

Toward an Extraordinary Everyday: Li Yu's (1611-1680) Vision, Writing, and Practice

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## ABSTRACT

### Toward an Extraordinary Everyday: Li Yu's (1611-1680) Vision, Writing, and Practice

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This dissertation considers how the literatus entrepreneur Li Yu (1610-1680) took advantage of the burgeoning market economy of early Qing China to engineer and market a new experience of the everyday. The world in which Li Yu's cultural products were best sellers was rife with novelty. The Ming dynasty had collapsed in 1644, yet many of its defining features remained: urban centers brimmed with gadgets, both Chinese and foreign, that offered new possibilities for engaging the material world. The status of writing and the reading public was also changing, as more books were published at lower costs than ever before. Li Yu capitalized on this ripe moment to develop and sell cultural products that directed the focus of consumers to the details and possibilities of their everyday. I argue that through his cultural production, Li Yu changed what constituted cultural capital and who had rights to it in the urban centers of southern China in the early Qing.

Li Yu made a brand of his name, which he used to market his fiction and drama as well as intangible products like innovative designs and do-it-yourself technologies. I examine the strategies that traverse the range of his cultural production to demonstrate how he altered the physical makeup of the built environment and the visual experience of theatrical performance, while also revising the ways that they could be represented in language and depicted in narrative. Readers of Li Yu's writing, visitors to his gardens, and audiences for his theatrical productions could expect to encounter particulars: his language zooms in on the material world, narrating the gritty specifics of genitals and dirt; he waxes technical about his rigged stage lighting and dioramic windows. In one of his stories, a man uses a telescope to impersonate a god; in another a wily thief cannot "see" a woman's myopia, and so misjudges her.

At the heart of this study is Li Yu's magnum opus, *Leisure Notes (Xianqing ouji)*, a curious collection of several hundred essays on topics that range from theater direction to heating, choosing a concubine to balustrade design, the art of walking to pomegranate trees. This text has some

commonalities with late-Ming manuals of taste, which documented the fine points of distinction around which people negotiated their status vis-à-vis conspicuous consumption of luxury commodities. In the late Ming, these markers of social distinction were hotly debated as merchants challenged literati claims to rights over cultural capital. I show how Li Yu departs from late-Ming discourse by rejecting luxury commodities to locate discernment instead in readers who join him in experimenting with his reproducible designs and technological improvements in the spaces of their everyday lives. I contend that these experiments reveal the limitations of grand narratives of the day—such as Confucian morality, gender norms, fate, and medicine—by exploiting their contingencies, and by elevating the status of individual experience.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Fred and Dianna Kile.

## INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of his thirtieth birthday in 1641, the child prodigy Li Yu 李漁 (1611-1680) was feeling like something of a has-been. His precociousness had given way to a string of failures in the provincial exam, and he worried that he was growing old without official success. On the evening of his birthday, he composed the following lyric:

There is only a moment's difference between last night and this morning, but it marks the division between old age and youth.  
 You ask how old I am? I've just reached thirty.  
 Yesterday I was still in my twenties, and although I was twenty plus nine years, it could still be considered youth.  
 Alas, although today I can't quite be called old, nor am I any longer young.  
 My wife is also a year older, her only wish to the gods was that I would get an official appointment soon.  
 I got anxious worrying about a position and forgot that it was my birthday.  
 Hearing me sigh as I held my cup, she bent her fingers and frowned in spite of herself:  
 Let's not bring up official matters; instead, let's get drunk together beneath the setting sun.

昨夜今朝，只爭時刻，便將老幼中分。  
 問年華幾許？正滿三旬。  
 昨歲未離雙十，便余九、還算青春。  
 嘆今日雖難稱老，少亦難云。  
 閨人，也添一歲，但神前祝我，早上青雲。  
 待花封心急，忘卻生辰。  
 聽我持杯嘆息，屈纖指、不覺眉顰。  
 封侯事，且休提起，共醉斜曛。<sup>1</sup>

Just three years later, the Ming dynasty, and the world in which he had turned thirty, came to an end, along with his ambitions of official success. Taking refuge in the mountains near Lanxi, Zhejiang, the thirty-three *sui* Li Yu wrote a poem likening his experience as a subject of that

<sup>1</sup> “Fenghuang tai shang yichuixiao 鳳凰台上憶吹簫” in *Naige ci* 耐歌詞, Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 20 vols., vol. 1-2, Li Yu quanji 李漁全集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1992), 2.477-8.

chaotic world to the evanescent life-span of a mayfly (既為亂世民，蜉蝣即同類).<sup>2</sup> Time had collapsed: From an image of himself in the middle of life, growing old while brimming with unfulfilled ambition, emerged a flickering, fugitive self with no past or future. Yet the days wore on, and as they did, Li Yu experimented with what to make of the time they offered him. In what follows, I explore the innovative and profitable experiments he took up under the new dynasty and how he made that time his own. Li Yu's writing, vision, and practice reveal one man's brilliant, singular, and intensely social response to the crisis that accompanied the collapse of the Ming.

### ***The Big Picture***

The year 1644 marked the official end of the Ming, but the transition dragged on with uncertainty from the vantage point of the literati population concentrated in southern Jiangnan, where rebellions and military clashes continued intermittently for several decades.<sup>3</sup> Adults of all social strata who had come of age under the Ming found themselves fleeing their cities and villages, losing their homes and families, and being reduced to take on menial labor to make ends meet. As the tide of dynastic change slowly settled, the late-Ming frame of space and time was disrupted and gave way to a transitional period during which these people were forced to come to terms with financial crises and uprootedness, grapple with fundamental questions of allegiance, and undergo bodily submission to the Manchu dynasty in the form of a shaved forehead and

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<sup>2</sup> “Jiashen jiluan 甲申記亂” in Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 2.8.

<sup>3</sup> There were grounds for this confusion: as Lynn Struve has demonstrated in her study of the Southern Ming, the year “1644 marks neither the end of Ming nor the beginning of [Q]ing. The Manchu leader Khungtaiji proclaimed himself emperor of a new dynasty, the [Q]ing, in 1636; and the last Ming prince to claim sovereignty over China, as Y[o]ngli emperor, was not eliminated until 1662.” See Lynn A. Struve, *The Southern Ming, 1644-62* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 1; Lynn A. Struve, *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

queue.<sup>4</sup> During this transitional period, the vibrant romantic culture of the late Ming survived in various permutations, albeit refracted by hindsight and nostalgia.

Many of the defining features of the late Ming moment remained: urban centers brimmed with Chinese and foreign gadgets and technologies, which challenged received knowledge about the possibilities of the material world. Since the mid-Ming, more books were being published at lower costs than ever before, and the make-up of the reading public was also changing, most visibly, perhaps, in the rise of the general urban reader.<sup>5</sup> The idealized Confucian division of men into the categories of literati (*shi* 士), peasants (*nong* 農), artisans (*gong* 工), and merchants (*shang* 商) had already decayed significantly during the Ming dynasty. The period from the middle of the Ming dynasty (mid-fifteenth century) until the nineteenth century saw a general trend of downward mobility of the escalating population of literati and upward mobility of increasingly successful merchants. This was true not least because even as the economy became increasingly commercialized and the Ming population soared, the number of official posts remained relatively stagnant, causing countless educated young men to lose hope of ever succeeding in the civil service examination.<sup>6</sup> Many of these downtrodden aspirants sought

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the rupture of space and time in visual media during the dynastic transition, see Jonathan Hay, "The Diachronics of Early Qing Visual and Material Culture," in *Qing Formation in World Historical Time*, ed. Lynn Struve (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> See Cynthia J. Brokaw, "On the History of the Book in China," in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 24-27; Anne E. McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China," in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Robert E. Hegel, "Niche Marketing for Late Imperial Fiction," in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of how this system changed over time, see P'ing-t'i Ho, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911*, Studies of the East Asian Institute, Columbia University (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2000).



financial support from patrons who were invested in procuring some of the literati's cultural capital. During the Qing, merchants, especially those engaged in the salt trade, enjoyed increasing cultural power and prestige, and enjoyed the support of the Manchu government.<sup>7</sup>

In practice, dividing lines among these groups had become quite porous, and when we consider what men actually did, how their careers changed over time, and how they made ends meet while vociferously aspiring to loftier goals, we find that the distinctions among social classes were often reduced to such transient criteria as appearances, claims, or practices.<sup>8</sup> For example, during the latter half of the Ming, merchants would often train a son to excel in the civil service exam, or they would simply purchase an official rank, which were put up for sale for the first time in the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, many educated men eventually chose to give up attempting the examinations to pursue another trade such as writing on

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<sup>7</sup> For an argument that these distinctions did not begin to break down until the eighteenth century largely because Ming merchants could not own property, see Martin W. Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/presentation: Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Chinese Novel* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 31.

<sup>8</sup> See Timothy Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 132. "Until the Ming, for instance, sons of merchants were not legally permitted to take the civil service examinations. [...] When this social vision became out of sync with reality, the dynasty's vision of education changed only enough in the late fourteenth century to enfranchise sons of merchants in the examination competition." See also Ho, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911*, 46. As early as the sixteenth century, Wang Daokun (1525-1593) had noticed a new fluidity between the categories of "literati" and "merchant" in the bustling mercantile environment of his native Huizhou: "It is not until a man is repeatedly frustrated in his scholarly pursuit that he gives up his studies and takes up trade. After he has accumulated substantial savings he encourages his descendants, in planning for their future, to give up trade and take up studies. Trade and studies thus alternate with each other, with the likely result that the family succeeds either in acquiring an annual income of ten thousand bushels of grain or in achieving the honor of having a retinue of a thousand horse-carriages. This can be likened to the revolution of the wheel, with all its spokes touching the ground in turn." Cited and translated in Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, 2 ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 73. It should be noted that the prosperous merchants of Huizhou, such as Wang Daokun, who took up residence throughout the Jiangnan region during the mid- to late Ming, especially in Yangzhou, were more likely than most to have access to the easy social fluidity indicated by this statement.

commission or publishing; others who initially managed success in the examinations took up profitable endeavors after being cashiered. What is more, craftsmanship, and knowledge about it, was beginning to be appreciated and practiced by men who were not artisans, while some gifted artisans enjoyed newfound fame and appreciation as experts in their craft, as evidenced by the fact that they began to sign their works in the late sixteenth century, and some even authored how-to manuals about their craft.<sup>10</sup> This relative fluidity of social status was fraught with politics, as, to give one example, merchants sought to appropriate some of the cultural knowledge that literati were invested in reserving for themselves, even while they capitalized on the commodification and sale of that knowledge.

The slow transition in the south had the initial effect of triggering increased mobility among urban cultural hubs throughout Jiangnan as people fled their homes or set out to make a living.<sup>11</sup> Many major urban centers were decimated by war; new spaces opened up in these and others as the cultural giants who had populated them were killed, committed suicide, or went into reclusion after the transition. Many educated men gave up aspirations for an official position, which often took the form of a lowering of status from student to peddler, tutor, or painter, though contemporary anecdotes demonstrate that the shame of this demotion was somewhat alleviated because it was shared with many others.<sup>12</sup> Li Tingsheng 李挺生, who, like Li Yu, was

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<sup>10</sup> For example, Ji Cheng was a garden designer who composed the first garden design manual, *Yuanye*. Maggie Keswick has pointed out that some of the entries in this manual are more colloquial and likely written by Ji Cheng, who had received some education, while other sections appear to have been edited by someone more familiar with the literati style of writing. See "Foreword," in *Craft of Gardens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 23.

<sup>11</sup> The dynastic shift disrupted the lives of some educated men in terms of place as well. Pointing to the early Qing travels of the educated Suzhou resident Deng Hanyi, Tobie Meyer-Fong has demonstrated a "dramatic increase in literati mobility" just after the conquest. See *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 102.

<sup>12</sup> Most of the educated men who gave up their studies to work for a living in the early Qing had not had to concern themselves with making a living under the Ming. Many went to significant lengths to maintain

a student at the time of the transition, “cross-dressed” as a merchant to peddle goods at a roadside stall until he could secure a job as a tutor. When he met a scholar friend who was likewise no longer pursuing studies, they nevertheless (to onlookers’ amusement, and their own) observed the rites of scholars.<sup>13</sup> The educated and talented artist Xiang Shengmo 項聖謨 (1597-1658) no longer hesitated to speak openly about selling his paintings for profit after his family’s property was pillaged during the fall of the Ming. He maintained his sense of dignity by refusing to sell to rich buyers he disliked no matter what they were willing to pay.<sup>14</sup> Cha Shibiao 查士標 (1615-1698), who was born into a family of means, spent his youth studying in Yangzhou in preparation for the civil examinations; after 1645 he gave up his ambitions and made a living selling painting and calligraphy.<sup>15</sup> These are only a few examples of the many stories of educated men who gave up pursuit of an official career after the fall of the Ming.

It was in this context that Li Yu embarked on a career of innovative cultural entrepreneurship. His cultural production was remarkable in two significant ways: first, as an

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their independence from those who provided for their daily necessities through payment of cash or gifts: they were selective about what work they would take on, would intentionally delay delivery of a product, or would express their disgust with a particular patron in writing. In addition to selling tangible products such as calligraphy and painting, many of these men also found ways to profit by selling commodified knowledge of the literati lifestyle and good taste. These men would work as cultural consultants for those wealthier but less educated than themselves, advising them on what they should purchase, and how and when they should display their purchases. See Qianshen Bai, *Fu Shan's World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003). How-to manuals like *Zhangwu zhi* served as general guides for late Ming men aspiring to good literati taste, but individualized consulting, since it could not be copied, would no doubt have been more valuable. See Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*.

<sup>13</sup> Li Xiaosheng, "Li Tingsheng's 'A Record of Hardship': A Recently Discovered Manuscript Reflecting Literati Life in North Henan at the End of the Ming, 1642-44," *Late Imperial China* 15, no. 2 (1994), 94. See also Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*, 248-49.

<sup>14</sup> James Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 12.

<sup>15</sup> L. Carrington Goodrich and Zhaoying Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 34-35.

author and editor across genres, he established a bookshop where he marketed and sold his books; second, he engaged in non-literary commercial ventures long avoided by literati such as designing gardens on commission and directing a touring theater troupe comprised of his own concubines for which he booked tours to the homes of wealthy patrons. Li Yu combined the innovative production of easily reproducible cultural products with the personal, strategic marketing of those products; taking on any number of new projects at a time, he made a name for himself and found creative ways to package and sell the products associated with it. Through close analysis of Li Yu's innovations in writing and practice, I aim to explore how Li Yu took advantage of the unprecedented prospects of the burgeoning market economy and the ubiquitous commodification of culture to forge new opportunities for cultural production in the early Qing. I show how in the process, he reimagined embodied, sensory perception of the self in the world, and found new ways to represent and share his innovations with others.

### *Situating Li Yu in Scholarship*

The modern study of Li Yu began during the Republican period and focused on the contribution of Li Yu's fiction and plays to the history of Chinese literature. Sun Kaidi provided the most lasting contribution, defining the modern project as one of rescuing Li Yu from the infamy that accompanied his name throughout the Qing: "No matter what his education was like, and regardless of how he conducted himself as a person, he has an important place in the history of Qing literature. 無論他的學問如何，無論他的作人態度如何，在清代文學史裡總有應當占一重要地位。"<sup>16</sup> Sun surveyed many extant editions of texts associated with Li Yu, and provided

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<sup>16</sup> Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, "Li Liweng yu Shi'er lou 李笠翁與十二樓," in *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, ed. Shan Jinheng 單錦珩 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1992).

a general biography along with a slightly more detailed study of Li Yu's second collection of short stories, *Shi'er lou* 十二樓 (*Twelve Towers*).<sup>17</sup> Republican intellectuals were also enthusiastic about their discovery of what they declared to be the earliest coherent analysis of drama in "traditional" China, and Li Yu soon gained fame as the "genius drama scholar who was the first Chinese to establish a systematic dramatic theory."<sup>18</sup> Published in 1978, Huang Lizhen's seminal book-length study fleshed out Li Yu's biography and provided a critical introduction to his oeuvre; that study was followed by a number of critical biographical studies that synthesize surviving documents to provide comprehensive analyses of Li Yu's life and work.<sup>19</sup> Since the 1980s, many monographs in literary studies have been devoted to the study of Li Yu's drama and fiction.<sup>20</sup> Studies of Li Yu in the West began in the 1960s; early works include author (biographical) studies and literary studies of his plays and fiction.<sup>21</sup> Patrick Hanan's comprehensive introduction to Li Yu's life and literary works, *The Invention of Li Yu* (1988), is

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<sup>17</sup> Except where otherwise noted, I follow Patrick Hanan's translations of the titles of Li Yu's works in Patrick Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

<sup>18</sup> Chen Duo 陳多 and Ye Changhai 葉長海, eds., *Zhongguo lidai julun xuanzhu* 中國歷代劇論選註 (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1987), 1. See the representative examples of these studies collected in Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 20 vols. (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1992), vol. 20.

<sup>19</sup> Huang Lizhen 黃麗貞, *Li Yu yanjiu* 李漁研究 (Taipei: Guojia, 1978); Yu Weimin 俞為民, *Li Yu pingzhuan* 李漁評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue, 1998); Shen Xinlin 沈新林, *Li Yu pingzhuan* 李漁評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing shifan daxue chubanshe, 1998); Huang Qiang 黃強, *Li Yu yanjiu* 李漁研究 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1996); Shen Xinlin 沈新林, *Li Yu xinlun* 李漁新論 (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> A few of the representative works are: Du Shuying 杜書瀛, *Lun Li Yu di xiju meixue* 論李漁的戲劇美學 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1982); Hu Yuanling 胡元翎, *Li Yu xiaoshuo xiqu yanjiu* 李漁小說戲曲研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004); Cui Zi'en 崔子恩, *Li Yu xiaoshuo lungao* 李漁小說論稿 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1989).

<sup>21</sup> Helmut Martin, "Li Li-weng über das Theater" (Heidelberg University, 1966); Eric P. Henry, *Chinese Amusements: The Lively Plays of Li Yu* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1980); Nathan K. Mao and Cunren Liu, *Li Yu* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977); Robert E. Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

the authoritative source on Li Yu in English.<sup>22</sup> Hanan draws out Li Yu's literary games and the personae he invented through masterful literary analyses and engaging translations.

These studies limit their scope to literary analysis, biographical research, and dramatic theory. For example, Patrick Hanan makes clear in the preface of *The Invention of Li Yu* that he is decidedly *not* interested in the Li Yu who wrote “poems on the cruelty of war and the humiliation of having to shave his head,” but rather on “his generally comic permutations of self” as evidenced in his literary production.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, the outrageous and hilarious stuff of Li Yu's plays and fiction retain their ability to shock and amuse, but such readings virtually remove Li Yu from his historical contexts, and celebrating his genius and creativity without exploring the contexts of the production and consumption of his cultural products. Some studies have addressed the question of Li Yu's social status and identity in light of the openly commercial nature of his cultural production, but the ambiguities of his social status have proven difficult to pin down using traditional terminology. A recent dissertation has characterized Li Yu as a previously unexplored alternative type of Ming loyalist, drawing examples from the tone and content of poems Li Yu wrote around the time of the Qing conquest and the themes of his historical essays as well as his plays and fiction (*yimin* 遺民).<sup>24</sup> Unwilling to pigeonhole Li Yu into a political category that he never claimed for himself, others have begun to analyze him as a member of an even larger third group of men, educated, wealthy, or both, who “maintained an ambivalent attitude and equivocal feelings, and just sought to survive in the narrow space in

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<sup>22</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*.

<sup>23</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, vii.

<sup>24</sup> For a presentation of Li Yu as a Ming loyalist, see Zhu Liangjie 朱亮潔, “Li Yu xinlun: yimin guandian de kaocha 李漁新論: 遺民觀點的考察,” National Central University, 2006, 146.

between.”<sup>25</sup> Recognizing the need for greater understanding of this in-between group, which includes many artists who made a living selling paintings and calligraphy, some scholars have begun to explore the diverse social networks and complex interrelationships among Qing officials, Ming loyalists, and the many educated men who cannot be neatly relegated into such dichotomized identities. These studies have begun to bring to light the porousness of the boundaries that ostensibly separated men of cultural influence in the early Qing, as well as to explore evidence of their extensive social networks.<sup>26</sup> Several studies of Li Yu’s contacts have compiled materials that give a comprehensive picture of his social network, and provide a rich trove for those who wish to explore the networks that flourished in the first decades of the Qing.<sup>27</sup> Other scholars have explored the effects of Li Yu’s commercial practice on his writing.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Shen Xinlin 沈新林, *Li Yu pingzhuan* 李漁評傳, 7. Shen argues that Li Yu and many others fell into the space between these two polar categories.

<sup>26</sup> See Hongnam Kim, *The Life of a Patron: Zhou Lianggong (1612-1672) and the Painters of Seventeenth-Century China* (New York: China Institute in America, 1996); Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*. Kim’s discussion of the loyalist painters appreciated and supported by Zhou Lianggong demonstrates that the boundaries between these groups were not only porous, but that they seemed to place remarkably few restrictions on interactions among the groups. Many studies have been dedicated to examining the literati who surrendered and became officials under the Qing court; likewise scholars have paid special attention to those faithful servants of the Ming who committed suicide, took monastic vows, or retreated into reclusion after the fall of the Ming in an expression of loyalty to that dynasty alone. See Lynn A. Struve, *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm: China in Tigers' Jaws* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993); Wilt Idema, ed. *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). Frederic Wakeman divides educated men living in the early Qing into three overlapping groups: romantics, stoics, and martyrs. He writes that contemporaries “professed to be shocked by the sybaritic laxity and aesthetic sensibility of such well-known figures as [romantics] Qian Qianyi, Wu Weiye, and Li Yu. . . . The stoics [like Chen Zilong] shared the *nei* or inner world of the romantics, but they also felt deeply committed to public duties.” “Romantics, Stoics, and Martyrs in Seventeenth-Century China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 43, no. 4 (1984), 640. Martyrs, for Wakeman, “consist[ed] of Qing loyalists among the Han bannerman who chose to remain loyal to the new dynasty during the revolt of the Three Feudatories” (647). Although Wakeman mentions and cites Li Yu’s *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu is not a good fit for any of the three categories.

<sup>27</sup> Gu Dunrou 顧敦錄, “Li Liweng pengbei kaozhuan 李笠翁朋輩考傳,” *Zhijiang xuebao* 1, no. 4; Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集; Huang Qiang 黃強, “Li Yu jiaoyou bukao 李漁交遊補考,” *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究, no. 2 (1996); Huang Qiang 黃強, *Li Yu yanjiu* 李漁研究, 303-12; Huang Qiang 黃強, “Li Yu jiaoyou zai kaobian 李漁交遊再考辨,” *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究 91, no. 1 (2009).

An exhaustively researched monograph by Chang and Chang is an important source for primary materials related to the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts of Li Yu's cultural production, but with their analysis, they efface Li Yu's creativity in a teleological account of an emerging, but failed, modernity.<sup>29</sup>

Several studies have analyzed Li Yu's fiction in the context of late-Ming short stories and erotic novels. Patrick Hanan has treated Li Yu's vernacular stories in his history of this genre, which includes biographical sketches of authors and editors as well as the dominant story types and themes.<sup>30</sup> Robert Hegel has singled out Li Yu's erotic novel, *Rouputuan*, as one of two "significant exceptions" to the more common sequel in seventeenth-century fiction production. As an important qualifier, he adds that *Rouputuan*'s status is in fact more ambiguous; "it is in large measure a literary parody, a caricature of fiction popular during the seventeenth century."<sup>31</sup> Keith McMahon has characterized self-containment—"an underlying struggle between indulgence and abandon and a moral imperative to promote temperance and self-restraint"—as the dominant ideology of the whole of seventeenth-century fiction, and he sees Li Yu's stories as "some of the most epitomizing and ironic portraits of self-containment in late Ming, early Qing

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<sup>28</sup> Huang Guoquan 黃果泉, *Yasu zhi jian: Li Yu de wenhua rengen yu wenxue sixiang yanjiu* 雅俗之間: 李漁的文化人格與文學思想研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 2004); Zhang Xiaojun 張曉軍, *Li Yu chuangzuo lungao: yishu di shangye hua yu shangye hua di yishu* 李漁創作論稿: 藝術的商業化與商業化的藝術 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Chun-shu Chang and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China: Society, Culture, and Modernity in Li Yu's World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>31</sup> Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, 141.



fiction.”<sup>32</sup> The ironic and parodic qualities of Li Yu’s fiction are significantly enhanced by his constant self-reference in all his writing. As Patrick Hanan has observed, “Li Yu made over the traditional narrator’s persona almost into his own image, so that his personal opinions and comments intrude upon, and even dominate, the narrative.”<sup>33</sup> What do we make of this “self” that is Li Yu’s fictional voice? Hanan reads it as a recognizable literary persona adopted by both “Li Yu the writer and Li Yu the man,” but despite his insistence that Li Yu delighted in role-playing and inventing himself, he wavers on the question of which of those personae might draw near Li Yu’s actual moral sensibilities.<sup>34</sup> In his review of Hanan’s *Invention*, Robert Hegel has called for an intertextual reading of Li Yu’s fiction, suggesting, “it is only reasonable to regard every one of his writings as being to one degree or another an inversion of some previous work or some element of contemporary cultural values.”<sup>35</sup> Some of his doctoral students in recent years have engaged in such analyses, drawing connections among Li Yu’s own stories as well as with earlier stories.<sup>36</sup>

But to use parody or intertextuality to get at what Li Yu was doing with fiction elides some crucial aspects of Li Yu’s literary production: First, with the sole exception of the erotic novel *Rouputuan*, he attached his name (and his persona) to everything he wrote, including his

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<sup>32</sup> Keith McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 9, 135.

<sup>33</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 33.

<sup>34</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 35.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Hegel, "Inventing Li Yu," review of *The Invention of Li Yu* by Patrick Hanan; *Silent Operas (Wusheng xi)* by Li Yu and Patrick Hanan; *The Carnal Prayer Mat (Rou putuan)* by Li Yu and Patrick Hanan, *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 13, no. 1 (1991), 98.

<sup>36</sup> Jie Zhang, "The Game of Marginality: Parody in Li Yu's (1611-1680) Vernacular Short Stories," Doctoral Dissertation, Washington University, 2005; Jing Zhang, "Playing with Desire: Reading Short Vernacular Fiction in 16th and 17th Century China" (Doctoral Dissertation, Washington University, 2006).

fiction. Second—and I will discuss this point below—he was a poor, if well-educated, nobody writing and publishing his writings for profit. While authors of publishers and commentators regularly associated their names with their works, often as a branding technique, authors of fiction did not.<sup>37</sup> David Rolston has characterized Li Yu's mode of fictional commentary as the commentator-narrator type.<sup>38</sup> This mode of producing fiction conflated the author (who had been anonymous), the narrator (who had been fictional, often the voice of traditional Confucian sensibility that is undermined and negated by the fictional story until it is reiterated and contained at the end), and the commentator (who had been a named ideal reader interpreting the author's ingenuity for empirical readers) into one name: Li Liweng.<sup>39</sup> The effect of this is that there is room for no one but the reader in Li Yu's fiction, and even then, he has incorporated the reader's responses—always naïve assumptions, bemusement, or delighted surprise—into the text. McMahon has suggested that seventeenth-century fiction shows life as “a process of repeated forgetting and remembering” as the story shifts between didactic statements and stories of breaches that are not contained by “orthodox ideology.”<sup>40</sup> I would contend that Li Yu's stories do more than simply present an ironic twist on that model. More than self-conscious, Li Yu's stories

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<sup>37</sup> See Ellen Widmer, "The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56, no. 1 (1996); Jamie Greenbaum, *Chen Jiru (1558-1639): The Development and Subsequent Uses of a Literary Personae* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2007). Even after Li Yu's death, Zhang Zhupo insisted that “the writers of novels never divulge their names, either because they have some axe to grind in their works or because they contain covert references to real people.” David L. Rolston and Shuen-fu Lin, *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 222.

<sup>38</sup> David L. Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing Between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 163-70; Jie Zhang, "The Game of Marginality: Parody in Li Yu's (1611-1680) Vernacular Short Stories" (Doctoral Dissertation, Washington University, 2005).

<sup>39</sup> See also Hanan's discussion of the evolution of the narrator in fiction. Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*.

<sup>40</sup> McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*, 31.

are so self-referential that there is no room for the reader to experience the contingency of the story; or, the forgetting and remembering revolve so quickly due to the constant interruptions of the narrator and commentator that artificiality, both of orthodoxy and something outside it, are exposed.<sup>41</sup> What is left is only Li Yu, the brilliant narrator-author-commentator, and you, his reader. Li Yu's stories put him on display; they advertise the brand of his name to the reader.

Sophie Volpp has pointed to a similar tactic in her study of theatricality that links dramatic texts to theatrical performance practices and argues for a gradual decline in the sense of permeability between the stage and the spectator over the course of the seventeenth century. She observes that in the late-seventeenth-century play *Taohua shan* 桃花扇, the storyteller Liu Jingting's continually interrupts the audience to remind them that what they are watching is only illusion. Volpp suggests that such "rhetorical dexterity and command over illusory worlds thus acquires a newly positive valence" at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>42</sup> The effect of Liu Jingting's interruptions is not dissimilar to the effect that Li Yu achieves in his fiction, which is one of interrupting the reader constantly to remind him that he is reading—in short, it is the metafictional quality of his stories (not to mention the metatheatrical qualities of his plays). In Li Yu's stories, the move works on two levels: on the first, he reminds the reader that he is reading a story written by an ingenious author. On the second level, within the story, he overturns the reader's assumptions about one or another aspect of his culture.

Through his explicit authorship, Li Yu's fiction marketed a particular construction of "the self"; this was a self that was capable of taking creative control over the stories of his life, just as

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<sup>41</sup> On the self-consciousness of Chinese narrative, see Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>42</sup> Sophie Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), 15.

had Li Yu the author and many of his characters who craftily manipulated their own stories. The didactic requirement of fiction—that it return to orthodoxy at the end—was present, but it was overwhelmed by the contradictions of the individualized author-narrator-commentator. In fact, a wealth of studies has shown that much ink was spilled around the production and representation of a “self” in the early Qing. Writing on early Qing drama, Wilt Idema has suggested that “as the certainties provided by the trinity of state, ideology, and career collapsed with the demise of the Ming, the only reliable sureties left were personal experience and the self.”<sup>43</sup> A retreat to the page, or to “art” more generally, to escape the contemporary world, is a theme that is traced through poetry, prose (including fiction), and drama in the edited volume *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*. Idema demonstrates the extent of “autobiographical impulse” of the early Qing, citing his own study of Ding Yaokang’s plays, Dieter Tszchanz’s study of Wu Weiye’s plays, Ayling Wang’s study of Liao Yan (“who presented himself under his own name as the main character in his *zaju* plays”), Ellen Widmer’s study of Huang Zhouxing’s play *Rentian le* 人天樂, and Lynne Struve’s study of the many memoirs written in the early Qing.<sup>44</sup> These examples of more or less explicit attempts to find a habitat for oneself on

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<sup>43</sup> Wilt Idema, "Drama After the Conquest: An Introduction," in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*, ed. Wai-yee Li Wilt Idema, Ellen Widmer (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 379.

<sup>44</sup> Idema, "Drama After the Conquest: An Introduction," 379. See the relevant chapters by Idema, Tszchanz, and Widmer in the same volume. Wang Ayling’s study is Wang Ailing 王瓊玲, "Siqing huagong--Ming Qing juzuoja zhi ziwo xuxie yu qi xiju zhanyan 私情化工——明清劇作家之自我敘寫與其戲劇展演," in *Yuyan mizhang: Zhongguo lishi yu wenhua zhong de si yu qing* 欲掩彌彰——中國歷史與文化中的私與情, ed. Xiong Bingzhen 熊秉真 (Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 2003). Lynne Struve’s study is Lynn A. Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict, 1619-1683: a Historiography and Source Guide* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Association for Asian Studies, 1998). For a study of the breakdown of the authentic self in the late-Ming see Tina Lu, *Persons, Roles, and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). On the relationship between literature and Ming loyalism in the early Qing, see Ellen Widmer, *The Margins of Utopia: Shui-hu hou-chuan and the Literature of Ming Loyalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

the page, whether through an alter ego, a memoir, or even the explicit dramatization of one's self, indeed show evidence of this new attention to the self, a self for which there is only an imaginary place to dwell.

This new attention to self finds further delineation in the work of scholars of Chinese art history, who have begun to explore the social history of the production and consumption of art, expanding the scope of texts and images relevant to analysis beyond what traditional aesthetic assessments would include. The social posturing around fiction was less charged than painting, as fiction was something that the elite read, edited, wrote about, or wrote about reading it. They almost never admitted to writing it. Drama, prose, and poetry, rather were literary vehicles for self-expression, and it is in the analysis of self-representation in those genres that recent studies of taste and literati subjectivity in art history becomes quite relevant. Craig Clunas's study of connoisseurship manuals in the late Ming argued for the inception of an elite taste game in the late Ming, in which participants jockeyed for status distinction vis-à-vis their modes of consumption of luxury goods.<sup>45</sup> Subsequently, James Cahill's *The Painter's Practice* turned attention to the social and economic contexts of production and circulation of painting, calling attention to the relationship between style and status and to the proliferation of "ghostpainters" that sever the association between the painter's hand and a painting.<sup>46</sup> This attention to the social history of art inspired a number of new studies that changed the way we think about the object of art history—a turn to a social history of the contexts of production and consumption of paintings,

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<sup>45</sup> Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*.

<sup>46</sup> As Cahill put it: "Long-standing myths of China's insularity and self-sufficiency, and the virtues of elegant amateurism both in practical affairs and in the arts, are similarly losing their hold on us." *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China*, 2.

and a history of visual culture.<sup>47</sup> In *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, Clunas shifts focus away from painting to pictures and proposes the concept of “iconic circuit” (“an economy of representation in which images of a certain kind circulated between different media in which pictures were involved”) as an alternative to the painting/not-painting dichotomy and arguments for “style” or “influence.”<sup>48</sup> Central to Clunas’s project, again, is the way in which these iconic circuits created “knowing subjects,” or the power relations at play behind the production and circulation of images and knowledge about them. Jonathan Hay’s work on the early Qing painter Shitao questions Clunas’s assumption that there is a knowable literati subject invested in the triumph of the self-referential picture in the late Ming. Instead, Hay—very productively I think—suggests rather that “the literati tastemaker’s role [...] was to reposition certain traditional skills within a new, commercially oriented elite context in which all means of finding a secure place were valid.”<sup>49</sup> By destabilizing the very notion of the literati subject, Hay opens up space for new understandings of literati subjectivity: he sees it “as a negotiation between two forces or processes: on the one hand, the interaction at the level of the individual human site of different patterns of social consciousness, and on the other, the individual impulse to seek a unity and coherence of the self.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Kim, *The Life of a Patron: Zhou Lianggong (1612-1672) and the Painters of Seventeenth-Century China*; Qianshen Bai, “Calligraphy for Negotiating Everyday Life: The Case of Fu Shan (1607-1684),” *Asia Major* 12, no. 1 (1999); Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*, RES Monographs in Anthropology and Aesthetics (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Bai, *Fu Shan’s World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century*; Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470-1559* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004).

<sup>48</sup> Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 46.

<sup>49</sup> Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*, 23.

These recent theorizations of literati subjectivity and the social and cultural history of consumption and taste in the seventeenth-century by art historians can do much to inform the study of early Qing *yimin* identity, and by extension, the subjectivity of other writing people during that period. The profound trauma of the transition notwithstanding, as a rhetorical stance, the identity of a nostalgic remnant subject (*yimin* 遺民) carried significant cultural capital in the game of self-representation. There was more than a little continuity between the late-Ming phenomenon of educated men giving up pursuit of official success to try their hand at making a living and the *yimin* identity, which provided affirmation and solidarity in the decision not to pursue an official career.<sup>51</sup> As the manifestation of individual expression—the expression of the authentic feelings of a self—the rhetorical stance also carried on an old practice in a new guise. Comparing the poetics of the late Ming to those of the early Qing, Wai-yee Li suggests that “the ‘revival of the ancients (*fugu* 復古) is no longer a matter of imitating earlier poetic styles; it is bound up with the project of preserving cultural continuity against all odds. By the same token, the ideal of individual expression, on one hand, is criticized for self-indulgence and, on the other, takes on the urgency of political and historical self-definition.”<sup>52</sup> Besides the old literati ideal of authenticity, the *yimin* self also had points of continuity with the “glorification of obsession” that Judith Zeitlin has tied to “late Ming romanticism and individualism.”<sup>53</sup> She presents obsession as a path to self-realization that was bound up with the subject, effacing the object of the obsession

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<sup>51</sup> Kai-Wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 100-08; Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*.

<sup>52</sup> Wai-yee Li, "Introduction," in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*, ed. Wilt L. Idema (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 97.

<sup>53</sup> Judith T. Zeitlin, "'The Petrified Heart': Obsession in Chinese Literature, Art, and Medicine," *Late Imperial China* 12, no. 1 (1991).

in a cycle of “desire, possession, loss; desire, possession, loss...”<sup>54</sup> Facing the profound loss of the fall of their dynasty, *yimin* turned to self-expression that was not so different from this. Many *yimin* wrote many poems identifying with the figure of the abandoned courtesan, giving voice to their feelings through their representations of helpless abandoned women in a sympathy that, like obsession, erased its object and enhanced the sense of self of its subject. In another article, Zeitlin has shown how in the wake of the fall of the Ming, lost texts and anxiety about the transience of writing were conflated with the dead bodies of women.<sup>55</sup> Wai-yee Li has also written about how *yimin* identified with the figure of the loyal woman in early Qing drama.<sup>56</sup> In both of these senses, the male identity of the *yimin* seems to have found its expression in identification with and erasure of the image of the abandoned woman.

The gender of *yimin* is important for the study of Li Yu’s writing because of its association with the late-Ming cult of *qing*, which gave deep feeling and an identification with love charge over life and death. Just as *qing* is absent from Li Yu’s writings, so he did not identify with the *yimin* contingent.<sup>57</sup> This has important implications for Li Yu’s treatment of gender. As Dorothy Ko has argued, the increase in women’s literacy and interest in their writing was accompanied by a sense that women’s writing was suited to a more authentic expression of *qing* (feeling) than men’s. “In itself, [the cult of *qing*], however, did not challenge gender stereotypes—woman as an emotional and temperamental sex. In fact, the cult of *qing* often reinforced the traditional identification of women with nature and the domestic, although these

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<sup>54</sup> Zeitlin, “‘The Petrified Heart’: Obsession in Chinese Literature, Art, and Medicine,” 16.

<sup>55</sup> Judith T. Zeitlin, “Shared Dreams: The Story of the Three Wives’ Commentary on the Peony Pavilion,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, no. 1 (1994), 143-48.

<sup>56</sup> Wai-yee Li, “Heroic Transformations: Women and National Trauma in Early Qing Literature,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59(1999).

<sup>57</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*.



attributes were valued more highly than before.”<sup>58</sup> Just as male *yimin* subjectivity depended on both particular kinds of representations of women and the participation of women in particular ways, so any representation of male subjectivity is bound up with the place of the feminine in it, and calls for different kinds of participation by women (even if this is their erasure or absence). What did gender relations look like in Li Yu’s post-*qing* world with its denial of “matters of the heart”?

Li Yu’s “personal conduct”—largely construed in his attitude toward and relationships with women—has been a common sticking point in modern literary analyses of Li Yu, from Sun Kaidi to the present. So much of Li Yu’s representation of gender and sexuality feels familiar to humanists—his tolerant portrayal of same-sex marriage, the strong and clever women who populate his stories, his insistence on moderation in sex—that it is easy to assume that Li Yu’s values are modern values, and to characterize his attitude toward sex and gender as down-to-earth. Yet as Hanan and Hegel (in his review of *Invention*) both point out, such characterizations prove, to them, incompatible with Li Yu’s writing about his own concubines: “the thought that this guilt-free Humbert Humbert was living in a China of like-minded men will not ease the reader’s embarrassment,” Hanan writes when revealing the young age of Li Yu’s concubines, concluding that “there is a gap between him and ourselves that cannot be bridged.”<sup>59</sup> The same gap persists in Hegel’s critique, when he concludes, “it is probably safe to say, given the mores of his day, that Li Yu was generally a conventional male chauvinist in his personal

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<sup>58</sup> Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 111.

<sup>59</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 99. See also Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, Chapter One.

affairs.”<sup>60</sup> Rather than judge Li Yu by modern standards of monogamy and gender equality, we should seek to understand his undoing of the late-Ming cult of *qing* and its sympathy for the feminine as one of his most interesting innovations (and one of the central ways his writing and practice in the early Qing differ from the late Ming).

A recent dissertation has suggested that Li Yu parodies the unrecognized tragic beauty in his fiction in order to mock the literati who identify with her.<sup>61</sup> It may be going too far to say that Li Yu intends to mock the reader here. Rather, it is enough for him to show his ingenuity at revealing to the reader something about himself and his assumptions that he had not realized—in this case his assumptions about women and his easy recourse to them in envisioning his own subjectivity. Often the assumptions and the fictional tropes that Li Yu overturns in his stories are related to gender, and perhaps more particularly, to bodies. In his analysis of containment in seventeenth-century fiction, Keith McMahon draws on Bakhtin’s concept of grotesque realism, or the narration in the novel of the degradation of the body that has the power to regenerate a social system.<sup>62</sup> McMahon points especially to the strategic use of interstices in the causality of narrative sequences, as in when a character goes to urinate, and throughout his study, he details the extent to which the fiction of this period describes bodies in very graphic detail.<sup>63</sup> Paying more attention to gender difference, Susan Mann has noted that the fictional depictions of the grotesque body avoid those that are specific to women alone (with the exception of

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<sup>60</sup> Hegel, "Inventing Li Yu," 100.

<sup>61</sup> Zhang, "The Game of Marginality: Parody in Li Yu's (1611-1680) Vernacular Short Stories," 125.

<sup>62</sup> McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*, 1. Bakhtin opposed the grotesque body to the body of the classic canon, which “was first of all a strictly completed, finished product...the signs of its unfinished character, of its growth and proliferations were eliminated.” *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968), 29.

<sup>63</sup> McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*, 20.

menstruation), such as the pain of footbinding.<sup>64</sup> In the same vein, Maram Epstein has suggested that in fiction women's bodies were not suited to serve as a metaphor for the state, nor as the ideal body of a Daoist immortal; rather, she writes, "whereas certain male characters have the prerogative of transcending social convention in order to achieve a more natural state of authentic self-expression, women in literature have no such freedom."<sup>65</sup> The examples she provides are resoundingly negative. Against these representations of the body in fiction, Li Yu's stories, again, begin from the premise: what if what we thought before is not true? In addition to Hanan's discussions of these stories already mentioned above, some other recent studies take a more critical approach to Li Yu's fiction. These include Sophie Volpp's insightful reading of the representation of male same-sex marriage in a short story in the context of a more general ethnographic mode of writing about curious sexual practices<sup>66</sup> and Liangyan Ge's analysis of voyeurism and exhibitionism in *Rou putuan*, which explores the intimate metaphoric relationship between sex and the examination system.<sup>67</sup> Critical analysis of Li Yu's representation of gender in light of his resistance to both the cult of *qing* and Ming loyalism will join the conversation that these articles have begun, and help us to conceptualize what was distinctive about his representation of gender and bodies.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Susan Mann, "Review," review of *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists: Sexuality and Male-Female Relations in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Fiction* by Keith McMahon; *The Chinese Virago: A Literary Theme* by Yenna Wu, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57, no. 1 (1997), 269.

<sup>65</sup> Maram Epstein, "Inscribing the Essentials: Culture and the Body in Ming-Qing Fiction," *Ming Studies* 41(1999), 25.

<sup>66</sup> Sophie Volpp, "The Discourse on Male Marriage: Li Yu's 'A Male Mencius's Mother'," *Positions* 2, no. 1 (1994).

<sup>67</sup> Liangyan Ge, "Rou Putuan: Voyeurism, Exhibitionism, and the 'Examination Complex'," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 20(1998).

<sup>68</sup> The edited volume *Body, Subject, and Power in China* suggests multiple ways of destabilizing the notion of the body, which has led to intriguing new research on representations of the body in China. Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow, *Body, Subject and Power in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago

Unlike many instances of fictional representation in the Ming and Qing period, Li Yu's fictional representation of gender and bodies is always bound up with his representation of himself as omniscient and omnipotent author. That self-representation functioned as a brand name, advertising an ingenious author of stories on the printed page. In a stark contrast to those early Qing *yimin* writers who escaped a world they felt no longer had a place for them by retreating to the page, Li Yu created and propagated his name by taking to the page and entering the bustling commercialized urban world of Hangzhou. When we expand our analysis to examine Li Yu's fiction and drama in light of his practice—which includes publishing, garden design, and theater direction—significant new aspects of his cultural entrepreneurship come to light.

That there was a dramatic increase in the number and variety of printed books during the late Ming is now generally accepted.<sup>69</sup> Whether this trend was unprecedented, what effect it had on culture and society, and how the market changed after the fall of the Ming dynasty are still debated.<sup>70</sup> More pertinent to the study of Li Yu's cultural production than generalizations about the history of print in China is the print culture of Jiangnan urban centers during this period. A few recent studies have begun to explore the publishing practices of individuals during this period.<sup>71</sup> These studies have shown, among other things, the range of genres that were being

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Press, 1994). Unfortunately, a more recent edited volume focuses solely on the modern period. Fran Martin and Larissa Heinrich, *Embodied Modernities: Corporeality, Representation, and Chinese Cultures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*; Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*.

<sup>70</sup> Kai-wing Chow, for example, has argued that printing led directly to political and social change, but that this movement lost impetus with the fall of the Ming. *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*.

<sup>71</sup> Widmer, "The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing; Ōki Yasushi 大木康, *Minmatsu Kōnan no shuppan bunka* 明末江南の出版文化 (Tōkyō: Kenbun Shuppan,

printed by particular publishers, and as such they invite us to consider the production and consumption of books outside traditional generic categories. Shang Wei's research on the relationship between *Jin Ping Mei* and encyclopedias for daily use is a good example of this approach.<sup>72</sup> Tobie Meyer-Fong, Ellen Widmer, Suyoung Son, and David Pattinson, among others, have studied the publication of edited volumes of contemporary writings in the early Qing, a trend in which Li Yu played an important role.<sup>73</sup> Robert Hegel's study of the printing of fiction has also shown that Li Yu was writing and publishing in the middle of a period in the history of print that witnessed the great commercial success of both high and low-quality editions of fiction and plays.<sup>74</sup> It is further of interest to my study that Li Yu began to publish his works only after the fall of the Ming, when previously flourishing printshops in Hangzhou and Nanjing saw a drastic reduction in numbers.<sup>75</sup> Based on research on Qing imprints, Cynthia Brokaw has suggested that the centralized publishing centers of the late Ming gave way in the early Qing to regional, localized production.<sup>76</sup> Further research on Li Yu's urban publishing during the early

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2004); Lucille Chia, "Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing," in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Suyoung Son, "Publishing as a Coterie Enterprise: Zhang Chao and the Making of Printed Texts in Early Qing China," *Late Imperial China* 31, no. 1 (2010).

<sup>72</sup> Wei Shang, "The Making of the Everyday World: Jin Ping Mei cihua and Encyclopedias for Daily Use," in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond*, ed. David Der-wei Wang and Shang Wei (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005).

<sup>73</sup> Tobie Meyer-Fong, "Packaging the Men of Our Times: Literary Anthologies, Friendship Networks, and Political Accommodation in the Early Qing," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 64, no. 1 (2004); Widmer, "The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing; Son, "Publishing as a Coterie Enterprise: Zhang Chao and the Making of Printed Texts in Early Qing China; David Pattinson, "The Market for Letter Collections in Seventeenth-Century China," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 28, no. Dec. (2006).

<sup>74</sup> Hegel, "Niche Marketing for Late Imperial Fiction."

<sup>75</sup> Chia, "Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing," 140-41.

<sup>76</sup> Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Qing will add to that ongoing conversation as well. Finally, in recent years, scholars have begun to think critically about illustrations, and the implications of the interactions between texts and images in reading practices.<sup>77</sup>

In his later years, Li Yu broadened his practice to include garden design and theater direction as well. His experience in these areas, broadly conceived, is recorded in his magnum opus, the assemblage of topical essays, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶寄 (1671). The several hundred essays included in *Xianqing ouji* are arranged under the broad categories of dramatic composition and staging, appreciation of women, house and garden construction, furniture arrangement, enjoyment of food and drink, and general well-being—all areas in which Li Yu had practical experience and could confidently market his skills and services. To date, there has been no systematic study in English of *Xianqing ouji*, perhaps precisely because its idiosyncrasies can only be understood with reference to Li Yu's entrepreneurial experiments in the world and his fictional and discursive experiments on paper.

That said, a number of recent book-length studies have brought Li Yu's plays (especially their metatheatrical elements) into conversations about theatricality on stage and in literature the Ming-Qing period.<sup>78</sup> Patricia Sieber, in her insightful analysis of the primacy of the visual in Li

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<sup>77</sup> Hung Wu, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Robert E. Hegel, *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Ma Mengjing 馬孟晶, "Ermu zhi wan -- cong Xiyou ji banhua chatu lun Ming chuban wenhua dui shijuexing zhi guanzhu 耳目之玩——從《西廂記》版畫插圖論晚明出版文化對視覺性之關注," *Meishu shi yanjiu jikan* 13(2002); Patrick Hanan et al., *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), Part II: Print Culture and Networks of Reading; Li-Ling Hsiao, *The Eternal Present of the Past: Illustration, Theater, and Reading in the Wanli Period, 1573-1619* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>78</sup> Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*; Jing Shen, *Playwrights and Literary Games in Seventeenth-Century China: Plays by Tang Xianzu, Mei Dingzuo, Wu Bing, Li Yu, and Kong Shangren* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010); Chun Mei, *The Novel and Theatrical Imagination in Early Modern China*, Sinica Leidensia (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011).

Yu's writing on dramatic performance in *Xianqing ouji*, recognizes that *Xianqing ouji* invites analysis as a coherent work. She brings analysis of the text's illustrations, instructions on dramatic performance, and implications for gender into conversation with one another.<sup>79</sup> Given the diverse contents of this singular text, it is not surprising that outside the realm of literary studies, scholars in a wide range of disciplines have utilized portions of *Xianqing ouji* (and to a lesser extent Li Yu's fiction and plays<sup>80</sup>) as important sources for studies ranging from furniture (Clunas) to the history of footbinding (Ko), the history of medicine (Furth) to an analysis of decorative objects (Hay) to the history of technology and gender studies (Bray).<sup>81</sup> The diversity of disciplines that have drawn on *Xianqing ouji* attests to its unusual scope. But even more important, many of these studies show that Li Yu succeeded in his attested goal of perpetual innovation: in each of these areas, he wrote about things in new ways.<sup>82</sup>

### ***Methodology***

In a dizzying range of cultural arenas, Li Yu pushed the possibilities of his historical moment to their extremes, and his is an imitable case study because he did so in practice and in

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<sup>79</sup> Patricia Sieber, "Seeing the World through Xingqing ouji (1671): Visuality, Performance, and Narratives of Modernity," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 12, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>80</sup> Charlotte Furth, "Androgynous Males and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century China," *Late Imperial China* 9, no. 2 (1988); Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*.

