ONEIRIC HORIZONS AND DISSOLVING BODIES: BUDDHIST CAVE SHRINE AS MIRROR HALL

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VISUAL CULTURE AND BUDDHIST ART

Certain pathos underlies the belated effort to subsume Buddhist art under the umbrella rubric of visual culture. As a 'religion of images',[1] Buddhism has much use for vision, optics, phantasmagoria, meditation, and readily dissolves the cognitive boundaries between the observer and the observed; it amounts to nothing short of a visual culture. Thus it never quite sits well with an ossified kind of art-historical practice bereft and depleted of the magnitude of the earlier holistic methodologies and cultural-historicizing energies exemplified by Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky. In some entrenched enclaves of study of Buddhist art, iconography is reduced to a fetishizing typology of hand gestures (*mudras*) and jewellery types (attributes) of Buddhist deities; style becomes a self-fulfilling explanatory model; material medium (painting, sculpture, or architecture) hardens into a compartmentalized solipsism of self-perpetuating pedigree; and pictorial compositions are classified rigidly by scriptural taxonomy. Even in more recent attempts to break away from this entrenched mode, an uninspired lesser version of a political/social history of art is running out of steam in repeatedly rehashing a predictable narrative (that art serves politics), often at the expense of an analysis of visual dynamics. The rich totality of perceptual experience of spellbinding viewing and imaginary flights solicited by the Buddhist images, together with the optical fiction created by the evocative congeries of statues and wall-paintings in a ritual space, are lost when their originally integrated constituents are dismantled and crated into the entrenched categories of iconography, style and, lately, politics.

The momentum gathered around the surging paradigm of visual culture, with its 'conception of the visual as disembodied *image*, re-created in the virtual spaces of sign-exchange and phantasmatic projection',[2] despite the controversy surrounding its ramifications, may potentially galvanize the study of Buddhist

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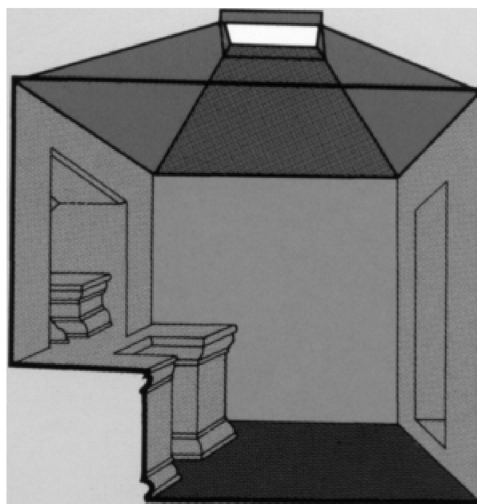
art. Inherently integral and vital to Buddhism, visual culture, as an analytic construct, is a long-overdue homespun product that should have arisen from within the study of Buddhist art itself. It is lamentable that this has not quite happened. It is also patently ironic that this paradigmatic rubric, variously characterized – to some extent justifiably – as a 'theoretical bubble' or 'a muddle of Western devising',[3] turns out to be a much-needed shot in the arm for the study of Buddhist art that could have envisioned it on a much more solid footing and with a well-equipped apparatus in the first place. It is, nevertheless, salutary that this is happening, and that it is here to stay.

To frame Buddhist art by way of visual culture is to shift the focus from the isolated objects to unifying subjects as the ultimate end of inquiry.[4] Not that objects are unimportant – they remain the primary source of art-historical scrutiny; but they are to be organized in the perceptual horizon of the subject. They are to be wrested from their conventionally pedigreed art-historical moorings of painting, sculpture and architecture, and integrated into the imaginary topographies that they were originally intended to evoke and create.[5] Traditional tools of iconography are still useful only in so far as they serve to piece together those perceptual fields and imaginary horizons. Texts and images are to be discussed not merely for the sake of elucidating each other. Rather, they combine to work towards the reconstruction of the large picture of the perceptual field. In what follows, I demonstrate how that can be done. In the academic climate of ardent revisionism driven by, among other things, an oedipal anxiety, it is common to occupy the methodological high ground of programmatic pronouncement and radical grandstanding with little demonstrative practice to follow up. I will practise what I preach.

SHADOW CAVE

A good place to start is the Buddhist cave shrines of medieval China. Excavated from hillsides from the fourth century to the fourteenth, most of these caves contain murals or relief sculptures covering the walls and ceilings (plate 2.1), with their niches filled with stone or clay statues. Circumstantial and geological reasons may have motivated these cave excavations. An enduring conceptual model, however, lies deeper behind them.



2.1 Drawing of an interior view of an eighth-century cave shrine at Dunhuang, China.

Chinese Buddhism sees itself largely as a matter of 'image teaching'.[6] Early images of Buddhas recorded in historical sources appear to be mostly

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freestanding statues.[7] The widely circulated early medieval image lore also gravitates towards the medium of sculptural icons.[8] However, the physicality of the bronze, wood and clay of freestanding Buddhist statues was susceptible to scepticism about their embodiment of deity.[9] It certainly did little to assuage the anxiety or subdue the bewilderment felt by the medieval Chinese about the nature of the disembodied foreign beings transcending time and space and made manifest to the living in bodily forms. Painting, by contrast, with its efficacy of conjuring up visual illusionism while remaining a physically impenetrable surface, became a more compelling medium with which the medieval Chinese could come to terms with the elusiveness of the 'body' of the eternal Buddha and the bodhisattvas.

Huiyuan (334–417) was among the first to articulate this concern. He spoke longingly of a sort of oneiric (that is, pertaining to, related to, dream) 'divine picture', tantamount to what is acquired in 'sleep and dream', that registers the 'shadow' and the 'spirit'.[10] This yearning for the 'shadow' led to his construction of a shadow cave on Mount Lu in 412, modelled upon the proverbial Shadow Cave in the mountain south of Nagarahāra (Jelalabad in modern Afghanistan).[11] Legend has it that Sakyamuni Buddha once subjugated the poisonous dragons occupying the Nagarahāra cave. The grotto was cleansed for the occupancy of Buddha. At the dragon king's entreaty, the Buddha promised to remain 1,500 years within the cave.[12] What ensued was an optical theatre:

> Sakyamuni Buddha leapt into the rock; and just as in a bright mirror a man can see the image of his face, so the dragons all saw the Buddha within the rock while radiantly manifesting Himself on its exterior . . . He sat cross-legged within the rock wall. Only those who looked from afar could see Him, for close by He was invisible. The various gods in their hundreds and thousands all adored the Buddha's 'shadow', and the 'shadow' also preached the Law.[13]

The storied cavern inspired Huiyuan's replica cave on Mount Lu in China. It also drew a succession of eminent Chinese pilgrims. Moreover, the idea of a shadow cave, with its focus of attention on the luminous reflection on the wall – an image registered on a flat surface – supplies a model of perceiving and conceptualizing the medium of wall-painting. The eulogies on the 'shadow of the Buddha' by Huiyuan and his followers register an interest in a new pictorial mode as opposed to the traditional surface-oriented curvilinear painting. Chiaroscuro, a formal quality that had hitherto held little interest to the Chinese, now appears to be of primary concern among Huiyuan's circle:

> The body, spirit-like, enters (the world of) transformation,
> And the shadow cast by it becomes separated from the form.
> . . .
> Though dwelling in darkness, it is not dim;
> Though situated in obscurity, it grows ever brighter.[14]

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Much is invested in indistinct optical and atmospheric conditions such as 'darkness', 'dimness', 'obscurity' and 'void', to offset the luminous forms of 'manifestations'. Attention is drawn to the interplay between background and foreground, 'darkness and light', brilliance and obscurity. There is a decided interest in visual illusionism associated with mirror reflection:

> A pure air swirls around the pavilion;
> Darkness and light are mingled before the dawn.
> It seems to mirror the divine appearance
> Vaguely, as if we actually meet the Real [Buddha].[15]

The purpose of such an illusionism is to facilitate the contemplative visualization of the Buddha. The key meditation guide for Huiyuan and his contemporaries was the *Pratyutpanna Sutra*, which teaches ways of obtaining the vision 'as if [all Buddhas] were standing before one's eyes'.[16] The devotee is advised to concentrate his thoughts and put himself into a trance so that he may obtain an oneiric vision of the Buddha analogous to 'a reflection in the mirror'. Such a visual encounter reinforces the illusionism of presence and fosters the sense of the image inhabiting a virtual realm that transcends the quotidian plane of experience and its constraints of time and space.

MIRROR HALL

2.2a–c Details from the east ceiling slope and the north ceiling slope, Cave 31, Dunhuang.

