

# Hexagram Landscapes in Six Dynasties Poetry

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## ABSTRACT

Here, in keeping with Owen's notion of the Chinese lyric as a "lovely science" rather than "human art," as the "honest record of a particular process of perception and thought," we are shown how the ancient mode of correlative, world-structuring thinking and in particular the "psychophysical" model of the *I Ching* guides, at a deep level, the patterning of poetic imagery. Textual examples drawn mainly from Juan Chi and secondarily from Hsieh Ling-yun show how specific images ("hidden dragon") and dualities ("fire over water," "mountain/wood," "crane/swallow") and their subtle, correlative values and symbolic connotations serve as a kind of (psychophysical, meta-physical) subtext for the poems themselves. In some cases an understanding of the *I Ching* subtexts would appear to be crucial, for a deeper and truer understanding of the poetry, taking into account also the poet's own intentions.

## KEY WORDS

symbolic patterning

*I Ching*

Subtext

psychophysical structure

correlative thinking

eremitic (hermit) tradition



Long before the advent of landscape poetry in the Six Dynasties period, the Chinese had already developed a proto-science of analogic categories that was used to define the structure of the physical world. The heyday of this school of *yinyang* and five-phase thought was the final years of the Warring States period. But the picture of the Chinese worldview is not complete without one other thought-system, the one represented by the hexagrams of the *I Ching*. C.G. Jung, in his forward to the Wilhelm/Baynes translation of the *I Ching*, described the ancient Chinese cosmos as a "psychophysical structure."<sup>1</sup> According to Jung, every moment in time has inseparable subjective and objective components; i.e., every object of sense perception is indivisible from the "psychic condition" of the observer. This is the principle by which the *I Ching* operates—the casting of the hexagram represents the observer's opinion that a given text "amounts to a true rendering of his psychic condition" at the moment he was concentrating on a particular object. Most of us dismiss this link between the moment and the-random hexagram as an act of faith on the part of the believer (in other words, the correspondence of hexagram and situation is merely coincidental and never meaningful). But the ancient Chinese certainly held this or a similar view. And when they used the language of poetry to describe the natural world around them, this psychophysical view influenced the way in which they chose their words.

Stephen Owen has called Chinese lyric a "lovely science" as opposed to a "human art" (78). In other words the poem is not an artifice, not a creation, but "the honest record of a particular process of perception and thought." The thinking process of the ancient Chinese was governed to a large extent by this kind of system. Their lives in fact

were steeped in this lore, and they would have been subconsciously inclined to pattern their poetic worlds after structures such as these because they had the infallibility of natural law.

The juxtaposition of fire and water and of wood and metal in the five-phase scheme was particularly favored later in the tradition. According to Andrew Plaks, just these two symbolic pairs account "for a great many lines of subtle parallelism in regulated verse poetry" (51). Although Plaks does not give any examples, what he is probably referring to is a particularly significant choice of images in a given poem's parallel couplet. So the "subtle parallelism" is the juxtaposition of, for example, an image of the sun over an image of a lake, i.e., fire over water. Thus the parallelism represents a fundamental relationship in both the mental and physical worlds; it is a psychophysical function in poetic language. According to Owen, the parallel couplet is the "formal linguistic manifestation of the structure of the natural world" (86). It is the "bones" of lyric, the canvas on which the artist painted his landscape. Since the pairing of analogical categories across the space of the couplet often reflected the spatial and conceptual correspondences in nature, before we can begin to understand the poem we must know the analogical patterns that the Chinese had always at their fingertips. In particular, we should know how the eight trigrams are doubled to form the sixty-four hexagrams of the *I Ching*, because the parallelism of poetic couplets can also match the physical requirements of scene with a meaningful pair of *I Ching* trigrams. In this manner the poet can add a multi-dimensional depth that is no more perceptible than the skeleton beneath the flesh.

During the Wei and Chin dynasties when *hsüan-hsüeh* 玄學 or "occult" Taoism flourished, not only did orthodox works such as the *Chuang-tzu* and *Tao Te Ching* receive new emphasis in intellectual circles but so did the *I Ching*. A fifth century commentary on the *Wei chih* 魏志—the Wei portion of the *History of the Three Kingdoms*—mentions "using Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu to interpret the images of hexagram texts" 差次老莊而參爻象.<sup>2</sup> Yen Yen-chih 顏延之, friend of T'ao Ch'ien, said in *Yu Wang Wei shu* 與王微書 [Letter to Wang Wei] that "a picture is not only art, but is composed of the same forms as

hexagram images” 圖畫非止藝行成當與易象同體 (qtd. In Wei Feng-chüan 27). *I Ching* imagery had an unquestionable influence on the art and literature of the Six Dynasties period. It is no coincidence that this is also the formative period for landscape poetry. While that is not the subject of this essay, what the following analysis will attempt to show is how two poets, Juan Chi and Hsieh Ling-yün, consciously developed their poetic scenes around the symbolic scene of the hexagram.