<sup>81</sup> See Craig Clunas, *Chinese Furniture* (Chicago: Art Media Resources, Ltd., 1997); Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin: Gender in China's Medical History, 960-1665* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010); Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>82</sup> See especially Sieber, "Seeing the World through Xingqing ouji (1671): Visuality, Performance, and Narratives of Modernity"; Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*; Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China*.

literary production at the same time, writing and publishing on—and thereby tirelessly commodifying knowledge about—all of his extra-literary endeavors. During and after his life, as well as to a lesser extent during the preceding late-Ming period, others engaged in some of the cultural activities he did to varying degrees, but none went so far nor had so broad a reach as Li Yu.

In light of recent scholarship in literary studies and cultural history, and the studies of publishing, gardens, visuality, and the body in China's early modern period, I aim to take a broad view in my analysis of Li Yu's cultural production. I am convinced that the audacious author who delights in novelty on the pages of his stories and plays cannot be disentangled from his booming business of selling his cultural productions—the pursuit of cultural entrepreneurship. Under the new Qing dynasty, Li Yu took advantage of the prospects of this unfamiliar world to forge new opportunities for cultural production and distribution. In the early Qing, educated men who had devised ways to cope with perennial failure in the exams during the late Ming had to grapple with what to make of themselves after the transition to the new dynasty. Besides heartfelt conviction, loyalism to the Ming was also a new option for men wishing to define their identities apart from the official sphere; in the late Ming, many men, known as “mountain men (*shanren*)” or “literary men (*wenren*)” had already given up seeking examination success to pursue other trades.<sup>83</sup> The idea of cultural entrepreneurship allows me to rethink conventional dichotomies for social status—both between literati and merchants, and between those men who took official positions under the Qing and the “remnant citizens (*yimin*)” of the Ming.

In his essays, plays, and fiction, Li Yu continually gestures toward the contemporary world he and his readers inhabited—to himself, to the reader, to other texts, and to the material

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<sup>83</sup> Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*; Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*; Ho, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911*.



world. He takes his readers on imaginative adventures in which he explores the possibilities and limits of subjectivity and of embodied, sensory perception of the world in a way that cannot be divorced from his own lived practice. Time and again Li Yu demonstrates for his audience new ways of using objects, alternate modes of embodiment, possibilities for manipulating space, and running through all of these is a fascination with the powers and limits of vision. Not only do his writings in various genres make up an interconnected textual network, but those texts exceed the page, constantly referring back to the everyday world, social networks, and even to their own distribution.

I proceed by examining a network of texts centered on *Xianqing ouji* (1671), as an exploration of questions about subjectivity and ways of perceiving the world. I offer a new contextual reading of *Xianqing ouji* as an integrated literary and practical experiment by tracing conceptual links among Li Yu's projects that have heretofore been overlooked. At the same time, my analysis will bring to the foreground Li Yu's ontological project, which I argue was nothing less than a re-fashioning of the world and a sometimes successful attempt to re-orient the people in it. This is the first book-length study since Patrick Hanan's *Invention* in 1988 to examine Li Yu's textual production in all genres together, and the first to systematically analyze their publishing history based on extant Qing editions of these works.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> I examined all of the Shunzhi and Kangxi period editions of Li Yu's works in the National Library, Peking University Library, Beijing Normal University Library, Shanghai Library, Nanjing University Library, and the Jiangsu Provincial Library. I also located and reproduced the collected works of about twenty of his closest friends and collaborators that were housed in these libraries. I compared four Yisheng tang 翼聖堂 first editions of *Xianqing ouji*. Two copies are housed at The Peking University Library, one at the Shandong Provincial Library, and one at the Beijing Normal University Library. In Chapter Two, I provide new information about early editions of Li Yu's complete works, *Liweng yijiayan*, published in a first collection, a second collection, and a combined edition, as well as details about some of his other publishing projects. I also looked at all of the works that Hanan claims were spuriously attributed to Li Yu. Hanan made his assessments about authenticity based on the voice, but the evidence from the title pages of such works as *Gujin chidu daquan* and *Qianwen qigu* look to be produced by the same publisher as his other edited collections and essay collections. I also looked at the first editions of

I draw out a common thread runs through Li Yu's cultural production: it is a mode of innovation that tinkers with the form of literary genres, imagines new possibilities for the medium of print, and brings gardens and theater into a single cultural space between writing and practice. On the page, and in the world, he orchestrated situations in a range of media that would teach people to see themselves and each other differently. In this dissertation, I bring together Li Yu's representation of the garden, theatrical performance, modes of looking, and bodies in his texts in various genres. I take all of these categories to be historically specific discursive constructions in which Li Yu engaged in new kinds of experimentation, and each of them is intimately related to the negotiation of subjectivity.<sup>85</sup>

I combine literary analysis with an investigation of the history and the visual and material cultures of early modern China. I take seriously the fact that, by the seventeenth century, much of the world was interconnected by trade routes and that the increasing speed with which commodities and precious metals were circulating worldwide came to bear on cultural agents operating at the local level. The complex linkages between commerce and cultural production have been explored by scholars of various geographic regions and disciplines, and my dissertation adds to these by providing a detailed account of the new possibilities for cultural production in China in the latter half of the seventeenth century and by exploring the implications of this change for the increasing fluidity of social status and diversity of social networks. My study of changing conceptions of subjectivity, the experience of self in the world,

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some of his plays, such as *Fengzheng wu*, noting that the quality of those early dramatic texts was far inferior to the first editions of his later works out of *Yisheng tang*. This research has allowed me to catalogue the locations and quality of all of the early editions of Li Yu's plays, which I have included as Appendix III.

<sup>85</sup> Roger Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices*, Parallax (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

and sensory perception will also be of interest to scholars who are interested in the multiple epistemological shifts that accompanied the global shift to modernity. My methodology, which draws on recent literature in anthropology and art history, will be of interest to literature scholars who seek to move beyond pure textual analysis to account for the circumstances of production and circulation of the literature they study. Moreover, my study of this early modern moment contributes to an ongoing dialogue among literature scholars, historians, literature scholars, and art historians of China about the changes that informed this period of dynastic transition in the early Qing. For example, in joining a discussion started by art historians of early modern China, I argue that visibility was already a consciously and vigorously contested notion in seventeenth-century China, an argument with implications for rethinking the common assumption that visibility emerged only in conjunction with capitalist modernity.

### ***Chapter Outline***

Chapter One, “Between Writing and Practice,” situates Li Yu’s cultural production—his writing, publishing, garden design, and theater direction—in the historical context of the cultural production in the early Qing and the ways that educated men negotiated their social status and identity during the social and political upheaval of that period. I trace the beginning of Li Yu’s for-profit cultural production to the moment when he sells his rural retreat to move to Hangzhou just after the dynastic transition, and show how from that time on, Li Yu began to focus on the potential of writing to create value. As many have noted, one of the most notable features of his literary production is the degree to which the author is present in the text, and the frequency with which he interacts with the reader—this presence in Li Yu’s work is a brand name that marks the text as distinctively his. I show how the value Li Yu created with his textual production

translated into a new social network that would support him, so much so that in his later years he was able to take his experiments off the page into the fields of garden design and theater direction. I conclude with a critical introduction to *Xianqing ouji*, which marks the culmination and the synthesis of his innovations in all of these fields—literature/print, garden design, and theater production. I suggest that his commitment to innovation across media distinguishes him from his contemporaries.

Chapter Two, “Experimenting in Print” situates Li Yu’s textual production and publishing practice within the context of the early Qing. In the easy reproducibility of his cultural products lie both the strength and weakness of Li Yu’s early mode of cultural entrepreneurship. I show how, as he entered the world of early Qing publishing in the bustling urban center of Hangzhou, Li Yu found that although he had created a valuable product, he would have to negotiate strategies to retain rights to his creations as they took the form of printed books and entered the book market. I then turn to the publishing projects he took on later in life. With these projects, he experimented with the potential of the printed book in what amounts to a new technology for interacting with the book and new ways of using books as social networking technologies. Later in his life, the pages of Li Yu’s texts were literally packed with contributions of letters, court cases, prefaces, comments, or essays he solicited from influential cultural figures and unknown old friends alike. I analyze the social status of the contributors to the texts Li Yu authored, edited, or commissioned, and show how he used textual production both to reinforce existing relationships and to forge new ones.

Chapter Three, “Crafting Everyday Social Spaces,” introduces Li Yu’s practice of garden design and theater direction as linked projects that, when considered together, open up new ways of thinking about both gardens and theater, which are often considered separately. Theater is an

essential part of garden space in Li Yu's writing. It makes many of the salient features of the experience of the garden portable, while also enhancing and highlighting the social aspect of garden space and it shapes the everyday experience of time and space in the garden. My comparison of Li Yu's writing on garden design with earlier descriptions of garden architects shows that whereas garden design had previously been analogized to the art of painting, Li Yu analogizes it to the art of literary composition. In light of this, I suggest that *Xianqing ouji* is a new kind of representation of the garden; I show how with it, Li Yu relocates the idea of "the garden" to the interplay between the space represented in the form and content of *Xianqing ouji* and the everyday space of the reader.

In Chapter Four, "Lights, Vision, Action," I examine Li Yu's manipulation of vision in various media, including his fiction, set design, and architecture. I show how in his fiction, he worked actively to "show" perspective, turning gazes back on unlikely internal characters and the reader alike. I bring these fictional narratives into conversation with Li Yu's essays on directing the visual experience by manipulating stage lighting, wall design, and windows in *Xianqing ouji*. With set design, I show how he uses light to direct audience attention to the performance space, while also orchestrating a secondary spectacle to the performance by designing a way to make the lamps appear to be moving on their own. With walls, I show how he emphasizes their function to open up views of other interior spaces, and that when they do not, he creates a spectacle on their surface that will engage the viewer instead. Windows open up views and bring natural moving pictures into the home or (better) onto one's boat. His experiments suggest that movement and light—be it in the form of other bodies, the moving and swaying of a boat, or the illusion of lamps that move on their own, not to mention theatrical performance—are the essential ways to capture and hold audience attention. Li Yu sought to

represent on paper interactive moving pictures of three-dimensional material world, with the bodies in it looking at each other. Li Yu presents his readers with a new vision of the world, refracted by multiple and intersecting foci.

In Chapter Five, “The Body Offstage,” I turn to Li Yu’s representation of the body in his fiction and essays. I suggest that Li Yu takes issue with the tendency of other contemporary discourses, like medicine and the cult of *qing*, to explain away the body without reference to its singularity. He seeks instead to open up spaces for people to think about the meanings they make of bodies, including their own. I begin by showing how in *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu plucks the body from the grasp of medical knowledge and treatment, asking people to reconsider “health” and their experience of their own bodies. Shifting to fiction, I show how he tested the nature of physicality and the malleability of the body by depicting people experimenting on their own flesh. He also told stories about what physicality would look like if bodies were exchangeable and available for purchase, which drew the reader’s attention to the place of the body within the logic of commodity exchange. Finally, I turn to Li Yu’s representation of the purchased female bodies that take center stage in *Xianqing ouji*, and show how he, in a fascinating denouement, stumbles against the limits of his experimental methodology (to commodify and profit from his innovative designs for improving the everyday). He unpacks the body, describing and judging all of its physical characteristics in intimate detail. In doing so, he also locates something beyond his reach, something present-but-hidden in the difference between the body and all of the other things he subjected to his innovative manipulations, including the characters in his stories. It is a quality of sustained and delightful unpredictability—a surprising movement, an inscrutable scene, a glimmer of spirit. Central to this quality is the delight of being a body among others—a body that, though commodified, nevertheless exceeds representation.

## CHAPTER ONE

## Between Writing and Practice

Who would ever have expected the Creator's ingenuity to be a hundred times greater than man's? It's as if he had deliberately combined these events so that they could be turned into a play or story—uniting the two couples and then separating them, separating them and then uniting them, at a prodigious cost in mental effort! This plot rates as novel and ingenious to an extraordinary degree!

誰想造物之巧，百倍於人，竟像有心串合起來等人好做戲文小說的一般，把兩對夫妻合了又分，分了又合，不知費他多少心思。這樁事情也可謂奇到極處、巧到至處了。

Li Yu, 1658<sup>86</sup>

Laozi's doctrine teaches retreat from the world and the practice of inaction; Li Yu's doctrine teaches how to live at home and occupy oneself. These two teachings exist side by side, so whether you rove within or outside your home, there is nowhere you cannot go.

老子之學，避世無為之學也；笠翁之學，家居有事之學也。二說並存，則游於方之內外，無適不可。

Li Yu, 1671<sup>87</sup>

During the first four decades of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), Li Yu 李漁 (1611-1680) experimented with fiction, publishing, playwriting and directing, garden and interior design. His prolific creative output is marked by imaginative and down-to-earth inquiries into the potential of the people and the world around him. In the course of a couple lines, as above, he could cause readers to pause and puzzle over his unpredictable claims: his narrator (frequently equated in name with the author himself) speaks directly to readers, asking them how the Creator could have come up with so novel an idea as the events that he has just described. The obvious

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<sup>86</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, trans. Patrick Hanan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 245.

<sup>87</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, Li Yu quanji 李漁全集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1992), 339.

fictionality of the text, however, works against this statement, and points to the ingenuity of the text's author, Li Yu, who is the real mastermind behind the carefully crafted plot. Yet there is more: it is hard to miss Li Yu motioning upstairs to the Creator, cheekily suggesting that there is nothing behind the curtain. The story, and perhaps our story too, may be just a story. Li Yu spent his life drawing new stories and possibilities from the world around him, in narrative and dramatic form, but also in his designs for manipulating the material world, physical bodies, and perspective. The stories he came up with sold well and made his one of the best-known names of the period.

Li Yu's skepticism about grand narratives of fate and the Creator, as well as claims that he assists the Creator in manipulating the natural world, pervade his writing. Upon the death of his father, the nineteen-year-old Li Yu refused to participate in the customary evacuation of the home for the "soul's return" (*huisha* 回煞), reasoning, "If my father does not have a soul, there is no need to avoid it; if he actually does have a soul, then it is likewise inappropriate to avoid it. 夫無煞則不必避，使誠有煞，則又不當避。"<sup>88</sup> Instead, the precocious teenager, now fatherless, stayed at home, took out a brush, and argued his position on paper. In doing so, he created a self that was not subject to the whims of a Creator. He would spend much of the rest of his life this way, with brush in hand, concocting ways to entertain people, new uses for ordinary things, and projects that would bring people together, all while scheming to get paid for his efforts and ideas.

In this chapter, I introduce Li Yu's cultural entrepreneurship to explore what kinds of opportunities for cultural production he forged in the urban centers of the early Qing. I also touch

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<sup>88</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 2. Some scholars have associated Li Yu's attitude with the modern tendency to disbelieve superstition, but it seems to me that it could just as easily refer to the Confucian imperative to focus on the living. For the former position, see Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 2; Zhong Mingqi 鐘明奇, "Li Yu fangqi keju kaoshi chengyin shuobian 李漁放棄科舉考試成因說辨," *Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* 4, no. 4 (2010).



on contemporary debates about social status and its markers, an issue that had been complicated by the fall of the Ming and the resultant retreat of many leading cultural figures. This introduction to Li Yu's creative and profitable endeavors lays the groundwork for my larger argument that experimenting in several distinct cultural spheres fuelled Li Yu's creativity in each of them. Reading Li Yu's writing together with his practice gives a more complete picture of what he made of the time he had. I suggest that this organic cultural entrepreneurship facilitated shifts in notions of representation and of value in the early Qing.

### ***Failed Exams, Failed Reclusion: The Birth of an Entrepreneur***

Li Yu's background makes him a uniquely well-documented example of what, short of taking up the family trade of selling medicinal herbs or pursuing an official career, were the possibilities for cultural production and social negotiation for a brilliant and well-educated young son of well-to-do merchants under the new Qing dynasty. Li Yu was born into a merchant family in Rugao, Jiangsu province in 1611. His father and uncles, natives of Zhejiang province, were doctors and pharmaceutical venders. The family had resided in Rugao for several generations, where business was more lucrative than in their relatively out-of-the-way ancestral village, *Xia Li cun* 夏李村 in Wuzhou 婺州 (near modern Lanxi in Zhejiang province). The family had not produced a successful scholar for more than nine generations, and the clan's genealogy noted that, "Many of this clan are merchants who go away on business; about two-thirds take up lodging away from home."<sup>89</sup> Li Yu, however, was a precocious child, and his family saw in him hope for success in the civil service examinations, so they took measures to ensure that he was

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<sup>89</sup> *Longmen Lishi zongpu* 龍門李氏宗譜, cited in Huang Guoquan 黃果泉, *Yasu zhi jian: Li Yu de wenhua rengen yu wenxue sixiang yanjiu* 雅俗之間: 李漁的文化人格與文學思想研究, 4. Li Yu's father and uncles are included among the ranks of these departed merchants.

given a classical education. In 1633 or 1634, when Li Yu was 23 or 24 *sui*, he returned to his ancestral village to complete final preparations for his first examination. He passed the county-level civil examination (*tongzi shi* 童子試) in 1635 with distinction in the Five Classics, attracting the attention of Zhejiang's Vice Education Intendant (*Zhejiang tixue fushi* 浙江提學副使), Xu Zhi 許彥, who printed Li Yu's examination paper and circulated it widely.<sup>90</sup> Despite Li Yu's success at the county level, however, he failed the provincial exam in Hangzhou in 1639. At the time, he likely imagined that his life would revolve around the triennial provincial examination until he passed it. In fact, this attempt would be his last: when he set out for a second attempt in 1642, military activity forced him to turn back before he even reached Hangzhou.

While preparing for the civil service examinations with the financial support of his merchant family, Li Yu experienced firsthand the middle ground between merchants (*shanggu* 商賈) and literati (*wenshi* 文士). Xu Zhi's support and promotion probably gave Li Yu real hope that his early success was a promising start to an illustrious official career as a literati-official. Later, well known as a popular author, playwright, and bon vivant, who enjoyed fame but no official recognition or the celebrated status of a loyalist to the fallen Ming dynasty, Li Yu would have to negotiate the disparaging remarks of some of his contemporaries throughout his life. Xu Zhi's favor, even forty years later, persisted as a reminder of what a "normal" career might have been like, of what it might have been like for Li Yu to have made a name for himself in a more orthodox fashion. Thinking back on this man in his old age, Li Yu wrote,

From the past until today, people have dismissed the dissemination of my [undeserved] reputation as starting from the praise of princes and noblemen for my frivolous plays;

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<sup>90</sup> The Five Classics are the *Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), the *Documents* (*Shujing* 書經), the *Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), the *Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋).

they don't know that in fact it began when I had just passed the county examination and was admitted to the government school; the favor I received in my ascent was due to the good words of one man [Xu Zhi].”<sup>91</sup>

予之得播虛名，由昔徂今，為王公大人所拂拭者，人謂自嘲風嘯月之曲藝始，不知實自采芹入泮之初，受知於登高一人之說項始。

Li Yu's first taste of fame, then, was for his mastery of the classics at a young age. Even as he neared his late twenties, he was still engaged in the studies that would prepare him for an official career.

Li Yu's father had passed away in 1630, and his mother in 1642, leaving him alone with his young wife as the Qing conquerors slowly laid hold of the land. As the fighting escalated in the southern region, Li Yu took his family and fled his residence in Wuzhou: “During the disturbances of 1644 and 1645,” he wrote, “although I took cover in the mountains, I nonetheless entered the city from time to time. It is most fortunate that only after I had moved my family, my home was burned; just after I left the city, the city fell.”<sup>92</sup> When the fighting subsided, he found himself without recourse and accepted an offer to take up lodging with Xu Xicai 許檄彩, the assistant prefect of Jinhua (in modern Zhejiang province), who provided him with a clerical position.<sup>93</sup> These uncertain years of dynastic transition would mark the only time in the adventurous and unpredictable career that was to follow that Li Yu would take up long-term residence in another's home.

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<sup>91</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 19.8.

<sup>92</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 19.15.

<sup>93</sup> “*Luanhou wujia zanru Xu sima mu* 亂後無家暫入許司馬幕,” in Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 2.162.

While at Xu Xicai's, Li Yu attempted to buy a plot of land near his ancestral village, Xia-Li Village, wishing to live out his days in reclusion. He wrote of his frustrations in “A Failed Attempt to Purchase Yi Hill 擬購伊山別業未遂.”

I intended to construct a thatched cottage next to my ancestors' burial grounds under the vaporous sky/ Door opening onto crystal river, bridges linking country fields; stove near the clear stream, bamboo guiding the spring/ As to making ends meet, I still worry about lacking shelter and grain/ but how is one to get money to spare when retiring from public life [lit. “buying a mountain”]?<sup>94</sup>

擬向先人墟墓邊，構間茅屋住蒼煙。門開綠水橋通野，灶近清流竹引泉。糊口尚愁無宿粒，買山那得有餘錢。

The phrase Li Yu uses here to indicate retirement from public life—“buying a mountain”

(*maishan* 買山)—dates back to the Jin dynasty, when the monk Zhi Dun 支遁 was ridiculed for attempting to purchase a mountain to which to retire.<sup>95</sup> The monk refused to sell the mountain to Zhi Dun, but was happy to let him live there. Zhi Dun was ridiculed because he failed to see that distance from economic exchange was a central component to the life of reclusion, whereas the monk who refused to sell was operating under the logic of the recluse, which holds that no man owns a mountain.

<sup>94</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 2.148.

<sup>95</sup> In Liu Yiqing's (403-444) *A New Account of Tales of the World* (*Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語), the story goes that the monk Zhi Dun 支遁 (styled *Daolin* 道林) once approached the monk Zhu Qian through an intermediary to purchase Yang Mountain from him. Zhu Qian replied, “I have never heard of Chao Fu or Xu Yu purchasing a mountain for their hermitage.” Cited and translated in Liu Yiqing 劉義慶, Jun Liu, and Richard Mather, *A New Account of Tales of the World: Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, trans. Richard B. Mather (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002), 412-13. In the *Record of Eminent Monks* (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳), there is another version of the anecdote, in which the monk replies, “If you want to come, I'm always glad to give it to you. Who ever heard of Ch'ao Fu or Hsü Yu purchasing a mountain for their hermitage?” Huijiao 慧皎, Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, and Tang Yixuan 湯一玄, *Gao seng zhuan* 高僧傳, Zhongguo fojiao dianji xuankan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992). Incidentally, Li Yu also includes a reference to this expression in his rhyme primer, *Liweng duiyun* 笠翁對韻. One of the rhymes goes: “The price of wine, the expense of buying a mountain 沽酒價，買山資.” Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 18, juan 4, 四支, no. 2. 532

By the Ming period, this expression was commonly used to indicate reclusion, but Li Yu includes an explicit reference to the cash transaction involved, emphasizing the real cost of living in reclusion during lean and uncertain times. Li Yu's poems on his villa at Yi Hill, a residence he built near his ancestral village in the 1640s, indicate some of the realities of living in an actual rural retreat, including land cultivation. What is most remarkable about these descriptions is how unremarkable they are, lacking the wit by which we recognize Li Yu. Rather, the poems show him writing himself into a long tradition of scholars retreating from official service. He refers to himself as a "literate farmer (*shizi nong* 識字農)," and discusses such topics as irrigation for fruits and vegetables ("lugging an earthen jar is too doltish, while a machine is too contrived 抱甕太痴機太巧").<sup>96</sup> In another poem called "Constructing a Garden (*Zhipu* 治圃)," he distinguishes the more refined cultivation of fruits or vegetables from run-of-the-mill agricultural production. The poem reads:

I can't become an old farmer, but tending a garden might provide some amusement.  
I'm willing to be belittled by Confucius for following Fan Xu's example.<sup>97</sup>

老農不可作，圃事尚堪娛。  
寧為夫子薄，吾願學樊須。

Fan Xu 樊須 (also Fan Chi 樊遲) was one of Confucius' disciples who asked Confucius about grain cultivation and growing vegetables. Confucius replied that he should ask some old farmer and called him a petty man (*xiaoren* 小人) for concerning himself with such trivial matters rather

<sup>96</sup> "Yiyuan shibian 伊園十便," in Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 2.311.

<sup>97</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 2.267.

than focusing on governance.<sup>98</sup> While at Yi Garden, Li Yu was cultivating both edible vegetables and an image of himself as a participant in a long tradition of reclusion and refusal to serve the government. Given his recent sojourn with Xu Xicai, there is probably also a renewed sense of independence here, and a sense that rustic pleasures are far superior to dependence.

Li Yu's friend Wu Xiuchan 吳修蟾, and likely most contemporary readers, understood Li Yu's description of his rural residence in the context of archetypal examples of reclusive living. Wu commented on this poem: "Is this [Wang Wei's] Wang River? Is it [Tao Yuanming's] Peach Blossom Spring?" We know from his poems and correspondence that although Li Yu would think back on his time at Yi Hill fondly later in life, in fact he and his family were constantly struggling to feed themselves.<sup>99</sup> Whatever the reality of Li Yu's circumstances at Yi Garden may have been, here and elsewhere, he linked the garden discursively to Wang Wei's idyllic rural retreat and Tao Yuanming's utopian agrarian village. Li Yu presents the production of his garden as a potential amusement, and therefore categorically distinct from the difficult work of cultivating grain.

Li Yu ultimately remained at his garden residence only three years—around 1650, he left rather abruptly due to a scandal that involved either his wife's family (who resided in a nearby

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<sup>98</sup> *Lunyu* 論語, 13.4. For the English translation, see Confucius and Edward Slingerland, *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 140.

<sup>99</sup> When Li Yu purchased the mountain in the wake of the Manchurian conquest, he had expected to remain there for the rest of his days: "I mistakenly assumed I would possess the mountain for a long time; who would have thought that lean years would follow the turmoil of war? [My family's] eight mouths cried out in hunger, so I took note of everything I owned and sold it to others." Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 1.129.

village) or a controversy related to his first southern drama (*chuanqi* 傳奇), *Lian xiang ban* 憐香伴 (*Women in Love*), which he published in 1651.<sup>100</sup>

### *Selling a Mountain*

As Li Yu made preparations to move his family to Hangzhou around 1650, he was grappling with what it would mean for him to put the property that he had worked so hard to obtain up for sale. His first play completed, he found himself attempting to sell the “mountain” he had struggled to procure where he had made his reclusive home for three years. Unlike the term “buying a mountain” which was understood to mean going into reclusion, “selling a mountain” was a new play on words, that, read against “buying a mountain,” should have implied “giving up reclusion.” Li Yu addresses the question of whether and how a mountain can be bought and sold in his “Deed of Sale for a Mountain (*Maishan quan* 賣山券)”:

Can a mountain be bought, or can it not be bought? If it cannot be bought, then how does he who does not have a deed possess property (*ye* 業)? If it can be bought, how is it that he who has a deed does not have enduring rights to property (*changye* 常業)? On what basis do I put forth these two propositions after all? I will tell you: “A mountain can be bought, but it cannot be obtained by amassing copper and silver coins. Coins can procure its trees and stones, but they cannot alter its spirit; they can purchase its physical body, but they cannot alter its name. On what do I rely to make this claim? I will tell you: I rely on the lofty integrity of my peculiar ways, and on my elegant verses. Their value is considerable, such that even when this mountain changes names, this expense of spirit can bring it back in the end; although time passes and brings with it great changes, [this mountain] will not have two masters.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Li Yu moved to Hangzhou sometime between 1648 and 1657. There remains some discrepancy among scholars regarding the precise dates of Li Yu’s movement among Lanxi, Hangzhou, and Nanjing after the fall of the Ming, and much of the evidence they rely on is based on indirect sources. Conflicting evidence has been discussed in detail elsewhere, so I will not rehash it here. For a synopsis of evidence regarding these moves, see Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 216, n. 37; Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China: Society, Culture, and Modernity in Li Yu's World*, 115, n. 78.

<sup>101</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 1.128.

山可買乎，不可買乎？云不可買，胡無券者不得業焉？如云可買，胡有券者不得常業焉？二說就何居乎？曰：可買，第非青銅白鐵所能居而有焉。青銅白鐵能購其木石，不能易其精靈；能買其肢體，不能易其姓名。然則恃何以居之？曰：恃絕德畸行，與瑰璋之詩文。其價值足與相當，則此山遂改易姓字，竭精畢能以歸之，雖歷古今，變滄桑，不二其主。

Li Yu's early musings on the nature of ownership that names and deeds could claim assert the power of the printed and disseminated text over the circulation of commodities acquired by cash.<sup>102</sup> Li Yu spilled a fair amount of ink recording his attempts to purchase the hill in the first place, the various "views" by which he established his ownership of the estate, and even accounts of his and his small family's labor there. Faced with losing the physical place, Li Yu drew on a long tradition of confidence that the dissemination of writings would mark the place as his rather than as belonging to whomever the current owner might be. Stephen Owen has suggested that such "'ownership may be understood as a cultural and discursive phenomenon as much as an economic phenomenon; [...] it is the production of value.'"<sup>103</sup> Li Yu's declaration of his right to ownership of this mountain even as he sold it made this point explicit.

This deed spells out and superimposes over the actual land an alternative, cultural landscape in which Li Yu can create value at will. After listing a number of well-known associations of particular mountains with illustrious historical figures like Su Shi 蘇軾 and Wang Xizhi 王羲之, he continues:

As soon as they pass through these places, merchants and officials as well as woodcutters and shepherds, all know the names of these men [with whom particular mountains are

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<sup>102</sup> Stephen Owen has traced the emergence of writers "buying a hill for the sake of the literary experience of the hill, an experience to be published and passed on" to the mid-Tang, suggesting that beginning at that time "to possess a singular style or a text that memorably represents an experience or a place is a more secure means of transmitting ownership to the future" than the less stable possession of land. Stephen Owen, *The End of the Chinese 'Middle Ages': Essays in Mid-Tang Literary Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 31, 33.

<sup>103</sup> Owen, *The End of the Chinese 'Middle Ages': Essays in Mid-Tang Literary Culture*, 33.



associated]—it is not that they only know after inquiring. Although wealthy men and ranked officials can pile up gold as high as a mountain, and though they use their power to shoulder the mountain and walk away, they will still not be able to erase the names of those who came before them and replace them with their own names. Although the current owner may replace the previous one, he is little more than a hired clerk or garden keeper, there to preserve traces of the past. If he were to say to people, “This mountain belongs to me,” who would think it so?<sup>104</sup>

自商賈仕宦以及樵叟牧豎，經其地則絳其名，不俟問津而候識。其富且貴者，雖積金與山齊，力能負之而走，終不能削前人之姓氏，而代以己名。即或業主遞更，亦僅同守薪之吏、灌園之丁，為護往跡而已。若號於人曰：“此山為我有也。”誰其然之？

With these lines, Li Yu places himself and his humble mountain estate among the ranks of some of China’s best-remembered recluses. At the same time, he sides with the cultured sensibility that there is much that money does not suffice to purchase, and that the wealthy, no matter how much cash they shell out, cannot compete with established fame, won by literary legacy. As he wrote these words, Li Yu was attempting to establish such a name for himself, associated with this Yi Hill where he had for three years made his home, and one that would overdetermine the site so much that it would outshine all future economic exchange. In selling, and not selling, Yi Hill, Li Yu leaves a part of himself in reclusion, and he will capitalize on his identity as a recluse for the rest of his days. After all, the two names by which he was most commonly known, Fisherman Li (李漁) and Straw-capped Old [Fisher]man on the Lake (笠翁), mark him above all as a recluse. When Li Yu took these names, he was technically a recluse, and nominal reclusion would remain part of his identity for the rest of his life. When he decided to sell Yi Hill, he knew that he would need to find a way to create a persona that would sell even as he left the countryside for Hangzhou.

<sup>104</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 1.128.

What is especially worth noting is the shift between Li Yu's writings on the estate while living there and this jesting yet emphatic deed that he makes as he faces the loss of the physical place. His poems describing the various "views" within his estate certainly lend distinction to the land, but they contain little of the wit and imaginative spirit that characterizes the majority of his literary production. It is not until he is faced with losing the land that Li Yu has writes of his estate in a voice that is distinctively his own—it is funny, confident, and meticulously reasoned. He gets our attention, not as the owner of a mountain, but as the "true" owner of someone else's mountain. In fact, perhaps such a loss, or displacement, was an experience without which his voice could not have been created. There would have been nothing compelling or memorable about him claiming what was clearly already his. Rather, this identification depends on a distance from the thing possessed. This creation of value, and declaration of ownership translated into real results: as he left the mountain, he moved to Hangzhou where he would sell his writings to make a living, and it was a mode of writing that he would develop throughout his life.

As Li Yu insists on the value of literary representation over land ownership, he is not only resisting the sale of his mountain to someone else, he is also declaring his confidence in his ability to "produce value" by laboring with his brush. Later he would make a living selling copies of his writings, which would be linked by the name he made for himself by first laying claim to places like this.<sup>105</sup> As a window onto Li Yu's early ideas about profit and the value of cultural production, this passage demonstrates that Li Yu was already thinking carefully about the relationship between literary production, fame, and economic exchange. With his cultural

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<sup>105</sup> At the same time, the phrase "[this mountain] will not have two masters" recalls one of the most pressing issues of Li Yu's day: the fact that those who sought official positions under the Qing by not committing suicide or remaining in reclusion would be designated turncoat officials (*erchen* 贰臣). By laying claim to long-term property rights over his mountain, Li Yu is also reassuring himself that giving up reclusion is not tantamount to serving under the Qing.

production, Li Yu sought to create products that would create value were there had been none—ideas, plans, schemes, and stories associated with his name—and sell them for a profit. The fruition of this project was to take shape in Li Yu's cultural entrepreneurship and his commodification of just this sort of cultural product—the cultural meaning of a hill, or any place; an arrangement of rocks, or of flowers; the design of a window or a chair.

Near the end of this essay, he wrote,

These days, when people acquire a little object, they are compelled to write in its crevices, “such-and-such a year/month/day, purchased by so-and-so,” in order that other people cannot seize it and claim it as their own. How much more for a hundred-*mu* hill? I have written poems on my *Retreat at Yi Hill* and included them in my collected works, which have been distributed far and near. If someday someone were to pass by here and say, “Is this not Li's mountain?” how could the new owner not be angry? One would have to circle the sunny side of the mountain and search out poems, ensure that they are stranger and more remarkable than mine, grant them long life by carving them onto printing blocks, and distribute them among the people. Only then will an observer say, “Yi Hill does not belong to Li [Yu] anymore, he sold it to someone else.”<sup>106</sup>

今人備一小物，必書其隙曰：“某年月日某置”，斯他人不得攘而有之，矧百畝之山乎？且余向嘗為伊山別業詩，載入集中，稍布遐邇矣，他日過此者曰：“是即李子之山也。”子寧不怒？夫陽匝而尋詩，務使離奇瑰瑋出余上，壽諸梨棗，胫翼人間，俾見者曰：“伊山不屬李子矣，售得其人矣。”

Here, Li Yu is talking about inscribing a particular place with his mark—the moment in, or period of, time and his name.<sup>107</sup> He reasons that the spirit of the mountain will change owners only when someone else has trumped his description of the place, published and disseminated.

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<sup>106</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 1.129.

<sup>107</sup> In comparing his mark on the mountain to the name and date inscribed on objects, Li Yu is participating in a culture of marking objects that was new in the Ming dynasty. See Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 22, 50-1. The marking of objects with a reign period had begun in the late fourteenth century, and had become common by the early fifteenth century. This practice not only gave “time a visual presence,” but it also shifted the value of objects from the visible and tangible qualities of materials and workmanship to the value of the inscription on its surface. Just as the value attributed to works of calligraphy and painting had long been tightly bound up with the signature of the author of the work, so now were objects marked with a signature that would guarantee their quality and value.

The kind of ownership implied here is again one that is outside the realm of economic exchange in the sense that it cannot be purchased with silver or cash, but must be created out of a person's ingenuity. Significantly, however, what can be purchased with cash, is that literary possession—viewing rights, or commodified knowledge about, Li Yu's ideas and designs. Later in his life, Li Yu would expand the scope of his claims to ownership of this particular hill's spirit (*jingling* 精灵) to include the texts he authored, gardens, the stage, the interior of homes; as well as to material objects, human bodies, and technologies re-imagined through his designs.

### ***Producing Culture in the Early Qing***

Except for a few poems he wrote during the mid-forties lamenting the fact that he had to shave his head in the Manchu style, it is hardly evident from his writing that Li Yu had come of age in the Ming and lived through the dynastic transition. The last of the ten plays Li Yu wrote, *Ingenious Finale* (*Qiao tuanyuan* 巧團圓), published in 1668, is unique among his plays and short stories for its explicit depiction of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition.<sup>108</sup> In his dramatization of the events of the recent past, Li Yu has an older character impart practical advice about the sort of work a young man should pursue in times of crisis. In the play, Yao Dongshan, a former official of the Ming who has gone into reclusion in the Qing, played by the older male role (*xiaosheng* 小生), spells out for a diligent young student, Yao Ji, just why it is

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<sup>108</sup> As Szekely has pointed out, although this *chuanqi* play was adapted from one of Li Yu's short stories ("Tower of my Birth" *Shengwolou* 生我樓), published ten years earlier in 1658, that story was nominally set in the troubled Southern Song. Lenore J. Szekely, "Playing for Profit: Tracing the Emergence of Authorship through Li Yu's (1611-1680) Adaptations of his Huaben Stories into Chuanqi Drama" (University of Michigan, 2010), 184.

unwise and impractical to bury one's head in books during a dynastic transition, presenting him instead with some more practicable career options.<sup>109</sup>

Yao Ji: If it is true [that during troubled times, pursuing book learning is impractical], then what's the use of reading books? There's just one thing: what can we students (*xiucaai*) do besides reading books?

Yao Dongshan: In times like these, there are only three sorts of person one should be. First are fortunetellers; the second are artisans; the third are merchants.

Yao Ji: Why are those the three sorts of person one should be?

Yao Dongshan: Living in such troubled times as these, when one encounters bandit armies, it is enough just to get away with one's life. One cannot bring land or any personal belongings along. Other people, even if they manage to get away with their lives, when they have lost their property, they will starve to death anyway. But for fortunetellers and artisans, their craft [*jishu*] serves as their property. They store it in their bellies and can depend on it to seek out sustenance anywhere they go. This is why they are considered the best and second-best sort of person to be. As for those who become merchants, they tend to become accustomed to trade, as they travel throughout the land, they take note of the terrain and the local customs; they know at which spots one can evade the army, and where one can flee from danger. When they find themselves in imminent danger, they simply take their wives and children along with them. If they have even a few taels of silver as capital left over, they can still manage to earn a living. Although this is the lowest sort of person, anyone can do it, and without losing their dignity. So, I ask you: have you studied any fortunetelling or craft?

生：既然如此，讀書何用？只是一件，我們做秀才的人，除了讀書別樣事做，卻怎麼好？

小生：當此之時，只有三等人好做：第一等是術士，第二等是匠工，第三等是商賈。

生：怎見得這三等人好做？

小生：處此亂世，遇了賊兵，保得性命就勾了，一應田產家私都不能攜帶。別樣人沒了家私，就保得性命也要餓死；那術士、匠工，把技藝當了家私，藏在腹中，隨處可以覓食，所以算做上中二等。為商做賈的人，平日做慣貿易，走

<sup>109</sup> For a discussion of these lines and the adaptation of Li Yu's story "Shengwo lou" into this play, see Szekely, "Playing for Profit: Tracing the Emergence of Authorship through Li Yu's (1611-1680) Adaptations of his Huaben Stories into Chuanqi Drama," 176-89. See also Ying Wang, "'Homing Crane Lodge' versus *The Story of a Palindrome*: Different Ways of Redefining *Qing* and Employing Inversion," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 6, no. 1 (2004), 157.

過江湖，把山川形勢、人情土俗，都看在眼里，知道某處可以避兵，某處可以逃難，到那危急之際，就好挈帶妻子前行，若留得幾兩本錢，還可以營生度活。這雖是最下一等，卻人人可做，又不失體面。我且問你，你曾學得些數術技藝麼？<sup>110</sup>

This dramatic portrayal of the dilemma educated young men faced during uncertain times depicts various social roles and the implications for those who take them up. Yao Dongshan's lecture takes a jab at *xiucai* 秀才, those young scholars who excel at book learning but prove helpless when faced with the task of supporting themselves. Most interesting, perhaps, is the way that he links scholar status to land and personal property (*tianchan jiasi* 田產家私), suggesting that without this capital, the scholar is for all practical purposes no longer a scholar. Scholars, here, more than any other group, are linked to, and utterly dependent upon their homes, families, and accumulated possessions (not least the cap and robe that mark them as scholars in appearance). In this sense, Li Yu has Yao Dongshan suggest (with a pragmatism that echoes Li Yu's own), they are the least equipped to survive in the chaotic world of the dynastic transition. By contrast, Yao locates the personal property of fortune-tellers and artisans inside their bodies, not in their external appearance or material possessions. If they can escape with their lives, he says, they can convert their embodied potential capital—skills and knowledge actually stored in their bodies—into economic capital and the basic necessities for life. Likewise, a merchant accumulates capital in the form of knowledge of the land and the people through his eyes, and stores it within his body. Because of his familiarity with the land, he is better equipped than fortune-tellers and artisans to survive during times of crisis. While the occupations of fortune teller and craftsman both require study or training, that of the merchant, according to Yao, requires only familiarity with the land. In this familiarity lie both its success (which is the ability

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<sup>110</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 5.329.

to turn a profit) and its strategic strength (the reason it is a reliable choice of occupation for men to take up in uncertain times). Finally, it is worth noting that for one fictional Ming loyalist official, depicted by Li Yu a quarter of a century after the fall of the Ming, taking up trade would not result in a loss of dignity.

This exchange is uncharacteristic of Li Yu's writing only in its explicit depiction of the events of the Ming-Qing transition. Li Yu's contemporaries like Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609-1672), Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648-1718), and Huang Zhouxing 黃周星 (1611-1680) tended to wax nostalgic when depicting the transition. These men felt that there was no place for them in the Qing dynasty, and turned to their brushes to create habitable worlds on the page.<sup>111</sup> Li Yu's cultural production bears traces of more than just his own practical navigation of the transition—it actually bears the mark of the profitable activities he took up and the trades he learned in order to survive, as well as how he represented them in writing.

In 1651, having failed at living under another's roof and of remaining in seclusion at Yi Mountain, Li Yu, published his first play in the urban center of Zhejiang, the city of Hangzhou. Landless and without support, he made what he could with what he had stored in his belly—the ability to write a good story. The publication of *Lianxiang ban* marked Li Yu's first step toward becoming a for-profit writer. The play depicts a tripartite romance among a young husband, his wife, and their courtship and marriage to a young woman. In 1645, Xu Xicai had offered Li Yu a concubine, a young woman named Miss Cao 曹氏, who had been widowed during the dynastic transition. Though he already had a wife, Li Yu accepted, and written records portray their relationship as particularly intimate; one of a series of poems on the topic addressed to his wife reads, "It seems you fall for her when you see her; so do I./ Our natural inclination to be moved

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<sup>111</sup> See Li, "Introduction."

by fragrance is the same./ How fortunate for this pearl to fall upon two palms/ Rolling it about between the two of us, it becomes perfectly round. 兒見猶憐我亦憐，憐香天性有同然。一珠何幸擊雙掌，覆去翻來自在圓。”<sup>112</sup> One of Li Yu’s contemporaries commented on this poem: “To have such extraordinary fortune within one’s bed-curtains: there’s a boastful expression on the author’s face; how can the reader not become jealous? 作者面有矜色，閱者能无妒心?”<sup>113</sup>

It would be difficult to deny that this first work was inspired by the world in which he had just spent half a decade—an intimate relationship with his wife and concubine without a significant amount of social engagement. His contemporaries thought so, too. In his preface to the play, Li Yu’s good friend, Yu Wei 虞巍 includes his own observations of the interactions among the three: “I saw that Li Yu’s wife and concubine had a harmonious relationship . . . Not only did the two women love each other, but they also both loved Li Yu. 見其妻妾和諧...兩賢不但相憐，而直相與憐李郎者也。”<sup>114</sup> In writing the character of the young unmarried woman

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<sup>112</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 3.320. This is an interesting twist on the phrase “Even I am moved when I see her (*wojian youlian*),” which was taken from a story in *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 about the jealous wife of the great general Heng Wen of the Eastern Jin (316-420). When the wife learned that her husband had taken a concubine, she planned to go to her and kill her, but upon reaching her room, she took pity on her and treated her well instead. The important point is that a woman overcomes her jealousy and sees another woman from her husband’s point of view, as an honorary man. See Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 et al., *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), 19.693. Another example of the way this phrase was used is: Shen Yixiu in her daughter’s biography, wrote, “You didn’t like it when others said you’re beautiful. But look at you, so pretty even ungroomed! Even I find you irresistible; what will your future husband have to say? 兒嗔人讚汝色美，今羸服亂頭尚且如此，真所謂笑笑生芳步步移妍矣。我見猶憐，未知畫眉人道汝何如？” Cited and translated in Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*, 167. As he experimented with what kind of stories a world without female jealousy would produce, Li Yu uses this phrase to indicate one woman’s love for another, and then attaches his own (male) sentiment as secondary (*yi* 亦).

<sup>113</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 3.320.

<sup>114</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng chuanqi shizhong jiaozhu* 笠翁傳奇十種校注, 2 vols. (Tianjin: Tianjin guji, 2009), 1.3.



in his first play, Li Yu did not even change her surname.<sup>115</sup> With this play, Li Yu took a step toward making his fresh wit and bold experimentation known throughout the region in printed form.

In Hangzhou, Li Yu found that the publishing world he aspired to join, in the new and uncertain dynastic frame of Qing time and space, was a changed place. The fall of the Ming spawned the closing of many of the publishing houses in the Jiangnan region—in Nanjing a mere seven publishing houses are registered during the first decades of the Qing, as opposed to thirty-eight in the late Ming; in Hangzhou five of twenty-five remained.<sup>116</sup> Yet, there seems to have been a market for the entertaining works Li Yu was producing. During his years in Hangzhou (c. 1651-1661), he wrote play after sensational play, and his original fiction collections were produced in quick succession early in his career.<sup>117</sup> Li Yu's output is striking when considered against the total number of extant fictional and dramatic texts published per

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<sup>115</sup> Hanan has suggested that the fact that the young woman portrayed in *Women in Love* shares a surname with Li Yu's concubine proves rather that his own family was far from his mind when he named the character, since to imply that the story was based on his own relationship would have been too potentially scandalous. Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 15-6.

<sup>116</sup> Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods*, 9-10, and 10 n.26. Brokaw draws these figures from the work of Zhang Xiumin 張秀民 and Han Qi 韓琦, *Zhongguo yinshua shi* 中國印刷史, 2 vols. (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2006), 343-48, 65-72, 550-51, 53-54, and 58. She reminds us that these figures are only estimates, but that they give us a general picture of the trend. She notes also that the number of printshops actually increased in Suzhou directly following the transition.

<sup>117</sup> For a synopsis of Li Yu's literary production during this period, see Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 15-23. For an introduction to his short stories, see Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 76-110. For descriptions of his plays, see Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 138-84. For more detailed analyses of four of his plays, see Henry, *Chinese Amusements: The Lively Plays of Li Yu*. For translations of his stories, see Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, trans. Patrick Hanan (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990); Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*. The conjecture that these were bestsellers, first put forth by Patrick Hanan in English, is based on the obviously scanty information we gain from examining numbers of extant copies of his works and the numbers of distinct editions. Perhaps most convincing is the proliferation of extant lower quality editions, which, pirated or not, indicate a more widespread popularity.

year. During the 1650s, Li Yu was completing and publishing on average one new play or short story collection per year. As far as can be determined from extant texts, there were only a handful of new short stories published each year supplemented by new editions of well-known works by author-publishers like Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1645) and Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580–1644). In all, Li Yu published three collections of short stories: *Silent Operas* (*Wusheng xi* 無聲戲) in 1656, *Priceless Gems* (*Lianchengbi* 連城璧) in 1658, and *Twelve Towers* (*Shi'er lou* 十二樓), also in 1658. In addition to *Women in Love*, nine other of Li Yu's plays are extant. Beginning in 1651, he published these lengthy southern dramas individually, usually in two-volume editions, as he completed them. Eventually he published all ten as a set entitled *Liweng's Ten Plays* (*Liweng shizhong qu* 笠翁十種曲). There is anecdotal evidence of the popularity of Li Yu's works in a letter included in his *Independent Words*: of his second play, *Mistake with a Kite* (*Fengzheng wu* 風箏誤), that it “had been coursing among the people for some twenty years, and there's nowhere one can't find a copy of it. 浪播人間幾二十載，其刊本無地無之。”<sup>118</sup>

As I have outlined in the introduction, Li Yu's plays and short stories are distinctive not only for their originality, parody, and lively dialogue, but also for the way that the author-narrator-commentator—who was identified with Li Yu by name—incessantly interrupts the reader, baits her, and delights in outsmarting her. His stories are stories about stories, just as the many metatheatrical elements of his plays draw attention to the fact that they are plays. This metafictional quality, among other things, directs attention to the author, Li Yu. There was no

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<sup>118</sup> “Da Chen Ruixian 答陈蕊仙” in Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 1.176. *Fengzheng wu* may have been his most popular play; it is the only play from which scenes are still part of the standard Kunqu repertoire today.

precedent for a literatus to identify himself explicitly as an author of fiction in this way, and while we do not know why he stopped publishing short stories after just a few years, they do seem to have sufficed to get readers interested in their author.<sup>119</sup>

After around a decade in Hangzhou, Li Yu began to diversify his literary production, engaging in projects that demonstrated the breadth of his knowledge, and also boasted empire-wide collaboration of many of those in his social networks. This shift is roughly simultaneous with his decision to relocate his family to Nanjing in the early 1660s. His projects during his late-Hangzhou and Nanjing years were largely comprised of collections of his own nonfiction prose on the one hand and collaborative compilations of contemporary writings on the other. The essay Li Yu wrote during this period covered a broad range of topics—including *Gujin shilüe* 古今史略 (*A Brief History of the Old and New*) in 1659, *Lungu* 論古 (*Discussions of the Past*) in 1664, those included in his compilations *Zizhi xinshu chujì* 資治新書初集 (*New Aid for Governance*) in 1663 and its sequel in 1667, as well as his crowning accomplishment, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶寄 (*Leisure Notes*), published in 1671.<sup>120</sup> Distinctive and witty, but not ribald or even comic, these essays demonstrate Li Yu's unique observational skills in a range of subjects, including history and governance, while *Xianqing ouji* is a singular experiment that instructs readers on how to constantly renew their everyday experiences. During this period, he

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<sup>119</sup> See Szekely's dissertation for the argument that Li Yu's stories were targeted toward his fellow literati, while his plays targeted a more general audience. She suggests that perhaps the public responded with more enthusiasm to his plays, and when he found them more profitable, he gave up the writing of *huaben* stories. Szekely, "Playing for Profit: Tracing the Emergence of Authorship through Li Yu's (1611-1680) Adaptations of his *Huaben* Stories into Chuanqi Drama."

