



The Dreaming Mind
and the End
of the Ming World

LYNN A. STRUVE

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Cover art: Woodblock illustration by Chen Hongshou from the 1639 edition of *Story of the Western Wing*. Student Zhang lies asleep in an inn, reclining against a bed frame. His anxious dream of Oriole in the wilds, being confronted by a military commander, completely fills the balloon to the right.

*In memory of Professor Liu Wenying (1939–2005),
an open-minded, visionary scholar and open-hearted, generous man*

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Introduction

AS A SPECIES, we humans are not alone in dreaming, as many other animals also have phases of mentation during sleep. Yet as individuals we are utterly alone in the dream state (belief in shared dreams notwithstanding), more so than in any other normal state of consciousness. Dreaming is as subjective as our awareness gets: almost totally oblivious to objective sense data and completely absorbed internally, our dreaming minds generate agglomerations of percepts that, even when remembered and thereby identified as “dreams,” are difficult to describe to others or even explain to ourselves after waking. Whether cherished as a medium of privileged insight on the divine, valued for reflective feedback on one’s character, indulged for the amusements it offers, or dreaded because of the challenges it brings to our complacency, dreaming is our most intimate, most self-baring, yet least intelligible kind of experience. This radical interiority and consequent ineffability are among the most universal associations of dreaming.

To this subjective quality may be added several other associations of dreaming which have endured through time and across civilizations. Certainly dreams, in running a gamut from the mystical to the bizarre, epitomize irrationality—or less pejoratively, the non-rational—a characteristic which overlaps with lack of control of one’s thoughts, movements, and environment, and with strong emotions which often catalyze waking up from dream-sleep. This deficit of logic and rationality in dreams is regarded warily by some but celebrated by others for opening us to greater spontaneity and creativity. And, like these qualities, dream content is unbidden, giving rise to belief in supernatural, supra-human sources, on one hand, and to convictions about subconscious selfhood, on the other. (Even when dreams are importuned from deities, the results, if any, cannot be determined by the supplicants.) For better or worse, dreaming is recognized as highly imaginal, filled with apparently meaningless illusions but also with personally compelling, self-arising symbols, metaphors, and avatars. Moreover, dreaming highlights the vagaries of memory.

Normally hard to recall but sometimes unforgettable, dreams frequently feature persons and things from our pasts but often in strange ways, offering shards of the familiar in unfamiliar situations and assemblages. As in the waking state, memories in dreams may be either recurrent or one-off, but uniquely in dreams our willpower flaccidly fails to banish them or hold them in mind.

In the past half century, tremendous strides in brain science have revealed much about the neurophysiological and neurochemical bases of how dreams *seem*, as a universal mode of human consciousness.¹ But we still are far from understanding how or what dreams *mean*—if, indeed, they mean anything at all. Whether dreams themselves project meanings, or meanings are imputed to them by waking thought, or both of these processes occur, the cognitive, semantic aspects of dreaming and dream-memory remain stubbornly resistant to systematic study, being inextricable from individual psychological differences, the variables of societies, and the vicissitudes of cultures.² Not only are the sources of our dreams multifarious at any given moment; they also change over time, and, over time, what and how we think about our dreams, individually and collectively, changes too.

There is a historicity to dreaming in two senses. Of course, some dreams literally have *made* history. But more germane here is that the degree of attentiveness to dreams and the profile of how they are regarded in certain periods, especially in the more authoritative or highly educated strata of societies, are indicators not to be overlooked in cultural or intellectual history. Literary critic George Steiner, for one, has pointed out “that the ways in which we speak to ourselves, that the style, frequency, content and outward effects of unvoiced soliloquies, of the interior monologue which comprises the major part of our linguistic output, are subject to historical change and sociological constraints.” He continues, “The same, I believe is true of the activities—they are manifold—which we associate with the generation, formulation and recollection, whether wholly private or published, of dreams.” He gives as an example of “fundamental transformation in the received

1. For an up-to-date, efficient overview of findings, with references to the most pertinent of the copious literature, see Moorcroft, *Understanding Sleep and Dreaming*. For a wide-ranging collection of articles by researchers in various fields of scientific dream research, see Barrett and McNamara, *New Science of Dreaming*, esp. vol. 1, chaps. 3, 5, 6, and vol. 3, chap. 9. On interrelating various approaches to dreaming, especially the phenomenological, psychological, and neuroscientific, see Flanagan, *Dreaming Souls*. On why it is appropriate to regard dreams as non-waking consciousness, see Windt and Metzinger, “Philosophy of Dreaming.”

2. A comprehensive, thoughtful consideration of the past century’s attempts to explain how dreams have meaning can be found in H. Hunt, *Multiplicity of Dreams*. For less skeptical views, see Cavallero and Foulkes, *Dreaming as Cognition*. Anthropologists know well the caveats in conducting research on dream-meanings in diverse cultures. See, for instance, Dentan, “Ethnographic Considerations.”

function of dreams and dreaming” in Western civilization the gradual decline of credence in the prophetic or oracular nature of dreams, which has been accelerating since the seventeenth century, at least among the better educated.³

Recognition of the temporalities of dream epistemes in scholarship on Western civilization is long-standing and has generated many period-specific studies of dreaming, from ancient Greece through the Freudian revolution.⁴ In Chinese scholarship, however, of the several monographs on premodern Chinese ideas about and practices related to dreaming, published since “culture” became a “hot” subject of research in the late 1980s, none is organized historically, and the material presented therein, while rich and immensely informative, is drawn preponderantly from the first millennium BCE through the first millennium CE. The late-imperial era is referenced only incidentally.⁵ Sinological studies that do focus on certain periods tend to employ the lens of a particular work or genre, such as records of royal dream interpretation in *Zuo's Chronicle* (*Zuozhuan*), which spans the eighth to fifth centuries BCE, dream poems of the Tang or Song dynasty, or collections of tales about strange phenomena—mostly of Tang provenance—such as the *Taiping Extended Records* (*Taiping guangji*; 997–998).⁶ The especially great importance of

3. Steiner, “Historicity of Dreams,” 10–14.

4. Such recognition seems to have been pioneered by Ludwig Binswanger in his book *Wandlungen in der Auffassung und Deutung des Traumes*, published in 1928. In postwar scholarship, the incorporation of dreams into investigations of cultures-in-history, as telling parts of their respective *mentalités*, owes its inception to certain works of the 1970s: Burke, “L’histoire sociale des rêves”; Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, pt. 3; and Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Âge*, pt. 3.

5. The following works have been especially useful to me: Liu Wenying, *Meng de mixin*; Zhuo Songsheng, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*; Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*; Chen Dakang, *Zhongguo gudai huameng lu*; Chen Meiyong, Fang Aiping, and Deng Yiming, *Zhonghua zhanmeng shu*; and Liu Wenying and Cao Tianyu, *Meng yu Zhongguo wenhua*. Similar in approach, that is, proceeding by topic or category rather than historical change and emphasizing early texts, is the seminal Western work by Ong, *Interpretation of Dreams*. Strassberg’s introduction to his translation of Chen Shiyuan’s *Mengzhan yizhi* gives a masterful synopsis of the history of Chinese ideas on dreaming up to the mid-sixteenth century, but no attempt is made to place Chen or his work in the context of Ming-period intellectual dream culture; see Chen Shiyuan, *Wandering Spirits*. Shuen-fu Lin, in “Chia Pao-yü’s First Visit to the Land of Illusion,” also discusses important ideas in the history of Chinese thought about dreaming, in comparison with some modern Western views, to introduce his literary analysis of several dreams in the eighteenth-century novel *Dream of Red Chambers*, but he mentions the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century background only in passing (94–95).

6. On dream prognostication in the *Zuozhuan*, see W. Li, “Dreams of Interpretation,” 17–29; Brennan, “Dreams, Divination, and Statecraft,” 80–93; or Liu Wenying and Cao Tianyu, *Meng yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 47–53. The best study of dream motifs in mostly Tang-period “tales of marvels” is Li Hanbin, “*Taiping guangji*” *de meng yanjiu*. The Tang and Song poets most often studied for their dream poems are Li Bai (701–762), Li He (790–816), Li Shangyin (813–ca. 858), Li Yu (937–978), Huang Tingjian (1045–1105), Lu You (1125–1210), and Wu Wenying (ca. 1200–ca. 1274).

Buddhism and Daoism during the Tang period has been noted as a factor in the rise of literati poetizing and storytelling with dreams,⁷ yet to my knowledge there has been no attempt to comprehensively describe or historically explain certain periods in Chinese history when dream sensibility was a salient characteristic of self-expression and cultural production among the intellectual elite.

The present endeavor seeks to do that, not only by identifying a significant period in the history of Chinese “dream culture,” but by asserting that a span of time from about the mid-sixteenth century through the end of the seventeenth century (i.e., the late Ming and very early Qing period) has been *the* most generative of dream-related writings and visual materials in Chinese history. This period distinctively exhibits what I call a “dream arc” within the contours of contemporaneous intellectual thought and expression. This is to claim not that Chinese literati dreamed more than usual then but rather that the experience and connotations of dreaming elicited significantly more attention, from a wider array of figures in the intellectual elite, as reflected in a spectrum of influential culturefacts broader than before or since. This occurred because a combination of factors particular to that time—best known for the disintegration and overthrow of the natively ruled Ming dynasty and the conquest of China by another dynasty, the Qing, led by “barbarian” Manchus—amplified in ways peculiar to Chinese intellectual sensibilities the neuro-cognitively grounded associations of dreaming set forth above.

Integral to the “Ming world” of my title—that is, the landscape and horizons of the Ming literati *mentalité*—was a trend (not uncontested) toward moral-ethical subjectivity, which reached a fairly radical climax in late Ming and fostered cross-creedal exploration of the fundamentals of spirituality. This was accompanied and augmented by the mounting dysfunctionality of the state system and political culture, which led many who otherwise would have aspired to objective, public achievements in official service on the traditional pattern to focus instead on personal matters. Concomitant with that inward-turning trend and dissatisfaction with government and politics was a questioning of the rationalism and emotional control that was emphasized in the politico-philosophical orthodoxy of the Ming state, and which was inculcated through the domineering civil service examination regime and its attendant educational curricula. A more accepting, valorizing attitude toward human feelings and spontaneity gained traction, and, as the corruptions and malfunctions of late-Ming rule became more outrageous, even nightmarishly bizarre, engagement with the non-rational side of humanity became unavoidable and, with some, obsessive.

As the late-Ming social fabric, too, became frayed, violent uprisings against the well-off began to impinge on the consciousness of intellectuals, who came to

7. See, for instance, Li Hanbin, “*Taiping guangji*” *de meng yanjiu*, chap. 2.

fear for their properties, incomes, families, and lives. Such anxieties peaked as the decades-long Qing conquest ensued. The sense of losing control over one's affairs and of needing to deal, however actively or passively, with unpredictable exigencies also heightened attunement to the unbidden. Such attunement was directed either outward to the cosmic forces behind events or inward to "the feeling and memory of what happens"—to adapt Antonio Damasio's characterization of core and autobiographical consciousness.⁸

The increased attention to dreams and dreaming that all these factors generated during the Ming disintegration and collapse persisted among those who survived the Qing conquest and lived on under alien rule, sustained or tormented by memories—often oneiric memories—of what or whom they had lost. The dream arc was extended to the end of the seventeenth century mainly by the life spans of "remnant subjects" (*yimin*) of the fallen Ming.⁹ The total effect of these changes was to weaken the distinction that people normally drew between waking and non-waking awareness and to make doubts about parsing "reality" and "unreality" emblematic of the age.

The emergence of dreaming as thematic in intellectual culture during a time when subjectivity, the non-rational, emotions, spontaneity, the imaginal, the unbidden, and personal memory were elevated in the minds of well-educated people is not unique to the period of Chinese history examined in this book. Though no comparative agenda is set forth here, one might hypothesize that increased emphasis on at least a cluster of these associative qualities in any sociocultural context will likely enliven interest in dreaming. In this regard, the Romantic period in Europe, from the late eighteenth through the early nineteenth century, offers the fullest comparison with China's late Ming and early Qing. In that case, the felt limitations of Enlightenment rationalism and mechanism, especially when used to explain relations between the human mind and body and the workings of the body politic, motivated counter-explorations of the subjectivity of knowing, the non-rational in the forces of nature and the human spirit, the role of pure emotions in aesthetic sensibility and creativity, the mysteries of self and consciousness, and the "unconscious" as a repository of childhood memories and symbols of our individually embodied primordium. With growing interest in dreaming as a medium through which to link these compulsions, dreams came to feature prominently in natural philosophy, medical thought, the budding field of anthropology, art and art theory, personal notes, and especially creative writing and literary criticism. This occurred as intellectuals responded with élan or anxiety, hope or dismay to the

8. Damasio, *Feeling of What Happens*, esp. chaps. 3 and 6.

9. On Ming *yimin* identity and its historical significance, see Kong, "Qingchu Ming yimin." On the complexities of Ming *yimin* lives and sensibilities, see W. Li, "Introduction." The rendering "remnant subjects" for *yimin* originated with Hay, "Suspension of Dynastic Time."

epochal French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, rising nationalisms, and socio-environmental changes attendant on the early Industrial Revolution.¹⁰

More closely contemporaneous with the period studied in this book is the rise to historical prominence, under vastly different sociopolitical conditions, of two religions that emphasized the individual's capacity for direct communion with the godhead: Sufism in the Ottoman Empire at its greatest extent, and Quakerism in the tumultuous transatlantic world of early America. Given the high levels of literacy among their followers, these religions during these times generated distinctive bodies of personal dream records which, both literally and figuratively, wrote special chapters in the histories of dreaming in their respective civilizations.

In Islam, dreaming always was bound to hold an honored place, given the many sanctioning—even sanctifying—references thereto in the Quran, in the revelations to Muhammad (d. 632), and among the hallowed words attributed to him. But it was especially important in the mystical current of Islam that is called “Sufism” in the West, because of the emphasis therein on direct experience of the divine and on achieving ecstatic union with God through dreams, visions, and trance.¹¹ While the dream-interest of Islamic culture at large was predominantly prognostic, assuring the circulation of innumerable manuals of divinatory dream interpretation (similar in approach to Chinese dream-divination books), Sufis increasingly probed their dreams primarily for indications of their current spiritual state and hoped to experience through them the immediacy of metaphysical truth. Excellent signs were dream visions of deceased sheikhs, Sufi saints, and best of all the Prophet himself. Sufi disciples were required to report their dreams, among other spiritual events, to their masters for interpretation and guidance—this exchange usually being conducted in writing. Furthermore, dream reports were important in confirming an aspirant's ascent to mastership or consecration in sainthood.¹²

“True dreams” were not considered as subjective phenomena but were rather assessed as sacred bestowals, usually in accord with but essentially inde-

10. Major figures, to mention a few in chronological order, were Novalis (Friedrich Hardenberg), Friedrich Schlegel, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Ludwig Tieck, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Emmanuel Nodier, G. H. Schubert, Achim Arnim, Lord Byron, Joseph Eichendorf, Charles Baudelaire, and Gérard de Nerval. Bearing their influences contemporaneously across the Atlantic was Nathaniel Hawthorne, and, forward in time, Victor Hugo. For studies, see B. Taylor and Bain, *Cast of Consciousness*; Dickson and Ward, *Romantic Dreams*; Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming*; James, *Dream, Creativity, and Madness*; Gollin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*; and Jianming Zhou, *Erzählstrategie in der Traumdarstellung*, 305–309, 333–345.

11. See Hermansen, “Dreams and Dreaming”; Sirriyeh, *Dreams and Visions*, chaps. 2–3; and J. Katz, “Dreams and Their Interpretation.”

12. J. Katz, “Dreams and Their Interpretation”; J. Katz, *Dreams, Sufism and Sainthood*, esp. chaps. 1 and 7; and Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary*, chap. 4.

pendent of Islamic legal or scholastic authority. Because of this independence, Sufis continually were criticized and persecuted as bogus, heterodox, even heretical, depending on how extreme the claims of certain visionaries became. Nevertheless, Sufism developed a close association with the Ottoman dynasty (1299–1922), initially via the religion’s earlier merger with Turkic shamanism and later as an instrument of the dynasty’s rulers in augmenting their political charisma as sultans with the religious charisma of Islamic universal caliphs. The latter process, abetted by the rise to political and intellectual prominence of the Sufi Halvetī Order, took place most intensively during the sixteenth century, as the empire was brought by successive conquests to nearly ring the Mediterranean Sea. Also, from early in that century (one thousand years after Muhammad’s lifetime) Muslim excitement grew in anticipation of the appearance of a messiah, the Mahdi, who would prepare the world for Judgment Day—a millennial belief affirmed in Sufism.¹³ Mythologizing dream lore was projected back onto the dynasty’s founder, Osmān I (d. 1324?), Ottoman historiography liberally employed dream material in chronicling the sixteenth-century sultans, and Sultan Murād III (r. 1574–1595) sanguinely used a series of written dream reports to his Sufi spiritual master to insinuate his ascent, through a hierarchy of Halvetī dream interpretation, to the supreme status of a Sufi gnostic.¹⁴

Extending well beyond the spheres of dynastic image making and master-disciple relations, this atmosphere encouraged the inclusion of dream narratives in the growing practice of autobiographical writing—journals, diaries, notebooks, travelogues, etcetera—among the highly literate, whose numbers burgeoned with the personnel needs of the empire. Especially in the seventeenth century, their lives were sorely affected as the whole empire was shaken by the decades-long crisis of drastically colder temperatures across Eurasia.¹⁵ From nameless court scribes who jotted down their dreams on scrap paper, to introspective sheikhs like ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha’rānī (1493–1565), to dedicated journal keepers such as the multi-talented, peripatetic Evliya Çelebi (1611–ca. 1683), to the revered jurist, thinker, and author ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (1641–1731), mid-Ottoman writers, especially when distressed or undecided, looked to their dreams for comfort, inspiration, and direction.¹⁶ In the words of Dror Ze’evi, “Ottoman culture may be described

13. Resonant processes, with Sufi underpinnings, also took place within the competing empires to the Ottomans’ east, first the Safavid, then the Mughal. See Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, esp. chaps. 3 and 6. On the influence of the Halvetī Order in mid-Ottoman times, see Curry, *Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought*, pt. 1.

14. Hagen, “Dreaming ‘Osmāns”; and Felek, “(Re)creating Image and Identity.”

15. On the “Ottoman tragedy” of 1618–1683, see Parker, *Global Crisis*, chap. 7.

16. See Fleischer, “Secretaries’ Dreams”; J. Katz, “An Egyptian Sufi”; Dankoff, *Ottoman Mentality*; and Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary*.

as a ‘dream culture’ in the sense that, true or imaginary, every change in daily life was believed to have had a counterpart in dreams or to possess an otherworldly dimension. People seem to have used dreams for introspection, to interpret the past, to anticipate the future, and to calculate their moves. Dream lore was a unifying discourse, uniting people in a bond of shared experience, knitting together insights from politics, medicine, and religion.”¹⁷

Looking far to the west of Ottoman domains in the mid-seventeenth century, we find political strife in England—the civil wars between parliamentarians and royalists, the execution, exile, and restoration of monarchs, the Cromwellian Protectorate, and eventually the Glorious Revolution of 1688—hastening the emigration of colonists to North America, especially religious dissenters from the Anglican Church of England such as Puritans, Anabaptists, and Quakers (Society of Friends). There, they faced both old and new tensions over religious and state politics transplanted from Old to New England, over community governance and cohesion, over compliance with strict moral demands, and over relations with various “Indian” tribes.

The Quakers among them were regarded as heretical by the majority Puritans for rejecting Puritan doctrinal and political authority in favor of meetings in which any member could testify to his or her struggles or progress in realizing God through Christ. They also were disparaged by the more skeptical Puritans—even equated with the heathens—for their frequent and serious inclusion of personal dreams among their unmediated experiences of God’s presence, guidance, and will. Early Quaker dream reports in America (a large percentage by women) usually were delivered orally at meetings. But many also were written down—by the dreamers themselves in letters, journals, and diaries, by listeners at meetings for personal edification or to share with others not present, and by itinerant ministering Friends—and recorded in copybooks and in Quaker publications, which were prime means for enhancing the solidarity and defining the mission of this well-schooled community of believers. Though Quaker dream testimonies became less prophetic over time, they remained a vital part of Quaker religious life well into the nineteenth century.¹⁸ In this case, as in the contemporaneous Ottoman and Chinese empires, increased valorization of the spontaneous, interior, mental-emotional experience of highly literate, expressive individuals fostered widespread dream reportage in various forms of self-writing.

17. *Producing Desire*, 107.

18. Gerona, *Night Journeys*. See also Plane, *Dreams and the Invisible World*, esp. chap. 3. On American colonists’ dreams in the latter part of the eighteenth century, see Sobel, *Teach Me Dreams*.

In the creedal traditions of every civilization I have studied—the Chinese, Islamic, and Euro-American—one finds a similar trichotomy of opinion about dreams: they mostly are residues of waking-state thoughts or by-products of bodily processes during sleep; they sometimes are caused by demonic/satanic forces; and, very rarely and only in persons of extraordinary spiritual cultivation or blessedness, they may be divinely inspired. Such a trichotomy arises from common observations as well as from philosophical, folkloric, and doctrinal sources. But a major factor in its perdurance also has been the self-interest of the authority figures in each tradition—the priests, venerated teachers, sheikhs, etcetera—whose responsibility it has been to protect their respective creeds against challenges to orthodoxy from the random mental effusions of neophytes. Even the impressively egalitarian Quakers had their means of disciplining oneiric anarchism and limiting the circulation of overly outlandish dream reports.¹⁹ Yet clear lines were difficult to draw, especially when dreams proved to be powerful motivators among adherents.

In the case of China, the following two examples are from religious contexts that otherwise are not addressed in this book: the formative stage of Highest Clarity (Shangqing) Daoism in the fourth to sixth centuries and the Jesuit mission of the seventeenth. There is some basis to the view that the founders of Highest Clarity—the calligrapher and visionary Yang Xi (330–ca. 375) and the editor and transmitter of Yang's *Declarations of the Perfected* (*Zhen'gao*), the great Daoist master and polymath Tao Hongjing (456–536)—esteemed intentional waking-state visions over uncontrolled dreams as modes of divine visualization.²⁰ This is reflected in the first quarter of the diary-like record of revelations (emulative of Yang Xi's) written by Tao's young, fervent disciple Zhou Ziliang (497–516), which Tao also transmitted, under the title *Master Zhou's Records of His Communications with the Unseen* (*Zhoushi mingtong ji*). Therein, at the end of *juan* 1, Tao pointedly notes that most of Zhou's visions came in his waking hours.²¹ Yet in the remainder of Zhou's record, dream visitations steadily increase to the point that, by the end, all of his communications with Daoist deities are in dreams—contrary to the supposed hierarchy of visualization in Highest Clarity teachings. Zhou's subsequent suicide by potion at age nineteen, out of the belief that he had been summoned to assume a celestial post,

19. Gerona, *Night Journeys*, 28, 33–40.

20. See Miller, *Way of Highest Clarity*, chap. 3. Yang's dream records in the *Zhen'gao* are minor relative to his visionary narrations, and they are relegated to a posterior position (*juan* 17–18). Briefly on Tao, Yang, and the *Zhen'gao*, see *ET*, 2:968–971, 1147–1148, 1248–1250, respectively. Ambiguity about the status of dreaming in religious Daoism has been remarked upon by scholars who have studied other texts as well: Fu-shih Lin, “Religious Taoism and Dreams”; and Ong, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 102–108.

21. Zhou Ziliang, *Shūshi meitsūki kenkyū*, 72. The *Zhoushi mingtong ji* also is introduced and partially translated in Lopez, *Religions of China*, 188–202.

was so impressive, however, that Tao was moved to edit, annotate, and prefatorily introduce his disciple's accounts for presentation to the emperor. As a result, *Master Zhou's Records* came to rival the *Declarations* as a Daoist inspirational text.

One and one-half millennia later in a very different religious environment, we find a remarkably similar course of affairs. Giulio Aleni (1582–1649), perhaps the most important early Jesuit missionary in China after the pioneering Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), followed the policy of the Society of Jesus in teaching Renaissance Aristotelian thought as an adjunct to his Christian message. This included a rationalistic view of sleep and dream that allowed little room for the possibility of holy dreams, even in the devout. Indeed, Ronnie Hsia finds only one personal dream recorded by a Jesuit in the whole history of the order's mission in China from 1582 to 1773—that of Ricci himself in a journal.²² Yet it was Aleni's fate to be resident, during the last posting of his life, in a region of China, maritime Fujian Province, that exuded special enthusiasm for religious dreams. There, Aleni had to at least tolerate a virtual cult of sainthood focused on dream ministrations from a certain Zhang Shi. This young man, as an assiduous convert of just seventeen *sui*, was baptized as “Michael” by Aleni in 1621 and died in 1623 after a period of penitential asceticism. Perhaps because of skepticism toward dreams in the doctrines propagated by the mission, the visionary encounters with God that brought Zhang cultic renown were recorded in Jesuit sources as having occurred in ambiguous states of consciousness during times of acute illness. Yet the religious psychology of Zhang's home area, Quanzhou, where he was buried, unambiguously took dreaming as the main medium of communication with his salvific soul.²³

Such ambivalence between principle and experience and such ambiguity about states of consciousness are but part of what I call the “contrarities of dreaming,” which frustrate systematic study and exposition but must be grappled with as constituting the dynamics of dream sensibility in philosophy, religion, literature, and people's intimate lives. Dreams rank among our most elusive, ephemeral experiences. They are hard to comprehend or remember, yet certain dreams, while perhaps difficult to articulate, make indelible imprints on our memories. Things in dreams are not objectively actual, but they may actually affect us, both psychologically and somatically, more than anything we encounter while awake. Dream content notoriously lacks logic yet seems compelling, even urgent, to us until—

22. R. Hsia, “Dreams and Conversions,” (1) 223–225. Briefly on Aleni, see *DMB*, 1:2–6. For an account of Ricci's dream, in which a Godlike figure encouraged Ricci to renew his efforts to gain residence in the Ming capitals, see Trigault, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 273–274.

23. Erik Zürcher, in Aleni et al., *Kouduo richao*, 87–91; R. Hsia, “Dreams and Conversions,” 232–238; Yunjing Xu, “Seeking Redemption,” 125–151. For primary documents, see *Faguo guojia tushuguan*, 12:407–501.

and sometimes even long after—we wake up. While the nonsense factor looms large, so does our sense of something profoundly true in our dreams, truer than the truths we pursue in waking-state cogitations. Dreams may be mostly illusory, but they carry a mystique that can either reinforce or subvert orthodoxies. Many dream-spheres are fuzzy, while some scenes and images are palpably vivid—“more real than reality.” We often recognize continuities from our waking experiences of a day to our dream experiences of a subsequent night, yet the dream state is discontinuous with other states of consciousness, not recognizing any but its own.

Such contrarities are reflected in the wide semantic range of *meng*, the most common Chinese word/character for “dream,” which often is used metonymically for “sleep.” Apart from literally denoting a dream, in Ming-Qing times it was used, much as it is in present-day Chinese and other modern languages, to connote a foolish, unreasonable, unfounded expectation, as in “You must be dreaming!” And the same character, pronounced alliteratively with an altered tone, *měngměng*, was used to characterize half-witted incomprehension.²⁴ Conversely, *meng* often did and still does mean an ardent, clear-eyed hope for something achievable—as in the “China Dream” of renewed civilizational greatness. In late-imperial parlance, less so than in today’s, it added emphasis to assertions of non-existence, impossibility, or vast improbability, such as “I’ve never even dreamed of such [an absurd] thing.” Yet it also was used to suggest a depth of fond remembrance for real persons or places, as in “I’ve been dream-thinking of you,” meaning “I miss you,” and “dreaming of home,” meaning “homesick.” And especially in literature, *meng* has borne an air of sadness or wistfulness over something or someone wonderful now lost or left behind.

Scholars who have occasion to think seriously about dreaming often remark upon such countervailing senses.²⁵ I have yet to see, however, a broad consideration of how these contrarities are emboldened when developments—usually surprising or disorienting—within certain cultures-in-time conspire to heighten people’s sensitivity to or appreciation of paradox. One might well posit that premodern China, influenced through millennia by the enlightening antinomies of Buddhism and the liberating absurdities of Daoism, was likely to exhibit such phases and that an affinity for paradox has been a heretofore underappreciated factor in the extraordinary richness of Chinese intellectuals’ discussions of dreams and dreaming. The late Ming and early Qing period instantiates this to a great extent, not only in learned, doctrinal, poetic, and fictional literatures, but perhaps most distinctly in the varieties of self-writing that proliferated then.

24. In modern usage, this character is normally written by adding the heart/mind radical.

25. Among sinologists, see, for instance, Plaks, “. . . But a Dream,” 3–5; or Faure, *Rhetoric of Immediacy*, 214–215.

It has become banal to point out that no one (perhaps excepting fMRI analysts) can directly study anyone else's dreams; to date, we can study only what people say or write about them. This largely exercises our skills in interpreting linguistic acts, in a manner no different than our everyday interpretation of anyone's subjective statement. For instance, when asked to join others for lunch, someone says, "No, I have a headache today. Sorry." Does she really have a headache? Is that really the reason she declines lunch, and is she really sorry? Does she usually accept or decline such invitations? How important is the occasion? Is she known to be less than straightforward in personal relations? Does her facial expression or tone of voice suggest that she is being facetious, coy, aloof, evasive? In the end, does it matter whether she's being candid, or whether we "read" her accurately? Perhaps not in this one case, but in aggregate the comprehensibility of societies and cultures to their constituents depends on such quotidian hermeneutics.

Reading linguistic acts like dream-writings from four hundred years ago, and from a civilization not one's own, requires knowledge and skills out of the ordinary, but, minus the opportunity for direct visual and auditory observation, it is pretty much the same interpretive task. What is the writer's pattern of relevant behavior—his intellectual profile, scholarly coterie, reputed personality, literary style? Does he often or seldom mention dreams in his oeuvre? in major or minor pieces? in hackneyed or idiosyncratic phrasings? in a jocular, serious, or wry tone? What was his situation, concern, or mood at the time when he wrote of a certain dream? Did he write immediately upon waking, sometime the following day, or when prompted by something years later? Does he follow a regimen of recording his dreams or routinely share them with confidants? Of all the dreams he may have recalled, why did he write about this one in this way? All writing has an implied audience, even if it is an audience of one, the writer. How does that sense of readership condition the textualization of dream-memories? If the dream element in a given piece of writing is convincing only as a conceit, or is plainly set forth as a literary trope or motif, what did the writer seek to achieve by using a dream device, rather than some other? If the text is an exposition on or doctrinal discussion of dreaming, how does the writer place his views in relation to past lines of argument or instruction? These sorts of questions must lead any attempt to describe how and explain why an especially thick concentration of well-known intellectuals employed dreams in their writing during a certain period of time.

Does it matter what people of the remote past thought about their dreams? It certainly should matter to those who study intellectual-cultural history, primarily because dream-writing in general brings us closer than any other kind of writing to the subjective consciousness of the highly literate, who collectively set the major trends of their respective civilizations. Furthermore, without exploring dreams, the pursuit of what has been variously called "history from within," "history of the

embodied self,” or “neurohistory,” that is, the study of mutual influence between human minds and historical contexts as informed by neuro-cognitive science,²⁶ must fall short of aspiration.

Dream records of course are hardly transparent windows on raw consciousness. Being constituted of language, which itself is a big set of conventions, such writings are affected by the expectations and associations of the genres in which they are written (some genres being more affective than others in this respect), and they exhibit some patterns and clichés peculiar to dream-talk as well. For instance, it seems that “sweat fell like rain” from a lot of Chinese men when they awoke from disturbing dreams. So conventional, moreover, that I have not bothered to address it further in this work is the hagiographical attribution of an auspicious, supernatural dream to one parent or the other upon the conception or birth of a Great Man. The force of this convention, born of the mystique of dreaming, was so pervasive that we find it ubiquitous in exemplary biographies of eminent monks and Daoist adepts, and even occasionally in Confucianesque *autobiographies*.²⁷

Despite this caveat, in the case of premodern China, where, outside Buddhism, consciousness per se was very seldom a subject of direct speculation or investigation, I submit that dream-writings can indirectly contribute to a history of consciousness, not in the sense of what people were conscious *of* over time (such as class identity) but in the sense of what people thought consciousness *was* and how they experienced it. Delving into this can illuminate how they felt and understood themselves existentially, which underlay other actions and endeavors. Consciousness at its most primal is a sense of being an observant entity, and it builds and modifies selfhood by the agency of narrating what is observed.²⁸ Attempts to narrate that most ineffable kind of observation, of what occurs to us in dreams, expose this process at the most elemental level that is accessible to others and therefore on which self interacts with society. So dream-talk can give us valuable information on how people probed awareness itself, under what circumstances they were moved to do so, and how their evolving selves negotiated narratologically with their sociocultural milieux.

26. See Burman, “History from Within?”; and L. Hunt, “Self and Its History.” For a critique, see McGrath, “Historiography, Affect, and the Neurosciences.”

27. Take, for instance, the self-compiled annalistic autobiography by Wang Siren (1574–1646), *Wang Jizhong xiansheng zixu nianpu*, 1b. See, on Daoist hagiography, Komjathy, *Way of Complete Perfection*, chap. 6, and on Buddhist hagiography, Kieschnick, *Eminent Monk*; however, neither particularly discusses dreams. On the functions of dreams in the sacred biographies of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist leaders, see Young, *Dreaming in the Lotus*, wherein many but not all observations could also apply to Chinese Buddhist biography.

28. Fireman, McVay, and Flanagan, *Narrative and Consciousness*, introduction.

Above, I use the words “interact” and “negotiate” pointedly, since any dream account, whether intentionally true, embellished, or fictional, is both conditioned by and conditions its cultural matrix. Carol Rupprecht and Kelly Bulkley have jointly commented on how the social sciences have shown us “the great extent to which the assumptions of a given culture shape the way dreams are experienced, reported, interpreted, and brought into relation with waking life.” Such findings, they continue, “require reexamination of the dream theories that have insisted on the universality of dreaming processes, on the timelessness and the cross-cultural continuities of dream meaning and dream content.” However, they assert, “At the same time that this social science research testifies to the somewhat determining effect on dreaming of the psychological, social, epistemological, and religious assumptions of a culture, it reveals the force of the reverse process: dreams also shape cultures. By critiquing current social conditions, envisioning new possibilities, motivating individual and collective action, and in myriad other ways, dreams have an impact that often changes the cultural paradigm in which they occur.”²⁹

The following chapters demonstrate, I hope, that during the dream arc of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in China, some human universals *are* suggested, not in the meanings or imagery of dreams, but in the sometimes contrary associations that dreams seem to evoke in all people, as articulated above. I also aim to show both sides of the reciprocal process that occurs between culture and dreams: how dream writers selectively used the blueprints and construction materials provided by China’s exceptionally long and rich history of thinking and telling about dreams, but also how they continued to make that history while infusing the general history of their time with a degree of subjective acuity that we seldom see documented in premodern sources. The special salience of dreaming and its attendant associations in the late-Ming and early-Qing period did not continue into the eighteenth century as a major current among leading intellectuals. But, as discussed in my epilogue, it did leave legacies in some dimensions of literati culture and, through one particular work of fiction, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, expanded the semantic range of *meng* in Chinese minds.

29. Rupprecht and Bulkley, “Reading Yourself to Sleep,” 3.

Continuities in the Dream Lives of Ming Intellectuals

THE FLORESCENCE OF ATTENTION to dreams and dreaming that arose in the late Ming did not come about *de novo*. By that time, ideas, beliefs, conceits, practices, and usages related to dreaming had proliferated richly in Chinese culture for millennia. Some had fallen by the historical wayside. For instance, the frequent consultation by rulers with court dream interpreters was no longer seen, the official position of dream-seer having disappeared early in the Common Era. This practice was known to Ming intellectuals only through their study of ancient records such as the *Zhou Rites* (*Zhouli*) and *Zuo's Chronicle*. Other associations between dreams and the mantic arts were still visible but mostly on the margins of the intelligentsia. Leading figures in the culture, while often practicing divination based on the “Confucian” *Change Classic* (*Yijing*, aka *Zhou Yi*), seldom looked to divinatory authorities—living or written—for explanations of their dreams. Oneiric interpretation increasingly was a matter to be pondered individually, perhaps in discussion with intimates. Also, the venerable literary tradition of writing dream narratives as long “poems of excursions among transcendents” (*youxian shi*) in the “rhapsody” (*fu*) genre was upheld by some in Ming times,¹ but by the end of the dynasty newer literary trends and tastes had become more salient. In this chapter I discuss, first, received notions about consciousness that underlay ideas about dreaming and the texts about or involving dreams that were most frequently alluded to by writers in late-Ming and early-Qing China. I then highlight a handful of noteworthy currents in the great stream of contemporaneous Chinese dream culture that are best seen as continuities rather than as emergent factors in the particular burgeoning of “dream”—that is, dream-related thoughts and expressive means—in the waking minds and methods of literati.

1. Zhu Guangqian, “Youxian shi.” For an early-Ming example, see “Menglian fu,” in Jin Shi, *Juefeizhai wenji*, 1.1b–2b; for a middle-Ming example, see “Meng yu Di fu,” in Wang Jiushi, *Meipo ji*, 1.1a–2b.

Perduring Ancient Notions about Consciousness and Dreaming

Patent to common, primordial observation was that dreams occurred to *living* people's minds—however “mind” might be construed. Thus, ideas about dreaming needed to be congruent with a given culture's understanding of human life within its basic ontology. In the case of China, this invariably meant interpreting human physiological and behavioral phenomena in terms of the polar yet complementary sets of modalities called *yin* and *yang*, which combine to form the dynamic patterns in all things, and also in terms of more opaque notions of spirit or numen (*hun*, *ling*, *shén*, and compounds thereof) which served to explain human consciousness. The equally pliant, definition-shy term *qi* (“ether,” “pneuma,” “breath,” “vital force,” “finest matter,” etc.) was used to express the sense of energy in the constituent stuff of all living and non-living entities.²

From earliest recorded times in China, these concepts underlay a plethora of ideas about waking and non-waking consciousness (i.e., waking-state thoughts and perceptions, and sleep mentations and sensations), which I have grossly but perhaps helpfully reduced to the “partite” and the “phasic” in figure 1.³ In the partite conception, humans become and remain alive by virtue of union between a terrestrial soul, *po*, the source of cohesion and acuity in each individual's unique physical body (*shēn*, *xíng*, *tí*), and an aerial soul, *hun*, which bears the individual's faculty of intuition and consciousness. (Though both souls were usually thought to be amorphous, notions of homunculi were not entirely absent [see fig. 7].)

According to this conception, when we are awake and lucid (i.e., in a basically *yang* state), our *hun* and *po* fully adhere and thereby enable the bodily senses to communicate smoothly with the mind. However, in sleep (a *yin* state) the two “souls” part temporarily, interrupting or obscuring input from the senses but also allowing the *hun* to experience things different from or beyond the scope of waking-state perception.⁴ This freeing of the *hun* from normal physical limitations served to explain the extraordinary abilities and disabilities, bendings of time and space, visits to netherworlds, and communications with deceased or noumenal figures that people experience while asleep—that is, in dreams. Nightmares and disturbing dreams often were interpreted as exposure of one's consciousness to avatars of the forces of justice or fate in dimensions of the cosmos normally outside direct perception. Unconscious or non-lucid states other than dream-sleep—such as swoons, comas, or drunken stupors—also were understood in this way, though the *hun* in those cases

2. For introductory essays on *qi* and *yin/yang*, see *ECP*, 615–617 and 846–847, respectively.

3. This diagram (in which the egg shapes bear no significance) is based on a general perusal of Liu Wenying's seminal work, *Zhongguo gudai yishi guanlian*.

4. *Ibid.*, chap. 1; Wu Kang, *Zhongguo gudai menghuan*, chap. 3; Zhuo Songsheng, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 157–176; Liu Wenying and Cao Tianyu, *Meng yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 22–30.

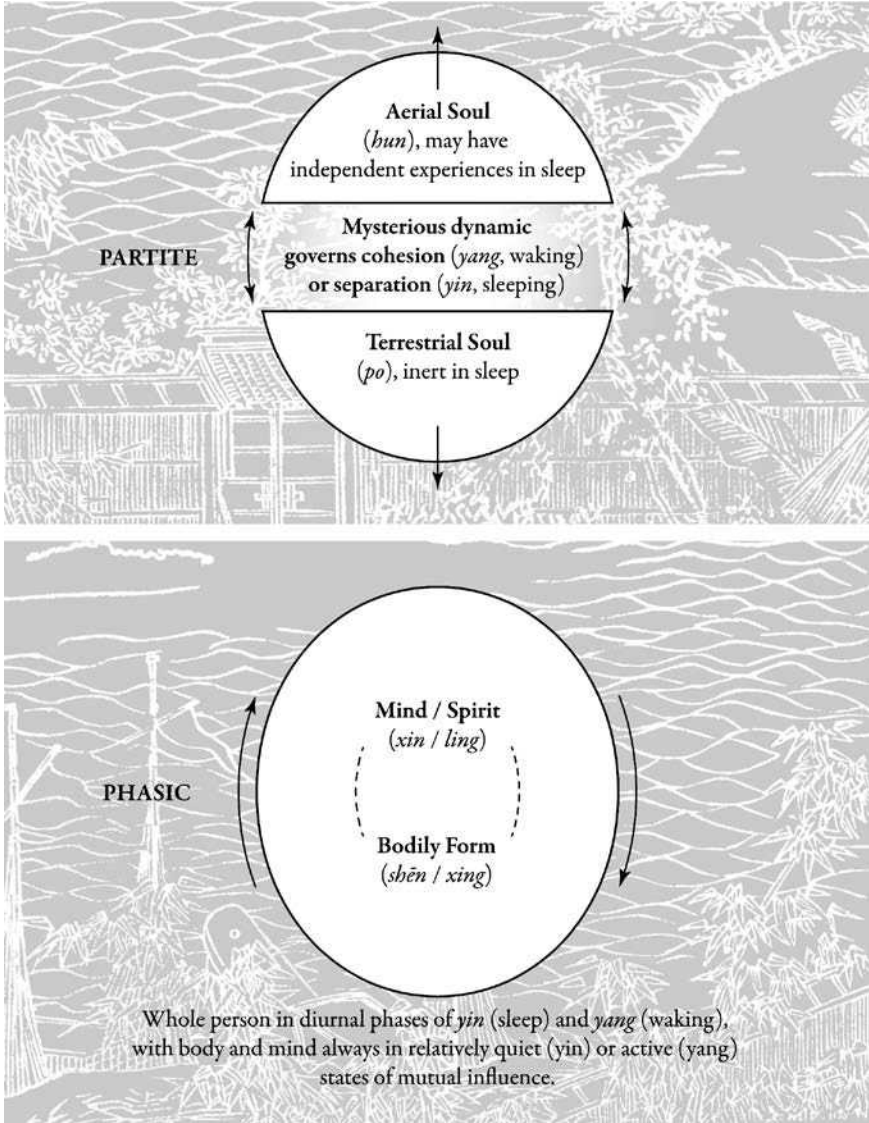


FIGURE 1. Two basic premodern notions of individual consciousness. In both cases, mercurial *shēn* may be synonymous with *hun*, *xin*, or *ling*, or the term may refer to the unfathomable operation of *yin* and *yang*.

was thought to be inert or impaired. Death resulted when the *hun* and *po* failed to re-adhere after sleep or some cleaving trauma. Thus, analogies between sleep and death arose early in Chinese texts.⁵

The idea of a sentient component to each human being, one which could leave the body and roam in extra-mundane spheres of existence, was especially congenial to those who liked to think and write about communing with ghosts, spirits, and deities, who yearned to explore beyond—or escape temporarily from—worldly concerns, whose imaginations were stimulated by the idea of spirit travel, or who were fascinated by the plasticity of the human physical and spiritual condition.⁶ An important example is the affinity between belief in the partibility of *hun* from *po* and the goal in religious Daoism to foster and purify an inner, second, potentially immortal self by inducing mystical, out-of-body experiences.⁷

Probably originating in China's prehistoric, shamanic priesthoods, this *hun-po* relation made its earliest extant appearance in a text of enduring import to Chinese intellectuals, *Zuo's Chronicle*, which amply records the employment of dream diviners in the Zhou royal courts going back to the eighth century BCE.⁸ Such seers either interpreted the dreams of rulers or entered into dreams themselves in order to search the netherspheres at the behest of royalty. The latter practice became immortalized in a famous poem attributed to Song Yu (ca. 298–ca. 222 BCE), “Summoning a Soul” (Zhaohun), in *Elegies of Chu* (*Chuci*), one of Chinese civilization's two most ancient collections of poetry. Therein the Lord on High (Shangdi) commands a holy shaman to lure back, through dream communication, the truant aerial soul of a sick, presumably unresponsive king.⁹ Contemporaneously, however, the Daoist classic *Master Zhuang* (*Zhuangzi*) by Zhuang Zhou (late 4th to early 3rd century BCE) and his school was liberating from shamanic association the idea of one's *hun* being active during sleep. Toward the beginning of the most dream-relevant chapter in this, China's most notable dream text, we find the oft-cited statement “In sleep, one's aerial soul is engaged; upon waking, one's body opens [to sensory contact],”¹⁰ with no reference to any priestly agency. The above-cited

5. Yü Ying-shih, “Oh Soul, Come Back!” 370–378; Richter, *Bild des Schlafes*, 196–209.

6. Fu Zhengu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 193–204. On such inclinations in Chinese thought (with no specific reference to dreaming), see Bauer, *China and the Search for Happiness*, 32–43 and chap. 3.

7. On methods of elevation in middle-era Daoism, see Eskildsen, “Mystical Ascent.”

8. See, for instance, *Zuozhuan*, 7th year of Duke Zhao, sec. 2.

9. On *Chuci*, the transmitted content of which dates from the second century CE, see *IC*, 347–349, 352; and *CH*, 223–230. David Hawkes, translator of *Chuci*, surmises that “Zhaohun” was composed during the reign of a certain king of the state of Chu in the mid-third century BCE (*Ch'u Tz'ü*, 102). For discussion of the “*Chuci* tradition,” see W. Li, “Dream Visions of Transcendence,” 64–69.

10. *Zhuangzi*, Inner Chapters, “Qiwulun,” sec. 2 (*Zhuangzi jinzhū jinyi*, 1:46).

textual loci were incipient of the long-running romance of Chinese intellectuals with soul- or spirit-encounters in dreams, which often were sublime but also could be unsettling.

A dream account in a long, elegiac prose-poem written by Song Maocheng (1569–1620) in memory of his first wife, née Yang, is a late-Ming example of the unsettling kind of encounter. This young woman had died of weakness and a dose of bad ginseng after giving birth to Song's first son—crucially, while her husband was far away on one of his many footloose sojourns. This elegy is unusual for its time in simulating the archaic modalities of *Elegies of Chu* and in its feigned adoption, at one point, of a dream diviner's persona. Yet it befits the late Ming in that the author is not the righteous one who protests being spurned and wronged (as in all the *Elegies of Chu* poems) but is, rather, a remorseful party who has neglected and wronged the object of his devotion. Song tells us in the elegy that, while traveling in the far north, he had a worrisome dream-premonition and consulted a soothsayer. He then writes that, filled with dread as nightfall came again,

[I] made a circuitous journey in a divinatory dream. As [the spirits of] my forebears, in utmost benevolence, undulated through clouds like flowing robes, [my wife's] soul—by maternal command and speechlessly [as though] offended—condescended to draw nigh. Like a diplomat,¹¹ keeping her feelings to herself, she sat in a palanquin under the torchlight of a hall. Then the room turned dark, and she uttered these parting words: “Bedridden, I took inferior medicine. [Now,] beside Comet Bridge at the [departure point of] the Pavilion of the Setting Sun,¹² even the finest mount would find it hard to proceed.¹³ I have descended from my small boat and knelt long to present this announcement of death.” Molten heat scalding my bowels, heart dissolving and face moist [with tears], nose stinging [with grief] and brain suffering [with sorrow], I left my slippers behind in [the sphere where] people live and ran after the roaming spirit that had made the announcement, [implored her] to heed the round sweetcakes [of life].¹⁴ [But] no distant aroma was emitted [in response], and at that, I wanted to die.

11. Alluded to here is Chiji, an important site in the ancient state of Jin for the making and breaking of diplomatic covenants. See *Zuozhuan*, 1st and 12th years of Duke Cheng.

12. In ancient times this pavilion, Xiyangting, was where rulers sent off emissaries to far-distant places. In literary usage, “Xiyangting” came to mean a place of long-term or permanent parting.

13. Jisi and Jingfan, named here by Song, were marvelous, fleet horses of legendary antiquity and the Three Kingdoms period, respectively.

14. This is a direct allusion to “Zhaohun.” Song Maocheng's sobriquet, Youqing, derives from the first line of this poem.

Song then histrionically beseeches the Lord on High to kill him malevolently by any of ten imaginative means.¹⁵ Congruent with the partite notion of consciousness, this fraught encounter, over hundreds of miles and between the permanently departing aerial soul of a recently deceased wife and her absent husband, is effectuated by the temporary flight of the latter's aerial soul in a nocturnal dream. Such testimony is not surprising in a contemporaneously lesser-known figure like Song Maocheng, who had an affinity for the mantic arts and readily believed in things noumenal.

The phasic view, on the other hand, appealed to those who were not entirely comfortable with talk of ghosts, spirits, or deities, who held a more down-to-earth attitude toward life, or who placed hope for spiritual renovation on individual interiority and moral-ethical self-cultivation. In this conception, the living individual is an integral whole, a unique endowment of *qi* which, in its inseparable physical and psychical properties, follows the *yin-yang* patterns of, for instance, rest and activity, sleep and waking, fogginess and clarity. Body and mind go together through diurnal phases of waking and sleep, and within those two phases, respectively, they enter subphases of relative rest and activity. Thus, dreamlessness and dreaming were understood as the relative quietude and activity of the mind within a phase, sleep, that is basically one of bodily and mental rest.

In this view, dreams generally were attributed to commonsensical causes, such as physical effects during sleep or thoughts and experiences during the waking phase. Sleep disturbed by bad dreams was laid to disruption of or instability in one's *qi*, which might imply some moral-ethical violation or failure. The terms *hun* and *po* were not eschewed but were used for different functional qualities within one's constituent *qi*, which was thought to remain integral until death.

Canonical evidence that in ancient times at least some dreams were understood as resulting from waking thought goes back to the laconic listing of six kinds of dreams in the *Zhou Rites*, one of which is "thought dreams" (*simeng*).¹⁶ The earliest discursive reflection of the view that dreams basically are internal, mental activities, with no direct causes or effects outside individual subjectivity, appears in the *Balanced Arguments* (*Lunheng*) of the great Latter Han skeptic Wang Chong (27–ca. 100 CE). Wang did allow, however, that in sleep the human spirit (*jingshen*)

15. "Wangfu Yangshi lei youxu," in Song Maocheng, *Jiuyue qianji*, 6.7a. For a full translation, see Struve, "Song Maocheng's Matrixes," appendix. All translations in this book are my own. When I have consulted others, that is noted.

16. Traditionally attributed to the Duke of Zhou (11th century BCE), this "Old Text" did not surface until the second century BCE. It was edited into its transmitted form around the advent of the first century CE. For the "six [kinds of] dreams," see "Chunguan zongbo," *xia*, in *Zhouli jinzhu jinyi*, 258. For discussion, see Liu Wenying, *Meng de mixun*, 215–218; Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 287–289; and Brennan, "Dreams, Divination, and Statecraft," 75–76.

could be especially attuned to cosmic movements such as fate and could generate dream-images out of such non-sensory perceptivity which, though insubstantial, could also be cryptically predictive.¹⁷ After Wang Chong, full development of what I call the “phasic notion” of consciousness and dreaming awaited three of the most important figures in the development of Neo-Confucianism during the eleventh and twelfth centuries—Zhang Zai (1020–1077), Cheng Yi (1033–1107), and Zhu Xi (1130–1200)—whose collective influence on intellectuals of the later-imperial era can scarcely be overstated.¹⁸ The following excerpts from the writings of these three figures illustrate congruities in how they placed consciousness and dreaming within their naturalistic, *qi*-based cosmology:

[Zhang Zai:] A day and a night indeed are one breath of Heaven; [seasons of] heat and cold are indeed Heaven’s day and night. In Heaven’s Way, the change in *qi* from spring to fall is like [the change] in engagement of people’s *hun* from waking to sleep.¹⁹

[Cheng Yi:] People’s waking and sleeping is like Heaven’s day and night. The *yin* and *yang*, activity and quietude [of waking and sleeping accord with] the principle of opening and closing. . . . What we see in dreams simply are things that previously have been in our minds. On any given day something may suddenly activate a response from those [previous thoughts], or one’s *qi* may become resonant with that of something else, and [the stimulus] afterward emits [a dream experience].²⁰

[Zhu Xi:] Waking and sleeping are the activity and quietude of the mind. Having and not having [waking] thoughts, likewise, are activity and quietude within

17. Wang Chong, *Lunheng*, “Ming lu,” “Qiguai,” “Lunsi,” “Siwei,” “Jiyao,” and “Dinggui” secs. For discussion, see Zhuo Songsheng, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 373–382; and Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 41–55. Wang Chong’s contemporary Wang Fu (ca. 85–163 CE) sets forth an influential classification of dreams in the “Menglie” chapter of his *Qianfu lun*. Seven of those ten categories were based on what the dreamer thought about or dwelled upon, his or her age and social status, personality or character, state of health, and bodily responses to climatic and seasonal changes. As with Wang Chong, this predominantly psycho-naturalistic view did not prevent Wang Fu from seeing dreams as auspicious or inauspicious. For discussion, see Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 66–76; and Zhuo Songsheng, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 382–387.

18. For synoptic essays on the thought of these three figures, see *ECP*, 864–869, 43–46, and 895–902, respectively. For detailed discussions of their thought on dreaming, see Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 85–115.

19. Zhang Zai, *Zhangzi zhengmeng zhu*, 1.14a.

20. In Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *Er Cheng ji*, 1:198, 202 (*juan* 18).

the active [phase], while having and not having dreams, accordingly, are activity and quietude within the quiet [phase].²¹

As the above quote from Cheng Yi suggests, the phasic notion tends to correlate with an emphasis on the memory content of dreams and the idea that dreaming is an extension of waking thought into the sleep state. The old saying that “southerners do not dream of camels and northerners do not dream of elephants” exemplifies this view that people dream only of what they have experienced in waking life.²² As for the observation that people often *do* dream of things they have not experienced, this became ascribed to the familiar mental faculty of associative thinking (*lianxiang*), by which, in a famous imaginary instance, “a shepherd lay down to rest. From his sheep he thought of horses; from horses he thought of carriages; from carriages he thought of canopies; from canopies he thought of the kind used by great ministers and generals [who were accompanied by] drums and pipes. So [the shepherd] then dreamed he had become a prince or duke. From [the status of] shepherd to that of royalty is indeed far. Why should we, then, be perplexed at the distance between [waking] thoughts and their associations [in dreams]?”²³

Often, also, associative thoughts in dreams were related to the partial, non-lucid penetration of sensory stimuli into the sleep state, such as dreaming of a waterfall and waking to the sound of rain falling from nearby eaves, or responding in sleep to somatic conditions, such as lacking air under a quilt and dreaming of being smothered. An example of this train of thought appears in the collected writings of Wang Tingxiang (1474–1544), a long-serving official and independent-minded Neo-Confucian thinker. He states that there are two kinds of dreams, those that are stirred (*gan*) by bodily conditions during sleep, and those that are stirred by thoughts we have before sleep. Regarding the first, note that Wang closely relates mind and body through the general condition of one’s *qi*, as follows:

21. “Da Chen Anqing,” *Huian xiansheng Zhu Wengong wenji*, juan 57, in Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi quanshu*, 23:2715.

22. This phrase is commonly attributed to Ye Ziqi (fl. ca. 1378) because it occurs in his *Caomuzi* (“Gouxuan pian,” 2.3a), but it is clear in that context that Ye is quoting and discussing an aphorism.

23. “Mengzhai ming bing xu,” in Su Shi, *Su Shi wenji*, 2:575. This refers to an elliptical but well-known record in the fifth-century *Shishuo xinyu*, “Wenxue” chap., 14th entry, in which Wei Jie asks Yue Ling (Yue Guang) about dreams. Later writers frequently referenced Yue Ling’s remark, “No one has ever dreamed of riding a carriage into a rat hole, nor of pounding edibles but eating the iron pestle, because there could be no thought to initiate such associations.” For a critical explication of this entry, see Nan Shengqiao, “‘Xiang yin shuo’ zhengyi.” See also Shuen-fu Lin, “Through a Window,” 21–24.

If one's *qi* is clear and vigorous, then [one dreams of] roaming the heavens, whereas if it is thick and turbid, then one's body wants to fly upward but instead drops down. If one's mind is open and calm, then one will [dream of] traveling in a vast and quiet natural expanse, whereas if it is troubled and pressured, then one treads cautiously in dark caves. The [dream] delusion of being harassed by a snake [comes from] entanglement in one's robe sash, and the sense of thunder in one's ears results when drum sounds enter [one's sleep]. If hungry [one dreams of] eating one's fill, if satiated then of giving [food to others]. If hot [one dreams of] fire, and if cold then of water—and so forth like this.

As for dreams that arise from thoughts, Wang continues,

If we think over a matter from beginning to end before going to bed, then after we fall asleep, it becomes a dream. So dreams are thoughts, and thoughts [become] dreams. Everything we have experienced in the past, whatever we did the [previous] morning—when entering our dreams, it [all] is stirred by [mental] habits. Things in our dreams that we have never seen or heard are associative stirrings. [For instance,] if one [often] chats about anomalies, then ghosts, spirits, and weird creatures appear; if one views terraces and pavilions, then the gates of heaven and kingly palaces arrive. Regret over [squashing] a frog [underfoot may be] a [dream]-error from having stepped on an eggplant,²⁴ while [a dream of] encountering a woman [may be] brought on by feelings of compassion from a woman's burial. Back and forth, things transform—now a fish, now a person.²⁵ We forget whether we're asleep or awake and [fatuously] speak of dreams within dreams.²⁶ The stirrings of people's [sleeping] minds by waking thoughts are of this sort.

Wang concludes in an attitude fairly typical of the more sober-minded side of the Confucian spectrum, where oneiromancy was generally disapproved: “Now, things in dreams [indeed] are things of the world. [But the way in which soothsayers] trace figures and compare categories, how can [they] fail to [come up with] random correspondences [to which they impute significances]? In short,

24. An allusion to an old Buddhist story that dates at latest from the Song period. See *Gu zunsu yulu*, 32.207b.

25. Probably an allusion to the story “Xue Wei” in *Taiping guangji*. See Li Hanbin, “*Taiping guangji*” *de meng yanjiu*, 151.

26. “Mengzhong shuo meng” is a common expression referring to people who do not realize that their normal, day-to-day consciousness is just as illusory as their nightly dreams. Wang, however, uses the expression here simply to mean muddle-headed.

diffuse and without foundation, [their reckonings] bamboozle us with portents too often.”²⁷

The moral implications of dream contents were of frequent concern to Chinese intellectuals of all stripes, though the moral ontology differed in the partite and phasic models. The consequences of good or bad acts or thoughts tend to come from outside, supernatural sources in the former and to redound inwardly in the latter. This difference aligns with a major issue in late-Ming and early-Qing moral self-cultivation, that of the workings of “stimulus and response” (*gan-ying*)²⁸—to wit, whether one should do good for direct rewards from the realm of ever-vigilant spirits and deities, or whether individuals’ good deeds were their own reward, producing benefits perhaps indirectly by radiating good *qi* into the encompassing community. The dream-life implications of holding opposite viewpoints on this issue may be illustrated by two prominent figures: Gao Panlong (1562–1626), a conservative Neo-Confucian, courageous official, and leader of the Eastern Grove (Donglin) Academy and its namesake political reform movement;²⁹ and the stellar writer, socialite, and patron of famous courtesans Mao Xiang (1611–1693), who in his early years consorted with reformists and later lived respectably as a man of Ming sympathies (*yimin*), avoiding service in the Qing government.³⁰

Gao Panlong was a prominent critic of the merit(-and-demerit) approach to morality, finding it self-serving, mechanistic, and rooted in heterodoxy.³¹ In his widely shared view, consistent with Confucian moral anthropology, goodness is an unself-conscious, inborn disposition, which should be exercised without expectation of recompense. A good man’s immediate reward is an unperturbed heart-and-mind, as exemplified in the following entry, a rare comment on dreaming among Gao’s recorded oral teachings: “Once speech or action deviate from the vacuous clarity of the unoccupied [mind], then it is like water absorbing salt or noodles absorbing oil—one cannot find calm even if one wants to. In life there are no

27. “Yashu,” *xiapian*, 6b–7b, in Wang Tingxiang, *Wangshi jiacang ji*, 5:2534–2536. For other examples in this vein, see Zhuo Songsheng, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 395–399.

28. On *ganying* in this sense, as the moral responsiveness of deities to human actions or plights, that is, as an anthropomorphic form of Chinese belief in “sympathetic resonance,” see Sharf, *Coming to Terms*, 93–97.

29. On Gao’s life and thought, see *DMB*, 1:701–710; and Busch, “Tung-lin Academy,” 121–135.

30. On Mao, see *ECCP*, 1:566–567; and Li Xiaoti, *Zuori dao chengshi*, 81–124.

31. See Brokaw, *Ledgers of Merit and Demerit*, chaps. 1 and 3, for background on the religious system of merit and demerit and one of its core texts, *Taishang ganying pian*, which appeared in the twelfth century but gained wider influence in the late sixteenth. On Gao Panlong’s criticisms, among those of several other prominent late-Ming Confucians, see *ibid.*, 121, 126, 138–145.

transgressive matters that do not [cause] transgressive dreams. If one takes no action contrary to propriety [*li*], all will be without transgression, and the mind will be calm of itself."³²

Mao Xiang, in contrast, drew moral motivation from continual unease over his standing in the purviews of various supernatural entities. During a ten-month period in 1638–1639, Mao Xiang had a series of dreams in which he communicated—sometimes repeatedly—with his deceased grandfather, two ghouls from the underworld, and the city god of his district capital, Rugao, in northern Jiangnan. Those dreams made him acutely anxious that his mother might die, or that his own life and those of his two sons would have to be sacrificed in order to ransom her from the enforcers of the calculus of life spans. But those same dreams, considered by Mao at a further remove in time and correlated with his assiduous prayers to efficacious deities and performance of many thousands of good deeds, also convinced him that he genuinely had been able to alter the course of fate through such dedication and self-sacrifice: his mother recovered from a worrisome breast condition; he lost one son to smallpox but soon was presented with a new baby boy as though in replacement; and Mao himself not only survived but became more firmly committed to a life of philanthropic service to his local community.³³

The contrast drawn above between the partite and phasic notions of consciousness and dreaming is sharp in the abstract, but in the actual dream lives of premodern intellectuals, pure, consistent, self-aware adherence to one or the other of these notions was rare.³⁴ Ideas of *hun* and *po* were so pervasive in Chinese thought that they could not be excluded entirely from discussions of life, death, waking, or dreaming, especially since *hun* and *po*, respectively, were sometimes used as virtual synonyms for *yangqi* and *yingqi*.³⁵ And the term *mengshen* (dream spirit, or dream consciousness), seen occasionally, could assimilate to either the partite or the phasic model. Moreover, within the view that dreams are activities of the mind's *qi* during sleep, there was a pervasive belief that the *qi* of one's mind responds especially acutely to *qi* of like kind in the universe. This made room for the idea that going to sleep with a

32. Gao Panlong, *Gaozi yishu*, 1.11a.

33. "Mengji," in Mao Xiang, *Chaomin wenji*, 4.1a–7a. For discussion, see Li Xiaoti, *Zuori dao chengshi*, 148–151.

34. Take, for example, the bibliophile Lang Ying (1487–1566), who, in different sections of his study notes, evinces views on dreaming that are not explicitly reconciled. He first writes as though convinced that dreams are thought-activities from past experience and present somatic sensings by one's *yangqi* (= *shén*) during sleep. Then he sets forth the *hun-po* theory of death and dreams, finding dreams predictive of individuals' fixed fates (Lang Ying, *Qixiu leigao*, 1:226, 436; 2:660, 684, 698, 704–705, 740).

35. No less a figure than Zhu Xi is an example of the latter. See Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 96–98.

strong desire to know about something in the future would enable resonance of the otherwise unoccupied mind with the extrasensory forces of the *qi* that determined such matters. Thus, knowledge of the future could be obtained through dreams under the phasic notion—as exemplified by the view of Wang Chong above—without aid from the sorts of supernatural entities that often appeared in the partite view. Also, as suggested above, the partite notion tended to accept dream-figures as existents perceived by the liberated *hun* of the sleeper, while the phasic tended to regard them as perhaps symbolic formations in the sleeper’s subjective consciousness. Most common, however, was ambiguity about the reality status of things in dreams, with many writers preferring, one might say, to let that sleeping dog lie.

“Classic” Dream Texts Frequently Referenced by Ming-Qing Writers

In the oeuvre of late-Ming and early-Qing intellectuals, some texts received from the tremendous corpus of Chinese writings about dreams were invoked more often than others, usually because of their relevance to some issue about dreaming in the creedal ambiance, or because certain contents appealed to people’s feelings and imaginations in a time of frustration, discouragement, and despair. Below I proceed in an order that is both chronological and topical, taking us from Confucian to Daoist classics and concluding with two Buddho-Daoist tales that endlessly inspired later works of popular fiction and drama.

Among the thirteen texts that came to be designated as Confucian classics in the Song period, the *Zhou Rites* was most explicit about the appointment of dream diviners to positions in Zhou government, the institutions of which, as a whole, were believed to have effected a golden age of ideal rule. Some Confucians whose minds were open to oneiromancy could, thus, cite the *Rites* chapter “Grand Superior of Sacred Ceremonies” (Chunguan zongbo) for canonical cover. But serious Confucians more commonly cast aspersions on dream divination, both because of Confucius’s advice to respectfully keep ghosts and spirits at a distance while concentrating on affairs of this life,³⁶ and because of the threat that shamanic and otherwise heterodox dream diviners posed to the authority of learned Confucians in society and at court. This problem was dealt with in a way familiar to those who study Confucian classical exegesis: the discomfiting passages were interpreted along lines compatible with Confucian mind cultivation, the diviners themselves sometimes being characterized as men of deep inner reflection who, thus, could understand the subjectively generated dreams of others.³⁷

36. *Lunyu*, “Yongye” and “Xianjin” secs., in *Lunyu jinzhu jinyi*, 87, 167, respectively.

37. For a comparative discussion of moralization in traditions of classical commentary, see Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary*, 121–129. For a rationalization of Zhou-period

This obscuration of the occult is particularly apparent in exegeses of a *Rites* passage in which the text clearly indicates three *methods* of dream divination in Zhou times: *zhimeng*, *jimeng*, and *xiande*. Moreover, the gloss on this passage by the esteemed Latter Han exegete Zheng Xuan (127–200), whose commentaries on the ritual classics held “almost canonical authority” for later scholars, explains that each was the means used by one of three Zhou-period ethnic groups, respectively, to bring about dreams for divination.³⁸ Yet later-imperial scholars often took them to mean three *kinds* of dreams, generally agreeing that *jimeng* meant undesirable “strange dreams” and variously fixing on the “arrive” sense of *zhi* in *zhimeng* and the “all” sense of *xian* in *xiande* to place value on dreams of pure spontaneity and openness to experience.

Another example of making room for the edifying potential of dreams in the Confucian tradition derives from one of the core Five Classics, the *Poetry Classic* (*Shijing*), specifically therein the three-verse air “Joyful Linging” (Kaopan) among the “Airs of Wei.”³⁹ This poem in admiration of a virtuous man who lived alone in nature, sleeping and waking, talking and singing to himself, with no intention apart from that, struck a chord in principled men who left, or were forced out of, public affairs and who hoped for a more genuine and spiritually free way of life. Interesting in the present context is that the “talking” in this verse came to be interpreted by some as the iteration of veritable dreams—that is, dreams of spiritual realization—by good men upon waking, when memory of such was fresh. An example of this is the preface by Wu Shen (1589–1670) to his *Waking Words* (*Wuyan*). Wu, a conscientious official who haplessly became one of the last grand secretaries of the Chongzhen emperor (r. 1628–1644),⁴⁰ was assigned an impossible military portfolio and then exiled for his failures. Having been rejected by the rump Ming court in Nanjing, Wu was living reclusively after 1645 when he found a parallel between his own situation and that of the virtuous man in “Joyful Linging,” who he thought had given up hope of properly serving the ethically corrupt state of Wei. Now relieved of official duties, Wu took a longed-for opportunity to seriously plumb Neo-Confucian moral-ethical teachings, the tenets of which he found incisive. He writes, “Having now concentrated my thoughts [on those tenets] for a long time, whenever I’ve just wakened from dream-sleep, right when the cock crows at dawn, if I feel

dream diviners as, in effect, sagely readers of human subjectivity, see “Zhengmeng,” in Liu Yu, *Zhizhai xiansheng wenji*, 17.20b–21b.

38. *Zhouli jinzhu jinyi*, “Chunguan zongbo,” *xia*, 251. Zheng Xuan also indicates that the character 陟 in 咸陟 was pronounced *dé* and meant 得, “obtain.” On Zheng’s stature as a *Zhouli* authority, see Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary*, 44.

39. *Shijing jinyi jinzhu*, 82–83.

40. Name Zhu Youjian, *ECCP*, 1:191–192. On his stressful reign, see *CHC*, vol. 7, 611–637.

some particular [moral-ethical] understanding, I immediately rise, throw on a robe, and jot it down on a slip of paper. Because I obtain [such understandings] between sleeping and waking, I therefore call [my notes] *Waking Words*.”⁴¹

Of dream-related passages in the Confucian canon, however, the most frequently cited and discussed is a despairing remark by Confucius himself (Kong Qiu, Kongfuzi; 551–480 BCE): having become debilitated by age, he long had not dreamed of his idol, the architect of the sacrosanct Zhou order, the Duke of Zhou (11th century BCE)—implying that in his vigor dreams of the duke had been frequent.⁴² Among later readers of Confucius’s *Analects* (*Lunyu*), this elicited concern that the Great Sage had lost his convictions in old age and, worse, that he had been cherishing oneiric communion with a specter! The consensus of discussion among leading Confucians of Song through Ming was that, since dreams were the products of waking thought, and edifying dreams, especially, arose from intense meditation on correctness, it was natural that Confucius had often dreamed of his exemplar during the years when he was most determined to restore the institutions founded by the duke. Late in Confucius’s life, according to this consensus, when a Zhou restoration clearly was beyond his reach, the Master in his sageliness turned to knowing the Way and to consequent contentment with death, so dreams of the duke abated.⁴³

This approval of dreams about sanctioned objects of mindfulness in Confucianism came to include other authority figures such as recent ancestors, as well as persons with whom the dreamer shared one of the five cardinal relationships: ruler-minister, father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger brother, and mutual friends. Such dreams were best considered as extensions of loyal and filial devotion from the waking state into sleep, rather than as visitations from ghosts, though this distinction seldom was explicitly made. Zhang Lüxiang (1611–1674), for instance, an influential Neo-Confucian moralist of the Ming-Qing transition, wrote an essay disagreeing with the common view that dream-sightings of dead people—usually friends, relations, superiors, and subordinates—are inauspicious (implying fear of ghosts), saying, “In the past they all were benevolent or dutiful toward us. Now that death has eternally separated them from the living, we think of them sadly. So, for a time, meeting with them convivially in dream-sleep should, rather, be cause for happiness.” And he continues more intimately:

41. Wu Shen, *Wuyan*, 17–18. On Wu Shen’s official career, see Wang Rigen, “Wu Shen.”

42. *Lunyu*, “Shu’er” sec., in *Lunyu jinzhu jinyi*, 95.

43. For a synopsis of Song-Ming Confucian discussions of this passage, see Chen Ye, “Menglu yu shuigong,” 89–92.

I lost my parents early on and [thus] have been unable to serve them [as an adult].⁴⁴ Each time these forebears enter my dreams, I deeply feel it's a fortunate matter. [It leads me] to think that on normal days when I enter their rooms I do not see them, nor when I ascend the [ancestral] altar do I see them, and at commemorative sacrifices, though there is a grand atmosphere as though they are present,⁴⁵ it too is just vague imagining, not real meeting. Only in dreams are their facial expressions, laughter, words, and movements no different from when they were alive. I feel pained that in this life I will never again be able [to see them like this], and upon waking I have endless regret. But right away I hope to have [such a] dream the next night. . . . When I do not dream of my parents for a long time, it means that for a while my mindfulness of them has declined, and what could be more frightening than that? When Confucius dreamed of the Duke of Zhou, was the latter uniquely not a dead person?⁴⁶

Clear in this essay is the approving parallel between Confucius's mindfulness, hence dreams, of an important forebear and ordinary people's mindfulness, hence dreams, of ancestors and others with whom they have had relations of "benevolence or dutifulness." But in favorably comparing dream encounters with such persons to imaginings of them in sacrificial settings, where souls of the deceased are ritually invited to draw nigh, Zhang leaves room for ambiguity about whether the persons in dreams are entirely of our minds or are the products of some evocative resonance between our consciousness and certain extant, noumenal entities such as dead people's aerial souls.

Canonical evidence that, in a certain regard, Confucius was an avid dreamer also bore significantly on an issue that, textually speaking, originated in China's most famous dream text bar none: *Master Zhuang* (aka *Nanhua zhenjing*), the Inner Chapters of which are most confidently attributed to Zhuang Zhou.⁴⁷ In the chapter "Great Ancestral Teacher" (Dazongshi), which describes the psychophysical virtues of the consummate Daoist exemplar, one passage states, "True men of ancient times slept without dreams and woke without cares."⁴⁸ This phrase led to the

44. *ECCP*, 1:45–46. Zhang's father died when he was nine *sui* and his mother when he was twenty-one. See Su Dunyuan, *Zhang Yangyuan xiansheng nianpu*, 1490–1491.

45. Acknowledging here the *Lunyu*, "Ba Yi" sec. (in *Lunyu jinzhū jinyi*, 37), on sacrificing to ancestors' spirits "as though they are present."

46. "Mengshuo," in Zhang Lüxiang, *Yangyuan xiansheng quanji*, 2:543.

47. The *Zhuangzi* text that we know today, and which was known to intellectuals in later-imperial China, is the product of extensive editing by Guo Xiang (d. 312 CE), whose commentary on the text was foundational to later understandings of it. For introductory essays on the *Zhuangzi*, see *Daoism Handbook*, 30–52; *ECP*, 911–918; and *ET*, 2:1297–1300.

48. *Zhuangzi jinzhū jinyi*, 187. This passage is reinforced in the Outer Chapters, "Keyi" chap. (*ibid.*, 436).

idealization of dreamless sleep in Daoism, epitomized by such sayings as “Perfected ones do not dream” and “Sages have no dreams.”⁴⁹ Indeed, from the writings of certain twelfth-century founders of Complete Truth (Quanzhen) Daoism, the most influential school among later-imperial literati, we can discern an ultimate goal of achieving, beyond the divine assistance and encouraging signs in cultivated dreams, a dreamless state of consciousness visually characterized by colorful mists and sacred radiances.⁵⁰

Late-imperial writers of a Confucian bent who wished either to stand up for the potential probity of dreaming or simply to criticize a Daoist classic would point most often to Confucius dreaming of the Duke of Zhou in order to question the ideal of dreamlessness. For Daoists the issue was more complicated, since among the many references to dreams and dreaming in the *Master Zhuang* text, primarily the chapter “On Equalizing Things” (Qiwulun), are ones that seem to celebrate the oneiric state as emblematic of Daoist free-flowing transformation and rising above the constraints of conventional social life—indeed, on the part of the revered Zhuang Zhou himself.⁵¹ This apparent internal contradiction in a Daoist classic was not, however, insurmountable.

One approach to resolving the issue of whether sages (Confucian or Daoist) have dreams was to redefine “dream” to mean something different for sages than what it means for ordinary people, especially by removing negative connotations such as loss of lucidity. For instance, the purported Daoist transcendent Chen Tuan (d. 989?) claimed of his sleep *meditations*: “Yea, from great dreams come great awakenings, from small dreams, small awakenings. My dreams are true dreams, not what [the secular] world [calls] dreams.”⁵² Daoist influence in this vein may account, cross-creedally, for the following statement by Xue Kan (1486–1545), a middle-Ming Neo-Confucian teacher: “When sages fall asleep at night, [their consciousness] sometimes is very bright and shining, just like daylight, so [in this sense] ‘perfected ones have no dreams.’ Should a dream occur, [the sages] themselves know it is a dream. This is [how they embody] the interpenetrating Way of day and night.”⁵³ Like Chen Tuan and the Quanzhen founders, the Confucian Xue Kan

49. See Liu Wenying, *Meng de mixin*, 279–284.

50. See Ding Yuanming, “Quanzhen beizong,” 174–176.

51. On the seeming contradiction or paradox between the “Dazongshi” and “Qiwulun” chapters regarding the value of dreaming, see Xu Shengxin, “Zhenren bu meng”; and W. Li, “Dreams of Interpretation,” 29–31.

52. “Chen Tuan zhuan,” in Zhao Daoyi, *Lishi zhenxian ti-Dao tongjian*, 47.8b. Here, the sense of *da meng* has shifted from “big dream” (i.e., ordinary consciousness) in the “Qiwulun” chapter to “great dream” (i.e., of spiritual revelation) characteristic of the school of “sleep meditation” supposedly founded by Chen.

53. Xue Kan, *Xue Kan ji*, 13.

thought that to say perfected ones have no dreams is to mean that in sleep their consciousness enters a state beyond the dualities of day and night, dreaming and waking perception, and other such distinctions of the common sphere of human existence.

Though Zhuang Zhou's "Equalizing" chapter may seem, *prima facie*, to contradict the "Ancestral Teacher" claim that "true men sleep without dreams," on the related theme of obviating dualities, its dream deployments provide reinforcement as well as two of the most frequently referenced passages in all of Chinese literary history. In the latter part of the chapter we find:

Those who dream of [the pleasure of] drinking wine, [after they awake] in the morn may sob; those who dream of sobbing, in the morn may [enjoy] going on a hunt. While they dream, they're not aware of dreaming and even conduct dream divinations within dreams. Only after waking do they realize it's been a dream, and only after a great awakening do they realize that this [life] is their big dream. But ignorant people still think they are awake and are utterly confident of it. . . . If I say that you are dreaming, I do so in my own dream.

And concluding the chapter is this gem:

Once Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, a flitting, fluttering butterfly. How unself-consciously content and happy he was, with no sense of being Zhou. Suddenly he awoke to find that he most definitely was Zhou. He didn't know whether he, Zhou, had dreamed he was a butterfly, or he was a butterfly dreaming he was Zhou. There must be some distinction between Zhou and a butterfly. This is called the transformation of things.⁵⁴

A great deal has been written about these passages within the context of the "Equalizing" chapter and the Inner Chapters as a whole. Suffice it to point out here that the term "dream" is used most obviously to emphasize the discreteness of states of consciousness among human individuals and within individuals between different states of existence (waking and sleeping, this life and beyond this life, the ordinary mind-set and the extraordinary mind-set). When we are in one body or state of consciousness, we may know of others only opaquely—or not at all—hence the pointlessness of disputing with other people, whose idiosyncratic perspectives we cannot really know.⁵⁵ True to the ever-intriguing paradoxicality of *Master*

54. *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, 94–95, 101.

55. For other examples of this threnody, see the exchange between Nie Que and Wang Ni in "Qiwulun," Yan Hui's question to Confucius in "Dazongshi," and the argument

Zhuang, however, is also the role assigned to “dream” in the “transformation of things,” specifically the possible transformation of this life’s consciousness, with its burdens of memory and *self*-consciousness, into butterfly consciousness—light of being, *unself*-conscious, forgetting, and free. The dubiousness of such cross-species attributions is ignored here in the interest of using a wonderful conceit, one which, on the unfathomable scale of the ever-changing Way, might be read literally to mean possible transformations between insects and humans but which more commonly was taken to suggest that a freer state of mind is available to us, if only we would dream it.

Centuries after Zhuang Zhou, metaphoric use of the word “dream” for our ordinary consciousness in this life, as in the first passage above, was found very useful in Buddhism to characterize samsaric existence, from which we are urged to “awaken” into enlightenment. In the second passage, the Zhuangzian sense of dreams as vehicles with the potential to transport us into liberated states of consciousness was endlessly inspiring to writers of romantic disposition, and “butterfly dream” (*hudie meng* or *diemeng*) became poetic shorthand for any sort of refreshing, delightful dream.

Shorthand terms for other kinds of dreams—“dream of Huaxu country” (*Huaxu meng*), for one of satisfying realization, and “dream of a plantain(-covered) deer” (*jiaolu meng*), for a baffling, disorienting one—also derive from a mainstay Daoist text, *Master Lie* (*Liezi*, aka *Chongxu zhide zhenjing*). This collection of stories and discourses is traditionally attributed to an obscure figure called Lie Yukou, who seems to have lived as a wise recluse around the time of Zhuang Zhou. However, the text that was transmitted to later-imperial readers and constitutes the *Master Lie* that we know today appeared only in the fourth century. Largely the product of one or more Daoist thinkers of the early Common Era, it strives to reinforce certain themes from the much earlier *Old Master* (*Laozi*, aka *Daodejing*) and especially *Master Zhuang*, which, together with *Master Lie*, were officially declared “classics” of Daoism during the Tang dynasty.⁵⁶

As such, *Master Lie* does not avoid contributing to the Daoist ambivalence about dreaming broached above. Indeed, of several dream passages in this work,⁵⁷ the two that were referenced most often by later-imperial writers mutually instantiate the incongruity between dreaming as a medium for enlightened experiences

between Zhuang Zhou and Huizi over empathizing with fish in the Outer Chapters, “Qiushui” (see *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, 89–90, 219, and 487, respectively).

56. For introductions to the *Liezi*, see *ECP*, 397–400; *ET*, 1:654–656; and Littlejohn and Dippmann, *Riding the Wind*, 15–49.

57. Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 30–41, discusses dream passages in the *Liezi* but is not attuned to their mutual contradictions and incommensurabilities.

and dreaming as symptomatic of the chronic muddle in human feelings, motives, and thoughts. Each suggests, again, a resolution in sagehood, but in different ways. In the second chapter of *Master Lie*, a legendary progenitor of Chinese civilization, the Yellow Sovereign (Huangdi), having spent thirty years wearing out his body and mind first in hedonistic indulgences and then in altruistically governing his empire, withdraws to a simple hut and disciplines himself by fasting for three months. Then, asleep in midday, he dreams of wandering the mythical, faraway country of the Huaxu clan,⁵⁸ where he finds people living the Daoist ideal of an unperturbed, non-contentious, non-stratified society and individually exhibiting the effortless powers of Daoist transcendents, never impeded in their movements because they “made only journeys of the spirit.” Upon waking, the sovereign was happy to have attained “the Way of cultivating the body and [bringing] order to things” by simply dreaming, rather than by exhausting himself in many emotionally consuming efforts. Thereafter, following what he learned in his dream of Huaxu country, he was able to make his empire almost as well ordered as that utopia.⁵⁹ This despite a passage in the next chapter, “King Mu of Zhou” (Zhou Muwang), which confirms that “in ancient times true men forgot their [waking] thoughts and in sleep did not dream,” because “in those whose spirit is concentrated, thoughts and dreams dissipate naturally.”⁶⁰

Compounding the incongruities, one story among several in the King Mu chapter exhibits quite a different attitude toward dreaming than is expressed in the Yellow Sovereign chapter: a virtual burlesque routine constructed by farcically exaggerating the common experience of mix-ups between dreams and the waking state. As the story goes, a woodcutter in the state of Zheng happens upon a deer, kills it, and hides the carcass under plantain leaves, expecting to deal with it later. But after a while, he cannot find the place of concealment and begins to wonder whether he had merely dreamed of such good fortune. Musing out loud about this on the road, he passes another man who overhears and then is able to locate the deer for himself and take it home. There ensues a dialogue between the second man and his wife about whether the woodcutter had a true dream of killing and hiding the deer, or whether the husband had a true dream of the woodcutter killing and hiding the deer. In any case, the second man intends to keep the venison. Meanwhile, the woodcutter has a true dream of where he hid the deer and of the second man taking it, so he brings a lawsuit to get the deer back. The judge sorts things out as follows, saying to the woodcutter: “[If] in the first place you really did catch the deer, it is false to claim

58. “Huaxushi” may mean either the Huaxu clan or Madame Huaxu, who, legendarily, was the mother of Fuxi, the purported first sovereign of China.