As a conceptual model, Huiyuan's shadow cave informs the design of Buddhist cave shrines in medieval China. The focus here is on Cave 31 at Dunhuang Mogaoku in northwest China, created in the eighth century, which is particularly demonstrative. Laid out on a rectangular plan, the cave is capped by a truncated pyramidal ceiling. As one enters from the east side, one faces the west wall with a recessed niche that displays an ensemble of clay statues of Buddha and his entourage. Large spreads of murals, painted between 756 and 781, cover the four walls and four ceiling slopes.[17]

The murals contain internal cues for ways of looking at them (plates 2.2a–c). The east ceiling slope shows Sakyamuni preaching the Lotus Sutra. Behind him

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rises Mount Sumeru capped by the Summit of Being, conceived as a cloud-rimmed transcendent heaven (see plate 2.8). To the left of the Buddha assembly is a man sitting in front of a rectangular mirror. A cloud trail bearing a transcendent being, the transformed version of the meditating man, issues from his head and soars towards the celestial sphere. Further left, continuing onto the north slope, is a scene of two kneeling men facing a mirror, with another mirror on the side, and yet another on top of a pennant before them.

These mirror scenes illustrate the practice of *samādhi*, that is, 'concentrating one's intent and calming one's thought', as Huiyuan defines it,[18] or 'composing the mind', 'perfect absorption of thought into the one object of meditation'.[19] In explaining the method, the Buddhist master Zhiyi (538–97) compares the Buddha image to the reflections in a mirror and a jewel placed on crystal.[20] Sure enough, on the east ceiling slope, next to the mirror scene, is a pearl placed on a reflective surface. Zhiyi's analogy is taken literally here.

The presence of mirrors and reflective pearls does not stop here. The image of Indra, the lord of the Thirty-Three Heavens, on the east wall near the entrance of the cave, seemingly unrelated to the mirror scenes, actually has everything to do with them. In fact, the image of Indra signals to the observer the kind of fictive space that he or she has stepped into. Buddhist sutras require the practice of the Lotus samādhi to take place in a 'Bodhi site' (practice-towards-enlightenment site) inside a decorated chamber in a quiet place.[21] An eighth-century exegesis compares the Bodhi site to 'Indra's pearl manifesting the Buddha Sakyamuni's reflections'.[22] The allusion is only a tip of the iceberg. Implicit in it is the luminous world of Indra, ruler of the Thirty-Three Heavens.

2.3 Reliquary from Bimaran stupa, Jalalabad, Afghanistan, *c.* 50 CE. Gold repoussé decorated with jewels, height 7 cm. British Museum, London.

The Bimaran reliquary from Gandhara (in modern Afghanistan) provides us with an early prototypical representation of Indra's world (plate 2.3). The arcades around the side are divided into two principal sets of three niches, formed with pointed arches, showing a Buddha in the centre flanked by Brahma (the ascetic holding a water pot) and Indra in royal regalia. The arcaded palatial setting suggests Indra's Thirty-Three Heavens, where the Buddha preaches to his mother.[23] The ostensible strings of garnets alternating with four-lobed floral motifs at both the top and bottom rims turn the palatial arcade into a luminous affair; the doubling of the Buddha–Brahma–Indra

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triad further hints at the projective and reflective disposition of the images.

While the optical luminosity of Indra's heavens displayed by the Bimaran reliquary remains no more than vaguely suggestive, it is clarified in medieval Chinese sources that describe a mirror hall in Indra's heavens. The Buddhist sutra *Zhenfa nianchu jing*, allegedly translated by Prajnaruci into Chinese in 539 under the Eastern Wei dynasty (534–50), contains a lengthy description of this mirror hall.[24] According to this, Indra takes *devas* (celestial spirits) on a tour inside two sala trees, each a gigantic 'mirror hall'. The 'Hall of Karma-Fruit-Retribution' inside the first tree contains 'mirror walls' or 'crystal-clear lapis lazuli walls' that display scenes of three grades of retributions.[25] The second tree holds another immense mirror hall. Indra and the *devas* here pay homage to the 'shadow image' of Kāśyapa Buddha, the sixth of the seven ancient Buddhas, who created this mirror hall for pedagogical purposes. The 'karma-mirror walls', tantamount to our modern wide screens, display the graphic scenes of Rebirth Hell, Black Rope Hell, Massive Hell, Wailing Hell, Great Wailing Hell and Burning Hell. Murderers, robbers, thieves, debauchers, libels and drunkards are shown in their various afterlife destinies falling into these miserable hells. Even after they exit these dismal places, they are destined to be reborn among hungry ghosts, beasts and humans where they suffer carnage, mayhem and starvation. The scenes displayed on the mirror walls are so graphic and real that the spectators are said to have actually 'entered' the mirrors.[26]

The textual mirror halls must have gripped the sixth-century Chinese imagination. A decade or so after the sutra was translated into Chinese, the Eastern Wei dynasty, the sponsor of the sutra translation, was replaced by the Northern Qi (550–77), which continued to base its capital in Yecheng. Gao Wei (r. 65–76), the second Northern Qi ruler, was infatuated with mirrors. The 'mirror stand' in his palace alone cost 'a thousand pieces of gold'. Moreover, he built a 'mirror hall . . . with exquisite paintings and sculptures therein unrivalled in his time'.[27] It is tantalizing to speculate on the possible connection between the mirror halls mentioned in the sutra translation under the Eastern Wei and their actual construction under the Northern Qi. A few decades intervened, and both shared the same locale.

From the Northern Qi onwards, the mirror hall tradition came alive. Prince Yang Jun of the Sui dynasty (581–618), extravagant in both imagination and spending, built a 'water hall' with 'bright mirrors covering its beams, posts, lintels, and ridgepoles'. The prince would then revel with his guests and courtesans in this mirror hall.[28] His younger brother Yang Guang (569–618), i.e., Emperor Yang of Sui (r. 604–618), was just as fascinated by the intricacy of mirror devices. The emperor received a set of 'bronze-mirror screens', together with southern female beauties, from a local governor in his southern tour to Yangzhou.[29] These mirror-related matters involving the Sui royal family may have combined to inspire the lore circulating in the Tang period (618–906) of the sumptuous Labyrinth Tower, allegedly built for the Sui emperor.[30] Ten dark bronze screens, each

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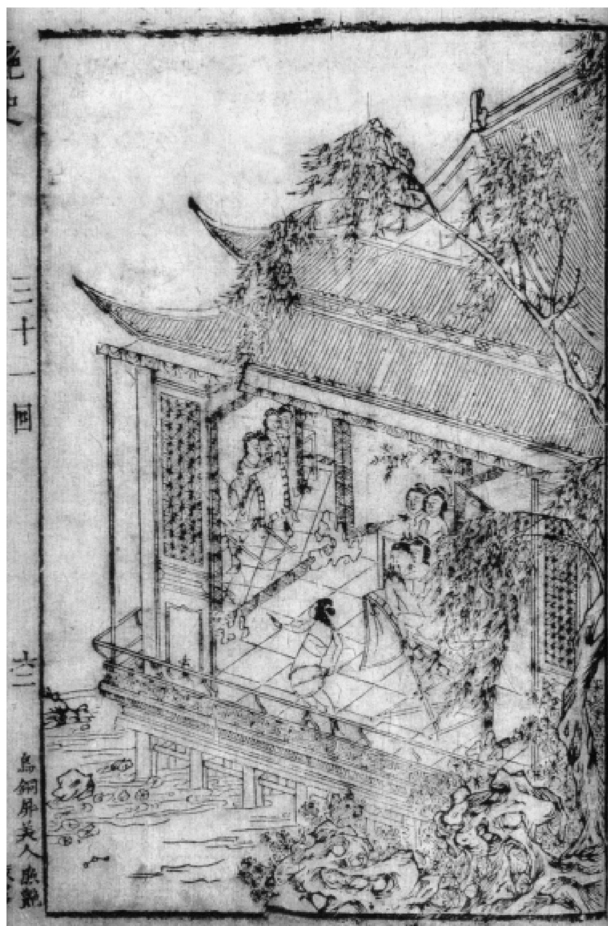

2.4 Sui Emperor Yang's dalliance in the mirror hall of the Labyrinth Tower. Illustration of chapter 31 of the *Sui Yangdi yanshi* (*Amorous history of Emperor Yang of Sui*), 1631. Courtesy of Harvard-Yenching Collection, Harvard University.

5×3 Chinese ft, were polished into mirrors and installed inside the bedchamber of the building. The mirror screens could reflect the fine hairs of palace women. The emperor, delighted and impressed, was prompted to compare mirrors with paintings: 'whereas painting can only obtain the image, the [mirror screens] capture the real human visage – they indeed excel painting by ten thousand times!'[31] What is put into the emperor's mouth is the medieval notion, current certainly by the Tang era, that murals and paintings should aspire to the condition of mirror screens. That this mirror hall remained an endless source of inspiration for subsequent times is evidenced in a later woodblock print illustration (plate 2.4).

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the tradition of the mirror hall was perpetuated under the Tang by a descendant of the Sui dynasty royal family. Empress Wu Zetian (624–705), whose maternal grandfather was a Sui marquis,[32] prompted her husband Gaozong to build a 'mirror hall whose four walls were all [covered with; or made of] mirrors'.[33] Built in 681 by the Directorate for Imperial

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Manufactories, the hall was located in the imperial palace precinct.[34] The facing mirror walls produced multiple reflections of a person inside the hall. Hence a sober court official, concerned that there should not be more than one sun in heaven and one ruler on the land, alerted the Emperor Gaozong to the disturbing implications of viewing multiple 'Sons of Heaven' (emperors) therein.[35] Liu Rengui's remonstration alarmed the emperor, but it did not dampen Empress Wu Zetian's unabated passion for mirroring spaces.

