The Structure and Theme of the *Hsi-yu Chi*

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During the Ch'ing dynasty critical attentions regarding the Chinese folk novel, *Hsi-yu chi* 西遊記 ,* were mostly paid to its allegorical intents.[1] As the novel provides sufficient amount of textual evidences, it gave rise at the time to various ways of interpretations according to the canons of various teachings. The Buddhist tried to show it as a fictionalized sermon of Buddhism; the Taoist tended to consider it as an actualized preaching to promote the way of Tao; and the Confucianist came to think of it as a personified doctrine of Confucianism. Under such divided opinions it became for a while a work of philosophical profundity difficult to be comprehended. Dr. Hu Shih 胡適 , however, vehemently repudiates such views. In his foreword to Arthur Waley's translation of *Monkey*, he maintains that it is unquestionably more "a book of good humour, profound nonsense, good-natured satire and delightful entertainment"[2] than one that elucidates the Great Way in subtle and abstruse language. Recent critics, who favor its humor and satire,[3] usually ignore Sandy's role in the narrative, thereby unable to clarify the seemingly entangling relations among the pilgrims, whereas those commentators who only take its political elements into account in disregard of its religious allegory consider it as a document directing to a severe attack on the corruption and perversion of bureaucracy without ever indicating any slightest interest in its underlying design.[4] In fact any conscientious exploration of the novel can ill afford to overlook its allegorical significance, and from the perspective of the Taoist theory of the five elements in particular, we can not only cast a very clear light on the relations among the pilgrims, but discover its structural principle. As the relations among the pilgrims have recently been dealt with,[5] we shall focus our attention upon a close analysis of its structure as well as an explication of its

theme.

The theory of the five elements was a system of thought devised by the Chinese thinker in ancient times to view the materialistic phenomena of nature. The interaction of the five elements – water, fire, metal, wood and earth – designates the five primordial essences in a state of constant flux and incessant movement. For our present purpose it suffices to know that the theory involves two orders: mutual production and mutual conquest. According to the former water produces wood, wood produces fire, fire produces earth, earth produces metal, and metal produces water. And as stated by the latter water conquers fire, fire conquers metal, metal conquers wood, wood conquers earth and earth conquers water.[6] Witness Chapter 49 of the *Hsi-yu chi,* which illustrates these two orders on the basis of Chinese folklore tradition

> Earth conquers water,
> And when water dries out the bottom is seen;
> Water produces wood,
> Which, having grown up, will come into bloom. . ...
> Earth is the mother
> That puts forth golden shoots,
> Metal begets divine water and sires the baby;
> Water is the source,
> Moistening Wood's flowers
> And Wood, burning, creates strong fire. (p. 437)
>
> 土尅水，水乾見底；
> 水生木，木旺開花 .....
> 土是母，發金芽，金生神水產嬰娃；
> 水爲本，潤木華，木有輝煌烈火夜。

The mutual production and mutual conquest of these elements which effect the successive transformations and causal relationships of all things in the universe are not passively stagnant, but powerfully constitute an endless cycle in an active way.

The five elements were said to have taken its origin from the *yin* 陰 and the *yang* 陽 These two forces in turn took their source at Tao 道. Before it divided, Tao was whole, complete and traceless; it was in a state of Chaos or Great Mist. It was then rent as a result of its constant flowing into the *yin-yang* forces, which drawing apart became the five elements.

When in due course the *yin-yang* forces and the five elements grew merged into one, the split Tao would return to its original state. The *Hsi-yu chi,* like many other Chinese folk novels, begins with the creation myth to expound this cyclical transformation of the universe. This is what its first verse passage says:

> Before Chaos split, Heaven and Earth were in confusion,
> Being vast and void, nothing was discernible.
> When P'an Ku sundered the Great Mist,
> Creation began, and the pure were separated from the impure.
> All things in between Heaven and Earth were created to
> adore the supreme Benevolence.
> The ten thousand creatures were shaped and led to goodness.
> Those who would know creation's work in myriads of years,
> Must read *The Story of Deliverances on the Westward*
> *Journey.* (p. 1)

> 混沌未分天地亂，茫茫渺渺無人見。
> 自從盤古破鴻濛，開闢從玆清濁辨。
> 覆載群生仰至仁，發明萬物皆成善。
> 欲知造化會元功，須看西遊釋厄傳。

The three stages described above are unity, separation and unity: the process from the state of Chaos or Great Mist to the creation of the world and all things is the process from unity to separation, and the process from creation and production to the Journey's end, then, is the one from separation to unity. The latter is what the very last verse passage of the novel in discussion describes:

> All were true immortals transformed to the dusty world,
> To experience the four forms (*laksana*) and cultivate the body.
> The five elements consider visible things (*rūpa*) as void
> and vacuous,
> Not to mention hundreds of monsters and illusory names.
> Candana (Buddha's) procurement of the right fruit
> conforms to the Great Perception,
> The achievement of his mission frees him from drowning
> and perishing.
> The Scriptures are imparted on earth with grace's radiance
> wide,
> And the five sages stand high at the unique gate. (p. 885)

一體眞如轉落塵，合和四相復修身。
五行論色空還寂，百怪虛名總莫論。
正果旃檀皈大覺，完成品職脫沉淪。
經傳天下恩光闊，五聖高居不二門。

As Luo Kuan-chung 羅貫中 remarks in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* 三國演義, "the general situation of the world is that united for a long time, it will cleave asunder; whereas its prolonged separation will invariably lead to reunion."[7] Such a process which begins with unity, proceeds to separation and ends in a return to unity are precisely the basic framework of the *Hsi-yu chi* as a whole and most of the episodes in it. As the movement from instability toward stability constitutes the legitimate plot of a story, it is only natural that the scheme of the novel concerned is placed upon the transition from separation to unity, a transition which involves the adjustment of the five elements represented by the questers of True Scriptures.