59. *Liezi*, “Huangdi,” first passage.

60. *Liezi*, “Zhou Muwang,” third passage.

you were dreaming. [If] you really dreamed that you caught it, then it's false to claim that this actually happened. The other man really did take your deer, yet he contests your right to it. His wife also says that he recognized it, in his dream, as another man's deer, yet he denies [the existence of] the man who caught it. Now what's certain is that we have this deer. Please divide it between you."

When the ruler of Zheng hears of the case, he wonders whether the judge himself has dreamed of dividing a deer between two men, and he asks his prime minister's view. The latter responds: "It's beyond me to distinguish dreaming and not dreaming. If one wants to tell waking from dreaming, [then one can] only [consult] the Yellow Sovereign or Confucius. Now that we have lost the Yellow Sovereign and Confucius, who can make the distinction?"⁶¹

In the *Master Zhuang* "butterfly" and *Master Lie* "Yellow Sovereign" passages, the sage is portrayed as able to penetrate the waking-sleeping divide, find higher truths in dreams, and actuate those truths in waking life. But the woodcutter story looks to sages for clarification between mutually exclusive waking realities and dream realities, suggesting that lesser humans are on their own in dealing with the confusions born of letting the two intertwine. In any case, it was the inveterate intertwining that fascinated and confounded later-imperial writers and could bring on allusions to *Master Lie*.

Yet another set of shorthand terms—"Lu's dream" (*Lu meng*), "yellow millet dream" (*huangliang meng*), "south branch dream" (*nanke meng*), and "ants dream" (*yimeng*)—came to be used for self-deluding hopes of grand attainment beyond one's present condition in life. These terms derive from two "tales of the marvelous" (*chuanqi*) from the later phase of the Tang dynasty, "Lu's dream" and "yellow millet dream" alluding to the story "Within a Pillow" (*Zhenzhong ji*), attributed to Shen Jiji (ca. 750–ca. 800), and "south branch dream" and "ants dream" alluding to "Governor of South Branch: A Biography" (*Nanke taishou zhuan*), by Li Gongzuo (fl. 797–818).⁶²

Both tales belittle the world of striving and suffering over false ideas of entitled success by condensing dreams of lifetimes of ups and downs into very short spans of objective time. And "Governor of South Branch," longer and more complex in structure than "Within a Pillow," adds spatial to temporal belittlement by revealing the protagonist's whole dreamworld to have been the "kingdom" of

61. *Liezi*, "Zhou Muwang," sixth passage. My translation, based on Graham's in *Liezi, Book of Lieh-tzu*, 70.

62. For standard versions of these stories, see, respectively, the early-Song compilation *Taiping guangji*, 1:526–528, under the name Lüweng, and 5:3910–3915, under the name Chunyu Fen. For discussion of both tales in the Tang storytelling context, see Manling Luo, *Literati Storytelling*, 164–168; for examples of Tang dream-stories that satirize contemporaneous conditions, see Li Hanbin, "*Taiping guangji*" *de meng yanjiu*, 310–317.

an extended colony of ants. In “Within a Pillow” a somewhat threadbare young man, Student Lu, meets an old Daoist named Lü at an inn on Handan Road and vents his unhappiness over poor prospects of gaining renown and enriching his family by becoming a general or high minister of state.⁶³ As the innkeeper begins boiling a pot of yellow millet to serve, the young man grows sleepy, so Old Man Lü lends him a ceramic pillow that “should lead him to glories suited to his aspirations.”⁶⁴ As Student Lu falls asleep, he notices a brightness within the air hole at one end of the pillow (see fig. 2) and, at least in spirit, enters the pillow’s hollow interior.⁶⁵ Therein he experiences marriage into an aristocratic family, the births of many children and grandchildren, passage of the highest civil service examination, successes in both civil and military positions, the perils of intra-bureaucratic jealousies and factional warfare, and ultimately a sumptuous life and the highest confidence of the emperor. Upon his dreamed death at age eighty, Student Lu awakes to find that the innkeeper’s pot of millet is not yet done—in other words, all he had hoped for and suffered was no more significant than the interval of a mere doze. He thanks Old Man Lü for his instruction, which has “stanchd his desires,” and takes his leave.

In “Governor of South Branch,” the main protagonist is a mustered-out army officer, Chunyu Fen, whose weakness for drink has blunted his career. Living in dissipation at home, he lies down to sleep off a midday drunken stupor under a large old sophora tree on the southern part of his property and finds himself being respectfully escorted by official emissaries to the Country of Sophora Peace and the lavish palace of that country’s king. The Sophoreans have received letters addressed to Chunyu from his long-lost, apparently deceased father, a defeated general.⁶⁶ Thinking that Chunyu might be someone who can help them defend their realm, they have located him with assistance from a Buddhist monk, Qixuan. After Chunyu Fen’s arrival, he is married to the king’s lovely daughter in a grand ceremony, becoming the royal son-in-law. Before long he is dispatched to govern an important border region, South Branch, gratified by the chance to show his mettle. There, he lives in high estate for more than twenty years, humanely successful in both civil and martial leadership and rising in the king’s esteem—before reverses begin: a damaging military incursion by a neighboring state and the death from illness of his beloved wife (mother of

63. Later-imperial readers usually interpreted Lüweng to be the Daoist immortal Lü Dongbin, whose cult grew prodigiously from Song times onward. See P. Katz, “Enlightened Chemist or Immoral Immortal?”

64. For discussion of the senses of “suitability” (*shi*) in this story, see Takeda, “Chinchūki.”

65. On the technical and social history of early Chinese ceramic pillows, see *Chūgoku tōchin*, introduction.

66. On this third dimension of the story, see Reed, “Messages from the Dead.”



FIGURE 2. An amber-glazed, marbled ceramic pillow of the Tang period, showing one of the lateral holes that relieved internal air pressure during firing. Early Chinese pillows appear to have been made of wood. Ceramic pillows were not made until the Tang, first for the court and nobility but extending to broader segments of society by late Tang (as seen in the story “Within a Pillow”). In later-imperial times, such ceramic supports for the head, neck, and wrist were common appurtenances of upper-class households. Image courtesy of Priestley & Ferraro, London.

his seven wonderful children). Chunyu Fen returns to the court in distress and, in the absence of his wife, takes to living profligately, such that an omen of the kingdom’s impending doom is blamed on him. He thus loses favor with the king, who has him sent back to the human sphere, about which Chunyu had forgotten. The emissaries rather rudely deliver him back to his physical body, still sleeping in his rundown house, and he wakes to observe that the sun has not yet gone down in the west, even though “what he so quickly dreamed was like living through a generation.” Tracing the network of ants’ nests radiating from the base of the sophora tree, Chunyu finds ant-size replicas of his dream world and exclaims at the genius of the ants, only to later find that, after a night of heavy rain, the colonies have been completely washed away, confirming the prediction of disaster in his dream. “Contemplating the ephemerality of South Branch, he realized the brevity of [things in] the human world and rested his mind in Daoism.” Chunyu dies in the year when one of the dream-letters from his father said they would see each other again.

Among the thousands of transmitted Tang tales, many hundreds of which involve dreams, these two stories, “Within a Pillow” and “Governor of South Branch: A Biography,” found special resonance among later-imperial literati mainly because they so ingeniously devalue the slippery ladder of worldly success. Yet, with the growth of affinity for Daoist and Buddhist perspectives in the course of the Ming, some intellectuals also were intrigued by both stories’ conceit of mutually exclusive realms of consciousness and the implied question of what sort of consciousness might lie, undetected, beyond the ordinary. “Dream Poem” (Mengshi), by the outstanding writer and lay Buddhist Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610), illustrates this sensibility.

There is no dream realm apart from my pillow, but on my pillow I seek it
in vain.

Conversely, while I’m in the dream realm, the pillow is unknown to me.
When I’m awake, my dreams seem utterly void; but in dreams, my waking
[awareness] is extinguished.

How can I know that my waking world does not have [yet another] pillow
beside it?

Dreaming and waking are like a cycle, in which illusion and reality can be
questioned in turn.⁶⁷

“Within a Pillow” and “Governor of South Branch” were accessible to Yuan’s contemporaries in mid-sixteenth-century republications of the early-Song compendia in which they originally had been preserved, and also as they were anthologized and rewritten in several Ming-period story collections.⁶⁸ Moreover, both stories inspired popular enactments among the dream plays that flourished so notably in late Ming and early Qing,⁶⁹ the most renowned being *On Handan Road* (*Handan ji*) and *Story of South Branch* (*Nanke ji*) by the eminent playwright Tang Xianzu (1550–1616).

67. Yuan Hongdao, *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao*, 1:551; for Chaves’s English translation, see Yuan Hongdao, Yuan Zhongdao, and Yuan Zongdao, *Pilgrim of the Clouds*, 37. Hongdao was the most literarily prominent of the “Three Yuan [brothers] of Gong’an.” The other two are Hongdao’s younger brother Zhongdao and elder brother Zongdao. For collective biographies of the “Three Yuans,” see *DMB*, 2:1638–1641; *IC*, 955–956; and Zhou Qun, *Yuan Hongdao pingzhuan*.

68. The contemporaneous *Taiping guangji* and *Wenyuan yinghua* collections were republished in 1556 and 1567–1571, respectively. For bibliographic studies of both stories, see Li Jianguo, *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xulu*, 1:269–273 and 305–310.

69. On dramaturgical spin-offs from *Zhenzhong ji* and *Nanke taishou zhuan* as plays of religious transcendence, see Liao Tengye, *Zhongguo mengxi yanjiu*, 245–274.

“Pure Dreams”

A sound night's sleep, undisturbed by frenetically churning mentations and leaving no residue of upsetting, engrossing remembered dreams, is widely prized in most societies as conducive to, and reflective of, both physical and psychological good health. Among Chinese intellectuals, the value placed on dreamless sleep or placid dreams was connected to the common observation discussed above, that the dream state continues the waking state; thus, disturbing dreams indicate a disturbed mind in need of amplified moral-ethical cultivation. Those who achieved the ideal of mental quietude and equanimity, even while engaging in complex activities, would naturally enjoy peaceful sleep.

Hope for “pure dreams” (*qingmeng*), from which one wakes refreshed and gratified by a dream of some edifyingly pleasurable or stimulating experience in a pristine, mostly natural, sometimes celestial environment, though compatible with Confucian and Buddhist outlooks,⁷⁰ is most commonly expressed in Daoistic ways. During early and middle Ming, especially, when Daoism was an ascendant and then overweening influence both at the imperial court and on Ming princely estates, and, in the view of Liu Ts'un-yan, “was never more powerful or pervasive among all social strata,”⁷¹ lyric poems recounting such pure dreams dotted the collected works of well-known writers. Whether or not Daoist deities, transcendents, or palatial precincts are mentioned in such poems, the mood is one of spiritual clarity and respite from secular cares, or temporary liberation from the secular plane itself. The following examples from early and middle Ming, all titled simply “Record of a Dream” (*Jimeng*), must suffice to characterize the range of such self-congratulatory poems, which represent the notion that people of pure mind and body reap blessed dreams.

A small banquet was closing down; the jade flutes ceased.
 An eastern wind through the hall heightened the feeling of spring.
 Greenfinches cried as they streamed eastward past the tower.
 A tree full of pear blossoms perfected the clear eventide.⁷²

70. For instance, in an essay written by Gui Youguang (1507–1571) to commemorate a friend's Studio of Pure Dreams, the putative escapist motivations of famous Daoist dream-writers are regarded as understandable but also pitiable. A better perspective, Gui opines, is to see pure dreams as instantiations of the centrality and harmony taught in such Confucian classics as the *Change Classic*, *Analects*, and *Mencius* (“Qingmengxuan ji,” in Gui Youguang, *Zhenchuan xian-sheng quanji*, 15.272–273). For a middle-Ming pure dream in a Buddhist vein, see “Chunmeng,” in Zhao Zhenji, *Zhao Wensu gong wenji*, 6.21a.

71. Liu, “Taoist Self-Cultivation,” 291. See also Liu Ts'un-yan, “Penetration of Daoism”; and Richard Wang, *Ming Prince and Daoism*.

72. By Guan Na (mid-14th century), in Cao Xuequan, *Shicang lidai shixuan*, 305.17b.



A transcendent drew a hibiscus flower from his sleeve,
 [As he,] smiling beside his lofty abode, asked me to pen something for him.
 [After] a day of wind and rain, my bedding [felt] pure and clean;
 In the sixth month, on Duckweed River, my thatched retreat was empti[ness].⁷³



Aching at the constraints of worldly affairs,
 I felt lucky to return early to the fields of home.
 A grass hut remote as the edge of the clouds,
 The capital as distant as the rim of the sun. . . .
 At dusk the mist hung like cloth,
 As a crescent moon rose to the center of the sky.
 Sidling in, I closed the humble gate
 And rinsed my teeth by scooping with my hand from a flowing spring.
 The servants had gone to their pillows side by side;
 Only [this] recluse had not fallen asleep.
 The myriad sounds were completely still;
 All around was a vast emptiness.
 When fatigue came, I nodded off on my desk
 And straightaway dreamed of arriving at the Celestial Court. . . .
 Having gotten to hear the heavenly music,
 I was presented with books by the supernal beauties.⁷⁴
 Before, I had admired [these works] only by repute;
 Now I could tap into their meaning.
 I am utterly devoid of external wants
 And have been spiritually pure for years.
 The spirit being pure, dreams then also are pure.
 Thusly can one learn immortality.⁷⁵

A well-known middle-Ming painting attributed to Tang Yin (1470–1524), *Dreaming of Immortality in a Thatched Hut* (*Mengxian caotang*), is in perfect sync with

73. By Dong Yun (1459–1534), in Dong Yun, *Xu Ai, Qian Dehong*, 328.

74. This is a reference to the *Xuannijing* and *Sunijing*, texts of ultimate Daoist knowledge, particularly as embodied in sexual practices, which legendarily contain instructions to the Yellow Sovereign from beautiful women of the empyrean.

75. By Li Kaixian (1502–1568), in *Li Kaixian ji*, 1:15. This poem includes allusions to the stories “Suhui” and “Paidiao” in *Shishuo xinyu* and a “Pusa man” song lyric attributed to Li Bai (701–762).

such poems. It was executed at the behest of a patron who, according to certain colophons, was known to have frequently dreamed of consorting with Daoist transcendents since his youth.⁷⁶ In the painting, a man (presumably the patron) dozes in a small hut while a more-faintly drawn male figure—apparently the artist’s visual realization of the patron’s spirit or aerial soul—wafts toward a misty horizon. The inscribed poem not only exemplifies the middle-Ming Daoistic ideal of pure dreams but also alludes to the progenitor of a specific Daoist belief in meditative sleep as a prime state for cultivating transcendence: the above-mentioned tenth-century historical figure and perennial character of fiction and folklore Chen Tuan (aka Chen Xiyi).⁷⁷ The poem reads:

At leisure, he falls asleep on his desk, books for a pillow,
and dreams of entering a gourd, where there’s another world.⁷⁸
He seems to meet in person with [Chen] Xiyi,
and gain direct transmission of the true art of Great Return.

Chen Tuan, who was celebrated in part for his ability to sleep for prodigious lengths of time, is credited with developing and orally transmitting a set of mind-body practices commonly called *shuigong* (sleeping/reclining meditational effort), which induce deep, trancelike somnolence. Therein the mind either becomes completely blank or has sacred visions or encounters, both outcomes coveted for refining one’s inner essence and returning the self to its fetal purity. That such mental activities were seldom called “dreams” reflects one of the many ambiguities in Daoism, whether perfected ones have dreams, which goes back to those somewhat contradictory passages in *Master Zhuang* discussed above. Though we have no authoritative text from Chen Tuan expostulating on *shuigong*, an early report by a supplicant who claims to have learned this practice from him is included in one of the best early biographies of Chen. In that report, Chen describes his *shuigong* technique, detailing his preparatory inner-alchemical (*neidan*) concentrations and the resulting sleep experiences:

76. Pang Yuanji, *Xuzhai minghua lu*, 4.9a–b. Another colophon (10a–b) identifies the “Mr. Dongyuan” of Tang Yin’s inscription as Wang Deyang, who is otherwise unknown to history. For reproductions as well as art-historical and religio-philosophical discussions of this painting, see Clapp, *Painting of Tang Yin*, 190–196; and W. Li, “Dream Visions of Transcendence,” 56–58.

77. See Kohn, “Chen Tuan in History,” esp. 15.

78. The most complete version of this staple Daoist reference, often attributed to Ge Hong, is in *Taiping guangji*, “Shenxian” sec., *juan* 12. A man learns from an old medicine seller in the market how to enter an empty gourd at night, wherein he finds a Daoist paradise of gleaming structures and plenteous victuals.

My spirit goes out to the Nine Palaces and freely roams the emerald-green [peaks]. Treading on the void as though it were solid, I ascend and descend with equal [ease], gently with an auspicious breeze, rambling and floating, coming and going with the leisurely clouds. I arrive at the Purple Mansions of Kunlun and visit all its grotto realms and blessed sites,⁷⁹ ingesting the glorious essences of sun and moon and playing in the wondrous scenes of mist and twilight. I visit true men to discuss principles beyond the mundane sphere and meet with transcendents for travels in other regions. . . . Thus, in sleep I am not aware of passing time, and much less have any regret over ups and downs in the secular world.

Chen then offers the supplicant two poems, the second of which reads:

Perfected ones basically have no dreams;
 Their dreams are excursions among transcendents.
 True men also do not sleep;
 Their sleep is floating in the clouds and mists.
 Their [inner] cauldrons always hold elixirs,
 So in a gourd they find another world.
 Wanting to know what's in dreams
 Is people's prime mystery.⁸⁰

From Chen Tuan's time onward, the techniques and mystiques of *shuigong* were propagated by a number of leading Daoist figures in a vein reinforced by Complete Truth Daoism. In line with its chief competitor, Chan Buddhism, this Daoist teaching discouraged ordinary sleep and denigrated worldly dreaming in favor of cultivating a purer, healthier, less demonically susceptible state of consciousness for periods of reclining rest. The basic idea of sleep-meditation thus accrued detailed prescriptions for sleep positions conducive to immediate and sound slumber, inner-alchemical benefits, and the alleviation of various physical maladies.⁸¹ In early Ming, this teaching

79. In Daoism, the Nine Palaces are regions of the cosmos (each governed by a respective deity), which correlate with the nine parts of the human head. The name Kunlun refers to mountains far to the west of China that were believed to serve as the earthly capital of Daoist deities when they descended from their heavenly capital.

80. "Chen Tuan zhuan," in Zhao Daoyi, *Lishi zhenxian ti-Dao tongjian*, 47.8a–b.

81. See Ding Yuanming, "Quanzhen beizong"; and Xiao Tianshi, *Daohai xuanwei*, 78–90. Historically recorded promoters of *shuigong* from Song through early Yuan include Zhang Ziyang (fl. 10th–11th centuries), Cai Jitong (1135–1198), Bai Yuchan (1194–1229), and Li Daochun (13th century). The Daoist teachers Qiu Chuji (1148–1227) and Yin Zhiping (1169–1251) promoted eliminating sleep entirely through meditation (Zhang Guangbao, *Yin Zhiping xue'an*, 7–9). The Complete Truth master Wu Shouyang (1574–1644) used Chan-like

was advanced by a very prominent Daoist master, Zhang Sanfeng (fl. late 14th–early 15th century).⁸² But we see no further written evidence of its influence among literati Daoists until circa 1579, when the illustrated essay “Complete Sleep–Meditation Techniques of the Twelve [Masters] of Huashan” (Huashan shi’er shuigong zongjue) was published in a collection of Daoist materials titled *Marrow of the Red Phoenix* (*Chifeng sui*; see fig. 3) by Zhou Lüjing (dates unknown). This essay is typical of the *shuigong* tradition in disparaging the dreams of ordinary people—both waking and sleeping dreams—as fraught with passions and karmic stains. Perfected ones, however, “are free of false thoughts and therefore have no dreams. Should a dream occur, it reaches their trueness and is not a dream of emotions or desires.”⁸³

Whether such an aspiration for “perfection” was operative in the lives of those who took an interest in *shuigong* may be explored tentatively in ancillary materials about Zhou Lüjing himself. Zhou probably died not long before the publication of *Marrow of the Red Phoenix*. He is known to us only through a two-part biography coauthored in 1579 by his distaff nephew, the well-known official, painter, and connoisseur Li Rihua (1565–1635), with whom Zhou was close.⁸⁴ Li portrays a man who loved plum trees and happily remained in his home area, garnering respect for his learning, painting, and medicinal cures. A collection of Zhou’s poems embedded in the second part of the biography discloses that he was comfortable with dreaming in rustic leisure. He sought neither dreamless sleep nor ecstatic flights in sleep-meditation, being content, it seems, with an occasional pure dream, such as the following:

How like an afterlife,
that Zhuang Zhou dream I had:
Of a morn I shed my illusory body
and serenely returned to the Northern Heights.⁸⁵

language in referring to the “demon of sleep” and “worldly, defiled dreams” (*Xian-Fo hezong yulu*, *juan* 1).

82. On Zhang Sanfeng, see *Zhongguo Daojiao sixiang shi*, 3:437–451; and Chen Bing, “Mingdai Quanzhen dao,” 44–47. For two poems by Zhang on *shuigong*, see *Zhang Sanfeng quanji*, “Xuanyao pian xia,” 36b–37a.

83. “Huashan shi’er shuigong zongjue,” in Zhou Lüjing, *Chifeng sui*, 3.2a–b. For Takehiro’s English translation, see Zhou Lüjing, “Twelve Sleep-Exercises”; for Despeux’s French translation, see Zhou Lüjing, *Moelle du phénix rouge*, 225–269.

84. Li Rihua wrote the first *juan* of *Meixu xiansheng bielu*, and another friend of Zhou’s, Zheng Yan (dates unknown) of Fujian, wrote the second. On Li, see *DMB*, 1:826–830; Brook, “Artful Life”; and C. Li, “Literati Life.”

85. In Li Rihua and Zheng Yan, *Meixu xiansheng bielu*, 2.6a. The Northern Heights, on the northeastern border of Luoyang County, is legendarily the place of Laozi’s enlightenment. In the first millennium, it also was a sought-after burial place for the ruling elite. Zhou’s allusion combines the senses of mortal death and immortal oneness with the Way.



FIGURE 3. “Yu Yiyang Transcends Life and Death,” from *Marrow of the Red Phoenix*. This is the last of twelve illustrations of purported disciples of Chen Tuan at Huashan engaging in sleep meditation, appended to Zhou Lüjing’s “Complete Sleep-Meditation Techniques of the Twelve [Masters of] Huashan.” In sleep, Yu Yiyang envisions the ascent of his purified, embryonic self. The inscription reads: “Having realized transcendence of life and death, he attains the Dao and naturally flies upward. Only after breaking through the chaos of the physical senses can one know what precedes the primordial. Only with this attainment can one be an immortal of Great Net Heaven.”

For examples of the continuation of “pure dream” poems in late Ming, one need look no farther than said nephew, Li Rihua, who often evoked the aura of ethereal dreams in his calligraphic inscriptions on fans and paintings. Yet many may have been youthful flights of artistic fancy if we are to believe the following entry in Li’s random notes:

Several years ago I was keen on abstruse learning and always hoped to meet a perfected one who, on a morn, would teach me ingenious arts. In my dreams, [transcendents] like Zhong [Liquan] and Lü [Dongbin] would linger to receive me and impart essentials of the Way. But more recently, because I have pursued [the Way] for a long time, I have become more attentive to the ordinary and substantive, and I know that my Way, all along, has in no respect been lacking. I am tranquil, with no arisings,⁸⁶ and in sleep, also, I no longer have those previous strange dreams.⁸⁷

86. The term *wuqi* (non-arising, empty) reflects Li’s increased engagement with Buddhism, which was common among intellectuals who lived in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

87. Li Rihua, *Liuyanzhai biji, sanbi*, 4.233. A proximate date in this section of Li’s roughly chronological jottings is 1628.

While many like Zhou Lüjing and Li Rihua sometimes found signs of spiritual rejuvenation in dreams, others found in their dreams' unbidden quality an especially spontaneous source of literary inspiration.

Authorial Dreams

One peculiarity in the oeuvre of later-imperial writers is the frequency with which lexical material reportedly is “obtained” from dreams—single characters, names or terms, phrases, poetic lines or whole poems, and even substantial, complete texts. While claims of recalling the content of stories, scriptures, disquisitions, or other lengthy texts verbatim upon waking are dubious and should be taken as signs that the dream state is being employed as a conceit for the exercise of rhetorical effect, reports of remembering certain words or short lines of text from dreams are more credible. This is especially so when we consider the hyper-literary lives of premodern Chinese intellectuals, who staked so much on the ability to memorize veritable hillocks of textual material and whose social standing depended so heavily on facility in extemporaneous, allusive poetizing. Blessed was the writer to whom original, felicitous lines simply “came” spontaneously, and no medium was more spontaneous than that of unpremeditated dreams. Traditional reverence for the sacredness of Chinese characters also lent a special aura to their appearance in dreams.

Though a few authorial dreams can be found among the works of well-known Tang-period writers, lexico-compositional elements became salient in literati dream reports only in the Northern Song, particularly in the oeuvre of Su Shi (1037–1101), one of China's most renowned poets and a pioneer in writing personal dream records for wide audiences.⁸⁸ During Ming times, poems that purportedly were written entirely in a dream, that were composed around a word or phrase derived from a dream, or that were “completed” from fragments remembered from a dream became common fare in the collected works of literati and remained so through the Qing period.

Whole poems that could somewhat credibly claim oneiric authorship naturally were short and generally did not differ from other one-stanza lyrics. A relatively conventional example is the following verse by Wang Jiushi (1468–1551), a literary official, well-known poet, and dramatist of some repute.⁸⁹ The following authorial poem by Wang exemplifies the refined, sedate, conservative style that dominated middle-Ming poetic taste:

88. Kühnle, “Entdeckung des Erlebnisses im Traum,” 50–53, 59. See also Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 453–454.

89. *DMB*, 2:1366–1367; *IC*, 860–862. Wang is one of the “former seven masters” (*qian qizi*) who advocated hewing closely to high-Tang models in poetry and prose.

Composed in a Dream (Mengzhong zuo)

At bamboo-enveloped Wenxun Monastery,
 before flowers we empty a jar of wine.
 Rustic clouds often tarry affectionately with the trees,
 while a stream properly guards the gate.⁹⁰

A second example, from late Ming, shows an insurgent trend toward greater individuality. Its author, Tao Wangling (1562–1609), was an upright official renowned for passing the palace examination in celebrated third place in 1589 and for courageously opposing an opportunistic persecution mounted by the embattled chief grand secretary of his day, Shen Yiguan (1531–1615). Yet Tao suffered from weak health throughout his life—afflicted by ringing in one ear, mistaken for a eunuch at one point because of his scarce body hair, and leaving no progeny—which probably contributed to his permanent departure from office in 1604 (though the ostensible reason was his mother’s illness, and the political circumstance was his enmity with Shen).⁹¹ The following poem, fresh of image and quixotic in its lofty self-deprecation, begins with a gastropodal dream memory, which issues into a reflection on Tao’s physical condition, and by the end is turned into a Daoistic statement of contentment with apolitical life.

In a Dream I Got the First Two Lines of a Poem, Which Sufficed for Me to
 Complete It after Waking (Mengzhong deshou erju xinghou zu chengzhi)
 Self-amused that my ways are just like a snail’s,
 with wound-up body and forked “horns,”
 My abode on my back, I try to make do,
 with effort “writing” ancient-style script slantwise on walls.
 [No matter if I’m] called an ox/snail, responding sluggishly to others,
 as sounds mistaken for warfare reverberate in [the strife between my] two
 antennae.⁹²

90. Wang Jiushi, *Meipo ji*, 6.3a.

91. Tao is better known for his contributions to the religio-philosophical and literary trends of his day, as an adherent of Yangming thought and later of Buddhism and as a key figure in the Gongan School of writing (see Zhou Qun, “Wendao bing huan”). On Tao’s health as a factor in his outlook, see Sun Liangtong, “Tao Wangling de beiqing.” On Shen Yiguan, see *DMB*, 2:1179–1182.

92. This couplet plays on the common term for “snail,” which includes the character for “ox,” and on the interchangeability of the characters 謾, 慢, and 漫 (“scornfully,” “slowly,” and “heedless,” all pronounced *màn*). It alludes to *Zhuangzi*, Outer Chapters, “Tiandao,” in which Laozi responds with scornful indifference to the deprecations of a visitor, and to Miscellaneous Chapters, “Zeyang,” in which a snail’s two antennae are said to respectively hold enemy countries, continually at war with each other.

Do not aspire to rise high, only to shrivel and die;
best reserve a little spittle [for self-preservation].⁹³

Normally such authorial dreams are found sprinkled thinly throughout a given figure's collected works, particularly among the poems. But in the mid-seventeenth century, the well-known seal-carver, imaginative writer, adventuresome editor-publisher, and Ming loyalist Huang Zhouxing (1611–1680), by his own testimony, “gathered the poems, prose pieces, scroll couplets, and tablet inscriptions he had seen in dreams, and compiled them in ten *juan*, the majority—70 percent—being his own, and 30 percent being others' compositions.”⁹⁴ Although this tome of testimony to Huang's hyperactive dream life does not survive, such accounts of text-centered dreams do constitute a collection of fifty-three items, titled *Brief Publication of Selected Dreams from the Hut of the Unexpected* (*Qixiang'an xuanmeng lueke*), which, judging from a certain entry, dates from after the Ming collapse.⁹⁵ The contents seem to be the product of Huang's long-standing habit of writing out dreamed-of texts immediately upon waking. He tells us at one point, “I read a great deal of poetry and prose in my dreams. Fearing that I will forget, upon waking I grab a brush and record it, covering both my walls and tables [with such jottings]. By the time I'm [fully] awake, I've already forgotten 70 to 80 percent.”⁹⁶

While the dream-circumstances of each remembered piece of text vary from simple to complex and from banal to bizarre, Huang is abstemious about recording only what he firmly recalls. In just one case does he give himself license, after waking, to revise one line of a self-composed poem.⁹⁷ He never uses the dreamed-of fragments as stimuli for new poems or as points of departure for “completing” a piece, as was common among other recorders of authorial dreams. In spite of the pedestrian quality of many items in this collection, the sense that Huang looked to his dreams as somehow oracular is reinforced by his alternation between dreams and divination in seeking communication with spirits.⁹⁸

93. Tao Wangling, *Xie'an ji*, 2.31a–b.

94. Huang Zhouxing, *Jiuyan xiansheng yiji*, 2.43a. On Huang, see Hu Zhengwei, “Ming-Qing zhi ji yimin Huang Zhouxing”; Widmer, “Between Worlds”; and Widmer, “Huanduzhai of Hangzhou,” 85–89, 108.

95. In the very last entry, Huang dreams of encountering, in a monastic setting, an old friend with whom he passed the highest Ming civil service examination, in 1640. They agree to compose a joint verse, and Huang leads with the line “Country broken, home lost, [I rot] like grass and trees” (*Qixiang'an xuanmeng lueke*, 12b).

96. *Ibid.*, 12a.

97. *Ibid.*, 10b–11a.

98. Widmer (“Between Worlds,” 259–260, 265–267) discusses the quasi-autobiographical nature of a play by Huang Zhouxing titled *Rentian le*, in the latter part of which the protagonist has conversations with heavenly beings mostly through dreams and divinations. She also points

A case in point occurred in the mid-1650s when Huang, as a Ming loyalist, became obsessed with learning the name of a literate young woman from southern Huguang (Hunan, that is, the region where Huang had been reared) who had martyred herself by plunging into the Han River after she had been captured and transported northward by conquering Qing forces. Huang first tried importuning certain Daoist transcendents through divination but got no result. The following winter, one answer came via a discussion with friends in a dream, but the next spring, that answer was called into question by a visitor from Hunan surnamed Lin, who gave a different name for the virtuous Maiden of Chu. And three years later, Huang encountered yet another man, surnamed Xu, from the young woman's home area. This man, claiming that she had been his younger sister, gave a seemingly unassailable account of her demise, explained the means by which her final poems had survived, and provided sure knowledge of her name. Faced with this third version, Huang still was not willing to simply dismiss the answer he had received in his dream, however. First he cited possible transmission errors, given the meanings and pronunciations of characters in the girl's name, which perhaps implies that the dreamed information was true but garbled. His ultimate appeal, however, was to Buddho-Daoist ideas of the indeterminacy of secular truths: "The bubbles and shadows [of transmitted knowledge] are of short duration. How do I know that Lin's [account] after all was wrong, or that Xu's after all was right? Moreover, how do I know that the dream was not true, or the truth not of a dream? [The answer] awaits the day when I can go to that region and ask the Han River at Fangcheng."⁹⁹

In this account, the object of Huang's quest for an item of knowledge lay in the recent historical past. Others found in dreams information—or at least clues—about otherwise inaccessible matters in their personal pasts, such as previous incarnations or the identities of ancestors. But in the majority of cases, attempts to oneirically surmount the epistemological limitations of the present were directed toward the ever-elusive future.

Prognostic and Diagnostic Dreams

The belief that dreams offer windows on the future arises at the intersection of the neurophysiology and psychology of dreaming, on one hand, and, on the other, cosmological ideas of the interconnectedness and mutual resonances of phenomena.

out Huang's literary friendship with Dong Tuo, another writer who was fascinated by his own dreams. She notes, however, that Huang's belief in the reality of spirits was something he shared not with Dong but with another, closer collaborator, Wang Qi (b. ca. 1600).

99. Huang Zhouxing, *Jiuyan xiansheng yiji*, 4.7b–9b. For fuller treatment of the "Maiden of Chu" story and Huang's obsession with it, see W. Li, *Women and National Trauma*, 411–425.

The strong emotional underpinning of remembered dreams dictates that features thereof have especially great staying power in our consciousness or subconscious. Later encounters with stimuli that activate a remembered dream-feature are then taken as “bearing out” (*yan*) that dream in some way. The same role of strong feelings in our dream lives results in remembered dreams that seem to reveal something about future matters that we deeply or urgently need to know, such as when or how we will die, or whether we will have progeny. Moreover, the workings of prescience, by which we subconsciously register signs of the direction of certain affairs but do not consciously form predictions, are often discernible in dreams. The cavalier attitude of the dream state toward the waking-state constraints of temporality, too, has always contributed to notions of dream-travel into the future (as well as the past).

All human brains exhibit these tendencies, yet belief in the predictive function of dreams has been far more characteristic of premodern than modern people, which suggests that cosmological and ontological worldviews are an important factor. Even research on modern subjects who report having precognitive dreams (i.e., dreams that at the time are felt to predict future events, and which prompt actions and condition perceptions accordingly) shows markedly greater frequency in people who already believe that dreams are predictive, whether because of religious ideas, cultural influences, or psychological inclination toward the paranormal.¹⁰⁰ Mostly, in moderns, the sense of oneiric prediction arises from what are properly called “dream *déjà vu*” experiences, wherein something happens in the waking state that we remember having dreamed before.¹⁰¹

In premodern China, understandings of both the precognitive and *déjà vu* types of dreams were bound up with deterministic ideas such as individual fate (*mingshu*) and with concepts of the encompassing Way of the universe and the inalterable thrusts, tendencies, or trajectories (*shi*) in the zone of human life “between heaven and earth.” Knowledge of how one’s own being or situation fit into the patterns and current phases of such large forces was based on ancient ideas of sympathetic resonance among things of like category (*lei*), including numbers. The largest of such categories were *yin* and *yang*, by which, for instance, resonances with female things would be sought among other things classed as *yin*, such as rain, so as to construct a complex of remote causalities leading to a prediction. Constituting the next largest set of categories were the sequential “five phases” (*wuxing*) of phenomenal change, in which rain, for instance, “belonged to” the phase water (the other phases being wood, fire, earth, and metal).¹⁰² Among the canonical texts

100. Houran and Lange, “Modeling Precognitive Dreams,” 1413; Sunmola and Adejumo, “Patterns, Perceptions, and Correlates,” 118.

101. Fukuda, “Most Experiences of Precognitive Dream,” 112–113.

102. *ECP*, 786–788.

of the imperial era, certainly the *Change Classic*, with which all intellectuals were somewhat familiar, most compellingly embodied a worldview of classified correspondences and resonances among all things, including the immediate intentions of anyone who used the book. Whether the *Change Classic* was regarded as a manual for divining the future, as a simulacrum of cosmic patterns for constructing megaschemata, or as a basis for discussing instantiations of those patterns in human society, the book instilled a powerfully numinous sense that all changes are manifestations of remote influences among things belonging in common to certain fundamental “figures” (*xiang*) of the universe.¹⁰³

The grand systems of correlative cosmology that dictated, among other matters, the structures and procedures of government, ritual forms, and the siting and design of building projects increasingly were regarded with skepticism among thinkers in the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, correlative thinking and notions of sympathetic resonance continued to underpin literati attempts on the personal level to explain seemingly linked experiences and to project relations between themselves and future events.

The following example illustrates the ease with which neuropsychology plus cosmology yielded teleology in the arena of predictive dreams: At the lunar New Year of 1610, Yuan Zhongdao (1570–1626)—a lay Buddhist like his two celebrated brothers—was in the northern capital to take the metropolitan examinations when he dreamed that the eminent monk Yunqi Zhuhong (aka Lianchi; 1535–1615) had died, although the monk was still alive and active in Jiangnan. In the dream, Yuan, his second-elder brother, and a friend led a procession of literati, all dressed for mourning, to pay their final respects, apparently at a nearby monastery. Yuan was puzzled by this dream, since he had never met Zhuhong. But the following mid-spring, Yuan met a monk named Sixin in a garden near his home in the central Yangzi region and “suddenly realized,” he wrote, “that the pathways in the garden were just like those in my New Year dream of going out to mourn Lianchi. Also, in that dream there were several big characters [brushed on] a whitewashed wall, and now again there were several [such] characters.” Up to this point we have a typical case of dream *déjà vu*: elements from a remembered dream have resurfaced later in response to seemingly random stimuli. But Yuan goes further in virtually the same breath to say, “From this I knew that meetings [between people] are predetermined and not random,” and he searches for some commonality between Zhuhong and Sixin, concluding that “their affairs were exactly the same” because

103. Henderson, *Development and Decline*, 13–19; Peterson, “Making Connections,” 80–117. For an introduction to late-imperial *Change Classic* divination, see R. Smith, *Fortune-Tellers and Philosophers*, 108–119.

104. Henderson, *Development and Decline*, chaps. 5–7.

both men entered the *sangha* (Buddhist monastic orders) from the status of licentiate.¹⁰⁵ Note that he does not cite the obvious, that both are monks, but reaches for something in both men's lives that strikes a chord in his *self*-understanding—that is, like him, they had sought greater fulfillment in Buddhism beyond early immersion in Confucian learning. By implication, this three-way shared resonance, involving Yuan's own spiritual disposition, had brought Zhuhong into his dream as an avatar of his destiny to meet Sixin. Most moderns would not make this sort of mystical inference, yet such correlative logic was very common in the dream-writings of Ming–Qing literati.¹⁰⁶

Especially in passive cases such as Yuan Zhongdao's, when the dream and the realization of its meaning simply happen to the subject, consultation with mantic or interpretive specialists, deities, or dream formularies is very seldom indicated. Occult methods more often appear when knowledge of some future outcome is actively sought through dreams, for instance, by candidates in the triennial civil examinations, about whom “marvelous” stories of dreams that cryptically foretell exam questions and success or failure had abounded since the advent of the examination system itself.¹⁰⁷ Yet evidence of resort to cultic or mantic dream methods in the attestable writings of Ming–Qing intellectuals is fairly thin, perhaps because literati patronage of soothsayers and supplication of deities concerning dream auguries had been criticized and dismissed by prominent writers at least since the Southern Song.¹⁰⁸

In late Ming, for instance, Xie Zhaozhe (1567–1624), widely known as a keen observer of his own times, cast aspersions on dream divination.¹⁰⁹ He was remarkably skeptical toward records in ancient classics of rulers concerning themselves with auspicious and inauspicious dreams, calling some such accounts patently ridiculous and attributing others to panderers to the kings. As for people of his own day who often wrote of dreams that were “borne out,” he wondered mockingly about all the dreams that *didn't* come true—surely far more numerous—and saw in

105. Yuan Zhongdao, *Youju shilu*, 231, 244.

106. A handy collection of many other such records from the whole span of the Qing dynasty is the 74th section of *Qingbai leichao*, prefaced 1916 by its compiler Xu Ke. Xu categorizes them as *mixin* (superstition) and justifies their inclusion as providing materials for the Western-inspired study of ideas of spirit or soul, for casual banter and entertainment, and to acknowledge the role of superstition in easing the lives of common people, especially women.

107. This is illustrated especially well for the Ming period in Elman, *Cultural History*, 326–345. The examiners' seemingly futile resistance to candidates' belief in anomalies and mantic predictions is also elucidated in *ibid.*, 346–360.

108. See, for instance, the essay “Guren zhanmeng” by prominent Song official Hong Mai (1123–1202), selected for inclusion by Tang Shunzhi (1507–1560) in his well-known collectanea *Jingchuan baibian*, 65.11a–b.

109. On Xie, see *DMB*, 1:546–507.

such exercises only weak joinery and strained analogies. “I emphatically disbelieve dreams. Of all the fortunes and misfortunes of my whole life, not one has been [foretold] in a dream. I thus know they do not bear credence.”¹¹⁰

In the next generation, Xiong Bolong (1617–1669), who rose to a prestigious literary position in the very early Qing court,¹¹¹ was even more categorical in rejecting dream-prognostication, and he also was more inclined to rationalistically explain away prognosticatory passages in the Classics than had been his remote mentor, Wang Chong. In his amplification of selected passages from Wang’s *Balanced Arguments*, Xiong writes:

Some say that bears and snakes [in dreams] are favorable signs for having a boy or a girl, [respectively], otherwise the words of the *Poetry Classic* would not be credible.¹¹² They say, if [a woman] will give birth to a son, then [her] *yangqi* is dominant and thus [her] bowels are hot, so she will dream of tough, strong animals, and if she will give birth to a daughter, then [her] *yinqi* is dominant and thus her bowels are cool, so she will dream of soft, supple animals. . . . But the dreams of pregnant women are not all like this. . . . In the world there are women who dream of bears and have daughters, and who dream of snakes and have sons. The poet [in the *Classic*] simply spoke of [cases] in which [the correspondence] was borne out but not of those in which it was not.¹¹³

Despite such denigration, two sorts of activities do testify—directly in one case, and indirectly in the other—to literati interest in cultic and divinatory methods of prognosis through dreams. Amply recorded from the Song period onward are instances of prominent figures soliciting personally revelatory dreams from efficacious deities.¹¹⁴ Also, the late Ming brought to a climax the publication of guides to oneiromancy, generically called *mengshu* or *zhanmeng shu* (dream books or dream-divination books), though specific cases of literati using such works to decipher their own dreams have so far eluded discovery.

The practice of seeking dreams from deities is based on belief in oracular dream incubation, that is, the planting of dreams or cryptic seeds thereof in the minds of supplicants by gods or spirits in response to appeals. This religious phenomenon, which has very ancient roots in Chinese and other civilizations, has been observed even in recent times at temples and shrines where the proprietary deity

110. Xie Zhaozhe, *Wuzazu*, 13.201–202.

111. On Xiong and his thought, see Yue Shengkui, “Xiong Bolong sixiang xinlun.”

112. See *Shijing*, “Xiaoya” part, “Sigan” sec., 6th–7th verses.

113. “Mengbian,” in Xiong Bolong, *Wuhe ji*, 333.

114. This practice was variably called *zhengmeng*, *qiumeng*, *qimeng*, *daomeng*, or *yemeng*.

traditionally has been reputed as reliable in furnishing accurately predictive dreams to sincere worshippers. Supplicants (or even substitutes who have been sent to pray and sleep for others) spend the night sleeping in or near the deity's sacred space.¹¹⁵ The most heavily patronized sites have provided special quarters for dream seekers, and specialists in oneiromancy usually have been on hand to aid the earnest but often bewildered patrons after they awake. Most frequently importuned have been city gods (*chenghuang*), the ubiquitous Lord Guan (i.e., the apotheosized Guan Yu [d. 220 CE]),¹¹⁶ and other deities associated with religious Daoism such as Lü Dongbin and the god of writing and literature, Wenchang Dijun (aka Zitong), though Buddhist figures also are propitiated.¹¹⁷

Not only have certain noumenal entities been considered most receptive to and effective with appeals for dreams; certain sites and geographic environs have earned reputations as most felicitous for seeking oracular dreams. In Ming–Qing times by far the most storied of those was a scenic area that encompasses Nine Carp Lake to the south and Stone and Bamboo Mountain to the north, stretching across Xianyou and Fuqing Counties in Fujian Province. Legendarily, the special qualities of this area for Daoist spiritual cultivation were discovered by nine blind brothers surnamed He, whose father had been close with the Prince of Huainan, Liu An, in the second century BCE. Those siblings took up residence there and eventually all became transcendents—the Nine He Immortals. Thus, the Daoist associations of this complex of sites were old and deep.¹¹⁸ Yet by Ming times, Buddhist features had appeared, such as a Lohan Pavilion and Guanyin Crag.

115. See Zhuo Songsheng, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 227–243; Chen Dakang, *Zhongguo gudai huameng lu*, chap. 6; Ong, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 39–44; Eggert, *Rede vom Traum*, 24–26; Laufer, “Inspirational Dreams,” 210–211; or R. Smith, *Fortune-Tellers and Philosophers*, 245–246. Particularly on Wenchang worship and oracular dreams, see Zhang Zehong, “Daojiao de ‘Zitong meng.’”

116. On the transformation of this historical figure into a Daoist deity, see Duara, “Superscribing Symbols,” 781.

117. Among self-records by prominent late-Ming intellectuals, see the complete text of “Jiqingsi Wenchangci qimengge shuwen,” an appeal to Wenchang written like an official petition, by Huang Ruheng (*jinshi* 1598), in his *Yulin ji*, 32.6b–7b; a request for a dream-prediction of an examination outcome at a shrine to Lü Dongbin by Wang Kentang (*jinshi* 1589), in his *Yugangzhai bichen*, 2.11a–b; and the context of “Henan shangguan ri mengji,” a dream solicitation of the Kaifeng city god by Mao Kun (1512–1601), in his *Yuzhi shanfang gao*, 16.20a–25a (esp. 22b). On the popularity in Ming–Qing times of deified martyr Yu Qian (1398–1457) among dream seekers, who flocked to his shrine in Hangzhou, see Chen Dakang, *Zhongguo gudai huameng lu*, 135, 138–141. For discussions of Zitong and of city gods, see entries by Kleeman and Zito, respectively, in Lopez, *Religions of China*, 64–81.

118. See articles by Zhan Shichuang, Ge Jianmin and He Zhenzhong, and Liu Xiangru in *Meng yu Dao*, 1:1–29. Zhou Lianggong (1612–1672), while serving as an official in Fujian in 1647–1654, wrote of another site to the west of Nine Carp Lake named Transcendents' Gate

Among the many Ming intellectuals who visited to solicit dreams,¹¹⁹ perhaps the most celebrated by locals was a native son, Ye Xianggao (1562–1627), who became the rarest of officials in late Ming: a widely respected chief grand secretary.¹²⁰ In 1616–1618, after retiring from office, he cosponsored the construction of a Guanyin Hall and a monks' residence and also rebuilt the Nine Immortals' Tower at Stone and Bamboo Mountain. These acts were in recognition of a dream he had received there as a young man which predicted that he would wear a belt of white jade (i.e., become a high-ranking official). A stele inscription by Ye commemorates a return ascent of the mountain in the spring of 1617 and modestly suggests that his success in office was foreordained, as evidenced by that earlier dream, not a matter of his own achievement:

As the rugged stones and bamboos penetrate the azure sky,
 Aroused from illness, I gladly respond to my excellent companions' call.
 In the dream I meandered through a grotto beyond the clouds
 And cut across from a gate of banyans to a streamside bridge.
 [Under] green cliffs and a cold moon, the Immortals' Altar was quiet;
 [Above] an emerald sea in a clear sky, [an immortal's] crane-carriage soared.
 Ever since this famed mount transmitted that dream,
 I have abashedly worn a jade belt around my waist.¹²¹

Unlike the ample evidence of intellectuals soliciting dreams at sacred sites exemplified by this inscription, the contemporaneous clientele for *mengshu* has gone unrecorded. Such books have left to us only the facts of their publication—and in some cases republication—by which to estimate their audience. Written guides to dream divination are known from bibliographic records to have existed since the Warring States period, but they were poorly preserved, surviving mainly in

Grotto, which he touted as just as efficacious for incubated dreams (*Min xiaoji*, 39b–40a); on Zhou, see *ECCP*, 1:173–174.

119. The local history *Jiulihu zhi* (prefaced 1586), *juan* 2, “Mengyan,” lists dozens of Ming-period degree-holders who received accurate predictive dreams at the complex. See also *Shizhushan zhi*, 8, for mentions of additional, prominent Ming and Qing patrons. For stele inscriptions by late-Ming literati visitors, see *Shizhushan zhi*, 51–53. The middle-Ming painter Tang Yin was fascinated with seeking dreams at the Nine Carp Lake complex (Wu Guofu, “Kaolun Tang Yin shanshui lüyou,” 62–63). For stories of dreams received there by Chief Grand Secretary Xia Yan (1482–1548) and Wen Lin (1445–1499), see Chen Dakang, *Zhongguo gudai huameng lu*, 132–133, 143–144, respectively; and by Xu Guocheng (*jinshi* 1583), see Shen Defu, *Wanli yehuo bian*, 3:720.

120. On Ye's career, see *DMB*, 2:1567–1570. He hailed from Fuqing.

121. *Shizhushan zhi*, 48, 51 (quotation).

fragments until the late Ming.¹²² Then, a confluence of trends brought forth voluminous publications in the genre: increasing antiquarian zeal for recovering lost knowledge and for classifying information encyclopedically; a tremendous boom in publishing books for the gamut of readerships and pocketbooks; and a rise—both populist and capitalist—in the production of “encyclopedias for daily use” (*riyong leishu*).¹²³ The mantic approach of drawing connections between things perceived to be of like kind, mentioned above, was especially amenable to encyclopedic organization, based as it is on classification. Moreover, traditionally the compilers of *mengshu* had posed not as author-creators but as collectors and preservers of knowledge of dream-divination techniques. Two late-Ming compilers in particular, Chen Shiyuan (1516–1597) and Zhang Fengyi (1527–1613),¹²⁴ remained in this vein while significantly augmenting the scholarly and literary cachet of such work, as well as the size and survivability of that field’s published products.

Earlier *mengshu* often begin with brief, abstruse statements on dreaming but consist largely of laconic entries organized in three broad categories—phenomena of heaven or the sky; features, flora, and fauna of the earth; and things and affairs of human life—according to the key “figure” of the recounted dream (*mengxiang*), that is, an image within a circumstance. (Thus, a dream of the sun would be placed in the heaven category. Whether it was rising or setting, bright or occluded, etc., would be an essential part of the figure.) Sometimes the dream-figure would be accompanied by a few words explaining the sense in which it should be construed. But the entry would always conclude with a judgment on the dream, either plainly declaring it “auspicious” (*ji*) or “inauspicious” (*xiong*), or predicting something that clearly implied good or bad fortune. For example, in the case of a dream of a walled city like a county seat, the dream-figure was taken to represent rulership, and the prediction was that the dreamer would see or meet a ruler.¹²⁵ Patterns of inference from dream-figure to sense to prediction were unsystematically associative—directly so

122. Liu Wenying, *Zhongguo gudai de mengshu*, 10, 66–67; Liu Wenying and Cao Tianyu, *Meng yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 86–95. The earliest extant fragments date from the Sui dynasty. Preserved among materials sealed in a Dunhuang cave in the eleventh century, those fragments (and one whole work) were unknown to Ming-Qing scholars. On dream-divination records among the Dunhuang materials, see Drège and Drettas, “Oniromancie.”

123. See Elman, “Collecting and Classifying,” 134–141, 148–149, 152–153; McDermott, *Social History*, chap. 2; and Chia, “Uses of Print,” 144–171.

124. Briefly on Chen, see *DMB*, 1:178–179. See also Chen Shiyuan, *Wandering Spirits*, 27–30; Drettas, “Rêve mis en ordre,” chap. 1; and Liu Wenying and Cao Tianyu, *Meng yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 71–78. Chen’s dates are according to Hu Mingsheng, “Chen Shiyuan xiansheng nianpu,” 606, 626. On Zhang, see *DMB*, 1:63–64; *IC*, 210–211; Aoki, *Shina kinsei gikyokushi*, 279–287; and Drettas, “Rêve mis en ordre,” chap. 2.

125. For clear analyses of typical *mengshu* contents and patterns of inference, as well as additional examples, see Liu Wenying, *Zhongguo gudai de mengshu*, 3–8; or Liu Wenying, *Meng de*

(a sick person falling to the ground → certain death), indirectly so (surrounded by filth and excrement → one will gain [morally corrupting] money and riches); poetically or rhetorically so (holding a haircomb → one's troubles will straighten out [like drawing a comb through tangled tresses]); linguistically so by homophones and puns (unripened *hulu* 胡蘆 gourds → examination candidates surnamed Hu 胡 and Lu 廬 have not yet passed [so the dreamer's fated turn has not come]); or, unique to Chinese dream divination, ideographically so by glyptomancy (getting an ear of grain 禾 and then losing it 失 → one will receive an official salary 秩).¹²⁶ Cogently identifying and explaining the key dream-figure and relating that to some future occurrence in the dreamer's life was called "rounding" or "completing" the dream (*yuanmeng*).¹²⁷ While ambient stories of "rounded" dreams could be fairly rich, the entries in traditional *mengshu* were quite bare and flatly formulaic, with judgments that were idiosyncratic to the unnamed diviners who purportedly originated them.

Chen Shiyuan, in his *Lost Meanings of Dream Prognostication (Mengzhan yizhi)*, prefaced 1562, adheres to the basic organization of *mengshu* but greatly changes the relative weight of the respective parts as well as the style of information delivery, producing a work which likely was much more palatable to literati readers.¹²⁸ Sparse, opaque introductory remarks are replaced by a whole Inner Part consisting of ten learned essays on issues pertaining to the cosmology and moral ontology of dreaming, the necessary conditions for effective dream divination, and the weight of testimony to the validity of dreams and oneiromancy. His essay "Sages" (Shengren), for instance, deftly combines Confucian and Daoist valorizations of infants to argue that *Master Zhuang's* statement "perfected ones have no dreams" cannot *literally* be true.¹²⁹ The subsequent Outer Part mostly preserves the traditional classification order of heaven, earth, and humankind (placing categories for non-human creatures at the end). Yet instead of just listing bare entries of dream-figure, judgment, and perhaps some construal of the figure's sense, Chen draws accounts of predictive dreams in each category from a broad array of classical, historical, and literary

mixin, 105–110. See also Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 289–312; or Chen Meiyong, Fang Aiping, and Deng Yiming, *Zhonghua zhanmeng shu*, 57–64.

126. Associative patterns and examples are drawn from Ong, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 151–172; Liu Wenying, *Zhongguo gudai de mengshu*, 10–22; and Chen Meiyong, Fang Aiping, and Deng Yiming, *Zhonghua zhanmeng shu*, 65–89. See also Strassberg, "Glyptomantic Dream Anecdotes"; and Vance, "Deciphering Dreams."

127. On this art, see Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 305–312.

128. Originally published in the interval 1562–1566, *Mengzhan yizhi* was republished in a collection of Chen's works, *Guiyun bieji*, in 1583. Strassberg's complete translation (Chen Shiyuan, *Wandering Spirits*) is based on a comparative reading of three later editions of 1833, 1850, and 1939.

129. Chen Shiyuan, *Mengzhan yizhi*, *juan* 2; for Strassberg's translation, see Chen Shiyuan, *Wandering Spirits*, 78–79. For discussion, see Ueno, "Musen itsushi ni miru Chin Shigen."

sources (358 in all) and places them within thematic discussions. For instance, in one of the “heavenly” categories, Chen asserts that stars, because they are “exceptional forms of primal *qi*,” do not occur as dream-figures among common people but among scholars who are destined to be the topmost selectees in the civil examinations, and he follows this with five corroborating examples drawn mostly from dynastic histories.¹³⁰ Throughout, Chen’s extensive interlinear notes, in which he provides further explanations and always cites his sources, constitute a very important dimension of the *Lost Meanings*.

Such was the scholarship that literati readers would have expected of Chen Shiyuan, who was a metropolitan graduate of 1544 and served briefly as a district magistrate before retiring to a life of travel, study, and writing. A true polymath, he authored more than two dozen works on widely varied subjects, making his name well known among later literati. Personal experiences readily piqued his curiosity. In the case of *Lost Meanings*, his preface exemplifies both the Daoist leanings of middle-Ming Confucian gentlemen, which Chen bore forward until he was influenced by the Buddhist revival late in life,¹³¹ and the alacrity with which he embarked on new inquiries. One night, drunk with wine, he fell asleep and dreamed that a man who looked like a Daoist transcendent bestowed upon him a set of books written in golden, ancient-style script which Chen could not read. Chen put the precious books into his sleeve for safekeeping and then asked the man if their encounter was a dream, to which the man gave a Daoistically paradoxical reply: “What encounter isn’t a dream, and what dream isn’t real?” The next day, Chen consulted a diviner about the dream and forthwith commenced the research into oneiromancy that resulted in the *Lost Meanings*.¹³²

Zhang Fengyi’s name would have been equally well known to seventeenth-century readers, since, after failing several times in the metropolitan examinations, he had made quite a reputation for himself in Suzhou as a dramatist, calligrapher, and writer, with several notable plays and other publications besides his *Classified Inquiries on Dream Prognostication* (*Mengzhan leikao*; 1587). Zhang, too, presented himself as dedicated to the recovery of ancient knowledge of dream divination which, he laments in his preface, had been paid no attention since the Song period. Consequently, he writes, the field had been ceded to irresponsible booksellers who pander to people’s need for dream prognostication by hawking such specious

130. *Mengzhan yizhi*, *juan* 3, “Leiyu”; for Strassberg’s translation, see Chen Shiyuan, *Wandering Spirits*, 115. My count of the number of works cited by Chen Shiyuan is from Strassberg’s “List of Sources,” in Chen Shiyuan, *Wandering Spirits*, 257–272.

131. For Chen’s record of a Buddhist dream he had in 1587 upon completing a study of Sanskrit phrases, see Hu Mingsheng, “Chen Shiyuan xiansheng nianpu,” 616.

132. Chen Shiyuan, *Mengzhan yizhi*, “Zixu”; for Strassberg’s translation, see Chen Shiyuan, *Wandering Spirits*, 51.

titles as *The Duke of Zhou Explains Dreams* (*Zhougong jiemeng*), which have no textual foundation.¹³³ Zhang is convinced that dream divination can be valid, first because of evidence in ancient (therefore authoritative) writings of its frequent employment in important affairs, second because of his own observation of the innate foreknowing capacity of the human mind, and third because, long before, he had recovered from a serious illness after a dream in which he had received a cure.¹³⁴ Thusly was Zhang motivated to scour reputable past records for evidence of divining the future through dreams and to meticulously organize his findings in clear categories for the convenience of others in pursuit of self-edification. The general order in which Zhang placed his findings is based, he says, on the “Great Plan” (Hongfan) chapter of the Confucian *Documents Classic* (*Shujing*, aka *Shangshu*).¹³⁵

Like Chen Shiyuan, Zhang Fengyi cites the textual source of each entry. Yet, despite concluding his *Classified Inquiries* with a valuable section titled “Dream Theories” (Shuomeng), which contains discussions of ideas about dreaming extracted from the works of a broad range of important writers, Zhang himself is far less philosophical or authorial than Chen, confining his own words to occasional, brief interlinear explanations of the case at hand. Moreover, Zhang’s selected records often are a good deal longer than those in Chen’s *Lost Meanings*, with the result that his *Classified Inquiries* can be said to constitute a story collection as much as an encyclopedia. To give another example from the “stars” subcategory: A junior military commander dreamed that a Daoist told him, “If a meteor falls to earth and you are able to avoid [being struck], you will rise [to the ranks] of generals and ministers.” The next day, the commander’s forces, who were laying siege to a city, were bombarded with stones hurled from atop the city wall, some of which destroyed his wooden redoubt and tattered half of his body armor. But he himself was not harmed and subsequently rose to a high official position.¹³⁶ The colorfulness of stories such as this one, befitting a compiler who liked to perform in his own, home-staged plays, lent an appeal to Zhang’s dream book that complements the more cerebral quality of Chen’s *Lost Meanings*.

133. Still popular today, this *mengshu*, also called *Zhougong jiemeng quanshu*, can be found in searchable format on the internet.

134. Zhang elaborates on this dream experience in “Bai wanzi,” in his *Mengzhan leikao*, 6.40a–b. See also Du Lianzhe, “Mingren jimeng,” 4–5.

135. Zhang makes the rhetorically strong but logically weak argument that dreams reflect the most subtle functioning (*ji*) of the mind, which knows good and bad before any physical action has taken place (*Mengzhan leikao*, preface, 1b). On Zhang’s experience with the thaumaturge, see *ibid.*, 2b; and on the “Hongfan” as an organizing model, see *ibid.*, 3a.

136. Zhang Fengyi (*Mengzhan leikao*, 1.11a) draws this story about Wang Yu from *Jishen lu*, tales of strange events collected by Xu Xuan (916–991).

Testimony of sorts to the favorable standing of Chen Shiyuan and Zhang Fengyi among late-Ming book buyers occurs decades after their deaths: the arrogation of their good names and of material from their *Lost Meanings* and *Classified Inquiries*, in a compendium of works on oneiromancy, *Mystical Interpretations of the Forest of Dreams* (*Menglin xuanjie*), prefaced 1636, which, at thirty-five *juan*, is certainly the most voluminous Chinese publication of its kind.¹³⁷ The publisher of this fairly pricey tome was Weng Shaolu of Nancheng, a market town in the orbit of a secondary publishing center, Huwanzhen in northeastern Jiangxi.¹³⁸

Weng used, or acquiesced in the use of, considerable sleight of hand—hardly out of the ordinary in Ming-Qing commercial publishing—to both enhance the aura of Daoist mystery and impart a modicum of Confucian respectability to the compendium. Its first two parts have strong associations with thaumaturgy: several disparate texts disclosing the esoterica of dream divination,¹³⁹ and two sections on exorcizing bad dreams, including incantations and talismans.¹⁴⁰ Two more parts follow, “The Provenance of Dreams” (*Mengyuan*) and “Verifications of Dream [Predictions]” (*Mengzheng*), which draw heavily on entries from Zhang’s *Classified Inquiries*, rearranging them, sometimes redeploying or rewriting them, and supplementing them liberally with other material, especially from Chen’s *Lost Meanings*. All of Zhang’s source notations have been removed, and Chen’s interlinear notes either elided or silently redeployed.¹⁴¹ Perhaps to sweeten the deal

137. In Qing sources, the character 玄 is changed to 元 in observance of the traditional taboo on using a character from the personal name of an emperor of the current dynasty—in this case, the Kangxi emperor.

138. Weng published a number of titles that appear to have catered to at least a lower-level literati clientele. See *Zhongguo guji banke cidian*, 491. His identity, as well as a price stamp of three taels, appears on the title page of an archival copy of *Menglin xuanjie*, which is not included in current reprint editions. See photoreproduction in Vance, “Textualizing Dreams,” 164. On Huwanzhen, see Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture*, 537–540.

139. On the five generically distinct sets of materials that make up “Mengzhan,” the first part of *Forest of Dreams*, as well as their respective problems of provenance and attribution, see Lackner, *Chinesische Traumwald*, 179–189; and Drettas, “Rêve mis en ordre,” 106–148.

140. The first section of the “Mengrang” part concerns the coordination of *Change Classic* divination with dream-figure interpretation in order to determine whether a given dream is genuinely inauspicious and therefore appropriate for exorcism. The second section explicates how certain incantations and talismans are to be used in the exorcism proper. See Drettas, “Rêve mis en ordre,” 149–162; and Vance, “Exorcizing Dreams and Nightmares,” 22–36.

141. In addition to extensive use of Zhang Fengyi’s material in parts 3 and 4 of *Forest of Dreams*, two items from his *Classified Inquiries* are used in the “Mengrang” part, and two of the items in his *fanli* (editorial explanations) are reused in the *fanli* in *Forest of Dreams*. Most of the entries in the unattributed “Zhanyou” section of *Forest of Dreams*, on principles of dream divination, are culled from Chen Shiyuan’s interlinear notes (Lackner, *Chinesische Traumwald*, 179, 202–205).

for customers, excerpts from the popular collection *Illustrated Cases of Ming Optimism* (*Ming zhuangyuan tukao*; 1607), stories of how the successes of the top civil examination graduates had been predicted in dreams, are appended (minus all the illustrations) to *Forest of Dreams* under the modified subtitle *Cases of Dreams by Top Graduates during the Imperial Ming* (*Huang Ming dingyuan mengkao*).

Because *Forest of Dreams* offers such voluminous evidence of Chinese ideas about oneiromancy, which otherwise is very scattered and had survived only tenuously into the later-imperial era, this work has attracted attention from modern-day scholars interested in uncovering the principles and beliefs of this mantic specialization.¹⁴² Yet a number of things about *Forest of Dreams*—bogus attributions, forged prefaces, foggy identities of contributors, internal editorial inconsistencies, unauthorized arrogation of, tampering with, and abridgement of other recent publications—would have given pause to discerning readers of the day, even those who did not reject such material.

To begin, it is highly unlikely that the purported principal compiler, whose name is signed “He Dongru” at the end of the main preface, was the He Dongru of historical record (*jinsi* 1598), as has been assumed to date. In 1636, when the He Dongru who styled himself a Daoist recluse in Suzhou penned his preface to *Forest of Dreams* after two years of work on the project, the historical He Dongru, a serious Neo-Confucian scholar-official and lecturer affiliated with the Eastern Grove cultural-political reform movement, was working himself to death formulating proposals for reinforcing the defenses of the auxiliary capital, Nanjing.¹⁴³ Moreover, the publisher of *Forest of Dreams* refers to the compiler, Mr. He, with a sobriquet not known to have been used by the He Dongru of record.¹⁴⁴ Nor is it easy to explain why the He Dongrus of either Nanjing or Suzhou, the two main publishing centers of the day, would engage a publisher in such an out-of-the-way place as Nancheng.

Whoever put together *Forest of Dreams*—whether some *other* He Dongru or someone using that contemporaneously well-known name to boost the work’s prestige—he took pains to construct false, air-filled accounts of the provenances of the lead materials, primarily in his own preface and in two apparently forged prefaces,

142. Monographs in chronological order are as follows: Lackner, *Chinesische Traumwald*; Ye Mingjian, *Menglin xuanjie*, app. 2; Drettas, “Rêve mis en ordre”; and Vance, “Textualizing Dreams.”

143. Briefly on He, see *DMB*, 1:521–522. This firebrand of the “pure element” in late-Ming politics was from Wuxi but resided in Nanjing. An important supplement to his biography in the *Mingshi* (20:6176) is a “short biography” in the front matter of He’s collected works, *He taipu ji*. For He’s memorial of 1637 on the defense of Nanjing (never submitted, presumably because of his death), see *He taipu ji*, 1.22a–23b.

144. *Menglin xuanjie*, title page, as in Vance, “Textualizing Dreams,” 164.

one attributed to the esteemed Song-period high official and Confucian classicist Sun Shi (962–1033)¹⁴⁵ and the other to the aforementioned Chen Shiyuan. The pseudo-Sun preface (inexplicably dated three years after Sun's death) purportedly is attached to a treatise on rounding dreams of which there is no corroborative record. And it tells of two motivating experiences in Sun's adult life set in years when the real Sun Shi would have been twelve and fourteen years old! The "brief preface" supposedly by Chen Shiyuan is more plausibly dated to 1564. Therein Chen is made to attribute certain core contents of the *Forest of Dreams* to Shao Yong (1011–1077), a famous cosmologist, numerologist, specialist on the *Change Classic*, and practitioner of Inner Alchemy who was respected by both Daoists and Neo-Confucians, and ultimately to Ge Hong (283–343), revered author of many works that were foundational to later Daoist beliefs and practices, especially regarding alchemy and immortality.¹⁴⁶ The message of this latter piece of legerdemain is that eight *juan* of materials in *Forest of Dreams* are long-lost products of two of the greatest minds in the history of Daoist and Daoist-Confucian crossover thought, enhanced for publication by the late, esteemed dream authority Chen Shiyuan in order to supplement his *Lost Meanings*.¹⁴⁷ The last of the front prefaces is genuine, Zhang Fengyi's preface to his *Classified Inquiries*,¹⁴⁸ but it is used without the deceased author's knowledge. This perhaps fulfills the triple purpose of inviting readers, reinforcing the rhetoric of the respectability of oneiromancy, and implying Zhang's sanction of the extensive use of his material in the third and fourth parts of *Forest of Dreams*.

Such smoke-and-mirrors tactics in the commercial press of the day, much decried by contemporaneous scholars and litterateurs, perhaps account for omission of *Forest of Dreams* from the *Bibliography of Thousand-Hectare Hall* (*Qianqingtang shumu*) compiled by the outstanding book collector Huang Yuji (1629–1691). Generally regarded as a good indicator of books within the purview of late-Ming and early-Qing intellectuals, this bibliography became the basis of the listing of extant books in the official *Ming History*.¹⁴⁹ Though *Forest of Dreams* seems to have

145. See *Sung Biographies*, 3:978–979. For another discussion of Sun Shi and this dubious preface, see Lackner, *Chinesische Traumwald*, 163–166.

146. On Shao, see *ET*, 2:876–877; and Birdwhistell, *Transition to Neo-Confucianism*. On Ge, see *ET*, 1:442–443; and Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven*, 13–17.

147. Hu Mingsheng finds no mention in any of Chen's extant writings of any such work as the *Forest of Dreams* ("Chen Shiyuan xiansheng nianpu," 619). On other doubts about the authenticity of this preface, see Lackner, *Chinesische Traumwald*, 167–169; and Drettas, "Rêve mis en ordre," 100–103.

148. Three additional purported contributors are untraceable. See the puzzling subprefaces to the second, third, and fourth parts of *Forest of Dreams*.

149. *ECCP*, 1:355–356. See Huang Yuji, *Qianqingtang shumu*, 364, for a listing of works on dream interpretation. A copy of *Forest of Dreams* was reviewed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century by compilers of the *Imperial Library in Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu*), who dismissed its

been printed in goodly numbers,¹⁵⁰ it was never republished. Its clientele may have been the well-off among county-level degree-holders, whose ranks burgeoned in late Ming, and book-buying members of the increasingly literate merchant class. In any case, the oneiromantic techniques and beliefs that *Forest of Dreams* offers up so copiously remained peripheral to ideas about predictive dreams that circulated among the higher intellectual elite.

Certain segments of *Forest of Dreams*, in harking back to very ancient notions of pathology and cosmic correspondence, do, however, offer an apt segue to discussion of another sort of “divination”: doctors’ consideration of their patients’ dream experiences in diagnosing maladies. The “Dream Exorcism” (Mengrang) part of the *Forest of Dreams* represents the persistence in some socioreligious sectors of the demonic medicine that prevailed in the era preceding the first stable unification of China in the second century BCE. In demonological pathology, illnesses (including those marked by bad dreams) were caused by vile spirits whose harmful effects on human bodies were enabled by disruption or deterioration in the normatively smooth relations between humankind and the ruling deities of the supernatural realm. Countermeasures typically involved chanting incantations, burning talismans, deploying apotropaic objects or substances, and ritual acts performed by shamanistic priests to drive out the malevolent demons and restore good relations with authoritative elements in the spirit hierarchy.¹⁵¹ At the same time, certain segments of *Forest of Dreams* minutely correlate certain dream-figures with harmonious and disharmonious relations among the five innermost organs of the body and assign meanings to categories of dream-figures that appear in their associated four seasons and on certain of the sixty nights in a sexagenary cycle.¹⁵² In doing so, they echo the great shift from demonology to the more naturalistic paradigm of correlative cosmology which was largely complete by the turn of the first century CE. This epochal change of worldview concomitantly gave rise to the “medicine of systematic correspondence” which prevailed in China until the twentieth century.¹⁵³

Most emblematic of that emergence of a new paradigm of health and illness is the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Sovereign* (*Huangdi neijing*), which contains elements

claims about origins as “insubstantial” and as “the dissembling words of soothsayers, from which [Chen] Shiyuan and the others [Ge, Sun, and Zhang, being deceased] were unable to distinguish themselves” (*SKTY*, 3:2320).

150. Vance (“Textualizing Dreams”) finds that sixteen copies have survived to the present, which is a respectable rate for a seventeenth-century Chinese book.

151. Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 34–40.

152. “The Long-Willow Schema of Dreams Emitted from Circular Changes among the Five [Organs’] Spirits and the Two Qi [of Yin and Yang]” (Changliu wushen chuanbian erqi fameng tu), in *Menglin xuanjie*, juan 24; and “Gan De’s Schema of Good and Bad [Dream Signs] according to the Seasons and the Sexagenary Cycle” (Gan De shiling ganzhi xiujiu tu), in *ibid.*, juan 25–26.

153. Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 52–73. See also Henderson, *Development and Decline*, 2–10.

dating back to the second century BCE but evolved until the received text took shape in the third century CE.¹⁵⁴ Despite vast developments in Chinese medical thought and experience in the subsequent two millennia, this work retained great influence as a baseline of medical knowledge, though in later-imperial times—as with all the ancient “classics”—it was cited selectively, some passages maintaining more credence than others. Pertinent here is that the *Inner Canon* set forth some of the most enduring ideas about using patients’ dream content to identify the sources of their illnesses, and thus about relations between the psychic act of dreaming and the somatic processes of human bodies.¹⁵⁵ This involved drawing direct correlations between dream-figures and the operations of the five phases and the *yinyang* modes of *qi*, which a priori were correlated with the systems of the five innermost organs (*wuzang*) (renal, hepatic, cardiac, splenic, and pulmonary) and their mutual effects, as well as with five basic emotional states (fear, anger, joy, pensiveness, and sadness or grief).¹⁵⁶

For instance, two passages on dreams in the “Basic Questions” (Suwen) part of the *Inner Canon* read as follows:

When *yin* is abundant, one dreams of stepping into a big body of water and being afraid; when *yang* is abundant, one dreams of a great, cauterizing fire; when *yin* and *yang* are equally abundant, one dreams of mutual slaughter, destruction, and injury. When [*qi*] is abundant in the upper torso, one dreams of flying; in the lower torso, then of falling. When one is very satiated, then one dreams of giving [food to others]; when very hungry, then of taking [food from others]. If the hepatic *qi* is abundant, then one dreams of being angry; if the pulmonary *qi* is abundant, then one dreams of crying.¹⁵⁷

Recession because of diminished *qi* leads to wild dreams and, at the extreme, hallucinations. . . . When the pulmonary *qi* is depleted, it makes people dream

154. Unschuld, “*Huang Di nei jing su wen*,” 2–3.

155. For general discussions of dreaming in traditional Chinese medicine, see Liu Wenying and Cao Tianyu, *Meng yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 541–597; Zhuo Songsheng, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 347–373; and Strickmann, “Dreamwork of Psycho-Sinologists,” 29–31.

156. For introductory articles on dreaming in the *Huangdi neijing*, see Han Liping, Guo Xiaoqing, and Liu Shi, “*Neijing* shuimeng guan”; and Lu Ying and Yan Jianhua, “*Neijing* yinxie fameng.” On the *wuzang* system and its five-phases and *yinyang* correlates, see Porkert, *Theoretical Foundations*, chaps. 1 and 3. On the emotions and “somatopsychic” diseases in the *Inner Canon*, see Unschuld, “*Huang Di nei jing su wen*,” 227–234.

157. *Huangdi neijing*, “Suwen” part, “Maiyao jingwei lun,” passage 4. The hepatic organ-system was correlated with anger, the pulmonary with sadness or grief, among the “five emotions.”

of white things, and of someone hacking and [strewing] blood everywhere, and if in its [correlate] time [of year], then of soldiers battling. If the renal *qi* is depleted, [it brings] dreams of [sinking] boats and people drowning, and if in its time, then of lying submerged in water as though very fearful. If the hepatic *qi* is depleted, then there are dreams of fragrant plants and fresh grasses, and if in its time, of lying under a tree but not daring to get up. If the cardiac *qi* is depleted, then one dreams of putting out fires and of the penis, and if in its time, then of cauterizing fire. If the splenic *qi* is depleted, then one dreams of food and drink being insufficient, and if in its time, then of constructing walls and houses. These are all cases of the *qi* of the five organ-systems being depleted and [the consequent] surfeit of *yangqi* and insufficiency of *yinqi*.¹⁵⁸

Apart from the obvious cases of sympathetic compensation in dreams for bodily discomforts such as hunger and satiation, what reasoning underlies these assertions (couched as observations)? Fortunately, a prominent, learned physician in late Ming, Zhang Jiebin (1563–1642?), combined passages from different parts of the somewhat desultory *Inner Canon* into thematic sections and wrote succinct explanations of each line. His [*Inner*] *Canon Categorized* (*Leijing*; 1624) has been cited ever since as *the* authority on meanings in the Yellow Sovereign's text.¹⁵⁹ Regarding the passage quoted directly above, for instance, Zhang helpfully explains that depletion of *qi* in the pulmonary system (correlated with the metal phase) brings on dreams of white things because metal is white, as well as dreams of hacking because that is one way in which metal is used. Since depletion always causes feelings of fear, timidity, and nervousness, the blood-strewn scene expresses high anxiety. "In its time" means the season in which the metal phase is at its fullest (i.e., autumn); thus we are given to construe that in autumn a dream of someone engaged in bloody hacking is compounded into one of many soldiers in battle. And so on *mutatis mutandis* for the other four of the five organ-systems. In the case of the hepatic system, correlated with the wood phase and plant life in general, one naturally dreams of flora, but the timidity brought on by depletion makes one afraid to get up from under a tree. The heart system is correlated with the fire phase, so depletion elicits dreams both of the frightening suppression of a fire and of the penis, since fire is *yang* and the penis literally is a "*yang* thing" (*yangwu*).¹⁶⁰

158. Ibid., "Fang shengshuai lun," passage 1. In the "Lingshu" part of the *Inner Canon*, see also the "Yinxie fameng" sec., passages 1–3.

159. On Zhang, see *ECCP*, 1:26–27; Unschuld, "*Huang Di nei jing su wen*," 68–69; and Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 199–200.

160. *Leijing*, *juan* 18, sec. 84, "Yinyang zhi nijue er wei meng." All the innermost organs—the *wuzang*, including the cardiac system—were traditionally classed as *yin* because they are "inner." But the heart, because of its position above the diaphragm and toward the back and its

Zhang's ability to plausibly explain passages in the *Inner Canon*, however, does not necessarily indicate that he subscribes to them. The two chapters in the *Canon Categorized* devoted to the target text's principal statements about dreams are followed by an eloquent note expressing Zhang's dissent. Therein he first cites well-known examples from classics and histories of the great multiplicity of dream variations, continuing in a vein that melds the physiological sense of *xin* as the heart organ with the moral-ethical and cognitive sense of *xin* as "mind":

Now, the transformations of the five phases have ever been limitless, and the creation of dreams in the heart/mind has ever been the same. The heart/mind is the "ruler" organ and the [main] abode of our life-spirit [*shén*]. When the life-spirit moves in the heart/mind, then the life-spirit in all of the five systems responds to it. So wherever the heart/mind or the life-spirit goes, so goes the other. Now, when a dreamer's heart/mind takes the lead over his life-spirit, then because [the heart/mind] is fixated by emotions, there is hindrance. But when a dreamer's life-spirit takes the lead over his heart/mind, he can have premonitions of what is [yet] unformed because of the life-spirit's numinous quality. [In that way,] the heart/mind's spirituality extends everywhere, and so one might see any sort of strange dream-figure—truly, even things that defy description. Only sages can control [the influence of] things with their heart/mind and subsume the heart/mind in their very nature [*xìng*], so that it becomes one with all creation. How could it be made subservient to the five phases?¹⁶¹

Zhang's main thrust here, in accord with many learned physicians of the later-imperial era, is to counter the idea that people's dream experiences can be neatly rationalized in terms of the five phases. While his approach to medicine remains unquestionably within the *Inner Canon's* episteme of systematic correspondence, his view of the heart as controlling organ has been influenced by Neo-Confucian emphasis on bringing the heart *as mind* into accord with our fundamentally good human nature. Of further interest, Zhang, as a physician, places greatest importance on *shén*, rendered here as "life-spirit" because in the *Canon Categorized* he carefully defines *shén* as arising from interchange between the essences of *yin* and *yang*—the sine qua non of all life.¹⁶² Obviously, there can be no operation of the heart/mind or human nature, or any participation in the five-phase changes, unless the individual is alive. But beyond that, Zhang sees the intimate relation between the heart/

correlation with fire, represented major *yang*, that is, "*yang* within *yin*." See Porkert, *Theoretical Foundations*, 32.

161. *Leijing*, *juan* 18, sec. 85, "Mengmei," endnote.

162. *Ibid.*, *juan* 3, sec. 9, "Benshen."

mind and the mystery of life as the key to understanding qualitative differences in people's dreams.

Compared to his contemporaries, Zhang Jiebin is particularly well known for his attention to patients' emotions and mental states in his diagnoses and prescriptions.¹⁶³ Yet other physicians of his era also commonly mentioned whether a patient had been having a lot of frenetic, frightening, or dread-inducing dreams, or seemingly had been rendered ill by a disturbing dream. Such observations generally were folded into a complex of symptoms from which diagnoses were drawn, and doctors in Ming–Qing times understood well that bad dreams could indicate complex interactions among mental and physical maladies, with either or both internal and external causes. Most commonly, the pathology would involve a depletion of *qi* or blood in the cardiac system,¹⁶⁴ the resulting anxious struggle of the heart's life-spirit causing a flare of fire, which in turn would deplete the *yinqi* in the other systems, increasing internal anxiety.¹⁶⁵ Case in point: the hepatic system was thought to be one of two “minister” organ-systems (along with the renal) proximate to the “ruling” cardiac, and it also was believed to house the *hun*, or aerial soul. Thus, when the liver-and-*hun* were disturbed by a heart-flare, dreams were produced. Regardless of the etiological conclusion in any particular case, however, late-imperial medical treatises and casebooks evince more interest in techniques for calming the suffering patient's mind (with sedatives or words—even ruses) than in noting the specific contents of reported dreams, much less correlating them with the five phases.