*Juan Chi* 阮籍 (210-263), leader of the “Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove,” is best known for his *Yung-huai shih* 詠懷詩, or “Poems Which Sing of My Innermost Thoughts.” But he was also well versed in *I Ching* lore, having produced a work known as *T'ung i lun*, 通易論 or “Understanding the Changes.” Li Shan 李善 (d. 689), in his commentary on the *Wen-hsüan* 文選, or *Selections of Refined Literature*, has this to say about Juan Chi's poetry: “There is much hidden meaning in his works. After the passing of so many generations, it is difficult to discern his meaning” 文多隱避百代之難以情測 (309). With a knowledge of how Juan Chi utilized the *I Ching* to compose his poetry, we can come much closer to understanding a poet who has remained enigmatic for centuries.

Our first poem, numbered 47 in the series, reads as follows:<sup>3</sup>

When was the hour of my birth?  
 Sad and lonely, tears wet my lapels.  
 The High Bird soars over the mountain crests;  
 The swallows and wrens nest in the forest below.  
 A dark cloud throws my garden into the shadow;  
 The plain zither pains my heart.  
 There is a crane singing in the lofty mountain:  
 How could I go looking for him?  
 生命辰安在，憂戚涕沾襟。  
 高鳥翔山岡，燕雀棲下林。  
 青雲蔽前庭，素琴淒我心。  
 崇山有鳴鶴，豈可相追尋。

In the first pair of lines the poet laments the astrological circumstances

of his birth. He was fated to live in one of the most chaotic periods in Chinese history, second only to the Warring States period in political strife and intrigue.

The second couplet is notable for its avian imagery—the juxtaposition of images of small and large birds is formulaic in Juan Chi. In *Ta-jen hsien-sheng chuan* 大人先生傳 (“Biography of Master Great Man”), he sets up a similar comparison:

Look, too, at the Sun Crow who roams beyond the dust of the world, and at the wrens who play among the weeds and grasses: there can certainly be no contact between the small and the great.

亦觀夫陽鳥遊于塵外而鷦鷯戲于蓬苳，小大固不相及。(46.6; 194)<sup>4</sup>

The poet's image of the Great Man (to whom the Sun Crow corresponds). was probably inspired by Chuang-tzu's mythical prototype, the great P'eng bird, the account of which opens the *Chuang-tzu*. In that tale, the dove and the quail, their breasts swelled with pride at their prowess at flying, scoffed at the thought of a bird who had “wings like clouds filling the sky” 翼若垂天之雲 (chap.1, 29-31). The Great Man is a mystical hero for the poet, a descendant of such giants as the tragic hero of Ch'ü Yüan's “Encountering Sorrow.” Some scholars even connect him with the deified Lao-tzu, an important figure in the religious Taoist folk tradition of this era. For our purposes it is important to note that the poet does not always seem prepared to identify with this hero. Instead, he seems content to scratch around in the barnyard with the common fowl. We will return to this subject in due course.

The *ch'ing yun* of line 5 is not an uncommon image, but its normally ameliorative connotations of “empyrean” and “high official” are contradicted by the verb *pi* 蔽, “to darken.” *Ch'ing* 青, a color attributive, is matched in line 6 with the adjective *su* 素. This pair can mean “black and white” when occurring in combination, which suggests the more pejorative interpretation of “dark” for the *ch'ing* of *ch'ing yun*. It

is "dark clouds" that "cover the courtyard" of Juan Chi's poem. This in turn recalls a poem (*Yung-shih shih erh* 詠史詩二 "Song of History, II") written by the poet's father, Juan Yü 阮瑀, also both an accomplished poet and a famous zither player. In it the elder Juan had alluded to the story of Chien Li 漸離 and Ching K'e 荊軻, would-be assassins of the man who became First Emperor of Ch'in. The vivid image of "sighs like dark clouds [*ch'ing yun*]" 嘆氣若青雲 describes the weeping of friends who heard Chien Li playing his lute as Ching K'e set off for the Ch'in capital.<sup>5</sup> An interesting anecdote detailing the exploits of Juan Yü will help to clarify this allusion. Ts'ao Ts'ao 曹操 (Han dynasty military commander and putative founder of the Wei dynasty) was aware of Juan Yü's fame as a writer and sought repeatedly to enlist him in his military government. When Juan refused and fled to the mountains, Ts'ao Ts'ao flushed him out by setting fire to the mountainside, then summoned him to an audience. Angered at Juan Yü's determined refusal to speak, the general installed him as a lowly musician in his court. But his musical improvisation, expertly played and cleverly conceived, greatly pleased Ts'ao Ts'ao.<sup>6</sup> Both the poet and his father were virtuosos, and both poems recall the sad notes of a stringed instrument. While the father's lines allude to historical figures, the son's recall the father's music and invite comparison with that of Chien Li. Like the tragic Chien Li, whose action revealed his loyalty to his friend and his state, Juan Yü made known his allegiance to the Han court by refusing to serve Ts'ao Ts'ao, the usurper.

The last couplet contains an allusion to Hexagram 61, *Chung fu* 中孚, or "Inner Truth." The judgment for line 2 reads, in part, "A crane calling in the shade. Its young answers it" 鳴鶴在陰，其子和之 (2.48b; 701).<sup>7</sup> Since Juan Chi locates his crane "in the lofty mountain," it is possible that it represents his father who had once fled to the mountains to hide. But why is the father calling to the poet? And why can't the poet "go looking for him?" Knowing that the court would only read retreat as proof of sedition, the penalty for which was execution, Juan Chi could not flee the current usurpers like his father had done before him. So if his father were calling him to become a recluse, to grant the father's wish would be suicide.