The term, *wu-hsing* 五行 (five elements), occurs approximately thirty times throughout the *Hsi-yu chi*. But the five elements respectively as *shui* 水 (water), *huo* 火 (fire), *chin* 金 (metal), *mu* 木 (wood) and *t'u* 土, earth) are innumerable. They are usually found in titular couplets and verse passages. The couplet which sums up the incidents of a chapter tells us that Monkey is associated with metal, Pigsy with wood and Sandy with earth;[8] from the verse passage interlaced in the narrative we know Tripitaka embodies water and Monkey incarnates fire. An example for illustration can be cited from chapter 57, where the T'ang monk, having expelled Monkey, feels for a moment unbearably parched. Then the verse passage that follows reads: "Earth and wood struggle in vain while metal and water sever" (p. 507). Here water apparently designates Tripitaka. Actually the often-mentioned term, "heart-monkey," already connotes the association of Monkey with metal and fire: the "monkey" comes to be connected with metal in the cycle of the Twelve Animals, while the "heart" is the viscus that corresponds to fire.[9]

A further perusal of the text will demonstrate that these five elements are not arbitrarily assigned to the pilgrims, but in agreement with their character traits. Tripitaka, nicknamed "River Float," is described as soft and meek as water, timorous, sentimental and muddle-headed. Monkey has a fiery disposition, impetuous, boastful and quick-witted on the one hand,

and proud, capricious, stubborn, and courageous on the other. Pigsy is said to be stupid as a stick, lewd, greedy and slanderous. Finally Sandy is mild as the noblest element earth, a peace-maker, a harmonizer and a nourisher, distinguished among other things for its generative as well as productive power. Their character traits are easy to be recognized; they are, in the words of E. M. Forster, "flat characters."[10] Though interpretators of the *Hsi-yu chi* have seldom pointed out the correspondence of these, they have nevertheless elaborately analyzed the character traits of the pilgrims,[11] wherefore we shall not further enter into details here.

The popular 100-chapter *Hsi-yu chi,* in which the legend of the Journey takes a definite shape and receives a full treatment, is allegedly based upon the version published in 1592 by the *Shih-tê t'ang* 世德堂 of Nanking.[12] Its entire arrangement of incidents, like the *Odyssey, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or the picaresque novel, is episodic. Its episodes succeed each other chronologically without strongly emphasized causality. Each of them, which consists of half a chapter at least (i.e. the two episodes in chapter 13) and seven chapter at most (i.e. chapters 1-7), makes up a very self-contained unit. The action of the entire narrative is of course complete, so is it true with that of each episode in it. Yet if we make a close examination of its tone and atmosphere expressed, we can discover its framework designed dramatically according to certain natural stages and its seemingly veiled theme threading the novel from beginning to end.

Let us now take the first, and also the most typical, episode of the *Hsi-yu chi* (chapters 1-7) as an example for illustration. This episode, whose plot revolves around its central character, Monkey, is intended to portray the unifying process of the two antagonistic elements, metal and fire. Monkey was born from an immortal "rock" on the Flower-Fruit Mountain worked upon by the pure essences of the "sun" and the "moon." The sun and the moon are heavenly "fires," while the rock is the consolidated material that consists principally of "minerals." Thus he has aggregated in his body fire and metal at birth albeit they are not purified yet. As soon as he sees the world, he "astonishes" the Jade Emperor by flashing two beams of metallic light from his eyes. After he has drunk water, the light grows dim, and his original nature becomes gradually merged. This is the first time that water conquers fire. He finds the Water-Curtain Cave for his fellow monkeys, and having suddenly realized one day during his carefree existence the uncertainty of life and the threat of death, dicides to quest for

immortality (chapter 1). After a long wandering search, he comes to the Holy-Terrace Mountain where he learns the secret of life. And here ends the exposition of the episode.

Hardly has he returned to the Flower-Fruit Mountain when his fiery temper and steely stubbornness begin to break out, thereby causing the action to accend. First he slays the Demon of Havoc, burns down her Water-Viscera Cave (chapter 2), carries away military equipments by magic from the Ao-lai Country, demands a weapon and garments from the Dragon Kings, and then in a drunken dream disposes two summoners and crosses out all the names of the monkeys on the Life-and-Death Records in the Palace of Shadows (chapter 3). The rising action is suspended for a moment when the Planet Venus suggests a means of pacification. Before long, however, it continues to mount up with Monkey's rebellious return to the earth, calling himself "Great Sage, Equal of Heaven" and repeatedly defeating the heavenly troops that come to arrest him. Again at the Planet Venus' suggestion of a peaceful solution the narrative movement slackens once more. Monkey is given the title of the "Sage" (chapter 4), and soon afterwards appointed supervisor of the Peach Garden. Yet he "astounds" the Jade Emperor for the second time by eating the Peaches of Immortality, drinking the nectar prepared for a celestial feast and purloining the Elixir of Longivity. Highly enraged the Emperor forthwith dispatches a hundred thousand heavenly soldiers to pursue him (chapter 5). The action continues to rise to a very high pitch until Monkey is defeated by Erh-lang through the help of Lao Tzŭ's magical snare (chapter 6) and, after the vain attempts of execution, pushed into the Crucible of the Eight Trigrams. There he is, contrary to expectation, tempered into "fiery eyes and metallic pupils." His former self consisted of a "stone" body with fine "fire" in it; but now the stone is purified and fire refined. The two mutually conquering elements are miraculously united into one to give forth an extremely invincible force. So when he jumps out of the Crucible, his magical power, having become much greater than ever before, almost turns heaven upside down. The Emperor, in great "consternation," appeals to the Patriarch Buddha for an immediate measure. The action reaches its turning point when Buddha comes. After a little wager, the self-conceited Monkey is humiliated under the Mountain of the Five Elements. At the Great Banquet for Peace, with which ends the episode, the cosmos restores its peace and perfect order.

