

Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature

*Women and National Trauma
in Late Imperial Chinese Literature*

WAI-YEE LI

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W.Y.L.

Abbreviations

- BQ* Yu Huai 余懷. *Banqiao zazhi (wai yizhong)* 板橋雜記 (外一種). Annotations by Li Jintang 李金堂. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000.
- CSY* Ding Chuanjing 丁傳靖. *Cangsang yan* 滄桑艷. Annotations by Chen Shengxi 陳生璽. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1991.
- CZL* Chen Zilong 陳子龍. *Chen Zilong quanji* 陳子龍全集. Edited by Wang Zhiying 王志英. 3 vols. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2011.
- DS* Du Fu 杜甫. *Du shi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳註. Compiled by Chou Zhao'ao 仇兆鰲. Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1985.
- DYK* Ding Yaokang 丁耀亢. *Ding Yaokang quanji* 丁耀亢全集. Eds. Li Zengpo 李增坡, Zhang Qingji 張清吉. 3 vols. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1999.
- FRJ* Chen Weisong 陳維崧. *Furen ji* 婦人集. In *Xiangyan congsbu* 香豔叢書.
- GS* Liu Shu 劉淑. *Geshan ji* 个山集. In *Liu Duo Liu Shu funü shiwen* 劉鐸劉淑父女詩文, edited by Wang Siyuan 王泗原. Beijing: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999.
- HJAS* *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*.
- HLM* Cao Xueqin (1715–ca. 1764). *Honglou meng bashi hui jiaoben* 紅樓夢八十回校本. Edited by Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 and Wang Xishi 王惜時. 4 vols. Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1985.
- KSR* Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648–1718). *Kong Shangren quanji jijiao zhubing* 孔尚任全集輯校註評. Edited by Xu Zhengui 徐振貴. 4 vols. Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 2004.
- KXY* Kangxi Yangzhou fuzhi 康熙揚州府志. Compiled by Cui Hua 崔華 and Zhang Wanshou 張萬壽. In *Siku quanshu cunmu congsbu*, vols. 214–15. Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 1996.
- LCG* Wu Weiye 吳偉業. *Linchun ge* 臨春閣. In *Qingdai zazhi xuan* 清代雜劇選, edited by Wang Yongkuan 汪永寬 Yang Haizhong 楊海中, and Yao Shuyi 幺書儀. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1991.

- LRS Chen Yinke. *Liu Rushi biezhuan* 柳如是別傳. 3 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980.
- LRSJ *Liu Rushi ji* 柳如是集. Edited by Fan Jingzhong 范景中 and Zhou Shutian 周書田. Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 2002.
- LRSSJ Fan Jingzhong 范景中 and Zhou Shutian 周書田. *Liu Rushi shiji* 柳如是事輯. Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 2002.
- LSY Li Shangyin 李商隱. *Li Shangyin shige jijie* 李商隱詩歌集解. Annotated by Liu Xuekai 劉學鍇 and Xu Shucheng 徐恕誠. 5 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988.
- LQL Lu Qinli 遼欽立. *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei Chao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩. 3 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.
- LXM Li Yu 李玉. *Liang xumei* 兩鬚眉. In *Li Yu xiqu ji* 李玉戲曲集. Edited by Chen Guyu 陳鼓虞, Chen Duo 陳多, and Ma Shenggui 馬聖貴. 3 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004.
- LY Li Yu 李漁. *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集. 20 vols. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1991.
- LZH Wang Fuzhi 王夫之. *Longzhoubui zaju* 龍舟會雜劇. In *Qingdai zaju xuan*.
- MYMS Zhuo Erkan 卓爾堪. *Ming yimin shi* 明遺民詩. Tokyo: Caihu shulin, 1971. Facsimile reprint of the 1960 Zhonghua shuju edition.
- MYSW Wang Duanshu 王端淑, comp. *Mingyuan shiwei chubian* 明媛詩緯初編. Qingyin tang, 1667.
- QJ Wu Zhaoqian 吳兆騫 (1631–84). *Qiujiu ji* 秋笳集. Edited by Ma Shouzhong 麻守中. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993.
- QLJ *Qianlong Jiangdu xianzhi* 乾隆江都縣志. Compiled by Wuge 五格 and Huang Xiang 黃湘. *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng* 中國地方志集成. Included in *Jiangsu fuxianzhi ji* 江蘇府縣志輯. Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1991.
- QMZ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益. *Qian Muzhai quanji* 錢牧齋全集. Annotated by Qian Zeng 錢曾. Edited by Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯. 8 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003.
- QQC *Quan Qing ci: Shun Kang juan* 全清詞。順康卷. Edited by Nanjing daxue Zhongguo yuyan wenxue xi Quan Qing ci bianzuan weiyuanhui 南京大學中國語言文學系全清詞編纂委員會. 20 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002.
- QSC *Quan Song ci* 全宋詞. Edited by Tang Guizhang 唐圭章. 5 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999.
- QSSJ Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯 et al. *Qing shi jishi* 清詩紀事. 4 vols. Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2004. Facsimile reprint of the 1987 edition.

- QJSCB Deng Zhicheng 鄧之誠. *Qingshi jishi chubian* 清詩紀事初編. 2 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984.
- SG Deng Hanyi 鄧漢儀. *Shiguan* 詩觀. In *Siku quanshu cunmu congsbu bubian* 四庫全書存目叢書補編, vol. 39.
- SKQS Yingyin Wen yuan ke sikuquanshu 景印文淵閣四庫全書. Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983.
- THS Kong Shangren 孔尚任. *Taohua shan* 桃花扇. 4 vols. In *Guben xiqu congkan wuji* 古本戲曲叢刊五集. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985.
- TPGJ Li Fang 李昉 et al., comp. *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記. 10 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981.
- TYH Tao Zhenhuai 陶貞懷. *Tian yu hua* 天雨花. Edited by Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 and Li Ping 李平. 3 vols. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1984.
- WMC Wu Weiye 吳偉業. *Wu Meicun quanji* 吳梅村全集. Edited by Li Xueying 李學穎. 3 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990.
- WSZ Wang Shizhen 王士禛. *Wang Shizhen quanji* 王士禛全集. Edited by Yuan Shishuo 袁世碩. 6 vols. Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 2007.
- YHJ Wang Duanshu 王端淑. *Yingranzi Yin hong ji* 映然子吟紅集. In *Qingdai shiwen ji huibian* 清代詩文集彙編, vol. 82. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009.
- YMA Mao Xiang 冒襄. “Yingmei an yiyu” 影梅庵憶語. In *Fusheng liuji (wai sanzong)* 浮生六記 (外三種), edited by Jin Xingyao 金性堯 and Jin Wennan 金文男. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000.
- ZWJ Meng Chengshun 孟稱舜. *Zhenwen ji* 貞文記. In *Meng Chengshun ji* 孟稱舜集. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005.
- Zuo zhuan Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu 春秋左傳注. Annotated by Yang Bojun 楊伯峻. 4 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000 (1981).
- ZXX Li Yin 李因. *Zhuxiao xuan yincao* 竹笑軒吟草. Edited by Zhou Shutian 周書田. Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003.

Introduction

On the nineteenth day of the third month of 1644, the Chongzhen emperor (Zhu Youjian 朱由檢, 1611–44, r. 1628–44) hanged himself on Coal Hill in the suburbs of Beijing as rebels overran the capital. According to the conquerors who eventually established Qing (1644–1911) rule, this event marked the end of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Holdovers from Ming rule, such as the Hongguang court in Nanjing (1644–45),¹ and loyalist resistance that lasted until 1662, however, raised questions on the finality of the official ending.² Likewise, to contemporary observers, the consolidation of Qing rule was a protracted and by no means inevitable process. Even as the Kangxi emperor (1654–72, 1662–1722) came of age and stability was tentatively restored, the Rebellion of the Three Border Principalities (1673–81), led by Chinese army leaders who had defected to the Manchus and facilitated the conquest in the 1640s and 1650s, gravely challenged the newly established regime.

Contemporary writings addressing the protracted and tortuous Ming-Qing transition are filled with apocalyptic images of violence, rupture, and destruction. Some experienced the Qing conquest as a crisis of culture and tradition, symbolized among other things by the mandated change of hairstyle and costume. Others felt compelled to make

1. In the fifth month of 1644, Zhu Youjian's cousin Zhu Yousong 朱由崧 (Prince Fu) ascended the throne in Nanjing and adopted the reign title Hongguang. This year-long continuation of Ming rule is sometimes called "the Southern Ming."

2. See Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*; Struve, *The Southern Ming*; Gu Cheng, *Nan Ming shi*. Resistance lasted until 1683, if we include Zheng Chenggong's 鄭成功 (1624–62) force in Taiwan.

momentous choices of life and death, choosing to “perish with the country” when the Ming collapsed, amidst a chorus of intense debates on the justifications for survival or the meanings of martyrdom. Loyalists (*yimin* 遺民, literally, remnant persons) engaged in anti-Qing resistance or withdrew altogether from participation in the new order. Withdrawal had gradations: some shunned ties with Qing officials; others maintained them.³ Still others became “turncoats,” and of this group the Qianlong emperor (1711–99, r. 1736–95) invented the derogatory category of “officials who served two dynasties” (*erchen* 貳臣).⁴ Service under the Qing, however, did not preclude “inner distance” or mourning for the fallen dynasty.

The Ming-Qing transition coincided with a vibrant period in Chinese literary history. The emotional and psychological dimensions of political turmoil found compelling expression in many genres, including histories, witness accounts, memoirs, poetry, fiction, and drama. Reworking the old adage that literary creation is rooted in the flaws of existence, one poet wrote, “The realm’s misfortune is the poet’s good fortune” 國家不幸詩家幸:⁵ this formulation places the burden of “negative impetus” on the author’s historical context. This logic is also evident in Huang Zongxi’s 黃宗羲 (1610–95) argument that eras of decline and chaos produce great poetry: the absolute disjunction between the poet and his historical reality leads to extreme anguish, which in turn makes for powerful, involuntary poetic expression.⁶ What looks like a theory of

3. The lifestyle of loyalists could be ascetic or religious, but it could also be gregarious and self-indulgent.

4. The word *er* means “to shift allegiance” and “to be disloyal.” These biographies were intended for eventual use in the standard history of the Qing but were later published separately as *Qinding guoshi erchen zhuan* 欽定國史貳臣傳. See Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict*, p. 64; Xie Guozhen, *Zengding wan Ming shiji kao*, pp. 775–77.

5. Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814), “Ti Yuan Yishan ji” 題元遺山集, in Zhu Zefei, ed., *Qing shi xuanping*, pp. 393–94.

6. See Huang Zongxi, “Xie Gaoyu nianpu youlu zhu xu” 謝皋羽年譜遊錄注序, “Suozhai wenji xu” 縮齋文集序, “Huang Fuxian shi xu” 黃孚先詩序, “Chen Wei’an ninabo shi xu” 陳葦庵年伯詩序, “Wan Lü’an xiansheng shi xu” 萬履安先生詩序, “Ma Xuehang shi xu” 馬雪航詩序, in *Huang Zongxi quanji*, 10:12–13, 31–35, 47–50, 95–97. Similar formulations are also found in Qian Qianyi, “Huang Tao’an xiansheng quanji xu” 黃陶庵先生全集序, “Haoqi yin xu” 浩氣吟序, “Tang Zuming shiji xu” 唐祖命詩集序, in *QMZ*, 5:741–43, 789–90; Gui Zhuang, “Luohua shi xu” 落花詩序, in *Gui Zhuang ji*, 1:119–20; Zhu Heling, “Xielin ji xu” 顯林集序, in *Yu’an xiaoji*, 8:8a–8b.

poetic genesis likely arose from the longing for poetic intervention. Huang imagines literary creation as both the product of, and recompense for, alienation and disempowerment.

Needless to say, not all of the writers of this period were responding to national trauma, but the riveting symbiosis of history and literature was such that even silence on the contemporary turmoil sometimes invited interpretations of repression or deliberate elision. Questions of how and why the Ming dynasty fell, how it should be remembered, and how its collapse defined personal and political choices dominated the early Qing literary imagination. Subsequent moments of political disorder, such as the Taiping Rebellion, the late Qing dynastic crisis, and the Sino-Japanese War, produced writings that sought prototypes of heroes, martyrs, traitors, and collaborators from the Ming-Qing transition. In the twentieth century, cultural nostalgia for a lost world destroyed by modernity, wars, and revolutions has often found metaphors of loss and retrieval in the fall of the Ming, the collapse of the Qing dynasty being too recent, messy, and implicated in the forces of destruction. Further, loyalist writings have sometimes come to represent the spirit of opposition and independence.

In taking stock of how the fall of the Ming reverberates in Qing writings and beyond, I have found the discursive and imaginative space commanded by women pivotal. Encompassing writings by women, writings about women, and men writing in a “feminine voice,” this space gives us access to the mentality of those who remembered or reflected on the dynastic transition, as well as those who reinvented its significance for later periods. It shows us how history and literature intersect, how conceptions of gender mediate the experience and expression of political disorder. In numerous writings across genres, variations on themes related to gender boundaries, female virtues, vices, agency, and ethical dilemmas are used to allegorize national destiny and the political choices of individuals. “To allegorize” is to draw on analogies ranging from transparent to elusive. Indirect modes of expression (深曲, 隱曲) often involve a man taking up a woman’s voice or persona. The crossing of gender boundaries emerges as a recurring theme, as male poets renewed the tradition of charging feminine diction and metaphors with political meanings while women poets turned to political engagement and heroic strivings in their writings.

It is fitting, therefore, that this book should begin with chapters exploring the relationship between gender and boundaries. I am not interested in defining quintessentially (or even historically evolving) male and female voices. The terms “feminine” and “masculine” are but pointers to their usual imagistic associations in conventional critical writings. The more pertinent issue is how shifts in gender roles test the boundaries of imagining and representing experience. Chapter 1 explores how the wonted tradition of male poets using feminine diction to convey political meanings developed during the Ming-Qing transition. The idea is as old as the *Verses of Chu* (*Chuci* 楚辭) tradition (ca. 3rd c. BCE)—and once it took hold, many poems in the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) were retroactively interpreted along the same lines. The tradition of using “beauties and fragrant flora” 美人香草 to refer to (usually unsuccessful) political quests persisted through different periods, but one of its high points was in the mid-seventeenth century. It also comes up often in reappraisals of earlier poets. Indeed, our very impression of certain poets as masters of “metaphorical and allegorical meanings” 比興寄托 employing the language of romantic longing for political purposes is often based on early Qing interpretations. Several early Qing commentary editions of the poetry of Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813–58), for example, chart the political implications of what could have been read as love poetry.⁷ A collection of song lyrics from the Song-Yuan transition (ca. 1280s), *The Supplementary Titles of the Music Bureau* (*Yuefu buti* 樂府補題), was rediscovered in 1679. The scholar and poet Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709) presented the ornate, sensual, and melancholy song lyrics in that collection as elegies to political ideals, and Chen Weisong 陳維崧 (1625–82), another great lyricist, described them as loyalist laments.⁸ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664) argued that “subtle expression” 微 marks the continuity between poetry and historical writings in chaotic times.⁹

7. See Zhu Yi'an, “‘Shijia’ bingfei ‘zong ai Xikun hao’”; Liu Xuekai, *Li Shangyin shige jieshoushi*.

8. On the allegorical meanings of *Supplementary Titles*, see Xia Chengtao, “Yuefu buti kao”; Huang Zhaoxian, *Yuefu buti yanjiu jianzhu*; Kang-i Sun Chang, “Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings.” On the importance of these works for Qing song lyrics, see Yan Dichang, *Qing ci shi*, pp. 244–54; Li Kanghua, *Ming Qing zhiji Jiangnan cixue sixiang yanjiu*; Zhang Hongsheng, *Qingdai cixue de jiangou*, pp. 32–59.

9. Qian Qianyi, “Hu Zhiguo shi xu” 胡致果詩序, in *QMZ*, 5:801.

The confluence of political disorder and a poetics of indirectness will define the broad context for chapter 1.

I will address a spectrum of partially overlapping possibilities—a male writer “passing” for a woman, adopting a female voice or persona, or turning to feminine choices, emotions, and perspectives as poetic topics. The possible correspondence between private and public domains, romantic and political expressions will lead to more general ruminations on the parameters of a poetics of indirectness. My focus will be the implications of such poetic choices for expression and communication, especially in moments of national crisis that render both more urgent and more difficult. During the Ming-Qing transition, censorship necessitated subterfuge, and ambivalent, contradictory emotions sought refuge in indirect expression, even as politicized readings become a pervasive practice among the poets’ contemporaries as well as their posterity.

When does “hiding behind a woman” convey a clearly coded, albeit indirectly expressed, political message? Under what circumstances does that poetic choice express real ambivalence about historical changes? How do female personae and feminine imagery function as a cipher affirming common ground or negotiating differences in poetic exchanges within male literary communities? One thing is certain: this acknowledged convention can have the effect of framing the interpretive act as the focus of attention (even, at times, dramatizing it), and in the process, it allows us to see how and why a time-honored formula can inspire a range of different readings. The rich contextual materials in this period also grant us glimpses into the social functions of this poetic convention or its realization as a social process.

Chapter 2 explores how political disorder transforms gender roles in women’s writings. If male voices using feminine diction for allegorical purposes in the mid-seventeenth century drew on numerous antecedents in the Chinese poetic tradition, early Qing women writers who challenged gender boundaries started a new tradition, whose echoes would reverberate in the rhetoric of revolution as the Qing dynasty faced imminent demise. In the extant corpus of China’s most famous woman poet Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1081–ca. 1141), we can find one song lyric and a handful of poems that break the mode of delicate restraint 婉約 and speak of heroic yearning or address historical, political themes. The significant number of women writing about their contemporary crisis

represents a new phenomenon; there was simply nothing comparable before the Ming-Qing transition. More generally, this was one of the high points in women's literary culture in the late imperial period.¹⁰

The toll of war and devastation raises perennial questions of human agency and limits, and for some women writers the Ming-Qing transition created or heightened the real and imagined space for heroic aspirations, political engagement, and historical understanding, as I will show in chapter 2. Poems about fallen blossoms or dying willows from this period, if written by a man, will likely be mined for metaphorical meanings or political references, especially if his biography supplies clues for such readings.¹¹ A woman writing on the same topics would not have expected her writings to be interpreted (by default) in political terms. She would thus have supplied somewhat more explicit "allegorical indices" even if she adhered to a style of delicate restraint.

Alternatively, she might have chosen to write directly about witnessing, understanding, and remembering the momentous events of her times. In doing so, she would sometimes question gender roles and stereotypes. In addition, women involved in resistance or sympathetic to the loyalist cause often self-consciously developed a martial, heroic self-image. References to swords and military imagery in women's writings from this period are on rare occasions literal; more often than not they encode an independent spirit or heroic aspirations, or they become a symbol of gender discontent. More generally, discontent with gender roles often emerges as the pre-condition for, as well as the consequence of, political engagement. It explains in part concomitant changes in the rhetoric of friendship (between women, and between men and women)—we see a new emphasis on political, intellectual, and spiritual common ground, sometimes tied to a sense of common cause or a shared experience of national calamity. This is also a self-reflexive moment: many of

10. See Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chamber*; Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush*; Fong, *Herself an Author*; Deng Hongmei, *Nüxing cisbi*; Zhao Xuepei, *Ming mo Qing chu nü ciren yanjiu*; Kang-i Sun Chang, *Gudian yu xiandai de nüxing chanshi*; Widmer, "Ming Loyalism."

11. See, for example, Wang Fuzhi's ninety-nine heptasyllabic regulated verses on fallen blossoms (*Chuanshan quanshu*, 15:565–84) and Gui Zhuang's poems on the same subject (*Gui Zhuang ji*, 1:119–23). We read these as anguished political laments because Wang and Gui were staunch loyalists. The political interpretations of Wang Shizhen's "Autumn Willow" poems and of the poetic exchanges they inspired will be discussed in chapter 1.

these women writers often self-consciously dwell on what it means to write and particularly to write as a woman.

While chapter 2 focuses on women poets who wrote about heroic aspirations, chapter 3 deals with the representation of real and imagined heroes. Moving from poetry to prosimetric fiction (*tanci* 彈詞), I present the story of a putative mid-seventeenth-century female author who claims to be driven by autobiographical impulse to retrace the relationship between herself and her father by writing about the Ming collapse. Using internal clues, I date the text to a later period, the eighteenth century: this leads to questions such as, why did a woman writer who did not directly experience the Ming-Qing transition invoke the Ming dynastic crisis to articulate the bonds and battles between father and daughter? How does political disorder legitimate a daughter's rebellion and charge her with a patrimonial burden?

More generally, representations of heroic women lend dignity and pathos to the cataclysmic turmoil of the mid-seventeenth century. The need to memorialize or to fantasize about a female hero asserting her agency, defending a crumbling order, or creating a new one stems from a desire to probe limits and to imagine alternatives in the face of political disorder. In the context of early Qing critiques of late Ming sensibility and reevaluations of romantic-aesthetic values, these heroic stories encompass their authors' indictment, nostalgia, apology, regrets, self-definition, and historical judgment, inseparable from their memory of and reflections on the dynastic transition. I will examine how the trope of heroic transformation modulates different views of the Ming-Qing transition and what it stands for in later periods. Mechanisms of suppression and selective amnesia may determine the memory of historical female heroes. The female hero may be used to indict the collective failure of scholar-officials and of the military command or to defend the self-redemption of late Ming romantic-aesthetic values. She may have to be glorified, yet tamed, in the complex and at times contentious process of imagining a new order. Her heroic image may sublimate violence, dignify failure, turn the past into aesthetic spectacle, and negotiate the claims of the old order vis-à-vis the new one. The idea of "transformations" also points to the shadows surrounding heroic images—hinting at their origins or what they may become, revealing the inherent tensions or contradictions in their making. This is especially evident when we have multiple versions of the same personage or story.

Heroic stories premised on fictional distance in chapter 3 are tied to historical retrospection or broad arguments about the Ming-Qing transition. Chapter 4 shifts scale and turns to remembrances and personal experiences. Writing about courtesans and concubines who displayed valor and resolve, the authors featured in this chapter use details and fragments to retrace memories and to question or defend their own past and present choices, often implicitly pondering the fate of pleasures and passions that shaped their personal history as well as collective memory, as late Ming culture is revisited through the lens of dynastic collapse. Theirs is an “affective” understanding of the past that fuses romantic nostalgia with political lament.

Vignettes about women of talent and sensibility, often expressed in stories of their sad fate and suffering during the dynastic transition, recur in the early Qing literature of remembrance. This literature tends to carry an implicit defense of late Ming romantic sensibility, which is presented as inseparable from moral courage and political idealism. For loyalist writers once steeped in late Ming courtesan culture, these memories became part of their self-definition. At times, writing about women also led to an interest in the recovery and transmission of women’s writings, whose associations with loss and erasure acquire greater symbolic significance in the context of political disorder. For Ming officials who served under the Qing, the proposition that romantic sensibility is instrumental for moral or heroic action is more ambiguous and problematic. I will examine how three important men of letters, all tainted by compromise, turned the women they loved into emblems of valor, resolution, and political integrity. How do “objects of desire” become heroes? The contexts and implications of such transformations differ, but they often define the authors’ own projected self-transformation, motivated by a mixture of self-reproach and self-justification.

Chapter 5 turns to questions of victimhood and agency. In terms of sheer quantity, the most numerous writings about women during this period may be eulogies of women who “perished with the country” 殉國, often as “chastity martyrs” (烈女, 烈婦) who committed suicide to escape rape or were killed defying the enemy (be they bandit rebels, the Qing army, or renegade Ming soldiers). Their deaths are often presented as acts of self-assertion, because there is solace and recompense in the idea of the victim’s agency. Often exemplified by poems on walls 題壁詩 or articles of clothing left by women abducted and “taken away

on horseback,” these writings include anguished laments, “suicide notes,” pleas for assistance, as well as poetic testimonies and judgments of the contemporary crisis. Reflecting an abiding fascination with the victim’s voice, these writings by (or attributed to) victimized women in turn invite poetic responses that debate the appropriate choices for an abducted woman whose chastity is imperiled. The virtual literary community and discursive space thus defined demonstrate the shifting margins between judging and being judged. Divergent attribution and circumstantial details for the same poems in various accounts also illuminate the forces behind the appropriation and varying uses of these writings.

The agency available to such victims captured readers’ interest. Being on the road, albeit against their will, was sometimes imagined as a kind of freedom. There are poems, stories, and plays about women who assume new identities or who fall in love under these adverse circumstances. Romances or marriages thwarted because of national calamity also collapse the boundaries between private and public realms in lamentations of lost love. In this context, accounts of romantic reunions have inevitable political implications; sometimes they are achieved as fantasies of recompense or reconciliation in the new political landscape. In addition to ubiquitous comparisons of female chastity with male political integrity, there are also versions of “apolitical chastity”—chaste women amenable to political compromises—that allow authors to imagine accommodation with the new order.

These stories explore and test different shades of accommodation: what if chastity itself is compromised, for example? In the Chinese tradition, ethical dilemmas (e.g., a person caught between loyalty to the state and filial piety) are often “resolved” through suicide. What should a woman choose when her parents or her husband’s family implore her to sacrifice her honor in order to save their lives?¹² Rather than committing suicide, often the victimized woman protects her family by sacrificing or

12. For some examples, see Gu Shanzhen, *Ke Dian shu*, p. 8; Ji Yun, *Yuewei caotang biji*, 3.40. In Gu’s example, the mother-in-law ordered the widowed daughter-in-law to submit to rebels so that her husband’s family could be saved. In Ji’s account (set in the last years of the Chongzhen era), a young woman watched her parents being tortured and was in the end killed along with them because she would not allow herself to be defiled. Ji finds her dilemma so troubling that he refuses to weigh in on whether she should have relented.

at least compromising her chastity. I will discuss stories that justify compromised chastity by crossing boundaries and exploring the gray zone between integrity and complicity, virtue and self-interest, truth and equivocation.

In contrast to such interest in “crossing boundaries” is the implacable moral certainty behind the praise of heroic women who eluded or defied their captors by suffering violent deaths. The implied logic seems to be that the more violent their deaths, the more remarkable their virtue. In an era when concrete, detailed depictions of violence during the dynastic transition were rare, the suffering female body became the venue for remembering trauma. Chapter 6 begins by considering the relationship between violence, memory, and historical judgment. Using as case study the depiction of the Yangzhou massacre of 1645—one of the most violent episodes of the Qing conquest—in miscellanies, fiction, local gazetteers, poetry, and biographies, I examine how the fate and choices of Yangzhou women help us understand how trauma is remembered and how historical judgments are formed. What kinds of rhetoric serve the respective arguments for eulogies or denigration of women caught up in these events? How and why are “licentious women” made to emblemize the shame of conquest, while women who died resisting real or potential violation are elevated as martyrs in various genres? What are the contexts facilitating or qualifying the logic of blame in the first case? And what are the negotiations underlying the logic of praise in the second? How are their political meanings defined, and why does spectacular virtue need aestheticized violence?

As Yangzhou returned to prosperity during the early Qing, the memory and erasure of trauma can be traced to the varying images of Yangzhou women and the ambiguous role of sensual, feminine imagery in the poetic exchanges bringing together diverse members in literary communities. The celebration of Yangzhou reminds us of the allure of Jiangnan culture and its late Ming moment of glory. The question of judgment thus leads us to consider its problematic realization. This is especially pertinent for those writers with no personal memory of the fallen dynasty. They pursue the promise of “second generation memory,” whereby historical retrospection unfolds in the balance and tension between nostalgia and judgment, both mediated through the writings of, or friendship with, the generation that lived through the Ming-Qing transition.

The female type that most readily invites negative judgment in the tradition is the *femme fatale* who inspires passions that undermine the polity. Yet the woman said to have played a pivotal role in the Qing conquest, the famous courtesan Chen Yuanyuan 陳圓圓 (b. ca. 1620s), eludes the clear explanations and categorical judgments usually linked to the figure of the *femme fatale*. The dominant narrative, especially by the late Qing, becomes one of redemption—whether it is achieved through religion, nationalism, or *her* judgment and self-understanding. She thus ends up illuminating the conditions and functions of historical judgment.

In presenting the main arguments of my book, I have deliberately refrained from specific titles and authors in the belief that an avalanche of names, some of them famous but many of them probably unfamiliar, will not be helpful to the reader. The genres I discuss include poetry, song lyrics, drama (both the shorter northern plays [*zaju* 雜劇] and much longer southern plays [*chuanqi* 傳奇]), classical tales, vernacular stories, full-length vernacular fiction, prosimetric fiction, memoirs, miscellanies, biographies, and local gazetteers. I realize doing so involves some risk—generic history and conventions may not receive enough attention, and supposed thematic shifts may just mask generic differences. However, I have enjoyed the process of following the lead of my materials as their connections unfold, and I hope the reader will also. Most of the works within my purview belong to the Ming-Qing transition and early Qing (mid-17th c. to early 18th c.), but I have found it necessary to delve into mid-Qing, late Qing, and Republican materials because of the ways the fall of the Ming resonates in the writings from these later periods. If given the properly detailed exposition, these reprises may expand this book's scope beyond my competence and the reader's patience, and I have therefore kept them as mere echoes and reverberations.

CHAPTER I

Male Voices Appropriating Feminine Diction

For a male poet to adopt a female persona or use feminine diction is one of the least surprising gestures in the Chinese poetic tradition.¹ This choice is perhaps above all else a matter of aesthetic surface—I use the word “surface” advisedly, since “speaking as a woman” often means communicating finely wrought perceptions and sensations, which put us squarely in the realm of skin, fabrics, reflections, light and shadows, screens and curtains. It is when we move from these surface perceptions to the meanings they are meant to convey that fissures and uncertainties can appear. A poet may choose a woman’s perspective simply because he is interested in the emotional and perceptual horizons it opens up, of course, but there are many cases when we as readers are supposed to infer socio-political functions and meanings. When are we justified to delve into “metaphorical and allegorical meanings” by pursuing correspondences between private and public spheres, or romantic diction and political emotions? Among the contexts that would facilitate their construction are clues given in the titles of works, historical situations

1. A category such as “feminine diction” offers evocative associations rather than precise analytic boundaries. In the Chinese poetic tradition, it suggests sensuous beauty, romantic longing, subtle expression, delicate restraint, and attention to details. The Chinese terms for feminine poetic diction almost always convey sensuous beauty (e.g., *yanti* 艷體, *yanqing* 艷情, *fiyan* 富艷, *huayan* 華艷, *qingyan* 輕艷, *fiyan* 浮艷, *xiangyan* 香艷, *ceyan* 惻艷, *aiyan* 哀艷, *qiyen* 淒艷), attention to details (*xini* 細膩), or indirectness and delicate restraint (e.g., *weiran* 委婉, *wanzhuan* 婉轉, *wanyue* 婉約).

surrounding events depicted in the poem, biographical circumstances, and anecdotes about the composition and circulation of the works in question. When may we rightly use such information as supporting evidence for our attempts to unearth hidden political meanings?

The tradition of conveying “metaphorical and allegorical meanings” through feminine perspectives suggests the aesthetics of indirectness and reticence, yet it encompasses self-revelation in varying degree of transparency. When the poetic “I” in *Encountering Sorrow* (*Lisao* 離騷, attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原, ca. 3rd c. BCE) declares, “The throng of women, jealous of my fair brow, / Slander me with charges of licentiousness” 眾女嫉余之蛾眉兮，謠諑謂余以善淫 (*Chuci jizhu*, p. 9), most readers readily decode this as a lament that jealous rivals block the poet’s access to his ruler. The Tang poet Zhu Qingyu 朱慶餘 (fl. 820s) wrote in the voice of a woman getting ready to pay her respects to her in-laws the morning after the wedding: “Having finished my makeup, I ask my husband: / The way my eyebrows are painted—dark or faint—is it modish or not?” 妝罷低聲問夫婿，畫眉深淺入時無？ The poem’s title (“Boudoir Thoughts, Submitted to Minister of Water Management Zhang” [“Guiyi shang Zhang shuibu” 閨意上張水部])² allows us to construe the young woman as Zhu’s self-representation as he seeks recognition, approval, and direction from his prospective examiner Zhang Ji 張籍 (ca. 767–ca. 830). In contrast to such relative clarity, the possible analogy between the language of ineffable loss and romantic longing in Li Shangyin’s “Untitled Poems” (“Wuti” 無題) and his political aspirations and frustrations or Tang factional politics is very much open to debate.³

In the following examples from the Ming-Qing transition, we see a comparable spectrum of opacity and transparency. Unlike poems from earlier periods, however, rich contextual materials and circumstantial details surrounding the poems reveal how the interplay of concealment

2. This is the title included in Hong Mai, *Tangren wanshou jueju*; Gao Bing, *Tangshi pinbui*; Yang Shen, *Jueju yanyi jianzhu*. The poem has the alternative title “Jin shi shang Zhang shuibu” 近試上張水部 in Cao Xuequan, *Shicang lidai shixuan*; Peng Dingqiu et al., *Quan Tang shi*. On the poetic exchange between Zhu and Zhang, see Fan Shu, *Yunxi youyi* 3:79; Ji Yougong, *Tangshi jishi*, 46.1256–57.

3. For some examples, see *LSY*, 1:389–400, 4:1439–84. Cf. Owen, *The Late Tang*, pp. 335–526. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

and revelation in the use of a female voice or persona is realized as a social process: through this interplay poets adjudicate each other and negotiate their political differences. Hiding behind a woman's voice has always facilitated a poetics of indirectness that expresses complex and contradictory emotions, but by the seventeenth century the very gesture of hiding was built into a culture of performance and theatricality. In these poems the writer's heightened consciousness of audience—be it the contemporary community or posterity—lends drama and pathos to the idea of self-definition through fate and choices that could only befall a woman. One may say that, expecting judgment and varying interpretations, the poet dramatizes the urgency of revelation through concealment by drawing attention to the perils and contradictions of his historical situation. I will begin with a particularly extreme example: one in which a male poet attempts to “pass” for a woman.

Passing for a Woman

Around 1657, a young poet, Wu Zhaoqian 吳兆騫 (1631–84),⁴ writing under the feminine name Liu Susu 劉素素, put up twenty quatrains on the walls of a temple in Tiger Mound near Suzhou (“Huqiu tibi ershi jueju you xu” 虎丘題壁二十絕句有序, *QJ*, 5:200–206; *QJSJS*, 1:1958–60).⁵ In an autobiographical preface, Liu tells of her sad fate during the Ming-Qing transition.

I, Liu Susu, am a native of Yuzhang. Under my mother's care, I grew up in the house of my maternal grandparents. My elder sister Qianniang, admirably skilled in literature, often taught me the art of composing and intoning poems when taking a break from embroidery. As a result, we had frequent poetic exchanges within the inner chambers. In the year Dinghai [1647], my sister got married at the age of eighteen. I was at the time sixteen and just beginning to tie my hair back. My mother arranged my marriage with Licentiate Xiong from the same prefecture. He was a noble young man with a distinguished pedigree. That year great chaos broke out in Yuzhang. I followed my mother and sought refuge in the mountains.

4. On Wu Zhaoqian, see *Qingshi gao*, 484.13337–38; *QJSJSCB*, 3:387–89; Xu Qiu's epitaph, in *QJ*, pp. 341–43; Li Xingsheng, *Shiren Wu Zhaoqian xilie*.

5. In the second quatrain, Liu speaks of being separated from her mother for ten years, which would date the poems to 1657.

And then the northern troops plundered and ravaged with abandon—I was abducted and then trapped under an overarching yurt. Grieving over separation from my mother and sister, and mourning the devastation of family and realm,⁶ I am heartbroken as tears of blood stream down. To suffer ill fate like this—truly I am no different from earthen figurines and drifting lemna.⁷ This year the man [who owns me] is serving in Zhejiang. He has been detained because of military campaigns in Nanjing, and we stopped our boat outside Changmen [the west gate] of Suzhou, awaiting his return. As I sat still by the boat's window, a hundred sorrows came together. I thus sought brush and paper and composed twenty quatrains to vent my lament and anguish. By midnight the poems were completed. Accompanied by a maid, we secretly rowed the boat to Tiger Mound and mourned the legendary courtesan, Zhenniang, at her grave. I then pasted the poems on the wall of the temple, hoping that my feelings can be made known to the talented ones of the Wu area. Alas! Just as the cries of gibbons in the gorges or the simurgh's shadow in the mirror are charged with sadness, the lament of all ages is in these poems!

妾，劉素素，豫章人也。少隨阿母育於外氏，長姊倩娘，雅工屬文，刺繡之暇，每教妾吟詠。自是閨閣之中，屢多酬和。丁亥之歲，姊年十八，嫁于某氏。妾時十六，髮始總額。阿母以妾許聘于同郡熊生，生一時貴公子也。是年豫章大亂，妾隨母氏，避亂山中，既而北兵肆掠，遂陷穹廬。痛母姊之各分，念家山之入破，肝腸寸斷，血淚雙垂。薄命如斯，真不減土梗浮萍。今歲某從役浙中，彼人以戎事滯迹白門，因停舟吳閶門外，以俟其來。兀坐篷窗，百愁總集，因覓紙筆，作絕句二十首，以寫其哀怨之思。夜半詩成，竊與侍婢泛舟虎邱，弔貞娘之墓，因黏詩寺壁，欲與吳下才人，共明妾意。嗟乎，峽裏猿聲，鏡中鸞影，千古哀情，在此詩矣。

6. The line puns with “The grand finale of the tune ‘Nian jiashan.’” According to Chen Yang, *rupo* 入破 (literally, to enter and break up) is a Tang musical term that refers to the converging final notes of a tune. The fact that tunes during the Tang emperor Xuanzong's (685–762, r. 712–56) times were often names of frontier places is taken as an omen that these lands would be lost to barbarian invaders. The court of Li Yu 李煜 (937–78, r. 961–75), the last ruler of the Southern Tang, had a musical tune titled “Nian jiashan po” 念家山破, which can mean, “Thinking of the breakup of home and realm,” and it is also said to portend the fall of the Southern Tang (Chen Yang, *Yue shu*, cited in Ma Duanlin, *Wenxian tongkao*, 142.1257).

7. Earthen figurines 土梗, easily destroyed by water, symbolize evanescence; see *Zhuangzi jishi*, 21.703; *Zhangguo ce*, Qi 3, 10.374; Zhao 1, 18.603. “Drifting” or “floating” lemna is a conventional symbol for homelessness.

Anecdotes about abducted women leaving poetic testimonies on walls and inspiring responses from readers proliferated during the Ming-Qing transition. As we shall see in chapter 5, these stories answered the need for redeeming victimhood. Following the pattern of such accounts, the Liu preface links personal misfortune to political lament. It diverges from the usual pattern on only two points: the lamentation at Zhenniang's grave and the explicit appeal to "the talented ones in the Wu area." Abducted women who left poetic testimonies on walls almost never compared themselves to famous courtesans, and while they bared emotions and often expressed the wish for ransom, rarely did they make collective appeals to an entire literary community.

The grave of Zhenniang, the famous ninth-century Tang courtesan, has since her death been a favorite poetic topic.⁸ In most cases, she features as an eternally absent object of desire, her early death symbolizing evanescence and unattainability.⁹ As in poetic treatments of the grave of Su Xiaoxiao, another famous courtesan, her allure is often personified in the beauty of nature where she is commemorated.¹⁰ (According to legend, the youths of the Wu area carried out her deathbed wish to have numerous flowers planted at her grave.) A Tang scholar, Tan Zhu 譚銖 (9th c.), opines that Zhenniang, alone among the innumerable graves at Tiger Mound, has invited poetic attention because men mostly "value sensual beauty" 重色.¹¹ Imagining Zhenniang's seductive charms at her grave seems to have been a favorite male literary pastime and the topic of many poetic exchanges, although there are also poems that point to the absurdity of such preoccupations by pitting the romantic longings

8. A collection of poems on Zhenniang's grave (*Huqiu si ti Zhenniang mu shi* 虎丘寺題真娘墓詩, in one *juan*) is listed as "no longer extant" in the Song compendium *Chongwen zongmu*, compiled by Wang Yaochen and others.

9. In Bai Juyi's words, "The supremely desirable creatures of this world—it is difficult to make them tarry" 世間尤物難留連 ("Zhenniang mu" 真娘墓, in Bai Juyi, *Bai Juyi ji*, 12.234–35).

10. A good example is Li Shangyin's "Heren ti Zhenniang mu" 和人題真娘墓, in *LSY*, 5:1946–49. The principle of synecdoche here is comparable to Li He, "Su Xiaoxiao mu" 蘇小小墓, in *Sanjia pingzhu Li Changji geshi*, p. 46.

11. Tan Zhu's satirical quatrain "Ti Zhenniang mu" 題真娘墓 is found in an anecdote from Fan Shu's *Yunxi youyi*, 2.42: "On the foothills of Tiger Mound, endless graves pile on, / Pines sighing and desolate—all can stir lament. / Why then must men value sensual beauty, / And on Zhenniang's grave alone inscribe poems?" 虎邱山下塚累累，松柏蕭條盡可悲。何事世人偏重色，真娘墓上獨題詩。

associated with Zhenniang's grave against tragic devastation. One such work is Lu Wenkui's 陸文奎 (1256–1340) poem (dated 1291) lamenting the fall of the Song dynasty.¹²

As mentioned above, extant poems on walls written by (or attributed to) abducted women almost never refer to Zhenniang. Indeed, her grave rarely came up as a topic in women's poetry.¹³ Tan Zhu's censorious quatrain might have taken enough hold for Zhenniang's grave to be pointedly associated with male poets who "valued nothing but sensual beauty." A notable exception is a mournful song lyric on Zhenniang's grave (to the tune "Qin lou yue" 秦樓月, composed ca. 1670s) by the courtesan Chen Susu 陳素素, whose romance with the poet Jiang Shijie 姜實節 (1647–1709) is said to have been sparked by the lyric.¹⁴ Wu Zhaoqian's deliberate invocation of Zhenniang's grave, inasmuch as it is somewhat atypical of women poets and summons incongruously romantic associations, is either an inadvertent betrayal of, or oblique reference to, the use of "Liu Susu" as a mask. "Her" direct appeal to "her" prospective audience is likewise uncharacteristic. We sometimes find pleas for help in this genre of poetic testimony, but the self-revelation of "Liu Susu" sounds more like an implicit invitation for poetic exchange or commentary. These differences point to an incomplete masquerade or perhaps a hidden desire to be found out.

These divergent points notwithstanding, the twenty Liu Susu quatrains contain imagery found often in poetic testimonies of victimized women—being taken away on horseback, sent into exile, subjected to

12. Lu Wenkui, "Huqiu liuti xinmao shu yu Jianchi" 虎丘留題辛卯書于劍池, in *Qiangdong leigao*, 18.7b.

13. The only examples I found from the seventeenth century are a "bamboo song" (*zhuzhi ci* 竹枝詞) by Wu Qi 吳琪 (fl. mid-17th c.) that comments on the popularity of Zhenniang's grave as a poetic topic in the Wu area, a quatrain by Ji Xian 季嫻 (1614–83) on the ephemerality of beauty, and a poem by Zhu Zhongmei 朱中楣 (17th c.) that juxtaposes the self-indulgent sensuality of the writings about Zhenniang with the moral burden of martyrdom. See Zou Yi, *Shiyuan ba mingjia ji*, the chapter on Wu Qi, 14b, the chapter on Ji Xian, 10a; Shen Jiyou, *Zui Li shi xi*, 41.35a–35b. Two other examples from the eighteenth century by Jin Yi 金逸 (1770–94) and Shen Xiang 沈纘 (18th c.), both of whom were Yuan Mei's disciples, present Zhenniang as the emblem of ephemeral glory.

14. Chen's composition of this song lyric is told in scene 2 of Zhu Suchen's (mid-17th c.) play *Qinlou yue*, which is based on the Jiang-Chen romance. Chen Susu's collection, *Er fen mingyue ji* 二分明月集, as well as poems on the romance by other woman writers (among them Wu Wenrou 吳文柔, Wu Zhaoqian's sister), are appended to the early Qing edition of the play.

endless peregrinations, and encountering the desolation of the frontier and the strangeness of northern or nomadic customs. Many of these testimonies invoke comparisons to Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 (1st c. BCE) and Cai Yan 蔡琰 (ca. late 2nd to early 3rd c. CE). Zhaojun (also called Mingjun 明君 or Mingfei 明妃, the Bright Consort), the Han palace lady sent off to marry the ruler of the Xiongnu as part of a policy of appeasement, has through the ages become the cipher for a range of oft-poeticized experiences and emotions, including exile, nostalgia, longing for home, unrecognized worth, the obligation to fulfill one's public duty that takes precedence over private inclinations. She is also sometimes invoked to question the very notion of loyalty, as in the subversive poems by Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–86) and Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521–93).¹⁵ Cai Yan (Cai Wenji 蔡文姬), daughter of the famous scholar Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–92), was abducted and detained by the Xiongnu and was forced to leave her half-Xiongnu sons behind when she was ransomed. Like Zhaojun, she emblemizes exile but has acquired additional associations with poetic testimony, ethical dilemmas, and separation from one's children, because she experienced the return from exile as another displacement and wrote about her travails. Cai Yan is remembered as the prototype of a woman poet whose account of personal suffering also chronicles her tumultuous times, although scholars have questioned the authenticity of the works attributed to her, "Poem of Grief and Rancor" ("Beifen shi" 悲憤詩) and "Eighteen Beats of the Barbarian Fife" ("Hujia shiba pai" 胡笳十八拍).¹⁶

Wu Zhaojun's son, Wu Zhenchen 吳振臣 (b. 1664), claimed that the title of his father's collection, *Autumn Fife* (*Qiuji* 秋笳集), alludes to Cai Yan's songs of the barbarian fife.¹⁷ Indeed, references to Zhaojun

15. Wang Anshi: "The grace of Han is but shallow, that of the barbarians, deep: / In deep recognition of like minds is the joy of human existence" 漢恩自淺胡自深，人生樂在相知深 ("Mingfei qu" 明妃曲, *Linchuan wenji*, 4.11b); Xu Wei: "He who married you to the barbarian was the Han emperor, / He who ransomed Cai Yan, who was he to Han?" 嫁爾呼韓漢天子，贖歸蔡琰漢何人? ("Zhaojun yuan" 昭君怨, *Xu Wei ji*, 8.870). Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), who ransoms Cai Yan and allows her return home, is also a traitor to the Han. From Cai's perspective, the question of who embodies just authority and who betrays it is open.

16. See LQL, 1:201; Frankel, "Cai Yan and the Poems Attributed to Her"; Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush*, pp. 112–27; Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers of Traditional China*, pp. 22–30.

17. Wu Zhenchen, "Qiuji ji ba" 秋笳集跋, in *QJ*, p. 358.

and Cai Yan thread through Liu Susu's longing in these quatrains. Even as she mourns the famed courtesan Zhenniang, she considers herself more pitiable, for like Zhaojun, her grave will lie beyond the frontier (14th quatrain):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 深深芳草葬紅顏 | Deep, deep among the fragrant grass, the fair one is buried. |
| 滿地飛花染淚斑 | Wind-blown flowers are strewn across the ground like so many tear stains. |
| 莫道貞娘多薄命 | Do not say that Zhenniang suffered such ill fate— |
| 猶勝青塚在陰山 | She is better off than the one buried at Green Grave Mound in Yinshan. ¹⁸ |

In the fifteenth quatrain Liu Susu compares herself to Cai Yan, whose sad fate and writings are said to appeal to the sympathy and discernment of “the talented ones of Wu,” among whose ranks Wu Zhaoqian must count himself. Wu is both the author and the ideal reader. By inventing a poetic persona for whom he as reader feels perfect empathy, he bridges the gap between fictional imagination and its historical context and banishes the anxiety of self-division in role-playing. This is a hide-and-seek game that allows him to be both inside and outside the mask:

| | |
|---------|--|
| 滿目東風散柳絲 | East wind scatters willow threads as far as eyes can see. |
| 虎邱山寺獨題詩 | At the mountain temple of Tiger Mound, I inscribe poems, all alone. |
| 吳下才人知不少 | There cannot be a lack of talented men in this land of Wu, |
| 也應腸斷蔡文姬 | They too must be heartbroken over the fate of Cai Wenji. |

According to the late Qing writer and revolutionary Chen Qubing 陳去病 (1874–1933), Wu Zhaoqian's authorship was not revealed until “later” (Chen does not specify when), and Liu Susu was celebrated as the paradigmatic talented yet ill-fated woman: “By daybreak, various scholars saw the poems, and they were all very surprised. They thought these were truly by a woman, and at the time there were many who wrote

18. Legend has it that the grass at Zhaojun's grave stays green despite the arid landscape.

poems in response” 厥明，諸文士見之，咸甚驚異，以爲真閨閣中筆也，一時和者甚眾。¹⁹ Chen does not cite his source for the story, which does not appear in extant early Qing writings. Although the exact circumstances of the composition and circulation of the Liu Susu quatrains remain unclear, their authenticity is not in doubt.²⁰ Wu Zhenchen grouped them with poems composed before 1658 in his father’s collection, *Autumn Fife*, where they appear under the title “Twenty Quatrains on the Walls [of a Temple] at Tiger Mound, with Preface.”²¹ This much is clear: the Liu Susu quatrains follow the mode of “speaking in another’s voice” 代言. Wu usually makes clear the context and logic of impersonation in other poems in the same *daiyan* mode, as in “Gazing Afar, Twelve Songs” (“Wang yuanqu shi’er shou” 望遠曲十二首) or the series of poems composed in the voice of earlier poets titled “Imitating the Ancients, Later Poems in Miscellaneous Styles” (“Nigu hou zati shi” 擬古後雜體詩) (*QJ*, 5.183–87; 6.207–20). In contrast, he provides no explanatory context for the Liu Susu quatrains, and his silence suggests that he did indeed leave these poems on the walls under the assumed name.

What prompted Wu Zhaoqian to adopt this fictive or allegorical mask? Was this merely a youthful prank designed to enhance his reputation as a rising literary talent? Did he use the female persona to facilitate a more dramatic literary exchange or to provoke greater interest?²² Did

19. Chen Qubing, *Wushizhi*, p. 277.

20. “Liu Susu” does acquire enough independent currency to be sometimes remembered as a woman writer in later writings. See, for example, Yuan Mei, *Suiyuan shibua*, 13.345; Ding Chuanjing, *Jia Yi zhiji gonggui lu*, 7.8b; *QJJS*, 4:15635–36.

21. *Qinjin ji* was first published by Wu’s friend, the scholar-official Xu Qianxue 徐乾學 (1630–94), in 1676, when Wu was still in Ningguta. When Wu Zhenchen republished it in 1726, he divided the Xu printing into four *juan*, and added four more. *Juan* 5, “Autumn Fife: Earlier Collection” (*Qinjin qianji* 秋笳前集), and *juan* 6, “Imitating the Ancients, Later Poems in Miscellaneous Styles,” comprise poems composed before Wu’s exile in 1658. *Juan* 7, “Autumn Fife: Later Collection” (*Qinjin houji* 秋笳後集), includes his post-exile poems, and *juan* 8, “Miscellaneous Works” (“Zaju” 雜著), includes writings from different periods. The Liu Susu poems are found at the end of *juan* 5.

22. Jin Shengtian 金聖嘆 (1608–61), for example, claimed to have been possessed by the spirit of a female deity, Lady Compassionate Moon 慈月夫人, and in her voice exchanged poems with Qian Qianyi in 1627. See Qian, “Xian tan changhe shi shishou” 仙壇倡和詩十首, *QMZ*, 1:330–35; “Le fashi lingyi ji” 泐法師靈異記, *QMZ*, 2:1123–26; Wang Yingkui, *Linnan suibi*, 3.46–47; Xu Shuofang, *Xu Shuofang ji*, 2:725–27.

he personally identify with the pathos of the displaced and victimized woman's story? Did he consider it broadly symbolic of his times? Was he using her emblematic power to lament the fall of the Ming? We will never know for sure: all these are plausible motives that could have come together in varying combinations. If the poetic testimony of the abducted woman has special resonance, it may be because exile (psychological and physical, voluntary and involuntary) had become a potent metaphor that captured the imagination in the post-conquest world. Images of exile and alienation are ubiquitous in poetry from this period. Wu Zhaoqian himself wrote about the strangeness of post-conquest Jiangnan in "Sent to Qi Yixi" ("Zeng Qi Yixi" 贈祁奕喜 [1655], *QJ*, 5.187):

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 胥臺糜鹿非吾土 江左衣冠異舊游 | The Gusu Terrace, overrun by deer, is not my land, East of the River are gowns and caps different from travelers of old. ²³ |
|--------------------|--|

In the absence of clear explanations regarding Wu's motives for composing the Liu Susu quatrains, we are left with the irony of their role as the inadvertent omen of Wu's fate as a victim of exile himself. Wu was implicated in the examination scandal of 1657, when allegations of corruption in the Shuntian and Jiangnan civil service examinations led to the execution of the examiners and exile for the successful candidates.²⁴ The case became an excuse for the Qing court's draconian persecution of the literati of Jiangnan, where anti-Qing resistance lasted longer than in the north. Under the surveillance of armed guards, Wu Zhaoqian turned in blank sheets when he had to retake the examination in Beijing in 1658. Interpreted by some as a gesture of protest, it was more likely simply the toll of trauma. Branded guilty, Wu was imprisoned and then exiled to Ningguta (in Manchuria) in 1658, and was allowed to return only in 1681 through the concerted help of some of the most prominent literati and scholar-officials at the time.

During his northward journey in 1659, Wu again assumed the persona of the suffering woman when he wrote a hundred quatrains on the walls of a post-station at Zhuozhou (in Hebei), signing his name as "Wang

23. Wu and Qi Bansun (Yixi) belonged to the same Jiangnan literary circles. Exiled respectively in 1657 and 1661, they continued their friendship "beyond the frontier."

24. See Meng Sen, *Ming Qing shi*, pp. 322–66.

Qianniang, a woman from Jinling” 金陵女子王倩孃. Those poems are not included in *Autumn Fife*, but Xu Qiu 徐鉉 (1636–1708) records two of them in an anecdote in his *Sequel to Poems in Context* (*Xu benshi shi* 續本事詩, p. 374):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 憶昔雕窗鎖玉人 | I recall the carved windows that enclosed the jade-like beauty in bygone days. |
| 盤龍明鏡畫眉新 | In the bright mirror with coiled dragons, she had just painted her brows. |
| 如今流落關山道 | And now, adrift and fallen, on the roads of mountains passes, |
| 紅粉空嬌塞上春 | The fair one tries, in vain, to entice springtime to the frontier. |
| 氈帳沈沈夜氣寒 | The felt tents sink low, the night air chills. |
| 滿庭霜月浸闌干 | Frosty moonlight fills the courtyard, soaking the balustrades. |
| 明朝又向漁陽去 | The morn of the morrow, again toward Yuyang we go— |
| 白草黃沙馬上看 | As we, on horseback, look upon white grass and yellow sand. |

According to Xu Qiu, “These heartfelt words are so wrenching that, from the regions of the two rivers and around the capital, many wrote poetic responses. That was why the poem by Ji Gaiting Fucuo [Ji Dong] says, ‘Most of all, in Qianniang’s lines inscribed on walls / Are the Wu lad’s unbearable feelings at the frontier’s extreme reaches’” 情詞淒斷，兩河三輔多有和之者，故計改亭甫草詩云：最是倩孃題壁句，吳郎絕塞不勝情。²⁵ We cannot be certain whether the Liu Susu quatrains were composed as an elaborate ruse, but the Wang Qianniang poems suggest that the “hiding” can be transparent and effective: Wu’s friends had no trouble decoding the assumed persona.

There is little reason to doubt the authenticity of this anecdote. For one thing, Xu Qiu is a credible source; he married Wu Zhaoqian’s sister and the two studied together in their youth, and Xu wrote the only extant epitaph for Wu upon the latter’s death.²⁶ In addition, the poet Ji Dong 計東 (1625–76), whose friendship with Wu is well documented in *Autumn*

25. See Xu Qiu, *Xu benshi shi*, p. 374; *QJ*, pp. 343–44. On Xu Qiu, see *Qingshi gao*, 484.13342; *QJSJCB*, 3.386–87.

26. See *QJ*, pp. 341–43. See also the letters Wu and Xu exchanged (*QJ*, pp. 308–12, 369–70).

Fife,²⁷ also took care of Wu Zhaoqian's family after his exile.²⁸ The first Wang Qianniang quatrain that Xu Qiu cites is the same as the sixteenth quatrain in the Liu Susu series. The nineteenth-century scholar Wu Chongyao 伍崇曜 (1810–63), who republished *Autumn Fife* in his 1852 collectanea *Yueya tang congsbu* 粵雅堂叢書, confused the two stories and thought that Xu Qiu's anecdote referred to Liu Susu.²⁹ Keeping them separate, however, yields an inadvertent omen and its deliberate fulfillment: whereas images of abduction and exile in the Liu Susu poems promise indefinite allegorical meanings which would, as it happens, tally with Wu Zhaoqian's life, their repetition in the Wang Qianniang poems indicates self-conscious conflation of the poet and his persona.

The element of a possible ruse or practical joke in the Liu Susu story tailors well with anecdotes about Wu's youthful arrogance,³⁰ and Liu Susu's link with collective victimhood is tempered by playfulness and fictional distance. By contrast, Wu's banishment authenticates the pathos of Wang Qianniang's story, just as her figure universalizes Wu's personal misfortune, reminding his audience of the emblematic fate of displacement, in its many guises and ramifications, suffered by so many in that era. In that sense, our interpretations of these two sets of poems are determined by the contexts in which they were composed.

Wu's assumption of the guise of the victimized woman in both the Liu Susu and Wang Qianniang poems may suggest a persistent desire to lament the fallen dynasty and, possibly, protest the new order—a stance that, in the latter case, would be fully justified because of his having suffered wrongful accusation and exile.³¹ Such a reading finds further justification in other poems by Wu, such as “The Song of the White-Haired Palace Lady” (“Baitou gongnü xing” 白頭宮女行, 1658) written

27. See *QJ*, 4.135, 5.158, 5.172, 5.192, 5.196, 8.268–69.

28. See *Qingshi gao*, 484.13337; *QJSCB*, 3.378–79; *QJJS*, 1:1944–48.

29. Wu Chongyao, “*Qinji ji ba*” 秋笳集跋, in *QJ*, pp. 361–62. The fact that Liu Susu's sister is named Qianniang adds to the confusion.

30. *QJJS*, 1:1949, 1953.

31. When Beijing fell in 1644, the precocious twelve-year-old Wu Zhaoqian wrote poems of political lament (“*Qiugan*” 秋感) in the style of Du Fu's 杜甫 (712–70) “*Qiuxing*” 秋興, but by the 1650s he had become reconciled enough to want to participate in the examination and join the new order. Li Yuerui asserts that Wu's implicit lament for the fallen Ming in some of his works might have led to his persecution (*Chunbing shi ye sheng*, cited in *QJJS*, 1:1954). There is little solid evidence for this, however.

on the eve of his exile, in which Wu displays his anguished empathy for the woes of a former palace lady who had served the last Ming emperor.

In contrast, in some other poems Wu Zhaoqian follows the convention of using the abandoned and pining woman to plaintively seek favor and sympathy, without expressing anger or protest.³² The academicians compiling *The Complete Library of the Four Branches* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, 1773–82), perhaps to justify mention of Wu's corpus, claimed that he “only had the voice of grief and sorrow, but harbored absolutely no rancor or resentment against his ruler and superiors” 但有悲苦之音，而絕無怨懟君上之意。³³ The imperative to suppress his rancor, driven by Wu's anxiety to avoid further charges and, if possible, to secure a pardon, is evident in many of his metaphorical invocations of the self-abnegating woman, as in Wu's letter to Ji Dong (dated the fifth month of 1658): “The palace lady from Handan, though married to a lowly menial servant, dreams of the depths of the palace, as she faces spring flowers and autumn moon” 邯鄲宮人，嫁身廝養，而春花秋月，尚夢深宮。³⁴ The figure of Wang Zhaojun appears in *Autumn Fife* as the emblem of sorrow and longing divested of resentment.³⁵

Wu was not the only one to see himself as an ill-fated beauty; the same pathos obtains in his friends' characterizations of him, as in Gu Zhenguan's 顧貞觀 (1637–1714) famous song lyrics, addressed to Wu in 1676: “Compared to the fair-faced ones, even more ill-fated, / How then to bear now what is ever more unbearable?” 比似紅顏多命薄，更不如今還有 (to the tune “Jinlǔzi” 金縷子, in *QJ*, p. 408). Chen Weisong also laments Wu's fate using the familiar tropes of the abandoned woman and the “distant marriage” of Wang Zhaojun in his poem (“Five Laments” [“Wu'ai shi” 五哀詩], in *QJ*, p. 382).

32. See, for example, “Zhongshan ruzi qie” 中山孺子妾, “Xiang fei yuan” 湘妃怨, “Changmen yuan” 長門怨, “Qie boming” 妾薄命, in *QJ*, 3.107–9. Included in a 1676 edition published by Xu Qianxue, these poems cannot be dated with certainty. The sense of “pandering to those in power” 媚上 is also precisely what irks his critics.

33. *Siku quanshu zongmu*, cited in *QJJS*, 1:1952.

34. Wu Zhaoqian, “Yu Ji Fucuo shu” 與計甫草書, in *QJ*, pp. 268–69. The image is taken from *yuefu* ballads; see Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji*, 73.1039.

35. See “Wang Zhaojun,” in *QJ*, 7.235; “Ming fei qu,” in *QJ*, p. 253. “Wang Zhaojun” was written after his exile; “Ming fei qu” appears in the undated “Supplementary” section and is similar in tone to “Wang Zhaojun.”

Wu Zhaoqian's exile is remembered in literary history in part because of the famous poems lamenting his fate by, among many others, Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609–72), Gu Zhenguan, and Nara Singde 納蘭性德 (1655–85).³⁶ The latter two, along with some other prominent literati and scholar-officials, eventually secured his pardon. There are uncanny parallels between Wu Zhaoqian writing as a displaced woman and the ways in which his exile became a collective cause. In both cases—the assumption of a female guise and the collective lamentation of an individual's pitiable fate—the processes of empathy and identification derive momentum from the symbolic quotient of exile and displacement and how they “translate” across categories of experience. They evoke emotions that speak to the concerns of the era and facilitate imagined analogies in writing and reading. Further, some critics have opined that Wu Zhaoqian's poetry would not have achieved lasting fame had it not been for his tragic story and the attention it received from early Qing writers. The same may be said of the very idea of a woman leaving written accounts of her victimhood on walls. Some poems traveled because of the stories surrounding them. Sometimes one even has the disconcerting feeling that some poems depended on sensational stories of pathos and martyrdom for their very circulation and survival. Wu Zhaoqian may well have mastered and manipulated this logic, but he also became the victim that embodied it. Victimhood—both imagined and actual—when made to speak through a man hiding behind a female persona, may achieve revelations that are demonstrably effective in generating responses from, and consolidating ties within, the literary community.

A Woman's Choices: Transparent and Hidden Analogies

Actually pretending to write as a woman was an extreme gesture. Much more common was the practice of referring to oneself and other men in one's cohort as women, so as to dramatize the literati's dilemmas in the new political landscape. The term *jie* 節 or *kujie* 苦節, which describes both female chastity and uncompromising political integrity or steadfast principles, was often invoked during the Ming-Qing transition. This shared lexicon illustrates the ease with which the female body effortlessly merges with the body politic, a phenomenon I will examine in

36. For these and other poems about Wu's exile, see *QJ*, pp. 382–404.

greater detail in chapter 5. In like manner, service in the new regime is sometimes compared to a woman's dishonorable liaison or remarriage; both are described with the terms *shijie* 失節 and *shishen* 失身.

The analogy between chastity and political integrity, which had appeared intermittently since the Song, became ubiquitous in the self-representation and mutual adjudication of men of letters during the Ming-Qing transition. The prominent scholar-official Xia Yunyi 夏允彝 (1596–1645), for example, defined his duty and destiny in terms of the chaste woman's imperative of martyrdom. As one of the leaders of the Revival Society (Fushe) and the Incipience Society (Jishe),³⁷ Xia vociferously attacked the corrupt elements of the late Ming court. After the fall of the Hongguang court in 1645, Xia was involved, together with Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608–47), in anti-Qing resistance in Songjiang (near present-day Shanghai). After the failure of the Songjiang insurrection, he was urged to escape and join the resistance in Fujian, but he refused, according to his biography by Hou Xuanhan 侯玄涵 (1620–64): "If the enterprise fails, I will have fled to seek survival: how can I be an example to all the ages to come!" 舉事不一當，而行遁以求生，何以示萬世哉。There was despair, resolution, and even a hint of self-doubt in his decision not to join the resistance in eastern Zhejiang: "In my eyes there is none who has the talent of a general or a minister (in the resistance), what is there to wait for! If I do not decide to die right now, then on another day disquiet and doubts may arise, and even I may not be able to do what I have to!" 吾目中無將相才，安待之！今不即訣，移日或生顧慮，即允彝亦不能自必矣。The commander of the Qing army in Songjiang tried to entice him to discuss the matter in person: "If Mr. Xia is willing to join us, he will be granted an important position right away; even if he is not willing, he should just meet me once" 夏君來歸我，即大用之。即不願，第一見我。Xia inscribed the answer on his door: "Suppose there is a chaste woman, and someone wants to marry her off (to another). She refuses. And then someone says to her, 'Even if you are not willing, just show your face.' Should the woman then raise the curtain and come out? Or should she protect herself by dying?" 有貞婦者，或欲嫁之，婦不可。則語之曰：爾即無從，姑出其面。婦將搥

37. The Jishe and the Fushe, active during the reign of the Chongzhen emperor, advocated political and administrative reforms. The translation of Jishe as Incipience Society follows Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, p. 113.

惟以出乎? 抑將以死自蔽乎?³⁸ To protect (or cover) oneself 自蔽 by means of one's own death is to claim the moral high ground of martyrdom by eliminating any room for compromise or uncertainty. Shortly afterwards, Xia drowned himself.³⁹

The Cantonese poet Qu Dajun 屈大均 (1630–96), who died as a loyalist of the Ming, tried to dissuade his friends from serving the Qing by comparing them to women who yield to seduction with indecorous haste. He writes in “Poem Sent to Li Zide” (“Fuji Fuping Li Zide” 賦寄富平李子德, *QJSJ*, 1:871):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 鴛湖朱十嗟同汝 | I sigh that you, along with Zhu Tenth |
| | of Lovebird Lake, |
| 未嫁堂前已目成 | While not yet married, have at the front hall |
| | sealed the pact with your gaze. |

Li Zide, better known as Li Yindu 李因篤 (1631–92), was a well-known scholar and man of letters who initially refused to serve the new dynasty. Eventually, however, he took the examination for “Eminent Scholars of Vast Learning” in 1679, which was expressly designed to heal the rift between the Qing government and the intellectual elite. Zhu Tenth is the renowned poet and scholar Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709), who also obtained office through the examination in 1679. In the tradition of the *Verses of Chu*, the inconstant god or goddess “seals the pact of mutual gaze” 目成 with the supplicating shaman-poet, but the promise of union is elusive and the quest ends in inevitable separation. Qu Dajun is implying that Li and Zhu, having betrayed their initial intention to remain Ming loyalists, are only entering into a fragile pact with the Qing court and negotiating new political dangers.

38. See Hou Xuanhan, “Libu Xia Yuangong zhuan” 吏部夏瑗公傳, in Xia Wanchun, *Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, p. 519.

39. According to *Mingshi* (277.7098–99), “confusion and despair among mountains and marshes,” as well as the examples of friends who had chosen martyrdom, drove Xia to suicide. Chen Zhenhui 陳貞慧 (1605–56) records a dramatic, almost “performative,” suicide: Xia is said to have summoned his friends for a feast, only to withdraw in the middle and drown himself (*Shanyang lu*, p. 628). Other quasi-hagiographical accounts describe how his clothes did not even get wet as he held his head down in shallow water and suffocated himself (Wen Ruilin, *Nanjiang yishi*, p. 242; Cao Jiaju, *Shuomeng*). Song Zhengyu confers with Chen Zilong about the proper honorific for Xia and in doing so they discuss the meanings of Xia's death; see Song Zhengyu, “Xia Yuangong sishi shuo” 夏瑗公私謚說 (1648), *Linnu wengao*, 16.6b–8b. On contemporary discussions of martyrdom, see Zhao Yuan, *Ming Qing zhiji shidaiyu yanjiu*, pp. 349–50.

Qu and Zhu were both involved in anti-Qing resistance in the Zhejiang area in the 1650s. In another poem Qu refers to their erstwhile comradeship, as well as the lost cause of resistance, in romantic and marital terms, presenting himself as the patient and long-suffering wife (*QJSJ*, 1:870):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 二十五年還待汝 | Twenty-five years, and I am still waiting for you, |
| 白頭未肯嫁斜暉 | Hair graying, I yet refuse to marry in the rays of the setting sun. |

Whereas the above analogies are transparent, the female persona or perspective can also be summoned to convey the poet's ambivalence when faced with the contradictions of political choices, as in Deng Hanyi's 鄧漢儀 (1617–89) poem, “On the Temple of Lady Xi” (“Ti Xi furen miao” 題息夫人廟, *QJSJ*, 1:2817):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 楚宮慵掃黛眉新 | In the Chu palace, she languidly paints her dark eyebrows anew. |
| 祇自無言對暮春 | Inexorably, without a word, she faces late spring. |
| 千古艱難惟一死 | Through all ages the greatest test: to embrace death— |
| 傷心豈獨息夫人 | When it comes to grief, how could there be only one Lady Xi? |

In contrast with Wu Zhaoqian, Deng does not write in the first person, although it is also possible to read this poem as “free indirect speech.” Lady Xi may be a transparent mask, but the tension between empathy and judgment is not resolved by the hiding. Deng Hanyi was himself very much an “in-between” figure: he befriended many Ming loyalists as well as Qing officials—his wide circle of acquaintance was important to his anthology projects, which can be regarded as a space for negotiating differences and a form of political accommodation.⁴⁰ He often expressed lament and nostalgia for the fallen dynasty, but he too reluctantly took part in the aforementioned examination of 1679. He seemed to have deliberately broken the rules of composition in order to avoid being chosen for office, but the Kangxi emperor still conferred on him the honorary title of “imperial secretary.”

“Lady Xi” in the poem refers to Xi Gui 息嬀, consort of the Xi ruler, who appears in a story from *Zuo zhuan* (ca. 4th c. BCE). In 680 BCE, the

40. See Meyer-Fong, “Packaging the ‘Men of Our Times’”; *QJSJ*, 1:2815–20.

Chu king destroyed the small state of Xi, in part because he heard reports of Xi Gui's extraordinary beauty and coveted her:

[King Wen of Chu (r. 689–677 BCE)] took Xi Gui back home, and she eventually gave birth to Du Ao and the future King Cheng. But she had not yet spoken a word. The Chu king asked her about this, and she replied, "I, one woman, have served two husbands. Though I have not been able to kill myself, what is there left for me to say?"⁴¹

以息媯歸，生堵敖及成王焉。未言。楚子問之。對曰：「吾一婦人，而事二夫，縱弗能死，其又奚言？」(Zuo^zhuan, Zhuang 14.3, pp. 198–99)

Opening up debates on political choices and definitions of political integrity (including its figural ties with female chastity), Lady Xi has continued to exert her hold for centuries. Like Wang Zhaojun and Cai Yan, she is both victim and displaced woman; unlike them, she is associated with hidden emotions, silence, and the use of speech to explain silence. Among the many who attend to this particular aspect of her persona are the Tang poets Wang Wei 王維 (699–761, *Wang Mojie quanji jianzhu*, 13.197) and Du Mu 杜牧 (803–ca. 853, *Fanchuan wenji*, 4.70):

王維 息夫人

Wang Wei, "Lady Xi"

| | |
|-------|--|
| 莫以今時寵 | Do not think, just because of today's favor, |
| 能忘舊日恩 | She can forget the ties of yesteryear. |
| 看花滿眼淚 | Looking at the flowers, her eyes filling with tears, |
| 不共楚王言 | She would not speak with the king of Chu. |

杜牧 題桃花夫人廟

Du Mu, "On the Temple of the Peach Blossom Lady"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 細腰宮裡露桃新 | In the Chu palace is the peach tree by the well, newly planted: |
| 脈脈無言度幾春 | Her heart full, her words lacking, how many springs has she passed? |
| 至竟息亡緣底事 | But then Xi was destroyed, and for what reason? |
| 可憐金谷墮樓人 | Pity the one who fell from the tower in the Golden Vale Garden. ⁴² |

41. In *Lienü zhuan* (4.80), Xi Gui kills herself.

42. *Jinsbu*, 33.1008. The Golden Vale Garden was Shi Chong's estate.

In Wang Wei's poem, the idea of emotions too intense or contradictory for words, of not speaking or speaking only to explain silence, is enacted by the aesthetics of reticence underlying the quatrain form. Wang Wei's restraint in "Lady Xi" is sometimes adduced as proof of his lack of political courage.⁴³ He held office in the rebel government during the An Lushan Rebellion (756–63), and later cleared himself of charges of treason with a poem—supposedly written when rebels occupied the capital—indirectly avowing loyalty to the Tang house.⁴⁴

More than a century later, Meng Qi 孟榮 (*jinsbi* 875), in his *Poems in Their Contexts* (*Benshi shi* 本事詩, completed in 886), elaborated an anecdote that purports to explain Wang Wei's poem in a different light.⁴⁵ According to Meng, Prince Ning took into his harem a cake vendor's wife. When asked whether she still thought about her former husband, she would not say a word. The prince summoned the cake vendor, and his wife seemed stricken with grief when they met. Wang Wei supposedly wrote the quatrain upon witnessing this meeting. In some versions of this story, Prince Ning was moved by Wang Wei's quatrain to restore the wife to her husband. In this way, a poem about silence is turned into an implicit and effective remonstrance. Yet more often than not the poem is admired for rising above judgment. The early Qing poet Wang Shizhen 王士禛 (1634–1711) concludes in *Gufu yuting zalu* 古夫于廷雜錄 that reticence is "precisely why the high Tang style is exalted" 此盛唐所以為高 when he compares Wang Wei's refusal of judgment with Du Mu's more explicit critique of Xi Gui.⁴⁶

In Du Mu's poem, silence becomes heavily sensual and tinged with guilty pleasure. "The palace of Chu" is literally "the palace of the Chu

43. Zhang Biaochen, *Shanbugou shibua*, 3.5a–5b. Using as criteria "learning" 學 and judgment 識, Zhang considers Du Mu's poem superior to Wang Wei's. See also the comments by Xu Yi 許顗 (12th c.), Zhao Yi, and Pan Deyu 潘德輿 (1785–1839), quoted in *Du Mu xuanji*, pp. 198–99.

44. Many believe, however, that the poem was composed later in self-exoneration. Its long title is often abbreviated as "Ningbi chi" 凝碧池 (*Wang Mojie quanji jianzhun*, 14.207–8). Gu Yanwu criticizes Wang Wei for "deceiving the world" (*Rizhi lu*, 19.451).

45. Meng Qi, *Benshi shi*, 1.8; cf. Sanders, *Words Well Put*, pp. 268–70.

46. *WSZ*, 6:4912. In this same passage, Wang Shizhen also quotes the pointedly satirical lines by his contemporary Sun Tingquan 孫廷銓 (1613–74): "Wordless, she had regrets in vain, / As her sons and daughters bloomed in fine array" 無言空有恨, 兒女榮成行. Wang Shizhen's judgment is consonant with his poetics of reticence 空靈 and resonance 神韻. Cf. Lynn, "Orthodoxy and Enlightenment"; "Tradition and Synthesis."

king who prized tiny waists,”⁴⁷ a reminder of Lady Xi’s capitulation to the Chu king’s desire. The well next to the peach tree is more precisely “the uncovered well” 露井: the allusion may be to Wang Changling’s 王昌齡 (698–757) famous quatrain, “Song of Spring Palace” (“Chun-gong qu” 春宮曲), which uses the peach tree’s blooming overnight by the uncovered well to evoke the emperor’s sexual favor,⁴⁸ an association substantiated by the fact that the word for “uncovered” also means “dew,” and “rain and dew” 雨露 is another euphemism for a ruler’s amorous attention. The peach tree, a reference to Lady Xi through her alias Peach Blossom Lady, is linked to silently self-evident worth in an ancient proverb, “The peach and pear trees do not speak, yet a path forms underneath them” 桃李不言，下自成蹊.⁴⁹ Here recognition of worth, instead of being a positive idea, is paradoxically linked to exploitation, and wordlessness is no longer rooted in proud self-containment or incontrovertible self-worth but ambiguous compromise. The Chu king destroyed Xi because he wanted Xi Gui, and she is more pointedly criticized for failing to expiate her “guilt” and embrace martyrdom like the Jin minister Shi Chong’s 石崇 (249–300) concubine Green Pearl 綠珠, who threw herself down a tower when Shi Chong was implicated in treason on the instigation of Sun Xiu 孫秀, a rival who coveted Green Pearl. As one may expect, critics who emphasize moral judgments and historical acumen tend to consider Du Mu’s poem superior to Wang Wei’s.

Deng Hanyi’s quatrain combines the reticence and empathy of Wang Wei’s poem with the irony and judgment of Du Mu’s. In various poetic anecdotes, Deng’s quatrain is said to pointedly criticize and deepen the shame of “turncoats” (*QJJS*, 1:2816–17). It is possible, however, to read deeper ambiguities into the poem. Lady Xi languidly painting her eyebrows (line 1) may indeed invoke the sensual image of a woman who has chosen pleasure over principle implicitly criticized in Du Mu’s quatrain. But whereas Du Mu depicts her silence as compromising or perhaps

47. The Chu king who reportedly loved slender waists and caused his subjects to starve themselves is King Ling (r. 540 BCE–529 BCE) (*Mozji xiangru*, 15.97). King Wen, who took Xi Gui into his harem, ruled more than a century before King Ling.

48. Wang Changling, “Chun gong qu,” in *Tang Song shi juyao*, 8.793.

49. Sima Qian uses the proverb to praise the general Li Guang, who was reticent and suffered calumny but was also widely loved and admired. See *Shiji*, 109.2878.

even complacent and oblivious, in Deng's poem (line 2) it suggests sorrow and helplessness in a manner reminiscent of Wang Wei—"inexorably" 祇自 implies the lack of choice or freedom; "she faces late spring" 對暮春 marks temporal duration as melancholy and purposeless. The tension between seduction and repulsion, recurrently juxtaposed in poems about Lady Xi, is here not resolved with the usual charges of hypocrisy or inconstancy; rather, the ideal of martyrdom is said to be a challenge throughout history, and the failure to embrace it has undone many who share Lady Xi's fate and heartache. The poet's voice thus veers from indictment to empathy as he ponders difficult choices of participation or withdrawal, inner resistance or outright opposition in the post-conquest era. As mentioned above, Deng's ambivalence is very much a function of his own circumstances and historical understanding.

Feminine Diction and Political Readings

Whereas the contexts of Qu Dajun's lines are stated, the frame of reference in Deng Hanyi's poem is only inferred. Both types of contextualization are common. Indirectness is perhaps no barrier since the process of encoding and decoding political readings is a deeply ingrained habit. The poet Wu Weiye reminisces about his friends' political choices in his *Remarks on Poetry* (*Meicun shihua* 梅村詩話, WMC 3:1135):

And then Li Shuzhang (Li Wen) took up office [under the Qing] and returned north. When he read Wozi's (Chen Zilong) poem, "Wang Mingjun,"⁵⁰ which says, "The Bright Consort, resolute and defiant, herself asked to go. / The fairest one of the era, with one gesture abandoned all, all too lightly," he was shaken and wept.

而李舒章仕而北歸，讀臥子王明君篇，曰：「明妃慷慨自請行，一代紅顏一擲輕。」則感慨流涕。

Chen Zilong, widely hailed as one of the greatest poets during the Ming-Qing transition, died in anti-Qing resistance in 1647. His close friend and exact contemporary Li Wen 李雯 (1608–47) served under the Qing,

50. The title of Chen Zilong's poem appears as "Mingfei pian" 明妃篇 in his collection (CZL, 1:385).

albeit only briefly, and with great sorrow and soul-searching.⁵¹ Chen and Li both hailed from Songjiang; along with the aforementioned Xia Yunyi, they were leaders in the Incipience Society. Chen and Li, together with another younger poet, Song Zhengyu 宋徵輿 (1618–67), were known as the “Three Masters of Yunjian” (*Yunjian sanzǐ* 雲間三子; Yunjian is the ancient name of Songjiang).⁵² Several joint collections testify to the political, social, and literary ties among this group: *Selections of Prose from the Incipience Society in 1632* (*Renshen wenxuan* 壬申文選, compiled by Song Zhengyu’s cousin Song Cunbiao 宋存標 [ca. 1601–66] in 1632), *Matching Poems of Chen Zilong and Li Wen* (*Chen Li changhe ji* 陳李倡和集, 1633–34), *Recent Poems by the Three Masters* (*San zǐ xīnshī* 三子新詩, compiled by Song Zhengyu and published in 1644), *Orchid Compositions* (*Youlan cao* 幽蘭草, ca. 1633–37), and *Matching Song Lyrics* (*Changhe shīyǔ* 倡和詩餘, 1650 prefaces).⁵³ The poetic ideals of the “Yunjian School” harked back to the “revival of the ancients” associated with the so-called “Early Seven Masters” and “Later Seven Masters” from the sixteenth century.⁵⁴ In writing song lyrics, the Yunjian poets looked to tenth- and eleventh-century models of elegance and restrained sensuality for inspiration. However, these formal, classical aspirations yielded pride of place to political considerations in posterity’s judgment. The writings of the “Three Masters of Yunjian” during the Ming-Qing transition cannot be considered separately from their political choices: Chen’s martyrdom, Li’s anguished compromise, and Song’s official career under the Qing.

When Beijing fell to the rebels in 1644, Li Wen was in Beijing. His father Li Fengshen 李逢申 (1619 *jīnshì*, d. 1644), a Ming official, was tortured and murdered by the rebels. Reduced to homelessness and extreme poverty, Li Wen was recommended for office under the new

51. Many poems in Li Wen’s *Liaozhai houji* testify to such sentiments. Some notable examples include his 1647 poem and letter to Chen Zilong (“Dongmen xing ji Chen shi fu shu” 東門行寄陳氏附書), his ten autobiographical poems (“Shu min” 述憫), and “Bingshu chuxi” 丙戌除夕. See *Liaozhai houji*, 1.2a–3a, 1.4b–7a, 2.14a.

52. Cf. Yao Rong, *Mingmo Yunjian sanzǐ yanjiu*; Liu Yonggang, *Yunjian pai wenxue yanjiu*.

53. On the dating of *Youlan cao* and *Changhe shīyǔ*, see Yao Rong, *Mingmo Yunjian sanzǐ yanjiu*, pp. 189–92.

54. The “Early Seven Masters” and “Later Seven Masters” feature prominently in *Huang Ming shi xuan* 皇明詩選 (1643) compiled by Chen, Li, and Song. For more on “the revival of the ancients” in the last decade of the Ming, see Xie Mingyang, “Yunjian shipai de xingcheng”; “Ming shi zhengzong puxi de jiangou”; Liao Kebin, *Fugui pai yu Mingdai wenxue sichao*; Sun Li, *Mingmo Qingchu shilun yanjiu*.

dynasty by his friend Cao Rong 曹溶 (1613–85), a former Ming official who had surrendered to the Qing. Li Wen legitimized the conquest with high-sounding rhetoric in various edicts and documents he drafted, including the Manchu prince Dorgan's (1612–50) letter to the Ming commander Shi Kefa 史可法 (1601–45).⁵⁵ In 1646, Li took his father's coffin back to Songjiang, and met Chen Zilong and Song Zhengyu. According to Song Zhengyu's account of that meeting in his biography of Li Wen, Chen tried to console Li, arguing that he had chosen survival and compromise out of filial duty.⁵⁶ Chen's disciple Wang Yun 王雲 (17th c.) said "they faced each other and wept," "bidding farewell like Su Wu and Li Ling."⁵⁷ Li returned north just when Chen was being hounded for his involvement in anti-Qing resistance, and Li himself died several months later.

As mentioned above, Zhaojun is a recurrent figure in writings by and about victimized women during this period. Here we see her special function in literary communication. Chen's "Bright Consort" appears in *Remnants after the Burning* (*Fenyu cao* 焚餘草), which includes poems dating from 1645 to 1647.⁵⁸ Citing Fan Ye's 范曄 (398–445) "Account of the Southern Xiongnu" in a note to the title of his poem, Chen purports to elaborate Fan's account of how Zhaojun requested to be sent off to the Xiongnu because she had not gained imperial favor.⁵⁹ Often presented as

55. See Zhaolian, *Xiaoting zalu*, p. 464; Tan Qian, *Beijou lu*, p. 369; *QJSCB*, 4.475. Li Wen also wrote poems glorifying Hong Chengchou's (1593–1665) suppression of Ming resistance in the south; see his *Liaozhai houji*, 1.3b–4b.

56. That is, he had no other choice if he wanted to take his father's coffin to his hometown; see Song Zhengyu, "Yunjian Li Shuzhang xingzhuang" 雲間李舒章行狀, in *Linwu wengao*, 10.1a–5b.

57. Wang Yun, sequel to Chen Zilong's *nianpu*, in *CZL*, 2:992. Su Wu (140–60 BCE) was the Han envoy who refused to defect despite years of detainment in Xiongnu territories, while Li Ling (d. 74 BCE) surrendered to the Xiongnu after Emperor Wu blamed him for the Han defeat. Li Wen compares himself to Li Ling, citing the latter's self-indictment in *Hanshu* (54.2465): "Like Li Ling my crime has reached to heaven!" 李陵之罪，上通于天矣 (Yang Zhongxi, *Xueqiao shibua sanji*, 1.2b). Cf. Du Dengchun's 杜登春 (1629–1705) poem on Chen and Li: "Like Su Wu and Li Ling, they confirmed their friendship parting at the bridge, / The same poetic form they shared, but not the same path" 河梁蘇李別，五言非同塗 (cited in Xia Wanchun, *Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, 6.285).

58. *Fenyu cao*, also called *Bingxu yicao* 丙戌遺草, was compiled by Chen's disciple Wang Yun.

59. See *CZL*, 1:385. For Fan Ye's account, see *Hou Hanshu*, 89.2941.

the victim of involuntary exile, she is here the agent determining her own fate.⁶⁰ The barbarian realm beyond the frontier is where she hopes to find recognition (CZL, 1:385):

陳子龍 明妃篇

Chen Zilong, "Bright Consort"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 薄命不曾陪鳳輦 | Ill-fated, in the imperial carriage she had not yet been company, |
| 嬌姿還欲擅龍城 | But with her winsome grace came the ambition to prevail in the Dragon City. ⁶¹ |

From this perspective, she should lament not of being abandoned to her fate among the Xiongnu but of having abandoned the emperor (CZL, 1:385):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 當年應悔輕相棄 | She must have regretted the all-too-easy abandonment back then— |
| 深愧君王殺畫師 | The ruler's execution of the painter should have left her deeply ashamed. |

According to legend, the court painter Mao Yanshou presented a distorted portrait of Zhaojun because the latter refused to bribe him. When the emperor beheld her beauty as she prepared to leave for the land of the Xiongnu, he regretted his decision to let her go and put Mao Yanshou to death.⁶² Whereas that story emphasizes the emperor's misjudgment, Chen's poem turns his execution of the painter into evidence of belated recognition, which Zhaojun might have secured had she not been in such haste to leave the Han court.

Agency is thus revealed as self-interest that only occasions shame and regret. In this sense, "Bright Consort" is a symmetrical reversal of Chen's earlier poem (ca. 1630) on the same subject, in which involuntary exile facilitates heroic mission. Entitled "Wang Mingjun" and grouped with other traditional *yuefu* ballads, it appears to be an exercise in "imitating

60. Note that revisionist poems on Zhaojun, traditionally criticized as disloyal, often follow the same logic; see n. 15.

61. Several Chinese cities bear the name "Dragon City." Here it probably refers to the "Dragon City" in Xiongnu territories (present-day Gansu in the northwest; see Takigawa, *Shiki kaichu koshō*, 110.23).

62. *Xijing zaji*, 2.86.

the ancients.”⁶³ Formal archaism is, however, potentially charged with themes of contemporary resonance. In that poem, Zhaojun’s self-sacrifice is an implicit indictment of weak men, summoning associations with divisions and ineffectiveness in the late Ming court (CZL, 1:115):

陳子龍 王明君

Chen Zilong, “Wang Mingjun”

| | |
|-------|---|
| 我本弱女子 | I was originally a frail woman, |
| 被選當雄兵 | But was chosen to serve as brave soldier. |
| 男兒畏強虜 | Menfolk fear the powerful barbarians, |
| 辛勤獨遠行 | So I, toiling, alone go on a distant journey. |
| ... | |
| 漢京君臣薄 | At the Han capital, little love between |
| | ruler and subject, |
| 胡人父子輕 | Among the barbarians, scant regard for the |
| | order of fathers and sons. ⁶⁴ |
| 豈欲惜一死 | How could it be that I wish to begrudge death? |
| 恐起漢胡爭 | I only fear rousing war between Han and the |
| | barbarians. |
| 天子方厭戰 | The son of heaven is just now tired of battles, |
| 婦人聊苟生 | A woman has no recourse but to live on. |
| ... | |
| 日憂負君託 | My daily fear: to fail my lord’s trust, |
| 時聞胡馬征 | Ever so often, I hear the neighing of barbarian |
| | horses. |
| 采采苜蓿枝 | Lovely the stalks of <i>musu</i> grass— |
| 血淚相與并 | Blood and tears together flow— |
| 願因雙飛鵠 | I wish the pair of flying wild geese |
| 持贈漢公卿 | Will take them, and present them |
| | to the ministers of Han. |

Here victimhood earns the prerogative of judgment. By contrast, in the later “Bright Consort,” self-willed choice invites the negative judgment

63. The collections of Li Wen and Song Zhengyu also contain many *yuefu* ballads. Both wrote poems on Wang Zhaojun.

64. Zhaojun married the son of the Xiongnu chieftain after the latter’s death, in accordance with Xiongnu custom. Zhaojun’s inadvertent role in this violation of “the order of fathers and sons” is presented, through poetic parallelism, as the consequence of “little love between ruler and subject,” i.e., Han ministers’ failure to manage the Xiongnu threat in a more heroic way.

of history. That poem was not addressed to Li Wen, but it might indeed have spoken to the dilemma of those caught between rejection of and participation in the new regime, especially if injustices perpetrated by the fallen dynasty were adduced as the reason for one's shifting allegiance.⁶⁵ Li Wen, in any case, seemed to have read it as implicit reproach and was thus deeply shaken. When did Li read this poem? Could it be already in 1647, when his grief over Chen's recent martyrdom would have been heightened by guilt and a sense of the latter's implacable judgment?

Xia Wanchun 夏完淳 (1631–47), Xia Yunyi's precocious son and Chen Zilong's disciple, also left a poem entitled "Bright Consort" ("Mingfei pian" 明妃篇).⁶⁶ With the same number of lines as Chen's poem, to which this was probably composed as poetic response, it also features a willful Zhaojun: "A supremely beautiful woman of untainted past requested to marry the barbarian" 絕代良家請嫁胡 and left the Han palace with aplomb 如花慷慨違金闕 but ultimately died in sorrow. Instead of being pointedly critical, however, Xia's poem simply mourns the tragic pathos of her fateful decision. It is with the same lament and pity that he ponders the choices of Chen and Li in another poem dated 1646 (*Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, 6.284).⁶⁷

| | |
|---------|---|
| 庾徐別恨同千古 | As with Yu Xin and Xu Ling, |
| | the pain at parting lasts for all time. |
| 蘇李交情在五言 | Just like Su Wu and Li Ling, |
| | their friendship is sealed in poetry. |

The sixth-century poets Yu Xin 庾信 (513–81) and Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–83), both of whom served in the Liang (502–57) court, are often mentioned together in relation to their ornate, sensual palace poetry

65. Li Wen's father had been punished for his remonstrance and was not pardoned until 1643. Li Wen also wrote a poem mourning his friend Zhou Zhong, who had been executed because of the vindictive policies of the Southern Ming court; see Wu Weiye, *Meicun shihua* (WMC, 3:1141).

66. Xia Wanchun, *Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, 4.193–94.

67. Xia wrote this poem, "Du Chen Yifu Li Shuzhang Song Yuanwen hegao" 讀陳軼符李舒章宋轅文合稿, upon reading the joint collection of Chen Zilong, Li Wen, and Song Zhengyu. Song Zhengyu seems to have been the main compiler of the anthology *Sanzi xinshi* 三子新詩, or *Yunjian sanzhi hegao* 雲間三子合稿, which includes the works of Chen and Li from 1640–43, and of Song from 1640–44. Xia Wanchun is listed as the disciple who edited it.

(the so-called Xu-Yu style 徐庾體). Their separation was the result of Yu Xin's detainment in the northern kingdoms of Western Wei and then Northern Zhou. Yu's most famous work, "Poetic Exposition Lamenting Southland" ("Ai Jiangnan fu" 哀江南賦), mourns his compromise and lost homeland; the implied parallel with Li Wen thus credits the latter with genuine regret. As mentioned above, Su Wu 蘇武 (d. 60 BCE) and Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 BCE) represent opposing political choices. The poems attributed to them, however, testify to their abiding friendship. Xia thereby affirms the empathy that underlies even apparent critique in Chen's poems directed at Li (perhaps including "Bright Consort").

Wu Weiye's account of Li Wen's response to Chen Zilong's poem might have been colored by his own experience. Wu gained early prominence as a poet and a leader of the Incipience Society, and he embarked on his official career with the Chongzhen emperor's personal recognition of his talents. Despite his reluctance, Wu held office under the Qing from 1654 to 1656, and he later came to deeply regret his "loss of integrity." His choice was perceived as pivotal for swaying others and aroused much chagrin. Hou Fangyu 侯方域 (1618–55), among others, urged him in an eloquent letter not to serve.⁶⁸ Real and apocryphal anecdotes about how Wu is mocked and shamed for becoming a Qing official proliferate.⁶⁹ Ji Dong, for example, is said to have written "Untitled Poems" ("Wuti" 無題) featuring female personae that are widowed or abandoned, resisting or yielding to temptation, as a pointed critique of Wu's political vacillations.⁷⁰

68. Hou Fangyu, "Yu Wu Jungong shu" 與吳駿公書, in *Zhuanghui tang ji*, 3:77–79. Ironically, Hou was himself pressured to serve under the Qing. Hou is cast as the male protagonist of *Peach Blossom Fan*, which I discuss in chap. 6.

69. For example, both Liu Xianting's (1648–95) *Guangyang zazhi* and Gu Gongxie's (18th c.) *Damnu biji* tell of an incident when a youth sent a satirical quatrain to Wu mocking him for serving two dynasties when he presided over a large scale literary gathering in Tiger Mound (*QJS*, 1:1238–39), but at the time of that gathering (1653) Wu had not yet taken office under the Qing.

70. Xu Ke, *Qing bai leichao*, cited in *QJS*, 1:1947–48. Untitled poems, in the tradition of Li Shangyin, often have romantic themes and sensual diction. Xu Ke provides no corroborating evidence from early Qing sources, and the anecdote could have arisen from Ji Dong's reputation as a defiant, unconventional man of letters.

Sometimes political readings demand an act of faith, as in the following poem (*QSJS*, 1:81):

余正垣 豔曲

Yu Zhengyuan, "Romantic Song"

| | |
|-------|--|
| 花氣和香煖 | The breath of flowers warms with their scent, |
| 風絲伴帶長 | Gossamer in the wind grows long by my sash. |
| 憑欄呼小婢 | I lean against the balustrade and call to the young maid— |
| 莫去繡鴛鴦 | Do not go and embroider lovebirds. |

The poem appeared in Chen Tian's (1850–1922) anthology of Ming poetry (first published 1883–1909), and when it was incorporated into *Qing Poems in Context* (*Qingshi jishi* 清詩紀事), the modern editor, Qian Zhonglian, opined: "This is an allegorical composition. What it means is: Do not serve in the Qing court" 此托興之作，意謂勿出仕清廷也 (*QSJS*, 1:81). But how do we know this? The generic title of the poem, "Romantic Song," gives us no clue. The poet, Yu Zhengyuan (d. 1645?), was listed in the Incipience Society roster and was well known in Jiangxi during the late Ming, but we know nothing about the context of the poem's composition. This interpretation appears to be merely a function of the categorization of Yu Zhengyuan as a loyalist.

With poets whose biographical circumstances, dilemmas, and choices of martyrdom or compromise are better known, dating becomes an all-important factor in interpretation. As examples we may consider the works of the aforementioned "Three Masters of Yunjian." As noted above, Chen embraced martyrdom while Li served under the Qing. Song Zhengyu also became a Qing official, and his career under the Qing was longer and more distinguished than Li's. The delicate, feminine diction of their song lyrics, which may delineate romantic emotions or convey political sentiments, poses special problems for the reader. The choice of a political interpretation often hinges on whether a song lyric can be dated after 1644, although there is no decisive stylistic break "before and after" the fall of the Ming. To better facilitate comparison between different readings, I have chosen a cluster of song lyrics that all treat the topic of willow catkins, conventionally associated with dispersal, separation, helplessness, and the melancholy of late spring.

李雯 浪淘沙。楊花

Li Wen, "Willow Catkins," to the tune "Langtao sha"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 金縷曉風殘 | On golden strands, catkins fade in the morning breeze, as |
| 素雪晴翻 | Pure snow swirls in the bright sky. |
| 爲誰飛上玉雕欄 | For whom do they fly aloft the jade balustrade? |
| 可惜章臺新雨後 | What shame—in the wake of the new rain at Zhangtai— |
| 踏入沙間 | To be trodden into mud. |
| 沾惹忒無端 | Tainted for no reason, |
| 青鳥空銜 | They are picked up by the bluebird in vain— |
| 一春幽夢綠萍間 | One spring of hidden dreams, where the green lemna grow— |
| 暗處消魂羅袖薄 | In dim corners, heart-broken in thin silken sleeves, |
| 與淚偷彈 | Furtively I shake off catkins and tears. |

The song lyric is found in *Liaozhai houji* 夢齋後集 (4.18b–19a), which collects Li Wen's writings after the fall of the Ming. The late Qing poet and scholar Tan Xian 譚獻 (1832–1901) comments: "He laments the state of being fallen and defiled" 哀於墮溷.⁷¹ In an eloquent exposition, Ye Jiaying shows how, in comparing himself to the willow catkins, Li Wen conveys the anguish and shame of being a hapless victim of fate: service under the new regime is a kind of involuntary elevation ("fly aloft the jade balustrade") that inevitably ends in dishonor and degradation ("trodden into mud") impossible to reverse ("picked up by the bluebird in vain").⁷² Traditional lore has it that willow catkins turn into lemna (duckweeds) in water, and here the transformation beckons as a provisional, albeit elusive escape where at least hidden dreams will be possible. The last two lines shift attention to the female persona whose identification with the willow catkins is confirmed by her furtive tears, thereby alluding to Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1036–71) famous song lyric on catkins (to the tune "Shuilong yin" 水龍吟), which concludes with the image of willow catkins turning into "tears of the parting ones" 離人淚.⁷³ The persona's

71. Tan Xian, *Qie zhong ci* 篋中詞, cited in Long Yusheng, *Jin sanbian nian mingjia cixuan*, p. 7.

72. Ye Jiaying, *Qingci xuanjiang*, pp. 5–48.

73. The last lines of Su Shi's song lyric on willow catkins (*QSC*, 1:277) read thus: "Look closely: / these are not willow catkins, / but, drop by drop, / tears of parting ones" 細看來, 不是楊花, 點點是, 離人淚.

action is “furtive” in the last line because his compromises have deprived Li Wen of the right to openly mourn those who died trying to reverse the tide or to explicitly lament the lost world of the fallen dynasty.

Another song lyric from *Liaozhai houji* (4.17b–18a) features a pining woman lamenting broken promises, a standard trope that nevertheless invites a political interpretation through its title, “Allegory” (“Yuyan” 寓言). The implied adoption of a female persona is also evident in yet another of Li Wen’s song lyrics from *Liaozhai houji* (4.17a–17b), “Sending Off Spring” 送春 (to the tune “Fengliu zi” 風流子):

| | |
|-------|--|
| 思量往事 | I dwell on things past— |
| 塵海茫茫 | A limitless sea of roiling dust. |
| 錦梭停舊織 | At the brocade loom, I stop the weaving from before |
| 麝月嬾新妝 | Under the sweet moon, too indifferent to adorn myself anew. ⁷⁴ |

According to Ye Jiaying, “the weaving from before” refers to the poet’s former ideals and aspirations.⁷⁵ Its termination is thus a gesture of despair, a kind of symbolic death. To be indifferent to adornment in this context is to protest inward distance—Li Wen may be serving under the Qing, but his ambivalence causes him to lack ambition to be “pleasing” or to advance in the new bureaucracy. The female persona thus brings ambiguities to clear-cut dichotomies in political choices: in the song lyric on catkins, self-indictment of “defilement” is mixed with self-justification.⁷⁶ The catkins, after all, do not choose their wind-blown fate; the only agency available to the helpless victim may simply be that of inward distance, like that of the lady “indifferent to adornment.” Had the above song lyrics been included in the pre-conquest *Orchid Compositions*, our readings would have been radically different. We would have relegated the poet to the position of observer, albeit one who writes with intense empathy for the ennui and helpless grief of his female subject.

74. *Sheyue* is literally “the moon with musk fragrance.” The term appears in Xu Ling’s preface to *Yutai xinyong*.

75. Ye Jiaying, *Qingci xuanjiang*, pp. 5–48.

76. The mixture of self-castigation and self-justification is most obvious in Li Wen’s “Answering the Hair’s Indictment” (“Da fa ze wen” 答髮責文, dated 1645), in which the “god of hair,” as “the remnant of a fallen state,” appears to Li Wen in a dream and reprimands him for his betrayal on the eve of his shaving his head in the Manchu style. Li Wen accepts his guilt but explains his lack of choice (*Liaozhai houji*, 5.8b–10b).

Unlike Li Wen, Song Zhengyu seemed to have advanced his official career under the Qing without too much soul searching. He passed the county examination under the Qing shortly after Xia Yunyi drowned himself in 1645, and he attained the *jinsbi* degree in 1647, the year Chen Zilong and Xia Wanchun died in anti-Qing resistance and Li Wen died from illness. Even so, his post-conquest poetry has given rise to autobiographical readings that filter analogous moments of disquiet and lament from depictions of changes and decline in the natural world. He also wrote a famous song lyric on willows, included in the post-conquest anthology *Matching Song Lyrics* (*Changhe shiyan*, p. 21):

宋徵輿 憶秦娥。楊花

Song Zhengyu, "Willow Catkins," to the tune "Yi Qin'e"

| | |
|---------|---|
| 黃金陌 | Paths of golden willows, |
| 茫茫十里春雲白 | For ten miles the endless white of spring clouds. |
| 春雲白 | The white of spring clouds— |
| 迷離滿眼 | A bewildering profusion as far as eyes can see— |
| 江南江北 | South of the River, north of the River. |
| 來時無奈珠簾隔 | Coming, they cannot help being barred by the pearl curtains. |
| 去時著盡東風力 | Going, they make full use of the force of east wind. |
| 東風力 | The force of east wind— |
| 留他如夢 | Keep them like a dream, |
| 送他如客 | See them off like a sojourner. |

According to Tan Xian, in this song lyric the poet laments "the pathos of his own life" 身世可憐,⁷⁷ but a more unforgiving reader may connect the concluding tropes of transience and helpless acceptance of changes to Song Zhengyu's lack of moral resolve.⁷⁸ Like the willow catkins that can only be kept elusively as a dream or sent off like a sojourner, the poet has allowed himself to be defined by circumstances. Song Zhengyu had a passionate though abortive love affair with the famous courtesan-poet Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618–64) in the early 1630s, and if readers tend not to

77. Tan Xian, *Qiezhang ci* (*Qing ci sanbai shou*, p. 35).

78. Qian Zhonglian implies such moral judgments when he compares the last two lines to Chen Zilong's line, "I pity their drifting, but they cannot help but fly" 憐他飄泊奈他飛 in *Qing ci sanbai shou* (p. 35): "Their moral resolve is different, and thus the words come out differently" 節慨不同，吐辭便異 (see p. 43 below).

read the topic as punning with Liu's name (Liu's surname was originally Yang, and both "yang" and "liu" mean willow), it may be because of the later date of this song lyric.⁷⁹

The commonly accepted reading of hidden political reference implied by the female persona in Chen Zilong's post-conquest poetry likewise depends on dating. As with Li Wen and Song Zhengyu, the stylistic divide of his song lyrics before and after the fall of the Ming is uncertain. This is evident when we compare his two song lyrics on willow catkins, one (to the tune "Huanxi sha") found in *Orchid Compositions* (*Youlan cao*, B.25) and the other (to the tune "Yi Qin'e") in *Matching Song Lyrics* (*Changhe shiyan*, p. 38). The latter was probably written in a cycle of poetic exchanges that include Song Zhengyu's lyric to the same tune cited above.

陳子龍 浣溪沙。楊花

Chen Zilong, "Willow Catkins," to the tune "Huanxi sha"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 百尺章臺撩亂飛 | Through a stretch of Zhangtai Road, a confused flight— |
| 重重簾幕弄春暉 | Layers of curtains tease the rays of spring. |
| 憐他漂泊奈他飛 | I pity their drifting, but they cannot help but fly. |
| 淡日滾殘花影下 | They whirl the pale sun to exhaustion beneath catkin shadows, |
| 軟風吹送玉樓西 | A waft of gentle wind sends them west of the Jade Tower. |
| 天涯心事少人知 | Here at sky's edge, my heart is so little known. |

陳子龍 憶秦娥。楊花

Chen Zilong, "Willow Catkins," to the tune "Yi Qin'e"

| | |
|---------|---|
| 春漠漠 | Spring, a misty expanse— |
| 香雲吹斷紅文幕 | Fragrant clouds of catkins break off the red patterned curtains. |
| 紅文幕 | Red patterned curtains, |
| 一簾殘夢 | Broken dreams rolled up in the shade— |
| 任他飄泊 | Let loose and drifting. |

79. All traces of the association between Song and Liu are erased from their respective collections, possibly because of the bitter end to their relationship. See *LRS*, 1:75–88; Wai-ye Li, "The Late Ming Courtesan."

| | |
|---------|---|
| 輕狂無奈春風惡 | A lighthearted willfulness is no match for the spite of spring, |
| 蜂黃蝶粉同零落 | Along with the bits of flowers borne by bees and butterflies, alike worn and torn. |
| 同零落 | Alike worn and torn— |
| 滿地萍水 | Everywhere, lemna on water, |
| 夕陽樓閣 | Pavilions in the setting sun. |

The first song lyric on catkins was written in the mid-1630s, when Chen Zilong was in the throes of a romantic relationship with Liu Rushi. (Liu and Chen met in 1632 and, despite their unabated love and regard for each other, unhappily separated in 1635 after only a few months of cohabitation.) The reader is tempted to link willow catkins to Liu's name, in which case the association of willows with Zhangtai or pleasure quarters would also be a fitting reference.⁸⁰ “Drifting” 飄泊 in line 3 would thus refer to the vicissitudes of a courtesan's uncertain fate—the poet's pity and empathy 憐 are tempered by a sense of helplessness 奈他飛. In brief, knowing the approximate date of this song lyric, we are prone to read it as addressing the confusion, uncertainties, and disappointments of love.

By contrast, the second song lyric, having been written after the fall of the Ming, is likely to invite a political interpretation, although a romantic reading is certainly also possible.⁸¹ The “fragrant clouds of catkins” drift by the red patterned curtains (line 2). It is a beautiful association that breaks off 斷: this suggests lost love but can mean also political failure. Following a political reading, the same compound that suggests a beloved woman's pitiable fate, “drifting,” would summon associations with Chen Zilong's peregrinations as a resistance fighter and a fugitive after the conquest. Likewise, the words “worn and torn” 零落 or “setting sun” 夕陽 would lament not merely personal helplessness but the sad fate of the country. Basically, however, the two song lyrics are similar enough in their diction to defy easy polarization of romantic and political readings *independent of contexts*, although the tone of the second is arguably more anguished. Even as astute and learned a reader as Chen

80. Chen Yinke surmises that the song lyric should be understood in the context of the love affair between Chen Zilong and Liu Rushi (LRS, 1:244).

81. Ye Jiaying, for example, reads this in the light of the Chen-Liu romance. See *Ye Jiaying zixuan ji*, pp. 196–201.

Yinke might have misread political lament as romantic longing because of mistaken dating.⁸² Yet how much explanatory power should historical contexts have? How could we be absolutely certain that Chen Zilong was not mourning lost love in 1646?

In regard to another song lyric, “Cold Food Festival” (“Hanshi” 寒食, to the tune “Tang duoling” 唐多令, CZL, 2:667), if we do not have Chen Zilong’s own note that follows the title—“at the time I heard about the imperial grave mounds of the former dynasty, and there are things I cannot bear to say” 時聞先朝陵寢有不忍言者—we could easily read it as a work mourning lost love, since it deploys the familiar imagery of fallen blossoms in spring rain and tropes associated with the Six Dynasties courtesan Su Xiaoxiao.⁸³ The note implying desecration of the Ming imperial graves gives a political dimension to the images of eternal longing associated with Su Xiaoxiao’s grave. According to Wang Yun, this was written in the third month of 1647, shortly before Chen’s suicide.⁸⁴ (Another song lyric composed at the same time, to the tune “Erlang shen,” 二郎神, “Thoughts of the Past at Qingming” [“Qingming ganjiu” 清明感舊, CZL, 2:676], is more explicit in its political lamentation.)

The tension or continuum between romantic and political meanings is at the heart of the reception history of Chen’s song lyrics. For example, Wang Chang 王昶 (1725–1806), the Qianlong era compiler of Chen’s collection, *The Complete Works of Chen Zilong* (*Chen Zhongyu gong quanji* 陳忠裕公全集, 1803),⁸⁵ made editorial changes that facilitate a more explicitly political reading of Chen’s song lyric to the tune “Dian jiangchun” 點絳脣.⁸⁶ Its title “Spring in the Inner Chamber” (“Chungui” 春閨) in *Matching Song Lyrics* is changed to “Moved by the Wind and Rain on a Spring Day” (“Chunri fengyu yougan” 春日風雨有感) in *Complete*

82. Chen Yinke reads “Jiangcheng zi” 江城子 (“Bingqi chunjin” 病起春盡) in light of the Chen-Liu romance, but that song lyric is included in the post-conquest anthology *Changhe shiyu*. (Chen Yinke did not have access to *Youlan cao* and *Changhe shiyu*. He was working from *Chen Zhongyu gong quanji*, which gives no information about dating.)

83. The note does not appear in *Changhe shiyu*, p. 41. The second half of the song lyric draws from the Six Dynasties *yuefu* song “Su Xiaoxiao ge” 蘇小小歌 (LQL, 2:1480–81) as well as Li He’s poem, “Su Xiaoxiao mu” (see n. 10).

84. See CZL, 2:676, 2:992.

85. “Zhongyu” is the posthumous honorific that the Qianlong emperor conferred on Chen Zilong.

86. Wang Zhaopeng and Yao Rong, “Zuopin yiyi.”

Works. Its subject, the passing of spring, is indeed a standard boudoir theme, but the phrase “wind and rain” inevitably recalls the Song poet Xin Qiji’s 辛棄疾 (1140–1207) song lyric that mourns Song decline by lamenting the end of spring.⁸⁷ Wang also changed “Spring, wordless” 春無言 to “Spring, belonging to none” 春無主 and reworked “the prince’s road amidst fragrant grass” 芳草王孫路 as “the prince’s road in the homeland” 故國王孫路. Restrained melancholy thus gives way to the lament of dispossession, and the “prince’s road,” a common allusion in poems on parting,⁸⁸ seems to acquire specific references to the fallen Ming with the insertion of “homeland.” The concluding image, “Where the cuckoo cries, / Rouge stains tears that fall like rain” 杜鵑啼處，淚染胭脂雨, tied to the pain of loss and separation, thereby seems more emphatically political, bringing to mind the myth of the ancient Shu king who is transformed into a cuckoo and weeps blood lamenting his lost kingdom. Chen Zilong may be following his own dictum that song lyrics should “entrust steadfast heart to an alluring surface, and hide unwavering dedication in sensual language” 托貞心于妍貌，隱摯念于佻言.⁸⁹ But Wang Chang, for one, deems his “allegorical intention” too hidden. Wang’s “intervention” demonstrates the logic of context-driven interpretations. For many readers, the extreme political pressures of the Ming-Qing transition call for a political reading whenever a poet adopts feminine perspectives, yet these readers also long for the confirmation of such interpretations in word choices that can function as reliable “allegorical indices.”

Negotiating Political Choices

Most of the song lyrics cited above, including the two on willow catkins to the tune “Yi Qin’e” (by Chen Zilong and Song Zhengyu), are found in *Matching Song Lyrics*. The collection includes works by Chen Zilong, Qian Gu 錢穀, Song Cunbiao, Song Zhengbi 宋徵璧 (ca. 1602–72, 1643

87. Xin Qiji’s song lyric “Mo yu er” 摸魚兒, dated to 1179, begins with these lines: “How many more bouts of wind and rain can it bear? / Spring fades, all too soon” 更能消幾番風雨，匆匆春又歸去 (*QSC*, 3:1867).

88. The locus classicus is “Zhao yinshi” 招隱士 (ca. 2nd c. BCE): “The Prince roams and does not return, / Fragrant grass grows ever more lush” 王孫遊兮不歸，春草生兮萋萋 (*Chuci jizhu*, p. 168).

89. Chen Zilong, “*San zǐ shiyu xu*” 三子詩餘序 (*CZL*, 2:1080–81).

jinshi), Song Zhengyu, and Song Siyu 宋思玉.⁹⁰ It is the product of their poetic exchanges and literary gatherings in the late spring of 1647, hence the shared titles and tunes. Members of the Song clan, who were instrumental in defining the Yunjian literary community from the 1630s to the 1650s, composed the majority of the song lyrics (147 out of the total 176).⁹¹ Li Wen was present for at least one of the gatherings, but he probably did not stay long before returning north, which may explain his exclusion. By then Xia Yunyi had embraced martyrdom and his son Wanchun had become a fugitive involved in resistance.

The six poets included in that anthology made different political choices. Chen Zilong was the only one among them who died as a Ming martyr. Song Cunbiao, a Ming official, and Qian Gu, a disciple of Xia Yunyi, did not hold office after the fall of the Ming. Song Siyu, Song Cunbiao's son, took the examination under the Qing but did not advance beyond the licentiate degree. Song Zhengbi, Cunbiao's brother, like his cousin Zhengyu became a Qing official. His participation in the Zhoushan campaign (1651) against the rump Ming court of the Lu Regent (Zhu Yihai 朱以海, 1618–62) was instrumental in advancing his official career.⁹² Do we assume that the shared imagery present in their poems points to a basic commonality of sentiments?⁹³ Or are we guided by the poets' biographies to discern different philosophies being expressed? Or is this a false dilemma, in the sense that the poet can use the language of melancholy and lost love to both lament the fall of the Ming and articulate divergent personal choices? In this context, the practice of "harmonizing compositions" or "matching poems" 倡和 involves the use of a common feminine diction to negotiate different political positions, and it is to this process I will turn.

90. It includes Chen Zilong's *Xiangzhen ge cunqao* 湘真閣存稿, Song Cunbiao's *Qiushi xiang ci* 秋士香詞, Song Zhengbi's *Xiepu changhe xiang ci* 歌浦倡和香詞, Song Zhengyu's *Hailu changhe xiang ci* 海閨倡和香詞, Qian Gu's *Changhe xiang ci* 倡和香詞, and Song Siyu's *Di'e xuan ci* 楝萼軒詞. This rare edition, almost never mentioned in the Qing, was recently published as part of *Yunjian sanzhi xinshi begao*.

91. On the Song clan of Songjiang, see Zhu Lixia, *Qingdai Songjiang fu wangzu*.

92. Zhu Yihai's supporters had rallied in Shaoxing (northeastern Zhejiang). On the Zhoushan campaign, see Gu Cheng, *Nan Ming shi*, pp. 671–87; Struve, *The Southern Ming*, pp. 114–15.

93. Wu Sizeng, citing the shared topos of the cuckoo that weeps blood, supports this position in "Chen Zilong *Xiangzhen ge cunqao* he *Changhe shiyu*," p. 17.

An undated preface to *Matching Song Lyrics* by Wu Weiye uses ornate parallel prose to announce some sort of allegorical intention:

Ever so often we recall the dry bones of old friends, soon to be overgrown with moss; and then what comes to mind is the goddess, her face flushed with wine, half supporting herself on the celestial rock.⁹⁴ We thus find expression in fine phrases crafted like kingfisher filigrees, as we lodge our sorrows at the Jade Terrace.

每念故人枯骨，旋長莓苔，還思神女酡顏，半支機石。于是摠辭翠鈿，寄恨玉臺。（*Changhe shiyu*, p. 1）

The deceased “old friends” who have to be commemorated through the figure of the goddess, following the logic of the shaman-poet’s hopeless quest in the *Verses of Chu* tradition, are those who died pursuing political ideals, in this case Ming martyrs. “Kingfisher filigrees,” as feminine ornament, is kenning for an ornate, sensuous style, as is “Jade Terrace,” which brings to mind *New Songs of Jade Terrace* (*Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠, 6th c.), known for its finely crafted songs of longing.

A preface by Song Zhengbi dated 1650 focuses exclusively on literary history and the choice of models in composing song lyrics. Another undated preface by Song alludes to some deeper grief in evasive and ambiguous terms. Citing lines from the *Verses of Chu* that contain the refrain “secretly I pity myself” 私自憐, Song traces the genealogy of song lyrics to the *Verses of Chu* tradition. However, instead of asserting moral-political dimensions in *Matching Song Lyrics* based on their affinity with *Verses of Chu*, he chooses to emphasize instead the imagery of romantic longing and feminine beauty in *Verses of Chu*. The preface introduces all the poets in the anthology except Chen Zilong, who might have been the “friend” mentioned in connection with the impetus behind the creation of the anthology in the following passage:

Ever since the ravages of war started, I have borne a hoe among the weeds. It was late spring when I encountered my friend in the eastern outskirts, and we agreed to make a game of competing in song lyrics, using it to take the place of gambling and chess. Before ten days passed, we each had quite a few compositions.

94. The word for celestial rock, *jishi* 機石, here is likely a variant of *zhijiishi* 支機石, the rock that a human rafter obtains from the goddess Weaver after reaching the River of Heaven (*Taiping yulan*, 8.171, 51.379).

兵火以來，荷鋤草間。時值暮春，邂逅友人于東郊，相訂爲鬪詞之戲，以代博弈。曾不旬日，各得若干首。(Changhe shiyu, p. 3)

In his preface to *Orchid Compositions*, Chen Zilong uses the same phrase “as a substitute for gambling and chess” 以當博弈 to describe the exchanges in song lyrics between Li Wen and Song Zhengyu.⁹⁵ But whereas Chen simply uses the analogy to politely juxtapose his friends’ prodigious talents with their mastery of a “minor genre,” Song Zhengbi employs the same comparison to pit the apparent obliviousness of “competing in song lyrics” 鬪詞 against the all-too-real devastation of war. The ornaments of literati culture could have continued despite national trauma—indeed, writing poems might have become a gesture of defiance, or Song Zhengbi may simply be trying to avoid any politically sensitive inferences. In the seventeenth-century edition preserved in the Beijing Library, Chen Zilong’s name does not appear under the title of his collection, *Extant Manuscripts of the Xiangzhen Pavilion* (*Xiangzhen ge cunqao* 湘真閣存稿); instead his authorship is encoded only through the line “Copied by Zhang Chuzhong and Wang Shengshi” 張處中王勝時手錄. Zhang Gong (Chuzhong) was Chen Zilong’s brother-in-law, and Wang Yun (Shengshi) was his disciple. The edition was finalized a few years after Chen Zilong’s involvement in anti-Qing resistance had ended in his suicide, and Song Zhengbi was obviously trying to preserve Chen Zilong’s writings even while concealing his identity. The same caution informs his qualified avowal of “deeper intentions”: he claims song lyrics and *Verses of Chu* share the vocabulary of feminine sentiments while avoiding mention of moral-political meanings.

The work in *Matching Song Lyrics* that best evokes the *Verses of Chu* tradition—or rather, its allegorical reach as traditionally understood—is Chen Zilong’s song lyric on “Orchids in Spring Snow,” composed shortly before his suicide in 1647⁹⁶ (CZL, 2:675–76; *Changhe shiyu*, p. 42):

95. Chen Zilong, “*Youlan cao ci xu*” 幽蘭草詞序 (CZL, 2:1107–8); *Youlan cao*, pp. 1–2.

96. Chen Yinke, not having access to *Changhe shiyu*, erroneously dates Chen Zilong’s “Orchids in Spring Snow” to 1645, construing it as a response to Song Zhengbi’s gift of a poem sent along with an orchid (LRS, 3:860–61).

陳子龍 念奴嬌。和尚木春雪詠蘭

Chen Zilong, "Matching Shangmu's Lyric on Orchids in Spring Snow,"
to the tune "Nian nu jiao"

| | |
|---------|---|
| 問天何事 | I ask heaven why, |
| 到春深 | Deep into spring, |
| 千里龍山飛雪 | Snow drifts over a thousand miles at Dragon Mountain. |
| 解珮凌波人不見 | The one who untied her pendant on rippling waves cannot be seen— |
| 漫說蕊珠宮闕 | For naught the talk of immortal palaces. |
| 楚殿煙微 | Faint haze at the Chu royal halls, |
| 湘潭月冷 | Cold moon over the pools of River Xiang— |
| 料得都攀折 | For sure the stems would all have been broken. |
| 嫣然幽谷 | For all the loveliness in the still valley, |
| 只愁又聽啼鵲 | I only dread another cry of the cuckoo. |
| 當日九畹光風 | At that time, among nine acres of light and wind, |
| 數莖清露 | And clear dew drops on several stalks, |
| 纖手分花葉 | Her delicate hands parted blossoms and leaves. |
| 曾在多情懷袖裏 | Once beloved, the orchids were lodged between bosom and sleeves, |
| 一縷同心千結 | And tied by one silken cord into a thousand knots of promises. |
| 玉腕香消 | The scent vanishes at her jade wrists, |
| 雲鬟霧掩 | Mists shroud her cloud tresses. |
| 空贈金條脫 | In vain did she give me the golden bracelets. |
| 洛濱江上 | On the River, by the banks of Luo, |
| 尋芳重惜佳節 | I seek the fragrance and again long for the beautiful season. |

Shangmu is the sobriquet of Song Zhengbi, who along with Chen Zilong served briefly in the Hongguang court. Various poems and prefaces in their respective collections attest to their friendship, borne out in gatherings linked to both romantic dalliances and political discussions.⁹⁷ It was in the company of Song Zhengbi that Chen Zilong came to know Liu Rushi in 1633 on a boat at White Dragon Deep near Songjiang. The poems they wrote on that occasion constitute the most reliable sources

97. In his preface to Song's collection Chen wrote that he had matched and exchanged poems with Song for twenty years ("Song Shangmu shigao xu" 宋尚木詩稿序 [1644–45], CZL, 2:804–5).

on the early life of the famous courtesan.⁹⁸ That they also shared political ideals is evident in *Essays on Ordering the World from the Imperial Ming Dynasty* (*Huang Ming jingshi wenbian* 皇明經世文編, 1638), which was compiled by Chen Zilong, Song Zhengbi, and Xu Fuyuan 徐孚遠 (1600–1665). It includes prefaces by Chen and Xu and prefatory remarks on “compositional principles” 凡例 by Song.⁹⁹

In most of his earlier song lyrics, namely the ones collected in *Orchid Compositions*, Chen Zilong favors short lyrics 小令 and aspires to a lucid, sensuous beauty and delicate melancholy unencumbered by difficult allusions,¹⁰⁰ a style associated with Southern Tang and the anthology *Among the Flowers* (*Huajian ji* 花間集, compiled ca. 941). Here allusive density, a longer mode 慢詞, and the use of “compositions on objects” 詠物 to lament dynastic collapse are reminiscent of Southern Song lyricists such as Wang Yisun 王沂孫 (d. ca. 1290) and Zhang Yan 張炎 (1248–ca. 1320), who lived through the Song-Yuan transition. In the *Verses of Chu* tradition, the goddess unties her pendant 解珮 to lure the shaman-poet with the promise of union—the pendant (*pei* 珮), homophonous with *pei* 佩 or “match,” is meant as love token or used to propose an assignation. Her inconstancy and unpredictability define the premises of the failed quest that lends the trope to many allegorical purposes. Here the goddess who cannot be seen, together with the expectation of the orchids having been broken off, and the sense of imminent destruction even for the ones blooming in the snow (the supposed subject of the song lyric) summon familiar associations with unfulfilled ideals and

98. See chap. 2, pp. 147–48; Chen Zilong, “Qiutan qu” 秋潭曲 (CZL, 1:304); Song Zhengbi, “Qiutang qu” 秋塘曲 (*Baozhen tang ji* 抱真堂集, 4.29a) (LRS, 1:48–64). Liu Rushi was at that time fifteen; Chen had met her a year earlier. Also present at this meeting was another friend and Incipience Society leader Peng Ben. Li Wen and Song Zhengyu, who often accompanied Chen Zilong on such excursions, were not present, possibly because they had gone to take the prefectural examination (LRS, 1:68).

99. The book was “published by Pinglu tang of Yunjian.” Pinglu tang 平露堂 was the name of a hall in Chen Zilong’s abode and also the title of one of his collections. Considering Chen’s modest financial circumstances, the publication was probably made possible by financial contributions from officials such as Fang Yuegong 方岳貢 (*jinshi* 1622) and Zhang Guowei 張國維 (1595–1646), who both wrote prefaces. As Chen Yinke points out, the book represents the political views of the Jiangnan literary elite (LRS, 1:288–96).

100. Although loss and longing are recurrent themes in this type of song lyrics that focus on desire and female beauty, the emotions are rarely intense or unrestrained.

frustrated aspirations. As in the *Verses of Chu* tradition, the fragrant plant or orchid symbolizes the poet's virtues and ideals. The cuckoo, often linked to lamentation over the loss of one's country, is also the evil bird that blocks communication and forestalls the flowers' blooming in *Encountering Sorrow*: "I fear the cuckoo would cry first, / And kill the fragrance of the myriad blossoms" 恐啼鵲之先鳴兮，使乎百草爲之不芳 (*Chuci jizhu*, p. 22).

In the second half of the song lyric, however, correspondences made habitual by the *Verses of Chu* are transformed. In the poet's memory of time past 當日, the goddess was a partner in cultivating these fragrant plants. Their sense of common cause is confirmed as a love pledge, the knot of silken cord. Now she is dead, and the poet feels that he has betrayed her gift of the "golden bracelet," which can be a variant of the goddess's "pendant" in the *Verses of Chu* tradition, or, more likely, is linked to the goddess from the tradition of Daoist lore. According to the Daoist text *True Declaration* (*Zhengao* 真誥), attributed to Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (452–536), the goddess Elühua 萼綠華 (which means Flower with Green Calyx or Calyx with Green Flower) came to Yang Quan's home in 359, recited a poem for him, and gave him various presents, including gold and jade bracelets.¹⁰¹ In some versions of this story, Elühua also imparted to Yang Quan truths about transcendence and immortality.¹⁰² In this song lyric, however, the poet betrays the gift and its promise of truth. He can only look wistfully to another "beautiful season."

Chen Zilong was always interested in identifying with the allegorical promise of the *Verses of Chu* tradition. His sobriquet in *Orchid Compositions* is "Water Mallow Threshold" (Jiangli kan 江離檻), alluding to the water mallow with which the poet adorns himself in *Encountering Sorrow*. In his later poetry, however, allusions to that corpus may be colored by specific topical and geographical references. In the poems he presented to his mentor, the scholar-official and calligrapher Huang Daozhou 黃道周 (1585–1646), in 1640, for example, he uses *Verses of Chu* imagery

101. See *Zhengao*, juan 1, "Yunxiang pian 1." The *tiaotuo* is shaped "like a ring but bigger." On Chen Zilong's interest in *Zhengao*, see "Zikai" 自慨, fourth poem (CZL, 1:490). The bracelet and Elühua are also common allusions in poetry addressed to courtesans.

102. See *TPGJ*, 57:354–55, Zhang Junfang (11th c.), *Yun ji qi qian*, 97:260–61.

to lament Huang's exile to southwest China (Guangxi), which he describes as the ancient land of Chu.¹⁰³ In Chen's "Poem of Resentment" ("Yuanshi xing" 怨詩行, *CZL*, 1:374–75, 1646), the legendary sage king Shun's failure to return from his journey provides an analogue for the demise of the Longwu court of the Prince of Tang (Zhu Yujian 朱聿鍵, 1602–46).¹⁰⁴ The queen or goddess (literally, "god's child" 帝子) who, "fair face withered, / plunged into green water" 凋朱顏, 墮綠水 may refer to the Prince's consort Lady Zeng, who drowned herself in captivity. Wang Chang suggests that the geographical connection between the ancient Chu kingdom and Prince Tang's original fief in Nanyang might have inspired the *Verses of Chu* symbolism.¹⁰⁵

Beyond topical references, Chen's post-conquest poetry is full of apocalyptic images of a crumbling celestial order and dying gods and goddesses. In "Ancient Longings" ("Gu you suo si xing" 古有所思行, *CZL*, 1:370), for example, Gonggong breaks the pillar of mountain separating heaven and earth, and the River of Heaven tumbles into earthly waves, while heavenly mountains crash to the bottom of the sea. The poet seeks help from the goddess Nüwa, who is said to have repaired heaven with stones, but reparation is impossible amid the total chaos and oblivion:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 乞得媧皇五色石 | I beseech Nüwa for the five-colored stone |
| | and obtain it, |
| 下土茫茫見深碧 | But for the world below see only |
| | a boundless deep blue. ¹⁰⁶ |

103. "Jixian Shizhai xiansheng wushou" 寄獻石齋先生五首 (*CZL*, 1:363–65). Chen attained his *jinshi* degree in 1637 when Huang was the examiner (*CZL*, 2:937).

104. The Prince of Tang led the Southern Ming resistance at Fuzhou (Fujian); see Struve, *The Southern Ming*, p. 77–99; Gu Cheng, *Nan Ming shi*, 278–310; Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, pp. 586–87, 672–73. Huang Daozhou died defending the Longwu court; see Struve, *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm*, pp. 122–40.

105. *CZL*, 1:374–75. The Goddess of River Xiang is called "god's child" in "Xiangjun" (*Chuci jizhu*, p. 35). Traditional exegesis identifies her as the consort of Shun and the daughter of Yao.

106. An earlier poem ("Jinnian xing" 今年行, ca. 1633, *CZL*, 1:305) uses similar imagery to portray personal frustrations and the inversion of values at court: "The Kui and Bi asterisms have fallen from heaven, but Nüwa is dead" 天漏奎壁女媧死. The Kui and Bi constellations control the fate of letters; their disappearance implies the abeyance of learning and writing. The hole they left behind cannot be patched up because the goddess who repairs heaven is dead.

Even as Nüwa cannot restore cosmic order, other mythical characters are caught in equally hopeless endeavors. In Chen's "Song of the White Sun" ("Bairi xing" 白日行), not only does Kuafu fail to catch up with the sun or Luyang fail to avert its setting by waving his halberd,¹⁰⁷ the sinking of the sun itself, inevitable and irreversible, becomes the tragic focus. Deities share all-too-human toil and powerlessness, and in a poem titled "The Former Song of Slow Melody" ("Qian huansheng ge" 前緩聲歌, CZL, 1:372–73) Chen compares his loyalist endeavors to the efforts of the mythical bird who tries to fill up the sea with pebbles it carries by its beak:

| | |
|---------|--|
| 翩翩帝女號精衛 | The god's daughter, in graceful flight, is called Jingwei: |
| 銜石西山毛羽蔽 | Holding pebbles from Western Mountain in her beak, her feathers are worn. |

According to the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhai jing* 山海經), Jingwei is the young daughter of the Red Emperor or Fire Emperor (Yandi). Drowned in the Eastern Sea, she turns into the Jingwei bird trying to fill the sea with bits of wood and pebbles from the Western Mountain she carries by mouth.¹⁰⁸ Here she is on the verge of exhaustion and despair. If the faithless and unattainable goddess in the *Verses of Chu* tradition articulates the poet's hopeless quest as personal frustration, then the cosmic disorder in Chen's late poetry announces a more traumatic rupture. Sometimes the goddess dies because she is a kindred spirit helpless against the forces of destruction (as in the song lyric on orchids in snow). Sometimes she is the bulwark against obliteration, as in "The Song of the Cuckoo" ("Dajuan xing" 杜鵑行, CZL, 1:373–74), in which Chen's anguished lament over the crumbling of Ming resistance concludes with an image of the goddess holding his hand:

107. On the story of how Kuafu races with the sun and dies from thirst, see *Shanhai jing jiaozhu*, 3.268; on how Lord Luyang manages to make the sun retrace its course with his halberd, see *Huainan honglie jijie*, 6.193.

108. *Shanhai jing jiaozhu*, 3.92. Gu Yanwu also uses the image of the Jingwei bird to symbolize the loyalist endeavor; see "Jingwei" 精衛, *Gu Tinglin shi jiangshi*, 1:123–24.

| | |
|---------|--|
| 惟應攜手陽臺女 | I should just hold hands with the goddess of Sunlit Terrace, |
| 楚壁淋漓一問天 | And with ink splashed on the walls of Chu, ask questions of Heaven. |

“Questions to Heaven” (“Tianwen” 天問) in *Verses of Chu*, traditionally attributed to Qu Yuan, is thought to convey his despair through questions that test the limits of moral reasoning and historical understanding. In “Poetic Exposition on Gaotang” (“Gaotang fu” 高唐賦) and “Poetic Exposition on the Goddess” (“Shennü fu” 神女賦) attributed to the nebulous Song Yu 宋玉 (ca. 3rd c. BCE), the goddess of Sunlit Terrace appears in a dream to gratify a Chu king’s desires, only to remain ultimately elusive and unattainable. She comes to embody all the ambiguities and contradictions of desire in the tradition, but here she holds the poet’s hand, in empathy with his anguish. Chen Zilong seems to imply that his despair over a lost cause is ameliorated by the certainty of higher purpose, as symbolized by the imagined sympathy of the goddess; alternatively, the uncertain solace of her sympathy may just throw into sharper relief the poet’s despair and confusion.

The context for Chen’s song lyric on orchids becomes clearer when it is read alongside the work to which it responds, Song Zhengbi’s lyric and its preface (*Changhe shiyu*, pp. 16–17):

In the late spring of 1647, I joined Dazun [Chen Zilong] and Shuzhang [Li Wen] at Zijian’s [Song Cunbiao] Untended Garden. On that day, the spring snow suddenly stopped, and the orchids in the garden bloomed. Dazun showed me his work from the first full moon of the year. Thereafter we viewed the rugged hills and looked down on the clear stream, sighing over [the fate of] Yuangong [Xia Yunyi]. Since we had gone to great lengths to discuss our poems and essays, I composed for the occasion a long song-lyric, to the tune “Nian nu jiao”—hence the line “Tunes for the select few.” The next morning, when I received and read Dazun’s matching song lyric, and came to the line “In vain did she give me the golden bracelet,” I could not but feel ashamed. And then, not long thereafter, Dazun also followed the example of Pengxian. It was as if my lines, “The waves of River Xiang,” “Again facing the quiet stream,” were omens for him.

丁亥暮春，同大樽、舒章二子集子建荒園。是日春雪乍霽，庭蘭放花。大樽示予上元篇。已而眺〔眺〕崇岡，俯清流，感嘆瑗公。既相與極論其文，予因即席賦〈念奴嬌〉長調，故有「陽春郢雪」之語。明旦接讀和章，至「空贈金條脫」，未嘗不愧其意也。乃未幾而大樽亦效彭咸，則「湘水波瀾」，「重臨幽澗」，竟若爲讖云。

宋徵壁 念奴嬌。春雪詠蘭

Song Zhengbi, "Orchids in Spring Snow," to the tune "Nian nu jiao"

| | |
|---------|---|
| 懸堦軟石 | Hanging from cliffs and leaning against rocks— |
| 自一番 | It cannot but be one bout |
| 相見倍增愁嘆 | Of more than common sorrow and sighs as we meet. |
| 湘水波瀾猶帶冷 | On the waves of River Xiang, cold still lingers, |
| 何事重臨幽澗 | For what reason are you again facing the secluded stream? |
| 萬種淒迷 | Myriad strands of melancholy, |
| 魂消楚侍 | The heartache of he who waits on the gods— |
| 際此情何限 | At this moment, feelings so boundless. |
| 東風暗逐 | East wind is in secret pursuit. |
| 衡皋相思日晚 | By fragrant shores, longing lasts as the day dims. |
| 曾記夙昔瑤階 | I remember from time past—on jade steps, |
| 和琅玕比翠 | In harmony with the bamboos, matching its emerald |
| 亭亭瑤幹 | Are graceful jade branches. |
| 長是煙膏并雨膩 | For long in the balm of mist and salve of rain |
| 辜負黃昏清旦 | We have let pass, all too soon, darkening dusk and clear dawn. |
| 三徑無人 | There is no one in the Three Paths of the Recluse. |
| 芳香依舊 | With fragrance as of old |
| 紫蒂搖銀漢 | The purple blossoms sway in the River of Heaven. |
| 陽春郢雪 | Tunes for the select few |
| 冰弦交付纖腕 | On icy strings are entrusted to slender wrists. |

The gathering that produced the song lyrics on orchids was thus a mournful occasion dominated by the remembrance of Xia Yunyi's martyrdom. Xia Yunyi and Chen Zilong passed the *jinsbi* examination in the same year (1637), but Xia, older and initially more famous, had promoted Chen's reputation from the time their friendship began in 1625.¹⁰⁹ Their relationship continued into the next generation. As mentioned above, Xia Yunyi's son Wanchun in turn honored Chen Zilong as his mentor. A few months after Xia's suicide, Chen wrote "The Letter of Requital for Xia Kaogong" ("Bao Xia Kaogong shu" 報夏考功書 ["Kaogong" or "examiner" refers to one of Xia's titles], CZL, 2:831–36).¹¹⁰ For Chen,

109. CZL, 2:925.

110. The letter cannot be dated with certainty, but Wang Yun mentions it in connection with events that occurred in 1646 (CZL, 2:990).

their shared political ideals, and Xia's friendship and martyrdom, could only be "requited" by his own death, for which the letter is but a substitution and a preparation. A mixture of historical testimony and self-revelation, self-justification and self-recrimination, the letter is at once a tribute to Xia Yunyi, who had been "both mentor and friend" 義兼師友, and a moving testament to the grief and guilt that tormented Chen Zilong.

Chen relates that Xia had embraced death with dignity, resolution, and equanimity, unlike those driven by exigencies and the passions of the moment. He had not burdened Chen with the imperative of martyrdom:

As you were facing death, you had sent a letter to me, urging me to abandon the family (i.e., become a monk) and preserve my life, perhaps to find in that a proper solution. You did not forget about loyalty even in death. How could your assiduous concern have been merely a matter of consideration for my own life or death!

足下臨沒，移書於僕，勉以棄家全身，庶幾得一當。足下死不忘忠，款款之意，豈獨爲鄙人存亡計耶。(CZL, 2:834)

Even as Xia Yunyi decided to end his own life, he had urged Chen Zilong not to commit suicide, but instead to continue the struggle, possibly seeking protection by becoming a monk. This is an option that Xia himself rejected, however: Xia Yunyi's brother, Xia Zhixu 夏之旭, had tried to persuade him to become a monk, but he refused. Chen laments his failure to die and to join the resistance in Fujian and Yunnan, but trusts that Xia would understand his filial obligation toward his grandmother. When his grandmother died in 1646, he felt that "the great principles of loyalty and filial piety have both been discarded to mud and earth" 忠孝大節，兩置塗地 (CZL, 2:835). In the letter, he avows his determination to follow Xia's example, but also acknowledges his confusion and hesitation. With the roads under heightened surveillance, he could not join the resistance in eastern Zhejiang as he had planned to do, and he also mistrusted some undisciplined and ill-organized resistance groups that "merely breed rancor among the people" 徒滋民怨: "That is why my hands are tied and I hesitate, turn towards heaven and weep blood, unable to stop myself" 此僕所以束手而躊躇，仰天泣血而不能自止也 (CZL, 2:835). He writes that Xia Yunyi appears to him in dreams, reenacting scenes from the past:

But in the end you have not yet told me directly about what is to come, and have not pointed to me the road to take. Is it because the ways of humans and ghosts diverge, and the principles of events, veiled and unclear, can no longer bear enquiry? Or is it because my will is weak and my conduct debased, that I would be rejected forever by an honorable man?

卒未正告以後事，開發以經途。豈人鬼道殊，事理蒙昧，已不可問耶。抑僕志懈行污，永見棄于節士耶。(CZL, 2:835)

Following the failure of the Songjiang insurrection, Chen moved his family to Kunshan and sought refuge in a Buddhist temple. He then became involved in the abortive resistance organized by Wu Yang. By the winter of 1646, after he had buried his grandmother and after the Southern Ming courts in Fujian and eastern Zhejiang had collapsed, he was despairing of success and living as a recluse.¹¹¹ His involvement in Wu Shengzhao's insurrection, which resulted in his capture and suicide, was variously remembered as half-hearted and resolute. All accounts point to his clear awareness of the cause as hopeless from the outset.¹¹²

Taking the cue from Song Zhengbi's preface and from Chen's letter to Xia, we may conclude that the transformation of the goddess tropes in the second half of Chen's song lyric on orchids is based on the relationship between Chen Zilong and Xia Yunyi. Xia is the goddess of good faith who had planted and cared for the orchids and who pledges love and common cause with the poet, tying "the knot of one heart" a thousand times. The gift of "golden bracelet" might have been the bond of recognition or more specifically Xia's final advice to Chen to continue the resistance. With the death of the goddess, or Xia's martyrdom, that "gift" would not be "in vain" 空 only if Chen also embraces the lost cause and pays with his life. In the *Verses of Chu* tradition, the poet's failed quest of the goddess provides the allegorical framework for the defeat and frustration of high ideals. Here Xia Yunyi is both the poet—in his letter Chen Zilong compares him to Qu Yuan—and the goddess; her death represents both an apotheosis, in the sense that the poet and his ideal have become one, and total despair, because not only the quest but also its object has died.

111. See CZL, 2:785–90. A desire for reclusion also appears in Chen's poems from that time; see the tenth poem in the "Qiuri zagan" 秋日雜感 series, in CZL, 1:584–87.

112. See CZL, 2:993; Song Zhengyu, "Yuling Menggong zhuan" 於陵孟公傳, in *Linwu wengao*, 8.7b.

The homology between the death of the goddess of good faith and the martyrdom of a mentor-friend thus makes the poet's political striving more personal and compelling. He is not just answering an abstract moral imperative but forging a concrete bond with Xia, as the death of the goddess looms as a challenge and a promise. The line "In vain did she give me the golden bracelet" conveys guilt and self-doubt reminiscent of Chen's letter to Xia Yunyi.¹¹³ The figure of the goddess from both the *Verses of Chu* tradition and Daoist lore, so often invoked in Chen's romantic poetry in connection with Liu Rushi,¹¹⁴ acquires political meanings through a shift of referent from Liu Rushi to Xia Yunyi. The elusive yet exacting goddess who formerly conveyed the uncertainties and intensity of romantic passion now symbolizes the poet's political self-questioning and self-examination. Such is the syntactical continuity between romantic and political emotions. It underlines some widely accepted assertions about Chen Zilong—e.g., he wrote great poems about both love and political ideals, or that he sometimes combined romantic and political themes in the same poem,¹¹⁵ or that one may

113. The moral imperative of martyrdom was so unforgiving at the time that some even blamed Chen Zilong for "delaying death." See Xu Shizhen 徐世禎, "Bingxu yicao xu" 丙戌遺草序 (*Chen Zilong shiji*, p. 773); Cao Jiaju, *Shuomeng*; Xia Zhixu's last poem, cited in Xu Bingyi, *Mingmo Zhonglie jishi*, 16.354–55.

114. The comparison of Liu to the elusive goddess from the *Verses of Chu* recurs not only in Chen's works but also in other writings addressed to her or about her by, among others, Li Wen and Qian Qianyi. The goddess Elühua is another favored analogy not only because Li Shangyin describes her as unpredictable ("Elühua came not from a fixed place" 萼綠華來無定所) but also because in *Zhengao* her original surname is said to be Yang, which had been Liu's surname. See Li Wen's lines addressed to Liu Rushi, "To whom will the bracelet be given / By the one who shares the name of the goddess Elühua?" 不知條脫今誰贈, 萼綠曾爲同姓人 ("Zuo zhong xiyan fenzeng zhuji" 座中戲言分贈諸妓, *Liaozhai ji*, 26.14a).

115. See, for example, "Yu jie Rangmu beixing yi liqing zhuanghuai baiduan zachu shi yi zhi kai" 予偕讓木北行矣離情壯懷百端雜出詩以志慨 (CZL, 1:305–6). Dated 1633, this was written when Chen Zilong left with Song Zhengbi to take the capital examination, which was to take place in 1634. Mournful feelings upon separation 離情 from Liu Rushi ("I want to leave but cannot, my insides are tied in knots, / When will she untie the pendant, to requite the gift of earrings?" 欲行不行結中腸, 何年解珮酬明璫) are juxtaposed with "heroic aspirations" 壯懷 expressing his political goal of recovering Liaodong from Manchu control ("Or else brave all, and strike the barbarians, / Deeds on metal and stone inscribed, the glory of it all!" 不然奮身擊胡羌, 勒功金石何輝光); cf. LRS, 1:118–19.

surmise a psychological continuity between different kinds of passion.¹¹⁶ This syntactical continuity is of course a time-honored convention, but Chen gives it new pathos by transforming the goddess into the emblem of empathy and tantalizing truth, as well as a symbol of the inevitable martyrdom of loyalism.

Song Zhengbi's song lyric is, by contrast, much less political. It has more in common with the other three song lyrics on the same topic and composed to the same tune by Song Cunbiao, Song Zhengyu, and Qian Gu in *Matching Song Lyrics*.¹¹⁷ They all dwell on the orchid's grace, purity, and aloofness ("hanging from cliffs and leaning by rocks," it is not to be picked or can only be picked by the "fair one"), the association of snow and coldness with austere beauty and uncompromising virtue, and the sorrow aroused by River Xiang. They can pass for generic responses to the topic, although our knowledge of the context invites specific associations with Xia's political integrity and the circumstances of his martyrdom.

The first half of Song Zhengbi's song lyric describes his encounter 相見 with the orchids as an occasion for deep melancholy, for their presence only announces the absence of the goddess, for whom there is "longing as the day dims" 相思日晚. His implied comparison of himself with the Chu shaman-poet "who waits on the gods and goddesses" 楚待 seems generic and conventional rather than pointed. The marker of remembrance 曾記 with which the second half begins would, judging from the preface, refer specifically to Xia Yunyi, but the ornate diction here seems to describe only reminiscences of literary gatherings. With the lines on "the Three Paths of the Recluse,"¹¹⁸ Song seems to uphold the eremitic ideal, which Chen Zilong, still on the cusp of getting involved in Wu Shengzhao's failed insurrection, was perhaps hoping to espouse as a venue of escape. This may also be Song's avowal of his own intent, his service in the Qing government being a somewhat later decision. The refusal to face stark choices (martyrdom or compromise) means sidestepping politics and emphasizing instead withdrawal ("the

116. Chen Yinke implies these themes throughout *Liu Rushi biezhuàn* but also articulates them specifically (2:459). See also Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Late-Ming Poet Ch'en Tzu-lung*.

117. *Changhe shiyu*, pp. 7, 26, 34.

118. For the "Three Paths," see Tao Qian, "Guiqu laixi ci" 歸去來辭兮, in *Tao Yuanming ji*, pp. 160–62.

Three Paths”) and communion in literature (“tunes for the select few”), which traverses the divide of dynastic collapse inasmuch as the literary-political community of which Xia Yunyi was a vital member now still continues its gatherings (although Song depicts the present focus as exclusively literary). The last line may even imply real or imagined singing girls who will perform their compositions. In sum, mourning is tempered by three standard venues of escape in the tradition—the eremitic, the literary, and the romantic. These alternatives have no place in Chen’s “harmonizing song lyric,” although elsewhere he ponders the possibility of living as a *yimin* by withdrawing from society and politics.¹¹⁹

In the preface, added after Chen Zilong’s death, Song Zhengbi claims that Chen’s line about “the golden bracelet” fills him with shame. It is as if Chen refuses to accept the solutions implied in Song’s work and emphasizes the call to embrace staunch resistance and martyrdom, symbolized by the death of the goddess, as inexorable. A few months after this gathering, Chen Zilong fulfilled the symbolic logic of his own song lyric by becoming involved in the doomed uprising of Wu Shengzhao and then drowning himself after its failure: “And then, not long thereafter, Dazun also followed the example of Pengxian.” At the end of *Encountering Sorrow*, the lyrical speaker avows his wish to “follow the example of Pengxian,” and this is traditionally understood as the historical Qu Yuan stating his choice of martyrdom over compromise, just like the Shang minister Pengxian who is said to have drowned himself.¹²⁰ Perhaps it is indeed shame (or is it opportunism?) that prompts Song to claim that his own lines announce the homology between Chen Zilong and Qu Yuan and thereby allow him, as a speaker of omens, to be symbolically connected to Chen’s martyrdom.

Forging Literary Communities through a Poetics of Indirectness

Whereas the referent is relatively specific and topical in the above exchange between Chen Zilong and Song Zhengbi and points to

119. See, for example, “Feng xian damu guizang lujie shuhuai” 奉先大母歸葬廬居述懷, “Bidi shi Shengshi” 避地示勝時, and “Zhongchun tianju jishi” 仲春田居即事 (CZL, 1:463–64, 467–69).

120. Hawkes suggests in *The Songs of the South* that Pengxian might have been a shaman, in which case the speaker would be announcing his quest for immortality by following Pengxian’s example. See also Hawkes, “The Quest of the Goddess.”

self-revelation and mutual adjudication within a tightly knit socio-literary group, elsewhere romantic, feminine diction with more ambiguous political meanings can function as a malleable medium for articulating diverse emotions and forming ties among widening circles of poets. A case in point is the early Qing poet Wang Shizhen's "Autumn Willows" 秋柳 poems (*WSZ*, 1:188–89)—through them he forged new literary communities by negotiating (consciously or otherwise) the conflicting demands and expectations of the new regime and the generation of poets who lived through the dynastic transition as adults, especially among Ming loyalists.

Although members of Wang's distinguished scholar-official family died as victims of the Ming-Qing conflict in 1642, and one uncle, together with his wife and son, committed suicide as Ming martyrs in 1644,¹²¹ Wang Shizhen and his brothers were from the beginning intent on participating in the new order. In the eighth month of 1657, when Wang Shizhen was twenty-four and already known for his precocious talent,¹²² he traveled to Lixia (in Shandong), where he organized a literary gathering at Lake Ming and formed the Autumn Willows Poetry Society. Wang's four "Autumn Willows" poems, composed in an elegiac mode and sometimes construed as lamentation for the fallen Ming, elicited hundreds of poetic responses, including a number by women.¹²³ An initial outburst of "harmonizing poems" was followed by another wave of responses that came when Wang served as police magistrate in Yangzhou (1661–65) and befriended many loyalists. Later Wang repeatedly looked back to the enthusiastic reception of his poems as a "famous case in the literary world" 藝苑口實, implicitly acknowledging their role in establishing his reputation.¹²⁴

121. Jiang Yin, *Wang Yinyang shiji zhenglue*, pp. 11–12.

122. He had obtained the *jinshi* degree two years earlier in 1655. His first collection, *Luojian tang chujì* 落箋堂初集 (1648), was published when he was fifteen.

123. Zhang Ming suggests that older members of the Autumn Willows Society, among them Qiu Shichang (1605–61), Yang Tongrui, and Yang Tongjiu, were well connected to many literary groups and contributed to the fame of the "Autumn Willows" poems (*Wang Shizhen zhi*, p. 158).

124. Wang Shizhen mentions the immense popularity of the "Autumn Willows" poems in various places, including *Jiyi lu*, *Yinyang shihua*, *Gufu yuting zalu*, and "Yuyang shanren zizhuan nianpu" 漁洋山人自撰年譜 (*WSZ*, 5:3760, 6:4752–53, 6:4907, 6:5061–62). His appointment in Yangzhou started in 1661, but he came to Yangzhou in spring 1660.

The “Autumn Willows” poems and their preface, densely allusive, rely on a web of stories and metaphorical associations from literary history for affective resonance. The preface begins (*WSZ*, 1:188):

Formerly, the Prince of Jiangnan, moved by falling leaves, was stirred to grief, and at Jincheng the marshal held long willow branches and shed tears. I have always been a man of sorrow, overwhelmed by too many emotions. Conveying feelings through willows, I am like the toiling soldier in *Lesser Odes*; using autumn lament as metaphor, I follow the poet gazing at the goddess in the distance by the banks of River Xiang. Having composed four verses by chance, I showed them to friends to seek their matching compositions. Written at the Northern Stream Pavilion on an autumn day in the year *dingyou* [1657].

昔江南王子，感落葉以悲秋；金城司馬，攀長條而隕涕。僕本恨人，性多感慨。寄情楊柳，同小雅之僕夫；致托悲秋，望湘皋之遠者。偶成四什，以示同人，爲我和之。丁酉秋日北渚亭書。

“The Prince of Jiangnan” refers to Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–51), the Prince of Jin’an and later Emperor Jianwen of Liang (r. 549–51), who laments autumn as the season of parting and devastation in “Poetic Exposition on Autumn Meditation” (“*Qiuqing fu*” 秋興賦). The marshal alludes to Huan Wen 桓溫 (312–73), who dominated Eastern Jin (317–420) politics and undertook various expeditions against the regimes of nomadic origins that had conquered northern China. During one of his northern expeditions, he passed by willows in Jincheng he had planted in his youth that had now grown to a ten-arm span, and sighed: “If even trees are like this, how can men bear it [i.e., the passage of time]!” 木猶如此，人何以堪。 Holding on to the willow branches, he wept (*Shishuo xinyu*, 2.55; *Jinshu*, 98.2572). In Yu Xin’s version of this encounter in his famous “Poetic Exposition on the Withered Tree” 枯樹賦, he turns the contrast between the trees’ oblivious growth and men’s struggles against time into the homology between withering trees and the beholder’s melancholy (*Yu Zishan jizhu*, 1:46–55):

昔年種柳
依依漢南
今看搖落
悽愴江潭
樹猶如此
人何以堪

In yesteryear I planted willows:
Winsome grace south of River Han.
Now I behold their trembling, falling leaves:
Sadness and melancholy by lakes and tarns.
If even trees are like this,
How can men bear it!

The “withered tree” thereby becomes for Yu Xin the symbol of his exile. The line “I have always been a man of sorrow” is from Jiang Yan’s 江淹 (444–505) “Poetic Exposition on Sorrow” (“Hen fu” 恨賦, *Wenxuan*, 16.744–47). With this response to mortality, the poet announces how, shaken in spirit, he feels compelled to enumerate instances of regret and sorrow through the ages. The soldier on the march in *Lesser Odes* in the *Classic of Poetry* (“Pluck the Bracken” [“Caiwei” 采薇])¹²⁵ measures his toil by how the willows’ “winsome grace” has turned into drifts of rain and snow. Traditional exegesis identifies the soldier’s weary expedition as the Zhou campaign against the Xiangyun barbarians (ca. 8th c. BCE). As mentioned above, the hopeless quest of the goddess in the *Verses of Chu* tradition is a frequent trope in poetry read as political allegory. Here Wang claims metaphorical intention 致托 behind the image of the poet gazing at the goddess by River Xiang in the season of autumnal melancholy. All the above are common, even formulaic, allusions in the literary tradition. However, the final invocation of “metaphorical intention,” as well as associations with political disorder, north versus south, and wars against barbarians (Xiao Gang’s enthronement and murder by the rebel Hou Jing, Huan Wen’s northern expedition, Yu Xin’s detainment in the northern kingdom of Western Wei, the Zhou’s campaign against Xiangyun), seem to have rendered this preface politically sensitive enough for Wang Shizhen to remove it when the “Autumn Willows” poems were included in his later self-selected anthology, *The Best of Wang Yuyang* (*Yuyang shanren jinghua lu* 漁洋山人精華錄, 1700).¹²⁶

Critical discussions of the “Autumn Willows” poems revolve around two overlapping issues—are there any topical historical references? How deep is the poet’s nostalgia and lament for the fallen dynasty? In numerous literary antecedents, fallen blossoms or withering leaves are linked to the decline and fall of dynasties. The lake where the poets met is suggestively named “Ming” or “Great Ming” (Daming 大明). It is close to the ruins of the palace of Prince De of Ming, which would later become the official residence of a Qing governor in 1666.¹²⁷ (In 1639, the last

125. Mao 167, in *Maoshi zhushu* 9C.333–34.

126. The preface appears in *Ruanting shixuan* 阮亭詩選 (1662) but not in *Yuyang Shanren shiji* 漁洋山人詩集 (1669) and *Yuyang Shanren shi chuxu beiji* 漁洋山人詩初續合集 (1694).

127. From 1666 to 1667, the Qing governor Zhou Youde built his residence on the ruins of the palace of Prince De; he also used building materials from Prince Heng’s palace; see chap. 3, p. 278.

Prince De, Zhu Youshu 朱由樞, was taken captive when Jinan fell to Qing troops.) Lake Ming's location in Lixia (Jinan) in Shandong notwithstanding, the poems contain ubiquitous references to Jinling (Nanjing), capital of the first three Ming emperors (1368–1420) and of the Hongguang court (1644–45). The first poem yields tantalizing “allegorical indices” (WSZ, 1:188):

王士禛 秋柳四首其一

Wang Shizhen, “Autumn Willows: Four Poems,” first poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 秋來何處最銷魂 | Autumn's advent: which place is the most heart wrenching? |
| 殘照西風白下門 | In remnant glow and west wind, the Baixia Gate. |
| 他日差池春燕影 | In yonder day, veering high and low, the shadows of spring swallows, |
| 祇今憔悴晚煙痕 | But for now, worn and desolate, the traces of evening mist. |
| 愁生陌上黃驄曲 | Sorrow rises from the embankment with the Yellow Steed Song, |
| 夢遠江南烏夜村 | Dreams leave for distant Jiangnan, to Night Crows Village. |
| 莫聽臨風三弄笛 | Listen not, facing wind, to the three tunes on the flute, |
| 玉關哀怨總難論 | The anguish and rancor of Jade Pass is finally hard to parry. |

The beginning couplet in question-and-answer mode transports us from the immediate “here and now” of the poet's act of creation to Jinling. What is most heart wrenching is not the scene within sight, but imagined melancholy in Jinling (where the Baixia Gate was located). “Remnant glow and west wind” evokes the ruins of the fallen Ming, since the immediate association of that line is “Grave mounds and city-gates of Han” 漢家陵闕.¹²⁸ The determined allegorist may read in the song composed for the Tang emperor Taizong's warhorse “Yellow Steed” (line 5) echoes of early Ming military successes or late Ming debacles. “Jade Pass” (line 8) is the marker of the frontier in Tang poetry; for Wang's contemporary readers, the association may well be the terminus

128. These are the last two lines of the song lyric to the tune “Yi Qin'e,” traditionally attributed to Li Bo 李白: “West wind, remnant glow, / Grave-mounds and city-gates of Han” 西風殘照, 漢家陵闕 (*Tang Wudai ci xuanji*, ed. Huang Jinde, p. 54).

of the Great Wall, the Shanhai Pass, whose breaching heralded the Qing conquest. "Anguish and rancor" would thus pertain to the fall of the Ming.

Yet it is entirely plausible to read in this poem a gentler and more universalized melancholy. Wang may simply be mourning the contrast between past and present (lines 3–4), the failure of heroic endeavor (line 5), the impossibility of return (line 6), inevitable mutability and longing for home (lines 7–8). The sense of loss can encompass lament for the fall of the Ming or for other dynasties. By Wang Shizhen's time (and indeed long before), Jinling had become a cipher for meditations on the past 懷古, many of which weave images of romantic longing with the decline and fall of dynasties.¹²⁹ One may argue that literary and romantic associations, rather than political meanings, determine the references to Jinling. Li Bo 李白 (701–62) wrote in a poem about parting: "The three willows at the courier station, / Are right in front of the Baixia Gate" 驛庭三楊樹，正當白下門;¹³⁰ he links willows and Baixia in another love poem: "What stirs the deepest feelings? / Crows crying among the willows of Baixia Gate" 何許最關情，烏啼白門柳。¹³¹ Li Bo bases these last two lines on a traditional *yuefu* ballad with the same title (Yang Pan'er 楊叛兒): "For now, come out from the Baixia Gate: / The willows are good for hiding crows" 暫出白門前，楊柳可藏烏。¹³² Following the associative logic of images and allusions, the crows in Li Bo's line and in *yuefu* ballads (including the title "Crows Caw at Night" 烏夜啼) might have inspired Wang Shizhen's reference to the "Night Crow Village" in line 6. Identified as the birthplace of a Jin dynasty queen, the reference may serve broader themes of mutability, but the juxtaposition of "Night Crow Village" with "Yellow Steed Song" (lines 5–6) also tones down the political urgency of the latter.

The final couplet is derived from the Tang poet Wang Zhihuan's 王之渙 (688–742) famous "Song of Liangzhou" ("Liangzhou ci" 涼州詞),

129. See Owen, "Place."

130. Li Bo, "Jinling Baixia ting liubie" 金陵白下亭留別.

131. Li Bo, "Yang Pan'er" 楊叛兒. Both Li Bo poems are cited in Wang Shizhen, *Yuyang jinghua lu jishi*, 1:68.

132. Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji*, 49.721. In that ballad the image of hiding is romantic and seductive; it is followed by the promise of union: "You, my love, will be the incense, / And I will be the Boshan censer" 歡作沈水香，儂作博山爐.

in which willows symbolize the longing for home of soldiers guarding the distant frontier: “Why should Qiang flutes hold rancor against the willows? / Spring wind does not reach beyond Jade Pass” 羌笛何須怨楊柳，春風不度玉門關。¹³³ Why blame the willows for not being there or not reviving? Spring is not supposed to come to the frontier. “Breaking Willow Branches” (“Zhe yangliu” 折楊柳) is also a tune title. The lines can thus be paraphrased differently: why express rancor by playing the “Willow” tunes on Qiang flutes? Insuperable distance makes the longing for spring (symbolizing home or succor) futile. The spatial logic of the Tang couplet is reversed in Wang Shizhen’s reformulation. The Eastern Jin commander and musician Huan Yi 桓伊 once played “three tunes on the flute” for Wang Huizhi 王徽之 (ca. 338–86) near Jinling (then called Jiankang). Throughout the performance they did not exchange words, and their encounter emblemizes musical communion between unconventional gentlemen (*Shishuo xinyu*, 23.49).¹³⁴ A commemorative landmark, “Steps Inviting Flute Playing” (“Yao dibu” 邀笛步), in Jinling memorializes the anecdote. It is the music of Jiangnan—the lament of loyalism—that expresses rancor and sorrow for what transpired at the frontier. This apparently pointed statement, however, is modulated by the evasive concluding words, “finally hard to parry” 總難論. Is the emphasis on emotions too complex and profound for words? Or is it an injunction to keep vain lament at bay?

The first “Autumn Willows” poem thus begins with the promise of allegorical meanings but moves towards restraint and ambivalence through the formal constraints of parallelism (lines 5–6) and rhetorical modulations (lines 7–8). The second poem seems even less political.

王士禛 秋柳四首其二

Wang Shizhen, “Autumn Willows: Four Poems,” second poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 娟娟涼露欲爲霜 | Such loveliness: cool dew is about to turn to frost, |
| 萬縷千條拂玉塘 | Countless silken skeins sway over the jade pond. |

133. Cited in Wang Shizhen, *Yuyang jinghua lu jishi*, 1:68.

134. Both Huan Yi and Wang Huizhi held the position of advisor for the aforementioned Huan Wen. There are many anecdotes about Wang Huizhi’s arrogant and eccentric behavior in *Shishuo xinyu*.

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 浦裏青荷中婦鏡 | The green lotus in the waters makes a mirror for a wife, |
| 江干黃竹女兒箱 | The yellow bamboo by the river makes a basket for a maiden. |
| 空憐板渚隋堤水 不見琅琊大道王 | Vain is the pity for the willow-lined imperial canal, Nowhere in sight is the prince of Langye on the wide road. |
| 若過洛陽風景地 含情重問永豐坊 | Whoever passes by the scenic spots of Luoyang Should ask again, with longing, about Yongfeng Lane. |

The first couplet is the only direct description of willows in this poem. Even so, it is mediated through allusions. In “Reeds” (“Jianjia” 蒹葭) in the *Classic of Poetry*, the elusive beloved “at the water’s edge” is beheld in the season when “white dew turns to frost” 白露爲霜.¹³⁵ The Tang poet Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842) wrote about willows in front of the imperial palace: “A thousand golden threads, ten thousand silken strands” 千條金縷萬條絲.¹³⁶ Any hint of a political turn to melancholy is set aside by the middle couplets (lines 3–6), which draw on the folk imagery of traditional *yuefu* ballads to suggest something both whimsical and perennial. The third line is derived from Jiang Congjian’s 江從簡 (d. 548) ballad (LQL, 3:1889):

江從簡 采荷諷

Jiang Congjian, “Picking Lotus: A Remonstrance”

| | |
|-------|---|
| 欲持荷作柱 | She wants to take the lotus for a pillar, |
| 荷弱不勝梁 | The lotus is too weak to bear the beam. |
| 欲持荷作鏡 | She wants to hold the lotus and use it as mirror, |
| 荷暗本無光 | The lotus is dark and has never yielded light. |

“A wife” is literally “the middle son’s wife,” the enumeration of the beauty and talents of three sons’ wives being a common trope in ballads. The “yellow bamboo” (line 4) is the opening image in the eponymous “Song of the Yellow Bamboo” (“Huang zhuzi ge” 黃竹子歌, Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji*, 47.682):

135. Mao 129, in *Maoshi zhushu*, 6D.241–42.

136. Cited in Wang Shizhen, *Yuyang jinghua lu jishi*, 1:69.

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 江千黃竹子 | The yellow bamboo by the river, |
| 堪作女兒箱 | Can be made into a maiden's basket. |
| 一船使兩槳 | One boat with two oars: |
| 得娘還故鄉 | Get the lady and return home. |

These are not allusions that present arguments; instead they rely on contiguous images to define an aura of feminine beauty for willows. Emperor Yang of Sui (569–618, r. 605–16) built the canal and lined the embankment with willows—its continued existence after his short reign is a rebuke against vainglory. “The prince of Langye” refers to the aforementioned Huan Wen, who was governor of Langye when he planted the willows that he was later to reencounter. But here Huan Wen is no longer the heroic commander heading north; instead he merges with the merrymaking man, “the prince of Langye on the wide road,” in *yuefu* ballads.¹³⁷ The last couplet alludes to a story about the Tang poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) and his family entertainer, the singer and dancer Fansu. Bai was already aging when Fansu was at the height of her beauty and vigor, and Bai conveys his unease with a song about a willow branch (*Bai Juyi ji*, 37.849):

白居易 楊柳枝詞

Bai Juyi, “Song of the Willow Branch”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 一樹春風千萬枝 | Spring wind means myriad branches for the tree— |
| 嫩於金色軟於絲 | More delicate in color than gold, softer than silk. |
| 永豐西角荒園裏 | In the western corner of Yongfeng, |
| | an abandoned garden: |
| 盡日無人屬阿誰 | To whom would it belong when, at day's end, |
| | there is no one? |

In Bai Juyi's collection, the “Song of the Willow Branch” sung by Fansu is followed by another poem commemorating the planting of two Yongfeng Lane willows in the imperial palace, the Tang emperor having decreed this transplanting after Bai's poem had made the willows famous. The concluding reference (lines 7–8) to the capital (Luoyang) and the imperial palace (echoing line 2) in Wang's second poem does not suffice to give a political turn to this poem. Nostalgia is tied to a general sense of mutability, with a hint of failed romance. Perhaps this is what inspired

137. Wang Shizhen supplies the information in the note to these lines (*WSZ*, 1:188).

Yi Yingding's 伊應鼎 (ca. early 18th c.) comment that this poem should be read in conjunction with *Miscellaneous Records of the Plank Bridge* (*Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記, hereafter *Plank Bridge*), Yu Huai's 余懷 (1616–96) remembrance of the courtesan world of Qinhuai during the Ming-Qing transition.¹³⁸ He may mean specific evocation of that world or a more general association of historical vicissitudes with the lost world of pleasures and passions.

The movement from the promise of pointed historical and political reference to vague romantic sentiments universalized through associations with folk songs, realized through the sequence of the first two poems, is repeated in the transition from the third to the fourth poem. As in the first poem, the third alludes to political devastation and human failure (*WSZ*, 1:189):

王士禛 秋柳四首其三

Wang Shizhen, "Autumn Willows: Four Poems," third poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 東風作絮糝春衣 | The east wind made catkins that clung to spring clothes. |
| 太息蕭條景物非 | Pity the desolation of things ne'er the same! |
| 扶荔宮中花事盡 | In the Fuli palace, exotic flowers are done blooming, |
| 靈和殿裏昔人稀 | By the Hall of Harmony, old friends are few. |
| 相逢南雁皆愁侶 | I have met wild geese heading south, all companions in sorrow. |
| 好語西烏莫夜飛 | Send word gently to the crows in the west: fly not at night! |
| 往日風流問枚叔 | For splendors of time past, ask the court poet Mei Sheng |
| 梁園回首素心違 | Who, at princely precinct, looks back to broken promises. |

The first couplet is a straightforward statement: the clinging tenderness of willow floss come and gone signals the mutability of all things. Du Fu 杜甫 (712–70) had written in the wake of the An Lushan Rebellion: "Pity myriad affairs of the human realm ne'er the same!" 歎息人間萬事非.¹³⁹ The fact that line 2 here echoes Du Fu's line casts loss and change in the context of political disorder. Fuli Palace of Emperor Wu

138. *Plank Bridge* will be discussed in chapter 4.