One exception to this generality was erotic dreams of such intensity or depravity (e.g., of having intercourse with demons or strange animals) that they caused nocturnal discharges of sperm in men and vaginal mucus in women. This was of concern to doctors because any unusual loss of bodily fluid (such as sputum, vomit, or sweat—not to mention blood) was likely to indicate illness and, if not checked, lead to dangerous dehydration. Excess vaginal fluid often was simply attributed to sexual deprivation (particularly in widows, wives whose husbands were away

163. See Guo Liwa and Huang Jian, “Shishu Zhang Jingyue”; and Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 220–221.

164. Injury to the heart system could itself be the knock-on effect of injury to one of the other inner systems or to the “outer” para-systems (*fu*), each of which was thought to have its own vulnerabilities.

165. For examples, see Wang Ji, *Shishan yi'an, juan shang*, “Rongwei lun,” passage 7; Wu Kun, *Yifang kao, juan 5*, “Jingji zhenzhong men”; or Zhang Jiebin, *Leijing*, 20.8b. Sun Yikui (1522–1619) was of the school that thought the stomach and spleen were the most important organs, and that once deficiencies in those organs sent either pathological cold or heat upward to the cardiac and renal systems, then hallucinations and frightening dreams would result (Sun Yikui, *Chishui yuanzhu, juan 2*, passage 245; *juan 10*, passage 11).

for long periods, nuns, and other unmarried women);¹⁶⁶ it was seldom regarded as life-threatening because blood, not vaginal mucus, was considered the essence of female vitality. Vaginal hemorrhaging or abnormalities in the color, consistency, or odor of the menstrual flow would be more serious matters. In men, however, semen was considered the life essence and therefore a precious fluid to be maximally conserved. Perhaps for this reason, a great deal of attention was devoted to “dream residues” (*mengyi*)—what we colloquially call “wet dreams”—in traditional Chinese medical casebooks and treatises.

Since semen was thought to be distilled from blood and then stored by the kidneys (correlated with the water phase), the renal system was the main focus of etiological thought about dream residues. Either that organ-system was weakened to the point that it could not hold its store of semen, or it became disturbed to such a degree that its semen overflowed. The renal system being close to the cardiac, it was thought to be especially vulnerable to flare-ups of the latter (the kidneys-as-water being depleted or at least tested by the heart-as-fire). Thus, at the same time that the ruler-heart was unsettling one minister-system, the hepatic, and thereby causing dreams (as explained above), its unsettling of the other minister-system, the renal, would allow semen to escape.¹⁶⁷

Though some learned doctors recognized that uncontrolled semen flow could be wholly physiological in its causes and favored such terms as “semen slippage” (*jinghua*) or “loss of semen” (*yijing*, *shijing*) for those cases, rather than “dream residues,” most nocturnal emissions were blamed on lifestyle, behavioral, and psychological causes: too much hard thinking, excessive indulgence in food and drink, and immoderate sexual activity or desire, all of which often underlay erotic dreams.¹⁶⁸ Thus, beyond the problem of wasting one’s life essence in semen loss was the issue of mental control over desires—whether for career success or sensual gratification—and their attendant emotions. This weighed on the consciences of gentlemen, who were judged, and self-judged, by their cultivation of calm restraint and disinterest in selfish gain, but who tended to be more susceptible than commoners to overthinking and overuse of culinary, alcoholic, and sexual amenities. Reflection on his many patients with dream-residue problems led Zhang Jiebin to

166. Hsiu-fen Chen, “Between Passion and Repression.”

167. For more on dream residues in Chinese medical thought, see Zhuo Songsheng, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 364–373. See also Liu Wenying and Cao Tianyu, *Meng yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 566–573.

168. For Ming-period examples, see “Laoji,” in Yu Tuan, *Xinbian yixue zhengzhuang*, 3.97b–98a; “Mengyi,” in Fang Guang, *Danxi xinfa fuyi*, 11.98b–99a (quoting Dai Sigong [1324–1405] and Wang Lun [fl. ca. 1500]); and “Mengyi,” in Wan Biao and Wan Bangfu, *Wanshi jiachao jishi liangfang*, 2.79b. Cases of semen loss similarly are attributed to exhaustion of the body and spirit in Ye Gui, *Linzheng zhinan yi’an*, 3.1a–13a.

express the enduring Chinese physicians' preference for prevention over treatment as follows:

Pathological loss of semen always begins with the heart/mind. Correctly, the heart/mind is the ruling fire, and the kidneys are ministers to that fire. Whenever [the heart/mind] moves, the kidneys must respond to it. So in all cases of young men with strong [sexual] desire, whether because the heart/mind has wild thoughts or because of wild encounters on the outside, it becomes a case of the ruler-fire becoming agitated above and the ministers-to-fire getting scorched below. Thus, water [i.e., the renal system] cannot hold, and its semen leaks out. Men don't dwell on this the first time, but after several times it becomes unstoppable . . . to the point of exhaustion and damage. As death draws nigh, can one not be fearful? . . . One sees this malady [of semen loss] mostly among the clever and ingenious, while ignorant and simple men of the fields mostly are free of it. Why is this? Again, it's ever just a matter of movement and repose in the heart/mind. This should be understood by young men before the malady appears.¹⁶⁹

Perhaps because learned doctors had to engage with dreaming most often when the dreamers were very ill, or because of the close relation between their episteme and that of Inner Alchemy Daoism, their view of dreaming—at least in their medical writings—was predominantly pathological. In that sense, it overlapped with the demonological dream exorcisms practiced by the thaumaturges with whom they jostled in late-imperial Chinese society.¹⁷⁰ To conclude this chapter on facets of continuity in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century intellectual dream culture, we must take a great leap to the opposite, inspirational end of the spectrum of attitudes toward dreaming, and from the most private to the most public of dreams.

Imperial Dreams

Many Chinese records of the dreams of rulers and their consorts date from the era before the subcontinent was unified in the second century BCE under a centralized, bureaucratic system headed by an “emperor” (*huangdi*). This was

169. Zhang Jiebin, *Jingyue quanshu*, 29.5a–b, passage 14.

170. Komjathy comments that early adepts in Quanzhen Daoism “were especially concerned about sexual fantasies . . . and, in the case of male practitioners, nocturnal seminal emission due to ‘demons of sleep’ (*shuimo*) and ‘yin-ghosts’ (*yingui*)” (*Way of Complete Perfection*, 101). For an analysis of the different kinds of health practitioners circulating in late-Ming society, see Cullen, “Patients and Healers.”

because of the regular employment of dream-interpretation specialists at the kingly courts in pre-Qin times. In that era, rulership was hardly a lark, but the kings were less circumscribed by bureaucracies and statutory precedents than were emperors in the “imperial” era, often acting in consultation with just one or a few advisors. The pressure to make right decisions—such as whether to battle or bargain with a threatening state, which son to ensconce as heir, or whom to select as prime minister—prompted numerous dreams which were set before diviners for deciphering. Royal dreams with instructive or intriguing later verifications were then recorded for eventual inclusion in such sources as *Zuo’s Chronicle*, as mentioned above.¹⁷¹ Perhaps because of the heavily Confucian conditioning of bureaucrats in imperial times, and the concomitant disappearance of dream-diviners from the ranks of courtiers, officially recorded dreams by emperors became fewer in number. But more so than those of the pre-imperial era, they tended to serve grand purposes of legitimation by demonstrating that major policy or structural changes, important departures from precedent, new patterns of dynastic religious identification and patronage, or dubious accessions and successions to the imperial throne were approved by the highest deities or cosmic powers in the belief systems of key constituents.

Another general difference between records of emperors’ dreams and those of pre-imperial rulers is that most of those records reflect the influence of Buddhism and religious Daoism on the Han-Chinese emperorship as well as the perennial, court-centered competition between those two religions which became marked from about the third century CE onward—though imperial dreams that reinforced the values of a third redoubtable competitor, Confucianism, also appear in court records.¹⁷² In any case, whether or not they were grounded in the actual dream experience of any given emperor (or empress), such records usually were issued as official or quasi-official documents for some political purpose, with content strategically targeted accordingly. Our interest here is in how the mystique of dreaming in China’s principal creedal traditions was marshaled in the service of imperial aims, especially self-legitimation.

In the Ming period, three cases of imperial dreams became well known among members of the scholar-official class, who were acutely attuned to political-cultural signals from the court: the portentous, Daoistic dream reportedly experienced by the Ming founder, Taizu (Zhu Yuanzhang, Hongwu; r. 1368–1399), just before his

171. See Wagner, “Imperial Dreams.” See also Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 314–335, on expressions of people’s political values through dream stories.

172. For Emperor Taizong’s (r. 626–649) affectionate, admiring dreams of his deceased chief ministers, which demonstrate the Confucian virtue of respect between ruler and minister, see Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 322–323.

enthronement; and two oneiric dispensations by the bodhisattva Guanyin, first to Empress Renxiao (née Xu; 1362–1407), wife of the prince who became Chengzu (Yongle; r. 1403–1425), and later to Empress Dowager Cisheng (née Li; 1546–1614), birth mother of Shenzong (Wanli; r. 1573–1620).¹⁷³ Exploration of these cases and their remote antecedents may illustrate the legitimating roles of Daoism and Buddhism in Han-Chinese imperial dreams.

Ming Taizu rose from the lowest rungs of fourteenth-century Chinese society and initially acquired the military skills and armed following necessary to found a new dynasty as a commander in the Red Turban Army of a Buddhist-Manichean millenarian insurgency. When, at length, he accrued enough success to have himself enthroned as emperor of the Great Ming, he immediately instituted prohibitions on the sorts of rebellious sects that had lofted him to power and began to minimize his past association with millenarians. This was one motivation in his tract “Record of a Dream” (Jimeng), written not long after his enthronement but purportedly recalling a dream of the previous autumn.¹⁷⁴ The dream account per se is thickly framed by Taizu’s autobiographical recollection of the circumstances that had compelled him, since 1351, as but one among the oppressed masses, to revolt against the failing rule of the Mongol-Yuan dynasty, and which led him to reject the other rebels and pursue his own state-building agenda. He writes that he had recently acceded to widespread calls to ascend the imperial throne when, out of the blue, he had a dream which presented him with successive, clearer and clearer signs of his destiny to be installed as senior celestial representative in the mortal world.

The dream takes Taizu back to the time when he was just Zhu Yuanzhang, living in straitened circumstances, and proceeds in two segments. In the first, flocks of birds appear to him, including a “fairy crane” (*xianhe*, lit., “crane of the immortals”) that soars to the southeast, the direction of his future capital. This sight is suddenly replaced by a brief vision of black banners floating in space and then of a square, red tower with two figures resembling Buddhist temple guardians who seem to be making an announcement.¹⁷⁵ But the tower abruptly turns around two times, to

173. *DMB*, 1:381–392, 566–569, 856–859, respectively. For more on Zhu Yuanzhang’s ascent to the throne and measures to reinforce his grip on power and claim to legitimacy, see *CHC*, vol. 7, 25–57, 68–125.

174. *Ming shilu*, Taizu, 30.10b–11a. “Jimeng” is translated and discussed in R. Taylor, “Ming T’ai-tsu’s Story,” 4–10, from Zhu Yuanzhang, *Ming Taizu yuzhi wenji*, 16.8a–11b, consulting alternative texts. Hok-lam Chan examines how elements of this dream record were worked into official accounts and documents of Taizu’s reign in “Xie Jin,” 101–102, 113–119.

175. The term here for “black flags” (*qingfan*) signifies the beginning of new life in the early spring, and the character for “red” in “red tower” is *zhu*, which is also Zhu Yuanzhang’s surname. R. Taylor (“Ming T’ai-tsu’s Story,” 19, n. 50) suggests that this red tower is the stupa of Buddha Prabhūtaratna who appears therein when the true law (of the *Lotus Sutra*) is revealed.

reveal at its center three dignitaries who appear to be the Three Pure Ones (San-qing), that is, the past, present, and future celestial emperors of religious Daoism, who look at Zhu briefly before disappearing. Still in his dream, the future Taizu then hurries home to tell his widowed sister-in-law of these sightings, feeling very ill at ease with such anomalies. Then commences the second segment, in which Zhu, suddenly no longer poor and insignificant, goes out in the direction of the Celestial Palace (the Big Dipper) to look for the heavenly spirits he has seen. He is met by several Daoist priests who give him a crimson robe with five-colored lining, meant for a “cultured, principled, fully realized man,” as well as an appropriate hat, shoes, and special sword. Next he sees coming toward him a man dressed only in a black tunic and with a cooking pot inverted on his head, who glares at him but goes off.¹⁷⁶ Zhu then embarks on what strikes one as being, in geographic miniature, a trek from his home (in present-day north-central Anhui Province) to his future capital, Nanjing. He sees standing there his eldest son, the “heir apparent,” dressed in black, and then awakes.

As an imperial accession narrative, this account certainly is idiosyncratic, perhaps befitting Ming Taizu, arguably the most unusual figure to ever found a major Chinese dynasty, and it reflects the rich mixture of religious influences in his colorful early life. Yet the predominance of Daoist symbols, personages, and ceremonial trappings was hardly unprecedented in imperial dreams. During the Tang dynasty, when the Daoist “Old Master,” Laozi (whose surname was thought to have been Li), was enshrined as the originary ancestor of the imperial lineage (also surnamed Li), the “Brilliant Emperor” Xuanzong (aka Minghuang; r. 712–756) dreamed of being visited by Laozi (canonized in early Tang as Sovereign of the Mysterious Primordium, Xuanyuan Huangdi), who told him where to find a carved image of himself for use in lineage worship. Xuanzong not only found the image and had it properly emplaced; he also, recollecting from his dream, had a likeness of Laozi drawn up for copying by artisans and ordered images based on that likeness installed in official Daoist belvederes throughout the country.¹⁷⁷

In the succeeding major Han-Chinese dynasty, the Song, Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997–1022) also inordinately patronized Daoism, although, with the imperial surname Zhao he could not play up any purported descent from Laozi. Not to be outdone by his Tang predecessors, he drew on another source of religious

176. This may be a dream-state remembrance of Zhang Zhong (aka Iron Cap Zhang), the most important among the several Daoist seer-magicians who aided Zhu Yuanzhang in his battles for supremacy. See H. Chan, “Chang Chung.”

177. Three years later, Xuanzong went even further, having images of himself carved of white jade or cast in bronze and placed beside images of Laozi at worship sites in the capitals and prefectures. See Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 360–361; Xu Daoxun and Zhao Keyao, *Tang Xuanzong zhuan*, 250–251.

legitimation: the oneiric reception from supreme celestial authorities of sacred texts and oral revelations, which established an even more exalted Daoist origin for the Song imperial lineage. The progressive stages of this self-aggrandizement began in 1007–1008 when Zhenzong, one of the most gullible emperors in Chinese history, had a blazing nocturnal vision followed by a dream in which a crimson-cloaked figure resembling a Daoist divinity or priest announced that certain talismans or scripts would be sent down. Two “Heavenly Texts”—soon miraculously “found” by sycophants—reinforced the legitimacy of the current reign and of the Song dynasty, predicting a very long tenure for the imperial Zhao clan. Then again, in 1012, certain ideas having been planted three years before by a Daoist magician, Zhenzong had a series of dreams which revealed the identity of the figure who had appeared to him previously: He was the originary ancestor of the Zhao clan, none other than the ultimate progenitor of Daoism in the world, the Yellow Sovereign! He had been commanded to make himself known to Zhenzong by the Jade Emperor (Yuhuang or Yudi), perhaps the most commonly worshipped deity in religious Daoism. Analogously to Xuanzong in the Tang, Zhenzhong ordered the Heavenly Texts carved in jade for worship in a specially constructed Daoist palace, with an image of himself placed alongside.¹⁷⁸

While Ming Taizu made no such claim to empyrean ancestry, his dream account unmistakably invokes the aura of a noumenal Daoist investiture. In all such cases the Daoist religion’s construction of a vast, hierarchical pantheon, which paralleled in the heavens all the levels of the Chinese imperial bureaucracy below, invited the rank-specific pairing of earthly and celestial rulers, as well as their protocol-compliant meetings when the earthly one of each pair could project superior spirituality through dreaming. Also worth considering is the wider political context. Though Tang Xuanzong and Song Zhenzong both succeeded to the throne by birthright, unlike Ming Taizu, who had no pedigree and seized power by force, the threat of defeat by formidable states to China’s north was acute in the minds of all three emperors and may have elicited oneiric reassurance of their personal and dynastic security. Moreover, among the most formidable of those enemies were steppe-based states that officially patronized Buddhism—the Tangut Western Xia, Khitan Liao, Jurchen Jīn, and Mongol Yuan—from which the Song and Ming rulers may have wished to distinguish themselves by favoring the “native” religion, Daoism.

Even without such a motive, any promotion of Daoism by the imperial court generally involved demotion of Buddhism. Tang and Song times saw continual measures intended to reduce the bloated wealth, supernumerary monks and nuns,

178. *Songshi jishi benmo*, *juan* 22; S. Cahill, “Taoism at the Sung Court”; *CHC*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 604–605.

and zealous lay followings of the Buddhist orders. Ming Taizu, after suppressing subversives like the White Lotus Society and bringing the Buddhist and Daoist religious establishments under firm state control, took a comparatively balanced approach toward the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism). The appeal of Daoism to Chinese emperors, however, for reasons in addition to those evinced in Taizu's dream account, remained strong throughout the Ming, becoming excessive in the reign of Shizong (Jiajing; r. 1521–1567) and dominating the religious culture of the princely courts.¹⁷⁹

That said, the political role of Buddhism, as well, under certain Ming emperors cannot be overlooked. Reasons for this are many, but pertinent here are two prominent empresses' dreams of Guanyin, an incomparably merciful bodhisattva who long since had taken female form in China and thus was seen as particularly approachable by women. The first imperial lady, Empress Renxiao, was a stalwart helpmeet to her husband, Zhu Di, formerly the Prince of Yan, who violently seized the throne from his nephew in 1402 after three years of bloody, harrowing civil war.¹⁸⁰ Well schooled and intelligent, she served ably after being instated as empress, particularly in the literary promotion of Confucian and Buddhist moral values. Thereby she complemented her husband's ambitious projects of this kind (which included a revised and expanded Chinese *Tripitaka*), as well as his comprehensive efforts to erase his nephew's reign from the historical record and alter facts so as to support his own legitimacy.¹⁸¹ Since Zhu Di had essentially refounded the Ming dynasty, his self-styling as a model Confucian ruler was a given, but he departed from Taizu's precedent by vigorously promoting Buddhism. This is attributable to the key role played in his successful usurpation by the omniscient Buddhist monk (and part-time conjurer) Daoyan (Yao Guangxiao; 1335–1418), to the emperor's geostrategic engagement with Tibetan Buddhism, and to the rent condition of the national fabric after the civil war, which called for an assuaging religious touch in the court's propaganda.¹⁸² This came partly in the form of a scripture, the *Sutra of Great Merit and Foremost Rarity* (*Diyi xiyou da gongde jing*), which Renxiao claimed was oneirically transmitted to her directly by Guanyin Bodhisattva.¹⁸³

The sutra itself is an unremarkable blend of Madhyamaka and Tathāgatagarbha teachings with chants familiar to Chinese Buddhists. In its relative brevity, it is

179. For historical background, see *CHC*, vol. 3, 411–412, 468–469; vol. 5, pt. 2, 260–278; vol. 6, 154–155, 196, 204, 313–315, 460–462; vol. 8, pt. 2, 224–227, 877–879.

180. *DMB*, 1:355–365, 397–404; *CHC*, vol. 7, 196–202.

181. *CHC*, vol. 7, 214–221.

182. On Yao, see *DMB*, 2:1561–1565; D. Chan, "Role of the Monk Tao-Yen"; and *CHC*, vol. 8, 915–918.

183. For discussions, see Xu Yizhi, "Mingdai diwang yu Guanyin," 10–28; C. Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 141–143; and *CHC*, vol. 8, 913–915.

suitable for frequent recitation, in return for which it promises relief from worries and sufferings, as well as graded soteriological blessings. Our interest here lies primarily in Renxiao's preface of 1403 (the year of Zhu Di's enthronement), in which she recounts a dream of 1398 (the last year of Taizu's life): One day she was sitting meditatively in her chamber, burning incense and reading old sutras, when her mind and spirit became absorbed in a dreamlike trance and a purple-gold light filled her surroundings. Then, she narrates, "I saw Guanyin Bodhisattva manifest herself within that glow. She walked before me, her greatly compassionate image treading lightly on a thousand petals of jewel lotus flowers and her hand holding a seven-treasure rosary. Unconsciously mounting a kingfisher-blue, curtained carriage, I went toward [her] under a five-colored precious canopy amidst a flurry of banners studded with pearls and gems, wafting gently upward to a place I knew not where." Through a gateway she enters a landscape of unworldly beauty, "the sphere of Vulture Peak," that is, the mountainous area where Śākyamuni Buddha took refuge with his disciples from the conflagrations of secular society, and where he delivered some of his most important sermons. The fairly simple description of this area in the *Lotus Sutra* (*Lianhua jing*) is richly elaborated in Renxiao's preface, with dazzling vocabulary and diction evocative of the *Flower Garland Sutra* (*Huayan jing*).

Proceeding over a long, high Bridge of Wisdom and passing through wondrous scenes, she eventually reaches the "foremost site of enlightenment" at the summit of Vulture Peak. Guanyin then leads her to ascend the overwhelmingly gorgeous Seven-Treasure Lotus Dais (the ultimate destination of Pure Land believers), where she begins to wonder by what good cause she had been brought there. Guanyin then smiles gently and tells her: "This is where the Buddha preaches the Dharma of enlightenment. Though [others] go through eons as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, none can reach here. Only those who accord with the Tathāgata Way can mount this [peak]. The Consort's inborn merit is consummately good; you are destined to actualize the Dharma and marvelously ascend to true awakening. But at present you are about to encounter a great trial, so I have specially brought you here to escape that worldly struggle." Guanyin then introduces Renxiao to the *Sutra of Great Merit and Foremost Rarity* and its benefits for devotees, adding: "The Consort is going to be Mother to the World. Endowed with deep good fortune and a fully bright, enlightened nature, you are wondrously worthy to fulfill this charge to uplift and aid living souls." Guanyin then pours a beaker of holy water over Renxiao's head, after which the latter feels great clarity of mind and the ability to remember things without lapse. On her third reading of the sutra, she thoroughly understands its meaning and has memorized its content. Listening intently to Guanyin's parting words, she suddenly hears the voices of people in her chamber and is startled awake.

Subsequently, Renxiao tells us (without making any specific reference to the civil war or the emperor whom her husband overthrew) that when her city was

besieged, she recited this sutra with extra effort and was completely without fear. Then in 1402, the “disastrous calamity was quelled,” her family “soothingly approached a Great Unification,” and she was formally made empress. Feeling that the sutra was “for nothing other than relieving the confusions of the masses and proclaiming correct teachings, she could not now keep it to herself and was having it printed for wide dissemination.” Guanyin’s foreknowledge that Renxiao would emerge triumphant after the war, as well as the bodhisattva’s provision of a spiritual “refuge” to ease that process, unmistakably vindicates the usurpatory actions of Renxiao’s husband and sanctions his claim on the emperorship.

Almost two centuries later, Renxiao’s *Sutra of Great Merit* would make its way into the *Continued Tripitaka (Xuzangjing)* through the piety of another imperial lady, Empress Dowager Cisheng, who lavishly patronized Buddhism both out of personal devotion and as one of many tactics for reinforcing the power she wielded behind the throne. In 1586 she was engaged in selecting several scriptures—among them Renxiao’s—to again supplement the Chinese *Tripitaka* (following the Yongle example) when a celebrated profusion of extraordinary lotuses bloomed within the precincts of her residential palace. Because Cisheng frequented a sectarian temple that worshipped the Guanyin of Lotuses in Nine Colors (Jiulian Guanyin), unofficial sources report that this flowering was followed by a dream in which a scripture was revealed to her. This *Venerated Sutra of the Incarnation of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva*, which she purportedly recalled exactly, describes the decision of the Nine Lotus Guanyin to descend into China (the “Treasure-Generative Country”) to save its people from all the travails of spiritual ignorance. In any case, Cisheng and her son promoted the belief that she herself was that incarnation, and a virtual cult of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva, centered on Cisheng, became a distinctive feature of officially sponsored Buddhism in the Wanli reign.¹⁸⁴

Precedent for the idea of rulers seeing Buddhist deities in dreams and thereby bringing sacred texts to China for the mutual benefit of state and populace goes back to the early sixth century when a Buddhist scripture (probably composed in China), the *Sutra in Forty-Two Articles (Sishi'er zhang jing)*, and a possibly pseudonymous set of arguments for the acceptability of Buddhist beliefs and practices in Chinese culture, *Master Mou Sets Right Our Doubts (Mouzi lihuo lun)*, first appear in bibliographic records. The latter seems to quote from the former in claiming that Emperor Ming of the Latter Han (r. 58–75) “dreamed at night of a spirit-person whose body was golden and who emitted sunlight from the back of his

184. See Xu Yizhi, “Mingdai diwang yu Guanyin,” 28–49; C. Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 144–148; and Chen Yunü, “Ming Wanli shiqi Cisheng,” 226. This *Venerated Sutra* (the full title of which, *Foshuo daci zhisheng Jiulian Pusa huashen dushi zunjing*, uses two characters from the empress dowager’s honorary name) was printed for wide dissemination by Shenzong in 1616.

neck while flying in front of the palace hall. [The emperor's] mind was delighted, and he enjoyed [the sight] very much."The next day, the sutra continues, Emperor Ming asked his ministers what spirit it was, and one of them said, "I have heard of someone in India who has attained the Way and who is called 'Buddha.' He moves lightly and can fly. Perhaps he is that spirit."Thereupon the emperor, greatly pleased, sent a twelve-man mission beyond the Pamirs, and they came back with the *Sutra in Forty-Two Articles*. Further, the sutra says, he took other measures to promote the religion, and consequently "innumerable people from afar were transformed into submission [to China] and were happy to be servants and subjects [of the Han court]. Domestically the country was [morally] pure and peaceful, and down to the present sentient beings have continuously depended on receiving this beneficence."¹⁸⁵

The dozen or so early versions of this story contain historical anachronisms, and the general sense is diametrically opposed to the historical record of Emperor Ming's policies vis-à-vis patronage of Buddhists by members of the imperial house.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, its veracity was unquestioned in premodern China, and intellectuals often alluded to it as an example of significant revelations occurring to persons of high status through dreams. The dream-elements of a glowing light surrounding a holy figure and the sense of joy in the dreamer, as well as the receipt of texts enjoining compassion toward all souls and the promise of benefits to the persons, societies, and countries of sincere believers—all these appealed to those who ran a state system patterned imagistically on a family of many devoted children under the care of benevolent parents.

The imagery of the penultimate imperial dreams to be recorded (in the Veritable Records [*shilu*] of the Manchu-Qing reigns) begins rather differently—by associating legitimacy with prowess in subduing wild game and with wondrous spectacles in the open sky—but migrates in the direction of Chinese symbols of authority such as texts and seals. In any case, prescience on the part of the leader/ruler and the inevitability of his success are always implied.¹⁸⁷ These are one dream by the progenitor of

185. *Sishi'er zhang jing*, 722a. On the dating of this text, see Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest of China*, 22. Keenan, in introducing his translation of *Mouzi lihuo lun*, lays out the modern scholarship on the text's dating and authorship (*How Master Mou Removes Our Doubts*, 3–7). For Keenan's rendering of Mouzi's version of Emperor Ming's dream and its consequences, with discussion of questions of historicity, see *ibid.*, 123–126.

186. Maspero, in "Songe et l'ambassade de l'empereur Ming," analyzes thirteen early versions of this story, beginning with the *Sutra in Forty-Two Articles*. See also Tang Yongtong, *Han Wei Liang-Jin*, 1:21–56. On steps taken against one of Emperor Ming's brothers who patronized Buddhists, see Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest of China*, 26–27.

187. For an insightful discussion of the Manchu leaders' dreams discussed below, see Cai Songying, "Huang Taiji shiqi de Hanguan," 266–271.

the Manchu state, Nurhaci (Taizu; 1559–1626), and six by the son who succeeded him, Hong Taiji (Taizong; 1592–1643). Nurhaci advanced a strategy of simultaneously warring on the Ming and subordinating rival tribes in the northeastern frontier region, including certain tribes of the Eastern Mongols, finding historical precedent in the twelfth-century Jīn dynasty from whose leaders, the Jurchens, he claimed descent. Hong Taiji carried his father's conquests into Korea, farther into Mongolia, and through Liao West to the very gates of Ming China at the Great Wall. In 1636 he declared his united people to be Manchus and their dynasty the Qing, while centralizing his nascent state more along Chinese bureaucratic lines.¹⁸⁸

The earliest of these dream entries in the Veritable Records occurs in midyear 1618, when Nurhaci was leading an important southward campaign in Liao East:

The Emperor [a retroactively applied title] dreamed at night of swans, cormorants, and a flock of other birds soaring back and forth [above him]. He netted a white cormorant and seized it, saying, "I've captured Jaisai!"

Exclaiming this, he awoke. When he told this dream to his consort, she said, "Jaisai behaves like a bird in flight. How could he be caught?"

The following day, [Nurhaci] again discussed this dream with the princes and chief ministers, who responded, "The dream is auspicious and probably means that Heaven is about to [enable] our state to obtain some very important personage."¹⁸⁹

Jaisai, a leader among the Southern Khalka Mongols who had been collaborating with the Ming and had repeatedly eluded consequences after angering Nurhaci, was a major Mongol thorn that he hoped to remove from his side. Shortly after this dream, Nurhaci seized the strategic town of Tieling and in so doing indeed captured Jaisai.¹⁹⁰

Similarly, in the tenth month of 1635, Hong Taiji dreamed that the river waters had risen somewhat. "When [I] went to look, I saw two otters slinking along. I quickly went after them and stabbed them to death. After that, I caught a large number of fish. I recall that, previously, when I've had this kind of dream, my campaigns have always been very gainful."¹⁹¹ This came at an especially confident

188. On the careers of Nurhaci and Hong Taiji, see *ECCP*, 2:594–599 and 1:1–3, respectively; *CHC*, vol. 9, 27–72; Yan Chongnian, *Tianming han*; and Sun Wenliang and Li Zhiting, *Tiancong han*, *Chongde di*.

189. *DLS*, *Manzhou shilu*, 2:262 (compare *DLS*, Taizu, 6.21b–22a).

190. For discussion, see Kataoka, "Yumemiru kōtei," 40–41. Kataoka compares the versions of this dream in the *Manzhou shilu* and successive revisions of the Qing Veritable Records, pointing out variations.

191. *DLS*, Taizong, 25.30b. Another example of oneiric analogy between subduing wild animals and subduing battlefield adversaries is Hong Taiji's dream of the eighth month, 1641

time in Hong Taiji's career, as he had just secured his western flank by subjugating the Chakhar Mongols. The following year he would do the same to Korea while also taking the title Emperor and declaring a new dynastic name, Qing, signaling a head-to-head challenge to Ming supremacy.

A dream record of midyear 1637 was perhaps meant to impress Hong Taiji's Mongol allies. It begins with his deceased father, Nurhaci, Hong Taiji's elder brother, Daišan, and Hong Taiji himself sitting together in the same room, looking out intently at the northern sky.

Glittering auspiciously were three overlapping layers of clouds, and above them could be seen clear sky. The emperor thought, "The sky is so high and far, how could I be seeing it so clearly?"

And Daišan said, "How strange! Shuji, the adopted daughter of the Precious Concubine of the Linzhi Palace, told me of a beautiful sight: a [streak of?] fire coming down from the sky and entering the palace. At first, being young, she was startled and awed, but afterward as well, she was not frightened."

His words were not finished when the emperor awoke. The next dawn he summoned his civil advisors and told them of this dream. They responded, "The sky/heaven is positioned above, and the cloud forms follow it. This is an extremely fine sign."¹⁹²

Manchu shamanism and Mongolian religion accorded ultimate, determining power to the sky and its phenomena (such as cloud formations and shooting stars),¹⁹³ and this assimilated well with the Chinese belief in "Heaven's command," particularly in authenticating claims to topmost state leadership. Moreover, the two women mentioned, Shuji and her foster mother, the Precious Concubine, were both of the ultra-elite Borjigid lineage, a fact which invokes the founder of the Mongol empire, Chinggis Khan (d. 1227). They had been concubines of the hold-out leader of the Chakhar Mongols, Ligdan (r. 1603–1634), and after his defeat and death, they had been treated very well by their Manchu captors, becoming concubines of Hong Taiji.¹⁹⁴

Another crossover symbol of supreme rulership in both China and Inner Asia was the large jade seal, imprints of which often grace the formal documents

(*ibid.*, 57.32a–b). This dream came just as Hong Taiji's forces had seized the crucial Ming defense bulwark of Jinzhou, inflicting tremendous losses on Ming personnel.

192. *Ibid.*, 37.12b–13a.

193. See Zhuang Jifa, "Saman yu tiaoshen quchong," 141–142; and Roux, "Religion and Myths," 1105–1106.

194. Kataoka, "Yumemiru kōtei," 44.

generated by Chinese emperors (and mar the paintings they acquired). Ligdan's seal, possession of which signified his claim to khanship over the Eastern Mongols, had been seized by the Manchus in 1635. Memory of this may have played into Hong Taiji's dream in the ninth month of 1641, when, exultant over his troops' capture of the Ming stronghold at Jinzhou and confident of victory in the next, decisive battle for Songshan,¹⁹⁵ he dreamed that the Great Progenitor, Nurhaci, ordered four men to present him with a jade seal. Afterward his chief ministers interpreted this seal as "the great treasure of the Son of Heaven and an omen of unification" and as "a clear sign that the Lord on High has granted [our] Emperor assuaging possession of both center and periphery."¹⁹⁶

Attention to legitimating texts, however, was a quintessentially sinic preoccupation. In 1636 Hong Taiji had upgraded the Literary Institute, the main work of which was to study the *Ming Code* and selectively translate the imperially compiled histories of previous Inner Asian states that had come to rule all or large parts of China, such as the Jurchen Jīn.¹⁹⁷ Accordingly, in mid-1637, Hong Taiji dreamed of preparing to report to the spirit of Nurhaci on the subjugation of Korea. Therein he spurned the trifles offered by the Ming emperor, whereupon the figure on the throne suddenly morphed into a Jīn-period spirit that gave him instead "a history of your previous Jīn dynasty." Then "[Hong Taiji] received [the book] and looked at it, though the script was of an earlier age and he couldn't make out all the characters. He wanted to discuss it with his literary officials, and he was taking it [to them] when he awoke." Learning of this dream, Hong Taiji's Confucian advisors advanced this interpretation: "Before, when [our] Emperor dreamed of entering the palace of the Korean king and lifting him up [easily] by hand, it was not long before that dream was validated. . . . The present [dream] is a premonition of Heaven extending its Mandate to [our] Emperor. That [you] directly entered the Ming palace and saw the Ming emperor [but then] received a history book of a former age from a Jīn man surely [means] that [Heaven] intends to substitute the rising [Qing] for the Ming and thus is giving our Emperor the means to effect that dynastic succession."¹⁹⁸

To my knowledge, the last officially recorded dream by anyone who held the Chinese emperorship is from another Manchu, Xuanye, the Kangxi emperor (r. 1661–1722). However, unlike the oneiro-cosmic self-justifications of the conquerors

195. On these battles, see Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, 1:210–216.

196. *DLS*, Taizong, 57.33a–b.

197. See Elliott, "Whose Empire Shall It Be?" 48–59.

198. *DLS*, Taizong, 36.10b–11b. Another dream of one year earlier also reflects Hong Taiji's increased engagement with Chinese institutional guides, though the gist of the dream record is that he already knew, subliminally, the correctness of what those guides prescribed. See *DLS*, Taizong, 30.7b–9a.

recounted above, it reads like an appeal to dream-wisdom on the part of a paterfamilias struggling with a domestic decision. Xuanye, as the great consolidator of Qing rule over China, was little concerned about his own legitimacy but became extremely distraught in his late years over the need—both highly emotional and highly political—to assure that his throne would pass to a suitable heir. The long-running saga of Crown Prince Yinreng (1674–1725), the only surviving son of Xuanye’s first and most beloved empress, who died shortly after his birth, is well known to historians of early-Qing politics and institutions.¹⁹⁹ Designated heir apparent in his infancy and personally reared for the emperorship by his doting father, Yinreng nevertheless displayed a mean and rash temperament by young adulthood. In 1708 the emperor, increasingly alarmed at Yinreng’s deplorable behavior, for the first time deposed him as heir and had him confined. These measures troubled Xuanye greatly, however, and within months, suspecting that witchcraft perpetrated by a rival for the succession had caused temporary insanity in his son and observing signs of recovery in Yinreng, the emperor decided to have him released and restored as heir.

Xuanye’s explanation of this decision begins with a confession that, since the death of his much-venerated grandmother Senior Empress Dowager Xiaozhuang (1613–1688), she had often appeared in his dreams and given him uncannily accurate advice on crucial affairs. “Recently,” he continues, “we have had the matter of the Heir Apparent, and in my dreams I have seen the Senior Empress Dowager looking very unhappy and just sitting at a distance from me, saying nothing—which is unusual. Also, because the Heir has been wronged, I have seen [his mother], Empress [Xiaocheng], in a dream. Moreover, on the day when the Heir was seized, the sky suddenly turned dark. So I have changed my thinking [about his case].”²⁰⁰ In his formal edict on this decision, Xuanye stressed that he had acted alone and from the heart, that is, not under the influence of any clique that might favor another prince for the heirship. Hence, the appropriateness of personal dream testimony regarding a serious matter of state. Alas, such dream-sentiments notwithstanding, Yinreng’s behavior subsequently became downright dangerous; in 1712 he was again deposed and spent the rest of his life under lock and key.

With this instance, a multimillennial but weakening tradition of undergirding state actions with “imperial dreams” came to an end. Ironically, this marshaling of the mystique of dreaming for political ends, honed to such refinement by Han-Chinese dynasties, met closure when the great dream of the Manchus came true. Their conquest and consolidation of rule over the whole Chinese subcontinent during the first three-quarters of the seventeenth century was accompanied by a rationalistic turn in

199. See *ECCP*, 2:924–925; *CHC*, vol. 9, 168–169; and Spence, *Emperor of China*, chap. 5.

200. *DLS*, Shengzu, 235.21b–22a. On Senior Empress Dowager Xiaozhuang, see *ECCP*, 1:300–301.

the new Qing dynasty's governing ethos which apparently discouraged the continued, legitimating deployment of dreams such as those discussed above. But the extremely fraught course of dynastic change from Ming to Qing was one important factor that lifted Chinese intellectuals' occupation with dreams and dreaming from the level of continuity into an arc of the extraordinary. Those various other factors are parsed in chapter 2, and the permutations of that elevated occupation, under conditions of cataclysmic change in the lives of intellectuals during the Manchu-Qing conquest and beyond, are examined in chapters 3 and 4.

Sources of Special Dream Salience in Late Ming

HYPOTHETICALLY, if intellectual culture had coasted changelessly from the mid-sixteenth to the late seventeenth century, it would have carried a rich array of references to dreams and dreaming, simply because dreaming, as a facet of human life, had long been an established topic of discussion and source of conceits and beliefs among the literati, in ways that are selectively discussed in chapter 1. The central contention of this book, however, is that interest in dreaming and use of dream motifs became significantly more noticeable among literati beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century and remained salient through the end of the seventeenth, constituting a distinctive dream arc in Chinese intellectual history. Such a diffuse phenomenon, pervading as it did most aspects of intellectual expression and occupying the thoughts of some of the most famous figures of that era, was not monocausal. Rather, a concatenation of factors, affecting both the inner and outer lives of the highly educated, brought a sharper focus to questions of human consciousness and the element of *conscience* in that consciousness¹—questions which prompted consideration of that most elusively independent activity of consciousness, dreaming.

Creeds

The most important developments that catalyzed this dream arc arose in the area of intellectual belief systems, both the contemporaneous changes internal to each of the Three Teachings and change in the degree and quality of interaction among them. Each of these immensely broad and varied “teachings,” long since extensively intertwined, made certain contributions to what was perhaps Chinese history’s

1. See Santangelo, “Human Conscience and Responsibility,” 46–56; and Xu Shengxin, “Mingmo Qingchu ruxue.”

most open and active period of inter-creedal exploration, generally referred to by such catchphrases as “Three Teachings harmonized as one” (*Sanjiao heyi*) or “Three Teachings blended and reconciled” (*Sanjiao rongtung*).² And the particular ways in which this fertile interaction ensued tended to bring dreaming to the foreground, even though dreaming had not been central to—indeed, had been regarded ambivalently at best in—all three creeds.

Key to resolving this paradox is that, by late Ming, the most influential strains in all of the Three Teachings had come to emphasize finding and cultivating in oneself an essential or original “nature,” usually referred to as *xìng* and with compounds of that term such as *benxing* (fundamental nature), *zixing* (self nature), or *xingming* (nature and destiny). The creeds differed in their approaches to (re)discovering and strengthening this nature and also regarding the end purpose of this endeavor for humanity. But all basically agreed that conditioning of the mind/heart (*xin*, *shén*, and compounds thereof) was necessary to discerning one’s true nature and that this core identity was nodal to joining one’s temporal being with infinity—in other words, that it had a transcendent dimension. For all of the Three Teachings, in overlapping ways and to different degrees, intense pursuit of “mind” and “nature” led beyond the waking hours into sleep and dream.

The flavor of this may be tasted in an instruction record of 1583, written by Lin Zhao’en (1517–1598), who went further than most to create a new, composite but unique religion, seeing no need to preserve separate identities for Confucians, Daoists, or Buddhists beyond the novitiate.³ This record, titled “The Person in Dreams” (*Mengzhong ren*), exhibits some truly cross-creedal ideas from the Three Teachings discourse on dreaming. Its quixotic preface begins with a line from the Confucian-claimed *Poetry Classic* about the spawn of the mulberry bug being carried away by wasps, which were thought to rear them as adoptive wasps.⁴ In the original poem, this insect behavior is cited so as to stress the importance of molding one’s young after oneself, but Lin turns it to his own purpose: to illustrate the possibility of transformation by inculcation. The wasp, he writes, as it carries off the baby bug, chants to it, “You are like me. You are like me.” But human beings, Lin

2. On the specialness of late Ming in the long history of Three Teachings syncretic thought, see Berling, *Syncretic Religion*, chaps. 2–3; and Ch’ien, *Chiao Hung*, chap. 1.

3. Among many secondary works on Lin Zhao’en, see Berling, *Syncretic Religion*; Liu Ts’un-yan, “Lin Chao-ên”; and Zheng Zhiming, *Mingdai sanyi jiaozhu*. For brief introductions, see *DMB*, 1:912–915; and *ET*, 1:660–661.

4. Lin Zhao’en, *Linzi quanji*, *yan* 元 sec., 31.1a–b. On dating the record to 1583, see Zheng Zhiming, *Mingdai sanyi jiaozhu*, 150. The traditional idea that the wasps reared the baby mulberry bugs as their own, followed here by Lin, had long been regarded as factually incorrect by some commentators. On *Shijing*, “Xiaoya” sec., “Xiaowan,” poem 3, see *Shijing jinyi jinzhu*, 308.

asserts, are able to effect *self*-transformation, not just on their physical being but on their essential spirit, “*the person in [their] dreams*,” by practicing the incantations of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. Thereby we can realize the selfhood that we fundamentally hold in common with Śakyamuni, the Old Master, and Confucius (and, by implication, the selfhood that those men held in common with each other).

The main text of “The Person in Dreams” reports Lin’s instruction to three of his students on the theme of realizing the eternal self. He questions and challenges the first student as follows:

Do you know dreaming? Do you know of the waking in dreams? If you do not know the waking in dreams, then you cannot enter the Way. . . . What I mean by the waking in dreams is that a true awareness naturally is present therein. . . . In dreaming dreams, what, after all, is in control and brings about awareness? One must come to know this. If you can know this, then you also can know how to cultivate it and, moreover, avoid obscuring your innate perceptivity. And when it comes to your conduct in the daytime, you certainly, as a matter of course, will have no perplexity because of dreams.⁵

To another student who asks how we seem to perceive things in dreams, Lin replies by suggesting that the perception we think comes from our physical senses actually has a metaphysical source: “The person in dreams originally is not of one’s body. The ancients had a saying, ‘Life is lodged,’ which surely means that the human spirit is merely deposited in one’s particular body. Precisely because they understood life as a [temporary] lodging [of the spirit], so they spoke of death as ‘return.’”⁶

Thusly, throughout this piece, Lin Zhao’en draws a parallel between coming to know one’s essential spirit from its activity as dreams and coming to know “the life in death,” in that only the body dies while “a little bit” of one’s spirit continues in the vastness of the creative universe.⁷ Typical of Lin’s goal of influencing the intellectual elite, with which he identified, he eschews ideas that would seem outlandish to Confucians, and he opens with reference to a Confucian Classic and one of Confucianism’s emphases: the importance of environment and conditioning to individual development. But he also draws on a work especially dear to Daoists, the *Master of Huainan* (*Huainanzi*; 2nd century BCE), for its extensive use of the *Old Master* and *Master Zhuang* to attain a supra-mundane perspective on life.

5. Lin Zhao’en, *Linzi quanji*, *yuan* sec., 31.1b–2a.

6. *Ibid.*, 4a–b. The old saying is from *Huainanzi*, “Jingshen xun” chap., passage 11.

7. See Lin Zhao’en, *Linzi quanji*, *yuan* sec., 31.5b; and Zheng Zhiming, *Mingdai sanyi jiaozhu*, 120–121, 389–400. Lin disavowed belief in either Buddhist reincarnation or Daoist immortality.

Moreover, the way in which Lin yokes the dreaming/waking dichotomy with that of death and life recalls the parallels of freedom and release with dream and death in *Master Zhuang*. Yet most basic to this instruction record is its use of a mental state in which our physical senses are disengaged, but in which we retain a feeling of active, integral being, that is, dream-sleep, to exhort reflection on what the true self is, and where it abides—a tactic that was best honed by certain Buddhists among Lin's contemporaries. Thus, "The Person in Dreams" demonstrates both the organic intermingling of creeds in late-Ming syncretic thought and the relative importance of Buddhist ideas in bringing ideas about dreaming to bear on the period's intense search for genuine selfhood. We will see this Buddhist influence, and how it increased during late Ming, in the following discussion of how each creed was disposed to engage in both the great Three Teachings interchange and the hyperactive dream-deliberation of that period.

Confucianism of one stripe or another was the most influential creed among intellectuals because it prescribed ethical conduct for upper-class households and state service and thus was the bedrock of education for the highly literate, the civil service examinations being largely composed of questions on the Confucian Classics. Confucians, compared to Daoists and Buddhists, typically had been the least interested in inter-creedal dialogue. Aversion to engagement with followers of the other two Teachings had sharpened with the formation of Neo-Confucian philosophy in the twelfth century, even though the (unacknowledged) adaptation of key concepts from Daoism and Buddhism had been essential to the development of Neo-Confucian metaphysics.⁸ Moreover, as touched on in chapter 1, serious Confucians were little inclined to discuss dreams, associating such talk either with insubstantial ghosts and spirits or with uncontrolled emotionality and desires (especially of the sexual kind). So, steeped as they were in Neo-Confucianism, what contributions were literati prepared to make toward Three Teachings syncretism and its attendant dream-involvement in the late Ming?

The contributions, though more general than specific, were crucial: a historically rare receptivity to unorthodox ideas and a shift in emphasis to the subjective side of human understanding. Both had been evident since early in the dynasty but grew more conspicuous from middle Ming onward with propagation of the philosophy of Wang Shouren (1472–1529), better known as Wang Yangming (hence, "Yangming learning"). And both were related to the uneasiness among important thinkers and teachers with the Neo-Confucian philosophy that had become dominant in the thirteenth century and remained the standard interpretation in Confucian classicism for the civil examinations from 1313 onward. This interpretation, called "Cheng-Zhu learning" after its primary architects, Cheng Yi and the great

8. See Liu Ts'un-yan, "Syncretism of the Three Teachings," 3–39.

synthesizer Zhu Xi, was also called “Song learning” after the dynasty during which these men lived.⁹ In Cheng-Zhu ontology, our nature is the human instantiation of an absolutely good, eternal, a priori, metaphysical “heavenly principle” (*tianli*) of the universe, which ideally functions to regulate the often wayward constituent, energetic stuff (*qizhi*) of our physical bodies, appetites, and emotions. The mind, on which realization of our nature and principle depends, is regarded with suspicion. Under disciplined cultivation (by quiet sitting and extensive inquiry), it can be refined to accord with nature and principle, but it can easily be overwhelmed by the force of *qi* and become too sullied and fragmented by mundane affairs to see its true humanity and unity with the Ultimate. Self-control, avoidance of things associated with bodily desires, and immersion in certain classical texts (regarded as the lexical embodiments of heavenly principle) thus were emphasized and became force-fed through the examination curriculum. Dreams, representing the uncontrolled mind in the lesser, *yin* state of sleep, even though Cheng Yi acknowledged that they offer signs of “one’s shallowness or depth of [moral-ethical] learning,”¹⁰ were rare subjects in Neo-Confucian learned discussions or master-student dialogues. More personal, less preceptive writings could be another matter, though this avenue was seldom taken until the Ming period.

Despite—or perhaps because of—the enshrinement of Cheng-Zhu learning in the official curriculum, dissatisfaction with its dualistic separation of principle from the materiality of the world, its emphasis on prodigious book learning, its distrust of the mind, and its devaluation of ordinary human feelings and desires became a threnody in the deliberations of Ming China’s most original thinkers. Even in early Ming, and even among those who continued to revere the eminences of Song learning, one finds highly emotional dream remembrances and self-observations of a sort that had not been seen before the fifteenth century.¹¹ For instance, the widely respected Confucian teacher Wu Yubi (1392–1469), to a considerable extent reflecting a lifelong struggle with his willful, irascible temperament and consequent alienation from his father, wrote often of his dreams, especially in a subjective self-cultivation journal titled *Day Record (Rilu)*, which he kept, off and

9. For introductions to the thought of Cheng Yi, Wang Yangming, and Zhu Xi, see *ECP*, 43–46, 760–775, and 895–902, respectively. Cheng-Zhu thought is also commonly referred to as the “learning of principle” (*lixue*), and Yangming thought as the “learning of mind” (*xinxue*).

10. “Yichuan xiansheng yu si,” in Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *Er Cheng ji*, 1:202.

11. For instance, in about 1484, well before Wang Yangming developed his philosophy and a century before the heyday of the Yangmingist Taizhou School, Qin Kui (1433–1496), a model official and paragon of gentry society (see *Guochao xianzheng lu*, 86.6a–8b), wrote a heartbreaking remembrance of his recently deceased infant child after being prompted by a dream (“Ku meng’er yishou,” in Qin Kui, *Wufeng yigao*, 1.12b–13a).

on, from 1429 into the year of his death.¹² Wu's manner of dream-recording, still unusual in his day, was little emulated by his numerous disciples. When the *Day Record* was republished in 1590, however, it fit perfectly with the dream-studded Neo-Confucian diary-keeping of late Ming times and became admired even by Zhu Xi devotees who normally had little truck with dreaming.¹³

It was rather Chen Xianzhang (aka Chen Baisha; 1428–1500) who left a significant legacy of moral philosophy and dream reflection for Neo-Confucian thinkers to follow in the Ming period.¹⁴ Unlike his onetime teacher Wu Yubi, Chen came to explicitly reject Cheng-Zhu learning on epistemo-ontological grounds. He replaced the dichotomy of mind and object, as well as exterior searches for nature and principle, with a unitary mind, which, with persistent removal of obscurations, can spontaneously intuit the principles that run through the dynamic *qi* of all things, including the mind itself. Chen's sense of the universe as a monistic, naturally flowing whole was conversant with Daoism, and his view that the mind's self-realization of its own inherent principle is basic to all true understanding draws nigh to the One Mind (Yixin) of Chan Buddhism, but he remained fundamentally Confucian in his values.¹⁵ Correspondingly, Chen's numerous dream poems often are Daoistic or Buddhist in tone, yet they also express his heartfelt thoughts of family members and friends,¹⁶ and one of several verses that came to him during sleep, "Poem on Washing the Mind, Composed in a Dream" (Mengzuo xixin shi), indeed is generally Confucian and specifically Neo-Confucian in inspiration.

At first wash, it reaches as far as Heaven and Earth,
 [so that one's] governance and teaching hark back to the Former Kings.
 Washed again, it shines like the sun and moon,
 enabling prolonged illumination of the four quarters.
 Continued washing brings daily renewal
 and ultimate veneration in a hundred ages.¹⁷

12. On Wu's life, see Wu Yubi, *Journal of Wu Yubi*, introduction. See also P. Wu, *Confucian's Progress*, 93–95; and *DMB*, 2:1497–1501. For examples of Wu's dream records, see his *Rilu*, 29a and 39a (Wu Yubi, *Journal of Wu Yubi*, 49 and 52, respectively).

13. See Gu Xiancheng, *Xiaoxinzhai zhaji*, 7.8a–9a (note of 1600); and Zhang Lüxiang, *Yangyuan xiansheng quanji*, 2:766; 3:1078, 1169, 1212.

14. For biographies, see *DMB*, 1:153–156; and P. Jiang, *Search for Mind*.

15. For more on Chen's thought, see Jen Yu-wen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy."

16. See Li Yumei, "Baishazi jimeng," 86–87, 89.

17. *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 1:316. Excepting the dream aspect, this poem alludes to Zhu Xi's explication of *Daxue* 2.1 (see *Daxue zhangju*, in *Zhuzi quanshu*, 6:18). More of Chen's dream records are transcribed in Du Lianzhe, "Mingren jimeng," 21–24.

Furthermore, he was not abashed to leave for posterity prose cogitations on dreams that seemed nonsensical, trusting that they held some truth, however puzzling to his waking mind.¹⁸

Chen's most important disciple, Zhan Ruoshui (1466–1560), who became a high-ranking career official, not only maintained the relevance of his mentor's philosophical standpoints in the sixteenth century but also continued Chen's practice of finding confirmation in dreams.¹⁹ On one occasion in 1551, for instance, Zhan dreamed that Chen ("Elder Natural") presented him with a terribly long text written on very big sheets of paper in characters the size of a fist. After waking, having forgotten what he had read in that text, Zhan nevertheless felt that he had understood its general meaning, as well as Chen's message, that sagely wisdom could truly be acquired only experientially, not just from transmitted writings.²⁰

The relative interiority of early- to middle-Ming thought was to be greatly reinforced, with commensurate sociocultural consequences, by Wang Yangming's wholly subjectivist view of the mind. In Wang's mature philosophy, the fundament of one's mind *is* one's nature, and its functioning *is* the manifestation of principle, which need not be sought in externals. It responds spontaneously and dynamically both to its own thoughts and feelings and to its environment with *liangzhi*, an innate sense of good and bad, and it compels moral action accordingly. Fully possessed by every person from birth but obscured by induced habits and socio-pedagogical conditioning, this core mind's potential cannot be released through study alone. Spiritual effort is required to remove that which blocks its light: selfish desires, which include coveting status and pursuing acceptance by conformity. Other kinds of desires and emotions, if found good in the light of *liangzhi*, were not to be suppressed. Belief in the original purity of people's minds valorized the innocent mind of the infant or child (*chizi zhi xin* or *tongxin*) rather than erudition or literary mastery.²¹

Since *liangzhi* was inborn to every person and did not require upper-class educational or lifestyle advantages for its realization, this teaching was a boon to the spiritual aspirations of ordinary people in an era when class distinctions were being eroded by commercial economic growth. As for intellectuals, since Yangming experientiality relied on no canonical standard of sagely truth, those

18. "Mengji erze," in Chen Xianzhang, *Chen Xianzhang ji*, 1:51–52.

19. *DMB*, 1:36–41; *ECP*, 851–854. More of Zhan's dream records are transcribed in Du Lianzhe, "Mingren jimeng," 32–34.

20. "Jimeng youxu," in Zhan Ruoshui, *Ganquan xiansheng xubian daquan*, juan 17 (12:23). On Chen's audacious disinterest in book learning, see P. Jiang, *Search for Mind*, chap. 3.

21. On the childlike-mind ideal in late Ming, see Mizoguchi, *Chūgoku zenkindai shisō*, 190–211. For English-language expositions of Yangming thought, in addition to *ECP*, 851–854, see de Bary, *Learning for Oneself*, chap. 6; and Tu, *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action*.

reared on Confucianism took license to seriously explore Daoism and especially Chan Buddhism en route to enlightenment.²² In the words of Wm. T. de Bary: “The striking feature of the new [syncretic] humanitarianism which developed out of the Wang Yangming school was that, drawing on the latter’s liberal view of man, it brought together the upper and lower classes, deepening the level of social consciousness in the former and raising the level of moral consciousness in the latter, while also releasing new political and cultural energies throughout the society.”²³

Wang Yangming made clear that *liangzhi* was continuously operative, whether consciously so or not, and that its good-knowing functioned in both waking and sleeping, “in the daytime being smoothly responsive with no stagnancy; at night contracting and becoming concentrated, [so that] any dreams are prescient.”²⁴ Wang himself, apparently influenced by the Quanzhen Daoist practice of deep meditation as a means to minimize sleep and, in sleep, to minimize dreams,²⁵ wrote very little about dreaming. Nevertheless, certain dreams became important in the lives of several of his first- and second-generation disciples.

Cited favorably by contemporaries, for instance, is a self-account by Luo Hongxian (1504–1564) of a dream he had as a young boy. It reflects the importance of the infant-mind analogy in Yangming thought, the high regard for lucid dreams as demonstrations of non-susceptibility to the delusions of dream-sleep, and the Buddho-Daoist influence among even less radical followers, like Luo, of the Yangming school. He writes,

When I was five *sui*, one night I dreamed of a thoroughfare five carts wide, with closely spaced, dazzling, multistory mansions. All manner of goods were piled like embankments, and [people] going about in the marketplace [were so numerous] they rubbed shoulders. I knew in myself that it was a dream scene and, right on the thoroughfare, I yelled out: “You [people] going to and fro are all of my dream, [but] you remain unaware of that, still confusedly striving against one another—how so?” They were indifferently unresponsive, so I clapped my hands and laughed heartily at them, soon waking up.

22. For a succinct study, see Araki, “Confucianism and Buddhism.” See also Araki, *Yōmeigaku no kaiten*; and Chen Yongge, *Yangming xuepai*.

23. De Bary, *Self and Society*, 22–23.

24. Wang Shouren, *Chuanxi lu, xia*, in *Wang Yangming quanji*, 1:106.

25. Wang seems to have held this in common with his outstanding disciple Wang Ji (1498–1583). See Zhang Ye, “Menglun yu shuigong,” 93. Further on Daoist elements in the writings of Wang Yangming and his disciples, see Liu Ts’un-yan, “Taoist Self-Cultivation,” 307–318; and *Zhongguo Daojiao sixiang shi*, 3:508–513.

When little Hongxian told his mother about this dream, she cajoled him skeptically. But, the mature man testifies, “Since that instance, just about every year I’ve had a strange dream, [from which I’ve gained] definite foreknowledge of small misfortunes and blessings. Indeed, my life is *all* a dream, not just tonight; the world is all a dream, not just in the dreamer. Within a dream I speak of dreams, yet still I struggle endlessly with myself—in what way different from the milling people [in that boyhood dream]?”²⁶

Bringing this around to a Confucian conclusion in the Yangming-subjectivist vein, Luo then cites the passage in the *Zhou Rites* enumerating three methods of dream divination (which, as explained previously, were often taken to mean three kinds of dreams). *Zhimeng* he interprets as “correct” (*zheng*) in “arriving of themselves,” that is, spontaneously; *qimeng* he more conventionally regards as “strange” dreams, such as nightmares; and *xiande* dreams he takes as stirrings (*gan*) in response to life experiences. The last two differ from the first because “correct” dreams exhibit a wholly subjective responsiveness: as they “arrive from no [external] cause and come from *true response* [*zhenggan*], [they thus] are dreamless dreams,” that is, non-delusional. “Ever since I can remember, such self-arriving dreams have been the majority, and of late they’ve increasingly brought me unusual lines, [such as the following which] I have recorded: ‘Our bright spirit at times tells us things—ah, and the mind’s wondrousness suddenly awakes to itself.’”²⁷ Again, great minds are acknowledged to have dreams only if a negative connotation of “dream” is removed—in this case, passive reactivity to other-directed occurrences.

While some of Wang Yangming’s followers sought by quietist means to augment awareness of their minds’ innate capacity to know the good and compel good action, others were attracted to the teaching of *liangzhi* for the trust it placed in energetic activism and following the lead of strong, right emotions. The latter was especially characteristic of the Taizhou branch of Yangming learning, named for the native place of its founder, Wang Gen (1483–1541), so it is not surprising that we find the emotional force of dreams playing a key role in the spiritual strivings of this school’s adherents. From what is surely the best-known Confucian dream of Ming times, Wang Gen himself derived the confidence to pursue sagehood, despite his low social status and relative lack of formal education.²⁸ He reportedly wrote on a wall in 1511,

26. “Mengji xu,” in Luo Hongxian, *Luo Hongxian ji*, 1:517.

27. *Ibid.*, 1:517–518. On Luo, see *DMB*, 1:980–984. More of his dream records are transcribed in Du Lianzhe, “Mingren jimeng,” 36–38. For an account of two successive dreams by Luo’s disciple Hu Zhi (1517–1585; *DMB*, 1:624–625), which prompted trepidation over flaws in his purity and being “bound up” in the thought-habits of forebears, see “Mengji,” in Hu Zhi, *Heng-Lu jingshe canggao*, 11.11a–b.

28. For biographies, see *DMB*, 2:1382–1385; and Gong Jie, *Wang Gen pingzhuan*. On Wang and his school, see de Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism”; and Y. Cheng, “Taizhou School.”

One night I dreamed that heaven fell crushingly upon me, as ten-thousand people ran for their lives and cried out for help. [I] alone rose, lifting heaven aloft again with my arms. Seeing that the sun, moon, and constellations had lost their positions, I also used my own hands to put them aright, as before. The ten-thousand people danced for joy and thanked me respectfully. When I awoke, sweat poured from me like rain, and I suddenly, profoundly realized the fundament of my mind and the unity of my body with all things. In my thoughts the universe became ever more vividly real. Since then, whether I'm moving or still, speaking or silent, [that experience] is central to my awareness.²⁹

A dreamlike experience also was crucial to the mental liberation of a second-generation follower of Wang Gen, Luo Rufang (1515–1588), one of the most important figures to carry the Taizhou strain of Yangming thought into late Ming.³⁰ From youth, Luo had suffered psychosomatic illness from exerting excessive self-control and trying to plumb various elusive passages in the Confucian Classics with a completely intellectual approach. In early adulthood, he studied with a leading disciple of Wang Gen, Yan Jun (1504–1596), who tried to teach Luo to think more from his heart and trust the naturally good tendency of his incipient feelings. This instruction was somewhat helpful, but in 1553, as Luo traveled northward to give the metropolitan examinations another try, he was stricken with illness again. This brought on a half-sleep hallucination in which an “old man” (perhaps an avatar of Yan Jun) frightened Luo into thoroughly changing his mind-set. At first Luo was reluctant to acknowledge that the long-standing weaknesses in his stamina, stability, and focus, as identified by the old man, were evidence of a “chronic sickness of the mind/heart.” So the old man pressed further: “People’s bodies and minds at base express Heaven’s constancy, responding to and penetrating everything they encounter without any fixation. [But] in holding fast to your studies, you force yourself too much. So the brilliant light in your every thought has become tied up in habit. . . . This can hardly be just a sickness of the mind; the body, too, cannot last long.” After receiving a thorough lecture from this spectral figure on restoring the free flow of his mental (and hence physical) energies, Luo “stood up with a start, then kowtowed in gratitude, sweat dripping from him like rain. After this, his fixated thinking lessened and dissipated, and his pulse became normal.”³¹

29. “Nianpu,” in Wang Gen, *Chongjuan Xinzhai Wang xiansheng quanji*, 1.4a–b (my translation). Wang’s *nianpu* was assiduously compiled by his immediate disciples, friends, and progeny directly after his death (see Gong Jie, *Wang Gen pingzhuan*, 13). The passage translated here in the first person was recorded in a mixture of third-person and first-person prose, apparently from Wang’s direct testimony.

30. *DMB*, 1:975–978.

31. “Jinxi yuyao,” *xia*.43a–44a, in Luo Rufang, *Geng zhongcheng Yang taishi pidian Jinxi Luozhi quanji*. Not just the admonishment in this dream, but having such an upsetting dream at

To gauge the effects of Yangming thought on how late-Ming literati regarded dreams and dreaming, we must look beyond the philosophers, however, and into the wider culture. For succinctness, let us make a comparison. The standard view à la Zhu Xi was that “waking [thought] is *yang*, but dream-sleep is *yin*; waking [thought] is clear, but dream-sleep is muddy; in waking there is control, but in dream-sleep there is none. Thus, the wondrousness of serenely responsive penetration can be discussed only [in reference to] the waking state.”³² By the mid-seventeenth century, however, one easily encounters remarks such as the following by Zha Jizuo (1601–1676), a historian and sought-after lecturer and raconteur:³³ “Dreams are manifestations of human wisdom. What is controlled during waking hours is let free when we sleep, like a horse that has been haltered. But because it has been haltered, though it goes loose, it still is tame. Our spirit’s vision is not obscured; rather, [the spirit (*shén*)] can come back and report to the body. . . . It might be about the fate of the country, or it might verify the mind of the Way. In any case, as dreams can be like spirit, those who regard [dream time] as inferior to waking time have misunderstood [dreaming].”³⁴

Exemplifying the literati culture spawned by the Three-Teachings-as-One movement, this statement by Zha is recorded in a massive study of the Daoist classic *Master Zhuang* by a Confucian-reared scholar who became a Buddhist monk after the Qing conquest.³⁵ It is placed as a critique of the *Master Zhuang* passage about perfected ones having no dreams, yet—the original context being unknown—it equally could be taken as disagreement with the Cheng-Zhu devaluation of dreaming. Such could be the peregrination of ideas in a time when a core theme of *Master Zhuang*, the shifting subjectivities in all perspectives, was increasingly visible in the ambient culture and when, thus, *Master Zhuang* attracted tremendous attention from all positions on the intellectual spectrum.

Among the Three Teachings, Daoism was home to the most ancient and fundamental paradigms in Chinese thought and moreover offered alluring prescriptions for long life and even immortality. Perduring through mighty challenges from Buddhism to its religious ideas, and continually impugned by Confucians for its alleged social irresponsibility, Daoism retained a strong position in Chinese culture

all, indicated that Luo had more than just a physical illness. According to Luo’s mature teaching, a well-cultivated mind should respond as calmly and fluidly to things in dreams as when awake, without fixations. See *Luo Rufang ji*, 1:230, 288.

32. “Da Chen Anqing,” *Hui’an xiansheng Zhu Wengong wenji*, juan 57, in Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi quanshu*, 23:2715.

33. For biographies, see *ECCP*, 1:18–19; and Ou Zhijian, “Luelun Ming yimin Zha Jizuo.”

34. As attributed in Fang Yizhi, *Yaodi pao Zhuang*, 3.6a, using one of Zha’s sobriquets, Yuzhai, and the unusual character with which Zha wrote his surname after the change of dynasties.

35. Briefly on Fang Yizhi, see *ECCP*, 1:235–237. On Fang’s conflicted early adulthood, see Peterson, *Bitter Gourd*.

while adjusting to competition through borrowing and accommodation. In late Ming, Daoist leaders were especially eager to engage with notable literati of Confucian and Buddhist persuasions in order to regain some respectability after the appalling Daoist abuses that took place under Emperor Shizong.³⁶ The literati at large partook of Daoism in the following principal ways: as a source of literary tropes and images connoting reclusive escape or ecstatic flight, as a body of hygienic and meditational practices for cultivation of physio-spiritual purity, and as a philosophy of personal freedom from sociopolitical trammels. Among these, the last had always drawn forth the *Master Zhuang* text as a basis for interlocution in times of heightened interest in creedal sharing. Its key themes resonated well with the Buddhist goal to transcend the discriminations of worldly affairs, and it could serve the Confucian tenet of timely withdrawal from hopelessly corrupt or benighted political regimes. Moreover, highly educated people of all creedal orientations had always admired Zhuang Zhou as a writer for his lively imagination and ingenious turns of phrase, even while perhaps rejecting the totality of his outlook. Thus it was, in late Ming, that greatly renewed interest in *Master Zhuang* became Daoism's central and tremendously important contribution to the discourses of Three Teachings as One.

Representing this diagrammatically, figure 4 schematizes the production of books on the three Daoist classics, whether printed or in manuscript, from middle Song through late Qing. Included in the count are new editions, new commentaries, collections of notes and commentaries, interpretive disquisitions—any scholarship in book form that focused on the *Old Master*, *Master Lie*, or *Master Zhuang*.³⁷ Most striking is how the latter, having held a bibliographical position well below the *Old Master* since Song times and becoming moribund in middle Ming, suddenly catapults to dominance, and to an unprecedented height, between the mid-sixteenth and the third quarter of the seventeenth century and maintains approximate parity with the *Old Master* thereafter.³⁸ Factors in this spike include intellectuals' frustration with governmental dysfunction and with disputation and political strife among Confucians in late Ming, as well as the search for some meaning in life—even paradoxical, world-inside-out meaning—among survivors of the cataclysmic change of dynasties from Ming to Qing.³⁹ Yet the strongest driver, as argued above, was the enthusiasm for creedal cross-fertilization that burgeoned during the four to five decades spanning the turn of the seventeenth century.

36. See *DMB*, 1:315–321; Liu Ts'un-yan, “Shao Yüan-chieh and T'ao Chung-wen”; Liu Ts'un-yan, “Wu Shou-yang”; and *Daoism Handbook*, 600–603. See also *Zhongguo Daojiao sixiang shi*, esp. chaps. 30–34.

37. Based on entries in Yan Lingfeng, *Lao Lie Zhuang sanzi zhijian lu*.

38. For a more detailed description of this stunning revival of intellectual interest in the *Zhuangzi*, see Fang Yong, *Zhuangzi xue shi*, 2:336–344.

39. See Xie Mingyang, *Ming yimin de Zhuangzi*, 27–32, 301–302.

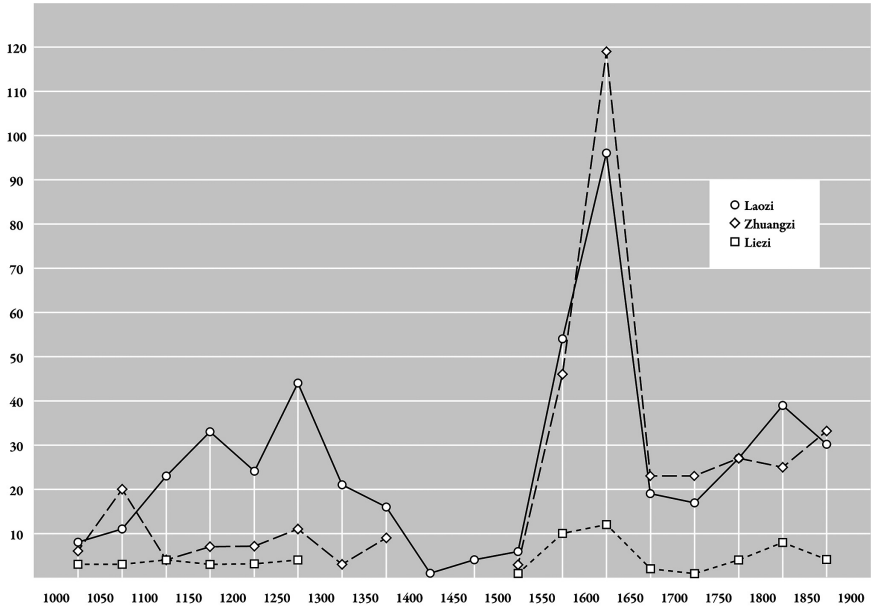


FIGURE 4. Numbers of works written on the Daoist classics, 1000–1900 CE.

It must suffice here to give three examples of comment on dreaming and waking in the “Qiwulun” chapter of *Master Zhuang* by intellectuals of wide influence who approached the text from primary backgrounds in Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, respectively, and who all were leading participants in the cross-creedal discourses of their time: first, the most prolific late-Ming Daoist scholar, Lu Xixing (1520–1601?); second, the most prolific Buddhist monk of the Ming period, Hanshan Deqing (1546–1623); and third, the most prolific associate of the Taizhou school of Yangming Neo-Confucianism, Jiao Hong (1540?–1620). Their comments on dreaming and waking in the “Qiwulun” context reflect both long-standing differences and contemporaneous common ground among the Three Teachings, as well as the importance of dreaming in the cross-creedal discourse of the time.

Lu Xixing, who became a Daoist priest in midlife but retained the self-image of a broadminded Confucian, was particularly inclined to read the Daoist classics in Buddhist terms, veritably regarding Zhuang Zhou as a progenitor of Buddhism in China.⁴⁰ In his widely read book *Adding Ink to Master Zhuang* (*Nanhua zhenjing*

40. On Lu’s life and literary work, see *DMB*, 1:991–994. For more on his Daoist learning, see *ET*, 1:719–721. On his reading of the *Zhuangzi* as Buddhist thought, see Fang Yong, *Zhuangzi xue shi*, 2:495–500.

fumo), completed in 1578, Lu approaches the dream passages that conclude “Qiwulun” by first emphasizing the word *dai* (to depend on) which dominates the opening of that final section, beginning with the dialogue between Penumbra and Shadow about how everything, in its functioning, depends on that of which it is a part. Here, the Daoist message is that, while people benightedly think of themselves as having self-agency, they actually depend on the creative, transformative Way for their very being as well as their activity.

But *dai* also had a career in Buddhism, serving in compounds such as *daiyuan* for the core Buddhist concept of dependent origination. Emphasis on *dai* thus implies identity of the Way with the Dharmakāya, Buddhism’s absolute, formless reality out of which all appearances arise. In making distinctions—Lu continues, paraphrasing Zhuang Zhou—such as between self and other, dream and waking, we become engrossed in multiplicity (“the two”) and neglect “the one” on which the multiples depend. When Zhuang Zhou dreams he is a butterfly and then wakes to find he is but himself (though wondering whether that self might be a figment of a butterfly’s dream), he then remarks, “This is called the transformation of things.” The question “two or one?” thus is raised: a self and an other sharing one consciousness, or one man in two successive states of consciousness? Lu obviates this conundrum—as he thinks Zhuang Zhou intends—by subsuming both possibilities in transformation. If we do not “enter the land of the transformation of things,” he writes, then “we will ever be in a big dream, confused and silent, not knowing [how to] come back in a great awakening.”⁴¹ Zhuang Zhou’s use of the dream state in “Qiwulun” to represent benighted subsistence in a mental world of false, distinction-drawing perceptions plays well into Lu Xixing’s construction of him as a pre-Indic Buddhist (Zhuang Zhou having lived well before Buddhism began trickling into China), while Lu’s deployment of “transformation” keeps Zhuang in the Daoist camp, where all the best insights of Buddhism purportedly were anticipated.

Hanshan Deqing, for his part, wrote influential commentaries not only on the *Old Master* and *Master Zhuang* but also on several of the Confucian Classics, in addition to many works on a range of Buddhist sutras.⁴² While not faulting Lu Xixing’s recognition of the Buddhist similarity in Zhuang Zhou’s metonymic use of the dream state for ordinary, deluded consciousness, he explicitly objected to Lu’s “claim that the entire Buddhist Canon proceeded from [Lao-Zhuang].”⁴³ Feeling the need to clarify the impressive but *limited* caliber of Lao-Zhuang thought in

41. Lu Xixing, *Nanhua zhenjing fumo*, 1.33a–34a.

42. Briefly on Deqing, see *DMB*, 2:1272–1275. For a comprehensive study of Deqing’s syncretic work on Daoist and Confucian texts, see Cai Jinchang, *Hanshan dashi de Sanjiao*.

46. Hanshan Deqing, *Guan Lao Zhuang yingxiang lun*, 1b, 8b.

relation to Buddhism, Deqing embarked on a project, pursued intermittently for more than thirty years,⁴⁴ to thoroughly explicate the *Old Master* and *Master Zhuang* from the point of view that he used in evaluating all “external” teachings: that of the “eight [dimensions of] consciousness” (*bashi*) in the Yogācāra (Ch. Weishi [Consciousness Only]) thread of Chinese Buddhism.⁴⁵

Deqing makes this approach clear in his virtual prologue to his future *Old Master* and *Master Zhuang* exegeses, *Contemplation of the Shadows and Echoes of Laozi and Zhuangzi* (*Guan Lao Zhuang yingxiang lun*), completed in 1590, which constitutes a subtext to his *Commentary on the Inner Chapters of Master Zhuang* (*Zhuangzi neipian zhu*), published in 1621.⁴⁶ Therein Deqing credits the Old Master and Zhuang Zhou with seeing through the deceptive realness of cognitions and feelings born of the mind in concert with the five senses, and thus with striking through the barrier of the sixth dimension of consciousness (Skt. *mano*, Ch. *yishi*). Further, they overcame the seventh dimension (Skt. *manas*, Ch. *monashi*)—the lair of the stubborn, self-interested “I,” our subconscious sense of being a distinct, continuous entity—and in so doing gained some insight on the eighth dimension (Skt. *ālaya vijñāna*, Ch. *alaiyeshi*), that is, awareness itself, the subjective basis of our whole samsaric existence. But, he finds, they never realized the fundamental problem of consciousness as such, nor its source in One Mind, the marvelous functioning *qua* human consciousness of the Dharmakāya, synonymous in Deqing’s thought with the Tathāgatagarbha (Ch. Rulaizang [Matrix of Suchness]).

Consequently, Deqing placed Lao-Zhuang thought on just the second of five ascending levels of teachings that bring good karmic rewards, the *wucheng*, with Confucianism granted a place on the first level.⁴⁷ Zhuang Zhou himself, Deqing points out, conceded that his “Qiwulun” arguments were set forth from within his own life’s dream, and that only a great sage arising in the remote future would be able to verify them, presumably from a perspective outside the “big dream.” “If the great sage that he sought was not the Buddha,” Deqing asks rhetorically, “then who?”⁴⁸

47. On the dating of Deqing’s commentary on *Master Zhuang*, see Shi Rui, “Hanshan *Zhuangzi neipian zhu*.”

48. Cai Jinchang, *Hanshan dashi de Sanjiao*, 95–115.

49. This practice conforms to a tradition in Tiantai and Huayan Buddhism of laying out broad lines of thought before proceeding with detailed discussions of scriptures. See Han Huanzhong, “Gaoseng neng jie Nanhua yi,” 27.

50. Hanshan Deqing, *Guan Lao Zhuang yingxiang lun*, 14b–15b, 17a, and “Lun zong qu” chap. See also Cai Jinchang, *Hanshan dashi de Sanjiao*, 109–112.

51. Hanshan Deqing, *Guan Lao Zhuang yingxiang lun*, 14a (quotation). See also Deqing’s *Zhuangzi neipian Hanshan zhu*, 2.73, referring to the “Qiwulun” passage in which Zhuang Zhou writes in the voice of Changwuzi (*Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, 94–95).

For Lu Xixing, a key word in “Qiwulun” is *dai*, while for Deqing it is *zhí*, “hold fast, cling to [something],” which also is an important term in *Master Zhuang* and had wide application in Buddhist teachings—for instance, in the most serious of spiritual hindrances and sources of affliction, *wozhí*, holding fast to the “I.”⁴⁹ Deqing identified Zhuang Zhou’s ridicule of people’s refusal to let go of ego-centered distinctions between self and other, right and wrong, life and death, caricaturing such fixations as dream-nonsense which is taken very seriously until it is dismissed upon waking, as the main way in which Zhuang transcended the seventh dimension of consciousness. Moreover, Deqing stresses, in “equalizing” the ordinary states of dreaming and waking, Zhuang raised the provocative issue of where the mind of the real me lies, thus inviting a higher-level search and potential realization of one’s “true governor” (*zhenzai*)—this term meaning the substance of the Way in Lao-Zhuang thought but the cognitive faculty of the Mind of Suchness in Deqing’s reading of *Master Zhuang*.⁵⁰ In his postscript to “Qiwulun,” Deqing writes,

In order to realize one’s original true governor, one must forget the “I.” And primary in the spiritual effort to forget the “I” is to gaze upon the secular world as though it were a dream, upon disputes over right and wrong as things in a dream, and upon those who [attempt to] correct such disputes as performing dream divinations within a dream. If one uses “dream” to contemplate the secular world, then ideas of [other] people [vis-à-vis] oneself will likewise naturally dissolve. . . . In case one can see the falseness of [the bodily] “I” but cannot forget things, [Zhuang Zhou deploys] the likes of the butterfly-dream parable so that things and self are both forgotten. When things and self are both forgotten, then right and wrong disappear.⁵¹

In sum, we find that Lu Xixing and Deqing differ little in exegesis but significantly in ontology and evaluation. The former regarded Zhuang Zhou’s dream passages as partial indications that Zhuang had virtually discovered dependent origination and the ultimate, non-dependent origin of things; the latter admired Zhuang Zhou’s use of the dream motif to defeat ego, while also judging that he had hardly even reached the ranks of Theravada monks, much less of Mahāyāna bodhisattvas. Deqing averred that Zhuang Zhou, by “holding fast” to the naturalism

52. See Cai Jinchang, *Hanshan dashi de Sanjiao*, 241–249; and Fang Yong, *Zhuangzi xue shi*, 2:531–533.

53. Cai Jinchang, *Hanshan dashi de Sanjiao*, 251–252. For more on the difference between understandings of *zhenzai* in Zhuang Zhou and Deqing, see Deng Keming, “Hanshan Deqing lun Zhuangzi,” 49–57.

54. Hanshan Deqing, *Zhuangzi neipian Hanshan zhu*, 2.88–89.

of the Old Master, “did not leave [behind his] cognitive nature and thus could not, in the end, [realize] One Mind.”⁵²

The great bibliophile and exponent of Three Teachings syncretism Jiao Hong held both Lu and Deqing in high esteem, yet he took his own approach to *Master Zhuang*.⁵³ Though filiated for good reason with the Taizhou line of Yangming learning, Jiao followed his teacher Luo Rufang in seeing no incompatibility between serious book learning (often eschewed by Taizhou followers) and trust in the innate perspicacity of one’s mind. While another of his mentors expressed doubts about Buddhism, Jiao Hong embraced it. He believed strongly in the fundamental unity of all moral-ethical and religious teachings, regarding people (especially fellow Confucians) who emphasize differences as failing to see beyond superficialities.⁵⁴ Reflecting the importance of scholarship in his Confucian background, Jiao undertook a non-sectarian, partly philological study of *Master Zhuang* by collecting and drawing on an unprecedented number of sometimes rare books and commentaries related to that work and also by interjecting many of his own views using occasional notes. He completed the monumental *Aid [to Understanding] Master Zhuang (Zhuangzi yi)* in 1588.⁵⁵

In Jiao’s final comment on the “Qiwulun” chapter, he summarizes by listing all the things that Zhuang Zhou levels, equalizes, unites, harmonizes, blends, or submits to mutual cancellation: other and self, right and wrong, making and destroying, much and little, small and large, past and present, life and death, dreaming and waking. This Zhuang accomplishes with “penetrating, unhindered insight,” writes Jiao, using terms seen more often in Buddhism than in Daoism: *mingda* and *wu’ai*. He follows with a caveat, however: “It may be all right to equalize things and self, but when it comes to dreaming and waking, how can one regard them as the same?” Though he grants that the mental content of daytime experiences and nighttime dreams varies little, and that, over a long time, the two become vaguely inseparable, the erudite Jiao distinguishes them by quoting from a then little-known text, an elaboration on *Master Lie* by a Song-period Daoist writer, Jiang Yu (dates unknown):

In waking we can know [i.e., recall] our dreams, but in dreaming we are unaware of the waking state, so waking certainly is more real than dreaming. But our waking experiences are just kept in [the sphere of] cogitation, whereas the prescience of dreams goes beyond cogitation, so dreams are indeed more numinous [*ling*] than waking [thoughts]. The speech and actions in our daily

55. Hanshan Deqing, *Guan Lao Zhuang yingxiang lun*, 24b.

53. On Jiao’s moral-ethical and religious thought, see Ch’ien, *Chiao Hung*, chap. 2.

54. *Ibid.*, chap. 3; Shi Ximei, *Jiao Hong “Zhuangzi yi” yanjiu*, 27–33. The mentor who warned against too much involvement with Buddhism was Geng Dingxiang.

