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I A STUDY OF HSIEH T'IAO'S POETRY

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Hsieh T'iao 謝朓 (464-499) is a well-known poet of the Ch'i dynasty 南齊朝. This study analyzes some of the expressional elements of his poetry in an attempt to understand the characteristics peculiar to his work.

First considered is the quality of 'wind' in his poems. By no means does it overwhelm by its strength, rather Hsieh's wind possesses a delicacy, an aesthetic lightness. It brings about subtle and quite beautiful transformations in the common objects against which it brushes: trees, flowers, leaves, water. A purified atmosphere pervades the poetry, owing to the presence of this light, gentle breeze.

Next, the qualities of 'light' are considered. Hsieh's light is marked by two qualities, first by its cold luminosity. 'Moonlight' most clearly conveys this quality. Secondly, the poems' light is characterized by its evanescence, its diffused quality. 'The fragile sunlight of early morning' and 'twilight's pale glow' best typify this second quality. The effect of 'light' gives rise to a tranquil poetic atmosphere, conducive to an unhurried, crystallized expression

of the poet's emotions.

Other expressional elements are next examined. Generally this concerns a process of selection, wherein Hsieh T'iao leans toward weaker, softer elements. Thus we may see an aging beauty starting to fade, or a plant just now pushing forth, or tiny insects. The apprehension of such delicate forms unexpectedly becomes the focus of a poem.

In turn, the confessional aspect of his poetry is considered, with a broad outline of the poet's life provided.

Lastly, the reason for Hsieh T'iao's greater success in short pieces as against his longer poems is examined. In the short poems, his poetical feelings effect a unity, fusing with the beautiful natural settings he depicts. It is in the short poems that his excellent lyric poetry achieves its ultimate expression.

## II CONCERNING THE WORD 'DREAM' IN THE POETRY OF LI SHANG-IN AND TU MU

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Li Shang-in 李商隱 and Tu Mu 杜牧 are two representative poets of the late T'ang 晚唐. In their poetry the word 'dream' (mêng, 夢) appears considerably more frequently than in the work of other T'ang poets or of the Liu Ch'ao poets. Their distinctive use of this word, reflecting their deep interest in the dream, serves to express their unique poetic imaginations. The notion of the dream becomes crucial to an understanding of their poetry.

Li Shang-in links dreaming to contact with some other person; the words 'dream' (夢) and 'letter' (shu, 書) are quite often placed in parallel positions within a couplet. In earlier poetry, dreams are a common setting for meetings, particularly for love rendezvous. But Li Shang-in's desire to dream is basically one of escape, transcendence of the hardships of this world. For the world in which the dream-meeting will occur is wholly a different one, a world removed from sorrow, a world deeply yearned for by the poet.

Tu Mu's dreams appear, in his nature poems, to be constantly

associated with the natural element water (shui, 水). The dream may occur beside a spring, a mountain stream, in the rain, or on a boat in a river. Though the content of the dream often remains unclear, still, in the close relation between the dream and water lies the key to an important element of the poet's vision: the flow from a troubled daily life to a beautiful natural setting (ching, 景), through serenity (shien, 閑) to slumber (mien, 眠), which drifts in turn to the dream, and finally, in a state of profound unconsciousness, a return to the Mother (mu, 母).

Yüan Chen 元稹 and Po Chu-yi 白居易 of the Middle T'ang 中唐 wrote many poems taking dreams as their title or theme, but with Li Shang-in and Tu Mu only a few are of that sort, though, again, the word 'dream' appears quite often in their work. They seem concerned more with the poetic meaning of 'the dream' than with recounting a given dream's content. It may be said that in their poetic usage of the word they take a step beyond many of their famous predecessors.

### III HUNG-LOU MENG 紅樓夢: ITS INNER TROUBLE

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This article considers Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in's 曹雪芹 basic stance and attitude in the *Hung-lou Meng*. Setting up the 'girls' world of the Ta-kuan Yüan 大觀園 as a nucleus within the Chia 賈 family, he describes its day by day decline, the terminal point of this decline being the complete downfall of the family. Ts'ao's primary aim is to be found in this process of description.

In the Ta-kuan Yüan, Lin Tai-yü 林黛玉 and Chia T'an-ch'un 賈探春 are two important characters bearing ambiguous positions who provide much of the novel's inner tension. Lin Tai-yü is of the Lin family, but economically, she depends on the Chias. Chia T'an-ch'un is an able member of the Chia clan, but, being a concubine's daughter, she must be content with a relatively unimportant position. Their respective ambiguous positions, stemming though they do

from differing circumstances, allow them an insight into the overall workings of the Chia family, a wider view of the grand play of human relations therein. Hence they are able to perceive and to resist the immutable decline of the family. Lin Tai-yü resists being dragged into the vortex of decay in the Ta-kuan Yüan, even to the time of her death. Chia T'an-ch'un persists in attacking people who are unsuitable as members of the Chia clan, but her efforts cannot restore the family's fading fortunes. She finally can only resign herself to her insignificant role in the clan, even as her realization of the family's tragic fate becomes more acute.

Both characters come to assume symbolic meanings in relation to the author's own true-life situation. Lin Tai-yü's death, on one hand, symbolizes Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in's dogged resistance to his own contemporaries' neglect of the Ts'ao family's fortunes, a family comparable perhaps to the Chia's. Never does he falter in the pursuit of his main theme, the downfall of a great family. Chia T'an-ch'un's insight, on the other hand, symbolizes Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in's understanding of the difficulties involved in resistance against a cancerous neglect. The overriding theme of decline is never derailed or dominated by these individual subthemes, instead it acquires a poignant intensity due to their presence. It is perhaps only natural, if tragic, that Ts'ao's contemporaries, caught up as they are in the headlong sweep of events, should be blind to their meaning, or if aware, should seem to neglect their import for the Ts'ao himself perhaps realizes this fact all too keenly. Still he plays out the workings of his own consciousness to the end.

It is in the struggle between events, which come to have an awesome momentum of their own, and the consciousness which perceives the tragic meaning of those events as they lead to their inevitable destination that the power of the novel is born. The depiction of this struggle gives the reader, in turn, an awareness of the author's true strength amidst the trying circumstances of his life.

**TRANSLATION AND NOTES:**

*Sui-shu ching-chi-chih* (Bibliographical Section of the *Sui* History)

—Hiroshi KÔZEN and Kôzô KAWAI, Kyôto University

**REVIEWS:**

“CHUNG JUNG Shih P'in” translated and commented by Masakazu  
TAKAGI

—Takeshi KAMATANI, Kyôto University

Kenshō HIRANO “Study On Literature And Buddhism In The T'ang  
Dynasty”

—Fumio KAKEHI, Ritsumeikan University