139. Du Fu, "Song Han Shisi Jiangdong shengjin" 送韓十四江東省親, in *DS*, 10.525–26. Zhu Heling 朱鶴齡 (1606–83) dates the poem to 761.

of Han (156 BCE–87 BCE, r. 140 BCE–87 BCE) was famous for its exotic flowers. Their decimation parallels the desertion in Harmony Hall, which alludes to a famous anecdote about willows from the *History of the Southern Dynasties*. The official Zhang Xu 張緒 (422–89), noted for his sensibility, learning, and romantic aura, won the admiration of Emperor Ming of Song (439–72, r. 465–72). After Song had collapsed and was replaced by Qi, Zhang Xu continued to serve in the Qi court. When Emperor Wu of Qi (440–93, r. 483–93) had willows planted in front of the Harmony Hall, their beauty reminded him of Zhang Xu: “These willows are graceful and lovely, just like Zhang Xu in years past” 此楊柳風流可愛，似張緒當年時 (*Nanshi*, 31.809). Zhang Xu served two dynasties, but the allusion here emphasizes mutability over any possible political dilemma. The glory of southern dynasties has faded along with imperial recognition of a minister’s sensibility and romantic presence.

The second half of the poem moves from general nostalgia to specific lament. “The wild geese flying south” inevitably reminds us of Ming loyalists. Yi Yingding implies as much when he cites as explanation Du Fu’s line: “Our traces erased, we share our toil and trials” 削迹共艱虞, also from a poem written during the An Lushan Rebellion.¹⁴⁰ Yi continues to match line 6 with another Du Fu line: “Rebels of the Western Mountain: do not encroach upon us” 西山寇盜莫相侵.¹⁴¹ The similar context in the Du Fu references masks a shift of perspectives: according to Yi’s reading, Wang is juxtaposing empathy for loyalist lament with a warning against actual resistance. Li Zhaoyuan also maintains in his 1808 commentary that this is admonition against “forming unfounded hopes for the fallen Ming” 妄萌思明之念.¹⁴² The embedded allusion in line 6 defines a calamitous moment and implies an injunction against political or military action: “Crows in the West Fly

140. Du Fu, “Zeng Gao Shiyan” 贈高式顏, in *DS*, 6.118–19. Cited in Wang Shizhen, *Yuyang jinghua lu jishi*, 1:71.

141. Du Fu, “Denglou” 登樓, in *DS*, 13.685. Cited in Wang Shizhen, *Yuyang jinghua lu jishi*, 1:71.

142. See Zhou Xinglu, *Yuyang jinghua lu huiping*, p. 39. Chen Yan is even more specific. He thinks “crow in the west” refers to Gu Yanwu’s resistance in Shanxi; “fly at night” implies secret insurgency 西鳥指亭林在山西時，夜飛謂暗中煽動。(*Shiyishi shibua*, 11.154). See also Qian Zhonglian: “Do not waste further effort in vain” 不要再徒勞了, in *Qian Zhonglian jianglun qingshi*, pp. 38–40.

at Night” (“Xiwu yefei” 西烏夜飛) is the title of a *yuefu* love song. It acquires a political meaning through the somewhat arbitrary attribution of authorship to the Song general Shen Youzhi 沈攸之 (d. 478)—he is said to have composed the song in 477, when he was on the verge of defeat and the short-lived Liu Song dynasty (420–79) was crumbling.¹⁴³

The last two lines invoke regret and nostalgia. Mei Sheng 枚乘 (d. 140) is the Han court poet whose extant works include a “Poetic Exposition on Willows” (“Liu fu” 柳賦). He was active first in the court of the Prince of Liang before he came to the attention of Emperor Jing of Han (188 BCE–141 BCE, r. 156 BCE–141 BCE) for urging rebellious princes to submit to the throne. “Princely precinct” (literally, “Liang Garden”) was where he, the Prince of Liang, and other ministers shared the joy of literary composition and appreciation. “Splendors of time past” 往日風流 thus refers to literary reputation, political acumen, and the ruler’s recognition of one’s talent. Ming scholar-officials who claim such a glorious past now live with regret for “broken promises” (素心違, literally, “betraying former convictions”), which may mean unspecified mistakes and failures or, more pointedly, the compromises of former Ming officials who now serve the Qing.¹⁴⁴ Yi Yingding might have in mind the “inner loyalism” of those who had to go against their “original intention” (another reading of *suxin* 素心) when he compares this poem to Yu Xin’s “Poetic Exposition Lamenting Southland.” Indeed, of the four poems the third one is most rife with images of deserted palaces, bygone splendor, and remorseful nostalgia.

As if veering away from the political judgments of the third poem, the fourth poem foregrounds romantic and feminine associations, thus repeating the shift between the first and the second poem (*WSZ*, 1:189):

143. See the comment from *Gujin Yuefu*, cited in Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji*, 49:722. The general’s desire to return to the capital is compared to a woman’s longing for her lover.

144. Zheng Hong, reading *suxin* as “those with the same pure heart” or “those of like mind” (as in the phrase *suxinren* 素心人), believes that the last couplet describes Hou Fangyu’s struggles against the corrupt elements in the Hongguang court. Cited in Zhou Xinglu, *Yuyang jinghua lu huiping*, p. 41. Chen Yan thinks this line refers specifically to Qian Qianyi (*Shiyishi shihua*, 11.154). This is highly unlikely, considering the fact that Qian was the much older and more prominent poet from whom Wang was seeking recognition. Wang Shizhen requested matching poems for “Autumn Willows” from Qian Qianyi and Liu Rushi when he was in Yangzhou in 1661, but Qian declined; see Qian Qianyi, “Yu Wang Yishang” 與王貽上, third of four letters, in *QMZ*, 7:225–26.

王士禛 秋柳四首其四

Wang Shizhen, "Autumn Willows: Four Poems," fourth poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 桃根桃葉鎮相憐 | Peach Leaf and Peach Root are indeed linked in feelings: |
| 眺盡平蕪欲化煙 | His gaze reaches the limits of the plain, about to turn into mist. |
| 秋色向人猶旖旎 | Willows in autumnal hues still entice with lingering grace, |
| 春閨曾與致纏綿 | From a spring chamber, they once conveyed aching longing. |
| 新愁帝子悲今日 | For new sorrows the god's child grieves today, |
| 舊事公孫憶往年 | Stories of long ago make the prince recall yesteryear. |
| 記否青門珠絡鼓 | Remember how, to the beat of the jeweled drum by Blue Gate, |
| 松枝相映夕陽邊 | Pines and willows lit up each other by the setting sun? |

Peach Leaf, traditionally identified as Wang Xianzhi's 王獻之 (344–86) concubine, is the subject of three "Peach Leaf Songs" ("Taoye ge" 桃葉歌), romantic *yuefu* ballads attributed to Wang.¹⁴⁵ One of them, employing standard *yuefu*-style association, contains the line "peach leaf is linked to peach root" 桃葉連桃根, bringing the word *lian* 連 (link) into play with its homophone, *lian* 憐 (to have tender feelings for someone). Peach Root comes to be personified as Peach Leaf's sister. Here the two sisters, punning on *lian* 連 and 憐, are "linked" in "shared feelings," inviting the gaze of the male lover, who can only discern tantalizing mist where grassy plains meet the sky. The third "Peach Leaf Song" describes the moment of parting at the river and imagined reunion, which might have inspired the image of misty distance in line 2. Peach Leaf Crossing (Tuye du 桃葉渡), a landmark along Qinhuai, may serve as another reminder of associations with Jinling.

The "Peach Leaf Songs," popular during the Chen dynasty (557–89), are said to be an omen for the Sui conquest of Chen in Sui dynastic history: the lover's celebration of "river crossing" is said to presage the Sui expedition crossing the Yangzi.¹⁴⁶ There is no indication, however, that such political reference is intended. The second couplet, recalling Wang Changling's famous quatrain about a woman reminded of her

145. Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji*, 45.664–65.

146. *Suishu*, "Wuxing zhi," cited in Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji*, 45.664.

absent husband as she gazes at spring willows by the wayside, develops the idea of longing.¹⁴⁷ The willows that concretize her longing in spring still entice with the promise of empathy in autumn. The third couplet is the most enigmatic in this set of poems. The poet and scholar Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733–1818) echoes many readers' frustrations when he complains that "grieves today" and "recall yesteryear" "do not come down to anything" 全無著落. Is the "god's child" (line 5) the goddess of River Xiang, who, as noted earlier, is associated with autumnal melancholy? Line 6 alludes to a story about Emperor Xuan of Han (91 BCE–49 BCE, r. 73 BCE–49 BCE), who suffered early misfortunes and wrongful accusations but fulfilled his imperial destiny as announced by a withered willow that came back to life and a prophecy on willow leaves.¹⁴⁸ Is this simply a reference to the vicissitudes of human existence or the unpredictability of political fortunes? The final couplet is derived from the same set of "Yang Pan'er" *yuefu* ballads (Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji*, 49.721) that are embedded in the first "Autumn Willows" poem:

楊叛兒 "Yang Pan'er"

| | |
|-------|---|
| 七寶珠絡鼓 | Jeweled drum with seven treasures: |
| 教郎拍複拍 | I have my love beat it again and again. |
| 黃牛細犢兒 | The yellow buffalo has its calf, |
| 楊柳映松柏 | The willows lit up the pines. |

The original ballad paints a scene of rustic celebration. Wang adds to it "Blue Gate," a possible allusion to reclusive disengagement from worldly glory,¹⁴⁹ and "setting sun," with its aura of decline and melancholy. The concluding rhetorical question may thus point to the promise of a simple, rustic life that allows steadfast integrity (as symbolized by the pines). There is, however, a stubborn opacity and fragmentation about this poem. The concluding allusion to "Yang Pan'er" sums up the tension between historical reflection and more general sentiments of

147. Wang Changling, "Gui yuan" 閨怨, in *Tang Song shi juyao*, 8.795.

148. See *Hanshu*, 75.3153–54.

149. The Blue Gate was the southeastern gate of Han Chang'an. Shao Ping, who was Lord of Dongling during the Qin, refused to accept office under the Han and made his living growing melons outside the gate. See *Shiji*, 53.2017; Li Bo's "Gufeng" 古風, ninth of fifty-nine poems: "The person growing melons outside the Blue Gate, / Was formerly Lord of Dongling" 青門種瓜人，舊日東陵侯 (*Li Taibo quanji*, 2.89).

longing and mutability. As we have seen, *yuefu* ballad references thread through these four poems. These source texts often have a folksong-like quality that seems to define typical, perennial human situations rather than specific historical moments, although commentators are eager to introduce historical meanings through authorship or reception, as with “Crows in the West Fly at Night” or “Peach Leaf” mentioned above. Beyond the exegetical tradition of *yuefu*, these allusions acquire contemporary political resonance through place names such as Baixia Gate (Jinling) or the capital (Luoyang, Chang’an). The dense web of allusions in the “Autumn Willows” poems, through allusions to *yuefu*, thus navigates a balance between historical specificity and perennial typicality. In addition, no sooner is the logic of allegorical signification built up than it is neutralized by feminized images of romantic longing.

The opacity of the “Autumn Willows” poems is matched by the specificity of purported historical references in their interpretation: perhaps the former facilitates or even encourages the latter. Allegorical interpretations might also have been inspired by the more palpable political meanings in the poetic responses to Wang’s poems that will be discussed below. In other words, the fact that the “Autumn Willows” poems elicited more explicit lamentation might have prompted the quest to unveil Wang’s political intention. The loyalist poet Qu Dajun is said to have remarked on how the “Autumn Willows” poems contain specific references to the Southern Ming court.¹⁵⁰ The quest for topical references can yield readings with widely divergent political implications.¹⁵¹ Thus the poet and scholar Qu Fu 屈復 (ca. 1665–ca. 1744), in a commentary published in 1744, emphasizes Wang’s lament for the fall of the Ming as he brings to the “Autumn Willows” poems the allegorical framework that characterizes his commentaries on *Verses of Chu* and Li Shangyin’s poetry.¹⁵² By contrast, Li Zhaoyuan’s 李兆元 1808 commentary

150. Quoted in Qu Xiangbang 屈向邦, *Yuedong shibua* 粵東詩話 (*QJSJS*, 1:2036).

151. For a succinct and perceptive discussion of allegorical interpretations of the “Autumn Willows” poems, see Li Shenghua, “Wang Shizhen ‘Qiuliú sishou.’”

152. Qu Fu’s comments are cited in Zhou, *Yuyang jinghua lu buiping*, pp. 45–56; for Qu Fu’s exegetical methods, see his *Chuci xin jizhu*, and for his developments of Zhu Heling’s commentaries on Li Shangyin’s poetry, see *Li Yishan shi jianzhu*. Qu Fu’s poetry shows loyalist sentiments and a keen interest in the history of the Ming–Qing transition (*QJSJCB*, 8.875–80).

subsumes lamentation to stringent historical judgment and identifies specific references to failures and scandals of the late Ming and Southern Ming courts.¹⁵³ His pro-Qing stance and careful justification of the conquest may be a response to the Qianlong literary inquisition, by whose draconian standards validation of Qu Fu's reading would mean the selective purging or total banning of Wang Shizhen's works, as was indeed recommended by the official Peng Yuanrui 彭元瑞 (1731–1803) in 1787.¹⁵⁴ Li's interpretation is modified in the commentaries of Wang Zuyuan 王祖源 (1866 preface) and Zheng Hong 鄭鴻 (ca. mid-19th c.), but the logic of specific topical references persists. (For example, both Li Zhaoyuan and Zheng Hong believe that the fourth poem refers to the controversy surrounding a woman who claimed to be Hongguang's former consort but who was rejected by the Hongguang emperor as an impostor. Li believes "the god's child" [line 5] refers to Consort Tong. Zheng, however, avers that "the god's child" refers to the man who claimed to be the former crown prince. The Hongguang court disputed his claim and put him in prison.)¹⁵⁵ The penchant for political allegory persists in modern scholarship: Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯 (1908–2003) reworks Zheng Hong's comments and Zhu Zejie discerns a web of references to the Ming-Qing transition in these poems.¹⁵⁶

Place names associated with courtesans and entertainers (Baixia Gate in the first poem, Yongfeng Lane in the second, Peach Leaf Crossing in the fourth), the names of singing girls (Peach Root and Peach Leaf in the fourth poem), and the sensuous diction of the "Autumn Willows" poems have led some to infer references to a courtesan, possibly Zheng Ruying 鄭如英 (Tuoniang 妥娘), who is said to have drifted north to Jinan after the fall of the Ming and might have been present at the literary gathering that produced these poems.¹⁵⁷ There is little evidence for this theory: Qian Qianyi writes about Zheng Tuoniang in one of his

153. Cited in Zhou, *Yinyang jinghua lu huiping*, pp. 29–51.

154. Guan Shiming 管世銘 (1738–98) disparages Qu Fu and also mentions his successful defense of Wang against Peng Yuanrui's recommendation that Wang's works be banned (*QJSJ*, 1:2031–32); see also Chen Kangqi, *Langqian jiven* (1885), 9.207.

155. See *QJSJ*, 1:2029–30.

156. Qian Zhonglian, "Chen Yan Qiuli shi jie bianzheng" 陳衍秋柳詩解辨正, in *QJSJ*, 1:1034–36; Zhu Zejie, "Ming yu Qing."

157. *QJSJ*, 1:2033.

1657 quatrains on Jinling, adding in a note that Zheng was at that time seventy-two. It is nowhere mentioned that Zheng “drifted north.” However, no specific Qinhuai courtesan is necessary to support the reading that the poems are infused with nostalgia and lament for the pleasures, passions, and pathos of late Ming Jiangnan, of which courtesan culture was a major component. We see the same sensibility in Wang Shizhen’s “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems on Qinhuai” (“Qinhuai zashi ershi shou” 秦淮雜詩二十首), written in 1661 when he was police magistrate in Yangzhou.¹⁵⁸ Wang was only ten when the Ming dynasty collapsed, and he had no personal memory of Qinhuai. That world became accessible to him only through the mediation of Ding Jizhi 丁繼之 (Ding Yin 丁胤), a renowned former musician from the Qinhuai pleasure quarters.¹⁵⁹ This mediated nostalgia allowed Wang to participate symbolically in the romantic-aesthetic culture of the previous generation, as he carefully traced the process of imagining loss.

Yim Chi-hung perceptively characterized the “Autumn Willows” gathering as “a literary, aesthetic, and social mourning ritual minus Ming loyalist sentiment.”¹⁶⁰ That Wang Shizhen fully acknowledges Qing legitimacy and has only censorious judgment of remnant Ming resistance is beyond doubt. Oblique references to the loyalist endeavors of Zhang Huangyan 張煌言 (1620–64), Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (1624–62), and Li Dingguo 李定國 (1620–63) in Wang’s poems from the 1650s and 1660s are all negative.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, properly mourning the Ming was part of Qing self-legitimization, as evinced by Wang Shizhen’s 1659 poem on how the Shunzhi emperor (1638–61, r. 1644–61) and his ministers wept at the Chongzhen emperor’s grave.¹⁶²

The “Autumn Willows” poems mourn the fall of the Ming while being divested of all suspicions of subversion. As mentioned above,

158. See *WSZ*, 1:298–99. Fourteen from this set are included in Wang Shizhen, *Yinyang jinghua lu* (*Yinyang jinghua lu jishi*, 1:227–35). Cf. Bryant, “Syntax, Sound, and Sentiment in Old Nanking.”

159. *WSZ*, 1:297–98, 6:4756–57.

160. Yim, *Qinliu de shijie*.

161. For some examples, see “Chun buyu” 春不雨 (1657), “Deng Jinshan” 登金山 (1660), “Runzhou huaigu” 閩州懷古 (1660), “Hai men ge” 海門歌, (1660), and “Eryue wuri Huaiyin zuo” 二月五日淮陰作 (1662) (*WSZ*, 1:180, 1:264, 1:268, 1:272, 1:349).

162. Wang Shizhen, “Jishi” 紀事, in *WSZ*, 1:235.

possible political meanings are rendered indefinite and ambiguous through images of romantic love and loss, many of them drawn from the *yuefu* tradition. The conflation of feminized images of longing with historical lament produces a poetic medium that is resonant and flexible, encompassing many shades of nostalgia, judgment, despair, or reconciliation. This explains the extraordinary impact of the “Autumn Willows” poems. Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) cites Wang’s second “Autumn Willows” poem as the negative example to be avoided in his “Prolegomena to the Plan for Literary Reform” (“Wenxue gailiang chuyi” 文學改良芻議, 1917) because its allusions are “general and indefinite, and can be explained in several different ways.”¹⁶³ Yet it is precisely such ambiguities that allow the poems to function as a forum for poets of different sympathies to project their own perspectives.

Among the extant response poems, we find, for example, unabashed pathos and nostalgia in Mao Xiang’s 冒襄 (1611–93) poems and heroic recalcitrance in Gu Yanwu’s 顧炎武 (1613–82) poem,¹⁶⁴ which is replete with unmistakable historical and political references. Both Mao and Gu refused to serve under the Qing, although no two temperaments could have been more different: Gu was involved in resistance and immersed himself in scholarship and moral philosophy, while Mao defiantly continued the good life of music and sensuous pleasures in his famous garden estate. Wang Shizhen’s cousin Xu Ye 徐夜 (1611–83), whose mother and other family members died when Manchu troops overran Xincheng in 1642, lived out the rest of his days in poverty as a loyalist. He intensifies the desolation in Wang’s poems by developing images of exile. Pan Wenqi 潘問奇 (1632–95), who lived for three decades in Buddhist monasteries but expressed anguish rather than religious renunciation in his poems, achieved the same effect by insistently linking lost love to loss of country. Cao Rong, who attained the *jinsbi* degree the same year as Chen Zilong and Xia Yunyi (1637), was a Qing official in Shanxi in the early 1660s. His poem, like that of Zhu Yizun, by then

163. Hu Shi, *Hu Shi wenji*, p. 10.

164. On whether Gu’s poem is meant as a response to Wang’s, and on the relationship between Gu and Wang, see Xie Zhengguang, *Qingchu shiwen yu shiren jiaoyou kao*, pp. 392–438.

his unofficial secretary,¹⁶⁵ “harmonized across the distance” 遙和 with Wang’s poems to convey lament more forcefully than the original. By contrast, emotions are blander, gentler, and more controlled in the response poems by Wang Shilu 王士禛 (1626–73), Shizhen’s mentor and oldest brother, and Wang Maolin 汪懋麟 (1640–88), one of Shizhen’s earliest disciples.

We can trace how the symbolic quotient of images and allusions are developed in different directions through comparisons. In Wang Shizhen’s “Autumn Willows” poems, “women of pleasure” are imagined with muted melancholy (2nd poem, lines 7–8, 4th poem, lines 1–2). The uncertain contours of misty longing acquire greater pathos and specificity in Mao Xiang’s “Matching Ruanting’s ‘Autumn Willows’ poems, using the same rhymes” (“He Ruanting Qiuli shi yuanyun” 和阮亭秋柳詩原韻, 1661), in which the merge of autumn willows with the sad fate of courtesans is more persistent and personal. Shortly after Wang took up office in Yangzhou in 1661, he invited Mao Xiang to visit and requested Mao to write a preface for an anthology of his poetry, *Selections from Ruanting’s Poetry* (*Ruanting shixuan* 阮亭詩選).¹⁶⁶ Numerous poems, essays, and letters testify to their friendship.

In Mao’s poems, the courtesan’s decline is not only individual destiny but also the devastation of a whole world. Mao frequented the Qinhua pleasure quarters in its late Ming halcyon days, and his union with Dong Bai 董白 (1624–51) was one of the most celebrated literati-courtesan romances of the period, as I shall describe in chapter 4. Whereas references to singing girls and entertainers transmute lament and judgment into a vague nostalgia in Wang Shizhen’s poems, the composite image of willow-courtesans in Mao Xiang’s poems resolutely casts her fate of dislocation and degradation as a prism for understanding national trauma. The contrast between Wang’s reticence and Mao’s frank urgency is nowhere more evident than in the concluding couplet of Mao’s first poem. While Wang seeks refuge in the ineffable, Mao battles oblivion (Mao Xiang, *Chaomin shiji*, 4.25a–25b):

165. Zhu Yizun became Cao Rong’s unofficial secretary 幕客 in 1656. On the friendship between Cao and Zhu, see Zhu Lixia, *Ming Qing zhi jiao wenren youmu*, pp. 302–23.

166. Jiang Yin, *Wang Yuyang shiji zhenglue*, p. 67.

冒襄 和阮亭秋柳詩原韻其一

Mao Xiang, "Matching Ruanting's 'Autumn Willows' Poems, using the same rhymes (first poem, lines 7–8)

曲中舊侶如相憶 Should former companions in pleasure quarters
think of me,

急管哀箏與細論 Tell all carefully, with the tumult and grief
of flute and lute.

"Quzhong" (the bend 曲中) designates pleasure quarters (*BQ*, p. 8), and "former companions" refers to courtesans and their literati friends and lovers. By the time Mao composed these poems in 1661, many of the famous late Ming courtesans, as well as Mao's friends who shared his political passions and also frequented Qinhuai, had died or suffered the slings of fortune.¹⁶⁷ The implied speaker is the composite figure of the courtesan-willow, and this first-person perspective is precisely what Wang Shizhen eschews in his "Autumn Willows" poems. ("Quzhong" can mean "in the song," in which case "former companions" would refer to the willows' figuration in poetry, especially *yuefu* ballads about willows.¹⁶⁸ Though a less likely reading, it does not alter the logic of the first-person poetic narrative.) The gesture here is self-referential, inasmuch as what is being "told carefully" 細論 is precisely the account of dispersal, victimization, and decline and fall in Mao's four poems.

Mao Xiang's poetic sequence begins with this line: "By the South Bank, in the west wind, a fitting heartbreak" 南浦西風合斷魂 (*Chaomin shiji*, 4.25a). "South Bank" alludes to the grief of parting that Jiang Yan portrays in "Poetic Exposition on Parting" ("Bie fu" 別賦),¹⁶⁹ and reference to Jiang Yan is also embedded in Wang Shizhen's preface. The

167. Dong Bai had died ten years earlier. Among Mao's close friends were Wu Yingji 吳應箕 (1594–1645), who died in anti-Qing resistance; Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611–71), who had taken the tonsure and continued resistance as a fugitive; Hou Fangyu, who had reluctantly taken the examination under the Qing and had died in 1655; and Chen Zhenhui, who had died as a recluse and a staunch loyalist in 1656. Mao, Fang, Hou, and Chen came to be called "the four noble talents of the late Ming" 明季四公子 (*Mingren zhuanji zhiliao suoyin*, p. 586). See also Wu Weiye, "Mao Pijiang wushi shou xu" 冒辟疆五十壽序 (*Tongren ji*, 2.5a–7a).

168. Besides the use of willows as dominant image in "Yang Pan'er" and "Wu ye ti," as mentioned above, "Breaking Willow Branches" ("Zhe yangliu" 折楊柳) and "Willow Branch" ("Yangliu zhi" 楊柳枝) are common *yuefu* titles.

169. Xiao Tong, *Wenxuan*, 16.750–56.

breaking of willow branches at the moment of parting gains special pathos: the courtesan seeing off a lover is a set piece in art and literature, and it is her lot to be “broken off” like the willow branch. Here her fate is also emblematic of the fall of the Ming, as Mao makes clear in the second poem (*Chaomin shiji*, 4.25a):

冒襄 和阮亭秋柳詩原韻其二

Mao Xiang, “Matching Ruanting’s ‘Autumn Willows’ Poems,
using the same rhymes,” second poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 紅閨紫塞晝飛霜 | A blight of flying daytime frost: the boudoir lady at the frontier |
| 顧影羞窺白玉塘 | Is ashamed to espy her shadow in the white jade pond. |
| 近日心情爲短笛 | Heart sick of late, the mournful short flute lures her, |
| 當年花絮已空箱 | In place of catkins of yesteryear, an empty basket remains. |
| 夢殘舞榭還歌榭 | Dreams of halls for dance fade, as do dreams of halls for songs. |
| 淚落岐王與薛王 | Tears stream down for the Prince of Qi and the Prince of Xue. |
| 回首三春攀折苦 | I look back to the pain of being wrenched and broken all spring, |
| 錯教根種善和坊 | And regret having taken root at Shanhe Lane. |

Willows blighted by unexpected frost are compared to the lady who suffers displacement from her proper abode (literally, “red chamber”) to the frontier (literally, “purplish fortress”).¹⁷⁰ Mao thereby sets up the homology between autumn willows and the abducted woman—countless women, including many courtesans, were “taken north” by the conquerors during the Ming-Qing transition, a theme I will pursue in chapter 5. The pond is compared to white jade, both for the unforgiving clarity with which it reflects decline and for the contrast between its purity and the lady’s defilement. The mood here is stark, especially when compared to the dew-like frost and the melancholy grace of the willows’ reflection in the beginning couplet of Wang’s second poem. The short

170. The Great Wall is also called “Purple Fortress.” The earth around the Great Wall is said to be purplish. See Cui Bao (ca. late 2nd c.), *Gujin zhu*, A.236.

flute, noted for its stirring, mournful notes, is fitting music for a time when even the vainglory of catkins is no more. The sound of the flute is also associated with exile and longing for the homeland, as in Li Bo's "Hearing the Flute in Luoyang on a Spring Night" ("Chunye Luocheng wendi" 春夜洛城聞笛, *Li Taibo quanji*, 25.1161):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 誰家玉笛暗飛聲 | From whence the jade flute that sends notes stealthily flying, |
| 散入春風滿洛城 | Notes that drift with the spring wind and fill Luoyang? |
| 此夜曲中聞折柳 | On this night, "Breaking Willows" is heard among the songs— |
| 何人不起故園情 | Who can be spared longing for home? |

Prince of Qi and Prince of Xue, sons of Emperor Rui of Tang (662–716, r. 710–12), may be meant as analogues for Ming princes leading remnants of resistance. The Tang princes also recall the world before the An Lushan Rebellion. Du Fu, for example, writes about the remembrance of meeting the musician Li Guinian in the estate of the Prince of Qi. More generally, the third couplet juxtaposes the cessation of songs and dance with political lamentation, for which there are many literary precedents.¹⁷¹ Shanhe Lane was part of the courtesan quarters in Tang Chang'an. While Wang Shizhen uses the singing girls and willows of Yongfeng Lane to conjure images of romantic longing in his second "Autumn Willows" poem, Mao Xiang turns to a comparable locale to lament the pitiable fate of courtesans, "broken off" like willow branches, toyed with and abandoned. The Tang poet Du Zhisong 杜之松 (early 7th c.) wrote in a poem on willows: "I brave the pain of being wrenched and broken, / Just so as to enter the music on the strings" 不辭攀折苦，爲入管弦聲。¹⁷² Punning on the *yuefu* title "Breaking Willow Branches," the conceit is the idea of life versus art: creation is rooted in suffering. Mao Xiang implicitly reverses that logic: here poetic commemoration supplies a small compensatory justice to lives truncated and destroyed.

171. For example, Du Fu's lines: "Turn back and pity the place of song and dance: / the heart of Qin has since ancient times been the realm of princes" 回首可憐歌舞地，秦中自古帝王州 ("Qiuxing bashou," sixth poem, *DS*, 17.870).

172. Du Zhisong, "He Wei Weisi liu" 和衛尉寺柳, in *Quan Tang shi*, 38.371.

The more pointed lament in Mao Xiang's poems is tied to a reluctance to pass judgment. Critique of mistakes and failures ("promises unkept" 素心違) in Wang Shizhen's third poem is echoed as overwhelming pity in Mao's third poem (*Chaomin shiji*, 4.25a):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 悞傳柳宿來天上 | By word of error is the Willow Asterism |
| | come to the sky; |
| 一墮風塵萬事違 | Once fallen to wind-blown dust, all is lost. |
| | (lines 7–8) |

The Willow Asterism is one of twenty-eight asterisms in Chinese astronomy. Here its place in the firmament is, however, uncertain, possibly the result of misdirection and miscommunication. The metaphor of "problematic elevation" might have been inspired by the implied reference to Bai Juyi's poems about Fansu and the Yongfeng willows. As mentioned above, legend has it that the Tang emperor decreed the planting of two Yongfeng Lane willows in the imperial palace after Bai's poem had made them famous. In Mao's poem, such elevation is curiously tied to degradation. Being transplanted to the imperial garden may indeed be compared to a place in the firmament. But here the fate of lowliness is not reversible, supposedly because "coming to the sky [the palace]" is mere rumor, but more likely because such "elevation" is demeaning. Mao Xiang may be alluding to how musicians and courtesans were drafted first into the Southern Ming court and then forcibly taken north to serve the Manchu ruling elite as its members too developed a taste for *kunqu* opera. Alternatively, the referent for these lines could be former Ming officials who served the Qing—their elevation is their moral downfall. The logic would be similar to Li Wen's song lyric on catkins discussed above. However, the consistent focus on courtesans in Mao's poetic sequence makes such a shift unlikely.

Such a focus on courtesans suffices as political statement, as is evident in Mao's fourth poem (*Chaomin shiji*, 4.25b):

冒襄 和阮亭秋柳詩原韻其四

Mao Xiang, "Matching Ruanting's 'Autumn Willows' Poems,
using the same rhymes," fourth poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 臺城隋苑總相憐 | The city wall and the Sui palace garden |
| | must cherish the willows |
| 憶昔縈堤并拂烟 | That wreathed the embankment |
| | and stroked the mist in memory. |

| | |
|---------|--|
| 金屋流螢俱寂寞 | Flitting fireflies in the golden chamber: both are sunk in lonely oblivion. |
| 玉關羈雁苦纏綿 | For the wild geese exiled to Jade Pass, relentless lament lingers. |
| 十圍種就知何代 | Planted and grown to fill a ten-arm span: what era was it? |
| 千縷垂時已隔年 | By the time a thousand strands sway, it was already another year. |
| 最恨健兒偏欲折 | The greatest horror: strong men want to break off willow branches— |
| 涼秋聞道又臨邊 | News came, with autumn, that they have come to the frontier again. |

Huan Wen, who appears in Wang's preface and second poem, is also the subject of the third couplet in this poem. The political meaning of the reference to Huan Wen, kept at bay in Wang's second poem, becomes unmistakable in Mao Xiang's lines: the girth of the willows is evidence of their roots in a previous era (the fallen Ming). The "strong men" who want to break off willow branches are Qing soldiers who abducted southern women and took them north. Their sad fate is thus conjoined with dynastic decline and fall through the image of the willow.

As mentioned above, Yu Xin's "Poetic Exposition on the Withered Tree," which concludes with Huan Wen's lament on willows and the passage of time, hovers at the background of Wang Shizhen's preface. Yu Xin comes up more explicitly in many of the response poems. Thus Pan Wenqi uses the figure of Yu Xin to evoke the idea of artistic creation rooted in failure and destruction. The mournful tone of Pan's "Autumn Willow" ("Qiuliu" 秋柳) is typical of the many poems lamenting the fallen dynasty in his extant corpus (*QJSCB*, 1.107–10; Pan Wenqi, *Baijuan tang shiji*, 2.24b–25a):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 漢南多雨仲文哀 | Relentless rain south of River Han feeds Zhongwen's lament. |
| 木葉凋傷作賦才 | Leaves withered and blighted stoke poetic talent. |
| 焚火漸生芳草盡 | The wild fire has spread, fragrant grass is no more. |
| 流鶯都去暮鴉來 | The flitting orioles are all gone: the evening crows have come. |
| 河橋舊事真成夢 | Old stories by the river bridge, truly the stuff of dreams. |
| 士女春心欲變灰 | The spring longing of fine ladies, about to turn into ashes. |

得意韓翃今在否 Han Yi who exulted—is he still here now?
 尋人莫更到章臺 Looking for his beloved, he must not go
 again to Zhangetai.

The Eastern Jin official Yin Zhongwen's lament over a dying locust tree is what begins Yu Xin's "Poetic Exposition on the Withered Tree"; the allusion (lines 1–2) sets the somber tone for Pan's poem. Bai Juyi, associated with Yongfeng Lane and the "Song of the Willow Branch" in Wang Shizhen's second poem, is here brought in through his well-known lines on wild grass on the plains.¹⁷³ Bai has written of grass that cannot be burned up because it will be revived by spring wind; here, however, destruction is total and irreversible (line 3): with this image Pan may imply the hopelessness of the loyalist cause. The hiding crows suggesting flirtation in the *yuefu* tradition are turned into "evening crows," possibly alluding to Li Shangyin's poem on the fall of the Sui dynasty entitled "Sui Palace" ("Sui gong" 隋宮): "Till the end of time, among the drooping willows are the evening crows" 終古垂楊有暮鴉 (LSY, 3:1395–1400). The Tang story about the courtesan Liu—her name means "willow"—and her lover Han Yi ends with their union despite formidable obstacles.¹⁷⁴ Here the impossibility of romance (lines 5–8) is framed as the inevitable consequence of a world engulfed in devastation.

As the southern poet detained in the north, Yu Xin is also part of a web of images on exile and homelessness. Wang Shizhen briefly conjures them only to submerge them in the ineffable in the concluding line of his first poem ("The anguish and rancor of Jade Pass is finally hard to parry"), but such associations are developed with deeper feelings in many of the response poems. Exile becomes the dominant motif in his cousin Xu Ye's four matching poems, of which only three are extant.¹⁷⁵ Considering Wang Shizhen's cautiously selective publication of Xu Ye's poems, it is quite possible that the lost poem was excluded because Wang considered it too politically sensitive.¹⁷⁶

173. Bai Juyi, "Fude guyuan cao songbie" 賦得古原草送別, in *Bai Juyi ji*, 13.262.

174. Han Yi wrote a melancholy poem about losing "Liu of Zhangetai" to a powerful rival; see Meng Qi, *Benshi shi*, 1.10–12; "Liu shi zhuan" 柳氏傳, in *TPGJ*, 485.3995–97.

175. Xu Ye, *Xu Ye shiji jiaozhu*, 2.88–91.

176. The lost poem might have been the first one. Wang Shizhen collected about two hundred poems in *Xu Ye's Poetry* (*Xu shi* 徐詩), also titled *Wang Shizhen's Selection of Xu Ye's Poetry* (*Ruanting xuan Xu shi* 阮亭選徐詩). One of Xu's descendants obtained a manuscript copy of Xu's poetry in 1799, but it was not until 1933 that this manuscript, along

The lost poem might indeed have been politically problematic, but the lament in Xu Ye's extant "Autumn Willows" poems is already forceful and explicit (*Xu Ye shiji jiaozhu*, pp. 88–91):

徐夜 和阮亭秋柳四首其二

Xu Ye, "Matching Ruanting's 'Autumn Willows,' Four Poems," second poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 若爲愁病殢眉端 | As if by sickness and sorrow soldered down are her eyebrows. |
| 金縷香消舞袖闌 | Fragrance fades from the golden skeins, dancing sleeves are idle. |
| 絕塞無心隨入破 | From beyond distant frontiers, no desire to follow the final notes. |
| 離亭何處上征鞍 | At the pavilion of parting, where did he mount the saddle of war? |
| 謝娘老去風猶在 | The aging Lady Xie, of willow fame, still retains her charm. |
| 張尹歸來日已殘 | Prefect Zhang has come back, though the day is already fading. |
| 莫向白門歌此曲 | Do not turn to Baixia Gate to sing this song |
| 蕭蕭鳥起不勝寒 | As crows start up in desolation, unable to bear the cold. |

Willows are conventionally compared to a woman's eyebrows, hence the references in lines 1 and 6. Zhang Chang 張敞 (d. 48 BCE), the Han Prefect of the capital, was a capable official remembered, among other things, for painting his wife's eyebrows.¹⁷⁷ The golden threads of the willow (line 2) also evoke the song of *carpe diem*, "Coat of Golden Threads" ("Jinlü qu" 金縷曲, attributed to the Tang courtesan Du

with other poems excluded from Wang's version, was published. The complete extant corpus of Xu Ye's poetry, comprising about 400 poems, was republished with annotations in 1997 as *Xu Ye shiji jiaozhu*. For the theory that Wang Shizhen deliberately excluded Xu's first "Autumn Willow" poem, see Yu Rongzhang's comment in *Zijing shanguan shihua cunqao* 紫荊山館詩話存稿, cited in *QJJS*, 1:350. As is consistent with his commendation of other loyalist poets, Wang Shizhen chose for praise the qualities of lofty disengagement and philosophical transcendence in Xu Ye's poems (*WSZ*, 6:4754). Xu's extant corpus, however, suggests much deeper disquiet and sorrow.

177. Zhang Chang liked to paint his wife's eyebrows and was censured for what appeared to be unseemly frivolity. When Emperor Xuan asked him about it, Zhang's clever retort absolved him from blame: "I have heard that there are joys in the conjugal chamber that exceed the painting of eyebrows" (*Hanshu*, 76.3222).

Qiuniang), and the dance that will not end, as in Yan Jidao's 晏幾道 (ca. 1030–ca. 1106) line: “Dancing until the moon among the willows and towers came down” 舞低楊柳樓心月.¹⁷⁸ The poet Xie Daoyun 謝道韞 (349–409), famous for her line comparing snow to willow catkins,¹⁷⁹ brings the aura of refinement and literary talent (line 5). All these associations with pleasure are here only reminders of loss and devastation—the willows are eyebrows beclouded with “sickness and sorrow,” the songs and dance have faded, the poet Xie Daoyun is aging, and the sun is setting for Zhang Chang.

Contrary to the logic of the Tang poet Wang Zhihuan's quatrain invoked in Wang Shizhen's first poem, here willows would no longer arouse the envy of the Qiang flute player beyond the frontier (line 3). Flute music from beyond the frontier has no incentive to follow the “Breaking Willow Branches” song to its finale (literally, to “enter and break” Jade Pass), perhaps because there is no more hope of return to the homeland, or perhaps because there is no longer any place that can be called home. This sense of homelessness suffuses lines Xu Ye wrote shortly after the fall of the Ming: “I cannot bear, nor help, the northward gaze: / It is still the great realm of bygone days” 不堪頻北望，猶是舊神州 (*QJSCB*, 1:160). Breaking willow branches is conventionally associated with seeing someone off on a journey, and the implied song of line 3 thus points to the scene of parting, when the one beyond the frontier “mounted the saddle of war” (line 4). Metaphorically, this harks back to the context that determines the fate of exile with no hope of return. As noted above, Li Bo's line “Crows crying among the willows at Baixia Gate” conjures romance, but here crows start up in fright and desolation, unable to bear the cold (line 8). The mood is unmistakably stark.

In the second poem, Xu Ye adds allusive depth by linking Yu Xin's exile to his special affinities with the Chu poet Song Yu, and by extension to the entire *Verses of Chu* tradition. The autumn willow as aging beauty is thus no longer the courtesan, but the composite and changing figure of the goddess, the poet, the king, and political ideals in *Verses of Chu* (*Xu Ye shiji jiaozhu*, p. 89):

178. See Du Mu, “Du Qiuniang shi” 杜秋娘詩, *Fanchuan wenji*, 1:5; *QSC*, 1:225.

179. See *Shishuo xinyu*, 2:71.

徐夜 和阮亭秋柳四首其三

Xu Ye, "Matching Ruanting's 'Autumn Willows,' Four Poems," third poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 悲哉爲氣祇悲伊 | Woe indeed—the spirit of autumn, woe only for you— |
| 同是風流楚所師 | Both of sensibility refined, held up as teachers for Chu. |
| 衰質望先驚鬢髮 | Looking at my decrepit form, I am first startled by graying hair. |
| 柔情銷只剩腰肢 | Worn out by tender feelings, only her slender waist remains. |
| 美人遲暮何嗟及 | These are the beauty's waning years, of what avail are sighs? |
| 異代蕭條有怨思 | The desolation of another era brings rancor and longing. |
| 日夕相看猶古道 | Day and night, a mutual gaze— it is still the same ancient road. |
| 漢家官樹半無枝 | Royal trees from the Han— half of them are bare of branches. |

Xu Ye begins by imagining Song Yu lamenting the decline of the willows. Song Yu's grief links him to Yu Xin, both honored as teachers in the land of Chu. In conjoining these two poets, Xu Ye is implicitly invoking the second poem in Du Fu's five poems on "Singing of My Feelings at Ancient Sites" ("Yonghuai guji" 詠懷古跡).¹⁸⁰ A line from the "Nine Disquisitions" ("Jiubian" 九辯, ca. 3rd c. BCE) attributed to Song Yu reads: "Woe indeed—the spirit of autumn" 悲哉秋之爲氣也 (*Chuci jizhu*, p. 119). Xu Ye singles out willows as the object of autumnal lament because of Yu Xin, who sojourned in Song Yu's supposed abode in Jiangling as he fled the fall of Jiankang (Nanjing) during the Hou Jing Rebellion (548). In his poems on ancient sites Du Fu declares both Song Yu and Yu Xin his teachers in sensibility and culture 風流儒雅亦吾師. Xu Ye repeats the gesture and upholds both as "teachers for Chu." The splendor of Chu in turn brings up imagery from *Verses of Chu*. In *Encountering Sorrow*, the poet laments his political frustration: "But the trees and grass have withered, / and I mourn the beauty's waning years" 惟草木之零落兮，哀美人之遲暮 (*Chuci jizhu*, p. 4). Here the poet's own aging and the withering willows are linked to political despair symbolized by "the beauty's waning years" (line 5).

180. Du Fu, *DS*, 17.875–76.

Literary genealogy and mediation promise continuity. At the same time empathy is inseparable from the experience of exile and national calamity. Du Fu can empathize with both Song Yu and Yu Xin because, like the latter, he drifted through the land in the wake of the An Lushan Rebellion. Xu Ye stayed in Shandong through the dynastic transition, but the Qing conquest must have produced a special sense of dislocation. When Du Fu laments his fate of not being born in the same era as Song Yu (“The desolation of another era—the time we do not share” 蕭條異代不同時), he is remembering Song Yu through Yu Xin’s invocation of him. Xu Ye presents himself as part of this chain (line 6), yet “the desolation of another era” conveys a special anxiety. The trees planted by official decree 官樹 are half stripped bare of branches: more than the wilting and falling of the leaves, this is an image of violence. Xu Ye may claim literary antecedents and cultural continuity, but the willows that facilitate this remembrance are themselves from “another era” and half destroyed. There may also be a specific reference to Prince De’s palace just south of Lake Ming. In 1639, the Qing army raided Shandong. Prince De was captured and his palace devastated. In “The Song of the Former Palace of Jinan” (“Jinan gugong xing” 濟南故宮行), Xu Ye describes the plunder of the former palace (*Xu Ye shiji jiaozhu*, pp. 254–55):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 王氣龍殘舊宮址 | The royal spirit hovers like dying dragons at the old site, |
| 流盡繁華繞宮水 | All splendor has ebbed away with the water wreathing the palace. ¹⁸¹ |
| 中流簫鼓已沉舟 | Flutes and drums at mid-stream now belong to sunken boats. ¹⁸² |
| 往事重來呼不起 | The past returns, but summons cannot raise it. |
| ... | |
| 旁餘游殿燒未得 | At the side palace, not yet burnt up, |
| 時有滿官來宴會 | Manchu officials often come for feasting. |
| 坐中往往作謎語 | In these gatherings, riddles would come up, time and again— |
| 北人不覺南人淚 | The northerners are oblivious; the southerners are tearful. |

181. The water becomes the Pearl Spring that flows into Lake Ming.

182. This line alludes to the Han Emperor Wu’s “Qiufeng ci” 秋風辭: “We drift in mid-stream, raising white waves. / Flutes and drums play, starting the oarsman’s song” 橫中流兮揚素波，簫鼓鳴兮發櫂歌 (LQL, 1:94–95).

...

| | |
|---------|---|
| 左近人家偷殿椽 | Families nearby stole the palace beams, |
| 重枚割去龍存邊 | And cut off the heavy pillars, leaving fragments of dragons. |
| 壁釭化鋪土蝕禿 | Beam rings become blunt instruments eaten up by dirt. |
| 丹題日供柔柴煙 | Plaques with inscriptions in imperial red ink supply daily firewood. |
| 土山之傍垂楊下 | By the earthen hill, beneath drooping willows, |
| 日暮北人還騎馬 | Northerners are still riding horses in the dusk. |

The willows stripped of branches in Xu Ye's "Autumn Willows" echo this destruction and become a haunting symbol of Ming collapse.

In the last poem of the "Autumn Willows" sequence Xu Ye implicitly compares himself to Su Wu, the paradigmatic symbol of unwavering loyalty in exile (*Xu Ye shiji jiaozhu*, pp. 90–91):

徐夜 和阮亭秋柳四首其四

Xu Ye, "Matching Ruanting's 'Autumn Willows,' Four Poems," fourth poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 搖落江天倍黯然 | The falling of the leaves by the river, against the sky, doubles my sadness. |
| 隋堤鴉亂夕陽邊 | Crows flutter over the Sui embankment, at the edge of the setting sun. |
| 誰家樓角當霜杵 | Whose house is it that faces the frost-hardened baton? |
| 幾處關程送晚蟬 | How many places along the Pass send off the belated cicadas? |
| 爲計使人西去日 | That day when the envoy who had gone west made the ruse for Su Wu— |
| 不堪流涕北征年 | That year of the northern march when Huan Wen could not check his tears. |
| 孤生所寄今如此 | Where a lone existence lodges has now come to this: |
| 蘇武魂消漢使前 | That wrenching moment, when Su Wu the Han envoy faced. |

Following the references to Chu in the preceding poem, this poem begins with implied allusions to Song Yu and autumnal melancholy with the image of "falling leaves" 搖落 from his "Nine Disquisitions". The "frost-hardened baton" pounds clothes for soldiers at distant frontiers beyond Jade Pass, perhaps recalling Li Bo's "Autumn Song" (*Li Taibo quanji*, 6.352):

| | |
|-------|--|
| 長安一片月 | Over Chang'an, one sheet of moonlight. |
| 萬戶搗衣聲 | In ten thousand homes, the sound of pounding clothes. |
| 秋風吹不盡 | Autumn wind cannot blow it all away— |
| 總是玉關情 | For always, this longing for Jade Pass. |
| 何日平胡虜 | What day will the barbarians be quelled, so that |
| 良人罷遠征 | My good man will be let off distant missions? |

The image of the “belated cicadas” alludes to Li Shangyin’s poem, “Willows” (“Liu” 柳, *LSY*, 3:1258, lines 3–4):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 如何肯到清秋節 | How can it bear to drag on until the clear autumn day |
| 已帶斜陽又帶蟬 | When, having carried the setting sun, it will also carry the cicadas? |

Autumn willows, the setting sun, and dying cicadas set up a dominant mood of melancholy. The indirect reference to exile and distant frontiers in lines 3–4 gains distinct contours through the figure of Su Wu in the second half of the poem. Detained for nineteen years among the Xiongnu, Su Wu persisted in his political principles despite extreme privations and pressure from the Xiongnu to surrender. When finally a Han envoy came to retrieve him, the Xiongnu ruler tried to fool him with news of Su Wu’s death, but Su Wu’s aide Chang Hui had secretly communicated with the envoy and taught him to claim quasi-divine intervention; the envoy told the Xiongnu that the emperor had shot a wild goose that had a missive from Su Wu tied to its feet (*Hanshu*, 54.2466). The envoy’s ruse that facilitated Su Wu’s return, which in turn vindicated an endless exile, is juxtaposed with Huan Wen’s melancholy as he beholds the willows of Langye during his northern expedition (lines 5–6). Both are moments of retrospection, looking back on time lost and the measure of human striving.

The only refuge for the exile’s “lone existence” is the moment that makes return possible. “Lone existence” is tied to the image of willows in a poem attributed to Su Wu (*LQL*, 1:340–41):

| | |
|-------|--|
| 童童孤生柳 | The bare willow, in its lone existence, |
| 寄根河水泥 | Lodges its roots in the soil by the river. |
| ... | |
| 瑤光游何速 | How swiftly the Jasper Light moves, ¹⁸³ |
| 行願去何遲 | How slow to realize, my wish to return home. |

183. Yaoguang (瑤光 or 搖光) is the seventh star on the “handle” of the Northern Dipper.

The lone willow, for all its bare existence, seems to promise a kind of reprieve, for it “lodges its roots.” The final line, however, makes even the return from exile disconsolate. This is the first line of Wen Tingyun’s 溫庭筠 (812–70) famous poem, “Su Wu’s Temple” (“Su Wu miao” 蘇武廟).¹⁸⁴ The moment Su Wu met the Han envoy might have brought feelings of hard-won vindication, yet Wen imagines it as mournful remembrance of lost years—the emperor that had sent him is dead, and his own youth is gone: “Facing the autumn waves, he wept in vain for the passing stream” 空向秋波哭逝川.¹⁸⁵ For Xu Ye, the autumn willow culminates as the symbol of a lost world that makes “return” futile or impossible.

Yet another dimension of exile is conveyed through the image of Baling (literally, the mound near Ba River). As noted earlier, “remnant glow and west wind” in Wang Shizhen’s first “Autumn Willows” poem is derived from the song lyric to the tune “Yi Qin’e,” which also contains these lines: “Every year, the color of willows: / At Baling, grief over parting” 年年柳色，灞陵傷別。In the matching poems by Zhu Yizun and Cao Rong, however, Baling goes beyond conventional associations with willows and parting. Zhu summons visions of a fallen dynasty (*Zhu Yizun xuanji*, pp. 92–94):

朱彝尊 同曹侍郎遙和王司理士禡秋柳之作

Zhu Yizun, “Matching Magistrate Wang Shizhen’s Autumn Willow Compositions across the Distance, along with Minister Cao” (last two lines)

| | |
|---------|--|
| 亡國尚憐吳苑在 | For the fallen domain, pity the Wu gardens that remain. |
| 行人只向灞陵看 | Passersby can only turn and look toward Baling. |

Like Xu Ye, Cao Rong uses willows, bared of branches, to convey stark desolation (*QJSJ*, 1:1571):

184. Wen Tingyun, *Wen Feiqing shiji jianzhu*, 8.171–72.

185. *Analects* 9.17: “The Master stood atop the stream and said, ‘What’s passing— isn’t it like this? There is no reprieve day and night’” 子在川上曰：逝者如斯乎，不舍晝夜。

曹溶 秋柳

Cao Rong, "Autumn Willows"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 灞陵原上百花殘 | On the plains of Baling, all the flowers have died. |
| 隄樹無枝感萬端 | Willows on the bank, bared of branches, roused too many feelings. |
| 攀折竟隨賓御盡 | Their branches have all been wrenched and broken by the departed. |
| 蕭疎轉覺道途寒 | With trees sparse and desolate, the road feels ever colder. |
| 月斜樓角藏烏起 | The moon is aslant on the tower; hidden crows start up. |
| 霜落河橋駐馬看 | Frost descends on the river bridge: he stops the horse and gazes. |
| 正值使臣歸去日 | This happens to be the day when the envoy returns— |
| 西風別酒望長安 | In the west wind, with the wine of parting, I look to Chang'an. |

For the one who returns there must have been many who were sent off. The time was the early 1660s, when major cases of persecution that led to the death or exile of many among Jiangnan literati were still recent memory. Cao may be obliquely lamenting their fate, or he may simply be using the image of bare willows at Baling to imply a grimmer, unspoken devastation. In Wang Can's 王粲 (177–217) famous "Seven Laments" ("Qi ai shi" 七哀詩, LQL, 1:365), "to look to Chang'an" from Baling is to mourn the horrors of war, as the poetic speaker "again leaves the central domain, / To go afar to the Jing and Man barbarians" 復棄中國去，遠身適荆蠻:

| | |
|-------|---|
| 出門無所見 | I leave the gates and see nothing but |
| 白骨蔽平原 | White bones covering the plains. |
| ... | |
| 南登灞陵岸 | Southward I ascend the banks of Mound Baling, |
| 迴首望長安 | And turn my head, looking to Chang'an. |
| 悟彼下泉人 | I commune with those in the springs beneath, |
| 喟然傷心肝 | And sigh, crushed within. |

The fact that Cao Rong was a Qing official may deter the reader from inferring allusion to Wang Can; but the bare willows can also be a reminder that participation in the new order does not preclude being pained by the dark side of conquest. Explicit lament here reverses the aesthetics of impersonality that underlies Wang Shizhen's poems. Ruan

Yuan's 阮元 (1764–1849) admiring comment that “there is someone in the poem” 詩中有人 points to this tacit dialogue between two very different poetic and historical perspectives.¹⁸⁶

The symbolism of exile is also articulated explicitly in a poem by Gu Yanwu, who became one of Cao Rong's “loyalist guests” 遺民門客 during Cao's tenure as circuit commissioner of Shanxi.¹⁸⁷ Gu might have joined in the literary exchange on the “Autumn Willows” poems through his friendship with Xu Ye.¹⁸⁸ Gu's poem is more emphatically political than many other extant response poems (*Gu Tinglin shi jianshi*, pp. 400–403):

顧炎武 賦得秋柳

Gu Yanwu, “Receiving the Poetic Topic of Autumn Willows”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 昔日金枝間白花 | For golden branches of yonder days, flecked with white flowers, |
| 祇今搖落向天涯 | There are now only leaves falling, turning to the edge of the sky. |
| 條空不繫長征馬 | To these empty strands are not tied any horses for long marches, |
| 葉少難藏覓宿鴉 | Their scant leaves can hardly hide crows seeking shelter. |
| 老去桓公重出塞 | Lord Huan, grown old, again sets off for the frontier. |
| 罷官陶令乍歸家 | Prefect Tao, relieved of office, suddenly returns home. |
| 先皇玉座靈和殿 | At the former emperor's jade seat, in the Harmony Hall, |
| 淚灑西風夕日斜 | Tears fly in the western wind, as the setting sun goes down. |

186. Ruan Yuan is quoting another poet, Sheng Bai'er 盛百二 (1720–after 1770) (*Liang Zhe youxuan lu*), cited in *QJJS*, 1:1571. His comment revisits the debate on reticence and subjective projection as opposing poetic ideals. Zhao Zhixin (*Tanlong lu*, p. 311) criticizes Wang Shizhen for his impersonality 詩中無人 and advocates a distinct subjectivity 詩中有人, echoing the view of Wu Qiao in *Weilu shihua*, p. 490. Cf. Huang Zongxi's comment, cited in Jin Zhi, *Buxiandai bian*, 3:52.

187. See Xie Zhengguang, *Qingchu shiven yu shiren jiaoyou kao*.

188. See Xu Ye, “Jinan zeng Ningren xiansheng shi” 濟南贈寧人先生詩 (*Xu Ye shiji jiaozhu*, 4:357–58); Gu Yanwu, “Chou Xu Chushi Yuanshan” 酬徐處士元善 (*Gu Tinglin shi jianshi*, 1:404–6).

The political transformation of sensual, romantic diction is evident in the first four lines, derived from lines 1–4 of Li Shangyin's "Teasing Willows" ("Xue liu" 詠柳, *LSY*, 4:1566–67):

| | |
|-------|---|
| 已帶黃金縷 | The strands already bear tinges of gold, |
| 仍飛白玉花 | Still flying are the white jade flowers. |
| 長時須拂馬 | When branches are long, they must stroke the horses. |
| 密處少藏鴉 | Where leaves are dense, hiding crows are few. |

In Li's lines autumn only brings a golden tinge to willows; the catkins of a warmer season still remain. Here, as in countless other love poems, the horse brings the lover for an assignation, and hiding crows signify playful concealment. In Gu's poem, not only is past splendor juxtaposed with present desolation, but the image of leaves "falling, turning to the edge of the sky" may allude to scions of the Ming house, or specifically the Prince of Gui (the Yongli emperor), the last claimant to the Ming throne, in distant Yunnan, since "golden branches and jade leaves" conventionally allude to royal lineage.¹⁸⁹ More generally, the first two lines describe the destruction of a world, pitting past glory against present exile. Displacement renders both engagement and detachment problematic. The horses of romantic encounters become the horses of military expeditions, but they are not tethered to the bare trunks (line 3). As if resisting this logic, Gu imagines Huan Wen again undertaking a northern expedition, defying his lamentation of aging prompted by the willows he had planted (line 5).¹⁹⁰ The concealment of dalliance is here a futile quest for protection (line 4). Tao Qian, the icon of the eremitic ideal in the tradition and ubiquitously invoked in early Qing writings,¹⁹¹ is associated

189. See Wang Jimin's annotations in *Gu Tinglin shi jianshi*, 1:401–3. Note that Qian Qianyi uses the same image to mourn the murder of the Prince of Gui in 1662: "Earth crumbles and heaven collapses at the cassia forest, / Over the golden branches and jade leaves is the pall of desolation" 地坼天崩桂樹林，金枝玉葉痛蕭森 ("Hou Qiuxing" 後秋興, 13th series, 1st poem, *QMZ*, 7:72). "Gui" means "cassia," and Guilin was also the one-time center of the remnant Ming court.

190. As Wang Jimin points out, Huan Wen never went beyond the frontier (*Gu Tinglin shi jianshi*, 1:402).

191. Qian Qianyi quotes Su Shi's line "Overnight the whole world is full of 'Tao Yuanmings'" 陶淵明一夕滿人間 to describe the ubiquity of references to Tao in early Qing writings; see his "Tao lu ji" 陶廬記 (*QMZ*, 5:1009–10). Tao was invoked as much for his empathy with doomed heroes and lost causes as for his lofty detachment. See also Sun Zhiwei, "Shu Tao shi hou" 書陶詩後, cited in Yuan Xingyun, *Qingren shiji xulu*, 1:191.

with willows through his self-representation in “The Biography of Mr. Five Willows” (“Wuliu xiansheng zhuan” 五柳先生傳). But “the return” celebrated in Tao’s corpus here conveys no equanimity: it happens “suddenly”; he is “relieved of office,” suggesting unwillingness and lack of choice (line 6). For many remnant subjects, withdrawal must have indeed seemed like bitter acceptance of defeat. The explicit lamentation for the “former emperor” in the last two lines is built on allusions to lines not originally political. The concluding couplet echoes the anecdote about Harmony Hall in Wang Shizhen’s third poem, but more specifically Li Shangyin’s “Willow with Hanging Branches” 垂柳: “Heartbroken at the Hall of Harmony, / Where the jade seat of the former emperor is empty” 腸斷靈和殿，先皇玉座空 (LSY, 1:352–53). The general lament of mutability in lines by Li Shangyin and Wang Shizhen becomes a pointed reference to the last Ming emperor in Gu’s poem.

From the perspective of literary history, the elusive, melancholy diction of Wang Shizhen’s “Autumn Willows” poems made for affinities with diverse literary communities, and this broad appeal in part accounts for his rise to canonical status. When Wang Shizhen was police magistrate in Yangzhou, he actively cultivated the friendship of many Ming loyalists who, perhaps precisely because of their political disempowerment, conferred the aura of cultural authority.¹⁹² Works like “Autumn Willows” and “Miscellaneous Poems on Qinhua” allowed him to define a politically safe but affectively powerful medium with which he could claim affinities with the historical experience of loyalist poets, many of them a generation older. The “Autumn Willows” poetic exchanges enhanced his fame so much that four years later, when he published his collection (*Yuyang shiji*), twenty famous literati and officials, among them Qian Qianyi, wrote prefaces. It is no small wonder that Wang Shizhen looked back so fondly at this pivotal moment of his poetic career in his later reminiscences.

Revelations through Hiddenness

A writer’s choice of female personae and perspectives during the Ming-Qing transition allows us to probe how contextual evidence determines

192. See Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Seventeenth-Century Yangzhou*; Li Xiaoti, “Shidaifu de yile”; Jiang Yin, “Wang Shizhen yu Jiangnan yimin shiren qun.”

transmitted meanings. The gesture of hiding can be theatrical and self-dramatizing, as in the case of Wu Zhaoqian. But while self-dramatization implies authorial control, the fact that the female victim through whom he might have intended to convey political commentary coincidentally presages his fate and becomes a factor in decoding his works points to the inherent slippage between authorial intent and hidden meanings. Hiding can seem transparent, as when male writers use the discourse of chastity for self-definition and mutual evaluation. Even in such cases, however, there is room for ambiguity, as demonstrated by the shifting margin between empathy and judgment in Deng Hanyi's poem on Lady Xi. To what extent, then, can readers assume that the extreme political pressures of the Ming-Qing transition irrevocably link a poet's use of feminine perspectives to political readings? The song lyrics of Li Wen and Chen Zilong demonstrate the logic of context-driven interpretations. Political meanings are ultimately not provable, but their possibility weaves regret and longing into the complexity and contradictions of the era, as evinced by the gap between intent and actions, the mixture of shame and self-justification in compromise, or that of self-doubt and conviction in heroism.

Beyond intention and expression, hidden meanings also facilitate poetic communication. As we have seen in the exchange of song lyrics between Chen Zilong and Song Zhengbi, veiled words provide the means for deliberating, justifying, and adjudicating political choices. The "Autumn Willows" poems and their "harmonizing compositions" represent a more amorphous yet more influential version of this process. Scholars have tended to focus on how literary gatherings among loyalists often had political significance and might have been linked to resistance¹⁹³—and there were indeed loyalists who adamantly refused any contact with Qing officials. However, what was perhaps more common were the kinds of associations that produced the poems on autumn willows in Lixia. Wang Shizhen continued such "mixed gatherings" in Yangzhou. The process of negotiation between the demands of the new political reality and nostalgia and lament for the fallen Ming is sometimes fraught with tension, suppression, and elision, as when Wang singles out for praise the non-political poems of his loyalist friends or when he evolves an ideal of poetic beauty that demands distance from historical reality, dissolving particulars into universals, but the "Autumn

193. See He Zongmei, *Ming mo Qing chu wenren jieshe yanjiu*, pp. 285–352.

Willows” exchanges have a fluidity and openness precisely because they are beyond Wang’s control. The feminized, melancholy diction of those poems turns out to be a flexible, resonant medium that accommodates many positions, from heroic lament to vague nostalgia, and it was as such that it reaffirms the sense of literary community in post-conquest China.

The “Autumn Willows” poems have continued to invite decoding through the Qing dynasty and beyond. Late Qing examples of this interpretive bent, such as the aforementioned Chen Yan 陳衍 (1856–1937), underline the emphasis on indirect expression in late Qing poetics. Chen Hang’s 陳沆 (1785–1826) *Metaphorical and Allegorical Meanings in Poetry* (*Shi bixing jian* 詩比興箋) was immensely influential well into the late Qing. In song lyrics, the dominance of the Changzhou school in the nineteenth century defines a comparable focus on metaphorical and allegorical meanings. Late Qing lyricists such as Wang Pengyun 王鵬運 (1849–1904), Zhu Zumou 朱祖謀 (1857–1931), Zheng Wenzhuo 鄭文焯 (1856–1918), or Kuang Zhouyi 況周頤 (1859–1926) responded to contemporary political turmoil while staying within the premises of indirect expression.¹⁹⁴ In 1900, as allied forces were ravaging Beijing in the wake of the Boxer Rebellion, Wang Pengyun, Zhu Zumou, and another lyricist, Liu Fuyao 劉福姚 (b. 1864), hid in Wang’s abode and composed lyrics conveying “secret sorrow” 幽憂. The resultant *Autumn Lyrics of the Year Gengzi* (*Gengzi qiuci* 庚子秋詞, 1900) demonstrates how they still deemed the language of romantic longing and heartache appropriate for confronting national crisis.¹⁹⁵ There are also topical references: a series of lyrics on “fallen leaves” 落葉 and lost love in *Autumn Lyrics* mourn the death of Consort Zhen.¹⁹⁶ Gong Pengcheng notes the prevalence of

194. Both Wang Pengyun and Kuang Zhouyi hailed from Lingui, hence the designation of this group as the Lingui or Guangxi lyricists. See Ju Chuanyou, *Qingdai Lingui pai yanjiu*; Zhuo Qingfen, *Qingmo si dajia cixue ji cizuo yanjiu*.

195. Song Yuren (1857–1931) also joined the “harmonizing compositions” that came to be included in *Gengzi qiuci*. See Wang Pengyun et al., *Gengzi qiuci*; Chen Zhengping, *Gengzi qiuci yanjiu*; Wu Shengqing, *Modern Archaics*.

196. Consort Zhen, widely believed to have supported the Guangxu emperor’s reform efforts, was forced by the Empress Dowager to commit suicide right before she fled the capital with the emperor in 1900. See Wang Pengyun et al., *Gengzi qiuci*, II.21a–22b, thirteen lyrics to the tune “Xiafang yuan.” Zeng Guangjun’s 曾廣鈞 (1866–1929) “Poems on Falling Leaves” also mourn Consort Zhen (*QSJS*, 4:13269–71). Cf. Huang Jun, *Hua sui ren sheng an zhiyi*, 1:130–31, 142–46; Chen Zhengping, *Gengzi qiuci yanjiu*, pp. 129–32. Huang Jun cites other poems on Consort Zhen; they bear titles such as “Fallen Blossoms,” “Palace Poems,” and “Goddess of River Xiang.”

palace-style poetry, poems on “wandering with immortals” 游仙, and compositions on objects during the late Qing.¹⁹⁷ all these are subgenres often characterized by political engagement through indirect expression and feminized diction. Chen Yan notes, for example, that his friend Chen Baochen 陳寶琛 (1848–1935) pointedly comments on the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 in “Mourning Spring” (“Ganchun” 感春).¹⁹⁸ The same event provoked Wang Kaiyun 王闓運 (1833–1916) to write five cryptic poems in 1895 entitled “Wandering with Immortals” (“Youxian shi” 遊仙詩); they present seductive, elusive goddesses and importune human suitors and invited many matching compositions. He decoded them in 1914, delineating intended critiques of high officials during the Guangxu reign.¹⁹⁹ If such modes of indirect expression served purposes of decorum or political cover in the waning days of the Qing dynasty, then their persistence after its collapse in 1911 functioned to define the contradictory emotions of poets who felt lingering loyalty to the fallen dynasty even as they were aware of being on the wrong side of history.

197. See Gong Pengcheng, *Zhongguo shige shi lun*, pp. 292–305.

198. Chen Yan, *Shiyishi shihua*, 17:232–33; *QJSJ*, 4:11894–95; Gong Pengcheng, *Zhongguo shige shi lun*, pp. 292–93.

199. *QJSJ*, 4:12284–86; see also Zeng Guangjun's eponymous matching poems (*QJSJ*, 4:13274–76).

CHAPTER 2

Female Voices Appropriating Masculine Diction

The turmoil of the Ming-Qing transition, often portrayed in apocalyptic images of destruction, produced an impressive spate of writings by women that challenged gender boundaries. Poetry about witnessing, understanding, and remembering this crisis necessarily transforms or transcends the boudoir as subject matter and the delicate, romantic diction traditionally characterized as “feminine.” Beyond engagement with the chaos and devastation of the Ming-Qing transition, we see general historical and political interests reflected in more poems in the subgenres of “meditations on the past” 懷古, “poems on history” 詠史, and “poems on my thoughts” 詠懷.¹ Political disorder might also have created new possibilities of action or defined an imaginative space for aspirations not admissible in periods with more stable social roles. Women actively involved in loyalist resistance, such as Liu Shu 劉淑 (1620–after 1657) or Liu Rushi, self-consciously developed a martial, heroic self-image and explored the idea of fluid gender boundaries in their writings. Fervently praised for their valor and strategic genius, they are often said to have put men to shame. Discontent with traditional gender roles became intertwined with political engagement. This was

1. See Zhao Xuepei, *Ming mo Qing chu nü ciren yanjiu*, pp. 145–66.

especially true of Gu Zhenli 顧貞立 (1624–after 1685) and Zhou Qiong 周瓊 (ca. mid–17th c.).

Concern with politics and history at this juncture—almost invariably expressed as lamentation and nostalgia—often brings to mind loyalism. For men, the refusal to serve the new dynasty broadly defined one as a “loyalist,” although there were many gradations of association with the new regime, and even a Qing official could hint at inner and hidden loyalist sentiments. Women, excluded from participation in government, did not face the same stark political choices. However, those writers who chose to dwell on dynastic decline and fall sometimes did so with implied self-definition as *yimin* of the fallen dynasty. A woman with loyalist sympathies married to a Qing official may even implicitly criticize her husband, as in the case of Xu Can 徐燦 (ca. 1618–after 1698), the wife of Chen Zhilin 陳之遴 (1605–66),² or of Zhu Zhongmei 朱中楣 (1622–72), a descendant of the Ming ruling house married to Li Yuanding 李元鼎 (1622 *jinshi*, d. 1670).³ The designation “female loyalist” 女遺民 placed a woman beyond gender-specific virtues. We may surmise that loyalism created a sense of mission and common cause that in turn encouraged a measure of independence and self-assertion for a select few writing women, even when loyalist sentiments did not translate into political action, as was notably the case in the writings of Li Yin 李因 (1616–85) and Wang Duanshu 王端淑 (1621–ca. 1685).

Revisiting Feminine Diction

As we have seen in chapter 1, for male poets writing during the Ming–Qing transition, the use of feminine diction was by default interpreted politically, and this political reading was confidently applied especially when supported by dating and biographical contexts. By contrast, women writers are usually not interpreted in terms of their political sympathies. As an example we may consider Chen Jie’s 陳契 (ca. mid–17th c.)

2. See Zhao Xuepei, *Ming mo Qing chu nü ciren yanjiu*, pp. 214–56; Deng Hongmei, *Nüxing cishi*, pp. 271–99; Li Xiaorong, “Singing in Harmony.” The dating of Xu Can here follows Zhao Xuepei.

3. According to Chen Ding (“Yuanshan furen zhuan” 遠山夫人傳, *Liaoxi waizhuan*, 16.5b), Zhu tried to dissuade her husband from serving under the Qing but failed: “Of course I am but a woman, / Yet I would be ashamed to have another paint my eyebrows” 妾身自是裙釵女，羞把蛾眉別畫人。

“Autumn Willows,” written in response to Wang Shizhen’s eponymous poems discussed in the last chapter. Wang proudly declared that many women poets, “including Li Jixian [李季嫻] and Wang Luqing [王潞卿], ladies from Guangling [Yangzhou],” wrote to harmonize with his “Autumn Willows” poems (*WSZ*, 6:4907), but Chen Jie’s “Autumn Willows” (“Qiu liu” 秋柳) may be one of very few extant examples of contemporary poetic responses by women (*SC*, 12.35a):⁴

| | |
|---------|--|
| 弱不禁風素自憐 | Too frail to bear the wind, it has always pitied its own lot. |
| 黃昏細雨斷疏煙 | The light rain of dusk blots wisps of smoke. |
| 樓頭指冷誰吹笛 | Fingers on the tower grow cold, who is playing the flute? |
| 塞上身單欲寄綿 | For the thinly clad one on the frontier, I wish to send warm cover. |
| 一任啼烏翻子夜 | Leave all to the crying crows: they turn time around to midnight. |
| 直須飛雪送窮年 | We need flying snowflakes for sending off the dwindling year. |
| 攀枝信墮英雄淚 | Holding on to the branches, the hero’s tears must have fallen, |
| 殘照蕭條灞水邊 | In the desolation of the remnant glow, by the edge of Ba River. |

The identification of the female poet with the willows is conventional: both are frail; her empathy with the withering willows is also self-pity. The flute and the frontier are linked to longing for home (and sometimes exile), as noted in chapter 1. Here the flute music on the tower and concern for the privations of “the one for the frontier” reverse the direction of the allusion—the pining wife, with her flute music, is thinking of the husband on the frontier. Yet the second half departs from the feminine perspective of the first half and, under other circumstances, might have invited a political reading. The titles “Crows Caw at Night” and

4. The matching poems by Li and Wang are no longer extant. Su Shizhang 蘇世璋 (mid-17th c.) and Zheng Jingrong 鄭鏡蓉 (mid-17th c.) might have used “Autumn Willows” as a poetic model a decade or two after Wang Shizhen’s death (*QJSJ*, 4:15659–60, 4:15729–30). Later examples of women poets writing to harmonize with Wang Shizhen’s “Autumn Willows” abound. See Fong, *Ming Qing Women’s Writings*.

“Midnight Song” (line 5) both belong to *yuefu* ballads. Here their semantic connection implies deepening gloom: the crows, cawing relentlessly, turn evening into darkest midnight. Its parallel in the couplet calls forth expectation of snow seeing the year to its end (line 6). The sense of an ending heightens the melancholy of the figure of Huan Wen holding on to willow branches and weeping over the limits of human endeavors.⁵ If these last four lines were written by a male poet who opposed the Qing regime, we would not hesitate to read in them markers of loyalist lament. Deng Hanyi, who anthologized it in *Perspectives on Poetry*, comments on the poem’s freshness but refrains from political inferences: “Poems written to match ‘Autumn Willows’ number several hundred. As for what is unaffected and fresh, this excellent one from the inner chambers must be praised” 和秋柳者數百首。而濯濯能新，則推此閨中之秀 (SG, 12.35a).

Only a handful of Chen Jie’s works are preserved in various anthologies, and details about her life are scanty. She came from a scholar-official family in Tongzhou (Jiangnan). Accusations of domestic mismanagement and of being barren wrecked her marriage. She returned to her natal family and eventually took Buddhist vows, ending her life in extreme poverty. Her few extant song lyrics are written in the plaintive, supplicating voice of the abandoned woman, but her poems, including a heroic frontier quatrain and a sober chronicle of her flight from chaos and devastation, show a greater range of styles.⁶ All the same, political readings would demand greater contextual evidence. For example, when we encounter in her poems the expression “writing in the void” 書空, alluding to the story of the Eastern Jin general Yin Hao’s demotion (after which he often wrote the words “How passing strange!” 咄咄怪事 in the air),⁷ we hesitate to presume political lament, preferring to discern domestic woes, as in “Sitting alone, I only write in the void” 獨坐只書空, or vague melancholy: “In one row, beyond the sky, they write on their own in the void” 一行天外自書空.⁸ (The idea of wild geese writing in the sky is an old poetic conceit.)

5. See chap. 1, pp. 63–64, 84, 90–91.

6. See Xu Naichang, *Guixiu cichao buyi*, 4.26b–27a; *MYSW*, 13.53a–53b.

7. *Shishuo xinyu*, 28.3, *Jinshu*, 77.2047.

8. See Chen Jie, “Guiyuan” 閨怨, in Yun Zhu, *Guochao guixiu zhengshi ji*, fulu 14b; Chen Jie, “Yangzhou zaoyan cheng Wang Ruanting xiansheng” 揚州早雁呈王阮亭先生, in SG, 12.34b–35a.

More generally, a woman poet who does not give explicit “allegorical indices” while writing about willows, catkins, fallen blossoms, the end of spring, or autumnal gloom is likely to be read as staying within the confines of traditional romantic-aesthetic topics, probably mourning her personal misfortunes.⁹ Thus when Xu Can mourns the fallen Ming with the image of dying willows, she boldly announces political intent at the beginning (*Xu Can ci*, pp. 45–46):

徐燦 少年遊。有感

Xu Can, “Being Moved,” to the tune “Shaonian you”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 衰楊霜遍灞陵橋 | Withering willows, frost far and wide on Baling Bridge— |
| 何物似前朝 | What things resemble the former dynasty? |
| 夜來明月 | Night comes; the bright moon, |
| 依然相照 | In unchanging illumination, |
| 還認楚宮腰 | Still recognizes the slender waist of the Chu palace lady. |
| 金尊半掩琵琶恨 | The golden flask half hides the sorrows of the lute— |
| 舊譜爲誰調 | For whom are the old, well-learned tunes plied? |
| 翡翠樓前 | In front of the emerald tower, |
| 胭脂井畔 | Beside the Rouge Well, |
| 魂與落花飄 | The spirit flutters with the falling blossoms. |

On the authority of the first two lines, the images of languishing maiden, pining wife, and ill-fated palace ladies that follow inevitably take on a political dimension. The poet’s implied identification with the still-illuminated “slender waist of the Chu palace lady” (line 5)—willows are conventionally compared to thin waists—is thus not self-appreciation or self-pity 自憐 but protestation of constancy even as “nothing resembles the former dynasty.” Images of Zhaojun regretfully plying old tunes in front of her new barbarian masters (lines 6–7), the wife on emerald tower gazing at willows (line 8),¹⁰ or the consort Zhang Lihua hiding at

9. This is true even in the twentieth century. Lü Bicheng had to protest the allegorical intention of her poems that had invited speculations about romantic entanglements; see her postscript to *Xiaozhu ci* 曉珠詞 (*Lü Bicheng shiwen jianzhub*, p. 310).

10. See Wang Changling 王昌齡, “Guizhuan” 閨怨, in *Tang Song shi juyao*, p. 795.

the bottom of a well when the Chen dynasty fell (line 9)¹¹ capture the shame, sorrows, and dilemmas of many who lived through the dynastic transition. In other words, a woman poet who wishes her response to political turmoil to be registered as such while staying within the perimeters of feminine experience or the style of decorous delicacy and restraint has to transform the latter from within. Some of Xu Can's song lyrics represent this development. In terms of literary history, this means filiation to the tradition of Li Qingzhao in following through intricacies of emotions, but also departure from that model by way of embracing male voices (e.g., Xin Qiji, Jiang Kui 姜夔 [ca. 1145–ca. 1235]) that give a political turn to the romantic diction of song lyrics.¹²

Xu Can hailed from a scholar-official family in Suzhou. Her great-aunt Xu Yuan 徐媛 (fl. 1590) was a renowned late Ming poet. There was obviously mutual respect, poetic affinities, and deep attachment between Xu Can and her husband Chen Zhilin, although darker echoes of disappointment surfaced after Chen, briefly a Ming official,¹³ decided to serve the new dynasty in 1645. In addition to a possible ideological divide, there was the inevitable rancor in a polygamous household: in some poems Xu Can alludes to Chen Zhilin's "new favorite" 新寵. Chen rose to high office under the Qing before being implicated in factional struggles and exiled to Shengjing (Shenyang, the pre-conquest capital of the Manchus) in 1656. Briefly pardoned, he was exiled again, along with his entire family, in 1658.¹⁴ Chen died in exile in 1666, and Xu Can was allowed to return only in 1671. Xu Can's extant ninety-nine song lyrics are found in *Song Lyrics from the Garden of Inept Government* (*Zhuozheng yuan shiyu* 拙政園詩餘, preface by Chen Zhilin dated 1650), printed in 1653.¹⁵

11. On the lore of the consort Zhang Lihua, see chap. 3, pp. 244–46.

12. For comparisons of Li Qingzhao and Xu Can, see Dong Hongmei, *Nixing cishi*, pp. 271–99; Ye Jiaying, "Cong Li Qingzhao dao Shen Zufen." On Xu's relationship with male and female poetic models, see Zhang Hongsheng, *Zhongguo shixue kaosuo*, pp. 387–400.

13. Chen served briefly because an imperial decree barred him from office after his father's prosecution and suicide in 1638.

14. Chen Zhilin and his sons belonged to the literary community formed through exile to Manchuria that also included Wu Zhaoqian, discussed in chap. 1.

15. Chen Zhilin acquired the Garden of Inept Government (*Zhuozheng yuan*) in Suzhou in the late 1640s but actually never enjoyed it, as he held office in Beijing before his exile.

This means, unfortunately, we have no record of her account of and response to her exile in song lyrics, although these come up as topics in her extant poems, collected in *Poems from the Garden of Inept Government* (*Zhuozheng yuan shiji* 拙政園詩集), printed in 1803.¹⁶

Xu Can's most admired song lyrics weave political lament into the linguistic fabric of longing and melancholy (*Xu Can ci*, pp. 78–80):

徐燦 踏莎行。初春

Xu Can, "Early Spring," to the tune "Tasha xing"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 芳草才芽 | Sweet-scented grass is barely sprouting, |
| 梨花未雨 | Pear blossoms are not yet soaked by rain— |
| 春魂已作天涯絮 | The spirit of spring has already become catkins at sky's edge. |
| 晶簾宛轉爲誰垂 | The crystal curtain, gently swaying: for whom is it lowered? |
| 金衣飛上櫻桃樹 | The oriole of golden garb alights on the cherry tree. ¹⁷ |
| 故國茫茫 | The former domain recedes in endless distance, |
| 扁舟何許 | Where is the boat? |
| 夕陽一片江流去 | One stretch of setting sun ebbs away with the River. |
| 碧雲猶疊舊河山 | Azure clouds are still piled on the rivers and mountains of old. |
| 月痕休到深深處 | Traces of the moon— reach not that deep, deep place. |

Though it cannot be dated with certainty, this song lyric was probably written in the late 1640s, either when Xu and Chen were fleeing the devastation of Chen's hometown (Haichang) or after Xu had already joined Chen in Beijing. As in the song lyrics on willow catkins discussed in chapter 1, the catkins (line 3) evoke helplessness and separation. There is a deliberate contrast between the poet's forlorn identification with "catkins at the sky's edge" and the mood of hopeful beginning in nature

16. *Zhuozheng yuan shiji*, which contains 264 poems, was printed through the effort of Chen Jingzhang, a descendant of Chen Zhilin's clan.

17. The Tang emperor Xuanzong calls orioles in the imperial garden "young noblemen in golden garb" 金衣公子 (Wang Renyu, *Kaiyuan Tianbo yishi*, p. 1725).

(lines 1–2) and serene beauty in her immediate surroundings (lines 4–5).¹⁸ The sense of homelessness conveyed by the image of “catkins at sky’s edge” attains a political dimension with the reference to “former domain,” which has the convenient double meaning of place of origins (in this case Suzhou) as well as the fallen Ming. To the poet’s vivid imagination, the clouds in the azure sky are still piled on—or, in an alternative reading, resemble—“the rivers and mountains of old,” the world before dynastic collapse, hence the entreaty to the moonlight not to reach “that deep, deep place,” the recess of consciousness with its hidden pain.¹⁹ Again, its political meanings are covert but unmistakable. In Tan Xian’s words, “Her emotions over the rise and fall of dynasties put the prime minister [Chen Zhilin] to shame” 興亡之感，相國愧之。²⁰

The little boat (line 7), the supposed answer to homelessness (line 6) and irreversible decline (line 8), cannot be found. This is a recurrent image in Xu Can’s poetry, as in the following example (*Xu Can ci*, pp. 165–67):

徐燦 滿江紅。將至京寄素庵

Xu Can, “Sent to Su’an [Chen Zhilin] When I Am About to Reach the Capital,” to the tune “Man jiang hong”

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------------|
| 柳岸軟斜 | The willows by the banks bow aslant. |
| 帆影外 | Beyond the shadows of sails |
| 東風偏惡 | Is the east wind, perversely vicious. |
| 人未起 | The person has not yet risen, |
| 旅愁先到 | But the sorrows of the journey |
| | have already overcome her. |
| 曉寒時作 | Morning chill gathers, all too often. |
| 滿眼山河擎舊恨 | Mountains and rivers fill the eyes, |
| | bearing old regrets. ²¹ |

18. Chen Bangyan (“Pingjie nü ciren Xu Can”) suggests that the images of complacent beauty and ascent (line 5) may refer to service under the new dynasty—i.e., Xu Can is subtly remonstrating with her husband. By this logic, “the deep, deep place” refers to the Qing court, and Xu Can is urging Chen not to go.

19. Xu Can’s lines echo earlier lines, e.g., Ouyang Xiu: “Deep, deep courtyard—how deep indeed?” 庭院深深深幾許 (to the tune “Die lian hua” 蝶戀花, *QSC*, 1:162); Xin Qiji: “Old sorrows flow endlessly with the river in spring, / New sorrows pile on like a thousand layers of cloud-mountains” 舊恨春江流不盡，新恨雲山千疊 (to the tune “Nian nu jiao,” *QSC*, 3:1874).

20. Cited in Xu Can, *Xu Can ci*, p. 20.

21. *QQC* has *qing* 擎, the *Baijing lou* edition has *qian* 牽 (*Xu Can ci*, pp. 165–66).

| | |
|---------|--|
| 茫茫何處藏舟壑 | In this vastness, where can the boat be hidden in the ravine? |
| 記玉簫 | I remember jade flutes |
| 金管振中流 | And golden pipes rousing the spirit in midstream— |
| 今非昨 | Now is not then. |
| 春尚在 | Spring is still here. |
| 衣憐薄 | Pity her, so thinly clad. |
| 鴻去盡 | The wild geese have all gone— ²² |
| 書難托 | Hard to entrust a letter to any. |
| 嘆征途憔悴 | I lament how, worn out by the road traveled, |
| 病腰如削 | My sickly form has wasted away. |
| 咫尺玉京人未見 | The one in the jade capital, so near, is yet not seen, |
| 又還負卻朝來約 | And again the promise of a morning meeting is broken. |
| 料殘更 | I look ahead to waning hours |
| 無語把青編 | When, wordlessly, holding a book, |
| 愁孤酌 | I drink in sorrow, alone. |

Xu Can wrote this song lyric on the way to Beijing, probably shortly after Chen Zhilin had taken office under the Qing in 1645. In chapter 6 of *Zhuangzi*, entitled “The Great and Venerable Master” (“Da zongshi” 大宗師), even the boat safely hidden in the ravine can be stolen: “But to hide the world in the world so that there is no place to escape—this would be the great truth in making things constant” 若夫藏天下於天下而不得所遁，是恆物之大情也 (*Zhuangzi jishi*, 6.243). What is proposed as transcendence, however, can also be read as despair. The obverse side of affirming that there is no need to escape is accepting that there is in fact no place to escape. “The boat in the ravine” 舟壑 thus functions as an allusion with opposite implications in the literary tradition: in Daoist and Buddhist writings it marks the acceptance of impermanence, but in many other writings it signifies the poet’s lament of historical vicissitudes and dynastic collapse. Thus we have both Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513): “One by one, the boats in the ravine are changed, / Little by little, markets and courts are transformed” 連連舟壑改，微微市朝變 (“The Drawn-Out Song” [“Changge xing” 長歌行], LQL,

22. Wild geese are often imagined as letter bearers in poetry.

3:1614); and Yu Xin: “Winds and clouds are swept up in the chaos, / The boat in the ravine is secretly moved” 風雲上慘，舟壑潛移 (“Inscription on Longing for the Past” [“Sijiu ming”] 思舊銘, *Yu Zishan jizhu*, 2:691). Xu Can’s lines evoke both the pathos of cataclysmic historical changes and the sense of no escape.

The past of “jade flute” and “golden pipes” is personal as well as political—the refined pleasures of the late Ming, merged with dynastic glory, are justified with the word *zhen* 振 (“rouse the spirit”), which suggests moral purpose. There are significant departures from the figure of the pining wife: here sorrow is not mitigated by the prospect of imminent union, and the point of reference for “then” 昨 is not marked as a past moment of romantic or marital bliss. Or rather, personal relationship is also politically framed, and “then” may refer to Xu Can’s last voyage up north, when Chen Zhilin passed the *jinsbi* examination (1637) and became a Ming official in Beijing. Yet the context for political lamentation remains traditional: the theme of “sorrows of the journey” 旅愁 operates well within the idiom of melancholy underlying the aesthetics of many song lyrics.

Perhaps more frequently with women poets, political lament gives form and meaning to more inchoate and less expressible rancor or personal unhappiness. A similar fusion of the personal and political is evident in the following image of the boat (*Xu Can ci*, pp. 98–100):

徐燦 唐多令。感懷

Xu Can, “Reflections,” to the tune “Tang duoling”

| | |
|---------|--|
| 玉笛送清秋 | Jade flutes are sending off clear autumn. |
| 紅蕉露未收 | Dew drops on the red plaintains have not yet receded. |
| 晚香殘 | In the fading fragrance of dusk |
| 莫倚高樓 | Lean not on the high tower. |
| 寒月羈人同是客 | The cold moon and the traveler are both sojourners. |
| 偏伴我 | Yet it has, unexpectedly, kept me company, |
| 住幽州 | Dwelling in Youzhou. |
| 小院入邊愁 | Into the small courtyard came sad news from the frontier. |
| 金戈滿舊遊 | Battles spread through the places formerly roamed. |

| | |
|---------|---|
| 問五湖 | I ask: at the Five Lakes, |
| 那有偏舟 | Is there really a boat? |
| 夢裡江聲和淚咽 | The sounds of the River in my dream are choked with tears: |
| 何不向 | Why does it not |
| 故園流 | Flow towards the homeland? |

“Youzhou” designates the swath of territories encompassing present-day Hebei and Liaoning; here it refers to Beijing. Imperial splendor is dimmed through the associations of the name Youzhou, literally “dark land.” At the time this was written, probably in the late 1640s, Chen Zhilin was rising in his official career, yet Xu Can presents herself as the lonely and mournful “sojourner” and “traveler” in the capital; her only companion is the “cold moon.” In the poetic tradition, the gaze from a high tower often extends to what has been lost—the homeland, lost love, fallen domains, past glory and happiness—hence the idea that leaning against the balustrades on a high tower would bring only heartache.²³ Again Xu Can combines political lamentation with her longing for the homeland in the south (and by implication the happier past it represents). Further, there is a pervasive sense of exile and displacement, not least because the homeland itself is war torn and ravaged by “sad news from the frontier.”²⁴ In this context, the elusive little boat beckons as escape from history. According to *Shiji* (41.1752, 129.3257), the ancient

23. The image as it appeared in the song lyrics of Li Yu, the last ruler of Southern Tang, is linked to the loss of country: “Lean not against the balustrade alone: / For limitless mountains and rivers, / Being parted from them is easy, hard it is to see them” 獨自莫憑欄，無限江山，別時容易見時難 (to the tune “Langtao sha” 浪淘沙); “Wordlessly I ascend the west tower alone” 無言獨上西樓 (to the tune “Xiangjian huan” 相見歡) (Huang Jinde, *Tang Wudai ci xuanji*, pp. 448, 451). Elsewhere it is usually associated with more private emotions: e.g., Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052): “Under the bright moon, lean not alone on the high tower: / Wine entering a heart of sorrow / Turns into tears of longing” 明月高樓休獨倚，酒入愁腸，化作相思淚 (to the tune “Sumu jie” 蘇幕遮, *QSC*, 1:11); Yan Shu 晏殊 (991–1055): “Last night west wind withered the emerald trees. / Alone I ascend the high tower, / Gazing to the end of the road at sky’s edge” 昨夜西風凋碧樹，獨上高樓，望盡天涯路 (to the tune “Que tazhi” 蝶戀花, *QSC*, 1:91); Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72): “The tower is high, do not lean close to the tall balustrades. / Where the plain ends are the spring mountains, / The traveler is yet beyond the spring mountains” 樓高莫近危欄倚，平蕪盡處是春山，行人更在春山外 (to the tune “Tasha xing” 踏莎行, *QSC*, 1:123).

24. This is an allusion to Du Fu’s sixth poem in “Qixing bashou”: “Into the small Hibiscus Courtyard came griefs of the frontier” 芙蓉小苑入邊愁 (*DS*, 17.870–71).

Yue minister Fan Li 范蠡 (ca. late 5th c. BCE), after successfully avenging Yue defeat by destroying its foe, Wu, “then took a boat and drifted among the lakes,” which are traditionally identified as the “Five Lakes.” Here the little boat cannot be found. In the aftermath of the conquest, failing martyrdom and resistance, withdrawal from the political realm was regarded as an honorable alternative. The little boat is both a symbol of eremitism and a political statement of non-participation in the new regime. Xu Can’s hopeless nostalgia and lamentation of “no escape” may thus represent on some level an implicit reproach against Chen’s choice of serving the Qing dynasty.

As noted in chapter 1, images of exile and homelessness are ubiquitous in early Qing writings. Their application is manifold: fighters in the resistance who were increasingly driven to the fringes of the empire, the displaced whose homeland was ravaged by wars and chaos, the victims of factional struggles in court or cases of persecution who ended up being exiled, those who felt that conquest had turned China into “foreign land,” even Qing officials who felt regrets or alienation—all could claim affinities with such images. Perhaps this explains the recurrence of the idea of homelessness and the phrase “no place” 無地 in early Qing literature.²⁵ The unavailable or hidden little boat in Xu Can’s poetry belongs to this cluster of images and also conveys her own sense of entrapment and contradictions: with it the idealized “Southland,” fusing lost home, vanished past, and perhaps the fallen Ming, recedes into impossible distance.

Xu Can’s poetry shows the compass of political expression for a woman poet who chooses to remain within the boundaries of delicate restraint. She needs the markers of political-historical reflections (e.g., “homeland,” “former domain,” “former dynasty,” “mountains and rivers,” the “small boat” that questions one’s place in the world), which are also sometimes announced in titles, as with her song lyrics entitled “Lamenting the Past” (“Diaogu” 弔古, to the tune “Qing yu an” 青玉案) and “Harmonizing with Wang Zhaoyi” (“He Wang Zhaoyi yun” 和王昭儀韻, to the tune “Man jiang hong” 滿江紅).²⁶ Such reflections

25. See Wai-ye Li, “Introduction,” pp. 44–52.

26. Xu Can, *Xu Can ci*, pp. 119–23, 159–62. Wang Zhaoyi (Wang Qinghui) was a Song palace woman taken north by Mongol conquerors after the fall of Southern Song. She wrote her song lyric during her northward journey (Tao Zongyi, *Nancun chuo geng lu*, 3:38–39); cf. chap. 5, p. 397–99.

are embedded in mournful, elegiac delineations of the boudoir or of the natural world, and they often retain dual references to personal circumstances and political events.

None of these traits are uniquely “gendered”—male poets in this period often maneuvered similar rhetorical moves. One difference may be that he could rely more confidently on the contexts of history, biography, and literary tradition for his allegorical intention to be understood and could therefore afford to be more indirect. Further, while the fusion of romantic longing and political vision is ubiquitous in the Chinese tradition, the reader tends to read the conjunction more literally in the case of female poets. For example, the quest of the goddess or the plaint of the abandoned woman would likely be interpreted as a metaphor for political ambition and disappointment in poetry by men, while the expression of romantic disappointment in poetry by women would probably be read as descriptive of her actual circumstances and emotions. Xu Can traverses the boundaries of the personal and the political in new ways. In addition to implying political perspectives through personal sorrow (as Li Qingzhao accomplishes in her famous song lyric to the tune “Yongyu le” 永遇樂), she also uses political lamentation to mark her own sense of ambivalence and contradictions.

The Terms of Historical Engagement

As a description of poetic diction, “masculine” is if anything more vague than “feminine.” In the context of the historical moment we are focusing on, a direct, forceful, and heroic style engaging with the contemporary crisis would have been regarded as more “masculine.” This style was in turn associated with bearing witness, coming to terms with historical events, pondering historical judgment, and exploring the relationship between history and memory, remembering and forgetting. These ideas are encompassed in the epithet “poet-historian” 詩史, widely applied in praise of male writers during this period.²⁷ Although the honor is not conferred on women in extant sources, some women developed similar concerns in their writings.

27. See Wai-ye Li, “Confronting History,” “History and Memory”; Yim, *The Poet-Historian Qian Qianyi*.

Wang Duanshu, who became a subject of scholarly attention through the pioneering work of Ellen Widmer and Dorothy Ko,²⁸ exemplifies a keen sense of political and historical engagement. Daughter of the renowned late-Ming man of letters and scholar-official Wang Siren 王思任 (1575–1646), she proudly claimed inheritance of her father's literary legacy. Her biographer Wang Youding 王猷定 (1598–1662) tells of childhood games that portended masculine aspirations: “She liked to dress up as a man, cut up paper for banners, and made her mother commander and the various maids soldiers and generals. She made a game of marching among their ranks and plucking the banners”²⁹ 喜爲丈夫粧，常剪紙爲旗，以母爲帥，列婢爲兵將，自行隊伍中，拔幟爲戲 (“Wang Duanshu zhuan” 王端淑傳, *MYSW*, 1b). In commending her broad learning and cultivation befitting a proper Confucian scholar, her clanswoman Ding Qiguang 丁啓光 implied that Wang's anthology shows a historian's insights and erudition.³⁰ Her husband Ding Zhao-sheng 丁肇聖 (1621–ca. 1700) was appointed police magistrate of Quzhou in 1639 and retired from public life after the fall of the Ming.³¹ Poverty in her later years drove her to support the family by selling her paintings and writings.³² Her refusal to answer summons from the Qing palace gave her a chance, rare for a woman, to demonstrate her political convictions.³³

Ding Zhaosheng admired her literary endeavors, as evinced by his effusive prefaces to her works. He also conceded her superior talents—many of Wang's extant poems are written “on his behalf” or “in his voice” 代, including not only occasional poems addressed to Ding's friends but also formal and ceremonial writings, such as a memorial to

28. See Widmer, “Ming Loyalism” and “Selected Short Works”; Ko, *Teachers*, pp. 126–37.

29. To “pluck the banners (of the enemy)” is to announce victory (*Shiji*, 92.2616).

30. See Ding Qiguang's preface to poems by Wang Duanshu (*MYSW*, 42.1a–1b).

31. See Wang Duanshu, “Zou shu” 奏疏 (*YHJ*, 19.3a).

32. Mao Qiling, “Guixiu Wang Yuying *Linqie ji xu*” 閩秀王玉映留篋集序 (*Xibe wenji*, p. 343).

33. See Ding Yaokang, “Zai da Shanyin Wang Wuying bing zongdi Ruzi [Ding Zhaosheng]” 再答山陰王玉映并宗弟睿子 (1660): “I also heard that the palace sought her instruction. / She did not go and instead asked to become a recluse” 又聞宮壺徵閨範，不去翻來問索居 (*DYK*, 1:381). Ding Yaokang's writings are discussed in chaps. 5 and 6.

the Chongzhen emperor seeking posthumous vindication of Ding's father Ding Wenzhong 丁文忠 (YHJ, j. 19), who had died as a victim of the eunuch Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 (1568–1627), the preface to a eulogistic account of Ding Wenzhong's political integrity and martyrdom (YHJ, 19.3b–5a), and a ceremonial biography 行狀 of Ding's mother (YHJ, j. 24). When Ding's concubine Chen died, Wang wrote a poem on his behalf mourning her (YHJ, 4.14b–15a): wifely empathy seemed also to have been on some level appropriation of the husband's authority.³⁴ One of Wang's collections, *Red Chants* (*Yinhong ji* 吟紅集), survived.³⁵ Some of her poems are preserved in Zou Yi's 鄒漪 (17th c.) anthology, *Collections of Eight Notable Women Poets* (*Shiyuan ba mingjia ji* 詩媛八名家集, preface by Shen Quan 沈荃 dated 1655). Deng Hanyi included two poems by Wang in his *Perspectives on Poetry* and stated his intention to obtain more. Wang's *Complementary Canon of Poetry by Notable Women* (*Mingyuan shimei* 名媛詩緯, 1661 preface, hereafter *Complementary Canon*) contains a final section on her own poetry (prefaced by Ding Qiguang) and also, through her biographical prefaces and critical appraisals, gives us rich material for understanding her achievements as critic and literary historian. Her anthology of prose writings by women, *Complementary Canon of Prose by Notable Women* (*Mingyuan wenwei* 名媛文緯), is unfortunately lost.³⁶

Wang Duanshu chronicles her tumultuous times with a self-conscious sense of mission.³⁷ Some works draw directly from her experience. In “Song of Pain and Suffering” (“Kunan xing” 苦難行, YHJ, 4.2a–3a),

34. See YHJ, 4.14b–15a. According to Meng Chengshun (“Ding furen zhuan” 丁夫人傳, MYSW, 2b), Wang “set up” this concubine for Ding when he was in office in Beijing while she returned with their son to stay with her father in Zhejiang in the final years of the Ming. Wang wrote that she bought this concubine for Ding, but the concubine later sowed discord between husband and wife. Xu Zhen 徐鉉 (a male poet) addressed a poem to Wang Duanshu that compares her to Xie Daoyun 謝道韞 (4th c.), who was married to a mediocre husband, which also suggests that Wang's marriage was not happy (Xu Qiu, *Xu benshi shi*, p. 329).

35. Various prefaces and biographical accounts mentioned Wang's *Liuqie ji* 留篋集 and *Wucui ji* 無才集, but they apparently did not survive. The prefaces to *Red Chants* indicate that it was published, but the surviving extant copy is hand-copied and dates from 1851.

36. For a list of Wang Duanshu's writings, see Hu Wenkai, *Lidai junii zhuzuo kao*, pp. 248–50.

37. See Kang-i Sun Chang, “Women's Poetic Witnessing.”

for example, Wang describes how, with her child, she fled marauding Qing troops following the collapse of the rump Ming court in Shaoxing headed by the Prince of Lu, whom Wang had supported. The details pertaining to these events in Wang Youding's biography of Wang Duanshu have been censored and appear as blank squares in the text,³⁸ making it hard to fill in the lacunae in the implied narrative in the poem. Her husband is not mentioned; Wang seemed to have been following, with misgivings, the lead of an older brother or cousin. The enemy is faceless; the poet describes her own confusion in the midst of rumors. There are arresting details, such as how she could not rouse her son when "in the middle of the night the tide came in like lightning" 半夜江潮若電入. After braving privations and grave dangers—she was robbed and her dilapidated boat lost its way—she returned to her natal home, only to find that her father had died, her older sister had become a nun, and the rest of her kin had become emotionally distant.

Many poets in this period chose to filter the complexities and contradictions of the historical moment through the experiences and memories of individuals, often presenting encounters that unfold as a kind of dramatic monologue, with the poet as the sympathetic auditor. As we shall see in chapter 4, Wu Weiye was a past master of this mode, and he often used women as his speakers. Wang Duanshu came to this through her interest in "speaking on behalf of another" 代言. As mentioned above, most titles marked as such were written for her husband, often for social occasions. But she also took up the voice of her women friends, sister-in-law, and elder sister Wang Jingshu 王靜淑 (referred to as "Zhen" 真 because her Buddhist name was "Yizhen daoren" 一真道人) and addressed poems to herself. More pertinent to the confluence of historical perspective and individual experience is a poem like "A Song That Chronicles Suffering, Written in the Voice of Elder Sister Zhen" ("Xu nan xing dai zhenzi" 敘難行代真姊, *YHJ*, 4.9b–10a).³⁹ Zhen was a widow fleeing disorder with her mother-in-law and three-year-old son. The beginning lines tie Zhen's fate to dynastic fortunes: "The country's allotted span has changed all of a sudden, / The great

38. Wang Youding, "Wang Duanshu zhuan" (*MYSW*, 4a–4b).

39. For Wang Jingshu's extant corpus, see *MYSW*, 15.5b–8a; Yun Zhu, *Guochao guixin zhengshi ji*, 2.18b–19a; Hu Xiaosi and Zhu Guang, *Benchao mingyuan shichao*, 3.7a–7b; Xu Shichang, *Wan qing yi shibui*, 184.8107–8; *QQC*, 2.1017. Cf. Grant, "Chan Friends."

calamity, how swiftly it overbears me” 國祚忽更移，大難逼何速。 The callous indifference of her kinsmen (“It is as if my clan has no one” 予族若無人) is consonant with Wang’s negative judgment of them in other poems. As the Qing army approached, Zhen “ruined her face and shaved her head” 摧容鬻剪禿, becoming a nun in order to defend her chastity. Wang imagines herself as both speaker and auditor, writer and reader: “Sounds of grief fall on paper, / I can write this, but not read it” 悲聲落紙中，能書不能讀。 Wang’s extensive response to poetic testimonies left on walls by abducted women (in one case, which I will discuss in chapter 5, she wrote twenty-eight poems to the rhyme of the original four) shows yet another dimension of expanding the space for empathy.

Male authors who endorse Wang’s writings in prefaces and commentaries often refer to her “historian’s talent” 史才。 Chen Weisong says that she “especially excelled in historiography” 尤長史學。 Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623–1716) implicitly contrasts her historical interests with “merely feminine cleverness”: “Writing her books she yields not to the historians of the Han, / Why would she weave brocade and invite pity with the poem on the loom?” 著書不讓[數]漢時史，織錦豈憐機上詩 (FRJ, 20b).⁴⁰ Six of her biographical accounts of the heroes and martyrs of the Ming-Qing transition (YHJ, 20.1a–9b) are incorporated into the noted literatus Zhang Dai’s 張岱 (1597–ca. 1680) historical compilation, *Writings in the Stone Casket* (*Shigui shu* 石匱書).⁴¹ Elaborate considerations of the timing, manner, and circumstances of martyrdom shape Wang’s evaluations in her “martyrology” (YHJ, j. 21–23). Even her

40. The *Xiangyan congsbu* edition of *Furenji* has *shu* 數; the line as cited in Xu Naichang’s *Guixiu cichao* has *rang* 讓。 The Han historians Sima Qian and Ban Gu are considered the greatest in the tradition. Mao may also be referring specifically to the woman scholar Ban Zhao 班昭 (Cao Dagu 曹大家) who wrote sections of *Hanshu*. Dou Tao’s 竇滔 (4th c.) wife Su Hui 蘇蕙 (b. 357) sent him a palindrome poem woven into brocade that can be read in various directions while he was in exile (*Jinshu*, 96.2523). The brocade palindrome poem symbolizes artistry and ingenuity in women’s writings. Here Mao claims that Wang’s greater vision puts her above Su Hui.

41. *Shigui shu* stands for *shishi jingui zhi shu* 金匱石室之書 (writings in stone chambers and metal caskets), which is how Sima Qian describes the documents in imperial archives that became the raw materials for his own *Shiji* (130.3296). Zhang Dai, like Wang Duanshu a native of Shanyin (Kuaiji, Zhejiang), belonged to the same literary circles as Wang’s husband Ding Zhaosheng.

beloved father did not escape her implacable judgment. When the hold-over Ming court headed by Zhu Yihai (the Prince of Lu) at Shaoxing collapsed, and Wang Siren, greatly trusted and honored by the Prince of Lu, did not immediately commit suicide, Wang Duanshu asked, “How did it happen that he was as indecisive as that?” 何其不決也如此:

All he did was pick wild ferns at the ancestral graves. His retreat was called “Lone Bamboo,” and his abode was called “Knowing Shadows.”⁴² [He proclaimed that] his head could be cut off, but he would not shave his hair [in the Manchu hairstyle]; his feet could be maimed, but he would not enter the city. His toil and suffering were extreme. Those in power threatened him with dire words, but he did not waver despite repeated adversities, and his resolute heart was ever more unrelenting. Finally, from grief and rancor, he refused food and medicine and died. His heart and his will were indeed worth lamenting. My late father lived to be seventy-three, and I truly regretted that those years were too few. Yet for these last scores of days, I also bemoaned their superfluity. I do not know how the sagacious ones would think about this view.

但採薇祖塋，庵曰孤竹，樓名識[息?]影。頭可斷，髮不可薙。足可刖，而城不入。勞苦備至，當事危言恐嚇，百折不回，心堅愈烈。竟以憤懣不食不藥而死。其心其意，良可哀也。先文毅享年七十有三，予實恨其少，但此數十日，予又嫌其多。不知識者以爲如何。(YHJ, 21.9a–9b)

To the modern reader such unforgiving judgment is almost chilling. But these were also pervasive concerns among the elite at the time. Some loyalists tirelessly debated what kinds of compromises were admissible and sternly adjudicated each other’s political choices. In this sense Wang Duanshu is presenting a proleptic defense on her father’s behalf—his delayed death is partially justified by implied comparison with Boyi; perhaps she is imagining how he would have defended himself.⁴³

Commemorative prose has its counterpart in verse. Sometimes the same figure is honored in different genres with different implications. In the septasyllabic narrative poem “Woman Martyr Jin and Her

42. If *shi* 識 is a mistake for *xi* 息, then the name would mean “Shadow at Rest” or “Shadow in Hiding.”

43. According to Sima Qian, Boyi and Shuqi, who were princes of Guzhu (Lone Bamboo) kingdom, refused to “eat the grains of Zhou” after the Zhou conquest of Shang. They went up the Western (Shouyang) Mountain to subsist on wild ferns, but died of starvation (*Shiji*, 61.2123).

Husband Died for Their Principles” (“Jin liefu tong fu xunjie” 金烈婦同夫殉節, *YHJ*, 5.3b–4a), Wang Duanshu glorifies both Lady Jin and her husband for embracing martyrdom and aestheticizes the violence of their death when the anti-Qing resistance they led failed. In a commemorative essay on Lady Jin (*YHJ*, 23.1a–2b), however, Wang contrasts Jin’s sound judgment, courage, and tenacity of purpose with her husband’s failures and vacillations. He begs for mercy while she defies her captors; she chooses the most gruesome execution—death by slicing—because she would not die an easier death than her husband.⁴⁴ Generic differences shape shifts in judgment, which in turn link heroism to the vindication or defiance of gender roles.

Historical judgment is sometimes tied to reflections on gender roles and self-understanding, as in the following poem (*YHJ*, 3.1a–1b):

王端淑 悲憤行

Wang Duanshu, “The Song of Grief and Rancor”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 凌殘漢室滅衣冠 | Ravaged and violated is the Han House: cap and gown are destroyed. |
| 社稷丘墟民力殫 | Altars of the domain are in ruins: for a people, strength depleted. |
| 勒兵入寇稱可汗 | Steering troops to enter as marauders, he is called the Khan— |
| 九州壯士死征鞍 | Brave men of nine regions are dying on the saddle of battle. |
| 嬌紅逐馬聞者酸 | Fair ones are taken away on horseback— to the grief of all who heard. |
| 干戈擾攘行路難 | In the chaos and devastation of war, a road journey is arduous. |
| 予居陋地不求安 | I dwell in a dilapidated place, scarcely seeking peace and calm. |
| 葉聲颼颼水漫漫 | The sound of leaves is a rich rustle, the water, an endless expanse. |
| 月催寒影到闌干 | The moon, urging cold shadows, reaches the balustrade. |
| 長吟漢史靜夜看 | In long chants I intone the Han histories, reading in the quiet night. |

44. See Idema and Grant, *Red Brush*, pp. 443–45. Lady Jin is lionized as a nationalist hero in Liu Yazhi (Alu), “Nüxiong tanxie” (1904).

| | |
|---------|---|
| 思之興廢冷淚彈 | Reflecting on rise and fall, I brush away cold tears. |
| 杜鵑啼徹三更殘 | The cries of cuckoos cut through, as third watch wanes. |
| 何事男兒無肺肝 | How did it happen that men, heartless and spineless, |
| 利名切切在魚竿 | Set their mind on fame and fortune, angled by their fishing rod? |
| 椎擊始皇身單弱 | With a bludgeon he tried to strike the First Emperor—he was but frail. |
| 謀雖不成心報韓 | Though his plot failed, in his heart he had requited the state of Hán. |
| 天風借吹羶血乾 | Borrow the wind of heaven, blow dry the stench of blood. |
| 徵賢深谷出幽蘭 | Seek the sage in deep valleys, let the lone orchid emerge. |

As mentioned in chapter 1, Cai Yan, to whom “Poem of Grief and Rancor” is traditionally attributed, is remembered as the prototype of a woman poet who, by telling of personal suffering, bears witness to her tumultuous times. From another perspective, political disorder is what authenticates and legitimizes women’s writings: no further apologia is necessary. The destruction of “cap and gown” 衣冠 (line 1), almost always associated with the mandated Manchu hairstyle and costume, marked Han cultural capitulation and occasioned intense anguish. Together with the women abducted and taken away on horseback (line 5), it is a recurrent symbol of conquest as violation. Wang’s self-image is as one who, in the midst of suffering and devastation, reflects on historical changes. But history provides no consolation, even as the cuckoo weeping blood (as mentioned in chapter 1, this is a dead king mourning the loss of his kingdom) stirs up only grief and lament. The hero from history presented here is the would-be assassin Zhang Liang 張良 (third c. BCE) (lines 15–16), a noble scion of Hán, a state eliminated by the man who unified China in 221 BCE and became the First Emperor of Qin. Though he failed to avenge the fall of his natal kingdom with the assassination attempt at Bolangsha, he eventually toppled Qin by becoming Emperor Gaozu’s chief helper in the founding of the Han dynasty. The Han historian Sima Qian describes his surprise upon seeing Zhang Liang’s portrait. He had expected the image of imposing strength, but Zhang “had the appearance of a gentle lady” (*Shiji*, 65.2049). Longing for the hero who looks like a woman, Wang

Duanshu also indicts the collective failure of men. Zhang Liang represents the incongruity of appearance and reality, roles and expectations, and as such appears often in writings praising women who transcend gender roles.⁴⁵ Wu Guofu, Wang Siren's friend, wrote in his preface to *Red Chants*:

The historian Sima Qian had suspected that Zhang Liang was imposing and majestic, and yet his appearance was like that of a woman. As for the real woman in this world who can compose imposing and majestic writings and reveal her imposing and majestic will, it must be none other than Yingranzi [Wang Duanshu]!"

史遷疑劉侯魁梧奇偉，而其狀乃如婦人女子。則世之真爲婦人女子而作魁梧奇偉之文，見魁梧奇偉之志者，非映然子而誰。
(YHJ, Wu preface, 4a)

The frustration with the failure of men is explicitly tied to historical reflection in Wang Duanshu's poem. By contrast, stylistic restraint in Xu Can, dictated in part by the generic propensities of song lyrics, leads to more muted judgments as she links political lament to reflection on gender roles. She questions the fatuousness of blaming women for the decline and fall of dynasties (*Xu Can ci*, pp. 119–23):

徐燦 青玉案。吊古

Xu Can, "Lamenting the Past," to the tune "Qing yu an"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 傷心誤到蕪城路 | Heartsick, I have mistakenly come to the road of the Forsaken City, |
| 攜血淚 | Bringing tears of blood, |
| 無歸處 | Having no place of return. |
| 半月模糊霜幾樹 | In the haze of the half moon, how many frosty trees are there? |
| 紫簫低遠 | The low sounds of the purple flute are distant, |
| 翠翹明滅 | The kingfisher filigrees shimmer and darken. |
| 隱隱羊車度 | The uncertain contours of the goat-drawn imperial carriage pass by. ⁴⁶ |

45. Li Yin is also compared to Zhang Liang (p. 125) and refers to him in her poetry (pp. 130, 151–52). The military commander Lady Xian in Wu Weiye's *Facing Spring Pavilion* is compared to Zhang Liang as well; see chap. 3, n. 93.

46. Emperor Wu of Jin (236–90, r. 265–90) is said to have ridden in goat-drawn carriages on palace grounds, letting the goats determine where he should spend the night (*Jinshu*, 73.962).

| | |
|---------|---|
| 鯨波碧浸橫江鎖 | Giant waves: emerald grave for the ships chained across the River, |
| 故壘蕭蕭蘆荻浦 | The former ramparts are desolate by the banks of reeds— |
| 煙水不知人事錯 | Mist and water know not of errant human affairs. |
| 戈船千里 | Battleships over a thousand miles, |
| 降帆一片 | Banners of defeat in one sweep: |
| 莫怨蓮花步 | Blame not the lotus steps. |

The Forsaken City (literally, a city overgrown with weeds) is Yangzhou or Guangling, an ancient name that retains a romantic aura. A fifth-century prince of the Liu-Song dynasty (420–79) staged a rebellion there that led to its devastation, which moved Bao Zhao 鮑照 (405–66) to write “Poetic Exposition on the Forsaken City” (“Wu cheng fu” 蕪城賦). Yangzhou was the site of a horrifying massacre in 1645 when, under Shi Kefa’s command, it resisted the Qing conquest of Jiangnan.⁴⁷ The journey announced in the first line may be real or imaginary; either way the word “mistakenly” 誤 marks the intensity of lament: coming there is an error, because overwhelming grief (“tears of blood”) is heightened by a sense of entrapment and homelessness (“having no place of return”). Yangzhou, once a princely domain, summons associations with Nanjing, the capital of early Ming, Southern Ming, and many southern dynasties throughout history. Its vanished glory retains a ghostly presence (lines 5–7).

The second stanza conflates various images of miscalculations, defeat, and effete self-indulgence in the history of southern dynasties. The image of “chained ships” recalls a disastrous blunder in 280, when the Wu kingdom in the south chained their ships across the Yangzi River in a fatuous attempt to stave off Jin invasion from the north. Wu’s defeat is remembered most famously in the Tang poet Liu Yuxi’s “Thinking of the Past at Western Frontier Mountain” (“Xisai shan huaigu” 西塞山懷古), whose lines (“Interminable iron chains sank to the River’s bottom, / Banners of defeat, in one sweep, emerged from the Stone City.⁴⁸ / . . . Former ramparts are desolate among the autumnal reeds” 千尋鐵鎖沉

47. For the ramifications of the Yangzhou massacre in Qing writings, see chapter 6.

48. Nanjing is also called the Stone City. In the third century, Wu built fortifications, called Stone City Wall, along stone cliffs on a mountain to the west of Nanjing, hence the name.

江底，一片降幡出石頭...故壘蕭蕭蘆荻秋) are echoed in Xu Can's song lyric (lines 9, 11–12).⁴⁹ Liu Yuxi's poem is mournful rather than judgmental, which can support the reading of the word *cuo* 錯 as "ever-changing" rather than "errant" in Xu Can's poem. "Lotus steps" in the last line alludes to the last ruler of the short-lived Qi dynasty, the Benighted Lord of Qi (Qi Donghun hou 齊東昏侯, 483–501, r. 499–500), who had golden lotuses inlaid on the floor to set off the beauty of his Consort Pan's delicate steps. Thus, "blame not the lotus steps" is a declaration that the Southern Dynasties collapsed for other reasons; it is wrong to blame political and historical failures on women. But the stated judgment (against blaming women) is framed by the difficulty of judgment in the face of overwhelming grief. She presents the image of crushing, total defeat as inevitable errors or mutability (depending on our reading of *cuo*) but does not assign blame.

Xu Can's "Lamenting the Past" may be linked to her "Reflections on a Boat Journey" ("Zhouxing yougan" 舟行有感), which concludes with the image of Yangzhou's ruin (*Zhuozheng yuan shiji*, A.14a–14b):

| | |
|-------|--|
| 燕墟腥未歇 | At the ruins of the Forsaken City, the stench has not worn off. |
| 杵血滿寒流 | Blood, buoying pounding rods, fills the cold streams. ⁵⁰ |

These images of violence and destruction are untypical for Xu Can, however. Violence in her poetry is usually muted. The devastation she could have witnessed or her personal sufferings as first her husband, and then she herself and her family, went into exile are usually filtered through aesthetic distance. In a manner reminiscent of Du Fu, historical reflection is embedded in the juxtaposition of past and present. Her "Autumn Feelings, Eight Poems" ("Qiugan bashou" 秋感八首, 1661), for example, are loosely patterned on Du Fu's "Autumn Meditations: Eight Poems" ("Qiuxing bashou" 秋興八首).⁵¹ The series begins with her unexpected exile to Manchuria (*Zhuozheng yuan shiji*, A.34a):

49. Liu Yuxi, "Xisai shan huaigu," in *Tang Song shi jiyao*, 5.610–11.

50. Mencius expresses his skepticism regarding an account of the Zhou conquest of Shang in the (no longer extant) chapter "Wu cheng" in *Documents*: blood is said to have flowed so freely that pounding rods float away on it (*Mengzi*, 14.49). Xu Can's poem also conjoins Nanjing and Yangzhou, as in "Lamenting the Past."

51. The first, second, and eighth poems in this sequence are translated in Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush*, pp. 436–37.

| | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| 絃上曾聞出塞歌 | On lute-strings I heard the song |
| | of going beyond the frontier, |
| 征輪誰意此生過 | Who would have expected this life |
| | to pass on distant tracks? |

The third, sixth, and seventh poems revisit various moments in her personal past, pitting them against historical turning points elaborated in the fourth and fifth poems. The fall of Beijing is presented as sudden and swift, as the Ming dynasty confronts nameless and faceless enemies (4th poem, *Zhuozheng yuan shiji*, A.35a):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 龍歸鳳去須臾事 | The dragon left, the phoenix departed, |
| | all in a matter of an instant. |
| 紫禁沉沉漏未殘 | In the Forbidden City, sunk in darkness, |
| | the clepsydra had not run its course. |

In the fifth poem Xu Can directs pointed criticism at the Hongguang court (*Zhuozheng yuan shiji*, A.35a–35b):

| | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|
| 半壁誰言王氣偏 | For the halved domain, who said that |
| | the royal aura is diminished? |
| 繁華六代尚依然 | The splendor of the Six Dynasties |
| | still held sway. |
| 金蓮香動佳人步 | Golden lotuses wafted fragrance |
| | with the steps of the fair ones, |
| 玉樹花生狎客筵 | Blossoms grew on jade trees |
| | in the missives of pleasure seekers. |
| 朱雀桁開延夜月 | By the Vermilion Bird Bridge, |
| | open windows invite the night moon. |
| 烏衣巷冷積秋烟 | The Dark Robes Lane is cold |
| | as the autumn mist gathers. |
| 石頭城下寒江水 | Beneath the Stone City, |
| | the water of the cold river |
| 嗚咽東流自歲年 | Swallows sobs and flows east, |
| | as the heedless years move on. |

These are poetic clichés that come up often in castigations of the Southern Ming, frequently compared to other effete and “decadent” southern courts in Chinese history, especially the last rulers of Qi (r. 499–500) and Chen (r. 583–87), to whom the allusions in lines 3 and 4 refer.⁵² Again the

52. For “golden lotuses,” see the discussion above. Chen courtiers composed “Jade Trees and Blossoms in the Rear Courtyard” 玉樹後庭花 to glorify the beauty of the ruler’s consorts (*Chenshi*, 7.132).

echoes of Liu Yuxi's famous poems lamenting Jinling's vanished glory are unmistakable (lines 1, 5–6).⁵³ Nostalgia and grief in these poems are muted; Xu Can is careful to divest her longing for pre-conquest Suzhou and Hangzhou of political implications (6th and 7th poems). The last poem in the series returns to the present moment of exile and ends with a plea that the carriage heading back home carry an empty sack, so as to “bring back the beauty of a thousand mountains” 攜得千山秀色迴. Xu Can's precarious political situation might have accounted for her restraint, whereby lament is only obliquely implied in the juxtaposition of personal experience and political events in the poetic sequence.

The grouping of quatrains or regulated verses into long poetic sequences to modulate perspectives or to create a mood of sustained meditation was a common practice during the Ming-Qing transition.⁵⁴ The fusion of personal memory and historical representation in Li Yin's poetic sequences is especially noteworthy. According to Huang Zongxi's biography, Li Yin had achieved early fame as a poet and an artist by the time she became the concubine of Ge Zhengqi 葛徵奇 (*jinsbi* 1628, d. 1645), a Ming official and painter of some note, in the late 1620s.⁵⁵ Ge was among those who declared that “the spiritual essence of heaven and earth” 天地靈秀之氣 was concentrated in women, who should thus claim their place in “the realm of words” 文字之場.⁵⁶ We may be sure that he appreciated Li Yin's literary talent. According to Huang Zongxi,

53. Line 1 echoes Liu Yuxi's “Xisai shan huaigu”: “The royal aura of Jinling dims and fades” 金陵王氣黯然收. Lines 5 and 6 hark back to Liu Yuxi's “Wuyi xiang” 烏衣巷 (*Tang Song shi juyao*, 8.816): “By the Vermilion Bridge wild flowers bloom. / At the Dark Robes Lane, the setting sun is sinking. / Swallows from the halls of the noble Wangs and Xies / Fly into the homes of common folks” 朱雀橋邊野草花，烏衣巷口夕陽斜。舊時王謝堂前燕，飛入尋常百姓家. Wang and Xie were powerful clans during the Eastern Jin. “Dark robes” indicate the raiment of nobility.

54. Among the most famous examples are Qian Qianyi's 108 poems patterned on Du Fu's “Autumn Meditations.” See chap. 4, pp. 371–81.

55. Huang Zongxi, “Li Yin zhuan” 李因傳, in *Huang Zongxi quanji*, 10:584–85. Excerpts from the account are cited below. Huang wrote this biographical account to thank Li Yin for a painting presented to his mother as a birthday gift. The poems inscribed on that painting are found in ZXX, p. 66.

56. See Ge's 1632 preface to Jiang Yuanzuo's 江元祚 (17th c.) *Xu Yutai wenyuan* 續玉臺文苑, an anthology of prose by women that is no longer extant (Hu Wenkai, *Lidai funü zhuzuo kao*, p. 887). Xie Ximeng 謝希孟 (12th c., Feng Menglong, *Qingshi leilue*, 5.161–62) and Cao Xueqin (*Honglou meng*), among others, make similar assertions.

she threw herself between Ge and mutinous soldiers in 1643: “The soldiers, awed by her luminous beauty, did not dare harm them” 兵子驚其明麗不敢加害。Huang implies her status as a former courtesan: “At that time, there was Liu Rushi in Yushan, and Wang Xiuwei [Wang Wei] in Yunjian,⁵⁷ both renowned for being kindred spirits with their husbands in literary-artistic sensibility and accomplishments. Shi’an [Li Yin] was on a par with them [literally, “was the third foot of the tripod”]. Even a country bumpkin or a common laborer admired these as wondrous romantic tales [literally, “tales of the Jade Terrace”]” 當是時，虞山有柳如是，雲間有王修微，皆以唱隨風雅聞于天下。是庵爲之鼎足，儉父担板亦艷爲玉臺佳話。After Ge Zhengqi died in 1645 (probably by suicide), Li made a living as a widow by selling her paintings.⁵⁸ Huang commends Li’s loyalism, comparing her to Zhang Liang, who tried to avenge the annihilation of his natal kingdom Hân.⁵⁹ Huang considers Li superior to Lady Guan, the woman poet-artist who lived through the Song-Yuan transition. Whereas Guan enjoyed the favors of the new Mongol rulers, Li sought refuge in Buddhist renunciation: “Her music lamenting a fallen domain remains, together with the ritual songs of drums and pipes, between heaven and earth” 亡國之音與鼓吹之曲共留天壤。⁶⁰ Li Yin’s three collections, named after her Laughing Bamboo Studio (Zhuxiao xuan 竹笑軒), were respectively printed in 1643, sometime in early Qing (possibly late 1640s or early 1650s), and in 1683.⁶¹

Li Yin’s “Forty-Eight Elegiac Poems Mourning Jiekan [Ge Zhengqi]” (“Daowang shi ku Jiekan sishiba shou” 悼亡詩哭介龕四十八首) mix

57. The marriages of Liu Rushi to Qian Qianyi and Wang Wei 王微 (1600–1647) to Xu Yuqing 許譽卿 (1612 *jinshi*) were among the most celebrated literatus-courtesan romances in late Ming.

58. Her paintings were so much sought after that there were about forty artists in Haichang (Ge’s hometown) who tried to sell in her name; she ranked the forgeries and refused the use of her name only for the inferior ones.

59. “As expressed in her poetry, she still harbors the pain of having served Hân for three generations” 其發之爲詩，尙有三世相韓之痛。According to Sima Qian, Zhang Liang had to avenge his natal kingdom because his father and grandfather served as ministers of five Hân kings (*Shiji*, 55.2033). Huang’s “three” is a mistake for “five.”

60. “Songs of drums and pipes” refer to *naoge*, a kind of military and ritual music that defines the virtue and power of a domain.

61. *Zhuxiao xuan yincao*, until recently quite hard to come by, was published as a punctuated edition in 2003. Citations refer to this edition.

memories of a happier past, present grief, and visions or hallucinations of re-encounters with a self-conscious attempt to “set the record straight” so that Ge’s martyrdom will not be forgotten.⁶² She has to merge her voice with her late husband’s to facilitate commemoration (ZZX, p. 42):

李因 悼亡詩其一

Li Yin, “Elegiac Poems,” first poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 輕煙四野一孤舟 | In the pale haze all over the wilderness, one lone boat: |
| 家國飄零壯志休 | From family and country cut adrift, the heroic will wanes. |
| 有淚空教談劍俠 | In tears we talked in vain about sword-wielding knights. |
| 忠魂無主泣皇州 | The loyal spirit, left with no master, weeps for the august domain. |

“The talk about sword-wielding knights,” or the longing for heroes who could turn the tide, might have been what Li shared with Ge; tears over its futility mark their common purpose undefeated by death. Lord or “master” is both husband and emperor, as personal loss converges with the collapse of the domain, and the “loyal spirit” (line 4) is thus both Li and Ge. Likewise, “the steadfast heart” (line 3) in the following quatrain is both political integrity and wifely devotion (ZZX, p. 42):

李因 悼亡詩其二

Li Yin, “Elegiac Poems,” second poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 長安市上欲埋輪 | In the capital’s marketplace, you wanted to bury the carriage’s wheels. |
| 此日銅駝遍荆榛 | By now, bronze camels are everywhere among bushes and brambles. |
| 只有丹心徒涕泣 | What remains is only the steadfast heart that weeps in vain— |
| 恨無圖史記賢臣 | I grieve that by no picture or history is the worthy minister remembered. |

The first line alludes to a story about the Eastern Han official Zhang Gang 張綱 (early 2nd c.), who received an imperial command to survey

62. For a rare antecedent of elegiac sequence by women poets, see Idema, “The Biographical and the Autobiographical.”

the mores and administration in the provinces but buried his carriage's wheels in the capital Luoyang, preferring to attack more pressing ills that afflicted the polity: "With jackals and wolves holding positions of power, why ask about mere foxes and wild cats?" 豺狼當路，安問狐狸 (*Hou Hanshu*, 56.1817). "Bronze camels among brambles" (line 2) is a common allusion in writings about dynastic crisis. The Jin official and general Suo Jing 索靖 (late 3rd c.) rightly predicted chaos, declaring that the bronze camels guarding palace gates will be seen among brambles (*Jinshu*, 60.1648). Ubiquitous destruction (line 2) seems to be the consequence of unheeded remonstrance (line 1). In thus eulogizing Ge Zhengqi's unbending integrity and valiant remonstrance, Li Yin is using her poems to combat the oblivion of history (line 4).

Like Wang Duanshu, Li Yin is concerned about the public meanings of martyrdom as she subsumes grief under moral affirmation (ZZX, p. 43):

李因 悼亡詩其二十五

Li Yin, "Elegiac Poems," twenty-fifth poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 誓報先君髮不髡 | Vowing to requite the late ruler, you would not shave your hair. |
| 宮袍猶羨舊朝紳 | Your court robes still arouse envy: they belong to the former dynasty. |
| 喜逢泉下新相識 | Happily you are encountering in the underworld new friends |
| 俱是當年死難人 | Who had all, in yesteryear, died as martyrs. |

An alternative reading of line two is that among "the former dynasty's officials" were many who had compromised by accepting the new order and had reason to envy untainted integrity as symbolized by Ge's Ming court robes. Vindication is to be sought in common purpose among the new community of dead martyrs.

Imagery of martyrdom, hopeless quest, and unfulfilled ideals from the *Verses of Chu* tradition is a staple in loyalist discourse. In drawing upon this tradition Li Yin casts herself as Song Yu summoning the soul of Qu Yuan (16th and 31st quatrains).⁶³ Lamentation takes a more skeptical and anguished turn in Li Yin's "Remembrances," the fifth of twelve poems (ZZX, p. 67):

63. Li Yin also compares herself to king Shun's consorts mourning his failure to return ("Elegiac Poems," 21st poem, ZZX, p. 43).

更抱長沙泣
空懷吊楚湘

I still cling to Jia Yi's tears at Changsha,
Longing in vain for lamentation
at River Xiang of Chu.

The Han minister Jia Yi 賈誼 (200 BCE–168 BCE) composed “Poetic Exposition Lamenting Qu Yuan” (“Diao Qu Yuan fu” 弔屈原賦), in which he, even while empathizing with Qu Yuan’s plight, questions whether suicide is justified, and asks whether Qu Yuan could have simply withdrawn from an iniquitous and uncomprehending world. Li Yin implies similar questions about Ge Zhengqi’s martyrdom. Unlike the moral certainty of commemoration, the vagaries of remembrances are haunted by confusion and contradictions. In the preface to “Remembrances,” Li Yin recalls how she and Ge Zhengqi had hidden among reeds on a boat as they fled the chaos: “Luxun [Ge Zhengqi] said, ‘My only choice is to die for the country.’ I said, ‘To give up life for a just principle will yet not help the times.’ We faced each other as we wept and sighed, overcome by too many emotions” 祿勛有言，惟以死報國。余云殺身成仁，無救于時。對泣唏噓，萬感交集 (ZXX, p. 67).

The poems in “Remembrances” almost always move from moral imperatives to confusion and despair, as in the third one in the series (ZXX, p. 67):

李因 憶昔十二首其三

Li Yin, “Remembrances,” third of twelve poems

鐵騎驅京國

The iron-clad cavalry overran the capital
of the domain.

勤王誰枕戈

Who, eager to assist the emperor,
was using halberd as pillow?

時聞風鶴警

Heard so often as alarm: the wind’s howl,
the cranes’ cries.

日畏虎狼過

We passed our days fearful of prowling tigers
and jackals.

白骨城中滿

With bleached bones the city was filled to the brim,

紅顏馬上多

Fair-faced ones on horseback numbered so many.

河流冰未合

The torrents were flowing, the ice had not
yet conjoined,

無計渡滹沱

There was no way to cross the Hutuo River.

The Jin poet and general Liu Kun 劉琨 (271–318) wrote in a letter, “I use halberd as pillow and wait for dawn, my ambition is to cut down treacherous barbarians” 枕戈待旦，志梟逆虜 (*Jinshu*, 62.1690). Such heroic

determination would have been the proper response to national crisis. Instead, there were rumors, fear, and confusion (lines 3–4).⁶⁴ As in Wang Duanshu's "Song of Grief and Rancor" and numerous other writings of the time, the shame of having "women taken away on horseback" (line 6) is juxtaposed with death and destruction (line 5). In one of Liu Xiu's 劉秀 (5 BCE–57 CE) campaigns before he became Emperor Guangwu of Han (r. 25–57), his beleaguered army managed to cross Hutuo River because it was frozen. This was taken as a sign of heavenly favor and mandate for Liu Xiu (*Hou Hanshu*, 1.12).⁶⁵ Here no such omen leaves room for hope.

The clarity of moral choice is also clouded by Li Yin's images of a teeming humanity suffering famine (1st poem) and dislocation (8th poem). She captures the cacophony of chaos in the seventh poem (ZXX, p. 67, line 5–8):

李因 憶昔十二首其七

Li Yin, "Remembrances," seventh of twelve poems

| | |
|-------|--|
| 煙莽號新鬼 | Among haze-shrouded brambles, new ghosts howl. |
| 枯田集餓鵝 | Over blighted fields, hungry crows gather. ⁶⁶ |
| 軍聲何處起 | The sounds of the army: where have they arisen? |
| 鵝鴨夜喧嘩 | Geese and ducks quack raucously through the night. |

Perhaps in tacit recognition that against such confusion heroic figures promise illumination and moral guidance, several poems end by expressing a longing for heroes—Jing Ke 荊軻, the doomed assassin of the Qin king (later First Emperor of Qin) (4th poem); Zhang Liang (6th and 10th poems); or Shen Baoxu 申包胥 (6th c. BCE), the Chu minister whose relentless wails at the Qin court brought about Qin assistance

64. In a major battle in 383, defeated troops from the northern kingdom of Former Qin mistook "the wind's howl and the cranes' cries" for their victorious enemy (*Jinshu*, 79.2082).

65. In another account, the general Wang Ba, who fought under Liu Xiu, declared that the Hutuo River was frozen when in fact it was not, so as to encourage his beleaguered army to cross. Then the river miraculously froze. See Zhou Tianyou, *Bajia Hou Hanshu jizhu*, p. 291.

66. New ghosts, i.e., the ghosts of the recently dead, are supposed to be more potent, more capable of haunting, than old ghosts (*Zuo zhuan Wen* 2.5, p. 524). Crows gather to devour the cadavers of the dead.

for besieged Chu (11th poem). Zhang Liang, the effeminate hero, again represents indictment (ZXX, p. 67, lines 7–8):

李因 憶昔十二首其十

Li Yin, “Remembrances,” tenth of twelve poems

| | |
|-------|--|
| 壯士羞巾幗 | Women put to shame heroic men who are |
| 無能博浪沙 | Powerless to become the assassin at Bolangsha. |

Heroes: Failures and Fantasies

Engagement with the contemporary crisis often shades into fantasies of heroic action. Thus Li Yin avows shame about wielding the woman poet’s “red brush” 彤管, because its redness pales beside the blood Mulan sheds in battle (ZXX, p. 22):

李因 聞豫魯寇警

Li Yin, “Hearing Alarming News of Raiders’ Incursion into Yu and Lu”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 萬姓流亡白骨寒 | Countless undone and adrift, as white bones grow cold. |
| 驚聞豫魯半凋殘 | I heard, with alarm, that Yu and Lu have been half devastated. ⁶⁷ |
| 徒懷報國慚彤管 | Vain is the will to serve the country: ashamed of the red brush, |
| 洒血征袍羨木蘭 | I envy Mulan, shedding blood on the robes of battle. |

The “red brush” mentioned in the *Classic of Poetry* is traditionally associated with women’s writings.⁶⁸ Here redness is associated with the loyalty (as in “red heart” 丹心)⁶⁹ that provides the impetus for poetic expression as well as with the blood on battle robes that beckons as an unattainable goal. Elsewhere Li Yin writes like any male poet denied the chance for heroic endeavor (ZXX, p. 78):

67. Yu and Lu refer to Henan and Shandong.

68. Mao 42, “Jingnü” 靜女, in *Maoshi zhushu* 2C.104–5.

69. See, for example, “Zhengqi ge” by the Song loyalist Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236–83): “From antiquity, who can escape death? / But one can leave behind a loyal spirit [literally, “red heart”] that shines forth in the annals of history” 人生自古誰無死，留取丹心照汗青. (*Songsbi*, 418.12359).

李因 病起夜坐口占其三

Li Yin, "Sitting Up at Night During Sickness:
Impromptu Poems," third poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 龍鐘老病又驚秋 | Decrepit and sickly, I am again startled by autumn's advent. |
| 白髮長懷壯士憂 | White-haired, I yet constantly harbor a hero's agony. |
| 報國有心無劍術 | The will to serve the country is belied by ignorance of the sword, |
| 空將時事鎖眉頭 | In vain do events of the times furrow my brows. |

The heroic imagery in Li Yin's poetry, when it is not devoted to Ge Zhengqi's memory, is almost always about the pathos of merely imaginary heroic endeavor. Yet later periods look back to the Ming-Qing transition as the moment when heroic fantasies translated into historical reality. In *Remarks on Poetry by Notable Women* (*Mingyuan shihua* 名媛詩話), for example, the woman poet Shen Shanbao 沈善寶 (1808–62) extols martial women who answered the clarion call of battle during moments of national crisis.⁷⁰ The chorus of praise grew louder in the late Qing.

Qing poetic anecdotes often name Bi Zhu 畢著 (17th c.) as a woman who combines martial prowess with poetic talent.⁷¹ Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673–1769) saw Bi Zhu's manuscript in his older brother Shen Laiyuan's house. Unfortunately it was lost with the latter's death, and all that remains are two poems that Shen Deqian copied and recorded in *Selections of Qing Poetry* (*Qingshi biecai ji* 清詩別裁集).⁷² In some ways these two poems explain Bi Zhu's relative fame. One of them, "Record of Events" ("Jishi" 紀事), describes how she infiltrated the ranks of bandits who murdered her father, slew them, and retrieved her father's corpse. According to Shen Deqian's biographical note in his anthology, Bi Zhu's father was governor of Jiqiu when he was killed in confrontations with the rebels at the end of the Ming. Zhaolian 昭璉 (1776–1829) and Li Yuerui 李岳瑞 (1862–1927) both pointed out that Bi's father died fighting the Qing army in 1642.⁷³ This kind of "substitution" to avoid censorship is not uncommon.

70. See Shen Shanbao, *Mingyuan shihua*, 1.3a; Fong, "Writing Self and Writing Lives."

71. *QJSJ*, 4:15503–7.

72. Shen Deqian, *Qingshi biecai ji*, 31.563–64.

73. Zhaolian, *Xiaoting zalu*, 3.462; Li Yuerui, *Chunbingshi yeheng*, B.22b.

Bi Zhu was twenty when she accomplished this feat of vengeance. Later she married a scholar, and the two lived as hermits for the rest of their lives. Her other extant poem, “Village Life” (“Cunju” 村居), tells of their eremitic existence. It is fitting that Bi Zhu should be singled out for praise. In the version that Shen Deqian transmitted, her valor affirms filial piety and dynastic loyalty without any problematic reference to the Qing dynasty. (Once the target shifts to the rebels, it also fits the dynastic narrative that the Ming fell because of rebel insurgents.) By embracing the eremitic ideal, she exemplifies political integrity. She is a convenient icon that dignifies the fall of the Ming without threatening the Qing in any way.

Of course heroic women (just like heroic men) did not necessarily write. The most famous martial woman of the Ming-Qing transition, Qin Liangyu 秦良玉 (ca. 1574–1649), earned her place in the Ming dynastic history but left no writings.⁷⁴ But the figure who looms largest in our imagination, both as poet and as hero, is Liu Rushi, thanks in large part to Chen Yinke’s monumental biography of her. Rising from humble origins as a maid or entertainer in the minister Zhou Daodeng’s 周道登 (d. 1632) household, Liu Rushi became a famous courtesan by her mid-teens and was consorting with prominent literati in the Lower Yangzi area, among them Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639), Li Daiwen 李待問 (d. 1645), and Song Zhengbi. As mentioned in chapter 1, she had ill-fated love affairs with Song Zhengyu and, with even greater passion and pathos, Chen Zilong. As someone who sometimes donned male attire, enacted “role reversal” by writing a poetic exposition about a male god of the River Luo, styled herself “younger brother” 弟 in her correspondence with male friends, and addressed men as intellectual and spiritual equals, Liu Rushi traversed gender boundaries.⁷⁵

In the winter of 1640, Liu, dressed as a scholar, visited Qian Qianyi at his residence in Changshu. Six months later, in 1641, Qian, in defiance of his wife’s clan and public opinion, married Liu with ceremonies proper

74. An apocryphal letter she wrote is included in the early twentieth-century collection *Xiangyan congshu*. For further discussion of representations of Qin Liangyu, see chap. 3.

75. Taking their cue from Chen Yinke’s *Liu Rushi biezhuàn*, various scholars have discussed this issue: see e.g., Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Late-Ming Poet*; Ko, *Teachers*; Wai-yeec Li, “The Late-Ming Courtesan.”

to a principal wife. Although according to Chen Yinke Qian and Liu were secretly involved in anti-Qing resistance after the conquest, we have no textual evidence of Liu's involvement in anti-Qing resistance from her own writings—indeed, very few of her poems can be dated to the post-conquest era. Instead, we have Qian Qianyi's moving tribute to her heroic exploits in the third series of his "Later Autumn Meditations" ("Hou qiuxing" 後秋興) and in some poems in his *Youxue ji* 有學集, which I discuss in chapter 4.⁷⁶

By far the most extensive poetic record by a woman on heroic aspirations and the ultimate failure to fulfill heroic ideals from this period is the corpus of Liu Shu. A contemporary woman poet, Wu Huang 吳黃, wrote a poem to express admiration for Liu's loyalist endeavor.⁷⁷ The earliest extant account of her life appears in Chen Weisong's *Writing Women* (*Furen ji* 婦人集, hereafter FRJ).⁷⁸ Liu Shu's father, Liu Duo 劉鐸 (1573–1627, *jinsbi* 1616), was a magistrate of Yangzhou who died because of the machinations of the powerful eunuch Wei Zhongxian.⁷⁹ Married to Wang Cixi, she was widowed early. After the fall of the Ming, she raised an army and offered to join forces with one "commander from Yunnan." The latter, however, "had other intentions and, clamoring for priority after getting drunk, spoke disrespectfully" 陰持兩端，又醉後爭長，語不遜。Angered, Liu Shu wanted to cut him down there and then, and "the commander ran around the pillar" 帥環柱走。⁸⁰ She threw down the sword, calmly asked for paper and brush, and wrote a poem in a "heroic, stirring mode" 辭旨壯激。She left with these words: "I have unfortunately come to this because of the calamity of the state. But I am [merely] a woman: I hope you, general, would do what you can" 妾不幸爲國難以至於此，然妾婦人也，願將軍好爲之 (FRJ, 22b–23a). Wang Chutong 王初桐 (18th c.), in his *History of Women* (*Lianshi* 奩史),

76. QMZ, 4:74–75, 4:III, 7:10–15.

77. QJSJ, 4:15612.

78. Chen Weisong, FRJ, 22b–23a. Chen cites Chao Zhenlin's 巢震林 (*jinsbi* 1652) *Shique wen bu* 史闕文補 as his source, but I have not been able to find Chao's book.

79. See Liu Duo, *Laiju zhai gao*, 10.157–59. Cf. *Mingshi*, 22.305, 305.7821; Liu Duo and Liu Shu, *Liu Duo Liu Shu funü shiwen, fulu*, pp. 160–67.

80. The image evokes Jing Ke's assassination of the First Emperor of Qin (*Shiji*, 86.2335). The latter also ran around a pillar before he collected his wits enough to pull out a sword.

also cites Chao Zhenlin as a source but supplies further details, such as the lines Liu wrote when confronting the contemptible commander.⁸¹

A somewhat more elaborate account appears in Wang Youdian's 汪有典 (18th c.) *Excluded History* (*Shi wai* 史外, 1748 preface),⁸² Li Yao's 李瑤 (fl. 1830) supplement (*zhiyi* 摭遺) of Wen Ruilin's 溫睿臨 (*juren* 1705) *History of the Southern Regions* (*Nanjiang yishi* 南疆繹史),⁸³ Xu Zi's 徐鼎 (1810–62) *Chronological Account of Remnant Domains* (*Xiaotian jinian* 小腆紀年), and Sun Jing'an's 孫靜庵 (1878–1943) *Records of Ming Loyalists* (*Ming yimin lu* 明遺民錄, 1912). Li Yao's account is included in the prefatory material of the modern edition of Liu Shu's collection, *Writings Left Behind by Geshan* (*Geshan yiji* 个山遺集, hereafter *GS*). In some biographies, her name appears as Liu Shuying.⁸⁴ We are told that her mother, Madame Xiao, taught her with the books left by her father, and she came to be learned in military strategy and swordsmanship, among other things.⁸⁵ The commander she met at Yongxin (in Jiangxi) is identified as Zhang Xianbi 張先璧, who could not face the real enemy but instead hinted at his intention to marry Liu Shu.⁸⁶ When Zhang's soldiers put on armor to defend their commander against Liu Shu's fury, she denounced them in no uncertain terms:

“How fearful you all are! If you are so fearful, can you still brave fire and brimstone? This is my own blindness, my own mistake. I am only a woman, what need is there for you to don armor?” She chanted these

81. Wang Chutong, *Lianshi*, 49.8a–9a.

82. See *Shi wai*, 8.58b–59b. The account is also anthologized in *Guang Yuchu xinzhì*, compiled by Huang Chengzeng (*Shuobai*, 4:1452–53). According to Li Ciming (*Yueman tang dushu ji*, p. 380), Wang compiled *Shi Wai* before the official *Mingshi* was made public.

83. See Li Yao, *Yishi zhiyi*, 15.7b–8b. The same account, entitled “Liu Shuying zhuan” and attributed to Wang Wan (1624–91), appears in *Yuchu guangzhì* (1915), compiled by Jiang Qiqun (*Shuobai*, 6:2034). However, no such account appears in Wang Wan's collection.

84. In her preface to her father's writings, Liu Shu wrote, “respectfully penned by his daughter Shu” (*GS*, 7.364), so “Liu Shu” should be the correct name. Cf. Hu Wenkai, *Lidai junü zhuazuo kao*, pp. 195–96; Zhao Botao, “Ming mo qì nǚzi Liu Shu.”

85. In gazetteers Liu Shu is simply known as “Wang Ai's wife.” In Li Yao's account Liu was married to Wang Ai. “Cixie” (the name given in *Furen ji*) may be a sobriquet.

86. On Zhang Xianbi's relationship with the Yongli court, see Wang Fuzhi, *Yongli shilu*, and “Cao Yang Zhang liezhuan” (*Chuanshan quanshu*, 11:440–41).

lines, "My courage of iron worn away, I would fain swallow the sword. / Take my eyes out, my wish is to have them hung at the gate."⁸⁷ She ardently wrote them on the wall and, calmly turning north, bowed: "I, your servant, will follow the former Mother of the State, Empress Zhou, serving by her side in Heaven." Xianbi, remorseful and terrified, led his troops in knocking their heads to the ground, acknowledging that they deserved to die. Shuying said, "A woman's words should not leave the inner chamber. I have incurred shame because of the country's calamity, and thus I have come to this. That my endeavor would not succeed is the will of heaven. You, general, should do what you can." Mounting a horse, she then left. She completely dispersed the troops under her command and had them return home. On her own she built a little monastery and called it "Lotus Boat," brought her mother there and cared for her. She ended her life serving the Buddha.

汝曹何怯也。如是而能赴湯蹈火乎。此吾自不明，吾自誤。吾一女子耳，又安事甲，口占句云：「銷磨鐵膽甘吞劍，挾卻雙瞳欲掛門。」大書於壁，從容北嚮，載拜曰：「臣妾將從先國母周皇后在天左右矣。」先壁悔且懼，率麾下叩頭請死。淑英曰：「婦言不出閫，吾以國難蒙恥。以至於此，事之不濟，天也。將軍好爲之。」跨馬竟去。盡散所部，使歸田里。獨闢一小庵。曰蓮舫，迎其母歸養，奉佛以終。(Li Yao, *Yishi zhiyi*, 15.7b–8b; *GS*, pp. 382–83)

Zhang Xianbi's more explicit advances in this version underline a common theme in accounts of heroic women: they imperil their chastity by venturing into the public realm and often need to be even more adamant about their virtue.⁸⁸ Despite the ultimate futility of Liu's endeavor, the cowering Zhang affirms her symbolic victory. Her heroic words and ritual gestures point to the quasi-hagiographic intent of this account.

Various gazetteers suppress her involvement in anti-Qing resistance and emphasize instead her chastity and filial piety.⁸⁹ There are new and

87. Before Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (6th c. BCE) committed suicide as a consequence of calumny at the Wu court and the Wu king's unjust suspicion, he asked followers to gouge his eyes out and hang them above the eastern gate of Wu, so that he can see Yue raiders enter into Wu and extinguish it (*Shiji*, 66.2180). Liu Shu is implicitly comparing herself to Wu Zixu, who had no wherewithal to fulfill his loyal intention or to avert the disaster he could foresee. In Wang Chutong's *Lianshi*, these lines belong to a poem that Liu wrote on paper.

88. In Dong Rong's *Zhikan ji*, Qin Liangyu also faces importune advances.

89. In *Da Qing yitong zhi* 大清一統志 (1685–1743), for example, she valiantly defends her chastity against the commander Zhang, who was demanding troop supplies from her. (In the accounts cited above, she had taken the initiative to meet Zhang.)

variant details: her son tried to collect and publish her writings but died before he could do so; and she is said to have died at thirty-five,⁹⁰ although internal evidence from her poetry indicates that she was still writing in 1657 when she was thirty-seven (*GS*, 4.303). Her biography in the *Gazetteer of Anfu County* (*Anfu xianzhi* 安福縣志, 1827) emphasizes her extraordinary virtue and courage, but dwells at greater length on her filial devotion and tells of her loyalist endeavor as a lucky escape:

When battles raged in 1646, she sold her jewelry to support an army defending justice [a euphemistic way to refer to anti-Qing resistance]. But then an unscrupulous commander wanted to marry her by force. She vowed to brave death, keeping a sharp knife by her side. Later, that miscreant, realizing that she had always been renowned for her filial piety and chastity, actually released her.

丙戌兵起，女脫簪珥餉義師，遇奸臣欲強娶之。女誓一死，藏利刃不離肘腋，後奸知其孝節素著，竟釋之。（*GS*, pp. 380–81）

Liu Shu's funereal essay honoring her father, written upon his burial in 1648, presents her military endeavor as a tribute to what he would have willed 吾父之志云爾. Her tone is subdued rather than defiant: "And then, relying on my father's blessing, I managed to preserve myself and escaped harm" 既又藉父之靈，得以全身避害 (*GS*, 7.364–67).

This essay, along with Liu Shu's preface to her father's writings and a poem entitled "Poem Inscribed on a Wall in Hechuan" ("Hechuan tibi" 禾川題壁, *GS*, 4.295–96),⁹¹ which incorporates as the third couplet the aforementioned lines she recited when she confronted Zhang Xianbi, as well as her brief biography, are included in the local gazetteers of Anfu and Luling. The modern edition of Liu Shu's *Geshan yiji*, with 915 *shi* poems, 40 song lyrics, and 14 prose pieces, contains a preface by Wang Renzhao dated 1914.⁹² Liu Shu's corpus yields insight into her life: her

90. See *ibid.*, and the Yongzheng-era *Jiangxi tongzhi*, j. 99.

91. Another quatrain bearing the same title is found in *GS*, 2.257.

92. Wang claimed that he consulted two rather damaged hand-copied manuscripts in the keeping of the descendants of the Liu family in the Sanshe village in Anfu and another manuscript in better condition that belonged to the Xiangyin branch of the Liu clan (*GS*, pp. 384–85). There is no way to prove or disprove the authenticity of these claims. I do feel, however, that the circumstantial details and contradictory emotions of these writings convey a sense of nuance and complexity (rather than the ideological purpose one may expect from a forgery). *Geshan yiji* was reprinted in 1934 and published by Meihua shuwu. In 1992, Wang Renzhao's son Wang Siyuan published the writings of Liu Shu and her father together in *Liu Duo Liu Shu funü shiwen*. This edition has *Geshan ji* instead of *Geshan yiji* as the title of Liu Shu's collection.

brief marriage was happy,⁹³ and her husband died a martyr while serving in the army.⁹⁴ She eagerly celebrated the heroism of like-minded women.⁹⁵ She endured years of hardship as she raised her son, tried to publish her father's writings,⁹⁶ and embraced religion as she reluctantly settled into a reclusive life.⁹⁷

The poem on the wall in Hechuan exemplifies the heroic mode that characterizes a number of her poems,⁹⁸ but her corpus incorporates a range of other styles and sensibilities. Much more often we see irony and self-questioning following a heroic declaration, as in the following examples (GS, 1.201):

劉淑 舒憤二首

Liu Shu, "Venting Frustrations," two poems

一刀日月磨
石嘯光芒吼
舞擲風雲生
將啖讎人首

One sword polished by sun and moon
Whistles among stones, its glow roaring.
Hurled in a dance, stirring wind and clouds,
It is about to take the enemy's head.

濃痴人喚佛
淡散自呼仙
杯底吐明月
鏡中掬還天

With intense passion, others yet call me Buddhist,
Detached, let loose, I dub myself immortal.
At the cup's bottom, I spit out the bright moon,
Scoop it up in the mirror, and return it to heaven.⁹⁹

93. "Ye Zhusheng ge" 謁註生閣 (GS, 2.243-44); "Ji wai" 寄外 (GS, 5.349).

94. "Tongku" 痛哭 (GS, 1.219).

95. "Wen guixiu Qinshi xingbing" 聞閨秀秦氏興兵 (GS, 1.228); "Ganyu qishou zhi er," 感遇七首之二 (GS, 2.251); "Diao Liu Muyu sima furen shishi shou" 弔劉牧雨司馬夫人十四首; "Diao Liu Muyu Li furen" 弔劉牧雨李夫人 (GS, 2.264-66); "Huinü zhuxiang Qinshi xingbing" 徽女助餉秦氏興兵 (GS, 4.318-19).

96. "Dinguan taipu gong *Laiju zhai gao xiaoyin*" 訂鍋父太僕公來復齋稿小引 (GS, 7.364-65).

97. "Zichan sanshou" 自懺三首 (GS, 4.300).

98. For some prominent examples, see "Bingxu suichu zhigan" 丙戌歲除志感 (GS, 1.224-25); "Junshi weibi jiaran quan wo yi gui shi'er shou" 軍事未畢家人勸我以歸十二首 (GS, 2.247-48); "Ganyu qishou" 感遇七首 (GS, 2.251-52); "Guilai shuxiong jie dizhi bei kaitan shishi quan yu buju guli ershou" 歸來叔兄偕弟姪輩慨歎時事勸余卜居故里二首 (GS, 2.253-54); "Qiugan sanshou" 秋感三首 (GS, 2.257); "Huabie ershou" 話別二首 (GS, 2.266); "Bing zhou wuyun yin," fifth poem 病中五韻吟其五 (GS, 3.272); "Yougan" 有感 (GS, 3.273); "Si zhong tibi ershi'er shou" 寺中題壁二十二首 (GS, 3.289-90); "Zitan shiwu shou" 自嘆十五首 (GS, 3.304-6).

99. This follows the Meihua shuwu edition. The 1992 edition has 鏡中掬遠天: "And hold distant heavens in the mirror."

While the first poem employs the imagery of power, light, magical agency, and elemental affinities traditionally tied to the mythical sword, the second one seems to bracket it as mere fantasy. The only agency available to the poet, with her contradictory emotions, is in the realm of illusion (the reflection of the moon in the cup and in the mirror). A similar ambivalence obtains in other poems in which she relegates heroic endeavor to the domain of dreams (*GS*, 3.271):

劉淑 偶成八首之二

Liu Shu, "Incidental Compositions," second of eight poems

| | |
|---------|---|
| 夢裏勤王醒後思 | Loyalist endeavor in a dream leaves wakeful pondering: |
| 依然戰馬共爭馳 | The same war horses—we were still fighting and galloping, |
| 征鞍亂洒將軍血 | On the saddle of battle, the general's blood splashes. |
| 真幻難從辨一時 | For a moment it is hard to tell reality from illusion. ¹⁰⁰ |

Even when she proclaims her heroic aspirations, the context is often failure, and the discrepancy between inner worth and external oblivion (*GS*, 4.294):

劉淑 喟然

Liu Shu, "Sighing"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 欲取元珠赤水瀾 | I wish to take the Dark Pearl, but the Red River is turbulent. ¹⁰¹ |
| 煙霞無主悵征鞍 | At a loss in the mist and clouds, I mount the saddle in melancholy. |
| 偶馳楊柳隄邊馬 | By chance galloping on a horse by the Willow Embankment, |
| 誤卻芙蓉鏡下冠 | I have missed the cap of distinction under the Lotus Mirror. |
| 幕府堅城無俠女 | At the council of the fortified city, there are no women knights. |

100. In "Yixi mengjian" 憶昔夢見 (*GS*, 1.220), Liu defends dreams as the consolation of failure ("After death only dreams remain" 死去惟存夢) and describes cutting down "barbarian raiders" in a dream.

101. For *yuan* 元, read *xuan* 玄. According to *Shanghai jing* 山海經 (*Xishan jing* 西山經), the Red River 赤水 flows from the mythical Kunlun Mountain (*Shanhai jing jiaozhu*, 2.47–48).

| | |
|---------|---|
| 未央配劍少奇男 | Even by midnight, few were the extraordinary men bearing swords. |
| 藏香隱玉乾坤內 | Conceal fragrance and hide beauty between heaven and earth— |
| 袖裏青霓貫斗寒 | Inside my sleeves, the sword pierces the cold of the stars. |

In *Zhuangzi*, “The Yellow Emperor wandered north of the Red River, ascended Mount Kunlun and looked south. Then he returned but left his Dark Pearl” 黃帝遊乎赤水之北，登乎崑崙之丘，而南望還歸，遣其玄珠。He sends Knowledge 知, Sight 離朱, and Eloquence 喫詬 to get it, but they fail. His last emissary, Mindlessness 象罔, succeeds. The Dark Pearl is usually glossed as the Way or the Truth (道, 道真) in the commentaries (*Zhuangzi jishi*, 12.414). Here it refers more categorically to an exalted goal, probably the poet’s vision of the loyalist cause, and the turbulent Red River symbolizes difficulties that seem almost insurmountable. Having stated her goal, however, the poet seems overtaken with melancholy. If lines 3 and 4 were written by a male poet, it would have described how casual indulgence (probably at pleasure quarters) leads to setbacks in seeking office (“Lotus Mirror” refers to a story about succeeding in the civil service examination [TPG], 155.III–12.) In the present context it may mean that the poet, drifting and melancholy, has missed the chance to distinguish herself, hence line 5. The final statement of hidden worth and heroic aspiration thus follows from the vagaries of doubt and hesitation. Such uncertainty extends to the possibility of enlightenment too, as in the following poem (GS, 4.302):

劉淑 自遣

Liu Shu, “Banishing My Own Sorrows”

| | |
|---------|--|
| 報國酬親志未諧 | To requite country and kin, that will is yet unfulfilled. |
| 肯將孤憤委陰霾 | How can lonely anguish yield to darkening clouds? |
| 心非日月輪堪轉 | My heart is not, like the sun or the moon, a wheel that can be turned. |
| 命比煙塵鏡裏揩 | My fate is akin to dust and smoke, from the mirror to be wiped clean. |
| 戀佛機關龍伏遠 | Cling to Buddha for solace: but the dragons are far from being subdued. |

| | |
|---------|--|
| 辭家遇合蝎磨乖 | In what I have encountered since leaving home, a star-crossed fate. |
| 伸眉試拂青萍劍 | I stretch my brows and try to brush the Qing-ping sword: |
| 畫割江南構小齋 | To mark and cut off the Riverland, for the making of a small abode. |

In “Cypress Boat” (“Bozhou” 柏舟) in the *Classic of Poetry*, the poet, in the voice of a woman in plight (possibly coerced or abandoned), uses a series of negative comparisons to make clear that her will is not to be bent:¹⁰²

| | |
|------|----------------------------|
| 我心匪鑒 | My heart is not a mirror, |
| 不可以茹 | It cannot hold everything. |
| ... | |
| 我心匪石 | My heart is not a stone; |
| 不可轉也 | It cannot be turned. |
| 我心匪席 | My heart is not a mat; |
| 不可捲也 | It cannot be rolled up. |

For the poet to raise the register of the metaphor in line 3 and claim that even the sun and the moon would not suffice as comparisons for her heart is a bold move. Her greater constancy defies temporality, unlike the sun and the moon, which must be “wheels that can be turned” to mark time. Is this because her burden to “right the times” is greater than the domestic woes of the poet in “Cypress Boat”? But whatever grand claim is being made, it is deflated in line 4, when constant striving produces nothing more than “dust and smoke, from the mirror to be wiped clean.” That act of wiping the mirror clean in turn suggests removing the obstacles to enlightenment, which steers us to the second half of the poem. Liu Shu thus appropriates the most basic paradigm of choice—that between engagement and detachment—for elite men in the tradition. Enlightenment remains elusive, however. The “dragons” in line 5

102. Mao 26, in *Maoshi zhushu* 2A.74–75. The Mao commentator reads this as a righteous man 仁人 lamenting the malice and calumny of petty men 小人. *Lienü zhuan* (4.75–76) identifies the widow of a Wei ruler as the author. Zhu Xi also avers that the poet is a woman, possibly Zhuang Jiang of Wei (*Shi jizhuan*, pp. 18–19). Female authorship for portions of the *Classic of Poetry* is sometimes noted to justify women’s writings. See, for example, Hu Xiaosi’s 1716 preface to *Benchao mingyuan shichao* (Fong, *Ming Qing Women’s Writings*).

refer to passions that have to be tamed, as in Wang Wei's line "Calm meditation quells poisonous dragons" 安禪制毒龍.¹⁰³ Here "subduing the dragons" is a distant prospect. *Xiemo* 蝎磨 (line 6) is the same as *Moxie* 磨蝎 (literally, scorpion), the name of a constellation, which can govern a person's life or fate. At this hopeless juncture the poem is also taking on a more defiant tone: Su Shi claims that Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) has *Moxie* as "the constellation of his person" 身宮, while he himself has it as "fate"—that is why they both receive a great deal of slander and praise throughout their lives 平生多得謗譽.¹⁰⁴ Even as he laments adversities, however, Su Shi is claiming Han Yu as a kindred spirit from history. Liu Shu repeats his gesture with the same allusion: astrological signs decree her unhappy fate, but they also confirm her affinities with great poets like Su Shi and Han Yu. Her solution, in the wake of all these reversals and convolutions, is to lift her spirit and use the mythical sword (Qingping), not for great heroic endeavors, but to cut off a piece of Southland (Jiangnan) so that she can build her own abode.

Elsewhere, Liu Shu questions the provisional equilibrium proposed in the building of the "small abode" with the powerful image of "lone existence" (*gusheng* 孤生) (GS, 6.361).¹⁰⁵

劉淑 黃鶯兒。感懷禾川歸

Liu Shu, "Thinking of Hechuan upon My Return,"
to the tune "Huang ying'er"

| | |
|---------|---|
| 洒淚別秦關 | In tears I part from Qin Pass. |
| 木蘭舟 | The cassia boat |
| 寄小灣 | Rests by the narrow bank. ¹⁰⁶ |
| 丹心不逐出籠鷗 | My loyal heart will not follow the silver pheasant, from its cage freed. |
| 桃花馬殷 | The dappled peach-blossom horse is dark red, |
| 屠龍劍閒 | The sword for slaying dragons is idle. ¹⁰⁷ |
| 長袂片月裏 | Long sleeves in the glow of the moon's fragment— |
| 羞顏病孱孱 | Subdued, broken by sickness. |

103. Wang Wei, "Guo Xiangji si" 過香積寺, in *Wang Mojie quanji jianzhu*, 7.102.

104. Su Shi, *Dongpo zhibin*, p. 38.

105. Cf. Deng Hongmei, *Nixing cishi*, pp. 214–19.

106. The trunk of the *mulan* tree (cassia or magnolia), supposed to have a special fragrance, could be carved into a boat (TPCJ, 406.1410).

