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Expressions of Self in a Homeless World: Zhang Dai (1597-1680?) and His Writings in the Ming-Qing Transition Period

Wenjie Liu

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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**EXPRESSIONS OF SELF IN A HOMELESS WORLD:
ZHANG DAI (1597-1680?) AND HIS WRITINGS IN THE MING-QING
TRANSITION PERIOD**

A Thesis Presented

by

WENJIE LIU

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Approved as to style and content by:

Donald E. Gjertson, Chair

Alvin P. Cohen, Member

Zhongwei Shen, Member

Amanda Seaman, Director
Asian Languages and Literatures Program

Julie Candler Hayes, Department Chair
Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures

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ABSTRACT

**EXPRESSIONS OF SELF IN A HOMELESS WORLD:
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SEPTEMBER 2010

WENJIE LIU, B.A., NANJING UNIVERSITY

M.A., NANJING UNIVERSITY

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Donald E. Gjertson

This essay analyzes Zhang Dai's life and his major literary work, and argues that the expression of self is the core of his writings. By contextualizing Zhang Dai's work in the Ming-Qing dynastic transition, this essay explains the hidden motives of Zhang Dai to justify, preserve and identify his self through literary practice, suggests that this explosion of self-expression is not only a literary response to the historical event of dynastic transition, but also a reflection of the cultural and literary trends of the 17th century. This essay also provides close readings and genre study to Zhang Dai's poems, prose and biographical writings, and demonstrates how the expression of the writer's self works in different types of literary genres.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. AN INTERRUPTED DREAM —A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ZHANG DAI.....	8
2.1 The Jiangnan area in the late Ming.....	8
2.2 Zhang Dai's life before the fall of Beijing in 1644.....	10
2.2.1 Zhang Dai's family.....	10
2.2.2 Zhang Dai's education.....	11
2.2.3 Ambition as a historian.....	15
2.2.4 Pleasures in life.....	16
2.3 Zhang Dai's life after 1644.....	18
2.3.1 Short service in Prince Lu's court.....	18
2.3.2 Flight and retreat.....	20
2.3.3 Writing.....	21
3. "COULD NOT BUT HAVE TO" —ANXIETY OF EXISTENCE AND SELF-JUSTIFICATION IN ZHANG DAI'S WRITINGS.....	23
3.1 The existential dilemma of the Ming <i>yimin</i>	23
3.2 "Stealing life" and "pleading for death" — Zhang Dai's anxiety of existence.....	26
3.3 Could not but have to — Zhang Dai's self-justification in his writings.....	31
4. PLACING THE SELF IN THE LOST WORLD — ZHANG DAI'S MEMOIR WRITINGS.....	38
4.1 <i>Xiaopin</i> and memory.....	38
4.2 Buildings—the physical housing of memories.....	46
4.3 People—the spirits of the past world.....	56
5. SAVING THE IDENTITY—ZHANG DAI'S	

BIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS	65
5.1 Biography or autobiography	66
5.2 Self-reflections—Zhang Dai's family biographies	68
5.3 Self-defining—Zhang Dai's autobiographical writing.....	82
6. CONCLUSION.....	95
APPENDICES	
A. SELF-WRITTEN PREFACE TO <i>SHIGUI SHU</i>	99
B. PREFACE TO <i>MENG YI</i>	100
C. LANG HUAN FU DI.....	101
D. SELF-WRITTEN TOMB EPITAPH	102
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	103

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My thesis is a case study on a particular matter in Chinese literature, namely, the expression of literary self, in a given historical period -- the Ming-Qing transition, when the northern Manchus replaced the Ming Dynasty and established their rule in the seventeenth century China as the Qing Dynasty.

The Ming-Qing dynastic transition was one of the most unstable and violent times in Chinese history. At the same time, it was also a hayday for literary development. Literary creation in poetry, prose, drama and fiction was active and fruitful during this period. One of the distinct characteristics found by later scholars in the literary works of this time is the explosion of self-expression. Of course, the expression of selfhood had existed in literary practice long before the seventeenth century, and it is always a fundamental function of certain literary genres such as poetry. But in the Ming-Qing period, due to the radical change of the society and the crucial individual experiences brought by the transitional trauma, the desire to record and express one's own stories, feelings and thoughts in writing were much more intense than during relatively peaceful periods. Moreover, a pervasive calling for individualism among intellectuals was aroused by Wang Shouren's 王守仁 (1472-1529) *xinxue* 心学 and Li Zhi's 李贽 (1527-1602) *tongxin shuo* 童心说 in the Ming. This provided a much earlier cultural context for literary self-expression.

Another evident feature of the self-expression literature in the transitional period is the strong tendency to use highly allusive language. Due to the strong political

pressures and strict censorship enforced by the early Qing rulers, intellectuals usually dared not to fully express their feelings and thoughts. To convey such themes, therefore, they had to employ highly allusive literary forms. Allusive poetry, fiction and drama were their primary choices. The outstanding fruits of such allusive literary practice include Wu Weiye's 吴伟业 (1609-1672) poems and dramas, Kong Shangren's 孔尚任 (1648-1718) historical drama *Tao hua shan* 桃花扇, and some heroine-centered fiction, such as *Hao qiu zhuan* 好逑传. This list is far from inclusive. As a consequence, when today's researchers deal with the topic of self-expression in the Ming-Qing transition period, their interests usually focus on the above literary genres.¹

This study particularly focuses on the work of one of the most outstanding writers at that time. Zhang Dai 张岱 (1597 - 1680?) (T. Zongzi 宗子, H. Tao'an 陶庵)² was a renowned intellectual, essayist and loyalist during the late Ming and the early Qing. After the collapse of the Ming, Zhang Dai refused to serve the new rulers; he became a reclusive farmer and writer in his hometown. The most distinct and interesting feature of Zhang Dai's writing is his great enthusiasm in recording the past. He wrote several books dealing with the world of the past in both the private and public spheres, and he was especially famous for writing memoirs about his bygone luxurious life.

¹ Published researches include Kang-I Sun Chang's "The Idea of The Mask in Wu Wei-yeh (1609-1671)" (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 48, 1988, pp. 289-320), Tina Lu's *Persons, Roles, and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), Dietrich Tschanz's "Wu Weiye's Dramatic Works and His Aesthetics of Dynastic Transition" in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*, ed. Wilt L. Idema and Wai-yee Li (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2006), etc.

² The year of Zhang Dai's death is not clearly recorded. In a colophon he wrote for his portrait, Zhang Dai mentioned "For eighty one years I am extremely poor and anxious" 八十一年，穷愁卓萃，thus it could be concluded that Zhang Dai was alive at least in 1678. Hu Yiming 胡益明, a modern researcher of Zhang Dai, who had the opportunity to read through the handwritten copies of *Guan Lang Qi Qiao Lu* 琯琅乞巧录 and *You Ming Yu Yue San Bu Xiu Tu Zai* 有明于越三不朽图赞, claims that the accurate year of Zhang Dai's death was 1680 when he was 84 years old, see Hu Yimin "Zhang Dai zu nian kao" 张岱卒年考, *Anhui da xue xue bao* 安徽大学学报 5 (2002).

Such writings are usually personal, allusive and nostalgic. By closely reading the poems, memoir-like essays and biographical writings that Zhang Dai wrote during the transitional period, I found that his writings are full of direct or indirect self-narrative and self-expression. Due to the radical changes brought by the dynastic transition, three kinds of emotional displacements -- the anxiety of existence, the sense of “homelessness” and the crisis of identity -- were the major themes in Zhang Dai’s self-expression. I will study the relationships between these emotional displacements and his writings, more specifically, how Zhang Dai conveyed such displacements and how he resolved them through writing.

The following is a brief introduction to the research and criticism on Zhang Dai and his writings. Since Zhang Dai was a hermit during the Qing dynasty and most of his writings were not published until after his death, he was barely mentioned in the discourse of Qing literature history.³ Zhou Zuoren 周作人(1885-1967), one of the important leaders of the New Culture Movement 新文化运动, was the first person to discover Zhang Dai and his writings in the 1930s. He highly praised Zhang Dai’s *xiaopin* 小品 writing and considered it the final integration of the Gong’an School⁴ 公安派 and the Jingling School⁵ 竟陵派. Contemporary literary research on Zhang Dai is roughly focused on two aspects. One is the research on Zhang Dai’s

³ *Xihu meng xun* 西湖梦寻[seeking for the West Lake in dreams], a collection of memoirs, historical anecdotes and poems about the West Lake, is his only book included in *Siku quanshu* 四库全书, however the bibliographical comment in *Siku quanshu* indicated it was an unimportant, clichéd book whose form was “entirely copied from Liu Dong’s 刘侗 (ca. 1593-ca. 1636) *Dijing Jingwu lue* 帝京景物略”. See *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四库全书总目 Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju 中华书局, 1965, juan 76, p. 665.

⁴ The Gong’an School, represented by Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610) and his two brothers, advocated for the native sensibility 性灵 in prose writing. The Jingling School, represented by Zhong Xing 钟惺 (1574-1624) and Tan Yuanchun 谭元春 (1586-1637), also laid claim to expressing the natural character and intelligence of humanity. They were the two most influential literary schools in the seventeenth century.

⁵ See Zhou Zuoren, *Zhong Guo xin wen xue de yuan liu* 中国新文学的源流, Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiao yu chu ban she 河北教育出版社, 2002, p. 26.

biographical sketches, such as Hu Yimin's 胡益民 *Zhang Dai pingzhuan* 张岱评传 (2002) and She Deyu's 佘德余 *Dushi wenren Zhang Dai zhuan* 都市文人张岱传 (2008). The other research focuses on Zhang Dai's *xiaopin* writings, including their literary inheritance, aesthetic evaluation, and influences. These researches are considerably influenced by Zhou Zuoren's view. Among them, Wu Chengxue's 吴承学 *Wan Ming xiaopin yanjiu* 晚明小品研究 (1998) is relatively systematic and comprehensive. An obvious limitation of such researches is that only Zhang Dai's *xiaopin* is brought into the researchers' visions while his other literature works are excluded. Several researches attempted to study Zhang Dai's other essay writings, for example, Wang Huiyin 王惠颖 paid particular attention to Zhang Dai's biographical essays in her study "Zhang Dai zhuanji wenxue chutan" 张岱传记文学初探 (2000). Such studies broadened the scope of study of Zhang Dai. However, it was also mainly focused on literary inheritance and aesthetic evaluations. In western scholarship, Zhang Dai has drawn growing attention. In his book *Remembrances: The Experience of Past in Classical Chinese Literature* (1986), Stephen Owen studied Zhang Dai's memoir writings and indicated that Zhang Dai's writing actually demonstrates an everlasting topic in Chinese classical literature—the author writes "to memorize" and his purpose is "to be memorized". Philips Kafalas's Ph.D dissertation "Nostalgia and the Reading of the Late Ming Essay: Zhang Dai's *Tao'an mengyi*" (Stanford, 1995) analyzed Zhang Dai's memoir writings in depth by employing psychological views on dreams and nostalgia. Both of these studies bonded Zhang Dai and his writings with cultural phenomenon, thus, they are in a quite different research direction. I found that

such studies also mainly focused on Zhang Dai's *xiaopin*. Jonathan D. Spence did the most comprehensive study on Zhang Dai's writings in his book *Return to Dragon Mountain: Memories of a Late Ming Man* (2007). He translated many of Zhang Dai's poems and essays, and used them as reliable resource to illustrate the history of Zhang Dai as well as the transitional period. His book is more in the field of historiography than literary study.

Having benefited a lot from these former studies, my thesis contributes to the study of Zhang Dai's various kinds of writings, including poems, memoir-like essays and biographical essays. I found that they can be seen as an entirety of Zhang Dai's writings about the past, and they serve the purpose of self-expression on different levels and dimensions, even though his poems and biographical essays haven't received as much critical attention as his memoir-like essays. Furthermore, I intend to contextualize Zhang Dai's writings within a transitional historical context in order to get deeper understandings about him and his work. Also, I want to provide a case study to the research on self-expression in literature during the transitional period.

My study is mainly based on close readings of Zhang Dai's literary works. It is not particularly about literary heritage or aesthetic evaluation. Instead, my interests are in motif, stance, and the cultural and historical context of his writings.

There are six chapters in my thesis. The first chapter introduces my topic, research method and includes a literature review. The second chapter provides a biographical sketch of Zhang Dai's life and outlines a general list of his writings. It also provides a brief introduction to the Ming-Qing transition society and culture as research

background.

The next chapter studies Zhang Dai's anxiety of self-existence during the transitional period and the relationship between such anxiety and his writings. Zhang Dai's anxiety of existence, represented as a contradictory attitude towards death and the longing for self-justification, was generated in the unstable existential situation and crisis of the intellectual's self-judgment. He expressed such anxiety in his poems and essays. More importantly, such anxiety became the major motive to his writing.

Zhang Dai's memoirs will be studied in Chapter Four. As a *yimin* 遗民 [remnant subject] of the Ming dynasty, Zhang Dai felt "homeless" in the new world. To rebuild his past world, Zhang Dai wrote many memoir-like essays. I find two kinds of memoir writings are especially important in his reconstruction of the past world, namely, his memories about family buildings and memories about eccentric people.

The fifth Chapter deals with Zhang Dai's biographical writings. Zhang Dai wrote a series of biographies for his family members as well as for himself. These biographies not only present Zhang Dai's effort to bridge the past and the future by recording family history, but also demonstrate how he identified and judged himself.

Chapter six contains conclusions to this study. The self-expression is abundant in Zhang Dai's writings and is mainly represented as three emotional displacements caused by the Ming-Qing dynastic transition. Such displacements are conveyed and resolved by recalling and writing about the past. In his remembrances of the past, Zhang Dai was able to make self-justifications, find mental stability and make

self-identifications. By contextualizing Zhang Dai's writings within the historical background, I want to contribute an interesting case to the study of literature and self-expression during the transitional period.

CHAPTER 2

AN INTERRUPTED DREAM--A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ZHANG DAI

Zhang Dai liked to claim himself a historian. While being an observer of history, he was also a participant in history. His life spanned the Ming-Qing transition period, and his life experience provides an example of the intellectual who survived a most unstable historical period. He enjoyed a lot of happiness in his early life, and then suffered enormous chaos and trauma after the Ming collapsed. His life, as well as his literature practice, is closely tied with the history of the Ming-Qing transition.⁶

2.1 The Jiangnan area in the late Ming

When Zhang Dai was born in 1597, the Ming dynasty had been ruling China for over two hundred years. Under its domination, China's politics, economy and culture had been greatly developed. However, this glorious empire started to decline in the middle of the fifteenth century. The system of bureaucracy designed by the empire's founder emperor Hongwu 洪武 was once solid, but now had grown too huge to work effectively. The cooperation between the Emperors and the subjects often came to be dilemmas. The northern boarder of the empire was constantly invaded by the non-Han military forces. Conflict between peasants and land owners grew fiercer due to a burst of population and unexpected nature disasters. In the late Ming, these crises were getting more and more severe in northern China. However, things seemed different in

⁶ The biographical information in this study is mainly based on Zhang Dai's own records, such as poetry, prose and biographical writings. Biographical studies about Zhang Dai can be seen in contemporary researcher Hu Yimin's 胡益民 *Zhang Dai ping zhuan* 张岱评传 (Nanjing: Nanjing da xue chu ban she 南京大学出版社, 2002) and She Deyu's 余德余 *Du shi wen ren Zhang Dai zhuan* 都市文人张岱传 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang ren min chu ban she 浙江人民出版社, 2008).

the Jiangnan 江南 area (lit., “south of the *Yangzi* 杨子” area, which actually refers to most of Jiangsu, Anhui and Zhejiang provinces), where Zhang Dai was born and lived. This area was the empire’s economical center. It produced most of the empire’s goods, from rice, cotton to luxury items; commercial trade was prosperous both domestically and internationally.⁷ Benefitting from prosperous business activities, increasing economic and social power concentrated in several big cities along the Yangzi River, such as Yangzhou, Nanjing, and Hangzhou, this area became one of the major urban hubs of China.

Those cities were also hubs of the empire’s cultural life. Jiangnan scholars initiated many great movements in philosophy, art and literature. Among them the most influential one is Wang Shouren 王守仁 (1472-1528) (T. Bo’an 伯安, H. Yangming 阳明), a native from Yuyao 余姚 of Zhejiang province. Wang’s *xin xue* 心学, which advocated the individual’s capacity to learn and apprehend knowledge, right, and the Way (道 *dao*) with his own heart, had the greatest influence upon intellectuals. Li Zhi 李贽 (1527-1602) (T. Hongfu 宏甫, H. Zhuowu 卓吾) went even further; his *Tongxin shuo* 童心说 [pure heart of a child] argued that people should be independent from others’ authority and follow their own personality, judgment and desire just like an innocent child.⁸ These new thoughts directly challenged the dominance of the version of Neo-Confucianism established by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) since the twelfth century by increasing openness and diversity in

⁷ For the economy of late Ming *Yangzi* area, see Timothy Brook’s *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) which offers a comprehensive study on agriculture, manufacturing, commerce and other business activities in this area.

⁸ Willard Peterson, “Confucian Learning in Late Ming Thought”, in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis C. Twitchett, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, vol. 8 p. 749.

philosophy. As a result, a developing awareness of the individual and an unprecedented advocacy of individual's value appeared in the cultural domain.⁹

In urban areas, the social milieu was open, creative and ebullient. Activities on literature, art and theater were very flourishing. Intellectuals lived in a luxurious lifestyle, profiting from the wealthy society. They had a zestful sense of joy and stylishness. Many of them were also artists, collectors and connoisseurs. Due to the rise of individualism, the late Ming intellectuals presented a collective enthusiasm for the pursuit of uniqueness. Because they were so concerned about their personal existence, they seemed very indifferent to social obligations and public services.¹⁰

2.2 Zhang Dai's life before the fall of Beijing in 1644

2.2.1 Zhang Dai's family

Zhang Dai was born in 1597 in Shaoxing of Zhejiang province, China. Zhang Dai's family, for generations, belonged to the elite group of the empire; some ancestors of the Zhang family had once held high level offices. The Zhang family owned large farming lands in the rural area and many estates in the urban area. Steady profit from these lands brought the family affluence with plenty of money to spend, allowed its members to live in a very luxurious lifestyle and encouraged all kinds of artistic activities in the family. Almost every male member of the Zhang family was an artist,

⁹ A thorough study on the late Ming philosophy and individualism can be found in Wm. Theodore De Bary's "Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought", in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, ed. De Bary & others, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, pp. 145-248.

¹⁰ On the late Ming literati's life, see Chen Wanyi 陈万益, *Wan ming xiao pin he ming ji wen ren sheng huo* 晚明小品和明季文人生活, Taipei: Da'an chu ban she 大安出版社 1998.

collector, or connoisseur. Zhang Dai's grandfather, father and Zhang Dai himself were huge fans of opera. They each founded their private opera troupes. Zhang Dai's grandfather was also interested in landscape design and building. He owned several famous gardens in Shaoxing. Zhang Dai's second uncle was one of the most famous collectors of antiques during that time. The Zhang family affiliated with many important literary or cultural figures of that time, such as Chen Jiru 陈继儒 (1558-1639), Wang Siren 王思任 (1575-1646), Qi Biaoqia 祁彪佳 (1602-1645), etc. In a word, the Zhang family was a typical rich urban family in the late Ming Jiangnan area.

2.2.2 Zhang Dai's education

The Zhang family was also renowned for scholarly achievements. Zhang Dai's great-great-grandfather, Zhang Tianfu 张天复 (1513-1573) (T. Futing 复亭, H. Neishan 内山 and Chuyang 初阳) had been appointed *Yunnan An cha si fu shi* 云南按察司副使.¹¹ Zhang Dai's great-grandfather and grandfather were high officials of the court and notable Confucian scholars. His great-grandfather Zhang Yuanbian 张元汴 (1538-1588) (T. Zijin 子稔, H. Yanghe 阳和) was a famous historian, he wrote several local histories of the Shaoxing 绍兴 area, such as *Shanyin xian zhi* 山阴县志, *Shaoxing fu zhi* 绍兴府志, *Guiji xian zhi* 会稽县志, etc.¹²

As the eldest son of the family, Zhang Dai was expected to follow in his ancestors' path, pass the civil service examination, and then become a scholar-official.

