

# Poetry Illustration and The Works of Ku K'ai-chih

By Hsio-yen Shih

THE CONNECTION between calligraphy, painting and poetry as allied arts for Chinese scholars from the 11th century A.D. on is well-known. Before the Northern Sung dynasty the question of whether painting was a suitable activity for scholars at all remained a subject of debate, the ultimate defence for its worthy status being given by Chang Yen-yüan 張彥遠 in the *Li-tai ming-hua chi* 歷代名畫記 (ca. A.D. 847).<sup>1</sup>

Our knowledge of pre-10th century painting has been largely restricted to funerary works or tomb decoration, and religious subjects. Despite the great masses of information offered in treatises written from the 5th century on, concerning both the lives of painters and the names of their works, we are barely able to form an image of what their styles may have been, though we can often discover something of their pictorial concerns. The vicissitudes of centuries, in which precious collections formed by Chinese connoisseurs have been repeatedly dispersed and destroyed, have robbed us of authentic examples. Only one figure has emerged with any degree of clarity in the early history of painting through the survival of perhaps original works or at least early copies. Happily, Ku K'ai-chih 顧愷之 (ca. 345-406) was considered one of the greatest painters of all time, as well as a scholar of distinguished literary gifts.

Ku's life was given extensive coverage by Chang Yen-yüan, and most discussions of him by Western scholars have depended upon this source and his biography in the *Chin shu* 晉書 (Dynastic History).<sup>2</sup> Many translations are, therefore, available of the two basic descriptions of his career and character. A recent Chinese publication has, moreover, added some minor anecdotes selected from other texts.<sup>3</sup> A chronological

<sup>1</sup>Book 1, "Hsü hua chih yüan-liu" 敍畫之源流 (On the Origins of Painting)—"Now, painting is a thing which perfects the civilized teachings, and helps the social relationships. It penetrates completely the divine permutations of Nature, and fathoms recondite and subtle things. Its merit is equal to that of the Six Classics, and it moves side by side with the Four Seasons. It proceeds from Nature itself, and not from either (human) invention or transmission. . . .

夫畫者，成教化，助人倫，窮神變，測幽微，與六籍同功，四時並運。發於天然，非由述作。

"Painting is a great treasure of the Empire, containing the strands and leading ropes which can regulate disorder. . . . What has this in common with the mental activity required for (mere amusements like) chess or checkers? Without doubt, painting is one of the things which may be enjoyed within the teachings of Confucianism."

圖畫者，有國之鴻寶，理亂之紀綱。……豈同博奕用心？是名教樂事。

<sup>2</sup>See Arthur Waley, *An Introduction to Chinese Painting* (London, 1923), pp. 45 ff; and Osvald Sirén, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (London, 1956), Part I, pp. 26 ff. For a translation of Chang Yen-yüan, *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, Book 5's entry on Ku, see William R.B. Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden, 1974), Vol. II, pp. 43 ff. Also consult Ch'en Shih-hsiang 陳世驥, *Chinese Dynastic Histories Translations* (Berkeley, 1953), no. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ma Ts'ai 馬采, *Ku K'ai-chih yen-chiu* 顧愷之研究 (Shanghai, 1958); also P'an T'ien-shou 潘天壽, *Ku K'ai-chih* (Shanghai, 1958); Yü Chien-hua 俞劍華 et al, *Ku K'ai-chih yen-chiu tzu-liao* 資料 (Peking, 1962).

summary of the major events reported may be compiled from these various histories.

Ku's father was a *pieh-chia* 別駕 (Chevalier-in-waiting) to Yin Hao 殷浩 (d. 356) when the latter was Governor of Yang-chou 揚州 ca. 346. After Yin was deposed in 354, Ku Yüeh-chih 悅之 became a *shang-shu tsa-ch'eng* 尚書左丞 (Assistant Secretary in the Imperial Secretariat). According to the *Ching-shih ssu chi* 京師寺記,<sup>4</sup> as quoted by Chang Yen-yüan, K'ai-chih was poor in early life, and he may have been engaged in classical and Buddhist studies at this time, living a modest life despite his father's official position. Huan Wen 桓溫 (312-373) became *ta ssu-ma* 大司馬 (Grand Marshall) in 363, and at about this time K'ai-chih entered his service as a *ts'an-chün* 參軍 (Aide-de-Campe). After this we learn that Ku became Aide-de-Campe to Yin Chung-k'an 殷仲堪 (d. 399), when the latter was Governor of Ching-chou 荊州 (Hupei). This must have been between 392 and 399, the span of Yin's service there. Ku returned to Yang-chou in 404, and was appointed *shan-ch'i ch'ang-shih* 散騎常侍 (Cavalier Attendant in Ordinary, an honorific post) the next year.

SOME REVELATION of Ku's literary imagination may be discovered in various anecdotes. One is reported in both the *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* 世說新語, compiled by Liu I-ch'ing 劉義慶 (403-444), and the *Chu-kung chiu-shih* 渚宮舊事 by Yü Chih-ku 余知古 (T'ang).<sup>5</sup>

As Marshall of the West, Huan constructed many beautiful sites in the city of Chiang-ling 江陵. He gathered guests and companions upon a river ferry and said: "Whoever is able to describe this town appropriately will receive a prize." Ku K'ai-chih was present as Huan's Aide-de-Campe, and, looking, said: "Regarding this terraced town from afar, red towers appear to be rosy clouds." Huan then rewarded him with two female slaves.

溫征西治江陵城甚麗，會賓僚出江津云：「若能目此城者賞。」顧愷之爲參軍在坐，目曰：「遙望層城，丹樓如霞。」溫郎賞以二婢。

It is, perhaps, not too far-fetched to see a distinctly visual translation in Ku's poetic couplet. Two other episodes also demonstrate the painter's awareness of pictorial symbolism.

Once he wishes to paint the portrait of Yin Chung-k'an who had long suffered from an eye disease and, persistently excused himself (from being portrayed). He said: "Your Excellency may rely on my hiding the eyes, for if the pupils are dotted in clearly, and then flying white is brushed on, the result will be like light clouds concealing the moon."

嘗欲寫殷仲堪真，仲堪素有目疾，固辭。長康曰：「明府當緣隱眼也，若明點瞳子，飛白拂上，使如輕雲蔽月。」

<sup>4</sup>The *Shui shu* 隋書 "I-wen chih" 藝文志 (Bibliographical Section) 2 lists two works by this title; one by Liu Ch'iu 劉瑒 and one by T'an-ching 曇景. For speculations about these lost works, cf. Paul Pelliot, "Les déplacements de fresques en Chine sous les T'ang et les Song," *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, Vol. 8 (1934), p. 206 note 4.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Yü Chien-hua, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

He also painted a portrait of P'ei K'ai 裴楷 (act. ca. 265-290) upon which he added three hairs to the chin, saying: "K'ai looked handsome and brilliant and was full of wisdom. These (hairs) are precisely (the signs of) his wisdom." Spectators examining it decided that its brilliance of spirit was exceptionally forceful.<sup>6</sup>

又畫裴楷真，頰上加三毛，云：「楷俊朗有識具。此正是其識具。」觀者詳之，定覺神明殊勝。

Finally, the direct liaison between Ku's pictorial and literary imaginations is most clearly demonstrated in the following passages.