It was not personal caprice that underlay Wu's interest in the optical property of mirrors. The seventh century witnessed a growing preference for illusionistic optical effects. Both the Sui royal family's infatuation with mirror space and Song Zixian's mirror installation in the early seventh century signal this growing trend. In 613 Song Zixian, a reputable wizard specializing in illusory arts, deployed optical devices to conjure up illusions of the Buddha images on the upper floors of his building. He installed large mirrors in the receiving hall and showed visitors the sinful karma deeds and images of their former lives by turning the mirror towards sheets of paper and silk bearing pictorial images of snakes, beasts and human figures.[36] The trend gathered momentum in the late seventh century and peaked in the early eighth century. Huayan-Buddhist teaching, increasing in popularity around 700, was emphatic about the interpenetrability or mutual identification among all phenomena.[37] To illustrate this point, Fazang (643–712), one of the founders of the Huayan School, staged a famous mirror installation for his students:

> He took ten mirrors and arranged them so that one occupied each of the eight compass-points, with one above and one below, in such a way that they all faced one another, a little over ten feet apart. He then placed the figure of a Buddha at the centre, and illuminated it with a torch so that its images were reflected back and forth. Thus his students came to understand the theory of passing from 'sea and land' [the world] into the [world of] infinity.[38]

Fazang was known for his optical contrivances. He allegedly used an illusory device comprising eleven mirrors to project the Guanyin image afar, which scared away the enemy army and won Wu Zetian's admiration.[39] Fazang served as the Buddhist preceptor for Empress Wu and Emperor Zhongzong after her.

A mirror hall noted for its 'pearl pennants' was installed in the Jianfu monastery, where Fazang served as abbot in his final years, in the capital city Chang'an. The 'pearl' here, according to a medieval exegete, referred to the 'network of pearls' in Indra's celestial palace, known as Vaijayanta in the heavenly city of Sudarśana. 'Each pearl reflects myriad pearls; and myriad pearls are all manifested in one single pearl, thereby resulting in layers of infinite reflections.'

> From this was derived State Master Xianshou's [i.e. Fazang's] mirror-and-lamp device. He arranged ten mirrors in a circle, with a lamp placed in the centre. If one looks at the mirror to

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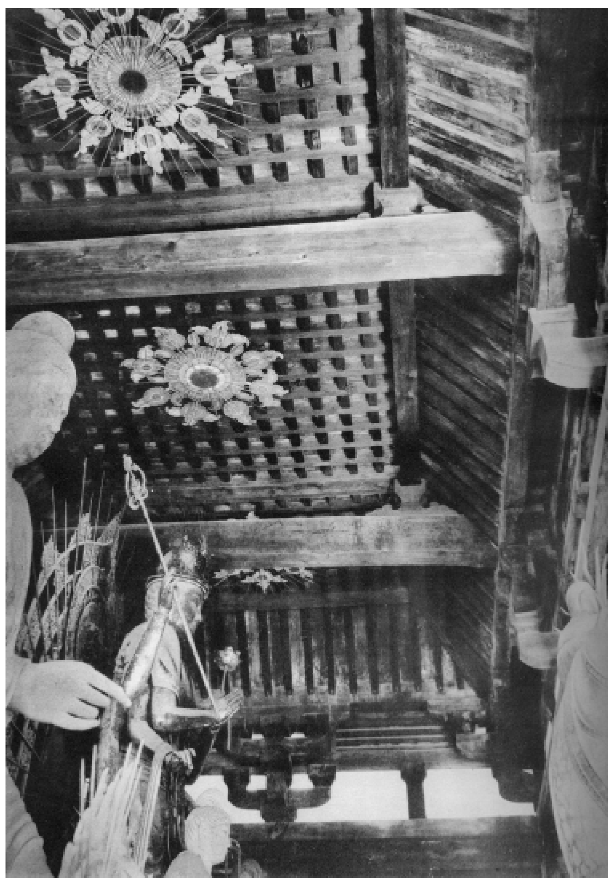

2.5 View of the ceiling of the Lotus Flower Hall decorated with three lotus-pattern canopies, each featuring eight bronze mirrors. First built in mid-eighth century, the hall was subsequently rebuilt and renovated, most notably in 12th and 13th centuries. From Nara Rokudaji Taikan Kankōkai. ed., *Nara rokudaiji taikan*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968–73, vol. 1, pl. 92.

> the east, then all the other nine mirrors are manifested therein with clarity. If one looks into the mirror to the south, the mirrors within mirrors are palpably present. In the same way, when the World Venerable [i.e., Sakyamuni] first achieved enlightenment, he rose to the heavens of the thirty-three devas without having to leave the Bodhi site.[40]

The west cloister where the mirror hall was located in Jianfu monastery contained a 'Bodhi site'.[41] The mirror hall was therefore most likely a sanctuary that housed Fazang's 'mirror-and-lamp' installation.

Ritual manuals translated in Tang times about the Bodhi sites reinforce this impression. The layout of the Bodhi site involves the arrangement of eight mirrors around the central platform. In addition, eight mirrors are to be placed atop the platform in alignment with the eight mirrors on the ground, 'so that their reflections may inter-penetrate one another'. The interior of the Lotus Flower Hall in the Tōdai-ji in Nara, Japan, first built in the eighth century and subsequently renovated, may preserve a remnant of the eighth-century arrangement (plate 2.5). Fitted to the ceiling are three huge canopies, known as 'inverted lotus petals', each featuring eight mirrors facing downwards. Moreover, these mirror canopies

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are vertically aligned with the statues of Amoghapāśa, Brahmā and, most significantly, Indra. The setup appears to suggest that the fictive space thus created encompasses Indra's Mirror Hall and network of reflecting pearls. It may also have followed the ritual prescription, mentioned above, concerning the establishment of the Bodhi site for the Lotus samādhi.

The mirror hall in the Jianfu monastery may have contained murals. Early eighth-century eulogies on the monastery speak of the 'hall decorated with reflections and shadows of golden figures' and compare it with the Han-period Hall of Luminous Brilliance noted for the gleaming murals therein.[42] The four walls of this 'platform chamber' were covered with 'images of the Buddhas of the ten directions and various bodhisattvas'.[43] In this mirror hall filled with murals or painted banners covering the four walls, the mirrors and paintings complemented each other. The mirrors created the illusionistic space; the paintings conjured up visible images to fill it. The facing mirrors bounced their reflections back and forth to extend the optical/virtual domains into infinite horizons where pictorial images loomed. It is this kind of space that Cave 31 at Dunhuang sought to create.

CAVE SHRINE AS MIRROR HALL

Indra's Mirror Hall and the network of reflecting pearls associated with his celestial palace are prototypical models behind the pictorial programme in Cave 31. The image of Indra painted near the entrance on the east wall accords with a longstanding iconographic convention of showing Indra holding a mirror near or on the shrine door (plate 2.6),[44] which establishes the sanctuary space following the entrance as a mirror hall. The figure of Indra holding a mirror resonates with the pronouncement in a Tang meditation primer: 'This Bodhi site of mine is like Indra's pearls manifesting Sakyamuni's reflections.'[45]

Indra's presence here indeed signifies the cave as a mirror hall. Images of lustrous pearls are prominently featured in the canopy of the Buddha in the tableau based on the *Recompense Sutra* on the north wall (see plate 2.13).[46] Moreover, the right-hand half of the tableau portrays the pictorial narrative of the quest for a rare 'precious pearl'. The story concerns two princes of the kingdom of Vārānasi. One prince is named Good-Friend (Sanskrit: Kalyānamitra; Chinese: Shanyou) and the other is known as Evil-Peer (Sanskrit: Pāpamkara; Chinese: Eyou). Prince Good-Friend takes pity on the population of his father's kingdom and gives one third of the state treasury to the poor. He then ventures into the sea to seek the magical precious pearl in the dragon king's left ear, which will satisfy the needs of all the population.[47] The pictorial narrative goes from the top to the bottom, culminating in the brightly shining precious pearl.

Reinforcing the symbolic significance of the pearl is the motif of blindness recurrent in Prince Good-Friend's story. A blind teacher guides the prince in his quest for the precious pearl; stabbed blind by Prince Evil-Peer, Good-Friend subsequently has his eyesight restored by the princess from Lishiba kingdom.

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2.6 Pair of shrine doors depicting Brahma and, on the right, Indra, holding a mirror. Wooden doors with polychrome and gold pigment over black lacquer, 131.5 × 109.3 cm. Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums. Gift of Charles Bain Hoyt.

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2.7 Practice of samādhi in front of a mirror; jewel placed over crystal; woman holds a spinning dhārani. Detail of the Lotus Sutra tableau on the east ceiling slope of Cave 31 at Dunhuang.

