4th century)

While the melancholy over human existence in the Han *yuefu* and *gushi* is free from concrete political concerns, many of the post-Han poets reintroduce the social dimension of the *Chuci* tradition into their "roaming into immortality". The socially oriented *tristia* is no longer, however, the stereotypical lament of a banished official but a highly personal reflection on the ills of the world surrounding the poet. It unfolds on a more complex introspective level and intimately blends with the poet's innermost awareness of the fleetingness of life.

In most of his poems on immortality Xi Kang links his moral and social concerns with his lament over the transience of life. It is also the corruption of the world that makes the hero reject his earthly strivings and aspire to the purity and loftiness of the immortals:

俗人不可親	I can not be close to the worldly people,
松喬是可鄰	I cleave to Red Pine and Wang Qiao.
何為穢濁間	What can you do in this mire?
動搖增垢塵	To move is to increase muck
慷慨之遠遊	Sighting in vehemence and indignation, I travel far
整駕俟良辰…	I wait to harness on a lucky day…
俯視當路人	… From above I observe those in power,
哀哉世間人.	Lamenting this world of men.
何足久託身	To always abide there – how is it enough? (<i>Wuyan shi</i> III, Lu Qinli: 489)

Similar frustration with the contemporary world of political power is developed at length in *Shuzhi* 述志詩 (“Voicing my Aspirations”):

1 潛龍育神軀	The submerged dragon nurtures a divine body, ⁴¹²
濯鱗戲蘭池	Cleansing his scales, he frolics in the Orchid Pool.
延頸慕大庭	Neck outstretched, he admires the Great Ting. ⁴¹³

⁴¹² An allusion to *Yijing*, Hexagram 1, 9/1: “Submerged dragon. Do not use” (初九:潛龍勿用). The dragon, who withdraws into the earth for the winter, here represents dynamic creative force, held in potential but ready to act. This is an image for the man of character, who not being recognized preserves his integrity and waits for better times.

⁴¹³ A reference to the golden age of the distant antiquity, described in *Zhuangzi* 10: “Don’t tell me that you don’t know about the age of utmost Virtue? Formerly, under the Houses of Rong Cheng, Great Ting, Bo Huang, Zhong Yang, Li Lu, Li Xu, Xian Yuan, He Xu, Zun Lu, Zhu Rong, Fu Xi and Shen Nong, throughout that time the people made use of knotted cords, found their food sweet enough, their own dress beautiful enough, were happy in their own customs, content in their own abode. Neighbouring states saw each other in the distance, heard the sound of each others’ cocks and dogs, but the people grew old and died without ever coming and going. Such is a time of utmost order.”

寢足俟皇羲	While asleep, he yearns for Fuxi.
5 慶雲未垂景	Auspicious clouds do not descend,
盤桓朝陽陂	I loiter on the eastern slope.
悠悠非我匹	The common people are not my peers,
疇肯應俗宜	They follow the vulgar and the fashionable
9 殊類難徧周	The extraordinary are not everywhere to be found,
鄙議紛流離	Vulgar talk abounds, spreads far and wide.
轉軻丁悔吝	In quagmires, remorse arises,
雅志不得施	Noble aspirations cannot be fulfilled.
13 耕耨感甯越	Plowing fields inspired Ning Yue, ⁴¹⁴
馬席激張儀	A horse blanket angered Zhang Yi. ⁴¹⁵
逝將離羣侶	I must leave, parting with my kin,
杖策追洪崖	Spurring on, in pursuit of Hong Ya.
17 焦鵬振六翮	When the firebird beats its six wings,
羅者安所羈	How can the bird catcher net it?
浮遊太清中	Soaring through the Grand Purity,
更求新相知	In search of new true friends.
21 比翼翔雲漢	Wing to wing sailing through the Milky Way,
飲露滄瓊枝	Drinking dew, nibbling at agate buds.
多念世間人	I often think of the men in the world,
夙駕咸驅馳	Who yoke their chariots early, chasing in haste.
25 冲靜得自然	Empty and still, I attain the natural way of things
榮華安足為	Majesty and glory – how are they enough! (Shuzhi shi I, Lu Qinli: 488)

In lines 1-6 Xi Kang expresses his frustration indirectly through allusions, comparing himself to a hidden dragon – a metaphor for a man of talent and integrity, who, though unrecognized, remains true to himself. He is longing for the golden age of “perfect virtue” (*zhide* 至德) and of “perfect order” (*zhizhi* 至治), described in *Zhuangzi* when Da Ting and Fu Xi reigned. The image of the auspicious clouds that fail to arrive in l. 5, however, conveys that his longings remain unfulfilled. In lines 7-12 his frustration is voiced directly and immediately connected with his own age of mediocrity and vulgarity, in which a virtuous gentleman finds nothing but obstructions. Like Ning Yue and Zhang Yi he is tempted to seek fulfillment and satisfaction elsewhere, but chooses a path different from theirs – not social involvement, but a complete rejection of his worldly ties. The flight into immortality is linked with the image of a soaring bird, escaping nets – the net evoking the idea of an emperor who assembles men of great

子獨不知至德之世乎？昔者容成氏、大庭氏、伯皇氏、中央氏、栗陸氏、驪畜氏、軒轅氏、赫胥氏、尊盧氏、祝融氏、伏犧氏、神農氏，當是時也，民結繩而用之，甘其食，美其服，樂其俗，安其居，鄰國相望，雞狗之音相聞，民至老死而不相往來。若此之時，則至治已。（*Zhuangzi jishi*: 357; tr. by Graham 1981: 209）

⁴¹⁴ The story of the farmer Ning Yue 甯越 is recorded in *Lüshi chungiu* 24.5. Ning Yue asked his friends how he could get out of his bitter life of farming. They told him that study was the best. He studied hard and in 15 years received an appointment from Duke Wei 威 of Zhou (Tkachenko 2001: 400).

⁴¹⁵ The story of Zhang Yi 張儀 is recorded in an anecdote from *Shiji*, which is preserved in *Yiwen leiju* 69. Zhang Yi felt offended by Su Qin 蘇秦 who offered him a saddle-cloth for a mat, and this offence enticed Zhang Yi into becoming a Prime Minister.

talent with “a net”.⁴¹⁶ At the same time the image of nets suggests perils and restrictions, which in this case are inherent in political service. Xi Kang breaks suddenly away from the source of despair and soars in blissful freedom from all entanglements, attaining emptiness, quietude and spontaneity. It is also in this perfect freedom and aloofness that he finds his true friends, “those who understand him” (*xiangzhi* 相知). Yet his state of mystical detachment is not absolute, for at the end there comes a pause, a look back to the human world. Xi Kang contrasts the two paths of social involvement and Daoist spontaneity, pitying his power-seeking former companions.

Ruan Ji likewise broadens the theme of human transience to include the problems of depravity and other social ills. In the words of Cai Zongqi, he dwells not only on physical frailty but upon “moral frailties” as well – upon the inconstancy of men in thought and action.⁴¹⁷ Most Chinese critics tend to search in the verse of Ruan Ji for references to contemporary events at any price and to claim to identify the targets of even the most obscure allusions.⁴¹⁸ Their readings often imbue the poems *ex post* with meanings that have little grounding in the text as such. Furthermore, such allegorical interpretations reduce the complexities of Ruan Ji’s verse to a series of critical political statements. According to my reading of the *Yonghuai* poems, rather than being a satire directed to outer events they voice his innermost sentiments and reflections – his disillusionment, frustration, unfulfilled yearnings and a desperate groping for some life meaning. Although it is rather tentative to identify any specific references to concrete political and social events, the existential uncertainty of his age is quite naturally reflected in most of his verse. Ruan Ji’s laments over the sudden and rapid flow of time often contain a political undercurrent. Cai Zongqi observes that the swift changes from glory to disgrace, from life to death within a single couplet in many of the *Yonghuai* poems indicate that Ruan Ji fears not so much time’s passage and the gradual approach of natural death, like the anonymous authors of the *Gushi shijiu shou*, but violent death of man’s own making.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ It appears in this sense for example in Cao Zhi’s “Letter to Yang Xiu” (*Yu Yang Dezu shu* 與楊德祖書, *Wenxuan* 42: 1901-02), and in Xi Kang’s other poems, as in the “Presented to the *xiucai*” (*Zeng xiucai* 贈秀才詩).

⁴¹⁷ Cai Zongqi 1996: 162.

⁴¹⁸ To mention but a few: Jiang Shiyue 蔣師掄 (18th cent) in *Ruan Sizong yonghuaishi zhu* 阮嗣宗詠懷詩注 1799, Chen Zuoming 陳祚明 (fl. 1655 – 1673) in *Caishu tang gushi xuan* 采菽堂古詩選, Chen Hang 陳沆 (1785-1826) in *Shi bixing jian* 詩比興箋, Gu Zhi 古直 in *Ruan Sizong yonghuai shi jian ding ben* 阮嗣宗詠懷詩箋定本 1935, Huang Jie 黃節 (1874 – 1935) and numerous others, many of them cited by Huang Jie 1961. Holzman 1976 provides an overview and critique of the allegorical interpretations of the individual poems of the *Yonghuai* cycle he discusses.

⁴¹⁹ Cai Zongqi 1996: 163.

Moral and political concerns have also traditionally been identified in Guo Pu's *Youxian* cycle, as already pointed out in the introduction above (p. 25). Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (? - 518) claimed that Guo Pu is "singing his feelings out of frustration", rather than showing interest in immortals (乃是坎壤詠懷，非列仙之趣也), hence the *Youxian* cycle is "inconsistent with and removed from the mystical tradition" (乖遠玄宗) (Wang Shumin 1992: 247). Most of the subsequent literary critics followed Zhong Rong's allegorical interpretation, emphasizing the social dimension of Guo Pu's verse and denying genuine mystic aspirations. It is my hope that the discussions of Guo Pu's poems from the *Youxian* cycle in the preceding chapters have demonstrated their intrinsic mystic value. We should, however, also consider those poems that more outspokenly link the *youxian* theme with reflections on the state of society. One example is the fifth poem of the *Youxian* cycle, which is permeated by grief over the corruption and hostility of the world. The poet's sorrows are, however, both deeply personal and abstracted from concrete contemporary events.

逸翮思拂霄	On swift wings I wish to sweep across the clouds,
迅足羨遠遊	With rapid steps I yearn to wander far.
清源無增瀾	Without raising waves in the clear spring,
安得運吞舟	How can it house a fish that swallow boats? ⁴²⁰
珪璋雖特達	Though Gui and Zhang jewels are of utmost perfection, ⁴²¹
明月難闇投	Bright Moon pearls should not be thrown into the night. ⁴²²
潛穎怨青陽	Hidden sprouts moan for the spring sun,
陵苕哀素秋	Lavish blossoms mourn over desolate autumn.
悲來側丹心	Sadness comes, pains my pure heart,
零淚緣纓流	Down the tassels of my hat tears flow. (Lu Qinli: 866)

Only the first couplet is in the traditional *youxian* vein – like Cao Zhi, Guo Pu here declares his wish to embark on a distant journey beyond the clouds, but instead of the far-off reaches of the empyrean, he is carried abruptly downwards, to the shallow waters of the spring. According to Li Shan the second couplet is a metaphorical statement "that the dusty customs [of the world] are not enough to sustain the immortals"⁴²³. After this realization, Guo Pu does not, however, abandon the "world of dust" to seek an imaginary escape into the realm beyond, as in the majority of the *youxian* poems discussed above. He remains instead within the

⁴²⁰ An allusion to *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, where Mencius says that "a boat that can swallow a fish will not reside in a shallow moor, and a man of great ambition will not live in a foul world" (cited by Li Shan, *Wenxuan*: 1021).

⁴²¹ *Gui* and *zhang* are jade ritual implements, used in court and ritual ceremonies and services. This line is a paraphrase of Confucius' words that "Gui and Zhang are of special perfection [because they represent] virtue" 珪璋特達, 德也 (*Liji*, cited by Li Shan, *ibid*: 1022).

⁴²² This line refers to a passage by Zou Yang 鄒陽, which says that if one throws a bright pearl in front of people in the dark, it will cause them to hold their swords in alarm (cited by Li Shan, *ibid*.).

⁴²³ *Wenxuan*: 1021.

human world and reflects further on its injustice and transience. His broodings are conveyed indirectly, through allusions and metaphors. The *gui* 珪 and *zhang* 璋 jewels and the Bright Moon (*mingyue* 明月) pearls in the following lines are symbols of virtue and purity, which, however, are met with misunderstanding and even persecution by the world. The sorrow of the hidden sprouts for the spring and of the blooms over the autumn may indicate both the adversities of the world and the mercilessness of time's passage.⁴²⁴ The poem ends with a powerful outpouring of sorrow and frustration.

In this *Youxian* poem Guo Pu in a way negates the conventions of the *youxian* genre by reversing the model of movement formed in the *Yuanyou* and employed time and again through the Wei and Jin dynasties. In the preceding poetry the grief and frustration at the human world are voiced at the beginning and are transcended through a distant journey in the course of the poem. Guo Pu, on the other hand, starts immediately with the expression of the feeling of exhilarating freedom, but the journey he proposes never takes place. He is dragged down by his human condition, which was conventionally supposed to be transcended by the distant roaming.

This structure at least superficially resembles many *Chuci* poems (*Xishi, Jiutan: Yuanyou*), which from the initial flight into the realms of immortals shift in the second part to a lament about the corruption and incomprehension of the contemporary society. There is a profound difference, however, between Guo Pu's passionate verse and the political allegories of the *Chuci*. While the *Chuci* poets are ultimately not interested in immortality seeking in itself and return willingly, stressing the priority of their worldly social concerns, Guo Pu, although kept bound to earth, aspires with all his heart to break away into transcendent freedom.

The *youxian* theme in the 3rd and 4th century poetry discussed above is commonly interpreted as allegory, similar to those in the *Chuci*, which conveys the authors' wish to flee from political corruption and oppressive government. While it is often almost impossible to distinguish to what degree a certain poem expresses genuine religious conviction or applies the theme as a poetic way of stating the authors' desire to retreat from the world, most of the post-Han "roaming into immortality" verse contain more dimensions than mere outspoken political allegory. Even when social concerns are present, the rise into immortality signifies not only withdrawing from the rigours of politics but a desire to vanquish time and attain spiritual fulfillment as well. Immortality is praised for itself as offering the only salvation from the misery, transience and confinement of human existence. Reflections on social ills,

⁴²⁴ According to Li Shan this couplet refers to the people of the world who doubt the search for immortality but still complain that Heavenly favour is unfairly distributed and life is too short – as the spring comes too late for the sprouts and the autumn too early for the blooms (*ibid.*).

yearnings for absolute values and meditations on life's evanescence intimately interweave and are imbued with genuine passion and existential anxiety. Only by taking these broader meanings into can a possible allegorical reading of the poetry in question be explored.

IV.1.6. Philosophical aspects of the discrepancy between the human world and immortality

That the poets of the 3rd and 4th century deal not merely with political, but with existential, even metaphysical problems is further evidenced by the tendency for the contrast between the world of men and the world beyond to be shifted to a more philosophical and religious level – no doubt under the influence of the neo-daoist thought of the period. In many cases the poets juxtapose not simply transience and eternity, spatial confinement and freedom, corruption and purity, but mystical insight and unity with the Dao on one side and the ordinary mind, confined by forms, limited by senses, feelings and knowledge on the other.

The world of man is also the world of senses and emotions, which prevent the human being from achieving a mystical oneness with nature. In many poems Ruan Ji contrasts immortality, perceived as a mystical merging with the Dao, to our world of sensual differentiation, of sounds and colours, which blind and deafen us.

讎怨者誰子	Who are those who are hostile and hate us?
耳目還相差	Our very ears and eyes put one another to shame.
聲色為胡越	What we hear and what we see are as different as the barbarians of the east and west:
人情自逼遼	Our own emotions oppress us.
招彼玄通士	I will summon the man of mystical understanding
去來歸羨游	And go away, forever roaming at ease.

(*Yonghuai shi* 77, Lu Qinli: 510; tr. by Holzman 1976: 170-71)

The transformed impetus for the distant journey can be well illustrated by some Jin dynasties imitations of *Yuanyou* – for example Zhi Yu's 摯虞 (ob. 312 AD) *Siyou fu* 思游賦 ("Rhapsody on Pondering a Journey"). In this particular poem not only is the social context bracketed out, but the realisation of human transience is no longer the major impulse for embarkation on a cosmic journey. The poet's distant journey into the Grand Primordium (Taichu 太初, cf. *Yuanyou*) is motivated solely by his desire to roam beyond the power of human knowledge, beyond the deceptions of his body, and by his wish to "establish the response to the Bright Spirits as a criterion of vision and hearing" (惟神明之應于視聽之表).

Lu Ji's *Lingxiao fu* 凌霄賦 ("Rhapsody on Skimming the Empyrean") is a good illustration of the Jin poets' tendency to conduct the juxtaposition between the human world and the realm of immortals in abstract philosophical terms.

挾至道之玄微	Carrying the mystic subtlety of the supreme Way,
狹流俗之紛沮	Loathing the stirred filth of current vulgarity
颺余節以遠模	I raise my banners after a distant model,
風扶搖而相予	The winds surge and rage, giving me support.
削陋跡於介丘	I cut off my vulgar tracks at a great mountain,
省游仙而投軌	To visit the roaming immortals I throw off the ruts.
凱情累以遂濟	Triumphing over the burdens of feeling, I approach the ford.
豈時俗之云阻	Overcoming the profanity of time, I move the barrier. (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 995)

Naformátováno: Písmo: Angličtina (Spojené království)

Naformátováno: Písmo: 10 b., Angličtina (Spojené království)

Naformátováno: Písmo: Angličtina (Spojené království)

▲ Ll. 1-8 establish two contrasting world models: the current profane world, which is associated with general concepts like grime, vulgarity and emotional attachments, and its antithesis – the world of the roaming immortals, which is the realm of the obscure and subtle Dao. The strictly parallel couplets enhance the contrast - thus *fenju* 紛沮 ("stirred grime") is juxtaposed to the "mystic subtlety" (*xuanmiao* 玄微) of the Dao; the poet's "vulgar traces", (*louji* 陋跡) – to the roaming immortals (*youxian* 游仙). The juxtaposition is carried out through general abstract terms and expressions. All four parallel couplets develop the idea of rising above the mud of the worldly affairs, cutting off the vulgar traces, overcoming profanity and established rigid modes (the tracks), and the bonds of emotional attachments.

IV.1.7. The distance between the world of the poet and the realms of immortality

The majority of early poems on immortality not only explicitly contrast the vulgar and transient human world and the world of immortals, but convey the breach between the two realms through more subtle devices. Even in cases when the human world is bracketed out, the very mode in which the poets present their immortal visions reveals the distance between the poet, trapped in his profane existence, and the higher realms of immortality.

The most common method of producing a feeling of remoteness is to voice the journeys into immortality as wishful thinking. Verbs like *yuan* 願 ("to wish, think of, long for"), *yu* 欲 ("to desire"), *si* 思 ("to think, brood, long for"), *xiang* 想 ("to think, imagine"), which almost uniformly introduce the accounts on cosmic ramblings and immortals' joys, immediately throw their reality into question. They suggest that the poet still remains rooted in his human world while the enchanted worlds are the distant object of his longings – something he aspires to, but attains only in his fantasy.

Thus, in *Lanhai fu* Ban Biao indicates the imaginary nature of his account by the verb *yu* 欲 (“I desire to”), which introduces his voyage through the greater cosmos. The detailed description of his cosmic journey and the divine islands are thus nothing but a flight of fancy, inspired by viewing the vastness of the sea. Most of the cosmic journeys of Cao Zhi discussed above are also presented as wishful thinking:

我心何踴躍 思欲攀雲追	How my heart leaps! I desire to mount the clouds and pursue them [the two True Ones, described in the previous lines] (<i>Kusi xing</i> , Lu Qinli: 439)
九州不足步 願得陵雲翔	The Nine continents cannot hold my steps, I wish to soar above the clouds. (<i>Wuyou yong</i> , Lu Qinli: 433)
意欲奮六翻 排霧陵紫虛	I desire to spread my six wings, Parting mists, ascend the Purple Void... (<i>Youxian</i> , Lu Qinli: 456)

Similar volitional expressions abound throughout the Wei-Jin poetry, for example:

思與王喬 乘雲遊八極	I long to be with Wang Qiao, mounting the clouds, touring the Eight Extremities (<i>Xi Kang Dai Qiuhu ge shi</i> VI, Lu Qinli: 480)
感年華之行暮兮 思乘煙而遠遊 命海若以量津兮 吾欲住乎瀛洲	Moved by the year’s journey into twilight, I long to mount the haze and roam afar. Ordering Hairuo to plumb the ford, I wish I could travel to Yingzhou. (Lu Yun <i>Xiji fu</i> , Yan Kejun vol. 4: 102)
逸翻思拂霄 迅足羨遠遊	On swift wings I long to sweep across the clouds, With rapid steps I yearn to wander far. (Guo Pu <i>Youxian shi</i> V, Lu Qinli: 866)

Naformátováno: Písmo: 10 b., Angličtina (USA)

Naformátováno: Písmo: 10 b., Angličtina (Spojené království)

While in majority of the “roaming into immortality” verse the poets let themselves be carried away by their yearnings, conjuring paradise visions of unusual clarity, in certain cases they immediately recognise the futility of their longings. Four preserved lines from the Western Jin poet Li Yong’s 李顥 *Lingxian fu* 凌仙賦 (“Rhapsody on Ascending into Immortality”) succinctly express a similar longing for the transcendent realm and a lament over inability to reach it: ⁴²⁵

瞻蓬萊之秀嶼 冀東叟之可尋 將乍至而反墜 滉巨浪之相監	I gaze afar to Penglai’s verdant island, Hoping that the eastern elders could be approached. Close within my reach, it sinks again And I grieve the huge waves mirroring each other (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 563)
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⁴²⁵ Nothing is known about the author Li Yong. His name does not appear in the dynastic histories such as *Weishu* 魏書 or *Beishi* 北史. In the 7th century Buddhist anthology *Guang hongming ji* 廣宏明集 there is a rhapsody *fu*, titled *Dacheng fu* 大乘賦 (“Rhapsody on the Great Vehicle”), which is ascribed to him.

Here Li Yong follows closely *Shiji* description of the paradise islands of immortals, which hover as distant mirages at the horizon but sink into the ocean as soon as someone approaches them. In this quatrain the image of the elusive islands conveys with extraordinary emotional intensity the futility of all desires to reach the transcendental lands, to break away from the human condition.

In a similar vein in *Yonghuai shi* 35 Ruan Ji contrasts his transcendental longings with his human limitations:

願攬羲和轡	I would like to seize Hsi Ho's reins in my hands
白日不移光	So that the bright sun would no longer move its rays.
天階路殊絕	But the road to the Heavenly Steps is cut off,
雲漢邈無梁	And there is no bridge to the distant Sky River. (Lu Qinli: 503; tr. by Holzman 1976: 160)

The poetic topoi of stopping the sun chariot, which can be traced back to *Lisao*, has already been discussed above (ch. I.5.) in connection with Cao Zhi's *Shengtian xing* and his desire to conquer time. Ruan Ji adds a more tragic touch to this time-honoured theme – after voicing a similar wish, he immediately negates its possibility and openly laments his inability to stop the passage of time. Neither is he able to climb the Heavenly Stairs and cross the Milky River; he remains earthbound, a subject to, not a master of, to the cosmic flow.

Guo Pu's fourth poem from the *Youxian* cycle echoes Ruan Ji, but deepens even further the feeling of melancholy and pessimism:

淮海變微禽	On the river Huai and the sea birds easily metamorphose
吾生獨不化	Only I never change. ⁴²⁶
雖欲騰丹谿	Though I wish to fly to Cinnabar gorge,
雲螭非我駕	Clouds and dragons are not my steeds.
愧無魯陽德	I am ashamed not to have the virtue of Lu Yang
迴日向三舍	To push the sun three days back. ⁴²⁷
臨川哀年邁	By a stream, mourning the passage of the years ⁴²⁸
撫心獨悲吒	To soothe the heart alone I cry out in grief. (Lu Qinli: 865)

⁴²⁶ A paraphrase of the words of Zhao Jianzi 趙簡子 (6th cent. BC) from the state of Jin, as recorded in the *Guoyu*. Sighing over human destiny, he said: “Sparrows fly into the sea and turn into oysters, pheasants fly into river Huai and change into clams; turtles, crocodiles and fish – all of them can metamorphose, only men are not able to do so – Alas, how sad is this!” (cited by Li Shan, *Wenxuan*: 1021; translated in Taskin 1987: p. 234, §203). The human faculty of metamorphosis (or rather the lack of it) in question is the ability to transform oneself into an immortal.

⁴²⁷ The story of duke Lu Yang 魯陽 of Chu is contained in *Huainanzi* 6. During a battle with the state of Han he caused the declining sun to go back three mansions, by threateningly shaking his spear at it (Liu Wendian: 193).

