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CONTENTS

- i** Editors' Preface
Benjamin Penny & Remco Breuker
- 1–24** “Crossing Over” to Immortality in the Daoist Ritual
Regulations of Highest Purity
Valentina Georgieva
- 25–46** Flows of Time in the Centres and Peripheries of Tang Experience
Oliver Moore
- 47–62** Within or Without? Ambiguity of Borders and Koryō Koreans’
Travels During the Liao, Jin, Song and Yuan
Remco Breuker
- 63–74** Reflections on the Tower of the Crimson Clouds and the
History of the Private Library in Late-Imperial China
Duncan M. Campbell
- 75–96** Taikun’s Zen Master From China: Yinyuan, the Tokugawa
Bakufu, and the Founding of Manpukuji in 1661
Jiang Wu
- 97–124** Vassal of a Deposed Regime: Archetypes of Reclusion in the
Poetry of Former Shogunal Official Yaguchi Kensai
Matthew Fraleigh
-
- 125–128** Preface to A.R. Davis Reprints
- 129–136** Su Shih, Poems
- 137–150** Su Shih’s “Following the Rhymes of T’ao Yüan-Ming” Poems:
A Literary or a Psychological Phenomenon?
- 151–170** “The Good Lines of the World are a Common Possession”:
A Study of the Effect of Tu Fu Upon Su Shih
- 171–184** On Such a Night: A Consideration of the
Antecedents of the Moon in Su Shih’s Writings

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SU SHIH'S "FOLLOWING THE RHYMES OF T'AO YÜAN-MING" POEMS: A LITERARY OR A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON?

 A.R. Davis

Su Shih (1037–1101) began his self-imposed task of “following the rhymes” of T’ao Yüan-ming (365–427)—writing poems of the same metre, the same rhyme-words and thus the same length as those of the earlier poet—in the year 1092, when he was fifty-five. This practice of “following the rhymes” became widely popular from the Mid-T’ang period of Chinese poetry (early 9th century) onwards,¹ but the rhymes followed were normally those of a living poet with whom an intimate relationship existed. Su Shih was presumably justified in his claim to be the first to follow the rhymes of a poet of an earlier age. The very novelty of his act might thus provide excuse for an enquiry, but I hope to show here that an examination of this particular collection within the corpus of Su’s work has a wider interest beyond that of a literary experiment.

When Su Shih began to “follow the rhymes” of T’ao Yüan-ming in 1092 at Yang-chou (in modern Kiangsu), where he was for a short time Prefect,² he had probably not conceived the idea of attempting to match the whole of T’ao Yüan-ming’s surviving collection of 120 or so poems. He was at least only to announce this intention, after a second occasion of following T’ao’s rhymes, three years later in 1095, when his personal fortunes had taken a considerable turn for the worse. Nevertheless, the Yang-chou beginning was a substantial one, since he followed T’ao’s longest series, the twenty poems which share the title *Drinking Wine*, and we may begin our enquiry there. Clearly, to compare all of Su’s poems with T’ao’s originals would require a book rather than a paper and selection is therefore necessary. If we seek to discern what kind of relation Su felt towards the older poet and what his motives were in undertaking this task, it seems appropriate to choose those poems in which Su refers directly to T’ao Yüan-ming or declares his feelings or intention in a preface.

The twenty-poem series *Drinking Wine* by T’ao is undoubtedly one of the most important of his works and represents an inner debate on the great

1 Although a few examples can be found as early as the 6th century, it was the exchanges of Po Chü-i (772–846) and his friend Yüan Chen (779–831) which gave an impetus to the practice. The same word *ho* (“to harmonize”) occurs in the titles of answering poems by T’ao Yüan-ming and other poets of the pre-T’ang period, but this generally in that period does not signify the use of the same rhyme-words as the poem answered.

2 Su reached Yang-chou and took up his appointment on the 16th day of the 3rd month (25 April 1092). He remained in this post for about five months before being recalled to the capital.

3 The translations of T'ao Yüan-ming which appear here are with the exception of the version of *Drinking Wine* V my final versions in *T'ao Yüan-ming (365–427 A.D.): His Works and Their Meaning*, which I hope that I may describe as “forthcoming”. The *Drinking Wine* series may be found in c.3 of editions of the poet's works arranged in the traditional order.

4 This view is opposite to that of J.R. High-tower, “T'ao Ch'ien's 'Drinking Wine' Poems” in Chow Tse-tung (ed.), *Wen-lin* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p.42. I have discussed the question at length in the work mentioned in the last note.