The question in line 8 is echoed in another poem. No. 46 speaks of doves and a Sea Bird, and the last line, in reference to this sea-spanning fowl, asks, "How could I seek out and follow you?" 用子為追隨 (57; 214).<sup>8</sup> Here the poet's reluctance to follow refers to creatures like the Great Man who is further described in poem no. 73:

And once he has left he will never come back,  
But he will still be looked for in a thousand years.  
一去長離絕，千歲復相望。(87; 185-186)

Like the High Bird, the Sea Bird, and the Sun Crow, all such creatures in Juan Chi's poetry succeed in escaping the confines of earth. A mere human would not have the power to keep up with them. They may be anathema to the earthbound, yet, when they leave, they are not forgotten for a thousand years. This is the only true immortality, the kind Juan Chi will eventually attain.

At least one Chinese commentator interprets the poem as referring to the father (Huang Chieh 58), but others see alternative allegories, and the English translator sees it only as "a general lamentation for Juan Chi's 'mortality'" (Holzman 215). The key to solving the "hidden meaning" of poem no. 47 lies in the hexagrammatic interpretation of the parallel couplet lines three and four:

The High Bird soars over the mountain crests;  
The swallows and wrens nest in the forest below.

The "mountain/forest" pair corresponds to the coupled trigrams "mountain" over "wood" which form Hexagram 18, *Ku* 蠱. The character *ku* shows three insects in a bowl and depicts an ancient form of voodoo.<sup>9</sup> The *I Ching* is the locus classicus for this term, and its occurrence there has always evoked danger. The Han exegetes glossed it as "service," or "work," which is meaningful only in the sense of an occult practice. Moreover, in ancient times it was the shaman who possessed the skill to manipulate the *ku* (Chou 243). Since most of the six line judgments mention "the father's *ku*," it seems reasonable to as-

sume that the father in the hexagram is a shaman or witch doctor. In addition, three of the judgments (lines 1, 3, and 5) assume the identical form, "taking up the father's work" 干父之蠱 (1.40ab; 75).<sup>10</sup> It is the son who is implicated here, and he is urged to step into the footsteps of his father. We might even be tempted to ask if father Juan Yü and his son were themselves adept at certain occult arts. Certainly Juan Chi shares with many professional diviners a profound knowledge of the *I Ching*. Moreover, his knowledge of Taoist "whistling" is attested,<sup>11</sup> a yogic technique that few could master. While the question is academic as to whether or not Juan Chi possessed shamanistic skills, it is at least significant and probably not coincidence that the *Ku* hexagram prompts us to make this kind of judgment.

If the poetic imagery is taken into account along with the added insights gleaned from the hexagram texts, the poem begins to make sense. First of all, the crane is associated with Taoist immortality, a subject that is certainly an obsession with Juan Chi. But the Great Man, symbolized by the High Bird, was also immortal. Thus the High Bird soaring over the mountain and the crane calling on the mountaintop belong to the same category: both are literary manifestations of an immortal being. If we were to seek the appropriate place in hexagram 18 to lodge the poetic image of the father, then the unbroken line at the top of the trigram for "mountain" would be ideal. This trigram is the emblem of the "youngest son," according to the *Shuo-kua chuan* 說卦傳, and we know Juan Chi was the youngest son of Juan Yü. The line, departing remarkably from other line judgments in the hexagram, reads:

He does not serve kings and princes,  
Sets himself higher goals.  
不事王侯，高尚其事。(481; 1.40b)<sup>12</sup>

For some this might come as a shocking revelation. By an occasional remark on the virtue of refusing official service the Han commentaries strengthened the developing eremitic ideology. But this candor is rare for line texts whose origin is much older. This line is an

important classical foundation for the legitimacy of the hermit's path. Already in early Han China the man who "set himself higher goals" was the *kao shih* 高士, the "lofty scholar," who did not serve the emperor. We are shocked because the line text is the clearest statement yet of the escapist urge that pervades the poem. We can probably say with some conviction now that Juan Chi does not mourn his executed friend, Hsi K'ang, in this poem.<sup>13</sup> While he may be mourning his father, it is his father's higher goal that captures the poet's imagination. But seldom would the tyrants of the third and fourth centuries let the hermits have their way. In the end Ts'ao Ts'ao won the allegiance of the father and therefore also of the son. Now it was Juan Chi who had to decide between service and suicide.

The second poem of our analysis is numbered 8 in the series:<sup>14</sup>

Bright is the sun as it sets in the west,  
 Its dying rays reflect on my blouse;  
 A whirlwind blows at the walls of my house,  
 Shivering birds huddle close to each other.  
 The dodo still holds his wings in his beak,  
 And the eohippus yet thinks of its hunger;  
 How is it that the man on the path to power,  
 Bent double from fawning, forgets where he's going?  
 Why does he boast of his reputation,  
 Making himself haggard and sorrowful?  
 I prefer to dart about with the swallows and sparrows,  
 Not to follow the yellow crane on its flight.  
 The yellow crane roams to the ends of the earth;  
 Once in mid-flight, how could one return?  
 灼灼西頽日，餘光照我衣。  
 回風吹四壁，寒鳥相因依。  
 周周吹四壁，蛩蛩亦念饑。  
 如何當路子，聲折忘所歸。  
 豈為夸譽名，憔悴使心悲。  
 寧與燕雀翔，不隨黃鵠飛。  
 黃鵠遊四海，中路將安歸。

