

## Late Ming Informal Prose

# 元明

Classical literature of the second half of the fifteenth and most of the sixteenth century was dominated by the influential literary group known as the "Archaists." The Archaists advocated strict adherence to formal models established by earlier writers. "Old style" verse was supposed to be modeled on the poetry of the Han and Wei, regulated poetry was supposed to be modeled on the High Tang, and prose was supposed to be modeled on pre-Qin writing. The theories of the Archaists were wonderfully teachable and well suited to the demands of an educational system growing rapidly in the new prosperity of the sixteenth century. Anthologies of model essays and poems served the schoolteacher and autodidact alike. Moreover, the insistence on strict imitation of models proved a useful way to prevent solecisms and awkwardness in student writers, for whom literary Chinese had become increasingly remote from the language they spoke.

At the same time, such a formalistic view of writing inspired a sense of falseness and artificiality that went against the most ancient values of Chinese literature, where poetry was supposed to give direct expression to feeling and whose prose was supposed to be an independent expression of the writer's values. It is not surprising, therefore, that Archaism provoked a strong reaction among certain groups of intellectuals during the second half of the sixteenth century (though Archaism retained its hold on the early stages of literary education). When the Archaists championed formal correctness, these new intellectuals of the late Ming championed informality, even awkwardness. When the Archaists championed discipline, these new intellectuals championed freedom and following one's natural inclinations. When the Archaists championed "moral seriousness," these new intellectuals championed trivial things and the unplanned surprises of the ordinary.

A major inspiration in this literary movement was the eccentric and heterodox intellectual Li Zhi. His discourse "On the Child-Mind" touched a whole younger generation. One consequence for literature was a new sense of the value of drama and prose fiction, of which Li Zhi spoke with approval. This was virtually the first time in the Chinese tradition that prose fiction and drama were not justified defensively, but rather treated as "literature" on a par with poetry and the essay. Another consequence was a renewed interest in informal prose. Anthologies of the period often refer to such works as "minor pieces" (*xiao-pin*), treating the experiences of daily life with humor and delight.

Although "On the Child-Mind" had literature as its primary topic and was immensely influential in subsequent literature, the essay itself is certainly not "literary," nor does it practice the values it preaches. Li Zhi's adoption of the ponderous style of Chinese philosophical writing may make the first part of his argument seem more

difficult than it actually is. The "beginning of mind" (or with the ambiguity of literary Chinese, "beginnings in the mind") is both the presumed innocence of the child's response and immediate or impulsive thoughts and responses in anyone—something like the implicit "first thoughts" that must have been there in order to say we had "second thoughts" about something.

The "Way" (*Dao*) and "inherent Pattern" (*li*) were key concepts in Neo-Confucianism, which had become state philosophical orthodoxy. Although the great Neo-Confucian philosophers argued that these were inherent both in the self and in the external world, Li Zhi was intensely aware of the social and psychological truth that these concepts and their application were learned and supported by social pressure. Thus, from Li Zhi's perspective, these most revered principles in Neo-Confucian thought were learned things that came from the outside and governed response, corrupting all that was spontaneous, natural, and innocent. The word translated as "in-authentic" (*jia*), which Li Zhi repeats again and again, means both "false" and "borrowed," in the sense of coming from elsewhere, not being one's own. Li's argument hinges on that range of meaning: what comes from the outside is "borrowed," not essentially one's own, and to represent oneself through such a borrowed medium is to be "false."

If this attack on the fundamental principles of Neo-Confucianism and the glorification of drama and fiction were not shocking enough to conservative sensibilities, Li Zhi went on in the final section to assault the integrity of the Confucian Classics themselves.

### Li Zhi (1527–1602), "On the Child-Mind"

When I (using the pseudonym "Mountain Farmer of Dragon Cave") wrote on the play *Western Parlor*, I commented at the end: "Those who judge such matters may not think it is all right that I still have a child-mind."<sup>1</sup> The child-mind is the genuine mind; and if having the child-mind is taken as not being all right, then having a genuine mind is also taken as not being all right. Free of all falseness and entirely genuine, the child-mind is the original mind of one's very first thought. Loss of the child-mind means loss of the genuine mind, and a loss of the genuine mind means loss of the genuine person. One who is a person and not genuine will never again have beginnings.

As the child is the beginning of the person, so the child-mind is beginning of mind. How could mind's beginnings ever be lost—but then how does it happen that the child-mind is indeed lost so abruptly? Initially, things seen and heard come in through eyes and ears. And when we take these as a governing factor from without, the child-mind is lost. As we grow older, the Way and Inherent Pattern come in through what we see and hear. And when we take these as the governing factor from within, the child-mind is lost.<sup>2</sup>

After a long time, as what we see and hear of the Way and Inherent Pattern steadily increases, what we know and what we are aware of also steadily broadens. At that point we further learn that to be praised is desirable; we endeavor to enhance opinion of ourselves, and the child-mind is lost. We learn that to be criticized by others is undesirable; we endeavor to avoid that, and the child-mind is lost.

Everything we see and hear of the Way and Inherent Pattern comes from extensive reading and judgments about what is morally right. Of course the ancient Sages read and studied; however, even if they hadn't read and studied, the child-mind would have remained secure within them all by itself. Even though they read and studied extensively, they also guarded their child-mind and kept it from being lost. They were not like scholars of our time, who repress the child-mind by extensive reading and moral judgments. And since scholars have indeed repressed their child-minds by extensive reading and moral judgments, what use was there in the Sages writing so extensively and instituting their words if it only served to make scholars repress their child-minds?

Once the child-mind is repressed, when words are uttered, those words do not come from what lies deep within; when they reveal themselves in questions of governing, what they do lacks any core; and when they write, their writing cannot reach others and accomplish its ends. In such people there is none of the inner reserve that reveals itself as beauty; there is none of the frankness and real substance that gives off its own aura. And if such people try to write even one line with moral force in the words, they ultimately fail. What is the reason for this? Their child-minds have been repressed, and their minds are constituted of things external to themselves; that is, what they have seen and heard, questions of the Way and Innate Pattern.

Since their minds are constituted of things they have seen and heard, the Way and Innate Pattern, then their words come from those external things and are not the words that the child-mind would say on its own. However artful such words may be, what do they have to do with the self? Can an inauthentic person do otherwise than to speak inauthentic words, to act inauthentically, and to write inauthentically? In fact, once a person becomes inauthentic, then he is inauthentic in every way. It follows from this that if you speak inauthentically to an inauthentic person, the inauthentic person will be pleased; if you tell an inauthentic person about inauthentic action, the inauthentic person will be pleased; and if you talk over inauthentic writing with an inauthentic person, the inauthentic person will be pleased. Being inauthentic in every way, it becomes pleasing in every way. When the whole stage is filled with inauthenticity, how can the short person standing in the audience tell the difference? In this case, even if we have the most perfect

opinion with the latter. Primary sensory experience and these more linguistic forms of "seeing and hearing" are alike in being external. Awareness of the Way and Inherent Pattern can come either from direct observation or Neo-Confucian instruction, but Li Zhi is thinking very much of instruction here.

<sup>1</sup> *The Western Parlor*, *Xi-xiang ji*, was a Yuan variety play by Wang Shi-fu, building on Yuan Zhen's "Ying-ying's Story."

<sup>2</sup> Note that Li Zhi very much includes what we hear from others and what we read among sense impressions; the Chinese term is "seeing and hearing," reading associated with the former and oral

works of writing in the whole world, it is not uncommon that they are destroyed by inauthentic people and do not survive to be seen by later generations. The reason for this is that the most perfect works of writing in the whole world always come from the child-mind. If the child-mind were permanently preserved, then the Way and Inherent Pattern would not be practiced and external things seen and heard would not take over. If the child-mind were preserved, then literary quality would never be missing from writing and no person would lack literary ability. It wouldn't be at all like the kind of writing constructed to fit formal models, writing that is not literature!