It must have been noted that the Jade Emperor is "astounded" or

"consternated" thrice throughout the episode. We might thus divide the action into three stages. The atmosphere is gradually intensified until it reaches the crucial moment at the third time. Between these stages of action there are suspensions, rises and falls. Thus viewed the episode can be said to be a very complete piece of short story. Though named "Aware-of-Emptiness," Monkey fails ironically to grasp its real intent, and becomes true to it. His pride and arrogance, if judged solely from this episode, indicate the propensity of a tragic hero. To achieve his unquenchable desire for longivity he needs, and is in effect given an opportunity to exert through Buddha's mercy, further efforts.

Dr. Hu Shih divides the *Hsi-yu chi* into three parts: Part I includes chapters 1-7; Part II embraces chapters 8-12; and Part III consists of the rest of the novel.[13] The novel structurally considered, however, the episode discussed above and those episodes contained in chapters 8-12 should be regarded as its exposition on the ground that they are meant to introduce the pilgrims separately and state the motivation of the quest for the True Scriptures. Chapters 8-12, which comprise five episodes at least, relate how the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin, under the orders of Tathāgata, comes to the East to find an appropriate scripture pilgrim and prepares for the future encounters of the five elements (chapter 8), how Ch'en Kuang-lei and his wife meet with their misfortunes, how Tripitaka revenges his father's murderers (chapter 9), how Wei Chêng executes the Dragon King of the Ching River in a dream (chapter 10), how the T'ang emperor T'ai-tsung tours the Region of Death, how Liu Ch'üan voluntarily presents melons and fruits to the Kings of Hades (chapter 11), how Tripitaka responds to the imperial commission to procure the Scriptures (chapter 12), and the like. Contrary to the brisk tempo of the first episode created by Monkey's restless energy, magical virtuosity and supernatural tricks performed specially in his battle with Erh-lang, these episodes, which revolve primarily around the element water together with the poetic debate between fisherman and woodcutter as well as the melancholy atmosphere of the Underworld, are slow in pace, murky in tone and, as matters of details are too many, loose in structure.

As the exposition of the novel, the episodes in chapters 1-12 suggest, aside from the incentive of the quest, the fact that since the creation of the universe the five elements have been separated. The first of their unifications starts at the moment when Tripitaka leaves Ch'ang-an (chapter 13), and is attained when Sandy joins the pilgrimage (chapter 22). It is worthy of note

that in this process of unification the five elements come to the scene in accordance with the mutually conquering order. Water represented by Tripitaka appears first, whereas the embodiment of earth, Sandy, comes into view last. Water is granted the primacy because it is the "source of the five elements" (p. 437). As the "mother of the five elements" (p. 437), earth presents itself last to provide harmony, peace and nourishment on the journey. Thus paradoxically mutual antagonism also means mutual agreement. Since conflict is the soul of every piece of literary work, this mutually conquering order is the best way to arouse interest and suspense.

The action of the novel begins to rise with Tripitaka's departure from the Capital City, proceeds through the episodes of the Two-Forked Ridge (chapter 13), the Double-Frontier Mountain (chapter 14), the Eagle-Grief Stream (chapter 15), the Kuan-yin Hall (chapter 16), the Black-Wind Mountain (chapter 17), the Cloudy-Paths Cave (chapter 18) and makes a temporary stop when he receives the Heart Sutra from the Zen master of the Crow-Nest (chapter 19). Then it resumes its ascendancy in his passage through the Yellow-Wind Ridge (chapters 20-21) and the Flowing-Sand River (chapter 22). It again comes to a temporal rest at chapter 23, where the lascivious Pigsy, tempted by beauty and wealth, makes a fool of himself in a scene of comic relief. Soon thereafter the action persists to move upward as the pilgrims arrive at the Five-Village Temple (chapters 24-26), and drastically reaches a climactic moment when Tripitaka, deceived by the Cadaver Demon and instigated by the envious Pigsy, chastises Monkey for cruelty (chapter 27). Shortly after Monkey's dismissal, Tripitaka stumbles mistakenly into the Wave-Moon Cave (chapter 28), seized and then released. A moment later, Sandy is taken prisoner (chapter 29), the master transformed into a ferocious striped tiger, and the Dragon Horse defeated (chapter 30). The five elements are scattered. When Monkey is called back to defeat the monster, they are united again (chapter 31).

In the episode of the Lotus-Flower Cave (chapters 32-35), the pilgrims meet with unexpected catastrophe once again. But the poetic scene of the Treasure-Wood Temple (chapter 36) at once relieves the tension, and momently suspends the tempo. When the Ghost King visits Tripitaka at night (chapter 37) with a weird moan of dark wind flickering the lamp and blowing about the ashes, the peaceful atmosphere vanishes. The action gains its gradual ascendancy in the episodes of the Fire-Cloud Cave (chapters 40-42), the Black River (chapter 43), the Cart-Slow Kingdom (chapters 44-46),