⁴²⁸ An allusion to the words of Confucius who had remarked before the flow of a river: “It passes on just like this, never ceasing day or night.” 逝者如斯夫！不舍晝夜 (Cheng Shude: 610). However, his remark does not mourn the aging connected with the passage of time – a meaning it would commonly acquire after the end of Han. The image of the river representing time's relentless movement and the passing of human life captured the imagination of the early medieval Chinese poets and became a favoured metaphor for time.

Like Ruan Ji Guo Pu is aware of his lack of strength to stop the flow of time but he also clearly recognizes the impossibility of even his own, personal transcendence of time and space. Neither is he capable of physical metamorphosis into *xian* immortal, nor are the steeds of the immortals – clouds and dragons, within his reach to carry him off into the heavens. Thus, all ways of rising beyond the human lot are recognized as futile. The tragic character of this poem goes beyond even the “Nineteen Old Songs”, for Guo Pu does not pose the alternative of seeking forgetfulness in sensual delights. He remains a clear-sighted observer of universal transience and his own decline, from which no escape is possible.

IV. 1.8. Confucianism, hedonism or immortality seeking?

The juxtaposition of the realm of immortals with the world of man served to express the poets’ longing for eternity, freedom and integrity, which are denied by human lot and human society. In addition, the theme of immortals was often employed in early “roaming into immortality” verse as a way of exploring the efficacy of different teachings in the face of hopeless human existence. Three life philosophies are the object of this existential questioning: Confucianism, the Daoist teaching of withdrawal and search for immortality, and the hedonist approach of *carpe diem*, “seizing the day”.

Confidence in Confucian values is commonly expressed in the Han dynasty poetry. This stance is well exemplified by Zhang Heng’s (78-139) *Sixuan fu* (“Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery”), already discussed in connection with the theme of cosmic journey (III.2.). The question that Zhang Heng confronts in this rhapsody is whether in the face of a corrupt world of slander and hostility he should escape to distant realms or rather remain in the world and despite the adversity persist in cultivation of his virtue. To resolve this question Zhang Heng rhetorically explores the two alternatives – escape from the world and remaining in it. The poet successfully reaches all the destinations of the cosmic traveller, only to find out that they do not offer him comfort and solace. While the celestial travel of Zhang Heng is one of triumph and ecstasy, he does not, like the protagonist of *Yuanyou*, end his journey in Daoist transcendence. On the contrary, although he is a step away from it, the poet rejects it as a satisfactory solution to his dilemma and resolves to go back to the human world and devote himself to the study of the Classics and writing of poetry. The coda (*xi*) of the poem recapitulates his scepticism about the prospects of immortality:

天長地久歲不留	Heaven is eternal, Earth is everlasting, time cannot be delayed
俟河之清祗懷憂	To wait for the Yellow River to clear only brings one grief.
願得遠渡以自娛	I wished to travel afar and enjoy myself,

上下無常窮六區 超踰騰躍絕世俗 飄遙神舉逞所欲 天不可階仙夫稀 柏舟悄悄吝不飛 松喬高踣孰能離 結精遠遊使心攜 迴志趨來從玄謀 獲我所求夫何思	Ascending and descending by no fixed rule to explore the six directions. Rising above, springing into the sky, I cut myself off from the world; Light and airy, my soul soared, and I gave free rein to my desires. But Heaven cannot be scaled and immortals are few. Like the “Cypress Boat” poet, troubled and sad, I regretted I could not fly away; Chi Song and Wang Qiao on their lofty perches – who can approach them? To concentrate vitality in distant roaming causes the heart to be drawn away; I thus change my course and come back to follow the profound counsels; I obtained what I sought - why brood on it further? (Wenxuan: 677; tr. by Knechtges 1987: 137-9)
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His rejection of the idea of the journey into immortality is connected not only with his rationalist scepticism, but, as D. Knechtges has demonstrated, with “his confidence in a cosmic moral order that is the source of ethical principles for the human world”.⁴²⁹ Only by behaving morally could one receive Heaven’s blessings. Although in his poem Zhang Heng does not explicitly deny the existence of spirits and immortals, he finds the journey into their realm “lonely, forbidding, and above all leading to a divorce from the moral order”.⁴³⁰

Zhang Heng’s *Qibian* (“Seven Arguments”), which has been discussed in chapter I.6., similarly contrasts the joys of immortality with the Confucian values, and additionally probes other alternatives: Daoist reclusion (advocated by the main protagonist Master Non-action) and various sensual indulgements (expounded by the first five speakers). We have already demonstrated how it is the Confucian wisdom that definitely wins over the three ways of hedonism, of eremitism and of immortality.

By the end of the Han dynasty, however, optimistic confidence in the ethical principles of the cosmos and of the human society has been seriously shaken. Some poets, like Cao Pi, did not hesitate to proclaim proudly that:

百家多迂怪 聖道我所觀	Hundred schools abound in weird nonsense, The Way of Sages is what I observe.	(Zhe Yangliu xing, Lu Qinli: 393)
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thus dismissing all Daoist pursuits and subscribing himself under the Confucian ideals, but when at the end of Han individual life in itself gained importance, the orthodox Confucian concept of “social immortality” in the form of heroism and posthumous fame ceased to provide an adequate solution to the search for the meaning of life.

In *Gushi shijiu shou* the theme of immortality appears in reflection on the efficacy of different philosophies in coping with human transience. The 13th poem of the cycle briefly examines the three main approaches: immortality seeking, Confucianism and hedonism:

萬歲更相送 聖賢莫能度 服食求神仙	Ten thousand ages come and go, But of the sages and wise men none could cross-over. Some seek divine immortality through ingesting [drugs];
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⁴²⁹ Knechtges 1982: 178.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*: 181.

多為藥所誤 Many end by poisoning themselves with drugs.
不如飲美酒 Far better to drink fine wine
被服納與素 And wear clothes made of choice white silk”
(Lu Qinli: 332, based on the translation of Watson 1971 with slight alternations)

The Daoist pursuit of physical immortality through drugs is ridiculed as unachievable – instead of prolonging one’s life the elixirs shorten one’s years. It is important to note, however, that it is not immortality *per se* that is questioned, but rather human ability to achieve it. The 15th poem puts it plainly:

仙人王子喬 Wangzi Qiao, that immortal man –
難可與等期 small hope we have of matching him (Lu Qinli: 333)

The rational scepticism about the human capacity to achieve immortality is similar to that of Zhang Heng and Cao Pi, but unlike the latter, the authors of the “Nineteen Old Songs” no longer put their confidence in the ethic order of the cosmos. The Confucian establishment of an immortal “name”, of posthumous glory through virtuous deeds is also dismissed as useless, since even sages and worthies have not escaped death. The anonymous author advocates the idea of *carpe diem*, of pursuing sensual delights, as the only sensible way to soothe human misery.

Cao Cao in his more personal and complex immortality poems also explores the different modes of activism and Daoist withdrawal in the light of inevitable death. The *Jinglie* 精列 (“Dissolution of the Essence”) song oscillates between melancholic reflections on the transience of all living beings and wishful thinking to escape to the everlasting realms of Kunlun and Penglai. After letting himself be carried away by his immortality dreams, Cao Cao recognises their futility - for even the ancient sages like the Duke of Zhou, Confucius and the Great Yu have succumbed to death. With resigned acceptance he turns back to his human condition and embraces the Confucian conception of the Superior Man who lives his life serenely in the face of inevitable death. This fatalistic resolve does not, however, ease his melancholy at the approach of death and his inner yearning for some kind of transcendental escape.

陶陶誰能度 In happiness who can cross over?
君子以弗憂 The superior man by not grieving.
年之暮奈何 The years decline – what can be done?
時過時來微 Time passes, the days to come are few. (Lu Qinli: 346)

In the first of the *Qiuwu* songs (*Qiuwu xing* 秋胡行) Cao Cao similarly attempts to find a solution to his personal dilemma, ending with subdued but not really resolved contradictions. In the first stanza he pictures himself sitting in a deep meditation far away in the Sanguan mountains, with a confused and troubled mind. A certain strange old man comes to him,

revealing that he is a True Man, an immortal from the Kunlun mountain, and instructs him in his methods of becoming an immortal. The poet, however, hesitates:

沉吟不決	Immersed in doubt, I cannot resolve,
遂上升天	And then he rose to Heaven.
去去不可追	He's gone, he's gone, he can't be reached,
長恨相牽攀	My deep regret clings to him. ⁴³¹
去去不可追	He's gone, he's gone, he can't be reached,
長恨相牽攀	My deep regret clings to him.
夜夜安得寐	Night after night, how could I sleep?
惆悵以自憐	Grieved and sad I pity myself. ⁴³²
正而不譎	"Upright and honest" ⁴³³ —
辭賦依因	The words offer me guidance and support. ⁴³⁴
經傳所過	What the Classics pass through,
西來所傳	What is transmitted from the West. ⁴³⁵

⁴³¹ D. Holzman 1994: 113 interprets this sentence as: "I will regret forever to have been pulled back [by my worldly affairs]"⁴³¹, but such a meaning is not explicit from the line. It is more natural that the thoughts of the poet should refer to the immortal.

⁴³² A paraphrase of line 10 of *Jiubian* 1: "Grieved and sad, he privately pities himself" 惆悵兮而私自憐 (*Chuci buzhu*: 183) The image of the sleepless hero overcome by grief is a stock image of the *Chuci* poetry. The insomnia of the hero is generally caused by grief over the passing of his years and his unfulfilled life. Rather than being universal grief over the passing of time, the lament of the *Chuci* hero is imbued with social implications: time is passing, I am getting old, and still haven't achieved anything. On the other hand, here Cao Cao laments his inability to detach himself from the world and follow the Way of immortals.

⁴³³ A quotation from *Lunyu* 14.15: The Master said: "Duke Wen of Jin was crafty and lacked integrity. Duke Huan of Qi, on the other hand, had integrity and was not crafty" 晉文公譎而不正, 齊桓公正而不譎 (Cheng Shude: 979). □ The same citation appears in l. 22 of Cao Cao's *Duangexing* poem. Duke Huan of Qi, the fifteenth Duke, was the first of the Great Hegemons who led the confederacy of Zhou states, and the most powerful and progressive ruler of his day. Throughout his poetry Cao Cao often refers to Duke Huan of Qi as a model of a virtuous and wise ruler. According to Balacz, Cao Cao here compares himself with the wise ruler of Qi – "when he becomes a hegemon, he will not forget those who have helped him, but will honour all of them by drawing them round him to devote their energies to building up the state" (Balacz 1964: 182).

⁴³⁴ In some editions there is 乃 for 辭. The meaning of this line is not completely clear to me. Huang Jie suggests that the subject of this line is duke Huan, alluded to in the previous line. He sees in it an allusion to the story of Ning Qi 甯戚, a man of humble origin from Wei, who became an oxen driver to a travelling merchant, in order to reach the state of Qi with him (Huang Jie 1958: 21). When Duke Huan came nearer to his cart, he started blowing an ox horn and sang. On hearing his song, the Duke immediately recognized that Ning Qi was a man of extraordinary abilities and employed him as an official. The story is recorded in *Lushi chunqiu* 19.23b, in *Huainanzi* 12.7b (*Huainanzi* 11.6b even compares Duke Huan's discovery of Ning Qi to Yao finding Shun), and is often mentioned in the literature before Cao Cao. It often appears in the *Chuci* as well (*Li Sao* ll. 295-6, *Jiubian* 10 ll. 41-2, *Qijian* III, ll. 33-4). In the *Chuci* the story is given as an example of wise and virtuous rulers who were able to discover the extraordinary human qualities under humble appearances, and is used to strengthen the poet's lament over the lack of recognition for his virtues. Von den Steinen accepts Huang Jie's interpretation and accordingly translates: "[Duke Huan] thus relied upon and was guided by a song./ What he passed through is [found] in the classical writings, / In books, coming from the West [stands] what is handed down." (von den Steinen 1939: 155). Balacz's translation, "thus I shall be, according...", which does not take this possible allusion into account, fails to convey the meaning of the line.

Huang Jie further suggests that the thrice-old man was an apparition of Ning Qi, and Cao Cao is comparing himself to Duke Huan. According to the *Weizhi*, a few months before ascending to the Sanguan pass, Cao Cao had issued an edict looking for capable men to enter his service. Huang Jie therefore draws the conclusion that the meaning of the poem is the search for wise and worthy men.

歌以言志 A song to speak my mind:
去去不可追 It's gone, it's gone, it can't be reached. (Lu Qinli: 349-50)

The concluding stanza reflects Cao Cao's internal conflict between his desire to leave the world of dust behind and enter a realm of eternity and purity, and his political aspirations. He openly laments his inability to detach himself from the world and follow the Way of immortals. In the final lines he assumes his duties as a national leader, finding solace in the ideal of an enlightened, wise and morally upright ruler. Although Cao Cao renounces the personal pursuit of immortality in the name of political activism, he does so with a heavy heart.

The same approaches explored in the "Nineteen Old Songs" – Confucianism, hedonism (the *carpe diem* theme) and the Daoist pursuit of immortality are explored further by Ruan Ji in his search for a meaning in life. As in the "Nineteen Old Songs", the Confucian striving for immortal name and worldly glory is rejected as an inadequate solution. The 15th poem of the cycle poignantly expresses Ruan Ji's bitter realisation of the shallowness of his youthful Confucian pursuits when faced with inevitability of death:

昔年十四五	Years ago, in my early teens,
志尚好書詩	My aims were lofty, my loves the Books of the Canon. ⁴³⁶
被褐懷珠玉	I wore coarse clothing, but my ideals were precious. ⁴³⁷
顏閔相與期	I tried to vie with Yan and Min. ⁴³⁸
開軒臨四野	I opened my window to look out at the surrounding land,
登高望所思	Climbed the heights and gazed towards those I was thinking of.
丘墓蔽山岡	Tumuli covered the hill crests:
萬代同一時	Ten thousand generations sharing a single moment!
千秋萬歲後	After a thousand autumns, ten thousand years,
榮名安所之	Where had their glory gone?
乃悟羨門子	It was then I understood Xian Menzi, ⁴³⁹
嗷嗷今自嗤	And now, sobbing, I mock myself dolefully. (Lu Qinli: 499; tr. by Holzman 1976: 163)

The view of the tombs, housing ten thousand long-forgotten generations, opens his eyes to human mortality and the transience of all worldly glory. He sees clearly the futility of his

⁴³⁵ Huang Jie believes that this line is an allusion to Duke Huan's westward expeditions, but this explanation seems very contrived. Both Balacz and von den Steinen agree that the phrase *xilai* 西來 refers to the Daoist writings and legends.

⁴³⁶ Allusion to *Lunyu* 2.4 where Confucius says: "When I was fourteen my aim was to study" 吾十有五而志于學 (Cheng Shude: 70).

⁴³⁷ Almost a *verbatim* citation from *Laozi* 70: "The Sage wears coarse cloth clothing and carries jade within his breast" 是以聖人被褐懷玉.

⁴³⁸ Yan 顏 and Min 閔 are Yan Hui 顏回 and Min Ziqian 閔子騫, two of Confucius most esteemed disciples.

⁴³⁹ Xian Menzi 羨門子 is the immortal Xian Mengao 羨門高, whose activities are described in *Shiji* (ch. 6: 251 and ch. 28: 1368-69, see also above, ch. I.1.4, p. 42) Initially a *fangshi* from the state of Yan 燕, he was believed to have achieved immortality and to dwell at Penglai.

youthful Confucian pursuits and the idea of establishing an immortal name, and, on the other hand, realizes that the pursuit of *xian* immortality, like Xian Mengao, might be the only salvation. According to Holzman, this poem does not finish with an unambiguous assertion of immortality-seeking, but with unresolved contradictions. He interprets the onomatopoeic binome *jiaojiao* 嗷嗷 in the last line as charged with sadness, which would mean that for some unspecified reasons Ruan Ji is not able fully to embrace and follow the way of immortality. The despair of his self-mocking laughter casts a shadow of frustration, of awareness of personal failure in both the ways that had been open to him.⁴⁴⁰

While Ruan Ji dismisses Confucian striving for immortal fame and worldly glory as futile, neither does he find any solace in hedonism, which had been advocated in some of the “Nineteen Old Songs”. For Ruan Ji seizing the day offers no solution to the misery of human life. In poem 10 of his *Yonghuai* poems he unflatteringly compares the ephemeral frivolity of the youths, who “drift along with the tide of the prevailing fashion” (俯仰乍浮沉), “who take shortcuts and follow narrow roads, striving hard as they haste to debauchery” (快捷方式从狭路, 僴俛趋荒淫), to the eternity of the immortal Wang Ziqiao, which alone can “calm his heart”(可以慰我心). He asserts the priority of the retreat from the world and the art of prolonging life over worldly dissipation.

In other poems, however, he quite explicitly expresses his doubts about the prospects for achieving immortality. In poem 80, for example, he rhetorically asks:

三山招松喬	On the Three Mountains I summon Songzi and Wangzi Qiao,
萬世誰與期	But who could hope to see them, even till the end of time?
存亡有長短	Our life has its limit,
慷慨將焉知	And, bitterly though we may sigh, we cannot know how long it will last...”
	(Lu Qinli: 510; tr. by Holzman 1976: 177)

In poem 78, after a typical scene with blissful immortals, he continues:

可聞不可見	That they can be heard of, but cannot be seen,
慷慨歎咨嗟	Makes me sigh and groan with pent up passion.
自傷非儔類	Pained that I am not of their kind,
愁苦來相加	I feel sadness and bitterness well up in me.
下學而上達	I study that which is here below, and reach toward that which is on high ⁴⁴¹
忽忽將如何	Time rushes by in headlong confusion: what shall I do?”
	(Lu Qinli: 510; tr. by Holzman 1976: 176)

⁴⁴⁰ Holzman 1976: 164-65.

⁴⁴¹ A quotation from *Lunyu* 14. Confucius is asked by one of his disciples what he meant when he said “Alas! There is no one who knows me!” (a reference to the obscure retirement, in which Confucius was leaving his life, unable to find a wise Lord who could appreciate his abilities). The Master explains: “I bear no grudge against Heaven and do not blame men. I study that which is here below and reach to that which is on high. Is it not Heaven that knows me?” 不怨天，不尤人。下學而上達。知我者其天乎！

Ruan Ji's scepticism is not so much disbelief in the existence of immortality, but doubt about his own ability to achieve it. At the same time he passionately declares his longing to be able to do so. The penultimate line, which quotes *Lunyu*, is extremely suggestive in the context of the poem. According to Donald Holzman, Ruan Ji "seems to be using the line somewhat ironically, as if he were saying that his lowly studies (Confucian or Daoist) should permit him to ascend to some immortal heaven, but they do not. The line... shows Ruan Ji torn between his conflicting desires, Confucian and Daoist, this-worldly and other-worldly."⁴⁴² Such unresolved contradictions are the hallmark of the whole *Yonghuai* cycle. Most of the poems constantly waver between Confucian, Daoist and mystical theories of life. Ruan Ji juxtaposes differing ideas and attitudes, endorses and denies them in the same breath, but seldom decides to follow one particular approach to life.

Unlike Ruan Ji, who remains a traditionalist at heart despite his transcendental yearnings, Xi Kang, himself a believer and practitioner of immortality arts, is much more radical in his rejection of traditional values in the name of mystical withdrawal.

昔蒙父兄祚 少得离负荷 因疏遂成懶 寢跡北山阿 但願養性命 終已靡有他 良辰不我期 當年值紛華 坎壈趣世教 常恐嬰網羅 羲農邈已遠 拊膺獨咨嗟 朔戒貴尚容 魚父好揚波 雖逸亦以難 非余心所嘉 豈若翔區外 滄瓊漱朝霞 遺物棄鄙累 逍遙遊太和 結友集靈岳 彈琴登清歌 有能從此者 古人何足多	In the past I was endowed with my elders' blessings, When young, I had to depart from this burden. My distance [from them] led into idleness, My footprints rest on the slope of the Northern Mountain. I only wish to nurture long life, When the end comes – there is nothing else. I have no share of lucky days, My prime years fell on a time of much ado. In quagmires I strove for the teaching of the age, I often dreaded getting netted. Fu Xi and Shen Nong were too remote, Lamenting, I sighed alone. Dongfang Shuo admonished to value [youthful] looks, The fisherman likes to float upon the waves. Although it was difficult to discard them, Not of my heart's delight. Why not soar beyond the world, Feeding on rose-gems, drinking morning dew? Distant from things, discarding worldly ties. Wandering free and easy in the Grand Harmony. With my friends I gather on Spirit Mountain, Strumming lutes, raising clear songs. If there are any who could follow this, How could the ancients be enough?
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▲ *Da Er Guo* II, Lu Qinli: 487)

Naformátovano: Písmo: 10 b., Angličtina (USA)

Naformátovano: Písmo: Angličtina (USA)

In the very opening lines Xi Kang proclaims the necessity of rejecting family and social ties, and shedding the burden of traditional values in order to discover his authentic self. He speaks

⁴⁴² Holzman 1976: 177.

directly of his former inclination towards Confucian teaching, but also of his fear of getting “netted” into political service, for he is aware of the dangers inherent in the common and vulgar political world. Meeting only adversity in his social life, he longs for some ideal of integrity, constancy and purity, represented by the ancient sages Fu Xi and Shen Nong. When this ideal (which is Confucian) is denied by the political world of the time, the answer is to make a radical break and pursue individual spiritual fulfillment. Daoist immortality, perceived not merely as long life but as freedom, purity and loftiness, thus presents an alternative to the Golden age. While Xi Kang remains alone with his ideals amidst a world of small men and opportunists (ll. 11-12), it is in the immortality realm, within the Grand Harmony, that he finds his true friends. The last two lines assert the priority of immortality seeking as the most appropriate way to gratify one’s yearning for absolute values, for heroic action in the manner of the ancients.

While for the poets of the Jian’an and Zhengshi (240-249) era the two ways of social activism and Daoist withdrawal presented an inner conflict that could seldom be resolved, from the establishment of the Western Jin (265) onward, a compromise was sought between public engagement and the principle of non-action. As Richard Mather points out, overt withdrawal from public life, in the manner of the ancient hermits Bo Yi and Shu Qi, had been long discredited, and towards the end of the third century a reconciliation between “inward naturalness” and “outward conformity” was established.⁴⁴³ The effort to reconcile the opposing principles of activism and quietism was rationalised by the Xiang Xiu/ Guo Xiang commentary to *Zhuangzi* (late 3rd- early 4th century AD):

“The innate principle of things (*li* 理) has an ultimate universality in which both ultramundane (*wai* 外) and inframundane (*nei* 内) are blended in mystical union (*ming* 冥). There has never been anyone who achieved a universal roaming in the ultramundane who has not at the same time united with the inframundane, nor has there ever been one who could be mystically united with the inframundane without roaming in the ultramundane. For this reason the sage constantly roams in the ultramundane in order to expand the inframundane. He has no fixed ideas (*xin* 心), but complies with Actuality (*you* 有). Therefore although he exercises his body all day long, his spirit and vital force do not change. Although he moves up and down through ten thousand critical decisions, he remains tranquil and self-possessed.”⁴⁴⁴

The importance of the “ontological turn” of the Wei-Jin style of thought for uncovering the otherworld of immortality within the earthly nature and transforming the distant cosmic journey into wanderings in mountains has already been discussed in chapter III.5. This new philosophical context also provided the ground for a new approach to the dilemma that had run through the poetry on immortality ever since the *Chuci*. Sun Chuo’s *You Tiantai fu*, discussed in the previous chapter, is symptomatic of the re-evaluation of the immortality

⁴⁴³ R. Mather 1969-70 : 160-180.

⁴⁴⁴ *Zhuangzi* 6, *Zhuangzi jishi*: 268. Translated by Mather 1969-70: 169.

theme during the fourth century, when the contrast between this-worldly existence and the other-worldly realms of immortals gradually subsides. In this composition the relation between the two worlds of humans and immortals is perceived less as a contrast between two spatially distant realms or two radically different modes of being, but as a state of mind – as a difference between mystical insight and profane psyche. It echoes the reconciliation propagated by the Xiang Xiu/ Guo Xiang commentary – a mystical union with the "inframundane" through roaming in the "ultramundane", for they blend in the ultimate reality, in the innate principle of things (*li*).