<sup>120</sup> Fifty years after Li Yu's death, in his foreword (*bianyan* 弁言) to the 1730 combined edition of Li Yu's *Independent Words* and *Xianqing ouji*, the current proprietor of Mustard Seed Garden writes that of all of Li Yu's writings, *Independent Words*, *Lyrics for Singing*, *On History*, and *Xianqing ouji*, hold the greatest appeal. Li Yu published all of these texts during his Nanjing years, and neither his plays nor his short fiction are included among them. Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng jiyiayan quanji* 笠翁一家言全集 (Nanjing: Jiezi yuan, 1730).

also oversaw the publication of his collected poetry and prose in various genres in a series of collections titled *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言 (*Liweng's Independent Words*). *Xianqing ouji* and *Yijiayan*, both published near the end of Li Yu's life, would be his legacy, despite his insistence that he was not concerned with the future transmission of his works.

In Nanjing, Li Yu also compiled and published several compilations of contemporary writings, which he solicited from his friends and prominent individuals throughout the dynasty. These included compilations of letters, poetry, and court cases, each intended for publication in several installments. Some of them the first of their kind, these collaborative projects placed Li Yu at the center of some empire-wide social networks. As he aged, Li Yu could increasingly rely on the name and reputation—outrageous, entertaining, and perhaps above all, social—that he had built up for himself through his earlier writing to produce collaborative texts that offered readers access not just to the well-known Li Yu, but also to many other famous contemporary individuals. These later texts were collaborative not only in the sense that Li Yu would solicit paratextual materials for them from his many friends, but also because he solicited the content of the texts themselves from some of the most influential literary figures of his day.

That Li Yu spoke of selling his works, advertised upcoming works in earlier ones, had no other means of income, and continued to produce only plays and fiction collections for a decade indicates that they were selling at least moderately well. At the same time, the fact that he did not publish another short story after 1658 indicates a significant shift—be it in his own interests, in the market, in his perception of the market, or some combination of these. Perhaps he sensed that there was space—or potential demand—in the urban center in which he lived for cultural products that would actively involve more people, both as producers and consumers, and that the reading public sought material that referred to the contemporary moment and that would give

them a sense of belonging to a community. Li Yu's fiction and plays would have served primarily to entertain readers privately by creating fictional worlds in which they might lose themselves—with what must have been a welcome distraction from the upheaval immediately following the transition. His later efforts to orchestrate spaces where visitors could share experiences through his theater direction and the design of his garden residence-cum-theater, Mustard Seed Garden further corroborate the hypothesis that Li Yu was experimenting with ways to make his cultural production more interactive.

In 1668, using funds acquired on a recent journey to Shaanxi, Li Yu built a garden residence of his own design—*Jiezi yuan* 芥子園 (Mustard Seed Garden), a three *mu* 畝 (half-acre) combined residence, garden, publishing house, and bookshop near Zhengyang Gate 正陽門 in the southeastern corner of Nanjing. He managed and worked out of Mustard Seed Garden for eight years, selling his own works (published by Yisheng tang) and woodblock-printed stationery of his design. Like the poems on Yi Garden, those Li Yu wrote on his Mustard Seed Garden are not particularly distinctive, nor do they showcase his wit. To give just one example, of his study, he wrote:

When it rains, I watch a waterfall; when it's clear, I watch the moon.  
In the morning I listen to the *qin*; at night I listen to song.<sup>121</sup>

雨觀瀑布晴觀月，  
朝聽鳴琴夜聽歌。

Li Yu's couplets on other sites within Mustard Seed Garden do not differ much from this one. Unlike "Records (*ji* 記)" of gardens, which provide longer, more detailed accounts of the particular garden being described, these poems are so generic that they could have been written about any garden, by anyone. Still, when we read them against the poems he wrote on Yi Garden,

<sup>121</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 1.242.

these poems stand out for their focus on entertainment and on leisure, whether in their lack of detail on the care required for particular plants, or their constant reference to those delightfully nonproductive aspects of the garden—the sights and sounds, the women and music. In presenting Mustard Seed Garden this way, Li Yu is writing himself into the younger tradition of celebrating the entertainment potential of gardens, especially those that were located in urban centers and served as gathering places for urban residents.<sup>122</sup> All references to the cultivation of foodstuffs we saw in the Yi Garden poems have disappeared, and entertainment takes center stage.

In Li Yu's garden, this entertainment took the form of theatricals performed by a troupe of young women he had been given as concubines. In 1666, the prefect of Pingyang, Shanxi, Cheng Zhifu 程質夫, gave the first girl, Qiao Fusheng 喬復生, to Li Yu at the beginning of a long northern patronage journey that would take him to Beijing, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Gansu, and Henan.<sup>123</sup> She showed a natural aptitude for music and could easily repeat verses she had heard only once. Once she had trained for awhile and impressed both her master and her teacher, she took it upon herself to train the concubine gifted to Li Yu upon his arrival in Lanzhou, Gansu, Wang Zailai 王再來. Li Yu directed them to perform his own plays as well as old plays he had adapted for the modern stage, at home and on tour. For the next several years, Li Yu tells us, they would perform any time there was cause for celebration, for some of the most celebrated cultural figures in the land. The two girls, who had brought life, music, and entertainment to Mustard Seed Garden, died of consumption, one after the other, in 1672 and 1673.

The first book to be published under the Mustard Seed Garden name was not printed until Li Yu had moved back to Hangzhou in 1676, but it is the reason the name Mustard Seed Garden

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<sup>122</sup> See Craig Clunas, *Fruitful Sights: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China* (Durham: Duke University Press), Ch. 1.

<sup>123</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 1.95-100.

is remembered to this day. Li Yu's son-in-law, Shen Xinyou, oversaw the publication of this very popular book, *The Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual* (*Jiezi yuan huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳), in 1679. Li Yu had commissioned the son of his long-time friend, Wang Zuoche 王左車 (之輔), Wang Gai 王槩 (安節) to produce a manual that would present the aspiring painter with the fundamentals of landscape painting.<sup>124</sup> The result was a multi-volume instructive guide to painting, richly illustrated with detailed instructional images of varying size.

In 1676, Li Yu left his Mustard Seed Garden, leaving his son-in-law to manage the business, and moved to his final residence, *Cengyuan* 層園, on Hangzhou's West Lake. He was publishing, writing, and providing comments and prefaces from that residence until just months before his death. He died on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, 1680 (KX19).

### ***More than a Mountain Man***

What was Li Yu's status as a producer of cultural products in the early Qing? A recent monograph has analyzed Li Yu's cultural persona in light of his participation in the for-profit circulation of cultural commodities.<sup>125</sup> For all its richness, however, this study limits its assessment of Li Yu to the contemporary dichotomizing categories of the noble literatus (*wenren* 文人) and disparaged literati-merchant sycophant or "mountain man" (*wengu qingke* 文賈清客 or *shanren* 山人), characterizing Li Yu as making a shift from a *wenren* to "mountain man"

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<sup>124</sup> For modern reproductions of this work, see Jan Tschichold, *Chinese Color-prints from the Painting Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden* (New York: The Beechhurst Press, 1953); Roger Goepfer and Gai Wang, *Blumen aus dem Senfkorngarten* (München: Kirmer Verlag, 1960); Liu-fang Li, Raffaël Petrucci, and Kai Wang, *Kiai-Tseu-Yuan Houa Tchouan: les enseignements de la Peinture du Jardin grand comme un grain de moutarde* (Paris: Renouard, 1918).

<sup>125</sup> Huang Guoquan 黃果泉, *Yasu zhi jian: Li Yu de wenhua renga yu wenxue sixiang yanjiu* 雅俗之間: 李漁的文化人格與文學思想研究.

sometime during his Nanjing years.<sup>126</sup> Martin Huang has pointed out that the term *wenren* originally denoted literati officials, but that by the Yuan dynasty the term had come to denote educated men who pursued literary talent as an end in itself as well.<sup>127</sup> By the late Ming, the numbers of self-identified *wenren* without official positions had soared, and many of them found ways to make a living by selling literary products and services. The cultural activities of these men, especially those meant to yield a profit, caused considerable anxiety among their more conservative counterparts.

Li Yu explicitly states in *Xianqing ouji* that *wenren* are “not just those men of talent (*caishi* 才士), but anyone who can read can be included in the group,”<sup>128</sup> and his actions and attitude make clear that he was hardly striving for the ivory tower of some idealized literati essence. Li Yu characterizes not only a remarkably successful author like himself as a literatus (*wenren*), but also all of the consumers of his literary products, men and women, old and young alike.<sup>129</sup> Whether Li Yu was sincere in this claim is not relevant. What is important for our purposes is that he suggested, in print, that literacy, perhaps even partial literacy, was the only requisite for inclusion in the *wenren* group. According to this definition, neither the refined taste,

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<sup>126</sup> Hanan has pointed out that “despite [Li Yu’s] claim to have traveled the length and breadth of China for almost twenty years, his long patronage journeys began only in 1666, when he traveled to Beijing, Shaanxi, and Gansu. He arrived home early in 1668, only to set off soon for Guangzhou, from which he returned early in 1669. In 1670 he traveled to Fuzhou and in 1672 to Hanyang. Then in 1673 came [his second] journey to Beijing.” Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 6. For an example of the *wenren/shanren* shift, see Huang Guoquan 黃果泉, *Yasu zhi jian: Li Yu de wenhua rengye yu wenxue sixiang yanjiu* 雅俗之間：李漁的文化人格與文學思想研究, 10.

<sup>127</sup> Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/presentation: Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Chinese Novel*, 32.

<sup>128</sup> See Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 199.

<sup>129</sup> For the discursive expansion of readership to include those outside the literati, including women, from the sixteenth century on see McLaren, “Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China,” 160. See especially her discussion of the term “ignorant men and women (*yufu yufu* 愚夫愚婦).”



nor the cultural activities, nor the moral values traditionally associated with this group are determining factors; rather, the group simply and expansively includes all who can read. Speaking of literacy apart from literati identity, and especially the use of literacy for particular purposes other than study for the exam or poetry composition shows that for Li Yu at least, the uses of literacy as well as the reach and legitimacy of the category of *wenren* were up for debate in the early Qing.

His contemporaries and those who would pass judgment on him during the remainder of the Qing, however, more often used the loaded term “mountain man” (*shanren* 山人) to describe him.<sup>130</sup> Li Yu used this term to describe many of his friends, and his choice of style and other names indicate a tendency toward a mountain man sensibility. Wai-ye Li has observed that “‘mountain person,’ or related terms like ‘daoist’ ([*daoren*] 道人) or ‘recluse’ ([*jushi*] 居士) are often used as part of the courtesy name ([*zi*] 字) or pen name (*hao* 號) among the late-Ming literati.”<sup>131</sup> She suggests that these terms convey “the idea of participating in the social relations of life and at the same time transcending them through the connoisseurly enjoyment of things.”<sup>132</sup> Kai-wing Chow has argued that the new career of the “professional writer” emerged in sixteenth-century China. He divides these professionals into the three tiers of the respected *minggong* 名公 (“famous gentleman”), the often-derided *shanren* 山人 (“mountain man”), and the relatively neutral *zuojia* 作家 (“author”), emphasizing that *shanren* usually designated a

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<sup>130</sup> Shanren were usually painters or calligraphers, but by the late Ming the identity was claimed by anyone who wanted to indicate his removal from worldly affairs. See Yizhi Fang and Willard J. Peterson, *Bitter Gourd: Fang I-chih and the Impetus for Intellectual Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 32-33, 131-33.

<sup>131</sup> Wai-ye Li, "The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility," *T'oung Pao* 81(1995), 284.

<sup>132</sup> Li, "The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility," 284.

professional who lived off his skills (such as writing or painting), and included men who would set up writing stations or divination tables at temples.<sup>133</sup> Yet, as Jamie Greenbaum's recent study of Chen Jiru makes clear, already by the late Ming, what sort of person *shanren* designated was, like the category of *wenren*, undergoing vigorous debate. She cites the renowned late-Ming literatus Yuan Hongdao complaining that "since the Jiajing period, the practice of retiring to live in the mountains and woods in order to get a good name for oneself has become a type of game."<sup>134</sup> She also points out that Wang Shizhen complained about overuse of this term, by imposters such as officials or profit-seekers, even as he used the term to describe himself.

The twenty-third scene of Li Yu's play *Paired Soles* (*Bimuyu* 比目魚) opens with a *chou* 丑, or clown role, disguising himself as a mountain man. The *chou* "dresses up as a fake old fisherman" (*ban jia yuweng* 扮假漁翁) and describes the costume, props, and actions that serve as his disguise:

I have donned a grass cape and a straw hat and exude a scholarly air. I look just like a talented man escaping the world. I also have my official's cap, round collar, and tie close at hand, so that people will see them they'll suspect that I'm an official. . . . In this world, it's hard to find a true recluse, mountain bandits might as well pretend to be mountain men. I am no other than a spy for the leader of the mountain outlaws, sent here to masquerade as an old fisherman.<sup>135</sup>

我如今穿蓑衣，戴了箬笠，做出些儒者氣象，儼然是個避世的高人。又把紗帽圓領帶在身旁，使人見了好疑我是個仕宦。世上難逢真隱士，不妨山賊冒山人。自家非別，山大王的細作，差來假扮漁翁的便是。

<sup>133</sup> Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*, 104.

<sup>134</sup> Wu Chengxue 吳承學, "Yinyi yu jishi--Chen Meigong yu wan Ming de shifeng 隱逸與濟世——陳眉公與晚明的士風," *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* 78, no. Spring (2005). Cited in Greenbaum, *Chen Jiru (1558-1639): The Development and Subsequent Uses of a Literary Personae*, 173.

<sup>135</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 5.180-81. Beginning of scene 23, 29b.

The marginal commentator explains Li Yu's intention: "This is not to curse mountain men, it is to curse those bandits who falsely claim the status of mountain man. The fact that there are false [mountain men] is precisely how we know that there are true mountain men. Do not say that Liweng is disparaging their kind [mountain men]. 非罵山人。罵匪類之冒為山人也。作假正以有真。勿謂笠翁自傷其類。"<sup>136</sup> This passage shows Li Yu dramatizing the widespread practice, common since the late Ming, of deriding those who claim mountain man status to seek fame or fortune, while claiming the right to determine who is deserving of the name.<sup>137</sup> The passage also demonstrates Li Yu's awareness of the debates surrounding the legitimacy of the category of mountain man and the supposed impostors who used the cultural capital associated with the lifestyle for personal gain.

Throughout his writings, Li Yu refers to friends with frequency as "mountain men (*shanren* 山人)."<sup>138</sup> In his preface to the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, Li Yu indicates that he has commissioned the groundbreaking how-to manual for aspiring painters specifically for the "mountain men and ink scholars" (*shanren moshi* 山人墨士) of the world.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 5.181.

<sup>137</sup> See Greenbaum, *Chen Jiru (1558-1639): The Development and Subsequent Uses of a Literary Personae*, 172-74. She refers to Lu Xun's comment that the sign *shanren* was an instant way of making an urban living in Chen Jiru's time, the late Ming. Both of the names Li Yu took as he made a name for himself resonate with the sort of cultural capital that the term *shanren* represented: Yu, or fisherman, was a common way to describe a recluse, while Liweng, or straw-capped old man, likewise indicated a fellow who had cast aside the cares of the world. Li Yu's own biography corroborates Lu Xun's claim, as Li Yu took these names for himself not when he took refuge at his Mount Yi estate, but when he had moved to the city to try to make a living.

<sup>138</sup> See "Ling *shanren suo zeng* 凌山人索贈" in Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 2.129. See also "Jiutu pian wei yanzhong zhu *shanren zuo* 酒徒篇為燕中褚山人作," in Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 2.40.

<sup>139</sup> See Li Yu's preface to Wang Gai 王槩, *Jieziyuan huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳, 5 vols. (China: s.n., 1679).

Later commentators on Ming and Qing culture, however, used the term *shanren* in a negative sense to indicate failed literati who ended up working for profit very successfully.

The struggle that was taking place over these status designations in the early Qing resulted in widespread disagreement over who could be a *wenren* and who was a *shanren*, and precisely what each of these terms indicated in various contexts. This dissonance was due in no small part to the fact that terms such as these failed to encapsulate the versatility of the cultural activities and social positions of men who lived and worked through the Ming-Qing transition and into the first decades of the Qing. Even as men sought to make a living in non-traditional ways, they differed significantly in their perceptions of the relationship between their apparent social status and their own sense of themselves and others. Examining the related phenomenon of the changing social practices and status of artists in late-Ming and early-Qing China, a number of recent art historical studies have begun to theorize the rhetorical position of these artists within alternate frames of reference.<sup>140</sup> The case of Li Yu provides insight into the particular qualities of such an early modern urban subjectivity. Li Yu, like many of his contemporaries, was both a literatus, or educated man, doing “something else” *and* a literatus who was using terms such as *shanren* to indicate his simultaneous participation in and transcendence of the very practices in which he was engaged.

Li Yu engaged in a broad range of profitable cultural activities that both made him money and served as creative outlets. While educated men seem to have enjoyed a significant amount of personal freedom during the first few decades of the Qing, Li Yu's entrepreneurship embroiled him in an unstable, demanding, and fast-moving web of market-driven relationships.

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<sup>140</sup> Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*. See also Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China*; Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470-1559*.

As the decades wore on, the interregional networks of educated and influential men (and some women) began to thrive again, often bringing together individuals of differing political persuasions, a phenomenon that was understandably much more visible and charged in the early Qing than any similar situation in the late Ming.<sup>141</sup> Li Yu's cultural production both reflected and helped to produce this empire-wide urban network in which cultural products were emphatically for sale and cultural producers negotiated interdependent relationships with interested buyers of many different pedigrees and trades. Li Yu molded his products to the market, and his enterprising activities informed the form and content of his writing.

Central to Li Yu's art was literacy, which he obtained through a classical education as he prepared for the civil service examination during his youth in the late Ming. This education provided him with the necessary tools to engage in the projects he would undertake later in life, while also providing him with common knowledge with many men in higher stations than he was. The support he received from influential men around him early in life can be attributed to his status as an aspiring young scholar, and it was on this foundation that he built his career. Yet Li Yu engaged in a range of profitable undertakings of unprecedented scope for a literatus. In this, he came perhaps as close as one could have to being an independent entrepreneur of innovative cultural products, without the luxury of independent wealth. He was flexible and took risks, expanding the limits of acceptable cultural production. His creativity and thirst for innovation seems to have been boundless, and he designed products in which he seems to have delighted. Li Yu's creative spirit and love of experimentation are what set him apart from merchants who simply put commodities into circulation.

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<sup>141</sup> Zhou Lianggong is one notable example. Although he submitted to the Qing and held official positions, he was a dedicated patron of artists of all political stripes. See Kim, *The Life of a Patron: Zhou Lianggong (1612-1672) and the Painters of Seventeenth-Century China*.

Li Yu's mode of cultural production explored new possibilities for the sale of cultural products and ideas, and the methods he used to make a living were bound up with the specific circumstances of the commercializing economy of the early Qing. The most important aspect of this is the fact that his "products" are reproducible designs, clever ideas, or individualized consultation; there is no apparent equivalent to someone sending a fee and demanding a painting or a eulogy of a literatus who had decided to work for a living.<sup>142</sup> The sorts of cultural production Li Yu engaged in throughout his life allowed him to forego the traditional relationship between patron and patronized, even while he spoke frankly about his need to make a living. His contemporaries and later high-minded scholars criticized him for catering to the market, but while he did so he managed to avoid working for any particular client, taking residence in a wealthier acquaintance's home only once, before the launching of his career during the dynastic transition when he had lost everything. One of his strategies was to alter cultural products so as to make cultural and symbolic capital more accessible to more people, even as it did so by marketing cultural products to them that they could afford—his books.<sup>143</sup>

### ***Xianqing ouji*: Writing Practice**

In 1671, twenty years into his lively career in writing, publishing, garden design, theater direction, and interregional tours, Li Yu published *Liweng's First Secret Book* (*Liweng mishu*

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<sup>142</sup> Craig Clunas, among others, has made a convincing case for the utility of the notion of symbolic capital, in the form of literati taste, to argue that during the late Ming, literati became invested in articulating the value of their construction of taste in response to the economic and social privilege increasingly enjoyed by merchants. Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*. Jonathan Hay has written of the artist Shi Tao working in the early Qing, that it was not that he would not accept payment for his work, but rather that payment was not enough to command production. Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*, 145.

<sup>143</sup> On how Li Yu adapted some of his own short stories into more "popular" *chuanqi* plays, see Szekely, "Playing for Profit: Tracing the Emergence of Authorship through Li Yu's (1611-1680) Adaptations of his Huaben Stories into Chuanqi Drama."

*diyi zhong* 笠翁秘書第一種), *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶寄. The Yisheng tang (翼聖堂) publisher's

note on the title page reads:

The world is brimming with Mr. [Li's] books. People say they are strange, unique, and unsurpassable, but he scoffs at them, saying that although there are unsurpassably marvelous things in life, they are not to be found in those earlier works. Suppose he were to make his pillow secrets public—perhaps then we could see the true Liweng? So he provided this volume, and I printed it to preserve it.

先生之書，充塞宇宙，人謂奇矣、絕矣，莫能加矣，先生自視蔑如也，謂平生奇絕處俱有，但不在從前剖方中，倘出枕中所秘者公世，或能見真笠翁乎？因授是編，梓為後勁。<sup>144</sup>

The selling point of *Xianqing ouji* for this publisher was that it would make the private life—the pillow secrets—of a well-known bon vivant available for public consumption. Inside those pages is an insider's guide to life by Li Yu. The text opens with two long sections on writing and directing plays, followed by his ideas on women, the home, food, plants, and how to maximize pleasure and prevent illness. The host of subtopics under these covers every imaginable aspect of everyday life that perhaps can only be held together with the idea of a “real” Liweng who had been interacting with readers since his first publication twenty years earlier. *Xianqing ouji* was supposed to reveal the man behind the curtain. Given Li Yu's delight in toying with readers in all his works, it should come as no surprise that the true Liweng proves somewhat difficult to pin down.<sup>145</sup>

At the beginning of the essay on arts (*wenyi* 文艺) in the *Shengrong* 聲容 section of

*Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu argued for the benefit of some level of literacy for everyone:

<sup>144</sup> This is from the title page of the first edition of *Xianqing ouji*, held in the Peking University collection, call number X/818.2/4037.1.

<sup>145</sup> Selections from these sections are translated in Faye Chunfang Fei, ed. *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 77-88. For other translations of parts of these sections, see David Pollard, "Voice and Looks; Accomplishments; Literacy; Clothes," *Renditions* 51, no. Spring (1999); David Pollard, "Structure," *Renditions* 72, no. Autumn (2009).

There is a key that unlocks the door to all of the ten thousand things and events under Heaven. What is that key? It is found in two words: language (*wen*) and principle (*li*). Regular keys only open one lock, and only one lock serves each door. But language and principle not only unlock tens of thousands of doors, but everything in the sky and under ground, in the ten thousand countries and the nine continents, so big there is no outside of it, so small it has no interior. As for anything you want to study or learn, there is nothing to which it does not hold the strategic position, controlling all who enter and leave. This theory applies not only to married women and girls, but all scholars, farmers, artisans and merchants under Heaven, those who follow the three teachings and the nine schools of thought, all the craftsmen and artisans—everyone should look at it this way.

天下萬事萬物，盡有開門之鎖鑰。鎖鑰維何？文理二字是也。尋常鎖鑰，一鑰止開一鎖，一鎖止管一門；而文理二字之為鎖鑰，其所管者不止千門萬戶。蓋合天上地下，萬國九州，其大至於無外，其小至於無內，一切當行當學之事，無不握其樞紐，而司其出入者也。此論之發，不獨為婦人女子，通天下之士農工賈，三教九流，百工技藝，皆當作如是觀。<sup>146</sup>

While his focus in this essay is on the benefit of literacy for women, Li Yu expands the group to include every person, regardless of his trade. For example, he suggests that a builder who is literate enough to keep accounts will be much more successful than one who is not—he will get twice the result for half the effort. It is not that everyone needs to learn exhaustively in order to read arcane classics; it is rather that language is a means to any end, and people should simply learn what is useful to them, since language has the power to create value in all fields. From the moment he claimed rights to his mountain as he was losing it, Li Yu began to experiment with the power of textual representation—both of language and print—to create value.

Li Yu used the power of language and his imaginative reasoning to create books that would sell; central to his early success as a writer was his ability to concoct new stories. McMahon has observed that a central feature of the short fiction of the late Ming is the ultimate containment at the end of stories, a didactic return to the equilibrium of the real world. That Li Yu's stories overturned or toyed with earlier stories, commonplaces, or assumptions about the

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<sup>146</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶寄, 143.



way the world worked made them entertaining, even as it suggested to readers the impossibility of such a return. Rather, they pointed to their author, who flaunted his power to make anything happen with words.

In his essay, “The Medicine of that which One has not Seen Previously” (*yisheng weijian zhi yao* 一生未見之藥) in *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu suggests that there is no literary value but novelty, a characteristic of his literary production that Patrick Hanan has termed “the necessity of invention.”

So-called rare books are not necessarily profound or secret books that are gotten out of their hiding places in dilapidated walls. All of those newly composed books that have not yet passed in front of one’s eyes are also rare books. . . . Things are not good or bad; those things that are rarely seen are treasured.

所謂異書者，不必微言秘籍，搜藏破壁而後得之。凡屬新編，未經目睹者，即是異書[·]物無美惡，希觀為珍。<sup>147</sup>

Li Yu had seen in fiction and drama the promise of such continual renewal, as they would allow him to take any commonplace and tell a different story about it. For example, his short story, “*Gai bazi kujin ganlai* 改八字苦盡甘來 (With a Change of the Eight Characters, Suffering Ends and Happiness Ensues)” opens with a poem that laments the perpetual difficulties in ascertaining Heaven’s will, followed by a comment that affirms that Heaven’s decisions are uncontestable. To demonstrate the absurd measures people will take to align themselves with Heaven’s will, the opening anecdote tells of a woman who suffocates her baby in her womb in an attempt to prevent herself from giving birth at an inopportune time. The narrator is quick to make known that because the eight characters are determined by Heaven, the baby simply went to another home and was born (at the same time) of another womb. The paragraph ends with the emphatic statement that the eight characters can absolutely not be changed, even as the next paragraph

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<sup>147</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 346.

opens, “Now recently, however, there was someone who changed his characters. 如今卻又有個改得的。”<sup>148</sup> This is the type of strange tale, Li Yu, the author tells us, in which “the principle is lacking, but the facts are there, and it is told to refresh the reader’s eyes and ears. 這叫做理之所無、事之所有的奇話，說來新一新看官的耳目。”<sup>149</sup> Stories had long refreshed readers’ eyes and ears by recounting new possibilities, but Li Yu’s stories go beyond those and overwhelm their frames.

Li Yu was writing in the wake of the late-Ming obsession with novelty as evidence of authenticity, when thinkers like Wang Yangming and Li Zhi ranked personal, unadulterated experience of the world, as theorized in their notions of innate knowledge *liangzhi* 良知 and a child-like heart *tongxin* 童心, above the wisdom of the ancients and its manifestation as contemporary book learning. The models for such idealized notions of authenticity were to be found in the uneducated—children, women, or men of the lower classes. For example, Yuan Zongdao 袁宗道 (1560–1600), in his *Lun yinzhe yiqu* 論隱者異趣, praised as naturally superior anyone who was not a student:

For farmers and artisans, merchants and peddlers, grooms and cooks, attendants and servants, what they are called upon to perform varies from day to day and month to month, and the way they speak also varies from day to day and month to month, because these are always new. Only those vulgar students who make a living their whole lives under somebody else’s spittle without one new thing to say are detestable.

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<sup>148</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 3.57.

<sup>149</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 3.57. Refreshing the eyes and ears was a common claim of fiction, as was finding the new in the immediate environment. Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, in the preface to his collection, *Chuke pai'an jingqi* 初刻拍案驚奇, calls for his compatriots to look at “that which is within the range of the eyes and ears 耳目之內” to find the strange and amazing, claiming that his stories (published under a pseudonym) will do just that. *Chuke pai'an jingqi* 初刻拍案驚奇 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue, 1957), 1.

農工商賈，廝養皂隸，所作之事，日化月遷；所說之語，亦日異月殊，以其新也。惟俗學終身在人涎沫下作生涯，無一新語，大可厭。<sup>150</sup>

Rather than locate authenticity in the lesser educated, as I have shown above, Li Yu advocated for their education. For him, (though he did not expressly state it) a childlike heart was useless without the words to express it. In fact, he might have pointed out that the late-Ming figures who located authenticity in these uneducated figures never stopped using language to express those assessments.

Li Yu sought to make what these men had idealized as pertaining naturally to the uneducated—a novel experience of the everyday—a possibility in real life. His stories were a first attempt to do so, as he converted tired tropes into brand-new entertaining page-turners. At the same time, I believe he eventually found limiting the fact that these lent themselves to quiet, solitary, and ultimately linear reading. In adapting four of his stories into plays, he updated his own story material even as he wrote with the intention of directing a social interaction in time—their performance. Not only that, but he found that his plays were more malleable than stories, readily adaptable to the various forms of the everyday. He could expand or contract them to fill a given span of time. He also updated old plays to renew their entertainment value. Li Yu's quest for constant renewal in literature might have found its culmination in a scenario he suggested in the section on updating plays (*bianjiu chengxin* 變舊成新) in *Xianqing ouji*:

As for the language of buffoonery, if you want to update worn-out words, [...] regardless of whether you want to add them to every play or change them in every scene, or change them every day, make them new every month, it is also pretty easy. It is just a pity that while the households of officials today house plenty of actors, they don't get a person who is witty with a brush to cultivate the literary daylilies to make them forget their cares at every moment. If heaven gave Liweng some extra years and a bushel of gold, so that he could buy some actors himself, write some verses himself, instruct them with his

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<sup>150</sup> Yuan Zongdao 袁宗道, *Bai Su zhai lei ji* 白蘇齋類集, ed. Qian Bochong 錢伯城 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), 21.301-4.

mouth and direct them with his body, then the theatricals would be renewed every day, and the buffoonery onstage would constantly change.

插科打諢之語，若欲變舊為新 [...] 無論劇劇可增，出出可改，即欲隔日一新，逾月一換，亦誠易事。可惜當世貴人，家蓄名優數輩，不得一詼諧弄筆之人，為種詞林萱草，使之刻刻忘憂。若天假笠翁以年，授以黃金一斗，使得自買歌童，自編詞曲，口授而身導之，則戲場關目，日日更新，氈上詼諧，時時變相。<sup>151</sup>

As Li Yu suggests here, however, such constant innovation would require not only an immense amount of labor on his part, but also significant expenditure. (It is also hard to imagine that he would remain in a single patron's home for long). Li Yu could not achieve this somewhat playful ambition of filling every moment with brand-new theatricals by writing and directing plays. There was no way for him to keep up in real time. Instead, he created a brand-new mode of representation with *Xianqing ouji*, one which would allow him to present readers with a way of effecting his vision of tinkering with every moment of every day of their private lives.<sup>152</sup>

A look through its table of contents gives the impression that *Xianqing ouji* is a collection of essays arranged topically, including essays on dramatic composition and staging, women, house and garden construction, furniture arrangement, enjoyment of food and drink, and health and well-being. Yet just about any foray into the essays propels one into an unpredictable world of surprises: one of the most delightful aspects of this work is found in the disjuncture between its relatively systematic table of contents and the stories that await the reader in many of the entries. Whereas the opening chapters on drama are celebrated to this day for their systematic treatment of playwriting and directing, these and many others go off on a whim or a clever

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<sup>151</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 3.75.

<sup>152</sup> Patrick Hanan has written of *Xianqing ouji*: "In scope and subject matter, the book has no parallel; the numerous Chinese works on the scholar's studio furnishings and the recluse's pleasures do not come near to matching it. Its organization and analytical approach, its style and humorous manner set it apart from other books. It is more than connoisseurship, more than know-how; it is, as it professes to be, a reflection of the tastes, interests, and thoughts of its author." *The Invention of Li Yu*, 196.

metaphor as soon as they begin. In this way, *Xianqing ouji* outwits the organizing system of its table of contents, and as such functions differently from the sort of useful how-to manual to which some of the other collections Li Yu edited belong. Another way of putting it is that the point of the text is that the reader has no way of predicting what Li Yu will make with a given topic, rather, what she knows is that he will not say what anyone else would have said. To give a few examples: the entry on softshell turtles tells of the chaotic transitional period when life hung in the balance, that on plum blossoms describes how to keep warm and heat wine while viewing plum blossoms on a mountain, and that on drinking tells of his love for music and his impatience with those who talk through it.

The two genres with which *Xianqing ouji* has most often been compared are the casual essay (*xiaopin* 小品) and the connoisseurship manual. Late-Ming connoisseurship manuals, such as *Desultory Remarks on Furnishing the Abode of the Retired Scholar* (*Kaopan yushi* 考槃餘事, 1590), and Wen Zhenheng's 文震亨 manual of taste, *Superfluous Things* (*Zhangwu zhi* 長物志, 1620s), instructed anyone interested in the particulars of appropriate luxury consumption.<sup>153</sup> Craig Clunas has proposed that these texts are representative of a new kind of writing about luxury consumption in the late Ming.<sup>154</sup> As manuals of taste, they establish minute (and often inscrutable) distinctions wherever literati needed to distinguish themselves from those with the means to acquire luxury goods, but who lacked the appropriate knowledge of how to consume them (e.g. display, color, size, type, place of production). He has also suggested that these manuals are best understood as a system of texts with multiple authors that borrow from one

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<sup>153</sup> Tu Long 屠隆, *Kaopan yushi* 考槃餘事 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985); Wen Zhenheng 文震亨, Hai Jun 海軍, and Tian Jun 田君, *Zhangwu zhi tushuo* 長物志圖說 (Ji'nan Shi: Shandong huabao, 2004).

<sup>154</sup> Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*.

another and are invested in a shared project, rather than as individual texts with individual authors. These texts tell what one should know on a given topic, many of which are similar to the ostensible range of *Xianqing ouji*, such as flowers and trees, vessels and utensils, or vegetables and fruits.<sup>155</sup> A comparison of a single topic will suffice here. The entry in *Zhangwu zhi* on parrots reads:

Parrots are capable of speech and, thus, must be taught short poems and harmonious phrases. They must not be allowed to hear the chattering of the marketplaces, well-heads and villages, a violent assault upon the ear. Their bronze perches and feeding jars must all be elegant and curious. However, these birds, just like golden pheasants, peacocks, collared finchbills and turkeys, are all categorically things of the women's quarters; they are not among the necessities of the recluse.<sup>156</sup>

鸚鵡能言，然須教以小詩及韻語，不可令聞市井鄙俚之談，聒然盈耳。銅架食缸，俱須精巧。然此鳥及錦鷄、孔雀、倒掛、吐綬諸種，皆斷為閨閣中物，非幽人所需也。<sup>157</sup>

And from *Xianqing ouji*:

More than any other bird, the thrush and the parrot delight people with their voices. Yet the parrot's voice is valued above the thrush's, and many people are taken with it because it can perform human speech. I am greatly opposed to that reasoning. I think the best thing about a parrot is its plumage. There is nothing about its voice to recommend it. The reason a bird's voice is worth listening to at all is because of its difference from the human voice. I want to listen to a bird's voice that is different from a human voice because what comes from people is the hubbub of people, whereas what comes from birds are the sounds of nature. If I want to hear people talking, I just need to listen to what's already ringing in my ears—what need have I to put a bird in a cage for that? What is more, even if the parrot that is most adept at talking has a tongue that can surpass a person who does not excel at talking, it still won't be able to say more than a few words. I really cannot understand why parrots are valued over people, or why people value parrots. As for the thrush's skill, with a single mouth it stands in for a great number of

<sup>155</sup> For a complete list, see Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, 26; Wen Zhenheng 文震亨, Hai Jun 海軍, and Tian Jun 田君, *Zhangwu zhi tushuo* 長物志圖說.

<sup>156</sup> Cited and translated in Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, 41-42.

<sup>157</sup> Wen Zhenheng 文震亨, Hai Jun 海軍, and Tian Jun 田君, *Zhangwu zhi tushuo* 長物志圖說, 134.

tongues, and each imitation bears a striking resemblance. When you add to that its delicate wispieness, it truly is a remarkable creature among birds.

鳥之悅人以聲者，畫眉、鸚鵡二種。而鸚鵡之聲價，高出畫眉上，人多癖之，以其能作人言耳。予則大違是論，謂鸚鵡所長止在羽毛，其聲則一無可取。鳥聲之可聽者，以其異於人聲也。鳥聲異於人聲之可聽者，以出於人者為人籟，出於鳥者為天籟也。使我欲聽人言，則盈耳皆是，何必假口籠中？況最善說話之鸚鵡，其舌本之強，猶甚於不善說話之人，而所言者，又不過口頭數語。是鸚鵡之見重於人，與人之所以重鸚鵡者，皆不可詮解之事。至於畫眉之巧，以一口而代眾舌，每效一種，無不酷似，而復纖婉過之，誠鳥中慧物也。<sup>158</sup>

As I will discuss in Chapter Four, the parrot also plays a major role in Li Yu's discussion of walls in another section of *Xianqing ouji*. From these two selections the difference between the prescriptive and normative nature of the *Zhangwu zhi* passage, complete with its taboo against things that might be considered feminine, and the novel and individual nature of Li Yu's views on the parrot is obvious.<sup>159</sup> In fact, Li Yu's inclusion of women and women's things in his texts is one of the most distinctive aspects of his table of contents when compared to late Ming connoisseurship texts. The second is the near absence of traditional objects of elite consumption. In *Xianqing ouji* under the entry of tea, we find nothing of tea varietals, or of the degree of taste that would allow one to determine not only the source and crop of the leaves, but also the water used to brew tea. Instead, Li Yu shares with the reader one simple and practical tip: a teapot should have a straight spout, rather than a curved one, because otherwise the tealeaves will get caught inside. Distinction is no longer about taste, but about practicality, the delights of illusion, the pleasure of one's whim.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>158</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 330.

<sup>159</sup> Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, 54-56.

<sup>160</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 221.

Yet a first look at the layout of the systematic table of contents in *Xianqing ouji* leaves one with the impression that the sections are comparable in scope only to these how-to manuals.

Li Yu himself anticipated just such an assumption:

Some people criticize me for authoring a text on eating and drinking without explaining methods of cooking, and for not clearly stating how much soy sauce, how much vinegar, how much wine, pepper, and spices to use. My reply: “Were I to include all of that information, I would be a cook and nothing more. I would certainly not be worth listening to.” He replied, “If that is so, then why do books like the *Record of Comestibles*, the *Treatises on the Nurturing of Life*, and the *Record on Hygiene* include such detail?” My reply: “Those are truly the works of cooks.”<sup>161</sup>

又有怪予著《飲饌》一篇，而未及烹飪之法，不知醬用幾何，醋用幾何，齏椒香辣用幾何者。予曰：果若是，是一庖人而已矣，烏足重哉！人曰：若是，則《食物志》、《尊生箋》、《衛生錄》等書，何以備列此等？予曰：是誠庖人之書也。

Li Yu saw himself as creating a different sort of text with his *Xianqing ouji*. While there are a fair number of imperatives to “not” (*wu* 勿) do such-and-such, which are reminiscent of the ubiquitous brief and often joyless instructions to that effect in the how-to manuals, for the most part, *Xianqing ouji* consists of longer, anecdotal entries that share experiences of his own, or his plans or ideas that he or a reader could bring into being tomorrow or the following day. While he allows himself the occasional foray into the past, he never dwells there for long, his focus soon drifting back to see what pleasures and potential he can create out of his everyday life.

If guides to consumption of luxury goods shared much of their tables of contents with *Xianqing ouji*, *xiaopin* shared something of their tongue-in-cheek observation of the world, their attention to detail, and the centrality of a self to their composition. *Xiaopin* became popular in the late Ming, and were linked with the personalities of a number of literary figures in the

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<sup>161</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 309.



anti-archaist school such as Yuan Hongdao.<sup>162</sup> The usually brief pieces of informal prose tend to treat a single object, place, or encounter. They relate an observation about the topic, conveyed in a spontaneous, carefree, and whimsical mood. Zhang Dai's 張岱 essay collection, *Dream Reminiscences of Tao'an* (Tao'an mengyi 陶菴夢憶, 1655), is an early Qing example of this genre that recounts memories of life under the Ming dynasty.<sup>163</sup> Rather than characterize *xiaopin* as “new manifestations of idiosyncratic inner being,” Philip Kafalas has suggested that “in form, subject matter, tone, and diction, [*xiaopin*] both trace and define the structure and boundaries of a particular mode of social being. One of those boundaries marks where the *xiaopin* world gives way to the separate realm of politics, and it was this border that prose could explore in ways no other genre could manage.”<sup>164</sup> Because Li Yu's essays lack, for the most part, the emotive quality that characterizes *xiaopin*, it is difficult to characterize them as such. But if we view *xiaopin* according to Kafalas's nuanced model, it becomes even easier to distinguish between them and Li Yu's project. Li Yu's essays mark boundaries that separate him from the sentiment and nostalgia that defined *yimin* identity, even as it marked off an area separate from political

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<sup>162</sup> Chih-ping Chou, *Yuan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Cao Shujuan 曹淑娟, *Wan Ming xingling xiaopin yanjiu* 晚明性靈小品研究 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1988).

<sup>163</sup> Zhang Dai 張岱, *Tao'an mengyi, Xihu mengxun* 陶菴夢憶 西湖夢尋, Ming Qing xingling wenxue zhenpin (Beijing: Zuoja, 1995).

<sup>164</sup> Philip A. Kafalas, "Weighty Matters, Weightless Form: Politics and the Late Ming *Xiaopin* Writer," *Ming Studies* 39(1998), 51. Another point Kafalas makes is also useful to thinking about the social and cultural work that *Xianqing ouji* was doing. He suggests thinking about *xiaopin* as showing how the eye saw: “Late-Ming *xiaopin* may have existed in a world that was run through with drama (which fact should have obviated any notion that *xiaopin* is the characteristic genre of the period), but for all the iconoclasm and social exploration that drama could employ it was by nature less suited to the depiction of small-scale personal existence than prose. If drama in the late imperial times appropriated some of the social function that poetry had always played among groups of literati, then prose—and in particular *xiaopin*—assumed some of poetry's function as the chronicler of how the eye saw. *Xiaopin* differed, however, in that it often only implied *shi* poetry's second step—the heart/mind's response” (51-52). *Xianqing ouji* instead locates the heart/mind's response outside the text, or only implies it. Often this is the response that the reader is to have, rather than something particular to the author himself.

service under the Qing. These politics, and Li Yu's particular mode of social being, found their expression and their preservation in *Xianqing ouji*.

Central to Li Yu's mode of social being was innovation: telling new stories, finding new uses for things, showing people a perspective they had not considered before. David Nye, in *Technology Matters: Questions To Live With*, articulates the similarities in the projects of telling a story and improvising with tools: "To improvise with tools or tell stories requires the ability to imagine not just one outcome but several; [...] In each case, one imagines how present circumstances might be made different."<sup>165</sup> Characters who excelled at improvising with whatever was at hand peppered Li Yu's stories, finding new uses for materials, writing, or their own bodies, but behind all of them was Li Yu, the flamboyant author, imagining new stories for the real-world things in that fictional world. With *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu excised the characters and the narrative structure that had contained and transmitted his ideas in fiction and plays, but he retained the lively imagination that scrutinized the world for new stories about things. He teaches the reader how to write a play, but also how to sweep, to put on her make-up, to get a demure woman to catch his eye, to enjoy bamboo shoots, to install retractable eaves so that she can enjoy her garden, rain or shine, how to treat sickness by removing something he detests, and how to make a window make the scene beyond into a painting.

What makes this collection so compelling in light of his larger oeuvre is its difference from his fiction, in which he would often *reverse* a commonplace, so that rather than a beauty being fated to marry a scholar, she would be shown to be fated to marry an ugly man.<sup>166</sup> As many scholars have observed, these stories are more about the idea or the concept than any

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<sup>165</sup> David E. Nye, *Technology Matters: Questions to Live With* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>166</sup> On Li Yu's interest in literally reversible language, see Wang, "'Homing Crane Lodge' versus *The Story of a Palindrome*: Different Ways of Redefining *Qing* and Employing Inversion."

attempt to describe the details of the world.<sup>167</sup> He seems to be saying: look, I can tell any story I wish, and I can tell it well! The “stories” in *Xianqing ouji*, on the other hand, for the most part use language to engage the material things and everyday practice that cannot be “reversed” as could a literary cliché. And so Li Yu’s literary experiments open out to include detailed descriptions of the material and physical makeup of the everyday, and it is there that he grapples with how to represent his ideas about everyday life in text. Such representations are intended to stay with the reader as more than just a memory of a clever story: they are intended to alter her material environment and what she does with her time after she puts the book down.

In *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu is improvising and experimenting with the stuff of everyday life and telling new stories about the things he finds. In this, too, his essays differ from *xiaopin*, which recount observations of past events (this is especially true of Zhang Dai’s famous essays, which were written when he was no longer able to enjoy the luxuries he had before the fall of the Ming): he often gives detailed designs for innovations to common objects that he has not had the chance to see produced—he is designing for the future, setting up something that *will be* brand-new as soon as the reader puts up the money. There was no place for such observations in *xiaopin*, which valued a keen observer of the things and affairs of the world, rather than a creator or story-teller. In *xiaopin*, the place for the storyteller was as topic of an account—a curious figure who could invent stories, but could not, perhaps, observe and recount himself doing so.<sup>168</sup> Li Yu got into the smallest crevices of the material everyday world, but his essays in *Xianqing ouji* draw a boundary line at the actual production of material objects. There is always an artisan,

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<sup>167</sup> See McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*; Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*.

<sup>168</sup> I will go into this phenomenon in more detail in Chapter Three.

or at least the idea of an artisan (since Li Yu cannot always afford one) situated between the author/designer and the creation.

“Liweng’s Incense Chop” is a good example of one of the designs—that is, a story about a thing—that Li Yu branded with his name in *Xianqing ouji* in an essay entitled “Censers and Bottles 炉瓶,” from which I will quote at length here to provide a sense of the technical specificity of some of the entries:

The method for manufacturing censers and bottles was determined by the ancients, and later generations have avoided making too many additions to it. Yet given that this is an implement that is kept under the clothing so close to the body, surely there is no harm in wishing to alter it a little. A censer must be accompanied by an incense spoon and chopsticks. The spoon is to smooth the ashes, while the chopstick is for lighting the incense. One cannot do without either of these things. That the length of the chopstick should be equal to the height of the censer is obvious—everyone knows that. Yet that the shape of the spoon should be determined based on the shape of the censer so that the two are not in conflict is less obvious, and it is something that many people overlook.

After adding coal, the ashes become lumpy and disordered, so one uses a spoon to smooth them out. If the spoon is square, the smooth surface of the ashes will be square; if the spoon is round, the smooth surface will be round. If the edges of the censer are straight and the spoon is curved, or the censer is curved while the spoon has a flat edge, then the two do not complement each other and one is only able to smooth the ashes in the middle, not those around the outer edge. What is needed is the method of “cutting the cloth to fit the body” [acting according to what the circumstances demand]: you must make a spoon that fits the censer and use it instead. Moreover, if you use a copper spoon, it is quite difficult to get the ashes smooth: one or two passes of the spoon are certainly not enough. This is not a matter one can delegate to servants—the master must see to it himself.

I am lazy by nature, and I am always seeking ways to avoid work. I previously invented a wooden chop to tamp the ashes. One stamp could take the place of several tens of passes with the spoon. At first, it was only to save a little work, who would have thought that once I had finished it, it would not only save energy, but it would also be exceedingly beautiful. My friends have passed it among themselves, and it has become a fixed method.

For example, if the censer is round, lathe a round section of board into a chop with the same measurements—it cannot be the least bit inaccurate—and attach a handle to the top so that one can hold it in one’s hand. It is advisable to leave a small area in the middle open so that the center will be raised and the edges will be lower like a steamed bun. Square ones can be dealt with using the same method. After you add the coals, first use the chopsticks to level the ashes, and then press down with this board, then the center and all four sides are smooth. Not only is the result as level as if it had been pared with a knife, but it also vies with the surface of a mirror for luster, and rivals oil in its glossiness.

Since there has been incense ash in the world, none has had so lovely a surface as this. Both lustrous and glossy, one can call it refined in the utmost.

When I looked it over and considered it, I found it extremely beautiful, but not yet perfect, so I instructed a carpenter to engrave it. I asked him to carve a few prunus branches, or a bouquet of chrysanthemums; a five-character quatrain, or the complete eight trigrams on the surface that comes into contact with the ashes. This way, one need only to lift a hand and press down, and countless marvelous things appear, a combination of the strengths of human ingenuity with heavenly craftsmanship that has not been seen since the advent of the incense burner. It would not be an overstatement to say that I, Liweng of the Lake, truly have something to offer those with refined sensibilities. I would like to call this chop the “Liweng’s Incense Chop.” Just as with everything that [Chen Jiru] Meigong produced, I name the thing after myself, so that the people in the country can make a judgment based on the actual situation and the quality of the product—it is not that I dare to wag my tongue excessively. This object is best suited to speedy use—just press it down and pick it up again right away, do not tarry for even a moment, for if you do, the air will be cut off and the fire will go out. After it is carved, you must paint it so that the ashes do not stick to it.