the Heaven-Reaching River (chapters 47-49), the Golden-Helmet Mountain (chapters 50-52), the Son-and-Mother River (chapter 53), the Women Kingdom of Western Liang (chapter 54) and the Lute Cave (chapter 55). For all the unforeseen disasters encountered and the inordinate anguish experienced, the pilgrims are progressively improving their relations. Their joint efforts enable them to survive the ordeals. Once when they are in the neighborhood of the Roaring Mountain, Sandy earnestly advises Tripitaka not to recite the headache spell. Another time, at the approach of the Black River, it is Sandy again that sincerely remonstrates with Pigsy to endure hardship. Sandy and Monkey keep themselves in the foreground to confront their formidable adversaries at the Black River and the Son-and-Mother River. Antagonistic as they are, Monkey (metal) and Pigsy (wood) brave the Scorpion in united action. And it is exclusively Monkey's dharma power that defeats the fatal challenge of the demonic Taoists at the Cart-Slow Kingdom. Needless to say, Monkey's mighty resources are duly discovered and appreciated by his fellow pilgrims. Even the timid master, who is easily frightened by any inkling of danger, joins the contest of meditation of his own accord at the Cart-Slow Kingdom. Thus despite their repeated antagonism, fire (Monkey) and water (Tripitaka) practically cooperate for this once. After the episode of the Golden-Helmet Mountain, Tripitaka reposes his full trust in Monkey. Thus the pilgrims seem to have entertained so far intimate relations with one another.

Nevertheless the following incident proves otherwise. When Monkey disposes in seemingly cold blood of several brigands (chapter 56), an internal strife is engaged. Each of the pilgrims feels discontented and irritated. Their relation reaches its nadir. Then fire and water are at serious variance for the second time, again resulting in Monkey's banishment (chapter 57). After the turmoil created by the two Monkeys (chapter 58), the five elements come together once more. The incident at the Flaming Mountain (chapters 59-61) purposes to reconcile fire and water, while what happen at the Ritual-Festival Kingdom (chapters 62-63) and the T'uo-lo Village (chapter 67) are intended to portray the agreement of metal and wood. It is Pigsy that opens the road at the Ridge of Thorns (chapter 64) and clears away the dirt of the Pulpified-Persimmon Alley (chapter 67). All these incidents do contribute greatly to the unification of the five elements. Meanwhile we find in between them the idyllic interlude of the Wood-Deity Temple (chapter 64) moving at a leisurely pace. Yet this is only the lull before the impending

storm; what instantly follows is the pilgrims' confrontation of dire difficulties at the counterfeit Thunderclap Temple (chapters 65-66). All the deities that come to their rescue are encompassed with perils. Monkey's might proves to be of no avail, and pierced with grief he cannot but sigh despondently and shed helpless tears. Then there succeed two scenes, which mix comicality in seriousness: one of them is the playful disposal of a Red Python at the T'uo-lo Village by Monkey and Pigsy together, while the other happens at the Vermillion-Purple Kingdom, where Monkey plays the Medico to check the King's disease and lovesickness, Pigsy and Sandy serving as pharmacists to compound medicine with the urine reluctantly contributed by the Dragon Horse (chapters 68-69). Again the situation becomes intense as master and disciples come upon a series of calamities at the Monoceros Mountain (chapters 70-71), the Gossamer-Entangling Cave (chapter 72) and the Yellow-Flower Temple (chapter 73). The action is now progressively building up to the unprecedented critical time in the entire narrative.

The challenge of the monsters of the Lion-Camel Cave is the greatest one with which the pilgrims are ever faced on their way to the Western Paradise. When they are drawing near the Cave, the Planet Venus appears in disguise to forebode the danger ahead. Then Monkey scares most of the little demons away by psychological warfare (chapter 74). However he is unluckily discovered his identity and trapped in the *Yin-yang* magical bottle. After a tremendous exercise of efforts, he is able to effect his narrow escape by piercing open a small hole on it (chapter 75). Though he has succeeded in the subdual of Green-hair Lion and the Yellow-tusk Elephant, all the pilgrims are nevertheless tricked and trapped. Monkey gets away singly, but the rumour has it that Tripitaka is eaten alive. In his despondence he appeals to Buddha, who promises to intervene and, with overwhelming powers, turns the scale (chapter 77). As has been pointed out, each of the episodes in the *Hsi-yu chi* is alomst always self-contained. For this reason we can find a number of climaxes in it. The most conspicuous among them are the thrice interventions of Buddha in person to subjugate the wily Monkey (chapter 7), the counterfeit Monkey (chapter 58) and the Garuda Monster (chapter 77). When these monsters are acting lawlessly, heaven and earth are thrown into violent confusion. Once Buddha comes to interfere, the universe returns to its regular order in no time. It is the peripety for the five elements to be re-united. Of the three crises, Monkey's rebel, dramatic as it is, is the smallest in scale. Since the two Monkeys are roughly equal in their feats, the

disturbance they have caused becomes more serious. In comparison the havoc raised by the Garuda Monster turns out to be the most serious since its magical power is much greater than Monkey's, that the situation is awkwardest for him, and that the universe becomes the most chaotic. It is worthy of note further that this episode is placed at the three fourth of the entire narrative; to a master hand of fiction, this is exactly the most appropriate spot for climax. Though there are yet adverse circumstances lying ahead, the intensity is being gradually alleviated.

The rest of the events are meant to depict the increasing understanding and mutual trust among the pilgrims. Learning that the King of the Bhikshu Country wishes to eat his heart and liver, the consternated Tripitaka is compelled to follow Monkey's ruse to exchange their appearances (chapters 78-79), an exchange which suggests change of positions as well as the elements they are embodied. Despite Monkey's repeated warning when they are pursuing the road in a dark pine forest, the saintly monk takes a she-monster in disguise along, and as a result is twice trapped in the Bottomless Cave (chapters 81-83). In the ensuing combat of Monkey and Pigsy against the Rat Monster there is a mixture of danger and humor. Again Tripitaka is captured at the foot of the Mist-Hiding Mountain. Realizing that his master is in mortal danger, Monkey becomes so sad as to shed tears when Pigsy advises him not to. Once when Pigsy wailed over the master's fate at the Yellow-Wind Mountain (chapter 24), Monkey tod him to spirit up; but now Monkey is bewailling himself. Thus metal (Monkey) and wood (Pigsy) also change positions. Such incidents are significant in that these hostile elements – fire and water, metal and wood – are becoming conjoined.