107. "Slaying dragons" 屠龍 refers to extraordinary or impossible feats of valor (*Zhuangzi jishi*, 32.1046).

| | |
|---------|--|
| 豈堪殉國 | How could I be a worthy martyr for the realm? |
| 宜臥首陽山 | I should just lie on Mount Shouyang. |
| 孤生天地寧有幾 | A lone existence between heaven and earth, what more to ask? |
| 已過了 | Already past |
| 天[三]之二 | Are two parts out of three. |
| 從容冷瞰塵寰事 | In calm dispassion I survey the affairs of the dusty realm. |
| 半縷佯狂 | With half a streak of feigned madness, |
| 一函憤烈 | And a full share of indignant fury, |
| 惱得天憔悴 | My rancor can reduce heaven to weary melancholy. |
| 買刀載酒空遊世 | I have bought a sword and taken wine, only to roam the world in vain. |
| 笑看他 | I laugh at that |
| 蜉蝣負李 | Ephemeral insect bearing a fruit too large. |
| 長天難捲野無據 | Wide heavens too hard to roll up, wilderness with no foothold— |
| 惟有孤生是 | Only this, my lone existence, is to be. |

“Lone existence” in the second half of the song lyric is a response to the contradictions developed in the first half. Her mission failed, but her tenacious loyalty would not let her break free and leave all behind. The emblems of martial valor, the horse and the sword, remain, but the poet is sickly and subdued. She might not be “a martyr for the realm” 殉國 on the battlefield, but a slower and equally inevitable martyrdom awaits her on Mount Shouyang, following the model of Boyi and Shuqi. “Lone existence” is reversion to oneself when external frames of reference threaten to dissolve with the resolute disjunction between self and world. In the writings of loyalist poets, the phrase “lone existence” or “lone heart” often resonates as exile and the refusal to compromise, as we saw in the case of Xu Ye in chapter 1. Another good example is Wang Fuzhi: “Countless cares of the heart are given up, leaving the lone heart cold, / Flowers in the mirror bloom and fall, unsurprisingly without shadows . . . / Stones would rot and seas would dry up, / But my lone heart persists, insignificantly, alone” 萬心拋付孤心冷，鏡花開落原無影 . . . 石爛海還枯，孤心一點孤。¹⁰⁸

108. See Wang Fuzhi, “Shuhuai” 述懷 (to the tune “Pusa man” 菩薩蠻), in *Chuan-shan quanshu* 15:736. Similar images appear in his song lyric “Lianzi” 蓮子 (to the tune “Shuilong yin”): “Embracing its own pure spirit: / The seas would dry up and stones

Elsewhere in Liu Shu's corpus, the term "lone existence" rings with the conviction of constancy and tenacity of purpose, as in the following poems:¹⁰⁹

劉淑 秋日雜作四首其四

Liu Shu, "Miscellaneous Poems on an Autumn Day,"
fourth of four poems (GS, 1.213, lines 1-2)

| | |
|-------|---|
| 孤生何落落 | Lone existence, how proud and free, |
| 雪袂忍斑斕 | How can I bear to stain my snowy sleeves? |

劉淑 自嘆十五首其一

Liu Shu, "Sighing Over Myself"
first of fifteen poems (GS, 4.304, lines 3-4)

| | |
|---------|---|
| 紛紜蜂蠆苦藏毒 | Wasps and scorpions, busy and swarming, inexorably hide poison. |
| 決烈孤生豈斷腸 | How can a lone existence, fierce and unwavering, break my heart? |

劉淑 孤生

Liu Shu, "Lone Existence" (GS, 1.210)

| | |
|-------|---|
| 孤生何所似 | Lone existence—what is it like? |
| 天地殊輪轉 | Heaven and earth that differ from the turning wheels. ¹¹⁰ |
| 同立天地中 | With heaven and earth, together we stand, |
| 不逐輪轉變 | Not following wheels that change with turning. |
| 天地不可測 | Heaven and earth cannot be fathomed, |
| 孤生天地見 | But a lone existence is revealed to heaven and earth. |

A lone spirit, foregoing ties with the world, is not subject to change and can be coeval with heaven and earth. In *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*

would rot, / But it would not decay in a thousand years. / Do not give up this insignificant, lone heart, / For against all odds / It retains the beauty of autumn" 自抱冰魂，海枯石爛，千年不壞。莫拋擲一點孤心，苦留得、秋容在。 (*Chuanshan quanshu*, 15:724). See also Wang Fuzhi, *Wang Chuanshan ci biannian jianzhu*, pp. 26-27, 262-63.

109. There are also instances where the term has a more negative meaning. For example, "Wang Nai'an biao xiong" 王耐菴表兄: "Heaven seems to have feelings, sparing me solitary death. / If I have none to rely on, how can I bear this lone existence?" 天似有情賒獨死，我如無賴忍孤生 (GS, 4.314). Related terms such as "lone life" 孤身 and "lone heart" 孤心 also appear a number of times in her poetry.

110. Here as in "Venting Frustrations," "turning wheels" refer to the sun and the moon.

中庸), the passage on how “ultimate sincerity” 至誠 as truthfulness and singleness of purpose allows the fullest realization of moral nature 盡性, whereby a human being can become the counterpart of heaven and earth 與天地參, belongs to a discourse of moral self-cultivation with transcendent echoes that men rarely associate with women and women writers rarely claim as their own.¹¹¹ Here Liu Shu implicitly appropriates it as she proposes a hypothetical asymmetry: heaven and earth cannot be fathomed, yet a “lone existence” is revealed to, perhaps even understood by, heaven and earth. For a woman more than for a man, moral meaning is often defined in terms of family relationships; here the idea of “lone existence” leaves behind familial and social frameworks to ask ultimate questions about the possibility of transcending human limits and mortality.

“Lone existence” addresses the dilemma of a common humanity; in that sense it is about carving a space beyond gender distinctions. In many of Liu Shu’s poems, she simply writes in the voice of a man, or, more precisely, a failed hero. She takes up his vocabulary of guilt over survival at such a historical moment: “I pledged death with my lord and ruler, / Yet all too soon I turned to meditation as a recluse” 我許君王死，無何居士禪；¹¹² “Becoming a knight-errant, I have yet kept my head” 爲俠竟存首；¹¹³ “To keep my head is nothing more than foolishness” 留頭總是痴；¹¹⁴ “To steal survival—how can that be a hero’s lot” 偷生豈是英雄業；¹¹⁵ “Then I pledged death with my lord and ruler, / Now I have become a sporadic wind” 昔許君王死，今成斷續風。¹¹⁶ The sword (and a host of other weapons) is often paired with words such as *kong* 空, *man* 漫, *xu* 虛 (which all mean “in vain”), *rao* 饒 (superfluous), *xin* 羞,

111. *Liji zhushu*, 53.895. Whereas stories about women as moral exemplars (especially of virtues such as chastity and filial piety) are ubiquitous, accounts of a woman’s moral self-examination that explores interiority, such as that obtains in the intellectual biographies of men in say, Huang Zongxi’s *Mingru xue’an*, are extremely rare. Lü Miaofen provides a few examples of women who self-consciously sought transcendence through self-cultivation (“Funü yu Mingdai lixue”).

112. “Yiju wenxin chu” 移居問心處, second poem (GS, 1.212).

113. Ibid., third poem (GS, 1.212).

114. “Suyue,” first of four poems 訴月四首其一 (GS, 1.211).

115. “Kouzhān jì Youpo shu,” seventh of eight poems 口占寄又坡叔八首其七 (GS, 2.250–51).

116. “Yougan” 有感 (GS, 1.214).

can 慚 (both meaning “shame”). She also uses the gestures and paraphernalia of the male recluse, such as *gaowo* 高臥 (lying comfortably), *baoxi* 抱膝 (hugging my knees), *changxiao* 長嘯 (a long whistle), *ji* 屐 (clogs), and *xunxie* 筍鞋 (bamboo shoes) to describe her country life, even while designating her companions as *zimei* 姊妹 (sisters) and *nongfu* 農婦 (peasant women). As in the writings of Li Yin and Wang Duanshu, who also used imagery related to the male recluse when describing their country life, eremitic existence is both idealized and presented as melancholy compromise and resignation, the acceptance that “the heroic will” 壯志 has failed and action is no longer possible.

In the poems that deal directly with women involved in military campaigns, Liu Shu tends to be most laudatory when addressing or referring to other martial women, as in the poem celebrating the efforts of Anhui women to support an army led by Madame Qin (possibly Qin Liangyu) and nineteen elegiac poems mourning Lady Li, wife of a military commander named Liu Muyu. About her own military effort she is in turn proud and apologetic, elated and despondent. In some poems she ponders whether she failed because she is a woman. She also explores the margins between the garb of war and a woman’s clothing, between the use of makeup and its rejection, with implicit reference to gender roles. Military attire stays long in her memory (GS, 2.251):

劉淑 口占寄又坡叔八首其二

Liu Shu, “Impromptu Poems Sent to Uncle Youpo,”
second of eight poems

| | |
|---------|--|
| 仗義禾川昔荷戈 | Then, taking up the just cause at Hechuan, I bore the halberd. |
| 今慚孤影伴煙蘿 | Now, I am shamed by my lone shadow, companion to misty vines. |
| 敲冰且自臨淵照 | Cracking the ice, let me just come to the pool for reflection— |
| 照影猶疑著戰韉 | Can it be that the reflected image is still wearing the boots of war? |

A woman looking at her reflection inevitably evokes images of self-pity and self-love 自憐, as in the poems by Feng Xiaoqing in the eponymous late-Ming tale.¹¹⁷ Here the moment of perception is made possible by an

117. See “Xiaoqing zhuan” (1612), in Feng Menglong, *Qingshi leilue*, 14.423–28; Zhang Chao, *Yuchu xinzhishi* (*Shuohai*, 2:338–42). See also Widmer, “Xiaoqing’s Literary Legacy.”

act of force (breaking the ice), and the reflected image brings memory of, and perhaps nostalgia for, a moment of action. If there is self-pity, it is not for ill fate in love but for her present state of irrelevance and powerlessness. A similar twist charges conventional “boudoir longing” with heroic pathos (*GS*, 3.271):

劉淑 偶成八首其六

Liu Shu, “Incidental Compositions,” sixth of eight poems

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------------|
| 不是傷春不上樓 | Why ascend the tower |
| | if not for mourning spring’s passing? |
| 多情多病爲吳鉤 | Too much emotions and sickness |
| | come because of the Wugou sword. |
| 縱然織盡回文錦 | Even if I were to weave |
| | endless palindrome poems on brocade, |
| 難寫芳心一段愁 | It will be hard to convey |
| | the sweep of sorrows in my heart. |

The palindrome poem woven on brocade, the symbol of a wife’s love and longing for her husband, here conveys the endless sorrow of failed heroism as symbolized by the Wugou sword.¹¹⁸ “Mourning spring” 傷春 in this context claims distinctly political meanings, reminiscent of Li Shangyin’s famous lines on the Tang dynastic crisis: “Though the cataclysm that shatters heaven and earth is heart rending, / The grief pales beside the mourning for spring’s passing” 天荒地變心雖折，若比傷春意未多。¹¹⁹ “Mourning for spring’s passing” is more momentous than, yet defined by, “the cataclysm that shatters heaven and earth.”

When Is a Sword a Sword?

The ubiquitous references to swords in Liu Shu’s corpus allow us to imagine their physical existence. She writes about the sword at the head of her bed 牀頭劍 and in the keeping of her mother, in addition to describing the experience of holding 按, stroking 撫, polishing 磨, snapping 彈, pillowing 枕, or blowing on 吹 the sword. But these gestures may be as much literary as actual. How are we to interpret the

118. On Su Hui’s palindrome poem, see n. 40. The story of the Wugou sword is told in *Wu Yue Chunqiu jijiao huikao* (4.44).

119. On the many different interpretations of these two lines, see *LSY*, 1:132–39; *Li Shangyin xuanji*, pp. 100–102; Owen, *The Late Tang*, pp. 436–37.

more general use of martial and military images in women's writings during this period? When does a sword become metaphorical? What would be its symbolic quotient?

For Liu Rushi, the martial imagery in her first collection *Drafts from the Year Wuyin* (*Wuyin cao* 戊寅草), printed in 1638 when Liu was twenty, marks her concern with the contemporary crisis. As a young courtesan defining her poetic voice through social exchanges with prominent male literati, she also claimed her role as their intellectual equal through prescient political judgment (*LRSJ*, p. 23):

柳如是 初夏感懷四首 其一

Liu Rushi, "Early Summer Ruminations,"
first of four poems (lines 5–8)

| | |
|---------|--|
| 城荒孤角晴無事 | Lone bugle at the deserted city: the brightness is undisturbed, |
| 天外撓槍落亦知 | But the comet of war beyond the sky will surely fall. |
| 總有家園歸未得 | For all, there is home, but return is not yet possible— |
| 嵩陽劍器莫平夷 | South of Mount Song, the sword dance cannot quell the barbarians. |

Calm is deceptive; the falling of the comet of war—looming unrest and disorder—is there for all to see. The sword dance may be an oblique indictment of ineffective action, policies and strategies relegated to the province of mere gestures. But it may also reflect Liu's own sense of powerlessness: heroic aspirations may be no more than the flourishes of a "sword dance," as she laments in the next poem in the series (*LRSJ*, p. 24):

柳如是 初夏感懷四首 其二

Liu Rushi, "Early Summer Ruminations,"
second of four poems (lines 7–8)

| | |
|---------|--|
| 我欲滎陽探龍蟄 | I wish to reach the dragon's lair at Yingyang, |
| 心雄翻是有闌珊 | But the heart's valor fades and dies. |

Many of her male admirers wrote about Liu Rushi's heroic aspirations as part of her appeal. Song Zhengbi's poetic tribute to the fifteen-year-old Liu describes her as "ardent and forceful" 錚錚. In a later note, he adds that "all her conversations were passionate and rousing, not the

least like the words of the boudoir” 凡所敘述，感慨激昂，絕不類閨房語 (“Song of Autumn Pond” [“Qiutang qu” 秋塘曲], *LRS*, 1:48–49; *Baozhen tang shigao*, 4.29a). Liu, for her part, presents political engagement as the basis of friendship and empathy in a poem addressed to Song Zhengbi: “With you I discourse on the great affairs of state— / All too clearly, you grieve for me” 與論天下事，歷歷爲我傷 (“To Song Shangmu” [“Zeng Song Shangmu” 贈宋尚木], *LRSJ*, pp. 39–40). She seemed to have participated keenly in the political discourse of the Incipience Society in the 1630s.

Martial imagery is thus tied to the sense of common political purpose that Liu shared with her male friends. Their fascination with her image as “female knight-errant” 女俠 is in turn bound up with their own heroic aspirations. Liu seems to be speaking to such fantasies in some of her occasional poetry. In a poem addressed to Zhu Maojing 朱茂暲 (1639 *jinsbi*), Liu commends his political idealism and empathizes with his disappointments, and, in a concluding tribute, imagines their shared transcendence of mundane cares (*LRSJ*, pp. 30–31):

柳如是 朱子莊雨中相過

Liu Rushi, “Zhu Zizhuang Passed by My Abode in the Rain”
(lines 13–16, 30–31)

| | |
|---------|---|
| 天下英雄數公等 | Of heroes under heaven, one must count your kind. |
| 我輩杳冥非尋常 | People like us soar to the great vastness: no common feat! |
| 嵩陽劍氣亦難取 | South of Mount Song, the sword's spirit is yet hard to glean, |
| 中條事業皆渺茫 | At the Central Range, all endeavors fade in infinite distance. |
| ... | |
| 我欲乘此雲中鶴 | I wish to ride this, the crane in the clouds, |
| 與爾笑傲觀五湖 | And with you, laughing, proud, survey the Five Lakes. |

Liu's longing for heroes opens up a fantastic realm in “The Song of Swordsmanship” (“Jianshu xing” 劍術行, dated 1634, *LRSJ*, pp. 29–30). In the wake of a series of rebellions, the poet encounters by chance a hero who, melancholy and forbidding, commands the elements and

“speaks not of boundless chaos, but of the art of swordsmanship” 湏洞不言言劍術.¹²⁰ She fantasizes about mastering martial prowess as well as esoteric wisdom (“with tiger steps, learning the Way” 虎步兼學道) but acknowledges ultimate futility: “I alone, in defiant abandon, embrace this wish, / Facing such monumental odds, how can I make peace?” 獨我慷慨懷此意，對之砱砱將安之. According to Chen Yinke, Liu Rushi might have addressed this poem to Sun Lin 孫臨 (1611–46), or to Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611–71) to be delivered by Sun Lin. Both Fang and Sun later died as Ming martyrs.¹²¹ The heroic ideal expressed in the poem combines exhortation and eulogy of her friends with Liu’s own heroic aspirations. It is tied to her more general concern about the looming political and military crisis in the last years of the Ming, also evident in her poems on the temples devoted to the heroic defenders of the realm, Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103–42) and Yu Qian 于謙 (1398–1457), in her second collection, *Drafts on the Lake* (*Hushang cao* 湖上草, dated 1639, *LRSJ*, pp. 73, 75).

In many cases, the sword simply indicates the poet’s desire for political engagement and heroic endeavor, and frustration at their impossibility, as in the following excerpt (lines 5–12) from Wang Duanshu’s “Autumn Night Chants” (“Qiuye yin” 秋夜吟). Drawing her imagery from Ruan Ji’s 阮籍 (210–63) “Songs of My Thoughts” (“Yonghuai” 詠懷), Wang describes how “sorrow and bewilderment” 徬徨 bar sleep (*YHJ*, 4.9a):

王端淑 秋夜吟

Wang Duanshu, “Autumn Night Chants” (lines 5–12)

| | |
|-------|---|
| 風景果不殊 | The scenery is indeed not different, |
| 日月光無色 | Yet the light of the sun and the moon brings no color. |
| 捫心惟行吟 | Pressing my heart, I can only pace and chant: |
| 吳鉤何可得 | The Wugou sword—how can it be obtained? |
| 壯髮漸凋殘 | The sheen of vigor on my hair—gradually it fades. |

120. Liu is probably alluding to Du Fu’s poem, “Guan Gongsun daniang dizi wu qianqi xing” 觀公孫大娘弟子舞劍器行: “In fifty years, like the turn of the palm, / Boundless chaos of wind and dust dim the royal house” 五十年間似反掌，風塵湏洞昏王室 (*DS*, 20.1044–46).

121. See chap. 4, pp. 302–4. Li Shenghua argues that the swordsman, described as older and weathered in Chen Zilong’s eponymous poem (to which Liu’s poem may be a response), could not be identified as Fang or Sun, both then in their twenties (*Liu Rushi*, pp. 70–73).

| | |
|-------|--|
| 神京曷時克 | The sacred capital: when will it be recovered? |
| 空掩楚囚悲 | In vain do I hide the grief of the Chu prisoner, |
| 恨乏木蘭力 | Regretting that I lack the strength of Mulan. |

The embedded allusion harks back to another moment of crisis in Chinese history. In the early fourth century, after barbarians had occupied the north and the Jin court had been driven south, the official Zhou Yi 周顗 (269–322) exclaimed during a feast at the New Pavilion (Xinting), “The scenery is no different, yet the mountains and rivers seem changed!” 風景不殊，正自有山河之異. The prime minister Wang Dao 王導 (276–339) roused the lamenting aristocrats, holding forth “recovery of the sacred land” 克復神州 as his goal: “Why would you deign to be like Chu prisoners facing each other?” 何至作楚囚相對.¹²² The Chu prisoner refers to Zhong Yi, who while in captivity in Jin in 582 BCE still played the music of his native land (*Zuo zhuan* Cheng 9.9, pp. 844–45). For Wang Duanshu, the Wugou sword represents the imperative of action (as enjoined by Wang Dao and represented by Mulan), which is impossible to fulfill. Its inadequate substitute is found in “the Chu prisoner’s grief,” the “music of the fallen domain” 亡國之音 conveyed in the poem composed by one who can only “pace and chant.”

A similar logic obtains in Li Yin’s recurrent sword imagery, whereby apparently simple declarative intent is bound up with the vagaries of self-understanding and self-representation (ZXX, p. 22):

李因 虜警

Li Yin, “Alarm for Barbarian Raid”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 胡兒十萬滿重關 | Barbarian troops, numbering a hundred thousand, fill pass after pass, |
| 鐵騎空屯薊北山 | For naught did the iron-clad cavalry guard the mountains north of the capital. |
| 從古劍仙多女俠 | Since antiquity, sword-wielding immortals have often been women knights. |
| 蒯緱手把自潛潛 | As I clutch the reed-bound hilt in my hand, my tears stream down. |

Written shortly before the collapse of the Ming, the quatrain juxtaposes the all-too-present crisis of survival with the fantasy of succor. It is

122. *Shishuo xinyu*, 2.31, *Jinsbu*, 65.1747.

only in legends of sword-wielding immortals that the knights are women. The real or metaphorical sword-hilt that the poet holds thus marks her helplessness and sense of futility. The reed-bound hilt also alludes to a story about recognizing worth. Feng Huan 馮驩, one of Lord Mengchang's 孟嘗君 (d. 279 BCE) numerous retainers during the Warring States period who was known only for his "reed-bound sword-hilt" suggesting humble circumstances, seems thoroughly unremarkable until the chance comes for him to prove his worth (*Shiji*, 75.2359–61). Recognition and the possibility of action, which beckon as promised outcomes even for disempowered men, are not possible for women.

In Li Yin's later poems, a masculine voice, martial images, and political engagement define the refusal to aestheticize (ZXX, p. 81):

李因 有感

Li Yin, "Moved"

| | |
|-------|---|
| 憂時看髮短 | Tormented by the times, my hair has grown visibly sparse. |
| 老病爲貧增 | Old age and sickness have, with poverty, gained hold. |
| 枵腹同饑鼠 | A hollow belly, no different from a ravenous rat. |
| 顏顏似凍蠅 | A face drained of life, like that of a fly frozen stiff. |
| 從戎非我輩 | Joining the army's ranks is not for the likes of us. |
| 狙擊更誰能 | To ambush and strike: who is still capable of that? |
| 悲感前朝事 | Grief prevails over events of the former dynasty, |
| 愁歸夜半燈 | As I return in sorrow to the midnight lamp. |

Rarely have decrepitude and helplessness been presented with such deliberately unflattering images in women's poetry. But ugliness is also a badge of honor and the appropriation of masculine poetic icons. Hair grown sparse from being "tormented by the times" recalls Du Fu's grief over the Tang dynastic crisis in his famous "Spring View" ("Chunwang" 春望): "White hair, for tearing, becomes ever more sparse—/ Almost unable to bear up with the pinning" 白頭搔更短，渾欲不勝簪。¹²³ Self-presentation as a "ravenous rat" is one of Su Shi's favorite tropes: "I am poor like a ravenous rat, / gnawing in vain through the long night" 我貧如饑鼠，長夜空齧齧; "Lying in the cold, chanting poems in hunger, like a ravenous rat" 凍臥饑吟似饑鼠; "I hate Meng Jiao's

123. *DS*, 4.263.

poetry, / Yet create words like Meng Jiao's. / Hungry innards on their own call out: / Ravenous rats scurrying inside hollowed walls" 我憎孟郊詩，復作孟郊語。饑腸自鳴喚，空壁轉饑鼠。¹²⁴ Beyond privations, the "ravenous rat" signifies a self-consuming need to create, and a perverse fascination with austerity and suffering in poetry (as symbolized by Meng Jiao's [751–814] corpus). "To ambush and strike" 狙擊 (literally, "to lie in wait like a macaque and pounce") are the words Sima Qian uses in his account of Zhang Liang's attempt to assassinate the First Emperor of Qin at Bolangsha (*Shiji*, 55.2034). Again, the impossibility of action feeds the fantasy of recompense—despite ultimate failure, Zhang Liang's attempt at Bolangsha retains a kind of symbolic grandeur.

The political meanings of swords and martial imagery are sometimes subsumed to a more personal sense of unconventionality, as in these quatrains by Wu Qi 吳琪 (fl. mid–17th c.) (*SG*, 12.7a–7b):¹²⁵

吳琪 寄龔靜照

Wu Qi, "Sent to Gong Jingzhao"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 詩狂生性與君同 | A spirit unbound in poetry: with yours my nature is one. |
| 遺世搜奇興不窮 | Leaving the world in quest of wonders, our zest knows no limit. |
| 見說綠窗嫻劍術 | I have heard: by the green window is one adept in the art of the sword. |
| 白雲深處禮猿公 | Deep in the white clouds, we pay obeisance to Master Gibbon. |
| 自入秋來興未闌 | Since autumn's advent, our zest has not abated. |
| 客窗酬和墨雲殘 | We match poems by the sojourner's window, till clouds of ink fade. |
| 壺中別有閒年月 | Inside the gourd is another kind of month and year— |
| 篋裏陰符夜夜看 | As we peruse, night after night, secret books on the art of war. |

124. Su Shi, "Sun Xinlao ji mo sishou" 孫莘老寄墨四首 (3rd poem); "Du Meng Jiao shi ershou" 讀孟郊詩二首 (2nd poem); "Ji Qi dian yu Pu Chuazheng" 寄鄆輩與蒲傳正, in *Su Shi shiji beizhu*, 25.1251, 16.768, 25.1258–59.

125. Cf. Widmer, "Wu Qi"; Fong, *Ming Qing Women's Writings*.

These poems are found in Deng Hanyi's anthology *Perspectives on Poetry*.¹²⁶ According to Deng, Wu Qi came from an elite official family, was recognized early on for her precocious talents, and married a distinguished young man named Guan Xun 管勳. Widowed after twenty years of marriage, she was reduced to poverty but continued literary and artistic pursuits with "two or three friends of the inner chamber." It was said that "her spirit was especially lofty and vigorous, and she did not deign to be trivial or sentimental" 意殊慷慨，不作兒女態也 (SG, 12.1b). She travelled with Zhou Qiong in the Qiantang area, and Wu and Zhou published their writings together in *New Sounds of the Matching Jades* (*Biyu xinsheng* 比玉新聲). Wu Qi eventually took Buddhist vows. Gong Jingzhao 龔靜照, to whom the poems were addressed, was the daughter of a Ming official who had died as a martyr during the dynastic transition. Skilled in calligraphy and painting, she was unhappily married, as one may surmise from the title of her collection, *Writings by the Person of Eternal Sorrow* (*Yong chouren ji* 永愁人集).¹²⁷ Like Xu Can, Gong fuses political lament with private sorrows in her writings.

Beyond possible reference to the sword as an object (my guess is that Wu and Gong were interested in history, politics, and military strategy, but there was no actual sword), the martial images in these quatrains serve three functions. First, Wu Qi uses them to extol the women's defiant and unconventional character (狂, 奇, first quatrain, lines 1–2). Second, these images define an imaginative space that promises escape—Master Gibbon, the mysterious master of swordsmanship in *Histories of Wu and Yue* (*Wu Yue Chunqiu* 吳越春秋) and countless other works of fiction and drama, resides "deep in the white clouds."¹²⁸ Third, the friendship between Wu and Gong acquires an aura of hermetic self-sufficiency, just like the gourd in Daoist lore. The promised world of limitlessness within limits (the world that opens up in the gourd) must be particularly appealing.

Martial imagery challenges gender boundaries. The compound "books and sword" 書劍 stands for the refinements of (male) literati culture that these women poets effortlessly claimed as the basis of their bond;

126. Shen Shanbao attributes these poems to Chen Jingxian (*Mingyuan shibua*, 1.7a).

127. The collection seems to be no longer extant. Cf. Fong, *Ming Qing Women's Writings*, *QQC*, 4:2352–55; Hu Wenkai, *Lidai funü zhuazuo kao*, p. 811; Shen Shanbao, *Mingyuan shibua*, 1.6a–6b; the appendix to Zhu Shuchen's play *Qinlou yue*.

128. The virgin of Yue fights Master Gibbon in a scene that implies both challenge and instruction; see *Wu Yue Chunqiu jijiao buikao*, 9.151–52.

for example, elsewhere in Wu Qi's corpus are these lines addressed to women friends: "For myself I buried books and sword at the New Bamboo Grove Temple, / Who would lean against the lute and the wine flask at the old painted tower?" 自埋書劍新篁寺，誰倚琴樽舊畫樓 ("Guiyou jianfang ganjiu" 閨友見訪感舊, *SG*, 12.4a); and "Year after year, weary and melancholy, beauty fades, / Holding on to books and swords, I grieve for parting at the world's edge" 年年憔悴芳華冷，書劍天涯悵別情 ("Chunri jihuai Yubu," 春日寄懷羽步, *SG*, 12.4b).

The last two lines quoted above are from a poem Wu Qi sent to Zhou Qiong, who even more than Wu Qi liked to employ martial images to develop a masculine voice and self-image. The rather sketchy and partially overlapping biographical information about her found in *Writing Women, Perspectives on Poetry*, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anthologies such as *Correct Beginnings by Boudoir Talents of Our Dynasty* (*Guochao guixiu zhengshi ji* 國朝閨秀正始集) and *Song Lyrics of Boudoir Talents* (*Guixiu cichao* 閨秀詞抄) conveys the impression of a woman of somewhat dubious station, something between a concubine and a courtesan. Trapped in unfortunate unions, she might have become a Daoist nun in her later years; in any case she took a Daoist name, Xing Daoren 性道人. She also seemed to have developed some lasting friendships with men, and at least one well-known man of letters, Mao Xiang, took her under his protection. According to Chen Weisong, she lived for eight months in the Deep Verdure Mountain Lodge in Mao Xiang's estate. Mao describes her as a "woman knight-errant" with whom he enjoys the pleasure of "perusing books" 繙書,¹²⁹ but he does not include her works in his collection of writings by family and friends, *Collected Writings of Kindred Spirits* (*Tongren ji* 同人集), which records one poem by her friend Wu Qi (*Tongren ji*, 7.38a). Chen Weisong has high praise for Zhou's style in *Writing Women*: "She has a pure, vigorous poetic style. Unconventional and carefree, she does not let worldly affairs trouble her. Brilliant and spontaneous, she has the airs of a famous gentleman" 詩才清俊，作人蕭散，不以世務經懷，傀俄有名士態 (*FRJ*, 26a). Deng Hanyi also praises her style as "lofty, vigorous, and spirited, without the effeminate affectations of the boudoir" 慷慨英俊，無閨幃脂粉態 (*SG*, 12.8b). His comments on Zhou Qiong, more so than those on any other contemporary woman poet in his anthology, show deep appreciation and empathy. Yun Zhu 惲珠 (1771–1833), by contrast, castigates

129. Mao Xiang, "Guan Yubu yu Shencui" 館羽步於深翠, *Chaomin shiji*, 5.9a–9b.

Zhou for her “free-spirited sensuality and defiant unconventionality” 放誕風流. Even so, she includes Zhou Qiong in the appendix of her anthology out of praise for her “hidden resolve to escape fame and preserve integrity” 逃名全節之隱.¹³⁰

With this somewhat grudging admiration, Yun Zhu may be responding to the defiance Zhou Qiong articulates. In “Spring Day, Reply to Liu Zigong” (“Chunri he Liu Zigong” 春日 and 劉字宮, SG, 12.10a), Zhou develops the contrast between her longing for freedom and the inglorious fate of “a woman of pleasure,” also associated with the image of movement (lines 1–2):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 性同鷗鷺任西東 | Having the same nature as gulls and egrets, free to roam east or west, |
| 肯逐巫雲向楚宮 | Why should I deign to follow the clouds on Mount Wu, heading to the Chu palace? ¹³¹ |

In another poem titled “Spring Abode” (“Chunju” 春居) and included in Yun Zhu’s anthology (*Guochao guixin zhengshi ji*, fulu, 11b), Zhou Qiong develops the contrast between the superficial gratification of romantic dalliance and higher aspirations of aesthetic and religious transcendence as symbolized by the magical Moye sword (SG, 12.9b):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 小榻參差竹影斜 | Across the small bed, bamboo shadows slant, dappled, uneven. |
| 衡門芳草鎖煙霞 | By the narrow gate, fragrant grass is locked in mist and clouds. ¹³² |
| 稜錚傲骨詩爲友 | With a proud, uncompromising spirit, I take poetry as my friend. |
| 淡泊禪心畫作家 | For a detached heart steeped in Chan meditation, painting is home. |
| 暖日不須來燕子 | The warm days need not make the swallows come. |
| 春風爭肯逐桃花 | How can spring wind deign to chase the peach blossoms? |

130. Yun Zhu, *Guochao guixin zhengshi ji*, “Liyan,” 5a.

131. This refers to the goddess of Mount Wu and her romantic-sexual encounter with Chu kings and Song Yu in “Poetic Exposition on Gaotang” and “Poetic Exposition on the Goddess.”

132. Mao 138, “Hengmen” 衡門, in *Maoshi zhushu*, 7A.252: “Under the narrow gate, / We can rest and tarry” 衡門之下，可以棲遲. *Hengmen*, literally a gate with one horizontal beam, indicates a small abode. The virtuous ones find contentment there.

| | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 凭欄細雨瀟瀟夜 | Leaning against the balustrade, |
| | in a night of drizzling light rain, |
| 慷慨悲歌撫鏌鋌 | With a heroic song of lamentation, |
| | I stroke the Moya sword. |

The adversities Zhou Qiong suffered and her more dubious social station must account in part for her fascination with martial and masculine images, expressed in the following two poems (SG, 12.8b–9a, and SG, 12.9b–10a):

周瓊 秋懷

Zhou Qiong, “Autumn Thoughts” (lines 3–4)

| | |
|---------|---|
| 俠氣驅愁存傲骨 | The knightly spirit drives sorrow away, |
| | leaving only proud integrity. |
| 詩懷借酒出奇兵 | Poetic thoughts, fueled by wine, |
| | come out as wondrous military strategy. |

周瓊 感興

Zhou Qiong, “Roused by My Feelings”

| | |
|---------|--|
| 屠龍未就且浮遊 | I would fain slay the dragon, but fail, |
| | and for now must roam and wander! |
| 江澗飄蓬豈自由 | Amid rivers and seas, a windblown tumbleweed: |
| | is this self-decreed? |
| 華髮似因多難短 | My grey hair, from too many devastations, |
| | seems to become sparse. |
| 孤衷寧爲晚春愁 | A lone soul grieves, surely not for the sake |
| | of spring’s passing. |
| 私憐咏絮才偏拙 | In secret sympathy with the poet of willow catkins, |
| | I yet lack her talent. |
| 雅慕凌雲志欲休 | An intense yearning to soar to the clouds— |
| | but that will seems to wane. |
| 碧草綠波無限意 | Emerald grass, green waves, |
| | longing without end— |
| 從今莫上最高樓 | From now on, ascend not that highest tower. ¹³³ |

133. For Mao Xiang’s response to these poems, see *Chaomin shiji*, 5.9a–9b. Mao Xiang urges Zhou Qiong to regard her sojourn in his estate as “carefree” 自由 and “wandering with immortals” 仙游. He emphasizes their intellectual pleasures (“perusing books” 繙書 and “heartfelt discussions” 快論) but also toys with erotic undertones, and rumors of impropriety might have arisen (“Why must others ask about our choices?” 他人何必問行由).

To “roam and wander” (line 1) is the consequence of one’s failure to achieve a higher, more heroic goal (“slay the dragon”) rather than self-willed freedom, hence the comparison with “a windblown tumbleweed” in line 2. Lines 5 and 6 suggest that Xie Daoyun and Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 180–117 BCE) may be Zhou’s literary models,¹³⁴ but the real exemplar of political and historical engagement, as evinced by verbal echoes in lines 3 and 8, may be Du Fu, whose hair grows sparse from sorrow over the country’s sad fate, and whose grief is heightened by ascent to the tower, as noted in the earlier discussion of Xu Can and Li Yin.¹³⁵ Deng Hanyi comments: “In my opinion, Yubu [Zhou Qiong] has the aspiration and daring of Dong’ge, but exceeds the latter in literary refinement. To treat Yubu as a mere concubine would be a grave mistake” 私意以羽步得志膽似冬哥，而文雅過之。以妾媵相待誤矣 (SG, 12.9a).¹³⁶ Deng’s comment points to the urgency of Zhou Qiong’s rhetoric. For her to use a sword metaphor or model her syntax on Du Fu’s is not just a matter of literary choice; it determines whether she would be treated as “a mere concubine.” The image of the sword is ultimately about defining defiance and difference as women poets articulate their political concerns and social expectations.

The Rhetoric of Friendship

As noted above, Liu Rushi’s poems with martial imagery are often addressed to male friends, and Wu Qi’s image of “books and sword”

134. In *Shishuo xinyu* (2.71), Xie Daoyun famously compares snow to willow catkins. After reading (or listening to) Sima Xiangru’s poetic exposition “The Great One,” Emperor Wu of Han was greatly pleased: “He drifted away, soaring to the clouds, as if he were roaming between heaven and earth” (*Shiji*, 117.3063).

135. See, for example, “Chunwang,” “Denglou,” in *DS*, 4.263, 13.685. See n. 23, n. 123.

136. Dong’ge, also called Dong’er, was a singing girl in the household of Liu Zeqing 劉澤清 (d. 1649), one of the “four commanders north of the Yangzi River” during the Hongguang reign. After Beijing fell, Dong’er went to the capital on horseback to learn of the fate of Ming princes. In “The Aged Entertainer of Linhuai” (“Linhuai laoji xing” 臨淮老妓行, 1655) by Wu Weiye, Dong’er is celebrated as a kind of “female knight-errant” whose journey turns her into a witness and judge of the corrupt forces undermining the Ming dynasty. See Wai-ye Li, “History and Memory”; Tan Qian, *Zaolin zazhu*, pp. 289–90; Qian Qianyi, “Bingxu nanhuan” 丙戌南還 (*QMZ*, 4:3–5); the last five in a series of fourteen quatrains addressed to “the Wang lad” (Wang Zijia) are actually sent to Dong’ge (*QMZ*, 4:127–28).

recurs in poems she sent to female friends. During the Ming-Qing transition, masculine imagery in women's poetry shaped the rhetoric of friendship in new ways. Female friendship was augmented by conventionally male prototypes (e.g., the recluse, the scholar, the knight-errant), which sometimes defined the woman poet's self-image, as in the following exchange between Cai Yindu 蔡音度 (17th c.) and Wang Duanshu on the theme of reclusion:

蔡音度 上元後二日過訪丁司李夫人王玉映偕隱處

Cai Yindu, "Two Days after the First Full Moon, I Visited the Place
Where Prefect Ding and His Wife Wang Yuying [Duanshu]
Lived Together in Reclusion" (*MYJW*, 13.16a)

| | |
|-------|--|
| 禹穴探奇跡 | To the Cave of Yu I go, in quest of wondrous traces. |
| 鹿門身自閒 | At the Deer Gate, a person is naturally at ease. |
| 幸登高士徑 | Fortunate to ascend the recluse's lane, |
| 喜會玉真顏 | I joyfully encounter the immortal's face. |
| 憐我羞同蔡 | Pity me, ashamed to share the same name |
| | as Cai Yan, |
| 知君本是班 | Knowing that you are none other than Ban Zhao. |
| 甘心貧到骨 | In gladness you bear bone-grinding poverty: |
| 天道自循環 | The way of heaven is a cycle all its own. |

王端淑 上元後二日劉子端司李室蔡音度過訪以詩見贈索和

Wang Duanshu, "Two Days After the First Full Moon,
Prefect Liu Ziduan's Wife Cai Yindu Came for a Visit, and with the Gift
of a Poem Sought a Matching Composition" (*YHJ* 8.8b–9a)

| | |
|-------|--|
| 權變英雄事 | The power to wreak change is the province of heroes. |
| 才疏到老閒 | For those of little talent, reaching old age brings ease. |
| 雲孤吹夢月 | A cloud, all alone, is blown to the moon in a dream, |
| 塚壘若荒山 | The graves are piled high, like a deserted mountain. |
| 漢史原推蔡 | The Han history has always extolled Cai Yan, ¹³⁷ |
| 椒花愧數班 | Of the palace's glory, one is loath to count Ban Zhao. |
| 陋居棲病骨 | In a dilapidated abode, my sickly frame lingers on— |
| 孰敢望循環 | How dare I look to the cycle that is the way of heaven? |

137. Fan Ye gives a positive appraisal of Cai Yan in *Hou Hanshu*, 84.2800.

Cai Yindu uses the standard vocabulary and place names (e.g., Deer Gate) for praising eremitism.¹³⁸ The Cave of Yu, which conveniently refers to Wang's hometown Shanyin (Kuaiji), is the place where Yu, the legendary sage king and flood controller, died or, in another story, obtained precious texts (*Shiji*, 130.3293). The textual association leads up to the comparison of Wang Duanshu with Ban Zhao 班昭 (49–ca. 120), remembered as one of the creators of a female literary and scholarly tradition. Since Ban was also a historian and Wang Duanshu had the reputation of having “a historian's talent,” Cai Yindu professes some trepidation—the stern moralist would have considered Cai Yan's reputation as a poet tarnished by the “dishonor” of her detainment in the land of the Xiongnu.

Wang Duanshu gives Cai Yindu's polite and unremarkable poem a political twist. Since the power to bring about change is only the province of heroes, for mortals of lesser talents old age actually brings a kind of reconciliation (lines 1–2). In other words, “being at ease” is less equanimity than acceptance of defeat, heightened by a scene of desolation (lines 3–4), in contrast to Cai's corresponding lines describing a triumphant ascent. Reclusion in Wang's poem is dogged by sickness and anguish (lines 7–8). For both Wang and Cai, identification with the earlier exemplars is so complete that instead of protesting their unworthiness to be compared with Cai Yan or Ban Zhao, they are modest *on behalf* of their chosen models.

Women poets also invoke male models to project their own aspirations or to praise their friends' achievements. Wang Duanshu singles out Lu You 陸游 (1125–1210) as a poet with whom she feels special affinities, in part because of his political engagement and patriotic fervor. She commends the “knightly spirit” 俠氣 of her friend Hu Zixia 胡紫霞 (17th c.), whose zeal to right wrongs recalls Lord Xinling 信陵君 (d. 243 BCE) of the Warring States era.¹³⁹ She compares the woman poet and painter Huang Yuanjie 黃媛介 (ca. 1620–ca. 1669) with the calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (321–79) and the Song poet Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105) (*YHJ*, 8.13a). Another friend is implicitly elevated as Ni Zan's 倪瓚 (1301–74) equal (*YHJ*, 10.11b, lines 1–4):

138. The recluse Elder Pang withdrew to Deer Gate (*Hou Hanshu*, 83.2776–77).

139. *YHJ*, 11.7b. Hu Zixia was the second wife of Wu Guofu, who wrote one of the prefaces of *Red Chants*. She appears often in *Red Chants* as “Lady Wu” or “Mistress of Floating Kingfisher Studio” (“Fucui xuan zhuren” 浮翠軒主人); cf. *MYSW*, 12.4b–5b.

王端淑 閨伴王夫人惠倪集及詩扇賦答

Wang Duanshu, "My Friend Lady Wang Kindly Gave Me
Ni Zan's Collection and a Fan on Which She Inscribed Her Poem,
and I Composed a Poem in Reply"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 墨煙淡擁萬峰齊 | Clouds of ink faintly embrace myriad peaks of equal loftiness. |
| 志壯長空缺自提 | A heroic will soars across the sky, taking sword in hand. |
| 香簫未舒清氣遠 | The scented fan is not yet opened, but its pure spirit wafts afar. |
| 忠文初展白雲低 | With writings of integrity newly unfurled, white clouds bear lower. |

The famous painter Ni Zan had already withdrawn from public life in the last decades of the Mongol (Yuan) dynasty, but his eremitism had political implications during the Yuan-Ming transition, as he seemed unwilling to recognize the new Ming dynasty.¹⁴⁰ The calmness of his landscape paintings is thus built on a stirring "heroic will." The gift of Ni Zan's collection and Lady Wang's fan prompts an analogy (lines 3–4), which retrospectively implies that the first two lines may also apply to both Ni Zan and Lady Wang.

If elevating the rhetoric of female friendship sometimes entails "masculinization," it is because the cultural values accrued to certain types of discourses (military, political, historical, philosophical) are traditionally considered masculine, as reflected in the following poem by Wu Qi (SG, 12.2a, lines 7–13):

吳琪 山中早梅雪後喜閨友任歸見訪

Wu Qi, "Early Plums in the Mountains: After the Snow,
I Was Glad That My Friend Ren Gui Came for a Visit"

| | |
|-------|--|
| 一朝顧柴關 | The morning you looked upon the brushwood gate, |
| 白雲驚豔客 | White clouds were startled by the beautiful guest. |
| 澗松青若故 | Pines by the stream, green just like in former days, |
| 野人貧似昔 | Framed the person in the wilds, poor as ever. |

140. Yuan, the Mongol dynasty overturned by the Ming, was considered a legitimate object of loyalism in mid-seventeenth-century loyalist discourse, although there were also dissenting voices. See Zhao Yuan, *Ming Qing zhiji shidaiyu yanjiu*, pp. 275–76.

| | |
|-------|---|
| 午飯供新葵 | For noonday meal I offered a fresh pick |
| | of edible plants, |
| 晚香論周易 | In evening's scent, we discussed |
| | the <i>Book of Changes</i> . |

The *Book of Changes*, like the poet's self-designation as "the person in the wilds" 野人, marks a space beyond gender distinctions. The "beautiful guest" 艷客, admissible perhaps only for a female recluse but not her male counterpart, confirms the capaciousness of that realm.

Like Wu Qi, Zhou Qiong wrote about studying and commenting on historical texts, pointedly implying competition with male writers.¹⁴¹ In another poem Zhou Qiong portrays her friendship with Wu Qi as a common quest for a higher freedom based on shared artistic and political ideals, a quest that involves self-definition as a "female knights-errant" and a new type of recluse (SG, 12.8b):

周瓊 贈吳蕊仙

Zhou Qiong, "Sent to Wu Ruixian [Wu Qi]"

| | |
|---------|---|
| 纔驚落葉鎖花城 | Just after I was surprised by fallen leaves that lock the Flower City, |
| 一徑春風感落英 | A lane of spring wind makes me cognizant of petals falling. |
| 嶺上白雲朝入畫 | White clouds on the peaks enter the painting in the morning, |
| 樽前紅燭夜談兵 | Red candles by the wine flask illumine evening talks about the art of war. |
| 文人薄命非因妬 | Men of letters suffer ill fate, not because of heaven's jealousy. |
| 俠女狂歌更種情 | Women knights, singing wildly, sow ever-deeper passions. |
| 安得五湖同載去 | If only we could, on the Five Lakes, float away on the same boat |
| 好尋范蠡訴平生 | And seek Fan Li, telling him of a lifetime's thoughts and feelings. |

Chen Weisong emphasizes that this poem is a "true record" 實錄 because Wu Qi "especially loved grand strategy, and excelled in painting" 尤好大略, 精繪染 (FRJ, 26b). The poem projects a series of varying self-images, and the ever-appreciative Deng Hanyi exclaims: "Is Yubu

141. See "Qiuye dushu tong Wu Ruixian fu" 秋夜讀書同吳蕊仙賦, in SG, 12.8a.

[Zhou Qiong] an immortal, a knight-errant, a woman, or a scholar? I do not have the wherewithal to fathom it” 羽步是仙是俠是女子是書生，吾不得而測之 (SG, 12.8b). Zhou and Wu are shown to have mastered the refined 文 and martial 武 aspects of the cultural tradition (lines 3–4), hence their confidence as “female knights” to “sow ever-deeper passions” (line 6), in contrast to “men of letters” who can only blame heaven for their misfortunes (line 5). The term “ill fate” 薄命 in line 5, used much more commonly in connection with women than with men, confirms the gender role reversal. The two women poets are to define the eremitic ideal together “on the same boat,” seeking Fan Li to ask him about his escape from history. Zhou Qiong does not seek Fan Li as partner in reclusion or romantic object; instead he is an intellectual equal. Some of Zhou’s poems addressed to her male friends develop the same logic. Non-romantic friendships require her to project a masculine voice.

Confirming shared political sentiments also takes women poets beyond gender norms. It may have been Zhou Qiong’s close association with the *yimin* community in Jiangnan that prompted her to write a number of political poems lamenting the fall of the Ming, as in this poem she exchanged with Mao Xiang (SG, 12.8b–9a):

周瓊 水繪庵即事和冒巢民

Zhou Qiong, “On the Event of the Moment at the Painted-in-Water Retreat,
Matching Poems with Mao Chaomin”

| | |
|---------|--|
| 禾黍離離玉樹寒 | The millet bends low, the jade trees are cold. ¹⁴² |
| 故宮車輦夢中看 | Carriages from the former palace are seen only in dreams. |
| 凋傷始識人情異 | Seeing them wilted and wounded, only then do I know worldly ways differ. |
| 喪亂深知歷世難 | With loss and chaos comes a deep understanding of survival’s perils. |
| 絕塞烽沙雙目飽 | Sand-choked beacon fires at distant frontiers: our eyes have seen enough. |

142. Mao 65, “Shu li” 黍離, in *Maoshi 毛詩*, 4A.147–48. In this ode, the growing millet heightens the speaker’s sorrow, traditionally understood as brought on by the decline and fall of the royal house. For “jade trees,” see n. 52 above.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 首陽薇蕨幾人餐 | Wild ferns on Mount Shouyang: how many live by them? ¹⁴³ |
| 五湖烟月雖無恙 | Mist and moon on the Five Lakes, though little impaired, |
| 回首西風落照殘 | Fade in the remnant glow, as I turn my head to the west wind. ¹⁴⁴ |

Deng Hanyi comments, “Yubu lodges her meanings in unusual ways, well above the common crowd. That is why her poetry often has the air of reflective melancholy and rancorous passion” 羽步寄托不群，故其詩多沉鬱牢騷之氣 (SG, 12.9a). Lament for the fallen dynasty is combined with judgment of men who serve the new dynasty—not many can live by “wild ferns on Mount Shouyang” (line 6), that is, follow Boyi and Shuqi by adhering to their convictions while suffering privations. Mao Xiang’s garden estate, implicitly compared to the “Five Lakes” (line 7) where Fan Li escaped in the aftermath of the Wu-Yue conflict, is the political refuge for a socio-literary community of which Zhou Qiong may aspire to become an honorary member.

A poem sent to another *yimin*, Huang Yun 黃雲 (Xianchang), brings together personal and political lament. Like the poet Ruan Ji whose proud, untamed spirit could find no accommodation in his times, Zhou Qiong suffers a sense of disjunction (lines 1–2, 7–8) that deepens her sense of loss as she mourns the fall of the Ming (lines 3–6) (SG, 12.10a):

周瓊 次韻贈黃仙裳

Zhou Qiong, “Sent to Huang Xianchang, Matching His Rhyme”

| | |
|---------|--|
| 春去花飛流水東 | Spring departs, flowers fly away, water eastward flows. |
| 傷哉我亦類飄蓬 | Woe indeed—I too am like the windblown tumbleweed. |
| 淒涼舊事悲殘月 | For melancholy events past, the fading moon mourns, |
| 慷慨新詩託曉風 | New verses of heroic sweep seek refuge in the morning breeze. |
| 漠漠野桃陵谷異 | Among endless wild peach trees, mounds and vales are altered. |

143. For wild ferns on Mount Shouyang, see n. 43 above.

144. See chap. 1, n. 128, and chap. 2, pp. 111, 148, 161–62.

| | |
|---------|--|
| 依依江柳故園同 | Riverside willows are winsome, as in the garden of old. ¹⁴⁵ |
| 踈狂傲世人應棄 | Careless, wild, world-defying, it is no surprise that I am forsaken: |
| 阮籍長歌崎路窮 | Ruan Ji, with drawn-out songs, wept where forking paths ended. ¹⁴⁶ |

Deng Hanyi comments: “Yubu truly has a proud, unencumbered spirit. She is not merely using empty words” 羽步實有一段簡傲之氣，非僅托之空言 (SG, 12.10a).

In another series of exchange poems, Zhou addresses nine quatrains to Deng Hanyi, claiming him as a kindred spirit who could share her political judgment and appreciate her hopes and fears (SG, 12.10a–11b):

周瓊 將歸江南次答鄧孝威見贈其一

Zhou Qiong, “About to Return to Jiangnan, I Reply to Deng Xiaowei’s
[Deng Hanyi] Gift of Poems, Using His Rhymes,” first quatrain

| | |
|---------|--|
| 揚袂狂歌歸去來 | Waving my sleeves, with songs unbound, I return home. |
| 五湖烟月冷蘇臺 | The mist and moon over Five Lakes chill the Jiangsu Terrace. |
| 遙憐竹屋分題處 | From afar, I cherish the bamboo lodge, where we decide on rhymes— |
| 花落重門草似苔 | With its fallen blossoms, closed gates, and grass like moss. |

The coldness of Jiangsu terrace is sometimes used in *yimin* poetry to evoke the sense of desolation in post-conquest Jiangnan. As noted in chapter 1, Deng Hanyi was closely associated with that community. The quatrain might have been meant to express a shared lament. In the

145. Both lines 5 and 6 allude to poems about mutability and cataclysmic political changes. See Mao 193, “Shiyue zhi jiao” 十月之交, in *Maoshi zhushu*, 12B.405–9: “The high banks became valleys, / Deep valleys became mounds” 高岸爲谷，深谷爲陵. A scribe in *Zuo zhuan* cites these lines to explain the rise and fall of ruling houses (Zhao 32.4, p. 1520). For Yu Xin’s lines on the willows, see chap. 1, pp. 63–64.

146. Zhou Qiong is conflating two allusions. The Warring States thinker Yang Zhu is said to regret his errors and weep at forking paths (*Xunzi jishi*, 11.247). Without directing his carriage, the poet Ruan Ji would come to the end of a road and cry bitterly (*Jinshu*, 49.1361). Ruan Ji also writes about Yang Zhu in “Yonghuai” (LQL, 1:500). Here the image conveys defiance rather than regret.

third quatrain of the series, Zhou Qiong claims to rise above other people's opinions of her by seeking self-sufficiency in religion. She implies that her fate of being misunderstood is no different from generations of perverse judgments blaming women for the fall of kingdoms (SG, 12.10a–11b):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 懶向人間道可憐 | I cannot bother to tell my piteous fate to the world of men, for whom |
| 古來傾國盡嬋娟 | Lovely women have, since antiquity, always toppled kingdoms. |
| 花飛不煮胡麻飯 | Amidst flying flowers, none cooks the sesame rice promising immortality, |
| 靜裏閒參柏子禪 | As in deep quiet, I find rest in Pine Seeds Meditation. ¹⁴⁷ |

The poet rejects the romantic-erotic connotations of the goddess who lures men to ruin in many literary quests (line 3)—in some stories a goddess cooks the “sesame rice” to entice Ruan Zhao¹⁴⁸—and turns instead to the true detachment achieved by Buddhist meditation (line 4). No such detachment can be easily sustained, as is evident in the fifth quatrain in the same series (SG, 12.10b):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 高樓獨坐易傷神 | Sitting alone in the high tower, it is easy to suffer grief of spirit. |
| 莫漫悲歌生不辰 | Do not, all too lightly, let the song of lament mourn ill fate. |
| 一首詩成千日謗 | One poem composed brings a thousand days of slander, |
| 憐才此地卻無人 | But as for love of talent, in this place there is no one. |

Instead of mourning lost love, a recurrent topic in women's poetry, Zhou Qiong laments how her poetry has been misread. Deng implicitly distinguishes himself from the undiscerning critics: “Since the slanderers

147. Incense made from pine seeds was often used in Chan meditation.

148. See Liu Yiqing, *Youming lu*, pp. 697–98. In this story, Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao meet two goddesses in Tiantai Mountain and sojourn as their mates for half a year, only to find that seven generations have passed when they return to the human world. Cf. Li Yin, “Zeng nüguan” 贈女冠: “Playing the flute under the peach tree and the bright moon, / Why would she deign to fool the Ruan lad by cooking sesame rice?” 碧桃花底吹明月，肯煮胡麻賺阮郎 (ZXX, p. 16).

are numerous, those who appreciate her talents are naturally few” 謗者既多，憐者自少 (SG, 12.10b). Zhou recasts calumny from others into her disdain for undeserving men in the sixth quatrain (SG, 12.10b):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 芳草西園逐恨增 | In the West Garden of fragrant grass, exile deepens resentment. |
| 夜深讀史乞餘燈 | Perusing the histories as night deepens, I beg for the last lamplight. |
| 少年裘馬多輕薄 | Youths with their cloaks and horses, habitually frivolous, |
| 盡日春風醉五陵 | Spend days in the spring breeze, drunk among the Five Mounds. |

Zhou Qiong's taking on a masculine self-image (in the image of the poet studying history) is also implicit indictment of effete and ineffective men. Deng Hanyi comments: “In her eyes she finds them totally unbearable” 眼中儘耐不得 (SG, 12.10b).

Zhou also leaves a poem about consorting with Buddhist monks (SG, 12.9a), which prompts Deng to applaud her unconventionality.¹⁴⁹ As mentioned above, Zhou's somewhat unstable social role underlines her concern with the possibilities and boundaries of friendship between men and women. As we shall see in chapter 4, the aura of late Ming courtesan culture derives in part from intriguing ties of friendship between the literati and courtesans, the kind of affinities that allow a courtesan to address herself or be addressed in male or gender-neutral terms like *xiong* 兄 (older kin) or *di* 弟 (younger kin).¹⁵⁰

The phenomenon of non-romantic male-female friendship seems to have been pervasive enough to cross social lines. According to Deng Hanyi, Wang Duanshu too “consorted with famous literati from all over, and she did not mind at all putting brush to paper in front of guests, or engaging with them in combative discussions in the same hall” 與四方名流相倡和，對客揮毫，同堂角塵，所不吝也 (SG, 12.37b). In “The Biography of the Wine-Obsessed Free Man” (“Jiupi sanren zhuan”

149. This kind of social relationship is often depicted as licentious in vernacular fiction and drama.

150. Thus Chen Liang addresses Gu Mei as *Mei xiong* 眉兄，媚兄 (*Tongren ji*, j. 4), and Liu Rushi refers to herself as *di* in her letters to Wang Ruqian 汪汝謙 (1577–1655) (LRSJ, pp. 84–85). *Xiong* and *di* are usually reserved for brothers and male friends, but can also more broadly include sisters and female friends 女兄，女弟.

酒癖散人傳, YHJ, 20.9b–10b), Wang Duanshu chronicles her friendship with a man who, in the tradition of feigning madness as political protest, laments the fallen Ming by living in extreme poverty and rejecting all social duties. Widmer identifies him as her husband Ding Zhao-sheng,¹⁵¹ but it is interesting that Wang should suppress his name and cast her relationship with him as the bonds of friendship. Wang claims to not know much about him, although she “day and night formed a deep bond with him through wine and poetry” 朝夕與之締詩酒交. She was one of his “friends in poetry” 詩友, just like other men who became his “friend in Chan meditation” 禪友, “friend in wine” 酒友, or “friend in historical discussion” 論史友. In thus celebrating the erasure of his identity and the transcendence of gender boundaries in friendship, Wang confirms his image as a loyalist as well as her place in the loyalist community.

Wang Duanshu wrote some of her most stirring political poems in exchanges with male poets, as in the following example (Zou Yi, *Shiyuan ba mingjia ji*, “Yuying,” 24b–25a):¹⁵²

王端淑 葉聖野閱予新草徵和二首其一

Wang Duanshu, “Ye Shengye, Having Read My Recent Works,
Sought Matching Poems,” first of two poems

| | |
|---------|--|
| 十年感慨寄高秋 | Ten years of searing emotions seek refuge in autumn, |
| 潦倒中原委亂楸 | As we, thwarted in the land, take to a confusion of catalpas. |
| 正氣歌存王室恨 | The “Righteous Song” keeps alive the sorrows of the royal house. |
| 北哀賦載故陵愁 | Your “Northern Lament” conveys the grief of old grave mounds. |
| 平臺士馬衣冠異 | For the men at Level Terrace, caps and gowns have changed. ¹⁵³ |
| 御水胡沙寶籍浮 | From imperial moat to barbarians sands, precious texts float away. |

151. See Widmer, “Selected Short Works.”

152. Cf. “Du Wumen Ye Shengye Bei ai fu” 讀吳門葉聖野北哀賦, in *MYSW*, 42.13a, a politically more innocuous version of the second poem, also anthologized in Zou Yi’s *Shiyuan ba mingjia ji*.

153. Level Terrace is associated with the palace of Prince Liang of Han (*Shiji*, 58.2083).

帑上淋漓知飲血 On ink-splashed paper, I know of blood
 drunk in revenge—
 忠篇珍重小齋頭 Your composition of loyalty
 will be treasured in my small studio.

In his anthology of *yimin* poetry, Zhuo Erkan 卓爾堪 (ca. 1653–after 1712) describes the poetry of Ye Xiang 葉襄 (cognomen Shengye 聖野, ca. 1610–55) as a vision of “ghosts wailing and flames of war burning, heaven laid waste and earth boiling” 鬼哭燹熾，天荒地沸.¹⁵⁴ His “Poetic Exposition of Northern Lament” is no longer extant, but it must have been a loyalist dirge that dwells on the Ming imperial grave mounds (line 4) and urges resistance and vengeance (line 7). (The latter image is repeated in the last two lines of Wang’s second poem: “I finished reading ‘Northern Lament’ and, lamenting, read again: / Who will be honored as lord, drinking from the barbarian’s skull?” 讀竟北哀哀復讀，封侯誰飲月氏頭。) Wang expresses admiration for Ye’s “Northern Lament” by juxtaposing it with the “Righteous Song” (“Zhengqi ge” 正氣歌) by Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236–83), the Southern Song hero who fought the Mongols and died a martyr. Amid devastation and capitulation (lines 5–6), writing may be the last line of resistance. The title suggests that Ye Xiang, recognizing Wang as a kindred spirit, must have “sought matching poems” by writing a poem praising Wang’s recent works.

Other poems put historical judgment in the context of social interactions and deliberate the meaning of failure (Zou Yi, *Shiyuan ba mingjia ji*, “Yuying,” 26a–26b):

王端淑 次邗江李若金孝廉韻其二
 Wang Duanshu, “To the Rhyme of Poems by Li Ruojin,
 xiaolian of Hanjiang,” second poem

閒評史斷論英雄 Taking our time with historical debates,
 we discourse on heroes:
 翰墨輕傳國士逢 Stories about encountering worthy men
 are too easily passed on.

154. Zhuo Erkan, *Ming yimin shi*, p. 613. Cf. Qian Qianyi, “Ye Shengye shi xu” 葉聖野詩序 (*QMZ*, 5:818–19).

| | |
|---------|---|
| 青棘銅駝知國變 | Bronze camels among green brambles tell of the country's calamity, |
| 白虹易水恨途窮 | A white rainbow over River Yi signals regret for the path's end. ¹⁵⁵ |
| 寒山瘞鶴餘悲在 | For the crane entombed in a cold mountain, lingering sorrow remains. |
| 古澗埋鉤剩穴空 | The sword is buried in the ancient stream, leaving an empty cave. ¹⁵⁶ |
| 鏡裏半僧羞短髮 | In the mirror, the half-monk is shamed by his sparse hair— |
| 寂寥竟日抱焦桐 | Solitary, all day long, he embraces the lute of burnt paulownia. |

Wang effortlessly claims her place in the “discourse on heroes,” possibly referring to an actual gathering in which she discussed historical exemplars with male friends. Historical texts purvey stories of recognizing valor, but those accounts of vindication may be misleading. The “worthy men of the realm” 國士 (line 2) could not be found or could not meet with recognition; the trope of recognition in any case concerns individuals, who are helpless in a historical cataclysm. Like Jing Ke confronting a portent of failure at River Yi (*Shiji*, 83. 2470) or Ruan Ji coming to “the path’s end” (*Jinshu*, 49.1361), individuals cannot turn the tide and can only recognize failure (lines 3–6). For the man shamed by his own image (“half-monk” refers to the Manchu hairstyle), consolation may be sought in the “lute of burnt paulownia,” for which the scar of surviving destruction is also proof of one’s worth. Legend has it that when Cai Yong heard a crackling sound as a piece of paulownia wood from Wu was being burnt, he recognized its worth, rescued it from the fire, and turned it into the famous “Burnt Tail Lute” 焦尾琴 (*Hou Hanshu*, 60B.2004).

155. For bronze camels, see p. 127. The white rainbow at River Yi is said to portend Jing Ke’s failure (*Shiji*, 83.2470).

156. The death of the crane, a symbol of longevity and immortality, brings special pathos. Writings about it convey “lingering sorrow”: “Inscription on the Entombment of the Crane” (“Yihe ming” 瘞鶴銘) in Jiaoshan was a famous piece of calligraphy questionably attributed to Wang Xizhi (Tao Zongyi, *Nancun chuo geng lu*, 14.171). The sword (*gou* refers to the Wugou sword) is no longer hidden in the cave (awaiting future opportunities) but lost forever.

Wang Duanshu thus sometimes uses a masculine voice to empathize with the dilemmas and failures of men, especially when she writes on behalf of her husband, as in the second half of “In the Voice of Ruizi [Ding Zhaosheng]” (YHJ, 10.3b–4a, lines 5–8):

王端淑 代睿子次新安曹文季進士龍山偶社韻

Wang Duanshu, “In the Voice of Ruizi, Matching the Rhyme of ‘Oushe of Dragon Mountain’ by Cao Wenji, *jinshe* of Xin’an”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 葛袍素負山川韻 | My hempen robes have long failed the music of mountains and rivers. |
| 石研光分牛斗寒 | The light from my ink stone rivals the cold brilliance of the stars. |
| 寂寞新亭應有淚 | For lonely desolation at the New Pavilion, one must shed tears. |
| 楚囚無髮愧南冠 | The Chu prisoner, with no hair, is shamed by his southern cap. |

Indifference to the beauty of nature (line 5) means that the hempen robe of the recluse is donned with reluctance. This is someone who still wants to act in the world and, failing action, has turned to writing (line 6). Unappeased anguish escapes as chilling “light from the ink stone,” so powerful that even the Bovine (Niu 牛) and Ladle (Dou 斗) Asterisms—which according to the theory of aetherial-terrestrial correspondence 分野 governed the ancient Wu and Yue, where Wang Duanshu was—seem to be affected. In *Jin History*, it is precious swords whose brilliance penetrates the spheres and creates a purple aura around the Bovine and Ladle Asterisms (*Jinshu*, 36.1075). Here the ink stone replaces the sword, in recognition of words as compensatory consolation when action fails. As mentioned above, Jin aristocrats shed tears at New Pavilion to lament conquest and exile. Unlike in the fourth century, there is no rump court that holds forth hope of recovering sovereignty—compared to Eastern Jin aristocrats, the grief of Ming loyalists can only be deeper. They are not even worthy to be “Chu prisoners,” whom Wang Dao mentions with contempt in his rousing speech. With their half-shaven pate, the “southern cap” of Chu, a reference to Ming style caps pervasive in the “cap and gown” discourse of the times, can only seem a reproach. The illusion of writing’s power is thus tempered by shame and muted despair.

Gender Discontent

While empathizing with men, women poets also expressed discontent with a woman's lot. Thus Zhou Qiong merges political lament with scorn for the supposedly feminine art of physical adornment in the second quatrain of a series addressed to Deng Hanyi (*SG*, 12.10a):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 憎煞從來傅粉粧 | Unbearable indeed, as always, is the powder of adornment. |
| 素琴時伴古詩囊 | Plain lute keeps constant company with the sachet for ancient poems. |
| 傷心多少繁華地 | I grieve that so much of the realm of glory and splendor |
| 只有殘陽麋鹿場 | Is reduced to grounds overrun by deer in the setting sun. |

Discontent with feminine adornment (line 1) and rejection of sensual indulgence as implied by her preference for plain lute and ancient poetry (line 2)—which in other poems by Zhou Qiong cited above are more a function of protest and personal longing for freedom and fulfillment—are here linked to mourning for the fallen dynasty (lines 3–4). She seems to suggest that her abjuration of adornment is analogous with the devastation of the land.

Some of the poems she addresses to male friends also imply that her “feminine side” is an impediment to a friendship based on true appreciation of her aspirations (*SG*, 12.8a):

周瓊 贈冒巢民

Zhou Qiong, “Sent to Mao Chaomin [Mao Xiang]”

| | |
|---------|--|
| 天涯浪跡幾年春 | My traces have been adrift at world's edge for years on end. |
| 此日何期青眼頻 | Little did I expect, on this day, your unwavering regard. |
| 贈藥爲憐司馬病 | You give the gift of medicine, pitying one as sickly as Sima Xiangru. |
| 解衣應念少陵貧 | Offering your robe, you must feel for her, the impoverished Du Fu. |
| 慙非駿骨逢知己 | Ashamed of being no glorious steed meeting with its kindred spirit, |
| 羞把蛾眉奉路人 | I am loath to offer a woman's art to please an indifferent world. |

| | |
|---------|---|
| 聽雨不堪孤館夜 | Listen to the rain: unbearable is the night in the lonely inn. |
| 感今追昔倍沾巾 | Moved by the present, tracing the past, my tears redouble. |

Zhou Qiong chooses the common allusions about recognizing worth to express her gratitude to Mao Xiang—“[being shown] the dark pupil of the eye” (*qingyan*, here translated as “regard,” line 2); the glorious steed that would be recognized only by the horse connoisseur Bole (line 5).¹⁵⁷ Her models of choice are famous male poets (lines 3–4). Again, “a woman’s art” (line 6) suggests a demeaning alternative.¹⁵⁸

Another poem sent to Zhang Youxue 張幼學 (Cichen 詞臣) (1646 *jinsu*) implies that feminine adornment is a betrayal of her “knightly spirit” (*SG*, 12.9a):

周瓊 次韻答張詞臣

Zhou Qiong, “Reply to Zhang Cichen,
Matching His Rhyme”

| | |
|---------|--|
| 莫道天涯不感傷 | Do not say, at world’s edge, that there is no sorrow: |
| 十年間恨付蒼茫 | Ten years of idle regrets are given to endless heaven and earth. |
| 每憐俠骨慚紅粉 | Cherishing the knightly spirit, I am shamed by a woman’s lot. |
| 肯學蛾眉理豔粧 | Why deign to learn her art, and contrive lovely adornment? |
| 風度曲欄間種竹 | A breeze wafts through winding rails, leisurely I plant bamboo. |
| 花迷小檻靜焚香 | Flowers obscure the narrow threshold as incense burns in silence. |
| 波瀾世路無青眼 | On these troubled roads, none offers proper regard— |
| 誰識人間我獨狂 | Who can recognize my lonely defiance in the human realm? |

157. Ruan Ji showed “the white of his eyes” to the people he disdained and “the dark pupils” to the people he respected (*Jinsu*, 49.1361). In parables about recognizing talent, a rare horse will suffer oblivion but for the discernment of the connoisseur Bole; see *Zhanguo ce*, 17.573; *Huainan honglie jijie*, 12.394–96; Han Yu, “Za shuo” 雜說, *Han Yu xuanji*, pp. 253–54.

158. Deng Hanyi comments: “She has, against all odds, compared herself to Sima Xiangru and Du Fu. Why would the world still regard Yubu as a mere woman!” 居然以司馬少陵自況矣，世奈何猶以紅粉目羽步哉 (*SG*, 12.8a).

A personal protest (against her own fate as concubine or courtesan) becomes a categorical proclamation against feminine adornment in the second couplet. Gestures suggesting meditative self-cultivation (lines 5–6) define the poet's ideal of independence, self-sufficiency, and mastery of the refinements of literati culture.¹⁵⁹

The combination of masculine self-image, personal lament, and political engagement in Zhou Qiong's poetry is explicitly articulated as gender discontent in some song lyrics by Gu Zhenli, who was the older sister of the poet Gu Zhenguan. Whatever little we know about her life is derived from a handful of poems from anthologies and 160 surviving song lyrics included in *Complete Qing Song Lyrics* (*Quan Qing ci*, 全清詞).¹⁶⁰ Of her nine poems anthologized in *Complementary Canon* (MYSW, 18.9a–11b), five are distinctly political, couched in the language of loyalist lament. Wang Duanshu seemed not to have known Gu's identity when she listed these poems under her sobriquet "The One Who Fled Qin" 避秦人. The name alludes to the inhabitants of Tao Qian's 陶潛 (365–427) Peach Blossom Spring, who fled Qin tyranny and thus escaped history. Yun Zhu includes seven of Gu's poems in *Correct Beginnings* (2.12b–14a) under her cognomen Gu Wenwan 顧文婉, but they all deal with conventional boudoir themes. (Only one quatrain appears in both anthologies.) Indeed, linking Gu with her typically feminine poems seems to be the prevailing preference of anthologists—Gu's song lyrics included in the early Qing anthology *Myriad Fragrance* (*Zhongxiang ci* 眾香詞) also feature boudoir themes, as do the three cited by Chen Weisong in *Writing Women* (FRJ, 31a–31b).

The best example of the fusion of gender discontent and engagement with the contemporary crisis in Gu's poetry is probably the following song lyric (QQC, 7:3761):

159. Deng Hanyi comments: "This is women's poetry, yet it possesses a tragic, heroic pathos. She is indeed no ordinary woman" 閨媛詩卻有一種悲歌慷慨之氣，固非尋常女流 (SG, 12.9a).

160. Xu Naichang's late-Qing anthology includes Gu's collection, *Qixiang ge ji*, with 134 song lyrics. The editors of *Quan Qing ci* glean other extant pieces from anthologies. For studies of Gu, see See Deng Hongmei, *Nüxing cishi*, pp. 257–70; Zhao Xuepei, *Mingmo Qingchu nü ciren yanjiu*, pp. 257–96; Xiaorong Li, *Women's Poetry of Late Imperial China*, pp. 86–114.

顧貞立 滿江紅。楚黃署中聞警

Gu Zhenli, "Hearing of the Alarm at the Chuhuang Station,"
to the tune "Man jiang hong"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 僕本恨人 | I have always been one burdened by sorrow. |
| 那禁得 | How to bear then— |
| 悲哉秋氣 | Woe indeed—the spirit of autumn, |
| 恰又是 | Especially when it is also |
| 將歸送別 | The time to return and send off another, |
| 登山臨水 | Climbing mountains and facing the water. |
| 一派角聲煙靄外 | One sweep of horn music beyond the mist and clouds, |
| 數行雁字波光裡 | Several rows of geese forming words in the shimmer of waves. |
| 試凭高 | I try to lean over the heights |
| 覓取舊妝樓 | To look for the former tower of adornment— |
| 誰同倚 | But who will stand by me? |
| 鄉夢遠 | The homeland of dreams is far off, |
| 書迢遞 | Letters are so distant. |
| 人半載 | I have, for half a year, |
| 辭家矣 | Taken leave of home. |
| 嘆吳頭楚尾 | I sigh that, here where the head of Wu meets the end of Chu, ¹⁶¹ |
| 儵然孤寄 | In desolate freedom my solitude lodges. |
| 江上空憐商女曲 | By the River, vain is my pity for the singing girl's oblivious song, |
| 閨中漫灑神州淚 | In the boudoir, for naught the tears I shed for the country. |
| 算綈綦 | Consider: the one in white clothes and grey scarf— |
| 何必讓男兒 | Why must she be lesser than men? |
| 天應忌 | It has to be the jealousy of heaven. |

The song lyric begins with the polite male self-designation *pu* 僕 (literally servant, here translated as "I"). The first line alludes to Jiang Yan's "Poetic Exposition on Sorrow," which enumerates examples of regrets and sorrows through the ages. The next few lines are derived from the "Nine Disquisitions" attributed to Song Yu: "Woe indeed—the spirit of autumn" 悲哉秋之爲氣也, "Climbing mountains and facing waters, sending off those about to return" 登山臨水送將歸 (*Chuci jizhu*,

161. This refers to Yuzhang in Jiangxi (*Fangyu shenglan*, cited in *QMZ*, 5:379).

p. 119).¹⁶² In “Nine Disquisitions,” following the diction of *Encountering Sorrow*, the poet laments mutability, and more specifically that talents and integrity are not recognized by a world enmeshed in inverted values. Through these allusions, Gu Zhenli moves beyond the standard feminine diction of longing to claim political and universal significance for her lamentation. “Horn music” (line 7) is the sound of battle; serving as a reminder that lament draws its power and pathos from deep engagement with the contemporary crisis. (Dated to the early 1640s, this song lyric was written when chaos was engulfing the Ming dynasty.)

The second stanza delineates the immediate context of the composition. In the coda to a song lyric to the tune “Man ting fang” 滿庭芳, dated to 1685, Gu Zhenli describes her early activities as a poet when she was in Chuhuang in 1640.¹⁶³ Assuming that the song lyric to the tune “Man jiang hong” was written in that period, Gu would have been a young wife newly married to Hou Jin, who worked as a minor official in Chuhuang. The image of solitude at once desolate and liberating (line 17) suggests that her marriage was unhappy.¹⁶⁴ Further, personal unhappiness seems to merge with her sense of helplessness (“vain” 空, “for naught” 漫) as she faces calamitous national crisis (lines 18–19). In Du Mu’s famous quatrain “Moored alongside Qinhuai” (“Bo Qinhuai” 泊秦淮), “The singing girl, oblivious to the sorrow of losing one’s country, / Still sings, across the River, ‘Flowers in the Rear Courtyard’” 商女不知亡國恨，隔江猶唱後庭花 (*Fanchuan wenji*, 4.70). The song, identified with the court of the last Chen ruler (553–604, r. 583–89), symbolizes sensual indulgence and political irresponsibility. The contrast between Du Mu’s own all-too-keen awareness of political changes and the singing girl’s blithe indifference is in part gender-based. Here we have one woman mourning the obliviousness of another. Further, while Du Mu, as one who frequents the pleasure quarters of Qinhuai, is himself implicated in the world of heedless pleasures, Gu Zhenli in the boudoir

162. For Jiang Yan and Song Yu, see chap. 1, pp. 64, 88–90.

163. Gu Zhenli, *Qixiang ge ci*, 2.3a, in Xu Naichang, *Xiao tanluan shi huikue guixiu ci*. The version in *QQC* (7:3775) does not include the postscript.

164. Textual evidence suggests that Gu’s marriage was unhappy. The few song lyrics addressed to her husband Hou Jin are conventional, with one exception in which Gu depicts her sorrow with heroic images. She addressed many more song lyrics to her brother, female friends, and relatives.

閨中 is aloof from such associations. (It is also possible to read line 18 as referring to Du Mu, who is then juxtaposed with the poet in line 19.) The contrast between the smallness of her world and the depth of her feelings is expressed in the juxtaposition of “boudoir” and “sacred realm” (神州, here translated as “country”) (line 19)—it is a marker of helplessness and implicit protest.

The lyric concludes with a resounding statement of gender discontent: it must be the jealous heaven that constrains a woman’s existence and decrees her subordination to men. “White clothes and grey scarf” describes the beloved in a poem from the *Classic of Poetry*.¹⁶⁵ The description is neutral enough to have invited different interpretations: while most commentaries associate it with the beloved lady, some have linked it to the male speaker. In representing herself thus, Gu Zhenli may be deliberately refusing the ornate, sensuous diction of female adornment. Historical-political engagement and gender discontent sustain and reinforce each other in this song lyric. The beginning appropriation of male poets’ lamentation is an enabling act that allows the lyric to unfold. That gesture is finally justified by the logic of “universalization”—the female perspective makes for heightened perception of vain endeavors in the throes of national crisis by merging personal disappointment with political lament.

The following examples have no explicit political references but further elaborate the poet’s discontent with gender roles (*QQC*, 7:3761).

顧貞立 沁園春

Gu Zhenli, to the tune “Qin yuan chun”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 掠鬢梳鬟 | Hair combed and coiffed, |
| 弓鞋窄袖 | Tiny bow shoes and narrow sleeves— |
| 不慣從來 | Habit has never made them familiar. |
| 但經營料理 | But to manage and array |
| 茶鐺茗碗 | Vessels for brewing tea, tea leaves in bowls, |
| 親供灑掃 | To clean and sweep, with personal devotion— |
| 職分當該 | These are my very charge and proper duties. |
| 還謝天公深有意 | Yet I must still thank heaven for its deeper intentions, |
| 便生就 | That I was born with |

165. Mao 93, “Chu qi dongmen” 出其東門, in *Maoshi zhushu*, 4D.180–82.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 粗疏邱壑才 | A careless, uncouth talent fit to grace hills and streams. |
| 將衰矣 | Decline is nigh— |
| 斜陽日影 | The reflection of the setting sun |
| 短景頻催 | Hastens evermore the end of brief light. |
| 閒身不妨多病 | An idle body little troubled by many bouts of illness: |
| 且憑他位置 | Just let me be placed |
| 廢苑荒臺 | In the garden of ruins, by the abandoned terrace. |
| 伴香濃琴靜 | Companion to dense incense aroma and the calm lute, |
| 百城南面 | I lord it over a hundred cities |
| 青編滿架 | With shelves filled with blue bound books |
| 湘軸成堆 | And piles of pale yellow scrolls. |
| 一縷茶煙和字煮 | One wisp of smoke arises from the tea brewed with words. |
| 只數點 | There are only several specks |
| 秋花手自栽 | Of autumn flowers, planted by my own hands. |
| 都休也 | Let all be gone— |
| 蠅頭蝸角 | Fame and fortune—no more than a fly's head and a snail's tentacle— |
| 於我何哉 | What are they to me? |

Gu Zhenli begins with a categorical protest in the first three lines. Feminine adornment and accoutrements become physical emblems of the unbearable constraints on a woman's existence. The subsequent affirmation of domestic duties (lines 4–7) seems rueful and ironic, especially since it is followed by her proud declaration of having been endowed with “a careless, uncouth talent fit to grace hills and streams” (line 10). Being “uncouth” 粗疏 signifies an independent spirit. In another song lyric describing a bout of drinking and melancholy, she writes: “With a proud whistle, I have long been a companion of the declining phoenix, / Uncouth, I am no different from the stubborn immortal” 嘯傲久成衰鳳侶，粗疏好與頑仙似 (*QQC*, 7:3763).¹⁶⁶ The

166. “The declining phoenix” refers to the misunderstood and unappreciated sage (*Analekts* 18.5). In a similar strain, Gu writes: “I fear I have been careless my whole life, / And cannot learn calligraphy in the ‘Pinning Flowers in the Coiffure’ style” 疏略愧平生，不學簪花格字 (to the tune “Ru meng ling” 如夢令, in *QQC*, 7:3776). The “Pinning Flowers in the Coiffure” style 簪花格 is supposed to be a calligraphic style proper for women.

expression “hills and streams” alludes to an anecdote from *A New Account of Tales of the World* (*Shishuo xinyu*, 7.19): Emperor Ming of Jin (299–325, r. 322–24) asks Xie Kun 謝琨 (280–323) how Xie compares to the general and minister Yu Liang 庾亮 (289–340). Xie Kun, an unconventional character who defies social norms,¹⁶⁷ replies, “As for being attired in ceremonial robes in the temple and the hall, making the numerous officials abide by the rules, I do not compare to Liang. As for enjoying a hill or a stream, I consider myself superior” 端委廟堂，使百僚準則，臣不如亮。一丘一壑，自謂過之。 This comes to be accepted wisdom in the tradition: seeking freedom of spirit in nature is a valid, and in some cases superior, alternative to engagement with socio-political reality. The implied choice here, however, is not between officialdom and reclusion, but between a woman’s familial, domestic duties and freedom. To be “wild” 狂 in the style of a Wei-Jin “gentleman of distinction” 名士 was not a model of character available to women of Gu’s time.¹⁶⁸ To “manage and array” 經營料理 requires careful, painstaking attention 細心, but heaven, perhaps with the “deeper intention” 深有意 of allowing her to imagine and articulate escape, has given her a “careless, uncouth” nature.

In poems employing feminine diction, the passage of time is registered in terms of declining beauty and the fear of abandonment. Here impending decline and “the end of brief light” (lines 12–14) echo grander aspirations and anxieties in lines about political, historical, and philosophical visions from the *Analects* and the poetry of Du Fu and Xin Qiji.¹⁶⁹ Gu Zhenli further implies that “the garden of ruins and the abandoned terrace” (line 17), sometimes presented as emblems of dynastic

167. Xie Kun is said to admire the sages of the Bamboo Grove; he “let his hair flow loose, stripped himself naked, and sat with his legs spread out” 散首披髮，裸袒箕踞。 During one of his escapades, a neighbor girl broke two of his teeth, and a contemporary ditty went, “For license no end, / his teeth did bend” 任達不已，幼興折齒。 See Deng Can, *Jin ji*, cited in *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, p. 280.

168. Perhaps this is why women writers aspire to it. See, for example, Wu Zao’s famous play *False Reflection* (*Qiaoying* 喬影).

169. *Analects* 7.5: “The Master said, ‘Extreme indeed is my decline! Long have I not dreamed of the Duke of Zhou’ 子曰。甚矣吾衰也。久矣吾不復夢見周公; Xin Qiji: “Extreme indeed is my decline!” 甚矣吾衰矣 (to the tune “He xinlang” 賀新郎, *QSC*, 3:1915); Du Fu, “Geye” 閣夜: “As the year draws to a close, sun and moon hasten the end of brief light” 歲暮陰陽催短景 (*DS*, 18.909).

collapse, supply the fitting context for her aging self (amounting almost to a kind of objective correlative). Idleness and sickliness are gestures lifting the poet above mundane cares and toil. She is claiming instead an alternative literary-aesthetic space with all the ornaments of literati culture—incense, lute, and, above all, books and scrolls. In the sixth century, the recluse Li Mi 李謐 (484–515) famously declared, “If a man embraces ten thousand scrolls of book, why does he need to recourse to facing south and presiding over a hundred cities?” 丈夫擁書萬卷，何假南面百城 (*Beishi*, 33.1231).¹⁷⁰ A wisp of smoke to be brewed or “cooked” 煮 with words (line 22) recalls a line by the precocious late Ming woman poet Ye Xiaoluan 葉小鸞 (1616–32), “One wisp of smoke arises from the tea brewed with dreams” 一縷茶煙和夢煮.¹⁷¹ The earlier poet’s invocation of the realm of dreams and immortals is here self-consciously linked to an alternative sphere of existence conjured by words. Indeed, literary appreciation and poetic judgments feature prominently in dream visions of immortals in Gu’s poetry.¹⁷² The flowers of autumn (chrysanthemums) and her disdain for “fame and fortune” affirm her self-image as a recluse. What might have passed for conventional aspirations in the works of male writers acquires a somewhat more combative tone because the standard venues of escape (eremitic and literary) are male prerogatives that the poet embraces out of discontent with the limits imposed on a woman’s existence.

The logic and sentiments of this song lyric are repeated in a second one written to the same tune, which celebrates a female literary community (*QQC*, 7:3762):

170. To “face south” is to be in the position of honor as befits a ruler or a lord.

171. “Chungui” 春閨, to the tune “Lang tao sha” 浪淘沙, in Ye Xiaoluan, *Fansheng xiang* 返生香 (*Wumeng tang ji*, 1:337).

172. See, for example, “Jimeng” 記夢, to the tune “Nan xiang zi” 南鄉子, in *QQC*, 7:3777. In that song lyric, Gu describes her dream visit to the Jade Palace, where fairy maidens meet her and accompany her to a room filled with lutes and books. “Carefully we ponder the merits of poems from the red brush and by the scented makeup case” 彤管香奩細與評. “Unmatched are the heavenly lines about cassia blossoms: / A peerless purity / That washes away spring sorrow and autumn melancholy” 獨有桂花天上句，偏清，一洗春愁秋怨情. In *Liangxi cixuan* 梁溪詞選, this lyric has a subtitle, “Sent to Ladies Ma and Xue” 寄馬薛二夫人, which suggests that Gu is referring to the gatherings of her own literary circle.

顧貞立 沁園春

Gu Zhenli, to the tune "Qin yuan chun"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 嘯傲生成 | Born with a proud and defiant whistle, |
| 薄遊身世 | I have lived a life of meager sojourns, |
| 慘澹情懷 | With feelings dark and arduous. |
| 也曾經料理 | I have also attended to |
| 繡床花樣 | Patterns on the embroidery set, |
| 回文機杼 | Palindromes on the loom— |
| 空裡樓臺 | Towers and terraces in thin air. |
| 怕向鍼神稱弟子 | I dread, facing the goddess of needlework, the address of disciple. |
| 但通國 | Yet throughout the realm |
| 閨娃受教來 | Girls in boudoirs have received her teachings. |
| 今難再 | Now hard to repeat— |
| 看殘絲賸綫 | Looking at leftover silken threads, |
| 意懶心灰 | My will is weary, my heart ashen. |
| 清神猶餘耳 | What remains is spirit unsullied, |
| 便霜鬟雪鬢 | Even as the frost and snow of my hair |
| 任屬形骸 | Goes the way of form and flesh. |
| 與青溪小妹 | From my little sister of Blue Stream, |
| 飛牋索賦 | Winged missives invite poetic responses. |
| 孀閨病嫂 | With my sickly, widowed sister-in-law, |
| 險韻同裁 | Together we ponder difficult rhymes. |
| 痼癖烟霞誰得似 | A perverse fervor for mist and clouds— who shares it? |
| 有疏影 | There is the sparse shadow |
| 孤山一樹梅 | Of one plum tree in the Lone Mountain. |
| 江南夢 | Dreaming of Jiangnan, |
| 想群花未醒 | Thinking of the myriad flowers not yet awakened, |
| 雪裡偏開 | It boldly blossoms in the snow. |

This song lyric begins with a profession of non-conformity and unconventionality (lines 1–3) more characteristic of masculine poetic diction. This makes the consequent sense of incongruity, when the poet turns to the labor of needlework, all the more drastic. Gu frankly avows her aversion to embroidery, summarizing its futility as “towers and terraces in thin air.”¹⁷³ What takes its place as the venue of fulfillment is literary

173. In another of Gu's song lyrics, rejecting needlework makes room for enjoying books: “Tossing aside color threads and golden needle, / I enjoy / ten thousand scrolls stacked high” 拋殘彩綫與金針，消受個，等身萬卷 (to the tune “Queqiao xian”

communication—exchanges with the female relatives who were part of her literary community (lines 17–20). She declares her affinity with the lone plum blossom, whose traditional association with eremitism¹⁷⁴ and integrity is here redefined as the spirit of proud and defiant independence (*QQC*, 7:3785).¹⁷⁵

顧貞立 滿江紅

Gu Zhenli, to the tune “Man jiang hong”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 墮馬啼妝 | Tumbling chignon, teary style— |
| 學不就 | What I cannot learn |
| 閨中模樣 | Are the modes of the boudoir. |
| 疏慵慣 | Used to being careless and lazy, |
| 嚼花吹葉 | I chew flower petals, blow on leaves, |
| 粉拋脂漾 | Set aside powder, let rouge flow away. |
| 多病不堪操井臼 | Sickly, I am not equal to the grind of domestic labor. |
| 無才敢去嫌天壤 | Lacking talent, dare I despise he who exists between heaven and earth? |
| 看絲絲 | See strand upon strand |
| 雙鬢幾時青 | On my temples—when were they dark? |
| 空勞攘 | Toil and bustle all in vain. |
| 應不作 | I should not |
| 繁華想 | Think of glory and splendor, |
| 收拾起 | And instead collect |
| 淒涼況 | The state of grief and melancholy. |
| 向牙籤堆裏 | Turning to the mass of ivory markers in books, |
| 自尋幽賞 | I seek, on my own, a secret joy. |
| 昨夜樓頭新夢好 | Last night, on the tower, in a good dream, |
| 輕風吹送瑤臺上 | A light breeze blew me atop the Jade Terrace. |

鵲橋仙, *QQC*, 7:3771). There are, however, also more conventional usages: Gu writes about plying the needle to relieve poverty (to the tune “Man jiang hong” 滿江紅, *QQC*, 7:3768), “picking up needle and thread again in melancholy” 鍼線重拈只自傷 (to the tune “Nan xiang zi,” 南鄉子, *QQC*, 7:3765).

174. Lin Bu 林逋 (967–1028) was a reclusive poet famous for his lines on plum blossoms (Ouyang Xiu, *Guitian lu*, 2.22–23).

175. Elsewhere in Gu Zhenli’s corpus, we find similar images: “It stands alone, facing the wind” 獨自臨風立 (to the tune “Baizi ling” 百字令, *QQC*, 7:3785); “Only the plum blossoms are / Pure and austere like me” 只梅花，清瘦還如我 (to the tune “Jin lü zi” 金縷子, *QQC*, 7:3785). See also the two song lyrics to the tune “Lang tao sha” (*QQC*, 7:3785–86).

| | |
|-------|--------------------------------------|
| 散閒愁 | Dispel idle sorrow— |
| 高枕是良方 | Peaceful slumber is the proper cure, |
| 飛瓊餉 | The way to be fêted by the goddess. |

The preciousness of the “tumbling chignon” (literally, the sideways chignon that makes a lady look as if she has fallen from a horse) and “tearful style” (i.e., eye makeup that gives the impression of being teary) makes the poet’s rejection of the “boudoir mode” seem rational and inevitable. Indeed, in the historical work where such styles are first mentioned, they are classified with “anomalous attire” 服妖 as omens of dynastic decline (*Hou Hanshu*, 13.3270–71). Devotion to domestic labor, enshrined as an integral part of feminine virtue, is here rejected in the name of sickness. She implies, in a parallel construction, that it irks her as much as her inferior husband. This alludes to a well-known anecdote from *A New Account of Tales of the World* (*Shishuo xinyu*, 19.26) that tells of Xie Daoyun’s plight. Married to the mediocre Wang Ningzhi, Xie Daoyun was resentful. Her uncle tried to mollify her, arguing that Wang, after all, came from a distinguished family (he was Wang Xizhi’s son) and had some redeeming qualities. Xie enumerated the talented men she knew in her own family and concluded, “Little could I know that between heaven and earth, there actually exists one such as Master Wang!” 不意天壤之間，乃有王郎。Here the disclaimer that, lacking talent, the poet should not complain like Xie Daoyun, is transparently ironic (line 8). Again, the poet seeks solace in writing and literature. The quest of the goddess, which bears romantic-erotic overtones in the poetic tradition, is often celebrated as the communion of kindred spirits in women’s poetry. The poet sometimes imagines herself as joining their ranks, leaving behind mundane cares and disappointments.¹⁷⁶ Here the goddess Xu Feiqiong, to be sought in “the proper cure” 良方 of dreams, emblemizes the recognition and communion denied Gu Zhenli in her unhappy marriage.

Elsewhere in her corpus Gu Zhenli writes about the traumatic dynastic transition. She did not seem adamantly opposed to service in the Qing court, since one of her song lyrics describes her disappointment when her son failed to pass the civil service examination under the

176. See Ye Xiaoluan’s lyrics about dream visits to immortal precincts (*Wumeng tang ji*, 1:339–40).

Qing.¹⁷⁷ Yun Zhu notes that Gu was the mother of Functionary Hou Linxun, which means that at least one son became a Qing official.¹⁷⁸ However, this also does not preclude sentiments of lament and a more general concern with the political crisis at the time. Although I am considering her poems about political engagement and those about gender roles separately (the two are explicitly conjoined only in the first example), I suggest that on some level these different aspects of her sensibility are connected, as is evident in the next poem *QQC*, 7:3764):¹⁷⁹

顧貞立 虞美人

Gu Zhenli, to the tune “Yu meiren”

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 暗傷亡國空彈淚 | Secretly I mourn the loss of country, shedding vain tears— |
| 此夜如何睡 | This night, how can I sleep? |
| 月明何處斷人腸 | Where is the bright moon most heartbreaking? |
| 最是依然歌舞宴昭陽 | Above all, where singing and dancing continue in the feasts of Zhaoyang Palace. |
| 幾年嘗遍愁滋味 | For years now, I have fully savored sorrow. |
| 難覓無愁地 | Hard to find is that place by sorrow unscathed. |
| 欲箋心事寄嫦娥 | I want to pour out my heart in a missive to Chang’e, |
| 爲問肯容同住廣寒麼 | And ask: Would she let me live with her in the Moon Palace? |

The tune title here brings to mind the famous song lyric written to the same tune by the last ruler of the Southern Tang, Li Yu 李煜 (937–78, r. 961–75). In that earlier work, dynastic fall and the fate of captivity charge the poet’s vision and memory with intense pathos. The first line here also echoes another well-known song lyric by Lu Qianyi 鹿虔扈 (10th c.): “Secretly I mourn the loss of country, / As pure dewdrops weep on fragrant red blossoms” 暗傷亡國，清露泣香紅。¹⁸⁰ Although some modern scholars have questioned Lu’s political integrity, the song

177. Gu Zhenli, to the tune “Nian nu jiao,” in *QQC*, 7:3757.

178. Yun Zhu, *Guochao guixiu zhengshi xu ji*, 2.12b.

179. Kathryn Lowry also translates this lyric in Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers*, p. 426.

180. Lu Qianyi, to the tune “Lin jiang xian” 臨江仙, in Zhao Chongzuo, *Huajian ji*, 9.213.

lyric is traditionally commended as loyalist lament.¹⁸¹ These are among the earliest examples of political lament in the history of song lyrics, and Gu Zhenli grandly appropriates that tradition. Her song lyric cannot be dated with certainty, but if it was written in 1644–45, the revelry of line 4 would have conveyed indictment of the Southern Ming court. The gender marker comes at the end: only a female poet could have asked whether she would be allowed to live with Chang'e in the cold palace in the moon, which is identified as a feminine precinct. In this context, the yearned-for communion with Chang'e also purports to be an escape from history.¹⁸² What starts out as a gender-neutral or even masculine lament (to the extent that it reverberates with the lines by rulers and ministers of fallen dynasties) concludes with, but also seems to justify, a distinctly feminine longing for escape.

Women on Writing

For many women writers, the allure of the “masculine voice” lies in the chance to rethink the meaning of writing. Gu Zhenli imagines how evaluation of her work is inseparable from the figure of a woman writing (*QQC*, 7:3771):

顧貞立 南鄉子

Gu Zhenli, to the tune “Nanxiang zi”

| | |
|---------|---|
| 消盡夜來霜 | The overnight frost is all gone. |
| 落木蕭疏雁數行 | Among sparse trees barren of leaves are rows of geese. |
| 一寸橫波凝望處 | Where my gaze rests— |

181. Yang Shen and Tang Xianzu, among others, praised it as loyalist lament. However, *Huajian ji* was compiled in 940, and the Latter Shu kingdom of Meng Chang, where Lu served as minister, fell in 965. If this song lyric laments the Former Shu, then by traditional evaluation Lu lapsed in his loyalist resolve because he served in the next dynasty (the Latter Shu). See Zhang Yiren, *Huajian ci lunji*, pp. 263–74.

182. Elsewhere Gu identifies with Chang'e in the context of her own loneliness and unhappy marriage: “Ask Chang'e from me: / How did it happen / That a whole life was wasted? . . . The colorful, inspired brush, / Is now left idle. / A thousand piculs of wine: / Who would savor it?” 爲問嫦娥，何事更、一生擔擱 . . . 五色管，今閑卻。千石酒，誰斟酌 (“Zhongqiu lübo,” to the tune “Man jiang hong,” 滿江紅，中秋旅泊, *QQC*, 7:3767).

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 瀟湘 無限江山送夕陽 | On the Rivers Xiao and Xiang, Endless mountains and waves send off the setting sun. |
| 羞說擅詞場 | I am ashamed to claim excellence in the arena of songs— |
| 總是愁香怨粉章 | None but compositions crafting feminine grief and sorrow. |
| 安得長流俱化酒 | How can I have the Great River all turned into wine, |
| 千觴 | And let a thousand cups |
| 一洗英雄兒女腸 | Cleanse me of all heroic strivings and romantic longings? |

In the preface, Gu Zhenli mentions that she composed this song lyric during an excursion to Xiguan in the company of her cousin, Lady Zhang, in 1672. Despite the occasion of pleasure excursion, the mood is somber and evocative. The first half of the song lyric should not earn the self-imposed judgment in line 7. Indeed, if the author of those first five lines were, say, Wang Fuzhi (who wrote some beautiful song lyrics on the Rivers Xiao and Xiang), we would not hesitate to read into them political, historical, even moral and philosophical meanings. Line 7 may thus refer to Gu's consciousness of how she would be read as a woman poet. Her disclaimer is a mixture of modesty, impatience, and frustration, which she can only counter with the extravagant image of the Yangzi River turning into wine, a thousand cups of which would wash away all heroic 英雄 and romantic 兒女 sentiments.

Elsewhere in her corpus, Gu writes about "drinking with abandon, letting out long-drawn-out songs" 痛飲長歌 (*QQC*, 7:3756). A deliberate departure from the conventional poetic celebration of a woman's "faint inebriation" 微醒 and perhaps a gesture claiming Li Qingzhao as model, such drinking looks to the Wei-Jin definition of the "gentleman of distinction" as one who "gets to be unburdened by anything, drinks with abandon, and tirelessly reads *Encountering Sorrow*" 但使常得無事，痛飲酒，熟讀離騷，便可稱名士，¹⁸³ and also evokes associations with Li Bo defiantly "drinking with abandon, singing wildly" 痛飲

183. The saying is attributed to Wang Gong 王恭 (d. 398); see *Shishuo xinyu*, 23.53. Li Qingzhao is the only other woman poet who wrote repeatedly about drinking. See *Li Qingzhao ji jizhu*, pp. 7–8, 13–14, 20, 27, 29–30, 34–35, 39–40, 49, 60–61, 75, 85, 97.

狂歌.¹⁸⁴ Gu also ties the Yangzi River to writing and cosmic transformation in a song lyric, composed as colophon on *Heartbreak Drafts* (*Duanchang cao* 斷腸草), the collection of Wang Lang 王朗 (17th c.), her friend and fellow woman poet: “Reverse and pour forth the endless flow of the Three Gorges, / And let ink’s breath infuse mist and clouds” 倒傾三峽潺潺水，墨氣染雲煙 (to the tune “Qingshan shi” 青衫濕, *QQC*, 7:7365).¹⁸⁵ Here drinking a thousand cups of wine from the Yangzi River combines similar tropes of purgation, self-transformation, and cosmic transformation, whose goal is the definition of a new voice that “rises above” the conventionally feminine.

In Gu’s literary exchanges with other women poets, she celebrates women’s writings even more boldly, as in the following song lyric addressed to her friend Lady Xue (*QQC*, 7:3786):

顧貞立 滿江紅。贈薛夫人

Gu Zhenli, “Sent to Lady Xue,”

to the tune “Man jiang hong” (lines 7–11)

| | |
|---------|---|
| 望去畫樓烟樹遠 | I look to painted towers among misty trees |
| | in the distance: |
| 飛來險韻驚人句 | Difficult rhymes and startling lines come flying. |
| 算詞壇 | I figure the arena of song lyrics |
| 端合讓裙釵 | Should yield to women. |
| 低頭矣 | Bow your heads! |

In proclaiming the superiority of women’s writings, Gu needs to establish a distinguished genealogy. In the following poem she looks to the Han consort Ban Jieyu (1st c. BCE) (*QQC*, 7:3786):

顧貞立 浪淘沙。和纖月倒用原韻

Gu Zhenli, “Matching Lyrics with Slender Moon, Using Her Rhymes in Reverse Order,” to the tune “Lang tao sha” (lines 1–5)

| | |
|---------|---|
| 何必羨儒冠 | Why envy the scholar’s cap? |
| 花滿闌干 | Flowers fill the balustrade. |
| 掃眉才子是鳴鸞 | Women of talent are the singing phoenixes. ¹⁸⁶ |

184. Du Fu, “Zeng Li Bo” 贈李白 (*DS*, 1.114).

185. The line is based on Du Fu’s “Zuige xing” 醉歌行: “phrases that reverse the flow of the Three Gorges” 詞源倒流三峽水 (*DS*, 3:131).

186. *Mingluan* 鳴鸞 can be read as *mingluan* 鳴鑾, chime bells on noble carriages.

得近班家明月句 For closeness to Consort Ban's line on the
 bright moon,
 甘作齊紈 I would fain become the Qi silk fan.

Ban Jieyu's 班婕妤 (1st c. BCE) famous "Song of Resentment" ("Yuan-ge xing" 怨歌行) uses the fan as a synecdoche for the female poetic persona.¹⁸⁷ Fashioned from white Qi silk, it symbolizes purity and constancy. "Round and round like the bright moon" 團團似明月, it conveys the hope for lasting union. Assured a place in the lover's sleeve during warm weather, its fate is less certain when autumn comes: "Abandoned and left in a coffer, / Love and regard cut off midway" 棄捐篋笥中, 恩情中道絕 (LQL, 1:116-17). To be "cast off like the fan in autumn" 秋扇見捐 comes to be the idiomatic equivalent for the abandoned woman. Reversing the logic of separation and abandonment, Gu Zhenli proclaims her wish to *become* the fan so that she can be close to, or approximate, Ban Jieyu's poetic talent.¹⁸⁸ The fan becomes the symbol not of the abandoned woman's pathetic fate but of the supreme talent of the woman who wrote about being abandoned.

For Liu Shu, who sought in vain to turn the tide, the escape from failure and futility is found in writing, hence the poems that imagine redemptive moments of creation (GS, 1.211):

劉淑 悶極作

Liu Shu, "Written in Extreme Frustration"

| | |
|-------|---|
| 榮已未若貧 | Glory is already no match for poverty. |
| 痴應可斷鋼 | Passions should suffice to cut through steel. |
| 俠指空吹劍 | Heroic clutch yields the sword rings' futile music, |
| 悲歌擊玉璫 | Mournful songs are sung to the beat of jade tiles. |
| 戶外苔封砌 | Outside the house, moss covers the steps. |
| 樓頭借月光 | On the tower, I borrow the moonlight. |
| 拈書聊遣興 | Picking up a book, I give in to my feelings, |
| 敲詩聽韻狂 | Ponder poems, and let rhymes go unbound. |

187. Cf. Owen, *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*, pp. 223-24.

188. The conceit of desiring to become an object close to the beloved appears often in poetry; a notable example is Tao Qian's "Xianqing fu" 閑情賦 (*Tao Yuanming ji*, pp. 152-59). The idea of embracing suffering to attain aesthetic transcendence is also evident in Du Zhisong's lines on willows quoted in chap. 1, p. 82.

The somewhat contorted syntax of line 3 conveys a powerful image. The fingers of a hero or, literally, a knight-errant (the poet), clasp a sword, but instead of wielding it for action, she can only blow the rings at the hilt to make the faintest music. The allusion is to *Zhuangzi*, “Zeyang” 則陽, where “blowing through the small holes on the rings at the sword’s hilt” 吹劍首 yields “nothing more than almost imperceptible sounds” 呖而已矣 (*Zhuangzi jishi*, 25.894). If expressive power is heightened in the “mournful songs” in the following line, it is still no more than the passions that should, but would not, cut through steel (line 2). Music only offers some sort of respite when it becomes the poet’s own “unbound rhymes” at the end of the poem (line 8).

As with Gu Zhenli’s allusion to Consort Ban’s fan, heroic endeavor and the act of writing combine to invert a standard trope of feminine sorrow in another two poems by Liu Shu (*GS*, 3:287):

劉淑 班竹管二首

Liu Shu, “Speckled Bamboo Brush,” two poems

| | |
|---------|---|
| 寫出漆書蝌蚪奇 | For writing the wonders of the hallowed ancient script, ¹⁸⁹ |
| 一枝班管最相宜 | Nothing is more fitting than the speckled brush. |
| 英皇那有許多淚 | How could the grieving consorts have shed tears so copiously |
| 遍洒湘山萬古悲 | Over Mount Xiang because of everlasting sorrow? |
| 殘雲潑墨未收還 | Remnant clouds are, like splashed ink, as yet untethered. |
| 雨過初晴霽色殷 | With the fresh brightness after rain comes a dusky red. |
| 想是屠龍敗鱗甲 | It must be that, as she slays the dragon, gory scales |
| 搯將玉笋變斑斕 | Stain her delicate hands and leave the brush speckled. |

Legend has it that when sage king Shun failed to return from his southern tour, his consorts, Ehuang and Nüying, wept by the River Xiang and their tearstains left the Xiang bamboo speckled.¹⁹⁰ In the first quatrain,

189. “Ancient script” is literally “Tadpole script” in “black paint”; see *Jinsbu*, 51.1433.

190. *Lienü zhuan*, 1.1–3; Zhang Hua, *Bowu zhi*, 8.217.

Liu Shu disputes the association and proposes that if one must invoke antiquity, then a more fitting object would be the ancient script produced by the speckled brush. The second quatrain likens “splashed ink” paintings (produced by the brush) to darkening clouds. The red glow after rain becomes a reminder of blood, and bloodstains from “slaying dragons” replace tearstains as the speckles on the bamboo brush. The dragon slayer displaces the pining wife, and the brush remains the only purveyor of heroic memory.

Failure to achieve one’s ideals and aesthetic creation are often intertwined, as in the following two song lyrics (*GS*, 6.358):

劉淑 蝶戀花。季春雨

Liu Shu, “Late Spring Rain,” to the tune “Die lian hua”

| | |
|---------|--|
| 亂紅飛盡春山小 | Fluttering red petals are all blown away; spring hills seem small. ¹⁹¹ |
| 瘦鐔彈雲 | My thin blade, snapping the clouds, |
| 如哭還如笑 | Seems to be crying, yet also laughing. |
| 可堪芳草連天杳 | Fragrant grass merges with the endless sky: how to bear it? |
| 夢魂空曳長安道 | I drag my soul in vain on the roads of Chang’an. |
| 乳梅滴滴鶯聲老 | On young plum trees, the orioles’ trickling songs grow old. |
| 病怪貧魔 | The demons of sickness and poverty |
| 馳逐無休了 | Have veered and pursued me without end. |
| 濃雨送春歌到曉 | A dense rain sends off spring, my song lasts till morn— |
| 愁心都倩碧天稿 | All my heart’s sorrows given to heaven for its compositions. |

The song lyric is charged with verbal echoes of earlier poems on late spring, but the conventional poetic vocabulary of melancholy is disrupted by more intense, violent images linked to heroic striving and political lamentation (lines 2–3, 5). Tears and laughter (line 3), or grief and self-mockery, are conjoined reactions to the futile gesture of the thin sword

191. Cf. Ouyang Xiu, “Fluttering red petals fly past the swing” 亂紅飛過鞦韆去 (“Die lian hua” 蝶戀花, *QSC*, 1:162); also “Where the plain ends are the spring hills” 平蕪盡處是春山 (to the tune “Ta sha xing,” *QSC*, 1:123).

blade “snapping the clouds.” As in the poems discussed above, there is a tentative redemptive moment at the end with the image of writing and creation. Here the syntax is somewhat more ambiguous. The poet’s song 歌 (line 9) merges with the composition or draft 稿 in the last line, which may be read in two ways: either heaven is using the poet’s sorrows for its own composition, or the poet is giving her sorrow to heaven, and turning that act into her composition.

In the next poem, the juxtaposition of violence and writing, futility and creation that we have examined in other poems is condensed in the one image of a lotus (*GS*, 6.354):

劉淑 清平樂。菡萏

Liu Shu, “Lotus,” to the tune “Qingping le”

| | |
|---------|--|
| 幾年瀝血 | Blood that has been draining for years |
| 猶在花梢滴 | Still trickles on the tips of blossoms. |
| 流光初潤標天筆 | Shimmering light has first moistened the heaven-marking brush: |
| 聊記野史豪傑 | Just use it to record the unsung heroes of unofficial history. |
| 碧箋閱稿千章 | On these emerald sheets I read endless drafts of chapters— |
| 拈來無那成行 | They come unbidden, falling into place line upon line. |
| 散作一池霞霧 | And then dispersal: a pond of mist and clouds, |
| 空餘水月生香 | Leaving in vain the scent that rises with the water and the moon. |

In this startling vision, the red lotus drips with blood from years of war and devastation. The stalk of the lotus is compared to a brush making its marks on heaven. This brush is writing on the lotus leaves, which unfold as chapters with “line upon line” falling into place. This is a history dripping with blood, but the lines give form, order, and meaning to this violence. Liu Shu may well count herself among “the unsung heroes of unofficial history” (line 4) to whom she pays tribute; it is the poet who emerges as the person who lives, writes, and reads this history. The sense of power and agency embodied by the “heaven-marking brush,” however, is dispersed through the Buddhist images of the last two lines. The vision may be no more than subjective illumination, but it is also no less than that.

The idea of poetry replacing or sublimating mundane existence is divested of aestheticist echoes because writing itself seems to be a mode of heroic action, as in the following poem, probably written when Liu Shu was on the verge of death (*GS*, 3.291):

劉淑 病危八首其二

Liu Shu, "Gravely Ill," second of eight poems

| | |
|---------|---|
| 殘骨寄將水火涯 | Remnant bones will find their home at the edge of water and fire. |
| 唾壺爲枕夢爲家 | Let the spittoon be my pillow, and dreams, my home. |
| 三生嘔盡杜鵑血 | Only the blood of lamentation, poured forth in three lifetimes, |
| 纔種人天不謝花 | Suffices to grow the undying flower in the realms of heaven and men. |

Songs sung to the beat of the spittoons are heroic tunes, but here heroic endeavor is a dream that the poet calls home. The transformation of "heart's blood" into poetry recalls the consummate art of Li He 李賀 (790–816), but here Liu Shu claims another kind of transcendence: it is "the blood of lamentation" (literally, "the cuckoo's blood"), the burden of not forgetting over three lives (past, present, and future) the sorrow of losing one's country, that grants immortality to her poetry.

Of the writers we have considered in this chapter, Wang Duanshu wrote most extensively and self-reflexively on the idea of the writing woman. Deliberate revisionism is evident in the following poem (*YHJ*, 5.2b–3a):

王端淑 失扇詩

Wang Duanshu, "Poem about Losing a Fan"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 山水主人甚淵博 | The master of mountains and waters is indeed steeped in learning, |
| 文心長被東風縛 | But her literary mind has long been tethered to the east wind. |
| 才高傲骨薄利名 | Her talents lofty, her spirit defiant, she disdains fortune and fame, |
| 願逐芳蘭在幽壑 | Glad to pursue the fragrant orchid in the secluded valley. |
| 偶占好句書扇頭 | By chance good lines came to her, and she wrote them on a fan: |
| 梅花一瓣隨春落 | One petal of a plum blossom, fluttering down with spring. |

| | |
|---------|---|
| 君不見 | Do you not see: |
| 僧繇畫龍雷雨昇 | Sengyao painted the dragon, rousing thunder and rain. |
| 子美詩成神鬼愕 | Zimei completed his poem, to the shock of gods and spirits. |
| 延津劍去變作蛟 | At Yanping Ford the sword vanished, transformed into a dragon. |
| 令威仙乎來化鶴 | Lingwei must have become an immortal— he came as a crane. |
| 始知神物豈可留 | Only now do I know that a divine object cannot be retained— |
| 離情非是經秋卻 | The feelings of separation came over us, not because autumn meant the fan's abandonment. |

Like Liu Shu's "speckled brush," the "lost fan" here turns a token of feminine sorrow into a powerful symbol of aesthetic transcendence. As mentioned above, the "autumn fan" signifies the abandoned woman through allusion to Ban Jieyu's song about the round fan. Wang Duan-shu declares categorically that the prototype of autumnal abandonment does not apply—it cannot, since she is both the fan and its owner. Instead, separation is inevitable because the fan has become a "divine object" through the inscription of her poem. Numinous power cannot be accommodated by mundane reality: thus the sword that once belonged to a master of esoteric knowledge leaps into Yanping Ford and turns into a dragon (*Jinshu*, 36.1075–76), and Ding Lingwei, having attained immortality, returns as a crane to his hometown after a thousand-year absence.¹⁹²

Wang pointedly implies an analogy between her fan and other examples of magical transformation in aesthetic creation: the Liang painter Zhang Sengyao 張僧繇 (fl. early 6th c., line 8) desists from dotting the eyes of dragons he paints on walls, claiming that they will break through the walls and fly away once endowed with a spirit.¹⁹³ Another anecdote tells how the dragons Sengyao paints on a beam in a temple in Kuaiji honoring the sage king Yu would fly into Mirror Lake and fight with other dragons during stormy nights.¹⁹⁴ Line 9 turns Du Fu's praise of Li

192. See *Soushen bouji*, 1.442.

193. Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji*, 7.148.

194. When people see that the beam is dripping wet and covered with aquatic plants, they realize what happened and put heavy chains over the painted dragon. See *Baoqing Siming zhi*, 12.16a–16b.

Bo into an image for Du's own poetry. Du Fu (Zimei) often used images of cosmic transformation to eulogize other poets, most notably in a poem addressed to Li Bo ("Ji Li shi'er Bo" 寄李十二白, *DS*, 8.438):¹⁹⁵

| | |
|-------|---|
| 筆落驚風雨 | Your brush descends, rousing wind and rain, |
| 詩成泣鬼神 | Your poem completed: gods and spirits weep. |

In referring to his own poetic creation, Du Fu conjoins the notion of numinous power with an ironic sense of futility, as in "Drunken Song" ("Zuishi ge" 醉時歌, *DS*, 3.187):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 但覺高歌有鬼神 | Aware only that in my soaring song, there are gods and spirits, |
| 焉知餓死填溝壑 | How would I know that, dying from starvation, I am to fill ditch and gully? |

The same juxtaposition concludes his "Autumn Meditations" series ("Qiuxing bashou," eighth poem, *DS*, 17.873–74):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 彩筆昔曾千氣象 | This many-colored brush once took on cosmic powers, |
| 白頭吟望苦低垂 | Now my white head, chanting and gazing, is sunk low in sorrow. |

In her "Poem about Losing a Fan" Wang Duanshu combines the idea of numinous power not with the irony of futile striving—although that concern surfaces in other poems by her—but with playful spontaneity. The good lines came to her "by chance," as effortlessly as the fluttering descent of a flower petal (lines 5–6), perhaps because, despite being "steeped in learning" (line 1), she has bowed to the whims of the east wind (line 2)—she has thus transcended the conventional opposition between tradition and individuality, learning and intuition in ideas about poetic creation.

195. See also Du Fu's lines addressed to the poets Gao Shi and Cen Shen, "Ji Pengzhou Gao sanshiwu shijun Shi Guozhou Cen ershiqi zhangshi Shen sanshi yun" 寄彭州高三十五使君適虢州岑二十七長史參三十韻: "The meaning, so apt, seems to soar in flight, / The poems, by the end, merge with cosmic vastness" 意愜關飛動, 篇終接混茫 (*DS*, 8.427). He uses cosmic imagery in "Ye ting Xu shiyi songshi" 夜聽許十一誦詩: "His subtlety pierces cosmic creation, / His forcefulness overwhelms thunder" 精微穿溟滓, 飛動摧霹靂 (*DS*, 3.224–25). On the pleasures of poetic exchanges, he writes in "Feng zeng Lu wuzhang canmou Ju" 奉贈盧五丈參謀琬: "With beautiful words leading the way, / It is fitting that lakes and mountains should be shaken" 藻翰爲牽率, 湖山合動搖 (*DS*, 22.1144–45).

In this celebration of a “second innocence” consequent upon profound self-awareness, mastery of tradition, and a quest that mythologizes the power of words, Wang may also be taking her cue from Du Fu, who famously declares in a poem inspired by the Yangzi River,

| | |
|---------|--|
| 爲人性癖耽佳句 | Of a nature perverse, |
| | I am obsessed with good lines: |
| 語不驚人死不休 | If my words do not startle, |
| | unto death I will not let go. ¹⁹⁶ |

Yet in what follows he claims that with old age comes a new ease, freedom, and spontaneity in writing poetry, and there is no further need for deliberate craft and extravagant emotions (lines 3–4). In the spirit of praising ordinariness, the raging waves of the Yangzi River only arouse thoughts of fishing and floating away on a raft (lines 5–6). He concludes by imagining the company of earlier masters such as Tao Qian and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433)—if only he could make them write about what he is seeing and roam with them (lines 7–8). Having internalized tradition and resolved its contradictions,¹⁹⁷ Du Fu has gained a new freedom to claim past masters as companions in roaming. Wang Duanshu may thus be mediating the same opposites in her “mythologization” of her own poetry—in doing so she turns the lost fan from an old trope of female powerlessness into a symbol of aesthetic agency and a venue for defining her own literary genealogy.

Another poem deliberates the meanings of “red” in the title of Wang’s collection *Red Chants* (YHJ, 8.13a).

王端淑 紅吟

Wang Duanshu, “Chanting Red”

| | |
|-------|--|
| 入漢宮人淚 | The palace lady’s tears as she enters the Han harem— |
| 吟清玉映詩 | My lines of poetry chanted in pure spirit. |
| 空音芍藥想 | Ethereal notes—the peonies evoke them. |

196. DS, 10.516. The title “The Water on the River Happened to Gather Momentum Like the Sea, so I Casually Gave a Short Account” (“Jiang shang zhi shui ru haishi liao duanshu” 江上值水如海勢聊短述) already highlights the fusion of naturalness with a labored aesthetics of wonder.

197. We can consider the idea of resolving contradictions in two ways. Tao and Xie are conventionally associated with naturalness and deliberate craft, respectively. Alternatively, both Tao and Xie can be seen as being natural (e.g., Zhong Rong compares Xie to “lotus rising from pure water”) and yet inspiring wonder and amazement 驚人.

| | |
|-------|---|
| 飄渺御溝思 | Far and fleeting is the longing on the imperial moat. |
| 汗血嘶風馬 | Sweating blood, the horse neighs in the wind. |
| 長鋒斷赤眉 | Long blades cut down the rebels with red eyebrows. |
| 疏林留落照 | In the sparse forest, the rays of the setting sun linger on |
| 擊碎石崇枝 | The smashing of Shi Chong's coral branches. |

In form this poem follows the tradition of “composition on objects” that brings together various associations of an object through allusions, a model that obtains, for example, in Li Shangyin’s famous poems on tears and on peonies.¹⁹⁸ We thus have here a series of images associated with “redness.” These images become progressively more violent. The first half of the poem draws upon more “feminine” images of longing and melancholy—the palace lady’s tears of blood (line 1),¹⁹⁹ peonies suggestive of “ethereal notes” (line 3), the imperial moat with floating red leaves inscribed with messages of pining (line 4).²⁰⁰

The second half of “Chanting Red,” however, moves to images of “redness” tied to warfare, heroism, and violence. The Han Emperor’s quest for the legendary horses that “sweat blood” (line 5) might have encouraged extravagant expeditions and campaigns (*Shiji*, 123.3170). “Red Eyebrows” designates one of the messianic cults that caused great upheaval (line 6) (*Hou Hanshu*, 11.478–87); here Wang imagines their bloody suppression. The smashing of coral branches by Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300) to prove his wealth was an act of wanton destruction that presaged his own downfall (*Shishuo xinyu*, 30.9). It symbolizes the heedless self-indulgence of the aristocracy and as such can be read as an omen for the fall of Western Jin. Alternatively, Wang may be comparing her poetry to the “music” produced by the smashing of coral branches: both are born of ruins and destruction. In sum, while the images and allusions in this poem are not logically connected, they do obey a pattern of turning from private emotions of loss and longing to engagement with public crisis.

198. See *LSY*, 4:1548; 4:1636.

199. Xue Lingyun 薛靈云, consort of Cao Pi 曹丕, Emperor Wen of Wei (187–226, r. 220–226), is said to have wept tears that turned into blood when she left for the palace (*TPGJ*, 272.2139–40).

200. The poet Gu Kuang 顧況 (ca. 725–ca. 814) finds leaves inscribed with plaintive poems on streams that flow from the imperial moat (Meng Qi, *Benshi shi*, p. 9). Variants of this anecdote develop into love stories between the palace lady who writes the poems on leaves and the scholars who pick up the leaves (*TPGJ*, 198.1486; 354.2807–8).

Another poem about reading her own collection develops a similar turn midway (YHJ, 11.9b):

王端淑 閱吟紅集

Wang Duanshu, Reading *Red Chants*

| | |
|-------|--|
| 墨淚愁中損 | Ink and tears are by sorrow diminished— |
| 紅啼怨已深 | Weeping blood, rancor is already deep. |
| 孰知嵇叔夜 | Who would have known that Ji Shuye should |
| 偏解斷腸音 | Of all people understand the music of heartache. |

The poet Ji Kang 嵇康 (Ji Shuye, 224–63) is known among other things for his defiant eccentricity and philosophical treatises on “preserving and prolonging life” 養生 and on “the absence of joy and sadness in music” 聲無哀樂.²⁰¹ For all that, he fell victim to the violent political intrigues of his era and died lamenting that his consummate art of lute music, “Guangling san” 廣陵散, would die with him. Ji Kang’s fate shows how “red tears” can no longer be simply read as boudoir lament; he who understands “the music of heartache” knows what it means to try and fail to survive in treacherous and chaotic times. Ding Zhaosheng makes the same assertion in his preface: “The collection is called *Red Chants*: these are the ink traces of one who has not forgotten the plight of the country over seventeen years” 集曰吟紅，不忘一十七載黍離之墨蹟也 (YHJ, Ding’s preface, 2a). In his preface Meng Chengshun 孟稱舜 (ca. 1600–1684) implies a gender shift in the title: “The collection is called ‘Red Chants’ to specify mournfulness. As it says in an old text, ‘In spring the maiden holds rancor, in autumn the scholar mourns.’ Unburdened by the sad longings of spring, she mourns autumn. Hers is the heart of the scholar in autumn” 集成名曰吟紅，志悲也。語曰：春女怨，秋士悲。不懷春而悲秋，人其猶秋士之心也 (YHJ, Meng’s preface, 2b). The cited passage from *Huainanzi* (“an old text”) concludes: “They know that things will transform” 而知物化矣.²⁰² According to traditional exegesis, spring as the season of marriage means

201. See Ji Kang, “Yangsheng lun” 養生論, “Da Xiang Ziqi ‘Nan Yangsheng lun’” 答向子期難養生論, “Sheng wu aile lun” 聲無哀樂論, in Yan Kejun, *Quan Sanguo wen*, 48.1324–28, 49.1329–33.

202. Instead of *luan*, the received text has *si* 思 (being filled with longing) or *bei* 悲 (grieve). See *Huainan honglie jijie*, 10.330.

that the maiden will be separated from her natal family, hence the rancor and uncertainties. “Mourning autumn” recalls Song Yu’s “Nine Disquisitions,”²⁰³ and points to political lamentation and grief over mutability.

In Wang Duanshu’s extant corpus, many poems and song lyrics are written in a conventionally feminine style. But that represents a stylistic choice rather than a biologically or culturally determined venue: her “hyper-feminine” poem, entitled “Imitating the Poetic Style of Boudoir Ladies to Invite a Smile” 效閨秀詩博哂, seem to be a poetic exercise done half in jest (YHJ, 9.4b–5a). The title of her anthology, *Complementary Canon of Poetry by Notable Women*, drawing on images of woof and warp, indicates her intention to define a body of writings by women that can complement or supplement canonical classics of poetry by men—a point taken up in Qian Qianyi’s preface when he eulogizes the anthology as being “both history and canonical classic” 亦史亦經 (MYSW, Qian’s preface, 3a). Self-reflexivity in women’s poetry is thus often played out as the implicit questioning of gender boundaries. To dwell on the importance of writing almost always means aspiring to the transcendent meanings and literary immortality held out as promise by the cultural tradition. In doing so, women poets availed themselves of both male and female literary models, often moving beyond their customary social roles in an expanding imaginative space.

“Our Husband Is China”

Several factors working in various combinations converge to explain my choice of examples in this chapter. The experience of war and political disorder raises perennial questions on human agency and limits, and for some women writers it also created or heightened the real and imagined space for heroic aspirations and endeavor, political engagement, and historical understanding. This is sometimes linked to discontent with gender roles, or at least self-conscious ruminations on their meanings. There are concomitant (and possibly related) changes in the rhetoric of

203. See pp. 88–90 above. Sarah Queen and John Major translate *shi* as warrior and suggest that “the warrior mourns” because autumn is the season of warfare (*The Huainanzi*, 10.58, p. 370).

friendship, both between women and between men and women. Beyond affinities in sensibility, there is a new emphasis on shared political, intellectual, and spiritual ideals. Some of the women writers discussed in this chapter also wrote about writing and reflected on their sense of mission as a writer. In some cases the gestures are grandiose, even mythologizing. It may be that the tradition of women's writings had by that moment become "ripe" enough for it to "turn on itself"—that is, certain recognized feminine traits have become standard enough to be challenged in order for the tradition to renew itself. That could be a literary historical development independent of the dynastic transition. Our evidence suggests, however, that responses to political disorder were decisive in shaping new directions in women's writings.

Swords—real, imaginary, or metaphorical—continue to define an important tradition in the voice of women poets in the Chinese tradition. The political turmoil of the Opium Wars and the Taiping Rebellion brought the next wave of woman writers voicing similar concerns, including Wu Zao 吳藻 (1799–1863), Shen Shanbao, Tan Yinmei 談印梅 (late 18th to early 19th c.), Wu Shangxi 吳尚燾 (1808–?), Li Changxia 李長霞 (1825–79), Zuo Xijia 左錫嘉 (1831–94), Zuo Xixuan 左錫璇 (mid-19th c.), Wu Chai 吳萑 (1838–74), and Chen Yunlian 陳蘊蓮 (19th c.).²⁰⁴ They used similar heroic gestures, they sometimes continued to complain about the constraints of being a woman, and most of them were also responding to war and devastation.

The culmination of this tradition is the revolutionary Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875–1907). One of her most famous photographs features her in Japanese costume, with a short Japanese sword in hand. Swords and martial imagery implying heroic striving, gender discontent, and anguish over national crisis recur in her writings.²⁰⁵ By then many women writers

204. For Wu Chai and Chen Yunlian, see Xiaorong Li, *Women's Poetry of Late Imperial China*, pp. 115–44. Cf. Siao-chen Hu, "War"; Mann, "The Lady"; Nanxiu Qian, "Xue Shaohui."

205. Qiu Jin, "Ribei Lingmu wenxueshi baodao ge" 日本鈴木文學士寶刀歌; "Jian ge" 劍歌; "Hongmao dao ge" 紅毛刀歌; "Baodao ge" 寶刀歌; "Baojian xing" 寶劍行; "Baojian pian" 寶劍篇, to the tune "Man jiang hong"; "Baojian pian" 寶劍篇, to the tune "Zhegu tian" 鷓鴣天 (*Qiu Jin quanji jianzhu*, pp. 127–33, 142–44, 246–56, 264–66, 324, 333). The sword functions in Qiu Jin's early occasional poetry as praise for the valor and heroic aspirations of the owner, but in her later works it becomes increasingly identified with revolution and martyrdom.

were writing in the same vein,²⁰⁶ but Qiu Jin's martyrdom gives her work special pathos. While Qiu Jin makes no explicit reference to her seventeenth-century antecedents and names Du Fu and Lu You rather than earlier women poets as her literary models, the Ming-Qing transition obviously loomed large in her imagination. Her friend and fellow poet Xu Zihua 徐自華 (1873–1935) tells of an episode when Qiu Jin wept on the nineteenth day of the third month, the anniversary of the Chongzhen emperor's suicide in 1644. Xu marveled: "You must be the reincarnation of Princess Changping or palace lady Fei!"²⁰⁷ Qiu Jin wrote an account about the latter, who is said to have killed her captors when Beijing fell to the rebels, as well as poems eulogizing Qin Liangyu and Shen Yunying, the martial women who defended the crumbling Ming dynasty.²⁰⁸ The image of Qin and Shen evolve from emblems of dynastic loyalty to beacons of revolution, martyrdom, and social change in Qiu Jin's later writings.²⁰⁹

What was unprecedented with Qiu Jin and her circle was the way gender served the rhetoric of revolution. Wu Zhiying 吳芝英 argues in her 1912 preface to Qiu Jin's writings that Qiu Jin was executed not least because of the outraged response to a woman intervening in "great affairs of changing state systems" 改制大事. Wu appeals to the *Book of Changes*, citing the feminine associations of the hexagrams *ge* 革 (49) and *ding* 鼎 (50), from which the terms revolution (*geming* 革命) and dynastic change (*dingge* 鼎革) are derived, as "evidence" that "overthrowing the old and instituting the new are the proper province of women" 然則

206. For some examples, see *Nüzi shijie*, (1904.2): 59–60; (1904.4): 51–56; (1904.5): 63–70; (1904.6): 63–68; (1904.7): 65–70; (1904.8): 67–72; (1904.9): 49–56; (1904.10): 45–52; (1904.11): 57–60; (1904.12): 59–62; (1905.2): 61–64; (1905.6): 59–60. On this journal, see Xia Xiaohong, *Wan Qing nüxing yu jindai Zhongguo*, pp. 67–113.

207. Xu Zihua, "Qiu Jin yishi" 秋瑾軼事, in *Qiu Jin yanjiu ziliao*, pp. 63–67. Princess Changping was the Chongzhen emperor's daughter. On palace lady Fei, see n. 208.

208. Qiu Jin, "Mou gongren zhuan" 某宮人傳 (a retelling of Lu Ciyun 陸次雲 [late 17th c.], "Fei gongren zhuan" 費宮人傳, found in Zheng Shurao, *Yuchu xuzhi* [*Shuo hai*, 3:742–43]); "Zhikan ji tihou bazhang" 芝龕記題後八章 (ca. 1893), in *Qiu Jin quanji jianzhu*, pp. 386–91, 4–9. Qiu Jin mentions Liu Shu and Song Huixiang (discussed in chap. 5) in her *tanci*, *Jingwei shi* 精衛石 (*Qiu Jin quanji jianzhu*, p. 471), but makes no reference to their writings. On Qin Liangyu and Shen Yunying, see chap. 3.

209. See the lyric to the tune "Man jiang hong" (1905) and *Jingwei shi* (*Qiu Jin quanji jianzhu*, pp. 324, 471).

革故而鼎新之，殆女子之所有事也。²¹⁰ Wu Zhiying deploys similar rhetoric in her “Elegy to the Woman Martyr Qiu Jin” (“Ji nülieshi Qiu Jin wen” 祭女烈士秋瑾文). She maintains that Qiu Jin was justified in refusing to play the role of wife vis-à-vis the husband she despised because “our husband is the sacred realm of China: / We follow the ancient example of Nüying and Ehuang” 吾夫赤縣，規古英皇。²¹¹ The ties between Nüying and Ehuang, daughters of Yao and wives of Shun, symbolize the common purpose of revolutionary women, who could exploit traditional gender hierarchy to claim the special prerogative of being married to the nation.²¹²

210. Wu Zhiying, “Qiu Jin yizhu xu” 秋瑾遺著序, in *Qiu Jin yanjiu ziliao*, pp. 344–45. On how Wu Zhiying and Xu Zihua guard and shape Qiu Jin’s legacy, see Hu Ying, “Gender and Modern Martyrology.”

211. Hu Wenkai, *Lidai mingyuan wenyuan jianbian*, pp. 132–33.

212. For a man to claim the nation as wife would not convey the same sense of reverence and devotion. Xun Can 荀粲 (ca. 212–ca. 240), who died mourning his wife, is put in the category of “Blind Infatuations” 惑溺 (*Shishuo xinyu*, 35.2). Also, Wu Zhiying could appeal to the tradition of Ehuang and Nüying “serving one husband together” 共事一夫, but the image of two men marrying the same woman (if the nation is feminine) would strike many as incongruous. Xia Xiaohong discusses the trope of “marrying the nation” in late Qing writings; see “Yingci nüjie qi chuaimo.”

CHAPTER 3

Heroic Transformations

The women writers examined in the previous chapter wrote about heroic aspirations and tried to cross gender boundaries in their works. These themes are echoed in images of heroic women that recur in historical and literary writings on or inspired by the fall of the Ming dynasty.¹ Historically, the most important martial woman from this period was Qin Liangyu 秦良玉 (ca. 1574–1649), the regional commander 土司 in Sichuan who fought the Qing (when it was still called Later Jin) in the 1620s, gained imperial recognition in 1630, and led military expeditions against rebel armies for four decades (1599–1640s). She is the only woman honored in the “Biographies of Generals and Ministers” (“Jiang xiang liezhuan” 將相列傳) in *Ming History* (*Mingshi*, 270.6944–48). Not much was written about her in the early Qing, however, possibly because she received titles from the Yongli court (1646–62) and might have been involved in anti-Qing resistance.² Mao Qiling

1. For a comprehensive study of heroic women in Ming Qing literature, see Gōyama, *Min shin jidai*, pp. 519–71.

2. For the titles Qin might have received from southern Ming rulers, see He Riyu 何日愈 (1793–1872), “Shu Ming doudu zongbing Qin Liangyu yishi” 書明都督總兵秦良玉軼事, in Jiang Qiqun, *Yuchu guangzhi* (1915), in *Shuobai*, 7:2366–70; Wang Baoxin, *Yuchu zhizhi*, in *Shuobai*, 8:2823–26. According to He, Qin’s titles mentioned in the gazetteer of Shizhu (*Shizhu zhi* 石柱志), the Ma family history (*Ma shi jiasheng* 馬氏家乘), and her tombstone are not recorded in *Mingshi* and might have been conferred by the Yongli emperor. Her death date was recorded according to the Yongli calendar (the fourth year of Yongli, i.e., 1649).

included Qin in “Joint Records of the Tribal Commanders” (“Man si hezhi” 蠻司合志); he qualified his admiration with a denigrating (and unsubstantiated) reference to her “scores of male concubines.”³ Qin became a paragon of virtue and a bulwark against the rebels in Dong Rong’s 董榕 (1711–60) play, *Auspicious Shrine* (*Zhi kan ji* 芝龕記). Neither in this play nor in the host of lesser-known plays, stories, and anecdotes about her is there any direct mention of Qin’s battles against the Manchus.⁴ Predictably, Qin’s narrative changed in the late Qing. She became a powerful nationalist symbol, and various accounts emphasize her role in the Ming-Qing conflict.⁵ (As mentioned in chapter 2, Qiu Jin invokes her as a model in her poetry and *tanci*.) By then Qin was also lauded for vindicating women’s rights.⁶

Another woman warrior, Shen Yunying 沈雲英 (1624–60), shares center stage with Qin Liangyu in *Auspicious Shrine* (although historically they were unconnected). Like Bi Zhu (discussed in chapter 2), she is remembered above all for penetrating enemy ranks to retrieve the corpse of her father, a military commander in Hunan. The Chongzhen emperor decreed that she should lead her father’s troops, but her husband’s death at that juncture prompted her to decline the offer. A scholar who specialized in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, she made a living as a tutor for her clansmen after the fall of the Ming. More than Qin Liangyu, Shen Yunying is known for combining valor with strict adherence to normative moral exemplarity. Mao Qiling wrote a tomb inscription and a laudatory biography for her.⁷ Other eulogies include biographies by Xia Zhirong

3. See Huang Chengzeng, *Guang Yuchu xinzhi* (1803 preface), in *Shuohai*, 3:1079–82. Tan Qian also mentions Qin’s young and handsome male attendants (*Zaolin zazhu*, p. 291).

4. See, for example, Xu Hongpan, *Nü Yuntai*; Chen Lang, *Shu Jinpao*; Li Changxiang, *Tianwen ge ji*, B.56; He Riyu, “Qin Liangyu yishi.”

5. In 1911, Qin Shangao compiled a collection of materials on Qin Liangyu, *Qin Liangyu zhuan huibian chu ji*. It was republished in 1936. *Shen bao* serialized materials on Qin Liangyu from June to July 1915 (Qin Yanchun, *Qing mo min chu de wan Ming xiangxiang*, p. 263).

6. See, for example, Zhi Gong 職公, “Nü junren zhuan” 女軍人傳 (1904).

7. Mao wrote the inscription upon the request of Shen’s clansman and student, Shen Zhaoyang. See Mao Qiling, “Youji jiangjun lienü Shen Yunying muzhiming” 游擊將軍列女沈雲英墓誌銘, in *Guang Yuchu xinzhi* (*Shuohai*, 3:1088–91); Mao Qiling, “Shen Yunying zhuan” 沈雲英傳, in *Yuchu xuzhi* (*Shuohai*, 3:771–73).

夏之蓉 (1698–1785), Wang Youdian, and Xu Zi.⁸ Her story is also dramatized in Yang Enshou's 楊恩壽 (1835–91) play *Hemp Beach Station* (*Matan yi* 麻灘驛, 1870s). By the late Qing, Shen was reinvented as a nationalist hero, a feminist, and an advocate of women's learning.⁹

The stories of historical heroes are thus constantly refashioned to answer the needs and constraints of different times. Fictive creations, even more protean, sometimes draw attention to the seams of heroic transformation—the tension between intervention and evasion, fact and aesthetic illusion, different historical perspectives, or divergent heroic ideals. A brief survey of the contexts of literary history for imagining female heroes will set the scene. Then I will revisit the question of political disorder and women's voice by turning to *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* (*Tian yu hua* 天雨花). In this prosimetric narrative (*tanci*), a woman writer's vision of Ming collapse is tied up with imagining rebellion against patriarchal order. In most cases, however, representations of heroic women are connected less to gender concerns and more to memories and judgment of the fall of the Ming or what it stands for in contemporary terms. Critique and defense of the late Ming, alienation from and reconciliation with Qing rule, as well as attitudes toward what the Ming-Qing transition symbolizes in later periods, are filtered through heroic transformations of women into assassins, avengers, warriors, statesmen, and knights-errant.

Contexts of Literary History

The late Ming aesthetics of *qi* 奇 (wonder, surprise) draws inspiration from transforming and manipulating gender roles. Cross-dressing is a staple trope in scholar-beauty romances. It is so common in late Ming drama that Qi Biaoja 祁彪佳 (1602–45) complains about it as “the path

8. See Xia Zhirong, *Banfang zhai ji*, in Shen Cuifen, *Qing wen hui*, p. 1480; Wang Youdian, “Liang nü jiangjun zhuan” 兩女將軍傳, in Huang Chengzeng, *Guang Yuchu xinzhi* (*Shuobai*, 4:1452–53); Xu Zi, *Xiaotian jinian*.

9. See Qin Yanchun, *Qingmo minchu de wan Ming xiangxiang*, pp. 267–70. Shen is juxtaposed with Qin in Zhi Gong's 1904 account (see n. 6). See also Fan Yanqiao, “Shen Yunying daifu shou gucheng.” Published in 1941, this is one of many stories about late Ming heroes told during the Sino-Japanese War. The late-Qing and early Republican reinvention of Shen as an advocate of women's learning is based on the historical Shen's role as clan tutor.

of perverse cleverness for southern plays” 傳奇纖巧一道.¹⁰ Gender roles are easily taken up and reversed—in the late Ming play *Gift of Books* (*Zengshu ji* 贈書記) by Wang Yuangong 王元功, the male protagonist adopts a female disguise and the female protagonist dresses up as a man,¹¹ and in Zhang Dafu’s 張大復 (1554–1630) *Auspicious Omen* (*Jixiang zhao* 吉祥兆), husband and wife change places, yet in the end there is effortless restoration of a presumably normative gender system.¹² Most of the time, the reversibility of roles calls attention to fictionality or theatricality—the willful arbitrariness of aesthetic illusion—rather than the questioning of gender roles. This playful vein continues in Li Yu’s 李漁 (1611–ca. 1680) early Qing play *Ideal Love Match* (*Yizhong yuan* 意中緣), which puts cross-dressing in a world of comic reversals, whereby truth and fiction, artist and copier, “true art” and “clever forgery” are inter-dependent rather than opposed. For women playwrights, however, the choice to represent oneself as a male character often implies more urgent discontent with gender roles.¹³

Malleable gender roles may become the means to ponder the more general opposition of self and role. A male writer can turn a woman’s frustration with her lot into his protest against the limitations of roles and circumstances, drawing attention to how all roles, like gender roles, may have to be transcended to make room for genuine expression or real fulfillment of the self. Some scholars believe that Xu Wei, for example, protests the inequities of human existence and laments his own destiny as an unrecognized and misunderstood figure in his plays about Mulan and the woman top-graduate Huang Chonggu (*Four Cries of a Gibbon* [*Sisheng yuan* 四聲猿]).¹⁴ These plays might have been created in the spirit

10. Qi Biaoqia, *Yuanshan tang qu pin*, p. 59.

11. On the possible political ramifications of *Zengshu ji* and of *Reversing Gender* (*Dao yuanyang* 倒鴛鴦), an early Qing play with cross-dressing protagonists, see Hui Ming-tak, “Nannü diandao.”

12. For *Zengshu ji*, see Mao Jin, *Liaoshi zhong qu pingzhu*, 17:7–171; *Jixiang zhao* is included in *Guben xiqu congkan*, 3rd ser., vol. 10.

13. See Hua Wei, *Ming Qing junü zhi xiqu chuanguo yu piping*, pp. 97–153.

14. For such interpretations, see Cai Yi, *Zhongguo gudian xiqu xuba huibian*, 2:865–73; Xu Shuofang, *Xu Shuofang ji*, 3:53–54, 96–99. Xu Wei’s play about Mulan is based on the famous “Mulan shi” (ca. 5th–6th c.), see LQL, 3:2160–62. For the story of Huang Chonggu, see TPGJ, 367.2924–25. For studies of Xu Wei’s plays, see Kwa, *Strange Eventful Histories*; Liang Yicheng, *Xu Wei de wenxue yu yishu*.

of rancor and protest, but again comic reconciliation seems to underlie shifting boundaries. Thus Mulan gladly leaves behind her past as warrior and becomes a scholar's wife, a seamless transition achieved through a magical formula that shrinks her enlarged feet, and Huang Chonggu relinquishes an official career to embrace marriage, accepting a top-candidate husband as adequate substitution for her own success in the civil service examination.

The female knight-errant 女俠, who first surfaced in Tang literature, became a prominent topic in late Ming writings after relative abeyance from Song to Ming.¹⁵ Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–90) and Zou Zhilin 鄒之麟 (1601–51) both compiled collections of classical tales about her. In a classical tale by Hu Rujia 胡汝嘉 (*jinsbi* 1553) and its much better known vernacular version in Ling Mengchu's 凌夢初 (1580–1644) *Slapping the Table in Amazement* (*Pai'an jingqi* 拍案驚奇, first collection, j. 4), the female knight-errant Wei Eleven discourses on the history of the ideals she embodies. She claims a far-reaching genealogy and a passion for justice, banishing the common error of linking the knight-errant to mere vengeance or magical feats of martial prowess. Female knights-errant from ninth-century Tang tales, such as Nie Yinniang 聶隱娘 and Hongxian 紅線, spawned elaborations, redefinitions, and imitations in late imperial fiction and drama, including notable examples by Liang Chenyu 梁辰魚 (ca. 1519–ca. 1591) and You Tong 尤侗 (1618–1704).¹⁶

From the late Ming to the early Qing, there was a special interest in the female knight-errant as a symbol of impassioned daring, as evinced by various adaptations of the Hongfu story,¹⁷ or as a figure transcending emotional entanglement, as exemplified by “The Female Knight-Errant” (“Xianü” 俠女) in Pu Songling's 蒲松齡 (1640–1715) *Records of the Strange from Liaozhai* (*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異, hereafter *Liaozhai*). The appellation of *xia* is sometimes extended to defiant, unconventional

15. See Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle*, chap. 4. Altenburger (pp. 74–75) characterizes Nie Yinniang in the eponymous Tang tale by Pei Xing 裴鉶 (9th c.) as the archetypal female knight-errant who takes up “social policing” and subverts gender roles.

16. See Liang Chenyu, *Hongxian nü*; You Tong, *Heibai wei*. Altenburger (pp. 75–80) notes the taming of Nie Yinniang in *Heibai wei*.

17. See “Hongfu ji” 紅拂妓 in Feng Menglong, *Qingshi leilue*, 4.112–13; Zhang Fengyi, *Hongfu ji* 紅拂記 (in *Zhang Fengyi xiqu ji*); Feng Menglong, *Nü zhangfu* (an adaption of Zhang's play); Ling Mengchu, *Shi yingxiong Hongfu mang zepai*.

women,¹⁸ but more often it refers to women of valor and discernment, such as Liang Hongyu 梁紅玉 (12th c.), the legendary Song courtesan married to the general Han Shizhong 韓世忠 (1089–1151).¹⁹ Liang's story inspired late Ming plays such as *A Pair of Heroes* (*Shuanglie ji* 雙烈記, ca. 1580s) by Zhang Siwei 張四維 (1526–85) and *The Qilin Mantle* (*Qilin ji* 麒麟罽, ca. 1600s) by Chen Yujiao 陳與郊 (1544–1611).²⁰ The image of Liang Hongyu beating the war drum at the Battle of Jinshan recurs in writings about heroic women during the dynastic transition, as we shall see in chapter 4.

Woman warriors also began to feature prominently in heroic sagas of the seventeenth century. Stories of Yang family generals (*Yang jia fu yanyi* 楊家府演義, preface dated 1606; *Yang jia jiang yanyi* 楊家將演義, ca. 1607–20) and of Sui-Tang heroes, which culminated in Chu Renhuo's 褚人獲 (1635–after 1703) *Sui-Tang Stories* (*Sui Tang yanyi* 隋唐演義, completed around 1675, preface dated 1695), often turned away from the misogynistic strain in early heroic sagas such as *Water Margin* to identify women warriors with romance and the energy of marginality.²¹ Emerging from the ranks of bandits, rebels, and barbarians, they invigorated and sometimes redefined the purported defense of legitimate political authority. An especially intriguing case is *The Unofficial History of the Female Immortal* (*Nüxian waishi* 女仙外史) by Lü Xiong 呂熊 (1642–1723). In this mythologized version of Zhu Di's (later the Yongle emperor) 1402 usurpation and the resistance against it, the heroine Tang Sai'er, who combines traits of the knight-errant, the warrior, the goddess, and the rebel, leads the descendants of Jianwen loyalists in a kind of counter-government that continues to threaten the Yongle court.²² The historical

18. See, for example, Yu Huai's use of this epithet for courtesans disdainful of wealth and uninhibited in their pursuit of pleasure or happiness (*Bangqiao zaji*); cf. Wai-ye Li, "The Late-Ming Courtesan."

19. Feng Menglong puts Liang Hongyu in the "Qingxia" 情俠 category in *Qingshi leihue*, 4.114.

20. For accounts of Liang Hongyu and Han Shizhong, see Luo Dajing (13th c.), *Helin yulu*, 2.266. For *Shuanglie ji*, see Mao Jin, *Liushi zhong qu pingzhu*, 20:9–356. *Guben xiqu congkan* includes the facsimile reproduction of the Wanli edition of *Qilin ji*, alternatively entitled *Qilin zhu*.

21. Chen Chen's *Shuibu houzhuan* 水滸後傳, a sequel to *Water Margin* with marked loyalist echoes, also features women warriors and shows greater appreciation for women and domestic happiness. See Widmer, *The Margins of Utopia*.

22. See Altenburger, *The Sword of the Needle*, chap. 6; Liu Chiung-yun, "Ren, tian, mo."

Tang Sai'er, who led a rebellion in 1420, becomes the instrument of justice in this fantasy but retains traces of the rebel cult leader. The fact that a number of well-known early Qing literati wrote chapter comments on the novel suggests the possible contemporary resonance of this episode of north versus south in early Ming history.

The context of dynastic decline and crisis in some of the writings mentioned above suggests that heroic women may represent a longing for effective action, but the extent to which they are linked to broader arguments about political developments varies. Few are as explicit as Ruan Hanwen 阮漢聞 (17th c.), who states in his *Women on Cloud Terrace* (*Nü yuntai* 女雲臺) that he collects examples of female warriors to shame the civil and military elite of his time.²³ In what follows, I will limit my analysis to examples wherein processes of remembering and understanding political failure and of imagining female heroes are incontrovertibly intertwined.

The Daughter's Patrimony in an Age of Disorder

In chapter 2, I discussed women's poetic responses to political disorder. If the 1651 preface to *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* is authentic, then we have, in this prosimetric narrative of about 900,000 words, a woman articulating her anguish over the fall of the Ming, tacitly celebrating a daughter's rebellion, and claiming her creative endeavor as a daughter's patrimonial burden. As I will show, what we have instead is likely a later woman writer (probably from the eighteenth century) who turns to dynastic crisis as the enabling framework through which she imagines a daughter's rebellion and patrimony. Although there is no definite proof of female authorship, *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* embraces a woman's perspectives on issues such as monogamy, sisterhood, and a daughter's rights and anxieties.

Spanning thirty chapters, *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* is set in the waning years of the Ming dynasty. Its hero, Zuo Weiming, was born in 1584, exactly one sexagenary cycle before the fall of the Ming in 1644, the designation *jiashen* rendering the connection unmistakable. A paragon of virtue, talent, and martial prowess, he rises to high office and valiantly

23. That work is no longer extant. Ruan was a scholar-official who died fighting the rebels; see Zhu Rong, *Zhongyi lu*, in Jiang Gai et al., *Ming Qing yishu wuzhong*, pp. 457–58.

combats the corrupt and devious factions in late Ming court politics. Although he repeatedly foils his enemies, he ultimately recognizes the fall of the Ming as inevitable. At the end of the book, following the suicide of the Chongzhen emperor in 1644, Zuo and his closest friends, together with their families, drown themselves in the Yangzi River by gathering in a big boat and then breaking the bottom of the boat.²⁴ This happens on the fifteenth day of the fifth month, the same day that Prince Fu ascended the throne in Nanjing²⁵ with the reign title Hongguang and continued Ming rule for another year. The collective suicide vindicates the official Qing narrative: it indicates recognition that the rump Ming courts after 1644 are doomed, resistance is futile, and Qing victory is inevitable.

Against the backdrop of Ming collapse, the narrative unfolds on a domestic scale chronicling tumultuous family relationships, especially the bonds and battles between fathers and daughters. Early on in the book Zuo Weiming marries Huan Qinggui. Their eldest and only son, Yongzheng, has a merely shadowy presence in the text. By contrast, the eldest daughter Yizhen's clashes with her father are at the center of the narrative. The second daughter, Dezhen, compliant and less talented, is sometimes roused to assertiveness, but only under Yizhen's influence. The youngest daughter, Wanzhen, self-centered and disdainful of the norms of proper conduct, is raised by indulgent adoptive parents and returns to the Zuo household only at sixteen.

The tension between a father's emotional dependence on his daughter and his need to assert absolute authority over her is a recurrent theme throughout the narrative. Fathers are violently punitive. When Wanzhen expresses the wish to poison her mother-in-law, Zuo Weiming orders her to drown herself. Supposedly staged as "shock treatment" with a view to convincing Wanzhen to reform after her rescue, this drastic punishment almost kills her (chap. 29). In another episode, Zuo's friend Huang Chizheng, on the basis of flimsy evidence, accuses his daughter Jingying of a liaison with her cousin and also orders her to drown herself, and she

24. The Ming official He Fengsheng 賀逢聖 and his family committed suicide in the same way when Wuchang fell to the rebels led by Zhang Xianzhong; see Ji Liuqi, *Mingji beilue*, 19.379. Zou Yi also chronicles the collective suicide of He's family but claims that He jumped off a bridge (*Qi Zhen yesheng*, 10.1a–2b).

25. Ji Liuqi, *Mingji nanlue*, 1.10. *Mingji nanlue* was completed in 1670 but not published until the mid-nineteenth century.

is saved only through Zuo Weiming's elaborate ruse (chap. 12). Likewise, Zuo Zhide (Weiming's younger brother) suspects his daughter Xiuzhen of illicit relations with her cousin and beats her to death (ch. 13). A daughter's life can be sacrificed with impunity in the name of defending family honor, and the killing of a disgraced daughter supposedly "cleanses" the father (TYH, 16.636). At the same time, even punitive fathers can seem emotionally dependent on their daughters. Huang Chizheng sounds almost like a jilted lover when he complains about Jingying's rejection in mournful remembrance after her supposed death: "Caring only for her mother, she had no regard for her father, / All her life she avoided me and withheld affection" 但知有母而無父，終身躲避不相親 (TYH, 14.523). Zuo Weiming, for all his implacable insistence on paternal authority, dotes on Yizhen and depends on her. The violence and vulnerability of fathers sets the stage for power struggles with their daughters.

Zuo Yizhen emerges as the most memorable character in the text. Her assassination of the arch-villain Zheng Guotai, brother of the scheming imperial consort Lady Zheng, is presented as the most meaningful political action and marks the climactic mid-point of the narrative. More generally, the narrative celebrates strong-minded daughters like Yizhen and Huang Jingying, who emerge as the dominant partners in their respective marriages. Weiming repeatedly derides Yizhen's husband Huan Chuqing as a "hen-pecked coward" 懼內庸夫 for deferring to his wife, but in a manner that is rare in the Chinese literary tradition, this power balance is presented as optimal and commendable.

As with many works in the repertory of Chinese popular literature, the dating of *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* is problematic. Its authorial preface is dated 1651, but the earliest extant edition dates from 1804. A short play based on Yizhen's assassination of Zheng Guotai (Kong Guanglin's 孔廣林 *The Female Assassin* [Nü Zhuan Zhu 女專諸, 1800]) and a passing comparison of *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* to *The Story of the Stone* (*Shitou ji* 石頭記, also known as *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢) by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1715–ca. 1764) suggest its popularity by the late eighteenth century.²⁶

26. Kong Guanglin's play is included in *Qingdai zaju xuan*; Yang Fangcan (1754–1816) juxtaposes "Tian yu hua in the south and Honglou meng in the north" (*nanhua beimeng* 南花北夢) as comparably popular (cited in Tan Zhengbi, *Zhongguo nüxing wenxue shibua*, p. 382).

Wilt Idema maintains that “its absolute conception of dynastic loyalty and its attempt to portray a perfect official” would seem to “reflect the trends and issues of the eighteenth century much more than that of the seventeenth century.”²⁷ “Based on its focus on filial piety and lack of mention of the Manchu invasion,” Epstein also dates *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* to the eighteenth century.²⁸ Indeed, its polarization of good and evil in late Ming political struggles recalls Dong Rong’s play *Auspicious Shrine*, and its idealized hero carries echoes of the larger-than-life protagonist of Xia Jingqu’s 夏敬渠 (1705–87) *Humble Words of an Old Rustic* (*Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言).²⁹ However, as Hu Siao-chen notes in her perceptive study, although the 1651 preface may or may not be authentic, its concern with a daughter’s patrimonial burden shows a deep affinity with the text, since the most riveting relationship in the text unfolds in the affection and tension between a father and his daughter:³⁰

I was born and grew up in tumultuous times, when chaos and dispersal were common. Whenever I read accounts of heroes, I would be roused by the power of loyalty and filial piety. I lament ever so often that the Han house was destroyed by eunuchs, and the Tang dynasty suffered disorder because of favored consorts. The Tianqi reign [1621–27] combined these two scourges, which fittingly paved the steps to evil. The slaughter of the loyal and virtuous then was more merciless than in previous ages, and finally the dynasty lost its mandate and brought about its own destruction. The pity of it all! Like Yue Guang, my father recognized people for what they are,³¹ and he hid his talents to embrace the eremitic way like Wang Wei.³² He used to regret that I was a woman with bound feet, but showed his esteem with heartfelt talks. He said that I had the talent to excel like Mulan, and the will to be virtuous like Cao E. Of these comparisons I am deeply unworthy. As in the Xie clan, fragments of information were gathered and transmitted through oral teaching. And

27. Idema, “Prosimetrical Narrative.”

28. Epstein, “Patrimonial Bonds.”

29. The issue here is less ascertainable “influence” than shared milieu or worldview.

30. See Hu, “The Daughter’s Vision”; *Cainü cheye weimian*.

31. Literally, “he had discernment like water and mirror.” Yue Guang (d. 204) is said to be “the water and mirror among men” 人之水鏡也 (*Shishuo xinyu*, 8.23).

32. Qu Boyu is said to “hide his talents” (*juanhuai* 卷懷) when there is no good government (*Analects* 15.7). Wang Wei withdrew to his Wangchuan estate.

now I have lost my father.³³ He gave me life, understood me, raised me, and taught me. What am I to do with the longing?³⁴

余生長離亂，遭時患難，每讀英雄之傳，慨然忠孝之才。每歎漢室亡于宦官，唐家亂于寵嬖。天啓兼此，宜長厲階，而屠戮忠良，烈于前古，卒移龜鼎，自取喪亡，慨已！家大人有水鏡知人之明，抱輞川卷懷之道，惜余纏足，許以論心。謂余有木蘭之才能，曹娥之志行，深可愧焉。又謝庭積有緒聞，傳于口學，今者風木不寧矣。生我，知我，育我，授我，我何爲懷？(TYH, Preface)

The preface carries the name of “Tao Zhenhuai of Liangxi.” The fact that *taozhen* is one of the names for prosimetric performers has fed suspicions that “Tao Zhenhuai” (using *taozhen* to express longing [for the father?]) may be a pseudonym.³⁵ Hu Siao-chen believes that the preface is authentic: the author’s father, likely a Donglin partisan, would have been someone who knew about the power struggles of the late Ming court firsthand. The requisite historical knowledge and judgment would have been her father’s to impart. Hu further infers that “Tao Zhenhuai” encodes her own and her father’s Donglin sympathies with the place name “Liangxi,” another name for Wuxi from which many Donglin leaders hailed.³⁶ Alternatively, the preface could be one appreciative and perceptive reader’s reconstruction of the creative process: she infers from the complex and dynamic father-daughter bond in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* that only a similar relationship in the author’s experience could have motivated the creation of such a text. A third possibility, which I consider most probable, is “mediated autobiography”: an eighteenth-century author used the Ming collapse to project her own vision or experience of a daughter’s desires and anxieties and also penned the preface.

33. Literally, “now the wind will not let the tree rest.” See Han Ying, *Han shi waizhuan*, 9.367: “The tree wants rest but the wind would not cease, the son wants to serve his parents but they could not wait for him” 樹欲靜而風不止，子欲養而親不待也。

34. The preface continues with autobiographical details indicating that the author’s husband is away on a military mission and that her son died young. It concludes with the names of female friends and relatives who have copies of the manuscript.

35. See Tian Rucheng, *Xihu youlan zhi yu*, 20.298: “In Hangzhou, blind performers, both male and female, often learn to play the pipa and chant stories and legends to make a living. They are called *taozhen*.”

36. Hu, “The Daughter’s Vision,” p. 219. The Donglin academy in Wuxi was the center of a political movement (1604–1640s) consolidating the opposition of literati and scholar-officials to the eunuch Wei Zhongxian and other factions at court.

The author of *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* might indeed have had direct experience of the fall of the Ming dynasty. The strangely cursory treatment of the Chongzhen reign (chap. 30), however, would seem to suggest otherwise.³⁷ Almost all early Qing historical writings and fictionalized history on the fall of the Ming by those who lived through the dynastic transition were obsessively concerned with the events of the Chongzhen and the short-lived Hongguang reigns, as if the minutiae of factional struggles and strategic errors would add up to an explanation for the cataclysmic fall of the Ming dynasty. *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*, by contrast, is somewhat abstract about the immediate events leading to Ming collapse. It is much more interested in political struggles that can be polarized as good versus evil, hence its perspective on the “three cases” (explained below) and the focus on Wei Zhongxian, whose pernicious influence is incontrovertible. Instead of direct experience, the author of *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* was likely motivated by mediated memory of the Ming collapse from a distance of one or more generations.

Even if one disputes the authenticity of the preface pertaining to dating, it would be hard to dismiss how the basic thrust of its argument is borne out by the text—namely, the mutual definition of political disorder and the father-daughter bond. The hero’s rectification of dynastic failure seems to be the result of a daughter’s compensatory idealization as she challenges his authority, and the heroine’s patrimonial burden—her identification with and defiance of her father—is made possible by political disorder.

There are numerous references to late Ming political turmoil in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*. Some of the rebel leaders in the narrative appear in other historical sources. “Rebellion from below” is repeatedly carried out by messianic cults that resort to black magic to fool the masses. By infiltrating the rebels’ ranks and unmasking their leaders, Zuo Weiming time and again speaks as a teacher who “enlightens” the ignorant followers of these cults, one of which, “Smelling the Scent Sect” (Wenxiang jiao 聞香教),³⁸ a branch of the White Lotus Sect, remained

37. The last chapter (30) is also much shorter and at various junctures discontinuous. The text might have been corrupted.

38. See TYH, 15.577–79; Ma Xisha and Han Bingfang, *Zhongguo minjian zongjiao shi*, p. 551.

intermittently active through the mid-Qing despite its defeat in the 1620s. The threat it continued to pose may account for the author's relish in depicting its suppression.

The first specific reference to the pitfalls of late Ming policies is seen when Zuo Weiming remonstrates with the Wanli emperor (1563–1620, r. 1573–1620) against “taxes levied on mines” (*TYH*, 3.129). The court's fiscal irresponsibility and the financial burden it imposed on the people were hotly debated issues during the late Ming and are subsequently interpreted as indices to decline and fall, but what engages the greatest narrative energy as the polarization of good and evil in late Ming politics are the “three cases.” Indeed, we are told at the very beginning of the text that Zuo Weiming is the incarnation of the Martial Star 武曲星, and his life “will clarify these three cases” 明此三案, as well as represent the triumph of virtue, in contrast to the actual stories of martyrdom during this period (*TYH*, 1.1). The three cases—the “Club Attack Case” 梃擊案 of 1615, the “Red Pill Case” 紅丸案, and the “Moving from the Palace Case” 移宮案 of 1620—are rooted in court intrigues surrounding succession for the Wanli emperor and involved conspiracy theories targeting overreaching consorts.³⁹ The emperor tried for a long time to sideline his eldest son, Zhu Changluo 朱長洛 (1582–1620), and to establish his third son, Zhu Changxun 朱長洵 (1586–1641), born of his favorite consort, Lady Zheng, as heir. This provoked widespread opposition from his ministers; in the text it is Zuo Weiming who “leads the great discussion fighting for the fundament of polity” 首持大議爭國本 (*TYH*, 3.142).⁴⁰ The Wanli emperor finally conceded and established his eldest son as heir apparent in 1601.

39. In the “Club Attack Case” of 1615, a man with a club broke into the residence of the crown prince Zhu Changluo. The “Red Pill Case” involves the murky circumstances of the death of the Taichang emperor (Zhu Changluo) in 1620 when, one month into his reign, he died after taking “red pills” submitted by the official Li Kezhao 李可灼. The “Moving from the Palace Case” (1620) involves overreaching consorts: first, the Wanli emperor spent his final days with Lady Zheng in the Qianqing Palace, the residence for emperors and empresses, and after his death Lady Zheng refused to move out unless she was granted the title of empress dowager (she later gave in under pressure). Second, upon the death of the Taichang emperor, his favorite consort Lady Li, a close associate of Lady Zheng, also refused to move out and tried unsuccessfully to bargain for the title of empress dowager and the role of regent for the newly acceded Tianqi emperor (1605–27, r. 1620–27).

40. The succession controversy was called the debate over “the fundament of polity” 國本.

The involvement of Lady Zheng's faction in all three cases is implied or elaborated in many miscellanies and historical accounts, although the Chongzhen emperor himself reportedly disputed conspiracy theories, claiming that they arose because "officials of the outer court did not know about affairs of the inner palace" 外臣不知內廷事.⁴¹ There is no room for such ambiguity in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*, and Zuo Weiming, whose position broadly corresponds to that of the Donglin party,⁴² unveils the evil machinations of Lady Zheng and her faction, whom he accuses of "replaying the calamity of Wu Zetian for our time" 使則天之禍見當今 (TYH, 14.543).⁴³ Lady Zheng's brother Zheng Guotai gains a much more prominent role here as arch-villain than in other accounts, plotting to depose the Tianqi emperor and to usurp the throne.

Why does *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* focus on these three cases? Inasmuch as they originated in the Wanli reign, the choice may simply reflect the widely held judgment that the seeds of doom for the Ming dynasty were sown during that era (*Mingshi*, 21.294–95). Historically, the real significance of the three cases was their aftermath and the factional struggles tied up with them. During the Tianqi reign, the eunuch Wei Zhongxian gained sway over the emperor and revisited the three cases in his compilation of *Essential Decisions of Three Reigns* (*Sanchao yaodian* 三朝要典), rebranding Donglin scholar-officials as conspirators and exonerating their opponents. After the accession of the Chongzhen emperor and Wei Zhongxian's downfall in 1627, the minister Ni Yuanlu 倪元璐 (1593–1644) memorialized the throne on rejecting *Essential Decisions of Three Reigns* but tried his best to be impartial:

For at that time controversies rose with those events, and mutual accusations filled the court. Those who insisted that the club attack was a conspiracy were trying their best to defend the crown prince, and those who insisted on the attacker's insanity wanted to placate the Shenzong [Wanli] emperor. Those who claimed that the red pill was deliberately deleterious were speaking in righteous indignation, and those who disputed that were willing to grant that the intention was to cure. Those who wanted the

41. Li Qing, *San yuan biji*, p. 196.

42. See Tan Zhengbi, *Zhongguo nüxing wenxue shibua*, p. 387.

43. Zuo Guangdou 左光斗 (1575–1625) denounces Consort Li's scheme of becoming regent as a potential "calamity of Wu Zetian." See *Mingshi*, 244.6630; cf. Gu Yanwu, "Xi miao liang yin jishi" 熹廟諒陰記事, in *Gu Tinglin shiwen ji*, p. 432.

consorts to leave the palace tried to forestall plots before they could take shape, and those who were opposed tried to keep balanced judgment when all was settled. For all six positions, each has its justification, and none can be categorically negated. . . . And so when the treasonous eunuch [Wei] killed people, he used the three cases; when throngs of petty cronies sought wealth and honor, they used the three cases. Having been used in these two ways, the three cases became something totally different.

蓋當事起議興，盈廷互訟。爭挺擊者，力護東宮；爭瘋癲者，計安神祖。主紅丸者，仗義之言；爭紅丸者，原心之論。主移宮者，彌變于機先；爭移宮者，持平于事後。六者各有其是，不可偏非。。。于是逆瑞殺人，則借三案，羣小求富貴，則借三案，經此二借，而三案之面目全非矣。⁴⁴

The three cases continued to reverberate in factional struggles through the Chongzhen and Hongguang (1644–45) reigns. The author of *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* avoids the murky factional implications of the three cases and chooses instead to present them through the polarized lens of good and evil. Is this due to Donglin partisanship or simply political naiveté? We will never know for sure. Such polarization serves the distinctly “gendered” political vision of the book: yin forces represented by illegitimate women and eunuchs undermine the polity; yang forces—men committed to monogamy and daughters claiming their patrimony—are their foes. In this sense, the castigation of overreaching consorts is but the projection of the text’s domestic morality onto a national scale. Lady Zheng plotting to establish her son as heir, and Lady Zheng and Lady Li fighting to win the respective titles of empress and empress dowager, fit into a symbolic scheme that regards ambitious, déclassé females who seek to usurp the place of elite women as the greatest threat to moral order. Their counterparts are the evil concubine (Qiaolian) who maligns her master’s wife and daughter and conniving maids (Wei Guixiang, Hongyun, Fenglou) who impersonate their mistresses to seduce men, crimes for which they ultimately pay with their lives. In the case of Wei Guixiang, the maid who schemes in vain to become Zuo Weiming’s concubine, the author even seems to take a perverse satisfaction in her repeated humiliation and punishment. More generally, whereas the maid,

44. See *Ming shilu*, *chaoben Chongzhen changbian*, 8.447–48. Cf. Ji Liuqi, *Ming ji nanlue*, 3.159–62.

the courtesan, and the fox spirit are often romantic partners for men in the literary tradition, these figures are devious if not downright evil in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*. Courtesans are at best banal and ordinary (TYH, 10.360), relying on the clichés of the literati to spread their fame. The alien nature of the fox spirit is emphasized—she has eyes with “a filmy light” rather than real pupils (TYH, 6.229–31). There is little doubt that the book articulates the elite woman’s fear of substitution whereby she could be replaced through men’s dalliances.