Why should poems have to be like those in the ancient *Anthology*? Why should prose have to be like that of the pre-Qin period? Writing continued to change after those periods, turning into the Six Dynasties style and then turning into regulated poetry. It changed again and turned into classical tales; it changed and turned into the early play-scripts and variety plays.<sup>3</sup> It turned into *The Western Parlor*; it turned into the novel *Water Margin*; it turned into the formal essays that people practice today for the examination. Every time a person of great virtue speaks of the Way of the Sages, it is perfect writing, in times gone by as well as now—it cannot be judged in its historical relation to the tendencies of the age. This is the reason I feel moved by the inherent literary quality of anyone who has the child-mind—who cares about the Six Classics or the *Analects* or the *Mencius*!

But let's consider what we find in the Six Classics, the *Analects*, and the *Mencius*—if they're not passages of excessive adoration by some official historian, then they're inordinate praise by some official. If neither of the above, then it was inexperienced followers and dimwitted disciples writing down from memory what their teacher had said. They gave the first part without the last, or got the conclusion but left out the beginning. They wrote it in books according to what they had personally witnessed. Later scholars did not reflect critically, so they claimed that these had come from the Sages' own mouths and decided to view them as "Classics." Who realizes that for the most part these are not the words of the Sages? Even if they did come from the Sages, they were uttered for some particular purpose, nothing more than matching the treatment to the disease, applying a remedy at the proper moment to save this very same dimwitted disciple or inexperienced follower. If the medicine worked for the disease in question, that doesn't mean we should cling fast to it—we certainly shouldn't right away make it the perfect doctrine for thousands of generations!

Be that as it may, the Six Classics, the *Analects*, and the *Mencius* have in fact become the stock excuses for Neo-Confucians and an abundant resource for inauthentic people. It is perfectly obvious that they cannot speak in words that come from the child-mind. This is a sorry state of things in-

deed! If only I could find someone who had never lost the child-mind of an authentic Sage and have a word with him about writing!<sup>4</sup>

Yuan Hong-dao was a great admirer of Li Zhi's iconoclasm. Yuan Hong-dao and his two brothers formed one of the most influential literary groups of the turn of the seventeenth century. Although the Yuan brothers themselves wrote in literary Chinese, they were, like Li Zhi himself, champions of vernacular literature and folksong. In an age when classical literature seemed to possess a weary sameness and hollow formality, they desperately sought qualities of freshness, spontaneity, and some elusive attractiveness that could not be reduced to formula. The term *qu*, translated as "liveliness" below, was just such a quality; it appears in things by chance and can be appreciated only by those with "intuitive grasp." Because such intuitive grasp is a sign of distinction, other people "try" to attain it, but such self-conscious attempts immediately become false.

### Yuan Hong-dao (1568–1610), On Chen Zheng-fu's Collected Works, *Intuitive Grasp*

What people of our time find the hardest to achieve is liveliness. Liveliness is like the colors of a mountain, or the taste in water, or the light on flowers, or the way a beautiful woman looks. Even the master of discourse cannot put down a single word about it; only those with intuitive grasp can understand it. People these days admire what is known for liveliness and seek the semblance of liveliness. For this reason, discriminating discussions of calligraphy and painting or delving deeply into antiques are thought to be pure and disinterested activities; involving oneself in the occult or removing oneself from the world's dirt and confusion is thought to evince detachment. On a lower level still, we have those like the connoisseurs of incense and tea in Su-zhou. These sorts of things are all the mere surfaces of liveliness—what do they have to do with spiritual feeling?

Liveliness, when it is achieved from what is natural, is deep; when achieved from study, it is shallow. When one is a child, one knows nothing of the existence of liveliness, but liveliness is present everywhere. The face is never grave; the eyes are never still; the mouth prattles trying to talk; the feet leap up and down and are never still. Life's most perfect happiness is truly never greater than at this time. This is, in fact, what Mencius meant by "not losing the heart of an infant" and what Lao-zi meant by "able to be the baby." This is the highest grade of liveliness, its correct enlightenment, its highest doctrine.

<sup>4</sup>In the closing line, Lu Zhi playfully echoes a famous passage on language in the "Outer Things" chapter of *Zhuang-zi*: "The reason for the net is the fish; when you get the fish, you forget the net. The reason for the snare is the rabbit; when you get the rabbit, you forget the snare. The reason for words is the idea; when you get the idea, you forget the words. If only I could find someone who has forgotten words and have a word with him!"

<sup>3</sup>Play-scripts" (*yuan-ben*) were a Northern form of drama, no longer extant, that preceded the variety play.

People of the forests and hills are not caught up and entangled in things; they are content to just pass their days; thus, though they do not seek for liveliness, liveliness is close at hand. The reason simpletons and ne'er-do-wells are close to liveliness is because they lack status. The lower one's status, the lower the things one wants. They go where their hearts take them, some for food and drink, others for women and entertainment, despising nothing and shrinking from nothing; feeling themselves cut off from all worldly expectations, they pay no attention to the world except to laugh at it. This also is a kind of liveliness.

But as the years gradually go by, as one's official position gradually gets higher, and as one's status gradually increases, one's body is as if in fetters and one's heart is as if stuck by thorns. One's hair, the body's apertures, one's bones and joints are all entangled by knowledge and experience; and though one becomes ever more deeply aware of the pattern of things, still one grows farther and farther away from liveliness.

My friend, Chen Zheng-fu, is deep in liveliness; and thus liveliness is the most prominent quality in his collected works, *Intuitive Grasp*, done in several chapters. If this were not so, I would not have written these comments for him, even if he had the principles of the martyr-recluse Bo Yi or were as noble as the hermit Yan Guang. Who would have thought that someone of your status, of your official rank, and someone in the prime of his years like yourself would have such a comprehension of liveliness?

Writing often celebrated refined pastimes and amusements of the intellectual elite: the connoisseurship of art, books, tea, flowers—along with some more unusual sports. There was a fascination with the special knowledge associated with each activity, even when that knowledge was invented on the spot. Writers often describe techniques, hierarchies of qualities, or different types of the activity, as in Yuan Hong-dao's account of spider-fighting.

### Spider-Fighting

To my knowledge the technique of fighting spiders never existed in earlier times. My friend Gong San-mu invented the sport. San-mu was staying in the same lodgings as myself, and whenever the weather grew mild in spring, each of us would catch several small spiders, ones with rather long legs, raise them in a window, and, to amuse ourselves, make them fight for victory. Spiders are usually found in the shadowy spots on walls or under tables. Catch them when they have just formed a few long strands of their webs without cross-strands, taking care not to move too quickly, because if you move too quickly, they'll become frightened; and once frightened, they'll never be able to fight. You should take the females and not the males, because the male flees when he encounters an adversary. The male's legs are shorter and his belly thinner—it's quite easy to tell them apart.

The way to train them is this: take the offspring of another spider that has not yet hatched and stick it on a piece of paper in the window; when

the female spider sees it, she will take it as her own offspring and protect it fiercely. When she sees the other spider coming, she will think it has come to take her own young and will do everything she can to fight the other off. You shouldn't use spiders who still have their eggs in their belly or whose young have already hatched. When they come on the field, they first grab one another with their legs; then after a few preliminary skirmishes, their ferocity intensifies, and they go at it tooth and nail until you can't see their bodies. The victor wraps her enemy up in threads and doesn't give up until the other is dead. There are also those who get frightened and run off in defeat in the middle of the battle; and there are some cases when the strengths are so equally matched that they quit after several rounds.

San-mu is always able to determine ahead of time which ones will win and which will lose. When he catches them, he'll say that this one will be a good fighter and that one won't be a good fighter and that these two are well matched—and it always works out just like he says. The jet black ones are the best; the ash gray ones second best; and the ones with mottled colors are the worst. We also have many special names for the types: "purple-black tiger," "hawk-talons," "tortoise-shell belly," "black Zhang Jing," "night prong," "cheery lass," "little iron lips," in each case named for what they resembled. You feed them flies and large black ants. We both knew how they looked when they were hungry or well fed, happy or enraged—but this gets into a lot of little details that I'm not going to include here. San-mu was very clever and good at poetry; as soon as he saw some skill or technique practiced deftly, he understood it—but also on this account he neglected his studies.