爐瓶之制，其法備於古人，後世無容蛇足。但護持襯貼之具，不妨意為增減。如香爐既設，則鍬箸隨之，鍬以撥灰，箸以舉火，二物均不可少。箸之長短，視爐之高卑，欲其相稱，此理易明，人盡知之；若鍬之方圓，須視爐之曲直，使勿相左，此理亦易明，而為世人所忽。入炭之後，爐灰高下不齊，故用鍬作准以平之，鍬方則灰方，鍬圓則灰圓，若使近邊之地爐直而鍬曲，或爐曲而鍬直，則兩不相能，止平其中而不能平其外矣，須用相體裁衣之法，配而用之。然以銅鍬壓灰，究難齊截，且非一鍬二鍬可了。此非僮僕之事，皆必主人自為之者。予性最懶，故每事必籌躲懶之法，嘗制一木印印灰，一印可代數十鍬之用。初不過為省繁惜勞計耳，詎料製成之後，非止省力，且極美觀，同志相傳，遂以為一定不移之法。譬如爐體屬圓，則仿其尺寸，斲一圓板為印，與爐相若，不爽纖毫，上置一柄，以便手持。但宜稍虛其中，以作內昂外低之勢，若食物之饅首然。方者亦如是法。加炭之後，先以箸平其灰，後用此板一壓，則居中與四面皆平，非止同於刀削，且能與鏡比光，共油爭滑，是自有香灰以來，未嘗現此嬌面者也。既光且滑，可謂極精，予顧而思之，猶曰盡美矣，未盡善也，乃命梓人鏤之。凡於著灰一面，或作老梅數莖，或為菊花一朵，或刻五言一絕，或雕八卦全形，只須舉手一按，現出無數離奇，使人巧天工，兩擅其絕，是自有香爐以來，未嘗開此生面者也。湖上笠翁實有裨於風雅，非僭詞也。請名此物為“笠翁香印”。方之眉公諸制，物以人名者，孰高孰下，誰實誰虛，海內自有定評，非予所敢饒舌。用此物者，最宜神速，隨按隨起，勿遲瞬息，稍一逗留，則氣閉火息矣。雕成之後，必加油漆，始不沾灰。<sup>169</sup>

Here, as is often the case in *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu presents not one, but several alternative stories for what a reader might do to refresh his everyday. He considers the object, thinking about its

<sup>169</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 216.

function, how it fulfills it, how to improve it, and how to make it striking. This is a technological innovation that updates the object and eases the user's experience ("one need only to lift a hand and press down, and countless marvelous things appear") each and every time she uses the object. *Xianqing ouji* is full of such designs that innovate the trappings of the everyday world, and we might understand them as new stories waiting for real characters to enact them. The author has become the curiosity, inviting the reader to interact with him and respond to the novelty he sees in the text.

Of course, consideration of *Xianqing ouji* with reference to Li Yu's practice shows that he was writing about topics in which he had practical experience and could confidently market his skills. The text can be read as an ongoing experiment at the intersection between the practice of everyday life and the possibilities of writing to update the everyday world, inviting us to ponder what possibilities there might be for things that have not yet occurred to us, what other uses we might make of space, or what role perception plays in our everyday lives. The social context for the production of this text is crucial to its production. Li Yu had earned all of his money through his cultural production, he had obtained his tiny Mustard Seed Garden late in his life, that his troupe of concubine-actresses were given to him and were with him only a few years until their death. Without this particular conglomeration of factors, *Xianqing ouji* could not have covered the range of topics it did. Yet what is most innovative about this text is not necessarily the selection of topics covered, but the way that it first proposes a structure, and then makes the content of each entry surprise the reader with a new story, and often a new kind of story, about the things in his everyday world.

Unlike his fiction, or even his flexible plays, which directed the reader on a private delightful linear trajectory of discovery between himself and Li Yu, the author, with *Xianqing*

*ouji*, Li Yu intended to open up a space for the reader to explore; it could be read in any order. Patrick Hanan has given a number of examples of Li Yu advising his friends on how to read the book, and it is notable that he advises one person to begin with the sections on women and houses, and another to start with those on women and on health and pleasure.<sup>170</sup> These instructions reveal something of the function of the table of contents: it allows readers to choose their own path through the text, based on their individual preferences. It is not surprising that Li Yu, a weathered author whose works always demonstrated both implicit and explicit attention to structure, would have paid careful attention to the way that the structure of a text invites readers to interact with it. In a passage on how to design garden paths (*tujing* 途徑), Li Yu outlines a way of thinking that allows for both practicality and subtlety, in a mode of design that has often been characterized as finding a middle way between the refined and the vulgar.<sup>171</sup>

With garden paths, there is nothing more convenient than the direct, yet nor is there anything subtler than the circuitous. Those who intentionally make winding paths for their splendid effect must also install a side door to allow family members to get on with household business. If you are in a hurry, open the door; if you are at ease, then close it. This way the refined and the vulgar both benefit from it, both being well served by this way of doing it.

徑莫便於捷，而又莫妙於迂。凡有故作迂途，以取別緻者，必另開耳門一扇，以便家人之奔走，急則開之，緩則閉之，斯雅俗俱利，而理致兼。<sup>172</sup>

With *Xianqing ouji*, he produces a similar effect of providing a system of doors through which the reader may enter, even as the essays reveal circuitous story-paths that surprise, delight, and distract. In this sense, *Xianqing ouji* as a book lends itself to a different experience of reading than random jottings *biji* or *xiaopin*, which drop the reader into the world of the observer/writer

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<sup>170</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 195.

<sup>171</sup> See, for example, Huang Guoquan 黃果泉, *Yasu zhi jian: Li Yu de wenhua rengen yu wenxue sixiang yanjiu* 雅俗之間: 李漁的文化人格與文學思想研究.

<sup>172</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 158.

at random, asking her to be in awe at a remove from the experience in space and time (the writer is telling about something he observed in his private past). The structure of Li Yu's table of contents allows a reader to have a sense of the space through which she is moving. It is not a stretch to say that the space and time portrayed in *Xianqing ouji* are very close to the reader's present (or future), the here-and-now.

One of the ways Li Yu accomplishes this effect is by leaving room for the reader in the text. Rather than describe precisely the way things should be or to give an account of his singular experience of them, Li Yu provides *some* new thoughts on *some* things in a mode of conceptualization that leaves open spaces for further developments. In fact, it is central to Li Yu's conception of the text that even as it appeared systematic, it did not aspire to comprehensiveness:

Someone criticized this book saying that it hasn't established a coherent method. He said that if I have a mind to establish a new precedent, I had better make every item contained therein conform to a fixed pattern. He asked how I could just talk about a few topics in each category. I responded by saying: "In medicine, we value specialization and avoid those who dabble in many areas, because dabblers have experience in some areas and lack experience in other areas. In histories, we value that we can leave gaps: not a single character was added [to the clearly incomplete phrases] "xiawu" and "Guogong" [in the Spring and Autumn Annals]. In not correcting the mistakes, [the historian] demonstrated that he was willing to leave gaps. That there are gaps makes the text believable. If it is complete, it will arouse the suspicion of all the later generations. If I were to do as you say and seek comprehensiveness [in my own work], so that not one thing is left out, then it will be faulted as a jumbled mess of trifles. People will doubt the dubious parts, and they will also doubt the reliable parts. In this way, my method would not be practiced in the world, and it would be because I had sought comprehensiveness and been faulted for one wrong idea. I am but one person, and I boldly hold forth on eight topics, from playwriting and training actors to cultivating plants and caring for one's well-being. It is said that many a despicable man will dabble in trifling matters, and even I fault myself for having interests that are too scattered, but in the end, this should not be compared with the specialization of medicine—Would you expect a single person to take on the tasks of reading horoscopes, treating illness and telling fortunes, practicing geomancy and divining?" He said, "No! no!" and retreated.

Among these eight topics, only with six of them have I actually established a working method. As for the two sections that deal with food and drink and cultivating plants, the method is incomplete and interspersed with commentary, and I would rather



present my views in a jumbled way than try to establish a coherent method on the basis of such trifles. I fear that in doing so, I would mislead the people of the world. So, I declare that successfully presenting my views is better still than establishing a coherent method. I want to ask the famous men of our land that I may avoid being censured for incoherence.<sup>173</sup>

有怪此書立法未備者，謂既有心作古，當使物物盡有成規，胡一類之中止言數事，予應之曰醫貴專門，忌其雜也，雜則有驗有不驗矣，史貴能缺，夏五，郭公之不增一字，不正其訛者，以示能缺；缺斯可信，備則開天下後世之疑，使如子言而求諸事皆備，一物不遺，則支離補湊之病見，人將疑其可疑，而並疑其可信、是故良法不行於世，皆求全一念誤之也、予以一人而僭陳八事，由詞曲，演習以及種植，頤養。雖曰多能鄙事，賤者之常，然猶自病其太雜，終不得比於專門之醫，奈何欲舉星相醫卜堪輿日者之事，而並責之一人乎？其人否否而退。八事之中，事事立法者止有六種，至飲饌種植二部之所言者，不盡是法，多以評論間之，寧以支離二字立論，不敢以之立法者，恐誤天下之人也。然自謂立論之長，猶勝於立法、請質之海內名公，果能免於支離之謫否。

Li Yu's tone throughout these instructions for reading and using *Xianqing ouji* functions on two levels: one is the level of the apology for not having established "a coherent method," while the other makes a case against the tendency to seek coherency. That Li Yu does not aspire to comprehensiveness is only nominally veiled: the point of the essay is not to apologize for his own shortcomings, but to criticize those who doggedly aim for a banal comprehensiveness in their learning and writing. The "gaps" left everywhere in *Xianqing ouji* prevent people from judging it on what it lacks (this is exactly what people could and did do as they revised manuals of connoisseurship, recipe books, *materia medica*). *Xianqing ouji* invites positive recollections of what was included, not criticisms about what was left out.

As many scholars have observed, traditional luxury goods are absent in *Xianqing ouji*. In this, we see another instance of Li Yu confounding his table of contents to surprise the reader. Patrick Hanan has written of Li Yu's essay on antiques in *Xianqing ouji*, "the essay's subject is

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<sup>173</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 4.

really his decision not to treat antiques, and he begins and ends with that decision.”<sup>174</sup> Yet Li Yu’s essays on antiques and other conventional luxury goods do more than simply confound the reader. In light of the discourse of elite connoisseurship that takes for granted the value of luxury goods and prescribes tasteful consumption of them, *Xianqing ouji* seems to erase and engage the material world at the same time. If earlier manuals had commodified knowledge about the proper consumption of luxury goods, *Xianqing ouji* commodified the stuff of everyday life in a way that rendered the majority of luxury goods obsolete.

He articulates as much in the middle of his essay on antiques:

I once said to someone that there is nothing older than books: they combine the thoughts and appearance of the ancients and pass them down. If the book is from the Three Dynasties period and we read it, it is as if we’re meeting someone from the Three Dynasties. If the book is from the time of Yu, then reading it is like being born in the time of Yu. Apart from these, everything else is an object. Objects cannot speak for the ancients, so how can they uncover their thoughts and show their appearance?

There is something to appreciate about ancient objects, but they are suitable only for the wealthiest families. Because those families have too much money, they have to store it in things. They have to use the method of “magical adjustment,” reducing a *zhang* (10 *chi*) to a *chi*, and a *chi* (10 *cun*) to a *cun*. This is just as in the expression, “storing gold is better than storing silver; storing pearls is better than storing gold.” The lighter and smaller it is, the easier it is to store.

What is more, keeping gold and silver around invites burglary. It’s better to trade for antiques. Not only will thieves leave them alone, but if they accidentally get ahold of them, they’ll discard them and leave.<sup>175</sup>

予嘗謂人曰：物之最古者莫過於書，以其合古人之心思面貌而傳者也。其書出自三代，讀之如見三代之人；其書本乎黃虞，對之如生黃虞之世；捨此則皆物矣。物不能代古人言，況能揭出心思而現其面貌乎？古物原有可嗜，但宜崇尚於富貴之家，以其金銀太多，藏之無具，不得不為長房縮地之法，斂丈為尺，斂尺為寸，如“藏銀不如藏金，藏金不如藏珠”之說，愈輕愈小，而愈便收藏故也。矧金銀太多，則慢藏誨盜，貿為古董，非特穿窬不取，即誤攫入手，猶將擲而去之。

<sup>174</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 189.

<sup>175</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 215.

Besides an extended advertisement for books and the value of writing—just the sort of product Li Yu was in the business of selling—this essay presents antiques as valuable only as a convenient store of value. Better than a sack of gold, antiques can contain an enormous amount of value in a very small space, and repel burglars to boot. Absent is any sense that there would be some inherent aesthetic value of these or any other objet d’art. Li Yu has exposed the game by removing the material things that supported it, revealing taste as no more and no less than a matter of mind, brush, and print. As he tells his readers: the only thing you need is this book.

More familiar assessments of antiques and other expensive things resurface in metaphor throughout *Xianqing ouji*, as in an essay on updating old plays:

Performing a new play is like reading contemporary writing: the charm is in hearing what one has not heard before. Performing an old play is like looking at antiques: the charm is that while one was born in a later age, he beholds a former dynasty. Yet what is so delightful about antiques is that the more aged and outmoded its substance, the more changed and marvelous its appearance. In bygone years, bronzes and jades were nothing more than a freshly carved lustrous surface, but after many years had passed, there was no longer a trace of the carving, and the luster had turned into a mottled pattern. This is what people treasure: not that its substance is unchanging, but its ability to renew and transform itself.

演新劇如看時文，妙在聞所未聞，見所未見；演舊劇如看古董，妙在身生後世，眼對前朝。然而古董之可愛者，以其體質愈陳愈古，色相愈變愈奇。如銅器玉器之在當年，不過一刮磨光瑩之物耳，迨其歷年既久，刮磨者渾全無跡，光瑩者斑駁成文，是以人人相寶，非寶其本質如常，寶其能新而善變也。<sup>176</sup>

There is a place in *Xianqing ouji* for such observations only in metaphor, and only detached from the relevant indicators in the table of contents. In metaphor, Li Yu also reveals himself as someone who knows how to look at antiques. He knows what lends them value (the delightful transformation of their patina over time), but more than that, he knows how and where to “display” them in this text: they provide support for Li Yu’s claim that plays must be updated.

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<sup>176</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 72.

By updating a play, one can mimic, and surpass, all that is delightful about an old bronze, and anyone who can read this book can do that.

Since he sold his mountain residence and moved to Hangzhou, Li Yu had been experimenting with how to produce value using words alone. With *Xianqing ouji*, he created a new way of representing the everyday world that taught people how to update, renew, and transform the smallest details of their private life. As in the examples of updating plays and the “Liweng Incense Chop,” he did this by imagining new alternatives for things, and teaching people how to enact those possibilities in their own material environments. At the same time, the openness of the text, and the time and space implied in many of the essays leaves room for the reader to explore it at leisure. It teaches what to do with free time even in its form. No previous writing had aimed to alter the experience of the space and time of everyday private life so completely as *Xianqing ouji*.

In what follows, I explore the resonances among Li Yu’s profitable endeavors and his cultural products, textual and nontextual alike. I consider his manipulation of the material world, his assessment of and contributions to the publishing market and print culture, his garden design and theater direction, and the ways in which he sought to bring all of these into conversation with the possibilities of language, circulating texts, performance, and the spaces of built environment in the cultural context of the early Qing.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Experimenting in Print

How did one make a living as a writer in the early Qing? Writing was the foundation of Li Yu's cultural production. Yet in addition to writing with the intention of making a living, Li Yu also took on many of the tasks of a late-Ming publisher—usually not a literatus-writer in his own right—and tried his hand as a commissioner, compiler, editor, publisher, bookseller, and promoter of others' works as well as his own.<sup>177</sup> He sought to secure the intellectual property rights to his creations, and his comments to this effect provide a nuanced picture of how he conceived of and defended these rights in the absence of legal protection.<sup>178</sup> Li Yu also experimented in innovative ways with the possibilities of the medium of print, making books work in ways they had not previously. To make books work faster, he added page numbers to his tables of contents and symbols to his texts to direct the viewer's gaze and to save him time. He also experimented with the use of print as a social networking technology. In this chapter I aim to show what was distinctive about Li Yu's writing for profit and uses of print in the early Qing.

Bookselling in the early Qing was a social affair. Suyoung Son has recently shown the many ways in which print culture in the early Qing maintained or mimicked practices that would usually be associated with manuscript culture, such as the continual adaptation of a woodblocks

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<sup>177</sup> Hanan reminds us how, contrary to Feng Menglong's unwillingness to put a pen name traceable to him on his works, or to advertise that he had adapted or written some of the *huaben* stories in his collections, Li Yu went to lengths to reference himself in the prefatory material, and throughout the narratives, often equating himself with the narrator. See *The Invention of Li Yu*, Ch. 2.

<sup>178</sup> On the lack of legal protection for intellectual property in imperial China, see William P. Alford, *To Steal a Book is an Elegant Offense: Intellectual Property Law in Chinese Civilization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

or the printing of very small numbers of a text for a select social group.<sup>179</sup> Li Yu seems to have hoped that his works would reach the broadest possible audience, but he involved hundreds of people in their production, and he was personally involved in their printing and distribution. He also appealed with frequency to wealthy patrons whose contributions allowed him to maintain his family and his lifestyle. In one letter requesting support from patrons in Beijing, he acknowledges his unusual success as a writer, but indicates that profits from book sales are not enough to support his large family:

If we consider the poverty of all under heaven, are there any poorer than Liweng of the Lake? Everyone will say: “There are. The number of impoverished scholars in this world is greater than the quantity of sand floating in the Ganges, and they all suffer from lack of stable property and sparse business. Moreover, under heaven there are none who understand and recognize them; even where they do, it doesn’t amount to much. Cold, they are not offered even a rough robe; hungry, there’s nowhere for them to seek out food. This is the state of their poverty. You have surmounted the hoe with your pen, and rivaled those near the city walls with your inkstone. Selling your writing already suffices to keep you fed, and you even have enough to entertain visitors—what kind of poverty is that?” I say, you understand one part, but not the other. The poverty of scholars generally refers to the many who struggle to obtain food. Now, the smaller families don’t exceed three or five, or perhaps seven or eight; the larger ten or twenty at most. Do any of them amount to thirty or forty? Even if you say some do, [in those cases] only seven or eight out of ten will sit down to eat—certainly one or two are off making money. You may say that’s not much, but even a penny a day can subsidize the cost of rice and salt; of the seven affairs of a day, it already takes care of one or two. I don’t even have allotted fields enough for eight, yet the open mouths expecting food amount to five times that number. Although I have writing that I can sell, is there among those who buy writing today one who can “offer one hundred *jin* of gold to purchase *Rhapsody on the Wide Gate* [*Changmen fu* 長門賦]” as did Empress Chen from Sima Xiangru? Certainly, you will say, there is not. Even so, the money that I earn selling writing can be counted on my fingers. With forty mouths depending on one person to feed them, it is like one mulberry leaf providing food for one hundred baskets of silkworms: days they’re born, nights they grow, how can a single leaf provide for them?”<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Son, "Publishing as a Coterie Enterprise: Zhang Chao and the Making of Printed Texts in Early Qing China."

<sup>180</sup> “*Shang Dumenguren shu jiuzhuang shu* 上都門故人述舊狀書,” Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1: 224.

The letter opens with an interlocutor familiar to readers of Li Yu's fiction and essays. Through a carefully constructed dialogue, Li Yu first allows for the claim that compared with other "impoverished scholars," he is quite well-off. He methodically wears down the defense, however: his writing sells, but his household is much larger than most, he is the sole breadwinner, and there is no one willing to offer him adequate remuneration for his writing. By far the most convincing, though, is his subsequent reference to Sima Xiangru, the great rhapsodist of the Han dynasty. The reference serves in the first place to justify the sale of one's writing by pointing to laudable historical precedent. It also recalls familiar laments of belatedness on the part of poets who mourn having been born in the wrong age: echoes of the high-minded, though usually fruitless, poetic quest for a true friend who "knows the sound" (*zhiyin* 知音) is here replaced with a plea for a patron who knows the true worth of his writing.<sup>181</sup> His interlocutor has only time to respond in the negative—of course no one can afford such a high price for writing anymore—before Li Yu is off on his next metaphor, likening himself to a insubstantial leaf being devoured by thousands of ravenous silkworms. The letter goes on to explain how all of his belongings, even his famed concubines, were given him as gifts, and that he in fact has nothing of his own; it concludes by informing the recipient that after he sends the letter he will face Chang'an and weep silently, waiting for succor.

Embarking on the path of cultural entrepreneurship in the early Qing, Li Yu did have to struggle to make ends meet. Nonetheless, a marginal comment by his friend Mao Zhihuang 毛稚

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<sup>181</sup> The term *zhiyin* originates in an anecdote in the fifth chapter, "*Tangwen diwu* 湯問第五," of the *Liezi* 列子, which tells of two friends, Bo Ya 伯牙 and Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期. Whatever was on Bo Ya's mind when he played the zither (*qin* 琴), his friend Zhong Ziqi would intuit upon listening. Since they shared thoughts in this way, and could not hide their feelings from one another, their friendship came to be considered ideal. The closely related knower-of-oneself (*zhiji* 知己) had already become an indulgent designation for patrons by the seventeenth century. Li Yu tends to use the less intimate term knower-of-relations (*zhijiao* 知交), however, in his references to patrons.

黃, which accompanied the published version of this letter, provides some perspective: “Among those who have ‘sold rhapsodies for a great deal of gold,’” he writes, “few since Sima [Xiangru] have equaled Liweng [Li Yu].”<sup>182</sup> On the one hand, this comment is nothing more than a touting of Li Yu’s unusual success, a type of flattery often encountered in such marginalia; on the other hand, juxtaposed with the entirety of Li Yu’s letter, it has the effect of drawing attention to the analogy with Sima Xiangru and downplaying the careful logic that precedes it. This example highlights the paradox I have outlined above: that the image Li Yu creates of himself as a scholar toiling in inkstone fields with hopes of profit was integral to his fabulous success as a writer who profited more than just about anyone else by selling his writings. A large part of this image was that of an impoverished scholar conscious of the difference between his cultural entrepreneurship and traditional patronage:

As for my friends [*zhijiao* 知交] within the four seas, I do not dare claim that no one recognizes [my situation], nor can I [resort to the clichéd] four-character phrase, “Those who know me are few,” and blame all those under heaven who praise me. For twenty years, I have carried my books all over this land—I have covered nearly two-thirds of all the land under heaven. Everywhere I went, there were already boarders who had set up schools, and unfortunately, those households I entered with frequency, I also left with regularity. Only in the sea is water gathered without leaking; rivers cannot manage this. Rather than the “gathering” of the irrigation ditches, I have the leakage of the rivers—it’s no wonder today’s riches do nothing to alleviate tomorrow’s poverty!<sup>183</sup>

Even as he draws attention to his lack of consistent patronage to make his case with potential donors in the capital, comparison with the form and breadth of his cultural activities as a whole does little to convince us that he would actually have preferred “the ‘gathering’ of the irrigation ditches” to the flowing of a river. The new kind of patronage that Li Yu forged allowed him a greater degree of personal freedom, and he took advantage of that flexibility to create one of the

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<sup>182</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1: 224.

<sup>183</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1: 224.



most memorable and inventive personas in traditional China—Liweng of the Lake.

### ***Branding a Self***

Li Yu created distinctive brands for his products, utilizing the style names he took on—Fisherman on the Lake (*Hushang Liweng* 湖上笠翁) or Fisherman Li (*Li Liweng* 李笠翁 and *Li Yu* 李漁)—as well as the names of his bookshop-garden residence, Mustard Seed Garden (*Jieziyuan* 芥子園), and his publishing house, Yisheng tang 翼聖堂. In his conception of what might be acceptable and profitable forms of cultural production, Li Yu took celebrated late-Ming cultural figure Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639) as an example. Chen was a very famous and active late Ming cultural figure whose prolific and diverse cultural production and lack of aspiration to officialdom caused Li Yu's contemporaries and later observers alike to compare him to Li Yu. Like Li Yu, Chen had written that he could not live up to the recluses of old who retired into the mountains and took up the plow (this, at least, was the ideal); for him, rather, was to plow with the brush, writing for profit to eke out a living.<sup>184</sup> In his preface to Li Yu's collected works, *Yijiayan* 一家言 (Independent Words), Bao Xuan 包璿 compares Li Yu's fame to both Chen Jiru and the radical late-Ming philosopher Li Zhi 李贄, making the point that Li Yu had the distinction of having risen to fame completely on his own, whereas Chen and Li Zhi both gained fame first by association with famous officials—Chen Jiru with Dong Qichang 董其昌 and Li Zhi with Jiao Hong 焦竑.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Greenbaum, *Chen Jiru (1558-1639): The Development and Subsequent Uses of a Literary Personae*, 168.

<sup>185</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 1-2.

Chen's celebrity in the late Ming had led profit-mongers to falsely attribute works to him, both in the form of spurious works and unauthorized editions.<sup>186</sup> Chen, though, who was famous primarily for his painting and calligraphy, found original works by his brush to be constantly in demand. Although Li Yu confessed to never having had much skill at painting in his introduction to the *Jieziyuan huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳 (Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual), he had certainly given some thought to what it would be like making a living selling traces of one's brush.<sup>187</sup> He dramatizes Chen Jiru and his close friend, the famous late-Ming artist Dong Qichang 董其昌, in his third play, *Yizhong yuan* 意中緣 (*Ideal Love Matches*), which was published around 1653 while Li Yu was living in Hangzhou.<sup>188</sup> It opens with Dong and Chen complaining about the incessant requests for their writing and paintings. Lamenting about the hardship of making a living by writing (notably not due to poverty, but to demand), they are planning to spend the day at Hangzhou's West Lake disguised as commoners so that people eager to solicit their work will not be able to recognize them. Li Yu's dramatization of the radical visibility of these men in his play shows us that he was thinking about the effects of celebrity on everyday existence, especially a kind of celebrity in which buyers ceaselessly commanded

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<sup>186</sup> Greenbaum, *Chen Jiru (1558-1639): The Development and Subsequent Uses of a Literary Personae*, 195-202.

<sup>187</sup> See Li Yu's preface to the manual, where he wrote: "Viewing the paintings of others is nonetheless not equal to the ability to paint oneself. [One perceives] the brilliance of another's painting from the outside, whereas the brilliance of one's own painting emanates from the mind. In my lifelong love of landscapes, I have only been able to view the paintings of others; I cannot make them into paintings myself 觀人畫猶不若自能畫。人畫之妙從外入，自畫之妙由心出。余生平愛山水，但能觀人畫，而不能自為畫。" Wang Gai 王槩, *Jieziyuan huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳.

<sup>188</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1: 224. See also Hanan's discussion of this play and his selected translations: Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 16, 142, 50-51, 54-55, 69-75, 83.

production.<sup>189</sup> The men are aware of the cultural capital their names carry, and rather than try to prevent people from making a profit by forging their names, the two men seek out talented artists who can paint in their style to relieve them of some of the burden of incessant demand for their works.<sup>190</sup> By the play's conclusion, the famous male artists have married two women who, respectively, forge their paintings for a living.<sup>191</sup> As someone who was quickly becoming a cultural figure in his own right, Li Yu was dramatizing the work and stress that comes with prolific and successful cultural production in the fast-paced urban centers of his time.

Li Yu insisted that he could not paint, but that claim may have more to do with his assessment of the relative viability of making a living as a producer of singular goods. In any case, he sought out types of cultural production that would ease his burden by the fact of their reproducibility, and in this, too, he found an example in Chen Jiru. The essay under "Pork (*zhu* 豬)" in *Xianqing ouji* expounds on why Li Yu is unwilling to make public his new designs for anything related to the bathroom (although the makeshift bamboo-stalk urinal in his study was an exception):

"Dongpo meat" is a case of a man becoming known to posterity through food. If we hear this expression in a rush, it seems as if it is not the flesh of a pig at all, but rather Su Dongpo's flesh. Alas, what sin did Dongpo commit that he would cut his own flesh to fill

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<sup>189</sup> Studies that have explored how these relationships were negotiated in life through analysis of letters, see Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*; Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470-1559*; Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China*; Kim, *The Life of a Patron: Zhou Lianggong (1612-1672) and the Painters of Seventeenth-Century China*; Bai, "Calligraphy for Negotiating Everyday Life: The Case of Fu Shan (1607-1684)."

<sup>190</sup> On the tradition of ghostpainting, see Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China*, 113-48.

<sup>191</sup> All four of the artists featured in this play were real artists, although in life they did not marry each other. The gender of the work of art, and the portrayal of female artists in the contemporary art scene are two fascinating aspects of this play that unfortunately are outside the scope of the current discussion. What is more, the preface to this play was written by a well-educated woman poet and painter, Huang Yuanjie. For more on her, see Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*, 117-23.

the bellies of all the gluttons of the ages? A distinguished literary man should truly not be subjected to something like this, and celebrities who dabble in lesser skills must be especially cautious. Several hundred years later, things like cake and cloth obtained a name through [Chen] Meigong. If we compare "Meigong cake" and "Meigong cloth" to "Dongpo meat," it seems like the former is superior to the latter. Yet the most misfortunate still, is that now that thing in the outhouse is known as a "Meigong toilet." Alas, what kind of thing is a toilet that it can be crowned with the name of a distinguished man? It's not that I don't know the flavor of meat, but I dare not speak freely on the matter of pork for worry that I might end up succeeding Dongpo. As for that thing in the bathroom, it's not that I haven't come up with a new design for it, but that I keep it stored away at home, unwillingly to take it out and show it to people or to write it in a book, for worry that I might succeed Meigong.

食以人傳者，“東坡肉”是也。卒急聽之，似非豕之肉，而為東坡之肉矣。噫，東坡何罪，而割其肉，以實千古饑人之腹哉？甚矣，名士不可為，而名士遊戲之小術，尤不可不慎也。至數百載而下，糕、布等物，又以眉公得名。取“眉公糕”、“眉公佈”之名，以較“東坡肉”三字，似覺彼善於此矣。而其最不幸者，則有溷廁中之一物，俗人呼為“眉公馬桶”。噫，馬桶何物，而可冠以雅人高士之名乎？予非不知肉味，而於豕之一物，不敢浪措一詞者，慮為東坡之續也。即溷廁中之一物，予未嘗不新其制，但蓄之家，而不敢取以示人，尤不敢筆之於書者，亦慮為眉公之續也。<sup>192</sup>

Chen Jiru's name had been attached to things that he had not personally produced, and Li Yu saw in that phenomenon the possibility of reaching the broadest possible audience with one's cultural products and one's name. Although the tone is comic, it is evident that he aimed to have his name attached to some things (like the "Liweng Incense Chop") and not others. Even as he created a brand name and transmitted it throughout the land by means of novel stories and designs, he sought to retain some control over the kinds of things it could be used to indicate. He left assessment of the worth of his designs to those who encountered them: after the description of his design for the "Liweng Incense Chop," he explains: It is just as with everything that [Chen Jiru] Meigong produced: the objects [he produced] made the man famous. Whether they were high or low quality, whether they were substantial or worthless, the people within the four seas

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<sup>192</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 284.

would decide for themselves. It is not that I dare to exaggerate. 方之眉公諸制，物以人名者，孰高孰下，誰實誰虛，海內自有定評，非予所敢饒舌。”<sup>193</sup>

Using his brand names, Li Yu went to significant lengths to advertise his works, such as a note in the table of contents of one of his collections of stories that a particular story would soon be adapted to a full-length *chuanqi* play. While many scholars have argued that the stories Li Yu adapted into *chuanqi* plays read well as stories and should not be read as simply a sketch of a play to come, given this sort of advertising, it is difficult to avoid thinking of the story as framed as a “preview” of the play to come, functioning to whet the interest of the reader. He engaged in other marketing strategies as well: on the title page of the first edition of *Xianqing ouji*, he calls it “The First Secret Book of Liweng” (*Liweng mishu diyizhong* 笠翁秘書第一種), and the earliest prints of this book include, in smaller characters below, the words, “The Second, *Independent Words*, To Be Released Soon” (*di'erzhong Yijiayan jichu* 第二種一家言即出).<sup>194</sup>

This technique ensured that he would receive credit for his works, but it would not prevent publishers from profiting from pirated editions of his works. To my knowledge, during his lifetime, Li Yu’s major concern was with the publication of unauthorized editions, not with

<sup>193</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 216.

<sup>194</sup> The title page of the first edition (Yisheng tang 翼聖堂) of *Xianqing ouji* reads “The First Secret Book of Liweng” (*Liweng mishu diyizhong* 笠翁秘書第一種). In some prints, this is followed by “The Second, *Independent Words*, Will Be Released Soon” (*di'erzhong Yijiayan jichu* 第二種一家言即出). The fact that some Yisheng tang imprints of the first edition include this notice (like the copy held in the Shandong Provincial Library), while others do not (like the copy held in the Peking University Library, call number X/818.2/4037.1), is evidence that the book was printed over time from the same blocks with certain changes. Ostensibly, the copy in the Shandong Provincial Library is an earlier print, and it would have been printed before 1673, when the first installment of Li Yu’s second “secret book” is likely to have been published. We can assume that the copy held in the Peking University Library was printed after *Independent Words* had come out, and that the advertisement was therefore removed. That *Xianqing ouji* was printed in multiple installments over time gives us some indication of demand for the work, but since woodblock printing lent itself to the continual production of small batches over time, that there exist multiple versions of the same edition does not tell us as much about demand as would a second edition of a text printed using movable type. For more information, see Appendices I-III.

the attribution of others' works to him.<sup>195</sup> Already in the mid-1650s, Li Yu, or Liweng of the Lake, had become so popular that his works were being pirated by print shops in Nanjing. In hopes that proximity would help him curtail this rampant piracy, he decided to relocate to Nanjing. In a letter to a friend that was published in *Yijiayan*, Li Yu wrote:

The only reason I moved to Nanjing [in 1657] was because people had been making trouble with my books, and there were numerous pirated editions [*fanban* 翻版]; to safeguard against this, I left the place where I was comfortable and moved again, thinking that a change of residence would allow me to obtain sustenance. I did not fathom that as soon as my new prints were out, the avaricious merchants of Suzhou [*Wumen tangu* 吳門貪賈] would already be sprouting covetous intentions. Fortunately I heard news [of their plans] first, and pled earnestly with Mr. Sun, an official of the Suzhou-Songjiang circuit to put up a notice prohibiting it [*jinzhi* 禁止], putting a stop to their plans. Just as the Suzhou scheme was put down, a message suddenly arrived at the house saying that someone in Hangzhou had already completed a pirated edition and the new book would be on the market in a matter of days. . . Alas! How much is that minuscule profit worth that these people will scramble after it like so many ducks?<sup>196</sup>

The fact that publishers in cities throughout the Southern Yangzi region were persistently producing pirated editions of Li Yu's works not only gives us an idea of the popularity of his writing at the time, but it also provides a glimpse of just how quickly the latest releases

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<sup>195</sup> Based on the voice of the writings attributed to Li Yu, Hanan has suggested that a number of works published during Li Yu's life, such as *Gujin shilüe* 古今史略, *Gujin chidu daquan* 古今尺牘大全, *Gujin liansou* 古今聯搜, and *Liweng duilian* 笠翁對聯, as well as annotations of *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 and *Shuihuzhuan* 水滸傳 were not of his pen, but Hanan makes these claims based solely on his sense of the tone of the works, and whether it sounds sufficiently like the witty and irreverent Li Yu we recognize from his other works. As such, there is insufficient evidence to corroborate this claim, or to prove that these works are definitively Li Yu's. Whether texts like *A Complete Collection of Letters Old and New* was published by Li Yu is difficult to determine, especially given the similarities of their cover pages to undisputed texts. See Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 225 n. 121. Hanan and Huang Qiang have also pointed out that most Mustard Seed Garden (*Jieziyuan*) editions are works that are dated after Li Yu's death. Huang Qiang has catalogued these editions and researched the more than two-hundred-year history of *Jieziyuan* as a publishing house. Huang Qiang 黃強, *Li Yu yanjiu* 李漁研究, 297-302. *Gujin shilüe* is included in volume 15 in the Jiangsu guji edition of the *Li Yu quanji*; three rhyme books attributed to Li Yu are also included (vol. 18); editions of the novels *Sanguo zhi* and *Jin Ping Mei*, ostensibly including his comments, are also included (vol. 10-14).

<sup>196</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 1.167-68. For Hanan's translation of the latter part of this passage, see *The Invention of Li Yu*, 12-13.

circulated among the urban publishing centers of Jiangnan. The carving of a new set of woodblocks to print a pirated edition (*fanban* 翻版) of a book seems to have taken no more than a week. In this competitive and fast-paced publishing milieu, authors and publishers writing and printing for profit had to take measures to detect and prevent the pirating of their works, a task that involved the articulation of the novel notion of intellectual property rights.<sup>197</sup> Li Yu moved to Nanjing largely in order to have more control over what he claimed as his intellectual property; he eventually extended this control to the monitoring of the carving of blocks and the printing of editions, as well as the marketing, sale, and distribution of his works. It is also worth pointing out that if other publishers were so eager to produce pirated versions of Li Yu's works, we might not be able to take Li Yu at his word that the profit to be gained from such an endeavor was indeed "minuscule." Although later in his life, Li Yu was frequently on the road searching out patrons willing to support him in a variety of ways, it appears that during this period of his life he survived mainly by writing and from the sale of his published works.

During the two decades that followed, Li Yu's conception of intellectual property rights developed with reference to his experiences selling an array of cultural products. Perhaps his most extensive and public expression of his perspective on the matter appear in an essay on the notepaper he designed and sold out of *Mustard Seed Garden* in Nanjing.<sup>198</sup> This essay demonstrates that Li Yu's creativity and good humor are inseparable from his professed need to

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<sup>197</sup> Patrick Hanan has pointed out, in his preface to an anthology of stories drawn from Li Yu's earlier collections, that Du Jun, the purported commentator of all three of Li Yu's collections of short stories, candidly "identifies the author of the collections as 'Master Li' and as 'Liweng' [Li Yu's style] and also mentions a couple of Li Yu's plays, perhaps to authenticate the edition in the face of the threat of pirating" *The Invention of Li Yu*, 22. Although this claim is speculative and impossible to corroborate, given that another publisher could have easily included such information in a pirated edition as well, it is nonetheless significant that Li Yu, as an author of vernacular fiction, was willing to attach his name to his works, since such fiction usually circulated anonymously or under a pseudonym.

<sup>198</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 131.

profit and his insistence that those who enjoy his cultural products acknowledge and respond to his professed need to make a living through their sale. He opens by lamenting that since the time of Su Huiniang 苏蕙娘, the production of notepaper embellished with all sorts of designs has flourished, from depictions of people and wares to birds, flowers, and insects.<sup>199</sup> The problem with such designs is not that they lack ingenuity of mind (*renxin zhi qiao* 人心之巧) or skillful workmanship (*jiyi zhi gong* 技藝之工)—in fact they are praised as being the “very likeness of the form” (*xiao qi xing* 肖其形) of the objects they depict—but rather that they do not have a thing to do with the notepaper’s function, which is letter writing. Li Yu’s critique of this tendency is simple: in seeking the resplendent and varicolored, those who designed that letter paper neglected what was close at hand to seek what was beyond reach. Under the auspices of “returning what it intrinsically comprised and eliminating what it originally was without (*huan qi gu you jue qi ben wu* 還其固有，絕其本無),” Li Yu advocates, rather, mining the two characters that comprise the term “notepaper (*jianjian* 箋簡)” for their “inexhaustible significance (*wuqiong benyi* 無窮本義),” and in doing so arrives at such possibilities as depictions of the functional writing surfaces of bamboo strips, plantain leaves, and walls, to name a few.<sup>200</sup>

What is distinctive about Li Yu’s notepaper, and what, according to him, he has rights to, are his innovative concepts for design. In the remaining portion of the essay, Li Yu not only introduces these ingenious designs in detail, as readers might expect, but also delves into the particulars of the notepaper’s production, where one can purchase it, the uses to which revenues

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<sup>199</sup> Su Huiniang of the Eastern Jin (317-420) is remembered for her palindrome poems. Her name has traditionally been associated with palindrome brocade, which Li Yu embellishes for some of his notepaper designs. She is also a central player in the scholar-beauty novel attributed to Li Yu, *The Story of a Palindrome* 合錦回文傳.

<sup>200</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 131.



from its sale are put, as well as its exceptional ability to allow people to engage with him directly, regardless of their location.<sup>201</sup> All of these aspects combine to form an argument for his rights to be the sole producer and vender of the notepaper of his design. The essay reads:

I already instructed my servants to make the notepaper according to my designs and sell it in the bookshop. Whatever money they acquire from sales, they turn over to the woodblock carvers to be used for the carving of blocks. In this way, from now on, they will flourish continually. Its ability to give people something new to see and hear, and bring joy to the task of writing is truly without end.<sup>202</sup>

已命奚奴逐款制就，售之坊間，得錢付梓人，仍備刮劂之用，是此後生生不已，其新人見聞，愉人揮灑之事，正未有艾。

In explicating for his readers the details of production and distribution of his notepaper, including the employment of his servants as the producers and salespeople carrying out the distribution of “Li Yu brand” notepaper, Li Yu is drawing attention to his unique role in production. It is significant that Li Yu claims intellectual property rights over the notepaper based solely on his design, and that the fact that his servants produced the actual material product being sold does not make the end product any less his property. He elaborates for readers how he and his employees reinvest revenue in the production process so as to continually create new products for customers.

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<sup>201</sup> Li Yu’s description of the designs he has produced to date serves a double role: on the one hand, he is advertising them to his readers, while on the other he is laying claim to his unique concepts for notepaper designs: “I have already produced eight refined literary designs and ten brocade designs. What are the literary designs? They are stones, spools, fans, books, bisected bamboo, snowy plantain leaves, scrolls, and volumes. As for the brocade designs, they all resemble palindrome brocade. The whole sheet is decorated with brocade; only the spaces left vacant by the ripple pattern remain for letter composition. When the letter is completed, it looks no different from a palindrome brocade. Each of the ten brocade designs is distinct, and the space remaining for letter composition varies. 已經制就者，有韻事箋八種，織錦箋十種。韻事者何？題石、題軸、便面、書卷、剖竹、雪蕉、卷子、冊子是也。錦紋十種，則盡仿回文織錦之義，滿幅皆錦，止留穀紋缺處代人作書，書成之後，與織就之回文無異。十種錦紋各別，作書之地亦不雷同。” Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 131.

<sup>202</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 228-29.

I have taken great pains to get this business underway, and it is difficult to enumerate the hardships involved. All of those sagely men who wish to obtain this writing paper may send someone to Nanjing to purchase it. I have been unable to carry out most of the multitudinous novel designs in this collection [*Xianqing ouji*] in the world, so I use this one thing to convey the general idea. The place where the writing paper is sold is the same place that sells my books; everything I have ever written is assembled here. Those with peculiar penchants [lit. eating scabs], can purchase them here and take them with them; this is no different from taking The Old Fisherman [Li Yu] back with them. Spiritual friendship over great distances depends entirely on this. At present, I can claim close friends [*zhiji*] throughout the land, why limit myself to those I meet face-to-face? [In smaller characters:] Inside the Cheng'en Temple in Nanjing, there is a sign with five characters that read: "Mustard Seed Garden Famed Notepaper"—that is the place.<sup>203</sup>

慘淡經營，事難縷述，海內名賢欲得者，倩人向金陵購之。是集內種種新式，未能悉走寰中，借此一端，以陳大概。售箋之地即售書之地，凡予生平著作，皆萃於此。有嗜痂之癖者，貿此以去，如偕笠翁而歸。千里神交，全賴乎此。只今知己遍天下，豈盡謀面之人哉？金陵承恩寺中有“芥子園名箋”五字署名者，即其處也。

In this passage, Li Yu tries to reconcile two seemingly contradictory positions. The first position is that his cultural products serve to transport him spiritually throughout the empire, allowing him to commune with and befriend all those who encounter them. The second position, though, ties the authenticity of these objects to his particular physical location—his bookshop inside the Cheng'en Temple in Nanjing, and the particular products for sale there. At Mustard Seed Garden, he sells cultural products that he advertises as vessels to carry his spirit to whomever is willing to pay the purchase price. This spiritual connection, here designated *shenjiao* 神交, is the language that Li Yu and others used to talk about using print to forge social networks—that is, as a social networking technology. At the time of writing, Li Yu had spent the better part of a decade traveling the country in search of financial support, so it is understandable that he would have been invested in convincing his readers that his products could overcome the distance between them, without requiring that one travel to the other. Hanan has suggested that the term *zhiyin* 知

<sup>203</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 229. For a translation of the latter part of this section, see Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 14.

音 or *zhiji* 知己 in Li Yu's texts already signified "patron," and not the bosom friend who knows almost intrinsically what is on one's mind. I want to argue that Li Yu's use of the term here is more nuanced than that. It seems that Li Yu is not using *zhiji* to refer to patrons, but rather to friends of greater and lesser means, potential customers who are interested in and can afford to purchase his notepaper or books, as well as those patrons from whom he might correctly expect more recompense than just the purchase of his cultural products. The term sends a message to anyone who knows, or aspires to know, Li Yu intimately that the way to do that is by sending someone to his bookshop, or headquarters, to purchase products that he has produced and endorsed.

Li Yu's most mature expression of his conception of intellectual property rights follows:

Permission is granted to copy all the new styles [patterns, designs] in this book except the notepaper designs, which I get my servants to manufacture and sell as an alternative to making a living by my pen. These may not be reprinted [*fanzi* 翻梓], and I have already given public notice, warning people at the outset. If any bold fellows try to seize the market by reprinting the designs as they are, or else adding or subtracting a little here and there, or slightly altering their shape, thus arrogating other people's achievements to themselves, grabbing others' profits while suppressing their names, they will be judged as contemptible as the Wolf of Zhongshan. I shall accuse them in the courts wherever they are and plead that justice be done. As for those who reprint [*fanke* 翻刻] my [Hushang Liweng's] books in the belief that their wealth and power will protect them, I don't know how many there are in the world, but they are living off my labor, and that is a situation I cannot tolerate. I swear that I will fight them to death, and hereby give notice to the authorities that this book marks a new policy on my part. In brief, Heaven and Earth endowed every person with a mind and it is up to each one of us to develop our own intelligence. I have done nothing to stultify their minds or prevent them from developing their intelligence. What right do they have to take away my livelihood and prevent me from living off my own labor?<sup>204</sup>

是集中所載諸新式，聽人效而行之；惟箋帖之體裁，則令奚奴自制自售，以代筆耕，不許他人翻梓。已經傳札布告，誠之於初矣。倘仍有壟斷之豪，或照式刊行，或增減一地，或稍變其形，即以他人之功冒為己有，食其利而抹煞其名者，此即中山狼之流亞也。當隨所在之官司而控告焉，伏望主持公道。至於倚富恃強，翻刻湖上笠

<sup>204</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 229. Adapted from translation in Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 14-15.

翁之書者，六合以內，不知凡幾。我耕彼食，情何以堪？誓當決一死戰，布告當事，即以是集為先聲。總之天地生人，各賦以心，即宜各生其智，我未嘗塞彼心胸，使之勿生智巧，彼焉能奪吾生計，使不得自食其力哉。

This final section of the essay addresses the question of intellectual property rights most directly. Here, Li Yu clearly forbids the reproduction of his notepaper and books. The terms he uses here, *fanzi* (reproduce-blocks) and *fanke* (reproduce-carving), both refer to the reproduction of woodblocks based on a woodblock-printed text. Li Yu argues that in this case both the ingenuity (*qiao* 巧) and workmanship (*gong* 工) of the notepaper designs are of secondary importance to his novel conception for the designs. His refusal to let any variation on his design be reproduced indicates a claim over a concept, rather than an authentic product, that would likely be difficult to enforce. Are there precedents for this level of insistence on one's rights over one's intellectual products in Ming China? What do these claims tell us about Li Yu's conception of his cultural production?

It is worth noting that Li Yu does not make an argument for his rights to his cultural products based on their authenticity, as one might with a forged painting. Instead, he argues so vociferously against the unauthorized reproduction of his cultural products precisely because he believes that consumers lose nothing when they purchase a pirated edition of one of his works. Rather than lend themselves to the cultivation of an intimate and specialized knowledge, or a connoisseurship that claims to distinguish the real thing from the fake, Li Yu's printed books and his stationery are portrayed here as reproducible cultural products, as templates that even invite copying, both in their popularity and in their quality of being necessarily removed from the brush of the person who designed them. Perhaps Li Yu talked so much about his rights to his intellectual property because his was the first sort of profitable cultural product to become successful precisely because they were reproducible. That his ideas and designs could be

mechanically reproduced by his servants and widely disseminated allowed him to gain a wider audience, and to require less financial support from each of them, than a career in painting or calligraphy would have.

### *A Hand in Publishing*

Li Yu was actively involved in the printing and distribution of his works in Hangzhou and Nanjing. Most of the first editions of his fiction and plays do not include reference to any publisher, even as they parted with the standard of publishing vernacular fiction under a pseudonym. Books published without reference to a publisher could imply that he hired carvers and oversaw the publication himself; or it could mean that the publisher was unwilling to associate his name with the works. In her study of the transition of commercial publishing between the Ming and the Qing in Nanjing, Lucille Chia has suggested that the apparent rapid rise and sharp decline of publishing may mask a less publicized reality: that contrary to extant evidence, Nanjing publishers did cater to lower end of the market as well, but without attaching their names to the publications. She proposes that this lower-level “hidden” market likely expanded and flourished in the early Qing.<sup>205</sup> The growth in the late Ming and early Qing of a readership that was no longer comprised solely of literati, and the increase in the number of educated men who, like Li Yu, had to cobble together a living for themselves and their families in the early Qing, it seems likely that at least some publishers would focus on what would sell commercially, even as they hesitated to associate the name of their publishing house with some of those works.<sup>206</sup> I wonder if we cannot extend this claim to the other urban centers of Jiangnan

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<sup>205</sup> Chia, "Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing," 140-41.

<sup>206</sup> For a study of the construction of new reading publics in the late Ming, see McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China."

as well, and if the example of Li Yu's admittedly racy and entertainment-oriented writing being published without reference to a particular publisher might be a window onto just such a hidden market.

There is more information about Li Yu's involvement with the publication of his works during his Nanjing years. All of the extant first editions of his Nanjing-period works were published under the name Yisheng tang 翼聖堂 by a person calling himself the "Master of Yisheng tang." Huang Guoquan has argued that Li Yu was the owner of Yisheng tang bookstore, since he covered expenses for publications of his works, including those of paper and block carving, prepared and kept all of the blocks, exercised authority over the content of the blocks right up until printing; and personally invited well-known personages to contribute prefaces and comments.<sup>207</sup> From this evidence it is clear that Li Yu had such a close relationship with it that he was able to function as a virtually independent publisher during almost all of his time in Nanjing, yet I wonder if there was not another person in charge of Yisheng tang during the period of Li Yu's affiliation with it. The earliest extant text I have seen that was published out of Yisheng tang is a 1659 imprint of a selection of Tang poems compiled in the late Ming by Zhang Zhixiang 張之象 titled *A Selection of Tang Poems, Arranged by Category* (*Tangshi lei yuan xuan* 唐詩類苑選). It is unlikely that Li Yu would have set up a bookshop in Hangzhou, published a collection of Tang poems rather than his own popular works under a new name, and returned to Hangzhou to continue publishing his own works for a couple more years. What is more, in her study of commercial publishing in late-Ming Nanjing, Lucille Chia notes two extant imprints out

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<sup>207</sup> Huang Guoquan 黃果泉, *Yasu zhi jian: Li Yu de wenhua renga yu wenxue sixiang yanjiu* 雅俗之間: 李漁的文化人格與文學思想研究, 46-7.

of Yisheng tang even before the fall of the Ming.<sup>208</sup> In the imprints of Li Yu's works, someone calling himself "The Master of Yisheng tang" composed the publisher's notes that appear on the title pages of the Yisheng tang editions of Li Yu's works. This person refers to Li Yu as *xiansheng* 先生, perhaps best understood in this context as equivalent to "author," a term that Li Yu never used to refer to himself in other contexts. Based on this evidence, I would suggest that Li Yu remained independent of Yisheng tang, and that it was more likely simply a shop with which he developed a very close relationship during his Nanjing years. Either way, almost every print that came out of Yisheng tang during Li Yu's Nanjing years seems to have involved Li Yu, and the evidence cited above shows the central role he played in every aspect of the production process. At the very least, Yisheng tang was an extension of the brand name he cultivated through his writings.

