



*Orchid Pavilion*

## “Zhang Dai’s Passionate Search for Orchid Pavilion”<sup>1</sup>

DUNCAN CAMPBELL

But I fear that as the years slip by one after the other even the mountains and rivers rise and fall; as one age gives over to the next, it is only with brush and ink that we can seek to preserve our melancholy.

Zhang Dai 張岱, “Guichou lanting xiuxi xi” 癸丑蘭亭修禊微  
[A Summons to Undertake the Spring Lustration Ceremony  
on the Occasion of the Guichou cyclical Anniversary]<sup>2</sup>

Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector’s passion borders on the chaos of memories.

Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting”<sup>3</sup>

Made of thin and fragile paper, a rubbing could easily be destroyed or ruined – torn, scratched, mildewed, burned, or eaten by insects. The materiality of a rubbing thus enables it to display most sensitively the vulnerability of a manufactured object to natural or human destruction: in a “ruined” rubbing, an eroded carving is damaged for a second time.

Wu Hung, “On Rubbings: Their Materiality and Historicity”<sup>4</sup>

Twice during his long life, in 1613 and then again in 1673, the late-Ming dynasty historian and essayist Zhang Dai (1597-?1689) visited the site of Orchid Pavilion to mark the occasion of the cyclical anniversary of that immortal moment in 353 when Wang Xizhi (309-c. 365), the greatest of Chinese calligraphers, had brushed his “Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Poems.” Zhang Dai’s visits were separated by the collapse of his world and the loss of the library that his family had laboured for three generations to assemble.

Where now were those “high hills with lofty peaks, luxuriant woods and tall bamboos,” the “swirling, splashing stream” both described in that text and depicted in later rubbings of the scene that day, rubbings that Zhang Dai has spent his life “visiting in spirit”? Why the discrepancy between text and image and the desolate scene that greeted his eyes? Zhang Dai’s reflections on the vicissitudes of both site and text inspire him to meditations on the nature of history and of authenticity. Whilst offering him some consolation for his own plight, these meditations also provide us with insights into the sensibilities of his age.

During the closing decades of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) an increasing tendency on the part of China's ruling elites to indulge in travel for its own sake, rather than travel required by either official duty or commercial advantage, resulted in the popularisation of a series of well-defined itineraries of cultural and scenic pilgrimage that were frequently represented both pictorially and in text.<sup>5</sup> It was an age during which "[t]ravel," Timothy Brook argues, "had been absorbed into the gentry project of cultural refinement,"<sup>6</sup> and it was through his engagement with the "historical poetics"<sup>7</sup> of particular sites that the man-of-letters could best distinguish himself from other and "vulgar" travellers, both official and mercantile.<sup>8</sup>

One extraordinary site combined both the temporal and the spatial aspects implied by the Chinese term for the various sites along these itineraries, *mingsheng guji* 名勝古跡 [sites famous for their surpassing beauty and where linger the traces of antiquity]: Orchid Pavilion (Lanting 蘭亭), some eleven kilometers south-west of Guiji 會稽 (present-day Shaoxing 紹興) in Zhejiang Province.<sup>9</sup> It had been here at this site that, during the late spring of the ninth year of the Everlasting Harmony reign period of the Eastern Jin dynasty (353), Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (309-c. 365) had gathered forty-one of his friends and relatives (including his son, Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344-88) in order to undertake the Spring Lustration Ceremony (*xi* 禊) whereby the evil vapours of the winter past were washed away in the eastward flowing waters. Twenty-six of the men named as being present that day produced between them a total of thirty-seven poems, and towards the end of the day, we are told, Wang Xizhi, a former librarian in the Imperial Library but now serving — in a somewhat desultory fashion, one imagines — in Guiji as the General of the Army on the Right (*youjun* 右軍), brushed a preface to this collection, on "cocoon paper" and with a "weasel-whisker brush," in 324 characters and 28 columns.<sup>10</sup>

In later representations, the occasion and its site served to define a particular set of social and aesthetic ideals: a refined and sophisticated elegance juxtaposed with suggestions of the social and political decadence that inevitably resulted from such an excess of insouciance and self-absorption. It was a style that to Chinese eyes found its most influential literary expression in a single book, Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403-44) *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 [A New Account of Tales of the World], produced in the early 430s, the sixth century commentary to which preserved an important recension of the text of Wang Xizhi's "Preface."<sup>11</sup>

If, as J.D. Frodsham argued some time ago, the poems said to have been written on this occasion are important early examples of "Nature Poetry" in China,<sup>12</sup> the "Preface" itself, under its various titles, proved to have something of a life of its own. It became, in Stephen Owen's phrase, the "classic [Chinese] statement on parties"<sup>13</sup> and is, besides, an important early representation of the

private use of landscape as garden and of the use of the garden as an idealized manufactory of poetic text in particular.<sup>14</sup> As such, it was subsequently one of the most frequently anthologised of prose writings in China. Most importantly, however, it was the calligraphy of the “Preface” — a form of the semi-cursive “Running Script” (*xingshu* 行書) that is close to the then developing “Perfect Script” (*zhenshu* 真書), better known as the “Regular Script” (*kaishu* 楷書), which has been the form of Chinese character used in the bulk of printing for more than a millennium now — that ever since has been regarded as the greatest masterpiece of what to traditional Chinese represents their most esteemed form of artistic production.<sup>15</sup>