Nevertheless, the model of contrasting the world of the poet with the higher realms through the *tristia* and *itineraria* themes, typical for early "roaming into immortality" verse did not disappear altogether. Among the poems dating from the fifth century onwards there are still a few compositions that echo older poetry in juxtaposing the human world and the realm of immortality. In a few of the poems from Southern Dynasties the *tristia* theme reappears at the beginning of the poem, and, as in the earlier poetry, it provides the stimulus for searching for an escape into the world of immortality. Probably the most powerful example of this surviving undercurrent in the "roaming into immortality" poetry is Bao Zhao's (410 – 470?) *Shengtian xing* 升天行 ("Ascending the Heaven"):

家世宅關輔	My family since generations has dwelt in the capital, within the pass,
勝帶宦王城	Achieving posts, I served in the king's city.
備聞十帝事	I have fully heard the affairs of the Ten Emperors,
委曲兩都情	In detail the events of the Two Capitals. ⁴⁴⁵
倦見物興衰	I got weary from seeing the flourish and decay of the existent,
驟睹俗屯平	So often I observed the worldly adversities and peace.
翩翩頰迴掌	Flit and flutter, like the waving of a hand,
恍惚似朝榮	Faintly flashing like one-morning blooms.
窮塗悔短計	At the end of the road, I regret my shallow schemes,
晚志重長生	With late aspirations I value long life.
從師入遠岳	Following a master, I enter the distant mountains,
結友事仙靈	Making friends, I serve the immortal spirits.
五圖發金記	The Five Charts issue golden records,
九籥隱丹經	The Nine-fold casket conceals the Elixir scripts. ⁴⁴⁶
風餐委松宿	Dining on wind, I lodge idly among the pines,
雲臥恣天行	Resting on clouds, footloose I journey through the sky.
冠霞登綵閣	Capped in auroras, I climb the florid towers,
解玉飲椒庭	Melting jade, I drink it within the pepper-scented court.
躡遊越萬里	Journeying, I pass ten thousand leagues,
近別數千齡	Since my recent parting – thousands of ages.
鳳臺無還駕	At the Phoenix terrace no chariot turns back, ⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ The expressions "ten emperors" and "two capitals" denote the Han dynasty with the Western capital of Chang'an and the Eastern Capital of Luoyang.

⁴⁴⁶ On the Five Charts (*wutu* 五圖) and the Nine-fold casket (*jiuyue* 九籥) see ch. III.6, pp. 184-85).

⁴⁴⁷ From the Phoenix terrace the immortal couple Nong Yu and Xiaoshi (the Flute Master) departed on the back of phoenixes into heaven.

簫管有遺聲 After the Flute Master there remains lingering tune.
何時與爾曹 At what time with your peers
啄腐共吞腥 Pecking at carrion, you'll devour together raw flesh? (Lu Qinli: 1264)

Bao Zhao starts in autobiographical tone, describing his personal situation and the turbulent years through which he has passed. The first ten lines are written in a deeply personal, anguished voice, in the current of *yonghuai* ("singing of the innermost thoughts"). At the "end of his road" he becomes aware of the transience of all worldly glory and the pointlessness of social aspirations. The tenth line is a turning point in the poem, and transforms it from *yonghuai* into *youxian*, "roaming into immortality". Bao Zhao then narrates a search for *xian* immortality, the joys of his far-off journey, the freedom and eternity he attains. In the concluding couplet he vehemently addresses a rhetorical question to his former worldly associates, who entangled in their lowly pursuits "peck at carrion", devouring "raw flesh". In structure this poem closely follows the model of immortality poetry predominant in the 3rd-4th century, i.e. an opening *tristia* section followed by the alternatives presented by immortality and concluding with unfavourable reference to the human world. In the subsequent poetry only Wang Rong's *Youxian shi* I and Yan Zhitui's *Shenxian shi* 神仙詩 exhibit a similar structure. In these, however, the lament of the poet is abstracted from any social or moral concerns and is solely connected with sorrow over one's transience. Moreover, these two poems reflect very concrete religious views and explicitly refer to Daoist beliefs and practices of the time.

IV. 2. The Public Current of Immortality Verse

IV.2.1. Compositions with a ritual function

The predominant current of "roaming into immortality" verse from its Han origins until the fourth century AD was connected with the expression of personal feelings and thoughts, directed not only to the realms beyond, but also towards the earthly existence of the individual poets. This current of subjective poetry had from the very beginning been paralleled by poetry written in praise of immortals, which included no reference to the human world. During the Han dynasty this rather impersonal verse was represented by compositions written for public purpose and connected with ritual. In fact, the earliest poems on immortals mentioned in the historical sources were of this type. Sima Qian writes, that when "the First Emperor of Qin

heard predictions of his death, he was extremely upset." Therefore, he "ordered the Erudite Scholars to compose poems on the immortals and True Men (*xian zhenren shi* 仙真人詩).

When he travelled around the world he ordered musicians to sing and play them to strings”⁴⁴⁸ These poems are unfortunately lost. It is very likely, however, that they were intended to please and attract the attention of the immortals so that they might favour the Emperor with their visit and blessings, prolonging his life.⁴⁴⁹ As evidenced by *Jiuge* (“The Nine Songs”), the shamanistic songs of *Chuci*, music and dance were a major medium through which to court the presence and the favour of the gods. In addition, there are a considerable number of preserved hymns from the Han dynasty written specifically for liturgical purposes – such as the *Jiaosi ge* 郊祀歌 (“Songs for Suburban Sacrifices”), composed for the suburban sacrifices to Heaven, Earth and the Grand Unity by court poets like Sima Xiangru, Zou Zi 鄒子, Li Yannian 李延年 (fl. 120 BC) and presumably by emperor Wu himself. They often describe the manner in which the gods and spirits move through the heavens, their processions, their descents and blessings to the Imperial house. Although the word *xian* or immortal personages is not explicitly present in them, one might suppose that the songs for the immortals commissioned by the First Emperor of Qin greatly resembled the sacrificial hymns extant from the time of Emperor Wu in their imagery, poetic focus and purpose.

The connection between immortality cult, Daoism and imperial cults during the Han dynasty is difficult to ascertain. Surviving poetic sources include the *Wangxian fu* by Huan Tan, written in honour of Wangzi Qiao and Red Pine during imperial sacrifices in 14 BC or 13 BC, which has been discussed above (ch. I.2.1, pp: 52-55). This composition is a straightforward poem of praise - there is not a trace of allegorical employment of the theme to express the frustrations of the loyal scholar, or of its rhetorical use to confirm worldly values. Nor does it serve for the glorification of the emperor depicted as a superhuman immortal. It directly celebrates the wondrous powers of the two popular immortals and praises an ideal world of spiritual freedom and purity. The poet does not voice any personal reflections and feelings (except admiration) and describes the immortals from the observer’s point of view.

Not many Han specimens of this current of religious verse survive. A few others come from Late Han stela inscriptions, which incorporate verse sections devoted to immortals.

A stela inscription of 165 AD, attributed to Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133? - 192), is dedicated to Wang Ziqiao and commemorates the establishment of an official cult of this immortal. The first part of the inscription, which describes the history of the tomb, the apparition of Wang

⁴⁴⁸ *Shiji* 6: 259.

⁴⁴⁹ For the same reasons in 104 BC Emperor Wu built replicas of the Islands of the Immortals in his park. See *Shiji* 12: 482 and 28: 1402.

Ziqiao and the ceremonies held there, is followed by three-syllable verse, praising the immortal:

伊王君	Lord Wang,
德通靈	So virtuous he could communicate with the spirits,
含光耀	Shone with internal brightness,
純秉貞	Keeping himself perfectly pure.
應大道	In tune with the great Dao,
羨久榮	He longed for eternal youth.
棄世俗	Rejecting the world and its customs,
飛神形	He flew away, his form made divine.
翔雲霄	Soaring in the highest clouds,
浮太清	Floating in the Grand Purity,
乘螭龍	He would ride on a hornless dragon,
載鶴駟	Or drive in a car pulled by a crane,
戴華笠	Wearing a multicoloured bamboo hat,
奮金鈴	Making his metallic bells ring out,
揮羽旗	Waving a flag of plumes,
曳霓旌	Brandishing a rainbow banner.
歡罔極	His joys know no limits,
壽億齡	And he lives for ever and ever, without end.” (Yan Kejun vol. 2: 706; tr. by Holzman 1991: 81)

Naformátováno: Písmo: 10 b., Angličtina (Spojené království)

It continues with a recapitulation of the ceremonies honouring the immortal and finishes with addressing blessings to the people and the imperial rule:

祐邦國	Thus it is that Heaven will protect our land,
相黔民	Aid our common people,
光景福	Make our blessings glow,
耀無垠	Shining to the end of the earth. (<i>ibid.</i>)

As in Huan Tan’s rhapsody, the tone of the poet in this composition is detached – it ventures no personal feelings, and is simply a hymn of praise.

Around the same time the court had official rituals performed in honour of the Daoist figures, for Laozi in 165 AD at his supposed birthplace in Henan, and for Laozi and Huangdi the following year in the imperial palace itself.⁴⁵⁰ These were accompanied by solemn ceremonial music and elaborate ritual trappings. An inscription, known as *Laozi ming* 老子銘, which was written by the court councillor Bian Shao 邊韶 in commemoration of the first ceremony survives. It gives an account of Laozi’s life, of the circumstances leading to the introduction of the rites and a recapitulation of Laozi’s teaching. The prose account is

⁴⁵⁰ Emperor Huan 桓 (147-168), ruling in a period of decline of the Han dynasty, turned to Laozi with the hope that in him would find divinity able to restore the waning glory of the Han and introduce the era of the Great Peace. At the same time he performed similar rites in honour of Buddha. However, the difference between Daoism and Buddhism was not felt strongly at that time – Buddha was considered to be Laozi, who had departed to the west in order to convert the barbarians. On *Laozi ming* and on the deification of Laozi in general see Seidel 1969.

interwoven with four-syllable verse praising Laozi as the central cosmic deity, presiding over the universe.

Thus, from the first century onwards, but especially from the middle of the second century, the theme of immortals also becomes the concern of religious verses of praise, which were intimately connected with the religious Daoism of the period. They were written by renowned scholars and calligraphers on occasions of religious ceremonies honouring Daoist deities and also immortals.

From the scanty records that the dynastic histories preserve of such rites, only inscriptions and one rhapsody-*fu* survive, and not a single specimen of the performed hymns has come down to us. In the case of certain *yuefu* songs, however, there is room for speculation about their possible liturgical purpose. Such is the *Wang Ziqiao* 王子喬 song, probably dating from the Western Han.⁴⁵¹

王子喬	Wang Ziqiao,
參駕白鹿雲中遊	Rides a white-deer carriage to roam amid the clouds,
參駕白鹿雲中遊...	Rides a white-deer carriage to roam amid the clouds ...
過謁三台	He passes to visit the Three Platforms,
東遊四海五嶽	To the East he roams the Four Seas and Five Summits,
上過蓬萊紫雲臺	Above he passes the Purple-Cloud Tower on Penglai.
三王五帝不足令	The Three Kings and Five Emperors may not command him,
令我聖明應太平	He commands my sagely, brilliant [ruler] to receive the Great Peace.
養民若子事父明	That he may nourish the people as a son serves his father and ancestors,
當究天祿永康寧	Thus shall be received Heaven's favour and perpetual health and peace.

(Yuefu shiji 29: 437; tr. by Russel 1985: 214)

Naformátováno: Písmo: 10 b., Angličtina (Spojené království)

This composition was probably created at court and might have served a ritual function. Although not included among the sacrificial songs, it shows an affinity with the hymns commissioned for official ritual. The song shares the air of religious devotion and the structure and the descriptive mode of the sacrificial hymns and of Huan Tan's rhapsody on the immortals. It consists of objective, on-lookers description of the activities and movements of the immortal and in the second part shifts to blessing the emperor and his rule – health, long life, heaven's favours and peace.

The few surviving verse compositions with a ritual function exhibit close links in structure and language with the inscriptions on bronze mirrors from the period 50 BC-250 AD. A series of the latter describe immortals among the divinities of the four quarters and mythical creatures. The inscriptions describing the life of the immortals are quite uniform, using a standard set of formulation. An inscription consisting of rhymed seven-syllable lines reads:

⁴⁵¹ Zhang Jinyi 1981: 74.

”The Shang-fang made this mirror and truly it is very fine. Upon it are immortal beings, oblivious of old age. When they thirst, they drink from the springs of jade, when they hunger they feed on jujubes. They roam at large throughout the world, wandering between the four seas. Long life be yours, like that of metal or stone, and may you be protector of the land!”
 尚方作竟真大好,上有仙人不知老。徘徊名山采芝草,渴次飲玉泉飢食棗。浮遊天下敖四海,壽如金石為國保
 (Zhang Jinyi 1981: 65)

Like the verses discussed above, the inscriptions describe from an observer’s point of view the activities and roamings of the immortals, focusing on the aspects of eternal life, divine diet and unrestrained roaming, and conclude with a felicitation formula, wishing long life and happiness.

IV.2.2. Feasting songs

The majority of the Han *yuefu* songs dealing with the subject of immortality that have come down to us exhibit a structure different from the ritualistic pieces mentioned above. Several of them are presented in first-person voice, depicting the journey of the poet into the paradise world after taking the drug of immortality. Nonetheless, they likewise end with felicitation closure, wishing longevity and joy to the host and the guests. These songs are not included among the hymns meant for ritual use, and very likely they were used as entertainment at less official occasions, such as court banquets.

仙人騎白鹿	The immortal rides a white deer,
髮短耳何長	His hair is short and ears so long.
導我上太華	As he leads me up the Great Mount Hua.
攬芝獲赤幢	He grasps the magic mushroom, seizes red-fringe fungus.
來到主人門	We reach the Master’s gates,
奉藥一玉箱	And offer him a jade casket of drug.
主人服此藥	When the Master eats the drug,
身體日康強	His body in a day grows strong and fit,
髮白復更黑	His white hair turns black again,
延年壽命長	His lifespan lengthens, his years are increased. (<i>Change xing, Yuefu shiji</i> 30: 442)

This song can be divided into two parts. The first six lines develop the themes of the journey in search of the immortality drug, the encounter with an immortal, who guides the protagonist and helps him acquire the drug, and the final presentation of the elixir to the Master – probably the host of the feast. These situations are presented in sequential order, which creates the impression of a real journey. The second half is based on conventional felicitation formulas – after taking the drug, the host’s body becomes young again, his hair turns black and his life is lengthened. Unlike the ritual compositions, this ballad is composed in the first-person. On the other hand, in contrast to the subjective poetry considered earlier, no gap exists here between the speaker and the immortals – he immediately enters the otherworld of the

xian and becomes their companion. The imagery and stock situations pertaining to the immortality theme are adopted here to express good wishes to the host in a hyperbolic manner.

Cao Cao and Cao Zhi transformed the less personal *yuefu* form into lyrical poetry *shi*, turning it into a means for exploration of their subjective feelings and dilemmas, but their works also include *yuefu* compositions in the more conventional mode of banquet songs (Cao Cao's *Moshang san*, *Qichuchang* II and III; Cao Zhi's *Feilong pian*, *Pingling dong*). In these compositions, springing directly from celebratory popular ballads, the poets assume the voice of a celestial traveller to describe their heavenly journey and feasts.

遊君山	I roam on Mount Jun ⁴⁵² –
甚為真	Of such pure nature!
確磈砢砢	Jagged and craggy, rough and ragged,
爾自為神	One naturally considers it divine.
乃到王母臺	Until I reach Queen Mother's tower:
金階玉為堂	Golden stairs, a hall of jade,
芝草生殿旁	Magical herbs grow by the hall,
東西廂	Wings to the east and west.
客滿堂	Guests fill the hall.
主人當行觴	When the host passes the goblet,
坐者長壽	This company will live forever,
遽何央	How could it perish?
長樂甫始宜孫子	The start of eternal bliss accords with sons and grandsons.
常願主人增年	Constant is our wish: may our host increase his years,
與天相守	Together with that of Heaven! (Cao Cao <i>Qichu chang</i> III, Lu Qinli: 346)

The concluding felicitation identifies this poem as a banquet song, voiced by the guests to celebrate their host and wish him long life. It flatteringly compares their feast to a feast of immortals at the terrace of the Queen Mother of the West.

Two of Cao Zhi's songs on immortality – *Feilong pian* and *Pingling dong* - likewise consist of independent visions of immortals' life. The poet speaks in his own voice and immediately depicts himself as an immortal, freely journeying through the universe, feasting together with the immortals and receiving from them elixirs of long life. These visions contain neither reflections on his earthly condition, nor any volitional verbs. The human world is excluded and they are pure celebrations of an ideal world of eternal joy. Similar light-hearted variations of older ballads are also found among the works of Xi Kang, like some of his *Siyang shi* 四言詩 (“Four-syllable poems”) and *Dai Qiuhu ge shi* 代秋胡歌詩 (“Substituting the *Qiuhu* songs”), and were probably written for entertainment purposes.

⁴⁵² Junshan 君山, also known as Dongting shan 東庭山 or Xiangshan, is the name of an island in the north-east corner of Lake Dongting. The island is connected with the legend of the goddess(es) of river Xiang, to whom two of the *Chuci* “Nine songs” are dedicated.

During the Jin dynasty officials and poets at the imperial court were, like their Han predecessors, were often commissioned to compose ceremonial hymns. These were Songs for Suburban and Ancestral Temple Rituals (*Jiaomiao ge* 郊廟歌) and State Banquet Songs (*Yanshe ge* 燕射歌). No hymns exclusively devoted to immortals are to be found among them, but immortality themes and lore at times enters the ceremonial poetry. One of the songs, submitted by Chenggong Sui 成公綏 (231 - 273) in 269 for the Big Assembly Ceremonies at the First Day of the New Year (*Zhengdan dahui xingli ge* 正旦大會行禮歌)⁴⁵³ exhibits a very intimate link with the verse on immortality:

登崑崙，上曾城	Ascend Kunlun, climb the Storried Walls,
乘飛龍，升泰清	Mount a flying dragon, rise to the Great Clarity.
冠日月，佩五星	Capped in sun and moon, with the Five planets as pendants,
揚虹蜺，建擘旌	Raise male and female rainbows, hoist flags of comets.
披慶雲，蔭繁榮	Garbed in auspicious clouds, shaded by dense blooms,
覽八極，遊天庭	Scan the Eight Extremities, roam in the Heavenly Court.
順天地，和陰陽	Following Heaven and Earth, in harmony with <i>yin</i> and <i>yang</i> ... ⁴⁵⁴

(*Songshu* 20: 592; *Yuefu shiji* 13: 192)

This hymn unfolds a celestial topography identical to the one in the *youxian* verse of the period – Kunlun with its Storried Walls, Heavenly Court, Changhe Heavenly Gate, Purple Tenuity. Likewise it shares a common imagery with the accounts of immortals’ ramblings: flying dragons as steeds, robes of clouds, starry pendants, rainbows and comets for flags.

Throughout the Southern Dynasties the theme of immortality was extremely popular in *yuefu* songs performed at less official occasions, such as banquets and other social gatherings. Like their precursors – the feasting songs of the Han and Wei periods, they provided an elegant way to compliment drinking companions, comparing them to blissful, splendid immortals and at the same time to voice a wish for long life and happiness. Such is the group of songs with the title *Huansheng ge* 緩聲歌 (“Song of Languid Music”), which is part of the Miscellaneous Tunes (*Zaqu* 雜曲). Some commentators speculate that the expression *huansheng* 緩聲 (“languid music”) is a pun on *huansheng* 緩生 (“prolonged life”). There are surviving pieces by Lu Ji, Kong Ningzi 孔甯子 (early 5th cent.), Xie Huilian 謝惠連 (379 – 433), Xie Lingyun, Shen Yue. All of them, with the exception of the one by Xie Huilian, deal with the subject of immortality and share common imagery and vocabulary. The earliest of

⁴⁵³ Shen Yue in “The Monograph on Music” (*Yuezhi* 樂志) in *Songshu* writes that in 269 Fu Xuan, Zhang Hua, Xun Xu 荀勗 (ob. 289 AD) and Chenggong Sui were commissioned to write lyrics for the music used in the ceremonies for the First Day of the New Year (正旦行禮歌), for Songs for Presenting Longevity-wish Wine (王公上壽酒) and Banquet songs (食舉樂歌詩) (*Songshu* 19: 539).

⁴⁵⁴ The text contains no clues on the subject of these actions.

the group, the "Former Song of Languid Music" (*Qian huansheng ge* 前緩聲歌) by Lu Ji is a typical example:

遊仙聚靈族	Roaming immortals gather their numinous clan,
高會曾城阿	Assembled high, at the slopes of the Storied Walls,
長風萬里舉	Lasting winds rise from ten thousand leagues,
慶雲鬱嵯峨	Auspicious clouds congeal, soaring and lofty.
宓妃興洛浦	Consort Fu appears on the banks of Luo,
王韓起太華	Wang Qiao and Han Zhong ascend the Grand Mount Hua.
北微瑤臺女	From the North they call the Maiden of the Azure-gem Terrace, ⁴⁵⁵
南要湘川娥	From the South they invite the goddess E of the river Xiang.
肅肅宵駕動	Swiftly swishing, the night carriages move on,
翩翩翠蓋羅	Halcyon canopies soar and billow.
羽旗樓瓊鸞	Plumed banners nest rose-gem phoenixes simurghs,
玉衡吐鳴和	Jade shafts emit an euphony of chimes.
太容揮高弦	Tai Rong strums an upper string, ⁴⁵⁶
洪崖發清歌	Hong Ya rises a clear song.
獻酬既已周	When toasting each other went a round,
輕舉乘紫霞	Lightened they soar, mount the purple auroras.
總轡扶桑枝	They tie the reigns up to a branch of the Fusang tree,
濯足陽谷波	And wash their feet in the Dawn Valley waves.
清輝溢天門	Clear radiance overflows the Gates of Heaven,
垂慶惠皇家	Descending grace blesses the House of Lord. (Lu Qinli: 664-65)

The poem depicts a splendid feast of the immortals in the paradise of the Kunlun Mountains, surrounded by auspicious clouds and winds. Some of the merry companions are mentioned by name – the immortals Wangzi Qiao and Han Zhong, Fufei – the goddess of the Luo river, the goddess of the Xiang river and the Queen Mother of the West, entertained by the immortal musician Hong Ya and Tai Rong – the music master of the Yellow Emperor. The feast is connected with a night excursion in jade carriages under kingfisher canopies and plumed banners, which takes the participants to the mythic realms of dawn. The scenes are described in an impersonal tone from an onlooker's point of view. The account of the immortals' joys celebrates a paradise world abstracted from any reflections about the human condition. The poem concludes with a felicitation formula, addressing a blessing to the Imperial house (*huangjia* 皇家). Thus the last couplet makes it clear that the joyous feast in the heavenly chambers is, in fact, a reflection of a similar occasion in the temporal domain rather than an authentic religious vision.

Yuefu songs describing immortals, their travels and feasts remained popular throughout the Southern Dynasties. Many of them take as their subject one particular immortal and retell in playful, impersonal verse the legends connected with him. Popular subjects were the couple

⁴⁵⁵ Probably a reference to the Queen Mother of the West. *Shiyi ji* 11 describes her residence – the Kunlun Mountain, as having twelve terraces of azure-gem, each of them being a thousand feet broad and having bases of five-coloured jade.

⁴⁵⁶ Tai Rong was the music master of the Yellow Emperor.

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飄忽陵飛波 Swiftly [I] rise on soaring waves. (*Youxian shi* IV; *ibid.*)

Naformátováno: Písmo: 10 b., Čeština

Such poems are often ambiguous – lacking volitional verbs and personal pronouns, it is not clear whether the poet is assuming the first-person voice, picturing himself as a “roaming immortal”, or whether he is describing the travels of the immortals as an observer.

The ten fragmentary *Youxian shi* by Yu Chan likewise lack any references to the human world. Like Zhang Hua in most of the poems he assumes a first-person voice, picturing himself as one of the immortals inside the paradise realm. He describes the otherworldly scenery that surrounds him and his own actions, patterned on *Chuci*-type ritualistic gestures:

玉房石榻磊砢 Jade chambers, stone pallets randomly heaped,
燭龍銜輝吐火 The Illuminating Dragon, mouth ablaze, spews fire,
朝採石英澗左 At dawn I gather stone blossoms on the left shore of a stream,
夕翳瓊葩巖下 At dusk I blanket myself with azure-gem flowers beneath a cliff.
(*Youxian shi* 10; Lu Qinli: 875)

There is no distance between the poetic hero and the immortals; he directly enters in his fantasy the paradise world, which in the older poetry had been an object of unfulfilled desire. In other poems Yu Chan describes paradise landscapes and scenes from an onlooker’s point of view. Reflections on the human world of the poet are similarly excluded:

叩疏鑿石髓 Qiong Shu smelts stone marrow,
赤松漱水玉 Red Pine rinses his mouth with liquid jade.
憑煙眇封子 Master Feng is glimpsed amid thick smoke,
流浪揮玄俗 Xuan Su soars through the surging waves⁴⁵⁷
崆峒臨北戶 Kongtong borders on the Northern Court.⁴⁵⁸
昆吾眇南陸 Kunwu is far from the Southern Lands.⁴⁵⁹
層霄映紫芝 In the layered empyrean purple mushrooms glimmer,
潛澗汎丹菊 On the hidden stream cinnabar chrysanthemums float.
崑崙湧五河 Kunlun spouts out the five rivers
八流縈地軸 The Eight streams encircle the pole of earth.⁴⁶⁰ (*Youxian shi* 3; *ibid.*)

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⁴⁵⁷ Xuan Su 玄俗 was a Han dynasty *fangshi* who specialised in the concoction of herbal medicines which he sold in the market places (Wang Shumin: 166; Kaltenmark 1987: 191-193).