This poem divides easily into three independent quatrains, with a single couplet as conclusion. The first stanza describes an apparent natural scene. The sun is declining, a foul wind is blowing, and four walls do not keep out the cold. The second quatrain begins with descriptions of fantastic creatures that pair up in bizarre symbiotic relationships. It ends with officials shown in their perpetual postures of obeisance, like the bent shape of the ceremonial chime. But while the birds assist each other in order to survive, the high officials do not know how to look back; they have forgotten how to *kuei*, or "go home." The third stanza is less denotative and more connotative, and is cautionary in tone. What begins as an admonition of the flatterers at court ends in the apparent surrender and self-denial of the poet who would play it safe rather than follow the yellow crane. But after invoking the image of the yellow crane, Juan Chi cannot simply abandon it and is compelled to join it part way in its flight. So we see that the poet is not really resolved to remain among the small birds.

Our first impression of birds is not flattering to the species. A huddle of unidentified birds crowds together to protect each other from the inclement weather. The image of "shivering birds" in line 4 can be matched with its syntactic counterpart in line 3, "whirlwind," to form a meaningful pair, "wind/birds." At first this does not seem to correspond to a particular hexagram in the manner that *Ku* was derived from poem no. 47. Since none of the eight *I Ching* elementals (heaven, earth, water, fire, mountain, lake, thunder, wood) readily corresponds to the image of birds, we must search again in the Han commentaries. In regard to the hexagrams and trigrams, the *Ta-chuan* 大傳, or "Great Commentary," says: "The names given are few, but their implications by natural category are great" 其稱名也小，其取類也大 (3.24a).<sup>15</sup> The *Shuo-kua* commentary appropriately expands each of the general trigram categories into as many as twenty distinct terms. For example, the extended category of the "mountain" trigram contains the following terms:

Keeping Still is the mountain; it is a by-path; it means little stones, doors and openings, fruits and seeds, eunuchs and

watchmen, the fingers; it is the dog, the rat, and the various kinds of black-billed birds. Among trees it signifies the firm and gnarled.

良為山為徑路為小石為門闕為果實為闍寺為指為狗為鼠為黔啄之屬其於木也為堅多節。(4.5b-6a; 278-79)

Although birds are not uncommon in the texts of the hexagrams, this passing statement is only one of three references to birds in the *Shuo-kua* discussion of trigram categories (a total of over one hundred attributes for the eight graphs). Mountains is the only element that subsumes the "black-billed" variety, and it is no accident that some references to birds in the *I Ching* occur in hexagrams that contain the trigram of mountain.<sup>16</sup> Thus the significant pair of poetic images, "wind/bird," corresponds to the hexagram formed from the trigrams wind over mountain, or no. 53, *Chien* 漸, "Progress." The text of this hexagram has been discussed extensively by Kunst and Shaughnessy who both emphasize its similarity to certain formulae in *Shih Ching* odes (Kunst 363). The identity of the bird in both classics, as well as the similar actions of birds in both texts, was enough for these scholars to declare "an intrinsic relationship" (Shaughnessy 193) between the words of hexagram and poem. In a move only a bit more bold, I suggest that both have an intrinsic connection to this Juan Chi lyric.

The genus of bird in both the *I Ching* and the *Shih Ching* passages is *hung* 鴻, also known as *hung-yen* 鴻雁, meaning "wild goose." The bird in lines 12-13 of Juan Chi is the *huang-hu* 黃鵠, or "yellow swan." The locus classicus for *huang-hu* is a passage in *Pu chü* 卜居, or "Divination," in the *Ch'u-tz'u* 楚辭, or *Songs of Ch'u*. The line in question reads as follows:

Is it better to match wing tips with the flying swan, or to dispute for scraps with chicken and ducks?

寧與黃鵠比翼乎，將與雞鶩爭食乎。(2: 591: 205)<sup>17</sup>

If Juan Chi is alluding to Ch'ü Yüan's "flying swan," which is likely, then it is clear that he valorizes the great over the small. But he is just

as likely to be calling our attention to the subject of divination. In *Pu chü* the exiled Ch'ü Yüan solicits the aid of a Great Diviner to determine his fate. To our great surprise, in Juan Chi's poem the same fate is being questioned. Has he also sought the aid of divination? If the parallel images of the second couplet are significant, then the hexagram they suggest is a most appropriate answer to Juan Chi's question. *Chien* is the only hexagram that mentions *hung*. The *hu* is a cousin of the *hung*, and their names sometimes occur together to mean large geese in general.<sup>18</sup> Juan Chi even employs the image *hung-hu* in a poem (no. 43, see below). As might be expected, the feet and beak of the Chinese swan are black, and yellow-brown feathers are not uncommon. Some commentators are tempted to translate the expression as "yellow crane," thinking that it is only the largeness of the species that is important to the meaning of the poem.<sup>19</sup> Since "cranes" are a symbol of immortality, they seem a more appropriate symbol for this poet. But the translation, "golden swan," is more accurate; it is also more valid since the *hu* of Juan Chi's poem all but alludes to the *hung* of the hexagram text.