One late-Ming visitor to Orchid Pavilion was the local historian and essayist Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597-?1689).<sup>16</sup> Like his father, his uncles and his cousins, Zhang Dai had been a great collector — of books, of actors, inkslabs, painting, and calligraphy, of gardens and of rocks, of all the various “superfluous” things that became the object of his many obsessions. Once his collections had been lost in the cataclysm of the dynastic transition between the Ming (1368-1644) and the Qing (1644-1911) — and he writes of their loss as if they were human — he became, by necessity, a collector of the memories of his own gilded youth.<sup>17</sup> Having spent the first half of his life reading through his family’s enormous book collection, he then spent the next half writing prolifically in the attempt, in part, to recapture something of the splendour of his past, but more importantly perhaps in order to understand the reasons for its loss.

In an essay found in his major collection, entitled significantly *Langhuan wenji* 琅嬛文記 [Paradise Collection], he celebrates his great good fortune to have been given the opportunity to visit Orchid Pavilion twice on the occasion of the 60 year cyclical anniversary of the day upon which Wang Xizhi wrote his “Preface.”<sup>18</sup> Zhang Dai’s two visits were separated by the collapse of his world, however, and his essay, like Wang Xizhi’s “Preface” itself a meditation on the vicissitudes of time and place, provides insights into his sense of anxiety about the transmission of the very Chinese cultural traditions perhaps best exemplified by the occasion at Orchid pavilion in 353.

“On the True Site of the Orchid Pavilion of Antiquity”<sup>19</sup>

Guiji’s fine hills and streams find no parallel throughout the empire, and when the evening mists settle or the morning clouds begin to lift, their beauty seems to gather especially along the Shanyin Road.<sup>20</sup> Here one encounters sites of surpassing beauty and famous mountains at every turn. Little wonder then that when Wang Xizhi, the General of the Army on the Right, was searching for a place to serve as his residence, from amongst the “thousand

cliffs" and "ten thousand torrents"<sup>21</sup> to be found here he chose only that patch of land where Orchid Pavilion stood. The lustrous beauty of the scenery and its various features would doubtless have been unmatched throughout the ages. As a youth, moreover, whenever I viewed an ink engraving of Orchid Pavilion, depicting the marvellous steepness of the surrounding cliffs and peaks, the lofty height of the pavilion and the gazebo, the meander with its flowing wine cups, the bathing geese and the inkstones being washed, the very moment I began to unfurl the scroll, I would be unable to prevent myself from being transported to the place in spirit.

In the Guichou year of the reign of the Wanli Emperor [1613], when I was in my seventeenth year, as it happened to be the cyclical anniversary of the year in which the General of the Army on the Right had undertaken the Spring Lustration Ceremony, I dragged some friends along with me to visit the site.<sup>22</sup> When we arrived at a spot to the left of the Heavenly Pattern Monastery we came across some ruined foundations and discarded stone slabs and were told that this was the site of the Orchid Pavilion of antiquity. I stood transfixed and disbelieving; the bamboo, the rocks, the brook and the hills — none of these seemed at all worthy of note. The scene as it appeared now before me was a world away from that depicted in the engravings of the site. Devastated, I choked and sobbed for a long while. For this reason, one must seek to prevent any unconventional travellers who desire to come here from doing so, in order thereby to protect Orchid Pavilion's reputation.<sup>23</sup> Thus it was that I bound my feet and did not dare come here again, and another sixty years have gone by.

This year is again a Guichou year [1673], the twenty-second such year since the 9th year of the Everlasting Harmony reign period [353]. How blessed I have been to have twice experienced this anniversary. As an expression of my good fortune, I wrote a Summons to my like-minded friends to forgather at Orchid Pavilion on the 3rd day of the 3rd month, in imitation of the Spring Lustration Ceremony of old.<sup>24</sup> The day dawned bright and clear and taking my brother Bi along with me, light-hearted and in pursuit of surpassing beauty, we traversed ridges and ascended cliffs. Sitting in the abbot's room of Heavenly Pattern Monastery, we sought out rubbings taken from ancient stelae. It was only after reading these that we became aware of the fact that both the Orchid Pavilion of antiquity and the former Heavenly Pattern Monastery had been consumed by flames at the end of the Yuan dynasty, the actual site of their foundations having been completely lost to memory. The pavilion that at present bears the name "Orchid Pavilion" was in fact constructed in the 27th year of the reign of the Yongle Emperor [1429] on a site chosen by a man surnamed Shen, then serving as the Prefect of the area. Because the site encompassed two ponds, the pavilion had been constructed

above these ponds and stones had been laid to form a water-course into which water from the fields had been led in imitation of the meander with its flowing wine cups — this last done in an especially childish manner. Here, those “high hills” had been rejected, the “tall bamboos” pushed aside, the prevailing order seemed clumsy in the extreme, the scene one of desolation — little more than a solitary thatched hut plonked down in the midst of the surrounding paddy fields. Moreover, the site was constricted, whilst the pavilion and the gazebo were mean and dirty; if it had been here that those forty-two men to be seen in the various depictions of the scene that day were to have gathered, then, with their canopied carriages and their numerous retainers, where would they have found purchase on this “wart” or “crossbow pellet”?<sup>25</sup> That the whole thing was no more than a counterfeit was patently obvious.