Twice in front of the Interlocking-Ring Cave (chapters 84-86), the Leopard Monster tries to cheat the disciples by starting a rumour that Tripitaka was eaten alive. Formerly under the circumstances Pigsy would invariably move a break-up of the group.[14] But now all of them in one mind swear to avenge their master. The pilgrims are closely knit. Monkey assumes the central role in the admonition for good deads, which brings torrential rain to the Phoenix-God Country (chapter 87), as well as the rejection of marriage proposal at the T'ien-chu Kingdom (chapters 93-95). The three disciples together are active in the impartment of martial arts to the three princes of the Jade-Flower District (chapter 84), in the battle engaged at the Leopard-Head Mountain (chapters 89-90), and in the combat at the Blue-Dragon Mountain (chapters 91-92). While Monkey enjoys the confidence of

his master and brothers, Tripitaka are loved and respected by his disciples. After the ordeal they suffer at the Copper-Platform Prefecture (chapters 96-97), they eventually arrive at the Holy Mountain. Tripitaka forsakes his earthly frame, crossing the Cloud-Transcending Stream in a bottomless boat, and surmounts his mortal fate (chapter 98). The dénouement of the novel comes when master and disciples through mutual support and reliance are rewarded with final exaltation in the presence of Buddha (chapter 99), and are harmonized (chapter 100). After such a prolonged process of adjustment the five elements represented by Tripitaka, Monkey, Pigsy and Sandy are ultimately united into one.

Seen from the above analysis, the stages of unity, separation and unity as the underlying structure of the *Hsi-yu chi* can be applied not only to the larger scheme of the novel, but almost always to each of the episodes therein, except that the unity at the end of the entire narrative designates a return to the state of Chaos, whereas the unity within each episode refers to the temporally renewed harmony of the pilgrims. The fate of the five elements depends solely upon their mutual production or mutual conquest: when they keep in their proper spheres, everything is well ordered; when they are divided into hostile camps, there inevitably brings about calamity. It may be noted further that this process is caused sometimes by the inducement of outside forces, the evidences of which can be cited from such episodes as the Cadaver Demon, Monkey's slaying of robbers, etc.; and sometimes, as in the episodes of the Five-Village Temple, the Fire-Cloud Cave, the Black River, etc., directly prompted by external intruders. E. M. Forster pictorially classifies the patterns of fiction into the shape of an hour-glass and the shape of a grand chain.[15] It seems appropriate to suggest here, for the episodically structured novel such as the *Hsi-yu chi,* a pattern termed the shape of rosary; all the beads are complete units strung together, the first of them being the last and vice versa.

. Meanwhile in the cycle of these three stages is revealed the theme of the novel. The religious names which Tripitaka's disciples assume are respectively Sun Wu-k'ung 孫悟空 (Monkey), Chu Wu-nêng 豬悟能 (Pigsy) and Sha Wu-ching 沙悟淨 (Sandy). As far as their surnames are concerned, Sun (monkey) and Chu (pig) suggest the animals to which they belong, while Sha (sand) obviously alludes to the dwelling place of Sandy, the Flowing-Sand River. The verb, *wu*, which initials their personal names, signifies "to become aware of," "to understand," "to penetrate," "to awake

to," "to comprehend," or "to have an insight into," etc. The noun, *k'ung* (*sūnyatā*), means "emptiness," or "vacuity"; *ching* connotes "stainlessness," also implicative of "emptiness"; *nêng* is a phonetic loan character or *t'ai* (胎, embryo), which implies "commencement."[18] Thus whether Wu-k'ung, Wu-nêng or Wu-ching, all indicate the comprehension regarding the insubstantiality of the earthly existence, or the Buddhist concept that everything visible is illusory. They bring to mind negatively an awareness of the emptiness, the vacuity and the unreality of the phenomenal world, and positively a penetration to one's origin as well as a reversion to one's true nature. Small wander that such variants of *nirvana* as *chi* 寂, *mieh* 滅, *hsü* 虛, *k'ung* 空, *wu* 無, and what not are repeatedly found in the narrative, especially verse passages.

"Emptiness," then, is no doubt the central concern of the *Hsi-yu chi*, and "awareness" the process to reach this state. Each of the five scripture seekers committed a certain unpardonable crime prior to his exile to the mundane world. To begin with, Tripitaka was in his previous incarnation the second disciple of Buddha, Golden Cicada, who transmigrated to be a mortal to suffer human anguish because of his inattentiveness to the discourse of the Tathāgata and thus offence against the Law. Monkey defied the authorities and made trouble in heaven out of his ambition for fame and rank. Formally the Marshal of Heavenly Raspberry in command of all the watery hosts, Pigsy was exiled to the world of dust for his flirtation with the moon fairy in an intoxicated moment. The crime committed by Sandy when he was the Curtain-Raising Captain was that he accidentally broke a crystal glass of jade at the Peach Banquet wherefore he stained his holy office. Finally the Jade Dragon, which set fire to a crystal pearl in the Palace Hall, was found guilty of unfilial conduct. These celestial delinquents were proud or defiant to a certain degree. Now that they have been banished to this common world they must take expiatory action to work out their own salvation before they can have the ultimate bliss regained. And the pilgrimage for the Scriptures offers them a noble occasion to win sufficient merits to atone for their past offences. The significances of their sacred mission are therefore threefold. The first and most obvious is to purge themselves of crimes actively; then they can take the advantage of the occasions to right the wrongs that face them on the road; last but not least is to enable them to realize the illusory nature of this life or the "butterfly dream of the world" (p. 600).