Although the prince's parents lose their eyesight in mourning their lost son, sight is restored by the precious pearl brought back by the prince.[48]

Both thematically and visually, the pearl echoes the meditation scene on the east ceiling slope which demonstrates the way of 'contemplating on Buddha in terms of similitudes ... like someone putting a jewel on crystal, so reflections appear therein' (see plate 2.7). The practice of such a samādhi is tantamount to 'working on the precious pearl: the more polishing it receives, the brighter the pearl becomes.'[49] The six sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) suffer from an 'inner blindness' and await delivery from 'obscurity and darkness'.[50] Visualizing the Buddhas of Ten Directions before one is 'like the bright-eyed man watching the stars at night'.[51]

MIRROR REFLECTION, ONEIRIC SPACE AND THE DISSOLVING BODY

More is to be said of the mirror scene on the east ceiling slope (plate 2.7). While the trope of the mirror frequently appears in Buddhist texts, it is in Zhiyi's exposition of samādhi that mirror reflection is mentioned, together with 'a jewel

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on crystal', to illustrate the oneiric nature of the recollecting Buddha images. The mirror and the jewel on crystal combine here to suggest the practice of samādhi codified by Zhiyi.

The term 'samādhi' refers to both the state of meditative absorption, or trance, and the mental and physical discipline designed to produce such a contemplative state: 'skilfully to fix the mind on one spot and abide there without shifting – that is called samādhi.'[52] There are, according to Zhiyi's scheme, four ways of cultivating samādhi: (1) constant sitting, (2) constant walking, (3) part-walking part-sitting, (4) neither walking nor sitting. Of particular relevance to us is the third method, 'part-walking part-sitting', which is associated with the 'Lotus samādhi' that involves repeated cycles of walking and seated meditation.[53]

The physical setting for practising the Lotus samādhi, as stipulated in the ritual manual conceived by Zhiyi, requires very sparse and minimal decoration: a secluded chamber in a quiet place, a tall seat on which is placed a copy of the Lotus Sutra, and the ground treated with perfumed water and mud, some oil lamps, and 'pennants and canopies and various votive implements'.[54] Primacy is given to the vast imaginary virtual space in which the practitioner of the samādhi immerses himself. It becomes apparent that the murals covering the interior walls of Cave 31 at Dunhuang, instead of providing the regimented trappings decorating the ritual practice, in fact picture and externalize this mental space in which the practitioner immerses himself.

The Lotus samādhi, as introduced in the *Repentance Ritual of the Lotus Samādhi* by Zhiyi, follows a regimen of ceremonial procedures.[55] The practitioner purifies his own body; invokes the descent of the Buddhas of ten directions to the secluded chamber; venerates and eulogizes the Buddhas; repents past deeds and sins associated with the six senses; makes vows for himself and all the sentient beings; burns incense and spreads flowers; circumambulates the high seat on which is placed the Lotus Sutra; and sits in deep meditation.[56]

In this process the physical space dissolves, replaced by a virtual space with dimensions of cosmic immensity, mapped out by the 'Buddhas of the ten directions', with a temporality encompassing past, present and future. The bodily presence of all beings in this virtual space takes the spectral form of disembodied images, mirror reflections, oneiric shadows and phantasmatic projections.

The tableau on the east ceiling slope (plate 2.8) depicts a dream vision, based on a set of medieval meditation primers, especially the *Great Calming and Contemplation (Mohe zhiguan)* by Zhiyi, and the *Sutra on the Practice of Visualizing the Bodhisattva Universal Good* (*Guan Puxian pusa xingfa jing*). On the left-hand side of the central assembly are: a rectangular pond, rimmed with coloured tiles, on which float lotuses bearing naked children; a ball on a glassy surface; and a seated man reverentially contemplating a convex mirror, an airborne figure issuing from his head – presumably his transformed self – on a trailing cloud in a flight to the cloud-rimmed celestial realm inhabited by transcendent figures in loose-fitting robes. To the lower left, a woman, with her right arm

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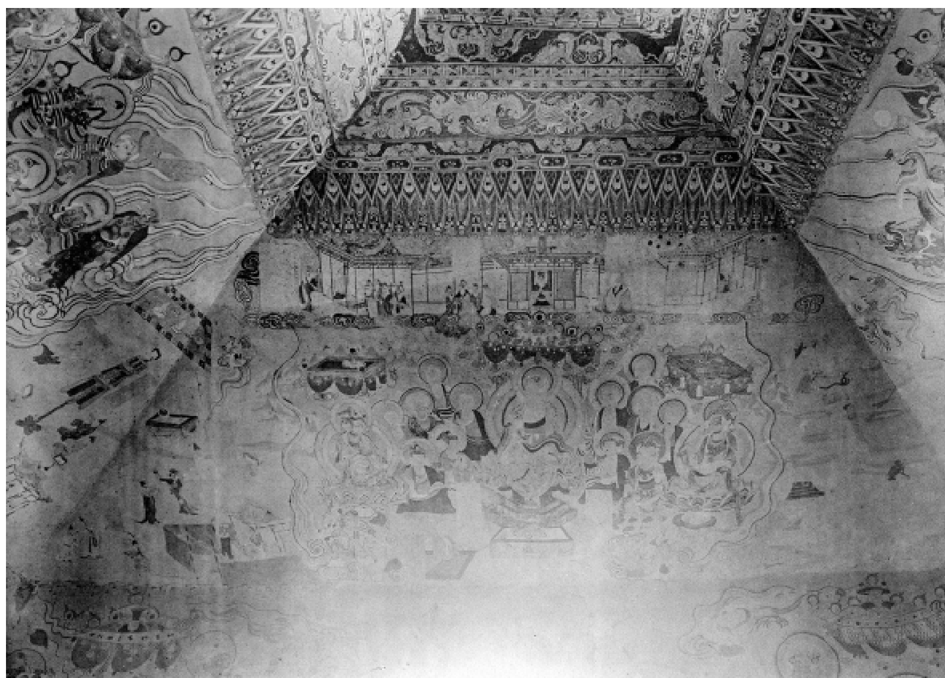

2.8 Transformation tableau based on the Lotus Sutra painted on the east ceiling slope of Cave 31, Dunhuang, second half of eighth century.

outstretched, holds a small object, which causes another woman to rejoice (plate 2.7).

In explicating the method of 'calming and contemplation' and ways of 'recollecting the Buddha', Zhiyi makes it clear that 'the material form of the Buddha is already extinct', hence it is 'not to be apprehended via body'. Buddhahood and dharmas are to be grasped or 'recollected' as dream images. The mode of experience, says Zhiyi, is analogous to one's dreaming of having an intercourse with a beautiful woman; upon awaking, however, the erstwhile dreamer realizes that 'neither did she really come to me, nor did I really go to her.' Recollecting the Buddha ought to be practised in this oneiric manner; by this means the practitioner may reach and be reborn in the blissful land of the Buddha Amitābha, 'ten trillion Buddha lands to the west' with its '*jewelled pond* in a jewelled land'. Zhiyi then compares this oneiric experience of the Buddha lands to a set of optical phenomena:

> It is like someone *putting a jewel on crystal*, so reflections appear therein. . . . No one brings the reflection . . . they are mentally produced, that is all. *Reflections in a mirror* do not come from outside and do not arise within; one spontaneously sees one's features because the mirror is clear. Insofar as the practitioner is physically pure, what is there is pure: wishing to see Buddha, you see Buddha.[57]

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An eighth-century monk further explains: 'The three similes of the jewel, etc., are essentially the same as those of the dream. The jewel represents the subjective mind that focuses on the object; the crystal represents the perceptual field [or ground of mind] itself; and the manifesting of the reflected image [in the mirror] is analogous to the dreamlike vision.'[58]

In order to enter into this oneiric contemplation, the practitioner may begin by seeking the magical power of the *dhārani*, or incantatory spell, associated with the 'dream-kings' (or rather, primary dreams) to subjugate the demonic forces and to remove inner obstructions.[59] As the spell is often referred to in the Chinese texts as 'spinning dhārani' (*xuantuoluoni*),[60] it is pictured as a spinning top held by the woman in the mural (see plate 2.7).

The oneiric visions obtained may be of different kinds, depending on the nature of the practitioner's past deeds. They may suggest the degrees of virtues and sins accrued in previous incarnations: disturbing mental pictures point to a sinful past; prospects of the Buddha lands signify the abundance of one's meritorious deeds. Of the visions particularly salutary are the scenes of the Buddha Sakyamuni's divided bodies filling up the void and the welling up of the Many Treasures stupa described in the Lotus Sutra. Failure to see such beatific scenes suggests the obstructions of the mind's eye, which is a sufficient cause for alarm: 'what sins have I committed', exclaims the anguished practitioner, 'that all I see are the jewelled land, jewelled thrones, and jewelled trees, but no Buddhas?' A disembodied voice in the air instructs him to recite sutras of the Great Vehicle, which he follows. Sure enough, the practitioner

> sees in his dream Buddha Sakyamuni, with his assembly, preaching the Lotus sutra at Mount Grdhraküta. . . . The practitioner then recollects the myriad Buddhas of the past. Reciting the Great Vehicle sutras, he sees his former body [or bodies], crystal clear. . . . and acquires the spinning dhārani . . . He also sees an exquisite colour-glazed ground like a cluster of lotus flowers.[61]

The painting on the east ceiling slope corroborates this process (plate 2.8).