Large flocks of birds were ominous events in ancient times, which accounts for their appearance in song and divination. But it is the migration of birds that is most significant in the hexagram, in particular the progression of flocks from one place to another. All six lines repeat the same formula: "the wild geese advance to X," while the variable changes incrementally from lower to higher elevations of "roosting" grounds:

The wild goose advances to the mountain stream,  
 The wild goose advances to the large rock,  
 The wild goose advances to the land,  
 The wild goose advances to the tree,  
 The wild goose advances to the hillock,  
 The wild goose advances to the hill.

鴻漸于干，鴻漸于磐

鴻漸于陸，鴻漸于木

鴻漸于陵，鴻漸于陸 (2.36b-2.37b)<sup>20</sup>

As this translation indicates, the ambiguity of the Chinese allows the subject of the line to be either singular or plural. Regardless of what number of birds is indicated in the hexagram, the movement is steadily upward. Since the goose is an aquatic fowl, migration from a river to the top of a mountain represents an increasing alienation from the natural environment. If this aquatic environment is the wintering ground of the lacustrine south (a similar progression in *Shih Ching* ode no. 159 begins at an "island"), then the spring migration is a progression that draws the birds ever closer to the dry plateau of the north. But Juan Chi asks in his poem how the *huang-hu* can ever return. Unlike the common goose or swan, it flies "to the ends of earth." Its journey is not a migration, not an annual cycle, but an ascension, a flight to the top of the world, an escape from the confines of earth. In the midst of its route the *huang-hu* never turns back, even though, like the goose, it must occasionally break its journey. Poem no. 43 states:

One after the other the Great Cranes [Swans] go flying,  
Flying to the very ends of the world.

....

In the morning they breakfast on coral tree fruit  
And they pass the night on Mt. Cinnabar's rim.

鴻鵠相隨飛，飛飛適荒裔。

....

朝餐瑯干實，夕宿丹山際。(54; 213)

We already know that when the Great Man leaves he will not return for a thousand years. Once the journey begins it does not end. The sun never wavers in its course.

It is the corresponding text of the *I Ching* that finally convinces us that the poet, too, in his imagination at least, was on a cosmic journey like the Great Bird. The text of line 3 of Hexagram 53 reads in part as follows:

The wild goose gradually draws near the plateau.

The man goes forth and does not return.

鴻漸于陸，夫征不復。(2.37a; 660)

This reads remarkably like the following passage from *Shih Ching* ode no. 159:

The wild-geese take wing; they make for the land.

The prince went off and does not come back.

鴻飛遵陸，公歸不復。(159; 15.6b; 38)<sup>21</sup>

Although both ode and hexagram refer at least implicitly to a male/female separation, however, the *Hsiang chuan* 象傳 commentary specifically explains the man's action in this manner: "he leaves his flock" 離群丑也 (*Chou-i pen-i* 2.37a). That is to say, this becomes the subject of the line "leaves his own kind." This is obviously the case if it is the lone goose that is the counterpart of man and prince. Like a lost goose, Juan Chi is alienated from his natural environment. He was not fortunate to serve a virtuous king and he could not even enjoy for long the safety and comfort of a secluded "bamboo grove." From his precarious perch in official circles, he must have yearned to flee to the riverbank.

On the other hand, if the hexagram text implies a flock of geese, then in addition to separation it might also signify steadfastness. Richard Wilhelm says of this line, "It pictures a man who never desists from his course and who therefore proceeds without ever turning back" (Wilhelm 661). This could certainly apply to the poet's apparent refusal to embrace the legitimacy of the Ssu-ma usurpers and his resulting insistence on habitual intoxication. But it could just as easily refer to the will of the Great Man, which does not waver. The inebriate was a prisoner of a tyrant while the poet sought the liberation of an ideal realm. Juan Chi the mystic soared on a timeless journey. The yellow swan in his poem, like the great P'eng bird, travels to the oceans at the edges of the world. Like the sun and moon it does not stop in its path. Similarly, how could Juan Chi swerve from his lofty goal? What appears as resignation and denial in the last stanza of the

poem is in fact a kind of ironic posturing on the part of the poet. Yes, the man could stay in the cold north and huddle together with the "swallows and wrens." Or he could depart for southern climes like migrating geese. Better yet, he could follow the Golden Swan flying to the four seas or the High Bird soaring over the mountain crests. Juan Chi could no more ignore the crane calling from the mountain than he could avoid trailing the Great Swan in its flight. While it was important for him to convince his audience otherwise, the hexagram injunctions belie his words. Juan Chi is certainly "progressing to the heights,"<sup>22</sup> and he will indeed "take up the father's work." We know this because the poet's work is still here to tell us. The Great Man is immortal in the words of the lyric. As long as the poet's songs continue to be read, the Great Bird will continue to fly.

Another pre-Tang poet possessed a knowledge of the *I Ching* profound enough to allow him to embed a deep structure of correlative symbols in his poetry. That poet was Hsieh Ling-yün 謝靈運, whose use of *I Ching* allusion is both frequent and intricate. I will need only to conduct this short analysis of his most famous poem, "Climbing the Tower by the Pond" (*Teng ch'ih shang lou* 登池上樓),<sup>23</sup> to demonstrate the complexity of allusion and literary analogy in Hsieh's poetry. It is the winter of 422, and the poet finds himself banished to the southeast coast after the death of Liu Yu, first emperor of the Liu Sung dynasty (420-479). The former duke arrives seriously ill from the capital where he had been one of the most admired figures of the age. The opening couplets of his poem read as follows:

Submerged dragons make enticing their mysterious forms,  
 Flying geese echo their distant cries.  
 Resting in the sky, I am shamed by the clouds' floating,  
 Lodged by the river, humbled by its fathomless depths.