He also painted Hsieh Yu-yü 謝幼輿 (i.e. K'un 鯤, 280-322) in a cave. People asked him why and Ku replied: "In (the environment of) hills and vales, he considered himself surpassing. This person is most appropriately placed within a cave."<sup>7</sup>

又畫謝幼輿於一巖裏。人問所以。顧云：「一丘一壑，自謂過之。此子宜置巖壑中。」

He admired Hsi K'ang 嵇康's (223-262) four-word poems and painted illustrations of them. He once said: "*My hand sweeps over the five strings* 手揮五絃 is easy to paint, but *My eye bids farewell to homing geese* 目送歸鴻 is difficult."<sup>8</sup> It would seem that, in Ku's creative impulse, a concrete image was more adaptable to pictorial expression than an emotive mood suggested by a physical event.

<sup>6</sup>For the first account, Chang Yen-yüan's version accords with the *Chin shu's* Book 92, which has one additional phrase in Ku's speech of persuasion—"... the moon, and would this not be beautiful?" Then Chung-k'an consented." 「……月，豈不美乎！」仲堪乃從之。

A *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* Section 21 version is very similar, but has Yin declining—"My form is ugly. Would it not only be vexing?" 「我形惡，卿不煩耳。」

The second episode also appears in both earlier texts, with the *Shih-shuo* ... version ending—"Those who looked at the painting examined and decided that the additional three hairs have given it brilliance of spirit, making it look much better than without the hairs." 看畫者尋之，定覺益三毛如有神明，殊勝未安時。

<sup>7</sup>Chang Yen-yüan's text must have followed the *Chin shu* 49 biography of Hsieh K'un, which reads—"Ming Ti (reigned 323-326) met him in the Eastern Palace and was most warmly respectful to him, asking: '(I have heard) speakers who feel that you, sir, are equal to Yü Liang (d. 340). What would you yourself say?' He replied: 'Correct and relaxed in temple and hall, setting a standard for all officials, in this K'un cannot equal Liang. In (the environment of) hills and vales, I consider myself surpassing him.'"

賞使至都，明帝在東宮見之，甚相親重。問曰：「論者以君方庚亮，自謂何如？」答曰：「端委廟堂，使百僚準則，鯤不如亮。一丘一壑，自謂過之。」

Both versions may have depended upon the *Shih-shuo* ... Section 21 anecdote.

<sup>8</sup>The lines come from a poem also supposed to have been illustrated by the Chin Emperor Ming. The fourth of five verses on "Tseng hsiu-ts'ai ju-chün" 曾秀才入軍五首 (offered to the First Degree Graduate upon his Entering the Army) dedicated to Hsi K'ang's older brother Hsi 熹, in the *Wen hsüan* 文選, compiled by Hsiao Tung 蕭統 (501-531), Book 24—

"I leave my attendant to rest in  
the Epidendrum Garden;  
I leave my horse to graze on the  
Brilliant Mountain;  
I trail my arrow string and stone  
weight over flat marsh;  
I hang my fishing line in the  
long river.  
My eye bids farewell to homing  
geese,  
My hand sweeps over the five  
strings.  
In a moment, I obtain  
A free heart in the Great Mys-  
tery;  
I marvel at that Old Fisher,  
Who caught fish and forgot the  
net.  
The man of Ying has passed.  
With whom can I still have  
speech?"

息徒蘭圃，  
秣馬華山。  
流矰乎阜，  
垂綸長川。  
目送歸鴻，  
手運五絃。  
俯仰自得，  
遊心泰玄。  
嘉彼釣叟，  
得魚忘筌。  
野人逝矣，  
誰與盡言。

WHEN WE TURN to historical records of Ku's attributed œuvre to determine the extent of his literary interests as expressed in painting, the evidence is meagre. In this context general mythological themes have been excepted as not directly related to specific literary works. Of seventeen scrolls listed in P'ei Hsiao-yüan 裴孝源's *Chen-kuan kung-ssu hua-lu* 貞觀公私畫錄 (preface of 639), not a single title suggests literary and/or especially poetic inspiration. Only one in thirty-six subjects recorded by Chang Yen-yüan refers directly to poetry.<sup>9</sup> Mi Fu 米芾's (1052-1107) *Hua shih* 畫史 is the earliest text to mention a handscroll of the *Nü-shih chen t'u* 女史箴圖 (Admonitions of the Imperial Preceptress) in the collection of one Liu Yu-fang 劉有方. Mi also refers to a T'ang copy of a *Lieh-nü chuan t'u* 列女傳圖 (Illustrious Women), the original attributed to Ku, mounted upon carved boards to form a fan, and with figures in the same scale as the handscroll (i.e. about three inches in height). The *Lo-shen fu t'u* 洛神賦圖 (Nymph of the River Lo) title did not appear until ca. the mid-14th century in T'ang Kou 湯垕's *Hua chien* 畫鑑 as attributed to Ku, though such a work had been given to the Chin Emperor Ming, Ssu-ma Shao 司馬紹, in both the *Chen-kuan* . . . and *Li-tai ming-hua chi*.

Of the three subjects allied to Ku's name in existing works, that of the *Admonitions* . . . has been most discussed. It is the earliest of his literary illustrations to have a lineage, being recorded by Mi Fu, in the *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* 宣和畫譜 (preface of 1120) Book 1, and in Chou Mi 周密's (1232-?) *Yün-yen kuo-yen lu* 雲煙過眼錄. Two versions exist of it today; one in the British Museum, and the other in the Peking Ku Kung Museum. Controversy over whether the London scroll is an original or a copy still rages. On the credit side is cited the number of seals and inscriptions which testify that it was considered to be a genuine example of Ku's painting from an early period. Its provenance can be traced back to the 8th century. Beginning with the Hung-wen kuan 弘文館, a department of the Han-lin Academy 翰林院, it was subsequently in the collections of Yen Sung 嚴嵩 (1481-1518), Ku Cheng-i 顧正誼 in the 1570s, Hsiang Yüan-pien 項元汴 (1525-1590), Liang Ch'ing-piao 梁清標 (1620-1691), An Ch'i 安岐 (1683-after 1742), Yang Shih-ch'i 楊世濟 between 1693 and 1700, the Ch'ing imperial collection from at least the Ch'ien-lung reign (1736-1796) on,<sup>10</sup> and finally entered the British Museum in 1903. Mi Fu identified the painting as by Ku and its calligraphy as by Wang Hsien-chih 王獻之 (344-386). The script form of the phrases identifying various scenes is, however, not in 4th century style, and this was recognized long before any doubt of the painting's origin had been admitted. A second suggestion was put forth by Ch'en Chi-ju 陳繼儒 (1558-1639) in the *Ni-ku lu* 妮古錄 that the painting is of Sung origin, and its calligraphy by the Emperor Kao-tsung 高宗 (reigned 1127-1173). Hu Ching 胡敬's (1769-?) *Hsi-ch'ing cha-chi* 西清劄記 (preface of 1816), Book 3 notes it as a T'ang

<sup>9</sup>The title is given as "Ch'i-hsien Ch'en Ssu-wang shih" 七賢陳思王詩 (Poems to the Seven Sages) by Ts'ao Chih 曹植, 192-232. These Seven Sages were also known as the "Chien-an ch'i-tzu" 建安七子 (Seven Masters of the Chien-an Period), being Ying Yang 應瑒 (d. 217), Hsü Kan 徐幹 (170-217), Wang Ts'an 王粲 (177-217), K'ung Yung 孔融 (153-208), Ch'en Lin 陳琳 (d. 217), Yüan Yü 阮瑀 (d. 217) and Liu Chen 劉楨 (d. 217). The six who died in the same year had

all been infected by the same plague. See Wei Wen Ti 魏文帝's letter to Wu Chih 吳質 (d. 230) in the *Wen hsüan* Book 42. *Op. cit.*, Books 20 and 24 contain several poems by Ts'ao Chih to the first three figures named above.