The journey, however, signifies differently to each of the holy pilgrims. To Sandy and the Jade Dragon, it means mainly self-redeem.[17] Having accomplished the journey Pigsy's appetite is drastically reduced; the pilgrimage for him, therefore, seems to imply, apart from self-redemption, more or less the awareness of *mundi transit*. As regards Tripitaka and Monkey, its significances are more profound. Monkey has always boasted, since his acquirement of Tao, of his "seventy ways of transformations," "everlasting life and ability to sail clouds for 108,000 *li* in a twinkling" (p. 54). In his mind he seems confident that equipped with such feats none can possibly surpass him. However he does not realize that highly invincible as her magical power is, the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin can neither vanguish the Scorpion (p. 494), nor identify the counterfeit Monkey (p. 516). Again, boundless is the power of the Tathāgata, yet as the dark power of monsters is no less impotent, he must intimate Monkey to ask Lao Tzŭ to capture the Blue Bull (pp. 468-569). Actually a careful scrutiny would demonstrate that those monsters destroyed by Monkey on the westward road are for the most part such petty sorts as serpents, tigers or cadavers on the one hand, and mountain spirits, wood devils or insect demons on the other. What he has defeated are nothing but the weasel, the deer, the rat, the rabbit and such like. On the other hand, many deities and monsters he has encountered are not upon any term less mighty than he. Among them are the Black Bear, Erh-lang shen, the Yellow-Wind Monster, the Chen-yüan Immortal, the Red Boy, the Rhinoceros, the Scorpion, the Bull Monster King, the One-hundred-eyed Monster, the Yellow-eyebrowed Boy, the Nine-headed Imperial Son-in-Law, the Nine-spirit First Sage, the Garuda, etc., let alone Buddha, Kuan-yin and Zen master of the Crow-Nest. Some of the monsters inferior to him in strength do not necessarily surrender themselves to him at discretion; the most obvious are the cases of the Jade Dragon, Pigsy and Sandy, whose willing submission to the pilgrimage is shown only on learning Kuan-yin's decree.

The troubles and frustrations that molest Monkey contribute much to the suppression of his hot temper and overweening pride. When the Silver-horned Monster of the Lotus Cave crushes him under the three mountains, Monkey feels so depressed as to shed tears. On learning that the Monster used to order around the mountain god and local spirit, he becomes quite shaken, condemning its insolence sighingly: "O Heaven, if you begot Old Sun, why did you also beget these creatures?" (p. 290). He must have been

surprised at the discovery that he should fail to take up Kuan-yin's vase with the water of the whole sea in it as he is always boastful of his ability to "overturn the river and disturb the sea" (p. 118). To him, few heavenly generals can outdo him in magic skills (p. 453), and yet for all his feats to "subdue monsters and vanguish demons, tame tigers and capture dragons" (p. 118), he finds himself powerless to deal with the Red Boy and the Rhinoceros. Notwithstanding the fact that he was afraid of nothing when he defied the heavenly authority formerly, he feels "frightened," seeing Pigsy seized by the Nine-headed Imperial Son-in-law and faced with the heavenly awning set up by the Spider Demons. Defeated by the Garuda Monster he comes to tell Buddha, shedding tears and beating his breast, that "since I became a man, I have never been at any disadvantage"; but now he "should meet with the fate in the hand of the Monster" (p. 691). His bald head is so hard that neither worldly people can hurt it with a fling, a pigweed staff, a rattan, a sword or a spear, nor can the heavenly hosts do with their swords, axes, thunder and fire, nor Pigsy with his Golden Rake, the Silver-horned Monster with his Seven-star Sword, Raksha with her Blue-blade Sword, the Lion Monster with its Guarding Sword. Nevertheless it is once painfully wounded by the Scorpion's poisonous sting, and another time seriously softened by the Centipede's golden radiance. These distressing experiences would assuredly tell him the fact that gods or monsters equal to his feats are by no means less in number. Accordingly he would most probably modify the ambitious notion that "the turn of kingship will be mine next year" (p. 54).

Futhermore Monkey's "fire" is time and again reduced by his peevish master's "water" on the journey to the Western Heaven. He becomes the main butt of his master's criticism and anger, and because of this he once takes an indignant departure and is twice shamefully driven away. The time he runs away he visits the Dragon King of the Eastern Ocean, and there sees a picture of Chang Liang presenting shoes at I Bridge. Then on the advice of the Dragon King and Kuan-yin, he returns to Tripitaka only to find himself tricked. When he is dismissed for the first time as a result of his seemingly merciless dispatch of the Cadaver Demon, Tripitaka gives him a "certificate" of banishment, which he takes unwillingly and returns in tears to the Flower-Fruit Mountain. At his second exile on account of his relentless disposal of several brigands, the ill-humoured master repudiates him for "no rectitude" and "no merciful kindness." Having recited the spell to inflict Monkey with

an unbearable headache, Tripitaka expels him. When Monkey comes back to beg for absolution, Tripitaka again pitilessly inflicts and then forces him out. Lost and homeless he appeals to Kuan-yin weepingly for adjudication. Contrary to his expectation, however, he is upbraided for his own mercilessness. As has been pointed out, it is the desire to quest for immortality that prompted Monkey to go abroad. Nominally aware of emptiness (Wu-k'ung), he nevertheless fails to grasp its real significance, and penetrate the mysteries of life and death. For this reason he has been passionately running after fame and rank. After all that he has experienced during his pilgrimage, he must have been able, with his prodigal intelligence, to recognize gradually the uselessness of pride and unreality of name. He finally becomes Buddha Victorious in Strife and this seems sufficient to prove that he has broken "the stubborn emptiness" (p. 9).