潛虬媚幽姿，飛鴻響遠音。  
 薄霄愧雲浮，棲川作淵沈。

Hsieh, dejected, is pressed down by the sky and hemmed in by the

river as he peers from the heights of the tower. The dragons mock him from the depths, and the geese ignore him from high in the sky. On the surface at least, it appears that the poet is suffering the conventional anguish of political exile.

But this poem, like few other of Hsieh Ling-yün's, is rich with "allusions couched within the fabric of the landscape which belie the current dominant mood" (Westbrook 242). The title prepares the reader for a panoramic view of a natural landscape, but instead we are immediately presented with an image of creatures either too fantastic to imagine or too distant to see. Are we being "enticed" to peer deeper into the structure of the poem to find the meaning of the poet's scenes? The poem opens with the appearance of *ch'ien ch'iu* 潛虬, or "submerged dragons," which echoes the *ch'ien lung* 潛龍, or "hidden dragon," of hexagram 1. This allusion opens up a great gate into Hsieh Ling-yün's intricate storehouse of meaning.

The "hidden dragon" is of course the symbol of the "lofty scholar," or recluse.<sup>24</sup> If we turn to the *I Ching* to seek help from the commentaries, we find one particular text especially enlightening: the *Wen-yen* commentary to *Ch'ien* 乾, the first of the sixty-four hexagrams. Three separate allusions in the poem are derived from this *I Ching* text. It reads in part as follows (with the pertinent words emphasized):

The Master said: There he is, with the powers of the dragon, and yet lying hid. . . . He can live, withdrawn from the world, *without regret*. (line 1)

The Master said: The superior man *advances in virtue*, and cultivates all the sphere of his duty. His real-heartedness and good faith are the ways by which he *advances in virtue*. . . . Therefore he occupies a high position without pride, and a low position without anxiety. (line 3)

The Master said: He finds no permanent place either above or below, but he does not commit the error (of advancing).<sup>25</sup> He may advance or recede; there is no permanent place for him: but he does not *leave his fellows*. The

superior man, *advancing in virtue* and cultivating the sphere of his duty, yet wishes (to advance only) at the (proper) time, and therefore there is no mistake. (line 4)

子曰：龍德而隱者也…豚世无悶。

子曰：君子進德修業。忠信所以進德也…是故居上位而不驕，在下位而不憂。

子曰：上下无常，非為邪也。進退无恆，非離群也。君子進德修業欲及時也。故无咎。(1.6ab; 6-8)

Allusions to the *Wen-yen* commentary begin in the third couplet of Hsieh's poem (lines 5-6):

Too stupid to advance in virtue,  
Too weak to retire to tilling.  
進德智不拙，退耕力不任。

In line 5, Hsieh introduces the concept of *chin te* 進德, an important characteristic of the Confucian superior man according to the words of "the Master." Here, however, it is juxtaposed against its Taoist alternative *t'ui keng* 退耕, the pastoral retreat. Therefore in the context of the poem to "advance" is to shoulder the responsibilities of the courtly official. But, as Westbrook puts it, "the term 'stupid' . . . has a highly favorable Taoist connotation" (Westbrook 243). So line 5 is not a modest appraisal of the poet's intellect but might be an aloof rejection of life in the capital. Is the poet proclaiming his detachment from the dusty world of official service? Is he actually pleased to be rid of his career at court?

Two paired images in this initial parallel couplet combine in a hexagram landscape that will answer the question with a resounding "yes." I refer to the subject of "submerged dragons" and its syntactic counterpart, "flying geese." Since none of the eight *I Ching* elementals readily corresponds to the images of either dragons or birds, we must search in the Han commentaries. We already know from our analysis of Juan Chi that the mountain trigram subsumes the image of birds. In

addition, the *Shuo-kuo* commentary expands the category of the thunder trigram into the following terms:

The Arousing is thunder, the dragon. It is dark yellow, it is a spreading out, a great road, the eldest son. It is decisive and vehement; it is bamboo that is green and young, it is reed and rush.

震為雷為龍為玄黃為敷為大涂為長子為決躁為蒼莨竹為萑葦。 (4.5a; 276)

Thus we may assign the symbol of thunder, or the trigram *chen*, to the image of dragons in line 1 of the poem. Then the significant pair of poetic images, "dragons/geese," corresponds to the combined trigrams thunder over mountain, which forms hexagram 62, *Hsiao-kuo* 小過, or "Preponderance of the Small."