<sup>10</sup>*Shih-ku-t'ang shu-hua hui-k'ao* 式古堂書畫彙考, compiled by Pien Yung-yü 卞永譽, preface dated to 1682, Book 8.

copy, with a long calligraphic exercise by the Emperor Hui-tsung 徽宗 (reigned 1101-1126) appended to it. Japanese and Western scholars have wavered between these various opinions, but there is general agreement that the "signature" is a later addition. The most recent study has given it to the Five Dynasties or Sung period, i.e. 10th-11th century, on the basis of a particular leaf stylization to be seen in the landscape representation.<sup>11</sup> The subject is, however, not one upon which much more could be said. The difficulty in dating might not have arisen had the work not been of such superior quality.

The scroll is an illustration of a text by Chang Hua 張華 (232-300) supposedly written to ridicule the Chin Dynasty Empress Chia 賈 at a time when the rise of her clan threatened the stability of the throne.

#### Admonitions of the Imperial Preceptress

#### 女史箴

"FROM THE chaotic cosmos were *yin* and *yang* separated;  
From emanate force and amorphous form were they moulded and shaped.  
With P'ao-hsi as ruler were the divine and the human distinguished.  
Thus began male and female, the ruler and ruled.  
The family's *tao* is regulated and the ruler's *tao* stabilized.  
Feminine virtue honours yielding, holding within codes of moral behaviour;  
Submissive and meek is the female's proper role within the household.  
Having assumed matrimonial robes, she should reverently prepare the offerings;  
Dignified and grave in deportment, be a model of propriety.  
To influence King Chuang of Ch'u, the Lady Fan ate no meat for three years;  
To reform Duke Huan of Ch'i, the Lady Wei ignored her own love of music;  
Their firm wills and lofty ideals changed the minds of two rulers.<sup>12</sup>  
When the black bear escaped its cage, the Lady Feng hastened forward.  
How was she not in fear but, aware of mortal danger, she did not hesitate.

茫茫造化，  
二儀既分。  
散氣流形，  
既陶既甄。  
在帝庖羲，  
肇經天人。  
爰始夫婦，  
以及君臣。  
家道以正，  
王猷有倫。  
婦德尚柔，  
含章貞吉。  
婉孌淑慎，  
正位居室。  
施衿結褵，  
虔恭中饋。  
肅慎爾儀，  
式瞻清懿。  
樊姬感莊，  
不食鮮禽。  
衛女矯桓，  
耳忘和音。  
志厲義高，  
而二主易心。  
玄熊攀檻，  
馮媛趨進。  
夫豈無畏，  
知死不慄。

<sup>11</sup>Michael Sullivan, "A Further Note on the Date of the Admonitions Scroll", Burlington Magazine, XCVI (1954), pp. 307-309.

<sup>12</sup>King Chuang thereupon giving up his love of

bloody sports and warfare, and Duke Huang relinquishing his taste for licentious popular music. Both stories are recorded in Liu Hsiang 劉向's (80-9 B.C.) *Lieh-nü chuan* 列女傳 (Biographies of Illustrious Women), Book 2 "Hsien-ming" 賢明 (The Enlightened).

The Lady Pan declined, despite her desire, to accompany the Emperor in his palanquin.  
 How could she not have been sad but, forfending the unseemly, she acted with prudence.<sup>13</sup>  
 The *tao* never flourishes but to deteriorate,  
 All matter must have its moment of florescence then decay;  
 For the sun rises to its zenith then sets,  
 And the moon comes to fullness then wanes.  
 Acquisition of virtue may be compared to the pace of earth building up in layers;  
 Decline of values can occur with the suddenness of an arrow shooting from the crossbow.  
 Men all know how to improve their visages, but not to refine their characters,  
 An unrefined character will fall short of propriety.  
 One should sculpt and embellish one's own character, and discipline oneself to become a sage.  
 If the words which one speaks are good, they will be heeded for a thousand miles;  
 If one defies this rule of conduct, then even one's bedmate will doubt one.  
 Now, even though one makes a seemingly insignificant utterance, yet from it issues one's triumph or failure;  
 No matter that one is in obscurity, spirits, without image, can still examine one;  
 No matter that one is in a boundless waste, spirits, without sound, can still hear one.  
 Do not pride yourself on your eminence, for Heaven detests such conceit;  
 Nor boast of your prosperity, for magnificence will dim.  
 Observe how the tiny stars were made free and content, and learn it as a lesson;  
 Make your heart like the grasshopper's, then you will multiply your kind.<sup>14</sup>  
 Favour must not be abused, and love must not be exclusive.

班婕有辭，  
 割驩同輦。  
 夫豈不懷，  
 防微慮遠。  
 道罔隆而不殺，  
 物無盛而不衰。  
 日中則昃，  
 月滿則微。  
 崇猶塵積，  
 替若駭機。  
 人咸知飾其容，  
 而莫知飾其性。  
 性之不飾，  
 或愆禮正。  
 斧之藻之，  
 克念作聖。  
 出其言善，  
 千里應之。  
 苟違斯義，  
 則同衾以疑。  
 夫出言如微，  
 而榮辱由茲。  
 勿謂幽昧，  
 靈監無象。  
 勿謂玄漠，  
 神聽無響。  
 無矜爾榮，  
 天道惡盈。  
 無恃爾貴，  
 隆隆者墜。  
 鑒于小星，  
 戒彼攸遂。  
 比心螽斯，  
 則繁爾類。  
 驪不可以黷，  
 寵不可以專。

<sup>13</sup>Both stories are recorded in the *Ch'ien Han shu* 前漢書 Book 97B "Wai-ch'i chuan" 外戚傳 (Biographies of Consorts). The Lady Pan 班婕妤's words to the Emperor Ch'eng the Filial 孝成帝 (32-7 B.C.), in declining his invitation, are supposed to have been—  
 "When one sees the paintings of the ancients, wise and virtuous rulers were always accompanied by noted officials. Only at the decline of the Three Dynasties

(Hsia, Shang and Chou) were they surrounded by concubines. Now, if I were to be in the same palanquin as your Imperial Majesty, would it not be comparable to the events of the Three Dynasties?"  
 「觀古圖畫，賢聖之君皆有名臣在側，三代末主乃有嬖女，今欲同輦，得無近似之乎？」

<sup>14</sup>The couplet implies humility and generosity as the two virtues to be cultivated by women.

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ADMONITIONS OF THE IMPERIAL PRECEPTRESS:  
Handscroll attributed to Ku K'ai-chih, illustrating the  
poem by Chang Hua. All sections reproduced here are  
from the British Museum version, courtesy of the Board  
of Trustees, British Museum, London.

Plate 1 THE ADMONITIONS SCROLL: "When  
the black bear escaped its cage, the Lady Feng  
hastened forward."

Exclusive love breeds coyness and extreme passion is  
fickle.

All that has waxed must also wane, and this principle  
is sure.

Admire your own beauty if you will, but that brings  
misfortune.

Seeking to please with a seductive face, you will be  
despised by honourable men;

If the bond of love is severed, this is the cause.

Thus it is said:

Prosperity is fostered with caution; honour will  
attend those who reflect.