5 *Su Tung-p'o chi, hsü-chi* (Basic Sinological Series, Commercial Press, reprint, 1958), part 10, pp.98–99. In this edition the collection appears conveniently approximately in the traditional order of T'ao's originals. Wu-chiu is the courtesy-name of Su's disciple Chao Pu-chih (1053–1110).

moral issue for him and for others of the scholar-official or gentry class which provided the poets of Imperial China, the issue of when to serve in the world and when to go into retirement. No other major poet devoted himself as passionately to this issue as T'ao the Hermit. He indeed can be said by his works and his life, though we know very little factually about his life apart from his works, and it might be more accurate to say by his legend, to have established the standard paradigms of this moral argument, to which his successors could and constantly did refer. For T'ao Yüan-ming this moral issue of service or retirement, which involved social duty and judgement, was intertwined and penetrated by a profound anxiety over the significance of man's life. The two strands come together in a painful knot in the problem of good and evil failing to find their due rewards.

T'ao in his preface to this twenty-poem series does not in fact declare that he was writing of an inner debate on a great moral issue. He writes:

I am living in retirement with few pleasures and recently the nights have been getting longer. I happen to have a famous wine, and not a night passes without my drinking it. Looking around at my shadow, I drain my cup alone and suddenly I am drunk again. After I am drunk, I always write a few impromptu verses to amuse myself. The pages thus have become many, but their contents have no order. So I have requested a friend to write them out merely that we might have some pleasure and laughter from them.³

It is quite unnecessary to conclude from the blandness of the preface, which seems so much to belie the high seriousness of the accompanying poems that T'ao was deliberately concealing his purpose.⁴ The preface needs to be read neither too subtly nor too literally. T'ao Yüan-ming was to a degree a philosophical poet, but he was writing poetry, not a logical philosophical treatise. Thus the preface may be seen as a disclaimer not of serious purpose certainly, but of ordered argument. Su Shih, equally a philosophical poet, adopts the same tone in his preface, which is here a fairly deliberate imitation of T'ao's.

I drink very little wine, but I constantly find pleasure in holding a wine-cup in my hand. Often I doze, fallen over in a heap, and others look on it as drunkenness, though my mind is clear. In fact it cannot be termed drunkenness or sobriety. In drinking at Yang-chou I always stop when it passes noon. When my guests are gone, I loosen my gown and sit cross-legged the whole day. Though my joy may be insufficient, there is ease in abundance. So I have followed the rhymes of Yüan-ming's twenty *Drinking Wine* poems in the hope that I might suggest their indefinable quality and have shown the poems to my younger brother Tzu-yu and Collator Chao Wu-chiu.⁵

While the preface is a kind of imitation of T'ao's, in the poems themselves only fairly seldom does he imitate T'ao's subject-matter, and I may at this point for those without Chinese offer parallel translations of one of T'ao's poems and one of Su's to show precisely what “following the rhymes” consists in. Here is a version of Poem V of T'ao's *Drinking Wine* series, one of the most frequently quoted of all his poems and one of the most famous in the Chinese language, also one of which Su Shih greatly admired the expression.

I have built my hut within men's borders,
But yet there is no carriage or horses' noise.
If you ask how this is possible:
To match the heart's, remoteness the place may *incline*.
As I pluck chrysanthemums beneath the eastern fence,
I distantly see the southern *hills*.

The hills' aspect is fair at close of day;
 The flying birds in flocks *return*.
 In this there is a true idea,
 But when I would express it, I forget the *words*.

6 *Ibid.*, p.99.

7 *Idem*.

Su's fifth poem had thus to end its even lines with the words "noise", "incline", "hills", "return" and "words".

The small boat is truly a leaf;
 Under it the dark waves' *noise*.
 A night start while I am drunk;
 I'm unaware that pillow and table *incline*.
 At daybreak the road before the gate
 Has already crossed a thousand golden *hills*.
 Ah me! what else is there for me to do?
 On this course I constantly go and *return*.
 How can one calculate the future before?
 On the past utter any more *words*?⁶

Because the Chinese lexigraphs are not confined to one part of speech and as nouns have no number and as verbs no tense, it is generally fairly difficult to achieve such identical translations for the rhyme-words. Apart from this one illustrative example, I have not made the effort.