This dream vision is just the beginning of the extended process of samādhi. The practitioner still frets over his failure to obtain the vision of the ultimate beatitude: 'Why is it that I can only see Buddha Sakyamuni and the Buddhas of his divided bodies, but not the stupa of the Many Treasures Buddha . . .? It must be my defiled evil eye that I cannot see.' The practitioner having repented with renewed gusto for seven more days, 'the Many Treasures stupa wells up . . . Overjoyed, the practitioner circumambulates the stupa seven times.'[62] The painting on the west ceiling slope shows this scene of beatitude (plate 2.9).

The practice of samādhi comes down to two basic modes: seated meditation and circumambulation. In practising the latter, the practitioner recites the names of Sakyamuni, the Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas of Sakyamuni's divided bodies: Bodhisattvas Mañjusri and Universal Good. His chant reverberates in space, as do the optical projections of his bodily reflections:

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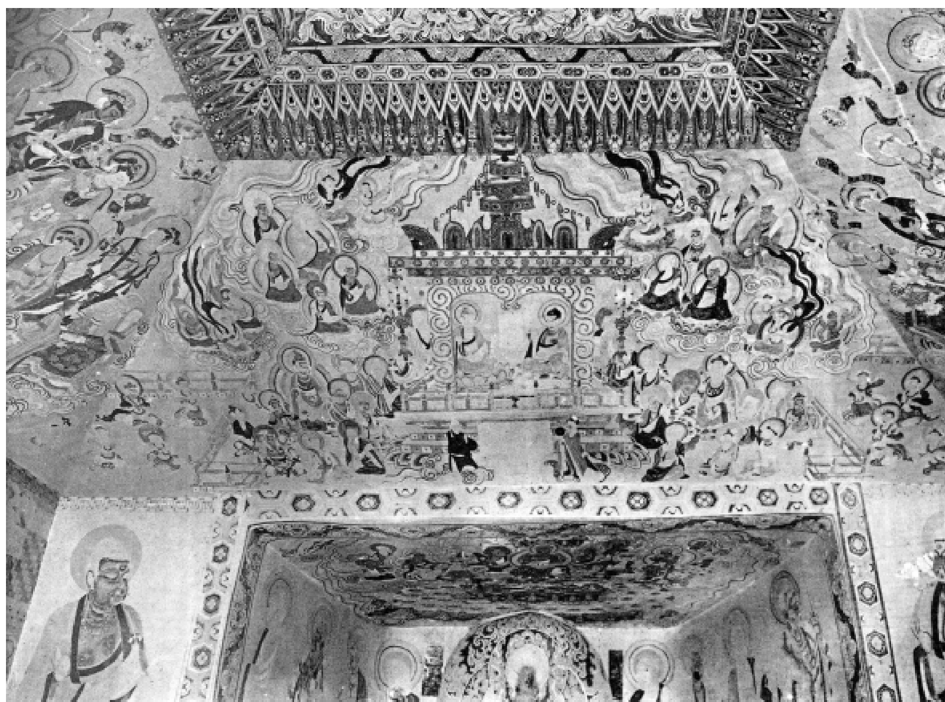

2.9 Transformation tableau based on the Lotus Sutra showing the welling up of the Many Treasures stupa. Mural on the west ceiling slope of Cave 31, Dunhuang, second half of eighth century.

> One ought to know that one's body and mind are thus like clouds and shadows. Stepping forward, one's mind is unattached and dislodged from the phenomenal world. One ought to know that this body is projected like a reflection onto the ten directions, filling the dharma world, ubiquitous, encircling the Buddhas.[63]

The murals on the north and south ceiling slopes resonate with this description: two airborne assemblies, encircling Bodhisattva Universal Good on the south ceiling slope (plate 2.10) and Bodhisattva Mañjusri on the north ceiling slope (plate 2.12), head towards the west on trailing clouds, respectively. The two assemblies escort a human figure with bird wings, shown in the foreground. The oversized scale of the cloudborne figures compares dramatically with the tiny figures absorbed in meditation on the ground, suggesting a cause and effect or correlated process: the seated meditation either produces the airborne flight or the two are simply alternating ways of the same practice of samādhi, as described above. This is, after all, the first of the twelve primary dream states to be sought in samādhi practice: 'If there is a man or woman, in his or her dream, acquires through the practice [of circumambulation] the capacity to fly in the air, lengths of hanging brocade, pennants, and canopies should [be set up and] follow [him or her].'[64] This is what is shown on the north ceiling slope (plate 2.12).

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2.10 Cloudborne Bodhisattva Universal Good and his entourage escorting a winged being across space. Mural on the south ceiling slope of Cave 31, Dunhuang, second half of eighth century.

2.11 Buddha Vairocana and his assembly. Mural on the south wall of Cave 31, Dunhuang, second half of eighth century.

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2.12 Cloudborne Bodhisattva Mañjusri with his entourage accompanying a winged being across space. Mural on the north ceiling slope of Cave 31, Dunhuang, second half of eighth century.

2.13 Transformation tableau based on the *Recompense Sutra*. Mural on the north wall of Cave 31, Dunhuang, second half of eighth century. Right: story of Prince Good-Friend and Prince Evil-Peer; left: story of Prince Sūjati.

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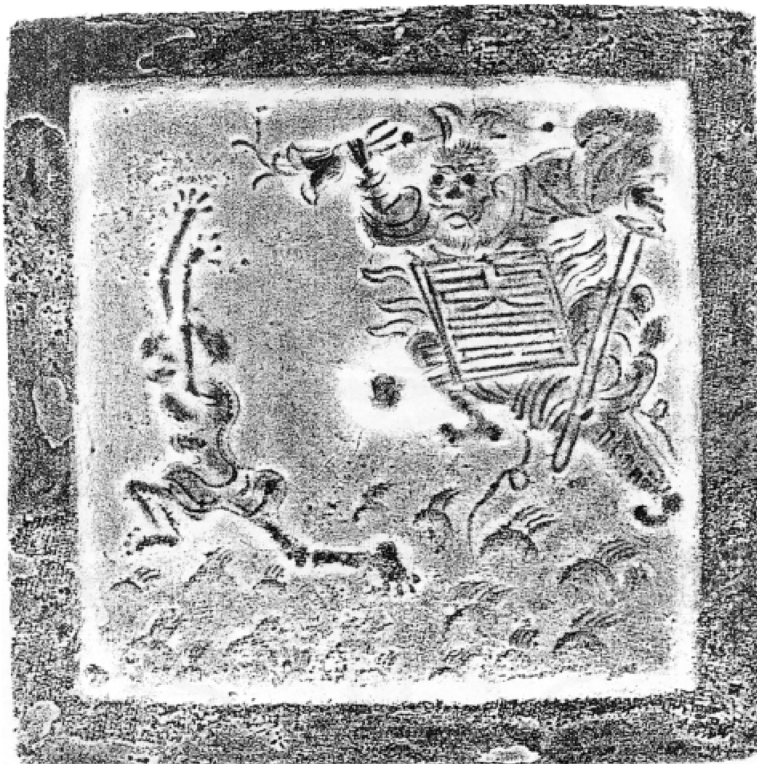

2.14 A Daoist exorcist chases a fleeing demon. Ink rubbing of design on the back of bronze mirror, Song dynasty (960–1279). Palace Museum, Beijing. Photo: Eugene Wang.

How mirrors come into complicity in obtaining the oneiric state of mind needs a little explanation. The painting shows, it may be noted, convex mirrors. Unlike the modern plane-glass mirror covered with mercury amalgam, the convex mirror made of bronze gathers and condenses the surrounding visual field into a concentrated and circumvented surface.[65] The clarity of the reflection only reinforces its eerie otherness. This clarity is sustained only when the mirror is held squarely before the beholder. Once it is tilted, the skewed angle would allow the reflection to be diluted by sources of light, thereby producing a hazy sheen and veiling the beholder's face in the mirror.