⁴⁵⁸ Kongtong 崆峒 is found with graphic variants 空同, 空桐 or 空峒 in *Zhuangzi*, *Shiji*, *Huainan zi* and *Shanhai jing*. In *Zhuangzi* 11 the mountain Kongtong 空同 is the place where the Yellow Emperor enquires from Guan Chengzi about the Dao (*Zhuangzi jishi*: 379). It is explained as the mountain in the far north beneath the Northern Dipper. In the post-Han Daoism the expression is imbued with cosmological significance – it is the empty cosmic region in which the primal Breath (*yuanqi*) was precipitated before the generation of the physical world (see Schafer 1981: 333). In Yu Chan’s poem it still appears as a toponym belonging to ancient mythic geography.

⁴⁵⁹ Kunwu 昆吾, often mentioned in the Han rhapsodies *fu*, is a famous volcano in the south that produced excellent copper and gold. Reputedly the sun stood above it at high noon.

⁴⁶⁰ The Eight streams may be the *bachuan* 八川, referred to in Sima Xiangru’s *Shanglin fu*. The *Wenxuan* commentary identifies these as the Jing 涇, the Wei 渭, the Ba 灊, the Shan 澆, the Feng 鄆, the Hao 鄆, the Lao 潦 and the Jue 潏. (*Wenxuan* 8/2a).

These poems illustrate that in the 4th century “roaming into immortality” verse is increasingly emancipated from its previous dependence on voicing personal feelings and thoughts to become an independent poetic subject. Visions of the immortals and their lands are not only more extensive and colourful, but are no longer conjured up as a contrast to the earthly existence of the poet. Descriptions of paradise sceneries, immortals’ feasts and ramblings are established as a self-sufficient poetic topic, not necessarily justified with the existential or social concerns of their authors.

In the course of the 4th century the *youxian*, “roaming into immortality” theme gradually becomes a free wandering of the poets’ thoughts into realms of myth, perceived as an aesthetic, intellectual or even religious experience above all. This new perception is also reflected in Tao Qian’s (365 - 427) poetic cycle *Du Shanhai jing* 讀山海經 (“Reading *Shanhai jing*”). Poems II-VIII from this cycle thematically fall within the *youxian* concerns. The opening poem, which serves as a preface, is more personal in expression and introduces the circumstances of Tao Qian’s writing the poems on mythic wonders described in ancient scripture.

孟夏草木長	Summer’s first month, the plants grow tall,
繞屋樹扶疏	And trees about my house spread thick.
眾鳥欣有托	The birds delight to have a roosting place,
吾亦愛吾廬	And I too have a love for my cottage.
既耕亦已種	I have plowed and I have sown;
時還讀我書	And now is time again to read my books.
窮巷隔深轍	My narrow lane is away from deep ruts, ⁴⁶¹
頗回故人車	And tends to turn my friends’ carts away. ⁴⁶²
歡言酌春酒	Joyfully I pour out spring-brewed wine,
摘我園中蔬	And pluck vegetables in my garden.
微雨從東來	A fair rain comes from the east,
好風與之俱	And a fair breeze accompanies it.
泛覽《周王傳》	I skim through the Record of the King of Zhou, ⁴⁶³
流觀《山海》圖	And glance over the pictures of Mountains and Seas.
俯仰終宇宙	Between an upward and a downward glance I encompass the universe,
不樂復何如	Where is there any joy, if not in these?

(Lu Qinli: 1010, based on the translation of Davis 1983: 154 with slight alterations)

Tao Qian describes the quiet joys he finds in his country retreat: rustic simplicity, the beauty of nature, the joys of wine and reading. When nature, wine, literature, art and his own mood are all in good accord, they reveal to him what paradise is and transport him to leisurely roaming throughout the universe. In the early immortality poetry it had always been the

⁴⁶¹ The phrase *shenzhe* 深轍 (“deep-worn ruts”) suggests the busy traffic on the paths of an official career, in contrast to the “narrow lane” of living in retirement.

⁴⁶² A.R. Davis understands this line as meaning that friends come to visit and translates: “But friends’ carriages often turn there”. (Davis 1983: 154)

⁴⁶³ The “Records of the King of Zhou” is *Mutianzi zhuan* (“Biography of King Mu”).

discontent of the poet with his world (the *tristia* theme) that prompted him to seek escape into the worlds beyond. For Tao Qian, however, it is the profound contentment and harmony he finds in his rustic life that open up to him the otherworlds of myth and immortality. The paradise of the immortals is not presented as an alternative contrasting the human existence, but rather as a broadening and extension of this very life. In the tangible reality of Tao Qian's country retreat lies the mythic realm of the immortals and the crossing over is smooth and easy, made possible through the aesthetic experience of reading and writing. The composition of the following poems is not justified as the expression of existential, religious or social concerns, but as an enjoyable pastime, in which letting one's thoughts spontaneously wander into the otherworldly realms is all that counts.⁴⁶⁴

The emancipation of the poetic worlds of immortality from this-worldly social and political concerns became complete in the literary salons of the southern court. In the highly cultured circles where poetry was practiced as amusement and artistic display, elegant improvisation was not primarily a means to voice one's mind, but a way to express one's verbal artistry and wit. The *youxian* theme with its precious imagery and striking figures provided a superb occasion to display one's poetic skill and cleverness. Poems on immortals were composed in mutual poetic exchange – as poems harmonising (*he* 和) with pieces written on the same theme by others, or extemporized on an assigned title (*fude* 賦得), or written in response to the requests of literary friends and patrons. Shen Yue's "Two Poems Matching a Poem on Immortality by Clerk of the Central Secretariat Liu" (*He Liu zhongshu xianshi* 和劉中書仙詩二首)⁴⁶⁵ are typical examples of such elegant poetic games, composed for pure enjoyment without any deeper social or existential concerns:

⁴⁶⁴ One exception is the last poem of the cycle, the subject-matter of which is not drawn from *Shanhai jing*. It contains certain political comments which might have been written with Tao's own period in mind. Critics generally understood it as being intended to refer to the downfall of the Jin dynasty. The apparent political character has prompted commentators to search for more subtle political references in the other poems as well. Thus IX poems's story of Kuafu 夸父 was perceived by Ming and Qing scholars as an allegory of "royal vassals and righteous gentlemen" who won posthumous fame although their attempts failed in their lifetime (Huang Wenhuan 黃文歡 *Tao shi xiyi* 陶詩析義, cited in Gong Bin 1996: 347). Others read in it Tao Qian's lament for the downfall of the Jin dynasty despite of all heroic efforts to restore it (Qiu Jiasui 邱嘉穗 *Dongshan caotang tao shijian* 東山草堂陶詩箋, cited in Gong Bin 1996: *ibid.*). Gu Zhi 古直 even interprets it as an allegorical expression of grief for the death of Sima Xiuzhi 司馬休之 while fleeing to Wei in 417 (*Tao Jingjie shijian* 陶靖節詩箋 4.14a, cited in Gong Bin 1996: *ibid.*). On the other hand, the last poem may not have initially belonged to the cycle at all and may have been joined to the rest accidentally in the process of transmission (Davis 1983 vol. 1: 153).

⁴⁶⁵ Liu Hui 劉繪 (458-502) was a member of the literary salon of the Prince of Jingling during the Yongming period, who held the post of clerk in the Central Secretariat (*zhongshu lang* 中書郎) between 491 and 493. His biography is contained in *Nan Qi shu* 48.841-843. He seems to have shared Shen Yue's interest in Daoist matters, as evidenced by another poem of Shen Yue, matching a Liu's poem on a Boshan censor (*boshan lu* 博山鑪) (Lu Qinli: 1646).

殊庭不可及 The Special Courtyard cannot be reached⁴⁶⁶
 風爍多異色 Its wind-blown flames are full of otherworldly tints⁴⁶⁷
 霞衣不待縫 Auroral robes have no need of stitching
 雲錦不須織 Cloudy brocades require no weaving.

清旦發玄洲 At clear dawn we set out from the Mystic Island
 日暮宿丹丘 At sunset spend the night at the Cinnabar Mound
 崑山西北映 Kun Mountain gleams towards the northwest
 流泉東南流 The Flowing Spring flows on to the southeast
 霓裳拂流電 Rainbow skirts graze flowing lightnings
 雲車委輕靄 Cloud chariots overhang with light sleet
 崢嶸上不睹 The dizzy heights above are out of sight
 寥廓下無見 The vast expanse below invisible
 (Lu Qinli: 1660; based on the translation of Mather 2003: 257 with slight alternations)

Like other "matching" *Youxian* poems by Shen Yue, cited above, these pieces draw heavily on *Chuci* topography and imagery. Despite the religious subject and imagery, the tone of the two poems is rather light-hearted, preoccupied with the display of verbal artistry and sensual beauty above all. The poetic wit is expressed in a certain amount of word play, such as the multiple negations "cannot be reached" (*bu ke ji* 不可及), "no need of stitching" (*bu dai feng* 不待縫), "require no weaving" (*bu xu zhi* 不須織), in the four lines of the first poem. In the 4th and 5th line of the second poem Shen Yue three times repeats the character *liu* 流 ("flow"), which is a homophone of Liu Hui's surname. The elaborate parallelism, the polished beautiful figures and the air of playful detachment accorded to this "roaming into immortality" fully conform to the artistic conventions of salon poetry.

While in the fourth century the earthly realm was often excluded all together, from the fifth century onwards it re-enters verse on immortality, but already garbed in immortality lore. Rather than being contrasted with the otherworldly realm of the immortals, the world of the poets is transformed into a similar paradise of beauty and refinement. The preceding chapters have discussed the merging of the otherworldly realms of immortals, the mountain worlds of hermits and the temporal landscapes of the nature poetry in many poems from the period of disunity. At the same time, Daoist masters and recluses were being extolled as transcendental

⁴⁶⁶ The Special Courtyard, Shuting 殊庭, refers to a place somewhere on the island of the immortals Penglai. It is mentioned in the annals of Emperor Wu in *Hanshu* 6.199 and in *Shiji* 28: "On the *jiawu* day of the twelfth month [in the first year of Taichu (104 BC)], his Majesty [Emperor Wu] personally performed the shan sacrifice on Mt. Kaoli [part of Mt. Tai] and made offerings to the Lord of Earth (Houtu). He came to the Eastern Sea, wanting to sacrifice from afar to the residents of Mt. Penglai, and hoped to get to the Special Courtyard (Shuting) there." (*Shiji* 28: 1402)

⁴⁶⁷ R. Mather speculates that the "wind-blown flames" (*fengbiao* 風爍) may be the name of a place, like the "Special Courtyard", or it may refer to the sacrifices performed by Emperor Wu, to which the preceding line alludes. It might well be a copyist's error for *fengbiao* 風標, which means "style" or "atmosphere". Mather 2003: 258.

immortals, and courtly feasts and excursions were often presented as gatherings of immortals amid paradisaical scenery.

Besides poems which use immortality imagery for decorative purposes, as tropes for court feasts, excursions and park sceneries, the *youxian* theme appears in compositions that deal with deeply felt private concerns. These, however, are less connected with the problems of society and more involved with the personal spiritual pursuits of the poets. Shen Yue, who engaged in a spirited correspondence with his Daoist friend Tao Hongjing, addressed some of his most private poems on immortality to him:

三清未可覩	The Three Purities I could never see, ⁴⁶⁸
一氣且空存	The Single Breath, too, I've tried in vain to visualize.
所願迴光景	All I want is to revolve my bright radiances, ⁴⁶⁹
拯難拔危魂	To rescue ills and save my endangered <i>hun</i> -souls.
若蒙九丹贈	If I should ever be honoured by a gift of the Nine-cycled Elixir,
豈懼六龍奔	Why should I fear the Six dragons' flight? ⁴⁷⁰

(Chou Huayang *Tao xiansheng shi*; Lu Qinli: 1637; see also Mather 1994: 119)

This is a very personal poem, poignantly expressing the dilemma which Shen Yue felt all his life. In Richard Mather's words, "Shen wanted to transcend the world, but kept being drawn back by a vaguely felt Buddhist compassion – a need to save suffering beings that was equated in his mind with Confucian civil duty".⁴⁷¹ The wistful regret that he lacks the resolve to break decisively with the world is also reflected in numerous other compositions that Shen Yue wrote both in the periods when he found refuge outside the capital and from the years he spent at court.⁴⁷²

Shen Yue's internal contradictions springing from a lack of singlemindedness recall the unresolved dilemmas that pervade Ruan Ji's *Yonghuai* cycle, discussed above, but the dissimilarities between the two poets are apparent at once. Shen Yue excludes the mortal world and his poem lacks reflections on human life in its aspects of transience, and its social and political ills. In other poems, such as "Returning to my Garden Home - in Respectful

⁴⁶⁸ The Three Purities (*sanqing* 三清) are the three heavens of Shangqing cosmology. The highest, Jade Purity (Yuqing 玉清), is the domain of the highest divinities who never endured life on earth; the middle, Supreme Purity (Shangqing 上清), is reserved for the True (*zhen* 真) Ones, while the lowest, Grand Purity (Taiqing 太清), is the abode of the *xian* immortals.

⁴⁶⁹ The microcosmic counterparts of the celestial radiances (or *jing* 景), usually 24 in number, within the body. These are brought through the visualisation (or rather "actualisation") *cun* 存 down to circulate within the human body.

⁴⁷⁰ The expression "Six Dragons' flight" may simply refer to the passage of time. However, given the context of the poem, it is more likely that Shen Yue is talking about ascending into heaven in the manner of a truly perfected adept (with a six-dragon harness) after taking the Nine-cycled elixir and achieving corpse-deliverance, *shijie* (see chapter III.6.).

⁴⁷¹ Mather 1994: 118-19.

⁴⁷² See Mather 1994, especially ch. 6 and 8.

Response to the Master of Huayang" (*Huan yuanzhai, fengchou Huayang xiansheng* 還園宅, 奉酬華陽先生) Shen Yue dwells at length on his worldly concerns – cares about his family and his official duties at court, which prevented him from embracing the path of Daoist withdrawal. Yet these are never condemned as "vulgar", "worldly dust", from which one should seek lofty disengagement. He remains an engaged public servant, even when he wistfully confesses the lack of strength and resolve to go after his heart's true desires. Moreover, his "Response to Master Tao of Huayang" adopts very concrete Daoist language to describe inner techniques and alchemic practices that he knew intimately from Tao Hongjing's teachings. Images of immortality are no longer metaphors for an ideal realm of one's aspirations, but refer to very concrete aspects and practices closely connected with the Daoist religion of the time.

IV.4. The passion for allusions in the court poetry on immortality

Yet another transformation can be observed in the "roaming into immortality" verse of the sixth century. The poets often do not describe one single landscape or scene taking place at a particular location in paradise with consistent actions unfolding (feast, celestial excursion). Instead, many of the poems take the form of long lists of allusions to otherwise disconnected stories of various immortals. For example, half of Yu Xin's poem *Fenghe Zhaowang youxian shi* 奉和趙王遊仙詩 ("Respectfully Matching a Poem on Roaming into immortality by King Zhao") consists of references to immortal personages:

京兆陳安世	In the capital – Chen Anshi, ⁴⁷³
成都李意其	In Chengdu – Li Yiqi ⁴⁷⁴ ...
白石香薪寺	White stones fragrant as fresh taro ⁴⁷⁵
青泥美熟芝	Green mud delicious like cooked mushrooms ⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ One of the immortals whose hagiography is included in *Shenxian zhuan*. He was a servant of a certain Guan Shuben 灌叔本, who also pursued the Way of immortality. When two immortals finally came to test him, Guan Shuben failed to recognize their true nature, and they took Chen Anshi as a disciple instead. Chen Anshi attained the Way earlier than his master and their hierarchical relation was reversed – the household master became religious pupil, and the former servant became religious teacher. See Campany 2002: 137-39.

⁴⁷⁴ Li Yiqi 李意其 also has his hagiography included in *Shenxian zhuan*. He was a native of Shu and was believed to have lived during the reign of the Han Emperor Wen 文 (r. 179 – 156 BC). He lived in an earthen den in a corner of Chengdu. When Liu Bei wanted to attack Wu, he invited Li Yiqi to court to consult with him the auspiciousness of his plan. Li Yiqi predicted to him the defeat of the Shu troops and Liu Bei's death. See Campany 2002: 228-230.

⁴⁷⁵ An allusion to the story of the immortal Master White Stone (Baishi xiansheng 白石先生). He is said to cook white stones for food. R. Campany points out, that the term *baishi*, "white stones", is probably not meant generically but signifies a particular kind of stone, the most likely candidates being milky quartz (*baishi ying* 白石英, "white stone blossoms") and hydrated magnesium silicate (sometimes termed *baishi hua* 白石華, "white stone flowers"). See Campany 2002: 292-294.

Naformátovano: Písmo: 10 b., Angličtina (Spojené království)

Naformátovano: Písmo: 10 b., Angličtina (Spojené království)

山精逢照鏡 Mountain spirits confront the radiant mirror⁴⁷⁷
樵客值圍棋 The woodgatherer came across a game of chess. ⁴⁷⁸ (Lu Qinli: 2362)

The tone of the poet could not be more detached; his attention is solely devoted to verbal dexterity and skilful construction of the individual parallel couplets. In this particular poem the numerous references to various hagiographic stories may be intended as examples, conveying different aspects of immortality. The allusions to the immortals Chen Anshi 陳安世 and Li Yiqi 李意其 in the opening couplet may express the priority of religious achievement over social hierarchy – the servant Chen Anshi had become the religious teacher of his master, and Li Yiqi, who lived in an earthen den, had predicted the defeat and death of Liu Bei. The white stones were used by the Master White Stone (Baishi xiansheng) as food, and the green mud was formed by Wang Lie 王烈 into balls, fragrant and tasty like glutinous rice. This couplet might be taken to imply the different order of paradise – what in the realm of immortals reveals itself to be delicious sacred food, is nothing but stones and mud in the world of mortals. The radiant mirror shows not the outer appearance, perceived by the mortal eyes, but the true nature of the demons and spirits. The allusion to the woodgatherer Wang Zhi refers to the different temporal dimension of the world beyond.

Each of the lines thus contains an allusion that from a different angle reveals the “otherness” of the paradise world. The images are no longer unified in one scenery or scene, however, but are strung together in a kind of “catalogue” of carefully moulded parallel lines. Each allusion, constituting a line, is contrived as an individual entity and is employed not to highlight a deeper meaning within the poem as a whole but simply to be juxtaposed in a novel and witty way to the other line of the couplet. Yu Xin moreover transforms his learned allusions into an artistic device to cast astonishing and unexpected metaphors (stones fragrant as taro, and mud delicious like a meal), which communicate the paradoxical air of the otherworld.

⁴⁷⁶ An allusion to the immortal Wang Lie 王烈, a friend of Xi Kang. While roaming on the Taihang 太行 Mountains he came across a hole in a cave, from which greenish mud was issuing like marrow and was warm like wax. Wang Lie made balls out of it, which smelled and tasted like cooked rice. He took several of these balls back to Xi Kang, but when Xi Kang examined them he found that they had lost their magical properties – they had hardened into green stones. See Campany 2002: 338-340.

⁴⁷⁷ In ch. 17 of *Baopuzi* Ge Hong names and describes several mountain spirits (Wang Ming: 303). The radiant mirror is a magic mirror carried by the Daoists on their way into the mountains, which showed the real appearance of spirits and demons (*ibid.*: 300).

⁴⁷⁸ An allusion to the story of the woodgatherer Wang Zhi 王質 who chanced upon immortals playing the game *liupo*. While he watched the game, hundreds of years passed in the human world - his axe decayed and his village turned to ruins. See above, ch. I.5., pp. 97-98.

The growing passion for allusions during the late Southern Dynasties is also evidenced by the *youxian* poems of Yu Xin's contemporaries – Dai Gao, Zhang Zhengjian, etc. Their poems often lack one single subject and elaborate no unified vision. Instead, like Yu Xin, they enumerate disconnected personages and actions. The nature of the allusions has also changed; now the immortals are seldom referred to by their names, as in all the poetry from Han throughout the Liang, but indirectly through some detail or attribute mentioned in their legends. For example, among the more than fifteen different personages referred to in Zhang Zhengjian's *Shenxian pian* 神仙篇 (“Divine Immortals”) not a single one is mentioned by name:

葛水留還杖	In the waters of Ge a revolving staff is left, ⁴⁷⁹
天衢鳴去雞	The Milky Way resounds with the departed roosters. ⁴⁸⁰ ...
玄都府內駕青牛	Inside the Mystic capital harness a green ox, ⁴⁸¹
紫蓋山中乘白鶴	Amidst the Purple Parasol Mountain mounts a white crane. ⁴⁸²
潯陽杏花終難朽	The apricot flowers of Xunyang never wither,
武陵桃花未曾落	The peach blossoms of Wuling have never fallen. ⁴⁸³
已見玉女笑投壺	Already see the Jade Maid, smiling, pitches arrows into a pot,
復覩仙童欣六博	Looking back at the Immortal lads having fun at <i>liubo</i> . (Lu Qinli: 2482)

These poems, which to modern readers might sound like versified riddles, would have been quite transparent for the poets from the literary salons of the Southern Dynasties, who shared a common interest in “records of the strange”. Like Yu Xin, Zhang Zhengjian combines images from various legends that originally did not have any common points.

⁴⁷⁹ *Geshui* 葛水 probably refers to the lake Gebei 葛陂 in Henan (*Shuijing zhu* 21). This line alludes to the story of the immortal Fei Zhangfan 費長房 from the Eastern Han dynasty. A bamboo staff carried Fei Zhangfan from the mountains, where the immortal Sire Gourd (Hugong 壺公) had taken him, back to his family. When he threw the staff into the waters of the Ge lake, it was transformed into a green dragon. Versions of the legend of Fei Zhangfan are recorded in *Shenxian zhuan* (Campany 2002: 161-168), in *Hou Hanshu* 82B/2743-45. He appears briefly in *Bowuzhi* 179, *Baopuzi* 2/20 and 12/228, *Soushen ji* 15.4, *Shuijing zhu* 21.

⁴⁸⁰ An allusion to the legend of Liu An's ascension to Heaven. According to *Shenxian zhuan* his dogs and cocks ate the remnants of the immortality elixir he had left behind, and followed him to Heaven (Campany 2002: 233-240)

⁴⁸¹ On the Mystic Capital see above, ch. II. 2., p.118.

The Blue Ox refers to the legend of Feng Heng 封衡 (styled Junda 君達) from the Han dynasty. After he attained immortality, he returned to his old village and often rode a blue ox, hence his sobriquet the Blue Ox Practitioner of the Way 青牛道士. His legend appears in *Bowu zhi* 5 and in *Shenxian zhuan* (Campany 2002: 149). In the *Hou Hanshu* 82 (*Fangshi zhuan*) he is called Master Blue Ox, *Qingniu shi* 青牛士.

⁴⁸² The Purple Parasol (Zigai shan 紫蓋山) is one of the peaks of Mt. Heng in Hunan. According to *Jingzhou ji* 荊州記 (“Record of Jingzhou”) of Sheng Hongzhi 盛弘之 (5th cent.; contained in *Taiping yulan* 39) there is a pair of white cranes soaring around the peak. At Mt. Zigai there was situated one of the thirty-six lesser grotto- heavens, called Zixuan dongmeng 紫玄洞盟. See Sima Chengzhen's 司馬承禎 (647-735) *Tiandi gongfu tu* 天地宮府圖 (“Plan of Celestial and Terrestrial Palaces and Residences”) in *Yunqi qijian* 27/8b/5 (CT 1032), and Du Guangting's 杜光庭 (850-933) *Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji* 洞天福地嶽瀆名山記 (“Record of Grotto-Heavens, Blessed Places, Ducts, Peaks and Great Mountains”, CT 599).

⁴⁸³ Allusions to Tao Yuanming, see above, ch. II.2., p. 119.

Nevertheless, in these disparate stories he finds similar details and manages to connect or juxtapose them in the parallel lines of a couplet. He shows a predilection for novel allusions that are not burdened with the symbolic and allegorical meanings of the conventionalised images. The staff in the Ge lake and the roosters on the Milky Way simply mean that their owners have departed from the human world. The image of the immortals playing *liubo* might evoke to the reader the opening of *Xianren pian* by Cao Zhi, or the story of Wang Zhi and the idea of disparity of time but their juxtaposition with the Jade maiden pitching arrows loosens these intertextual connections and they become merely examples of immortals' pastimes. Moreover, the discrete character of the lines and of the individual allusions makes it impossible to search for deeper levels of significance beneath their literal meaning. The cited examples by Yu Xin and Zhang Zhengjian are evidence that at the end of the Southern Dynasties the *youxian* verse often becomes an elegant poetical game, delighting the audience with the startling novelty of the metaphors and bizarre details, with surprising interconnections, and displaying the erudition of the author in matters supernatural.

IV.5. *Youxian* poetry, eulogies *song* and encomia *zan*

In the study of the theme of immortality in early medieval Chinese poetry it is important to consider not only specimens of lyric poetry *shi*, but also the treatment of this theme in other versified genres, such as eulogy *song* and encomium *zan*. Traditionally classified among prose writings (*wen* 文), these versified forms are usually excluded from the discourse on literature. This neglect, however, not only does them an injustice, since they are well-developed phenomena with an important position in the literature of the period, but also means that interesting interplays and interconnections with the then contemporary poetry, which are important for the general evaluation of the literary developments of the Six Dynasties have never been explored.