In this fifth poem of the series, Su's poem contrasts very strongly in content with T'ao's. Where T'ao is in quiet contemplation of Nature, remote from social ties, implied by the traffic of carriages and horses, Su describes himself as being continually on the move, as a result of his official postings, uncertain of his goal. Su's image of T'ao Yüan-ming can be seen as very different from T'ao's feeling about his own circumstances. For Su, T'ao was a man who kept pure and unswerving hermitage for more than twenty years after his return home in 405 until his death in 427, a solitary true man in a corrupt age. In the third poem of his series *Following the Rhymes of T'ao's Drinking Wine* he wrote:

When the Way is lost, scholars lose themselves;
 The words they utter are always insincere.
 The men of Eastern Chin society
 Even in drunkenness sought after fame.
 Yüan-ming alone was pure and true;
 Amid talk and laughter he found true living.
 His person was like a wind-blown bamboo,
 Yielding, all its leaves quivering,
 Yet every movement possessed of a bearing;
 When he got wine, poems composed themselves.⁷

Su's admiration for T'ao is perfectly clear, but it is admiration for one secure in history, secure among the shades. No sense is conveyed of the anxiety of the living poet who had written:

The Way has been lost for nearly a thousand years;
 All men are careful of their feelings.
 Though they have wine, they will not drink it,
 But regard only their name in their generation.
 "What makes us value our persons
 Surely lies within our single life.
 A single life, how long can it be?

8 *Idem.*

9 Su had three sons, Mai, Tai and Kuo (a fourth, the son of his beloved concubine Chao-yün, had died in infancy in 1084), so he must here be counting in the three sons of his younger brother Su Che, *viz.* Ch'ih, Kua and Yüan. Yüan-ming had five sons.

Swift as flashing lightning's alarm;
Its great extent is but a hundred years;
Holding to this, what should we achieve?

Su Shih felt that the manner of his life had been completely different from T'ao's, as he directly states in the first poem of his *Drinking Wine* series.

I am not like Master T'ao,
Being deeply involved in the world's affairs.
How can I find a single opportunity
When I too may have a life like his?
If the mind's field is clear of thorns,
A place of beauty exists therein.
So give rein to the mind and go with affairs;
Whatever befalls, have no more doubts!
I happen to appreciate the pleasure in wine,
But an empty cup also I constantly hold.⁸

From the time of taking up his first post in 1061 Su had been in official life for more than thirty years and had become a leading member of the conservative party which opposed the reformer Wang An-shih (1021–1086) and his “New Laws”. The struggle between the two groups lasted through the last three decades of the eleventh century with imperial favour going first to one then the other. Su had once feared for his life as he lay confined in the Censorate prison during the last months of 1079, and when pardoned, spent the next four years in banishment at Huang-chou (modern Huang-kang in Hupei province). After the “Old Laws” party held power over a ten-year period, he was again to be banished in 1094 to Hui-chou (modern Hui-yang on the East River in Kwangtung) and then in 1097 virtually beyond the bounds of China, to Hainan Island, of which he was the most famous visitor and observer. This second time of banishment was still ahead of him, when he followed the rhymes of T'ao's *Drinking Wine* poems in 1092, but his experience and attitudes up to this point in his life had clearly been very different from those of the older poet.

Since Su stresses so strongly the differences between them, what was the purpose of his association with T'ao Yüan-ming at this particular time in his life in 1092? Is the point to show that he in his career within the world had remained as pure as T'ao who withdrew from it? This is in fact what he seems to be saying in the poem last quoted:

If the mind's field is clear of thorns,
A place of beauty exists therein.

In following the rhymes of *Drinking Wine* then he is not so much expressing an affinity with T'ao Yüan-ming, as setting up the image of T'ao as a standard against which to measure his own life. This seems to be confirmed by the fifteenth poem of his series, the only other in which he directly mentions T'ao Yüan-ming.

I have left my village for thirty years;
Storms have made a wilderness of my old home.
All that remains is a bundle of letters;
Of my living there are no permanent traces.
Always therefore am shamed by Yüan-ming;
Yet still I receive three hundred measures of grain.
Tall are our six sons;⁹
Generally they are of honourable repute.

For me how should that not be much?
What else should I sigh over?¹⁰

Here, as he so continually does throughout his poetry, he speaks of—it would be wrong to say that he laments—his rootlessness. He consoles himself with his service (“yet still I receive three hundred measures of grain”) and with the satisfactoriness of his sons (in this last respect he continually felt himself luckier than T'ao Yüan-ming).

When he next came to following T'ao's rhymes in 1095, he was out of office and in banishment at Hui-chou. His circumstances had become much more akin to those of the hermit T'ao and he began on what was now to be a sustained task appropriately enough by following the rhymes of T'ao's series *Returning to Live in the Country*, which is generally believed to have been written by T'ao soon after his celebrated retirement from the magistracy of P'eng-tse at the end of the year 405,¹¹ when he began on his withdrawal from the world which lasted until the end of his life.

T'ao's series has no preface, but Su Shih supplies one for his.