The monks confirmed that this was not in fact the original site and that half a *li* away there stood the ruins of the Orchid Pavilion of antiquity. Bi and I hastened through the brambles, impatient to view the true site. When we got there, however, we discovered that, constricted and out-of-the-way, it seemed to have even less to recommend it as a site. Standing to the side of the site was a stone gate upon which had been engraved the words “Orchid Pavilion of Antiquity.” When I examined this inscription carefully, I discovered that this gate actually marked the start of the old road leading towards Orchid Pavilion, not the site of the pavilion itself.

We returned to the abbot’s room and continued our investigations by consulting the rubbing of the inscription written by Shang of the Ministry of Personnel.<sup>26</sup> This document informed us that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of the Wanli Emperor [1575], Liu Jianhao and Wang Songbing, both of Western Sichuan, along with others, obtained this piece of land at the foot of the “high hills” where bubbled the source of the meander, and thinking that it retained something of the appearance of the Eternal Harmony reign period of old, they collected subscriptions and entrusted the monks with the restoration of the pavilion. A pavilion was built, “its wings outspread,”<sup>27</sup> its plaque reading: “Former Site of Orchid Pavilion.” Later on, five halls were constructed, to accommodate the banquets of visitors to the site. Before long, however, the monastery again fell into a state of dilapidation and the pavilion too soon lay in ruins, even its site no longer susceptible to inquiry.

Turning to Bi, I said: “The General of the Army on the Right was a man of culture, a man of exquisite refinement. Surely the site that he selected for his pavilion would offer some sort of prospect! Why ever are we combing this site in search of it, here where the grass grows wild and the trees are so dense?” Soon thereafter we came across a patch of level ground in front of the

Heavenly Pattern Monastery and here at last were the "high hills with lofty peaks" spoken about by the General of the Army on the Right, the "swirling, splashing stream, wonderfully clear," the "luxuriant woods and tall bamboos," here where the hills encircled us like a screen and the stream held us in its embrace. Waving his arms about him in excitement, Bi shouted: "This is it, this is it!" Thereupon we laid out our felt rugs upon the ground, loosened our belts and remained there spread-eagled for a considerable time, entranced by the scene. It was late afternoon before we returned.

For a thousand years now I believe that the true site of Orchid Pavilion of antiquity has been lost, like the authentic version of Wang Xizhi's preface itself, which Biancai treasured more than his own life and which he preserved wrapped beneath ten layers of silk cloth, not allowing it to be viewed by anyone else. Later on, Xiao Yi tricked Biancai out of it, but as he hastened back to the court with it, he stole a glance at it hidden in his sleeve and flowers began to bloom everywhere. This, anyway, is the story of it told in the monastery.<sup>28</sup> My burning desire now is to build a thatched pavilion here in order to return to the pavilion its original site. To do so would be both to speak up on behalf of Orchid Pavilion and to restore a modicum of dignity to the General of the Army on the Right. Just as was the case with the "Orchid Pavilion Preface" that lay hidden in the rafters before Xiao Yi managed to get hold of it, my brother and I have managed to trick the pavilion itself back into existence. This pavilion, once built, will be named "Ink Blossom," in allusion to the story of Xiao Yi.<sup>29</sup>

On one level, the anxieties of this essay are specifically political and historical; Zhang Dai is after all a Ming loyalist — a left-over subject (*yimin* 遺民), as the Chinese termed it — who participated (if only briefly) in anti-Qing activities. Wang Xizhi's "Preface" is itself one of the great Chinese literary products of exile, in his case from his homeland in the north, and within possibly a year or two of having written this preface, he penned another still extant essay (usually referred to by the title *Sanghuan tie* 喪亂帖 [Letter on the Disturbances]) in which he bemoaned the fact that he was unable to mourn at the tombs of his ancestors.<sup>30</sup> As described in the preface to his most famous work, *Taoan mengyi* 陶菴夢憶 [Dream Memories of Taoan], Zhang Dai too had been forced into exile by the circumstances of his time: "Taoan's [Zhang Dai] state fell and his family was destroyed. Finding himself without a place of refuge, he let his hair hang loose and took to the mountains, there to become a man of the wilds, terrifying of appearance."<sup>31</sup> Further, many of the allusions that lurk beneath the surface of Zhang Dai's essay are to writings about loss and exile. Most significantly, perhaps, was the unmentioned but widely understood association between the site of Orchid Pavilion and the desecration of the Song Imperial tombs during

the Yuan dynasty (1260-1368), the earlier occasion when China in its entirety had fallen under “foreign” rule; some of the scattered bones from these tombs had been reburied here by a group of Song loyalists and some wintergreen trees from the tombs had been transplanted there to mark the eternal presence of the dead.<sup>32</sup> Given Manchu sensitivity to references to this earlier example of conquest, it is little wonder then that Zhang Dai’s *Paradise Collection* was not published until almost two hundred years after his death, in 1877.