Since the Song Dynasty, informal letters to friends and family had been treated as a form separate from the stylized literary letters that an author would preserve in his collected works. Like letter collections in the West, these letters were often published separately. In their casualness and roughness of style, they perfectly suited the late Ming ideals of spontaneity and easy informality, and they were often included in anthologies of "minor pieces." Characteristic of late Ming self-consciousness, such letters frequently took as their topic the very values they sought to embody. Two letters by Yuan Hong-dao and one by Tu Long follow.

### Letter to Li Zi-ran

Have you been writing any poems recently? If you're not writing poetry, how are you getting through these dreary days? A person can only be happy when he finds something to put his heart into. Some people put their hearts into chess, some into beautiful women, some into a particular skill or craft, some into writing. The reason that the most self-realized people of olden times were a level better than others was their unwillingness to simply pass their lives drifting along.

Every time I see people with nothing to put their hearts into—so busy all day long, as if they had lost something, worrying even though they have

nothing to worry about, getting no joy out of a scene before them—I personally can't understand why. This is being in hell while alive—who needs the iron beds, the bronze pillars, knife mountains, and sword trees! It's too bad! There's probably nothing really hard to do in the whole world; and as long as you just get it over and done with haphazardly, your day will go along like water forming its own channel. With a talent like yours, Zi-ran, there's nothing in the whole world you couldn't do. I'm just afraid that you're too cautious and serious and not willing just to throw yourself into it and do it. Go ahead and try it. It's all right not to disappoint a true friend's intention to help you succeed.

### Letter to Qiu Chang-ru

I've been very concerned since I heard how sick you've been. If you should die, all the grace and culture of the Southeast will be gone. Can I help being concerned? As a county magistrate, I've had to play the most hateful roles—they are indescribable. To give you a general idea: when I chance to meet a superior official, I'm a slave; when I entertain a guest who has dropped by, I'm a courtesan; when I manage money or grain, I'm a warehouse supervisor; when I explain things to the peasantry, I'm an old lady matchmaker. In the course of a single day, things blow hot and cold a hundred times, now bright and active, now dark and passive—the county magistrate experiences all the worst qualities of the everyday world. It's painful and it's like poison to me.

My brother was going to pass through Wu this autumn, and though he did pass through, he just wanted to sit around in the county office library reading books and poems, and we didn't get to go climb Tiger Hill as we had before with Mr. Hou.

Have you felt much of an inclination to travel lately? Even though, as chief officer of Mao-yuan here on the outskirts of Su-zhou, I don't have any money to give to visitors, still I have wine to get drunk on, tea to drink, the Great Lake as my spoonful of water on which to go boating, and Dong-ting Mountain as my lump of rock to climb—so I'm not too gloomy. What do you think?

### Tu Long (1542–1605), From the Capital, to a Friend

In Beijing I cover my face and ride a brown horse; the wind rises and the dust flies, filling the streets and avenues. When I get home and dismount, both of my nostrils are as black as chimney-holes. The piss of men and horses mixes with the sandy dirt; and after it rains, you sink into the muck up to your knee or saddle. Peasants push ahead, whipping their half-lame donkeys, their shoulders rubbing against those of officials. When the cry comes to clear the way for a high official, when you can't get to duck quickly into a wind-

ing sidlane, you run wildly until you're breathless and the sweat flows down to your heels. That gives you a sense of what it's like here.

And I imagine the evening sunlight in some Yangzi River village far away, the fishing boats putting into shore, the last rays of the sun shooting back into the forest, and the sand bright as snow. Under flowering trees fishing nets dry in the sun, and the white planks and blue awnings of a tavern are half-hidden behind hanging willows. An old man comes out of a ramshackle gate, holding a fish and carrying a jug. To go strolling on the sands with a few good friends at this time would be far better than riding a horse into the mud in the capital.

### Chen Ji-ru (1558–1639), A Colophon for "The History of Flowers"

Those who have a taste for the wilderness but experience no delight in it are woodsmen and herdsman; those who let fruit rot without ever getting to taste it are hired gardeners and grocers; those who have flowering trees but cannot enjoy them are the nobility. Of the famous men of olden days, only Tao Qian found his interest held everywhere by mulberry and hemp, by pines and chrysanthemums, by fields and villages. Su Dong-po loved gardening and was able to touch flowers and trees with his own hands. This comes from a person's nature and cannot be forced. Force it, and even if you give someone the "History of Flowers," he will become irritable and throw it away. But if such things are close to your nature and you also love them, then I urge you to take this book with you to lie in the sun among the trees and watch carefully as the flowers blossom and fall. What difference is there between this and the course of the rise and fall of men and dynasties over the past thousand years? What we refer to as the "Twenty-one Dynastic Histories" may well all be in this one unorthodox history.

Zhang Dai belonged to the generation of Ming writers who, in their maturity, witnessed the fall of the Ming and the establishment of the Qing Dynasty. Like other writers of "minor pieces," Zhang Dai's best-known works, "The Dream Recollections of Tao-an" (*Tao-an meng-yi*) and "Tracing West Lake in Dream" (*Xi-hu meng-yun*), treated special moments and small occasions; but Zhang Dai, writing after the fall of the Ming, recasts such moments through the haze of memory.

### Zhang Dai (1597–1679), Night Theater on Gold Mountain ("The Dream Recollections of Tao-an")

One day after mid-autumn in 1629, en route from Zheng-jiang to Yan-zhou, we reached Bei-gu in the late afternoon and moored the boat at the mouth of the river. Moonbeams had been poured from an upturned bag into the

water, and their light played flickering on the waves; misty vapors swallowed in the light, then spat it back out, whitening the sky. I was amazed and delighted; and when we moved the boat past Gold Mountain Temple, it was already about ten o'clock. As we went through the Dragon-King Chamber and into the main hall, everything was silent and black as pitch. Moonbeams leaked through the forest and lay widely scattered like patches of snow.

I told my servant boy to bring the props and costumes for a play, and we hung up lanterns throughout the main hall. And we performed two plays—*Han Shi-zhong*, *Prince of Qi*, at *Gold Mountain* and *The Great Battle on the Yangzi*. The drums and gongs resounded everywhere, and everyone in the whole temple got up to look. There were old monks rubbing the sleep out of their eyes with the backs of their hands, their mouths all hanging open in one accord. There was yawning and stretching and laughing and sneezing, until gradually their attention was fixed; and where these people were from, what they were doing, and when they had come—none of these things did they dare ask.

When the plays were over, the daylight was soon to arrive. We undid the moorings and crossed the river. The monks of the mountain followed us down to the foot of the mountain and for a long time followed us with their eyes, not knowing whether we were people or apparitions or ghosts.

Zhang Dai seems to have had a particular fondness for events that appear suddenly, full of light and noise, then disappear just as suddenly. The following piece is an example of Zhang's breathless, impressionistic prose at its most characteristic.

#### Mid-September on West Lake ("The Dream Recollections of Tao-an")

There is nothing at all to look at on West Lake in mid-September but people looking at the mid-September moon. There are five types of looking among people looking at the mid-September moon. One type looks at it thus: in great pleasure barges with cabins, flutes and drums playing, banquets teeming with tall-capped officials with lanterns, actors and servants in a tumult of voices and light, and though they call it "looking at the moon," they don't actually see the moon. Another type looks at it thus: they are also in pleasure barges, and these barges also have cabins, with famous courtesans and the flower of the fair sex, and those whose hands are held include handsome young catamites; laughter and cries are mixed together as they sit in circles on open-air platforms, with seductive glances cast right and left; they are right under the moon but they don't actually look at the moon. Yet another type looks at it thus: they are also in pleasure barges and there are also voices in song, with well-known singing girls and relaxed monks pouring small cups of wine and caroling softly, with gentle piping and strings played softly, throat and woodwind each coming forth in turn; they are also right under the moon, and they do look at the moon, but want others to look at

them looking at the moon. Yet another type looks at it thus: neither in boat nor carriage and wearing neither cloak nor turban, but drunk from wine and having eaten their fill, they shout in small groups and make their way into the crowds. At Zhao-ting Temple and Broken Bridge they make a racket, and pretending to be drunk, they carol out of key; the moon they do indeed look at, and those looking at the moon they look at, and those not looking at the moon they also look at, and actually don't look at anything. Yet another type looks at it thus: in small boats with light awnings, clean tables and warm stoves, teapots soon to boil, and the pale white porcelain quietly passed round; good friends and fair ladies invite the moon to sit with them, sometimes concealing their reflections under trees, sometimes fleeing the din to the interior of the lake; they look at the moon, but no one sees how they look when looking at the moon, and they don't look at the moon self-consciously.