The aim of the eulogy and encomium is not to convey personal feelings, but to present an appraisal – of ancient kings, sages, or in this case, immortals. The eulogy and the encomium, which figure as two separate categories in Liu Xie's (ca. 465 - 522) *Wenxin diaolong* and in Xiao Tong's generic classification in *Wenxuan*, are in fact very close both in form and in content. They use the old form of four-syllable verse, with rhymes on the even lines, and employ straightforward and concise language, lacking poetical embellishments and metaphors. Liu Xie states that the encomium *zan* may be considered a branch of the eulogy *song*, but he

still feels the necessity to distinguish between the two. He derives the origin of the *zan* from the initial pronouncements of the ceremony, repeated by the music master during the worship of Yao and Shun. He goes on to write that "the original idea of the *zan* developed out of the desire to express praise or admiration. For this reason its style has always been terse, allowing little room for expansion. ... Its guiding principle is to employ brevity of language to portray adequately the feelings involved and to develop its literary expressions with the emphasis on lucidity."⁴⁸⁴ In fact, the term *zan* refers both to the critical appraisal presented by the historian at the end of each chapter of a dynastic history (for example Ban Gu's "Judgement from the Biography of Gongsun Hong in Hou Hanshu" in *Wenxuan* 48), and to a type of eulogy praising the virtues of a prominent historical personage (for example the *zan* written for portraits, see Xiahou Zhan's 夏侯湛 (243 – 291) "Encomium on the Portrait of Dongfang Shuo", *Wenxuan* 47).

According to Liu Xie, eulogy *song* is derived from the *song* section of *Shijing*, and it means "to describe a spectacle; its function is to praise great virtue and describe the performance of rites honouring it"⁴⁸⁵. Zhi Yu 挚虞 (ob. 312), the author of the earliest (and now lost) generic anthology (*zongji* 總集) *Wenzhang liubie ji* 文章流別集 ("Collection of Literature Divided by Genre"), even acclaims the eulogy, which "praises the concrete appearance of consummate virtue", as "the finest form of poetry".⁴⁸⁵ Liu Xie states that "the *song* must possess the qualities of elegance and grace, its language has to be clear and bright. In its narration it is similar to the rhapsody *fu*, but it must not succumb to florid and excessive language." He continues: "It has the spirit of reverence and prudence which characterises the *ming*, or inscription, but differs from it in not being admonition or warning. In its praise and honouring of its subject, it formulates beautiful expressions, but its content has the broadest scope. It has finesse and artifice adapted to the feelings aroused".⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Knechtges 1982: 53

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*:3. On Zhi Yu and his anthology see *ibid.*: 489-90, notes 14 and 15.

⁴⁸⁶ Shih Yu-chung, Vincent 1957: 52.

In the time of Zhi Yu the *song* genre was already, however, perceived to be in decline among the critics. He expressed sorrow that like the rhapsodies *fu*, in “more recent times“ it had started to deviate from the canonical standards. Liu Xie likewise criticises the generic deviations in works by Cao Zhi and Lu Ji, and sees their mixing of “praise and censure” in the same piece as an example of “the corrupt style of an age of decline”. Another subject of his criticism is Ma Rong 馬融 (79 - 166), whose eulogies, according to Liu Xie, are graceful like rhapsodies *fu* and sacrifice substance (*zhi* 質) in the cause of rhetoric.

Generic violations of the form during the Six Dynasties are likewise apparent in eulogies and encomia that take as immortals as their subjects. In certain cases the colloquial diction of the *yuefu* songs enters eulogies and encomiums that were supposed to be formal and terse. One example is the fragmentary preserved encomium on Shang Qiuzi 商丘子 from the series of *Liexian zhuan zan* by Sun Chuo (only two of them survive).⁴⁸⁷

商丘卓犖□□	□ Shang Qiu stands aloft,
執策吹竽□□□	Grasping a staff, blowing his pipes.
渴飲寒泉	When thirsty, he drinks from the cold springs,
饑食昌蒲□□□	When hungry, he feeds on sweet flag.
所牧何物□□□	What animals does he shepherd?
殆非真豬□□□	They seem not real pig,
我龍摠	These are my scattered dragons. (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 637)

Sun Chuo’s appraisal closely follows the data, provided by the immortal’s hagiography in *Liexian zhuan* – his mastering of the *yu*-pipes, his tending pigs, his diet of sweet flag and spring water. The concluding question and answer formula is taken from the *yuefu* songs. The poet assumes the voice of an interrogator and the answer is provided by Shang Qiuzi himself. The last three lines give the composition a highly colloquial, playful air – something that violates the conventions of the *zan* form.

The loosening of the formal conventions of the encomium is also apparent in the compositions by Guo Pu. Liu Xie criticized Guo Pu for picking up such trivial subjects as plants and objects from the *Erya* dictionary for his eulogies. Guo Pu also left a series of encomia on the pictures of the miracles described in the *Shanhai jing* (“Book of Mountains and Seas”), on which he had also written a commentary. Not only does he choose such an “undeserving” subject for appraisal, but in many cases he infuses his compositions with more personal air.

⁴⁸⁷ The hagiography of Shang Qiuzi is contained in *Liexian zhuan* 58 (Wang Shumin 1995: 140; Kaltenmark 1953: 166-67). He is said to be a man from Gaoyi 高邑, who was good at tending pigs and playing on the *yu*-pipes. At the age of seventy he was still not married, and he did not grow old. He revealed to the inhabitants of Gaoyi the secret of his longevity – to drink only pure water and live on the roots of sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*).

Naformátováno: Čeština

Naformátováno: Písmo: Čeština

萬物暫見□□□□□ Ten thousand things are fleetingly seen,
 人生如寄□□□□□□□□□□ Man's life is but a sojourn.
 不死之樹□□□□□□□□□□ The non-dying tree,
 壽蔽天地□□□□□ Its longevity spreads over heaven and earth.
 請藥西姥□□□□□□□□□□ [I] ask the drug from the Western Granny,
 焉得如羿 □□□□□□□□□□ Receiving it from her – like the Archer Yi. (Yan Kejun, vol. 5: 1268)

Guo Pu starts this encomium with a reflection on the brevity of human life, voiced in diction similar to the “Nineteen Old Songs”.⁴⁸⁸ As shown above, the theme of human transience is recurrent throughout the Jin lyrical poetry, often being expressed in almost identical phrasing. The image of the non-dying tree is thus introduced in juxtaposition to the human condition and as a hope, open to the mortals. The last couplet turns away from the subject of the encomium and speaks of receiving the immortality drug from the Queen Mother of the West. Although personal pronouns are absent, we can assume that here Guo Pu speaks in first-person voice, abandoning the impersonal attitude required by the *zan* genre. Rather than a mythic tree, the real subject of this composition is human mortality and the alternatives left for men. This encomium shares a common theme with Guo Pu's cycle of *Youxian shi*, and is closer to the *shi* genre than to the conventional *zan*.

After Guo Pu, the wonders of *Shanhai jing* attracted the attention of Tao Qian, who wrote a series of thirteen poems on “Reading *Shanhai jing*” (*Du Shanhai jing shi*). Tao Qian was undoubtedly very familiar with Guo Pu's encomia on the illustrations of *Shanhai jing*, and in taking the same topic he presented his individual version of them in *shi* form. The poems are based not only on mere observation of the illustrations of *Shanhai jing*, but mainly on the text of the book with the commentary of Guo Pu and his encomia, as well as on *Mu Tianzi zhuan*, which is the source for poem II and III. Like Guo Pu, Tao Qian in poems II - VIII transforms much of the ancient mythology into immortality lore.

Of all poems in the series, poem IV, which takes as a subject the Cinnabar tree (*danshu* 丹樹), is the closest imitation in verse form of the prose account in *Shanhai jing*:

丹樹生何許 Where grows the Tree of Cinnabar?
 迺在崑山陽 There, on Mt. Mi's southern slope.
 黃花復朱實 Yellow flowers, vermillion fruits,
 食之壽命長 Eat them to prolong your life.
 白玉凝素液 White jade congealed from milky juice,
 瑾瑜發奇光 Lustrous jade emits a wonderful light.
 豈伊君子寶 Not alone by gentlemen cherished –

⁴⁸⁸ Compare with:
 年命如朝露 The years allotted to man are like morning dew
 人生忽如寄 Man's life is as transient as a sojourn (*Gushi shijiu shou* No. 13)

見重我軒黃 It was cherished by our Yellow Emperor. (Lu Qinli: 1010)

It is interesting to compare Tao Qian's poem with what Guo Pu had written on the same subject. Although the cinnabar tree and the *jinyu* 瑾瑜 jade (translated freely as "lustrous jade") are connected in a single passage of *Shanhai jing*, he made them the topics for two separate encomia:

丹樹焯焯 The Cinnabar tree brightly blazes,
沸沸玉膏 Jade nectar spumes and spurts.
黃軒是服□□□□□□ This is what the Yellow Emperor consumed,
遂攀龍豪□□ And then he snatched the dragon barbells.
眇然升遐 Miraculously he mounted the distant,
群下烏号□□□□□□□□ The crowd below gave a cry of sorrow. (*Danshu zan*, Yan Kejun, vol. 5: 1248)

鍾山之寶 The treasure of the Bell-mountain,
爰有玉華 Are its jade flowers.
光采流映 Luminous colours pour out reflections,
氣如虹霞 The air is like rainbow aurora.
君子是佩 These are the pendants of a gentleman,
象德閑邪 The virtue of their image wards off evil. (*Jinyu yu zan* 瑾瑜玉贊, *ibid.*)

Tao Qian's poem and Guo Pu's encomia refer to the Cinnabar tree and the *jinyu* jade, described in *Shanhai jing* 2 as found on Mt. Mi:

. "420 *li* towards the northwest is Mt. Mi. On it are many cinnabar trees. They have round leaves and vermilion trunks, yellow flowers and vermilion fruits. Its fruits taste sweet like sugar, and one does not feel hunger if one eats them. ... [Upon the mountain] is jade nectar; where the spring begins, the jade nectar gushes and bubbles forth (*feifei* 沸沸). The Yellow Emperor ate them and accepted them as a sacrifice. [From the nectar] black jade is produced; the jade nectar soaks into the wood of the cinnabar tree; after the tree grows for five years the five colours become clear and the five tastes become flavourful. The Yellow Emperor picked the jade flowers and put them down on the sunny side of Zhong Mountain. The lustrous jade is most excellent, it has rich moisture and radiance, emitting the five colours.... The gentleman wears it to ward off the unauspicious."
又西北四百二十里，曰崆山，其上多丹木，其葉而赤莖，黃華而赤實，其味如飴，食之不飢。丹水出焉，西流注于稷澤，其中多白玉，是有玉膏，其原沸湯，黃帝是食是饗。是生玄玉。玉膏所出，以灌丹木。丹木五歲，五色乃清，五味乃馨。黃帝乃取崆山之玉榮，而投之鍾山之陽。瑾瑜之玉為良... 濁澤有而光。五色發作，... 君子服之，以禦不祥... (Yuan Ke 1980: 41)

It is evident that both authors closely followed the original text of *Shanhai jing*. Guo Pu uses the same descriptive binome - *feifei* 沸沸, to render the manner in which the jade spring gushes forth.⁴⁸⁹ Tao Qian keeps even closer to the original text – he is more concrete than Guo Pu in toponyms and imagery. His third line (“Yellow flowers, vermilion fruits“ 黃花復朱實) quotes almost verbatim from *Shanhai jing*, and his fourth line uses almost identical

⁴⁸⁹ In his commentary Guo Pu had identified the waters of the jade spring as an immortality elixir – he cites a certain text titled *Hetu yuban* 河圖玉版 (“Jade tablet of the River diagram“), which says that “on Mountain Shaoshi there is white jade nectar, consuming it, one becomes immortal“ (Yuan Ke 1980: 41).

phrasing (compare his “eat it to prolong your life” 食之壽命長 with “eat it not to feel hunger” 食之不飢 in *Shanhai jing*, whereby the phrase *buji* “not hungry” was replaced by Tao Qian with *shouming chang*, “prolong the life”).⁴⁹⁰ In his first encomium Guo Pu somewhat deviates from the text of *Shanhai jing* and adds the story of the Yellow Emperor’s ascension to heaven as found in *Shiji* 28. Tao Qian also refers to the Yellow Emperor in the last line of the poem, but keeps closer to the *Shanhai jing* text. All three compositions are characterized by an impersonal, detached tone, and closely emulate the text of *Shanhai jing*; somewhat paradoxically, Tao Qian patterns his *shi* poem even closer on the prosaic source. The only difference between this poem and the encomia composed by Guo Pu is its five-syllable form and the opening question, which gives it a more colloquial diction (although the encomia also underwent a certain colloquialisation as pointed out above).

Tao Qian’s third poem from the cycle devoted to the Mystic Gardens of Kunlun (Xuanpu 玄圃) is once again much more consistent with the *Shanhai jing* account than the corresponding encomium by Guo Pu (on Yingzhao 英招, the spirit of Mt. Huaijiang 槐江; in Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1248).

The other poems of Tao Qian’s cycle are, however, marked by more personal tone than Guo Pu’s encomiums. Thus while in the first half of the 5th poem he keeps quite closely to Guo Pu’s commentary and encomium on the Three Azure Birds (Yuan Ke: 54 and Yan Kejun: 1249), in the second half he assumes the first-person voice and playfully speaks about the message he wants to send through the birds to the Queen Mother of the West:

翩翩三青鳥	Fluttering are the Three Azure Birds;
毛色奇何伶	Their coloured feathers, how strange and lovely.
朝為王母使	In the morning they are messengers of the Queen Mother,
暮歸三危山	In the evening they return to the Three-peak Mountain.
我欲因此鳥	I would like through these birds,
具向王母言	Directly to tell the Queen Mother:
在世無所須	In this world I need nothing,
唯酒與長年	Save only wine and long life.

(Lu Qinli: 1010, based on the translation of Davis 1983: 157 with slight alternations)

In poem VIII Tao Qian most radically departs from his literary models and writes pure lyrical poetry rather than impersonal appraisal. This poem draws on Guo Pu’s commentary and encomium on the Country of the Deathless people (Busi min 不死民)⁴⁹¹.

⁴⁹⁰ The commentary of Guo Pu does not make any reference to the fruits of the cinnabar tree, and so the connection Tao Qian makes with prolonging life seems to be his own invention.

⁴⁹¹ *Shanhai jing* 6 account is very laconic: “The Deathless people are to the east. They are men with black faces; they live long and do not die”. Guo Pu comments: “There is the Round Hill Mountain. On it is a tree

自古皆有沒	From of old for all there has been death,
何人得靈長	What man ever gained eternal life?
不死復不老	If one does not die and does not age,
萬歲如平常	Ten thousand years appear ordinary.
赤泉給我飲	Let Crimson Spring provide my drink,
圓丘足我飲	And Round Hill supply my food!
方與三辰游	Then I will wander with the Three Luminaries ⁴⁹² ,
壽考豈渠央	How will my term of life ever end?

(Lu Qinli: 1010, based on the translation of Davis 1983: 159-60 with some alternations)

The first two couplets of the poem develop the old theme of human transience and the impossibility of attaining immortality, which had initially been voiced in the Nineteen Old Songs. The third couplet turns to Guo Pu's commentary and encomium, which connect the Deathless people with the Round Hill and the Crimson Spring of immortality. The concluding lines describe the poet's wishful transformation into immortal. Both in structure and diction this poem goes back to the *youxian shi* of the Wei-Western Jin period.

Tao Qian's cycle is remarkable for the ease with which he manipulates his literary sources and the freedom with which he crosses genre boundaries. Some of his poems are even closer to the prosaic accounts of *Shanhai jing* than Guo Pu's encomia while others are lyrical poetry *par excellence*. In the midst of detached description of the otherworldly miracles he unexpectedly assumes the first-person voice to make a personal statement. In presenting his own version of the theme, Tao Qian freely experiments with literary forms and deliberately confuses their conventions.

Tao Qian's poetic cycle is symptomatic of the fluidity of generic distinctions and interconnections between the literary forms in early medieval Chinese poetry. Not only were the eulogies and encomia changing, adopting a more personal tone, but the *shi* and *yuefu* poetry, on the other hand, were moving towards greater descriptivism and depersonalisation, as shown above. The blurring of the generic distinctions is most apparent in the case of the *yuefu* songs, which like the eulogies and encomia take one particular immortal as their subject (see *Xiaoshi qu* by Jiang Zong, cited above, 4.2.2., p. 231). Like the appraisals, their tone is

of immortality. If one eats of it, one lives long. There is also the Red Spring. If one drinks from it, one will not grow old." (Yuan Ke: 196-197). And here is Guo Pu's encomium:

有人爰處	Here are men who dwell,
員丘之上	Upon the Round Hill.
赤泉駐年	The Crimson Spring halts their years;
神木養命	The divine tree nourishes their life.
稟此遐齡	They are endowed with this long life,
悠悠無竟	Everlastingly, without end. (Yan Kejun, vol. 5: 1262)

⁴⁹² Sun, moon and the stars

impersonal, free of any subjective reflection, and they present what are merely playful variations on the prose account.

A composition praising the Yellow Emperor by the fourth century poet Cao Pi 曹毗 illustrates the merging of the poetical genres. In the Tang anthology *Yiwen leiju* 11 it is listed among the encomia *zan* with the title *Huangdi zan* 黃帝贊. It is also included in the Ming anthology *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 32 as a *shi* poem with the title *Yongshi* 詠史 (“Singing of History”).

軒轅應玄期	The Yellow Emperor answered to the mystic times,
幼能總百神	From childhood he could summon throngs of deities.
體鍊五靈妙	He transmuted his body by the arts of the Five Numen,
氣含雲露津	His breath contained the moisture of clouds and dew.
摻石曾城岫	Gathering stones on the ridge of Storeyed Walls,
鑄鼎荆山濱	He forged a cauldron on the shores by mount Jing.
豁焉天扉闢	So widely, the portals of heaven open,
飄然跨騰鱗	Swiftly he rises, mounting the soaring scales.
儀轡灑長風	With a pair of reins he scatters the everlasting wind,
褰裳躡紫宸	Raising his skirts, he arrives at the Purple Palace.

(Lu Qinli: 888; Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1095)

Cao Pi recapitulates the legends connected with the Yellow Emperor from a third-person, objective point of view, excludes his subjective reflections or feelings and adopts an attitude of praise. In diction this composition fully falls into the *song* and *zan* categories (only employing five-syllable line instead of four-syllable meter) and at the same time shows strong affinity with works from other poetic genres written in praise of immortals (such as Huan Tan's *Wangxian fu*, “Rhapsody on Watching the Immortals”)

A composition by Jiang Yan devoted to Wang Ziqiao has caused later anthologists a similar uneasiness in classification. This is one of four encomia on a “Snowy [or Cloudy] Mountain” (*Xue [yun] shan zan* 雪[雲]山贊). The preface explains that their composition was inspired by the sight of wall-paintings of a mountain landscape emitting clouds with immortals among them. The first piece is included both in *Yiwen leiju* 78 as encomium *zan*, and in *Yuefu shiji* as a *yuefu* song.

子喬好輕舉	[Wang] Ziqiao loved to rise lightened,
不待鍊銀丹	He did not wait to transmute silver and cinnabar.
控鶴上窈窕	Reigning a crane he ascended gracefully,
學鳳對嶺岫	Imitating the phoenix he faced the craggy heights.
山無一春草	In the mountain there is no single-spring grass,
谷有千年蘭	In the valley are thousand-year orchids. ⁴⁹³

⁴⁹³ The image of the spring grass in the mountains could be an echo of *Chuci Zhao yinshi*: “A prince went wandering and did not return/ In spring the grass grows lush and green“ 王孫遊兮不歸，春草生兮萋萋 (*Chuci buzhu*: 233). In early medieval Chinese poetry the image of the spring grass is commonly associated with the unstoppable flow of time. In poetry lush grass also commonly grows on old tombs and on the ruins

雲衣不躑躅 Cloud robes do not falter,
龍駕何時還 What time will the dragon harness come back? (Yan Kejun vol. 7: 390)

The circumstances of composition are consonant with the customary practice of composing encomia on paintings, but in form and diction this piece is very different from the standard appraisals such as the "Encomium for a Portrait of Dongfang Shuo" by Xiahou Zhan 夏侯湛 (contained in *Wenxuan* 47: 2119-20). It is written in five-syllable regular meter, with carefully ballanced parallel couplets (except the first and the last ones), and it employs the more artful language of the *shi* and *fu* forms. The third couplet involves a play on words, with the image of the single-spring grass juxtaposed to the thousand-year orchid in the strictly parallel lines. The image of the spring grass is generally associated with the passage of time. Jiang Yun further deepens these connotations through the expression *yichun cao* 一春草 ("grass that lasts a single spring") and makes the grass a symbol of transience. The meaning of the orchid image in the next line is deliberately shifted – the orchid, conventional symbol of virtue, is here characterised as "thousand-year old" and becomes infused with a new meaning of longevity. The penultimate line is a playful reversal of the time-honoured motif of faltering at the threshold of the otherworld (see for example Xi Kang's "19 Songs Presented to My Brother" VII, Liang Wudi's *Youxian shi*). Jiang Yan humorously alters the conventional trope by placing the negative particle *bu* before *chouchang* 躑躅 ("to falter indecisively"). In this way he consciously manipulates conventional imagery and twists its meanings. In its pursuit of verbal artistry and deliberate play with literary clichés, Jiang Yan's poem, although classified as encomium, is undistinguishable from the poetic genres of the time.

The examples just cited are evidence that in the post-Han poetry and especially during the Southern Dynasties the generic distinctions become increasingly blurred and the boundaries between the literary forms appear to be less rigid than the later classifications might suggest. The eulogies *song* and encomia *zan* often adopt more lyric or colloquial diction, or strive after ornate and artificial language, thus coming close to the point of merging with the *shi* poems. On the other hand, *shi* lyrical poetry moved towards descriptivism and emotional detachment. Even the poetic meter ceased to be a reliable criterium during the Southern Dynasties: while the archaic four-syllable line was still perceived as the norm, eulogies and encomia written in five-syllable verse become increasingly prominent, especially in the Daoist religious texts.

IV. 6. Court poetry on immortality and Daoist ritual hymns

of ancient palaces. The image of the orchid, a symbol of virtue in the *Chuci* poetry, here probably points to Wang Ziqiao's accomplishments.

The discussion of themes and motifs connected with the “otherworldly” poetic current on many occasions has touched on the question of the possible influence of Daoist poetry in court literary circles. The court poets were very familiar not only with the revealed poetry of the Shangqing tradition, collected by Tao Hongjing, but also with the liturgical music and hymns of the Daoist public ceremonies, which during the fifth century were elaborated and codified under the strong influence of Buddhism. The music and chants accompanying Daoist rituals seem to have captured the imagination of the literary elite to the extent that imitations of ceremonial verse were written at court. A set of seven ballads under the common title *Shangyun yue* (“Music of the Supreme Clouds”) is ascribed to Emperor Wu of Liang.⁴⁹⁴ It is not known whether the emperor composed the chants himself or commissioned some of his court poets to write them, nor is there any information about the occasions on which they were performed. There are no hymns of that title in the Daoist canon and very probably the emperor created a new *yuefu* tune, adapting folk melodies of the South and imbuing them with Daoist religious content.⁴⁹⁵ They describe divine sites of the Shangqing Daoism and assemblies of divinities and immortals, (with the exception of the 6th song, which is devoted to alchemy), using technical religious terminology.

While Liang Wudi’s *Shangyun yue* might not bear any immediate relation to actual Daoist hymns, Yu Xin wrote a set of ten stanzas on “Pacing the Void of a Daoist Master” (*Daoshi buxu ci* 道士步虛辭) as imitation of a type of chant performed during Daoist ritual. There are preserved Daoist counterparts of this series and a comparison of the two can tell us more about the interplay between religious and aristocratic poetry.

The tune of “Pacing the Void” (*Buxu* 步虛) had developed parallel to the Lingbao purgatory rites from the end of the Eastern Jin and by the 5th century “Pacing the Void” stanzas have already become an integral part of Daoist ceremonies. The reformer of Daoist liturgy Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406 – 477) had himself written a set of “Songs on Pacing the Void” for use in public rituals, which were probably part of the Purgation of Numen and Gem (*lingbao zhai* 靈寶齋) held on Maoshan on the second day of the twelfth month in honour of

⁴⁹⁴ According to *Gujin yuelu* 古今樂錄, “In the 11th year of the Tianjian 天監 era (512 AD), Emperor Wu transformed the Western tune (*Xiqu* 西曲) and made *Jiangnan nong* 江南弄, *Shangyun yue*, altogether fourteen pieces” (cited in *Yuefu shiji*: 726). The form of the seven *Jiangnan nong* pieces is similar to that of *Shangyun yue*, comprising lines of irregular length. However, in content this set is very different – it deals with beautiful women rather than with Daoist immortals. Besides the set by Liang Wudi, *Yuefu shiji* 51 contains three ballads with the title *Shangyun yue* by Zhou She 周捨 of Liang, Li Bai and Li He.