55. See Fang Yong, *Zhuangzi xue shi*, 540–543.

waking [consciousness] often exhibit regularity, whereas what we see and hear each night in dreams often is discontinuous. The difference between dreaming and waking can be spoken in an instant, merely amounting to this, whereas the going and coming of death and life are the truly great changes. Unless one is that [rare] person [of high spiritual attainment], how can one hope to escape being churned under by transformative creation? But if one can manage early on to realize [the deeper meaning] of dreaming and waking, then the going and coming of death and life need hardly be mentioned.⁵⁶

Considering Jiao Hong's Buddhist writings and his relations with certain prominent Buddhists,⁵⁷ his vicarious appreciation here of the "numinousness" of dreaming may reflect a certain trend in late-Ming Buddhism to elevate dreaming from something that epitomized the muddle of samsaric existence to a stage on the way out of that existence, from something to be suppressed or expunged to an aid in understanding the wherefore of our minds. This development, within the one Chinese creed that took consciousness per se as a critical issue, made the late-Ming Buddhist "renewal" perhaps the single most important arena of philosophico-religious thought for us to understand regarding the increased salience of dreaming in that period.

Because of various institutional laxities and the inordinate favor shown toward Daoism by middle-Ming emperors, culminating in the complete removal of state support from Buddhism by the persecutory Emperor Shizong, Buddhism in China had fallen into desuetude by the mid-sixteenth century. Few well-educated men or women entered the orders, and knowledge of oral, ritual, and scriptural traditions within the *sangha* became severely eroded. After Shizong's long reign ended, the repressive atmosphere abated under Emperor Muzong (r. 1567–1572). Moreover, the formidable Empress Dowager Cisheng, mother of the next emperor, Shenzong, and a fervent Buddhist, launched an extensive program of patronage for Buddhist architecture, rituals, scriptural publications, and certain learned monks. Concomitant with this warming political climate, the epochal openness of Neo-Confucianism to Buddhist concepts and spirituality, and the prosperity of the late-Ming economy, gentry patronage of Buddhist temples, monasteries, and causes swelled into a great wave from the mid-sixteenth through the mid-seventeenth century, with both positive and negative effects on the health of the *sangha*.⁵⁸

56. Jiao Hong, *Zhuangzi yi*, sec. 54, 1.37; quotation from Jiang Yu, *Chongxu zhide zhenjing jie*, 3.10a. For discussion, see Shi Ximei, *Jiao Hong "Zhuangzi yi" yanjiu*, 109–117.

57. A passage in Jiao Hong's "Zhi tan," *xia*.20b–21a, in his *Baoyantang miji*, reflects thinking on dreams similar to that of Deqing and Zhenke.

58. For background, see C. Yü, *Renewal of Buddhism*, chaps. 6–7; Brook, *Praying for Power*; and J. Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, chap. 2.

Herculean tasks faced the monks who rose to the challenge of restoring doctrinal rigor, ritual authenticity, monastic discipline, and relations with the imperial court, while raising the sometimes dilettantish level of Buddhist knowledge among the literati. The so-called Four Great Monks of Late Ming—Hanshan Deqing, his soul mate Zibo Zhenke (aka Dagan; 1544–1604), their contemporary Yunqi Zhuhong, and a devotee of both Zhuhong’s and Deqing’s teachings, Ouyi Zhixu (1599–1655)⁵⁹—shared a concern to reacquaint their co-religionists with the scriptural foundations of Chinese Buddhism without devaluing the experiential aspect of enlightenment and widening divisions among schools, particularly the seeming gulf between Chan and Pure Land (Jingtu). Zhuhong, especially, preached the “joint practice” of Chan and Pure Land and was tremendously effective in extending the reach and raising the level of lay Buddhism.⁶⁰

Yet in the writings of contemporaneous Chan and Pure Land leaders we find scant evidence of new thought about dreaming. In both schools, where concentrating the mind is emphasized as an essential first step, sleep continued to be discouraged and dreams regarded ambivalently.⁶¹ When referring to dreams, followers of all late-Ming schools of Buddhism continued in the Sinitic tradition of using the universal experience of dreaming and waking for three salvific purposes: to induce a longing to “awaken” from one seemingly real state of consciousness into another, palpably more genuine state; to characterize everything of the conditional realm as ephemeral, as in the six metaphors (*liuyu*) of the *Diamond Sutra* (*Jin’gang jing*)—“like a dream, illusion, bubble, shadow, dew, or lightning flash”;⁶² and to promote mental detachment from all phenomena by showing that they are cognitions born of the mind, not external, objectifiable things-in-themselves. In late Ming, however, two particular filiations of monks who had considerable influence among lay and secular literati—first, from Zhenke to his principal disciple, Mizang Daokai (dates unknown), then from Daokai to a disciple, Cheyong Zhouli

59. For brief biographies of Zhenke, Zhixu, and Zhuhong, see *DMB*, 1:140–144, 244–246, and 322–324, respectively.

60. See C. Yü, *Renewal of Buddhism*, chaps. 3–4; and Eichman, *Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship*, esp. chap. 1. The following eight paragraphs draw on Struve, “Deqing’s Dreams,” 30–34; and Struve, “Alter World,” 324–342.

61. The eminent Pure Land exegete Shandao (613–681) exemplifies his school’s bias against sleep in his canonical *Guannian Amitufofo*, 23c and 24b. And a perusal of the thirteenth-century Pure Land compendium *Lebang wenlei* finds many cases in which sleep is condoned as a visualization state in instances of extreme fatigue or imminent death, but few of correct visions experienced during dream-sleep. On ambivalence toward dreaming in Chan, in which sleep was limited to brief periods between long stretches of meditation, see Faure, *Rhetoric of Immediacy*, 215–221.

62. *Jin’gang bore poluomi jing*, 752b. Other such metaphors—for instance, cloud or echo—are common in the literature. See Müller, “Zum Begriff des Traumes,” 262–263.

(1591–1648),⁶³ and, second, from Deqing indirectly to Zhixu—promoted a more affirmative attitude toward dreaming rooted in the common doctrinal sources of their particular religious inspiration.

The initiators of this trend, Deqing and Zhenke, partook of a reinvigorated mutuality among the Flower Garland, Tathāgatagarbha, and Yogācāra traditions—the latter as originally espoused by Paramārtha (Zhendi; 499–569).⁶⁴ In second-millennium Chinese Buddhism, the chief canonical bearers of these traditions were the *Flower Garland (Huayan)*, *Śūrangama (Shoulengyan)*, and *Perfect Enlightenment (Yuanjue) Sutras*, and the treatise *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith (Dacheng qixin lun)*. Use of these currents in Buddhist thought to strengthen the doctrinal bases of Chan and to reconcile the major schools of Buddhism had been pioneered by Yongming Yanshou (904–975) during an earlier era of Buddhist revival. In late Ming, emulation of Yanshou’s work, especially as transmitted in his *Records of the Source-Mirror (Zongjing lu)*, was stimulated by the rescue of nearly extinct Yogācāra study in China during the early sixteenth century.⁶⁵

The goal of these traditions, using different emphases and rhetorical means, was to gain spiritual distance from the inveterate cognizing of the ordinary mind, to escape total submersion in unstopable, uncontrollable thoughts, thereby to

63. Daokai is known chiefly through his role as close assistant to Zhenke in the project to compile and print an updated Chinese Buddhist canon, referred to most commonly as the *Jiaxing zang*. See Jin Shen, “*Jiaxing zang* de zhuke seng.” After Daokai abruptly left that project circa 1593, and especially after Zhenke’s death in prison in 1604, his whereabouts were long unknown. But close study of Cheyong Zhouli’s background finds Daokai later teaching in Yao’an, Yunnan Province. Zhouli, a product of the great Huayan center Jizushan, northeast of Erhai lake, studied with Daokai in Yao’an. For biographical sketches of Zhouli, see Tao Ting, “Miaofengshan kaishan shanzhishi Cheyong Chanshi xiaozhuan,” in Cheyong Zhouli, *Cheyong heshang Guxiang ji; Xinxu gaoseng zhuan siji*, 37.13a–14a; and Chen Yuan, *Mingji Dian-Qian Fojiao kao*, 18. See also Struve, “Alter World,” 327–330.

64. On Paramārtha’s importance in the history of Chinese Yogācāra and for a defense of attributing to him the first and most influential translation of the *Dacheng qixin lun* into Chinese, see Yang Weizhong, *Zhongguo Weishi zong tongshi*, chap. 2. See also Paul, *Philosophy of Mind*, esp. chap. 4.

65. On Yanshou, see Ran Yunhua, *Yongming Yanshou*, esp. chaps. 3 and 5; Y. Huang, *Integrating Chinese Buddhism*, 67–73 and chap. 6; Yang Weizhong, *Zhongguo Weishi zong tongshi*, 2:841–860; and Welter, *Yongming Yanshou’s Conception of Chan*. On the Weishi revival in late Ming, see [Zhang] Shengyan, *Mingmo Fojiao*, chap. 3. On the especially great influence of Yanshou on Zhixu, as well as Zhixu’s Weishi thought in relation to his concentration on the *Śūrangama Sutra*, see [Zhang] Shengyan, *Minmatsu Chūgoku Bukkyō*, esp. chaps. 3–5; and Iwaki, “Chigyoku no Kishinron.” On Zhenke’s extensive writings on Yogācāra topics and the importance of Huayan in his approach to Chan, see Fan Jialing, *Zibo dashi shengping*, 242–263. On the combination of Tathāgatagarbha and Yogācāra thought in Deqing, see Chen Songbo, *Hanshan Chanxue*; and Cui Sen, *Hanshan sixiang*.

intuit more and more clearly the true reality of mind in the non-objectifying, non-grasping, non-discriminating, mirrorlike, pure awareness of the One, True, Thus-Come (Tathāgata) Buddha Mind. The ways in which one spontaneously sees things (i.e., cognizes phenomena) is an indicator of one's progress in this quest. And for some, particularly in the context of late-Ming thought, the most spontaneous cognitive state was that of dream-sleep, when our minds are not directly engaged with physical sensory data and are less susceptible to the habitual rationalization of waking consciousness. Flower Garland teaching, moreover, emphasized the interpenetration of all spheres, including all spheres of consciousness, and also that buddhas and bodhisattvas (representing the all-pervading Tathāgata Mind) especially favored the dream state as a medium through which to assist believers.⁶⁶ Both Deqing and Zhenke cited dream-encounters with such sacred figurations as crucial in their spiritual advancement, and, later on, repeated dreams of Deqing compelled Zhixu to follow in his path (Deqing having been widely regarded among believers as a bodhisattva both before and after his death).⁶⁷

Over the centuries, eminent monks such as these often had confirmed their progress toward enlightenment with dream visions or experiences. Significant in late Ming is their incorporation of ordinary dreaming into the spiritual programs of less-than-eminent people. Deqing, for one, believed that, because of the especially moving "power of illusion" (*huanli*), dreams were conducive to opening ordinary minds to moments of celestial consciousness and that, if a calm mental state were sustained, this experience could be extended to more challenging levels of spiritual release. He assured one supplicant who inquired about practicing *nian-Fo* (sincere invocation of the Buddha's name) in order to envision Amitābha: "If you can practice *nian-Fo* consistently when your mind is troubled, then you can do so in dream-sleep. If you can practice it in dream-sleep, then you can do so when afflicted with illness. If you can practice it consistently while afflicted with illness, then as you approach death, you will see [the Buddha] in clear detail and will know your destination."⁶⁸

Zhenke's remarks on dreaming often serve to reinforce (with terms from *Yogācāra*) the *Śūrangama* teaching that our perceptions of things, with which we form concepts, are functions not of our five senses and conceptual faculty but

66. See, for instance, *Dafanguang Fo huayan jing*, 6.29a, 24.129c, 31.167a, 39.841b, or 80.442a; and Deqing's treatise on this sutra, Hanshan Deqing, *Dafanguang Fo huayan jing gangyao*, 6.522a.

67. On the crucial role of visions of certain bodhisattvas and Maitreya Buddha in Deqing's progression to his own bodhisattva status, see Struve, "Deqing's Dreams," 18–30. For Zhenke's account of repeatedly dreaming of Guanyin incognito, see Zibo Zhenke, *Zibo zunzhe quanji*, 2.164b–165a. On Zhixu's oneiric encounters with Deqing, both before and after the latter's death, see Ouyi Zhixu, *Lingfeng Ouyi dashi zonglun*, 1.253a–b, 7.385c–386a, and 9.409b–c, 414a, 415c.

68. Hanshan Deqing, *Hanshan laoren mengyou ji*, 10.528b.

ultimately of Mind. By observing that dream cognitions do not arise from either logic or the objective world, we can infer that the same is true for waking cognitions. And by deepening this observation, we can penetrate to Perfect Awareness. “Thus,” he writes, “those who reach the fundament and know Mind, though they are like ordinary people in having chaotic dreams, since they have attained the realm of no-inherent-existence and know that there is nothing outside Mind, the more they dream, the more they are awakened.”⁶⁹

In this same vein, Zhixu argues that the permeation of all states of consciousness by Buddha Mind does not allow dismissal of dreams, in one instance questioning mere ephemerality as the right understanding of the six metaphors of the *Diamond Sutra* enumerated above (of which “dream” is the first): “Though the dream-sphere is empty, the dream-mind is itself the mind of enlightenment; though illusions are void, the basis of illusion is not entirely void. Bubbles, though insubstantial, do not [occur] without water; shadows, though insubstantial, do not [occur] without substance. So we know that the life-and-death cycles of the six kinds of unenlightened beings, though they are like dream illusions, are not cut off from the Buddha nature. It’s just that in everyday activities this is not realized.”⁷⁰

Daokai, for his part, also found fault with long-established negative views of dreaming, such as a lay Buddhist’s statement that “dreamers are [merely] dreaming; those who know [the falsity of] dreams have never dreamed.” Such a view, by placing dreamers and non-dreamers at two poles, Daokai felt, obscures the unity of all minds with all truths and the inseparability of actuality and the Buddha-nature. Like “removing ice while looking for water, or leaving aside tools while seeking metal,” he writes, dismissing dream cognitions ignores the unformed that is inherent in the formed.⁷¹

It was Zhouli, however, who advanced the most focused and extensive arguments in favor of dreams, echoing his teacher Daokai in refuting those who regard dreamlessness as superior: “In those who know dreams, dreaming is [precisely] awakening; in those who do not know dreams, their waking state is [just] a dream.”⁷² For Zhouli, not only do dreams offer relatively unmediated insight on Mind, repeated dreaming, waking, and reflecting on the interrelations between the two states becomes a prime method of contemplation (*guanfa*) for gradual insight on ultimate truth, analogous to

69. See Zibo Zhenke, *Zibo zunzhe quanji*, 1.154a–c, 2.156b and 161b–c, 3.170b, and 6.198c (quotation).

70. Ouyi Zhixu, *Lingfeng Ouyi dashi zonglun*, 4.321a.

71. “Fu Zeng Shunzheng jushi,” in Mizang Daokai, *Mizang Kai Chanshi yigao*, 1.13c.

72. Cheyong Zhouli, *Yunshan mengyu zhaiyao*, xia.278a. Xu Shengxi (“Meng ji Fofa,” 41–61) gives a detailed analysis of the *Yunshan mengyu zhaiyao*; and Liao Zhaoheng (*Zhongbian, shi-Chan, mengxi*, 455–463) points out ways in which Zhouli’s thought about dreaming was more penetrating and explicit than that of either Zhenke or Deqing.

focusing on “critical phrases” in Chan or reciting the Buddha’s name in Pure Land. Of the skeptical, he says: “Because [such people] hold on to everything before their eyes, they take it all as substantial and regard dreams as empty illusion. They are far from realizing that those caused, perceptual phenomena are completely insubstantial, that what is dreamed is in itself awakening to the [true] nature.”⁷³

Such positive views of the potential in dreaming to aid Buddhist awareness certainly were not confined to the lecture mat, since all the monks featured above had extensive influence among intellectuals.⁷⁴ The association between raising spirituality and minimizing the distinction between dreaming and waking is easy to see in the following entry from the discourse record (*yulu*) of Cai Maode (1586–1644), a dedicated provincial official, devotee of Yangming learning, and lay Buddhist: “In the daytime wander a lot in thought; at night also have many dreams. Wandering thoughts are daytime dreams, and [in this sense] those who do not dream in the daytime are few. One’s cares calmed, with nothing to do, day and night become as one. This then is awakening.”⁷⁵

Nor, by any means, were litterateurs unaffected. A poem by the famous writer, Yangming Neo-Confucian, and lay Buddhist Yuan Zongdao (1560–1600) may serve to illustrate how the idea of enlightenment through dream contemplation (as well as invocation of Zhuangzian paradox) infused the poetic sensibility of monks and literati alike in late Ming.⁷⁶ Herein Yuan parallels the unreality of flowers in a dream with the ultimate unreality of his own body, while also broaching the possibility that his dream-experience of a profusion of cassia flowers (their bright yellow color being sacred in Buddhism) is in some real sense continuous with his waking experience of the saving grace of Guanyin, symbolized by the willow branch.

Dream of Flowers (Menghua)

In a dream, a grove of cassia [trees] was in bloom,
Its fragrant shade covering several acres.

73. Cheyong Zhouli, *Yunshan mengyu zhaiyao*, xia.281b.

74. Feng Mengzhen (1546–1605), a major lay-Buddhist patron of the *Jiaxing zang* project and therefore an especially close lay associate of Daokai, records several dreams in his diary, *Kuaxuetang riji* (36–37, 38), notably at times when he was in direct contact with Daokai. The lesser-known Zhouli was able to sojourn in the central Yangzi region and Jiang-Zhe in 1634–1636. His contacts with lay-Buddhist scholars and officials in Nanjing led to publication of his *Yunshan mengyu zhaiyao*, which eventually was included in the *Jiaxing zang*. See Struve, “Alter World,” 329–331.

75. Cai Maode, *Cai Zhongke gong yulu*, 5a. On Cai, see *Ming mingchen yanxing lu*, 90.1a–5a; and *Jushi zhuan*, 51.280b–c.

76. In Liao Zhaoheng, *Zhongbian, shi-Chan, mengxi*, chap. 1, it is apparent that the same combination of Huayan and Yogācāra doctrinal backgrounds that we see among those who led the elevation of dreaming also characterized those who led a significant rise in poetry-writing among monks, an activity which both reflected and enhanced their interactions with literati.

The yellow blossoms were as plump as beans,
 The green branches as thick as one's elbow.
 With a laugh, I opened a fresh jug [of wine]
 And folded letters inviting my poet-friends.
 Suddenly, I remembered that I was staying in the capital,
 Where surely there had never been such old cassias.
 Anxiously I reached to feel with my hand,
 Testing whether the blossoms were real.
 I rather sensed that the blossoms were not blossoms
 But did not realize that my hand was not a hand.
 In the jumbled, flurried confusion of a dream,
 Who can separate truth from absurdity?
 [Yet] how could there be only nighttime dream-blossoms
 When the willow appears, too, in the day?
 This matter truly is hard to know.
 Try asking the old Free and Easy Wanderer [Zhuang Zhou].⁷⁷

This specimen of regulated verse, written in five-meter lyric couplets, pours some fresh wine into an old jar. But at this same time (1599), a number of other “jars”—that is, genres and styles of writing—were gaining new vogue among literati and would prove to be even better receptacles for the “wine” of dream-expression.

Writing

Concomitant with the popularization of Yangming thought was an increasing preference for realism in writing (*xieshi*)—“telling it like it is,” we would say—as opposed to idealistic affectation, along with license to present strong (even erotic) emotions (*qing*) in a favorable light, or at least honestly. Emphasis on finding and expressing one's true, individual nature propelled indulgence in various forms of self-writing, as well as the flaunting of personal eccentricities and odd obsessions (*pi*). Moreover, aversion in some quarters to the stilted formalities of high-register literature, as well as socioeconomic conditions that tended to blur the distinction between classically educated gentlemen and lesser literates (such as hack playwrights and churners of pulp fiction), led many well-known literati to display their writing skills in modalities theretofore considered vulgar or lowbrow.

The result of these trends was the prominent appearance in late-Ming and early-Qing literati culture of several kinds of writing that were especially

77. Yuan Zongdao, *Yuan Zongdao ji jianjiao*, 20. On willow symbolism in the Chinese worship of Guanyin, see C. Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 78–82.

dream-friendly—that is, which in form or expected content and sensibility invited the recording, simulation, or deployment of dreams. Discussed in order here are (1) ethically self-exploratory autobiography and diary-keeping; (2) a loose category of brief writings, usually prose essays, called *xiaopin* (small pieces); and (3) wholly fictional works—short stories, novelettes, novels (*xiaoshuo*), and plays (i.e., operas), especially the long, “southern” style of musical drama known as *chuanqi*. (Indeed, it has been scholars of Chinese fiction who have pioneered in highlighting the prominence of dream themes in late-Ming and early-Qing literati culture.⁷⁸) Each kind of writing found particular efficacy in the seeming spontaneity, strong emotionality, or psycho-religiously compelling quality of dreams. Moreover, although short poems were sometimes included in collections of *xiaopin*, and appreciation of musical drama privileged its sung elements (arias), the genres that attained new prominence in late-Ming literati repertoires were basically narratological. In their relative length and flexibility of structure and diction, they were better media than regulated verse or song lyrics for simulating the experience of dreaming, in all its mercurial distortions and sudden changes of mood and dimension.

Modern scholars have ably described the accelerating emergence during the sixteenth century of the personal voice, the unabashedly subjective authorial “I,” in Chinese self-writing and the stunning growth in evidence of autobiographical urges from late Ming through early Qing.⁷⁹ Adding significance to this megaphenomenon are, first, the degree of concern expressed by autobiographers over their individual moral, ethical, and religious life conditions, which imbued many self-accounts with a confessional tone,⁸⁰ and, second, the unprecedentedly broad swath of Chinese society that they represented, including a small but groundbreaking number of well-educated women. Both of these characteristics are well illustrated in the “Record of Past Karma” (Qianyin ji), written by Ji Xian (1614–1683), an unhappily married woman of elite ancestry who was esteemed for her poetry but took the unusual step, for a woman, of also writing prose.⁸¹

This step enabled Ji Xian to advocate in writing for certain practices in Buddhism, of which she was a lifelong devotee. More pertinent here, it also allowed her to interpret her illness-inducing marital discontent in unusual ways that could

78. Citing just Western-language works, see Hales, “Dreams and the Daemonic”; Hegel, “Heavens and Hells”; Eggert, *Rede vom Traum*; W. Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*; Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, chap. 5; and Jianming Zhou, *Erzählstrategie in der Traumdarstellung*.

79. The pioneering works here are P. Wu, *Confucian's Progress*; and Bauer, *Das Antlitz chinas*. See also Struve, “Chimerical Early Modernity,” 359–364.

80. See P. Wu, “Self-Examination and Confession”; Wang Fansen, “Mingmo Qingchu de yizhong daode yan'ge zhuyi”; and Santangelo, “Human Conscience and Responsibility.”

81. Ji Xian, “‘Record of Past Karma’”; and Wang Xiangdong and Xu Ji, “Xiushan guizhong.”

not be expressed in poetry: that is, as a result of the deferral of her commitment, since maidenhood, to become a Buddhist nun and as a test of her ability to overcome jealousy (of other women to whom her husband turned) and take a more deeply religious view of life. Most of the “Record of Past Karma” recounts dreams and prolonged hallucinatory encounters—often with spectral voices—which convinced Ji Xian that her sickness was rooted in having acquiesced in the “false ties” of the world (read: marriage) and in a certain unrealized penance for a murder she believed she had committed in a past life. In one dream, the ubiquitously deified figure of Guan Yu (Lord Guan) tells Ji Xian that her condition can be cured if she changes her vexed heart for one of purity, and after ten days of wishing for this, she dreams a sequel:

Someone announced, “The venerable god Lord Guan is coming.” Before I was able to make him welcome, he had already arrived at my bed. There were more than ten people, all in strange shapes and weird forms, crowding around. [Guan Yu’s faithful assistant] Zhou Cang was holding up [Guan Yu’s iconic] crescent-moon saber, on which hung a fleshly heart. It was shaped like the heart of a lotus flower, golden with precious gems. He wanted to change my heart for me. I was just wondering how the inside heart could come out and the outside heart go in, when I looked down [and saw that] a hole had opened in my diaphragm. He had already changed my [old] heart and hung it on the saber. He told me to look at it, and I felt that it was incredibly filthy. I humbly thought that this must be what the Sixth Patriarch [of Chan Buddhism, Huineng] called the deluded heart of craving and anger. Waking up, I still felt a slight pain in my heart. Only after three days did it calm down.⁸²

Ultimately, Ji Xian was able to establish separate quarters within her marital home, where she could be apart from her husband and practice Buddhist devotions unimpeded, thus further cleansing her bad karma and filially aiding the transmigration of her deceased mother.

The increased practice in late Ming of keeping diaries and following other schematic regimens to aid moral-ethical self-cultivation, as well as writing “ledgers” of good and bad deeds to exert control over one’s fate, were even more conducive to self-reflection through personal dreams than the writing of full or selective autobiographical accounts.⁸³ Some literati preferred to reflect in

82. “Qianyin ji,” 4a–b, in the prose section of Ji’s *Yuquan kan heke*. Ji Xian, “‘Record of Past Karma,’” 143 (translation adapted from that of Grace Fong).

83. J. Smith (*Action in Late Ming Thought*, chap. 8) provides an overview of what she terms the “fact-centered” approach to self-cultivation and self-correction, that is, the scrutinizing of

the quiet of nighttime on the day's thoughts, feelings, and activities, as well as on the previous night's dreams. Others, such as the upright official and exponent of Yangming learning Meng Huali (1545–1597), advocated an early-morning regimen of self-examination. He writes: "After breakfast, bring up the previous night's efforts [at cultivation] for deliberation. In your sleep, were you indeed peaceful and calm, or indulgent in emotions and bravado? If you had dreams, did they show old habits and [sexual] desires, or cautious reflection? Rising early, after ablutions, are you aware of any instances of overthinking or overdoing? If so, bring those up one by one for deliberation, without any self-deception."⁸⁴ Such "deliberations," when written out consistently, took their place among other self-observations that typically filled the pages of ethically conscientious gentlemen's diaries and journals aimed at promoting greater self-awareness and hastening self-improvement.

Lu Shiyi (1611–1672) provides an example of a staunch Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian who, as such, could hardly deny that his mind's activity when both asleep and awake should be reflected upon seriously, but who was reticent about the content of his dreams. Though he was much inclined to regularly record his philosophical and scholarly thoughts, it apparently took a certain friendship with an active promoter of a Neo-Confucian style of diary-keeping to prod him into routine dream reportage. The resulting diary, *Record of Determination to Learn* (*Zhixue lu*), covers an eleven-month period (with one hiatus) in 1641. Therein Lu recorded his moral-ethical states of mind, examination studies, social frustrations and satisfactions, and, crucially, his participation in a gentlemen's benevolent association. The purposes of this Common Good Society (Tongshanhui) were providing mutual help toward personal betterment among members and promoting measures to aid their community's less fortunate residents.⁸⁵ Members congregated regularly, sometimes sharing and commenting on one another's self-monitoring records.

Lu's closest "brother" in this endeavor was Chen Hu (1613–1675), who later formulated an influential Neo-Confucian guidebook on daily record-keeping for moral self-improvement, *Primer of Sagely Learning* (*Shengxue rumen shu*), which cites the authority of Cheng Yi for injunctions to note whether one has maintained con-

specific deeds and thoughts in diaries, ledgers, and other consistent records, as distinct from the more traditional recording of instruction dialogues and study notes (the "ideal-centered" method). Wang Fansen ("Ripu yu Mingmo Qingchu sixiang jia") refers generically to the variety of Confucian daily self-cultivation schemata as *ripu*. On the "ledgers," commonly called *gongguo ge*, see Brokaw, *Ledgers of Merit and Demerit*, esp. chap. 2.

84. Meng Huali, *Meng Yunpu xiansheng ji*, 6.19b. On Meng's life and thought, see *Ming mingchen yanxing lu*, 70.15a–16a; and Huang Zongxi, *Mingru xue'an*, juan 29.

85. For a portrait of Lu Shiyi, see J. Smith, *Art of Doing Good*, esp. chap. 5.

scientiousness and proper comportment in one's dreams.⁸⁶ Lu's collaboration with Chen Hu is obvious in Lu's diary, particularly in his assessment of each day's conduct as predominantly "conscientious" or "lax," and in his ten-day summaries, which use exactly the categories in Chen's *Primer*, based on the canonical Neo-Confucian *Greater Learning (Daxue)*: extending knowledge; making the will sincere; rectifying the mind (including dreams); ordering the household; and effecting peace and good governance in society.

Lu maintains a daily routine of laconically reporting on his dream state only through the third month, however, using a simple code—dreams were "correct" or "upright," "pure" or "pristine," "mixed" or "disorderly," "depraved" or "lustful"—and seldom commenting much further. In Lu's case, phases of especially great worry or upset, which predominate from the fourth month onward and tend to roil his dream state, cause long interruptions in his dream-recording, in a pattern opposite that of a comparable diary by Huang Chunyao (discussed below). For instance, in the fourth month, anxiety over news of raids by roving rebels suspends Lu's dream reportage for several days, after which he writes, "Dreams correct but many. This is [because] the pure ether of my mind has been disrupted." And during a ten-day span in the seventh month, marked by mounting personal and public troubles, Lu records nothing about his dreams, yet in the summary for that period, under "Rectifying the Mind," he writes, "Dream-sphere mostly impure."⁸⁷

In general, Lu seems to attend regularly to his dreams but not write them out unless they can be construed as reflecting propriety in his concerns for family and community—for instance, dreams of mourning his recently deceased father, of remembrance (on the death anniversary) of his long deceased birth mother, of worry over the health of his foster mother, and of debates with his society brothers over ethics and duties, as well as a hopeful dream of watching fish when a severe drought had raised fears of starvation and social upheaval.⁸⁸ There are, however, several brief confessions—in conjunction with examination tensions, pressures to assume a (potentially ruinous) post of responsibility for the community, and worry about local security—that his dreams have been "very disordered and chaotic" and even that he has dreamed of demons (*mo*). Despite the latter, on the whole Lu maintains a typically commonsensical Confucian attitude toward dreams and even stranger

86. "Daxue richeng," in Chen Hu, *Shengxue rumen shu*, 2.3b–4a. Chen's annalistic biography by Chen Pu, *Andao gong nianpu*, indicates (5a–7b) that he began working with Lu Shiyi in 1636 on a system for daily self-monitoring that would be superior to *gongguo ge* in being based on Cheng-Zhu teachings. Other local scholars gradually joined them for structured moral-improvement meetings. Chen Hu also enjoyed close friendships with Meng Huali and Huang Chunyao.

87. *Zhixue lu*, 24b, 54a.

88. *Ibid.*, 12b–13a, 15a, 45a, 57a–58a, 63b, 65b–66a, 69b, 70b, 81b.

mental phenomena. Note, for instance, his self-psychologizing explanation of two successive nights' bedtime hallucinations of facing innumerable books: they arose from the convergence of the worrisome drought conditions and overconcentration on the upcoming examination for renewing his licentiate status.⁸⁹

A man of Lu's conservative Neo-Confucian disposition might alternatively have emulated his exact contemporaries, the Cheng-Zhu revivalists Zhang Lüxiang and Diao Pao (1603–1669), who followed Cheng Yi's exhortation to reflect seriously on their dreams but felt little or no compulsion to write them down.⁹⁰ Lu took a different course because of his direct engagement with an enthusiastic promoter of daily moral record-keeping, Chen Hu, and his close involvement with a group of peers in the Common Good Society who exchanged diaries and apparently expected to find dream-notations therein.

Whether reticent or forthcoming, responses to dreams in diaries and journals hold a particular value, in that they were recorded in relatively real time (discounting later editing) compared to those written long after the fact, as in memoirs, personal vignettes, or autobiographies, wherein the meaning of certain selectively recalled, strategically deployed dreams has been molded by lengthier retrospection. Promptly recorded dreams are more likely than thoroughly digested dream memories to elicit tentative interpretations and bafflement (e.g., Lu Shiyi's reaction—"very odd"—to a dream of understanding the speech of fur-capped northern barbarians⁹¹). Ye Shaoyuan (1589–1648), a disaffected official, celebrated writer, devoted family man, and, finally, Ming-loyalist Chan monk, provides an example of this difference. He wrote an annalistic autobiography of his secular life covering forty-nine years, *Ye Tianliao zizhuan nianpu*, along with a year-by-year continuation through mid-1645, *Nianpu xuzuan*, and a diary of his life on the lam from the Manchus, *Jiaying rizhu* (from summer 1645 into autumn 1648). In both the autobiographies and the diary, Ye frequently recounts his dreams.⁹²

To an unusual degree in his day, Ye Shaoyuan fostered a refined literary atmosphere in his household in collaboration with his beloved wife, Shen Yixiu (1590–1635), a notable writer herself who also bore Ye twelve children. Ye's first three daughters were especially accomplished in belles lettres, the third one, Xiaoluan, being his favorite. But premodern mortality stalked this endearing family with no pity. The successive deaths in Ye's family—of his eldest daughter, precious third

89. Ibid., 75b.

90. Zhang Lüxiang, *Yangyuan xiansheng quanji*, 2:543, 689, 715, 3:1175; Diao Bao, *Qianshi zhaji*, shang.19b–20a, 22a, xia.29b–30a. On Diao, see *Guochao qixian leizheng*, 398.21a–24a.

91. Lu Shiyi, *Zhixue lu*, 10b.

92. On Ye, see *DMB*, 2:1576–1579; Fong, "Reclaiming Subjectivity"; and the introduction by editor Ji Qin to the collected works of Ye, his wife, and daughters, in *Ye Shaoyuan, Wumengtang ji*.

daughter, and second son in 1632; of his wife in 1635, despondent about the recent death of their youngest son, a toddler; and the passing of Ye's mother in the same year—turned his thoughts toward a religious life in Buddhism.⁹³ In his retrospective autobiography, Ye accepts as truth-bearing communications two dreams in which his deceased wife seems to impart approving guidance on his decision to become a monk.⁹⁴ Yet in a real-time entry in the diary, after dreaming that his wife had composed an elegy for a household maid, Ye writes: “But for [a mistress] to elegize a maid would not be proper. Moreover, my wife has been gone for twelve years now, and [the maid] Yinzhen is sixteen this year, charmingly alive! The dream sphere is preposterous like this.”⁹⁵ Had more time passed, this dream might have been recalled differently, if at all. In any case, as a guilelessly volitional act of self-disclosure, Ye's record of it stands as one testament among many to the role of dreams in fulfilling the subjective autobiographical impulses of late-Ming and early-Qing writers.

Also flourishing in this era was another form of self-writing, though it usually is not treated as such: *xiaopin* or *xiaowen*. Going far back in Chinese literature, these synonyms generally referred to brief compositions (of diverse genres) that were deemed less important than writings weightier in length, formality, subject, and diction. In the characterization of one modern scholar, they were light “snacks” compared to the heavier “suppers” of more serious compositions.⁹⁶ Though certain early specimens of these “small pieces” had always been prized, the writing of such bagatelles was elevated to the status of an esteemed literati art in the Northern Song period, most notably by the consummate writer Su Shi. His genius in developing a style that elicited deep reflection from seemingly trivial subject matter, added to his troubled political life, unrestrained expressiveness, deep engagement with *Master Zhuang*, and predilection for writing about dreams, made him easily the most popular model from earlier eras among late-Ming litterateurs.⁹⁷ Su's aesthetics of the minor essay, after *xiaopin* picked up momentum in the mid-sixteenth century, were taken further most influentially by writers of the Gongan School,⁹⁸ to the point that *xiaopin* became a virtual genre, based not on form or structure but on a certain

93. Ye Tianliao *zizhuan nianpu*, in Ye Shaoyuan, *Wumengtang ji*, 2:848–851.

94. *Nianpu xuzuan*, in Ye Shaoyuan, *Wumengtang ji*, 2:852, 858.

95. *Jiaying rizhu*, in Ye Shaoyuan, *Wumengtang ji*, 2:950.

96. Luo Yunyun, *Ling yu qu de yijing*, introduction.

97. Briefly on Su Shi, see IC, 729–730. On his iconic stature among late-Ming *xiaopin* aficionados, see Chen Wanyi, *Wan-Ming xiaopin*, chap. 1; Zhou Qun, *Yuan Hongdao pingzhuan*, chap. 9; and Xiong Lihui, *Ming-Qing sanwen*, 13–19, 404–405. On his *Zhuangzi* engagement, see Jiang Shengdiao, *Su Shi de Zhuangzi xue*. Dreams in Su Shi's oeuvre have been thoroughly studied by Kühnle, who counts forty-six personal dream accounts among Su's works (“Entdeckung des Erlebnisses im Traum,” 59).

98. See Chou, *Yüan Hung-tao*, esp. 91–93.

cluster of aesthetic values, attitudes, and tastes—a mentality, one might say—that was distinctive to a broad spectrum of the late-Ming intelligentsia.⁹⁹

Growing alienation from, and waning aspiration to participate in, government service and all the highbrow posturing entailed by the exam system and public office, combined with increasing concern to discover and express one's genuine self, turned *xiaopin* into cameos of authentic self-portrayal in private, personal contexts, the slightness of the “genre” ironically bearing a determination to find truths in the intimate.¹⁰⁰ And what could be more intimate and spontaneously expressive of personal truths than dreams? A related aspect of the late-Ming *xiaopin* aesthetic is independence from orthodoxy, particularly the sort of Confucian orthodoxy that tended to silence dream-talk. In this sense, dream-writing became a countercultural gesture in *xiaopin*. Stylistically, *xiaopin* works often were admired for their “strangeness” in some respect and for giving readers unexpected twists en route to suggesting the writer's ineffable uniqueness, even eccentricity. Here, too, dream accounts served handily.

Some *xiaopin* writers enjoyed projecting an air of whimsicality with personal dream stories.¹⁰¹ But the most striking examples of dream use in this genre, and the ones that most clearly contrast the *xiaopin* aesthetic of sometimes confessional authenticity with the self-gratifying, idealistic transcendence of “pure dreams,” are essays that exposed the festering sociopolitical discontents and frustrated spiritual longings of their authors in ways that resonated with peer audiences.

Zhang Dafu (1554–1630), for instance, became well known for his *xiaopin*, using dream topoi more frequently than any other writer in the genre, though he penned them merely as a sideline to his main source of literary income and renown: commemorative biographies written for hire. As a young man he had pursued examination success, but in midlife a combination of stress and illness severely damaged his eyesight. This forced him to relinquish his licentiate's stipend and, with the aid of assistants, to support his family by producing fine pieces of literary adornment, especially biographies, for the families of others—a reduction to “plowing with one's pen” that was the fate of increasing numbers of literati.¹⁰² While most of Zhang's oneiric

99. See Kafalas, “Weighty Matters,” 50–53; and Xiong Lihui, *Ming-Qing sanwen*, chap. 6.

100. For a succinct summary of the main criteria of good *xiaopin* in late Ming, see Chen Shaotang, *Wan-Ming xiaopin lunxi*, chap. 2. For more on the evolution of those criteria from middle to late Ming, see Xiong Lihui, *Ming-Qing sanwen*, chaps. 4–6. See also W. Li, “Rhetoric of Spontaneity.”

101. See, for instance, “Jimeng,” by Zhong Xing (1574–1625), in his *Zhong Bojing xiaopin*, 262–263, in which dream-encounters with deceased friends for whom Zhong had written biographies led him to calculate the speed at which such earthly compositions reached their subjects for review in the netherworld.

102. In Zhang's main collection of short prose, *Meihua caotang bitan*, one finds twenty-four pieces about dreams. On Zhang and his *xiaopin* art, see Wu Chengxue, “Lun Zhang Dafu de sanwen xiaopin.”

xiaopin are gently wry reflections on human relations prompted by dreams of friends and acquaintances,¹⁰³ the following item is especially illustrative of late-Ming *xiaopin* for the frank expression of Zhang's jaundiced attitude toward his patrons and his circumstances, which bring on bad dreams even during a placid time for his waking mind. His surprisingly grateful response to such disturbed sleep—as much as to good dreams—and his ultimate emphasis on being naturally at ease with oneself, no matter what happens, reflect key values in the late-Ming *xiaopin* aesthetic.

Nightmares (Emeng)

Living in penury, I don't socialize. So everything I write out of social obligation is slave-work for others, which my mind bitterly detests. When people [for whom I write biographies] sometimes think that a certain official's achievement has not been [sufficiently] acclaimed, or that some sensitive matter should be expunged, it makes me want to vomit [this work] out or cut it off. [Left with] no room for myself, several times I've wanted to burn my brush and inkstone and swear to never do [such writing] again. But circumstances have not permitted. With spring coming on, I've been free of this thought and quite self-forgiving. When my dream-spirit pains me and I rave madly [until my sleep is] broken by the neighbor's rooster, [upon waking] I somehow am glad [about the bad dreams] and feel happy. So I think that in all cases of nightmares, there's a personally fitting satisfaction in reflecting on them while awake. . . . On one's worldly road of frustrations and disappointments, the real pain is simply in not waking. After genuine awakening, how can one not be at ease with oneself?¹⁰⁴

While Zhang accepts both good and bad dreams with equanimity as opportunities for self-exploration, a dream recounted by Song Maocheng upends the self-congratulatory implication of a “pure dream” as it contrasts too crushingly with Song's actual condition. Song, who half-heartedly competed in the civil service examinations through his whole adult life out of family obligation, met with greater renown as a writer and sympathetic patron of courtesans. A candidly emotional man, he was a sanguine but eclectic spiritual seeker, applying (but not always living up to) Confucian standards in his family life, and moving erratically among Daoism, Buddhism, and the mantic arts in his individual religiosity.¹⁰⁵ Song's strong

103. Zhang held the common view that dreams are the sleeping anima's elaborations, by association or suggestion, on things experienced in the waking state. He welcomed all kinds. See his “Meng yin,” in Zhang Dafu, *Meihua caotang bitan*, 151 (juan 7).

104. Zhang Dafu, *Meihua caotang bitan*, 262 (juan 12).

105. For biographical sketches of Song Maocheng in his social and literary contexts, respectively, see Struve, “Song Maocheng's Matrixes,” 73–82; and Barr, “Wanli Context,” 109–121.

yearnings but inveterate shortfalls in his restless spiritual life are movingly reflected in essays describing dreams and dreamlike visions,¹⁰⁶ as in the following example:

A Dream of Receiving Treasures (Jimeng, shoubao)

For three years I had not dreamed of spirits or transcendents, when, in the tenth month of 1608, I was sojourning at Tiger Hill [in Suzhou] and learning the Buddhist teachings of purity from a diviner. On the night of the tenth, I was returning in a drunken state to the lecture hall of the monastery [where I was staying]. A frosty moon was cleansing the sky [so brilliantly that] I could see the shadows of trees on my body, and I felt as though I might fly with the falling leaves. Though I slept until the predawn hour, in my dream the sun was well up in the morning sky, where I [also] saw to the north several especially bright stars. One star in the center, as red as cornelian, came down slowly from the blue firmament, and I received it in my hand as a black, jadelike stone. Then I saw coming toward me, slim and graceful, a five-colored phoenix, and I received it, too. And again, there came, all crimson, into my hand a piece of fine jade. At this point I thought I had become a spirit or transcendent and did not expect to wake up. But when [in fact] I was waking, I felt that all five parts of my body were agitated and [discovered that] my left hand was clutching a rock. [In disappointment] I almost could not keep body and soul together. Was that not what [the *Lotus Sutra*] calls the “six kinds of quaking” [that awaken the world]? If, after this, I still am my old self, it will utterly betray this dream!¹⁰⁷

The bracketing of a thoroughly Daoist dream with Buddhist references, as well as the mention of studying Buddhism with a diviner, are quintessential to Song's unsettled creedal orientation. And we are alerted early on to the slippage in his religious pursuit by the admission that he had become quite drunk while studying Buddhist purity, a state not likely to yield the most spiritually valid dream experience. Yet the waking plunge from his dreaming heights still gives the story an arresting turn, in prime *xiaopin* style.

The theme of searching for a place in life to be at ease, but finding oneself uneasy everywhere, appears again in a dream essay by a pioneer of unbridled self-baring in late-Ming *xiaopin*, perhaps the period's maddest creative genius, Xu Wei (1521–1593). Unsuccessful in the civil examinations beyond the licentiate, Xu, like many of his peers, was influenced by Yangming thought and moved readily

106. In addition to the essay translated here and Song's dreams of his dead wife (discussed in Struve, “Song Maocheng's Matrixes”), see his *Jiuyue ji*, 16–18, 35, and *Jiuyue qianji*, 1.2a–4b. See also Zhang Yuling, “Lun Mingdai zuojia Song Maocheng,” esp. 63.

107. Song Maocheng, *Jiuyue ji*, 37.

from that to sample Daoism and Buddhism, though not seriously enough to take formal vows. Ever psychologically unstable, Xu appears to have suffered temporary, suicidal insanity in 1565 from fear of guilt by association when an important official whom he had served as a personal secretary was arrested on inflated political charges and died in prison.¹⁰⁸ Xu himself had trouble with tribunals, but on other grounds, most seriously in 1566 when he was jailed for irascibly killing his third wife on suspicion of infidelity. Even during his seven-year incarceration, however, Xu maintained contact with his many literati admirers, who effected his release and afterward enabled him to sojourn restlessly, writing and painting prolifically. He died penniless in a daughter-in-law's natal home at age seventy-two. The following dream record reflects his tortuous life experience, mocking self-assessment, and boldly unvarnished style, particularly in capturing the mercuriality of actual dreams.

Record of a Dream (Jimeng)

Going into the deep hills, it was effortless all the way. The sun was bright, and the broad, winding, unpaved road went on for several dozen hectares. I came to a site on the north side of a series of hills, where four or five government offices were located, all facing southward—but closed. A troop of soldiers was guarding them, and three or four each of some strange birds and beasts, of sorts that I did not recognize, were tied up on the left. As I walked toward the center office, the ground suddenly shook, and it almost collapsed. Looking upward, I saw a dark green forest on the hills' northern face, lush and dense as kingfisher's feathers, and I anxiously strode toward a Daoist monastery therein. As I entered, the door guard announced me to the head priest, who came out dressed in a yellow hat and cotton robe. I wanted to stay, but the priest said, "This is not the abode for you." As I bowed and made to leave, the priest took out a registry and opened it, saying: "Your given name is not Wei; this character, *shěn* [to smirk sardonically], is your name." The place then seemed terribly desolate, and the [garments of] both the guard and the priest [had turned] shabby.¹⁰⁹

The emphases on forthrightness, authenticity, and disregard for orthodoxies that we see in *xiaopin*, espoused most pointedly by associates of the Gonggan School but widely evident among late-Ming literati, also greatly abetted the complete par-

108. Briefly on Xu Wei and his persecuted employer Hu Zongxian (1512–1565), see *DMB*, 1:609–612 and 631–638, respectively. On his madness, see Uchiyama, "Jo Wi no kyōki ni tsuite." On Xu's multifaceted creativity in literature, drama, calligraphy, and painting, see Zhou Qun and Xie Jianhua, *Xu Wei pingzhuan*, esp. 232–245 on his *xiaopin*, which links him closely with the Gonggan School.

109. Xu Wei, *Xu Wenchang yigao*, 24.3a–b. My translation, guided by Yang Ye, *Vignettes*, 21.

turition of fictional stories, long and short, from the womb of historical narration, as the unabashedly subjective vision of the author and the genuineness of the characters came to supersede the traditionally dominant value of fidelity to past events. The art of character portrayal, too, departed from the reproduction of laudatory and minatory stock figures, so basic to standard historiography, to seek lifelikeness in portraying the individuality and complexity of each character, even those with allegorical roles. This great leap forward in appreciating stories as wholly the creations of imaginative writers came about under the critical and authorial pens of three generations of publisher-commentators, from Li Zhi (1527–1602) in late Ming through Zhang Zhupo (1670–1698) in early Qing.¹¹⁰ Add to this the electrifying elevation of emotions—especially love and sex between men and women—to the status of prime mover in the universe on the part of Li Zhi and other associates of the Taizhou and Gongan Schools, and the result was a heyday of blatant emotionality with strong psychological undertones within the signature bizarreness of fictional stories. This was the case whether they were written in the recent trend of approximating vernacular speech (which many short-fiction writers and all novelists followed) or as developments in the tradition of classical-language tales.¹¹¹

Feng Menglong (1574–1646), a scholar-publisher influenced by Gongan writers, provides an example of the heightened emphasis on the power of emotion in dreams. His work in recovering, redacting, and revising old stories, and authoring or coauthoring stories of his own, was pivotal in raising the profile of “lowbrow” fiction among late-Ming literati.¹¹² One of Feng’s popular story collections, *Constant Words to Awaken the World* (*Xingshi hengyan*; 1627), includes a composite story, “Student Dugu [Enters a] Raucous Dream while En Route Home” (Dugu sheng guitu naomeng), whose antecedents reach back to the Tang dynasty.

In this story, a loving wedded couple, through a series of misfortunes, is separated by great distances for three years. Husband and wife independently request the aid of a goddess who legendarily is efficacious in dream communication, and presumably she engineers their reunion, though in a very strange way. The experience of the wife, Bai Juanjuan, who has been wishing for a dream of her husband, unfolds through two nested dreams, climaxing in a nightmare in which she is rudely taunted by rowdies just as a dream-journey to search for her husband has almost brought her home. Meanwhile, the experience of the husband, Dugu

110. S. Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality*, chap. 6.

111. On *qing* in this literary epoch, see K. Chang, *Late-Ming Poet Ch'en Tzu-lung*, chap. 2; Mowry, *Chinese Love Stories*, introduction; W. Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, chaps. 2–3; R. Wang, “Cult of *Qing*”; and Zheng Zongyi, “Xingqing yu qingxing.” On what it might mean to say that a late-Ming literatus wrote “in the vernacular,” and for a brief history of vernacular stories in China, see Hanan, *Chinese Vernacular Story*, chap. 1. See also *IC*, 31–46; and *CH*, chaps. 34–37.

112. On Feng, see *IC*, 380–384; and Hanan, *Chinese Vernacular Story*, chaps. 4–5.

Xiashu, proceeds in the waking state. On *his* return journey, unaware that he has come to the same place as Juanjuan's dream-site, he is sleepless out of concern about how his wife has fared in his absence when he somehow becomes privy to Juanjuan's nightmare of humiliation. At first not sure whether the hapless woman is indeed his wife, Xiashu becomes so enraged at one boor's treatment of her that he throws a couple of brick pegs at him, one of which inadvertently strikes the woman in the head. Thereupon the whole scene disappears, and Xiashu begins to worry that the woman he saw was the ghost of his wife—deceased! The next morning he anxiously rides the final distance to their home, where he finds his wife having just woken with a bad headache. The couple then realize that his concerned mind had entered her dream, and that his action therein against a phantom rowdy had caused her real physical pain.¹¹³

At this point in the story, Feng Menglong inserts a note in which he playfully poses a challenge for himself from a hypothetical reader whose willingness to suspend disbelief has been stretched too far: Tales that purport to erase the commonsense distinction between dream mentation and waking actuality are simply “lies”! But Feng cites the theory that dreams have their inceptions in thoughts and defends his tale as follows: “Bai [Juanjuan] single-mindedly dwelt on her husband, whatever she was doing. That is why her true spirit ascended into dreams, with forms and figures that were utterly real. Xiashu, too, missed his wife to such an extreme that, even though he was awake, a little bit of his spirit-soul entered his wife's dream. It's easy to see that this is a case of two spirits in such communion that the aerial soul of one connects with the terrestrial soul of the other. How can one say I'm telling lies?”¹¹⁴

This story exhibits some long-established uses of dreaming in Chinese creative literature: as media of (often cryptic or puzzling) communications to, or actions on, mortal protagonists by representatives of various precincts (karmic, celestial, and purgatorial) of the supernatural cosmos; to expand or condense space or time to suit narratological convenience; and to elicit reflection on what is “real” and “unreal” in human experience. Dreams prompted by heartfelt yearning or other strong emotions, too, were hardly new in late-Ming or early-Qing literature.¹¹⁵ Distinctive in this period, as evidenced in Feng's comment, is the claim that emotions can be so powerful as not only to affect a person physically within a single subjectivity (psychosomatic illness having been long accepted as fact in Feng's culture) but also to override the objective distinction between the physical and the imaginary, uniting

113. Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World*, 4:1531–1588. For discussion, see Hales, “Dreams and the Daemonic,” 84–86; on provenance, see Ogawa, *Sangen nihaku honji*, 200–201.

114. Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World*, 4:1588.

115. See Hegel, “Heavens and Hells,” 1; Zou Qiang, “Meng yixiang xingshi”; and Chen Jingyi, “Zhongguo gudian meng wenxue,” 65–72.

the sentient faculties of multiple, co-concerned individuals. In the time-worn conceit of “shared dreams,” the aerial souls of two or more persons, released from their bodies in dream-sleep, meet elsewhere in an ontologically separate space. In the “Student Dugu” story, Feng Menglong is intrigued by the opportunity to argue that what may seem weird or unbelievable is actually credible if one understands the potential of emotion in dreams to meld discrete subjectivities, even across the waking-dreaming divide.

Feng does little in this story, however, to impart psychological depth to its characters. This challenge is taken up a half century later by the most outstanding writer of paranormal fiction in late-imperial China, Pu Songling (1640–1715), whose collection *Strange Stories from the Make-Do Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi*) includes a different riff on the story of Student Dugu, “A Gentleman of Fengyang” (Fengyang shiren).¹¹⁶ Pu’s reworking centers on the consciousness of the wife, to whom there appears at bedtime a beautiful, alluringly attired woman, recognizable to knowing readers as the importuned, dream-facile goddess. While Dugu Xiashu piously disbelieves the legend of this goddess’s wanton seductiveness in Feng Menglong’s version, her aura here, as well as the soon-to-be-demonstrated powers in her erotic red shoes, foreshadow a confirmation of it. The beauty whisks the pining wife away on a dream-journey to a distant residence, where the husband, too, soon arrives. But then she deceitfully lures the husband’s attentions away from his wife to herself and takes him into the bedchamber for a night of sexual pleasures that mimic those he has enjoyed with his wife. The latter, observing this, is beside herself with frustration. When her brother appears, she urges him to do something, and he throws a rock through the bedchamber window, striking the husband on the head. The wife then berates her brother for injuring her husband, and, angered by her contrariety, the brother shoves her to the ground and departs. At this point she awakes.¹¹⁷ The rather pat denouement—it is discovered the next day that the waiting wife, returning husband, and visiting brother have had a *three-way* shared dream—is secondary in artistry to Pu’s portrayal of the wife’s confused feelings of erotic expectation and fear of displacement by a rival, her yearning and outrage matched by weakness and

116. Briefly on Pu and his *Liaozhai zhiyi*, see *IC*, 563–565, and *CT*, 691–693. The “Fengyang shiren” story occurs early (*juan* 2 in latter-day *juan* divisions) in this large collection of more than 490 stories, suggesting that it probably was written in the 1670s. On the complexities of dating the *Liaozhai* stories, composed between the 1670s and early 1700s, see Barr, “Comparative Study.”

117. Pu Songling, *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1:234–238; for an English translation, see Pu Songling, *Chinese Ghost and Love Stories*, 101–106. For discussion, see Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 157–159; and Barr, “Pu Songling and *Liaozhai zhiyi*,” 272–273. On other dream stories in *Liaozhai zhiyi* that “seriously take issue with the status of illusion,” see W. Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 141–146.

helplessness, and her mixed livid and loving attitude toward the seduced husband. The irrational but true-to-life tumult of these emotions is appropriately captured in a dream.

Yet such fictional use of the dream state to display psychological insight did not require the paranormal mode, nor did it wait for the early Qing to appear. In late Ming, two groundbreaking but very different works of long fiction brought Chinese fictional dream-psychologizing to its peak until the incomparable eighteenth-century novel *Dream of Red Chambers* (*Honglou meng*) appeared. One is a wholly sublunary, grossly pornographic, politically satirical depiction of moral depravity in a wealthy bourgeois household, the late sixteenth-century novel *Gold Vase Plum* (*Jin Ping Mei*) by the prudently pseudonymous Scoffing Scholar of Lanling (Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng). The other is a mesmerizing Buddho-allegorical course in self-enlightenment for an all-too-humanly sensual but indeed fantastical protagonist—that is, the 1641 novella *Supplement to Journey to the West* (*Xiyou bu*). For sound reasons, this work is generally attributed to the champion dream-writer of the seventeenth century, Dong Tuo (commonly pronounced “Dong Yue”; 1620–1686), though some scholars have raised the possibility that his father, Dong Sizhang (1587–1628), played an authorial role.¹¹⁸

Of the several dreams deployed in *Gold Vase Plum*, the most memorable may be two experienced by Li Ping'er, the sixth and most favored wife of the sexually overindulgent head of household Ximen Qing.¹¹⁹ Ping'er had been the sole wife of Ximen's sworn brother and next-door neighbor Hua Zixu, but an adulterous relationship with Ximen leads her to transfer Hua's inherited silver cache to the Ximen compound and then to drive Hua to death from despair after he loses the rest of his property in a lawsuit. Ximen Qing promptly takes Ping'er as a new concubine, and she subsequently bears a son, much to Ximen's satisfaction but to the discomfiture of his savagely jealous fifth wife, Pan Jinlian, who acerbically questions whether the boy is really Ximen Qing's offspring. When the little boy, named Guan'ger, is afflicted with a lingering illness, Pan carries out a cruel plot to ensure his death.

Li Ping'er's two dreams occur at a time of acute distress for her, shortly before and shortly after Guan'ger's passing. In the first instance, she had been weeping over

118. On *Jin Ping Mei*, see IC, 287–291; CH, 637–643; and Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, chap. 2. On *Xiyou bu*, see IC, 418–420; and Q. Li, *Fictions of Enlightenment*, chap. 4; Brandauer, *Tung Yüeh*, chaps. 5–9; Hegel, *Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, 142–166; and T. A. Hsia, “*Hsi Yu Pu* as a Study.” For recent synopses of literary arguments supporting Dong Tuo or Dong Sizhang, respectively, as the author of *Xiyou bu*, see Zhao Hongjuan, “*Xiyou bu* zuozhe wei Dong Tuo”; and Li Qiancheng's preface in Dong Sizhang, “*Xiyou bu*” *jiaozhu*. For an English-language work on Dong Tuo, see Brandauer, *Tung Yüeh*, chaps. 2–4. On the correct pronunciation of 董說 as “Dong Tuo,” see Zhao Hongjuan, *Ming yimin Dong Tuo*, 217–218.

119. Huang Lin, “Wan-Ming nüxing,” 264–267; Fu Zengxiang, “Li Ping'er de mengxiang.”

the failing infant, holding him close to her day and night. Toward the end of the eighth month,

[she] was lying on her bed, seemingly asleep yet not asleep, when she dreamed that Hua Zixu came in the front door, dressed in white and looking just as he had while still alive. When he saw Li Ping'er, he condemned her in a harsh voice, saying, "You lousy wanton whore! How could you have misappropriated my property and turned it over to Ximen Qing? Right now I'm going to lodge a formal complaint against you."

Li Ping'er grasped his sleeve with one hand and pled with him, saying, "Good brother, please forgive me." But Hua Zixu abruptly broke loose, and she woke with a start, [to realize that it was] but a dream of South Branch. Upon waking, she was grasping the sleeve of Guan'ger's garment in her hand.

In the second instance, on a cold night early in the ninth month, Li Ping'er, in the clutches of despair at the loss of her child, was again "seemingly asleep yet not asleep, [when] she became indistinctly aware of a noise made by someone tapping on the window frame.

She called to her maidservants, but they were both fast asleep and did not respond, so she got out of bed herself. Slipping on her shoes backwards and putting on her brocade gown inside out, she opened the door to the room and went outside to see who was there. It seemed to be Hua Zixu, holding Guan'ger in his arms, calling out that he had found a new abode and that she should go with him to live there. Li Ping'er was unwilling to relinquish Ximen Qing and refused to go, but she reached out with both hands to embrace the child, upon which Hua Zixu gave her a shove that knocked her to the ground.

Jolted awake, Ping'er is so shaken that she breaks out in a cold sweat and can only wail and sob until dawn.¹²⁰

Aside from using various techniques to simulate actual dream experience—such as having Li Ping'er fall into dreams unaware, adding touches of confusion, rendering sense perceptions indistinct, and connecting somatic dream-elements to actual bodily movements—the author vivifies Li's feelings of guilt which, added to her sorrow at losing a beloved and valuable boy child and compounding her postpartum physical illness, take her life before long. Intriguing are the successive ghostly dream appearances of Hua Zixu (whose given name could be read "void of

120. Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng, *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 59.14a, 60.2a. Translations modified from Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng, *Plum in the Golden Vase*, 4:474–475, 492.

progeny”) just when Li’s thoughts are most occupied with Guan’ger. Has she been sufficiently stung by Pan Jinlian’s invidious words to indeed suspect that Guan’ger might be her *former* husband’s offspring? Or in any case, does she subconsciously feel that Guan’ger is a child that she somehow owes to Hua Zixu, who died childless in large part because of her duplicity? By tacitly raising these questions and leaving them suspended in the dream state, the Scoffing Scholar effectively expands the reader’s imagination about human emotions under moral duress.

China’s most remarkable exploration, to that point in time, of human anxieties through fictional dreams was enacted not by a human being but by one very special simian. The headstrong, impetuous, flawed aspirant to Buddhist merit, Pilgrim, the Monkey King (Sun Wukong), was extracted from the sixteenth-century novel *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji*) to undergo added trials in the seventeenth-century *Supplement*.¹²¹ The global conceit of the latter is to “supplement” the former by inserting sixteen more chapters between chapters 61 and 62, at which point Pilgrim, theretofore sensually unmovable, has become exposed to sexual desire through his efforts to obtain a magic fan from the human wife of the Bull King. Thus rendered vulnerable, as his pilgrimage companions are napping, he enters into a bewildering matrix of affairs which we learn at the end is a dream induced by his arch nemesis, the monster Qing Fish (Qingyu; homophonous with *qingyu*, “carnal passion”), who aims to distract Pilgrim from protecting his master, the chief pilgrim Tripitaka (Sanzang).

This technique of allowing the subject to slip into dreaming without explicitly cuing the reader, effecting what I like to call a “stealth dream,” is not uncommon in Chinese dream-writing, especially in fiction, as it imparts a touch of subjective realism and augments the reader’s curiosity.¹²² Yet only in the *Supplement* does a stealth dream constitute virtually an entire, multichapter work. Though it is challenging to define normal consciousness in a figure as fantastical as Pilgrim, we begin to sense deviation from his usual air of full confidence and control when he becomes greatly disoriented in time and space, and this sense deepens as he finds ineffectual some of his special powers (such as summoning local deities

121. *Xiyou ji* is attributed to Wu Cheng’en (ca. 1506–ca. 1582). For discussion of *Xiyou ji* and the issue of authorship, see *IC*, 413–418; *CH*, 632–637; Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, chap. 3; and the introduction in A. Yu, *Rereading the Stone*.

122. Note the “stealthy” onset of the wife’s dream in Pu Songling’s story “Gentleman of Fengyang,” as well as Song Jiang’s first dream—of meeting a goddess and receiving divine books—in the Ming novel *Shuihu zhuan* (Y. Wu, “Outlaws’ Dreams of Power,” 47–48). *Journey to the West* itself conventionally employs dreams several times for communication between the living and realms of the dead, the spirits, and the future. The *Supplement* departs from the ur-novel not in using a dream motif but in imbuing that motif with more sophisticated religio-psychological and soteriological significance, while matching the parent work’s entertainment quotient.

and celestial officials), loses some bodily control (for instance, in precipitous falling and inextricable entanglement), and encounters absurdities, illogicalities, and conundrums that stymie even his renowned cleverness. Not only scenes but whole planes and worlds change kaleidoscopically in the polysemy of this work, while unenlightened Pilgrim keeps striving in his usual ways—by trickery, obsessive pursuit, and blunt force—to deal with the obstacles and demons that thwart him. When he is wakened from what turns out to be a dream in the last chapter, a nod is given to the manipulation of temporality in the classic dream stories “Within a Pillow” and “Governor of South Branch”: the midday sun over the peony tree, under which Pilgrim and his companions have been sleeping, has barely moved, his oneiric saga of fourteen chapters having taken place in the communal time of a siesta!

Yet narrative skill in mimicking the dream state and in enhancing the characterization of Pilgrim, developing in him a conscience and generally a much larger subjective dimension, are relatively ancillary factors in the *Supplement's* status as the most significant single item of dream-writing since the Tang. More central are the ways in which emotionality, dreaming, and Buddhist salvifics are combined to perfectly instantiate the pro-dream current in late-Ming Buddhism, addressed above. Indeed, Dong Sizhang and Dong Tuo, *père et fils*, could hardly have been better situated in space, time, dream fascination, and doctrinal orientation to have been impressed by the messages of Hanshan Deqing, Zibo Zhenke, Mizang Daokai, and Cheyong Zhouli—that is, to focus positively on dreams in order to realize that the incessant illusion-making of one's ordinary, samsaric mind, what Buddhism often calls the “mind monkey” (*xinyuan*), must be grounded in a more fundamental consciousness: One Mind, one's own true nature in the Buddha nature.

The prominent Dong lineage had long patronized Buddhism in and around the nexus of Buddhist influences in southern Jiangnan and northern Zhejiang, Nanxunzhen, about equidistant on the main travel routes between the southern centers of activity for Zhenke and Daokai: the Jingshan monastic complex to the west and the temples of Jiaying to the east. When Deqing visited Jingshan in 1616–1617, Dong Sizhang, always avid to meet leading monks, took lay-Buddhist (Skt. *upāsaka*) vows under the great master and received from him not only a new Buddhist name, Zhiguang, but also an instruction to interrogate delusional thoughts “day and night,” realize that *all* are dream-illusions, and thereby come into the light of ultimate wisdom.¹²³ For his part, Dong Tuo, who as a child is said to have read the *Perfect Enlightenment Sutra* even before studying the Neo-Confucian Four Books, was active in literary circles from Hangzhou to Suzhou in 1635–1636, when Cheyong Zhouli visited that region and was able to publish, with donors' support,

123. “Shi Dong Zhiguang,” 499c, in Hanshan Deqing, *Hanshan laoren mengyou ji*, *juan* 6.

his *Dream Talk Synopsis* (*Mengyu zhaiyao*).¹²⁴ Though Dong Tuo destroyed most of his writings three times, his surviving corpus manifests an intimate knowledge of the *Flower Garland Sutra* and interest in both the *Śūrangama Sutra* and Yogācāric ideas.¹²⁵ Moreover, in the collected works of Dong Sizhang, we find not only a poetic appreciation of Yanshou's *Records of the Source-Mirror* but also an account of a dream (1621) in which a monk presented him with a manuscript copy of the climactic "Gandavyūha" (Rufajie pin) section of the *Flower Garland Sutra*, a scripture which Sizhang especially revered.¹²⁶

Thus, it makes sense that, in conceptual structure and symbolism, the *Supplement* should display affinities with the core scriptures of the late-Ming Buddhist filiations that were most instrumental in promoting a soteriology of dreaming: the mainstay Tathāgatarbha text *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*; the *Perfect Enlightenment*, *Śūrangama*, and *Flower Garland Sutras*; and the great work of Chan-Huayan-Yogācāra-Pure Land synthesis around the central bodhisattva path, Yanshou's *Source-Mirror*.¹²⁷

To begin, the most succinct doctrinal foundation of the assertion that "the more one dreams, the more one is awakened" is the second dialogue in the *Perfect Enlightenment Sutra*, in which the great bodhisattva Samantabhadra (Puxian) asks the Buddha, "How can [sentient beings] remedy illusion using illusion?" and the Buddha replies, "By firmly abiding in separation from thought, you also separate from the thought of 'illusion.' As this separation becomes illusion, you again separate from it. You again separate from this separation from separation from illusion, until you reach 'nothing to be separated from,' which is the removal of all illusion."¹²⁸ In the *Supplement*, the monkey Pilgrim dreams just once, but within that single dream

124. See Brandauer, *Tung Yüeh*, 89–90; Zhao Hongjuan, *Ming yimin Dong Tuo*, 44–48, 59–63; Struve, "Alter World," 324–332; Dong Sizhang, "Xiyou bu" *jiaozhu*, 17–18; and Dong Sizhang, *Jingxiao-zhai cancao*, 7.1a–b.

125. Struve, "Alter World," 321–324.

126. Dong Sizhang, *Jingxiao-zhai cancao*, 12.10a, 15a. The "Rufajie pin," as separately translated and independently circulated in 40 *juan*, was often called the "Small Huayan." Sizhang also wrote admiringly in 1610 of a monk from Sichuan who sojourned in the Tai Lake region and spent several years making four copies of the *Flower Garland Sutra* in his own blood (Dong Sizhang, *Jingxiao-zhai yiwen*, 1.1a–3b). Sizhang himself purchased an incomplete Song-period imprint of this sutra and had it supplemented (*Jingxiao-zhai cancao*, appended remembrances, 7a). Under his earlier Buddhist name, Guangshu, Sizhang also was instrumental in publishing Li Zhi's *Huayan jing helun jianyao*.

127. For other discussions of Buddhist concepts and images in *Xiyou bu* which broach some of the points made below, see Brandauer, *Tung Yüeh*, 88–93; Andres, "Chan Symbolism"; Eggert, *Rede vom Traum*, 201–210; and Q. Li, *Fictions of Enlightenment*, 35–45, 95–97.

128. *Dafanguang yuanjue xiuduo-luo liaoyi jing*, 913c25 and 914a12–14; and translation, *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment*, 88, 95.

he is confronted with a series of illusory representatives of his desires for not only sex but power and achievement as well. As he contends with these challengers one after another—always single-handedly, since every individual must ultimately be self-enlightened—a series of avatars of his True Self/Mind present themselves. But Pilgrim, always in some sort of guise, fails to recognize them as such, though he does grow in his sense of justice. In the end, a doppelganger figure, Pilgrim’s “son” King Pāramitā (King of Perfections), totally defeats Pilgrim’s benighted strivings and even beheads the object of his protective desire, Tripitaka, who has given up his pilgrimage to enjoy, first, a lovely woman and then martial honor. Thereupon, a Master of the Void (Xukong Zhuren) wakes Pilgrim by explaining that he has been trapped in the Qing Fish’s dream, and Pilgrim proceeds to finally crush that monster just in time to save Tripitaka from being devoured by it. Thus, by repeatedly dealing with dream illusions, Pilgrim ultimately “separates” himself from the source of those illusions—*qingyu*, desire—and becomes better able to pursue a religious quest with his newfound True Mind, that of the Void.

Second, the *Supplement* indicates from its very beginning that the subject is not a monkey but the “mind monkey,” first by referring to our protagonist as *xinyuan* and then with an argument that erupts between Pilgrim and Tripitaka when they see a peony tree. Pilgrim exclaims, “Master, those peonies are so red!” and Tripitaka responds, “No, they’re not.” In the ensuing give-and-take, Pilgrim asserts that either Tripitaka’s vision is faulty, or, if the peonies are not really red (the color of romance and lust), it must be the bright sun that makes them look so.

When the Elder [Tripitaka] heard Pilgrim suggest sunlight, he decided that his disciple’s thinking was even farther off. “Stupid Ape!” he scolded. “It’s *you* who are red! You talk about peonies, then about sunlight—how you drag on with trivialities.”

Pilgrim said, “You must be joking, Master. All the hair on my body is mottled yellow, my tiger-skin kilt is striped, my monk’s robe is gray. Where do you see red on me?”

Tripitaka then said, “I didn’t mean that your body is red. I meant that your heart/mind is red.”¹²⁹

To any Buddhist of the Tathāgatagarbha persuasion, this should readily bring to mind the mutually more respectful and patient exchange in the first part of the *Śūrangama Sutra* between the Buddha and a young attendant, Ānanda, who, while begging for alms, has succumbed to the charms of a prostitute. At length, Ānanda

129. Dong Sizhang, “*Xiyu bu*” *jiaozhu*, 91–92; Dong Tuo, *Tower of Myriad Mirrors*, 16 (translation modified).

is led to realize that he does not see things with his eyes—nor perceive anything with his sense organs—but rather with his mind. Further, his distinction-making, illusion-generating, conditioned mind, which produces conventional “reality,” is dependent on an underlying, pure and luminous, all-reflective, unchanging consciousness, his True Mind, for any sort of clear seeing.¹³⁰

Third, the central image of the *Supplement*, the “tower of myriad mirrors” into which Pilgrim falls and within which he struggles for most of the novella, easily brings to mind the Great Tower of the Adornments of Vairocana into which Maityreya Buddha escorts the most famous seeker of the bodhisattva way in East Asian Buddhism, Sudhana (Shancai tongzi), near the climax of this boy’s quest in the “Gandavyūha” section of the *Flower Garland Sutra*. Therein, notably, Sudhana felt “it was like someone asleep seeing various things in a dream.”¹³¹ Yet mirrors make up but a small part of this representation of bodhisattva omniscience, and in the *Supplement*, it is Pilgrim’s ignorance that is towering, not any Sudhana-like spiritual attainment.

Rather, in the *Supplement*, the mirror element in Vairocana’s tower from the “Gandavyūha” section has been totalized by using the mirror symbolism from the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, which also is employed in the *Source-Mirror*. That is to say, the mirror represents the dual aspects of One Mind, the Tathāgata-garbha: it shines ever brightly, illuminating all things without discrimination, and it is ever reflective of images whereby it creates our provisional sense of phenomenal existences. Delusion occurs when we become absorbed only in the latter aspect, taking unreal reflections as objective reality, thus losing sight of the integral True Mind, our genuine self (i.e., “true face,” *zhen mianmu*), which simultaneously supports our discriminative cognizing faculty and connects us with the universal Buddha Mind.¹³² This is precisely Pilgrim’s predicament. Seeing the countless mirrors, he looks not with his mind’s Buddha-eye which would see limitless brightness but, out of vanity and impetuous curiosity, only with his mind’s image-making eye, which sees all manner of phenomena, his own cognitions. “Pilgrim thought, ‘This will be fun. Let me reflect a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred million of me.’ He went to start mirroring himself, but instead of his own image, what he saw was that every mirror contained hundreds

130. *Da Foding rulai miyin xiuzheng zhu pusa wanxing shoulengyan jing*, juan 1. For an English translation, see *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, 5–47.

131. *Dafangguang Fo huayan jing*, 78.434c–79.437c, in Cleary, *Entry into the Realm of Reality*, 365–374.

132. See *Dacheng qixin lun*, 576c–577a; *Awakening of Faith*, 42–45; Yongming Yanshou, *Zongjing lu*, 1.416b06–14, 417a20; and Welter, *Yongming Yanshou’s Conception of Chan*, 25, 64. Because only the featureless, luminous aspect of One Mind is acknowledged in the well-known bright mirror of Huineng in *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liuzu dashi fabao tanjing*, 349a), it is a less cogent source of the mirror symbolism of *Xiyou bu*.

of other heavens and earths, suns and moons, mountains and forests. Ignorantly amazed, he could only scan them cursorily.”¹³³

Moreover, because Pilgrim is in the dream state, his cognizing can run amok, largely oblivious to tentative interventions by True Mind avatars, until the last of his illusory scenes—all in vivid color (*se*, connoting lust)—is completely destroyed by the forces of King Pāramitā, the kaleidoscopic black, purple, green, and yellow banners of the contending armies collapsing together in an utterly incomprehensible melee. Pilgrim, reduced to a rage of impotence and exasperation, can then be awakened. Thus, the stubborn dominance of the image-making aspect of the mirror-mind, which becomes especially patent, emotive, and ultimately soluble through dream-sleep, constitutes the core story of the *Supplement*.

Remarkable as dream topoi are in the fictional tales and novels of late Ming and early Qing, their occurrence is actually more frequent in musical plays, which rose from the repertoires of low-class entertainers to become a prized part of intellectual literary performance during that period. In *Strange Stories from the Make-Do Studio*, for instance, about 16 percent of the items involve dreaming in some way,¹³⁴ whereas by the time of that collection’s completion, dream plays had long since shot up to constitute more than one-quarter of all roughly datable plays (see figs. 5 and 6).¹³⁵ Especially likely to employ dreams in their plots were dramas of the *chuanqi* subgenre, which had grown in favor since the mid-fourteenth century and had its golden age between the 1570s and 1630s.¹³⁶ Much longer in numbers of scenes and more varied in musical structure and singing roles than *zaju* (the previously dominant subgenre developed in the Yuan period), Ming *chuanqi* were eminently dream-friendly. Not only did they literally “convey marvels” (*chuan qi*); they also allowed dreams to function at several points, and the consequences of dreams could unfold complexly within each play’s capacious span. Regardless of subgenre, the long-running affinity between notions of “life is but a play” and “life is like a dream,” as well as the common equation of illusion, playacting, and dreams,¹³⁷ made it likely that any marked expansion in theater arts such as occurred in late Ming would be accompanied by some increase in dramaturgic dream expression. Yet specific currents in late-Ming intellectual culture, especially the exaltation of

133. Dong Sizhang, “*Xiyou bu*” *jiaozhu*, 115; Dong Tuo, *Tower of Myriad Mirrors*, 38 (translation modified).

134. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 135; Guo Li, “*Liaozhai zhiyi* jimeng zuopin,” 1.

135. Numbers for both graphs are derived from listings in Liao Tengye, *Zhongguo mengxi yanjiu*, and in Zhuang Yifu, *Gudian xiqu cunmu huikao*. The percentage for Yuan *zaju* closely corresponds with the numbers cited in Liu Shusheng and Qiu Bi’ao, “Lun Yuan zaju zuopin zhong de meng,” 70.

136. For synoptic essays on Ming-Qing drama, see *IC*, 19–27; and *CH*, 823–843.

137. Liao Tengye, *Zhongguo mengxi yanjiu*, 12–17.

emotions by certain influential literati and the promotion of dreaming by certain influential Buddhist monks, generated an extraordinary number of dream plays from that time through the very early Qing period.¹³⁸

The increased engagement of not just literati but *glitterati* in writing, critiquing, and staging plays—the latter more often in opulent scholar-official residences than in public venues, using hired or home-trained troupes of actors—brought greater sophistication to the art in both thematic conceptualization and the lyrical quality of the arias that most movingly expressed the emotions and psychological depth of the lead characters. And, amidst the much-studied publishing boom of late Ming, this intellectualization also led to the more frequent consumption of plays as fine reading matter rather than as live performances.¹³⁹ Yet regardless of the medium, avid absorption of elite ladies and gentlemen in make-believe characters entailed controversy over proprieties, especially since romance, the demimonde, and non-Confucian beliefs were prime subject areas in late-Ming literati drama. Further, misgivings about the probity of expending one's energies on creating illusions, and wasting one's social capital on actors and spectators who mutually thrived on the performance of falseness, paralleled and intersected with issues of historical truth versus subjective truth in the arena of literati fiction.¹⁴⁰ Sophie Volpp, in her study of “theatricality” in seventeenth-century China, succinctly outlines two contemporaneous modes of justification for participating in drama circles during that period:

In the first, theatrical roles are likened to social roles, and theatrical spectatorship becomes the training ground for the recognition of social imposture and inauthenticity. . . . [T]he goal is not to participate in illusion, but to discount it. The theater then becomes a figure for the disjunction of appearance and actuality. . . .

In the second and more profound understanding . . . , the stage becomes a space that allows the spectator to apprehend the illusory nature of all forms. Reading drama, viewing theater, and fraternizing with actors train the social spectator to enter the spectacle and immerse himself in it, to engage with illusion even while understanding it to be such. The most refined spectator . . . has a capacity for simultaneously impassioned and dispassionate observation and moves headlong into the tangle of illusion and disillusion. In this understanding of theater and theatricality, only the vulgar seek to distinguish between illusion and reality.¹⁴¹

138. For mention and brief discussion of dozens of Ming and early-Qing plays in the major categories of romance and religious awakening, see *ibid.*, 72–76, 79–82. For broader treatment of these categories in plays from Yuan through Qing, see *ibid.*, chap. 4 and chap. 6, pts. 1–3.

139. See Carlitz, “Printing as Performance.” On the late-Ming middlebrow appetite for sometimes hastily produced drama miscellanies, see He Yuming, *Home and the World*, chap. 2.

140. See Wang Ailing, *Wan-Ming Qingchu xiqu*, 179–205.

141. Volpp, *Worldly Stage*, 8–9.

There is an important homology between these two positions and the two basic attitudes toward dreaming in late-Ming Buddhism discussed above. The more standard one, corresponding with the spectator's recognition of inauthenticity, regards dreams as detritus, as metaphoric of the benighted state that precedes one's "awakening" to a truer state of consciousness. The newer emphasis, corresponding with the spectator's engagement with illusion, takes the dream state as an immersive medium, the cognitions of which demonstrate the independence of mind from sense matter, and the exaggerations of which heighten one's awareness of the mind's illusion-making proclivity, whether in sleep or awake. So it is not coincidental, nor simply a figment of the creedal environment, but rather by conceptual parallel that several notable dream plays of the late Ming—such as *Dream of a Peach* (*Yingtao meng*) by Chen Yujiao (1544–1610) and *Bamboo-Leaf Boat* (*Zhuye zhou*) by Bi Wei (b. 1622?)—bring Buddhic-Daoist awakening to their protagonists through dream illusions.¹⁴² Such plays often hark back to the Tang-period tales "Within a Pillow" and "Governor of South Branch" but exhibit stronger portrayals of the dreamers' emotions and relate those to clearer, more fulfilling paths of spiritual release.

The best example of a Buddhist dream-deliverance play in late Ming is the *Story of South Branch* (*Nanke ji*), published in 1600 by the most outstanding playwright in an era outstanding for its plays, Tang Xianzu (1550–1616), who took an extended leave of absence from a rocky bureaucratic career in 1597.¹⁴³ In 1591, when the emperor had chided officialdom for its reticence in pointing out failures in current governance, Tang, as a mere secretary in the Nanjing Ministry of Rites, had (boldly or naively) memorialized, laying blame for the atmosphere of intimidation on then-ascendant Chief Grand Secretary Shen Shixing (1535–1614) and his faction. Rewarded for this with drastic demotion to a minor post at the most southerly point of mainland Guangdong Province, Tang, ill and resting at home en route to his place of quasi-exile, had a nightmare which seems to have catalyzed an enduring interest in dreaming, as amply evidenced in his collected works.¹⁴⁴ Intriguing as Tang's personal dream-jottings may be, however, they are greatly superseded in cultural significance by his use of dream conceits to compose *chuanqi* dramas.

Story of South Branch is the third in a much-celebrated series of four plays Tang wrote between the late 1580s and 1605, and it embodies a significant change in the outlook on love and life that had been expressed in Tang's second play,

142. For information on these playwrights, see *Guben xiqu jumu tiyao*, 273; for summaries of the plays, see *ibid.*, 462.