While some studies of publishing in early modern China have tended to draw a clear distinction between private (or literati) and commercial publishing, recent works have begun to call this distinction into question.<sup>209</sup> One recent study has found that although there were some ten "literati publishers" of fiction active in Hangzhou in the early Qing, only two of them published in association with their own names: Li Yu and Wang Qi 汪淇, a Ming loyalist who published for profit.<sup>210</sup> And when Li Yu moved to Nanjing, he likely found only one other literati

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<sup>208</sup> Chia, "Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing," 120. I have been unable to locate references for these Ming imprints.

<sup>209</sup> For an example of the former practice, see Wen Gehong 文革紅, *Qingdai qianqi tongxu xiaoshuo kanke kaolun* 清代前期通俗小說刊刻考論 (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin, 2008). For arguments that government or literati publications often served commercial ends as well, and that it is therefore difficult to draw a hard line between them, see Chia, "Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing," 120; Brokaw, "On the History of the Book in China," 17.

<sup>210</sup> Wen Gehong 文革紅, *Qingdai qianqi tongxu xiaoshuo kanke kaolun* 清代前期通俗小說刊刻考論, 326. Ellen Widmer has included a detailed comparison of the output of Wang Qi and that of Wang Ang, demonstrating that Wang Qi was clearly publishing with the intention of profiting, while Wang Ang had

publisher on the scene, Zhou Lianggong's 周亮工 younger brother, Zhou Liangjie 周亮節, who published several editions of the great novels, but was not himself an author of fiction.<sup>211</sup>

In any case, a look at the publishing of Li Yu and Wang Qi shows that perhaps what made some publishing commercial—its profitability—is a better criterion for distinguishing among publishers than the identity or education of the managers. Both of these men advertised the works they published, and both earned enough to make a living from them. Li Yu was distinctive because he had authored many of the works he published, whereas Wang Qi focused on compiling, editing, and commissioning new works from others. Like Li Yu, Wang Qi was unashamed of profiting from sales, and in the prefatory material to the third installment of his letter compilations, he happily informed his readers that profits from sales of the first two letter compilations had been sufficient to “turn his tadpole studio into a unicorn pavilion.”<sup>212</sup>

As educated men publishing for profit, both Li Yu and Wang Qi differ considerably from men like Suzhou resident Deng Hanyi 鄧漢儀 (1617-1689) who was just a few years Li Yu's junior. Deng actively participated in the transregional publishing world, lacked official status under both the Ming and the Qing, and was, as Tobie Meyer-Fong has characterized him, “emblematic of the post-Ming *fengliu* [風流] (fashionable personality).”<sup>213</sup> Yet when we consider the details of how compilations were put together and paid for, Deng Hanyi's business

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had a full career and had more lofty motivations. Widmer, "The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing."

<sup>211</sup> Wen Gehong 文革紅, *Qingdai qianqi tongsu xiaoshuo kanke kaolun* 清代前期通俗小說刊刻考論, 427.

<sup>212</sup> Wang Qi 汪淇, "Fenlei chidu xinyu ershisi juan 分類尺牘新語二十四卷," in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu jibu* (Tainan: Zhuangyan wenhua, 1997), 3:18.1ab, 3:18.8a. Cited in Widmer, "The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing," 89.

<sup>213</sup> Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*, 102.



of compiling differed markedly from Li Yu's and Wang Qi's. Deng Hanyi did produce "private editions under his own imprint," but his "*Poetry Survey* series does not seem to have been profitable, for by his own account, Deng had to solicit monetary contributions from officials in order to publish all three of the collections."<sup>214</sup> Thus, even while men like Deng Hanyi and Zhou Liangong account for much of the quantitative surge in the early Qing of anthologies of contemporary writing in the early Qing, it is Li Yu's and Wang Qi's more commercial practice of simultaneously participating in, catering to, profiting from, and challenging the limits of literati culture through their publication of successful for-profit anthologies that provides us with a better sense about what was commercially viable in the cultural context of the early Qing.

Li Yu was involved with the distribution of his books beyond his bookshop as well, and he relied on some combination of their sales and more direct support from patrons to support his family. To this end, Li Yu explored a variety of marketing strategies, from advertising upcoming books within the pages of earlier ones, to carrying books on journeys to sell in other places, to those in which he simply pleads with people not to take his livelihood away by producing their own copies of his work. While we will probably never know precisely how much of Li Yu's income came from sales of his works, there is some evidence in the form of correspondence that sheds some light on this issue.

A series of letters to two of his acquaintances during one of his visits to Beijing sheds some light on the way that his book business worked while he was on the road.

Beyond the three Kunshan brothers in the Hanlin Academy, I can count on one hand the brothers who arise in quick succession to serve the imperial court without distinguishing between them. You two gentlemen, Yan Danyuan and Yan Xiulai, are among them. When I entered the capital and heard of this good news, I could not but send a word to mark the occasion. I respectfully composed a couplet for you to hang on your wall, but I'm not sure if you will find it appropriate. Previously, I bothered you with vulgar

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<sup>214</sup> Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*, 106.

mention of selling books, and I want to let you know that since I will depart soon, I hope you will take care of it soon, but I'll say no more for now.

昆季聯翩而起，又同仕廟堂，不分內外者，自崑山三太史而外，指不數屈，澹圖修來兩先生，其匹休者也。野老入都，聞此等盛事，不可無一語紀之。謹撰一聯，以疥尊壁未審有當否也。前以買書鄙事奉托，想荷留神行期日幸早圖之，附聞不一。

Previously, I bothered you about the trifling matter of selling books, and I want to let you know that now my departure date is now approaching, and I'm begging your kind reply. Since buyers are few, I wonder if you would be willing to request ten or twenty volumes for your personal use to lighten my load. I will wait for your reply, leaving it at this for now. Your humble younger brother, Li Yu kowtows to you.

前以買書瑣事瀆聞，想為留意，茲行期已屆，乞示德音。既購者寥寥，亦求自用一二十部，輕我行裝為惠多矣。立候回示，不盡，晚弟李漁頓首，修翁老年臺大人。

As soon as I receive the list of books that I sent you so you could select those you would like, I will send the books back with your servants. This way, you will be spared the trouble of writing a letter: all you need to do is select a trustworthy servant and send along your card so that the servants can request the books on your behalf. This way, the whole matter can be taken care of in just half a day. As for checking the distribution of each book, it's also easy to deal with. For each book I send, I decrease my burden by one book; if I set off one day earlier, I don't have to worry about that day, all thanks to my friends. Your servants will do all of the work themselves, so I hope you will send them right away.

來單一紙，即求專役代傳。其求售之故。冀價值多寡，悉在其中，可省一番揮翰之勞。但擇可與言者幾何人，悉發尊刺，煩貴役面索所用書單。則此事半日可了。至查各書分送，亦易為力。多去一部，少受一部之累，早去一日，少擔一日之憂，皆知己之賜也。貴役自當勞之。即日遣行是禱。

My bags are already packed, and I'm heading back south very soon. There are still a lot of my books leftover, and the road is difficult to travel, so I cannot bring them with me. Please sell them to like-minded friends, or read them yourself, or give them to people--anything. They are even cheaper than in the bookshop. I won't sell them by title (*bu*), but rather by volume (*ben*). I will only ask for five fen of silver (100 *fen* per tael) per volume, and one additional qian (10 *qian* per tael) per case, if they have a case. Books from the south are the thickest: compared to those sold in the bookshops [here in Beijing], one volume is worth at least two or three. Not only that, but the quality of the binding materials and the workmanship are absolutely distinct. If you're not interested, [I'll bother you] no more. If you are interested, please send the list so I will be able to send them to you, and [when the books are delivered] you can pay for them right then, and I will not have to delay my departure. With deepest gratitude, Yu.

漁行裝已束，刻日南歸，所餘拙刻尚多，道路難行，不能攜載。請以質之同人。或自閱，或贈人，無所不可。價較書肆更廉。不論每部幾何，但以本計。每本只取紋價五分，有套者每套又加壹錢。南方書本最厚。較之坊間所售者。一本可抵二三本。即裝訂之材料工拙。亦掘絕不相同也。不用則已。用則別示一單。以便分送。書到之時即授以值不誤行期。至感至感。漁具。<sup>215</sup>

First, we see that Li Yu offers a couplet by way of congratulations to these brothers for their official success. In each letter, though, he mentions book sales. It is also worth noting that he used an inventory list that would save him the trouble of writing the available selections in each letter he sent. Since he did not have a shop in Beijing, he would have had to rely on a courier service to send out his books for him. The last letter is of particular interest for two reasons: first, it appears that Li Yu was enlisting assistance in selling his books in Beijing from officials (although he had known these men before they passed the exam). It appears then that he traveled to Beijing carrying books, but did want to carry them back with him. Second, this letter is of more general interest for the information it provides about book prices and the book trade in Beijing. It is also a first step toward understanding how much Li Yu could have made on the sales of his books alone, and how much he depended on sponsorship from patrons.<sup>216</sup> A preliminary conclusion is that these letters suggest that Li Yu's books sold for much less than most of the other recorded prices for contemporary book sales. This implies that some books were more affordable than previously thought, which might have meant greater access to books in general in the early Qing.

### ***Social Networks and Hypertext***

<sup>215</sup> From the collected letters of Yan Guangmin 顏光敏 (1640-1686). Yan Guangmin 顏光敏, *Yanshi chidu* 顏氏藏尺牋, vol. 3, Congshu jicheng 叢書集成 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1935), 3.164-5.

<sup>216</sup> Chum Shum 沈津, "Circulation and Price of Books at Bookstores in Ming Dyansty 明代坊刻圖書之流通與價格," *Guojia tushuguan guankan* 85, no. 1 (1996).

The shift in Li Yu's publishing projects around 1660 from stories and plays to essays and collaborative works was accompanied by a sharp increase in the number of individuals associated with a given text (see Appendix I). Whereas his early plays and stories would feature a preface writer and a commentator or two, his later works feature dozens of contributors who represent a broad spectrum of cultural figures, from reclusive loyalist poets to educated women to prominent Qing officials. Although many literati at the time used the medium of print to preserve traces of the Ming or as an alternative space to the Qing, Li Yu's collaborative projects focus squarely on the present. Rather than simply reflect existing networks, these texts create spaces in which networks could be fashioned in the new dynasty, reflecting and creating connections among a broad range of literate figures.

Noting that the gathering and publishing of "handwritten traces" of the current age gained exceptional currency during this transitional period, scholars have explored some of the collections of contemporary writings that proliferated as people worked to rebuild their disrupted lives.<sup>217</sup> These studies have shown that many early Qing compilations of contemporary writings had an agenda that could not be disentangled from loyalty to the Ming, such as one solicitation of women's poetry in 1655, which exhorted fellow literati "to scour old books and ... courier station walls and to send [in] whatever they could find."<sup>218</sup> Ellen Widmer has demonstrated that the literatus-publisher Wang Qi professed loyalty to the Ming, even as he included contributions

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<sup>217</sup> For excerpts from some of these anthologies, see Xie Zhengguang 謝正光 and She Rufeng 佘汝豐, *Qingchu ren xuan Qingchu shi huikao* 清初人選清初詩彙考 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1998). Cited in Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*, 225, n. 28.

<sup>218</sup> See Judith T. Zeitlin, "Disappearing Verses: Writing on Walls and Anxieties of Loss in Late Imperial China," in *Writing and Materiality in China*, ed. Judith Zeitlin and Lydia Liu (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 99-100.

from Qing officials in his profitable letter collections.<sup>219</sup> And Tobie Meyer-Fong has shown how Deng Hanyi's three-volume *Poetry Survey* aimed to forge new “transregional, and often explicitly transdynastic, social and literary communities” through its compilation, bringing together the writings of a diverse range of contributors.<sup>220</sup> Among these, Li Yu stands out for the experimental range of his projects, his attempt to add instructional value to them, and his incessant marketing of them. He used print to forge connections with some of the most influential men of his time: even as these efforts led to sustained support from wealthy individuals, they allowed Li Yu to maintain his independence and pursue his own creative agenda.

Oftentimes such collections were the only “place” where men scattered across the dynasty could actually encounter one another. Zhang Chao, in a letter in his own published compilation of his friends' writings, remarked that “out of every ten of his friends, he is only familiar with about half of their faces. The rest fall into the category of “spiritual friendship” 然十人之中，識面者裁及其半，其餘皆屬神交。”<sup>221</sup> Li Yu, too, noted the necessity and utility of spiritual communication facilitated by print in cases when face-to-face encounters were not possible:

Those with sufficiently eccentric tastes [lit. obsessed with eating scabs], may purchase [my books] here and take them with them; this is no different from taking The Old Fisherman [Li Yu] back with them. Spiritual friendship over great distances depends entirely on this. At present, I can claim close friends throughout the land—why limit myself to those I meet face-to-face?<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Widmer, "The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing."

<sup>220</sup> Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*, 105.

<sup>221</sup> “*Fu Wang Zhecun* 复王柘邨” in Zhang Chao 張潮, *Chidu oucun* 尺牘偶存 (1780), 11.7.

<sup>222</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 229.

有嗜痂之癖者，貿此以去，如偕笠翁而歸。千里神交，全賴乎此。只今知己遍天下，豈盡謀面之人哉？

Li Yu conceived of his cultural products as serving to transport him spiritually throughout the empire, allowing him to commune with and befriend all those who encountered them. As he expanded his output to include texts that collected the works of other writers, readers of his works would enjoy spiritual communication with them as well, always with Li Yu playing host.

In 1660, Li Yu opened his first collaborative project, *A First Levy of Letters* (*Chidu chuzheng* 尺牘初徵), with an explanation of his desire to publish contemporary letters that gestured to a project of memorializing the Ming, or of forging a sense of shared contemporary culture: “In the thirty years since the soldiers laid waste [to the land], clashing weapons have nearly all been cast aside, but what of the handwritten traces of virtuous men? Your servant has sought far and wide, and after much delay, I’ve come up with this compilation and called it *A First Levy*.”<sup>223</sup> Yet Li Yu’s participation in this endeavor to collect “handwritten traces” consistently also emphasizes profit, practical use value, and networking.

Profit was a necessary outcome, although, it seems, never the sole aim of Li Yu’s collected volumes. He differed from all other contemporary publishers in that he was outspoken about his need to profit from sales even while only publishing his own works and his own new projects rather than revisions or reissues of any older, reliable texts. Again, this particularity made his involvement with publishing a unique hybrid of the role of men like Qing official and patron of artists Zhou Lianggong, who sponsored their own publications and published whatever

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<sup>223</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 19.36. A Kangxi reprint that combines Li Yu’s first collection with a collection of Wang Qi’s 汪淇 is housed in the Peking University Library. On the collections of letters (*chidu*) of the early Qing, see Pattinson, “The Market for Letter Collections in Seventeenth-Century China.” He discusses these manuals as catering to a range of social groups, and argues that they functioned broadly as guidebooks to high society, but that they also served to record memories of the culture of the fallen Ming dynasty.

they wished to circulate, and men like Wang Qi, who published a steady stream of new editions of already famous titles in addition to their own creative projects.<sup>224</sup>

Li Yu's was the first of a number of collections of contemporary letters published in the 1660s and the several decades that followed. It was prompted by his correct assessment of latent demand for such collections, yet the evidence of later collections suggests that he may have been successful in spite of himself.<sup>225</sup> His editorial note at the beginning of *A First Levy* reveals that in determining demand for collections of letters, he focused on the letter's broad appeal rather than the collection's ability to facilitate spiritual connections among contemporaries. In it, he writes:

Since the dynastic change, not only have splendid new collections of poetry and old-style prose come out in succession, but southern dramas and unofficial histories have also piled up on bookshelves and filled up carts. Yet there have been absolutely no new publications of letters. Spreading throughout the four directions are nothing but hackneyed words. Out of one hundred people, no more than one or two will author poetry, prose, southern drama, or unofficial histories. Yet from the most esteemed Son of Heaven down to the lowliest commoner, not one can do without letters to

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<sup>224</sup> See Widmer, "The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing," 84.

<sup>225</sup> Pattinson, "The Market for Letter Collections in Seventeenth-Century China," 127. According to Pattinson, Li Yu's *A First Levy* of 1660 seems to have tapped into a latent market for informal letters in early Qing China. During the next few decades, compilations of contemporary letters were published by Wang Qi 汪淇 (*Modern Words*, [Fenlei] *Chidu xinyu* [分類]尺牘新語 1671); Chen Mei 陳枚 (*Writings of the Heart*, *Xiexin ji* 寫心集 1680, 1696); Zhou Lianggong 周亮工 (*A New Selection of Letters*, *Chidu xinchao* 尺牘新鈔, 1663, 1667, 1668); and 黃容 (*Chidu lanyan* 尺牘蘭言, 1673). Some of Zhou's criteria for his selection of letters are made clear in a letter to his friend Zhang Yi. He writes: "[Before my trouble started], at my leisure I had been devoting myself to selecting and editing letters sent by friends. . . . Now that my mind is in such turmoil I cannot review these letters. I would like to ask you to browse through this volume of twelve chapters. . . . One letter by Shigong [probably Kuncan] is marvelous. I have it already printed. But I detest recent letters written by Wugong [probably Fang Yizhi] because he likes to talk in the Chan manner, which makes me feel quite nauseous. But the one you have transcribed is quite elegant and vivid, which is unusual for him. Therefore I have included it. . . . Do you know if there are any collected works by contemporary literati I can edit?" Zhou Lianggong 周亮工, *Chidu xinchao* 尺牘新鈔 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 12, 14. Cited and translated in Kim, *The Life of a Patron: Zhou Lianggong (1612-1672) and the Painters of Seventeenth-Century China*, 145.

communicate. No one can avoid writing letters: they are the essential stuff of writing.”<sup>226</sup>

文章自鼎革以來，無論詩賦古文，新奇錯出，即傳奇野史，亦復疊架盈車。唯尺牘絕無新科。四方流布，盡屬陳言。夫詩賦古文傳奇野史，百人之中，作者不過一二。尺牘一事，貴如天子亦有賜問之書。下及庶人不無相通之札。無人可以不作。是文字中之水火菽粟也。

Li Yu's pitch for collections of contemporary letters hinges on his claim that the letter is the most broadly “useful” genre. The reference to “hackneyed words” makes a pitch for the need for better letter-writing manuals: with such a manual, the less educated could cut and paste sections into their own compositions, improving them.<sup>227</sup>

Accordingly, Li Yu designed his collection to be utilized as an instructional model. In the text's prefatory material, Li Yu includes two tables of contents: in the first table, which he calls the “List of Contents of *A First Levy of Letters*, Arranged by Type for Convenience” 尺牘初徵分類便查綱目, he includes a list of thirty-three general categories, including “celebration,” “consolation,” “requesting a loan,” and “literature and art.”<sup>228</sup> These categories serve to guide the reader through the second table, titled the “List of Entries in *A First Levy of Letters*, Arranged by

<sup>226</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Chidu chuzheng shier juan* 尺牘初徵十二卷, vol. jibu 153, 四庫禁毀書叢刊 (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1997), 503.

<sup>227</sup> This period saw the publication of a number of collections of *huaben* stories that seem to have been written in hopes that they would capitalize on the success of Feng Menglong and Ling Mengchu's collections published in the late Ming. See Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*.

<sup>228</sup> See Li Yu 李漁, *Chidu chuzheng shier juan* 尺牘初徵十二卷, jibu 153. The main categories listed in this table of contents are: Celebration 慶賀類, Consolation 慰唁類, Presentation of Gifts 餽遺類, Feasting 飲宴類, Paying Visits 造訪類, Meeting and Seeing Off 迎送類, Making Plans 期約類, Tidings 音問類, Seasonal Greetings 寒暄類, Expressing Amity 情誼類, Expressing Admiration 稱羨類, Expressing Praise 感頌類, Expressing Encouragement 勸勉類, Expressing a Wish 期望類, Sincere Advice 規誡類, Admonishing 責讓類, Expressing Disgust 鄙薄類, Poking Fun 嘲謔類, Expressing Modest Restraint 謙抑類, Narrative Letters 敘述類, Exemption from a Request 免倩類, Entreating 求索類, Requesting a Loan 借貸類, Detaining an Official 仕止類, Government Affairs 政事類, Current Events 時事類, Literature and Art 文藝類, Leisure 閒情類, Marriage 婚姻類, Illness 疾病類, and Buddhism and Daoism 釋道類.



Type for Convenience” 尺牘初徵分類便查條目, which further divides the above categories into subcategories, and under which he lists the author, title, volume, and page number to facilitate quick reference (See Figure 1).

尺牘初徵分類便查條目	
○慶賀類	
壽	上陸臺翁 四卷 東呂心和 三卷 謝張西銘 八卷 謝張西銘 廿一卷 復王華亭 十二卷 復白雲 八卷 奉大司馬 廿四卷
婚	賀李笠翁 十卷 賀曹汝珍 十一卷 賀毛馳黃 十卷 賀友人 十一卷 復友 七卷 賀友 廿三卷
誕育	沈雲生 十一卷 賀友人 廿四卷
遺姻友	賀友人 廿四卷
賀生孫	賀友人 廿四卷
遷移	賀友遷居 十一卷 賀友 廿七卷 賀友 廿八卷
入泮	賀嚴子餐 十五卷
補廩	賀李君實 十一卷
登第	賀翁長卿 二卷 賀翁長卿 三卷 候潘二岳 三卷 賀丁飛禱 六卷 賀張嗣留 十五卷
與卓辛義	賀卓辛義 六卷 賀卓辛義 七卷
答陸京卿	賀陸京卿 十一卷 賀陸京卿 十四卷
復沈君典	賀沈君典 十一卷 賀沈君典 十二卷
律後謝同憲	賀同憲 十一卷 賀同憲 十二卷

Figure 1. Page from the table of contents of Li Yu's *A First Levy of Letters*, reproduced in the *Siku jinhui congkan*, 四庫全書禁毀叢刊, vol. 4 集部, pt. 153, 499-704, 503.

Li Yu also gives detailed instructions in the editorial note about how to use the two tables to look up letters by category (*cha lei zhi fa* 查類之法):

First, read (*yue*) the table of contents, and see (*kan*) to which category (*lei*) belongs the thing you want to look up (*cha*). Next, look at (*yue*) the items and verify which category and item you are looking up. Each letter you look up will only require a single turn of the page and the letter will appear before your eyes. You do not have to bother with

looking up a second page. Each section is separated by an L-shaped symbol so that you only read (*yue*) the section that deals with your topic, and you do not have to read what precedes or comes after it. All of this is set up for those who are deficient in learning. What use would erudite scholars have for looking up [topics]?<sup>229</sup>

先閱綱目，看所查之事在何類之中。次閱條目認定所查之事在某類某條之下。每查一首且取書中心縫一揭，便在目前，不煩再撿第二葉矣。逐段有 L 相隔，事在其段，止閱某段則前後皆可不閱。然此皆為淺學者設。若夫名通弘博之士，焉用稽查。

The system Li Yu has developed in this table of contents is a technological update that provides the partially literate with the option of zooming in on the relevant parts of a letter without reading (See Figure 2). As far as I know, it is also the first use of page numbers in a table of contents—readers would not have previously had the experience of flipping to a page based on an indication of a numeric destination—previous works would have indicated *juan* 卷 and sequence only. Li Yu manipulates the letters to become reference material for people who do not appreciate them in the same way their original recipient would have.<sup>230</sup> In doing so, he uses every term but “read” (*du* 讀) to prescribe how one is to interact with the text.

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<sup>229</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Chidu chuzheng shier juan* 尺牘初徵十二卷, jibu 153, 503.

<sup>230</sup> In organizing his letter-writing manual in this way, Li Yu had a predecessor in the late-Ming compiler Shen Jiayin 沈佳胤, who classified his *A Sea of Letters* (*Han hai* 瀚海) by topic, dividing it into sections and subsections for the convenience of those who wish to consult the letters as models. He did not go so far as to divide letters into multiple sections like Li Yu would, but he did include the most common types of letters near the beginning of the collection, leaving those that dealt with weightier matters to the end, indicating that the collection was arranged for ease of use. See Pattinson, "The Market for Letter Collections in Seventeenth-Century China," 133-4. Pattinson also discusses the ways in which Wang Qi's organization of letter collections evolved over time, citing that he took a lesson from Li Yu's organizing principle, but adapted it in various ways so as to avoid alienating his better educated customers. He faults Li Yu for catering too much to the least educated by making his collection appear as more of a reference manual and less like the sort of reading a self-described elite would read for pleasure.

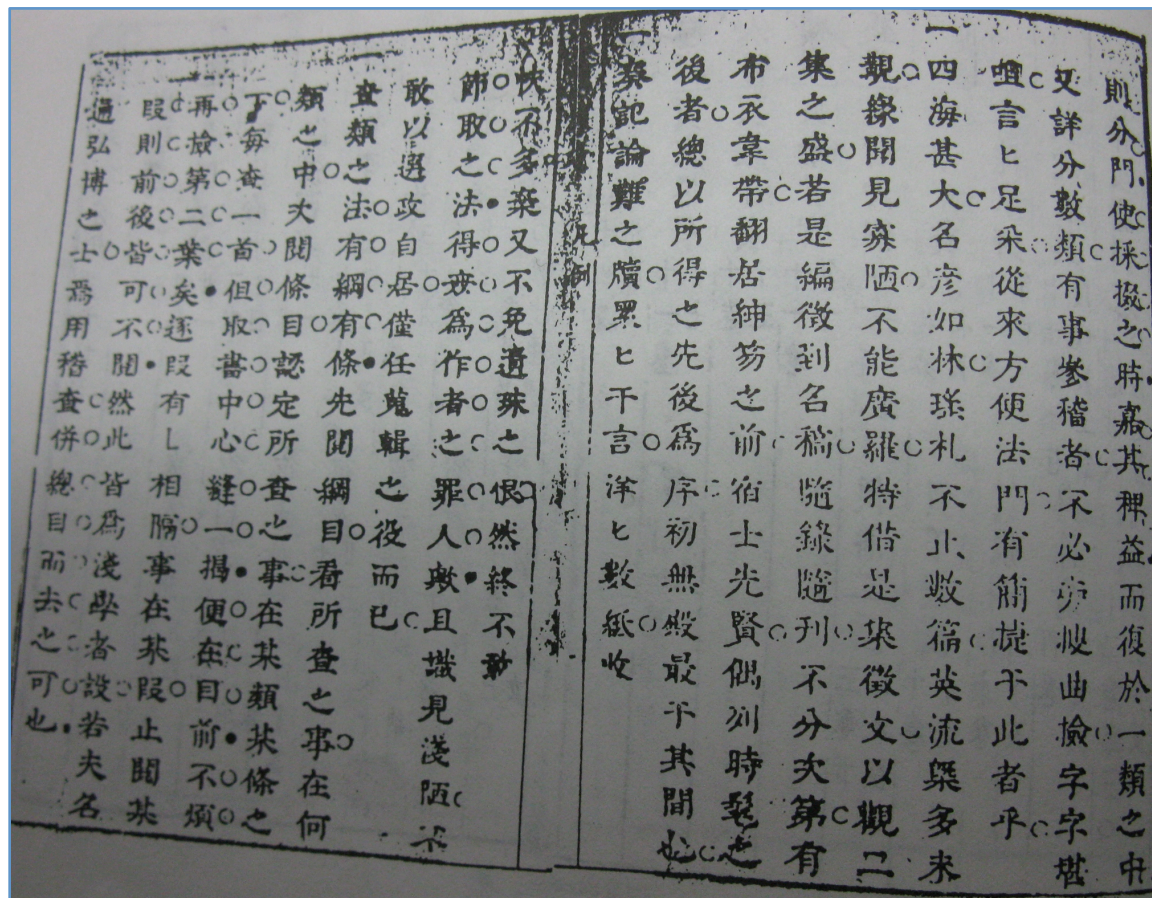


Figure 2. Excerpt from the editorial note to *A First Levy of Letters* with “L” symbol. Reproduced in *Siku jinhui congkan*, 四庫全書禁毀叢刊, vol. 4 集部, pt. 153, 499-704, 503.

Rather than convening with the handwritten traces of like-minded friends, the person who encounters his text is encouraged to “look” (*kan* 看), “look over” (*yue* 閱), and “look up” (*cha* 查) to make the desired information “appear before his eyes (便在目前).”<sup>231</sup> At the same time, the collection was intended to give some of his readers a sense of the literary exchanges that comprised the symbolic life of Jiangnan cities after the fall of the Ming. Yet Li Yu’s apology to the erudite men who might be offended by his tables is dismissive, as if it were included only as

<sup>231</sup> On these alternate ways of reading, especially *kan*, see McLaren, “Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China.”



an afterthought, and there seems to have been a price to pay for marketing so directly to the less literate and more practical minded. Or perhaps Li Yu's ambiguous social status, and reputation as an often crass author of plays and fiction made him less desirable than more conservative figures to serve as a node for the production of such collections at that time. In any case, no sequel is extant, despite Li Yu's stated intention to compile and publish second, third, and fourth collections of letters in his "Call for Submissions" in *A First Levy*, and a publisher's note on the title page of another of his publications reported that: "[Li Yu's] *A First Levy* has been in circulation for a long time now, and *A Second Levy* is about to be completed 先生尺牘初徵行世已久，二徵旦夕告成。”<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Chidu chuzheng shier juan* 尺牘初徵十二卷, jibu 153, 503; Li Yu 李漁, "Gujin chidu daquan 古今尺牘大全," (1688). The statement is by Baoqingge zhuren 抱青閣主人. See Huang Qiang 黃強, "Li Yu Gujin shilüe chudu chuzheng yijiayan shukao 李漁《古今史略》《尺牘初徵》《一家言》述考," *Wenxian* 2(1988); Pattinson, "The Market for Letter Collections in Seventeenth-Century China," 140. Both of these scholars think the work was published, Huang because Li Yu indicates that he was in the process of working on it, and Pattinson because there is a note at the beginning of *Letters Old and New* that assures the reader that no material included in the first or second collections has been included. See Li Yu 李漁, "Gujin chidu daquan 古今尺牘大全," 1b. "bai 白." Pattinson is right that this would be proof that the collection was published and that there are no extant copies, but he assumes that *Letters Old and New* is the work of Li Yu. In fact, the only extant version of this text, that held at Peking University, indicates that it is a "newly carved edition of 1688," eight years after Li Yu's death. Also, the publisher and author, Shen Zhengchun 沈正春, calls himself *yinjia di* 姻家弟, indicating that he is related to Li Yu's son-in-law and later manager of Mustard Seed Garden, Shen Xinyou. According to Shan Jinheng's *jiaoyoukao* 交游考, Shen Zhengchun 沈正春 was Shen Xinyou's grandfather. Shan Jinheng 單錦珩, "Li Yu jiaoyou kao 李漁交遊考," in *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1992). It is much more likely that this person shared a name with Shen Xinyou's grandfather, but was a younger relation. Another factor is that the preface is not dated: instead of a date are the characters "Hangzhou year" (*Xiling nian* 西冷年), which I have not been able to decipher. The layout of the *Gujin chidu daquan* is exactly the same as that of Li Yu's first letter collection. The preface is written in a similar font, and ends at the same line on the same page, and is followed by two seals of equivalent size. As Hanan has pointed out, something of Li Yu's bravado is missing from the pages ascribed to him, but the fact of this advertisement for *A Second Levy* leads me to be inclined to accept the work as one of Li Yu's projects.

One extant version of *A First Levy*, likely pirated, appears to have been printed using the original blocks or a very meticulously rendered copy.<sup>233</sup> Notably, Li Yu's two user-friendly tables of contents have been removed, a decision that no doubt was intended to transform the collection from a letter-writing manual into a form that would cater to those who found such crutches distasteful. Twenty-four years after its first publication, some publisher thought that Li Yu's *A First Levy* would sell best with his name *and* Wang Qi's, but without the convenient tables. That many collections of letters were published during the remainder of the seventeenth-century, while none was so user-friendly as Li Yu's had been, is indicative of a demand for contemporary letters as reading material for educated men who had no need for a letter writing manual, but sought spiritual connections with likeminded friends.

Li Yu's *A First Levy of Letters* was his attempt to reach the broadest possible audience with his publishing project, even while it was also his first experiment with soliciting manuscripts from people he had not met and bringing them together on paper. In addition to predicting what kind of demand there would be for such texts, Li Yu considered how he might use the project as a social networking tool to bring himself and his works into contact with more people in more places. In other words, he was experimenting with using publishing as an interactive social technology. Whereas his early plays and stories would feature a preface writer and a commentator or two (never more than three total collaborators), this collection and later works feature dozens of contributors who represent a broad spectrum of cultural figures, from

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<sup>233</sup> Only the date of Wu Weiye's 吳偉業 (1609-1672) preface has been changed, from 1660 to 1684 (four years after Li Yu's death, and twelve years after Wu Weiye's death). This is a curious decision, for it seems that the only reason one would want to "update" this preface would be to sell it as a recently completed text. But if there was demand for the text, it seems that those potential buyers would know either that the work had been in circulation for some time, or that the famous Wu Weiye had been dead for more than a decade. The edition is attributed to Wang Qi 汪淇 on the title page, but to Li Yu later on the first page of the ninth volume.

reclusive loyalist poets to educated women to prominent Qing officials to seal carvers and painters. Li Yu solicited materials for his compilations from his extensive network of friends, as well as from influential cultural and political figures throughout the empire whom he had never met.

One of the immediate results of these publishing projects was that Li Yu expanded his reputation beyond that of an author of fiction and drama. In attaching his name to his vernacular fiction in the first place, he had already departed from the standard literati practice of publishing such works anonymously, using the publication of fiction and plays to broadcast his name, and to shape the venturesome persona that would come to mind when people heard it. As he aged, Li Yu could increasingly rely on that name and reputation—outrageous, entertaining, and social—to advertise collaborative texts that offered readers access not just to the by then well-known Li Yu, but also to many other contemporary individuals.

A reader of *A First Levy* would be privy to the personal letters of ninety-two of Li Yu's contemporaries. Forty of the contributors were Li Yu's close friends, while a majority, the remaining fifty-two, were people with whom he had no other recorded connection. About three-quarters of these held an official position during the Ming, the Qing, or both, with an approximately equal number of them passed the highest level of exam during the Ming dynasty as during the Qing. Only eight in total seem to have identified as Ming loyalists. Most contributors were from the Jiangnan region, though some came from places that Li Yu had not yet visited, such as Shaanxi, Hubei, Sichuan, and Guangdong. Their ranks and political persuasions, as well as the ratios of these, are almost identical for the group Li Yu knew already and the one he did not. Most of them were from the Jiangnan region, though included among them were men from Shaanxi, Hubei, Sichuan, and Guangdong, among other distant places that

Li Yu would visit eventually, although at the time of publication, he had not yet had the chance. It is this function of his first edited volume—the ability to attract submissions from like-minded people throughout the empire—that Li Yu took away from the project.<sup>234</sup>

Around the time *A First Levy of Letters* was published, Li Yu moved his family to Nanjing, where he would live for the remainder of his productive years. In 1663, just three years after the publication of his letter collection in Hangzhou, he published a large edited volume of contemporary legal cases (*A New Aid for Administration* 資治新書) out of his printshop in Nanjing. He requested that manuscripts be delivered to his printshop, Yisheng tang 翼聖堂, taking care to provide potential contributors with careful instructions on how to post them so they would not be lost. In a note soliciting manuscripts at the beginning of the text, Li Yu wrote:

If you will favor me with your famed manuscripts from afar, I implore you to post them to the Yisheng tang bookshop in Nanjing. If your manuscript is delivered to my humble studio [Yisheng tang], it will certainly not be set aside. I only ask that you seal it securely and affix your official seal to prevent loss, and request a stamped card of mine in reply, so that you may check on its delivery status. Previously, when I entreated gentlemen in all the land to convey their personal letters from afar, I did not receive some of your esteemed manuscripts, some due to someone's misdirection; others to the courier's unreliability, such that I have offended several esteemed personages, and I am unable to plead innocence. I wronged you before; I cannot but be cautious going forward.<sup>235</sup>

名稿遠賜，乞郵致金陵翼聖堂書坊。稿送荒齋，必不沈擱。但須封固鈐印庶免漏遺，並索圖章賤刺報命，以驗收否。前蒙四方君子遠貽尺牘，尊稿本坊未收，或為他人誤領，或為驛使浮沈，以致開罪名流，無從辯白，誤之於前，不得不慎之於後耳。

Like the letters, Li Yu's collections of court cases could cater to a double market: on the one hand, they provided stories of compatriots adjudicating throughout the empire, giving readers the pleasure of intimate contact with a community. On the other hand, the cases could also serve as

<sup>234</sup> The study of Li Yu's social associations (*jiaoyou kao* 交遊考) in the 1992 *Complete Works of Li Yu* has been invaluable in identifying the contributors to these collections. Shan Jinheng 單錦珩, "Li Yu jiaoyou kao 李漁交遊考."

<sup>235</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 16.7-8.

instructional materials for newly employed officials who would be faced with similar cases in their day-to-day lives.<sup>236</sup> The first of these actually contained blueprints of forms that an official could use when someone wanted to report a death. Li Yu describes the forms in the adjacent text, indicating that “the model form to the left can be cut out and made a standard.”<sup>237</sup> Like the letter collection, the text is meticulously organized and user-friendly, complete with tables that divide the cases by category and subcategory. However, the cases themselves are not divided into subsections since readers would have been assumed to be well educated and in need of specialized knowledge and shared experience rather than remedial writing instruction. Perhaps this is evidence of Li Yu’s attempt to cater to a better-educated group of potential readers. That he had moved on to collecting court cases was also further evidence that Li Yu had abandoned the brash projects of his earlier years: in his preface to Li Yu’s collection of court cases, Zhou Liangong wrote, “Critics say that Liweng’s profligate abuse of his talents in his early writings has been replaced by a dignified and righteous manner.”<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> These works include *A New Aid to Administration* (*Zizhi xinshu* 資治新書) and *Preserving Life* (*Qiusheng lu* 求生錄) in 1663, followed by *A New Aid to Administration, a Second Collection* (*Zizhi xinshu* 資治新書二集) in 1667, all of which were actual contemporary cases solicited from his contacts who held or had held official positions.

<sup>237</sup> Li Yu 李漁, “*Xinzheng zizhi xinshu chujì* 新增資治新書初集,” (1663), 13a.

<sup>238</sup> Preface to Li Yu 李漁, “*Zizhi xinshu erji* 資治新書二集,” (1667). Translated and cited in Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 24. Although they were clearly close enough that Li Yu could solicit a preface from Zhou, the two men had different opinions about what kind of texts were worth publishing. Pattinson has cited Zhou in the “Principles for Selection” to his letter collection *Chidu xinshao* 尺牘新鈔 saying “The things one can write about are limitless; by categorizing them, all matters of the same type can be seen in one section. Most collections of letters are like this. However, they are just for hacks of little learning to plunder whenever they so require . . . A poor writer would find it difficult [to cobble together the borrowed bits], while a talented writer would hardly need to append such warts. 啓事通懷，萬端難盡；分門別類，一節可稽，往往如是。所以利淺學之漁獵，便不文之襲取也 . . . . 是拙手既難全勦，巧筆又何用懸疣，不若並渾之為得也。” (Zhou Liangong, *Chidu xinshao*, “Xuan li,” 3, trans. and cited in Pattinson, “The Market for Letter Collections in Seventeenth-Century China,” 143.



Despite superficial similarities and the fact that some people contributed to both of these collections, the pool of potential contributors for this latter collection was much more limited—to men who held, or had previously held, an official position. Between this and the second collection of cases Li Yu published five years later, he collected cases from some 180 current and former officials. There is record of Li Yu having an ongoing relationship with only forty-eight of these men, while 132 seem to have been associated with him only through their submission of cases for this publication. The majority of them attained the *jinshi* degree under the Qing, with only about a dozen having passed during the Ming. Of those, only three were Ming officials who did not serve under the Qing. This collection, which opens with a number of essays by Li Yu—who himself had never passed even the provincial-level examination, nor served as an official--situates him at the center of a network of the men who wielded judicial power in the early Qing.

The final collection for which Li Yu solicited manuscripts was *A First Collection of Parallel Prose*, which he published in 1671. That collection contained contributions by 147 individuals, many of whom also contributed to his *First Levy of Letters*. Ninety-two of these were people with no other relationship to Li Yu, while long-time friends comprised the remaining fifty-five. The majority of submissions, though not all, came from men who had held an official position, though Ming loyalists are better represented here (about twenty), than in the previous collections. Li Yu apologizes for not including selections from a wider range of people, and expresses hope that the first volume will serve as an advertisement to invite submission by mail from throughout the land for inclusion in the second collection. The guide in the prefatory material lists the various works that are for sale at Li Yu's garden residence cum bookshop, Mustard Seed Garden (芥子園), including *A First Levy of Letters* and *A New Aid to*

*Administration.* This embedded advertisement indicates the ongoing availability, if not popularity, of Li Yu's compilations. What is more, the fact that edited volumes are mentioned, but not any of Li Yu's plays or fiction collections, seems to suggest that the edited works were bringing in more buyers, unless the fiction and plays were already so well known that there was no use in advertising them.

It seems to me that each of the collections would have served a few distinct functions. First, for contributors, they provided a place on paper for people from all over the empire to take part in a community that transcended their local place. Second, for readers, they presented communities of people getting on with life and recording it in print in the new dynasty, and could imagine themselves a part of it, even as they benefited from the educational aspect of each collected genre as a model. Third, for Li Yu and his close friends, they situated them (especially Li Yu) at the center of empire-wide social networks, and broadened the scope of Li Yu's reputation to include a much broader range of talent and interest.

Li Yu gestured at, and experimented with, producing texts that would cater to a broad readership, but it seems that the lukewarm reception his letter collection received and the excitement of soliciting manuscripts from and making connections with cultural figures from all over the empire compelled him to focus on publishing for a better educated group of higher social status. I want to suggest that the networks Li Yu developed through these publishing projects allowed him to avoid the sort of labor in which another literati publisher would have had to engage: reprinting older, reliable works for profit.

During the 1660s and 1670s, Li Yu also published his own essays and collected works. Like these collected works, and unlike his plays and fiction, these were collaborative efforts that included comments from dozens of individuals. Forty-three people commented on his *Lungu* (論

古 1664), nineteen on his *Xianqing ouji* (閒情偶寄 1671), eighty-four on his complete works, *Yijia yan* (一家言 1672-1678), and fifteen on his *Naige ci* (耐歌詞 1678). The greatest differences between these collaborations and the edited volumes discussed above are first, that all contributors are people Li Yu knew well, and second, that they include many who never held office, many others who went into reclusion after the fall of the Ming, and still others who served under the Qing and used their resources to support Li Yu's cultural production over the years, and others remembered as painters and seal carvers who frequented Li Yu's home. These works sold on Li Yu's reputation and wit alone, and by 1730, forty years after his death, all of them were collated into his *Yijiayan*.

In soliciting letters, court cases, comments, and prefatory materials from well-known personages throughout China, Li Yu was also taking part in a print culture that allowed the print medium to be “appropriated by the social desire of early Qing literati to position themselves favorably within an economy of cultural prestige.”<sup>239</sup> Li Yu's edited volumes served two main ends in the early Qing: first, with them, he connected in print the many individuals who were working, writing, and getting on with life in the early Qing, while situating himself at the center of empire-wide social networks. Second, in addition to bringing together dozens of collaborators for many of his later projects, Li Yu also worked to expand the market of potential readers and buyers through a range of techniques that would make his works more accessible to a broader audience.

In all, Li Yu produced edited collections of three distinct genres, drawing on two overlapping groups for submissions (officials and former officials for the court cases, and a more

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<sup>239</sup> Son, "Publishing as a Coterie Enterprise: Zhang Chao and the Making of Printed Texts in Early Qing China," 100-1.

politically diverse group for the other two). A core of close friends and frequent patrons were featured in multiple projects, and these were supplemented by mailed submissions from across the dynasty. Each of the collections provided a printed place for contributors to join a community that transcended locale, but each also had an instructional quality, and could be used as reference material. Through these projects, Li Yu developed a reputation as a versatile cultural entrepreneur and cultivated a dynasty-wide support network of which he took advantage on several long journeys later in his life. Li Yu lived off of the proceeds of his publications and the support of connections he made through them, but he did not publish anything that did not boast his creative touch. As such, he was a hybrid figure who functioned between the well-to-do who could sponsor the publication of whatever they wished and the men who made a living publishing a steady stream of reliable titles.<sup>240</sup> His constantly innovative publishing practice participated in, catered to, profited from, and challenged the limits of literati culture.

In his preface to *Naige ci* in 1678, two years before his death, Li Yu wrote:

The world of today is not the world of ten years ago. Nor was the world of ten years ago the world of twenty years ago. Just like May flowers and crabs of nine autumns, today is more beautiful than yesterday, and tomorrow is superior again to today.<sup>241</sup>

今日之世界，非十年前之世界，十年前之世界，又非二十年前之世界，如三月之花，九秋之蟹，今美于昨，明日复胜于今矣。

Though perhaps not intended so literally, the division of time here approximates the periods of Li Yu's literary output discussed above. In the world of "twenty years ago," Li Yu wrote plays and fiction, shifting "ten years ago," to edited collections, and finally turning "today" to his own essays and other writings, liberally peppered with comments by the many friends he has made

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<sup>240</sup> See Widmer, "The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing," 84.

<sup>241</sup> Li Yu 李漁, "Naige ci 耐歌詞," 1a.

along the way. Li Yu played a key role in forming social networks during the first decades of the Qing, and he was able to do so because of his sensitivity to market demand, flexibility, and creativity. By analyzing the particulars of how he did this, we not only gain new insight onto the social and cultural possibilities of the early Qing, but we also gain a context for understanding the cultural work that Li Yu's fiction, plays, theatrical production, and garden design performed during this period, with their intense focus on the many possibilities of the present. During the latter portion of the almost twenty years he spent in Nanjing (c. 1657-76), in addition to writing and publishing, Li Yu began to experiment with a range of non-literary cultural activities generally looked down upon by literati, including directing a traveling theater troupe and designing gardens on commission. It is to these practices that I now turn.

## CHAPTER THREE

## Crafting Everyday Social Spaces

I once said to someone, “All my life I’ve had two unique skills that I haven’t been able to use myself, nor have other people been able to put them to use—this is truly a pity.”

He asked me, “Which unique skills are those?”

I replied, “One is the discernment of music; the other is designing gardens.”

予嘗謂人曰：生平有兩絕技，自不能用，而人亦不能用之，殊可惜也。

人問：絕技維何？

予曰：一則辨審音樂，一則置造園亭。

Li Yu, *Xianqing ouji*, 1671<sup>242</sup>

The decade between 1667 and 1677 saw the rise and fall of Li Yu’s (李漁 1611-1680) little household theater troupe of his concubines and his famed garden residence-cum-bookshop, *Jiezi yuan* 芥子園 (Mustard Seed Garden), as well as the publication of *Xianqing ouji*. At this, the height of his career as a cultural entrepreneur, as his publishing projects evolved to comprise virtual spaces for interregional networking, Li Yu for the first time found himself with the resources to manipulate everyday social spaces off the page as well. His work in these spaces combined his twin passions of theater direction and garden design—in his words, his two “unique skills.”<sup>243</sup>

In the early Qing, the social space of gardens and theatrical performance often overlapped. A primary function of many gardens was to serve as a place for the staging of plays by private

<sup>242</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 156-7.

<sup>243</sup> Sieber, "Seeing the World through Xingqing ouji (1671): Visuality, Performance, and Narratives of Modernity," 15. Sieber mentions Li Yu’s linking of these two skills in terms of his constant reference to visual analogies, especially painting, antiques, garden design, and medicine. Hanan mentions the two as also relating to the titles of two of his fiction collections. Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 78.

troupes, and that “stage” was often little more than a temporary rug placed on the ground in an open space.<sup>244</sup> In some gardens, like Li Yu’s Mustard Seed Garden, a permanent stage was set up primarily for theatrical performance. Still, the idea of a garden (*yuan* 園) was plastic enough that it could designate anything from ink on a page to a boat on a lake to, perhaps, any place in which people gather to watch theater—the most common term for the theater world was Pear Garden (*liyuan* 梨園). Theater and gardens were two of the primary illusory spaces to which people, especially Ming loyalists, would retreat from present reality during the early Qing. Li Yu’s practice ran counter to that tendency—he was concerned with the concrete physical, social, and economic factors that allowed these social spaces to function and entertain. He sought to create spaces that would augment the experience of the everyday. Li Yu’s Mustard Seed Garden was a place where he played host to some of the most illustrious cultural figures of his day; his troupe not only provided entertainment for those guests, but it also made a central aspect of the garden portable. Performances outside the garden would invoke the physical environment of the garden (often also the setting of the play), even in its absence.

In both theater production and garden design, Li Yu deviated from traditional practice. His theater troupe, which performed in Mustard Seed Garden and for patrons and friends on Li Yu’s journeys, was a new hybrid form, neither exclusively private nor fully commercial.<sup>245</sup> In his garden design, Li Yu forged a new middle category between garden proprietor and garden designer, situating his practice squarely between them. At the same time, his practice in these areas proceeded in conversation with the ways he conceptualized them in writing. The concept of

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<sup>244</sup> Sophie Volpp has described the space occupied by the stage (usually a red carpet) as “opportunistic,” with open boundaries. See *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*, 71-2.

<sup>245</sup> Responding to earlier exaggerations of the extent of Li Yu’s involvement with his traveling troupe, Patrick Hanan has argued that the troupe performed mostly for Li Yu’s literary friends rather than patrons, and that it was not a significant commercial endeavor. See Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 8.

a garden had long been bound up with its textual and visual representation, and, read in light of this tradition, *Xianqing ouji* is also an experiment with a new kind of representation of the garden. This chapter examines Li Yu's crafting of and writing about the social spaces of gardens and theatrical performances, considering them together to explore the composite cultural work they performed.<sup>246</sup>

### ***Gardens on Paper***

Seventeenth-century accounts of imaginary gardens, written by literati who could not afford or did not desire gardens of their own, serve as a useful starting point for understanding the cultural functions of gardens in the early Qing. A comparative reading of some of these texts also provides a picture of the impact of the fall of the Ming on the production, consumption, and imagination of gardens. Huang Zhouxing 黃周星 (1611-1680) opens one such text, the "Account of Make-do Garden (*Jiangjiu yuan ji* 將就園記)," with the lines, "From ancient times, gardens have been passed down by men, and men have been passed down by gardens."<sup>247</sup> Thus, he links the garden to the literati practice of "establishing oneself with words (*liyan* 立言)," implying that having one's name associated with the name of a famous garden would provide one with literary immortality.<sup>248</sup> In a move similar to that by which Li Yu laid claim to his mountain, for Huang, the passing on of one's name was a function the garden could perform regardless of whether it had ever existed in physical form. His record of an imaginary garden, like the textual records that

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<sup>246</sup> Wai-yee Li has suggested a link between gardens and illusion in the early Qing, especially those gardens that exist only as illusion, like the imaginary *Jiangjiu yuan*. See Li, "Introduction."