¹¹ The Surveillance Vice Commissioner of Yunnan Province. Rank 4a. Principal aide to the Commissioner. Overseer of judicial and surveillance activities.

¹² Zhang Dai 张岱, "Jia zhuan" 家传 [family biographies], *Langhuan wenji* 琅嬛文集 (hereafter LHWJ), vol. 4, p. 159.

Zhang Dai showed intelligence from the time he was very young. He was especially good at forming couplets, which was seen as a test on one's promptness and literary talent. As he later recorded, he was able to answer an adult's challenge quickly, even it was from a famous literary figure.

When I was six years old, Sir Yuruo, my grandfather, took me to Hangzhou, where we met Sir Meigong (Chen Jiru 陈继儒). He was riding on a deer and traveling there. He said to my grandfather, "I've heard that your grandson is good at composing couplets. Could I test him face to face?" Then he pointed at a screen, where there was hanging a picture of Li Bo 李白 sitting on a whale, and he said, "Riding on a whale, Taibo is dragging the night moon out of the water by Cai Shi River." I replied, "Sitting on a deer, Meigong is pleading for money from his friends in Qiantang County." Meigong burst out laughing, jumped up and said, "How could you be so brilliant? You are really my little friend." And thus he considered helping me to get the greatest achievement.¹³ 六岁时，大父雨若翁携余之武林，遇眉公先生跨一角鹿，为钱塘游客，对大父曰：“闻文孙善属对，吾面试之”。指屏上李白骑鲸图曰：“太白骑鲸，采石江边捞夜月。”余应曰：“眉公跨鹿，钱塘县里打秋风。”眉公大笑起跃曰：“那得灵隼若此，吾小友也。”欲进余以千秋之业也。

Zhang Dai's grandfather Zhang Rulin 张汝霖 (1558?-1625) (T. Suzhi 肃之, H.

¹³ Zhang Dai, "Zi wei mu zhi ming" 自为墓志铭 [self-written tomb epitaph], *LHWJ*, vol. 5, p. 201.

Yuruo 雨若) pinned large hope on this smart grandson. He took charge of Zhang Dai's education all by himself, just as he did to his own son, Zhang Dai's father, Zhang Yaofang 张耀芳 (1574?-1632) (T. Ertao 尔弢, H. Dadi 大涤). However, the way he instructed Zhang Dai was quite different from normal. He taught Zhang Dai to read only the original canonical texts, and forbade him to read the commentaries by Zhu Xi. For his learning, Zhang Dai said:

When there was something that I couldn't fully understand, I would recite them in my mind, as devoid of meaning as they were. A year or two later, when reading another book or listening to others' conversations, when watching the mountains and rivers, clouds and stars, birds and beasts, insects and fishes, my eyes would be struck and my mind would be aroused, the meaning of the text would be suddenly come to light.¹⁴ 间有不能强解者，贮之胸中。或一年或二年，或读他书，或听人议论，或见山川云物鸟兽虫鱼，触目惊心，忽于此书有悟。

Obviously, his grandfather's teaching method depended largely on the learner's intelligence, perception, and even some luck. It was too flexible and impractical for preparing for the civil service examination, considering that the exam required a strict curriculum covering all the Confucian classics and Zhu Xi's commentaries as the established standard.

Though known as talented, Zhang Dai had very little luck in the civil service exam.

¹⁴ Zhang Dai, "Si shu yu xu" 四书遇序 [preface to *Si shu yu*], *LHWJ*, juan 2 p. 70

He passed the lowest level exam and got the *xiuca* 秀才 degree in his early twenties, but couldn't go any further. Disappointed by several unsuccessful tries in the provincial level exam, he finally gave up the civil service examination in his forties.

Zhang Dai was not the first one who failed the exam in the Zhang family. Grandfather Rulin had struggled more than twenty years before he finally achieved success in the national civil examination in 1595.¹⁵ Zhang Dai's father Zhang Yaofang was even more frustrated. Zhang Yaofang was so devoted to learning that he almost became blind when he was young; however, he only ended up with a passing grade on the supplementary list of provincial candidates when in his fifties. Being very depressed, Yaofang then indulged himself in training theatre troupes, building landscape gardens, and practicing Taoism. His luxurious hobbies consumed most of the Zhang family's savings¹⁶

Many struggles and failures in the exam were not only a sign of the Zhang family's decline, but also a reflection of the dilemma faced by many late Ming intellectuals, who wanted to pursue careers by passing the exam. Since 1487, exam candidates were required to compose essays in a rigid parallel-prose form, which was called the *Bagu wen* 八股文 [eight-legged essays]. The "eight-legged essays" to a great degree increased the exam's difficulty. Meanwhile, the Ming Dynasty's population had greatly increased by the time Zhang Dai was born. Thus, only very few candidates could finally pass the exam and be recruited into the government service. "There were only two to four thousand of these *jinshi* 进士, on the order of one out of 10,000

¹⁵ Zhang Dai, "Jia zhuan", *LHWJ* juan 4, p. 252.

¹⁶ Zhang Dai, "Jia zhuan", *LHWJ* juan 4, p. 256.

adult males.”¹⁷ In this situation, intellectuals were often easily disappointed by the difficulty of pursuing civil positions, which can partly explain the collective reclusive attitude among late Ming literati. Difficulty in passing the exam also forced intellectuals to focus on other subjects, such as literature, history, art, etc. For Zhang Dai, after several failures in the exam, his life-time goal changed.

2.2.3 Ambition as a historian

It is not surprising that Zhang Dai wanted to be a historian. The tradition of learning and writing history in the Zhang family can be traced back to Zhang Dai's great-grandfather Zhang Yuanbian, who wrote several local histories of Shaoxing and was ranked as one of the most successful historians of his time. The Zhang family owned a private library of more than thirty thousand volumes,¹⁸ including many history books. Zhang Dai felt thrilled while reading those old records, and was especially moved by the stories of loyal people. “Every time I read such things, my face turns red and my ears burn, my eyes open wide and my hair rises with anger.”¹⁹ 每为之颊赤耳热，眦裂发指 Inspired by those stories, Zhang Dai started to write his first historical book *Gujin yilie zhuan* 古今义烈传 [Biographies of Righteous and Virtuous People in Ancient and Modern Times] in 1618. This book was finished in 1628. With biographies of more than 400 people, including famous warriors, officials and lower class people from the Shang Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty, this book highly praised those subjects' bravery and loyalty. This book received enthusiastic positive

¹⁷ Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999, p. 199.

¹⁸ Zhang Dai, “San shi cang shu” 三世藏书 [Three generation's collected books], in *MY*, juan 2, p. 37.

¹⁹ Zhang Dai, “Preface”, in *Gu jin yi lie zhuan* 古今义烈传. Microfilm. Washington D.C. : Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, [195-] 2 reels ; 35 mm.

comments from his contemporary scholars; Chen Jiru, a literary figure of the late Ming, commented that “(this book’s) organization and subjects gain Longmen’s (司马迁) essence. The plentiful allusions are completed with Linchuan’s (刘义庆) unique style.”²⁰ 条序人物，深得龙门精魄。典贍之中，佐以临川孤韵。

The success of *Gujin yilie zhuan* hugely encouraged Zhang Dai. He found another path leading to fame and achievement in the scholarly world. Soon after the completion of *Gujin yilie zhuan*, he planned to write *Shigui shu* 石匱书 (a book in a stone casket), a general history of the Ming. At that time, although Zhang Dai had no idea about the coming collapse of the Ming, writing *Shi gui shu* had become his lifetime ambition.

2.2.4 Pleasures in life

When not engaged with study, Zhang Dai had many ways to enjoy life. In the tomb inscription he wrote for himself, Zhang Dai described his early life like this:

When he (Zhang Dai) was a profligate son of the rich, he was addicted to a luxurious life. He loved the exquisite buildings, beautiful maids and handsome boys. He loved bright-colored apparel and delicious food. He loved fine horses, colorful lanterns, as well as fireworks; he loved operas and music, he loved antiques, flowers and birds. Besides all of these, he was seduced by the art of tea, addicted to oranges, fed on books and enchanted by poetry. He had been busy with

²⁰ Chen Jiru, “Gu jin yi lie zhuan xue” 古今义烈传序 [Preface to *Gu jin yi lie zhuan*], *Zhang Dai shi wen ji* 张岱诗文集 (hereafter ZDSWJ), p. 467.

these things for half of his life, now everything has turned into an illusion²¹ 少为纨绔子弟，极爱繁华，好精舍，好美婢，好娈童，好鲜衣，好美食，好骏马，好华灯，好烟火，好梨园，好鼓吹，好古董，好花鸟，兼以茶淫橘虐，书蠹诗魔。劳碌半生，皆成梦幻。

In this third-person narrative, Zhang Dai presented later readers with a typical late-Ming wealthy literati's life style, which was full of enjoyment, luxury and self-involvement.

Since Zhang Dai didn't have any official positions, nor did he have any worries about money, he engaged in all kinds of entertaining activities. He traveled around the *Yangzi* River area, visiting famous landscapes and delicate gardens. But most of his time was spent in urban areas, where he organized and joined different clubs, playing the zither or writing poems with friends. He even convened a cockfighting club and a crab-eating club. He collected antiques, lanterns and other rare valuable things, in competition with his cousin Zhang E 张萼 (?-1646), another self-indulgent member of Zhang family. He tasted every spring around *Shaoxing* to find the perfect water for his self-prepared tea leaves. Zhang Dai loved opera, so he founded a private theatrical troupe. He wrote plays and trained actors by himself. In 1629, Zhang Dai travelled with his theatrical troupe. When they passed a famous temple, Zhang Dai ordered the troupe to perform in the main hall of the temple very late at night. Their noise woke up the monks, who were shocked to watch this improvisational performance. In his later writing, Zhang Dai recorded proudly every detail of this impulsive behavior. In

²¹ Zhang Dai "Zi wei mu zhi ming", *LHWJ*, Vol. 5, p. 294.

fact, he preserved all memories of the joyful moments in his *xiaopin* 小品 collection, *Tao'an mengyi* 陶庵梦忆 (Dreams and Memories of Tao'an), which will be discussed in detail below.

2.3 Zhang Dai's life after 1644

1644 was the watershed in Zhang Dai's life. In that year, the Ming dynasty's capital city Beijing was conquered by a peasant rebel army led by Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606-1645), and the last emperor Chongzhen 崇祯 (r. 1628-1644) hanged himself on a small hill near his palace. Shortly after, the Manchu armies entered Beijing city, drove away the rebels, and its army quickly moved toward south China.

2.3.1 Short Service in Prince Lu's court

After the fall of Beijing city, several imperial descendents escaped to southern China and proclaimed their heirship to the throne. One of them, Prince Lu 鲁王 Zhu Yihai 朱以海 (1618-1662), fled to Zhejiang. In 1645, Prince Lu founded a resistance army in Shaoxing and proclaimed himself "regent" 监国.

Zhang Dai was suddenly involved in this political event. The relationship between the Zhang family and Prince Lu was very close. Zhang Dai's father Zhang Yaofang once served as the primary secretary in Prince Lu's court. During Zhang Yaofang's service, Zhang Dai had visited his father several times in Shandong province.²² It is probable that Zhang Dai had met Prince Lu before 1645.

After arriving in Shaoxing, Prince Lu paid a personal visit to Zhang Dai's home.

²² Zhang Dai recorded his trips to Shandong in "Lu fan yan huo" 鲁藩烟火 [fireworks in the State Lu], in *MY*, juan 1, p. 12.

Zhang Dai took it a great honor and carefully prepared a feast and opera to delight Prince Lu.

(Prince Lu's) face was slightly red. He was supported by two attendants to the carriage since he was too drunk to walk. When Dai escorted him to the gate, (Prince Lu) asked his attendants to deliver the imperial decree saying that "The master was very happy today, was extremely happy." It is really unusual that the happiness and harmoniousness between the ruler and the subject can be so unrestrained.²³ 睿颜微酡，进辇，两书堂官掖之，不能步。岱送至闾外，命书堂官再传旨曰：“爷今日大喜，爷今日喜极！”君臣欢洽，脱略至此，真属异数。

After this visit, Zhang Dai followed Prince Lu as a subject, and was appointed a position titled "administrative secretary of the military district" 兵部职方部主事 in the interim government. However, he quickly found that this government had very little ability to handle the military and political situation. Prince Lu was soon manipulated by local military leaders. Zhang Dai, though holding a position, had no power in political or military affairs. He was disappointed by Prince Lu's credulity and indecision. Only a couple of months later, Zhang Dai resigned his position, and hid in the Cheng Mountains 嵯山 near Shaoxing. Prince Lu's troops found him in his hideout and urged him back to service. When Zhang Dai refused, his son was kidnapped and he paid a large ransom from his own wealth.²⁴

²³ Zhang Dai, "Lu wang" 鲁王 [prince Lu], *MY*, pp. 140-141.

²⁴ Zhang Dai, "Qi Shipai" 祁世培, *MY*, p. 143.

2.3.2 Flight and retreat

In 1646, Shaoxing was conquered by the Manchus. Zhang Dai fled to *Yuewang Zheng Mountain* 越王嶂, a small mountain 120 *li* southwest of Shaoxing. He hid in a temple for months, later his identity became known and he had to move to *Xibai Mountain* 西白山, 60 *li* away from *Cheng County* 嵊县.

In 1649, when the situation became more peaceful, Zhang Dai returned to Shaoxing. Since all the Zhang family's estates had been destroyed in the war, he had to rent a deserted cottage named *Kuai Garden* 快园 to live. His life was in extreme poverty now. A shortage of food troubled him from time to time. "The bottle is frequently out of grain, there is nothing to cook"²⁵ 瓶黍屡尽, 不能举火 To support himself, he started to learn farming, "Recently I worked hard in tilling land and drilling wells...old farmers are my teachers."²⁶ 近稍力耕凿...丈人是吾师.

Although the Qing dynasty had gradually established their rule in China by then, Zhang Dai kept his loyalty to the Ming Dynasty. As a traditional Confucian scholar, loyalty was a central creed that Zhang Dai admired. In his *Gujin yilie zhuan*, Zhang Dai expressed his admiration of the ancient loyalists and their righteous actions. Moreover, his family had been in service in the Ming for generations, and some relatives and close friends sacrificed their lives in the anti-Manchu resistance. These facts put additional responsibility on him to keep his loyalty. However, the essence of Zhang Dai's loyalty is not the direct resistance to the Qing. In contrast, he wisely avoided to be involved in any dangerous political or military situations, and barely

²⁵ Zhang Dai, "Meng yi xu", *LHWJ*, juan 1, p. 28.

²⁶ Zhang Dai, "He You hui er zuo" 和有会而作 [in reply to the "You hui er zuo"], in *ZDSWJ*, juan 2, p. 24.

made direct criticism of the new alien rule. To manifest his loyalty, Zhang Dai chose to withdraw from public service. He didn't seek any appointment in the new government, lived reclusively in Kuai Garden, and only socialized with some old friends who had the same loyal attitude. In the following chapters, we shall see that the essence of Zhang Dai's loyalty was not directed to the Ming ruler but to the Ming culture and civilization.

Such a reclusive lifestyle was followed by many Ming loyalists. They called themselves *yimin* 遗民 [remnant subject] to clarify their sensual attachment to the past dynasty. Although many *yimin* didn't actively work in resistance, like Zhang Dai, or ceased resistance, they were still widely considered as loyal and honorable. It is noteworthy that, unlike the ideal eremitic mode admired by traditional Chinese intellectuals, being a "remnant subject" doesn't mean a total rupture with one's moral and social responsibility. In Chapter 3, I will explain how *yimin* took preservation of the China's cultural legacy as their obligation to the old dynasty and inner resistance to the new rule.

2.3.3 Writing

While struggling to make a living through farming, Zhang Dai spent the rest of his life mainly writing books. Most of his important works were accomplished during that time, including the historical masterpiece *Shigui shu*, a memoir collection *Tao'an mengyi* 陶庵梦忆, and a prose collection *Langhuan wenji* 琅嬛文集. His extended composition list includes *Shigui shu houji* 石匱书后集 [sequel to *Shi gui shu*] which covers the history from 1644 to the end of the southern Ming (1662), *Shi que* 史阙

[the missing part of history] which is a collection of history anecdotes, an essay collection *Xihu mengxun* 西湖梦寻 [seeking for the West Lake in dreams], *You Ming yuyue sanbuxiu tuzan* 有明于越三不朽图赞 [portraits and comments of three kinds of immortal people of the Shaoxing region in the Ming dynasty], and a small-size encyclopedia about literature and natural knowledge, which was called *Ye hang chuan* 夜航船 [the night ferry].

However, none of Zhang Dai's books was published during his life. *Tao'an mengyi* was first published in 1794, almost one hundred and fifty years after Zhang Dai's death, *Langhuan wenji* was published in 1876, and *Shigui shu* was published only in the 1990s.²⁷

²⁷ For detailed publishing information about Zhang Dai's books, see Hu Yimin *Zhang Dai ping zhuan*, pp.80-113.

CHAPTER 3

“COULD NOT BUT HAVE TO”—ANXIETY OF EXISTENCE AND SELF-JUSTIFICATION IN ZHANG DAI’S WRITINGS

3.1 The existential dilemma of the Ming *yimin*

The Ming-Qing transition brought both physical and mental trauma to Zhang Dai as well as many other Ming intellectuals. It was not only a collapse of the outside world but also a social and cultural crisis that threatened their internal stability. Among all kinds of extreme life experiences brought to people by the dynastic transition, the most direct and fundamental one was the anxiety of existence. Such anxiety firstly came from the fear of death. In the Ming-Qing transition period, people were surrounded by extremely unstable situations, including war, massacre, violence, robbery, hunger, etc. Thus, in their narrative, this period of time was full of blood, death and fear. Descriptions about the chaos, such as “earth broke, heaven collapsed” 地坼天崩, “cries throughout the land” 哭声遍野, “corpses were jumbled” 尸骸杂处, appeared frequently in literature dealing with this series of historical events. Death was so common that it inevitably became a major subject in transitional memories. Meanwhile, in many cases death was also a spontaneous choice due to an individual’s cultural character or social-political situation. In the time of dynastic transition, the sense of loyalty, as a central Confucius creed, was greatly aroused by the national tragedy. Numerous martyrs chose to “die for the emperor” 君亡与亡 or “die for the country” 殉国, many were scholar officials who committed suicide during or after

the collapse of the Ming.²⁸ Their deaths were considered honorable and therefore highly admired by the surviving loyalists. Thus, death as a literary topic, whether to lament the tragic ones or to praise the righteous ones, was unprecedentedly highlighted in the transitional time, and it was endowed with much deeper social-cultural meaning by the survivors.