These optical properties may have facilitated symbolic investment by the medieval Chinese. The gathering, condensing and transforming of the reflected visual field may have granted the convex mirror the capacity to inspire associative thoughts about its reflection as a window onto a heightened plane of experience. Moreover, in addition to its quotidian use as a toilet piece, the convex mirror was believed to possess magical functions – displaying images other than that of the beholder. A Daoist specializing in polishing bronze mirrors for common folks explained the magical functions of the mirror thus:

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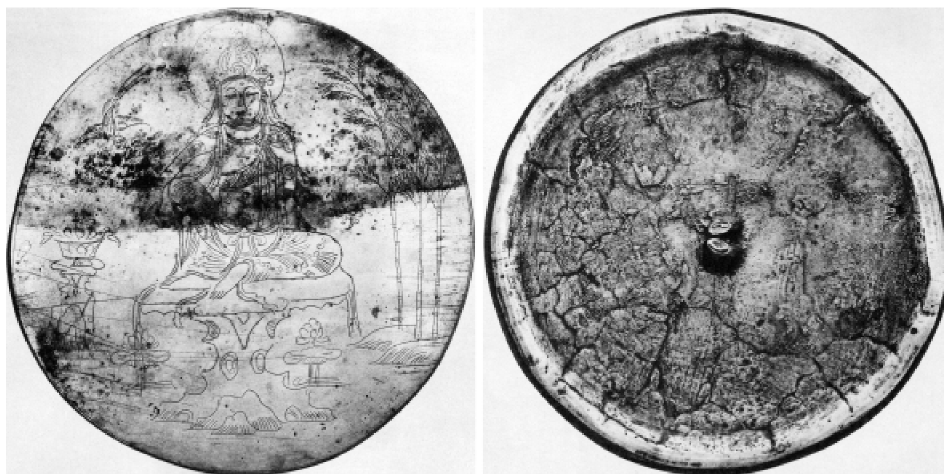
> The way of the bright mirror is this. It multiplies and transforms, so that a single entity may become ten thousand; it makes one intelligent so that one knows the events in [the] future; it enables human mortals to meet with the myriad gods in heaven. Practising the way of the mirror, the adept receives the various gods and transcendents from the above; seeing oneself in the mirror, one attains immortality and restores one's youth and adolescence. Also, venturing into the mountains, the adept will be tested by the mountain powers and aged goblins who appear in the shape of the human form. Finding himself in a cave, the adept ought to hang the nine-inch bright mirror on his back to ward off all the evils. Even though various demons and aged spirits are capable of metamorphosis [for deception], they are unable to change their reflections in the mirror into optical phantoms. Once they see their own reflection in the mirror, they will retreat and bow out, and dare not do harm.[66]

The design on the back of a medieval Chinese mirror, showing a Daoist exorcist chasing a fleeing demon (plate 2.14), illustrates the mirror's magical efficacy.

The optical property of the mirror is thus freighted with the power of confounding the constraints of time and space. Contrary to the cognitive habit that dismisses reflected images as illusory, here the mirror reflection is considered a revelation of truer forms of existence. This perceptual conceit prepares the way for the mirror surface as the screen to showcase the manifestation of gods, an optical fiction frequently formalized in the carving of deities onto the reflecting surface of bronze mirrors (plate 2.15).



2.15 Left: Image of Bodhisattva Water-Moon Sound Observer (Guanyin) carved on the reflecting surface of a bronze mirror from east-coast China; right: back of the mirror. Tenth century. Collection of Seiryo-ji, Kyoto, Japan. From Nara National Museum, *Shōrai bijutsu*, Nara, 1967, pls 183–4.

Buddhism mostly seizes upon the mirror's optical property to make various rhetorical points concerning its illusoriness to the human eye, and its ontological nothingness, analogous to the emptiness of all existences.[67] However, the

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Buddhist concept of the 'karma mirror' is commensurate with the Daoist perception of the mirror as the display screen of otherness. As the sentient beings are caught up in the endless cycles of birth and rebirth, the karma mirror has the capability to show images from one's previous lives, with the result that one's 'virtuous and evil deeds are all manifested.'[68] This occurs particularly during one's post-mortem encounter with the King Yama of purgatory, who calls up scenes from the deceased person's previous lives on the karma screen and determines accordingly the degree of the latter's sin (plate 2.16). Like the modern television screen, the karma mirror plays back 'video clips' of one's past deeds.

This symbolic function of the mirror as a screen that can display flashbacks calls attention to the painting on the north wall (plate 2.13) based on the *Recompense Sutra* (*Baoen jing*). The Buddha in the centre relates his *previous* existences, which are shown on both sides. The scenes on the right, proceeding from top to bottom, illustrate chapter 6 of the sutra, 'the Wicked Son', which tells the tale of the two princes of the kingdom of Vārānasī: Good-Friend and Evil-Peer. Those on the left, going upwards, illustrate chapter 2, 'Filial Veneration', a story about a seven-year-old boy named Sūjati who flees with his father – the sixth prince of Vārānasī – and his mother, from a rebellion in the kingdom of Vārānasī where the king is killed. Driven by a shortage of food, the prince intends to kill his wife in order to have her flesh as sustenance. Sūjati intervenes and offers his own flesh to his parents instead. The parents help themselves to their son's flesh and then leave him by the roadside. The boy's austerity is further tested by Indra, who manifests himself first as a beast to demand food from him. Sūjati offers his last piece of flesh. Indra then resumes his true form and restores Sūjati to his former strength.[69]

The good boy in both pictorial narratives turns out to be the previous incarnation of Sakyamuni himself. The narrative situations pertain to events of distant *past* recollected by the narrating Buddha. Just as significant is the melodramatic opposition between the good and evil deeds. The latter, committed by Evil-Peer, include greed, violence and robbery. As such, the painting on the north wall becomes an integral part of the overall pictorial programme. The mirror scene on the east ceiling slope establishes the preliminary phase of the repentance ritual which recalls events of the past. The north wall shows events of previous existences recollected by the narrating Buddha. The Evil-Peer amounts to an allegorical Everyman; his sinful deeds could have been committed by anyone. For the meditator immersed in the repentance ritual, the north wall serves as a flashback screen, a reminder of the evil deeds he may have committed in his previous existences.

Just as significant is the sequential order of the pictorial narrative. The vignettes involving Evil-Peer (on the right) proceed from top to bottom; those involving the self-sacrificial boy (on the left) move from bottom to top. Both narratives pertain to the royal family of Vārānasī. The composition thus suggests

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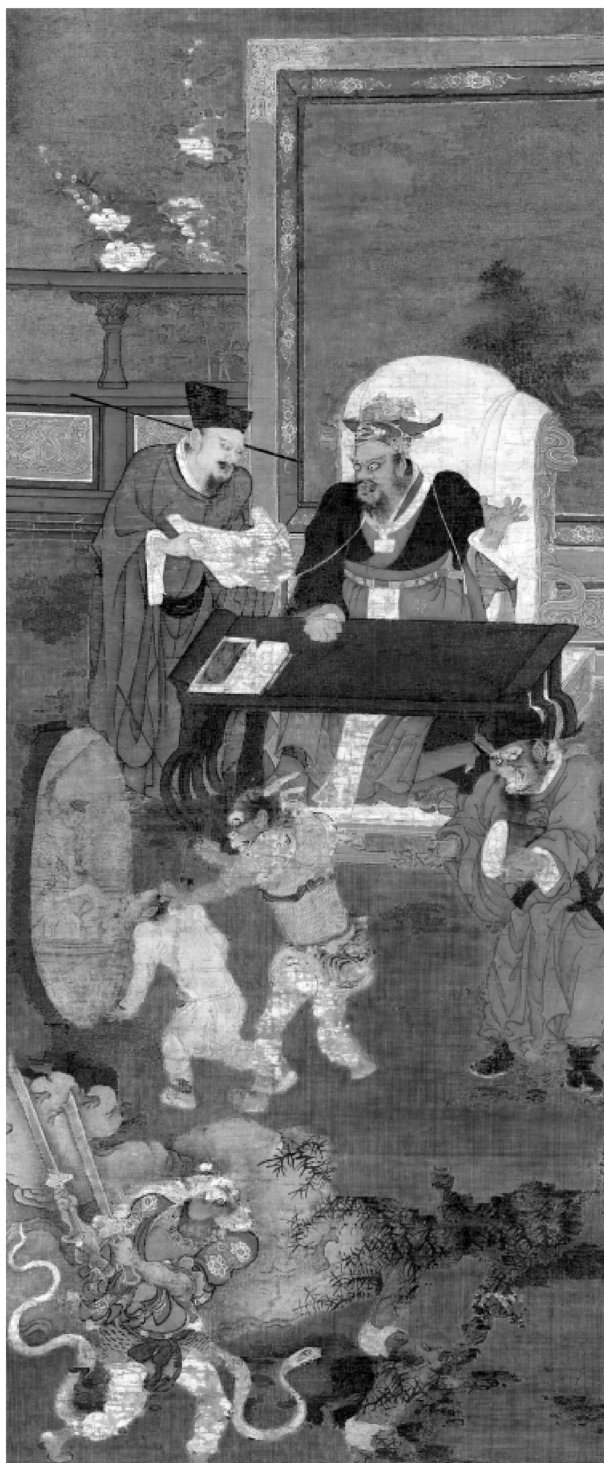

2.16 Jin Chushi (late twelfth century), Ten Kings of Hell, before 1195. Five of a set of ten hanging scrolls, ink and colour on silk, 111.8 × 47.6 cm. Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

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2.17 Detail of the mural on the north wall of Cave 31, Dunhuang, second half of eighth century.

the endless cycles of reincarnations and the successions of bad and good deeds. As the cloudborne procession on the north ceiling slope acts out the meditative circumambulation initiated by the contemplation on the mirror screen, whose purpose it is to call up mental pictures of past deeds, the north-wall painting corroborates with this ritual procedure as a mnemonic device of sorts by supplying and externalizing that mental picture. Not that the observer 'remembers' the scenes in the normal sense of the word; the purpose is to show him scenes of good and evil deeds that may have been his past existences, of which he does not have distinct memories. The scenes are meant to prompt deeper repentance.