More broadly, however, Zhang Dai’s anxieties about establishing the authenticity of the actual site of Orchid Pavilion can be understood to express late-Ming anxieties about the continued transmission of culture, particularly once the empire had fallen into “foreign” hands. Writing in 1671, several years before his second visit to Orchid Pavilion, Zhang Dai had mourned the destruction of another site that, to his mind, had best embodied the quintessence of his civilization, West Lake in Hangzhou:

Born at an evil hour, I have been separated from West Lake for twenty-eight long years. Not a day passes however that West Lake does not enter my dreams, this West Lake of my dreams having never left me for a single day. I have since revisited West Lake twice, in the *Jiawu* [1654] and *Dingyou* [1657] years, only to discover that of the splendid estates that once lined the shores of the lake — the Tower Beyond the Tower of the Shang Clan of Gushing Gold Gate, the Occasional Dwelling of the Qi Family, the country villas of the Qian and Yu families, and the Sojourn Garden once owned by my own family — nothing remains but the shards of their roof tiles. That which fills my dreams exists no longer beside West Lake.

When I reached Break-Off Bridge and took in the prospect it afforded, I found that only one in ten of the fine willows and tender peaches that once stood there, of the singing pavilions and the dance terraces, had survived, the rest as if washed away by a great flood. I fled from the place, hiding the sight from my eyes and consoling myself with the thought that as I had come here to view West Lake only to find it thus, it was better to seek to preserve the West Lake of my dreams, for that West Lake at least remains intact.<sup>33</sup>

In the case of Orchid Pavilion, however, at issue was not simply the neglect and ruination of the site itself, a process that Zhang Dai recognizes as inevitable and of long-standing (“...for a thousand years now”), but more importantly the transmission of the immortal product of this site, Wang Xizhi’s “Preface.” As Richard Kraus has argued: “Searching for the best copy of the lost ‘Orchid



Pavilion Preface' replicated the melancholy Confucian effort to recapture a lost and flawless past."<sup>34</sup>

Somewhat paradoxically, an art form that accords unique emphasis both to factors of time and movement and to the transmission down through the ages of canonical masterpieces<sup>35</sup> was founded upon a particular mode of transmission whereby the flow of the individual strokes of a piece of calligraphy was condemned to the tyranny of reproduction in stone and on paper. In a brilliant and resonant recent treatment of aspects of this process, Wu Hung speaks of the extent to which each time a rubbing was taken from a stele, loss was incurred by both original and reproduction: "Because a rubbing 'freezes' an object at a particular moment whereas the object itself continues to deteriorate, an older rubbing is always more 'authentic' than the real object. In this sense, a rubbing also becomes the nemesis of the object, constantly challenging the historical authenticity of the object by juxtaposing the present with a more reliable past."<sup>36</sup> At the same time that "more reliable past" too is always subject to "natural or human destruction."

Some years ago, Pierre Ryckmans addressed what he believed to be the paradox to be found at the heart of Chinese civilisation whereby: "...cultivation of the moral and spiritual values of the Ancients appears to have most often combined with a curious neglect or indifference towards the material heritage of the past."<sup>37</sup> Ryckmans's solution to this paradox of spiritual preservation in the face of ceaseless material destruction was to argue that: "the vital strength, the creativity, the seemingly unlimited capacity for metamorphosis and adaptation which the Chinese tradition displayed for 3,500 years may well derive from the fact that this tradition never let itself be trapped into set forms, static objects and things, where it would have run the risk of paralysis and death."<sup>38</sup>

Although Ryckmans's proposition has proven generally to be a stimulating and productive one, he appears to have understated to extent to which the actual processes whereby Chinese culture — calligraphy above all — sought to transmit the smallest details of its formal characteristics on to succeeding generations were almost entirely reliant upon "set forms, static objects and things," and that often great anxiety accompanied such processes.

In the case of Wang Xizhi's "Preface," to the extent that the received "memory" of that occasion in 353 at Orchid Pavilion served to embody the cultural ideal of a perfect communion between man and nature, and the quintessential cultural product of such a communion, to the scholarly and artistic elite of the recently destroyed Ming dynasty it represented a form of paradise now lost irretrievably somewhere in the endless processes of transmission (and translation) between site and text, description and depiction, stone and paper, paper and paper. If, with difficulty and driven by an intense concern for

authenticity, the true site of paradise may yet be recovered by a man such as Zhang Dai, despite the promise offered him as historian by the cyclical progression of time, however, paradise's occasion could not be regained. Like a marvellous opera, a bright moon hanging high in the sky, a freshly-brewed cup of fine tea, the splendours of both nature and culture "...can provide the gratification of but a moment, their passing to then occasion a lifetime's regret at their loss. They cannot be wrapped up in an embroidered bag to be passed on for evermore."<sup>59</sup> By 1673, during his second pilgrimage to the site, Zhang Dai seems to have recognised this sombre fact.

Wang Xizhi's celebrated "Preface" — and by deliberate implication, Zhang Dai's own somewhat less celebrated attempt to recapture the magic of the moment and place of its inscription — expresses that melancholy contract that binds the readers and writers of the one generation to those of preceding ones, whereby we read in order to recognise in others the causes of our own distress.

*Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*



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<sup>2</sup> Yun Gao 雲告, ed., *Langhuan wenji* 琅嬛文集 [Paradise Collection] (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1985), 114.

<sup>3</sup> *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 60.

<sup>4</sup> In Judith T. Zeitlin & Lydia H. Liu, with Ellen Widmer, eds., *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 62.