The discussion of death continued for a long time even after the Qing had steadily established its rule. In the more peaceful situation, people's attention to death turned in the opposite direction—the meanings or the justification of life. Shadowed by so many deaths, it is natural for survivors to ask themselves these questions: Why do I choose to live while so many others died? How do I testify to my loyalty? What are the meanings of my life? As such, “shameful to be alive” 耻生 became a popular attitude in discussions on death and life. Among survivors, “twice-serving officials” 二臣, who chose to serve the new reign, were considered utterly shameful, and their reputations were ruined at once. For example, Qian Qianyi 钱谦益(1582-1664), the most distinguished and influential poet at that time, surrendered to the Qing in 1645. Ever since then he is condemned as the symbol of a disloyal intellectual, and the dominant critics never forgave his disgraceful behavior even though he quickly retired from his position in 1647 and subsequently expressed regret for the rest of his life. For other survivors who chose to withdraw, shadowed by the past loyalists' martyrdom while suffering in the aftermath of the chaos, they found that they were stuck between

²⁸ Based on modern scholar He Guanbiao's 何冠彪 research, an official record made in early Qing “Qin ding sheng chao xun jie zhu cheng lu” 钦定胜朝殉节诸臣录 [Imperial-ordered record of the martyrs of the preceding dynasty] recorded more than 3883 Ming loyalists “died for the country” 殉国 after 1644. Most of them were civil service officials. See He Guanbiao 何冠彪, *Sheng yu si: Ming ji shi da fu de xuan ze* 生与死: 明季士大夫的选择 [live or die: the choices of scholars in the end of the Ming], Taipei: Lian jing chu ban shi ye gong si 联经出版事业公司, 1997.

death and life. That means, they could neither have honor as a martyr nor enjoy the happiness of life. Because of this “oscillation between a crisis of death and a correlative crisis of life”,²⁹ it is not surprising to see many self-blaming narratives in the *yimin* writings. For example, Qu Dajun 屈大均 (1630-1696), a famous Ming loyal scholar, confessed at his teacher Chen Bangyan 陈邦彦(1603-1647) and his classmates’ suicides that “today I, the unworthy son, am stealing life here, I not only have no face to see my teacher, but also feel shameful to see these four gentlemen Ma, Yang, and the Huo brothers. I’m also a criminal in front of them.”³⁰ 今不肖隐忍偷生于此，不但无以见公，且无以见马、杨、霍四子，又四子之罪人也。 Besides, some paradoxical expressions, such as “stealing life” 偷生, “living dead man” 活死人, “one day of life equals one day of death” 一日之生即是一日之死, even “pleading for death” 祈死, were frequently seen in the *yimin* writings.³¹

During the Ming-Qing transition period, the anxiety of existence among Ming survivors was paradoxically expressed as both fear of death and desire for death. They also felt painful, even shameful, for being alive, and consistently sought for the meaning of life. Motivated by such anxiety, many descriptions and representations of death appeared in literary works, and a certain literature genre—the “self-elegy”, including self-elegy lyrics 自祭诗, self-written tomb epitaph 自为墓志铭, self-written

²⁹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 7.

³⁰ Qu Dajun, “Si shi xian ye shi zeng bing bu shang shu Chen Yanye xian sheng ai ci” 死事先业师赠兵部尚书陈岩野先生哀辞, *Weng shan wen wai* 翁山文外, Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she 上海古籍出版社, 2002, juan 14.

³¹ For more detailed researches on *yimin*’s attitude towards “life” and “death”, see Kong Dingfang 孔定芳, “Qing chu yimin de shen fen ren tong yu yi yi xun qiu” 清初遗民的身份认同与意义寻求[status recognition of adherents of the Ming Dynasty in early Qing Dynasty and exploration on its significance], in *Li shi dang an* 历史档案, 2006.2, pp. 44-54.

colophon on one's last portrait 自题遗像—was particularly popular at that time.

3.2 “Stealing life” and “pleading for death”—Zhang Dai's anxiety of existence

Although Zhang Dai just briefly served in Prince Lu's court, he faced the same crisis of death and life after the collapse of the Ming. There is no direct record indicating that he had been in any fatal situations, but “death” was indeed a realistic issue that happened around him. In 1645, Qi Biaoqia 祁彪佳 (1602-1645), Zhang Dai's best friend, a well-known scholar and a successful local official, drowned himself in a river near Shaoxing. His last letter said “I should die for the loyalty of an official”.³² In 1646, Shaoxing city was conquered by Manchu troops, and Zhang Dai's cousin Zhang E 张萼(?-1646) died in the defense of the city.³³ Several days later, Wang Siren 王思任 (1575-1646), a close friend of the Zhang family died from a self-imposed fast.³⁴

Faced with this series of tragedies, it was very natural for Zhang Dai to think about his own death. He might have seriously considered committing suicide. “Many times,” said Zhang Dai, “I had decided to commit suicide.”³⁵ But he didn't carry it out. Still, Zhang Dai expressed constantly that he was pleading for death so he could escape from all the hardships of life and be reunited with old friends. For example, Zhang Dai wrote three poems titled “He wan ge ci”和挽歌辞 [in reply to the elegy]. In the first one he said

³² Zhang Dai, “Biography of Qi Biaoqia”, *Shigui shu* (hereafter SGS), juan 14, p. 623.

³³ Zhang Dai, “Biography of five strange persons”, *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 27.

³⁴ Zhang Dai, “Biography of Wang Xue'an”, *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 290.

³⁵ Zhang Dai, “Preface to *Mengyi*”, *LHWJ*, p. 28.

Zhang Dai is pleading for death,
Not urged by human or ghost.
Righteously I will not surrender to the strong Qin,³⁶
But what's the need to record this little contribution?
There is already no home to go to,
And nowhere to die.
Strangers would probably lament my death,
Would my dear ones dare to mourn over me?
My death would end all the hardships,
And the world would know nothing about it.
Consequently in thousands of years,
There would be neither honor nor humiliation on me.
However my only regret would be the *Shigui shu*,
Which I couldn't have finished in my life.³⁷

张子自觅死，不受人鬼促。义不帝强秦，微功何足录？

出走已无家，安得狸首木？我死备千辛，世界全不觉。

千秋万岁后，岂遂无荣辱？但恨石匱书，此生修不足。

It is clear that this poem was intentionally echoing of Tao Qian's 陶潜 (365-427) poems "Ni wan ge ci" 拟挽歌辞 [drafts of the elegies], which were written not long before his death. As the most noted reclusive intellectual in Chinese culture, Tao Qian was admired for both his natural-toned poems and his reclusive life style. So it is very

³⁶ Obviously Zhang Dai avoids mention the Manchus, so he compared it to the Qin 秦 dynasty (221BC-206BC).

³⁷ Zhang Dai, "Response to the Elegy", *ZDSWJ*, juan 2, p. 25.

common for Zhang Dai to cite Tao Qian and his literature as a metaphorical comparison of his own frustrating situation. In Tao's poems, the poet expressed a detached attitude toward death, which was, in his mind, a natural consequence of life, as he said "since there is life then there must be death, an early end is not urged by one's fate."³⁸ 有生必有死, 早终非命促 But in Zhang Dai's narrative, death was not nature's inevitability but his own desire, for in the world where he had "no home to go to" and no achievement to be proud of, only death could ultimately cure all hardships and hide his humiliation.

In another poem titled "He pin shi" 和贫士 [in reply to "A Poor Gentleman"], which was also an echo to Tao Qian's poem "Pin shi" 贫士 [A Poor Gentleman], Zhang Dai again said that he had been ready, even eager, to meet those dead friends, "The pillar supporting the sky has already broken, why do I still worry groundlessly? Walking and chanting along the river, I'm going to meet my friends who passed away. If I would luckily not shame them, then my heart has no more requests."³⁹ 天柱既已折, 杞人复何忧, 行吟在泽畔, 吾将见吾俦. 幸不惭死友, 此心何所求。

In both poems, Zhang Dai conveyed a seemingly detached attitude toward death—considering how heavily these poems were playing upon Tao Qian's poems—but subsequently he said either there was something that held him back or he still had worries in the "nothing-worth-worrying-about world". In the first poem, the thing that held him back was the writing of *Shigui shu*. In the second one, Zhang Dai was worried that if he died now he might shame his old friends, that is to say, he had

³⁸ Tao Qian, "Ni wan ge ci", *Jingjie xiansheng ji* 靖节先生集, Taipei: Zhong hua shu ju 中华书局, 1965, juan 4, p. 18.

³⁹ Zhang Dai, "He pin shi", *ZDSWJ*, juan 2, p. 22.

to justify the meanings of his life before he received the final judgment. In a paradoxical way, his “pleading for death” came to be anxiety about death —if death came, he would not be able to complete his social obligation.

In the third poem of the elegy series, Zhang Dai imagined his afterlife. “Since I have been in the land of the Dead, thousands of years is just like one day. I’m watching how time passes by, and what does that feel like? I didn’t accomplish my aspirations, now even my soul and spirit can not go home.”⁴⁰ 身既死泉下，千岁如一朝。目睹岁月除，中心竟若何？平生不得志，魂亦不归家。 Because of his anxiety of existence, Zhang Dai doubted whether death could really bring him peace if he didn’t accomplish his aspiration while he was still alive. Zhang Dai understood that he had to finish his obligation; otherwise, there would be no home for him in either the earthly world or the unearthly world.

The anxiety to accomplish his social obligation was expressed more clearly in another poem “He shu jiu” 和述酒 [in reply to the “Discourse on Wine”]. Zhang Dai said, “How expansive the universe is! But who can accommodate me? How many days are left in my life? I dare not be lazy to write.”⁴¹ 天宇尽寥阔，谁能容吾身？余生有几日？著书敢不勤？ Zhang Dai felt that the end of his life could arrive at any time, and this urged him to be diligent in writing.

Besides poems, Zhang Dai also wrote many other pro-death writings. He once built a tomb for his afterlife on a small hill near Shaoxing and wrote an epitaph for himself. In the epitaph, he said:

⁴⁰ Zhang Dai, Zhang Dai, “He wan ge ci” *Zhang Dai shi wen ji*, juan 2 p. 26.

⁴¹ Zhang Dai, “He shu jiu”, *ZDSWJ*, juan 2, p. 24.

After the Jiashen year (1644), the time passed so quickly. I was unable to die or make a living. My hair is all white but still thick, and I'm still stealing life in the world meaninglessly. My only fear is that my life would disappear suddenly just like a dewdrop in the morning, and my body would decay with nameless grass and trees.⁴² 甲申以后，悠悠忽忽，既不能觅死，又不能聊生，白发婆娑，犹视息人间。恐一旦溘先朝露，与草木同腐。

Again, Zhang Dai felt shameful about his meaningless life. He sighed about time passing so quickly, that both death and life were difficult, and that he was just stuck in between. He was worried that if death arrived suddenly, he would vanish so soon and so pointlessly as a short-lived dewdrop or rotten leaves.

In these writings, Zhang Dai narrated the anxiety of his existence. On the one hand, he had parted from relatives and friends. Being all alone in the earthly world, life meant only suffering to him. So he was prepared, even eager, to die and to meet his friends in the unearthly world. On the other hand, he was worried that if death came before he finished his writing, he would have no time to accomplish his social obligations, and his life in turn would be meaningless. Such anxieties appeared repeatedly, like two murmurs, in a low voice but continuously echoed, twisted in Zhang Dai's writings, waiting for relief.

⁴² Zhang Dai, "Zi wei mu zhi ming" 自为墓志铭 [self-written tomb epitaph], *LHWJ*, juan 5, p.201.

3.3 Could not but have to—Zhang Dai’s self-justification in his writings

As demonstrated above, writing for Zhang Dai is very important. It is, of course, not a novel statement. Chinese intellectuals, from ancient times, had considered writing as one of the human being’s immortal achievements. However, in a transitional period, the significance of writing surpassed the personal level. It was connected with the fate of the nation. For example, Gu Yanwu 顾炎武 (1613-1682), one of the most influential scholars in the seventeenth century, once said that:

There is the fall of a state; there also is the fall of the world. What’s the difference? In the case of a state’s fall, the name of its ruler changed. This is so-called “fall of a state”. In the case of the world’s fall, justice and virtue were blocked, (the ruler) would lead beasts to devour men, and humans would eat each other. This is so-called “fall of the world”.⁴³ 有亡国，有亡天下，亡国与亡天下奚辨？曰：改姓易号，谓之亡国。仁义充塞，而至率兽食人，人将相食，谓之亡天下。

The “world”天下 in this context indicates not only the reign of a certain dynasty but China’s orthodox civilization. In Gu’s opinion, the continuation of culture is more crucial than the standing of a reign. As long as the culture doesn’t vanish, the “world” would not fall. Gu’s words represented the general understanding of the dynastic transition of the *yimin*. While the alien Manchus had been steadily establishing their reign in China, Han intellectuals felt that it was their responsibility to “preserve the nation’s tradition” 存国故, record the Ming Dynasty’s history, and let later

⁴³ Gu Yanwu, “Zheng shi” 正始, *Rizhi lu* 日知录, Taipei: Shang wu yin shu guan 商务印书馆, 1968, vol. 17, juan 13, 5a.

generations know what truly happened. They believed that by doing this, the old order would be continued in their memories and writings. In this way, their loyalty to the Ming would be proved, their social obligation would be completed, and the meaning of their lives would be justified. Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲 (1610-1695), another leading scholar of that time, considered the *yimin* as the only solid ground that Confucianism could rely on. “The world not being destroyed and Confucianism’s continuation depends mostly on those personages of the conquered state.”⁴⁴ 天地之所以不毀，名教之所以仅存者，多在亡国人物。

In this context, it is easy to understand why Zhang Dai considered writing so important. For him, writing was the only way to achieve self-justification as well as to relieve his anxiety of existence.

The most important work of Zhang Dai is his *Shigui shu*. As mentioned before, this is a general history of the Ming. Zhang Dai started to write this book in 1628 at his most ambitious age. In 1655, Zhang Dai finally completed this book. *Shigui shu* covered the history from 1368 when the Emperor Hongwu 洪武 (r. 1368-1398) founded the Ming, to the end of the Tianqi 天启 period (1621-1627). It was organized in regular dynastic history format; the main categories included “Basic Annals” 本纪, “Treatises” 志, “Hereditary Households and Chronicles” 世家, and “Ordered Biographies” 列传. However, evaluating *Shigui shu* as a historiographical work is not the main interest of this study. Instead, it is his narratives about *Shigui shu* that Zhang Dai included in his essays and poems that need close reading, because they manifest

⁴⁴ Huang Zongxi, “Wan Lu’an xian sheng shi xu” 万履安先生诗序, *Nanlei wending* 南雷文定, Taipei: Taiwan shang wu yin shu guan 台湾商务印书馆, 1979, juan 1, p. 11.

his motives and understandings for writing this book.

When Zhang Dai started writing the *Shigui shu*, he had no idea about the coming fall of the Ming. In a radical essay titled “Zhengxiu Mingshi xi”⁴⁵ 征修明史檄 [A Summons for Collecting and Composing Ming History], Zhang Dai criticized several Ming historians and their books as “inauthentic” and “biased”; he decided to write a more reliable history of the Ming, as he claimed:

I feel lucky that my great-grandfather had the ambition to be an historian as great as Sima Tan 司马谈 (?-100BC) and Sima Qian 司马迁 (ca.145 BC-86 BC), thereupon I ignorantly wanted to follow Ban Biao 班彪 (3-54) and Ban Gu 班固 (32-92).⁴⁶

Obviously Zhang Dai was proud to inherit the family tradition of studying history; he wished to achieve immortal scholarly fame by composing a great history book based on abundant and reliable documentary resources. This ambition was very common among Chinese gentlemen of education. But like every private historian of that time, he had to face a problem: the limited resources he could access. But still Zhang Dai was optimistic and confident. The “Summons” aimed at collecting more documents, and he believed that “if there are tens of thousands of books accompanying me, my work can be done.”⁴⁷ 万卷随行，吾事其济。

Then came the war. Zhang Dai “brought a copy of his draft and hid deep in the mountains.” His ambition of being a great historian was frustrated by the unstable

⁴⁵ The date of this essay is not clear, however, based on its content, which doesn't mention the fall of Ming, we can assume that it was composed before 1644. See *LHWJ*, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁶ Zhang Dai, “Zheng xiu ming shi xi”, *LHWJ*, juan 3, p. 110

⁴⁷ Zhang Dai, “Zheng xiu ming shi xi”, *LHWJ*, juan 3, p. 110

existential situation and severe cultural environment during the chaos. In spite of this, Zhang Dai continued writing the *Shigui shu*, but it was no longer the pursuit of scholarly fame that motivated him but the desire for self-justification.

Some ten years later, Zhang Dai finally completed the *Shigui shu*. In the preface, he said:

A historian like Dongpo⁴⁸ had the ability to write history but refused to. A historian like Yanzhou⁴⁹ didn't have the ability to write history but did write. Yanzhou's eyes opened wide, his mouth was big, and his pen was rich with ink. In front of his eyes and under his wrist, there surely was the thought that "if I can't write history then nobody can" in his mind. But this thought really misled him and his history was not good. Sima Qian wrote wonderful biographies. He never took a single word or stroke casually. His writing was precise and natural. His comments, even only a few words, were as subtle as three fine hairs on the subject's face or a dot on the eye, thus he didn't need much ink to write. In later generations, Dongpo was the only one who obtained Sima Qian's spirit, but he insisted on not writing history. He had steadfastly refused Ouyang Wenzhong's⁵⁰ and Wang Jinggong's⁵¹ persuasion, for he really knew that history is hard to write and can't be written. If even Dongpo wasn't willing to do so, then it is much harder for those who come later.

⁴⁸ Dongpo 东坡 is Su Shi's 苏轼 (1037-1101) studio name.

⁴⁹ Yanzhou 彘州 is Wang Shizhen's 王世贞 (1526-1590) studio name.

⁵⁰ Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修 (1007-1072), Wenzhong 文忠 is his posthumous name.

⁵¹ Wang Anshi 王安石(1021-1086), Jinggong 荆公 is the abbreviation of his honorable title Jing guo gong 荆国公 granted by the emperor.

My writing of history was nothing compared with that of Yanzhou, let alone with Dongpo. I only saw that in the Ming, official histories had too many falsities, family histories were flattery, and unofficial histories had too many fantasies. Two hundred and eighty-two years of the Ming historical record had been a fake world. Three generations in my family, since my great-great-grandfather, made efforts in collecting books and the collection was huge. If I didn't work on writing a little bit, then the thirty year's of collection in my family would fly away like cold smoke, and end up nourishing weeds. I started to write this book in the second year of the Chong Zhen reign (1628). Seventeen years later I experienced the sudden upheaval of my country. I brought the draft and hid deep in the mountains. After another ten years' research, the book was finally finished.....It is true that I'm not able to write history; I just had to do what I couldn't, because that is not an excuse. But there are so many people who are able to write history but do not do so, thus, I'm waiting for them, holding my book.⁵²

Zhang Dai admired Sima Qian's and Su Shi's talent in historical writing; he even admired Wang Shizhen's confidence, though he doubted Wang's ability. When talking about himself, Zhang Dai said that things were contradictory. On the one hand, he was aware that he was not the person to write history. On the other hand, the reasons urging him to write -- if he didn't, then the Ming's history would be "a fake world"

⁵² The original text can be found in Appendix A.

and the Zhang family's tradition would be "cold smoke" -- were so strong and so inescapable that he had no other choice. The statement that "I couldn't write but I have to" reminds us of the similar words he had said dealing with life and death, that is, "I'd like to die but I have to live". Here, "to write or not" equals the same question "to live or not". What Zhang Dai tried to tell us is that writing is as significant as life itself; writing is both the only thing and the best thing he could do for his country and his family; writing is the only justification for life. The modest way that Zhang Dai evaluated his ability was just like any traditional Chinese intellectual. But Zhang Dai believed that, with the *Shigui shu* in his hand, he would wait until people found him and understood him.

By analyzing Zhang Dai's poems, essays and other writings during the transitional period, we can observe his anxiety of existence as well as his effort to release this anxiety. Such anxiety became the major motive for Zhang Dai to write the *Shigui shu* and other books. The immense anxiety of existence and self-justification made the relationship between literature and the intellectuals at this time different from other historical periods, especially from the more peaceful eras. Writing was not only a path for intellectuals to release the stress of their extreme situations, but also became an essential part of life. It is noteworthy in Zhang Dai's later years, when he could be more accommodating to the world and his own life experience, that he admitted he was clinging to life, and judged himself as a "loyalist but fearful of pain."⁵³ However,

⁵³ Zhang Dai, "Zi ti xiao xiang" 自题小像 [colophon of Self-Portrait], *LHWJ* juan 5, p. 246.

this statement doesn't weaken the later reader's understanding of his struggle during the transition, doesn't harm the admiration for his effort in writing in the midst of devastation, and indeed enriches the reality of Zhang Dai as a common human being who had suffered so many traumas exceeding our imagination.