Articulating a linear or cyclical temporality, the north wall amounts to a memory lane or a flashback screen replaying things recollected from the remote past. The south wall, by contrast, accentuates the spatial immensity of this mental universe. Dominating the composition is the Vairocana (literally sunlight) Buddha – figure of the essential omnipresence of Buddha-truth – whose bodily presence pervades and encompasses the entire cosmos (plate 2.18). Ritual primers of samādhi typically place the penitent meditator in an imaginary echo valley of sorts where a disembodied voice – known as 'the Voice in the Air' – reverberates. 'Where shall I practise the repentance ritual?' the practitioner asks the 'Voice in the Air'. 'A Buddha named Vairocana that pervades everywhere,' replies the 'Voice in the Air'.[70]

Vairocana's cosmic body dissolves the boundary between the tangible individual body and the immense ethereal space, and reduces the body into a matter of phantasmatic projection. 'This Dharma body of the Buddha', says a primer of the Lotus samādhi, 'is like the vast empty space, reflecting objects and manifesting forms as if they are in front of one's eyes.'[71] It makes the

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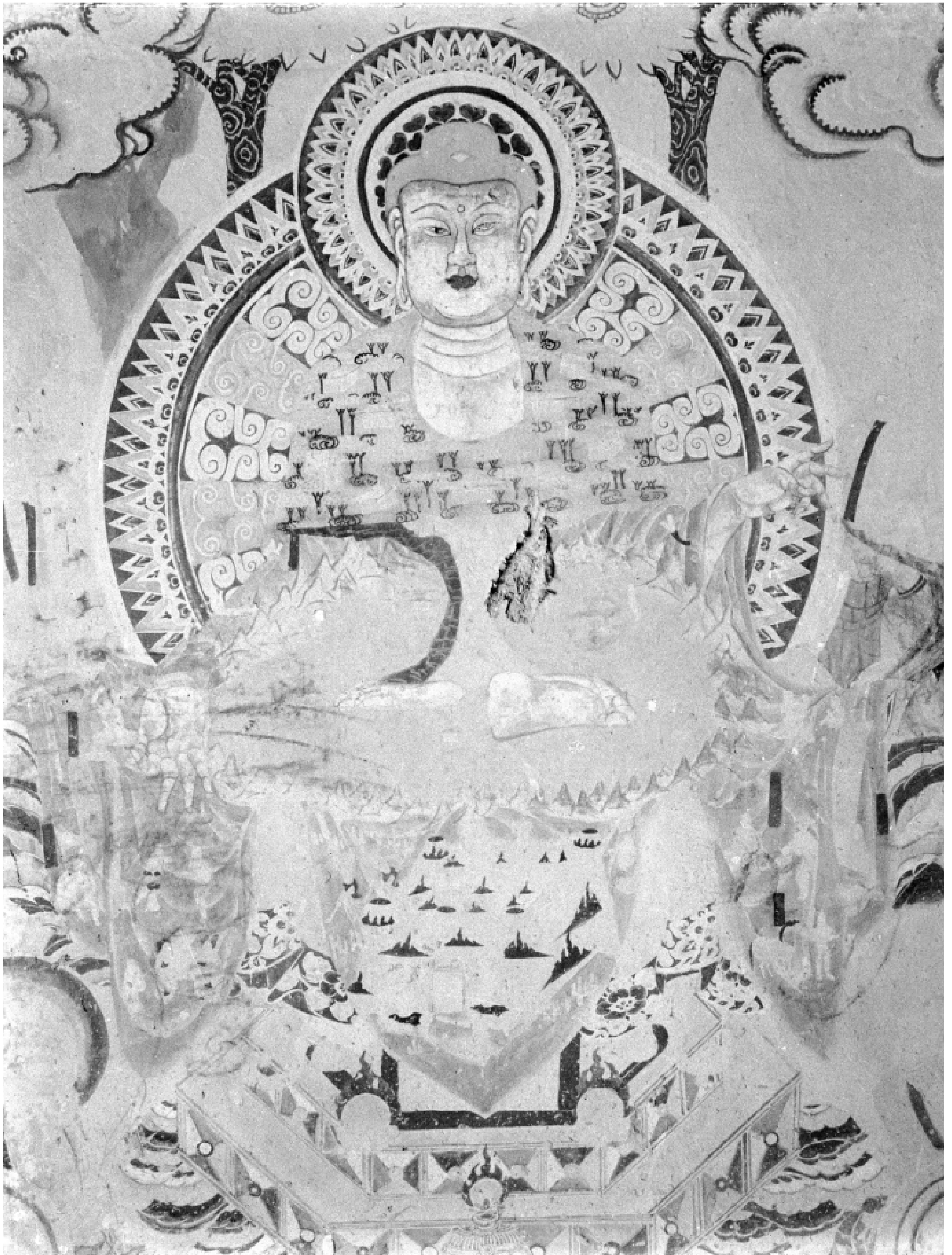

2.18 Vairocana Buddha whose robe displays a picture of the cosmos. Detail of painting on the south wall of Cave 31, Dunhuang, second half of the eighth century.

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observer realize that nobody possesses individuality; nobody is a body unto itself; everybody is a matter of a phantasmatic projection and mirror reflection. In this light, the good and bad deeds pictured on the north wall are at once nobody's and everybody's; they occur in the immeasurable continuum of time and space for which the all-pervading Vairocana Buddha provides a figural analogue and testimony. Suffering from an 'inner blindness', the sentient beings are immersed in the 'gloomy darkness' of the 'long flow of death and rebirth' of eons of 'evil ways'. In Vairocana Buddha's all-pervading light, the practitioner sees the impurities and magnitude of such existences, repents, and 'conforms to the way of Bodhisattva Universal Good', shown on the south ceiling slope.[72]

Oscillating between body and space, and reducing the body into a mirror screen that reflects the Dharma world, Vairocana's cosmic body prompts the observer to regard his own body as an insubstantial reflection in the mirror. An eighth-century primer of samādhi compares the practice sanctuary, the Bodhi site, to Indra's pearl – a comparison made good in the cave by Indra's image painted near the entrance, the jewel-fitted canopy above Sakyamuni on the north wall (see plate 2.13), and the repeated appearances of mirror images – thereby turning the sanctuary into a mirror hall. All the Buddhist deities are, according to the primer, a matter of mirror reflections in this 'pearl'. In the same way, the meditator's own body is a phantasmatic projection attending these reflections, so it, too, can be reflected and manifested everywhere.[73] A pair of lay figures appear on the east ceiling slope, attending Sakyamuni's sermon on the Lotus Sutra. Presumably the same pair, transformed into bird-winged beings, ride trailing clouds across space, escorted by the Universal Good (plate 2.10) and Mañjusri (plate 2.12) and their respective entourages on the south and north ceiling slopes; the lay couple finally appear before the Many Treasures stupa on the west ceiling slope (plate 2.9). They are phantasmatic projections and mirror reflections of the meditator. Stretching one's imagination is what this mirror hall is all about; murals only give these fleeting phantoms a fixed form and structure. It all started with looking into mirrors.

Operating on the principle of a mirror hall of infinite reduplications, the cave shrine is thus an 'abyss of representation'.[74] The scene of the man meditating in front of a mirror on the east ceiling slope (plate 2.7) amounts to something of a *mise en abyme*, a visual artifice that uses an internal mirror within a represented scene to 'reflect' and thematize the entire structure of the work that contains it.[75] When first theorized by Gide, the *mise en abyme* in question pertains to paintings in which 'a small, sombre *convex* mirror reflects the interior of the room in which the depicted scene is set.'[76] When Jacques Derrida gives the notion a poststructuralist spin, the cue comes from Edmund Husserl's description of the Dresden Gallery which contains a picture depicting a picture gallery.[77] To Derrida, such a gallery space amounts to an 'abyss of representation' involving 'indefinite multiplications'. This Derridean abyss can thus be envisioned just as well as a

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mirror hall: 'a space of repetition' that posits an 'indefinite process of supplementarity'. Presence stems from the 'abyss' of 'representation of representation'. The self is split into multiple reduplications.[78]

The Buddhist cave shrine considered here may be theorized in the same way. The painted scenes of mirror-viewing thematize the perceptual mode attending the wall paintings as a succession of mirrors. In this mirror hall – this abyss of representations – the painted images are analogous to mirror reflections registering the multiplied presences of both Buddhist deities and the split self of the viewing/meditating subject. Moreover, the subject is both a viewer and a projected figure in the picture being viewed. With the self split thus, the experience is best formulated by a schizophrenic's response to the question of 'where are you?' The answer is invariably: 'I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I am at the spot where I find myself.'[79]

Such a formulation speaks to what Roger Caillois calls 'mimicry': the dissolution of the distinction between a sentient being and its surroundings, the individual's loss of self-possession to an engulfing space, to the extent that the self no longer knows 'where to place itself'. The self becomes the space:

> To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at *himself from* any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, *dark space where things cannot be put*.[80]

The deconstruction of the self in Indian Buddhism and its assertion about samsara (the endless cycles of birth and rebirth) have long remained a vexing contradiction in the medieval Chinese imagination. The pictorial programme in the eighth-century cave shrine discussed here both rehearses the problem and provides a formal apparatus through which such a contradiction may finally be visualized and symbolically reconciled.