⁴⁹⁵ The tune of *Shangyun yue* mixed Wu melodies 吳聲 and Western tunes 西曲, native to the largely non-Chinese South of pre-Six Dynasties times, together with Miscellaneous dance music 雜舞曲 and foreign music (Li Fengmao 1979: 78).

the annual epiphany of Mao Ying 茅盈.⁴⁹⁶ These chants were believed to have a divine origin, having initially been intoned by divinities in the heavens and transcribed by Cao Zhi (!).⁴⁹⁷ During ceremonies chanting of the stanzas accompanied the burning of incense and the ritual peregrination of the Daoist master, and verbally reproduced sceneries and scenes from the highest heaven of the Jade Capital and the divine music of its inhabitants. They were accompanied by music performed on bells and drums, which together with the exalted verse transported the participants into the highest spheres of the celestial void.

The earliest preserved chants on Pacing the Void are a set of ten pieces contained in the “Scripture on Pacing the Void on the Jade Capitoline Mountain of the Numinous Treasure of the Pervasive Mystery” (*Dongxuan lingbao Yujing shan buxu jing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經, CT 1439), probably dating from the 5th century.⁴⁹⁸ They uniformly consist of five-syllable lines, but differ in length – there are ten, twelve, thirteen, fourteen and even twenty two lines-long songs. The first and the last piece frame the set, serving as an opening and conclusion. They exhibit more liturgical air, referring to rites performed by the Daoist master, to ritual gestures, burning of incense in honour of the gods, etc. The rest describe the scenery of the Jade Capitoline, the celestial roaming of divinities and immortals and abound in references to esoteric techniques, divine music and sacred scriptures. Generally they adopt a more religious and exalted tone than the “roaming into immortality” verse, but the strong connection with this current is apparent throughout the cycle:

嚴我九龍駕	I speed my harness of nine dragons,
乘虛以逍遙	Mount the void, roam footloose and carefree.
八天如指掌	The eight heavens are like finger or a palm,
六合何足遼	The six quarters - how could be distant enough.
眾仙誦洞經	Immortal multitudes recite grotto scriptures,
太上唱清謠	The One on High chants pure tunes.
香花隨風散	Fragrant flowers scatter along the wind,
玉音成紫霄	Jade notes complete in the purple heavens. (VIII)

⁴⁹⁶ Schafer 1981: 388-89. The title is listed in *Maoshan zhi* 9/11b (CT 304) and in the bibliographic section of *Tongzhi* 通志 (completed 1161), but the relation of these hymns to the ones that are preserved is not clear.

⁴⁹⁷ A story from the 5th cent AD tells that when “Chen Siwang [Cao Zhi] of Wei strolled in the mountains, he suddenly heard the sound of scriptures being chanted within the sky-vault – clear and remote, relaxed but brilliant. Being a person who understood literary composition, he transcribed an imitation of it. As these were the sounds of divine transcendence, Gentlemen of Dao reproduced them to make “Pacing the Void”” 陳思王[曹植]游山，忽聞空里誦經聲，清遠適亮，解音者則而寫之，為神仙聲，道士效之，作步虛聲。Liu Jingshu’s 劉敬叔 (d. ca. 468) *Yiyuan* 異苑, quoted in Ye Tinggui’s 葉庭珪 (fl. 1140) *Hailu sui shi* 海錄碎事, ch. 13a, p. 21a (p. 1765). See Li Fengmao 1979: 83-84; Schafer 1981: 388.

⁴⁹⁸ It is not known whether this series bears any relation to the original set by Lu Xiujing (Schafer 1981: 389).

The general plot, the images of dragon harness, mounting the void, “footloose and carefree” ramblings, the trope of looking down from the heavenly heights, even the rhetorical question in line four, all belong also to the conventional repertory of the poetry on immortals. The differences between the two are more a matter of degree and terminology used.

Yu Xin’s ten “Stanzas on Daoist Master Pacing the Void” are the first *buxu* poems written by secular poets in imitation of these religious chants.⁴⁹⁹ They are likewise written in five-syllable regular form; four of the poems have twelve lines, five consist of ten and one of eight lines. In diction they are, however, much more contrived, consisting almost exclusively of couplets of strictly parallel lines. Unlike their predecessor they contain no references to ritual procedures. Instead, the opening piece starts with abstract Daoist speculations:

渾成空教立	The Undifferentiated and All-embracing establishes the teaching of emptiness, ⁵⁰⁰
元始正圖開	The Primordial Originator opens correct maps.
赤玉靈文下	From scarlet jade divine texts descend, ⁵⁰¹
朱陵真氣來	From the Vermilion Mound true breath arrives. ⁵⁰²
中天九龍館	At the Middle Heaven – the Nine Dragons’s lodge, ⁵⁰³
倒景八風臺	Above the skylights – the Terrace of the Eight Winds. ⁵⁰⁴
雲度絃歌響	Clouds pass, strings and songs resound,
星移宮殿迴	Stars shift, palaces and halls turn.
青衣上少室	Green Robes ascend the Lesser Chamber, ⁵⁰⁵
童子向蓬萊	The lads go to Penglai.

⁴⁹⁹ By the Tang times it came to be accepted as a regular *yuefu* theme, and the corpus in *Yuefu shiji* 78 comprises sets by nine other poets. These are Yang Guang 楊廣 (569-618), Chen Yu 陳羽 (fl. 806), Gu Kuang 顧况 (ca. 725-ca. 814), Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778), Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫(772-842), Wei Qumou 韋渠牟 (749-801), Jiao Ran 皎然 (fl. 760), Gao Pian 高駢(d. 887), Chen Tao 陳陶 (fl. 841).

⁵⁰⁰ A reference to *Daode jing* 25: “There is something undifferentiated and all-embracing/ that was born before Heaven and Earth” 有物混成，先天地生。

⁵⁰¹ The texts of scarlet jade may be an allusion to the story of An Qi Sheng as recorded in *Lixian zhuan*, where he is said to have left a letter to Qin Shi Huangdi written in scarlet jade (Wang Shumin 1995: 70). But given the context, it more probably designates scriptures of the Lingbao tradition, for example the “True Writs in Five Chapters Written in Scarlet” (*Chishu wupian zhenwen* 赤書五篇真文), also known as “True Writs on Jade Tablets Written in Scarlet” (*Chishu yupian zhenwen* 赤書玉篇真文, CT 22), which is regarded as the ancestor of all Lingbao scriptures. At the initial differentiation of cosmic breath *qi* it appeared spontaneously in the heavens in the form of mysterious flickering graphs and was further refined by the Celestial Worthy through fire.

⁵⁰² Vermilion mount (Zhuling 朱陵) is the grotto-heaven associated with Hengshan, the Southern Marchmount (*Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji* 6b-8b, CT 599). In the Lingbao tradition it becomes the place where the corporeal spirits of the dead were refined to be reunited with the physical body (which underwent similar refinement in the Palace of Darkness) for rebirth or for continued existence in one of the heavens (Bokenkamp 1997: 382, 411).

⁵⁰³ Nine Dragons was originally the name of a hall from the Zhou period (Zhang Heng *Dongjing fu*, l. 209, commentary by Xue Zong 薛綜 (ob. 243 AD); Knechtges 1982: 260-61)

⁵⁰⁴ The phrase *daojing* 倒景 (“upturned radiances”), common in Daoist poetry, denotes the highest reaches of heaven, from where one beholds the celestial lights from above. The eight winds are the winds of the four cardinal and four inter-cardinal directions.

⁵⁰⁵ The Eastern Han author Zhang Chao 張超 has written a rhapsody *fu* on “Criticising the Green Robes” (*Qiao qingyu fu* 謫青衣賦, *Quan Han fu*: 606) where the expression *qingyu* 青衣 (“green robes”) denotes attendants and valets. In the context of Yu Xin’s poem these are the attendants of the immortals and divinities. The Lesser Chamber Mountain, Shaoshi shan, is the western peak of Mt. Song.

逍遙聞四會 Footloose and fancy-free, listen to the Four Assemblies,⁵⁰⁶
倏忽度三災 Suddenly cross over the Three disasters.⁵⁰⁷ (Lu Qinli: 2349)

The opening piece starts with allusions to the *Daode jing* – “undifferentiated and all-embracing” (*huncheng* 渾成) is an epithet of Dao in its original, chaotic and all-embracing state, while the “teaching of Emptiness” (*kongjiao* 空教) designates Daoism, which values non-Actuality (*wu*) and Void (*xu*). The second line of the couplet takes on a more religious note, referring to the supreme Daoist god, the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Commencement, Yuanshi tianzun, and to the generation of divine graphs at the cosmic origins. The rest of the poem contains references to revealed sacred texts, descriptions of celestial topography and sweeping heavenly vistas. In the last line the poet speaks of his (or of the True ones’) ultimate salvation – to be carried unharmed over the three calamities destroying the world at the end of a cosmic kalpa.

The rest of the cycle consists of a similar mixture of discursive passages, landscape description, images of celestial flight, of divine music and sacred scriptures.

Besides the first poem, three more pieces commence with Daoist philosophic speculations, for example:

無名萬物始 The nameless is the origin of myriad things,⁵⁰⁸
有道百靈初 Having the Way is the beginning of a hundred numina. (II)

要妙思玄牝 [In] profound subtlety contemplate the mysterious female,⁵⁰⁹
虛無養谷神 [In] Void and Non-actuality nurture the spirit of the valley. (V)

Discursive verses are common in the revealed poetry of the Shangqing tradition, the function of which was essentially didactic. Through the medium of verse the True Ones gave instructions, encouragement or even censure to their earthbound followers and often discussed philosophical or theological matters. They expounded basic tenets of classical Daoism and themes from the intellectual debates of the time, especially the relation between Actuality *you* and Non-Actuality *wu*, Reliance (*youdai* 有待) and Non-Reliance (*wudai* 無待), and even certain Buddhist concepts.⁵¹⁰ None of these is reflected in the Yu Xin’s discursive couplets,

⁵⁰⁶ The expression “Four assemblies” (*sihui* 四會) denotes the assemblies of gods and perfected.

⁵⁰⁷ Two kinds of “Three calamities” (*Sanzai* 三災) exist. The minor are sword, pestilence and famine, which appear during a decadent world-period. The major calamities destroy the world at the end of a cosmic kalpa – these are fire, water and wind.

⁵⁰⁸ Allusion to *Daode jing* 1: The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth, The named is the mother of myriad things “無名天地之始，有名萬物之母。”

⁵⁰⁹ See *Daode jing* 6: “The spirit of the valley never dies/ this is called the mysterious female. The gate of the mysterious female is the root of Heaven and Earth” 谷神不死，是謂玄牝，玄牝門，天地根。

⁵¹⁰ See Russel 1985: 274-283.

which take *Daode jing* as the only source of technical Daoist expressions. Moreover, these abstract terms are removed from a particular context and seem to convey no particular religious or philosophical lesson. In the couplets cited above Yu Xin even engages in word plays, consciously manipulating the original text. Thus, in poem 2 he puts together the first and second line of the famous *Daode jing* passage he refers to, and makes the Nameless, *wuming* 無名 (epithet of Dao) the origin of a myriad things, instead of “The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth, The named is the mother of myriad things“ 無名天地之始，有名萬物之母. Furthermore, he changes "having name" (*youming* 有名) into "having the Dao", (*youdao* 有道). In poem 5 he alludes to one of the most obscure passages in *Daode jing* and once again plays with the wording of his source, with the result that the surprising twist overshadows the possible philosophic message in the verse. It seems that Yu Xin uses these obscure and paradox expressions more for the verbal effect alone than for the elucidation of a particular religious doctrine.

Yu Xin devotes considerable space to the description of celestial landscapes. These take the form of polished parallel couplets, full with beautiful images of sparkling gems, colours and light.

五香芬紫府 The five fragrances waft in the Purple Prefecture,
千燈照赤城 A thousand lamps lit up the Crimson City. (VII)

北閣臨玄水 The Northern gate towers stand beside the Dark River ,
南宮坐絳雲 The Southern palace rests on scarlet clouds. (VIII)

碧玉成雙樹 Azure jade changes into a couple of trees,
空青為一林 Hollow malachite makes a whole forest.⁵¹¹ (IX)

The heavenly sceneries resound with all-pervading divine music, which sets everything in motion:

回雲隨舞曲 The turning clouds follow the dance tunes,
流水逐歌弦 The flowing water trails after songs and strings. (III)

These verses exemplify the striving of the late Southern Dynasties authors for beautiful, visually and sensually powerful landscape descriptions, already discussed in chapter II. Yu Xin's visions abound in colour effects, further emphasised by the parallelism of the lines, which juxtapose purple (*zi* 紫) and crimson (*chi* 赤), *xuan* 玄 (black with a hint of reddish)

⁵¹¹ The term "hollow malachite" (*kongqing* 空青, lit. „hollow green“) designates malachite (basic copper carbonate) in the nodular form with large holes, as distinguished from the stratified form, *cengqing* 曾青. See Needham 1976 (V.3): 15. Note the merging of the mineral and floral kingdom in this couplet – a feature of paradise descriptions, which was emphasised in ch. II.4.

and scarlet (*jiang* 絳), *bi* 碧 (azure, cyan) and *qing* 青 (green-blue). These are no ordinary colours, but the most sacred, mystic Daoist hues, as already pointed out above. Yu Xin furthermore infuses the scenery with auditory and olfactory perceptions (the heavenly music in poem III, the wafting fragrances in poem VII) and with the feelings of cold and warmth, suggested by images connected with the North and darkness (Northern towers, Black river) and with the South and sunlight (Southern palace, scarlet, bright lamps). The otherworldly landscapes are thus made almost tangible for the listener. These descriptions fully accord with the aesthetic pursuits of the court poets and are at the same time close to the celestial sceneries found in the religious verse. The heightened aesthetic experience seems to interweave with religious sentiments. The sheer beauty and striking luminosity of these scenes in themselves offer a direct glimpse of the higher spheres of the divine.

Very prominent in Yu Xin's cycle are images of ecstatic celestial travels through the most mystic reaches of the universe:

寂絕乘丹氣	In utter silence, mounting cinnabar breath,
玄明上玉虛	In mystic luminosity, rising to the Jade Void. (II)
飄飄入倒景	Soaring and swirling enter the upturned lights,
出沒上煙霞	Emerging, disappearing, rise into the misty auroras.(VI)
歸心游太極	Returning the heart to roam in the Great Culmen,
回向入無名	Turning direction and enter the Nameless. (VII)

In their mystic exaltation these passages are closer to religious poetry than to the then contemporary “roaming into immortality” verse, where the theme of cosmic journey had receded to the background.

In his cycle Yu Xin often refers to Daoist festivals, which were occasion for major ceremonies:

三元隨建節	The Three Primes correspond to the establishment of the seasons,
八景逐回輿	The eight radiances follow the returning carriage ⁵¹² (II)
上元風雨散	On the Upper Prime winds and rain scatter,
中天歌吹分	At the Central Heaven songs and pipes disperse (VIII)

⁵¹² The eight radiances (*bajing* 八景, also translated as eight phosphors) in Daoist poetry often serve as a propelling power for the chariots of the True Ones. There are differing explanations of this phrase – they are interpreted either as the breaths of the eight colours of the eight heavens (Yan Dong 嚴東, 5th cent.); or as the seven luminaries (sun, moon, the five planets) together with the Collective Breath of the Supreme Original, *Shangyuan zongqi* 上元總氣 (Cheng Xuanying 成玄英, ca. 600 - ca. 660); or as the seven luminaries together with the Northern Dipper. See Maspero 1981: 553.

The expression Three Primes (*sanyuan* 三元) most generally refers to the basic cosmological concept that the triad heaven-earth-water was formed from the divisions of primal breath *qi*.⁵¹³ The fifteenth days of the first, seventh and tenth months are the festivals of the Three Primes. These are the days when the gods in the Three Offices (*sanguan* 三官) of Heaven, Earth and Water assemble to inspect the doings of men and assess the life and death records of all humans, the living and the dead. The Three Primes of song II probably refer to these festive occasions, which had become major liturgical festivals marked by communal rites and by reunions with the gods. The Upper Prime (Shangyuan 上元) mentioned in song VIII denotes the major festival on the 15th day of the first month.

While adopting from religious poetry the more exalted imagery of celestial flights, heavenly landscapes, divine music and sacred scriptures, Yu Xin indulges in the fashion of stringing together numerous allusions that was current in the literary salons of his time. His “Pacing the Void” stanzas abound in references to stories of immortals from literary sources, recording lives of immortals, like *Shenxian zhuan* and *Liexian zhuan*. No references of this kind are to be found in the religious Daoist verse. The older *xian* immortals held such a low status within the celestial hierarchy that they never attracted the interest of the religious authors, who turned their attention to much loftier divinities and sublime celestial spheres. Furthermore, allusions are not so typical in Daoist poetry, which used much more straightforward and less artificial language.

In poem IX Yu Xin even refers to unsuccessful human attempts to achieve immortality:

漢武多驕慢	Emperor Wu of Han was too arrogant, ⁵¹⁴
淮南不小心	The King of Huainan was not careful. ⁵¹⁵
蓬萊入海底	Penglai has sunk to the bottom of the sea,
何處可追尋	At what place should one look for it ? ⁵¹⁶ (IX)

⁵¹³ In various Daoist traditions the third member differs – while the Celestial Masters speak of celestial (*yang*), terrestrial (*yin*) and centrally harmonious (*zhonghe*) breaths, the Shanqing and the Lingbao traditions refer to the heaven-earth-water triad.

⁵¹⁴ After meeting the Queen Mother of the West, Emperor Wu failed to follow her teachings and benefit from the sacred texts she had bestowed on him. The Goddess had said of him that his appearance was arrogant and his spirit was tarnished (形慢神穢) and lacked “immortal’s talent” (*xiancai* 仙才), and so he never achieved immortality (*Han Wudi neizhuan* cited in *Yu Zishan jizhu* 1980: 401).

⁵¹⁵ According to *Baopuzi* 20, when Liu An was honoured with an audience with the Thearch on High, he behaved inappropriately – sat spread-legged, spoke loudly and referred to himself by the form reserved for rulers - “I, the Single man” (*guaren* 寡人). For this rude breach of etiquette he was assigned to guard the celestial latrine for three years (Wang Ming: 350). In other versions Liu An behaved disrespectfully towards the immortal dignitaries (*xianbo* 仙伯) he hosted (*Taiping yulan* 186/7b, *Taiping guanji* 8.1). After the three years of punishment he became an immortal without any office and rank.

⁵¹⁶ Allusion to the unsuccessful sea-expedition of Qin Shi Huangdi and other rulers in search of Penglai – when the boats came close, the island sank in the sea.

The lack of aptitude for immortality shown by various ancient sovereigns that were famous for their unfulfilled otherworldly aspirations had been a popular motif in the *youxian* verse at least since Guo Pu.⁵¹⁷ This was not, however, a very appropriate theme for Daoist ritual hymns, honouring divinities.

The last poem of Yu Xin's cycle consists almost exclusively of learned allusions to stories of immortals contained in *Liexian zhuan* and *Shenxian zhuan*.

麟洲一海闊	The Unicorn continent is a whole ocean away, ⁵¹⁸
玄圃半天高	The Mystic Gardens rise through half the Heaven.
浮丘迎子晉	Floating Hill invites Zi Jin, ⁵¹⁹
若士避盧敖	Master Ruo avoided Lu Ao. ⁵²⁰
經餐林慮李	Customary dine on plums from mount Linlu, ⁵²¹
舊食緱山桃	Since long time savour peaches from mount Wei. ⁵²²
成丹須竹節	To transform the elixir bamboo segments are needed, ⁵²³
刻髓用蘆刀	To cut marrow reed knife is used. ⁵²⁴
無妨隱士去	Unhindered, the Concealed Master goes -
即是賢人逃	This is the way the sage escapes. ⁵²⁵ (X)

⁵¹⁷ See for example Guo Pu's *Youxian shi* VI:

燕昭無靈氣 King Zhao of Yan never had the numinous breath,
漢武非仙才 Emperor Wu of Han lacked immortal's talent. (Lu Qinli: 866)

⁵¹⁸ The Unicorn Continent is one of the paradises described in *Shizhou ji* ("Record of the Ten Continents") – this is the Phoenix and Unicorn continent 鳳麟洲, situated in the Western Sea (Wang Guoliang 1993: 68). This line may be also translated as "The Unicorn continent is broad as a whole ocean".

⁵¹⁹ Zi Jin is the immortal Wang Ziqiao. This line alludes to the story of Wang Ziqiao and Master Fu Qiu 浮丘, Floating Hill, as recorded in *Liexian zhuan* 28. There it is said that Wanzhi Qiao roamed between the Yin and Luo rivers, met the Daoist master Fu Qiu, and together they ascended mount Song (Wang Shumin 1995: 65).

⁵²⁰ The story of Lu Ao 盧敖 and Master Ruo 若士 is recorded in *Shenxian zhuan* (Campany 2002: 330-331). Ge Hong in fact, borrows this story from *Huainanzi* and Wang Chong's *Lunheng*. Lu Ao met the ancient immortal Master Ruo in the extreme north and asked him to become his master and friend. But Master Ruo resented Lu Ao's boasting and left him, rising into the highest heavens.

⁵²¹ Mount Linlu 林慮, known also by the names Longlu 隆慮 and Tonglu is situated in western Lin district, Henan Province. It appears in *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography of Sun Bo 孫博, who entered it, refined a divine elixir there and departed as an immortal (Campany 2002: 334-35). It also figures in some versions of the hagiography of Bo He 帛和. The dining on plums from Linlu mountain is not attested elsewhere.

⁵²² The peaches from Mount Wei are connected with the story of the immortal Ge You 葛由 from *Liexian zhuan* 23. Being chased by the nobles of Shu, he entered Mount Wei 緱 and none of his chasers who went after him returned – they all became immortals. Other variants add that on this mountain grow peaches: "If one gets a single peach from Mount Wei, although he will not become immortal, it is enough to make him extraordinary" (Wang Shumin 1995: 50-51).

⁵²³ Probably a reference to an elixir mentioned in *Shenxian zhuan*, the Red Spring Divine Elixir (*Hongquan shendan* 紅泉神丹), the recipe for which was obtained by Shen Wentai 沈文泰, who transmitted it to Li Wenyan 李文淵. This method consists of cooking the elixir with bamboo root juice (Campany 2002: 334). In *Baopuzi* 4 Ge Hong gives instructions for making a certain Li Wen's 李文 elixir, by combining cinnabar with hematite (*baisu* 白素) and cooking them in bamboo juice (Wang Ming 1985: 80).

⁵²⁴ The possible allusion in this sentence is not clear. The commentary of Ni Fan 倪璠 cites a sentence from *Hanshu*. *Jiaosi zhi*: "先鬻鶴", commented by Yan Shigu: "yu 鬻 is the old form of zhu 煮 ('to cook'), and 鬻 is the old form of sui 髓 ('marrow')". Therefore, Ni Fan supposes that sui ("marrow") in Yu Xin's poem might likewise mean crane's marrow (See *Yu Zishan jizhu* 1980: 402). However, the meaning of the reed knife in conjunction with marrow is not clear – probably this is an allusion to some elixir.

In diction and content this piece is undistinguishable from the other *youxian* poems of Yu Xin and his contemporaries, which often take the form of long lists of allusions.

Although the title of the cycle makes it clear that it was intended as an imitation of liturgical hymns, what emerge under the brush of the court poet are no longer religious chants. Rather than keeping true to his model, Yu Xin composes court “roaming into immortality” verse, but infuses it with a much stronger Daoist air. The “Daoisation” is expressed in the adoption of esoteric terms and expressions, ecstatic flight imagery, names of mystic celestial locations and references to Daoist festivals and sacred scriptures. At the same time the poet fully indulges in the passions of the literary salons – elaborate parallelism, deliberate verbal effects, paradoxical figures, word-play and extensive lists of allusions without deeper religious meaning. Even the discursive parts, fashioned after *Daode jing*, take the form of verbal games, whose major aim is to astonish with paradoxes and obscure figures of speech rather than expose the Dao. Yu Xin’s “Stanzas on Pacing the Void” further attest to the aesthetisation of the “otherworldly” poetic current during the Southern Dynasties and the fluidity of the boundaries between “secular” and “religious” poetry.

⁵²⁵ Probably a reference to the story of Mister White Stones 白石先生. In *Shenxian zhuan* he is given the sobriquet Concealed Immortal, Yindun xian 隱遁仙, because “he was not anxious to ascend to the heavens to become a transcendent official, nor did he seek fame” (Campany 2002: 294).