<sup>5</sup> For a recent discussion of some of the issues involved here, see Tobie Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1998), 181.

<sup>7</sup> For which, see Jonathan Hay, "Ming Palace and Tomb in Early Qing Jiangnan: Dynastic Memory and the Openness of History," *Late Imperial China*, v. 20, no. 1 (1999): 1-48.

<sup>8</sup> These itineraries were of course always prone to the shifting tides of fashion. Writing during the course of his celebrated tour of the districts south of the Yangtze River in 1597, Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610) notes the extent to which the fame of the Shanyin Road 山陰道 for its beauty, at its height during the Six dynasties (220-589), had been eclipsed gradually since the Tang dynasty (618-907) by that of West lake (Xihu 西湖) at Hangzhou 西湖, "...from which circumstance," he concludes, "the lifespan of the mountains and the rivers too may perhaps be said to have been predestined," for which, see "Yu xue" 禹穴 [Yu the Great's Grotto], in Qian Bocheng 錢伯城, ed.,

*Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao* 袁宏道集箋校 [The Complete Works of Yuan Hongdao: Annotated and Collated] 3 vols. (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1981), 1: 441. For translations of Yuan's representations of the splendours of the West Lake, along with a brief discussion of the importance of this trip to the development of Yuan Hongdao's literary praxis, see Stephen McDowall, trans., *Four Mouths of Idle Roaming: The West Lake Records of Yuan Hongdao* (1568-1610), Asian Studies Institute Translation Paper # 4 (Wellington: Asian Studies Institute, Victoria University of Wellington, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Susan Naquin argues that this term was in fact first popularized during this period, by the Fujianese scholar Cao Xuequan 曹學佺 (1574-1646), in a series of book titles, for which see her *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 251& 254. Although the term my protagonist Zhang Dai 張岱 uses in the essay under discussion here is the variant shengdi mingshan 勝地名山 [sites of surpassing beauty and famous mountains] elsewhere he does use a close homophone to the one employed by Cao Xuequan — *mingshan guji* 名山古跡 [famous mountains and sites where linger the traces of antiquity], for which see his "Xi Shi shan shushe ji" 西施山書舍記 [A Record of the Bookroom on Xi Shi's Hill] (*Langhuan wenji*, 93) wherein he warns: "Of the many famous mountains and sites where linger the traces of antiquity under Heaven, only three out of every ten retain anything by way of even a shadow or an echo of their former splendour, whereas the reputations of the rest are simply vainglorious. Those who wish to rank and evaluate such sites are best advised to do so from a standpoint that is both bland and remote (*danyuan* 淡遠)." In the case of his essay about Orchid Pavilion, Zhang Dai seems to have ignored his own advice. As Naquin argues, the lexicographical evidence implies that the expression mingsheng 名勝 referred initially to "famous and outstanding men" and was only later used to refer to sites either of great beauty or of historical importance. Of significance to present purposes is the fact that the first instance of this particular usage provided in the *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 1997), 1:1516, is taken from the biography of Wang Dao 王導 (a cousin of Wang Xizhi's father) found in the *Jin shu* 晉書 [History of the Jin Dynasty] and also involves a gathering to mark the Spring Lustration Ceremony and that an alternative meaning for the second half of the term — *guji* 古跡 (with the variant 古蹟) — refers to surviving specimens of the calligraphy of ancient men.

<sup>10</sup>The best English-language treatment of this topic remains Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton University Press, 1979). Ledderose provides useful references to bibliographies of Chinese and Japanese studies on the topic. See also Han Chuang (John Hay), "Hsiao I gets the Lan-t'ing Manuscript by a Confidence Trick," *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 5 (3) (July-Aug 1970): 1-13 (Part 1) and 5 (6) (Jan-Feb 1971): 1-17 (Part 2) for stories associated with the transmission of the "original" version of the "Preface"; Donald Holzman, "On the Authenticity of the 'Preface' to the Collection of Poetry Written at the Orchid Pavilion," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117 (2) (1997): 306-11 for a discussion of the various recensions of its text; Eugene Y. Wang, "The Taming of the Shrew: Wang Hsi-chih (303-361) and Calligraphic Gentrification in the Seventh Century," in Cary Y. Liu, Dora C.Y. Ching & Judith G. Smith, eds., *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy* (The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), 133-73, on the process of canonisation of the calligraphy associated with the "Preface"; and Philip Hu, "Illustration of the Spring Purification Gathering at the Orchid Pavilion," in his *Visible Traces: Rare Books and Special Collections from the National Library of China* (New York: Queens Borough Public Library, 2000), 150-54, for a particularly fine example of a Ming dynasty depiction of the occasion in 353.

<sup>11</sup>For a masterful translation of this work (and its commentary), see Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976); Mather's translation of this version of the "Preface" (attached to the "Admiration and Emulation" chapter of the work) can be found between pp. 321-22. In his recent book, *Spirit and Style in Medieval China: The Shih-shuo hsin-yü and its Legacy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i

Press, 2001), Nanxiu Qian argues that there was something of a “*Shih-shuo* frenzy” during the late-Ming/early-Qing period, particularly in the Jiangnan area, a frenzy in large part inspired by Wang Shizhen’s 王世貞 (1526-90) *Shishuo xinyu bu* 世說新語補 [Supplement to *A New Account of Tales of the World*] published in 1585.