On the fourth day of the third month (10 April 1095) I made an excursion to the Buddha's Footprint Cliff on White Water Hill.¹² I bathed in the Warm Spring, dried my hair below the waterfall, and turned homeward singing loudly.¹³ On the way back in my sedan chair I talked with my guest and did not realize that we had come to Lichee Reach on the northern side of the river. The evening sun was faint and the bamboos' shade was gloomy; the lichees were clustered like water-nuts.¹⁴ An old man of eighty-five pointed to them and said to me: “When they are ready to eat, you can bring wine and come and enjoy them. The idea pleased me and I agreed. When I got home, I went to bed, and when I awoke, I heard my son Kuo reciting Yüan-ming's six *Returning to Live in the Country* poems. So I followed the rhymes of all these poems. First of all, when I was at Kuang-ling (Yang-chou), I followed the rhymes of Yüan-ming's twenty *Drinking Wine* poems. Now I have written these. I shall have to go on until I have followed the rhymes of all his poems.¹⁵

The reason he gives for again starting to follow the rhymes of T'ao Yüan-ming's poems is indirect, but if we consider the first two poems and compare them with T'ao's originals, there is little doubt now of his sense of affinity of circumstance as compared with the earlier occasion in Yang-chou.

Surrounding the city are many white waters;
Reaching to the sea everywhere are green hills.
Amid these unlimited scenes
I find lodging for my limited years.
My eastern neighbour is known as a Confucius,
My western neighbour as a Yen Yüan.¹⁶
In the market are no double prices,
Among the farmers no dispute over fields.
It's a pity the Duke of Chou, Kuan and Ts'ai¹⁷
Did not live in a three-room thatched hut.
For my satisfaction one bowl of rice is enough;
Fern roots serve in place of a banquet.
Disciples present firewood and rice,
And prevent there being no smoke from my kitchen.
A gallon of wine and a chicken—
With drunken singing they entertain my white hairs.
How should birds and fish understand the Way?
I am lucky that Nature has its own quiet.

10 *Op.cit.*, p.100.

11 I in fact question this dating, but the matter is of no importance in this context. *Returning to Live in the Country* is found in c.2 of T'ao's works.

12 Eastern peak of Lo-fu shan, 20 li NE of Hui-chou, according to Su's own note to the poem *The Buddha's Footprint Cliff on White Water Hill*, written on the occasion of his previous visit there in the 10th month of the preceding year.

13 Su is writing on the day after the Double Third Festival and makes the allusion common in Double Third poems to *Lun-ü* 11.25 where the disciple Tseng Hsi wishes “in late spring, when the spring clothes are finished, with five times six capped youths and six times seven boys (a magical number of 72) to perform the lustration in the I river, the exposure at the rain-dance altar, and then to return home singing”.

14 The fruits of a species of water-lily, used in various culinary and medicinal preparations.

15 *Op.cit.*, p.91. Su adds (the statement is missing in some editions) that he wrote out this series of poems and sent it to his Taoist-priest friend, Tao-ch'ien (Master Ts'an-liao).

16 Confucius' favourite disciple.

17 Kuan and Ts'ai (these were the names of their fiefs; their personal names were Hsien and Tu) were brothers of the Duke of Chou and roused suspicion against him when he acted as regent for King Ch'eng at the beginning of the Chou dynasty. The Duke of Chou killed Kuan and drove Ts'ai into exile.

18 *Op.cit.*, p.91.

19 The world of affairs.

20 Lotus leaves; cf. Tu Fu's *chüeb-chü* series *Random Feelings*, Poem VII (Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 14, *A Concordance to the Poems of Tu Fu*, 360/22/18G): "Dotting the stream, lotus leaves string green coins".

21 A bird so named from the sound of its cry.

22 *Op.cit.*, p.91.

Anxious concern there need not be;
For a while I am happy as I am.¹⁸

This "following" very well captures the general tone of T'ao's

In youth I was out of harmony with the common rhythm;
My nature from the first loved hills and mountains.
Yet mistakenly I was caught in the Dusty Net,¹⁹
And once I was gone, ten years went by.
The migrant bird longs for its old forest;
The fish in the pond thinks of its former depths.
I have opened up waste land at the edge of the southern wild;
I have kept rusticity, returned to garden and fields.
My square homestead covers ten *mou* and more;
My thatched house has eight or nine rooms.
Elms and willows give shade to the rear eaves;
Peaches and plums are arrayed before the hall.
Faint are the villages of distant men;
Thick is the smoke from their houses.
Dogs bark in the depths of the lanes;
Cocks crow at the tops of mulberries.
Within my doors there is no dust or confusion;
In the empty house there is abundant leisure.
For a long while I have been inside a cage;
Once more I have been able to return to nature.

Close similarity of idea or expression is absent, though it is noticeable that Su has a tendency to introduce reminiscences from other of T'ao's poems than the particular one of which he is following the rhymes. In the second of his series to the rhymes of *Returning to Live in the Country* the last couplet recalls the final lines of Poem V of T'ao's *Drinking Wine*.