Conclusion

The present study has traced the development of the theme in immortality in early medieval Chinese poetry on the basis of compositions belonging to different versified genres (*shi*, *yuefu*, *sao*, *fu*, *song* and *zan*) and traditionally classified under different thematic categories (*youxian*, *yonghuai*, *zhaoyin*, *xuanyan*, *youlan*, *shanshui*). The transformations of motifs and imagery that have been discussed in detail above allow us to distinguish three major periods in the development of the verse on immortality: a period of constitution of *youxian* verse inspired by early religious beliefs, from the earliest preserved compositions of the 2nd century BC until the early 3rd century AD (Western-Eastern Han); a period of subjective poetry, increasingly coloured by philosophical Daoist speculations, which covers the end of the Eastern Han, the Wei, Western Jin periods and fades away during the Eastern Jin; and finally a period of aesthetisation and objectivisation in the court poetry from the fifth century up to the Sui dynasty.

From its origins the poetry on immortality was always deeply influenced by the *Chuci* poetry and its Han interpretations. From the *Chuci* poetics it adopted the theme of the cosmic journey, the ornate, exotic imagery and diction and the intimate interconnections between *itineraria* and *tristia* themes. Throughout the Six Dynasties *Chuci* remained an ever-renewed source of inspiration for the poets, who, in different periods and in differing social and intellectual contexts exploited and modified various tropes from the *Chuci* poetics, imbuing them with new meanings. Thus, the cosmic *itineraria* could be transformed into an ecstatic journey of a Daoist adept, into a mystic mountain ascent, or into ornate descriptions of splendid celestial processions. The *tristia* theme, which had initially been an allegorical voicing of the sorrows of a rejected loyal courtier, could lose its socio-political undertones, and become anguished existential questioning, induced by the awareness of the transience and limitations of human life, by the search for the authentic “natural-self”, thus turning into *yonghuai*, “singing of one’s heart”. The splendid luminous imagery surrounding the *Chuci* celestial deities is adopted as attributes of immortals and acquires new significance in the context of immortality. The feasts with music and dance, that had transported the original *Chuci* protagonist into higher spheres, could become in the Six Dynasties the sole theme of a “roaming into immortality” poem. They could even replace the distant journey as a hallmark of immortality, or be transformed into highly embellished images of court banquets and gatherings.

Other factors besides *Chuci* poetics that shaped and determined the “otherworldly” poetic current were the more popular imagery and colloquial diction of the late Han *yuefu* songs, some influences from ritual hymns, and above all the impact of Daoist traditions of thought. The present study has attempted to demonstrate that the verse on immortality had a much stronger religious inspiration than traditional interpretation would credit it with. The various aspects of the state of *xian*-ship, the techniques for its achievement, the regimen and fare of the immortals, their activities, the vocabulary used, are all rooted in Daoist texts and I have tried to trace them back to their prose sources. As the concepts connected with immortality and its achievement evolved and were transformed in Daoist religious traditions, the immortality verse reflected these transformations. In the first two periods, as outlined above (Han throughout Jin) the poetry on immortals was shaped by early Daoist thought as developed in *Zhuangzi*, *Neiye* and *Huainanzi*. The poets stressed the spiritual aspects of *xian*-immortality – mystic withdrawal from the outside world, purity and simplicity, unity with the Dao, unrestrained freedom, concretized through the images of ecstatic flight through the cosmos. Very prominent in the immortality verse of these periods were the techniques of inner cultivation, developed in the pre-Han and early Han Daoist texts – breathing exercises, gymnastics, meditation, absorption of cosmic fluids. The current of the *yuefu* songs on the other hand reflected the concept of immortality as practiced at the Han courts – immortality in terms of endless prolongation of life achieved through consumption of a ready-made elixir. The perception of the immortals in the mystical vein of *Zhuangzi* dominated the verse on immortality of the 3rd and 4th century, sustained by the flourishing of the *xuanxue* discussions. In the poetry of this period abstract philosophical concepts and terms became interwoven with then current Daoist methods of nourishing life.

From the beginning of the fifth century a significant change can be observed in the *youxian* theme. The poets of the Southern Dynasties increasingly refer to new immortal personages popular in fourth century hagiographic sources and records of strange phenomena. The techniques of spiritual cultivation, based on pre-Han and early Han Daoist sources, were replaced by the higher art of alchemy. From the Liang Dynasty onwards the “otherworldly” verse exhibits a very intimate connection with the then current esoteric practices – there are references to specific alchemical concoctions of the Shangqing tradition, an emphasis on divine scriptures that was central to the Shangqing school, and a general “daoisation” of the attainment of immortality, which is perceived more as mastering arcane arts than as travelling to a distant paradise. In many cases the poems reflect the actual pursuits (spiritual and alchemical) of their authors, and some were even composed on the occasion of consuming or

being presented with a drug. Others are addressed as poetic correspondence to Daoist masters, friends of the poets, or were written on the occasion of visits to Daoist temples. Some of the court verse on immortality was created under the direct influence, and even as imitation, of Daoist ritual hymns.

The study has many times posed the question of the possible influences of Daoist verse on the “secular” poets of the Southern Dynasties. As shown above, both court and religious poetry share many common themes, images and vocabulary. Because the form and style of Daoist religious poetry was determined by much the same traditions that shaped the manner of poetical expression in the *youxian* literature of the period, it is not easy to draw a precise line between the independent stylistic development of the “roaming into immortality” current and the possible impacts of revealed poetry. The influence of the religious verse is most obvious in the adoption of certain esoteric terms and expressions, more exalted imagery and the inclusion of some new paradise lands. However, while Daoist verse turned to a novel, loftier pantheon of celestial beings and divinities, the court poets showed a predilection for the older *xian*-immortals from sources preceding the Shangqing revelations. Neither did the secular poets dare to venture into the mystic regions of the highest empyrean, recently disclosed by the Shangqing divinities. The fascination of court poets with alchemical elixirs as a major agent of immortality is also at odds with the Shangqing hierarchical arrangement of practices, which privileged meditation, visualization and interiorized alchemical processes. Moreover, the style of the immortality verse with its elaborate parallelism, deliberate verbal effects and extensive lists of allusions was generally in line with the poetic pursuits of the literary salons. Poets such as Yu Xin seemed to be interested not so much in the religious or philosophical message of their Daoist sources, as in using them as a source of striking images and new metaphors above all. Their numerous allusions to Daoist texts commonly take the form of verbal games, whereby artistic and witty manipulation of language matters more than any esoteric meaning. The verse on immortality created in the literary salons of the aristocrats reflects the poets’ preoccupation with the craft of verse as such and the notion of poetry as an independent artistic object, rather than as a means to voice religious ideas.

The present study focused on the treatment of the theme of immortality in poetry has demonstrated that during the period of disunity the genre distinctions between the literary forms appear to be less rigid than the established classifications might suggest. Towards the end of the 4th century *shi* lyric poetry moved towards the external descriptivism and emotional detachment that had traditionally pertained to the forms classified as *wen* – rhapsodies *fu*, eulogia and encomia. On the other hand, the latter often adopted more lyric or colloquial

diction. In the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties not only the *yuefu* songs, but also eulogies and encomia employed the ornate and artificial language of the *shi* poetry, thus coming close to the point of merging with the lyrical *shi* poems of the period. The analysis of Tao Qian's poetic cycle on "Reading *Shanhai jing*" and some eulogies and encomia by Jiang Yan and Yu Xin has demonstrated that rather than abiding by certain preconceived genre laws, the poets were freely experimenting with poetical forms, even consciously subverting their conventions. Similar fluidity was evident in regard to the boundaries between the thematic categories of *youxian*, "voicing one's feelings" (*yonghuai*), eremitic poetry (*zhaoyin*), neo-daoist poetry (*xuanyan*), poetry on sightseeing (*youlan*) and on mountains and rivers (*shanshui*). There was too complex an interaction between realistic and transcendental landscape, between images of reclusion and immortality, between roaming into transcendence and roaming in the mountainous nature to allow us to make neat genre categorizations.

Let me sum up the transformations of the three major themes distinguished in early medieval verse on immortality in terms that emphasise the interconnections rather than lines of division between the poetic sub-genres.

In the first two periods as outlined above (Han – Jin) the poets focused on the spiritual qualities of the immortals and on their endowment with absolute freedom, expressed symbolically as unrestrained flight through the cosmos, transcending spatial limitations. In the course of the late 3rd-early 4th centuries the mystical aspects of immortality received increasing emphasis and the *youxian* poetry often came very close to the verse traditionally classified as *xuanyan*. During the 3rd century the topos of abstract idealised reclusion was established within the current of eremitic poetry, which reflected the poets' yearning for quietist disengagement from the entanglements of the temporal world. At the same time within the Daoist religious thought there emerged the new ideal of the terrestrial immortal, probably as a reaction to the increasingly bureaucratized otherworld of immortals. The terrestrial immortals were the recluses of the divine sphere, sharing with their earthly counterparts the same attitude towards social service and embodying the same ideal of unfettered freedom, purity and spontaneity. At the end of the Western Jin the immortals of the *youxian* poetry, who had formerly traversed the cosmos in all its directions, descended to earth, to partake of the attractive, idealised nature of the *zhaoyin* recluses.

In the course of the late fourth – fifth centuries a further shift in the perception of immortality can be observed. The spiritual aspects of immortality recede into the background to be replaced almost exclusively by more static visions of bliss and splendour in paradise - by ornate and suggestive descriptions of immortals' feasts, celestial processions and

audiences. These polished, sensually appealing scenes corresponded to the aesthetic pursuits of court poetry in general, and the context of their composition. Being created above all as occasional poems, the “roaming into immortality” verse often tends to transpose a concrete occasion, such as courtly feast or outing, into the realm of immortals. On the other hand, these splendid descriptions conformed with the sublime and exalted image of the celestial True Ones, which in the Shangqing Daoist tradition took over the older ideas of immortality. The ideal of freedom and spontaneity that had determined the Jin perception of immortality was replaced by a vision of a divine otherworld, highly appealing to aristocratic tastes, in which transcendental majesty and courtly glamour blended together. In the verse of the period even actual Daoist masters and recluses, such as Tao Hongjing, became surrounded with the splendour of the celestial immortals. As the divine world was increasingly merging with the court surroundings of the poets, the immortals’ specific relationship to time took on importance - immortality came to be perceived not as a transition to other spatial realms, but rather as a transition to other temporal dimensions, paralleling ordinary human time.

Descriptions of paradise landscapes did not figure prominently in the early “roaming into immortality” verse, when the attention of the poets was directed mainly to the state of immortality conceived in terms of spiritual accomplishment and celestial flight. In the course of the fourth century, as these gradually recede, poetic accounts of lands of immortality become more extensive and detailed, more visually powerful. In their visions of paradise the poets created autonomous, self-contained realms, timeless and total, with separate world-orders that defied human categorizations. At the same time the other-worldly sceneries are luminous, delightful and refined, embodying the poets’ ideal of beauty and harmony.

In the course of the fourth century a certain “naturalisation” of the fantastic can be observed, whereby otherworldly realms are increasingly transported to the alluring and idealised mountain landscape of the earthly recluses. During that period, generally under the influence of the “ontological turn” brought about by *xuanyan* thought, the poets discovered the metaphysical dimensions of nature as the embodiment of the cosmic processes and of the very Dao. Daoist religious thought came to recognize the different temporal and spatial dimensions paralleling ordinary experience - such as the paradisiacal “grotto-heavens” hidden within the mountains, or the esoteric “true form” (*zhenxing*) of mountains and nature landmarks. Under these influences, by the end of the 4th century the verse on immortality started to describe the sacred and timeless otherworld underlying this-worldly nature. Many poets question the need to strive after distant paradises and give preference to eternal life in this earthly paradise instead of a celestial flight to the worlds beyond. On the other hand,

many poems traditionally classified as *youlan*, which emphasise the actuality of poetic experience, are imbued with features of the “otherworld of paradise” - distortion of the logical rules of time and space, paradoxical figures, striking metaphors. I believe that these may not be simply poetic embellishments, but rather features of the inverted world of paradise, embodied in the physical forms of nature.

The merging of the otherworldly realms of immortals, the mountain worlds of hermits and the temporal landscapes of the nature poetry becomes complete in the poetry of the Southern Dynasties, where they are transformed into elegant products of sophisticated court culture. The sceneries became less “natural” and less numinous - they had been cultivated and refined, turned into lovely objects in aristocratic gardens, which provide aesthetic delight above all.

The theme of the distant journey, which was at the very origin of the “roaming into immortality” verse, also underwent significant transformations in the course of the Six Dynasties. In early poetry it was not only a hallmark of immortality, but also epitomized the process of its achievement – lifting the hero from the mundane world and transporting him into a land of paradise. Two major models of the journey as the way to immortality have been distinguished in the poetry of the Han dynasty: a power-engendering circuit of the cosmos which through the act of journeying itself induces a change of the travellers’ state of being, or a quest-journey in search of immortality elixir. The post-Han authors also described the state and the way to immortality in soaring, lyrical terms as unrestrained flight through the cosmos. The poets drew both on the *yuelfu* and the *sao* traditions and freely mingled *Chuci* poetics, early Daoist descriptions of free and easy roaming (*xiaoyao you*), Daoist techniques of levitation and some popular imagery. A common feature shared by poetic works is that the experience of reaching the higher realms and higher state of being is no longer important. Han dynasty compositions like *Yuanyou*, *Sixuan fu*, *Wangxian fu* had all traced long processes of spiritual and physiological cultivation, initiation and gradual advance in ever loftier regions. This transition, earlier conceived as a graduated progress, in the 3rd and 4th centuries becomes compressed in the volitional expressions “I yearn”, “I wish”, “I imagine” (*yuan*, *yu*, *xiang*) which indicate that it is the conscious act of imagination that transports the poet into the worlds beyond, whereby he, “between an upward and downward glance” can embrace the whole universe.

In the course of the 4th century the theme of the unrestrained flight through the universe as a hallmark of immortality receded into the background to be replaced by more static scenes in paradise and emphasis on the temporal dimensions of immortality. The *itineraria* theme,

however, did not disappear altogether, but instead underwent a significant transformation, generating two separate currents of poetry. The first (exemplified above by Sun Chuo), gradually developed under the impact of neo-Daoist and Buddhist thought into the landscape poetry of mountains and rivers and became transformed into roaming in mountainous nature. The second current preserved the connection between the travels and the quest for the elixir, but transposed it onto earthly mountains and maintained an increasingly close relation with the then contemporary esoteric arts and technical matters of Daoist religion. Gradually the *itineraria* within it receded to the background, being replaced by more practical issues such as consumption of elixirs, alchemy and divine scriptures, which formed an intrinsic part of court culture. The fantastic cosmic *itineraria* based on the *Chuci* poetics continue to be exploited by the poets, but shifted towards descriptions of feasts and celestial processions of immortals that are very often embellished images of similar events down on earth. While the older descriptions of celestial journeys often had a metaphorical or allegorical function, during the Southern Dynasties the two new currents developed in the direction of greater realism – the *shanshui* and *youlan* poems described real excursions into “real” earthly nature, and the “elixir” poems reflected the actual pursuits, or at least genuine interest, of their authors and of the court culture in general.

In the early “roaming into immortality” verse (Han throughout the Western Jin dynasty) the visions of immortality were connected with the social and existential concerns of the poets and were presented in juxtaposition to the limited and limiting human world. The *sao* model of linking the *itineraria* with the *tristia* theme determined the mode of expression in the subsequent poetry on immortality, where the wishful roaming in the otherworldly realms was prompted by the poets’ sorrows at various aspects of his human existence. While in most poems of the *Chuci* anthology this is the conventional lament of an honest and upright official against the corruption and injustice of the political world, the post-Han poetry on immortality is permeated by more general existential grief over the transience of human life, over the limits of human knowledge and powers, by yearnings for integrity, eternity and freedom that remain unfulfilled in the real world of the times. I have attempted to demonstrate that the voicing of personal feelings connected with the human and social existence of the poet does not exclude religious sentiments and the *youxian* theme cannot be reduced to formal political allegory, as many traditional critics have claimed.

Besides subjective lyrical poetry, a current of verse with a public function has been identified, i.e. ritual hymns, poetry of praise (encomia, eulogies, certain rhapsodies *fu*) and banquet songs, which presented their immortality visions as independent entities from which

reflections on the human condition were absent. From the fourth century onwards, with the shift from personal poetry to the poetry of literary salons, the contrast between the human world and the ideal realms of immortality also gradually receded in the verse written in *shi* form. Instead of presenting an alternative to the sorrowful earthly existence, the paradise realms merge with the elegant and refined court surroundings of the poet. Some of the poems become charming vignettes of otherworldly landscapes, in which the poet takes the role of a mere observer, and no longer a questioning or reflecting mind. Others present embellished scenes of feasts and celestial processions of immortals, in which it is not clear if the poet speaks from an onlooker's point of view, or as a participant. The "roaming into immortality" verse shifts from the voicing of personal feelings towards evocative descriptions, towards creating more splendid and tactile images of the fantastic, which immediately appeal to the senses.

This pursuit of highly aesthetic and ornate court "realism" might superficially suggest a diminution in religious feeling. At the same time, as we have observed above, in this very period the verse on immortality takes on a stronger Daoist air. To account for this seeming paradox we should take into account the Daoist idea of potential continuity between mundane existence and the celestial otherworld, the differences between which were conceived as being more of a degree than of a kind. Contemplative quiet and detachment from earthly desires were necessary prerequisites for the attainment of *xian*-immortality, but once achieved it promised an infinite gratification of these very desires, albeit on a more sublimated level. The descriptions of immortals and their paradises in religious sources likewise stress the aspects of aesthetic and sensuous plenitude, - instead of realms of mystic void beyond all forms, sounds and colours, these are more often depicted as splendid gardens of delights, abounding in all that is exotic, precious and beautiful.

In the court "roaming into immortality" poetry, religious and aesthetic values closely interweave, modify and enhance each other. The fantastic visions created by the poets are often more real than life, imbued with greater vividness, with more intense colours, more tactile through visual and sensual impressions. It is their heightened aesthetic qualities above all that lift them out of the ordinary categories of experience and open up a direct glimpse of the higher spheres of the divine.

From our point of view, the discussion of the various aspects of the *youxian* theme also opens up richer connotations in the meaning of roaming *you*, which has given this poetic current its name. In the introduction to this study I noted that the majority of poems titled "Roaming into Immortality" actually do not present accounts of celestial journeys. If Daoists

perceive the cosmos as a smooth continuum of levels of being, then the power of the *xian*-immortals to move spontaneously between them is what constitutes their roaming *you*. It does not necessarily involve travels to a distant paradise or to higher celestial regions, but rather signifies seamless transitions between various spheres and states of reality. The roaming *you* might also denote the immortals' smooth passage to different temporal dimensions. The pervading vision, which moves from the outer configurations of nature to their true numinous form, inherent in them, is also a mode of *you*. As applied to poetry, *you* may have even broader implications. The very act of composing poetry on cosmic ramblings and paradise visions constitutes in itself such a journey *you* – a free wandering of the poets' thoughts into otherworldly realms, perceived as a religious, intellectual or aesthetic experience above all. If the Daoist adept had the power through visualisation to render present, to actualize divinities and paradise realms, then a poet had no less power to actualize his roaming into transcendence through his verse. It is hardly by chance that the *youxian* verse and its effects on the listeners are often described as “floating and soaring, skimming the clouds” (飄飄而凌雲). The Shangqing adept could discover and behold the celestial divinities and starry regions contained within his very body. The court poet could perceive these very realms in his elegant and harmonious surroundings and be transported into paradise through intense aesthetic experience, taking his listeners on his otherworldly roaming through the magic and beauty of his verse.

Appendix

Preserved verse treating the theme of immortality

Anonymous

Gushi shijiu shou 古詩十九首 (“Nineteen Old Songs”): Lu Qinli: 329-334; *Wenxuan* 29: 1343 – 1351.

Anonymous *sao* poems

Yuanyou 遠遊 (“Distant Journey”) [2nd half of the 2nd century BC]. *Chuci buzhu*: 163 – 175.

Xishi 惜誓 (“Sorrow for Troth Betrayed”) [2nd half of 2nd century BC]. *Chuci buzhu*: 227 – 231.

Zibei 自悲 (“Oppressed by Grief”) from the *Qijian* 七諫 (“Seven Remonstrances”) cycle [2nd half of 2nd century BC]. *Chuci buzhu*: 248 - 249

Anonymous Han dynasty *yuefu* songs

Bagong cao 八公操 (“Eight Lords”, ascribed to Liu An, Prince of Huainan): Lu Qinli: 98-99; *Yuefu shiji* 548: 851.

Buchu xiamen xing 步出夏門行 (“Stepping out of the Summer Gate”, in *Yutai xinyong* 1 and *Wenxuan buyi* 34 under the title *Longxi xing* 隴西行). Lu Qinli: 267-68; *Yuefu shiji* 37: 545.

Changge xing 長歌行 (“A Long Song”). Lu Qinli: 262-63; *Yuefu shiji* 30: 442.

Dongtao xing 董逃行. Lu Qinli: 264; *Yuefu shiji* 34: 503.

Huainan wang pian 淮南王篇 (“The King of Huainan”): Lu Qinli: 276-77; *Yuefu shiji* 54: 792.

Shanzai xing 善哉行 (“How Wonderful”). Lu Qinli: 266; *Yuefu shiji* 36: 535-36.

Shuixian cao 水仙操 (“Water Immortal”). Lu Qinli: 320.

Wangzi Qiao 王子喬. Lu Qinli: 261-62; *Yuefu shiji* 29: 437.

Ban Biao 班彪 (3 – 54)

Lanhai fu 覽海賦 (“Rhapsody on Viewing the Sea”). *Quan Hou Han wen* 23 (Yan Kejun vol. 2: 231); *Quan Hanfu*: 252

Bao Zhao 鮑照 (421? - 463?)

Huainan wang 淮南王 1 (“King of Huainan”). Lu Qinli: 1278; *Yuefu shiji* 55: 797.

Shengtian xing 升[昇]天行 (“Ascending to Heaven”). Lu Qinli: 1264; *Yuefu shiji* 63: 920; *Wenxuan* 28: 1329 – 30.

Xiaoshi qu 蕭史曲 (“The Tune of the Flute Master”). Lu Qinli: 1269; *Yuefu shiji* 51: 748.

Xingyao zhi chengdong qiao 行藥至城東橋 (“Under the Influence of the Drug, I approach the Bridge to the East of the City Wall”). Lu Qinli: 1301; *Wenxuan* 22: 1056.

Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133? - 192)

Wangzi Qiao bei 王子喬碑 (“Wang Ziqiao Stele”, dated 165 AD) *Quan Hou Han wen juan* 75 (Yan Kejun vol. 2: 706)

Cao Cao 曹操 (155 – 220)

Jinglie 精列 (“Dissolution of the Essence”). Lu Qinli: 346; *Yuefu shiji* 26: 384; Huang Jie 1958: 6.

Moshang sang 陌上桑 (“Mulberries along the Path”). Lu Qinli: 348; *Yuefu shiji* 28: 412; Huang Jie 1958: 12-13.

Qichu chang 氣出唱 (“Song on Vital Breath exhaled”) 3 pieces. Lu Qinli: 345 - 346; *Yuefu shiji* 26: 383; Huang Jie: 1958: 3 -5.

Qiu hu xing 秋胡行 (“The Tune of Qiu hu”) 2 pieces. Lu Qinli: 349-51; *Yuefu shiji* 36: 527 – 28; Huang Jie 1958: 20 - 22.

Cao Pi 曹丕 (186 – 226)

Zhe yangliu xing 折楊柳行 (“Breaking up a Willow Branch”). In *Yiwen leiju* 78 the title is *Youxian shi* 遊仙詩; in *Gu yuefu* it is *Changge xing* 長歌行. Lu Qinli: 393, Huang Jie 1958: 46-47; *Yuefu shiji*: 37: 547

Cao Pi 曹毗 (4th century)

Huangdi zan 黃帝讚 (“Encomium on the Yellow Emperor”), with the title *Yongshi* 詠史 (“Singing of History”) in *Gushi ji* 32. *Quan Jin wen* 107 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1095); Lu Qinli: 888 under the title *Huangdi zanshi* 黃帝讚詩.

Cao Zhi 曹植 (192 - 232)

Feilong pian 飛龍篇 (“Flying Dragon”). Lu Qinli: 421 - 22; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 926; Zhao Youwen 1984: 397.

Guizhi shu 桂之樹行 (“Osmanthus Tree”). Lu Qinli: 437-38, *Yuefu shiji* 61: 886; Zhao Youwen 1984: 399.

Kusi xing 苦思行 (“Bitter Thoughts”). Lu Qinli: 439; *Yuefu shiji* 63: 919; Zhao Youwen 1984: 316.

Pingling dong 平陵東 (“East of Pingling”). Lu Qinli: 437; *Yuefu shiji* 28: 410; Zhao Youwen 1984: 400.

Quche pian 驅車篇 (“Speeding my Chariot”). Lu Qinli: 435; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 928; Zhao Youwen 1984: 404.

Shengtian xing 升天行 (“Ascending to Heaven”) 2 pieces: Lu Qinli: 433; *Yuefu shiji* 63: 919; Zhao Youwen 1984: 266- 267.

Wuyou yong 五遊詠 (“Five-fold Roaming”). Lu Qinli: 433-34; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 922; Zhao Youwen 1984: 401.

Xianren pian 仙人篇 (“Immortals”). Lu Qinli: 434; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 923; Zhao Youwen 1984: 263.