There is no tampering with monogamy in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*. All its positive characters are monogamous, with the exception of the wrong-headed Huang Chizheng, whose concubine alienates him from his wife and daughter and is finally drowned when she is caught in adultery. Zuo Zhide (Weiming’s younger brother) is married to a plain and shrewish woman and for many years has only daughters. He threatens to take a concubine in order to produce a male heir but never does, although social mores would have justified it. Braving the label of unfiliality, Zuo Weiming adamantly refuses to heed his mother’s wish that he take her maid, Wei Guixiang, as his concubine. Within these monogamous relationships, a wife can sometimes take on the aura of unavailability—the province of goddesses, famous courtesans, Daoist priestesses, and forbidden maidens in other literary works. Thus Zuo Weiming’s wife, Huan Qinggui, refuses sexual intercourse with him during pregnancy in the name of “fetal care,”⁴⁵ and Zuo Yizhen adheres to sexual abstinence and shuns her husband while copying Buddhist sutras. *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* depicts sexual tension and courtship *within* a marriage—here wives have to be wooed and seduced.⁴⁶ Of course the unusual monogamous ethos of the book does not go so far as to question imperial polygamy and the need to produce as many heirs for the emperor as possible. Even so, scheming imperial concubines are presented as the source of political disaster. The power of the hero who combats such disorder is tied to resolute monogamy: again and again Zuo Weiming’s enemies try to ensnare him through the wiles of beautiful women 美人

45. One understanding of “fetal care” 胎教 dictates that women abstain from sex during pregnancy.

46. While the narrative seems to take pleasure in Zuo Weiming’s sexual attention toward his wife, it also deals with the moral implications of Weiming’s forcing himself on his reluctant wife in a manner perilously close to rape.

計, but he effortlessly foils these plots (chaps. 9, 21). Likewise, his self-possession when a fox spirit tries to seduce him ultimately grants him the power to quell the rebellion instigated by her avenging father (chaps. 6, 15). By contrast, Weiming's son, sons-in-law, and their friend succumb to the ploys of courtesans sent by the evil eunuch Wei Zhongxian and have to be rescued by Weiming (TYH, 26.1079–98).

The analogy of family and polity is pervasive in the Chinese literary tradition, and some works of late imperial fiction link domestic conflict and dysfunction to dynastic decline. *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*, by contrast, juxtaposes domestic order with political turmoil, and Zuo Weiming is said to head an exemplary household as the Ming dynasty crumbles. In the last third of the book, when the eunuch Wei Zhongxian, in league with the emperor's former nurse Madame Ke, dominates the court and persecutes upright officials during the Tianqi reign, Zuo Weiming, his friends, and their children withdraw from politics (TYH, 25.1025). Narrative attention shifts to the family. The one chapter devoted to Zuo's defiant dismantling of a temple honoring Wei Zhongxian (chap. 26) is framed by four chapters chronicling his elaborate scheme to rescue his widowed niece from the clutches of her sadistic and avaricious mother-in-law (chaps. 22–25) and two chapters describing how he punishes his son-in-law, Wang Liqian, for trying to force a woman to become his concubine, and orders his daughter Wanzhen to drown herself for mistreating her mother-in-law (chaps. 28–29). Familial and patriarchal order is presented as a refuge from political disorder.

This is a patriarchal order that sets formidable limits for women. At the same time, from a daughter's perspective, there is compensatory solace in the kind of patriarchal authority that allows her to stay in her natal home, to control an errant husband, and to foster female friendships. Although tradition dictates that a woman marry into her husband's household, the husbands of the Zuo daughters marry into the Zuo household—this is all the more unusual because they are single sons of distinguished families.⁴⁷ For Zuo Weiming, his daughters' natal family

47. Huan Chuqing and Wang Liqian are said to marry into the Zuo household 入贅, but when their wives, Zuo Yizhen and Zuo Dezhen, are pregnant, they return to their husbands' families (TYH, 23.951), much to the chagrin of Zuo Weiming and his wife. The narrative does not explain this transition.

ties outweigh marital family ties.⁴⁸ (Paradoxically, this is a proposition he refuses to entertain for his own wife. Huan Qinggui is away from her own mother for nine years and manages to visit only when the latter is dying. There is great emphasis on filial piety, but its manifestation as a woman's devotion to her mother-in-law, so prevalent in late imperial writings, has almost no place in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*.) Zuo Weiming's zealous education of his friends, his younger brother, and the next generation includes strict prohibition of liaisons with courtesans (chaps. 4, 10, 20), and he cleverly foils the attempt of Wang Liqian, his second son-in-law, to acquire a concubine (chap. 28). The author recounts Zuo Weiming's "taming" of Wang's profligacy through elaborate ruses with great relish (chap. 20). Finally, the women Weiming rescues from distress all end up in the Zuo household, forming lasting friendships with the Zuo daughters in a kind of enclosed utopia. Huang Jingying, wrongfully accused by her deluded father of a liaison with her cousin, finds a safe haven in the Zuo household after Weiming rescues her from a forced "suicide." Zuo Weiming says of Jingying and his two daughters: "The three of them are tied together, as in the graph *pin*,⁴⁹ . . . forming a faction in the inner chambers" 三人品字牽連定 . . . 結為一黨在閨門 (TYH, 14.529); and "the three of them are just like the sworn brothers of the Peach Garden" 三人宛如桃園結義一般 (TYH, 18.707). He understands Yizhen's sense of urgency when her cousin Xiaozhen is abused by her mother-in-law: "I know among you girls, you are all friends ready to give up your lives for each other" 我知你姊妹間，個個是刎頸之交 (TYH, 23.930). The benefits of this patriarchal order seem to justify what Hu Xiao-chen characterizes as "the absolute father" and "the eternal daughter" in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*.⁵⁰

As idealized patriarch Zuo Weiming represents a stable, even implacable figure of authority against which other distinctions become fluid. He is the quintessential yang, and other men are by definition feminized

48. Zuo Weiming is furious when Yizhen does not immediately answer his summons to come home: "You are not born of the Huan household, / To the end of your life you are of the Zuo family. / Why did you, overnight, forget your origins? / Having married into the Huan household, did you become another person?" 汝須不是桓門出，此身終是左家人。因何一旦忘了本，嫁到桓門變了人？ (TYH, 25.1045).

49. The graph *pin* is made up of three "mouths."

50. See Hu, "The Daughter's Vision," p. 211.

in relation to him. In some cases, the hierarchy and value judgment in the yin-yang polarity is obvious, as when Zuo Weiming humiliates his enemies, Zheng Guotai and Sun Guoying, by having them dress as women and abase themselves as his “concubines”: “You should do no more than guard closely the inner chambers. Learn the womanly way—that and only that would be the proper lot for you two” 惟有緊守深閨，學些婦道，方是你二人本分 (TYH, 11.424). By the same token, the pernicious influence of imperial consorts, their relatives, the emperor’s erstwhile nurse, and eunuchs is categorized as yin. Even when female disguise serves a good cause, the implication of Zuo’s “feminization” of other men is evident. In one episode, when bandits abduct the wife of his friend Du Hongren during a temple visit, Zuo and Du disguise themselves as husband and wife to infiltrate the bandits’ fort and rescue Du’s wife. In the words of Du: “If I did not become your wife, I could not get to be her husband” 我若不做你的妻子，也做不成人的丈夫 (TYH, 2.75).

Basically, the gender boundaries of other characters become malleable under the influence of Zuo Weiming. When the members of the Zuo household return from the capital to their hometown Xiangyang, their boat comes under attack from pirates, and Zuo, obtaining by divination the hexagram that “reverses the male and female principles” 陰變爲陽陽變陰 (TYH, 22.908), devises a ruse whereby his daughters and daughter-in-law dress up as men and escape first, while his son and sons-in-law disguise themselves as women to lure the pirates and ensnare them in drunken stupor before cutting them down (chap. 23). In other words, Zuo Weiming as absolute patriarch relativizes gender boundaries for other characters, and an aspiring daughter like Yizhen can thus take on yang qualities.

Embodying absolute yang, however, has its limits, not least because it forestalls the desirable fusion of opposites, as in the androgynous sensibility of Zuo Yizhen.⁵¹ In one of the confrontations between father and daughter, Zuo Weiming confesses that he is no match for Yizhen because she combines the best of both masculine and feminine attributes (TYH, 14.534):

51. A real hermaphrodite, however, is presented as a monstrous aberration and a source of evil (TYH, 5.205–6).

不想小小閨中女
我竟難于治此人
渾身權術多奸詐
分明看破父親身
剛似父而柔似母
剛柔鍾在一人身

Who would have thought that this slip of a girl
Would be so very hard for me to control.
Full of calculations and devious schemes,
She has obviously seen through her father . . .
Hard like her father, yet gentle like her mother,
Hardness and gentleness come together
in her person.

Harsh, unbending, and not given to self-questioning or self-criticism, Zuo Weiming in his authoritarian self-righteousness can seem, perhaps even to the Qing reader, at best a flawed hero. The character idealized most passionately is Yizhen, who often acknowledges her own error and her father's superior judgment and thereby gains a moral depth denied Weiming. By challenging her father, she also represents an improved version of who he is. Her rebellion propels the plot and, despite the apparent formula of her being tamed by her father, her defiance is often shown to have positive consequences, from her earliest confrontation with her father at age seven, when by sneaking out of the schoolroom against his command she saves her cousins from being pushed into a pool by their misguided mother (TYH, 7.274–75), to her last one, when by disobeying him she saves her sister Wanzhen from drowning (TYH, 29.1198–99). Again and again discipline is enforced through confinement within domestic spaces (school room, inner chambers). But the author's apparent affirmation of this type of disciplinary response is repeatedly belied by Yizhen's adventures and acts of courage made possible by flouting such boundaries.

Zuo Weiming recognizes in Yizhen a kindred spirit early on and offers to oversee her education, taking over a role that traditionally belongs to the mother. He explains to his wife:

“All intelligent persons can take a turn for better or for worse. From what I can see, this daughter is not what you, my lady, can handle. For one thing, you would indulge and spoil her, for another, I fear that Yizhen, with her great talent, would surely not submit to you. Now you should just count her as a son and leave her to me. I too will not treat her as a daughter, but regard her as a son.”

但凡聰明人，可善可惡。我視此女，非夫人可教。你一來但知溺愛，一來恐儀貞有才，必不能服你。你如今將她只算是個兒子，交付與我。我亦不以爲女，當以子視之。(TYH, 7.269)

Affinity between father and daughter leads to inevitable conflict, as Yizhen inherits her father's defiance and willfulness. As a figure of

moral exemplarity Zuo Weiming's filial piety is taken for granted, yet he defies his own mother on several occasions. Whether the issue is alleviating the burden of levy for their tenants or rejecting her demand that Weiming take her maid as his concubine, he engages the reader's sympathy when he stands up to his mother for a just cause. Yizhen follows his footsteps in claiming justified disobedience. As the absolute patriarch Weiming repeatedly assumes the role of teacher towards other characters (including his wife and his mother). The only other person who teaches in the book is Yizhen (she instructs Huang Jingying in the art of poetry). More importantly, she becomes the leader of the female community in the inner chamber, goading her younger sister Dezhen to punish her errant husband and encouraging her mother to defy her father. Unlike so many other heroines in fiction and drama who oppose parents to pursue romance, Yizhen rebels to defend other women.

The dynamic of identification and rebellion is evident in Yizhen's role as Weiming's copier and ghostwriter. Her calligraphy and painting style are said to so resemble her father's that she becomes his secretary and often writes on his behalf. Substitution is here both subservience and subversion. Zuo Weiming's demand that Yizhen write and paint on his behalf is one way for him to claim control over her: even when she is pregnant and living with her husband's family, she stays for extended periods with him to help him fulfill his painting obligations (*TYH*, 29.1210–13). For Yizhen, disputing or rejecting this responsibility would have been one way to articulate rebellion. At the same time, writing for her father gives Yizhen the opportunity to forge his letters and foil him. Convinced that her cousin Xiaozhen is suffering mistreatment by her mother-in-law and unable to make her father intervene, she pens a letter in Weiming's hand that would allow Xiaozhen to rejoin the Zuo household in the capital (*TYH*, 14.530–35). Upon Weiming's discovery of the ruse and his reprimand, Yizhen vows: "If in the future I wield the brush for Father again, I will for all time to come never be reborn as human, and I will die in the middle of the river" 將來若再與父親代筆，永世不復爲人，死于江心之內 (*TYH*, 14.535). This vow comes up again in the course of another battle of will, and Weiming responds: "if your vow materializes, then I will take the lives of the entire family to die with you in the river" 你誓若驗，我亦全家性命陪你共死在江心便了 (*TYH*, 16.631). The inadvertent omen of the story's ending casts a dark shadow over the uneasy balance between identification and rebellion.

Alternatively, one may say that identification and rebellion merge, both being vindicated through collective political martyrdom.

Yizhen's wielding the brush for her father also occasions the most symbolically charged series of events in the text—her acquisition and use of the “coiled dragon sword” 盤龍劍, so-called because it can be curved and hidden or extended at will, one of a pair that belongs to Weiming. Reluctantly given as reward for Yizhen's literary competence and for her service as Weiming's copier and ghostwriter, its symbolic association with paternal authority and phallic power is eloquently explored in Hu Siao-chen's study.⁵² Yizhen's request for the sword, initially rebuffed and finally granted, is coincident with the “three cases,” giving credence to the idea that she needs the sword to fend off political dangers. More generally, as we have seen in chapter 2, the sword is a potent symbol for political engagement and crossing gender boundaries in women's poetry. In *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*, its presence is also the implicit rebuttal of the limitations imposed on women's existence. Zuo Weiming's oft-repeated injunctions about the enclosure of women within the inner chamber, based on the supposed danger caused by their public visibility, are covertly challenged by Yizhen's sword.

It is no surprise, then, that the sword is first used when Yizhen violates her father's command and ventures into the garden with her sister and friend. Like the Confucian father Du Bao in *The Peony Pavilion*, Zuo Weiming regards the garden as a place of danger and potential transgression. He offers the garden in the Zuo family estate in Xiangyang to his wife as an alternative when he denies her the possibility of excursion to a semi-public garden, but even the family garden becomes off-limits when they move to the capital. Its low walls and location in the city would enhance the danger of visibility. As is often the case in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* (and *tanci* in general), subversion is tempered or disguised by the rhetoric of submission. Encountering “flower and wood sprites” in the form of three young men pressing their suit, Yizhen and her companions can only acknowledge Weiming's foresight and seek his help. Weiming's apparent vindication and the girls' self-recrimination notwithstanding, Yizhen manages to protect herself and her companions by cutting off the limbs of the plum spirit in the guise of a

52. See Hu, “The Daughter's Vision.”

young man. Her use of the sword becomes a kind of rehearsal for the assassination of Zheng Guotai.

As noted earlier, Zheng Guotai's usurpation of the throne in the interregnum of the Taichang and Tianqi reigns in 1620 has no basis in history. The episode is invented to make a hero of Yizhen, "who by guarding a woman's chastity fulfills a subject's loyal duty" 以守女烈而盡臣忠 (TYH, 15.572). Whereas Zuo Weiming's confrontations with Lady Zheng's faction at first seem triumphant but are ultimately inconclusive, Yizhen's assassination of Zheng has an unmistakable finality. As she plies Zheng with drinks, she performs equivocal songs but ultimately avows her intention of vengeance.⁵³ Following the defeat of the usurpers and the restoration of the Tianqi emperor, Yizhen is honored in an imperial audience. Confronting all the officials, she makes public visibility seem glorious rather than shameful. In the words of the emperor, "If it were not for this incident, a lady of such talent, intelligence, and chaste determination would be sunk in oblivion—what a pity that would be!" 若非此一事，可惜這等才智節烈之女，竟終身湮沒不聞 (TYH, 16.625).

Imperial recognition gives Yizhen a source of authority beyond the family. In the words of her future father-in-law, Weiming may not punish her at will: "She has the insignia of honor bestowed by the emperor, / She is not a nameless nobody" 花封紫誥君王賜，不是無名少姓人 (TYH, 16.642). In the aftermath of the assassination, Yizhen becomes even more assertive as she tries to defend the woman she believes to be her cousin Zuo Xiuzhen, whose help had rendered her own captivity more bearable. (In fact, this is the maid Hongyun, who had assumed Xiuzhen's identity to conduct an affair with Xiuzhen's cousin and then continued the charade after Xiuzhen's wrongful death.) Disgraced first because of alleged sexual misconduct and again by becoming Zheng Guotai's concubine, "Xiuzhen" provokes the wrath of her father Zuo Zhide and her uncle Zuo Weiming. They try to bring about her death

53. One is reminded of Li Xiangjun's reluctant performance in front of the Hongguang emperor and his courtiers in scene 25 of *Peach Blossom Fan* and Chen Yuanxuan's performance in front of Li Zicheng in *Beauty in the Turmoil of History* (see chap. 6, pp. 551, 571), or of Xie Xiao'e's songs performed for her enemies before she wreaks vengeance in *Dragonboat Gathering* (p. 239). Equivocal self-assertion through performance seems to be a common trope, especially in stories about women avengers or women who defy their victimizers.

while she is in prison so that the family will not suffer the shame of her public execution, but Yizhen repeatedly foils their schemes. Referring to Zheng Guotai's declared intention of taking "Xiuzhen" as a concubine in order to humiliate Zuo Weiming (and repeating verbatim Zheng's insulting words), Yizhen even holds her father responsible for the sad fate of "Xiuzhen."

More generally, Yizhen rejects the implacable morality that punishes women for violations committed against them by men. The point is perhaps driven home for the reader by Weiming's chilling insistence, before he knew of his daughter's fate, that he would personally put Yizhen to death had she survived rape (instead of choosing suicide), disregarding pleas from his wife and his younger brother that her abduction calls for a more forgiving judgment (*TYH*, 15.608). It would be unthinkable for *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*, and indeed most traditional fiction, to accept compromised chastity,⁵⁴ but Yizhen's impassioned defense of "Xiuzhen" comes close to questioning absolute standards of chastity (*TYH*, 16.633):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 三妹年幼兼無學 | Third sister is young and furthermore lacks learning. |
| 叫她何計保全身 | By what scheme is she to protect her integrity? |
| 舍生取義非容易 | To give up life and embrace duty is no easy matter, |
| 豈可將來責此人 | How can one demand it of this person? |

She also lectures her uncle for failing to educate Xiuzhen and for all his missteps that leave her at Zheng Guotai's mercy. Comparing her father's compassionate rescue of Huang Jingying and his unconditional condemnation of "Xiuzhen," she accuses him of hypocrisy (*TYH*, 16.636):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 背親向疏爹爹性 | Turning against kin and supporting strangers is Father's nature. |
| 沽名釣譽是真心 | Angling for name and reputation is your true concern. |
| 仁義道德都是假 | Humaneness, righteousness, morality— all are fake, |
| 看破之時值幾文 | Once one sees through them, how much are they worth? |

Repeatedly thwarted by Yizhen, Zuo Weiming and Zuo Zhide concede to a grudging admiration for her ethos that "only sets great

54. For some exceptions, see chap. 5. Epstein ("Patrimonial Bonds") notes how *Tian yu hua* diverges from the Qing chastity cult.

store by the bond of sisterhood and has little regard for the dishonor of the family” 只重姊妹之情，不顧家門之醜 (TYH, 16.642). Ultimately Yizhen has to admit defeat, and the revelation of Hongyun's deception seems to render the whole endeavor meaningless. Yet the author obviously relishes the battle of wills between father and daughter. At one point Zuo Weiming pleads with Yizhen (TYH, 16.645):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 此刻又恐驚壞你 | And now I also fear the shock will harm you. |
| 打時越發不能禁 | A beating, worse still, is not what you can bear. |
| 算來叫我真無法 | By all accounts I am indeed at my wits' end. |
| 甚樣冤仇結得深 | What enmity is this, that it should run so deep? |
| 但逢有事來纏我 | Whenever something comes up, you entangle me, |
| 恨無地洞去藏身 | What a pity that there is no hole in the ground for me to hide! |
| 我反求告賢小姐 | I must turn around and beg you, good young lady: |
| 只當寬饒你父親 | Just have mercy and spare your father! |

The real fruit of victory in Yizhen's use of the sword is to almost reduce her father to submission when she upholds sisterhood over paternal authority. The fight over the fate of “Xiuzhen” in the aftermath of Zheng Guotai's assassination is typical of the shift of the narrative from the public and political to the private and domestic. More nuanced and less predictable, the latter domain ultimately represents the more successful sections of the book.

It is fitting that when Yizhen wields the sword again it is to cut through the iron lock of the garden where Weiming has confined his wife Huan Qinggui. In this episode, the Zuo sisters and Jingying visit the forbidden garden with Qinggui and are espied by suspicious characters that later turn out to be pirates. Angered by Qinggui's disobedience, Weiming declares to Yizhen, “You cannot call her mother, / She is worthy only to be your sister: / Sister Qinggui is her name” 不可呼她做母親，只堪與你為姐妹，清閨姐姐是她名 (TYH, 22.885). He then demands in vain that Yizhen accept punishment on behalf of her mother. When Qinggui, daring her husband to strike her, defiantly returns to the garden, her daughters celebrate her rebellion (TYH, 22.886–87):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 爹爹欺母真太甚 | Indeed, Father bullies Mother too much! |
| 母親平昔最無能 | Mother has always been an easy target, |
| 今朝却也來激起 | And now she too is roused to action. |
| 此去花園妙十分 | This visit to the garden is truly marvelous! |

Weiming then closes the garden gate with the lock that Yizhen later cuts through. Alluding to her difficult role as pawn in the confrontation between her parents, she turns divided loyalty into justification for her actions:

“For today’s incident, indeed I cannot shirk blame. Had Father locked up someone else, I would certainly not have been so bold. But what could I do when the person who locked the gate was Father, and the person locked up was none other than Mother? If I were to sit through Mother’s troubles, and if Mother were to reprimand me, what could I say? . . . If it is a matter of the older controlling the younger, and if the stronger party should win, then in today’s incident, Father is strong and Mother is weak. But suppose Mother is strong and Father is weak, and Father is locked inside the garden, then would it be right for me to open the gate, or would it be right for me to not open the gate? For that I need you, Father, to instruct me, so that I know where I err.”

孩兒今日之事，實難辭責，但父親若是鎖別人，孩兒斷然不敢這般大膽。怎奈鎖門的是父親，被鎖的便是母親，兒若坐視母難，倘或母親責備起來，却何辭以對？ . . . 若說以長臨幼，以強為勝，則今日之事，是父強母弱。萬一母強父弱，爹爹竟被鎖在園中，孩兒還是開門的是，不開門的是？也須爹爹賜教一番，方知罪之所在也。(TYH, 22.889)

By turning her father’s apparent victory into a question of abuse of raw power, Yizhen forcefully makes the case that paternal authority is not intrinsically greater than maternal authority. But in the end her motive is perhaps less filial devotion to her mother than identification with her plight. In that sense Weiming is right: the absolute patriarch “flattens” other forms of familial authority and leaves room only for the solidarity of sisterhood for the women of the household. The incident continues with more show of power on Weiming’s part, but it ends with his indirect concession. Instead of insisting on his position, he tries to mollify his wife by professing his love and desire. This is another uncommon theme in traditional literature, which rarely deals with love and desire (rather than loyalty and devotion) between a husband and wife in middle age:

潘郎雖則年差老
豈其不足奉佳人
...

Although this comely man is aging,
Could he not suffice to serve the fair one?

難道子女成雙對
便該父母兩分離

Is it possible that when children find their mates,
Then their parents should be apart?

| | |
|---------|---|
| 夫妻豈論年老少 | How can youth and old age matter for husband and wife? |
| 生同羅帳死同墳 | Alive, they share the same bed curtains, dead, the same grave. |

Weiming turns out to be right about the baleful consequences of the garden visit. Pirates who catch sight of the Zuo ladies ambush their boat as the family makes its way back to Xiangyang. But even this attack is less a vindication of his position than a chance to play with gender reversals. As mentioned above, in preparation for the assault the Zuo ladies leave first in male disguise. This is the only moment in the text that Yizhen can glory in cross-dressing: “‘Father, what about letting me be your son and letting Chuqing (Yizhen’s husband) be your daughter-in-law from now on?’ Zuo Weiming smiled and said, ‘If I could have you as a son, what blessing can be greater?’” 爹爹，從今以後，待孩兒做了兒子，楚卿做了媳婦如何？左公笑道：若得你爲兒子，何幸如之！（*TYH*, 22.907). Complex negotiations in the balance of power thus often belie the father’s superficially successful taming of the daughter.

The last important father-daughter confrontation occurs toward the end of the text in chapter 29: Weiming tries repeatedly to discipline the errant and rebellious Zuo Wanzhen for mistreating her husband and mother-in-law but fails. After overhearing Wanzhen cursing her ailing mother-in-law and wishing for poison to hasten her death, he decides to “almost put her to death to give a grave warning” 將她九死一生，以爲重戒 (*TYH*, 29.1192). Claiming that “a plot, even one not yet executed, is a crime punishable by decapitation, / The laws of the great Ming dynasty are unsparing” 謀即未行皆斬罪，大明律法不饒人 (*TYH*, 29.1194), he pretends to force Wanzhen to drown herself in a pond. Knowing that Yizhen is defiant and “not one who abides by her lot” 也不是個安本分之人 (*TYH*, 29.1193), he summons her to witness the scene. His plan depends on one critical detail—that Yizhen will step in to save Wanzhen so that the latter can achieve radical transformation 改情換性 in a metaphorical rebirth. He is also prepared, however, for the contingency of Wanzhen truly drowning: “But now the weather is cold, who knows whether that girl could live after she throws herself into the pond? Even if she actually drowns, it is not worth grieving” 但此時天氣寒冷，那妮子投入水池，不知活否？果然沉死，亦不足惜也 (*TYH*, 29.1200).

Weiming's plan and Wanzhen's transformation come to pass, but not before the daughters give lengthy tirades against the father. Yizhen's diatribe begins thus (TYH, 29.1196):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 居家竟要行國法 | Staying within the family, you want to execute the laws of the state: |
| 幾時接位坐龍亭 | When exactly did you ascend the throne to sit in dragon court? |
| 常言虎毒不食子 | As the saying goes, the tiger for all its venom devours not its own. |
| 人而不及虎狼心 | You are human, yet no match for the heart of tigers and wolves! |
| 天性之恩全沒有 | Of heaven-endowed compassion you have none. |
| 堪笑爹爹枉做人 | Laughable indeed: Father, you have been human in vain! |

Wanzhen threatens vengeance before she throws herself into the pond (TYH, 29.1197):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 豺狼虎豹不至此 | Jackals and wolves, tigers and leopards would not come to this: |
| 枉將人話告他身 | You have wasted human words on his person. |
| 用手指定生身父 | She pointed steadily at the father who gave her life: |
| 呀左呀爹爹 | Alas, Zuo . . . Alas, Father! |
| 你今逼死我當身 | Now you are driving me to death. |
| 冤魂啣恨難饒你 | My wronged ghost, filled with rancor, will hardly spare you: |
| 有日前來討命生 | The day will come when I will ask for your life! |

The author is obviously more interested in the power struggle between Yizhen and Weiming than in Wanzhen's reformation. Weiming pretends not to know of Yizhen's rescue of Wanzhen, and Yizhen, ignorant of her father's plan, proceeds to mobilize the rest of the family against him. The unsuspecting Yizhen articulates her loathing of her father's cruelty with harsh and bitter words (TYH, 29.1204):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 爹爹便作人中虎 | Even if you, Father, are going to be the tiger among humans, |
| 也合山中去吃人 | You should go and eat humans in the mountains. |
| 不應距坐家門內 | There is no reason to perch within the family, |
| 兼之但吃自親生 | And further, eat only those born of you. |
| 兒等兄妹人四個 | There are only four of us brother and sisters, |
| 那夠爹爹幾次吞 | How could these few rounds of swallowing suffice for you? |

Zuo Weiming keeps the charade going beyond what is necessary, as if he too takes a perverse pleasure in matching schemes with Yizhen and provoking her defiance. More importantly, the success of Weiming's scheme *depends on* Yizhen's disobedience of his command not to save Wanzhen. The model is less the taming of a daughter's rebellion than its surreptitious and anxiety-ridden justification.

In sum, political disorder makes room for female agency, as symbolized by Yizhen's quest and use of the coiled dragon sword. Abduction absolves her of blame for crossing boundaries and for being publicly visible while giving her the chance for momentous political action, which in turn facilitates and justifies other domestic confrontations. Political disorder also justifies rebellion by showing the gap between public integrity and flawed domestic judgments. The idealization of Weiming's political morality as he faces dynastic disintegration is in a sense compensation for the anxieties attending defiance of the father. In other words, the daughter's subversion of the father's authority finds cover and comfort in the image of him as the perfect official confronting greater evils.

Dynastic collapse at the end of *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* provides a context for daughters to covertly claim their patrimony. Whether articulating the need to embrace martyrdom (Wanzhen) or the will to fight (Yizhen), they are defining political choices that transcend gender boundaries (TYH, 30.1239–41 and 30.1242–43). Even in the heavenly realm, where the martyrs have become gods, Yizhen writes out the final judgments for those held responsible for the fall of the Ming. She is still her father's proxy, as Weiming says, "Your writing looks like mine: you can issue the judgments" 汝字如余即判行 (TYH, 30.1244). In the mundane realm, the Zuo line continues because of the daughters' acts of disobedience. This is because, against the wishes of her father and shunning her husband, Yizhen earlier made copies of the Diamond Sutra to appease the souls of Xiuzhen, Hongyun, and Fenglou, who had all died for real or imagined crimes of sexual transgression (TYH, 19.756–65). Throughout the narrative, Weiming consistently disparages Buddhism, and Buddhist monks and nuns are often depicted as lascivious and corrupt. He is therefore adamantly opposed to the idea of copying sutras as a potentially salvational act. Yizhen pretends to comply with his orders but secretly continues her project. Devotional copying requires sexual abstinence, and Yizhen declares to her complaining husband:

“You may pride yourself on being a rare item, / But you may not figure much in my mind” 你便自恃爲奇貨，我意中未必有桓君 (TYH, 19.758). Despite the pervasive anti-Buddhist rhetoric of the narrative, Yizhen’s reproduction of the Diamond Sutra is shown to be efficacious: the aggrieved Xiuzhen answers the wish of the father who killed her and is reborn as his son Zuo Yongxiao (whose name means “eternal filial piety”). At the end of the text, he is charged with continuing the family line because he is not obliged to die, not having received office from the Ming (TYH, 30.1244–46). Thus does the wronged daughter killed by her father, through the help of another daughter defying her father and husband, inherit the patrimony. That this is achieved through rebirth as a son points to concomitant irony and equivocation.⁵⁵

Female Hero as Indictment

The author of *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* uses dynastic crisis to imagine female agency and rebellion. By contrast, most seventeenth-century male writers used female heroes to allegorize political judgments and national destiny. We will begin with the figure of the female avenger.⁵⁶ The logic of female vengeance implies symbolic substitution—only by taking up a male role (and often male disguise) can the female avenger make up for the authority left absent by dead or ineffective men in a patriarchal system. Notable Ming-Qing examples of such avengers include Shentu Xiguang 申屠希光, who appears in *The Compendium of Love* (*Qingshi leilue* 情史類略), *The Stones Nod* (*Shi Diantou* 石點頭), and *Constant Words to Awaken the World: Second Collection* (*Erke Xingshi hengyan* 二刻醒世恆言); the eponymous heroine in “Cai Ruihong Endured Shame to Achieve Vengeance” (“Cai Ruihong renru Fuchou” 蔡瑞虹忍辱復仇) in *Constant Words to Awaken the World* (*Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言, j. 36); and Shang Sanguan 商三官 in the story that bears her name in *Liaozhai*. Shang Sanguan is closely patterned on Xie Xiao’e 謝小娥, whose story,

55. Just as intermittent disparagement of *tanci* and fiction—fit reading only for morally flawed characters like Madame Ke’s daughters and Zuo Wanzhen in the text—punctuate the author’s implicit celebration of her genre of choice, the proposition of the daughter’s patrimony is accompanied by a sense of negation and impossibility.

56. For an anthology of examples, see Wang Li and Liu Jieying, *Zhongguo gudai xiayi fuchou shiliao cuibian*, pp. 180–266. On the moral and legal justification for vengeance, see Li Longxian, *Fuchou guan*.

first told by Li Gongzuo 李公佐 (9th c., TPGJ, 491.4030–32), is included in *New Tang History* (*Xin Tangshu*, 130.5827–28) and elaborated in a vernacular tale in Ling Mengchu's *Slapping the Table in Amazement, First Collection* (*Chuke pai'an jingqi* 初刻拍案驚奇, j. 19), under the title "Li Gongzuo Skillfully Unraveled Words in a Dream; Xie Xiao'e Cleverly Captured Bandits on the Boat" ("Li Gongzuo qiaojie mengzhong yan Xie Xiao'e zhiqin chuanshang dao" 李公佐巧解夢中言，謝小娥智擒船上盜).

The story of Xie Xiao'e acquires distinct loyalist pathos in Wang Fuzhi's *Dragonboat Gathering* (*Longzhou hui* 龍舟會), a *zaju* play in four acts set in the Tang dynasty. It is a compelling example of using the female avenger to articulate indictment of the collective failure of the male scholar-official and military elite. In the words of Xie Xiao'e after she accomplishes revenge, "All of you among the audience: do not say that I, as a false man, have not washed off all erstwhile rouge and powder from the boudoir, for you who sport beards and thick eyebrows are in truth false men" 列位看官們，你休道俺假男兒洗不淨妝閣舊鉛華，則你那戴鬚眉的男兒原來是假 (LZH, 3.136). *Dragonboat Gathering*, Wang Fuzhi's only known dramatic work, was in all likelihood never performed, but he apparently deemed the form conducive to historical reflection. Unlike his direct critique of late Ming intellectual trends, factionalism, institutional failures, and military miscalculations in his voluminous writings,⁵⁷ the play opens up room for irony, probing his sense of failure and doubts about the possibility of action. A renowned thinker, scholar, historian, and poet, Wang Fuzhi was also a staunch loyalist. After despairing of success for the cause of loyalist resistance, he left the Yongli court and devoted himself to scholarship in ever more remote places. He spent the last seventeen years of his life in a self-styled mud hut on Stone Boat Mountain, thereby implicitly comparing himself to a "recalcitrant stone" 頑石.⁵⁸

The Tang tale, "Xie Xiao'e's Story," tells how Xie avenges the murder of her husband and father. The spirits of the murdered men appear to Xie Xiao'e in a dream and give, in the form of riddles, the names of their

57. See Wang Fuzhi, "Zhangzi *Zheng meng zhu lun*" 張子正蒙註論, "Sijie" 俟解, "E'meng" 噩夢, and "Saoshou wen" 搔首問, in *Chuanshan quanshu*, 12:9–13, 478, 483–89, 557–60, 569–70, 625, 632–34, 640–42.

58. See Wang Fuzhi, "Chuanshan ji" 船山記, in *Chuanshan quanshu*, 15:128–29.

murderers.⁵⁹ When the author-narrator, Li Gongzuo, meets Xie in a temple, he solves the riddles and comes up with the names “Shen Lan” 申蘭 and “Shen Chun” 申春. Acting on this knowledge, Xie Xiao’e uses male disguise to become a servant in Shen Lan’s household, where she successfully accomplishes her mission of vengeance. She then becomes a Buddhist nun. Whereas the late Ming vernacular story in Ling Mengchu’s collection basically adheres to the Tang model of eulogizing individual valor, Wang Fuzhi implies broad historical significance from the outset, beginning with the spatial and temporal markers of the titular couplet: “On Parrot Island a traveler solved riddles, / At Dragonboat Gathering a heroic woman avenged wrongs” 鸚鵡洲游人拆字，龍舟會烈女報冤. Parrot Island evokes memory of Mi Heng 彌衡 (173–98),⁶⁰ whose fearless denunciation of Cao Cao as usurper is celebrated in fiction and drama.⁶¹ The Dragonboat Festival commemorates the quintessentially loyal minister Qu Yuan, whose martyrdom is implicitly compared to Xie’s mission of vengeance. Qu Yuan was ubiquitously invoked as a model in early Qing loyalist literature, especially for those who perished by drowning. Self-definition through *Verses of Chu* symbolism is prevalent in Wang Fuzhi’s writings, and he also left behind annotations and commentaries on that corpus. The fact that he hailed from Hunan, which overlaps with ancient Chu, facilitates assertions of geographical affinities.

Turning Xie Xiao’e’s story into an allegory for national trauma, Wang Fuzhi transparently names Xie Xiao’e’s father and husband Xie Huang’en 謝皇恩 (“Gratitude to imperial beneficence”) and Duan Buxiang

59. The names are encoded as follows: “Monkey in carriage, grass east of the gate. Running in the hay, husband for a day” 車中猴，門東草，禾中走，一日夫. *Dragonboat Gathering* has “running in the field” 田中走 instead of “running in the hay.” Monkey corresponds to *shen* 申, the ninth of the twelve terrestrial branches. *Shen* is also the middle portion of the character for carriage 車. The grass radical 艸 and the characters for gate 門 and east 東 together make up the graph *lan* 蘭. Hay is found in fields. The graph for “field” 田, once it is “run through,” becomes *shen* 申. To add one horizontal stroke to the character for husband 夫 and incorporate the word day 日 underneath makes the character *chun* 春. Hence the names of the murderers are Shen Lan 申蘭 and Shen Chun 申春.

60. Parrot Island is named after Mi Heng’s poetic exposition on parrots (“Yingwu fu” 鸚鵡賦, Yan Kejun, *Quan Houhan wen*, 87.942).

61. See *Sanguo yanyi*, chap. 23; Xu Wei’s *Sisheng yuan* (first play).

段不降 (homophonic with “Will certainly not surrender”).⁶² For Xie to avenge their murder is to vindicate Ming loyalism. In act 1, the goddess Little Lone Mountain, herself the embodiment of the idea of lonely integrity and resistance (the small mountain being like the bulwark against the currents in midstream, as described by the proverbial expression *zhongliu dizhu* 中流砥柱 for a person of indomitable will and uncompromising integrity), defines the historical significance of Xie Xiao’e’s mission by emphasizing the context of dynastic crisis (LZH, 1.120):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 萬派東流赴海門 | Ten thousand tributaries flowing east proceed to the Gate of the Sea, |
| 中流一柱砥乾坤 | In mid-current, one pillar determines the cosmic flow. |
| 大唐國裏忘忠孝 | The great Tang empire has forgotten loyalty and piety— |
| 指點裙釵與報冤 | I will point the way for a woman to repay wrongs with justice. |

Xie Xiao’e is thus the last of the just:

Although a woman, she, unlike the hordes of little beggars who swindle gauze officials’ caps in the Great Tang empire, has the courage of a real man. They abandon the Zhenyuan emperor⁶³ to his fate as he fails to find refuge anywhere. But she can avenge the wrongs that her father and husband suffered.

雖巾幗之流，有丈夫之氣，不似大唐國一夥騙紗帽的小乞兒，拚著他貞元皇帝投奔無路，則他可以替他父親丈夫報冤。(LZH, 1.120)

The solution of riddles is a common motif in Chinese historiography and literature, especially in stories about portents or crimes and detection.⁶⁴ Literary riddles are often based on “character-splitting” 拆字—the breaking of characters into constituent graphic elements, which are then translated into images or described in lines that appear enigmatic or nonsensical. In both the Tang tale and the Ming vernacular story, Li Gongzuo’s solution of riddles through ideographic analysis is climactic:

62. In the earlier accounts her father is not named, and her husband’s name is Duan Juzhen.

63. Emperor Dezong of Tang used three reign titles—Jianzhong (780–84), Xingyuan (784–85), and Zhenyuan (785–805).

64. See Plaks, “Riddles and Enigmas”; Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, pp. 146–50.

the scholar-official's genius parallels the female avenger's courage. In *Dragonboat Gathering*, Wang Fuzhi heightens the redemptive moral purpose of the riddles. In this play, the goddess encodes the names of the murderers in riddles, so that the ghosts of Xie's father and husband will not be able to seek revenge themselves. Ghostly retribution will not suffice as moral example; Xie Xiao'e needs to demonstrate her valor and determination, "so as to preserve for the Great Tang empire a modicum of a living person's breath" 替大唐國留一點生人之氣 (LZH, 1.121).

Solving the riddles becomes an occasion to ponder the burden placed on the literati, whose proper province is "knowing the words" 識字. When Xie Huang'en complains about the opacity of the riddles, the goddess of Little Lone Mountain incredulously asks, "Is it truly possible that in the whole wide world there is not one scholar who knows the characters and can explain this to your daughter?" 難道普天下沒一個識字的秀才爲你女兒分解 (LZH, 1.121). After the ghosts of her father and husband tell her about their foul murder and give her riddles encoding the murderers' names, Xie Xiao'e muses, "But it will be difficult to find one who can truly study books and know words for what they really are" 只難得個會讀書的識字真 (LZH, 1.124). Li Gongzuo's solution of the riddles thus dramatizes the relationship between erudite learning and meaningful political action.

Li Gongzuo comes upon the riddles at Skybright River Pavilion (Qingchuan ge), where he first laments the moral bankruptcy of scholar-officials and the military elite. Using language and geographic markers reminiscent of the Qing conquest,⁶⁵ he mourns the disintegration of the Tang empire (LZH, 2.125–26):

| | |
|------------|--|
| (末) [紫花兒序] | (Li sings, to the tune "Zhi hua'er xu"): |
| 弄筆尖的把丹青畫餅 | Those who wield brushes use vermilion and blue to paint cakes; |
| 持牙籌的將斛斗量沙 | Those who hold ivory tallies use pecks great and small to measure sand; |

65. Li sings of the endangered Lulong Pass, which is near Xifengkou in present-day Hubei, and is one of the strategic defense posts against northern invaders. In 1630, the Manchu army passed through Xifengkou and almost reached Beijing. "Fields upon fields have been sold" may refer to Han collaborators who betrayed the country for personal profit. Li also describes a truncated Tang empire that is reminiscent of rump Ming courts after 1644.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 擁旌旄的似畫錦冠猴 | Those who hold banners of war are like capped monkeys, dressed in brocade by day. ⁶⁶ |
| 空目斷長堤垂柳 | In vain do my eyes extend to the weeping willows at the embankment |
| 古渡扁舟 | Where small boats are found at the ancient crossing. |
| 波流 | Waves flow on, |
| 一任乾坤日夜浮 | Letting time and tide drift for days and nights. |
| 問誰是 | I ask who would be |
| 吊北渚靈均哀郢 | Qu Yuan mourning at the northern sandbar, lamenting Ying, |
| 祝東風周郎顧曲 | Zhou Yu praying to the east wind, turning back for the music, |
| 望長安王粲登樓 | Wang Can looking to Chang'an, having climbed the tower? ⁶⁷ |

凭高北望，極目中原，好傷感人也

Leaning out on the heights, I looked north, my vision
reaching its limits at the Central Plain—how sad all this is!

[金蕉葉]

顛巍巍盧龍塞

賣卻田籌

(To the tune "Jin jiao ye"):

Trembling—precarious, precarious,
the Lulong Pass,

Fields upon fields have been sold.

66. "Name (or fame) is like cakes drawn on the ground—they cannot be eaten" (Chen Shou, *Sanguo zhi*, 22.651). The general Tan Daoji measured sand and cried out tallies, thereby fooling the enemy about the extent of its supplies (*Nanshi*, 15.446). Xiang Yu wanted to return east after burning down the Qin palaces, exclaiming, "Attaining wealth and status and not going home is like wearing brocade clothes and walking in the dark. Who will know about me?" He was mocked and compared to "the monkey capped after bathing" (*Shiji*, 7.315). All three allusions refer to deception, miscalculation, and false appearance.

67. Qu Yuan, Zhou Yu 周瑜 (175–210), and Wang Can here represent poet-statesmen who embrace the burden of political responsibility. According to tradition, Qu Yuan wrote "Lamenting Ying" ("Ai Ying" 哀郢) to mourn the fall of the Chu capital Ying to Qin troops. He grieves at the "northern sandbar" because the Chu king is held captive in Qin, to the northwest of Chu. Zhou Yu supposedly prayed for northeast wind when he used fire against the enemy army in the famous Battle of Red Cliff. He was knowledgeable about music; hence the saying, "Where there were mistakes in the music, Master Zhou turned to look" (Chen Shou, *Sanguo zhi*, 54.1265). Wang Can wrote a poetic exposition on climbing a tower ("Denglou fu" 登樓賦, *Wenxuan* 11.489–92) to convey his frustration about his lack of recognition and the impossibility of realizing his vision.

| | |
|--------|---|
| 去滔滔清汴水 | Gone—rushing, rushing, the River Bian, |
| 割斷鴻溝 | The great dividing waterway has been cut off. ⁶⁸ |
| 更那堪 | How to bear |
| 響鳴鳴古涼州 | The piercing notes of ancient |
| | Liangzhou tunes, |
| 笛悲折柳 | The flutes mourning willow branches |
| | broken off. ⁶⁹ |
| 只留得個 | What remains |
| 石頭城 | Is only Stone City, |
| 二分水洲 | Where the Islet separates two rivers. ⁷⁰ |

這壁間有許多留題在上。待下官看來。

These walls are filled with inscriptions: let me look at them.

| | |
|---------|--|
| [小桃紅] | (To the tune “Xiao tao hong”): |
| 凌雲庾信已千秋 | Soaring to the clouds, Yu Xin has lasted |
| | a thousand years. ⁷¹ |
| 問伊誰 | I ask who they are, |
| 披夕秀 | That take cover with evening’s gracefulness. |

(笑介) 原來都是這等樣詩！止不過

(*Li laughs*): So what we have here is this type of poem! Nothing more than

| | |
|---------|------------------------------------|
| 崔顥殘膏來潤口 | Moistening mouths with the remains |
| | of Cui Hao’s repast. |
| 漫悠悠 | Gently, extending to infinitude— |

68. For Lulong Pass, see note 65 in this chapter. River Bian, in present-day Henan, was the “great divide” spearating Chu and Han armies during the wars preceding the founding of the Han dynasty in 206 BCE. Here the “cutting off” of the “great divide” may refer to the crumbling lines of division bewteen the Ming dynasty and the Qing conquerors.

69. See chap. 1, pp. 67, 82, 87; and n. 168 on p. 80.

70. For Stone City, see chap. 2, n. 48. For the image of the two rivers, see Li Bo, “Deng Jinling Fenghuang tai” 登金陵鳳凰台: “The three mountains half fall beyond the blue sky, / Two rivers parted in the middle by the White Egret Islet” 三山半落青天外，二水中分白鷺洲 (*Li Taibo quanji*, 2:478). The White Egret Islet, at the outskirt of Nanjing, is flanked by the Yangzi and Qinhuai Rivers.

71. For Yu Xin, see chap. 1, pp. 37–38, 63–64, 84–85. In the first of his six quatrains on poets, “Xiwei liu jueju” 戲爲六絕句, Du Fu praises Yu Xin for his “powerful brush soaring to the clouds” 凌雲健筆 (*DS*, 11:561–62). Of course Yu Xin “had lasted for a thousand years” by Wang Fuzhi’s time, but not according to the supposed temporal setting of the play in the ninth century.

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 望鄉關學幾句閑倻愁 | They look upon homeland's pass and learn a few lines about idle, listless sorrow. ⁷² |
| 爲你含羞 | On your behalf I feel shame, |
| 虧伊出手 | How can you write all that? |
| 倒不如漁唱樵謳 | Less worthy than fishermen's songs and woodcutters' chants. ⁷³ |

At this juncture Li Gongzuo sees Xie's riddles pasted on a pillar. There is great urgency behind these apparently nonsensical lines, especially when compared to the adjacent banal poems of idle sorrow. Li promptly solves the riddles, first conveying his answers through allusions and then noting that the encoded names involve common errors due to ignorance of the "proper principles of the six scripts" 六書正法.

Knowing what we know of Wang Fuzhi's keen interest in history, as evinced by his monumental *Reading the Comprehensive Mirror* (*Du Tongjian lun* 讀通鑑論), *Discussions of Song History* (*Song lun* 宋論), and *True Records of the Yongli Reign* (*Yongli shilu* 永曆實錄), his redefinition of the historical context for Xie Xiao'e's story emerges as highly significant. The Tang tale is set during the reign of Emperor Xianzong 憲宗 (778–820, r. 806–20): Li Gongzuo first meets Xie Xiao'e in Nanjing in the eighth year of the Yuanhe era (814), Xie accomplishes the mission of vengeance in 818, and they meet again in Sibin in 819. The events thus take place in the context of the hope for the restoration 中興 of Tang rule that was associated with Emperor Xianzong's reign, although this history remains very much in the background, unarticulated. *Dragonboat Gathering*, by contrast, is set during the troubled reign of Emperor Dezong 德宗 (742–805, r. 779–805), who was almost deposed during the turbulent provincial revolts of 781–86. Emperor Dezong was ousted from

72. "Extending to infinitude" 悠悠, "homeland's pass" 鄉關, and "sorrow" 愁 all echo Cui Hao's 崔顥 (704–54) "Huanghe lou" 黃鶴樓 (*Tang Song shi juyao*, pp. 546–47), on which Li Bo's "Fenghuang tai" is based. The Yellow Crane Tower is in present-day Wuchang, where Li Gongzuo is in this scene. "Skybright River Pavilion" and "Parrot Island" refer to Cui's poem: "The skybright river is unmistakable, as are trees of Hanyang, / Fragrant grasses, lush and verdant, cover Parrot Island" 晴川歷歷漢陽樹，芳草萋萋鸚鵡洲。

73. The reader is reminded of Fu Shan's 傅山 (1607–84) impatient refusal to "meditate on the past" at Jinling, dismissing it as idle exercise at a moment of national crisis: "Indeed Jinling has an ancient past, / Poets, heedless, would have their meditations" 甚是金陵古，詩人亂有懷 ("Jinling bu huaigu" 金陵不懷古, *Fushan quanshu*, 1:172).

Chang'an and stranded for ten months, first in Fengtian and then Liangzhou, between 783 and 784. In act 2, Li Gongzuo comes on stage describing the emperor's recent plight: because of the insurrections of regional commanders in the Guanzhong and Hebei areas, Dezong's court has fled to Liangzhou, and the emperor now depends on the Jiangnan area, where Li Gongzuo's clan uncle Li Qi 李錡 is inspector-general.⁷⁴ Working under Li Qi, Li Gongzuo is responsible for sending provisions from Jiangnan to Guanzhong. In the play, Li Gongzuo first meets Xie Xiao'e at Hanyang in 796 when, in the aftermath of the provincial rebellions, the central government is greatly weakened. Xie undertakes her mission of vengeance in 799 and meets Li Gongzuo again in 802. In the meantime the erstwhile apparent loyalist Li Qi has developed subversive ambitions, and Li Gongzuo's attempts to alert the emperor have been frustrated by scheming eunuchs (LZH, 4.137).

Dragonboat Gathering cannot be dated with certainty, but many details in it reverberate with the Ming-Qing transition. Wang Fuzhi might have intended parallels between Emperor Dezong and the Chongzhen emperor: both rulers were plagued by their suspicious natures and misjudgments of people.⁷⁵ For both of them, initial reformist intentions were overhasty and failed to come to fruition, ethnic groups beyond the frontier posed looming threats, factionalism undermined the polity, and apparent loyalists switched sides with alarming alacrity in a confusing political landscape.⁷⁶ The simple bandit-murderers of the Tang tale and the Ming story become politically subversive in Wang Fuzhi's play. Aspiring to establish a counter-government in the style of the protagonists in *Water Margin*,⁷⁷ the bandits nevertheless dispense with their rhetoric of loyalty and duty 忠義 to the reigning dynasty. Their goal is to "not let the ruling Li family wear their embroidered dragon robes comfortably" 則教那李官家穿不穩袞龍袍 (LZH, 3.131). They carry echoes of rebels such as Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606–45) and Zhang Xianzhong 張獻忠 (1606–47), whose massive insurrections precipitated the final crisis that brought about the fall of the Ming dynasty.

74. Sima Guang mentions one Li Qi who was made inspector-general of Zhexi in 800 and who rebelled in 802 (*Zizhi tongjian*, 235.1617, 236.1619). See also Lü Simin, *Sui Tang nudai shi*, pp. 303–4, 329.

75. See Wang Fuzhi, *Du Tongjian lun* (*Chuan Shan quanshu*, 10:893–943).

76. See *Ibid.*, 10:924–25.

77. As in *Water Margin*, they "gather in righteousness" 聚義 and claim to "fulfill the Way on behalf of Heaven" 替天行道 (LZH, 3.132).

In the context of chaos and crisis, Xie's unflinching heroism serves as a decisive reproach against the seditions, compromises, inertia, or indifference of the male scholar-officialdom and military elite. Even Li Gongzuo, whose sagacious solutions to the riddles are celebrated in earlier sources, in the play seems trapped, disappointed, and hopeless (LZH, 2.129):

(末) [看花回]
 辜負了我做大丈夫的
 挽蒼虬
 帶吳鉤
 無力相援，只待聽
 雌龍夜吼

(*Li sings, to the tune "Kanhua hui"*):
 In vain do I, the real man,
 Pull the dark dragon,
 Wear the Wugou swords.
 Powerless to help, I can only listen to
 The female dragon roar at night.

In the end Li defends his integrity by withdrawing from politics, and regards Xie's revenge as symbolic fulfillment of his own frustrated aspirations. Thus Li's role in the play is to be Xie's soulmate 知音 and to interpret the historical significance of her vengeance.

Li urges Xie to assume male disguise. That a woman disguised as a man may imply a concealed weapon is evident even in vulgar punning: when Xie Xiao'e is to entertain the bandits with songs, one of them declares, "Good! Good! Brother Xiaoyi [Xie's assumed name], if it were not for your extra 'knife,' you would have passed for a woman" 好! 好! 小乙哥，你只多了那把刀兒，倒也像個婦人. To this Xie responds in an aside, "I will let you recognize the good man with that knife" 教你認得有這把刀兒的好男子 (LZH, 3.132). The bandit mocks Xie's effeminate appearance, referring to the male sexual organ as a knife. In response to the bandit's mocking, Xie indicates that she is to prove her manliness by wielding a knife. As a singer-entertainer, Xie is the disguised man playing a female role. This double mediation and the consequent dramatic irony facilitate her fervent denunciation of the bandits: even as double role-playing points to her original gender role, skillful equivocation allows her to enumerate the bandits' crimes and proclaim her revenge in words apparently glorifying the bandits' exploits. Before killing the bandits,⁷⁸ she declares herself a woman, and after

78. In the antecedent stories, she kills only Shen Lan.

accomplishing her mission, she reverts to feminine attire. Unlike some versions of cross-dressing whereby reversion to female identity can be anti-climactic or can signal a compromise, the moment of truth and triumph in the play is marked by Xie Xiao'e's proud resumption of her former identity, for only with disclosure is her instrumentalization of male disguise complete.

Despite Xie's success, the tone of *Dragonboat Gathering* is profoundly melancholic. In the end the dead cannot be brought back to life. Since the murdered men's names are Xie Huang'en and Duan Buxiang, the play indicates that "gratitude for imperial beneficence" and "determination not to surrender" are irrevocably lost. The irreversible decline of the Tang dynasty continues. The most memorable arias contemplate loss and destruction: they are sung by the ghosts of Xie Huang'en and Duan Buxiang as they drift hopelessly toward their former home and by Li Gongzuo as he witnesses the disintegration of the Tang empire. Despite the premise of reading public, symbolic meaning into personal vengeance, Wang Fuzhi shows a lingering awareness that Xie's defiant dispensation of justice remains a lone, private act, as indicated by her refusal to seek help from magistrates or to accept official recognition of her courage. Li Gongzuo regards her refusal as proof of her integrity and as token of their shared sense of loneliness (LZH, 4.139–40):

(末) [風流體]
鬧烘烘，鬧烘烘金字匾

絮叨叨，絮叨叨列女傳

看將來，看將來值甚錢？

水牯牛，水牯牛誰受鼻繩串？
What water buffalo, water buffalo
would like being roped by the nose?

[亂柳葉]
卻又嘆
半生半生問天

空熬得
鬢邊鬢邊霜練

(*Li sings, to the tune "Fengliu ti":*

The blazing glitter, blazing glitter
of tablets with golden words,

The endless chatter, endless chatter
of the "Biographies of Women"—

For ages to come, ages to come,
how many coins are they worth?

What water buffalo, water buffalo
would like being roped by the nose?

(*To the tune "Luan liu ye":*

But I lament—
For half a lifetime, half a lifetime
I question heaven,

In vain do I suffer
Hair's edge, hair's edge, turning to
frostlike white silk.

眼對著
江山江山如顛

似落葉依苔依苔蘚

庭院歸燕，
銜不起殘紅片

My eyes look at
Rivers and mountains, rivers and
mountains trembling,
Just like falling leaves clinging, clinging
to moss.⁷⁹
The returning swallow of the courtyard,
Cannot bear the weight of the remaining
red petals.⁸⁰

(旦) 請問恩官此行何往? (末) 我抒忠無路，且自歸休。

(*Xie speaks*): May I ask where my benefactor is going on this trip?

(*Li speaks*): I have no way to express my loyalty, and can only
withdraw and return.

The play ends with both Xie and Li withdrawing from society and seeking the consolation of religion: Xie Xiao'e becomes a Buddhist nun and Li Gongzuo withdraws into a kind of Daoist detachment.⁸¹ But their meeting in the final scene also shows how, as their familiar world falls apart, they take refuge in their common grief and mutual recognition. Similarly, as their hopes for heroic action diminished, Ming loyalists sought historical understanding and self-understanding in the communion of like-minded persons, among both their contemporaries and readers from later generations.

Female Hero as Apology

The heroic transformations of women can be used in opposite ways: to indict male effeteness and incompetence, and to vindicate what comes under the rubric "feminine." Whereas the condemnation of inadequate men is relatively straightforward and often carries a broader critique of late Ming cultural attitudes, the apology for feminine attributes is intrinsically ambivalent and points to a mixture of regret, nostalgia, and self-justification in the historical retrospection on the late Ming. Feminine qualities are commonly linked to romantic and aesthetic spheres

79. The country's fate is compared to falling leaves that cannot escape disintegration even if they "cling to moss."

80. Like the swallow, which is too weary to carry "the remaining red petals," Li Gongzuo has no strength left to fight the good cause.

81. In the antecedent stories Li Gongzuo remains an official.

of experience in the Chinese literary tradition. If a quintessentially feminine character becomes a hero, it implies that immersion in romantic-aesthetic realms can also be redemptive, not, as the moralists claim, self-indulgent and irresponsible. Redemption is a paradoxical proposition, however, because it is unclear how beauty, aesthetic sensibility, and passion can generate or co-exist with valor, ambition, and moral mission.

Both the indictment of ineffective men and the vindication of the romantic-aesthetic realm are developed in Wu Weiye's *zaju* in four acts, *Facing Spring Pavilion* (*Linchun ge* 臨春閣), although the latter theme is by far the more prominent. Wu's play presents two women, the military commander Lady Xian 冼夫人 and the favored consort Zhang Lihua 張麗華 acting in the capacity of minister, as the only possible saviors of the failing Chen dynasty. The women meet at a banquet at Facing Spring Pavilion and then again at a Buddhist temple, where they confront the past (i.e., their former incarnations as a bodhisattva and her martial attendant, respectively) and the future, imminent dynastic ruin. The play ends with the fall of Chen, Zhang Lihua's death, and Lady Xian's choice of religious renunciation after her dream of Zhang's ghost.

Chinese literature conventionally associates dynastic decadence with a last ruler's sensual indulgence and neglect of public duty. *Facing Spring Pavilion* challenges this proposition and reverses traditional injunctions against women assuming power or taking up male roles in the body politic. As in *Dragonboat Gathering*, the female hero represents reproach against the collective failures of men (*LCG*, 2.9):

(小旦)(指江孔末道)他外頭全然不濟

(Zhang points to the ministers Jiang and Kong and speaks):

These people outside are totally useless.

[么篇]

(To the tune "Yao pian"):

儘文章弓馬

Be it literary composition or skill with bow
and horse,

我輩占風流

Our like claim beautiful mastery.

In act 1, even as Lady Xian glories in the royal recognition of her achievements, she expresses nostalgia for the heroic Han general Ma Yuan 馬援 (14 BCE–49 CE), for, as she explains it, "In these days, there is not a single man like this to be seen" 到今日啊，這樣的男兒一個也不見了 (*LCG*, 1.5). The play concludes with her challenge to and

reproach against men as she foregoes her position: “After all it is difficult for women to make the difference in winning and losing,⁸² / And I wish you who can make the difference in winning and losing would let show your man’s valor” 畢竟婦人家難決雌雄，則願你決雌雄的放出男兒勇 (LCG, 4.23). However, the play’s critique of weak men fades into the background as its eulogy of strong, feminine women takes center stage. As the embodiment of idealized male and female attributes, Lady Xian and Zhang Lihua aestheticize war and politics, and fuse romantic-aesthetic longings with socio-political order. More specifically, the invention of the female hero “overturns the case” 翻案 against the claim that excessive pleasures and passions undermine the polity.

Despite intermittent jibes against male incompetence, we sense throughout the play the restraint of judgment and the reluctance to condemn.⁸³ Even Chen Houzhu (553–604, r. 583–89), the last ruler of Chen, emerges as a relatively benign figure. In act 3, the monk Zhisheng praises Chen Houzhu: “For my king, the tree of no worries is ten thousand feet high” 吾皇無憂樹高千丈 (LCG, 3.14). In Buddhist lore, many princes were born under “the tree of no worries” (the Asoka tree), a blessed spot. However, the epithet “without sorrow” 無愁 is traditionally used to castigate a ruler’s blithe irresponsibility.⁸⁴ Wu Weiye reverses the meaning of the epithet by using it to describe Chen Houzhu’s equanimity consequent upon the felicitous choice of Zhang Lihua and Lady Xian as leaders in court and at the frontier. When he comes on stage, Chen Houzhu declaims:

The beauty of the eastern kingdom is acclaimed for adeptness at poetry,
the son of heaven of the southern dynasty is known to be without sorrow.
I, Chen Houzhu, have entrusted affairs of state to the prized consort

82. Of course in Chinese this means, literally, “deciding who’s male and who’s female.”

83. This is also true of many of Wu Weiye’s historical poems. See Wai-ye Li, “History and Memory.”

84. Qi Houzhu (557–77, r. 565–76), the counterpart of Chen Houzhu in the north, was called “the son of heaven without sorrow” (*Bei Qi shu*, 8.176; *Suishu*, 14.331). Li Shangyin’s “Chen Hougong” 陳後宮 has the lines: “The ministers in attendance were all half-drunk; / Just as the son of heaven was without sorrow” 從臣皆半醉，天子正無愁 (LSY, 1:11). In Kong Shangren’s *Taohua shan*, Emperor Hongguang describes himself as “the son of heaven without sorrow” (scene 25). See also Liu Rushi, “Chunjiang huayue ye” 春江花月夜: “For the son of heaven without sorrow, the Yangzi River was the boundary; / Dying and living under flowers, he was king of the upturned winecup” 無愁天子限長江，花底死活酒底王 (LRSJ, p. 34).

Zhang Lihua. Indeed, she is like the key minister within the tent of strategic decisions, toiling day and night without rest . . . It can be said that I delegated responsibility to the right person. I have no more worries.

東國佳人推善賦，南朝天子號無愁。孤家陳後主，以國事付貴妃張麗華，果然帷幄重臣，夙夜匪懈 . . . 可謂委任得人，吾無憂矣。
(*LCG*, 2.7)

After receiving Lady Xian and conferring on her a eulogy composed by Zhang Lihua, he reiterates the legitimacy of his withdrawal from government. “The two of you—one reads and deliberates reports and memorials for me, and the other inspects and guards rivers and mountains for me. I can spend my days with two or three merrymaking guests drinking and writing poetry. What joy!” 你兩人一為我看詳奏章，一為我巡視山河，朕日與二三狎客，飲酒賦詩，好不快活也 (*LCG*, 2.8).

According to *History of the Southern Dynasties*, the three pavilions—Facing Spring, Tying Silk 結綺閣, and Beholding Immortals 望仙閣—were built in 584 as abodes for Chen Houzhu and his consorts Zhang, Kong, and Gong. In these structures, the epitome of luxury and refinement, Chen Houzhu held literary and musical gatherings that produced lyrics glorifying the pleasures of court life and the beauty of his consorts. Typical titles are “Jade Trees and Flowers in the Rear Courtyard” 玉樹後庭花 and “The Joys of Facing Spring” 臨春樂. Literary depictions of gatherings at Facing Spring Pavilion invoke images of a last ruler, ministers, and consorts wallowing in oblivious self-indulgence, trivializing government, and degrading poetry into mere ornate, sensuous adornment. Facing Spring Pavilion thus becomes the byword for dynastic decadence.

To dramatize the doomed fate of such hedonistic pleasures, *Remnant Records of Sui* (*Sui yilu* 隋遺錄, ca. 9th–10th c.) uses the topos of the interrupted feast.⁸⁵ In this account, Emperor Yang of Sui meets the ghosts of Chen Houzhu and his palace women. Chen Houzhu’s ghost recalls the end of the Chen dynasty, when the Sui general Han Qinhu 韓擒虎 (538–92) led the invading northern army into the Chen palace:

85. The topos of the interrupted feast is also used in Bai Juyi’s “Changhen ge” 長恨歌 (*Bai Juyi ji*, 12.238–39); and in scene 24 of Hong Sheng’s (1645–1704) *Palace of Lasting Life* (*Changsheng dian* 長生殿).

At that moment, what pained [Zhang] Lihua the most was how, just as she was leaning against the Facing Spring Pavilion and trying out the brush made of Dongguo purple rabbit hair on a small piece of shiny red silk to compose a reply to minister Jiang's [Jiang Zong] line on "the jade-disc moon," she saw—before finishing her poem—Han Qinhu astride a dark horse, leading ten thousand armored soldiers and bursting in.⁸⁶

爾時麗華最恨方倚臨春閣試東郭競紫毫筆，書小硯紅綃作答江令壁月句。詩詞未終，見韓擒虎躍青驄駒，擁萬甲直來衝入。

This is a moment of historical justice, when sensual indulgence meets the destruction it helped to bring about. Wu Weiye also alludes to Facing Spring Pavilion as the emblem of heedless pleasures and passions ending in dynastic collapse in "The Song on Listening to the Daoist Bian Yujing Playing the Zither" ("Ting nü daoshi Bian Yujing tanqin ge" 聽女道士卞玉京彈琴歌, *WMC*, 1:64), as we shall see in chapter 4. This is but one instance of recurrent Qing comparisons of the Southern Ming to the Southern Dynasties, or of the Hongguang emperor to Chen Houzhu and other decadent last rulers.

Although in his poetry Wu Weiye follows conventional interpretations in his negative judgment of "decadent" southern dynasties, in *Facing Spring Pavilion* he reverses his position. Perhaps in conscious rejection of the topos of the interrupted feast discussed earlier, here he makes the banquet the occasion to celebrate the military achievement of Lady Xian, the literary talent and judgment of Zhang Lihua, and the friendship of the two women. Zhang Lihua composes the imperial decree praising Lady Xian, and she writes a quatrain celebrating the image of the aestheticized woman warrior. Later her ghost visits Lady Xian in a dream to demonstrate "the deep understanding between ruler and subject, a friendship in life and death" 君臣知遇，生死交情 (*LCG*, 4.18), thereby augmenting a feminized version of the ideal ruler-subject relationship. The two female heroes appreciate each other's talents, but they also understand that their individual effort alone cannot turn the tide of dynastic decline. By virtue of their beauty and sensibility Zhang Lihua and Lady Xian embody romantic-aesthetic values, but they also represent the transcendence of those values. As civil and military leaders they have the potential to rectify the socio-political order; as prescient characters they measure the individual's effort against the pressures of

86. See *Sui yihu*, Lu Xun ed., *Tang Song chuanqi ji*, p. 139.

the historical moment; as religious initiates they ultimately renounce all worldly attachments and escape from the judgment of history.

In *History of the Southern Dynasties*, Zhang Lihua is decried for her seductive beauty, ambition, witchcraft, and interference in government (*Nanshi*, 12.347–50). In Wu Weiye's play, however, she is celebrated for her poetic talent and political judgment.⁸⁷ She has no choice but to take up the reins of government because Chen Houzhu is slothful, indifferent, and constantly inebriated. Even as she admires Lady Xian's achievements, she chafes at the limits her position imposes on her (*LCG*, 2.6):

| | |
|------------|---|
| (小旦) [石榴花] | (Zhang sings, to the tune "Shi lin hua"): |
| 深宮閒卻磨堦手 | Deep in the palace, the hands capable of writing the "Polished Cliff Stele" are idle. ⁸⁸ |
| 鎮無聊花月吟謳 | It is indeed pointless to intone lyrics on the flowers and the moon. |
| 埋沒咱能文會武君王后 | Buried are the talents of this queen, versed in literature, able in military matters. |
| 明教讓女伴覓封侯 | Clearly I have to leave it to my female companion to seek a liege's fiefdom. |

Zhang Lihua's tragedy arises not from overreaching ambitions but from unrealized talents. Lady Xian links, through a rhetorical strategy of parallelism that conceals logical elisions, Zhang's poetic imagery to effective policies: "The words bring along the 'jade-disc moon' and agate flowers, / the brush sweeps away pestilential rain and barbarian mist" 字

87. The literary pretensions of the court ladies are often treated derisively. The very institution of the "female academician" 女學士 supposedly mocks the seriousness of writing and scholarship. See Li Shangyin, "Nanchao" 南朝: "Filling the palaces were academicians, all lovely, / Minister Jiang, in those years, totally used up his talents" 滿宮學士皆蓮 [一作顏] 色, 江令當年總費才 (*LSY*, 3:1372–78). "Totally" 總 is a pun of Jiang Zong's name and also alludes to the anecdote about how "his talents ran out" 才盡 (*Nanshi*, 49.1451). Jiang has "used up" his talents writing poems that glorify the beauty of Chen Houzhu's female academicians.

88. Yuan Jie 元結 (723–72) of the Tang dynasty composed the "Ode to Dynastic Revival" 中興頌. Written in Yan Zhenqing's 顏真卿 (709–85) calligraphy, it was carved on a cliff and called the "Polished Cliff Stele" 磨堦碑. The title is therefore associated with literary and calligraphic talent, lasting achievements, and perhaps even dynastic revival.

帶著壁月瓊花，筆掃著瘴雨蠻煙 (LCG, 1.4).⁸⁹ Zhang Lihua thus comes to emblemize the claim of the aesthetic-romantic realm to coherence and responsibility. The justification of Zhang becomes a more general defense of poetry. As Lady Xian laments, “How could pentasyllabic verses have betrayed the country?” 五言詩怎賣盧龍 (LCG, 4.21).⁹⁰ In the end, Zhang’s death is lamented as the fate of the talented scholar, proof that “fine writings are useless” 文章沒用 (LCG, 4.19). Instead of undermining political order, poetry represents the final refuge from chaos and destruction. There may even be autobiographical echoes in Lady Xian’s statement that Zhang Lihua, “even though she had only writings but no official position, should have a poet’s grave” 便算是有文無祿，做個詩人塚 (LCG, 4.21). Recall that Wu Weiye asked to have the words “grave of the poet Wu Meicun” 詩人吳梅村之墓 inscribed on his own tombstone.⁹¹

All the empathetic appraisals of Zhang Lihua come from Lady Xian, and herein lies Wu Weiye’s revision of the image of Lady Xian conveyed by the historical sources *Sui History* (*Suishu* 隋書) and *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi* 北史).⁹² As charismatic leader of semi-autonomous Southern Yue tribes, Lady Xian lived through the Liang (420–78), Chen, and Sui (589–618) dynasties, and defended all three regimes against rebels. Her title, Lady Qiaoguo (Qiaoguo furen 譙國夫人), was conferred by Yang Jian 楊堅 (541–604, r. 581–604), Emperor Wen of Sui, not by Chen Houzhu, as in the play.⁹³ Although she

89. The “agate flower” 瓊花, a symbol of Yangzhou, is associated with Zhang Lihua.

90. “Lulong” (translated here as “country”) probably refers to the Lulong Mountains near Nanjing and facing the Yangzi River (LCG, p. 38). It may also refer to the Lulong Pass (see n. 65).

91. Shortly before he died in 1671 Wu Weiye wrote: “After I die, wrap me in a monk’s garb. . . . Set up a round stone tablet in front of my grave, with the words ‘the grave of the poet Wu Meicun.’ Do not build an ancestral temple. Do not request laudatory inscriptions from others” (WMC, 3:1406). The epithet “poet” and symbolic renunciation in death thus represent Wu’s regret over serving the Qing.

92. See *Suishu*, 80.1800–1803; *Beishi*, 91.3005–7. Cf. Lin Tianwei, “Sui Qiaoguo Furen”; and the somewhat hagiographical *Jinguo yingxiong diyi ren* by Zhuang Zhao and Gao Huibing.

93. The term “Qiaoguo” also conveniently alludes to Zhang Liang (said to be from Qiao prefecture). Lady Xian claims that her art of war is “handed down from Yellow Stone” (Yellow Stone is Zhang Liang’s mysterious teacher in *Shiji*). She tells the soldiers under her command: “Do not mistake me for old Marquis of Liu [Zhang Liang] with all his charm and effeminate beauty” 休錯認老留侯女貌嫣然 (LCG, 1.4). On Zhang Liang in writings by and about women, see chap. 2, pp. 119–20, 125, 130, 152.

apparently established close ties with Chen Baxian 陳霸先 (503–59, r. 557–59), founder of Chen, she represents less loyalty to any particular house than political integrity and concern for her people's welfare (*Suishu*, 80.1802). Without bias, she stored gifts from the houses of Liang, Chen, and Sui in separate treasuries and duly displayed them on festival days to teach her descendants "loyalty and filial piety" (*Suishu*, 80.1803). In *Facing Spring Pavilion*, however, she is exclusively loyal to the Chen house and has deep sympathy for its romantic-aesthetic values. As the beautiful woman warrior, her presence is entirely fitting at Facing Spring Pavilion. In numerous arias, Zhang Lihua, Chen Houzhu, and Lady Xian herself pay tribute to the fascinating tension between sensuous allure and martial garb.⁹⁴ Indeed, Wu's play makes more references to Lady Xian's seductive beauty than to Zhang Lihua's. When Lady Xian learns of the collapse of the Chen dynasty, she contemplates the past and reflects on her final meeting with Zhang Lihua. Lamenting the tragic irony that Zhang lacked the power to act upon her prescience, Lady Xian absolves her of all blame (*LCG*, 4.18):

(旦)我想萬歲爺終日沉醉，這些光景，張娘娘一雙俊眼兒，有甚麼瞧不出來？

(*Xian speaks*): To my mind, how could these scenes of His Majesty being inebriated day after day fail to be noticed by Lady Zhang's handsome eyes?

[紫花兒序]
他雖在人兒裏打哄
圖個被兒裏情濃

索是意兒裏玲瓏
昨日個臨春排宴

(*Xian sings, to the tune "Zi hua'er xu"*):

Although she voices gaiety among people,
And hopes for deep feelings
under the coverlet,

Her mind is crystal clear.

The other day, when the feast was spread at
Facing Spring Pavilion:

94. The image of the beautiful warrior is a deliberate contrast with that of a court lady in military garb. The latter symbolizes dynastic decadence, as in Li Shangyin's poems on Feng Xiaolian, Qi Houzhu's consort: "Winsome smiles, it is known, suffice to counter ten thousand affairs of state, / Her city-toppling beauty was greatest when she put on the garb of war. / Jinyang has already fallen, do not turn back— / I entreat the king for another round of hunting" 巧笑堪知敵萬機，傾城最是著戎衣。晉陽已陷休回顧，更請君王獵一圍 ("Bei Qi ershou" 北齊二首, second of two quatrains, in *LSY*, 2:539).

| | |
|------------|--|
| 怎生般酒釀花穠 | How intoxicating the wine was, how luxuriant the flowers. |
| 匆匆 | Over all too soon. |
| 爲甚的執手臨歧怨落紅 | Why, then, did she hold my hands at the forking paths and lament falling red petals? |
| 我曉得他意兒了 | I understand her meaning. |
| 說不出君王懵懂 | She could not speak about the ruler's befuddlement. |
| 猛見了點點青山 | Suddenly I see dots of blue mountains— |
| 蹙損了淡淡眉峰 | Diminished from pain are the faint peaks of her eyebrows. ⁹⁵ |

When Zhang's ghost visits Lady Xian in a dream, they lament together the injustice of blaming dynastic ruin on favored consorts (*LCG*, 4.21):

| | |
|-----------|--|
| [紫花兒序] | (<i>Xian sings, to the tune "Zi hua'er xu"</i>): |
| 我見了芳心猶動 | Having seen you, even my heart is moved to longing, |
| 虧下的一點霜鋒 | How could they have let the sword's frost blade fall on you? |
| 娘娘，你死得其所， | My lady, you are given justice in death, |
| 也索罷了 | and that is all. ⁹⁶ |
| 從容 | With calm dignity, |
| 腸斷琵琶曲未終 | The heartbroken song on the <i>pipa</i> has not come to an end. |
| 寄語那黑頭江總 | Send word to that dark-haired Jiang Zong. ⁹⁷ |
| 還虧我薄命昭陽 | It was all thanks to my ill-fated queen, |
| 點綴了詩酒江東 | That poetry and wine gain luster east of the River. |

95. The comparison of a beautiful woman's eyebrows to distant peaks is a standard conceit. See *Xijing zaji*, p. 88.

96. Lady Xian is implying that Zhang Lihua dies as a martyr, and with death she has earned her rightful place in history. According to *Nanshi*, Zhang hid at the bottom of a well in the palace with Chen Houzhu and Lady Kong when the Sui army marched in. The three were hauled out and Zhang was subsequently executed. This shameful episode, a common allusion in classical poetry, is deliberately suppressed here.

97. Du Fu wrote: "From afar I am shamed by Jiang Zong of Liang: / Who, when he returned home, still had dark hair" 遠愧梁江總，還家尚黑頭 ("Wanxing kouhao" 晚行口號, *DS*, 5.295). When Taicheng of Liang fell to rebels in 549, Jiang Zong was thirty-one; when he returned to the Chen court in 563, he had survived a dynastic transition and was forty-five. While Du Fu's lines express envy, Wu Weiye implies disparagement: in contrast to Zhang Lihua, Jiang Zong was skilled above all in self-preservation.

(小生)聞得眾文武說兩個貴妃許多不是。(旦)都是這班人把江山壞了，借題目說這樣話兒。

(*A general speaks*): I heard that crowds of civil and military officials criticized the two prize consorts for many wrongdoings. (*Xian speaks*): It is these people who, having ruined the country, borrow a pretext to say such things.

| | |
|----------|---|
| [麻郎兒] | (<i>Xian sings, to the tune "Ma lang'er"</i>): |
| 他鎖著雕房玉櫳 | She was enclosed in carved chambers, behind jade lattices. |
| 五言詩怎賣盧龍 | How could pentasyllabic verses have betrayed the country? |
| 我醒眼看人弄醉翁 | With sober eyes I watched how people toyed with the drunken old man, |
| 推說道裏頭張孔 | And yet they would shift blame to Zhang and Kong inside. |

Wu Weiye thus appropriates Lady Xian as defender and loyalist of the Chen dynasty. He shows how Lady Xian's valor and loyalty are integrally linked to her empathy with the romantic-aesthetic values of the Chen court, especially as embodied by Zhang Lihua. In doing so, Wu Weiye redefines sensuality and sensibility as the basis of heroic action.

As a woman warrior at the edge of the civilized world (Gaoliang is at the southern frontier),⁹⁸ Lady Xian also belongs to romances of the margins. In the context of the Ming-Qing transition, literary works that romanticize real or imaginary geographical margins often combine three ingredients: fantasies of escape and utopia; valorization of the periphery as critique or corrective of the center; and the hopes of Ming loyalists that their cause, though suppressed and marginalized, may yet gather momentum, perhaps through foreign support.⁹⁹ In *The Female Kunlun* (*Nü Kunlun* 女崑崙, 1676 preface), for example, Qiu Lian 裘璉 (1644–1729) presents a martial Korean princess who comes to China in male disguise to seek the man whose portrait she has fallen in love with.

98. Part of present-day Guangdong, Gaoliang was established as prefecture in 220. Lin Tianwei argues that Lady Xian belonged to the Xidong tribe indigenous to the area. The clan of her husband, Feng Bao, seemed to have been influenced by the Xianbei people for generations ("Sui Qiaoguo Furen," pp. 23, 26–33).

99. Widmer discusses these issues in *The Margins of Utopia*.

Their eventual union in part explains why Korea is poised to come to the assistance of the crumbling Song dynasty at the end of the play.¹⁰⁰ The poet Kuang Lu 鄺露 (1604–50), who served in the Yongli court and died a martyr to the loyalist cause, wrote about the Yao tribes in the southwest and claimed to have served as secretary to one Yunduo niang 雲韞娘, the female Yao military commander. He devotes sections of his miscellany, *Chiyā* 赤雅, to Yunduo niang's art of war and special adornment.¹⁰¹ Marginality also figures in *Facing Spring Pavilion*, notably in episodes where Lady Xian carries echoes of Qin Liangyu. As mentioned above, in 1630 the Chongzhen emperor received Qin in an imperial audience and praised her defense of Beijing with four poems. In Wu's play, Chen Houzhu also receives Lady Xian in an imperial audience (act 1), and Lady Xian plans to move her army to defend the Chen capital: "If I do not endure all hardships to come to the emperor's rescue, how can I laugh at men who ruined the country?" 若不顛沛勤王, 怎笑他男兒誤國 (LCG, 4.17). The critic Wu Mei also believes that Wu Weiye is inspired by Qin Liangyu and intends indirect criticism of the military commander Zuo Liangyu 左良玉 (1599–1645).¹⁰²

The marginality of the female martial hero often conveys an implicit critique of the overripe civilization at the center. In Dong Rong's *Auspicious Shrine*, for example, the courtesan Liu Rushi in Nanjing (i.e., the center) is a symbol of sensual indulgence and dynastic decadence, as opposed to the heroic image of Qin Liangyu in far west Sichuan (i.e., the semi-barbarian margin). According to the logic of Dong Rong's play, Liu Rushi, on horseback and sporting military garb, embodies the spirit of play-acting that erodes the legitimacy of the Southern Ming (scene

100. See especially scenes 5, 8, 13, 22, 29, 31, 38–40. The title refers to Yinniang, a female knight-errant who serves one of the male protagonists and who foils the machinations of the evil minister Jia Sidao. A hand-copied version of *Nü Kunlun* is included in *Guben xiqu congkan nuji*. Recall that Zhu Zhiyu 朱之瑜 (1600–1682) (better known by his sobriquet Shunshui) tried to seek military assistance for the loyalist cause from Japan.

101. Kuang Lu, *Chiyā*, 3b–4b. Cf. *QJJS*, 1:147–54; and Huang Haizhang, *Ming mo Guangdong kang Qing shiren pingzhuan*, pp. 69–79. The story of Kuang Lu and Yunduo niang later became the subject of at least two plays, Chen Lang's *Haixue yin* and Wang Yonzhang's *Lüqi tai*.

102. Wu Mei, *Wu Mei xiqu lunwen ji*, p. 170. There is, however, no solid evidence of this.

57). She is presented as a travesty of the real martial valor of Qin Liangyu and Shen Yuning. In *Auspicious Shrine*, the marginal woman warrior is thus premised on the affirmation of orthodox moral-social order and the negation of late Ming cultural attitudes, which are identified with the Lower Yangzi courtesan culture.¹⁰³ By contrast, Lady Xian empathizes with a supposedly effete court culture. Her martial valor is less a condemnation of over-refinement and corruption of the center than an apology. She identifies with the Chen court and is also its potential savior and chief mourner.

Whatever critique of Chen court culture runs through these works is also ameliorated by Buddhist compassion, as a quasi-religious perspective unfolds in the second half of *Facing Spring Pavilion*. In scene 3, Lady Xian, Zhang Lihua, and the female academician Yuan Dashe gather in the Lady Zhang Temple to offer incense. They listen intently, but with no real comprehension, as the Buddhist monk Zhisheng discourses on karmic cycles and the ephemerality of dynastic fortunes. He hints at imminent catastrophe and enigmatically foretells the name of the general who will conquer Chen.¹⁰⁴ We learn that Zhang, Lady Xian, and Yuan are incarnations of a bodhisattva (the Lady Zhang honored in the temple) and her martial and literary attendants, respectively. Zhisheng's prophetic statements about the fall of Chen elude his audience, leaving them only with a profound sense of melancholy (*LCG*, 3.15):

(外)(座上插楊枝介)

(Zhisheng puts a willow branch in a vase and sings)

[甜水令]

這楊枝兒

歷盡興亡

綰盡悲傷

(to the tune "Tian shui ling"):

This willow branch

Has been through every rise and fall,

Has tied together all grief and sorrow.

103. Dong Rong: "For late-Ming is a world of pure yin, only these two women (Qin Liangyu and Shen Yuning) represented the yang in yin." (Cai Yi, *Zhongguo gudian xiqu xuba huibian*, 3:1719).

104. One general Han reportedly captures a tiger offstage. The tiger is brought onstage and tamed by Zhisheng, who remarks, "The general who captured the tiger is terrifying, but the tiger is not worth fearing." The Sui general who conquered Chen is named Han Qinhu ("one who captures tigers").

| | |
|---------|--|
| 止道是 | One would think that |
| 蟠根天上 | It takes root in heavens above, |
| 一任他 | And so let |
| 飛絮滿長江 | Flying catkins fill the Yangzi River. |
| 有日呵 | The day will come, |
| 運盡枯楊 | When the withered willow's luck runs out, |
| 移植雷塘 | And it will be transplanted to Leitang. |
| 看看的 | Look how |
| 斧斤凋喪 | Axes will bring death and desolation, |
| 爲他與 | And all because |
| 做詩人一樣顛狂 | With the poet it shares the same wild unrestraint. |

The willow branch 楊枝 is part of the iconography of the bodhisattva Guanyin. Here it conveniently alludes to the house (Yang 楊) that will conquer Chen and establish the Sui dynasty.

If the dynastic transition seems mandated (“it takes root in heavens above”), the excesses of Yang Guang 楊廣, Emperor Yang of Sui—who, like Chen Houzhu, was also a poet—brought about the speedy collapse of the Sui dynasty. Yang Guang was buried in Leitang (near Yangzhou). Zhisheng thus looks beyond the fall of Chen to the weary, relentless repetition of dynastic cycles, and a time when the conquerors of Chen will in turn be destroyed for similar reasons. As a metaphor for the oblivious self-indulgence and moral confusion of last rulers such as Chen Houzhu and Emperor Yang of Sui, the “wild unrestraint” 顛狂 of the “flying catkins” 飛絮 is not particularly condemnatory. The rise and fall of dynasties seems inevitable and impersonal. Zhisheng concludes, “This too is the karmic fruits of the multitude, not connected to the rise and fall of one family. I see that the rivers and mountains beautiful as embroidered brocade will soon turn into a world of weapons and soldiers” 也是眾生業果，非關一姓興衰。眼看的錦繡江山，剗地裏刀兵世界 (LCG, 3.16). It is as if the painful prospects (and, for the author, memories) of destruction leave little room for sustained reflection on how and why the dynasty fell.

Pushing associations and homophones further, one may also link the willow branch to Yangzhou, where the Ming commander Shi Kefa took his final stand against Qing troops and where the horrifying massacre of 1645 took place. Easy access to Yangzhou was also the impetus behind Yang Guang's extravagant project of building canals, which were lined

with willows.¹⁰⁵ Yangzhou thus evokes the starkest combination of refined pleasures and bloody destruction. It is also a context where the merest suggestion of just deserts (i.e., the hint that Yangzhou somehow “deserved” that bloodbath because it was steeped in self-indulgent pursuit of pleasure) seems immoral, illogical, and offensive.¹⁰⁶

Zhisheng envisions the historical process as relentless repetitions and cycles of destruction: “The wheel¹⁰⁷ of kalpa ceaselessly buries people, who fasten on what seem to be the immortal land of the undying” 轆轤不住將人葬，認定是不死仙鄉 (*LCG*, 3.15). The only viable escape seems to be religious renunciation. At the end of the play, Zhang’s ghost hints at return to former karmic incarnations, and Lady Xian decides to “enter the mountains to pursue enlightenment” 入山修道. Yet the mythic framework sustaining the religious perspective is not consistently elevated. Zhang Lihua is half bodhisattva, half fox spirit. The temple keeper introduces the history of the woman bodhisattva Zhang: initially she attracted many worshipers, but the temple fell into disuse when a scholar claimed to have encountered her as a fox spirit and married her. Even as nostalgia displaces negative judgments, it is tempered by unease, by the awareness that destruction is all too real and that escape is merely a willful invention. The idea that those who abide by the romantic-aesthetic realm can achieve self-redemption through it is fraught with irony.

Taming the Female Hero

Whereas the plays by Wang Fuzhi and Wu Weiye use the female hero to dignify mourning and invite historical retrospection and judgment within a setting of defeat and failure, there are other works that employ comparable images of martial woman to imagine a new order, albeit often tentatively and in an escapist fashion, suggesting that contradictions are repressed rather than resolved. One example is Li Yu’s 李玉 (ca. 1591–ca. 1671) *Two Manly Heroes* (*Liang xumei* 兩鬚眉, hereafter

105. Wu Weiye also alludes to Yang Guang and Leitan in his Yangzhou poems. See chap. 6.

106. Versions of this argument are discussed in chap. 6.

107. *Lulu* is literally a pulley for drawing water from a well.

LXM). (He will be hereafter referred to by his cognomen as Li Xuanyu 李玄玉 to avoid confusion with the other famous Li Yu 李漁 [1611–80] from this period, whose stories will be discussed in chapter 5.) Li Xuanyu is the most prominent figure in a group of dramatists associated with Suzhou during the Ming-Qing transition. Their works sometimes have a marked contemporary and topical focus, addressing social issues and political developments from late Ming to early Qing.¹⁰⁸ The dates of many of these Suzhou dramatists cannot be ascertained, but they seemed to have been active from the 1620s to the end of the seventeenth century.

The Ming dynasty collapsed as the empire was torn apart by rebel insurgents and Manchu invaders. As if to counter the historical reality of disintegration, literary representations from this period sometimes tell of divisions healed and borders maintained. Li Xuanyu's play is a case in point: *Two Manly Heroes*, with a preface dated to 1653, glorifies the exploits of one Huang Yujin 黃禹金 and his wife, née Deng 鄧氏, in battling the rebels during the dynastic transition. Huang and Deng are based on historical personages who also appear in contemporary poetry, biographical accounts, and miscellanies. Huang's heroic story likely masks compromise and capitulation, while Deng's might have had its subversive elements excised or embroidered.

Two Manly Heroes begins with Huang joining the army as bandits overrun the land. He eventually gains the trust of Shi Kefa with his plans for pacifying and containing the insurgents: he argues that "local bandits" 土賊, driven to rebellion by years of locust plagues and famines and pursued as the enemy by the government, swell the ranks of "roving bandits" 流賊. He believes that it is possible to "erode support for the (roving) bandits by pacifying the local bandits" 撫土賊以孤賊援. This vision, repeatedly averred in the play, facilitates successful re-assimilation of the insurgents into the polity; time and again rebel leaders are persuaded by Huang's rhetoric of pacification (scenes 7, 8, 21–23,

108. These Suzhou playwrights typically did not hold office, belonged to a lower social echelon, and captured the liveliness of urban culture with a more expressive than allusive diction. Perhaps it was inevitable that Suzhou, as the stronghold of both the Revival Society and theatrical culture, should see the rise of political drama. Cf. Li Mei, *Ming Qing zhiji Suzhou zuojia qun yanjin*; Kang Baocheng, *Suzhou jupai yanjin*.

27).¹⁰⁹ Such reintegration is possible because these “local bandits” are presented sympathetically as being no more than independent spirits longing for utopia, “a Fuyu kingdom beyond the edge of the earth, / a Peach Blossom Cave that seems unlike China” 扶餘國遠隔天涯，桃源洞似非華夏 (LXM, 6.1217). Behind this distinction is the belief that local ties can create common bonds and define shared interests between the rebels and their enemies.

The message is that most of the rebels can be reclaimed and converted into defenders of the realm, except for a core group of “roving bandits” (direct followers of Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong) who wreak havoc and spread unmitigated evil (LXM, 2.1205–6). Huang’s role as itinerant persuader never puts him into contact with such types—indeed, his success depends on “convertible bandits.” It is left to his wife, Deng shi, to confront the intransigent rebels. Deng is introduced as a solicitous wife and mother who transforms unintentionally yet effortlessly into a local leader and military commander during Huang’s absence. (Huang and Deng are almost never together in the play: while Huang undertakes his “pacification missions,” Deng holds down the fort at home.) When Deng’s home county, Liu’an, is about to fall to the bandits, her concern for the fate of the unburied coffins of her parents-in-law prompts her to move the family to the ancestral graveyards outside the city so that they can keep watch over the coffins. Her foresight establishes her as the leader of the community, even as the lands surrounding the graves offer refuge for fellow Liu’an inhabitants escaping chaos and destruction. A repeated refrain in the play is that Deng takes up her role as leader inadvertently and reluctantly (LXM, 13.1235):

| | |
|------------|---|
| (旦) [油葫蘆] | (Deng sings, to the tune “You hulu”): |
| 俺是個蓬華糟糠一女曹 | I am but a woman from a humble abode, a lowly wife. |
| 祇爲著寇焰恁咆哮 | But the raging roars of bandits, spreading like wildfire, |
| 因此上身先男子冒弓刀 | Drive me, marching ahead of men, to brave bows and swords. |

109. In another play, *First Rank Cup* (*Yipin jue* 一品爵, in *Li Yu xiqu ji*, 3:1673–1752), Li Xuanyu seems to espouse the opposite view that “eradication campaigns” 進剿 rather than “pacification” 招撫 restore order. However, that play also glorifies Yan An, a knight-errant type character who uses the rebels’ army as an instrument of justice; by changing sides, he also brings about the defeat of his erstwhile leader Zhang Xianzhong.

She is conventionally aestheticized as a woman warrior, although much less is made of her beauty than of, say, Lady Xian in *Facing Spring Pavilion* (LXM, 13.1235). Her family estate, White Lake Mound, is turned into White Lake Fort, a stockade run with military discipline, and the local army she organizes defeats the rebels. She single-handedly shoots down the enemy in an open, clearly defined battle (scene 14). With the imperial rewards for such success, she organizes famine relief and recruits the beleaguered inhabitants of Liu'an to till untended land.

Li Xuanyu broadly affirms that loyalty, or political integrity 忠, is the quality that manifests itself as rhetorical prowess, strategic wiles, and military leadership in a situation of national crisis. Yet the object of this loyalty is ambiguous. Shi Kefa, fervently praised throughout the play as a potential savior of the country (e.g., LXM, 4.1210, 9.1225), exemplifies and inspires loyalty—he oversees Huang Yujin's missions and personally writes the inscription honoring Deng shi's achievement, comparing her to the great Song commanders Han Shizhong and Fan Zhongyan ("Han and Fan among women" 女中韓范) (LXM, 17.1249). Shi Kefa also states plans to write a biographical account of Deng. Beyond mutual respect and personal recognition, however, the broader context of political integrity is problematic.

While the insurgents are clearly marked as the enemy, the locus of legitimate authority remains rather vague. When Huang Yujin tries to persuade the rebels to renounce their insurrection, he summons the emotional weight of "imperial beneficence" received "(by us) as subjects over three hundred years" 況做了三百年的子民，受皇恩，怎消受 (LXM, 8.1223). Yet there is only passing reference to the fall of Beijing and the suicide of the Chongzhen emperor. Deng explains:

Recently the bandit rebels under Li Zicheng invaded the north, and Beijing fell. I gathered the local braves and led an army to come to the court's assistance. Just when I was about to cross the River, I heard that the Eastern Army had already pacified Beijing. The rebel army under Li collapsed and disintegrated, they were pursued and destroyed in a great victory. That was why I halted troops on the march and returned to my hometown.

近日闖賊北侵，燕都失守，妾身彙集鄉勇，率兵勤王，正欲渡河，聞得東兵已定燕京，闖逆潰奔，追勦大捷，故此勒兵還鄉。
(LXM, 24.1267)

As in many other Qing representations of Ming collapse, the Manchus are not named—they are called “the Eastern Army” (as here), “the Northern Army” (as in *Peach Blossom Fan*), or often “the great army.”

Huang Yujin and Deng shi are not confronted with the choice of accepting or rejecting the new regime. The Southern Ming court, presented as corrupt, divided, and doomed, is nevertheless still clinging to power at the end of the play. Its reluctance to properly accommodate the bandits’ surrendered troops convinces Huang that the southern court will collapse, and he decides to retire from office (scene 29). Recognizing that the tide cannot be turned, Huang and Deng find peace in reclusion and escape from history: “One lone pillar cannot support a great mansion” 大廈難支一木 (*LXM*, 30.1286); “In Peach Blossom Spring there is another heaven and earth. / Removed from the human realm / is the Wuling Stream. / Be it Qin or Han, let the changes be” 桃源別有天地，隔人世，武陵谿。爲秦爲漢任推移 (*LXM*, 30.1284–85). The play concludes with a somewhat perfunctory “happy ending”—both Huang and Deng find recognition and honor, and domestic felicity supposedly facilitates disengagement from the political realm. As a typical “virtuous wife,” Deng has taken care to send two new concubines to Huang’s official residence while she remains at home (*LXM*, 24.1268). In the last scene, one of the concubines gives birth to a son. Political discretion and perhaps also wishful thinking dictate that an unspecified status quo is maintained through the Ming-Qing transition as the “bandits”—the real enemy—are destroyed.

Chinese scholars have often feel obliged to disparage such a stance as “reactionary” or “anti-revolutionary,” but in fact the aforementioned distinction between “local bandits” and “roving bandits” is ambiguous. The boundary between hero and rebel, between abiding by the law and breaking it, is also tenuous and shifting. In scene 6, a rebel leader named Zhang Fuhuan comes on stage explaining his heroic aspirations. He tells the audience that he started out organizing local braves to fight the roving bandits, but success only brought government demands that eventually drove him to rebellion (*LXM*, 6.1216). Huang Yujin convinces him without much ado to change sides and support the government (*LXM*, 7.1219). Another rebel, Di Yingkui, was a former Ming officer captured by the bandits and made to join their ranks; Huang Yujin persuades him to pledge loyalty to the Ming again (*LXM*, 25.1269–28.1280). Rebels are swayed by ethical imperatives of loyalty and filial piety. Huang

enlists the help of the mother of a recalcitrant yet filial rebel to bring him to submission (*LXM*, 8.1223). Unlike her husband, Deng does not maneuver shifting boundaries, though she recognizes that want and desperation fuel insurgency, and she stops government troops from undertaking reprisals by pointing out that “these are hungry people, not bandits” 此乃饑民，並非寇盜 (*LXM*, 11.1230).

Such ambiguities are perhaps less a function of Li Xuanyu’s residual sympathy for the rebels than of his keen perception of confusion in the midst of an unfolding conflict, whereby the lines of opposition are constantly being redrawn, and the distinction between late Ming rebel and early Qing resistance fighter is especially problematic. It may also be his attempt to neutralize the political choices of the characters in his historical raw materials. By taking the Qing conquerors out of the picture, he invents a context that justifies both changing sides and defending an independent power base as loyalty to the Ming. The historical counterparts of the protagonists are Huang Ding 黃鼎 (17th c.) and his wife Deng shi 鄧氏 (17th c.), who appear in various contemporary and later historical sources.¹¹⁰ The names of Huang Yujin’s son and nephews in the play correspond to those of Huang Ding in the local gazetteer of Liu’an, which also records Deng’s confrontation with rebels.¹¹¹ There are other obvious clues: the name “Yujin” 禹金, “metal of Yu,” is associated with “Ding” 鼎 or “cauldron,” because the legendary sage king Yu is supposed to have cast cauldrons with metal from nine regions (*Zuozhuan*, Xuan 3.3, pp. 669–72). Huang Yujin’s style name is Yilü 彝侶, “companion of the *yí* ritual vessel,” and *dingyi* 鼎彝 is a common compound referring to ritual vessels.

The Liu’an gazetteer includes Zhang Jinyan’s 張縉彥 (1599–ca. 1670) account, “Defending White Lake against Bandits” (“Baihu youkou jì” 白湖禦寇記), which lauds Deng’s strategic genius. As minister of war, Zhang surrendered to the rebels when Beijing fell in 1644. After escaping south and serving in the Southern Ming court, he eventually switched

110. See Xu Mingyan, *Xu Mingyan wencun*, pp. 36–48.

111. See the biographies of Huang Ding and his nephews in *Tongzhi Liu’an zhou zhi*, 27.5b–8a. Deng shot down the rebel leader Zuo Jinwang in 1642, and Shi Kefa honored her with the inscription “Regalia of Honor for the Master Strategist” (*Difu longtao* 翟弗龍韜); see *Tongzhi Liu’an zhou zhi*, 45.55a–55b.

allegiance to the Qing in 1646. According to his accusers, he dubbed himself “undying hero” 不死英雄 for being able to “change with the times.”¹¹² Factional strife in the Qing court led to his demotion and exile to Ningguta in 1660. Zhang presents the official Qing version of the dynastic transition as the successful suppression of the rebels’ insurgency and its unproblematic memory. He visited White Lake in 1644 in Huang Ding’s company and was impressed by its military discipline. Revisiting in 1646, he found that a vivid collective memory of Deng’s exploits lived on among Liu’an inhabitants. Details on the deployment of forces, including an army of women patrolling the ramparts of the inner city wall, and an account of how Deng bided her time and struck the rebel leader with precision, correspond to what is depicted in the play. Behind this celebration of the martial woman is an unspoken story of capitulation for two men: in 1646, when the Qing army under Dorgan was consolidating its gains in Henan and Jiangnan, Zhang Jinyan convinced Huang Ding to surrender to the Qing, and Huang Ding’s power base became part of Zhang’s own bargain to secure office under the new dynasty.¹¹³

Yao Wenran 姚文然 (1620–78), another Ming official who rose to high office under the Qing, opines that Deng far exceeds other women warriors in history in his account, “Preface to Madame Deng and White Lake Fort” (“Deng furen Baihu zai xu” 鄧夫人白湖寨序): To name a few examples, Mulan was a mere soldier; Xun Guan, who at thirteen broke through a siege to seek help for her father,¹¹⁴ exemplified no more than valor; and the Song general Han Shizhong’s concubine Liang Hongyu or the Tang general Zhang Xun’s sister “Auntie Lu”¹¹⁵ contributed to military campaigns merely as subordinates of the men with whom they were associated.

As for establishing a military base, issuing strategy, and annihilating the leaders among rebels, in the manner of a transforming dragon or crouching tiger, raging lightning or shooting stars—this is the awe-inspiring

112. *Qing shi gao*, 245.9638.

113. “Zhang Jinyan zhuan” 張晉彥傳, in *Qing shi liezhuan*, 79.63a.

114. *Jinshu*, 96.2515; *Huayang guozhi*, cited in *Taiping yulan*, 519.2490.

115. Zhang Xun’s older sister married into the Lu family, but she accompanied Zhang in his campaigns against the rebels during the An Lushan Rebellion and preceded him in martyrdom (*Xin Tangshu*, 129.5540).

talent of a great commander. What was rare even among the ancients is to be found here and now. . . . She dug up earth mounds and fortified them as city walls, tore silk and hemp and made them into banners, turned hoes and spades into halberds that kill, took our villagers and turned them into soldiers whose combat could not be opposed, took our women and turned them into manly guards whose defense could not be breached. And thus the bandits came three times but always left after suffering defeat, and she finally cut down their leader and robbed them of vitality. . . . Is it really true, or is it not, that at the end of an era, the heroic, wondrous spirit of heaven and earth is not brought together in us men but is unexpectedly to be found among women of the inner chambers? Yet at the time one did not hear about special honor or reward encouraging merit, as in the story about Lady Xian's brocade cover and enfeoffment investiture. Is it possible that the court officials close to the emperor were blind to the merit of winning battles, while it is manifest to rebels rising up in violent protest? Or is it possible that capturing the rebel leader and destroying the bandits should naturally be a man's duty, and the lady should not have exceeded her domestic role and taken his place?

乃若建軍府，授方略，馘渠魁，龍變虎蹲，電奔星運，恢恢乎稱大將才也，古之所難，今於是乎在。 . . . 裂繒帛而幟之，取輶輜而戟殺之，取我田舍子而卒伍之，其戰不可禦，取我婦人而丁男之，其守不可攻。乃賊三至，輒創去。至乃斬其渠而奪之氣 . . . 豈真末世天地雄杰瑰琦之氣，不鍾於我輩男子，而偏在閨閣中否耶？ . . . 而當時不聞殊旌懋賞，如洗夫人錦蓋錫封故事，則豈戰伐功格昧于輦上諸君子，而顧明于揭竿斬木中人耶？抑豈擒渠破賊，自男子事，夫人不應越澣統醢醢而代之耶？ (Yao Wenran, *Yao Duanke gong wenji*, 13.8a–9b.)

Both Zhang Jinyan and Yao Wenran refer to Shi Kefa's biographical account of Deng (no longer extant), which is also mentioned in *Two Manly Heroes*. Both claim to know about Deng through Huang Ding, and neither implies that Huang was a lesser figure. Yao especially takes pains to conclude his account with the image of their equal stature: "Whenever Huang passed through White Lake, the lady would meet him with well-disciplined troops, with their weapons fully in place. Banners faced each other, hers faintly resembling a rival domain. For within their family are two great generals!" 間一過白湖，夫人嚴部伍，束橐鞬以迎。旌旗相望，隱若一敵國然。蓋門以內有兩大將軍哉！ (Yao *Duanke gong wenji*, 13.9b). Yao's vision is the same vision that informs *Two Manly Heroes*.

Yao Wenran also pays tribute to Huang Ding in “Preface to Poems for Commander Huang” (“Zeng Huang zongrong xu” 贈黃總戎序),¹¹⁶ which gives us some insight into the negotiations between the local elite and Qing forces in the aftermath of the conquest. Having surrendered to the Qing, Huang Ding continued his “pacifying missions” in Anhui, from whence both Huang and Yao hailed. Yao commends Huang for heeding his own plea against excessive use of force in suppressing anti-Qing resistance and enunciates a vision of martial prowess based on restraint. Anti-Qing resistance, lionized in modern Chinese historiography as “loyalist” or “proto-nationalist,” is characterized here as a continuation of late Ming rebellions. This, of course, is the official version of the dynastic transition, but Yao might also have felt that the chaos of those years and shifting definitions of “legitimate mandate” call for a more restrained confrontation with “those who have not accepted the mandate” 不受命者. Huang targeted rebel leaders but showed overall leniency and restraint in dealing with them. Yao quotes him:

“I received the profound beneficence of the former dynasty, but I was not able to die as a martyr. And now my good fortune is such that, as captive, my blood was not used to anoint the war drum, and I have even been given the chance to oversee military ranks. What do I know about military affairs? I only know that I should use what remains of my life to allow as many to live as possible.”

吾受先朝厚恩，不能死。今復幸不以俘臣繫鼓而俾蒞戎行。吾何知有兵，吾知以餘生廣生生。

Yao implicitly defends Huang’s support of the new regime as compassionate restoration of order for the war-torn, and he lauds Huang’s choice to “become an eremitic recluse behind soldiery” 隱於兵 as demonstrating an understanding of the wisdom of Laozi.

A less flattering picture of Huang Ding emerges from other sources, which emphasize the connection between Huang Ding and Ma Shiyong 馬士英 (ca. 1591–1646), widely blamed for the debacle of 1645. In 1643, Ma Shiyong, then governor of Fengyang, sent Huang Ding to Macheng to persuade the rebel leader Zhou Wenjiang to renounce his insurgency.

116. Yao Wenran, *Yao Duanke gong wenji*, 13.10a–13a. Yao also addressed two poems to Huang Ding; see *Yao Duanke gong wenji, shiji*, 3.12b, 7.17b.

There were rumors that Huang forged Zhou's seal and faked his surrender.¹¹⁷ In *Two Manly Heroes*, by contrast, Zhou Wenjiang is a reluctant and inadvertent rebel whom Huang Yujin convinces to again pledge loyalty to the Ming (*LXM*, 19.1252–23.1266), and it is Shi Kefa who sends Huang Yujin on the mission to find Zhou. Ma Shiying is not mentioned at all.

According to Gu Ling's 顧苓 (17th c.) *Jinling yechao* 金陵野鈔, another rebel leader, Di Yingkui, gained office under the Southern Ming court after killing Li Zicheng's general Lu Yingbiao and surrendering, along with thousands of soldiers under his command, to Huang Ding in the fourth month of 1645.¹¹⁸ These events are told in scenes 25 to 28 in the play, with Di depicted as a former Ming officer whose loyalty to the Ming is easily rekindled, Lu as a tyrant, and Huang Yujin as an eloquent mediator.¹¹⁹

The play ends in 1645, before the collapse of the Southern Ming. Huang Ding is mentioned in *Qing Veritable Records* as “attacking rebels” in 1647 under the direction of Hong Chengchou 洪承疇 (1593–1665), the Ming commander whose defection to the Qing facilitated the Qing conquest of southern China. Shortly thereafter, Huang suffered defeat and lost his position as commanding officer of Anqing after being fooled by one insurgent's feigned surrender.¹²⁰ This is almost an ironic echo of the historical pitfalls of Huang's pacification strategies celebrated in *Two Manly Heroes*. The rebels that Huang Ding suppressed during the early Qing would also inconveniently force the playwright to aver his stance on the dynastic transition. Perhaps that is why the “pacification” of rebel leader Zhang Fuhuan occurs during the last years of the Ming dynasty in the play (*LXM*, 6.1216–17). The historical Zhang Fuhuan was involved in anti-Qing resistance in Yingshan (in Qing Anhui and present-day Hubei)

117. See Huang Zongxi, *Hongguang shilu chao*, in *Huang Zongxi quanji*, 2:16–17; Qian Xin, *Jiashen chuanxin lu*, pp. 193–94; Ji Liuqi, *Mingji nanlue*, 1.49; Xu Zi, *Xiaotian jinian*, p. 209; and Li Tiangen, *Juehuo lu*, 2:772.

118. Gu Ling, *Jinling yechao*, 25a.

119. Historical records tell of Di Yingkui's subsequent role in suppressing Muslim unrest in the northwest after he surrendered to the Qing (*Qingshi gao*, 237.9480; *Qing shilu*, 79.623).

120. *Qing shilu*, 30.247–52.

and Liu'an.¹²¹ According to the Liu'an gazetteer, Huang Ding played an instrumental role in his defeat in 1649.¹²²

A stirring and dramatic contrast between Huang Ding's capitulation and Deng shi's steadfast refusal to surrender to the Qing emerges in Liu Xianting's 劉獻廷 (ca. 1648–ca. 1695) *Guangyang zaji* 廣陽雜記.¹²³

Huang Ding of Huoshan had the cognomen Yu'er. He was a low-level degree holder of Huoshan. When the Ming dynasty fell, he rose in resistance. Later he surrendered to Hong Chengchou, was given the post of military superintendent, and was made to stay in Jiangnan. His wife alone did not surrender; she gathered followers numbering tens of thousands, became entrenched in the mountains, and resisted the government army, which was time and again defeated. The governor Ma Guozhu said to Ding, "Can't you summon your wife and make her surrender?" Ding said, "I cannot. However, her son is here. If we send him, perhaps there will be success?" Guozhu then sent her son to summon her. Ding's wife said, "The great mansion is about to collapse; one wooden pillar alone cannot hold it up. Yet a person intent on integrity cannot have that intent twisted and bent. I must have the governor come to Lu for a personal meeting. He can make a pact with me to disband the troops, and give the order for them to shave their heads. But I will still live in the mountains to stay true to my convictions; I cannot be sent to stay in another place like my husband." Her son reported discharge of his mission. Guozhu personally came to Luzhou. Ding's wife, leading her followers, came out to meet him. Clad in metal armor and helmet, she was as awe-inspiring as a great, manly hero. [She greeted him] with the rites a military chief used to meet with a superintendent. She then surrendered, but to the end she never left the mountains. Huang Ding stayed in Jiangnan for a long time. Later he frequently colluded with Zheng Chenggong. At the time of Governor Lang, his plot was uncovered, and he died by taking poison.

霍山黃鼎，字玉耳。霍山諸生也。鼎革時起義，後降洪〔承疇〕經略，授以總兵，使居江南。其妻獨不降，擁眾數萬，盤居山中，與官兵抗，屢為其敗。總督馬國柱謂鼎：「獨不能招汝妻使

121. See *Qingshi gao*, 239.9519, 243.9591; Jin Zhong, *Huang Ming mozao lu*, p. 143; and Wen Ruilin, *Nanjiang yishi*, 418.2a–2b. In Quan Zuwang's commemorative essay on Shi Kefa, he notes anti-Qing resistance in Yingshan and Huoshan invoked the name of Shi Kefa, rumored to be still alive ("Meihua ling ji" 梅花嶺記, *Quan Zuwang ji bujiao jizhu*, 20.1116–18). It is ironic that while Huang Yujin in the play pledges allegiance to Shi Kefa, his historical counterpart was suppressing resistance associated with his name.

122. *Liu'an zhou zhi*, 27.7a–8a.

123. On Liu Xianting and *Guangyang zaji*, see Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict*, pp. 335–36.

降乎？」鼎曰：「不能也。然其子在此，使往，或有濟乎？」國柱遂使其子招之。鼎妻曰：「大廈將傾，非一木所能支，然志士不屈其志。吾必得總督來廬一面約，吾解眾，喻令薙髮。然吾仍居山中，以遂吾志，不能若吾夫調居他處也。」其子覆命，國柱自來廬州，鼎妻率眾出見，貫甲，鐵兜鍪，凜凜如偉丈夫。如總戎見制臺禮。遂降，終不出山。黃鼎居江南久，後屢與鄭氏通，郎總督時，事敗，服毒死。(Liu Xianting, *Guangyang zazhi*, 1.36)

As Lynn Struve observes, *Guangyang zazhi* contains “numerous stories about martially talented and boldly principled women who refused to go along with the political choices of their menfolk.”¹²⁴ Besides Deng, we learn about the commander Han Shiqi’s 韓世琦 mother, who never visited his Qing official residence because of “the impropriety of juxtaposing Han and Manchu costumes.”¹²⁵ Hong Chengchou’s mother is said to have hit him with a staff and reprimanded him for failing to die as a martyr.¹²⁶ Zhu Mei’er, a Qinhuai courtesan, was married to a Ming official who surrendered to the Qing and then joined the failed rebellion of Sun Kewang 孫可望 (d. 1660), who tried to gain sway over the Ming loyalist forces in southwestern China only to capitulate to the Qing again. After the execution of Zhu’s husband, she arranged for the women of his household to commit suicide before throwing herself into a well so that they could escape the fate of being sent to Manchuria as slaves.¹²⁷ As with other entries in Liu’s miscellany, these are gleaned from sources of varying reliability and their historical veracity is hard to determine. What is certain is that accounts of these women’s heroic actions create a space for imagining defiance.

The image of Deng as loyalist gains oblique vindication from a poem by Qian Qianyi entitled “Madame Huang, née Deng, of Liu’an” (“Liu’an Huang furen Deng shi” 六安黃夫人鄧氏, *QMZ*, 4:429–30):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 鐃歌鼓吹競芳辰 | Martial strains on drums and pipes vie to celebrate a lovely day. |
| 娘子軍前喜氣新 | In front of the women’s army, elation glows anew. |

124. Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict*, p. 336.

125. Liu Xianting, *Guangyang zazhi*, 1.35.

126. *Ibid.*, 1.39.

127. *Ibid.*, 1.45.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 繡幃昔聞梁刺史 | Hearing of Lady Xian behind embroidered curtains from time past, |
| 錦車今見漢夫人 | We now see another Han lady envoy in the brocade carriage. |
| 鬚眉男子原無幾 | Manly men are not many to begin with, |
| 粉黛英雄自有真 | But there are true heroes among fair ladies. |
| 還待麻姑擘麟脯 | Wait for Magu to cleave the dried meat of the mythical beast: |
| 共臨東海看揚塵 | Together we will come to the Eastern Sea and behold dust rising. |

The poem deploys the standard references to martial women: Princess Pingyang's female army, which contributed to the founding of the Tang dynasty (line 2); Lady Xian, the commander dignified by the imperial gift of embroidered carriage curtains (line 3); Feng Liao, the Han woman envoy whose missions "pacified the barbarians" (line 4).¹²⁸ Lines 5–6 could refer to the contrast between Huang and Deng and may confirm the truth of the anecdote about Deng's defiance and Huang's capitulation in *Guangyang zaji*.¹²⁹

The spectacle beheld in the last two lines heralds another cataclysmic change—when the sea becomes land again, perhaps the Ming may yet be restored.¹³⁰ More specifically, it may refer to loyalist activities along the coast undertaken, among others, by Zheng Chenggong. The poem was written in 1658; in the following year Zheng's army tried to march towards Nanjing. In Ge Hong's 葛洪 *Accounts of Immortals* (*Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳), the woman immortal Magu feasts her guests with dried meat that is said to have come from a mythical animal, the *lin* 麟. She tells of seeing the blue seas turn into mulberry fields, and vice versa, three times over (TPGJ, 7.45–48, 60.369–70). The subject of the last line could be Magu and Deng shi, or it could be Deng shi and the poet—in other words, Qian also expresses his own loyalist aspirations (and retroactively

128. On Princess Pingyang's army, see *Jiu Tangshu*, 58.2315; *Xin Tangshu*, 83.3642–43. On Feng Liao, see *Hanshu*, 96B.3907.

129. Qian Qianyi could be the source of the anecdote in *Guangyang zaji*. The precocious Liu Xianting discussed Buddhist scriptures with Qian in his youth (Yang Bin, *Yang Dapiao xiansheng zuwen cangao*, p. 33), but it is also possible that Liu recorded this account in the course of his "oral history-gathering" peregrinations.

130. The last line of Qian's poem echoes a line from *Shenxian zhuan*: "Dust will rise in the sea again" 海中復揚塵.

rectifies his own compromises) through his eulogy of Deng shi. As we shall see in the next chapter, this logic gains further momentum and complexity in his post-conquest poems about Liu Rushi.

It is impossible to ascertain the historical veracity of Deng's anti-Qing resistance or the extent Li Xuanyu knew about it, whether as fact or rumor. Qian Qianyi and Li Xuanyu knew each other—Qian wrote a laudatory preface for another of Li Xuanyu's plays, *Talented Beauty of Meishan* (*Meishan xiu* 眉山秀), in 1654.¹³¹ It is possible that the story of Deng's loyalism circulated in the circles of Qian and Li. If Li knew about it, then his choice to neutralize or suppress the dangerous and subversive aspects of her story may simply be an attempt to dramatize and preserve a politically acceptable version of her heroism. It is also interesting to note that the taming of the woman warrior involves the rehabilitation of her husband. In *Guangyang zaji*, Deng's loyalism is most powerfully expressed through her defiance of Huang Ding. Even at the very end, when she surrenders to Ma Guozhu, she underlines the difference between herself and her husband. Li's play, on the other hand, proposes that husband and wife are heroes of equal stature. "Rehabilitation" may in turn stem from empathy with Huang's compromises and capitulation, a perspective also enunciated in Yao Wenran's eulogy of Huang Ding.

Even so, the contrast between Huang's mediatory negotiations and Deng's intransigent independence periodically emerges in the play. Accounts of Huang Ding suggest that he plays the same role of negotiating with rebels and encouraging them to abandon their insurrection under successive governments—Ming, Southern Ming, and Qing. In *Two Manly Heroes*, negotiation facilitates integration and broadly affirms loyalty to the Ming, or at least the personal bond of recognition between Huang and Shi Kefa, the symbol of loyalty to whom Li Xuanyu also pays tribute in another play.¹³² (Recall that the historical Huang Ding's patron was Ma Shiyong, not Shi Kefa.) By contrast, the very nomenclature of Deng's power base, "White Lake Fort," suggests defiance and independence, "fort" or "stockade" 寨 being the loci of opposition and resistance from late Ming to early Qing, the very forces that the historical Huang Ding and his dramatic counterpart try to "pacify." Deng's role is

131. The play is also called *The Female Degree Holder* (*Nü xiucai* 女秀才). Qian's preface is included in *Li Yu xiqu ji*, 3:1788–89; Cai Yi, *Zhongguo gudian xiqu xuba huibian*, 3:1470–71.

132. See *Union Across Ten Thousand Miles* (*Wanli yuan* 萬里圖), in Li Yu, *Li Yu xiqu ji*, 3: 1569–1672, scenes 3 and 4.

to battle the rebels—again, this confrontation may echo the politically more sensitive Ming-Qing conflict. In the play Deng is still a fighter, although she is tamed because the terms of the struggle are changed to remove any suspicion of subversion. The vision of order that emerges contains the woman warrior within the bounds of a conventional “happy ending” wherein patriarchal authority stays unchallenged, dynastic transition brings no disquiet, and withdrawal to a Peach Blossom Spring is still possible.

Alternatively, the account of Deng defying her husband and fighting the Qing in *Guangyang zaji* could be fanciful elaboration of her exploits defending Liu'an. Still, this is the version of the story that gained sway by the early twentieth century. Wang Baoxin 王葆心 (1867–1944), who anthologizes Yao Wenran's account of Deng in his collection of classical narratives, *Yu Chu zhi zhi* 虞初志 (1920 preface), also tells how Huang eventually surrendered to the Qing while his wife refused to be thus co-opted, thereby revisiting an episode of Ming loyalist resistance that he chronicled earlier in *Records of the Forty-Eight Forts in Qi and Huang* [Eastern Hubei] (*Qi Huang sishiba zhai jishi* 鄆黃四十八砦記事, 1908 preface).¹³³ Ding Chuanjing 丁傳靖 (1870–1930) cites the *Guangyang zaji* version in *Women During the Ming-Qing Transition* (*Jia Yi zhi ji Gonggui lu* 甲乙之際宮閨錄, 1925 preface, 1934 printing).¹³⁴ Deng thus becomes part of the late Qing and early Republican tradition asserting that “while men surrendered, women did not” 男降女不降 during the Ming-Qing transition.¹³⁵

Inventing the Female Hero

If Deng shi exemplifies how a heroic figure in history is contained in response to historical exigencies, Lin Siniang shows how heroic transformation is a function of the process of being imagined into historical existence. Traversing boundaries of history and fiction, human and ghost, pathos and heroism, at once threatening and accepting the new

133. Wang Baoxin, *Qi Huang sishiba zhai jishi*, 2.21a–21b; see also Wang Baoxin's comments following Yao Wenran's account (*Shuohai*, 8:2669–71).

134. Ding Chuanjing, *Jia Yi zhi ji Gonggui lu*, 5.3b–4a.

135. On the possible provenance of this idea and its late Qing reverberations, see Xia Xiaohong, *Wan Qing nüxing yu jindai Zhongguo*, pp. 114–41.

order, by turns a Ming loyalist and a Qing loyalist, Lin Siniang is one of the most malleable figures in Qing literature, constantly being rewritten from the early Qing to the late Qing. Lin Siniang first attracts scholarly attention because of her appearance in *The Story of the Stone*.¹³⁶ Judith Zeitlin has perceptively analyzed early Qing Lin Siniang stories as attempts to come to terms with the recurrent memory of traumatic events, and I defined elegiac retrospection on the fallen dynasty as tension between Lin's martial image and her victimhood.¹³⁷ Zeitlin assigns no particular significance to Lin's martial paraphernalia in some accounts, describing it as "weapons her ghost could potentially wield against the living."¹³⁸ I believe that heroic transformation sublimates the potential violence of Lin as vengeful ghost and also redeems the pathos of Lin as "wronged soul." Lin's martial image dignifies failure as aesthetic spectacle, and it is as such that she continues her protean transformations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century "afterlives."

More recently, Alan Barr has unearthed three hitherto unknown early Qing stories of Lin Siniang (nos. 5–7 below). In total, so far seven accounts of Lin Siniang have been found in the following early Qing sources:

1. Lin Yunming's 林雲銘 (1658 *jinsbi*) collections, including *Sunzhai fenyu* 損齋焚餘 and *Yikuilou xuangao* 挹奎樓選稿. Lin Siniang's story is also included in Zhang Chao's 張潮 (1650–after 1707) influential anthology, *Yuchu xinzhì* 虞初新志 (in *Shuohai*, 2:408–11). Zhang's preface and *fanli* are dated 1683 and his postscript is dated 1700.
2. Pu Songling's *Liaozhai* (1:286–91).¹³⁹
3. Wang Shizhen's *Casual Chats North of the Pond* (*Chibei outan* 池北偶談, hereafter *Casual Chats*), *juan* 21 (*WSZ*, 5:3364–65); Wang's preface is dated 1691.
4. Chen Weisong's *Writing Women* (*FRJ*, 33b–34b). The account included here is the prose preface to "The Song of Lin Siniang" 林四娘歌 by Wang Shizhen or his brother Wang Shilu.

136. See Yi Su, *Honglou meng juan*, pp. 410–11; Xu Fuming, "Cong 'Lin Siniang,'"

137. Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, p. 92–120; Wai-ye Li, "Women as Emblems of Dynastic Fall."

138. Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, p. 113.

139. On the possible dating of this story, see Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, pp. 227–28, n. 47; Alan Barr, "A Comparative Study."

5. Li Chengzhong's (1629–1700) *Notes from Genzhai* (*Genzhai biji*, 艮齋筆記, hereafter *Genzhai*). This unpublished work was written in the 1690s.¹⁴⁰
6. An Zhiyuan's (1628–1701) *Anecdotes from Qingzhou* (*Qingshe yiwén* 青社遺聞). This collection, also completed in the 1690s, was not published during the Qing.¹⁴¹
7. Chen Yixi's 陳奕禧 (1648–1709) *Yuzhou ji* 虞州集, which includes Chen's writings from about 1678 to 1689. Chen's preface to his unpublished collection is dated 1689.¹⁴²

These stories all describe the relationship between Lin Siniang, a female ghost who died before or during the fall of the Ming, and a Qing official named Chen Baoyao from Jinjiang (in Fujian) when he was circuit-commissioner of Qingzhou (in Shandong). All the authors (aside from the Fujianese Lin Yunming and Zhejiang native Chen Yixi) hailed from townships close to Qingzhou. The ghost is gentle or violent, tender or aloof, martial or pathetic, and almost always literary, and Chen's attitudes correspondingly shift between suspicion and acceptance, fear and love, loathing and admiration. In all the accounts except for those by Lin Yunming and Chen Yixi, Lin Siniang is identified as a palace lady or consort in the household of Prince Heng of the Ming in Qingzhou.

Barr, commenting on the differences between these accounts, suggests that we turn our attention to Chen Baoyao, whose identity as a Qing official in Qingzhou remains constant in these stories. Chen was a Ming loyalist who joined Zheng Chenggong's anti-Qing resistance, attaining the *juren* degree under the Yongli emperor in 1647. Zheng made him overseer of ritual in 1655, but conflicts between the two drove Chen to surrender to the Qing in Quanzhou in 1656.¹⁴³ He served as circuit commissioner in Qingzhou for about eighteen months, from 1660 to 1662. When the border domains headed by Chinese commanders rebelled in the 1670s, Chen threw in his lot with the rebel leader Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612–78), but later surrendered again to the Qing in 1679.¹⁴⁴ Chen

140. The account of Lin from *Genzhai biji* is quoted in Bai Yaren (Alan Barr), "Luelun Li Chengzhong *Genzhai biji*."

141. Cited in Bai Yaren, "Luetan An Zhiyuan *Qingshe yiwén*."

142. Cited in Bai Yaren, "Lin Siniang gushi yuanliu bukao."

143. See Kawaguchi Chōju (1774–1834), *Taiwan geju zhi*, p. 42; Shao Tingcai (1648–1711), *Dongnan jishi*, II.IIA.

144. See *Qing shilu*, Shunzhi 17 (134.1037), Kangxi 18 (79.1014); *Qing shigao*, 216.8992.

was a prolific and highly regarded poet, but most of his corpus did not survive the censorship of the Qianlong reign. As Barr has pointed out, the political and historical lamentations for which he was praised are no longer discernible in the cautious selections of the anthologist. A few poems that could have invited political interpretations adopt the perspective of ill-fated and misunderstood women.¹⁴⁵

I would like to build on Barr's insight that the deepest or earliest layer of the stories listed above are poems attributed to Lin Siniang but most likely authored by Chen himself, and that the various accounts are but narrative vehicles that frame these poems or explain their existence. There is little doubt that poems said to be by the ghost Lin Siniang were circulated in Shandong. An Zhiyuan writes that the compilation (in one *juan*) of poetic exchanges between Lin and Chen was widely known in Qingzhou.¹⁴⁶ Wang Shizhen mentions toward the end of his account that another Qing official, Li Huaxi 李化熙 (1594–1669), had a copy of the manuscript of Lin's poems. Is Chen the "ghostwriter"? As Barr notes, Chen's political vacillations indicate that he never gave up on the idea of Ming or Han resurgence, and the ghost of a palace lady would be a perfect vehicle for lamenting the fall of the Ming—in which case this would be impersonation 代言 comparable to the case of Wu Zhaoqian and Liu Susu discussed in chapter 1. However, it is also possible that Chen only later came to be linked to the Lin Siniang poems (ghostwritten by someone else) precisely because of his history of changing sides.

The accounts by Li Chengzhong, Wang Shizhen, and Pu Songling quote the same poem (or poems) by Lin Siniang's ghost with some variations. Here is Pu's version (*Liaozhai*, 1:288–89):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 靜鎖深宮十七年 | Locked in the quiet of the palace for seventeen years, |
| 誰將故國問青天 | Who would ask blue heaven about the former domain? |
| 閑看殿宇封喬木 | Undisturbed, I saw the palaces being sealed by tall trees, |

145. Wei Xian, *Bai mingjia shixuan*, *Shi chi*; Bai Yaren, "Lin Siniang gushi yuanliu bukao."

146. An's account ends with some details about Chen but trails off rather incoherently. It is possible that some details of his life were later deemed too problematic and were thus excised. See Bai Yaren, "Luetan An Zhiyuan."

| | |
|---------|--|
| 泣望君王化杜鵑 | Weeping, I beheld the ruler transformed into a cuckoo. |
| 海國波濤斜夕照 | On the waves of the sea kingdom, sunset glow slants. |
| 漢家簫鼓靜烽煙 | Amidst Han flutes and drums, beacon smoke calms down. |
| 紅顏力弱難爲厲 | The fair one, lacking strength, cannot become a vengeful ghost, |
| 蕙質心悲只問禪 | Pure in spirit, heartsick, she can only ponder Zen mysteries. |
| 日誦菩提千百句 | Every day I chant hundreds and thousands of bodhi lines, |
| 閑看貝葉兩三篇 | And peruse, unhurried, two or three palm-leaf sutras. |
| 高唱梨園歌代哭 | Songs ring loud in the Pear Garden: singing has replaced wailing. |
| 請君獨聽亦潸然 | I ask you to listen alone, and your tears, too, will amply flow. |

Seventeen years before Chen's tenure in Qingzhou from 1660 to 1662 would date Lin's death to 1644 or 1645. The palace in ruins, overgrown with vegetation, or the ruler transformed into the cuckoo that weeps blood are standard images in political lamentation. Chen held office in Qingzhou at a significant juncture in the Ming-Qing transition: in 1662 the Burmese court handed the Yongli emperor over to the Qing, and his execution ended the last hopes for Ming resistance. In 1659, the Qing army also pushed back Zheng Chenggong's naval forces that had had ephemeral success. By 1661, Zheng had occupied Taiwan. "Sea kingdom" may even be read as referring to the last bastion of anti-Qing resistance led by Zheng in Taiwan (*QSS*, 4:16233–35), especially in light of the affirmation of the pacifying power of "Han flutes and drums." But in the meantime "singing has replaced wailing"—oblivion passed off as good cheer only invites nostalgia and melancholy (lines 11–12). In *Liaozhai*, this is Lin's farewell poem as her ghost leaves Chen for rebirth, ending their three-year-long liaison.

The *Liaozhai* version is the only full-fledged romance among early Qing stories about Lin Siniang and also the only one devoid of images of Lin's violence or martial power. It dispenses with subsidiary characters and focuses on the emotional ties between Lin and Chen. Here Lin's ghost comes mysteriously to Chen, at once bold and timid:

The Qingzhou official Chen Baoyao hailed from Fujian. He was sitting alone one night when a woman raised the curtain and entered. He looked at her and did not recognize her. She was extremely beautiful in her long-sleeved palace costume. She smiled, "To sit still in a clear night—are you not lonesome?" Chen asked in surprise who she was. She said, "My house is not far. I am your proximate western neighbor." He surmised she was a ghost, but his heart was enamored of her. He pulled her sleeves and drew her to sit down, and was greatly pleased to find her conversation refined and literary. He embraced her, and she did not quite resist. Looking around, she said, "Is there no one else here?" Chen hastily closed the door, saying, "None." He urged her to loosen her clothes, but her manner was extremely shy and timid. He volunteered attentive assistance. She said, "I am twenty and still a virgin. Excessive fervor will be unbearable." By the time their passion was spent, flowing blood soaked the mat. And then, in the quiet conversation on the pillow, she called herself "Lin Siniang." He questioned her in detail. She said, "A lifetime of steadfast chastity has already come to naught because of your reckless ardor. If you intend to love me, then it suffices to plan for our lasting happiness. Why this endless chatter?" Soon the cook crowed, and she then rose and left.

青州陳寶鏞，閩人。夜獨坐，有女子褰幃入。視之，不識。而艷絕，長袖宮妝。笑云：「清夜兀坐，得勿寂耶？」公驚問何人。曰：「妾家不遠，近在西隣。」公意其鬼，而心好之。捉袂挽坐，談詞風雅。大悅。擁之，不甚抗拒。顧曰：「他無人耶？」公急紮闔戶，曰：「無。」促其緩裳，意殊羞怯。公代爲之殷勤。女曰：「妾年二十，猶處子也。狂將不堪。」狎褻既竟，流丹浹席。既而枕邊私語，自言「林四娘」。公詳詰之。曰：「一世堅貞，業爲君輕薄殆盡矣。有心愛妾，但圖永好可耳。絮絮何爲？」無何，雞鳴，遂起而去。(Liaozhai, 1:286)

Presumably Chen infers that Lin is a ghost because of her Ming palace costume. This is in some ways the typical romantic encounter in *Liaozhai*: a woman from another realm (a ghost, a fox spirit, or an immortal) comes unsolicited to a scholar or official late at night. Like some other female ghosts in *Liaozhai*, Lin is virginal yet seductive, but this is the only time bleeding is mentioned.¹⁴⁷ Blood seems to be too closely connected to the living—in one *Liaozhai* tale the male lover cuts himself and drips a drop of blood on the navel of the beloved, a female ghost, to bring

147. In other instances of sexual intercourse with virgin ghosts in *Liaozhai*, there is no reference to blood. See "Lianxiang" 蓮香, "Qiaoniang" 巧娘, "Lu gong nü" 魯公女, "Liansuo" (Liaozhai, 1:220–32, 1:256–64, 1:294–98, 1:332–37).

about her resurrection (“Liansuo” 連鎖). Common attributes of female ghosts in Chinese fiction, such as lightness, coldness, a faint voice, fluid movements, or seamless clothes, are also not mentioned in relation to Lin. Her unghostly palpability is ambiguous: it may speak for the presentness of the past, yet it also announces its repression, for Lin is reluctant to speak of the past.

After many evasions and postponements, Lin half-involuntarily discloses her identity through mournful music. It is only when Chen’s suspicious wife tries to convince Chen to end the liaison that she explains her past:

She said sadly, “I was a palace lady in Prince Heng’s household. It has been seventeen years since I met with calamities and died. Because of your exalted virtue, I find solace in our harmonious union. But indeed I do not dare harm you. If there are fears and suspicions, I beg to leave now.” Chen said, “I have no qualms, but our love is such that I cannot afford not to know the truth.” He thus asked about events in the palace. She recalled the past fondly, relishing details that captured his attention. When she came to the moment of decline and fall, she would be choked and incapable of words. She did not sleep much and rose nightly to chant the Zhunti and Diamond Sutras. He asked, “Is it possible to redeem oneself in the Nine Springs?” She replied, “It is the same. I ponder how my life was sunken and lost in confusion and wish to redeem my next life.”

女愀然曰：「妾衡府宮人也。遭難而死，十七年矣。以君高義，託爲燕婉。然實不敢禍君。倘見疑畏，請從此辭。」公曰：「我不爲嫌，但燕好若此，不可不知其實耳。」乃問宮中事。女緬述，津津可聽。談及式微之際，則哽咽不能成語。女不甚睡，每夜輒起誦準提、金剛諸經咒。公問：「九原能自懺耶？」曰：「一也。妾思終身淪落，欲度來生耳。」 (*Liaozhai*, 1:287)

In this story, remembrances and nostalgia are mediated through the course of a romantic-sexual relationship. The result is more intense emotions and deeper empathy. As if to forestall the subversive potential of sharing lamentation, Lin’s image here is the least threatening among the early Qing versions of the story, giving credence to the line, “The fair one, lacking strength, cannot become a vengeful ghost.” She is also the most religious, fulfilling the Buddhist references in the above-cited poem. Her appearance as a ghost is presumably redemptive, yet the reason is withheld. Is piety called for because of memory, repentance (of what?), longing, or rekindled passion? There is deliberate ambiguity.

The burden of historical trauma is such that Lin cannot be resurrected. In *Liaozhai*, ghost stories associated with the wars and devastation of the Ming-Qing transition break the rule of happy endings.¹⁴⁸ Lin's parting poem, cited above, is the defining moment of the Lin-Chen romance, even as it marks its ending. As we shall see below, the analogous poem is circulated among members of a socio-literary community and yields a muted collective response in Wang Shizhen's *Casual Chats*. Here, however, the secrecy of such an intensely personal communication is tempered only by the implied transmission of the story to the narrator. Compared to other accounts, *Liaozhai* gives a fuller context of the poem's composition:

Suddenly it was cockcrow, and so she said, "I cannot stay long for sure! You have often blamed me for refusing to show my unworthy writing—now that final separation is nigh, I should compose a verse in haste." She asked for a brush and wrote it down, saying, "My heart is grieving and my mind is confused. I cannot carefully ponder choice of words. Such wrong rhymes and unpolished rhythm—please do not show it to anybody!" She covered her face with her sleeve and left. He accompanied her beyond the door, where she vanished. He was melancholy for a long while. Looking at the poem, he saw that the calligraphy was gracious. He cherished it and kept it hidden . . . The poem is repetitive and disconnected. I suspect there are errors.

忽唱，乃曰：「必不可以久留矣。然君每怪妾不肯獻醜，今將長別，當率成一章。索筆構成，曰：「心悲意亂，不能推敲。乖音錯節，慎勿出以視人。」掩袖而去。公送諸門外，湮然沒。公悵悼良久。視其詩，字態端好，珍而藏之 . . . 詩中重複脫節，疑有錯誤。(*Liaozhai*, 1:288–89)

We are not told how the hidden poem comes to be known. Its formal imperfections—it is a hybrid of ancient-style verse 古詩 and regulated verse 律詩—may also suggest that the narrator is not privy to the "real" version treasured and hidden by Chen Baoyao. Chen's hiding of the poem, Lin's reticence and apology, and the narrator's distance all echo the repression concomitant with lament in this story. Mourning for the fallen Ming, even when it is expressed, is first withheld, then hidden, and

148. See also "Gongsun Jiuniang" in *Liaozhai*; cf. Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, pp. 121–30. In other ghost stories in *Liaozhai*, the female ghost comes back to life for a lasting union with the male protagonist.

finally pronounced incoherent. Scholars who try to discern “proto-nationalist sentiment” in *Liaozhai* have adduced as evidence Lin Siniang’s lament, as well as a handful of other stories dealing with the violence and chaos during the dynastic transition and early Qing insurrections.¹⁴⁹ In the scheme of the whole book, however, the Ming-Qing transition is not a dominant theme. For all its pathos, memory of the fallen Ming as embodied by Lin Siniang is divested of dangerous political implications because Lin merely suffers her fate and fixes her gaze on the past.

Lin Siniang’s poem appears (with slight variations) as three quatrains in Li Chengzhong’s *Genzhai biji*.¹⁵⁰ Here the verses are disembodied traces on walls—their connection with her ghost is only obliquely suggested. Dread of the uncanny suffuses the account, although Chen himself shows only aversion and indifference. The confrontation between the old order and the new is implied throughout. The account begins with Chen Baoyao “following the order to open the palace of the former Prince Heng” several months after assuming office in Qingzhou. He finds ghostly devastation:

He saw hordes of squirming snakes filling the courtyard, leaving one nowhere to stand. He closed it up for three days. By the time he came again, all was quiet and there was nothing. Old gauze clothes on the racks crumbled like ashes as they were blown away by the wind. There were bean-sized bird eggs in bowls. It was truly like the stuff of “Song of Lianchang Palace.” On the walls were inscribed three quatrains; the ink was dripping and not yet dry.

見羣蛇蜿蜒滿院中，無可下足處。閉之三日。及再至，悄然無所有。架上故紗衣迎風作灰飛去。碗中雀卵大如豆，蓋宛然連昌宮詞中故事也。壁間題絕句三首，墨淋漓未乾。(Bai Yaren, “Luelun Li Chengzhong,” p. 51)

Yuan Zhen’s 元稹 (779–831) “Song of Lianchang Palace” (“Lianchang gongci” 連昌宮詞) famously uses a dilapidated Tang palace to mourn the decline of the Tang dynasty brought on by the catastrophe of the An Lushan Rebellion. Yuan’s poem describes “gauze still green” on intricate

149. See “Liluan” 亂離, “Yegou” 野狗, “Kuigu” 鬼哭, “Linshi” 林氏, “Gongsun Jiuniang” 公孫九娘, “Zhang shi fu” 張氏婦, “Guili” 鬼隸, and “Han Fang” 韓方 (*Liaozhai*, 1:70, 1:76, 1:477, 1:784–86, 1:810, 2:1527, 2:1588, 2:1664).

150. In *Genzhai* it is “eighteen” instead of “seventeen,” and “pacify” 靖 instead of “calm” 靜.

windows and snakes on curved beams, images echoed in Li's account. But whereas Yuan articulates a lesson on good governance, Li merely dramatizes the encounter between a Qing official and the ruins of a Ming palace, where the freshly inscribed quatrains speak of unappeased anguish.

The line "the fair one, lacking strength, cannot become a vengeful ghost" no longer conveys pathos but frustration—it seems "the fair one" would fain "become a vengeful ghost" but cannot.

That night, when his honor was sitting alone in his quarters, he heard the sound of weeping and lamentation. Thinking it must be a wronged soul, he ordered it to reveal itself. It said, "I do not dare come out without clothes." He gave it clothes, but it still did not reveal itself. It said, "You have to burn spirit money at the main gate to welcome me." He followed its request but still saw nothing. He became quite tired of it, and tried threatening it with cannon fire, but it was not in the least intimidated. It also appeared on the horizontal beam, being as long as the beam itself, yet remaining vague and unidentifiable. One day, a woman suddenly came to his brother's abode. She called herself Lin Siniang, and her attendant, Donggu. Siniang had a red cape and filigree ornaments, while Donggu wore the dark clothes for maids. The commissioner heard about it and did not pay any attention.

是夕公獨坐閣內，聞有泣訴聲，以爲冤魂也。命之見，曰：「無衣，不敢出。」與之衣，仍不見。曰：「須自大門焚楮迎入。」如其請，竟亦無所見。後頗厭之，威之以火炮，了無所懼。又現形橫屋上，其長竟屋，微茫莫可名。一日，忽有女子至其弟某所，自稱林四娘，侍者曰東姑。四娘朱帔翠翹，東姑青衣而已。觀察聞之，置不問。(Bai Yaren, "Luelun Li Chengzhong," p. 51)

The connection between Lin Siniang and the hesitant yet fearless ghost or the aforementioned quatrains is merely implied. Of all early Qing Lin Siniang stories, this is the only one where Chen and Lin do not meet. Lin is seen only by Chen's brother and later by a minor officer in his employ. To the latter Lin offers banal admonition, which seems all the more incongruous because "when he stealthily peeked at her hands, they seemed like withered bark" 竊視其手，若枯樹皮, which suggests a "tree spirit" 木魅. She brings dispersal and death: the officer leaves for Shu and Chen's brother dies.

The same verses thus generate opposite narratives. The respective narrations of the Chen-Lin relationship by Pu Songling and Li Chengzhong represent two poles of the spectrum, spanning romantic intimacy

and adversarial alienation. Lin veers between a mournful, spectral beauty and an ever-changing, vaguely sinister ghost, and her elegiac verses of remembrance correspondingly inspire either empathy or indifference. In some ways the heroic, powerful image of Lin Siniang that obtains in *Casual Chats* and *Writing Women* mediates these conflicting emotions: the potential violence of a would-be “vengeful ghost” is sublimated as martial display, the sorrows of a “wronged soul” or of “a life sunken and lost in confusion” are redeemed through heroic correction, and the imposition of a new order yields no real disquiet because the past can be regarded with empathetic longing from a safe distance, as symbolized by the Chen-Lin friendship (rather than romance). (Of course, mediation operates not necessarily as actual reference to the stories by Pu and Li, but in terms of the positions encoded in those accounts.)

The issue of territorial rights or spatial competition implied in Li Chengzhong’s account comes up in other Lin Siniang stories as a Ming ghost’s request to use a Qing official residence. Zeitlin and Barr have noted its connection to what Dudbridge calls the “haunted post” theme in Chinese fiction.¹⁵¹ In one entry in *Casual Chats* (WSZ, 5:3386), Wang Shizhen tells how he drank at the ruins of Prince Heng’s palace in 1656, when a tower, a winding brook, and an ancient pine still remained. From 1666 to 1667, a Qing governor, Zhou Youde, set up his official residence at the former palace of Prince De of Ming at Jinan,¹⁵² using for its construction trees and stones from the palace of Prince Heng. As a result, “the abandoned palace of Prince Heng was taken over by rampant weeds” 衡藩廢宮，鞠爲茂草矣. The Ming palace in ruins appears only in Li Chengzhong’s account, but it is cited as the reason why Lin needs to use Chen’s official residence in both *Casual Chats* and *Writing Women*.

In *Casual Chats*, a pretty young maid announces the unbidden arrival of Lin Siniang at Chen’s study. The startled Chen is awestruck:

151. See Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, pp. 107–8; Bai Yaren, “Lin Siniang gushi yuaniu bukao”; Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T’ang China*.

152. Wang Shizhen and his friends composed poems on autumn willows in 1657 at the lake near the ruins of this palace (see chap. 1, pp. 64–65, 89).

She had a southern topknot coiffure and wore an embroidered vest over her vermilion clothes. Shod in phoenix beak boots, she sported a pair of swords at her waist. Chen suspected that she was an immortal knight-errant and had no choice but to bow and invite her to sit down.

蠻髻，朱衣繡半臂，鳳嘴靴，腰配雙劍。陳疑其仙俠。不得已挹就座。(WSZ, 5:3364-65)

Lin Siniang then tells her story: she was born and raised in Jinling and became Prince Heng's favorite consort.¹⁵³ Her provenance from Jinling, whose roots in Ming history are noted in chapter 1, evokes associations between dynastic crisis and her personal demise. She died a few years before the Ming fell and was buried in the palace.

"He [Prince Heng] then went north, while my spirit is still attached to the old ruins. Now that the palace is decimated, I just want to borrow your pavilions and chambers to invite guests. It is true that this will bring you no advantage, but it will not harm you either. I hope you will not be suspicious." Chen concurred. From then on she came every day without fail.

遂北去，妾魂魄猶戀故墟。今宮殿荒蕪，聊欲假君亭館延客，固無益於君，亦無損於君。願無疑焉。陳唯唯。自是日必一至。(WSZ, 5:3364-65)

The subsequent feasts, at first ghostly, audible but invisible, become increasingly palpable with the participation of Chen and his friends. They become the empathetic audience of her mournful remembrances:

Intoxicated with wine, Siniang told of past events in the palace, and was beside herself with grief. As she sang to her own beat, her voice was filled with sadness and rancor. The entire audience wept and stopped drinking. A year passed like this. One day she was melancholy and seemed sad about leaving. She told Chen, "My worldly karma has come to an end, and I should be going to Zhongnan Mountain. Because of your deep friendship, I have come to bid you farewell." From then on she no longer came.

酒酣，四娘敘述宮中舊事，悲不自勝，引節而歌，聲甚哀怨，舉座沾衣。如是年餘，一日黯然有離別之色。告陳曰：「妾塵緣已盡，當往終南，以君情誼厚，一來取別矣。」自後遂絕。(WSZ, 5:3365)

153. In this account she is a consort 宮嬪, while in *Liaozhai, Writing Women*, and An Zhiyuan's *Anecdotes from Qingzhou* she is said to be a palace lady 宮人.

There is no mention of Chen's reaction. Instead the text chronicles the circulation of Lin's poetry: among Wang Shizhen's friends, the official Li Huaxi has a copy of the poem, and another official Cheng Keze 程可則 (1627–76) remembers one of Lin's poems. The version recalled by Cheng and recorded in *Casual Chats* is a regulated verse that omits lines 2–5 in the poem cited above and offers variations in other lines. The changes remove direct references to the fall of the Ming and the palace ruins. The idea of seeking consolation in religion remains, but the final sense of loss is more muted: "Songs of peace and prosperity ring loud in the Pear Garden: / Try listening to them—and you too will be at a loss" 梨園高唱升平曲，君試聽之亦惘然。 (WSZ, 5:3365) Comparing the Lin Siniang poems in *Liaozhai* and *Casual Chats*, scholars have often averred that the former laments the Ming with greater intensity. This argument in turn builds on Wang's success in a socio-political system that denied Pu Songling advancement. (Wang's prominence probably also accounts for the inclusion of the *Casual Chats* poem in the section on "ghost poetry" in Lu Jiansheng's 盧見曾 [1690–1768] anthology, *Poems from Shandong* [*Shanzuo shichao* 山左詩抄, 1758 preface]). However, the inclusion of the same verse(s) in *Liaozhai* and *Genzhai*, as well as the reference to other recorders and transmitters (Li Huaxi and Cheng Keze) in *Casual Chats*, should caution us against simply reading Lin's poem as the implied author's self-expression. From another perspective, the relative restraint of the poem in *Casual Chats* fits well with the mixture of empathy and distance in the Chen-Lin friendship. Her martial self-possession tempers the excess endemic to Lin's image as object of desire (in *Liaozhai*) or as potential vengeful ghost (in *Genzhai*).

The process whereby a heroic image sublimates violence and keeps erotic tension at bay is even more evident in *Writing Women*. Chen Weisong relates that it was Wang Shizhen who told him about Lin Siniang.¹⁵⁴ The account discussed here is probably also by Wang Shizhen, but it might have come to his attention as an entry in his brother Wang Shilu's *Burning Candles* (*Ranzhi ji* 燃脂集), a collection of writings by and

154. Chen refers to Wang as Wang Eleventh 王十一 because Wang Shizhen is his grandfather Wang Xiangjin's 王象晉 (1561–1653) eleventh grandson. The account here is the prose preface to "Song of Lin Siniang" ("Lin Siniang ge" 林四娘歌), which does not appear in the extant corpus of Wang Shizhen or Wang Shilu.

about women.¹⁵⁵ Here an initially forceful, peremptory Lin Siniang suggests a more jarring confrontation of past and present. The night Chen Baoyao takes up office, he finds that the official residence has already been occupied by feasting ghosts. The concerted efforts of guards and servants, loud orders, bows and arrows, even cannon explosions all fail to evict the ghostly horde. A few days later, a beautiful and resplendently clad Lin Siniang comes to Chen's study and requests the use of his premises with greater civility. She introduces herself in much the same terms as in *Casual Chats*, but she describes the ruins of the Ming palace in greater detail. As displaced ghosts, Lin Siniang and her associates seem more desperate to reclaim human space in order to "speak lovingly of the past" 話舊情深 (FRJ, 34a).

Lin proposes to Chen that they should be "friends beyond the square" (i.e., friends not confined by the constraints of worldly conventions). She invites Chen to participate in her feasts and offers monetary compensation. For all his suspicions and fears, Chen has no choice but to go along with her, and finds that the food, wine, and money are all real. Lin also comes to be on familiar terms with Chen's wife and concubines:

When Chen's friends passed through Linzi and sometimes asked to be received by her, she did not fail to be genial and pleasant. In extemporary poetic exchanges, her brush touched the paper as if winged. Her poems mostly mourned the fallen dynasty and dealt with partings and separation. Alas! What was all this for!

陳之客過臨淄者，或請接見，無不歡好。即席酬和，落紙如飛，詞中憑弔故苑，離鴻別鶴之音爲多。噫嘻！此何爲者耶？(FRJ, 34a).

The narrator professes to be bemused rather than moved and is deliberately silent on the reactions of Lin's audience.

In thus performing for a male audience, Lin (both here and in *Casual Chats*) is reminiscent of the courtesan. But despite her beauty, she is forbiddingly martial. None dare to make advances, not even to her beautiful maids. With her pair of swords she is "transcendent like Nie Yinniang

155. Only fragments of *Ranzhi ji* are extant. In response to Chen's letter about his completion of *Writing Women*, Wang Shizhen wrote him about his brother's similar compilation and expressed the wish that they could exchange manuscripts. See Wang Shizhen, "Da Chen Qinian" 答陳其年, in Zhou Lianggong, *Chidu xinchao*, p. 28.

and Hongxian [famous female knights-errant from Tang tales]" 冷然如聶隱娘、紅線一流, and she exits in their grand manner: "She rose and soared to the blue heavens, and all traces of her suddenly vanished" 聳身碧霄, 蹤影頓絕 (FRJ, 34b).

Does Lin's martial aspect in *Writing Women* and *Casual Chats* retrospectively rectify dynastic effete-ness? She seems more effective as a ghost than as an ill-fated palace lady. Her longing is endowed with a broad historical significance, and she is attached not so much to Prince Heng as to the emblems of the bygone dynasty. The continuation of the feast is not an act of self-indulgence; it is the renewal of communion among the dead and the injunction to remember among the living. Beauty augmented by martial assertiveness allows the continuation of a lost world, both in memory and in its ghostly existence, and facilitates the negotiation between the old order and the new one. The past reclaims its dignity and its power, but it no longer encroaches on the present. It is a spectacle provoking wonder and reflection rather than empathy. Lin's ghost is aloof, and her human audience remains ensconced in present reality.

In neither *Writing Women* nor *Casual Chats*, however, does Lin's martial image translate into a heroic parting poem. In *Writing Women*, she speaks in the hesitant, fading voice of the evanescent spirit who no longer has a place in the human world (FRJ, 34b):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 玉階小立羞蛾蹙 | On jade steps she briefly stood, her hesitant brows drawn. |
| 黃昏月映蒼煙綠 | In the yellow haze of moonshine, the dark mist is green. |
| 金牀玉几不歸來 | Golden beds and jade tables will not return, |
| 空唱人間可哀曲 | In vain have I sung the song of lament from the human realm. |

Lines 2–4 of this quatrain overlap with the first of "Two Songs on a Former Palace" ("Gugong qu ershou" 故宮曲二首), in which Wang Shizhen contemplates the ruins of the palace of the Ming prince Rui, who was murdered by the rebel Zhang Xianzhong. The poems were written when Wang was an examiner in Sichuan and included in his *Road to Shu* (*Shudao ji* 蜀道記, 1672).¹⁵⁶ The Ming-Qing transition is not a

156. See *Yinyang jinghua lu jishi*, 2:802–4.

dominant theme in Wang's corpus, but here Wang describes the desolate beauty of the site and notes that the palace has become the official residence of a Qing governor. The first line of the first poem, which reads, "Dots of wet fireflies cling to the slender bamboo" 溼螢幾點粘修竹, is obviously derived from the Yuan poet Fan Peng's 范梈 (1272–1330) lines: "The rain ceases among the slender bamboo, / Flitting fireflies come in the dead of night" 雨止修竹間，流螢夜深至.¹⁵⁷ Various poetic anecdotes relate how Fan considered these lines too "ghostly" 鬼氣 and inauspicious and rectified the mood accordingly.¹⁵⁸ In his *Remarks on Poetry*, Wang Shizhen praises Fan's lines and offers his own imitation.¹⁵⁹

We cannot ascertain which of Wang Shizhen's poems, the one in Lin Siniang's voice or the one on the ruins of Prince Rui's palace, was composed first. The "ghostly" associations of the line on fireflies might have suggested the poem as a fitting attribution to Lin Siniang, the substitution of the first line rendering the sense of loss more personal and palpable. Alternatively, the wet fireflies could be the elegiac equivalent of the palace lady, as Wang confronted scenes similar to what he describes in "Lin Siniang." In both *Casual Chats* and *Writing Women*, the plaintive, mournful voice of Lin's poems seems a reminder of the weakness that keeps her heroic image from becoming threatening.

The transformation of Lin Siniang in Chen Weisong's *Writing Women* bears some resemblance to the accounts by Lin Yunming and An Zhiyuan.¹⁶⁰ An's short account is obviously truncated—it breaks off while supplying details about Chen Baoyao, possibly because reference to his involvement in loyalist resistance has been censored. Here Lin Siniang, a middle-aged palace lady, also defies expulsion but ends up cordially exchanging poems with Chen. In Lin Yunming's account, Lin

157. Fan Peng, "Cangshan ganqiu" 蒼山感秋, in *Fan Deji shiji*, 2.13b.

158. See, e.g., Ye Ziqi (14th c.), *Caomu zi*, 4A.79; Hu Yinglin, *Shaoshi shanfang bicong*, 37.378. Hu opines that these lines represent "a ghostly mood, not ghost poetry" 是鬼境非鬼詩.

159. *Yuyang shihua*, B.191, no. 41. Wang recalls his own imitation that captures the ethereal grace of Fan's lines but reveals a less somber mood: "The light of fireflies emerges from deep verdure, / The lotus in the pond hints at a secret fragrance" 螢火出深碧，池荷聞暗香.

160. Whereas all three accounts describe Lin's transformation, in the other four Lin stories her image remains constant.

Siniang likewise transforms from a monstrous demon into an intimate friend. At first she defies Chen's repeated efforts to expel her and wreaks havoc in his official residence. Immune to weapons, explosives, and exorcising rites, she finally becomes more amenable only when Chen's visiting friend, Liu Wangling, suggests that he stop the aggressive tactics. When Liu asks her to alter her fearsome appearance, she appears as a peerless beauty and calls herself Lin Siniang. Her maid and servant "had shadows but no forms; only Siniang was no different from a living human being. Day after day Chen drank happily and exchanged poems with her. Their intimacy was extreme but did not reach actual transgression" 皆有影無形，唯四娘與生人了無異相。陳日與歡飲賦詩，親狎備至，唯不及亂而已 (*Shuohai*, 2:409).

Lin Siniang's poetry is "pervasively desolate and mournful" 多感慨淒楚之音 (*Shuohai*, 2:409), yet she seems integrated into mortal existence. She assists Chen by drafting documents, investigating suspicious cases, observing mores, and evaluating talented men for office. She joins his social circle, keeping his debtor at bay and checking the unruly sexual fantasy of his friend. Unlike in the stories discussed above, here Lin is not Prince Heng's palace lady. During the Chongzhen reign, her father, a minor official, is imprisoned for mismanaging funds, and Lin and her cousin try their best to save him. Upon his release, he suspects them of an illicit relationship. She hangs herself to protest her innocence, as she explains to Chen: "It is only that my martyred spirit would not disperse."¹⁶¹ I came because we are from the same hometown. This is no accident" 烈魂不散耳。與君有桑梓之誼而來，非偶然也 (*Shuohai*, 2:410). She departs after eighteen months, leaving Chen with fond memories. Although Lin's death is not connected to the fall of the Ming, the story still pertains to the confrontation of past and present, or the threat past wrongs pose for the new order. As Zeitlin observes, "kindness and clemency, rather than persecution" is the only real way to mollify a ghost and restore peace.¹⁶²

The "taming" of Lin Siniang in the versions by An Zhiyuan and Lin Yunming does not involve any martial transformation. Perhaps that is a fitting corollary for the evolution of the Chen-Lin relationship from

161. She dies a "chastity martyr," having committed suicide to vindicate her purity.

162. Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, p. 109.

hostility to respectful distance and intimacy, respectively, in the An and Lin accounts. Neither deals with the subtle negotiations between the old and the new political order embodied by the Chen-Lin friendship and the image of Lin as knight-errant in *Casual Chats* and *Writing Women*. Not that the knight-errant image as such necessitates this fine balance—Chen Yixi's "Account of Lin Siniang" 林四娘小傳 provides an illuminating comparison. It shares some of the same details with Lin Yunming's version, including Lin's management of Chen's debts, her punishment of Chen's lascivious friend, and her ability to predict future events. But here Lin is not connected to the fallen Ming in any way and has no trace of sadness or rancor. Instead she appears as a forty-year-old sword-wielding immortal 劍仙 who descends from the clouds into Chen's official residence, surrounded by armored guards and clad in armor herself. She claims to be sent by the gods to help Chen. Unburdened by the past, she can serve the new order without compunction; her age and martial aspect rule out intimacy.

How are all these accounts related to each other? It is impossible to reconstruct the circulation and chronology of these stories, but the web of associations connecting the authors, Qingzhou, and Chen Baoyao is evident. Both Chen Baoyao and Lin Yunming hailed from Fujian, and Lin relates that Chen told him the story in 1666. On the basis of Lin's professed source, Xu Fuming maintains that Lin's account is the urtext, while the other versions by Shangdong authors might have woven that text with Shandong legends on the unappeased ghost of a palace lady in Prince Heng's harem.¹⁶³ As mentioned above, however, it is quite possible that Chen Baoyao produced (or is linked to) poems that gave rise to different versions of the story. He might also have simply told different stories to different people or at different times. The banning of his writings makes it difficult to trace his socio-literary ties, but we know of his friendships with Lin Yunming and Li Chengzhong. The latter, in his autobiographical "Three Lives" ("Sansheng ji 三生記"), writes that his examination essays met with Chen Baoyao's approbation in 1661.

The web of ties connecting these authors becomes more complex when we discover that Li Chengzhong and An Zhiyuan were both close associates with Chen's successor Zhou Lianggong 周亮工 (1612–72),

163. Xu Fuming, "Cong 'Lin Siniang.'" It is also possible that Lin Yunming changed the story to remove possible political implications.

who also had literary exchanges with Wang Shizhen. Wang Shizhen came from Xincheng but had ancestral ties to Qingzhou. In a letter to Wang Shizhen, Lin Yunming refers to their shared interest in ghost stories:¹⁶⁴ could he have told Wang the Lin Siniang story at some point? Pu Songling lived in relative obscurity but corresponded with Wang Shizhen, who read stories from *Liaozhai*. Li Huaxi, said to possess a copy of Lin Siniang's poems, is featured in *Liaozhai*. Chen Yuxi hailed from Zhejiang but also had a Shandong connection: Wang Shizhen refers to him as his disciple.¹⁶⁵

How did the Lin Siniang story come to Cao Xueqin's attention? Zhou Lianggong, who might have had a role in transmitting the Lin Siniang stories, was a friend of Cao's grandfather and great-grandfather, so it is possible that he heard a version of the story as a boy or young man.¹⁶⁶ Of course Cao might simply have read one or more of the stories mentioned above. Early Qing stories about Lin Siniang command a repertoire of images in varying combinations—the vengeful ghost, the lover, the friend, and the martial knight-errant—and it is the last that best embodies the negotiations between past trauma and present order. When Cao Xueqin put the character Lin Siniang in *The Story of the Stone*, he was using the martial Lin Siniang to explore other contradictions—between history and fiction, reality and imagination, orthodox moral order and romantic, aesthetic values. As the only character with some tangible connection to the Ming-Qing transition, Lin Siniang fits into a host of readings that try, from different perspectives, to link *The Story of the Stone* to that period in Chinese history.¹⁶⁷ As we shall see, the context of her invention, much more than her possible historical resonance, speaks to the major concerns of the novel.

The Story of the Stone is famously vague about its historical and geographical setting; the author repeatedly emphasizes that the book is not

164. See Jiang Yin, *Wang Yiyang shiji zhenglue*, pp. 52–53. Wang and Lin served as examiners together in the Jiangnan provincial examination in 1660.

165. Wang Shizhen, *Yiyang shibua*, C.210, no. 84.

166. See Cao Yin 曹寅 (1658–1712), “Chongxiu Zhou Liyuan citang ji” 重修周櫟園祠堂記 (1705), in *Lianting ji jianzhu*. Cao Yin also knew Chen Weisong (Fang Xiaowei, *Cao Yin pingzhuan nianpu*, pp. 194–95).

167. This is especially true of the so-called *suoyin* 索隱 (topical and allegorical reference) school from the early twentieth century. Cf. Wang Xianming, *Hengwang fu yu Honglou meng*.

concerned with history and politics and takes great pains to eulogize the reigning dynasty whenever the occasion arises. This is as much a function of political discretion and avoidance of censorship as an attempt to claim discrete coherence for the romantic-aesthetic sphere of experience and timeless, universal significance for the book. In the Lin Siniang episode in chapter 78 of *The Story of the Stone*, Cao suppresses all references to the fall of the Ming and focuses instead on the rites of commemoration for a fallen hero. The reigning dynasty, as Jia Zheng (the father of the protagonist Jia Baoyu) explains, is honoring the memory of virtuous but as yet unacknowledged persons from previous dynasties. Prince Heng of Qingzhou has died fighting rebels, and his consort Lin Siniang, in leading an army of palace women to avenge the prince, has died a martyr. The throne is seeking compositions commemorating Lin Siniang. The “political neutralization” of the Lin Siniang story may indicate that a century or so after the conquest, traumatic memories of the dynastic transition can be reabsorbed as stories of moral exemplarity.¹⁶⁸ Paradoxically, this too may conceal anxieties. The Qianlong emperor’s canonization of Ming martyrs is but the obverse side of his proscription of Ming loyalist writings—both are driven by the perceived need to define and control historical memory. Although the canonization and proscription began some twelve or thirteen years after Cao’s death, the same logic unfolds: in both history and fiction, moral exemplars are supposed to, but may yet fail to, resolve contradictions.

The younger males of the Jia clan submit their compositions on Lin, and Baoyu distinguishes himself with his ancient-style poem, “The Winsome General” (“Guihua jiangjun” 嬌嬋將軍). In Baoyu’s poem, we see Lin Siniang initially as Prince Heng’s creation—his attempt to combine his military and romantic passions. The army made up of beautiful palace ladies starts off as mere spectacle, answering Prince Heng’s appreciation of the tantalizing combination of martial attributes and sensual beauty. Wars, chaos, and martyrdom transform a romantic diversion into an ethical ideal. Prince Heng dies as Qingzhou falls to the rebels (HLM, 78.897):

168. This can mean the past is “stable and safely buried” (Zeitlin, *Phantom Heroine*, p. 106).

| | |
|---------|--|
| 紛紛將士只保身 | All the generals and soldiers sought only to protect themselves, |
| 青州眼見成灰塵 | As Qingzhou, for all to see, was turning into ashes and dust. |
| 不期忠義明閨閣 | Unexpected was how loyalty and duty illuminated the inner chambers, |
| 憤起恆王得意人 | And the one most beloved by Prince Heng rose in just fury. |

“Just fury” and courage do not translate into the power to actually reverse the tide, and Lin Siniang leads her army of palace ladies to certain death. Baoyu thus eschews description of the battle and passes directly from Lin’s determination to her heroic martyrdom, which puts to shame the ineptness of officials supposedly upholding the realm.

The superiority of women is a constant refrain in *The Story of the Stone*, but this is the first time a woman is eulogized for martyrdom in the name of “loyalty and duty” 忠義. The feminine is elevated in the novel for embodying romantic-aesthetic values, not for transcending them through ethical sublimation. Recall that in chapter 36 Baoyu expresses disdain for “the civil official dying for his remonstrance, the military dying in battle” 文死諫，武死戰 (HLM, 36.379). If Baoyu seems to be moving closer to conventional ethical norms in this poem, his father, Jia Zheng, for his part recalls his own youthful predilections for poetry and wine and shows a keener than usual appreciation of Baoyu’s poetic talent. In other words, the poem is a kind of meeting ground for father and son, a subdued affirmation of the patriarchal order. As an embodiment of sensuality and passion that transcends and vindicates itself, Lin Siniang potentially solves the central problem in the novel: the conflict between love and its limits. This “solution” is, however, ultimately inconclusive.