The exhausted gibbon has returned to the wood;
The sick horse for the first time is free of the halter.
My mind is empty to be filled with new awareness;
The scenes grow familiar to linger in my dreams.
The river gulls cluster, more tame;
The old Tanka folk visit me time and again.
On the southern pool green coins²⁰ appear;
On the northern range purple bamboo-shoots grow.
How does the "bring-the-jar"²¹ understand drinking?
Yet his excellent words are sometimes consoling.
In the spring river are beautiful verses,
But drunk, I let them fall into oblivion.²²

In this second poem, which judged simply as a poem seems to me one of the best in this particular collection of Su Shih, even the tone as well as the expression and thought is rather different from the poem of T'ao, which it "follows". After the unusually happy note of his first, something of the anxiousness to which T'ao was so much prone creeps into his second poem.

In the country I take little part in men's affairs;
In the narrow lane wheels and harness are rare.
The bright sun is shut out by my rustic gate;
The empty house cuts off dusty preoccupations.
At times again in the waste ground and byways,
Parting the grasses, I share men's comings and goings.
When we meet, there is no discursive talk;

We speak of the growth of mulberry and hemp.
 My mulberries and hemp daily grow taller,
 While my lands daily grow broader.
 Always I fear the coming of frost and hail,
 When they will be shattered like the weeds.

While Su Shih might see himself as being in a situation generally like that of T'ao, it is necessary to note the actual difference in the two poets' situations. T'ao, who repeatedly insists on his temperamental incompatibility with official service, had probably voluntarily and deliberately withdrawn from it; Su, on the other hand, was merely accepting enforced banishment with resignation. In the sixth poem of his series, which in a sense should not be there, since what now stands as the sixth poem of T'ao's series is an erroneous inclusion of an imitation of T'ao by the fifth-century poet Chiang Yen, one may detect an unease on Su Shih's part with his state of enforced idleness.

Before when I was at Kuang-ling,
 I gazed gloomily towards Ch'ai-sang's dykes.²³
 I intoned the *Drinking Wine* poems
 And found a chance of amusement.
 At that time I was under no constraint;
 My mornings idle and evenings unengaged.
 How much more now I am a man of continued leisure;
 An eternity unfolds in a moment.
 River and hills hide and reveal one another,
 Appearing and disappearing at my service.
 At Slanting Stream I follow Yüan-ming;²⁴
 At Eastern Marsh am friend to Wang Chi.²⁵
 When my poem is complete what am I to do?
 There's no profit in playing *liu-po*.²⁶

One might indeed to some extent see this effort which he now undertook to match every one of the poems of T'ao Yüan-ming as an exercise to fill his "continued leisure", but this at best could be only a partial reason for a man of such varied interests and talents as Su Shih. We have to realize that during these late years, however much he may talk of idleness in the poems here quoted, he wrote widely, besides producing a counterpart to a poem of T'ao's at any suitable moment, and also indulged in a multiplicity of expeditions and social activities. It was the removal of official duties, which probably made his life actually seem "leisured" or "idle", although we have at the same time to be aware that in the language of the scholar-official "leisure" and "idleness" were synonyms for being out of office rather than the signification of inactivity.

There were probably many other things, literary, artistic or social, with which he might have occupied his time, if an occupation were the essential reason for matching T'ao's poems. Su certainly wrote very easily, sometimes too easily, as has been remarked, so that the difficulty for him of following the rhymes of T'ao Yüan-ming's whole collection should not be exaggerated. He did not in fact in the end follow the rhymes of all T'ao's surviving poems, as he had announced that he would and as has been often stated slightly incorrectly that he did. There are almost twenty missing from the extant editions of his works and it seems to me improbable that these were lost in transmission. For most of the omissions it is possible to offer some reason. For example, that *Suffering a Fire in the Sixth Month of the Year Mou-shen* has no parallel may be for the very good reason that in this period Su's house did not catch fire. Again, in these late years Su got no more sons so that T'ao's

23 i.e. T'ao Yüan-ming's native place.

24 T'ao has a poem *An Excursion to Hsieh-ch'uan* (Slanting Stream) in c.2 of his works.

25 The Early-T'ang poet Wang Chi (585-644), also an admirer of T'ao, styled himself Tung-kao-tzu (The Master of Eastern Marsh).

26 *Op.cit.*, p.92. For the game *liu-po* see Yang Lien-sheng, "An Additional Note on the Ancient Game *Liu-po*", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XV (1952), pp.124-139.

27 The coffin.
28 His tomb.

title *Ming-tzu*, usually translated *Naming My Son* was also inappropriate. We have already seen Su in one of our examples speaking with pride of his sons, so T'ao's humorous and very famous *Reproving My Sons* was also not for him to follow. In fact, when one looks closely at the omissions, it can be seen that they include all the poems which T'ao addressed to members of his family. This obviously deliberate avoidance makes it almost certain that the missing parallel poems are the result of Su Shih's decision and not the fortuitous circumstance of transmission. This belief may embolden us to speculate about some other omissions.