When the people of Hang-zhou go sailing on the lake, they go out mid-morning and come back in the early evening, avoiding the moon as if it were their enemy. But on this evening of such fair repute they all go out in throngs, usually giving their household guards some wine money as a bonus, and sedan-chair bearers, torches in hand, wait for them in lines along the shore. Once they get in their boats, they hurry the boatmen to push off as soon as possible from Broken Bridge, and catching up, they enter the swarm of other boats. Thus, before ten o'clock people's voices, the drums and piping, seem to boil up and crash, seem like nightmares or talking in one's sleep, seeming to deafen and drown out speech, until all together the large boats and small boats make for the shore, and one sees nothing but boat-pole knocking against boat-pole, boat bumping boat, shoulder rubbing shoulder, face looking at face. In a brief moment the excitement is over; the parties of officials break up, with black-robed government servants yelling to clear the road; sedan-chair bearers shout, and people in the boats become distressed that the city gates will be locked, and, with lanterns in hand like constellations of stars, they go off, everyone squeezed into groups. People on the shore also follow the crowds to make it to the city gates, gradually growing fewer and more scattered, until a moment later they're all gone.

Only then did we moor our boat near the shore. And as the stone stairs to Broken Bridge grew cool, we spread out mats on them and called to those still out to come drink with us. At this time the moon was like a newly polished mirror; the hills were again freshly adorned, and the face of the lake was again bathed clean. Those who had poured small cups of wine and caroled softly came forth; those who had concealed their reflections under the trees also came forth; we exchanged friendly words with them and urged them to sit with us. Companions in verse came by; well-known singing girls showed up; winecups and chopsticks lay still; throats and woodwinds sang out. The moonlight was gray and cool, and the guests didn't go their ways until the east was growing light. Then we pushed off in the boat again and slept off the wine in the midst of ten leagues of lotus blossoms, whose fragrance brushed over us, and our clear dreams were quite contented.

### Viewing the Snow from "Heart of the Lake Pavilion" (“The Dream Recollections of Tao-an”)

In February 1632, I was living at West Lake. There was a blizzard that lasted three days, and the sounds of birds and people on the lake ceased entirely. On the day in question, just as the night was drawing to a close, I took a small boat, and wrapped in a fur coat and huddled close to a portable stove, we went off by ourselves to look at the snow from Heart of the Lake Pavilion. There was a white haze of lake mist around the trees; the sky and the clouds and the mountains and the water were all white above and below. The only reflections on the lake were the single streak of the Long Embankment, the single dot of Heart of the Lake Pavilion, the single mustard seed of our boat, and the few specks of the people in the boat.

When I reached the pavilion, there were two people sitting on a rug and a servant boy who was tending a stove on which the water for heating wine had just come to a boil. When they saw me, they were delighted and said, “Who would have thought there would be anyone else on the lake!” They dragged me over to drink with them, and I took my leave after forcing myself to drink three mugs. When I asked who they were, I found out that they were from Jin-ling and were visiting. When I got in the boat, one of the boatmen mumbled, “I guess the gentleman here isn’t all that foolish because there are others even more foolish than he is.”

“Foolish” (*chi*) was a double-edged quality, sometime pejorative and sometimes positive. It was applied to those who were “besotted” by love but was also the term used to describe the innocence of children. To the boatman, going out in the freezing cold at the break of dawn is “foolishness” in one sense; Zhang Dai reports the story positively, because to him such “foolishness” is a quality in which he takes pride.

### The Performance of Peng Tian-xi (“The Dream Recollections of Tao-an”)

The performances of Peng Tian-xi were the finest in all the world, yet in every scene he stayed with the script and never altered a single word to suit his own taste. When he wanted a scene performed, he would invite the actors to his house and spend twenty or so pieces of silver; and in no time at all his family fortune of one hundred thousand was used up. Throughout the months of spring he was usually at West Lake and visited Shao-xing perhaps half a dozen times. He came to my house and played fifty or sixty scenes without ever exhausting the range of his art.

Tian-xi usually played villains and clowns. The most vicious and violent men of all time and the worst flatterers became even more cruel in passing through Tian-xi’s heart, on Tian-xi’s face they became still more wicked, and coming from Tian-xi’s mouth they became even more malevolent. When he put himself in their positions, it seemed that even the evil of King Zhou of

Shang was not as bad as this. He would knit his brows and peer around, and there was really a sword in his heart and a dagger behind his smile; he had a demonic air and a deadliness so sinister that the audience felt dread. We may well say that all the book learning in Tian-xi’s breast, all the mountains and streams in his breast, all the schemes and stratagems in his breast, and all his extraordinary and restless energy had nowhere to express itself, so that he expressed it in this singular way.

When I see a good play, I regret that I cannot wrap it up in fine brocade and pass it on forever without perishing. I have compared it to a whole night of fine moonlight in the heavens and to a cup of tea brewed just for the right amount of time—all of these provide only a moment’s use, and yet we treasure them endlessly. When Huan Yin saw a fine spot in the landscape, he abruptly shouted, “It’s just too much, too much!”<sup>5</sup> There truly are such things that are just too much, things the mouth cannot express.

### Preface to “Tracing West Lake in a Dream”

I was born in the wrong time and have been far apart from West Lake for twenty-eight years. Nevertheless not a day has gone by when West Lake was not in my dreams, and the West Lake of my dreams has, in fact, never left me for a single day. Earlier, in 1654 and 1657, I twice went to West Lake; and of places like the mansions beyond mansions of the Shangs at the Yongjin Gate, or the Qi’s temporary lodgings, or the estates of the Qians and Yus, along with my own family’s gardens—of a whole shore of lake villas there survived only shards of the tiles. Thus what still existed in my dreams was, in fact, not there at West Lake itself. And as for the view from Broken Bridge, all the lithe willows and tender peaches of bygone days, the mansions and pavilions for singing and dance, were as if swallowed up by a vast flood, and not one in a hundred survived.

I then fled the place as quickly as I could, telling myself that I had come here because of West Lake and that from what I now saw, it would be better to guard the West Lake of my dreams, where I could still keep it complete and unharmed. At that point I fancied how different my own dreams were from the dream of Li Bo. When Li Bo dreamed of Tian-mu, it was like a goddess or a renowned beauty; he dreamed of what he had never seen, and such a dream was illusion. But when I dream of West Lake, it is like my home garden and my family; I dream of what used to be, and such dreams are genuine.

I have now lived in lodgings rented from someone else for twenty-three years, but in my dreams I am still where I used to live. The young servant who served me then now has white hair, but in my dreams his hair is still done up like a young boy’s. I cannot rid myself of these long-standing habits and cannot escape an old disposition; and both now and hereafter I can only

<sup>5</sup>In fact, the famous Eastern Jin aristocrat gave this response to hearing a song.



be melancholy in my Butterfly Cottage and walk slowly from my Bed of Rude Awakening. My dreams are all that I have to hold to, a stream of scenes of West Lake, still perfectly arranged and unmoving.

When the children want to know about it, I may happen to tell them; and it may be all speaking a dream from within a dream, but it is not speaking out of this present nightmare. Thus I came to write the seventy-two entries of "Tracing West Lake in a Dream" and leave them for generations to come as a reflection of West Lake. I am like that man of the hills who returned from the seaside, praising the pleasures of seafood in glowing terms; and everyone in his hometown crowded around him to lick his eyes. But, unfortunately, once those precious relishes and sweet morsels of shellfish pass the tongue, they are gone—and then how can licking the eyes ever satisfy the craving?

—The sixteenth of the seventh month, 1671.