The judgment for this hexagram contains the interesting note: *fei niao i chih yin* 飛鳥遺之音, "The flying bird leaves behind its sound" (2.49b; Kunst, 363), or "The flying bird brings the message" (Wilhelm/Baynes 240). Westbrook amazingly fails to point it out, but line 2 of the poem, *fei hung hsiang yüan yin* 飛鴻響遠音 ("Flying geese echo their distant cries"), is an allusion to this judgment text. The coinciding of both a literary allusion and what I call a "hexagram landscape" is good evidence that the poet's intention was to encode this section of his poem with the message of the *Hsiao-kuo* hexagram judgment. That message is as follows:

It is not well to strive upward,  
It is well to remain below.  
不宜上宜下。 (2.49b, 240)

The judgment of hexagram 62 warns precisely against "ascending." So Hsieh Ling-yün is indeed happy to have escaped the dangers of political life, and he justifies his attitude by "hiding" a message behind the fantastic landscape of a parallel couplet. The poet does indeed "remain below," although the situation of his lying low is not the ideal

one (his sickness is ostensibly prohibiting him from partaking in the labor of eremitic retreat). He may be sick and in exile, but he will convince himself that he “occupies a low position without anxiety.”

Whereas the poem opens with almost surreal images of alienation and discomfort, the second half witnesses a change of season—when “the new *yang* changes the old *yin*” 新陽改故陰 (line 14), or when winter changes to spring. The mood of the poem is also transformed, as if the poet’s illness has passed with the winter, and he finally begins to identify with his seaside environment. Yet even this brighter side bears shadows of uncertainty. One couplet introduces allusions from the two great classical anthologies of poetry:

“Crowds”—I’m saddened by the song of Pin,  
 “Lush and green”—moved by the tune of Ch’u.  
 祁祁傷豳歌，萋萋感楚吟。(lines 17-18)<sup>26</sup>

Both poems describe different forms of alienation, and the poet employs the allusions to reflect the condition of his own troubled mind. He is “saddened by the song of Pin” because he is separated from his “crowd,” presumably other poets, like-minded officials, and Buddhist monks. He is “moved by the tune of Ch’u” because he has not severed his ties to the court as completely as the *yin-shih* 隱士, or “gentleman who became a recluse.” That we know his mind is troubled is clear from the verse that contains the second allusion from the *Wen-yen* commentary discussed above: “It’s hard to quit the flock with tranquil mind” 離群難處心 (line 20).

But we know the poet is steeling himself for the ultimate resignation. The most realistic landscape in the poem—describing for the first time the scene that gives the poem its title—is also a hexagram landscape:

The pond is growing into springtime plants,  
 Garden willows have turned to singing birds.  
 池塘生春草，園柳變鳴禽。(lines 15-16)

The poet's decision to match "pond" with "garden willow" recalls hexagram 28, *Ta-kuo* 大過, or "Preponderance of the Great," which pictures the trigram for lake above the trigram for wood. The *Hsiang-chuan*, explaining the significance of the component trigrams, has the following gloss:

The superior man, in accordance with this, stands up alone and has no fear, and keeps retired from the world without regret.

君子以獨立不懼，豚世无悶。(1.54b; Legge/Sung, 124)

To "retire from the world" of official duties is the proper way to "remain below." To "quit the flock" is the proper way to not "strive upward." This hexagram landscape makes it abundantly clear by what principles the poet wishes to live.

The closing couplet reveals the poet's decision to adhere to those principles:

Holding to principle is not only a thing of old:

That I am without regret is proven today.

持操豈獨古，无悶徵在今。(lines 21-22)

This is the final allusion to the *I Ching* and takes the poem full circle from the enticement of the "submerged dragons." The poet is "without regret" because "he can live, withdrawn from the world," which is precisely the judgment of hexagram no. 28.<sup>27</sup> Therefore Hsieh's poem, "Climbing the Tower by the Pond," contains not one but two incidents of a literary allusion coinciding with an encoded hexagram, which is powerful evidence in favor of authorial intention. Although other critics have interpreted "principle" as loyalty, the hexagram landscapes mark it instead as the eremitic ideal. And although Francis Westbrook was unaware of this level of hexagram encoding, she came surprisingly close to the mark when she described the work as "an intimately personal poem whose author is concerned solely with having sufficient character to stand alone and live in re-

clusion" (Westbrook 244).<sup>28</sup> This, of course, is precisely the hexagram message that lies behind the lyric landscape of lines.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Wilhelm. Translated into English by Cary F. Baynes.

<sup>2</sup> *Wei chih, chüan* 29, *Kuan Lu chuan* 管輅傳. In a commentary on this biography of Kuan Lu by P'ei Song-chih 裴松之 (Nan Sung dynasty), another biography, the *Lu pieh chuan* 輅別傳, is cited, which is where this quote originates.

<sup>3</sup> The translation is adapted from Donald Holzman 215. The original can be found in Huang Chieh 58.

<sup>4</sup> The first number in the citation is the *chüan* and page in *Yen K'e-chün* 嚴可均 and the second is the page in Holzman.

<sup>5</sup> Juan Yu's lyric can be found in Ting 188. See also Ssu-ma Ch'ien's biography of Ching K'e in Birch 106-118.

<sup>6</sup> This anecdote is compressed from the translation appearing in Holzman 4, and was originally found in the *Wen-shih chuan* 文士傳, a collection of biographies dating from the early 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>7</sup> References to the *I Ching* will give the *chüan* and page number in Chu Hsi 朱熹, *Chou-i pen-i* 周易本義, followed by the page number in Wilhelm/Baynes.

<sup>8</sup> This and subsequent citations from the poetry of Juan Chi lists first the page number in Huang Chieh and second, the page number in Holzman.