Perhaps the most notable is the lack of parallel for T'ao's series of three *Burial Songs*. These three poems, in which T'ao contemplates himself being carried to his tomb, are very typical of this poet who looked so resolutely on the extinction of life and tried so desperately to see a meaning to life within its finite term.

I

Where there is life, there must be death;
An early end is no shortening of one's destiny.
Last evening, like others, I was a man;
This morning I am in the register of ghosts.
My soul, sundered, where has it gone?
While my withered frame is lodged in the "hollow tree".²⁷
My dear children, seeking their father, cry;
My good friends, caressing me, weep.
Getting and losing, I'll know no more;
Right and wrong, how should I realize?
After a thousand autumns, ten thousand years,
Who will know my honour or my disgrace?
I only regret that when I was alive,
In drinking wine I did not get enough.

II

In the past I had no wine to drink;
Now only they fill vain cups for me.
On the spring wine scum forms;
When may I taste it again?
Tables of offerings are piled before me;
Relatives and friends weep at my side.
I would speak but my mouth is without sound;
I would see but my eyes are without sight.
Before I slept in the high hall;
Now I pass the night in the 'village in the wilds'.
One morning I went out of the gate,
But a return there can truly never be.

III

The wilds, how vast are they!
The white aspens too are mournful.
In the harsh frost, in the ninth month,
They escort me out of the distant suburbs.
On every side no human dwellings,
Only the high tombs tower up.
The horses neigh to the sky for me;
The wind itself makes moan for me.
When the dark house²⁸ is once closed,
For a thousand years no more morning.

For a thousand years no more morning;
 Worth and intelligence are of no avail.
 Those who till now escorted me
 Return, each to his own home.
 My relatives may have some further grief,
 But the others for their part are already singing.
 When a man has gone in death, what more to say?
 They have given his body to become one with the hillside.²⁹

29 These three poems are in c.4 of T'ao's works.

30 In c.2 of his works.

31 i.e. to become an "immortal".

One might think that Su Shih avoided such poems as being too personal, but I suspect that for the optimistic Su Shih, whose Confucianism was modified by Buddhism and Taoist immortality-seeking, the theme was anathema. This view can perhaps be tested by looking at how Su performs in the case of T'ao's *Body, Shadow and Soul*,³⁰ which philosophically is fairly close to the *Burial Songs* and which Su actually followed.

Su Shih wrote no preface to match T'ao's, which reads:

Every man, noble or humble, wise or foolish, is busy in husbanding his life. This is the greatest of delusions. Therefore I have set out all the griefs of the body and its shadow, and have made the soul expound Nature to resolve them. All gentlemen who are interested in things will grasp the intention.

The body addresses the shadow:
 Heaven and earth endure without end;
 Hills and streams have no changing seasons.
 Plants and trees attain a constant rhythm;
 Frost and dew make them flourish or fade.
 It is said man is most divine and wise,
 Yet he alone is not like this.
 He happens to appear in the world;
 Suddenly is gone with no time of return.
 Who should notice the absence of one man?
 Relatives and friends will not think of him.
 His only relics are his everyday things,
 At the sight of which there is sadness.
 I have not the art to ascend and change.³¹
 It must be so with me; I do not doubt.
 I pray you, sir, take my word,
 And given wine, don't foolishly refuse.

So T'ao, and Su follows with:

Heaven and earth have a constant cycle;
 Sun and moon are without time of rest.
 Who, remaining in inactivity,
 By his action set them in motion?
 If you and I are closely examined,
 Mutually dependent, we achieve our present form.
 Swiftly we follow the changes of things;
 How can we set a date on life or dissolution?
 In dreams I am just silent;
 Still, without any thoughts.
 Why should one have sorrow or joy
 And always be again involved in tears?
 I dance and you tremble in disorder;
 Of our correspondence there's not the slightest doubt.

32 *Op.cit.*, p.93.

33 Mountains supposed to be the abode of "immortals".

34 *Op.cit.*, p.93.

35 Nature.

36 Heaven, earth and man.

37 Perhaps Fu-hsi, Shen-nung and the Yellow Emperor, all mythical sovereigns of remote antiquity.

Still with my words when drunk
You reply to my dream musings.³²

One may say immediately that Su treats his characters much more directly as Body, Shadow and Soul than does T'ao who makes them much more the mouthpieces of his ideas. This becomes still more obvious in the second poems.