As mentioned above, the historical context of the fall of the Ming dynasty is suppressed and Ming loyalism is not the issue, but the idea of mourning a lost world persists. The death of Baoyu’s maid Qingwen in the previous chapter signifies the end of the garden world. In chapter 78, a maid tells Baoyu that Qingwen has been summoned to become a hibiscus spirit (Furong huashen 芙蓉花神). At that moment Jia Zheng sends for Baoyu. After composing a poem on Lin Siniang, Baoyu returns to the garden to mourn Qingwen with “Elegy to the Hibiscus Maid” (“Furong nüer lei” 芙蓉女兒誄). There are interesting parallels and contrasts between Baoyu’s two poems. “The Winsome General” is supposed to be

historical, yet it is something fabricated by Baoyu to satisfy his father's demand for a public performance. Its composition is punctuated by exchanges between father and son debating its merits as well as a chorus of polite—almost sychopantic—appreciation from Jia Zheng's friends. Presumably factual 真, it is yet colored by emotional distance and deliberate fabrication 假. The very term “winsome” (*guibua* 婉嬋) in the title echoes the evanescence of the goddess in Song Yu's poetic exposition, in which she is said to “move with winsome grace in the realm of darkness” 既婉嬋乎幽靜兮. It is possible that *guibua* may be punning on the homophonous term *guibua* 鬼話, “ghostly words” or, by extension, “nonsense.” In other words, what is supposedly historical may yet turn out to be merely fictive and inconsequential. Cao Xueqin may also be referring obliquely to the early Qing Lin Siniang stories. By drawing attention to the transformation of a ghost into a heroic martyr claiming her place in history, Cao adds further variation to the persistent theme of the fluid and unstable boundaries between history and fiction, reality and illusion, in *The Story of the Stone*. In *Casual Chats* and *Writing Women*, Lin's heroic image sublimates violence, redresses the pathos of dynastic collapse, and confronts the new order, yet it is belied by the tentative, plaintive voice in her poems. Cao also points to unresolved tensions: the ethical vindication of love may be possible only in an arbitrary invention satisfying the demands of the father and the state.

In some ways, Baoyu's two poems in chapter 78 are both responses to the collapse of a world premised on romantic-aesthetic sensibility. In a neat symmetrical reversal of “The Winsome General,” the elegy for Qingwen is prompted by a fib fabricated by a maidservant, who tells Baoyu that Qingwen has become a flower spirit to gratify him. It is thus something false that is nevertheless made real by Baoyu's conviction and imagination. In the scheme of *The Story of the Stone*, such transformative power is upheld as ideal. In chapter 58, for example, the young actress Ouguan, who plays the role of the male lead, offers sacrifices to her dead wife onstage, Diguan. Ouguan's ability to transcend gender boundaries and to turn theatrical illusion into palpable reality arouses Baoyu's deepest respect and empathy. Thus the titular couplet: “In the shade of the apricot tree, the false male phoenix wept for the illusory female one; / Under the red gauze window, with genuine feelings he apprehended the truth of obsession” 杏子蔭假鳳泣虛凰，茜紗窗真情揆癡理 (HLM, 58.628–47). The “false” and “illusory” are nevertheless rooted

in “the truth of obsession” comprehensible to anyone with “genuine feelings.” Both “The Winsome General” and “Elegy for the Hibiscus Maid” involve self-conscious mythmaking in commemorative rites for women who have died, but the dialectical relationship between reality and illusion is reversed.

There are other analogies and contrasts as well. Both poems appeal to the political virtue of loyalty to the ruler and the state. In “Winsome General” this is evident in the transformation of Lin Siniang from favored harem beauty into heroic martyr avenging her husband and lord. In “Hibiscus Maid,” the political references are more covert but still unmistakable. Qingwen is compared to Qu Yuan and Jia Yi, traditional icons of unheeded, thwarted loyal ministers. This reverses the usual allegorical direction of the “beauties and fragrant flora” tradition in Chinese literature: whereas the maligned beauty or the unfulfilled quest of the goddess usually symbolizes frustrated political ideals, here the victims of political persecution explain the plight of a maidservant. The straightforward celebration of self-sacrifice in “The Winsome General” promises to establish the continuity between love and political loyalty, yet it relies on dramatic spectacle and retains a measure of emotional distance, perhaps because it is imagined to meet external demands. “Hibiscus Maid” boasts of greater interiority; but it appeals to moral-political exemplars to elevate romantic longing rather than to propose the reconciliation between desire and its constraints. The supposed continuum of romantic passion and political fervor in “The Winsome General” is refuted by “Hibiscus Maid,” in which political references only serve to defiantly reassert the superiority of imagination, empathy, and romantic longing. Even that is not the last word. The apotheosis of the romantic-aesthetic realm in “Hibiscus Maid” is bracketed by the author-narrator’s ironic stance towards Baoyu’s willful mythmaking. The elegy is prefaced by Baoyu’s extended and almost precious ruminations on the meanings of his composition and the narrator’s ironic comments on his literary competence.¹⁶⁹ Ultimately the contexts of performance render both of these responses to the collapse of the garden world ironic and ambiguous,¹⁷⁰

169. These comments appear in the Gengchen edition but are deleted in the 1791 and 1792 printed editions. See *HLM*, 2:898–99, 3:670.

170. The phrases describing the contexts of performance in the titular couplet suggest irony: Jia Zheng “unhurriedly invites [a composition]” 閑徵 and Baoyu “willfully fabricates” 杜撰 the elegy.

perhaps a token of the unresolved contradictions in Cao Xueqin's attitude towards the tension between imagination and reality, between love and its transcendence through ethical-political ideals.

The Lin Siniang episode in *The Story of the Stone* intimates how the fall of the Ming dynasty becomes a metaphor for the demise of a world, and how loyalist lament may be transformed into a more generalized nostalgia. An interesting counterexample is Yang Enshou's *The Glory of the Winsome General* (*Guibua feng* 婁婁封, 1860, in *Xiangyan congshu*, 3:3087–3113), in which Lin Siniang departs from her symbolic role as realized in *The Story of the Stone* and is used again to represent a traumatic historical event, as with her seventeenth-century antecedents. Here she appears neither as ghost nor poetic creation but as a historical woman general who embraces martyrdom to avenge her lord.

Set in the Jiajing era (1522–67) of the Ming dynasty, Yang's play deliberately avoids references to the fall of the Ming. However, Yang is obviously interested in that period, as evinced by his other plays devoted to the Ming-Qing transition, *Hemp Beach Station* and *Liling Slope* (*Liling po* 理靈坡): both deal with heroic Hunan officials fighting the rebel Zhang Xianzhong at the end of the Ming. As noted above, *Hemp Beach Station* features the martial heroine Shen Yunying. Either directly or obliquely, all three plays use the Ming dynastic crisis as a substitute for the Taiping Rebellion.

References to incompetent leadership and corruption in *The Glory of the Winsome General* evoke the crisis facing China in the mid-nineteenth century. Yang disclaims all historical analogies in his preface, although elsewhere he states that his Lin Siniang is based on the wife of General Zhou Yunyao—both the general and his wife fought with valor and died as martyrs as they defended Xintian in Hunan against Taiping rebels in 1855.¹⁷¹ Indeed, the rebels' insurrection is explicitly designated as *hongyang jie* 紅羊劫 (*Guibua feng*, 3.23a)—literally, “karmic destruction brought on by the red ram,”¹⁷² which by homophonic associations refers to Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1814–64) and Yang Xiuqing 楊秀清 (1821–56), leaders of the Taiping Rebellion.

171. See Yang's preface to *Hemp Beach Station*, in Cai Yi, *Zhongguo gudian xiqu xubu huibian*, 4:2395.

172. “Hongyang jie” usually refers to the belief that calamities tend to occur in the years *bingwu* and *dingwei* in the sexagenary cycle. *Bing* and *ding* are associated with fire (hence “red” [*bong*]), while *wei* is linked to the ram (*yang*). The *bingwu* and *dingwei* years closest to the Taiping Rebellion are 1846 and 1847.

In the play dynastic order is restored after the martyrdom of Prince Heng and Lin Siniang. The general who finally defeats the rebels offers sacrifices to Lin with an image reminiscent of Song and Ming loyalists (*Guibua feng*, 5.28b):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 這墳堆呵 | At this grave mound, |
| 冷漆燈 | The cold, dark lamp |
| 通明透幽 | Pierces through the realm of light, reaching to the realm of darkness. |
| 問一樹冬青栽否 | I ask, has the one evergreen tree been planted? |

In 1278, Song loyalists reburied the remains of six Song emperors (whose graves had been violated) and marked the gravesite with an evergreen tree, which became a recurrent symbol in Song and Ming loyalist writings. Here Lin is apotheosized (by implication) as a Qing loyalist. It may seem ironic that a figure symbolizing mourning for the Ming should be transformed into a staunch defender of the Qing dynasty against rebels who, among other things, tried to ignite ethnic passions by appealing to the traumatic Ming-Qing transition. The proper dynastic order is, however, a malleable concept, and the Qing had long since acquired legitimacy by the time this play was written.¹⁷³

The Qing loyalist becomes a Ming loyalist again in late Qing writings. The Kangxi gazetteer of Ninghua mentions the anti-Qing resistance of one Consort Peng, married to the heir apparent of the Ming Prince Yongning of Jiangxi. She is said to have organized “local malcontents” at Nine Dragons Fort in Fujian.¹⁷⁴ From the late Qing on, Consort Peng was sometimes linked to Lin Siniang. According to *Notes on Fujian* (*Min zaji* 閩雜記) by Shi Hongbao 施鴻寶 (d. 1871), Consort Peng, known as “Small-Footed Peng” 彭小腳, led scores of household braves to Fujian, where she declared allegiance to the Yongli emperor and joined with other forces to continue anti-Qing resistance for another five years. Even as she faced execution, she was still shaming the officials present for surrendering to the Manchus.¹⁷⁵ Li Yuerui relates this story and suggests

173. The Qing loyalist general Zeng Guofan constantly invoked Ming martyrs as his model as he fought the Taiping rebels (Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict*, p. 74).

174. Li Yuanzhong, “Koubian ji” 寇變紀, j. 7 in *Ninghua xianzhi* 寧化縣志, cited in Xie Guozhen, *Qingchu nongmin qiyi ziliao jilu*, p. 305.

175. Shi Hongbao, *Min zaji*, 4.60; Chen Yan, *Taiwan tongji*, pp. 23–24. Peng is not executed but allowed to hang herself.

that the figure of the “Winsome General” in *The Story of the Stone* is based on Consort Peng, an assertion echoed in the anonymous *Heroic Women* (*Jinguo xumei zhuan* 巾幗鬚眉傳, 1900).¹⁷⁶ This image of Lin Siniang as a Ming loyalist must also have informed the late Qing story “Winsome General” 婉孌將軍小說 by Longmen jingtian shi 龍門經天氏, serialized with illustrations in the supplement of *Divine Continent Daily* (*Shenzhou ribao* 神州日報) from October 20 to December 20, 1907. I have not been able to locate this story. Judging from the idea of mission and patriotic fervor mentioned in the preface,¹⁷⁷ it must present, in unambiguous terms, the apotheosis of Lin Siniang as the embodiment of national salvation. The constant rewriting of Lin’s story testifies to its capacity to respond to different historical conflicts or aesthetic conundrums.

Female Heroes and National Salvation

The examples discussed in this chapter have significant late Qing and early Republican iterations: both the real or imagined historical personages from the Ming-Qing transition as well as heroic women appropriated from earlier sources by early Qing writers take on new burdens of national salvation in the throes of China’s painful transition to become a modern nation-state. As mentioned above, Deng shi and Lin Siniang were reclaimed as Ming loyalists by late Qing writers, while Qin Liangyu and Shen Yunying were recast as symbols of nationalist strivings and advocates for the equality of the sexes in early twentieth-century writings. Joan Judge noted the inclusion of Lady Xian as a model for the new female citizen 國民 in progressive works such as Yang Qianli’s 楊千里 (1880–1958) *New Reader for Girls and Women* (*Nüzi xin duben* 女子新讀本, 1905) and Xu Dingyi’s 許定一 (ca. 1888–ca. 1909) *Biographies of Great Women of Our Country* (*Zuguo nüjie weien zhuan* 祖國女傑偉人傳, 1906).¹⁷⁸ New anti-Manchu heroines are minted: Altenburger draws our attention to the legend of Lü Siniang, said to be the granddaughter

176. See Yi Su, *Honglou meng juan*, pp. 410–11; *Jinguo xumei zhuan* 3:26a–26b. Consort Peng is also lionized in a December 24, 1912, newspaper article in *Min li bao* (cited in Qin Yanchun, *Qing mu minchu*, p. 222) and in *Minggui qiyan ji* by Yifen nüshi (1917).

177. The preface is cited in Yi Su, *Honglou meng shulu*, p. 407.

178. See Judge, *The Precious Raft of History*, pp. 24–27, 157–58.

of the Ming loyalist Lü Liuliang 呂留良 (1629–83), whose corpse was desecrated and whose descendants and disciples were executed or exiled in 1728 because of alleged sedition. In early Republican (1910s–1930s) fictionalized history, Lü Siniang avenges the wrongs inflicted on her family by assassinating the Yongzheng emperor (1678–1735, r. 1722–35).¹⁷⁹

Less explicitly ideological was an operatic work by the poet Fan Zengxiang 樊增祥 (1846–1931), *Coiled Dragon Sword* (*Panlong jian* 盤龍劍), based on Zuo Yizhen's assassination of Zheng Guotai in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*. Reportedly written as a vehicle to feature the actress Fu Zhuyou 富竹友, this opera was published in *Fiction Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報) in 1915 but was never staged. Fan emphasizes Yizhen's valor and loyalty but does not introduce modern nationalist themes, which become much more prominent only in Zhou Xinfang's 周信芳 (1895–1975) rewriting of *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* as the Beijing opera *Zuo Yizhen* in the 1920s and 1930s. Xie Xiao'e is one of the roles taken up by the famous male *dan* (female lead) Shang Xiaoyun 尚小雲 (1900–1976), whose repertoire encompasses many woman warriors and female knights-errant, including Qin Liangyu and Lin Siniang. Other male *dan* like Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 (1894–1961), Cheng Yanqiu 程硯秋 (1904–58), and Xun Huisheng 荀慧生 (1900–1968)—all stars in the operatic firmament—also played various roles as heroic women “saving the nation” from the 1920s to the 1940s. The nationalist message is unmistakable in the context of China's deepening crisis and the war with Japan.

Judge points out that the divergent representations of heroic women at the turn of the twentieth century articulate different solutions to national crisis “through bloodshed and redemption, national utilitarianism, and gradual reform.”¹⁸⁰ However, their relevance as symbol of national renewal and salvation is rarely disputed. This is even more obvious in the Republican period, especially as the specter of Japanese invasion became a reality. Unlike our seventeenth- and eighteenth-century examples wherein heroic transformations convey hopes and anxieties about female agency or modulate conflicting perspectives on the fallen Ming and the new Qing order, here the purposefulness of such imaginings leaves little room for irony or ambivalence.

179. Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle*, chap. 8.

180. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

CHAPTER 4

The Fate of Pleasures and Passions

The writings we examined in the last chapter were conducive to implicit historical retrospection that commands broad arguments about the Ming-Qing transition or what it represents. The more personal writings we encounter in this chapter focus on details and fragments. Whereas heroic transformation is premised on fictional distance and foregrounds fictionality in chapter 3, images of female valor and resolve in the works discussed here claim the truth of experience or memory. Writing about courtesans and concubines, these authors also pondered the fate of pleasures and passions. Often they were questioning or defending their own past and present choices.

In contrast to the loyalists who insisted on ascetic withdrawal from society, for Jiangnan literati who espoused loyalist sentiment without eschewing refinement and extravagance, political convictions and romantic-aesthetic sensibility were intertwined. Indeed, these writers sometimes purported to be making a political statement by continuing or remembering a life of refined pleasures before the end of the Ming, because they were “remnants” 遺民 not only of the Ming as a political entity but also of the entire late Ming cultural realm. Their remembrances of the dynastic transition fuse romantic nostalgia with political lament. Prominent examples include Mao Xiang’s *Reminiscences of the Plum Shadows Convent* (*Yingmei an yiyu* 影梅庵憶語, 1651, hereafter *Plum Shadows*) and Yu Huai’s *Miscellaneous Records of the Plank Bridge* (*Banqiao zaji*

板橋雜記, 1693, hereafter *Plank Bridge*).¹ Those less steeped in late Ming courtesan culture may nevertheless have cultivated a mediated nostalgia, as in the case of Chen Weisong, who also used anecdotes about women's lives and writings in *Writing Women* to retrace the pathos of the Ming-Qing transition.

Both Yu Huai and Mao Xiang defined themselves as Ming loyalists. Memories of late Ming romantic sensibility thus often imply its instrumentality for moral or heroic action. In the case of men tainted by compromise, the ambiguities and contradictions of this proposition are heightened. Three women—Wang Sun 王蓀 (1625–46), Bian Sai 卞賽 (ca. 1620s–after 1663), and Liu Rushi—emerge as emblems of courage and resolution in the respective writings of three of the most important men of letters in the seventeenth century: Zhou Lianggong, Wu Weiye, and Qian Qianyi. All three were Ming officials who served under the Qing. For Qian and Wu especially, self-presentation and evaluation by posterity were very much bound up with their “loss of integrity” 失節. All three transform the women they love from “objects of desire” into heroes, and in their writings romantic attachment can become valor, historical understanding, or political integrity. The contexts and implications of such metamorphoses differ, but they often involve the male authors' own projected self-transformation, motivated by a mixture of self-reproach and self-justification. Indeed, the very act of writing about these women is a redemptive process. Whereas Zhou merely defends a former self, Qian and Wu turn personal tributes into broader cultural statements, in a manner comparable to Mao Xiang and Yu Huai, but with an even greater emphasis on heroic action after the conquest.

Defending Pleasures and Passions

Yu Huai never advanced beyond the lowest degree in the civil service examination, though he was widely known for his literary talent. A staunch member of the Revival Society,² he served as the minister Fan Jingwen's 范景文 (1587–1644) advisor from 1640 to 1644 and was

1. Cf. Ōki, “Mao Xiang and Yu Huai”; *Bo Jō to Eibaian okugo no kenkyū*, pp. 3–41; *Fengyue Qinhuai*.

2. See Yu Hua's congratulatory essay written for Mao Xiang's seventieth birthday (1680), in Mao Xiang, *Tongren jì*, 2.46a–47a.

embroiled in the factional struggles of the Hongguang court. Some scholars suggest that his peregrinations from the mid-1640s to the late 1660s were tied to anti-Qing resistance, although the evidence is not conclusive.³ He is remembered above all else as the chronicler of the Qinhuai pleasure quarters in Nanjing.

By the time Yu Huai wrote *Plank Bridge* in the early 1690s, the world of late Ming courtesan culture had faded into memory.⁴ Its rupture from the present was matched by the historical continuity it embodied while it existed. In the late thirteenth century, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, the first Ming emperor, reign title Hongwu (1328–98, r. 1368–98), established “the sixteen towers” to house “official courtesans” 官妓 in Nanjing, then the capital. The purpose was apparently to increase revenue and to encourage urban revival. The ranks of courtesans and prostitutes swelled in 1402, following Zhu Di’s 朱棣 usurpation of the throne to become the Yongle emperor (1360–1424, r. 1402–24). After deposing his nephew Zhu Yunwen 朱允炆, the Jianwen emperor (1377–1402, r. 1399–1402), Zhu Di ruthlessly eliminated officials who were Jianwen loyalists and condemned their female relatives to join “the register of entertainers.” By the late Ming, Qinhuai had become the very site for the cultural elite to articulate their political concerns and aspirations. It is on the basis of this historical memory that Yu Huai claims to use his account of courtesans to sum up “the prosperity and decline of an era, the melancholy ruminations of a thousand years” 一代之興衰，千秋之感慨 (*BQ*, p. 3). Yu Huai’s deep nostalgia for late Ming courtesan culture is compounded of personal loss and national calamity—mourning lost years and friends who are no more, he also uses the destruction of the Qinhuai pleasure quarters to lament the fall of the Ming.

Plank Bridge is typical of the early Qing literature of remembrance premised on the gap between past and present in the aftermath of cataclysmic collapse. Yet the contrast of life “before and after” can be misleading. *Plank Bridge* may give the impression that the phenomenon

3. See *LRS*, p. 1082; Yan Dichang, *Qing ci shi*, p. 81; Li Jintang’s preface (*BQ*, p. 3). Yu Huai’s extant corpus, a mere fragment of what he wrote, includes many poems of political lament, but there are no direct references to resistance. Both fellow loyalists and Qing officials feature prominently in Yu’s literary exchanges.

4. On late Ming courtesan culture, see Ropp, “Ambiguous Images”; Wai-ye Li, “The Late-Ming Courtesan”; Ko, “The Written Word.”

of literati consorting with courtesans declined after the fall of the Ming, but Yu Huai's *Record of Travels in Wu* (*San Wu youlan zhi* 三吳遊覽志, preface dated 1650) shows how courtesans continued to attend socio-literary gatherings (including meetings commemorating Ming martyrs). There are recurrent references to one courtesan named Chuyun 楚雲, with whom Yu Huai seemed to have developed a deep bond.⁵

Yu Huai evokes the world of Qinhuai as a separate and alternative reality. Borrowing the vocabulary of “encounter with immortals” in fiction, Yu describes entry into the Qinhuai pleasure quarters as a deepening enchantment:

The houses were tasteful and meticulously clean, gracefully laced with flowers and vegetation. Reach the entrance and the gates with copper rings would open, while bead curtains hung low. Go up the steps, and pet dogs would bark at the guests, and parrots would call for tea. Ascend the hall and the madame would respectfully welcome you, and conduct rituals proper for hosts and guests. Enter the court and the maid would have finished applying makeup for the beauty; she would emerge followed by the maid. Sit long enough and all manners of delicacies would arrive and various tunes and songs would strike up. Reach an understanding and her gaze would stir your heart, and tender feelings would deepen.

屋宇精潔，花木蕭疏。到門則銅環半啓，珠箔低垂。升階則鴉兒吠客，鸚哥喚茶。登堂則假母肅迎，分賓抗禮，進軒則丫環畢妝，捧艷而出。坐久則水陸備至，絲肉競陳。定情則目眇心挑，綢繆宛轉。(BQ, p. 8)

In jest, Yu Huai renames the abode of the famous courtesan Gu Mei 顧媚 (1619–64) “Meilou” 媚樓, or “Mei’s House,” which is famous for its tasteful elegance, as “Milou” 迷樓 (House of Enchantment), the labyrinthine realm where one may happily surrender to refined pleasures (BQ, pp. 29–30).⁶ The lantern boats of Qinhuai, with their shimmering splendor, heighten the sense of carefully wrought illusions (BQ, p. 10).⁷

5. See Xie Zhengguang, “Chuyun.” There are many poems addressed to or written about courtesans in Yu’s post-conquest writings.

6. Emperor Yang of Sui built a palace in Yangzhou called “Milou.” He reportedly said, “Even if real immortals roam here, they must also be lost in enchantment. This can be called ‘The Tower of Enchantment’” (*Gujin shihua*, cited in BQ, p. 31).

7. In addition to Yu Huai’s account of and poem on the lantern boats (BQ, p. 10), see Du Jun, “Chu wen dengchuan guchui ge” 初聞燈船鼓吹歌, in *Bianya tang yiji*, “Shi,” 2.16b–19b. Writing in 1647, Du Jun uses the pale revival of music on Qinhuai to remember its late Ming glory.

According to Yu Huai, for all its allure, Qinquai is also a world “cleansed of the dust of the mundane world” 漱滌塵俗 (*BQ*, p. 9), where among the objects used “there was not a vulgar thing” 都無俗物 (*BQ*, p. 15). Contrary to the common perception that courtesans represent sensual indulgence, Yu notes how some insist on unworldly abstemiousness in the midst of opulence. As “trend-setters” in sartorial fashions, they favor simple styles, muted colors, and minimal adornments (*BQ*, p. 13). Yu describes Li Shiniang’s 李十娘 abode, where he held literary gatherings that “did not deteriorate into wantonness” 不及於亂, as a pure, decorous space framed by ancient plum trees, wutong trees, and bamboo: “One would question whether this was still the mundane realm” 疑非入境. As for Li Shiniang herself, the more she was sought after, “the more she tried to hide herself. She claimed to be sickly, did not adorn herself, and refused to entertain guests” 愈自閉匿，稱善病，不妝飾，謝賓客 (*BQ*, p. 23).

Why does Yu Huai emphasize both seduction and restraint? Writing almost half a century after the fall of the Ming, he seems to be continuing the late Ming fascination with liminality. His *Plank Bridge* thus gives us some insights into the ambiguities and permeable boundaries of the Qinquai world. It is a malleable alternative reality with its own kinship relations, friendships, nomenclature, and vernacular. Classified as “debased” 賤, the courtesan yet consorted with elite men, sometimes as an intellectual equal, and could reclaim respectability through marriage 從良. A courtesan was often born or sold into that station, but Yu Huai reminds us that an elite or even aristocratic woman could have been reduced to that status, as with female family members of officials opposed to the Yongle emperor (*BQ*, p. 15). The favors of courtesans could be purchased, yet they could appear unattainable, and Yu emphasizes their choice, agency, and loyalty. Above all, liminality serves Yu’s argument that feminine space was also political space. The Nanjing examination hall and the most select courtesan quarters “faced each other across some distance” 遙對. Consorting with courtesans was “the unofficial chapter of the battles of letters” 文戰之外篇, and examination candidates (often also Revival Society members) gathered in the painted boats of Qinquai for fervent literary and political discussions (*BQ*, pp. 13–14).⁸

8. See also Huang Zongxi, *Sijiu lu* (*Huang Zongxi quanji*, 1:361); Mao Xiang, *Tongren ji*, 11.23b–25a.

The relationship between patron and courtesan encompassed many gradations of sexual, romantic, and intellectual intimacy; its appeal lay precisely in such shifting boundaries. Friendship between men and women, so hard to come by under normal social situations in that period, thrived in the courtesan's world, with or without nuances of romantic tension. *Plank Bridge* also recounts many courtesan-literatus romances. Arranged marriages being the norm in premodern China, the pleasure quarters might well be the only place where agency, tension, yearning, and uncertainty—the ingredients of romance—could come into play.

Perhaps more than any other book, *Plank Bridge* establishes late Ming courtesans as a cultural ideal. The chronicle of their beauty, wit, refined taste, and accomplishments as poets, painters, calligraphers, and musicians is perhaps not very different from the “literature appraising courtesans” 品妓 that started in the late Tang and flourished from the late Ming to the late Qing. Also typical is the celebration of men's writings about courtesans. Yu Huai proudly proclaims, “The songs and poems I wrote were circulated and chanted by various courtesans” 所作歌詩，傳誦諸姬之口 (*BQ*, p. 3).⁹ Writings about or addressed to courtesans often defined literati self-image and affirmed socio-literary ties among men, and *Plank Bridge* offers examples illuminating that tradition.

What sets Yu Huai's book apart is his deep empathy with the courtesans' plights and dilemmas, successes and failures, and above all their role in the political struggles of the period. He also celebrates their unconventionality and free-spiritedness that defies prescribed roles and sometimes even gender boundaries. Empathy stops short of introspection, however. Yu Huai describes with relish literatus-courtesan romances but does not consider a man's culpability for betraying the expectations of a courtesan, as shown in his accounts of Bian Sai or Li Meiniang 李媚娘—he says nothing about Bian Sai's disappointment with Wu Weiye and gives a matter-of-fact account of how he had to leave Li Meiniang following his failure in the civil service examination.

9. Literati often determined the fame of courtesans through their writings, while courtesans could enhance the reputation of a man of letters by chanting his poems or singing his song lyrics. This interdependence was already evident in the Song dynasty, notably in the case of the lyricist Liu Yong (11th c.) and his courtesan friends and lovers.

There are intermittent glimpses of disparagement; but even then sympathy is never far beneath the surface. If some of the courtesans in *Plank Bridge* come to an ignominious end, they are simply trapped in circumstances beyond their control. For example, Wang Yue 王月 [Wang Yuesheng 王月生] (d. 1642) is faulted for falling victim to the sadistic caprices of the rebel leader Zhang Xianzhong, but it is clear that her only alternative is suicide (*BQ*, p. 50).¹⁰ Gu Mei is implicitly criticized for stooping to all kinds of follies in quest of an heir after she marries the poet and scholar-official Gong Dingzi 龔鼎孳 (1615–73), and for accepting the honors due an official's wife from the Qing court (*BQ*, p. 34), but at least on the latter point it is Gong who, by traditional standards, deserves greater blame for “serving two dynasties.”¹¹

The dark shadows of this world develop from the courtesans' powerlessness against the fate of being bought, sold, transferred, and abandoned despite the illusory sense of agency. The reality of transaction is thus never truly suppressed, and political turmoil rudely shatters the dreams of many courtesans and their literati lovers. The issue is not, however, simply that a glamorous aura masks a sordid and unhappy reality. Rather, the sense of freedom and splendor is all the more treasured and celebrated precisely because it is recognized as a precariously sustained, carefully wrought, and passionately defended illusion.

Plank Bridge, by virtue of its subject matter, has to dwell on the boundaries of conventional morality. Courtesans articulate an argument often used by men—namely, that sexual morality is defined not by actual

10. In Yu Huai's account, when Luzhou fell to Zhang Xianzhong in 1642, Wang Yuesheng, then concubine of Cai Ruheng, governor of Luzhou, was seized. She became one of Zhang's favorites in his harem. For some unspecified offense, Zhang had her beheaded, steamed her head, and served it to other rebel leaders (*BQ*, p. 50). According to Liu Luan (17th c.) Wang refused to submit to Zhang Xianzhong and died a martyr (*Fengren shihua*, 4a–4b). Zhang Dai describes Wang Yuesheng as reserved and refined (*Tao'an mengyi*, pp. 24, 72).

11. Gu Mei received the honor declined by Lady Tong, Gong's principal wife. Madame Tong had declared: “I already twice received honors from the Ming dynasty. From now on the beneficence conferred by this dynasty may be yielded to Madame Gu.” In other words, her refusal was a political gesture of non-participation in the new regime. Yu Huai exclaimed, “Alas! Madame Tong was so much more worthy than men!” Gong Dingzi was Yu Huai's good friend and patron. As Li Jintang points out, it is a measure of Yu's impartiality that he criticizes Gong (*BQ*, p. 34). On Gu Mei, see also Meng Sen, *Ming Qing shi*, pp. 435–72.

behavior but by emotional states and mental attitudes. When Yu Huai's friend (and probably lover) Li Shiniang changes her name to Zhenmei 貞美, meaning "chaste and beautiful," Yu teases her: "Beautiful, to be sure, but chaste, not quite" 美則有之，貞則未也：

She wept and said, "You are one who knows me, how can you come out with these words? . . . If it is someone I care for, even if we treat each other decorously like host and guest, my feelings are already in harmony with his; if it is not someone I care for, even if I am made to share with him the same pillow and mat, I will not be one with him. That I am unchaste is fate! How can it be helped?" As she finished speaking, her tears streamed down and wet her lapels. I collected myself and apologized, "I misspoke! It's my fault!"

十娘泣曰：「君知兒者，何出此言？...苟兒心之所好，雖相莊如賓，情與之洽也。非兒心之所好，雖勉同枕席，不與之合也。兒之不貞，命也。如何？」言已，涕下沾襟。余歛容謝曰：「吾失言，吾過矣。」 (BQ, pp. 23-24)

The idea that apparent wantonness and moral principles can converge serves the narrative of loyalism in *Plank Bridge*. Yu Huai asserts the connection between the romantic and the political spheres of experience by comparing himself to the late Tang poet Du Mu (BQ, p. 4), for whom romantic dalliances in Qinhuai did not preclude engagement with political and military issues. One anecdote from *Plank Bridge* recounts how Fang Yizhi and his brother-in-law Sun Lin 孫臨 pretended to be bandits to frighten Jiang Gai 姜垓 (1614-53) during Jiang's prolonged sojourn with Li Shiniang. Fang and Sun revealed their identity only when Jiang piteously begged for mercy. Jiang Gai, known for his integrity, later became a staunch loyalist.¹² Fang Yizhi was an important thinker, scholar, and poet; he took the tonsure after the fall of the Ming and died a Ming martyr.¹³

Yu Huai also records how Sun Lin was enamored of the courtesan Ge Nen 葛嫩, and how Sun and Ge died heroic deaths defying their Qing captors. (Sun Lin was an officer under Yang Wencong's 楊文聰 [1596-1646] command, and both died fighting the Qing forces in Fujian.)

12. See Xie Zhengguang, "Qing chu zhongjun dianfan." Yu Huai addressed many poems to the Jiang brothers.

13. See Yu Yingshi, *Fang Yizhi wanjie kao*.

Upon their army's defeat, Sun Lin was seized, and Ge Nen too was arrested. The chief commander [of the Qing army] wanted to molest her. Nen loudly cursed him, bit her tongue into pieces and, holding blood in her mouth, spit at his face. The commander put her to the blade himself. Kexian [Sun Lin], seeing that Nen had died a martyr, laughed out loud, "Today Sun Third attained immortality!" He too was killed.

兵敗被執。并縛嫩。主將欲犯之。嫩大罵，嚼舌碎，含血噴其面。將手刃之。克咸見嫩抗節死，乃大笑曰：「孫三今日登仙矣。」亦被殺。(BQ, p. 26)

The account of their martyrdom comes right after the story of how Sun became infatuated with the seductive Ge Nen. At first Sun Lin had loved Wang Yue, but she was forced to marry another. Cast into a deep gloom, Sun was persuaded by Li Shiniang to seek consolation with the beautiful and talented Ge Nen:

He barged into her bedchamber. Just then Nen was combing her hair. Her long tresses reached all the way to the ground, her wrists were delicately round like lotus roots, her complexion was ivory fair, her eyebrows had the hue of distant mountains, and her eyes were jet black. She let out the words, "Please sit." Sun Lin said, "This is the realm of sensuous delight. I am content to grow old here!" That night they confirmed their passion, and for a month he did not emerge from Ge Nen's quarters. He finally made her his concubine.

闌入臥室，值嫩梳頭，長髮委地，雙腕如藕，面色微黃，眉如遠山，瞳人點漆。叫聲「請坐。」克咸曰：「此溫柔鄉也，吾老是鄉矣。」是夕定情，一月不出。後竟納諸閑房。(BQ, p. 26).

Nine years separate these two juxtaposed events—Sun Lin met Ge Nen in 1637, and they died in 1646.¹⁴ Yu Huai begins his entry by enumerating Sun's literary talents, martial prowess, interest in military strategy, as well as immersion in the pleasures of courtesan quarters. He makes no attempt to explain the psychological mechanism that prompts the pair's shift of role from lover/seductress to resistance fighter/martyr. Instead, in a tone of relatively unembellished record keeping, Yu Huai juxtaposes

14. On the date of their meeting, see Fang Wen's poem (dated 1637) sent to Sun Lin on the latter's thirtieth birthday, in *Fang Tushan shiji*, 4.126. In the note to that poem, Fang Wen mentions that Sun Lin was "at the time enamored of Ge Nen, and was about to marry her." On their martyrdom, see Qian Chengzhi, "Sun Wugong zhuan," in *Tianjian wenji*, j. 21; *Mingshi*, 257.7103; Fang Wen, *Fang Tushan shiji*, 7.259. Sun Lin's collections, published in the final years of the Ming, are no longer extant.

romantic, sensual desires with martial aspirations and heroic determination and thereby implies a continuum between these spheres of experience.

Yu Huai pays tribute to another courtesan, Li Xiang 李香 (called Li Xiangjun 李香君 when she becomes the heroine of *Peach Blossom Fan*), for her political courage. Described as “knightly and intelligent” 俠而慧 (*BQ*, p. 69), she remonstrates with her lover Hou Fangyu against associating with Ruan Dacheng 阮大鍼 (1587–1646), the minister of the Hongguang court hated for his earlier ties with the eunuch Wei Zhongxian, whose corruption and abuse of power wrought much havoc in late Ming politics. Yu thus implies that heroism and moral integrity can accommodate romantic liaisons; further, the apparently self-indulgent behavior of associating with courtesans actually masks or perhaps even encourages moral resolve.

Women who inspire such emotions and aspirations may themselves be wayward beyond conventional boundaries. Yu Huai sometimes uses the appellation *xia* 俠 (knight-errant), whose range of associations includes martial prowess, physical courage, and defiant unconventionality, to appraise courtesans in *Plank Bridge*. By *xia* he is referring to unrestrained emotions and independence of spirit; on a more mundane level such attributes may be expressed through financial generosity, readiness to take a younger lover, or disdain of social norms (*BQ*, pp. 28, 51, 69). Defiance is, however, often mixed with pathos. Kou Mei 寇湄 (style name Baimen 白門) is a good example. Zhu Guobi 朱國弼, Lord Protector of the State, married her with great pomp and circumstance—according to Chen Weisong, Zhu had fifty armored soldiers hold up red silk lanterns that lighted up the night (*FRJ*, 16a–16b). When Beijing fell in 1644, Zhu went north with his household.¹⁵

Baimen ransomed herself by giving the lord a thousand pieces of gold. Leaping on a lone horse and wearing a short coat, she returned south with a maid.¹⁶ Upon her return, she became a female knight-errant, built

15. Yu Huai states that Zhu Guobi surrendered to the Qing before heading north, but Ji Liuqi claims that Zhu was active in the Hongguang court and surrendered only when it fell in 1645 (Ji Liuqi, *Mingji nanlue*, 4.218; Li Qing, *Sanyuan biji*, pp. 239–40).

16. According to Chen Weisong, when Zhu's estate was confiscated after the conquest, he survived by selling his concubines and singing girls. Kou convinced Zhu that she could pay him more handsomely if he let her return south, and in a month she was able to send him ten thousand taels of silver (*FRJ*, 16a–16b).

gardens, entertained guests, and consorted daily with men of cultivation. In a state of inebriation, she would sing or wail, mourning her fate as a declining beauty, adrift and belonging nowhere. Subsequently, she married a Yangzhou licentiate, was frustrated and unhappy, and returned to Nanjing. She was growing old, but still spent her days with various youths. As she lay sick, she summoned her lover Han, shared her intimate feelings with him, and wept in anguish. She wanted Han to stay for the night. He declined on some pretext, and even then she held his hands and could not bear to let him go. Night came, and she heard Han talking and laughing in her maid's room. She struggled up, called her maid, and lashed her scores of times. Cursing Han endlessly for being a faithless beast, she would fain set teeth on him. Her illness took a turn for the worse—medicine was of no avail—and she died because of it.

白門以千金予保國贖身，跳匹馬，短衣，從一婢南歸。歸爲女俠，築園亭，結賓客，日與文人騷客相往還。酒酣以往，或歌或哭。亦自歎美人之遲暮，嗟紅豆之飄零也。既從揚州某孝廉，不得志，復還金陵。老矣，猶日與諸少年爲伍。臥病時，召所歡韓生來，綢繆悲泣，欲留之偶寢。韓生以他故辭，猶執手不忍別。至夜，聞韓生在婢房笑語，奮身起喚婢，自箠數十，咄咄罵韓生負心禽獸行，欲嚙其肉。病愈劇，醫藥罔效，遂以死。(BQ, p. 51)

She chose to resume her trade rather than surrender. Wu Weiye compares her to the ancient beauty Xi Shi, who sought freedom on a boat and whose heroic aspirations ultimately found no venue.¹⁷ The entry ends with Qian Qianyi's poem on Kou, which praises her as a "female knight-errant" (BQ, p. 51; QMZ, 4:417). The image of Kou taking her fate into her hands and returning to Nanjing on horseback fits the image of heroic defiance, but her sad end is a reminder of the formidable limits on a courtesan's aspirations of freedom and self-determination.¹⁸ Both heroism and tragic pathos are bound up in the image of the knight-errant: they become two sides of the idea of defying limits.

A courtesan sometimes earned the epithet of "knight-errant" for her friendship with a literatus. The obverse side of such a relationship is the man's self-representation as real or potential knight-errant. Indeed, a man coming to the assistance of a courtesan as a friend (rather than a lover) often earns the designation of "knight-errant," following the

17. Wu Weiye, "Zeng Kou Baimen liushou" 贈寇白門六首, WMC, 1:210–12. On Xi Shi, see chap. 6, pp. 564–65, 575.

18. Kou Baimen's tragic end echoes the fate of the Tang courtesan Yu Xuanji.

tradition of “the knight in a yellow jacket” 黄衫客 who vindicates the wronged courtesan Huo Xiaoyu 霍小玉 in the eponymous ninth-century tale.¹⁹ Such was Yu Huai’s implied self-image when he helped Gu Mei extricate herself from persecution by a vindictive client (*BQ*, p. 30). Similarly, Wu Qi 吳綺 (1619–94) said of the literati who tried to facilitate the union of Mao Xiang and Dong Bai: “they vied to wear the yellow jacket” 競著黄衫 (*BQ*, p. 68).

More generally, “knightly spirit” is that spark of defiance that allows a man to defy boundaries and embrace great endeavors. Some loyalists thus carried on anti-Qing resistance with the flair and romantic pathos of knights-errant; some of them were also known for their willful passions. For example, the poet Wei Geng 魏耕 (1614–62), who was executed in 1662 for involvement in anti-Qing resistance, insisted on wine and the company of courtesans when he discoursed on military strategy. Fang Yizhi, mentioned above as a Qinhuai prankster, was “given to unrestrained roamings” 恣意浪遊 even when he was a fugitive in Guangdong in 1646, when he was briefly involved with the Yongli court.²⁰ He once stripped himself naked and let his hair down to reenact the scene of Mi Heng playing the drum to defy Cao Cao. When admonished, Fang broke into operatic arias to the accompaniment of the sandalwood clapper.²¹ Unrestraint or self-indulgence and heroic striving, often presented as intertwined in late Ming writings, continue to be conjoined in one strand of loyalist discourse in the early Qing.

Yu Huai concludes his book with the last section of a long poem, “Blue Tower” (“Qinglou pian” 青樓篇), by the precocious poet and Ming martyr Xia Wanchun, implicitly claiming Xia as a kindred spirit (*BQ*, pp. 70–71). (“Blue tower” is the standard euphemism for pleasure quarters.) Xia Wanchun was sixteen when he died in 1647; whatever memory he had of the Qinhuai courtesan world before the fall could hardly have been based on personal experience. Yet like Yu Huai and so many other poets from that period, he too mixes romantic nostalgia with political lamentation and heroic aspirations in writing about the world of

19. The courtesan painter Lin Tiansu describes Wang Ruqian as “knight in yellow jacket” for publishing Liu Rushi’s letters; see Lin’s preface (*LRSJ*, p. 81).

20. Wang Fuzhi, *Saoshou wen* 搔首問, in *Chuanshan quanshu* 12:635.

21. Qu Gongmei 瞿共美, “Liushi chudu shizi bashou xu” 六十初度示子八首序, in Chen Hu, *Lijou ji*, A.51b–52b; cited in Zhao Yuan, *Ming Qing zhiji shidafu yanjiu*, p. 478.

courtesans.²² These pervasive cultural associations may also be rooted in Xia's literary predilections. Echoing some works by his mentor Chen Zilong, Xia Wanchun persists in the *Verses of Chu* tradition, charging the image of the quest for beauty with political purpose.²³ In concluding his memoir with such an icon of loyalism, Yu Huai confirms his defense of pleasures and passions.

Romantic Moralists

One of the courtesans that Yu Huai pays tribute to is Dong Bai 董白 (style name Xiaowan 小宛, 1624–51), whom he describes as a paragon of beauty, talent, and refinement whose early death was widely mourned, notably in Mao Xiang's memoir and Wu Weiye's poems (*BQ*, pp. 34–35). Yu Huai and Mao Xiang were good friends and had much in common: both belonged to the same literary circles in Jiangnan, and both lived as loyalists after the fall of the Ming. Yu Huai's *Plank Bridge* evokes a world also dominant in *Plum Shadows*. For all that, the logic of the two works is different. Mao Xiang implicitly defends the continuity of their former lifestyles, but Yu Huai emphasizes rupture. Mao imposes orthodox moral and social order on chaos, even while aestheticizing this order, whereas Yu proposes an order that transcends conventional boundaries as it emerges from the vagaries of memory.

Mao Xiang came from a distinguished scholar-official family and was active in the Revival Society during the late Ming. He withdrew from public life under the Qing but continued to host literary gatherings and theatrical performances in his estate, Painted-in-Water Garden, which he built in the early 1650s. His anthology of writings by himself, his family members, and his friends, *Collected Writings of Kindred Spirits* (*Tongren ji* 同人集), compiled during the mid-Kangxi period (1673–ca. 1692), testifies to the evolution of literary communities that included both Ming loyalists and Qing officials.

22. In Xia's "Jiangnan qu" 江南曲, for example, courtesans and their literati lovers speak of heroic exploits (*Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, pp. 204–5).

23. Xia sometimes uses "beauty" 美人 to refer to other loyalists; see, for example, "Jihuai Ziliu Fang Er" 寄懷子留方二 and "Wujiang yeku" 吳江野哭. In other poems "beauty" stands for political ideals; see his "Ti Caoxi caotang bi" 題曹溪草堂壁 and "Chang ge" 長歌 (*Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, pp. 168, 85–87, 221).

Mao Xiang's *Plum Shadows*, which chronicles his relationship with Dong Bai, moves from the public, social space of the courtesan world to private, domestic space. They met in 1639. Dong Bai, described as withdrawn, frail, and long-suffering, though resourceful, actively pursued union with the initially reluctant Mao Xiang. After overcoming many obstacles, she finally became his concubine in 1642. The text follows a broadly chronological frame, beginning with their first encounters and ending with Mao's dream of Dong's death and his brief lament that the dream has become reality in 1651. Closer scrutiny reveals, however, a thematic organization. The thematic units are marked in the "Maoshi congshi" 冒氏叢書 edition: their "first encounters" 紀遇 and "travels" 紀游, Dong's "quiet intelligence" 紀敏靜 and "respectful abstemiousness" 紀恭儉, her interest in "poetry, history, calligraphy, and painting" 紀詩史書畫 as well as "tea, incense, flowers, and the moon" 紀茗香花月, her culinary skills 紀飲食, their "shared plight" 紀同難, and her "care for him in sickness" 紀侍藥.²⁴ This thematic structure shows how romantic pathos and aestheticized daily life continue to be idealized in the post-conquest world.

The middle sections on aesthetic and sensual pleasures traverse the traumatic turning points in the dynastic transition. Mao tells, for example, of their 1642 tour of Jinshan, where Dong's ethereal beauty, enhanced by a dress made from European gauze, drew the admiration of a growing crowd that followed Mao and Dong around and pointed to them as "immortals." (YMA, p. 13). He continues with two more excursions and concludes the section with their 1645 trip to Lake Yuanyang, whose idyllic scenery betrayed no sign of national crisis (YMA, pp. 14–15). Likewise, Mao explains how Dong assisted him in compiling anthologies of Tang poetry, and how she also collected anecdotes and accounts by and about women in a work entitled *Beauties by the Boudoir Case* (*Lianyan* 奩艷) when Mao and his family sought refuge in Yanguan, having fled the chaos and battles in Rugao (YMA, pp. 16–18). The story of how in 1646 Mao and Dong "crafted by hand a hundred pellets" of incense, made according to some European prescription obtained from "the imperial collection," is indicative of Mao's devotion to Dong and their shared delight in the pleasures of daily life—he notes how the incense has to be

24. See Wu Dingzhong, *Dong Xiaowan huikao*, pp. 135, 137, 138, 139, 142, 146, 148, 152, 154.

burnt gently, without producing any smoke, and only a person with Dong's gentle refinement can understand its subtleties. The incense presumably became available because of the fall of Beijing in 1644 and the collapse of the Hongguang court in 1645, but Mao does not allude to the circumstances of its acquisition (*YMA*, pp. 20–21). In other words, the narrative of Dong's literary and aesthetic sensibility sometimes seems to defy or ignore calamitous political events, although Mao also chronicles sadly how Dong lost the paintings and calligraphy she loved in the course of their wanderings (*YMA*, p. 19), in a manner reminiscent of Li Qingzhao's "Postscript to the *Record of Inscriptions on Bronze and Stone*" ("Jinshi lu houxu" 金石錄後序). Put differently, the aesthetic domain, idealized as romantic bliss and domestic order, beckons against all odds as a refuge from the turmoil of history.

Throughout *Plum Shadows*, Dong Bai is both the connoisseur and the object of connoisseurship, or more precisely, her persona as connoisseur confirms her superior sensibility and turns her into an object of beauty. Mao describes with evident admiration how, as they fled from chaos, Dong Bai abandoned the ornaments of the boudoir and took only calligraphy and paintings. Eventually she let go of the boxes and mounting paraphernalia and kept only the paper and silk, yet even then destruction was inevitable: "Her obsessive devotion was genuine and extreme" 而姬之嗜好，真且至矣 (*YMA*, p. 19). A great lover of flowers, especially chrysanthemums, Dong took care to frame herself with chrysanthemum shadows even in her sickness (in the autumn of 1650):

Every night she burned tall bright candles, used six sections of white screens to frame three sides, and set up a small seat among the flowers. The chrysanthemum shadows had to be positioned in the most expressive and exquisite ways. Only then would she enter. She was among the chrysanthemums, and both the chrysanthemums and she were in the shadows. She returned her gaze to the screen, looked at me and said, "The spirit of the chrysanthemums is fully expressed. But what is to be done about the frail one?"²⁵ Even now, when I think about it, the scene has the intangible grace of a painting.²⁶

25. See Li Qingzhao: "She is, compared to the yellow blossoms, more frail" 人比黃花瘦, to the tune "Zui huayin" 醉花陰 (*Li Qingzhao ji jiaozhu*, pp. 34–35).

26. Cf. Sikong Tu, *Ersbisi shipin* 二十四詩品: "The fallen blossoms are wordless: / A person with intangible grace like chrysanthemums" 落花無言，人澹如菊。

每晚高燒翠蠟，以白團回六曲，圍三面，設小座于花間，位置菊影，極其參橫妙麗。始以身入，人在菊中，菊與人俱在影中。回視屏上，顧余曰：「菊之意態盡矣，其如人瘦何？」至今思之，澹秀如畫。(YMA, p. 22)

In the compass of late Ming sensibility, what is savored is not simply the object, but also the experience and spectacle of aesthetic appreciation—of this logic the connoisseurs themselves are acutely aware. When Dong Bai recites Li He's lines, "Drenched in moonlight, / Waves of misty jade" 月灑灑，波烟玉，²⁷ her enjoyment of the moon and the poem turn her into their perfect embodiment: "She entered the world of 'waves of misty jade.' Her eyes were like sidelong ripples, her breath was like the mist on the River Xiang, and her body was like white jade. She was like the moon, and the moon, too, was like her" 人以身入波烟玉世界之下，眼如橫波，氣如湘煙，體如白玉，人如月矣，月復似人 (YMA, p. 23). "Enjoying the moon" 玩月 creates perfect empathic identification: Dong Bai becomes the spectacle she cherishes. Political turmoil has not impinged on how Mao and Dong continue late Ming aesthetic sensibility.

Aestheticized feminine space not only provides refuge from political disorder, it also establishes the commonality of pleasures, passion, and orthodox morality. Dong Bai's virtue is tested and vindicated by her sufferings and devotion to Mao during the dynastic transition. Her love, often expressed as self-abnegation, comes to be conflated with a higher moral-political purpose. There is seamless continuity between Dong's artistic pursuits and domestic duties. She masters needlework as perfectly as the musical arts of the courtesan; the same zeal in which she practices calligraphy sustains her in artistic self-expression as well as in making lists for the household (YMA, pp. 15–16, 18). Even as she embodies traditionally feminine virtues such as deference, gentleness, and selfless, tireless devotion to Mao and his family during the turbulent years of dynastic transition, she is also credited with a broader sense of political morality—she shares Mao's indignation over the plight of Eastern Han scholars opposing corrupt elements in court, and gives up following Zhong Yao 鍾繇 as a calligraphic model when she finds out about his disparagement of Guan Yu 關羽 (ca. 160–219), upheld as the

27. Li He, "Yue lu lu pian" 月灑灑篇, in *Sanjia pingzhu Li Changji geshi*, p. 165.

paragon of loyalty and courage (*YMA*, p. 18). In sum, Mao's tribute to Dong emphasizes how romantic-aesthetic values are redeemed by moral exemplarity.

A concern with moral justification also colors Mao's self-presentation in the memoir. If Dong Bai seems determined to pursue a union with him, it may be because Mao feels the need to emphasize his own passivity and hesitation, so as to affirm his unwavering submission to the greater claims of filial duty and family honor. In 1640, when Dong expressed her wish to marry him, he declined (*YMA*, p. 6). In 1642, Mao's liaison with another courtesan, Chen Yuanyuan, came to an abrupt end because Chen had fallen prey to the designs of a powerful family before Mao could meet her again as promised: "I arrived, and was extremely melancholy. For the sake of relieving my father's distress in his moment of crisis, however, I could not regret betraying the trust of a woman" 余至，悵惘無極，然以急嚴親患難，負一女子無憾也 (*YMA*, p. 8). When he left Dong Bai in the same year, he wrote, "Although I pitied her, I felt as if I were relieved of a great burden when I was able to return home by myself" 余雖憐姬，然得輕身歸，如釋重負 (*YMA*, p. 10).

Having taken up the persona of irresolute lover, Mao Xiang cedes to his friends the role of "knights in yellow jackets." Qian Qianyi and several other scholar-officials paid off Dong's debts and facilitated the union of Mao and Dong. Even as his beloved concubine, Dong could not claim too much of his attention in a moment of crisis. In 1644, when Rugao fell to marauding troops, Mao fled with his family. "With one hand supporting my elderly mother, and another dragging my wife . . . at that time I could no longer assist her [Dong]" 一手扶老母，一手曳荆人， . . . 維時更無能手援姬 (*YMA*, p. 26). This is the intermittent refrain in the narrative: Mao would not allow romantic passion to stand in the way of what he deemed higher ethical obligations. Dong Bai, for her part, totally identifies with Mao's perspective and repeatedly emphasizes her own insignificance compared to his parents, wife, children, and younger brothers. She embraces his plan (later retracted on the insistence of Mao's parents) to abandon her to a friend's care and vows to commit suicide in case of exigencies (*YMA*, p. 28). Mao Xiang also describes perfect harmony between his wife and Dong Bai. His wife had prepared an abode to welcome Dong when Qian Qianyi brought her to Mao's hometown Rugao and Mao had not yet dared to present her to his

parents. When Dong died, his wife was “lonesome and helpless, looking at her left and right hands, not knowing where to put them” 兢兢粥粥，視左右手罔措也 (YMA, p. 3). His wife’s generosity is matched by Dong’s reverence and self-denial.

Dong Bai’s tenacious, unconditional devotion allows Mao Xiang to fulfill his moral duties without being burdened by the role of lover. There is such perfect congruence between the perspectives of Mao and Dong that his praise for her is inseparable from self-vindication. Commendation of her fine literary sensibility is also self-congratulation, since Mao presents himself as the teacher who shaped her taste. Gratitude for her fierce devotion during his illness is also self-affirmation as a morally responsible person, for Dong explains herself thus:

“I have been married into your family for four full years. Day and night I have seen your actions. You have a generous and noble spirit and are not, even in the smallest way, tainted by selfishness and meanness. Only I know and appreciate all the ways you have borne with undeserved blame. My respect for your heart and mind indeed exceeds my love for your person—the person that gods and spirits acclaim and admire, fear and avoid. If Dark Infinitude has sentience, it will surely protect you in silence. . . . As for the future, if we fortunately survive, we should leave all behind and roam freely in the world beyond. Take care not to forget the words of this moment.” Alas, how am I going to requite her in life and death? She is certainly no ordinary woman of this mortal world!

我入君門整四歲，早夜見君所爲，慷慨多風義，毫髮幾微，不鄰薄惡。凡君受過之處，惟余知之亮之。敬君之心，實逾於愛君之身。鬼神讚嘆畏避之身也，冥漠有知，定加默佑。 . . . 異日幸生還，當與君敝屣萬有，逍遙物外，慎毋忘此際此語。」噫吁嘻，余何以報姬于生死哉？姬斷斷非人世凡女子也。(YMA, p. 29)

There is little room for anything ugly, disgusting, or alienating in *Plum Shadows*. Violence and deprivation are endured with dignity and fortitude. The mergence of romantic-aesthetic ideals with moral order is also not qualified by ironic questioning, and one does not hear dissenting or skeptical voices, certainly not from Dong Bai.

Toward the end of *Plum Shadows*, right before the elliptical and dream-like account of Dong Bai’s death, Mao Xiang records his literati friends’ compositions about his relationship with Dong on the occasion of his fortieth birthday in 1650. Gong Dingzi requests that Mao add his own annotations, for fear that some specific details may be forgotten (YMA, p. 32). This means that those details in the lore of the Dong-Mao

romance were well known to his circle. Indeed, both their union and Dong's death became poetic topics among Mao's friends. In addition to *Plum Shadows*, Mao also wrote elegies and poems to mourn Dong Bai. His friends contributed at least one portrait, one biography, and innumerable poems and colophons to her memory (some of them are found in *Collected Writings of Kindred Spirits*, juan 6). Du Jun 杜濬 (1611–87), another well-known loyalist poet, wrote a commentary on *Plum Shadows*. As an object of desire, the courtesan has always defined relationships between men.²⁸ In Mao Xiang's case, not only passion but also nostalgia for late Ming literati-courtesan culture are validated through public display and reaffirmed bonds among elite men.

The ending of *Plum Shadows* is elliptical and enigmatic. It tells of how, in the third month of 1650, when Mao was away from home, an unexpectedly stark and melancholy mood crept into poems composed during a literary gathering and filled him with dread:

Once my head hit the pillow, I dreamed of returning home. I saw everyone in the family, all except her. I hastened to ask my wife, who did not answer. I then looked for her everywhere, and only saw my wife shedding tears behind my back. I cried out in the dream, "Could she have died?" A sharp pang of grief woke me up. She had been sick every spring, and I was filled with doubt and foreboding. Subsequently I returned, and she was actually not ill. When I had the chance, I told her about the dream. She said, "How strange! That night I also dreamed of several persons taking me away by force. I hid myself and luckily escaped, but they were still barking away endlessly." Who would have known that the dream was real and that the omen had first come to me in the poems!

余甫著枕，便夢還家。舉室皆見，獨不見姬。急詢荆人，不答。復遍覓之，但見荆人背余下淚。余夢中大呼曰：「豈死耶？」一慟而醒。姬每春必抱病，余深疑慮。旋歸，則姬固無恙，因間述此相告。姬曰：「甚異。前此亦于是夜夢數人強余去，匿之幸脫，其人尚信信不休也。」詎知夢真而詩讖咸來先告哉。（YMA, p. 33）

28. For example, the Tang poets Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen both patronized the courtesan Shang Linglong, who seemed to have served as a conduit for their feelings for each other. In Yuan Zhen's words: "Do not send Linglong to sing my poems, / My poems are all words about parting from you" 休遣玲瓏唱我詩，我詩多是別君詞。Yuan Zhen, "Chong zeng (Letian)" 重贈(樂天), in *Yuan Zhen ji*, 22.244.

The coincident dreams have bred speculations that perhaps Dong Bai did not die at all, but was abducted by Qing troops. Xu Zhiyan 許指嚴 (d. 1923) tells the story that she entered the Qing palace and became the Shunzhi emperor's beloved consort, Lady Dong'e 董鄂妃, and her early death was said to have prompted the Shunzhi emperor's Buddhist renunciation.²⁹ At the turn of the twentieth century, some scholars of *The Story of the Stone*, such as Wang Mengruan 王夢阮 and Shen Ping'an 沈瓶庵, believed that the novel is a roman à clef encoding these episodes about Dong Bai and the Shunzhi emperor. The historian Meng Sen 孟森 (1868–1937) has convincingly refuted these speculations.³⁰ On the level of narrative, the omen and the dreams merely confirm spiritual affinities and a deep attachment. It is perhaps also fitting that Dong's death should be portrayed as the (offstage) fulfillment of Mao's dream, as the memoir is suffused with subjective illumination that may ultimately tell us more about Mao Xiang's desires, fears, and hopes than about the historical Dong Bai.

Writing About Women, Writing Women

Although he was almost a generation younger than Mao Xiang and Yu Huai, Chen Weisong had close ties with the *yimin* community. His loyalist sympathies notwithstanding, he took the 1679 examination for Eminent Scholars of Vast Learning, and participated in the imperial Ming history project. Chen's father, Chen Zhenhui 陳貞慧 (1605–56), was grouped, together with Hou Fangyu, Fang Yizhi, and Mao Xiang, as one of the “four notable young men of letters” 四公子 in the 1630s and 1640s. The ties of friendship among Chen Weisong, Mao Xiang, and Yu Huai are evident in their literary exchanges, and Chen Weisong “sojourned” for almost eight years in Mao Xiang's Painted-in-Water Garden.

It seems that Chen was less deeply steeped in late Ming Lower Yangzi courtesan culture than Mao and Yu—he was in any case more interested

29. See Xu Zhiyan, “Dong Xiaowan biezhuàn” 董小宛別傳, in *Yuchu guangzhi* (1915), included in *Shuohai*, 7:2290–2301.

30. See Meng Sen, “Dong Xiaowan kao” 董小宛考 (1915); *Ming Qing shi*, pp. 227–63. Chen Yinke accepts Meng's conclusion that Dong Bai and Lady Dong'e were two different persons, but still suggests that Dong Bai might have been abducted by Qing troops (*LRS*, 276–77, 493).

in young male actors and singers³¹—and his *Writing Women* has a more objective tone. Some of his entries were supplied by Wang Shilu, whose interest in writings by and about women was borne out in his own compilation, *Burning Candles*, unfortunately no longer extant beyond scanty fragments. Dong Yining 董以寧 (1625–64), Peng Sunyu 彭孫逵 (1631–1700), Wang Shizhen, and other friends provided information for other entries. Chen Weisong's *Writing Women* thus gives the impression of being almost like a collective enterprise, reflective of a group of elite men's interest in using the fate of women and their writings to capture the spirit of the times and to gauge the toll of political turmoil.

Plum Shadows and *Plank Bridge* both describe literate women with keen sensibility; some of them were also poets. What are the functions of the words by them, addressed to them, or about them? Chen Weisong's *Writing Women*, perhaps by virtue of its being “mediated nostalgia,” gives more sustained and objective reflections on these questions than the other examples discussed above. *Writing Women* collects anecdotes about the fate of women, many of them poets, during the dynastic transition. In style and spirit it is sometimes reminiscent of *A New Account of Tales of the World*; there are linguistic echoes and also a common sympathy for talented women.

Writing Women has a broad canvas encompassing various social groups, and its arrangement of entries implies a socio-political hierarchy. It begins with stories about Princess Changping, the ill-fated daughter of the Chongzhen emperor;³² imperial consort Tian, who had died two years before the fall of Beijing; and palace ladies who retained relics from the Ming court. Chen Weisong then turns to Chen Yuanyuan, perhaps in tacit recognition of her pivotal role in the Manchu conquest—many believe that the military commander Wu Sangui sought help from

31. See Mao Guangsheng, “Yunlang xiaoshi”; Volpp, *Worldly Stage*, pp. 173–213.

32. When Beijing fell, the Chongzhen emperor sent his sons away and decreed suicide for his consorts. He also tried to slay his daughters to forestall dishonor. “The princess hung to the emperor's clothes and cried. The emperor said, “Why did you have to be born as mine?” He waved his sword and hacked her, cutting off her left arm. . . . Five days later, Princess Changping revived” (*Mingshi*, 121.3677–78). Cf. Tan Qian, *Beijou lu*, pp. 322–23. Citing Sun Chengze's (1592–1676) *Chunming mengyu lu*, Chen Weisong claims that Princess Changping “was injured on her cheek and wrist” (FRJ, 15a–15b). Chen also records Changping's memorial to the Qing court requesting to enter Buddhist orders. The request was not granted; she married but died shortly thereafter.

the Manchus to fight the rebels led by Li Zicheng because Chen, his favorite concubine, was held captive by the rebels after they had overrun Beijing.³³ For obvious political reasons, Chen Weisong alludes to these events only elliptically: “During the havoc caused by Li Zicheng, she was held captive by the rebel leader Liu Zongmin. When our army entered Beijing, Yuanyuan was taken into the harem of a certain lord as his secondary consort” 李自成之亂，爲賊將劉宗敏所掠。我兵入燕京，圓圓歸某王宮中爲次妃 (FRJ, 15b–16a). He refrains from judgment and instead cites poetic lines on Chen’s beauty written by his friends, Mao Xiang and Ye Xiang, and by his eldest brother.

The political meanings of women’s lives and writings remain a refrain throughout. Toward the end of the book, Chen records the poem eulogizing the palace lady Fei who slew her captors, mentioned in chapter 2. This is followed by the suicide poems of a woman from Dongting who embraced martyrdom to avoid being taken captive by Qing troops.³⁴ Lin Siniang, discussed in chapter 3, is the subject of one of the final entries.

Courtesans and entertainers in *Writing Women* are sometimes eulogized as heroic; the logic is comparable to Yu Huai’s *Plank Bridge*. The singing girl Dong’er, mentioned in chapter 2, is said to traverse thousands of miles on horseback to learn of the fate of the Ming princes after the fall of Beijing (FRJ, 16a). In terms similar to Yu Huai’s, Chen Weisong lauds Li Xiang’s discernment and political integrity, which compelled her to reject the well-connected official Tian Yang on account of her contempt for his erstwhile association with Wei Zhongxian (FRJ, 29b). Even when political courage is not the issue, Chen expresses admiration for unconventional character traits, such as Kou Baimen’s independence and Liu Rushi’s “free-spirited sensuality and defiant unconventionality” 放誕風流 (FRJ, 16a–16b).

Where *Writing Women* differs from the two works discussed above is in its deep interest in the fate of women’s writings. *Writing Women* contains many anecdotes about chance encounters with works of poetry written by women, their oral transmission, and their miraculous (albeit sometimes merely partial) preservation. Wang Shilu is sometimes said to be quoting from memory. Chen records how, on another occasion, Wang

33. For further discussion of Chen Yuanyuan, see chap. 6.

34. On the various versions of this story and its implications, see chap. 5.

Shizhen could not fully recall a poem by the woman poet Peng Yan 彭炎 (Peng Sunyu's aunt), but Chen justifies its curtailed state as an appropriate correlative for excessive emotions: "Dark thoughts and feelings of rancor—such things are what precisely make a person unable to finish a song" 幽思怨緒，政自使人不能終曲也 (FRJ, 17b).

Loss, absence, erasure, and ephemerality, which often feature in stories about the tenuous transmission of women's writings,³⁵ are made more threatening by political disorder, and this becomes a constant refrain in the book. Wang Lang, daughter of the famous late Ming romantic poet Wang Cihui 王次回 (1593–1642), is said to be herself a prolific writer, though "ever since the flames of battle raged, her writings were lost" 兵火以來，便成遺失 (FRJ, 19a–19b). Chen then proceeds to record three of Wang Lang's song lyrics he chanced to see on a fan, and Wang Shilu supplies one half of another song lyric (FRJ, 19a–19b). Accidental transmission places a special burden on the discernment and recognition of the reader:

Formerly I saw in Dong Second's [probably Dong Yining] studio several sheets of short paper, with the arias of *The Western Chamber* written on them. The calligraphy was graceful and inspired, like flowers facing the wind. There was a colophon at the end: "The peach blossoms may marry eastward flowing water, / But it should not be compared to willow catkins turning into lemna." The entire poem was uncommonly thought provoking. The seal was that of one "Girl Picking Herbs." These sheets were obtained from the hands of a child, who was given pancakes in exchange.

向于董二書舍見矮箋數幅寫會真詞曲，字法秀逸，如花臨風，後有題云：「桃花便嫁東流水，不比楊花更化萍。」全詩殊耐尋想，其印識為采藥女郎。得于童子手中，以炊餅易之者。(FRJ, 20a)

Fallen peach blossoms drifting away on streams and willow catkins turning into lemna on ponds are both common conceits associated with the passing of spring, and they echo numerous literary antecedents. The "Girl Picking Herbs," however, implies distinctions and perhaps hierarchy. Does she mean that the fallen peach blossoms may claim integrity even as they are buffeted by fate, whereas willow catkins are subject to

35. Women adhering to strict decorum also destroy their own writings, like Zong Yuanding's mother Madame Chen (FRJ, 20a).

transformations? Is she referring to an unhappy marriage (peach blossoms) as compared to one marred by separation or unchaste conduct (willow catkins)? Does the standard language of melancholy and longing here allow allegorical readings pertaining to the political drama of the time? We are left only with Chen Weisong's claim that her lines invite ruminations on their deeper meanings. He is the discerning reader who preserves the lines for us but withholds definite interpretations.

Some anecdotes link women's poetry to the ideal of genuine expression in the poetic tradition. Kan Yu 關玉, trapped in an unhappy marriage and reduced to demeaning labor, "was in deep despair. She raised her head to heaven, wailed, and composed a song" 玉悲甚，仰天慟哭而作歌 (FRJ, 24b). The song purports to be overheard and orally circulated. It is deliberately archaic, reminiscent of various well-known Han-Wei ballads about being abused by one's kin and husband. The idea that poetry is the elemental, plaintive cry overheard, going beyond the realm of convention and social function, is one of the abiding myths of origins in Chinese poetics. Kan Yu's sad fate is also tied to the fall of the Ming. She was thirteen when Beijing fell in 1644, and was duped into marrying an uncouth vegetable vendor under the looming threat of being drafted into the harem of the Hongguang emperor. Her plight is thus embroiled in the corruption and decadence of the Southern Ming court.

In another example, the story of the artist and poet Zhou Zhao 周炤, the last entry in the book, seems at first sight the familiar one of a talented, unhappy concubine, but the story is more complex than that: she was reduced to concubinage because her father, an official, died as a martyr in 1644. Her elegiac poetic exposition mourning her father, with its copious references to Qu Yuan and the *Verses of Chu*, prompts comparison of her to Nüxu, the woman offering advice to the poet in *Encountering Sorrow* (FRJ, 34b–35a). Writings on and by women thus become the prism for understanding and remembering this tumultuous era.

Anecdotes about women leaving poems on walls proliferated during the Ming-Qing transition. Several examples are found in *Writing Women*. Some tell of domestic woes and private longings; more typical are poems composed by abducted and victimized women, who by writing of their personal plight bore witness to the turmoil of the time, as I will show in chapter 5. Their stories also represent the injunction to remember and to comprehend that historical moment. There are recurrent references to

the standard topoi of exile, displacement, and victimization as embodied by the legends of Wang Zhaojun and Cai Yan. Beyond recording these poems, Chen Weisong tells of his friends' zeal in recovering these fading traces. He cites Wang Shilu, who recounts how his brother Wang Shizhen, along with his friend Fu Yi 傅宸, arduously tried to locate the poems by the abducted woman Wang Suyin 王素音, and gleefully congratulated themselves on their success as they wrote harmonizing poems (FRJ, 31b).³⁶ Their mood seems to be triumphant rather than mournful. Wang Shizhen was ten when the Ming dynasty fell; his interest in Wang Suyin testifies to the mechanism of "second generation memory": empathy with the sufferings of the previous era is distilled through the aesthetized image of the woman who transmutes her sad fate into poetry.

Although there are some stories of female virtue in *Writing Women*, the chaste women who earned their places in the tomes of official historiography are included here only if they were also writers. Women's wayward passions, when beautifully crafted and expressed, are accorded a place and implicitly affirmed (FRJ, 30a). The fruits of their artistic and literary talent are all the more treasured for being too easily lost. The overwhelming emphasis is thus on the power of words by women and on women to preserve the memory of the fallen dynasty by conjuring a realm of beauty and pathos; as we have seen, often these are also writings that testify to the sufferings of that era.

Concubine as Martial Ghost: Wang Sun and Zhou Lianggong

If Yu Huai, Mao Xiang, and Chen Weisong seem to be defending the sensibility of an entire generation, Zhou Lianggong is intensely personal in commemorating the heroism of his concubine Wang Sun. Zhou gained early fame for his literary talent,³⁷ and was from the 1630s active in the political and literary activities associated with the Revival Society. After attaining the *jinsbi* degree in 1640, he was appointed magistrate of Wei County (in Shandong) in 1641. In 1643, the Manchu army overran great stretches of Shandong, and Wei County was under attack for six

36. See Zeitlin, "Disappearing Verses."

37. See Zhou Lianggong, "Nianpu" 年譜, 2a–2b, in *Laigu tang ji*, "fulu."

months.³⁸ The heroic and successful defense of the county under Zhou Lianggong's leadership was told in Zhou's *Great Fury* (*Tong jin* 通愾, 1643) and *Brief Account of Defending Wei* (*Quan Wei jilue* 全濰紀略, 1643), in the poetic exchanges of Zhou's friends written right after the siege (collected in *On White Waves River* [*Bailang heshang ji* 白浪河上集], 1643), and in corroborative accounts by witnesses written in 1643 and 1644.³⁹ The people of Wei built a temple to honor Zhou. It is said that Zhou, passing by the temple some years after the conquest, when he had become a Qing official, was so ashamed that he refused to stay the night in Wei.⁴⁰

Wang Sun, who became Zhou's concubine in 1639, was his comrade-in-arms during the 1643 siege of Wei County. When the Ming dynasty fell, Zhou had just been promoted for his military success and distinguished governance in Wei County. Persecuted by the corrupt elements of the Southern Ming court after he had made his way to Nanjing, he chose retirement instead. After the fall of Nanjing in 1645, he joined the Qing government and had thereafter a checkered official career. Impeached in 1655 and 1669, he was imprisoned and narrowly escaped execution. Declaring his regret over "having been misled his whole life by vain fame" 一生爲虛名誤, he burnt the printing blocks of his books in 1670, an uncanny omen of the Qianlong emperor's later categorical banning of his works based on alleged sedition (i.e., sympathy with Ming loyalism) in his *Record of Reading Paintings* (*Dubua lu* 讀畫錄).⁴¹ Although Zhou served the Qing regime, his friendship and empathy with Ming

38. The siege began in the twelfth month of the *renwu* year (January 1643). By then sixty-one cities in Shandong had fallen to the Manchus (Zhou Lianggong, *Tong jin*, 4a).

39. *Tong jin* includes Zhou's poems composed during the siege; *Quan wei jilue* contains Zhou's reports to the court 塘報 and orders issued during the siege, as well as reports by his colleagues (*Quan Wei jilue*, 11a–20b). *Bailang heshang ji*, compiled by Wang Xun, celebrates the "defeat of the barbarians" and contains many poems written in response to Zhou Lianggong's own compositions about the siege (most of which are no longer extant). Local pride and nationalist fervor prompted the publication of these sources in the 1930s (see Ding Xitian, *Weixian wenxian congcan*).

40. Jin Yufu, *Jin Yufu shouding ben*, 1:421.

41. For the book burning episode, see Zhou Zaijun 周在浚, "Xingshu" 行述, in Zhou Lianggong, *Laiyu tang ji*, fulu, 57b. For a study of Zhou Lianggong as connoisseur and patron, see Kim, *The Life of a Patron*. Although the blocks were burnt, Zhou's corpus was partially reassembled and printed again through the effort of his sons, especially Zhou Zaijun.

yimin (including, among many others, Yu Huai, Mao Xiang, Fang Yizhi, Huang Zongxi, Wan Shouqi 萬壽奇 [1603–52], Gong Xian 龔賢 [1599–1689], Du Jun, and Wei Xi 魏禧 [1624–81], who wrote a preface for his collection) are extensively documented in his writings. He was especially active in promoting the loyalist poet Wu Jiaji 吳嘉紀 (1618–84).

In his elegy, Du Jun pays tribute to Zhou's valor and integrity.⁴² He juxtaposes Zhou's recognition of his talents with his own admiration of Zhou's heroic defense of Wei County:

Around 1642 and 1643, his honor, then in his prime and having just achieved distinction in the examination, had become the governor of Wei County. Just then the iron hoofs of the enemy, numbering hundreds of thousands, were bearing down on the border. Sometime earlier, important provincial capitals and great cities had collapsed, as if swept up by storm. Wei was but the size of a pellet, and it lacked even the most negligible assistance that could allow it to overcome the invaders. But then he ascended the parapet and pledged to fight to the death. With surprise stratagems he achieved victory, and was finally able to defeat the invaders' fury and curb their momentum. At that moment, whose merit was it that the region north of the Yellow River was not lost? I remember he once drank with Zhang Xiuhu [Zhang Bi, 1620–75] of Qiantang [Hangzhou] and me in the Hall of Accidental Survival.⁴³ Intoxicated and flushed with wine, he spoke passionately about what had happened then. He disrobed and showed me the arrow wound on his left shoulder.⁴⁴ Even though so much time had passed, the wound was still darkly red. He also said to us with heroic pathos, "If only I had died there and then, would I not rival the sun and moon in brightness!" Xiuhu and I looked at each other and were moved by the courage of his words.

壬午癸未間，先生以盛年新第，作宰濰縣。值鐵騎壓境，號數十萬。先是，名都大郡，望風瓦解。濰城彈丸耳，外無虻蚋螳子之援，可以韞尖踢倒，乃先生登陴飲血，出奇制勝，卒能挫抑其

42. Du Jun, "Ji Zhou Liyuan yushi wen" 祭周櫟園御史文, in *Bianya tang yiji*, "Wen," 8.9b–10b.

43. The title of the hall is likely derived from Du Fu's line, "I managed, by chance, to survive and return" 生還偶然遂. See "Qiang cun" 羌邨, first of three poems (DS, 5.299). The Hall of Accidental Survival 偶遂堂 was one of Zhou's sobriquets in later life. According to Li Chengzhong, he chose the name to mark his release from prison (*Zhou Lianggong quanji*, 1:2).

44. Zhou wrote about his injury in "Qiankou he er fufa gan er fuci" 箭口合而復發感而賦此 and in "Shi wenji ke" 示問疾客 (*Tong jin*, 1b, 2b).

鋒，沮遏其勢。當是時，河北之不亡，繫誰之功也。憶先生嘗酌濬及錢塘張繡虎〔張貴〕於偶遂堂。先生酒酣耳熱，劇談當日事，因解衣示濬以左肩箭瘢。雖歲月深矣，而殷殷猶赤，且慷慨語濬與繡虎：「若使周某當日遂死，豈不與日月爭光哉。」濬與繡虎相顧，壯其言。

The friendship between Zhou and Du typifies the reciprocity involved in relationships between loyalists and those who served the new regime. As a Qing official, Zhou Lianggong had the wealth and influence to promote Du Jun, whose family fortunes had declined with political turmoil. Almost as a kind of recompense, Du Jun's empathy with Zhou's earlier heroic defense of Wei County and with his implied regret ensured that the memory of his earlier heroism would not be erased by later compromises.

Zhou's writings about the siege of Wei County, almost never mentioned during the Qing, were printed only in the 1920s and 1930s. For obvious political reasons, Zhou pruned all but a handful of poems about the siege from his poetry collection *Hall of Reliance on the Ancients* (*Laigu tang ji* 賴古堂集, published in 1675); of what remains, four were written during and shortly after the siege (three of these are also included in *Great Fury*),⁴⁵ and the remarkable sequence, "Dreaming of My Deceased Concubine during the Day While at Sea, I Composed Eight Poems" ("Haishang zhoumeng wangji chengshi bazhang" 海上畫夢亡姬成詩八章), was written in 1649. The preface to the poetic sequence gives a stirring account of Wang Sun's death:

My concubine and I shared experiences sweet and bitter for a little over seven years. Her heroic nature was charged with a tragic pathos. On Qingyang Tower, she pledged to defy death as she ascended the ramparts. She said as her life was ebbing, "I have been burdened by feelings, I vow I do not wish to be reborn in this world. I would be grateful if I could have my hair shaven and be buried as a nun. I was born in Wanqiu [in Henan]: for me to die at Weiyang [Yangzhou] is altogether not a lonesome affair."⁴⁶ Even so, my soul must still remain among the willows of Baixia Gate [Nanjing], not stay under the moon, in the midst of flute

45. See "Xue zhong jian wuyi pizu" 雪中見無衣陣卒 "Jingzhi" 警至, "Ba canrong xicheng jiezhi zeng zhi" 巴參戎西城捷至贈之, "Gao Chengfu nian taifuren langqiang bie yu qu" 高澄甫念太夫人踰牆別余去 (*Laigu tang ji*, 3.6a, 7.2b–3a, 7.8b–10a).

46. Yangzhou was a much livelier city than Wanqiu: with such bustle she should not have felt "lonesome."

music [Yangzhou].⁴⁷ Your 'Poems on the City Wall'—I still know them by heart.⁴⁸ I would be grateful if you can write them out and place them, along with my matching poems, on my left.⁴⁹ The teacup, the ancient ink-stick, and the sword I have always worn are to be put on my right. Cover me with a portrait of Guanyin. Let my left hand hold prayer beads, and my right grasp a seal with your name and sobriquet. I am relying on the power of Buddha for deliverance. It is not my wish to make for the next life a love token from a former life."⁵⁰ Her words were heart wrenching; those present could not bear to listen. My concubine was neé Wang. Her father was an old licentiate. When she married me, she could already write verses—such competence was based on instruction she received at home. She followed me as I took office at Weiyang. When she died from illness at the official residence, she was but two and twenty. That she be buried east of the Bull Head Mountain at Moling [Nanjing] was her wish. She has been dead three years and has not entered my dreams—not even sporadically. Whenever I composed poems to lament her, I too would break down in tears and would not be able to complete the lines. In the summer of *jichou* [1649], I was overseeing naval forces. The boat was moored at the city dock. The wind and waves were sonorous, and birds and beasts cried piteously, as boundless expanses merged. Thus did her spirit come to hold my hands, weeping as if she were still alive. I could not help but be overcome with emotions, and could no longer know how words have flowed on.

姬與予共甘苦者七載餘。性悲壯。青陽城上，矢死登陴。絕命時言：「予爲情累，誓不願再生此世界。幸祝髮以比丘尼葬。予生宛丘，死維揚，咸不寂寞。然予魂夢終在白門柳色中，不在簫聲明月下也。郎君城上詩，猶能默識。幸書一通，并予所和詩置諸左。茗椀，古墨，及予素所佩刀置諸右。覆以大士像，左持念

47. "Willows of Baixia Gate" refers to Nanjing (see chap. 1). The moon and flute music allude to Yangzhou; see Du Mu, "Ji Yangzhou Han Chuo panguan" 寄揚州韓綽判官 (*Fanchuan wenji*, 4.73): "On the Twenty-Four Bridge, under the bright moon, / Where would one teach the fair one how to play the flute?" 二十四橋明月夜，玉人何處教吹簫。

48. "Poems on the City Wall," the first section of *Tong jin*, includes eight poems.

49. Zhou adds in a note to the seventh poem that Wang wrote matching poems. Long afterwards, Wang liked to recite their verses composed during this siege and was often moved to tears.

50. Literally, "it is not my wish to make for the next life a ring on the arm." The allusion is from a story about the Tang commander Wei Gao, who gives his beloved Yuxiao a ring as a love token. She dies pining for him and is reincarnated as a girl with the same name, born with flesh shaped like a ring on her finger (Fan Shu, *Yunxi yongyi*, 2.23–25).

珠，右握郎君名字章，仗佛力解脫，非願再世作臂上環也。」語悽切，人不忍聞。姬王氏，父爲老諸生。歸余時即能爲韻語，蓋本之庭訓云。隨予宦維揚。疾死署中，年才二十又二。葬秣陵牛首之東，姬志也。亡三載矣。不數入夢。每爲詩哭之，亦哽咽不能句。己丑之夏。董師海上，舟泊城頭，風波鏗鏘，鳥獸悲鳴，茫茫交集。遂有魂來握手，泣泗儼若生初。未免有情，不自知其絮絮矣。(Laigu tang ji, 7.8b–9a)

The way Wang Sun embraced renunciation is all the more poignant for being contradictory. Buddhist symbols for cutting off worldly ties are neatly paralleled with tokens of tenacious memory in her burial arrangement; she wants to both remember and forget, to be reborn, continuing lost love, and yet to escape the karmic cycle. The sword in particular is polyvalent, embodying meanings of detachment (“With the sword of wisdom she begged me to cut off the roots of desire” 慧刀乞我斷情根 [7th poem, 1st line]) as well as love and heroism. Her love for Zhou is inseparable from their shared moment of glory as heroic defenders of Wei County—she is to be flanked by her sword and the poetic testimonies of the siege (Zhou’s “On the City Wall” and her harmonizing compositions). Zhou does not say why she wants to be buried “east of Bull Head Mountain” instead of in Yangzhou. Perhaps it was because Zhou was born in Nanjing. Bull Head Mountain near Nanjing was also where Zhou and his immediate family lived in withdrawal from politics and society,⁵¹ following Zhou’s breach with the Hongguang court and before he joined the Qing government. By the time Wang died in 1646, Zhou Lianggong had become the assistant to the finance commissioner overseeing naval defense in the Huaiyang area. In choosing her site of burial, Wang Sun may also have been stating her affirmation of Zhou’s short-lived choice of withdrawal.

The poetic sequence “Dreaming of My Deceased Concubine” begins and ends with the dream or spirit visitation of the present and, in the middle (3rd to 7th poems), mixes remembrance of scenes past with visions of Wang Sun as a ghost. In the third poem, Zhou pays tribute to her “ghostly talent” (*Laigu tang ji*, 7.9a–9b):

51. “Nianpu,” 5a–5b, in Zhou Lianggong, *Laigu tang ji*, fulu.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 閨中作賦未曾休 | In the inner chamber, she never stopped composing verses. |
| 玉女新成白玉樓 | As Jade Maiden, the newly built White Jade Tower is her theme. |
| 才鬼臨文情更艷 | A talented ghost poised to write, her feelings are ever more lush. |
| 鏡臺有句力偏遒 | By the mirror stand are her lines, of power unexpectedly intense. |
| 瓣香未必留巫峽 | Petal-shaped incense may yet not remain in the Wu Gorges, |
| 杯酒常懷奠莫愁 | With a cup of wine always ready, she offers libation to Mochou. |
| 猶憶微酣譏我語 | I still remember, spoken in slight inebriation, her teasing words: |
| 不仙不佛不封侯 | “Neither an immortal, nor a Buddha, nor yet a lord.” |

References to Li He define the image of Wang's self-consuming passion for poetry that lasts beyond death. The lore of Li He pits literature against life: we imagine the frail poet astride a sickly donkey, putting obsessively crafted lines into a brocade sachet; his own premature death heralded by images of graves, ghosts, and spirits in his poetry. Legend has it that as he lay dying, an emissary in red came to summon him to heaven to write an essay commemorating the newly built White Jade Tower.⁵² The “talented ghost” 才鬼⁵³ commands “ghostly talent” 鬼才—an expansive imagination that encompasses opposites and challenges the boundaries of life and death. Here too the voice beyond death embraces life and lush beauty 艷, even as in life her love poetry—the mirror stand alludes to betrothal gifts or love tokens—rose above conventional tenderness and had unexpectedly intense power 遒 (lines 3–4). Such intensity is evident in the few lines that remain of her corpus—for example, her celebration of defiant love as symbolized by the stars Cowherd and Weaver Maid: “One night, unending, is repeated for eons— / It is yet better than the human realm where lovers, growing old, will die”

52. See Li Shangyin's biographical account of Li He (*Sanjia pingzhu Li Changji geshi*, pp. 13–14).

53. “Talented ghosts” were the subject of an eponymous collection (*Caigui ji* 才鬼記) by Mei Dingzuo published in 1605. On poetry attributed to ghosts, see Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, pp. 57–81.

一夕綿綿億萬年，猶勝人間白頭死 (Zhou Lianggong, *Yinshu wu shuying*, p. 25). Passion infuses both religion and heroism. “Petal-shaped incense,” used in Buddhist devotion, is paradoxically conjoined with the haunt of amorous goddesses (Wu Gorges), while libation of wine, usually reserved for heroes, is offered to Mochou, a famous Six Dynasties beauty (lines 5–6). The way she traverses contradictions seems to have turned into the power of judgment (lines 7–8). The last line likely refers to a lost poem by Wang Sun.⁵⁴ Her words echo the lines of the Song poet Liu Guo 劉過 (1154–1206), who uses the ruins of a Daoist temple to ruminate on mutability and his own aspirations to transcend ready-made truths: “That is why Master Liu / Is no immortal, no Buddha, and no lord” 是故子劉子，不仙不佛亦不侯.⁵⁵ This series of negations suggests freedom and a refusal to mold oneself to fit into power structures and value systems. In the context of Zhou’s subsequent choices, it must also sound like a failed promise and a reproach.

According to Zhou’s miscellany *Shadows of Books at the House by the Trees* (*Yinshu wu shuying* 因樹屋書影), Wang wrote about two hundred poems, and scores of song lyrics: “I wanted to transmit them, but she often wished to burn them” 余欲傳之，輒欲自焚 (*Yinshu wu shuying*, p. 25). Zhou cites notable lines by her but honors her wish not to be published, which would mean being “arrayed in the wake of crafty monks and put in the midst of immoral women” 列狡獪瞿曇後，穢跡女士中 (*Yinshu wu shuying*, p. 26). (It is customary in traditional anthologies to list women’s poetry after works by monks, and to put the poetry of courtesans and other women writers in the same section.) “I commended her intent, copied the poems and hid them, and did not dare publish them. Even her name—I cannot bear to expose it” 予嘉其志，書而藏之。不敢付梓，并起名字，亦不忍露也 (*Yinshu wu shuying*, p. 26). The reason why we know Wang’s name is Sun, and that she had the cognomen Ruolan, is because Xu Shumin 徐樹敏 (late 17th and early 18th c.) and Qian Yue 錢岳 (17th c.) supply the information in the early Qing anthology *Myriad Fragrances* (*Zhong xiang ci* 眾香詞, 1690), which includes five song lyrics by her.

54. This is suggested by Zhou Lianggong’s note to that line: “She wrote about a hundred recent style poems but kept them secret. She also requested that I should not transmit them” 姬別有近體詩百餘首，自秘之。新余勿傳。

55. Liu Guo, “Deng Shengyuan ge gui” 登升元閣故基, in *Longzhou ji*, 1.4.

The fourth and fifth poems in “Dreaming of My Concubine” juxtapose the image of Wang Sun as a martial ghost with a reenactment of the siege of Wei County (*Laigu tang ji*, 7.9b):

Fourth poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 香粉塋中葬佩刀 | In the tomb with scented powder, the sword she wore was buried. |
| 月明起舞鬼能豪 | Rising to dance under the bright moon, her ghost can be defiant. |
| 新銘囑記前金粟 | A new inscription said: remember your former life as Buddha's disciple. ⁵⁶ |
| 小篆歡攜舊學陶 | On the small seal she gladly held was my old name of “Emulate Tao.” |
| 百雉城高驚白浪 | High above the long city walls, the White Waves River raised alarm. |
| 孤鴛夢冷憶江皋 | A lone love bird, his dreams cold, recalls the river bank's goddess. |
| 依稀更見帷中面 | I still see, in uncertain contours, the face in the curtains— |
| 玉步聲搖大海濤 | As sounds of her jade steps sway with great surging waves. |

In the first half of the poem, Zhou Lianggong uses funereal objects to imagine Wang's death-defying spirit. Her ghost will still be able to wield her sword in a proud, heroic sword dance. She can also look to the religious transcendence of death: an inscription (probably on one of her personal belongings) reiterates her belief that she was Buddha's disciple in a former life. She holds the seal with one of Zhou's sobriquets, “Emulate Tao” (Xuetao 學陶): this promises remembrance of her love in the next life and also marks the name's special significance for her. Contradictions between these ways of defying death (heroism, religion, romantic love) are suppressed. “Emulate Tao” was a seal Zhou used frequently in the early 1640s (there are several references to it in *On White Waves River*); the association of the seal with Zhou in the 1640s brings up the memory of the siege (line 5).⁵⁷ Zhou shared the same cognomen, Yuanliang 元亮, with Tao Qian, and also used the sobriquet Tao'an

56. Literally, “the Golden Grain Buddha.” Zhou notes: “She once called herself the disciple of the Golden Grain Buddha” 姬嘗自稱金粟如來弟子。

57. Zhou adds in a note: “White Waves River is west of the city of Beihai.”

陶庵 (Tao's abode).⁵⁸ Which Tao Qian is he emulating (or rather, which Tao Qian does Wang Sun want him to emulate)? Is it Tao Qian the Jin loyalist who admires doomed heroes and lost causes? Tao Qian who sympathizes with Tian Chou, defender of the crumbling Han dynasty?⁵⁹ Tao Qian the recluse? None of these images would have fit easily into Zhou's choice to serve as a Qing official. There is cruel irony in the fact that Zhou became a posthumous victim of the Qianlong literary inquisition in 1788 because a poem expressing longing and admiration for the transcendence and political integrity symbolized by Tao Qian and chrysanthemums is considered subversive.⁶⁰ The example of Tao Qian upheld by Wang Sun seems to be beyond his reach.

What heals ruptures may be Zhou's love for Wang Sun—it, too, defies death, and different selves created by fateful choices acquire a kind of imagistic homology. In this poem, Wang Sun is always by the water or emerging from it—whether as a fighter facing White Waves River (line 5), as the romantic ideal of a river goddess pledging good faith (line 6), or as a ghost returning from the dead to visit Zhou on the seas (lines 7–8). The apparition “in uncertain contours, the face in the curtains” reminds us of Lady Li's spirit as seen by Emperor Wu of Han (*Hanshu*, 25A.1219–20). In line 5 Zhou is a loyal defender of the Ming, but by lines 7–8 he is a Qing official; still Wang Sun remains by his side, albeit only in his dream. Zhou moves from imagining Wang Sun's steadfast love to reenacting details of the siege in the fifth poem in the series (*Laigu tang ji*, 7.9b):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 危樓城上字青陽 | On the city wall was the high tower called Qingyang. |
| 一飯軍中盡激昂 | One meal for the troops, and the spirits of all were roused. |

58. Zhou is consistently called “Yuanliang” in *On White Waves River*, but in later life the cognomen “Liyuan” 櫟園 was much more often used.

59. See Tao Qian, “Ni gu” 擬古, second of nine poems (*Tao Yuanming ji*, p. 110). On the multiple meanings of Tao Qian as a model during this period, see Wai-ye Li, “Introduction,” p. 38.

60. See Zhou Lianggong, “Meng zhi Hu Yuanrun jia, jian suo jian ju” 夢至胡元潤家見所饒菊 (*Dubua lu*, 2.6b): “He escapes history, being beyond Han and Wei, / The flowers, too, are remnants of the Yixi era” 人皆漢魏上，花亦義熙餘. “Being beyond Han and Wei” allude to the inhabitants of Peach Blossom Spring (Tao Qian, *Tao Yuanming ji*, p. 166). Tao did not use reign titles beyond Yixi (405–18), the reign title of the Jin emperor An. Traditionally this is interpreted as his rejection of the legitimacy of the new Liu Song dynasty.

| | |
|---------|--|
| 旗影全開慙弱女 | The banners' shadows opened up: shaming a frail woman. |
| 鼓聲欲死累紅妝 | The roll of drums was about to die, as the fair one toiled. |
| 玉臺咏雜空王巷 | Songs of the Jade Terrace mingled in Buddha's Lane, |
| 錦繖塵迷壞色裳 | Dust from the Brocade Canopy beguiled the one in cassocks. |
| 仙佛英雄成底事 | Immortals, buddhas, heroes— what does it all come down to? |
| 勞勞亭畔柳千章 | By the Pavilion of Sorrow are willows by the thousands. ⁶¹ |

Wang's heroism is almost mundane—she prepares a meal for the soldiers, probably when food is already scarce (line 2), and she beats the war drums to boost morale (line 4). Indeed, the pathos of Zhou Lianggong's tribute to Wang Sun derives precisely from images of frailty and disquiet. She is roused to action because she is ashamed of being a “frail woman” 弱女, a phrase that Zhou also uses to refer to her in *Great Fury* (3a). Public purview when “the banners' shadows opened up” may account for her unease. Her heroism is all the more remarkable for being “against the grain” of her character. The image of Wang Sun beating the war drums inevitably recalls Liang Hongyu. But here the “dying sounds” 死聲, said to portend defeat (*Zuozhuan* Xiang 18.4, p. 1043), indicate adverse circumstances and an unbearable burden. The fragments of Wang's writings that have been preserved convey desperate resolution rather than flamboyant heroism. Wang Sun's poem “Hearing of the Alarm” (“Wenjing” 聞警) has the lines: “For ill fate, pity the insects' limbs, / A whole family is in the tiger's jaws” 薄命憐蟲臂，全家在虎牙; and in “Besieged City” (“Weicheng” 圍城) she writes: “Having already accepted worn out bodies, no different from rats and birds, as our wretched lot, / I yet dare say: let the large tree be shaken by

61. See Li Bo, “Laolao ting” 勞勞亭: “The place of heartache in this world / Is the Pavilion of Sorrow for sending someone off. / Should east wind know of parting's pain, / It would not have turned the willows green” 天下傷心處，勞勞送客亭。春風知別苦，不遣柳條青 (*Li Taibo quanji*, 25.1150).

ants and mites” 已分殘軀同鼠雀，敢言大樹撼蚍蜉 (cited in Zhou Lianggong, *Yinshuwu shuying*, p. 26).⁶²

The theme of heroic acts by the weak is juxtaposed with that of purported transcendence of the earthbound. Religious transcendence paradoxically encompasses romantic longing and heroic action: songs of love and longing, such as those found in *New Songs of Jade Terrace* (6th c.), mingle in Buddha's Lane (literally, the Lane of the King of Emptiness, one of the Buddha's names in the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* [*Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經]); dust from the Brocade Canopy under which Madame Xian gives orders on the battlefield⁶³ beguiles those who avow renunciation (marked by “cassocks” or “clothing of improper color” 壞色裳). Although Zhou's conclusion is that “immortals, buddhas, heroes” represent futile strivings powerless against the all-too-human reality of loss and separation, he seems to imply that Wang Sun embodies these ideals or at least the perspective capable of judging these ideals. The line about “immortals, buddhas, heroes” also recalls Wang's own line of gentle mockery, embedded in the last couplet of the third poem cited above.

In Zhou's dream, Wang also offers advice and judgment on his present situation (1st poem, lines 7–8, *Laigu tang ji*, 7.9a):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 躑躅詢郎戰苦處 | She faltered, lingered, and asked me about the hardships of war |
| 烏龍江透白龍江 | That reach all the way from Dark Dragon River to White Dragon River. |

Here Dark Dragon River and White Dragon River may just be general markers of north and south—there is no record of Zhou being engaged in battles in the Wulong [Heilong] jiang (Dark Dragon River) area or near Songjiang, where Bailong jiang (White Dragon River) is. In Zhou's dream vision, Wang is implying continuity between his endeavors as defender of the Ming in Wei County in the north and his efforts to smite remnant Ming resistance on behalf of the Qing in Huai Yang in the south. That both the Ming and Qing dynasties could claim legitimate mandate and demand absolute loyalty from their subjects was both official ideology and the self-justification avowed by “officials who

62. “Insects' limbs” refers to the futility of an insect trying to counter a carriage's wheel with its arms, as in the proverbial expression *tangbi dangju* 螳臂擋車. Han Yu compares ignorant critics who disparage Li Bo or Du Fu to “ants trying to shake a big tree” 蚍蜉撼大樹 (“Tiao Zhang ji” 調張籍, *Han Yu xuanji*, p. 129).

63. *Zizhi tongjian*, 177.5533–34.

served two dynasties.” Here the assertion is rooted in Wang’s empathy and love and is divested of opportunism. She is also keenly aware of the dangers of political life and thus urges timely withdrawal (2nd poem, lines 7–8, *Laigu tang ji*, 7.9a):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 瀕行猶道風波惡 | Even when leaving, she still harped on: the waves are treacherous, |
| 何似閒乘下澤車 | What could compare to an unhurried ride in a short-hubbed carriage? |

The Han general Ma Yuan, even after gaining victory and glory, quotes his cousin who extols the pleasures of a simple life, symbolized by a short-hubbed carriage that runs with facility (*Hou Hanshu*, 24.838). Considering the calumny Zhou later encountered in public life as a Qing official, Wang’s advice seems strangely prescient. For Zhou Lianggong, Wang Sun represents empathy, acceptance, and judicious counsel for his present self, but perhaps more importantly, she allows him to commemorate their heroic endeavor in 1643, untarnished by later compromises. Their poetic testimonies of the siege have been buried with her, and his poetic sequence about her dream visitation is the only way to save them from oblivion (7th poem, lines 7–8, *Laigu tang ji*, 7.10a):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 城上詩同風雨葬 | “Poems on the City Wall” were, with wind and rain, buried— |
| 難從劫後釋煩冤 | It is hard, with what remains of kalpic fire, to right wrongs and woes. |

Courtesan as Poet-Historian: Bian Sai and Wu Weiye

Wu Weiye’s writings on the courtesan-artist Bian Sai (Daoist name Yujing) offer similar images of ambivalent transcendence but imply a different kind of historical retrospection. Wu traces Bian Sai’s transformation from a famous courtesan into an icon of Buddhist devotion in the biographical account appended as a preface to “Passing by the Grave of the Daoist Yujing at Brocade Forest” (“Guo Jin shulin Yujing daoren mu” 過錦樹林玉京道人墓, *WMC*, 1:250–53), his last recorded poem devoted to her.⁶⁴ The account is self-consciously defined through Wu

64. The poem is dated 1668. Bian Sai died around 1663. Wu Weiye’s first trip to Mount Hui (near Wuxi), where Bian Sai was buried, was in the ninth month of 1668. See Ye and Feng, *Wu Meicun nianpu*, p. 428.

Weiye's perspectives—his relationship with her and what he could know about her. Wu uses one of his style names, Luqiao sheng 鹿樵生, and refers to himself as “the scholar” or “he” 生 throughout the account (*WMC*, 1:250–51):

The provenance of the Daoist Yujing was not known. Some said she was from Qinhuai.⁶⁵ Her surname was Bian. She was literary, adept at calligraphy in small standard script, and she could paint orchids and play the zither. At eighteen she sojourned at Hill Pond of Tiger Mound [near Suzhou]. Her abode, with its mottled bamboo blinds and small pine table, was austere and immaculate, without the slightest hint of dust. The limpid depths of her eyes reflected, day after day, fine ink and good paper. When she received guests, she would initially be reticent, but eventually her wit and humor would shine ever so often and captivate everyone present. After one spent enough time in her company, she often showed signs of regret and rancor. When asked about it, she usually deflected the question with words about other subjects. Her keen intelligence was such that even the literati could not measure up to her. Once she met Luqiao Sheng, she wanted to pledge troth to him. Intoxicated with wine, she leaned against the low table and looked at him, “Are you then interested?” He pretended not to understand. She heaved a long sigh and fixed her gaze. Subsequently she never spoke about it again. Eventually she was caught up in the turmoil of the times and they parted. She returned to Qinhuai for five or six years. A long time elapsed, and someone heard that she had again gone east, being hosted by an old friend from Haiyu [Changshu]. He happened to pass through the same place. A certain minister prepared a feast and insisted on inviting her on his behalf.⁶⁶ All the guests put down their cups and stopped drinking when a message came that said she had arrived. Some time later, the carriage turned and entered the inner quarters. She was called several times, but to the end she refused to come out. He was devastated and at a loss, and finally could not suppress his feelings. He returned home and wrote four poems to tell of their final separation, and then he sighed, “I was the one who betrayed her, how can this be helped!” Several months passed, and Yujing suddenly came. A maid named Rourou followed her. On one occasion she wore yellow clothes and took up Daoist garb, called Rourou to fetch the zither she brought along, and played a couple of tunes for him. She said tearfully,

65. This suggests that Bian Sai belonged to the “Registry of Entertainers” 樂籍 by birth.

66. “A certain minister” refers to Qian Qianyi.

“When I was in Qinhuai, I saw in the former mansion of Lord Zhongshan his incomparably beautiful daughter. Her name was among those chosen for the Inner Palace. Before she entered the palace, chaos broke out. A military officer used a whip to send her on her way. For my likes to sink into misery and oblivion is fate. How can anybody be blamed?” All the assembled guests shed tears. Rourou was modest and intelligent. When the Daoist painted orchids, she liked to create their lush, wind-blown gracefulness. Once her brush descended, she would use more than ten sheets of paper. Rourou attended to her by her inkstone and seat like a disciple, hardly resting the whole day. Sometimes the guests tried to bring her into conversation, but she would not respond; or they would give her wine, but she would not drink. Two years passed. Yujing crossed the river to Zhejiang and married a lord in Kuaiji.⁶⁷ She was not happy, and offered Rourou to serve him. She begged to reclaim her person and shave her head, and lived as the dependant of a fine physician, the Guardian, in Wuzhong. The Guardian was over seventy. A clansman of the lord, he built a separate residence for her and provided for her generously. After the lord died, Rourou, who had borne a son, was married off. The family she married into met with calamity, and it was not known what happened to her.⁶⁸ The Daoist was very strict in observing Buddhist rules and abstinences. Luqiao sheng was a cousin of the physician, and thus could meet her with proper religious rituals. The Daoist spent three years pricking her tongue for blood to copy the *Lotus Sutra* for the physician. Upon its completion, the Daoist wrote the preface herself. Clergy and laity all raised their hands in admiration. A little over ten years later, she died. Her grave is on the plain near the Zhituo Temple at Brocade Forest in Mount Hui.

玉京道人，莫詳所自出，或曰秦淮人。姓卞氏。知書，工小楷，能畫蘭，能琴。年十八，僑虎丘之山塘。所居湘簾排几，嚴淨無纖塵，雙眸泓然，日與佳墨良紙相映徹。見客初亦不甚酬對，少焉諧謔間作，一坐傾靡。與之久者，時見有怨恨色，問之輒亂以它語。其警慧雖文士莫及也。與鹿樵生一見，遂欲以身許，酒酣拊几而顧曰：「亦有意乎？」生固爲若弗解者。長嘆凝睇，後亦竟弗復言。尋遇亂別去，歸秦淮者五六年矣。久之，有聞其復東下者，主於海虞一故人。生偶過焉。尚書某公者，張具請爲生必

67. This lord is identified as Zheng Yinggao 鄭應臬; see Wu Weiye, *Wu Meicun shiji jianzhu*, pp. 189–90. For the identification of the “eastern region” as Kuaiji, see Zhang Ruzai’s comment in *Wushi jilan*, 6B.17a.

68. Rourou married Yuan Dashou 袁大受, who, along with many members of the Jiangnan literati, were accused of supporting Zheng Chenggong and executed in 1659; see *Wu Meicun shiji jianzhu*, p. 190.

致之，眾客皆停杯不御，已報曰至矣。有頃，迴車入內宅，屢呼之終不肯出。生悵怏自失，殆不能爲情，歸賦四詩以告絕。已而歎曰：「吾自負之，可奈何！」踰數月，玉京忽至，有婢曰柔柔者隨之。嘗著黃衣道人裝，呼柔柔取所攜琴來，爲生鼓一再行。泫然曰：「吾在秦淮，見中山故第有女絕世，名在南內選擇中，未入宮而亂作，官府以一鞭驅之去。吾儕淪落，分也，又復誰怨乎？」坐客皆爲出涕。柔柔莊且慧，道人畫蘭，好作風枝婀娜，一落筆盡十餘紙。柔柔承侍硯間，如弟子然，終日未嘗少休。客或導之以言，弗應。與之酒，弗肯飲。踰兩年，渡浙江，歸於東中一諸侯，不得意，進柔柔奉之，乞身下髮，依良醫保御氏於吳中。保御者，年七十餘，侯之宗人，築別宮資給良厚。侯死，柔柔生一子而嫁，所嫁家遇禍，莫之所終。道人持課誦誠律甚嚴。生於保御，中表也，得以方外禮見。道人用三年力，刺舌血爲保御書法華經，既成，自爲文序之，縑素咸捧手讚歎。凡十餘年而卒，墓在惠山祇陀菴錦樹林之原。

Wu Weiye ties Bian Sai's aesthetic sensibility with her aura of mystery. Her austere abode, reminiscent of Yu Huai's descriptions of parts of Qinhuai in *Plank Bridge*, implies disdain for sensuous pleasures. The courtesan painter is proud, reserved, spirited, and unconventional. Bian's melancholy and evasiveness suggest she carried the burden of excessive feelings, a theme favored by literati when idealizing courtesans.⁶⁹

Wu gives few details about his relationship with Bian. Their intimacy could have developed in the period from 1641 to 1644, when Wu was in his hometown, Taicang, which is close to Suzhou. Bian and Wu were together at a gathering seeing off Wu's cousin Wu Jishan when the latter left for office in Sichuan in 1643. After noting that Bian "was fond of composing short poems," Wu records the poem she wrote on a fan for the occasion in his *Remarks on Poetry* (WMC, 3:1139):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 剪燭巴山別思遙 | Trimming candles, speaking of Mount Ba: such is distant longing. |
| 送君蘭楫渡江泉 | I see you off, as orchid oars take you across the river. |
| 願將一幅瀟湘種 | My wish is to have one sheet with Xiao Xiang orchids |
| 寄與春風問薛濤 | Sent via spring wind to convey my regards to Xue Tao. |

69. See, for example, Zhang Dai's accounts of the courtesans Zhu Chusheng and Wang Yuesheng in *Tao'an mengyi*, pp. 50, 72.

Bian Sai must have painted orchids on the fan. These orchids, of the variety that grew by the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, were associated with the *Verses of Chu* tradition and suggestive of a pure, lofty spirit: with these she marked her affinity with the Tang courtesan-poet Xue Tao 薛濤 (768–831), who lived in Sichuan. The first line recalls Li Shangyin's famous lines: "How will it be when, trimming candles together at the west window, / We talk of rainy nights at Mount Ba" 何當共翦西窗燭, 卻話巴山夜雨時.⁷⁰ Taking a moment of future retrospection as the focus of longing, Bian's quatrain follows Li's rhetoric of friendship, which prevails although the quatrain might have been addressed to his wife. As noted in chapter 2, the discourse of friendship was important for courtesans who wished to address elite men as intellectual equals.

The poems that Bian must have addressed to Wu are no longer extant. Wu Weiye's own song lyrics about his trysts with Bian (to the tunes "Zui chunfeng" and "Xijiang yue," *WMC*, 2:550–51, 2:556–57) paint Bian as the object of desire with a frank sensuality reminiscent of Liu Yong 柳永 (987–1053); perhaps that is why he refers to them in his *Remarks on Poetry* (*WMC*, 3:1140) but not in the adulatory tribute here. Instead the nostalgic and mournful mood of the preface focuses on loss, obstacles, failures, and religious transcendence. Bian's bold resoluteness in proposing to Wu Weiye and Wu's failure to meet her expectations echo contemporary accounts of scholar-courtesan relationships.⁷¹

Bian might have left for Qinhuai (Nanjing) in 1643, and Wu lost news of her for seven years (*WMC*, 3:1140). In that interval the Ming dynasty fell. In the biographical preface cited above Wu chronicles one failed meeting and one actual meeting of the two after the fall of the Ming. In autumn 1650, while hosting Wu Weiye, Qian Qianyi invited Bian Sai. She came but refused to meet with Wu. Wu then wrote "Zither River: Remembrance of Things Past, four poems, with preface" ("Qinhe ganjiu sishou bing xu" 琴河感舊四首并序, 1650, *WMC*, 1:159–61); the poems dwell on evanescence, removal, tortuous mediations, and final non-communication.⁷² Wu implicitly links lost love to dynastic collapse in the

70. Li Shangyin, "Ye yu jibei" 夜雨寄北, in *LSY*, 3:1230–34. This poem is entitled "Ye yu jinei" 夜雨寄內 in Hong Mai's *Tangren nanshou jueju xuan*.

71. Liu Rushi proposed to Song Zhengyu; the latter's irresoluteness led to their separation (*LRS*, 1:69). Chen Yuanyuan and Dong Bai pursued union with Mao Xiang (*YMA*, pp. 6–11).

72. Zither River is near Changshu in Jiangsu.

preface: “For the swallows by the river, the old ramparts have all changed. As for she who picks *minu* herbs on the mountains, where is the one she once loved?” 江頭燕子，舊壘都非。山上蘼蕪，故人安在？⁷³ The preface concludes with references to the Tang poets Du Mu and Bai Juyi, who both use the sad fate of a “woman of pleasure” to lament personal and historical vicissitudes: “How could I not be moved like Du Mu was by Du Qiuniang, or weep like Bai Juyi at Jiangzhou!” 能無杜秋之感，江州之泣也。 In Du Mu’s poem about Du Qiuniang, the latter’s song of *carpe diem*, “Coat of Golden Threads,” is but a poor answer to the political upheavals, rebellions, and court intrigues that determined her fate.⁷⁴ Bai Juyi wrote the famous “Song of the Pipa” (“Pipa yin” 琵琶引) about an aging courtesan he encountered when he was an official in Jiangzhou.⁷⁵ His empathy with her also resonates with broader themes of exile and displacement.

The first “Zither River” poem moves inexorably from romantic memories to regret (*WMC*, 1:160):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 白門楊柳好藏鴉 | The willows of Baixia Gate: a good place for hiding crows. |
| 誰道扁舟盪槳斜 | Who says that the paddling oars are aslant by the little boat? |
| 金屋雲深吾谷樹 | The golden chamber among the trees of Wu Vale is deep in the clouds. |
| 玉杯春暖尚湖花 | Jade cups by the flowers of Lake Shang are warmed by the spring. |
| 見來學避低團扇 | She sees me coming, and learns to hide behind lowered round fans. |
| 近處疑嗔響鈿車 | Her carriage rumbles, drawing closer, and I suspect her anger. |
| 卻悔石城吹笛夜 | I only regret that at Stone City, when flute music wafted through the night, |
| 青驄容易別盧家 | My blue steed took leave of her abode all too lightly. |

73. In a well-known *yuefu* ballad, an abandoned wife “picks *minu* herbs on the mountain” and encounters her former husband, showing submission and undiminished devotion (*LQL*, 1: 334). Here Wu Weiye reverses the trope and claims that the abandoned woman sees no place for “the one she once loved.”

74. Du Mu, “Du Qiuniang shi” 杜秋娘詩, *Fanchuan wenji*, 1.5–6.

75. Bai Juyi, “Pipa yin” 琵琶引, *Bai Juyi ji*, 12.241–43.

The first line recalls a standard trope of dalliance seen in *yuefu* ballads: crows hiding behind willows at Baixia Gate. Concealment is playful, redolent with the misty romanticism of Jiangnan. If the drifting boat suggests a quest for what is hidden, the pursuit is pointedly non-deliberate and unburdened by anxiety (line 2). Wu and Bian parted in Suzhou around 1643, and Bian returned to Qinhuai. Concealment may suggest that, despite the public purview associated with her status as courtesan, Bian remains reticent and elusive. Line 3 alludes to Bian's sojourn at the estate of an "old friend," variously identified as Lu Tingbao and Sun Lu; "golden chamber" hints at a romantic liaison or rumors of an imminent marriage.⁷⁶ Line 4 may hark back to past gatherings in Qian's abode, where elegance and springtime warmth suggest oblivious good cheer (the seasonal discrepancy would otherwise be unaccountable).⁷⁷ Lines 5 and 6 describe Bian Sai's tantalizing proximity—she has come, but seems bent on avoiding an encounter. What might have passed for mere coyness or whimsical anger turns out to be the inevitable outcome of Wu's earlier hesitation and rejection. The image of drawing closer (lines 5–6) is contrasted with that of departure in the final couplet. The mood of the poem moves from playful dalliance to retrospective regret. Their parting at Nanjing might have taken place when Wu was serving briefly as an imperial tutor in the Hongguang court.⁷⁸

The second poem describes the heartache of being cut off from his beloved despite her tantalizing proximity (*WMC*, 1:160):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 油壁迎來是舊游 | The painted carriage brought her, love of a former life. |
| 尊前不出背花愁 | She would not emerge, shunning wine vessel and flowers, grieving. |
| 緣知薄幸逢應恨 | Because of my breach of faith, a meeting would only bring regrets, |
| 恰便多情喚卻羞 | Yet there must be deep feelings, though summons tried her shyness. |

76. See Cheng Muheng's annotations in "Wugu xing" 吾谷行 and "Guo Jinshulin Yujing daoren mu" (*Wu Meicun shiji jianzhu*, pp. 582, 716); Jin Rongfan's notes in "Qinhe ganjiu" (*Wushi jilan*, 11B.10A). In *Han Wu gushi* (p. 166), Emperor Wu of Han says he would like to put the woman he loves (Ajiao) in a "golden chamber."

77. Wu Valley and Lake Shang are scenic areas in Yushan, Qian Qianyi's hometown.

78. However, Wu states that he lost all news of Bian for seven years before their meeting in 1650 (*WMC*, 3:1140). It is possible that Wu, for whatever reason, does not want to acknowledge this 1645 meeting in *Remarks on Poetry*.

| | |
|---------|--|
| 故向閑人偷玉筍 | Willfully turning to the unconcerned, she sheds furtive tears. |
| 浪傳好語到銀鈎 | For naught did fine words reach the curtain's silver hook. |
| 五陵年少催歸去 | The rich young men of Five Mounds urge her return, |
| 隔斷紅牆十二樓 | And from her I must be cut off by the red walls of Twelve Towers. |

She who is brought by the carriage is “love of a former life”—the words *jinyou*, literally a “former companion,” point to Bian Sai’s status as a courtesan. The second line ends with her emotions of grief and sorrow, the nuances and contradictions of which are explored in the middle couplets (lines 3–6). The poet acknowledges his own “breach of faith” and yet speculates that Bian Sai must still retain “deep feelings” for him (lines 3–4): these are lines that Wu proudly recalls later in his *Remarks on Poetry* as “a true description of the feelings and circumstances at the time” 此當日情景實語也 (*WMC*, 3:1140). Bian stays in the inner quarters with Qian’s concubine Liu Rushi despite repeated entreaties, possibly acting on Liu’s counsel. Wu opines that she refuses to come out not out of rancor, but because she is shy or ashamed 羞. These lines remind us of Yingying’s poem in Yuan Zhen’s “Yingying’s Story” (“Yingying zhuan” 鶯鶯傳), when she responds to her former lover Zhang Sheng’s request to see her after his betrayal and the termination of their relationship: “It is not because of others that I am too ashamed to rise, / For you I have wasted away, yet in front of you I must be ashamed” 不為旁人羞不起，為郎憔悴卻羞郎 (*TPGJ*, 488.4012–17). As in the earlier story, the poet believes that the abandoned woman’s emotions speak louder for being repressed (line 5), despite his lament that attempts or promises to communicate with her have been in vain (line 6). (The “fine words” can be read as her promise to meet him or, more likely, his pleas entreating her to come out.) The last two lines refer to rumors of Bian’s impending marriage, and the poem concludes with a final image of irrevocable obstacle and separation: “red walls” and “Twelve Towers” evoke forbidden access to the celestial realm (*Wushi jilan*, 11B.10a; *Shiji*, 12.484).⁷⁹

79. Li Shangyin compares the “red walls” sealing off the beloved to the River of Heaven in “Dai ying” 代應 (*LSY*, 5:1814).

The third poem reaffirms past bonds in the face of inevitable separation (*WMC*, 1:160):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 休將消息恨層城 | Do not, because of the news, hate the layers of city walls. |
| 猶有羅敷未嫁情 | Still there is Luo Fu's love, before she belongs to another. |
| 車過卷簾勞悵望 | A passing carriage with raised curtains: it stirs a sad gaze in vain. |
| 夢來攜袖費逢迎 | Tugged sleeves in a dream: parleying comings and goings. |
| 青衫憔悴卿憐我 | You feel pity for me, careworn in a blue coat. |
| 紅粉飄零我憶卿 | I long for you, adrift in rouge and powder. |
| 記得橫塘秋夜好 | Memory comes: the lovely autumn night at Hengtang— |
| 玉釵恩重是前生 | When jade hairpins bore deep feelings in that former life. |

The news of Bian Sai's impending marriage poses barriers, but the poet immediately turns to the past—and to her feelings before she “belongs to another.” The poet invokes Luofu, the heroine of the *yuefu* ballad “Mulberry on the Lane” (“Moshang sang” 陌上桑)⁸⁰ who rejects the advances of a comely man, proudly proclaiming her married state and unavailability. Here the invocation of Luofu is double-edged. The poet may be emphasizing Bian Sai's steadfast love, analogous to Luofu's, or he may be casting himself as the suitor who could have escaped rejection—the ill-timed encounter between Luofu and her suitor might have had a happier outcome had they met before Luofu “belonged to another.” This is an ironic role-reversal, considering how Wu had spurned Bian earlier. The middle couplets override these ambivalences and celebrate a communion of feelings: their fleeting and dreamlike encounters belie a deep bond (lines 3–4). Line 3 alludes to a Tang story about how the courtesan Liu, forcibly taken away from her lover Han Yi by a military commander, re-encounters Han when she is riding in a carriage. Through “raised curtains” she sends her missive of undiminished love.⁸¹ The

80. LQL, 1:259–60.

81. Meng Qi, *Benshi shi*, pp. 10–12; see also *TPGJ*, 485.3995–97. For discussion of the story of Han Yi and Liu, see chap. 1, p. 85.

words *lao* 勞 (“stir in vain”) and *fei* 費 (“parley”) imply that “the sad gaze” and “comings and goings” are futile, yet the furtive communication and dream visitation also confirm lasting ties between Wu Weiye and Bian Sai. Perfect symmetry, reciprocity, and confluence of feelings seem to have erased memories of betrayal and estrangement (lines 5–6). The “blue coat” (line 5) alludes to the Tang poet Bai Juyi’s encounter with a singing girl in “Song of the Pipa”: he empathizes with her degradation as he listens to her performance, the two being “both lost souls at the edge of the world” 同是天涯淪落人, and at the end of the poem he presents himself as the official in a blue coat who wept most copiously among those in the audience. Line 5 also echoes Feng Xiaoqing’s appeal to her own shadow: “You must pity me, as I pity you” 卿須憐我 我憐卿. Feng Xiaoqing, in the famous eponymous late-Ming story, loves *The Peony Pavilion* and re-enacts its heroine’s grand passion in a context whereby the absence of any worthy object gives her emotions an inevitably tragic, self-consuming, and somewhat narcissistic turn.⁸² Both allusions underline how empathy may be tied to self-love, self-justification, and the desire for recognition. Perhaps that is why by the final couplet the memory of Bian Sai’s pledge of love has displaced that of his own irresolute refusal.

The fourth poem is about a substitution—an orchid painting takes the place of the painter. We may surmise its context: failing a meeting, Wu Weiye must have asked for a painting from Bian Sai, a noted painter of orchids (*WMC*, 1:161):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 長向東風問畫蘭 | For long facing the east wind, I ask about her orchid paintings. |
| 玉人微嘆倚闌干 | The lovely one sighs ever so lightly, leaning against balustrades. |
| 乍拋錦瑟描難就 | Suddenly letting go of the brocade zither, she finds brushstrokes hard to complete. |
| 小疊瓊牋墨未乾 | Gently she folds the missive of jade hue: the ink is not yet dry. |
| 弱葉懶舒添午倦 | Timid leaves unfurl in languor, adding to midday weariness. |
| 嫩芽嬌染怯春寒 | Tender shoots are painted so delicately, as if fearful of spring chill. |

82. Jianjian jushi 堯堯居士, “Xiaoqing zhuan” 小青傳, in Feng Menglong, *Qingshi leilue*, 14.423–28.

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------|
| 書成粉箋憑誰寄 | The writing is done on the fan, |
| | but how to send it? |
| 多恐蕭郎不忍看 | I fear he who should receive it |
| | cannot bear to look at it. |

The poet imagines the artist's melancholy and hesitation as she picks up the brush to paint. On the surface, line 3 describes Bian putting aside a musical instrument to turn, with some difficulty, to painting. But "brocade zither" inevitably brings to mind the opening image in Li Shangyin's famous "Brocade Zither" ("Jinse" 錦瑟), commonly understood to describe lost love (LSY, 4:1420–38). In this context, "brushstrokes hard to complete" seem to bear the burden of excessive feelings. "The ink is not yet dry"—she has folded the letter in haste; and the letter, fresh from her hand, seems to retain a more immediate connection with her.⁸³ The poet imagines the timid languor and fragile beauty of the orchids as Bian's self-representation—they speak of ambivalent reticence and withheld emotions. The final couplet dwells on the difficulty of communication from her perspective: even if the message is completed, there may not be a way to send it, and even if it is sent, he who should read it has become a stranger (Xiao lang 蕭郎) and cannot bear to read it. The external and internal logic of this poetic sequence thus goes in opposite directions. Obstacles and postponements reflect the difficulty of communication and conclude with the failure to meet, yet the poetic voice moves from calm recollection to deep empathy, from regarding Bian with some distance to articulating emotions from her perspective.

Despite recurrent images of non-communication in Wu's "Zither River" poems, a meeting materialized shortly after they were written, as Wu recalls in his *Remarks on Poetry*: "And three months passed. In the early spring of 1651, I had the pleasure of her visiting me on a boat. Together we drifted on Hengtang, and only then did I write out the four earlier poems for her as a gift" 又過三月，爲辛卯初春，乃得扁舟見訪，共載橫塘，始將前四詩書以贈之 (WMC, 3:1140). This reunion might have been the occasion for another romantic and sensual song lyric, written to the tune "Lin jiang xian" and subtitled "Encountering an Old Friend" ("Fengjiu" 逢舊), which both You Tong and Jin Rongfan

83. Possibly alluding to Li Shangyin, "The letter has been hastened to completion, with ink not yet thickened" 書被催成墨未濃 ("Wuti" 無題, in LSY, 4:1467).

靳榮藩 (1726–84) assert as having been written for Bian (*WMC*, 2:554–55).⁸⁴ But it would have no place in a narrative presenting personal and political loss as the basis for Bian’s religious transformation. The biographical preface to “Passing by the Grave” thus moves directly from their failure to meet in 1650 to Bian’s performance of a song of remembrance in her new guise as a Daoist priestess in the late spring of 1651.

In the preface to “Having Read Imperial Tutor Meicun’s Romantic Poems, I Was Moved to Write the Following Four Poems” (“Du Meicun gongzhan yanshi yougan shuhou sishou” 讀梅村宮詹豔詩有感書後四首, *QMZ*, 4:116–20), Qian claims that Wu used romantic-erotic imagery to express political lament, following Late Tang models such as Li Shangyin and Han Wo 韓偓 (844–923). Qian’s matching poems thus employ opaque romantic imagery to evoke political and historical events. Some years later, when Wu Weiye wrote his *Remarks on Poetry*, he disclaimed political meanings in his “Zither River” poems and asserted instead that Qian was using him to “stave off criticism” 解嘲 (*WMC*, 3:1140).

The political turn in Wu’s writings about Bian springs not from the metaphorical connection between lost love and political lamentation but from her transformation into poet-historian in “Song on Listening to the Daoist Bian Yujing Playing the Zither” (1651, *WMC* 1:63–64). Here Wu’s empathy with Bian’s anguish makes way for her compassion for the sufferings of others. He elevates Bian’s voice to the point that it mediates personal witness and historical reflection, and fuses personal suffering with the vicissitudes of history. While the preface to “Passing by the Grave” simply emphasizes how, when Wu and Bian met in 1651, Bian empathized with other unfortunate women, the poem describing that meeting endows her voice with new authority.

吳偉業 聽女道士卞玉京彈琴歌

Wu Weiye, “Song on Listening to the Daoist
Bian Yujing Playing the Zither”

駕鵝逢天風
北向驚飛鳴

Wild geese met with heavenly wind,
Turned north and cried in fearful flight.

84. Wu Weiye, however, does not mention this as one of the works written for Bian in his *Remarks on Poetry*.

- 飛鳴入夜急 Flight and cries became more urgent with night.
 側聽彈琴聲 Turning my head, I heard someone playing a zither.
 5 借問彈者誰 I asked, "Who is the player?"
 云是當年卞玉京 They said it was Bian Yujing of yesteryear.
 玉京與我南中遇 Yujing and I met in the southern capital.
 家近大功坊底路 Her home was by the road
 beneath the Great Merit Mansion—
 小院青樓大道邊 "The small courtyard of the blue tower
 flanked the avenue,
 10 對門卻是中山住 Facing the gate where none other
 than Lord Zhongshan lived.⁸⁵
 中山有女嬌無雙 Lord Zhongshan had a daughter
 of peerless charm,
 清眸皓齒垂明璫 With bright eyes, gleaming teeth,
 and dangling earrings.
 曾因內宴直歌舞 Once, for a feast in the inner quarters,
 I had to sing and dance,
 坐中瞥見塗鴉黃 Espying, among the seated, one with a trace
 of heightened color.⁸⁶
 15 問年十六尚未嫁 I asked about her age—
 sixteen and not yet married,
 知音識曲彈清商 She knew music, mastered songs,
 and played the *qing* and *shang* scales.
 歸來女伴洗紅妝 Upon return, with my female companions
 I washed off makeup—
 枉將絕技矜平康 In vain did we take pride in our great skills,
 lordling over Pingkang.⁸⁷
 如此纔足當侯王 Only someone like her sufficed to match
 lords and rulers.
 20 萬事倉皇在南渡 Everything was in distressing chaos
 with the southward crossing,
 大家幾日能枝梧 For how many days could the imperial house
 keep up its dignity?
 詔書忽下選蛾眉 An edict suddenly came down,
 decreeing choice of beauties:

85. Line 9 alludes to Cao Zhi's 曹植 (192–232) line: "The blue tower faces the great avenue" 青樓臨大道. Yu Huai also notes the proximity of the Qinhuai pleasure quarters to Lord Zhongshan's estate (*BQ*, pp. 8–9).

86. *Yahuang* 鴉黃 or *ehuang* 額黃 was a dab of yellow that women applied decoratively to their foreheads, a style fashionable in the Six Dynasties and the Tang dynasty.

87. Pingkang, the lane in Chang'an where courtesans lived during the Tang dynasty, has since the late Tang become a standard way to refer to pleasure quarters.

- 細馬輕車不知數 One lost count of the slender horses
and light carriages for the mission.
- 中山好女光徘徊 The good daughter of Lord Zhongshan,
her brilliance shimmered:
- 25 一時粉黛無人顧 All of a sudden, none heeded the other
rouged and powdered ladies.⁸⁸
- 艷色知爲天下傳 Her beauty, we know,
was told by all under heaven,
- 高門愁被旁人妬 And a noble house must fear
being the target of others' envy.
- 盡道當前黃屋尊 All said that right there was the
glory of the gold-domed carriage,
- 誰知轉盼紅顏誤 Who would have known, in the twinkling
of an eye, the fair one's ruin?
- 30 南內方看起桂宮 At the South Court, just as they beheld
the Cassia Palace being built,
- 北兵早報臨瓜步 Word came that the northern army
was closing in on Guabu.⁸⁹
- 聞道君王走玉驄 We heard that the emperor had fled
on his fine steed,
- 犢車不用聘昭容 Calf-drawn carriages would not be used
for betrothing consorts.
- 幸遲身入陳宮裏 Fortunate to have delayed being taken
into the Southern Palace—
- 35 卻早填名代籍中 Yet her name was already put down
in the Northern Registers.⁹⁰
- 依稀記得祁與阮 In hazy contours, I remember
Qi and Ruan—
- 同時亦中三宮選 At that same time, also chosen
for the three palaces.
- 可憐俱未識君王 Pity indeed, that none
had even met the emperor,
- 軍府抄名被驅遣 When the army took down their names,
driving them on.

88. Bai Juyi, "Changhen ge" 長恨歌: "The rouged and powdered ladies in the six palaces lost their glow" 六宮粉黛無顏色 (*Bai Juyi ji*, 12.238–40).

89. Guabu is in present-day Jiangsu Province.

90. What I translate as "the Southern Palace" is "the Chen Palace" (line 34) or the palace of Chen Houzhu, the Hongguang emperor's analogue; "the Northern Registers" is literally "the Registers of Dai" (line 35). Dai was an ancient domain in Hebei; here it refers to the Manchus.

- 40 漫詠臨春瓊樹篇 Slowly they sang the songs “Facing Spring”
and “Agate Trees,”⁹¹
玉顏零落委花鈿 Until their fair faces wasted away,
as hair ornaments fell.⁹²
當時錯怨韓擒虎 At that moment, it was wrong
to blame Han Qinhu: for
張孔承恩已十年 Zhang and Kong had already enjoyed
royal favor for ten years.⁹³
但教一日見天子 Let her but see the son of heaven
for one day—
- 45 玉兒甘爲東昏死 Yu'er would have gladly died
for the Benighted Lord.⁹⁴
羊車望幸阿誰知 Their longing for imperial favor—
who would have known it?⁹⁵
青塚淒涼竟如此 The green grave is desolate,
desolate like this.⁹⁶
我向花間拂素琴 I turn to the flowers,
strumming a plain zither:
一彈三歎爲傷心 One sweep of notes and three sighs—
I grieve for them,
- 50 暗將別鵠離鸞引 Secretly bringing the tunes of
“Parting Geese and Riven Phoenixes”
寫入悲風怨雨吟 Into the chant of mournful wind
and bitter rain.
昨夜城頭吹簫箏 Last night, on the city wall,
they were blowing the military fife.
教坊也被傳呼急 The music quarters have also received
urgent summons.
碧玉班中怕點留 Among the ranks of courtesans reigns
the terror of being chosen,

91. “Joys of Facing Spring Pavilion” (“Linchun le” 臨春樂) was a song from Chen Houzhu’s court; “agate trees” 瓊樹 appear in another Chen court poem (*Chenshu*, 7.312).

92. This is an allusion to the death of Consort Yang in Bai Juyi’s “Changhen ge”: “Hair ornaments fell to the ground, none collected them” 花鈿委地無人收 (*Bai Juyi ji*, 12.238).

93. Chen Houzhu reigned for only eight years, so ten is either given as a round number or is inclusive of the years before Chen Houzhu ascended the throne.

94. Yu’er was the informal name of Consort Pan, for whom the Qi ruler, the Benighted Lord (Donghun), made lotuses inlaid with gold on the floor; see chap. 2, p. 122.

95. See chap. 2, n. 46.

96. The “green grave” refers to Wang Zhaojun’s grave; see chap. 1, n. 18.

- 55 樂營門外廬家泣 Outside the gates of the entertainers' camp,
young women weep.
私更裝束出江邊 I secretly changed my garb,
and came to the river's edge,
恰遇丹陽下渚船 By chance encountering, at Danyang,
boats at the sandbank.
翦就黃紬貪入道 I cut a robe of coarse yellow silk
and coveted entry into the Way,
攜來綠綺訴嬋娟 Carrying an ancient zither to tell of the woes
of fair ones.⁹⁷
- 60 此地絳來盛歌舞 In this place, singing and dancing
had always flourished:
子弟三班十番鼓 Three troupes of performers,
ensembles of ten instruments.
月明絃索更無聲 The moon is bright,
yet the strings yield no sounds.
山塘寂寞遭兵苦 Hill Pond, ravaged by war,
is all silenced and forsaken.
十年同伴兩三人 Of companions over ten years,
two or three remain,
- 65 沙董朱顏盡黃土 The glowing faces of Sha and Dong
have all returned to earth.⁹⁸
貴戚深閨陌上塵 Noble ladies deep inside the boudoir:
mere dust on the path,
吾輩飄零何足數 For the likes of us to be adrift and lost,
how can it matter?"
坐客聞言起歎嗟 The assembled guests heard these words
and heaved sighs,
江山蕭瑟隱悲笳 From bleak rivers and mountains,
a fife's sad notes faintly drifted.

97. What I translate as "ancient zither" is *lǜqí* 綠綺, "green patterned zither." *Lǜqí* is the name of a lute said to belong to the Han poet Sima Xiangru. It may also allude to *Lǜqítái* 綠綺台, a zither from the Tang court owned by the Ming emperor Zhengde (1491–1521, r. 1505–21). It ended up as the treasured possession of the loyalist poet Kuang Lu (see chap. 3, p. 251), who met his martyrdom by its side in 1650. *Lǜqítái* became a symbol of loyalty and dynastic upheavals in many early Qing poems. See, for example, Wang Shizhen's quatrain on Kuang Lu (*Yuyang jinghua lu jishi*, 1: 350), Qu Dajun, "Lǜqí qín gē" 綠綺琴歌, in *Qu Daju quanji*, 1:113–14.

98. Sha Cai, Sha Nen, Dong Nian, and Dong Bai, all famous courtesans, had died by 1651.

- 70 莫將蔡女邊頭曲 Do not let the songs of Cai Yan
beyond the frontier,
落盡吳王苑裡花 Bring down all the flowers
in the palaces of Wu.

At the beginning of this poem, Wu Weiye affects the impersonality of the *yuefu* ballad, and uses the associative principle of an affective image—here, in this case, the calls of wild geese. According to the preface to “Passing by the Grave,” Bian visited Wu in a deliberate and dramatic fashion. But here Wu implies a chance encounter, and borrows a formula from ancient-style poems 古詩 and song-style 歌行 poems: “I asked, ‘Who is the player?’” (line 5).⁹⁹ His careful distance as humbled listener elevates Bian’s authority and allows him to merge his voice with hers. “Bian Yujing of yesteryear” (line 6) suggests a radical transformation—Wu claims to fail to recognize her. As mentioned earlier, they had “drifted on Hengtang,” possibly resuming a romantic relationship, only recently. (Assuming that the northward flight of the wild geese [line 2] describes their migration in late spring, the meeting of Bian and Wu at Hengtang in early spring would have taken place a month or two earlier.) However, “Yujing and I met in the southern capital” (line 7) is all Wu gives of their former relationship.¹⁰⁰ Such dissociation emphasizes Bian’s transformation—in her Daoist garb, she is now privy to a higher understanding.

From that point on, the voice of Bian Yujing takes over. She sings of the misfortunes of the daughter of the Lord of Zhongshan, whose mansion was close to Bian’s own abode. Lord Zhongshan was a descendant of the general Xu Da 徐達 (1332–85), one of Zhu Yuanzhang’s key helpers in founding the Ming dynasty. It was as reward for his achievement that the Great Merit Mansion was built. Xu’s lineage was a reminder of early Ming glory; perhaps that is why its degradation is so often considered symbolic in early Qing writings. According to Yu Huai, a scion of the Xu line survived after the fall of the Ming by taking

99. See, for example, “Nineteen Old Poems,” no. 5: “Who could have made this tune?” 誰能爲此曲 (LQL, 1:330); Bai Juyi, “Pipa yin”: “I traced the sounds and secretly asked, who is the player?” 尋聲聞問彈者誰. (*Bai Juyi ji*, 12.242).

100. This may refer to their meeting in Nanjing when Wu served briefly in the Hong-guang court. A variant version of this line reads: “Yujing parted from me and left for the southern capital” 玉京別我南中去 (*WMC*, 1:64, n. 2): this would refer to their parting in Suzhou in 1643.

the place of those to be punished by flogging (*BQ*, p. 58). In Kong Shangren's *Peach Blossom Fan*, the noble son Xu, mentioned as banqueting in the beginning (scene 2), ends up as a lackey of the new regime in the last scene, hounding loyalists offstage in his zeal to recruit recluses for the new dynasty.

The proximity of the Qinhuai compound and the aristocratic residence reminds us how courtesan culture and Ming history are intertwined. In this case, it also affords Bian Yujing the prerogative of witnessing. It is as courtesan summoned for attendance 直 that Bian caught a glimpse of Lord Zhongshan's daughter.¹⁰¹ Bian's appreciation of her beauty and musical talents paradoxically reveals that the courtesan and the noblewoman share a common fate (lines 11–19). She considers Lord Zhongshan's daughter more desirable than any courtesan, but it means that her worth, too, is to be measured as an object affording pleasure for powerful men. Her misfortune is tied up with Ming collapse: the fall of Beijing is starkly juxtaposed with the southern court's preoccupation with the choice of consorts for the Hongguang emperor (lines 20–23).¹⁰² This very concern exposes the court's oblivious self-indulgence and links it to other decadent southern dynasties. The sad fate of would-be consorts is also an indictment of the Southern Ming.

The elevation of Zhongshan's daughter is as senseless as her degradation—indeed, the former makes the latter inevitable. With the fall of Nanjing, she and the other ladies narrowly escaped recruitment into the palace, only to be abducted by Qing troops (lines 34–35). In this middle section of the poem (lines 24–47), Wu, in Bian's voice, uses numerous historical and literary allusions about favored consorts and imperial whims or passions, and at every turn it is the mismatch that accounts for the pathos. The beauty of Zhongshan's daughter dims the allure of other ladies (line 25), just as Consort Yang is said to have done in Bai Juyi's "Song of Lasting Sorrow" ("Changhen ge" 長恨歌). But whereas the status of imperial consort is a coveted one in Bai's poem, here being chosen for that role is an abhorred fate, which Zhongshan's daughter cannot escape because others, jealous of her noble family, have ensured that rumors of her beauty reach the court (line 27). The affliction crossed political lines—among those chosen were daughters from

101. This was one of the duties of an official courtesan 官妓.

102. See Ji Liuqi, *Mingji nanlue*, 2.92; Li Qing, *Sanyuan biji*, p. 110.

the clan of Qi Biaoja, who subsequently died as a Ming martyr in 1645, and that of Ruan Dacheng, widely denounced as the devious minister whose self-serving calculations undermined the Southern Ming (lines 36–37). Anecdotal literature from the period is also full of stories about how young women were hastily married off, often to the wrong men, in order to avoid being drafted as palace ladies.¹⁰³

Chen Houzhu built the Cassia Palace for Zhang Lihua, and in this poem Wu intermittently pursues the analogy of Hongguang with the last ruler of Chen (lines 30, 34, 40–43). Singing, dancing, and feasting in Chen are brought to an abrupt end by invading armies from the north (lines 40–41). Wu caustically opines that the victims should hold no rancor against the conquerors (line 42) because Chen deserves to fall: oblivious self-indulgence has lasted too long. But where are the Ladies Zhang and Kong in this reenactment? “Zhang and Kong had already enjoyed royal favor for ten years” (line 43), yet here Zhongshan’s daughters and the other ladies had not been taken into the palace. Had there been a relationship with the emperor, no matter how fleeting, they might have been able to empathize with his waywardness and even depravity, and in that way fittingly share his fate, as in the case of Consort Pan (Yu’er) and the Benighted Lord of Qi (lines 44–45). Here their victimization obeys no logic. The only fitting analogy for the would-be consorts “taken north” may be Wang Zhaojun living and dying in the land of the barbarians. As somber conclusion, Bian invokes the memory of her desolate, green grave beyond the frontier (line 47).

In Wu Weiye’s longer narrative poems on contemporary historical events, he often filters the complexity, tensions, and contradictions of the moment through the perception and experiences of a character or persona.¹⁰⁴ He manipulates perspectives through the interplay of empathy and judgment, even when his subject calls for categorical verdicts, as with Hong Chengchou in “Lament of Mount Song” (“Songshan ai” 松山哀, 1655) or Wu Sangui and Chen Yuanyuan in “Yuanyuan’s Song” (“Yuanyuan qu” 圓圓曲, 1651), which I discuss in chapter 6. In some cases, such as with “Encountering the Gardener at the Southern Wing, I Was Moved to Compose Eighty Rhymes” (“Yu nanxiang yuansou ganfu bashi yun” 遇南廂園叟感賦八十韻, 1653) or “The Aged Entertainer

103. See the story of Kan Yu in *Writing Women* discussed above, p. 318.

104. Cf. Wai-ye Li, “History and Memory.”

of Linhuai,” the characters Wu encounters take over the poetic narrative as witness and judge. Here Bian is shown to have mastered Wu’s own mode of empathy and historical judgment as she sings of the sufferings of women who are victimized by both the inept, crumbling old order (the Southern Ming) and the ruthless new one (the Qing).

For Bian Yujing, the burden of witnessing calls for decisive action. When the courtesan quarters are being ransacked and when the threat of abduction by Qing troops is all too real,¹⁰⁵ Bian Yujing fashions for herself Daoist robes in order to stave off the immediate threat to her person. In doing so, she is able to tell the story of victimized women, a causative sequence embedded in the parallel between “coarse yellow silk” 黃紬 and “green patterned zither” 綠綺 (lines 58–59). She then dwells on the here and now of her performance: “this place” (line 60) is Suzhou, well known for its music, which had been silenced by the ravages of war. Her song is thus a defiant continuation of lost traditions. The war has taken its toll on both her courtesan companions and noble ladies, and her sufferings pale in comparison (lines 64–67).

The poem concludes with the audience’s empathetic identification (lines 68–71), invoking Cai Yan. Both the “Poem of Grief and Rancor” and the “Eighteen Beats of the Barbarian Fife” attributed to Cai Yan tell of her abduction by the Xiongnu, her twelve-year detainment among them, and her forced separation from her sons upon her return to Han China. It is possible that Bian’s song is conflated with those of Cai Yan to imply inner exile. I use the phrase “inner exile” with two issues in mind. First, Manchu conquest has turned China into barbarian territory, so that being in China is like being exiled.¹⁰⁶ This idea comes up often in early Qing writings. Thus Qian Qianyi writes in “Xu Yuqing Set Forth Wine for Nights on End, but Caisheng Left First” (“Xia lao leixi zhijiu Caisheng xianbie” 霞老累夕置酒彩生先別, *QMZ*, 4:343):¹⁰⁷

105. According to Chen Yinke, the Qing court seemed to have forcibly brought Qinhuai courtesans and entertainers to the capital between 1650 and 1651, possibly because of the Shunzhi emperor’s interest in drama; see *LRS*, 2:494.

106. The barbarian fife 胡笳 also becomes a symbol of Manchu conquest in Qian Qianyi, “Hou qixing” (1st ser., no. 2; 2nd ser., no. 2; 10th ser., no. 2; 12th ser., no. 2; 13th ser., no. 2); “Zeng Xu Wujing shengri” 贈徐武靜生日 (*QMZ*, 4:333–35).

107. Chen Yinke discusses Caisheng’s probable loyalist sympathies in *LRS*, 3:1113–24.

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------------|
| 兵前吳女解傷悲 | Facing the armies, |
| | the Wu maiden knows grief and sorrow. |
| 霜咽琵琶戍鼓催 | War drums hasten notes on the pipa, |
| | which seem to choke in the frost. |
| 促坐不須歌出塞 | Come closer: there is no need to sing |
| | "Going beyond the Frontier," |
| 白龍潭是拂雲堆 | The White Dragon Pond is already |
| | Brushing Clouds Mound. |

Written during Qian's visit to Songjiang in 1657, this poem captures the mood of displacement and alienation in post-conquest Jiangnan. The mournful, hesitant notes on the courtesan Caisheng's *pipa* respond to the ominous military situation described in the first two lines: the Qing dynasty, prepared to counter Zheng Chenggong's anticipated attack from the sea, has amassed armies around Songjiang. Qian claims that under Qing rule, White Dragon Pond in Songjiang is no different from Brushing Clouds Mound that lies beyond the frontier. There is thus no need to invoke Wang Zhaojun's exile with "Going beyond the Frontier"; the reality of inner exile is all too pressing and its reminders all too ubiquitous.¹⁰⁸

Second, one may seek escape from this barbarian realm in "inner exile," i.e., through detachment and inner resistance. A performance that enjoins remembrance and allows a momentary escape in empathetic grief may thus amount to a gesture of inner resistance. Under Qing rule, a performance in Suzhou is tantamount to Cai Yan's mournful song about barbarian lands; hence the fear of the music arousing too much grief, which would "bring down all the flowers." (Suzhou is where the ancient kingdom of Wu was, hence the reference to "the palace of Wu.") The music "bringing down all the flowers" suggests "Falling Plum Blossoms" ("Luo meihua" 落梅花) or "Plum Blossoms Falling" ("Meihua luo" 梅花落), an ancient tune title for the flute, possibly of Xianbei origins. The image of flute music actually causing blossoms to fall is a common conceit in classical poetry. I suspect a more specific reference to two Li Bo poems, "Drinking with Official Shi, Listening to Someone

108. Chen Yinke (*LRS*, 3:1123) suggests that Brushing Clouds Mound may also convey hopes for heroic endeavor by invoking Du Mu's line about Mulan: "On Brushing Clouds Mound, she offered libation to Zhaojun" 拂雲堆上祝明妃 ("Ti Mulan miao" 題木蘭廟, *Fanchuan wenji*, 4.80).

Playing the Flute on Yellow Crane Tower” (“Yu Shi langzhong yin ting Huanghe lou shang chuidi” 與史郎中飲聽黃鶴樓上吹笛) and “Watching a Tartar Playing Flute” (“Guan huren cuidi” 觀胡人吹笛), because of the associations of this image with exile and with barbarian music, respectively (*Li Taibo quanji*, 2:522, 2:564). Implicit political lament is tied to aesthetic mediation, for it is by listening to Bian Yujing that her audience can remember and judge a lost world.

The exact meaning of Bian Sai’s donning Daoist garb, however, is not totally clear. According to the poem, Bian made a Daoist robe for herself in the havoc immediately following the fall of the Hongguang court in 1645, but this “conversion” did not forestall rumors of her impending marriage in 1650, when she refused to meet Wu Weiye. As mentioned earlier, shortly before their encounter in this poem, Wu and Bian had met in Suzhou, adrift on a boat in Hengtang, when there was no mention of Bian’s being a Daoist. Wu’s friend Zhou Zhao wrote “Seeing Off Bian Yujing As She Entered the Way” (Song Bian Yujing rudao shi 送卞玉京入道詩), which is frankly sensual and laden with romantic overtones.¹⁰⁹ Being a Daoist nun also did not preclude her brief and unhappy marriage to Zheng Yinggao in 1653. Shortly thereafter, she offered Rourou to serve Zheng Yinggao in her place, and lived under the protection of the physician Zheng Qinyu as a fellow Buddhist devotee: the “performative religiosity” of Daoist garb turns into genuine renunciation. In his funereal commemoration of Zheng Qinyu, Wu Weiye describes him as being steeped in Confucian learning and Buddhist teachings. Wu also implies his loyalist sympathies. A descendant of the Song loyalist Zheng Sixiao 鄭思肖 (1241–1318), he is said to have offered zealous assistance to those who fell into difficulties during the dynastic transition.¹¹⁰ The final meeting(s) of Bian and Wu were conducted with Buddhist rituals, and by then her transformation into a symbol of religious transcendence was complete.

109. Cited in Wu Weiye, *Wushi jilan*, 4B.12a. Chen Yinke opines that “Qinhuai shuiting feng jiu jiaoshu” 秦淮水亭逢舊校書 (*QMZ*, 4:402–5) by Qian Qianyi might have been addressed to Bian Yujing (*LRS*, 2:499). These poems are also vaguely romantic and nostalgic in tone. There is a long tradition of addressing romantic-erotic poems to Daoist nuns.

110. See Wu Weiye, “Baoyu Zheng Sanshan mubiao” 保御鄭三山墓表 (*WMC*, 3:1028–32). For Zheng Sixiao, see chap. 5, pp. 411–12.

Yun Zhu includes a poem by Bian Sai, “On My Self-Portrait” (“Tì zìhuà xiǎofú” 題自畫小幀), in her anthology (*Guochao guixiū zhèngshì jì*, “fulu,” 17b):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 沙鷗同住水雲鄉 | With egrets and gulls, I live in a home of water and clouds, |
| 不記荷花幾度香 | No longer remembering how many times the lotus has bloomed. |
| 頗怪麻姑太多事 | I just wonder at the goddess Magu— too concerned, she |
| 猶知人世有滄桑 | Still knows of the human world, with its blue seas and mulberry fields. |

Having forgotten time and history, the poet can only wonder why Magu betrays awareness of changes in the human world, even as she claims the “long view” of blue seas turning into mulberry fields and vice versa thrice that renders vicissitudes insignificant.¹¹¹ According to Yun Zhu, Bian liked to paint portraits of women, signing the paintings “the Person in the Painting” (Hua zhong ren 畫中人), indicating both pride in her beauty and understanding of its illusoriness. Yun Zhu does not give her sources, and we cannot establish the authenticity of the attribution or her biographical details. The image of religious transcendence here is definitely more absolute than that in “Song on Listening” or the biographical preface to “Passing by the Grave.”

Wu Weiye strives to overcome the contradictions of religious transcendence in “Passing by the Grave.” This elegiac poem welds together the romantic-erotic, aesthetic, and religious dimensions of Bian Yujing (lines 25–30), often in the same parallel couplet:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 獨有瀟湘九畹蘭 | Only the nine acres of orchids of the Rivers Xiao and Xiang— |
| 幽香妙結同心友 | Their subtle fragrance binds friends of the same heart. |
| 十色箋翻貝葉文 | Paper in ten colors is transformed into Buddhist sutras, |
| 五條絃拂銀鈎手 | Brushing the five strings are hands adept with “silver hooks.” |
| 生死梅檀祇樹林 | Life and death among the sandalwood in the forest of Zhi— |
| 青蓮舌在知難朽 | Her blue lotus tongue remains; it will not easily wither. |

111. See chap. 3, p. 266.

Paper in ten colors, made by the famous Tang courtesan-poet Xue Tao for writing love poetry, is used by Bian for writing Buddhist sutras. In other words, an object with sensual, romantic associations is transformed into a token of religious devotion. The player of string instruments, who still vaguely recalls the singing girl of pleasure quarters, is also adept at the “silver hooks” of superior calligraphy and painting. In some ways her Lotus Sutra parallels her orchid paintings: the same self-consuming energy and continuum between creator and creation underline her identification with orchids (lines 25–26) as well as her understanding of Buddhist enlightenment (lines 29–30), although there is also a stark contrast between the excessive emotions and free expression in her orchid paintings and the self-negating, self-mutilating religious fervor behind the Lotus Sutra she wrote with her tongue’s blood.¹¹² Thus Bian Yujing uses religious renunciation not to transcend aesthetic sensibility but to redeem it.

Bian Yujing is aestheticized in death. Wu Weiye evokes the melancholy and mysterious beauty of her grave: red leaves of tallow trees, sunset glow, “brocade splendor of the brocade city” 錦城如錦, red pavilion in rain, misty clouds enveloping the grave (lines 13–16). Wu imagines a juxtaposition of her art and beauty: in lines 19–20, her grave is reminiscent both of a Ni Zan painting¹¹³ and of the beautiful Six Dynasties courtesan Su Xiaoxiao:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 居然設色倪迂畫 | It is indeed a painting by Ni the Eccentric, but in color: |
| 點出生香蘇小墳 | Bringing forth a Su Xiaoxiao grave that emits fragrance. |

In some of his poems, Wu Weiye elaborates the idea that a woman painter is both artist and aesthetic object (especially when she paints);

112. The monk Suiduan 遂端 recited the *Lotus Sutra* incessantly, and in 861, “he suddenly expired as he sat in the lotus position. A moment later from his mouth emerged seven stalks of blue lotus” (Zanning [919–1001], *Song gaoseng zhuan*, 25.869). Bian Sai’s act of devotion could be regarded as a reenactment of this miracle. The same image appears in Qian Qianyi’s eleventh quatrain (in a series of twelve) on the Daoist Jinghua: “Blue lotus blossoms, from her tongue’s root come alive” 青蓮花向舌根生 (QMZ, 4:405). Chen Yinke identifies Jinghua as possibly Bian Sai in *LRS*, 2:498–99.

113. The Zhituo Temple was Ni Zan’s former abode, which would account for the association.

she thereby attains spiritual union with her paintings and also enacts a seamless continuity between the act of creation and the created image.¹¹⁴ Here the comparison of Bian to paintings persists through life and death. Bian identifies with the orchids she paints (lines 25–26): the painted images she creates embody her spirit. Even as Bian shares with her paintings bonds for “friends of the same heart” (line 26), the spectacle of her grave is to be framed and apprehended as a painting. Indeed, her grave is an “improvement” over paintings by the Yuan painter Ni Zan, because it has “color”; so infused is it with memories of her life that it seems to excel Su Xiaoxiao’s grave in producing fragrance. In Li He’s famous “Su Xiaoxiao’s Grave,” the natural world is metamorphosed into her aura and adornments. In Wu’s poem, spectral continuance is heightened by fragrance.

Bian Yujing’s choices have distinct contours, in contradistinction to Wu Weiye’s own irresoluteness and compromises. Wu contrasts his and her attitudes when he describes the end of their relationship (lines 5–8):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 離別沉吟幾迴顧 | We parted. In hesitation I looked back again and again, |
| 遊絲夢斷花枝悟 | Gossamer dreams were cut off, the flowering branch awakened. |
| 翻笑行人怨落花 | She even laughed at passerbys who regret the fallen blossoms— |
| 從前總被春風誤 | In those days they were too often fooled by the spring wind. |

No trace remains of the abandoned woman that Wu portrays in “Zither River.” The rejected courtesan seems to mock Wu’s regrets and laughs at their common delusion and misguided belief in permanence. The idea of mutability acquires a distinct historical-political dimension, and the mourning of lost love merges with regrets over his compromises.

The only shadow in Bian’s religious transcendence is the fate of Rourou, who became her substitute so that Bian could choose Buddhist piety. Wu juxtaposes their fate in “Passing by the Grave”: Bian is buried with her “Bronze Bird Inkstone,” while mud sullies Rourou’s “skirt of dark crimson” (lines 17–18). In the aftermath of her new husband’s

114. Aside from Wu’s description of Bian Sai as orchid painter, see Wu’s tribute to her sister Bian Min, another courtesan-painter, in “Hualan qu” 畫蘭曲 (*WMC*, 1:43). Cf. *BQ*, pp. 37–39.

implication in the “collusion with maritime resistance” case 通海案, Rourou was probably sold as a slave. By comparing her to Wang Zhaojun (line 35), Wu Weiye also hints that she was taken north by Qing troops, a fate that Bian had avoided by becoming a Daoist (lines 33–36):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 薄命只應同入道 | Suffering ill fate, they should have entered the Way together. |
| 傷心少婦出蕭關 | With grief of heart, the young woman left for the distant pass. |
| 紫臺一去魂何在 | Once she departs from the Purple Terrace, where is her spirit? |
| 青鳥孤飛信不還 | The blue bird, in solitary flight, will surely not return. |

Wu Weiye does not go so far as to suggest that Bian is responsible for Rourou’s plight—instead she becomes almost a foil, a reminder of what Bian escapes through dramatic asceticism and renunciation.

Read together, “Song on Listening” and “Passing by the Grave” show how Bian Yujing embodies aesthetic-religious transcendence attained through the fulfillment of the role of poet-historian. She is presented as the bard and commentator who bears witness and saves the past from oblivion, and her role is authenticated by personal suffering and by the heroic determination to decide her own fate. In turning her into such a symbol, Wu Weiye is reaffirming his own self-definition as poet-historian. He is also redeeming his past and, more broadly, rethinking the place of pleasures and passions in a cataclysmic historical moment.

The Hidden Loyalist: Liu Rushi and Qian Qianyi

As mentioned in chapter 2, in 1641 Liu married the noted poet, scholar, and former minister Qian Qianyi; theirs was one of the most celebrated literati-courtesan unions. A leader of the Donglin faction and the Revival Society, Qian was caught up in court factional struggles and barred from office in the final years of the Ming. Upon the reconstitution of the Ming court in Nanjing in the aftermath of the fall of Beijing to the rebels in 1644, Qian served as Minister of Rites. According to various sources, when Nanjing fell to Qing forces in 1645, Liu wanted Qian to commit suicide with her. Qian’s disciple Gu Ling authenticates this fact in his 1664 biography of Liu with witnesses’ accounts:

With the catastrophe of the fifth month in the year *jíyōu* [1645, when the Hongguang court fell], she [Liu Rushi] urged the minister [Qian Qianyi] to die, but he apologized and balked at the prospect. She sprang forth and wanted to drown herself in the pond, but she was held back and could not do it. That she sprang forth on the pond was witnessed by Shen Minglun, *mingjing* of Changzhou, who was residing at the minister's abode. That she urged the minister to die was what the minister himself told Wang Zhijin of Baofeng, official of the Ministry of Military Affairs, and Zhijin told me.

乙酉五月之變，君勸宗伯死，宗伯謝不能。君奮身欲沉池水中，持之不得入。其奮身池上也，長州明經沈明掄館宗伯寓中見之。而勸宗伯死，則宗伯以語兵科給事中寶豐王之晉，之晉語余者也。(LRS, 3:827–29)

Shortly thereafter Qian surrendered, went north without Liu, and served in the Qing court in 1646 as Vice Minister of the Board of Rites and Vice-Supervisor of the Ming history project for about five months before pleading illness and resigning. Shen Zengzhi 沈增植 (1850–1922), Jin Hechong 金鶴沖 (1873–1960), Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969), Qian Zhonglian, and others have established that Qian was thereafter involved in Ming loyalist resistance. From the mid-1640s on, Qian's poems to and about Liu Rushi change in tone: romantic passion is fused with comradeship in anti-Qing resistance. Even as he pays tribute to her, she becomes the venue through which he tries to undo the shame of compromise and defines his own image as the hidden and misunderstood loyalist. In some ways, however, the real hidden loyalist is Liu Rushi. "Hiding" is a constant theme in Liu's writings, but the meanings of her hidden agency changed during the Ming-Qing transition. References to her political activities in Qian's writings are often indirect, and the sense of deliberate contradictions is heightened when Qian links her heroism and romantic aura to religious transcendence.

Among the dozen or so names and sobriquets used by Liu Rushi was Yin 隱, which means "hidden" or "recluse." According to Chen Yinke, talented women often chose this word as their cognomen during the late Ming. Among its range of associations are the idea of hidden worth or agency, the refusal to be defined or pinned down, and the sense of disjunction between self and world. As noted in chapter 2, women poets writing about withdrawal from society often used imagery related to the male recluse, which sometimes conveyed pointed gender discontent.

In Liu Rushi's case, the courtesan's dilemma determined the associations of *yin* in her earlier years. The name Liu Yin can mean "hiding among willows," with willows referring more specifically to "willows of Zhang-tai," a kenning for pleasure quarters. The idea of a true self detached from the brittle glamour of a courtesan's existence also surfaces in some of her poems: "One tree of red pear blossoms, ever more melancholy, / Unmistakably seeks shelter, turning to the painted tower" 一樹紅梨更惆悵，分明遮向畫樓中 ("West Lake" ["Xiling" 西冷], 1st of 10 poems, *LRSJ*, p. 106; *LRS*, 2:451–53). She sees a kindred spirit in the mountain-dwelling recluse Xu Xuan (Xu Mai 許邁, 4th c.), with the difference that for her, ascending a mountain and looking afar bring on hesitation and anxiety 人似許玄登望怯 ("Early Autumn" ["Chuiqiu" 初秋], 3rd of 8 poems, *LRSJ*, p. 41; *LRS*, 1:312).¹¹⁵ In her letters written around 1641 to Wang Ruqian 汪汝謙 (1577–1655), she repeatedly avows her desire to hide from the unwelcome attention of persistent suitors: "Now as for what I [literally, 'younger brother' or 'younger kin'] am most concerned about, nothing exceeds the matter of hiding my traces. I hope you, sir, would soon choose a quiet place to which I can retreat" 今弟所汲汲者，亡過于避跡一事。望先生速擇一靜地爲進退 (*LRSJ*, p. 85; *LRS*, 2:383–84).

Even as Liu tried to "hide her traces," she continued to meet and appraise suitors, for whom (including Qian Qianyi) Wang Ruqian acted as an intermediary. Her letters to Wang are written in a witty, lapidary style reminiscent of the masters of the Six Dynasties, yet they also betray a deep disquiet. In this she is true to the spirit of the works inspiring her prose, such as *Jin History* (*Jinshu*) and *A New Account of Tales of the World*—in these works philosophical wit and aesthetic freedom are born of political dangers and the sense of human existence as precarious.¹¹⁶ In other words, the wit thrives on concision and control but also conceals anxiety. Such is the paradox of hidden agency—it often implies self-division, and sometimes it is tied to revelation. For example, the goddess of River Luo, embedded in a tradition of elusive and unattainable

115. Cf. Chen Zilong's eight poems to the same title, to which these poems respond (*LRS*, 1:305–13). Chen Yinke suggests that Liu's hesitation has to do with her small bound feet (*LRS*, 1:312), but probably Liu is simply stating that the recluse's transcendence eludes her because of her perilous personal situation.

116. Cf. Wai-ye Li, "*Shishuo xinyu*."

goddesses who capture the anxieties and contradictions of desire, and a figure to whom Liu Rushi is often compared in the writings of her admirers, is turned into a male deity whom Liu addresses as “friend” 友人 and who becomes the object of her fervent quest in a poetic exposition addressed to Chen Zilong entitled “Male Spirit of the River Luo” (“Nan Luoshen fu” 男洛神賦, ca. 1634, *LRSJ*, pp. 60–62; *LRS*, 1:133–41). Divested of the ambivalence in poems about the goddess of River Luo, Liu’s piece is an unequivocal affirmation of love as she ardently hopes for union with the male spirit. Masks and reversals thus sustain “writings avowing longing, and words of heartache” 誓願之文，傷心之語 (*LRS*, 1:141). Likewise, when Liu visited Qian Qianyi in 1640 sporting “a square head-scarf and bow shoes, dressed in men’s clothes” 幅巾弓襪，著男子服 (*LRSJ*, p. 5),¹¹⁷ disguise was not about passing for a man but about revealing seductive charms (symbolized by the bound feet in bow shoes) under the scholar’s robe. This is “revelatory hiding” that promises to combine feminine charms with intellectual conversation and literary communion.

If hidden agency for Liu is initially tied to the need for personal recognition and the vagaries of desire, its meanings are decidedly political in the post-conquest world. Whereas Qian Qianyi’s post-conquest writings are voluminous despite his repeated declarations to have forsaken poetry after 1644, very few of Liu Rushi’s works written after the Ming collapse have been preserved. This might simply have been the failure to collect her writings on the part of her stepson, daughter, and son-in-law, who come across as rather helpless characters in all accounts. The factions hostile to her in the Qian clan could also have blocked the circulation or publication of her works. Chen Yinke surmises that Liu “deliberately embraced obscurity” 意存韜晦 because of her commitment to the loyalist cause (*LRS*, 3:1012). In Qian Qianyi’s letter (ca. 1661)¹¹⁸ responding to Wang Shizhen’s request for harmonizing compositions on his

117. A less reliable version of this encounter in *Muzhai yishi* 牧齋遺事 (*LRSJ*, pp. 363–79) maintains that Liu has to revert to female attire before she gets Qian’s attention.

118. In the letter (the third of four addressed to Wang Shizhen), Qian refers to himself as an “old man of eighty years,” and he was eighty *sui* in 1661. However, he could have been only close to eighty when he wrote that. For the “Autumn Willows” poems, see chap. 1, pp. 62–78.

“Autumn Willows” poems, he claims to have become too immersed in Buddhism to write poetry, and adds that in any case someone has taken away his copy of Wang’s poems. As for Liu Rushi, “the old lady in the poet’s [literally, “in Bai Juyi’s”] household is tied down and harried by her domestic duties [literally, “under the stove”]. The chants about red leaves and willow catkins seem as distant as a former life” 白家老嫗，刺促爨下，吟紅詠絮，邈若隔生 (*QMZ*, 8:226). Liu was then in her early forties. Wang’s request had come in the immediate aftermath of Zheng Chenggong’s failed expedition to recapture the Lower Yangzi area, and the involvement of Qian and Liu in that endeavor would account for their cautious refusal to write on a topic that was inviting poetic expressions of lament and nostalgia from many *yimin*.

We will never know for sure why so few of Liu’s post-conquest poems are extant. Owing to the loss of these poems, Liu’s image as a loyalist is entirely constructed through Qian’s poems about her or addressed to her. Even there, we come up against indirectness, reticence, and deliberately obscure allusions through which Qian sought a measure of political cover or hinted at the ineffable. Qian refers again and again to his poetic language as riddles 謎，perhaps most poignantly when he comments on his “Later Autumn Meditations” in 1662: “Like a riddle, like a jest, and perhaps above all like an omen, / From one not mad, not drunk, and also not possessed by demons” 似謎似俳還似識，非狂非醉又非魔 (“Having Finished Chanting My Poems, I Wrote Verses as Comments to Dispel Sorrow: Two Poems” [“Yinba ziti changju bomen ershou” 吟罷自題長句撥悶二首], 1st poem, lines 3–4, *QMZ*, 7:70–71).¹¹⁹ Hidden agency and hidden meanings define the exegetical premises in Chen Yinke’s account of Liu’s life after the fall of the Ming.

In chapter 2 I discussed martial imagery and a concern with the contemporary crisis in Liu Rushi’s early poetry. Whereas heroic images in that corpus seem to be rooted in fantasy and frustration, other poets wrote about the political engagement of Qian and Liu in a more hopeful tone. In the cycle of poetic exchanges between Qian and his circle of fellow writers on the occasion of his wedding, Qian’s friend Xu Jing 許經 (17th c.) gives feminine labor a political turn (*LR SJ*, p. 159):

119. See also *QMZ*, 4:79, 1:315.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 更將補袞彌天線 | As for the threads that repair heaven and mend robes of state— |
| 問取針神薛夜來 | Ask to obtain them from the goddess of needlework, Xue Yelai. |

No extant source mentions Liu Rushi's aptitude in needlework, which nevertheless provides convenient metaphors of "mending" and "repairing" from the *Classic of Poetry*.¹²⁰ The tribute celebrates conjugal bliss marked by the shared interest of Qian and Liu in political and military affairs. Qian Qianyi writes of this sense of common purpose in 1641 (QMZ, 1:666–67):

錢謙益 秋夕燕譽堂話舊事有感

Qian Qianyi, "Autumn Evening in Yanyu Hall,
Moved by Our Conversations about Past Events" (lines 5–8)

| | |
|---------|---|
| 埋沒英雄芳草地 | With heroes buried in the land of fragrant grass, |
| 耗磨歲序夕陽天 | Years are worn away under the sky with the setting sun. |
| 洞房清夜秋燈裏 | A clear night, a deep chamber: by the glow of the autumn lamp, |
| 共簡莊周說劍篇 | Together we pondered Zhuang Zhou's "Discourse on Swords." |

The first line of the poem describes the looming Manchu threat ("For thirty years the roving spirits of eastern barbarians" 東虜遊魂三十年),¹²¹ which would account for the military discussion in the last line, but Chen Yinke opines that the mention of "Discourse on Swords" in *Zhuangzi* refers specifically to military topics in examination essays Qian adjudicated as an examiner in Zhejiang in 1621. Qian's enemies subsequently used allegations of corruption in that examination to thwart his political ambitions (LRS, 2:651–52). Irrespective of whether one accepts Chen's theory of topical reference, there is no denying that Liu Rushi in this poem is only the companion in military discussions. Her

120. In Mao 260, "Zheng min" 蒸民 (*Maoshi zhushu*, 18C.674–76), the minister Zhongshan Fu is said to mend ritual robes of office when they have holes 袞職有闕，維仲山甫補之。

121. According to Chen Yinke, "thirty years" designates the approximate time span between the rise of Nurhaci in the northeast in 1588 and the time of the 1621 examination, when this threat presumably came up as a topic (LRS, 2:652). However, it is also possible that "thirty years" refers to the Manchu threat looming since the 1610s.

heroic image is to become much more anguished and complex in Qian's post-conquest poems.