By Zhang Dai, the old man of Butterfly Cottage in Gu-jian

## Belatedness

Although the Ming and Qing was a theater-loving culture, the arguments made by some late Ming intellectuals for the legitimacy of drama and prose fiction as "high" literature were intended to shock common opinion. Poetry was still generally considered the most important literary form, and the High Tang was considered the height of poetry and the immutable norm of poetic excellence. The more extreme versions of such an opinion, held by the influential Archaists, declared that one should not even read the classical poetry of the Song and Yuan dynasties, so far had it diverged from the High Tang standard. That common opinion had serious consequences for contemporary poetic practice: new poems could either be like the Tang, in which case they would be imitative, or unlike the Tang, in which case they would be bad poems, swerving from the very qualities that seemed to define poetic excellence. The Archaists favored imitation; but a century of "Archaist" domination of classical literature produced so much uninspired verse that new solutions had to be found.

This dilemma in classical poetry was only one aspect of a much larger problem in elite culture during the Ming and Qing: how a contemporary writer or intellectual could establish his own worth in a culture where past achievements set the standards against which contemporary works were judged. A very similar dilemma can be found in European culture from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century, and the Chinese solutions parallel those of Europe in interesting ways. Both cultures eventually produced a modern notion of "historicism," in which each period had distinct qualities that defined what was "good" only for that period.

To argue, as Li Zhi and others did, for the importance of vernacular literature was one solution to the dilemma; that solution emerged victorious only in the twentieth century. Another solution was to go back and take a fresh look at classical poetry from periods other than the Tang, to develop a broader sense of what was "good" in poetry, and to begin to develop a sense of relative historical value in which each

age had its own distinct strengths. The classical poetry of the Song, so maligned by the Archaists, was the ideal place to begin. Thus the late Ming saw a revival of interest in Song poetry and a cultivated admiration for precisely those ways in which it differed from Tang poetry. The following preface to a new edition of Song and Yuan poetry compiled by Yuan Zhong-dao catches the flavor of the times. It was an uneasy defense of the Song, and, as always, the image of the Tang loomed large in the background.

Yuan Zhong-dao was the younger brother of Yuan Hong-dao and a well-known literary figure in his own right.

### Yuan Zhong-dao (1570–1623), A Preface to "Poetry of the Song and Yuan"

Poetry never reached a greater height than in the Tang. If a poem comes from the hand of someone in the Tang, it possesses color when you look at it, it possesses tone when you test it with a knock, and it seems to possess a bouquet when you sniff it. Even from as much as a thousand years ago, those poems are like blades just off the whetstone or the petals of flowers newly spread. The Song and Yuan masters who followed them found in song lyric and vernacular song the unique achievements of their own talents and feelings; and even if Tang writers had condescended to write in such forms, they would not necessarily have been able to surpass the Song and Yuan. But when it came to classical poetry, the Song and Yuan masters could only yield place to the Tang. Take a couplet like Chang Jian's on "Broken Mountain Temple":

A bamboo trail leads through to hidden places,  
a meditation chamber deep in flowering trees.

Ou-yang Xiu claimed that he could never come up to that, even if he spent his whole life trying. Su Dong-po said that Ou-yang Xiu had, in fact, become sick of the rich flavors of meat and fine rice and developed a taste for conch—but this is not the case. Literature is bound up with the temper of the times. Comments like these do not mean that their talents were inferior to those of the Tang or that their learning was inferior—it was merely a limitation imposed by the temper of the times and an inability to force themselves to be the same. It is not a matter of want of effort that the Han and Wei was not like the *Classic of Poetry*, or that the Tang was not like the Han and Wei, or that the Song and Yuan were not like the Tang. Nevertheless, it is indeed an error to seize upon this and subsequently claim that the Song and Yuan had no poetry worthy of the name.

Past critics maintained that excellence in poetry was like the taste of salt in water or the pure pigment in colors, that the meaning was not exhausted when the words stopped. This is, in fact, true of countless individuals during each generation of the Tang and of countless poems by each of those individuals. In expressing their emotions and drawing scenes, they made what



was far seem close at hand, and they made what was separate merge; their excellence lay in a sense of something held in reserve and in not expressing everything openly. Their style was elevated, their energy had an organic unity, and they observed the rules strictly. Yet they were extremely conservative in their choice of material for poems, and the path they took was a very narrow one. There is no question that the course of development they set in motion had no choice but to change, becoming the Mid-Tang and the Late Tang. Given the fact that Li Bo and Du Fu already could not help extending poetry's range in new directions in order to say everything they wanted to say, why blame the Song and Yuan masters for doing the same?

The Song and Yuan were the successors of the three phases of Tang poetry, and they spent all their efforts and skill in poetry, until the splendors of the universe were virtually all divulged with nothing left over. Those who made poems found themselves at an impasse where change was necessary. And they preferred to let each person bring out his own innate capacities, to let each person come up with his own devices and strategies in order to adequately convey what he-wanted to say; they were never willing simply to repeat or imitate, to gather up the drops of spit left by others to die in the words of their predecessors.

Thus the full gamut of feeling was exhausted, and there was nothing they left undescribed; the full range of scenes was exhausted, and there was nothing they left unused in their poems. They left nothing undescribed, yet reached the point of describing what did not need to be described; they used everything, yet reached the point of using what did not need to be used. At their worst what they wrote could be preposterous, clumsy, crude, or slick and frivolous, as if they simply brought out poems like turning over a barrel or emptying a sack, without taking time to pick and choose. In general they took their sense of measure from their own sensibilities and learned rules only from their native wit; when a thought stirred them, they gave voice to it; and when the thought was done, they were silent. Even though they cannot compete with the Tang for the heights, still those points where their flashes of brilliance cannot be expunged should be preserved in this world together with the Tang. It is for this that Song and Yuan poems are being printed here.

When I read the Song and Yuan masters, I find that the talents of the most outstanding are high, their grace is also deep, and they read everything there was to read. Thus when they conceived poetic ideas and fashioned phrases, they tended to go far off on tangents; even if this was a different mode from any other period in history, they still made something worth handing on to posterity. I find it outrageous that later scholars, short on talent and with pedestrian sensibilities, didn't read over the books gathered together and just picked out the most superficial phrases of Tang poets on wind, clouds, moonlight, and dew, while at the same time looking on Song and Yuan writers as if they didn't exist. In fact, rhetoricians of recent times came up with the unprecedented claim that one should not read the writings of the Song and Yuan.

Any reader should draw from a wide range and garner what is best; each of those talented and ingenious men over the course of five or six centuries achieved something unique. When you take what's the best in them, it can always bring something out in one's spirit and wisdom. Is it not a great injustice to wipe them generally from consideration in one fell swoop? Ever since this theory that one should not read Song and Yuan poetry appeared, it has been the jungle in which closed-minded and lazy men have found refuge. Since one need not read their books, they don't need to be preserved either. In this case should we then just let the literary collections of the Song and Yuan be scattered to the winds and lost, and not be concerned with them any more?

Early in the Song, there were the collected works of the "Nine Monks"; it was said that if you put them together with Tang works, you couldn't tell them apart. By the middle of the Song, their collected works no longer survived. Lu You praised the poems of Pan Bin-lao as having an unequalled excellence. And yet today we have no way to get a glimpse of Pan's collected works. Huang Ting-jian had the highest words for Gao He's achievements in emulating Du Fu, but even the local gazetteer of his native Jiang-ling omits his name. Everywhere I see lines from the Song and Yuan written on a painting or on some set topic, and there are some extremely fine poems; but either we know of the person yet don't have his collected works, or we have his works yet these don't include that poem. From this we know that a great many Song and Yuan poems have not survived. If we look for them now, we will find one in a hundred or ten in a thousand that we ought to treasure, make our secret acquisitions, and extol publicly to keep this part of our culture from being lost forever; how then can they say that we need not read this and need not preserve it!

The calligraphy and paintings of the Song and Yuan are still preserved in the households of erudite connoisseurs and collectors and have become immortal now. Yet the fact that their poems alone are so rarely exhibited makes them truly lost classics. Pan Shi-heng of Xin-an has spent much effort seeking out and purchasing various collected works by Song and Yuan masters. He has had plates carved to print them in order to ensure that the writings of these two dynasties last forever, together with those of the Tang. This is a most welcome event in the past several centuries and one that is very much in accord with my own feelings on the matter. Thus I have not demurred and have written this introduction for him.