The shadow answers the body:
Preserving life is not to be spoken of;
Protecting life is always sadly clumsy.
Truly I'd like to roam on K'un-lun or Hua,³³
But they are remote and the way there is cut.
Ever since the time that I met with you,
I have never known other sorrow or joy.
Resting in the shade, we seem separated;
But when we stop in the sun, we are never parted.
This oneness cannot be constant;
Darkly, we both in time will perish.
When the body dies, name also ends:
Think of this and the five emotions blaze.
Establish good and some affection will remain.
Why do you not exert yourself?
Wine, they say, can dispel grief,
But it is surely inferior to this.

And Su, seeming to make his Shadow argue somewhat with T'ao Yüan-ming's poem as well, wrote:

When your features are depicted with colours,
I always fear the painting master's clumsiness.
I rely on the moon lantern's appearance
To compare our twin excellences.
Beauty and ugliness are essentially in you;
How should I flatter or please you?
You are like the smoke over the fire;
When the fire is out, you will be parted.
I am like the image in the mirror;
When the mirror is broken, I am not destroyed.
Though you say I depend on shade and sunshine,
I can never suffer cold or heat.
Aimlessly, I simply accord with things;
How should there be an end to my myriad changes?
Drunkenness and sobriety are both but dreams;
It's no use to discuss their worth.³⁴

For T'ao

The soul expounds:
The Great Cycle³⁵ exerts no partial force;
Its myriad workings appear in profusion by themselves.
That Man is one of the Three Powers³⁶
How can it be other than due to me?
Though I am of a separate kind from you,
From birth I have been closely attached.
Joined in dependence, I have had joy in our union
How should I not give advice to you?
The Three August Ones³⁷ were great saints,

Yet now where are they to be found?
 P'eng-tsu³⁸ was covetous of long years;
 He would have remained but could not stay.
 Old and young alike come to one death;
 Between wise and foolish there is no distinction.
 In daily drunkenness one may be able to forget,
 But is it not a means of shortening life?
 Though to establish good is your constant joy,
 Who is obliged to sing your praises?
 Much brooding harms our life;
 It is simply right to submit to change.
 Give yourself to the great transformations' waves;³⁹
 You will have no joy, but also you will have no fear.
 When you should end, then you must end;
 Never again ponder much upon it!

38 The model of longevity.

39 The four major changes in a man's life:
 infancy, youth and prime, old age and death.

40 *Op.cit.*, p.93.

Su's third poem seems the closest of the three to T'ao's original, but he contrives to alter the whole emphasis.

You two were originally without me;
 We are first attached in beings.
 Surely not just in old age do you change and decline?
 Instant by instant you are not as before.
 I know that you are not metal and stone;
 How could I long depend upon you?
 Don't follow the words of Lao-tzu!
 And don't employ Buddha's sayings!
 Immortal's mountains and Buddha-realms,
 There are in the end perhaps no such places.
 Best be willing to follow old T'ao
 And move house to Wineland.
 Drunk and sober must have their end;
 It is not easy to avoid one's fate.
 All your life you pursue childish games;
 Everywhere you create an excess of implements.
 Wherever you go men gather to watch;
 Attention arouses censure or praise.
 If now you will light a fire,
 Good and bad may both be burned.
 When you have no rewards to carry,
 You will also have no fear of thieves.
 Confucius late in life realized;
 Why should one care for the world?⁴⁰

In the case of these three poems by T'ao Yüan-ming it has been argued that they were contrived as a debate between Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist attitudes current in the intellectual world of his time. While this is in my opinion a quite forced interpretation of the three poems, Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist beliefs are certainly under examination and to some extent under attack here, though not in the abstract, but within a frame of intense personal reference. With Su Shih nearly seven hundred years later the intellectual background, though it equally embraced Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism was not of the same character and his personal attitude to the three beliefs was different from T'ao's. Nevertheless the individual psychological differences which it seems possible to detect through the comparison of these poems may be more striking than the differences in their ideologi-

41 *An Introduction to Sung Poetry* (Harvard University Press, 1967).

42 The arithmetic here proves a little difficult, but does not seem to be worth great expenditure of time or space.

43 *Op.cit.*, pp.88–89. This edition omits the day (19th) of the month (12th) in the preface date.

cal positions. Where T'ao's poems seem intense and passionate, filled with a very personal questioning, as he seeks a path to the acceptance of the human condition, Su by contrast is relatively dispassionate and witty and seems to confront the issue far less personally.

Yoshikawa Kōjirō in his study of Sung dynasty poetry, which has been translated into English by Burton Watson,⁴¹ maintains as a central thesis that Sung poetry by comparison with its predecessors developed a less intense view of man's life, and he founds this thesis very particularly upon the poetry of Su Shih. The comparison which has just been made lends support certainly to Professor Yoshikawa's view. At the same time, however, unless we adopt a completely determinist view of man as a product of his times, we need to recognize that T'ao Yüan-ming and Su Shih appear from the evidence that we possess to have been men of very different characters, the former a man of an essentially lonely nature, the latter strongly gregarious.