143. On Tang and his oeuvre, see *IC*, 751–754; *Zhongguo gudai xiqujia*, 383–399; H. Chang, *Chinese Literature*, 263–272; and Xu Shuofang, *Tang Xianzu pingzhuan*.

144. Xu Shuofang, *Tang Xianzu pingzhuan*, 73–76; Wang Yongjian, *Tang Xianzu yu Ming-Qing chuanqi*, 26–28. For the nightmare, see Tang Xianzu, *Tang Xianzu ji*, 1:385. On Shen Shixing, see *DMB*, 2:1187–1190.

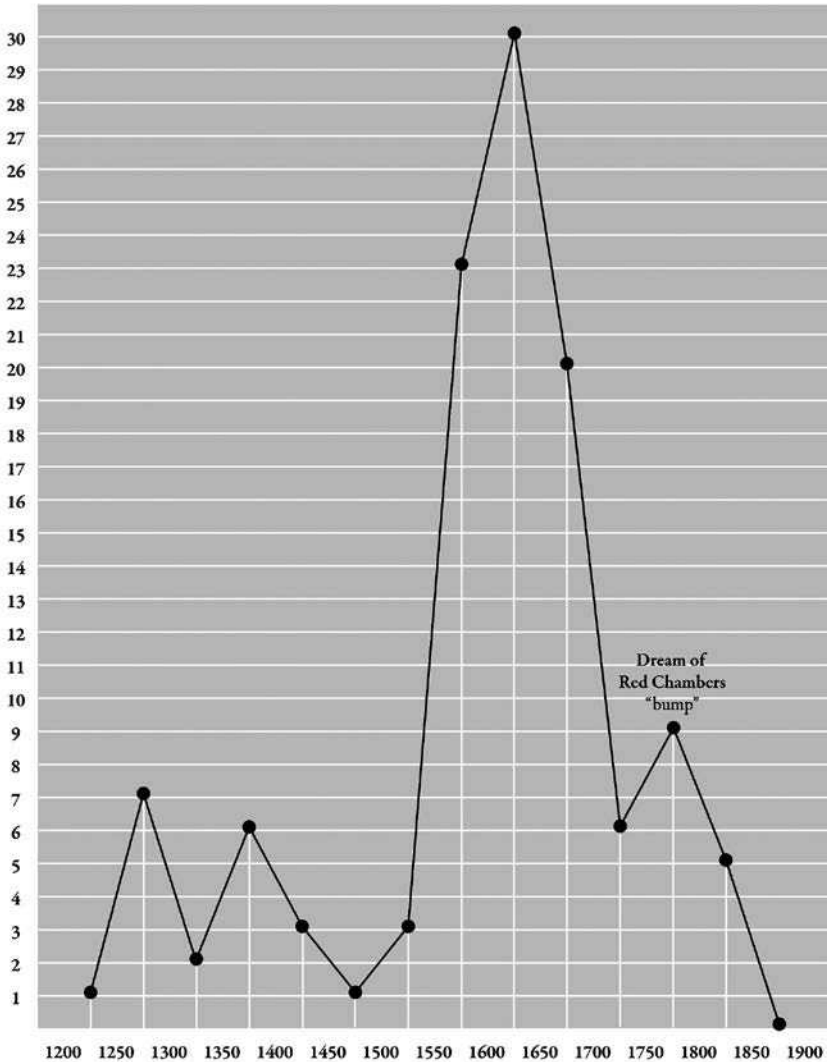


FIGURE 5. Numbers of extant roughly datable “dream plays,” Yuan through Qing. The increase in popularity of dream motifs in plays written in China from the late sixteenth through the late seventeenth century is eye-popping. Also interesting, a few plays that reference the novel *Dream of Red Chambers* in the interval 1750–1800 interrupt only slightly and briefly the sharp decline of interest in dream-dramas during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

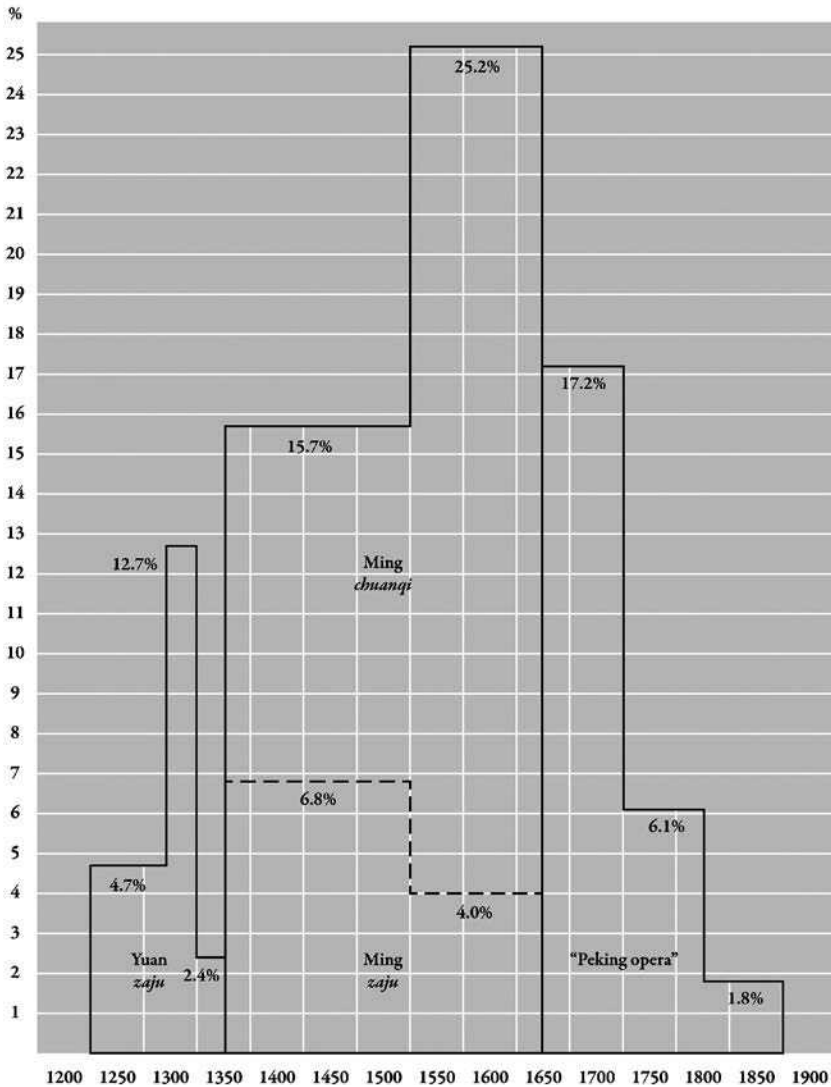


FIGURE 6. Roughly datable “dream plays” as percentages of all roughly datable plays, Yuan through Qing. The relative frequency of dream elements in the *chuanqi* subgenre of Chinese drama is easy to see in the center of the graph (keeping in mind that many late-Ming plays called *zaju* were actually in a new style that combined elements of *zaju* and *chuanqi*).

his masterpiece and the most noted drama of the Ming-Qing era, *Peony Pavilion* (*Mudanting*; aka *Soul's Return* [*Huanhun ji*]). This work, completed in the winter of 1597–1598,¹⁴⁵ is justly famed as emblematic of the primacy of emotion (*qíng*) vis-à-vis rational principles (*lǐ*), a position espoused by Tang's friends and mentors in the Gong'an School of literary expression and the Taizhou School of Neo-Confucianism.¹⁴⁶ In that controversial play, which caused a sensation especially in female audiences (both viewers and readers) well into the eighteenth century,¹⁴⁷ dreams are essential to the young female and male protagonists' shared initiation to obsessive erotic love, with passions so intense as to overcome not only the force of reasoned authority in society but even the barrier between life and death. Tang's preface to *Peony Pavilion* is often quoted as a virtual manifesto of the contemporaneous "cult of *qíng*":

We know not from whence desire arises, but it deepens as it ensues. The living may die of it, and having died may [by desire] return to life. The living who cannot die for it, and the dead who cannot be reborn by it, they have not [known] desire at its fullest. And must the desires in dreams necessarily be unreal? For the world hardly lacks people [whose reality is, indeed,] in dreams. . . . Alas, affairs of the human social sphere cannot entirely be explained within that sphere. . . . [Those who] only say that something is absolutely not rational, how can they understand that it must be [a matter of] desire?¹⁴⁸

Certainly in the latter three of Tang Xianzu's four dramas, his formula "from emotions make dreams, and from dreams make plays" was operative.¹⁴⁹ But midway in the series, his valuation of emotion changed, and the function of dreaming changed concomitantly, from allowing the fullest experience of emotions in order to achieve true love in an adverse society, to allowing the fullest experience of emotions in order to reject them as hindrances to spiritual release. The *Story of South Branch*, coming forth at a point when Tang had grown more conscious of mortality, is the first dramaturgical evidence of this change in his outlook.

145. Zheng Run, "Mudanting zuonian zhiyi."

146. On the broad and varied yet profound senses of *qíng* in Tang Xianzu's thought and dramas, see Ye Changhai, "Liwu qingyou shuo Tang weng"; Zou Yuanjiang, *Tang Xianzu de qing yu meng*, chap. 5; and Wang Ailing, *Wan-Ming Qingchu xiqu*, 56–69. The idea for *Mudanting* came from a Ming-period semivernacular story titled alternatively "Du Liniang muse huanhun" and "Du Liniang ji."

147. See Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, chap. 2. For an English translation of *Mudanting*, see Tang, *Peony Pavilion*.

148. *Tang Xianzu ji*, 2:1093. For a fuller translation, see W. Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 50–51.

149. This "formula" is stated succinctly in "Fu Gan Yilu," in *Tang Xianzu ji*, 2:1367.

The play is derived largely from the Tang-period tale “Governor of South Branch,” yet it departs from that source in two notable ways. First, it greatly expands the role of the monk Qixuan, making him a formidable figure. It is Qixuan who identifies Chunyu Fen as prime material for Buddhist enlightenment, and who devises a plan to make that enlightenment instrumental in the karmically dictated deliverance, also, of the ants in the sophora-tree colony, their Buddhist devotion over hundreds of years having earned them release from samsara. Moreover, unlike in “Governor of South Branch,” Chunyu does not dismiss life’s tribulations born of desires as insignificant—mere ants in a mere dream. Rather, as in *Peony Pavilion*, memories of love from the dream state propel intense feelings after Chunyu wakes. He yearns to see his loved ones again, even knowing they are ants, and he clings especially painfully to the princess as she ascends to Buddha heaven with the others—until Qixuan cleaves them apart with his Chan sword (which cuts off craving). Unlike in *Peony Pavilion*, the climactic scene of *Story of South Branch* does not provide comic resolution in a great, happy reunion of the sympathetic characters (as was conventional in *chuanqi* plays). Chunyu, though he has woken from an afternoon’s dream, has not yet woken from the big dream that is life itself. This comes with Qixuan’s sword stroke:

CHUNYU: Only now have I [truly] awakened. In life, rulers, officials, their families—how are they distinct from the ants? All hardship and happiness, rise and decline differ not from [those of] South Branch: they are equally of the dream-sphere. From where can [anyone] ascend to [an illusory] heaven? All along I’ve been a muddled fool. . . .

QIXUAN: What’s next for you?

CHUNYU: What’s next for me? To seek sentient form would be in vain; to seek celestial form would be in vain. Even seeking Buddha form would be in vain. Everything has become empty!

QIXUAN: *What is emptied?*¹⁵⁰

Thusly does Qixuan complete the Chan enlightenment progression by “emptying emptiness.”

Just after finishing *Peony Pavilion* and before writing *Story of South Branch* in 1600, Tang Xianzu had his last, most serious encounters with a great old friend, the eminent monk Zibo Zhenke, who had long seen in Tang’s genius sufficient potential to take the bodhisattva path. As discussed above, Zhenke was a key Buddhist figure in advocating dreams as a medium for heightening awareness of false cognition and its emotional aspect. From Zhenke’s perspective, Tang, having mastered the portrayal of emotions

150. *Nanke ji*, act 44, in Tang Xianzu, *Tang Xianzu ji*, 4:2274–2275. For further discussion, see W. Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 64–69.

in dreams, had yet to fundamentally recognize their unreality. During one interval of separation, Zhenke sent a long letter to Tang, emphasizing the need to distance himself from emotions in order to let his true self appear: “To obscure one’s nature by giving rein to passions is called slighting the Way [of True Mind],” he warned.¹⁵¹ The impression this message made on Tang is evident in a subsequent dream, in which a bedside dalliance with a comely maidservant is interrupted by receipt of a missive from Zhenke reminding him that “emptiness holds truth, while the depths of passion are bottomless.” Waking, Tang reflected that, at fifty *sui*, his realizations had been shallow, falling short of a “great awakening.”¹⁵² In this frame of mind, he wrote the *Story of South Branch*.

Yet Tang himself never was able to emulate Chunyu Fen’s epiphany. Conscious that, as an inveterately emotion-driven writer, he could not fulfill Zhenke’s hopes, Tang could only beg his spiritual mentor to take pity on him.¹⁵³ One year after writing *Story of South Branch*, Tang completed the last of his plays, *On Handan Road*, based on “Within a Pillow.” In this play, Old Man Lü is specifically identified as the Daoist transcendent Lü Dongbin, who is in search of a mortal to recruit for menial duties on one of the fairy islands when he encounters the dejected Student Lu. As in the Tang-period story, Lu wakes from the pillow-dream to realize the vanity of worldly pursuits. But unlike in that story, the play has Lu transported to his new, endless life of enjoyment among fairy immortals, thus raising the question of whether he has wakened from one dream, that of striving for success in mortal life, but not from the encompassing dream of an infinite, sensually gratifying, trouble-free existence. Lu himself wonders about this ambiguity, half saying and half singing, “Old master, your foolish and ignorant disciple still fears that this encounter with transcendents also is a dream. Though earlier I was awakened from delusions, I still fear that what’s true is hard to discern.” Thereupon a paradisiacal chorus both reproves and reassures him: “Why are you just racking your spirit, making yourself a ‘fool who cannot distinguish a dream-story [from reality]’? After all, dreams of roaming with transcendents are sure.”¹⁵⁴ The play ends without defending this dubious claim.

151. Zibo Zhenke, *Zibo zunzhe quanji*, 23.345c23. See also Xu Shuofang, *Tang Xianzu pingzhuan*, 162–165.

152. “Mengjue pian,” in Tang Xianzu, *Tang Xianzu ji*, 1:534–535.

153. See “Jiangzhong jianyue huai Da gong,” in Tang Xianzu, *Tang Xianzu ji*, 1:531; and “Ji Dagan shu,” in *ibid.*, 2:1268. Zou Yuanjiang argues, rather, that Tang ultimately rejected Zhenke’s view of *qing* on valid religio-philosophical grounds. See his study of Zhenke’s Buddhist thought vis-à-vis Tang Xianzu in *Tang Xianzu de qing yu meng*, 231–244.

154. *Handan ji*, act 30, in Tang Xianzu, *Tang Xianzu ji*, 4:2431. For further discussion, see W. Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 69–72. The words “a fool who cannot distinguish a dream-story [from reality]” allude to a common saying, thought to originate with the monk Huihong (1070–1128), that one should not talk nonsense to foolish people because they might believe it, taking the unreal to be real.

Tang Xianzu, having been formally dismissed from office in 1601, may have written *On Handan Road* for extra income or with particular zest for political satire.¹⁵⁵ But in view of Tang's spiritual struggle of those years, it may not be far-fetched to view the *Story of South Branch* as his homage to Zhenke's goal for him and *On Handan Road* as his acknowledgment that he must settle for something short of that goal: to simply go on dreaming the "big dream," albeit in an elevated state of mind. In any case, Tang, in both his dream-jottings and his dream plays, presents an excellent example of an influential writer who was deeply affected by two major factors in late-Ming intellectual dream culture, the emphasis on experiencing and expressing pure, strong emotions, and Buddho-Daoist encouragements to interrogate truth and selfhood through dreams.

Picturing

Two trends in literati writing discussed above, that is, increasingly subjective forms of self-writing and the penning of plays that were mainly meant to be read in fine editions, opened up notable spaces for the visual representation of dreams: illustrations in pictorial autobiographies and woodblock scenes in published dream plays.¹⁵⁶ Both underwent significant development in late Ming and early Qing, while the ambient discourse of dreaming had a less eye-catching but significant effect on literati painting, as well.

In Chinese civilization, the practice of illustrating the lives of prominent individuals with scenes from important occasions or milestones in their official careers dates back to tomb murals of the Latter Han period. Such paintings (*huanji tu*), when executed on silk or paper, were much more perishable, the earliest extant example dating to middle Ming, and the earliest ones known to have been created by the living autobiographical subject himself are of the late sixteenth century.¹⁵⁷ Outstanding in this fragmentary evolution of the pictorial autobiography—for its size, completeness, visual detail, and representation of not only official occasions but also some highly personal events—is an album of twenty-six commissioned paintings, accompanied by narrative poems with long, explanatory prefaces and

155. On the sociopolitical sarcasm in *Handan ji*, see Zeng Xianping, "Lun *Handan meng*," 350–365. On Tang's frame of mind, see Xu Shuofang, *Tang Xianzu pingzhuan*, 182. In "Fu Gan Yilu," Tang claims, perhaps merely in self-deprecation, that he wrote both *Nanke ji* and *Handan ji* only for the money (*Tang Xianzu ji*, 2:1367).

156. On the latter, see Hsiao, *Eternal Present of the Past*, introduction and chap. 1; and Carlitz, "Printing as Performance," 276–281, 287.

157. Regarding the latter, in addition to the example by Xu Xianqing, discussed here, we have the unfortunately fragmentary *huanji tu* of Zhang Han (1510–1593). See Yang Lili, "Yiwei Mingdai Hanlin guanyuan," 63–64.

spanning the years 1537 to 1587, by a little-known court official named Xu Xianqing (1537–1602). Xu, who closely served two successive emperors in ritual and literary capacities, apparently directed two court painters to fashion these scenes from his life in 1588, at a point when, at fifty-two *sui*, he felt fulfilled after having recently been promoted to junior vice minister of rites. This was one year before another promotion, to the politically more sensitive position of junior vice minister of personnel, brought a barrage of censorial accusations upon him. Generously allowed to retire, he returned in 1589 to his home in Suzhou.¹⁵⁸

Pertinent here are two paintings of dreams or dreamlike experiences undergone by Xu at times when he was in mortal peril from a malady that led him to consult many doctors from early adulthood onward. Xu is remarkably frank about this physical problem, chronic inguinal hernias, which apparently developed downward into his scrotum, since he complains of effects on both testicles. This made waste elimination painful at best, or impossible at worst, and thus could become life-threatening. Also worrisome for a Confucian gentleman like Xu, who at forty-four *sui* had married off his only child, a daughter, was that the hernias prevented sexual intercourse. Thus, he was in danger of dying without a male heir and thereby committing a great violation of Confucian injunction.¹⁵⁹

The fifteenth painting in this album, *Sagely Help for My Malady* (*Shengyou jijì*), depicts a dream Xu had in 1581 when his condition had become so severe that he was tearfully expecting to join his parents in the vale of the dead. According to Xu's narration, in the dream he found himself completely naked at the entrance to the shrine at Confucius's tomb site, within which he could see a glow on the altar (suggesting the presence of the Sage's spirit). Suddenly a voice announced the arrival of the current lineal descendant of Confucius (since Song times titled Duke Who Propagates the Sage's [Lineage] [*Yansheng gong*]), who had come to perform ritual sacrifices. Thereupon, Xu sent regrets that he was not properly clothed to meet the duke and hastened away from the shrine. Soon he was approached by two women-in-waiting from inside the shrine who presented him with boxes of cooked food (apparently from the sacrificial offerings), one containing auspicious deer meat, which Xu allowed himself to be fed from, even though he had long lacked any appetite.

Eating and thinking of how the savory taste filled my mouth and how my saliva poured forth, I awoke with the flavor still in my mouth. I then chided myself for having this dream [of eating] as I waited to see my parents' spirits and follow after them. [And I thought,] could it be that I'm not yet supposed to die? When

158. For correlation of the scant information on Xu's bureaucratic career and personal life with the successive paintings in the folio, see Zhu Hong, "Xu Xianqing *huanji tu yanjiu*," 48–55.

159. For discussion and transcription of the texts, see *ibid.*, 60–63.

daylight arrived, hurrying into my study, I dribbled urine all over the floor, and it smelled unusually rank. Checking the afflicted place, I saw that the [bulge] had broken and no longer protruded from the hole where the medication had been applied. The pain then stopped, over one or two days urine poured out, and the hernia abated.

Aside from such astonishingly candid language in the text of a basically self-commemorative project, interesting here is the infantile condition Xu assumes in this dream, as waking thoughts of rejoining his parents without having perpetuated the patriline lead to dream-thoughts of the patrilineal descendant of Confucius arranging to have him babied back to health and potency.

This spiritual intervention cured only the left-side hernia, however; Xu continued to have the same problem in the right side of his groin. In 1585, he again lay incapacitated after a doctor's treatment had broken the protrusion but also induced fever chills. Though it was the hot sixth month of the year, Xu could not get warm. Wrapped in both a quilt and a fur-lined garment, his sick room completely shuttered, he had not taken any food or water in four days and lay semiconscious, near death. But, Xu writes, at dusk on the eighth of the month, "I suddenly heard a loud sound like talking and laughing, which came gradually from the courtyard toward my room's window. On my bed, startled, I said [to myself], 'This is what I sound like! Could it be that my aerial soul, having gone out, has come back?' Then I threw off the quilt, opened the [bed]curtains, and felt relieved and refreshed. The next day I again had an appetite for gruel, and after a month I returned to my duties at the National University."

This experience is depicted in the twenty-second painting in Xu's album, *Arising Again upon the Return of My Soul* (*Xuanhun zaiqi*; fig. 7).¹⁶⁰ Whether the sound Xu heard was a dream or a feverish hallucination, he clearly subscribes to the idea of an aerial soul that can leave one's immobile body and then either return, restoring one's animation and conscious clarity (as in waking from sleep or recovering consciousness after illness or injury), or depart permanently (as in death). The representation here of the *hun* as a diaphanous entity like a homunculus, while extremely rare in Chinese visual arts, is compatible with the anthropo-sensate behavior of *hun* that we find in ubiquitous written references to it.

There are just a few such intimate scenes in Xu Xianqing's album, the genre of pictorial autobiography having originated in commemoration of men's official careers. But the trend going forward was to include larger percentages of non-official events and occasions. And the survivability of the illustrations was enhanced when the original paintings were simulated in woodblock prints for publication,

160. *Ibid.*, 64–65.

often with the subjects' collected writings. This was the case with another native of Suzhou, You Tong (1618–1704), born sixteen years after Xu Xianqing's death.¹⁶¹

In his late seventies, with the tribulations of the Ming–Qing transition a distant memory, his renown as a writer well established, and his Daoist inclinations having grown during his retirement from Qing official service, You set to work on compiling his own self-congratulatory *nianpu*. To accompany this, he commissioned sixteen paintings of scenes from his life, for which he wrote poetic captions. The resulting *Pictures and Poems [for My] Annalistic Autobiography (Nianpu tushi)*, prefaced 1694, gives relative weight to non-official affairs and amply demonstrates You's attraction to the idea of envisioning, or wafting among, Daoist transcendents. The sixteen commissioned scenes-plus-poems are followed by four additional pictures of You at leisure, three from occasions in 1664, 1670, and 1695, each naming the artist and followed by poetic appreciations written by You himself and a dozen or so other literary stars of his day. The fourth is a picture titled *Pictorial Dream of an Excursion to the Three Isles [of the Immortals] (Meng you Sanshan tu)*, dated 1696 and depicting You in the center of an idyllic landscape surrounded by five of the greatest writers in Daoist literary history, each in an iconic pose: Zhuang Zhou, Dongfang Shuo (ca. 160–93 BCE), Tao Qian (365–427 CE), Li Bai, and Su Shi. We learn from You's note that a painter-friend had presented him with this (flattering) work, which he playfully repaid with a narrative poem. Therein You imagines the thrill of “taking a *hun*-dream as his vehicle and, with his whole spirit, rising in a flash to those peaks,” although in this self-deprecating, written version of the dream, the five luminaries, finding such a crude writer as You in their midst, do not abide him, and he wakes up back in his own garden.¹⁶²

Because both the texts and the pictures were published in You Tong's oeuvre, they became well known and may have inspired later creators of pictorial autobiographies such as Hong Liangji (1746–1809) and the Manchu Bannerman Wanggiyan Lincing (1791–1846). In the changed episteme of middle Qing, however, the first of these later exemplars contains no dream item, and the second has but 1 out of 240—a predictive dream from Lincing's youth.¹⁶³

By far, the most numerous depictions of dreams and dreamers during the late Ming and early Qing were illustrations in woodblock editions of the many plays and works of prose fiction that included dream episodes. In the case of paintings,

161. Briefly on You Tong, see *ECCP*, 2:935–936. For modern biographies that discuss his literary profile, especially as a playwright, see Xu Kun, *You Tong yanjiu*; and *Zhongguo gudai xiqujia*, 544–547.

162. See *Nianpu tushi* and *Xiaojing tuzan*, in You Tong, *Xitang yuji*, esp. 650–651.

163. De Weerd (“Places of the Self”) compares You Tong's pictorial autobiography with that of Hong Liangji, the pictures for which have not survived. I am indebted to De Weerd for the term “pictorial autobiography.” For an English translation of Lincing's “Ciyun xunmeng” from his *Hongxue yinyuan tuji* (1:38–40), see Linqing, “Tracks in the Snow,” 128–131.

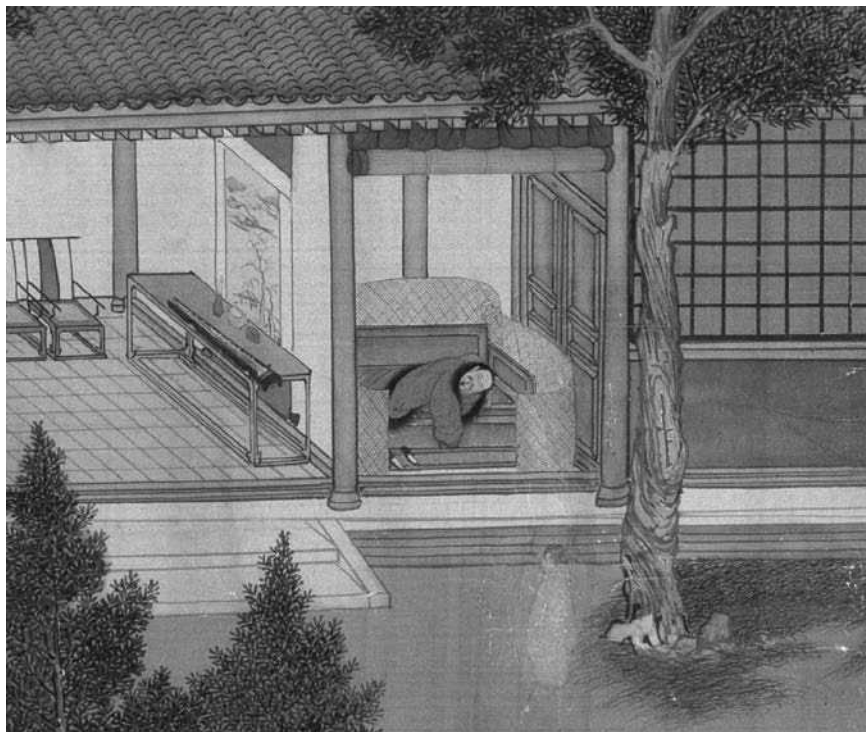


FIGURE 7. Detail from *Arising Again upon the Return of My Soul*, one painting in the *Illustrated Achievements in Office of Xu Xianqing* (*Xu Xianqing huanji tu*). The exterior blind of Xu Xianqing's bedchamber is raised to show him lying asleep, wrapped warmly against fever chills. A nearly transparent, small human form is traversing the courtyard toward a faintly drawn funnel that connects to Xu's head. Provided by the Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph by Feng Hui.

artists generally achieved atmospherics that served to visually distinguish dreamer from dream content (if both were presented in the same visual field) through the use of washes and translucent billows. Though a painter might use lines for this purpose, lineal techniques are much more common and distinct in woodblock prints, for which almost everything had to be effected with fine lines. Sometimes the woodblock artist would simply frame the dream without the dreamer or would place the dreamed-of object in an area proximate to the dreamer, in both such cases assuming that viewers' familiarity with the play would enable them to interpret the illustration. But far more common are two separator techniques: swirls representing clusters of cloud or smoke (used most often when the protagonist sees one or more spiritual entities—in some sense veritable—such as gods, ghosts, immortals, or bodhisattvas) and large balloons emerging from the dreamer's head

or sleep location (usually employed when the dream content is understood to be imaginary).¹⁶⁴

The balloon technique had been a staple of woodblock illustration since the dawn of illustrated drama and fiction in the Yuan period.¹⁶⁵ Notable, however, in the very late Ming was a change in this technique, corresponding with the ambient view that, from the perspective of individual mentality and consciousness, dreams are just as real, or even more real, than waking reality. Wholly consistent until this time had been elaborate detailing of the dreamer's actual surroundings but placement only of key dream figures within the mostly empty balloon. Starting in the last Ming reign, however, we begin to see a reversal of this convention, by which the surroundings of the dreamer are merely sketched and the dream content is rendered in thick contrast, to convey a sense of the dreamer's subjective absorption in his or her non-waking reality. Presented here to exemplify the appearance of this permutation are two illustrations of the "Alarming Dream" (Jingmeng) scene from two of many editions and variants of the perennially popular, much annotated, and lavishly published play *Story of the Western Wing* (*Xixiang ji*).¹⁶⁶ In this scene, Student Zhang (Zhang Junrui), having parted tearfully from his paramour, Oriole (Cui Yingying), at the remote monastery where they met, has stopped for the night at Grass Bridge Inn along with his servant boy. After bedding down, he dreams that Oriole, overcome by longing, has surreptitiously left her mother and maidservant and, through harrowing conditions, has come on foot in search of him. In different versions of this scene, Zhang is or is not able to protect Oriole from crude soldiers who confront her for being out and about at night. In any case, Zhang wakes to disappointment that Oriole has not actually arrived, and to even deeper worry about her.

The illustration in figure 8, from a 1610 edition of the play, depicts this dream scene in the traditional way, with the dreamer's surroundings rendered in fine detail and select figures from the dream placed in a largely empty balloon, which expands outward from Student Zhang's head.¹⁶⁷ The print in figure 9, in sharp contrast, is

164. For brief discussions of Chinese woodblock techniques for representing supernatural and dream phenomena, see Zhuo Songsheng, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 512–528; and Huang Cailang, "Mingdai banke tuxiang," 286–289.

165. For some Yuan-period examples, see *Guben xiaoshuo banhua tulu*, 1:28, 32.

166. Derived from a Tang-period story, *Xixiang ji* is attributed to the Yuan-period playwright Wang Shifu (dates unknown). See Wang Shifu, *Moon and the Zither*, introduction; and Siebert, *Theaters of Desire*, chap. 3. At least forty distinct editions of *Xixiang ji* were published during the Ming alone, all but one or two of those between 1579 and 1644 (see Jiang Xingyu, "Xixiang ji" *de wenxian*, 16–19). On late-Ming illustrations inspired by *Xixiang ji*, see Wu Hung, *Double Screen*, 243–259.

167. Illustration from *Wang-Li heping bei Xixiang ji*, the Northern(-style) *Xixiang ji* with critical comments by Wang Shizhen and Li Zhi, Wulin Qifeng edition, with woodblock illustrations by the famous carver Huang Yikai. Manually enhanced from a reproduction in *Guben xiqu*

from a 1639 edition of the play—an illustration by the famous artist Chen Hongshou (1599–1652), who is best known for his figure paintings but who also dabbled in woodblock illustration.¹⁶⁸ Chen's affinity with ironic perspectives and unusual juxtapositions made him a natural for introducing this pictorial reversal of view on the reality of dreams. He may well be the pioneer, since a dream illustration taking the same approach for the late-Ming erotic novel *Gold Vase Plum*, in an edition often ascribed to the Chongzhen reign period (1628–1644), has been reassigned to no earlier than 1658.¹⁶⁹ In any case, this innovation in dream-picturing, so expressive of late-Ming intellectuals' heightened sense of the encompassing psychological world of dream content, seems, indeed, to have occurred just before the end of the dynasty.

Artists illustrated many dream scenes in printed short stories, novellas, and plays in part because such scenes were so numerous in fictional works of the period, and also because there were well-established conventions, as noted above, for the woodblock depiction of ideational content. The case is quite different, however, in the realm of literati painting (*wenren hua*), in which landscapes traditionally dominated. While viewers of monumental landscapes, especially, never tired of spiritually inhabiting those bracing or tranquil vistas, and our champion dream-writer of the seventeenth century, Dong Tuo, once dreamed of striding into an inviting landscape painting,¹⁷⁰ scenes personally envisioned in dreams are extremely rare in the oeuvres of literati artists. Indeed, we lack firm evidence that such works existed before the seventeenth century.¹⁷¹ Appearing then within a seventy-eight-year interval (among works that survived to be studied in modern times) are no less than five that purport to depict the painter's own dreamscape: *Streams and Mountains Enter My Dreams* (1623), by Li

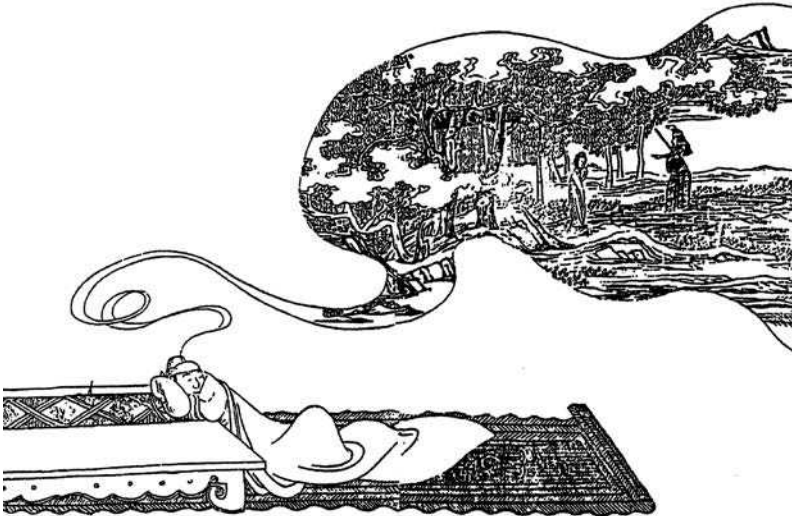
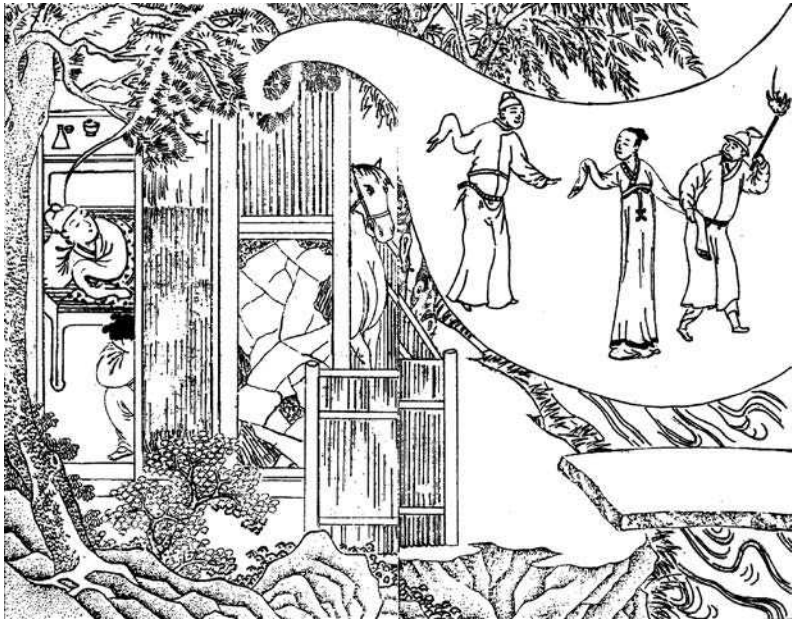
banhua tulu, 3:30–31. For the dating of this edition to 1610 and discussion of Huang Yikai, see Jiang Xingyu, “Xixiang ji” *de wenxian*, 16, 565–567. See also Dong Jie, *Ming-Qing kan “Xixiang ji” banhua kaoxi*, 46–47.

168. This illustration, from *Zhang Shenzhi zheng bei Xixiang ji miben*, has been reproduced many times. See, for instance, *Guben xiqu banhua tulu*, 4:298–299. For discussion, see Xu Wenmei, “Shenqing yumen de nüxing”; Bentley, *Figurative Works of Chen Hongshou*, 53–62; and J. Cahill, *Distant Mountains*, 249–250. The distinctiveness of Chen's visual treatment of dream content has been noted in W. Li, “Dream Visions of Transcendence,” 73; and Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 137.

169. Referred to here is an illustration of the scene “Li Ping'er He jia tuomeng” in chap. 71 of *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jin Ping Mei*, for which several well-known woodblock carvers from Huizhou produced the two hundred illustrations. See Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng, *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jin Ping Mei*, 2:974–975, 980–981; and Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng, *Plum in the Golden Vase*, 4:322–324. On the dating of this edition to 1658 or later, see Liu Hui, *Jin Ping Mei chengshu yu banben*, 91.

170. “Zouru huatu,” in Dong Tuo, *Zhaoyang mengshi*, 1b–2a.

171. This excludes dream visions heard or read about, as well as “reclining journeys” (*woyou*) of the imagination, which are consciously directed exercises of the mind, not actual dreams.



FIGURES 8 and 9. Woodblock illustrations from different editions of *Story of the Western Wing*. In the 1610 illustration (above), Student Zhang is pictured to the left, asleep inside the inn, with his servant boy dozing below his bed and his horse tethered outside. His dream of being unable to save Oriole from being detained by a soldier is depicted in the otherwise empty balloon to the right. In the 1639 illustration by Chen Hongshou (below), Student Zhang lies asleep in the inn, reclining against a bed frame. His anxious dream of Oriole in the wilds, being confronted by a military commander, completely fills the balloon to the right.

Rihua; *Five Pines* (1629), by Xiang Shengmo (1597–1658); *Pictured Dream Sphere* (1656), by Wang Jian (1609–1677); *Village on a Mountainous Lakeshore*, one leaf in a ten-work collection, *Landscape Folio of 1671*, by Gong Xian (1619–1689); and *Dream Visit to Qiufeng's Thatched Hut* (1701), by Shitao (Zhu Ruoji; 1642–1707).

Remarkably, none of these works differs appreciably from the usual style of the given painter in the respective period of his career. The Li Rihua scroll, perhaps a reverie rather than a dream, was executed when the artist was in Beijing and yearning for his preferred southern scenes. The work concerns itself primarily with executing painterly, calligraphic, and poetic allusions to past models.¹⁷² Xiang Shengmo was a protégé, close friend, and marital relative of Li Rihua and Li's son, Zhaoheng. In his inscription to *Five Pines*, Xiang writes that he dreamed of sitting convivially with Rihua on a broad, arboreal terrace at the Li home, and that Zhaoheng joined them there, surrounded by ancient pines, lovely flowers, and marvelous grasses, bamboos, and stones. Only the slightly odd placement and angle of the terrace might marginally be interpreted as imparting “dreaminess” to *Five Pines*, which otherwise resembles other clusters of pines in Xiang's oeuvre.¹⁷³ Among these examples, Wang Jian's *Dream Sphere Pictured* is the most overtly occupied with style. Wang's long inscription explains that he dreamed of himself sitting in a studio in the midst of a landscape that seemed like the (non-extant) *Wang River Painting* (*Wangchuan tu*) by Wang Wei (701–761), whom he credited with co-initiating the painting of garden studios within landscapes. Wang Jian proceeded to paint his dream in the style of one of his models, Wang Meng (1308–1385), who he felt had borne this tradition forward most ably. The aura of *Dream Sphere Pictured* does not differ appreciably from that of Wang Jian's other landscapes.¹⁷⁴ The little-known painting by Shitao is of a dream in which he visited his close friend Li Lin (Li Qiufeng; 1634–1707) in a somewhat mysterious recluse's abode. As in the others, the style of this “dream visit” does not differ palpably from Shitao's other landscapes of the same interval.¹⁷⁵ (On Gong Xian's *Village on a Mountainous Lakeshore*, see below.) Minus the inscriptions and related textual information on the occasions of these works, one would never guess that the paintings are dream scenes.

The explanation for this may be twofold. First, by Ming times, literati painting had become mainly about style—that is, the artist's reception and interpretation of certain lineages in technique and composition—more than about subject matter. Concomitantly by late Ming, appraisals of literati painting largely concerned

172. C. Li and Watt, *Chinese Scholar's Studio*, 43, 145, and plate 3.

173. *Ibid.*, 45–46, 154, and plate 17.

174. Li Anyuan, *Wang Jian “Mengjing tu” yanjiu*, 2–3, 120–189.

175. Vinograd, “Origins and Presences,” 63–66. The title assigned to this painting is my own, taken from characters in Shitao's inscription thereon.

the grouping of artists into historical filiations of style.¹⁷⁶ Second, in spite of that emphasis, the value of similitude in painting was never lost. It remained important that a work, through the unique perceptivity and skill of the painter, both represent the outer form and capture the inner vitality of something in the natural world.¹⁷⁷

This may best be illustrated by comparing two works by Gong Xian, the most unusual landscape painter of the seventeenth century, whose illusionistic techniques often unsettle or baffle the viewer but who always “insisted on the compelling reality of his world” and on grounding his art in the principles of the early landscape masters.¹⁷⁸ Both works are products of successive phases—dark ink, then lighter—of the period during which his landscape style reached maturity, the mid-1660s to mid-1670s in Nanjing. The first is now perhaps the most famous landscape of the century, *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines* (*Qianyan wanhuo*; fig. 10), which, more than any other painting of the Ming–Qing era, with its “fearsome scene of oppressive loneliness,”¹⁷⁹ suggests a turbulent dreamscape, but which Gong in no way connects to dreaming. The second, *Village on a Mountainous Lakeshore* (fig. 11),¹⁸⁰ while typical of several Gong Xian landscapes in making the hills appear to float on water, does not differ from treatments of shorelines by other, contemporaneous painters and hardly seems, thereby, to qualify as a dream scene. Yet, unique among Gong’s surviving works, it is announced as such in the inscription, which reads, “A painting of what I saw in a dream. A friend said to me, ‘On the lakeshores in Zhejiang are many such places.’” In accord with the landscape tradition to which Gong was heir, the “illusory state” (*huanjing*) that he strove for in painting was not that of untethered imagination but rather one in which similitude, while retained, is artfully obscured so as to achieve communion between the subjectivity of the painter/viewer, on one hand, and features of the natural world, on the other.¹⁸¹ Indeed, Gong Xian in the *Lakeshore* example seems

176. Bush, *Chinese Literati on Painting*, chap. 5.

177. See Vanderstappen, *Landscape Painting of China*, introduction; C. Li and Watt, *Chinese Scholar’s Studio*, 19–20; and Bush, *Chinese Literati on Painting*, 22. On similitude in the Northern Song traditions to which many seventeenth-century painters referred in situating their art, see Powers, “Discourses of Representation.”

178. J. Cahill, “Early Styles of Kung Hsien,” 69. For biographies that make thorough use of the sparse sources on Gong’s life, see Liu Gangji, *Gong Xian*, 1–23; and Liu Yujia, “Gong Xian de shengping.”

179. C. Li, *Thousand Peaks*, 1:206–211, 207 (quotation); on the placement of this painting between 1665 and 1670, see 208. J. Cahill (“Early Styles of Kung Hsien,” 69) extends this time range into the early 1670s. For further discussion of this painting, see Silbergeld, “Political Landscapes of Kung Hsien,” 571–572.

180. On this painting, as well as the other nine in its group, see Xiao Ping, “Gong Xian ‘Xinhai shanshui ce.’” See also J. Cahill, *Fantastics and Eccentrics*, 68–69, 73.

181. Wang Shaolun, “Gong Xian shanshui hua.”



FIGURE 10. Gong Xian, *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines*. Property of Museum Reitberg, Zurich. Photograph by Rainer Wolfsberger.

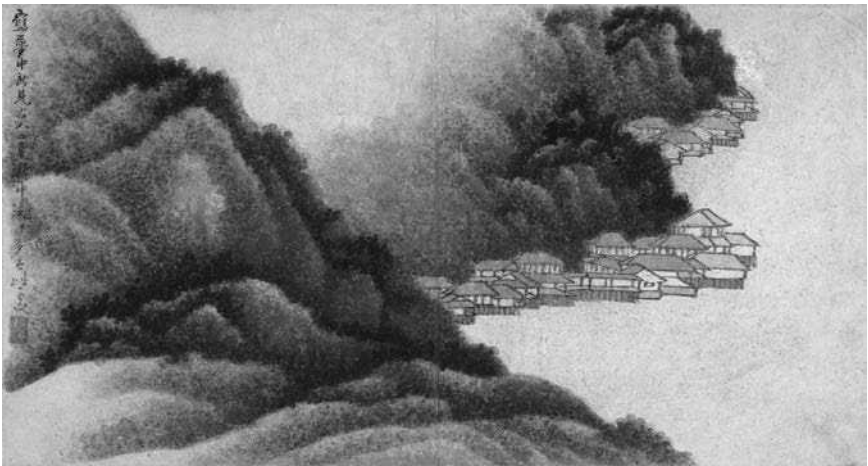


FIGURE 11. Gong Xian, *Village on a Mountainous Lakeshore*. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 60-36/6.

pleased that, although asleep, his mind still rendered even unfamiliar lands, waters, and structures veridically.¹⁸²

While some might take this as a case in point supporting the adage “What one thinks of during the day, one will dream of at night,”¹⁸³ another well-respected landscape painter from Gong Xian’s region and whose most flourishing period as an artist overlapped his, Wu Li (aka Wu Yushan; 1632–1718),¹⁸⁴ offers an encompassing rather than sequential understanding: “Human affairs of the age, big and small, are all like one dream. Is painting alone not of this dream? Indeed, I dream entirely in brush and ink, and what I see in my dreaming are simply hills, streams, grasses, and trees.”¹⁸⁵ In other words, he paints what he is humanly conscious of, and, in this however benighted life, he is most conscious of landscapes whether awake or asleep.

From this we may speculate that the ambient mood of erasing distinctions between waking and sleeping mentation obviated the need for painters interested in dreams to make any extraordinary effort to depart from the traditions of their art in representing dreamscapes. In any case, the sudden appearance of several paintings of personal dream experiences between 1623 and 1701 suggests a degree of engagement with the subjective dream state that was strong enough to break through the conventions of literati painters.

Politics

Unfortunately for a great many Ming literati who attained local influence, regional renown, or national office, the world that preoccupied their consciousness was less one of inspiring landscapes and more one of disgusting—even horrifying—politics. Perhaps the strong public-service ethic instilled through standardization of the Confucian curriculum for the civil examinations can be credited with sustaining a dynasty that produced so many terrible emperors. In any case, the most bitterly contested issues in Ming politics tended to involve the line-bureaucracy’s efforts to deal

182. On the importance to Gong that his landscapes, however intriguingly strange-looking, be grounded in the actualities of the natural world, see Liu Gangji, *Gong Xian*, 25–29; and Xiao Ping, “Gong Xian yu zaowu.”

183. Xiao Ping and Liu Yujia, *Gong Xian*, 126.

184. Chen Yuan, “Wu Yushan,” 136–140.

185. “Mojing tiba,” in Wu Li, *Mojing ji*, 4.71b. See also Wu Li, *Wu Yushan ji jianzhu*, 437. One of Wu Li’s biographers believes that this isolated record of an inscription on an unknown painting was made after Wu converted to Catholicism (his baptism probably occurring in 1676). See X. Lin, *Wu Li*, 104–105. I find no evidence to support this connection and feel that Wu’s sentiment, expressed above, might well have sprung from his considerable association with Buddhists from 1664 through 1675. See Chen Yuan, “Wu Yushan,” 148–151; and Wu Li, *Wu Yushan ji jianzhu*, 3–4.

with three kinds of elements: cloying, venal eunuchs; dictatorial chief grand secretaries; and flaccid or self-seeking yes-men among the other grand secretaries. These sorts tended to fill the “inner court” space between weak, petulant, irresponsible emperors and the “outer court” ministers, censors, and provincial officials who always were trying to get their ruler to straighten up and fly right. The chronic disharmonies in this fraught dynamic,¹⁸⁶ especially from the middle Ming onward, provided fertile soil for cultivating the art of critical comment through ostensible or elaborated dreams.¹⁸⁷

Though one can seldom wholly reject the possibility of inspiration from a dream or dream fragment in this sort of writing, political dream-critiques by their strategic nature were largely calculated. Such critiques always invited blowback in varying degrees, so the plausible deniability of meaning or intent in purported dream records was useful in veiling protests and indictments. Also, belief that living persons could see, communicate with, or channel the spirits of historical figures through the dream medium could also provide handy conceits for drawing admonitory comparisons between past and present. And in some cases, ambient *incredulity* toward dreams could sharpen the bite of criticism with sarcasm.

Exemplifying some of these ploys in middle Ming, as well as growing concern about the unchecked influence of eunuchs, is the only substantial dream record in the oeuvre of Wang Yangming. Therein he purports to have received a long, instructive poem from a prominent scholar-official of the Eastern Jin, Guo Pu (276–324), who was slain because he tried to dissuade the militarist Wang Dun (206–324) from rebelling and seizing power for himself and the dynasty’s chief minister, his cousin Wang Dao (276–399).¹⁸⁸ Guo’s main message in the dream is that, while everyone knows he was killed by Wang Dun, few realize that it actually was someone near the emperor, Wang Dao, who brought about his death.¹⁸⁹ From the date of this dream record, 1520, it is thought that Wang Yangming wrote it to express his fear and indignation at the threats, instead of accolades, that he received after defeating the usurpation-bent Prince of Ning, Zhu Chenhao (d. 1521). This was because the emperor at that time, the self-indulgent and impetuous Wuzong (r. 1505–1522), surrounded by sycophantic eunuchs who catered to his every whim, wanted—outrageously—to claim the victory for himself and his favorites.¹⁹⁰ Wang’s

186. On the evolution of the Grand Secretariat as a necessary but never fully institutionalized organ of Ming government, after the founding emperor’s paranoid abolition of the original secretariat in 1380, see *CHC*, vol. 8, 74–78.

187. Su Shi had been a consummate practitioner of this. See C. Smith, “A New Reading.”

188. On these events, see biographies of Wang Dao, Guo Pu, and Wang Dun in *Jinshu*, 6:1745–1754, 1899–1910, and 8:2553–2566, respectively.

189. “Jimeng bingxu,” in Wang Shouren, *Wang Yangming quanji*, 1:777–778.

190. On this series of events, see Israel, “Prince and the Sage.” On the reign of Wuzong, the Zhengde emperor, see *DMB*, 1:307–315. For the insight that Wang’s dream record reflected his

dream of Guo Pu suggests that he, too, may have loyally confronted the danger of a rebellion only to be done in by nefarious elements at court. Chilling pathos is brought to Wang's situation by the spirit of the unjustly murdered Guo Pu, retaining so much pent-up resentment as to warn Wang oneirically across a divide of more than a thousand years. And the implied parallel between an infirm state, the Eastern Jin, and the Ming state under Wuzong also serves as a warning from Wang to others of his own time, lest he himself not survive his predicament.

In late Ming, the chronic problem of eunuchs abusing their influence over weak emperors reached heinous proportions during the "reign" of chief eunuch Wei Zhongxian (1568–1627), who manipulated the mentally deficient Emperor Xizong (r. 1621–1627).¹⁹¹ Repeated and growing protests from civil officials against the overreach and corruption of the eunuch establishment under Wei's direction brought on a series of dragnets, in which the boldest protesters were arrested (usually in the provinces after their respective dismissals), brought to the capital, tortured in the notorious Eastern Depot of the eunuch secret service, and left to die of their wounds, without any hearing, in the court prison. Such was the fate of one Zhou Qiyuan (1571–1626), who, as governor of Jiangnan, charged one of Wei's eunuch agents with malfeasance in procuring silks for the court. Not long after, Zhou was met with a barrage of trumped-up countercharges, and Wei issued a secret order for his arrest.¹⁹²

According to Zhou's annalistic autobiography, in the second month of 1626, he had finished making sacrifices at his lineage's ancestral shrine near his home in Fujian Province and was staying overnight there. Once asleep, he dreamed that a major persecution had arisen in the north, and that he himself had been detained and was undergoing the most severe punishment. Zhou cried out in his sleep, "Monopolizing power, you [Wei] have forged a proclamation and are arbitrarily using torture to assault the loyal and good, deceiving our emperor!" This startled Zhou's son who was lying beside him, and who hastened to wake his father with shouts. When awake, Zhou said, "I'm going to be arrested." After a while, Zhou dreamed again, this time of a spirit who came to him and did not speak but wrote a poem with his finger on Zhou's palm:

With secret words I cross into Your Honor's home,
flying like a dragon through the twilight of the vast sky.
[Your] dream was not wild thoughts.
With all speed refine your cinnabar [i.e., the core of your inner resources].

peril after capturing the prince, see Du Lianzhe, "Mingren jimeng," 17.

191. On Zhu Youjiao and Wei Zhongxian, see *ECCP*, 1:190 and 2:846–847, respectively.

192. On Zhou's case, among those of others caught in the dragnet of 1626, see Dardess, *Blood and History*, chap. 4.

Awaking from this warning, Zhou spoke urgently to his son, saying, “The eunuchs’ power pervades all. We cannot yet know [the consequences] for the country, much less for officials [like me]. But death and life are ordained. The spirit was simply reminding me [of this] in advance to put me at peace.”¹⁹³ Though this account was crafted to impress posterity with Zhou’s acceptance of martyrdom in resisting the enemies of justice and right governance, perhaps to some degree it represents the actual nightmares induced by the eunuch terrors of the late Ming.

The main targets of Wei Zhongxian’s tyranny were outstanding figures in the most morally strident political faction of that time, the Eastern Grove (Donglin) Party. Although men who identified with Eastern Grove causes went to their deaths most courageously and in the largest numbers during Xizong’s reign, what first had galvanized the politically engaged intelligentsia to form solidarity blocs that operated like disciplined “parties” (*dang*), traditionally disapproved of in Chinese political philosophy, had been their struggle, a generation before, against the domineering manner of Chief Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng (1525–1582), one of the most formidable officials in Ming history. Zhang had provided strong leadership during the youth of Emperor Shenzong and vigorously pursued needed systemic reforms, but with time he grew venal and increasingly impatient with criticism, cashiering many who opposed him.¹⁹⁴ No small number of those whom Zhang expelled from office gathered to make common cause in quasi-private academies of Confucian learning throughout the country, which Zhang forthwith banned in 1579. Though this ban lasted only until Zhang’s death three years later, it was the match that lit the fire of ethically outraged, academy-centered “public” vociferousness about state affairs that roiled Ming politics until the end.¹⁹⁵

The young emperor, at last relieved of Zhang Juzheng’s avuncular oversight, soon wearied of all the admonitions he now received from the wider reaches of the civil bureaucracy, and after 1590 he basically went on perpetual strike from his civil-governmental duties, becoming incommunicative, uncooperative, and, when he did take actions, deliberately contrarian.¹⁹⁶ Official posts from the Grand Secretariat on down went unfilled for lack of approval from the top, as the Ming bureaucracy lurched toward paralysis. Under this unprecedented circumstance, the few grand secretaries who *were* appointed came under heavy scrutiny and were

193. Zhou Qiyuan, *Haicheng Zhou Zhonghui gong zixu nianpu*, 1.11b–12a. Zhou dictated this *nianpu* to family members; thus the entries are recorded in the third person.

194. Briefly on Zhang, see *DMB*, 1:53–61.

195. Such academies had been suppressed in 1537–1538, though with less effect. See Meskill, “Academies and Politics,” esp. 160–171. The most thorough study of late-Ming academies and partisan politics is Ono, *Minki tōsha kō*.

196. For an interpretation of the first two decades of Shenzong’s reign, see Ray Huang, *1587, a Year of No Significance*, chaps. 1–3. See also *CHC*, vol. 7, 514–532.

criticized sharply by “pure” or “righteous” elements for taking measures on their own, without Shenzong’s imprimatur, or for compromising with his irresponsible desires rather than leading him to be a proper head of state.

Among the grand secretaries who served in the early 1590s was Wang Xijue (1534–1611), who had been considered an ally in righteous circles because of his previous opposition to Zhang Juzheng, but who, in his frustrated dealings with Shenzong as chief grand secretary himself, came to be seen as too moderate or even complicit in the emperor’s expulsion of reformist critics. Things came to a head in the personnel evaluation of 1593, a conspiratorial undertaking on Shenzong’s part to rid himself of “pure critics,” which Wang Xijue had little choice but to oversee and for which he was rather unjustly blamed. The upshot of this, and the controversy that ensued, was that several high-profile remonstrators were drastically demoted or dismissed, including an outspoken bureau director in the Ministry of Personnel, Gu Xiancheng (1550–1612). Gu, thereafter out of office, went on to mobilize his network of like-minded associates into perhaps the most famous partisan movement in Chinese history, centered on the Eastern Grove Academy in his home county, Wuxi, and dedicated to assuring that only trustworthy men of staunch Confucian character served in government. Meanwhile, in 1594, Wang Xijue also left office, and relations between these two retirees smoldered for years in their home region, the Yangzi delta.¹⁹⁷

In 1606–1608 another crisis occurred. The number of serving grand secretaries having dwindled to just one (who died the following year), Shenzong approved the selection of three more, thus raising hope among Eastern Grove partisans that men favorable to their cause could be placed. But that hope was dashed in 1607 when just a single friendly figure was chosen. The other two were Li Tingji (1542–1616), the protégé of a previous, anathematized grand secretary, and—gasp!—Wang Xijue. Forthwith Li Tingji became the target of incessant denunciations and in 1608 completely withdrew from government affairs.¹⁹⁸ At this time, Wang Xijue, mulling over the wisdom of returning to the fray from his home in Taicang, Suzhou Prefecture, became the target of two dream-critiques, one by Gu Xiancheng and the other by Gu’s student and next-generation Eastern Grove stalwart Yao Ximeng (1579–1636). In his critique, Gu uses the states of waking and dreaming to underscore the importance of supplementing objective knowledge with subjective

197. For biographies of Gu Xiancheng and Wang Xijue, see *DMB*, 1:736–744 and 2:1376–1379, respectively. On relations between the two men, see Gu Qingmei, *Hui’an cunqao er*, 15–28. On the 1593 evaluation and the formal founding of the Eastern Grove Academy in 1604, see *CHC*, vol. 7, 536–540; and Chen Yongfu, “Cong ‘guisi daji.’”

198. However, “[d]enunciations [of Li] never ceased, and at last in 1612 the emperor accepted his resignation after it had been submitted a hundred and twenty times” (Hucker, “Tung-lin Movement,” 148). See also Ono, *Minki tōsha kō*, 312–318.

knowledge, while Yao, for his part, makes more use of familiar aspects of dream experience in two successive dream accounts, shifting his location in place and time to richly allusive effect.

Since neither Gu nor Yao, as relatively conservative Confucians, had therefore been inclined to write about oneiric affairs, some speculation is warranted about what rhetorical advantage they sought in couching their negative essays about Wang Xijue in the form of dreams. Of note here is that Wang and his close friend and landsman, the literary doyen of his day Wang Shizhen (1526–1590), in the past had been enthusiastic proponents of the idiosyncratic Buddho-Daoist religion of Xijue's charismatic young daughter, Wang Daozhen (aka Tanyangzi; 1558–1580). In her short life, she had attracted a surprisingly large following among prominent scholar-officials as well as common people, in part through visions and "spirit-wanderings" which brought her into privileged contact with a panoply of deities during sleep and meditation. Also, after her "ascent and transformation [into an immortal]" (i.e., her esoteric ritual suicide), her spirit purportedly had communicated with both Xijue and Shizhen in dreams.¹⁹⁹ This sort of cultic activity was looked upon askance by many, especially those in government, and in 1581 Wang Xijue, Wang Shizhen (both out of office at the time), and Shizhen's younger brother (who soon resigned his post) were cited in official channels for heterodoxy.²⁰⁰ Little came of those indictments, however, and when Xijue was brought back to court as minister of rites and grand secretary in 1585, a bureaucrat junior to him in rank, one Geng Dingxiang (1524–1596),²⁰¹ wrote of a dream in which he met and spoke with him. Therein Geng went beyond merely absolving the two Wangs from heterodoxy. He glowingly congratulated them for having been worthy of the spiritual revelations of Tanyangzi, whose teaching of "bland quietude" he effusively characterized as foundational to Wang Yangming's *liangzhi*, exhorting Xijue and Shizhen to remain true to her special gift—a perfect antidote to the errant tendencies of exceptionally able and talented men.²⁰²

Although Geng had previously written, in apparent sincerity, of undergoing spiritual self-enlightenment in the dream state,²⁰³ and his dream-encounter with Wang Xijue is mildly admonitory, it would not have been hard for contemporaries to read

199. For brief biographies of Wang Shizhen and Wang Daozhen, see *DMB*, 2:1399–1404, 1425–1427, respectively. See also Waltner, "T'an-yang-tzu and Wang Shih-chen"; and Xu Meijie, "Tanyangzi 'shenghua'"; as well as "Tanyang dashi zhuan," in Wang Shizhen, *Yanzhou sharen xugao*, 78.1a–4b.

200. See Tan Qian, *Guoque*, 5:4390; Shen Defu, *Wanli yehuo bian*, 2:593; and a biography of Shizhen's brother, Wang Shimao (1536–1588), in *DMB*, 2:1406–1408.

201. On Geng, see *DMB*, 1:718–721.

202. "Jimeng," in Geng Dingxiang, *Geng Tiantai xiansheng wenji*, 19.41b–42b.

203. See "Jingyan," Geng's record of 1577, in *Geng Tiantai xiansheng wenji*, 19.29a–30a.

his 1585 essay as pandering to a superior, especially since Geng had been criticized by Gu Xiancheng's brother, Gu Yuncheng (1554–1607), for flattering certain grand secretaries.²⁰⁴ Moreover, Gu Xiancheng never had been a fan of Geng Dingxiang, either politically or philosophically. Thus, even years later in 1608, Gu and his student Yao Ximeng hardly would have let the memory of Wang's Tanyangzi taint go unrefreshed. Using dreams to recall both Wang's association with heterodoxy and Geng's proclivity for flattery struck at two birds with one stone and lent sarcasm to strategy.

For his part, Gu Xiancheng, who had direct experience with Wang Xijue, wrote and circulated a pair of essays, the first, titled "Awake Talk" (Wuyan), serving as a preamble of sorts to the second, "Sleep Talk" (Meiyan).²⁰⁵ In the former, Gu is about to take a late-afternoon rest when he is visited by an old local schoolteacher who asks whether it is true that Wang Xijue has been recalled (to the Grand Secretariat) and whether Gu thinks Wang should accept the summons. Gu affirms the recall but is equivocal about the prospect of Wang taking up the charge, saying that he should either plunge in vigorously and make significant changes or simply stay home. Taking the job but then just going along with the status quo and returning empty-handed would not do.

The teacher then goes into a long monologue about dysfunctional relations between the grand secretaries and the ministry heads (especially those in the Ministry of Personnel) and the poor record in retaining good men for the Grand Secretariat—all based on his reading of Capital Gazettes borrowed from scholar-officials of his acquaintance. Further, from his knowledge of the *Analects* and the *Mencius*, he expatiates on the courageous qualities that are needed for high-level government leadership. All of his views are much in accord with Eastern Grove positions, until he states his hope that Wang Xijue will return to the helm, because he feels that Wang is just the sort of man to set things right. At this, Gu's silence is sealed. The schoolteacher, an outsider to capital politics, has come to some well-reasoned opinions by means of objective sources. But his judgment of particular men is hampered by lack of personal, subjective knowledge, which Gu has. Rather than explicitly disagree with his guest, Gu simply goes back to his afternoon rest, and the snubbed schoolteacher leaves in a huff.

Yet Gu cannot stop thinking about what his visitor said, and that night, after going to bed, he dreams of meeting Wang Xijue for a tête-à-tête in which Wang appears as Gu viscerally knows him to be: a self-regarding dissembler. In response to Wang's polite request for instruction, Gu launches into a diatribe, accusing Wang of greatly wronging not only him but, more seriously, the emperor, citing several

204. See Huang Zongxi, *Mingru xue'an*, juan 35, passage 2.

205. Gu Xiancheng, *Jinggao canggao*, 3.3a–9b. See also Busch, "Tung-lin Academy," 51–54. The titles "Wuyan" and "Meiyan" allude to "Kaopan" in the *Shijing*.

instances in which Wang harmed the official careers of men whom Gu favors by contravening what Gu believes to have been Shenzong's intent. Wang, seemingly nonplussed, responds that the actions in question were direct imperial orders, which he could not go against, that he had abided by the hallowed Way of the minister in outwardly attributing all good acts to the ruler and taking responsibility for bad acts upon himself. But Gu derides him as "still talking [to save] appearances" while asserting that he, Gu, "speaks from the heart." Though granting that rulers with character flaws require special measures from ministers, Gu declares that their present ruler is consummately perspicacious and broad-minded, and that Wang does Shenzong a great disservice by shifting blame to his quarter and making him appear inconsistent. As Wang's expression becomes anguished, Gu repeats three times, "With a ruler like this, how can you bear to betray him?!" his voice rising to a cry which wakes all those around him. He himself then awakes, his face soaked in tears, and straightway lights a candle to record the dream. He concludes with the hope that, should Wang return to court, as seems to be his covert desire, he will treat the emperor as the finest in history. In that case, Gu writes, his essay will not be merely a case of "dream-telling in broad daylight."

Whether this highly disingenuous two-part political tract had any bearing on Wang's eventual decision against returning to the Grand Secretariat is not known. More likely is that Wang ultimately had to agree with the gist of a letter that Gu wrote to him before releasing the "Talks": If Wang had lacked the force of will to do much with Shenzong previously in his prime as chief grand secretary, what could he hope to accomplish now as a spent old man?²⁰⁶ In any case, for the purpose of rousing opinion among literati at large, the license afforded by dream-telling was more effective in discrediting a perceived adversary of the Eastern Grove than in convincing anyone that Shenzong was a great emperor, which could not have been Gu's real aim.

The approach of Yao Ximeng, in 1608 merely a licentiate with no experience in holding public office but a dyed-in-the-wool Eastern Grove loyalist,²⁰⁷ is to associate the constellation of affairs surrounding Wang Xijue with perilous interludes in Chinese history, ones in which men of questionable character seized power or when good men were expunged. In so doing, he takes certain things common to dreaming—having an unusual dream after a disturbing occurrence; finding oneself in different personas, times, and places in the course of a dream; having a dream,

206. Gu Xiancheng, *Jingqiao cangqiao*, 3.1a–2b. For Wang's final letter (early spring 1609) declining the appointment on grounds of age (he was seventy-six *sui*) and ill health, see Wang Heng and Wang Shimin, *Wang Wensu gong nianpu*, 97a–b.

207. Yao lost his father in infancy and so was reared in his mother's natal household, that of the prominent Wen family of Suzhou. For biographies of Yao, see Chen Ding, *Donglin liezhuan*, 23.3a–6a; and Zou Yi, *Qi-Zhen yesheng*, 1.16b–18a.

waking, and then dreaming again while remembering the first dream—and aligns them with certain rhetorical requirements for delivering a warning to the age.

In his “Record of an Autumn Dream” (Qiumeng ji),²⁰⁸ Yao is lodging in Danyang (south of Nanjing) and enjoying the bright harvest moon when an urgent sound erupts from the sky and a wind blows from the horizon. Soon a servant tells him that for the past two or three nights, the locals have taken the sound and wind to be an expression of “Heaven’s sorrow.” Yao then thinks that perhaps because of successive poor harvests in the region, people had been feeling agitated and their extreme sorrows had ascended to the sky, bringing on this strange omen. But the dream he had later that night after going to bed led him to suspect another reason. This opening to Yao’s dream record makes use of the fact that there had been famine in both the central plain and Jiangnan that year, as well as two instances of earthquakes rocking the capital—both kinds of phenomena traditionally associated with Heaven’s displeasure at current imperial rule.²⁰⁹

In the initial dream, Yao is leaning against the door of a poor dwelling in his home prefecture, Suzhou, when a big procession of crudely dressed but orderly, well-armed, haughtily disdainful soldiers ride by from north to south, shouting over and over, “Cao Mengde is coming!” This is Cao Cao (155–220), who was famed in history as the brilliant militarist who quelled the Yellow Turban Rebellion and served as chancellor-protector of the last Han-dynasty emperor.²¹⁰ But he had been demonized in popular culture as a cruel, scheming man who made the emperor his de facto prisoner and planned to usurp imperial powers—the latter because of his portrayal in plays and in the famous novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*). It is to this popular impression of Cao Cao, and of his early allies-cum-adversaries in the *Romance*, that Yao appeals in his dream record, bringing Cao counter-historically to Suzhou, the home area also of Wang Xijue.

Before long, another, stately procession goes by, escorting a large, covered carriage in which sit three men, Liu Bei (161–223), historically one of the most nimble warlords to survive the final breakdown of the Han, and his two most trusted generals, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei (d. 220). In the *Romance*, these three men swear an oath of brotherhood in a peach garden and join with Cao Cao in saving the Han court from the Yellow Turbans, only to discover Cao’s traitorous designs on the throne.²¹¹ Thereafter, they courageously, implacably oppose Cao’s power aggrandizement, led by Liu Bei, who bears the Han imperial surname and who, in popular lore, is consummately humane, dedicated, and loyal.

208. Yao Ximeng, *Songying ji*, 2.10b–13a.

209. *Mingshi, benji* 21, Wanli year 36 (2:386–387).

210. *CHC*, vol. 1, 347–355, 368.

211. Luo Guanzhong, *Three Kingdoms*, chaps. 1–2.

In contrast to Cao Cao's entourage, in Yao's dream the noble threesome is followed by a few dozen neatly robed civil officials who all exchange friendly waves of the hand with Yao, and some of whom call him "Zhang Hu," the name of a late-Tang poet. In the dream, moreover, Yao thinks of himself as Zhang Hu (792–853), who sometimes sojourned in Danyang, the place where Yao was sleeping. Though this facet goes by quickly, it offers an important clue to the thrust of this dream record. Zhang Hu, in those of his poems that comment sadly on his times, decries the Sweet Dew Incident of 835–836 in which the eunuchs in control of the court massacred hundreds of officials who had plotted to overthrow them, and he laments the eventual expulsion of the man who saved the situation thereafter, Li Deyu (787–850). Li is famed as a strong-minded, disciplined, highly competent chief minister who came to power with a partisan background but who quelled dysfunctional factionalism and reduced eunuch abuses, and who was trusted by his emperor to make important decisions.²¹²

In any case, the dream continues as Yao/Zhang gains a vantage point on the burgeoning array of officials and their military guards, who somehow expand the narrow streets of Suzhou into thoroughfares on which two or three horsemen, each with several attendants, could ride abreast. He is able to see that the lines of guards stretch out for a couple of miles, and—typical of dreams that are interrupted by an emotional high point—he is just exclaiming "What a grand view!" when he awakes. Interestingly, however, he then goes back to sleep and dreams again, this time remembering not only the previous dream but also the alarming sound from the sky which preceded it. In this second dream, Yao deliberates over these successive phenomena and eventually comes to this conclusion:

I cannot venture, on the basis of empty dream-nonsense, to speak of abstruse principles. But having sensed things for no [apparent] reason, I am led to ask what that darkly booming sound was earlier in the night. Could it not have been the sound of metal lances and iron-clad cavalry giving stern warning in front of and behind [a dignitary's carriage]? Cao Cao and Liu Bei raised righteous troops together and knew each other well. A single [incident] showed which man was true and which false, and forthwith they became utter enemies. If Cao's earthly soul still has not dissipated after a thousand years, then the heroes underground surely wish again to resist him!²¹³

212. On these events, as well as Li Deyu's service under Tang emperor Wuzong (r. 840–846), see *CHC*, vol. 3, 656–671. On Zhang Hu (whose given name was often miswritten 祐, as in Yao Ximeng's text), see Yin Zhanhua, "Lun Zhang Hu ji qi shi," esp. 2–3.

213. Yao Ximeng, *Songying ji*, 2.13a–b.

In brief, an avatar of Cao Cao (read: Wang Xijue) has come to Suzhou, and he is being checked by avatars of the sworn brothers of the peach garden (read: the Eastern Grove solidarity bloc). Precisely who was supposed to represent Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei in Yao's time is not clear, though Gu Xiancheng would be a good guess for Liu Bei.²¹⁴ Like Gu, Yao Ximeng favors a strong-willed but fair-minded chief grand secretary, someone who can bring the emperor along, rather than working around or deceiving him. Yet unlike Gu, who has held high office and thereby is qualified to comment publicly on state affairs, the mere licentiate Yao Ximeng must veil his views and even couch his deliberations *on a dream as a dream*, using "empty dream-nonsense" to gain plausible deniability. Of course, to compare Wang Xijue with Cao Cao both flatters and derides the former too much. Rather than acute historical judgment, this dream-essay by Yao exemplifies the questionable tactics employed by some in the Eastern Grove camp, tactics which have been underplayed in the modern trend to lionize in toto this crusading constituency in late-Ming politics.

Angst

While Gu Xiancheng and Yao Ximeng were frustrated with the Grand Secretariat, and many activists became fearful of retaliation from powerful eunuchs, other scholar-officials grew increasingly alarmed about Manchu border incursions and domestic rebellions, finding that the multimillennial ideal of withdrawal to one's rural home brought insufficient relief from anxieties. Zha Yingguang (d. 1638), for one, preferred the "inebriation" afforded by slumber to waking awareness of current conditions. In a poem, "Drunk with Dreams" (Zuimeng), Zha alludes to two famous models of reclusion: the self-rusticated poet Tao Qian, who absorbed himself in eccentricities, and the nonconformist soue Ruan Ji (210–263), who long evaded harm in perilous times by behaving like a drunken lunatic. In his poem, Zha suggests the inadequacy of both men's manner of escape compared to the "wine" of a good dream. He concludes:

One must know the [true] meaning of "hard to wake from wine"
[when] a yellow-millet [dream] seems better than affairs of the world.²¹⁵

In addition to Zha's worries over his country's security, his earlier life of frustration in climbing the bureaucratic ladder illustrates the most widespread source

214. For mention of ten other men who were close associates of Gu Xiancheng around this time, see Hucker, "Tung-lin Movement," 142.

215. Zha Yingguang, *Liqixuan shi*, 1.14a–b. For a nephew's biography of Zha, who retired after serving in a number of minor official positions, see *ibid.*, prefatory 1a–5b.

of anxiety among late-Ming intellectuals, something that weighed on them from childhood: the civil service examination system. As the growth in classical literacy increased much faster than available official posts during the Ming, competitiveness within that system grew exponentially, and even the most brilliant thinkers and writers often struggled for decades in the examination halls with no success. But distress over the examinations was due not only to the pressures involved. There was a growing sense that the system, far from being a fair test of men's abilities, was actually worse than any lottery or mere charade. Hardly just an arena for the inscrutable operation of fate, it was a fixture of government and upper-class life that not only was dysfunctional but also had become thoroughly corrupted by venality and factional politics.²¹⁶ As with Zha Yingguang, a corollary to dissatisfaction with the systems for higher-level examinations and official appointments was loss of confidence in the ability of the men whom the state did employ to deal with the challenges of securing the realm from barbarians, bandits, and rebelling peasants. Such fears are palpable in many personal writings of the very late Ming, so it should not surprise us to find intellectuals who, having become very ambivalent about seeking office, faced crises of life direction that were reflected in their dreams and attitudes toward dreaming.

It so happens that the last two cycles of the upper-level examinations to be completed for the whole country under Ming auspices, from the provincial exams of autumn 1639 to the metropolitan exams of autumn 1643, were sufficiently upsetting to cast three well-known writers into various states of physical and mental illness, despair over their personal futures, and deep introspection. You Tong and Dong Tuo (both introduced above) and Huang Chunyao (1605–1645) explored their respective conditions in widely different styles reflecting different temperaments—You using ideas about dreaming to dilute the significance of individual experience, Dong finding temporary relief from cares in an alter-world of oneiric mind-play, and Huang tracking the stubborn tensions in his divided psyche through dreams.

Like the other two, You Tong had shown great promise in letters at a young age, performing remarkably well in the local-level examinations while still in his teens, only to have expectations dashed at the provincial level, where eligibility for any sort of official appointment began. Having failed in his first attempt in 1639, in the autumn of 1642 he failed again in the preliminaries to the main provincial examination and, upon returning home from Nanjing, fell into debilitating illness.

216. For a comprehensive explanation of the tri-level, triennial examination system of the middle and later Ming, see Elman, *A Cultural History*, chap. 3. On the increased competitiveness from the fifteenth century onward, see *ibid.*, 140–144. Elman discusses the extreme anxieties that plagued examinees, as well as the most common forms of irregularities in the exams and calls for reforms, in *ibid.*, chaps. 6 and 8.

Able to do little more, he gathered together his poems from the three months surrounding that year's examination sojourn and titled the collection *Record of Autumn Dreams from the Western Hall* (*Xitang qiუმeng lu*).²¹⁷ The poems therein are filled with gloom—over predatory elements in the human sphere as dangerous as those in the wild, over being too penurious to buy medicine for his sick wife (with a hungry baby at her dry breasts), over reports of bandit scourges in the western provinces and the hardships this entailed for common people pressed by military service and war taxes, over expectation of a great calamity to come, and over his own maladies, exacerbated by worry and disappointment. Only one among them is a dream poem: a Daoistic sky trek in which You “imbibes from the vast waters of the Milky Way to cleanse his bowels of melancholy, pouring it out toward the void.”²¹⁸

Clearly, the title of this collection is not intended to indicate poems that record or simulate dreams; rather it is meant to characterize a particular three-month period as just one small segment in a life that is entirely a dream, one from which You expects to “awaken” not in Buddho-Daoist enlightenment but only in death. This is articulated in his preface,²¹⁹ which artfully weaves several references to well-known, received ideas about dreaming and waking consciousness. It begins: “My life is singly a dream. Being alive, I have form; having form, I have spirit; having spirit, I have thought; having thought, I have associations; having associative [thought], I have dreams.” You then uses Su Shi's example of a lowly shepherd following a train of thought—from sheep, to horses, to carriages, to carriage canopies, to riding in a fancy, escorted carriage as an important official—in order to illustrate sequential thought-associations in dreams. This is followed by a fifth-century saying about how one never dreams of things one has not remotely experienced—such as riding a carriage into a rat hole—which serves to illustrate the difference between having or not having an inception-thought for dream associations. Other associational mind-moves, You writes, are prompted by yearning for the opposites of our unhappy conditions or worrying about the negation of our happy conditions in life. Having established that dream content is generated by thoughts, You then shifts to questioning the conventional distinction between waking consciousness and dreaming consciousness, since both exhibit thoughts and affect each other in diurnal circularity. He acknowledges that in the dream state we know only the dream, while on waking we are aware of having dreamed. “Nevertheless,” he asks,

217. You Tong, *Hui'an nianpu*, shang.4b.

218. “Meng tian,” in You Tong, *Xitang qiუმeng lu*, 15a–b (poem written in “harmony” with one of the same title by late-Tang poet Li He).

219. “Zixu,” in *Xitang qiუმeng lu*, 5a–7a.

how do I know that the poverty of those who dream of plenty is not itself a dream? That the lowly state of those who dream of high status is not itself a dream? That the security and happiness of those who dream of danger and grief are not themselves dreams? . . . For just as form generates spirit, spirit generates thought, thoughts generate associations, and associations generate dreams, so dreams [recalled after waking] also give rise to associations and thoughts, [and affect] spirit and form. Thus, none who has form, spirit, thoughts, and associations can depart from dreaming. . . . When one's form is extinguished and spirit [enters the] darkness, when thoughts are cut off and associations are stilled, then what are there of wealth or poverty, honor or baseness, security or danger, happiness or grief? . . . After [death] is the great awakening.

You then goes on to fault Zhuang Zhou for not understanding, upon waking, that what he thought had been a dream of being a butterfly was actually something from his waking mind—in other words, that there really had been no “transformation” from the dreaming to the waking state. It was all of a piece in his consciousness. Further employing *Master Zhuang*, You writes, “Nighttime dreams are awakened from at dawn; lifetime dreams are awakened from at death. Zhuang Zhou spoke of [people] divining [the meaning of] a dream within a dream and only realizing it was all a dream when they awoke. Nowadays people who know nighttime dreaming but do not know lifetime dreaming are the ones who engage in dream-divination all day long but are unable to wake up.” Thus, according to You, not just the nocturnal dreams but the whole lives of even the most revered people are entirely dreams, compared to which his own hopes, disappointments, cares, and perils, as reflected in his poetry collection, are of little significance. You then concludes on a note of mild despair over the unobtainable: enlightenment in his time. “It is said that perfected persons have no dreams. But it is not [actually] that they have no dreams. [Rather, they realize that] their dreams do not differ from their waking [state] and vice versa. Since [for them] dream is waking and waking is dream [i.e., their consciousness is undivided], is this not why they ‘have no dreams’? As for me, how will I ever find a dreamless person with whom to discuss dreams?”²²⁰

Though You Tong was not without concern for his country, he sought examination success and official service primarily as a means of relieving his chronic penury and supporting his family, and his identity was more that of an imaginative writer than of a patriot. He began taking the civil service examinations again under Qing auspices immediately after the pacification of Jiangnan, earning provincial degree status in 1649 and serving in a minor prefectural post from 1652 to 1656. The cultural boredom of that duty led him to compose musical plays, and it was as

220. This last phrase is a play on “Waiwu,” passage 13, in *Zhuangzi*, Misc. Chapters.

a dramatist that he gained widest recognition in early-Qing literary circles. High official status came to him only after the age of sixty-one, when he passed a special, court-initiated examination for a select group of prominent scholars in 1679.²²¹ In You's case, the moroseness of his poems from the autumn of 1642 and the corresponding darkness of his preface on life-as-mere-dream mark an acute but passing phase of relatively youthful depression and anxiety.²²²

This was not so for Dong Tuo, close to You Tong in age and of parallel experience in the examinations, for whom the absolute difference between waking and dreaming consciousness was an essential balm that eased his life from youth into old age. Nor was it a passing phase for You Tong's older acquaintance Huang Chunyao,²²³ who struggled with the examinations much longer, and whose intensely self-demanding personality, evinced in his last diary's dream records, led him to commit a martyr's suicide rather than accept Qing rule.

Dong Tuo also failed the 1639 provincial examination in Nanjing and was incensed by what he perceived as gross unfairness in the results. Unlike You Tong, however, his initial response, apart from beginning a long-term "residence" in "dreamland,"²²⁴ was to increase his activity in reform-oriented literary societies, quickly becoming a favored protégé of the founder of the reformist Restoration Society (Fushe), Zhang Pu (1602–1641).²²⁵ Zhang's sudden death was a blow to Dong's aspirations toward public leadership from which he never recovered. After participating in a large-scale interment ceremony for Zhang in the autumn of 1642, Dong returned home emotionally exhausted and forthwith plunged into severe depression and psychosomatic illness.²²⁶

A tendency to suffer from chronic illnesses had been characteristic of men in Dong's lineage for generations. This hereditary condition, often marked by strange mental phenomena, combined with the Dongs' multigenerational commitment to lay Buddhism, correlates with a propensity to recall and take an

221. On the cultural context of the imperial *boxue hongci* examination of 1679, see Q. Bai, *Fu Shan's World*, 212–220.

222. Two pieces (from the interval 1657–1671) in You's collected works evince confidence that Daoist cultivation of a calm spirit can bring on inspiring dreams or, better, a condition close to that of the dreamless perfected man; see "Mengyou wuyue fu" and "Qumeng," in *Xitang zazhu erji*, 1.4b–7a, 14a–16a, respectively.