<sup>12</sup> “The Origins of Chinese Nature Poetry,” *Asia Major*, n.s. 8 (1960-61): 68-104.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Owen, ed. & trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 282.

<sup>14</sup> Citing some early research by the late Chen Congzhou 陳從周 (1918-2000), Lothar Ledderose argues that the site of Orchid pavilion was likely to have already been a garden by the time Wang Xizhi and his friends gathered there rather than “untouched nature”, for which, see his “The Earthly Paradise: Religious Elements in Chinese Landscape Art”, in Susan Bush & Christian Murck, eds., *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 172. In the mid-1950s, Chen was commissioned to advise the provincial government on the restoration of the site. Writing about a trip back there more than twenty years later, Chen was to declare that: “The present site of Orchid Pavilion is not longer that of the original Jin dynasty one; it is difficult, therefore, to reconcile the scenery here with that described by Wang Xizhi in his ‘Preface’”, for which see his “Hang Shao xingjiao” 杭紹行腳 [On Foot Between Hangzhou and Shaoxing], *Yuanlin qingyi* 園林清議 [Conversations About Gardens] (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 2005), 145.

<sup>15</sup> For a persuasive discussion of the process whereby calligraphy acquired its pre-eminence within the hierarchy of the arts in China, and the reasons for this development, see Michael Nylan, “Calligraphy, the Sacred Text and Test of Culture,” in Cary Y. Liu, Dora C.Y. Ching & Judith G. Smith, eds., *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, 17-75. Nylan argues that the late Eastern Han dynasty (25-220) saw a decisive double change: “the change of executant from anonymous servant to admired artist and the change by which fine writing no longer embellishes production but discloses the producer” (19). In this vein and of Wang Xizhi, Nylan says: “Transparency offset by limpid subtlety, a readiness to embody change while keeping to the still center, and a capacity to exult in one’s commitment to beauty – such qualities were admired in the character no less than in the script” (55).

<sup>16</sup> For short English-language biographies of Zhang Dai, see A.W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 1644-1912* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), 53-54; and W.H. Nienhauser, ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986 & 1998), 1: 220-21. In Chinese, see the full-length study of Zhang Dai by Xia Xianchun 夏咸淳, *Mingmo qicai - Zhang Dai lun* 明末奇才—張岱論 [On Zhang Dai: A Late Ming Genius] (Shanghai: Shehui kexueyuan, 1989) and, more recently, Hu Yimin 胡益民, *Zhang Dai pingzhuan* 張岱評傳 [A Critical Biography of Zhang Dai] (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> For discussions of the moral dimensions of collecting during this period in particular, see Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); and Wai-yeet Li, “The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility,” *T'oung Pao* 81 (4/5) (1995): 269-302. For a translation of Zhang Dai’s account of the loss of his family’s library (“Three Generations of Book Collecting”), see D.E. Pollard and Soh Yong Kian, trans., “Zhang Dai: Six Essays,” *Renditions* 33 & 34 (1990): 165-66. In the “Attached Preface” (*bingxu* 並序) to his “Ershiba you ming” 二十八友銘 [Epitaphs to Twenty-Eight Friends], Zhang Dai writes: “Far more than half the antiques once owned by my family have now been lost, but I still know the names of each and every one of them, just as if they were old friends”, for which see *Langhuan wenji*, 229.

<sup>18</sup> For a brief account of this system of notating the passage of time (known as the *ganzhi* 干支 cycle), see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 175-84.

<sup>19</sup> “Gu Lanting bian” 古蘭亭辨, *Langhuan wenji*, 119-21.

<sup>20</sup> The Shanyin Road, the area surrounding present-day Shaoxing, was noted for its natural beauty. This opinion was most famously expressed by Wang Xizhi’s (309-c. 365) son, Wang Xianzhi, as recorded in the “Speech and Conversation” chapter of the *Shishuo xinyu*: “Whenever I travel by the Shanyin Road, the hills and streams complement each other in such a way that I can’t begin to describe them”; Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World*, 71-2; romanisation altered.

<sup>21</sup> Again in the “Speech and Conversation” chapter of the *Shishuo xinyu*, we are told that: “When [the artist] Gu Kaizhi [ca. 345-406] returned to Jiangling from Guiji, people asked him about the beauty of its hills and streams. Gu replied, ‘A thousand cliffs competed to stand tall, / Ten thousand torrents vied in flowing. / Grasses and trees obscured the heights, / Like vapors raising misty shrouds’”; Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World* 70; romanisation altered.