In 1647, Qian Qianyi was arrested as an accomplice of the Ming loyalist Huang Yuqi 黃毓祺, who tried unsuccessfully to recover Changzhou with a naval force from Zhoushan. One source claims that Liu Rushi "went to the seas to raise the morale of the army" 至海上犒師, but there is no corroborative evidence.¹²² Liu was eventually able to arrange for Qian's release, probably not through bribes, as some accounts suggest, but through skillful maneuverings of intercessors, evidence, and witnesses (*LRS*, 2:899–900). While in prison, Qian composed matching poems to the ones Su Shi sent to his brother Su Che 蘇轍 (1039–1112) when he, too, was in prison expecting death. Qian wrote in the preface to "Harmonizing with Dongpo's [Su Shi's] Western Terrace Poems, to the Same Rhyme: Six Poems, with Preface" ("He Dongpo Xitai shi yun liushou bing xu" 和東坡西臺詩韻六首并序):

In the year Dinghai [1647], on the last day of the third month, I rose in the morning to pay obeisance to the Buddha. All of a sudden, I was urgently summoned. Manacled and dragged, my life was to be lost in a mere instant. Lady Hedong,¹²³ who was then gravely ill and lying in bed, abruptly got up. Braving death to follow me, she vowed to submit a letter requesting to die in my place, or else she was to follow me in death. Heroic and spirited, she headed the way: there were no clinging, pathetic words. Relying on this, I also fortified myself. When the case became desperate, I matched the poems Dongpo sent to his wife from the Censorate Prison,¹²⁴ using them to bid my farewell. Lacking paper and brush in prison, I could only silently chant them, facing the wind and weeping. Upon my survival and return, I sought to retrace what had been forgotten, and could only remember six poems. It happened to be my lady's thirtieth birthday. As a big banquet was to begin, I poured a full cup and chanted these poems with abandon, hoping to earn the smile that had taken three years to win. I will also have them circulated among those of like mind, in order to seek matching compositions.

122. Zhu Chungu 祝純嘏, *Gu zhong hou lu* 孤忠後錄, cited in *LRS*, 2:888–89.

123. Qian Qianyi often used the name "Hedong jun" for Liu Rushi, implying her connection with the Tang poet Liu Zongyuan, who hailed from Hedong. See Qian Qianyi, "You mei yibai yun" 有美一百韻, *QMZ*, 1:624–32.

124. Su Shi, "Yushi tai" 御史臺, *Su Shi shiji beizhu*, 19:975–76. Wang Yingkui (*Liunan suibi*, pp. 2–3) criticizes Qian for mistakenly stating that Su Shi addressed the poems to his wife, while Chen Yinke jokingly claims that this is a felicitous confusion because of Liu's self-designation as "younger brother."

丁亥三月晦日，晨興禮佛，忽被急徵。銀鑕拖曳，命在漏刻。河東夫人沉病臥蓐，蹶然而起，冒死從行，誓上書代死，否則從死。慷慨首塗，無刺刺可憐之語。余亦賴以自壯焉。獄急時，次東坡御史臺寄妻詩，以當訣別。獄中過紙筆，臨風誦誦，飲泣而已。生還之後，尋繹遺忘，尚存六章。值君三十設悅之辰，長筵初啓，引滿放歌，以博如皋之一笑。并以傳眎同聲，求屬和焉。(QMZ, 4:9-13)

The exact extent of Qian's involvement in Huang Yuqi's anti-Qing resistance is hard to determine. Qian apparently did not contribute financially to the campaign, probably because he lacked the means to do so.¹²⁵ Here he protests his innocence by portraying himself as a devout Buddhist detached from worldly affairs. There is little doubt, however, that he sympathized with Huang's cause. Although all references to Huang have been removed from *Autumn Locust Collection* (*Qiubuai ji* 秋槐集, QMZ, 4:1-46), which includes Qian's poems dated 1645 to 1648, ten years later in 1657 Qian acknowledged their friendship and mourned how Huang "died a martyr for a just cause" 殉義.¹²⁶ Political caution dictates his dissociation from Huang, but his sufferings because of suspected involvement in resistance might also have a purgatory significance in the eyes of Qian's loyalist friends. The very name "Autumn Locust" may prefer to the predicament of the "inner loyalist" by alluding to the poem Wang Wei composed to lament the Tang dynastic crisis even while he held office under the rebel government during the An Lushan Rebellion.¹²⁷ By celebrating Liu Rushi's courage and resourcefulness, Qian is also on some level projecting his own aspiration for heroic action. Perhaps that is why he conjoins his victimhood with her heroism as he invites poetic responses from his friends.

125. See LRS, 3:899-906. According to Ji Liuqi, Qian did not contribute to Huang's campaign because he predicted its failure (*Mingji nanlue*, 4:253-54, no. 205).

126. Huang, a fellow Buddhist, had asked Qian to write an inscription for a pagoda honoring a monk they had both revered. Qian wrote the inscription in 1657 "to console Jiezi [Huang Yuqi] in the underworld" ("Tiantong Miyun Chanshi Wugong ta ming," 天童密雲禪師悟公塔銘, QMZ 6:256-61). Chen Yinke suggests that Qian might have shed his customary cowardice because of his faith in Zheng Chenggong's imminent expedition (LRS, 3:904-5).

127. "Ningbi chi" (see ch. 1, n. 44) contains the line, "The leaves of the autumn locusts fall in the empty palace" 秋槐葉落空宮里. Cf. Jin Hechong, "Nianpu" (QMZ, 8:939-40).

The images he chose for victimhood in the “Western Terrace” poems veer between abject indignity (“Bones worn, skin torn, head constantly bowed” 骨消皮削首頻低, 5th poem, line 2, “My longing is still long, like a rat dragging its entrails” 心長尚似拖腸鼠, 6th poem, line 3) and lofty equanimity (“Western paradise, western execution ground, in any case viewed as equal” 西方西市原同觀, 5th poem, line 7; “Pity indeed, that the long night should return in a mere instant— / I sit and wait as, slowly, the white sun goes west” 可憐長夜歸俄頃, 坐待悠悠白日西, 3rd poem, lines 7–8). *Qi* (wife), the last word of the sixth line in all six poems,¹²⁸ draws on a series of allusions to courageous and devoted wives. Another poem written around the same time implicitly compares Liu Rushi to two exemplary heroic women from early Chinese classics—Qi Liang’s wife and the widow of a man killed by the Ju lord.¹²⁹ The former’s lamentation of Qi Liang’s death in battle made the city wall crumble, and the latter avenges her husband by letting down a rope that allows the Ju lord’s enemy to breach the city wall (“Having Seen Sheng Jitao’s Matching Poems to the Rhyme ‘ta,’ I Composed Five More Poems” [“Jian Sheng Jitao ci tazi yun shi chonghe wushou 見盛集陶次他字韻詩重和五首”, *QMZ*, 4:27). In both cases, wifely loyalty brings down unjust domains. The very designation of a concubine as wife 以妾爲妻, however, is scandalous enough for Gu Ling to draw attention to it: “at the time, the titled lady [Qian’s wife], Madame Chen, was still alive and well” 時封夫人陳氏尚無恙也 (*LRSSJ*, p. 6; *LRS* 3:826). “The smile that had taken three years to win” in the preface is, literally, “the smile at the marsh” 如臬之一笑. It alludes to a story from *Zuo zhuan* (Zhao 28.3, p. 1496): “Formerly a high officer of Jia, who was ugly, took a wife who was beautiful, and for three years she neither spoke nor smiled. He drove her in his chariot to a marsh and shot at a pheasant. When he hit it, his wife smiled and spoke for the first time” 昔賈大夫惡, 娶妻而美, 三年不言不笑。御以如臬, 射雉, 獲之, 其妻始笑而言. Shortly after meeting Liu in 1640, Qian had used the same image to convey his joy: “Hard won indeed, one smile only after three years, / To be cherished is this day when the same boat we share” 爭得三年才一笑, 可憐今日與同舟 (“The Following Day I Used the

128. *Qi* is also the last word of the sixth line of Su Shi’s second “Yushi tai” poem.

129. For Qi Liang’s wife, see *Lienü zhuan*, 4.81; for the widow, see *Zuo zhuan* Zhao 19.7, p. 1403.

Former Rhyme and Sent Another Poem” [“Ciri die qianyun zaizeng” 次日疊前韻再贈], *QMZ*, 1:617). “For three years she neither spoke nor smiled” took on a political meaning in 1647, implying Liu’s sorrow since the fall of the Ming in 1644 and then the collapse of the Southern Ming in 1645 (*LRS*, 2:907–8). Perhaps the poetic tribute that is to win her smile of approval is also expiatory—Qian’s brush with death and his actual or wishful participation in the cause of resistance promises to undo the dishonor of surrender in 1645 and service under the Qing.

In 1650, Qian Qianyi, probably upon the urging of Liu Rushi and Huang Zongxi, went to Jinhua via Hangzhou to try to persuade Ma Jinbao 馬進寶 (17th c.), a military commander in the area, to join the loyalist cause (*QMZ*, 8:941–42; *LRS*, 3:1028). The poems composed during this journey are collected in *Summer Fifth Collection* (*Xia wu shiji* 夏五詩集, *QMZ*, 4:83–112). One of its high points is “Miscellaneous Thoughts at West Lake: Twenty Poems” (“Xihu zagan ershi shou” 西湖雜感二十首, *QMZ*, 4:89–106). In this sequence, past moments of glory and refinement merge and reinforce each other in a palimpsest fashion, even as different scenes of destruction coalesce and deepen the poet’s grief over the recent devastation of the Lower Yangzi area. Since Hangzhou (Lin’an) was the capital of Southern Song, there are recurrent references to the Song-Yuan transition and the pathos of Song loyalism. Hangzhou fell in 1645, and by 1650 Qing troops were stationed at the banks of West Lake. The West Lake poems mourn the destruction of passions and pleasures, and transform elegiac longing into political statement.

In the eighth poem (lines 3–4) of the series, Qian pays homage to the memory of Liu Rushi traveling and sojourning at West Lake from 1638 to 1640 (*QMZ*, 4:96–97):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 楊柳長條人綽約 | The long branches of the willow— |
| | her graceful form, |
| 桃花得氣句玲瓏 | “Peach Blossoms breathe of her”—a limpid line. |

“Willow” is an obvious pun on Liu Rushi’s name. The line “The peach blossoms breathe of the beauty in their midst” 桃花得氣美人中 is from the first of Liu’s eight quatrains on the West Lake (*LRSJ*, p. 71; *LRS*, 1:29–30, 242).¹³⁰ Poetic talent is but the other side of aestheticized

130. Qian Qianyi also cites this line in the twelfth of his sixteen quatrains on recent poets (*QMZ*, 1:606).

heroism, confirmed in the comparison between Liu Rushi and Liang Hongyu in the writings of both Liu and Qian (*LRS* 2:751, 3:1025).¹³¹ In the seventeenth poem of the “West Lake” sequence, Liang (and by implication Liu) combines splendid regalia and the pleasures of West Lake with “the heroic drumbeat at Jinshan bearing down on the dust of war” 畫鼓金山壓戰塵 (*QMZ*, 4:103). The image of Liu as Liang Hongyu can only be realized if Qian himself fulfills the role of Han Shizhong.¹³² The possible projection of that self-image is all the more poignant because the “West Lake” poems are suffused with mournful remembrance of the 1645 debacle and trenchant condemnation of those who embraced Qing rule.¹³³

The last poem in *Summer Fifth Collection* is akin to a declaration of intent (*QMZ*, 4:111–12):

錢謙益 書夏五集後示河東君

Qian Qianyi, “Written at the End of *Summer Fifth Collection*
and Shown to Lady Hedong”

| | |
|------------------|--|
| 帽簷側側漉囊新 | The cap's brim was aslant, the sachet for filtering wine was new. |
| 乞食吹簫笑此身 | I beg for food, play the flute, and laugh at this present self. |
| 南國今年仍甲子 | In the southern domain, this year is still <i>jiazi</i> , |
| 西臺昔日亦庚寅 | On the Western Terrace, back then, it was also <i>gengyin</i> . |
| 皋羽西臺慟哭， 亦庚寅歲也 | When Gaoyu (Xie Ao) grieved and wailed on Western Terrace, the year was also <i>gengyin</i> . |

131. Chen Yinke suggests that Liu might have visited the historical sites connected with Han Shizhong and Liang Hongyu in 1635 (*LRS*, 1:166), and that she decided to stay in Suzhou in 1642–43 when she was seriously ill, perhaps because she wanted to die at the same place where Han and Liang were buried (*LRS*, 2:751).

132. Chen Yinke opined that the tragedy was precisely the mismatch: while Liu Rushi could very well be Liang Hongyu, Qian Qianyi was no match for Han Shizhong (*LRS*, 3:1025).

133. In the preface to the West Lake poems, Qian castigates those who “proudly embrace barbarian customs, and regard an alien tongue as second nature” 侮食相矜，左言若性 (*QMZ*, 4:89). The twentieth poem in the sequence contains the line, “The shaved crane with red top [a transparent reference to the Manchu hairstyle and the red top of the hat worn by Qing officials] regrets giving up his former costume” 鶴髯丹頂悔初衣 (*QMZ*, 4:105).

| | |
|---------|--|
| 聞雞伴侶知誰是 | My companion in rising with the cockcrow: who else but she? |
| 畫虎英雄恐未真 | The hero drawing a tiger, I fear he is not for real. |
| 詩卷叢殘芒角在 | Among many fragments in scrolls of poems, sharp points remain, |
| 綠窗剪燭與君論 | Trimming candles by the green windows, I discuss them with you. |

The first two lines are based on the contrast between the late Ming splendor of Hangzhou and its present devastation: the cap rakishly askew and the sachet for filtering wine (line 1) are the markers of a refined sensibility 風流 and the carefree enjoyment of an existence full of sensuous pleasures such as what literati like Qian would have relished before the fall of the Ming. But now he compares himself to Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (6th c. BCE), who as a fugitive determined to avenge his father's death played the flute and begged for food in the market of Wu (line 2).¹³⁴ Not only is Wu Zixu from *Shiji* a symbol of the tenacious will for vengeance, but the story of his disguises during his wanderings as elaborated in later accounts can be turned into a cipher for the idea of a hidden self or even self-alienation.¹³⁵ The need for hiding is determined by the historical moment (lines 3–4): Chen Yinke suggests that “the southern domain” refers to the Yongli emperor's remnant Ming court in Guangxi. That it still has the year *jiazi* means that the rump court still commanded enough legitimacy to chart time by reign title and sexagenary cycle.¹³⁶ *Gengyin* here does not simply pertain to the year of composition, 1650, but echoes the Song loyalist Xie Ao's 謝翱 (1249–95) *Record of Grief and Lament at Western Terrace* (*Xitai tongku ji* 西臺慟哭記) mourning Wen Tianxiang and the fall of the Song dynasty, also written in the *gengyin* year (1290), as Qian added in a note. References to Xie Ao and his work are ubiquitous in the writings of Ming loyalists, and Qian frequently mentions Xie Ao, “Western Terrace” (*Xitai*) and its alias Fishing Terrace (*Diaotai*) in his *Summer Fifth Collection* (*QMZ*, 4:83–86, 104, III).

134. *Zhanguo ce*, “Qin ce,” 3:186; *Shiji*, 79.2407.

135. These associations also come up in Qian's poem about dreaming of Wu Zixu (*QMZ*, 4:210–II, 6:1654). For Qian's other references to Wu Zixu, see *QMZ*, 4:215, 220, 379, 7:17.

136. *Jia* is the first of the ten heavenly stems, *zi* the first of the twelve earthly branches in the sexagenary cycle.

Qian presents Liu as his comrade-in-arms (line 5). Both are burdened with the sense of urgency and of personal responsibility for national destiny, the same sort of concern that spurred Zu Ti 祖逖 (266–321) and Liu Kun to rise to sword dance upon hearing the cockcrow (*Jinshu*, 62.1694). The proverbial deflation of heroic aspiration captured in the image of drawing a tiger so unsuccessfully that it resembles a dog may refer to Ma Jinbao or himself (line 6). In a bid to win Ma Jinbao's goodwill, Qian's poems dated 1650 are filled with flattering comparisons of him to the Han general Ma Yuan, but his actual mistrust may instead bring to mind Ma Yuan's letter cautioning his nephew against the mockery of ineptly "drawing a tiger" (*Hou Hanshu*, 24.845). Alternatively, Qian may be expressing self-doubt with the image.¹³⁷ If Qian has little faith in Ma Jinbao or himself and seems to doubt if anything is actually accomplished by his trip,¹³⁸ he finds solace in sharing a common goal with Liu. The last two lines underline the theme of shared loyalist aspirations. Using motifs usually associated with intimate conversations in a feminine space ("trimming candles" 剪燭 and "green window" 綠窗), Qian emphasizes how Liu supports his mission and understands his anguish and defiance—i.e., the "sharp points" 芒角 in what he self-deprecatingly calls "many fragments" 叢殘.

In the preface, Qian explains why he cryptically entitles his collection "Summer Fifth" instead of "Summer, Fifth Month" (*QMZ*, 4:83) and implies that opacity conveys "sorrow and disquiet" 憂患. Exegetes regard missing words 闕文 in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as the sage's intention to "use doubts to convey uncertainty" 以疑傳疑. Qian deliberately leaves out the word "month" in his title to draw attention to the hidden purpose of his trip, despite the facetious avowal that "crossing the River, I have no business but the search for flowers" 涉江無事但尋花 ("On the Way to Tonglu" ["Tong Lu dao zhong" 桐廬道中], *QMZ*, 4:87). "Doubts" may also pertain to Qian's own skepticism regarding his mission. But if for all practical purposes his trip is futile, the

137. In 1649, on his way back to Changshu after being imprisoned for the Huang Yuqi affair, Qian mocks himself with the line "A luckless hero who became one ineptly drawing a tiger" 運去英雄成畫虎 in the poem "Gouqu nilü xi wei xiangshi tishan" 句曲逆旅戲爲相士題扇 (*QMZ*, 4:63).

138. Four months after Qian's trip, Ma Jinbao asked to move his family from banner jurisdiction. This may indicate that Qian's persuasion had actual impact (*LRS*, 3:1021).

intensity of loyalist lament (most evident in allusions to Western Terrace) and nostalgia (especially in the poems on West Lake) is unmistakable. By presenting Liu Rushi as a like-minded loyalist who can truly understand the complex issues and emotions in the collection, Qian is in effect appealing to her and to posterity to apprehend his intent, anguish, and heroic endeavor, rather than judge him by his capitulation to Qing conquerors in 1645 and 1646.

Whereas “companion in rising with cockcrow” suggests parity, Qian applies the image of the knight-errant only to Liu Rushi, as in the first of “Dispelling Gloom at the Water Pavilion, two poems” (“Shuiting buomen, er shou” 水停撥悶二首, *QMZ*, 4:407). Dated 1657, when Qian was traveling in Nanjing and possibly seeking support for Zheng Chenggong’s expedition (*LRS*, 3:1151), these poems summon images of fantastic, unpredictable dangers, countered only by the female knight-errant. This is evident in the second half (lines 5–8) of “Dispelling Gloom,” first poem:

| | |
|---------|--|
| 攬鏡每循宵茁髮 | I hold the mirror, tracing hair that sprouted overnight. |
| [先作朝薙] | [in the earlier version: “hair shaved in the morning”] |
| 擁衾常護夜飛頭 | I embrace the coverlet, always protecting |
| | the head that may fly by night. |
| 黃衫紅袖今餘幾 | Of the yellow jackets among red sleeves, |
| | how many remain? |
| 誰上城西舊酒樓 | Who will come up to the old wineshop |
| | west of the city? |

The word *xun* 循, meaning “trace” (line 5), recalls Li Ling’s words to Han emissaries who tried to convince him to return: “He looked at them intently and traced his own hair, responding, ‘I already have the guise and garb of a barbarian’” 孰視而自循其髮，答曰：吾已胡服矣 (*Hanshu*, 54.2458).¹³⁹ “Tracing” or “following the pattern” thus suggests lingering regrets and a meditative mood. “Hair that sprouted overnight” (*xiao zhuo fa* 宵茁髮) and “hair shaved in the morning” (*zhaoti fa* 朝薙髮) describe the poet’s state before and after the daily shaving of his head, respectively. Looking at his image in the mirror, Qian confronts a painful and

139. Qian Zeng cites as reference Su Shi’s lines, “In military garb, hatless like a prisoner: from the bare crown, hair has sprouted” 戎服囚首，枯顱茁髮 (“Bu Longshan wen” 補龍山文, in *Su Shi shiji bezhu*, 50.2493).

humiliating reminder of the Manchu conquest.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps Qian chooses *xiaozhuo fa* over *zhaoti fa* because the latter shows that conformity with the hairstyle mandated by the Qing rulers is an accomplished fact, whereas the former intimates that shaven hair will grow again and that with Han resurgence Chinese men may yet eventually be able to avoid the Qing hairstyle. The image of sprouting hair may thus be linked to Qian's hopes for the loyalist cause, but such hopes imply that his life is in constant danger—hence the reference to “the head that may fly” in line 6. Duan Chengshi 段成式 (803–63) tells of nocturnal flying heads that return in the morning in Lingnan.¹⁴¹ The parallelism between “sprouting hair” and “flying head” reminds the reader of the saying at the time that “men who keep their hair will not keep their heads, men who keep their heads will not keep their hair” 留髮不留頭，留頭不留髮。

Reflections on an oppressive reality prompt Qian to pay tribute to Liu Rushi as the female knight-errant, possibly referring to how she came to his rescue during the Huang Yuqi case (*LRS*, 3:1152). He may also be indirectly drawing attention to his own dangerous mission, a juxtaposition that also obtains in a poem Du Dengchun 杜登春 (1629–1705) addressed to Qian Qianyi in 1656: “Behind the curtains is the flower-like one: a true knight-errant, / Inside the sack, a decree coming from the sky of wilderness” 帳內如花真俠客，囊中有卷自蠻天 (*LRS*, 3:1141). (The decree here may refer to some communication from the Yongli court in the southwest.) As mentioned above, “yellow jacket” is the byword for knightly courage to right wrongs. “Yellow jackets among red sleeves” thus means “a knight-errant among women.”¹⁴² The last line

140. References to the humiliation of the Manchu hairstyle abound in Qian's writings; some examples are found in *QMZ*, 3:1587–88, 4:12, 77, 78, 129, 190, 244. Gui Zhuang, a good friend of Qian's, describes his anguish at “being Chinese and turned into a barbarian” 華人變為夷 when relatives and friends forced him to shave his head; see his “Duanfa ershou” 斷髮二首, in *Gui Zhuang ji*, pp. 44–45. Numerous accounts from the period document how the decree on hairstyle provoked widespread opposition, which in turn led to ruthless reprisals and bloody repression.

141. Duan Chengshi, *Yuyang zazu*, 4:198. In *Yuzhi tang tanhui*, Xu Yingqiu catalogues various references to “barbarians with flying heads” 飛頭蠻 from Han to Ming (*Biji xiaoshu daguan xubian*, 3:2756–57).

142. Qian Qianyi wrote the tenth quatrain of “Jinling zati jueju ershiwu shou” 金陵雜題二十五首 in remembrance of Kou Baimen after her death: “Who knows Kou Baimen for being a female knight-errant?” 女俠誰知寇白門 (*QMZ*, 4:417). Chen Yinke suggests that Qian is in effect implying that, with the death of Kou Baimen, Liu is the only one who deserves the epithet of “female knight-errant” (*LRS*, 3:1152).

continues the image of the knight-errant. Chen Yinke (*LRŚ*, 3:1152) claims that “west of the city” alludes to the Han knight-errant Yu Zhang who lived “in Willow Town west of the city” 城西柳市 (*Hanshu*, 92.3705), while “wineshop” 酒樓 may refer to the wineshop in Xu Yaozuo’s 許堯佐 (9th c.) “Courtesan Liu’s Story” (“Liu shi zhuan” 柳氏傳), where a knight-errant figure volunteers to restore Liu shi (who had been forced to become the concubine of a powerful general) to her husband. Qian might have chosen these allusions because both are associated with the word *liu*, which puns with Liu Rushi’s name. Instead of being a rescuer of victimized women, however, the “yellow jackets among red sleeves” reverses gender roles and offers hope and succor for the anxious poet.

Between 1659 and 1663, Qian Qianyi wrote 104 poems (thirteen series of eight each) following the rhyme and theme of Du Fu’s famous eight “Autumn Meditations,” written in 766 when he was in Kuizhou.¹⁴³ In these poems, political turmoil defines poetic expression, as Du Fu ponders the present crisis while remembering and imagining the glory and destruction of Chang’an. Qian entitled the first series “Autumn Meditations at Jinling, Eight Poems, following Caotang’s [Du Fu’s] Rhymes” (“Jinling qixing bashou ci Caotang yun” 金陵秋興八首次草堂韻) and the other twelve series “Later Autumn Meditations,” which became the common collective title.¹⁴⁴ Following Du Fu’s example, Qian brings visionary intensity to the disjunction of past and present, the fusion of historical understanding and self-understanding, and the interplay of witnessing, memory, and imagination. The “Later Autumn Meditations” series, together with four poems in which Qian comments on his own act of creation—two appended at the end of the twelfth series and two at the end of the series as a whole—constitute *Throwing Down the Brush* (*Toubi ji* 投筆集, *QMZ*, 7:1–77), the title an obvious allusion to Ban Chao 班超 (1st c.) who threw down the brush and aspired to more heroic accomplishments (*Hou Hanshu*, 47.1571).¹⁴⁵ Even as Ban

143. The literature on these poems is vast. See Ye Jiaying, *Du Fu Qixing bashou jishuo*.

144. Yim (*The Poet-Historian*) translates and discusses the first three series.

145. In the last of “Qiuri za shi ershi shou” 秋日雜詩二十首, Qian writes: “Meditations first roused in the autumn of *jibai* (1659)— / The year of their conclusion cannot be divined” 發興已亥秋，未卜斷手年 (*QMZ*, 5:594). This suggests that Qian hopes to complete the series when the Ming is restored, hence the deliberate incompletion of the series. See Pan Chongkui’s postscript in *Qian Qianyi Toubi ji jiaoben*, pp. 63–68.

Chao defended the Han empire by fighting the Xiongnu and other peoples in the Western Territories, Qian embraced the cause of resistance and might have acted as a strategist for Zheng Chenggong. (Sometimes, for example in the second series, Qian sounds like a military advisor.) In “Later Autumn Meditations,” Qian chronicles his euphoric hopes for the loyalist cause in the seventh month of 1659 (when Zheng Chenggong’s navy was poised to capture Nanjing), his subsequent fears and disappointments with Zheng’s defeat and retreat to Taiwan, his anguish over Qing suppression of the remnants of Ming loyalist resistance, his concern with the fate of the Yongli court in the southwest, and finally his despair when Zheng Chenggong dies and the news of the Yongli emperor’s execution by Wu Sangui is confirmed in 1663, a year before Qian’s own death.

In Chen Yinke’s opinion, insofar as Qian played a major role in the political and military decisions of the Southern Ming and continued to be active in the loyalist cause, the poet’s burden of witnessing and remembering in *Throwing Down the Brush* is even more compelling (or at least has greater historical ramifications) than in Du Fu’s “Autumn Meditations” (*LRS* 3:1169). Indeed, Qian Qianyi self-consciously claims his place in history by taking up the role of poet-historian: “Duling [Du Fu], as poet-historian, leaves his name in the records of history” 杜陵詩史汗青垂 (“Later Autumn Meditations,” 1st ser., no. 8, line 8).¹⁴⁶ The sense of being an agent in history, of battling lies, and of being privy to suppressed and distorted truths imbues Qian’s self-perception as historian (*QMZ*, 4:39, 387, 418). Although his drafts of Ming history were unfortunately destroyed in a fire in 1650 (*QMZ*, 8:942–43), his anthology of Ming poetry, *Poems from Arrayed Reigns* (*Liechao shiji* 列朝詩集), ties the appraisal of poets to the shape of Ming history.

Various clues indicate that *Throwing Down the Brush* was at one point included in *Youxue ji* (the major collection of Qian’s post-conquest poetry and prose), but was removed even before the Qianlong emperor categorically banned Qian’s writings. Only the third series of “Later Autumn Meditations,” entitled “Written in Regret of Parting, upon a Night Journey on a Small Boat on the Tenth Day of the Eighth Month” (“Bayue

146. The Du Fu Qian emulates here is also one who celebrates the defeat of barbarians (Yim, *The Poet-Historian*, pp. 128–32).

chushi ri, xiaozhou yedu xibie er zuo” 八月初十日小舟夜渡惜別而作), without Qian's own annotations and with some changes in wording that render them politically more innocuous, remain in all but one version of *Youxue ji* (QMZ, 4:517–18). (The edition annotated by Qian Zeng does not include this series.) Qian wrote these eight poems in 1659 when he parted from Liu to join the rear guard of Zheng's naval force near Changshu, the night before Zheng ordered the attack on Chongming. Qian's goal was probably to persuade Zheng not to retreat further, despite the setback at Nanjing two weeks before. The journey, however, came to naught because Zheng failed to seize Chongming and led the remnants of his troops southward to Zhoushan (off the coast of Zhejiang) and then to Fujian and Taiwan, effectively ending the last significant loyalist challenge to Qing rule (QMZ, 8:946–48; LRS 3:1168–69). Qian might have believed that even if the rest of “Later Autumn Meditations” were to be suppressed, this poetic tribute to Liu Rushi would suffice as testimony of his loyalist endeavor.

Qian's eight poems define his relationship to Liu Rushi over two decades (1640–59) through the lens of historical retrospection. It was above all a life of constant anxieties, shared intellectual passions, and common political purpose: “The red and yellow for collating texts in disarray, strands of her hair askew: / We have endured upheavals for twenty years as time passes” 丹黃狼藉鬢絲斜，廿載間關歷歲華 (2nd poem, lines 1–2, QMZ, 7:10). The devotion to scholarship here echoes Liu's own line about their conjugal life: “Among a jumble of books on a bed facing the wind, I look for my hair ornament” 風牀書亂覓搔頭 (QMZ, 1:667). Intellectual pursuits might have served as bulwark against political disorder, which now occasions their parting: “I mistook late autumn for the finale of spring: / Sorrows of parting fill the sky, as catkins swirl” 錯記窮秋是春盡，漫天離恨攪楊花 (2nd poem, lines 7–8, QMZ, 7:10). Willow catkins belong to late spring; the season of parting here is late autumn. Qian is alluding to Su Shi's song lyric that compares catkins to “tears of parting ones.”¹⁴⁷ As mentioned above, catkins also puns on Liu Rushi's name. For Qian the most fateful “finale of spring” might have been that of 1645, when the Hongguang court was collapsing.¹⁴⁸ Catkins that churn up regret and sorrow in the sky thus

147. See chap. 1, n. 73.

148. Qian Qianyi surrendered on the fifteenth day of the fifth month in 1645.

form a composite collage, combining tears of separation, memory of dishonor, and a vision of vindication based on his present journey, all entwined with the image of Liu Rushi.

The poetic sequence brings different moments from the past to bear on the meanings of their present parting. The fifth poem, for example, harks back to another moment of parting in 1645, when after the fall of the Southern Ming Qian surrendered and went to Beijing, while Liu Rushi stayed in Nanjing (*QMZ*, 7:12–13):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 水擊風搏山外山 | Strike the waters, churn the wind: mountains beyond mountains. |
| 前期語盡一杯間 | Words looking to future reunion trail off, as the cup was drained. |
| 五更噩夢飛金鏡 | Nightmare at fifth watch: a golden mirror flies away. |
| 千疊愁心鎖玉關 | The heart with sorrows thousandfold is locked behind Jade Pass. |
| 人以蒼蠅汙白璧 | People used dark flies to besmirch a flawless white jade disc, |
| 天將市虎試朱顏 | Heaven sent the tiger in the market to test the fair one. |
| 衣朱曳綺留都女 | Clothed in vermilion, swaying in silk, the lady in the former capital ¹⁴⁹ |
| 羞殺當年翟萼班 | Put to shame those who, in yesteryear, sporting exotic finery and insignia. |

Qian describes his parting from Liu in 1645 as anxious and mournful, filled with foreboding and unspecified pledges.¹⁵⁰ “Strike the waters, churn the wind” (line 1) refers to the soaring flight of the great *peng* bird in “Free and Easy Wandering” (“Xiaoyao you” 逍遙游) in *Zhuangzi*. The usually positive associations of those words with freedom are soon dispelled. “Mountains beyond mountains” (line 1), like Jade Pass (line 4), suggest exile to distant lands. It is also, more specifically, derived from a *yuefu* ballad couched in riddles, as annotator Qian Zeng notes.

149. Nanjing was called “the former capital” during the Ming because the first Ming emperor made it the capital. Beijing became the capital only after Zhu Di (the Yongle emperor) brought about the move in 1420.

150. Some scholars read the first half of the poem as referring to the present occasion of parting; see, e.g., Sun Zhimei, *Qian Qianyi shi xuan*, p. 336; Yim, *The Poet-Historian*, pp. 132–33. This would make for a more forced transition in the middle of the poem.

藁砧今何在
山上復有山
何當大刀頭
破鏡飛上天

The cutting block: where is it now?
Atop the mountain, yet another mountain.
How about the hilt on the great sword?
The broken mirror flies to heaven above.

Wu Jing explains this as follows: the cutting block or pounder (藁砧 砧) is also called *fu* 砧, homophonous with the word for husband (*fu* 夫). (*Fu* 砧 means “beautiful stone,” and it is not clear why 藁砧 should be called *fu*. It is more likely 藁砧 summons associations with *fu* through the imagistic association of “cutting block” or “execution block” with “axe” [*fu* 斧、鉞].¹⁵¹) One mountain atop another makes up the graph for *chu* 出 (leave). On the hilt of a sword is a ring (*huan* 環), homophonous with the word return (*huan* 還). A broken mirror in the sky is a half-moon 半月, which can also mean “half a month.”¹⁵² Taken together, this means the husband who left home will return in half a month. Allusions to this ballad recur throughout the third series (no. 1, no. 5, no. 6). Perhaps its unexpected twists of meaning fit Qian Qianyi’s own judgment that the “Later Autumn Meditations” poems are “Like a riddle, like a jest, and perhaps above all like an omen.” Also, for all its supposedly auspicious message, the ballad is filled with images of violence, sorrow, and insurmountable distance, which may resonate with Qian’s own foreboding and anxieties.

By the typecasting of the tradition, singing girls of pleasure associated with southern dynasties perform ballads. Qian turns this idea upside down: “Pity indeed: you were but a girl of Qi and Liang, / Yet against all odds you can sing the ballad of the cutting block” 憐君本是齊梁女，樂府偏能賦藁砧 (1st poem, lines 7–8). Qi and Liang were both short-lived southern dynasties associated with sensual indulgence and thus allude to Liu’s beginnings as a courtesan. The ballad of separation she has chosen, however, intimates the dangers of a heroic mission. The courtesan has become the loyalist who inspires and understands Qian’s endeavor, although posterity may have to fathom this only through riddles.

151. The image of “axe and cutting block” (*fuzhen* 斧砧) appears in the the first poem of the ninth and the thirteenth series (QMZ, 7:45, 72). In all other cases in the series, 藁砧 refers to the pounder.

152. Wu Jing, *Yuefu guti yaojie*, pp. 44–67; cited by Qian Zeng (QMZ, 7:10).

The flying mirror (line 3) also alludes to the above-cited ballad but gives it an ominous twist. Whereas the “broken mirror” in the ballad signifies imminent return, it inspires the nightmare of separation or even estrangement in Qian’s line.¹⁵³ He may also imply his eagerness to return—perhaps even “half a month” is too long, or perhaps he fears being fooled by a false omen. Their momentous parting and forebodings about an uncertain future are also captured by the allusion in line 2 to Shen Yue’s “Parting from Fan Ancheng” (“Bie Fan Ancheng” 別范安成, lines 5–8, *LRS*, 3:866–67): “Do not say that this is merely a flask of wine, / It is difficult to hold on to the morrow. / Not knowing the way in my dreams, / How can I assuage longing?” 勿言一樽酒，明日難重持。夢中不識路，何以慰相思? Qian is thus implicitly countering accusations that he had gone with the conquerors to Beijing to seek new honors. His reluctance and sorrow are nowhere more evident than in the comparison of Beijing, now the capital of the new dynasty, to the distant frontiers beyond Jade Pass (line 4). In Li Bo’s famous “Autumn Song” (“Qiuge” 秋歌), Jade Pass is linked to barbarian invasions (*Li Taibo quanji*, 6.352–53; *LRS*, 3:867):

| | |
|-------|---|
| 長安一片月 | Over Chang’an, one sheet of moonlight. |
| 萬戶搗衣聲 | In ten thousand homes, the sound of pounding clothes. |
| 秋風吹不盡 | Autumn wind cannot blow it all away— |
| 總是玉關情 | For always, this longing for Jade Pass. |
| 何日平胡虜 | What day will the barbarians be quelled, so that |
| 良人罷遠征 | My good man will be let off distant missions? |

For Qian at that juncture, return and reunion with Liu are fused with hopes that the tide might yet be turned and “the barbarians quelled.”

The second half of the poem turns to Liu Rushi. While Qian was in Beijing, there were rumors that Liu had a lover. Chen Yinke cites several sources on this rumor but does not try to ascertain or disprove them. Instead, he deplores the double standards for extra-marital relationships for men and women in traditional China, and applauds those who argue that national trauma should change the stringent standards of female

153. In the first poetic anecdote in Meng Qi’s *Benshi shi* (p. 7), Princess Lechang, sister of Chen Houzhu, and her husband Xu Deyan each hold onto one piece of a broken mirror as the Chen dynasty crumbles. The broken mirror becomes the medium that finally leads to their reunion.

chastity. Chen quotes Lin Shidui's 林時對 (1615–1705) *Hecha congfan* 荷牓叢談, which tells how Qian Qianyi's son accused Liu of adultery: "When Qian returned, he angrily reprimanded his son, and would not see him. He said that, with the country destroyed and the ruler perished, even scholar-officials cannot maintain their integrity. How then could a woman be blamed for not being chaste? These words can be called fair and forgiving" 及歸,怒罵其子,不容相見。謂國破家亡,士大夫尚不能全節,乃以不能守身責一女子耶?此言可謂平而恕矣 (LRS, 3:868–70). Here Qian Qianyi firmly rejects those rumors as vile and groundless (line 5), comparing their mongers to the "dark flies" which incite discord in "Blue Flies" ("Qingying" 青蠅) in the *Classic of Poetry* (Mao 219, *Maoshi zhushu*, 14C.489). Liu Rushi is the innocent victim of slander that gathers momentum as it is repeated (line 6): as told in a fable about slander in early China, even baseless assertions about a non-existent tiger in the market would gain ground if supported by three witnesses (*Han Feizi*, 9.537; *Zhanguo ce*, "Wei ce," 23.845–46).

Further, the rumors arose because Liu was staying in Nanjing, a fact that should have earned her approbation instead. Women did not face the same stark political choices as men did, but they could choose to reject the honors bestowed by the new dynasty, as Lady Tong, Gong Dingzi's wife, did. Liu's vermilion (*zhu* 朱) clothes may also be a pun on the name of the Ming house (*Zhu*). Her decision to stay in the "former capital" of the Ming signals her nonparticipation in the new regime, which puts to shame other officials' wives who go to Beijing with their husbands and sport new finery and insignia (lines 7–8). Qian Qianyi turns the injustices Liu Rushi suffered into a metaphor for the "inner loyalist." Qian was widely criticized when he went north to serve in the Qing court, even though his misgivings, reluctance, subsequent regret, or plans for future resistance could have been ameliorating factors. Qian implies a homology between his fate and Liu's—both suffer undeserved calumny because their pure intentions are not understood. Some of his poems about the evils of slander or deceptive fabrications can easily apply both to himself and to Liu Rushi (e.g., *QMZ*, 4:27, 1:407).

Qian Qianyi rehearses Liu's heroic exploits, especially her involvement in loyalist resistance (3rd and 4th poems) and her success in extricating Qian from the Huang Yuqi case (6th poem). The third poem chronicling Liu's role in anti-Qing resistance between 1653 and 1655 is notable for Qian's own ample annotations, which explain the

circumstantial details and also indicate his close contact with forces of resistance (*QMZ*, 7:11–12).¹⁵⁴

| | |
|--|---|
| 北斗垣牆暗赤暉 | The red glow of the Northern Dipper and the Wall is dimming. |
| 誰卜朱鳥一星微 | Who would have divined the Vermilion Bird's fading? |
| 破除服珥裝羅漢 | She gave up fine clothes and jewelry to deck out the Defenders, |
| 姚神武有先裝五百 羅漢之議，內子盡囊 以資之，始成一軍。 | Yao Shenwu (Yao Zhizhuo) had the proposal to first “deck out five hundred Defenders of the Faith.” My wife gave all she had to finance it. Only then could Yao raise an army. |
| 減損鹽餉飲飛 | And diminished already modest provisions to supply the brave warriors. ¹⁵⁵ |
| 娘子綉旗營壘倒 | Embroidered banners of the women's army fell with the ramparts. |
| 張定西謂阮姑娘曰： 吾當派汝捉刀侍柳夫人。 阮喜而受命。舟山之役， 中流矢而殞，惜哉。 | Zhang Dingxi (Zhang Mingzhen) said to Ms. Ruan: “I should send you, bearing a sword, to attend on Lady Liu [Liu Rushi].” Ruan accepted the order gladly. During the Zhoushan campaign, she was hit by a stray arrow and perished. What a pity!” |
| 將軍鐵稍鼓音違 | The general's iron spear departed from the rousing drumbeat. |
| 乙未八月，神武血戰， 死崇門城下。 | In the eighth month of 1655, Yao fought to the last and died underneath the city walls of Chongming. |
| 鬚眉男子皆臣子 | Men of beard and brow are all subjects of the domain, |
| 秦越何人是瘠肥 | Why would they, like Qin and Yue, be indifferent to each other's fortunes? |
| 陵文相國來書云云。 | Prime minister Wen Anzhi from Yiling said so in his letter to me. |

“Northern Dipper,” “Wall,” and “Vermilion Bird” (lines 1–2) are all names of constellations whose dimming portends or reflects the fall of the Ming. The “Northern Dipper,” marker of seasons and directions, is thought to govern “boundaries of domains.” The “Wall” determines whether barbarian invaders would breach the Great Wall. “Vermilion” in “Vermilion Bird” is homophonous with the surname of Ming rulers (Zhu), and its southward location implies connection with the Southern

154. Cf. Yim, *The Poet-Historian*, pp. 128–30.

155. “Cifei” is the name of a brave warrior of the state of Chu. The proper name became the name of a rank in the army (*Hanshu*, 9.281, 19A.732).

Ming. These stars, then, are the cosmic echoes of the cataclysmic collapse that roused Liu Rushi to action.

Taken out of context, the third line refers to a woman giving up her finery to make contributions to a Buddhist temple (literally, “dress the statues of Luohan or Arhat, Defender of the Faith”). Qian’s notes make it clear that “Luohan” is Yao’s code word for his resistance army, which Liu supported by exhausting her financial resources and suffering deprivations. The parallelism in the third couplet juxtaposes the death of Yao and of a woman warrior on the battlefield. Qian’s note supplies the explanatory context that points to women’s military involvement in loyalist resistance (*LRS*, 3:1041–42) and hints at Liu’s physical presence among loyalist troops during their campaigns to gain control of Zhoushan. That Zhang Mingzhen 張名振 (d. 1656), stalwart commander of the Prince of Lu (Zhu Yihai), should make Miss Ruan Liu’s assistant indicates Liu’s commitment to the loyalist cause.¹⁵⁶ The last two lines are ambiguous. On their own they could mean that the woman warrior’s martyrdom puts to shame the compromises and indifference of men. The note about the letter from Prime Minister Wen of the Yongli court indicates, however, that the issue is potential or actual division among loyalist forces and the hope that mistrust and rivalries could be overcome, perhaps by responding to the exemplary heroism of women depicted in the middle couplets.

In the fourth poem (*QMZ*, 7:12), Qian returns to present concerns and again compares Liu Rushi to Liang Hongyu:

| | |
|---------|--|
| 閨閣心縣海宇棋 | She stakes her heart on the chess game of worlds and seas, |
| 每於方罫繫歡悲 | Unremittingly, to chessboard squares are tied her joys and sorrows. |
| 乍傳南國長馳日 | The day when news came of sweeping troop movements in the south, |
| 正是西窗對局時 | Was exactly when we faced each other over chess at the west window. |

156. The Prince of Lu was based in Zhoushan from 1645 to 1651, when Qing forces gained control of the island. In 1652, the Prince of Lu joined forces with Zheng Chenggong. Zhang, with Zheng’s support, briefly restored Zhoushan to Ming loyalist control.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 漏點稀憂兵勢老 | The water-clock drips slow drops— we fear the army's waning momentum, |
| 燈花落笑子聲遲 | Burnt-out wicks fall—we laugh at the tardy sounds of chess pieces. |
| 還期共覆金山譜 | I still hope that together we will ponder the Jinshan strategy. ¹⁵⁷ |
| 桴鼓親提慰我思 | Beating the war drum in person, you will console my spirit. |

The comparison of volatile historical situations (in which opposite sides contend in political and military affairs) to chess is a standard conceit in classical Chinese and a recurrent topos in Qian's poetry.¹⁵⁸ Following Du Fu's "Autumn Meditations," Qian takes up the metaphor of chess in the fourth poem of each of the thirteen series (and also in 3rd ser., no. 8; 11th ser., no. 5; 12th ser., no. 3). He presses the analogy between chess and battles, political struggles, and his own life, lamenting uncertainties, defeats, and betrayals. In the case of the poem cited above, its force depends on the convergence of the chess game at the west window—a symbol of domestic, conjugal bliss—with the chess game being played out in the world beyond (lines 1–4). Both games are caught in a moment when time stands still. Loyalist forces led by Zheng Chenggong and Zhang Huangyan had overcome Zhenjiang in the sixth month of 1659, but their siege of Nanjing in the seventh month failed. By the time Qian was writing, "the waning momentum" of the loyalist forces had reached a critical juncture. Qian and Liu are riveted, with great expectations and fears, on the "chess game of worlds and seas," perhaps wishing to stop time to arrest "the waning momentum," and both seem to have forgotten the literal chess game (lines 5–6). Even in this magically suspended moment, the poet hopes for a reenactment of the Battle of Jinshan, when Han Shizhong achieved an important victory, and he seeks solace in the image of Liu Rushi beating the war drum to bolster morale, just as Liang Hongyu had done (lines 7–8). As mentioned above, the Liang

157. The word *pu* 譜 (military strategy) here also continues the metaphor of chess: the compound *qipu* 棋譜 refers to instructional chess menus.

158. In the fourth of his eight "Autumn Meditations," Du Fu compares drastic changes and unpredictable developments in the Tang capital Chang'an to a chess game. There are many poems entitled "watching a chess game" 觀棋 in *Youxue ji*. Cf. LRS 3:1014–15.

Hongyu analogy implies Qian's own aspiration to be a heroic figure like Han Shizhong, echoed in his more grandiose self-image as master strategist in this series. He writes in the seventh poem (*QMZ*, 7:14): "I take pride in waving the halberd to reverse the course of the setting sun" 自許揮戈迴晚日 (line 3),¹⁵⁹ and hints at aspirations to serve the restored Ming as chief minister (*LRS*, 3:1176). Qian Qianyi thus represents his own final effort at heroic action through testimony to Liu's valor and determination.

Buddhist imagery has always featured in the poetic exchanges of Qian and Liu, but the promise of religious transcendence is politicized in their later poems. In the very first poem Liu sent to Qian, she praises him for his understanding of "sublime truths and abstruse principles" 妙理玄規 and presents herself as the earnest seeker of Buddhist truth ("In Mid-Winter of 1640, I Visited the Venerable Muzhai" ["Gengchen zhongdong fang Mu weng" 庚辰仲冬訪牧翁], *QMZ*, 1:616). Qian responds in his matching poem by using a religious image to convey romantic longing: "Flowers rained down in the ten-foot square room—was there ever taint?" 露花丈室何曾染 (*QMZ*, 1:616). In the *Vimalakirti Sutra* (*Weimojie jing* 維摩詰經), the flowers scattered by the divine maiden cling only to those who have not attained enlightenment, and the ten-foot-square room is Vimalakirti's abode.¹⁶⁰ Qian may be saying that Liu's previous relationships with Song Zhengyu, Chen Zilong, and others have not compromised her purity (*LRS*, 2:517–26), or he could simply be adding the divine maiden's mysterious allure to Liu Rushi. One of Liu's ostensible reasons for visiting Qian was to deliberate the fine points of Buddhist teachings, and Qian responded in kind by giving Liu the name "Rushi" and the style name "Wowen jushi" 我聞居士 ("I Have Heard" Recluse), inviting her to sojourn in "Wowen shi" 我聞室 ("I Have Heard" Chamber). "Rushi wowen" 如是我聞 (Thus have I heard) is the beginning line in many Buddhist sutras—"thus" refers to Buddhist truth, and "I" is the supposed voice of Ananda.

With courtship and marriage couched in the language of Buddhism, Liu Rushi as "divine maiden" simply suggests romantic intimacy. In

159. Lu Yanggong waves his halberd to make the setting sun reverse its course (*Huainan honglie jijie*, 6.193). Chen Yinke disparages Qian's misguided self-perception as able military strategist (*LRS*, 2:668, 3:1025).

160. *Weimojie jing yizhu*, pp. 104–11.

one poem, Liu is the “Jade Maiden” with whom Qian beholds “heaven raining down flowers” in his “ten-foot-square room” of Buddhist meditation 玉女共依方丈室，金牀仍見雨花天 (QMZ, 1:623, LRS 2:570). Quasi-religious sublimation seems to be taken more seriously in Qian’s “West Lake” poems from 1650, when recollection of Liu at West Lake ends with their present Buddhist devotion: “Today, in the ten-foot-square room with one lamp,¹⁶¹ / The divine maiden scattering flowers has long attended to old Pure Name” 今日一燈方丈室，散花長侍淨名翁 (Pure Name is the Chinese translation of Vimalakirti¹⁶²).

Qian gives such “sublimation” an explanative political context. In his preface to “Miscellaneous Poems Composed at the End of the Feast at the Hall of Exalted Gathering” (“Gaohui tang jiulan zayong” 高會堂酒闌雜詠, QMZ, 4:315–18), written upon his repeat visit to Songjiang in 1657, he recalls his first meeting with Liu Rushi in 1640 (LRS, 3:1106–8). The purpose of Qian’s 1657 trip was again to persuade Ma Jinbao, then commander of Songjiang, to support Zheng Chenggong’s expedition. In this feast, “words were like riddles, and phrases comparable to the jester’s” 語同讖謎，詞比俳優, probably because political concerns had to be disguised. By describing such oblique and hesitant expressions, however, Qian is underlining the political purpose of the gathering: “The barbarian songs we hear only sufficed to deepen our sorrow; heaven is like a yurt, so what harm is there to fall inebriated?”¹⁶³ 歌聞敕勒，祇足增悲。天似穹廬，何妨醉倒. Qian contrasts past romantic attachment with present preoccupation with historical crisis. He prefaces his sense of loss and covert references to his loyalist activities with a description of how his relationship with Liu Rushi had been transformed. “I have not come to Yunjian [Songjiang] for sixteen years. The idle words by the Heavenly River¹⁶⁴ have long since fallen down to the

161. *Yideng* 一燈 appears as *yilai* 一來 (one coming) in another recension. The alternative reading is thus: “Today, after unexpectedly coming to the ten-feet-square room” 今日一來方丈室 (LRS, 2:549–50).

162. See Sengzhao’s annotation of the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, cited by Qian Zeng in QMZ, 4:96–97.

163. “Barbarian songs” are literally “songs of Chile.” The Chile people were descended from the Xiongnu. The line “heaven is like a yurt” is from “Chile ge”; see LQL, 3:2289.

164. “Shuitian xianhua jiushi” 水天閒話舊事 is the alternative title of “Chu gong” 楚宮 by Li Shangyin (LSY, 2:784). The poem has invited both romantic and political readings.

human world; . . . in the ten-foot-square room with Vimalakirti presiding, flowers touched the bodhisattvas' clothes and left no traces" 不到雲間，十有六載矣。水天閒話，久落人間. . . 丈室維摩，衣花不染. Political turmoil has brought the romantic aura surrounding his relationship with Liu Rushi down to the mundane world. The religious transcendence of romantic passion (the divine maiden's flowers falling off the clothes of the enlightened ones) may be a response to an alienating new reality.

The religious interests of Qian and Liu may also function as a smoke-screen for their loyalist activities. Liu Rushi thus comes to symbolize both heroic endeavor and religious transcendence, two categories that converge. The ambiguities of transcending romantic and political passions persist in Qian's poems on Liu Rushi's Buddhist vows, which took place in 1663 according to Gu Ling (*LRSJ*, p. 7) and in 1643 according to Chen Yinke (*LRS*, 2:802-4).¹⁶⁵ In the winter of *kuimao* (1663), a few months before Qian Qianyi died, he wrote "Miscellaneous Poems Composed to Dispel the Cold on My Sickbed: Forty-Six Poems" ("Bingta xiaohan zayong si shi liu shou" 病榻消寒雜詠四十六首), ruminating over random topics as well as the major events of his life and times (*QMZ*, 5:636-74).¹⁶⁶ Poems 34, 35, and 36 are devoted to Liu Rushi. In poem 34, Qian recalls with satisfaction the celebration of his union with Liu in a literary gathering in the winter of 1640 (*QMZ*, 5:664-65; *LRS*, 2:515, 539-57). With an abrupt shift of perspective, Qian turns in the next two poems to Liu Rushi "entering the Way" 入道. Poem 35 in the series reads thus (*QMZ*, 5:665-66):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 一剪刀鐫佛前 | One cut with the golden scissors before the embroidered Buddha: |
| 裹將紅淚洒諸天 | She wraps red tears to be scattered in the heavens. |
| 三條裁製蓮花服 | Three strips of cloth are cut and made into the lotus costume, |
| 數畝誅鋤穠稷田 | Several acres have been cleared: now they are fields with swaying grains. |

165. Chen suggests that Liu took Buddhist vows after her illness that lasted from 1641 to 1643, possibly brought on by discontent with her marriage. However, the circumstantial evidence he adduces seems to me insufficient to disprove the record of Gu Ling, a close contemporary.

166. For a comprehensive study of this series, see Yim, *Qian Qianyi Bingta xiaohan*.

| | |
|---------|--|
| 朝日妝鉛眉正撫 | Under the morning sun she puts on makeup, just when her eyebrows are most lovely. |
| 高樓點粉額猶鮮 | On the high tower she applied powder, now still fresh on her forehead. |
| 橫陳嚼蠟君能曉 | You understand indifference to a seductive body— as bland as chewing wax; |
| 已過三冬枯木禪 | Already past are three winters of Chan meditation, as calm as wood withered. |

The poem is a remarkable mixture of sensuous, sentimental, and religious images. It begins with the dramatic moment of Liu Rushi having her hair cut in front of the Buddha's image.¹⁶⁷ "Red tears" 紅淚 is a standard allusion to the tears of a beautiful woman. The palace lady Xue Lingyun is supposed to have wept tears of blood upon parting from her parents (TPGJ, 272.2139–40). Here "red tears" are wrapped and then scattered in the various heavens: tears of attachment are transformed into tears of compassion. "The lotus costume" 蓮花服 is a symbol of detachment, but the "swaying grains" evoke a vision of engagement: Du Mu writes about "A hundred acres of swaying grains / That the west wind blows to half-yellow" 罷亞百頃稻，西風吹半黃 to feed one's kinfolk and neighbors.¹⁶⁸ On the surface, lines 5 and 6 are about a beautiful woman's adornment. The time-markers (zheng 正, "just when"; and you 猶, "still") define a seductive moment whose appeal lies in its perilous transience. Line 5 suggests conjugal bliss by echoing the story of Zhang Chang painting his wife's eyebrows.¹⁶⁹ Line 6 alludes to a well-known Buddhist story: when the Buddha was in the kingdom of Qiebiluo, he entered the city to beg for food and reached his brother Ananda's house. At that very moment Ananda was helping his wife put on makeup and rubbing scent between her eyebrows. When Ananda heard the Buddha at the door, he wanted to go outside to see. His wife made him promise to come back before the makeup on her brows was thoroughly dry.¹⁷⁰ The powder "still fresh on her forehead" thus suggests

167. Yim suggests that the image of the golden scissors may also allude to Yuan Haowen's 元好問 (1190–1257) poem about cutting a sprig of flowers as offering to the Buddha (*Qian Qianyi Bingta xiaohan*, pp. 122–23). Liu probably did not actually cut her hair.

168. Du Mu, "Junzhai duzhuo" 郡齋獨酌, *Fanchuan wenji*, 1.7.

169. See chapter I, n. 177. Yim (*Qian Qianyi Bingta xiaohan*, p. 124) suggests the allusion to a love poem by Liu Shi sent to her husband (LQL, 3:2130).

170. See *Za baozang jing* 雜寶藏經, cited in *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林, j. 22, in *Taisho shishu Daizokyo*, 53:451a.

an attachment to sensuous pleasures that becomes an obstacle to enlightenment: here the injunction of Ananda's wife, tied to the brief time span it takes for cosmetics to dry, marks that moment when the perfected illusion of phenomenal appearance (her makeup fully done suggests an even more palpable beauty) displaces the possibility of enlightenment.

The middle section of the poem thus dwells on the power of engagement and seduction, which are presumably overcome in the last two lines. In the *Surangama Sutra* (*Lengyan jing* 楞嚴經), the sight of a horizontally displayed female body arouses only indifference: to the enlightened one beholding that spectacle it is as tasteless and inspid as chewing wax 嚼蠟.¹⁷¹ Liu Rushi's religious renunciation is thus couched in terms of her understanding of an enlightened male observer's indifference to her as an object of desire. Hence the subject of the last line is ambiguous: it may refer to either Qian or Liu. He or she is divested of all feelings, with a heart like "wood withered" 枯木, having passed three winters in *Chan* meditation. The last two lines proclaim resolution and detachment after shifting sympathies and dramatic reversals, yet it is belied by the counter-argument and sensual imagery in the middle section of the poem.

Qian Qianyi's attention to sensual details is even more obvious in the second poem on Liu Rushi's Buddhist renunciation (36th poem in the series, *QMZ*, 5:666):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 鸚鵡疎窗畫語長 | The parrot at the sparsely latticed windows talks all day long, |
| 又教雙燕話雕樑 | And also lets the paired swallows twitter at the carved pillars. |
| 雨交澧浦何曾濕 | Rain crosses at the shores of River Li— do they get wet? |
| 風認巫山別有香 | The wind recognizes Mount Wu— there is yet another fragrance. |
| 初著染衣身體澀 | Donning dyed cloth for the first time, her body feels its roughness. |

171. *Lengyan jing shujie mengchao* 楞嚴經疏解蒙抄, in *Shinsan Dai Nihon zoku Zōkyō*, 13:762a. Qian Qianyi uses the same image in a poem about a Qinhuai courtesan who became a Daoist or Buddhist (possibly Bian Sai), see *QMZ*, 4:418.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 乍拋綢髮頂門涼 | Suddenly discarding her silken hair, her pate is cold. |
| 縈烟飛絮三眠柳 | Entwining mist and flying catkins of the thrice-sleeping willows: |
| 颺盡春來未斷腸 | Blown to utter distraction is the heart not yet broken since spring. |

This is supposedly a poem written to mark Liu Rushi's taking of Buddhist vows. Yet the images suggest the redolent ennui and languor of the inner chamber. The first two lines could have been the beginning of a love poem: the parrot's drawn-out words suggest a lady waiting or pining for her lover: the lonely palace woman talking to her parrot is a standard conceit in classical poetry. The paired swallows suggest a pair of lovers or husband and wife. Parrot, swallows, sparsely latticed windows, and carved pillars are familiar images describing the sensuous, ornate decor of the inner chamber. Rain spatters the shores of River Li, without, however, making them wet, even as the wind recognizes Mount Wu because of a special fragrance other than that of a seductive goddess. Wind, rain, River Li, and Mount Wu are all clichés marking romantic encounter and sexual union with divine women. The denial of actual wetness and the assertion of "another fragrance" imply either ultimate detachment despite intimacy or renunciation of sexual union despite deep attachment. Yet subsequent references to religion in lines 5 and 6, namely, to Liu's new Buddhist garb and shaved head, suggest something jarring, uncomfortable, and incongruous. (It is quite unlikely that Liu actually shaved her head and put on Buddhist robes, so the reference is symbolic.) The "thrice-sleeping willows" 三眠柳 in line 7 are a recurrent allusion in Qian's poems. Legend has it that "the Han palace has a human-shaped willow, which each day rises and drops three times."¹⁷² The motif of constant transformation, the fluid transition between different states of being, and the obvious pun on Liu Rushi's name probably appeal to Qian Qianyi. Elsewhere Qian uses the image to describe Liu's seductive charms: "Willows in the palace, thrice sleeping, draw me into madness" 宮柳三眠引我狂 (*QMZ*, 1:622); "Then I dreamed of willows thrice sleeping" 昔夢柳三眠 (*QMZ*, 4:347). The poem concludes with a final image of longing: entwining mist, flying

172. Chen Yuanjing, *Shilin guangji*, 12.402.

catkins, the thrice-sleeping willow, and wind-borne flight suggest confusion and desires that cannot be controlled. This is an ambivalent answer to the detachment and sublimation affirmed in the middle of the poem.

Qian's interest in Buddhism is well documented in his corpus. His devotion seemed to have become more fervent after his treasured collection of rare books was destroyed in a fire in 1650. Why is Qian so ambivalent about religious transcendence in these poems? Is he simply desolate about Liu's professed repudiation of human affection and worldly ties? Is he exploiting the political meanings of renunciation to signal an alienating political reality? Is unresolved longing linked to his self-image as a defiant loyalist despite certain failure? Is it supposed to show how Liu herself regards religion with a mixture of devotion and skepticism? Does he find the tension between attachment and detachment a fitting metaphor for the vacillations and contradictions of his life? As noted above, none of Liu's own writings about her heroic exploits and Buddhist vows have been preserved. Qian's writings give us glimpses of her and, perhaps even more poignantly, his own projected self-transformation. The interplay of revelation and mystery in Qian's depiction of Liu points to his own tragic fate as a hidden loyalist. About a month after Qian died in 1664, his clansmen clamored for repayment of supposed debts and pressed claims on his estate. Liu invited them to Qian's house, had the gates closed and guarded, and retreated to an inner chamber where she hanged herself. She staged her suicide in such a way that her persecutors would be considered culpable. Her death has been interpreted as "martyrdom for the Qian family" 殉家難. Some aver that she "followed Qian in death." It is even possible to read this as "delayed suicide" for one who had wished to "perish with the country." Liu persists in being enigmatic in the very management of her own death. It is a measure of how, independent of Qian's mediation, she remains a tantalizing symbol of political and romantic passions.

Salvageable Passions

Charging romantic memories with the pathos of the rise and fall (of dynasties) is a constant refrain in Chinese literature. *Plank Bridge* is often invoked in the literature appraising or remembering courtesans throughout the Qing dynasty. It becomes almost *de rigueur* in Qing memoirs of (or guides to) courtesan quarters to adopt a melancholy tone and lament

loss and the passage of time.¹⁷³ Some of them also link the fate of the courtesan world to political disorder, notably Xu Yu's 許豫 (19th c.) *New Beauties of Nanjing* (*Baimen xinliu ji* 白門新柳記, 1872 preface), which chronicles the vicissitudes of Nanjing courtesan quarters in the wake of the Taiping Rebellion. If these later writings nostalgically invoking *Plank Bridge* often pale in comparison, it may be because the latter's political meanings cannot be easily replicated.

The women discussed in this chapter, especially the famous courtesans, continued to fascinate readers through the Qing dynasty and beyond. Among their devotees were Chen Wenshu 陳文述 (1771–1843), champion of women's writings, and Ye Yanlan 葉衍蘭 (*jinsbi* 1856), whose *Eight Beauties of Qinhuai in Prose, Poetry, and Images* (*Qinhuai bayan tuyong* 秦淮八艷圖詠, 1892 prefaces) typifies the elegiac mood of such accounts. By the twentieth century, these courtesans also had come to represent a lost world destroyed by modernity, wars, and revolution. Mao Guangsheng 冒廣生 (1873–1959), distantly related to Mao Xiang, wrote *Bian Yujing Remembers Wu Weiye in Death* (*Bian Yujing siyi Meicun* 卞玉京死憶梅村) as well as two other plays on the courtesans Ma Xianglan and Zheng Tuoniang, both remembered in *Plank Bridge*. All three plays are included in Mao's *Eight Short Plays from Regrets Studio* (*Jinzhai zaju bazhong* 疚齋雜劇八種). The scholar Wu Mei makes the love story of Jiang Gai and Li Shiniang and the prank of Fang Yizhi and Sun Lin, mentioned above, the subject of his *zaju* play *Warm Fragrance Tower* (*Nuanxiang lou* 暖香樓, ca. 1910s), later rewritten as *Xiangzhen Pavilion* (*Xiangzhen ge* 湘真閣, preface 1933). The defiant anachronism of writing *zaju* in the twentieth century confirms the cultural nostalgia of such reenactments.

Quite distinct from cultural nostalgia is the heightening heroic strain vindicating passion. In retelling the story of Zhou Lianggong's concubine Wang Sun, for example, Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應 (1842–1922) turns her into a woman warrior who, dagger in hand, flies into the enemy's camp and slays the chief culprits in the style of a Tang female knight-errant like Hongxian.¹⁷⁴ From the late Qing onwards, romantic passion

173. See, for instance, Zhuquan jushi, "Xu Banqiao zaji" (1785 preface), "Xuehong xiaoji"; Yu Jiao (b. 1751), *Chao Jiao fengyue ji*; Jiang Xueqiao (18th–19th c.), "Qinhuai wenjian lu"; Penghua sheng, *Qinhuai huafang lu* (1817 preface); Xu Yu, *Baimen xinliu ji*; *Baimen shuailiu fuji* (1872 prefaces); Miao Quansun, *Qinhuai guangji* (1912 preface).

174. Zheng Guanying, *Jianxia zhuan*, *Xu jianxia zhuan*, p. 110.

and nationalist strivings are increasingly intertwined. The aforementioned Qinhua martyr Ge Nen is the heroine of *Flowers of Blood* (*Bixie hua* 碧血花) by Wang Yunzhang 王蘊章 (1884–1942), published in 1911 in *Fiction Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報). Aying 阿英 (Qian Xingcun 錢杏邨, 1900–1977) produced another play (also called *Flowers of Blood*) on Ge Nen during the Sino-Japanese War (1939). A recurrent trope is a woman who embraces martyrdom to spur her lover to anti-Qing resistance, like in stories from the 1900s told about the courtesan Fang Zhi, Yang Wencong's concubine, and the nameless concubine of Li Chengdong 李成棟 (d. 1649).¹⁷⁵

In some ways the romance of Liu Rushi and Qian Qianyi follows a similar plot. The story of Liu's bravery, in contrast to Qian's cowardice, was told throughout the Qing dynasty, when Qian's writings were banned. However, Liu's involvement in resistance and her possible role in inspiring Qian are not mentioned until the late Qing (first by the poet Shen Zengzhi). Chen Yinke's biography of Liu Rushi develops this narrative of loyalism but also establishes her as a cultural ideal in new ways. Chen famously describes Liu Rushi as the representative of "the independence of spirit and freedom of thought of our people" 我民族獨立之精神、自由之思想. These are also his own ideals as an intellectual and a historian.¹⁷⁶ He honored Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) with the same words when the latter committed suicide in 1927. What did the famous courtesan and the great scholar have in common? One might say they were both loyalists (of the Ming and the Qing respectively) and in that sense stood for the right of disaffection from the current regime, the need to claim a cultural-intellectual space not governed by political authority. Perhaps more than Wang Guowei, however, Liu Rushi represents the balance or tension between center and periphery in the tradition. Learned and accomplished, she was nevertheless only a "defiant and free-spirited" courtesan, both courting and defying the establishment. She symbolized the capacity of Chinese culture for regeneration through crossing boundaries and encompassing opposites.

175. See Alu (Liu Yazhi), "Nüxiong tanxie" (1904); Pan Xiaohuang, woman of Songling (Liu Yazhi), "Wei minzu liuxie wuming zhi nüjie zhuan" (1904). The story of how Fang Zhi urges Yang Wencong to commit suicide as a Ming martyr is first told in Shen Qifeng (b. 1741), *Xie duo*, 4.4a–4b. Wang Xiaonong 汪笑儂 (1858–1918) also wrote a Beijing opera about Fang Zhi (1904).

176. See Li Yumei, *Chen Yinke zhi shixue*, pp. 92–120.

More generally, Chen's biography is colored by his empathy with the choices and dilemmas of those enduring the toll of political disorder. Their pathos of dying for or surviving a lost world spoke to his perception of the crisis of Chinese civilization during successive political movements in the 1950s and 1960s. From another perspective, the repressive forces in traditional Chinese culture distorted or suppressed the "truth" or "reality" of Liu Rushi. In order to reconstruct her life and writings, Chen had to battle two and a half centuries of neglect, misunderstanding, and destruction. Many of Liu's writings are lost, and their existence or meaning can be inferred only indirectly from the works of her friends and lovers (e.g., *LRS*, 1:299–302; 331–33). Chen Yinke is implying that his relationship to the literary and cultural heritage of China is similarly "archaeological," as fragments are retrieved and reconstituted. His own act of creation is thus a new twist on the idea of salvaging passion (in this case passion for cultural ideals through empathy with Liu) from political ruins.

CHAPTER 5

Victimhood and Agency

Countless wrenching stories and poems about women abducted and “taken north” in accounts of the Ming-Qing transition have come to symbolize the shame of conquest. A few voices from the chorus suffice to establish the contours of this iconic image; one such example is found in Gu Yanwu’s “Autumn Mountains,” first of two poems 秋山其二, lines 11–14 (*Gu Tinglin shi jianshi*, 1.47):

| | |
|-------|--|
| 北上三百舸 | Three hundred boats headed north, |
| 舸舸好紅顏 | Every single one filled with fair ladies. |
| 吳口擁橐駝 | Wu beauties, hugging camels, |
| 鳴笳入燕關 | Enter the northern pass to ringing fife music. |

One of Li Yin’s poems, discussed in chapter 2, situates this image in the midst of general devastation (ZXX, p. 67):

李因 憶昔十二首其三

Li Yin, “Remembrances,” third of twelve poems (lines 5–6)

| | |
|-------|--|
| 白骨城中滿 | With bleached bones the city was filled to the brim, |
| 紅顏馬上多 | Fair-faced ones on horseback numbered so many. |

Qu Dajun compares abducted women to the Han consort Wang Zhaojun being exiled to barbarian lands (an analogy I explored in chapter 1) in the first of three poems entitled “Lamenting the Past at Guangzhou” (“Guangzhou diaogu” 廣州吊古, *Qu Dajun quanji*, 2:867) (lines 5–6):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 無多越女留炎徼 | Not many Yue maidens are left behind |
| | in the sultry south, |
| 不斷明妃去紫臺 | As an endless stream of Bright Consorts |
| | leave the Purple Terrace. ¹ |

Qu Dajun identifies these victims as being from his native Guangdong, but much more common is the association with Jiangnan, as in these lines from Xia Wanchun (*Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, p. 328):

夏完淳 感舊步仲芳先生韻六首其一

Xia Wanchun, "Moved by the Past, following Zhongfang's Rhyme,"
first of six poems (lines 7–8)

| | |
|---------|---|
| 江南一片傷心月 | Over Jiangnan, the moon of endless heartache: |
| 多少琵琶馬上彈 | All too many are strumming lutes on horseback. ² |

The abducted woman, often also a victim of rape, is the object of both sympathy and scrutiny. Sun Zhiwei 孫枝蔚 (1620–87) wrote scathingly of Yangzhou women who showed no sorrow when they were taken as trophies of conquest in the second of his four "Songs of Abducted Women" ("Nanfu ci" 難婦詞, *Gaitang ji*, 8.21b):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 何關出塞始風流 | Why wait to go beyond the frontier |
| | before displaying our charms? |
| 生長江邊不解愁 | Born and bred by the River, |
| | we have never known sorrow. |
| 自到前旗多姊妹 | Ever since coming to the front banners, |
| | we've met so many sisters: |
| 笑聲一片是揚州 | A wave of boisterous mirth shows |
| | this is indeed Yangzhou. |

The Yangzhou massacre of 1645 was a major turning point in the Qing conquest of southern China. The atrocities visited on Yangzhou were intended to undermine the people's will to resist in other southern cities. Instead of regarding these Yangzhou women as victims, Sun presents them as being more than willing to consort with the conquerors, eager to "go beyond the frontier." They "have never known sorrow," recalling the amorous Mochou 莫愁 ("Don't Have Sorrow") in *yuefu* ballads. Like

1. "Purple Terrace" refers to imperial precincts. See Jiang Yan, "Hen fu," *Wenxuan*, 16.744; Du Fu, "Yonghuai guji" 詠懷古跡, in *DS*, 17.876; Li Shangyin, "Lei" 淚, in *LSY*, 4:1637.

2. For similar images, see Xia Wanchun, *Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, pp. 162, 182, 190, 288.

the singing girls “oblivious to the sorrow of losing one’s country” in Du Mu’s poem,³ they continue the music and laughter of Jiangnan. Much more common, however, are accounts of poems on walls or articles of clothing left by abducted women. They used such writings to mourn their fate, judge their times, or to send messages in the hope of deliverance. Zha Jizuo 查繼佐 (1601–76) tells of the plight of another Yangzhou woman:

In the *remnu* year of the Chongzhen reign [1642], she was abducted by the rebels. The following summer, in the fifth month, she escaped and returned, but her home had already been destroyed. She then told her story and added a few quatrains, inscribing them on the walls of an inn. She also said, “Why does a mere woman matter? But for those who enjoyed high office and handsome emoluments, what are they doing in court and at the frontier?” I recorded one of her poems, “In vain do the generals hold on to the banners of war, / Overrunning the endless central plains, barbarian horses neigh. / All they have achieved is a lifetime of abject submission: / Do not let these women weep, like the Bright Consort, till the end of time!”

崇禎壬午，爲寇所掠，明年夏五逃歸，而已無家。既自爲敘，而繫以詩數絕，題客店之壁。且曰：「一女子何足惜？朝端之上，邊塞之間，高官厚祿何爲者耶？」爲錄其詩之一：「將軍空自擁旌旗，萬里中原胡馬嘶。總使終生能繫頸，不教千載注明妃。」 (Zha Jizuo, *Zuiwei lu*, p. 2801)

The same provenance from Yangzhou, the same fate of abduction, and the same association with exile and Wang Zhaojun yield opposite perspectives on the abducted woman as object of castigation and the voice of plaintive yet authoritative accusation. She is both the one offering judgment and the one being judged; she is both the victim of historical trauma and its enduring witness. Sometimes these different perspectives unfolded in the same discursive space through the cultural practice of inscribing poems on walls, and it is to the debates and negotiations bound up in such literary exchanges that I will now turn.

The Discursive Space Defining the Abducted Woman

I will first consider two antecedents of our seventeenth-century examples, in part to construct a possible genealogy, and in part because they

3. See chap. 2, p. 175.

attracted attention during the Ming-Qing transition. One of them is Lady Pistil 花蕊夫人, favored consort of Meng Chang 孟昶 (919–65, r. 934–64), the last ruler of Western Shu, one of the southern kingdoms that emerged in the aftermath of the breakdown of the Tang empire. The other is the Song palace lady Wang Qinghui 王清惠 (late 13th c.), who was abducted in the aftermath of the Mongol conquest of Southern Song (1127–1279).

According to a Song miscellany by Wu Zeng 吳曾 (fl. 1127–60), Lady Pistil was taken north after Song conquered Western Shu. Known for her palace poetry, she is also associated with a song lyric that she is said to have written on the walls of a post station and a quatrain she presented to the first Song emperor Taizu (926–76, r. 960–76). The song lyric (to the tune “Cai sang zi” 采桑子) is curiously both mournful and expectant as she “resolves her grief” 自解 by moving from painful memories to hopes for the future (Wu Zeng, *Nenggai zhai cihua*, p. 134):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 初離蜀道心將碎 | Taking leave of Shu, my heart is breaking. |
| 離恨綿綿 | The sorrow of parting lingers without end. |
| 春日如年 | A spring day drags on like a year. |
| 馬上時時聞杜鵑 | On horseback, I listen often to the cries of the cuckoo. |
| 三千宮女皆花貌 | Of the three thousand palace ladies, all lovely as flowers, |
| 妾最嬋娟 | My charms reign supreme. |
| 此去朝天 | For this journey, as I go to face the emperor: |
| 只恐君王寵愛偏 | My only fear is that he will be partial in his favors! |

Lady Pistil is also known for her searing indictment of men who failed to defend the kingdom:

When Shu fell, she was taken into the Song harem. Emperor Taizu heard about her and summoned her to compose a verse, and she chanted her “Poem on the Fallen Kingdom”: “The ruler planted banners of surrender on the city walls, / How am I, deep in the palace, to know about it? / Four hundred thousand soldiers shed their armor together: / There was not one true man among them.” Taizu was pleased, for while Shu troops numbered four hundred thousand, Song troops amounted to only tens of thousands.⁴

4. Here Lady Pistil's surname is Fei, while in Wu Zeng's account her surname is Xu.

國亡，入備後宮。太祖聞之，召使陳詩。誦其〈國亡詩〉云：
「君王城上豎降旗，妾在深宮那得知。四十萬人齊解甲，更無一
箇是男兒。」太祖悅。蓋蜀兵四十萬，而王師方數萬爾。(Chen
Shidao, *Houshan ji*, 23.2a–2b)

The pathos here is ambiguous. As Meng Chang's favored consort and author of palace poetry, Lady Pistil seems the very embodiment of sensuous indulgence. The second line is thus a kind of proleptic self-defense, her attempt to absolve herself of blame. Is the castigation of Shu troops also indirect praise for the outnumbered Song army?⁵ Does the line "there was not one true man among them" imply that the Song emperor is "the one true man"? That Taizu is pleased indicates that there is but a thin divide between lamenting the fallen kingdom and currying favor with a new master.⁶ This ambiguity may be what prompted a seventeenth-century anthologist and publisher, Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599–1659), to emphasize that Lady Pistil is presented to the Song emperor as a captive rather than a new addition to his harem. Other defenders of Lady Pistil use the discrepancy between the two halves of her song lyric to question the authenticity of the voice seeking favor. Thus Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559) imagines a scenario whereby she is rushed off after completing only the first half of the song lyric and someone else writes the second half:

Even when Lady Pistil had an audience with the Song emperor, she wrote the poem with the line, "There was not one true man among them." How could it be possible that, following Meng Chang on his way, she would write words that amount to such a travesty of integrity? Not only did the person who continued the song lyric fabricate lies, but his words are vulgar and demeaning, unworthy of the original like the proverbial "dog tail linked to sable."

花蕊見宋祖，猶作更無一箇是男兒之詩，焉有隨昶行而書此敗節之語乎？續之者不惟虛空架橋，而詞之鄙，亦狗尾續貂矣。
(Yang Shen, *Yang Sheng'an congshu*, 2:400–401)

The odd transition in Lady Pistil's song lyric is unmistakable: the sense of anguish and urgency diminishes as its focus shifts from former love

5. Some other accounts give 140,000 or 200,000 as the size of the Western Shu army.

6. The anecdote as told in Wang Shizhen's *Wudai shibua* (8.16a) ends thus: "Taizu favored her even more."

to prospective favor, from mourning the past to planning the future. Instead of averring this as evidence of how Lady Pistil “resolved her grief,” the scenario of inscribing poems on walls traces the shift in tone to divergent voices. Before Lady Pistil can finish her song of sorrow, a critic who implies that her grief masks compromise and capitulation usurps her voice. She is remembered in literary history for her indictment of ineffectual men;⁷ here she becomes the one who is judged for her moral failure.⁸ But the opinion of this real or hypothetical “second author” is in turn questioned and derided by Yang Shen, who regards him as unjust, petty, and mean-spirited. This story is widely cited from the late Ming to the early Qing: slightly different versions appear in Cao Xuequan’s 曹學佺 (1574–1647) *Accounts of Shu* (*Shu zhong guangji* 蜀中廣記), Mao Jin’s *Palace Poetry by Three Masters* (*San jia gongci* 三家宮詞), Xu Qiu’s *Miscellanies About Song Lyrics* (*Ci yuan congtao* 詞苑叢談), *Poetic Anecdotes about the Five Dynasties* (*Wudai shihua* 五代詩話) by Wang Shizhen and Zheng Fangkun 鄭方坤 (1723 *jinshi*), and *Song Lyrics from Different Eras* (*Lidai shiyu* 歷代詩餘) compiled by imperial decree during the Kangxi reign.

Lady Pistil’s story has different endings. Some sources claim that she so bewitches the Song emperor Taizu that he is in danger of repeating Meng Chang’s errors. Taizu’s brother Prince Jin (later the Taizong emperor) offers remonstrance but is unheeded; in the end he shoots and kills her.⁹ Here she remains the dangerous femme fatale. Her poetic talent confirms her seductive wiles rather than offers historical judgment. In other accounts she remains loyal to Meng Chang even in the Song harem: disguising Meng’s portrait as the portrait of a divinity, she is able to continue offerings to him and honor his memory.¹⁰ The ruse acknowledges the gap between intention and execution, will and fate. Circumstantial constraints and her own lack of choice render her judgment all the more poignant.

7. E.g., Xue Xue commends Lady Pistil for her “righteous fury” 忠憤 (*Yipiao shihua*, p. 702).

8. This “second voice” is implicitly blaming Lady Pistil for failing to die a martyr, a perspective articulated most harshly in Hao Jing 郝經 (1223–75), *Lingchuan ji*, 12.6b–7b.

9. Cai Tao, *Tiewei shan congtao*, 6.18a–18b.

10. This story appears in many Ming–Qing miscellanies, including Hu Yinglin, *Shaoshi shanfang bicong*, 40.416–17; Cao Xuequan, *Shu zhong guangji*, j. 96, and Fang Yizhi, *Tong ya*, j. 21.

The same interface between victimhood and agency, empathy and judgment obtains in the stories about the Song palace lady Wang Qinghui. The scholar and poet Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1308), who lived through the Song-Yuan transition, records the song lyric left on the walls of a post station by Wang as she went north with the court after the fall of the Song, as well as the poetic response from Wen Tianxiang, the hero of Song loyalist resistance. Wang's song lyric (to the tune "Man jiang hong") traces how love and splendor came to an abrupt end, and concludes with her hopes and fears as she endures the journey northward: "At the abode of sojourn, startled by nightly dreams of the dusty road, / The palace carriage crushed the moon beyond the mountain pass till dawn. / I ask the moon goddess whether she would accommodate me, / And let us wax and wane together" 客館夜驚塵土夢，宮車曉碾關山月。問姮娥，於我肯從容，隨圓缺 (Zhou Mi, *Haoran zhai cihua*, pp. 229–30). The ending is ambiguous enough to sustain opposite readings: shared fate with the moon implies helpless uncertainty but also suggests acceptance of inevitable change. The abode in the moon points to a longing for escape from the cares of the mundane realm, but this exalted sphere can also refer to the Yuan court where Wang may be seeking a place for herself.

Wen Tianxiang's matching song lyric imagines the palace lady's proud grief, and it ends with a profession of constancy: "Let the ways of the world be as inconstant as a flipping hand: / I will always be the bright moon, unstinting. / Laughable indeed is the Princess Lechang, with her romance / Based on a broken mirror" 世態便如翻覆手，妾身元是分明月。笑樂昌一段好風流，菱花缺 (Zhou Mi, *Haoran zhai cihua*, pp. 229–30). The moon becomes the metaphor for "unstinting brightness" 分明 rather than inconstant "waxing and waning" 圓缺. It is also associated with the final image of the mirror. After the fall of the Chen dynasty, Princess Lechang was separated from her husband Xu Deyan. They each held onto the broken half of a mirror and were eventually reunited after a series of fortuitous events.¹¹ The reunion of the broken mirror comes to stand for tenacious love and devotion defying all odds, yet the poetic speaker here disdains it, presumably because it is attained only after compromise and dishonor. Princess Lechang has been taken

11. See chap. 4, n. 153.

into the Sui minister Yang Su's harem, and it is Yang Su's generosity that allows her to be reunited with Xu. The poetic speaker thus implies that the broken mirror symbolizes her blemished chastity.

Wen's matching song lyric is couched in the palace lady's voice, a point made explicit in another song lyric "written on Lady Wang's behalf" 代王夫人作 (*Zhinan boulu* 指南後錄, in *Wen Tianxiang quanji*, pp. 550–51). He employs the image of Wang Zhaojun to lament exile, and singles out for praise Zhang Xun and Xu Yuan, the Tang commanders who died defending Suiyang during the An Lushan Rebellion. This song lyric also concludes with the image of steadfast loyalty: "I look back to Zhaoyang Palace as I take leave of the setting sun, / And grieve that the Bronze Bird Terrace will welcome a new moon. / I ponder how, unwilling to share the fate of the realm, I will not be / A broken vessel" 回首昭陽辭落日，傷心銅雀迎新月。算妾身不願似天家，金甌缺。 The Bronze Bird Terrace that Cao Cao built to commemorate Wei victories is where the beautiful Qiao sisters of Wu might have ended up, had Wei defeated Wu at the Battle of Red Cliff in 208. Here the speaker's sympathy obviously lies with "the setting sun" rather than "the new moon." The vessel, or literally "golden basin" 金甌, is a kenning for one's country.¹² By this logic, a woman's body is the last line of resistance, her chastity almost a defiant refusal to become, like the country, "a broken vessel."

Zhou Mi refrains from judgment as he juxtaposes Lady Wang's song lyric with Wen Tianxiang's responses, whose avowal of constancy and loyalty might have been held up as the ideal for which the palace lady should strive. All the same, there is evident empathy and no explicit critique. The perception, common among scholars, that Wen Tianxiang expresses criticism is based on other contextual materials. Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (b. ca. 1316), for example, condemns Lady Wang's compromise in his miscellany, *Nancun chuo geng lu* 南村輟耕錄 (1366 preface). He chronicles how, with the fall of the Song dynasty, the whole imperial harem was taken north in 1276. After recording Wang's song lyric, he describes the ritual suicide of two palace ladies, Zhu and Chen, and their attendants. In Lady Zhu's final testament, she speaks of the imperative to avoid "bringing dishonor on the realm" 辱國 by suffering "dishonor

12. Emperor Wu of Liang (464–549, r. 502–49) reportedly said, "My country is like a golden basin without one flaw or crack" (*Nanshi*, 62.1517; *Liangshu*, 56.862).

for their bodies” 辱身 and becoming “northern subjects” 北臣. Tao concludes: “Compare these four persons with their heroic chastity to the one who earlier averred hidden sorrow in her poetry—what an insurmountable distance separates them!” 夫此四人之貞烈，視前日之托隱憂于辭章者，相去蓋萬萬矣 (*Nancun chuo geng lu*, 1.42–43). Pitting Wang Qinghui’s mournful song lyric against the grim determination of Lady Zhu’s “suicide note,” Tao Zongyi declares the former morally dubious.¹³

Such harshness is echoed in comments in the received text of *Zhinan boulu*, Wen Tianxiang’s poetic chronicle of the final phase of his loyalist struggles. After citing Wang’s song lyric, Wen writes: “It came to be known all over the realm. What a pity that the last line is not well-considered” 中原傳誦。惜末句少商量。¹⁴ The subtitle of Wen’s song lyric claims “to express what Houshan [Chen Shidao] conveyed through ‘Ill-Fated Woman’” 以庶幾後山妾薄命之意. The Song poet Chen Shidao, in the voice of an ill-fated woman who lost her husband, professed unswerving loyalty and devotion to his friend and patron Zeng Gong 曾鞏 (1019–83) when the latter died: “If the dead had sentience, / I would follow him in death” 死者如有知，殺身以相從。¹⁵ By invoking Chen Shidao’s poems, Wen Tianxiang implies their analogous modes of self-definition through a woman’s voice. Whereas the absolute loyalty of the “ill-fated woman” in Chen’s poems represents a fictional construct and an unproblematic ideal (which the poet does not expect to literally follow), the ambivalence of the song lyric by the historical Lady Wang invites, in Wen’s view, rectification through his own profession of steadfastness.

Wen’s implicit reproach may also be indirect affirmation of his choice of martyrdom. However, according to *Song History*, after Wen’s arrest, he requested to “become a Daoist and return home” 以黃冠歸故鄉 (*Songshi*, 418.12539). This prompted Xu Qiu to question Wen’s critique of

13. Under the same entry of “heroic chastity” 貞烈, Tao also records the martyrdom of Wang shi, Han Ximeng, and Xu Junbao’s wife, who all left behind poetic testimonies.

14. Wen Tianxiang, *Zhinan boulu*, in *Wen Tianxiang quanji*, pp. 550–51. There are minor discrepancies between the song lyric as cited here and the versions in *Haoran zhai* and *Chuo geng lu*. The early Ming writer Ye Ziqi cites Wang’s song lyric in his miscellany and adds a similar comment: “What a pity that the last line is somewhat wanting” (*Caomu zi*, 4a.74–75).

15. Chen Shidao, “Qie boming ershou” 妾薄命二首, in *Houshan ji*, 1:1a–1b.

Wang: after all, both sought escape in religion, so “why rashly denigrate words like ‘accommodate’ or ‘waxing and waning?’” 從容圓缺語，何必遽貶耶? (*Ciyuan congfan jiaojian*, 6.337–38). Did Xu Qiu have a keener appreciation of Wang Qinghui’s dilemma because he lived through the Ming-Qing transition? Xu also wrote with great sympathy for Lady Pistil, reiterating Yang Shen’s theory that she wrote only the first half of the song lyric on the wall of the post station. As noted earlier, other accounts defending Lady Pistil proliferated from the late Ming to the early Qing.

The stories of Lady Pistil and Wang Qinghui demonstrate the subtle tension between offering judgment and being judged. Their victimization enhances the moral authority of their judgment, but if they survive abduction, the suspicion of compromised chastity undermines their authority. In this sense the statements deemed most compelling were often suicide notes. However, “disembodied” poems, unembellished by framing stories, can sometimes achieve the same impact. Quatrains found “on the walls of the former palace,” recorded in Chen Weisong’s *Writing Women*, merge private and public lament in explicit historical judgment (FRJ, 17a–17b):

| | |
|------------|---|
| 南朝天子一愁無 | In this Southern Dynasty, the son of heaven is without sorrow, |
| 石子岡連元[玄]武湖 | Mound Shizi links up with Lake Xuanwu. |
| 草綠離宮人不到 | Grass turns green at the temporary palace, where no one comes. |
| 日長惟勅阮佃夫 | The day passes, and imperial decrees are issued only to Ruan Dianfu. |
| 臨春閣外渺無涯 | Beyond Facing Spring Pavilion is limitless distance, |
| 烽火連天動妾懷 | Beacon fires reaching to the sky shake my heart. |
| 十萬長圍今夜合 | Ten rounds of long siege are closing in tonight, |
| 君王猶自在秦淮 | And the emperor is still at Qinhuai. |

Chen Weisong comments: “The strokes of the graphs have been blotted out by moss. Perhaps someone had filled in the words as he saw fit. The tone of the poems is mournful and restrained, and could have been the words of a palace lady from the Hongguang court” 中有字劃爲苔蘚剝蝕。或以意補之，詞意淒婉，類弘光時宮人語 (FRJ, 17a–17b). Both quatrains compare the Southern Ming emperor to pleasure-loving and incompetent last rulers of short-lived southern dynasties—Qi Houzhu (557–77, r. 565–76) and the last Liu-Song rulers (r. 465–76) in

the first quatrain, Chen Houzhu in the second one. As mentioned in chapter 3, “the son of heaven without sorrow”—the oblivious, irresponsible ruler—conflates the images of Qi Houzhu, Chen Houzhu, and Hongguang. Ruan Dianfu (427–77) in the first quatrain was a favorite of the last rulers of Song, Mingdi (r. 465–72) and Houfeidi (r. 473–76); here the figure refers to the Southern Ming minister Ruan Dacheng. In the seclusion of the palace, the emperor receives none but his sycophantic favorites, such as Ruan Dacheng. The second quatrain again links Hongguang to Chen Houzhu through the reference to Facing Spring Pavilion.¹⁶ The palace lady’s anguish over the fate of the country contrasts with the emperor’s oblivious self-indulgence in Qinhuai pleasure quarters. “The strokes of the graphs have been blotted out by moss”—this silent accusation on the verge of erasure had enough resonance for the spectator to “fill in the words as he saw fit.”

We cannot know for sure whether these two quatrains were actually written by a palace lady from the Hongguang court on palace walls. Questions of historical authenticity aside, many contemporaries thought they should have been authentic, and that was why they were widely circulated. The right to judge is inextricably tied to victimization. Zhao Xuehua 趙雪華 left three quatrains on the walls of a pavilion at Shancheng County; they begin with the conventional imagery for mourning abduction and exile (horseback, pipa, Zhaojun’s green grave) but end with unequivocal indictment (Tan Qian, *Zaolin zazhu*, p. 287; Yu Huai, *BQ*, p. 74):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 驚傳縣吏點名頻 | Alarming news came: the officers are going through the rosters. |
| 一一分明漢語真 | Every word is unmistakable— they are speaking Chinese. |
| 世上無如男子好 | There is none greater than men in this world: |
| 看他髡禿也驕人 | Look how, pate shaven and half bald, they proudly lord it over us. |

However, as noted above, the line between offering judgment and being judged is thin. Poems by and about Ye Zimei, another Hongguang palace lady, are a good example. Ye does not blame the ruler and ministers of the Southern Ming. Instead she mourns the past, laments her

16. See chap. 3, pp. 243–45.

abduction, and seems to hope for deliverance through self-revelation. The poem appears with a preface in Ji Liuqi's 計六奇 (b. 1622) chronicle of the aftermath of the fall of the Ming (*Mingji nanlue*, 11.372–73):¹⁷

I am a native of Yangzhou. I had served in the Western Palace for less than two years when I was driven away to a distant place, strumming the lute on horseback. As my tears wet the brush, my words are far from lucid and orderly. I have composed this in great sorrow. With luck someone from my hometown may see this and know where I have drifted like lemna. Inscribed by Ye Zimei of Yangzhou, two days before double seventh in the year *wuzi* [1648].

妾廣陵人，從事西宮，曾不二年，馬上琵琶，逐塵遠去，和淚濡筆，語不成章，愴懷賦此。幸梓里同人見之，知浮萍之所歸耳。廣陵葉子眉題。戊子（1648）七夕前二日也。

| | |
|---------|---|
| 馬足飛塵到鬢邊 | Dust flies from the horses' hoofs to my temples. |
| 傷心羞整舊花鈿 | Heartbroken, I am ashamed to affix old hair ornaments. |
| 回頭難憶宮中事 | As I look back, events in the palace are fading from memory. |
| 衰柳空垂起暮煙 | In vain do the withered willows hang low, as evening mist rises. |

Ji Liuqi also records eight poems harmonizing with Ye's poem. Five of them are filled with empathy and lamentation, but the last three are critical, comparable to the harsh judgments condemning Lady Pistil and Wang Qinghui discussed above. Wei Guisen of Guying 古瀛衛桂森 writes:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 紅葉詩流御水邊 | The red leaves with poems flow by the imperial moat. |
| 佳人何必整花鈿 | Why must the fair lady affix hair ornaments? |
| 中途寫盡離騷曲 | Along the way, the song of <i>Encountering Sorrow</i> is writ large. |
| 肯許浮雲到紫煙 | Why promise floating clouds to reach the frontier's purple mist? |

17. The poems and titles appear with some variations in *MYSW*, 23.11b–12a; *FRJ*, 25a.

Dust stirred up by the horses' hoofs in the original poem evokes her abduction, but "red leaves with poems" in Wei's response turns the reader's attention to her agency in communicating her feelings. Self-adornment (line 2) implies a desire to curry favor with the conquerors, and *Encountering Sorrow* (line 3) holds up martyrdom as the right choice: if Ye's song contains as much grief as Qu Yuan's *Encountering Sorrow*, then she should have followed Qu Yuan's example of suicide instead of accepting the fate of exile and compromise (line 4). The eighth poem by Zhishui yikuang 芷水逸狂 (Wild Recluse of River Zhi) is even more explicitly disparaging:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 漢女和戎勉出邊 | The Han woman, appeasing barbarians, resolutely leaves for the frontier, |
| 猶將青草雪花鈿 | And she still uses the snowy green grass for her hair ornaments. |
| 包羞不識牀頭劍 | Bearing the shame, she does not turn to the sword by the bed's head. |
| 何用悲歌辱紫煙 | Why use the song of sorrow to endure dishonor in the purple mist? |

Ye Zimei's preface uses the image of Wang Zhaojun ("strumming the lute on horseback") to lament involuntary exile; here Zhaojun's mission of "appeasing barbarians" implies Ye's compromise with her captors. "Bearing the shame, the position is inappropriate" 包羞，位不當也 is the line statement of the third *yin* line in hexagram 12 in the *Book of Changes*, Pi 否 (Obstruction). "The Wild Recluse of River Zhi" thus castigates Ye Zimei for "bearing the shame" of "an inappropriate position." Instead of choosing suicide, she endures dishonor, which is not ameliorated by her song of sorrow. Ji Liuqi found these harsh judgments repugnant: "As I read the poem that the talented Lady Ye inscribed on the walls of an inn at Chaoge, my voice broke down as I choked back tears. There were many who wrote harmonizing poems. As for the hasty and callous ones among them, buckets of lime should, with luck, wash away these stains on the wall" 讀葉才人題朝歌旅壁詩，聲淚俱碎。和者縷縷，率爾數章。幸以純灰數斛，浣此壁疥也 (*Mingji nanlue*, 11.372-73).

But even empathy can be problematic. Inasmuch as the vanquished country is represented as feminine, women who articulate their lament seem to represent the redemptive moments in tales of abject suffering and shameful conquest. Perhaps that is why Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936)

castigates the widespread interest in such poems as “whitewashing darkness” 粉飾黑暗 in an essay from 1935:

Even in such devastating moments as when the Mongols killed and plundered, or the Manchus burned and massacred, there were still those who held up for our admiration none other than poems by chaste women ending their lives or victimized women writing on walls. One would eagerly pass on the story, another would write poems to the same rhyme. They were more engaged with all that than with such great calamities as the ruination of a culture and the devastation of a people.

大至胡元殺掠，滿清焚屠之際，還會有人單單捧出甚麼烈女絕命、難婦題壁的詩詞來，這個艷傳，那個步韻，比華屋丘墟，生民涂炭之慘的大事還起勁。（“Binghou zatan” 病後雜談, *Jieqie ting zawan*, p. 145)

In other words, Lu Xun regards such stories as displacement or repression of national trauma. Instead of confronting the chaos and destruction of such moments, the implied (male) reader seeks refuge in the glorified image and tragic pathos of the martyred woman vindicating herself through poetic testimony.

The lady strumming a lute on horseback, drifting to the ends of the world, where evening fifes played against yellow sand and limitless sky—these are images that lend a tragic beauty to chaos and devastation. As noted in chapter 2, women’s literature in China has from the beginning been authenticated and legitimized by political disorder, as evinced by the stories of Wang Zhaojun and Cai Yan. Hushang Ouli 湖上鷗吏 (Seagull Official on the Lake) wrote in his preface to Ding Yaokang’s 丁耀亢 (1599–1669) southern play (*chuanqi* 傳奇), *Fan of West Lake* (*Xihu shan* 西湖扇): “From ancient times, talented and beautiful women have no venues to express their deep thoughts or spread their fame unless they experience disorder and dislocation. . . . Beauties are ill-fated not because of their fate, but because only ill fate can allow them to pass on what is best about them” 自古絕世才媛，不經流離播遷，其幽思不出，而其名必不傳 . . . 佳人薄命，非命薄也，夫固以命薄傳其佳也 (DYK, 1:742). Such appreciation may seem almost callous, but the process whereby the literati identified with victimized women, and the significance of how and why their stories spread, cannot summarily be dismissed as political irresponsibility or heedless “transference” and deserves further investigation.

Variables of Poetic Traces

These poetic records on walls, despite the sense of autobiographical urgency they convey, show how the same poems with slight variations can be tied to different authors, events, or geographical origins. Their historical reality is ultimately elusive and not provable, but divergences of attribution and circumstantial details can throw light on the forces behind the appropriation and varying uses of these writings. As an example we can turn to “Poems by Women Martyr Du of Chenzhou, with Preface” 辰州杜烈女詩并序, found in the historian Tan Qian’s 談遷 (1594–1657) *Record of a Northern Journey* (*Beiyou lu*, no. 106, pp. 337–39).¹⁸ In her study of suicide poems by women, Grace Fong emphasizes the agency and autobiographical significance of Du’s writings;¹⁹ here my focus will be how their protean transformations redefine agency and autobiography. In this section I will examine the poem series and its preface, and then trace the divergent responses to Women Martyr Du’s poems that surfaced in early Qing writings. I will show how, as her name and identity change, different authors transformed her story in ways that reflected their self-perception, political concerns, and moral judgments.

Tan Qian stayed in Beijing from 1653 to 1656 and died in 1657. This account would have come to his attention between 1654 and 1657. The preface, which identified the author as Du Xiaoying 杜小英, tells of her life from conception to the narrative present, when she is on the brink of suicide. Her sense of her own extraordinary destiny is evident in the account of her mother’s dream: “The night my mother became pregnant, she dreamed of a lady with tinkling jade pendants turning to her and bowing. Calling herself Miss Yingtai, she said she wished to rent an abode for a number of years. Mother woke up and became pregnant. In due course I was born, and she thus named me ‘Xiaoying’ [Little Yingtai]” 母孕余之夕，夢一女子玉聲璆然。向母而挹。自號英臺小姐，欲租居數載。母覺而孕。及期生余，遂名小英。 Her maternal uncle educated her: “He took heroic woman martyrs past and present and made them into lessons for the boudoir, offering detailed instruction on each and every example. As for classical prose and poetry,

18. Chenzhou is in modern-day Hunan, in Yuanling County.

19. See Fong, “Signifying Bodies.”

the models were all drawn from the sayings of heroic, chaste women. We did not dare follow other models” 取古今烈女閨訓，逐一詳誨。其古文詩歌，例皆烈女節婦語錄，他不敢從。 Schooled in staunch orthodoxy, she disapproves of the courage and valor of cross-dressing heroines like Mulan and Huang Chonggu: “For a woman to be among men involves compromising dangers, even if she preserves her chastity. That is why I heartily censure this” 以爲女子混跡男兒，縱完璧亦藏身危險，切切非之。

The preface refers to the Qing troops who abducted her as the “royal army” 王師 and betrays no anti-Qing sentiment in the account of the fighting between Qing forces and remnant loyalist resistance. “In the *jiawu* year [1654] the royal army swept through, and Chenzhou, because of its importance for opposing sides, could not ultimately meet the demands of both” 甲午王師掃蕩，辰以左右舉足實難兩全。 She is captured while hiding in the mountains with her mother. When she is offered to a commander surnamed Cao, she asks for a two-month reprieve in order to fulfill her vow of three years of abstinence, a devotional act she is undertaking because of her mother’s illness. The general, himself a filial son, “heard my words and wept, and actually adhered to our pact” 聞余言淚下，竟如約。 Du explains why she has not taken her life earlier: “It is not that I could not have died in the waves of Lake Dongting. I just could not bear to have my loyal heart submerged in the oblivion of desolate mist and untamed waters, without anyone knowing about it. This happened to be the time for prefectural examination, and the worthy men of Chu are gathered in the Wuhan area.²⁰ Even those gaining sway over Chu or pacifying it might be capable of special discernment. Further, there is bound to be someone from my hometown taking the examination” 蓋洋洋洞庭，余非不能死也。忍以一片丹心，投之荒煙野水中，遂無知者。時當大比，楚賢大夫居集黃鶴白雲間，即節鉞楚與鎮撫楚者，或具特識。且余里應選者亦必有人。 In other words, she places her hopes for the transmission of her story and final poems on examinees and Chu officials—men who supported and participated in the new order.

The preface concludes with her preparation for suicide:

20. Literally, “among the yellow cranes and white clouds,” alluding to Cui Hao’s poem “Huanghe lou.” See chap. 3, n. 72.

Today is the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. The commander rose in the morning and gave me a mirror. I bowed and accepted it, secretly praying: "He seeks union symbolized by the round mirror, I fear losing my chastity and becoming a broken mirror." ... By midday, I knew the inevitable was coming and said to the commander: "I am grateful for your beneficence. You have been so lenient. My only regret is that I lack the means to repay you. I know rudimentary composition, but did not dare speak about it. By now I am not going to hide it any longer. My mother was thrown into the lake by other troops. Now you and I are going to be joined in union, yet how could I be indifferent to the deepest ties of mother and child? I beg leave to borrow a piece of paper and compose an elegy and offer libation to her by the river. When that is over, I will be yours forever." The commander agreed and gave me brush and paper. I secretly smiled, "This is no elegy for my mother, just poems on ending my life so that this lamentable story of the ages can be passed on." I thus composed ten quatrains, wrapped the paper with an oiled sheet, and placed it next to my bosom. By nightfall, I came to the river to offer my elegy. Perhaps I could rise and fall with the huge waves of the great river flowing east and be spared dishonor. If the river god is sentient, he should embrace me in the roaring waves. As for the immortality of my name, it is not what I dare hope for.

是日六月廿四也。主帥晨起以一鏡贈余。余拜受。私祝曰：「彼求鏡圓，吾恐鏡破耳。」...日午，余知不免，因復語主帥曰：「感君恩，寬至此。恨含報無地。但余粗知筆墨，昔不敢言，今不再隱矣。余母爲他軍投之湖畔。今余與汝好合，骨肉之情，寧忍恕乎？敢借紙一幅，作祭文，江上弔之。祭畢，則終身偕老矣。」主帥諾。以紙筆給之。余私笑曰：「非祭母也，實自作絕命詞以傳千古傷心事耳。」因賦詩十絕。以油衣一幅，納之胸前。至晚，臨江祭母，滔滔大江東去，或得與波上下以免一身之辱耳。江神有靈，擁余怒濤驚浪中，得傳不朽，亦非敢望也。

Ten quatrains follow the preface (Tan Qian, *Beiyou lu*, pp. 338–39).

First poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 家鄉一別不勝情 | Ever since leaving home, my longing has become unbearable. |
| 此日含羞到漢城 | On this day, I arrived in Wuhan in shame. |
| 忽聽將軍搜刮令 | Suddenly word came that the general decreed a relentless search— |
| 教人焉敢惜餘生 | How dare I cherish what remains of my days? |

Second poem

征帆又說過雙孤

Forging sails have taken us beyond

Double Lone Peaks.

掩淚聲聲却夜烏
葬入江漁波密去
不留青塚在單于

The sound of weeping wards off the night crows.
Buried in the river fish, as waves ripple away,
I would not leave my green grave in Tartar lands.

Third poem

骨肉親辭弟與兄
依人千里夢長驚

I took leave of my brothers and closest kin,
Clinging to them in dreams, startled by the
interminable distance.

歸魂欲返家園路
報到雙親已不生

My returning soul wants to find the way home
And tell my parents that I am no longer living.

Fourth poem

厭聽胡兒帶笑歌
幾回腸斷嶺猿多

Weary of listening to the barbarians' laughing songs,
All too often I am undone
by the mountain gibbons' cries.

青鸞有意隨王母

The blue bird is intent
on following the Queen Mother,

空教人間設網羅

And the net is cast in vain in the human realm.

Fifth poem

遮身猶是舊羅衣
夢到瀟湘何日歸

What covers me is still the old silken garment.
Dreams take me to Rivers Xiao and Xiang:
when is the day of return?

遠涉風濤誰作伴

Traversing distance with wind and waves:
who would accompany me?

深深遙祝兩靈妃

From afar I invoke, with deep bow,
the two divine consorts.

Sixth poem

生小伶仃畫閣時
讀書曾拜母兄師

Tender youth, solitary in a painted pavilion:
I bowed to my mother's brother,
making him my teacher.

濤聲夜夜悲何極

Roaring waves, night after night,
grief without end—

猶記挑燈讀楚辭

I still remember trimming the lamp
and reading the *Verses of Chu*.

Seventh poem

閑時閨閣惜如珍

In those unhurried days in the boudoir,
I was cherished like a gem.

何事牽裾逐水濱
寄語雙親休眷戀
入江猶是女兒身

Why then am I driven, clutching lapels,
to the water's edge?
Send word to my parents: do not pine for me—
I enter the river with my person unsullied.

Eighth poem

生平猶是未簪笄
身沒江瀾歎不齊
河伯有心憐薄命
東流直繞洞庭西

A life in which my hair is not yet pinned up
Ends with my body sunken in waves:
I sigh for odds unjust.
If the Lord of the River pities my sad fate,
The river flowing east should go westward
around Lake Dongting.

Ninth poem

影照江千可勝悲
永辭鸞鏡斂雙眉
朱門空許成秦晉
死去相逢總不知

My reflection at the river's edge:
how to bear the sorrow?
My eyebrows lowered, I bid eternal farewell
to the phoenix mirror.
For naught was the promise of union
with the noble house:
Meeting beyond death, we will not recognize
each other.

Tenth poem

圖史當年強解親
殺身自古欲成仁
簪纓雖愧奇男子
猶勝王朝共事臣

In yesteryear, in the images and histories
I strove to grasp,
Are lives lost, since ancient times,
to perfect nobility.
Though I may lack the extraordinary man's
cap of distinction,
Still I far surpass his fellow officials
serving at court.

Charged with the pathos of urgent self-definition and self-revelation, these quatrains are direct and relatively unadorned. The ninth poem alludes to a betrothal, which, however, is not mentioned in the preface. There is also a discrepancy in tone: whereas the preface ameliorates the violence of the Ming-Qing conflict, the quatrains, marked by more intense grief and rancor, are unsparing in denouncing the conquerors and the collaborators. In the second quatrain, the speaker disdains the model of Wang Zhaojun, avowing her choice of suicide over life and death among her barbarian captors. Qing troops, dignified by the title

of “royal army” in the preface, are designated in the fourth quatrain as “barbarians” 胡兒, whose songs and laughter contrast with wrenching cries of the gibbons on peaks along the river, a common poetic trope that seems to refer here specifically to lamentation over one’s lost homeland. Comparing herself to the blue bird that follows the Queen Mother of the West, she mythologizes her suicide and turns it into religious transcendence that allows her to defy snares and bondage in the human realm (fourth poem). The religious imagery arguably echoes the reference to her mother’s dream in the preface.

The locality of Hunan is identified with ancient Chu in part because of Du’s childhood memories of reading *Verses of Chu*, whose connection with political allegory pervades the quatrains. Instead of employing the traditional, indirect “beauty and fragrant flora” imagery, however, the poet professes again and again the inevitability of martyrdom. Her model is Qu Yuan, putative author of the *Verses of Chu*, as well as the goddesses of the Rivers Xiao and Xiang—not the elusive deities that frustrate the shaman-poet in *Verses of Chu*, but the consorts identified as the daughters of Yao who follow their husband King Shun in death, their tears making the bamboo leaves of Xiao and Xiang speckled.²¹ The political meaning of preserving her chastity is most evident in the tenth quatrain, when she implicitly compares herself to Wen Tianxiang. Before his martyrdom, Wen left behind a famous profession of faith: “Confucius speaks of perfecting nobility, / Mencius speaks of choosing duty. / It is only by fulfilling duty to the utmost / That one attains nobility. / What does one learn / Studying the classics of the Sages? / From this point on, / I can perhaps be free from shame” 孔曰成仁，孟曰取義。惟其義盡，所以仁至。讀聖賢書，所學何事。而今而後，庶幾無愧 (*Song shi*, 418.12540). Confucius (*Analects*, 15.9) urges one to “give up life to perfect nobility” 殺身成仁, and Mencius (*Mengzi*, 6A.10) considers it imperative to “choose duty over life” 捨生取義. Du follows the exemplars from the classics and histories, just as Wen embodies the sages’ teachings. It is such resolution that earns her the moral high ground from which she denounces the collaborators, erstwhile Ming officials now serving in the Qing court. Such severity, however, departs from the conciliatory tone in the preface, which looks to Qing officials and scholars to spread her story and transmit her poems.

21. See chap. 2, p. 188.

The divergence in tone and perspectives calls into question the connection between the preface and the poems. Yet without the preface, we would have no wherewithal to establish the poet's identity. A mysterious "lady from Dongting" or "Chu maiden" is mentioned in a number of other works, but her identity is elusive, although telling details link her to the poet identified as "Du Xiaoying" in the preface cited above. Toward the end of "Two Chastity Martyrs of the Lu Family" ("Lushi er liefu zhuan" 盧氏二烈婦傳), Qian Qianyi's eulogy of two women who died resisting or forestalling violation by bandit rebels in 1644, Qian pays tribute to the innumerable women who died heroic deaths during the Ming-Qing transition. He laments how the vast majority of them sank into oblivion, and cites as example "the maiden from Chu":

In the fifth month of the *jianwu* year, an abducted maiden from Chu threw herself into River Han and died. Her corpse floated against the current up the Yangzi River. People from the south of River Xiang retrieved the life-like corpse and found ten poems on a white silk handkerchief tied to her left arm. When news of this reached Nanjing, Lin Gudu, Daoist of Rushan, respectfully recorded them. But ultimately we do not know this maiden's name.

甲午夏五月，楚女子被擄投漢江死。其屍逆流而上，湘南人援得如生，有詩十首，以素帕縛左臂。傳至白下，乳山道士林古度拜而錄之。然卒不知此女何姓氏也 (QMZ, 6:1294).

According to Qian's account, the poems are anonymous and did not circulate with a preface attached. Further, the poet is said to have drowned herself in the fifth month and not the sixth month of 1654, as stated in the preface.

Qian Qianyi mentioned that his friend Lin Gudu 林古度 (1580–1666), a well-known loyalist poet who took up residence in Nanjing, "recorded" the poems. Lin also printed and circulated them.²² This endeavor was comparable to his publication of *History from the Heart* (*Xinshi* 心史) written by the Song loyalist Zheng Sixiao (QJSCB, 2.282). Buried in an iron casket in 1283 and discovered at the bottom of a well at Chengtian Temple in Suzhou in 1638, Zheng's history became a potent symbol of

22. The ten poems cited above are included, with minor differences in wording, in Liu Luan's *Fengren shihua*, 4b–5a, under the entry "Xiang nǚ shí juéjù" 湘女十絕句. Liu notes that Lin Gudu wrote a postscript to these quatrains and had them printed.

tenacious loyalist lament that defied political adversities and the passage of time.²³ Lin placed these ten poems on the same par with Zheng's history: both testify to unyielding integrity in face of dynasty collapse. As for Qian Qianyi, by juxtaposing the women from the Lu family (victims of the rebels) with the Chu maiden (victim of Qing troops), he dilutes the anti-Qing implications of the Chu maiden's story—women's victimization threads through their experience of the Ming-Qing transition, and the many guises of the perpetrator turn attention to victimhood rather than the source of violence.

The historian Ji Liuqi recorded these as "Ten Poems by a Chaste Maiden" 貞女詩十首, dated autumn of 1654, after briefly recounting the story of how she defied her captors and drowned herself and how the poems were miraculously preserved among her clothes.²⁴ Again there is no preface or name attached to the poems, which came to his attention in 1661. He muses at the end that while the first nine quatrains powerfully convey her chaste determination, the last one "is no longer merely the voice of a cloistered maiden. She almost rivals Wen Tianxiang in embracing heroic martyrdom! What a pity that her name and provenance are not known" 則非閨秀口角，儼與文山爭烈矣。惜乎失其氏里。 Ji thus unequivocally affirms the significance of her suicide as political resistance.

The early Qing scholar-official and poet Shi Runzhang 施閏章 (1618–83) gives a briefer account in his *Poetic Remarks of Huozhai* (*Huozhai shihua* 蠓齋詩話) under the entry "Chastity Martyr of Dongting" 洞庭烈女. He introduces an eyewitness but erases all references to Qing troops: "Shi Tianhua of Wuhu, sobriquet Hecai, once moored his boat at River Han. A certain woman, coming from Dongting, drowned herself in the river. The local people buried her and obtained from her bosom a length of silk, with ten quatrains written on it. I hereby record six" 蕪湖施

23. See, for example, Gu Yanwu, "Jing zhong *Xinshi* ge" 井中心史歌 (1668), in *Gu Tinglin shi jianshi*, 5.913–19. Gui Zhuang and Qian Sule 錢肅樂 (1606–48) wrote about *Xinshi* when it was first discovered. Zhang Guowei 張國維 (1595–1646) printed it and built a temple for Zheng. (Gu and Gui were well-known loyalists; Qian and Zhang later died in anti-Qing resistance.) See Xu Shupi, *Shi xiao lu*, 2.165–66. The academicians of the Four Branches, however, cast doubt on the authenticity of *Xinshi*. Tan Qian believes that *Xinshi* was in circulation before its discovery in 1638 (*Zaolin zazhi*, p. 232).

24. Ji Liuqi, *Mingji nanlue*, 14.444–46.

天驊，字河采。嘗泊舟漢江。有女某氏，自洞庭來，投江死。土人瘞之，得胸前尺帛，書十絕句。今錄其六 (*Huozhai shibua*, pp. 384–85). Shi included only the second, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth quatrains. Did Shi omit the more forthright accusation of the perpetrator and the collaborator (first and last quatrains) because of his own position as a former Ming official now serving the Qing? Is there only room for grief but not deep rancor?

In Chen Weisong's *Writing Women* (FRJ, 33a–33b), which emphasizes her heroic martyrdom, “the woman from Dongting” was “caught in the chaos” 遭亂 and drowned herself at River Hanyang. Her corpse was carried to Shouchang, where the locals found the poems and buried her, “and all who heard about it vied to recite and pass on the poems” 聞者爭傳誦焉. After citing the second poem (with some variants) that avows inevitable martyrdom, Chen reproaches other women poets for their compromises: “The final note is tragic and heroic, and the style is fitting and beautiful. How is this inferior to the Han poet Ban Jieyu? If the likes of Wang Zhaojun, Cai Yan, and Lady Pistil from ages past were to read it, how could they not die of shame?” 結響悲楚，運格端好，詎在班婕妤下。令千古以下王嬙蔡文姬[琰]花蕊夫人流輩讀之，能無愧赧欲死. Chen also cites the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth quatrains (again with variants), and quotes Tang Yunjia 唐允甲, a former Ming official: “The maiden’s surname is Lin, her given name is Yuzhen. Some said she was from Xiangtan (Hunan), some said she was from my hometown [Xuancheng in Anhui]” 女姓蘭，名玉貞。或曰湘潭人，或曰，即吾邑人。²⁵

Wang Duanshu's *Complementary Canon* (MYSW, 21.3a–4a) records the second and the sixth quatrains under the title “Poems on White Silk” (“Bailing shi” 白綾詩), and lists as their author “a maiden from Hanyang,” adding a brief account of her abduction and suicide at age thirteen, the ten poems she left on white silk, as well as official recognition of her martyrdom. Beyond the usual minor discrepancies, the second half of the second quatrain departs significantly from the one cited above: “Buried in the river fish at the bottom of the waves, / I left no name to be bandied in vain” 葬入江魚波底後，不留姓字任人呼。

25. Chen Weisong cites “Gengwu laoren.” I am basing the identification of “Gengwu” as Tang Yunjia on Wang Shizhen, *Chibei outan* (WSZ, 4:3182). Tang hailed from Xuancheng.

If these lines are authentic, then the autobiographical preface was indeed added later. Or did the transmitter of these poems, on account of the poet's anonymity, turn inadvertent loss into deliberate disdain and anger by changing the lines? Wang's encomium for the Hanyang maiden is entwined with the castigation of men:

"Whenever the courage of scholar-officials is on the wane, the spirit of heroic loyalty between heaven and earth is concentrated in women. As for the Hanyang maiden, she was originally a fairy immortal fallen into the human realm; her name is on the jade tower in heaven. A precious star sank to light up a flame; her spirit wanders on the merciless river.²⁶ How heroic! Rare indeed! These two poems have endless resonance."

凡士氣不興而乾坤貞烈之氣多種[鍾]于婦人。若漢陽女子者，本瓊姝墮凡，名在玉樓。寶婺沈燄，魂游弱水。烈哉，難矣。二詩寓意無涯 (MYSW, 21.3b).

The most intriguing response to these ten quatrains came from Huang Zhouxing 黃周星 (1611–80).²⁷ A degree holder and an official under the Ming, Huang withdrew from public life after the fall of the Ming and made a living by teaching, writing, and seal carving. A versatile writer working in prose, poetry, and drama, he tests the boundaries of fact and fiction, illusion and reality, even as he exemplifies the choices and dilemmas of Ming loyalists.²⁸ In 1654, Huang wrote "Ten Poems Harmonizing with the Chu Maiden" ("He Chunü shi shishou" 和楚女詩十首) and explained in the preface:²⁹

The name and provenance of the Chu maiden are not known. A northerner sojourning in Chu claimed that, in the summer of the *jiannu* year, the maiden was abducted by troops and taken to the River Han, where she

26. Wu 婺 is one of the twenty-eight constellations in ancient Chinese astronomy. Also called Xunü 嫫女, it is often used as a term of praise for extraordinary women. In Zuo Si's "Shu du fu" 蜀都賦, a torch is thrown into Fire Well and a flame lights up 火井沈燄 (*Wenxuan* 4.177). What I translate as "merciless river" is literally "weak water" 弱水. It is the name of a river in *Shangshu* but also refers to water on which nothing would float in Buddhist texts.

27. Huang Zhouxing, *Xia Weitang bieji*, pp. 119–23.

28. Widmer, "Between Worlds." Also see Wai-ye Li, "Gardens and Illusions"; Zhang Yuling, "Huang Zhouxing."

29. Huang appends the Chu maiden's poems after his own poems with preface. In addition to minor discrepancies with the versions in *Beiyou lu* and *Mingji nanlue*, the sequential order of the fourth and fifth poems is reversed.

drowned herself. Her corpse drifted against the current for a thousand *li*, passed through Lake Dongting, and headed south. When a fisherman retrieved it, her fair face was lifelike. She was about fourteen or fifteen, with a white handkerchief tied tightly around her left arm. When it was untied, ten poems were found. People vied to copy and circulate them, and thus they reached Jinling [Nanjing]. I came upon them on Master Lin's fan. Upon reading the poems, one can surmise that she was from the River Xiang area. Under the desolate autumn lamp, I followed the same rhyme and wrote matching poems. Be it encomium or elegy, my shame is deeper than my grief.

楚女初不知姓名邑里。有燕客游於楚者云：甲午之夏，此女遭兵掠至漢江，赴水死。其屍逆流千里，越洞庭湖而南，爲漁人所獲，玉貌如生。可十四五，有素悅繫左臂甚固，發視得詩十首，人爭傳寫，遂達金陵。余得之林子扇頭，讀其詩咸意爲湘江女子也。秋燈蕭颯，依韻和之。頌歎誅歎，愧深于慟。（*Xiawei tang bieji*, pp. 119–20)

The supernatural detail here (the corpse drifting against the current) seems to literalize and exaggerate the last line of the eighth poem. Master Lin may well refer to Lin Gudu. Irrespective of Master Lin's identity, the encounter testifies to the poems' wide and rapid circulation, for which Lin Gudu's promotion and publication was doubtless responsible.

In his matching poems, Huang Zhouxing imagines the awed submission of deities who confirm the martyred poet's apotheosis: "Divine dragons and unearthly beings in eight realms all bow down together, / For this is the very epitome of literature and integrity" 天龍八部齊驚拜，箇是文章節義身 (7th poem). He compares her again and again to Qu Yuan, Wen Tianxiang (Wenshan), and Boyi and Shuqi ("the Guzhu martyrs") (*Xiawei tang bieji*, pp. 119–20):

Third poem

孤竹文山是弟兄
奸雄聞此定心驚
湘娥雖死何曾死
蜍志當年本不生

The Guzhu martyrs and Wenshan are her brothers:
Deviant powers, hearing of this, must be shaken.
The Xiang maiden, even in death, defies death.
Mere mediocrities, living on then, never did live.³⁰

30. The last line reads, literally, "Chu and Zhi, back then, never did live." It alludes to Yu Daoji's appraisal of characters in *Shishuo xinyu* (9.68): "Lian Po and Lin Xiangru, though dead for a thousand years, are still awe inspiring, as if they were alive. Cao Chu

Eighth poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 萬劫真容儼未笄 | Through endless kalpas, her true form retains the look of youth. ³¹ |
| 汗青重見女夷齊 | Boyi and Shuqi appear again, as maidens, in historical records. ³² |
| 鬼神但識西山事 | Spirits and deities know only of what happened on Western Mount: |
| 此是西山又向西 | This is westward of Western Mount. |

Boyi and Shuqi, whose stories comprise the first account in the biography section in Sima Qian's *Shiji*, were princes of the Guzhu kingdom. Opposed to the idea of “replacing violence with violence” 以暴易暴, they refused to accept the Zhou conquest of Shang and died of starvation on Mount Shouyang (also called Western Mount). Wenshan (line 1, 3rd poem) was the sobriquet of Wen Tianxiang, whose line, “keeping a loyal heart to shine through historical records” 留取丹心照汗青 (*Songshi*, 177.12539), is also echoed in the eighth poem (line 2). The Chu maiden's kindred spirits are thus emblems of integrity that inspired Ming loyalists. Even more heroic than these exemplars (“westward of Western Mount”), her immortality is a stinging reproach for those who “stole life.”

Fifth poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 字字分明正氣歌 | Every word is, unmistakably, the “Righteous Song.” |
| 光爭日月豈須多 | A light that rivals sun and moon, why does she need to say more? |
| 春蘭秋菊哀終古 | Spring magnolias, autumn chrysanthemums— a lament for all ages |
| 還勝投詩贈汨羅 | That surpasses throwing poems as a gift into the Miluo River. |

and Li Zhi, though right here, are languishing like beings beneath the Nine Springs.” Lian Po and Lin Xiangru were the heroic commander and minister of Zhao (ca. 4th–3rd c. BCE), respectively. Cao Chu and Li Zhi (ca. mid–4th c.) were officials who served without distinction.

31. Literally, the look of a young girl who had not undergone the hair-pinning ceremony 笄 at age fifteen (Zheng Xuan's annotation, in *Liji zhushu*, 2.37); this alludes to the eighth poem in the original series.

32. “Historical records” is here, literally, “sweated bamboo strips” 汗青, i.e., bamboo strips divested of moisture; they were used for writing in ancient times.

The Chu maiden's poems, like Wen Tianxiang's famous "Righteous Song," define an ethical imperative. Her words embody, like Qu Yuan's spirit, "a light that rivals sun and moon in brightness" 與日月爭光 (*Shiji*, 84.2482). In a poem lamenting Li Bo's exile, Du Fu imagines Li throwing poems into the Miluo River as a gift for Qu Yuan,³³ who drowned himself at Miluo. Such an act marks empathy and shared fate: Du Fu implies that Li Bo, like Qu Yuan, "had good faith but suffered suspicion, was loyal but was slandered" 信而見疑，忠而見謗 (*Shiji*, 84.2482). For Huang Zhouxing, this gesture pales beside the Chu maiden's suicide. Her identification with the poet of *Encountering Sorrow* is total and unsparing.³⁴

In the eighth poem, Huang Zhouxing speaks in her voice:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 玉折蘭摧此一時 | The jade breaks, the orchid is crushed: this is the moment— |
| 隨光正則是吾師 | Bian Sui, Wu Guang, and Qu Yuan are my teachers. |
| 江潭漁父非漁父 | The fisherman by the river is no mere fisherman, |
| 帝遣神收絕命辭 | But a spirit sent by the gods to collect the words ending my life. |

In *Zhuangzi*, Bian Sui and Wu Guang drowned themselves upon being offered kingship, condemning political violence as unjust and fearing the inevitable corruption of power (*Zhuangzi jishi*, 28.985–86). Both in *Zhuangzi* and *Shiji*, Bian Sui and Wu Guang are mentioned in connection with Boyi and Shuqi: "they would not tread the earth in an era that has lost the way" 無道之世，不踐其土 (*Zhuangzi jishi*, 28.985–88; *Shiji*, 61.2121–29). In "The Fisherman" ("Yufu" 漁父) in *Verses of Chu*, the exiled Qu Yuan encounters a fisherman who urges him to dispel his anguish by embracing Daoist detachment and reconciliation (*Chuci jizhu*, pp. 116–17). In Sima Qian's biography of Qu Yuan, "The Fisherman" is followed by "Embracing Sand" ("Huaisha" 懷沙), which pits the self against a malevolent world, and then the account of Qu Yuan's suicide—in other words, the vision of detachment is pitted against implacable idealism whose only possible conclusion is suicide (*Shiji*, 84.2486–90).

33. Du Fu, "Tian mo huai Li Bo" 天末懷李白, in *DS*, 7.403.

34. "Spring magnolias and autumn chrysanthemums" allude to *Encountering Sorrow*: "In the morning I drink dew drops dripping from magnolias, / By evening I dine on the fallen petals of autumn chrysanthemums" 朝飲木蘭之墜露兮，夕餐秋菊之落英 (*Chuci jizhu*, pp. 7–8).

No advocate of compromise or detachment, the fisherman who found the Chu maiden's corpse is instead an envoy sent by the gods to ensure the immortality of the "words ending [her] life."

Perturbed by the anonymity of the Chu maiden, Huang Zhouxing wanted to divine her identity through "spirit writing," but the plan did not come to fruition.³⁵ In the winter of 1654, he dreamed of speaking to his friends about the Chu maiden. In the dream one friend said her name was Li, and the other gave the girl's name as Lu Folian:

I could not help feeling vindicated, and took a brush to the desk to write down the three words 'Lu Folian.' That friend then said the character is not *fó* as in "Buddha," but the one with the bamboo radical. I pondered: among words with the bamboo radical, very few are pronounced *fó*. Perhaps this was a mistake for the character *fā*—I thus added *fā* next to *fó*, thereby preserving both meanings. That friend did not say anything. I woke up, wondered at it, and marked the occasion with a poem. From this point on, the anonymous Chu maiden got a name.

余不覺恍然。因援筆就案書盧佛蓮三字。此友復言佛字非是，乃上从竹頭者。余諦思竹部諸字，佛音殊少。或是筏字之譌，遂復注筏字於傍，兩義並存。此友無語。醒而異之。紀以一詩，自此楚女無姓字而有姓字矣。(Xianwei tang bieji, p. 121)

The careful deliberation in his dream, as well as the recording of possible variant characters, signals a quest for truth that accommodates doubts and uncertainties. The aura of religious significance pervades the possible words for the name—Fo 佛 (Buddha), Fa 筏 (the raft for reaching the shore of enlightenment), and Lian 蓮 (lotus) all have Buddhist associations, which Huang Zhouxing brings up in his poem, "Obtaining the Chu Maiden's Name in a Dream" ("Meng de Chunü xing" 夢得楚女姓, *Xianwei tang bieji*, p. 121):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 寶筏蓮臺佛國遊 | On the precious raft and lotus terrace, she roams in Buddha's realm. |
| 珊珊甲帳豈堪儔 | How could the spirit moving behind jeweled curtains be her peer? |
| 湘江水月身重現 | Like the moon's reflection in River Xiang, her form is again revealed: |
| 不是當年舊莫愁 | This is not the same Mochou from yesteryear! |

35. Huang Zhouxing participated in spirit writing sessions where a god or a ghost is supposed to write through a spirit medium; see "Xian ji zayong" 仙乩雜詠, in *Xianwei tang bieji*, pp. 128–29.

The evanescence and elusiveness of the Chu maiden link her to mystery and sublimation. But Huang is careful to delineate her as the embodiment of religious transcendence, as distinct from the divine women who combine seduction and instruction and who charge religion with romantic longing and erotic tension in the Chinese tradition. That is why Lady Li, whose ghost seems to be beckoning the pining Emperor Wu of Han behind jeweled curtains (*Hanshu*, 97A.3952), cannot be compared to her. The beautiful singing girl Mochou is said to come from Shicheng in Hubei. That locality, as well as imagistic association with the eastward flowing river in famous poems about her,³⁶ may explain the reference. Categorical lament of ephemeral beauty or mutability, however, would not suffice to capture the heroic pathos of the Chu maiden's story, hence the last line in Huang's poem. Her martyrdom distinguishes her from Mochou, a figure associated with love and finery.

In the spring of 1655, Huang Zhouxing again spoke to his friends about the Chu maiden. One of them, Lin Fengming, claimed that she came from his hometown (Anlu in Hubei), and that her name was Huang Qinglian 黃青蓮: "It was to escape from the chaos that she sojourned in Changsha. She was abducted by soldiers and threw herself into the river and embraced martyrdom—the account that has been circulating is no rumor. But the ten poems were written on oiled paper, not on a white silk kerchief" 因避亂僑居長沙，突遭兵掠，赴江盡節，前所傳一一不妄，但十詩題油楮上，非素悅 (*Xiawei tang bieji*, pp. 121–22). The minor discrepancies (her provenance and the medium of writing) actually heighten the broader sense of credibility, which Huang celebrates in four poems. Being from Hubei brings the maiden geographically closer to Qu Yuan, as Huang notes in his fourth poem (*Xiawei tang bieji*, p. 122):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 三楚精神屈宋魂 | The spirit of Chu, the soul of Qu Yuan |
| | and Song Yu: |
| 離騷日月至今存 | Encountering Sorrow, rivaling sun and moon, |
| | lives to this day. |

36. For example, Emperor Wu of Liang's famous *yuefu* ballad, "He zhong zhi shui ge" 河中之水歌, begins with this image: "The water of the river flows east, / The Luoyang maiden is named Mochou" 河中之水向東流，洛陽女子名莫愁 (LQL, 3:1520–21). Wei Zhuang's (836–910) "Yixi" 憶昔 uses Mochou as the symbol of past splendor: "And in the present chaos, all seems like a dream, / In the setting sun, you see only the river flowing east" 今日亂離俱是夢，夕陽唯見水東流 (*Wei Zhuang ji jiaozhu*, pp. 116–17).

| | |
|---------|---|
| 絲來湓女非湘女 | It had always been the maiden from River Yun, not River Xiang. ³⁷ |
| 雲夢從今不敢吞 | Henceforth the mist would not dare swallow Yunmeng Marsh. ³⁸ |

The famous mist engulfing Yunmeng Marsh, which lies to the north of Anlu, would not dare obscure the brilliance of the maiden's spirit. Huang is also surprised that his earlier dream, while not exactly accurate, is not too widely off the mark. Both names, after all, contain the word "Lian." Further, the maiden's surname seems to affirm kinship with Huang (*Xiamei tang bieji*, p. 122):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 謫仙崎號偶同行 | The banished immortal and he of wayward names by chance cross paths: |
| 夢裏先偷一字名 | He had stolen, in a dream, one word from her name. |
| 更訝無端聯氏族 | Even more surprising are the accidental lineage ties— |
| 恰如許渾對飛瓊 | Just like Xu Hun facing the divine Xu Feiqiong. ³⁹ |

After the fall of the Ming, Huang Zhouxing adopted some unusual sobriquets, including Luesi 略似 (Faint Resemblance), Banfei 半非 (Half False), Jiangjiu zhuren 將就主人 (Approximate Master), and Xiaocang daoren 笑蒼道人 (Daoist Laughing at Heaven). These names, which imply self-alienation or disjunction with the world, seem to bring him closer to the poet of uncertain name. Their common surname, a name that Huang adopted only in 1640, suggests an accidental kinship. (Huang Zhouxing ended up combining the name of his natal family, Huang, with that of the family that adopted him, Zhou.)

37. River Yun is in Hubei, River Xiang in Hunan.

38. Cf. Meng Haoran, "Lin Dongting zeng Zhang chengxiang" 臨洞庭贈張丞相: "Mist swallows [hovers over] Yunmeng Marsh" 氣吞(蒸)雲夢澤, in *Tang Song shi jiyao*, p. 438.

39. The Tang poet Xu Chan 許渾 (9th c.) dreams of visiting the immortal realm; there the goddess Xu Feiqiong orders him to compose a poem. He gives away her name in the second line, whereupon the goddess tells him to rewrite the poem (TPGJ, 70.433). Meng Qi tells the same story but features the poet Xu Hun 許渾 (8th c.) (*Benshi shi*, 2.16–17). The analogy here is based not only on the idea of a poet writing about a goddess who shares his surname, but also the mystery surrounding a goddess anxious to withhold her name.

In the winter of 1658, Huang met one scholar Xu from Hengyang, and again spoke about the Chu maiden:

Xu said disconsolately, “This was my younger sister. In the spring of the *jiannu* year, she was abducted in Hengzhou. When they reached River Han, she drowned herself. Before her death she had left ten poems on paper. Espying just then a lad bearing a pole with buckets of water, she pulled out a silver hairpin and gave it to him along with the poems. She instructed him: ‘Please send them to a literate gentleman.’ The lad presented them to his master, scholar Qu, and the poems thus circulated widely in Wuchang. The authorities heard about this and sent people to follow the current and try to retrieve her corpse, but they had no success. They then had the ten poems carved on a stele, setting it up outside the city gate of Hanyang.”

徐生慘然曰：「此吾妹也。以甲午春在衡州被掠至漢江，赴水死。死時留十詩于紙。適見擔水童子，乃抽銀釵并詩授之，囑云：煩寄與讀書相公。童子以呈其主人瞿生，遂盛傳於武昌。藩臬聞之，遣人順流收其屍，不獲。因礪碑鐫十詩其上，植之漢陽門外。」 (*Xianwei tang bieji*, p. 122)

Xu added that his sister was thirteen at the time, had been betrothed to the Wang family, and that her name was Qingluan 青鸞 (Blue Bird), as embedded in the third line of the fourth poem: “The blue bird is intent on following the Queen Mother.” Huang also learned that his friend Xu Lijie (*juren* 1636), the scholar Xu’s father, had died of sorrow for his daughter. Convinced that the story Lin Fengming told about “Huang Qinglian” was spurious, Huang Zhouxing entitled his earlier poems “Obtaining the Wrong Name for the Chu Maiden, four poems” (“Wangde Chunü xingming sishou” 妄得楚女姓名四首) and wrote six poems on “Obtaining the Real Name for the Chu Maiden” (“Zhende Chunü xingming liushou” 真得楚女姓名六首). Instead of being gratified by a sense of final resolution, however, Huang questions the shifting boundaries between fact and rumor, reality and illusion:

Alas, for this one Chu maiden’s name: I first dreamed of it, then received false information about it, and only now get to the truth of the matter. From Folian to Qinglian, and from Qinglian to Qingluan, it was like transmission by post. Strange indeed! That was why I wrote another six poems to mark the occasion. However, what constancy is there to bubbles and shadows? How do we know that Lin was actually wrong or Xu actually right? And how do we know that dreams are not real? That reality is not

a dream? I will wait for the day when I pass by Fangcheng and River Han and ask about it.⁴⁰

噫，一楚女姓名也，初夢得之，既妄得之，至是始得其真焉。乃繇佛蓮而青蓮，由青蓮而青鸞，若郵遞然，亦奇矣。因復爲六詩識之。雖然，泡影何常，惡知林之果妄耶，徐之果真耶。又惡知夢之非真耶，真之非夢耶。俟他日過方城漢水而問之。(Xianweitung bieji, p. 122)

With this new discovery, the Chu maiden's provenance moves again from Hubei to Hunan, and the image of religious transcendence shifts from Buddhism to Daoism.

First poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 吳楚乾坤倏不同 | From Wu to Chu, in an instant, another world unfolds. |
| 祝融粉碎洞庭空 | The god of fire smashes the emptiness of Lake Dongting. |
| 那知萬古貞魂宅 | Who could have known: the chaste spirit's abode is for all time |
| 卻在湘帆九面中 | Lodged among the nine sails on River Xiang. |

The god of fire, Zhurong, is associated with ancient Chu and Mount Heng, next to Hengyang, Xu Qingluan's hometown. To "smash emptiness" 粉碎虛空 is a common expression in Daoist self-cultivation, meaning to transcend the fixation on emptiness or detachment to attain a higher oneness with all things. Here the image seems to encompass Daoist enlightenment as well as rumors clarified.

The name Qingluan seems to turn her wish to be a celestial attendant into destiny:

Third poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 青鸞王母是前因 | Between the blue bird and the Queen Mother is karma of a former life. |
|---------|--|

40. Fangcheng and River Han are associated with ancient Chu. In *Zuo zhuan* Xi 4.1, p. 291, Guan Zhong enumerates Chu offenses during a Qi-Chu confrontation. Qi demands to know why King Zhao of Zhou "went south on a military expedition and did not return." The Chu minister Qu Wan replies, "You should ask about that at the banks of the river." Huang's proposition thus conveys the sense of hopeless quest for what is ultimately imponderable.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 漚槿塵緣總未真 | Mundane ties, like bubbles and transient blooms, are finally not real. |
| 環珮若歸明月夜 | If with tinkling pendants she returns on a moonlit night, |
| 應隨南嶽魏夫人 | She should be following Lady Wei of Southern Peak. |

“Bubbles and transient blooms” refer to Xu Qingluan’s short life and unfulfilled marriage destiny. It may also symbolize Huang Zhouxing’s own quest for the identity of the Chu maiden. He tries to attach her to a name and a place, even as she recedes beyond “mundane ties” to the realm of divinity. The third line alludes to Du Fu’s poem on Wang Zhaojun: “With tinkling pendants, her soul returns in vain” 環珮空歸月夜魂.⁴¹ Lady Wei is a Daoist goddess associated with Mount Heng (also called Southern Peak).⁴² Should the Chu maiden’s ghost return, she will find her rightful place with Lady Wei, unlike Wang Zhaojun’s spirit which can only indulge in futile rancor.

In this imaginative process whereby the Chu maiden as object of longing inspires dreams and earnest discussions, demonstrating how empathy and admiration can have both personal and social dimensions, the boundary between self and other is fluid. Huang finally establishes the Chu maiden’s identity as an old friend’s daughter, thus giving an intensely personal connection a social framework. Xu Lijie is said to die of grief mourning his daughter, and Huang imagines the father-daughter bond from her perspective:

Fifth poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 天遣奚童表孝貞 | Heaven sent a lad to make her filial piety and chastity known: |
| 讀書種子定鍾情 | She trusted a man of letters to be a soul of feelings. |
| 脫簪瀕死殷勤囑 | On the verge of death, she offered a hairpin with an earnest plea ⁴³ — |
| 祇爲高堂不爲名 | This will be for the sake of my parents, not my fame. |

41. Du Fu, “Yonghua guji” 詠懷古跡 (3rd of 5 poems), in *DS*, 17.876–77.

42. See Robson, *Power of Place*, pp. 184–212.

43. Literally, “she took off a hairpin and offered earnest instruction.”

Huang identifies with the scholar Qu, to whom these poems were entrusted. Their shared mission is to ensure memory of her martyrdom:

Sixth poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 千秋墮淚說遺蹤 | For ages hence people will shed tears as they speak of what she left behind. |
| 片石今看矗女宗 | On one stele, now for all to see, her example soars heavenwards. |
| 漫道朱陵峰七二 | Zhuling boasts too easily of its seventy-two peaks: |
| 直應添作七三峰 | Now with this addition, the peaks number seventy-three. |

In the first two lines, Huang compares the affective power of the Chu maiden's story to that of the Jin commander Yang Hu 羊祜 (221–78). He was so beloved that people who read the inscription of his merits and accomplishments on the stele in Xiangyang (in Hubei) would all inevitably shed tears, and the stele came to be called “Stele of Tearful Longing” (“Duolei bei” 墮淚碑). Her integrity is as inspiring as his concrete political achievements. In line 3, Zhuling 朱陵 or Zhuling tongtian 朱陵洞天 in Mount Heng is one of the thirty-six precincts of Daoist immortals. Famous for its seventy-two peaks, it can now claim an additional peak because of the stele's monumentality.

Carved by the Qing authorities, the stele demonstrates the flexible political meanings of chastity. Qing troops are called barbarians (or “tartar youths,” *bu'er* 胡兒) in the fourth poem by the Chu maiden as recorded in Tan Qian's *Record of a Northern Journey* and Ji Liuqi's *Mingji nanlue*; both circulated only as hand-copied manuscripts for most (or all) of the Qing dynasty. By the time Huang Zhouxing's writings were published as *Xianwei tang bieji* in 1688, the phrase was changed to the homophonous “archers” (*bu'er* 弧兒). With this sleight of hand the perpetrators' identity is more indeterminate (e.g., they could be the rebels, Ming renegade troops, or Qing troops).⁴⁴ More generally, the political implications of defending chastity can be manipulated, so long as the emphasis is on the victim rather than the perpetrator. In some ways it functions as an anchor, turning chastity into a virtue that defies political changes and endures despite political disorder.

44. However, the second poem would still suggest abduction by Qing troops.

Did the Chu maiden really exist? Was her name Du Xiaoying, Lin Yuzhen, Li shi, Lu Folian, Falian, Huang Qinglian, or Xu Qingluan? We will never know for sure. Supernatural touches, such as the corpse “drifting against the current for a thousand *li*” or its “lifelike” (i.e., non-decaying) aspect may lead us to question some of these accounts, and Du Xiaoying’s autobiographical preface may sound somewhat dramatized. In comparison, Xu Qingluan’s story seems more credible.⁴⁵ How do we know, however, that life does not imitate art? Shouldn’t we read Du Xiaoying’s dramatic gestures of offering libation to herself and her mother as self-conscious attempts to define a memory of her suicide? Huang Zhouxing is constantly playing with the margins of facts and fiction in his writings, so how do we know he did not fabricate his dreams and his discussions about the Chu maiden? (The sense of unrelenting quest here, however, does diverge from the more playful tone in his other writings that test the boundaries of illusions.) What seems certain is that the writings by abducted and victimized women aroused keen interest, and their contemporaries were often eager to posit some kind of connection with them, perhaps relying on rumors or resorting to fabrication. In 1680, Huang tried to drown himself and, after being rescued twice, finally starved himself to death.⁴⁶ He wrote “Poems on Ending My life” (“Jueming shi” 絕命詩), which are unfortunately no longer extant. The loyalist poet Du Jun comments in 1685 upon reading those poems: “The first poem explains his rancor, the second poem shows how he matches Qu Yuan and identifies with him” 其首章固已自明其憤之故，次章直欲與三閭大夫並駕齊驅。⁴⁷ Du Jun compares Huang Zhouxing to Qu Yuan, just as Huang compares the Chu maiden to Qu Yuan. The symbolic connection is unmistakable: both analogies view suicide as the vindication of rancor and moral principles, and both confirm the continuity between life and writings—or rather, between a truncated life and its fulfillment through final writings.

45. The *Gazetteer of Hengyang* (*Hengyang zhi* 衡陽志) from the Guangxu reign (1875–1908) records Xu Qingluan’s story and cites her ten poems. Wang Kaiyun mentions a stele with her story at the city gate of Hanyang, but Wang Baoxin could not find it in the early twentieth century (*Xu Hankou congkan*, 2.243–45).

46. See Ye Mengzhu (1624–after 1688), *Yueshi bian*, pp. 104–8; Widmer, “Between Worlds.”

47. Huang Zhouxing, *Jiuyan xiansheng yiji*, 4.20a–21a.

The *Gazetteer of Wugang Prefecture* (*Wugang zhou zhi* 武岡州志) includes a short biography of Du Xiaoying as well as “poems on her sash” 衣帶詩, which might have been added for a later edition issued in the Kangxi (1663) or the Qianlong (1756–57) reign. Like some of the above-cited accounts, this one includes supernatural details:

Du Xiaoying, maiden of Wugang, had the courtesy name Xiang'e. Some said she was from Chenzhou. At that time the great army had just arrived. Xiaoying was separated from her family while they were trying to escape; she stayed in hiding and got to Little Lone Mountain. Recognizing the inevitable, she composed ten quatrains, attached them to her sash, and drowned herself. Her corpse drifted upstream against the current. Days passed and her face remained lifelike. The poems on her sash could still be deciphered, and everyone marveled at this. We record five of the poems.

杜小英，字湘娥。武岡女子。或曰辰州人。時大兵初至，小英與家人逃竄相失。潛匿至小姑山，知不能脫，爲十絕繫衣帶間，赴水死。屍逆流上，經數日，顏面如生。帶間詩猶可讀，人咸嗟異。詩錄五首。(Wugang zhou zhi, 10.55b–56b)

The courtesy name “Xiang'e” 湘娥 (Xiang Maiden or Xiang Lady) may be derived from the reference to the goddesses of Rivers Xiao and Xiang in the fifth poem, or it may be taken from the third poem in Huang Zhouxing's harmonizing series. Little Lone Mountain as the place where she was drowned follows the logic of the second poem. According to this account, Du Xiaoying is not actually abducted; she commits suicide because she anticipates defilement. As mentioned above, political discretion often dictates that victims rather than perpetrators take center stage in accounts of the Ming-Qing transition. Du Xiaoying fears that dishonor is inevitable, and the narrative vindicates that reasoning, but “the great army” which causes such suffering seems almost abstract. If in the autobiographical preface in Tan Qian's account the image of the commander Cao already seems “sanitized,” here reference to any actual violence is dispensed with altogether. The *Wugang Gazetteer* records the first, second, seventh, eighth, and ninth poems. The exclusion of the more political fourth and tenth poems (comparable to Shi Runzhang's choice discussed above) confirms the need to stave off any suspicion of anti-Qing reference. The last line of the second poem is also changed to avoid any reference to “barbarians”: “I would not leave my green grave in Tartar lands” in Tan Qian's version becomes “I would not leave my green grave in the misty wilderness” 不留青塚點烟蕪.

Du Xiaoying's story is further depoliticized in Chen Ding's 陳鼎 (b. 1650) biography of her included in his *Lixi waizhuan* 留溪外傳.⁴⁸ Largely overlapping with the preface found in Tan Qian's *Record of a Northern Journey*, this account adds the names of Du Xiaoying's parents and emphasizes that she delays suicide in order to send word to them. Divergences from Tan's version are more notable—only six out of ten poems bear some resemblance to the series cited above.⁴⁹ Allusions to Wen Tianxiang as well as phrases like “barbarians” and “Tartar lands” are removed. The tenth poem in *Lixi waizhuan* echoes the third poem in Tan Qian's sequence: Du Xiaoying's spirit will return home and tell her parents of her fate. By the logic of the rearranged sequence, filial piety rather than loyalty or political resistance emerges as the ultimate ethical imperative.

When Chen Ding's “Biography of Du Xiaoying” is cited in the erotic novel *Just Let Me Talk Nonsense* (*Guwangyan* 姑妄言, ca. 1720s), the need to avoid subversive political references is even more evident. In this account, Qing soldiers are not mentioned at all. Chenzhou falls to troops led by the bandit rebel Zhang Xianzhong, and it is a renegade Ming general who abducts Du Xiaoying. In the novel, a maid named Daimu (meaning “in place of eyes”) reads this account to the blind courtesan Qian Gui, who after listening to the story resolves to extricate herself from transient pleasures and find a worthy mate.⁵⁰ The political meaning of Du Xiaoying's story fades in the celebration of her exemplary chastity, even as public transmission of her poems becomes a private reading in the pleasure quarters.

Niu Xiu 鈕琇 (1641?–1704), whose keen interest in the personages and events of the Ming-Qing transition is evident in his *Leftover Vessel* (*Gusheng* 觚賸, first collection, 1700 preface, second collection, 1702

48. See Chen Ding, “Biography of Du Xiaoying” (“Du Lienü liezhuan” 杜烈女列傳), in *Lixi waizhuan*, 15.3a–4a.

49. The second to sixth poems in *Lixi waizhuan* are close to the fourth, seventh, sixth, eighth, and ninth poems in Tan Qian's version. The tenth poem in Chen Ding's account is close to the third poem in Tan Qian's sequence.

50. Cao Qijing, *Guwangyan* (*Sinruixie huibao*, vols. 36–45), chap. 3, 361–68. Studies of *Guwangyan* include Chen Yiyuan, *Gudian xiaoshuo yu qingse wenxue*, pp. 175–76; Li Mingjun, *Jinji yu fangzong*, pp. 301–13; Martin Huang, *Desire*, pp. 251–70; Gary Gang Xu, “Ethics of Form.”

preface), tells the same story whose context diverges from the above-cited accounts.⁵¹ He links the chastity martyr Zhu who drowns herself to the Rebellion of the Three Border Principalities (1673–81), led by Chinese army leaders who had defected to the Manchus and facilitated the conquest in the 1640s and 1650s. As mentioned in the introduction, the suppression of that rebellion marked the final consolidation of Qing rule.

The maiden Zhu from Changsha was caught up in the rebellion led by Wu Sangui. Her whole family was dispersed. Helpless and with no one to turn to, she was abducted by soldiers. Because of her resolve and courage, the soldiers did not dare to molest her. When the boat reached Little Lone Mountain, she braced herself and jumped into the river. Her corpse drifted against the current for three days and three nights. It floated at the banks of her hometown, and she told her parents about it in a dream. Startled, her father rose and followed the traces and indeed found his daughter's corpse. With great grief they buried her; her fair face was lifelike. They untied her clothes and found ten quatrains next to her chest. Tightly sewn together, the words did not get wet. Now I will record the two with the greatest pathos.

長沙朱氏女，遇吳逆之亂，盡室星散，弱質無依，遂爲營卒所掠。氏志堅意決，眾莫敢犯，舟行至小孤山下，奮身投江。其屍逆流三晝夜，浮于故居水濱，夢訴于其父母，父驚起迹之，果獲女屍。慟哭收殮，玉顏如生，解其襦得懷間絕句十章。重鍼密紉，字不沾濡，今存其最警痛者二首。

The two poems correspond roughly to the second and sixth poems in the original Tan Qian series. Here the maiden's teacher is her mother, not her uncle, as noted in the sixth poem included in Tan Qian's *Record of a Northern Journey*. Since the perpetrator is now Wu Sangui's soldiers rather than Qing troops, the geographical context of dishonor moves from north to south. In place of the line, "I would not leave my green grave in Tartar lands" (second poem), there is "I would not leave behind a grave of shame at Gusu" 不留羞塚在姑蘇. The grave of shame alludes to a story about the wife of the Han minister Zhu Maichen, who asked to leave him when he was impoverished. As the story goes, when he rose in the world and refused to take her back, she died of shame and was buried at "the Grave of Shame." The iconic image is thus no longer

51. Niu Xiu, *Gusheng*, 8.156.

Wang Zhaojun's exile, but the shame of Zhu Maichen's wife: chastity and loyalty to the husband or betrothed becomes the overriding imperative.

Zha Weiren 查爲仁 (1694–1749) and Yang Jichang 楊際昌 (b. 1718) give similar accounts in their respective collections of poetic anecdotes.⁵² Yun Zhu in her anthology of women's poetry cites the story and the same two poems, as does Shen Shanbao in her *Remarks on Poetry by Notable Women*, but the main character reverts to “Du Xiaoying,” only here she is abducted during Wu Sangui's rebellion. Yun Zhu and Shen Shanbao also attribute the seventh poem in the series to another woman, Zheng Qixiu from Laiyang. Abducted by soldiers in 1654, she drowns herself in River Xiang. Her corpse, unblemished, floats only seven days later, with the poem written on red silk tied to her arm.⁵³

The multifarious transformations of this story demonstrate how chastity commands a broad range of symbolic meanings. Implications of political resistance can be diluted when an author puts greater emphasis on chastity and filial piety. The chastity martyr can be presented as a Ming loyalist, but she can become a Qing loyalist if the context is shifted to the Rebellion of the Three Border Principalities. Whether Qing troops act as perpetrators or representatives of a legitimate regime, the narrative logic remains the same. One may explain the shifting target with reference to political dangers and tightening censorship, but it may also simply demonstrate how historical memory survives through accommodations with the new order.

Private and Public Passions

In the examples from the last section, divergences spring from varying interpretations of historical testimony and martyrdom. The agency available to victimized women and the struggles articulated in their writings, however, reach beyond public displays of heroism to more personal choices in private life. Often the victimized woman staunchly avows moral principles, and we are not granted glimpses into her emotional turmoil, but there are also many poems mourning separation from her

52. See Zha Weiren, *Lianpo shibua*, no. 173, p. 515; Yang Jichang, *Guochao shibua*, p. 1663.

53. Yun Zhu, *Guochao guixiu zhengshi ji*, 1.20a–20b, 3.2b–3a; Shen Shanbao, *Mingyuan shibua*, 1.17b–18a.

family.⁵⁴ At the same time, being on the road, albeit against her will, may define a new space for action. There are stories of women who assume new identities or who fall in love under adverse circumstances. Romantic and marital relationships thwarted because of national calamity also collapse the boundaries between private and public realms in lamentations of lost love. In this context, accounts of romantic reunions have inevitable political implications; sometimes they are achieved as fantasies of recompense or reconciliation in the new political landscape. To explore this process, I will analyze poems attributed to two abducted women, Song Huixiang 宋蕙湘 and Song Juan 宋娟, the poetic responses they generated, and the play that gives a happy ending to their tragic stories, Ding Yaokang's *Fan of West Lake*.

In his *Record of a Northern Journey* Tan Qian includes "Poems on the Wall of South Gate at Xinle County" ("Xinle xian nanguan tibi" 新樂縣南關題壁):

I was simply a helpless woman who lived by the River Huai—provincial, limited, and naïve. Caught up in the raging wars of the *wuzi* year [1648], I was taken north by a brutal Manchu man. In the *renchen* year [1652], he brought me along for their southward campaigns. And then I encountered by chance this man—he lifted his brow and eyes, which overflowed with emotions, showing a spirit purer than lone orchids. Alas, who was this striking man? Lamenting my sad fate, I composed these poems: "Going north, coming south, I have wondered in vain: / How long am I to bear the burden of frontier sorrow? / My heart yearns most of all for the Han emperor, / But following the Tartar chief, I dare not come." "A fleeting encounter, yet we harbor clandestine passions. / A pact sealed by our gaze: how can I fear exposure any longer? / Everything in my heart, all too clear, all too wrong— / If only I could, facing you in bed, tell you all."

妾本淮上弱質，僻陋而無心。戊子（1648）遭兵燹，滿之狂丈夫，以我北去。壬辰（1652）復挾我南征。過此偶遇之子，盱衡之間，情溢于露，氣幽于蘭。嗚呼，此誰氏之美也。嗟予薄命，感而賦此。「北去南來空自猜，邊愁爲膺幾時懷。妾心最慕漢天子，自將單于不敢來。」「造次相逢若相私，目成那復畏人知。胸中歷歷不然事，可得對牀說與伊。」(Tan Qian, *Beiyou lu*, p. 399; Tan Qian, *Zaolin zazhu*, p. 289)

54. For example, in a poem left on the wall in the poststation at Zhuozhou, a woman explains why she cannot kill herself because she wants to see her child and husband again (Xu Qiu, *Xu benshi shi*, p. 306).

By traditional standards, these poems are so raw and so forthright that they flout rules of decorum. Driven north and south, this woman is at the mercy of her Manchu captor, yet a chance encounter ignites her passion. In an era when survival seems accidental and control over one's fate is elusive, the transgression of clandestine passions seems insignificant in comparison, hence the line: "A pact sealed by our gaze: how can I fear exposure any longer?" Moreover, since her captor is Manchu and her lover is Han Chinese, the secret passion she boldly reveals can acquire a political dimension, whereby the idea of Han versus barbarian justifies her choice.

Anguish over domestic woes is a recurrent theme in poems on walls by women. In times of political crisis, personal misfortunes affecting one's family 家難 merge with, or are submerged within, national disaster 國難, and lamentation traverses boundaries of private and public passions.⁵⁵ Song Huixiang's widely circulated poems, which invited numerous harmonizing compositions, constitute a notable example. Various identified as a palace lady from the Hongguang court or a Qinhui courtesan,⁵⁶ she is said to have been abducted by Qing troops and left poems on the post station at Yecheng, Ji County or Weihui Prefecture. Here is the version cited by Yu Huai in *Plank Bridge* (BQ, 72):

First poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 風動江空羯鼓催 | Urged on by barbarian drums, wind sweeps the empty River. |
| 降旗飄颭鳳城開 | Banners of defeat flutter, as the Phoenix City opens. |
| 將軍戰死君王繫 | The generals died in battle, the ruler is held captive— ⁵⁷ |
| 薄命紅顏馬上來 | The ill-fated beauty on horseback has come. |

55. On poems on walls by women, see Zeitlin, "Disappearing Verses"; Gōyama, *Min shin jidai*, p. 496–516.

56. See Ji Liuqi, *Mingji nanlue*, 4.227–28; *MYSW*, 1.11b–13a; *BQ*, 72; *FRJ*, 28b; *SG*, 12.6a–6b; Shi Runzhang, *Huozhai shibua*, p. 384; Xu Qiu, *Xu benshi shi*, p. 328.

57. Cf. Shi Runzhang: "The general did not fight, the ruler is held captive" 將軍不戰君王繫 (*Huozhai shibua*, p. 384); Chen Weisong: "The ruler came down the palace hall, the general died" 君王下殿將軍死 (*FRJ*, 28b). *Complementary Canon* has "war drums" 戰鼓 instead of "barbarian drums" (*MYSW*, 1.11b–13a).

Second poem

| | |
|---------|---|
| 廣陌黃塵暗鬢鴉 | Yellow dust on the broad path dims her crow-black tresses. |
| 北風吹面落鉛華 | North wind blows the powder and blush off her face. |
| 可憐夜月箜篌引 | Pity the “Song of the Harp” on a moonlit night— |
| 幾度穹廬伴暮笳 | How many times, under the yurt, did it accompany the evening fife? |

Third poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 春花如綉柳如煙 | Spring blossoms like embroidery, willows like mist: |
| 良夜知心畫閣眠 | A lovely evening with the beloved asleep in a painted pavilion. |
| 今日相思渾似夢 | And for now, the longing is almost dreamlike, |
| 算來可恨是蒼天 | Only I figure what invites rancor is the blue yonder. ⁵⁸ |

Fourth poem

| | |
|---------|--|
| 盈盈十五破瓜初 | She is all of fifteen, in the first flowering of youth— |
| 已作明妃別故廬 | Already the Bright Consort, bidding farewell to her old home. |
| 誰散千金同孟德 | Who will equal Cao Cao and give away a thousand gold pieces |
| 鑲黃旗下贖文姝 | To ransom this Cai Yan under the embroidered yellow banner? ⁵⁹ |

Many matching poems simply focus on the pathos of Song Huixiang's sad fate.⁶⁰ But the political dimension of Song's poems is unmistakable. The “Song of the Harp” (“Konghou yin” 箜篌引) mentioned in the

58. In *MYSW*, this is the second poem. The third line reads: “I secretly ponder how a lifetime passes like a dream” 暗想百年渾似夢 (*MYSW*, 1.12b).

59. In *MYSW*, 1.12b–13a, the second poem is the fourth poem in the series: it has “rain” 雨 instead of “face” 面, “abandoned hut” 荒廬 instead of “yurt” 穹廬. The fourth poem appears as the third poem. It has *qi* 齊 (rival, equal) instead of *tong*. The last line is politically more neutral: “To assiduously send an envoy to ransom Cai Yan” 慇懃遣使贖文姝.

60. See the poems by Xu Zhen (17th c.) and You Tong 尤侗 (1618–1704), in Xu Qiu, *Xu benshi shi*, p. 328.

second quatrain is a Han ballad. Also called “Lord, Please Do Not Cross the River” (“Gong wu duhe” 公無渡河),⁶¹ it may allude here to the sad fate of the Hongguang emperor after he “crossed the River” and headed north. Ji Liuqi records the first and second of these poems in *Mingji nanlue*, and places them between the news of the Ming princes’ execution in the fifth month of 1645 and the account of Southern Ming ministers and common people who died as martyrs or who escaped and did not surrender (*Mingji nanlue*, 4.227–28). According to this narrative sequence, the iconic image of “the beauty on horseback” sums up political failures and dynastic collapse.

The matching poem by the hero of anti-Qing resistance, Zhang Huangyan, paints an even more distressing picture of subjugation undignified by resistance (*Zhang Cangshui ji*, p. 113):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 獵火橫江鐵騎催 | Flames of war, hastened by the iron hoofs, ranged across the River, |
| 六朝鎖鑰一時開 | The chains and locks of the Six Dynasties opened in the same instant. |
| 玉顏空作琵琶怨 | In vain did the fair one express rancor on the lute, |
| 誰教明妃出塞來 | Who was it that drove the Bright Consort to go beyond the frontier? |

Zhang’s poem engages in a dialogue with Song’s poems through shared allusion to the Tang poet Liu Yuxi’s famous poem, “Thinking of the Past at Western Frontier Mountain.”⁶² “Banners of defeat flutter, the Phoenix City opens” in Song’s first poem echoes Liu’s fourth line, “Banners of defeat, in one sweep, emerged from the Stone City” 一片降幡出石頭. Here Zhang uses phrases like “ranged across the River” and “chains and locks” to allude to the third line of Liu’s poem: “Interminable iron chains sank to the River’s bottom” 千尋鐵鎖沉江底 (*Tang Song shi juyao*, 5.610–11). The implicit dialogue turns one woman’s plight into the emblem of defeat, which in turn sets off castigation of the Southern Ming.

From another perspective, the “Song of the Harp” is a wife’s lament for a husband’s death—the contextual materials claim that she follows her heedless husband in death—and is associated with love and conjugal devotion. Song’s third poem is especially reminiscent of “boudoir long-ing” in the poetic tradition. Wu Qi wrote two matching poems that dwell

61. LQL, 1:255–56.

62. Cf. chap. 2, pp. 121–22.

on the pain of separation from one's beloved (*SG*, 12.6a–6b). Wang Duanshu, in her series “Matching the Palace Consort Song Huixiang’s Four Rhymes, twenty-eight poems” (“*Ci gongfei Song Huixiang siyun ershiba shou*” 次宮妃宋蕙湘四韻二十八首, *YHJ*, 13.10b–15b), also reads Song’s quatrains as love poems. Wang’s first quatrain imagines the moment of separation:

| | |
|---------|--|
| 奔馬悲嘶軍令催 | Urged on by the army’s commands, galloping horses neigh in grief. |
| 舞衣零落綠鬟開 | My dance clothes are tattered; my dark tresses disheveled. |
| 空庭月照驚殘夢 | In the empty courtyard, moonshine startles what remains of a dream: |
| 疑是君王秉燭來 | I seem to see the emperor coming, candle in hand. |

The quatrain begins with Song Huixiang’s shame and suffering when she was taken away, but ends with her longing for the emperor, or rather, her imagination of the emperor’s lingering regard for her. The poems remembering lost love in the series use imagery from palace poetry, as in the second quatrain:

| | |
|---------|--|
| 題詠君王含笑催 | The emperor, with a smile, urged me to inscribe a poem: |
| 烏絲乍捲爲奴開 | Opening for me the paper with dark silk border that abruptly curled up. |
| 裁雲不解長門怨 | I pondered elegant words, not knowing the rancor of abandonment. |
| 今識胡歌塞上來 | Only now do I recognize the tartar songs coming from the frontier. |

In Wang Duanshu’s imagination, imperial favor is expressed through the refinement of literary creation and appreciation. This is a palace lady for whom the usual trope of the pining neglected woman does not apply, and only “tartar songs” can impose separation. While standard palace poetry uses ornate, sensual imagery as a backdrop for feminine longing, here it defines the context for a ruler yearning for lost love, his captivity and confinement making for a homology with Song Huixiang, as in the twenty-seventh quatrain:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 淡掃蛾眉寵愛初 | In the first flush of imperial favor, she lightly brushed her eyebrows |
| 香椒彩壁貯金廬 | In the golden chamber, its painted walls fragrant with pepper. |

| | |
|---------|----------------------------|
| 今宵雨暗燈花滅 | Tonight, in the dim rain, |
| | as the lamp wick dies, |
| 夢醒君王憶舊姝 | The wakeful emperor |
| | remembers his former love. |

The word “come” (*lai* 來) in the line “The ill-fated beauty on horseback has come” (Song’s first quatrain) signals exile and rupture: the abducted woman laments the irreversible passage from Han to barbarian lands. In Wang Duanshu’s matching poems, however, the word “come” indicates how the emperor and Song Huixiang defy distance and celebrate their communion in the realms of memory, dreams, and imagination:

| | |
|---------|--|
| | Third quatrain |
| 漸遠君王煙樹隔 | In the receding distance, |
| | misty trees block the emperor. |
| 青山恨擁白雲來 | Enveloping blue mountains with regret, |
| | the white clouds come. |

| | |
|---------|---|
| | Fourth quatrain |
| 妾心甘傍君王死 | Gladly I embrace death by your side: |
| 魂魄依隨舊路來 | My soul, following old roads, would still come. |

| | |
|---------|---|
| | Fifth quatrain |
| 鍼書難寄煩傳示 | Letters are impossible, so please send word for me: |
| 道妾初從漢苑來 | Say that I have just from the Han palace come. |

| | |
|---------|--|
| | Sixth quatrain |
| 承恩衣畔香猶在 | Fragrance still lingers on the clothes |
| | that knew imperial favor. |
| 怎得君王帶笑來 | How could I have the emperor come smiling? |

| | |
|---------|--|
| | Seventh quatrain |
| 香盟莫逐胡煙斷 | Do not let the barbarian mist break a solemn pact: |
| 未了今生俟再來 | For what is left unfinished in this life, |
| | wait till we again come. |

| | |
|---------|---|
| | Ninth quatrain |
| 同行五百淮河水 | Five hundred on the same journey, |
| | across the Huai Waterway, |
| 夢杳瀟湘帝子來 | Come in a distant dream, like the goddesses |
| | of Rivers Xiao and Xiang. |

Eleventh quatrain

| | |
|---------|------------------------------|
| 珊珊環佩歸秋月 | The tinkling pendants |
| | return with the autumn moon, |
| 落落淮河照妾來 | The desolate River Huai |
| | shines on me as I come. |

In Wang's poems, Song Huixiang's compassion for the deposed emperor leaves little room for self-pity, or rather, their shared fate of exile and displacement makes for total empathy:

Thirteenth quatrain

| | |
|---------|---|
| 回首宮牆噪暮鴉 | I look back to the days when evening crows |
| | cawed along palace walls: |
| 君如垂柳妾如花 | You were like the swaying willows and I, |
| | the willow blossoms. |
| 柳條難繫君王住 | The willow branches cannot keep the emperor |
| | in his place, |
| 華泊荒臺對晚茄 | Blossoms drift on the desolate terrace |
| | as they face the evening fife. |

In Wang's seventeenth quatrain, Song compares herself to the Tang consort Yang Yuhuan. The point, however, is not her self-perception as a femme fatale, but her empathy with the emperor who has lost his beloved: "Who is his companion in the patter of light rain? / The barbarian fife left him in bitter grief for the fair one crushed at Mawei" 細雨淋玲誰是伴，馬嵬玉碎恨胡笳。

Wang Duanshu must have known that the historical Hongguang emperor bore little resemblance to the tragic lover of deep feelings in her poems. In *Complementary Canon*, Wang identifies Song as a palace lady. It is hard to believe that a palace lady would be thus singled out for favor—perhaps that is why Wang Duanshu "promoted" her to the rank of "consort" in this series. For Wang to idealize and romanticize this relationship between Song and the emperor is almost a kind of "literary recompense" for the sufferings of the abducted woman. Wang's twenty-eighth quatrain (the last in the series) confirms this reading:

| | |
|---------|--|
| 百結愁腸落筆初 | My inside knotted in grief, |
| | I started writing: |
| 才人後或遇匡廬 | Perchance the woman of talent |
| | will find deliverance at Mount Lu. |
| 癡情若也賡殘韻 | If one with deep feelings can continue |
| | the fading rhymes, |
| 強似千金贖去姝 | It would be better than being ransomed |
| | for a thousand pieces of gold. |

Wang imagines Song's hope to be read by an empathetic fellow poet; this is also Wang's attempt to define the meaning of her own creation. Poems on walls are often messages seeking responses or possibly succor. For the abducted woman, however, the chance of reunion with her family is slim, and often "ransom" merely means a transaction whereby an unknown buyer pays her captor. An empathetic reader composing harmonizing poems might have been the most meaningful human connection she could hope for. To create for Song Huixiang a spiritual realm of mournful beauty, wherein her emotional connection with a loving emperor is sustained by dreams, memory, and imagination, is a kind of recompense. That the object of her love is the ruler also imbues private longing with public significance, even as her displacement marks dynastic collapse.