As far as Tripitaka is concerned, quest for the True Scriptures is the pilgrim's progress on the surface. Interpreted in terms of the notion that "the production and extinction of all kinds of *mara* depend upon the state of the mind (p. 107), it becomes a spiritual progress. If Tripitaka stands for Everyman in search of ultimate bliss,[18] it seems not inappropriate in a way to equate his disciples to the three psychic zones assigned by Freud. Monkey, who represents the *superego*, is morality-oriented; Pigsy may suggest the *id* because of his inordinate lust and physical appetites; and Sandy embodies the *ego* that observes the reality principle. The process which Tripitaka has to pass through involves mainly the conflict of the *superego* and the *id*, with the *ego* as the reconcilor according to the real state of matters. Also, we often come across in the narrative the customary association of the five viscera with the five elements, such as liver-wood, heart-fire, spleen-earth and kidney-water.[19] They are aptly corresponded to Pigsy, Monkey, Sandy and Tripitaka. Here we are reminded in the ancient Greek philosophy of the theory of the four elements: water, fire, wind and earth. These four elements were later developed and related to the four humours of the human body. "Since humour is a trait of personality, the disposition of the four pilgrims may roughly fit the four humours: Monkey is of choler, Pigsy is of blood, Sandy is of melancholy and Tripitaka is of phlegm."[20]

The lengthy route undertaken by Tripitaka becomes further the process of Taoist internal alchemy in particular.[21] The monsters which impede the pilgrim's progress to attain a full enlightenment are various stumbling blocks on the spiritual journey. As Dante encounters in the Black Wood the

Leopard, the Lion and the She-Wolf, which prevent him from climbing directly up to Mt. Delectable, so Tripitaka must confront the Bear, the Tiger, the Bull and other beasts of prey prior to the commencement of his spiritual irradiation (chapter 13). In the course of his "awareness," our Everyman must first rectify his mind to eradicate the Six Robbers that retards his enlightenment (chapter 14), and then start the pilgrimage sincerely. Otherwise the "monkey of the mind," once set free, may capriciously soar high and fall low, while the "horse of the will," if not properly reined of its bridle, may become uninhibited (chapter 15). From this time forth, it is of necessity to uproot greed and blot out desires (chapters 16-21). To achieve this he needs to leap clear from the sea of passions and the sand of flowing nature (chapter 22), to extinguish love, lust, wealth and beauty (chapter 23). The mind, having thus undergone such severe ordeals, must strengthen itself by the effect of mandrake fruit against the infliction of internal ogres (chapters 24-26).

Our Everyman listens to his crafty nature and banishes his mind-monkey for the first time (chapters 27-29). The unpleasant consequence is the invasion of the evil demons against the true dharma (chapter 30). Only when the mind-monkey returns to its proper sphere can the demons be extinguished (chapter 31). If spirit grows confused and nature lost, ten thousand ills will arise (chapters 32-35), so it is most urgent for him to puncture heterodoxy (chapter 36), suppress the nightmare (chapters 37-39), triumph over the demonic fire (chapters 40-42), cross the black river (chapter 43), root out the deviates (chapters 44-46), pass over the layered ice (chapters 47-49), atune the self and not-self (chapters 50-52), deracinate gluttony (chapter 53), escape the net of sex (chapter 54), wipe out lewd demons (chapter 55), raze the false mind (chapters 56-58), harmonize water and fire (chapters 59-61), purge off dirt and purify the mind (chapters 62-63), deliver himself from the thorns and thistles (chapter 64), remove impediments (chapters 65-66), tranquillize the Zen nature (chapter 67), free from sadness and worry (chapters 68-71), break open the web of concupiscence (chapter 72), jump out the prison of passions (chapter 73), pierce through the *yin* and the *yang* (chapters 74-77). Then he must further accumulate virtuous fruit by benevolent acts and merciful kindness (chapters 78-86), perform charitable service of great magnitude (chapters 87-88), quiet down the nine spirits (chapters 89-90), cleanse the Tao's mind (chapters 91-92), revert to his true nature (chapters 93-95), rescue the soul (chapter 97), and finally

cast the original shell (chapter 98). After such prolonged efforts, all kinds of *mara* are grossly exterminated, and Tao returns to its original state (chapters 99-100).

At first glance the *Hsi-yu chi* seems to be structureless. Yet when we weigh the intensity of tone and atmosphere presented in each of its episodes, we can trace its natural stages of development. Like most of the structurally close-knit fiction, it consists of an exposition (chapters 1-12), ascending action (chapters 13-73), climax (chapters 74-77), falling action (chapters 78-98) and dénouement (chapters 99-100). There are rhythmic waves of poetic scenes to relax the tension as well as intensifying atmospheres to build up the climactic moment. All these are closely associated with the relations of the five elements. Meanwhile threading through the entire narrative is the theme of "emptiness" which is made manifest in the course of "awareness." *Everyman,* a representative of the ecclesiastic drama of the medieval period, dramatizes the self-saving of the soul by virtuous deeds; its moral teaching, however, is too obvious and too weighty. Again John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress,* which deals with man's journey through life to heaven or hell in novel form, is allegorically shallow and morally preoccupied.[22] Because of the superb skill of its author, the didactic overtone of the *Hsi-yu chi* is drastically reduced. We may read it in different attitudes. If we reject it for its interest in the "six ways of reincarnation" as well as the idea of the "correspondence between heaven and man,"[23] we are biased in our judgement. If, on the other hand, we accept it only for its combination of beauty with absurdity, of profundity with nonsense, we are lacking in refined taste. An appropriate attitude is to appreciate with wisdom, apart from the lyrical beauty, epic grandeur, and verbal humour woven in the fabric of the narrative,[24] the superb manipulation of its theme and structure. Needless to say this is what our author has satisfactorily achieved, and this again is what the *Hsi-yu chi* depends upon to command the interest and admiration of all time.