## Diary

Although extensive travel diaries had been written since the Song, the great age of the diary in China began in the late Ming. One of the best diaries of the period is the long "Account of My Travels in Fei" by Yuan Zhong-dao. He begins by persuading himself that he needs to get out of the house and take a vacation: that a trip by boat would really be much better for his studies than staying at home trying to read.

Yuan Zhong-dao, from "Account of My Travels in Fei"

1. December 1, 1608, in the Wan-li Reign. I've been staying in Yun-dang Valley. After I failed the examination last year in 1607, I lodged with Commander in Chief Qian of Yu-yang and came home this May. My brother Hong-dao had previously held an office in the Ministry of Rites and was on his way south in the winter of 1607-08 when he got news from the Ministry of Personnel. He went back to the capital this spring, while I stayed at home. The bamboo in Yun-dang Valley grew leafier from each day to the next, and the flowers grew more splendid. At several spots among them I added pavilions and terraces, and I felt a strong determination to live a life of retirement.

2. After living quietly for a few months, I suddenly longed to go traveling. In fact, while I was in Yun-dang Valley I had had a really good experience of the secluded life and was able to shut my door and study. But as things were, it couldn't go on that way very long. I was oppressed by family responsibilities and got caught up in social obligations to outsiders, such as writing responses and paying social calls; and habitual guests were intruding on me and disturbing me until finally I didn't have a moment to breathe. These are the reasons I wanted to go traveling: First, famous mountains and splendid rivers could flush clean the everyday concerns that filled me. Second, there are quite a few chapels in Wu and Yue where I could sit quietly and study. Third, even though my learning has reached the level of reliable interpretation, my intuitive powers are still not deep enough; beholding a scene gives rise to feelings, but there are still many points where I get bogged down on precipitous paths. On a trip I might meet famous monks and superior companions and be imbued with their improving influence, molding and quickening the sense of everyday routine that I have in my bones and making me susceptible to transformation. This is the reason I didn't dare cling to my peace and quiet.

3. I happened to be with my uncle Gong Jing-ting when the talk turned to the question of traveling. I said, "Traveling shouldn't be pressured by questions of fame and profit; it's better just to go along with the river. However, when you go by river, it's also best to buy one's own boat and carry one's own provisions in it. Then, no matter whether you go quickly or slowly, no matter whether it's near or far, you can hope to come upon fine scenery and fine friends, and then you can linger there a long time and follow all your impulses to climb mountains, go sailing, or just hang around; and you won't be hurried along by your elders. Also there are a lot of storms on the rivers and lakes, and only when you have your own boat can you travel when you should travel and stop when you should stop—there is nothing more convenient than this." My uncle said, "I have a boat that I had made myself, as strong and solid as possible. Moreover, I've used it over the course of many

years, and now, nephew, I'll turn it over to you." At the time the boat was right in Sha-shi, the district capital.

4. From town I crossed the river and went to the district capital to see to preparations for the trip. At night the sky looked quite bad, with dense clouds spread out on all sides. By daybreak the sky had cleared, and there were small ripples on the surface of the river. The atmosphere was clear and lovely. I took a short rest when I reached Yellow Rapids. In Wang Shi-peng's collected works this is written "Yellow Altar"—there must have been a reason.

5. I went to the river to get a look at the boat that Uncle Jing-ting had given me, and it was quite sturdy. I got in the boat and made tea using river water—it was excellent. Then I took a stroll in the marketplace, recalling when I came here twenty years before, with the "girls like clouds." Too bad that it's so dreary and deserted now. . . .

[Yuan Zhong-dao sets off on the river. Any expectation of escaping the circle of friends and their demands would prove illusory—but one suspects that Zhong-dao never really wanted privacy in the first place. Letters also reach him.]

12. I received a letter from my brother Hong-dao in which he said, "Now I really understand that I cannot be an active, enthusiastic official—my only fear is that I can't get away from this quickly." You can tell what was on his mind. I got a letter from Li Ben-ning that said, "I recently read the *Yuyang Collection* and didn't know about the poems 'On the Words "Wild Goose." When it's convenient, I would be grateful if you would copy them out and send them to me." I had actually written that poem in the spring of 1606. Subsequently the monk Wu-ji wrote two more poems on the topic. Next Hong-dao and I locked horns in competition in front of Ju-luo Pavilion and together did ten more poems on the topic. Long Zhu-ling later saw them and admired them, and he too did ten matching poems. Long Jun-zhao also did ten matching poems, while the two official astrologers Zeng and Lei did two poems apiece. I had my poem printed in my *Yundang Collection*. . . .

29. I embarked to go back to Gong-an and spent the night at He Cave. There was nothing else to do in the boat, so I read, revised poems, burned incense, made tea, and did calligraphy on fans. Thus I passed a day in ease.

30. I got in the boat with my uncles Gong San-mu, Gong Jing-ting, and Gong Fang-ping. We moved the boat to the sandy beach on the northern shore, where we sat on mats and drew characters in the sand to amuse ourselves. I got some intuition of the excellence of the ancients in making seal impressions in clay and drawing in sand. The wind grew a little stronger, and we moved closer to the water's edge and listened to the waters churn-

ing. We boiled a fish and heated wine, then lay back drunk and sang boisterously. We saw the evening sun turn blood red and decorate the isles and sandbars. . . .

32. Night, there was a great blizzard. I had wanted to get in the boat and go to Sha-shi, but was finally prevented by the snowfall. Nevertheless, the bits of snow struck against the thousands of stalks of bamboo and made a tinkling sound. With the window dark and the fire red, I read a few chapters as my whim took me, but found little interest in them. And I thought it was too bad that whenever I wanted to go somewhere, something would come up that would keep me from it; still, I go when the course of things indicates, and when thwarted, I stop—I just go with the flow. This is what Huang Ting-jian meant by: "There is no spot I cannot find lodging for a dream."

These are just a few incidents from the early pages of Yuan Zhong-dao's diary, which goes on in this vein, detailing the small pleasures, pains, and incidents of that period of his life, for 310 pages in a modern edition (it would be about two to three times as long in English translation). Less than forty years later, we have a diary of a very different sort—short, and covering only ten days. But they were ten memorable days. The subtlety and cultivated ease of the late Ming has quite gone.

In 1645, Shi Ke-fa, commander of the Southern Ming forces, decided to make his stand against the advancing Qing armies in the city of Yang-zhou. After a siege of only seven days, the city fell, and what followed was the bloodiest chapter in the Qing conquest of the Ming.

Qing critics, perhaps unfairly, sometimes blamed late Ming aesthetic and intellectual culture for the fall of the dynasty. The late Ming sensibility, with its focus on private life and inner experience at the expense of concern for the polity, was afterward seen as decadence. The citizenry of Yang-zhou certainly paid a terrible price for their passivity and inability to act in their own defense, but they possessed the ability to tell the story with an intensity of detail that makes it still memorable, and that ability derived in no small part from an art of diary and "minor pieces" fostered in an age of heedless peace.

### Wang Xiu-chu, from "Ten Days of Yang-zhou"

On the fourteenth of the fourth month in 1645, the High Commander Shi Ke-fa couldn't hold his position on the Bai-yang River and fled to Yang-zhou in disarray, closing the city walls tight to withstand the enemy. Up to the twenty-fourth, the walls had not yet been breached.

There were soldiers defending each of the gates that controlled access to the city. My own house was in the western part of the city, whose defense was under the command of someone named Yang. Soldiers and staff were distributed everywhere. I had two billeted in my house, as did each of the houses around me. These soldiers acted in a shamelessly overbearing way, and more than a thousand cash a day was spent to provide for them. Even-

tually we had no choice but to make plans as a group to entertain their commanding officer, and I even went to such lengths as to treat him with great deference, so that our relations gradually became cordial. The commanding officer was delighted and warned his troops to keep away from us.