The Imperial Preceptress rules these admonitions and  
respectfully instructs the imperial concubines.<sup>15</sup>

專實生慢，  
愛極則遷。  
致盈必損，  
理有固然。  
美者自美，  
翻以取尤。  
冶容求好，  
君子所讎。  
結恩而絕，  
職此之由。  
故曰，翼翼矜矜，  
福所以興。  
靖恭自思，  
榮顯所期。  
女史司箴，  
敢告庶姬。

The British Museum version begins with the Lady Feng episode to continue for a total of nine scenes.<sup>16</sup> A second copy in the Peking Ku Kung Museum is unquestionably of much later date, but includes the two earlier scenes of Lady Fan and Lady Wei.<sup>17</sup> However, these are highly suspect as evidence for the composition of sections lost from the London scroll. Though the rest of the Peking copy appears to be quite close to the London painting, albeit feebler (as, for example, the bear in the Lady Feng scene which has been transformed by an incompetent hand to an insignificant rodent-like creature), its first two scenes betray a markedly different character. Lady Fan and King Chuang of Ch'u stand facing one another quite calmly to indicate nothing of the matter in dispute, to be followed by a repetition of the

<sup>15</sup>The *Wen-hsüan* Book 56.

Osvald Sirén, *op. cit.*, Part III, Pls. 11-15.

<sup>16</sup>The British Museum scroll is best reproduced in

<sup>17</sup>The Peking Ku Kung scroll is partially reproduced in Ma Ts'ai, *op. cit.*, Pls. 5 ff. (seven scenes in all).

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Plate 2 THE ADMONITIONS SCROLL: "*The sun rises to its zenith then sets, and the moon comes to fullness then wanes.*" (British Museum version)

Lady Fan kneeling before an empty table. The Lady Wei tale is depicted with a single female figure seated before two musicians playing upon bells and chimes. Both illustrations lack the explicitness and drama of visual interpretation which are to be seen in most of the other scenes. This dullness and lack of insight into literary content are products of a less imaginative painter. Very likely, the copyist decided to fill the gaps in his model, perhaps the British Museum scroll, and added two compositions of his own invention. An additional betrayal of their late conception may be seen in the furnishings and musical instruments which are unlike any found in Six Dynasties work. Their brushwork, too, have lost any similarity to the original. The Peking scroll is, therefore, of little help in forming an idea of what has been considered to be the style of Ku K'ai-chih.

Facial and figural forms on the London scroll, on the other hand, are very close to such excavated examples of Six Dynasties pictorialization as the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove" stamped on bricks of a tomb near Nanking, and the Taoist themes moulded and painted on bricks of a tomb at Teng hsien 鄧縣, Honan.<sup>18</sup> The fine, even movement of lines in drapery rendering etc. is equally in accord. Some of the British Museum version's male figures show a bulky roundness of body structure less in keeping with a 4th century work. This is particularly evident in the Lady Pan scene, where the palanquin form is drawn in the same manner as this motif at Teng hsien,<sup>19</sup> but with its bearers moving in complicated curvilinear rhythms for which there seems no adequate motivation. Such a stylization evidences a departure from the angularity we generally expect in Chin dynasty style. Two other details are also anomalous. In the landscape scene, neither the mountain nor the figure resemble known Six Dynasties work. The plasticity of accumulated boulder shapes alternated with flat surfaces of paths is much more three-dimensional, and conceived in terms

<sup>18</sup>Alexander C. Soper, "A New Chinese Tomb Discovery: the Earliest Representation of a Famous Literary Theme," *Artibus Asiae*, XXIV: 2 (1961), pp. 79-86; and Honan sheng wen-hua ch'ü 河南省文化局,

*Teng hsien ts'ai-seh hua-hsiang chuan-mu* 鄧縣彩色畫象磚墓 (Peking, 1958).

<sup>19</sup>*Teng hsien* . . . , no. 32.

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Plate 3 THE ADMONITIONS SCROLL: "*People all know how to improve their visage, but not to refine their characters.*" (British Museum version)

of mass rather than the successive overlapping planes of 4th to 6th century formalizations. Similarly, a crude pyramidal arrangement of the family group seems incongruous. It is less satisfactory in giving an idea of recession than the usual Six Dynasties device of diagonal placement on an imaginary ground-line. The problems presented by the London scroll are, therefore, not merely a question of whether it is an original or a copy, for the first possibility must be excluded. Even the placement of its exact date of execution is less important than whether it reflects Ku's conception more or less clearly.

For this reason, it is in its visual interpretation of literary content that the London painting may prove particularly revealing. In the Lady Feng episode, two court ladies in smaller scale are shown moving off towards the right while the Emperor sits impassively facing left towards the onrushing beast which leaps at the erect lady while being attacked by two lancers. Following is a single lady representing the Imperial Preceptress herself to introduce the Lady Pan episode. The expression of a truly idiosyncratic creative intelligence is most clearly displayed in the contrasts provided for this scene. The virtuous lady follows behind the Emperor whose head is seen, above the side of his litter, looking backward with a lugubrious face while another lady is seated beside him, and his bearers seem to be moving under their burden with immense effort. The next scene, illustrating a metaphysical statement in poetic terms rather than a story with narrative elements, is most interesting if awkward. The pictorial image uses a mountain as its central motif, to the right of which is the sun and its symbols, and to the left the moon and its symbols. A man rests on one knee at the left, almost half the height of this peak, aiming a bow and arrow at a tiger on the slope. This animal is also exaggerated in size. By contrast, pheasants, rabbits and other beasts are smaller in scale and, at least, plausible in relation to the land mass. Similarly, the trees and landscape details

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Plate 4 THE ADMONITIONS SCROLL: "*Make your heart like the grasshopper's, and you will multiply your kind.*" (British Museum version)

are somewhat diminished in size to relate to the whole. There seems to be no obvious reason for these discrepancies in proportions. At the same time, there may appear to have been a failure of imagination in the literalness with which every concrete image (sun and moon, "earth building up in layers" and "an arrow shooting from the crossbow") was seized upon and transferred. It has been said that this scene represents the text in terms of symbols alone,<sup>20</sup> but these symbols are the equivalents of poetic similes, and their very combination in a noticeably artificial construct echoes the allusive quality of their textual origin. The difficulties of conveying metaphorical significance are also demonstrated in the next scene which shows one figure applying facial make-up while another seated figure is having his hair dressed by a standing female figure. Here, the details of dressing-stand, mirror and cosmetic boxes all fit with what we know of Han and Six Dynasties accoutrements. The artist's sense of humour and human acumen are again visible in the illustration of the couplet on true and false speech, with a gentleman addressing his spouse while seated on the edge of a bed, and she sitting inside as far away from him as the restricted space of this piece of furniture would permit. The inadequacy of the family scene as a formal composition has already been noted, but it is also less effective than other sections in conveying the gist of its verbal communication. The second to last group chose to represent two elements: a lady approaching a gentleman is rejected by him with a warding-off gesture from his left hand, and another lady is seated quietly alone, presumably perfecting her "commitment to compassion". Finally, the Imperial Preceptress is seen writing on a scroll before two court ladies.

<sup>20</sup>Alexander C. Soper, "Life-Motion and the Sense of Space in Early Chinese Representational Art," *Art Bulletin*, XXX: 3 (Sept. 1948), p. 178.