If there were fundamental differences between them, where did the attraction of T'ao Yüan-ming for Su Shih lie? For I must now come back to consider more directly why in fact Su felt impelled to this undertaking. At this point we may consider Su's own final testimony, which has fortunately been preserved in a letter to his brother Su Che, quoted by the latter in the preface he wrote for the collection of the *Poems Following the Rhymes of T'ao Yüan-ming* (dated 24 January 1098).

There are works by poets of the past in imitation of earlier poets, but none of them followed the rhymes of an earlier poet. I am the first to follow the rhymes of a poet of the past. I am not very fond of any other poet; I am fond only of Yüan-ming's poems. Yüan-ming did not write many poems, but his poems are simple, yet truly beautiful; they are spare, yet truly rich in flavour. Ts'ao [Chih], Liu [Chen], Pao [Chao], Hsieh [Ling-yün], Li [Po], Tu [Fu], none of them equal him. I have followed the rhymes of altogether one hundred and nine of his poems.⁴² When I had achieved my purpose, I told myself that I should not be too ashamed before Yüan-ming. Now I have collected the poems and written them all out, to hand them down to gentlemen who come after that they might record them for me. But it is certainly not only Yüan-ming's poems that I am fond of; I am truly moved by his character. When Yüan-ming was near his end, he addressed his sons, Yen and the others: "In my youth I was in extreme distress. Always because of my family's poverty, I hurried east and west. My nature is unyielding, my talent feeble; to many things I am opposed. When I weighed up my position, I knew that I should inevitably incur worldly misfortune. So I made an effort to withdraw from the world and caused you in your childhood to suffer hunger and cold." These words of Yüan-ming's are indeed a true record. I really have a similar weakness, but I did not early understand myself. For half my life I have gone out into official service and suffered the misfortunes of the world. This is why I am deeply shamed by Yüan-ming, and I want in old age to take his rare example as my model.⁴³

This statement of Su in fact answers the query of my title in both ways. He says that he admired the poetry of T'ao Yüan-ming above all others and implies that his following of T'ao's rhymes was a tribute to the older poet. At the same time he describes himself as deeply moved by T'ao's personal conduct and states his desire to take T'ao as the model for his late years. In both aspects there is a degree of exaggeration and it may not be too unfair to say that Su is striking an attitude in response to the situation in which he found himself. Su Shih was a post-T'ang poet and his work could not escape the enormous effect which that great age of Chinese poetry had upon the period which followed. When we examine his poetry as a whole,

the effect of Tu Fu, Po Chü-i and Han Yü, Tu Fu above all, is patent to see. Artistically the effect of these poets on him is greater than that of T'ao Yüan-ming. Of T'ao the man his conception was rather stereotyped and even, one might say, superficial. He admired T'ao as a hermit and a drinker, a good but unconventional man who truly despised the world. He failed to catch the note of morbid anxiety, the continual concern over personal morality, which is present in T'ao's works, because all this was very foreign to his own nature. He thought very much in social and political terms. Eastern Chin was a weak and evil age, so T'ao was to be admired for withdrawing from it. Had Su lived to come back again to office, his adoption of T'ao as a model might have proved to be only temporary.

Su Shih was in no way unique in adopting T'ao Yüan-ming as a model for hermitage, when he found himself in banishment in 1094. As I said before, T'ao had long been a standard and favourite image for the man out of office. He had been very much in the thoughts and poetry of Tu Fu in the latter's "Thatched Hut" period in Ch'eng-tu, to cite but one famous example. But no-one before had gone to the extent of association to which Su Shih went with this particular collection of poetry. Since the effort was so large and so exuberant, there was no hope for it to remain within the bounds of any image of T'ao Yüan-ming, true, conventionalized or false. To a great extent, I should say that the identification with T'ao Yüan-ming was an initial impetus for this undertaking. Thus at the outset it may be true to describe this following of T'ao's rhymes as a psychological phenomenon. As the months passed and it continued, it must have become more nearly a regular part of Su's literary activity. Although at no point did Su speak in other than his own voice, one may feel the presence of T'ao Yüan-ming most strongly in the earliest pieces.

I have here tried to examine in a little more detail a collection of Su Shih's poetry which invariably finds mention, but only in a few sentences. In case I may have in places seemed critical of Su Shih's understanding of T'ao Yüan-ming, I should finally modify such criticism. Poetry is above all an activity of personal significance both to the poet and to his reader who must embrace it for his own life. When the reader is another poet and one so great as Su Shih, his freedom to make of it what he will is absolute.

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