CHAPTER 4

PLACING THE SELF IN THE LOST WORLD—ZHANG DAI'S MEMOIR WRITINGS

In Zhang Dai's self-narratives, he often claimed himself "homeless" 无家. This word reveals Zhang Dai's sense of displacement in the aftermath of the dynastic transition. In the physical dimension, Zhang Dai lost everything in the chaos, including his wealth, house, and other estates, so he had to rent a cottage and supported himself by farming. In the mental dimension, his inner resistance to the new reign determined that he could not agree with the current political and cultural circumstances. Impelled by such a sense of displacement, Zhang Dai kept tracing back to the past in order to find his mental habitat.

Tao'an mengyi, the collection of memoir-like essays written simultaneously with the composition of the *Shigui shu*, recorded Zhang Dai's memories about the bygone life. While the *Shigui shu*, considering its content and its social and cultural meanings, could be seen as a record of collective memories in the public sphere, *Tao'an mengyi* is highly focused on his personal memories in the private sphere. By recollecting places where he had been accommodated, people he had associate with, and things he had loved, Zhang Dai rebuilt his lost home in different dimensions.

4.1 *Xiaopin* and memory

Zhang Dai started to compose *Tao'an mengyi* around 1647.⁵⁴ Since this book was

⁵⁴ Zhang Dai mentioned that "I think about my life...the past fifty years have become a dream" 五十年来, 总成一梦 in the preface.

written almost simultaneously with the composition of the *Shigui shu*, it can be seen as a supplement or a counterpart to the *Shigui shu*, for they both deal with the past but in different dimensions. What Zhang Dai tried to record in the *Shigui shu* was the nation's political, military and economic issues, in other words, the public sphere of the lost world. In contrast, *Tao'an mengyi* is a memoir about Zhang Dai's own life. It focuses on his personal experiences, feelings and remembrances of the past. Thus, in *Tao'an mengyi*, there are no grand narratives but personal accounts, such as records of everyday lives, anecdotes about common people, and detailed descriptions of some trivial things that only mattered to Zhang Dai.

The literary genre of *Tao'an mengyi* also reveals that it is a personal narrative. All essays are written in the *xiaopin* form. *Xiaopin* is a prose genre, which is generally short, informal, personal, and sometimes trivial. The composition of *xiaopin* essays was especially fruitful during the late Ming period. However, the term “*xiaopin*” had been used long before. This term was generated from Buddhism, which refers to the abridged edition of the Buddhist scriptures.⁵⁵ The character “小” also implies unimportance, weightlessness and brevity of such genre.

The proliferation of *xiaopin* writing is both an opposition to the “restoring antiquity” 复古 literary movement in the early and mid- Ming dynasty and a literary response to the late Ming's society, culture and philosophy.

“Restoring antiquity” was the dominant trend in early and mid-Ming prose writing

⁵⁵ Researches on *xiaopin*'s origin and development can be seen in Chen Shaotang's *Wan Ming xiaopin lun xi* 晚明小品论析 (Hongkong: Bo wen shu ju 波文书局, 1998) and Wu Chengxue's *Wan Ming xiaopin yan jiu* 晚明小品研究 (Nanjing: Jiangsu gu ji chu ban she 江苏古籍出版社, 1998).

practice. Most of the influential literary schools advocated seeking for models from former literary traditions. The Taige ti 台阁体 [the grand secretary style], which was dominant in the fifteenth century, highly praised the Song prose writers, such as Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修 (1007-1072) and Zeng Gong 曾巩 (1019-1083). The “Former Seven” 前七子 and the “Later Seven”⁵⁶ 后七子 announced that all prose writings must imitate the style of prose in the Qin 秦 Dynasty and the Han 汉 Dynasty. The Tang-Song School⁵⁷ 唐宋派 took the eight masters of prose writing in the Tang Dynasty and the Song Dynasty 唐宋八大家 as their models. The common ground shared by these literary schools is that they took prose as a treatment of moral and historical issues. Prose, in their opinions, should be a medium for Confucianism thought and moral didacticism.

This kind of imitation and dependence upon former literary models were opposed by the Gong’an School. Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610), the central leader of the Gong’an School announced that every generation should have its own literature. The central literary concept advocated by the Gong’an School is “*xing ling*” 性灵 [*xing* refers to one’s character and *ling* refers to one’s soul, it is also translated as innate sensibility by some contemporary researchers], which emphasized the importance of individuality and the genuineness of emotion in literature. The Gong’an School believed that literature should be the presentation of an individual’s true

⁵⁶ The “Former Seven” refers to a poetry circle comprising Li Mengyang 李梦阳 (1473-1530), He Jingming 何景明 (1483-1521), Xu Zhenqing 徐祯卿 (1479-1511), Bian Gong 边贡 (1476-1532), Kang Hai 康海 (1475-1540), Wang Jiushi 王九思 (1468-1551), and Wang Tingxiang 王廷相 (1474-1544), the “Later Seven” was led by Li Panlong 李攀龙 (1514-1570) and Wang Shizhen 王世贞 (1526-1590).

⁵⁷ The Tang Song School led by Gui Youguang 归有光 (1506-1571) and Tang Shunzhi 唐顺之 (1507-1560) was influential in the sixteenth century.

feelings, fundamental personalities and uniqueness rather than a medium of didactic purposes and the imitation of former models. Their ideas were shared by the Jingling School, as well as many other late Ming literati.

Thus, the trend of prose writing in the late Ming was very much self-oriented and quite different from the former public-oriented prose writing. The prose at that time was usually short and personal, dealing with the detailed surroundings of private life rather than historical or political issues, presenting the author's exquisite taste and subjective feelings instead of serious thoughts or argument. Such writings represented the open cultural milieu of the late Ming and the life style of the late Ming literati, which was leisured, self-involved and pleasure-oriented. Anything drawing the late Ming literati's interest or raising their subtle feelings could be the subject of writing, from a joyful tour to a beautiful vase, even a hilarious joke. Also, the literary choice was very flexible. In a late Ming prose collection, we can find all different kinds of literary forms, such as preface, biography, landscape essay, anecdote, personal letter, and etc.

The boundary of *xiaopin* is difficult to define, but the essential features of *xiaopin* writing are obvious. It is spontaneous and novel rather than conventional, it focuses on individual experience rather than historical or moral issues, it advocate for personal emotion and enjoyment rather than moral preachment. Instead of defining *xiaopin* as a fixed literary genre, it is more practical to see it as a style of writing and a particular way the author presents self and the surrounding world through literature.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ For more detailed research on *xiaopin*, see Wu Chengxue's 吴承学 "Ming ren xiao pin shu lue" 明人小品述

Then it is no wonder that Zhang Dai chose *xiaopin* as the literary medium for his memories. Essays in this collection are short in length, have no fixed form, and many have no date. Unexpected beginning of narrative and sudden end are frequently seen. One can say that *xiaopin*, in some degree, are fragmentary, just like Zhang Dai's discontinuous dreams or sudden flashes of the past.

Zhang Dai's preface to *Tao'an mengyi* is one of his best essays, and offers later readers access to understanding the background and motives of his writings. In the preface, Zhang Dai said,

Since the country of Tao'an (Zhang Dai) fell and his home was lost, he had nowhere to go. So he disheveled his hair and fled into the mountains like a frightful wild man. When old acquaintances saw him, they were shocked and dared not to have contact with him, as if he were a poison or a beast. He had written a lamentation poem for himself and decided to commit suicide many times. However, thinking about the uncompleted *Shigui shu*, he kept on stealing life in the world.

His bottle was frequently out of grain, so he had nothing to cook. Then he began to realize that the story about those two old men Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齐, who ceased to eat under the reign of the Zhou 周 Dynasty and starved to death in the Shouyang Mountain 首阳, was actually fancied by later people.

While suffering hunger, he liked to play with brush and ink. And he thought about the old days when he lived in his as-rich-as-Wang-and-Xie 王谢 family. Today's sufferings must be retribution for the old day's luxuries.

For the jade hair clasp and comfortable shoes that he used to wear, now he has to wear a bamboo hat and bamboo sandals. For the light and warm clothing he once had, now only patched clothes and coarse linens. For the delicacies, he now eats beans and unpolished grains. For the soft bed, he now uses a straw mat and stone pillow. For spacious and comfortable houses, he now locks up the door by a rope and his window is just the mouth of a jar. For fragrance and beauty, now his eyes are smoked by mist and his nose smells dung. For sedan chair and servants, he now has to walk by foot and carry heavy bags by shoulder. All kinds of old sins are revealed by all kinds of retributions.

Every time, when I hear the cock's crows and my spirit is refreshed, I think about my life, seeing all the splendor and extravagance passing before my eyes and turning into vacancy. So the past fifty years have become a dream. Now the millet is cooked and the trip in the anthill comes to its end.⁵⁹ How could I endure this

⁵⁹ The millet refers to the Tang legend "Huang liang meng" 黄粱梦 [the yellow millet dream] (also called Zhen zhong ji 枕中记 [the record in a pillow] or Handan meng 邯郸梦 [the Handan dream]) written by Shen Jiji 沈既济 (750-800). Tang Xianzu 汤显祖(1550-1616) wrote the famous play *Han dan meng* 邯郸梦 based on this story. The anthill refers to the story of "Nanke taishou zhuan" 南柯太守传 [the biography of the prefecture chief in Nanke] written by Li Gongzuo 李公佐 (8th ct. ?). In both stories, the heroes fell asleep and experienced a very

fact? I keep thinking about the past. Every time when a memory emerges, I write it down on paper, carry it and confess in front of the Buddha.

I don't arrange them by years and months, in order to distinguish them from a chronological biography. Also they are not divided by categories and so differ from a collection of anecdotes. Now and then I pick up one of them to read; it feels like I'm traveling on a former path and meeting some old friends. Those old cities and people make me really happy. So it's true that you can't talk about dreams in front of a fool like me.

I then sigh for the intelligent scholars who have an incorrigible desire for the fame. They are just like Scholar Lu who awoke from his Handan dream when the sand in the hourglass was running out and the morning bell was ringing.⁶⁰ But he still tried to write the last report to the emperor, thinking about making his calligraphy work, which imitated Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi⁶¹ spreading to later generations. His desire for reputation is as firm as a Buddha's relic that can endure even in the fierce kalpa fires.⁶²

This text is full of dualities, distance and intimacy, past and current, dreams and realities, happiness and sufferings, sins and retributions, etc. Such dualities were

happy and successful life in their dreams, but they finally woke up. Their stories are metaphors for Zhang Dai's own life.

⁶⁰ Scholar Lu is a legendary figure in the *Huang liang meng*.

⁶¹ Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361) and Wang Xianzhi 王献之 (344-386), the most famous Chinese calligraphers.

⁶² Zhang Dai 张岱, "Preface" 自序, *MY*, pp.3-4. The original text can be found in Appendix B.

caused by the dynastic transition, which interrupted the continuity of Zhang Dai's world and turned everything into its opposite.

Both by using a third-person voice and by calling his memory "dreams", Zhang Dai set up a distance between himself and the text. Such a sense of distance is one of the essential features of a memoir, for different from the diary form, memoir is always about something far away diachronically, which can only be reached by travelling backwards. And the progress and effort of travelling backwards raise another question about memoir: what is to be memorized and why?

Zhang Dai often recalled his past splendor and happiness. Because his current sufferings were so harsh that they were unexplainable to Zhang Dai, they even made the ancient saint's virtue, which he once believed, doubtful. The only form of reason he found acceptable was in Buddhism. By applying a Buddhism term "karma", Zhang Dai easily paired every current hardship with every past enjoyment as retribution and sin. So when he was suffering, he recalled backwards to find its counterpart, and wrote it down to confess in front of the Buddha.

However, even though he called his past pleasures "sins", Zhang Dai didn't mean to criticize or transcend them, instead, he still felt enough pleasure to write down these "sins", for they connected him with the past world and entertained him in his painful reality. When recalling and writing, Zhang Dai was "traveling on a former path and meeting some old friends", which made him feel like coming home. In a word, in memories Zhang Dai found where he came from and where he really belonged. His sense of displacement was resolved in such recalling.

Memoir is a product of emotion and purpose, just like poetry, fiction and drama. Though it is a record instead of a plot, it still selects images, scenes and events. This kind of selection reveals the significance in them. Memoir is a response to the writer's sense of the current. Since Zhang Dai's sense of the current was "homelessness", he hoped that in memories he could rebuild the lost world. In retrospect, those memories connecting him with his original homeland were of special significance. In closely reading Zhang Dai's memoirs, I found two kinds of memories that particularly served this purpose.

4.2 Buildings—the physical housing of memories

It is interesting to see so many memories about buildings in Zhang Dai's essays. Buildings are substantive, solid and relatively lasting. It is the physical space where the memory happens. People who used to live in a building might have to leave it and never come back. In Zhang Dai's case, he lost all the Zhang family's real estate, some were destroyed in the war, and some others changed hands. Only memory can always find its way back.⁶³

Like many other wealthy families in Jiangnan, the Zhang family had the tradition of building gardens. This act needed an enormous amount of money, refined taste and much leisure. Thus, his memory of gardens was always tightly linked to the family's ups and downs. For example, Yuzhi Pavilion 筠芝亭, was "just a simple and plain pavilion" 浑朴一亭耳, "no pillars or tiles were added outside, and no threshold or

⁶³ The relationship between memory and architectural place is well studied by Phillip A Kafalas in his "Mnemonic Locations: The Housing of Personal Memory in Prose from the Ming and Qing", *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, Vol. 27 (Dec., 2005), pp. 93-116.

door was decorated inside.” 亭之外更不增一椽一瓦，亭之内亦不设一槛一扉。It is so plain that there is no more description about the pavilion. Instead, Zhang Dai remembered that “Around the pavilion, trees planted by my great-great-grandfather were so huge that it needed two people with linked arms to encircle. Standing in the shadow, with the cool mountain breeze blowing, people felt as if floating in autumn water.” 亭前后，太仆公手植树皆合抱，清樾清岚，滃滃翳翳，如在秋水。The pavilion was built by his great-great-grand father, who once held high office under the Ming Dynasty. In Zhang Dai’s opinion, “My family’s prosperity started with my great grand father.”⁶⁴ 岱家发祥于高祖 This pavilion, though simple and plain, was the symbol of the beginning of the Zhang family. “None of the other pavilions built after the Yunzhi Pavilion can be its match; neither can those towers, chambers or study rooms.”⁶⁵ 后此亭而亭者，不及筠芝亭；后此亭而楼者、阁者、斋者，亦不及。

Compared with the Yunzhi Pavilion’s simplicity, the Jie Garden 劼园 was delicate and sumptuous. Its artful design and skillful handling of water were especially impressive. “The Jie Garden was surrounded by water. It employed water but arranged it so skillfully that it seemed there was no water. Near Shouhua Hall, Jieyi Dam, Xiaomei Hill, Tianwen Platform, and Bamboo Trail, the water was twisty and long. In the inner quarters, where the Xiangshuang Studio, Hanshu, long corridor, winding bridge, and the east fence were, the water was deep. Near the pond, there were the Luxiang Pavilion and Meihua Monastic Room, so the water was quiet and

⁶⁴ Zhang Dai, “Jia zhuan”, in *LHWJ*, p. 157.

⁶⁵ Zhang Dai, “Yunzhi ting”, in *MY*, p. 12.

remote.”⁶⁶ 阶园，水盘据之，而得水之用，又安顿之若无水者。寿花堂，界以堤，以小眉山，以天问台，以竹径，则曲而长，则水之。内宅，隔以霞爽轩，以酣漱，以长廊，以小曲桥，以东篱，则深而邃，则水之。临池，截以鲈香亭、梅花禅，则静而远，则水之。

The Jie Garden was built by Grandfather Zhang Rulin. At his time, the Zhang family's wealth, reputation as well as luxurious lifestyle had just hit its peak. Thus, “the garden was extremely splendid when grandfather was alive.” 大父在日，园极华缛 Then Zhang Dai's memory suddenly ended at two strangers' dialogue, “There once were two old men wandering in the garden. One said, here must be paradise. The other one laughed at him, how could there be a place like this?”⁶⁷ 有二老盘旋其中，一老曰，竟是蓬莱阆苑了也。一老哂之曰，个边那有这样？ It is a humorous dialogue but full of profoundness. “Here” is the real Jie Garden, while “there” is the imaginary heaven. Deluded by the Jie Garden's glamour, these two old men could not tell “here” from “there”. For them, “here” is just as good as or even better than “there”. Now Zhang Dai himself became the old man who is fooled, for him “here” was the reality and “there” was his memory. This beautiful garden, as well as the glorious days of the Zhang family, was so distant from his immediate reality that it was as illusory as the imaginary heaven.

Some buildings were more recent. They had not witnessed great-grandfather's distinction or grandfather's luxury, but they were directly connected with Zhang Dai and his life. For example, In “Shouzhi Tower” 寿芝楼, Zhang Dai tells us that his

⁶⁶ Zhang Dai, “Jie yuan”, *MY*, juan 1, p. 13.

⁶⁷ Zhang Dai, “Jie yuan”, *MY*, juan 1, p. 13.

fate was mysteriously bound up with this building. The Shouzhi Tower was an enigmatic place in the Zhang family. “My father said, the Divination God was enshrined in the Shouzhi Tower. A pen was hung on the wall and it would move itself as a sign that something was going to happen. Usually what it wrote would magically come true. If somebody prayed for a son or a medicine, it would respond immediately and instruct where to find the elixir. My father used to pray for a son. The Divination God instructed him to search for the elixir in a brush holder locked in a bamboo trunk whose key had been lost for a long time. My father went to check it, and as expected he found a golden elixir in that brush’s holder. My mother swallowed it and then gave the birth to me.”⁶⁸ 先君言，乩仙供余家寿芝楼，悬笔挂壁间，有事辄自动，扶下书之，有奇验。娠祈子，病祈药，赐丹，诏取某处，立应。先君祈嗣，诏取丹于某簏临川笔内。簏失钥闭久，先君简视之，自出觚管内，有金丹一粒，先宜人吞之，及娠余。 There are many well-known stories about supernatural birth in Chinese culture, and in this one, Zhang Dai said the beginning of his life was bound up with a building where so many miracles had happened. More importantly, it is in this building that Zhang Dai was connected with his parents, who were so eager to have a son. So the supernatural story becomes a much more meaningful narrative about kinship.

Zhang Dai also had sweet memories about his childhood, especially the time he spent with his father in a pavilion. “When I was six years old, I followed my father to study in the Xuanmiao Pavilion 悬杪亭. I remember it was under a cliff. The pavilion

⁶⁸ Zhang Dai, “Shouzhi lou”, *MY*, juan 3, p. 51.

was totally supported by wood and rocks, and there is not an inch of soil under it. The eaves were up-turned and the room was empty. Along the cliff were all bush and trees, intertwining with the eaves.” 余六岁随先君子读书于悬抄亭，记在一峭壁之下，木石撑距，不藉尺土，飞阁虚堂，延骈如栉。缘崖而上，皆灌木高柯，与檐甍相错。 This place, isolated, quiet, and natural, was a perfect site for studying. In the pavilion, the father and the son chanted and read together, it was Zhang Dai’s “child-time pleasure”. However, the pavilion had been moved away, “my second uncle built a hut under the cliff. A geomancer told him that the pavilion would obstruct his good fortune. He believed such words, purchased the pavilion by all kinds of schemes, and moved it away in one night. Now only thick grass grows there.” 后仲叔庐其崖下，信堪舆家言，谓碍其龙脉，百计购之，一夜徙去，鞠为茂草。 Along with the disappearance of the building was the happy time between father and son. Zhang Dai’s father Zhang Yaofang had been struggling in taking the civil service exam for almost fifty years, he was “stuck in the examination hall many times, depressed and whiny.”⁶⁹ 屡困场屋，抑郁牢骚. In his later years, Yaofang indulged in the practice of alchemy, and seemed very distant from his sons. Thus, both the Xuanmiao Pavilion and the sweet time Zhang Dai spent with his father became just memories, and the only way to recall such “child-time pleasure” was to “search the way back in my dreams.”⁷⁰ 儿时怡寄，常梦寐寻往.