Wang Duanshu's harmonizing poems are premised on empathy and on subjective projection of an imagined romance between her and the emperor, but her comments upon the inclusion of Song Huixing's poems in *Complementary Canon* emphasize rhetorical strategy and practical calculations:

Emperor Wu of Wei [Cao Cao] was a person of deep feelings; he was not merely greedy and ruthless. That he killed Kong Rong (153–208) was, to paraphrase Su Shi, because "if Cao Cao had not killed Kong Rong, Kong Rong would have killed Cao Cao." As for Yang Xiu (175–219) and Mi Heng (173–98), they set too much store by their talents and were flip-pant and disdainful. Indeed they were not good at hiding their abilities. For Cao Cao to ransom Cai Yan with a thousand pieces of gold, making her father Cai Yong grateful in the underworld, was heroic and generous. Huixiang hoped for deliverance like Cai Yan, and used Cao Cao's example to encourage potential ransomers—that was a strategic step designed to move people. One reads with helpless anger the first poem on the fall of the ruler and of the country. The third poem uses only one word, "rival," to goad people to action. Huixiang excelled in persuasion.

魏武情深，不是一味貪狠。其殺北海，子瞻所謂操不殺融，融殺操也。至于德祖、正平，恃才輕躁，殊未善藏其用矣。千金贖琰，使中郎夜臺感慟，不愧英心厚道。蕙湘欲希文姬事，以孟德勵之，自是動人勝著。首作君國云亡，讀之氣竭。其三只一「齊」字激動世人，蕙湘善於游說。(MYSW, I.12a)

In her eager approbation of Cao Cao's ransoming of Cai Yan, Wang Duanshu questions his negative image. Quoting Su Shi out of context,

she claims that Cao Cao killed Kong Rong out of self-defense.⁶³ She further criticizes Cao Cao's victims, such as Mi Heng and Yang Xiu, decrying their arrogance that brought calamities upon themselves. Empathizing with Song Huixiang's hope to be ransomed like Cai Yan, she affirms Song's strategic rhetoric in creating an idealized image of Cao Cao to encourage emulation. The temporal progression of Song's poems thus unfolds as lamentation over the present (first and second poems), longing for the past (third poem), and hopes—or even plans—for the future (fourth poem). The ideal reader of her poems would not be the ruler but someone who could ransom her. In the context of contemporary historical circumstances, that person would be her new master (or new lover). Wang Duanshu seems to consider this a reasonable trajectory, and does not evoke traditional mores that demand of a woman absolute loyalty to her original mate.

Wang Duanshu is inconsistent on this issue of "seeking ransom." *Complementary Canon* records "Poem Written on a Wall during a Journey" ("Nǐlǚ tǐbǐ" 逆旅題壁) by Wu Fanghua 吳芳華 (mid-17th c.) (*MYSW*, 21.7b–8a):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 胭粉香殘可勝愁 | Fragrance fades from rouge and powder with grief unbound. |
| 淡黃衫子謝風流 | Pale yellow clothes yield no aura of refinement. |
| 但期死看江南月 | My only wish is to die beholding the moon of Jiangnan, |
| 不願生歸塞北秋 | I do not want to return alive to autumn north of the frontier. |
| 掩袂自憐鴛夢冷 | Brushing away tears with my sleeves, I pity my cold, lonely dreams. |
| 登鞍誰惜楚腰柔 | As I climb up the saddle, who will cherish my fragile, slender frame? |
| 曹公縱有千金志 | Even if Lord Cao had the will to offer a thousand pieces of gold, |
| 紅葉何年出御溝 | When will the red leaves come out of the imperial moat? |

This poem also appears in Ji Liuqi's *Mingji nanlue*, where it is dated 1645 and appended to a short biographical account:⁶⁴

63. In Su Shi's encomium on Kong Rong ("Kong Beihai zan bing xu" 孔北海贊并序), he explains the mutual antipathy of Kong and Cao as inevitable, with Kong's integrity pitted against Cao's ruthlessness (*Dongpo quanji*, 94.2b–3a).

64. Wu Qi wrote a deeply sympathetic matching poem that focuses on Wu Fanghua's grief over lost love and lost homeland (*JG*, 12.3b–4a).

Wu Fanghua was the wife of the scholar Kang. Three months after they got married, the Qing army bore down on Qiantang. Following her husband, she tried to escape the chaos in Tianzhu, but was captured by marauding soldiers and ended up with a certain You of the Yellow Banner. She left a poem on the wall during her journey and also wrote, “People who later pass by this place should send word to my husband: he should look for me between the white willows and the green grave.” Those who saw this grieved for her.

吳芳華，文學康某婦也。結褵三月，清兵迫錢塘，從夫逃亂天竺，道爲亂軍所獲，屬正黃旗下尤某。題詩旅壁有云：「後之過此者爲妾謝藁砧，當索我於白楊青塚之間也。」見者哀之。
(*Mingji nanlue*, 5.284–85)

By this account, Wu Fanghua was prepared to die and wanted to use the poem to convey the message of her devotion to her husband. But Wang Duanshu divines in the last two lines of Wu Fanghua’s poem her desire to be ransomed, and faults her for wavering: “Alas! In the wake of the calamitous change, those like Fanghua are really pitiable! The third and fourth lines convey the sense of ‘not wanting to enter the Jade Pass alive,’⁶⁵ which is contradicted later. It is indeed difficult to persevere to the end. I have recorded this to admonish later generations” 嗚呼！滄桑後如芳華者，可勝歎哉。三四句有不願生入玉關之意。後復矛盾。甚矣，有終之難也。錄之以勵後人 (*MYSW*, 21.7b–8a).

In the same chapter, Wang includes “Poems Offered in the Marketplace” (“Shoushi shi” 售市詩) by a woman from the River Xiang area. The biographical preface claims that, “Having been abducted, she composed three poems and asked a servant boy to offer them at the marketplace, making clear her intention to die. A man from Chu gave the money to ransom her, and she survived” 蒙難被略，賦詩三章。命小童售於市，以明必死。有楚人贈貲贖還，姬得不死 (*MYSW*, 21.8a–8b). Wang Duanshu opines that although Cao Cao’s ransom of Cai Yan was admirable, union affords but transient gratification, and it is perhaps ultimately more honorable to protest abduction with suicide (*MYSW*, 21.8a–8b). In yet another example, Wang criticizes a woman conveying the hopes of ransom in her poems as “merely deepening her shame” 徒增醜耳 and empathizes instead with her dishonored husband

65. Alluding to Ban Chao’s (32–102) memorial in *Hanshu* (47.1583): “I do not dare hope to reach the principality of Wine Springs. I just wish to enter the Jade Pass alive.”

(*MYSW*, 21.8b–9a). This perverse reasoning contradicts the more forgiving perspective that obtains in Wang's account of Song Huixiang. The inconsistencies may well reflect divergent contemporary attitudes.

Whereas Wang Duanshu puts the onus of moral choice on victimized women, these women sometimes eschew shame and focus instead on the responsibility of men, as in "Inscribed on the Walls of Qingfeng Inn" ("Ti Qingfeng dian" 題清風店) by Song Juan 宋娟 (mid-17th c.) (*MYSW*, 21.6b–7b):⁶⁶

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | 妾命如朔風 飄然振落葉 不入郎羅幃 乃逐塵沙陌 | My fate is akin to the fallen leaf Adrift in the driving, wintry wind. Instead of entering the silk bed curtains of my love, I was cast out on the paths of sand and dust. |
| 5 | 妾本良家兒 流落平康劫 十三工秦箏 十五好筆墨 尊前柔聲歌 | Originally a child of good family, I sank to the debasement of the pleasure quarters. At thirteen I excelled at the Qin lute, By fifteen my love was for brush and ink. Gentle songs in front of the wine flask |
| 10 | 淚濕江州褶 | Earned the tears wetting the Jiangzhou official's lapels. |
| | 人謂妾顏好 妾謂前生孽 武林遇公子 知心不徒悅 | People called me beautiful, I call this the evil karma of a former life. At Wulin I met the noble young man Who was a kindred spirit: it was no mere infatuation. |
| 15 | 忽爾天地崩 遂令山川別 一爲俗子羈 再爲干戈綫 啾啾破車中 | All of a sudden heaven and earth collapsed, And we were separated by mountains and rivers. Once held captive by a vulgar man, I was again caught in the thick of battle. From the dilapidated carriage, my mournful cries arise, |
| 20 | 塵土滿髻髻 塞馬嘶寒風 元(玄)冰眞慘裂 披擲一羊裘 皴肌冷如鐵 | Plastered over my chignon are dust and mud. Frontier horses neigh in the cold wind, The black ice is crackling, unforgiving. With a sheepskin as cover, My coarsened flesh is cold as metal. |
| 25 | 晝則強權笑 夜則潛哽咽 | By day I am forced to feign gladness, At night I secretly weep. |

66. Qingfeng is in modern-day Dingzhou, in Hebei Province. Wang Duanshu comments: "In her grief and rancor she is like Cai Yan, but her longing is tender. She does not seek finely crafted words, but then why are finely crafted words even necessary?"

- 誰謂文姬哀
文姬猶返闕
誰謂明妃怨
30 猶能封馬鬣
而我命薄妾
終當染鋒血
胡不即就死
心爲公子結
- Who says that Cai Yan was pitiable?
Cai Yan yet returned to the Han court.
Who says that Wang Zhaojun had rancor?
She yet got her modest grave.
And I, the ill-fated woman,
Must finally stain the blade with blood.
Why did I not die right away?
The noble young man has left my heart tied in
a knot.
- 35 公子爾多情
豈忘西湖月
公子爾多智
豈不諒我節
公子爾任俠
40 忍妾委虎穴
公子爾多交
豈無豪傑
媒灼扇上詩
顛沛不忍撇
- Noble one: you are a soul of feelings,
How can you forget the moon of West Lake?
You are ever so clever,
How can you not forgive my compromise?
You are one valiant as a knight,
How can you bear to leave me in the tigers' lair?
You have ever so many friends,
How can there be no heroes among them?
Our matchmaker is the poem on the fan
Which I could not bear to leave behind through
all my wanderings.
- 45 忍死一相待
悲酸難再說
又聞洞山方
風流當世杰
爾既善顧郎
50 何不一救妾
- I brave death to wait for you,
Of my grief and pain it is hard to find more words.
I also heard that Fang from Dongshan
Is a dauntless hero of our time:
Since you look upon Gu lang as a good friend,
Why haven't you even tried to save me?

Relatively unadorned, Song Juan's poem narrates a scholar-courtesan romance destroyed by political turmoil. Although she describes her life as a courtesan as "evil karma," she also relishes her accomplishments and the sympathy she garnered from her literati clients, whom she implicitly compares to Bai Juyi (the Jiangzhou official). An encounter with Gu at Hangzhou (Wulin) blossomed into romance, but the lovers were abruptly separated by the wars of the Ming-Qing transition. She fell victim to "a vulgar man" and was taken north. Like other abducted women writing about their experiences during this period, Song Juan despairs that her fate is more pitiable than Cai Yan and Wang Zhaojun—after all, Cai returned to Han and Wang could claim the dignity of a modest grave. Song Juan's voice is marked, however, less by the shame of survival than by the urgent questions she poses to her ineffectual lover. She praises his depth of feelings, resourcefulness, and knightly valor by way of urging him to save her. At the same time, she implicitly

questions whether he is equal to that task, and turns her attention to Gu's friend Fang, hoping that he could bring her justice like the "knight in a yellow jacket" in the Tang tale "Huo Xiaoyu's Story."

A version of Song Juan's poem, with minor discrepancies, is split into two in Tan Qian's *Zaolin zazhu*.⁶⁷ Here Song Juan's lover is surnamed Cao, and a preface repeats much of the information given in the poem, but also elaborates the role of Cao's friend Fang, the lovers' vow, as well as the circumstances of Song Juan's composition. Fang is identified as Fang Xuancheng 玄成 (Fang Xiaobiao 方孝標, 1617–after 1680) of Dongshan (Tongcheng in Anhui). Cao carried a fan inscribed with Fang's poem, which Song admired, and the fan becomes the love token Cao gives to Song when they pledge their love at West Lake. Unwilling to die an anonymous death, Song Juan imagines her poem as the means to communicate with her lover. She builds her hope for ransom on the news that both Cao and Fang passed the prefectural examination and would therefore have the wherewithal to save her. A song lyric by the contemporary poet Huang Yong 黃永 (17th c.) describes a gathering in which Fang Xiaobiao shows a copy of Song Juan's poem, which arouses sympathetic but ultimately futile indignation from his audience. It is precisely the kind of ineffectual reaction that justifies Song Juan's fears. Huang Yong also appends a shorter version of Song Juan's preface in which she identifies her lover as "Cao Zigu of Jiashan."⁶⁸

"Zigu" was the cognomen of Cao Erkan 曹爾堪 (1617–79). A well-known early Qing lyricist, he attained the *jinshi* degree in 1652, entered the Hanlin Academy, and became an imperial lecturer. His friend Fang Xiaobiao passed the *jinshi* examination in 1649. Song Juan's poem can be dated to autumn 1648, the year both Cao and Fang passed the prefectural examination. Cao Erkan is called "Gu lang" 顧郎 in Song Juan's poem in *Complementary Canon* because Cao's sobriquets are "Zigu" 子顧 and "Gu'an" 顧庵. That version of the poem, plus Song Juan's preface included in *Zaolin zazhu* (with the difference that "Cao sheng" becomes "Gu sheng"), as well as Song Huixiang's poems, become the prefatory

67. Tan Qian, *Zaolin zazhu*, pp. 287–89.

68. Huang Yong, "Fang Changdian Liu Jundu zhong shiyu Fang Xiaobiao xiongdi yi Qingfeng zhen Song Juan shi jianshi" 訪長店劉峻度中適遇方孝標兄弟以清風鎮宋娟詩見示, *QQC*, 5:2853.

materials in Ding Yaokang's *Fan of West Lake*, which he wrote at the behest of Cao Erkan, his patron or benefactor, around 1654.⁶⁹

According to Ding Yaokang's preface to his two poems, entitled "Moved by Song Juan's Poem" ("Gan Song Juan shi ershou" 感宋娟詩二首, dated 1648–49), Song Juan's story was a hot topic in Beijing: "Juan was a famous courtesan from Zhejiang who died among the troops. She sent a poem to Cao Zigu, *xiaolian* of Zhejiang, asking him to ransom her. The story was widely known in the capital" 娟, 浙中名妓。沒于兵。題詩清風店, 寄浙中孝廉曹子顧求贖。都中盛傳其事 (DYK, 1:43).⁷⁰ Like Huang Yong, Ding Yaokang in his poems focuses less on Song Juan's plight than on the empathy of her literati readers, asserting the common fate the frustrated scholar or forgotten hero shared with the victimized woman.

Wang Duanshu notes in *Complementary Canon* that Song Juan was finally reunited with Cao Erkan (MYSW, 21.6b).⁷¹ The paratextual materials in *Fan of West Lake* suggests otherwise. Ding's son, Ding Shenxing 丁慎行, wrote that upon Cao's request, Ding "turns the beautiful and talented lovers' sea of bitterness and sorrow of separation into joy and gladness on stage . . . Not only was he Mr. Cao's⁷² great helper, he had created the compassionate raft of union for those mourning lost love through the ages" 遂使才子佳人苦海離愁, 一旦作登場歡笑 . . . 是不但爲石渠先生功臣, 直爲古今來怨曠作合慈筏矣 (DYK, 1:741). The final poem in the last scene of *Fan of West Lake* also hints at the dire reality behind the play's happy ending (DYK, 1:799):

69. After Ding finished the play, Cao paid him three hundred strings of cash so that Ding could build an abode, probably as payment for the play. See Ding, "Cao Zigu taishi ji caotang zi sanbai min shi wei Zigu zuo *Xihu* chuanqi xincheng" 曹子顧太史寄草堂資三百緡時爲子顧作西湖傳奇新成, DYK, 1:200.

70. There are, however, not many extant poems about Song Juan. One example is Song Luo's 宋瑩 (1634–1713) "Qingfeng dian kouhao" 清風店口號 (Xu Qiu, *Xu benshi shi*, p. 298).

71. Wang and Cao were both well-known literary figures in eastern Zhejiang. The highly complimentary poem that Cao Erkan addressed to Wang Duanshu testifies to their friendship. See Cao Erkan, "Zeng Yingranzi" 贈映然子, in Xu Qiu, *Xu benshi shi*, p. 285.

72. The original has "Shiqu" 石渠, which seems to be one of the names Cao used; see QQC, 2:1321, 2:1331.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 天上雙星不易投 | The twin stars in heaven: it is not easy for them to meet. |
| 飛花長恨水東流 | Flying flowers must forever regret the water flowing east. |
| 王嬙不返仍青塚 | Wang Qiang did not return— she is still in her green grave. |
| 蔡琰重歸已白頭 | By the time Cai Yan came back, her hair was already white. ⁷³ |

From the plaintive appeal for ransom in the poems by Song Huixiang and Song Juan, Ding Yaokang fashions a romantic play with a happy ending.⁷⁴ Below I will examine how this transformation uses female chastity to enact reconciliation with the new order.

Active in literary circles in Shandong, Ding yet failed to advance beyond the lowest degree 諸生 before the fall of the Ming. Briefly involved in military efforts to defend the crumbling dynasty, he signaled his acceptance of the new order by becoming an instructor of youths under the Embroidered White Banner in 1648. In 1651, he was appointed lecturer at Rongcheng (in Hebei), a post he took up three years later. He was promoted to the magistracy of Hui'an (in Fujian) in 1659 but never assumed that post.⁷⁵ *Fan of West Lake*, a southern play in thirty-two scenes, focuses on the separation and union of Gu Shi (based on Cao Erkan) with the courtesan Song Juanjuan (based on Song Juan) and a young woman from a good family, Song Xiangxian (based on Song Huixiang). A subplot traces the adventures of Gu's friend Chen Daodong as envoy to the Jurchen (Jin) kingdom in the north. Set in the early years of the Southern Song, when Jurchen incursions threatened Song sovereignty, there are obvious echoes of the contemporary crisis.

As is typical in southern plays, the object named in the title marks the twists and turns of fate. Song Xiangxian inscribes a quatrain on a fan and

73. These lines are repeated in the first half of Ding's poem in *Jiaoqiu shi* 椒丘詩 (1654), "Ti Xuhu shan chuanqi qumo" 題西湖扇傳奇曲末 (DYK, 1:233). Instead of "Wang Qiang" this poem has "Bright Consort."

74. The conflation of these two stories also appears in *Zaolin zazhu*, where the poems Song Huixiang supposedly authored according to other accounts are presented as Song Juan's writings.

75. On Ding's life and writings, see Idema, "Crossing the Sea"; Chen Qinghao, "Hainci fenshu shi jinding"; Huang Qionghui, *Shibian zhong de jiyi yu bianxie*, pp. 1-28, Xiaoqiao Ling, "Re-reading the Seventeenth Century."

loses it at West Lake. The scholar Gu Shi picks it up when he is in the company of the courtesan Song Juanjuan and two other friends. The four compose another quatrain on the fan. The two poems on the fan encode the names of the three main characters and can be read as an omen portending their romantic encounters, separation, and eventual bigamous union. The romance between Gu Shi and Song Juanjuan blossoms. In the meantime, Chen Daodong, who opposes appeasement of the Jurchens, earns the enmity of the deviant minister Qin Gui, who sends him to the Jurchen court via a sea route with the impossible mission of “securing Jurchen submission” and “rejecting tributary demands.” Qin’s plot is to have him either killed by storms or by Jurchen officials. As Chen’s friend and associate, Gu is blacklisted and flees to Tongcheng after giving the fan to Song Juanjuan to pledge their troth. On the way he is captured by marauding Jurchen troops, who also abduct Song Xiangxian during her flight to Yangzhou to escape the turmoil. Song Juanjuan, on her way to look for Gu Shi, is likewise captured by Jurchen troops. The three characters thus end up in the same place because of their respective misfortunes, but do not have the chance to meet.

At the midpoint of the play (scene 16), Song Juanjuan inscribes a poem on the wall at an inn at Qingfeng⁷⁶ and leaves the fan there in the midst of the commotion. Song Xiangxian finds it after writing her own poems (loosely patterned on the first and fourth poems in the series cited above) on the wall. Gu becomes the secretary of a Jurchen commander, chances upon the poems left by the two women, and is filled with helpless grief. Even as he remembers lost love (Song Juanjuan), the seed is sown for a future romance with Song Xiangxian. After being taken north, Song Juanjuan works as weaver in the household of a Jurchen official. Song Xiangxian is given to the Jurchen commander Lou, but is spared rape and concubinage thanks to Lou’s jealous wife, who consigns her to menial tasks.

76. The poem corresponds to lines 1–4, 13–16, 21–22, and 35–36 of the poem by Song Juan cited above. It adds two lines (between lines 14 and 15): “The silk fan confirms our secret pledge, / But the pendant of a lifetime is not yet tied” 紈扇定幽盟，百年珮未結. The frank and impatient pleas of the original are omitted, and the poem ends with a rewording of line 43 and line 46: “What remains is the matchmaking fan with poems, / Of my grief it is hard to find more words” 媒妁留詩扇，悲酸難再說.

In a parallel subplot, Chen Daodong refuses to prostrate himself in full obeisance at the Jurchen court and is exiled to “north of the desert,” where he becomes a tutor. One of his students is Yelü Chucai. The historical Yelü Chucai 耶律楚材 (1190–1244) was a Khitan who switched allegiance from the Jurchens to the Mongols and became an important minister under Genghis Khan (ca. 1162–1227). In the play he is a Mongol enamored of Chinese civilization serving in the Jurchen court. Gu meets Chen and Yelü up north and tells them about his ill-fated romance with Song Juanjuan and his concern for another abducted woman, Song Xiangxian. In a chance encounter, Yelü aborts Song Xiangxian’s suicide attempt and sends her to the Imperial Aunt Temple for protection. On the Lantern Festival, Gu and Song Juanjuan both happen to go to that temple. The three characters meet and acknowledge the karmic ties embodied by the fan. Just then word comes that Gu has placed third in the Jurchen palace examination, and despite some more minor travails Gu eventually marries both Song Xiangxian and Song Juanjuan under the special decree of the Jurchen queen. Chen Daodong, who also attains high honors in the palace examination, refuses to accept office and returns to Southern Song.

The political meanings of chastity and violation define our interpretation of this play. Legend has it that the Song lyricist Liu Yong’s lush description of “Cassias all through autumn, / miles of lotus blossoms” 三秋桂子，十里荷花 in Hangzhou aroused the ambitions of the Jurchens to invade Song a century and a half later.⁷⁷ In *Fan of West Lake*, the lure of bountiful Southland is tied specifically to women: “Bright Consort singing at night” 明妃夜唱 and “Han ladies in rows” 漢女成行 (DYK, 1:750). Jurchen soldiers would “first raid Qinhuai, and then head straight to Suzhou and Hangzhou” 先掠秦淮，直下蘇杭 in order to “take over the brocade haven of West Lake” 奪取西湖錦繡窩 (DYK, 1:750). Conquest and violation, the body politic and the female body, are tightly intertwined. In scene 6, just as Gu Shi and Song Juanjuan are pledging their love in West Lake, the boatman sings: “The beauty of West Lake is most difficult to describe, / Patches of red and green, just

77. Luo Dajing, *Helin yulu*, 1.241–42.

like the dress of Xi Shi. / That Jurchen stops his horse at Mount Wu⁷⁸ / To look at the scenery. / He is to strip this woman Xi Shi stark naked” 西湖好景最難子描，花花綠綠一似女裙子腰。那箇金家立馬吳山來看子个景囉哩，把一个西施女剝的赤條子條囉 (DYK, 1:753). If conquest is imagined as sexual violation, should the chaste determination of Song Xiangxian and Song Juanjuan be invested with political meanings? Yet they never link their personal misfortune to the fate of the country, and their political awareness is not at all evident.⁷⁹ Their reunion with Gu depends on the beneficence of the Jurchen court, Gu's success and service in the Jurchen court, and finally the Jurchen queen's dispensation decreeing their marriage. Such dissociation of chastity from its political meanings facilitates accommodation with the new order.

The same balance between compromise and integrity defines the male characters. Wilt Idema suggests that Chen Daodong projects a political ideal as Ding's alter ego. It is true that unlike other displaced characters in the play, Chen undertakes his northward journey with a sense of agency and purpose. He regards his involuntary mission as a way to fulfill his aspiration to be loyal to the country and to bolster its fading glory. The journey is associated with both heroic endeavor and eremitic escape: “I envy the resolution of Tian Heng and his followers, who heroically defended their island. I want to follow the example of Lu Zhonglian, who had the prescience to flee beyond the seas” 羨田橫守島雄心，學魯仲連蹈海知機 (scene 10, DYK, 1:761).⁸⁰ During the chaos of the Ming-Qing transition, Ding Yaokang undertook a perilous sea journey that left a deep impression on him and that he wrote about in the autobiographical “Account of My Escape from Calamity” (“Chujie jilue” 出劫紀略).⁸¹ Chen Daodong's sea journey as well as the maritime fantasy in another of Ding's play, *The Magicians' Wandering* (*Huaren you*

78. The image is taken from a poem attributed to the Jurchen ruler Wanyan Liang 完顏亮 (1122–61). He is said to have inserted an image of himself as horseman on Mount Wu in a painting of the Southland; see Yue Ke (1183–1234), *Ting shi*, 8.95–96. Su Shi compares West Lake (Xihu) to Xi Shi in “Yin hushang chu qing hou yu” 飲湖上初晴後雨 (*Su Shi shiji bezhu*, 9.404).

79. See Idema, “Crossing the Sea.”

80. For Tian Heng and Lu Zhonglian, see *Shiji*, 94.2643–47, 83.2459–65.

81. See “Hang hai chujie shimo” 航海出劫始末 and “Bifeng manyou” 避風漫遊, in DYK, 3: 277–80, 283. Cf. Ling, “Re-reading the Seventeenth Century”; Huang Qionghui, *Shibian zhong de jiyi yu bianxie*, pp. 107–65.

化人遊), might have been based on this experience.⁸² The ocean turns hopelessness into a brave new world, a passage from death to life. The ease and mastery with which Chen traverses great distance is an idealized portrait of Ding's own escape and survival. Chen's assertion of Chinese dignity at the Jurchen court, his exile to "north of the desert," and his choice to become a teacher of Jurchen and Mongol peoples also matches Ding's career as an instructor of Manchu students. Although "Teaching in Liao" ("Liaozhang" 遼帳, scene 19, *DYK*, 1:774–76) is filled with slapstick humor, the hope of "using Chinese civilization to transform the barbarians" 用夏變夷 is earnest: "When it comes to the sages' texts, there is no north and south" 聖賢書, 南北本無分; "to teach these youths is to transmit the way of the sages to foreign lands" 教訓子弟, 這也是聖人大道傳之異域了 (*DYK*, 1: 774–76). Chen Daodong turns humiliation into an opportunity to pursue higher goals: this seems to represent Ding's justification of his own political choice to become a tutor of bannermen. Self-defense is mixed with great expectations but possibly also shame.

To become a subject yet assert cultural superiority: this fantasy of role reversal projected through Chen Daodong entails a certain degree of compromise. Although he holds his own during the mission, it is still a far cry from his initial hope to be like "Lin Xiangru defying Qin and returning the jade to Zhao, Cao Mo swearing a covenant with Qi to reclaim Lu territories, Shen Baoxu bringing about the resurgence of Chu" 實望做完璧相如, 歃血曹生, 復楚申包 (scene 22, *DYK*, 1:780).⁸³ He accepts Yelü Chucai's recommendation and takes the examination. Although he refuses to accept office, he does so acknowledging the beneficence of the Jurchen ruler. Chen Daodong repeatedly compares himself to the unyielding Han envoy Su Wu. By traditional standards, Su Wu and Li Ling symbolize the contrast between unbending integrity and shameful compromise, as noted in chapter 1. In *Fan of West*

82. The maritime imagination in both plays is underlined by an intertextual reference in *Fan of West Lake*. The clown traveling with Chen says in scene 10: "The sea also has leviathans and monsters that can swallow boats. If we are swallowed and end up in the belly of the leviathan, it will be another play, *The Magicians' Wandering*" (*DYK*, 1:761).

83. For Lin Xiangru, Cao Mo, and Shen Baoxu, see *Shiji*, 81.2439–51, 86.2515–16, 66.2176–77.

Lake, that contrast is echoed in the juxtaposition of the respective political choices of Gu Shi and Chen Daodong, although Ding emphasizes their bond: “Like Su Wu and Li Ling, we have a deep friendship” 蘇李交情深; “The great way makes no distinction between north and south. / It is right there with fine writing and deep feelings. / Look how when Su Wu leaves, / He does not cut off Li Ling in his poem” 大道無南北，文情即在斯。君看蘇武去，不絕李陵詩 (scene 31, *DYK*, 1:797). The contrast between Chen and Gu is thus sometimes muted, or becomes a matter of gradation or even analogy in *Fan of West Lake*. Chen compares himself to both Su Wu and Li Ling (scene 22) and refers to the comparable fates of Su Wu, Li Ling, and Wang Zhaojun (scene 14). Gu Shi, for his part, calls himself Su Wu for serving as the secretary of a Jurchen commander. Su Wu and Li Ling, and by extension integrity and compromise, are not irrevocable opposites in this play.

Gu Shi's rectitude and resolution pale beside Chen Daodong's, but he is not directly blamed for serving the Jurchens. The knight-errant Tian berates him for “not being a man” because he laments Song Juanjuan's fate without trying to save her—he is said to have failed as a lover, not as a scholar-official. His bewilderment in the midst of political turmoil evokes the reader's sympathy rather than criticism. Gu Shi, Song Xiangxian, and her mother sing during the Jurchen raid in scene 12 (*DYK*, 1:763–64):

塵起處，馬亂喧
旗過處，甲兵攢
現挽著離弦箭
大戟長刀壓戰鞍
見羊裘垂辮
喊聲沸，朔風羶

Where the dust rises, horses neigh in confusion.
Where the banners pass, armored soldiers amass.
They carry the arrows about to leave the bows,
Their spears and long swords press on the saddles.
We see sheepskin, hair in braids.
Shouts boil over; the wintry wind carries a
sickening stench.

荒野裏
人民逃竄
村落裏
紅煙撩亂
到處裏
屍橫血濺
無處避流星掣電

In the wilderness,
People are fleeing.
In the villages
Are tangled coils of red smoke.
Everywhere,
Corpses are piled up and blood splattered.
Nowhere can one escape the shooting stars and
charging lightning.

俺呵，說甚麼
前冤、現冤

As for me, what is there to say about
Previous injustice? Present injustice?

情緣、禍緣
呀，會騰那叫
不出行方便

Karma of love? Karma of plight?
Alas! Even with maneuvers I cannot call out
for each to make way.

The speakers in the poem bear witness to traumatic events even as they struggle to survive. The same can be said of the poems Song Xiangxian and Song Juanjuan leave on walls. Gu acknowledges their lack of choice and laments their likely fate as fallen women: “Like catkins in the wind / And bubbles in water, / They drift with the flow / On the imperial moat, behind golden screens” 如風中絮，水中漚，任飄流，金凭御溝 (scene 18, *DYK*, 1:774). However, he does not see any analogy between their “fall” and his own choice to serve as a secretary to a Jurchen commander, which he presents as justified: “Since I am now already at the Jurchen court, I reckon I would not be able to go back. Even here I should be able to win my place. I must revisit all that I have studied: who knows, perhaps I will encounter some opportunity” 俺如今既在金朝，料已不能歸去，在此處也可出頭。還將舊時學業做起，或者別有機緣，也未見得 (scene 18, *DYK*, 1:774).

In *Fan of West Lake*, the shame of capitulation is only identified with unchaste women. Among the women abducted with Song Xiangxian and Song Juanjuan are the eager and hyper-sexualized Li Ruhua and Zhang Ajiao. They embrace Jurchen customs, unbinding their feet and coiling their hair, and become Jurchen palace women (scene 30, *DYK*, 1:794–95). It is as if by focusing on their shamelessness, the more amorphous moral choices of others can be glossed over. In the play there are no men castigated for serving the enemy, only men who cooperate with the new regime to varying extent because they do not have any other choice. On the symbolic level, their analogues are not Li Ruhua or Zhang Ajiao but chaste women who bide their time for ransom. Song Juanjuan and Song Xiangxian guard their chastity but convey no awareness of political opposition, and they do not have the least bit of compunction in seeking the assistance of the Jurchen queen and royal aunt. They represent the understanding of the Cai Yan and Wang Zhaojun stories as compromise and reconciliation instead of exile and displacement. Through the tropes of marriage alliance and appeasement, Cai and Wang can be seen as the bridge between center and margins, Chinese and barbarians. Likewise, the two Songs’ apolitical chastity and the plot of romantic union promise to resolve the contradictions underlying the political choices of the male protagonists in the play.

Political and Apolitical Chastity

If apolitical chastity may yet facilitate political accommodation, the margin between explicit and implicit political functions deserves special attention. As an example I will turn to Meng Chengshun's *Chastity and Talent* (*Zhenwen ji* 貞文記), a southern play in thirty-five scenes set during the Song-Yuan transition. Completed in the 1650s, its backdating to 1643 reflects Meng's awareness of the potential political dangers his play poses. Unlike *Fan of West Lake*, this play presents chastity as a political statement. Yet it ends up, like *Fan of West Lake*, implicitly justifying participation in a new order. Disquiet about this contradiction is displaced as mockery of men whose submission to alien conquerors is sexualized as contorted feminization. Passionately idealized as "genuine emotion," chastity becomes unequivocal, almost abstract, and dramatically flat. All of the playacting and deception—the stuff of theater—is left to conniving males.

The full title of Meng's play is *Chastity and Talent: Zhang Yuniang, the Three Purities of the Inner Chamber, and the Parrot's Grave* (*Zhang Yuniang guifang sanqing yingwu mu zhenwen ji* 張玉娘閨房三清鸚鵡墓貞文記). The main story centers around the chaste and talented Zhang Yuniang, betrothed from childhood to her cousin Shen Quan. She remains steadfastly loyal to him despite opposition from her parents. The rival bidder for Zhang's hand is Wang Juan, whose suit is supported by her parents and local officials serving the Mongol regime. When Shen earns second place in the capital examination, Zhang's parents finally assent to the union, but he dies shortly thereafter. Zhang Yuniang expires from grief and from the conviction that she should follow Shen in death. Her parrot and two maids, Zi'e and Shuang'e, whom she calls "the three purities of the inner chamber," also die out of loyalty toward her and empathetic identification with her sad fate. Zhang, her two maids, and the parrot are buried together, and their grave comes to be called the Parrot's Grave. The story is bracketed and intermittently interrupted by a concurrent mythical tale (which is invoked in scenes 2, 12, 23, 24, 31, 35), whereby Zhang and Shen are attendants (Longnü and Shancai) of Bodhisattva Guanyin, the two maids are sisters of Longnü, and Zhang's parrot is Guanyin's bird. They are reborn in the mundane world because of the stirrings of longing, and they return to the celestial realm to proclaim their transcendence of feelings.

The historical Zhang Yuniang 張玉娘 (1250–76), a woman poet from Songyang (called Bailong County in the play) who lived during the Song-Yuan transition, was a “chastity martyr” who “followed” her fiancé in death. That her writings survived owed much to the efforts of Meng Chengshun, who published her collection of poems, *Lady Zhang’s Orchid Snow* (*Zhang Dagū Lanxue ji* 張大家蘭雪集).⁸⁴ Meng probably learned about Zhang Yuniang when he was overseeing prefectural education at Songyang. But Meng Chengshun deliberately conceals the date of *Zhenwen ji*. In his preface, supposedly dated 1643, he mentions raising funds for building a temple and a grave dedicated to her memory and for the publication of *Zhenwen ji*. As Xu Shuofang points out, however, it was only around 1649 that he started serving at Songyang, and it was not until 1656 that the temple was built.⁸⁵ Upon its completion Meng wrote “An Account of the Temple of Chastity and Talent” (“Zhenwen ci ji” 貞文祠記) and “Elegy to Zhang Yuniang” (“Ji Zhang Yuniang wen” 祭張玉娘文).⁸⁶ The building of a temple dedicated to Zhang’s memory is described in scene 34, which incorporates Meng’s elegy. *Zhenwen ji* was thus probably written shortly after 1656, when Meng resigned from office and returned to his hometown Shanyin (present-day Shaoxing). Recognizing its political implications and fearing persecution, he purposely backdated the work to precede the Ming collapse.

Meng Chengshun deliberately sets forth the link between female chastity and political loyalism at the mid-point of the play (scenes 17–19). Climactic middle scenes, a wonted convention of southern plays, are here devoted to the assassination of a Mongol official by a Song loyalist named Wang Yuanyi, who served under Wen Tianxiang. Wang was also a native of Songyang, and the historical Zhang Yuniang wrote a poem about him titled “The Grave of General Wang” (“Wang jiangjun mu” 王將軍墓), which includes a preface explaining how he died in battle

84. See Zhang Yuniang, *Zhang Dagū lanxue ji*. Cf. Idema, “Female Talent,” pp. 565–66; Tan Zhengbi, *Zhongguo nüxing wenxue shibua*, pp. 293–301; Hu Wenkai, *Lidai funü zhuqiao kao*, pp. 57–59.

85. See Xu Shuofang, *Xu Shuofang ji*, 3:539–72. Meng writes in his preface that financial contributions for the publication of *Zhenwen ji* came mainly from his friends in Shanyin and Jinling. This suggests that the play was written, or at least published, after his return.

86. See Zhang Yuniang, *Zhang Dagū lanxue ji*, “fulu,” 3a–7b; Meng Chengshun *ji*, pp. 563–64, 570.

after the fall of the Song dynasty (*Zhang Dagū lanxue jī* A.4a–4b). In scene 17, Wang expresses the anguish and despair of remnant loyalist resistance. He comes onstage declaiming an adaptation of Du Fu's "Mourning Chentao" ("Bei Chentao" 悲陳陶), using Fang Guan's disastrous defeat in 756 to describe the catastrophic final battles of the Southern Song and, by implication, those of the Southern Ming. Wang's monologues and arias against barbarians in this scene alone would have sufficed to get Meng Chengshun into political trouble (*ZWJ*, 17.454).⁸⁷

| | |
|----------------|---|
| (外) [朱奴插芙蓉] | (Wang sings, to the tune "Zhunū cha furong") |
| 老天公沈湎醺醺 | Good old heaven is drunk, sunk in the dregs of the brew, |
| 普天下不辨華夷 | All under heaven fail to distinguish Chinese and barbarians. |
| 陣陣腥風滿城市 | Whiffs of wind-borne stench fill the city, ⁸⁸ |
| 錦乾坤變做了 野田沙磧 | A brocade world is turned into abandoned fields of sand and gravel. |
| 愁雲黯 | Clouds of sorrow darken. |
| 昏黃晝迷 | In a yellow haze that confounds in daytime— |
| 恁英雄難將一劍 挽斜暉 | It's hard even for a hero to save the setting sun's glow with one sword. |

At the exact midpoint of the play (scene 18), Wang Yuanyi assassinates the magistrate of Bailong county and then commits suicide because there is no place for him "in this meager wine cup of a world" 區區酒盞大的小乾坤 (*ZWJ*, 18.457). This episode ties up with the love plot, because the magistrate is on his way to press his suit for Wang Juan. In scene 19, Zhang offers a libation to Wang, reciting a poem by the historical Zhang Yuniang on Wang Yuanyi (*ZWJ*, 19.460), which is the only poem by her quoted in the entire play. She compares Wang to

87. Wang condemns the atrocities of "foreign soldiers" 蕃兵 (*ZWJ*, 17.453). In the next scene (18.456), he delivers diatribes against collaborators who "castigate Chinese for barbarians" 替胡兒罵漢人 and, "having threw in their lot with the barbarians, are about to wipe out the Chinese" 跟了胡人，便待要殺盡華人.

88. This is the stench 腥 of blood. In a previous aria Wang sings, "The stench and filth of the world cannot be washed clean" 洗不盡乾坤膻穢 (*ZWJ*, 17.454). There the word *shan* 膻, the odor of sheep and goat, is associated with the supposed odor of barbarians.

knight-errant who rescue maidens in distress in Tang tales, but, going beyond the theme of personal succor, she insists on the analogy between her chastity and his loyalty:

(*Zhang speaks*): Men must live up to loyalty and valor; women have to aspire to chastity. Now I do not dare look too far back to the ancients.

I should be content to follow the example of General Wang.

(*Zhang sings, to the tune "Shiliu hua"*):

With the family ruined and the domain fallen, we guard integrity and loyalty:

Loyalty for men, chastity for women—the two are the same.

(*Zi'e, Shaung'e speak*): Looking afar, the whole stretch of maple forest is already red. We do not know whether these are traces of tears or of blood.

(*Zhang sings*): This is blood scattered over maples, dyeing them crimson.

One look at the maple forest—

The red of cuckoo's blood fills the eyes.

(旦) 丈夫則以忠勇自期，婦人則以貞節自許。我今不敢遠望古人，但得效王將軍足矣。[石榴花] 家亡國破守貞忠，男忠女節兩相同。(二旦) 望去楓林一帶，都已赤了。未知還是淚痕血痕啊。(旦) 這是楓林灑血染丹楓。楓林一望，滿眼杜鵑紅。

The image of tears of blood turning maples red recalls lines from Dong Jieyuan's 董解元 (13th c.) *Master Dong's Western Chamber* (*Dong Jieyuan Xixiang ji* 董解元西廂記), where red maples are like "blood from the eyes of people parting" 離人眼中血 (*Dong Jieyuan Xixiang ji*, 6.126). In a similar strain, in the Yuan play *Romance of the Western Chamber* (*Xixiang ji* 西廂記) by Wang Shifu 王實甫 (late 13th c.–early 14th c.), "Who was it that dyed the frosty forest this morning, giving it the hue of intoxication? It must be all from tears of people parting" 曉來誰染霜林醉，總是離人淚 (*Xixiang ji jijie*, 3.246). Here the cuckoo, transformed from the ancient Shu king who mourns the loss of his kingdom, weeps tears of blood that dye the maple forest.⁸⁹ Again a romantic motif acquires political echoes.

The "exit poem" 下場詩 of scene 19 ends with these lines: "Ashamed to adorn myself to serve two husbands, / I now wish to follow the example of a remarkable man" 我今願學奇男子，羞畫蛾眉事二夫。

89. On this image, see chap. 1, p. 46.

Yet earlier in the play Zhang Yuniang urges Shen Quan to achieve success in the civil service examination to facilitate their union (ZWJ, 5.405). In other words, as in *Fan of West Lake*, the analogy between “not serving two husbands” and “not serving two dynasties” is not rigorously pursued. Herein lies the usefulness of female chastity as a metaphor for loyalism—even deliberate analogy does not call for direct, concrete political action. In other words, an author can use the chaste woman to express loyalist lament without putting himself in political danger. Moreover, the chaste woman usually *suffers* her virtue (i.e., she often realizes her virtue by enduring harm or inflicting it on herself); and victimhood, in addition to capturing the sense of individual helplessness in momentous historical events, is less likely than, say, resistance to be construed as subversive or dangerous. Still, in this case, Meng deems the topic politically sensitive enough for him to hide the real date of the play.

Meng Chengshan takes pains to present chastity not merely as an ethical imperative, but as the paramount expression of genuineness 真 and intense emotions 情. In doing so, he seems to be going against his own predilections, as shown in the celebration of love in his earlier works, and against the romantic longing expressed in the historical Zhang Yuniang’s poems.⁹⁰ He writes in the preface:

But then there are those in this world who see talents and become enamored, long for sensual gratification and expire—how can they qualify to speak of love! One must be like Yuniang before one can speak of love. Thus this play is a book about love. Mencius said, “Having the feeling, one can do good.” In that sense this play is also a book about moral nature.

90. Her poems and song lyrics are sensual, melancholy, and passionate. The song lyric to the tune “Yunü yaoxian pei” 玉女瑤仙珮 (*Zhang Dagū lanxue jì*, B.9a), for example, seems frankly to express regret for not having agreed to greater intimacy with her cousin Shen Quan; and another song lyric to the tune “Shuidiao getou” 水調歌頭 (*Zhang Dagū lanxue jì*, B.9b–10a) tells of her desire to escape with Shen Quan to another world. Perhaps this is why Meng quotes only one of Zhang’s poems despite repeated emphasis on her literary talent. Meng’s earlier play, *Jiao Hong jì* 嬌紅記, presents love as daring, defiant of social conventions and prescribed codes of feminine modesty. *Zhenwen jì* could have been easily written, like *Jiao Hong jì*, as a celebration of the martyrdom and symbolic transcendence of the thwarted lovers, but Meng deliberately turns it into a eulogy of chastity.

然則世有見才而悅，慕色而亡者，其安足言情哉？必如玉娘者而後可以言情。此此記所以爲言情之書也。孟子曰：「乃若其情，則可以爲善。」則此書又即所爲言性之書也。（Meng Chengshun, *Meng Chengshun ji*, pp. 561–62）

The discourse on the mergence of love and moral nature here is an implicit dialogue with the valorization of love in *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan ting* 牡丹亭) by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616), and perhaps refers specifically to the exchange between Tang and the minister Zhang Wei as told in Chen Jiru's 1623 preface to the play. When Zhang asked Tang why he eschewed the role of philosopher-teacher, Tang replied, “your honor expounds on moral nature, while I expound on love” 師講性，僕講情.⁹¹ Meng implicitly disparages Du Linian, the protagonist of *The Peony Pavilion*, who indeed “sees talents and becomes enamored, longs for sensual gratification and expires,” as Tang Xianzu emphasized.

However, Meng's apparent refutation of Tang Xianzu's position is belied by passages closely modeled on *The Peony Pavilion*⁹² and by the continuity of motifs between the two plays, such as meetings in dreams and after death, and longing mediated through the painted image of the beloved. Meng Chengshun “rectifies passion” 正情 by purging it of all hints of impropriety and transgression. Zhang Yuniang and Shen Quan never meet in mundane, waking life in the play, though there is a reference to how they had met as cousins before the action of the play begins (ZWJ, 5.404). In scene 5, when there is an opportunity for Shen to see Zhang, she refuses and resorts to Shuang'e's mediation to conduct a conversation with him. She repeatedly disparages romantic figures from history and literature such as Zhuo Wenjun and Sima Xiangru, Cui Yingying and Zhang Junrui (scenes 6, 11, 32),⁹³ the models eagerly invoked by Zhang's unworthy suitor Wang Juan (scenes 6, 10, 27). However, in order to give chastity a genuine, intense emotive quotient, Meng has to

91. Chen Jiru, “*Mudan ting tici*” 牡丹亭題辭, in Mao Xiaotong, *Tang Xianzu yanjiu ziliao huibian*, 2:855.

92. Xu Shuofang lists ten examples; see *Wan Ming qujia nianpu*, 2:556–58. To this list may be added echoes of *The Peony Pavilion* in the play; see ZWJ, 5.406, 6.409, 12.432, 23.477, 23.479.

93. However, some of the arias by Zhang and Shen (ZWJ, 6.409, 24.481–82, 26.494) echo lines from *Xixiang ji*.

bring Zhang and Shen together with standard romantic topoi such as the departure of the spirit (scene 23), encounters in dreams (scenes 24, 30), and the visitation of the ghost (scenes 30, 31). Yet in all these scenes, instead of ecstatic romantic union (as in *The Peony Pavilion*), there is either the questioning of selfhood and emotions as ultimate vanity, or the affirmation of loyalty, constancy, and self-sacrifice as the supreme expression of love. Meng seems to imply that such mergence of emotions and self-denial makes chastity a fitting metaphor for the anguished, tenacious devotion of loyalism. For all that, the political meanings of chastity are foregrounded only in the middle two scenes and not sustained throughout.

What is dramatized with greater energy and consistency is the capitulation of male scholar-officials. Meng uses metaphors of gender and playacting to indict their dissemblance and conformism and to introduce sexual innuendoes to their pandering. Idema rightly notes the importance of scenes 8 and 21, when Wang Juan takes up female dramatic roles, first from a play about Wang Zhaojun and then from Xu Wei's *Girl Graduate* (*Nü Zhuangyuan ci feng de huang* 女狀元辭鳳得凰). Wang Juan is not so much a villain as a spineless self-styled talented scholar. In scene 7 he asks the local magistrate, a Mongol, to present his suit to Zhang's family. In the following scene he joins the local magistrate and his assistants, Zhou Gengyu and Ruan Zai, at the Dragonboat races. Zhou and Wang engage in an exercise of composing poetic couplets, but once the poem moves from the bustle of the moment to Qu Yuan's martyrdom Wang fails to continue, implying his indifference to the ideals of loyalty and integrity (ZWJ, 8.419).

Ruan Zai (played by the clown) then urges Wang to sing dramatic arias, adding that he has already displayed his mettle on earlier occasions by singing in the roles of "Hongniang inviting guests, sisters bowing to the moon" 紅娘請客，姊妹拜月 (ZWJ, 8.419). At the behest of the magistrate, Wang Juan sings arias in the role of Wang Zhaojun. His obsequious self-abnegation vis-à-vis the barbarian is dramatized by female impersonation. There is added irony in the confusion of self and role. The magistrate gibes that since Wang Juan "has the surname Wang, has a pretty face, and also looks like a Zhaojun, he should sing arias describing Wang Zhaojun bringing about peace with the barbarians" 王大爺姓王，面貌標緻，又像個昭君，便唱曲王昭君和蕃罷 (ZWJ, 8.420). Wang looks the part and is indeed fostering good relations (or rather

currying favor) with the barbarian. But the identification of self and role is the ultimate betrayal of self and role. In his aria, the grieving Wang Zhaojun sings, “I did not put on powder, nor did I wash or comb my hair, as I go to appease the northern barbarians” 不搽粉，不梳洗，去和北蕃, but to portray grief disdainful of adornment Wang Juan has to dress up 喬粧打扮 as Wang Zhaojun. Some contemporary plays also use Wang Zhaojun’s lament to refer obliquely to the fall of the Ming—for example, You Tong’s *Elegy for the Pipa* (*Diao pipa* 吊琵琶) and Xue Dan’s 薛旦 (17th c.) *Zhaojun’s Dream* (*Zhaojun meng* 昭君夢). As noted above, allusions to Zhaojun in poetic and narrative accounts on and by displaced women are ubiquitous. Wang Juan’s performance seems a mockery of these women’s tragic fates.

Acting is associated with the absence of principles in the play. When Ruan Zai volunteers to play the part of the horse groom, the Mongol magistrate opines that he “indeed looks like a groom: there is no need to dress up” 阮師爺倒像個馬夫，也不消扮了 (*ZWJ*, 8.420). Ruan Zai is constantly using theatrical metaphors or staging dramatic scenes (e.g., scenes 16, 20). He is the inveterate actor because he has no core. His name may be a pun on *ruan zai* 軟哉 (pliable indeed). It is also possible that he carries echoes of Ruan Dacheng, much hated by scholars of the Revival Society, of which Meng Chengshun was a member.

The irony arising from playacting and reversing gender roles is even more devastating in scene 21, a parody of the civil service examination and its conventional representation on stage. Twice the play mentions that under the Mongols, candidates are tested for their skill in composing dramatic arias (*ZWJ*, 8.420, 21.464).⁹⁴ Scene 21 takes the impersonation and masking implicit in dramatic arias to its farcical conclusion—the candidates are to be chosen on the basis of their performance, and the play to be performed is “Girl Graduate” by Xu Wei, a fellow native of Shanyin greatly admired by Meng. Extended portions of acts 1, 2, 4, and

94. This theory is now discredited. See Wang Guowei, *Song Yuan xiqu shi*, pp. 76–77; West, “Text and Ideology.” In thus rehearsing and mocking the notion that under Mongol rule, officials are chosen on the basis of their singing and playacting skills, Meng Chengshun also presents a parodic reenactment of the origins of Chinese drama. Perhaps the theater can only redeem itself through the ritual of commemoration, as when Zhou Gengyu pays tribute to Zhang Yuniang’s chastity in scene 34.

5 of Xu Wei's play are performed in scene 21. This stipulates that Wang Juan, playing Huang Chonggu, should dress up as a woman, who then pretends to be a man, takes the examination, assumes office, and finally reverts to a female role. The consequent inversions of truths and lies speak to an illegitimate government based on the betrayal, perversion, or denial of one's identity and proper loyalty. (These subversive ramifications may be another reason for Meng's tampering with the play's date.)

The examination hall (the site of letters) and the stage (the site of playacting) converge from two perspectives in the "exit poem" (ZWJ, 21.470):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 一顛一倒兩陰陽 | One topsy, one turvy, two yin and yang, |
| 自古文場似戲場 | For all times the site of letters is the site of playacting. |
| 今日舉朝皆女子 | Today the whole court is filled with women— |
| 何止西蜀一黃郎 | How can it be only Master Huang of Western Shu? |

First, in the play within the play (or the examination within the examination), Huang Chonggu dissembles but displays real talent in composing her winning arias (the "Bei jiang'er shui" 北江兒水 series are the best arias in the play). For Huang, playacting has a positive meaning: the stage is the site of mastery and freedom implied in the idea of a woman playing a man's role. Second, the performance of the play within the play acquires a negative meaning. When Wang Juan plays Huang's role in "his" examination, for him to be in his own gender role as a man in effect enacts the illusion of a woman dressed as a man, and he thereby "doubles and quadruples his insincerity."⁹⁵ He is correspondingly deprived of his own voice as he borrows Huang Chonggu's arias—he is therefore being "played with" 戲弄 onstage. Huang's disguise is defiant, an assertion of her will, while Wang's costumes mark his submission to an alienating system based on false appearances. "Women" who fill the court represent the ultimate perversion of government. Like Wang Juan they would be men playing women pretending to be men.

95. Idema, "Female Talent," p. 570.

Wang Juan is not alone in the examination hall. Shen Quan comes in second, playing Jia Lu 賈臚 (which is a homophone for a term that means “false *jinsbi*”).⁹⁶ A certain Wu You 烏有 (“non-existent”) plays Hu Yan 胡顏 (which can mean “barbarian face,” and is a homophone for “barbarian language” or “nonsense” 胡言)⁹⁷ and comes in third, being commended for “not concealing his true nature” (ZWJ, 21.470). There is no discernible criticism of these other two characters, yet the puns expressed in their names imply irony and ambivalence.

As for Shen Quan, he articulates his disaffection when he first comes onstage because Confucian scholars were relegated to a lowly position under Mongol rule (ZWJ, 3.397). But Zhang Yuniang soon convinces him that success in the examination, which by extension guarantees him a post in the new regime, is the only way to bring about their union (ZWJ, 5.405). Zhou Gengyu 周羹虞, the assistant to the local magistrate who is the author’s persona in the play,⁹⁸ also serves the new regime. It is as an official of Bailong County that Zhou builds a temple to honor Zhang’s memory (ZWJ, 34.522–26). If we follow through the analogy of chastity with loyalism, the building of the temple would imply that official Qing commemoration of Ming loyalism is made possible by the acceptance of the new order and concomitant recognition of a safe historical distance.

Meng Chengshun thus does not totally discredit participation in the new regime despite his scathing representation of the examination as a disgraceful charade. His ambivalence is integral to his manipulation of the margins of genuineness and dissemblance in the play. If the examination, and by implication the whole political process, is based on

96. After the palace examination, the names of the newly elected *jinsbi* would be read out loud—that procedure of announcement is called *luchang* 臚唱 or *luchuan* 臚傳.

97. While Xu Wei almost certainly did not intend any pun on “barbarian face” or “barbarian language” in *Girl Graduate*, Meng might have used these puns to refer both to the special promotion of Mongol and Central Asian candidates during the Yuan dynasty and to the analogous position of Manchu candidates under the Qing.

98. As Xu Shuofang (*Xu Shuofang ji*, 3:548) explains, Meng and the fictional Zhou share a common ancestry. The legendary king Shun is also called Youyu 有虞 (*Shiji*, 1.45). Shun is also said to constantly keep in mind the example of his sage predecessor Yao, so much so that “when he ate he beheld Yao in his stew [*geng*]” 食則睹堯于羹 (*Hou Hanshu*, 63.2084). Gengyu 羹虞 thus encodes “Shun,” part of Meng Chengshun’s name. As mentioned above, Meng built the temple for Zhang Yuniang in 1656; in the play it is Zhou Gengyu who does the same in scene 34.

playacting and false appearance, it is nevertheless accepted as the venue for the bond between Zhang and Shen to unfold. Zhang may identify with loyalist resistance, but official recognition of her chastity comes from the new regime.

More broadly, the sustained reflection in *Chastity and Talent* on the tensions between fact and fiction, truth and lies is based on the manipulation of gender boundaries and of the limits of the stage. In an age when it was not uncommon for the literati occasionally to assume the role of amateur actors,⁹⁹ men dressing up as women or assuming female roles still retained a certain shock value. Fictional and dramatic works from this period sometimes represent men disguised as women with unease and perhaps even abhorrence.¹⁰⁰ Counter-examples abound, however. In *The Male Queen* (*Nan wanghou* 男王后) by Wang Jide 王驥德 (d. 1623), a beautiful boy who for a time becomes the “queen” of a rebel prince, is seen as following his true destiny.¹⁰¹ In other instances, rugged males take up female costumes to dramatize their sense of alienation and the yawning gap of dissonance between self and society. Notable examples include Shen Zizheng’s 沈自徵 (1591–1641) short play, *Drunk with Wine and Poetry*, *Yang Sheng’an Pins Flowers in his Coiffure* (*Yang Sheng’an shijiu zanhua ji* 楊升庵詩酒簪花髻), which shows the exiled poet Yang Shen donning the clothes of courtesans and venting his spleen against the inequities of the world and its inverted values. Zhang Chao’s one-act play, *Begging for Skills* (*Qiqiao wen* 乞巧文), features the Tang poet and scholar-official Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819) dressed up as a woman begging for skills to maneuver his way in a treacherous world. In these examples, whether the motive is homoerotic yearning or righteous indignation, there is genuine self-expression, no matter how perverse or histrionic. By contrast, Wang Juan’s double cross-dressing at the behest of Mongol officials epitomizes inner hollowness and capitulation. This is the obverse side of politicized chastity—abject pandering to the conquerors is sexualized through gender reversal as licentiousness and betrayal whose metaphor is playacting.

99. See Zhou Yibai, *Zhou Yibai xiaoshuo xiqu lunwen ji*, p. 298; Zhang Dai, *Tao'an mengyi*, p. 4; Li Yu, *Naihe tian* 奈何天, in *LY*, 2B.31.

100. See Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 98–131; Idema, “Female Talent,” pp. 570–71.

101. See Volpp, *Worldly Stage*, pp. 129–72.

Compromised Chastity

In *Chastity and Talent*, what is dramatically interesting is not resolute chastity but its opposite, the fakery and playacting of the character steeped in compromise. The despicable Wang Juan crosses gender boundaries and provokes reflections on theatrical illusion and “the stage of history.” By contrast, Zhang Yuniang adheres to her principles and expires without much fanfare. In a sense this is a function of Meng Chengshun’s premises: he wants to elevate Yuniang’s chastity by detaching it from romantic relationships and to allegorize it as loyalism without references that could be construed as politically problematic. The result is a somewhat abstract and undramatic version of martyrdom. In *Fan of West Lake*, the convention of romantic southern plays stipulates that Song Xiangxian and Song Juanjuan successfully defend their chastity during their captivity. Circumstances protect them—Song Juanjuan is (unaccountably) condemned to hard labor but not sexual service; Song Xiangxian is saved by her buyer’s jealous wife. In both cases, chastity rules out role-playing.

Inasmuch as chastity is often confirmed through a “death wish,” a chaste woman could sometimes seem passive in survival stories. In *Casual Chats* (WSZ, 5:3425), Wang Shizhen tells the story of an abducted woman who refuses to submit to the silversmith who bought her. Several men moved by the plight of victims captured by troops ransom her. They also happen to ransom her fiancé, mother, and future mother-in-law. Wang implies that the family reunion is karmic recompense for her chastity, but karma as causality also leaves her to the mercy of circumstances.

The abducted woman who outwits the enemy by sacrificing her chastity raises inevitable moral questions. “The Account of a Remarkable Woman” (“Qi nüzi zhuan” 奇女子傳) by Xu Fang 徐芳 (1619–71) is a case in point.¹⁰² Woman Yang, married to a certain Li, is abducted by Wang, an officer from Shandong, during the Qing siege of Nanchang to stamp out resistance in 1647. Yang has a son with her captor and abnegates herself to serve him and his wife. While Wang is away on military duty, Yang reveals to Wang’s wife that her former husband’s family had

102. Xu Fang, “Qi nüzi zhuan,” in Zhang Chao, *Yuchu xingzhi* (*Shuohai*, 2:448–50). On Xu Fang, see Barr, “Novelty, Character, and Community.” Barr also translates “Qi nüzi zhuan” in this essay.

hidden treasures whose whereabouts are known only to her. When urged to go find these treasures, Yang feigns reluctance to leave her child. Wang's wife offers to look after the child and sends Yang on her way, disguised as a man ("she removed her hairpins, shaved the front of her head and braided her hair" 釋笄薙辮) and accompanied by two soldiers. Yang gets the soldiers drunk, murders them, and heads home. Her terrified former husband could not recognize the "young general" as she "sat on high and summoned her former husband, shouting out orders in a forbidding manner" 踞坐索其夫，呼叱甚厲. (Does she prolong the masquerade because she enjoys the power?) Yang finally embraces her husband and reveals her identity. She is honored in her community as "a remarkable woman."

Perhaps because of unanswered questions and moral ambiguities, Xu Fang's commentary is almost as long as the narrative. If, as Xu concedes, Yang "cannot be commended for her chastity" 節不足稱, she may nevertheless deserve praise for her "deep intelligence and unfathomable valor" 深智沉勇. Yang is abducted in 1647 and escapes in 1654: Xu Fang praises her for biding her time and not forgetting her husband, arguing that, unlike other fictional heroines saved by fate or by knights-errant, she plots her escape with unerring machinations and ruthless daring. Xu defends her against the charge of being an unfeeling 忍 mother: "This is precisely why she is remarkable. Without leaving this son, she has no way of gaining the trust of her captor's wife, and there is no way she can reunite with her former husband" 此所以奇也。非是子無以信其妻，而故夫不可見矣. The epithet "remarkable" 奇 hovers on the margin between moral exemplarity and its redefinition, and Xu's disquisition argues that defiance of conventional norms justifies a higher morality.

The field of judgment of women in such impossible circumstances cries out for broadening and redefinition. Below I will use Li Yu's comic transformation of traumatic events in some of his stories to explore how compromised chastity may be understood and forgiven. Delving into the balance between circumstances and responsibility, intention and action in cases of women who have extramarital sexual relations, he urges "justifying transgressive action by taking into account virtuous intention" 原心. In the preface introducing the story "Birth Tower" ("Shengwo lou" 生我樓) in *Twelve Towers* (*Shi'er lou* 十二樓), he opines: "Since those who act like loyal subjects but harbor deviance are

castigated in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, those who end up in faraway lands but whose heart is tied to their husbands should be commended in these declining times” 迹似忠良而心同奸佞，既蒙貶斥于春秋，身居異域而心繫所天，宜見褒揚于末世 (LY, 4B:251). The same preface records a song lyric by a woman who chronicles her shame (LY, 4B:250):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 千年劫 | It is my lot to encounter |
| 偏自我遭逢 | The calamity of a thousand years. |
| 國破家亡身又辱 | My domain fallen, my family destroyed, my person defiled: |
| 不教一事不成空 | There is nothing not in vain. |
| 極恨是天公 | What I hate most is Heaven. |
| 差一念 | The difference one step made! |
| 悔殺也無功 | Regrets are of no avail. |
| 青塚魂多難覓取 | At the green graves are souls too numerous to seek, |
| 黃泉路窄易相逢 | On the narrow paths of the underworld, an encounter too easy. |
| 難禁面皮紅 | I cannot help blushing with shame. |

Li Yu explains:

When the bandit rebels under Li Zicheng came south, someone picked up a bit of tobacco by a big road. This song lyric was recorded on a piece of paper with which some rebel wrapped up tobacco. The person who picked this up did not understand the meaning, thinking it was merely a fragment of writing. Only when it was later passed on to a scholar was it understood that a talented woman had suffered abduction and wrote this. Regretting her loss of chastity, she wanted to seek death but feared that, having incurred shame, she could not face her husband in the underworld. Not knowing where to turn, and caught between survival and death, she thus wrote this work mulling over grief and rancor.

此詞乃闖賊南來之際，有人在大路之旁拾得漳烟少許，此詞錄于片紙，即闖賊包烟之物也。拾得之人不解其義，僅謂殘篇斷幅而已。再傳至文人之手，始知爲才婦被擄，自悔失身，欲求一死，又慮有腆面目，難見地下之人，進退兩難，存亡交阻，故有此悲憤留連之作。(LY, 4B:250)

Even when the writings of these victimized women survive, they are likely to be ignored or misunderstood; their despair is known to the world only through the intercession of empathetic readers, among whom Li Yu counts himself. He surmises that this is a literate elite woman, and

her sorrow moves him to this conclusion: “Since this woman had been defiled, it seems fitting that she would turn her back on bygone duty and love, and forget all about her dead husband. Yet she could still put her heartfelt lament in writing, and should be counted among those who deserve forgiveness and understanding. She should not be put on the same par with women who lose their chastity under ordinary circumstances” 此婦既遭污辱，宜乎背義忘恩，置既死之人于不問矣，猶能慷慨悲歌，形于筆墨，亦當在可原可赦之條，不得與尋常失節之婦同日而語也 (LY, 4:251).

This sober excursus announces themes that are treated with the unexpected twists, playful reversals, and deliberate paradox typical of Li Yu’s style in the story proper of “Birth Tower,” which is set during the Song-Yuan transition, a transparent analogy for the Ming-Qing transition. Political turmoil tears families apart, but in this story it allows a family to be reconstituted. As Tina Lu observes, fictional family reunion “becomes a way of imagining how links that have been destroyed might be restored or how the empire might be reconstructed in the wake of dynastic tragedy.”¹⁰³ In the beginning of “Birth Tower,” the child of the Yin family mysteriously disappears. Some years later, in order to seek an heir, Yin Xiaolou offers himself as a “father for sale.” The young man who buys him, Yao Ji, turns out to be Yin’s long vanished son. Before this truth comes to be known, however, the two men are separated during the chaos of war. A string of coincidences allow Yao Ji to reestablish familial order through economic transactions. At the time soldiers would sell the women they abducted in “human markets” 人行. In order to make it impossible for buyers to judge the women by their outward appearance, the soldiers put women in sacks and sell them by weight. Trying his luck with this “purchase by sack,” Yao Ji ends up with an old woman. He pities her sad fate and honors her as his “adopted mother,” with the secret intention of possibly arranging her marriage with his supposedly widowed “adopted father.” Grateful for his generosity, the old woman teaches him how to find the virtuous and talented beauty she came to know among the women in captivity. Following her instructions, he succeeds in buying that young lady, who turns out to be none other

103. Tina Lu, “Fictional Reunions,” p. 344, in *Trauma and Transcendence*.

than the woman he loved and lost, Miss Cao.¹⁰⁴ Upon his reunion with Yin Xiaolou after many convoluted plot twists, Yao Ji finds out that the old woman is actually Yin's wife. After more unexpected revelations, it turns out that Yin Xiaolou and his wife are in fact Yao Ji's birth parents.

The sale of women in sacks, a symbol of the dehumanization of the victims of the dynastic transition, surfaces in several early Qing miscellanies and stories.¹⁰⁵ In "Birth Tower," however, this is called "the fairest of all transactions" 天下第一宗的公平交易. As in Yao Ji's earlier (and accidental) purchase of his father, the language of economic transactions—principal, capital, interest, bargaining, debt, goods, buying and selling—reestablishes family ethics and social order. This paradox, even more evident in *Accidental Reunion* (*Qiao tuanyuan* 巧團圓, LY, 2B:321–415), the play based on "Birth Tower," also finds a parallel in the ways the female hero, Miss Cao, defends her chastity. Dispensing with the Song-Ming analogy, Li Yu sets the play during the Ming-Qing transition. It features a daring and resourceful Miss Cao, who articulates the need for women to bypass norms in order to survive and preserve their integrity during troubled times. As the threat of chaos looms large, she takes her destiny into her own hands and elicits a promise of marriage from Yao Ji (scene 8). Reversing gender roles, she throws him a handkerchief with the lines, "The gracious and noble man: / the fair maiden would fain be his mate" 窈窕君子，淑女好逑 (LY, 2B:341–43).¹⁰⁶ After being abducted by soldiers, she induces temporary disfigurement by putting croton oil on her face, hoping thereby to repel molesters (scene 13, LY, 2B:354–56). When an undeterred rebel soldier tries to hold her oil-infused hands, he contracts dysentery (scene 15, LY, 2B:358–61). Miss Cao's strategic chastity, like Yao Ji's mercantile morality, creates new contexts to realize ethical norms.

104. A similar story is found in Wang Shizhen's *Xiangzu biji*, 4 (WSZ, 6:4534). A man who intends to buy a wife ends up with an old woman and decides to honor her as his mother. She gives him money to buy another woman who turns out to be her daughter. (Mother and daughter were abducted by banner men and separated.)

105. See, for example, Yan Yudun (1650–1713), "Yan'e."

106. This is a reversal of lines from the first poem in *Classic of Poetry*: "The gracious and gentle maiden: / the noble man would fain be her mate" 窈窕淑女，君子好逑. See Mao 1, "Guanju" 關雎, in *Maoshi zhushu*, 1A.20–22.

Miss Cao's disfigurement trick also appears in the story "The Seven Ruses of the Female Chen Ping" ("Nü Chen Ping jisheng qichu" 女陳平計生七出) in Li Yu's collection *Silent Operas* (*Wusheng xi* 無聲戲, *LY*, 4A:93–106).¹⁰⁷ Because of the inherent differences between the two genres, ribald humor and sexual details banished from the romantic southern play are fully developed in the vernacular short story 話本. The protagonist of "Female Chen Ping," Geng Erniang, is illiterate but resourceful. When her town falls to rebel soldiers, she bids her husband farewell: "Things have come to this: there is nothing to be done. If I am captured, I will not steal life by bearing with defilement, nor will I lightly choose death. I will exhaust all my powers and employ all possible tricks to meet the challenge" 事到如今，也沒奈何。我若被他擄去，決不忍恥偷生，也決不輕身就死。須盡我生平的力量，竭我胸中的智巧去做了看 (*LY*, 4A:96). Recognizing her husband's limitations, she realizes that he cannot protect her, nor will he have the means to ransom her if she is captured. She thus urges him to flee for his life and, should he survive, come back home to wait for her when stability is restored. In this way the usual "gender geography"—the woman at home and the man on the road—is reversed. The fearless Geng Erniang almost seems to regard the fate of abduction as an adventure, a chance to prove her pluck, worth, and powers.

When she sees a "comely" 標標致致 rebel chief, she offers herself to him. Here "abduction" takes on echoes of "choosing a mate." Having become his "trophy," she first uses bloodstained rags to pretend that she is menstruating, and then rubs croton around her genitalia to make it swollen and unsightly. She also fondles the rebel chief's penis holding on to a handkerchief treated with croton oil. Geng Erniang is able to avoid sexual intercourse only by conceding to all kinds of intimacies:

With innumerable ruses and schemes Erniang sets out to "preserve this ritual vessel," refusing to "lend it to others."¹⁰⁸ As for the rest—her red

107. Miss Cao is compared to Chen Ping in *Accidental Reunion* (*LY*, 2B:356). Hanan translated "Female Chen Ping" in *Silent Operas*.

108. *Zuozhuan* records Confucius' remarks: "It is precisely ritual vessels and names that cannot be lent to others, for these are the things by which a ruler governs" 惟器與名，不可以假人。君之所司也 (Cheng 2.3, p. 788). There is a similar assertion in *Zuozhuan* Zhao 32.4, p. 1520. Li Yu is irreverently referring to Geng's genitals as the "ritual vessel."

lips and pink tongue, smooth breasts and soft nipples, golden lotuses and jade fingers—she was indifferent to them, as if they were merely “wooden or earthen forms.”¹⁰⁹ She let him suck, kiss, caress, and rub them, as if unconscious of what was going on. This is the art of expediency that saves the root and trunk without worrying about the branches and leaves.

二娘千方百計，只保全這件名器，不肯假人，其餘的朱唇絳舌，嫩乳酥胸，金蓮玉指，都視為土木形骸，任他含啞摩捏，只當不知。這是救根本，不救枝葉的權宜之術。(LY, 4A:101)

She feigns attachment and plies the rebel chief, sick with dysentery, with loving words to convince him of her affection. When she finds out where he hides the spoils of war, she escapes, finds her way home, and tells her husband to unearth and appropriate the loot. She then asks her husband to summon the villagers and besiege the rebel chief, who is beaten to death after his public confession that he actually has not had sexual intercourse with Geng Erniang.

Li Yu's friend Du Jun, under the pseudonym “Libationer of the Realm of Sleep” 睡鄉祭酒, comments at the end of the story:

Women who guard their chastity have always been the sages among women. Those who would rather die than submit to violation are the pure among sages. Those who bear with shame and achieve vengeance are the undaunted among sages. As for Geng Erniang's type, they are the balanced among sages. Not only should she be called Chen Ping among women, she may also be named the female Liu Xiahui.

從來守節之婦，俱是女中聖人。誓死不屈的，乃聖之清者也。忍辱報仇的，乃聖中之任者。耿二娘這一種，乃聖之和者。不但叫做女陳平，還可稱為雌下惠。(LY, 4A:105)

The discourse on different kinds of sages is derived from *Mengzi* (5B.10): “Boyi is the pure among the sages; Yi Yin, the undaunted among sages; Liu Xiahui, the balanced among sages; Confucius, the timely among sages. Confucius can be said to encompass all in a great integration” 伯夷，聖之清者也；伊尹，聖之任者也；柳下惠，聖之和者也；孔子，聖之時者也。孔子之謂集大成. The definition of “pure,” “undaunted,” and “balanced” in Du Jun's comments is, however,

109. In *Shishuo xinyu* (14.13), the Jin poet Liu Ling is said to be short and plain, but has a natural indifference to his appearance as if “his body were merely wooden or earthen forms.”

different from the original context. According to *Mengzi*, “Boyi’s eyes did not behold evil sights, his ears did not hear evil sounds. He would not serve one who was not his ruler, nor would he command those who were not his people. With political order, he stepped forth; with disorder, he withdrew” 伯夷，目不視惡色，耳不聽惡聲。非其君，不事；非其民，不使。治則進，亂則退。 In an era of political turmoil, Boyi has the choice of self-cultivation in withdrawal; he can bide his time and wait for the world to match him in “purity.” A chaste woman facing violation has no such choice; her “purity” must be realized through martyrdom. Yi Yin “stepped forth irrespective of order or disorder”; he considers it his mission to act regardless of circumstances. (The word translated as “undaunted” above also means “mission” or “responsibility.”) A chaste woman who can achieve vengeance may also pride herself on being undaunted by her mission, but such missions are often preceded by rape and followed by suicide, quite different from Yi Yin who could serve different governments and achieve meaningful action without endangering himself. Liu Xiaohui “was not shamed by serving a benighted ruler, and he did not refuse a minor office” 不羞汙君，不辭小官, thus realizing the principle of “balance without compromise” 和而不流. Liu declares: “You are you, and I am I. Even if you expose your naked body next to me, how can you defile me?” 爾爲爾，我爲我。雖袒裼裸裎於我側，爾焉能浼我哉? By distinguishing circumstances and state of mind, he seems to share Geng Erniang’s *modus operandi*. After all, Geng also lets the rebel chief lie naked next to her while preserving “inner distance.” The difference is that Geng herself is also naked, and even while preserving her “ritual vessel” has to use her body to please the enemy. As “the balanced among sages,” Geng Erniang is defined not only by “inner distance” but also by inevitable compromise. This is integrity built on blemishes and concessions. Li Yu does not mention “the timely among sages,” perhaps because he does not dare make fun of Confucius. But Geng Erniang is driven by the circumstances of her times to redefine moral action and may actually claim to be “the timely among sages.”

In this passage Du Jun, echoing the title, commends Geng Erniang as “the Chen Ping among women.” Chen Ping 陳平 (d. 178 BCE) was an important early Han minister who helped Liu Bang 劉邦 (256–195 BCE, r. 202–195 BCE) found and unify the Han empire through his strategic genius, but his schemes were ruthless and self-serving. He conspired to

frame Han Xin, Liu Bang's erstwhile comrade-in-arms, for treason, and managed to preserve his life during the interregnum of Empress Lü's rule by opportunistically modulating his position. Although Sima Qian praises him for "beginning well and ending well" 善始善終, he registers his implicit criticism by letting Chen Ping predict the decline of his line: "If my descendants lose their positions, that would be the end. They would finally not be able to rise again, because I had secretly brought calamity to many" 吾世即廢，亦已矣。終不能復起，以吾多陰禍也 (*Shiji*, 56.2052). In other words, the appellation of "female Chen Ping" does not just convey admiration for Geng's resourcefulness, it also implies that her schemes are rooted in self-interest and can be morally dubious. In Li Yu's view, political disorder dictates how morality is but the art of the possible.

Du Jun also compares Geng Erniang to Liu Xiahui. According to traditional moral standards, the Lu man who refuses to allow a woman to enter his abode pales beside Liu Xiahui, who remains indifferent with a woman sitting in his lap, for the one who refuses temptation lacks the fortitude of the one who can withstand it. By the same token, Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–85), who famously declared, "There is a courtesan in my eyes but none in my mind," is deemed superior to his brother Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), who left a feast in which courtesans were present.¹¹⁰ However, this "improper propriety" is usually a male prerogative; rarely can a woman claim to act according to this reasoning.¹¹¹ Du Jun's comparison of Geng Erniang to Chen Ping and Liu Xiahui confirms Li Yu's elevation of expediency. Geng Erniang's apparent disloyalty to her husband (as implied by the word *er* 二 and the compound *erxin* 貳心) does not detract from her steadfast integrity (which is the meaning of her surname by marriage, Geng 耿). Absolute morality requires one to disregard alternatives and spontaneously do what is right. The ways

110. The Cheng brothers are both famous neo-Confucian thinkers.

111. One exception consists of anecdotes and stories about courtesans, such as the entry on Li Shiniang discussed in chap. 4. The early Qing novel *Jin Yun Qiao zhuan* 金雲翹傳 by Qingxin cairen 青心才人 features a courtesan (Wang Cuiqiao) who maintains her inner purity despite sexual relations with many men. Like some of the stories we discussed, she also turns victimhood into a venue of empowerment. Another notable example is You Sanjie in *The Story of the Stone*. "Licentious without being licentious" 淫而不淫, she flaunts her sexuality while remaining pure (at least in the later revisions of the novel).

Geng Erniang defends her chastity are marked by calculations, negotiations, and considerations of profit, and she seems to take an almost sadistic pleasure in tormenting her captor. Li Yu is fully aware of the potential contradictions and hence declares at the beginning: “Be lenient even as you follow the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in casting blame, do not look for shortcomings in real achievements” 春秋責備且從寬，莫向長中索短 (LY, 4A:93).

Another short story by Li Yu titled “The Tower for Honoring Ancestors” (“Fengxian lou” 奉先樓) in *Twelve Towers* (LY, 4B:235–49) also deals with the theme of compromised chastity. The protagonist is again a woman who turns her plight into an opportunity to exercise her judgment, determination, and resourcefulness. The plot follows the trials and tribulations of Madame Shu, who must choose between “preserving the orphan” 存孤 and “guarding her chastity” 守節 during the chaos of the Ming-Qing transition. Licentiate Shu urges his wife to disregard chastity and pour her effort into protecting their child who will continue the Shu line. When Madame Shu summons the entire clan and seeks guidance from the spirits of Shu’s ancestors by performing divination in the Tower for Honoring Ancestors, she repeatedly gets “preserving the orphan” as an answer. When her town falls to the rebels, Licentiate Shu flees and Madame Shu trades her body for her child’s life. The rebel enamored of her allows mother and son to stay together through endless peregrinations. With the Qing conquest, the rebels’ captives are taken over by Qing soldiers. Madame Shu is passed from one man to another and eventually becomes the wife of a Qing general. When Licentiate Shu is captured by the general’s troops and drafted as an oarsman, Madame Shu, instead of revealing her identity or helping him, has him heavily chained to forestall the general’s jealous suspicion. Upon his return, the general is indeed convinced that Madame Shu has not resumed relations with her former husband and fulfills his promise of returning her son to her husband.

After achieving the union of father and son, Madame Shu hangs herself. The general manages to revive her, and she reveals her former promise to commit suicide after her mission of saving her son is accomplished. The general recognizes in her “a chaste woman who endured shame to preserve the orphan” 忍辱存孤的節婦 and counsels her: “Having died once, you can be said to have kept your promise” 你如今死過一次，也可為不食前言了 (LY, 4B.248). He restores her to her

husband with this advice: “That she is following you home today is my good office, not her original intention. Now after you get back, you should just say that your former wife had died, and that you have married another fair lady. That way you can erect an arch commemorating her chastity so that she can leave her name for posterity” 今日從你回去，是我的好意，並不是她的初心。你如今回去，倒是說前妻已死，重娶了一位佳人，好替她起個節婦牌坊，留名後世罷了 (LY, 4B:248). The general even sends along Madame Shu’s clothes as her “trousseau.” Li Yu expresses his admiration for the general’s generosity at the end of the story: “This righteous act is the most memorable story of the dynastic transition” 這是鼎甲以來第一件可傳的事 (LY, 4B.248).

As in Geng Erniang’s case, there is a performative aspect to Madame Shu’s moral choice. From the beginning Madame Shu turns to theatrical analogy to explain her actions. When her husband first tries to convince her to sacrifice her chastity for the sake of protecting their son, she retorts: “Formerly when I saw a performance of *Washing Silk*, and came to the part when Xi Shi, after bringing down Wu, again follows Fan Li to return to the lakes, I could have died of shame on her behalf! . . . If I am unfortunate enough to play the role of Xi Shi for our time, I will most certainly not act out that shameful scene of ‘Returning to the lakes!’” 當初看做《浣沙記》，到那西子亡吳之後，復從范蠡歸湖，竟要替她羞死！ . . . 我萬一果然不幸做了今日之西施，那一齣〈歸湖〉的醜戲也斷然不做！ (LY, 4B:239).¹¹²

Just as Geng Erniang maneuvers to gather the villagers to witness the rebel leader’s confession that “they had no sexual intercourse” (literally, “the water did not touch the rice” 水米無交), a statement whose qualification Li Yu narrates with obvious relish, Madame Shu also needs an audience of clansmen and ancestors for the divinatory drama that affirms her choice of protecting her child at all cost. Confucian ethics prizes “vigilance in solitude” 慎獨 and “not deceiving anyone even in a dark room” 不欺暗室,¹¹³ but in Li Yu’s world, moral values have to

112. On the political meanings of Xi Shi’s story during this period, see chap. 6, pp. 564–65, 575.

113. For *shendu*, see *Zhongyong*, in *Liji zhushu*, 51.879. Qu Boyu adheres to ritual propriety even when no one sees him, see *Lienü zhuan*, 3.57–58; for the use of *buqi anshi* as idiom, see, for example, Xiao Gang, “Youzhi tibi zixu” 幽禁題壁自序, in Yan Kejun, *Quan Liang wen*, 12.3018.

be dramatically performed and applauded by an audience to be affirmed. External confirmation, sometimes involving debate and negotiation, is needed precisely because moral precepts cannot be applied indiscriminately with absolute certainty.

In "The Tower for Honoring Ancestors," Madame Shu's compromised chastity finds a parallel in her husband's "half-abstinence" 半齋, which allows the consumption of meat other than that of dogs and oxen. The reasoning is that dogs and oxen perform crucial service for humans (guarding their houses and plowing their fields), while other animals impose no obligations and can be eaten with impunity. In the course of Licentiate Shu's wanderings, some soldiers give him a piece of beef which he injects without realizing what it is. Filled with trepidation, and despite his weakness from starvation, Shu sticks his fingers into his throat to remove the offending food. The effort almost kills him, but the gods, pitying his sincerity in observing "half-abstinence," restore him to life. Li Yu calls this the principle of "doing good by halves" 半做善事:

Doing by halves does not mean that one has to do fifty percent, as if everything has been measured on a scale. So long as one can weigh the odds and choose to do the most important ten or twenty percent, that counts as half. Leave the other half for the future—who knows, perhaps gradual accretion will lead to completion.

半做者，不是叫在十分之中定要做了五分，就像天平彈過的一般，方纔叫做半做。只要權其輕重，揀那最緊要的做得一兩分，也就抵過一半了。留那一半以俟將來，或者由漸而成，也未見得。(LY, 4B:235–36)

Without absolute moral standards, there is no black-and-white distinction of genuine and fake. "Female Chen Ping" begins with a discussion of the difficulty of discrimination:

The ancients said: with strong wind one knows which grass is tenacious; in tumultuous times one recognizes who is the loyal minister. To distinguish between genuine and fake, one needs the test of a crisis. But then this is not something you can test with impunity. Unlike the test for metals in cauldrons, which leaves the genuine intact and the fake destroyed, the test for virtues such as loyalty, filial piety, chastity, or duty leaves you surviving fakes, for the genuine ones will have perished with the test.

古云：疾風知勁草，板蕩識忠臣。要辨真假，除非把患難來試他一試。只是這件東西是試不得的，譬如金銀銅錫，下爐一試，假的壞了，真的依舊剩還你，這忠孝節義將來一試，假的倒剩還你，真的一試就試殺了。(LY, 4A:93)

Real virtues that can be vindicated only through death go against the idea of just retribution and recompense dominant in vernacular short stories. In order to combine chastity and self-preservation and to break down the polarization of “seeking life by damaging nobility” 求生害仁 and “giving up life to perfect nobility” 殺身成仁 (*Analects*, 15.9), it is necessary to redefine “genuine” and “fake.” Li Yu calls Geng Erniang “the live treasure that will not perish in the test” 試不殺的活寶:

Although hers cannot be regarded as the norm for guarding chastity, it is actually a notch higher than those who endure shame and then seek revenge. Dear readers, if you insist on the criticism which the *Spring and Autumn Annals* applies even to worthy men and make excessive demands, that would not be the properly forgiving way of judging people in a time of decline and disorder.

雖不可爲守節之常，卻比那忍辱報仇的還高一等。看官，你們若執了《春秋》責備賢者之法，苛求起來，就不是末世論人的忠厚之道了。(LY, 4A:94)

The empathy in such historical understanding calls for the acumen to see genuineness in duplicity, and to divine necessary lies in truth telling.

In “The Tower for Honoring Ancestors,” Madame Shu declares to her clansmen in the ancestral temple:

Disloyal subjects and unchaste women have always borrowed grand labels to pursue their deviant paths. They may claim to try to continue the ancestral line or extend the country’s wellbeing against all odds, but this is not necessarily their original intention. It is only after the ancestral line has been continued or the country’s wellbeing actually extended that one can distinguish between the genuine and the fake.

從來不忠之臣，不節之婦，都假借一個美號，遂其奸邪。或說勉嗣宗祧，或說苟延國脈，都未必出于本心，直等國脈果延，宗祧既嗣之後，方纔辨得真假。(LY, 4B:240)

This is a strangely functional way of “distinguishing between the genuine and the fake.” “Original intention” 本心, by definition hard to objectively determine, is here vindicated only by practical, concrete results. There is no gap between intention and execution in martyrdom. But the very term “hidden loyalist” or “inwardly chaste woman” implies a distance between motive and action. By arguing for judgment based on consequences, Li Yu in effect calls for an ethics of ends justifying means, greater good accommodating lesser evil. By this logic, when genuine

virtuous intention behind deviant action does not pan out (imagine if Geng Erniang fails to escape or if Madame Shu's son dies), it creates merely private psychological drama. Intention justified by efficacious, if transgressive, action requires careful calculation instead of the spontaneous outpouring of emotions. That is why, when Madame Shu meets her former husband, she cruelly maltreats him—she knows this is the only way to gain the general's trust and to restore her son to her husband. The denial of feelings hides steadfast principles. That at the end of "The Tower for Honoring Ancestors" Madame Shu can die and come back to life or can even become two persons testifies to the shifting boundaries between the genuine and the fake, surface and deeper meaning. "Involuntary compromises" and "expediency answering higher goals" are either excuses or truths whereby people survive or defend their choices in an age of disorder. The compromised yet intact chastity of victimized women thus signals the confusion, contradiction, and helplessness of the era, calling into question how true individual agency is possible in chaotic times, and how contemporary and later historical judgment must weigh the balance between intention and action, action and consequences.

Geng Erniang's and Madame Shu's uses of the fate of abduction and displacement to exercise their agency constitute the fantasy of "the power of the weak." From another perspective, the ways they adapt to changing times and manipulate their circumstances to ensure their own survival (and in Shu's case, the survival of her son) can be said to represent the process of accepting the new order. This is especially obvious in "The Tower for Honoring Ancestors," where Li Yu speaks of the "Great Qing establishing rightful mandate" 皇清定鼎 and "bringing peace and stability to the realm" 削平區宇. There is, however, imagistic continuity between the "great Qing army" and "bandit rebels"—Madame Shu was passed from the latter to the former, and her husband's sufferings at the hands of Qing soldiers are vividly described. Even so, the problem becomes the solution, as the cause of violent dislocation also heals the ruptures created by violence. The Qing general miraculously transforms from jealous husband to magnanimous conqueror—he is moved by Madame Shu's virtue to return her to her former husband. This answers the victims' quest to resolve contradictions and escape sufferings and represents the hopes that the conquered harbor vis-à-vis their conquerors. That is why Li Yu proclaims, "This righteous act is the most memorable story of the dynastic transition."

In these stories, the finality of death is reversible, truth and equivocation are accepted as intertwined, and compromise is presented as instrumental for survival and reconciliation. Li Yu in effect calls for a redefinition of virtue to accommodate compromises, pragmatism, and self-interest. His position reminds the reader of an ancient saying quoted in *Zuo zhuan*: “Sages reach optimal positions with their principles, second to them are those who guard their principles, the lowest are those who lose their principles” 聖達節，次守節，下失節.¹¹⁴ The caveat, of course, is the precarious balance between “reaching optimal positions with one’s principles” and “losing one’s principles,” and the question as to who has the authority to adjudicate the distinction.

Crossing Boundaries

If compromised yet intact chastity takes us to treacherous terrains defying easy distinctions and categorical judgments, it would seem that the more conventional equivalence of chastity with political integrity is relatively straightforward. Yet *Fan of West Lake* and *Chastity and Talent* show how chastity may facilitate accommodation or displace anxieties about compromise. As we shall see in the next chapter, the commemoration of “chastity martyrs” also involves complex questions (when, where, how, and to what ends).

Whether as a martyr or a survivor, whether as the judge or the judged one, the victimized woman invites ruminations on the compass of agency. The abiding concern with the victim’s agency is evident in the examples we examined. Poems on walls, whether truly written by abducted women or merely fabricated, provoke responses defining a discursive space wherein a women’s choices are debated. These words,

114. Kong Yingda (*Zuo zhuan Zhengyi*, 27.466) cites sages who, as subjects, accept rulership (e.g., Shun, Yu) or those who start new dynasties (e.g., founders of Shang and Zhou) as instances of “reaching optimal positions with principles.” But the idea of going beyond fixed rules certainly has broader applications. Whereas “to guard one’s principles” 守節 and “to lose one’s principles” 失節 have become common idioms, “to reach optimal positions with one’s principles” (*dajie*) is not often used. *Da* implies efficacy, flexibility, and expediency, and is in many cases related to the word *quan* 權, which Huang Kan glosses as “going against constancy and yet abiding by the way” 反常而合於道. See Huang Kan’s gloss to *Analects*, 9.30, cited in He Yan, *Lanyu jijie yishu*, 5.19. Cf. Qian Zhongshu, *Guanzhui bian*, 1:206–10.

whether as chronicles of personal suffering or eyewitness accounts of contemporary disorder, suicide notes or pleas for ransom, accusation or self-definition, show how the victim reclaims her dignity by gaining (or being given) a voice.

Sometimes a victim's agency is unimaginable without crossing boundaries. Many of the heroines discussed in this chapter are abducted or displaced; just that fact alone takes these women out of their usual domestic sphere. In order to survive, the victim often has to maneuver compromises, bypassing conventional morality or redefining it altogether, as in the Li Yu stories discussed above. Whereas Li Yu ends his stories with the original families reconstituted, some early Qing accounts tell of victimized yet resourceful heroines who form new families. "Passing by Ruins" ("Guoxu zhi" 過墟志) by a writer who called himself "The Recluse West of the Fields" (Shuxi yisou 墅西逸叟, 1676) goes further and crosses the Han-Manchu divide.¹¹⁵ Here the reader is also invited to identify with the instinct for self-preservation or the pursuit of self-interest, without any self-conscious excursus justifying compromises or pragmatism. The story tells of the fate of Liu Sanxiu, a widow abducted by Qing troops. Through luck, courage, and cunning, she becomes the consort of a Manchu prince. Supposedly historical, based on the oral account of Liu's maid Zhang and the correspondence between Liu and her brothers, it nevertheless has uncorroborated historical details.¹¹⁶ The "ruins" in the title refer to the charred remains of the estate of Liu's late husband Huang Lianggong, a ruthless, grasping miser more than thirty years her senior. (Orphaned at a young age, Liu was virtually sold to Huang by her second eldest brother.) On one level, the author marvels at the resilient, resourceful Liu's triumph against all odds—she turns her victimization into the venue for advancement at every juncture—but stops short of celebrating her union with the prince as a full-blown Han-Manchu romance. The emotional center of the story is not her relationship with either husband but her love for Zhen, her daughter from her first marriage with Huang. The author is also

115. The account is included in Jiang Qiqun, *Yuchu guangzhi*, j. 11, in *Shuobai*, 7: 2391–2411. It is also included in *Xiangyan congshu* under the title "Guoxu zhi gan." For a partial translation, see Struve, *Voices from the Ming-Qing Catachysm*, pp. 93–113.

116. Postscripts and textual notes in the *Yuchu guangzhi* version raise questions regarding the identity of the Manchu prince in the story.

uneasy enough about the implied affirmation of a woman's rejection of chaste widowhood as the only honorable choice to frame the plot as retribution. The account begins with the image of Huang's estate in ruins and ends with Liu's futile attempt to establish an heir for the Huang line, thus turning a story of triumphant survival and successful second marriage into a cautionary tale of just retribution.

The victim who survives or thrives through crossing boundaries does not conform to later ideals of what makes a hero. Late Qing nationalist narratives readily embrace our seventeenth-century chastity martyrs. Alu 阿盧 (one of the pseudonyms adopted by Liu Yazhi 柳亞子 [1887–1958]) chronicles ten poems by “a woman from Hunan” (I discussed their divergent attribution and varying uses above) and the first poem by Song Huixiang in “Anecdotes about Female Heroes” (“Nüxiong tanxie” 女雄談屑) in *Women's World* (*Nüzi shijie* 女子世界, 1904.9), hailing them as proof that “while men surrendered, women did not.” In another issue of *Women's World* (1905.4–5), “Lü Yichu, a woman from Shimen” 石門女士呂逸初, published “A Woman's Soul” (“Nühun” 女魂), which includes Song Huixiang's story. Here she curses her Manchu captors and dies a martyr. Lü records the first three of Song's poems cited above. This poetic testimony and lamentation, written in blood on walls, does not include the fourth poem, an explicit plea for ransom.¹¹⁷ This might have been the version Qiu Jin read, for she includes Song Huixiang among the heroes whose spirit will lift Chinese women from ignorance and passivity in her prosimetric narrative, *Stones Carried by the Jingwei Bird* (*Jingwei shi* 精衛石).¹¹⁸

In nationalist narratives, the boundary that *can* be crossed is the infiltration of the enemy ranks as a spy, but even that becomes problematic for a woman, as Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904–86) shows in her 1941 story, “When I was in Xia Village” (“Wo zai Xiacun de shihou” 我在霞村

117. It is a measure of how “chastity martyrs” can still serve different political narratives in the late Qing that the first part of “A Woman's Soul” eulogizes women martyrs who died fighting Taiping rebels. One of the contributors to *Women's World*, “Dawo” 大我 (Hui Wochun 惠我春 [1877–1948]), defends Lü's disregard for ethnic loyalties and claims that these are all “patriotic women.” “Dawo” feels totally vindicated when the second part of “A Woman's Soul” turns to anti-Qing heroines from the Ming-Qing transition. Yichu is the cognomen of the woman novelist Lü Yunqing 呂韻清 (ca. 1870 to ca. 1937).

118. Qiu Jin, *Qiu Jin quanji jianzhū*, p. 471.

的时候). In this story, Zhenzhen (whose name means “chastity”) is abducted and raped by Japanese troops. She continues sexual relations with the enemy in order to obtain information that she passes on to the Chinese resistance fighters. This “victim as hero” story, however, sadly results in her rejection by her fellow villagers, although a sympathetic communist narrator and Zhenzhen’s prospective repatriation to the Communist-controlled area introduce a slightly more hopeful tone. The revolutionary cause that exacts her sacrifices seems ultimately impersonal and amorphous. Even Zhenzhen herself mixes pride with self-castigation as she expresses residual admiration for the Japanese; this is yet another instance of how one can so easily cross the boundary and enter a gray zone where compromise and meaningful action, self-alienation and fulfillment are inextricably intertwined. An even more subversive example is “Lust, Caution” (“Sejie” 色戒) by Eileen Chang. Set during the Sino-Japanese War and probably first drafted around 1950, this story was not published until 1978. Here the protagonist Wang Jiazhi, a female student revolutionary and aspiring actress, undertakes a mission to assassinate Yi, a collaborator, by seducing him. On the cusp of success, as Yi is in the process of buying her a diamond ring, Wang is moved by feelings akin to love to betray her secret. The story ends with Yi’s execution of Wang and her comrades. Evoking a world in which revolutionary fervor seems to be rooted in bad faith and collaboration is cruelly cynical, Chang offers the illusion of love, even if it is based on delusion and self-deception, as the closest thing to a moment of truth. In contrast to the examples discussed in this chapter, here a woman’s victimization (by herself and others) drives home the impossibility of political agency and of redemptive truth.

CHAPTER 6

Judgment and Nostalgia

Responses to writings by or about abducted women, though predominantly sympathetic, include unforgiving voices, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Contemporary literature, memoirs, and miscellanies often present women who consort with the enemy as the symptom or even the cause of national calamity. Thus Ding Yaokang caricatures women eager to enter the Jurchen ruler's harem in *Fan of West Lake*. Li Yu (in "Seven Ruses of the Female Chen Ping") and Xu Fang (in "Account of a Remarkable Woman"), in order to justify their respective heroines' strategic sacrifice of chastity, resort to vilifying women who serve as their foil by wantonly embracing new lovers with neither compunctions nor "higher" goals. In this chapter I will begin by examining writings in which women represent the shame of conquest. One such scathing critique is found in the eyewitness account of the Yangzhou massacre of 1645. Depictions of Yangzhou women earning praise and blame and their imagistic association with remembering or forgetting trauma posit questions for the premises of historical judgment. Further, tension between judgment and nostalgia marks second-generation memory, and even the figure most likely to invite ready judgments, the femme fatale Chen Yuanyuan, turns out to resist it.

The Women of Yangzhou

In May 1645, after fierce fighting, the Qing army took the city of Yangzhou, which had been under Shi Kefa's command. The troops then

plundered, raped, and slaughtered its inhabitants. For modern readers, there is perhaps no narrative of violence during the Ming-Qing transition more compelling than “An Account of Ten Days in Yangzhou” (“Yangzhou shiri ji” 揚州十日記, hereafter “Ten Days”) by Wang Xiuchu 王秀楚 (17th c.), which is an eyewitness account of these atrocities. Included in a collection of materials on the Ming-Qing conflict published during the Daoguang reign (1821–50), it became widely known during the late Qing with the spread of anti-Manchu sentiment.¹ We know nothing about Wang Xiuchu beyond his account, but his references to “Yangzhou natives” 揚人 and “Yangzhou customs” 揚俗 suggests that he came from another province. Antonia Finnane concludes in her absorbing study of Yangzhou that Wang might have been a merchant from Huizhou.²

Perhaps it is Wang’s perspective as an outsider and the tensions between Yangzhou natives and Huizhou sojourners that lend a critical edge to his account of the massacre. He condemns women who shamelessly pander to Qing soldiers and try to profit from their loot, turning them into the emblem of moral crisis and national trauma:

A middle-aged woman was tailoring some garments. She was a local person. Wearing heavy makeup and gaudy clothes, she was also decked out in trinkets and finery. Gesticulating, talking, and laughing, she exuded good cheer and seemed pleased with herself. Whenever she spotted some valuable item, she pleaded for it with the soldiers, currying favor in the most cloying and shameless manner possible. One soldier remarked to another, “When we campaigned in Korea, not one among scores of thousands of women we abducted lost her chastity. How did it happen that

1. “An Account of Ten Days in Yangzhou” is included in *Jingtuo yishi* 荊駝逸史. *Jingtuo* is literally “bronze camels among the brambles” 荊棘銅駝, a common expression for “past splendor now in ruins.” Despite references to violence and atrocities in *Jingtuo yishi*, Lynn Struve believes it “followed through on, or rode the wave of interest generated by, the Qianlong emperor’s retrofit of the historiography of that conflict to the specifications of Qing loyalism” (*The Ming-Qing Conflict*, p. 72). On the circulation and banning of “Ten Days,” see Wei Minghua, *Yangzhou wenhua tanpian*, pp. 168–84; on its dissemination in the late Qing, see Zarrow, “Historical Trauma.” For translations of “Ten Days,” see Struve, *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm*, pp. 24–48; Owen, *An Anthology*, pp. 826–33.

2. Finnane, *Speaking of Yangzhou*, chap. 4.

great and glorious China became as shameless as this!” Alas! This is why China is caught up in chaos!³

一中年婦人製衣。婦本郡人，濃抹麗裝，鮮衣華飾，指揮言笑，欣然有得色。每遇好物，即向卒乞取，曲盡媚態，不以爲恥。卒嘗謂人曰：「我輩征高麗，擄婦女數萬人，無一失節。何堂堂中國，無恥至此。」嗚呼，此中國之所以爲亂也。（“Ten Days,” p. 470）

Wang witnessed this scene at the residence of one Qiao Chengwang, “a merchant from the west [Shanxi or Shaanxi]” 西商.⁴ While being herded there along with a large crowd, he could already register the separate fates of men and women:

Suddenly some women came by, and two in that group called out to me. I saw that they were my friend Zhu Shu’s concubines, and quickly stopped them [from making any noise]. Their hair untied and their flesh exposed, both women were mired to their ankles in mud. One of them was still carrying a baby girl, whom a soldier whipped and threw into the mud before quickly pushing her on. One soldier, wielding a sword, acted as vanguard while another, leveling a spear, drove us on. One soldier kept to the middle, flanking us either on the right or the left to prevent escape. Scores of people were thus driven on, being herded like cattle. Those who lagged behind were whipped, beaten, or killed outright. All the women, tied around the neck with a long rope, were strung like pearls one adjacent the other. Stumbling at every step, they were all covered with mud. Babies were everywhere, surrounding horses’ hoofs and clinging to human feet. Human remains covered the ground, and sounds of weeping filled the air. We passed by a ditch and a pond, where corpses—a jumble of arms and legs—piled high. Blood merged with water, and red and bluish green turned into myriad colors. The pond was filled to the brim with corpses.

忽來婦人，內有呼予者。視之，乃予友朱書兄之二妾也。予急止之。二妾皆散髮露肉，足深入泥中沒脛。一妾猶抱一女，卒鞭而擲之泥中，旋即驅走。一卒提刀前導，一卒橫槊後逐，一卒居中，或左或右以防逸。數十人，如驅牛羊，稍不前即捶撻，或即殺之。諸婦女長索繫頸，累累如貫珠，一步一跌，遍身泥土。滿地皆嬰兒，或視馬蹄，或籍人足，肝腦塗地，泣聲盈野。行過一溝一池，堆尸貯積，手足相枕，血入水，碧赭化爲五色，塘爲之平。（“Ten Days,” p. 469）

3. The soldier here is presumably speaking in Chinese; there were many Han Chinese soldiers in the Qing army.

4. According to Finnane, the Qiao family hailed from Xiangling in Shanxi and was prominent in Yangzhou (*Speaking of Yangzhou*, p. 72).

The late Ming obsession with perception and perspectives is given a lurid, traumatic turn as Wang observes the carnage at close range (or from unlikely hiding places at other points in the account) with terror and confusion. Party to this harrowing march through death and destruction, Wang Xiuchu nevertheless notices how the women “strung like pearls” represent the spoils of conquest and have to be more closely guarded, unlike babies and men who are killed off with little hesitation. Men associated with the women face even greater dangers; perhaps that explains why Wang is eager to disavow acquaintance with his friend’s concubines.

Their transformation into the conquerors’ prize takes place in the soldiers’ lair at the Qiao residence. The grasping middle-aged woman mentioned above takes their measurements and gives them new clothes from a pile of looted silks and satins. Under threat of punishment from the soldiers, the women must strip themselves naked as they change. After they have put on new clothes, their captors cuddle and carouse with them, “stopping at nothing.” It is at that point that one of the soldiers shouts for the men in the crowd, “the southern savages” 蠻子, to come forward and face execution, a fate that befalls two of Wang’s brothers. Wang himself narrowly escapes.

The transformation in Wang’s account of these women from victims into potential culprits parallels the transition from an apparently shared fate to the yawning gap between those who will be granted possible reprieve and those who will suffer certain death. Throughout “Ten Days,” women consorting with the enemy represent not only the shame of conquest but also real and present danger. Indeed, for Wang the first unmistakable sign of doom is the sight of Qing soldiers marching on the city wall in the company of women “dressed in the Yangzhou style.” At one point he risks detection as he hides above a canopied bed where a Qing soldier almost persuades a woman to lie with him. Women pose an implacable threat: Wang is as anxious to be dissociated from them as he is quick to judge them.

In contrast to the Yangzhou women whom Wang excoriates, his wife is implicitly commended for her selfless devotion to her son, her husband, and her in-laws. When Wang spies Yangzhou women in the midst of Qing soldiers on the city wall, he tells his pregnant wife that she should kill herself should “unforeseen circumstances arise.” His wife agrees: “I promise. Keep these pieces of gold. As for the likes of me,

there is little hope for survival” 諾。有金若干，付汝收藏。我輩休想復生人世矣 (“Ten Days,” p. 468). Her profession of readiness to die and attempts to commit suicide punctuate the account. At one critical juncture, Wang’s wife lets him hide among rushes, while she holds onto their son and confronts the wrath of a Qing soldier. Wang stays in hiding, following her injunction not to imperil him and their son, while being within earshot of his wife’s cries as a Qing soldier beats her almost to death. One is almost tempted to link his castigation of immoral Yangzhou women to displaced outrage at his own helplessness. Their shamelessness by choice seems to throw into relief his inaction by necessity. There is little self-recrimination as he records his wife’s sufferings. Indeed, there is almost no trace of “survivor’s guilt” in “Ten Days,” in contrast with some other records of horrific events marking the traumatic dynastic transition, such as Zhang Maozi’s 張茂滋 (b. ca. 1625) “A Record of Life beyond My Due” (“Yusheng lu” 餘生錄).⁵

Wang’s account conveys the sense of raw, unmitigated perception and experience, as the narrator suppresses subsequent knowledge, presenting the confusion of each terrifying moment as it unfolds. At one point he is separated from his wife and son, for example, and the narrative gives no indication that he will eventually be reunited with them: “From then on I lost sight of my wife and my son, and no longer knew whether they were dead or alive” 自此遂與婦子相失，不復知其生死矣 (“Ten Days,” p. 469). The quest for survival seems to override historical reflection or clear-cut ideological concerns. When he forays into the past and the future, however, it is judgment of women rather than self-reflection that emerges. The last recorded atrocity, an apparent gang rape that is said to be almost consensual, is implicitly explained as retribution for the misdeeds of the woman’s family.

Several soldiers had captured four or five women. The two older ones among them were weeping piteously, while two of the younger ones giggled and seemed at ease. Two other soldiers caught up with them later and tried to grab the women, and they broke out in a fight. One of them, speaking in Manchu, tried to resolve the conflict. All of a sudden one soldier carried one of the young women and, reaching a tree, copulated with her under it. The other two young women were also defiled. The

5. The title follows Struve’s translation of “Yusheng lu.” See also Struve, “Confucian PTSD.”

older women wailed and wept and begged to be spared, while the three young women were shamelessly nonchalant. A dozen of so took turns having intercourse with them before handing them over to the two pursuing soldiers. By then one of the young women could no longer stand up or walk. I recognized her as the daughter-in-law of the Jiao family, whose dealings thus came to that fitting end.

有數卒擄四五個婦人，內二老者悲泣，兩少者嘻笑自若。後有二卒，追上奪婦，自相奮擊，內一卒勸解，作滿語。忽一卒將少婦負至樹下對合，餘二婦亦被污。老婦哭泣求免，三少婦恬不爲恥，十數人互爲姦淫，仍交與追來二卒。而其中一少婦，已不能起走矣。予認知爲焦氏之媳，其家所爲應至此。（“Ten Days,” p. 475)

This is last scene before “the cessation of slaughter” 封刀. What the author most abhors, perhaps even more than the crimes of the Qing soldiers, are the women who easily yield to them. As noted above, “Ten Days” did not become widely known until the late Qing. However, its focus on women as the crucible of memory and historical judgment finds echoes in early Qing writings. In what follows I will examine how the representations of Yangzhou women determine collective memory and judgments of the Ming-Qing transition, especially the 1645 massacre.

The Logic of Blame

“Ten Days” concludes with a moral homily: lest future generations “neglect self-cultivation and self-examination” and “indulge in profligacy and extravagances,” they should heed the Yangzhou massacre as a warning. The very idea of a lesson to be learned suggests the perverse reasoning that the people of Yangzhou are somehow responsible for the horrors visited on the city. While “Ten Days” never explicitly articulates that view, its images of the greed and moral laxity of some Yangzhou women fit the scenario of “crime and punishment.” The historian Ji Liuqi hints at this causality: “Since Song-Yuan times Yangzhou has thrice suffered warfare and devastation. Could it be that when prosperity and glory are excessive, even the Creator disapproves!” 豈繁華過盛，造化亦忌之耶! (Ji Liuqi, *Mingji nanlue*, 3.206).

The transgression and punishment model is also implied in the context of broader historical judgment on what happened and what should have happened, as in Yan Ermei’s 閻爾梅 (1603–79) “Lament for

Yangzhou” (“Xi Yangzhou” 惜揚州). Active in the Revival Society during the late Ming, he strategized for Shi Kefa in 1644 and 1645, but his proposals on northward and westward offensives were not heeded, and Shi Kefa decided to retreat to Yangzhou. Yan’s involvement in resistance after the conquest accounts for his long periods of wandering as a fugitive. His vision of what “might have been” and “should have been” somehow merges with the notion of reckoning for Yangzhou, which takes up about half of this long poem. This section on its excesses culminates in the extravagance of Yangzhou women (*QJSCB*, 1:92–93):

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|---------|---|
| 揚州女兒肌如雪 | The women of Yangzhou, with their snow-white flesh, |
| 珠翠羅紈恣蝶褻 | Recklessly toy with pearls and jades, silks and satins. |
| 深閨初未識蠶桑 | Deep in the inner chambers, indifferent to sericulture, |
| 碎剪猶嫌機匠拙 | They cut fabric into pieces, finding fault with the weavers. |
| 快意不從勤苦來 | Pleasure for them was not the fruit of industry. |
| 暴殄徒增脂粉孽 | Wasteful abandon only added to evil karma for the rouged and powdered. |

The argument of karmic retribution has to reckon, however, with Yan’s overwhelming grief and is also qualified by his judgment that the fall of Yangzhou was due to an avoidable strategic error, as he makes clear in the concluding lines on Shi Kefa (*QJSCB*, 1:92–93):⁶

| | |
|---------|--|
| 公退揚州爲公羞 | You, sir, retreated to Yangzhou, and I was ashamed for you. |
| 公死揚州爲公愁 | You died for Yangzhou, and I grieved for you. |
| 死與不死俱堪惜 | Dying or not dying: both would be worth lamenting. |
| 我爲作歌惜揚州 | For you I compose the song lamenting Yangzhou. |

6. Hou Fangyu, who served as Shi Kefa’s advisor, also commends Shi for his loyalty but acknowledges his strategic errors in his elegy (“Aici” 哀辭). See *Hou Fangyu shiji jianjiao*, pp. 279–80. Shi Kefa’s image in “Ten Days” conveys desperation and confusion. Shi’s overseer of troops, Ying Tingji, also implies criticism of Shi’s strategy in his *Qinglin xie*.

One remarkable fictional re-creation of the reasoning of “crime and punishment” and its limitations, enmeshed with the use of Yangzhou women to ponder historical causation and to define judgment, is Ding Yaokang’s *Sequel to Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Xu Jin Ping Mei* 續金瓶梅, hereafter *Sequel*). Ding sets out to castigate Yangzhou women and explain retributive justice but ends up with complexities and contradictions that escape his moral scheme. *Sequel* has a preface dated 1660 and was likely finished around 1661.⁷ In this novel, Ding meticulously metes out punishments to characters and their reincarnations from *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅, ca. 1590s), following the scheme laid out in the imperially sanctioned book of popular morality, *Supreme Retributive Correspondences* (*Taishang gangying pian* 太上感應篇). In the prefatory materials, Ding draws attention to how each chapter begins with quotations from religious texts and how the narrative functions to pointedly illuminate moral and religious teachings, thereby reversing the balance between moral homily and storytelling common in fiction. In order to dramatize his retributive scheme, Ding claims he “has to parade the spectacle of lustful pleasures to lure people to enlightenment” 只得妝點出淫樂光景，引誘世人參悟 (*Sequel*, chap. 23, *DYK*, 2:165), comparable to how the Mansjuri Bodhisattva leads Shancai to contemplate ultimate emptiness through sexual display (chap. 33, *DYK*, 2:242–43). The claim to “use licentiousness to discourse on Buddhist dharma” 借淫說法 so as to rein in desire is of course common currency in late imperial erotic fiction. But Ding Yaokang’s tireless elaboration of moral lessons in Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist terms, as well as his interest in how exactly erotic description accomplishes its supposed moral mission, distinguishes his work from other works of erotic fiction, and also invites the critique of the book as being “neither proper moral homily nor proper storytelling” 道學不成道學，稗官不成稗官.⁸

However, Ding’s pedagogical tone, by turns patient and stern, cannot quite accommodate the aberrant sexuality and random violence of the novel. One may say that such a failure of “self-containment” is itself the legacy of *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, whose moral-religious rhetoric and

7. Chen Qinghao suggested that the printing blocks that Ding arranged to have sent north from Hangzhou in 1661 were those of *Sequel*, see his “Hainci fenshu,” pp. 377–79; cf. Huang Qionghui, *Shibian*, p. 168.

8. Liu Tingji, *Zaiyuan zazhi*, p. 215.

karmic schemes also fail to dispel our impression of the author's abiding fascination with the meanness, intricacy, and delight of mundane sensuous existence.⁹ Ding's sequel also departs from the parent novel by containing more extensive descriptions of sociopolitical disorder and its human toll, using the collapse of the Song dynasty to create an apocalyptic mood and drawing on the obvious analogy between the Song-Jin transition and the Ming-Qing transition.¹⁰

Ding claims to explain not only individual fates but also dynastic fortune with his retributive scheme. Emperor Huizong is said to be the reincarnation of the last ruler of Later Zhou, from whom the founder of Song wrested power.¹¹ In order to explain Yue Fei's unjust death and Qin Gui's undeserved prosperity, Ding invokes, rather lamely, their previous lives as respective winner and loser at the moment of the Song founding. Pitted against these retributive cycles are specific judgments premised on agency and responsibility: Ding blames the demise of the Northern Song on factionalism at the Song court, rapacious ministers, and Emperor Huizong's avarice, extravagance, and frivolous obsessions, evidently alluding to the failings of the late Ming and Southern Ming courts (chap. 13, *DYK*, 2:93–98). Devastating political events thus frame the punishment of culpable characters. Emperor Huizong is shown composing song lyrics blaming his own excesses for the fall of the dynasty during his northward journey, after he has been abducted along with his son Emperor Qinzong and members of their court (chap. 19, *DYK*, 2:135). The sacking of the Song capital Bianjing (Kaifeng) is told as the story of the fall of the courtesan Li Shishi, Huizong's paramour

9. Cf. Hu Siao-chen, "In the Name of Correctness."

10. There are numerous references to the sociopolitical reality of mid-seventeenth century China—on topics such as "the fashionable Suzhou style," "camp of the Blue Bordered Banner," "the salt merchants of Huizhou," "the small feet of women from Datong (in Shanxi)," "the calamity of factionalism," shameless turncoats "who opened the gates and surrendered, right away shaving their heads, sporting braids, and learning the barbarians' language," "Cold Mountain that is like Ningguta," "the lean mares of Yangzhou" (*DYK*, 2:144, 147, 205, 208, 228, 250–51, 252, 418–20). Hong Hao (1088–1115), the Southern Song official detained in the north and known for spreading Confucian learning there, becomes the instructor for Jurchen students in Liaodong in *Sequel*, and is obviously Ding's analogue for himself (*DYK*, 2:467–69). See Huang Qionghui, *Shibian*, pp. 173–93; Ling, "Rewriting."

11. *Sequel*, chap. 62, in *DYK*, 2:507. *Tian shi*, Ding's account of "history as retribution" compiled in the 1630s, presents the same logic; see *DYK*, 3:19–20.

(chap. 36, *DYK*, 2:267–76). Likewise, the devastation of Qinghe County in Shandong (the supposed setting of *Plum in the Golden Vase*) is enmeshed in the account of retribution for Ying Bojue, Simen Qing's sycophant who betrays him after his death in *Plum in the Golden Vase* (chap. 45, *DYK*, 2:342–52).

The fall of Yangzhou to the Jurchens in 1133 (and by analogy to the Manchus in 1645) in chapter 53 follows this pattern, but with a twist.¹² Instead of retributive justice for characters from the world of *Plum in the Golden Vase* or Song history, Ding rehearses a litany of the vices of Yangzhou that implicitly explain the atrocities of conquest as retribution for its excesses. The chapter begins with a quote from Nāgārjuna's (ca. 2nd c.) *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (*Dazhi du lun* 大智度論) on the evils of sensual indulgence and the perils of being ensnared by female beauty and wiles.¹³ It comes as no surprise, then, that Ding should present “the lean mares of Yangzhou” 揚州瘦馬¹⁴ as the epitome of the city's sins. That term refers to girls who were purchased at a young age, groomed and schooled in the arts of seduction, and eventually sold to rich families as concubines. If these commodified females, at once emblems of desire and symbols of status, seem to arouse greater disquiet than courtesans and prostitutes, it may be because they did not define a social space like the latter. They were bought and resold, but prospective buyers were only granted brief interviews before making their decisions. Though they had to seduce buyers, the girls were supposed to enter into marriages as virgins and to become submissive concubines. The system of transaction and the girls' disconnection from “the registers of entertainers” thus threatened to efface the boundary between respectability 良 and a debased status 賤.

12. According to *Songshi* (25.461), the Jurchens attacked Yangzhou in 1129 to pursue Emperor Gaozong. Yangzhou was not a turning point in the Song-Jin struggle, as it was in the Ming-Qing conflict. Ding's choice of Yangzhou no doubt refers to contemporary events.

13. *DYK*, 2:418. The passage is from section 14 of the Buddhist treatise.

14. Bai Juyi's lines, “Do not raise lean horses, / do not train little singing girls” 莫養瘦馬駒，莫教小妓女 (“You gan” 有感, *Bai Juyi ji*, 21.469), are often cited as a possible source for this term. Bai's poem laments the tenuousness of ownership—the lean horse, once fattened, would gallop away, just as the little singing girl, once grown-up and skilled, may acquire a new master. The analogy suggests how, with proper investment, a cheaply purchased girl could yield handsome returns when she was eventually resold.

Accounts of the “lean mares of Yangzhou” are found in various Ming-Qing miscellanies. The geographical scholar Wang Shixing 王士性 (1546–98) writes about their training in propriety, needlework, and the arts with implicit approval as he explains why those who bought concubines “had to do so in Yangzhou.”¹⁵ Xie Zhaozhi 謝肇淛 (1567–1624) affirms their desirability and sounds forgiving even of those who bought and sold them, averring their virtual kinship with the “lean mares” because of prolonged association.¹⁶ Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578–1642) also claims that “the lean mares of Yangzhou,” decorous and submissive, fared well as concubines.¹⁷

There are also negative perspectives. The term “lean mares of Yangzhou” has become familiar to most modern readers through Zhang Dai’s memorable account of the matchmaker’s 牙婆 presentation of “lean mares” to prospective clients in his *Dream Memories of Tao’an* (*Tao’an mengyi* 陶庵夢憶), where his keen sense of irony leads him to expose the heedless frenzy and sordid details of transaction that leave little room for pleasure, let alone romance. The account is on a par with his portrayal of lower-class Yangzhou prostitutes in another entry in *Dream Memories* titled “Romances of the Twenty-Four Bridge” (“Ershisi qiao fengyue” 二十四橋風月): “Numbering as many as five or six hundred, they would come out of the alleys every day at dusk. Their pathetic ploys to lure customers can barely conceal their despair.”¹⁸ Zhang Dai’s Yangzhou is a complex mixture of splendor and desolation, sensual indulgence and bleak misery.

Disparaging perspectives on the “lean mares of Yangzhou” veer between moral outrage and socio-aesthetic disdain, between images of the women as victims and as soulless instruments. Whereas Zhang Dai tries to demystify the “lean mares of Yangzhou” as objects of desire by dwelling on the gap between expectations and reality, outrage is directly and forcefully articulated in the Qing official Tang Bin’s 湯斌 (1627–87) proclamations proscribing such transactions.¹⁹ Another early Qing official, Wang Sen 汪森 (1653–1726), registers his critique of the

15. Wang Shixing, *Guanzhi yi*, 2.216.

16. Xie Zhaozhi, *Wu zazhi*, 8.147.

17. Shen Defu, *Wanli yehuo bian*, 23.597.

18. Zhang Dai, *Tao’an mengyi*, 5.160–62, 4.118–19.

19. Tang Bin, *Tang Bin ji*, 9.570–71.

system by recording the sad story of He Guizhi 何桂枝, a young woman bought and sold as a “lean mare”; she left behind a wrenching poem that conveys unmistakable indictment.²⁰

Ding Yaokang’s presentation is markedly different. He eschews the chronicler’s acceptance, the aesthete’s disdain, the moralist’s condemnation, and the pathos of the victim’s perspective. While professing the most stringent critique, he yet shows a lingering fascination with the training of “lean mares,” apparently relishing prurient details of how they learn sexual techniques or how they are prevented from indulging in masturbation. For all his opprobrium, Ding Yaokang continues to celebrate these women as objects of desire, for supposedly it is only as such that he can claim to turn them into agents facilitating historical explanation.

Licentiousness and extravagance emblemized by the culture of “lean mares” call for retributive justice realized in the fate of women. Ding tells how, after Jurchen troops ravage Yangzhou, countless men and elderly women are massacred. Rape is the order of the day, but as in “Ten Days” victimized women are sometimes said to be more than willing. In one episode a husband hiding atop a wardrobe witnesses how his beloved concubine enjoys intercourse with a Jurchen soldier, and in her ecstasy she urges him to get rid of her husband.²¹ The voyeuristic pleasure underlying this lesson in the vanity of attachment is typical of Ding’s avowed method of “seduction and alienation”: “A hot bout, a cold bout, making the readers itch [with yearning] and ache [with pain] in turn” 熱一回、冷一回，著看官們癢一陣、酸一陣 (chap. 31, *DYK*, 2: 423–24).

Ultimately, however, Ding’s supposedly precise retributive system is unequal to the burden of historical explanation it is made to bear. The Song (i.e., Ming) may deserve to fall, but Ding’s description of human suffering in the midst of political turmoil engages our sympathy, which we would withhold if we could accept dynastic collapse as a rational

20. Wang Sen, *Yuexi congqai jiaozhu*, 17.722–26. Guizhi’s poem is also included in Xu Shichang, *Wan qing yi shibui*, 185.615; Zhang Yingchang, *Qing shi duo*, 25.959–60.

21. As mentioned above, “Ten Days” has a comparable episode—Wang Xiuchu perches precariously on a horizontal beam above a bed while his brothers are being slaughtered in an adjacent room. A Qing soldier brings a woman to the bed, but their intimacy is interrupted; otherwise Wang would have been discovered.

historical process. Universal suffering, randomly incurred, is observed and delineated too keenly to be reasoned away. Yangzhou may be decadent, but to believe that it deserves the violence inflicted on it would be callous and cruel, and even Ding cannot quite bring himself to fully embrace that “logical” conclusion. His ambivalence is filtered, yet again, through the prism of the fate of women.

Ding describes how, after the slaughter comes to an end, the Jurchen commander Ali Haiya (Ariq Qaya) and his Han collaborators, Jiang Zhushan and Miao Qing,²² undertake the recruitment of three thousand women—a thousand to be sent to Beijing to the Jurchen court, a thousand to serve in army camps, and a thousand to be awarded to the generals and officers who brought Yangzhou to submission. Ding declares categorically:

Later, when Jiang Zhushan chose Yangzhou women [to fill the aforementioned quota of three thousand], it goes without saying that all these “lean mares” and courtesans went along. But even women from distinguished and respectable families came out—happy and excited, they were riding horses with barbarian soldiers, eager to sell their charms, even more shameless than women in the pleasure business. Was this not retribution for Yangzhou’s licentious and extravagant mores?

後來蔣竹山考選揚州婦女，這些瘦馬妓女不消說的，還有大家女子出來，歡歡喜喜，和蕃兵騎在馬上，爭妍賣俏，比門戶人家更沒廉恥，豈不是風俗淫奢之報。(chap. 53, *DYK*, 2: 424)

But contradictory observations abound: Ding describes women who cover themselves with dirt and ashes and dress in dilapidated clothes, hoping that ugliness can save them from being drafted as one of the three thousand. Since the family members of chaste women who choose self-mutilation or suicide are faced with execution, they vigilantly prevent potential “chastity martyrs” from committing suicide to avoid implication (*DYK*, 2:421–22).

22. The historical Ariq Qaya (1227–86) lived almost a century later and played an important role in the Mongol conquest of Southern Song. Jiang and Miao are both characters from *Plum in the Golden Vase*. In *Sequel*, Jiang gains favor with a Jurchen prince by offering him aphrodisiac and by garnering the support of Miao Qing, a salt merchant who undermines Yangzhou’s defense from within. When the Song army recovers Yangzhou in chapter 56, Jiang and Miao are shot and put to death by slicing, respectively.

As these three thousand Yangzhou women are rounded up for a test of their beauty, literary and artistic talent, and entertainment skills (a mock replica of the civil service examination), Ding returns to his castigatory refrain: "The mores of Yangzhou were licentious and extravagant. Generally speaking, eight out of ten women loved the examination. No more than one or two out of ten were chaste women. This was indeed speedy retribution²³ for sumptuous extravagance!" 揚州風俗淫奢，大約愛考選的婦女十有其八，貞烈之女不過一二，此乃繁華的現報! (*Sequel*, chap. 53, *DYK*, 2:422). Yet at the scene of the examination, although there are women who have adopted Jurchen costume and hairstyle as they eagerly participate, there are also many who mourn the prospect of exile, weeping "like Zhaojun leaving for the frontier." The idea of women appraised, tested, and honored with the titles and paraphernalia of the civil service examination is obviously derived from courtesan culture.²⁴ "Flower examination lists" 花榜 seemed to have originated during the Song.²⁵ By the mid- and late Ming it had become very popular to compare courtesans to various flowers, and to rank them like examination candidates in "civil" and "martial" categories, with evaluative poems appended to their names. The practice continued throughout the Qing.

It is not difficult to imagine why Chinese literati sought the examination system's reflection and refraction in the courtesan world. For the countless unsuccessful candidates, the right to evaluate must have seemed a kind of wish fulfillment or compensatory justice. For the fortunate few who succeeded, the "flower lists" reproduced and continued their glory. As noted in chapter 4, the courtesans' world was a malleable alternative reality. During the early Qing, the civil service examination was also the crucible for gauging participation in or withdrawal from the new order. It was not uncommon for well-known scholar-officials to be pressured to take the examination. To possible anguish or soul-searching attending the stigma of "serving two dynasties" was added the association of the examination with political danger after the examination scandal of 1657, mentioned in chapter 1 in relation to Wu Zhaoqian's

23. Literally, retribution that does not have to wait until the next life.

24. See Ko, "The Written Word"; Gōyama, *Min Shin jidai*, pp. 68–109.

25. Luo Ye, *Xinbian Zuiveng tanlu*, 1:34–37.

exile.²⁶ As in *Chastity and Talent* (discussed in chap. 5), the examination becomes both a charade and a metaphor for the hopes and fears of elite men.

Given the era's heightened awareness of the literati's dilemma, of their choices or lack thereof in relation to the examination with all its political implications, it is not surprising that Ding Yaokang leaves condemnation behind and instead presents the successful women contestants in the Yangzhou examination as victims or, at best, reluctant winners. The prize candidate Song Juan writes an essay in parallel prose on "Prize Consort Yang at Mawei" 楊貴妃馬嵬坡總論. It reprises the reasoning that the author periodically indulges in the novel and elsewhere in his corpus: namely, desires and pleasures are dangerous and undermine the equilibrium of the self as well as sociopolitical order. The calamitous union of the Tang emperor Xuanzong and his erstwhile daughter-in-law Prize Consort Yang is but the culmination of incestuous, ruinous passions that cloud the history of the Tang royal house. The An Lushan Rebellion and Yang's death at Mawei are thus just retribution for the havoc and suffering caused by the emperor's passion for Yang (DYK, 2:427–28). Song Juan's essay also appears in Ding Yaokang's appraisal of the excesses of Yang's brother and sisters in his *Divine Justice in History* (*Tian shi* 天史, 1632 authorial preface), an earlier attempt to distill order from the course of Chinese history by defining webs of crime and punishment (DYK, 3:29–30). Song Juan happens to be the name of an actual courtesan abducted by Qing troops. Her poem, the circulation of her story, and Ding Yaokang's play about her and Cao Erkan are discussed in chapter 5. The reminder of Song Juan as victim displaces negative judgment of her in *Sequel*. Instead, victimhood authenticates authority: her voice also merges with the author's as she passes judgment on history.

The import of Song Juan's essay is self-evident. But the poems on peonies by Wang Susu, who wins second place, command a degree of subtlety and ambiguity, so much so that the narrator feels compelled to offer his own interpretation of their deeper meanings. Like the peonies by the Incense Pavilion (associated with Emperor Xuanzong and

26. The persecution was directed against Jiangnan-Zhejiang literati. Among those implicated was Fang Gongqian 方拱乾 (1596–1666), to whom Ding Yaokang addressed several poems (DYK, 1:295, 310).

Consort Yang), Wang “did not love commotion and splendor, and was content to guard purity with self-denial (literally, like a withered tree). The final lines of every poem all contain self-reference” 不愛繁華，甘心枯守，每一首末句都有自寓的意思 (DYK, 2:428). The final lines of Wang’s poems seem to protest an inner purity unsullied by circumstances (DYK, 2:428):

First quatrain

| | |
|---------|--|
| 洗淨鉛華應不染 | Cleansed of all rouge and powder, she should be spotless: |
| 天台姑射一時逢 | An unexpected encounter with a pure immortal on Tiantai Mountain. |

Second quatrain

| | |
|---------|---|
| 姚黃魏紫爭承寵 | All the rare species of peonies vie for favor, |
| 冷萼天香未可干 | But there is no tempering with the heavenly fragrance on the cold calyx. |

Third quatrain

| | |
|---------|--|
| 爲囑花神好相護 | Give word to the flower god: take good care of her— |
| 明妃馬上不成妝 | Like the Bright Consort on horseback, her makeup is undone. |

The image of Wang Zhaojun’s exile is yet another reminder that a compromising situation may conceal inner integrity and find compelling expression. The poem on peonies by Liu Meixian, who wins third place, shows no grief and resentment; instead she proudly expects favor in the Jurchen court. Even so, Ding betrays no indignation. Indeed, he seems to have left all critical intent behind as he portrays with evident relish the beautiful spectacle of these examination candidates producing their compositions (chap. 53, DYK, 2:426).

Ding concludes his chapter with a song lyric written on the wall by an abducted woman and thereby decisively veers away from the rhetoric of retributory justice. Composed to the tune “Man ting huang,” Ding mistakenly puts the tune down as “Man jiang hong,” possibly because the latter is often associated with heroic pathos. Using the fall of Yangzhou to lament dynastic collapse, and linking individual lament to broader historical meanings, it brings associations with martyrdom

because it is based on a song lyric attributed to “Xu Junbao’s wife” 徐君寶妻, who lived during the Song-Yuan transition and protested her abduction by throwing herself off a cliff.²⁷ The examination for women in Yangzhou, supposedly dramatizing shame and punishment, is dignified by pathos, lyricism, authoritative judgment, and martyrdom: Ding’s indictment of Yangzhou women thus turns into their ambiguous vindication.

The chapter following the account of the fall of Yangzhou is prefaced by Ding’s two long poems on the sufferings of Jiangnan women during political turmoil. He questions his own reasoning about retribution: such widespread devastation does not heed distinctions between the good and the bad, the respectable and the debased, the chaste and the licentious (chap. 54, *DYK*, 2:431–32). Vindication and empathy are perhaps only a step away from fantasies of heroic action, and heroism comes from unexpected quarters. Ding tells the story of a Yangzhou Chaoguan courtesan, Su Qionqiong, who manages to slay her Jurchen captors, seize the valuables in their possession, and escape with her lover. Ding touts it as “the deed of a knight-errant” 俠事 (*DYK*, 2:424). The fall of Yangzhou in chapter 53 is followed by Jurchen defeat at nearby Jinshan in chapter 54, which features the heroic exploits of Liang Hongyu, the courtesan who married the Song commander Han Shizhong and became his comrade-in-arms. The spectacle of Liang Hongyu beating the war drums or leaping onto the top of a mast to survey Jurchen army camps so that they appear as nothing more than “a map in her palm” (chap. 54, *DYK*, 2:437) seems almost a circuitous redemption of pleasures and passions.

As a Shandong native Ding Yaokang might have harbored a northerner’s contempt for southern decadence.²⁸ Yangzhou natives as well as southerners under Jurchen command are sometimes referred to as “southern savages,” the same disparaging term Qing troops used in reference to southerners in “Ten Days” and in other early Qing miscellanies. Ding notes that the vanguard of the Jurchen army is made up of “captured southern savages from Huai’an and Gaoyou,” which resonates

27. Tao Zongyi, *Nancun Chuo geng lu*, 3.42–44. Ding changes the wording, adding references to Yangzhou.

28. For Ding’s critique of southern culture, see also *DYK* 2:355, 3:99.

with historians' reconstructions of the components of the Qing army besieging Yangzhou in 1645.²⁹ If Ding's critique of Yangzhou's decadent mores is mitigated by a lingering fascination, he may have been influenced by his earlier sojourns in Jiangnan (in 1619 and 1647), when his associations with famous scholars and literati greatly enhanced his reputation. He may also be taking his cue from a famous contemporary, fellow Shandong native Wang Shizhen, who makes a "cameo appearance" in chapter 53. The supposed examiner Ariq Qaya is illiterate, and his Han collaborator Jiang Zhushan knows little more than medicine names. "They could only leave everything to Police Magistrate Wang of the Yangzhou prefecture. A talented scholar from Shandong, he had over the years become a great lyricist. Everything from the setting of questions to the adjudication of compositions was left to his judgment" 只凭着揚州府王推官，是個山東才子，積年大詞客，一切出題看卷凭着去取 (DYK, 2:246). After the eight hundred "female presenting scholars" 女進士 have been picked, Jurchen commanders choose a few to serve in the army but leave the rest in the Agate Flowers Abbey under Wang's care. When the Song army under Yue Fei's command recovers Yangzhou in chapter 56, these women are released and returned to their families. Police Magistrate Wang eulogizes the chastity martyrs among them in compositions petitioning the court to confer honors on them.

As mentioned in chapter 1, from 1661 to 1664 Wang Shizhen served as police magistrate of Yangzhou prefecture, where his literary activities provided an interesting perspective on generational shifts and on the evolving relationship between loyalists and Qing officials.³⁰ Wang's interest in the composition and collection of song lyrics was important for the early Qing revival of the genre.³¹ His ties with various literary groups were also instrumental for his later rise to canonical status. The references to Wang Shizhen in Ding's own corpus (DYK, 1:405, 409–10)

29. The Qing army that conquered Yangzhou consisted of a large number of Han Chinese, some of them defectors from the army guarding Yangzhou the previous year. See Wakeman, *The Great Enterprize*, p. 549.

30. See Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture*, chap. 2; Li Xiaoti, "Shidaifu de yile"; Jiang Yin, *Wang Yinyang yu Kangxi shitan*; Jiang Yin, *Wang Yinyang shiji zhenglue*.

31. Yan Dichang, *Qing ci shi*, pp. 57–61; Liu Wanyu, *Qing chu Guangling ciren qunti yanjiu*.

indicate at least a passing acquaintance—they would have met in 1660 or 1661, when Ding was returning to Shandong from Yangzhou.³²

Ding's critique of Jiangnan decadence is mixed with fond memories and hopes for its revival. The "Flower Examination List" echoes the celebration of pleasures and passions behind the unfolding revival of Yangzhou literary culture whose center was Wang Shizhen, to whom Ding pays indirect tribute. There is illicit gratification in thus conflating past and present and distilling pleasure from a traumatic historical memory—perhaps that is why Ding Yaokang categorizes this chapter under "Playful Division" 遊戲品, which in the novel usually refers to chapters with sexual content. With such subdivisions used in Buddhist scriptures, he thereby cloaks possible ambivalence as expediency. To explain the devastation of war as retribution for excesses is to invest history with moral inevitability. Ding Yaokang indulges in this kind of moral reasoning in *Divine Justice in History*, but in the aftermath of experiencing the traumatic Ming-Qing transition, when he tries to reenact it in *Sequel* he cannot help questioning its validity. That his ambivalence is filtered through the representation of women is rooted in his sympathy for their sufferings and lingering fascination with sensual pleasures. The castigation of Yangzhou that ends up almost as an apology follows the transformation of its women from culprits into victims, from their image of turpitude and sensual indulgence to their moral authority as witnesses and judges of their times.

The Logic of Praise

Writings that claim to blame licentious Yangzhou women for moral decline and political debacle, such as Wang Xiuchu's "Ten Days" or Ding Yaokang's much more equivocal *Sequel*, are far less voluminous than eulogies of women who died as chastity martyrs during the fall of Yangzhou. In what follows I will examine the negotiations behind the chorus of praise as well as its social and political functions. Both loyalists and Qing officials participated in the eulogy of these women. In Ding Yaokang's *Sequel*, for example, Police Magistrate Wang, the examiner choosing women to be sent to the Jurchen court, is also responsible for

32. Wang Shizhen arrived in Yangzhou in the third month of 1660, although he took up his position only in the following year (Jiang Yin, *Wang Yuyang shiji zhenglue*).

petitioning the Song court to confer honors on chastity martyrs. There is deep irony in this juxtaposition: women who died resisting real or potential violation were often elevated as political martyrs, but the officials conferring honor on them were representatives of the new order.

In the *Gazetteer of Yangzhou Prefecture* (*Kangxi Yangzhou fu zhi* 康熙揚州府志) compiled in 1675, the section dealing with the fall of Yangzhou in *juan* 25, “Loyalty and Integrity” (“Zhongjie” 忠節), chronicles the calm, carefully staged, and ritually proper suicides of a number of scholars and officials. The scholar Han Mo, for example, says to his wife Xiao shi: “Things have already come to such a pass! I who have studied the sage’s writings should die guarding the principle of moral duty. I cannot seek to survive by compromise. You should plan for yourself” 事已至此，吾讀聖人書，當守義而死，不可苟求活。若自爲計。He then changes his scarf and robe and jumps into a well. His wife and eldest son follow suit and commit suicide. Gao Xiaozuan puts on a blue robe and hangs himself next to Confucius’s seat in the county school. Another scholar, Wang Shixiu, writes the spirit tablet for the Chongzhen emperor on yellow paper before he and his brother hang themselves (KXY, 25.13a–13b).³³ In such instances, suicide is turned into martyrdom for the ruler, the country, and moral principles. There is no mention of anti-Qing resistance, except in the oblique, muted reference to how Zheng Weihong 鄭爲虹 (1622–46) “calmly embraced martyrdom” 從容就義 after he failed to defend a pass against Qing troops.³⁴ What follows are accounts chronicling the martyrdom of commanders, officials, and commoners who died fighting for the Qing or defending its legitimacy. The close juxtaposition of Ming martyrs and Qing martyrs in accounts following comparable narrative logic implies the continuity of the same moral imperatives.

The analogous section in *juan* 27, “Notable Women” (“Lienü” 列女), is three times as long. The same refrain of “calm resolve” reverberates in these accounts, mostly of suicide by hanging, drowning, or self-immolation. The perpetrator rarely appears: most of these chastity martyrs,

33. *Jiaqing chongxiu Yangzhou fu zhi* gives a more detailed account of Han, Gao, and Wang, and cites Wang Yan’s 王巖 *Yixiang ji* 異香集 (no longer extant) as the source.

34. In the 1743 *Qianlong Jiangdu xian zhi* (19.6a–6b), any sense of resistance is further neutralized. Zheng Weihong is said to have first let the people leave before dying in defense of the empty city.

facing potential violation, “vowed to die pure” 誓以節死. After Yangzhou fell, the widow You shi, urged to leave the city under the cover of night, said: “A woman should not flee at night, let alone a widow like myself!” 游謂女不夜奔。況吾孀婦乎！ She jumped into a well along with her young daughter (KXY, 27.35a–35b). There are also several accounts of the collective suicide of mothers and daughters. The fourteen-year-old daughter of Yang shi, who had pledged death to defend her chastity, “pressed her mother to quickly decide [to kill herself]” 趣母決計. Yang shi begged her eleven-year-old daughter to stay behind to take care of her injured father; she refused, “and they thus made three loops and took turns to hang themselves” 乃爲三環次第就縊 (KXY, 27.38a). The line between “dying for the country” 殉國 and “dying for one’s husband” 殉夫 is sometimes hard to define. There were wives who killed themselves after their husbands had been killed during or after the siege, widows who were confirmed in their resolution to choose suicide because the city fell, and “chaste maidens” who ended their own lives as their fiancés died amidst the chaos. One Zhang shi, whose fiancé was killed in 1644, went to live in mourning with her fiancé’s family. When Yangzhou fell in 1645, Zhang embraced her fiancé’s spirit tablet and immolated herself. Her sister-in-law, two young girls in her fiancé’s household, and her father-in-law all leaped into the flames (KXY, 27.39a–40a).

To fail to kill oneself and still preserve one’s reputation of chastity calls for special justification. One account tells of Sun Daosheng’s daughter, no longer young in 1645, who was arrested and refused to submit. One angry soldier was about to slay her, and his blade was already at her neck when he felt pity for her old age and desisted. She went into hiding with a neighbor, who repeatedly stopped her from committing suicide. After her neighbor was arrested, she was even more determined to die, but death miraculously eluded her.

She jumped into a well but did not die, as if someone was holding her up. A group taken captive passed by and heard a human voice in the well. Someone leaned over and looked, and Sun hastened to immerse her head in water. The group recognized her and said, “You are an old woman, why worry? Those in the army are looking only for the young ones.” They then pulled her up with a rope and hid her in a dilapidated house, leaving food for her before going away. Two days later, the soldiers returned, and Sun again threw herself into the well. Suddenly several soldiers came,

looked down, and lowered a rope, saying, “You, old woman, are almost bald. What is there to fear?” Again they pulled her up. Another old woman gave her a change of clothing. Thus she was spared death.

墜井若有負之者，不死。有被俘者過，眾識之，曰：「母老，何患？軍中惟索少者耳。」因以繩引而上。藏之破屋中，留飯飯之去。居二日，兵復至，孫又投井。忽聞井中人聲，俯視之。孫急以頭沒水。數卒至，垂絙下視，曰：「老婦頭已禿，何畏爲？復引以上。」一老婦爲易衣，遂不死。(KXY, 27.36a–36b)

In this account, old age seems to afford protection. The first Qing soldier pities her and spares her, fellow victims tell her not to fear violation, and in the end it is Qing soldiers who rescue her. With their apparent respect for old age, these Qing soldiers do not inspire terror. Although Sun repeatedly seeks to kill herself, she fails, and her name is included in the chapter on “Notable Women” because of her determination. Her contemporary, Wang Yan 王巖, wrote her biography, which is incorporated into the gazetteer. Wang also wrote “The Biographies of Ten Chaste Martyrs in the Sun Clan,” appended to the gazetteer.³⁵ Among these ten are Lan shi and Gu shi, both fifty-four years old, and Chen shi, who was already a grandmother. These women did not accept the rationale that they need not fear violation because of their age. How could Sun’s survival be considered honorable if it were not marked by her insistence on martyrdom?

Although the predominant emphasis is on how these women “calmly embraced martyrdom,” there are accounts of women who died resisting violation. Compared to “Loyalty and Integrity,” “Notable Women” contains more references to violence, although most of them pertain to Gao Jie’s 1644 siege of Yangzhou. Qing soldiers rarely surface in the account of the 1645 debacle. Peng shi, who had been guarding her baby, “cut her throat when one soldier arrived on the scene.” She is later revived, and the Qing soldier is not said to have committed any atrocities (KXY, 27.38b).

In the *Qianlong Gazetteer of Jiangdu County* (*Qianlong Jiangdu xianzhi* 乾隆江都縣志) compiled in 1743, the space devoted to the 1645 martyrs in the section on “Loyalty and Integrity” is about the same length as its

35. KXY, 27.36b–37a. Wang Yan’s *Yixiang ji* seems to have contained many accounts of women who died as martyrs during the dynastic transition.

counterpart in the 1675 *Yangzhou Gazetteer*. The analogous section in *juan* 29, “Notable Women,” however, is twice as long as its antecedent, whose omissions and errors the compilers purportedly remedy. The 1743 gazetteer sometimes presents Qing soldiers as perpetrators.³⁶ Wu shi eludes the attempts of Qing soldiers to violate her, only to suffer seven sword wounds before she manages to drown herself. Another woman, Han, jumps into a pool of night soil and submerges her head. The Qing soldiers who have captured her are enraged but also deterred by the filth; they kill her with a barrage of arrows (*QLJ*, 29.24b, 26b). Perhaps the consolidation of Qing rule facilitated a more confident retrospection that could accommodate even violence, or perhaps the more extreme conception of chastity in that era needs perpetrators to dramatize the sufferings of the virtuous.

Added accounts of family members dying together testify to more fanatical views of “honor” in the Qianlong era. The 1675 gazetteer includes several records of mothers bringing their children to their deaths before killing themselves. But analogous accounts in the 1743 gazetteer are more numerous and more extreme. For example, Xiao shi “ordered her son to follow suit after his father jumped into a well. Then she tied a loop from the beam. After seeing her eldest daughter expire from hanging, she gave her young son to the wet nurse and then killed herself” 蕭氏逼令其子從父墜井，又結縲於梁，立視長女就縊既絕，以幼兒付乳母，然後自盡 (*QLJ*, 29.20a). In another story, Wang shi is separated from her young daughter, and she slits her own throat after pleading with her neighbor: “If you see my daughter, please push her into the water on my behalf” 汝見吾女，乞代我推之水中 (*QLJ*, 29.22a). Several mothers order their young daughters to hang themselves before committing suicide (*QLJ*, 29.22b–23a, 26b). These mothers’ steely and relentless insistence on a “pure” death for their children (usually daughters), while horrifying, points to the strongly perceived need to “manage a proper death.” This concern is also manifested in the “symbolic construction” of suicides—Sun shi embraces a copy of the family genealogy to her chest before she falls on the sword; the widow Tang hides a piece of jade (as symbol of purity) and deeds of the family’s properties (*QLJ*, 29.17b, 25a).

36. As in the earlier gazetteer, though, most cases of atrocities are associated with Gao Jie’s siege of Yangzhou in 1644.

Again and again we come across the reasoning that, at moments of danger and crisis, men have to survive to ensure the continuation of their lineage, while women should die to avoid defilement (*QLJ*, 29.23a, 25b, 26b). There are many accounts of “chastity martyrs” instigating collective suicide: the evening before the city falls in 1645, Lu shi, together with her daughter-in-law Sang shi and other family members, blocks the doors with firewood and sets their house on fire, which culminates in forty-seven deaths. When Cai commits suicide along with her daughter, nine women in the household follow suit (*QLJ*, 29.26a–26b).

Compared to the earlier compilation, the Qianlong gazetteer also includes more supernatural and miraculous occurrences. Shao shi falls (or jumps) from a building, cracking her skull and breaking her legs. She declares that her husband heals her legs in a dream, then leaves the city and walks for three miles so that she can pay her final respects at the ancestral graves before she drowns herself in a pond (*QLJ*, 29.23b). One chastity martyr is said to “stand, lifelike, even after death”; another is said to “hold tight to a tree” even after being hacked to death by soldiers who try to abduct her; yet others reportedly leave corpses that remain “undecaying and lifelike” (*QLJ*, 29.26b, 28b).

Why do gazetteers (and other accounts, for that matter) emphasize “calm resolve” in suicide? “Calm resolve” aestheticizes death and restores dignity and agency to the victim—this is true for both men and women, but for the latter it has the added valence of forestalling violation. The above accounts devote more space to women precisely because the political meanings of their martyrdom are fungible—they die defending their chastity or vindicating their loyalty to husbands, parents, or country. The very chapter title “Notable Women” broadly encompasses womanly virtues, the political significance of which is open to interpretation. There is more room to maneuver the meaning of their resistance and thus less need to repress the memory of it. Anti-Qing resistance by men, if mentioned at all, is typically brief and categorical in gazetteers. Women forestalling or resisting rape can be depicted in more concrete terms, thus facilitating the remembrance of violence and suffering during the dynastic transition.

In contrast to the tone of deliberate restraint in the official narrative found in gazetteers, accounts of woman martyrs in other genres are often filled with drama, tension, and pathos. As examples I will turn to Qian Shuxian 錢淑賢 and Zhuo shi 卓氏. Both gazetteers discussed

above note laconically that Qian's death "was especially heroic."³⁷ In 1656, Wang Youding, a Ming loyalist who once served as Shi Kefa's advisor, wrote an epitaph on Qian Shuxian at the behest of her father, Qian Yingshi.³⁸ The epitaph is written in the voice of the father, who retraces his daughter's multiple suicide attempts. She tries to cut her own throat and to immolate herself but is thwarted by her father. She tries to hang herself, and the loop breaks. Her father reluctantly gives her poison, reasoning that "you should just judge the exigencies of the situation" 汝姑視緩急可也. Qing soldiers enter and thrust their halberds under the bed, almost reaching Qian Shuxian, who is hiding there. It is probably then that she takes the poison. Her parents force her to purge the poison, and she revives. She then tries to drown herself, but her father pulls her up.

At the time it was raining heavily, outside the door horse hooves were stepping in blood, splashing with the mud. House by house they slaughtered the people and burned their abodes, and fires rose on all sides. Night came. My daughter used paper soaked with water to stuff her mouth and nostrils, and forced my hands to suffocate her. Heartbroken, I could not raise my hands. Then she untied her sash and forced her mother to strangle her. Her mother dashed out in desperation. Then we heard her feet hitting the bed—thud, thud. Alas, she had died!

是時雨甚，門外馬蹄踐血，與泥聲濺濺，比屋殺人焚廬，火四起。夜，女以紙漬水塞口鼻，強余手閉其氣，令絕。余心慟，手不能舉。又解衣帶，強母縊之。母倉皇走出。聞足擊床閣閣，嗚呼死矣。

What the gazetteers brand heroic martyrdom unfolds as a narrative of horrors and desperation: Qian's persistent attempts to kill herself despite repeated failures and the wrenching confusion of her parents as they try to both thwart her and acquiesce to her choice. Qian Shuxian's final request is cremation, and her ashes are buried near the family by the temple of the Jin general Bian Hu 卞壺 (281–328). Wang Youding turns this proximity into an affirmation of the equivalence of her death and the martyrdom of Bian Hu, who died fighting rebels:

37. KXY, 27.36a; QLJ, 29.18b; see also *Jiaqing chongxiu Yangzhou fuzhi*, 55.11a.

38. Wang Youding, "Qian lienü muzhiming" 錢烈女墓誌銘, in *Sizibao tang ji*, 5.49a–51a; Cf. Zhang Yi (1608–95), *Yuguang qianqi ji*, 27.970.

The three lights are extinguished; only one flame burns bright. The god of Earth, fighting for her remains, almost cracked. We buried you here, by the loyal Bian Hu. Your spirit, side by side with the sun, will shine upon failures in all the land!

三光絕，一炬烈。后土爭之土欲裂。瘞爾于忠貞之旁，麗重離以照四方之缺！

The flame of cremation illuminates the dark age wherein the three lights (the sun, the moon, the stars) have been extinguished. Qian's spirit, along with Bian's, will shine forth in the ages to come.

The determined effort of Qian Shuxian's father to commemorate her martyrdom turns her into a much eulogized model of heroism and chastity. In addition to Wang Youding, Qian Yingshi asked the aforementioned Wang Yan to write his daughter's biography, and also requested a contribution from the loyalist poet Lei Shijun 雷士俊 (1611–68), who then composed “The Elegy to the Chastity Martyr Qian, with Preface” (“Qian lienü lei bing xu” 錢烈女誄并序).³⁹ Additionally, social ties of the Yangzhou literary community spread her fame. In 1661 the Fujian poet Xu Bi 許埶 (1614–67) commemorated Qian Shuxian as he passed through Yangzhou in his northward journey to take office.⁴⁰ Becoming a Qing official did not deter him from recalling the violence of the 1645 siege in “The Bian Grave Mound is High” (“Bian fen gao” 卞墳高, *Tietang shicao*, B.21b–22b):

卞墳高
日慘風颼颼
祠前江水流腥臊

枯楊人頭老烏號

老烏號

卞墳高

中有烈娥

(一解) (first stanza)⁴¹

The Bian grave mound is high:

The sun darkens, the wind soughs.

In front of the temple, the river flows
with the stench of blood.

Human heads hang on withered willows,
where old crows caw.

Old crows are cawing,

The Bian grave mound is high,

Lying therein is a heroic woman.

39. See *Zengxiu Ganquan xianzhi*, 16.26a–27a; Lei Shijun, *Ailing wenchao*, juan 15.

40. See Jiang Yin, *Wang Yuyang shiji zhenglue*, p. 79. For the friendship between Wang Shizhen and Xu Bi, see *ibid.*, p. 33. Wang Youding's close friends Du Jun and Wang Wan were also part of Wang Shizhen's circle; Wang Wan, Du Jun, and Zhou Lianggong were associated with both Xu Bi and Wang Youding. Xu might have learnt of Wang's epitaph through these connections. On Xu Bi, see also *Wanqing yi shihui*, juan 27; *QJS*, 1:2239–40.

41. This type of stanza marker, which comes after the stanza, is found only in *yuefu* ballads.

烈娥錢氏子
兵至各披靡
不料丞相生
誰料丞相死

The heroic woman is the daughter of Qian.
The soldiers came—defeat was total.
None expected the prime minister to live,⁴²
Yet who would have expected the prime minister
to die?

(二解) (second stanza)

丞相死
揚城閉
黑風吹人四月熱
東隣飛人肉
西隣濺人血

The prime minister died,
As Yangzhou was locked in a siege.
A black wind blew with the heat of May.
Among neighbors to the east, human flesh flew,
Among neighbors to the west,
human blood splashed.

(三解) (third stanza)

維血與肉
誰強誰弱
我不敢殺汝
反恐汝殺我
父耶母耶
胡生女耶

Such is blood and flesh:
Who is the strong one? Who the weak?
I do not dare kill you,
But fear you would kill me.
Father! Mother!
Why did you have to bear a daughter?

(四解) (fourth stanza)

父耶母耶
乃生我耶
女生不得力
女死不得老
父兮母兮
生我死我
死我生我

Father! Mother!
Thus have you given me life!
Alive, a daughter cannot be of much help,
Dead, a daughter cannot care for you in old age.
Father! Mother!
You gave me life; you can take it away,
Take my life away; and you will have let me live.

(五解) (fifth stanza)

吁嗟
父母不肯殺我
兵亦不殺我
我將安逃
引刀刀缺
引環環裂
刀環不引決
我命安得絕

Alas!
My father and mother refused to kill me,
The soldiers too did not kill me.
Where would I escape?
I drew a knife, and the knife was blunted.
I drew a loop, and the loop tore.
Knife and loop brought no decisive end,
How could my life be cut off?

(六解) (sixth stanza)

42. Shi Kefa was not the prime minister. Xu Bi is using the term to mean “commander” or “minister.”

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 嗚呼 | Alas! |
| 蹈水耶 | I jumped into water, |
| 水不喪元 | But my head could not be submerged. |
| 蹈火耶 | I jumped into fire, |
| 火不燎原 | But the fire would not burn up the land. |
| 不得與父母永訣 | Otherwise I could not have bid Father and Mother farewell— |
| 亦水火之恩 | That too was the gift of water and fire. |
| (七解) (seventh stanza) | |
| 已焉哉 | It is done! |
| 水火弗烈 | Water and fire, powerless, |
| 不如慈父手中藥 | Do not compare to the poison in my kind father's hands. |
| 飲藥擊牀聲闐闐 | I drank the poison, and my feet hit the bed— thud, thud. |
| 黃榜招民空城雀 | The imperial edict summoned the people, lost like birds in an empty city. |
| 忠貞祠堂野草著 | At the Bian Hu temple, wild grass grows. |
| (八解) (eighth stanza) | |
| 野草著 | Wild grass grows, |
| 野煙吐 | Wild mist twirls. |
| 何不揚其塵 | Why not lift her dust |
| 其骨昇之於天帝之衢 | And let her bones ascend to the pathways of the god on high, |
| 迺葬與廣陵一坏土 | And instead bury her at a clump of earth at Yangzhou? |
| 卞墳高 | The Bian grave mound is high, |
| 高千古 | High in all ages to come. |
| (九解) (ninth stanza) | |

The site of commemorating virtue is rife with the memory of violence. In Xu Bi's vision, the stench of blood prevails, and crows are still pecking at corpses. In the context of the carnage following the fall of Yangzhou, Qian's insistence on suicide seems almost a last grasp at agency. There is an implicit dialogue between Wang's epitaph and Xu's poem: whereas Wang Youding's epitaph is couched in the voice of the father's helpless grief, Xu's poem follows the daughter's wrenching reasoning in embracing inevitable suicide. The new order pronounced by imperial edict rings hollow against the fear and bewilderment of people

displaced like “birds in an empty city.”⁴³ The thriving wild grass suggests oblivion, and escape becomes a kind of transcendence as Qian’s ashes ascend to the heavenly realm.

At some point during the early Qing, Qian Shuxian’s grave was moved next to Shi Kefa’s grave at Plum Blossoms Peak. (Shi Kefa’s corpse was not found, and his cap and gown were interred there.)⁴⁴ Thereafter, writings on Qian dwell on the shared fate of Qian and Shi—in some cases the poet even avers Qian’s conscious imitation of Shi.⁴⁵ More often, however, there is simply implied equation of their “loyalty and integrity.” Qu Dajun wrote “Three Poems Lamenting the Chastity Martyr Qian, with Preface” (“Qian lienü aici sanshou bing xu” 錢烈女哀辭并序) to eulogize her suicide as political resistance, and the elegy puts her on a par with Shi Kefa (*Qu Dajun quanji*, 5:314):

First poem (lines 1–2)

佳人能獨立
不肯嫁烏孫

The fair one was capable of standing alone:
She refused to marry the barbarian chief.

Second poem (lines 1–4)

一代漢宗臣
衣冠冢與鄰
蘭心憂社稷

The great Han minister of his era
Left cap and gown in his grave by yours.
Your pure heart was pained by what befalls
the country,
Like the Lu maiden of Qishi, you embraced
the skeins of state.⁴⁶

Zhu Yishi 朱一是 (*juren* 1642), who took the tonsure after the fall of the Ming, wrote in the same vein in “A Long Song Written for Chastity Martyr Qian of Weiyang” (“Changge xing wei Weiyang Qian lienü fu”

43. “Kongcheng que” 空城雀 (Birds in an empty city) is a *yuefu* title. See Wu Jing, *Yuefu guti yaojie*, p. 50.

44. Bian Hu’s temple was at the south gate of Yangzhou, while Plum Blossoms Peak was north of the city. According to Li Dou, the temple for Shi Kefa was built at the foot of the peak in 1772, but he does not mention Qian’s grave (*Yangzhou huafang lu*, 3:77).

45. See, for example, Jin Yingsheng 靳應昇 (1605–63), “Du Hanjiang Qian lienü zhuan bushi yi dao zhi” 讀邢江錢烈女傳補詩以悼之, in *Yangzhou lidai shici*, 2:22–23.

46. “Pure heart” is literally “heart like an orchid”; “Qishi” refers to a story in *Lienü zhuan* (3.66) about a Lu maiden worried about her domain; *jinglun* 經綸, a metaphor derived from sericulture, means principles of governance.

長歌行爲維揚錢烈女賦). Her martyrdom epitomizes the refusal of surrender and compromise (*Weike tang chujī*, 16.27b–28a):

| | |
|----------|--|
| 轟轟夜礮燒廣陵 | Booming cannons, firing through the night, set Yangzhou aflame. |
| 將軍戰死城角崩 | The general had died in battle; the city walls had crumbled. |
| 弱男迎降壯男走 | Weak men surrendered, strong men fled, |
| 紅粉成群牽馬後 | Women were roped behind horses in droves. |
| ... | |
| 即[願]爲斷頭鬼 | She would rather be a headless ghost, |
| 不作偷活擄 | Than steal life as a captive. |

Zhu Yishi compares the implied connection between Shi and Qian to the bond uniting two famous Song generals who defended Yangzhou against the Mongols—Li Tingzhi (1219–76) and Jiang Cai (d. 1276):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 鼎鼎北邙相向哭 | At piled-up graves they faced each other and cried: |
| 李庭芝外有姜才 | Beside Li Tingzhi, there was Jiang Cai. |
| 招魂縹渺葬諸公 | With uncertain hopes they summoned his soul before burial, |
| 錢女魂飛一炬紅 | While her soul took flight in one bright flame. |
| 赤帝唏噓祝融怒 | The Red Emperor sighed, the god of fire raged, |
| 上與皎日光爭互 | As the flame vied with the white sun above for brightness. |
| 馬鬣空傳封一邱 | Vain was the rumor of her burial in grave mound— |
| 肯教香骨飽蠅螻 | Why would she let vermin feast on her fragrant bones? |
| 烈女識達心更苦 | The brave woman could see through it all, her grief ever more: |
| 豈有陵園保終古 | Was there ever a mound and grave to last through the ages? |
| 廿四橋邊一望悲 | Looking to the Twenty-Four Bridge, a vision of sorrow: |
| 上無蒼天下無土 | Above, there is no heaven, below, no earth. |

Yet another tie between the graves of Shi and Qian is the absence of their corpses. What might have been a cause for sorrow is celebrated as a kind of transcendence. In comparison with Qian's request for cremation, the ritual of summoning the soul and interring cap and gown in Shi's case seems more mundane. For Qian, cremation confirms the sense of a "lost country" (the exact words used are "no earth" 無土)—this means both her rejection of the new order and her acceptance of

ultimate ephemerality. In Qu Dajun's preface to his three poems, Qian reportedly says, "Do not leave my bones in this defiled land" 無留骨穢地 (*Qu Dajun quanji*, 5.314).

The analogy between Shi Kefa and chastity martyrs also obtains in the historian and scholar Quan Zuwang's 全祖望 (1705–55) "Account of Plum Blossoms Peak" ("Meihua ling ji" 梅花嶺記), which chronicles the demise of Shi Kefa and concludes with references to Qian Shuxian and Shi's sister-in-law, Lady Shi Eighth 史八夫人.⁴⁷ Quan tells how Shi Kefa, unwilling to die by the enemy's hand, has asked who among the generals "could help me defend my integrity at the critical moment?" 臨期成此大節. The assistant commander Shi Dewei accepts the charge, and Shi Kefa makes him his "sworn son." When Yangzhou falls, Shi Kefa, failing in his suicide attempt, calls for Dewei's help, but the latter cannot wield the sword.⁴⁸ The exchange between Shi Kefa and Shi Dewei is reminiscent of that between Qian Shuxian and her parents: assistance in suicide confirms the closest ties. As in Zhu Yishi's poem, Quan Zuwang also implies that the loss of Shi Kefa's corpse and Qian's cremation are fitting symbols of severing ties with a new order that could not claim them.

Quan's account dwells on the various "afterlives" of Shi Kefa as he continues to inspire others. Since Shi Kefa's corpse is not found, there are rumors that he has not died, and anti-Qing resistance fighters often claim his leadership. Upon the arrest of resistance fighters who claim to be Shi Kefa and his followers, the Qing commander summons Shi's family members to a meeting to determine their identity. Present at the meeting is the widow of Shi Kefa's eighth younger brother. The commander covets her beauty and demands to marry her, whereupon she commits suicide.⁴⁹ Shi Kefa's cousin Shi Kecheng (1606–after 1675) surrendered first to Li Zicheng and then the Qing. Quan imagines how

47. Quan Zuwang, *Quan Zuwangji huijiao jizhu*, 20.1116–18. Cf. Huang Zongxi, *Huang Zongxi quanji*, 2:90; Liu Baonan, *Shengchao xun Yang lu*, A.14b–17a.

48. According to Quan Zuwang, Shi was then captured by Qing troops. The Qing commander Prince Dodo tried to persuade him to surrender. Shi responded with curses and was executed.

49. Lady Shi Eighth is a widely commemorated figure in Qing writings, although details vary. See Sun Zhiwei, *Gaitang ji*, 9.17a–17b; Zhang Yi, *Yuguang jianqi ji*, 27.970; Wang Youdian, *Shi nai*, 1A.2a; biography by Yao Nai (in Wang Baoxin, *Yuchu zhibi, Shuobai*, 8:2723–24).