<sup>247</sup> Translated in Ellen Widmer, "Huang Zhouxing's Imaginary Garden," in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*, ed. Wilt Idema (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 260.

<sup>248</sup> See also Joanna F. Handlin Smith, "Gardens in Ch'i Piao-chia's Social World: Wealth and Values in Late-Ming Chiangnan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 51, no. 1 (1992).



grant real gardens immortality, offers detailed description of the things and people in his garden that delight the “visitors’” eyes and ears. In creating this garden on paper, Huang exploits the fact that most of the gardens his readers had experienced, they had encountered in textual accounts alone.

What purpose is served by the juxtaposition of a detailed description of a garden and the admission that it exists only on paper? Huang describes his account of an imaginary garden as seeking to create a utopian place that is “both of this world and outside it.”<sup>249</sup> By virtue of not actually existing in the world, Huang’s imaginary garden offers a space even further removed from the world than that of a physical garden—as a retreat, then, it may be more effective than a physical garden. Ellen Widmer has tied Huang’s account of this fictional garden to the connection between Ming loyalism and fictionality in the early Qing. This is a convincing reading of Huang’s account of the Make-do Garden, especially considering that the only southern drama (*chuanqi* 傳奇) Huang wrote lent dramatic life to both the composition of the fictional account of the Make-do Garden and the construction of its “real” counterpart the fantastic Mt. Kunlun. Huang’s garden can attain physical form only when it is twice removed from the physical world, first into a play and then onto an otherworldly mountain within the play.

Wai-yee Li has suggested that both imaginary and real gardens were “alternative spaces” that Ming loyalists set up apart from the early Qing world, and that their “gardens, as private

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<sup>249</sup> See Widmer, “Huang Zhouxing’s Imaginary Garden.” See also Stanislaus Fung, “Notes on the Make-do Garden,” *Utopian Studies* 9, no. 1 (1998). Fung has argued that Huang’s garden is not utopian, because like Tao Yuanming’s Peach Blossom Spring, it is not entirely of another world, but rather both of this world and of another world. I would argue however, that by resorting to the creation of a textual garden, Huang does situate his garden in another world. Further, Fung does not bring the representation of the garden in Huang’s play into his analysis as Widmer does; with this omission, he fails to notice that Huang there characterizes the garden built on Mt. Kunlun as the real (*zhen* 真) garden, and the garden he writes about in the record as the false (*jia* 假) garden.

aesthetic spaces, acquired new political meanings” in the early Qing.<sup>250</sup> In her analysis, the recurrence of the phrase “no place” (*wudi* 無地) in the writings of Ming loyalists “contending or dispensing with historical moorings result[ed] in a new poetics of space” in the early Qing.<sup>251</sup> Central to this new poetics of space was the articulation in verse of the displacement these leftover servants of the Ming felt in the new dynasty. Li cites the example of Qian Qianyi’s “Later Autumn Meditations (*Hou qiuxing* 後秋興)” to show that contemporary claims to “have a place” mark a place only to point to its “imminent destruction”:

There is a place [*di*], but only for hearing the roaring of waves,  
With no sky [*tian*], how can the flying frost be seen?<sup>252</sup>

有地只因聞浪吼  
無天那得見霜飛

To take her reading further, the parallelism in Qian’s couplet links “place (*di*)”—the earth (*di*) below—to heaven (*tian*), or the sky above. Earth and sky, which represent a world intact, cannot exist at the same time. The disappearance of the sky, and the light it provides, has blinded the speaker, who can now only deduce its presence by the sound of crashing waves. All he has left is a place to stand, and perhaps more germane to this analysis, a place from which to write. It is from such a place of defeat that many of the early Qing gardens on paper are born.

In the case of Huang’s garden too, the space of theater and gardens overlapped. Many of these men saw both their involvement with and writing about theater and gardens as creating spaces in which they might pursue a life apart from the politics of the early Qing world. Wai-yee

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<sup>250</sup> Li, “Introduction,” 49.

<sup>251</sup> Li, “Introduction,” 44-6. She considers Huang’s account alongside other contemporary writings about utopia escapes, like Zhang Dai’s “Blessed Land of Langhuan (*Langhuan fudi* 琅嬛福地),” not just other writings about gardens.

<sup>252</sup> Li, “Introduction,” 46. Qian Qianyi’s poem is the third in the twelfth series of his *Later Autumn Meditations* “*Hou Qiuxing*” sequence in *Toubi ji* 投筆集.

Li has also drawn a connection between the illusionism of gardens and theater, pointing to cultural figures such as Zhang Dai, Huang Zhouxing, Wu Weiye, Qi Biaoqia, and Li Yu as examples of men who pursued interests in both. What is more, actors who would perform the workings of the vanished world onstage gave Ming loyalists another outlet for voicing their sense of being out-of-place.<sup>253</sup>

At the same time, another account of an imaginary garden, Liu Shilong's 劉士龍 "Account of a Garden That Does Not Exist (*Wuyou yuan ji* 烏有園記)," was written in the late Ming, and so cannot be understood as loyalist in persuasion. Liu discusses the benefits of constructing a "garden on paper (*zhi shang yuan* 紙上園)," glorifying the space of the page as better equipped than a plot of land to contain a garden:

The scene is born of feeling; the appearance is suspended under my brush. It does not waste money, nor does it require labor, and yet one can enjoy it to the fullest. This is why it is the most suitable for poor people. Moreover, while the space allotted to the construction of a real garden is limited, there are limitless possibilities for the construction of an imaginary garden—herein is the excellence of my garden.<sup>254</sup>

景生情中，象懸筆底，不傷財，不勞力，而享用具足，固最便於食貧者矣。況實創則張設有限，虛構則結構無窮，此吾園之所以勝也。

A garden produced and consumed on the page, Liu argues, does not waste wealth or labor resources, and the imaginary space for its construction is limitless. Liu is displaced not by a sense of not belonging to the ruling dynasty, but by the economic reality of his lack of means to

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<sup>253</sup> Wai-yee Li cites Li Shengguang's 李生光 poem "Guan ju": Worthy of envy are those singing and dancing in the Pear Garden./Imposing gowns and caps, the charm and refinement of old." Deng Zhicheng 鄧之誠, *Qingshi jishi chubian* 清詩紀事初編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 1: 167. This attention to actors, like that of Li Shengguang here, and Zhang Dai and others elsewhere, is related to the tendency in the late Ming and early Qing to write anecdotes about artisans and entertainers like the garden designers and storytellers I discuss below.

<sup>254</sup> Wei Yong 衛泳, *Bing xue xie: wan Ming baijia xiaopin* 冰雪携: 晚明百家小品 (Shanghai: Zhongyang shuju, 1935), 104-5.

construct a grand garden. He argues for the superiority of his creation of the most frugal and refined of gardens.

Liu's account introduces the factors involved in the textual creation of fictional gardens before writers had recourse to the trope of fall of the Ming. It is instructive to consider what about gardens survived the transition as a context for early Qing loyalist representations of gardens and Li Yu's own garden production. Bound up with the above records of imaginary gardens is the assumption that some of the key cultural functions of gardens—namely preservation of one's name as a vehicle for establishing one's name through writing, a place to retreat from the world, and even a place to gather with likeminded friends—can be accomplished without the physical production (materials, labor, costs involved) and acquisition of real estate (a plot of land) that the construction of a real garden requires. Both accounts mark as the most salient features of a garden those that can be rendered on the page or accomplished through the circulation of text. As Liu Shilong suggests in his record, his garden is as real to his contemporaries as the famous historical gardens they praise though they have never visited them.

### ***Theater In the Garden***

Grand Prospect Garden (*Daguan Yuan* 大觀園), the setting for the most memorable exchanges among the young protagonists in the great eighteenth-century novel, *The Story of the Stone* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢), provides a detailed fictional example of the inextricability of garden and theater space in the Qing, even as it draws on a long tradition of writing about gardens that exceeds the limitations of the physical place. A survey of the actors and decision-making processes involved also elucidates the multiple roles that Li Yu took on through his cultural activity. In the novel, when the Jia 賈 family hears that the daughter who had been made an imperial consort will return to visit, they enlist a garden designer to draw up a blueprint

for a new garden. The opulent Jia clan has plenty of capital at its command, but no one in the family is depicted as having any ability or desire for creative control over the garden. Rather, this specialist is put in charge of “the conception as a whole as well as the designs for the garden’s execution.”<sup>255</sup>

Who was this specialist? In the text, he is designated an “old gentleman, styled *shanziye*—mountain man (*Lao Minggong hao ‘shanziye’* 老明公號山子野),” a title that is rather difficult to unpack. “Mountain man (*shanren* 山人),” which it first invokes, was, as I have discussed in Chapter One, a loaded term in this period. Its original meaning was “recluse,” but by the late Ming it had connotations of vulgarity and sycophancy, even while it could refer to any educated man who made a living outside officialdom. He seems to have no first or last name: a comment on this line in the *Zhiyanzhai* 脂硯齋 commentary reads, “What a clever style, naming him after his work. 妙號隨事得名.”<sup>256</sup> Yet this nameless individual is credited with nothing less than masterminding every nook and cranny of the garden setting at the center of this work. The author clearly differentiates the fictional designer’s artistic talent from the heavy lifting associated with mere workers. (As we will see, Li Yu frames his work as a garden designer in similar terms.) Yet as soon as the garden is complete, the work of this *shanziye* seems to fade from memory, as others impart their own masterful touches on the garden.

The issue of populating the garden with actors is raised almost immediately. As the family negotiates the purchase of actresses in Suzhou, it becomes clear that this is another area

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<sup>255</sup> Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢, 1 vols. (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2002), 1.272. (Hereafter HLM); Cao Xueqin and Gao E, *The Story of the Stone*, trans. David Hawkes and John Minford, 5 vols. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973-1986), 1.319. (Hereafter SS). David Hawkes calls this figure “Horticultural Hu.”

<sup>256</sup> Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Zhiyanzhai chongping Shitou ji* 脂硯齋重評石頭記 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1980).

with which none of them possess specialized knowledge. Jia Qiang informs his uncle, Jia Lian, of the plan:

“Uncle Zhen has given me the job of going to Suzhou to engage music and drama teachers and to buy girl players and instruments and costumes so that we can have our own theatricals for the visitation. I'm to take Lai Sheng's two sons with me, and two of Great-uncle Zheng's gentlemen, Dan Ping-ren and Bu G[e]-xiu, are coming as well. Uncle said I ought to have a word with you about it before I go.”<sup>257</sup>

下姑蘇合聘教習，採買女孩子，置辦樂器、行頭等事，大爺派了侄兒帶領著來兩個兒子，還有單聘仁、卜個修兩個清客相公，一同前往所以命我來見叔叔。

The purchase of twelve singing girls is presented as an indispensable component of a garden built on as grand a scale as the Grand Prospect Garden. The two “literary gentlemen (*qingke xiangong* 清客相公)” Jia Qiang is going to take with him can be understood less poetically as cultural advisers to or hangers-on of wealthy families, a role closely associated with Li Yu, especially as he embarked on multiple patronage journeys during the last decades of his life. Li Yu simultaneously specialized in practices generally associated with three different types of cultural figure: garden designer, literary gentleman, and garden proprietor.

This account in *Stone* is also instructive for the way it divides up creative credit for the production of a garden. Even after the *shanziye* has finished overseeing the physical construction, the garden remains incomplete—the young protagonist Jia Baoyu has yet to accompany his father and the literary gentlemen on a tour of the garden to decide on names and verses to mark each view (“All those prospects and pavilions—even the rocks and trees and flowers will seem somehow incomplete without that touch of poetry which only the written word can lend a scene.”).<sup>258</sup> When the imperial consort arrives, she is given a walking tour of the garden and the

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<sup>257</sup> HLM, 1.269; SS, 1.316.

<sup>258</sup> HLM, 1.278; SS, 1.324-325. Craig Clunas has also referred to this passage in his argument for the dependency of the existence of “the garden” on the naming and versifying of features within it. Clunas,

option of revising Baoyu's verses.

These tours—first Baoyu's with his father and company and then the guest of honor's—are spatial trajectories that allow participants to experience the garden as an itinerary. The tours, and the texts they engender, endow the place with the cultural authority of something knowable and habitable as “a garden.”<sup>259</sup> Readers, like the characters, need places to be named before we can recognize them; they allow us to imagine together how we might move from here to over-there. These and poems, inscriptions, records, and pictures that remain of nonfictional Ming/Qing gardens situate particular gardens within textual and pictorial traditions to make them legible—not by providing a map, but by situating the reader or viewer in the place of a visitor.<sup>260</sup>

If the marking with text completes the production of the garden as a recognizable, nameable, and habitable luxury experience, theatrical performance for a guest of honor marks the beginning of its everyday consumption.<sup>261</sup> No sooner does the imperial consort finish the task of

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however, concludes his reading here, deeming the garden complete as soon as it is inscribed. See Clunas, *Fruitful Sights: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*, 137.

<sup>259</sup> Clunas has suggested that “the garden” came into being only through discourse on it, pointing to a moment sometime in the 1620s or 1630s when writing about “the garden” became possible for the first time. Clunas, *Fruitful Sights: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*, 137.

<sup>260</sup> Clunas, in *Fruitful Sites*, has used Certeau's categories of space and place from *The Practice of Everyday Life* to analyze the various ways of depicting and recording Ming gardens, but his study stops at the portrayal of tours like this one through gardens. In his study of some “Records” of gardens, Clunas focuses on the spatializing practices of site visits to gardens. He contrasts the tour-like itinerary (emphasis on walking) with the map-like sitings of individual features (emphasis on seeing), showing that although many of the latter give the impression of topographical precision, in fact this is almost never the case. These spatializing practices may not actually be revealing of consumption practices. Clunas acknowledges that landowners were both the writers of these records, and the painters, but he does not bring into his analysis the fact that some of these men also designed their own gardens, or at least had a hand in the design. In this sense, they are both producers and consumers of the physical structures that make up the garden in addition to the textual and pictorial descriptions of it. Gardens were no doubt made famous through representation, but before that could happen, they had to be designed and built.

<sup>261</sup> See Certeau's definition of space as occurring “as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities.” Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

composing poems than she is asked to select the scenes that will be performed to entertain her:

All this time, Jia Qiang and his troupe of girl players had been waiting impatiently below for an order to begin their performance. Just as they were reaching a peak of impatience, a eunuch came running down to them.

"They've finished writing poems," he said, "Quick, give me a playbill!"

Jia Qiang hurriedly handed him a list of the pieces they had rehearsed, together with a brochure containing the stage names of each of the twelve players and some notes on the parts which each of them played. Four pieces were chosen: "Shi-fan Entertains" from *The Handful of Snow*, "The Double Seventh" from *The Palace of Eternal Youth*, "The Meeting of the Immortals" from *The Handan Road*, and [Du] Liniang's death scene from *The Return of the Soul [Peony Pavilion]*. Jia Qiang supervised the preparations and soon the rock-splitting little voices and spellbinding movements of the actresses had taken over, and the stage was full of passions.<sup>262</sup>

那時賈薔帶領十二個女戲，在樓下正等的不耐煩，只見一太監飛來說：“作完了詩，快拿戲目來！”

賈薔急將錦冊呈上，並十二個花名單子。少時，太監出來，只點了四齣戲：第一齣，《豪宴》，第二齣，《乞巧》，第三齣，《仙緣》，第四齣，《離魂》。賈薔忙張羅扮演起來。一個個歌欺裂石之音，舞有天魔之態。雖是妝演的形容，卻作盡悲歡情狀。

The impatience with which the little players wait for their turn to perform enlivens the narrative description of the garden with a sense of kinesis. The performance that follows lends reverberating sounds and captivating movement to the garden, the sensorial experience of which exceeds what can be recorded in text. In this excess lies a second sort of spatial practice of the garden—the performance marks the passage of time by allowing the audience to be transported into and through a virtual reality. This operation presents new possibilities for the experience of space in time—whereas before, the visitor could lose himself meandering in the space of the garden, he can now lose himself in the time-space created by the theatricals. While comments about these events can be recorded, the events themselves, specifically their sounds and movements, can only be recalled. Both the tour and the theatrical performance are fundamental spatial practices that are enacted on the place of the garden, with its ponds and rockery, plants

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<sup>262</sup> SS 1.371; HLM 1.314.



and trees, buildings and paths, moon overhead and crepuscular glow of the sky.<sup>263</sup>

This detailed fictional account of the production of garden space in the Qing draws inspiration not only from seventeenth-century writings on particular gardens, but also on a discourse of garden design and a practice of granting fame, and even honorary or playful literati status, to talented garden designers. Precisely which late-Ming or early-Qing garden designer inspired the character of this *shanziye* has played a role in debates over the very authorship of *Stone*,<sup>264</sup> but evidence is scanty at best, and it is not my intention to suggest a particular prototype for this figure. Instead, I will explore the writings about garden designers in the late Ming to shed light on the range of views on their status and craft. Most records and poems on gardens in the late Ming and early Qing were written either by the proprietor or a guest without reference to the production or the laborers involved.<sup>265</sup> A focus on writing about the production of gardens, rather than records of them written by their proprietors or visitors long after their

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<sup>263</sup> See Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117. For Certeau, “a place (lieu) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place). The law of the “proper” rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated in its own proper and distinct location, a location it defines.” In this sense, the site of a garden, and the physical structures on it are a “place.” The two practices of writing records and of viewing theater both amount to spatial practices on this place, then, in the following sense: “A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. . . . It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements within it. . . . Space is a practiced place.” Certeau’s work relates even more directly to the question of theatrical performance when we consider the emphasis he places on the utterance: “Space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts.” Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.

<sup>264</sup> Tu More 土默熱, *Tu More Honglou gushi xinkan* 土默熱紅樓故事新堪 (Beijing: Zhongguo haiguan, 2006).

<sup>265</sup> In Clunas’s analysis of entries in a Changzhou county gazetteer published in 1571 and 1598, he notes that “what is deemed worthy of record . . . are principally the distinguished literary and artistic figures who have celebrated the gardens, rather than the gardens’ intrinsic features.” *Fruitful Sights: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*, 69.

completion, sheds light on an understudied aspect of garden culture in seventeenth-century China.

The episode is also relevant to the current study for its detailed presentation of the sorts of expertise that went into garden construction and the establishing of a theater troupe, and of the owning of a troupe of girls and the viewing of performances as a primary everyday use of the garden. More importantly, perhaps, it shows us how a garden should be experienced on a daily basis, and its place in the cultural imaginary. The story of Grand Prospect Garden drew on a tradition of writing about gardens—both imaginary and real—that dated back to at least the late Ming. As such, it is also useful for considering which qualities of the garden, as it was conceived of from the late Ming through the Qing, required land, labor, and capital, and which could be transmitted in text alone. At the same time, some of the design elements in Grand Prospect Garden resonate with novel concepts first proposed in Li Yu's *Xianqing ouji*, so it seems that Li Yu must have played a central role in the conception of this fictional talent as well.

### ***Mastering a Garden***

As we have seen in the fictional account in *Stone*, the design of the garden is relegated to a *shanziye*, and the owners and residents of the garden experience it as a mysterious series of delights that confound their sense of direction. Li Yu designed his own gardens, designed gardens on commission for others, and included detailed and practical instructions in his *Xianqing ouji* on the art of economical garden design. His writing about gardens and theatrical performance proceeded in collaboration with his practice of engaging with the physical structures and human bodies that for him were central to their composition. At the same time, throughout his textual accounts of his experiments with the material world, he shows fastidious

concern with text as a portable medium for commodified knowledge about gardens and directing.

In *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu describes his practice of garden design:

One of my talents is designing gardens. I arrange them in a manner suitable to the lay of the land [*di*], not limiting myself to preconceived ideas. I have each and every rafter brought out for me to cut personally. In this way, I cause those who pass through this place [*di*], those who enter its buildings to have an experience akin to reading the books of Liweng of the Lake—although they may lack great erudition, they are in fact rather unconventional.<sup>266</sup>

一則創造園亭，因地制宜，不拘成見，一榱一桷，必令出自己裁，使經其地、入其室者，如讀湖上笠翁之書，雖乏高才，頗饒別致。

The concept of place (*di*), the canvas on which Li Yu will deploy his skills, marks Li Yu's practice as removed from the discourse of displacement of Ming loyalists. Elsewhere Li Yu uses the compound *zhizao* 置造, which connotes arranging and building, to indicate garden design, but here he uses *chuangzao* 創造, a term that places more emphasis on the creative aspect. Both compounds contain the character *zao*, which Wai-yee Li has linked in the context of its reference to garden design to the Creator (*zaohua* 造化). She has suggested that during the late Ming and early Qing, designing gardens (*zaoyuan* 造園) was an activity that men engaged in to emulate the Creator in a place of their own.<sup>267</sup> This observation rings particularly true for Li Yu, whose fiction and essays constantly reference the ingenuity of the Creator with tongue-in-cheek meant to point back to Li Yu's ingenuity as author of the text.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 156-7.

<sup>267</sup> Wai-yee Li, "Gardens and Illusions from Ming to Qing" (paper presented at the Artful Retreat: Garden Culture of the Qing Dyansty, Peabody Essex Museum, Nov. 13 2010).

<sup>268</sup> See Chapter One. To give one example: following a sequence of improbable reunions in his short story "Nativity Room (*Shengwo lou* 生我樓)," Li Yu has the narrator explain, "Who would ever have expected the Creator's ingenuity to be a hundred times greater than man's? It's as if he had deliberately combined these events so that they could be turned into a play or story—uniting the two couples and then separating them, separating them and then uniting them, at a prodigious cost in mental effort! This plot rates as novel and ingenious to an extraordinary degree!" Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 245. Here, Li

Already in the late Ming, men like the fictional *shanziye* in *The Story of the Stone* were hiring out their services as overseers of garden construction. Of these, Zhu Sansong 朱三松 (late Ming) was a sought-after bamboo carver and painter, while Ji Cheng 計成 (1582-c. 1642) began as a painter and later wrote the first guide to the art of garden design, *The Craft of Gardens* (*Yuanye* 園冶, between 1631 and 1634). Zhang Nanyuan 張南垣 (1587-1671) also came to garden design by way of painting, which he studied with the most famous artist of the day, Dong Qichang 董其昌. Zhang was memorialized in several biographies written by influential figures of the Ming-Qing transitional period, including Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695) and Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609-1671).<sup>269</sup>

Writings on these men establish a particular discourse on the art and practice of garden design, notable both for the way it links garden design to painting, and for the way it portrays the men who worked as garden designers as naturally talented and quick to laugh, but also as “different” from the writers—for example, Zhang is described as being dark-skinned, short, and plump. Huang Zongxi’s biography of Zhang Nanyuan credits him with being the first artist of garden design. Huang describes garden design as three-dimensional landscape painting, and analogizes its development to the evolution of three-dimensional sculpture from two-dimensional portraiture.<sup>270</sup> In the preface to *The Craft of Gardens*, Ji Cheng claims a similar background in

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Yu inverts the relationship between the Creator and the Author—that is, he credits to the Creator the plot that he has created—and in doing so, fashions himself facetiously as a mere recorder of lived events.

<sup>269</sup> See Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, "Dieshi mingjia Zhang Nanyuan fuzi shiji 疊石名家張南垣父子事輯," *Guoli Beiping tushuguan guankan* 5, no. 6 (1931).

<sup>270</sup> Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, "Dieshi mingjia Zhang Nanyuan fuzi shiji 疊石名家張南垣父子事輯," 14. The gardens Zhang was most famous for designing include Hengyun shanzhuang 橫雲山莊 for Li Fengshen 工部主事李逢申, Yu yuan 豫園 for Yu Dafu 參政虞大復, Lejiao yuan 樂郊園 for Wang Shimin 太常少卿王時敏, Fushui shanzhuang 拂水山莊 for Qian Qianyi 禮部尚書錢謙益, and Zhu ting 竹亭 for Wu

painting to Zhang's: "As a young man I was known as a painter. I was by nature interested in seeking out the unusual."<sup>271</sup> By tracing the origins of garden design back to painting, Huang must be trying to raise the status of garden design from that of a craft produced by an artisan to that of a work of art created by a painter. Both Zhang Nanyuan and Ji Cheng are depicted as being naturally suited to the art: separately, they happen to come upon an unsuccessful attempt at piling up rockery and burst into laughter at the shoddy result.<sup>272</sup> Their laughter lends spontaneity and playfulness to the figure of the garden designer, while also presenting him as able to discern better than others how such "landscape sculptures" should appear.

Writing on garden designers seems to have been invested in the search for authenticity of character (*zhen* 真), undertaken in the late Ming by literati influenced by the writings of the radical thinker Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602).<sup>273</sup> Wu Weiye and Huang Zongxi were at the forefront of a trend of literati writing anecdotal biographies of figures like the famed storyteller Liu Jingting 柳敬亭.<sup>274</sup> All of these accounts link garden design to painting and garden designers to the romantic, or *fengliu* 風流, disposition associated with late-Ming literati, and their substance, tone, and teleology are at least as indebted to that discourse as to the practice and personality of

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Changshi 吏部文選郎吳昌時, 橫雲山莊 for Li Fengshen 工部主事李逢申, Yu yuan 豫園 for Yu Dafu 參政虞大復, Lejiao yuan 樂郊園 for Wang Shimin 太常少卿王時敏, Fushui shanzhuang 拂水山莊 for Qian Qianyi 禮部尚書錢謙益, and Zhu ting 竹亭 for Wu Changshi 吏部文選郎吳昌時.

<sup>271</sup> Translated in Ji Cheng 計成, *Craft of Gardens*, trans. Alison Hardie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 35.

<sup>272</sup> Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, "Dieshi mingjia Zhang Nanyuan fuzi shiji 疊石名家張南垣父子事輯," 14; Ji Cheng 計成, *Craft of Gardens*.

<sup>273</sup> Zuo Dongling 左東嶺, *Li Zhi yu wan Ming wenxue sixiang* 李贄與晚明文學思想 (Tianjin shi: Tianjin renmin, 1997), 160-5.

<sup>274</sup> Zhang Dai's essay on Liu is translated in David Pollard, *The Chinese Essay* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 89-90. Liu was also immortalized in the seventeenth-century play, Peach Blossom Fan (*Taohua shan* 桃花扇) by Kong Shangren 孔尚任.

the individuals in question. There was a great deal of symbolic capital due to the astute observer of craftsmen like these.

Ji Cheng's *The Craft of Gardens* provides another set of perspectives: in addition to a preface by the infamous late-Ming politician, Ruan Dacheng 阮大鍼 (1587-1646), there is a self-portrayal by Ji Cheng, an otherwise unknown man who had studied painting and become a garden designer. Joseph McDermott has suggested that Ruan considered Ji Cheng to be a member of the privileged literati in the relatively fluid social networks of the late Ming, citing Ruan's habit of calling Ji Cheng a "divine worker *shengong* 神工" and a "wise artisan *zhejiang* 哲匠." McDermott also points to Ji Cheng's espousing of literati values, such as disdain for the ignorant rich, as a maneuver to gain acceptance by his literati readers.<sup>275</sup> Perhaps he knew literati discourse well enough to portray himself and his craft in a way that would appeal to potential patrons. Yet even as he aligns himself with some of the tastes of his would-be patrons, Ji Cheng also works to create space and appreciation for the practice of his craft, not least in his descriptions of the primary importance of the role of the master designer. He writes:

Generally, in construction, responsibility is given to a "master" (*zhu*) who assembles a team of craftsmen; for is there not a proverb that though three-tenths of the work is the workmen's, seven-tenths is the master's? By "master" here I do not mean the owner of the property, but the man who is master of his craft. The skill of Lu Ban or the fine artistry of Lu Yun in ancient times should not lead us to think that they actually wielded the axe or adze themselves. If an ordinary workman merely carves skillfully or sets up the framework of a building competently, with pillars and crossbeams, so that it is firm and immovable, it is quite correct to call him by the expression "a mere mechanic." In fact, the master in charge of constructing a garden residence should really account for nine-tenths of the work, and the workmen he employs for only one-tenth. Why is this? Skill in landscape design is shown in the ability to "follow" and "borrow from" the existing scenery and lie of the land, and artistry is shown in the feeling of suitability

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<sup>275</sup> Joseph McDermott, "Review," review of *The Craft of Gardens* by Ji Cheng, trans. Alison Hardie, *Garden History* 18, no. 1 (1990), 72, 74.

created.<sup>276</sup>

世之興造，專主鳩匠，獨不聞三分匠、七分主人之諺乎？非主人也，能主之人也。古公輸巧，陸雲精藝，其人豈執斧斤者哉？若匠惟雕鏤是巧，排架是精，一梁一柱，定不可移，俗以無竅之人呼之，其確也。故凡造作，必先相地立基，然後定其間進，量其廣狹，隨曲合方，是在主者，能妙於得體合宜，未可拘率。假如基地偏缺，鄰嵌何必欲求其齊，其屋架何必拘三、五間，為進多少？半間一廣，自然雅稱，斯所謂主人之七分也。第園築之主，猶須什九，而用匠什一，何也？園林巧於因、借，精在體、宜，愈非匠作可為，亦非主人所能自主者，須求得人求得人，當要節用。

Prior to the publication of this text, the designer would have been considered superior to, but of a kind with, the rest of the workmen, but Ji Cheng insists on a distinction between his own art and profession—a master of garden design (*zhu* 主)—and the manual labor of ordinary workmen (*jiang* 匠). With this word play, he displaces the actual owner and declares the designer the true master of the garden. “By ‘master’ I do not mean the owner of the property (*zhuren* 主人), but the man who is a master of his craft (*nengzhu zhiren* 能主之人)” demotes the owner, who is “master” in name only, and declares the designer who actually orchestrates the process the only legitimate master of the garden. The actual owner has only to select the right master: “The owner must obtain the skills of the right person, and not throw his money away.”<sup>277</sup> By recording and commodifying his expertise, Ji Cheng presents a convincing case for the artistic value of his craft and for his rightful designation as master of the gardens of his design.

Li Yu was also a self-professed expert in garden design, but apart from that, he differed from these Ming garden designers in every relevant way: he did not paint, and he was not an

<sup>276</sup> Ji Cheng 計成, *Craft of Gardens*, 39; Ji Cheng 計成, *Yuan ye tushuo* 園冶圖說 (Jinan: Shandong huabao, 2003), 33.

<sup>277</sup> Ji Cheng 計成, *Craft of Gardens*, 39; Ji Cheng 計成, *Yuan ye tushuo* 園冶圖說, 33.

artisan. Rather, he was a professional writer and publisher already ensconced in literati circles.<sup>278</sup>

At the same time, no small part of *Xianqing ouji* is devoted to his expertise on gardens. Li Yu was no armchair devotee; he boasted practical, if under-tapped, skills in garden design. How did he practice this expertise and represent it in his writings? How can we understand his role in this area of cultural production in the early Qing? In *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu is careful to distinguish himself from garden designers like Zhang and Ji, whom he calls “famous mountain builders (*dieshan mingshou* 疊山名手).” He does so by means of a reversal of the terms through which the talent of the garden designers is constructed in Zhang’s biographies. He argues that respectable scholars can dash off thousands of landscape paintings in an instant, but that they are not suited to recreate them in three-dimensional, miniature form. For Li Yu, painting does not evolve into landscape design, but remains a separate and more refined undertaking. (He likens asking a literatus to design a garden to asking a blind man for directions). Rather, he reasons, literati require a medium between themselves and the three-dimensional space of the garden. The famous mountain builders, “none of whom have been people who can write poetry or paint,”<sup>279</sup> serve this function for Li Yu. He then analogizes garden design to planchette writing: just as illiterate planchette writers cannot fake spirit words, so garden designers not versed in literati culture cannot interfere with the process of garden creation.

Through this series of associations, Li Yu reasons that the resulting garden will invariably reflect the character of the owner rather than the talent of the designer (the opposite of Ji Cheng’s position):

The principle of commanding those who are skilled at it to pile up mountains and arrange

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<sup>278</sup> On Li Yu’s admission that he cannot paint, see his preface to Wang Gai 王槩, *Jieziyuan huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳.

<sup>279</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 195-6.



rocks rather than having *wenren* and distinguished gentlemen do so is the same [as having illiterate people serve as planchette writers]. The technique of the Creator (*zaohua*) and the spirits is such that there is still a distinction between the exquisite and elegant and the vulgar and inferior: the Creator takes the owner's discrimination as directive. If the owner is refined and delights in exquisite workmanship, then the garden will be exceedingly exquisite and elegant. If the owner is vulgar and tolerates inferior workmanship, then it will turn out vulgar and inferior. It is also the sublime work of the Creator and the spirits which, though men expend tens of thousands of taels of silver, prevents their mountains from becoming mountains and their rocks from becoming rocks: these depict the inner spirit and likeness of a person's character. In the proper placement of a single flower and a single rock, the spirit of the owner can already be seen, what need is there to inspect his speech and observe his appearance before one can distinguish his character?<sup>280</sup>

其疊山磊石，不用文人韻士，而偏令此輩擅長者，其理亦若是也。然造物鬼神之技，亦有工拙雅俗之分，以主人之去取為去取。主人雅而喜工，則工且雅者至矣；主人俗而容拙，則拙而俗者來矣。有費累萬金錢，而使山不成山、石不成石者，亦是造物鬼神作祟，為之摹神寫像，以肖其為人也。一花一石，位置得宜，主人神情已見乎此矣，奚俟察言觀貌，而後識別其人哉？

Li Yu links the aesthetic quality of a garden directly to its owner. In doing so, he bypasses the skill of the garden designer that Ji Cheng had set up as the actual creative impetus behind the construction of a garden. This move is especially notable in light of Li Yu's general disdain for the tendency to invoke causality to explain the goings-on of the world.

Despite Li Yu's characterization of the figure of the garden designer as a mere intermediary between the literary gentleman and nature, the particulars of his views on garden design in *Xianqing ouji* have much in common with those espoused by Ji Cheng and those attributed to Zhang Nanyuan. Like Ji and Zhang, Li Yu ridicules the rich man who expends gross amounts of capital and human labor to haul an enormous rock from a faraway city to his own garden.<sup>281</sup> Li Yu and Ji Cheng both suggest instead that the person use a combination of earth

<sup>280</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 195-6.

<sup>281</sup> Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, "Dieshi mingjia Zhang Nanyuan fuzi shiji 疊石名家張南垣父子事輯," 15; Ji Cheng 計成, *Yuan ye tushuo* 園冶圖說; Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 197.

and smaller rocks, carefully fitted together, to create the semblance of a larger rock without the great expense of moving one.<sup>282</sup> Echoing Zhang and Ji's sensibilities, Li Yu also belittles those who would instruct a designer to model any of the structures on those found in famous gardens, encouraging them rather to try their own hand at creativity. He does so through an extended analogy to writing essays, wondering why, if even the least talented writers do not simply copy another's essay verbatim, someone would think that an equivalent move were acceptable in garden design:

“Alas! It is disgusting indeed, that as concerns the lofty matter of garden design, even the best of men of letters cannot try their own hand and make something truly great and creative, and the worst of them do not even attempt to move the components around a little. Rather, they simply learn a mediocre skill and never excel, and still express satisfaction with what they see. How can they conduct themselves in such a base manner?”<sup>283</sup>

噫！陋矣。以構造園亭之勝事，上之不能自出手眼，如標新創異之文人，下之不能換尾移頭，學套腐為新之庸筆，尚囂囂以鳴得意，何其自處之卑哉？

Whereas Ji Cheng sought to present the craft of the garden designer as a legitimate art form and profession, Li Yu wants to justify the practice as one that any literatus might engage in.

This discrepancy is in keeping with the significant differences between the men's practices and social roles. While Ji Cheng designed gardens for patrons such as political giant Ruan Dacheng and Zhang Nanyuan worked for such famous cultural figures as the great poet Qian Qianyi and famed painter Wang Shimin, Li Yu focuses his writings on his own gardens. Because of this, he can portray himself as a literatus-designer rather than a “professional” one, though the evidence of letters, comments to his writings, and other records of his activities indicate that he designed at least two gardens for others, with plans to consult on several others.

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<sup>282</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 195-6.

<sup>283</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 165.

Even so, he pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable literati practice with his garden design, and it would not be going too far to characterize him as semi-professional.

It was common for connoisseurs of the art of garden design to lament that some talented garden designer had not been allotted sufficient space in which to put his skills to work. In his foreword to Ji Cheng's *Yuanye*, Zheng Yuanxun praised Ji in this way:

He would dearly love to set out all the ten great mountains of China in one area, and direct a squad of all the mighty laborers of the empire; and to collect together all sorts of exotic, jewel-like flowers and plants, ancient trees and sacred birds to be arranged by him, giving the whole earth a totally new appearance. What a joy this would be to him! But alas, there is no landowner with sufficiently grand ideas!<sup>284</sup>

Li Yu's friend, the famous poet You Tong 尤侗, wrote a comment in a similar vein to a letter included in Li Yu's complete works. In the letter, Li Yu and the great writer Gong Dingzi 龔鼎孳 (1616-1673) discussed the possibility of Li Yu designing a garden near his own Mustard Seed Garden in Nanjing for Gong:

He who enters Mustard Seed Garden sees what he has never seen before. He who reads the book *Xianqing ouji* hears what he has never heard before. If he were able to exhibit the mountains and pools he has stored in his bosom in the famous Garden of the Urban Recluse, I do not know what sort of even more spectacular wonders he would create. Reading this tickles the mind's eye.<sup>285</sup>

入芥子園者見所未見；讀《閒情偶寄》一書者，聞所未聞。使得市隱名園，展其胸中丘壑，更不知作何等奇觀？讀此癢人心目。

In comparing the genius of Li Yu's garden design to his innovative writing style, You Tong is playing into the tradition of lamenting the fact that talented garden designers could work wonders with sufficient space and resources. At the same time, he departs from the tradition of

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<sup>284</sup> Zheng Yuanxun's foreword to *Yuan Ye*, in Ji Cheng 計成, *Craft of Gardens*, 29.

<sup>285</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiyayen* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1.162. This is marginal comment to a letter from Li Yu to Gong Dingzi 龔鼎孳, written after Li Yu has learned that Gong was planning to retire and to ask Li Yu to design a garden for him near Mustard Seed Garden in Nanjing. The letter was published in *Independent Words*.

comparing the skill of garden design to that of landscape painting, and as Li Yu is an author who can put his talents to use on the page as well. His relationship with Gong was not one of equals, yet neither was it the sort of traditional artist to patron relationship like that of Ji and Ruan Dacheng in which Ruan would allow Ji to dally at playing the role of a literatus.

In Li Yu's practice and in his writing, he designed cultural and social spaces that would give him creative control over his own and others' gardens while distancing himself from the low status of other garden designers and avoiding the tendency to praise their unusual talent as had the literati of the late Ming. In the narrative depiction of garden design and construction in *Stone*, it takes several different people to fulfill the roles that Li Yu took on himself—not only was he designer and proprietor, but he also played the role of literary gentleman (*qingke* 清客) who was a connoisseur of music and women; the role of this *shanziye* resonates much more with the practice of Zhang Nanyuan and Ji Cheng than it does with the wide-ranging expertise of Li Yu, who combined these roles into one persona.

### ***The Social Space of Theater***

From the time in the late Ming when “the garden” came to hold a central place in the imagination of the literati, one of its primary features was that it was a site that could be visited, and hosting groups of friends in one's garden became one of their most important uses. The entertainment associated with these meetings included tea, wine, moon gazing, poetry composition, song and dance, and *qin* playing, but perhaps none of the common pastimes required quite so many resources as theater. The linking of gardens and theatrical performance in particular was common in descriptions of the lavish households of the late Ming and early Qing. Shen Defu (1563-1620), for example, observed in his *Wanli yehuo bian* (萬曆野獲編), that

“During the last year(s) of the Jiajing reign period, the leisure of the literati and well-to-do throughout the land, consisted of constructing gardens and teaching song and dance, and in the leftover time/space, interspersed with [the appreciation of] antiques 嘉靖末年，海內宴安，士大夫富厚者，以治園亭、教歌舞之隙，間及古玩。”<sup>286</sup> Like him, many late Ming and early Qing observers reported on gardens and theater in a single breath in their jottings (*biji* 筆記). Both Jin Zhi, writing on Mao Xiang’s “garden and singing actors,” and Shi Xuan, describing Tian Hongyu’s “garden and singing actors (*yuanting shengji* 園亭聲伎)” use the same four-character phrase, indicating that a proprietor would not boast one without the other, and that the two combined were the reason that a particular garden (not to mention a particular individual) would become famous. It seems to have been almost unheard of for someone to keep a theater troupe without a garden; likewise a sizeable garden might seem empty without the song and dance provided by a household troupe. The practice of watching plays being performed, bringing the place to life and filling it with music, was a key element to the daily consumption of Qing gardens.

For Li Yu, women were a fundamental component of garden space. In *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu draws an explicit distinction between concubines (like the actresses in his troupe) and the principle wife, likening the concubine to a garden:

Concubines and serving girls are different from the principle wife. Taking a wife is like buying an estate: nothing should be grown but the five grains, and nothing should be

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<sup>286</sup> Shen Defu 沈德輔, *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980). Cited in Zhan Haoyu 詹皓宇, "Mingmo Qingchu siren yangyou chuyue zhi tantao--yi Li Yu jiaban weili 明末清初私人養優蓄樂之探討--以李漁家班為例" (National Central University, 2010), 99. Zhan also cites Jin Zhi 金埴, *Jin xiang shuo* 巾箱說, Qingdai shiliao biji congkan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 67; Shi Xuan 史玄, *Jiuqing yishi* 舊京遺事 (Beijing: Beijing guji, 1986), 38. Zhao Yi, writing in the eighteenth century, instructing readers in his *Oubei ji*: "Once a garden (*yuanlin*) is completed, you should teach song and dance, the performers in two troupes should work according to the script." Zhao Yi 趙翼, *Oubei ji* 甌北集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1997), 13.

planted but mulberry and hemp. Anything that has the least to do with visual appreciation should be removed, since the estate is meant to produce clothing and food, and the capacity of the land is limited, so auxiliary things cannot be included. Purchasing concubines is like making a garden. In a garden, one grows flowers that produce seeds and also flowers that do not produce seeds. One plants trees that provide shade and trees that do not provide shade. Since in the first place these were set up to provide entertainment and stir up feelings, one values in them the sensory experience.<sup>287</sup>

至於姬妾婢媵，又與正室不同。娶妻如買田莊，非五穀不殖，非桑麻不樹，稍涉游觀之物，即拔而去之，以其為衣食所出，地力有限，不能旁及其他也。買姬妾如治園圃，結子之花亦種，不結子之花亦種；成蔭之樹亦栽，不成蔭之樹亦栽，以其原為娛情而設，所重在耳目。

Li Yu includes this extended metaphor in an essay on “Learning Skills” (*xiji* 習技), which he opens by refuting the commonplace expression, “For a woman to be without talent is a virtue 女子無才便是德.” He grounds his position on an assertion of difference among kinds of women, which allows him to leave “female virtue,” as embodied in wives, intact, even as he concocts various alternatives for female bodies in other social roles.<sup>288</sup> Exempted from the reproductive imperative of the family system, these other bodies belong to, and also embody, the space of the garden. The garden and concubines alike, combine productive and ornamental vegetation, both the explicitly useful and the delightfully useless. Li Yu imagined his garden making space for a new kind of woman.

Li Yu described his aptitude for garden design with reference to the sights and sounds of theatrical performance that enliven the everyday space of the garden. “Discernment of music,” which Li Yu touted as one of his unique skills, was his way of summing up all of the practices

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<sup>287</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 142.

<sup>288</sup> In a marginal comment, You Tong noted one possible effect of such a conceptual shift: “Ye Shaoyuan 叶绍袁 (1589 -1648) said that virtue, talent, and beauty are the “three immortalities” of women. Liweng assigns virtue to the wife and talent and beauty to the concubine: maybe this can put a stop to jealousy among those who enter a household. 葉天寥以德才色為婦人三不朽。笠翁以德屬妻，以才色屬妾更為平論，且可息入宮之妒矣。” Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 142.

that go into producing an evening of theatrical entertainment:

I am by nature fond of penning arias [for *chuanqi* dramas]. I have written many of these plays, and everyone has seen them. Now, supposing I were to obtain a place to put them on, I could choose some actors myself, and have them sing tunes I have composed myself, teaching them orally and demonstrating for them personally. If it was a newly composed aria, I could distinguish it with a contemporary tune; if it were a play handed down from the past, I could rid it completely of its stale aspects and improve it with a new style, giving playwrights of the past a new look. This is one of my skills.<sup>289</sup>

性嗜填詞，每多撰著，海內共見之矣。設處得為之地，自選優伶，使歌自撰之詞曲，口授而躬試之，無論新裁之曲，可使迥異時腔，即舊日傳奇，一概刪其腐習而益以新格，為往時作者別開生面，此一技也。

Li Yu claims that he can select appropriate actors and train them in all aspects of performance himself through oral and physical demonstration. He conceives of them performing his own works set to tunes of his choosing, but he also boasts an ability to rework traditional plays so that they will appear fresh to the audience.

By the time Mustard Seed Garden was completed, in 1669, Li Yu had already been given several talented concubines to perform in it.<sup>290</sup> He was given the first, posthumously called Qiao Fusheng 喬復生, by the prefect of Pingyang in 1666 at the beginning of a long patronage journey.<sup>291</sup> She would play the female lead in Li Yu's troupe. The following year, in Lanzhou, Li Yu was given Wang Zilai 王再來, who would play the male lead.<sup>292</sup> The girls performed for

<sup>289</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 156.

<sup>290</sup> There is record of them performing both Li Yu's plays and older plays that he had reworked.

<sup>291</sup> In 1668, he embarked on his second long patronage journey to Anhui, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hunan in the south.

<sup>292</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1.95-100. The girls who performed for Li Yu and his friends were both gifts from patrons. There is a record of at least one other concubine, surnamed Cao 曹, who was given to Li Yu by Xu Xicai 許檄彩, the assistant prefect of Jinhua (in modern Zhejiang province) in 1645 (“*Luanhou wujia zanru Xu sima mu* 亂後無家暫入許司馬幕” in Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 2.162.), and in Guangzhou, on his 1668 patronage trip to the south, Li Yu

just six years until their early deaths, one after the other, at nineteen. The double biography Li Yu wrote as a eulogy for them recounts their years together: he remembers both as extraordinarily gifted, and after very little training, Li Yu tells us, they began to perform any time there was cause for celebration.<sup>293</sup>

Attention to spatial practice brings to light the role of women in theatrical performance and in the social world of the garden. In the biography, Li Yu depicts Qiao Fusheng as undergoing a gradual transition from spectator in a secondary audience space, concealed behind a screen, to a striking performer in full view of a range of spectators. Li Yu, through careful manipulation, first of the physical place of the garden, then of the bodies and voices of the girls, and finally through his narrative account, makes it appear that his concubines have ended up onstage naturally.

The very day he was given Qiao, Li Yu writes in their double biography, he and his hosts (*zhiji* 知己) watched professional actors (*linggong* 伶工) perform his recently completed southern drama, *Woman in Pursuit of Man* (*Huang qiu feng* 凰求鳳). He describes Qiao as “peeking out from behind a hanging screen (二妓垂簾竊視).”<sup>294</sup> After seeing the play, she begins to sing to herself whenever she is alone (無人之地), stopping if someone comes along.<sup>295</sup> This first transition portrays Qiao moving from concealed audience member to a performer with no audience. Soon after, though, one of Li Yu’s guests wishes to hear her perform (客有求聽者),

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acquired an unnamed girl, admitting in a letter home, “I have a tendency to buy girls when I am on the road.” Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 19.64.

<sup>293</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1.95-100.

<sup>294</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1.95.

<sup>295</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1.96.



so Li Yu sets up a screen to separate her from the spectators (以罽隔之), and she sings for them.<sup>296</sup> This performance marks a second transition, from a performer without an audience, to a performer concealed behind a screen, heard but not seen.

After this performance, Qiao takes measures to establish a household troupe. She requests musical accompaniment, but more than that, she needs other women to perform with her. Li Yu hires an old actor to train her, and she trains Wang Zilai herself. Qiao reasons that with a private troupe, they can perform Li Yu's plays privately (*mi* 秘) within their own gates rather than let professional troupes carelessly propagate them. The significant boundary is no longer a screen that shields women from view, but the gate that separates their household from the outside world. His narrative assures the reader that so long as the plays are performed within the home, they are acceptable and the need for a screen is tacitly dropped.

Yet as soon as the troupe has learned some plays, they begin to perform for literary friends, relatives, and neighbors, not ever concealing their performances from anyone.<sup>297</sup> Whereas the term *mi* 秘 (secret) above indicates that the household troupe will allow the plays to be kept safely within the home, here Li Yu indicates that the practice of the troupe, from the beginning, is not to deny anyone the chance to view their performances. The girls have moved to performer space in full view where they perform for Li Yu's guests. Yet Li Yu and others never called the women "actresses" (*nüyue* 女樂 or *linggong* 伶工), but *jiaji* 家姬 and *fengnü* 奉女, terms that connote a higher status, and that seem to have been only occasionally used to refer to actresses previously.

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<sup>296</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1.97.

<sup>297</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1.98.

As the women emerge from behind the screen, they take on new roles in the social world of the garden. One of the most important features of that social world is its ability to blur boundaries and manufacture convincing illusion. In *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu writes that it is challenging for women to play the role of the male lead (*sheng* 生), and even harder for them to play the role of clown (*chou* 丑), since these characters are expected to walk with large strides, a task made difficult in bound feet. He concludes the section on women by explaining how a beautiful woman playing the young male role might cross the boundary between onstage and off:

As for beautiful women playing the male (*sheng*) role, they are even more graceful than they are as women. [Famed male beauties like] Pan An and Wei Jie cannot be glimpsed alive again, but in this way we can temporarily make a little likeness of them, whether through making their appearance come to life onstage or a flash of the eyes in the midst of a song. Before the flowers and beneath the moon, the women sometimes take on this appearance; one can sit with them and chat or play chess, drink tea and burn incense; although this is outside the scope of song and dance, it is really a special way to enjoy their softer charms.