The Bu’er Studio 不二斋 was the place where Zhang Dai studied in his youth. “The Bu’er Studio was surrounded by thirty-feet-high phoenix trees casting thousands

⁶⁹ Zhang Dai, “Jia zhuan”, in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 165

⁷⁰ Zhang Dai, “Xuanmiao ting”, *MY*, juan 7, p. 114.

of petals of shade. The west wall was not covered so I filled it up by planting calyx canthus. The shade made the sky all green. Summer heat could not reach here. Out of the rear window there was a section of wall just a little higher than the window's bar, there were planted several square bamboos, casual but elegant. A horizontal scroll of Zheng Zizhao's calligraphy was hung on the wall, which said "listen to the autumn's sound". The sun was shining. Gazing at the sky, it was as clear as a piece of glass or mica. People sitting here always felt as if in a cool and refreshing world. Books stuffed four walls from the floor to the roof, even filled my bed. All kinds of cauldrons, vessels, and wine jars were all in their places. I put a stone bed and a bamboo table on the room's left side, enclosed them with sheer curtains to block insects. The green shade dyed the curtains, and my face was illuminated green too."⁷¹

不二斋，高梧三丈，翠樾千重。墙西稍空，蜡梅补之。但有绿天，暑气不到。后窗墙高于槛，方竹数竿，潇潇洒洒，郑子昭“满耳秋声”横披一幅。天光下射，望空视之，晶沁如玻璃、云母，坐者恒在清凉世界。图书四壁，充栋连床，鼎彝尊罍，不移而具。余于左设石床竹几，帷之纱幕，以障蚊虻。绿暗侵纱，照面成碧。

In Zhang Dai's memory, it was such a comfortable, elegant and exquisite place to stay, with thousands of books in it, "I just loosened my clothes, sat with my legs sprawled out. I didn't go outside easily no matter in summer or in winter."余解衣盘礴，寒暑未尝轻出。

Studying was one of the most important tasks in Zhang Dai's youth, and it was always a happy and leisurely thing in such a comfortable and exquisite environment.

⁷¹ Zhang Dai, "Bu'er Studio", *MY*, juan 2, p. 33.

Besides Bu'er Studio, he also had some other sites for reading and studying. In Plum Blossom Studio, Zhang Dai planted many precious flowers, including “peonies as large as watermelons”, “strong and powerful plum blossom mixed with soft and enchanting camellia”, “I sat or lay there all day. Nobody could enter without my permission, except distinguished persons and fine guests.”⁷² 余坐卧其中，非高流佳客，不得辄入。

Sometimes he left his studio, visited more natural places by boat. “Since I studied in the Shantingzi Studio, I left a small boat in the lake. When there was a moon, I went out every night. Floating along the city to Beihai Slope, it was almost a five *li* roundtrip.” 自余读书山艇子，辄留小舟于池中，月夜，夜夜出，缘城至北海坂，往返可五里，盘旋其中 “I set up a cool mat on the boat, lay there and gazed at the moon. The servant boy was chanting a folk song at the fore. I was drunk and dreaming. His voice gradually became distant, and the moon started to dim little by little. I finally fell asleep... (At that time) I had no idea of what sadness and melancholy are in the world.”⁷³ 余设凉簟，卧舟中看月，小僮船头唱曲，醉梦相杂，声声渐远，月亦渐淡，嗒然睡去.....不晓世间何物谓之忧愁。

By describing his studying places, Zhang Dai actually revealed one of the most important self-forming periods, also the happiest time, in his life. The youthful self was ambitious, carefree and rich. He could easily reach out to all kinds of appealing things. Studying was his major task and he was full of hope about the future, having “no idea of what sadness and melancholy are”. However, after the chaos, Zhang Dai

⁷² Zhang Dai, “Plum Blossom Studio”, *MY*, juan 2, p. 33.

⁷³ Zhang Dai, “Panggong Pond” 庞公池, *MY*, juan 7, pp. 116-117.

lost his beautiful places for study. He now lived in a rented cottage, along with him were “a broken bed, a destroyed table, a broken cauldron, a worn zither, several destroyed books and a cracked ink stone.” This description artfully juxtaposed the fleeting pleasure of the past with sober reflections on time and change.

Among all memories about buildings, there is one distinguished from all others. In “Lang huan fu di” 琅嬛福地 [Lang huan blessed place], Zhang Dai described what his heaven looked like.

My dream has its karma. I often dream about a stone house with deep caves. In front of it there is a swift and winding river running like snow. Pines and rocks are odd and ancient, mixed with rare blossoms. In my dream I sit there, a young servant brings me tea and fruit. The shelves are full of books. I open one and see all kinds of ancient scripts. In my dream it seems I am able to understand the obscure meanings. I have this dream every night at leisure, and keep thinking about it when I wake up. I want to find a place just as wonderful.”

Zhang Dai did find a small hill in the suburb of Shaoxing, and he imagined building a garden there,

“The hall faces east, with windows on both sides. Behind the hall I will build a stone platform, some Huangshan pines or some odd rocks will be placed on it. In front of the hall I will plant two Suoluo trees to provide cool shade. An empty room is attached on the left, facing the hill’s foot, with the inscription “A Hill” 一丘 hung on it. On the left

side there are three spacious rooms, facing a deep pool. The water is pure and clean, and I will read books under the heavily willow. The inscription is “A Gully”一壑.

Zhang Dai then continued,

At the end of the hills there are nice caves. I will build a grave there for myself, waiting for the day of my coming death. The tomb inscription says, “Alas! The grave of the Ming person Zhang Changgong” 有明张长公之墓. In the open space near the left side of my grave, I’ll build a hut where the Buddha and my portrait are enshrined. Monks will burn incense here. There is also a lake ten *mu* 亩 in area. A small and winding river gives my boat access to the lake. Along the river are high mounds, where I’d like to plant fruit trees, such as tangerine, plum, pear, date, medlar and chrysanthemum. A pavilion could be built on the top. On the east side of the mounds are twenty *mu* of fertile farmland, good for both broomcorn and rice. The door faces a large river, harbored by small towers with a view of Lu Peak and Jingting Mountain. On the door there is a plaque saying “Lang huan fu di”. Walking along the north side of the river, there is a very ancient bridge, covered by bushes. I could sit on the bridge, enjoying the wind and the moon.⁷⁴

In Zhang Dai’s descriptions, “Lang huan fu di” is an ideal place for a reclusive

⁷⁴ Zhang Dai, “Lang huan fu di”, *MY*, juan 8, p. 138. The original text can be found in Appendix C.

scholar, in another word, a utopia, where the natural environment is peaceful, comfortable, secluded, yet self-sufficient, given those fruit trees and grains Zhang Dai planned to plant. In such a place, Zhang Dai could find the inside serenity which his real retreat Kuai Garden couldn't offer. He not only hoped that he could study and live in this utopian place, but also wanted to spend his afterlife here.

However, “Lang huan fu di” is not a totally imagined place that never existed in reality. It easily reminds Zhang Dai, as well as the readers, of those buildings and gardens once owned by Zhang family, such as Bu'er Studio, Plum Blossom Study, Yunzhi Pavilion and Jie Garden. Thus, “Lang huan fu di” is not a utopian but a lost heaven, not imagined but rebuilt by Zhang Dai's memorizing and writing. The name “Lang huan fu di” itself reveals such information. The name is originally from a story in *Lang huan ji* 琅嬛记 written by Yin Shizhen 尹世珍 (13th ct.).⁷⁵ The story is about a scholar who had the chance to read all the rare ancient books in a rock cave called “Lang huan fu di”. When he asked to borrow these books, the owner sent him out, and he was unable to find the way back. It is very similar to another story, the famous Peach Blossom Spring 桃花源记 invented by Tao Qian. They are all about people who once found their heaven but finally lost it. The difference is, in “Lang huan ji” the scholar's heaven was a place with all the rare books that he had never read before.

Zhang Dai was fond of reading and collecting books very much. He once owned a private library with more than thirty thousand volumes. However, all the books were

⁷⁵ Yin Shizhen 尹世珍, *Lang huan ji* 琅嬛记, in *Xue jin tao yuan* 学津讨源, Comp. Zhang Haipeng 张海鹏 (1755-1816), Taipei: Xin wen feng chuban gong si 新文丰出版公司, 1980, vol. 13, p. 2.

lost or destroyed during the wartime.⁷⁶ It was the enthusiasm for books induced Zhang Dai to call his own imaginary heaven “Lang huan”. By doing this, Zhang Dai pictured himself just like the scholar, or the fisherman. Like them, he once owned that heaven but eventually lost it. The only way to reconstruct it, Zhang Dai found, is through his writing.

Zhang Dai’s memories about buildings are allusive yet revealing. The memories about metaphorical physical place connected Zhang Dai with the past happy life, the family’s glorious days, and his ambitious self-cultivation period.

4.3 People—the spirits of the past world

In Zhang Dai’s memoirs, there are many portrayals of people that he once associated with. These portrayals are different from ordinary biographies for they usually only glimpse a certain moment of the subject’s life or sketch a certain aspect of the subject’s characteristics. Many of the subjects are just common people, such as a gardener, an actor or actress, a doctor and a courtesan, which means they had very little possibility of having their own biographies in historical records, in other words, to be remembered in the collective memories. However, in Zhang Dai’s personal memories, these people comprised a crucial part of his lost world. Not only because they once accompanied him on various joyful occasions, but also because Zhang Dai believed that the spirits of the past world were represented by such people.

Zhang Dai once announced that, “I am unable to get along with a person without

⁷⁶ Zhang Dai, “San shi cang shu” 三世藏书 [three generations’ collection of books], *MY*, juan 2, p. 37

obsessions, for he doesn't have deep feelings, and am unable to get along with a person without flaws, for he doesn't have genuineness.”⁷⁷人无癖不可交, 以其无深情也; 人无疵不可交, 以其无真气也. Obviously, for Zhang Dai, “deep feeling” and “genuineness” were important standards in judging people. Such a standpoint was very popular in the late Ming because of the rise of individualism. Zhang Dai also believed that the best way to show one's authenticity and uniqueness is to have special obsessions. Consequently, later readers can find a gallery of some very eccentric people's portraits in *Tao'an mengyi*.

Jin Rusheng 金乳生 was a devoted gardener, “His health was very poor. Every morning when he got up, before washing his face and combing his hair, he crept under the stairs to search for insects on every leaf. Although there were thousands of plants in his garden, he had to make a round for all of them every day...Even ice had chapped his hand and the sun had singed his forehead, he was careless.”⁷⁸ 乳生弱质多病, 早起不盥不栉, 匍匐阶下, 捕菊虎, 地蚕, 花根叶底, 虽千百本, 一日必一周之。虽冰龟其手, 日焦其额, 不顾也. Fan Yulan 范与兰, one of Zhang Dai's friends, was so fond of orchids that he called them “concubines”. When one orchid was withering, Fan “panicked. He irrigated it with ginseng decoctions, petted it in his arms day and night until it revived one month later.”⁷⁹ 惊惶无措, 煮参汁浇灌, 日夜摩之不置, 一月后枯干复活.

Qi Zhijia 祁豸佳 (1595—1670), one of Zhang Dai's best friends, “had obsessions in calligraphy and painting, in the game of *cuju*, in playing drum and cymbals, in

⁷⁷ Zhang Dai, “The Obsessions of Qi Zhixiang” 祁止祥癖, *MY*, juan 4 pp. 72-73.

⁷⁸ Zhang Dai, “Jin Rusheng's plants” 金乳生花草, *MY*, juan 1, p. 9.

⁷⁹ Zhang Dai, “Fan Yulan” 范与兰, *MY*, juan 8, p. 132.

watching ghost plays and in theatre art” 有书画癖，有蹴鞠癖，有鼓钹癖，有鬼戏癖，有梨园癖。He was especially addicted to a young boy called A Bao. In 1645, Qi Zhixiang fled home from Nanjing with A Bao, “they encountered a group of brigands on their way. Though knives and swords were on his neck, he cared nothing about his own life but only for A Bao.”⁸⁰ 遇土贼，刀剑加颈，性命可倾，阿宝是宝。

Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 was the most famous storyteller in Jiangnan. In Zhang Dai’s memory, his deformed look was very contrary to his tranquil manner. “Pock-faced Liu from Nanjing had a dark complexion with scars all over his face. His manner was idle and unvarnished.”⁸¹ 南京柳麻子黧黑，满面疤痕，悠悠忽忽，土木形骸 “Although his face was extraordinarily ugly, his speech was lively, and his eyes were bright and sharp, his apparel was clean and tidy.” 貌奇丑，然其口角波俏，眼目流利，衣着恬静。He was a very skillful storyteller, and his self-esteem was just as impressive. When he gave a performance, “all guests had to sit still, hold their breath, and listen attentively, only then would he begin to talk. Once someone from the audience whispered, yawned or seemed bored, he stopped. Thus, no one could force him to talk.”主人必屏息静坐，倾耳听之，彼方掉舌。稍见下人咕哝耳语，听者欠伸有倦色，辄不言，故不得强。

Liu Jingting was indeed a cultural figure of the late Ming. His unique, sometimes self-preoccupied, behavior was highly admired by the late Ming’s elite culture as a sign of spontaneity. He later became a character in Kong Shangren’s 孔尚任 (1648~1718) famous historical play *The Peach Blossom Fan* 桃花扇. Huang Zongxi

⁸⁰ Zhang Dai, “The Obsessions of Qi Zhixiang” 祁止祥癖, *MY*, juan 4, p. 72.

⁸¹ Zhang Dai, “Liu Jingting shuo shu” 柳敬亭说书, *MY*, juan 5, p. 81.

黄宗羲 (1610-1695) also wrote a biography for him. Like Liu Jingting, Jin Rusheng, Fan Yulan and Qi Zhijia all had their own eccentricities, some were presented as profound obsessions, and some were presented as immoral flaws. Such eccentricities, in Zhang Dai's opinion, were in perfect accord to the late Ming culture, which advocated the true nature and uniqueness of an individual.

In Zhang Dai's memory, there were two impressive female characters. Zhang Dai recorded them because they both once accompanied him on some happy occasions. More importantly, compared to the male characters, the females usually hinted at even more cultural meanings in the transitional period.

Wang Yuesheng 王月生 was a beautiful courtesan living in Nanjing before the collapse of the Ming. She “was born in the Red Market. In the thirty years before and after, no one could be a match to her. The tone of her face was like a newly-opened orchid, and her fine feet looked like fresh water chestnuts. She was so restrained that she barely spoke or laughed. No matter how hard her friends or idlers tried, they couldn't evoke a smile from her. She was good at writing *Kai* 楷 script, painting orchids, bamboo and narcissi. She also knew Wu songs but rarely sang.”⁸² 王月生出朱市，曲中上下三十年决无其比也。面色如建兰初开，楚楚文弱，纤趾一牙，如出水红菱，矜贵寡言笑，女兄弟闲客多方狡狴嘲弄哈侮，不能勾其一粲。善楷书，画兰竹水仙，亦解吴歌，不易出口。The Red Market was a low level brothel area in Nanjing, but Wang Yuesheng's beauty as well as her refined taste made her very popular in the upper circles. The rich and powerful people in Nanjing treated her

⁸² Zhang Dai, “Wang Yuesheng” 王月生, *MY*, juan 8, pp. 127-128.

respectfully, “if rich merchants or influential people want to invite her to a banquet for half day, they must send the invitation and earnest money one day in advance. The earnest money was usually ten or five gold pieces, otherwise it would be disrespectful. A more private assignation must be booked one or two months in advance or it wouldn’t be granted for the whole year.” 富商权胥得其主席半晌，先一日送书帕，非十金则五金，不敢褻订。与合盃，非下聘一二月前，则终岁不得也。 To manifest Yuesheng’s extraordinarily reserved manner, Zhang Dai recorded an interesting anecdote, “Yuesheng didn’t like to be associated with ordinary people; if she had to, she just ignored them even when they were seated face to face. Once, a playboy paid for her company. They slept and ate together for half month, but Yuesheng didn’t speak a word. One day, Yuesheng’s lips moved slightly, her servants rushed to tell the playboy, “Yuesheng talked!” He saw it as an auspicious sign and hurried to see her. Yuesheng’s face blushed and she stopped talking. The playboy begged her again and again; finally she shyly said two words: go home.” 不喜与俗子交接；或时对面同坐起，若无睹者。有公子狎之，同寝食者半月，不得其一言。一日口噤嚅动，闲客惊喜，走报公子曰：“月生开言矣！”哄然以为祥瑞，急走伺之，面赭，寻又止，公子力请再三，蹇涩出二字曰：“家去。”

In Zhang Dai’s description, Wang Yuesheng was of incredible beauty and refined artistic taste. Her extraordinarily reserved manner, like that of Liu Jingting, increased her charm, and made her adored in late Ming elite culture.

Association between courtesans and scholars was kind of a cultural fashion in the late Ming. The most famous cases include Dong Xiaowan 董小宛 (1624-1651) and

Mao Xiang 冒襄 (1611-1693), Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618-1664) and Qian Qianyi, Bian Yujing 卞玉京 and Wu Weiye 吴伟业 (1609-1672), etc. Because of these courtesans' refined taste, beauty, and their intimacy with scholars—some of them even directly participated in anti-Qing movements, for example, Li Xiangjun 李香君 (1624-?)—they became the symbol of the brilliant past of the Ming dynasty. Accounts of courtesans from the pleasure quarters of Nanjing were frequently seen in intellectuals' memoir-like writings in the transitional period, which conveyed their cultural nostalgia.⁸³ For example, Yu Huai's 余怀(1617-1696) *Ban qiao za ji* 板桥杂记 was a collection of memoirs about the lives of the Qinhuai 秦淮 courtesans. In the preface, Yu Huai said, the records of courtesans had “direct bearing on an entire generation's rise and decline, as well as the sighs and emotions of a thousand years.”⁸⁴ 一代之兴衰，千秋之感慨所系。Like Yu Huai, Zhang Dai embodied his mourning for the past dynasty's culture and spirit in his retrospective account on Wang Yuesheng.

Zhu Chusheng 朱楚生 was an outstanding actress in Zhang Dai's private theatre troupe.

Chusheng was not very beautiful, but even a matchless beauty couldn't obtain to her grace and charm. Her solitude was expressed on her brows, her deep feelings were in her eyes and her consideration was conveyed in her dreamy gaze and enchanting movements. She devoted her life to the opera, did it heart and soul. If any singings or lines were

⁸³ Wai-ye Li discussed such cultural nostalgia in “The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Cultural Ideal”, in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, pp. 46-73.

⁸⁴ Yu Huai, “Ban qiao za ji xu” 板桥杂记序, *Ban qiao za ji* 板桥杂记, Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she 上海古籍出版社, 2002.

not perfect, she just needed a little hint. Several months later, the mistake would be corrected as instructed. Her mind often wandered restlessly even when she was seated. Her emotions were so deep that they always wavered out of control. One day, she was accompanying me at Dingxiang Bridge. In the sunset, the mist rose, the trees were far and dark. Chusheng lowered her head and cried silently, her tears fell down like rain. I asked but only got some disguised answers. Chusheng had too much worry and sadness, and eventually she died from her deep emotions.⁸⁵ 楚生色不甚美，虽绝世佳人，无其风韵。楚楚谡谡，其孤意在眉，其深情在睫，其解意在烟视媚行。性命于戏，下全力为之。曲白有误，稍为订正之，虽后数月，其误处必改削如所语。楚生多坐驰，一往深情，摇扬无主。一日，同余在定香桥，日晡烟生，林木昏冥，楚生低头不语，泣如雨下，余问之，作饰语以对。劳心忡忡，终以情死。

The most particular characteristic Zhang Dai found in Zhu Chusheng was her “deep emotions” 深情. As introduced before, the late Ming’s elite culture was deeply influenced by Wang Yangming’s *xin xue* and Li Zhi’s *tong xin shuo*. They both advocated for a human being’s authenticity and independence. The fascination with the concept of *qing* 情 [emotions, sentiments, or passions] was a cultural response to their philosophical thoughts. “Deep emotions” were considered as crucial proof of one’s genuineness, and was highly valued in the late Ming elite culture. It was also

⁸⁵ Zhang Dai, “Zhu Chusheng”, *MY*, juan 5, p. 90.

one of the major themes in the late Ming's romantic literature.⁸⁶ The most influential literary work about *qing* in the late Ming is Tang Xianzhu's 汤显祖 (1550-1616) *The Peony Pavilion* 牡丹亭, a romantic opera about the story of Du Liniang 杜丽娘, who felt in love with an imaginary scholar and finally died for such illusionary love. Coincidentally, Zhu Chusheng was a talented and devoted actress, like Du Liniang, she died for her "deep emotions". Zhang Dai's remembrance for such a metaphorical figure actually expressed his nostalgia for the late Ming culture.