This commanding officer liked music and was good mandolin player. He wanted to get some well-known courtesan to entertain him in his time off from his military duties. That evening he had invited us to drink with him. Everyone present was ready to indulge himself freely when all of a sudden a note came from the high commander; the officer looked it over and the color drained from his face. Immediately he went atop the walls, and all of us dispersed to our homes.

The next morning the high commander's proclamation was read out; and when it came to the words, "So long as there is one man in the city to withstand them, they will not oppress the common folk," all who heard it were stirred to tears. We also got news that a patrol had achieved a minor victory, and everyone touched their foreheads in celebration.

After midday, one of my wife's relations came from Gua-zhou to get away from the fleeing troops of the Earl of Xing-ping (Gao Jie was the Earl of Xing-ping, and the high commander had dispatched him out of the city to hold himself at a distance). Since my wife had not seen her in a long time, they were sobbing when they met; but I had already been told by several people that enemy troops had entered the walls. I quickly went out to see what I could find out, and someone said, "The relief column of Huang De-gong, the Count of Jing-nan, has arrived." Then I observed that the troops defending the wall were maintaining strict discipline. Next I went to the market, where there was an uproar of people talking. Men with their hair hanging loose and in bare feet appeared right afterward. I asked them what was happening, but they were in such a state of panic and so out of breath that they weren't able to answer me. All of a sudden a few dozen horsemen went galloping from the north toward the south in a disorderly mass like a surging wave; they were closely gathered around a single man—it was the high commander. It turned out that they had fled out to the east of the walls, but couldn't get through the soldiers assaulting the city, then had decided to flee through the south gates and thus had passed through here.<sup>6</sup> At this point I realized that there was no doubt the enemy had entered the city.

Abruptly a single horseman appeared going from north to south. He had let the reins drop and was going slowly, looking upward and crying out in despair; in front of him two foot soldiers led the horse by the bit and, out of affection, wouldn't abandon him—to this day I can see the picture clearly in my eyes, and I regret never having learned his name. When that horseman had gotten some distance away, the men who had been defending the wall began to come down in droves to hide, throwing away all their helmets

<sup>6</sup>When the Manchu troops had broken through Yang-zhou's defenses, Shi Ke-fa tried to commit suicide, but was saved by his escort and taken out of the city, where the Manchus eventually captured him and killed him.

and weapons. Together with them were those with head wounds and broken legs; and when I turned and looked at the wall towers, they were already completely empty.

Seeing that the city walls were too narrow to set up his cannons, the high commander had earlier ordered plank scaffolding to be erected on the parapets; room was left in the front for passage along the wall, while the back part reached to the roofs of people's houses, allowing extra space so that it could rest secure. Before this work was completed, the first of the enemy over the wall clasped their bows and descended with naked blades. The soldiers defending the wall were jammed against one another; and since the way was blocked off in front of them, they all escaped on the wooden planking. Crawling along, some managed to reach the roofs; but the new planking wasn't firmly fixed, and all at once the footing gave way; men were falling like leaves, and ninety percent died. Those who reached the roofs broke tiles wherever they stepped, all making sounds like swords and pikes striking one another, or like a rain of hailstones or shot; the clanking and crashing echoed all around without letup, and the people in the houses were in utter terror and frantic, not knowing what to do. Inside and outside main halls and deep into the women's apartments, everywhere the soldiers who had been defending the wall were climbing down from roofs and in their fear looking for some cubbyhole in which to hide themselves. The owners of the houses yelled at them but couldn't stop them. Doors to corridors and between adjoining rooms were shut, and all evidence of human habitation was hidden from sight.

The back of my main hall faced the wall, and from a crack in my window I peered out and saw soldiers moving along the wall south and then west. They were marching in strict order and even in the heavy rain they showed not the least suggestion of disarray, so I guessed they were a force sent to bring the situation under control, and at that my heart calmed down a little. Suddenly there was an urgent knocking at my door. This turned out to be one of my neighbors, who wanted me agree to go out as a group to welcome the Qing troops and set up a table with burning incense to show that we were not resisting. Even though I knew this wouldn't work, I still wouldn't go against the consensus of the group and at the moment answered, "All right." Then I changed into clothes of a different color and kept a lookout, but for a long time no one showed up.

When I went back to the rear window to get a look at what was happening on the wall, the companies of soldiers had somewhat thinned out; some were on the move and some were standing still. All at once I saw that there were some walking with women clustered among them, and I noticed that the colors of the women's clothes were all in the Yang-zhou fashion. Then I became very alarmed. I went back and said to my wife, "The soldiers are in the city. If something unforeseen should happen, you will have to commit suicide." My wife agreed and said, "I have a certain amount of silver that I want to turn over to you to take care of. We women no longer can

envision staying alive in this world." And with tears streaming down her face, she got out her silver and gave it to me.

At this point a domestic came in, shouting urgently, "They're here! They're here!" I rushed out, and looking north I saw several horsemen coming, holding the reins and moving slowly. At once the man who had gone out to welcome the Qing troops bowed his head as though something had been said. At the time everyone was watching out for himself, and there was no normal interchange—even people a few feet away made no comment. When they got somewhat closer, I realized that they were going from house to house looking for money. Still their intentions seemed rather moderate; as soon as they got a little something, they would let people go and demand no more. Some people wouldn't give them what they wanted, but even though they would hold them at sword point, they still didn't hurt anyone. When I later learned that someone had been killed even though he made an offering of ten thousand taels, it was, in fact, because people from Yangzhou itself had led the enemy soldiers to do it.

Next they reached my threshold. One horseman singled me out, pointing to me and shouting to the horseman behind him, "Get something from the one with the indigo blue gown." At that the horseman behind dismounted, but I had already fled and hidden myself. Thereupon the rear horseman let me go, mounted up again, and left. I tried to figure it out to myself. "I'm dressed in rough clothing like a servant—why did they single me out?" After that my younger brother showed up, and one of my older brothers also came. I discussed with them what should be done: "The residences all around me belong to rich merchants. What am I going to do if they take me for a rich merchant as well?" I then entrusted my wife and the others to my eldest brother; he was to go out in the rain and take them as quickly as possible by back lanes to the house of my next oldest brother. His house lay behind the He family tombs, a stinkhole inhabited entirely by poor people.

I stayed on at the house by myself to see what would happen. All at once my oldest brother showed up and said, "The main roads are splattered with blood. What are you waiting for staying here? If we brothers can stay together dead or alive, we should have no regrets." So I reverently took the family's ancestral tablets in my hands and went with my eldest brother to the house of my other older brother. At that time one older and one younger brother, his wife and her child, along with my wife and one child, my two sisters-in-law, and one brother-in-law all took refuge in my brother's house.

Dusk was gradually falling, and the sounds of enemy soldiers killing people came from outside the gate, so we climbed up on the roof to hide for the time being. The rain was very heavy, and a dozen of us were huddled together in one rug, everyone's hair drenched. Outside the gate the voices crying out in pain kept ear and soul in a state of terror on into the night, when all gradually grew still. Only then did we dare get down from the roof, climbing down from the eaves, and lit a fire to cook our meal. Inside the city fires

had started up on every side—a dozen or so places nearby and more than we could count farther away. Red beams of light glistened like bolts of lightning, and the crackling sounds roared endlessly in our ears. We also heard the muffled sounds of blows being struck, and now and again we would look around in anguish—the misery was beyond description. When the food was ready, we looked at one another in such a state of shock that no one could use their chopsticks and no one could suggest a plan as to what to do. My wife took out the silver and broke it into four equal parts. My three brothers and I each hid one part. It was everywhere—in our hair, in our shoes, in our clothes, in our sashes. My wife also found a worn-out robe and some battered shoes for me so that I could be comfortable, and then I lay with my eyes wide open all the way to dawn. A bird was singing in the sky that night, its voice like the notes of a reed mouth organ, and there were also sounds like a baby crying, all not far from our heads. Later I asked the others about it, and they had all heard it too.

The twenty-sixth: After a while the force of the fires died down a bit. As the sky gradually grew brighter, we once again climbed up on the roof to keep out of sight, and there were already a dozen people hiding in the roof drains. All of a sudden by the eastern porch a man climbed up over the wall; a soldier was following him sword in hand, bounding along in pursuit as if flying. He looked and saw us, and the group of pursuers gave up on the man they had been chasing and ran in my direction. I was shaking with fear and immediately fled down from the roof; my elder brothers came next, and then my younger brother. After we had run over a hundred paces, we stopped. And from this point on I lost track of my wife and child, not knowing whether they lived or died.