Notes

1 Takakusu Junjirō & Watanabe Kaigyoku, eds, *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* (hereafter abbreviated as T), 85 vols, Tokyo, 1924–32, 41:813b.

2 'Visual culture questionnaire', *October*, 77, Summer 1996, 25.

3 Statements by Susan Buck-Morss and Thomas Crow in 'Visual culture questionnaire', 36.

4 Here I am taking cues from Michael Ann Holly's line: 'What does visual culture study? Not objects, but subjects – subjects caught in congeries of cultural meanings.' 'Visual culture questionnaire', 40–1.

5 For serious art-historical practice, equally to be avoided is the mindless subscription or catering to the populist New Age swooning over the imagined and disembodied totalizing spirituality of the ur-Buddhism (largely a figment of Western imagination), dislodged from historical and regional contexts.

6 T41:813b.

7 Ōmura Seigai, *Shina bijutsu-shi: chōsōhen*, Tokyo, 1922, 116–32.

8 T50:352b; T50:358c; T52:202.

9 Buddhist apologetic literature often cites the opponents' charge about the unreliability of the 'clay and wood' to stand for Buddhahood, and includes arguments in defence of their symbolic functions. See, for instance, T52:175a.

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10 T50:359a. For translation, see Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, Leiden, 1959, 244–5.

11 Soper identifies the place as the vicinity of the modern village of Hadda, in southeastern Afghanistan. Alexander Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China*, Ascona, 1959, 265.

12 T25:126b; T15:859a. Alexander Soper, 'Aspects of Light Symbolism', *Artibus Asiae*, 12:3, 1949, 279. Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 265–6.

13 T15:681ab. Translation based on Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 266.

14 T52:198a; T50:358b. Translation from Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, 242–3.

15 Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, 242–3.

16 T13:905a.

17 Duan Wenjie, ed., *Zhongguo bihua quanji Dunhuang*, 6:6. Ying Guangming dates it to the period around the Dali reign (766–79). Ying Guangming, ed., *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, vol. 9, Hong Kong, 2000, 105. Plates 2.8–2.13 are taken from Paul Pelliot, *Les grottes de Touen-Houang: peintures et sculptures bouddhiques des époques des Wei, des T'ang et des Song*, Paris, 1914–24, vol. 5, pls 287–92.

18 T52:351.

19 William Soothill et al., *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, Taipei, 1969, 254.

20 T46:950a. Zhiyi here draws on the *Pratyutpanna Sutra*, see T13:905c.

21 T46:950a.

22 T46:956a.

23 For discussion of the reliquary, see Martha Carter, 'A Reappraisal of the Bimaran Reliquary', in Raymond Allchin et al., eds, *Gandharan Art in Context: East-West Exchanges at the Crossroads of Asia*, New Delhi, 1997. I have also benefited from exchanges with Sonya Quintanilla.

24 T17:178–184.

25 The 'mirror wall' is here also referred to as the 'crystal-clear lapis lazuli wall' (*piliuli bi*), which is vaidūrya. T17:178a.

26 T17:179a–181a.

27 Li Baiyao (565–648), *Bei Qi shu*, Beijing, 1972, 8.113; 301.

28 Wei Zheng (580–643), *Sui shu*, Beijing, 1973, 45.1239; 71.2467.

29 Sima Guang (1019–1086), *Zizhi tongjian*, Beijing, 1956, 183.5716.

30 The eighth-century poet Bao He mentions the Labyrinth Tower in his poem *Quan Tang shi*, Beijing, 1985, 208.2172. The matter is narrated in the romance entitled *Sui Yangdi milou ji*, dated to Tang times. See Li Jianguo, *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xulu*, Tianjin, 1993, 2:897–900.

31 *Milou ji* collected in Tao Zongyi (fourteenth century), *Shuofu, Wenyuange Siku quanshu* edn, Hong Kong, 2002, 110.28.

32 Chen Yinque, *Chen Yinque shixue lunwen xuanji*, Shanghai, 1992, 359–60.

33 *Tangshi* (no longer extant), cited in *Yuding yuanjian leihan*, compiled by Zhang Ying (1637–1708) et al. (Siku quanshu edn), 380.21. The matter is also referenced in a number of sources. *Zizhi tongjian*, 202.6401; 242.7836.

34 Xu Song, *Tang liangjing chengfang kao*, Beijing, 1985, 23. Li Jianchao, *Zengding Tang liangjing chengfang kao*, Xi'an, 1996, 32.

35 *Zizhi tongjian*, 202.6401.

36 Wei Zheng (580–643), *Sui shu*, Beijing, 1973, 23.662. See also Victor Mair, *T'ang Transformation Texts*, Cambridge, Mass., 1989, 72.

37 Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton, NJ, 1972, 314–15.

38 T50:732ab; trans. from Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Cambridge, 1954–2000, 4.1:92.

39 T50:283c.

40 T48:214bc.

41 Several scholars who visited the monastery in 814 stayed in what they called the 'monks' chamber of mystic mirrors (*xuanjianshi*) of the west cloister'. Li Fang, *Taiping guangji*, Beijing, 1959, 399.3201. Zhang Yanyuan (ninth century) mentions 'the Bodhi Precinct of the west cloister'. Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji*, Shanghai, 1964, 3.60.

42 *Quan Tang shi*, 53.647–48.

43 T19:133b.

44 Dunhuang Research Academy ed., *Dunhuang shiku neirong zonglu*, Beijing, 1996, 16. Guo Ruoxu (fl. 1070–5) records images of Brahma and Indra near the door in the Great Xiangguo Monastery in Kaifeng. Guo Ruoxu, *Tuhua jianwen zhi*, Chengdu, 1986, 291.

45 T46:956a.

46 The complete title of the sutra is *Dafangbianfo baoen jing* (Sutra of the great means by which Buddha recompenses the favour of his parents). T3, no. 156, probably a Chinese apocrypha compiled 445–516.

47 T3:142b–147a.

48 T3:143c–146c.

49 T46:12a.

50 T46:956b.

51 T46:12a.

52 T46:11a. Daniel Stevenson, 'The Four Kinds of Samādhi in Early T'ien-t'ai Buddhism', in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter Gregory, Honolulu, 1986, 48–9.

53 It is also associated with the *fangdeng* samādhi. Stevenson, 'Four Kinds', 49.

54 T46:950a.

55 For an excellent introduction to the ritual process, see Stevenson, 'Four Kinds', 67–72.

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56 T46:949–55.

57 T46:12c. Translation based on Thomas Cleary, trans., *Stopping and Seeing: a Comprehensive Course in Buddhist Meditation*, Boston, 1997, 58 (my italics). See also Neal Donner and Daniel Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of the First Chapter of Chih-i's Mo-ho chih-kuan*, Honolulu, 1993, 243.

58 T46:187a. Translation based, with slight modification, on Donner and Stevenson, *The Great Calming*, 243.

59 The Sanskrit term 'dhārani', derived from the root *dhā*, meaning 'to hold' or 'to retain', attains additional sense beyond its usual denotations of spell or incantation that sustains a particular power; it occurs in Zhiyi's exposition as the 'true discernment of the reality [of all phenomena]', Stevenson, 'Four Kinds', 63–4.

60 T9:391b-c.

61 T9:391a-b.

62 T9:391c-392a.

63 T46:953c.

64 T46:944b.

65 Wolfgang Zucker, 'Reflections on Reflections', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 20:3, Spring 1962, 243.

66 Zhang Junfang (eleventh century), *Yunji qiqian*, Beijing, 1996, 48.283. Similar accounts appear in the *Baopuzi* by Ge Hong (284–364), with some situations dramatized. See Wang Ming, *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi*, Beijing, 1985, 17.300.

67 T25:104bc.

68 T3:298c.

69 T3:125–130. For a brief synopsis of this tale, see also Arthur Waley, *A Catalogue of Paintings Recovered from Tun-Huang by Sir Aurel Stein*, London, 1931, 2–3.

70 T9:392c.

71 T46:951b.

72 T46:956b.

73 T46:956a.

74 For a succinct introduction to the notion of 'abyss of representation', see Craig Owen, 'Photography "en abyme"', *October*, 5, Summer 1978, 73–88, esp. 75–8.

75 See Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, Chicago, 1989, 7–19.

76 André Gide, *Journal 1889–1939*, Paris, 1951, 41 (my emphasis).

77 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas*, trans. W.R.B. Gibson, New York, 1962, 270.

78 Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David B. Allison, Evanston, 1973, 104; *Of Grammatology*, trans. G.C. Spivak, Baltimore, 1976, 163.

79 Eugène Minkowski, 'Le Problème du temps en psychopathologie', *Recherches philosophiques*, 1932–3, 239.

80 Roger Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', trans. John Shepley, *October*, 31, Winter 1984, 30.

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