Compared to buildings, human life is more fragile. Most of the people in Zhang Dai's memory had died before or during the transition. However, Zhang Dai found their spirits and manner, sometimes decorated by unreasonable behaviors, were just as if they were alive. The friendships or intimate relationships between Zhang Dai and these people, as well as his emotional recollections of them, served as a very close tie bonding Zhang Dai to the past world.

Zhang Dai's memoirs are mainly focused on the bygone happy life. This is due to his sense of displacement in the aftermath of dynastic transition. His sense of displacement impelled him to find recollections that connected him with the past world. My study finds that two kinds of memories are especially important in such tracing back. One is the memory about family buildings. The mental re-construction of these buildings not only represented the physical environment that Zhang Dai was familiar with, but also connected Zhang Dai's memory with family history and

⁸⁶ For comprehensive research on late Ming's cult of *qing*, see Martin W. Huang's "Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature", *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, Vol. 20 (Dec., 1998), pp. 153-184.

self-cultivation. Thus, the recollections of the buildings are very autobiographical. The other one is the memories about people, especially those with obvious obsessions and extraordinary personalities. Such people were symbols of the late Ming culture. Memories about them wove personal pleasures, historical illusions and cultural metaphors, and embodied Zhang Dai's cultural nostalgia to the past world.

CHAPTER 5

SAVING THE IDENTITY—ZHANG DAI'S BIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS

In the preface to *Tao'an mengyi*, Zhang Dai calls himself a “wild man” 野人. The rhetorical implications are obvious. A “wild man” is distant from family and society, his image is blurred and odd, he came from nowhere and has no place to go. As a *yimin*, Zhang Dai was indeed a “wild man”. Most of his family members were departed or separated; old acquaintances couldn't recognize him and considered him “poison and beast”. He was not willing to serve the new order-- he was not even registered as a Qing citizen; consequently there was no social and public role for him. He was in an ambiguous position and alienated from the contemporary society. He had no social or cultural identity.

By calling himself a “wild man”, Zhang Dai actually revealed his crisis of identity caused by the traumatic transition. Generally, in traditional Chinese society, an individual's identity was established in social context. An individual is identified by his social role. For example, a man always belonged to a certain social group. Thus, the question “who am I?” could, and often would, be replaced by the question “what kind of man am I?” To identify an individual, one needed to know whose son he was, whom he associated with, his social status, and his social achievements.⁸⁷ Such identification obviously can only be done in a stable and continuous social context. However, in the Ming-Qing transition, continuity was interrupted, the gap between

⁸⁷ Robert E. Hegel studied the construction and expression of self in Chinese context in “An Exploration of the Chinese Literary Self”, *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, ed. Robert E. Hegel & Richard C. Hessney, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 3-30.

one's past and one's current context blurred his identity. Thus, seeking for self-identification was an important objective in Zhang Dai's writings. To achieve this, Zhang Dai wrote several biographies for his family members and himself.

5.1 Biography or autobiography

Zhang Dai's engagement with recording the past includes remembrances of his own family members. Zhang Dai understood that there was a gap between the past and the future in the dynastic transition; continuation was shattered and everything would easily vanish if no one recorded it. Thus, he felt it was his responsibility to preserve the history of the Zhang family just as he did for the Ming dynasty. More importantly, "Self is based on the past" is a typical Confucian view.⁸⁸ For a Chinese man, family is the origin from where he came; ancestors are models that posterity should follow. Thus, tracing the history of the Zhang family helped Zhang Dai to understand his own fate and personality, which had become so unpredictable and confusing in the chaos of the transition.

To give a full picture of the Zhang family, Zhang Dai wrote three series of biographies around 1651. The "Family Biography" 家传 includes four biographies for Zhang Dai's great-great-grandfather, great-grandfather, grandfather and his father, who are all direct paternal relatives of Zhang Dai. In the "Attached Biography" 附传, Zhang Dai recorded accounts of his three paternal uncles, for they were important male members of the Zhang family. In the last series of biographies called

⁸⁸ Hegel, p. 10.

“Biographies for Five Eccentric Persons” 五异人传, Zhang Dai added five more distant male paternal relatives to his collection: two grandfather’s brothers, one uncle and two cousins.

Writing biographies for close family members is not a very usual thing in Chinese culture, maybe that is why at the beginning of “Family Biography” Zhang Dai felt necessary to mention that two Ming literature figures, Li Mengyang 李梦阳 (1473-1530) and Zhong Xing 钟惺 (1574-1624), also wrote such family records. At that time, a person’s biography was either written by official historians or by intellectuals who felt the social obligation—sometimes urged by the subject’s family—to write, such as the subject’s friend, teacher, student, or colleague. An intellectual also wrote biographies for strangers, mostly aiming at praising the subjects’ outstanding achievements, virtues or inspiring personalities. This type of biography typically contained all kinds of information to identify the subject, such as his date of birth, his place of origin, his male relatives in several generations, education, grade in the civil service exam, official positions, achievements, talent in literature or other fields, and his moral character. These types of information were strictly recorded from archival resources, and were arranged in a relatively fixed order. Generally, biography should be seen as a kind of public writing with didactic purposes.⁸⁹ Needless to say, Zhang Dai had written many volumes of such biographies in his historical works. However, Zhang Dai’s remembrances of his ancestors, though they were still called “zhuan” 传, are different from historical

⁸⁹ For a study on Chinese biography, see Denis Twitchett, “Problems of Chinese Biography”, in *Confucian Personalities*, ed. Arthur F. Wright & Denis Twitchett, Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1962, pp. 24-42.

biographies. His writings to a great degree broke through the limits of traditional biography in format, purpose and theme. The relationship between Zhang Dai and his subjects was much closer than other biographers might have experienced. What he purposed to do was not to make a stereotypical record, but to create detailed accounts that show the true characteristics of his ancestors, and convey his personal understandings of them. In this process, Zhang Dai explored, discovered and constructed the stories of subjects with his own subjectivity. By saying subjectivity, I'm not suggesting that Zhang Dai invented stories about his subjects, but argue that when the narrative is not strictly controlled by convention, the author has more space to convey personal opinions, and the self of the author will be revealed wittingly or unwittingly. Consequently such writing will hint at the author's self-expression.

5.2 Self-reflections—Zhang Dai's family biographies

In the preface to "family biography", Zhang Dai said.

Both Li Mengyang and Zhong Xing wrote family biographies, for the transmission of their family histories depended upon their writings. My great-great-grandfather and great-grandfather were able to write their own biographies by themselves, and others also have written biographies about them. So there is no need for me to write their biographies. My grandfather was able to be his own biographer too. I was born late and only had the chance to witness his old age, so I know nothing about his

earlier life. Therefore, although I want to write his biography there is some part that I can not record completely. For my father, I knew him truly and for a long time. Although I'm able to write his biography, it is impossible for me to record everything about him. In this case, writing biographies for my great-great-grandfather, great-grandfather, grandfather and father therefore is much more difficult than what Li and Zhong did. However, how could I not write biographies for them? If I were not to do so, then I'd be a sinner who is able to record personages of the fifteen reigns in the Ming dynasty but couldn't write for his own ancestors. So I clean my brush and announce that: writing biographies for my great-great-grandfather and my great-grandfather should be like rescuing the moon during an eclipse, to let the missing parts appear. My grandfather's biography should be like illuminating a drawing to show the fullness by the half of it. My father's biography should be like a fishnet which only catches the large ones, yet the small ones can be seen.⁹⁰ 李崧峒之族谱，钟伯敬之家传，待崧峒、伯敬而传之也。岱之高曾自足以传，而又有传之者，无待岱而传之者。岱之大父以自足以传，而岱生也晚，及见大父之艾，艾以前无闻焉；岱即欲传之，有不能尽传之者也。岱之先子，岱知之真，积之久，岱能传之，又不胜其传焉者也。是以岱之传吾高曾祖考，盖难于李、难于钟者也。虽然，其可终无传哉！终无传，是岱能传我有明十五朝之人物，而不能传吾高曾祖考，

⁹⁰ Zhang Dai "Jia zhuan", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 154.

则岱真罪人也已。岱乃泚笔而志曰：传吾高曾如救月，去其蚀，则阙者可见也；传吾大父如写照，肖其半，则全者可见也；传吾先子如网鱼，举其大，则小者可见也。

By comparing himself as a man rescuing the moon, a painter drawing sketches, a fisherman catching fish, a narrator of the biography who was usually required to be invisible appeared in the text, with great subjectivity--he was able to decide what he personally understood about the subject and how it should appear in writing.

In great-great-grandfather Zhang Tianfu's biography, Zhang Dai started out as usual: he introduced Tianfu's name, studio name and birth date, then praised Tianfu's enthusiasm for Confucian learning and the achievements he made. Because of his outstanding performance in the civil service exam, Tianfu obtained a high official position in Yunnan Province. There, he was involved in a conflict with a local strongman named Mu, who first tried to bribe Tianfu and then impeached him. Although the injustice inflicted on Tianfu was finally cleared, he was overwhelmed by the lawsuit, retired and went back to his hometown Shaoxing. Tianfu's retirement years were full of self-abandonment, indulgence and extravagance.

When he (Tianfu) came back, he built a villa by the Jing Lake surrounded by high phoenix trees and thick willows. Every day he drank there with courtesans. A servant boy was ordered to squat in the top of a tree to see if Wengong (Zhang Yuanbian, Tianfu's son) came to visit by boat. If so, he then tidied up and welcomed his son. After Wengong left, he opened the door, drank, shouted, and cried out as before. In the xinwei

year (1571), Wengong placed first in the national exam. My great-great-grandfather was extremely happy, he invited guests to come, shouted, chanted, and drank all day long. Subsequently he fell sick, and finally died at sixty-two.⁹¹ 归则构别业于镜湖之沚，高梧深柳，日与所狎纵饮其中。命一小僮踞树颠，俟文恭舟至，辄肃衣冠待之。去即开门，轰饮叫嚎如故也。辛未，文恭魁大廷，高祖益喜，召客啸咏豆觞，日淋漓，遂病瘳，六十二乃卒。

At the end of the biography, Zhang Dai added his own comments about Zhang Tianfu. “My family was actually founded by my great-great-grandfather. All glory and good fortune that started with him blessed his posterity. However, great-great-grandfather was too extravagant and indulgent in his later years.”⁹² 岱家发祥于高祖，而高祖之祥正以不尽发，为后人之发……未免褻越太甚。

Compared to Tianfu’s self-abandonment, his son Zhang Yuanbian was more disciplined. In Zhang Dai’s opinion, his great-grandfather was very close to an ideal Confucian, who was honest, upright, filial and loyal. However, Zhang Dai didn’t put too much emphasis on Yuanbian’s achievement in the civil service exam or success in his career. Instead, Zhang Dai noticed that great-grandfather’s life was full of hardship and frustrations. During his career, he was always constrained by filial duties. For example, in his twenties, to clear the impeachment on his father, Yuanbian had to suspend studying and travel thousands of miles from south to north to help his father.

Great-grandfather rushed back from the capital city, escorted his father

⁹¹ Zhang Dai “Jia zhuan”, in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 157

⁹² Zhang Dai “Jia zhuan”, in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 157.

to Yunnan to face the charge. Luckily the charge was cleared. But he still worried that there would be some accident, so he sent trusted people to escort great-great-grandfather home. He then hurried to the capital city alone in one day, talked to people holding office in the government, and got the emperor's decree. After that, he again hurried home alone, carrying back the decree to console great-great-grandfather. In one year he traveled back and forth between south and north three times, for a total of thirty thousand *li*. At thirty, his hair was all grey. In 1571, when he triumphed in the exam, a eunuch saw him and mocked: "What an old champion we have today!" because of his grey hair.⁹³ 曾祖自都中驰归，身掖太仆公至滇对簿，幸而得雪。又虑有中变，嘱所亲护太仆公归，而自以单骑并日驰京师，白当道，始得谕旨。旨下，则又以单骑驰归，慰太仆公于家。一岁而旋绕南北者三，以里计者三万。年三十，而发种种白。辛未牖唱，中官见曰：“今日那得此老状元。”盖嫌其发白也。

Though great-great-grandfather and great-grandfather both had their biographies recorded in the nation's histories, people would never know them completely without Zhang Dai's retrospective. Tianfu's self-abandonment and Yuanbian's too early gray hair were just like the missing parts in an eclipse of the moon. And Zhang Dai was able to mend such incompleteness by frankly recording his ancestors from a personal perspective.

Zhang Dai knew Grandfather Zhang Rulin quite well, since he followed Rulin's

⁹³ Zhang Dai "Family Biography", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 158.

instruction in study and often travelled with him. But he didn't mention much about the years they spent together; instead, Zhang Dai was more impressed by grandfather's earlier life, especially his frustrations in taking the civil service exam.

When (grandfather) was young, he was not willing to practice calligraphy, so his handwriting was ugly and clumsy. He failed the exam every time because of it. So he had to pay tuition to enter the Grand Academy...Grandfather once studied in the Longguang Tower. He took away all the stairs; only food could be passed in by a pulley. For three years he didn't go downstairs.⁹⁴ 少不肯临池学书,字丑拙,试有司辄不利,遂输入粟入太学.....大父读书龙光楼,辍其梯,轴轳传食,不下楼者三年。

Three years later, grandfather felt prepared for the exam. Unfortunately, just before the exam his mother Madame Wang passed away. After the funeral, grandfather then confined himself in the Longguang Tower for another three years. Intense study even caused damage to his health.

On the first day of the first month in jiawu year (1594) grandfather went to Hangzhou and studied in the Heming Mountains. Reading day and night caused severe damage to his eyesight, so he lowered curtains and sat in silence for three months. Still, if friends discussed certain topics from the canons with him, he was able to write an essay about it as soon as he heard it.⁹⁵ 甲午正月朔,即入南都,读书鹤鸣山,昼夜不辍。病目眚,下帷静

⁹⁴ Zhang Dai "Jia zhuan", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 161

⁹⁵ Zhang Dai "Jia zhuan", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 161

坐者三月。友人以经书题相商，入耳，文立就。

Zhang Dai felt pity about his grandfather's difficult pursuit of learning. He commented that, "Grandfather lived in isolation for ten years; his poetry, prose, as well as moral qualities were all distinguished and independent. It is so pitiful that he was interrupted later. If he could have persisted on, stayed tranquil and kept up his progress, then his achievements could be unimaginable."⁹⁶ 郊居者十年，诗文人品，卓然有以自立，惜后又有以夺之也。倘能持此不变，而澹然进步，则吾大父之诗文人品，岂可量乎？

The biography for Zhang Dai's father Zhang Yaofang is the most personal one in this series, partly because Yaofang had very few achievements in his career. As introduced before, due to his hopeless pursuit of learning, Yaofang was very depressed throughout his whole life and indulged himself in opera and Taoism. Zhang Dai particularly criticized Yaofang's extravagance and indulgence in alchemy, "When my father was young he didn't know how to make a living, and in his later years he was fond of pursuing immortality. My mother helped him to manage the family property, but all her gain was stolen and carved up by my father's concubines, maids and their children. When my father was old, he had nothing left. Thus, my father's life was just like a Handan dream, fortunes and splendors passed away in front of his eyes, and ended up in nothing."⁹⁷ 长子少年不事生计，而晚好神仙。宜人以戮力成家，而妾媵子女臧获，则三分之。先子暮年，身无长物。则是先子如邯郸梦醒，繁华富丽，过眼皆空。

⁹⁶ Zhang Dai "Jia zhuan", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 164

⁹⁷ Zhang Dai "Jia zhuan", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 167.

Although Zhang Dai seemed disappointed by his father, he still shared some delightful parts of Yaofang's characteristics. Yaofang was humorous and liked to joke with juniors.

One day, his concubine Zhou was sick. My father worried that she would die. I said, "She won't die." "How do you know?" my father asked. "Bo Pi⁹⁸ 伯嚭 was born to destroy the State Wu. If Wu still stands, Bo Pi will not die." My father blamed me. But after a second thought, he couldn't help laughing.⁹⁹ 一日，周氏病，先子忧其死。岱曰：不死。先子曰：尔何以知其不死也？岱曰：天生伯嚭，以亡吴国；吴国未亡，伯嚭不死。先子口詈岱，徐思之，亦不觉失笑。

Another anecdote Zhang Dai shared was about Yaofang's greedy appetite.

My father was good at eating. His everyday breakfast was equal to a couple of people's lunch... In the prime of his life, he once competed in eating with Uncle Zhu Qiaofeng. Each of them ate a young goose weighing ten *jin*. Then my father cooked noodles in goose soup, and swallowed more than ten bowls. Uncle Zhu laughed and ran away with his belly held in his hands.¹⁰⁰ 先子善饭，是日早膳，尤兼数人之餐...壮年与朱樵风表叔较食量，每人食肥子鹅一只，重十斤。而先子又以鹅汁淘面，连啜十余碗。表叔捧腹而遁。

Zhang Dai didn't tell us any details about how his father was indulgent in alchemy or how he was fooled by his concubines. However these two anecdotes,

⁹⁸ Bo Pi was the prime minister of the State Wu during the Spring and Autumn period. He was greedy and disloyal. Thus, Zhang Dai called his father's greedy concubine "Bo Pi".

⁹⁹ Zhang Dai "Jia zhuan", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 166

¹⁰⁰ Zhang Dai "Jia zhuan", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, pp. 166-167.

thought in a humorous tone, indirectly reveal Zhang Dai's criticism of his father's weakness in character, as well as his self-indulgence, which was obviously opposite to the conventional criteria of Confucian self-discipline.

Zhang Dai's attitude toward his ancestors was complex. On the one hand, he admired the ancestors' achievements, was grateful for the contributions they made to the Zhang family; on the other hand, he also noticed their undeniable shortcomings or failures. One thing noteworthy is that after each biography Zhang Dai also attached a very brief introduction to the spouse. For these female characters, Zhang Dai was full of praise and admiration. For example, great-great-grandmother was far-sighted. She advised Tianfu to retreat at the peak of his career. Zhang Dai's mother was thoughtful and giving. She understood her husband's distress and supported all his luxurious hobbies as consolation: "My mother told me, your father got old quickly and his goal (success in the exam) was unreachable. May the garden and music comfort him, and let him relieve his loneliness."¹⁰¹ 尔父冯唐易老，河清难俟，或使其适意园亭，陶情丝竹，庶可以解其岑寂。Compared to his conventional perception of these females, Zhang Dai's frankness in recording the negative aspects of his male ancestors is impressive and unconventional.