The cunning soldiers were afraid that too many people would hide themselves, so they deceived people by claiming there were orders to bring calm to the populace and that there would be no executions. People in hiding scrambled to come out and follow them, and they had gathered a group of fifty or sixty, with women making up half. My elder brother said, "The four of us are helpless, and if we run into rampaging soldiers who ignore the orders, we won't escape. It would be better to join this large group where it will be easier to hide. And if it doesn't go well, I won't regret it as long as we can die together." At that time our minds were in turmoil, and we didn't know what the best stratagem would be to save our lives. So we all agreed and together went to join the group.

There were three Manchu soldiers in charge of the group. They searched everyone for silver and money, and my brothers were cleaned out of everything they carried, leaving only me unsearched. All of a sudden some people called out to me from the group of women. I looked closely and saw that they were the two concubines of my friend Zhu Shu. I hurriedly stopped them. Both women had disheveled hair and their flesh was showing; their feet were mired deep in the mud up to their calves. One of the women was still carrying her baby daughter. A soldier hit them with his whip and threw the baby into the mud, then drove everyone on. One soldier led the way,

holding a sword; a second soldier brought up the rear hefting a long spear; the third soldier sometimes stayed in the group and sometimes went to either side of it to keep anyone from escaping. The several dozen men were driven along like dogs and sheep; if there was the least holding back, the soldiers would immediately beat the person and sometimes kill him on the spot. All the women were tied at the neck by a long rope, like pearls on a string; they would stumble at every other step, and their bodies were covered in mud.<sup>7</sup> Babies lay everywhere on the ground, some in between the hooves of horses and some under people's feet; brains and internal organs were smeared on the ground, and the sound of wailing filled the wilderness.

We walked across ditches and pools stuffed with piles of corpses, hands and feet layered on one another. The blood, flowing into the water, reddened its sapphire blue and made it multicolored. The canal was filled in until it was level with the ground. We came to the compound that had belonged to Judge Yao Yong-yan of the Court of Judicial Review and entered directly through the rear gate. The building held a deep maze of rooms, and everywhere there were piles of corpses. I thought for sure that this would be the place I was to die. But we wound our way through the rooms until we reached the front door, then went out into the street and came to another compound, which was the house of the western merchant Qiao Cheng-wang. This was the lair of the three soldiers.

We entered the gate, and one soldier was already there holding several beautiful women captive inside. Baskets and hampers had been sorted through, and brightly colored silks were heaped like mountains. When this soldier saw that the three others had arrived, he gave a loud laugh and immediately drove our group, the several dozen men, to the rear banquet hall, while keeping the women in a side chamber. In that chamber two square tables were set up, with three seamstresses and a middle-aged woman making clothes. That woman was from Yang-zhou; she was heavily made up in an elegant style and was dressed in splendid clothes with an elaborate hairdo. She was smiling and chattering as she gave orders. She appeared cheerful and quite content, and whenever she found something nice, she would immediately turn to the soldiers and beg to have it with wheedling, ingratiating airs. I regretted that I couldn't snatch one of those soldier's swords and cut the vile creature down. At one point a soldier said to the men, "When we were on the Korean campaign, we captured tens of thousands of women, and not one of them failed to keep her honor. How is it that glorious China has reached this level of shamelessness?" And this, alas, is how China came to these troubles.

The three soldiers then ordered the women to take off all their wet clothes, outer garments and underclothes from tip to toe. At the same time they ordered the women making clothes to measure them for length and girth to furnish them a change of fresh clothing. Under duress the women had no

<sup>7</sup>The women's difficulty in walking is no doubt due to their bound feet, making it impossible to keep pace in the muddy streets.

choice and were compelled to face them naked, with their private parts all exposed, and they looked like they would die of shame—the scene was beyond description. When the women had finished changing, they herded them over to drink wine, while keeping up an endless stream of joking and chatter. All of a sudden one of the soldiers hefted his sword and leapt up, shouting sharply to those in the rear banquet hall, “Come on, Southerners, come on!” Several men who approached had already been tied up, and my eldest brother was among them. My next oldest brother said, “Since the situation has come to this, what more can I say?” He then quickly took hold of my hand and pulled me forward; my younger brother also followed him.

At that time there were over fifty males who had been captured; with the mere lifting of a sword and a single shout, their souls took flight, and not a single man failed to go forward. As I followed my older brother out of the rear banquet hall, I saw that outside they were killing the men, and the group just stood in line, each awaiting his fate. At first I had thought that I too would willingly go to be tied up, but all at once, as if by divine aid, my heart balked, and I fled back into the rear banquet hall to hide. And none of those more than fifty men realized it.

The rooms on the west side at the back of the banquet hall still held all the old women, so I couldn't hide there. I went through the central hall to a back room, and it was filled with camels and horses feeding so that I couldn't get through. I felt an increasing sense of desperation, so I crouched down and went under the animals' bellies and came out on the other side after crawling under several bellies. If I had startled one of those camels or horses and one had lifted its hoof just a little, I would have immediately been smashed into mush. I passed through several more levels of rooms, but none offered a route of escape. Only at the side was there a rear gate that led to an alley, but the soldiers had already shut this gate tight with a long spike.

I went from the rear alley back toward the front of the compound and heard the sounds of killing in the front hall; at this my terror increased and I saw no recourse. I looked around and the kitchen was over to the left. The four men in it had been taken to serve as cooks. I asked if they would let me join them, thinking that if they used me to perform menial tasks such as tending the fire or drawing water, I might have a chance. But the four men adamantly refused, saying, “The four of us were selected for this task. If we pick someone else and add to our number, they will surely suspect us of trying to put something over on them, and ruin will come to us.” When I wouldn't stop pleading, they got even more furious and wanted to seize me and take me outside.

Then I left and felt even more panic. I looked and saw that in front of the stairs there was a wooden frame, on which there was a jug. It wasn't very far from the room, so I climbed up on the frame; but as soon as my hand reached the jug, I lost my balance and fell, because the jug was empty inside and I had been exerting too much force.

Nothing could be done about it, so I ran quickly to the side alley gate and hit the spike with both my hands and shook it a hundred times. But I

couldn't budge it. I then used a stone to hit it, and the sound reached the outer courtyard—I was terrified they would be alerted. I had no choice but to again use all my strength to move it. My fingers were cut and blood flowed, trickling in a stream down to both elbows. Suddenly the spike moved; and using all my strength, I pulled on it. When the spike was in my hand, I hastily worked at the bolt of the gate. The bolt was made of hibiscus wood, and swollen from having been soaked by the rain, so that it was twice as tight as the spike. I was desperate in the extreme, and the only thing I could do was to force the bolt. I couldn't pull the bolt, but the hinges suddenly snapped, and the door of the gate collapsed with a sound like thunder. I quickly leapt up and flew through the opening, and I still don't know where my strength came from. I ran quickly out the back gate and was right at the foot of the city wall.

At the time soldiers and horsemen were everywhere one went. Unable to go on, I ducked into the rear gate of the neighbor to the left of the Qiao compound. Every place a person could hide had someone in it, and they would never let anyone else in. Going from the rear to the front of the compound, I tried five times to get into a hiding place, and in each case it turned out the same way. When I reached the main gate overlooking the street, there were soldiers going back and forth in an unbroken stream. Everyone else had deserted the street as being too dangerous a place to stay. I hurried back in and found a bed. At the head of the bed was a canopy frame. After climbing up the post and curling up inside it, my panting subsided. All of a sudden I heard my younger brother crying out on the other side of the wall; then I heard the sound of a sword chopping; after three chopping sounds, all was silent. After a short interval I again heard my second oldest brother say with desperate earnestness, “I have silver in the cellar of my house; let me go and I'll give it to you.” There was a blow and again it was silent. . . .

The narrator's troubles were far from over. When he finally found his wife and what was left of the family, the nightmare was just beginning.