223. You went on an excursion to Yushan in Changshu with Huang and members of the latter's literary circle in 1641. See You Tong, *Hui'an nianpu*, shang.4a–b.

224. In Dong's essay "Mengxiang zhi" of 1643, he writes that he has been journeying in that "dreamland" for three years (in *Fengcao'an qianji*, "Qiguo bian," 12b).

225. On Zhang Pu, see *ECCP*, 1:52–53. On Dong's sanguine early activity in literary societies and his relationship with Zhang, see Zhao Hongjuan, *Ming yimin Dong Tuo*, 72–74, 86–102.

226. For detail on Dong's mental and physical state in 1639–1643, see Yang Yucheng, "Mengyi, outu yu yiliao," 1–8.

interest in personal dreams.²²⁷ Dong Tuo took this to extremes partly in tune with a late-Ming intellectual atmosphere that exalted eccentricity, partly as a madcap response to the outrages and absurdities he encountered as a young man, and partly to objectify the strange gyrations his mind performed under stress. The year 1643 (*guiwei*) thus became a banner year in Dong's self-confessed "dream obsession," not only for his record of memorable dreams during that time span, *Dream History from a Gui Year* (*Zhaoyang mengshi*), but also for three of the four parodies he wrote about dreams.²²⁸

Dong's preface to his *Dream History* exudes a fascination with the mercuriality of dreams, like the infinite similitudes of the changing shapes of clouds, and concludes with the words, "Clouds are like madness; dreams are like drunkenness. The ancients so delighted in tipsiness that they extolled the virtue of wine. [Therein] superior men of later times [may] discern [why] my heart prizes dreams."²²⁹ The thirty-one dream records in this collection, while often eerie and always bizarre, are never terrifying and seldom ominous, and do not even hint at sexual desire.²³⁰ In them, Dong, seemingly with little inhibition, attempts to capture in writing the products of his hyperactive dream imagination, which is weirdly stimulated at times by his physical maladies. For instance: "When my eyes had hurt for a long time, [in a dream] my two pupils suddenly fell to the ground and turned into flood-dragons, which flitted endlessly around the courtyard."²³¹ In two cases, Dong sees dreams as confirming choices he had made or would make in the near future,²³² but he does not look to his dreams for instruction or prediction, nor does he venture much

227. See Zhao Hongjuan, *Ming-Qing Huzhou Dongshi*, 63–67; and Yang Yucheng, "Mengyi, outu yu yiliao," 19–20.

228. The following five paragraphs derive largely from Struve, "Alter World." For extensive documentation of Dong Tuo's several obsessions, including with dreams, see Zhao Hongjuan, *Ming yimin Dong Tuo*, chap. 3. For a psychological interpretation, see Yang Yucheng, "Mengyi, outu yu yiliao," 21–28.

229. *Zhaoyang mengshi*, preface, 1b. For a Japanese translation of *Zhaoyang mengshi*, see Dong Tuo, "Tō Etsu no mita yume."

230. One example of a rare ominous dream in *Zhaoyang mengshi* is "Tianxia jie caomu" (6a), in which Dong looks down from a high mountain—usually one of his favorite vantages—and becomes upset to see only plants, fearing that there are no people to talk to. In the dream "Zou baiyun shang" (3a), Dong, having climbed a ladder into the sky, strides along for several miles on top of a layer of clouds before missing a step and falling through into a paddy-field below. But no terror is expressed, and the effect is that of a pratfall.

231. "Tong wei jiao," in *Zhaoyang mengshi*, 9b.

232. See *Zhaoyang mengshi*, "Tian yu zi" (1a), in which Dong sees characters that rain down from the sky as figuratively composing a poem of returning home to seclusion, and the dream "Zhaoshu hunpo" (3a–b) which Dong sees as presaging his act of destroying his manuscripts a few months later.

interpretation. He is comfortable letting his dreams unfold and especially enjoys ones that explore landscapes—real, painted, or ceramic, all delight him.²³³

The parodies that Dong Tuo wrote about dreams in 1643,²³⁴ though much more performative than his dream records, are helpful in understanding his orientation toward dreaming. In the first of these, “Treatise on the Land of Dreams” (*Mengxiang zhi*), Dong describes his dreamland by absurdly meeting the desiderata of a treatise on a foreign country in some historical survey such as a dynastic history. After briefly citing evidence of this land’s existence in ancient records, he sets forth its seven internal divisions: strange birds, beasts, and humanoids; venerable mountains and rivers; netherworld roamings of the soul; confining thoughts, emotions, and cognitions; wishful fantasies of opulence and ease; the past; and the future. He then explains how cleanliness is promoted in those regions and how the land’s affairs are preserved and recorded. And he also lays out its statutory prohibitions: no talk of salacious dreams with selected guests; no forced dressing-up of banal dreams; no use of dreams for slander. Finally, he lists the officers who keep the dreamland well governed, including a marshal who enforces the prohibitions and issues fines for inferior dreams.

The second essay, “Soliciting Dreams” (*Zhengmeng pian*), perhaps punning on a term for seeking dreams from deities, parodies the “calls for submissions”—usually of short pieces such as poems or elegant letters—commonly issued by editors, or would-be editors, of anthologies of contemporary literature in late-Ming and early-Qing times.²³⁵ Dong Tuo simply substitutes records of interesting dreams as the desired material for sharing among gentlemen of like interests and tastes. Typically, an editor would first publish a collection of writings solicited from his friends and colleagues, and therewith he would issue an appeal for more such submissions to a wider circle of writers, often referencing similar literary activity among talented writers of the hallowed past. In this respect, Dong goes over the top, citing dream recorders from the beginning of Chinese civilization, as well as cases in which famous writers, unhappy with the world of money, sex, and power, turned to spheres of

233. For instance, see *Zhaoyang mengshi*, “Zou ru huatu” (1b), “Mai shan” (3b), or “Weng yue” (6a–b). Dong Tuo’s obsession of allowing alter-worlds, especially wonderful landscapes, to surround him in dreams is analogous to that of his contemporary Qi Biaoqia (1602–1645). Weary of politics, Qi became obsessed with creating his own subjective refuge, the hill garden *Yushan yuan*, partly from dream-inspired ideas which seemed to “open as though from Heaven.” See Cao Shujuan, “Qi Biaoqia yu *Yushan*,” esp. 394–395 (quoting from the preface to Qi’s *Yushan zhu*). On relations between dreams and written representations or actualizations of gardens by Dong, Qi, and several of their contemporaries, see W. Li, “Gardens and Illusions,” 305–307, 323–328.

234. *Fengcao’an qianji*, “Qiguo bian,” 12a–16b. For German translations of “*Mengxiang zhi*” and “*Mengshe yue*,” see Eggert, *Rede vom Traum*, 263–266.

235. On this practice in Dong Tuo’s lifetime, see Meyer-Fong, “Packaging the Men of Our Times.”

mystery, illusion, and dream for spiritual solace. As for his contemporaries, Dong writes, they can “maintain fond ties by presenting one another with their rustics’ dreams,” with which he will “begin publishing a ‘Dream Chronicle’ by engraving them on jade blocks in a Spirit Palace outside the azure sky and ocher earth, setting up work in the [palace historian’s fireproof] stone Orchid Room.” Dong concludes by venturing to say that, in such a role, he could be a great physician to his age.

The third essay, “Dream Society Pact” (Mengshe yue), parodies one of the social mechanisms by which networks were built among literati who contributed to the anthologies mentioned above: the covenant of a gentlemen’s “society.” Dong begins by establishing the importance accorded to dreams in the authoritative past and then exclaims at how uninteresting the world would be without dreams, making a particular case for the value of dreaming in disordered times. Those filled with worry and melancholy should “come travel with me,” he writes. “I can get you where you wish.” He then grandly prescribes four ways of dreaming for himself and his “dream friends”: having spiritually uplifting experiences in sacred places, attaining vast perspectives by ascending to wondrous heights, occupying the persona of someone who lived in an era of great peace and well-being, or, bodily transformed, entering scenes from the past or future.

Many years later, Dong would reflect back on this period of interest in “profound and distant” dreams which he thought could “cleanse people” of current, mundane concerns. His solicitation of others’ dreams came to naught, he recalled, because some people sent him contrived pieces like semifictional tales.²³⁶ If there had been any real plan to convene a society of dreamers or publish a dream chronicle, it was rendered moot anyway by the disastrous events of the next few years, during which Dong’s ability to find respite in dreams from illness-inducing tribulations became essential to his survival.

Huang Chunyao, like Dong Tuo also involved in Restoration Society activities, actually passed the Nanjing provincial examinations of 1642 and went on to pass the metropolitan examinations with flying colors in Beijing the following year.²³⁷ He did so primarily out of obligation to parents and patrons and his ego’s demands that he best other intellectuals of his day. In truth, he had strong misgivings about the probity and effectiveness of the civil service examination system and doubts about the suitability of his unbending, abstemious character for official life.²³⁸ Hav-

236. Dong Tuo, *Lianhua ji suibi*, xia.9a.

237. Material for the following seven paragraphs was first published in Struve, “Self-Struggles of a Martyr.” Briefly on Huang, see *ECCP*, 1:338–339; and for a sociopolitical study of Huang that places him within the dynamics of the Jiading resistance, see Dennerline, *Chia-ting Loyalists*, chaps. 8–10.

238. Having failed to take or to pass the provincial exams for sixteen years, Huang had ample time to think through his influential critique of the examination system, “Keju lun,” in Huang Chunyao, *Tao’an ji*, 1.1a–8b (summarized in Elman, *Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 217–219).

ing established a reputation for himself as a serious Confucian ethicist, Huang could scarcely conceal his revulsion at the self-prostitution to clique interests, the self-ingratiation with examiners, and the bribery of Ministry of Personnel officials—activities which were expected of candidates, not only to pass the examinations, but also to receive a worthwhile posting if successful. Perhaps having behaved too self-righteously in the weeks following his selection in the metropolitan competition, refusing to grease palms or wangle deals in the appointments process, Huang ended up with no official post at all. He returned to his home in Jiading city early in 1644 greatly dejected and unable to still his conflicted mind.

In that mood, Huang returned to two aids in self-cultivation that were common among ethically concerned gentlemen of his day: diary-keeping (discussed above), which he had practiced religiously for a decade by this time, and meeting regularly with a small group of intimate friends for mutual assistance in spiritual and behavioral self-improvement. His thirteen-member Straight Talk Society (Zhiyanshe) had formed the previous year, before his examination breakthrough. Though Huang had never before shown his diaries to anyone, using them only for self-reflection, he broke that rule to participate in diary-sharing with other members of the society. And probably for that reason a copy survived into the twentieth century (perhaps slightly purged of negative references to the Manchus), to be published in 1925 as *The 1644 Diary of Loyal and Principled Sir Huang* (*Huang Zhongjie gong jiashen riji*).

In choosing what sorts of things to enter in this diary, Huang came to systematically apply a threesome of categories that was common to both Neo-Confucian and Buddhist ideas for self-monitoring—speech (*kou*), deeds (*shēn*), and thought or conscience (*xin*)²³⁹—plus a fourth category that was natural for a Confucian scholar, book study (*dushu*). At an early point in the diary, Huang abruptly announces: “In the daytime interrogate one’s behavior; at night verify it in one’s dream-sleep. Neither [of these] two kinds of effort can be done without. They are the dreamer’s self-certification.”²⁴⁰ We may surmise from this statement, as well as other indications, that Huang was influenced by Cheng Yi’s phasic view of waking thought and sleeping dream as complementary, *yang* and *yin*, activities of mind, to which gentlemen should carefully attend. Thereafter in the diary, Huang consistently writes something about his nightly dream state, even when he recalls no dreams, or recalls only a mishmash, or even confesses to having a rather bad dream that he cannot

239. For discussion of this tripartite approach as advocated by the late-Ming scholar-official Lü Kun (1536–1618), see J. Smith, *Action in Late Ming Thought*, 190. Lü’s three categories correspond to Buddhism’s *sanye* (Skt. *trividhadārva*), the three media of karma-causing activities that must be attended to at all times.

240. Huang Chunyao, *Huang Zhongjie gong jiashen riji*, 5a–b.

bear to record.²⁴¹ Though Huang does not always write out interpretations of his retrieved dreams, their correlation with his explicit concerns about his recent speech, behavior, thoughts, and studies would not have been hard to discern by a peer reader.

Most pertinent here are reflections of the deep wound left on Huang's psyche by the successful examination and unsuccessful appointment experiences of 1642–1643. Irreconcilably conflicted in several ways, he blamed the system for wasting forty years of his life, years during which he might have made greater spiritual progress if not for the need to incessantly prepare for the exams. But he also acknowledged often defeating himself, both spiritually and in official circles, with a prideful and supercilious attitude. Dreams of writing examination essays and of traveling to Beijing are seen by Huang as indications that mental habits of the past have not yet been quelled.²⁴²

In another dream, Huang encounters a man who wants him to do full obeisance, and Huang asks how he can presume to make such a demand. Huang writes that, in reply, the man “seemed to say of himself that he was a man of the Way. I then said, ‘If I perceived you as a man of the Way, then I would accede to doing even a hundred obeisances. [But] right now I really don’t see that’s the case. Even if you only wished that I bend my waist, I could not bring myself to do it.’ Upon finishing these words, I awoke. This surely [shows] that my lifelong haughty and indomitable manner has, over time, become a demonic hindrance.”²⁴³ Such behavior harks back to the offense that Huang gave to important personages after passing the metropolitan exams, not stooping to grovel for a favorable appointment which he both wanted and dreaded. Having missed out on a posting, Huang now looked to his dreams for confirmation that official service, anyway, had been an undesirable goal. In one dream, for instance, Huang feels both elegant and vulgar in paying court to superiors in formal attire; his old habits, he writes, have not yet been put to rest. In another, he is dressed in formal robes and facing south (as though officiating), but under his feet is filth.²⁴⁴

As an instrument of self-cultivation, Huang's diary naturally is introspective. But awareness of ominous vibrations from the wider world is evinced, subtly at first—as in Huang's dream that evokes the Rolling-Thunder (Zhen) hexagram of the *Change Classic*²⁴⁵—and always in terms of Huang's concern about lack of integrality between his outer and inner selves. In particular, he fears that a brave face and rousing words might not be matched by a courageous heart and heroic action in a real

241. *Ibid.*, 7b.

242. *Ibid.*, 18a, 25a.

243. *Ibid.*, 25b.

244. *Ibid.*, 38a and 26b, respectively.

245. *Ibid.*, 6a. On this *Change Classic* dream in view of Huang's own scholarship on the work, see Struve, “Self-Struggles of a Martyr,” 377–379.

emergency. In the latter part of the diary, Huang's increasing worry over his readiness for a mortal test parallels his more frequent citations of Chan Buddhist classics on the importance of nonduality, as well as his use of the Chan imagery of militancy toward enemies of enlightenment and of courage on the brink of nothingness.²⁴⁶ For instance, late in the diary, having recently become engrossed in the harrowing discourse records of the great Linji Chan innovator Dahui Zonggao (1089–1163),²⁴⁷ Huang writes, "I dreamed of bandits engaging in plunder. I threatened to send troops against them and angrily castigated them, saying, 'Bandits, bandits: I am certainly not one who fears you!' Then suddenly I awoke. Alas, to not fear external bandits is easy; to not fear internal bandits is hard. That now my dreams and waking [thoughts] are not the same is because I am constrained by internal bandits."²⁴⁸

The received text of Huang Chunyao's diary abruptly terminates at the end of the third lunar month, 1644, probably at the point when Huang learns of the fall of Beijing. Surviving testimony from Huang's own hand is scarce after this point. No further dream records aid us in understanding his frame of mind in the subsequent year, as he turned from seclusion, to active participation in resisting the Qing takeover of Jiading, to double suicide with his younger brother when the city walls were breached and a massacre of Jiading's residents ensued in the seventh month of 1645. The diary does attest, however, that dreams became important to Huang Chunyao as his feelings toward the examination system and public service became sharply conflicted, and as his anxieties intensified about how he would respond, as an ethical man, to a collapse of sociopolitical order.

Thus, we can see from the examples of Dong Tuo and Huang Chunyao that men of quite different mental dispositions could find, among the various cultural associations of dreaming—here, dismissible illusoriness, fascinating freedom, and revelation of conscience—help in dealing with the particular cares of frustrated literati in the last decade of the Ming. Theirs is but one facet of the extraordinary occupation with dreaming that had arisen among Chinese intellectuals since the mid-sixteenth century, along with widespread changes of emphasis in philosophico-religious outlook, dilution of commitment to government service, and correlated shifts in literary modes and tastes, all of which heightened concern for the condition of one's individual, essential, subjective self. This concern was sharpened further with the collapse of the Ming state and resulting direct endangerments to the mortal being of every dreamer in the land.

246. On these topics in Chan, see Loy, *Nonduality*, esp. 218–224; and the essays "Death" and "Power" in Lopez, *Critical Terms*, esp. 57–59 and 213.

247. On Zonggao, see C. Yü, "Ta-hui Tsung-ko." On the widespread interest in him among late-Ming literati, see J. Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, 5, 54.

248. Huang Chunyao, *Huang Zhongjie gong jiashen riji*, 39a.

Crisis Dreaming

THE FALL OF BEIJING IN 1644, first to roving rebels and then to invading Manchu-Qing forces, was a nodal event: it was the culmination of more than two decades of contestation, in which the Ming dynasty lost control of the far northeasterly Liao region and then North China. And it marked the onset of two more decades of contestation over control of South China, from the subjugation of Jiangnan in 1645–1646 to the nearly simultaneous quelling of Ming-loyalist elements in far-southwestern Yunnan and the far-southeastern maritime zone in 1662. Then, in the mid-1670s, a civil war ensued when three Qing feudatories in the southernmost provinces revolted against the court. No one who lived in China proper between the 1620s and the 1670s was unaffected by this maelstrom, the armed protagonists of which were extremely diverse—Qing Banner forces, surrendered and resistant Ming army units, local militias and outlaw groups, remnants of the roving-rebel armies, merchant-marine freebooters, and fighters from the west-southwestern native chieftaincies, to paint with yet a broad brush.

Under the extreme stresses of prolonged life-or-death challenges, Chinese literati of this period, while exhibiting several forms of follow-through on salient developments in late-Ming dream culture, recorded dreams that especially reflect their ultimate religious beliefs and most basic spiritualities. In some, dream content reinforced commitments to firmly held values and subscribed truths by showing how rooted those were even in the dreamer's subconscious mind. For others in whom spiritual paths were less clear, the inchoate nature of dreams seemed to taunt their unsettled minds with riddles, discomfitures, and frights. And at least one extraordinary individual, through psychologically compensatory dreams, was able to mentally escape the intolerable conditions of daily life by oneirically creating alternative worlds of curiosity, amusement, and bliss.

The sites of the dreaming examined in this chapter were far-flung: Guiyang and Guilin, capitals respectively of the remote provinces of Guizhou and Guangxi

in China's southwest; the coastal city of Ningbo in eastern Zhejiang Province; and the shores of Tai Lake in the Yangzi delta region (see fig. 12). The featured dreamers, however, all hailed from an area of about thirty miles around Tai Lake, which suggests something about the cultural geography of self-writing in seventeenth-century China. Moreover, they were of similar social and educational backgrounds and from wealthy scholar-official households. Yet their dream profiles are highly diverse, showing us again the importance of individual psychology in resonance with multifarious, ambient attitudes toward dreams, and reminding us that great, perduring thought systems are so because, rich and capacious, they can be approached and partaken of by people with very different temperaments and spiritual needs.

Certainties

The following records are examples of quite dissimilar dreams born of ultimate convictions grounded respectively in the Buddhist and the Confucian faiths. They are provided by two men who faced death in Guiyang and Guilin, cities less than 250 miles apart (as the bird flies): Liu Xixuan (b. 1574) at the beginning of the Ming slide toward collapse, and Qu Shisi (1590–1651) at the opposite end of that temporal spectrum, when any hope of a Ming restoration became futile.

Liu Xixuan, a midlevel official and also a serious lay Buddhist since passing the metropolitan examinations in 1607, was sustained by his Buddhist faith, confirmed largely through dreams, during a three-hundred-day siege of Guiyang city by rebellious forces of Guizhou's tribal peoples in 1622.¹ This was but one drama in a widespread revolt of the native chieftaincies (*tusi*) of southern Sichuan and all of Guizhou, which had repercussions throughout China's west-southwest from 1621 until 1630, and which constitutes an important though generally overlooked factor in the terminal weakening of the Ming state.

Campaigns to quell restlessness among the populous aboriginal tribes of this region had been recurrent during the Ming, when a system of native chieftaincies was further refined to maintain a semblance of order in areas where the ethnically Han population was slight and where resources would not sustain the operation of prefectures and counties governed by rank-and-file Han bureaucrats. On a quasi-feudal pattern, the Ming court conferred titles, privileges, and gifts on tribal leaders (often semi-sinicized, hereditary leaders) who

1. The following discussion of Liu Xixuan takes many cues from "Shidai weiji yu geren jueze" by He Shuyi, who kindly brought Liu's case to my attention. For biographies of Liu, see *Qianlong Changzhou xianzhi*, 24.45a–b; and *Jushi zhuan*, 47.247a. (In Qing-period publications, the last character of Liu Xixuan's name is written 元.)



FIGURE 12. Late Ming China.

in return sent tribute items, provided expeditionary fighters (renowned for their fierceness) when called upon, and kept the peace in their bailiwicks. Plenty could go wrong in this imperfect system, manipulated perfidiously as it was on both sides. A major, chronic source of friction, salient in the present case, was the inexorable migration of Han-Chinese settlers from more crowded parts of China into tribal areas, which inevitably resulted in lands being subtracted from tribal control and consigned to governance under the regular Ming bureaucracy, often without appropriate compensation to the affected tribes. Despite the frequent need for “pacification” measures against disgruntled non-Han ethnic groups in the southwest, such hostilities were considered domestic affairs, which, being distant from either of the Ming capitals, were not seen to warrant the degree of constant military preparedness that was maintained on the northern border and along the southeastern coast.²

2. On the *tusi* system during the Ming, see Shin, *Making of the Chinese State*, chap. 3. For a long temporal perspective on ethnic governance and unrest in Guizhou, see Wen Chunlai, *Cong “yiyu” dao “jiujiang.”* On Ming military preparedness, or lack thereof, to deal with southwestern native uprisings, see Li Xiaolong, “Mingdai xi’nan zongdu.”

The overriding concern for the security of Beijing was greatly heightened in 1619–1621, when the Ming court became alarmed by the Manchus' seizure of Liao East,³ and orders went out to draw troops and provisions from other parts of the country to reinforce northeastern defenses. Two familially related leaders of the Miao and Zhongjia peoples of southern Sichuan and northwestern Guizhou, She Chongming (d. 1629) and An Bangyan (d. 1629), took advantage of this situation to effect a ruse: amass fighting men near a major urban center on the pretext of offering military services to the Ming, collect a lot of weapons and provisions for that feigned purpose, and then turn on the city. In the ninth month of 1621, She in this way seized Chongqing and went on to besiege the Sichuan capital, Chengdu. An, called upon by Ming officials in Guizhou to attack She, instead beefed up his forces with Ming ordnance and supplies and turned on Guiyang. Other non-Han ethnic groups, galvanized by the prospect of creating a natively ruled state in the region, joined the She–An Rebellion, and soon several provinces—Sichuan, Guizhou, Huguang, Guangxi, Guangdong, and Yunnan—were engulfed in or sorely affected by a major revolt.⁴

Liu Xixuan, from Suzhou Prefecture, had been a serious student of military affairs but theretofore had served in relatively minor, non-military positions, most recently as secretary of the Bureau of Sacrifices in Nanjing. Early in 1621, he reluctantly accepted an appointment as assistant education intendant for Guizhou and learned of She Chongming's revolt in Sichuan en route to his new post. This, and Liu's receipt of an additional, concurrent appointment as troop supervising censor, boded ill for an uneventful tour of duty. Arriving in Guiyang, Liu found himself third in rank among the understaffed provincial officers, behind the governor who had just resigned and a regional inspector. An emergency transfer of funds was soon used to provision and send most of Guizhou's troops to the north-east of the province, to retake areas along a major supply route that had fallen to She Chongming's men. Thus, the government granary in isolated Guiyang—largely dependent on shipments from outside agriculturally poor Guizhou—was insufficiently stocked to withstand a prolonged hiatus in deliveries. After the siege began in the second lunar month of 1622, Liu very carefully husbanded both the remaining grain supplies and the few troops left in the city while also organizing citizen militias. But further disaster struck in the fourth month when two of

3. See Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, 1:59–66.

4. An Bangyan wielded de facto power as the paternal uncle of the still-young hereditary successor to the headship of the Shuixi native chieftaincy. The most substantial general account of his rebellion dates from the early Qing; see Li Zhen, *Mingji Shuixi jilue*. Among several modern accounts, see Liu Xiulan, "Lun Mingmo Chuan-Qian"; and Wen Chunlai, *Cong "yiyu" dao "jiujiang,"* 152–164. On the natural, ethnic, and political environment of Guizhou in late Ming and early Qing, see Weinstein, *Empire and Identity*, chap. 2.

the deputed Ming armies, abandoning the northeastward campaign, broke into Guiyang seeking shelter and victuals rather than helping with the defense of the city. Those refractory soldiers “sat and ate” their way through the government supplies and then began harassing the populace, perpetrating some of the worst atrocities of the siege period. As the city’s true defenders grew weaker and fewer, tribal fighters repeatedly came close to breaching the walls, and Liu, for his part, was on the verge of suicide several times. When the siege finally was broken in the twelfth month with the arrival of an army under the succeeding provincial governor, a city whose civilian households normally numbered a hundred thousand had been reduced—by combat, flight, or starvation—to barely more than a thousand individuals. Liu himself had lost a trusted family servant and one of his two concubines, the birth mother of his younger son, who had accompanied him to his post.⁵

Ten months of unrelieved mortal peril and heavy responsibility for others’ lives brought vividly into Liu’s waking and sleeping consciousness the essentials of his firm Buddhist convictions, which are evinced abundantly in several of the records he kept of his actions, thoughts, and experiences in Guizhou, especially during the siege of Guiyang. Before, during, and after his journey homeward in early 1623, he compiled, edited, and commented upon the copious documentation he had kept from that whole profoundly affecting episode. The resulting *Ten Collections from South Guizhou* (*Qiannan shiji*) include his diary during the siege (eventually illustrated with ten woodblock scenes); a journal of personal—especially religious—thoughts about the course of events, in the vein of the “sharply awakening” (*jingce*) testimonies and confessionals that had burgeoned in late Ming; spiritual reflections during his return journey; and, of particular relevance here, a log of his dreams (fifty-one in all) and *Change Classic* divinations from before and during the Guiyang ordeal, often with comments on how earlier dreams were “borne out” in events.⁶ The speed with which these publications appeared reflects, most probably, Liu’s desire to defend himself against accusations of incompetence from the regional inspector under whom he had served and, just

5. Liu had left his wife at home, in Changzhou, to care for his parents. Both of Liu’s sons had accompanied him to Guiyang, but the eldest was sent home when the threat of siege arose (in order to protect the patriline).

6. Two variant editions bear identical prefaces dated to the seventh month of 1623. The edition titled *Xuncheng lu* (held at the National Library, Taipei) is a poorly produced hodgepodge, which does, however, contain one treatise not found in the other edition. The log of Liu’s dreams and divinations, “Weicheng mengbu,” can be found only in the other, better-produced, edition, *Qiannan shiji*, the reprint of which, cited here, is based on a copy held by the Central University for Nationalities, Beijing. This latter edition also includes the elaborate illustrations of scenes from Liu’s diary, which the *Xuncheng lu* lacks.

as important, his wish to show the compatibility of Buddhism with public service and to proselytize for the faith.⁷

To understand Liu Xixuan's certainty about the truth of his Buddhist practice, the peace of mind he found in accepting whatever might befall him as the Buddha's will, and his propensity to find indications and affirmations of both in his dreams, we must look back to the summer of 1620 (*gengshen* 庚申). That was when the dreams and deliriums he had during three weeks of a strange illness completely resolved in his mind an old tension in Buddhism: between the mind-filling invocation of Amitābha Buddha's presence, as advocated by the Pure Land school, and the mind-emptying approach of confounding rational thought with inexplicable phrases, gestures, "beatings, and shouts," as favored in major Chan traditions such as Caodong.⁸ The course of Liu's unconventional enlightenment-by-plague was characteristically documented at length in a section titled "'Seven Stimulations' in the Summer of a *Geng* Year" (*Gengxia* "Qifa"),⁹ published in a collection of his earlier writings, *Remaining Swept-up Reminders* (*Saoyu zhi yu*). The illness—during which, Liu claims, he never felt ill or uncomfortable—ran its course in phases: first, seven days of coma-like sleep of which he remembered nothing, but during which he spoke coherently as though discussing the *Śūraṅgama Sutra* (his words having been taken in dictation by a visiting co-religionist); then a period of outward lucidity and balance but actual focus on an inner dialogue prompted by dreamed visions, voices, and phrases; and finally a phase of crazily joyous, intoxicated abandon—the euphoria of one who has undergone a genuine religious enlightenment.

Two turning points seem to have been key to what Liu concluded from this whole experience, and to what later sustained him during the siege of Guiyang. One night he had elaborate dreams of challenging minor officials over their evil deeds, debating with an inner friend over abstruse questions, reenvisioning kaleidoscopically all the most abhorrent and delightful things he had ever seen, and witnessing the terrors and sufferings of hell. But he discovered that throughout, as he firmly held to the "four-characters," A-mi-tuo Fo (Amitābha Buddha), then

7. Liu's interpretation of one dream expresses his view that he has been discriminated against in official appointments because of his devotion to Buddhism, the undesirable posting to Guizhou being just the most recent case; see "Weicheng mengbu," 2b–3a, in Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, 317–318. On a trend in late-Ming and early-Qing times to reconcile Buddhist spirituality with dynastic loyalty, see Liao Zhaoheng, "Yi zhongxiao zuo Foshi."

8. See He Shuyi, "Shidai weiji," 75–79. On the antinomian practice of "beating and shouting" (*banghe*) as part of a "reinvented" Chan in seventeenth-century China, see J. Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*.

9. This rendering supposes an allusion by Liu to the prose-poem "Qifa" by Mei Cheng (d. 141 BCE) in which a crown prince is persuaded by a guest to cure his illnesses through spiritual reform. See Mei and Wang, *Mei Cheng's "Seven Stimuli,"* 3–99.

“even in the midst of illness, my mind was unitary and undisturbed, [to a degree that] I had never felt in the purest daytime of my forty-seven years.” Fully accepting whatever might be his karmic fate for the present incarnation, he only appealed to Amitābha and Guanyin (Dashì) to compassionately lend strength to his soul on its migration through the *kalpas*. “As soon as I had this thought, all the good and bad elements, as well as the manifestations of hell, entirely extinguished one another and disappeared. Peacefully, I awoke.”¹⁰ The other point came eight nights later, when Liu dreamed of two aphoristic phrases which went ‘round and ‘round in his mind as he tried to apprehend their meaning for his physical and mental health. Between sleeping and waking, he realized that he had no need to puzzle over such aphorisms because “not only would I not die from this illness, actually the Thus-come One was making use of the appearance of illness to [help me] attain the Path” and to understand that “ultimately there is no barrier between life and death.”¹¹

Although Liu continued to alarm his doctors and members of his household for a couple of days with curses, wildly elated jokes, and recitations from all manner of literary and Buddhist sources, “he himself felt that each word emitted from his mouth in some way verified his unity with the Linji, Yunmen, Gui-Yang, and Caodong [schools of Chan] as well as the *Flower Garland*, *Lotus*, *Lankāvata*, and *Śūrangama* [Sutras].”¹² Soon he was able to return to his normal ways, but with a conviction that the powers of the Buddha were aiding his karma (*ye*), and that the quality of his faculty for exerting mind over matter—including spirited indifference to whether he lived or died—was determined by that sacredly assisted karma.¹³

Particularly in its dream dimensions, this record shows signs of influence from the teachings of Hanshan Deqing, to whom Liu had personally articulated a vivid dream in 1617, and to whom he later sent a copy of his “Seven Stimulations.”¹⁴ Though more deterministic and credulous than Deqing, Liu accords with him in practicing *nian-Fo* (Buddha-mindfulness or recitation of Buddha’s name) to calm his mind, recall the Buddha-presence in himself, and gather in spiritual energy, rather than seek a privileged rebirth. He approaches dream mentations as valid—

10. “Gengxia ‘Qifa,’” 11a–12b, in Liu Xixuan, *Saoyu zhi yu*.

11. *Ibid.*, 14b–15a.

12. *Ibid.*, 18b–19a.

13. A good expression of this conviction can be found in “Weicheng zalu,” 26b–28a, in Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, 247–248.

14. Hanshan Deqing, *Hanshan laoren mengyou ji*, 25.641c and 17.584c, respectively. In the first instance, although Deqing was skeptical of certain ideas that Liu advanced about his dream, the letter impressed Deqing as supportive of the non-killing and release-to-live of animals. Regarding Liu’s account of his strange illness, which Deqing received in 1623, he counseled Liu to trust his own mind but to be reserved about taking that one spate of experiences as adequate confirmation of enlightenment. Further on Liu’s affinity with Deqing, see He Shuyi, “Shidai weiji,” 86–89.

even key—objects of interrogation just like critical phrases in the Chan tradition of “eyeing words” (*kanhua*). And he takes the personal experience of Buddha’s power working in his own destiny as the core of a wide range of Buddhist practices and scriptural traditions, overriding such differences as those between Pure Land and Chan. Elsewhere, in Liu’s journals during the siege of Guiyang, he makes frequent reference to Deqing’s favorite scripture, the *Flower Garland Sutra*,¹⁵ which, as discussed before, presents dreaming as a prime medium through which bodhisattvas can bring spiritual aid to believers. Also, he refers repeatedly to Yongming Yanshou’s *Source-Mirror*, which Deqing often cited. For Liu Xixuan, like Deqing, that text was compelling for its use of Yogācāra insights to understand and value the cognitions generated by *nian-Fo* practice as well as those that occur as dreams. In the foreword to his dream log, Liu shows compatibility with Yanshou’s Yogācāra approach by acknowledging that dreams, indeed, are cognitions (*shi*), not wisdom (*zhi*), but then arguing that

[if] the untrue is not pursued to the utmost, then the source of the true cannot be traced. How can we know that our labors in the dust of daytime are any different from [the so-called] incoherencies and derangements [of dreams]? Within those incoherencies and derangements, the three natures [of cognition] can be gauged [through their] perceptual objects. Using one’s fifty-one mental faculties maximally, if the bad [aspects of] sleep are followed upon and monitored one after another without fail, then the signs of good and bad will be thoroughly [identified], and the whys and wherefores of [both] day and night will be penetrated.¹⁶

The *Source-Mirror* figures particularly in another earlier dream that took on great significance for Liu Xixuan during the siege of Guiyang. Believing that the spirits of revered historical figures, worshipped at various shrines throughout the country, are manifestations of Buddha truth,¹⁷ in the winter of 1619 Liu had “begged for a dream” at a shrine in Hangzhou dedicated to Yu Qian (Zhongsu gong), the minister of war who preserved the continuity of the Ming dynasty and prevented a siege of Beijing when the reigning emperor was captured by invading Oirats in 1449.¹⁸ Liu writes,

15. See “Riji jingce,” 4a, 12b, 14b, 16a–b, 18a–19b, 21a, in Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, 265, 269, 270–273.

16. “Weicheng mengbu xiaoyin,” 1b–2a, in Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, 317. On the Chinese Yogācāra terms *sanxing* and *wushiyi* [*xin*]*suo*, see the respective entries in *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*.

17. “Weicheng zalu,” 48b, in Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, 258.

18. See *DMB*, 2:1608–1612.

As soon as I hit the pillow and closed my eyes, I saw the four characters “happy as people’s king.” Then it seemed that [someone] was intending to boil a person, and I saw the three characters “great man soup” before waking. Closing my eyes again, I saw the *Source-Mirror*, *juan 27*, and saw the character “memorialize.” I woke again [and remained awake] for quite a while before falling into a deep sleep that lasted until around one in the morning and dreaming that a big [force of] caitiffs was approaching the city wall. I was in a very small, high place [with a] window that seemed [open] to the west. From atop the window lattice I grabbed a big rock and threw it at a caitiff, but missed. He turned, picked up the rock, and was going to throw it [back] upward. I [tried to] close the lattice, but it had no bolt, and the wall was about to be breached!

Still in the dream, Liu then turns and goes down a back road to a familiar-seeming place near a river, where, as the footsteps of family members become audible, he prepares to commit suicide by drowning. “I faced the water and began Pure Land concentration, reciting the Buddha’s name, feeling no fear [of death] or attachment [to life]. After a long while, my parents and wife arrived, all wearing the formal attire of official [families], looking very stately in richly decorated, neatly worn caps and pendants, listening attentively for news from the [city] wall, and preparing to enter the water [with me in a] whole-family [suicide].” After another long while, however, they hear signals indicating that the caitiffs have retreated, and Liu is consternated to find himself having happy thoughts of entertaining guests when he should be engaging in self-reflection on such a warning. He sees two or three people in a small boat and wonders whether they are caitiffs. Then someone tells him to read a work he has never heard of, he again sees the character “memorialize,” and then awakes. That morning, he borrows a copy of the *Source-Mirror* at a nearby monastery and is intrigued to find that it discusses ten approaches to Pure Land.¹⁹ Also worth noting is that *juan 27* gives a prime expression of Yanshou’s “Consciousness-Only Pure Land” (Weixin Jingtū), which complements the mind’s capacity for stillness with its capacity for activity—activity such as envisioning Dharma images, whether awake or in sleep.²⁰

Even before Liu’s arrival in Guizhou, he looked back on this dream as foresight into what would transpire for him there. For him, it was an especially memorable in-

19. For this dream record and Liu’s specific interpretations, see “Weicheng mengbu,” 1a–2b, in his *Qiannan shiji*, 317. Therein Liu glyphomantically sees the two characters 人 and 王 in “people’s king” as forming the single character 全, “whole,” signifying to him that he will return in one piece, unharmed.

20. For discussion, see Welter, *Yongming Yanshou’s Conception of Chan*, 32–33. In *Yongming Yanshou*, *Zongjing lu*, *juan 27*, see esp. 568a.

stance of placing his doubts piously before the four kinds of holy ones (*sisheng*)²¹—in this case represented by the spirit of Yu Qian as well as *Change Classic* hexagrams²²—and found that his inscrutable powers of cognition (*shishen*) could tell him in advance whether things would turn out well or not.²³ The siege dream made Liu optimistic that he, and Guiyang, would survive, and it reinforced the confidence he drew from the dreams-in-illness that, in any event, he could face death with total equanimity, even transcendence, because his fate was in the compassionate hands of the Buddha.

This sense of supernatural support comes through intensely in a half-dream experience from an early point in the Guiyang ordeal, when the area outside the city wall was being cleared in preparation for an expected siege. Feeling fatigued, Liu (who usually patrolled most of the night and did not go to bed until around three in the morning) had gone to take a nap on the lower level of the North Gate Watchtower, where some gunpowder left over from making weapons had been left scattered around. Close to midnight, sparks from the intentional burning down of structures outside the North Gate ignited the gunpowder in the watchtower. As Liu recounts,

The flames burst out right in the paper screen at the head of my bed. I heard an extremely loud sound in my dream-sleep and, alarmed, got out of bed, losing track of my shoes. As the noxious smoke and dreadful flames went straight from my eyes and nose down to my core, I was suffocating and near giving up. I groped along the wall in my stocking feet, stepping and shrinking back by turns, but each time I shrank back, two people lifted me under my arms. At first I addressed them as yamen servants, asking urgently where the exit door was, but they did not reply. As my mind became even more anxious, I could only implore Guanyin to [let me] die quickly. Having been hoisted 'round to the outside [of the tower], [I found that] the [gathered] licentiates and underlings were milling about indecisively, unable to tell where I was. [They said that] not only had I broken through the smoke and flames fully upright, there had been no one helping me [see fig. 13]. Only then [did I realize,] to my surprise, that those two people were not [really] people.

21. The *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, bodhisattvas, and buddhas.

22. Liu took up *Change Classic* divination during the siege because his attempts to reassure colleagues and citizens based on his dream experiences were met with skepticism, and, as he writes in “Weicheng mengbu xiaoyin” (in *Qiannan shiji*), among educated people it was a more familiar, respected, and clear-cut means of probing the future, especially concerning events at large. Nevertheless, he still preferred examining his dreams for “setting firmly my own feet.” As He Shuyi points out, Liu’s hexagram interpretations are consistently correlated with his dream interpretations, both having been written largely post-siege (“Shidai weiji,” 73–74).

23. “Weicheng mengbu xiaoyin,” 1a, in Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, 316.

In a while, one of the licentiates offered to lend Liu a pair of shoes and, since Liu had been treading through a burning building and run out onto rain-soaked ground, also offered him a clean pair of stockings. But when Liu went to remove his socks, he found them unsoiled. “Everyone sighed in amazement saying it was a supernatural anomaly, though for my part, I was abashed [to wonder] what virtue [in me] had made it so. After this [incident], I had even less concern for my physical body, being certain that no rebel could [determine] whether I lived or died.”²⁴

In mostly less dramatic ways, this pattern in which a threat has no serious consequence appears in many of the dreams in Liu’s log. Early on, the rebellious chieftains, for instance, are variously represented by wild or feral animals, angry insects, unpleasant wooden puppets, or repulsive dwarfs, none of which ends up causing Liu more than some annoyance. As the siege ensues, Liu dreams of more frightening situations, such as nearly falling from a boat, a perilous pathway, a high fence, or a narrow bridge, but he always evades harm effortlessly.²⁵

Liu never attributes any good outcome to his own ability as an official. His pervading sense of being out of his depth, particularly as a troop supervising censor facing a major uprising, is expressed graphically in one dream of a very large garden pond from which the water was being drained. The water level had gone down to about a foot, and numberless fish of various sizes could be seen leaping about in the shallows. There was one extremely big one, about ten feet long and the span of two men’s arms in girth, fishtailing through the water and lifting up its dragonlike head. Liu excitedly called his parents and wife to come and see the big fish. He ordered that visitors be declined, and he perfunctorily sent away a ministry functionary who came with some official correspondence. Liu had returned to watching the fish, which was flopping in the shade of a study built near the labyrinthine pond, when he awoke. Liu’s interpretation reads: “This signifies receiving, undeservedly, an important office. When my parents and wife came, the fish retreating to the shade of the study on the pond [meant]: [amidst] the pleasures of the family garden, why covet a challenging appointment? But I shouldered the Imperial command, feeling cramped [by the responsibility], and eventually my poor constitution could not sustain it. My dream-spirit prefigured this, too.”²⁶ In other words, Liu’s shallow pond of ability could never have sustained such a big-fish appointment.

24. “Weicheng zalu,” 3b–4b, in Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, 235–236.

25. In the one dream that really frightened Liu, he holds on to his son desperately to keep him from falling off a mountainside. See “Weicheng mengbu,” 10a, in Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, 321.

26. “Weicheng mengbu,” 13b–14a, in Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, 323.

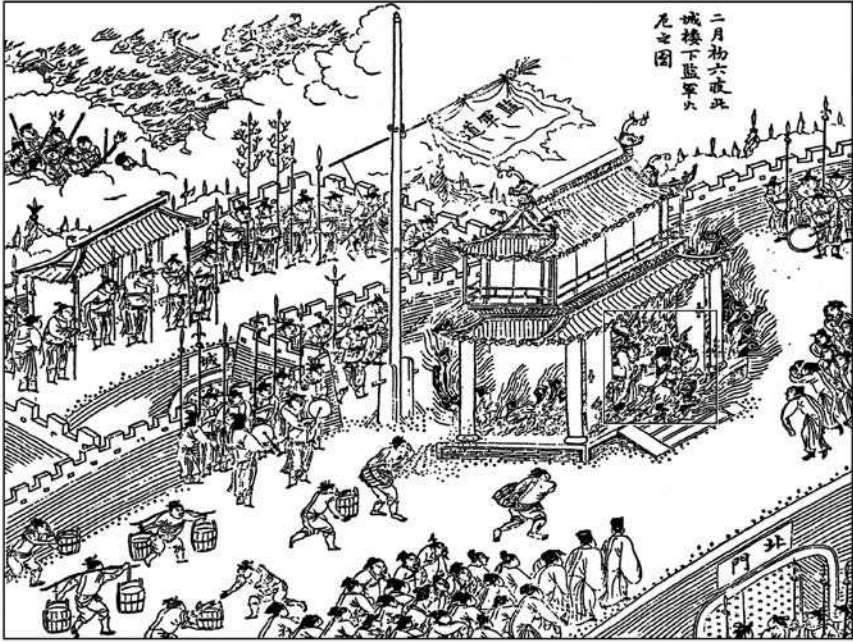


FIGURE 13. Woodblock illustration of Liu Xixuan emerging shoeless from the burning North Gate Watchtower of Guiyang, assisted by two mysterious figures (see detail). From Liu's *Qiannan shiji* (reprint 208). Graphics by James B. Campbell.

The local-history biography of Liu Xixuan indicates that later, in the Chongzhen reign period, he was appointed administrative vice commissioner for a northeastern border region, but his biography as a lay Buddhist suggests that, in his last years, he was more interested in organizing literati societies for “releasing [animals] to live” (*fangsheng*) and for *dhāranī* recitation.²⁷

Generally speaking, Confucians tended to criticize Buddhist beliefs in karma and salvific beings such as buddhas and bodhisattvas as inducing passivity, fatalism, and spiritual other-dependency. As one can see in someone like Liu Xixuan, the cogency of such criticism was limited, because Liu felt that he still had to muster from within himself enough spiritual worthiness to receive Buddha aid and that help with one’s karma came only to those who also helped themselves and others. Complementarily, while emphasizing the cultivation of inner spiritual resources, Confucians did so in order to realize the connection of their individual makeup with the universal, ultimately good, force of Heaven. Yet in some periods such as the prolonged distress of the Ming–Qing transition, when “Heaven’s will” seemed inscrutably perverse, Confucian individuals would look to their inner resources and to exemplars of inner strength in the history of human affairs, while Buddhists could hope for compassionate deliverance from (non)beings outside of time. Such differences in spiritual culture between these two creeds, expressed in different individuals in different situations, could produce strongly contrasting mentalities—and thus strongly contrasting dream reports.

Leaping forward twenty-eight years, we find the Ming dynasty on its last legs just to the south of Guiyang, in Guangxi Province. Since the suicide of the Chongzhen emperor in 1644,²⁸ three Ming princes had successively headed rump Ming courts in Nanjing (Jiangnan), Shaoxing (Zhejiang), and Fuzhou (Fujian), only to see their regimes destroyed in short order by the Manchu–Qing juggernaut. For the Qing leadership, however, gaining a firm grip on the provinces in the far south and southwest, with Banner forces overextended and turncoat Ming armies unreliable, had proven to be a very taxing and time-consuming challenge. The difficulties in this had allowed diehard Ming loyalists to enthrone one last imperial claimant in order to prolong hopes of a restoration: the young and inexperienced Zhu Youlang (1623–1662), formally declared Yongli emperor in Zhaoqing, Guangdong, on December 24, 1646.²⁹

27. On *dhāranī* recitation, another practice advocated by Hanshan Deqing, see entries on *zhou* and *tuoluoni* in *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*. On literati clubs in the late Ming and early Qing that centered on releasing captive or food animals, see J. Smith, “Liberating Animals,” esp. 55; and Eichman, *Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship*, chap. 4.

28. For a detailed account of the last two days of the Chongzhen emperor’s life, see Yu Tongyuan, *Chongzhen shiqi nian*, chap. 1.

29. On Zhu Youlang, who recently had inherited the title Prince of Yongming, see *ECCP*, 1:193–195. On events surrounding his enthronement, see Struve, *Southern Ming*, 99–103.

The most instrumental figure in this enthronement was Qu Shisi (1590–1651), of Changshu, Jiangnan, who had been appointed governor of Guangxi by the Nanjing government but found himself without a legitimate monarch to serve after the demises of the eastern courts. For the next four years, coping with on-and-off Qing advances, perfidy among militarists who were supposed to defend the Yongli regime, deadly factionalism surrounding the weak-willed emperor, and the disinclination of that would-be ruler to take a stand in any one location, Qu (with the concurrent titles Minister of Personnel, Minister of War, Grand Secretary, and Grand Preceptor of the Heir Apparent heaped on him) remained a rock of probity, loyalty, and determination. As the imperial family and its increasingly ragtag court fled every threat, repeatedly traversing sites in western Guangdong, southern Huguang, and Guangxi, Qu focused on holding a city that was key to any invasion and occupation of Guangxi, the provincial capital, Guilin (see fig. 12).³⁰

Qu had succeeded at this in 1648, when he repulsed three Qing attempts to seize Guilin. But late in 1650, past the age of sixty, he faced a more serious challenge as the Qing side sent its best Banner armies, under seasoned, high-ranking Liao East generalissimos, on a three-pronged campaign to finally capture and hold Guangdong and Guangxi.³¹ When Qing forces under the Prince Who Secures the South, Kong Youde (d. 1652), overran the remote-defense bulwarks of Guilin to the northeast, the militarists under Qu's nominal command all fled, as did everyone in Guilin connected with the Ming cause, including almost every member of Qu's household. The exception was Qu's viceroy, Zhang Tongchang (d. 1651), who *came to* Guilin from his station farther south in order to die with his superior. The two compatriots waited stoically in the governor's yamen, where Qing troops found them on November 24, 1650, and took them to Kong Youde.³²

Kong, hoping to secure Qu Shisi's services for the Qing, or at least to neutralize him as an agent of the Ming, promised Qu high office if he would switch sides and, failing in that ploy, offered to release him if he would shave his head and live as a monk. These alternatives were firmly, even derisively refused. Qu and Zhang were held in separate rooms of an ordinary house for forty days before Qu purposely provoked Kong into executing them.³³ During those forty days, Qu wrote a large number of poems, some in exchanges with Zhang Tongchang, despite the serious injuries Zhang had sustained at the hands of his captors. Forty of those poems, our last indications

30. For modern biographies, see *ECCP*, 1:199–201; *QRZ*, 3:296–304; Qu Guoxing, *Qu Shisi nianpu*; and Fan Yaxiu, “Cong Yushan dao Guilin.”

31. See Struve, *Southern Ming*, 107, 140–143.

32. On Kong Youde, see *ECCP*, 1:435–436; and *QRZ*, 4:140–152. Ironically, a year and a half later, Kong himself would commit suicide in Guilin when he, in turn, lost the city to an erstwhile roving-rebel leader who had become a supporter of the Yongli emperor.

33. See Jäger, “Die letzten Tage des Kü Schi-si”; or Qu Guoxing, *Qu Shisi nianpu*, 161–176.

of Qu's thoughts and feelings as he awaited death, were published by Qu's family in Changshu in 1652 under the title *In tonations of an Overflowing Spirit* (*Haoqi yin*), alluding to the self-described source of courage in the Confucian sage Mencius.³⁴ Particularly through some dream references, the poems add poignantly to our resources in answering the question, Why was this man so committed to dying in this way?

First, there was family and life background. Qu Shisi's forebears in his grandfather's and father's generations had distinguished themselves in both government service and scholarship, his father having been especially well regarded for uprightness.³⁵ And Shisi himself not only had been greatly respected as a Ming district magistrate; he also had taken up the reformist cause of the Eastern Grove partisan movement, willing to incur dismissal and imprisonment as a consequence. Thus, he strongly identified with the best interests of the Ming state and was the sort of man who would insist that, as the chief official responsible for losing a border region, he should pay for that failure with his life. Yet Qu, in his disgust at the loose principles of most of the generals under his command, also represents the fraught relations between civil and military officials that severely crippled the Ming state when it was faced with rebellions and invasions in the seventeenth century. He wanted to provide a contrast to the cowardice and treachery of the militarists by setting an example of steadfastness in a civil-official role. This disposition heightened Qu's disdain for Kong Youde, who had been a Ming soldier in Shandong before going renegade and then, in 1633, defecting to the Manchus in Liao East. Moreover, Kong was abetting barbarians in their violent takeover of the civilized world, while Qu traced his lineage to a family of Song loyalists who had refused to serve the Mongol-Yuan dynasty in the thirteenth century. With the fall of Guilin, Qu held firmly in mind the example of the most famous Chinese martyr of the Mongol conquest, Wen Tianxiang (1236–1282).³⁶ Wen and Qu, alike in their ethno-civilizational loyalism, craved righteous death as testament to the principle of “not living under the same sky” as an enemy,³⁷ especially an invading, barbarian enemy of one's state.

34. See “Jia Qi zhang,” in *Mengzi*, “Gongsun Chou pian” (*Mengzi jinzhu jinyi*, 61). On publication of the *Haoqi yin* and discussion of its content, see Fan Yaxiu, “Cong Yushan dao Guilin,” 25–27, 41–55, 158.

35. See Qu Guoxing, *Qu Shisi nianpu*, 1–5.

36. For examples of Qu's references to Wen Tianxiang (Wen Wenshan) in the *Haoqi yin*, see “Chu liuri jishi” and “Run shiyi yue chuyi ye fangyan,” in *Qu Shisi ji*, 237 and 241, respectively. On the Wen Tianxiang template for the quasi-hagiographical portrayal of Qu's confrontation with Kong Youde in the *Dong-Ming wenjian lu*, written by a clansman, Qu Gongmei, see Struve, “Chimerical Early Modernity,” 359–361.

37. The origin of this common saying about *all* enemies is a *Ritual Record* passage about enemies of one's family and friends, which begins, “Do not share the same sky with an enemy of one's father” (*Liji jinzhu jinyi*, “Quli shang” chap., 1:33).

Thus, where Liu Xixuan professed indifference about whether he would survive because he believed in karmic destiny and the will of the Buddha, Qu Shisi, after a certain point, sought death to ensure the continuity of righteous principles that must be upheld by the force of will in individuals of each generation. Qu was not anti-Buddhist. Many of his friends, associates, and family members were inclined toward Buddhism, and Qu occasionally expressed Buddhist sentiments himself. Moreover, his early teacher, later political and literary collaborator, and fellow townsman Qian Qianyi (Qian Muzhai, aka Yushan laoren; 1582–1664) was a prominent lay Buddhist. Yet, when forced into reliance on his ultimate spiritual resources in the context of the fall of Guilin, Qu chose a staunchly Confucian view of human will over the Buddhist one.³⁸ A poem in the *Intonations* makes this clear.

Buddhism says that [regarding] life and death,
 [One needs] no more than a single comprehension: of [karmic] causation.
 [But] I comprehend only [the Way] “heard in the morning.”³⁹
 Those instructive words of the Sage take prior standing.
 Approaching [the point of] righteously proving the wholeness of my nurturance,
 “Completing [my] humanity,” I intone [the words of] former worthies.⁴⁰
 In the end, I now “awaken” to [the non-Buddhist truth]
 That [all] is within me and does not come from fate.⁴¹

Regarding Qian Qianyi, Qu wrote two poems in his last days, prompted by recurrent dreams of his former mentor, but these make no reference to Qian’s Buddhist faith. Rather, they evince Qu’s need to work through his conflicted politico-Confucian feelings about this man. Qu revered Qian as a teacher and respected him as a friend, but he could scarcely forgive the latter’s principal role in surrendering Nanjing to the Manchus in 1645, nor Qian’s service to the Qing as a high-ranking minister until he had a change of heart in 1646. That Qian had been clandestinely aiding the Ming resistance since 1647, and in 1649 had secretly sent Qu a letter coaching him on strategies for reversing the Qing

38. Investigating claims widely circulated in Christian writings that Qu Shisi was Christian, Huang Yinong finds, to the contrary, more evidence of Qu’s engagement with Buddhism (*Liangtuo she*, chap. 2 and 312–322).

39. This is an allusion to Confucius’s statement in the *Analects*: “Hearing the Way in the morning, [a man] can die [contentedly] that night” (*Lunyu jinzhu jinyi*, “Liren” chap., 50).

40. This allusion to Confucius’s statement in the *Analects*, “Some [determined, virtuous men] complete their humanity by giving their lives,” also occurs in the last words of Wen Tianxiang. See *Lunyu jinzhu jinyi*, 244; and Wen Tianxiang, *Wenshan xiansheng quanji*, 647.

41. “Zijing,” poem 4, *Haoqi yin*, in *Qu Shisi ji*, 239.

invasion,⁴² did not resolve Qu's feelings, since Qian thereby had further shown his inconstancy. The complexity of Qian Qianyi's status in Qu Shisi's thoughts as he chose a path starkly different from that of his erstwhile mentor is reflected in a pair of poems to which Qu gave the following explanatory title: "Since entering captivity, I have repeatedly dreamed of Teacher [Qian] Mu[zhai], twice as intimately attentive to me as he was in normal times, so I write this poem to express my feelings." The first of these, not published until recently and probably never seen by Qian, has a very hard edge.

How is it that [Qian] Yushan repeatedly enters my dreams?
 He is my enemy but also my intimate [associate].
 Back then, in the proper way, we called each other "teacher" and "student,"
 Hardly expecting to become servants [respectively] of Chinese and barbarian
 rulers.
 [His] secret letter on three kinds of strategy makes the big picture clear,
 [But itself shows why] histories passed down through the ages [tell of] few
 whole men.
 His drawing close upon me [in sleep] heightens my dread:
 Might it be a report to my spirit that [he, too, is] about to die?⁴³

The second poem of the pair, however, which did appear in the original *Intonations* of 1652 and certainly was seen by Qian Qianyi, evinces measured understanding of the latter's failure to realize the seriousness of Manchu capabilities and intentions. The concluding lines read as follows:

It is futile to ask when Heaven's heart will turn back around.
 [but] how can adherence to a minister's integrity ever change its constancy?
 I do not expect to see you [again] in this life.
 In the end, I hope to not disgrace my discipleship [to you].⁴⁴

42. Briefly on Qian, see *ECCCP*, 1:148–150. Qu began studying with Qian Qianyi in 1605 at sixteen *sui* (Qu Guoxing, *Qu Shisi nianpu*, 10). For Qu's report to the Yongli emperor on the content of Qian's secret letter on strategy, see "Bao zhongxing jihui shu," in *Qu Shisi ji*, 104–107. On the poetic record of Qian's last years, as a loyalist, see Yim, *Poet-Historian Qian Qianyi*.

43. As transcribed from a 1684 manuscript of Qu's writings, titled *Yushan ji*, compiled by Shisi's grandson Qu Changwen (in Qu Guoxing, *Qu Shisi nianpu*, 186). On this manuscript, see Fan Yaxiu, "Cong Yushan dao Guilin," 158.

44. *Haoqi yin*, in Qu Shisi, *Qu Shisi ji*, 243. Qian Qianyi later wrote a moving dream record mourning Qu's death ("Hanye jimeng ti *Kuntong tuyin*," in Qian Qianyi, *Muzhai youxue ji*, *juan* 13, 2:580–582).

As the teacher of Qu's youth, Qian was regarded as a secondary father. The other dream poems in *In tonations* also reference oneiric encounters with persons in cardinal Confucian relationships with Qu: his deceased wife and parents. To the poem about his wife, Qu gave a prefatory title: "The ninth day of the intercalary eleventh month [Dec. 31, 1650]⁴⁵ is the anniversary of my late wife's birth, [but,] being held captive, I am unable to burn [even] one piece of paper [to send a remembrance at her coffin].⁴⁶ In the hills, [my friend] Yang Shuofu is performing a [Buddhist] rite of penitence [in compensation],⁴⁷ so I write this poem to thank him."

Her voice and face have several times entered my dreams,
 As though pitying my hardship and wishing me peace.
 In that desolate village, who is there to accompany her during late-night
 rains?—
 Her crude coffin being uselessly surrounded by myriad ranks of peaks.
 The glow of incense [at the site] has long been buried in layers of dust,
 [Though] the bamboos and plum trees may hear [her] jade pendants chime.
 [Her] birth date troubles me, still held in my heart,
 [So] I have specially made a pure platform for offerings [to her] spirit.⁴⁸

In the succeeding poem Qu explains that he has set up a simple altar in his quarters, trusting that his wife's noumenal soul can fly to him from anywhere. He weeps thereupon over his offering of a cup of rice, a saucer of vegetables, and a half goblet of wine, concluding with these lines:

This captive minister of a lost state is alive but also a ghost,
 who before long will join you in returning to our old [family burial] mound.⁴⁹

45. Here, Qu pointedly uses the Ming calendar promulgated by the Yongli court, not the Qing calendar used in most concordances for the years after 1644. See Fu Yili, *Can-Ming tatong li*, 1; and "Yue beili yougan," *Haoqi yin*, in Qu Shisi, *Qu Shisi ji*, 240–241.

46. Qu had married Ms. Shao in 1609 when he was twenty and she was seventeen *sui*. When an altercation erupted among Ming units inside Guilin in the fifth month of 1649, she went by boat about ten miles downstream from the city for safety. But she died on the boat of a recurrent fever. In the eighth month, Qu had her coffin enclosed in a temporary shelter on the east side of the river not far from Guilin, where he conducted a makeshift funeral service. See Qu Guoxing, *Qu Shisi nianpu*, 6, 11, 126–128, 133.

47. This man was Yang Yi of Guangxi, an esteemed client-scholar on Qu's personal staff. See Qu Guoxing, *Qu Shisi nianpu*, 179–180; and Sun Jing'an, *Ming yimin lu*, 38.1b–3a.

48. *Haoqi yin*, in Qu Shisi, *Qu Shisi ji*, 243.

49. *Ibid.*, 244. Not until the latter part of 1652 was Qu Changwen able to escort the cremated remains of his grandparents back to Changshu. See Qu Guoxing, *Qu Shisi nianpu*, 194–195.

Qu also gave an introductory title to the poem about his parents: “The night of the twenty-sixth I dreamed of being in a room like the Sasuo Study in my home. My late father told me to make a daybed and lie down. As I wiped my desktop clean and spread the bedding over it, a ceramic vase near the desk was bumped and [began to] fall down. But I caught it with both hands, so it did not hit the floor. It was fine, with no damage. I recorded [this dream] when I awoke.” The poem reads:

Someone else will receive their portraits;
 I can see my deceased parents in dreams.
 They seem distraught at my incurring calamity
 But still pleased that my attire is dignified.
 The lot of one who gives his life as a loyal minister
 Is hard to [fulfill and also] earn repute as a good son.
 Awake, I still [try to] reconcile this in myself,
 But in lofty repose, I report [to my parents] that all is well.⁵⁰

While custodial transmission of ancestral portraits and regular, ritual reports to dead parents are important Confucian duties, Qu’s dream of catching the vase is redolent of commitment to a higher form of familial care: “upholding” the historical honor of the Qu lineage, keeping it “whole” and not letting it “fall” in an emergent situation. The adjective *yao* used to describe the vase, through its associative compound *yaoqi*, sharpens our awareness that it is a *vessel*, metaphorical of a man’s capacity especially for noble action and moral rectitude. In the dream, Qu Shisi, even as a youth, spontaneously and without any need for reflection, sustains the capacity of the Changshu Qus for multigenerational distinction. This is why Qu Shisi thought the dream was memorable and worth recording as he approached martyrdom without ambivalence.

In these latter poems we see not only the Confucian concern with cardinal relationships but also the importance of sustaining those ritually when the party or parties on one side of the relationship have died. In the first one, Qu’s failure to personally, appropriately observe the birth anniversary of his deceased wife adds to his sadness in thinking (and, thus, dreaming) of her, as his own end draws nigh. Less obvious but central to the “Sasuo Study” poem is the fact, created by Qu’s determination to die righteously, that he, an only son, will not inherit his parents’ portraits nor will he be continuing the family sacrifices to them until the natural end of his life. This reflects the tension between two filialities, dying for one’s monarch and living for one’s patriline, to which Qu gives voice in the latter part of the poem.

50. *Haoqi yin*, in Qu Shisi, *Qu Shisi ji*, 240.

Also typical here is ambiguity about the ontological status of the wife and parents. They seem to come, like spirits, into Qu's dreams, and ritual offerings and dutiful reports are addressed to them although they have no actual agency in the world of the living. Their reality is that of memory—all-important memory, without which generational continuity cannot be sustained.

In all of these dream poems, Qu is struck by the feeling of intimate contact in the dream state, whether soothing, in the instances of wifely and parental visitation, or chilling, when one who betrayed his most strongly held convictions, Qian Qianyi, draws uncomfortably near. This sense of immediate presence distinguishes these oneiric encounters from ordinary, waking-state memories or reveries. Each case, however, gives Qu an opportunity to affirm his certainty about seeking death as a Confucian martyr. Below we see, rather, an instance in which the vivid immediacy of trauma-induced nightmares only adds to the suffering of someone who had not yet figured out why he alone remained alive when everyone else in his family had died for the Ming.

Uncertainties

Let us now leap again, not in time but in distance, to the most easterly extent of the vanishing Ming empire. There, we find the first of two cases in which escape from or avoidance of deadly sieges instilled feelings of guilt, shame, and bewilderment that affected the fugitives' dream states—again, in very different ways.

In the ninth month of 1651, following completion of the Qing overland campaign on the far southern provinces, a concerted Qing amphibious force stormed the Zhoushan Archipelago off the coast of Zhejiang outside Hangzhou Bay.⁵¹ On Dai Island, in particular, the walled town of Wengzhou held the headquarters of the Ming-loyalist former governor of Fujian Province, Zhang Kentang (*jinsi* 1625), who had been trying futilely to coordinate that region's naval resistance to Qing control of Jiangnan and Zhejiang.⁵² For some time, Kentang had understood that his cause was lost and had arranged with the other members of his household—his four concubines, one daughter-in-law, a granddaughter, and twenty others—to commit mass suicide should Qing cannonades penetrate the city wall. Only his grandson, Zhang Maozi, then about eighteen years old, was kept in the dark about

51. See Struve, *Southern Ming*, 114–115.

52. For the most complete biography of Zhang Kentang, who had served with distinction under the Chongzhen emperor and had been a grand secretary in the court of the Prince of Tang in Fujian, see Quan Zuwang, *Jieqiting ji*, 1:121–129. The following five paragraphs about Zhang's grandson, Zhang Maozi, and the latter's memoir, *Yusheng lu*, are derived from Struve, "Confucian PTSD." For a translation of most of the *Yusheng lu*, see Zhang Maozi, "Zhang Maozi."

this plan until the last minute, when his grandfather ordered him to stay alive as the only male survivor in their lineage.⁵³

His family members having all hanged themselves from the rafters of their home, Maozi could only tug at their robes “in complete loss of his whole world.” But as Qing swordsmen raced toward the residence, he was bundled outside, as prearranged by his grandfather, by two brothers surnamed Lin who were loyal members of Kentang’s personal guard. Those two were hacked to death almost immediately, but somehow in the bloody melee Maozi escaped, only to endure a hair-raising series of scrapes with death. These included falling into a weedy slough, from which he was fished out and made to carry bags of loot by a non-murderous soldier; leaping down the outside of the city wall and wading across the moat; escaping from a hiding place behind a shrine, a gambit which would have been foiled by the sound of a falling wall tile if not for a cat that distracted the guards; almost drowning in a tide-swollen river estuary, which he managed to cross by clinging to an opportune bamboo log; and, having been stripped naked by booty-crazed troops, suffering lacerations over his whole body as he crawled through dense brambles.

Eventually Maozi found refuge in the home of a family acquaintance outside the city, but when the Qing invaders instituted a dragnet, he gave himself up, not wanting to implicate his host. Subsequently he was tied up with other prisoners in the hold of a troop ship and remanded to the mainland, where, weak and filthy, with no resources or contacts, he was thrown into a damp, sunless, twenty-foot-deep dungeon cell in the Ningbo jail. There, he almost died again from the inhumane conditions: rats and snakes also occupied the floor, which was strewn with human bones; each night Maozi was strapped to a blood-stained restraining rack; other prisoners seized any food that was given to him; and nothing but abuse could be expected from the guards without payment of bribes, which were utterly beyond Maozi’s means.

Before long, however, various former employees and admirers of his grandfather managed, with great perseverance, to secure better treatment for Maozi, and eventually, after a hundred days had elapsed, they got him released into the custody of a local man. In that benefactor’s home, Maozi recuperated for two months from the severe blows to his body and psyche, exhibiting in semiconscious states the symptoms of severe post-traumatic stress disorder. “One night,” he recalls,

mournful thoughts [of my deceased family members] caused me acute sickness. My delirium was filled with sounds of cannon balls smashing the city walls, of foot soldiers and cavalry cutting and killing; of dwellings collapsing in fire; of

53. According to the *Yusheng lu*, Maozi’s father died in office in 1644.

my grandfather, mother, four concubine-grandmothers, and little sister grasping lengths of silk, drawing them [into nooses], and shouting at me to get away; of [the Lin brothers'] and other victims' blood being spattered and flesh being ripped. Suddenly I was in a viney, muddy slough, then falling down a wall that seemed more than ten thousand feet high, then going under as I tried to wade across a moat. Then the tile from [the shrine] wall had aroused the soldiers to make a search, and I had gone into the rising tide on the East River shore, but neither the cat nor the bamboo had come. Then I was down in the pit, where ten-foot venomous serpents with shiny spots reared their heads, bared their tongues, and spit fire, where the rats turned into fierce-looking tigers which flared their tails as they pounced toward the restraining rack, and where the jail guards had red hair, blue jowls, and two protruding fangs. After [the guards], brandishing gigantic clubs, came to dun me for money, they would suddenly announce receipt of an order to march me to the marketplace, where I would see an executioner, silk pennon fluttering from his topknot, raising a blade as white as boiled silk [to behead me].⁵⁴

Zhang Maozi was plagued not only by such nightmares but also by survivor guilt, as he obsessed over the questions, Why had he alone survived of all his family members? Wouldn't it have been better to die with his mother and grandfather? What place did he have in the world when his ancestral home in Huating, Jiangnan, lay in ruins? When Maozi was offered the chance to carry his grandfather's ashes back home for interment in the family cemetery, he began to realize why he had been kept alive: "Could it be that Emperor Heaven and Empress Earth have been moved by the bitter resolve of my forebears and have specially preserved this unfilial, weak body of mine to fulfill their plan to return Grandfather home? Or that, in this decadent age when upright ways have withered away, they have made use of this refugee's hardships to make glowingly manifest [the example left to us by] humane and noble persons?"⁵⁵ At this point, Maozi was able to write out a memoir of his ordeal, titled *Record of Life Beyond My Due* (*Yusheng lu*), as a testament to the virtue of Zhang Kentang and his household of martyrs. As it happened, continuing hostilities in the Zhoushan area prevented Maozi from obtaining Kentang's remains, but he was able to return to the family home in Huating with his grandfather's wooden spirit tablet—only to die there tragically at about age twenty.⁵⁶

54. Zhang Maozi, *Yusheng lu*, 8b–9a.

55. *Ibid.*, 9b–10a.

56. This is according to a colophon to the *Yusheng lu* written by the man who eventually obtained and preserved Maozi's manuscript, the famous historian of Jiang-Zhe affairs in the Ming–Qing transition Quan Zuwang (1705–1755). Zhang Kentang's ashes remained entombed on Putuo Island to the southeast side of the Zhoushan Archipelago at least until 1726 (Quan Zuwang, *Jieqiting ji*, 1:122).

As with Qu Shisi, Zhang Maozi's values during life-or-death crises were thoroughly Confucian, and his reported dreams were matters of memory. But in his case, a damaged psyche generated dream-deliriums that were symptomatic of continuing bewilderment and gave Zhang only more reason to wish that he had died with his family. They are neither sources of answers nor expressions of firm convictions. In another case of guilt over avoidance of Confucian duty, however, we find that dreams, while at first reflective of fears and helplessness, eventually became instrumental in one man's search for a spiritually sustainable way of life.⁵⁷

Xue Cai (Xue Xiemeng; 1598–1665), of Wujin County, to the northeast of Tai Lake, was descended from an especially distinguished line of Ming scholar-officials, and having placed very high in the metropolitan examinations of 1631, he idolized the Chongzhen emperor. Moreover, he had been close with three maternal uncles, all of whom eventually sacrificed their lives in demanding posts.⁵⁸ Yet, like many of his peers in that day, Xue himself lacked political ambition and sought to avoid challenging bureaucratic appointments, hoping to retire early and live modestly but comfortably on his landed income. After holding several middling positions in both Beijing and Nanjing, he was pressed into serving as prefect of glorious but imperiled Kaifeng, a storied former dynastic capital in the heart of China's central plain. There, Xue soon developed great admiration for the culture and people of Kaifeng city but equally great frustration with the special military coordinators who were deputed from the court to rid the region of threats from roving-rebel armies such as that of Li Zicheng (1606–1645). Reportedly, Xue became ill from worry about the security of Kaifeng and from anger at his superiors. When his requests to be relieved of duty were not granted, he simply quit his post (and, in effect, the civil service) and returned, much embittered, to his relatively small, contented household in Wujin in the winter of 1638–1639. Xue, then in his early forties, probably expected to spend his remaining years as a dignified *paterfamilias* and retired scholar-official, writing poetry, dabbling in scholarship, editing the writings of his forebears, and keeping a journal of his occasional thoughts to pass on to descendants.

57. The following discussion of Xue Cai and his dreams derives and includes extensive quotes from Struve, "Dreaming and Self-Search."

58. When Xue Cai began his journal, the eldest maternal uncle, Liu Xizuo, was serving as regional inspector for Huguang, and the second, Liu Yongzuo, was prefect of Xinghua, Fujian. In 1643, Xizuo was heinously executed by followers of the rebel leader Zhang Xianzhong. And in 1646, Yongzuo committed suicide as Manchu forces penetrated Xinghua. The youngest maternal uncle, Liu Mianzuo, had died more than a decade earlier of illness and exhaustion after battling bandits as a county magistrate in Jiangxi Province. Together, they became known as the "Three Loyal Lius." See Zhao Jishi, *Xu Biaozhong ji*, 5.59a–62a.

Indeed, the journal that Xue Cai wrote intermittently from the spring of 1642 through the spring of 1646, *Jottings of Mr. Xue Xiemeng* (*Xue Xiemeng xiansheng biji*),⁵⁹ starts out in an avuncular, reminiscent mood, somewhat pompously correlating the service of his forebears with the greatest moments of the Ming. But disturbing news begins to intrude late in 1642 when Xue learns of the horrendous, complete destruction of Kaifeng by flood, as certain maneuvers by besieging rebel forces and Ming relief armies caused a breach in the nearby dikes on the Yellow River.⁶⁰ Xue's anguish over having abandoned Kaifeng to this awful fate, and his grief over the enormous loss not only of lives but also of cultural and architectural treasures in the city, gave rise to feelings of foreboding. His journal entries of midsummer 1643 consist mostly of hearsay about ghostly, calamitous phenomena, which he regarded as omens of an impending, inauspicious change of epoch. Toward the end of that year, an insurrection of extra-legal volunteer defense forces led by the tragic hero Xǔ Du (d. 1644) was roiling society in western Zhejiang and stirring public opinion throughout the lower Yangzi region.⁶¹ Moreover, news arrived that Xue's two surviving maternal uncles were under real threat from bandits at their respective official posts. Doubting the resolve of either officials or citizens to loyally resist any roving-rebel incursion on Jiangnan, Xue began to feel geographically and psychologically besieged.

At this point in his journal, in the late winter of 1643–1644, Xue started to record dreams that differ qualitatively in their intensity, vividness, and reflection of mental turmoil from the more conventional ones reported earlier. The first dream of this sort encapsulates associations among longer- and shorter-term memories, Xue's siege mentality and lack of confidence in the Ming military, his felt inability to either escape or take effective action, and his shame at the outward pomp and propriety but actual irresponsibility and fecklessness of men of his own class. In the dream, Xue sees a crowd of gentlemen milling around Great Ming Gate (in Beijing) as a call to arms against the bandits is posted. A fat, swarthy man who introduces himself as Mr. Xǔ nudges Xue from behind and exhorts him, saying, "Don't you wish to rise up and repay the state, sir?" Xue replies that he does not begrudge sacrificing his body, but, alas, he is not good at horseback riding or archery, and anyway, he lacks a good mount.

The man then takes Xue, arm in arm, outside the city wall, where warhorses are in readiness. On exiting the city gate, however, Xue's tepid ardor is hardly roused by the sight of bandits riding around vigorously, huge pennons flying in dazzling array,

59. The original journal (containing many derogatory references to the Manchus) survived only in a single manuscript, which was lost after its contents were published in a woodblock edition by Xue Cai's descendants in 1939. See Struve, "Ancestor *Édité*."

60. For a digest of the scholarship on this incident, see Des Forges, *Cultural Centrality and Political Change*, 58–59.

61. See Dennerline, "Hsü Tu," esp. 118–122.

throughout the mountain ranges and deep rows of hills *to the south of the city*. (Note the italicized counterfactuality: There is no such mountainous topography to the south of Beijing, which in reality would have been Xue's logical escape route.) As yet undaunted, several hundred Ming cavalymen sally forth. Mr. Xǔ takes off his robe to reveal a suit of armor, an archery bow, and a sword. Leaping onto his horse, he dashes toward the fray, while Xue Cai, "grasping a short whip and straddling the saddle awkwardly," follows behind him. But when the Ming vanguard reaches the bandits, the riders dismount and kneel down before them, only to have their heads cut off and strung on cords carried by every fourth or fifth mounted bandit. Mr. Xǔ then thinks they should take refuge with others in a very small, garrison-like building to the north of the city wall, which he suspects is a brigade headquarters. So he hoists Xue off his horse and takes him into the building. There, Xue sees many officials, their robes a magnificent and orderly display, backed on all sides by wooden shutters. Among them is one of his uncles, who calls out to him, "The bandits' thrust is very intense. Why throw your flesh to tigers?"

Xue replies, "What about [our duty to repay] the beneficence of the state?"

Then he hears dripping sounds from behind the shutters and, lifting one of them, sees a great many people distilling liquor! His uncle orders him to not move, and at that point Xue awakes, alarmed and sweating, to hear a *drip-drip-drip*, presumably of rainwater, from a nearby eave.⁶²

A few nights later, Xue had the first of several dreams that reflect his alienation from the culture of Confucian schooling and examinations with which he theretofore had proudly identified—alienation because of misconceived criteria of excellence, morally and academically flaccid teachers and examiners, and, as this dream suggests, the profligate waste of the best men's finest faculties, represented by the image of human eyes. In the dream, Xue approaches and gropes at a deteriorating spot in the front gate of the great hall of a Confucian temple (Mingluntang), to find that underneath the surface it is composed entirely of people's eyes—the dried-up ones more toward the outside, the still-shiny ones more toward the inside. Groping farther and getting a handful, he is trying to repair the eroded spot when, to his surprise, a caretaker appears and says that the eye content of the door is nothing unusual: Had Xue not observed that the star-models in the Kuixing Temple (where government students worshipped Heaven on the grounds of the prefectural Confucian school) were all made of people's eyes? Indeed, he says, the whole temple is constructed of them; no dirt or wood was used at all! Startled at this, Xue wakes up.⁶³ The resemblance of the Kuixing Temple star-models to shiny human eyes, in

62. Xue Cai, *Xue Xiemeng xiansheng biji*, 1:13a–14a.

63. *Ibid.*, 1:14b–15a. For more of Xue Cai's dreams related to the examination system, see *ibid.*, 1:36b–37b, 38a–39b, 42a–b. On the neglected subject of associations between the eye and knowing in traditional Chinese thought, see Ghiglione, *Vision dans l'imaginaire*, esp. 79–87.

a setting redolent of high intellectual achievement, may once have seemed fitting to Xue Cai. But the transmutation of this memory into a nightmarish discovery of innumerable eyeballs consumed to maintain the most symbolic (though crumbling) edifice of Confucian learning cannot but be read as a macabre sign of deterioration in Xue's own value structure.

As news worsened through the spring of 1644—of terrible deaths under rebel attacks in various parts of the country (particularly that of his uncle in Huguang); of the rebel campaign on Beijing, then of the fall of the northern capital and the uncertain fates of the Chongzhen emperor and crown prince; then of the emperor's solitary suicide, matched in righteousness by all too few of his ministers; and of the subsequent occupation of North China by the Manchus—Xue rails in his journal against all the dishonorable, unprincipled, and devious behavior in his world. But he evaded advisory service to his county magistrate and declined a call to join the rump Ming court in Nanjing, fearing most for the safety of his family. In the eighth month he moved into the hills of West Dongting Island on the south side of Tai Lake, which functioned as his place of refuge for the next ten months.

This distance from political pressures, however, did not appreciably settle Xue's mind, which was plagued by dreams of having no route of escape, of guilt at his pusillanimity, of feeling unworthy of his ancestral legacy, and of fear that he would be unable to protect himself and his womenfolk from violence and uncontrollable contact with abhorrent commoners. In the ninth month, for instance, he recorded a dream in which Wujin city is being penetrated by enemy troops, and *the south gate and bridge are blocked* by mayhem. Xue rushes home and, while quickly closing all the doors, hears the frightened cries of his wife, daughter, and niece in the inner quarters. When he receives an official order to assemble all the gentry of the prefecture for a meeting, he instead discards the document and hurries away.⁶⁴ And in the twelfth month Xue narrated a dream in which he is accompanied by a cousin and a former fellow student to what seems to be the West Ancestral Hall (Xicitang) of his rural village. There, he sees a strangely constructed coffin, which, he is told, contains the body of his deceased (and much revered) paternal granduncle. The coffin is supposed to receive Xue Cai as well, but alas, the opening at the top is too small (perhaps implying that he does not meet his ancestor's stringent standard). When they go to leave, Xue has trouble keeping his footing in a curved corridor paved with mounded, slippery bricks, with mud on either side several feet deep. Though the *exterior double-doors are locked*, Xue's cousin has no trouble pushing through them to go out. But Xue sees that the mud outside is even worse, so he stops. The narration continues: "Two beggar boys, their bodies covered with filth, stood on either side of the outside door. I hurriedly shut the inner door panels but then turned and saw a

64. Xue Cai, *Xue Xiemeng xiansheng biji*, 1:33b.

beggar-woman, even filthier, walking as though heading out, and chiding us, saying, 'Why are you two making off without staying for a while?' Fearing defilement by contact [with her], I stepped back slightly to the south and told her to quickly catch up with the other two [beggars] who were still nearby. The beggar-woman actually sped out, and my heart felt somewhat calmed."⁶⁵

Most violent is a dream recorded in the subsequent spring, after Xue had heard several alarming reports from Nanjing. In the dream, he is staying in the western rooms of his rural residence, engaging in leisurely banter with companions, when suddenly they hear a loud noise, like Heaven collapsing and Earth splitting apart. In no time, trees are being uprooted, rocks are flying, and the roof timbers are caving in. "The myriad masses came running and crying out, some falling down, soiled with blood, limbs broken and foreheads bashed," Xue writes. "Thinking about this after waking, I trembled so badly I couldn't control myself."⁶⁶

In the fifth and sixth months of 1645, reports of Manchus crossing the Yangzi River and of the ignominious collapse of the Nanjing court prompted another fusillade of outraged comments in Xue's journal. But he partook frankly of the blame, referring to himself as a "culpably dismissed, orphaned official [who has] observed the world's condition from the sidelines" and writing in a collective sense that "the South," having done nothing to take revenge on the rebels, has brought the catastrophe of alien invasion upon itself.⁶⁷ He eagerly entertained even the wildest notions about prospects for effective resistance but made no move to join or aid any such movement, being adamant only about not submitting to the caiffiffs. Hearing that Qing forces had penetrated as far south as Suzhou and that non-clerical men in Jiangnan were being forced to adopt the Manchu queue, Xue began to realize that, as a former Ming official, the best he could do to protect home and family was to leave both in the care of his grown son while he sought an alternative social identity in a Daoist or Buddhist community. But which path to follow? Xue's earlier dreams in the journal are mostly reflections of his sociopolitical and ethical anxieties. Increasingly, from 1645 onward, his dream state became a medium of search for a sustainable mode of religious seclusion and for insights on the workings of the nethersphere.