THE SECOND best known attribution to Ku is the illustration to the *Lo shen fu* which now exists in three known versions.<sup>21</sup> This title appeared within Ku's oeuvre in the Yuan dynasty. It was next listed in Mao Wei 茅維's (act. ca. 1596) *Nan-yang ming-hua piao* 南陽名畫表. Wang K'o-yü 汪珂玉's *Shan-hu-wang* 珊瑚網 (1543) Book 1 describes a heavily coloured version on much damaged silk, with Sung dynasty mounting. Hu Chin's *Hsi-ch'ing cha-chi* Book 2 briefly mentions a scroll of this title attributed to Ku, but without signature. The 1744 imperial catalogue *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi* 石渠寶笈 describes a version with a Ch'ien-lung imperial inscription dated to 1741, four seals of the Jurchen Chin dynasty's Ming-ch'ang 明昌 reign (1190-1196) and five colophons, in Book 36. While in the collection of K'o Chiu-ssu 柯九思 (1312-1365), it had been seen by Chao Meng-fu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322) whose seals appeared on the scroll and whose inscription of the prose-poem itself in the calligraphic style of Wang Hsi-chih 王羲之 (303-361) was on a separate piece of paper attached to the painting. After Chao's inscription of 1299, colophons were added by Li K'an 李衍 (1245-1320) in 1307, Yü Chi 虞集 (1272-1348), Shen Tu 沈度 (act. ca. 1401 on) in 1417 and Wu K'uan 吳寬 (1435-1504) in 1470. Finally, in the late Ch'ing dynasty, a connoisseur and dealer Li Pao-hsün 李葆恂 recorded, in his *Hai-wang-ch'un shuo-chien shu-hua lu* 海王村所見書畫錄 Book 1, what seems to have been another version from the imperial collection, with a seal of Li Kung-lin 李公麟's (ca. 1040-1106) collection, various seals of Liang Ch'ing-piao, an inscription by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 董其昌 (1555-1636) and seals of the Ch'ien-lung emperor. Li also noted that there were many copies of Sung and later date, from Li Kung-lin's efforts onward.

The Freer Gallery scroll is clearly fragmentary, with only four episodes, but fits Li Pao-hsün's description, and entered the U.S.A. from the Tuan-fang 端方 (1861-1911) collection. The Peking Museum's more complete version in eight scenes arranged as a continuous composition is not inscribed with the prose-poem itself, and may be the one seen by Hu Ching. Finally, the Tung-pei Museum's freer rendering is also partial, but contains one scene not found on either of the two other paintings, and having as well the text inscribed in sections and Ch'ien-lung seals.

OF THE THREE, the Peking scroll reveals the most amazing fidelity to the prose-poem's text.<sup>22</sup> A comparison between the poetic and pictorial descriptions will indicate what its illustrative attitude was.

<sup>21</sup>One in the Peking Ku Kung Museum is reproduced in Ma Ts'ai, *op. cit.*, Pls. 1 ff. (seventeen in all), and in two details from *A Selection of Figural Paintings from Various Dynasties* (Shanghai, 1959). The scroll in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., is reproduced in Osvald Sirén, *op. cit.*, Part III, Pls. 9 and 10. The version in the Tung-pei Museum, Shen-yang, is also reproduced in Ma Ts'ai, *op. cit.*, Pl. 2 ff. (five in all). A fourth copy is supposed to exist but its whereabouts has not been noted; cf. Wen Chao-t'ung 溫肇桐,

"Ku K'ai-chih ti 'Lo-shen fu' t'u ch'uan" 顧愷之的洛神賦圖卷 (*The Nymph of the River Lo Handscroll* by Ku K'ai-chih), *Mei-shu* 美術, III (1957), p. 47.

<sup>22</sup>*Wen-hsüan* Book 19. Ts'ao Chih 曹植's (192-232) poem has been partially and rather freely translated by Arthur Waley, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-62. Unless otherwise acknowledged, all translations in this article are by its author.

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**Nymph of the River Lo**

**洛神賦**

IN THE YEAR 223, after being at court in the capitol, I returned by the River Lo. According to the ancients, the deity of this river is named Mi-fei. Remembering Sung Yü 宋玉's (290-222 B.C.) account of the tale of the divine maiden and the King of Ch'u, I composed this prose-poem, its words being—

黃初三年，余朝京師，  
還濟洛川。  
古人有言：  
斯水之神名曰宓妃。  
感宋玉對楚王神女之事，  
遂作斯賦。其辭曰：

LEAVING THE capitol and returning to my fief in the east,  
With back to towering I-ch'üeh Mountain I crossed  
the tortuous Huan-yüan Pass;  
Penetrated the great T'ung Valley and traversed the  
Ching Peak.  
As the sun descended westward, horses and chariot  
were weary,  
So we unhitched them upon a flowery bank, grazing  
the steeds amidst perfumed fields.

余從京城，言歸東藩。  
背伊闕，  
越轅轅。  
經通谷，  
陵景山。  
日既西傾，  
車殆馬煩。  
爾乃稅駕乎蘅皋，  
秣駟乎芝田。

The first scene of the Peking scroll shows two grooms by three horses gambolling and feeding in a meadow.

Then I rested within a willow grove, casting glances  
at the River Lo.  
Suddenly, my spirits were startled and my thoughts  
scattered.  
Bowing down I could see nothing, but looking up I  
beheld wonder:  
I perceived a beauty at the foot of a precipice.

容與乎陽林，  
流眄乎洛川。  
於是精神移駭，  
忽焉思散。  
俯則未察，  
仰以殊觀。  
覩一麗人於巖之畔。  
乃援御者而告之曰，  
爾有覲於彼者乎。

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copyright restrictions.

Plate 7 NYMPH OF THE RIVER LO: "Her movements were unpredictable, at once unsure and calm, seeming to advance and to retreat." (Ku Kung Museum version).

Then I seized an attendant and asked:  
"Do you see that person over there?  
Who is she with so fair a form?"

The attendant replied: "I have heard of the Nymph  
of the River Lo, whose name is Mi-fei.

Perhaps that is whom Your Honour sees.

But what of her form? For I truly wish to know."

I replied: "She moves with the lightness of wild geese  
in flight;

With the sinuous grace of soaring dragons at play.

Her radiance outshines the autumn chrysanthemums;

Her luxuriance is richer than the spring pines.

She floats as do wafting clouds to conceal the moon;

She flutters as do gusting winds to eddy snow.

From afar she gleams like the sun rising from dawn  
mists;

At closer range she is luminous like lotus rising from  
clear waves.

彼何人斯，  
若此之艷也。  
御者對曰，  
臣聞河洛之神，  
名曰宓妃。  
然則君王所見，  
無乃是乎。  
其狀若何，臣願聞之。  
余告之曰，其形也，  
翩若驚鴻，婉若游龍。  
榮曜秋菊，華茂春松。  
髣髴兮若輕雲之蔽月，  
飄飄兮若流風之迴雪。  
遠而望之，  
皎若太陽升朝霞。  
迫而察之，  
灼若芙蕖出綠波。

In the scroll, a group of men, Ts'ao and his attendants, are represented gazing to the left at the nymph who stands on the surface of the waves. The artist has chosen to convey Ts'ao's eulogy, with its profusion of similes, by simply representing the objects to which she is compared. Thus, two geese in flight and an ascending dragon appear in the sky to the right of her figure, a sun with its crow symbol rises from behind clouds to the left, while lotus flowers emerge from the waters below.

Her height and girth fit exactly in proportion;  
Her shoulders are sculptured forms, and her waist  
pliant as a bundle of silk.