Attached to the "Family Biography" are three biographies Zhang Dai wrote for his indirect paternal relatives, that is, his second uncle Zhang Baosheng 张葆生, third uncle Zhang Erhan 张尔含, and seventh uncle Zhang Eryun 张尔蕴. The reason Zhang Dai wrote such "attached biographies", as he said, is "(my uncles) have no

¹⁰¹ Zhang Dai "Jia zhuan", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 165.

biographies yet and might never have any. Indeed some people went to their end silently without being recorded, but my three uncles are worthy of biographies. All of them had both strengths and flaws. Their strengths probably are not worth being recorded, but their flaws really are. Xie Dashen¹⁰² once said, I'd rather be an imperfect jade than a perfect stone. Because it is flaws make a piece of jade precious. Then how dare I cover my uncles' flaws and lose their jade?"¹⁰³ 尚未有传，则是终无传也已。人之死而寂寂终无传者有之矣，惜乎吾三叔者，皆可传之人也。三叔者，有瑜有瑕，言其瑜则未必传，言其瑕则的的乎其可传也。解大绅曰：宁为有瑕玉，勿作无暇石。然则瑕也者，正其所以为玉也，吾敢掩其瑕以失吾三叔之玉乎哉！

Zhang Dai was aware that according to traditional standards, his three uncles were not qualified for a biography, so they would just silently vanish. Such fear impelled him to write biographies for them. Also he showed his basic understanding of writing biography, that is, anyone with special features should be recorded.

Second uncle was a successful collector; he was fond of collecting antiques as well as concubines. After his death, his collections were devoured by his son Yanke, and all his concubines remarried. Then Zhang Dai sighed that "My second uncle was obsessed with old things, and wouldn't give up easily even a small one. However what he collected, antiques or women, disappeared like illusions so quickly. So there is actually nothing permanent in one's desire and obsession. What's the need to be busily scheming every day?"¹⁰⁴ 仲叔嗜古，即一隅一廛不肯轻弃。而铜雀诸妓可谓

¹⁰² Xie Jin 解缙 (1369-1415) was the first Prime Minister of the Ming Dynasty, Dashen 大绅 was his *zi*.

¹⁰³ Zhang Dai "Attached Biography", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 168.

¹⁰⁴ Zhang Dai "Attached Biography", in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 170

朝夕西陵，乃不移时而散如泡幻。则是货利嗜欲之中，无吾驻足之地，何必终日劳劳持筹握算也？

Third uncle was obsessed with power. Though he was just a confidential secretary in Beijing, the information he could access made him powerful in the bureaucracy. He was also the middleman in corruption among officials. His pursuit of power finally put him in a complex lawsuit; he then died because of it.

Seventh uncle was obsessed with violence. In his earlier life he was the leader of a local gang. At the age of twenty, seventh uncle suddenly became interested in learning, and he used only three years to make great achievement. Seventh uncle was also extremely impatient. Once when he was sick, the doctor prescribed strong medicine for him and instructed him to take a little of it everyday for three months. Seventh uncle replied, “Who can wait that long?”¹⁰⁵ 谁能耐此？ He took all the medicine in one day and died because of the overdose.

These accounts testified to Zhang Dai’s judgment. None of these three men were qualified to be a subject of a didactic biography. However they are vivid, lively and impressive because of their shortcomings. Such an idea is presented even more vividly in the final series of biographies.

At the beginning of “Biographies for Five Eccentric Men”, Zhang Dai repeated his criterion for judging people. “I am unable to get along with a person without obsessions, for he doesn’t have deep feelings, and I am unable to get along with a person without flaws, for he doesn’t have genuineness.” Based on this criterion,

¹⁰⁵ Zhang Dai “Attached Biography”, in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 174.

Zhang Dai believed that these five men each deserved a biography. “My grand-uncle Ruiyang was obsessed with money, his brother Mustache Zhang was obsessed with wine. My uncle Ziyuan was extremely choleric, my cousin Yanke was indulgent in building gardens, and my brother Boning was obsessed with poetry and books. Their emotions were deep. When they were young, those emotions were their flaws; after they grew up, those emotions became their obsessions. These five men didn’t care about a biography. Nevertheless, their obsessions forced me to write biographies for them.”¹⁰⁶ 余家瑞阳之癖于钱，髯张之癖于酒，紫渊之癖于气，燕客之癖于土木，伯凝之癖于书史，其一往深情，小则成疵，大则成癖。五人者皆无意于传，而五人之负癖若此，盖亦不得不传之者矣。

Among them, stories about Yanke are most entertaining. He was the only son of second uncle, spoiled, extraordinarily arrogant, impatient and wasteful. There were several anecdotes about him. One says, “Once he spent hundreds of gold pieces buying a girl. Not pleased, he sent her away after only one night.”¹⁰⁷ 尝以数百金买妾，过一夜，不惬意，即出之。In another one, “He bought an ancient bronze stove for fifty gold pieces. The color was not perfect, and someone suggested reforging it. Yanke used a basket of carbon, fanned a good blaze around it. The stove melted down immediately. Yanke shouted, Ahh!”¹⁰⁸ 曾以五十金买一宣铜炉，颜色不甚佳，或云火拂之自妙。燕客用炭一簍，以猛火扇之，顷刻融化，失声曰“呀” After elaborating Yanke’s wastefulness, Zhang Dai then suddenly mentioned his loyalty to the Ming dynasty. Unlike Zhang Dai, Yanke followed Prince Lu and died in 1646; his

¹⁰⁶ Zhang Dai “Biography for Five Eccentric Men”, in *LHWJ*, juan 4, pp. 175-176.

¹⁰⁷ Zhang Dai “Biography for Five Eccentric Men”, in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 184.

¹⁰⁸ Zhang Dai “Biography for Five Eccentric Men”, in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 185.

last words were “After my death, dump me in the Qiantang River 钱塘江. It’s regretful that my body can not be wrapped in horsehide, so being wrapped in a leather bag is also fine.”¹⁰⁹ 我死，弃我于钱塘江，恨不能裹尸马革，乃得裹鸱夷皮足矣。

From these brief introductions to and summaries of the biographies devoted to the Zhang family, it is not hard to see the common ground shared by several generations. Many of them were diligent in learning but often suffered frustrations. Their careers were marked by many failures. They easily turned to self-abandonment and self-indulgence when at a low ebb. Some of them had unexplainable contradictions in their personalities, the boundary between villainy and virtue was usually fluid. And of course, most of the Zhang males, especially among the younger generations, had incurable obsessions. All these accounts are not suitable for conventional biography with its affirmative didactic purposes. However, Zhang Dai frankly recorded them, highlighted them, and even tried to defend them. By depicting the subjects’ hidden aspects, which they might not want the public to know, Zhang Dai created a more personal narrative space in his biographical essays than could be done in conventional biographies. In this space, Zhang Dai owned more autonomy, he conveyed his personal understandings, selected remembrances for the subjects, and embodied what he thought essential to illuminate the subjects without limitations. By issuing every male relative a biography, Zhang Dai legitimized the subject’s private self, as well as their failures, shortcomings, and eccentricities. In a word, the private self was identified in Zhang Dai’s writings.

¹⁰⁹ Zhang Dai “Biography for Five Eccentric Men”, in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 185.

Moreover, such writings can also be seen as Zhang Dai's self-expression. First, as introduced at the beginning of this chapter, in the traditional view, an individual's identity is recognized in his social context, and family is the basic and most influential dimension in such a context. Zhang Dai's family had been torn apart by both the stream of time and the dynastic transition. Only in the action of writing a family biography could Zhang Dai rebuild the context. Second, due to the autonomy within Zhang Dai's writing, the way Zhang Dai depicted his subjects also reflected how he depicted himself. Zhang Dai paid close attention to his family members' failures, frustrations and obsessions. Of course these things did exist in the reality of the past, but when Zhang Dai highlighted them in his remembrances, he actually saw his ancestors' fate cast upon his own fate, his peers' shortcomings indicated his own shortcomings. Did not Zhang Dai fail many times in the civil service exam? Did not he participate in his cousin's wasteful behavior even try to compete with him? Was not he now in the same, if not more tragic, frustration that his great-great-grandfather and his father had once experienced? By recording, mourning and showing sympathy for his subjects, Zhang Dai also defined his own life and personality in a very veiled way.

Though the purpose of self-reflection and self-defining was not asserted directly in his writings, Zhang Dai did use an interesting story to suggest his contradictory emotions when composing family records. At the beginning of the "Family Biography", Zhang Dai said,

Once, a leper woman gave birth to a son in the middle of the night. She

rushed to bring a lamp and looked at the baby, worried that he might look like her. Fortunately none of my ancestors was a leper. My biographies can not be the exact images of my ancestors. At night, when I get a light and look at what I write, I feel fearful that I might not look like them. This feeling is just the same as the leper woman's.¹¹⁰ 厉之人，夜半生其子，遽取火而视之，汲汲然惟恐其似己也。岱之高曾祖考，幸而不为厉之人。而岱之传而不能酷肖吾高曾祖考。则夜半取火而视之惟恐其似己，与惟恐其不似己，其心则一也。

The self-consciousness is clearly represented in this metaphorical comparison. Contrary to the leper woman who worried that her son would inherit her disfigurement, Zhang Dai worried that he and his writing might not be similar to his ancestors. What he really intended to do, when he lit a lamp and wrote biographies for his family members during the night, was to find the bond between him and his family, namely, the continuity between the past self and the current self.

5.3 Self-defining—Zhang Dai's autobiographical writing

Since Zhang Dai wrote a lot about his ancestors and peers, people may wonder how he regarded his own children, for they were the continuation of the Zhang family. In a poem titled “Jiawu erbei fu shengshi bugui zoubi zhaozhi” 甲午儿辈赴省试不归走笔招之 [In 1654, writing to call back my sons who didn't return from the provincial examination], Zhang Dai said:

¹¹⁰ Zhang Dai “Family Biography”, in *LHWJ*, juan 4, p. 155.

My first son wanders everywhere, barely making a living for himself.

In the name of studying, my second son is just greedy for wine.

My third son is fond of playing, considering his friends as his life.

My fourth son has great ambition, but he is just boastful.

My two youngest sons only know how to cry, pulling my coat and asking for water chestnuts and lotus roots.

The old man's energy declines, will there be another year for me?¹¹¹

大儿走四方，仅供糊其口。次儿名读书，清馋只好酒。三儿惟嬉游，性命在朋友。四儿好志气，大言不惭愧。二稚更善啼，牵衣索菱藕。老人筋力衰，知有来年否？

Despite the tolerance and even praise of the shortcomings of his ancestors and peers, Zhang Dai expressed intense disappointment toward his children. Such disappointment was not only due to his sons' idleness but further lay in their compromise with the new reign. Taking the civil service examination under Qing rule was still considered dishonorable behavior among the *yimin*. Actually, even in 1679, when the Kangxi 康熙 Emperor (r. 1661-1722) opened a special metropolitan examination to recruit Han intellectuals, which was called Boxue hongci ke 博学宏词科 [examination of erudition and grand lyrics], many famous *yimin*, such as Gu Yanwu, Huang Zongxi and Fu Shan 傅山 (1607-1684), still refused to take part. However, the *yimin* could not prevent the next generation from attempting to join the

¹¹¹ Zhang Dai, *ZDSWJ*, juan 2, p. 31.

new order. Facing such a dilemma, Zhang Dai expressed his helplessness in this situation, “my sons are chasing after achievement and fame, they abandoned me like an old broom.”¹¹² 儿辈慕功名，撇我如敝帚。

This sense of being abandoned in another aspect of his life reveals Zhang Dai’s crisis of identity. As a symbol of the past dynasty, Zhang Dai, like many other *yimin*, was doomed to be marginalized and gradually became unknown politically and socially. Further, “One is dead, but his essence and spirit are uninterruptedly succeeded by his offspring”¹¹³ 身没而子孙之精气相承以不间 is the ideal Confucian view of how the continuation of an individual’s identity is guaranteed. However, the existence of *yimin* and their identities was bounded in one generation only. The new generation had understandings and expectations of the new dynasty that were different from those of their fathers; they would no longer hold a reclusive and loyal attitude. In this sense, the *yimin* actually had no successors.

Zhang Dai felt he was abandoned like an old broom. Would there be anyone to record his life, just as he did for his ancestors? How will the future generations see him and judge him? These questions must have been considered by Zhang Dai as a historian and a man with immense self-consciousness. Thus, in 1666, when Zhang Dai was sixty nine years old, he wrote a tomb epitaph for himself.

Like biography, an epitaph records the subject’s life, characteristics and achievements. By engraving such an account on a stone tablet set in front of the

¹¹² Zhang Dai, *ZDSWJ*, juan 2, p. 31.

¹¹³ Wang Fuzhi, *Du tongjian lun* 读通鉴论, Taipei: Zhong hua shu ju 中华书局, 1965, juan 13, p. 484.

subject's grave, the epitaph clearly delivers the expectation that the subject will be identified and remembered in the future. Usually the composing of an epitaph was delegated by the decedent's family to a suitable person; sometimes a person who felt the social obligation would also spontaneously write an epitaph. Since the purpose of the epitaph was to praise the decedent and honor his family, the content, besides basic biographical information, was mostly focused on the decedent's glorious moments and his achievements in a somewhat flattering tone.¹¹⁴

A self-written tomb epitaph also embodies the writer's strong desire for being remembered. The writer looks back to his life as if it had already ended and he tries to make a final account of what he has done and how he thinks about himself. In this sense, a self-written tomb epitaph is very close to an autobiography, which was not an independent genre in classical Chinese literature. The author's hope lies in the future--by summing up his past, he wishes to preserve the most important things of his life for later generations and tries to mold the way they will be received and understood. The following is how Zhang Dai depicted his own story.

Zhang Dai was a man of Sichuan Province, and Tao'an was his professional name. In his youth he was a profligate son of the rich, who had an extreme addiction for luxury. He loved delicate buildings, beautiful maids and handsome lads. He liked gorgeous apparel and delicious food. He liked fine horses, colorful lanterns, fireworks, operas, court music, antiques,

¹¹⁴ Denis Twitchett particularly discussed Chinese tomb inscriptions' origin and development in "Problems of Chinese Biography", in *Confucian Personalities*, ed. Wright Arthur F. & Denis Twitchett, Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1962, pp. 24-42.

flowers and birds. Besides, he was also an expert at appreciating green tea, a glutton for oranges, a bookworm and a huge fan of poetry. He worked hard on these hobbies for the first half of his life, but then everything turned out to be an illusion.

In his fifties, his nation was broken and his family declined. He had to hide in the mountains. What remained to him were only some pieces of old furniture, including a broken bed and a small table, a bronze tripod cauldron with missing legs, an out-of-tune zither, some incomplete volumes, as well as a cracked ink stone. His clothes and food were coarse, and he frequently had nothing to cook. Looking back on his life of twenty years ago, it was really like another world.

When he judged himself, there were always seven unexplainable contradictions. In the past as a common person wearing cotton cloth, he was able to lead a noble's life, but now as a descendant of his old and prominent family he actually lives like a beggar. In this way the eminent and the humble are tangled. This is the first unexplainable thing.

Although his fortune was just average, he desired to compete with Shi Chong.¹¹⁵ Now there are many shortcuts leading to success in the world, but he just stays in the mountains waiting [like the stupid farmer waiting for a rabbit to hit the tree]. In this case, the poor and the rich are opposite. This is the second unexplainable thing.

¹¹⁵ Shi Chong 石崇 (249-300) was the richest man in the Jin 晋 Dynasty. His famous Golden Valley 金谷园 was a symbol of the opulent estate in classical Chinese literature.

As a scholar he had fought on the battlefield, while as a general he also exceeded others in literature, thus, the civil life and the military life are intertwined. This is the third unexplainable thing.

If he had accompanied the Jade Emperor in heaven, he wouldn't be flattering. If he had accompanied beggars from the poorhouse, he wouldn't be arrogant. Then the distinction between superior and inferior are indistinguishable. This is the fourth unexplainable thing.

When he was weak, if people spat on his face, he would leave the spit to dry by itself. When he was strong, he dared to fight the enemy all alone. Thus gentleness and fierceness are mixed. This is the fifth unexplainable thing.

He was willing to be behind other people when competing for profit and fame. But he never let others precede him in watching plays or games. Thus he was wrong in assigning degrees of importance. This is the sixth unexplainable thing.

In playing the game of go, chess, or dice, he couldn't tell winning from losing, but when drinking tea and tasting water, he was able to distinguish waters from different rivers. Thus his wisdom and stupidity were entangled. This is the seventh unexplainable thing.

With these seven unexplainable paradoxes that he himself cannot understand, how could he hope for other people's understanding? So he can be called a rich man or a poor, a wise man or a fool, a strong man or a

coward, also an irascible man or a relaxed one.

He failed at learning calligraphy, swordsmanship, integrity and loyalty, composition, alchemy, Buddhism, farming and gardening. Everything he attempted to learn failed. So he let people call him a prodigal, a waster, a bulldog, a numb scholar, a sleepy man, and an old ghost.

His first courtesy name was Zongzi. Since people called him Shigong [Sir Stone], then he changed it to Shigong. He was always fond of writing books. His finished writings included *Shigui shu*, *Zhang shi jia zhuan*, *Yi lie zhuan*, *Langhuan wenjie*, *Ming yi*, *Da yi yong*, *Shi que*, *Shishu yu*, *Meng yi*, *Shuo ling*, *Changgu jie*, *Kuai yuan dao gu*, *Xi lang shi ji*, *Xihu mengxun*, and *Yi juan bing xue wen*..

He was born on the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month in the *dingyou* year (1597) of the Wanli reign period during *mao* hour of the night. He was the descendant of Sir Dadi, who used to be the prime minister of the State of Lu. His mother was Lady Tao. Because of a phlegmatic disease bothering him often in his childhood, he was taken care of by his maternal grandmother Lady Ma for ten years. Sir Yungu, his maternal grandfather, was an official in charge of Guangdong Province and Guangxi Province. He collected several cases of *Shengniu Huang* balls. From my birth to my sixteen year I kept taking this medicine until I recovered.

When I was six years old, Sir Yuruo, my paternal grandfather, took me to Wulin (Hangzhou), where we met Sir Meigong. He was riding on a

one-horned deer and traveling to Qiantang. He said to my grandfather, “I’ve heard that your grandson is good at composing couplets. Could I test him face to face?” Then he pointed at a screen, where was hanging a picture of Li Bai sitting on a whale, and he said, “Riding on a whale, Taibai is the dragging night moon out of the water by the Caishi River.” I replied, “Sitting on a deer, Meigong is seeking money from his friends in Qiantang County.” Meigong burst out laughing, jumped up and said, “How could you be so brilliant? You are really my little friend.” And thus he considered helping me to get the greatest achievement. He definitely didn’t realize that I would get nowhere in the future.

After 1644, my time was quickly fiddled away. I was unable to either seek death or to make a living. My hair is all white but thick, and I still meaninglessly keep stealing life in the world. My only fear is that my life would disappear suddenly just like a morning dewdrop, and my body would decay along with nameless grass and trees. And then I thought about those previous persons, such as Wang Ji,¹¹⁶ Tao Qian and Xu Wei,¹¹⁷ all of whom had written tomb epitaphs for themselves. Then I decided to blindly imitate them though it could be ludicrous. However, every time when I began plotting my own epitaph, I found that neither my literary talent nor my personality was good enough. So I put down my pen again and again. Even so, frankly recording my addictions and mistakes could probably make a

¹¹⁶ Wang Ji 王绩 (585-644) was a famous poet and hermit in the Tang Dynasty.

¹¹⁷ Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593) was a famous painter, essayist, and play writer in the Ming Dynasty. He was also a close friend to Zhang Dai’s great-grandfather.

good biography.

On the Jitou Mountain in Xiangwang Village, I have built a tomb for myself. My friend Li Yanzhai wrote an inscription saying “Alas! The tomb of Tao’an Zhang Changgong, a famous writer and a great Confucian in the Ming”. Boluan was a man with noble character, so his grave was near to Yaoli’s.¹¹⁸ That’s the reason why I chose Xiangwang Village. Next year I will be seventy years old. But since the exact dates of my death and burial are still unknown, I don’t write them here.

The epigraph states:

Poor Shi Chong competed for wealth in the Jingu garden,

Blind Bian He presented an unpolished priceless jade.

Old Lian Po fought in the Zhuolu battlefield,

Castrated Sima Qian wrote the grand *Shi ji*.

Su Dongpo was gluttonous,

the princes of the Guzhu Country were hungry.

How could the Grand Official Baili Xi sell himself for just five sheepskins?¹¹⁹

All the attempts to intimate Tao Qian and Mei Fu¹²⁰ are just in vain.