<sup>22</sup> Wang Xizhi’s “Preface” reads, in H.C. Chang’s translation: “In the ninth year [353] of the Yonghe [Everlasting Harmony] reign, which was a *guichou* year, early in the final month of spring, we gathered at Orchid Pavilion in Shanyin in Guiji for the ceremony of purification. Young and old congregated, and there was a throng of men of distinction. Surrounding the pavilion were high hills with lofty peaks, luxuriant woods and tall bamboos. There was, moreover, a swirling, splashing stream, wonderfully clear, which curved round it like a ribbon, so that we seated ourselves along it in a drinking game, in which cups of wine were set afloat and drifted to those who sat downstream. The occasion was not heightened by the presence of musicians. Nevertheless, what with drinking and the composing of verses, we conversed in whole-hearted freedom, entering fully into one another’s feelings. The day was fine, the air clear, and a gentle breeze regaled us, so that on looking up we responded to the vastness of the universe, and on bending down were struck by the manifold riches of the earth. And as our eyes wandered from object to object, so our hearts, too, rambled with them. Indeed, for the eye as well as the ear, it was pure delight! What perfect bliss! For in men’s associations with one another in their journey through life, some draw upon their inner resources and find satisfaction in a closeted conversation with a friend, but others, led by their inclinations, abandon themselves without constraint to diverse interests and pursuits, oblivious of their physical existence. Their choice may be infinitely varied even as their temperament will range from the serene to the irascible. Yet, when absorbed by what they are engaged in, they are for the moment pleased with themselves and, in their self-satisfaction, forget that old age is at hand. But when eventually they tire of what had so engrossed them, their feelings will have altered with their circumstances; and, of a sudden, complacency gives way to regret. What previously had gratified them is now a thing of the past, which itself is cause for lament. Besides, although the span of men’s lives may be longer or shorter, all must end in death. And, as has been said by the ancients, birth and death are momentous events. What an agonizing thought! In reading the compositions of earlier men, I have tried to trace the causes of their melancholy, which too often are the same as those that affect myself. And I have then confronted the book with a deep sigh, without, however, being able to reconcile myself to it all. But this much I do know: it is idle to pretend that life and death are equal states, and foolish to claim that a youth cut off in his prime has led the protracted life of a centenarian. For men of a later age will look upon our time as we look upon earlier ages – a chastening reflection. And so I have listed those present on this occasion and transcribed their verses. Even when circumstances have changed and men inhabit a different world, it will still be the same causes that induce the mood of melancholy attendant on poetical composition. Perhaps some reader of the future will be moved by the sentiments expressed in this preface.” In H.C. Chang, trans., *Chinese Literature: Volume Two: Nature Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977), 8-9 (romanisation altered, translations of the reign title and pavilion name added). Footnoting this preface to Zhang Dai’s

essay is of course to invert the proper relationship between the two texts as he would have understood it.

<sup>21</sup> Writing sixteen years earlier, Yuan Hongdao had noted Orchid Pavilion's somewhat desolate air, in his shorter (and earliest) account of his visit to the site: "How very lonely Orchid Pavilion now appears! The Orchid Pavilion of antiquity was nestled within the hills and alongside a torrent. With its many twists and turns, no more perfect spot for a meander could possibly be imagined. At present, however, a channel has been dug out on a flat piece of land and a meander created. Such is the ignorance of the vulgar pedant!" in *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao*, 1:445. In the longer and revised version of this record, Yuan changed the end of last sentence to read: "...as if it were simply an object to be found within some important man's garden" (1:444).

<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere ("Shou Lu Qu'an bashi" 壽陸瞿卷八十 [A Congratulatory Poem on the Occasion of Lu Qu'an's Eightieth Birthday], Zhang Dai suggests that he was blessed also to be accompanied on this second anniversary visit by two friends who had also been with him on his 1613 tour of the site, Zhou Mougou 周懋谷 and Lu Qu'an, for which see Xia Xiachun, ed., *Zhang Dai shiwen ji* 張岱詩文集 [A Collection of the Prose and Poetry of Zhang Dai] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991), 57-58.

<sup>25</sup> An allusion to Yu Xin's 庾信 (513-81) "Ai Jiangnan fu" 哀江南賦 [Rhapsody on River South], for which see William T. Graham Jr., *The Lament for the South: Yu Hsin's 'Ai Chiang-nan fu'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 90-91. In Graham's translation, this section of the poem reads: "Now, territory reduced to a wart,/ With a fortress like a crossbow pellet,/ His enemies bitter,/ His alliances cold,/ This vengeful bird could fill up no sea;/ This simple old man could move no mountains."

<sup>26</sup> This may be a reference to Shang Tingshi 蔣廷試 (1497-1584), a native of Guiji and a man whose biography had been written by Zhang Dai's great-grandfather Zhang Yuanbian 張元忭 (1538-88).

<sup>27</sup> An expression found in Ouyang Xiu's (1007-1072) 歐陽修 "Zuiwending ji" 醉翁亭記 [An Account of the Pavilion of the Drunken Old Man], a translation of which may be found in Stephen Owen, ed. & trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, 613-14.

<sup>28</sup> Legends associated with the manuscript are recorded in a variety of Song dynasty sources; Zhang Dai himself provides a retelling of some of this material in his *Shi que* 史闕 [The Lacunae of History] 2 vols. (1824; Taipei: Huashi chubanshe, 1977), 1: 346-50.

<sup>29</sup> In his account of a visit made to the site in 1981, the bibliophile Huang Shang 黃裳 (Rong Dingchang 容鼎昌), the owner of the only extant manuscript version of Zhang Dai's *Zhangzi shibi* 張子詩批 [Zhang Dai's Poetic Husks], notes that the plaque that hangs presently in the Ink Blossom Pavilion refers to Zhang Dai's "discovery" of the true site of the Orchid Pavilion of old, for which see "Lanting" 蘭亭 [Orchid Pavilion], *Baimen qiu liu* 白門秋柳 [Autumn Willows of Nanjing] (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 2004), 94.