Notes

* *Hsi-yu chi* 西遊記 (Taipei: San-min 三民, 1972). Subsequent page numbers given in parentheses, unless otherwise noted, always refer to this edition.

1. Prominent among the examples are Ch'en Shih-pin 陳士斌, ed., (*Hsi-yu chen-ch'üan* 西遊眞詮; Chang Shu-shen 張書紳, ed., *Hsin-shuo Hsi-yu chi* 新說西遊記; Liu I-ming 劉一明, ed., *Hsi-yu chi yüan- chih* 西遊記原旨; Wang Hsiang-hsü 汪象旭, ed., *Hsi-yu chêng-tao shu* 西遊證道書; Chang Han-chang 張含章, ed., *T'ung-i Hsi-yu chêng-chih* 通易西遊正旨。
2. Hu Shih 胡適, "*Hsi-yu chi k'ao-chêng*" 西遊記考證, *Hu Shih wen-ts'un* 胡適文存 (Taipei: Yüan-tung 遠東, 1953), II, 390.
3. See Fan Yü 方瑜, "Lun *Hsi-yu chi*—i-kê chih-hui tê hsi-chü" 論西遊記——個智慧的喜劇, *Chung-wai Literary Monthly*, 6, No. 5 (October 1977), 17-26; 6, No. 7 (December 1977), 66-72.
4. See Li Ch'en-tung 李辰冬, "*Hsi-yu chi tê chia-chih*" 西遊記的價值, *Hsi-yu chi* (Taipei: Shih-chieh 世界, 1964), pp. 1-6; Sun Ch'i 孫旗, "*Hsi-yu chi* tê yen-chiu" 西遊記的研究, Tsu-pen *Hsi-yu chi* 足本西遊記 (Taipei: Wen-hwa 文化, 1969), pp. 1-8; Sha Mêng-wu 薩孟武, *Hsi-yu chi yü chung-kuo ku-tai chêng-chih* 西遊記與中國古代政治 (Taipei: San-min, 1970), etc.
5. See James S. Fu 傅述先, "*Hsi-yu chi* chung wu shêng tê kuan-hsi" 「西遊記」中五聖的關係, *Chinese Cultural Renaissance Monthly* 中華文化復興月刊, 9, No. 5 (May 1976), 10-17.
6. There are four different modes of enumerating the five elements. The author of the *Hsi-yu chi*, as we shall see in the following exploration, seems to have adopted the one in which the elements are supposed to have been created originally. For a discussion of the four modes, see Alfred Forke, trans., *Lun-hêng* (New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962), II, 469-72.
7. Tsu-pen *San-kuo yen-i* 足本三國演義 (The full-text *Romance of the Three Kingdoms)* (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1958), p. 724.
8. See *Hsi-yu chi*, titular couplets of chapters 32, 38, 40, 41, 47, 76, 85, 86, 88, 89, etc.
9. Chapter 61 of the *Hsi-yu chi* exemplifies the association of the cycle of the 12 Animals with the five elements by saying: 'Wood, born in the time of *hai* (亥), is assigned to the pig, drawing the bull to return to the earth. The time of *shêng* 申, which gave birth to metal, is originally the monkey; without punishment and conquest there is much genial atmosphere" (p. 543). In chapter 41 we see the description of the Red Boy's samadhi fire: "The liver's wood can strengthen the heart's fire; The heart's fire can tranquillize the spleen's earth" (p. 361), which is an example showing the correspondence of the five viscera to the five elements.
10. E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972),

p. 75.

11. See C. T. Hsia, *The Classical Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 125-127; 134-138; 149-152; See also Li Ch'en-tung, James S. Fu and Fan Yü. Nevertheless the analysis of Sandy is generally not very disinterested and satisfactory; I shall relate it later in another essay.
12. See Glen Dudbridge, "The Hundred-chapter *Hsi-yu chi* and Its Early Version," *Asia Major*, n.s. 14 (1969), 184.
13. Hu Shih, pp. 381-389.
14. See *Hsi-yu chi*, pp. 121, 129, 166, 261, 278, 312, 356, 380, 434, 492, 510, 691, 710, 720, 728.
15. Forster, p. 151.
16. See Sun I-jan 孫詒讓, "Ssŭ-wen" 素問 chapter, *Cha-i* 札迻 (1894; rpt. Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1964), *chüan* 11, 1a.
17. See *Hsi-yu chi*, pp. 259, 356.
18. See Arthur Waley, "Preface" to *Monkey* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1942), p. 10.
19. For example, see the poetic description of the Red Boy's samadhi fire in chapter 41 of the *Hsi-yu chi* already quoted in note 9.
20. James S. Fu, *Mythic and Comic Aspects of the Quest: Hsi-yu chi as Seen Through Don Quixote and Huckleberry Finn* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1977), p. 60.
21. See the sections on "Fang-fa lei" 方法類 and "Chung-shu lei" 衆術類 in *Chêng-t'ung Tao-tsang* 正統道藏, comp. Yen I-p'ing 嚴一萍 (Taipei: I Wen 藝文, 1962).
22. For a comparative study of the *Hsi-yu chi* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, see Chao Hsiang-yüan 趙湘元, "Ch'ien shuo *Hsi-yu chi* yü *T'ien lu li-ch'êng*" 淺說「西遊記」與「天路歷程」, Kaohsüng *shih-yüan hsüeh-pao* 高雄師院學報, No 6 (November 1977), 147-174.
23. See Liu Ta-chieh 劉大杰, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh fa-ta shih* 中國文學發達史 (Taipei: Chung-hwa 中華, 1971), p. 956.
24. For a discussion of these elements, see for example Anthony C. Yü, "Introduction" to the translation of *The Journey to the West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), I, 24-33.