Youxian 遊仙 (“Roaming into Immortality”). Lu Qinli: 456, Zhao Youwen 1984: 265.

Yuanyou pian 遠遊篇 (“Distant Roaming”). Lu Qinli: 434; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 922; Zhao Youwen 1984: 402.

Dai Gao 戴嵩 (6th cent.)

Shenxian pian 神仙篇 (“Divine Immortals”). Lu Qinli: 2099; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 924.

Chengong Sui 成公綏 (231 - 273)

Xian shi 仙詩 (“Poem on Immortality”). In *Guanwen xuan* 9 and *Gushi ji* 21 the title is *Youxian shi* 遊仙詩 (“Roaming into Immortality”). Lu Qinli: 584 – 585.

Zhengdan dahui xingli ge 正旦大會行禮歌 (“Song for the Big Assembly Ceremonies at the First Day of the New Year”). *Songshu* 20: 592; *Yuefu shiji* 13: 192.

Fan Yun 范雲 (461 - 503)

Da Gouqu Tao xiansheng shi 答句曲陶先生詩 (“In Response to Master Tao of Gouqu”). Lu Qinli: 1545.

Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217 - 278)

Yunzhong Baizi gao xing 雲中白子高行 (“Baizi Gao among the Clouds”). Lu Qinli: 564; *Yuefu shiji*: 63: 921.

Gao Yun 高允 (390 - 487)

Wangzi Qiao 王子喬. Lu Qinli: 2201; *Yuefu shiji* 29: 438.

Gao Yunsheng 高允生 (first half of 6th century)

Wangzi Qiao 王子喬. Lu Qinli: 2112; *Yuefu shiji* 29: 438.

Guo Pu 郭璞 (276 – 324)

Shanhai jing tu zan 山海經圖贊 (“Encomia on the Illustrations of *Shanhai jing*”, 265 pieces). *Quan Jin wen* 122, 123 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1243-1271).

Youxian shi 遊仙詩 (“Roaming into Immortality”, 19 poems). Lu Qinli: 865 – 867; poems 1-VII in *Wenxuan* 21: 1018 – 1024.

Guo Yuanzu 郭元祖 (4th cent.)

Liexian zhuan zan 列仙傳贊 (“Encomia on *Liexian zhuan*”) 70 pieces. *Quan Jinwen* 139 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1444 – 1452).

He Shao 何劭 (236 – 301)

Youxian shi 遊仙詩 (“Roaming into Immortality”). Lu Qinli: 649; *Wenxuan* 21: 1017 - 18.

Huan Tan 桓譚 (ca. 43 BC - 28 AD)

[*Wang*]xian fu [望]仙賦 (“Rhapsody on [Watching] the Immortals”). *Quan Hou Han wen* 12 (Yan Kejun vol. 2: 130); *Quan Hanfu*: 248.

Jiang Yan 江淹 (444 - 505)

Cong Guanjun Jianping wang deng Lushan Xianglu feng 從冠軍建平王登廬山香爐峯 (“Accompanying the General Commander of the Troops, the King of Jianping, I Ascend the Incense-Burner Peak of Mount Lu”). Lu Qinli: 1557; *Wenxuan* 22: 1058.

Dansha ke xue fu 丹砂可學賦 (“Rhapsody on Alchemy Can be Learned”). *Quan Liang wen* 34 (Yan Kejun vol. 7: 343-44).

Guo Hongnong Pu youxian 郭弘農璞遊仙 (“Roaming into Immortality [after] Guo Pu of Hongnong”). Lu Qinli: 1575-76.

Xue [Yun] shan zan sishou 雪[雲]山贊四首 (“Encomia on a Snowy [Cloudy] Mountain, 4 poems”).

Quan Liang wen 39 (Yan Kejun vol. 7: 390). The *Wang Tai Ziqiao zan* 王太子喬贊 from this series also in *Yuefu shiji* 29: 438 under the title *Wangzi Qiao* 王子喬.

Zeng liandan fa he Yin zhangshi shi 贈鍊丹法和殷長史詩 (“Presenting a Method of Refining the Elixir, Matching a Poem by Administrator Yin”). Lu Qinli: 1564.

Jiang Zong 江總 (518 – 590)

Xiaoshi qu 蕭史曲 (“The Tune of the Flute Master”). Lu Qinli: 2571; *Yuefu shiji* 51: 749.

Kang Hong 康泓 (4th cent.)

Shan Daokai zhuan zan 單道開傳贊 (“Encomium on the Biography of Shan Daokai”). *Quan Jin wen* 133 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1380).

Kong Ningzi 孔孺子 (early 5th century)

Qian huansheng ge 前緩聲歌 (“Former Song of Languid Music”). Lu Qinli: 1138; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 945.

Kong Zhigui 孔稚珪 (447 - 501)

Chu Xiansheng Boyu bei 褚先生柏玉碑 (“A Stele on Master Chu Boyu”). *Quan Qiwen* 19 (Yan Kejun vol. 6: 809).

Li Yong 李顥 (3rd century)

Lingxian fu 凌仙賦 (“Rhapsody on Ascending into Immortality”). *Quan Jin wen* 53 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 563).

Liang Jianwen di 梁建文帝, Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (502 - 551)

Shengxian pian 昇仙行 (“Ascending to Immortality”). Lu Qinli: 1916; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 926.

Xianke shi 仙客詩 (“An Immortal Guest”). Lu Qinli: 1934.

Xuanpu yuan jiang song 玄圃園講頌 (“An Eulogy on the Mystic Park”). *Quan Liang wen* 12 (Yan Kejun vol. 7: 133 – 134).

Liang Wudi 梁武帝, Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (464 – 549)

Changhe pian 闔闔篇 (“The Changhe Gate”). Lu Qinli: 1515-1516; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 932.

Youxian shi 遊仙詩 (“Roaming into Immortality”). Lu Qinli: 1530.

Shangyun yue 上雲樂 (“Music of Rising into the Clouds [of the Supreme Clouds]”), 7 pieces. Lu Qinli: 1524-1526; *Yuefu shiji* 51: 744-746.

Liang Yuandi 梁元帝, Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508 – 555)

He Bao Changshi Longchuan guan shi 和鮑常侍龍川館詩 (“Matching a Poem on the Temple of Dragon Stream by Attendant-in-ordinary Bao”). Lu Qinli: 2038.

Liu Shan 劉刪 (6th cent.)

Caiyao you mingshan 採藥遊名山 (“Gathering Herbs, I roam the Famous Mountains”). Lu Qinli: 2546 – 47.

Liu Xiang 劉向 (77 – 6 BC)

Jiutan 九歎 (“Nine Laments”). *Chuci buzhu*: 281 – 312.

Liu Xiaosheng 劉孝勝 (1st half of 6th cent.)

Shengtian xing 升天行 (“Ascending to Heaven”). Lu Qinli: 2063; *Yuefu shiji* 63: 920.

Lu Huixiao 陸慧曉 (435 - 497)

Youxian shi 遊仙詩 (“Roaming into Immortality”), 2 couplets surviving. Lu Qinli: 1462.

Lu Ji 陸機 (261 - 303)

Fuyun fu 浮雲賦 (“Rhapsody on Floating Clouds”). *Quan Jinwen juan* 96 (Yan Kejun, vol. 5: 982).

Jia yan chu beique xing 駕言出北闕行 (“Harnessing and Going out of the Northern Gate”). Lu Qinli: 662; *Yuefu shiji*: 61: 889.

Liexian fu 列仙賦 (“Rhapsody on Arrayed Immortals”). *Quan Jinwen juan* 97 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 994).

Lingxiao fu 陵霄賦 (“Rhapsody on Skimming the Empyrean”). *Quan Jinwen juan* 97 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 995).

Qian huansheng ge 前緩聲歌 (“Former Song of Languid Music”). Lu Qinli: 664-65; *Wenxuan* 28: 1314; *Yuefu shiji* 65: 945.

Wangzi Qiao zan 王子喬贊 (“Encomium on Wang Ziqiao”). *Quan Jin wen* 98 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1006).

Youren fu 幽人賦 (“Rhapsody on the Obscure Man”). *Quan Jinwen juan* 96 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 989).

Lu Sidao 盧思道 (535 – 586)

Shengtian xing 升天行 (“Ascending to Heaven”). Lu Qinli: 2629; Zhu Shangshu 2001: 52-53; *Yuefu shiji* 63: 920-21.

Shenxian pian 神仙篇 (“Divine Immortals”). Lu Qinli: 2629; Zhu Shangshu 2001: 50-52; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 925.

Lu Yu 陸瑜 (fl. second half of 6th century)

Xianren lan liuzhu pian 仙人覽六箸篇 (“Immortals Grasp Six Game- Slats”). Lu Qinli: 2539; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 924.

Lu Yun 陸雲 (262 - 303)

Choulin fu 愁霖賦 (“Rhapsody on Grieving the Torrent”). *Quan Jin wen* 100 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1022).

Dengxia song 登遐頌 (“Eulogies on Climbing the Distant”). *Quan Jin wen* 103 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1051-53).

Xiji fu 喜霽賦 (“Rhapsody on the Joy from Clearing [the Sky]”). *Quan Jin wen* 100 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1023).

Lu Zijing 盧子誥 (4th cent.)

Shi 詩 (“A Poem”), 2 couplets surviving: Lu Qinli: 885.

Mu Hua 木華 (fl. ca. 290)

Haifu 海賦 (“Rhapsody on the Sea”). *Quan Jin wen* 105 (Yan Kejun vol. 5: 1068 – 69); *Wenxuan* 12: 543 – 556.

Qian Xiu 牽秀 (? - 305)

Huangdi song 黃帝頌 (“An Eulogy on the Yellow Emperor”). *Quan Jin wen* 84 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 877).

Laozi song 老子頌 (“An Eulogy on Laozi”). *Quan Jin wen* 84 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 877).

Peng Zu song 彭祖頌 (“An Eulogy on Peng Zu”): *Quan Jin wen* 84 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 878).

Wang Qiao Chi Song song 王喬赤松頌 (“An Eulogy on Wang Ziqiao and Red Pine”). *Quan Jin wen* 84 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 878).

Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210 – 265)

Daren xiansheng zhuan 大人先生傳 (“Biography of Master Great Man”). *Quan Sanguo wen* 46 (Yan Kejun vol. 3: 465 – 469); Chen Bojun: 161 – 193.

Laozi zan 老子贊 (“Encomium on Laozi”). *Quan Sanguo wen* 45 (Yan Kejun vol. 3: 455); Chen Bojun: 193.

Yonghuai shi bashi er shou 詠懷詩八十二首 (“Poems Singing of My Heart, 82 pieces”). Lu Qinli: 496-510; Chen Bojun 207 – 405.

Shen Yue 沈約 (441 – 512)

Chi Songzi jian 赤松子澗 (“The Stream of Master Red Pine”). Lu Qinli: 1659; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 364.

Chou Huayang Tao xiansheng shi 酬華陽陶先生詩 (“In Response to Master Tao of Huayang”). Lu Qinli: 1637; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 360.

Chou Kong tongzhi Ti huai Peng shi 酬孔通直逖懷蓬詩 (“In Response to [Clerk with] Comprehensive Duties Ti’s Poem „Yearning of Penglai”). Lu Qinli: 1661; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 435.

Feng Huayang Wang Waibing shi 奉華陽王外兵詩 (“Respectfully Offered to [General of] Outer Troops, [Tao Hongjing] of Huayang”). Lu Qinli: 1638; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 363.

He Jingling wang youxian shi er shou 和竟陵王遊仙詩二首 (“Two Poems Matching a Poem on

Roaming into Immortality by Prince of Jingling”). Lu Qinli: 1636-37; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 356 – 57.

He Liu Zongzhou Hui Boshan xianglu shi 和劉雍州繪博山香爐詩 (“Matching a poem on a Boshan Censer by Liu Hui, Governor of Yong Province”). Lu Qinli: 1646; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 384.

He Liu zhongshu xianshi ershou 和劉中書仙詩二首 (“Two Poems Matching a Poem on Immortality by Clerk of the Central Secretariat Liu”). Lu Qinli: 1660; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 432.

He Wang zhongshu Dechong baiyun shi 和王中書德充白雲詩 (“Matching a poem on the White Clouds by the [Clerk of the] Central Secretariat Wang Dechong”). Lu Qinli: 1645; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 383.

Huan yuanzhai, fengchou Huayang xiansheng 還園宅，奉酬華陽先生 (“Returning to my Garden Home - in Respectful Response to the Master of Huayang”). Lu Qinli: 1638; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 361.

Huashan guan wei guojia ying gongde 華山館為國家營功德 (“In a Temple on Mt. Hua Establishing Merit on Behalf of the State and Royal Family”). Lu Qinli: 1660; Chen Qingyuan 1995:433.

Huayang Tao xiansheng denglou bufu xia 華陽先生登樓不復下 (“Master Tao of Huayang Climbs the Loft Never to Come Back”). Lu Qinli: 1638; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 362.

Huan ge xing 緩歌行 (“Languid Song”). Lu Qinli: 1619 - 20; *Yuefu shiji* 65: 946; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 303.

You Jinhua shan 遊金華山 (“Roaming on the Gold Floriate Mountain”). Lu Qinli: 1633 - 34; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 346.

Jiaojufu 郊居賦 (“Rhapsody on Living in the Suburbs”). *Quan Liang wen* 25 (Yan Kejun vol. 7: 261-264); Chen Qingyuan 1995: 5 - 13.

You Shen Daoshi Guan 遊沈道士館詩 (“Roaming to the Temple of the Daoist Priest Shen”). Lu Qinli: 1637; *Wenxuan* 22: 1062 – 63; Chen Qingyuan 1995: 359.

Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179 - 117 BC)

Daren fu 大人賦 (“Rhapsody on the Great Man”). *Quan Han wen* 21 (Yan Kejun vol. 1: 457- 458); *Quan Hanfu*: 91-96.

Song Xiaowu di 宋 孝武帝, Liu Jun 劉駿 (430 - 464)

Dongjing zan 洞井贊 (“Encomium on the Grotto Well”). *Quan Song wen* 6 (Yan Kejun vol. 6: 77).

Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314 – 371)

Liexian zhuan zan 列仙傳讚 (“Encomia on *Liexian zhuan*”), 2 pieces on Laozi and Shang Qiuzi 商丘子 extant. *Quan Jin wen* 61 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 637).

You Tiantai shan fu 遊天台山賦 (“Rhapsody on Roaming the Celestial Terrace Mountains”). *Quan Jin wen* 61 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 633 - 634); *Wenxuan* 11: 493 – 501.

Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536)

Gaoyou pian 告遊篇 (“Announcing a Journey”). Lu Qinli:1813.

Shuixian fu 水仙賦 (“Rhapsody on Water Immortal”). *Quan Liang wen* 46 (Yan Kejun vol. 7: 455 – 56).

Yun shang zhi xianfeng fu 雲上之仙風賦 (“Rhapsody on the Wind of Immortality from Above the Clouds”). *Quan Liang wen* 46 (Yan Kejun vol. 7: 455).

Tao Qian 陶潛 (365 – 427)

Du Shanhai jing shi shisan shou 讀山海經詩十三首 (“Poems on Reading the Book of Mountains and Seas, 13 pieces”). Lu Qinli: 1010-12; Gong Bin 1996: 334-355. The introductory poem of the cycle also in *Wenxuan* 30: 1392.

Wang Bao 王褒 (1st cent. BC)

Jiuhuai 九懷 (“Nine Regrets”). *Chuci buzhu* : 268 – 280.

Wang Bao 王褒 (500 – 563?) or (ca. 513 – 576)

He congdi You shanjia shi er shou 和從弟祐山家詩二首 (“Two Poems Matching a Poem on Dwelling in the Mountains by my Younger Cousin You”). Lu Qinli: 2338.

Qingju pian 輕舉篇 (“Rising with a Lightened Body”). Lu Qinli: 2331; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 923.

Wang Rong 王融 (466 – 493)

Youxian shi wushou 遊仙詩五首 (“Roaming into Immortality, five poems”). Lu Qinli: 1398; poem III under the title *Shenxian pian* is included in *Yuefu shiji* 64: 924.

Wang Yun 王筠 (481 - 549)

Dongnan Yeshan shi 東南射山詩 (“Poem on Mt. [Gu] Ye of the Southeast”). Lu Qinli: 2017.

Wu Jun 吳均 (469-520)

Caiyao Dabu shan shi 採藥大布山詩 (“Gathering Herbs on Mt. Dabu”). Lu Qinli: 1739.

Xi Han 嵇含 (264 - 307)

Hanshi san fu 寒食散賦 (“Rhapsody on Cold Food Powder”). *Quan Jin wen* 65 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 672).

Xi Kang 嵇康 (223 - 263)

Da Er Guo sanshou 答二郭三首 (“Answer to the Two Guo, Three Poems”): Lu Qinli: 486-487; Dai Mingyang: 63

Dai Qiuhe ge shi 代秋胡歌詩 (also known under the title *Zhongzuo siyan shi 重作四言詩*) No. 6, 7: Lu Qinli: 480; Dai Mingyang: 50-52.

Shuzhi shi er shou 述志詩二首 (“Voicing My Aspirations, two poems”) Lu Qinli: 488-89; Dai Mingyang 1962: 35-37.

Siyan zeng xiong xiucai ru jun shi 四言贈兄秀才入軍詩 (“Four-syllable Poems Presented to my Brother as he enters the Army). Lu Qinli: 482- 484; Dai Mingyang: 6 – 20.

Siyan shi shiyi shou 四言詩十一首 (“Four-syllable poems, 11 poems”), No.10. Lu Qinli: 485.

Wuyan shi sanshou 五言詩三首 (“Five-syllable poems, 3 poems”), No.3 Lu Qinli: 489.

Youxian shi 遊仙詩 (“Roaming into Immortality”). Lu Qinli: 488; Dai Mingyang 1962: 39-40.

Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385 – 443)

Huan ge xing 緩歌行 (“Languid Song”). Lu Qinli: 1152; *Yuefu shiji* 65: 946.

Luofu shan fu 羅浮山賦 (“Rhapsody on Mt. Luofu”). *Quan Songwen* 30 (Yan Kejun vol. 6: 291).

Ru Dao zhiren fu 入道至人賦 (“Rhapsody on the Accomplished Man, who has Entered the Dao”).

Quan Songwen 30 (Yan Kejun vol. 6: 293).

Wang Zijin zan 王子晉贊 (“Encomium on Wang Zijin”). *Quan Songwen* 33 (Yan Kejun vol. 6: 319).

Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464 – 499)

He Ji canjun fusan desheng shi 和紀參軍服散得益詩 (“Harmonizing with a Poem by Adjutant Ji on Gaining Benefit from Consuming (*hanshi*) Powder”). Lu Qinli 1447.

Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531 – after 590)

Shenxian shi 神仙詩 (“Divine Immortals”). Lu Qinli: 2282.

Yin Keng 陰鏗 (6th cent.)

Fuyong de shenxian shi 賦詠得神仙詩 (“Presented on [the title] “Divine Immortals”). Lu Qinli: 2456.

You Shixing Daoguan shi 遊始興道館詩 (“Roaming in the Temple of Original Establishment”). Lu Qinli: 2453.

Yu Chan 庾闡 (286? – 339?)

Caiyao shi 採藥詩 (“Gathering Herbs”). Lu Qinli: 874 - 75.

Youxian shi shi shou 遊仙詩十首 (“Roaming into Immortality, ten poems”). Lu Qinli: 875.

Yu Jianwu 庾肩吾 (c. 487 – 551)

Daoguan 道館 (“Daoist temple”). Lu Qinli: 2001.

Yu Xin 庾信 (513 – 581)

Daoshi buxu ci 道士步虛辭 (“Cantos on Pacing the Void of a Daoist Master”), ten poems. Lu Qinli: 2349-50; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 392 – 402; *Yuefu shiji*: 78: 1099-1100.

Fenghe Zhaowang youxian shi 奉和趙王遊仙詩 (“Respectfully Matching a Poem on Roaming into Immortality by King of Zhao”). Lu Qinli: 2362; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 217.

He Yu Wen Neishi chunri youshan 和宇文內史春日遊山 (“Matching a Poem by the Inner Secretary Yu Wen on Roaming on a Spring Day in the Mountains”). Lu Qinli: 2355; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 18.1

Huangdi jian Guang Chengzi zan 黃帝見廣成子贊 (“An Encomium on the Yellow Emperor seeing Guan Chengzi”). *Quan Hou Zhou wen juan* 11 (Yan Kejun vol 9: 206); *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 625.

Mengci jiu shi 蒙賜酒詩 (“Be Honoured with Wine”). Lu Qinli: 2378; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 286.

Ru Daoguan 入道館 (“Entering a Daoist Temple”). Lu Qinli: 2388; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 329.

Xianshan shi ershou 仙山詩二首 (“Mountain of Immortality, Two Poems”). Lu Qinli: 2403; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 373.

Xun Zhou chushi Hongran shi 尋周處士弘讓詩 (“Looking for the Recluse Zhou Hongrang”), in *Yiwen leiju* 36 attributed to Yu Jianwu. Lu Qinli: 2400; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 363.

Youxian 遊仙 (“Roaming into Immortality”, also with the title *Youshan* 遊山 “Roaming in the Mountains”): Lu Qinli: 2355; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 181.

Yuzhang shan ming 玉帳山銘 (“An Inscription on Mt. Yuzhang”). *Quan Hou Zhou wen juan* 12 (Yan Kejun vol. 9: 215); *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 695-96. (In *Yiwen leiju* 7 attributed to Yu Jianwu with the title *Donggong Yuzhang shan ming* 東宮玉帳山銘, contained in *Quan Liang wen* 66 Yan Kejun vol. 7: 684)

Zeng Zhou chushi shi 贈周處士詩 (“A Poem Presented to the Recluse Zhou”). Lu Qinli: 2400; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 363.

Zhi Laozi miao yingzhao shi 至老子廟應詔詩 (“Reaching the Temple of Laozi: In Response to Instruction”). Lu Qinli: 2362; *Yu Zishan jizhu*: 215-217.

Yuan Hong 袁宏 (328 - 376)

Shan Daokai zan 單道開贊 (“An Encomium on Shan Daokai”). *Quan Jinwen* 57 (Yan Kejun vol 4: 594).

Yuan Tuan 袁象 (447 - 494)

Youxian shi er shou 遊仙詩二首 (“Roaming into Immortality, two poems”). Lu Qinli: 1471.

Zao Ju 棗據 (4th century)

Biaozhi fu 表志賦 (“Rhapsody on Expressing My Aspirations”). *Quan Jin wen* 67 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 699).

Shi 詩 (“A Poem”), in *Gushi ji* 23 with the title *Youlan* 遊覽 (“An Excursion”). Lu Qinli: 589.

Zhan Fangsheng 湛方生 (fl. 386)

Lingxiu shan ming 靈秀山銘 (“Inscription on Mount Lingxiu”). *Quan Jin wen* 140 (Yan Kejun vol.5: 1461).

Lushan shenxian shi 廬山神仙詩 (“Poem on the Immortal from Mount Lu”, dated 386). Lu Qinli: 943.

Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139)

Sixuan fu 思玄賦 (“Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery”). *Quan Hou Han wen* 52 (Yan Kejun vol. 2: 506 - 509); *Quan Hanfu*: 393 – 411; *Wenxuan* 15: 651 – 691.

Qibian 七辯 (“Seven Arguments”). *Quan Hou Han wen* 55 (Yan Kejun vol. 2: 530 - 531); *Quan Hanfu*: 490-492.

Xiaoyao fu 逍遙賦 (“Rhapsody on Free and Easy Roaming”, 4 lines surviving). *Quan Hanfu*: 485.

Zhang Hua 張華 (232 - 300)

Youxian shi sishou 遊仙詩四首 (“Roaming into Immortality, four poems”). Lu Qinli: 621.

Zhang Rong 張融 (444 - 497)

Xiaoshi qu 蕭史曲 (“The Tune of the Flute Master”). Lu Qinli: 1410; *Yuefu shiji* 51: 749.

Zhang Xie 張協 (d. 307)

Youxian shi 遊仙詩 (“Roaming into Immortality”). Lu Qinli: 748.

Zhang Zhengjian 張正見 (6th cent.)

Shenxian pian 神仙篇 (“Divine Immortals”). Lu Qinli: 2482; *Yuefu shiji* 64: 925.

Zhi Dun 支遁 (314 - 366)

Yonghuai shi 詠懷詩五首 („Singing of My heart, five poems“). Lu Qinli: 1080-1081.

Zhi Yu 摯虞 (ob. 312)

Siyou fu 思遊賦 (“Rhapsody on Pondering a Journey”). *Quan Jin wen* 76 (Yan Kejun vol. 4: 785-86).

Zhou Hongzheng 周弘正 (6th cent.)

He Yu Jianwu Ru Daoguan 和庾肩吾入道館 (“Matching a Poem by Yu Jianwu on Entering a Daoist Temple”). Lu Qinli: 2462.

Zhuang Ji 莊忌 (fl. 154 BC)

Aishi ming 哀時命 (“Alas that my lot was not cast”). *Chuci buzhu*: 259 – 267.

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