Shi's regret and sorrow over the betrayal and compromises of his paternal cousin (or a younger brother, by Chinese kinship terms) would find recompense in the martyrdom of a sister-in-law. Resistance in Shi's name is pronounced unlawful, but Shi's spirit lives on in the martyrdom of chaste women. Lady Shi Eighth and Qian Shuxian come to embody the resistance whose political and military manifestations are officially ruled as seditious.

A similar displacement and rhetorical sleight of hand is evident in the writings eulogizing chaste woman Zhuo, née Qian. Although she is not mentioned in the Kangxi and Qianlong gazetteers discussed above, *The Sequel to the Jiangdu Gazetteer* (*Jiaqing Jiangdu xian xuzhi* 嘉慶江都縣續志), compiled in 1811, contains her epitaph written by Wu Qi 吳綺 (1619–74).⁵⁰ *The Amplified Ganquan Gazetteer* (*Zengxiu Ganquan xianzhi* 增修甘泉縣志), compiled in 1885, includes her biography by Wei Shixiao 魏世儼 (b. 1655).⁵¹ According to Wei, Zhuo's nephew Zhuo Erkan wrote about his aunt, and had also invited his friends to join him in writing about her. Indeed, Zhuo Erkan's anthology, *Poetry by Ming Loyalists* (*Yimin shi* 遺民詩 or *Ming yimin shi* 明遺民詩), ensures the spread of her fame by including poems about her by Huang Zongxi, Jia Kaizong 賈開宗 (1605–61), Chai Shaobing 柴紹炳 (1616–70), Huang Kui 黃逵 (17th c.), Shen Lanxian 沈蘭先 (1618–80), Li Bo 李柏 (1630–1700), and Wang Feng 王淦 (17th c.).⁵²

Huang Zongxi, in the preface to his four quatrains on Zhuo, notes that she was Qian Ying's daughter and married the officer Zhuo Huan at seventeen. He adds that Zhuo Huan's ancestor Zhuo Jing 卓敬 (1388 *jinsbi*) died in 1402 defending the Jianwen emperor against the usurper, his uncle Zhu Di (later the Yongle emperor). (The 1402 usurpation, as a story about the right to rule and the struggle of north versus south, was sometimes symbolically linked to the Qing conquest and the subject of debates and rewriting during the Ming-Qing transition.⁵³) Huang thereby

50. See *Jiaqing Jiangdu xian xuzhi*, 9.22b–25a.

51. See *Zengxiu Ganquan xianzhi*, 16.42a–43b.

52. See MYMS, 1.46–47, 7.284, 9.353–54, 11.445, 12.493, 14.604. Other loyalist poets who wrote about chaste woman Zhuo but are not anthologized by Zhuo Erkan include Meng Nai, Chen Tinghui, and Wang Wenshi; see Li, Liu, and Chen, *Yangzhou lidai shici*, 2.102, 2.135; *Shengchao xun Yang lu*, B.23b–24a.

53. See Zhao Yuan, *Ming Qing zhiji shi daifu yanjin*, pp. 165–92; Wai-ye Li, "Introduction," pp. 42–43. Cf. Liu Qiongyun, "Diwang huanhun."

implies the analogy or affinity in spirit between Zhuo Jing and the latter-day woman martyr.⁵⁴ He goes on to explain the collective suicide she inspires. The day before Yangzhou fell, she declares, “If the city falls, there will certainly be slaughter. Women would not be able to escape defilement. It would be better to die first” 城陷必屠，婦女不能免辱，孰若先死。Her husband tries to dissuade her and devises a hiding place to no avail. Holding her three-year old son, she jumps into a pond, and Zhuo Huan’s widowed sister (or aunt), his two younger sisters and three younger brothers all follow suit. Huang Zongxi contrasts the collective suicide with men who surrender and compares Zhuo to Qu Yuan, who drowns himself at Miluo River (“Chastity Martyr Zhuo, with preface” [“Zhuo liefu bingxu” 卓烈婦并序], *MYMS*, 1.46–47):

Second quatrain

| | |
|---------|--|
| 無數衣冠拜馬前 | Countless men in cap and gown prostrated themselves in front of the conquerors’ horses, |
| 獨傳閨閣動人憐 | Her story alone, from the inner chamber, moves me to pity and sorrow. |
| 汨羅江上千年淚 | A thousand years of tears at the Miluo River |
| 灑作清池一勺泉 | Are sprinkled, like a spring, on the clear pond. |

Third quatrain

| | |
|---------|---|
| 問我諸姑淚亂流 | Ask me about my sisters-in-law, and tears stream down: |
| 風塵不染免貽羞 | Untainted by dust, they were spared from incurring shame. |
| 一行玉佩歸天上 | Jade pendants, in one line, returned to heaven |
| 轉眼降幡出石頭 | As, in the blink of an eye, banners of surrender emerge from the Stone City. ⁵⁵ |

Poems on Zhuo often compare her to emblematic heroes such as the Warring States assassins Jing Ke and Nie Zheng, or Zhang Xun and Xu Yuan, the Tang commanders who died defending Suiyang during the

54. Zhuo Erkan’s friend Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645–1719) sums up the meaning of Zhuo Jing’s martyrdom: “He resisted the one who was not our ruler but who wanted to rule over us”; see his paean to the genealogy of loyalty in the Zhuo family, “Shu Zhuo shi zhonglie yihui juan” 書卓氏忠烈遺徽卷, in *Nanyun wengao*, 12.2a–2b. He also praises chastity martyr Zhuo as “the echo of Zhuo Jing’s sacrifice” in a tomb inscription, see *ibid.*, j. 10.17a.

55. The last line alludes to Liu Yuxi’s poem; see chap. 1, pp. 121–22, chap. 5, p. 433.

An Lushan Rebellion. The counterpoint to Zhuo's suicide is invariably men who accept political compromises or women who submit to abduction. The eulogies sometimes conclude with categorical declarations of the superiority of women (MYMS, 1.47, 14.604):⁵⁶

賈開宗 卓烈婦

Jia Kaizong, "Chastity Martyr Zhuo" (lines 3–4)

| | |
|---------|---|
| 天地正氣付阿誰 | The righteous spirit of heaven and earth: |
| | to whom is it given? |
| 茲道如今寄簪珥 | That Way, for now, is lodged among women. |

柴紹炳 卓烈婦

Chai Shaobing, "Chastity Martyr Zhuo" (last two lines)

| | |
|---------|--|
| 二十年前余有言 | Twenty years ago, I already had this saying: |
| 大都女人勝男子 | Women in most cases excel men. |

Yet behind these eulogies of Zhuo, there might have lurked a forgotten man. According to Pan Chenyu, Zhuo Erkan's great-uncle, Zhuo Tianqi, might have been involved in a group sent on a secret mission to Korea by the Hongguang court with a view to inciting Korea to join Ming resistance against the Qing.⁵⁷ This mission must have failed, and Zhuo Tianqi probably committed suicide after the fall of Nanjing. Various clues in Zhuo Erkan's vague and inconsistent references to Zhuo Tianqi give some credence to this theory. The hypothesis, though ultimately not provable, points to a basic truth: while anti-Qing resistance by men often remains a tabooed subject, the intrinsic flexibility in the political meanings of a woman's martyrdom allows it to be widely eulogized.

One of the most notable works commemorating Zhuo is Li Bo's poem (MYMS, 11.445):

李柏 卓烈婦

Li Bo, "Chastity Martyr Zhuo"

| | |
|---------|--|
| 黑雲壓城城欲摧 | Black clouds crushed the city, a city about to fall. |
| 北風吹折瓊花飛 | North wind broke the branches, |
| | as agate blossoms scattered. |

56. See also Wu Sugong, "Ba Zhuo mu Qian shi zhuanlue" 跋卓母錢氏傳略, in *Jienan wenji*, 18.36a–36b.

57. Pan Chengyu, *Qing chu shi tan*, pp. 14–17.

| | |
|---------|--|
| 揚州乙酉遭屠戮 | Yangzhou, in the <i>yiyou</i> year, endured slaughter— |
| 卓氏貞魂至今哭 | The chaste spirit of Woman Zhuo wailed to this day. |
| 將軍已降丞相死 | The general had surrendered; the prime minister had died. |
| 一家八口齊赴水 | Eight in one family made the plunge together. |
| 池中土作殷紅色 | The earth in the pond became bright red. |
| 血漬波痕轉逾碧 | Blood stained the waves, which turned a more intense emerald. ⁵⁸ |
| 曾聞精衛能填海 | I have heard: the Jingwei bird could fill the sea with pebbles— |
| 一勺之池想易改 | Such a dipper of a pond must be easy to transform. |

The first line is taken from the opening line of Li He's famous poem, "The Song of the Governor of Yanmen" ("Yanmen taishou xing" 鴈門太守行). In that poem, the ominous threat sets the stage for the final declaration of loyalty: "Jade dragon sword in hand, I will die for my lord" 提攜玉龍爲君死. In Li Bo's poem, also, the city's doom determines the political meanings of Zhuo's martyrdom. She cries, mourning the victims of the 1645 massacre: here the issue is no longer the moral premises of her action, but the injunction to remember. Li Bo compares the eight corpses filling the pond to the Jingwei bird trying to fill up the sea. As noted in chapter 1, the Jingwei bird, daughter of the Red Emperor, is the symbol of lofty though hopeless endeavor: here the implied transformation of the pond as it is filled with corpses suggests a kind of moral vindication, yet this is at best an ambiguous triumph, weighed down by the sense of futile striving and unappeased anguish conveyed by the image of the Jingwei bird.

References to the Yangzhou massacre are unexpectedly rare in early Qing writings; Li Bo's poem is one of the few extant examples. As mentioned above, we know nothing about the circulation of "An Account of Ten Days in Yangzhou" in the early Qing. Gazetteers are typically laconic about the massacre, but some poems and biographies, many of them about women martyrs (such as the writings on Qian Suxian and Woman

58. The lines evoke the association of "emerald blood" 碧血, or blood shed for a just cause. In *Zhuangzi*, the blood of the loyal minister Chang Hong turned emerald (*Zhuangzi jishi*, 26.920).

Zhuo), offer glimpses into the event. Besides Li Bo, Huang Kui also uses the carnage to explain Zhuo's motive: "Do you not hear the soldiers outside the gate? / They are killing people like slaughtering pigs" 不聞門外兵，殺人如屠豕 (MYMS, 7.284).⁵⁹ Wu Sugong, in his postscript to Zhuo's biography, also uses Zhuo to lament the forgotten dead and acts of heroism sunk in oblivion: "I heard that in the days after the city fell, about eight hundred and thirty thousand were slaughtered. The Yangzhou gazetteer chronicled about thirty women who died to defend their honor . . . but the gazetteer did not mention Zhuo"⁶⁰ 余聞城陷之日，屠者八十三萬有奇。按揚志婦女死節三十餘人 . . . 然志不及卓氏事。Through his friendship with Zhuo Erkan, Wu Sugong came to know about his aunt. Paying tribute to her became a way to commemorate the forgotten heroes and victims of the massacre.

Another example of a woman's story as the prism of remembrance is seen in writings about a certain old woman Dong. As mentioned above, the Yangzhou gazetteer chronicles the calm and ritually proper suicide of the scholar Han Mo and his family (KXY, 25.13a–13b). The horror of the moment, however, is preserved in the accounts of how one servant of the family, old woman Dong, saved the two-year-old orphan Han Wei. Thus Han Wei's friend Wang Maolin wrote: "At that time, thousands of men on horseback brought slaughter to the city. Fire broke out in the city, glaring on blades bright as snow. It was raining heavily, and sounds of splashing merged with the clangor of armor and weapons. Corpses blocked the roads. The old woman crept low, crawling like a snake beneath swords and horse hooves, and lying among piles of corpses" 當是時，萬馬屠城，城中火起，照鋒刃如雪，天大雨，淙淙與戈甲聲亂，殺人塞坊市。嫗匍匐蛇行刀頭馬腳之下，伏死人中。⁶¹ Han Wei requested Wang Maolin to write Dong's biography, and Dong's courage and loyalty are thrown into sharper relief

59. Cf. You Tong, "Zhang liefu zhuan" 張烈婦傳, cited in *QJSCB*, 1:318.

60. Wu Sugong, *Jienan wenji*, 18.36a–36b. The figure of 800,000, mentioned in "Yangzhou shiri ji" (p. 476) and *Mingji nanlue* (3.205), has been questioned by historians. See, for example, Zhang Defang, "Yangzhou shiri ji bianwu"; Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, pp. 547, 563–64.

61. Wang Maolin, "Dong yu zhuan" 董嫗傳, in *Baichi wutong ge ji*, 5:377.

by the odds she is defying. Another of Han Wei's friends, the well-known poet Wu Jiaji, wrote in the voice of Dong to pay tribute to her ("Old Woman Dong" ["Dong yu" 董嫗], *Wu Jiaji shi jianjiao*, 12.357–59):⁶²

| | |
|-------|--|
| 憶母將縊時 | I remember when his mother was about to hang herself, |
| 復抱幼兒乳 | She again held the young child and nursed him. |
| 乳兒幾曾飽 | She nursed him, but he could not have eaten enough |
| 蒼惶分散去 | When in great chaos we were separated. |
| 門外積骸高 | Outside the gates corpses piled high. |
| 昏暮何西東 | It was dusk—who could tell east from west? |
| 裹兒兒不啼 | I wrapped the child up—he did not cry— |
| 共入死人中 | And together we made our way through piles of the dead. |
| 死人蓋生人 | The dead covered those who were alive, |
| 尸血模糊紅 | The blood of the corpses was a blurry red. |
| 五日殺人了 | In five days the slaughter was done, |
| 駱駝鳴蜀岡 | And camels cried on the Shu Mound. |

In the Yangzhou gazetteer Han Wei's mother simply follows the dictates of her moral reasoning, but here her farewell with her child is wrenching. Confusion, despair, and the indomitable will to survive, rather than "calm resolve" and ritual propriety, characterize accounts like this.

Of the six poems wherein Wu Jiaji describes or refers to the Yangzhou massacre, all but one filter the event through the experience of a woman. The most horrifying among these is "Woman of the Li Family" ("Li jia niang" 李家孃), dated to 1681.⁶³ Abducted by Qing soldiers, Li refuses to submit and commits suicide by smashing her head against the wall upon receiving news of her husband's death. Enraged, her abductor eviscerates her, showing her innards to onlookers (Wu Jiaji, *Wu Jiaji shi jianjiao*, 10.299):

62. Another poem that Wu inscribes on Han Wei's painting alludes to the massacre; see "Ti Han Zuibai xingle tu" 題韓醉白行樂圖 (*Wu Jiaji shi jianjiao*, 11.323). On Wu Jiaji's poetry, see Huang Guilan, *Wu Jiaji Louxuan shi zhi yanjin*; Chaves, "Moral Action"; Yan Dichang, *Qing shi shi*, pp. 130–43.

63. This "close-up" of carnage in Yangzhou has very few parallels in Qing poetry. One finds comparably graphic violence in Wang Hongdu's poem about his aunt's martyrdom; see Wang Hongdu, "Shumu shi" 叔母詩, in *Shengchao xun Yang lu*, B.28a–28b.

吳嘉紀 李家孃

Wu Jiaji, "Woman of the Li Family"

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 城中山白死人骨 | Inside the city, a mountain white with bleached bones, |
| 城外水赤死人血 | Outside the city, a river red with blood of the dead. |
| 殺人一百四十萬 | More than a million have been slaughtered, |
| 新城舊城內有幾人活 | How many survived within the bounds of the new city or the old one? |

(一解) (first stanza)

| | |
|-------|---|
| 妻方對鏡 | As the wives faced the mirrors, |
| 夫已墮首 | The husbands' heads already rolled. |
| 腥刀入鞘 | Blood-drenched swords entered sheaths, |
| 紅顏隨走 | As the fair ones were taken away— |
| 西家女 | Girls from homes to the east, |
| 東家婦 | Women from homes to the west. |
| 如花李家孃 | The flower-like woman of the Li family, |
| 亦落強梁手 | Also fell into the strongmen's hands. |

(二解) (second stanza)

| | |
|--------|--|
| 手牽拽語 | They grabbed the women's hands and talked |
| 兜離笳吹 | As barbarian fifes blew. |
| 團團日低 | The round, round sun lowered |
| 歸擁曼睩蛾眉 | As they returned, embracing these comely creatures. |

| | |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| 獨有李家孃 | Only the woman of the Li family |
| 不入穹廬栖 | Refused to enter the yurt. |

(三解) (third stanza)

...

| | |
|--------|--|
| 夫既歿 | The husband had already died, |
| 妻復何求 | What more could the wife hope for? |
| 腦髓與壁 | She gave her brains to the walls, |
| 心肺與讎 | Her heart and lungs, she gave to the enemy. |
| 不嫌剖腹截頭 | He did not balk at eviscerating and decapitating her— |

| | |
|----------|--|
| 俾觀者殼鰥似羊牛 | He had to make the onlookers shudder and cower like cows and sheep. |
|----------|--|

(九解) (ninth stanza)

| | |
|--------|-------------------------------------|
| 若羊若牛何人 | Who were those like cows and sheep? |
| 東家婦 | Women from homes to the east, |
| 西家女 | Girls from homes to the west. |

| | |
|---------|--|
| 來日徹營北去 | The next day they decamped and went north. |
| 馳驅辛苦 | Driven ahead, they toiled and suffered. |
| 鴻鵠飛上天 | The wild geese flew to heaven, |
| 兔兔不離土 | The stubborn rabbit did not leave its earth. |
| 鄉園回憶李家孃 | Remembering the woman of the Li family in their homeland, |
| 明駝背上淚如雨 | Those on the backs of camels wept tears like rain. |

(十解) (tenth stanza)

Li's corpse is desecrated; she fares no better than "cows and sheep." From her perspective, however, this is the fulfillment of her martyrdom. The true "cows and sheep" are the cowering women who have lost all dignity as they are driven north like cattle. Li's horrific death notwithstanding, she could claim a kind of agency in fulfilling her wish "not to leave her land." On camels' backs are the women who mourn Li and who perhaps lament that they suffer an even more pitiable fate. If we compare this poem with more categorical laments—such as Gu Yanwu's famous lines: "Sadly we witnessed the three armies collapsed at Jingkou, / In grief we spoke of the seven-day siege of Yangzhou" 愁看京口三軍潰，痛說揚州七日圍⁶⁴—then we may say that concrete memory of violence is often mediated through a woman's body. The evisceration of Woman Li, inasmuch as it makes manifest her heroic will, eerily seems like a kind of self-revelation. By inviting this fate, she transcends it. Through her commemoration, the repressed memory of violence is preserved and further, reinstated as resistance.

If Woman Li facilitates the remembrance of atrocities otherwise repressed, there were countless women consigned to oblivion or even calumny because their martyrdom is tied up with rape and an ignominious death. Grace Fong draws our attention to the prose of the woman writer Xu Yezhao 徐葉昭 (18th c.), who recounts the martyrdom of Xuegu 雪姑 during the Ming-Qing transition.⁶⁵ When bandit rebels raid her home, Xuegu tries to kill herself with a knife but fails, and she is raped. Espying the knife close by, she attacks the bandit and wounds him in the thigh. "The bandit, in great fury, stripped her naked, plunged

64. Gu Yanwu, "Zeng Zhu jieji sifu" 贈朱監紀四輔, in *Gu Tinglin shi jianshi*, 2.261–62.

65. Grace Fong, "Unlikely Biographers?"; Xu Yezhao's essay, "Shu liefu Xuegu shi" 書烈婦雪姑事, is included in *Zhisizhi xuewen gao* 職思齋學文稿, 1.32a–33b, in Grace Fong, *Ming Qing Women's Writings*.

the knife into her vagina, pierced it through her buttocks and killed her” 寇大恨，裸其衣，以刃透下體穿沒 [股] 而死。Xuegu’s family considers her death shameful and never speaks about it. The villagers mockingly compare her to officials who surrendered, calling her “so-and-so with pierced buttocks” 穿臀某家。By the time Xu was writing (ca. 1780), the shameful label had persisted for 130 or 140 years and the family still scrupulously avoided mentioning her. Outraged at such perverse judgments, Xu condemns Xuegu’s family and villagers for being benighted and seeks to reinstate her name as a chastity martyr. This case reminds us of what is erased or twisted behind the logic of praising chastity martyrs.

Remembering and Forgetting

Despite the retelling of horrific acts of violence, the carnage of the Yangzhou massacre was apparently quickly forgotten. Zhou Rong 周容 (1619–79) expressed it thus in “Yangzhou” 揚州 (Li et al., *Yangzhou lidai shici*, 2:162, lines 7–8):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 可憐十萬蒼生骨 | Pity the bones of untold thousands: |
| 不得相傳是戰場 | They could not say this was the battlefield. |

Early Qing Yangzhou emerged from devastation and experienced revival, and both this devastation and its revival are filtered through sensual and feminine imagery. Sun Zhiwei presents Yangzhou’s decline as the loss of its women to the conquerors in “Miscellaneous Thoughts on Yangzhou” (“Yangzhou zagan” 揚州雜感, in *Gaitang ji*, 9.8b, lines 3–4):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 一自南來多北馬 | Ever since so many northern hordes came south, |
| 如今女貌比瓊花 | Beautiful women are for now as rare as agate blossoms. |

For Ding Yaokang, mourning the demise of pleasure quarters in 1647 is one way to voice political lament in “After the War I Passed by Yangzhou Again” (“Luohou zaiguo Yangzhou sishou” 亂後再過揚州,” fourth of four poems, *DYK*, 1:691, lines 5–6):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 天女頓辭鶯雀館 | Heavenly maidens suddenly took leave of the House of Pleasure, |
| 神仙來哭帝王丘 | Immortals have come to lament at the Mound of Kings and Emperors. |

If the focus on devastation potentially disarms critique, then survival and revival may imply oblivion or compromise in the first poem from the same series (DYK, 1:691, lines 3–4):

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 新市鴨[鴉?]妝仍 | In the new market, crow-black hair coiffed, |
| 步楚 | they still sport mincing steps. |
| 舊台馬瘦盡歸燕 | On the old terrace, the “lean mares” |
| | have all headed to northern Yan. |

The image of women abducted and taken north by Qing troops is juxtaposed with the renewed charms of Yangzhou women, who have returned to self-adornment, showing little concern with the recent trauma. Revival means acceptance of the new political reality in the second poem from Ding’s series (lines 5–8, DYK, 1:691):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 楚館門排邗市粉 | At the gate of the house of pleasure |
| | is arrayed Yangzhou face powder. |
| 吳儂歌學滿州聲 | Wu ladies, plying their songs, |
| | learn the inflection of Manchu. |
| 不堪湖柳千行禿 | Unable to bear the lakeside willows, |
| | barren in the thousands, |
| 一任孤舟到處橫 | I let my lone boat drift where it would. |

Perhaps a measure of commercial revival comes only with women of pleasure willing to learn Manchu inflection. The alternative (lines 7–8) is perhaps too bleak to admit of any real choice beyond promising a tenuous escape. But if these compliant women herald the city’s revival, does this also imply the erasure or repression of traumatic memory?

As Yangzhou returns to prosperity, these ambiguities are not dispelled. As example we can turn to Wu Weiye’s “Yangzhou: Four Poems” (“Yangzhou si shou” 揚州四首, *WMC*, 1:395–97). He wrote these poems in 1653 during his northward journey to assume office under the Qing, a decision he was to regret for the rest of his life. In the poems he pits memories of bloody destruction against their deliberate erasure. Thus the first poem (*WMC*, 1:395):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 疊鼓鳴笳發棹謳 | With drumbeats and fife tunes come rowing songs: |
| 榜人高唱廣陵秋 | The oarsmen sing loudly “Guangling Autumn.” |
| 官河楊柳誰新種 | Willows by the official canal—by whom |
| | newly planted? |
| 御苑鶯花豈舊遊 | For orioles and flowers in the imperial garden— |
| | the same pleasure seekers? |

| | |
|---------|---|
| 十載西風空白骨 | For ten years in the west wind, bleached bones lie in vain, |
| 廿橋明月自朱樓 | By the Twenty-Four Bridge, under the bright moon, red towers stay oblivious. |
| 南朝枉作迎鑾鎮 | For naught was the imperial carriage welcomed at the southern dynasty, |
| 難博雷塘土一丘 | That emperor could not even win a mound of earth at Leitong. |

Yangzhou has reverted to refined pleasures and oblivious good cheer. The boatman's songs, newly planted willows, and perhaps persistent pleasure seekers suppress memories of the violent conquest. Lines 5 and 6 employ a standard juxtaposition in parallel couplets—the words *kong* 空 (in vain, for nothing) and *zì* 自 (on its own, by itself, unaffected, oblivious). The bridge and red towers, emblems of sensuous pleasures, remain defiantly a world unto themselves. All traces of the massacre have been erased. The last two lines constitute Wu's poetic response to the implicit logic of the preceding couplet. Perhaps oblivion is the fitting response, considering the pitiful fate of the Hongguang court. The Hongguang emperor does not even measure up to Emperor Yang of Sui, another pleasure-loving last ruler. He was buried at Leitang (near Yangzhou), but the Hongguang emperor could not even win a grave there.

The poet tries to counter erasure by lingering over and offering judgment on the events of the Southern Ming, which may explain why the second and third poems reexamine particular strategic and political errors from 1644 to 1645. The fourth poem refers specifically to the abduction of Yangzhou women by Manchu troops (*WMC*, 1:397).

| | |
|---------|---|
| 撥盡琵琶馬上絃 | They strummed, to the bitter end, strings of <i>pipa</i> on horseback. |
| 玉鉤斜畔泣嬋娟 | By the Jade Hook Winding Lane, women wept. |
| 紫駝人去瓊花院 | Riding purple camels, they departed from the Agate Flowers Courtyard, |
| 青塚魂歸錦纜船 | From their green graves, souls returned to boats with brocade masts. |
| 荳蔻梢頭春十二 | Like cardamon pods on branch tips were budding maidens of twelve. |
| 株萸灣口路三千 | By Magnolia Bay were endless roads of three thousand miles. |

| | |
|---------|--|
| 隋堤壁玉珠簾夢 | Sui embankment, jade-disc moon, and pearl curtain dreams— |
| 小杜曾遊記昔年 | Du Mu was once here, and now remembers yesteryear. |

Here Wu Weiye juxtaposes two sets of feminine imagery. One belongs to the Wang Zhaojun lore—exile, *pipa* played on horseback, purple camels, green grave, and the soul returning to the homeland. As mentioned above, Zhaojun is a ubiquitous figure in early Qing writings on and by displaced, abducted, and victimized women. The other set of images evoke decadent southern dynasties and the pleasures of courtesan quarters—Jade Hook Winding Lane, Agate Flowers Courtyard, brocade masts, jade-disc moon, cardamon pods, pearl curtains. Yangzhou has returned to oblivious good cheer by capitalizing on the second set of images and suppressing the first one. Wu Weiye exposes these elisions: the women of Yangzhou who now symbolize its pleasures were once associated with loss, abduction, and the shame of conquest. For all its gaiety (as told in the first poem), Yangzhou cannot repress the memories of violence and destruction. On a personal level, this also means Wu Weiye's historical reflections have to be modulated by recollections of his own immersion in the romantic-aesthetic realm of the Lower Yangzi. He compares himself to the late Tang poet Du Mu.⁶⁶ To what extent does this implicate him in a kind of collective guilt? Do those memories make him a better or worse observer and judge of his time?

Several months before Wu Weiye went north, he presided over a large literary gathering at Tiger Mound. For this occasion he wrote melancholy poems lamenting the fall of the Ming. But being so much in the public eye might also have made it more difficult for him to avoid being pressed into the service of the Qing government. However, socio-literary ties that cut across political differences were common, not only for Ming officials who eventually served the Qing, but also for many

66. Lines 5–8 evoke well-known poems by Du Mu on the pleasure quarters of Yangzhou: “Graceful, swaying, she was all of thirteen, / Like a cardamon pod at the beginning of March. / In the spring breeze, for miles of roads in Yangzhou, / None behind rolled up pearl curtains compare to her” 娉娉裊裊十三餘，苙蔻梢頭二月初，春風十里揚州路，卷上珠簾總不如 (“Zeng bie” 贈別); “Ten years passed, in the flash of a dream, / And in return: my name as a faithless lover of the pleasure quarters” 十年一覺揚州夢，贏得青樓薄倖名 (“Qianhuai” 遣懷), see *Fanchuan wenji*, 4.82, p. 321. Recall that Yu Huai also compares himself to Du Mu; see chap. 4, p. 302.

who considered themselves loyalists to the end. The reason why Wang Shizhen's socio-literary gatherings in Yangzhou (which took place during the years 1660–1664) have attracted so much attention is because they illuminate perspectives on the ties between Qing officials and loyalists, the interdependence between political power under the new regime and cultural capital based on not serving the Qing dynasty. They also produced writings balancing acceptance of the new order with lamentation and nostalgia for the fallen dynasty.

In 1664, at one of the literary gatherings at Vermilion Bridge, Wang Shizhen and his friends (including some well-known loyalists) wrote poems on spring.⁶⁷ Here is one of Wang Shizhen's quatrains (WSZ, 1:387):

冶春絕句

“Lovely Spring” (13th of 20 quatrains)

| | |
|---------|---|
| 當年鐵炮壓城開 | In yesteryear iron cannons breached the city walls. |
| 折戟沉沙長野苔 | On broken halberds sunk in sand, wild moss grows. |
| 梅花嶺畔青青草 | By Plum Blossoms Peak, the green, green grass |
| 閑送遊人騎馬回 | Calmly sends off travelers returning on horseback. |

The poet dispenses with the carnage of nineteen years earlier in one line—flying cannonballs make the siege of the city swift, faceless, inevitable. All memories of destruction are to be erased. The second line echoes Du Mu's meditation on the Battle of Red Cliff, fought in 208: “On the broken halberd sunk in sand, the metal is yet unworn, / Polish and wash it, so as to recognize the former dynasty” 折戟沉沙鐵未銷，自應磨洗認前朝.⁶⁸ If in Du's quatrain recognition of the “former dynasty” is still possible as one ponders historical causation and questions historical inevitability, then in Wang's poem the memory of war and destruction has been resolutely erased—“wild moss” now grows on the broken halberd. Plum Blossoms Peak, where the grave of Shi Kefa is found, is now the vantage point for spring excursions. Pleasure and leisure have returned to Yangzhou, and Plum Blossoms Peak is divested of its historical role as the emblem of martyrdom.

67. Tobie Meyer-Fong draws our attention to this site in her important study, *Building Culture*.

68. Du Mu, “Chibi” 赤壁, *Fanchuan wenji*, 4.69.

Yet the contest for signification is not far beneath the surface. In the last of his eight matching poems Wu Jiaji gives a stark reminder of how surreal the appearance of harmony can be (*Wu Jiaji shi jianzhao*, 2.59):⁶⁹

| | |
|---------|--|
| 岡南崗北上朝日 | North of the mound, south of the mound, a spring day. |
| 落花遊騎亂紛紛 | Fallen blossoms, travelers on horseback, all abustle. |
| 如何松下幾坏土 | How is it that the clumps of earth beneath the pines |
| 不見兒孫來上墳 | See no descendants coming to sweep the graves? |

Wu's quatrain reverses the logical and temporal sequence of Wang's poem: it begins with contemporary images of serenity that are duly dismantled by the repressed violence of unappeased memories. The graves are untended, perhaps because the descendants of the dead had perished during the 1645 massacre.

Sun Zhiwei wrote forty-eight quatrains titled "Lovely Spring" to match Wang Shizhen's original twenty, again mixing memories and their suppression. Celebration of pleasures is both defiant and mournful. Sun eventually took the 1679 special examination for Eminent Scholars of Vast Learning, but in 1664 he still saw himself as a loyalist. He mourns how Shi Kefa's grave has sunken into oblivion (6th quatrain in the 1st series, *Gaitang ji*, 9.19a):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 故相墳頭少白楊 | Few are the poplars at the former minister's grave. |
| 舉杯欲飲心茫茫 | About to drink, I raise my cup, and my heart is at a loss. |
| 人生幾何經喪亂 | How often in a lifetime is one to know the toll of devastation? |
| 二十年前此戰場 | Twenty years ago, this was a battlefield. |

Sensual pleasures past and present become the backdrop for the mourning that most prefer to ignore (7th quatrain in the 1st series, *Gaitang ji*, 9.19a):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 九十春光去如鳥 | Ninety days of spring light are gone with the birds. |
| 三千宮女化爲雲 | Three thousand palace ladies have turned into clouds. |

69. In the edition of Wu's poetry published by Zhou Lianggong, this is the tenth of eleven poems. Wang Shizhen does not mention Wu in the note he supplies about friends present at the gathering (*W'SZ*, 1:385). See also Yan Dichang, *Qing shi shi*, p. 136.

酒旗飄颺琵琶急
那識鄰家來上墳

Wine banners flutter, as *pipa* music quickens—
How could one know that neighbors are coming
to tend the graves?

The past haunts the present like unappeased ghosts, defiant and unrepentant (3rd quatrain in the 2nd series, *Gaitang ji*, 9.21a):

玉鉤斜畔鬼迷人

By the Jade Hook Winding Lane,
ghosts bewitch humans.

怨魄逢春未識春
借問山前諸老衲

The spirit of rancor meets spring, yet knows it not.
Let us ask the old monks at the foot
of the mountain:

鐘聲能懺幾歌唇

How many singing lips can the sounds
of Buddhist bells atone for?

Gao Zao 高瓘, who like Wang Shizhen hailed from Shandong, was not part of this gathering, but in his poem he pointedly criticizes the forgetfulness behind celebrating “lovely spring” (*QJSCB*, 1:162):

揚州梅花嶺問史閣部葬衣冠處

“Asking for the Burial Place for Minister Shi’s Regalia
at Plum Blossoms Peak in Yangzhou”

錦纜牙樯畫舫遲

Decked in brocade ropes and ivory masts,
the painted boat tarries.

冶遊人唱竹枝詞

Revelers of spring sing the “Bamboo
Branch Songs.”

年來草沒梅花嶺

For years past, overgrown grass has covered
Plum Blossoms Peak:

閣部衣冠半未知

Half of those asked know not the burial place
of the minister’s regalia.

Du Jun sums up the interweaving of remembering and forgetting in these literary exchanges (*Bianya tang yiji*, “Shi,” 9.6b):

題冶春詞後

“Postscript on the ‘Poems on Lovely Spring’”

揚州恨血地全遮

The blood of regret in Yangzhou covers every inch
of the ground.

復有笙歌蓋土花
賺得聰明王十一
春詞賦就起悲筳

But again pipes and songs overlay the dark moss.
The clever Wang Shizhen is tricked into
Completing verses about spring, as forlorn fife
music rises.

The quatrain uses the imagery of covering and layering (“covers,” “overlays”) in dealing with past and present. The memory of devastation still hangs like a cloud over Yangzhou, but the celebration of prosperity and pleasures (“pipes and songs”) overrides that memory as symbolized by the “dark green moss.” The moss brings to mind Li He’s line: “Over the thirty-six Han palaces, the dark moss is emerald green” 三十六宮土花碧⁷⁰—moss growing over the ruins of palaces evokes the image of decline and fall. Wang’s poetic response brings “forlorn fife music,” which conveys a gentle melancholy that modulates painful memories (rather than grief or despair), hence the aptness of the words “tricked” and “clever.”

Early Qing writings about the Yangzhou massacre thus unfold in the balance and tension between remembering and forgetting. As noted above, remembering and forgetting are in turn tied to the praise and blame of women, judgment of them and empathy for them. In all cases, the socio-literary ties in male communities played a decisive role. Thus although Ding Yaokang intended to use shameless Yangzhou women as the emblem of “sins of the city” to discourse on karmic retribution, his judgment is rendered more nuanced or even contradictory by his participation in Jiangnan literary circles and his hopes for their revival. Zhuo Erkan turned his aunt into an emblem of loyalty and chastity through his project of anthologizing loyalist poets. But Zhuo Erkan served in the Qing army and also invited Qing officials to write poems and biographies about his aunt. Those who eulogized Qian Shuxian mined various shades of political meanings from her martyrdom, and the connections among the writers are also sometimes traceable through social, political, and literary ties. From this perspective, literati culture can be said to be the negotiating ground between critique and nostalgia, resistance and compromise, remembering and forgetting.

Second-Generation Memory

As mentioned above, Wang Shizhen’s sojourn in Yangzhou from 1660 to 1664 was instrumental in forging new and politically diverse literary communities. For Wang himself, friendship with Ming loyalists inspired a

70. Li He, “Jin tong xianren ci Han ge” 金銅仙人辭漢歌, in *Sanjia pingzhu Li Changji geshi*, 2.66.

kind of mediated nostalgia for the fallen dynasty, as we have seen in chapter 1. Two decades later, another Shandong native, Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648–1718), fell under the spell of Jiangnan culture when he held office in the Yangzhou-Huainan area from 1686 to 1690.⁷¹ Kong was a sixty-fourth generation descendant of Confucius. An unexpected opportunity to lecture to the Kangxi emperor when the latter was offering sacrifices at the temple of Confucius at Qufu in 1684 launched Kong on a checkered official career,⁷² which ended in 1700 with his demotion. Kong's friendship with men of letters from an earlier generation, many of them Ming loyalists, in part explains the "second generation memory" evident in his play, *Peach Blossom Fan* (*Taohua shan* 桃花扇). Completed around 1699 and first published in 1708, it is arguably the most famous literary representation of the fall of the Ming.

The central dramatic action of *Peach Blossom Fan* traces Chinese history from the eve of the Ming collapse to the fall of the Hongguang court: that is, from the second month of 1643 to the seventh month of 1645 (scenes 1–40). The love story of the scholar Hou Fangyu and the famous courtesan Li Xiangjun, set in the Qinhuai pleasure quarters, encompasses the political passions of the Revival Society and the intrigues and factional struggles at court, which are interwoven with events marking the decline and fall of the Ming. Hou and Li meet and "marry"—to the extent that the arrangement whereby a client formalizes his union with a virgin courtesan can be called marriage—early in the play (scenes 5–7). Their separation and Hou's peregrinations are linked to the faltering military operations of the collapsing Ming dynasty (scenes 12, 14, 19–20). Beijing falls and the Chongzhen emperor hangs himself in the first third of the play (scene 13). The Ming court and remnant Ming forces are reconstituted in Nanjing, and Zhu Yousong, cousin of the Chongzhen emperor, ascends the throne and adopts the reign title Hongguang. Both Li and Hou are victims of the Hongguang court, whose follies and demise dominate the last two-thirds of the play. Li's misfortunes are tied to the court's decadence and self-indulgence, while

71. Kong Shangren was supposed to assist the minister of works, Sun Zaifeng, in controlling floods in the lower Yangzi area. Work was stalled, however, because of disagreements among Kong's superiors. See Yuan Shishuo, *Kong Shangren nianpu*, pp. 46–94.

72. See Kong Shangren, "Chushan yishu ji" 出山異數記, in *KSR*, 4:2335–50.

its miscreant ministers Ma Shiyang and Ruan Dacheng persecute Revival Society members and put Hou in prison (scene 33). In the scene with the central heroic gesture that gives the play its name, Li spatters her fan with blood as she struggles against being forcibly taken into the harem of the Southern Ming minister Tian Yang (scene 22). The painter and official Yang Wencong (scene 23), a morally dubious character who curries favor with all factions, transforms the bloodstains on Li's fan, a love token from Hou, into peach blossoms (scene 23). (The historical Yang Wencong died a martyr in anti-Qing resistance in 1646. This is noted in comments on the play probably penned by Kong himself⁷³ and in "Textual Verification of *Peach Blossom Fan*" [*Taohua shan kaoju* 桃花扇考據].⁷⁴) Li is then recruited against her will into the imperial theatrical troupe and forced to perform in the palace (scenes 24–25). The corrupt Hongguang court, whose legitimacy is questioned from the beginning, collapses from internal dissension and military defeats. After enduring many more vicissitudes, Hou and Li unexpectedly meet at a Daoist service commemorating the Ming martyrs of 1644 and 1645 (scene 40). Just as they are rejoicing over their reunion, Zhang Wei, the Daoist priest presiding over the ceremony, tears the peach blossom fan and declares: "Alas! You two fools! Just look: where is your country? Where are your homes? Where is your ruler? Where are your fathers? Can this bit of romantic love not be cut off?" 呵呸！兩個癡蟲，你看國在那裡？家在那裡？君在那裡？父在那裡？偏是這點花月情根，割他不斷麼？ (THS, scene 40, B.115a). Hou and Li renounce their love, accepting its inadmissibility in the aftermath of dynastic collapse, "enter the Way," and part for good.

73. In "Taohua shan benmo" 桃花扇本末, Kong wrote that he did not know who wrote the comments, but the commentator "divines my intention and never errs" 忖度予心，百不失一 (THS, B.148b–149a). On Kong's probable authorship of the comments, see Li Ciming, *Xunxue zhai riji*, 39a; Liang Qichao, *Taohua shan zhu*, p. 3; Ye Changhai, *Zhongguo xiju xue shigao*, p. 459; Wang Ayling, "Cundu yu xin, bai bu shi yi."

74. When Yang Wencong leaves the stage, a comment notes: "He is heading to Suzhou and Songjiang to take up office there and would later become a minister who dies for his principles" 却是到蘇松任，後為死節之臣 (scene 36, THS, B.99b). Kong names the sources (*Qiaoshi*, *Banqiao zaji*, and poems by Qian Qianyi and Gong Dingzi about Yang) that describe Yang's martyrdom (THS, B.142b, 143a, 144a–144b, 145b). As noted in chap. 4, Sun Lin (Ge Nen's lover) fought under Yang's command.

Peach Blossom Fan has an elaborate meta-theatrical frame. In the prologue and extra scene 21 (the beginning and midpoint of the play), both set in 1684 (the year of Kong's serendipitous encounter with the Kangxi emperor), the nameless Master of Ritual, a character in the play, presents himself as a member of the audience and gives monologues on what it means to be both inside and outside the theatrical illusion. At the midpoint and the end of the play (extra scene 20, scene 40), which take place during the Ghost Festival in 1644 and 1645, Zhang Wei, first an imperial guard and then a Daoist priest, proclaims visions of retributive rewards and punishments for those who died during the dynastic transition. In the epilogue (sequel to scene 40), set in 1648, the Master of Ritual, the storyteller Liu Jingting, and the music teacher Su Kunsheng come onstage to mourn, remember, and commemorate the fallen Ming.

The emphasis on frames and liminal characters, whose passage in and out of the theatrical illusion makes them both actors and interpreters, turns both history and its interpretation into dramatic presentation. The play is premised on two temporal sequences, the order of historical events as lived and experienced, which moves forward chronologically, and the order whereby history is known—the order of memory or historical reconstruction—which moves from the present backward. *Peach Blossom Fan* is thus unique not only because Kong is meticulous about historical references, as evinced by his listing of sources in “Textual Verification of *Peach Blossom Fan*,” but also because the play treats history as a protean problem: contradictions that may or may not be reconciled, palpable forces shaping the present that seeks to define it, something that invites both nostalgia and critical judgment. This complexity is a function of second-generation memory—the mergence of Kong's perspectives with the remembrances of the generation who lived through the dynastic transition.

Kong Shangren explains the genesis and circulation of his play in a postscript, “About *Peach Blossom Fan*” (“*Taohua shan benmo*” 桃花扇本末, *THS*, B.146a–149a). The story about how Yang Wencong painted Li Xiangjun's bloodstains on her fan as peach blossoms, told by Yang's servant, appears in no other sources and becomes the “factual referent” 本事 of *Peach Blossom Fan*. An older clansman Kong Shangze 孔尚則 (ca. 1605–ca. 1664) served in the Southern Ming court and was witness to many events described in other “unofficial histories.” Kong's father-in-law, Qin Guangyi, sought refuge with Kong Shangze for three years

during the chaos of the Ming-Qing transition. Qin Guangyi (rather than Kong Shangze) was the likely source for the fan story and other stories. Kong does not mention how his play might have gained momentum from his experiences in Jiangnan. However, scholars have chosen to focus on that period, using it as counterweight to what we know of Kong's eagerness to serve in the Qing government and his abiding gratitude to the Kangxi emperor for recognizing his talents and lifting him out of obscurity—the prevailing view is that the elegiac tone of *Peach Blossom Fan* is inexplicable without taking into consideration Kong's empathy with the loyalists' sense of loss and devastation.⁷⁵

Among the Jiangnan men of letters that Kong befriended in the late 1680s were many who witnessed the events and knew the personages depicted in the play. Some are names we have encountered before—Mao Xiang, Yu Huai, Huang Yun, Du Jun, Deng Hanyi, Sun Zhiwei, Zhuo Erkan, Zhang Chao, Song Luo; the list also includes, among others, Zong Yuanding 宗元鼎 (1620–98), Xu Chengqin 許承欽 (1605–after 1688), Gong Xian, and Zhang Yi 張怡 (1603–95). Kong wrote about these older poets' reminiscences in one literary gathering in 1688:⁷⁶

所話朝皆換
其時我未生
追陪炎暑夜
一半冷浮名

The dynasty spoken about has been fully replaced:
It was a time before I was born.
Keeping you company on this hot summer night
Dampens half of my fervor for vain glory.

Deng Hanyi comments at the end of the poem: “Shuweng (Xu Chengqin) is an old man of eighty-four years, but his love for wine and poetry is undiminished. An evening of heartfelt conversation somewhat dispelled the loneliness of travel. But this cannot be told to others not of the same persuasion” 漱翁以八十四老人，詩酒之興不減，一夕快談，差消旅寂。然不堪爲門外人道 (KJR, 2:898). The memories shared on this occasion must have been strongly worded or filled with lamentation. Kong Shangren claims that stories of cataclysmic changes dampen his ambition. While such professions of detachment are often

75. See Yuan Shishuo, *Kong Shangren nianpu*; Strassberg, *The World of Kong Shang-jen*; Wang Ayling, “Taohua shan di song nanchao.”

76. This is the second half of a poem entitled “You zhi Hailing yu Xu Shuxue nongbu jianbi jianzhao xiaoyin” 又至海陵寓許漱雪農部間壁見招小飲, in KJR, 2:898. The poets present at this gathering, Xu Chengqin, Deng Hanyi, and Huang Yun, were three or four decades older than Kong.

merely conventional (and Kong seemed eager to regain an official position even after his demotion in 1700), the poem points to a basic truth—narratives of the past can alter perceptions of the present. (The reverse process is more apparent in *Peach Blossom Fan*: Kong uses temporal shifts in the framing scenes to show how present concerns shape our understanding of the past.) Such stories about the fallen Ming can be deemed dangerous or even subversive; that is why Deng claims that they should not be told to those “not of the same persuasion” (literally, “those outside the gate”).

One of Kong’s friends, Mao Xiang, has an offstage presence in scene 4 as one of the young Revival Society scholars admiring Ruan Dacheng’s plays and at the same time savaging his character. Kong also visited Nanjing in 1689 and sought out Zhang Yi, whose dramatic counterpart, Zhang Wei, plays an important structural role in *Peach Blossom Fan*.⁷⁷ Zhang’s song lyric (to the tune “Man ting fang”) summarizing the plot is quoted in the prologue.⁷⁸ At the mid-point (extra scene 20) and the end of the play (scene 40), both taking place on the Ghost Festival (the fifteenth day of the seventh month), Zhang mediates visions of the dead. The first half of the play ends with an account of the fall of Beijing in 1644 told by Zhang Wei, an imperial guard fleeing south in extra scene 20. He describes to his fellow travelers how he buried and mourned the Chongzhen emperor and Empress Zhou. He then repeats the official Qing version of the dynastic transition: “The Great Army entered the Pass, crushed and beat back the rebels, settled the people, and avenged the Ming dynasty” 大兵進關，殺退流賊，安了百姓，替明朝報了大讐 (extra scene 20, *THS*, A.128a). Zhang then “beholds” the mutilated and unappeased war dead in wind, rain, and thunder, followed by a

77. Both the historical Zhang Yi and the dramatic character Zhang Wei have the cognomen Yaoxing 瑤星. The biography of Zhang Yi broadly corresponds to the story of Zhang Wei in the play. See Yuan Shishuo, *Kong Shangren nianpu*, pp. 291–94; Wen Ruilin, *Nanjiang yishi*, 37.305. According to Wen, Zhang Yi was originally named “Luzheng,” and he adopted the name Yi after the fall of the Ming. Zhang Yi’s name is sometimes written as “Yi” 遺 (meaning “remnant”). Kong might have chosen “Wei” because one of Zhang’s sobriquets is “Wei’an.” Zhang’s miscellany, *Yuguang jianqi ji*, is cited in n. 49 in this chapter.

78. Here “Daoist Zhang” probably refers to the character Zhang Wei rather than the historical Zhang Yi.

triumphant procession announcing the ascension of the Chongzhen emperor, Empress Zhou, and the martyrs of 1644 to heaven. This vision, though enacted on stage, is supposedly privy only to Zhang, who then describes it to his audience. Zhang's mediatory function is more religious and public in scene 40—by then a Daoist priest, he officiates in a Daoist ceremony that honors the martyrs of 1644 and placates countless unnamed victims of violence. As he “shuts his eyes in silent contemplation” 閉目靜觀 (*THS*, B.IIIa), a vision of rewards and punishment meted out to the heroes and traitors of 1645 is revealed to him. Unlike the procession of silent ghosts onstage in extra scene 20, here recompense is loud and dramatized: the dead heroes declare their deification while the villains suffer gruesome deaths.⁷⁹ Memories of recent trauma are supposedly soothed by this vision of compensatory justice. As mentioned above, Zhang also tears the peach blossom fan and convinces the protagonists of the ultimate futility of private passions in a world in ruins.

The historical counterpart of this figure of moral and religious authority conveyed only unappeased anguish, however, when Kong Shangren visited him in 1689 (*KSR*, 3:1083):

白雲庵訪張瑤星道士

“Baiyun an feng Zhang Yaoxing daoshi”

| | |
|-------|---|
| 每夜哭風雷 | Every night he wails with the wind and the thunder—for him |
| 神出鬼爲濕 | The spirits come out; the ghosts are soaked. |
| 說向有心人 | He speaks to someone of like mind: |
| 涕淚胡能免 | How can his tears not flow? |

The wind and the thunder that form the backdrop of wailing ghosts at the midpoint of *Peach Blossom Fan* symbolize disquiet that is eventually dispelled in scene 40, but in Kong's 1689 poem Zhang's lamentation does not diminish with time. Zhang Wei articulates the official version of the Ming-Qing transition and also imposes a moral order as well as a sense of resolution on discontent and disintegration. Yet he is based on a character whose eremitic withdrawal brought no equanimity and for whom

79. Scene 40 is set two months after the fall of Nanjing. By that historical moment the Hongguang emperor was in captivity in Beijing. He was executed in July 1646. Zhang Wei professes to fail to see what befalls him.

Kong Shangren felt empathetic grief. It is often said of Kong that his friendship with Ming loyalists instilled “the pathos of dynastic rise and fall” 興亡之感, but what does this mean exactly? The example of Zhang Yi/Zhang Wei shows how lament for the fallen Ming can be transformed into a vision of order that purports to resolve contradictions. It also suggests that such a vision of order must contend with residual disquiet and sorrow.

Zhang’s vision, however, is not the last word. In the “epilogue” set in 1648, the Master of Ritual, Su Kunsheng, and Liu Jingting, who have all shaped decisive events in the play, come together to remember and mourn the fallen Ming. Like Zhang they move in and out of the theatrical illusion through spatial and temporal shifts. This is especially true of the Master of Ritual, who commands the temporal perspectives of 1643 (scene 3), 1645 (scenes 32, 40), 1648 (epilogue), and 1684 (prologue, extra scene 21) and in that sense mediates divergent temporal and generational perspectives. Comments on the play identify the Master of Ritual with both Kong’s uncle (Kong Shangze) and Kong Shangren. In the prologue, set in 1684, he proclaims that the play is performed in the Garden of Peace in an era of prosperity and good government sanctioned by twelve auspicious portents. Political discretion may have been mixed with the genuine belief that past turmoil is best understood from the perspective of present order. He is almost apologetic and defensive about the *raison d’être* of *Peach Blossom Fan*. A comment in the prologue notes that the Master of Ritual is based on Kong’s uncle, “who once served in Nanjing and witnessed what happened. The author took up his views and thus created this character” 老贊禮者，云亭山人之伯氏，曾仕南京，目擊時事。山人領其緒論，故有此作。⁸⁰ By the midpoint of the play (extra scene 21), the Master of Ritual is unabashedly nostalgic as he dwells on the pathos of watching his role enacted on stage (*THS*, B.2a–2b):

| | |
|---------|--|
| (甘州歌) | To the tune “Song of Ganzhou” |
| 難尋吳宮舊舞茵 | Hard it is to find the former dance mat in the Wu palace. |
| 問開元遺事 | I ask about remnant stories from the Kaiyuan era, |

80. “Eyebrow comment” in prologue, *THS*, A.1b.

| | |
|---------|---|
| 白頭人盡 | But the white-haired ones who remember are all gone. |
| 云亭詞客 | The lyricist of Yunting, |
| 擱筆幾度酸辛 | Overwhelmed by sorrow, rests his brush ever so often. |
| 聲傳皓齒曲未終 | Notes are transmitted by gleaming teeth: the song is not yet done, |
| 淚滴紅盤蠟已寸 | Yet wax-tears, dropping on the red plate, are already one inch high. |
| 袍笏樣 | The semblance of robes and tablets, |
| 墨粉痕 | The traces of paint and powder: |
| 一番妝點一番新 | One round of makeup, one brand-new appearance. |
| ... | |
| 當年真是戲 | In yesteryear reality was a play, |
| 今日戲如真 | Today the play is like reality. |
| 兩度旁觀者 | Twice an observer on the side: |
| 天留冷眼人 | Heaven has preserved the one with cold eyes. |

“Recluse of Yunting” (Yunting shanren) was one of Kong Shangren’s sobriquets. Here the identification of the Master of Ritual with the author seems complete, as he speaks of the fading memories of a dying generation, of empathetic grief as the impetus of literary creation, and of the playwright’s prerogative of moving in and out of theatrical illusion.

The Master of Ritual in the prologue recalls Kong Shangren the ritual specialist,⁸¹ whose moment of glory was the chance to expound on Confucian ritual to the Kangxi emperor in 1684. Ritual in this context augments and ornaments the new order. Yet in the thick of dramatic action, ritual takes on the totally different meaning of political intervention: in scene 3, the Master of Ritual resorts to physical violence to prevent Ruan Dacheng from taking part in the ritual of the Confucian temple; in scene 32, he performs commemorative rites for the Chongzhen emperor on the anniversary of his suicide, his heartfelt mourning an implicit reproach against the Hongguang courtiers’ pale imitation of grief. A comment at the end of scene 32 reads: “Before the scholars can hit Ruan Dacheng, the Master of Ritual hits him first; he wails loudly when the hundred officials do not wail. What ritual enables is the formation and sustainment of heaven and earth. The author’s deep intention

81. For Kong Shangren’s writings on Confucian ritual, see *KSR*, 4:2224–60.

has to be made known” 諸生未打，老贊禮先打。百官不哭，老贊禮大哭。贊禮者，天地之化育也。作者深心，須爲拈出 (THS, B.39a).⁸² When intervention is no longer possible, ritual becomes the venue of commemoration and reconciliation, as when the Master of Ritual takes part in the Daoist ceremony in scene 40.

Ultimately what we remember is not the Master's professed equanimity in the prologue but the modulation of anguish and philosophical resolution in the epilogue. His song in the epilogue, “Questions to Heaven” (“Wen cangtian” 問蒼天), starts by naming the Shunzhi era, which implies acceptance of the legitimacy of the Qing. It is the seventeenth day of the ninth month, the birthday of the god of wealth. But the Master of Ritual, who shares the same birthday, does not take part in the celebration, thus distancing himself from the material wellbeing of the new order. Instead he restates his principles and detachment, articulating a vision of philosophical resolution much more charged with nostalgia and helplessness as compared to his voice in the prologue (THS, B.119a–119b):

| | |
|------|--|
| 神有短 | The gods have their faults, |
| 聖有虧 | The sages have their flaws. |
| 誰能足願 | Who can fulfill their desires? |
| 地難填 | The earth's hollows cannot be filled up, |
| 天難補 | Nor can heaven's hole be patched, |
| 造化如斯 | For such is the way of creation. |
| 釋盡了 | I have dispelled all |
| 胸中愁 | My heart's sorrows. |
| 欣欣微笑 | Serenely I smile. |
| 江自流 | The River must flow on, |
| 雲自卷 | The clouds must curl. |
| 我又何疑 | Why should I doubt? |

“The pathos of dynastic rise and fall” is thus not simply empathetic grief but a complex process of identification, negotiation, and self-division. The Master of Ritual is a cipher for Kong Shangze, who passes on memories of the Hongguang court; for Kong Shangren, who employs these and other stories to mediate nostalgia and judgment; and for the

82. In *Zhongyong*, to fulfill one's moral nature 盡性 is to “enable (zan, as in the title *lao zanli*, “Master of Ritual”) the formation and sustainment of heaven and earth” 贊天地之化育 (*Liji zhushu*, 53.895).

idealized vision of ritual itself as the means to wield corrections and to achieve cathartic reconciliation.

The first of a remarkable sequence in the epilogue, the Master of Ritual's song is followed by the arias of Liu Jingting, storyteller turned fisherman, and Su Kunsheng, singing teacher turned woodcutter. In some ways the sequence reverses the logic of philosophical reconciliation, for it *starts* with the renunciation of worldly success and the acceptance of mutability and proceeds through historical retrospection (Liu's song) to *end* with lamentation upon close encounter with Nanjing in ruins (Su's song). (To demonstrate the consolation of philosophy, one would start with the pain of loss, establish historical distance, and conclude with acceptance and reconciliation.) The sequence in the epilogue duplicates the order of appearance for these characters in the prologue and first two scenes. If the Master of Ritual's song is a subdued and melancholy echo of his affirmation of the new order in the prologue, then the songs of Liu and Su recapture, respectively, the meanings of historical engagement and lyrical expression as developed in scenes 1 and 2.

In scene 1 Liu Jingting performs with a wooden clapper a song about the musicians who left the court of Lu upon realization, just as Confucius was "rectifying music," that they were serving a usurping minister. Derived from a drum song by Kong's friend Jia Fuxi 賈鳧西 (ca. 1590s–ca. 1670s),⁸³ the account elaborates a line from *Analects* 18.9, which states simply that various musicians left for different domains or took to rivers and seas. Since *Analects* 18 ("Weizi" 微子) is full of examples of men who choose to withdraw from society, commentators have linked the musicians' departure to political protest and disaffection.⁸⁴ Liu is using the song as transparent analogy for how he and Su Kunsheng left the

83. A comment at the end of scene 3 notes that Liu's song is taken from Jia Fuxi's drum song (*THS*, A.24b). Jia Fuxi is famous for freely mixing classical and vernacular styles to create historical songs that "overturn standard interpretations" 翻案. An unconventional character who defied social norms, Jia reluctantly resumed his Ming official post under the Qing for a few months but managed to resign by impeaching himself for "indulging in storytelling and neglecting official duties." See Kong Shangren's biography of Jia Fuxi, "Mupi sanke zhuan" 木皮散客傳, in *Kong Shangren shiven ji*, 6.495–97; Yuan Shishuo, *Kong Shangren nianpu*, pp. 222–27.

84. Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–77) believes that the musicians are inspired by Confucius (comment cited in Zhu Xi, *Sishu jizhu*, 9.130).

service of Ruan Dacheng, but the broader question of seeking freedom and political disengagement must also have had special resonance for those among the audience who still felt an emotional connection with the fallen Ming. Hou Fangyu, initially suspicious of Liu, is moved to declare that he is “one of us” 我輩中人. By the epilogue, Liu Jingting is providing in “Autumn in Jinling” (“Moling qiu” 秣陵秋) an overview of Ming decline and using other ill-fated southern dynasties as analogies to trace the demise of the Hongguang court. The form he chooses, while designated in the text as the style of “strumming by blind singing girls” 盲女彈詞, is in fact no different from a regular septa-syllabic long regulated verse 七言排律 comparable in mood to Wu Weiye’s historical poems. Its elegiac tone notwithstanding, Liu’s song implies implacable historical judgment. Between scene 1 and the epilogue, Liu Jingting has moved from judging a historical moment to judging the whole Ming dynasty.

A comparable trajectory applies to Su Kunsheng—the incipient political meanings of indulging in pleasures and passions he suggests in scene 2 are explicitly articulated in the epilogue. In scene 2 Su Kunsheng, having also left Ruan Dacheng’s employ, is a music master in Qinhuai teaching Li Xiangjun arias from scene 10 of *The Peony Pavilion*. His ties with the world of courtesans are echoed in “Lamenting Southland” (“Ai Jiangnan” 哀江南), the last series of arias in the epilogue. According to Yuan Shishuo, Xu Xudan 許旭旦 (17th c.), Kong’s colleague in river management, wrote the song series “Thoughts at the Old Pleasure Quarters” 舊院有感, on which Su Kunsheng’s songs are closely based.⁸⁵ Whereas Xu focuses exclusively on the Qinhuai quarters, by changing a few words and phrases in Xu’s poem and turning it into Su’s song, Kong transforms melancholy reflections on Qinhuai’s destruction into a dirge for Jinling, the Ming palace, and the Ming imperial tombs. As we have seen in chapter 4, these are connections set forth in Yu Huai’s *Plank Bridge*, which Kong Shangren cites as one of his sources. Su’s lamentation conveys anguish that cannot be contained by the framework of philosophical reconciliation or historical explanation (*THS*, B.312b–313a):

85. See Xu Xudan, *Shijing tang shici chao* 世經堂詩詞抄, j. 30. In addition to “Preface to *Peach Blossom Fan*,” another song series in scene 23 seems to have been authored by Xu. See Yuan Shishuo, *Kong Shangren nianpu*, pp. 263–70. The “Lamenting Southland” series also appears in Jia Fuxi’s *Mupi sanren guici* 木皮散人鼓詞.

| | |
|------------|--|
| 俺曾見金陵玉殿鶯啼曉 | I once saw orioles singing in the morning |
| | in the jade palace in Jinling, |
| 秦淮水榭花開早 | Flowers blooming early by pavilions |
| | at the banks of Qinhuai. |
| 誰知道容易冰消 | Who could have known that all vanished |
| | so easily like ice melting? |
| 眼看他起朱樓 | I saw them building the vermilion towers, |
| 眼看他讌賓客 | I saw them spreading feasts, |
| 眼看他樓塌了 | I saw the towers crumbled. |
| ... | |
| 殘山夢最真 | By mountains that remain, |
| | dreams are most real. |
| 舊境丟難掉 | Former realms, cast aside, are hard to banish. |
| 不信這興圖換藁 | I cannot believe that a new version of this |
| | map has taken over! |
| 謫一套哀江南 | Making up a series "Lamenting Southland," |
| 放悲聲唱到老 | I will let grief carry my songs till old age! |

Encounters with Liu Jingting and Su Kunsheng recur in early Qing literature. Typically, the authors knew them before the fall of the Ming, reencountered them after the fall, sometimes listened to their performances, and either addressed poems to them or wrote about meeting them. Kong lists examples of such writings in his "Textual Verification"; among his friends, Du Jun had especially close ties with Liu Jingting, and Mao Xiang was Su Kunsheng's patron after the fall of the Ming.⁸⁶ Indeed, seventeenth-century literati writing about performers liked to emphasize that the latter were their "kindred spirits," unlike their Tang antecedents who did not allow empathy to erase distance, as we can see in Du Fu's poems on Li Guinian and Gongsun Daniang's disciple⁸⁷ or Bai Juyi's "Song of the *Pipa*." Chen Weisong says of Su Kunsheng in a song lyric: "Consider: if not this one, / Who can be counted as my friend?" 算此外，誰歟吾友。⁸⁸ Addressing a song lyric to Liu Jingting, Gong Dingzi

86. Kong Shangren cites works on Liu Jingting and Su Kunsheng by Yu Huai, Qian Qianyi, Wu Weiye, Chen Weisong, and Gong Dingzi in "Textual Verification of Peach Blossom Fan." For Du Jun's poems about Liu Jingting, see "Jinnian pin" 今年貧, 22nd and 23rd of 24 quatrains, in *Bianya tang yiji*, "Shi," 9.13a. Su Kunsheng was for a while the singing teacher in Mao's family troupe in Painted-in-Water Garden.

87. Du Fu, "Guan Gongsun daniang dizi wu jianqi xing" 觀公孫大娘弟子舞劍器行, "Jiangnan feng Li Guinian" 江南逢李龜年, in *DS*, 20.1044-46, 23.1175-76.

88. Chen Weisong, "Zeng Su Kunsheng" 贈蘇崑生, to the tune "He xinlang," *QQC*, 7:4228.

writes, “You and I, / Have for long tarried together” 卿與我，周旋久。⁸⁹ The affinity of spirit implied here is deepened through the allusion to Yin Hao’s 殷浩 (306–56) witticism upon being asked by Huan Wen how Huan and Yin compare: “I and myself have for long tarried together; I would rather be myself” 我與我周旋久，寧作我。⁹⁰

The Jiangnan literati’s continued immersion in the culture of entertainment and performance accounts in part for this empathic connection. Unstable boundaries between the literatus and the performer may also imply that the trope of performance invades the province of moral certainties. It was probably this disquiet that prompted Huang Zongxi to write a censorious biography of Liu Jingting.⁹¹ Kong Shangren obviously did not share this anxiety. As noted above, Hou Fangyu refers to Liu Jingting as “one of us.” Comments in the epilogue refer to the respective songs of Liu and Su as evidence of “profound learning” 學問高深 (THS, B.132a). Liu and Su use their art for political intervention—in scene 11 Liu uses storytelling to stop Zuo Liangyu from moving east and threatening Ming rule; in scene 31 Su uses singing to gain Zuo’s attention and urge him to march to Nanjing to confront the corrupt forces of the Hongguang court. When the venue for heroic action is closed, their performances make possible historical retrospection and the rites of mourning and commemoration. In thus presenting Liu and Su, Kong is identifying with the generation of poets who use their reencounter with these performers to reflect on historical causality, lament the dynastic transition, and renew their longing for a lost world. Chen Weisong, for example, writes of Su Kusheng that his song brings forth “the cuckoo’s blood / Congealed on the silken sleeve” 是鵲血，凝羅袖 (QQC, 7:4228). Many such poems and song lyrics were written to “harmonize” with each other; often the authors were in the audience together. Irony and self-reflexivity inevitably surface as these authors compare their own creative endeavors to the performer’s enactment of a lost world. In Kong Shangren’s case, aesthetic mediation functions not only through the represented performance but also implicit allusion to writings about

89. Gong Dingzi, “He Cao Shi’an sheren zeng Liu Jingting” 和曹實庵舍人贈柳敬亭, to the tune “He xinlang,” in *Qing ci sanbai shou*, pp. 26–28.

90. *Shishuo xinyu*, 9:35; *Jinshu*, 77.2047.

91. Huang Zongxi, “Liu Jingting zhuan” 柳敬亭傳, *Huang Zongxi quanji*, 10:587–89; cf. Volpp, *Worldly Stage*, pp. 214–44.

attending such performances. In other words, Kong is nostalgic not just for the artistry and heroism of Liu or Su but also for the pathos in the literature of remembrance centered on them.

There is thus a mixture of sorrow and reconciliation, nostalgia and judgment, identification and distance in second-generation memory. The elaborate framing scenes, the commentary that is probably authored by Kong himself, as well as the wealth of prefaces, postscripts, and interpretive guides that accompany the text testify to the sense that the past is still problematic, still in need of reconstruction, interpretation, and commemoration. There is a lingering feeling that the “good order” of the present may be based on repression and evasion, even as the complex sentiments of Kong’s older friends, including both loyalists and Qing officials, are brought into dialogue with each other and with Kong’s views. As we have seen, Zhang Wei, the Master of Ritual, Liu Jingting, and Su Kunsheng chart these modulating perspectives. It is in such a context that Li Xiangjun emerges as the most fitting hero and the peach blossom fan the most useful and potent symbol. She represents heroic action and moral purpose that bypass or transcend the ambivalence inherent in second-generation memory.

Peach Blossom Fan adheres closely to the official version of the Ming-Qing transition—namely, rebels toppled the regime in 1644, but the Ming and the Southern Ming succumbed above all to internal contradictions and forces of self-destruction. Kong makes only sporadic references to the “great army” and “northern army.” Scarcely any mention is made of the bandit rebels, featured as villains and adversaries in high and mid-Qing plays like Dong Rong’s *Auspicious Shrine*, Yimin waishi’s 遺民外史 (ca. mid-18th c.) *Survival from the Tiger’s Jaws* (*Hukou yusheng ji* 虎口餘生記), or Huang Xieqing’s 黃燮清 (1805–64) *Imperial Daughter* (*Dinü hua* 帝女花). These later works present the Qing conquerors and the rebels as polarized forces of good and evil: the rebels destroy the Ming, and the Qing army marches in to restore order and avenge the fallen dynasty. The comparative reticence of *Peach Blossom Fan* on the Qing mandate makes for deeper ambiguities.

According to the logic of *Peach Blossom Fan*, the real destroyers of the Ming are the unworthy ruler and ministers of the Southern Ming, with whom Li Xiangjun has the most passionate and dramatic confrontations. Constrained by the parameters of what constitute acceptable political opinions in the early Qing, Kong Shangren could not afford to argue

that effective political action was possible, that the tide could actually have been turned. As a result, scholar-officials and military leaders in the play are ultimately ineffectual. The most Kong could strive for was to invest symbolic significance in theatrical gestures. The stage is the perfect locus for fostering the impression that surface movements are meaningful, that a beautiful gesture is already significant political action. In *Peach Blossom Fan*, Li Xiangjun emblemizes heroic, dramatic gestures that carry the beauty and clarity of conviction. Her blood-spattered fan is a broad indictment of the Southern Ming court, and, more amor-phously, a valiant struggle against the real forces destroying the Ming.

A comment at the end of scene 37, "Abducting the Treasure" ("Jiebao" 劫寶), which describes how the Hongguang emperor is seized and taken north, alludes to the symbolic quotient of Xiangjun's blood: "The peach blossom fan is stained by blood from Li Xiangjun's face. The blood of Xiangjun's face is the blood of Xiangjun's heart. On account of the blood of Xiangjun's heart, what is known about the blood of Zuo Liangyu's heart, the blood of Shi Kefa's eyes, and the blood of Huang Degong's neck can be transmitted. These were so-called full-blooded men, who exerted themselves with blood and sweat for the Ming dynasty. It does not help that the spirit and energy of the Ming was too weak, making for the sickness of anemia. What could have been done?" 桃花扇乃李香君面血所染。香君之面血，香君之心血也。因香君之心血，而傳左寧南之心血，史道隣之眼血，黃靖南之頸血。所謂血性男子，爲明朝出血汗之力者，而無如元氣太弱，正成一失血之病，奈何？(THS, B.106b).

Zuo Liangyu, Shi Kefa, and Huang Degong are called "the three loyal generals of the southern dynasty" 南朝三忠. Here their blood refers to the scenes of their death in the play, which all in different ways raise the question of what constitutes meaningful action. According to the Qing dynastic narrative, Chongzhen was the last legitimate Ming emperor, and loyalty to the Ming after his death is by definition private, tragic, even delusional. Caught in the midst of confusion and general disintegration, the characters in the play seem uncertain of their goals and foes. The three generals all perceive themselves as loyal defenders of the Ming, but the Ming becomes a cipher with different meanings. A comment at the end of scene 37 opines: "Shi Kefa's heart is with the Ming, Zuo Liangyu's heart is with the Chongzhen emperor, Huang Degong's heart is with the Hongguang emperor" 史閣部心在明朝，左寧南心在崇禎，黃靖南

心在弘光 (*THS*, B.106a). All three are bedeviled by the gap between intention and execution, action and consequence. They are filled with doubts even while they avow moral certainty and reiterate images of heroic action and political integrity. Su Kunsheng and Liu Jingting convince Zuo Liangyu to confront the corrupt forces of the Hongguang court and rescue imprisoned Revival Society members, but his eastward march precipitates the collapse of Ming resistance against the Qing. Zuo Liangyu expires as he witnesses how his plan to restore “the rightful heir” of the Chongzhen emperor backfires under the strain of forces he unleashes but cannot control (scene 34). Huang Degong persists in the vocabulary of absolute loyalty to the Hongguang emperor (alluding to Zhuge Liang’s 諸葛亮 [181–234] words to the dying Liu Bei 劉備 [161–223]), even though the latter seems totally unworthy and is ready to relinquish his role as ruler. The abduction of the Hongguang emperor by Huang’s aide in his own tent leads him to declare that he is the final destroyer of the Ming dynasty, and he slashes his throat (scene 37). Shi Kefa may claim the most exalted goals, but even he has to rely on his troops’ personal loyalty to him rather than a greater imperative of loyalty to the Ming. Only when he weeps blood do his troops vow to fight for him (scene 35). After Shi Kefa’s defeat and before his suicide by drowning, he blames himself for bringing about the Yangzhou massacre: “This carnage came about—all because my foolish loyalty was implacable” 這屠戮，皆因我愚忠不轉 (scene 38, *THS*, B.107a).⁹²

The unspoken adversary of the three generals is the Qing army. This is self-evident in Shi Kefa’s case. Although Zuo Liangyu and Huang Degong are pitted against each other, ultimately it is the Qing conquest that causes their deaths. Zuo dies when he hears that his son Zuo Menggeng has surrendered to the Qing, and Huang kills himself when his aide abducts the Hongguang emperor as a trophy to be presented to the conquerors. By linking Xiangjun’s blood to their blood, the commentator symbolically suggests resistance and martyrdom. Shi and Huang commit suicide and Zuo dies from sickness brought on by guilt and rancor. Perhaps the dignity of martyrdom is better preserved this way;

92. As mentioned in note 48, the historical Shi Kefa was probably executed by Prince Dodo. In the play he is granted the dignity of committing suicide by drowning, which implicitly evokes Qu Yuan.

in any case the Qing conquerors cannot be presented as perpetrators of violence onstage. As mentioned above, their self-inflicted deaths are bound up with their sense of guilt. By contrast, Xiangjun's blood does not bear the burden of self-doubt or self-recrimination. Her heroic act seems to be a seamless fusion of romantic passion and political integrity. For Kong and his early Qing audience, it is also a neutralized and aestheticized version of political resistance, safe to commemorate because it is directed against the Hongguang court rather than the Qing. In comparison, the martyrdom of Wu Yingji 吳應箕 (1594–1645, the leader of the scholars attacking Ruan Dacheng in scene 3) and Yang Wencong in anti-Qing resistance, both told in the sources Kong cites in "Textual Verification," cannot be presented in *Peach Blossom Fan*.⁹³ Nor can Hou Fangyu's efforts to rally Gao Jie's troops to resist the advance of the Qing army become part of the play.⁹⁴ Instead, Kong contrasts Xiangjun's heroic use of the fan "as a sword for self-defense" 防身的利劍 (scene 22, *THS*, B.11b) with Hou's passivity and hasty departure from Gao Jie's camp (scene 26).

The conundrum of reality and illusion, truths and lies, from which Xiangjun strives to escape, gains momentum from the political landscape. Zuo Liangyu marches towards Nanjing because he believes that the surviving son of the Chongzhen emperor is being imprisoned as a pretender (scenes 31, 34). Contemporary and later history, miscellanies, fiction, and poetry often refer to rumors regarding a man who claimed to be the Chongzhen emperor's son and one Tong shi who was supposed to be the Hongguang emperor's former consort.⁹⁵ A proven crown prince would of course threaten to displace the Hongguang emperor as legitimate ruler. The sources, except those by Donglin partisans, mostly express skepticism. Evidence suggests that Tong shi probably did have a

93. For Yang, see n. 74. Wu Yingji has supporting roles in scenes 2, 3, 8, 29, and 33. His martyrdom is the subject of elegies by Hou Fangyu and Jia Kaizong ("Textual Verification," *THS*, B.143b, 144a).

94. See Jia Kaizong's biography of Hou ("Hou Chaozong benzhuan" 侯朝宗本傳, in Hou Fangyu, *Hou Chaozong wenxuan*, pp. 283–84), also mentioned in Kong, "Textual Verification," *THS*, B.144a.

95. See, for example, Li Qing, *Sanyuan biji*, B.124–28; Ji Liuqi, *Mingji nanlue*, 3.174–90; Huang Zongxi, *Hongguang shilu chao*, 4.81–87; Qian Xin, *Jiashen chuanxin lu*, pp. 154–58; Li Tiangen, *Juebuo lu*, 9.414–15; Qian Chengzhi, *Cangshan ge ji*, 3.85–86; Struve, *The Southern Ming*, pp. 35–36; Gu Cheng, *Nan Ming shi*, pp. 155–68.

liaison with the Hongguang emperor when he was a fugitive prince, but the latter's refusal to recognize her bred rumors that he himself was a fake fearing exposure. *The Woodcutter's History* (*Qiaoshi* 樵史), one of the sources cited in Kong's "Textual Verification" (*THS*, B.142a–142b), pointedly suggests that these so-called pretenders were in fact wrongfully deprived of their rights by the Hongguang court.⁹⁶ As fitting finale to this matrix of presumed or real lies, *The Woodcutter's History* also describes how in the chaos following the fall of Nanjing, a crowd took the pretender–crown prince out of prison and made him ascend the throne donning the theatrical costumes found in the Wuying palace.⁹⁷

The confusion of truth and lies is bound up with the Hongguang emperor's passion for the theater, abetted by the playwright and minister Ruan Dacheng. The theater becomes the symbol of the frivolity, self-indulgence, and illegitimacy of the Hongguang court (that is, it has but the simulacrum of mandate). In scene 12, Ruan comes onstage linking acting to dissemblance and moral relativism: "Regarding black and white as moves within a chess game, / I put on beard and eyebrows to appear as the one in the play" 黑白看成棋裏事，鬚眉扮作戲中人 (*THS*, A.78a–78b). The exalted language of recognizing worth and sharing political purpose is employed to talk about the theater. The Hongguang emperor adopts Ruan's play, *The Swallow's Letter* (*Yan'zi jian* 燕子箋), as "the music of restoration and revival," and Ruan vows eternal devotion to repay the emperor's recognition (scene 25). The baleful consequences of this absorption in the theater are well attested in contemporary sources.⁹⁸ Xia Wanchun, for example, laments that theatricality has taken over government: "When Ruan Dacheng vowed to charge with the army on the River, he wore clothes with the pattern of a white python, and wrapped a jade belt around himself."⁹⁹ Those who saw him recognized in surprise the costumes of the theater. . . . Great military and ritual occasions all became the site of performance for courtesans and entertainers.

96. In *Peach Blossom Fan* (scene 31), the general Yuan Jixian accuses Ma Shiyong and Ruan Dacheng of rejecting Tong shi's claims so that they can expand their influence by instating their female relatives as imperial consorts.

97. *Qiaoshi*, 40.306.

98. See, e.g., Ji Liuqi, *Mingji nanlue*, 3.156.

99. This detail, mentioned in scene 29, *THS*, B.35b, also appears in *Qiaoshi*; Kong cites it in his "Textual Verification" (*THS*, B.142a).

Even if one wants the country to be spared destruction, how can this be done?" 阮圓海誓師江上，衣素蟒，圍碧玉，見者詫爲梨園裝束...大兵大禮，皆倡優排演之場，欲國之不亡，安可得哉 (*Xu xingcun lu*, in *Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, p. 476).

Indeed, theatricality and performance seem to pervade all spheres of experience in the play.¹⁰⁰ One can argue that the Qinhuai world of courtesans and entertainers, by and large presented positively in the play, is but a deceptive alternative reality, that even those who believe in integrity are bedeviled by false appearance and playacting as they perform roles such as that of the knight-errant, unconventional man of letters, loyal official, or romantic heroine. Recent scholarship addressing issues of identity, authenticity, and theatricality in *Peach Blossom Fan* has focused on irony, unstable roles, and the gap between self-perception and the understanding of the audience or the reader.¹⁰¹ In some ways it echoes earlier views that the play is a critique of late Ming emotions and emotionalism, whose political ramifications were partisan sentiments and divisive factionalism.¹⁰²

The reading of pervasive irony is, however, belied by the elegiac, melancholy mood of the play. It is true that while Ruan Dacheng and Ma Shiyong are vilified, their adversaries, the "pure stream" 清流 scholars of Donglin and Revival Society, are not presented as unalloyed heroes. A comment in scene 8 notes: "In those days the Revival Society was ostentatiously righteous; that was why it invited acrimony" 復社當年過於標榜，故爲怨毒所歸 (*THS*, B.56b). Confronted with the bewildering political reverberations of this confusion of fact and fiction, the well-meaning characters of *Peach Blossom Fan* can only act out their convictions and seek the truth of untrammelled self-expression, as when Revival Society scholars vociferously denounce Ruan Dacheng (scenes 3, 4, 8). These actions are ineffectual and ultimately harmful, insofar as they deepen divisions in the realm. And yet the logic of the play does not allow for productive compromise. When Hou Fangyu seems ready to relent upon realization that Ruan Dacheng supplied the trousseau that

100. See Volpp, *Worldly Stage*, pp. 214–48; Wai-ye Li, "The Representation of History."

101. See Lu, *Persons, Roles, and Minds*; Owen, "I Don't Want to Act as Emperor Anymore."

102. Kong Shangren's friend Gu Cai 顧采 articulates this view in his preface. See also Struve, "History and the *Peach Blossom Fan*."

facilitates his union with Li Xiangjun, he is presented as weak rather than judicious. Unyielding idealism retains the aura of conviction even as its futility is dramatized—the most compelling example of this mixture is Li Xiangjun.

Xiangjun comes onstage demure and nameless. The introductory scene (scene 2), with an act of naming and a singing lesson, shows how she is fashioned as “famous courtesan” and romantic heroine with political purpose. Xiangjun has received homage from well-known Revival Society scholar-officials in the form of poetic inscriptions on the walls of her abode.¹⁰³ To them Yang Wencong adds a painting of orchids, whose association with “supreme fragrance of the domain” 國香 (*Zuozhuan* Xuan 3.6, p. 673) suggests the name “Xiangjun.” (In other sources she is called Li Xiang. The word *jun* adds dignity and implies the classical reference to *Zuozhuan*.) Thus named, she is to aspire to the proud, hidden purity of orchids. In the same scene, Su Kunsheng teaches her arias from *The Peony Pavilion*. As she masters the technical niceties—upon the patient insistence of her teacher—she also learns the language of love, for the scene concludes with Hou Fangyu’s name being mentioned as a prospective suitor-client. The ironic reading of Li Xiangjun could argue that Su’s corrections of Xiangjun’s singing imply the dissection of her role as romantic heroine, or that the focus on how she is made into a famous courtesan amounts to demystification.¹⁰⁴ Alternatively, one can see her “fashioning” as the fulfillment of a destiny defined by the convergence of romance and politics.

If Xiangjun’s role is constructed for her, she also eagerly embraces it. If she closes the gap between self and role, private and public concerns, and thereby resists irony, it may be because the role of romantic heroine is politicized by historical circumstances and vitalized by theatricality. The same ardor and demand for absolutes in romantic love feeds

103. Zhang Pu 張溥 (1609–41) and Xia Yunyi left poems on Xiangjun’s walls (*THS*, scene 2). In his biography of Li Xiang, Hou Fangyu mentions that Zhang and Xia lavish praise on her (“Li ji zhuan” 李姬傳, *Hou Chaozong wen*, p. 89). On Xia Yunyi, see chap. 1. According to Yu Huai, the Donglin scholar-official Wei Xuelian 魏學濂 (1607–44) wrote Yu’s poem about Li Xiang on her walls, and Yang Wencong painted orchids and rocks next to it (*BQ*, p. 48). Kong Shangren cited *Plank Bridge* as one of his sources.

104. See Lu, *Persons, Roles, and Minds*; Owen, “I Don’t Want to Act as Emperor Anymore.”

Xiangjun's political convictions and also in part explains her final religious renunciation, although her conversion at the end of the play remains a function more of structural than of psychological necessity. Kong Shangren includes in his "Textual Verification" Hou Fangyu's account of Li Xiangjun, in which Hou emphasizes how their relationship determines their respective political views.¹⁰⁵ In the play, Li Xiangjun dramatizes the convergence of fidelity in love and integrity in politics. In scene 7, Ruan Dacheng tries to finance the union of Hou and Li in order to have Hou intercede on his behalf with Revival Society scholars who have denounced his association with the nefarious eunuch Wei Zhongxian. Hou is on the point of being persuaded when Xiangjun passionately rejects Ruan's gifts—by dramatically taking off the jewelry and beautiful clothes he sent—and reproaches Hou for "following private desires and foregoing public justice" 循私廢公 (scene 7, *THS*, A.53b). The uncompromising zeal of her political judgment stems in part from her longing for a perfect, unsullied romance—for her there is no gap between private desires and public justice. The comments in scene 7 praise her judgment: "Such capacious understanding!" 何等胸次, "with her lofty vision she stands alone between heaven and earth" 巾幗卓識, 獨立天壤 (*THS*, A.53b).

By contrast, Hou Fangyu is chided for being undiscerning and weak willed. Indeed, throughout the play, Xiangjun is consistently praised while Hou is intermittently disparaged. When the two are forced to part because of Ruan's vindictive accusations, Hou frets while Xiangjun declares, "You, sir, have always prided yourself on being a hero, why are you behaving like a woman?" 官人素以豪傑自命, 為何學兒女子態 (scene 12, *THS*, A.81b). The comments on these lines read, "Xiangjun is a hero in everything" 香君事事英雄; "Hou sheng has lost his

105. See Hou Fangyu, "Li ji zhuan." Hou couches the account in the language of friendship and mutual understanding rather than that of romantic love. Hou writes, "She too had a knight-errant's temperament and was intelligent. Quite versed in literature, she could discern the virtues or lack thereof among scholar-officials" 亦俠而慧, 略知書, 能辨士大夫賢否. She dissuades Hou from associating with Ruan Dacheng, and sings arias from *Pipa ji* to caution him against misjudging people. She refuses to see the corrupt minister Tian Yang despite the latter's expensive gifts. "Is Mr. Tian any different from Mr. Ruan? What was it that I encouraged Master Hou to do in the past? If now I go to meet Tian out of greed, then I will be betraying Mr. Hou!" 田公寧異于阮公乎。吾嚮之所贊于侯公子者謂何？今乃利其金而赴之，是妾賣公子矣 (*Hou Chaozong wen*, pp. 89–91).

bearing” 侯生方寸亂矣 (*THS*, A.81b). These distinctions in the comments are symptomatic of Kong’s well-tempered ambivalence towards late Ming cultural attitudes. For Hou and his fellow Revival Society scholars to be immersed in Qinhuai pleasure quarters even as the Ming dynasty was going up in flames suggests oblivious self-indulgence. When Hou sings in his first aria onstage: “What do all these intoxicating pleasures have to do with decline and fall?” 那些驚顛燕狂，關甚興亡？ (scene 1, *THS*, A.10a), the commentator calls this “the root of sickness for the Southern Dynasty” 南朝病根. At the same time Kong is filled with nostalgia for this lost world of “famous scholars and beauties” 名士美人, whose memory must have been glorified by Kong’s friends like Mao Xiang, Yu Huai, and Du Jun. Li Xiangjun’s fervent identification with Revival Society political ideals becomes the moral justification of that nostalgia.

Whereas Revival Society members have well-defined expectations of moral responsibility and historical engagement, a courtesan who aspires to transcend her trade invents her own roles and personas, sometimes relying on literary examples. That Li Xiangjun’s chosen medium of self-invention is the theater allows Kong Shangren to rectify the theater’s negative associations with Ruan Dacheng and the Hongguang court. She seems to close the perceived gap between role-playing and genuine self-expression by plying actual and metaphorical theatrical roles. In scene 24, when she is forced to perform in front of Ruan Dacheng, Ma Shiying, and Yang Wencong, she calls herself the “female Mi Heng,” ready to denounce the evil minister and his sycophant who seem to have stepped right out of the sixteenth-century play *The Singing Phoenix* (*Mingfeng ji* 鳴鳳記), which castigates the evil minister Yan Song’s 嚴嵩 (1480–1567) persecution of just men (scene 24, *THS*, B.24a):

(旦) [忒忒令] (*Li sings, to the tune “Te te ling”*):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 趙文華陪著嚴嵩 | Zhao Wenhua is at the side of Yan Song: |
| 抹粉臉席前趨奉 | Having painted his face, he scurries to please in front of the banquet table. |
| 醜腔惡態 | With vile cadences and revolting gestures, |
| 演出真鳴鳳 | They perform the real <i>Singing Phoenix</i> . |
| 俺做個女彌衡 | I will be the female Mi Heng, |
| 搗魚陽 | Beating the Yuyang drums. |
| 聲聲罵 | One denunciation will follow another: |
| 看他懂不懂 | Let us see if they understand or not? |

Mi Heng is the typical “talented wild man” 狂士 whose arrogant, futile defiance of Cao Cao and other second-century warlords costs him his life and makes him the hero in works such as *The Three Kingdoms* and *The Mad Drummer Thrice Played the Yuyang Tune* (*Kuang gushi Yuyang sannong* 狂鼓史漁陽三弄), the first of four plays in Xu Wei’s *Four Cries of the Gibbon*.¹⁰⁶ In Xu Wei’s play, Mi Heng’s spirit, on the eve of ascension to heaven to become a literary deity, is vindicated in an underworld reenactment of his denunciation of Cao Cao. Although the balance of power is reversed in this underworld performance, Cao Cao is to affect the impiousness and cunning of his worldly self. No such tension between self and role seems to obtain in Xiangjun’s self-projection as Mi Heng in *Peach Blossom Fan*, where moral certainty overrides considerations of efficacy, danger, or vindication. In choosing Mi Heng as her model, Li Xiangjun also ignores the futility of her tirade but trusts in the moral meaning of articulating her convictions.

The Singing Phoenix chronicles the abuse of power by the Ming minister Yan Song and his faction and the martyrdom of upright officials who tried to indict him. This anonymous play, written shortly after the fall of Yan Song from power, in many ways presages *Peach Blossom Fan* in its ambition to meticulously stage a recent past and to offer judicious historical judgment. While Xiangjun judges Ma Shiyong and Ruan Dacheng through the lens of *The Singing Phoenix*, the villains themselves are blind to the comparison. Instead, they relish the refinements of literati culture. In scene 24, Ruan Dacheng maintains that, as he “sweeps snow and makes tea” 掃雪烹茶, he will be “spared strokes of the powdered brush” 免了幾筆粉抹 (applied to villains and clowns in drama). In response, Ma Shiyong expresses consternation about the power of the theater:

Ma Shiyong: Ah! The powdered brush of the stage is most fearsome. Once applied to the face, it cannot be washed off. Even filial sons and charitable grandsons will refuse to recognize such a person as ancestor.

Yang Wencong: Though fearsome, there is justice in it. It was originally meant to warn depraved people who feared nothing. It was not meant for people like us.

106. Fan Ye’s dispassionate tone in his biography of Mi Heng (*Hou Han shu*, 80B.2652–59) conveys both criticism and admiration, but Mi Heng emerges as a more heroic figure in literary representations.

Ma: From what I see, Yan Song suffered because of flattery.

Yang: How so?

Ma: You see, from that earlier generation Yan Song, the Lord of Fenyi, was not without merit as a man of letters. But now in *The Singing Phoenix* he has a daubed and painted face—most disagreeable and unsightly. Was it not brought about by the likes of Zhao Wenhua?

Ruan Dacheng: Yes, yes. You, sir, do not like flattery. I can only submit with gladness and heartfelt admiration!

[淨]啊呀，那戲場粉筆最是利害，一抹上臉，再洗不吊（掉）。雖有孝子慈孫，都不肯認做祖父的。[末]雖然利害，卻也公道。原以儆戒無忌憚之小人，非爲我輩而設。[淨]據學生看來，都喫了奉承的虧。[末]爲何？[淨]你看，前輩分宜相公嚴嵩，何嘗不是一個文人，現今鳴鳳記裏抹了花臉，著實醜看。豈非趙文華輩奉承壞了？[副淨打恭介]是、是。老師相是不喜奉承的。晚生唯有心悅誠服而已。（*THS*, B.24b–25a）

A comment on this passage cites Du Mu's "Poetic Exposition on the Efang Palace" ("Efang gong fu" 阿房宮賦) to point to the transparent dramatic irony: "The men of Qin did not have the time to lament themselves, and posterity lamented them. If while lamenting, posterity did not heed Qin as mirror, then it would be making its own posterity lament it" 秦人不暇自哀，而後人哀之。後人哀之而不鑒之，亦使後人而復哀後人也 (*THS*, B.24b–25a). As the voice articulating *The Singing Phoenix* analogy, Xiangjun is aligned with the power of the theater to "praise and blame" in the spirit of historical writings. In the prologue, the Master of Ritual says of the author of the play, "just look how he parses praise and blame—in the spirit of creating the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, he must rely on his ancestor's tradition" 但看他有褒有貶，作春秋必賴祖傳 (*THS*, A.11a). Liu Jingting makes the same claim about his own storytelling, which realizes "the subtle authority of compensatory rectification, and also the wonderful use of praise and condemnation" 此乃補救之微權，亦是褒誅之妙用 (scene 10, *THS*, A.66b). Xiangjun thus joins the ranks of these liminal and commentarial characters, although she does not structurally step outside the theatrical illusion as they do.

As mentioned above, Kong stages the most dramatic confrontation between Xiangjun and the Hongguang court. Xiangjun indicts the self-serving ministers of the Southern Ming (scene 24, *THS*, B.26a):

| | |
|---------|---|
| 堂堂列公 | Lords grandly arrayed: |
| 半邊南朝 | A halved Southern Dynasty |
| 望你崢嶸 | Looks to you for distinction and leadership. |
| 出身希貴寵 | Having attained office, you seek only grandeur and favor. |
| 創業選聲容 | For establishing the regime, you choose among pleasing sounds and faces. |
| 後庭花又添幾種 | How many varieties of “Flowers in the Rear Courtyard” have you added? |

Even in her apparent defeat—her tirade does not save her from being taken into the imperial theatrical troupe—she seems to find her voice. In scene 25, the Hongguang emperor chooses actors for a Lantern Festival performance of *The Swallow’s Letter*. Ruan had hoped to cast Xiangjun in the role of clown, but the Hongguang emperor notices her beauty and gives her license to perform arias of her choice:

Li Xiangjun: I learned *The Peony Pavilion*.

Hongguang: That is also good. Just sing.

(*Xiangjun seems embarrassed and does not sing.*) Hongguang: Look—her fair face is flushed, as if she is bashful. We will give her a peach blossom palace fan to cover her spring like beauty. (*An attendant throws a fan to Xiangjun. Xiangjun holds the fan and sings, to the tune “Lan huamei”*):

[旦]學過牡丹亭。[小生]這也好了，你便唱來。[旦羞不唱介][小生]看他粉面發紅，像是靦腆，賞他一柄桃花宮扇，遮掩春色。[雜擲紅扇與旦介][旦持扇唱介][懶畫眉]

| | |
|------------|--|
| 爲甚的玉真重溯武陵源 | Why does the goddess seek again the source of Wuling Spring? |
| 也只爲水點花飛在眼前 | Tis all because flowers fly with water drops in front of her eyes— |
| 是他天公不費買花錢 | These flowers cost the lord of heaven nothing. |
| 則咱人心上有啼紅怨 | My heart filled with sorrow, I weep for the falling red petals. |
| 咳，辜負了三春二月天 | Alas, how I have failed the best months of spring! (<i>THIS</i> , B.32b–33a) |

The making of Xiangjun’s peach blossom fan has just taken place (scenes 22–23); here another peach blossom fan, so-called because of its color, materializes as imperial gift. The fan of splattered blood reveals heroic self-definition; here the palace fan conceals her confusion. The hint of imperial favor seems to make a mockery of both political protest and

avowal of chastity. For all that, Xiangjun charges the borrowed lines with new meanings.

Whereas the language of romantic longing from *The Peony Pavilion* still seems external to Xiangjun during her singing lesson in scene 2, by this point it is her medium of choice in a context wherein she has lost her freedom. The aria comes from scene 12 ("In Quest of Dreams" ["Xunmeng" 尋夢]) of *The Peony Pavilion*. With these lines Du Liniang looks in vain for the lover she dreamed up in scene 10. Enticed by the flying raindrops and fallen petals, the goddess looks for the source of the Wuling or Peach Blossom Spring. In Daoist lore it is the human lovers, Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao, who cannot find the goddess who lured them to sojourn in the Daoist paradise of Peach Blossom Spring¹⁰⁷—here the role reversal points to Liniang's consuming passion.

In the new context of an involuntary performance, Li Xiangjun uses the aria not only to mourn lost love but perhaps also to forge a private symbolism. The line "flowers fly with water drops" 水點花飛 recalls Xiangjun's description of her injury: "These are peach blossoms on the face, / That fly as red rain and fall, / drop by drop splashing on the cold silk" 是臉上桃花，做紅雨兒飛落，一點點濺上冰綃 (scene 23, *THS*, B.15b).¹⁰⁸ The Peach Blossom Spring is, of course, not only about celestial encounters but also the escape from tyranny, as in Tao Qian's famous eponymous account, which also describes "falling petals fluttering down" 落英繽紛.¹⁰⁹ Xiangjun seems to be recapitulating her act of resistance and articulating her desire for escape. The context of performance thus endows the romantic aria with political and historical significance. At the same time, it is still only private symbolism and an aria performed for the pleasure of a heedless ruler. As one comment notes, "This is 'Jade Trees and Flowers in the Rear Courtyard': who can bear listening to it?" 此玉樹後庭花，誰忍聽之 (*THS*, scene 25, B.33a).

The contextualization of *The Peony Pavilion* in *Peach Blossom Fan* inevitably draws attention to the incongruity.¹¹⁰ Whereas the gap between

107. Liu Yiqing, *Youming lu*, pp. 697–98. The immortals' abode has a giant peach tree; its location is sometimes identified as the Peach Blossom Spring in poetic allusions.

108. On the image of peach blossoms fluttering down like "red rain" 桃花亂落如紅雨, see Li He, "Jiang jin jiu" 將進酒, *Sanjia pingzhu Li Changji geshi*, 4.164.

109. Tao Qian, "Taohua yuan ji" 桃花源記, *Tao Yuanming ji*, p. 165.

110. Cf. Owen, "*Mudan ting zai Taohua shan zhong de huigui*"; Wai-ye Li, "Shuo zhen."

subjective projection and objective circumstances, romantic passion and socio-moral constraints can be negotiated through comic reconciliation in *The Peony Pavilion*, the gap becomes insuperable with the burden of history in *Peach Blossom Fan*. As the symbol of both romantic love and political integrity, the peach blossom fan promises to close that gap; yet as self-willed meaning and private symbolism it threatens to confirm it. The obverse side of the peach blossom fan is the Peach Blossom Spring, painted by Lan Ying for Zhang Wei in Xiangjun's abode after the latter was taken into the palace (scene 28). Zhang's abode of reclusion houses Lan Ying's paintings (scene 40), but it is not clear whether "Peach Blossom Spring" is among them. Inasmuch as the tearing of the fan is more palpable than the uncertain fate of the painting of Peach Blossom Spring, the promise of transcendence is conveyed as the negation of passion rather than real escape. In submitting to this logic, Xiangjun's redemptive self-negation, another tragic and beautiful gesture, paradoxically justifies nostalgic retrospection.

Aesthetic mediation (symbolized by the peach blossom fan and the painting of the Peach Blossom Spring) thus renders both political engagement and the escape from politics compelling yet elusive. Yet aesthetic pleasure is a problematic proposition in *Peach Blossom Fan*. The cultural refinements of the Hongguang court—Ruan Dacheng's drama, Ma Shiying's painting, and Wang Duo's calligraphy—only seem to make it a classic example of how aesthetics and politics should not mix. That Yang Wencong, who paints the peach blossom fan, also comes from that world suggests that the virtues and vices of late Ming cultural attitudes may not be so easily separated. On another level, aesthetic mediation is a given in second-generation memory: Kong Shangren understood the Ming-Qing transition through the writings of those who lived through it; his friendship with some of them allowed glimpses into processes of remembering and the aesthetic ordering of memories. Perhaps this accounts for Kong's insistence on fusing historical reflection and meta-theatricality in *Peach Blossom Fan*. The result is well-tempered ambivalence towards late-Ming culture that translates into Xiangjun's heroic gestures.¹¹¹

III. By contrast, the focus shifts from judgments of late Ming culture to anti-Qing resistance in twentieth-century rewritings of the play, such as Ouyang Yuqian's 歐陽子倩 (1889–1962) Beijing opera version (1937) and Guilin opera version (1939) produced

The Elusive Femme Fatale

The individual's helplessness and quest for meaningful action in the midst of cataclysmic events problematize simplistic historical judgments in *Peach Blossom Fan*. This theme runs through many of the writings about the dynastic transition, even with a trope that would otherwise resist it—that of the femme fatale. The Chinese tradition is full of stories about beautiful women who inspire passions that undermine the polity—usually this takes the form of a ruler's romantic obsession or of political-military conflicts caused by competition over a woman. In the context of the Ming-Qing conflict, the woman said to have played a pivotal role in the Qing conquest is the famous courtesan Chen Yuanyuan (or Chen Yuan 陳沅 in some sources). As we shall see, however, she foils the clarity of explanation and judgment usually associated with the figure of the femme fatale.

Numerous historical accounts, miscellanies, poems, stories, and plays have been written about Chen Yuanyuan since the mid-seventeenth century, with a special concentration during the early Qing and then again from the late Qing to the Republican period. Representative Qing accounts are included in “A Collection of Materials on Chen Yuanyuan” (“Chen Yuanyuan shiji” 陳圓圓事輯) compiled by the lyricist and scholar Kuang Zhouyi and published in *Fiction Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報) in 1915. In 1931, Li Genyuan 李根源 (1879–1965) published a sequel to this collection and added other sources. Chen Shengxi, in his annotations to the modern edition of Ding Chuanjing's play *Beauty in the Turmoil of History* (*Cangsang yan* 滄桑艷, hereafter *Beauty*), refers comprehensively to sources on Chen Yuanyuan.

Although these sources often disagree, they share a few common and oft-repeated assertions: Chen hailed from Jiangsu, and was sold (rather than born) into a debased status as entertainer. An accomplished musician and operatic singer, she was a much sought-after courtesan by around 1640. In 1642, she was taken to Beijing against her will by the henchman of an imperial relative, identified in most cases as Tian Hongyu 田弘遇 (d. 1643), father of the emperor's beloved consort

during the Sino-Japanese War. In those plays Xiangjun fiercely denounces Hou Fangyu's capitulation to the Qing. Chen Yinke saw a version of the play in 1959 in which Xiangjun embraces martyrdom by drowning (*LRS*, 2:729; *Chen Yinke shi jianshi*, 2:1057–61).

Tian.¹¹² Tian brought Chen to the Chongzhen emperor's attention to curry favor, but the emperor was much too preoccupied with the crisis engulfing the country to pay her any attention. Shortly before his death in 1643, Tian offered Chen to Wu Sangui, military commander of Ningyuan, an important outpost near Shanhai Pass—the eastern terminus of the Great Wall and a strategic bastion guarding the capital from northeastern incursions. When rebel armies led by Li Zicheng overran the capital, Chen Yuanyuan came to be held by the rebel leader Liu Zongmin. Outraged at this turn of events, Wu sought help from the Manchus, joining forces with them to march to Beijing and defeat the rebels, thus playing a crucial role in the Qing conquest.

Among the ascertainable facts about Chen is her fame as a late Ming courtesan. Mao Xiang recalls their meeting in 1641 in *Plum Shadows*: “She was delicate and refined, graceful and ethereal. Wearing a silken jacket in the palace style, she would now and then look back on her trailing skirt. She truly seemed like a lone phoenix in mists and clouds” 其人淡而韻，盈盈冉冉，衣椒繭，時背顧湘裙，真如孤鸞之在煙霧 (YM4, p. 6). Chen resolutely pursues her union with Mao, who declines immediate commitment and arranges for a later meeting, but by 1642 Chen is taken away by “the henchman of a powerful family related to the emperor by marriage” 竇霍門下客 (YM4, p. 6).¹¹³ But for its abrupt and untimely end, this scholar-courtesan romance could have captured the imagination of contemporaries and posterity. As it turns out, instead of Chen it is another famous courtesan, the long-suffering Dong Bai, whose love is embroiled in dynastic collapse and conflated with higher moral-political purpose in Mao Xiang's writings, as we have seen in chapter 4.

Tian Hongyu's abuse of power is widely documented in various historical records and miscellanies. His role in Chen's abduction seems certain. Early Qing rumors that Chen was presented to the Chongzhen emperor, hard to verify or disprove, credit Chen with a potential role in

112. On Consort Tian, see *Ming shi*, 114.3545; Li Qing, *Sanyuan biji*, A.21–22; Wu Weiye, “Yonghe gong ci” 永和宮詞 (WMC, 1:52–55); Wai-ye Li, “History and Memory,” pp. 112–15.

113. Mao addressed eight quatrains to Chen (“Zeng Wanfen ba jue” 贈婉芬八絕) when they parted in 1641 and chronicled the circumstances of their meetings and separation in *Nanyue xingqin riji* 南嶽省親日記 (cited in CSY, p. 26). For Chen's fame as a courtesan and singer and the stories surrounding her abduction, see also Chen Weisong, FRJ, 15b; Zou Shu, *Shi mei ci ju*, 1:1.29a.

late Ming court intrigues. Tian is said to have used Chen as a replacement for the recently deceased Consort Tian (d. 1642), hoping thereby to continue his power. (Some of the sources that identify Zhou Kui, father of Empress Zhou, as the one who abducted Chen Yuanyuan also claim that he hoped to use Chen to counter the influence of the Tian family.) The Chongzhen emperor's indifference fits well with his by and large positive portrayals.¹¹⁴ That Wu Sangui's defection facilitated the Qing conquest is beyond dispute; that Chen had become Wu's concubine by the time she was held captive by the rebels in 1644 seems certain. Numerous miscellanies, stories, poems, and plays link Wu's decision to Chen's captivity.¹¹⁵ If Chen Yuanyuan escapes being typecast as the femme fatale who beguiled a pleasure-loving last emperor (inasmuch as the Chongzhen emperor is said to have declined the role), she is thought to inspire the heedless passion that led to Wu's fateful decision. Yet, contrary to what one might expect, Chen Yuanyuan is rarely presented as the femme fatale that brings about the fall of the Ming dynasty.

The most famous literary representation of the courtesan and her fate is Wu Weiye's "Yuanyuan's Song" ("Yuanyuan qu" 圓圓曲, *WMC*, 1:78–80):

- 1 鼎湖當日棄人間 Back then when the emperor
 abandoned the human realm,¹¹⁶
 破敵收京下玉關 He crushed the enemy and took the capital,
 bearing down from Jade Pass.¹¹⁷

114. According to Sun Chengze, however, the Chongzhen emperor was so interested in the singers and entertainers from Nanjing brought to his attention in 1640 that he stopped seeing Consort Tian for a month. See Sun, *Siling dianli ji* 思陵典禮記, 2.25–26.

115. There are also dissenting voices. According to Quan Zuwang (*Quan Zuwang ji bujiao jizhu*, 29.1348), Chen Yuanyuan had not yet become Wu Sangui's concubine when Liu Zongmin abducted her. Other sources do not mention Chen Yuanyuan and state that Wu Sangui joined forces with the Qing upon receiving news that the rebels had massacred his family; see Peng Sunyi 彭孫貽, *Liukou zhi* 流寇志, Zhao Shijin 趙士錦, *Jiasben jishi* 甲申紀事 (cited in *CSY*, pp. 86–88). Modern historians dismiss or dispute Chen's supposedly pivotal role in Wu's calculations; see Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, p. 279; Chen Shenxi, *Ming Qing yidaishi dujian*, pp. 56–116.

116. The first line refers to the emperor's death as, euphemistically, "abandoning the human realm at Dinghu [Cauldron Lake]." Dinghu is the place where the Yellow Emperor ascended to heaven as an immortal (*Shiji*, 12.459).

117. Jade Pass (or Jade Gate Pass) is in Gansu (see chap. 1, pp. 65–66). Here it refers to Shanhai Pass.

- 慟哭六軍皆縞素 Wailing in grief were the six armies,
 all clad in the white of mourning.
 衝冠一怒爲紅顏 Raising his headgear was one rush of fury,
 all for the sake of the fair one.¹¹⁸
 5 紅顏流落非吾戀 The fair one, drifting and fallen, was not
 what I cherished.
 逆賊天亡自荒譌 Heaven smote the offending bandits, who had been
 wallowing in wanton pleasures.
 電掃黃巾定黑山 Lightning swept the Yellow Turbans
 and quelled the Black Mountain troops—¹¹⁹
 哭罷君親再相見 Having mourned for ruler and kin,
 we met again.
 相見初經田竇家 We met first at the abode of imperial kin
 by marriage—¹²⁰
 10 侯門歌舞出如花 With songs and dance she emerged, flower-like,
 at the noble house.
 許將戚里箜篌伎 The promise was that the musical entertainer
 of the exalted lane
 等取將軍油壁車 Would wait for the general's
 painted carriage.
 家本姑蘇浣花里 My family was from
 Washing Flowers Lane of Gusu.
 圓圓小子嬌羅綺 Lovelier than fine silks,
 I am called "Yuanyuan."
 15 夢向夫差苑裏遊 In my dreams I wandered to the gardens
 of King Fucha,
 宮娥擁入君王起 Palace women ushered me in:
 the ruler rose.
 前身合是採蓮人 In my former life I must have been
 a lotus gatherer,
 門前一片橫塘水 In front of my house was a sheet of the
 Hengtang stream.

118. To have one's hair raising one's headgear is usually associated with righteous anger over a just cause. See, for example, *Shiji*, 7.313, 81.2440, 86.2534; Yue Fei's song lyric to the tune "Man jiang hong" (*QSC*, 2:1246).

119. Both the "Yellow Turbans" and "Black Mountain Troops" were rebel armies that precipitated the disintegration of the Han empire in the late second and early third century.

120. Literally, "the abodes of Tian and Dou." Tian and Dou were both powerful families of consorts during the Han dynasty. Tian Hongyu's name provides a convenient link.

- 橫塘雙槳去如飛 On Hengtang a pair of oars moved away,
 as if in flight—
 20 何處豪家強載歸 From whence the powerful family
 that by force carried her away?
 此際豈知非薄命 At that moment, how could she know
 it was not ill fate?
 此時只有淚沾衣 That was the time when she could only
 let tears freely flow.
 薰天意氣連宮掖 Overreaching sway extended
 to the palaces,
 明眸皓齒無人惜 But none cherished her shining eyes
 and bright smile.
 25 奪歸永巷閉良家 Snatched from the palace and confined
 to a respectable home,
 教就新聲傾坐客 She was taught new songs
 to entrance the guests.
 坐客飛觴紅日暮 The guests let cups fly in toast
 till the glowing sun set,
 一曲哀絃向誰訴 To whom could this song of sorrow
 be sung?
 白晳通侯最少年 Fair was that young man
 with a noble title:
 30 揀取花枝屢回顧 He picked a flowering branch
 and repeatedly looked back.
 早攜嬌鳥出樊籠 Make haste to take the lovely bird
 out of her cage,
 待得銀河幾時渡 Till when could we wait to cross
 the River of Heaven?
 恨殺軍書底死催 Most hateful was the relentless haste
 urged by military missives,
 苦留後約將人誤 Painstakingly we planned the later meeting
 that almost eluded us.
 35 相約恩深相見難 Planned with such love, that meeting
 became hopeless
 一朝蟻賊滿長安 As the capital was, overnight, crawling
 with bandits.
 可憐思婦樓頭柳 Pity the pining wife gazing at willows
 on her tower—
 認作天邊粉絮看 She was but taken for willow catkins
 by the edge of the sky.
 徧索綠珠園內第 They besieged the inner court,
 looking for her everywhere.

- 40 強呼絳樹出雕欄 Shouting for her, they forced her
 to emerge from carved balustrades.¹²¹
 若非壯士全師勝 Had it not been for the brave man
 who achieved total victory,
 爭得蛾眉匹馬還 How could the lady have returned
 on a lone horse?
 蛾眉馬上傳呼進 For the lady on horseback came summons
 to proceed.
 雲鬟不整驚魂定 Her coiffure askew, she was
 still in shock.
- 45 蠟炬迎來在戰場 Candles welcomed her
 on the battlefield,
 啼妝滿面殘紅印 On her tear-streaked face
 were traces of rouge.
 專征簫鼓向秦川 With flutes and drums, the supreme
 commander headed to Qinchuan—
 金牛道上車千乘 On the Golden Bull Road were
 thousands of chariots.
 斜谷雲深起畫樓 At Slanting Valley, deep in the clouds,
 a painted tower rose.
- 50 散關月落開妝鏡 The moon set over Sanguan,
 as she opened her makeup case.
 傳來消息滿江鄉 Her news came, filling all corners
 of her homeland—
 烏柏紅經十度霜 The tallow trees have already turned
 red with frost ten times.
 教曲伎師憐尚在 Music teachers of the pleasure quarters
 felt for her survival,
 浣紗女伴憶同行 Female companions in washing silk
 remembered her among their ranks.
- 55 舊巢共是銜泥燕 In the old nest they were together as swallows,
 mud in beaks,
 飛上枝頭變鳳凰 Now she has flown to the branch's tip,
 transformed into a phoenix.
 長向尊前悲老大 Some turn to the wine flask,
 mourning the passing of years,
 有人夫婿擅侯王 Some have husbands
 who prevail as lords.

121. Literally, “looking for Lüzhu [Green Pearl]” and “Shouting for Jiangshu [Coral Branch].” Lüzhu was the Jin minister Shi Chong’s favorite concubine; Jiangshu was the name of a Wei (early 3rd c.) singing girl.

- 當時只受聲明累 Then she was burdened
by her fame,
- 60 貴戚名豪競延致 Noble and powerful houses vied
to be her patron.
一斛明珠萬斛愁 “One peck of pearls” was sung
with ten thousand pecks of sorrow,
關山漂泊腰支細 She wasted away as she drifted
through the land.
錯怨狂風颳落花 But she was wrong to blame ruthless wind
for scattering fallen blossoms,
無邊春色來天地 For boundless spring has returned
to heaven and earth.
- 65 嘗聞傾國與傾城 I have heard of beauties that topple
kingdoms and cities,
翻使周郎受重名 Yet against all odds she gave Master Zhou
a great name.
妻子豈應關大計 Why should wives be tied
to affairs of state?
英雄無奈是多情 But then a hero cannot help
his deep feelings.
全家白骨成灰土 His entire family’s white bones
have turned into dust,
- 70 一代紅妝照汗青 A lady most famed in her era illumines
the records of history.
君不見 Do you not see?
館娃初起鴛鴦宿 They have just risen from conjugal bliss
in the Guanwa Palace.
越女如花看不足 The flower-like Yue maiden—
one cannot see enough of her.
香逴塵生鳥自啼 Dust gathers on the Fragrant Stream,
birds cry in unconcern.
- 75 屨廊人去苔空綠 She is gone from the Corridor of Footsteps;
the moss turns green in vain.
換羽移宮萬里愁 There is infinite sorrow in the changes
of tunes and scales,
珠歌翠舞古梁州 Bejeweled singers and dancers performed
the ancient “Song of Liangzhou.”
爲君別唱吳宮曲 In parting I sing for you the song
of Wu palace,
漢水東南日夜流 As the Han River flows southeast,
day and night.

Wu Weiye sidesteps all indictment of Chen Yuanyuan and focuses his caustic wit on Wu Sangui. The poem is marked by sudden reversals and shifts of perspectives and time frames. In the opening lines, for example, the apparent connection between the Ming emperor's death and the movement of Wu Sangui's avenging armies, sealed by the spectacle of troops clad in mourning white,¹²² is rudely disrupted by the revelation of Wu's obsession in line 4. In the seamless parallelism of the justly famous lines 3 and 4, meaning contradicts surface impressions, motive challenges pretext. The incongruities are further developed in lines 5–8, which purport to present Wu Sangui's self-justification in his own voice. With a drastic change of perspectives, the fifth line begins with the two words, "fair one" 紅顏, that conclude the previous line—a rhetorical device called *dingzhen* 頂針 (literally, "thimble") in Chinese poetic criticism. Wu Sangui denies the charge of line 4: the "fair one," in her "drifting and fallen" 流落 state, is presumably unworthy of him. He thereby sets up an implicit moral contrast between himself and the rebels. Chen's historical role is, according to this rhetoric, not to determine Wu Sangui's troop movements but to mark the rebels' demise by becoming the token of *their* self-abandonment and sensual indulgence 自荒蕪. The rebels' search for Chen and her implied status as a trophy of conquest is told in lines 37–40.

Wu Sangui and Chen Yuanyuan are supposedly party to an implacable historical process that destroys the rebels, whom "Heaven smote" 天亡. At the same time, Wu claims to be an active agent with moral motives, "Having wailed for ruler and kin, I met her again" (line 8). That line is apparently Wu Sangui's feeble rebuttal of the indictment in line 4: his mourning proclaims his campaign as a war avenging family and country 家國. Yet Wu is unmasked with the last three characters, *zai xiangjian* 再相見 (I met her again)—the price of the reunion is betrayal of the Ming dynasty and of Wu's own family. Various sources enlarge on Wu's indifference to the fate of his father Wu Xiang when the latter was held hostage by Li Zicheng. Some present Wu Sangui as being ready to strike a compromise with the rebels, when news of Chen's capture spurs him to pursue vengeance. Using the rhetoric of loyalty to justify sacrificing his family, Wu reportedly wrote to his father: "Since Father cannot be

122. It is doubtful whether mourning clothes for such a large army could have been made in time. Some sources claim that Dorgan requested Wu Sangui's soldiers to wear white armbands as identification (CSY, n. 9, p. 89).

a loyal subject, how can your child be a filial son?" 父既不能爲忠臣，兒安能爲孝子乎?¹²³

Historical judgments and poetic irony in "Yuanyuan's Song" are premised on unmasking the discrepancy between Wu Sangui's declared and real intentions. The beginning lines are echoed in the middle (lines 41–42) and at the end of the poem (lines 65–70). The question-and-answer form, implied conditionals, and demonstrative reversals in these lines are discursive modes that obliquely, yet pointedly, condemn Wu Sangui. The idea of sacrificing all for love is divested of romantic aura. The poet facetiously proclaims his surprise: Chen is the exception to city-toppling femme fatales. Just like the younger Qiao sister who enhanced the fame of the famous general Zhou Yu 周瑜 (175–210), Chen Yuanyuan has given Wu Sangui a "great name" (line 66). Wu's "great name" and Chen's glory in "the records of history" (line 70) could not be subjects for sarcasm if they had been agents of a just and inevitable historical process. It is in this sense that the unforgiving judgment of posterity also negates the argument of historical inevitability and turns the poem into an elegy for the fallen Ming.

Ten years have elapsed since Chen Yuanyuan was taken north (line 52): this would date the poem to about 1652, just when Qing rule was being consolidated.¹²⁴ To dismantle Wu Sangui's claim of avenging "ruler and kin" is also to expose the hypocrisy of the official version of the dynastic transition: namely, the Qing waged a war of vengeance against the rebels on behalf of the martyred Chongzhen emperor. Only a year later, when Wu Weiye was serving as a Qing official in Beijing, he was to glorify Wu Sangui as just avenger in his account of late Ming rebellions.¹²⁵ But here Wu Weiye is scathingly ironic, setting up a contrast

123. Lu Ciyun, "Yuanyuan zhuan"; Sun Xu, *Ping Wu lu*; Liu Jian, *Tingwen lu*; Qian Xin, *Jiashen chuanxin lu*; Mao Qiling, *Houjian lu* (CSY, pp. 83–86).

124. Chen Yinke suggests that "Yuanyuan's Song" and "Song on Listening" were probably written in the same year, around 1651 (LRS, 491). Feng Yuanjun dates it to 1650; see Qian Zhonglian, *Mengtiao an zhuanzhu erzhong*, pp. 178–82. Gu Shishi's dating of the poem to 1644 (WMC, 3:1446) has been widely discredited.

125. In *Suikou jilue* (1652), Wu compares Wu Sangui to the Zhao orphan who avenges the unjust extermination of his clan (*Shiji*, 47.1783–85) and to Shen Baoxu, who wails at the Qin court for seven days to secure Qin help for restoring the fallen Chu (*Zuozhuan* Ding 4.3, p. 1548); on Wu's conflicts at this time, see Ye Junyuan, *Wu Weiye pingzhuan*, pp. 213–220. Gu Yanwu, among others, criticizes the fatuousness of this excuse of vengeance (*Rizhi lu*, 4.85–86).

between Wu Sangui's manipulations and Chen's helplessness.¹²⁶ The focus on Chen Yuanyuan's role in the dynastic transition thus goes beyond a specific critique of Wu Sangui; it demonstrates how the concatenation of events that led to the Qing conquest is fortuitous and avoidable, tied to willful passions and accidental obsessions. Perhaps this is why Wu Weiye portrays Chen Yuanyuan as an inadvertent femme fatale, indeed, almost a victim.

As mentioned above, "Yuanyuan's Song" is marked by temporal shifts and changes in perspectives. Whereas the first use of the "thimble" device employs logical reversal by turning "fair one" into implicit accusation and then disclaimer, the second occurrence defines a flashback—after summing up the momentous events that allow Wu Sangui and Chen Yuanyuan to meet again (line 8), Wu Weiye recalls their first meeting with the same phrase "we met" 相見 in the following line (line 9). From line 13 to line 50, Chen Yuanyuan tells her own story, and the translator has the choice of either using first person or a kind of "indirect free style" that implies her perspective. She explains her origins, how Tian "purchased" her against her will and presented her to the emperor, how Tian used her to curry favor with Wu Sangui, her brief union and separation from him, her abduction by the rebels, and her eventual reunion with Wu Sangui. With varying degrees of explicitness, Wu Weiye uses examples of historical beauties to give meaning to Chen Yuanyuan's story. Tian's ploy to use her to gain imperial favor failed. The Chongzhen emperor's dismissal (line 24) means that she is not to play the role of Prize Consort Yang, the femme fatale blamed in some accounts for beguiling the Tang emperor Xuanzong and bringing about the An Lushan Rebellion that marked Tang decline, although their love is romanticized in Bai Juyi's "Song of Lasting Sorrow," to which "Yuanyuan's Song" is often compared. The phrase "shining eyes and bright smile" (line 24) recalls Du Fu's poem about Yang and post-Rebellion devastation: "Her shining eyes and bright smile—where are they now? / Her blood-stained, wandering spirit cannot come back" 明眸皓齒今何在，血污遊魂歸不得。¹²⁷ All the same, that analogy is not pursued. Instead, Wu Weiye

126. One may argue that Wu Sangui is also a victim of circumstances, that he intends to be Shen Baoxu but is foiled by Qing forces that fail to act like Qin. See, for example, Xia Yunyi, *Xingcun lu*, A.11b–12a, but Wu Weiye rejects this possibility.

127. Du Fu, "Ai jiangtou" 哀江頭, *DS*, 4.267–69.

turns to other famous beauties in history—the references may be merely ornamental, as with the invocation of the Tang courtesan-poet Xue Tao (line 13), Green Pearl (line 39), or Coral Branch¹²⁸ (line 40), or it may be ironic, as when the poet compares Chen to the younger Qiao who gave her husband Zhou Yu “a great name” (line 66).

Much more important is a web of allusions to Xi Shi, who is credited with a crucial role in the fall of Wu and the resurgence of Yue (ca. 5th c. BCE). Structurally, this mythic-historical backdrop is analogous to the uses of the Han emperor Wu’s quest for the spirit of his deceased consort, Lady Li, in Bai Juyi’s “Song of Lasting Sorrow.”¹²⁹ However, whereas the allusions to the Han emperor’s quest confirm romantic passion by taking it out of history and into the realm of myth and subjective illumination, the allusions to the Xi Shi story in “Yuanyuan’s Song” are pervasively ironic, casting doubt on agency and the justification of passion through reminders of ineluctable destruction and mutability in history.

Chen Yuanyuan’s provenance from Wu, her humble beginnings and spectacular rise, as well as Wu Sangui’s surname may have inspired the associations with Xi Shi and the king of Wu. Legend has it that Xi Shi was a Yue maiden of modest origins discovered by the Yue minister Fan Li, who offers her to the Wu king Fucha (r. 496–473 BCE) as part of a scheme to make Wu trust Yue, distract Fucha from his duties, and eventually bring down Wu. In the romantic apotheosis of Xi Shi’s story, Liang Chenyu’s *Washing Silk* (*Huansha ji* 浣紗記), she becomes Fan Li’s lover and a “patriotic agent” of Yue. By then she has become a full-fledged romantic heroine, but in the Han accounts she is a silent pawn.¹³⁰ In “Yuanyuan’s Song,” there is a comparable disconnection between Chen Yuanyuan’s experience and the turmoil she supposedly causes. The allusions to Xi Shi’s story suppress its political dimensions and emphasize her dreams of greatness (lines 15–16), her precipitous rise (lines 54–56), and the ephemerality of glory (lines 71–79). That final vision has led some to marvel at Wu Weiye’s prescience. At issue, however, is not so

128. As a famous courtesan, Xue Tao would be a fitting comparison. Like Yuanyuan, Green Pearl was a favored concubine. Coral Branch is invoked chiefly as syntactical parallel to Green Pearl.

129. See Cheng Qianfan, “Shu Wu Meicun ‘Yuanyuan qu’ hou.” Xi Shi’s story can be read as an example of sacrificing chastity to achieve a higher political goal; see chap. 5, p. 391. Cf. Chen Yinke, *Yuan Bai shijian zhenggao*, pp. 1–44.

130. See Zhao Ye, *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, pp. 147–48; Yuan and Wu, *Yue jue shu*, 12.283.

much the specific prediction of Wu Sangui's downfall as a sense of mutability that mocks the illusion of glory and power.

Whereas transience implies an even more scathing indictment of Wu Sangui, it augments the pathos of Chen's unintended—perhaps even unwanted—power. Even as Xi Shi wields her power without willing or understanding the rise and fall of kingdoms, Chen Yuanyuan seems to passively determine the course of events. Wu Weiye emphasizes her innocence and helplessness (lines 17–20). She is presented as having little control over her fate as object of desire—whether she be rejected (as by the Chongzhen emperor) or sought after (as by Wu Sangui and the rebels). The poem is threaded through with images of her involuntary movements (lines 19–20, 25–26, 39–40, 43–44). Chen may see herself as the pining wife gazing at willows, belonging to a man and a place, but her fate is to be buffeted in the wind like willow catkins (lines 37–38). The willow is thus transformed from the object of a distant gaze into the symbol of the viewer's fate.

Wu Weiye sums up the vicissitudes of Chen's life: she is merely a hapless victim with the solace of dubious vindication. Her fate as an object of desire and transaction, being taken across the land against her will, echoes the image of Wang Zhaojun. Indeed the line “But she was wrong to blame the ruthless wind for scattering fallen blossoms” calls to mind Ouyang Xiu's “Again Matching the Song of the Bright Consort” (“Zai he Mingfei qu” 再和明妃曲, *Ouyang Xiu ji biannian jianzhu*, 1:331):

| | |
|---------|--|
| 狂風日暮起 | A furious wind rises as the sun sets, |
| 漂泊落誰家 | Drifting, homeless, where will she fall? |
| 紅顏勝人多薄命 | Beauties who excel others must suffer a sad fate— |
| 莫怨東風當自嗟 | Blame not the east wind, you should just lament your lot. |

Told from Chen Yuanyuan's perspective, the political consequences of her union with Wu Sangui are held in abeyance. Even the latter emerges as a more sympathetic figure—a gallant suitor who rescues her from shameful bondage (lines 29–32).

Wu Weiye knew Mao Xiang; he might also have known Chen Yuanyuan personally. His own lover, Bian Sai, apparently lived in the same lane (Lindun Lane) as Chen and might have been one of the “female companions in washing silk.” Chen's displacement and transference as object of desire are comparable to the experiences of Bian Sai

and the daughter of Zhongshan as described in Wu's "Song on Listening," also written around 1651.¹³¹ Wu Weiye was too closely associated with the Qinhuai world to repudiate Chen and what she stood for. "Yuanyuan's Song" could have been cast as a warning against the destructive consequences of pleasures and passions, but Wu Weiye chose not to do so. He remained sympathetic to Chen and instead condemned Wu Sangui's abuse of the notion of "deep feelings." "Yuanyuan's Song" thus sustains two parallel narratives: on the one hand, an indictment of Wu's betrayal of the country and an implicit lament of the Ming fall as the consequence of fortuitous passion; and on the other, measured empathy for Chen as the accidental and uncomprehending femme fatale, whose hapless involvement in the vicissitudes of history captures a ubiquitous sense of the jarring disjunction between individual experience and cataclysmic historical events.

Among the various accounts, Lu Ciyun's 陸次雲 (late 17th c.) "Yuanyuan's Story" ("Yuanyuan zhuan" 圓圓傳, ca. 1680s–1690s)¹³² alone gives some credence to Chen Yuanyuan's image as femme fatale. She is presented as determined, ambitious, and manipulative, controlling events and therefore also responsible for the way they unfold. In this account, Wu and Chen pursue their union with artful deliberation. Drawn by Chen's great reputation, Wu has hoped to marry her, but Tian supersedes him, much to the chagrin of both Wu and Chen. When Tian Hongyu presents Chen to the Chongzhen emperor, "she painted her brows and entered [the palace], hoping to invite the emperor's attention, but the emperor was indifferent and soon gave orders to have her returned to Tian Hongyu's household" 圓圓掃眉而入，冀邀一顧，帝穆然也，旋命之歸皖第。At this juncture, Wu Sangui is made commander of the Shanhai Pass to deal with the mounting crisis. Chen Yuanyuan convinces Tian to seek Wu's protection and to entice Wu with his family singers and entertainers.

The Tang tale "Curly Beard" ("Qiuran ke" 虬髯客) reverberates in the encounter of Wu and Chen in Lu Ciyun's story:¹³³

131. On this poem, see chap. 4, pp. 342–52.

132. See Zhang Chao, *Yuchu xinzhi* (*Shuohai*, 2:506–9).

133. The story (*TPGJ*, 193.1445–58), classified as anonymous in some sources, has also been attributed to Zhang Yue 張說 (667–730) or Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933).

Wu said, "You must be very happy?" Yuanyuan whispered, "Hongfu is unhappy even with the Lord of Yue, let alone those who do not measure up to the Lord of Yue?" Wu nodded. As they were drinking heartily, alarms came, one on the heel of another. It seemed Wu did not wish to go, although he could not but go. Tian Hongyu drew closer and said, "When the enemy arrives, what is to be done?" Wu said suddenly, "If you can give me Yuanyuan, I would protect your family before I protect the country." Tian Hongyu reluctantly agreed.

吳語曰：「卿樂甚。」圓圖小語曰：「紅拂尚不樂越公，矧不迨越公者耶。」吳領之。酣飲間，警報踵至，吳似不欲行者，而不得不行。曉前席曰：「設寇至，將奈何。」吳遽曰：「能以圓圖見贈，吾當保公家，先於保國也。」(Shuohai, 2:507)

In the Tang tale, Hongfu recognizes Li Jing's genius and elopes with him, thereby escaping service under her inane and corrupt master, Yang Su. The invocation of Hong Fu thus introduces the topoi of discernment and decisive action in Lu Ciyun's story. It marks Yuanyuan's resolve to take her fate into her own hands.

Chen Yuanyuan's resourcefulness and rhetorical skills are again evident when she secures Li Zicheng's favor, after Wu's father offers her to Li when Beijing falls to the rebels. When Wu Sangu's army defeats Li Zicheng, Chen Yuanyuan persuades Li to let her stay behind to placate Wu. Chen and Wu are reunited, and for decades thereafter he remains devoted to her. Lu describes a bond based on shared ambition:

Every so often he asked Yuanyuan to sing, and she often sang stanzas from the "Great Wind" to flatter him. Intoxicated with wine, he often pulled out his sword and rose to dance, displaying the mien of great aspirations and defiant endeavor. Yuanyuan would then raise the wine cup to drink to his long life; she considered his martial valor peerless in his era. That was why she enjoyed his undivided favor that remained constant for decades. That he harbored subversive intent, affected humility, and secretly formed alliances was, according to some sources, the result of plots hatched with the one who shared his dreams.

圓圖每歌大風之章以媚之。吳酒酣，恆拔劍起舞，作發揚蹈厲之容。圓圖即捧觴爲壽，以爲其神武不可一世也。吳益愛之，故專房之寵，數十年如一日，其蓄異志，作謙恭，陰結天下士，相傳曰多出於同夢之謀。(Shuohai, 2:508)

By singing "Great Wind," the song of the first Han emperor, Chen Yuanyuan is encouraging Wu's imperial ambitions. She survives and thrives by the "ploys of concubines" 妾婦之道. Just as she once

applauded the tunes of Li Zicheng's native Shanxi airs as "heavenly music," she flatters Wu Sangui by singing the "Great Wind." As complicit conspirator, she fans his ambitions, thereby bringing about his and her own downfall. The emphasis on Chen Yuanyuan's agency thus implies condemnation of her disastrous role in the Ming-Qing transition, yet even here her machinations become most evident only with Wu's rebellion. Tampering with the official version of the dynastic transition as justified and inevitable was obviously taboo; hence negative judgment of Wu's role in the Ming collapse often merged with, or was perhaps transposed as, condemnation of his rebellion against the new dynasty. Although Lu Ciyun refers to Wu Weiye's "Yuanyuan's Song" as the "proof" of his own account, its neat moral equations in effect displace the pathos in Wu's poem.

Judgment and Redemption

In Lu Ciyun's account, Chen Yuanyuan maneuvers her way through difficult situations with artful rhetoric. By contrast, Niu Xiu portrays a largely silent Yuanyuan in his miscellany of classical tales and anecdotes, *Leftover Vessel*.¹³⁴ "Yuanyuan" reflects his general interest in the events and personages of the Ming-Qing transition. Niu also recorded the deeds and writings of many Ming loyalists and of those victimized by early Qing repressive policies, especially in the section "Wu gu" 吳觚, which contains accounts from Niu's native Wu area.

Niu Xiu includes Wu's poem in its entirety, and poem and narrative are obviously complementary despite, or perhaps because of, their divergent perspectives.¹³⁵ Before the quoted poem begins, the narrative comes to a provisional conclusion with a "happy ending," the reunion of Wu and Chen told by a slyly congratulatory narrator. The hint of irony is confirmed after the quotation of the poem, where the author comments: "Such is the subtle criticism of the poet-historian" 此詩史微詞也. From that point on, however, Niu Xiu proceeds to spin a redemptive

134. "Yuanyuan" is included in the section "Yan gu" 燕觚, in Niu Xiu, *Gusheng*, pp. 68–73. For biographical information on Niu, see *Gusheng*, pp. 1–4, 255–56; Barr, "Novelty, Character, and Community."

135. Cf. the analogous relationship between Bai Juyi's "Changhen ge" and Chen Hong's "Changhen ge zhuan."

conclusion to Chen Yuanyuan's story. As Wu Sangui is caught in his new ambitions, Chen Yuanyuan declines to become his principal consort on one of the two occasions that she speaks in the story. Her speech is wise and modest. With self-abnegation and inward detachment, she manages to get along with Wu's jealous wife and to redefine her relationship with Wu:

As time passed, Yanling [Wu Sangui] secretly harbored subversive plans, and Xing [Chen Yuanyuan] discerned their minute beginnings. Citing her advanced years, she begged to become a Daoist nun. . . . During moments of leisure from military exercise, Yanling often came to her place and engaged in "pure conversation" for the whole day, returning only in the evening. If there were difficult situations over which Yanling's ire could not be placated, Xing would offer a gentle word or two, and his anger would melt like ice. She often said, "Day and night I burn incense and calm my spirit. There is joy in doing good; other things are not what I consider." Those inside and outside the household respected her even more.

居久之，延陵潛蓄異謀，邢窺其微，以齒暮請爲女道士，... 延陵訓練之暇，每至其處，清談竟晷而還。府中或事有疑難，遇延陵怒不可解者，邢致一二婉語，立時冰釋。常曰：「我晨夕焚修，爲善是樂，他非所計也。」內外益禮敬焉。(Gusheng, pp. 72-73)

In Niu Xiu's account, Chen represents the unheeded voice of reason and religious detachment. The story concludes with Wu's rebellion (1673) and death (1678).

Xing's name did not appear in the list of confiscated property and persons. Did she, like Yu Xuanji, undergo Zen transformation in death? Did she, like Hongxian, become an immortal recluse? Did she, like Panpan, end her days in Swallow Tower? This can no longer be known. But she preserved herself in times of upheaval, rejected glory and did not covet its mantle, returned her heart to the land of purity, and to the end guarded her principles in her final years. If Yanling were to meet her under the Nine Springs, how ashamed he would be!

邢之名獨不見於籍。其玄機之禪化耶？其紅線之仙隱耶？其盼盼之終於燕子樓耶？已不可知。然遇亂能全，捐榮不御，皈心淨域，晚節克終，使延陵遇於九原，其負愧何如矣。(Gusheng, p. 73)

With this tantalizing ending and aura of mystery, Chen Yuanyuan seems to elude judgment. The story presents no compelling psychological explanation of her transformation and instead turns her self-redemption

into the symbolic undoing of her role in the fall of the Ming dynasty. The accounts by Lu Ciyun and Niu Xiu define opposite perspectives on Chen Yuanyuan, but both praise and blame dispense with the ambiguities underlying Wu's poem by focusing on her final years as a Qing subject. Some reliable contemporary sources, including Li Jieli's 李介立 (17th c.) *Tianxiang ge suibi* 天香閣隨筆 and You Tong's *Gengzhai zhashuo* 艮齋雜說, claim that she "left the palace and entered the Way" because Wu Sangui's jealous wife left her little choice but to do so.¹³⁶ Niu Xiu seems to have turned an apparently expedient measure into conscious self-transformation.

Chen Wenshu, known for his interest in women's writings and late Ming romantic figures, wrote ten quatrains exonerating and glorifying Chen Yuanyuan.¹³⁷ Considering how Wu Sangui's wife and son survived the turmoil of 1644, Chen suggests that Wu Sangui might have been trying to save them rather than Yuanyuan (2nd quatrain). He also claims that Chen "died for the general" and drowned herself in the lotus pond on Wu's estate (5th quatrain), thus inviting comparison with Xiang Yu's consort Lady Yu, who is said to have killed herself when Chu was besieged by Han (6th quatrain). Chen Yuanyuan's suicide is also mentioned in Ye Yanlan's *Eight Beauties of Qinqhai*. As we shall see below, her suicide comes to be celebrated as expiatory martyrdom in Ding Chuanjing's *Beauty*.

Various nineteenth-century accounts elaborate stories of Chen's final years as a Daoist nun.¹³⁸ This redemptive dimension is further developed

136. See Li Jieli, *Tianxiang ge suibi*, j. 2; You Tong, *Gengzhai zhashuo*, 5.12a–12b. You Tong recalled meeting Yuanyuan in his youth.

137. Chen Wenshu, "Ti Ciqing Hou yuanyuan qu qijue shishou" 題次卿後園圖曲七絕十首. Ciqing is the sobriquet of Ruan Fu, son of the famous scholar Ruan Yuan. Ruan Fu's poem, dated 1827, is no longer extant. Chen's quatrains are included in Kuang Zhouyi, *Huifeng cihua jianzhu*, pp. 493–94.

138. See the accounts by Li Na (1830), Shi Bing (1830), Kong Longzhang (1839), and Huang Ying (1900) on the traces and sites related to Chen's final years as a nun, included in Kuang Zhouyi, "Chen Yuanyuan shiji." Zhao Fan visited various sites associated with Chen's final years and debated their authenticity; see his account of Chen (1889) included in Li Genyuan, "Chen Yuanyuan shiji xu" (CSY, pp. 156–57). Contemporary accounts of Wu's rebellion and its suppression, such as *Tingwen lu*, *Ping Wu lu*, and *Ping Dian shimo*, mention that Chen had either died before or perished during the rebellion (CSY, pp. 155, 182–83). It is highly unlikely that Chen could have survived the Qing conquest of Yunnan.

in two episodes added to Chen's story from the mid- to late Qing describing the circumstances of her death and her ghostly return. In 1804, Li Yuanlu 李元瀘 (1768 *jueren*) published *The Phoenix's Shadow at Mount Shang* (*Shangshan luanying* 商山鸞影), a scroll of poems "written" by Chen Yuanyuan's spirit in planchette sessions.¹³⁹ The poems combine the ornate, sensual diction and gentle melancholy of conventional palace poetry, lingering regrets over dynastic upheavals, critical judgments of Wu Sangui, apologia and self-vindication ("As I am a ghost with feelings, heaven, too, will forgive me" 做鬼有情天亦恕), and images of an unappeased ghost seeking solace in poetic composition and communication. These ghostly poems range in expression from the sorrow of being misunderstood to broad historical reflections.¹⁴⁰

Accounts of Yuanyuan's martyrdom and her spectral return retroactively redefine her life. This logic unfolds in full force in the late Qing play *Beauty* (1908) by Ding Chuanjing, in some ways the culmination of Chen Yuanyuan lore. Ding follows Lu Ciyun's biographical account for about two-thirds of his play but turns calculations and guile into resourcefulness and resolution. She also shows her concern for the fate of the country by urging Wu Sangui to leave for his military post (CSY, 5.58), just as later she avows her trust in Wu's "loyalty and duty" 忠義 and his will to fight the rebels (CSY, 9.93). Her rhetorical and expressive skills, literary talents, and powers of persuasion emerge as her defining traits. Even in adversity she voices her convictions. When Yuanyuan sings for Li Zicheng during her captivity by the rebels, she tells of her woes and castigates Li in her native Wu dialect; her inflection eludes Li, a native of Shanxi. In thus using performance to vindicate her convictions, she reminds us of Xie Xiao'e in *Dragonboat Gathering*, Li Xiangjun in *Peach Blossom Fan*, and Zuo Yizhen in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*.¹⁴¹

139. See Li Gengyuan, "Chen Yuanyuan shiji xu," cited in CSY, pp. 192–93. Spirit possession of the medium in a planchette session is called "the descent of the phoenix" 降鸞. Mount Shang lies outside the provincial capital of Yunnan. According to Ding Chuanjing, the temple at Mount Shang houses *The Phoenix's Shadow at Mount Shang*, in one *juan*; see *fulu* in the 1920 edition of *Cangsang Yan* (published by Saoye shanfang), p. 13b. Chen Wenshu refers to *Shangshan luanying* in his ninth quatrain.

140. See, for example, Chen Yuanyuan's parting poem in an account of the encounter between her ghost and one scholar Zheng in Yu Yue, *Yantai xianguan biji*, 9.209–10; see also the poem by Yuanyuan's spirit (CSY, 19.190–91).

141. See chap. 3, pp. 223, 239, chap. 6, pp. 551–53. Note the same trope in Kong Guanglin's *Female Zhuanzhu*, the play based on *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*.

Once the play moves to Wu Sangui's rebellion against the Qing, Ding Chuanjing removes all suggestions of the opportunism and ambition implied in Lu Ciyun's story and veers instead toward Yuanyuan's religious conversion, prescience, and martyrdom as portrayed by Niu Xiu. Following the convention of romantic southern plays, Ding retains a measure of sympathy for Wu and Chen as "the hero and the beauty" of the traditional love story. Wu's self-justification is presented without apparent irony: "And all because of copious tears of love, splashed in front of flowers, / My heart to avenge the country is confirmed, implacable as metal and stone" 只爲著淋浪情淚花前濺，倒成全我報國心情鐵石堅 (CSY, 8.81). Chen Yuanyuan's loyalty to Wu is elevated to martyrdom when, after Wu's failed insurrection and death, she drowns herself in a lotus pond. Before her suicide, she ponders the contradiction between her loyalty and her supposed transcendence of worldly attachments as a Daoist nun. "Although it is said that those who learn the way of immortals and Buddhas must cut off all longings and attachments, / Has one ever seen those who forget kindness and duties attain enlightenment?" 縱然說學仙佛的人兒要絕愛癡，幾曾見忘恩負義的人兒有正果時 (CSY, 17.178). She dies with the conviction that her suicide is redemptive: "If in another year my name appears in the immortals' registrar, / It will yet be due to this unflinching plunge into River Xiang, as I follow my lord in death" 或者是仙籙他年有名字，還仗這投湘一殉不游移 (CSY, 17.179). The "plunge into River Xiang" recalls Qu Yuan's suicide, and Chen Yuanyuan's martyrdom symbolically erases her guilt for the fall of the Ming dynasty. She says in her monologue as she wanders as a ghost: "The king of the underworld judged that the manifestation of my sensual form brought calamities to the country. Fortunately, hearing of the catastrophe [of Wu's rebellion] I sacrificed myself. This one token of integrity sufficed to cover up previous transgressions" 冥王以我現此色身，誤人家國，幸聞變身殉，此一節足蓋前愆 (CSY, 18.186).¹⁴² She is to wander as a "ghostly immortal" 鬼仙 (CSY, 19.190).

The redemptive dimension in *Beauty* is bound up with memory and self-representation. In the penultimate scenes of the play (scenes 18 and 19), Yuanyuan's ghost ponders the meanings of her life, encompassing

142. Cf. the transformation of Yang Yuhuan from femme fatale into martyr for the country in Hong Sheng's 洪昇 (1645–1704) *Palace of Lasting Life* (*Changsheng dian* 長生殿); see Wai-ye Li, "Early Qing to 1723," pp. 236–39.

both geographical distance in her movements and historical duration in her judgments. In scene 18, her ghost visits the ruins of Wu Sangui's palace, the rebuilt courtesan quarters in Suzhou, and Beijing, now unmistakably the Qing capital. The mood is intensely elegiac. The splendor of Suzhou and Beijing notwithstanding, Yuanyuan returns to Yunnan at the end of the play, perhaps in tacit recognition that the historical significance of her life is defined through her relationship with Wu Sangui. Scene 19 is set in 1738, sixty years after Chen Yuanyuan's death. Yunnan literati gather for a planchette session, inviting Yuanyuan's spirit to move the brush. The eight poems written by Yuanyuan's spirit chronicle her life: her secret sorrows as a famous courtesan, her role as Tian Hongyu's pawn in his attempt to gain imperial favor, and most poignantly, her relationship with Wu Sangui. Told in terms of their meeting, separation, reunion, and her renunciation and suicide, the five poems on Wu and Chen deliberately avoid the political consequences of their entanglement and refrain from any negative judgment of Wu Sangui.

In thus reflecting on her life, Yuanyuan's spirit joins other interpreters in the play—Wu Weiye in scene 14, the Yunnan literati in scene 19, the poet Ruan Fu in scene 20. Ding self-consciously turns the writings on and memories of Yuanyuan into the “stuff” of drama. This interest in memory and representation is again reminiscent of *Peach Blossom Fan*. Scene 14 enacts the anecdote of how Wu Sangui, fearing for his reputation, tries to bribe Wu Weiye into removing “Yuanyuan's Song” from his collected works.¹⁴³ With his resolute refusal Wu Weiye makes up for his own earlier compromise. Wu describes his reluctant service under the Qing: “The unforgiving net of worldly entanglement drove me to my downfall, / How much disdain and censure did I receive from former friends!” 不情世網驅人墮，受多少故人笑唾 (CSY, 14.142). The play presents “Yuanyuan's Song” as Wu Weiye's redemption. By insisting on keeping it in his collection, he at least maintains his integrity as a poet: unlike Wu Sangui's vainglory, “I will last for all time in the realm of poetry” 詩壇自有千秋我 (CSY, 14.143). In the final scene, Ruan Fu, inspired by “Yuanyuan's Song,” seeks out the sites associated with Chen Yuanyuan—her final abode, her grave, and the place of the planchette session summoning her spirit. Ruan's own poem on Chen Yuanyuan (dated 1827) is no longer extant. Although it is not clear whether Ding

143. See Lu Ciyun, “Yuanyuan zhuan” (*Shuobai*, 2:509); Liu Jian, *Ting wen lu*, 1.4b.

knew the poem, he imagines Ruan's empathy and nostalgia as a fitting tribute to Chen Yuanyuan.

The rehabilitation of Chen Yuanyuan in *Beauty* is tied to two contrary perspectives. First, she is presented as inadvertent agent in a necessary historical process. Although the play's preface is dated 1908, three years before the collapse of the Qing dynasty, Ding adhered remarkably closely to the officially sanctioned view of the dynastic transition and was deferential in all references to Qing rulers. Yuanyuan cautions Wu Sangui against any thought of rebellion and urges acceptance of the Qing mandate: "For ever since the battles were done, / The Zhou cauldron has been put in place. / Chinese and barbarians have united under one rule— / That, too, is mandated by heaven" 況一自戎衣定，已奠成周鼎，一統華戎，也自由天命 (CSY, 25.152). Second, despite the recurrent emphasis on the Qing mandate, there is the sense that the fall of the Ming is a calamity for which Yuanyuan is somehow responsible, hence Ding's effort to exonerate her. The play oscillates between these two views of the Qing conquest and Yuanyuan's possible role in that process.

Beyond such oscillation is the sense that historical distance displaces judgment. Castigations of the incompetence and cowardice of Ming officials and numerous references to chaos and hopelessness at the end of the Ming (CSY, 2.19, 3.30, 4.39–40, 6.67–68) would seem to justify the Qing conquest, yet for the contemporary audience the sense of an ending probably echoed the late Qing crisis. Elegiac remembrance emerges as the only fitting response, as Ding seems to cast his own play as a continuation of the quest of the Yunnan literati or of Ruan Fu for Chen Yuanyuan's traces.

Beauty ends with these lines: "If the house of Han were to paint its founding ministers in Lingyan Palace, / The portrait of highest merit must be ceded to the fair lady" 漢家若畫凌煙閣，要讓蛾眉第一功 (CSY, 19.191). The irony that dynastic fortunes should ultimately be tied to the fate of a single woman must have seemed even deeper at the end of the Qing dynasty, whose demise again raises questions of mandate and historical causation. Fan Zengxiang captures this mood as he echoes Ding's lines in his "New Song of Yuanyuan" ("Xin Yuanyuan qu" 新圓圓曲, 1918, CSY, 201–2): "It is only that for the rise and fall of two dynasties, / The minister of greatest merit came from the blue tower" 惟有兩朝興替事，功臣第一出青樓. Fan often wrote about the fallen Qing with pathos and nostalgia, but in this poem he eschews the nuances

and empathy in Wu Weiye's poem, choosing instead a more consistently caustic tone. His purported goal is to "tell the whole story," which Wu could not have known when he wrote his poem in 1651. Fan pushes the Xi Shi analogy in Wu's poem a step further:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 吳亡何處求西子 | Wu fell, but where was Xi Shi to be found? |
| 不下鷗夷兩槳船 | She did not step into Fan Li's two-oared boat. |
| 附會香墳非一地 | For her supposed fragrant grave there is more than one site, |
| 荒唐鸞影是何山 | The absurd phoenix's shadow— which mountain is it? |

The dynasty that Wu Sangui's fateful decision helped to establish is also no more. Writing in the aftermath of the 1911 revolution, Fan Zengxiang seems to have been most intrigued by the idea of Chen Yuanyuan's escape from the judgment of history. The mysterious links between momentous changes and a mere courtesan suggest the opacity or irrationality of the historical process, which makes the possibility of escape by its agent or victim even more compelling.

Fan notes in the preface to his poem that he was first inspired to write a new "Yuanyuan's Song" when Ding showed him *Beauty*. He finally composed the poem when asked to write a prefatory poem for Zhang Hongbin's (d. 1917) *Headgear Raising Fury* (*Chongguan nu* 衝冠怒), fragments of which were published posthumously in 1920. Here Chen Yuanyuan invokes the model of Xi Shi as the paragon of purposeful political action and timely withdrawal (4a). Her professed models are Liang Hongyu and Hongfu, whose prescient choice of Li Jing as mate is based on their common political aspirations (17b). When she urges Wu Sangui to leave for his military duty, Wu's father calls her a "hero among woman" 女中丈夫. Hearing of Wu's readiness to surrender to Li Zicheng, Yuanyuan agrees to marry Li, in the hope of provoking Wu Sangui to avenge the Chongzhen emperor (29a–29b). The last scene of this incomplete manuscript shows Wu furiously contemplating vengeance, hence the title of the play. In the prologue, Zhang pronounces his play "the biography of the female Curly Beard." Curly Beard in the eponymous Tang tale founds a new kingdom in a distant realm, which suggests that Zhang might have planned to present Yuanyuan as a loyalist who tries to persuade Wu Sangui to restore the Ming or lead Han resurgence during the latter's rebellion in Yunnan.

The idea of Chen Yuanyuan as femme fatale all but vanishes in late Qing writings. One exception is Zhou Zuoren's 周作人 (1885–1967) "Accounts of Women's Peril" ("Nühuo zhuan" 女禍傳) in *Women's World* (1906). Using the pseudonym "Bingyun" 病雲 and speaking as a woman,¹⁴⁴ he disparages the idea of "Women's Peril" but proceeds to tell the story of biblical Eve and paradise lost. The Chinese counterpart of Eve is said to be Chen Yuanyuan—by failing to remonstrate with Wu Sangui or to rouse him by committing suicide, she "betrayed her race" 賣種. The author hopes for a new breed of heroic women who, like the "Yellow Peril," would strike fear among Westerners—they will be celebrated in the "New Account of Women's Peril" ("Xin nühuo zhuan" 新女禍傳). This deliberate or inadvertent transformation of the negative concept of "Yellow Peril" into a token of Chinese power means that women's power is also imagined as the redirection of a threat or destructive potential so that it can target the nation's enemies.

Chen Yuanyuan emerges as a full-fledged Ming loyalist in some late Qing nationalist writings. In *The Saga of Wu Sangui* (*Wu Sangui yanyi* 吳三桂演義) by the revolutionary Huang Shizhong 黃世仲 (1872–1912), published in Hong Kong in 1911, Chen combines shrewd self-interest with a nationalist political vision. As Wu Sangui deals with his own conflicts and negotiates the treacherous terrain of early Qing politics in the process of crushing Ming resistance and consolidating Qing rule, Chen is often offering remonstrance and subtly or directly reproaching him. Chen's decision to become a nun is dated to 1644, when Wu is (erroneously) said to be on his way to Yunnan to establish Qing control there.¹⁴⁵ Her religious renunciation is presented as almost a form of political protest (*Wu Sangui yanyi*, 10.110–11). Chen dies on the eve of Wu's rebellion. She urges Wu to desist in her final letter, predicting doom for his ambition and blaming him again for missing the only chance of Han resurgence by stamping out Ming loyalist resistance (*Wang Sangui yanyi*, 17.152–53).

Chen Yuanyuan became a full-blown nationalist heroine as China's crisis deepened in the 1930s. During the Sino-Japanese War, Li Jiwei

144. Zhou Zuoren used several feminine pseudonyms in his youth. He wrote in *Zhitang huixiang lu*: "This was but a form of first love, a way to indicate longing for young women" (*Wangshi huixiang Zhou Zuoren*, p. 178).

145. Wu Sangui did not go to Yunnan until 1659.

李季偉 (1899–1972), under the pseudonym “Jieyu sheng” 劫餘生 (Survivor of Kalpic Destruction), wrote *Regrets of Yu'an* (*Yu'an ben chuanqi* 玉庵恨傳奇, preface dated 1938).¹⁴⁶ Yu'an is supposed to be Chen Yuanyuan's Buddhist name. In the preface, Li presses the analogy between Wu Sangui and the collaborators 漢奸 of his own times and designates the work a “resistance play” 抗敵劇. I have not been able to locate the play, but judging from the preface, it portrays Chen as a determined Ming loyalist. This is also the case with Jiang Qi's 蔣旂 play *Chen Yuanyuan*, dated 1940.

Agency is inseparable from voice. In Huang's novel, for example, Chen's speeches and letters define an imagined loyalist option, “the road not taken.” In 1915, a woman writer, Yu Lanxian 余蘭仙, published in *Women's World* an account of Chen Yuanyuan (“Chen Yuanyuan yishi” 陳圓圓逸事), wherein she restores voice and agency to Chen by authenticating the discovery of her letter and self-portrait.¹⁴⁷ The account begins with vivid descriptions of the ruins of Wu Sangui's palace in Yunnan and the memories it evokes. Instead of simply rehearsing the familiar story, it describes how Wu comes to neglect Chen and how she transcends the fate of the abandoned woman by turning to religion. The account then fabricates “archaeological discoveries”: in 1906, when the Wuhua Academy was built in Yunnan, a jade seal with the words “Receiving the Mandate from Heaven” 受命於天, which presumably belonged to Wu Sangui, was unearthed. Also discovered was a wooden box that contained Chen Yuanyuan's letter and self-portrait, as well as a marble statue inscribed with poems written in Chen's voice. In the letter, supposedly written on the eve of Wu's rebellion, Chen sounds like a grand strategist debating heaven-sanctioned timing 天時, geographical advantage 地利, and support of the people 人和. It recapitulates Chen's positions at fateful moments of the Ming-Qing transition. In 1644, Chen

146. Li was a chemistry professor in Yunnan. Another of his plays, *Fugu ji* 桴鼓記, uses Liang Hongyu to rouse nationalist fervor. See Zuo Pengjun, *Wan Qing minguo chuanqi zaju shigao*, pp. 400–406. According to the preface, the play was performed to great acclaim in 1938 and 1939.

147. See *Women's World* (1915.4), “Tancong”: 8–11. This *Women's World* (*Nüzi shijie*), edited by Chen Diexian 陳蝶仙 (pseudonym Tianxu wosheng 天虛我生) and published in Shanghai by Zhonghua tushu guan, ran for six issues between December 1914 and July 1915. It should not be confused with the eponymous journal published in Shanghai by Datong yinshuju from 1904 to 1905.

urged Wu to take advantage of timing to “drive away the barbarians and establish his own rule” 逐胡自立, in the early 1650s Chen suggested that Wu should use Wuhan as a geographic base to support Ming loyalist resistance, and after 1659 Chen argued that Qing atrocities had created momentum for the Ming cause. In all these cases Wu ignored Chen, who now predicts doom if Wu persists with the rebellion.

Chen’s self-portrait shows a beautiful woman holding a lute with her right hand and an incense burner with her left hand. Smoke rises, twirling, from the incense burner, “as if about to fly to the sky” 直欲升空而去. The symbol of religious transcendence is also given a political twist. At the bottom of the statue, which shows an older Yuanyuan in religious garb that makes her look like an image of Guanyin, is a poem with these lines: “Void of all attachments, I would gladly become a ghost, / All hopes of resurgence for the country lost, my wish is to turn into smoke” 身無可戀甘爲鬼，國到難興願化煙. But despair yields to mythic hope: “My spirit will not carry insentient rocks: / My hands will make bodies and repair heaven” 精魂不去啣頑石，手造雙軀補恨天. Instead of being the Jingwei bird destined to fail in filling up the sea with rocks, she sees herself as the goddess Nüwa making humans and repairing heaven. There may be little in the Yuanyuan story that warrants such a grand conclusion. In Yu Lanxian’s imagination, however, her self-fashioning augurs well for a generation of “new women” because “her talent and vision far exceeded others” 其才識蓋亦大有過人者.

In the Chinese tradition, the femme fatale embodies the moral failure that facilitates the judgment of a historical development as accountable or even inevitable. As we have seen, in Wu Weiye’s poem Chen Yuanyuan has the opposite function: she makes the historical process seem accidental. In successive iterations she becomes the victim, the witness, the mourner, the voice of political prescience and religious transcendence, the hero and would-be avenger. Chen Yuanyuan as hero in late Qing and Republican representations answer the call of nationalism, very much in line with similar transformations in that period that we have seen in previous chapters. Beyond that predictable twist, all these images reject simplistic judgments—instead they are in different ways redemptive, indicative of the need to dignify or lament the fall of the Ming, to register the distance between supposed historical role and individual experience, and to imagine what “might have been” in alternative histories. In that sense, Chen’s images lead us to reflect on the functions and conditions of historical judgment.

Aftermath

There is a long tradition in Chinese poetic exegesis, starting with commentaries on the *Classic of Poetry*, that regards the recovery of historical referents 本事 or contexts of production as the ultimate explanation.¹ This preoccupation extends to other genres: a good example is the periodic decoding of *The Story of the Stone* in terms of Cao Xueqin's family history or early Qing history. A constant stream of new interpretations based on uncovering the "hidden historical basis" of the novel continues to fascinate readers. The writings discussed in this book may invite the same treatment. They are embedded in and determined by their historical moments; an unprecedented wealth of contextual materials gives us insights into processes of literary production and communication. Chen Yinke's biography of Liu Rushi, a key portal to the rich tapestry of the personages and events of the Ming-Qing transition and a frequent frame of reference in this book, is firmly rooted in this exegetical tradition.

However, the relationship between history and literature in this book is ultimately more fluid and open-ended. Inasmuch as an epochal event like the Ming-Qing transition involves suffering and dislocation, retrospection on a lost world and accommodation with a new order, fateful decisions of life and death or of participation in or withdrawal from government and society, the reader is more tempted than ever to turn to historical events and circumstances for explanation of the authors' literary choices. I have tried to reverse the direction of that reasoning, however, and regard the experience and memory of such a traumatic

1. See Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*.

moment as something so momentous, complex, and contradictory that it demands repeated confrontation, reenactment, and reshaping through literature. In that sense, gender boundaries and images of women are modes of mediation in this process. Scholarship on gender has mostly focused on writings by women and about women. While encompassing these aspects, I have also tried to understand why and how gender tropes become instrumental in dealing with challenging or sometimes even calamitous experience, how it allows writers to remember and forget, to imagine resistance and reconciliation, to strive for self-definition and form social connections.

This book demonstrates the expressive and explanative power of these gender tropes, whose contours often seem to change upon closer scrutiny. I concluded chapter 6 with the multifarious images of Chen Yuanyuan. The same protean transformations characterize Lin Siniang in chapter 3. More generally, there are many instances of unstable boundaries in this book—we see a thin and shifting line between, for example, the hero and the victim, the avenger and the mourner, the powerless dead and the martial ghost, the courtesan and the poet-historian, the femme fatale and the potential savior of the realm, the chastity martyr and the patriot, the Ming loyalist and the Qing loyalist. In some cases, multiple iterations bear the imprint of authors with different agendas, as in the case of Chen Yuanyuan, Lin Siniang, or “Du Xiaoying” and Song Huixiang (chap. 5). In other examples, shifting boundaries testify to courageous choices of historical figures and the projected self-transformation of authors who eulogize them, as with the courtesans and concubines discussed in chapter 4.

Sometimes transformations call attention to what is hidden: unarticulated intention, veiled references, unspoken political pressure. In this sense, the poetics of indirectness examined in chapter 1 has broad ramifications. The twice-married and dolefully silent Xi Gui, the dying goddess derived from the *Verses of Chu* tradition, or the fading beauty mourning the season’s passing can be used variously to define oneself, adjudicate others, negotiate political choices, or forge literary communities. Beyond these examples from chapter 1, however, indirect expression can encompass the images of female virtues and vices, agency and victimhood developed in other chapters. Indirectness may result from political discretion; often it points to contradictory emotions, whether it be the psychological turmoil of those who lived through the dynastic

transition, or the admixture of political accommodation and mediated nostalgia that frequently characterize second generation memory. Women writers' direct expression of historical engagement (as in examples from chap. 2 and *Heaven Rains Down Flowers* in chap. 3) would seem to escape such ambiguities. The fact that their political concerns are sometimes tied to new types of socio-literary relations or reflections on and discontent with gender roles, however, should remind us that they too elude simple equation of intention and execution.

Responding to the clarion call of national salvation, many late-Qing and Republican authors made heroes of figures from the Ming-Qing transition. In addition to the woman warrior or the female avenger, the femme fatale, the victim, and the historical witness all become heroes. This "heroizing" trajectory may give the impression of an unproblematic correspondence between female heroes and political resistance or (from the late nineteenth century on) nationalist fervor. The heroic images in women's poetry (chap. 2), however, are intertwined with self-conscious fantasy and a sense of failure or impossible endeavor. In other chapters, we see how the image of a martial or valorous woman facilitates or legitimates mourning (Xie Xiao'e, Lady Xian, and Lin Siniang in chap. 3), conveys different judgments about the fallen Ming (*Dragonboat Gathering* and *Facing Spring Pavilion* in chap. 3), commemorates a lost former self (Wang Sun and Zhou Lianggong in chap. 4), rectifies compromise and confirms hidden loyalism (Liu Rushi and Qian Qianyi in chap. 4), and infuses critical judgment with intense nostalgia in historical retrospection (*Peach Blossom Fan* in chap. 6).

The complexities of heroes prompt us to reconsider other truisms. The analogy between chastity and steadfast political principles and between licentiousness and betrayal of one's country is widely asserted in seventeenth-century and later writings. Our examples show, however, how a range of political positions can be encoded in female chastity, from unrelenting loyalty to varying degrees of political accommodation (as in *Fan of West Lake* and *Chastity and Talent* in chap. 5). Li Yu's stories about compromised chastity (chap. 5) constitute a new twist on the idea of "inner loyalty." Poetic testimonies by abducted women turn witnessing and recording into justifications for survival (chap. 5). Licentious women symbolize the shame of conquest and invite the condemnation of a few writers, who often extend their opprobrium to the excesses of Jiangnan culture. Such condemnation is hard to sustain, however,

for those who experienced the sufferings of the Ming-Qing transition, especially if they feel affinities for the pleasures of Jiangnan literati life (as in Ding Yaokang's case in chap. 6). Even the apparently straightforward analogy between the chastity martyr and the political martyr takes us to the margins of repressed memory, whether it be that of a male hero who cannot be commemorated or graphic violence that would have been forgotten (chap. 6).

Commemoration and remembrance often have a social dimension. Social obligations and anthologizing projects sometimes determined who would be remembered. Literary gatherings were the nexus points that allowed memories to cross generational lines, as we see in the case of Wang Shizhen (chaps. 1 and 6) and Kong Shangren (chap. 6). While I emphasize literary communities only in the first two chapters, one should note that, more generally, most of the seventeenth-century writers mentioned or discussed in this book knew each other, with rare exceptions (like Wang Fuzhi). This vast network means that conceptions of gender mediate the experience and expression of political order in social ways, and that the images I deal with in this book are also in some ways fashioned through social processes. Poetry was often occasional and tied to contexts of literary gatherings. Stories or rumors were collected and transmitted (as with "Du Xiaoying" in chap. 5, or Qian Shuxian and Woman Zhuo in chap. 6). Authors influenced each other and wrote commentaries on each other's works. Du Jun, for example, commented on the works of Mao Xiang (chap. 4), Huang Zhouxing (chap. 5), Li Yu (chap. 5), and Wang Shizhen (chap. 6).

It is a measure of how potent the nexus of gender and national trauma is that we see its recurrence not only in subsequent moments of political turmoil but also in ways of imagining opposition (as in *Heaven Rains Down Flowers*) and more general representations of a lost world (as in *The Story of the Stone*). Its implications are also multi-dimensional enough so that opposing sides, such as Ming loyalists and Qing officials, Qing loyalists and anti-Qing revolutionaries, can both turn to the fall of the Ming and mine its repertoire of female avengers, mourners, heroes, and victims.

In discussing recurrence, I have mostly referred to late Qing and early Republican examples, with occasional forays into the Sino-Japanese War. The example of Chen Yinke takes the issues I explore in the book to

more recent history.² Chen writes about female impersonation on the operatic stage to reflect on the contortions of “Thought Reform” in the 1950s.³ Broken romantic promises and troth plighted in vain become a way to refer to the betrayal of intellectuals in successive campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s.⁴ Chen devotes the last twenty years of his life to writing with deep empathy about the woman writer Chen Duansheng 陳端生 (1751–ca. 1796), the author of *Love in Two Lives* (*Zaisheng yuan* 再生緣) and the life and times of Liu Rushi.⁵ He sees in the stories of opposition and resistance embodied by their lives and writings a way to salvage what is valuable about Chinese civilization as he endures the indignities and sufferings of an alienating political reality. The ways whereby gender roles, gender perspectives, and women’s lives and writings define agency and judgment in Chen’s response to contemporary crisis and devastation echo themes developed in this book. Chen wrote in 1949: “Where can we summon all the souls from time past?” 何地能招自古魂?⁶ It seems the space demarcated by issues related to women and gender constitute precisely one such venue for the “summoning of souls.”

2. See Wai-ye Li, “Nostalgia and Resistance.”

3. Chen Yinke, “Nandan,” in *Chen Yinke shi jianshi*, 2:662–65; cf. Yu Yingshi, *Chen Yinke wannian shiwen shizheng*, p. 53.

4. Chen Yinke, “Dingyou qixi” 丁酉七夕, in *Chen Yinke shi jianshi*, 2:1005–12.

5. Chen Yinke, “Xinchou qiyue Yuseng laoyou zi Chongqing lai Guangzhou chengxun jinkuang fu ci da zhi” 辛丑七月，雨僧老友自重慶來廣州，承詢近況，賦此答之 in *ibid.*, 2:1084–88. “Yuseng” is the sobriquet of the well-known poet and scholar Wu Mi 吳宓 (1894–1978).

6. This is an allusion to the late Tang poet Han Wo’s line, “From this far off place, it is hard to summon all the souls from time past” 地迴難招自古魂 (*Han Wo shi zhu*, 2.201). *Jiong* 迴 appears as *sheng* 騰 in some versions.

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