Admixtures of Daoism can be found in Xue Cai's basically Confucian family background, and familiarity with regional Daoist culture is evident in earlier entries in his journal. For instance, Xue's youngest paternal uncle (who had assumed greater importance in Xue's life after his father's death) in his later years had become a Daoistically eremitic wanderer. This uncle and his son, Xue's paternal cousin, appear

65. *Ibid.*, 1:34a–b.

66. *Ibid.*, 1:37b.

67. *Ibid.*, 1:43b.

in one of Xue Cai's dreams recorded after the disastrous Kaifeng flood, exposing one sort of reason for the latter's guilty ambivalence toward Daoism: its sometime association with frivolity and irresponsibility. In that dream, Xue is in a richly appointed government office, drafting a prose-poem inside a red-gauze mosquito tent. When the composition is finished, he takes it outside to a large terrace, which seems to him as broad as the elephant-performance grounds in Beijing or Nanjing. A thousand paces away to the south, he sees his junior paternal uncle and has started out to present the poem to him when a great, churning flood of water fills the huge area and turns it into a majestic river or lake. From the eaves of the building appear a profusion of immortals of popular-Daoist lore, who cavort in the water, some riding on fishes, others stepping about on lily pads, disporting themselves in various ways. Now accompanied by the cousin, Xue joins in the fun, ambling along playfully and getting his feet wet. Spontaneously he exclaims, "What a grand view!" But his uncle, at a distance, responds with a biting pun: "The two of you being big officials [*daguan*], how then can you speak of a 'grand view' [*daguan*]"?

Looking back respectfully to the north, Xue sees in the mosquito tent three figures who, by their dress, seem to be an emperor, an imperial concubine, and a crown prince, and below them sits a man in a Daoist hydrangea cap and feathered robe, like a "recluse prime minister." The latter, seeing Xue, tries to leave, but the emperor figure grabs the "minister" so he cannot move, and he also grabs Xue, making him sit in front of the crown prince figure. Xue then excuses himself, saying that his socks are wet, and goes to find clean ones. Even after changing socks, however, he still lacks leg bindings, and, feeling unbearably cold, he awakes.⁶⁸ The emperor figure here surely represents Chongzhen, toward whom Xue felt intense guilt for having abandoned his post in Kaifeng. And the "recluse prime minister" immediately suggests Tao Hongjing, whose reputation in official histories is of a coy charlatan who duped his Liang-dynasty monarch and weakened the state by dabbling in elixirs.⁶⁹

Other dreams, however, evince Xue's sense of his incapacity to undertake the rigors of self-purification that were necessary to advance in the Daoist sacred hierarchy. Early in 1645 he recorded a complex dream sequence toward the end of which he is led by a man in Daoist garb to an eminent structure with forbidding doors sealed with archaic writing. It is dark and cavernous inside, but also fascinating and intoxicating. The Daoist figure orders Xue to make obeisance, and he readily complies, hoping to focus the efficacies of all teachings on one point of pure sincerity. He concentrates hard for a long while and is exhorted by the Daoist to at least muster a vision of Lord Guan, even if he cannot summon the whole panoply

68. *Ibid.*, 1:14a–b.

69. See Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching."

of Daoist spirits. But behind his closed eyes, Xue can see nothing distinct. The Daoist sighs three times and says, “You only amount to *this!* I had high hopes for you. Who would have thought that your fate would be so thin?” Xue then awoke prostrate on his pillow, bathed in sweat and wailing in grief.⁷⁰ Further, in another dream later that month, Xue makes a return visit to the Daoist Yuanfu Palace in the Maoshan complex to the west of Wujin. The place seems the same as before, though slightly smaller. All the Daoists, young and old, come out to meet Xue, and an elderly one says to him, “If you’re not going to go out to serve in government, then, while you [still] have the fortune to make your own choice, you should turn back to the official ranks of the transcendents.” Xue responds in a loud voice, “Cai [is so] unworthy. Not only is he unable to serve the Son of Heaven; he also dares not be a son of the Lord on High”—at which the old Daoist stands agape.⁷¹

After these oneiric failures, there is no further mention of Daoism in Xue’s journal. His turn toward Buddhism did not, however, proceed therefrom by default. It was initiated five months later by the coincidence of the Manchu-Qing invasion of Jiangnan and an extremely painful occurrence in Xue’s family life: the excruciating death by illness (and by botched treatments) of his dearly beloved and Buddhistically pious daughter, married but residing with her husband in her natal home. Disconsolate over this loss, Xue came to believe, through two sequential dreams, that the transmigration of his daughter’s soul was being hampered by a very old karmic debt in his family line. Xue Cai, being the young woman’s father, was thus implicated in her baleful transmigration, and from the moment when he apprehended this, Xue’s own spiritual struggle became entwined with that of his daughter’s soul in the netherworld. This brought Xue physically into a monastic environment and spiritually into a frame of mind to embrace more salvifically forgiving Buddhism.

Determined to fulfill his daughter’s wish to be buried near a monastery, Xue, his wife, son, and son-in-law set out with her coffin on an incredible journey by boat across Tai Lake in the very midst of hostilities attending the Qing conquest of the surrounding region. After dodging nervous lacustrine militias, they accepted the hospitality of the head monk Sanguan at the Sheng’en Monastery in the Xuanmu Hills which border the lake to the southeast, and they decided to bury the daughter in the monastery’s plum grove. Xue and his son-in-law remained there, awaiting the final funerary ritual on the hundredth day after the daughter’s death, Xue all the while worrying more and more about Qing forces penetrating his sanctuary and attending fervently to his dreams for signs of his daughter’s transmigratory fate. First, a reassuring dream of his daughter as a Buddhist nun was contradicted by a

70. Xue Cai, *Xue Xiemeng xiansheng biji*, 1:34b–35a.

71. *Ibid.*, 1:35a.

rumor from Xue's home locale that she had appeared as a restless ghost.⁷² Then Xue grew concerned as he began to dream of infants, particularly his own children when they both were very small and adorable, because folklore had it that dreaming of infants was inauspicious. He nevertheless found it hard to accept that dream-visions of his babies were bad.⁷³

A breakthrough occurred when Xue went to discuss funerary arrangements with Sanguan and stayed overnight in the monastery. The dream that Xue recorded from that night manifests the incorporation of recent dream-memories, the degree to which he has identified his own spiritual journey with that of his daughter, and his sense that he has not quite reached her level of commitment: Xue is traveling *by boat* through a market town when he sees a square pagoda marking the location of a monastery. He disembarks and climbs the bank, walking several hundred paces on a field-path before reaching the gate of the monastery. Entering, he does not go up to the main hall but goes around to a red door on the right, which leads to the Hall of the Ghost-Children's Mother (Guizimutang).⁷⁴ Beside the freshly decked-out idol, Xue sees *rows of boxes*, each with a lifelike model of a boy or girl inside. He particularly notices one model of a *boy* dressed in red, preparing to shoot an arrow, and an *empty box* lined with madder-red felt. Xue is walking around aimlessly when his *son comes in*, arm in arm with his sister. Her head is shorn like a nun's, and she is dressed as she normally had when observing Buddhist rites (thus confirming Xue's previous dream and dispelling the restless-ghost rumor). Xue says to the pair, "Since you've climbed the steps to the hall [which Xue had skirted], don't do obeisance, hand in hand, right away." The daughter responds, "[Yes,] when one's feet are sore from walking, wait a while before doing obeisance." At that, Xue woke abruptly, feeling disheartened.

But the following day, he learned that Sanguan also had dreamed the night before—more positively. According to Sanguan's report, he was proceeding through a great *body of water* when he saw the daughter's *coffin* by itself on top of a dike, avoiding submergence. Behind it was a *row of houses/rooms*, and in the dream it seemed that there were approving shouts that she had "found her [proper] place." Soon a *boy* came toddling into the scene, and the dream ended when the boy *seized a boat* to help her. The mutual corroboration of womblike boxes and rooms, boats

72. Ibid., 2:1a, 5a–b.

73. Ibid., 2:5a, 6a, 9a. On the belief in *fammeng*, that is, dreams that represent the opposite of what is, or is about to be, the actual case (according to which dreams of infants would mean that one would have no [more] children), see Chen Meiyang, Fang Aiping, and Deng Yiming, *Zhonghua zhanmeng shu*, 90–96.

74. On the story of this deity, who began as an evil devourer of others' children but was reformed by the Buddha and subsequently was worshipped as a giver and protector of children, see *FDC*, 5:4365–4366.

transporting persons over water, and vigorous boy figures convinced Xue and Sanguan that the daughter had overcome obstructions in the realm of darkness and had reached the other shore of transmigration to be reborn as a boy. Xue writes that, at this, he “could not [but] clutch his forehead, prostrate himself on the ground, and pray for the condescending oversight of the compassionate Buddha heart.”⁷⁵

Exactly when Xue made the decision to become a monk is not known, but early in 1646 he wrote of dreaming that a relative came to see him wearing the red robe (*zhuyi*) of high-ranking Ming officials.⁷⁶ In the dream, Xue gets out his own red robe and puts it on, but after a while, when he looks again, it has turned the dark reddish-purple color (*qanse*) associated with the Buddha realm and, by extension, monastic interiors.⁷⁷ Xue took this as a dream of “auspicious clothing” but, again cognizant of the lore about dreaming the opposite of what is destined, feared that it would not come true.⁷⁸ He did eventually take the tonsure and remain as an unaffiliated monk in the general vicinity of the Sheng’en and Lingyan Monasteries in the hills on the west side of Wu County, overlooking Tai Lake. Eventually Xue Cai returned to his home area and his lineage’s ancestral graves, where he seems to have lived privately as a monk, with support from his wife and son and unmolested by the Qing authorities, until the end of his life.⁷⁹ His dreams had helped him choose between Daoism and Buddhism, but, despite that choice, he could not undo the family ties to his heart.

Respite

As Xue Cai traversed Tai Lake in 1645, another remarkable dream-writer also had become waterborne, Dong Tuo.⁸⁰ The latter, fleeing the total collapse of public security attending the Qing conquest of Jiangnan, moved with his family onto a boat which he moored on a stream in the highlands to the south of Tai Lake. Dong, like Xue, also eventually joined the loose community of Ming loyalists in the hill region between Suzhou and the lake, and like Xue (though a decade later), he was inducted as a Buddhist monk at the above-mentioned Lingyan Monastery. Moreover, during two of his months as a river-dwelling refugee, Dong—like Xue, suffering from stress, anguish, and insecurity, but also from predictable flare-ups

75. Xue Cai, *Xue Xiemeng xiansheng biji*, 2:8a–9a.

76. The character *zhu* (red) also is the surname of the Ming imperial family.

77. *FDC*, 5:4767–4768.

78. Xue Cai, *Xue Xiemeng xiansheng biji*, 2:11a.

79. See “Xue taipu,” in Chen Jisheng, *Tianqi Chongzhen liangchao yishi, xiaozhuan* sec., 154; and Zhang Youyu, “Suixing gong zhuan,” 1b–2a, in Xue Cai, *Duishan xiansheng qianji chao*.

80. The following discussion of Dong Tuo draws on and quotes from Struve, “Alter World.”

of his recurrent illnesses—recorded quite a few dreams in his “Records of Travel While Ill” (Bingyou ji).⁸¹ Yet the jottings of Dong Tuo, unburdened by guilt from past official service or deaths among loved ones, reflect an oneiric state of release and relief, quite different from the fraught dream life of Xue Cai. Indeed, at the outset of Dong Tuo’s “Records,” he writes, “Though my physical body is bound by cares, [in dreams] my spirit can fly up and roam, surveying from above. In the crudest of circumstances I can feel ultimate well-being⁸² and ethereally enjoy a pure dream. Also, [dreaming] is sufficient [for me], without stirring, to forget about death.”⁸³

Most of the dreams reported during this difficult time are of Dong cavorting, childlike, with his best friends the clouds, of riding astride a pine limb that turns into an ox, of strange rocks with indecipherable writing, and of bizarre experiences at his writing desk, such as penning an ode to his brush rest (lit., “brush bed,” *bichuang*), declaring that he will not burn it—as he had done with most of his writings—and that his brush could “sleep” forever thereon.⁸⁴ In dreams, he enjoys an idyllic sunset and fragrant chrysanthemum broth served to him by a Daoist and experiences himself as a Buddhist monk with a talking locust tree as a disciple. Wonderful images include shore water undulating under a vast, dense expanse of bamboo, ten thousand yellow chrysanthemum plants as tall as pines growing near a monastery, and a stone measure with characters on it that look like people’s faces. Dong views all such oneiric permutations equally as reflecting his “habituated mind” (*xixin*),⁸⁵ in accord with the prescription, put forth by certain monks in Dong’s home region during his early adulthood, to observe one’s dreams as a way of observing Mind.

By this time, events of the Manchu conquest had begun to move Dong into a more serious engagement with Buddhism, and this is reflected in a fourth essay about dreams which he added in 1647 to his previous parodies of 1643. “Dream Pharma” (Meng bencao) imitates an entry describing the properties of a given herbal remedy in a traditional Chinese pharmacopoeia (with which the chronically ill Dong Tuo was all too familiar), simply substituting the word “dream” for the name of the medicinal herb. The essay begins, “Dream: sweet to the taste, its nature pure with no toxicity. It increases spirit and wisdom, opens out the blood vessels, and breaks up the congestion [caused by] annoyances, clearing the mind [to gain] distance from the commonplace. And it makes people long-lived.” Then we are

81. Dong’s “Bingyou ji” and “Xu Bingyou ji” are the last two items in *Fengcao’an qianji*, “Tiaowen bian,” 14b–15a, 15a–16a, respectively.

82. This alludes to Yan Hui in the *Analects*, “Yongye,” passage 9 (*Lunyu jinzhu jinyi*, 82).

83. “Bingyou ji,” in Dong Tuo, *Fengcao’an qianji*, “Tiaowen bian,” 14b.

84. “Xu Bingyou ji,” in Dong Tuo, *Fengcao’an qianji*, “Tiaowen bian,” 16a.

85. *Ibid.*

informed about the regions where this medicinal herb is produced. The two best places are deep and expansive landscapes of mountains and streams, and the realms of marvelous spirits beyond the mundane sphere. Dreams from these regions are efficacious in treating the sicknesses of the dusty world. There are three other regions of production, but each of these has a drawback: dreams from the regions of memory of the past and anticipation of the future easily become crude and moreover cause increases in mournfulness and anxiety; ones from the region of acute fear pull one out of sound sleep and cause insanity. People who really know dreams do not value these kinds. Good-quality dreams need not be prepared with flame or water, and they can be taken in any season. At night, just close one's eyes.⁸⁶

In a postscript to this essay, Dong acknowledges that it plays on a parody by the Southern Song monk Huiyi Wenya (dates unknown), "Chan Pharma" (Chan bencao), which prescribes Buddhist meditation as a remedy for the ills of sentient beings.⁸⁷ Dong liked this essay because it suggested to him that, instead of regarding his dream obsession as a chronic malady, he could think of it as self-medication. This corresponds with something Dong wrote to a friend in the same year: "My fascination with dreams has increased with my illness. When I get a fine dream—perhaps traversing a wondrous landscape, or seeing the ancients, or intoning an otherworldly text—then I feel happy, and my illness, too, lessens somewhat. If I happen to reap a commonplace dream, then I feel bad for several days, to the point of being nauseated and unable to eat."⁸⁸ But in his "Dream Pharma" postscript, Dong departs from the self-medication theme by also drawing an analogy between misapplied Buddhist meditation and misapplied dreaming: "Meditation is supposed to release one from constriction, [but] nowadays people who practice meditation are constricted *by it*. This is like ordinary people who speak of dreams with ideas about [what is] auspicious or inauspicious. They are merely constricting themselves with dreams."⁸⁹

Later in life, after Dong Tuo formally became a monk in 1657, his advancement in Buddhist learning led him to look back on his dream-writings of the 1640s with mild bemusement.⁹⁰ Yet he continued to record some dreams until the end of his life. They were never again so frequent or bizarre as those from his middle years, becoming more sedate and brief, less bent on transcendence. For instance, in his fifty-sixth year, Dong merely states that he dreamed of his deceased teacher, without narration, though a bout of serious illness still brought on a relatively

86. "Meng bencao," in Dong Tuo, *Fengcao'an qianji*, "Tiaowen bian," 12a–b, 12a (quotation).

87. For Huiyi Wenya's "Chan bencao," see *Luohu yelu*, xia.395b.

88. "Fu Yan Jifang shu," in Dong Tuo, *Fengcao'an qianji*, "Qiyao bian," 18a.

89. "Meng bencao," in Dong Tuo, *Fengcao'an qianji*, "Tiaowen bian," 12b.

90. See the last lines of Dong's preface to *Fengcao'an qianji*, 1b–2a.

elaborate dream of meeting with strange monks in a high mountain monastery.⁹¹ Dong's doctrinal studies in that monastic phase of his life indicate a continued interest in the relation between illusion and truth, and in the state of mind wherein the identity of the two could be realized. He particularly came to underscore the difference between the deeply meditative state of *samādhi*, which leads to true enlightenment, and *śamatha*—that is, calming, stabilizing, and focusing the mind⁹²—for which dreams had served him well, especially at the height of the conquest.

One midlife dream noted by Dong Tuo—relatively rare in being tinged with sadness, but still rendered with wistful beauty—was a daring venture into the region of memories. In “A Dream of Hou Jidao” (Meng Hou Jidao), Dong meets rapturously with the ghost of his friend from Restoration Society days, the Ming martyr Hou Xuanyan (d. 1645).⁹³ This poem, reminiscent of a time before tragedy, finds Dong in a frame of mind more characteristic of his peers among the Ming literati who survived to live under, but who never accepted, early-Qing rule. Dream records like the ones examined above, from times of mortal crisis as the Ming order crumbled and fell, tend to reflect salvific, self-sacramental, or guilt-inducing aspects of the Three Teachings (as we have seen with Liu Xixuan, Qu Shisi, Zhang Maozi, and Xue Cai) or the self-extricating capacities of exceptional—one might say abnormal—minds (such as that of Dong Tuo). As in Dong's dream of Hou Jidao, however, the dream lives of those who struggled to find emotional stability under the relative sociopolitical stability of the late seventeenth century were characterized more by issues of memory and retrospective pangs of conscience over painfully hard choices made during the interdynastic conflict.

91. For dreams recorded in Dong's diary from the first six months of 1676, see his *Nanqian riji*, 2a, 5b, 6b, 16a–b.

92. See, in particular, Dong's essay on the *Śūrangama Sutra*, “Lengyan santi,” in *Fengcao'an houji*, “Buqiao bian,” 30a–b.

93. Dong Tuo, *Fengcao'an shiji*, “Dengfeng bian,” 7.13b. Hou Xuanyan had been martyred with his father, Restoration Society activist Hou Tongzeng (1591–1645), in the Qing massacre of Jiading city.

Dream-Coping in the Aftermath

THE LAST PHASE of special dream salience in late-imperial intellectual culture was constituted by literati who managed to survive into the early Qing period, and who, under the scythe of human mortality, were mostly gone by the end of the seventeenth century. Though some who ended up serving in Qing government wrote about dreams in their oeuvres,¹ by far the lion's share of dream-writing in this phase was done by intellectuals who strongly identified with the Ming and refused—at least covertly—to transfer their allegiance to the new dynasty, that is, Ming *yimin*. Such men found themselves undead and fraught with many issues of livelihood, cultural-political identity, social ethics, and existential uncertainty under Manchu-Qing rule. Especially evident in this generation was the Buddhoh- Daoist sense, tinged with sadness and wistfulness, that “life is like a dream” (*rensheng rumeng*), with the dual connotation that human times are mercurial and ephemeral and that one's personal past is compelling but elusive to memory.² Yet, unwilling to occupy their minds in service to the new government, many *yimin* coped with this all-too-*unfleeting* period of despondency by scouring their dreams for what did remain to memory. In so doing, they drew creatively on the intellectual culture of dreaming that had become so vibrant in the late Ming.

Chapter 3 has shown that dream accounts from the phase of dynastic collapse and alien conquest often exhibit extreme anxiety—even terror—and a frenetic sense of not knowing where to turn, as well as worry over the spiritual fates of both

1. For fine examples of dream poems in sad remembrance of deceased wives and concubines, see “Haishang zhoumeng wangji bazhang,” by the “twice-serving” early-Qing official and connoisseur Zhou Lianggong, in his *Laijutang ji*, 7.8b–10a; and “Dingsi chongyang qian sanri,” among numerous dream-lyrics by Nara Singde (Ch. Nalan Xingde; 1655–1685), the first Manchu writer to become a celebrated poet in Chinese, in Nara, *Nalan ci jianzhu*, 312–313. On the latter, see *IC*, 634–636; and Nara, “Drinking Water,” 111–112.

2. Zhang Songhui and Zhang Weiwei, “Rensheng rumeng,” 114–118.

the dreamers and their loved ones. Subsequent dream-writings by *yimin* intellectuals are more concerned about living for a long time with overwhelming loss. Thus, the *yimin* psyche displays some features akin to mourning but is more culturally complex, involving historical, religious, and philosophical dimensions that set the personal losses of close relatives or friends within a wider context—of the perceived eclipse of an entire, centuries-long dynastic order and even of civilization itself.

Ming Yimin

Whether recording or characterizing their own actual dreams or using the dream state as a veiling or encompassing conceit, dream-writings by remnant subjects of the Ming evince four kinds of spiritual endeavor: to maintain psychological connection to lost times, places, or persons through dream-recollection; to distance their consciousness from the present, unacceptable world of social and political affairs; to express inextinguishable bitterness and indignation over the course of events that destroyed the Ming; and to deepen moral-ethical self-examination in view of the difficult choices demanded by the dynastic upheaval.

REMEMBERING PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

The appearance in dreams of the dear departed is common in all societies and periods, since human dream experience consists basically of memory associations prompted by flows of emotion. In Chinese society, dreaming of deceased persons with whom one shared a cardinal Confucian relationship was especially sanctioned, as were dreams of model representatives of Confucian virtues in past ages and of teachers who were influential in the molding of one's Confucian moral being. Records of and reflections on dreams of deceased friends are especially frequent in the collected writings of later-imperial Chinese intellectuals, in part reflecting the strength of male-male bonds in a gender-segregated society. The nearly incessant need for highly educated men to travel about in a vast country, and their acute consciousness of even the ordinary vagaries of illness and death, sharpened the poignancy of parting between friends with the sense that they might never see one another again.

This was intensified by the horrible disruptions of the interdynastic wars, which forever scattered many families and coteries. During that period of turmoil, intense sorrow and worry occasioned by the violent rending of individuals' social fabrics brought no small number of lost loved ones or close associates into literati dreams. Later, while immediate anxieties subsided, longing on the part of *yimin* for the restoration of at least some spiritual communion was reinforced by a sense of shared experience with friends and relatives who had suffered through an apocalypse and by feelings of comradeship with fallen participants in the Ming

resistance. *Yimin* dream-memories of persons who had died during the crisis years, some perhaps in martyrdom for the Ming cause, thus swirl with mixtures of admiration, historico-literary pathos, and world-weary loneliness.

Wu Qi (1620–1695), a promising writer from culturally rich Huating district in the center of the Yangzi delta, resigned himself to looking after his immediate family with drastically reduced financial resources after several literary associates were killed and his father was gravely injured during the Qing conquest of his home region. After many years of deprivation, he reflected on his deserted condition as follows, using images from (in order) Buddhist and Daoist lore; the tragic poem “Encountering Sorrow” (Lisao) in the *Elegies of Chu*, attributed to the banished, virtuous minister of Chu, Qu Yuan (ca. 340–278 BCE); and a story of righteous self-preservation during the Qin-Han transition of the third century BCE:

A raging fire has totally voided Tuśita Heaven;
 The coterie of immortals has now scattered from Liaoyang [Palace].
 My lone, ephemeral body I entrust to the Jeta Grove;
 Hair sparse at the temples, I look [back] with alarm at [my] fifty years.
 The fragrant flowers of the Chu marshes offer themselves for picking,
 As [the Four White-Haired] old gentlemen of Mount Shang consort together.³
 Come night, in brief dreams, I’m able to share memories with them,
 Together on a drifting raft in the ambits of the sun and moon.⁴

Others who, like Wu Qi, were able to remain in their home areas may not have desired his degree of reclusiveness but often felt too insecure to travel for communion with colleagues. The Neo-Confucian philosopher Chen Que (orig. Chen Daoyong; 1604–1677), formerly a Ming licentiate, was a native of coastal Haining, Zhejiang, which became heavily occupied by Qing troops because of threats from maritime pro-Ming revanchists. Thus, he had to move his household several times to avoid molestation by soldiers. Meanwhile, Liu Zhuo (d. 1664), the son of Chen’s former teacher, the great moral philosopher and revered Ming martyr Liu Zongzhou (1578–1645), had secluded himself in the family’s home county of Shanyin just across Hangzhou Bay from Haining. Chen eventually sent him the following poem:

3. This alludes to four principled octogenarians (*sihao*) who escaped the persecution of Confucian scholars under Qin rule by retreating to Mount Shang in Shaanxi, and who also declined to serve the succeeding Han dynasty until ethical conduct reigned. Reference to them became an analogy for all righteous *yimin*. For this story’s inception, see “Liuhou shijia,” in Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 6:2045–2047.

4. “Zeng Shen Xuefeng,” in Wu Qi, *Kanhan ji*, unnumbered *juan* of seven-character verse, 4b. For a biography of Wu, see Sun Jing’an, *Ming yimin lu*, 10.1a–b.

In recent years I've consigned heartfelt thoughts to letters,
 The difficulty of trudging on foot compounding my regrets.
 Since the chaotic dispersion, my home has gone back to scratch,
 And I have gone from chronic illness to sloth.
 [My] sight of your watery locale is obscured by rain,
 [Which] cuts off bell sounds from the six monasteries of Yunshan.⁵
 Only my dream-soul often goes back and forth,
 In the deep night, over black waves, fearing the dragon fish.⁶

Others, such as Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692), whose *yimin* dream sensibility is discussed at length below, found oneiric reunions with old friends to be sad substitutes for the kinds of cheerfully animated reminiscences that no longer seemed appropriate after the fall. In 1670 Wang remarked poetically on how the spring blossoms normally would evoke elated, musical expressions, but now,

My heart no longer emits a cappella songs;
 my sleeves no longer rise together in dance.
 Those who, before, I recalled over [zither] strings
 now gather [only] in my dreams.
 Floral fragrance no longer means spring to me.
 How can I ever allow joyfulness again?⁷

Many literati became permanently removed or cut off for long periods not only from contact with living relatives and soul mates but also from the normal scene of contact with forebears, that is, the regular rituals at family or clan shrines and burial grounds or visitations to the graves of close friends, mentors, and heroes. No small number of those who resisted the Qing, or who were fatally caught up in the pervasive violence of the interdynastic cataclysm, were never properly buried, and thus their souls could not be summoned in the usual, location-specific

5. These are references to Liu Zhuo's home area and to the monastic complex where his father had taught Chen Que. For a contemporaneous biography of Liu Zhuo, who had been something like a teaching assistant to his father, see "Zhenxiao xiansheng zhuan," in Shao, *Sifutang wenji*, 1:282–287.

6. "Bingzhong meng fang Liu Bosheng shixiong yinji," in Chen Que, *Chen Que ji*, 2:783. Chen may have had ulterior motives in seeking contact with Liu Zhuo, because Chen was controversially trying to establish himself as the authoritative interpreter of Liu Zongzhou's teachings. See Deng Liguang, *Chen Qianchu yanjiu*, 3–4 and chaps. 7–8; and Peterson, "Ch'en Ch'üeh Finds Himself."

7. Second verse of "Ni gushi shijiu shou," in Wang Fuzhi, *Wang Chuanshan shiwen ji*, 1:193.

rites prescribed for assuaging discontent in the wrongfully dead. In some cases, those who wished to commemorate them could not do so openly for fear of persecution.

The stellar poet Qu Dajun (1630–1696), for instance, who had to evade the Qing authorities for decades because of his resistance activities, could commune only oneirically with his fellow literatus-monk and coconspirator Wei Geng (orig. Wei Bi, Buddhist name Xuedou; 1614–1662), who had been captured and publicly sliced to death by the Qing authorities in Hangzhou:

Underground [lie] many of my friends,
all ghost-heroes who met untimely deaths.
At night Xuedou comes [into my] dreams,
howling endlessly on a battlefield.⁸

Such feelings were evoked not just by comrades of the two-legged sort. Qu also poetically memorializes his friend Zhang Jiazhen (b. 1630), who was much affected by a dream he had one stormy night of again riding a fine steed—the one that had carried him valiantly into battles to stanch the Qing occupation of Guangdong.⁹

Since dreaming was widely regarded as a numinous medium for communion between people's spirits, records of the appearance in dreams of close associates who had died in the interdynastic tumult served, in effect, as alternatives to the sacrificial addresses (*jiuven*) through which the lingering souls of deceased friends would have been enjoined in more normal times. Historian Qian Chengzhi (orig. Qian Bingdeng; 1612–1693), for instance, still dreamed of his distant relative and extraordinary benefactor Qian Bing (Qian Zhongyu; *jinshi* 1637) more than ten years after the latter had drowned under attack by enemy troops as he directed resistance forces to the east of Tai Lake in 1645. Chengzhi, who had been aiding Bing at the time, lost his wife, younger son, and daughter in the same incident, thus compounding his grief.¹⁰ Bing had sheltered Chengzhi and his family on and near his rural estate when the latter was blackballed by nefarious elements in the rump Ming court at Nanjing, and Chengzhi's dream poem of 1656 recalls a common scene—now distorted by sleep—from that time.

8. "Meng" in Qu Dajun, *Qu Dajun quanji*, 2:1094. For brief biographies of Qu, see *ECCP*, 1:201–202; and *QRZ*, 6:326–335. On Wei Geng and his compatriots see "Xuedou shanren fenban wen," in Quan Zuwang, *Jieqiting ji*, 1:108–109; and Wang Limin, *Boda zhi zong*, 65–80.

9. "Mengma ge youxu," in Qu Dajun, *Qu Dajun quanji*, 1:174–175. The anti-Qing resistance in Guangdong had been led in part by Jiazhen's eldest brother, Zhang Jiayu (1615–1647).

10. "Beifen shi," in Qian Chengzhi, *Cangshan'ge ji xuanji*, 2:79–80.

Somehow I was on the path to South Garden,
 Though the way seemed different than before.
 [His] medicine bowls were still in the window sun,
 And he greeted his guest in the same old hempen garb.
 The speech and laugh confirmed it was him,
 Though the entrance and hall seemed mostly wrong.
 Bottomless tears of the past ten years
 Again are cast toward the daybreak hour.¹¹

Because of Qian Chengzhi's active involvement with the Ming resistance regimes in Fujian and Guangdong, and his need thereafter to remain incognito, many more years elapsed before he was able to write a formal inscription for Qian Bing's tomb, recounting in detail his career, personal kindness, and ultimate righteous end.¹²

In such dream testimonies as these, it is clear to both writer and reader that memories of actual, live, past encounters and relationships are involved, but the sense conveyed is that of renewed real-time contact between the spirits of writer and subject in some parallel zone of reality. Placing that contact within dreams not only reflects belief in the tendency of aerial souls to range into netherspheres during sleep. It also adds pathos, especially through the brevity of such encounters and the distortion effects illustrated above, to the dreamer's sorrowful acceptance that his relation with the dreamed can only be evanescent and never the same as before.

Turning to dream-remembrances of places and things rather than persons, we find a quite different posture, style, and use of dream connotations in the chief exemplars of that sort of composition by Ming survivors, *Tao'an's Dream Recollections* (*Tao'an mengyi*) and *West Lake Sought in Dreams* (*Xihu mengxun*) by the renowned *xiaopin* writer Zhang Dai (Zhang Tao'an; 1597–after 1684). Here the objects of memory are such because they are utterly gone; they exist in real time only in the sense that they assume psychic reality when Zhang reminisces on or dreams of them. Moreover, while *yimin* dreams of lost persons were written out as a means of validating *them*, the scenes and activities that Zhang claims to relive in his dreams are recorded as a means of affirming *himself*—or, more precisely, *his self*—in spite of his failed and fallen condition after the Qing conquest.

Until the Ming collapse, Zhang had been the wastrel heir of a lavishly wealthy family in eastern Zhejiang, a bon vivant with no interest in an official career but

11. "Meng Zhongyu," in Qian Chengzhi, *Tianjian shiji*, 8.370. The poem may be misplaced in this *juan*, which is dated to 1661. For a modern biography of Qian Chengzhi, see QRZ, 6:244–260.

12. "Ku Zhongyu muwen," in Qian Chengzhi, *Tianjian wenji*, 25.249–251. The inscription was written twenty-seven years after Qian Bing's death.

with omnivorous tastes in all the epicurean pleasures and entertainments of elite society in late-Ming Jiangnan and Zhejiang. He developed literary renown principally as a writer of brief but engaging, evocative, often paradoxical prose essays and as a connoisseur of literati drama. In 1645, however, when Qing forces invaded the South, Zhang (then in his late forties) lost nearly everything, because of his involvement with the unstable and ill-fated Ming resistance court of the Prince of Lu, and became destitute. That condition did not improve until he was in his mid-seventies—that is, until roughly the time (the early 1670s) when he finished penning his two collections of memoirs, one of his own life and one of the delights of West Lake (adjacent to Hangzhou) before its environs were laid waste by Qing forces.¹³

The interpretation presented here, of the contents of *Tao'an's Dream Recollections* and *West Lake Sought in Dreams* as avatars of Zhang Dai's self, rests on two senses of the word “dream” that were ambient in his culture, and which are deployed in his prefaces to these two works, read in relation to his “Self-Composed Epitaph” (Ziwei muzhi ming), written in 1671.¹⁴ The first sense is Buddhistic: that one's entire everyday, samsaric consciousness is metaphorically a dream state from which one might awaken spiritually to a more genuine state of awareness. Zhang Dai saw his whole life as a dream in two phases, one of fantasy-like indulgence before the fall and one of nightmarish deprivation thereafter. He would “awaken” from this only at death. In his preface to *Tao'an's Dream Recollections*, he writes:

On my pillow at cockcrow, when the night's vapor is about to recede, I contemplate my [erstwhile] life of splendor and extravagance, and it all becomes empty while passing before my eyes—the past fifty years all amounting to a dream. . . . Thinking far back on things, I write them down as I recall them, to be placed one by one before the Buddha in repentance. . . . Picking an item at random is like roaming an old byway, like seeing people from the past. [Should] common folk in the city [some day] turn [these pages] to amuse themselves, it will truly be [a case of] ill-advised dream-telling before fools. . . . Now I am about to awake from my big dream, but still I pursue the writing craft. This, too,

13. On Zhang Dai, see *ECCP*, 1:53–54; and Hu Yimin, *Zhang Dai pingzhuan*, esp. chap. 1. On the question of Zhang's death date, see Zhang Zetong, *Zhang Dai tan'gao*, 43–44. Zhang Dai's life and personality have been artfully interpreted for Western readers in Spence, *Return to Dragon Mountain*. On Zhang's fame as a *xiaopin* writer, see Kafalas, *In Limpid Dream*; as well as Chen Pingyuan, *Cong wenren zhi wen*, 83–114.

14. Zhang Dai's preface to *Tao'an mengyi* seems to have been written when he commenced the work, that is, around 1646, but another, anonymous preface, possibly by Zhang himself, was written circa 1675 when he had finished it. *Xihu mengxun* was prefaced by Zhang in 1671. See Hu Yimin, *Zhang Dai pingzhuan*, 92–93. For a complementary discussion of the senses of dreaming in Zhang's prefaces, see Cao Shujuan, “Chiren shuomeng.”

is a round of talking in my dream-sleep. So I sigh over the karmically clever literatus whose concern for reputation is hard to change. . . . That small root of his ego is as indestructible as a Buddhist relic—even the raging fire that ends the *kalpa* will not burn it up.¹⁵

Typical of Zhang Dai's writing style and self-ironic personality, he shifts from seeing his memories as "empty" (*kong*) to characterizing them as vividly real. And he undercuts the earlier tone of Buddhist piety by concluding with a declaration—whether resigned or unabashed is left for the reader to ponder—that his intention to leave behind some testimony to his tastes and talents through his memoirs evinces a stubborn selfhood that no amount of repentance can eradicate, at least not in this *kalpa*. But the conceit of his life as a dream, in which he yet speaks of dreams, is consistent in the piece.

In a further twist, the preface to *West Lake Sought in Dreams* draws on another sense that people have about dreams, one not incompatible with Buddhism but which transcends religious—and, indeed, civilizational—differences: that dreams, though generally consisting of much that is irrational and inexplicable, nevertheless reflect truths that cannot be discerned otherwise. They are paradoxically most false and most true. Moreover, dreams are so wholly subjective that, however we might try to narrate or describe them for others, their full experiential reality is beyond words, or any other medium of expression. This preface, more compact than that for *Tao'an's Dream Recollections*, makes two points: first, that the West Lake ambience Zhang dreams of nightly is now almost totally destroyed and, second, that it remains intact in his dreams. "My dreams of West Lake," he writes, "are like those of my [old] home, garden, and family—they are all of things as they were in the past. So my dreams are indeed reality." He professes great dedication to this kind of dream-preservation and seems to both cherish and lament the fact that his oneiric reliving of the past cannot be fully shared with others. "When my children ask about it, I say something or another, but it's just speaking of a dream from within a dream, as though I'm either having a nightmare or talking in my sleep. . . . I am like a man of the hills who comes home from the sea extolling the wonders of seafood dishes, and the local people vie to come and lick his eyes. Alas! Once those [gourmet dishes] pass the tongue, they are utterly gone [*kong*]. How could licking [the eater's] eyes relieve [anyone's] craving?"¹⁶

15. "Mengyi xu," in Zhang Dai, *Zhang Dai shiwen ji*, 110–111. The entire preface has been translated, based on slightly variant texts, in Kafalas, *In Limpid Dream*, 10–13; and Owen, *Remembrances*, 134–135.

16. "Xihu mengxun xu," in Zhang Dai, *Zhang Dai shiwen ji*, 144–145. For translations of the entire preface, see Ye, *Vignettes*, 102–103; and Owen, *Anthology*, 819–820.

Notably, with just two exceptions, Zhang does not give any aura of dreaminess to the essays in *Tao'an's Dream Recollections*,¹⁷ and he likewise refrains in *West Lake Sought in Dreams*; their origin in Zhang's dream life is signaled only in his prefaces. This additional seeming contradiction might be explained in two ways: Zhang wanted his readers to experience what he remembered just as he had, as real—whether in dream or awake—thus implicitly valorizing those equally “un-awakened” states; or he wished to further personalize two collections of essays which, absent the prefaces, become just wonderfully written, relatively idiosyncratic examples of the retrospective vignettes and nostalgic local-geographic miscellanies that long had been composed after the cataclysmic destruction of dynastic regimes and their vibrant urban centers in Chinese history.¹⁸

The first explanation is perhaps more plausible for *Tao'an's Dream Recollections*, which was kept private by Zhang and not published even fragmentarily until the last quarter of the eighteenth century.¹⁹ The second is more cogent for *West Lake Sought in Dreams*, which was prefaced by several well-known contemporaries and published in a widely read edition in 1717.²⁰ In any case, use of the word “dream” in the titles of both works unmistakably placed them in the sentimentally patriotic lineage of such dream-retrospectives as the *Recorded Dreams of Huaxu in the Eastern Capital* (*Dongjing meng Hua lu*), attributed to Meng Yuanlao (dates unknown) of the Southern Song, which describes the delights of the Northern Song capital, Kaifeng, before it was lost to the Jurchens, and *Record of Millet Dreams* (*Mengliang lu*) by Wu Zimu (dates unknown), which looks back on the Southern Song capital, Hangzhou, in its glory days before the Mongol conquest of the South.²¹ Zhang Dai

17. These exceptions are “Langhuan fudi” (138–139) and “Qi Shipai” (143–144). The latter is Zhang's account of a dream visitation from his good friend and Ming official Qi Biaojia, who committed suicide during the Qing conquest of Jiang-Zhe. Because, in that dream, Qi advises Zhang to abandon active loyalist resistance and withdraw in order to finish his history of the Ming, the item seems to be Zhang's apology for not defending unto death the Prince of Lu (on whose estate his grandfather had served). This, along with a few other items, circulated separately from the rest of the *Tao'an mengyi* until the nineteenth century.

18. The earliest in this tradition may be the *Record of Sangharama in Luoyang* (*Luoyang galan ji*) by Yang Xuanzhi, a sixth-century official of the Northern Wei dynasty. This text traces the history of Buddhism in China up to that time and recalls the many, flourishing monasteries of the Wei capital, Luoyang, before that city was virtually destroyed in the wars that ended the dynasty in 532–534 CE.

19. See Hu Yimin, *Zhang Dai pingzhuan*, 92–93.

20. *Xihu mengxun* is more organized and somewhat less personal than *Tao'an mengyi*, having borrowed a good deal from an earlier guide to West Lake by Tian Rucheng (1503–1557). See Zhang Zetong, *Zhang Dai tan'gao*, 253.

21. On *Dongjing meng Hua lu* and its legacy, see West, “Interpretation of a Dream.” Hegel, in his “Dreaming the Past” (353–355), particularly discusses Zhang Dai's *Tao'an mengyi* in rela-

surely was not averse to such an association, since it lent distinction to his Ming loyalism, an important element in his self-identity. But he would not have welcomed being pegged solely in that way, since, in accord with the late-Ming trend to value individualism, what he most prized was the mutability of his free-flowing, undefinable self, which always would elude capture.

Here, a deeper understanding of the dream aspect of Zhang Dai's vignettes requires attention to his "Self-Composed Epitaph,"²² the largest part of which enumerates seven things about his life that are "inexplicable" and which muddy various standards by which things are conventionally judged—such as distinctions between refined and base, martial and literary, meek and valorous. Zhang proceeds as though deprecating himself for contrariness, but his commitment to natural spontaneity and disdain for petty consistency and probity are distinct undercurrents. He acknowledges that, given the erratic turns of his behavior and life course, others, looking objectively, would be justified in giving him diametrically different labels. "Nevertheless," he writes, after confessing to hesitation in emulating other self-writers of epitaphs in the past, "even if this is all about my habitual faults, then that, also, is at least worth transmitting."²³ In the subjective dimension, he implies, there is value in a self that can accommodate such a plethora of identities. Just as *someone* exists behind all the possible, contradictory views of him—those of others and even his own—so, analogously, uniting all the diverse, objectively described scenes, activities, and encounters in *Tao'an's Dream Recollections* and *West Lake Sought in Dreams* is a single, absolute subjectivity named Zhang Dai. That true yet elusive self is represented by the ultimate ineffability of dreams.

By continually reentering a beloved, lost past in his dreams, Zhang Dai sustained himself in an otherwise unbearable present. But as he came to sense that his life was drawing to a close, he also used the dream medium to gaze forward, toward a blissful departure from the world. He thus joined the company of other *yimin* who looked to dreams in anticipation of eventual transcendence.

tion to a later collection of vignettes about the pleasure quarters of Nanjing in the late Ming, the *Miscellaneous Records from Plank Bridge* (*Banqiao zazhi*), written in 1693 by Zhang's younger contemporary and loyalist sympathizer Yu Huai (1616–1696).

22. "Ziwei muzhi ming," in Zhang Dai, *Zhang Dai shiwen ji*, 294–297. On Zhang Dai's playful self-deprecation within basic self-affirmation in this epitaph, see Chen QiuHong, "'Ziwei muzhi ming' de ziwo shuxie," 179–182.

23. "Ziwei muzhi ming," in Zhang Dai, *Zhang Dai shiwen ji*, 295–297. One translator has noted a model for this piece in the "Letter Breaking Off Relations with Shan Juyuan" (Yu Shan Juyuan juejiao shu) by an enduring favorite of non-conformists, Ji Kang (223–262). See Ye, *Vignettes*, 132, n. 2.

MENTALLY DISTANCING THE WORLD

Conjuring soul sanctuaries in dreams did not, by any means, come easily to all. The poet-calligrapher Wang Guangcheng (1606–1677), for instance, who evaded hostilities in his home county of Huating by crossing Hangzhou Bay and hiding out in the hills of eastern Zhejiang, found that “even in dreams, the road to Peach Blossom Spring is far away.” This alludes to Tao Qian’s well-known story about a man who, in disrupted times, happened upon a secluded, idyllic community that had not been spoiled by state power or its corruptions since the advent of the imperial era.²⁴ For Wang, the slumber of a dedicated *yimin* revealed no point of entry to a better world. But Zhang Dai’s imagination *was* up to this challenge.

As described above, Zhang begins his preface to *Tao’an’s Dream Recollections* with an anticipation of his own death. Thus, it is appropriate that the most complete version of this collection ends with Zhang’s envisioned tomb and votive structures, set within the verbal equivalent of a monumental landscape which he derived from a recurrent monumental dreamscape. He opens this marvelous essay, “Blessed Land of Langhuan” (Langhuan fudi), thusly:

My dreams having karmic inceptions, I often dream of coming to a stone escarpment, pitted with deep caverns. A coursing stream winds down its face, water descending like snow. The pines and stones are wondrously ancient, and there are scatterings of prized flowers. In my dream, I sit in their midst as a lad serves me fine tea and fruit. Stacks of books fill some shelves, and [even though,] when I open a volume, I see lots of seal-script writing like tadpoles, chicken tracks, or thunderbolts, in my dream I can read [the books] and seem to comprehend their thorny abstruseness. Living at leisure with nothing to do, at night out of nowhere I have this dream, and after waking I stay still to ponder it, longing to acquire an excellent site wherein to create some semblance of it.²⁵

In the remainder of this essay, Zhang goes on to fantasize touchingly—in part from memory and actualities, in part from other associations—about the naturally elegant and spiritually symbolic environs he would establish around his preparatory tomb, at the entrance to a cave on a stretch of land and waterways that he had seen. Toward the end, we learn that the gateway plaque would name the site “Blessed

24. Selection from “Biluan ru Shanxi sanshou,” in Wang Guangcheng, *Lianshan caotang shi hechao, juan shang*. For an English translation of Tao Qian’s “Record of Peach Blossom Spring” (Taohua yuan ji), see Birch, *Anthology*, 1:167–168.

25. “Langhuan fudi,” in Zhang Dai, *Tao’an mengyi*, 138–139. The entire essay has been translated, from slightly variant texts, in Ye, *Vignettes*, 97–98; and Kafalas, *In Limpid Dream*, 18–19.

Land of Langhuan”—a clue to what Zhang means at the beginning by “My dreams have karmic inception.” Several references to Langhuan in Zhang’s other writings and in the title of his *Langhuan Prose Collection* (*Langhuan wenji*), indicate that the story of this legendary place held special significance, not only in Zhang’s mind, but also in the lore passed down in his lineage: as a secret repository of rare knowledge, as a pure, secluded place for those who could transcend the secular sphere, as a refuge for those who could not live with the outcomes of interdynastic upheavals, or at least as an ideal that sustains the possibility of such places.²⁶

“Record of the Blessed Land of Langhuan” (*Langhuan fudi ji*), an essay in Zhang’s collected prose, relates the story of how Zhang Dai’s putative lineage progenitor, Zhang Hua (232–300), a talented, opinionated writer and ill-fated high official in the treacherous politics of the late Wei (220–266) and Western Jin (266–316) dynasties,²⁷ followed the source of a stream into a grotto. Therein he came upon an old man who showed him into the chambers of the “Blessed Land of Langhuan,” chock full of books written in ancient scripts, which were said to record the history of China before the (book-destroying) Qin dynasty and of all countries outside China. Though treated to wine and fruit of otherworldly freshness and purity, Zhang Hua, concerned about a mundane matter, took his leave, promising to return another time and peruse the books. When he exited the grotto, however, its mouth closed behind him, never to be located again.²⁸ In a culture that often understood karmic effects as reverberating through lineages, Zhang Dai felt a karmic affinity with this tantalizing experience of his ancestor (so resonant with Tao Qian’s “Record of Peach Blossom Spring”), an affinity that was repeatedly confirmed in his dreams. They were a psychic resource with which he could imagine a tranquil existence of special insight, both before and beyond the grave.

The date of Zhang Dai’s death is not known, though evidence suggests that he lived through the mid-1680s. Perhaps, as a Ming loyalist, he was encouraged to live longer by a major challenge to Qing rule which, to some, offered hope of a Ming restoration: the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories (1674–1680). Zhang,

26. See Guo Wenyi, “Ming-Qing zhi ji yimin mengxiang,” 112–115. This article also treats the utopian *Record of the Jiang and Jiu Gardens* (*Jiang-Jiu yuan ji*) by Zhang Dai’s fellow Ming loyalist Huang Zhouxing, touting both men’s imaginary gardens as seminal in the late-imperial “dream garden” trend. However, Huang’s writings contain no explicit mention that he envisioned the Jiang-Jiu yuan through dreams.

27. On Zhang Hua, see *IC*, 215–216.

28. “Langhuan fudi ji,” in Zhang Dai, *Zhang Dai shiwen ji*, 148–149. The idea of “storing in the mountains” sensitive writings (especially those bearing on political affairs), to be found and perhaps understood more objectively in later ages, has a long history in China. In Zhang Dai’s case, the title of his history of the Ming dynasty, *Stone Cabinet Book* (*Shikui shu*), relates more specifically to his vision of Langhuan’s stone grotto filled with books containing rare knowledge.

residing in Zhejiang, could not have been directly affected by this revolt against the central government by the leaders of three semiautonomous regions in China's far south, southeast, and southwest. But the ultimate defeat of the revolt in Guangdong Province appears to have been the deciding factor in the self-initiation to the Buddhist *sangha* of Guangdong native, Confucian scholar, and pro-Ming activist Fang Zhuankai (1637–1722), who eventually narrated his life story as three kinds of dream.

Fang had impeccable Ming *yimin* credentials. His grandfather had been a Ming magistrate, and his father had joined both the destined-for-tragedy rump Ming court of the Prince of Tang in Fujian and that of Zhu Youlang, who was enthroned as Yongli emperor in Zhaoqing, Guangdong, but soon was forced to flee westward by Qing advances. When that fugitive court was able to return to Guangdong in 1649, after the collapse of the first Qing occupation of that province, the very young Fang Zhuankai became a Ming licentiate under its auspices. He mostly kept a low profile during the time when the Qing feudatory Shang Kexi (1604–1676) ruled Guangdong, from 1650 until he retired in 1673. When Kexi's son and self-asserted feudatory heir, the beastly Shang Zhixin (1636–1680), revolted against the Qing court in 1676, Fang seems to have harbored some hope of a Ming restoration. But when Zhixin, under strategic pressures, sought to return to the Qing fold in 1677, Fang, in despair, abruptly shaved his head and declared himself a Buddhist monk (with the approval of his mother, a lay-Buddhist *upāsikā*).²⁹

At first, Fang was not accepted in the monastic community because he had not been properly initiated and was short on Buddhist training, but he persevered, found a respected teacher, and, from 1678 to 1681, went through the processes of initiation and ordination. The first Buddhist name he received was Guangjiu, but he became best known by a later one, Chengjiu. Having already reached midlife, and being somewhat headstrong, lacking depth in Buddhism, and imbued with the airs of a literatus, Chengjiu was looked upon askance by many born-to-the-cassock Buddhists in Guangdong and Guangxi, and this was an underlying factor in the shortness of his stays at a number of monasteries in the region. But his broad learning and literary skills were found useful as the regional *sangha* adjusted to early-Qing governance, and Chengjiu also gained favor with the secular elite—both *yimin* literati and Qing

29. For a combined biography of Fang Guohua and Fang Zhuankai (in which some dates are inaccurate), see *Shengchao Yuedong yimin lu*, 1.34a–36a. See also Cai Hongsheng, *Qingchu Lingnan Fomen*, 98–103 (in which speculations that Chengjiu engaged in covert anti-Qing plots probably are unwarranted). On the complicated historical context, particularly the rump Ming courts in Fujian and Guangdong, see Struve, *Southern Ming*, chaps. 4–5. On the Three Feudatories Rebellion, see Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, chap. 15; and Tsao, “K’ang-hsi and the *San-fan* War.” For biographies of Shang Kexi and Shang Zhixin, see *ECCP*, 2:634–636; and *QRZ*, 4:162–173 and 6:195–201, respectively.

servitors—as a painter and calligrapher.³⁰ With advancement in his Buddhist learning, Chengjiu became respected by many for his monastic leadership and for his other contributions to the Buddhist community of central Guangdong.³¹

Nevertheless, on his eightieth birthday in 1716, feeling that he did not have much longer to live and regretting that even his few close friends did not truly understand him, Chengjiu was moved to write a lengthy account of himself. He diluted the worldliness of this self-interested endeavor by characterizing all the content as one kind of dream or another.

Looking back over eighty years, half were spent in lay life and half in the ranks of monks; the lay part was certainly of the dream sphere, and the monk part also has had dream causation.³² Surely because my [poor] habits of many lifetimes were not expunged, the consequence is that I am weighed down by concern for my empty name in the present world. Vulgar eyes look on from the side and, having seen few like me, find much that is strange. Confucian gentlemen all view me as a miscreant, and in this age of decline in the Dharma, ordinary people see me as an enemy. Among them only two or three intimates “search me out beyond my physical body.”³³ Fond of my fondness for myself, taking my lack of talent as talent, and not overdoing the “eminent monk” compliments, they join me as poetry friends. But in the end, whether befriending me or indicting me, everyone in his own way seeks the body from the shadow. . . . The dream-illusions of those directly involved [with me] being unreal, and the hearsay of onlookers alike being false, I often look up to heaven and heave a long sigh, [thinking that], in such a big universe, if but one person could understand me, I could die satisfied. . . . So, from amidst a dream I tell my dream, seeking the truth beyond illusion.³⁴

He then proceeds to write a lengthy account of his life, *Chronicled Dream Records* (*Jimeng biannian*), in the form of an autobiography, not a chronicle, and mostly detailing—often quite emotionally—the facts and vicissitudes of his waking life, seldom discussing his dreams in the conventional sense.

30. On extant specimens of Guangjiu/Chengjiu's brushwork, as well as a portrait of him, see Zhang Enchang, “Fomen juji Lingnan zhongbao.”

31. For an overview of Chengjiu's Buddhist career and oeuvre, see Yang Quan, “Chengjiu ji qi *Xiandatang ji*.”

32. This may refer to his samsaric karma in general or to his mother's story that she dreamed of a monk coming toward her just before he was born.

33. Quotation from *Zhuangzi*, Inner Chapters, “Dechong fu” (see *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, 166).

34. Chengjiu, *Jimeng biannian*, 1.

The first several pages of Chengjiu's *Chronicled Dream Records* read like almost any other literatus's autobiography, crediting parents and teachers and describing youthful enthusiasms, none of which fully satisfied him—"like obtaining precious things in a dream but being unable to figure out their true use."³⁵ We learn how, in his early thirties, Fang became a serious student of the Way, bent on learning sage-like conduct, and how, after his father's death, he grew more desperate about both family responsibilities and his spiritual path. The account becomes less ordinary when, in the context of especially troubled times, Fang encounters a Daoist seer, and after experiencing a nocturnal vision of a ray-emitting humanoid that filled his room with light until dawn, he began a desultory migration into the Buddhist *sangha*, where his career was highly variegated.

Most interesting from the viewpoint of dream culture is that Chengjiu, himself a prime example of the "literaticization" (*shiren hua*) of Chinese Buddhism, which was greatly accelerated by the "flight into Chan" (*tao Chan*) of literati during the Ming-Qing transition,³⁶ refined his Buddhist view of life as a dream by reference to the Confucian classic *Zhou Rites*. Therein Chengjiu cites the passage that enumerates three methods of dream divination in that ancient time: *zhimeng*, *jimeng*, and *xiande*. Chengjiu, like most literati, takes these terms as names for three qualitatively different kinds of dreams: "[Dreams] that 'arrive' from thinking are called *zhimeng*; those that are [too strange for] thought to fathom are called *jimeng*; and when one spontaneously responds to and thoroughly comprehends things without any cogitation, that is called a *xiande* dream."³⁷

Chengjiu particularly regarded as *jimeng* all of his unexpected success in a seven-year process of restoring the dilapidated Datong Monastery (in Guangzhou), beginning in 1701, as well as the extraordinary difficulties and resistance he encountered in the six years he spent as a vigorously reformist abbot at the Dinghu Qingyun Monastery (in Zhaoqing), until intense acrimony forced him to leave in 1714. Of those years, he writes, with mixed elation and dejection, "There was nothing that wasn't dream-illusion beyond imagination."³⁸

As for Chengjiu's *xiande* dreams, those are his writings, which, he says, had come forth when he "contemplated that the myriad dharmas are but the mind. When I was sensitive to things with no [fixed] mind, then they came of my heart in response." Thus, he named the studio where he did most of his writing the

35. *Ibid.*, 10.

36. On broad variations in the degree to which authentically Buddhist ways were adopted by literati who quasi-symbolically became monks during the Ming-Qing transition, and on contemporaneous opinion about that, see Liao Zhaoheng, "Tianbeng dije," pt. 2.

37. Chengjiu, *Jimeng biannian*, 25.

38. *Ibid.*, 25-27, 25 (quotation).

Xiandetang and his collected prose and poems the *Xiandetang ji*.³⁹ With a degree of feigned modesty, Chengjiu equates his oeuvre with the babble of someone in dream-sleep, and he correspondingly characterizes those who have appreciated and published his works as “awake/ning people nearby who overhear the sleeper’s babble” and find some meaning or value in it.⁴⁰

Like Zhang Dai, Chengjiu felt that the full truth about himself was beyond the comprehension of others: the truth was the dream itself, compared to what could be consciously, lamely told about it or inchoately mumbled during sleep. Zhang, however, was at ease in his ultimate subjectivity, while Chengjiu was troubled about being misunderstood. Both men, despite their different backgrounds and personalities, sought to ease their departures from the worldly sphere of life and from life itself by drawing on different associations of dreams in their culture: imagination for Zhang and illusion for Chengjiu.⁴¹ For others, the truth of dreams was not so much about selfhood but about eternal principles for which they were willing vehicles. Such persons wanted to *be of* their times in order to instantiate the perdurance of certain timeless, Confucian values despite the recurrence of civilizational disaster.

CONFIRMING LOYALTIES

Qianshen Bai, in his masterful study of the *yimin* calligrapher Fu Shan (1607–1684/85), discusses a poem by Fu about a dream he had of a stele on which the inscription was mostly illegible. Just one character stood out, that for “hollyhock” (*rong*), a flower that symbolized loyalty to the emperor because it always turns toward the sun. In the poem, Fu traces this floral referent to the Shu region (roughly, the province of Sichuan) and thus to the Shu-Han kingdom (221–263), traditionally regarded as the legitimate successor to the Latter Han dynasty (25–220) during the disunited Three Kingdoms period. He plays on the double meanings of *shu* (“Sichuan” and “to belong”) and *han* (the Han dynasty and the Han people as distinct from aliens). He concludes with confidence that the sun, that is, proper

39. Ibid., 26. Apart from the substantial *Xiandetang ji* (romanized “Xianzhitang ji” in bibliographies), Chengjiu was most proud of his explications of the *Śūrangama Sutra* and the *Old Master* and of his histories of two Buddhist centers where he had resided.

40. Chengjiu, *Jimeng biannian*, 26.

41. Ma Guang (dates unknown) was less successful at distancing his recent, harrowing past by regarding it all as “dream within dream, illusion within illusion.” He wrote a memoir titled *Dream Sojourn in the Two Southern Regions* (*Liang-Yue mengyou ji*), at the end reiterating the dream-within-dream characterization of his calamitous career as though to set it behind him. “But,” he concludes, “aware that I did not recompense the great beneficence of the former emperors by a foot’s inch, and that I was unable to sacrifice my life [for the state], even in death I will not be able to close my eyes” (*Liang-Yue mengyou ji*, 11a).

imperial authority, can never be wholly obscured, but also with awareness that a restoration will require ingenious leadership.⁴²

Besides explicating this poem, Qian also points out the significance of the flower character appearing specifically on a stele: “Steles differ in format and literary style, as well as in their location and the reason why they were made, yet all had one thing in common: they are memorial monuments. Since the durable nature of stone allows them to survive wars, natural disasters, and the rise and fall of dynasties, over the passage of time they have become witness to history.”⁴³ The poem thus exhibits a potent combination that we find in other *yimin* dream-writings of this kind: loyalty to a great dynasty that has been severely damaged or brought down, expressed through a historical allusion; an image of endurance related to the earth (here, stone or, alternatively, a landscape feature—especially a “lofty” one—or the land itself); intimations of aroused or distressed feelings; and an implication, through the dream conceit, that this sensibility arises from within the very subconscious of the writer. Fu Shan himself writes, “An old stele *came to* my orphaned dream-state,” suggesting the spontaneity of such a pregnant vision in an *yimin* like himself, abandoned by his parent dynasty.

Fu Shan’s good friend Wang Hongzhuan (1622–1702)—like Fu, a prominent scholar, calligrapher, epigrapher, painting connoisseur, and dedicated *yimin* from the northwestern part of China proper—gives us another example in this vein with his “Record of a Dream Journey to Floating Jade Mountain” (Mengyou Fuyushan ji), which centers on the name of a hard-to-reach peak.⁴⁴ According to Wang’s account, he was traveling by riverboat in Zhejiang Province when a strong headwind came up that terrified the boatmen (a signal that something weird is about to occur). That evening, after the wind calmed, he went to bed and dreamed of ascending a mountain with an odd assortment of companions. The chair-bearers, to stoke their energy during the climb, sang ten rounds of a hikers’ chant based on ten impeachments of bad officials by the vigorous mid-Tang censor Yan Zhenqing (709–784/85), including his charges against a powerful military governor who eventually had Yan killed. In the dream, Wang himself was much invigorated by this singing. The party came to a point beyond which the bearers would not go, but Wang was intrigued by the jadelike beauty of the range ahead, so he went on by himself over very rough and perilous terrain.

Still in the dream, Wang sometimes clambered with both hands and feet, his fear of falling from a precipice—or, contrarily, of drowning in a vast sea—worsened

42. Bai, *Fu Shan’s World*, 172–174. For the original poem, “Beimeng,” see Fu Shan, *Fu Shan quanshu*, 1:51.

43. Bai, *Fu Shan’s World*, 174.

44. Wang Hongzhuan, *Dizhai ji*, 4.6a–8a.

by enveloping clouds that obscured his vision. But he persevered and, anon, reached a large, level area of wonderfully rare flora and fauna and a dwelling, unadorned but of labyrinthine depth, in which no one lived. Others in Wang's party caught up with him there, and they began to debate the name of that extraordinary place. When one of his companions insisted it was Floating Jade Mountain, Wang recalled reading of such a place, and in a trice he looked up and saw this name in big, green characters on the mountaintop. After observing the unusual environs further, Wang wrote a brief commemoration of his visit. The place being completely uninhabited, however, he could find no one to receive it for future inscription on the site.⁴⁵ At the end of the essay, reflecting on the dream's illusoriness and inconsistencies, he sighs, "Alas, in the world there certainly is no shortage of affairs like this dream."⁴⁶

An experience two years later, in 1672 (a *renzi* year), brought greater import to this dream, however. Now in Jiangnan, Wang and a friend climbed Mount Jiao, a sharp protrusion in the middle of the Yangzi River where it passes north of Jingkou. On the way up, Wang sensed that it all seemed similar to his earlier dream, and soon he saw there, too, the characters *fuyu* (floating jade). He also found an inscribed poem left there in 1552 (a *renzi* year) by the courageous, self-martyred Ming official Yang Jisheng (1516–1555), who suffered torture, cruel incarceration, and execution for bringing accusations of ten major crimes against the notoriously corrupt chief grand secretary Yan Song (1480–1565).⁴⁷ Thereupon, Wang had a sudden realization and appended his own verse to that of Yang Jisheng:

Whither our former state?—unknown,
the *renzi* year comes again.
Looking together at this altered scene,
we pour tears toward the river and sky.⁴⁸

At this point, it is important to know Wang Hongzhuan's opinion on the fall of the Ming. Prudently making no reference to the Manchu-Qing regime, he concentrated on the internal problems of Ming leadership. Like many of his time, Wang refused to place blame on the Chongzhen emperor, who was respected for honorably committing suicide when his Beijing court was overtaken by rebels.

45. On the tradition in China of civilizing natural sites by having their rock faces carved with literary mementos written by famous visitors, see Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes*, introduction.

46. Wang Hongzhuan, *Dizhai ji*, 4.8a.

47. For biographies of Yang Jisheng and Yan Song, see *DMB*, 2:1503–1505, 1586–1591, respectively. Further on Yang, see Hammond, *Pepper Mountain*.

48. Postscript to "Mengyou Fuyushan ji," in Wang Hongzhuan, *Dizhai ji*, 4.8a–9a (quotation, 8b). For slightly elided records of both the 1670 and 1672 mountain treks, see Zhao Lisheng, *Wang Shanshi nianpu*, 102–103.

Instead, Wang bitterly blamed the emperor's senior officials, most of whom, in his view, had been incompetent and traitorous for placing their own interests and those of their own cliques above the well-being of ruler and country. And he had written a disquisition naming names.⁴⁹ With this in mind, we can understand Wang's inexplicit "realization": that the characters *fuyu* were emblematic of his spiritual bond with Yang Jisheng, who had placed the good of emperor and state above concern for his own life. This bond had come through, but garbled, in Wang's dream of ascending Floating Jade Mountain—the ten indictments brought by Yan Zhenqing in mid-Tang being a dream stand-in for Yang Jisheng's ten indictments of Yan Song in the middle Ming. The difficulty of reaching the wondrous environs atop the mountain is a standard device for suggesting a place where only a special few could go; in Wang's dream, the absence of anyone in the labyrinthine structure on the mountaintop suggests that no officials had recently qualified for residency there.

Intriguing as these examples from Fu Shan and Wang Hongzhan may be, the most significant and extensive use of "dream" in expressions of righteous despair over the Ming demise was that by Wang Fuzhi. Readers who are familiar with Wang as the most widely learned and original Neo-Confucian thinker of the late-imperial era (principally for his seminal writings in ontology, moral and historical philosophy, and epistemology), and even students of Chinese literature who know of Wang's important views on literary aesthetics, may be surprised to learn that such a serious Confucian scholar left a substantial poetic oeuvre in which dream motifs appear in remarkably large number.⁵⁰ Upon examination, one finds that Wang's dream sensibility is a direct reflection of his philosophy of mind and spirit, as well as an important element in his particular *yimin* identity.

The men in Wang's family, all highly educated, had aspired to enter public service during the Chongzhen reign. Wang and his elder brother, both having passed the provincial examinations, were en route to take the metropolitan examinations when Beijing fell in 1644. More important, however, to Wang's *yimin* mentality and later loyalist image were his subsequent, fervent attempts to militarily stanch the Qing invasion of far southern Huguang Province (now southern Hunan) in 1648, and his ardent though frustrated involvement with the short-sighted, militarist-constrained Yongli court in Guangdong and Guangxi during the following two years. The tragic failures of both those efforts burned in Wang's mind for the rest of

49. "Jiashen zhi bian lun," in Wang Hongzhan, *Dizhai ji*, 3.35a–37b.

50. Independently, Zhang Liyan, in "Lun Wang Fuzhi cizhong de 'meng,'" and Zhang Yaxiang, in "Wang Fuzhi cizhong 'meng,'" found that Wang refers to dreaming in more than one-quarter of his 279 extant lyric-meter (*ci*) poems. By my own count, of Wang's roughly 1,550 poems in genres other than *ci*, about 12 percent involve "dream" in some way. For his several collections of poetry in modern editions, see Wang Fuzhi, *Wang Chuanshan shiwen ji*, 1:139–279, 2:282–640.

his life, which he spent mostly in secluded locations around Hengyang, refusing to comply with Qing hair-and-dress decrees or to meet with Qing officials. Living in constant fear of government spies, he earned a meager livelihood for himself and his small family as a teacher and ginger farmer, using most of his energies to explain in voluminous writings the woeful state of his world using a comprehensive command of China's historical, political, and philosophical heritage.⁵¹

In his cosmological thought, Wang is well known for his reversal of ontological priorities in Neo-Confucian philosophy, giving primary place to *qi* and seeing *li* (eternal principles), theretofore transcendentalized, as simply patterns in the inherent movement and rest, dispersal and congealing of *qi*. This underlies his relative acceptance of the phenomenal world and human feelings, for which in modern times Wang has been misleadingly characterized as a “realist” or “materialist.” Neglected has been the great importance he placed on *shén* (the mysterious, *yin-yang* self-functioning of *qi*) and thus his deep religiosity,⁵² as well as the spiritual foundation of the great passion Wang invested in his work, especially his poetry.

It is no coincidence that Wang's many dream references occur almost wholly in his poetic oeuvre, since dreaming is associated with emotions and poetry was the prime verbal medium of emotional expression for literati.⁵³ In Wang's particular case, dream references are most often used to reinforce the profundity of his righteous feelings—usually of sadness, indignation, and despair over his personal situation and that of his country. The following few, relatively simple poems, representing Wang's transition from some hope, to no hope, to realization of his relic status, must suffice as examples here. The first poem is undated.

South Window: A Poetic Inscription (Nanchuang ming)

At the north window there's a chill wind [the Manchus having seized North
China];
Through the south window glows a setting sun [the Ming resistance failing in
the South].

51. On Wang Fuzhi's life, see *ECCP*, 2:817–819; Xiao Shafu and Xu Sumin, *Wang Fuzhi pingzhuàn*, chap. 2; McMorrán, *Passionate Realist*, chap. 1; and Wang Zhichun, *Wang Fuzhi nianpu*.

52. See Yan Shoucheng, “Zhuangzi, chongxuan yu xiangtian.” For a succinct summary of Wang's philosophical views on cosmology, human nature, knowledge, history, and politics, see *ECP*, 748–755. See also Black, *Man and Nature*.

53. A rare but well-known occurrence of the word “dream” in Wang's prose oeuvre is the title he gave to his critical disquisition on the faults of late-Ming governance, *Nightmare (Emeng)*; see Wang Fuzhi, *Chuanshan quanji*, vol. 13. This was not to suggest anything dreamy about the content but to signal his revulsion at the continuation of late-Ming faults in early-Qing policies that harmed the people.

This mind of Tao Qian [inclines to] lofty repose⁵⁴
 But in dreams remains with the imperial capitals.
 How pitiful, my wish to wipe away [enemies] like ants!
 [When only] my dying thought can be with [the fugitive Ming court in]
 Yunnan.⁵⁵

The second poem was written in 1670.

Cottage of Continuing Dreams (Xumeng'an)

My old dreams no longer come,
 Yet new ones [wake me with] fright even more.
 As the spray of the stream runs off the bamboo leaves,
 With its *drip-drip* patter I pass the midnight hour.⁵⁶

Wang wrote the third poem in 1673.

Dashed Off for [Portraitist] Liu Siken (Zoubi zeng Liusheng Siken)
 In old age, my appearance seems to grow unreal—
 The person in the mirror is like someone in a dream.
 From the thousand snowy strands [of hair] painted by you, sir,
 It's surely an undying person from the past dynasty.⁵⁷

Wang's geographic location in the territory of the ancient state of Chu, his political position as someone who braved great danger to fight both the alien enemies of his state and the nefarious elements who controlled his ruler-by-attribution, the Yongli emperor, and the clique treachery that eventually forced him

54. We see here again the idealization of Tao Qian as a sagely exemplar of "contentment in poverty and delight in the Dao" and of "steadfastness in adversity" on the part of later-imperial writers. See Swartz, *Reading Tao Yuanming*, 118–129, 207–226.

55. "Jiangzhai wenji," in Wang Fuzhi, *Wang Chuanshan shiwen ji*, 1:101. For discussion, see Takata, *Ō Senzan shibunshū*, 215–216.

56. "Liushi ziding gao," in Wang Fuzhi, *Wang Chuanshan shiwen ji*, 1:200. For discussion, see Takata, *Ō Senzan shibunshū*, 223–224. "Cottage of Continuing Dreams" was the name of a simple dwelling that Wang constructed and lived in for a few years at the foot of Lotus Peak in the Heng Mountains.

57. "Liushi ziding gao," third verse of three in Wang Fuzhi, *Wang Chuanshan shiwen ji*, 1:224. The mass of white hair refers to Wang's refusal, as a Ming loyalist, to shave his head in the prescribed Manchu style. This instance of Wang viewing a portrait of himself occurred when he was only fifty-seven. Liu Siken also did a portrait of Wang when he was seventy-one. See Takata, *Ō Senzan shibunshū*, 265–266, 421–422; and Wang Zhichun, *Wang Fuzhi nianpu*, 84, 124–125.

away from that figurehead's court⁵⁸—all these combined to provide Wang with certain literary precedents for his dream-studded poetic oeuvre. He wrote a major commentary on the *Elegies of Chu*, the portions of which written by Qu Yuan, the wronged, exiled official of Chu, and those attributed to Qu's supposed literary follower Song Yu became classics of poetic longing to properly serve an ill-advised ruler.⁵⁹ This affinity is especially apparent in the lengthy "Rhapsody Manifesting [My] Spirit" (Zhangling fu), in which Wang wrote about his decision of 1653 to leave the Yongli court and return home. Having characterized the hopelessness of exerting any positive influence on the court, Wang expresses regret that he dithered in extracting himself from the animalistic circle of certain Yongli officials. He confesses, in an allusion to the "Nine Arguments" (Jiubian) chapter of *Elegies of Chu*, that although he "dreamed of easy riding [like the] nocturnal journeys [of crickets]," he still "feared losing his reins in the wilderness."⁶⁰ Wang thus taps into the yearning for transcendence given voice in the *Elegies of Chu* but also succumbs to the work's anguish.

Far more akin to Wang's predominant style, however, were the many dream poems by two other historical figures with whose plights he identified and whose poetry he loved, Xin Qiji (1140–1207) and Qu You (1347–1433).⁶¹ Xin was born thirteen years after the Jurchens seized North China from the Song dynasty, and he spent most of his turbulent public career promoting both the good of the common people and revanchism against the Jurchens. For thus stirring the pot, he was repeatedly censured, demoted, and dismissed, coming to identify himself with exiled poets of the past.⁶² Qu, for his part, was exiled to a northern border station for ten

58. On this searing interval in Wang's life, see McMorran, "Patriot and the Partisans."

59. See *Chuci tongshi*, in Wang Fuzhi, *Chuanshan quanji*, 9.1b–2a, which gives a purely philological explanation of the passage on a divinatory dream, *zhangmeng*. Compare that to Wang's "Jiuzhao," his sequel to *Chuci* written in the *sao* mode, in which his one dream account is not divinatory but rather self-psychological, bespeaking his fear of losing control to unreliable elements should he again undertake an active campaign (*Wang Chuanshan shiwen ji*, 1:90). On the spirit of Qu Yuan and "Lisao" in Wang's lyric meters, see Wang Xuan, "Shilun Wang Fuzhi cizhong." On Wang, among others who drew inspiration from the Qu Yuan myth in early Qing, see Schneider, *Madman of Chu*, 79–84.

60. "Zhangling fu," in Wang Fuzhi, *Wang Chuanshan shiwen ji*, 2:90. The allusion to the "Jiubian" chapter lies in the crickets' nocturnal journeys.

61. See Wang's prefatory note to "Xiaoxiang xiaobajing ci," in *Wang Chuanshan shiwen ji*, 2:619. See also Zhang Liyan, "Lun Wang Fuzhi cizhong," second page. Among all Chinese poetry genres, lyric meter was the most closely associated with dream expression, and Xin Qiji was most noted as a *ci* stylist. This may account for the relative concentration of Wang Fuzhi's dream poems in his *ci* oeuvre.

62. On Xin Qiji's life and poetic art, see Lo, *Hsin Ch'i-chi*. To peruse Xin's large body of extant lyric-meter poems, see *Quan Song ci*, 3:1867–1977.

years, having written some poetry that displeased the usurpatory Yongle emperor.⁶³ The multiple ways in which these wrongfully banished writers used oneiric themes in their poems of discontent certainly influenced Wang Fuzhi.

But in order to fully understand Wang's extensive use of dream references in his poetic oeuvre, we must look to the moral philosophy that underlay all of his writing. Like many late-Ming thinkers, Wang Fuzhi was dissatisfied with the orthodox Neo-Confucianism of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, which preached the control of feelings and desires (=qi) with a cultivated understanding of higher principles (li). But instead of looking to the Ming-period revisionist thought of Wang Yangming and his school, which Wang Fuzhi regarded as deviant, he reached back to a Song-period progenitor in the Neo-Confucian movement, Zhang Zai (1020–1077), whose monism of qi incorporated human feelings into a holistic vision of a shared dynamic flow between individuals and the universe. In his thought, the spiritual challenge was to reach and maintain a profound awareness of this participation in Heaven's constancy and change, in which one's emotions, however strong, would never be incorrect. Indeed, conditions of grievous departure from the normative Way, such as those of the Ming-Qing transition, would rightly demand plaintive emotional expression. But should such expression come through dreams?

As it happens, Zhang Zai wrote some of Neo-Confucianism's most important statements on dreaming in his seminal *Rectifying Obscurations* (*Zhengmeng*), on which Wang Fuzhi wrote a much-cited commentary. Scattered passages in *Rectifying Obscurations* amount to a holistic, *yin-yang* vision in which the diurnal cycle of human waking and sleeping is homologous with Heaven's change of season from spring and summer to fall and winter: when the body is "open" in the waking state, our will and consciousness go outward, learning new things and forming new patterns of thought and behavior; when the body is "closed" during sleep, the will and consciousness become active only intermittently—producing dreams—and then only on the basis of memory and already-formed habits of mind. But just as Heaven's qi is constant through the seasons, so there is continuity in the qi of the individual's anima through the waking and sleeping states. The feelings and phenomena of dream experience may be hard to grasp rationally, but at base they reflect the quality and tendency of the individual's mind, which is the cognitive activity of his qi.⁶⁴ The following comment by Wang Fuzhi on some of Zhang Zai's pertinent statements may serve to indicate how Wang construed the latter's philosophy of dreaming as far as the cultivated moral self is concerned: "In autumn and

63. On Qu You's life, see "Qu You nianpu," in Xu Shuofang, *Xiaoshuo kaixin bian*, 465–491. For Qu's collected *lishi* and *ci* poems, see *Qu You quanji jiaozhu*, vol. 1.

64. For discussion of Zhang's views on dreaming in various sections of *Zhengmeng*, see Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo meng wenhua*, 101–106.

winter the life-essences of things are gathered in, appropriate to the formless state of the Great Void. This is like [humans] reverting to what is true in sleep. . . . One's *qi* is continuous through day and night, just as it is through waking and sleeping. Thus, the superior man has nothing but correct dreams; they accord with principle just as in his waking hours."⁶⁵

In one of Wang Fuzhi's two works on *Master Zhuang*, however, he comments thusly on the well-known statement that "perfected men of ancient times did not dream when they slept and had no worries when awake": "Dreams [occur] when the unfathomable activates the anima and suddenly becomes manifest as shadow. In a state in which sense perceptions are still lingering and unstable, [the mind] has not forgotten their appearance and makes an illusion of them. For those who [can] return to their true [inner] knowledge, [however,] the light of Heaven shines within, and the remaining traces of sense perceptions are forgotten. [Such persons'] *qi* is gathered in, their minds are vacuous, and dreams do not arise."⁶⁶ Taking Wang's comments on Zhang Zai and *Master Zhuang* together, his view seems to be that when a superior man dreams, he can maintain the correct activity of his mind, but in ultimate sagely sublimity, all dreams cease.

Wang Fuzhi, a Confucian who nevertheless identified with Zhuang Zhou as a fellow independent thinker in war-torn times, interpreted Zhuang's most cherished mode of living, "free and easy" (*xiaoyao*), as the spiritual freedom of a man constrained by circumstances, of a "whole man" (*quanren*) who keeps himself whole (*ziquan*) through precise self-awareness of his place—his agency and helplessness, possibilities and impossibilities—in the grand scheme of the universe.⁶⁷ It was much through his poetic dream-expressions that Wang continually adjusted this awareness in himself.

Wang Fuzhi did not pretend to sagehood beyond dreaming, but short of that, he was a man so firm in his Neo-Confucian selfhood that he did not need to fear his dreams—at one point asking rhetorically if they are not "the ultimate teachers [when one has] no teacher."⁶⁸ Indeed, his dreams guided him in expressing what could not *but* be expressed by an ethical man in grossly aberrant times. Others, less confident in their life choices and self-cultivation but compelled by the challenges of *yimin* existence to justify or improve themselves, found evidence in unsettling, even upsetting dreams of where to concentrate their efforts.

65. Zhang Zai, *Zhangzi Zhengmeng zhu*, 1.14b, in Wang Fuzhi, *Chuanshan quanji*, 12:9286.

66. *Zhuangzi jie*, 6.2a, in Wang Fuzhi, *Chuanshan quanji*, 13:10075.

67. Wang Yubin, "Wang Fuzhi 'xiaoyao yi.'" Further on Wang Fuzhi's significant interpretations of the *Zhuangzi*, see Wu Limin and Xu Suming, *Chuanshan Fo-Dao sixiang*, esp. 59–65; and Xie Mingyang, *Ming yimin de Zhuangzi*, chap. 6.

68. Note prefacing "Qian yugu yue," the first poem series in Wang's "Yugu ci"; see Wang Fuzhi, *Wang Chuanshan shiwen ji*, 2:633.

ADDRESSING FAULTS

In late Ming, literati had been challenged morally and ethically in several ways: by an epochal divergence within Neo-Confucianism between the Song “school of principle” and the Ming “school of mind,” by growing dissatisfaction with the civil service examination system, by egregious corruption in Ming governance, and by dysfunctional, dangerous factional struggles. After the Ming defeat, *yimin*—that is, men who declined to take examinations or serve as officials under the Qing—became concerned with political issues only at a remove, as commoners and, in some cases, as private scholar-critics of the recent past. Confucian moral-ethical issues, however, remained acute and went through new permutations. One was the debate among literati who survived the interdynastic cataclysm about the honor or dishonor in having died or not died during the crisis years. Another was the trend to bring Confucian learning back down to earth from the abstruse discussions of Neo-Confucian concepts such as “mind-and-heart” and “human nature,” which many felt had diverted men’s attention away from the concrete problems of state and society during the Ming. Below, we examine how dream-recollection played into these developments in two representative figures.

The voice of Chen Que, introduced above, was notable in pervasive *yimin* discussions of the ethics of choosing life or death during the dynastic transition. Of course, only those who had survived were present to witness this debate, so most could readily accede to Chen’s point that not all deaths during the dynastic crisis had been honorable and that not all honorable men had chosen death.⁶⁹ But there was a sense about Chen that he protested too much. At the time, he was trying to gain recognition as the philosophical heir to the great Neo-Confucian Liu Zongzhou, who was celebrated among *yimin* for arduously committing suicide rather than accepting Manchu rule, and Chen also counted other such suicides among friends in the heavily loyalist region surrounding Hangzhou Bay. Thus, he felt a special need to justify his self-preservation.