<sup>9</sup> Several poisonous creatures, such as scorpions, centipedes, and snakes, were placed in a pot and allowed to devour each other. The creature that survived was called the *ku*, and it had magic properties, such as the ability to bewilder or enslave the unwary victim. In certain areas of China the living *ku* was raised by its master, and if the owner died, the *ku* was passed down to his son. See Eberhard 149-50.

<sup>10</sup> The translation of this line judgment is taken from Kerson Huang.

<sup>11</sup> For a description of Juan Chi's expertise in "whistling," see Liu I-ch'ing 331-332.

<sup>12</sup> This translation is from Wilhelm/Baynes.

<sup>13</sup> This is the interpretation of Ku Chih 古直, in his *Juan Ssu-tung yung-huai shih chien ting pen* 阮嗣宗詠懷詩箋定本, cited in Holzman 216.

<sup>14</sup> The translation is that of Victor Mair 19, except for the last three couplets which are from Holzman 118. For the original see Huang Chieh 11.

<sup>15</sup> This translation is adapted from Owen 61.

<sup>16</sup> Another hexagram containing the mountain trigram (no. 56) is concerned with birds, in this case the *chih* 雉, or "pheasant." The fire trigram (see hexagram no. 30) is equated with the same "pheasant" in the *Shuo-kua* commentary.

<sup>17</sup> The citation lists first the volume and page number from T'an Chieh-fu 譚介甫 and second the page number from David Hawkes

<sup>18</sup> Such is the case in a significant passage from the "Ch'en-she shih-chia" 陳涉世家 chapter of the *Shih-chi* 史記, or *Records of the Grand Historian*: "How can swallows and sparrows know the mind of the *hung-hu*?" 燕雀安知鴻鵠之志哉.

<sup>19</sup> Holzman, in regard to the "great crane" of poem no. 43, says, "he is, in fact, a 'crane' only by the necessity of attaching the name of some large bird to him, for the Chinese term is not for any specific genus of large birds" (213). The term he refers to is *hung* rather than *hu*, the former which can sometimes mean simply "large." A more accurate translation of *hung-hu* is then, "Great Swan." Holzman is probably influenced to some degree by the famous Huang-he Lou 黃鶴樓, or "Yellow Crane Pagoda" (in modern-day Wuhan), and the legend behind it.

<sup>20</sup> This translation is from Shaughnessy 189.

<sup>21</sup> The citation lists first the ode number according to the sequence in *Mao-shih*, followed by the *chüan* and page number in Ma Ch'i-ch'ang, and thirdly the page number in Arthur Waley

<sup>22</sup> This is one translation of line six of the hexagram. See Kerson Huang 145.

<sup>23</sup> See Westbrook. For the original see Ting, vol. 2, 638. The remaining text of the translation reads as follows:

Too stupid to advance in virtue,  
 Too weak to retire to tilling,  
 I followed my salary to the remote seaside  
 And lie sick facing the empty woods.  
 With quilt and pillow I blot out the season.  
 Opening up, I briefly look out.  
 Inclining my ear I listen to surging billows  
 And raising my eyes behold the craggy peaks.  
 Early spring has replaced the drawn-out winds,  
 The new *yang* changes the old *yin*.  
 The pond is growing into springtime plants,  
 Garden willows have turned to singing birds.  
 "Crowds"—I'm saddened by the song of Pin,  
 "Lush and green"—moved by the tune of Ch'u.  
 Living apart can easily last forever;  
 It's hard to quit the flock with tranquil mind.  
 Holding to principle is not only a thing of old:  
 That I am without regret is proven today.

<sup>24</sup> T'ao Yüan-ming 陶淵明, a contemporary of Hsieh's and the first hermit poet, probably took his name T'ao Ch'ien from this *I Ching* phrase.

<sup>25</sup> The Wilhelm/Baynes translation of this sentence reads "In ascent or descent there is no fixed rule, except that one must do nothing evil" (381), which seems closer to the mark. The Legge translation of the commentary was chosen because it apparently is the inspiration for Westbrook's translation (passages that are common to both texts have been emphasized). Legge also translates literally the sentence following: *fei li ch'un yeh* 非離群也, "he does not leave his fellows," which is alluded to in line 20 of "Climbing the Tower by the Pond": *li ch'un nan ch'u hsin* 離群難處心, "It's hard to quit the flock with tranquil mind." The Wilhelm/Baynes version is inaccurate and thus incapable of being used to demonstrate the relationship between poem and *I Ching* commentary. The Legge translation cited is the updated version of Z. D. Sung.

<sup>26</sup> Westbrook (242) identifies the allusions as follows: "Crowds"

of line 17 is from *Shih Ching* 154 which reads, "The spring days are drawing out;/ They gather the white aster in crowds./ A girl's heart is sick and sad/ Till with her lord she can go home" (Waley 165); "Lush and green" of line 18 is from *Ch'u-tz'u* "*Chao yin-shih*" which reads in part, "A prince went wandering/ And did not return./ In spring the grass grows/ Lush and green" (Hawkes 119).

<sup>27</sup> The expression also occurs in the *Wen-yen* commentary to line 1 of the *Ch'ien* hexagram, and as such is the third allusion to that text in the poem.

<sup>28</sup> Emphasis mine.

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