<sup>30</sup> If, as Eugene Wang argues ("The Taming of the Shrew: Wang Hsi-chih (303-361) and Calligraphic Gentrification in the Seventh Century," 134), the tracing copy of this letter was taken to Japan sometime before or during the eighth century and remained unknown in China until its publication there in 1892, Zhang Dai cannot ever have read it. In a quite remarkable way, however, Zhang Dai's own writings serve to echo the sentiments expressed by Wang Xizhi, as translated by Eugene Wang (134): "I, Xizhi, am writing with reverence. Amidst the extremity of the chaos, my ancestral tombs have once again been ravaged. My heart goes out toward them, and I wail, rant, and choke to death. I am filled with pain, my heart is broken. Tormented as I am, what can I do? What can I do? Though they were repaired in no time, I have not had the chance to rush there [to attend to them]. The grief gnaws deeply into me. What can I do? What can I do? Faced with the paper, choking with tears, I do not know what to say. Yours sincerely, Xizhi" (romanisation altered).

<sup>31</sup> "Zixu" 自序 [Author's Preface], Xia Xiachun 夏咸淳 and Cheng Weirong 程維榮, eds., *Taoan mengyi: Xibu mengxun* 陶菴夢憶：西湖夢尋 [Dream Memories of Taoan: Dream Quest for

West Lake] (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2001), 3. For a translation (and discussion) of this preface in its entirety, see Stephen Owen, *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 131-41.

<sup>12</sup> On this aspect of the site, see Kang-i Sun Chang, "Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the Yueh-fu pu-i Poem Series," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46 (2) (1986): 353-86. Interestingly, during his visit to the Shanyin district in 1597, Yuan Hongdao likened the scenery of the district to the landscape painting of the Yuan dynasty, in contrast to that around West Lake which, he believed resembled the painting style of the preceding Song dynasty, for which see "Yu xue," in *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao*, 1: 441. During the Qing dynasty, Yuan Hongdao's poem on the site of the Song Imperial tombs "Song di liu ling" 宋帝六陵 [The Six Song Imperial Tombs] was excised from collections of Yuan's works as being "biased and ridiculous."

<sup>13</sup> *Taoan mengyi: Xibu mengxun*, 147. For translations of extracts from this work, see Duncan Campbell, trans., "Landscape as Garden: West Lake," in Stanislaus Fung, ed., *The Dumbarton Oaks Readings on Chinese Gardens* (Harvard University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> Richard Kraus, *Brushes with Power: Modern Politics and the Chinese Art of Calligraphy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 35.

<sup>15</sup> Lothar Ledderose, "Chinese Calligraphy: Its Aesthetic Dimension and Social Function," *Orientalism* 17 (10) (1986): 35-50.

<sup>16</sup> "On Rubbings: Their Materiality and Historicity," in Judith T. Zeitlin & Lydia H. Liu, with Ellen Widmer, eds., *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan*, 34. For earlier (and more practically minded) English language treatments of the mode of calligraphic transmission in China, see Robert van Gulik, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur* (1958; repr. Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1981), 86-101; and Lui Wing-fong 呂榮芳, *Traditional Chinese Rubbing Techniques* (Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Museum of History, 1986). For an excellent discussion of the political dimensions of the processes whereby certain examples of calligraphy by certain calligraphers were chosen for inclusion in (or exclusion from) the compendia of calligraphic models that were compiled during the Song dynasty generally, and the extent of imperial involvement in the cult of Wang Xizhi, in particular, see Amy McNair, "The Engraved Model-Letters Compendia of the Song Dynasty," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114 (2) (1994): 209-25.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Ryckmans, *The Chinese Attitude towards the Past*, The Forty-seventh George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1986), 1. The lecture was later republished in *Papers on Far Eastern History* (1989), 39: 1-16.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Ryckmans, *The Chinese Attitude towards the Past*, 11. Significantly, the particular case study that Ryckmans adduced in support of his argument was that of Wang Xizhi's "Preface" for, as Ryckmans explains, the problem with the esteem traditionally accorded this particular calligraphic specimen is that the original of the preface – if ever such a thing actually existed – has not been seen since 649 when it was buried with the 2<sup>nd</sup> emperor of the Tang dynasty, Tang Taizong (r. 627-49), and that there are now extant at least 100 markedly different calligraphic versions of the preface, the earliest of which date from the Tang dynasty (618-906), in the case of copies, or from the Song dynasty (906-1279), in the case of rubbings. Further, in 1965, the Chinese historian Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978) raised a number of important questions both about the authenticity of the text of the preface itself, and about the received tradition of Wang Xizhi's calligraphic style. Guo Moruo's original (and subsequent) article, along with a variety of responses to his arguments, have been usefully collected in *Lanting lumbian* 蘭亭論辨 [Orchid Pavilion Debates] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1973). As Donald Holzman points out ("On the Authenticity of the 'Preface' to the Collection of Poetry Written at the Orchid Pavilion," 306, Guo Moruo was developing ideas first expressed in a colophon by Li Wentian 李文田 (1834-95).

<sup>19</sup> "Peng Tianxi chuanxi" 彭天錫串戲 [Peng Tianxi as Performer], *Taoan mengyi: Xibu mengxun*, 93.