至於美婦扮生，較女妝更為綽約。潘安、衛玠，不能復見其生時，借此輩權為小像，無論場上生姿，曲中耀目，即於花前月下偶作此形，與之坐談對弈，啜茗焚香，雖歌舞之余文，實溫柔鄉之異趣也。<sup>298</sup>

A talented actress could blur the boundaries between the stage and the garden by performing a male role offstage in the garden. By taking part in other leisure activities associated with the garden as her onstage male role, but not as any particular character, her function was to transport the visitors into a fictional world. The garden, which had already been serving as a theater that housed a stage space, would then mark the boundaries of a new stage space performed by the

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<sup>298</sup> See Sieber, "Seeing the World through Xingqing ouji (1671): Visuality, Performance, and Narratives of Modernity," 20. Sieber suggests that with this image of a cross-dressed woman playing a like-minded friend, Li Yu "violates norms of historicity and gender in the name of creating a new sign." This new sign, she suggests, "challenges the normative division of the boudoir and the stage, which were predicated on opposing imperatives with regard to female visibility." "Neither slavishly representational nor expressionistically self-referential, the sign of illusion mediates between the facts of the historical record and the graphic depictions of the popular imagination" (21).

visitors and girls together. Through this textual representation, readers are also invited both to watch this scene (on paper) and imagine themselves in it.<sup>299</sup>

Without explicitly mentioning her, in this section of *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu has in mind his own concubine who plays the *sheng* role. In the double biography, he goes into greater detail about her specifically:

Although her voice and appearance cannot compare with Fusheng's, she is suited to masculinity rather than femininity. If you put her among female companions, she appears to lack something, but if you change her clothes and make-up, making people look at her differently, she's no different from a handsome young man. I love her distinguished appearance, and even when she's not onstage, I have her sit across from me in a scholar's cap with a duster in hand and enjoy pure talk. Those who do not understand see her as a singing girl, but in fact, she is my like-minded friend.<sup>300</sup>

聲容較之復生雖避一舍，然不宜女而宜男，立女伴中似無足取易妝換服，即令人改觀，與美少年無異。予愛其風致，即不登場，亦使角巾相對，執麈尾而伴清談。不知者目為歌妓，實予之韻友也。

In *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu wrote of the possibility, or the concept, of having a *sheng* actress play a literary friend in the garden, but here he cites the particular woman he had in mind when he wrote the passage. He still suggests that he is more perceptive than other viewers, who persist in seeing his concubine as a concubine, but in this description her offstage male performance in the garden is depicted not as a skillful performance so much as an enactment or realization of a role to which she is in the first place *naturally* suited. Before assigning her this role in his troupe, Li Yu had scrutinized the this young woman and he ascertained that she was suited to masculinity (*yinan* 宜男) rather than femininity. The term *yinan* 宜男 had long meant that a woman excelled at giving birth to baby boys, but I do not know of anyone but Li Yu using it to talk about a

<sup>299</sup> Sophie Volpp has conceptualized the relationship of this mode of theatricality to social distinction. She writes, "The spectator enters the spectacle, but also views it as an omniscient observer, and this gives rise to a mode of spectatorship that I suggest is participatory and panoramic." *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*, xii, 56.

<sup>300</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 2.217.

natural gender orientation separate from sex. As Li Yu tells it, her role was to be herself for the entertainment of others, and in this way, hers was not so different from Li Yu's own role in the social space of his gardens and theatrical performances, which marketed an interactive experience that would bring visitors to his garden onto the stage and into the world of the performance. A marginal comment accompanying this passage attests to the fact that she did just that: "When her femininity is stripped away, she has the bearing of a scholar. The old man [Li Yu] is then onstage 張壺陽評：脫脂粉氣，有儒者風，翁恰在登場中。"<sup>301</sup>

The construction of Mustard Seed Garden and the formation of the troupe of concubine actresses were socially significant for Li Yu because they gave him a place of his own where he could play host to his guests. Most records of visits to his garden include some mention of theatrical entertainment. The earliest record of his concubines' performance is a mention by Li Yu that they "tried out performing a new play 家姬試演新劇" on New Year's Day 1668 at the home of theater aficionado Li Shenyu 李申玉 in Pengcheng in honor of his wife's birthday.<sup>302</sup> Many of the performances for friends and wealthy Qing officials during the five years that followed took place at Li Yu's Mustard Seed Garden, but he also took the girls with him on his patronage journeys.

Li Yu's contemporaries came to his garden to experience a particular kind of social space. In 1669, Li Yu's friend, the Ming loyalist and poet Fang Wen (方文, 1612-1669) brought a visitor, Sun Chengze (孫承澤, 1592-1676) to Li Yu's home. Sun had been an official under the

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<sup>301</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 2.217.

<sup>302</sup> "Li Shenyu kunjun shoulian," in Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 1.236. Li Yu seems to have been detained there due to inclement weather, see, "Zhou ci Pengcheng, bingxue jiaozu. Ji Zixiang sima, Li Shenyu Guangwen xiangliu dusui," Li Yu 李漁, *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言, 1-2, 2.171.

Ming, and had served as Left Vice Director of the Ministry of Personnel under the Qing until 1654, when he retired. Fang's poem recounts the event as rather impromptu:

My friend, Mr. Sun came down across the river, he knocked on my door and it opened.  
 We require song and dance to talk of delights of old; we can't stand to be lonely and dried  
 up like cold ashes.  
 He asked about gardens—whose place would be best? My response: Li's, south of the  
 city wall, is rich in song.  
 The little garden in his home boasts the delight of secluded refinement; rocks are piled up  
 to form mountains and sweetgrass grows.  
 His esteemed girls are skilled in Suzhou tunes; they are also adept at playing the flute and  
 strumming the zither.  
 The prolonged notes and delicate arias are enough to break one's heart; the faster beats  
 are likewise pleasing to the mind.<sup>303</sup>

我友孫公渡江來，特地扣門門始開。  
 為言老興須鼓舞，不應枯寂同寒灰。  
 因問園亭誰氏好，城南李生富詞藻。  
 其家小園有幽趣，累石為山種香草。  
 兩三奉女善吳音，又善吹簫與弄琴。  
 曼聲細曲腸堪斷，急管繁弦亦賞心。

Li Yu's garden is portrayed here as a gathering place for friends and out-of-town visitors, and the girls are its main feature. This visit is typical in several ways. First, they involved Li Yu, one or more poet or loyalist friend, and at least one individual who was currently or had been an official under the Qing. Although the majority of Li Yu's writing is emphatically apolitical, the entertainment he provides allows these visitors space to step out of their current reality for a time; some of them expressed deep loyalist sentiments in their own works, so in this sense, Li Yu was playing a role in making a place for these men under the Qing. Second, the design of the garden and other leisure activities as well are mentioned along with accounts of the performances, making the garden setting—the theater—central to the experience of any performance. Third, the composition of poetry, often matching others' rhymes, is a key component of the visit. Poetry

<sup>303</sup> Fang Wen 方文, *Tushan ji* 壽山集, Xuxiu siku quanshu (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2002), 2.112.

composition shifts the focus from the performers back onto the spectators, showcasing their spectatorship even as it creates a written record of the event.

The following year, 1670, another Qing official, Du Zilian 杜子濂 (1622-1685), wrote a lyric on Fubaixuan 浮白軒, a site in Mustard Seed Garden. Du had obtained the *jinshi* degree in 1648, and was serving in 1670 Administration Vice Commissioner of the Jiangzhen Circuit. A visit to Mustard Seed Garden by an official like Du would have come with some sort of remuneration for Li Yu. While he was there, he composed a poem, “Li Liweng *Fubai xuan* 李笠翁浮白軒 (On Li Liweng's Cups Studio)”:

On the little window float rays of light, the reclusive scholar resides in seclusion.  
Bits of moss encroach on the short path, bamboo's shadow darkens the front step.  
Drinking at night heaven joins the game, brocade is no match for the autumn blossoms.  
The Three Caverns on Mount Jinhua are fine, I often honor the calligraphy of [the immortal] Red Pine.<sup>304</sup>

Willows near Zhou Chu terrace, their clinging branches tenuous and long.  
The wild mountains harbor evening showers, the little pavilion faces the setting sun.  
At times we write lyrics, at ease we burn heart-shaped incense.  
Separated by a screen, the clapper marks the beat of a song, the Censor is truly an eccentric.

窗小浮光白，蕭然處士居，  
苔痕侵短徑，竹影暗前除。  
夜飲天於卜，秋花錦不如，  
金華三洞好，常拜赤松書。

周處臺邊柳，依人裊裊長，  
亂山含宿雨，小閣對斜陽。  
時作空中語，閒燒心字香，  
隔屏歌板奏，御史正清狂。<sup>305</sup>

<sup>304</sup> Chisong zi lived in the Jin, and he was supposed to have become an immortal. The "Three Caverns," refer to the place where he lived on Mount Jinhua.

<sup>305</sup> Du Shuang 杜灃, *Meihu yin* 湄湖吟, 11 vols. (China: Du Liangzeng, 1680), 7:4b.

This poem situates Li Yu, his guest, and his concubines at a particular site within his garden, his Cups Studio. All of the physical trappings of the garden are accounted for: the man, the path, the steps, the flowers, and the trees. Most of the markers of time in this poem, such as the creeping moss, the darkening shadows, and the setting sun, point to the time of the world outside the garden where the passing of a day is lost time that cannot be recovered. That time marks the components of the physical garden with its passage. It is against that loss that the leisure depicted at the end of the poem stands out. The terms “at times (*shi*)” and “leisurely (*xian*)” mark off a different kind of time, given shape by the chat and burning incense. The music, out of sight of the speaker and the reader, lends the scene a soundtrack that marks that “garden” time.

The girls’ performances were one way Li Yu could recompense his famous literary friends for their contributions to his works. In 1671, Li Yu took the girls to Suzhou to perform for his friends and very well known poets, You Tong 尤同 (1618-1704) and Yu Huai 余懷 (1616-1695), as well as Song Danxian 宋澹仙 in Suzhou.<sup>306</sup> The former two men had long been important contributors to Li Yu’s publishing projects. You Tong wrote a preface for Li Yu’s *Lungu* in 1664 and *Xianqing ouji* in 1671 and contributed his writings to Li Yu’s *Siliu chuzheng* in 1671; Yu Huai had contributed letters to Li Yu’s first collection in 1660, also wrote a preface for *Lungu* and *Xianqing ouji* and contributed his works to *Siliu chuzheng*.

In the same year, well before he had written the fantastic stories in *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異, the thirty-year-old Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715), invited Li Yu and his girls to take a trip north to Baoying (Jiangsu) to perform in honor of the birthday of his patron, Sun Hui 孫蕙, who

<sup>306</sup> “*Duanyang qian wuri, You Zhancheng, Yu Danxin, Song Danxian zhuzi ji gu Suyu zhong guan xiaohuan yanju. Danxin shouchang bajue, yiyun hezhi,*” Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 2.347. For Yu Huai’s poems, see “*Li Shengweng zhaoyin chujia ji yan xinju jixi fenfu* 李笙翁招飲出家姬演新劇即席分賦,” Yu Huai 余懷, “*Weiwai xuan shiji* 味外軒詩輯,” (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe ), 10b-11b.

was serving as magistrate there.<sup>307</sup> Pu Songling resided with a patron only for a couple of years, after which he worked as a tutor. This is his only recorded connection with Li Yu.

Then, on New Year's Day in 1672, Li Yu put on a grand performance in his home. Zhou Lianggong 周亮工 (1612-1672), an official who was an enthusiastic collector of paintings and committed patron of artists, was in attendance. He had contributed his writings to Li Yu's first *Zizhi xinshu*, and written a preface for the second collection. He also contributed his writings to Li Yu's *Siliu chuzheng* and comments to his *Xianqing ouji* and *Yijiayan*. Also at the performance were Wu Guanwu 吳冠五, who was a close friend of Zhou Lianggong; Fang Lougang 方樓岡 (1650 *jinshi*) who was a Reader-in-waiting at Hanlin Academy and another frequent commenter on Li Yu's works; Fang Shaocun 方邵村 (1648 *jinshi*) prefect of Huolu county who had contributed cases to *Zizhi xinshu* and writings to *Siliu chuzheng*; and He Shengzhai 何省齋 (1650 *jinshi*) a Reader-in-waiting at Hanlin Academy who had contributed writings to *Siliu chuzheng*.<sup>308</sup> In his collected works, Li Yu mentions the three most famous of these men as frequent patrons of performances at Mustard Seed Garden—Zhou, He, and Fang Shaocun. Zhou and He also contributed to the very production of Mustard Seed Garden by offering their calligraphy to Li Yu to mark various sites therein. Woodblock replicas of these calligraphic traces of Zhou and He's hands are among the very few illustrations Li Yu included in *Xianqing ouji*.

Also in 1672, there is a record of the troupe giving a performance for Commissioner Lou Jinghu 婁鏡湖. In the first of his poems on the occasion, Li Yu includes the lines, “At the

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<sup>307</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 19.72.

<sup>308</sup> See Wu Guanwu's marginal comment on “Hou duangchang shi shishou 後斷腸詩十首,” in Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 2.216.



banquet, the girls bow in vain as benefactions are offered to them 當筵枉拜纏頭賜." The second poem begins, "Cries of hunger tend to harm the singing voice 啼饑容易損歌喉."<sup>309</sup> These poems mention directly the fact that the girls (and less directly, Li Yu) need to be recompensed for their performance. The other two audience members Li Yu mentions by name in the girls' double biography are Gu Qieyan 顧且庵 (1656 *jinshi*, Magistrate of Zhenyang, Henan) and Shen Qiaozhan 沈喬瞻, who apparently watched the girls perform in Hangzhou.

While Li Yu's troupe did perform for his friends, extant accounts suggest that most of the performances that were commemorated in verse involved at least one person who was serving the Qing in an official capacity. Only one of the audience members mentioned in the double biography was not a *jinshi* holder under the Qing. As I have shown, most of them participated in other aspects of Li Yu's cultural production as well, contributing commentary, prefaces, letters, and other writings to Li Yu's books and projects. The association of these men with his garden and with his works was an important source of social capital for Li Yu, and as officials, they would have had the means to provide support to Li Yu economically since they would have received stable incomes as officials under the Qing.

It is likely that the girls performed more often than these records indicate. If we take Li Yu at his word in the double biography, they seem to have performed for all sorts of everyday gatherings attended by family members and neighbors. In *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu imagined a broad range of potential audience members and tried to determine what would allow all of them to engage most fully with the performance: "Performing old plays is like singing the arias [without acting]: it can only delight the ears of a few *zhiyin* [aficionados], it cannot entertain the eyes of all of the guests and friends present. 盖演古戏如唱清曲，只可悦知音数人之耳，不能娱满座

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<sup>309</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 2.195.

宾朋之目。”<sup>310</sup> His strategy seems to have worked: his income from this and other endeavors was enough to support his large household, and he managed to provide live entertainment to many of the most significant cultural figures of his day.

With his Mustard Seed Garden, Li Yu created a kind of place—an urban gathering place for likeminded friends—that was in high demand (if for varying reasons) in the late Ming and early Qing. His performing concubines seem to have been the highlight of any visit to his garden. For Li Yu and those who enjoyed the performances with him, though, the women also could reproduce through their performances the experience of watching plays in the garden anywhere, effectively making some central aspects—like the sense of time it evokes—of the garden portable. This issue of portability was likely on Li Yu’s mind as he embarked on journey after journey from 1666 on. According to the biography, Li Yu took the girls with him to Hebei, Hubei, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Fujian, Anhui, and Zhejiang, and it is unlikely that they would have accompanied him without performing regularly, given the other accounts we have of their frequent performances. This is not to conflate gardens and theater: as I have attempted to show above, Li Yu was very much concerned with the physical particularities of the garden as a special kind of place. Yet it is important also to recognize that these girls not only represented, but in fact could produce anywhere much of what people valued in a visit to a garden.

### ***Conclusion: A Garden of One’s Own***

All of these social negotiations and evenings of entertainment took place in the everyday world, and they left traces in the comments, poems, biographies, and prefaces that the people involved in them wrote. Yet most of what we know about Li Yu’s concept of a garden is culled

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<sup>310</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 68.

from the pages of *Xianqing ouji*. It was that text that caused people to marvel at the thought of entering a built environment designed by Li Yu. The surplus of stories that seemed to spout off the tip of his brush were understood as translatable into the design of garden space. Whereas other garden designers had followed a trajectory from painting to rock-piling, Li Yu had gone from telling stories about the world to telling stories about real things and real spaces.

While some of his contemporaries recognized that they might create an imaginary garden on the page to carry on their name, Li Yu began on the page. In the activities I have outlined in this chapter, he then went beyond the page back into the real world. His own “real” garden, Jieziyuan, makes just three appearances in the text of *Xianqing ouji*. One is when he directs readers to its specific address to purchase his books and stationery (locating the garden’s place in a larger context, rather than revealing the details of the private world within). The second is in illustrations that depict the calligraphy of famous individuals to mark particular places in the garden. The final instance occurs under the entry for “pomegranate tree,” where he gives us the most detailed description of its layout that remains:

The plot of Jieziyuan does not even amount to three *mu*, and buildings take up one of them, rockery another, yet I still have room for four or five large pomegranate trees. These trees are what embellish my residence and keep it from feeling desolate. They are also what take over my land, making it so I cannot grow any other plants. Does it not seem that the merits and demerits of the pomegranate are just about equal? It all comes down to my ability to arrange them well, so that although there are several trees, they will not be burdensome. By nature, the pomegranate tree likes pressure, so it is suitable to pile rocks up at its base to make a mountain out of it. This way, the root of the pomegranate tree becomes the base of the mountain. By nature, the pomegranate tree likes sunshine, so I can use the shade it provides to shelter a building, such that the shade of the tree becomes the sky above the building. By nature, the pomegranate tree tends to be tall and straight, so I can take advantage of that fact and construct a building next to it, thereby drawing closer to its branches and becoming an immortal on the horizon. In this way, the pomegranate flowers also lean on my railing and serve as the gatekeepers. This is the method the master of Mustard Seed Garden uses for dealing with pomegranate trees; please share it with all those who plant trees.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 271-72.

芥子園之地不及三畝，而屋居其一，石居其一，乃榴之大者，復有四五株。是點綴吾居，使不落寞者，榴也；盤踞吾地，使不得盡栽他卉者，亦榴也。榴之功罪，不幾半乎？然賴主人善用，榴雖多，不為贅也。榴性喜壓，就其根之宜石者，從而山之，是榴之根即山之麓也；榴性喜日，就其陰之可庇者，從而屋之，是榴之地即屋之天也；榴之性又復喜高而直上，就其枝柯之可傍，而又借為天際真人者，從而樓之，是榴之花即吾倚欄守戶之人也。此芥子園主人區處石榴之法，請以公之樹木者。

The aspects of the garden inspired by the interaction of a mastermind writer and a pomegranate tree differ markedly from the records of social interactions we have seen above. Here, all of a sudden, size, proportion, layout, specific buildings and vegetation, all have their place. The shade is not a symbol of passing time; rather, it is a quality of the pomegranate tree that anyone can enjoy. With this brief essay, Li Yu seems to suggest that if one scrutinizes a pomegranate tree closely enough, the tree will design a garden on one's behalf. With this essay, the design and material makeup of Li Yu's garden are revealed, marked by the only use of the name "Proprietor of Jieziyuan (*Jiezi yuan zhuren* 芥子園主人) in *Xianqing ouji*.

There is no denying that much of Li Yu's experience designing and living in Jiezi yuan and his directing his troupe of concubine-actresses informed what eventually went into *Xianqing ouji*, but *Xianqing ouji* is emphatically not a representation of Li Yu's garden. He barely mentions Jiezi yuan in the text, and he alludes to his concubines without naming them. In short, he generalizes them. *Xianqing ouji* is a generalized garden on paper. All of the sights and sounds, every aspect of what might go into the creation of a garden of one's own is there. Unlike the brief entry on Jieziyuan, however, the garden space in *Xianqing ouji* evades any description of its layout. It does so because Li Yu has designed it so that it is not dependent on place. Just as did the theatricals when Li Yu took his actresses on tour, the lodging of *Xianqing ouji* in text make the whole experience of the garden portable. Where it improves upon other portable gardens (imaginary gardens that exist only on paper), however, is that although Li Yu the author is

present throughout, the garden that remains is not his. Anyone can enter it, explore its nooks and crannies, and touch the things inside. The garden represented in *Xianqing ouji* belongs to the reader.

With his Mustard Seed Garden and theater troupe, Li Yu created spaces that were in high demand in the early Qing. In a world full of displaced Ming loyalists, Li Yu created urban gathering places, on the pages of his books, in his own garden, and anywhere his troupe traveled, for people invested in the experience of playing the role of likeminded friend to Li Yu, each other, and even his concubines. Rather than escape to the page, Li Yu designed a literary garden that excelled reality and a real garden that transcended the text.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## Lights, Vision, Action

Zhu Huizhi, an itinerant from Zhelong, was by nature simple and uncultured, but adept at all styles of calligraphy. He could paint "The Eighteen Arhats Cross the River" with a tapered brush on a melon seed and finish it off with his signature. On the reverse side, he could inscribe all eight of Du Fu's "Autumn Meditations." Even if one's vision is outstanding, one must obtain a microscope to be able to see it. Some say that Zhu first sits in a dark room for ten days, that it must be the height of summer when the sun is in the south, he opens a tiny crack the size of a finger to let in sunlight, and only then can he write, calling on the workings of nature to execute it. I met Zhu at Li Liweng's place, where I obtained two of his ivory carvings the size of melon seeds: the first was an illustration of *The Story of the Western Wing*, the other was the recluse Lin [Bu]'s poem on plum blossoms. Zhu died, and his son could not learn his skill. As for it being said that Song Lian could write several characters on a millet grain, that is so crude so as to not even be worth mentioning.”

-Cha Jizuo (1601-76)

浙龍游人祝徽之者，性質樸少文，通諸書，能於瓜仁尖細畫十八羅漢渡江圖而系之以名，其背書杜句《秋興》之八。雖目力極佳，必得察微鏡乃見。或云祝初坐暗室旬日，必盛夏日南時，啓一罅如拈大容光，乃為之筆，亦另法意制之。余曾晤祝李笠翁之座，得其琢象牙如瓜者二：一西廂像，一林處士梅花詩也。祝卒，其子亦不能學其學。所云宋濂溪一黍能作數字，粗不足道矣。<sup>312</sup>

A lone artist in a dark room at Li Yu's residence let in a sliver of the brightest light the seasons offered, adjusted a tiny chip of ivory, and set out to create a nearly invisible work of art, one that could only be viewed under a microscope. That a melon seed could contain a painting or selection of calligraphy so small that it could not be seen with the naked eye plays with common understandings of art and culture, even as it echoes the delight taken in the design of a garden like Li Yu's *Jiezi yuan* (Mustard Seed Garden), which appears to “contain a Mount Sumeru in a

<sup>312</sup> Cha Jizuo 查繼佐, "Zui wei lu lie zhuan 罪惟錄列傳," in *Xu xiu Si ku quan shu*, ed. "Xuxiu Siku quanshu" bianzuan weiyuanhui (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1995), 435. Lin Bu was a Northern Song recluse, and Song Lian (1310-1381) was a compiler of Yuan history. I translate *fayi* 法意 as “workings of nature,” though it also may have a Buddhist connotation of “dharma” here.

mustard seed 芥子納須彌。” Scholars of Chinese art have explored the interaction between Western perspectival painting and Western optical instruments on Chinese painting and visual culture in the seventeenth century, arguing for varying degrees and modes of influence in a range of visual media.<sup>313</sup> Li Yu was certainly interested in the possibilities of visual representation through painting: he commissioned the painting manual *Jieziyuan huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳 near the end of his life, and he counted many artists among his close friends. Literary scholars have also explored his interest in the possibilities of Western optical devices, as evidenced by his fictional treatment of a telescope in the short story *Xiayi lou* 夏宜樓 (A Tower for Summer Heat), which includes a list of optical instruments available for sale in Hangzhou, including a telescope and a microscope.<sup>314</sup> However, Li Yu’s experiments with vision depend on textual rather than visual representation to teach readers how to see the world.

In this chapter, I explore Li Yu’s writing about vision and the ways he manipulated the sensorial experience of readers of his fiction and essays, spectators of his theatrical productions, and visitors to his home. In Li Yu’s short stories and his novel *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團 (*The Carnal Prayer Mat*), he draws attention to vision and perspective by alternately exaggerating and

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<sup>313</sup> James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); Jennifer Purtle, "Scopic Frames: Devices for Seeing China c. 1640," *Art History* 33, no. 1 (2010); Joseph McDermott, "Chinese Lenses and Chinese Art," *Kaikodo Journal* (2001). For a study of the influence of visual technology in Japan, see Timon Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart: The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).

<sup>314</sup> Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart: The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan*. Sophie Volpp, in a talk given at Columbia in 2006, introduced the source from which Li Yu copied his descriptions of lenses, *Jingshi* 鏡史, by Sun Yunqiu 孫雲球 (1630-1662). See also Gu Xiaohong 顧曉紅, "Zhongguo guangxue yiqi zaoye dianjiren--Sun Yunqiu 中國光學儀器製造業奠基人——孫雲球," *Wujiang dang'an* 吳江檔案 5(2011).

reversing old narrative practices of depicting looking.<sup>315</sup> He meticulously describes what people see, how they see, and the limits of their vision, developing these tropes through story time. Li Yu uses his narrator and commentator to return the gaze of the reader, exposing her as a presence in the story and causing her to reimagine herself as someone who is not only observing, but who is also being observed. I bring these fictional narratives into conversation with Li Yu's essays on capturing and engaging viewers' attention by manipulating stage lighting, wall designs, and window designs in *Xianqing ouji*.

### ***You are watching: Reader as voyeur***

It is difficult for a reader of Li Yu's last and most mature collection of fiction, *Twelve Towers* (*Shi'er lou* 十二樓, 1658), to avoid sensing that she is a peeping tom. The lengthy comments at the end of each story are directed explicitly to the reader, and refer to Li Yu by name. These extra-diagetic references—to the reader, to the author, and to the fictionality of the text—interrupt the story time of the narrative and cause the reader to become aware not only of the story as fictional representation, but also of her implied presence in it.<sup>316</sup> They also draw attention to the fact that the reader is *reading*, rather than listening to an implied storyteller as he was in previous fiction (the phrase, “now listen [*qieting* 且聽],” for example, was common in

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<sup>315</sup> Although *The Carnal Prayer Mat* was published anonymously, there is a consensus among scholars that it is the work of Li Yu, given an early attribution of the novel to him by Liu Tingji 劉廷璣 in *Zaiyuan zazhi* 在園雜誌 in the early eighteenth century, as well as the overwhelming stylistic similarities between the novel and Li Yu's other works. For a summary of the debate, Ge, "Rou Putuan: Voyeurism, Exhibitionism, and the 'Examination Complex'," 127, n. 2.

<sup>316</sup> For recent studies of the metafictional quality of Li Yu's stories, see Zhang, "The Game of Marginality: Parody in Li Yu's (1611-1680) Vernacular Short Stories; Karl S. Y. Kao, "Self-Reflexivity, Epistemology, and Rhetorical Figures," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 19 (1997); Zhang, "Playing with Desire: Reading Short Vernacular Fiction in 16th and 17th Century China." In a section on “Xiayilou” (177-188) in particular, Jing Zhang suggests that the telescope is a metafictional figure that asks the reader to see the “author's artistic ingenuity” and the “artifice of the narrative art” (180).



earlier works). It is the eyes, and not the ears, that are the most important organ for appreciating Li Yu's fiction, as in his references to the reader's weary eyes (the narrator stops to "give readers a chance to rest their eyes before the next chapter is performed 且等看官息息眼力，再演下回").<sup>317</sup> The visual is also the implied sense in his use of the term "silent opera (*wusheng xi* 無聲戲)" to describe not only his first collection of short stories, but the genre itself: he asks that we "keep our honorable eyes peeled as we watch the next scene of this silent opera 各洗尊眸，看演這出無聲戲."<sup>318</sup>

The conceit of *Twelve Towers* is that each of the twelve stories shares its title with the name of a fictional architectural structure that also come into play in the story's plot. Li Yu makes narrative use of the buildings in a variety of ways: storied buildings allow characters a bird's-eye view, a room in an old building is etched into a character's memory, or the construction or purchase of a building is a pivotal moment in the development of a plot. Given Li Yu's interest in designing gardens, decorating interiors, and even in writing plays, it is no surprise that he would pay particular attention to the structure of these short stories, dividing the texts into visually distinct sections to break up the narrative flow and to create spaces in which the narrator may interject and chat with the reader. Previous short story collections, including Li Yu's first two collections, had not divided stories into chapters, and narrator comments had simply been inserted into the body of the text. In *Twelve Towers*, the narrator stops flamboyantly to emphasize the narrative effects of particular chapter breaks:

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<sup>317</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 3, "Xiayi lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 183. Adapted from Hanan's translation.

<sup>318</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 3, "Xiayi lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 154.

Quick though the messenger may be, the author insists on a delay at this point, so that he can start a new chapter. Like [Xianxian's] poem, which was broken off before it was completed, the story will be far more interesting than if it were told all in one piece.<sup>319</sup>

怎奈走路之人倒急，做小說者偏要故意遲遲，分做一回另說。猶如詹小姐做詩，被人隔了一隔，然後聯續起來，比一口氣做成的又好看多少。

Li Yu's fictional narrator is more prominent and more closely linked to his own voice than that of any previous author of fiction.<sup>320</sup> In the short fiction of the late Ming, such as that written by Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 and Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, the narrator would engage in simulated dialogue with an implied reader who might on occasion protest the logic of a sequence of events, but Li Yu exploits the power of the narrator to control the story to an unprecedented degree.

In Li Yu's best-known story, "Xiayi lou," he recounts a sequence of events from what first appears to be the perspective of an omniscient narrator, only to reveal that the perspective is actually that of another character in the story. The story opens with a series of poems on lotuses that Li Yu had composed earlier (he eventually published these poems together with his complete works),<sup>321</sup> and goes on to recount how a group of young girls skinny-dip in a pond in what they assume to be the privacy of their own courtyard. Xianxian 嫋嫋, the daughter of the master of the household who is a circumspect and modest beauty, spots them and chastises them. Soon after, she receives a marriage proposal from Jiren 吉人, a mysterious suitor who possesses

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<sup>319</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 3, "Xiayi lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 26.

<sup>320</sup> See Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 134; McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*. McMahon notes, "Li Yu's work represents the incipience of the story of the author himself (or someone like him), in other words, the story of the author telling the story. However, this trend seems to begin and end with Li Yu; for better or worse, no one seems to pick up where he left off" (135).

<sup>321</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 80.

an uncanny amount of information about the goings-on of her inner quarters (she lives in a tower called “A Tower for the Summer Heat,” or *xiayi lou*), and even her private thoughts.

Li Yu has structured the story in such a way that the reader is likely convinced with Xianxian that her suitor is an immortal with supernatural abilities. The reader learns otherwise only after a pause between chapters, at which time the narrator explicitly urges her to ponder the issue:

Put aside all other concerns and focus on the question of how Jiren knew what was going on in the Zhan household. Was he man or ghost? Was it dream or reality? By all means try to guess the answer and then, when you find you cannot come up with it, turn to the next chapter for the explanation.<sup>322</sup>

看官們看到此處，別樣的事都且丟開，單想詹家的事情，吉人如何知道？是人是鬼？是夢是真？大家請猜一猜。且等猜不著時再取下回來看。

Only after the reader has admitted defeat does the narrator reveal that he has tacitly situated a telescope between the reader and the events for the duration of the first chapter. Suddenly, the reader’s sense of herself as solitary and isolated, or even as a listener to a simulated storyteller or spectator at a theatrical performance, is shattered. Instead, she finds herself within the story, a cunning voyeur on par with Jiren whose gaze has penetrated the inner quarters of the Zhan household.

The story hinges on the ability of the telescope to enhance vision and facilitate new views in multiple ways.<sup>323</sup> In the story’s second chapter, the narrative flashes back to Jiren on an outing with friends, when he had encountered a telescope in a local pawnshop. The shop owner touts the telescope as being useful because “if you look through it from some high place, you’ll find that it

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<sup>322</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 3, "Xiayi lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 14.

<sup>323</sup> For an argument that the use of the telescope marks a shift in Chinese narrative from the glance to the gaze, see Chen Jianhua 陳建華, "Ningshi yu kuishi: Li Yu 'Xiayi lou' yu Ming Qing shijue wenhua 凝視與窺視：李漁“夏宜樓”與明清視覺文化," *Zhengda Zhongwen xuebao* 9, no. 6 (2008).

brings the scenery into view for miles around 登高之時取以眺遠，數十里外的山川，可以一覽而盡，” and Jiren’s companions respond enthusiastically to the possibility of being able to see a distant scene clearly.<sup>324</sup> The novelty here is that the technology will allow a vast expanse to be taken in in a single glance, or view (*yilan erjin* 一覽而盡), reducing it to something that a viewer could apprehend all at once. Craig Clunas has observed that late-Ming gardens were described as superior to nature for precisely the reason that they could be taken in at a single glance (*yilan jin zaimu* 一覽盡在目). He relates this characteristic to a tendency to seek and value miniaturization and pictorialization in the late Ming, and suggests that both imply a distanced viewer, stationed at a height above the object being viewed.<sup>325</sup> The purported use of a telescope for the shop owner and Jiren’s companions is to make any place into a pictorialized, miniaturized version of nature, a project closely related to this contemporary discourse on gardens.

Overlooking the ability of the telescope to “make people and things that are far off appear to be even clearer than those things that are close at hand 又能使遠處的人物比近處更覺分明”—in other words, to create views—Jiren determines that he is going to use it to arrange a marriage.<sup>326</sup> This task requires that the telescope allow him to see through walls, or to see up

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<sup>324</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 3, "Xiayi lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 20-21. In light of Ge Liangyan’s study of voyeurism in Li Yu’s novel, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, in which he suggests a convertibility between sex and the examinations such that sexual fulfillment is made to stand in for examination success, it is worth noting that the first thing these men view to confirm the powers of the telescope is a scrap from a failed examination essay. That the first use of the telescope is to stand in for the all-powerful examiner foreshadows the power that it will confer on the person who knows how to use it. See Ge, "Rou Putuan: Voyeurism, Exhibitionism, and the 'Examination Complex'," 141-3. Reading from afar was also one of the first uses to which the newly invented telescope was put in the West as well. See Elizabeth A. Spiller, "Reading through Galileo's Telescope: Margaret Cavendish and the Experience of Reading," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2000), 192.

<sup>325</sup> Clunas, *Fruitful Sights: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*, 151.

<sup>326</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 3, "Xiayi lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 22.

close from far away something that would remain hidden were he closer to it. As he reasons, when it comes to young bachelors gaining access to wealthy households, “although from nearby there may be an impediment, if one gazes from afar, he imagines, there is no blockade 近處雖有遮攔，遠觀料無障蔽。”<sup>327</sup> He determines that when put to this use, the telescope (“thousand-*li* lens” *qianli jing* 千里鏡) is not a lens at all, but a pair of “thousand-*li* eyes (*qianli yan* 千里眼).” Rather than miniaturize or pictorialize a scene, Jiren uses the telescope to transport a version of himself into a forbidden place: what he sees with the telescope is something anyone could see unaided, with the caveat that the telescope renders the viewer invisible, and allows him to see without being seen.

In this aspect, too, Li Yu’s narrative of the telescope focuses intently on the reader, usually the least visible presence in a story. From the opening lines, the reader is tacitly situated with Jiren in his monk’s cell (as high a room as he could find), riveted to the telescope hoping to spot some novel sight, invisible to the characters she is viewing. The frolicking girls draw Jiren’s attention to Xianxian’s courtyard at the same moment that they attract the reader’s attention in the opening lines of the story. With Jiren, the reader watches Xianxian grow ill with melancholy in her private quarters, and reads with him the tiny characters of Xianxian’s poem, all before she has realized that she has been implicated in the story as a voyeur. Li Yu’s manipulation of the narrator’s voice, division of his short stories into chapters, and unconventional use of the telescope combine to create a narrative that intervenes on everyday social life for the enjoyment and titillation of himself, his characters, and readers alike. These devices draw the reader into the

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<sup>327</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 3, "Xiayi lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 22.

world of the story, and they also make her aware of her own presence and perspective vis-à-vis the fictional world of the story.

***Not a One-way Gaze: Looking back at the spy***

The reader is not the only usually invisible presence that is brought into full view in Li Yu's fiction. He also structures his fictional plots around the reversal of the usual direction of the gaze within the diegetic world of the story: under his brush, the gaze is turned back on such characters as the ubiquitous maid, or thief, or wily go-between who had always played the role of all-seeing outsider. An outside observer, while not the hero, had played a role in Ming southern dramas (*chuanqi* 傳奇) and fiction, either to triangulate the primary story of the relationship between two protagonists, or to provide the reader access to the inner workings of everyday life, to which she would have otherwise not been privy.<sup>328</sup> Bakhtin, among others, has emphasized the role of such a “‘third person’ in relation to private everyday life,” who is permitted “to spy and eavesdrop” on behalf of the reader as one of the core components of novelistic discourse.<sup>329</sup> In a Ming context, as in Bakhtin's analysis, this observer could take the form of a rogue or an

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<sup>328</sup> Sophie Volpp has identified the low characters in Tang Xianzu's 湯顯祖 *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (*The Peony Pavilion*) as part of his project to ridicule the pedantry of the archaists and the new middle elite. She sees the colloquial language associated with them as exposing the distance between the elite and the material world, and sees this phenomenon as being taken to a new extreme in *Mudan ting*. See *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*, 105. In the context of the sixteenth-century novel *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 *The Plum and the Golden Vase*, Ding Naifei has pointed to the function of the parasitic “third eye” in the seduction scene between Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮 and Ximen Qing 西門慶. In her view, the gaze of the go-between old woman Wang, “interrupts and disrupts the play between these two; her interjection breaks the spell between them as well as between the text and reader.” Naifei Ding, *Obscene Things: Sexual Politics in Jin Ping Mei* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 162.

<sup>329</sup> M. M. Bakhtin and Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 124.

adventurer, or perhaps most often, a servant, that “most privileged witness to private life.”<sup>330</sup>

With “A Tower for the Summer Heat,” Li Yu concocted a technological alternative to the extraordinary capability of these “third persons” to see into private worlds—with the help of the telescope, Jiren manages to reduce the usually crucial role of the go-between to obsolescence, taking on the role of spy, or the third eye, himself.

Many of Li Yu’s stories are inversions of age-old truisms or literary themes; another of his strategies, of which this story is a prime example, is to pursue a theme or an adage to an extreme.<sup>331</sup> Another of the stories in *Twelve Towers*, “The Cloud-Scraper (Fuyun lou 拂雲樓),” is a story in which the “third person”—the servant of the beautiful young woman destined to marry the brilliant scholar in a scholar-beauty (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人) romance—becomes the protagonist and the bride sought by the scholar. The story opens with a poem that points to the central role of the maid in the most famous play of the day, *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (*Story of the Western Wing*). The poem concludes: “Without Hongniang there to unravel the clues, Would Student Zhang have ever been found by Yingying? 不是紅娘通線索，鶯鶯何處覓張生?”<sup>332</sup> Hongniang is the maid of the female protagonist, Yingying, and Student Zhang is the young scholar who is pursuing her. In addition to having some of the most memorable lines of the play, Hongniang plays a significant role in planning the young couples’ rendezvous and plotting to convince Yingying’s parents that the two should be married.

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<sup>330</sup> Bakhtin and Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, 124-25. Bakhtin identifies this rogue with the author in the case of novels: “The novelist stands in need of some essential formal and generic mask that could serve to define the position from which he views life, as well as the position from which he makes that life public” (161).

<sup>331</sup> See Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 76-110; Ying Wang, “Two Authorial Rhetorics of Li Yu’s (1611-1680) Works: Inversion and Auto-communication” (Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1997).

<sup>332</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi’er lou, ch. 6, “Fuyun lou”. Translation adapted from Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 117.

In the main story of “The Cloud-Scraper,” Li Yu elevates the status of the maidservant, Nenghong 能紅, to be the impetus driving the story’s action and also its hero. In doing so, he elevates the status of the perceptive viewing and cunning plotting associated with the “third person” or “third eye” in the narrative. First, he has scholars on an outing rank her and her mistress, Miss Wei, as first and second place among all of the women out at the Dragon Boat festivities, without noticing the status distinction between them. He then has the male protagonist, Pei Yuan, who had previously broken off an engagement with Miss Wei, engage in a series of attempts to win the two of them for himself, which culminate in his pleading with the matchmaker for the maid’s hand in marriage:

If the daughter isn’t willing, I won’t press her again. But I understand that the Weis have a maid named Nenghong whose beauty and intelligence are the equal of Miss Wei’s. Since there’s no bond between the mistress and me, I’ll have to turn my attention to the maid. I’m asking you to persuade Mr. Wei to consider Nanghong his daughter and marry her to me as my second wife. . . . If he remains inflexible and won’t budge, I beg you to go behind his back and inform Nenghong. Tell he that I lost my heart to her when I saw her at the lake and that I never expected to find such a heavenly flower growing on the earth below. Ask her to take into account my heartfelt love for her and find some way for us to marry.<sup>333</sup>

小姐自己不願，也不敢再強。聞得她家有個侍妾，喚做能紅，姿貌才情不在小姐之下。如今小姐沒份，只得想到梅香。求你勸她主人，把能紅當了小姐，嫁與卑人續弦…若還他依舊執意不肯通融，求你瞞了主人，把這番情節傳與能紅知道，說我在湖邊一見，驀地銷魂，不意芝草無根，竟出在平原下土；求她鑒我這點誠心，想出一條門路，與我同效鸞鳳，豈不是椿美事。

To demonstrate his sincerity, Pei Yuan kneels down in front of the matchmaker while he is speaking.

Li Yu presents the exchange so as to highlight the novelty of the plot: such a turn of events had no precedent in Chinese literature, and even the predictably clever maid cannot

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<sup>333</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 6, "Fuyun lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 136.



anticipate such a surprising twist. When the matchmaker goes to discuss the matter with Nenghong, she finds that the maid is oddly privy to the private affairs between her and Pei Yuan and is able to describe accurately the scene that had taken place between them: “He knelt down in front of you, and of course you want to repay him with interest. 受人一跪，少不得要加利還他。”<sup>334</sup> At this point, the matchmaker and the reader alike wonder how Nenghong could have this information, and whether she has, as the matchmaker suspects, “superhuman eyes and ears.”<sup>335</sup> In her retort, Nenghong insists that she is “an immortal incarnate” and that she knows everything that they had talked about. The only point about which she is confused is why the matchmaker is coming to talk to her and not the mistress, since the scheme is aimed at her. The moment that Nenghong makes this mistake, the reader and the matchmaker realize that she is a phony immortal.

This revelation brings the narrator to the foreground as the true “third eye,” who can obtain detailed information about all of the characters without being seen. He informs us that the tower of the story’s title has played a key role for Nenghong: just as Jiren looked down onto the tower for summer heat, Nenghong has been looking down from her own tower, the Cloud-Scraper:

The Weis’ house faced the Yus’ with only a wall in between. In the back garden was a tower named the Cloud-Scraper [*fuyun lou* 拂雲樓], which had a balcony for airing clothes that was encircled by a trellis. From inside it one could see out, but from outside, nobody could see in.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 6, "Fuyun lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 138.

<sup>335</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 6, "Fuyun lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 138.

<sup>336</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 6, "Fuyun lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 140.

原來韋家的宅子就在俞阿媽前面，兩家相對，只隔一牆。韋宅後園之中有危樓一座，名曰“拂雲樓”。樓窗外面又有一座露台，原為曬衣而設，四面有笆籬圍著，裡面看見外面，外面之人卻看不見裡面的。

Nenghong uses this tower to gain access to sights that she was not intended to see, while not revealing her own presence. The one-way gaze is enabled in Jiren's case by distance allowed by the telescope, and in Nenghong's by the trellis that hides her from view.

Contrary to the matchmaker's initial guess that Nenghong has superhuman eyes *and* ears, however, Li Yu draws attention to the limitations of interpersonal experience based solely on the sense of sight, penetrating though it may be. In "The Cloud-Scraper," Nenghong sees Pei Yuan kneel down, but she can only deduce that he is doing so for the reason that Scholar Zhang from *Xixiang ji* or any other young scholar would—to marry a beautiful girl. Unable to "read" from his actions something so novel as seeking the hand of the maid instead of the mistress's, she reinforces the novelty of the plot by reminding us that such a move is improbable. In "A Tower for the Summer Heat," Li Yu exploits the illusion of Jiren's proximity to Xianxian created by the telescope. One day while he is watching her compose a poem, she is startled. His first response is to fear that she has seen him and to wonder how she could know that he is spying on her from above.<sup>337</sup> Jiren's "thousand-*li* eyes" disorient him, since unlike the avid reader of fiction, he is not used to the sort of looking—the safety of a disembodied, one-way gaze—that they enable. His task of gathering information from a silent scene is accomplished only by the fact that some of it is recorded in writing, another analogy to the act of the reader reading the story.

An even more effective third eye in Li Yu's fiction is that of the thief who makes a living entering others' homes, seeing but not seen. A thief is the protagonist of another of the *Twelve*

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<sup>337</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 6, "Fuyun lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 25.

*Towers* stories, “Guizheng lou 歸正樓 (Return-to-Right Hall),” and a key player in Li Yu’s novel, *Rouputuan* 肉蒲團 (*The Carnal Prayer Mat*). The figure of the wily cat burglar had been made popular a few decades earlier by Ling Mengchu’s story of *Lanlong* 懶龍 (Lazy Dragon), included in his second collection of short stories in 1632.<sup>338</sup> As the narrator attests in “Guizheng lou,” the thief is “a confidence man who [i]s capable of the most sublime feats, but whose name, place of birth, and physical likeness [a]re impossible to determine 神奇不測的拐子, 訪不出他姓名, 查不著他鄉里, 認不出他面貌.”<sup>339</sup> His existence on the peripheries of social life, adherence to an alternative moral code, and physical ability to enter homes in unorthodox ways make him an ideal figure to reveal the inner workings of everyday life. The thief in *The Carnal Prayer Mat* boasts that while he “may not take the stage, [he has] a better view of the action than everyone else.”<sup>340</sup> Unlike Jiren and Nenghong, who gaze down from a stationary, elevated point of view,

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<sup>338</sup> Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, *Erke pai'an jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue, 1957), ch. 39. The story is entitled “*Shenyou jixing yizhi mei Xiadao guanxing sanmei xi* 神偷寄興一枝梅 俠盜慣行三昧戲.” For an English translation, see Xianyi Yang et al., *Lazy Dragon: Chinese Stories from the Ming Dynasty* (Hong Kong: Joint Pub. Co., 1981). Like Li Yu’s thieves, Lan Long is a chivalrous thief who is something of a Robin Hood figure. In all of the accounts, the reader is encouraged to sympathize with the thief and his moral code, even when the narrator or the thief himself regrets his career choice. The “Five Abstentions from Theft” of Li Yu’s thief in *The Carnal Prayer Mat* are “unlucky people, lucky people, people [he] know[s], people [he] ha[s] robbed once already, or people who take no precautions.” Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, trans. Patrick Hanan (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 63. For a discussion of precedents for early Qing tales of thievery, see Allan H. Barr, “The Early Qing Mystery of the Governor’s Stolen Silver,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 60, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>339</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 6, “Fuyun lou”; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 45.

<sup>340</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 68. See Li Yu 李漁, *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團, Zhen cang ban. ed., 1 vols., Zhongguo guyan xipin congkan (Taipei: s.n., 1987).

the thief has learned to move through urban environments anonymously and to change his appearance at will if he is recognized, skills that make him effectively socially invisible.<sup>341</sup>

In the novel, *Rou putuan*, Li Yu details the superior range of vision of the thief, Sai Kunlun 賽昆侖.<sup>342</sup> Because he enters and moves around freely in others' homes under a cover of anonymity, the Knave has developed a way of looking at the world that differs dramatically from ordinary people. For one thing, he sees naked bodies and strangers engaged in sex on a regular basis. He informs the male protagonist, the young voluptuary Weiyang sheng, upon inspecting the body he has been boasting about: "I see [penises] all the time—I must have inspected a thousand or two, at least—and I don't think I've ever seen one quite as delicate as yours. 這件東西是劣兄常見之物，多便不曾有。一二千根是見過的。只怕也再沒有第二根像尊具這般雅致的了。"<sup>343</sup>

Weiyang sheng, despite the fact that he is in the midst of an empire-wide search to locate the most beautiful woman alive, has "rarely seen another man's penis, [since] ordinary people keep theirs tucked away under their clothes, where naturally they can't be seen. 只有陽物這件東西其實不曾多見，平常的人藏在衣服裡面，自然看不出了。"<sup>344</sup>

Elsewhere in *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, Li Yu exposes the limits of the vision of even the sharpest of viewers, the Knave. On one occasion, the Knave has sized up a particular woman, and he tells Weiyang sheng that she is "supremely beautiful but lacking in experience with

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<sup>341</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 9, Shi'er lou, ch. 6, "Fuyun lou"; Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 62.

<sup>342</sup> In his study of *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, Ge Liangyan identifies the Knave as the only pure voyeur in the story. See "Rou Putuan: Voyeurism, Exhibitionism, and the 'Examination Complex'," 130.

<sup>343</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 99; Li Yu 李漁, *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團 (Taipei: Taiwan daying daike gufen youxian gongsi, 1994), 240.

<sup>344</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 104; Li Yu 李漁, *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團, 245.

lovemaking. 若論姿色，都有十二分，只是風流二字不十分在行。”<sup>345</sup> Later, when the handsome

Weiyang visits the shop she tends and she flirts with him, it becomes clear that she had acted modestly only because her myopia prevented her from adequately assessing the earlier situation with the Knave. The commentator (again, a voice indistinguishable from Li Yu's own) explains how the author has allowed the reader to think she has found a contradiction only to prove his ingenuity:

In Chapter Six, the Knave described this woman as prudish, as unversed in passion, whereas in the silk-shop incident in this chapter she matches [Weiyang sheng] blow for blow in repartee. Not only is she not prudish, she is extremely seductive, a fact that flatly contradicts what the Knave has said. No doubt ignorant readers had concluded that the novel's stitching was not fine enough and had criticized the author for it, never dreaming that he would have nearsightedness in mind as a pivot, and that *that* was the reason for the apparent inconsistency. The author deliberately set an ingenious ambush so as to lure people into attacking him—a clear case of literary deception. The reason the woman was described as prudish is that she was nearsighted; she didn't see the handsome young man in front of her and had no occasion to behave seductively.

第六回塞崑崙口中既說，此婦老實，風流二字不十分在行，此回賣絲一段，與未央生接談，機鋒不避，旗鼓相當，不但不老實，竟風流到絕頂處，大與前說相左，不知者，定以為針線不密，尋出作者破綻來矣。誰知他把近視二字藏在胸中？做個行文的轉軸。故前後自相矛盾，有益伏此奇兵。使人攻擊，乃文章詭譎處也。前之所謂老實者，以其眼睛近視，不曾看見標致男子，無所用其風流也。<sup>346</sup>

Perceptive though the Knave may be, his vision is limited by the unitary point-of-view allowed an embodied subject: he can go everywhere and observe everything, but he cannot see how others see. As this comment makes clear, even when the Knave's vision fails, the author's does not, and here again he reiterates his own role as mastermind behind these resourceful third-eye characters.