It is a must to find the “Three-out wild man” Zheng Sixiao,¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Boluan 伯鸾 was the *zi* of Liang Hong 梁鸿, a famous hermit in the East Han Dynasty. Yao Li 要离 was a famous righteous assassin of the State Wu. After Liang Hong’s death, he was buried near Yao Li’s tomb for they both had noble minds.

¹¹⁹ Baili Xi 百里奚 was a capable official who served Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (died 621 BC). Duke Mu paid five sheepskins as the ransom to buy Baili Xi back from the State of Chu 楚国.

¹²⁰ Mei Fu 梅福 (fl. BC 8-BC 14) was a famous hermit in the East Han Dynasty.

Then the words from the bottom of my heart will be understood.¹²²

In the tomb epitaph, Zhang Dai aimed at recording the unique and memorable things of his life in order to secure his identity from oblivion. The crisis of identity never stopped haunting him as he stated that “my life would disappear suddenly just like a morning dewdrop, and my body would decay along with the nameless grass and trees.” Thus, he intimated Tao Qian, Wang Ji and Xu Wei to write a final account to preserve his identity. Just like these three predecessors who claimed that they had no significance to the public, Zhang Dai also deconstructed his identity in the public sphere. By stating all his failures and uselessness, Zhang Dai depicted himself as a totally insignificant “nobody” who can be called by any offensive term. Except for a couple of anecdotes to demonstrate his smart childhood, Zhang Dai did not share any public experience in the epitaph. Even the most important historical event—the fall of the Ming dynasty—was understated. Instead, Zhang Dai refined the depiction of himself in a totally private sphere.

At the beginning of the epitaph, Zhang Dai listed all his eccentricities and obsessions in order to define himself. These obsessions, from the common ones to the unusual ones, such as the love of pretty boys, were all dealing with self-amusement. Although these obsessions had no significance to the public--some might even be considered improper and extremely trivial--their legitimacy had been proved by Zhang Dai in both the memoirs about eccentric persons and the biographies of his

¹²¹ Zheng Sixiao 郑思肖 (1241-1318) was a famous loyalist to the Southern Song Dynasty, and “San wai ye ren” 三外野人 [three-out wild man] was his *zi*.

¹²² Zhang Dai “Zi wei mu zhi ming”, *LHWJ*, Vol. 5, pp. 294-295.

family members. Obsession, as Zhang Dai stated before, is the direct proof of one's true feelings and generousness. In turn, people with obsessions will be identified and are worthy of being remembered. Zhang Dai's obsessions remind us of his great-great-grandfather and grand-father who liked opera, his father who had a greedy appetite, his second uncle who collected antiques, and his own weird friends. Thus, such an inflation of his obsessions can be seen as a series of hallmarks, which identified Zhang Dai in the specific late-Ming cultural context.

Another stunning thing in this epitaph is Zhang Dai's thorough exploration of the inner self. He included seven paradoxes within his personality. Generally, in conventional Chinese biography, a subject's personality was stereotyped and represented changelessly throughout his whole life--very often one's virtue might have been displayed by his behavior in childhood. Even in autobiographical accounts, the authors tended to represent the self with consistency. For example, Tao Qian in his "Sacrifice to himself ode" 自祭文 depicted himself as a detached hermit, who was poor but self-amused. He had no regret for the earthly life and would welcome his death with peace, "Today I will ascend to heaven, there should be no regret for me. My life spans one hundred years, what I admire is complete reclusion. Dying of old age, I have no sentimental attachment. The winter and the summer pass by turns, death is another existence."¹²³ 余今斯化，可以无恨。寿涉百龄，身慕肥遁。从老得终，奚所复恋。寒暑愈迈，亡既异存。 There is no struggle or contradiction expressed in Tao Qian's narrative. Just the opposite, Zhang Dai's personality was

¹²³ Tao Qian, "Zi ji wen", *Jingjie xiansheng ji* 靖节先生集, Taipei: Zhong hua shu ju 中华书局, 1965, juan 7, p.5.

unsettled, struggling and full of paradoxes. Every paradox reveals Zhang Dai's intense self-awareness. Such an outpouring of his fundamental characteristics provides a comprehensive image of Zhang Dai's inner self and defines the boundary of his personality.

Although Zhang Dai had asserted his self-identification by his obsessions and the complexity of his personality, which are specific enough to distinguish him from anyone else, he still turned to the power of the historical allusion. In the final verse, he cited several famous historical figures to indicate every important aspect of his life. Every allusion can find its match in Zhang Dai's story. Shi Chong's story indicates his luxurious early life and the sudden reversal of his fate; Bian He and the famous unpolished priceless jade *He shi bi* 和氏璧 both reveal Zhang Dai's resignation of not being understood; Lian Po was a tragic figure who missed an opportunity and his talent was finally buried, while Baili Xi was just the opposite. Sima Qian was the most famous example who suffered a catastrophe in his life but still persisted in his academic pursuit, he thus was a very close foil to Zhang Dai. Zhang Dai admired Su Dongpo's literary talent and the virtues of Bo Yi and Shu Qi. Ironically, although Zhang Dai was an expert gourmet like Su Dongpo, his life was as destitute as Bo Yi and Shu Qi's. Tao Qian and Mei Fu were famous hermits, but Zhang Dai might never be able to attain their extremely aloof attitude to society, so the attempt to intimate them was only in vain. Zhang Dai told us that the most important figure was Zheng Sixiao 郑思肖 (1241-1318), a famous loyalist to the Southern Song Dynasty. In 1638, a volume of historical records concerning the fall of the Song, written by Zheng

Sixiao, was found at the bottom of a well at Suzhou, sealed in an iron box. Zhang Dai undoubtedly was inspired by this legendary deed and sympathized with the same situation he shared with Zheng Sixiao, and considered Zheng the exact parallel of his life. This assimilation of an individual's life into the history and cultural tradition demonstrated that "a dialectical movement between assertion of the self and reintegration into the great family of the world runs throughout Chinese classical literature."¹²⁴

In sum, in the tomb epitaph, Zhang Dai defined his life and his identity in the personal sphere. He emphasized his obsessions and eccentricities, and highlighted his complicated personality. By doing so, he defined his existence and relieved his fear of oblivion, not in substance but in some inner core of private and personal meanings, of which he could find echoes in his family tradition, in the late Ming culture and in a much broader historical context.

¹²⁴ Stephen Owen, *Remembrance: the Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 133.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This essay analyzes Zhang Dai's life and his major literary work, and argues that the expression of self is the core of his writings. By contextualizing Zhang Dai's work in the Ming-Qing dynastic transition, this essay explains the hidden motives of Zhang Dai to justify, preserve and identify his self through literary practice, suggests that this explosion of self-expression is not only a literary response to the historical event of dynastic transition, but also a reflection of the cultural and literary trends of the 17th century. This essay also provides close readings and genre study to Zhang Dai's poems, prose and biographical writings, and demonstrates how the expression of the writer's self works in different types of literary genres.

Dynastic transition, individual and self-expression

Self-expression, as an eternal theme of literature, came to the fore in the Ming-Qing transition period. The dynastic change and conquest by outsiders brought radical changes to the society and to the individual. These changes also influenced literary practice and consequently were represented in literary work. In Zhang Dai's case, he lost his home, wealth, and leisure life in the chaos. More crucially, the dynastic transition fundamentally threatened his social and cultural identity. Thus, seeking and preserving his inner self is at the core of his writings. In Chapter Three I analyzed Zhang Dai's anxiety of self-existence. From his writings, we see a shameful person who failed to accomplish his social duty trying to justify his life. In his poems, Zhang Dai clearly expressed the anxiety of existence of *yimin*. By referring to the topic of

life and death intensely and dialectically, Zhang Dai expressed the existential dilemma he confronted, and took writing as the justification for his life. In Chapter Four we see a physically and mentally homeless person looking for his lost home. In Zhang Dai's memoir writing, his nostalgic retrospective of private daily life, especially his memories about buildings and eccentric people, connected him with the past physical and cultural world, in which the self found its mental habitat. In Chapter Five, I argued that Zhang Dai's biographical writings about his family and himself reveal his crisis of identity caused by the transition. We see a wild man who lived in the gap between the past and the future seeking for the continuity of his family and cultural tradition. Biography is the most direct way to preserve one's identity. Through his biographical accounts Zhang Dai secured his identity in family tradition, in the late Ming cultural context and in the connection with the historical legacy.

In Zhang Dai's work, an interaction between historical event and literary practice is demonstrated. His crisis of self-existence and identity evoked by the dynastic transition became the major motif and theme of Zhang Dai's writing; in turn, the power to create a space where the self can be placed and preserved as an escape from deconstructive reality was found in writing.

The image of self—innovation and convention

Zhang Dai's work provides us an opportunity to observe how an individual and the meaning of his/her life were judged and understood in the 17th century. I found that Zhang Dai's depictions of himself, his family members, and his friends especially dwell on the individual's inner uniqueness and personal characteristics instead of their

social roles or moral status. In his autobiographical account, Zhang Dai depicted himself as a “nobody” in the public world, but a unique person with obsessions, eccentricities, and multiple personalities in the inner world. Such an image of the self, as well as other portraits in Zhang Dai’s work, is fresh and unconventional. Zhang Dai’s writings dealing with people illustrate that in the 17th century a new perspective emphasizing the individual and the true nature of the human being was established in the culture and literature.

Meanwhile, an individual must be identified in connection with family and society. Zhang Dai, who lived at the transition point from one era to another, tried to re-achieve this connection. He found reflections of his self not only in the biographies of his ancestors but also in Chinese cultural tradition. In this sense, Zhang Dai’s writings also represent the conventional Confucian view about the individual.

Questions about the genre

I also noticed an innovation and negotiation of literary genre in Zhang Dai’s writings. The tradition of classic Chinese literature did not provide a mature and independent literary genre for the topic of self-expression. As Pei-yi Wu noted, “First-person narratives such as travel literature, eyewitness accounts of campaigns or missions, or autobiographical fiction did not exist in ancient China.”¹²⁵ The expression of self is embodied in various literary media, but very often indirectly and with restraint. Prose is highly public-oriented in classic literature. But in Zhang Dai’s essay collection *Tao’an meng yi*, an innovative subgenre of prose, namely the *xiaopin*

¹²⁵ Pei-yi Wu, *The Confucian’s Progress: Autobiographical Writings in Traditional China*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, p.4.

style, provides a non-public, informal narrative form to convey the writer's personal life experience and memories. Biography is also a literary genre that does not express the personal voice. However, in the biographies written for his family, by applying the writer's subjectivity in deciding how to represent his subjects as well as what is essential to construct a person's identity, a formerly-invisible narrator appeared in the text. In this way, Zhang Dai broke the limitations of generic conventions, and made his biographical writings a direct self-reflection.

Zhang Dai's life experience may seem dramatic and impressive for people who never experienced such drastic changes and sufferings. However, in the Ming-Qing period, he was just an ordinary intellectual who faced the irresistibly deconstructive power of the historical transition and struggled not to be buried and silently forgotten in the stream of time. It is amazing that even hundreds of years later we still can see the most essential self he tried to preserve and construct through his writings, vividly, recognizably, and convincingly.

APPENDIX A

SELF-WRITTEN PREFACE TO *SHIGUI SHU*

石匱书自序

能为史者，不能为史者，东坡是也，不能为史者，能为史者也，弇州是也。弇州高抬眼，阔开口，饱蘸笔，眼前腕下，实实有非我作史，更有谁作之见，横据其胸中。史遂不能果作，而作不复能佳，是皆其能为史之一念有以误之也。太史公其得意诸传，皆以无意得之，不苟袭一字，不轻下一笔，银钩铁勒，简练之手，出以生涩，至其论赞，则淡淡数语，非颊上三毫，则睛中一画，墨汁斗许，亦将安所用之也？后世得此意者，惟东坡一人。而无奈其持之坚，拒之峻，欧阳文忠、王荆公力劝之不为动，其真有见于史之不易作与史之不可作也。嗟嗟！东坡且犹不肯作，则后之作者亦难乎其人矣。

余之作史，尚不能万一弇州，敢言东坡？第见有明一代，国史失诬，家史失谏，野史失臆，故以二百八十二年总成一诬妄之世界。余家自太仆公以下，留心三世，聚书极多。余小子苟不稍事撰述，则茂先家藏三十余乘，亦且荡为冷烟，鞠为茂草矣。余自崇祯戊辰，泚笔辞书，十有七年而遽遭国变，携其副本，屏迹深山，又研究十年，而甫能成帙。……五易其稿，九正其讹，稍有未核，宁阙勿书。故今所成书者，上际洪武，下迄天启，后皆阙之，以俟论定。余故不能为史，而不得不为其所不能为，故无所辞罪。然能为史而不能为史者，世尚不乏其人，余其执简俟之矣。

APPENDIX B

PREFACE TO MENG YI

梦忆序

陶庵国破家亡，无所归止。披发入山，駢駢为野人。故旧见之，如毒药猛兽，愕望不敢与接。作《自挽诗》，每欲引决，因《石匱书》未成，尚视息人世。然瓶粟屡罄，不能举火。始知首阳二老，直头饿死，不食周粟，还是后人妆点语也。因思昔人生长王谢，颇事豪华，今日罹此果报：以笠报颅，以蓑报踵，仇簪履也；以衲报裘，以苎报絺，仇轻暖也；以藿报肉，以粝报粳，仇甘旨也；以荐报牀，以石报枕，仇温柔也；以绳报枢，以瓮报牖，仇爽垲也；以烟报目，以粪报鼻，仇香艳也；以途报足，以囊报肩，仇輿从也。种种罪案，从种种果报中见之。

鸡鸣枕上，夜气方回。因想余生平，繁华靡丽，过眼皆空，五十年来，总成一梦。今当黍熟黄粱，车旋蚁穴，当作如何消受？遥思往事，忆即书之，持问佛前，一一忏悔。不次岁月，异年谱也；不分门类，别《志林》也。偶拈一则，如游旧径，如见故人，城郭人民，翻用自喜。真所谓痴人前不得说梦矣。

昔有西陵脚夫，为人担酒，失足破其瓮。念无以偿，痴坐伫想曰：“得是梦便好！”一寒士乡试中式，方赴鹿鸣宴，恍然犹意未真，自啮其臂曰：“莫是梦否？”一梦耳，惟恐其非梦，又惟恐其是梦，其为痴人则一也。余今大梦将寤，犹事雕虫，又是一番梦呓。因叹慧业文人，名心难化，政如邯郸梦断，漏尽钟鸣，卢生遗表，犹思摹榻二王，以流传后世。则其名根一点，坚固如佛家舍利，劫火猛烈，犹烧之不失也。

APPENDIX C

LANG HUAN FU DI

琅嬛福地

陶庵梦有夙因，常梦至一石厂，崢岿岩峩，前有急湍洄溪，水落如雪，松石奇古，杂以名花。梦坐其中，童子进茗果，积书满架，开卷视之，多蝌蚪、鸟迹、霹雳篆文，梦中读之，似能通其棘涩。闲居无事，夜辄梦之，醒后伫思，欲得一胜地仿佛为之。郊外有一小山，石骨棱砺，上多筠篁，偃伏园内。余欲造厂，堂东西向，前后轩之，后磔一石坪，植黄山松数棵，奇石映之。堂前树娑罗二，资其清樾。左附虚室，坐对山麓，磴磴齿齿，划裂如试剑，匾曰“一丘”。右踞厂阁三间，前临大沼，秋水明瑟，深柳读书，匾曰“一壑”。

缘山以北，精舍小房，绀屈蜿蜒，有古木，有层崖，有小涧，有幽篁，节节有致。山尽有佳穴，造生圻，俟陶庵蜕焉，碑曰“呜呼有明陶庵张长公之圻”。圻左有空地亩许，架一草庵，供佛，供陶庵像，迎僧住之奉香火。大沼阔十亩许，沼外小河三四折，可纳舟入沼。河两岸皆高阜，可植果木，以橘、以梅、以梨、以枣，枸菊围之。山顶可亭。山之西鄙，有腴田二十亩，可秫可秔。门临大河，小楼翼之，可看炉峰、敬亭诸山。楼下门之，匾曰“琅嬛福地”。缘河北走，有石桥极古朴，上有灌木，可坐、可风、可月。

APPENDIX D

SELF-WRITTEN TOMB EPITAPH

自为墓志铭

蜀人张岱，陶庵其号也。少为纨绔子弟，极爱繁华，好精舍，好美婢，好娈童，好鲜衣，好美食，好骏马，好华灯，好烟火，好梨园，好鼓吹，好古董，好花鸟，兼以茶淫橘虐，书蠹诗魔，劳碌半生，皆成梦幻。年至五十，国破家亡，避迹山居，所存者破床碎几，折鼎病琴，与残书数帙，缺砚一方而已。布衣蔬食，常至断炊。回首二十年前，真如隔世。

常自评之，有七不可解：向以韦布而上拟公侯，今以世家而下同乞丐，如此则贵贱紊矣，不可解一；产不及中人，而欲齐驱金谷，世颇多捷径，而独株守於陵，如此则贫富舛矣，不可解二；以书生而践戎马之场，以将军而翻文章之府，如此则文武错矣，不可解三；上陪玉帝而不谄，下陪悲田院乞儿而不骄，如此则尊卑溷矣，不可解四；弱则唾面而肯自干，强则单骑而能赴敌，如此则宽猛背矣，不可解五；争利夺名，甘居人后，观场游戏，肯让人先，如此则缓急谬矣，不可解六；博弈擣菹，则不知胜负，啜茶尝水，则能辨澆淄，如此则智愚杂矣，不可解七。有此七不可解，自且不解，安望人解？故称之为富贵人可，称之为贫贱人亦可；称之为智慧人可，称之为愚蠢人亦可；称之为强项人可，称之为柔弱人亦可；称之为卞急人可，称之为懒散人亦可。学书不成，学剑不成，学节义不成，学文章不成，学仙学佛，学农学圃俱不成，任世人呼之为败家子，为废物，为顽民，为钝秀才，为瞌睡汉，为死老魅也已矣。

初字宗子，人称石公，即字石公。好著书，其所成者有《石匱书》、《张氏家谱》、《义烈传》、《琅環文集》、《明易》、《大易用》、《史阙》、《四书遇》、《梦忆》、《说铃》、《昌谷解》、《快园道古》、《侯囊十集》、《西湖梦寻》、《一卷冰雪文》行世。

生于万历丁酉八月二十五日卯时，鲁国相大涤翁之树子也，母曰陶宜人。幼多痰疾，养于外太母马太夫人者十年。外太祖云谷公宦两广，藏生牛黄丸盈数簏，自余困地以至十有六岁，食尽之而厥疾始廖。六岁时，大父雨若翁携余之武林，遇眉公先生跨一角鹿，为钱塘游客，对大父曰：“闻文孙善属对，吾面试之。”指屏上李白骑鲸图曰：“太白骑鲸，采石江边捞夜月。”余应曰：“眉公跨鹿，钱塘县里打秋风。”眉公大笑起跃曰：“那得灵隼若此，吾小友也。”欲进余以千秋之业，岂料余之一事无成也哉？

甲申以后，悠悠忽忽，既不能觅死，又不能聊生，白发婆娑，犹视息人世。恐一旦溘先朝露，与草木同腐，因思古人如王无功、陶靖节、徐文长皆自作墓铭，余亦效顰为之。甫构思，觉人与文俱不佳，辍笔者再。虽然，第言吾之癖错，则亦可传也已。曾营生圻于项王里之鸡头山，友人李研斋题其圻曰：“呜呼，有明著述鸿儒陶庵张长公之圻。”伯鸾高士，冢近要离，余故有取于项里也。明年，年跻七十，死与葬，其日月尚不知也，故不书。铭曰：

穷石崇，斗金谷。盲卞和，献荆玉。老廉颇，战涿鹿。麀龙门，开史局。饑东坡，餓孤竹。五穀大夫，焉能自鬻。空学陶潜，枉希梅福。必也寻三外野人，方晓我之衷曲。

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