禮織得衷，修短合度。  
肩若削成，腰如約素。

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Plate 8 NYMPH OF THE RIVER LO: "P'eng-i  
beat his drums, and Nü-wa trilled her song."  
(Freer Gallery version)

Her slender neck and tapered nape reveal a glowing  
surface,  
Without application of scent or fragrant powders;  
Her hair coils in cumulus clouds and her brows curve  
in silken threads;  
Her cinnebar lips gleam without, with snowy teeth  
pure within;  
Her bright eyes glance charmingly, and dimples decor-  
ate her cheeks.  
Her deportment is superb and her attitude tranquil;  
Her manner is gentle and elegant, and her speech  
bewitching;  
Her unusual dress is that of another world and her  
form worthy of depiction.  
Wrapped in brilliant gauzes, she is adorned with ear-  
rings of rich jade,  
And hair ornament of gold and feathers; her body  
glistens with strings of pearls.  
She treads upon "far-roaming" patterned slippers,  
trailing a skirt of misty silk;  
She skims among fragrant growths of delicate orchids  
and wafts by the mountain slopes."

延頸秀項，皓質呈露。  
芳澤無加，鉛華弗御。  
雲髻峨峨，修眉聯娟。  
丹唇外朗，皓齒內鮮。  
明眸善睠，靨輔承權。  
瓊姿艷逸，儀靜體閑。  
柔情綽態，媚於語言。  
奇服曠世，骨像應圖。  
披羅衣之璀璨兮，  
珥瑤碧之華琚。  
戴金翠之首飾，  
綴明珠以耀軀。  
踐遠遊之文履，  
曳霧縠之輕裾。  
曳霧縠之輕裾。  
微幽蘭之芳藹兮，  
步踟躕於山隅。

The nymph is seen placed in a setting of hills and flowers, and is elaborately garbed.

Then, suddenly, she straightened herself and took to  
random play,  
On her left a brilliant banner, and on her right a cassia  
flag.

於是忽焉縱體，  
以遨以嬉。  
左倚采旄，右蔭桂旗。

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Plate 9 NYMPH OF THE RIVER LO: A section from the Ku Kung Museum version, depicting the same scene as Plate 8.

She bent her wrist to a fairy bank to pluck a dark reed from the shallows.  
Thrilled by her beauty, my heart moved restlessly,  
Lacking a go between to join us in happiness, I entrusted my message to the rippling waters.  
Wishing to express my sincerity, I removed a jade pendant as pledge of my vow.  
How courteous the fair one was, how refined in propriety and poetry!  
For she offered precious gems in acceptance, and pointed to the mysterious depths in promise.  
But, realizing the vicissitudes of love, I feared the spirit would betray me.  
For I remembered how Chiao-fu was once deceived,<sup>23</sup>  
So was I cunningly forewarned and wary as a fox.  
I composed my expression and quieted my mind;  
I assumed an air of dignity and held myself aloof.  
Whereupon, the Nymph of the River Lo was moved;  
she wavered and faltered;  
Her divine light flickered, now darkening and again gleaming.  
She tensed her light frame like a crane erect, about to fly but yet with wings furled;  
She trod along the clove-spun path, spreading fragrance of the herbs.  
She uttered a long cry of eternal love, a sound sorrowful and enduring.

攘皓腕於神澗兮，  
采湍瀨之玄芝。  
余情悅其淑美兮，  
心振蕩而不怡。  
無良媒以接權兮，  
托微波而通辭。  
願誠素之先達兮，  
解玉珮以要之。  
嗟佳人之信修兮，  
羌習禮而明詩。  
抗瓊瑤以和予兮，  
指潛淵而爲期。  
執眷眷之款實兮，  
懼斯靈之我欺。  
感交甫之棄言兮，  
悵猶豫而狐疑。  
收和顏而靜志兮，  
申禮防以自持。  
於是洛靈感焉，  
徙倚徬徨。  
神光離合，乍陰乍陽。  
竦輕軀以鶴立，  
若將飛而未翔。  
踐椒塗之郁烈，  
步蘅薄而流芳。  
超長吟以永慕兮，  
聲哀厲而彌長。

<sup>23</sup>Chiao-fu exchanged vows with two immortal maidens who immediately disappeared.

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Plate 10 NYMPH OF THE RIVER LO: "*Wishing to express my sincerity, I removed a jade pendant as pledge of my vow.*" (Freer Gallery version).

At this, the multitude of spirits came flocking to  
proclaim their amity.  
Some splashed through the clear waves and others  
winged amidst the sacred isles;  
Some gathered brilliant pearls and others kingfishers'  
plumes.  
Together came the two queens of the Hsiang River,  
and she who roamed the bank of the River Han.  
They sang the doleful song of the Ladle Constellation  
that knew no mate, and pealed the ballad of the  
Herdboy's loneliness.

爾乃衆靈雜遝，  
命儔嘯侶。  
或戲清流，或翔神渚，  
或采明珠，或拾翠羽。  
從南湘之二妃，  
携漢濱之遊女。  
嘆匏瓜之無匹兮，  
詠牽牛之獨處。

There is a break at this point in the Peking scroll, for the landscape elements do not match at the join of silk lengths. The Tung-pei version has the first group of Ts'ao and his attendants immediately followed by the nymph's figure moving left towards the noble backed by only three attendants (of eight in the first scene). At no other point and on no other copy is any group represented with a strong counter-movement to the right as seen here. Could this have been a replacement for a missing section? We would expect some illustration of the exchange of vows, Ts'ao's uneasiness and its consequences.

The nymph, her light mantle fluttering in the wind,  
trailing her long sleeves, stood still for a while.  
Then, swift as a bird on the wing, with the elusiveness  
of an immortal,  
She passed lightly over the waves, her silken stockings  
rousing fine dust.  
Her movements were unpredictable, at once unsure  
and calm, seeming to advance and to retreat.

揚輕袿之猗靡兮，  
翳脩袖以延佇。  
體迅飛鳧，飄忽若神。  
陵波微步，羅襪生塵。  
動無常則，若危若安。  
進止難期，若往若還。

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**Plate 11** NYMPH OF THE RIVER LO: *"She summoned the flying fish to guard her chariot, and the sound of jade chimes mark her departure."* (Ku Kung Museum version).

She turned her glittering eyes backward, which lit up  
her jade-like face;  
She withheld her words, only exhaled the fragrance  
of rare orchids.  
Her beauty was such as to make me forgetful of self.

轉眄流精，光潤玉顏。  
含辭未吐，氣若幽蘭。  
華容婀娜，令我忘食。

The nymph is repeated four times, thrice accompanied by a spirit attendant of whom one is depicted in the peculiar attitude of moving on her knees. This unusual detail is also to be seen on the Tung-pei scroll.

Then the Storm God lulled the winds and the Water  
God stilled the waves;  
P'eng-i beat his drums, and Nū-wa trilled her song.  
The nymph summoned the flying fish to guard her  
chariot,  
And the sound of jade chimes mark her departure.  
Six dragons, majestic in even line, pulled the floating  
cloud chariot;  
Whales and dolphins gambolled at its wheelside, while  
water fowl flew as escort.

於是屏翳收風，  
川后靜波。  
馮夷鳴鼓，女媧清歌。  
騰文魚以警乘，  
鳴玉鸞以偕逝。  
六龍儼其齊首，  
載雲車之容裔。  
鯨鯢踊而夾轂，  
水禽翔而爲衛。

Ts'ao is shown seated, partially surrounded by five attendants, watching the departure of the nymph. The Washington fragment begins at this point. All the deities of earth and sky cited in the poem are depicted to the left of the nymph. Following this section, the Peking scroll again appears to have suffered a loss. There is another clear break in its join of two pieces of silk between the official group and the nymph seated upon the Jade Phoenix. On the Freer example, the distance between the two protagonists is fairly long, while it is too short on the Ku Kung copy to create a suitable effect of increasing separation between the worlds of immortal and man. In both versions, the nymph's head is turned back to the right.

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Plate 13 NYMPH OF THE RIVER LO: "I floated on the long stream forgetting to return, my thoughts like tangled threads, my longing ever increasing." (Freer Gallery version).