At some points, Chen cited an obligation to attend to and support his elderly mother, but this excuse has proven somewhat specious.⁷⁰ He was on firmer ground in appealing to Chinese “culturalism,” that is, the idea that (Han-Chinese) civilization could continue and even prosper under conditions of alien domination if Han-Chinese literati kept themselves alive and devoted themselves to nurturing

69. For specific quotations, see Deng Liguang, *Chen Qianchu yanjiu*, 151; and He Guanbiao, *Sheng yu si*, 241.

70. For discussion of Chen Que and the issue of choosing life or death, see He Guanbiao, *Sheng yu si*, appendix. On reasons to doubt Chen’s particular claim to having been occupied with providing for his mother, see *ibid.*, 235–238.

that civilization through writing and scholarship.⁷¹ Yet in this respect, he could not compare in either valor or accomplishment with his philosophical rival, Huang Zongxi (1610–1695). Like Wang Fuzhi, Huang had placed himself in great physical danger for years by resisting Qing forces and trying to aid one of the rump Ming courts in the South before turning in defeat to a life of research, thought, and writing.⁷² So Chen redoubled his efforts at self-justification, arguing in 1652 that *writing was the harder choice* for him than active resistance or martyrdom and drawing on a dream account to back up that subjective claim.

Both righteous action and literary writing are emphasized in Confucian teaching. If the two cannot be [upheld] equally, then strong-willed gentlemen pride themselves on acting out of righteousness, while ordinary gentlemen take literary writing as their forte. Everyone knows the judgment on which [of these] is hard or easy, weighty or light. But I have tested this in my dreams [and found that] when I'm at the crux of life and death, I am able to be quite decisive, with absolutely no terror or reluctance to leave [life behind]. But when I approach anything literary, I often make mistakes; even when I take extreme care in composition, I still get the sense turned around. So it is not necessarily correct to say that righteous action is hard and literary writing is easy.⁷³

To illustrate, Chen recounts a dream of floating along in a small boat on a sparkling, moonlit river and seeing in the middle of it a pavilion surrounded by marvelous, multicolored peonies taller than the pavilion itself. As sounds of music and song emerge from the pavilion, Chen thinks they are coming from people who are there enjoying the flowers. But regrettably, the current carries his boat past so quickly that he cannot get a good view. Thereupon, in the dream, he recalls a poem supposedly by Su Shi, "Peonies of the Mid-River Pavilion" (Jiangxin ting mudan), which seems to be one he had recited by heart in the past, and he sonorously intones a few lines before waking. But even while still in the dream, Chen senses that the "autumn fragrance" in one line of the poem makes no sense in conjunction with spring peonies, and after waking he realizes there is no such poem in Su's oeuvre. "The language of the poem and the peonies were utterly unrelated," he writes, "but in the dream I tried to explain it as though I had gotten [the meaning]. My mind floats about, unsecured to this extent! In my life, whenever I've dreamed about engaging with liter-

71. See Langlois, "Chinese Culturalism."

72. Briefly on Huang Zongxi, see *ECCP*, 1:351–354. On his philosophical thought, see *ECP*, 306–309. On his disagreements with Chen Que's views, see Deng Liguang, *Chen Qianchu yanjiu*, 144–148.

73. "Shumeng ji," in Chen Que, *Chen Que ji*, 1:216–217.

ature, it's always been like this."⁷⁴ He concludes, "I have never concurred with [those who] say that dreams preserve the authentic and expunge the inauthentic, that there is no difficulty or ease, facility or lack thereof [in dreams]. So I have written this to place the issue before those who are good at writing."⁷⁵ Chen's somewhat lame point seems to be that his dream experience proves his awkwardness and difficulty in literary writing, which, nevertheless, he chooses to pursue out of cultural dedication over the easier alternative, for him, of righteous self-endangerment or death.

Another prominent writer on retrospective life-or-death issues is Wei Xi (1625–1681), who also held that there were multiple ways other than death to honorably respond to a catastrophe like the Ming–Qing transition and that choosing to live might well be more difficult than choosing to die. Wei, however, was not so defensive as Chen, and he also was more thorough, examining many cases in detail, finely weighing the considerations in each, and evaluating individuals' whole lives, not just their deaths. His chief requirement was that people had taken some sort of decisive, determined action to oppose, or express opposition to, the various destructive agents in the dynastic collapse and defeat.⁷⁶ On this criterion, Wei had no need to feel inferior, since he and his two brothers, following the lead of their widely respected father, had built for their family and certain friends a remote compound on Cuiwei Peak in mountains to the west of Ningdu, as waves of violence had swept over their home region, far southern Jiangxi Province. Normally able to defend this redoubt from unwelcome intruders, Wei Xi stayed there from 1646 until 1662, living in relative simplicity, eschewing contact with Qing officials, and carrying on learned discussions with a few fellow residents who, like the Weis, were committed to producing only scholarship of pragmatic application in society.⁷⁷

Wei's dream records pertain to a corollary of this commitment: an intense focus on right living and interpersonal ethics—especially in the five cardinal relationships and between teacher and student—as the true concerns of Confucianism. Through those records, we glimpse a more visceral, psychological aspect of early-Qing "Confucian fundamentalism," heretofore studied primarily through contemporaneous philosophical and social-institutional discourses.⁷⁸ His dreams also

74. Chen Que, *Chen Que ji*, 1:217.

75. *Ibid.*

76. Huang Yudong, "Xunguo zhi wai."

77. On Wei Xi, see *ECCP*, 2:847–848; Wen Jumin, *Wei Shuzi nianpu*; and Huang Yudong, "Ming yimin jiating chuchu," 391, 398–410. His father, Wei Zhaofeng (1597–1654), as merely a Ming licentiate, had been recommended to the court for special opportunities because of his sterling comportment, but he reportedly declined involvement in court affairs because of the rampant factionalism of the time.

78. See, for instance, Lü Miaofen, *Xiao zhi Tianxia*, esp. chap. 7; and Chow, *Rise of Confucian Ritualism*, esp. chaps. 4–5.

show the intensification of Confucian guilt over personal faults that became salient in late Ming and proliferated among *yimin*.⁷⁹

Most notable among more than a dozen dream reports in Wei Xi's oeuvre is a very disturbing threesome. The autumn of 1675 found Wei perplexed. Both he and his wife were beset by serious illnesses, but he wanted to travel again to the Suzhou region, so he made a divination and received awfully inauspicious predictions about his wife's health and about leaving home. Several days later, feverish and in pain, he dreamed of reclining on a sea of waves, where he stayed in spite of his wife's calls from inside a doorway. The waves soon grew frighteningly intense, until they lifted him up and he went through the doorway. In spite of this warning sign, Wei felt compelled to seek medical help in Ningdu, and during his descent from Cuiwei Peak, a terrifying fall down a steep slope left him convinced that "from here on, all my years are extras. I should solely reflect on my faults, cultivate virtue, and secure my fate."

In this mood, after returning to Cuiwei Peak, Wei had a restless night and did not fall asleep until dawn, whereupon he dreamed of having bedded down in a large monastery with the abbot and a guest-monk. In the dream, they talked lewdly among themselves all night long. In the morning, when the guest-monk got up, he doubled over in severe pain, his eyes looking deathly, and soon grew stiff. Wei hurried out into the main hall, where a disorderly crowd was saying that the monk's heart had been cut out by a Daoist enforcer god. Shortly, the god came with a handful of vital organs, dripping with blood, which he cast on the ground for the dogs to eat. Then the god addressed Wei. Pointing to his own heart, the god said, "People have only to achieve wholeness here. You should make a [greater] effort." Wei understood the dire meaning in the god's calmly spoken words and was terror-stricken to think that the god knew of his lewd conversation with the monks. Meanwhile, the crowd was saying that the guest-monk had done bad things at another monastery and had continued to harm people here. They tried to encoffin the body in its blood-soaked clothing, but the legs were bent stiff. Wei dashed to the kitchen for some water to wash his face, but he encountered a clan uncle, and as he put the water down to bow in respectful greeting, he awakened, feeling extremely chilled. Wei then reflected that, thanks to the good fortune bestowed by heaven and to warnings from gods, although he sometimes had lewd thoughts, they never had resulted in actual licentious behavior on his part.

This does not conclude the matter, however. Wei goes on to recall that, three years earlier, in 1672, when he had been sojourning in the Suzhou area, someone

79. See P. Wu, "Self-Examination and Confession of Sins," 16–38 (esp. on Wei Xi, 28–34); Wang Fansen, "Ripu yu Mingmo Qingchu sixiangjia"; and Xu Shengxin, "Mingmo Qingchu Ruxue."

invited him over and greeted him quizzically at the door, saying, “I’ve had a strange dream that you, sir, and my younger brother, Qingli, brought in a sow and copulated with it. People say that ghosts and spirits respected your esteemed father because in his life he committed no licentious acts. But since I’ve suddenly had a dream like this, I wonder whether you, sir, have behaved carelessly of late?” Hearing this, Wei broke out in a sweat, because at that time his host’s brother was enamored of a prostitute, with whom Wei often joked and chatted. He confesses, “I rather desired to be intimate with her but thought it impermissible. Nevertheless, I couldn’t cease thinking [about her]. Probably [my host], Tingwen, didn’t [consciously] know of this. I’m recording these [dreams] together to admonish myself, and also as a lesson to the younger generation that, as the saying goes, the spiritually enlightened way is nearest, not remote.”⁸⁰

Arresting here is the mortal seriousness with which Wei takes certain experiences that would have been a joking matter in many late-Ming literati circles, and also the willingness of such an earnest Confucian to include confessions of his lascivious thoughts and belief in spirits among his collected works. This sequence represents most vividly Wei Xi’s guilt-ridden dreams from the mid-1660s through the mid-1670s, during which period he at first tentatively taught classes and sojourned away from Cuiwei Peak and eventually, unambiguously “came out” to associate with Qing officials who shared his interest in practical statecraft.⁸¹ Wei’s discomfort with himself during this decade is reflected in other dreams, as well—ones that induce guilt through Confucian superego figures associated with the Ming.

The earliest example, from 1665 when Wei Xi’s hope of a Ming restoration was flagging, suggests both Wei’s identification of his father with the Ming and his perennial sense of not meeting his father’s (or Ming) expectations. Wei records in an ancient-style poem that the previous day he had been teaching a group of students and shocked them by directing harsh sarcasm at a dullard. That night, he dreamed of watching the moon 月 as it turned into a brightly shining crane surrounded by multicolored clouds, just like the insignia worn by officials. The poem goes on:

Suddenly two suns 日 were suspended in the western quadrant of the sky—one large, one small, emitting bright light (*mingming* 明明).
I blocked the light from my left eye with one hand and looked at the new sun[/day] with just one eye.

80. “Shumeng,” in Wei Xi, *Wei Shuzi wenji*, 3:1044–1046.

81. For specific examples of Wei’s relations with Qing officials and discussion of considerations on the part of *yimin* in forming such contacts, see Li Xuan, “Ming yimin yu shi-Qing Hanguan,” 138, 150, 153–154. On the factors involved in Wei’s thinking about “staying home” (*chǐ*) or “going out” (*chū*) to engage with Qing officialdom, see Huang Yudong, “Ming yimin jiating.”

I strode to the inner room to tell my esteemed father,⁸² who sat up and searched for a pair of shoes.
 Then I knelt down and clasped my father's hands [to say,] "This year Heaven's changes have turned very good!
 Times [will be] peaceful, prices low, and harvests abundant!"
 But somehow I was so pained that I lost my voice,
 And my esteemed father [merely] said, "You're always like this."⁸³

The father's odd, deflating remark at the end of this poem doubles back to Wei's implied regret over humiliating a student, while the sudden, almost painful loss of elation seems to suggest that Wei could no longer lucidly expect such a reappearance of the Ming sun/court/emperor in the western firmament.⁸⁴

The theme of being admonished by a fatherlike authority figure of the Ming recurs in a letter written by Wei in 1667:

At night I dreamed I was lying in bed when my former teacher shouted at me to get up so he could enumerate six or seven of my transgressions—all matters of social propriety, which hit the mark deeply and painfully. [He] even singled out self-indulgence in the medicines I took. [His manner of maintaining] a warm countenance while speaking severe words was even more marked than before. Awaking, I panted in fear and wept over my thoughts and feelings [from the dream]. Mr. [Yang] and I had been as close as father and son, and I can still see in my mind's eye what he looked like as I greeted him solemnly each morning. [From this dream I know] that his love for me transcends the worlds of dark and light.⁸⁵

In other words, out of loving concern, his teacher continues to admonish him even from the grave through the dream medium—as Wei's father certainly does. Though in the latter case, the loving concern seems awfully one-sided on Wei Xi's part.

82. At the time of this dream, Wei Zhaofeng had been dead for eleven years.

83. "Jimeng," in Wei Xi, *Wei Shuzi wenji*, 3:1322.

84. The last claimant in the Ming royal line, the Yongli emperor, had been executed under Qing order in Yunnan in 1662. By 1665, the power of that claimant's executioner, the feudatory Wu Sangui (1612–1678), had grown to such an extent that he held sway over all the westernmost provinces, even into Hunan (see *ECCP*, 2:877–880). Some Ming loyalists harbored hope that Wu would eventually revolt against the Qing and restore the Ming dynasty, under which he had been an important general.

85. "Yu Yang Yu Li Jinye," in Wei Xi, *Wei Shuzi wenji*, 1:342. I have interpreted this missive as referring to Wei's tutor during his teen years, the regionally renowned teacher for examination preparation Yang Wencai (1585–1664), who had died three years earlier. See Wen Jumin, *Wei Shuzi nianpu*, 5, 39–40. Note the parallel between the manner of the teacher—warm of countenance but severe in words—and that of the Daoist enforcer god in the monastery dream discussed above.

We see this in 1673 when Wei was asked to inscribe a portrait of the deceased father of a friend who purportedly had maintained regular, lifelike, filial relations with his father through dreams over a long period of time. This prompted a sad reflection from Wei about his comparative lack of filial sincerity, because his own father's dream-appearances had lessened over the years.

People of ancient times regarded father and son as one body, with continuity between life and death. But if there were any lack of authentic [filiality on the son's part], then he would not be able to see [the father after his death]. . . . In my youth I was often ill, so in assuming family ritual duties I always got up too late, which made my esteemed father angry—so angry that sometimes he couldn't get over it.⁸⁶ My father turned his back [on life] nineteen years ago. During the first ten years [afterward, until 1664], I dreamed of him two or three times a month; after that, down to this year, I've dreamt [of him just] five or six times. I feel unfilial: inured to [bad] habits, I'm unable to assuage the concerns of my kind father in the netherworld. So he is only angry, never pleased [with me]. Who could be more unfilial?⁸⁷

Starting off more cheerfully, but also turning to self-indictment, is a concluding example, a poem from 1677 when Wei Xi had become fully engaged in relations with Qing officials. The poem reports Wei's dream of a boyhood friend with whom he had formed what they both thought would be an eternal bond, "never expecting that the greatest principles would go awry" or that they would become separated by distance. The friend apparently has remained withdrawn from the Qing world, while Wei has been unable to do so. The latter part of the poem is as follows:

As the Long River [flows] three thousand miles,
 His fine soul comes [to me in a dream] from remote seclusion.
 Knowing that his heart is not divided [in dynastic allegiance],
 My face is deeply colored with shame.
 I greatly cherish his past benevolence
 But breathe hard in trepidation at his righteous words.
 In life, the last path is the most important,
 And surmounting the threshold of great virtue is hard.
 But I just scratch myself [in crude indolence]

86. For another moving dream of Wei Zhaofeng's stringent devotion to ritual obligations, see "Meng Zhengjun fubing baixian," in Wei Xi, *Wei Shuzi wenji*, 3:1333.

87. "Ti mengqin tu," in Wei Xi, *Wei Shuzi wenji*, 2:630.

And fear that my good friend rejects me.
 At daybreak [my mind] pursues bygone things
 As I wipe the tears that soak my quilt and mat.⁸⁸

Thus, while Wei Xi does not seem to have been troubled, as was Chen Que, about his course of action during the most chaotic years of the dynastic transition, his inability to sustain non-involvement with Qing officialdom over the long term—like so many other *yimin* literati—became a burden on his conscience. This burden emerged in dreams, mainly in the form of imagined disapproval from Ming-associated authority figures, during his later years.

Qing Servitors

Generally speaking, literati of the Ming–Qing era were not prone to write self-reflectively while in office. Such works as personal memoirs and dream records were usually products of life phases when they were not busy with governmental tasks, such as during mourning leave or after dismissal or retirement. Even so, the paucity of dream reports, dream references, and dream contemplations among those who served the Manchu–Qing government in the seventeenth century is striking in comparison to the plethora of such writings among Ming *yimin*. Two notable exceptions, Ding Yaokang (1599–1670) and Li Wen (1607–1647),⁸⁹ were litterateurs who entered Qing service under especially pressing circumstances and became very unhappy with their situations, evincing little commitment to the government they had joined. Their unease, expressed through dream modalities, bears some resemblance to that seen in *yimin*. As for officials who were comfortable in their service to the Qing, Wei Xiangshu (1617–1687) was unusual in frequently writing of his dreams, although, characteristic of the orthodox trend of the Qing period, his reports are largely frames in which to display satisfaction with his Confucian values and learning.

Ding, a prolific writer known best for his plays and admonitory literati fiction,⁹⁰ was a native of Zhucheng in east-central Shandong Province, which suffered sorely from roving-rebel depredations as early as the 1620s and from Manchu raids in 1639 and 1642. Having lost his father in boyhood, Ding assumed responsibility

88. “Meng guren,” in Wei Xi, *Wei Shuzi wenji*, 3:1303.

89. Ding died at the end of the twelfth lunar month, which places his death date in the Western year 1670, not 1669 as given in many sources. On the year of Li Wen’s birth, see Yao Rong, “Li Wen shengnian bianzheng.”

90. On fictional works definitely written by Ding Yaokang, see Idema, “Crossing the Sea”; S. Hu, “In the Name of Correctness”; Huang Qionghui, *Shibian zhong de jiyi*, chap. 4; and articles about *Xu Jin Ping Mei* and Ding’s plays in *Ding Yaokang yanjiu*, 153–252.

for managing his widowed mother's household at an early age despite having two elder brothers, and it was concern for the safety and support of this household that guided his actions through the tumult of the conquest years. Worries about insecurity led him to relocate some or all of the Ding family several times—back and forth between Zhucheng city and rural residences and, in 1642 and 1644, to islands off the coast—his two brothers and a nephew having lost their lives trying to defend Zhucheng against the Manchus in 1639, and his eldest son having died in 1641. For a period in 1644–1645 he attempted to aid Ming forces that were being driven southward by the Qing juggernaut. But like many literati in the north who craved stability above all, after decades of disruption, endangerment, and loss of livelihood, Ding moved expeditiously to make contacts on the Qing side and seek a post in Beijing when the Ming resistance was quelled in Jiangnan.⁹¹

Ding had become a Ming licentiate and tribute student during the Chongzhen reign, but like many in late Ming he was perennially frustrated at his inability to pass the provincial examinations. This blockage continued under Qing rule, but the Manchus in those early conquest years sorely needed Han-Chinese collaborators to teach them Chinese literary skills and to put a Chinese face on local administration as their sway broadened. So men like Ding Yaokang were able to obtain posts despite deficiencies of qualification in the exam system. Official employment brought stipends and a modicum of protection, but sometimes it was not satisfying to the appointee or was downright hazardous. Ding took maximal leave from his lowly job as a teacher of Chinese to Manchu Bannermen, literally dreaming of the day when he could be free of uncertainties in his Oak and Juniper retreat to the south of Zhucheng city.⁹² And he stalled when assigned to be the education official in Rongcheng, Hebei, where his eventual tenure was, as he described in a poem,

like three years in a [meaningless] dream:
 the post as cold as being retired.
 The land is infertile, the customs backward,
 the people of little note and few courtesies.⁹³

Around this time, in 1654, Ding recorded a dream that seems to conflate memories of a trip he made in 1635 to Shandong's sacred mountain, Taishan, with

91. For biographical studies of Ding Yaokang, utilizing, among other sources, his memoir of repeated flights from Zhucheng, *Chujie jilue* (in *Ding Yaokang quanji*, vol. 3), see *Zhongguo gudai xiqujia*, 488–497; Chen Qinghao, “‘Hainei fenshu jin shi Ding’”; and Huang Qionghui, *Shibian zhong de jiyi*, esp. chap. 3 and app. 1. See also I Songgyu, “Shantung in the Shun-chih Reign.”

92. “Meng ru gushan,” in Ding Yaokang, *Ding Yaokang quanji*, 1:56. Ding had built his retreat, Xiangjia shanfang, in the mid-1620s.

93. “Rumeng,” in Ding Yaokang, *Ding Yaokang quanji*, 1:323.

lore about Daoist transcendents residing on islands off the Shandong coast (among which Ding had sought refuge in the 1640s). In the dream, Ding can glimpse from afar, through the heavy mists, the bright precincts of the celestial ones, but in trying to approach those precincts, he falters. Perhaps writing allegorically of his bureaucratic career, he versifies:

Bent over in the weeds and mire, my bones could not move another step.
 Someone, in both mirth and pity, tried to lift me onward.
 The mountain sprites insulted me by tugging at my clothes,
 flitting about like sparks and leaving as though on wings.
 In the vast space before me, I could see only greenness.
 When will Heaven's gate open its grotto door [to me]?⁹⁴

As though in perverse response, Ding was promoted in 1659, but to an even less desirable position: magistrate of faraway Hui'an in coastal Fujian, on the forefront of concentrated Qing efforts to finally defeat the maritime challenge of Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong (1624–1662) and his fleet.⁹⁵ Again Ding delayed. Instead of proceeding straightway to his post, he slowly traveled through eastern Jiangnan to Hangzhou, associating with well-known literati and, along the way, completing his major fictional work of biting social criticism, *Sequel to "Gold Vase Plum"* (*Xu Jin Ping Mei*). He published that work, using a Ming-loyalist signature, in 1660, forthwith resigned his magistrate's post, and returned to Zhucheng, where his second son died the following summer.

In the subsequent several years, Ding's dejection was reinforced by the progressive loss of his eyesight, by two local lawsuits—extortionate in intent but not without foundation—charging that he was disloyal toward the Qing order, and by an administrative indictment for failing to assume the magistrate post. In 1665, he was imprisoned in Beijing for more than a hundred days, and upon his release under a general amnesty, he took the tonsure as a Buddhist monk with the name Muji (Wooden Cock).⁹⁶ After this point, Ding's normally bemused attitude toward or symbolic interest in his dreams (showing none of the heavy emphasis on cosmic retribution that characterizes his major writings) turned to concern that he could not clear his mind, especially of dream-thoughts about his children (most of whom were deceased) and of regret that, being about seventy years old, he could not have

94. "Meng Taishan xing," in Ding Yaokang, *Ding Yaokang quanji*, 1:250–251.

95. For an overview, see Struve, *Southern Ming*, 178–193.

96. In *Zhuangzi*, Outer Chapters, "Dasheng," a fighting cock is reared to be unresponsive to any provocation, as though it were wooden, so as to appear very formidable (*Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, 531–533).

another child.⁹⁷ Evincing the predominant Pure Land preference for waking-state enlightenment, he takes the negative side of Buddho-Daoist views toward dreaming in the following poem:

Repenting Dreams (Chanmeng)

The consummate man is able to have no dreams;
 his mind being empty, his dreams also are void.
 [But] I cannot cut off deluded thoughts,
 and my emotions are so unsteady. . . .
 [Confused, conflicting] thoughts arise in the bright day
 and occupy my breast in the pure night,
 Disturbing my meditation place
 and turning [my mind] to mundane cares.
 [My] wandering soul creates [its own] world;
 cognitions seize the inner palace.
 Grief and joy contest each other;
 an enemy realm lies covered in [sleep's] shadow. . . .
 [My] mind's strength is not self-supporting;
 cutting off love is like [starting to exercise by] pulling the [toughest] bow.
 Only hearing the [morning] bell brings pure awakening,
 when I can completely lose [concern for] my body.
 Theretofore known as "Master Wooden Cock,"
 I somehow forget that and become the Old Man of Heaven.⁹⁸

If Ding Yaokang's adult life was a long drama of episodic tensions, that of Li Wen was a sharply joined triangular tragedy, in which dream-expression was used quite differently. Li, who became a Ming licentiate at age twenty, had been born to a long line of Ming officeholders in Songjiang Prefecture, Jiangnan, but like so many highly educated young men in that hothouse of scholarly and literary achievement, he was unable to pass the more advanced civil service examinations. Li made his fame instead as a poet's poet by consorting with such stellar litterateurs as Chen Zilong (1608–1647) and Song Zhengyu (1618–1667), and together they became renowned as the Three [Poetry] Masters of Songjiang (Yunjian Sanzi). Chen later committed suicide after being arrested for resisting the Qing occupation of Jiangnan, while Song went on to become an important Qing official; meanwhile, Li fell

97. Ding Yaokang, "Yisi liuyue su Quqiu Zhihai Chanfang jimeng," "Mengjie," "Meng'er," and "Mengzhong de zi yuzhi shi zhongdong nianer ye er shou," in *Ding Yaokang quanji*, 1:468, 500, 544, 613–614, respectively.

98. In Ding Yaokang, *Ding Yaokang quanji*, 1:470.

into a political and emotional no-man's-land between the life-or-death choices of his soul mates.⁹⁹

Li Wen's father, as a bureau secretary in the Ministry of Works during the Chongzhen reign, had come under administrative indictment and was mustered out. After two appeals, he was restored to office in 1643, and Li Wen accompanied him back to Beijing, where father and son were trapped the following spring when the forces of the rebel leader Li Zicheng laid siege to and penetrated the capital. Compounding this horrendous calamity was the consequent suicide of the Chongzhen emperor on the nineteenth day of the third lunar month, and the death of Li's father, who probably was extorted, tortured, and killed under the rebel occupation.¹⁰⁰ These events left Li Wen so destitute and despondent that, after collecting only enough cash from begging to encoffin his father's remains, he collapsed and nearly starved to death.

Li's state of body and mind during that terrible time are conveyed quite strangely in the first of two eerie dream essays, "Alleviated Melancholy" (Shichou wen), dated by an extremely arcane, time-out-of-conventional-time method to roughly the fourth month of 1644.¹⁰¹ Therein Li dreams that he is summoned forth by one of the legendary founders of Chinese civilization, the Red Emperor—"heroically resplendent in a vermillion formal robe, with the God of Fire at his side, [surrounded by] chirping dragons, with rainbow-colored streamers floating upward, his hair russet and teeth exposed." The emperor queries him, in highly formal and archaic yet sympathetic language, about why he is so downcast and enervated, and urges him to take heart and pull himself together. After doing obeisance, Li responds by elaborately attributing his melancholy to the debased state of the society he sees before him, which he feels powerless to change or escape. "I'm as aghast," he says, "as having encountered a hidden tiger-demon on a remote mountain; my spirit's so startled, I haven't been able to keep my mortal soul from bolting away. So I've become a pathetic, ugly old man."

99. For a collective biography of Chen, Song, and Li, see Yao Rong, *Mingmo Yunjian sanzi*. On Li individually, see Liu Yonggang, "Lun Li Wen." For a study of Chen in the context of the Ming-Qing transition, see K. Chang, *Late-Ming Poet Ch'en Tzu-lung*. Song Zhengyu (Song Maocheng's son) wrote the most authoritative contemporaneous biography of Li Wen, "Yunjian Li Shuzhang xingzhuang"; see Song Zhengyu, *Linwu wen'gao*, 10.1a-5b.

100. On the reign of terror under Li Zicheng's regime in Beijing, see Wakeman, "Shun Interregnum of 1644." The exact circumstances of the death of Li Wen's father, Li Fengshen (*jinshi* 1619), are unclear, though all notices agree that he "died for his state under duress" (*xunman*). Li Wen's own account of his father's death, listed in the table of contents of *Liaozhai houji*, is not actually to be found therein.

101. Li Wen, *Liaozhai ji*, 40.21a-23a. The ancient system used in this essay to indicate the year and month is recorded in the *Erya* (ca. 3rd century CE); see *Erya*, "Shitian" chap.

“Oh, oh!” says the Red Emperor. “[The conditions] that make you morose are [also] worrisome to me. But since there’s nothing to be done, why [try to] repair things and lay plans? Neglecting only to take pity on your [own] body, [how can you go on being] anxious about everything else?”

“Trembling,” writes Li, “I accepted [the emperor’s] command and, damp with perspiration, straightened my garments and arose, relieved of more than half my melancholy.”¹⁰²

As it happened in reality, at the beginning of the fifth lunar month, after Li Zicheng’s army was defeated by a coalition of Manchu and erstwhile Ming forces, Beijing was reoccupied by an expeditionary contingent of the Manchu-Qing government under the authority of Manchu Prince Dorgon.¹⁰³ Some time after that, Li Wen was found near death by certain acquaintances who had taken influential positions with the Manchus, and they fed and cared for him until he regained a modicum of physical strength. Li, a mere licentiate with no means of sustaining himself, much less ever taking his father’s remains home, eventually acceded to his benefactors’ wish that he join them in serving the Qing. Under these emergent circumstances, Li, with his consummate command of the formal, official prose style, was catapulted to the top. Becoming a secretary to Dorgon himself, he drafted many of the first Chinese-script proclamations to be issued by the alien regime “inside the Pass.”¹⁰⁴ Consequently, in the following year, when Qing policy trended toward insistence that all male subjects shave off most of their hair and cultivate queues in the steppe fashion of the Manchus, Li, troubled by this necessity, again addressed the matter in a weird dream account, “Reply to Admonishment by My Hair” (Da faze wen):

In the fifth month, second year of [the Qing] Shunzhi [reign], I was in Yandu [i.e., Beijing] and about to shave off my hair. The night before, I dreamed of something eerily indistinct in form, which spoke to me angrily, [saying], “I am the spirit of your hair. Since you were born thirty-eight years ago, I have accompanied your crown, but now I hear that you are going to cast me away, so I have come to admonish you. Since you were young, I have occupied your head—fine and even, straight all around, both glossy and solid black. I could strike an air in the women’s quarters; I could reflect the shine of your splendid hair clasps; I could be dried in

102. “Shichou wen,” in Li Wen, *Liaozhai ji*, 40.21a–23a.

103. See Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, 1:310–318, 414–424.

104. Li Wen’s functions included writing impressive letters to Ming officials and loyalists persuading them to collaborate. Recent research has tended to confirm past assertions that Li Wen ghost-authored the famous letter from Dorgon to the key defense coordinator of the rump Ming court at Nanjing, Shi Kefa (1601–1645), urging him to switch sides. See Liu Yonggang, “Li Wen wei Shezheng Wang.” On that letter and Shi’s reply, see Struve, *Southern Ming*, 49–51.

the morning sun or float, glistening, in pure springs. [So I] cannot think of even one reason for this decision of yours, though it seems that wracking your brain has taxed your vitality and shaken your body's health, to the point that I, [your hair,] have lost my lustrous splendor. Your blood having weakened prematurely, [I] have grown thin; before my time [I] have become motley—to the point that you [look like] a disheveled bumpkin in public places, unsure of your direction and unsteady on your cart. . . . Nonetheless, how could I have anticipated being driven off halfway [through our life]? . . . In past times you took me as a bulwark in adversity. [Now suddenly,] one morning, you discard me so offhandedly, how can I not be pained by such shoddy treatment? If you have nothing to say for yourself, then I [will forthwith] lodge a complaint in the Vault of Heaven.

At first taken aback by this onslaught, in the dream, Li can only cover his face and weep. But then he gathers his thoughts and responds with a retort, arguing that there is no necessary, permanent relation between a man and his hair, that the man is the core decision maker and the hair a mere appendage, and that, anyway, neither man nor hair is an independent entity in the world. Both must accommodate themselves to the historically fluctuating power relations between China and the steppe, and they should feel lucky in this case to encounter such enlightened rule (under the Qing). From that perspective, Li asserts, the relation between himself and his hair is insignificant. In the end, the hair-spirit, rendered speechless, withdraws in tears, and the day after this dream, Li shaves his head.¹⁰⁵

Palpably, both the Red Emperor and the hair-spirit essays are meretricious displays of literary skill more than—or rather than—faithful reports of dream content.¹⁰⁶ Notable, however, is Li Wen's use of the dream conceit to project the debates within his own mind into a state of consciousness where the rational and irrational bear equal credence. Should he die, like his father, with the Ming, or live to fulfill his filial duty to father and lineage? Should he take the personal or the historical perspective as paramount? In which relative quarters of the possible should he lodge shame and honor? Because so much rides on the psychological factor in such debates, they are not resolvable by reasoned argumentation alone—or at all. Thus Li's resort to the dream medium, through which, moreover, readers perhaps could feel his quandaries as viscerally as he did. In the first essay, the Red Emperor likely is an avatar of the recently self-martyred Chongzhen emperor (vermillion being symbolic of the Ming); his earnest resuscitation of Li's will to live, therefore, decides Li's question of whether to die with his father and ruler-father. The hair-spirit in

105. "Da faze wen," in Li Wen, *Liaozhai houji*, 5.8b–10a.

106. Dream poems that Li wrote before the Ming demise all appear to have been prompted by at least wisps of genuine dream experience. See *Liaozhai ji*, 23.2b–3a, 30.8a–b, 32.4b–5a.

the second essay speaks for Li's sense of shame, which ultimately he had to set aside but could not ignore.

Eventually Li faced ill will from peers on both the Qing and Ming-loyalist sides. In the former case, it appears he was sniped at for having assumed such a high and influential position without qualifying by the usual bureaucratic procedures. In the latter, when Li was able to take his father's remains home for burial in the autumn of 1646, encounters with former associates who held anti-Qing sentiments naturally were strained, and many old friends were unforgiving.¹⁰⁷ Having never fully regained his health, Li fell seriously ill under the stresses of self-recrimination, peer disapproval, and fear of being implicated in the sedition case of Chen Zilong. He died in 1647, not long after returning to Beijing.

Among figures who fared well in Qing service, one finds much less interest in dreaming. During the same period when Zhang Dai was writing *West Lake Sought in Dreams*, Sun Chengze (1593–1675), a native of the Beijing area who had been a high minister under the Qing, penned in retirement a detailed description of the palaces, halls, gardens, and official institutions of the Ming northern capital, which were all but completely destroyed in 1644, and titled it *After-Dreams of the Capital* (*Chunming mengyu lu*). Produced in the same "dream" tradition of recording precise memories of fallen political and cultural meccas, this work, in its complete objectivity and absence of internal reference to dreaming, offers a Qing-trending contrast to Zhang Dai's quintessentially Ming-remnant work. Sun had been a Ming censor but then took office in the rebel regime, going over to the Qing when Li Zicheng was driven out of Beijing. His thusly checkered political past may account for the lack of any preface for this homage to the Ming ("Chunming" being synecdochical for Chinese capitals, while highlighting the character *ming*) and for the delay of a whole century before its wide publication.¹⁰⁸

Unburdened by any previous service to or lingering sentiment for the Ming dynasty was Wei Xiangshu, a northerner from rebel-ravaged Shanxi Province, who competed successfully in the very first Qing metropolitan examination, of 1646. He went on to have an outstanding—if interrupted—governmental career, principally in service as an incorruptible censor but also in the exercise of practical statecraft. Seriously committed to Confucian principles, he exemplifies the strong surge in early Qing to reaffirm the correctness of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism.¹⁰⁹ Thus,

107. See Liu Yonggang, "Li Wen wei Shezheng Wang," 14; Liu Yonggang, "Lun Li Wen," 117–119; and Yao Rong, *Mingmo Yunjian sanzi*, 123–127.

108. See Chen Lunxu's preface to Sun Chengze, *Chunming menghua lu*; and Naquin, *Peking*, 452. On Sun, see *ECCP*, 2:669–670.

109. On Wei Xiangshu, see *ECCP*, 2:848–849; Yang Jing, "Qingchu zhichen zhi guan"; and Chang Yuenan, "Shixi Qingchu lixue mingchen."

in two respects, Wei was virtually unique among early-Qing officials in his degree of engagement with his own dreams: he wrote about them even while in active service, and he exhibits none of the reticence about them that characterizes devotees of Zhu Xi. The source of these anomalies, in my view, was Wei's indomitable confidence in his creed and his commitment thereunto. All of his dream records confirm the fundamental rightness of Confucian ontology and ethics, though his mind was open to complementary views from unorthodox quarters.

Like most Confucians, Wei looked upon dream content as relatively spontaneous though often strange non-waking thought.¹¹⁰ Thus, he was gratified when even his sleeping mind yielded visions of Confucian sages or conscientious ministers of ancient times, compliments on his probity from respected figures, or philosophical phrases that led him to further plumb the depths of Confucian teachings. For instance, Wei's strong disagreement with a local lecturer over the correct interpretation of a phrase in the *Mencius* was followed by a dream of being led into the Temple of Confucius in Qufu, Shandong. Therein Confucius himself ordered that Wei be given a large serving of rice, and Wei was able to see Confucius's four attending principal disciples, as well as Mencius himself, who called out Wei's name and spoke with him more than once. Reflecting on this after waking, Wei wrote: "When Confucius failed to dream of the Duke of Zhou, he sighed at his [spiritual] decline. My dream of Confucius and all the Worthies [would seem to show] that fortunately I have not yet declined. But I fear leading an empty life and dying dissolute, an offender to the Confucian school. In the dream I was inside the [secure] palace walls; waking I am [exposed to moral hazards] outside those walls. In recording [this dream], have I avoided [just] talking in my sleep?"¹¹¹

After returning home several years later, Wei constructed a private shrine on the model of what he had seen in this dream, placing Confucius in the center, with the Worthies to the left and, to the right, the Song-period progenitors of Neo-Confucianism whom Wei so revered. Outside the inner chamber, he set places honoring his own teachers as well as friends who had helped him advance in the Way and performed obeisance to all twice a month. Wei did this on the principle that "forebears [should be] remembered in both waking and sleeping" and that thoughts, to be valid, should be carried out concretely.

110. Dream-premonitions of the deaths of his best friend, Zhang Boheng, and of his mother struck Wei as uncanny. But both figures represent cardinal Confucian relationships, so the premonitions could be construed as the extremely fine attunement of Wei's mind to the well-being of those persons. See "Qiyue ershisani meng Zhang Boheng" and Wei's self-dictated "Hansong laoren nianpu," entry for 1669, in Wei Xiangshu, *Hansongtang quanji*, 6.253–254 and appendix, 698–699, respectively.

111. "Meng ye Kongmiao ji" and "Hansong laoren nianpu," entries for 1658 and 1665, in Wei Xiangshu, *Hansongtang quanji*, 410 (quotation), 694, 697, respectively.

Like Cheng Yi, Wei held that dreams can confirm one's grasp of waking-state efforts at learning. In the winter of 1662, he dreamed of receiving instruction from a senior figure about the ontological meanings of the *Change Classic* hexagrams, and he wrote about the experience to a good friend, saying, in part: "Of course, dreams are merely of the illusory sphere. [But] the ancients often used them to test the strength of their learning. Moreover, in addition to discussing principles and affairs, [dreams] can benefit one's body and mind. Though illusory, they also are true and must be written out. In last night's dream of a lecture on the *Change*, the clarity of [my] questions and [the elder's] answers was especially unforgettable."¹¹²

In view of this, it does not seem strange that Wei wrote to his court colleague and fellow ardent Confucianist Wei Yijie (1616–1686) seeking enlightenment about abstruse ontological phrases that came to him in a dream. Surprising, rather, is Wei Xiangshu's report of praying for a dream at one of the main Daoist sites in Beijing, the White Cloud Monastery, on its festival day and subsequently receiving oneiric words of edification from the monastery's Yuan-period headmaster Qiu Changchun, as well as a similar dream-encounter with the omnipresent God of War, Lord Guan.¹¹³ Yet, since the words from both of these dream-figures were compatible with Neo-Confucian ideas about self-cultivation, one might take these instances as evincing Wei's belief in the universality of Confucian insights.

On the job, also, Wei received reinforcement of his judgment from dreams. For instance, in his capacity as a censorial official, he heard that a certain magistrate in Shandong had arbitrarily killed some citizens in the county. Investigation had proven the accusations true, and Wei had drafted a memorial recommending the severest punishment. "I had not yet penned a clean copy," he wrote, "when at night I dreamed that several people, streaked in blood, knelt in a semicircle before me, piteously seeking to charge [the magistrate]. The next day I promptly submitted the memorial."¹¹⁴ Such confidence in governmental justice, and in the moral sinews of the agent of that justice, hardly appears in dream records of the late Ming.

Wei Xiangshu's active dream life and interest in sharing it with others are unusual in his cohort of men who were fully invested in the new Qing order. Unusual,

112. "Meng Yi ji yu Wang Yunsheng Guangwen," in Wei Xiangshu, *Hansongtang quanji*, 8.410–411. This friend, Wang Yunsheng, had written a work titled *Explanation of Dreams about the "Change Classic"* (*Meng Yi jie*), which apparently is no longer extant. See the note following Wei's reference to Wang's burial site, in *ibid.*, 6.254.

113. "Meng ji gao Wei Shisheng xiansheng" and "Hansong laoren nianpu," entry for 1666, in Wei Xiangshu, *Hansongtang quanji*, 409, 698, respectively. On the White Cloud Monastery festival on the nineteenth day of the lunar New Year, see Naquin, *Peking*, 276–277.

114. "Hansong laoren nianpu," entry for 5th month, 1650, in Wei Xiangshu, *Hansongtang quanji*, 685. For another self-gratifying, good-official dream report by an early-Qing servitor, Song Wan (1614–1674), see "Xueyuan jimeng," in Song Wan, *Song Wan quanji*, 175–176.

first, because the early-Qing trend—among intellectuals and within the state—to reaffirm the orthodoxy of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism generally tended to elide the meditative bent and moral-ethical abstraction of both Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi while focusing on the classicism and broad learning of Zhu Xi alone, thus leaving in abeyance Cheng Yi's injunction to monitor one's dream state. Second, mental energies were directed toward "solid" (*shizhi*) objects of knowing, both by the Manchu-Qing leadership and by a decline of credence among intellectuals, accelerating since late Ming, in the sufficiency of purely subjective ethical inquiry (as represented by Yangming thought). There was a growing insistence that objective aids, such as ritual practice and study of the ancient classics, were equally important—though long neglected!—in Confucian cultivation.¹¹⁵ Wei's allegiance to Zhu Xi and concern to actualize his dreams in rites, conduct, and governance reflect this trend.

Less characteristic of Wei's early-Qing cohort were his occasional visits to the White Cloud Monastery, as literati engagement with both Daoism and Buddhism declined along with subscription to Yangming philosophy and interest in Three Teachings syncretism. The imperial court, while bestowing traditional sanction on the more disciplined of the Daoist orders, did not patronize Daoism to nearly the degree seen in Ming times, and dwindling literati support added to the isolation and penury of Daoist communities.¹¹⁶ Likewise, literati patronage of Buddhism fell off concomitantly with interest in dreams. After the death of Ouyi Zhixu in 1655, no eminent monks carried forward the dream-positive thought of Zibo Zhenke and Hanshan Deqing.¹¹⁷ Protracted, bitter disputes over praxis and lineage succession within and among the Chan schools invited derision and even prompted imperial intervention in the 1730s.¹¹⁸ While Qing court patronage of Buddhism was substantial, for geopolitical reasons such patronage was directed principally toward Inner Asian forms of the religion and particularly toward the Tibetan theocracy.

115. See Wang Fansen, "‘Xin ji li’ shuo de dongyao" and "Qingchu sixiang zhong xingshang xuanyuan"; as well as Chow, *Rise of Confucian Ritualism*, chaps. 4–5.

116. *Daoism Handbook*, chap. 21.

117. Later in the dynasty, Chan master Chewu Jixing (1741–1810) left some indication in his relatively slim recorded teachings of belief that, while ordinary dreams of samsaric phenomena lead only to further confusion, blissful dreams of supreme joy (e.g., of the Pure Land) can gradually bring one to a "great awakening." His ideas appear to have derived from independent study of Yongming Yanshou and Yogācāra texts, not from the influence of the late-Ming Buddhist promoters of oneiric enlightenment (see Chewu Jixing, *Chewu Chanshi yulu*, 336c05–09; Jones, "Mentally Constructing What Already Exists," esp. 45–46; and Faure, *Visions of Power*, 119–120). His thought had little influence among contemporaneous literati.

118. Brook (*Praying for Power*, 182–184) builds on earlier work by Wolfram Eberhard in finding a surge of gentry patronage of Buddhist works and institutions from about 1550 to about 1700 (not coincidentally corresponding in time with my dream arc). On the self-weakening of Chan, see J. Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, esp. chaps. 6 and 11.

The case of Wei Xiangshu thus prompts contemplation of the tail of the dream arc. In the epilogue which follows, the general recession of dreams and dreaming from the thought of leading Qing-period intellectuals is argued further. Therein, however, I also advance a thesis about the long-term legacy of the dream-compulsions that attended the end of the Ming world.

Beyond the Arc

AROUND THE TURN OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, the famous scholar, poet, bibliophile, and literary aide to important officials (including the Kangxi emperor) Zhu Yizun (1629–1709) was taken aback upon reading a disclosure by one of his former employers, past vice minister of revenues Cao Rong (1613–1685), that he repeatedly saw Guanyin Bodhisattva in his dreams. Observing that Cao had “thoroughly plumbed the learning of Confucians but was not well versed in Buddhist writings,” Zhu wondered whether this represented the category of “bad dreams” in the *Zhou Rites*, or whether the vaunted ability of Buddhist figures to promote goodness through dreams had not seeped into the subconscious stratum of Cao’s well-cultivated mind.¹ Though not overtly anti-Buddhist, Zhu’s surprised reaction and seeming felt need to concoct an apology for Cao reflect the decline of Buddhist influence among early-Qing scholar-officials, as well as the long-standing association between dreaming and Buddhism.

But growing aversion to abstruse religiosity in early Qing also was affecting Confucianism. Even as intellectuals were returning to the fold of Song Neo-Confucianism and to the scholarly authority of Zhu Xi, that authority was being compromised by scientifically rigorous advances in authenticating ancient texts and verifying meanings therein. The application of philological techniques to the Confucian Classics, increasingly well-honed since middle Ming, inevitably exposed the degree to which the canonical choices and metaphysical interpretations of the Neo-Confucian founders were pervaded by Buddhist and Daoist influences. This underlay the clarion call of many leading intellectuals to circumvent the Song and return to pre-Buddhist periods (Han and pre-Han) for verifiable evidence of the original texts and meanings in the Confucian

1. “Chucui weng mengji ba,” in Zhu Yizun, *Pushuting ji*, 53.5b–6a. Briefly on Zhu and Cao, see *ECCP*, 1:182–184 and 2:740, respectively.

canon, which caused tension between state orthodoxy and intellectual credence throughout the Qing period.

As a result of this epochal positivistic, text-critical, evidentiary spirit, which infused not only classicism but also historiography and statecraft studies, the most prestigious careers for Qing intellectuals were in the scholarly employment of skills in phonology, etymology, paleography, epigraphy, collation, lexicography, and bibliography.² The collected works of such doyens of High Qing scholarship as Hui Dong (1697–1758), Quan Zuwang (1705–1755), Wang Mingsheng (1722–1798), Dai Zhen (1724–1777), Qian Daxin (1728–1804), Duan Yucai (1735–1815), and Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801) are chockablock with masterly demonstrations of those skills, leaving no place for subjects as nebulous as dreams.³ And this ascendant episteme affected other areas of intellectual production as well, wherein dreams, if mentioned at all, are generally regarded commonsensically as memories during sleep of things experienced in waking hours, or as the sleeping mind's responses to somatic stimuli such as thunder or a rocking boat.

Various forms of autobiographical writing—principally diaries and annalistic autobiographies—bурgeoned in the Qing period, yet their contents tended to be ever-more-detailed accountings of objective affairs: the weather, visits paid or received, topics discussed, occasions attended, letters sent, poems exchanged, studies completed, travel events, local news, etcetera. Dreams were seldom recorded therein.⁴ It is true that well-known writers sometimes left poetry collections arranged in chronological order, which allow more insight on their private thoughts and feelings and thus virtually constitute poetic autobiographies. Exhibit A in this category is the *Oubei Collection* (*Oubei ji*) by Zhao Yi (1727–1814), a revered historian, poet, and academy rector, as well as an able official in both court and provincial assignments. This collection provides on average a full *juan* of poems for every year from Zhao's nineteenth through his eighty-fourth, mostly about the personal side of his rich life.⁵ Yet for the years before Zhao's full retirement at age sixty-five, we

2. The scholarship of Yü Ying-shih on the "rise of Qing Confucian intellectualism," first set forth in 1975, is expanded and synopsized by Yü in *ECP*, 115–125. See also Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, chaps. 2–3.

3. The massive collected works of Wang Mingsheng, filling eleven volumes in the modern edition, do contain one highly performative "pure dream," occasioned by Wang's trip to Mount Tai. See *Jiading Wang Mingsheng quanji*, 10:28–29.

4. On the relative objectivity and density of exterior description in later Qing diaries and memoirs, see Struve, "Chimerical Early Modernity," 365–367. Note that the inclusion of dream accounts in the diary of the obscure local scholar Liu Dapeng (1857–1942) was not among the motivating instructions on diary-keeping that he read in the posthumously published letters of his idol, the great statesman Zeng Guofan (1811–1872). See Harrison, *Man Awakened from Dreams*, 11. In any case, Liu's diary was scarcely known until its publication in 1990.

5. See *ECCP*, 1:75–76; and Du Weiyun, *Zhao Yi zhuan*.

find only 3 dream poems among approximately 1,300. Only in his seventies and eighties do dreams—even nightmares—of his past official service, deceased loved ones, and youthful passions noticeably trouble Zhao, as he complains of geriatric sleep disorder and unwelcome invasions of his consciousness.⁶

However annoying those dreams may have been for Zhao Yi, that he wrote about them only in verse suggests that we would do better to look into the oeuvres of those known primarily as litterateurs, rather than as philologists, historians, or classicists, to gauge the level of dream-interest among prominent eighteenth-century Chinese intellectuals. A transitional figure who spent two-thirds of his life in the seventeenth century, the prolific poet Zha Shenxing (1650–1727) left an immense collection of 4,755 poems, of which 7 are about his own dreams.⁷ And his younger contemporary Fang Bao (1668–1749), who posthumously was exalted as a master of ancient-style prose writing, left just one dream record in his twenty-eight-*juan* collection of brief works. Though touching and apparently genuine, Fang's single record forms part of an expression of gratitude to the Kangxi emperor for releasing him from a sentence of exile in 1713.⁸ Thus, affective personal disclosure in this case was marshaled for reconciliation with the pinnacle of power. These two examples of figures whose oeuvres spanned the turn of the eighteenth century show that dream-writing continued among prominent literati but also suggest reduced frequency compared to a century—or even just a generation—earlier. In the next generation, Fang Bao's biggest champion, the outstanding literary scholar and stylist Yao Nai (1732–1815), wrote nothing at all about dreams.

An interesting case in point is Yuan Mei (1717–1798), the most widely read litterateur of the eighteenth century, popular especially for his unconventional views and frank, often sensual, down-to-earth autobiographical poems and essays.⁹ Yet in his main poetry collection of more than 3,800 verses, we find just two poetic dream reports: one (written at age fifty-six) a sighting of a deceased elder friend; the other (in his seventy-second year) the puzzling appearance of first a Buddhist monk and then a Daoist priest, both predicting that Yuan would “return to his place among the transcendents” within the month. In commenting on the latter instance, Yuan confirms his dislike of such Buddho-Daoist nonsense—except that he does quite like the two Daoist goddesses of Mount Tiantai! Somewhat more numerous

6. See, for instance, Zhao's “Shaoshui” (1808) and “Huanmeng” (1811), in *Oubei ji*, 50.18a, 53.11b, respectively.

7. See Zha Shenxing, *Jingyetang shiji*, *juan* 8, 13, 14, 22, 29, 42, and *xuji*, *juan* 3.

8. Fang Bao, *Wangxi xiansheng quanji*, 18.6b–7b.

9. On Yuan Mei's life, see *ECCP*, 2:955–957; *IC*, 956–959; and Schmidt, *Harmony Garden*.

are the oft-seen scholars' complaints of sleeplessness, and in Yuan's final year, as he suffers prolonged illness, he yearns to remember his regrettably elusive dreams, which he finds as irretrievable as a dead man.¹⁰

While absolutely rejecting any beliefs that constrained natural human desires, Yuan Mei did leave three dream accounts among his brief, *xiaopin*-like essays. In one, the Buddha, through the trickery of Yuan's "dream spirit," gets him to bow down before a host of arhats by turning them temporarily into a troupe of beautiful female entertainers. Another, purportedly a dream from Yuan's youth, plays on the homophony of his surname with the word for "ape," *yuan*, and resonates with the fantastical powers of Pilgrim, the Monkey King, in *Journey to the West* by suggesting—perhaps with mock vainglory—that Yuan's writings would "sweep away a thousand armies and run rampant within the [four] seas." The third involves a dream of Guanyin reported by one of Yuan's maidservants, which he uses to demonstrate his utter contempt for at least the idolatrous aspects of Buddhism by smashing and burning a sandalwood figurine of Guanyin and forbidding any further Buddhist worship in his household.¹¹ The first two dream records resemble the spoofs that are typical of Yuan Mei; only the last can be taken as veritable, and it does not report a dream experienced by Yuan himself.

Though Yuan Mei curtly dismissed what might be called the superstitious elements in the Three Teachings, as well as popular belief systems such as geomancy, he eccentrically pursued a fascination with stories of paranormal phenomena, recording them at every opportunity, sometimes elaborating on them, and eventually publishing 945 of them in the collection *What Confucius Did Not Discuss* (*Zi buyu*). This activity paralleled that of his contemporary, the eminent bibliographer Ji Yun (1724–1805), who documented and debated almost two thousand uncanny stories with his social circle, although in compiling his *Notes from the Cottage of Close Scrutiny* (*Yuewei caotang biji*), Ji's modality was more folkloric and his aim more didactic than Yuan's.¹² Given the large role that dreams always had played in this genre called *zhiguai* (tales of the strange), the numbers of dream-stories in these two collections are puny to unimpressive—less than 1 percent in the former and about 8 percent in the latter. In any case, neither can compare in authorial presence and creative exploration of human psychology with the seventeenth-century collection *Strange Stories from the Make-Do Studio*, in which more than 16 percent of the tales

10. See Yuan Mei, *Yuan Mei quanji*, 1:467, 786, 916, 920. The old friend in the first poem is the important Manchu official and litterateur Yanjišan (1694–1771). The third poem is translated in Yuan Mei, *I Don't Bow to Buddhas*, 106.

11. "Ershi rumeng," "Meng zhao," and "Guanyin rumeng zuobie," in Yuan Mei, *Yuan Mei quanji*, 8:10–11, 35, 57–58, respectively.

12. See Schmidt, *Harmony Garden*, 58–70, 103–105; and L. Chan, *Discourse on Foxes*. Briefly on Ji's career, see *ECCP*, 1:120–123.

involve dreams in some way.¹³ And comparing Yuan Mei's oeuvre overall with that of the late-Ming figure whom he matches well in literary stature, Tang Xianzu, the sparseness of dream figurations and cavalier attitude toward religion are striking on Yuan's side.

In another area of "superstition" closely associated with dreams, prognostication, we do find a slim addition to the literature of oneiric prediction in the form of seven folio pages of notes by Wang Zhaoyuan (1763–1851), one of the most talented female scholars of the mid-Qing period. Her *Dream Book* (*Mengshu*), appended to a collection of treatises by her husband and scholarly collaborator, the capital official and naturalist Hao Yixing (1757–1825), was first published in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ The entries in the main part of Wang's *Dream Book* were culled, with a sense of discovery on her part, from three well-known encyclopedic works of Sui, Tang, and Northern Song vintage, and to this she added two pages of entries from standard texts such as the *Zhou Rites*, *Poetry Classic*, *Master Zhuang*, *Master Lie*, and *Balanced Arguments*. Wang explains that she always has enjoyed talking about dreams, and that the abundance of spare time at her disposal in the women's quarters allowed her to copy out interesting passages about them as she randomly explored various books. Thinking that someone might laugh at her for being a dreamer, she coyly forestalls this, writing, "But how can I know that this dreamer is not awake, or that the laugher is not a dream?"¹⁵ While these words evoke the spirit of late Ming, Wang seems completely unaware of the massive compendia of oneiromancy published in that earlier period, affirming my surmise that such works were not widely consumed by members of the higher intellectual elite.

One might well think that, living in an age as peaceful and prosperous as the eighteenth century in China, intellectuals simply were not moved to probe the depths of spirit and psyche to the same degree as were writers in the stressful late Ming and early Qing. Yet, as troubles mounted for the Qing in the first half of the nineteenth century and exploded with devastating force in the Taiping Rebellion of 1850–1864, which laid waste to the country just as much as did the Qing conquest, we find no revival of intellectual dream-writing to any degree near that of the seventeenth century. Following the rebels' destruction of Yangzhou, that wondrous jewel of High Qing upscale urban life, in 1853, a former sojourner there who gave his name only as Student Zhou of Zhenjiang (Jiaodong Zhousheng) wrote a memoir of his times in Yangzhou, spent mainly as a patron of the city's famous pleasure quarters. The work consists of four *juan*: on persons (prostitutes), writings exchanged (mainly poems)

13. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 133–134.

14. On Wang and Hao, see *ECCP*, 1:277–279; and Zhai Ruqian, "Hao Yixing yu Wang Zhaoyuan."

15. Wang Zhaoyuan, *Mengshu*, 1a–b.

within Zhou's circle of bordello friends, affairs and things (customs and material culture) of the city, and sentiments (addressed through light philosophizing and odd, mildly uncanny stories). These four topical areas are characterized as "dreams within a dream," and the whole work is titled *Yangzhou Dream* (*Yangzhou meng*).

Therein Zhou's concentration on portraying his favorite women of the night and, at the end, his "awakening" to the gratifications of ordinary family life place his memoir within the well-worn "Yangzhou dream" literary tradition of regretting nostalgia over lost love and bygone romantic times.¹⁶ In this lineage, the word "dream" connotes the illusion that such personal indulgence can be endless. The fact that Zhou's dynasty, the Qing, was shaken but not terminated by the Taiping Rebellion excludes his work from the doubly pathos-filled tradition of dream-memories of great cities or sites that had been ruined during—and thereby had become symbolic of—the ends of whole dynastic eras,¹⁷ represented in the seventeenth century by *Tao'an's Dream Recollections* and *West Lake Sought in Dreams*. In any case, *Yangzhou Dream*, completed in 1858, seems to have made little impression in the late Qing, since its earliest certain date of publication is 1911, and its author was not identified as Zhou Boyi (1823–1895), a minor literatus of eclectic interests, until 2004.¹⁸

These arguments, though advanced largely from absence, are intended to support my view that dreaming, as a major surface current in the historical flow of Chinese intellectual expression, dissipated with the passing of first-generation Ming *yimin* around the turn of the eighteenth century and never recurred. This is not to say, however, that the dream arc left no legacy. Further pursuing the river metaphor, I find an undercurrent of dream-writing that creatively maintains trends from the late Ming and early Qing in literature by women and literature by men about women (Wang Zhaoyuan and Zhou Boyi, discussed directly above, being respective cases in point). I therefore suggest that during Qing times, dream-stuff became gendered as "soft" (*rouluan*), affective material in contrast with the "solid" subjects and firmly documentary approaches preferred by the dynasty's alpha(-male) literati.

The factor of personal frustration that underlay a good deal of male dream expression in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries continues in evidence among Qing-period women, as the steady growth in their scholarly and literary abilities outpaced the halting and limited expansion of opportunities to exercise their intellectual talents. And among men, while the government examination sys-

16. This tradition originated in certain writings by the late-Tang contemporaries Du Mu (803–852) and Yu Ye (fl. ca. 867). See *IC*, 824–826; and Wei Minghua, *Yangzhou wenhua tanpian*, 87–102.

17. This judgment despite Zhou's indirectly self-gratifying allusion to the *Dongjing meng Hua lu* in Jiaodong Zhousheng, *Yangzhou meng*, 76.

18. Wu Chunyan and Lu Lin, "'Jiaodong Zhousheng'"; and Jiaodong Zhousheng, "Writing about Things," 218–220.

tem generally was administered less corruptly in middle Qing than in late Ming, it became ever more competitive as growth in both population and high literacy greatly outstripped the fairly stagnant exam quotas and the correlated number of civil service positions.¹⁹ This in addition to the maintenance of a third service elite beside the regular military and civil services by the Manchu-Qing state—that is, the ethnically distinct, hereditary Banners, from which non-Banner Han-Chinese men were excluded.²⁰ In other words, the Qing had plenty of disgruntled ineligible and drop-outs, too, and among them was a growing number of women who were barred from even attempting the examinations and could never serve as officials.

Elite women almost universally were married out by their natal families at fairly young ages. They spent the rest of their lives largely confined to the women's quarters of their husbands' households, usually in a different locale, while their husbands were called upon by various duties to sojourn away from home. If widowed, most upper-class women did not remarry. The High Qing (roughly the late seventeenth through the early nineteenth century) saw the apex in Chinese history of female sequestration and the cult of wifely chastity as applied to upper-class women.²¹ And this overlapped in time—the mid-eighteenth through the early nineteenth century—with the “high point in late imperial Chinese women's literary culture,” wherein writings from the boudoir (*gui*) were typified by expressions of ennui and loneliness.²² As such feelings tended to intensify at night, it stands to reason that the considerable number of dream poems by Qing-period women writers reflect sadness over absent or deceased loved ones, longing for natal homes or locales, and fantasies of escape into realms of spiritual freedom.²³ One example of each type must suffice here:

Qian Shusheng (dates unknown) was married at seventeen, lost her husband after just three years, and spent the remaining four decades of her life as a chaste widow. The first stanza of her poem “Moved by a Dream” (*Menggan*) reads:

Last night I dreamed of my late husband,
 walking lightly through the mist.
 We clasped hands but could not speak.
 Grieving, I woke with a start.²⁴

19. Elman shows that “the competition in civil metropolitan examinations during the [Qing] dynasty, following long-term Ming-[Qing] demographic trends, increased by 100% in the eighteenth century” (*Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 158; see also table 3.20).

20. For background on the Qing Banner system, see Elliott, *Manchu Way*, pt. 1.

21. See Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters*, pt. 2.

22. Li Xiaorong, *Women's Poetry*, 53.

23. Zhong Huiling, “Shen gui xing kong.”

24. As quoted in *ibid.*, 266–267. See also *Wanqingyi shihui*, 191.30a.

Zhuang Defen (1718–1774), married into a family in a separate county of Jiangsu Province, writes of a spring observance in her natal home in this verse, “Dream Return” (Menggui):

Our conch-shell goblets brim with fragrant new wine,
 as we open the drapes of the small chamber to face the early plum blossoms.
 A sublime scene from twenty years past,
 [like] the halls and courtyards of the Xie household, come in a dream.²⁵

And Hou Cheng'en (fl. ca. 1722), in her “Record of a Dream,” beautifully executes a model poetic dream-excursion among transcendents.²⁶

More militant in expressing discontent with her woman's lot was Wang Yun (1749–1819), one of a dozen female playwrights known to us from the High Qing period.²⁷ She is best known for her musical drama *A Dream of Glory* (*Fanhua meng*), which harks back to the late Ming in its long *chuanqi* form and in offering yet another twist—this time, gender-bending—on the stories “Within a Pillow” and “Governor of South Branch.” In this play, a talented woman, frustrated by confining gender rules, becomes enamored of another woman by viewing her portrait. She then falls asleep and, with the intercession of an agent of Guanyin, is turned into a man who succeeds not only in the examinations and an official career but also in marrying the beauty in the portrait and taking as concubines two other women whom the dreamer has admired. Waking from this charmed life as an ideal male, the protagonist (who from the beginning consistently takes the male lead of *chuanqi* role convention) is chagrined to find herself back in the boudoir. But then she has another dream in which a female Daoist transcendent enlightens her about the illusoriness, for both men and women, of worldly gratifications.²⁸ Thusly *A Dream of Glory* exhibits three of the most common devices for projecting female

25. As quoted in Zhong Huiling, “Shengui xingkong,” 276. See also *Wanqingyi shihui*, 184.65a. The “Xie household” refers to the longed-for natal home of Xie Daoyun (ca. 340–399), the brilliant but unhappily married favorite niece of the prominent statesman and litterateur Xie An (320–385). See *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women*, 1:359–385.

26. As quoted in Zhong Huiling, “Shengui xingkong,” 283–284. See also *Wanqingyi shihui*, 183.28a–b. For basic biographical information on the three women cited above, search the Ming Qing Women's Writings database. For additional poems by Hou Cheng'en, see K. Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers*, 432–434.

27. Hua Wei, *Ming-Qing funü zhi xiqu*, 31. On Wang Yun, see *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women*, 4:225–227; Ropp, “‘Now Cease Painting Eyebrows’”; and K. Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers*, 531–538.

28. For a full study with an English translation, see Wang Yun, *Dream of Glory*. Further, see Hua Wei, *Ming-Qing funü zhi xiqu*, 109–119.

subjective desire in Qing-period women's plays: dream, painted portrait, and female transcendent.²⁹

With support from Wang Yun's prominent father and certain of his friends, *A Dream of Glory* was published in 1778, and it appears to have earned Wang some contemporaneous renown. However, since women's writings were viewed as marginal until recent decades, her plays and poems circulated only in fragments after her lifetime, and the full text of her magnum opus was not again brought to light until the turn of the twenty-first century.

Given the portrayal in *A Dream of Glory* of the superhuman power of a woman's desire, as well as the play's evocation of "Within a Pillow" and "Governor of South Branch," it is no surprise that Wang's most ardent fan, the woman who had the work published, favorably compared her artistry with that of Tang Xianzu,³⁰ the celebrated author of the "Four Dream-[Plays] of Linchuan" (Linchuan simeng).³¹ Tang's reputation for strength of character and brilliant playwriting—especially in his most sensational success, *Peony Pavilion*—remained high among both male and female drama aficionados during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as best indicated by the elaborate commentaries written primarily by wives with their husbands' collaboration: the oft-republished and widely influential *Wu Wushan's Three Wives' Commentary on the Peony Pavilion* (*Wu Wushan sanfu heping Mudanting*; 1694); and the erudite, voluminous, but rarely seen *Talented Scholar's Peony Pavilion* (*Caizi Mudanting*; 1762).³²

The most prominent figure to write an homage to Tang Xianzu, however, was a man. Jiang Shiquan (1725–1785), a celebrated poet and dramatist who, having

29. Hua Wei, *Ming-Qing funü zhi xiqu*, 55–66.

30. See a translation of Zhang Zao's postscript to *Fanhua meng* in Ropp, "'Now Cease Painting Eyebrows,'" 92.

31. Tang here is referred to by the name of his home county, Linchuan, Jiangxi. In addition to *Peony Pavilion*, *Story of South Branch*, and *On Handan Road*, there is Tang's first play, *Purple Hairpin* (*Zichai ji*). Although an object, not a dream, is used as a device for uniting and reuniting the lovers in this play, the strength of romantic love and indomitable hope to overcome obstacles are qualities that have placed *Purple Hairpin* among Tang's so-called four dream-plays.

32. The role of Wu Wushan (Wu Yiyi; 1647–after 1704) in bringing to publication the commentaries that he attributes to his first betrothed, Chen Tong (d. 1665), to his first actual wife, Tan Ze (d. 1674), and especially to his second wife, Qian Yi (b. 1671), is unclear, but he certainly was a discerning supporter of their work. See Zeitlin, "Shared Dreams," 175–178. On the value and influence of this commentary, see Hua Wei, *Ming-Qing funü zhi xiqu*, pt. 2, chap. 2. The pseudonymous *Caizi Mudanting* is now known to have been initiated by Cheng Qiong (dates unknown) and added to by its publisher, her husband Wu Zhensheng (1695–1769). See Hua Wei, *Ming-Qing funü zhi xiqu*, pt. 2, chaps. 3–6. Its circulation may have been limited by its heavily sexual interpretations. On several sequels written to Tang Xianzu's dream-plays, see Liao Tengye, *Zhongguo mengxi yanjiu*, 186–196.

attained the highest examination degree in 1757, became stuck in low-ranking literary positions and embittered toward government service. This alienation, Jiang's hailing from Tang's home province, his affinity for writing plays, and perhaps his interest in personal dreams led him to identify closely with the historical Tang Xianzu. Jiang's drama *Linchuan's Dreams* (*Linchuan meng*; 1774) is a virtual biography of Tang's adult years. With considerable artistic license, it correlates the writing of each of his four plays with a particular mood of anger at politics or grief over life's losses.³³ It is, thus, much less an exploration of dreaming than the creative channeling of an idol for expiatory effect.

Far more than in any work mentioned above, the most important legacy of the dream arc lies in what is now acclaimed as China's greatest novel, best known by the titles *Story of a Stone* (*Shitou ji*) and *Dream of Red Chambers* (*Honglou meng*). This incomparable work of allegorical imagination, terrestrial and celestial description, and limning of unforgettable characters (especially the women of the Jia household) was mainly written by a man so obscure that his identity was not mined from the historical substrata until 1921.³⁴ The work was not widely read until after its first publication, under foggy authorial and editorial circumstances, in 1792, about three decades after his death.³⁵ Very little is known for certain about the man to whom authorship of the *Dream* has been attributed, Cao Zhan (ca. 1715–1763), usually referred to by one of his sobriquets, Xueqin.³⁶ Copious modern treatments of his life are largely based on inferences from (1) the novel itself, which is assumed—with some justification—to have been extensively autobiographical, and (2) the historically documented lives of Cao's forebears, certain bondservants of the Plain White Banner (directly commanded by the Manchu emperors) who had grown immensely wealthy during the Kangxi reign but thereafter were ruined by imperially ordered household confiscations of 1728 and 1745. From bits of other evidence and interlinear comments written by intimates on partial manuscripts of the *Dream*,

33. On Jiang, see *ECCP*, 1:141–142. On his *Linchuan meng*, see Gao Jiawen, “Lun *Linchuan meng*”; and Ōki, “Jiang Shiquan bixia de Tang Xianzu.” Jiang wrote of his own dreams mainly in regulated verse. See his *Zhongyatang ji jiaojian*, vols. 1–3.

34. On the May Fourth literary climate and breakthroughs on authorship of the *Dream*, see Chen Weizhao, *Hongxue tongshi*, 1:128–167; and Saussy, “Age of Attribution.”

35. Today, principal authorship of the first 80 chapters is generally attributed to Cao Xueqin. Still a matter of scholarly debate is the extent to which Cao may have written the last 40 chapters of the 120-chapter edition, or whether those chapters were fabricated by his surviving intimates or that edition's publishers, Cheng Weiyuan (d. 1818) and the Bannerman Gao E (1738–1815). See Chen Weizhao, *Hongxue tongshi*, 1:221–223. See also David Hawkes's introduction in Cao Xueqin, *Story of the Stone*.

36. On Cao Zhan and his grandfather, Cao Yin (1658–1712), see *ECCP*, 2:737–738 and 740–742; Spence, *Ts'ao Yin and the K'ang-hsi Emperor*; and Zhou Ruchang, *Between Humble and Noble*.

it seems that Cao was a genial eccentric, facile at poetry and painting, who ended up living penuriously and rather fecklessly near the Plain White Banner camp west of Beijing, sharing successive chapters of his novel with friends and relatives, and perhaps selling portions of it to performing troupes for wine money.³⁷

In the *Dream's* draft phases, it appears to have circulated mainly within the Beijing Manchu Banner community and perhaps was read by well-educated women in that context.³⁸ Much more certain is that after its publication, in the first half of the nineteenth century, many of the sequels to the *Dream* catered to female readers, and one or two were actually written by women—China's first female authors of long fiction.³⁹ This is not surprising, as most of the scenes in the *Dream* are domestic, the majority of the important characters (and the most sensitively portrayed) are women, and the novel marvelously highlights the refined literary talent or impressive managerial skills of the household's youngest ladies. Moreover, a central thread of the work is romantic: the gradual, emotionally stressful loss of innocence in the love between a “very strange” boy protagonist, Jia Baoyu, and several of the girls who surround him, especially his pensively beautiful cousin, Lin Daiyu. Judging from various post-publication commentaries and prefaces, and from the sequels which strove to supplement, complete, or extend the novel, it elicited deep insights from a few but was read largely moralistically or for its portrayal of sentiments between the sexes. Readers' dissatisfactions with the grim or indeterminate outcomes for sympathetic characters—especially Daiyu's tragic death—were serviced by continuations or spinoffs that provided happier dispensations. The religio-philosophical profundities of dreaming in the *Dream* do not register strongly in the evidence of reader appreciation, while the authors of sequels used the association of dreams with mutability to rhetorically re-dream the *Dream* and dry everyone's tears.⁴⁰

37. On two circles of early readers of Cao's drafts, basically relatives and Manchu friends, see Chen Weizhao, *Hongxue tongshi*, 1:19–20. The most prominent person to know directly of Cao Xueqin's work on the *Dream* may have been Mingyi (b. ca. 1740) of the Manchu Bordered Yellow Banner, son of the heroic Fuqing (d. 1750). Huang Yinong has determined that a certain remark in certain editions of Yuan Mei's *Suiyuan shihua* is actually derived from Mingyi's *Lüyan suochuang ji*, and that Yuan himself never knew Cao nor had he ever seen the *Dream*. See Huang, *Erchong zou*, chap. 8. On late-Qing dream-play spinoffs from the *Dream*, see Liao Tengye, *Zhongguo mengxi yanjiu*, 93–95.

38. One of the work's most renowned modern authorities, Zhou Ruchang (1918–2012), has speculatively concluded that the pseudonymous commentator on, editor of, and finisher of several drafts, “Red Inkstone Studio” (Zhiyanzhai), was an intimate female third cousin of Cao Xueqin. See Chen Weizhao, *Hongxue tongshi*, 1:244–245; and Zhou, *Between Humble and Noble*, 178–187. This view is not generally accepted among specialists.

39. See Widmer, *Beauty and the Book*, 22 and chaps. 6–7.

40. Eggert, *Rede vom Traum*, 251–253. See also Widmer, *Beauty and the Book*, 238–247; and Saussy, “Age of Attribution,” 121–125.

During most of the twentieth century, Chinese scholarship on the *Dream of Red Chambers* has exemplified the remarkable persistence of positivistic Qing-period epistemology under kaleidoscopically changing ideological and sociopolitical conditions. The so-called Redology (Hongxue) of the twentieth century was long obsessed with uncovering the historical Cao Xueqin and everyone else portrayed in or associated with the novel, as well as the period-verity of everything described therein, and with precise textual and bibliographical study of the work's surviving editions and manuscripts. There was little discussion of such "unscientific" and "superstitious" matters as dreaming. The 1970s, however, saw the inauguration, primarily by Western-trained scholars, of approaches that focused more on relations between the novel's structuring concepts and aesthetic modalities.⁴¹ In this vein, a number of studies have examined how the *Dream* marshals and imbricates such multimillennial Chinese cultural elements as the complementarities of *yin* and *yang*, commitment to family and loved ones versus yearning for transcendence, ideas of fate and karma, the lore of stones and jade, the agency of goddesses, gardens as microcosms of universals or instantiations of the divine, the irony of truth in illusion, the necessity of samsara before nirvana, and the Buddho-Daoist use of mirror and dream motifs to interrogate reality.⁴²

Finding antecedents to the *Dream* in the literature of the century preceding its composition has, perforce, been speculative, since the text of the novel (mindful to obscure its own dynastic period) alludes only to much earlier works, and Cao Xueqin left no other writings that shed light on the sources of his inspiration. Suggested influences range from the portrayal of domestic life in *Gold Vase Plum*, to the powerful role of male-female passions in the plays of Tang Xianzu, to the psychological sophistication of certain works in *Stories from the Made-Do Studio*, to the enlightenment by mirror-filled dream in *Supplement to Journey to the West*. All are possible. Yet discerning specific literary sources is not so important as comprehending the full plenitude of thought about dreaming and of ways to write dreams that was available to any literatus of the eighteenth century who, uncharacteristically for his time, might wish to address things with which dreams commonly are

41. The inception of this reorientation was in 1973, when Harvard-trained Yü Ying-shih delivered lectures at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on "The Two Worlds of *Honglou meng*" (published in 1978 as *Honglou meng de liangge shijie*), and Andrew Plaks finished his doctoral thesis at Princeton (published in 1976 as *Archetype and Allegory in the "Dream of the Red Chamber"*). On the controversiality of Yü's approach among mainland Chinese specialists in *Honglou meng*, see Chen Weizhao, *Hongxue tongshi*, 1:295–303.

42. In addition to Yü and Plaks, cited directly above, see, for instance, A. Yu, "Quest of Brother Amor"; A. Yu, *Rereading the Stone*, 137–151; W. Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, chaps. 4–5; S. Lin, "Chia Pao-yu's First Visit"; J. Wang, *Story of Stone*; Q. Li, *Fictions of Enlightenment*, chap. 5; and Guo Yuwen, *Honglou meng yuanyuan lun*.

associated: subjectivity, the non-rational, emotions, spontaneity, the unbidden, the imaginal, and memory. Anyone who has read the *Dream of Red Chambers* can immediately relate all these qualities to the text.

Concomitantly, the novel deploys about two dozen dreams for typical purposes but with atypical skill within an ingenious cosmographical frame: (1) for communication between mortals and various denizens and precincts of the non-mortal Otherworld; (2) for prefiguring events, sometimes suggesting the dreamer's subconscious awareness of possibilities; (3) for simple amusement in showing how people dream of what they have been thinking intently about; (4) to vivify certain characters' personalities or emotional states; and (5) to abet the encompassing conceit of the novel in disrupting the conventional sense that our grounded, waking world is real and our ungrounded dream worlds are unreal.

The best example of this last use is a dream by the mortal, realistically portrayed "false" (Jia/jia) Baoyu, who finds his indirectly described, sketchily portrayed dop-pelganger, the "real" (Zhen/zhen) Baoyu, sleeping in quarters in Nanjing that seem like those in his own Prospect Garden in Beijing. Jia Baoyu is astonished when the seemingly familiar maids reject him as an impostor and try to screen him from Zhen Baoyu, who himself is having a mirroring dream within the ongoing dream of Jia Baoyu. The youth on the bed that Jia Baoyu sees in his dream awakes with a sigh and initiates the following sequence by saying to a maid,

"I heard Grandmother say that there is another Baoyu in the capital who is exactly like me, but I didn't believe her. I've just been having a dream in which I went into a large garden and met some girls who called me a 'nasty creature' and wouldn't have anything to do with me. I managed to find this Baoyu's room, but he had just woken from sleep. What I saw was only an empty shell lying there on the bed. I was wondering where the real person could have gone to."

"I came *here* looking for Baoyu. Are *you* the real Baoyu then?" Baoyu could not help blurting out.

The youth leaped down from the bed and seized Baoyu by the hands: "So *you* are Baoyu, and this isn't a dream after all?"

"Of course it isn't a dream," said Baoyu. "It couldn't be more real!"

Just then someone arrived with a summons: "The Master wants to see Baoyu."

For a moment, the two Baoyus were stunned. And then one Baoyu hurried off, and the other Baoyu was left calling after him, "Come back, Baoyu. Come back, Baoyu!"

Aroma [Xiren] heard him calling his own name in his sleep and shook him awake. "Where's Baoyu?" she asked him jokingly.

Though awake, Baoyu had not yet regained consciousness of his surroundings. He pointed to the doorway: "He's only just left. He can't have gone very far."

“You’re still dreaming,” Aroma said, amused. “Rub your eyes and have another look. That’s the mirror. You’re looking at your own reflection in the mirror.”

Baoyu leaned forward and looked. The doorway he had pointed to was his dressing mirror. He joined Aroma in laughing at himself.⁴³

Shades of Pu Songling and Dong Tuo notwithstanding, this is a sparkingly creative jewel of dream-writing, set with several others in the crowning work of Chinese vernacular fiction. It employs the motif of dream-within-a-dream to highlight the growing perturbation of a young man over true selfhood, it captures the vivid sense of realness within the bizarreness of dream-cognition, it adds mirror to dream in exemplifying human susceptibility to illusion, and it concludes with the disconnect between dreaming and waking states of consciousness.

Though Cao Xueqin may have gathered these fruits of Chinese dream culture one by one from ancient texts, the present monograph advances the likelihood that they came to him conveniently packaged from the dream arc of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, through the delivery service of late-imperial publishing and book circulation. Although this arc, as a salient phase in Chinese intellectual history, had ended by the time of Cao’s birth, it had bequeathed to the sphere of long fiction and drama, especially to its feminine and feminized aspect, a wealth of ideas and techniques for exploring and portraying the human condition in cosmic perspective. In the hands of an obscure, eccentric writer, out of step with his times but thereby free to follow his muse, those fruits were carried forward into the twentieth century, which applied standards of appreciation that scarcely could have been dreamt of in Cao’s lifetime. The long-term consequence has been an extension of the semantic range of *meng*. It now means more than “dream,” with all that word’s connotations; it also means *the* dream, with all *its* connotations—the *Dream of Red Chambers*.

We began this “arc-eological” investigation with dreaming at its most universal level, the sleep state of mammals, and, at its most basic human level, the brain of *Homo sapiens sapiens* in its typical non-waking and not-fully-wakened modes. In my view, all studies in what we call the *humanities* should look for at least some grounding in brain science, for it is our brains that most distinguish us as human and from which arise all forms of humanistic expression. Starting there, we are able to understand why everyone’s dreams tend to exhibit a handful of characteristics—bizarreness, illogicality, imagination, vivid or garbled memories, strong emotions, dissociation from physical limits, difficulty of recall—and why people tend to experience them in contradictory ways. The unbidden arrival of dreams

43. Cao Xueqin, *Honglou meng*, chap. 56; Cao Xueqin, *Story of the Stone*, 3:85–87 (translation modified).

has always seemed to demand explanation, giving rise to alternative ideas from the supernatural to the gastrointestinal. Despite the perdurance of notions about exogenous sources of dreams, recognition of their psychological component has been evident since ancient times. And despite the perdurance of specialists in the occult interpretation of others' dreams, recognition of the ultimate subjectivity of dream-meaning has grown over the centuries.

Though all societies have their dream lore and all civilizations exhibit distinct "dream cultures," it is not the case that dreaming elicits equal degrees of interest—particularly among intellectuals—across all periods of time. Brains have social experiences and interact with their cultural environments to become minds, minds thus change with societal and cultural change, and such changes are intertwined with events. Certain permutations in the course of history can heighten responsiveness to various associations of dreaming and thereby produce florescences of attention to personal dreams and classic dream texts, discussion of dream phenomena, exploration of the religio-philosophical and moral-ethical implications of dreaming, and use of dream tropes and conceits in expressive literature.

The point of this book has been not only that *a* certain such florescence arose in China from the middle sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, but that it was *the* most thoroughly recorded such florescence—or dream arc—in Chinese history, and possibly one of the most significant in world history. Beginning with a general tilt toward subjectivity in Neo-Confucianism and openings toward Daoism and Buddhism in Ming intellectual thought (epitomized by the Three-Teachings-as-One movement of late Ming), dreaming permeated the evolving literary and visual arts and even was marshaled in the partisan polemics of the intelligentsia in the first half of the seventeenth century. Anxieties, especially over men's personal plights amid political dysfunction, were poignantly expressed through dream accounts in ego-documents such as diaries, journals, and memoirs, and those fears—as well as oneiric means of escape therefrom—became acute during the tumultuous dynastic change from Ming to Qing. The fraught memories and consciences of those who survived that cataclysm sustained dream-writing as a distinct phenomenon until the passing of all "remnant subjects" of the Ming by the turn of the eighteenth century. After that, an ongoing general shift in episteme relegated dream-expression to a particular set of mostly female-related undercurrents in Chinese literary culture. Though not without remainder, the arc by then was over.

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