All three copies retain the section with her unearthly mode of travel, though the Peking scroll is the simplest in its depiction and the Washington version the most elaborate.

Having crossed the northern islet and passed the southern mound,  
She turned her smooth neck and gazed back with clear eyes.  
She moved her red lips and slowly spoke of the rules of friendship,  
Of her regret that the ways of man and divinity are separate, and her sorrow at the waste of her prime of life.  
She raised her damask sleeve to conceal the tears which coursed in streams onto her collar;  
She grieved at the eternal severance of this love, and mourned the finality of her departure.  
"Unable to return the slightest affection for your love, let me offer you this bright pearl of the South.  
Though I stay concealed in the Great Darkness, my heart will long be entrusted to you, my lord."

於是越北汜，過南岡。  
紆素領，迴清揚。  
動朱唇以徐言，  
陳交接之大綱。  
恨人神之道殊兮，  
怨盛年之莫當。  
抗羅袂以掩涕兮，  
淚流襟之浪浪。  
悼良會之永絕兮，  
哀一逝而異鄉。  
無微情以效愛兮，  
獻江南之明璫。  
雖潛處於太陰，  
長寄心於君王。

The Peking scroll shows the nymph clearly with her head turned back and mouth open as if in speech, though the last detail is less clear in the two other versions.

Suddenly, I no longer see where she was, for the divinity had disappeared, and her light had faded.  
Then, descending from the high mountain, I walked away, but my heart remained.

忽不悟其所舍，  
悵神宵而蔽光。  
於是背下陵高，  
足往神留。

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Plate 12 NYMPH OF THE RIVER LO: A section from the Freer Gallery version, depicting the same scene as Plate 11.

My mind dwelt upon her image, and, looking about,  
I became depressed.

Hoping that the divinity would resume her form,  
I embarked upstream on a swift boat to begin my  
search.

I floated on the long stream forgetting to return,  
My thoughts like tangled threads, my longing ever  
increasing.

At night, disquieted I could not sleep, and, soaked by  
the dew, I remained awake till dawn.

遺情想像，願望懷愁。  
冀靈體之復形，  
御輕舟而上溯。  
浮長川而忘返，  
思緜緜而增慕。  
夜耿耿而不寐，  
露繁霜而至曙。

All copies show Ts'ao in a boat, attended by two ladies, and then seated on the shore with a pair of lighted candles by his side to suggest the sleepless night. The Freer copy has a detail of a landscape scroll hanging within the boat and visible from its bow through a window, which is thought to date it as a Southern Sung dynasty work.<sup>24</sup>

I ordered the grooms to hitch the chariot, and was  
about to resume the eastern road.

I seized the reins and raised the whip; yet, depressed  
and undecided, I could not leave.

命仆夫而就駕，  
吾將歸乎東路。  
攬駢轡以抗策，  
悵盤桓而不能去。

Both the Peking and Tung-pei versions terminate with this scene of Ts'ao seated in a chariot and looking back to the river, while the Freer copy ends with his night watch. Interesting in both scrolls in China is the presence of a lady seated beside Ts'ao in the chariot, a contradiction of the expressed sentiment, and perhaps a satirical note which echoes that already described for the Lady Pan episode of the *Admonitions* . . . scroll.

<sup>24</sup>Taki Seiichi 瀧拙庵, "Ku K'ai-chih's Illustration 1939), pp. 139-144.  
of the Poem of Lo-shen," *Kokka* 國華, No. 582 (May

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Plate 14 NYMPH OF THE RIVER LO: "*At night, disquieted I could not sleep, and, soaked by the dew, I remained awake till dawn.*" (Freer Gallery version).

The Ku Kung example offers one striking difference from the Freer one in terms of formal rendering; that is, a less distressing incongruity of scale. Though trees are in all versions not much taller than human figures, in the Peking scroll, they offer a greater impression of mass through close grouping and fullness of foliage. The spatial continuum is more closely defined in it as well. An extended landscaped ground reaches to about the midpoint of the scroll's height and is defined through use of colour as well as line. In the other two copies, the landscape elements in the immediate foreground are distinctly represented with line and colour, but contours tend to dissolve into soft washes with recession. Figural types also differ from each other. The Peking copy's bulky figures with smooth flowing draperies to emphasize their mass recall T'ang dynasty types. However, its female divinities with slender bodies and garments in active movement remain closer to what we can reconstruct of Chin dynasty forms. The Washington copy shows uniformly slim figures, but not elongated bodies with small heads such as are familiar in Six Dynasties archaeological finds. Their lines, too, are stiffer and straighter than in the Peking work. Finally, the Tung-pei copy betrays temporally the latest figural style, with its emphasis upon hard lines and more complicated drapery folds which return to a non-descriptive pattern of schematization. All three show some fidelity to Six Dynasties costume, hair arrangements and tree stylizations. There can be little doubt that efforts were made to recapture original effects.

Certain points may be established about the appearance of the original from the evidence of these copies. First, the horizontal scroll form was in use, but organized as separate and closed scenes. Movement from one part to the next was prompted by the action of main figures in a single direction. Second, landscape setting was conceived in terms of "space cells". Emphasis upon an accumulation of landscape motifs in the immediate foreplane, with only occasional definitions of rocks and trees behind, indicates that it was felt unnecessary to enclose the space in which figures were set. Third, plant motifs were executed with a limited range of foliage patterns. An exact definition of leaf contours prevented a correct relationship between the parts of trees or shrubs. Finally, decorative lines were exploited in seemingly wind-blown drapery, and in the scrolled stylizations of waves and clouds.

Common to all three versions is a certain charming naïveté in the illustration of narrative. Compartmentalization of the continuous scroll form was adapted to a temporal and spatial sequence. Their elements of representation are specific and concrete; thus, all metaphorical allusions were translated into visible images. The

reading of such a painting is literary as well as pictorial in its demands upon an understanding of standard symbols.<sup>25</sup>

IF WE TURN to examine Ku K'ai-chih's own literary production, will we discover a special quality of visualization expressed through verbal means? Fortunately, the most complete of his extant writings is also in the *fu* (prose-poem) form; the *Lei-tien fu* 雷電賦 (Prose-Poem on Thunder and Lightning) being, therefore, comparable to the *Lo-shen fu* and its illustration. Ku's composition has been described by Ch'en Shih-hsiang as follows—

"Its word-power is as enchanting as that of any other good work in this *fu* genre. But remarkable is the occasional demonstration of an artist's insight into the visual attraction of the raging natural elements in a sublime landscape."<sup>26</sup>

The late Professor Ch'en then offered a partial translation "to show its quality". His version is a masterful one, but for the sake of consistency in English literary style, it has been thought preferable to offer another translation of the entire poem.<sup>27</sup>

Prose-Poem on Thunder and Lightning

雷電賦

In ordering of the cosmic chaos and purification of  
the primal ether,  
*Yin* and *yang* coalesced to produce thunder and  
lightning.

太極紛紜，  
元氣澄練。  
陰陽相薄，  
爲雷爲電。

<sup>25</sup>The third attribution to Ku is a *Lieh-nü chuan t'u* 列女傳圖 (Illustrations to the Biographies of Illustrious Women) which may be reflected in a handscroll also in the Peking Ku Kung Museum, reproduced in Ma Ts'ai, *op. cit.*, six scenes; P'an T'ien-shou, *op. cit.*, Pls. 11-24; and Yü Chien-hua, *op. cit.*, Pls. 35-38. A woodblock printed edition of Liu Hsiang 劉向's text appeared in 1063, with a preface identifying its illustrations as copies after Ku's work. Chang Yen-yüan, *op. cit.*, Book 5 does specify a "Maiden of the Ah Valley" among Ku's oeuvre, and her story is included in the *Lieh-nü chuan* Book 6 as a model of "penetrating argument". The blocks were recarved in 1825 by Yüan Fu 元福, whose sister Chi-lan 季蘭 was responsible for copying the illustrations. Extant copies of this edition show that very little of the original's style could have survived after passing through the hands of first Sung then Ch'ing artisans. The Ku Kung painting is fragmentary. A Sung inscription by Wang Chu 汪注 notes that the original had fifteen scenes containing twenty-four male figures, twenty-one female figures and four children. A version extant in the Sung dynasty had eight scenes composed of fifteen male figures, nine female figures and four children. Later, another copy was discovered in a private collection. This was executed on paper and had fourteen scenes,

lacking only five figures of the original. These were again copied to remedy omissions in the previous copy. Only twenty-seven figures have been reproduced. Their hard lines, very much schematized in drapery folds, indicate that they are of late production, probably post-Sung. However, the compositions and general illustrative approach are closely related to the *Admonitions* . . . scroll, though adding very little to our further understanding of Ku's literary and pictorial interpretations. The figures are grouped simply, moving in dignified poses against a plain background. The subjects are identified more clearly in inscription than through expressive or animated action. Furthermore, all other elements reflect this scroll's later origin. Even the garments, vessels and furniture are of post-Sung, and possibly Ming types.

<sup>26</sup>Ch'en Shih-hsiang, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>27</sup>The former Professor of Chinese at the University of California at Berkeley was certainly influenced in his English poetic style by the generation of Oxford aesthetes just after the First World War, for he was a student of Harold Acton's at Ch'ing-hua University 清華大學; cf. Harold Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (London, 1948).

They battled (the sacrilegious) Wu-i by the Yellow River, demonstrating his punishment by execution;

They shook the temple of the Chan clan, exposing a concealed crime.

Thus it was that Confucius himself would suddenly alter his respectful visage (at their phenomena).

For (thunder's) noise is without fixed outbreak and (lightning's) flash is without constant gleam,

But like the deafening crash of rolling wheels and the secretive flickers of dodging flames.

When the *yin* sinks and the *yang* rises,

Torpid insects emerge, their vitalized spirits first to respond

In multitudes gently vibrating, neither agitated nor passive.

When the (*yin* musical mode of) Lin-chung rules the season of humid heat and shimmering haze,

Stars and moon blur, and clothing feels aflame,

Then, to usher in a pure breeze gusting away dust and dirt,

Richly rumbling the sound breaks and jaggedly the clouds are rent apart.

Then it is that worn faces open to renewed vigour;

Though disturbing one's peace and troubling one's rest,

(Thunder and lightning) arouse the vital essence and stimulate the spirit.

When the wrath of Heaven is about to erupt, crimson lightning issues first,

Exposing cliffs from all sides, glaring or gleaming in double perfection.

Thunder and lightning are awesome enough to move the Earth's pivot,

Rebounding and disrupting so that mountains and oceans submit (to their greater might).

When noon and midnight are in balance, waters dry up and trees become bare,

Winter's second month is about to commence and concealed thunder bursts out,

Crashing and booming, flashing and blinding.

How could this be but 'sound and fury signifying nothing'?

For it banishes accord and injures life;

It reveals the ruler's loss of the just mean, and makes visible the secret of Heaven and Earth.

擊武乙於河，  
而誅戮之罰明。  
震展氏之廟，  
而隱惡之誅見。  
是以宣尼，  
敬威忽變。  
夫其聲無定響，  
光不恒照。  
砰訇輪轉，  
倏閃藏曜。  
若乃太陰下淪，  
少陽初升。  
蟄蟲將啟，  
動靈先應。  
殷殷徐振，  
不激不憑。  
林鍾統節，  
溽暑烟燼。  
星月不朗，  
衣裳若焚。  
爾乃清風前颯，  
蕩濁流塵。  
豐隆破響，  
裂缺開雲。  
當時倦容，  
廓焉精新。  
豈直驚安竦寐，  
乃以暢精悟神。  
天怒將凌，  
赤電先發。  
窺岩四照，  
影流雙絕。  
雷電赫以驚衡，  
山海磕其奔裂。  
若夫子午相乘，  
水旱木零。  
仲冬奮發，  
伏雷先行。  
磕磕隆隆，  
閃閃覓覓。  
豈隱隱之虛憑，  
乃違和而傷生。  
昭王度之失節，  
見二儀之幽情。

Then again, sometimes, in the bright sun and cloud-  
less sky of an early morn,  
That spiritual eye will raise its essence to flame  
fiercely;  
The stalwart drum will burst the skies with its  
sonorous beats;  
Then tombs and citadels roar (echoing) as if in  
expectation of down-fall;  
Flat lands heave vertical as if about to disintegrate;  
Mortal beings lose their lives before they knew it;  
Dragons and demons are dislodged in tumultuous  
confusion;  
Light startles (those) in river depths and noise vibrates  
beyond heaven's bounds.  
It is like the scattering of the Great Dipper at the  
sacred birth (of the Yellow Emperor):  
The shaking of K'un-yang when (Wang Meng) attack-  
ed the transgressor;  
The falling of deer horns to caution (Hsia) Chieh;  
The suicides (by T'ien Heng's followers) on the isle  
between two rivulets;  
The tossing of fallen junipers up to Heaven's limits  
(when the Duke of Chou died);<sup>28</sup>  
The grazing of soaring dragons at the clouds' borders.  
Set the whole earth ablaze with your encircling glare;  
Solemnize the Six Directions with your transforming  
power.  
Moving within the sphere of spiritual virtue,  
The ways of divinities are beyond our comprehension.

至乃辰開日朗，  
太清無靄。  
靈眼揚精以麗煥，  
狀鼓崩天而砰磕。  
陵雉旬隱以待傾，  
方地嶮嶮其若敗。  
蒼生非悟而喪魂，  
龍鬼失據以顛沛。  
光驚於泉底，  
聲動於天外。  
及其灑北斗以誕聖，  
震昆陽以伐違。  
降枝鹿以命桀，  
島雙濟而橫屍。  
驚倒檜於霄際，  
摧騰龍於雲湄。  
烈大地以繞映，  
惟六合以動威。  
在靈德而卷舒，  
謝神艷之難追。

The poem's structure in temporal sequence is comparable to that of the *Lo-shen fu*; similarly its use of onomatopœic words, of literary similes and metaphors. Is it hindsight that causes us to see in it a richer display of observed and natural detail? Is there not a richer texture of direct physical impact, depending less upon abstruse vocabulary, and more upon sensual stimulation?

We may conjecture that literature achieved effects beyond the representational artist's powers, certainly in Ku K'ai-chih's time, and probably in all the pre-Sung dynasty periods. In the third quarter of the 20th century, when the converse is steadily becoming more and more evident, might we not pause to consider what might have been and what might be if both literary and pictorial creativity proceeded in equality?

<sup>28</sup>For the Yellow Emperor allusion, see the *Sung Shih* 宋史 "Fu-jui pien 符瑞篇"; the Wang Meng allusion, see Chang Heng 張衡's *Tung-ching fu* 東京賦; T'ien Heng's followers, see the *Shih Chi* 史記 biography; the Duke of Chou's death, see the *Shang Shu* 尚書 "Chin-t'eng pien" 金縢篇. Two allusions have not been identified.