<sup>345</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 90; Li Yu 李漁, *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團, 229.

<sup>346</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 132; Li Yu 李漁, *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團, 278.

Li Yu's deployment of thieves, maids, and the telescope in his fiction are novel variations on the traditional role of the "third person" character who grants the reader access to the inner workings of the fictional worlds. They also reveal what sorts of twists of plot occur when other characters look back at them. Just as he has brought the reader into view, Li Yu has manipulated the narrative so as to allow other characters return the sleuthing gaze of the maid, Nenghong, who finds herself unexpectedly the object of another's desire, and of the thief, whose all-seeing powers are called into question when the myopic woman acts in contradiction to his expectations. In "Return-To-Right Hall (Guizheng lou 歸正樓)," a group of courtesans recognize and remember the thief as a particularly kind and generous former patron, prompting him to redouble his efforts to remain anonymous by hastily throwing on a disguise.<sup>347</sup>

In her study of Li Yu's method of training concubines in *Xianqing ouji*, Dorothy Ko has observed that one of Li Yu's innovations in the practice of connoisseurship of women was his concern with women returning the gaze of the male viewer.<sup>348</sup> These fictional examples of two-way looking show that for Li Yu, this exchange was not always gendered this way, with the male appraising the female; rather, in some cases, such as that of the maid Nenghong, the roles would be reversed. In the case of maids, the role of observer implies her outside status as a member of a lower social order and limits her to a tangential relationship to the social world she observes.

The various forays into private everyday life that these interactive looks enable bring to the foreground not only the position of the reader as an unseen voyeur and active participant in the story, but also questions of the implications of visibility and concealment, the powers and

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<sup>347</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 61.

<sup>348</sup> Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*, 155.

limits of vision, and the ethics of the one-way gaze of an invisible viewer. Li Yu did not limit his exploration of these questions to fictional narrative, but also engaged in real-world experiments with them and recorded them in essay form for sale in one of his most sought-after products, the essay collection *Xianqing ouji*. The resonances among his experiments in both contexts invite a comparative reading that considers his fiction alongside his essays.

### ***Captivating the Audience: Strategies of Light, Story, and Sound***

One of the central issues in *Rou putuan* is the effect of differing levels of visibility and concealment. What a person sees, not to mention when, how much, and how often she sees it, changes her. Li Yu's treatment of this theme exposes the fact that certain illusions, such as the idea that nudity is appealing, inform everyday experience as we know it. Frequent viewing of sex organs and nudity lessens their desirability for the Knave: in his early days of thieving, he would masturbate to the sight of a naked woman while he waited for the right time to rob her, absorbing the spectacle in minute detail: "for the better part of an hour I have my eyes on her, and during that time nothing escapes me, not her eyes or face or figure or complexion, not even the depth of her vagina or the growth of her pubic hair. 所以那幾刻時辰，極看得仔細，不但眉眼面貌體態肌膚，一毫沒有躲閃，就是那牝戶之高低，陰毛之多寡，也都看得明明白白。”<sup>349</sup> While the prospect of such a view likely titillated many readers, Li Yu is quick to point out that the Knave had eventually seen so many naked women that “a vulva came to resemble some kitchen utensil

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<sup>349</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 204; Li Yu 李漁, *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團. For a discussion of the notion of “transit” as essential to eroticism as it applies to Chinese visual culture, see John Hay, "The Body Invisible in Chinese Art?," in *Body, Subject, and Power in China*, ed. Angela Zito and Tani Barlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

and aroused about as much feeling in [him]. 看著陰戶就像尋常動用的傢伙，一毫不覺得動情。<sup>350</sup>

The Knave's attitude is a foil for that of Weiyang sheng, who is obsessed with female beauty and the naked body. When he is first instructing his wife, Yuxiang 玉香, in the art of love-making, he spends a fair amount of time discoursing on the joys of making love in broad daylight so that sight of the other person's genitals will arouse one and make the act even more enjoyable.<sup>351</sup> At first, the modest Yuxiang is not even willing to entertain the idea that two people could be bold-faced enough to make love while in plain sight of one another. From the extreme vision of the Knave, from whom almost nothing is hidden, to the moderate Weiyang sheng who takes pleasure in seeing forbidden sights, to Yuxiang, who is barely willing to raise her eyes, Li Yu draws the reader's attention to the ways in which these divergent modes of looking influence the characters' feelings, desires, and world views.

Li Yu's fictional treatment of these divergent attitudes highlights the effects of viewing at particular times of day with different levels of natural and artificial light. While the Knave seems to enjoy unfettered visibility night and day alike, for ordinary viewers, the time of day matters. Yuxiang's response in particular indicates that sex during daylight hours means something radically different than sex between invisible bodies under the cover of night. For her, it is the viewing of the act rather than the act itself that has the potential to shame—the darkness allows her to maintain whatever illusion she wishes. With this example, Li Yu shows that visibility is a complicated matter: in moderation, it can increase desire and pleasure, but too much visibility

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<sup>350</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 69; Li Yu 李漁, *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團, 205.

<sup>351</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 41-45.



threatens to crush desire entirely. In his theater direction, Li Yu engaged in a similar balancing act.

I have discussed above how Li Yu drew the reader visually into the story through his manipulation of commentary, chapter divisions, and narrative sequences. Cultivating the attention and pleasure of viewers of his dramatic productions was a related, but distinct, game that included as a central component the delicate manipulation of light.<sup>352</sup> He gave serious thought to the ways in which different levels of natural and artificial lighting could affect the experience of viewers, in particular the implications of time of day for visibility. Too much light, and like the Knave, they would risk losing interest; too little, and they would not be able to get wrapped up in the story. His articulation of these issues represents the first extended treatment of stage lighting in Chinese history.<sup>353</sup>

Li Yu explains his business of captivating his audiences through the manipulation of light in several sections of *Xianqing ouji*. In one of the sections on drama theory, “Abridging Plays *Suochang weiduan* 縮長為短,” he explains how to adapt lengthy play to make them suitable for everyday performance. It may strike the reader as odd at first that he opens such a section with a discourse on appropriate lighting for performances, but performing plays when the lighting is optimal turns out to be the primary reason that they need to be abridged:

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<sup>352</sup> Sieber, "Seeing the World through Xingqing ouji (1671): Visuality, Performance, and Narratives of Modernity," 19. Sieber cites Li Yu's suggestion that plays be performed at night as a way to enhance the visual illusion.

<sup>353</sup> Sophie Volpp has distinguished the seventeenth-century stage from the modern theater in a Chinese context following Stephen Greenblatt's distinction between the English Renaissance stage and the modern playhouse that there was “no dimming of lights, no attempt to isolate and awaken the sensibilities of each individual member of the audience, no sense of the disappearance of the crowd.” Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 5. Cited in Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*, 83. Read together with his fiction, Li Yu's theories on dramatic staging offer an example of unprecedented attention to lighting that I explore in this section.

Watching plays is suited to the dark, not the daylight. There are two reasons why this is so: Theatrical performance [playing a role] is in the first place not reality. The ingenuity lies in the interplay between what is hidden and what leaps out. If a performance is put on during the day, distinctions are sensed too clearly, and performers have difficulty executing their illusionary magic. The audience only sees and hears fifty percent of the actor's voice and appearance because eyes, ears, and voices are scattered and not concentrated in one place.

觀場之事，宜晦不宜明。其說有二：優孟衣冠，原非實事，妙在隱隱躍躍之間。若於日間搬弄，則太覺分明，演者難施幻巧，十分音容，止作得五分觀聽，以耳目聲音散而不聚故也。<sup>354</sup>

Theater is best enjoyed in the evening for both aesthetic and practical concerns (the second reason is that watching plays during the day would hinder work).<sup>355</sup> Li Yu argues against bright natural light because it emphasizes the artifice of the performance at the expense of the pleasure of the viewer. More than simply revealing the obvious artifice of the performance, however, too much light allows viewers' attention to drift, and they end up taking in only a fraction of the spectacle. By staging plays at night, Li Yu aims to ensure that the attention of the whole audience remains riveted on the action. Here, the author of fiction who boasts to the reader of his masterful control over the plot manipulates light to the same effect as he had previously manipulated language and story.

Scholars generally concur that there was significant permeability between stage—which was often no more than a carpet (*quyu* 氍毹) placed in a courtyard—and audience in private household performances in the seventeenth century.<sup>356</sup> Li Yu's assertion that staging a

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<sup>354</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 70-71.

<sup>355</sup> The text reads: “Moreover, regardless of whether a person is wealthy and ranked or poor and humble, during the day everyone has to go about their business, and watching plays would inevitably hinder their work. 且人無論富貴貧賤，日間盡有當行之事，閱之未免妨工。” Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 71.

<sup>356</sup> For an analysis of the symbolic conventions in fiction and drama illustrations portraying these carpets, see Mei, *The Novel and Theatrical Imagination in Early Modern China*, 38-44. For an argument that the boundaries between these stages and the world were more temporal than spatial in the early seventeenth

performance in the dim light of evening would increase twofold the concentration of each member of the audience suggests that he was in the process of imagining a new kind of relationship between audience and stage space. His conviction that the artifice of theater is best enjoyed after sunset is not dissimilar to the modern practice of dimming the lights in a theater. A century later in France, strikingly similar language was used to describe the pedagogical strategy of using the projected images of the camera obscura in a dark room to engage young learners: “Many children, gathered in a room, have their minds captured as a result of the darkness necessary for representation of the pictures which appear suddenly illuminated on a large disc.”<sup>357</sup>

The focus of this essay—abridging plays—is another aspect of Li Yu’s performance theory that reveals his desire to demarcate a clear boundary between stage space and audience space. To write about abridging plays at this time indicated a reaction against the contemporary practice of performing excerpted scenes from various plays, known as *zhezi xi* 折子戲.<sup>358</sup> As Volpp has observed, “because *zhezi xi* were more easily paired to particular occasions than were full-length texts, the advent of this performance practice had the potential to enhance a sense of permeability between world and stage.”<sup>359</sup> Contemporary records, including accounts of private performances in novels, attest to the fact that selecting scenes for performance that would

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century, see Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*, 72-77. Volpp has also presented a compelling case for the gradual decline of this permeability over the course of the seventeenth century as raised stages in wine shops (*jiulou* 酒樓) grew widespread and private troupe owners grew less interested in becoming part of the spectacle of theatrical entertainment, Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*, 59-88.

<sup>357</sup> Jean-Phillipe Gui le Gentil, Comte de Paroy (1750-1824). Goepper and Wang, *Blumen aus dem Senfkorngarten*, 278. Cited in Laurent Mannoni and Richard Crangle, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 84.

<sup>358</sup> Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*, 63-65.

<sup>359</sup> Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*, 67, 12.

resonate with the social occasion was a common practice at this time. Li Yu's preference was instead to put on multi-scene plays as entertainment, which would captivate spectators and transport them away from the present into the fictional world of the play. At the same time, he recognized that performance of a complete play is often not feasible, since few are the truly dedicated who can stay awake appreciating plays until dawn:<sup>360</sup>

It is better for a play to be short and have a conclusion than for it to be long and without closure. Thus, those who compose *chuanqi* [plays] and hand them over to actors must first show them how to adapt them to various lengths: Take several scenes that can be omitted from the plot, and mark them as such.<sup>361</sup>

與其長而不終，無寧短而有尾，故作傳奇付優人，必先示以可長可短之法：取其情節可省之數折，另作暗號記之。

Given Li Yu's manipulation of the experience of readers and viewers elsewhere, it is not surprising that he would react against this practice by insisting on multi-scene performances that provide a sense of the full narrative arc of the story, even if that meant that some of the scenes had to be cut. Rather than a series of discrete and familiar scenes that resonated with and referred to the social event at hand, Li Yu featured an evening of entertainment consisting of a single storyline—ideally one that the audience had not seen before—that would capture the attention of aficionados and newcomers alike.

If natural light threatened to compromise the art of theatrical performance for Li Yu, artificial light, and a lot of it, was essential. An essay from the section of *Xianqing ouji* on

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<sup>360</sup> In the rest of the essay, he elaborates on his innovative practice of improving the abridged versions: in addition to following the general practice of cutting scenes, he suggests that playwrights focus their attention on adding lines to the remaining scene to give a better sense of the whole and to avoid giving viewers the sense that the play has been truncated. One effect of this practice is to make the viewing experience feel continuous and to ensure that the attention of the audience is sustained.

<sup>361</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 71.

household objects and utensils is devoted entirely to how to use lamps to illuminate stage space.

Like many of the essays in this section, this one includes substantial technical detail.

Of utmost importance at a banquet is that it is brilliantly lit with lamps. Whenever gentlemen gather together, delicacies from the mountains and seas are spread out before them; they imbibe sweet wine; a few instruments accompany frequent song. All of this is perfectly delightful. It is only the stage that is slightly obscured. That people today delight their guests' ears and hearts but cannot delight their eyes is not because the host is stingy with his oil or unwilling to set up more lamps, it is actually that he places too much faith in the lamps themselves, either failing to learn the method for trimming them or failing to get the right person to maintain them.<sup>362</sup>

燈燭輝煌，賓筵之首事也。然每見衣冠盛集，列山珍海錯，傾玉醴瓊漿，幾部鼓吹，頻歌疊奏，事事皆稱絕暢，而獨於歌台色相，稍近模糊。令人快耳快心，而不能不快其目者，非主人吝惜蘭膏，不肯多設，只以燈煤作祟，非剔之不得其法，即司之不得其人耳。

Having insisted that plays be performed under the cover of night, Li Yu here observes that the primary problem with banquets is that everything but the stage is brightly lit. In other words, the only spectacle the guests can observe clearly is that of their own party. They cannot escape into the fictional place of the performance because the offstage space is brightly lit while the stage lights are dim.

Li Yu sets out to remedy this problem by first noting two shortcomings in contemporary lighting practice. The first is that wicks that are regularly trimmed give off twice as much light as those that are not. To drive this point home, he provides an easy-to-remember rhyme: “Frequent trimming beats lighting more lamps *duodian buru qinjian* 多點不如勤剪.”<sup>363</sup> The second is that in many cases no one has been put in charge of looking after the lights, as when “both master and servant are caught up in viewing the performance, all fixing their eyes on the Pear Garden [show], and not concerning themselves with the lighting 或以觀場念切，主僕相同，均注目於

<sup>362</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 225.

<sup>363</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 225.

梨園，置晦明於不同。”<sup>364</sup> Li Yu’s solution to the problem of stage lighting is twofold: ensure that a responsible servant is put in charge of trimming the wicks regularly, and that he has a workable method for completing this task.

Li Yu’s concern with presenting audiences with a brightly lit stage to contrast the darkness of the evening translates into ideas for exciting technical innovations that would considerably alter the viewing experience of his audience. Since lamps around a stage are usually hung at a considerable height, Li Yu reasons that either the person has to go up to trim the lamp, or the lamp needs to be lowered—one of these needs to happen each and every time the wick is trimmed. Since both the person doing the trimming and the observing guests would quickly find such an arrangement tiresome, one of two methods should be employed. The first is to construct a pair of long-handled scissors that will allow a person to reach the lamp simply by raising his arm. The second design, significantly more complex and captivating, involves rigging a pulley system that allows the lamps to be lowered using hidden cords:

This method requires that you make a long groove in the overhead beam to run it to the back of the room, thread a hanging lamp cord through the center, and put a tiny wheel-disk underneath it. Then hang the lantern. The inner frame and the outer screen should be separate, and the outer screen should be fastened between the roof beams and not move up or down. Put the wheel-disk across the cord on the inner frame. When you want to trim the lamp, release the cord on the inner frame and lower it down to the height of a person. When you are through trimming, raise it again. Since you fit it into the outer screen, the outer screen remains hanging up high without moving, neatly arranged, and waiting patiently to be moved. . . . As compared with lowering the whole thing, which comes with all sorts of physical hindrances, this allows you to gain an edge.

法於梁上暗作長縫一條，通於屋後，納掛燈之繩索於中，而以小小輪盤仰承其下，然後懸燈。燈之內柱外幕，分而為二，外幕系定於梁間，不使上下，內柱之索上跨輪盤。欲剪燈煤，則放內柱之索，使之卑以就人，剪畢復上，自投外幕之中，是外

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<sup>364</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 225. “Pear Garden” was a common term for “theater” at this time.

幕高懸不移，儼然以靜待動…較之內外俱下，而且有礙手礙腳之繁者，先踞一籌之勝矣。<sup>365</sup>

With these designs, Li Yu has proposed two convenient ways to maintain a brightly lit stage by proposing new and improved methods for trimming lamp wicks regularly that eliminate the need to climb up to the lamps to do so. His second method hinges on the deconstruction of the lamp into its component parts, each of which he evaluates and treats separately so as to improve the function of the whole appliance.

To focus primarily on the technical and labor-saving aspects of these improvements belies the primacy of the dramatic visual effects to Li Yu's conception of this second design. While the moving parts of his mechanical stage lighting do serve his stated intention of keeping the stage brightly lit, by this point in the essay, he has turned his attention to orchestrating the performance of the moving lamps themselves. The lamps, properly executed, become a puppetry of marvelous effect that constitutes a second onstage spectacle:

Now, why do I not openly pull it down with a cord, but rather insist on secretly fitting it in a groove in the rafters and running it to the back of the room? It is because I want to hide the person who pulls on the cord in the back of the room. People will only see the wheel-disk turn, and the lantern descends on its own. After it has been trimmed, it rises up again without sign of someone pulling it, as if a spirit were lodged among the rafters. If you stand one extra person onstage, you will create a screen for another person. If you have one person trim the lantern and another pull the cord, as soon as one finishes, it is time for the next. They are constantly on the move so that the guests end up watching them walk and are no longer free to focus on the singing. But if you conceal someone in the back of the room behind half a bamboo fence, then what calm appears before the guests' eyes and ears! ... [It does not matter what kind of screen you use] so long as those on the inside can see out while those on the outside cannot see in. This way, human artifice is concealed, and Heaven's ingenuity can be carried out.<sup>366</sup>

其不明抽以索，而必暗投梁縫之中，且貫通於屋後者，其故何居？欲埋伏抽索之人於屋後，使不露形，但見輪盤一轉，其燈自下，剪畢復上，總無抽拽之形，若有神

<sup>365</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 226.

<sup>366</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 226.

物廁於梁間者。蓋場上多立一人，多生一人之障蔽。使以一人剪燈，一人抽索，了此及彼，數數往來，則座客止見人行，無復洗耳聽歌之暇矣。故藏人屋後，撤去一半藩籬，耳目之前，何等清靜……但使內見外，而外不見內，則人工不露而天巧可施矣。

Li Yu remains tacit about the light-giving quality of these lamps here, referring rather to the art of concealing the people in charge of manipulating them to the illusory effect that they seem to be moving like themselves. The imperative that the servants tending the lamps be able to see out from behind the screens that conceal their presence from the audience them recalls the strategy of Nenghong peering down from behind the trellis in “The Cloud-Scraper” (“From inside it one could see out, but from outside, nobody could see in 裡面看見外面, 外面之人卻看不見裡面的”), or Jiren from his tower. Yet, while Pei Yuan remains unaware that Nenghong is watching him from the tower, the viewer of Li Yu’s lamp puppetry is in on the game—he is invited to revel in the delightful illusion that the lamps seem to be moving on their own even as he knows that there is human effort behind the movement.

The distinction between these two one-way gazes gets at the crux of Li Yu’s scenography, and of his theater direction: that the lamps appear to move by themselves (or to be moved by a spirit in the rafters), even while the audience knows that that is impossible, is the point. Li Yu puts it this way: “He who observes this technique has an experience akin to a person on a dim mountain path: he knows well that what he beholds is a person and not a ghost, yet he is still astonished and startled. People will applaud when they see this: it is yet another pleasure. 觀其術者，如入山陰道中，明知是人非鬼，亦須詫異驚神，鼓掌而觀，又是一番樂事。”<sup>367</sup> In broad daylight, a person is simply a person, and there is little in the sight of him to astonish a viewer. In crafting a lighting system that would reproduce for an audience anytime the delightful

<sup>367</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 227.



experience of encountering the unknown on a dim mountain path, Li Yu added a second spellbinding spectacle to enhance that of the actors' performance. On Li Yu's stage, the apex of ingenuity is the illusion borne of human design and its concealment—it transfixes because it appears to be magical but is not.<sup>368</sup>

Having set the scene, Li Yu is finally able to shift his attention to the performance itself. If the motion of the lamps draws attention to the hidden bodies of the servants, whose presence is charged by the combination of its inevitability and concealment, the amplified light of the lamps intensifies the view of the actors' bodies onstage. The “calm” Li Yu has orchestrated for his guests by screening the servants from view culminates in their experience of being mesmerized by the motions and sounds of these women. All eyes now glued to the stage, Li Yu turns his attention to orchestrating the final component of this audiovisual experience.

In addition to insisting on the performance of an unbroken evening-length narrative arc, Li Yu was concerned with how the written play script translated into spoken dialogue, and from there into the sounds perceived by the listener:

Dialogue has always been demarcated only on paper, no one has paid any attention to whether it flows or is impeded in the mouth. Oftentimes what is most profound in printed form becomes muddled nonsense when performed onstage. How could one person's eyes and ears be both quick and deaf? Because the author only concerns himself with his brush, and he has not yet put himself in the position of others, letting his mouth stand in for the actor's mouth, and his ear for the listener's, so that heart and mouth work together. If you examine whether it rolls off the tongue, and it doesn't; or whether it pleases the ear, and it doesn't, this is obviously the reason why. Now, when Liweng wields a writing brush in his hand, his mouth is nevertheless onstage, entirely standing with his body in place of the actors [Pear Garden]. He allows his mind to wander in all directions, contemplating

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<sup>368</sup> At the conclusion of “A Tower for the Summer Heat,” Jiren and Xianxian both decide that the telescope is supernatural, not because they believe that a god or a buddha is controlling it, but because it allows them to see things that without it they could not: “Every day they bowed down before it, and whenever some decision had to be made, they would consult it. By picking up the telescope and looking through it, they would always see something unusual, which they then treated as an oracle, and it never failed to produce results. From this example it is clear that where the mind is concentrated, objects of clay and wood can work miracles.” Li Yu 李漁, *A Tower for Summer Heat*, 38.

the elements of the plot and testing out the sound. If it is good, he writes it down directly; if not, he sets his brush aside. That is the way in which he makes what is seen and heard suitable to all.<sup>369</sup>

從來賓白只要紙上分明，不顧口中順逆，常有觀刻本極其透徹，奏之場上便覺糊塗者，豈一人之耳目，有聰明聾聵之分乎？因作者只顧揮毫，並未設身處地，既以口代優人，復以耳當聽者，心口相維，詢其好說不好說，中聽不中聽，此其所以判然之故也。笠翁手則握筆，口卻登場，全以身代梨園，復以神魂四繞，考其關目，試其聲音，好則直書，否則擱筆，此其所以觀聽咸宜也。

Li Yu's claim that many playwrights failed to consider the way their lines would sound in performance was not a new criticism of the overly ornate language of some late-Ming plays. What is new here is the relative weight he places on spoken dialogue as opposed to sung arias. The way that he improves upon traditional practices of writing dialogue echoes the kinds of interpersonal maneuvers we have seen in his fiction and scenography: he imagines himself in the position of each of the roles involved (the actors, the audience, and the writer), wandering mentally among these perspectives until he has orchestrated a totalizing experience of predetermined roles for all involved.

### *Looking at Walls: Boundaries, peepholes, and panoramas*

Theatricals such as these would not end with the conclusion of a play. Li Yu was taken with the potential of all sorts of walls, from the outer walls surrounding residential compounds to the decoration of the interior panels of a room. He conceived of walls as two-sided and porous boundaries between distinct but connected spaces, paying special attention to the design possibilities of the windows that would open up at least two views through any wall. Much of Li Yu's fiction involves characters finding novel ways to see the private life hidden within the walls of someone else's home. The plot of "The Tower for Summer Heat" hinges on Jiren's deduction

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<sup>369</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 48.

that by viewing from above, he could effectively use a telescope to see through a wall. The ability of both the Knave and maids to see interiors also depends on their navigation through the outer walls of private residences. In each of these cases, the fundamental barrier breached is that of the outer wall distinguishing one compound of living quarters from another (*jieqiang* 界牆). Li Yu discusses this sort of wall in *Xianqing ouji*, and it carries with it to the essay form (with its direct reference to the material lived environment) echoes of the concerns in his fiction with accessing interiors: “Border walls are the boundary between me and others, between public and private; they are the outer limits of the home. 界牆者，人我公私之畛域，家之外廓是也。”<sup>370</sup>

Whereas Li Yu exercises complete creative control over the production of his plays and the narratives of his stories, he is obliged to give up control over the temporal and experiential aspects of his designs and technological innovations relating to the everyday built environment. Without the fixed time and place of a story or a particular performance, he has to teach readers how to arrange visual technologies themselves with step-by-step instructions and illustrations.

In *Xianqing ouji*, walls do more than simply obstruct vision or mark boundaries. Li Yu opens the section on walls with the tongue-in-cheek observation that, contrary to the accusation that he writes only about trivial matters, this section demonstrates that he is committed to discussing serious and significant matters—the likes of Chan Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism. He waxes monumental on the import of walls, pointing to their fundamental role in empires and homes alike, and analogizing this function to a metaphorical boundary drawn around one’s heart and mind to ensure a solid foundation of personal integrity. As boundaries, he goes on to posit, “walls are that which divide inner and outer; one half is for myself while the other half is for

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<sup>370</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 182.

others 牆壁者，內外攸分而人我相半者也。”<sup>371</sup> He cites a popular expression to corroborate:

“when one household constructs a wall, two households may enjoy looking at it 一家筑牆，兩家好看。”<sup>372</sup> It is the visual aspect of the wall that indicates possession here; for Li Yu, only the

surface of the wall in his field of vision truly belongs to him. Because of this, he reasons,

“among household things, walls alone are impartial; all of the other components are for the self alone 居室器物之有公道者，惟牆壁一種，其餘一切皆為我之學也。”<sup>373</sup> These observations

suggest first that the boundaries of self extend to the outer edges of the home, and second, that

visibility—in particular being looked at—alters things and people. Even more, he suggests that

therein lies much of the pleasure of living. What uses did Li Yu invent for walls, and how did he

use them to expose or change the way people thought about the function of the everyday built

environment, themselves, and their relationships with others?

Li Yu had read in a little encyclopedia, written more than a millennium earlier during the Western Jin Dynasty (265-316), the following observation: “‘Maiden walls [*nüqiang*]’ are small

walls atop city walls. They are also known as *bini* [to look askance, to peep], so called because

they are used to spy on people from atop city walls 女牆者，城上小牆。一名睥睨，言于城上

窺人也。”<sup>374</sup> *Nüqiang* and *bini* were both common terms for parapets, and this is only one of

many places that the two are listed together. (I translate *nüqiang* as “maiden walls” rather than

“parapets” to clarify the play on words at the heart of Li Yu’s essay). Li Yu does not even feign

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<sup>371</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 181.

<sup>372</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 181.

<sup>373</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 181.

<sup>374</sup> The text is *A Commentary on Things Old and New (Gujin zhu 古今注)*, by Cui Bao (fl. 290-306) during the Western Jin Dynasty (265-316). See Cui Bao 崔豹, *Gujin zhu 古今注* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1956).

interest in the textual tradition as a potential authority on the meanings and etymologies of words, nor does he attempt to link words to the things they might have originally been intended to indicate. Instead, he revises the tradition by glossing the term “maiden wall” based on his own experience. He writes:

Let me explain it from my perspective: this name [maiden wall] is quite beautiful, but it seems to me that it does not necessarily refer to city walls, denoting rather any little shoulder-level residential wall. The term *nü* [maiden] is what we call [married] women who have not yet married; it is meant merely to express her liveness. If, as a matter of course, refers to the small walls atop city walls, does this not imply that clambering up on those walls to face the enemy is the business of married women and girls?<sup>375</sup>

予以私意釋之，此名甚美，似不必定指城垣，凡戶以內之及肩小牆，皆可以此名之。蓋女者，婦人未嫁之稱，不過言其纖小，若定指城上小牆，則登城禦敵，豈婦人女子之事哉？

For Li Yu, the top of a city wall is no place for women, nor for a wall associated with them.

Rather, like women themselves, a wall called a “maiden wall” is suited to the diminutive, decorative walls of pleasure gardens. Li Yu’s insistence that the name suit the object it describes is a form of analogical reasoning that recurs throughout his *Xianqing ouji*, such as in his discussion of coiffures or stationery (see Chapter Two). His practice of exposing inconsistencies between words and the material things they describe opens up space for excess, play, and pleasure. As he shifts focus from interpreting ancient texts to creating new meanings and

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<sup>375</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 183. Li Yu seems to have been the first to use the term *nüqiang* to refer to shoulder-level walls within a residential compound, and later this seems to have become an accepted reference of the term. *Nüqiang* is used to refer to a garden wall in the great eighteenth-century novel, *The Story of the Stone* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢), for example: “[As she walked through the grounds,] she was forcibly struck by the aura of desolation that pervaded the place. The buildings were unchanged, but she had noticed that a strip of land along the inside of the Garden wall [*nüqiang*] had already been converted into some sort of vegetable plot. A deep sense of melancholy oppressed her spirit. 覺得淒涼滿目，台榭依然，女牆一帶都種作園地一般，心中悵然如有所失。” Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Hong lou meng jiao zhu* 紅樓夢校注, Ge xin ban, Cai hua ben. ed., 3 vols. (Taipei: Li ren shu ju, 1984), 1564; Cao Xueqin and Gao E, *The Story of the Stone*, 5.66-67.

possibilities for things in the world he and his readers inhabited, he effectively integrates the adventures of fictional romances into the structure of the built environment of everyday life.<sup>376</sup>

Not surprisingly, some walls marked boundaries only to invite their transgression. Li Yu goes on to play with the meaning of the second term for parapets, *bini* (peeping or spying), situating it in the garden as well, but ensuring that it enables the action its name denotes:

Walls that have latticework patterns or apertures carved in them so that those inside and outside can see each other, like those in recently constructed gardens, can also be called “maiden walls” because they are created by reproducing the design of *bini* [spying] walls... I maintain that to have decorative patterning from the base to the top of the wall is not only quite unstable, but that it is also a great waste of resources. The reason for opening an aperture between the inside and the outside is merely so that it can take the place of a [translucent] colored-glaze screen, in hopes that people will peep in to see how grand your residence is. All you need to do is to open two or three feet at eye level and decorate it with a fine pattern. As for the sections above and below this level, fill them in [with stones or bricks] as usual. This way, the cost will not be great, and a chance bump will never cause the wall to come tumbling down.<sup>377</sup>

至於牆上嵌花或露孔，使內外得以相視，如近時園圃所築者，益可名為女牆，蓋仿睥睨之制而成者也…予謂自頂及腳皆砌花紋，不惟極險，亦且大費人工。其所以洞徹內外者，不過使代琉璃屏，欲人窺見室家之好耳。止於人眼所矚之處，空二三尺，使作奇巧花紋，其高乎此及卑乎此者，仍照常實砌，則為費不多，而又永無誤觸致崩之患。此豐儉得宜，有利無害之法也。

These walls that facilitate peeping in gardens are also “maiden walls” because their design mimics that of the parapets, or “spying walls,” atop city walls. With this essay, Li Yu draws attention to the permeability of walls, those that set up a dividing line between two spaces, with the seeming express purpose of inviting those who encounter them to look over, or through, them. Setting aside the telescope and towers that facilitate such transgressive looking in his fiction, Li Yu here focuses on arranging the material environment so that great effort is not required; rather,

<sup>376</sup> For a discussion of the trope of walls as boundaries in seventeenth-century fiction, see McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*, 19-28.

<sup>377</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 183.

in his gardens, walls themselves invite and facilitate looking, and anyone's eyes will do. Not only is this looking directed at the women who inhabit the inner quarters of these residences, but the walls themselves are even named for the women they are intended to bring into view. In pointed contrast to Li Yu's initial claim that walls are a metaphorical fortification intended to bind and protect the self, this treatment of walls suggests a much deeper engagement with the space of others, a space that is connected to one's own by porous walls. At the same time, the essay offers practical instructions for how to technically bring off the design—this way, readers have tools with which to alter their physical surroundings even as they begin to think about the significance of these surroundings and the interactions they facilitate in new ways.

If “maiden walls” serve to connect two spaces by encouraging people to look through spaces even as they divide them, other walls invite the viewer's engagement with no reference to the space beyond. Li Yu's treatment of the walls in the main hall of a residence deals only with their interior surfaces—the continuous surface of the four panels—and the possibilities for playing with vision that these offer. He opens the essay advocating for the superiority of murals to hanging a painting mounted on a scroll or pasting one directly on the wall, citing a line from a poem by the great Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770): “What year did [the famed artist Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (344-406)] visit [this temple]? The walls are covered with paintings of the land of immortals 何年顧虎頭，滿壁畫滄州，”<sup>378</sup> suggesting that mural painting was “a refined

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<sup>378</sup> These lines are from Du Fu's 杜甫 poem, “On the walls of the Chan Master's room at Xuanwu Temple (at Zhongjiang Daxiong Mountain) 題玄武禪師屋壁 (屋在中江大雄山),” in Peng Dingqiu 彭定求, *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩, 25 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai shuju, 1960), 227.7, 2459. The poem records Du Fu's impressions of a mural he saw painted on the wall of this Chan Master's hut. Gu Kaizhi (344-406), the purported artist behind the mural, was a famed painter, calligrapher, and poet of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420).

activity enjoyed by lofty men 高人韻事.”<sup>379</sup> There is a world of difference between the small painting or two that he first advocates, and the four walls completely covered with mural where he concludes. Murals were traditionally associated much more with temples, the setting for the lines from Du Fu’s poem he cites. In fact, at the time, murals seem to have been anything but “refined activities enjoyed by lofty men” at this time, who preferred rather, at least in writing, to discourse on the superiority of a few understated, seasonal, and frequently rotated paintings as tasteful décor.<sup>380</sup>

Li Yu sets up his mural design as a creative solution to a dilemma of his own competing desires: he has a penchant for birds but does not like to see them caged. (It is interesting to note that he does not mind that they are caged so long as the cage is not visible). The murals in his hall enter the essay as a desirable habitat for his birds, which may perch on one of the painted tree branches:

I asked famous painters to fill each of the four walls of the hall with painted trees and flowers, and to encircle them with clouds and mist; then I situate my beloved bird on some gnarled old branch.<sup>381</sup>

乃於廳旁四壁，倩四名手，盡寫著色花樹，而繞以雲煙，即以所愛禽鳥，蓄於虬枝老乾之上。

He has an interlocutor ask the obvious question: “The painting is just empty traces, yet the bird has substantial form: how can it perch on the branch? 畫止空跡，鳥有實形，如何可蓄?” The disparity between the three-dimensional form of a bird and the flat surface of the mural is meant

<sup>379</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 184.

<sup>380</sup> For a revision of the notion that minimalist “literati taste” covers the range of decoration that literati enjoyed in the early Qing, see Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China*, Ch. 1. He notes especially that marked contrast between decoration in a study and that in a hall.

<sup>381</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 184.



to mesmerize readers of this essay and visitors to Li Yu's home who behold the murals alike.

Readers are made privy to the mechanics of the spectacle first:

My reply: this is not difficult; the first thing you need is a parrot. Now, parrots have always been kept on copper frames, so just remove three sides of the frame so that only the perch on which the bird rests remains, along with the two containers for drinking water and grain. First, bore a tiny hole in the wall on the painted pine branch, and then insert the parrot's perch into the hole, ensuring that it is sturdy enough that when the parrot hops around, it will not cause the perch to sway.<sup>382</sup>

曰：不難，蓄之須自鸚鵡始。從來蓄鸚鵡者必用銅架，即以銅架去其三面，止存立腳之一條，並飲水啄粟之二管。先於所畫松枝之上，穴一小小壁孔，後以架鸚鵡者插入其中，務使極固，庶往來跳躍，不致動搖。

With these few maneuvers, Li Yu has made the bird a little residence in his painted forest. For the reader, at least, the discrepancy between flattened image and live bird has been resolved, but Li Yu has only begun to disclose the fascinating visual effects he has created.

He goes on to describe what someone who encounters his creation experiences:

When my friends gaze up at the mural and suddenly see the bird on the branch move, and its tail spread under the leaves, without exception, they turn pale and their spirits flee in their surprise at this "immortal brushwork." And yet before their bewilderment has dissipated, the bird flutters and sings again as if it wants to soar down from the painting. Only after careful scrutiny do they arrive at an understanding of the situation. How could there be any who do not clap their hands and cry out in delight, saying that its craftsmanship surpasses the work of Heaven?<sup>383</sup>

良朋至止，仰觀壁畫，忽見枝頭鳥動，葉底翎張，無不色變神飛，詫為仙筆；乃驚疑未定，又復載飛載鳴，似欲翱翔而下矣。諦觀熟視，方知個里情形，有不抵掌叫絕，而稱巧奪天工者乎？

Like the pulley-rigged lighting that seems to move magically, with his mural, Li Yu has created delightful spectacle so seamless that it seems to be the work of Heaven. It is notable that in this case the illusion depends not on the concealment of human intervention, but rather on the play

<sup>382</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 184.

<sup>383</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 185.

between a living body and a painting: the painted scene makes the bird seem painted, while the bird's vitality makes the painting seem real. Instead of seeking to create a realistic image, Li Yu highlights the correspondence between the colors of both the painted image and the bird: "The pine is a pine of applied colors; the bird is a bird of many colors. The two reflect and enhance each other, as if they were painted with the same brush. 松為著色之松，鳥亦有色之鳥，互相映發，有如一筆寫成."<sup>384</sup>

Li Yu's strategy for achieving this illusory effect differs from the usual narrative play related to reality and illusion in paintings of the time, in which the painted object (often, but not always, a woman) would either come down from the painting or entice the viewer to enter the painting.<sup>385</sup> Read against such stories, Li Yu's creation is remarkable for its emphasis on an optical illusion that can be experienced again and again without any intervention of narrative, recourse to magic, or realistic visual effects.<sup>386</sup> "Since the birds sing and peck, one feels as though the flowers and trees are also moving and swaying. The flowing water does not make a sound, yet it seems to sound. The tall mountain is silent and yet it is not silent 因禽鳥之善鳴善啄，覺花樹之亦動亦搖；流水不鳴而似鳴，高山是寂而非寂."<sup>387</sup> The sustained juxtaposition of physical bodies with fictional or painted images echoes Li Yu's theatrical productions and

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<sup>384</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 185.

<sup>385</sup> For an insightful close reading of the play with boundaries and layers of illusion in the story "Painted Wall 畫壁" in Pu Songling's 蒲松齡 *Liaozhai's Tales of the Strange* (*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異), see Judith T. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 183-93.

<sup>386</sup> For a discussion of illusionism as the primary visual mode in Li Yu's theatrical production, see Sieber, "Seeing the World through Xingqing ouji (1671): Visuality, Performance, and Narratives of Modernity."

<sup>387</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 184.

stage designs, which depend for their magic on an orchestration of partial visibility so that the bodies of the actors and the illusion they portray strike the most effective balance.

In the realm of painting, a mural is particularly suited to creating this effect. Any sort of frame enclosing the painting would enhance the fact that the scene was a painting and diminish the potential of the moving and singing body of the bird to create an illusory effect. With this essay, Li Yu attempts to redefine the rules of the taste game, proposing this embellishment of the walls one encounters in everyday life to remodel them into an entertaining experience akin to watching theater. The values he is promoting depart from the minimalist and often-arbitrary distinctions among particular alternatives for consumption (which he certainly does advocate at other points in *Xianqing ouji*, most notably in his discussions of fashionable attire). Li Yu's designs for walls change the landscape of readers' everyday lives by providing a canvas on which they may learn to create views.

In another essay in *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu deploys his sensitivity with regard to capturing viewers' attention to his design for a window in a boat. The window he proposes is shaped like a fan—a very common canvas for contemporary paintings and calligraphy—and it functions as a frame to focus peoples' attention on the view portrayed through the window. Li Yu instructs that every opening but that of the window be completely sealed so that no light can enter—setting the scene in a way that is reminiscent of the dark room in which Li Yu's guest executed his tiny paintings (Figure 3).

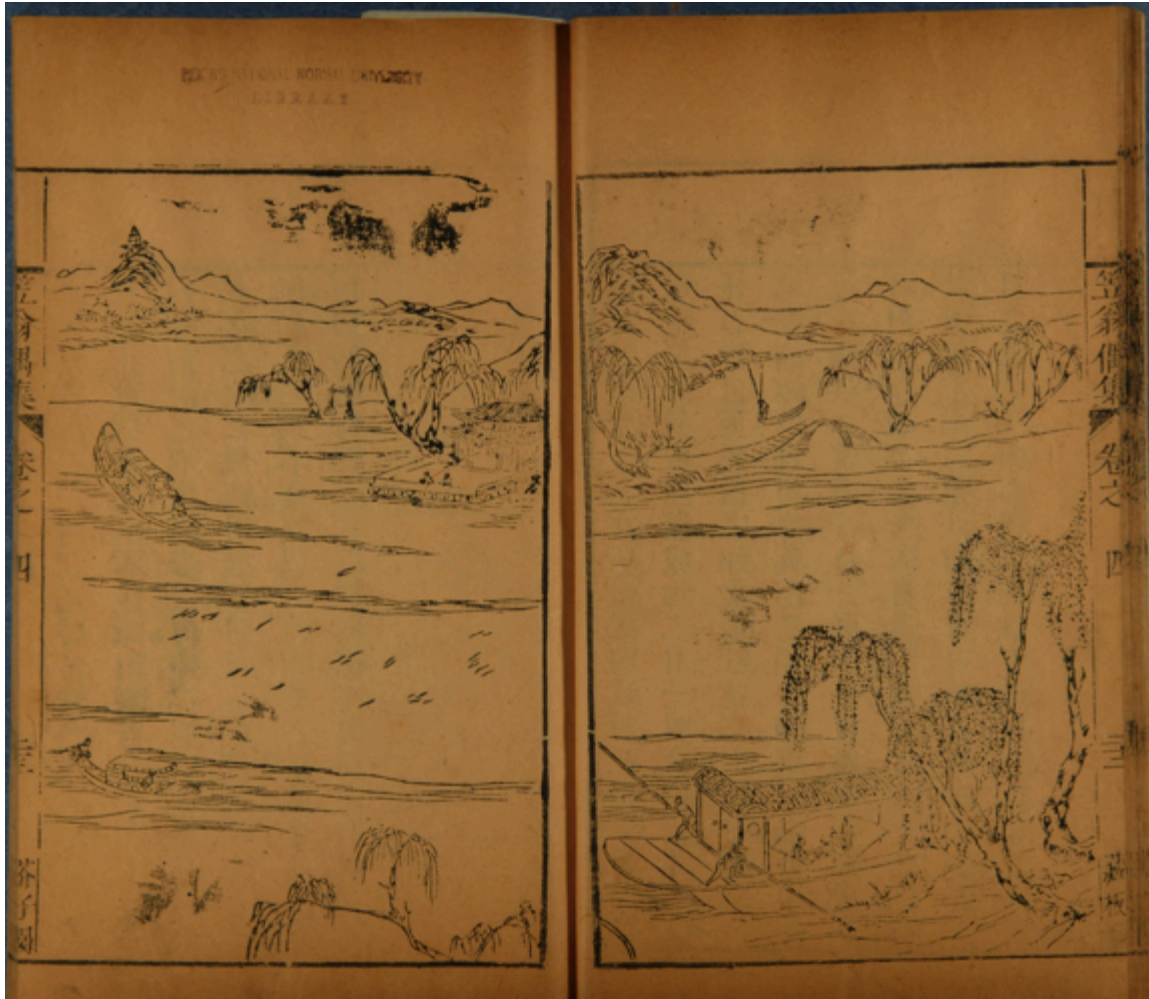


Figure 3. Woodblock illustration of Li Yu's fan-shaped window on a pleasure boat from the 1730 *Jiezi yuan* 芥子園 (Mustard Seed Garden) edition of *Liweng ouji* 笠翁偶記 (Liweng's [*Xianqing*] *ouji*) in *Li Liweng yijiayan* 李笠翁一家言 (Liweng's *Independent Words*), vol. 4, 22b-23a. From the collection of the Nanjing University Library.

“This window will not only entertain you,” he writes, “but it will also entertain others; not only does it absorb the entire exterior scene onto the boat, but it can also eject all of the people on the boat, along with the tables, mats, cups, and plates, outside the window for the enjoyment of passersby. 窗不但娛己，兼可娛人。不特以舟外無窮無景色攝入舟中，兼可以舟中所有之人物，並一切幾席杯盤射出窗外，以備來往遊人之玩賞。”<sup>388</sup> Li Yu's window causes two

<sup>388</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 170.

images to be projected simultaneously onto both sides of a window frame. The people on the boat enjoy a scenic landscape painting, while anyone walking along the shore would see a fan painting depicting a lively party. Each viewer is also the object of another view. Such a reordering of vision is a design that facilitates and promotes a conception of intersubjectivity—in particular the inextricability of looking and being seen—that Li Yu finds illustrations insufficient to portray. What is notable here is that the illustration depicts a scene that does not clearly demonstrate the design or the visual effect. Rather, the boat in question is depicted at the bottom right-hand corner of the two-half-page illustration, most of which is dedicated to mountains, water, trees, and other boats. Only after reading the accompanying text and design for the fan-shaped window does that particular part of the illustration become charged with meaning. A closer look, and a reader is likely to note that the people on the boat do, in fact, appear to be figures on a fan painting. At the same time, after reading the accompanying text, the reader would also imagine himself as one of those figures on the boat, looking out through the fan window at the landscape “painting” that cannot be depicted simultaneously in the illustration. Li Yu was experimenting with new possibilities for vision in narrative and in designs for the built environment that referred to two-dimensional illustrations, but that could not be contained by them.

### ***Conclusion***

The visual experiments that span Li Yu’s fiction and his essays on theater production and architectural innovations focus on innovation in diverse media that enhances the pleasures gained by the real and illusionary effects of looking. One of the constants of his experiments is to remind the viewer that he is looking, and that someone is most likely also looking at him. The resonance this looking generates among people creates a visual experience that is sustained by

allowing continual interplay among people, such that no single perspective is definitive. Li Yu presents his readers with a new vision of the world, refracted by its multiple and intersecting foci. With these experiments and his representation of them in his fiction and essays, Li Yu teaches people to see in new ways, and to imagine with him how technological innovations might allow them to see the material world differently, not least because it helps them to imagine the world as others see it. Li Yu's treatment of the politics of looking and of various ways of manipulating perspective extends from his discussion of windows to his ranking of concubines, his stage design to his fiction and plays. Li Yu's illusions depend for their magic on the tension between the physical bodies of the performers, the servants, and the audience interacting in a dance of visibility and concealment. These are at the heart of the performance, just as a reader of Li Yu's stories, or the "third eye" represented in them, suddenly turns around to find himself on display.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## The Body Offstage

I recall that after the Ming had fallen and before the Mandate of Heaven had been passed on to the Great Qing [...] I took refuge in the mountains, and took pride in having no business to attend to. In the summer, I didn't visit anyone, nor did any visitors come by. Not only did I leave off my cap, but I also cast aside my shirt and shoes. At times I would lie naked among the lotuses; my wife and children would search for me to no avail. Other times I would lie under a tall pine; the monkeys and cranes would pass over me without noticing. [...]

I figure that in my whole life, I have only enjoyed the happiness of immortals during those three years. Wishing to continue that now, I seek some spare time, but I cannot get it. How injurious! People are not iron or stone: how can we be pestled into needles? Is life so much mud and sand that it is good for nothing but abandoning this dusty world to enter the earth? I urge people to enjoy themselves, yet with profound regret I have conscripted my own body [to labor]. Alas! How could Heaven grudge this bit of leisure just to supplement the splendor of the wealthy and ranked?

追憶明朝失政以後，大清革命之先，[...] 山居避亂，反以無事為榮。夏不謁客，亦無客至，匪止頭巾不設，並衫履而廢之。或裸處〔乱〕荷之中，妻孥覓之不得；或偃臥長松之下，猿鶴過而不知。[...]

計我一生，得享列仙之福者，僅有三年。今欲續之，求為閏餘而不可得矣。傷哉！人非鐵石，奚堪磨杵作針；壽豈泥沙，不禁委塵入土。予以勸人行樂，而深悔自役其形。噫，天何惜於一閒，以補富貴榮膺之不足哉！

Li Yu, *Xianqing ouji*, 1671<sup>389</sup>

The author who interrupts his readers' thoughts, who asks those who appreciate his designs to shout his name a few times, who frenetically imagines himself in the shoes of each and every person he spots, seems out of place resting naked among trees and flowers. In this rare wistful passage of *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu recalls living in a period that was outside of political and social time, a liminal few years between dynasties. This liminal space also manifests on the

<sup>389</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 319.

printed page: the characters for “the Great Qing” appear at the top of a new column, leaving a lengthy blank space after the mention of the fallen dynasty, inviting the reader to dwell there for a moment as well.<sup>390</sup> Li Yu remembers himself naked, hidden, and carefree.<sup>391</sup> It is worth noting that his invisibility is punctuated and confirmed by the presence of others: his wife and children who know he is nearby but cannot find him, and roaming animals that do not notice him. They are functioning in an active, productive, routine sort of time while he pauses apart from that rhythm for a moment, off-screen.

With the many inventions in *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu taught people to pause and lose themselves in a moment like this. He taught them to experience the world in slow motion, noticing everything that would usually escape them.<sup>392</sup> In his fiction, drama, and essays, he was fascinated with probing what others overlooked, and he left no stone unturned in his quest to uncover aspects of things that were not immediately apparent. He picked up the things around him, turned them over, shook them, and imagined how they might be differently. The body was no exception. Rather, as I will argue in this chapter, Li Yu takes the physical body as a key locus for his experiments. He takes issue with the tendency of other contemporary discourses to explain away the body and drain it of its contingency. Instead, he opens up spaces for people to think about the meanings they make of bodies.

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<sup>390</sup> This respect was generally shown to the current dynasty in print, but this is the only time Li Yu mentions the “Great Qing” in *Xianqing ouji*.

<sup>391</sup> John Hay suggests that despite the “characteristically uninhibited acceptance of bodily functions,” in traditional China, “there is no image of a body as a whole object, least of all as a solid and well-shaped entity whose shapeliness is supported by the structure of a skeleton and defined in the exteriority of swelling muscle and enclosing flesh.” Hay, “The Body Invisible in Chinese Art?,” 50-51.

<sup>392</sup> Jonathan Hay has used the notion of “absorption” that he noted in the painter Shitao’s later work, which “abolishes time’s pressure and overcomes the loss of a sense of self implicit in the practice of disguise” that was so common to the literati enterprise in the early Qing. Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*, ch. 10. Li Yu notes on leisure—the entirety of *Xianqing ouji*—can be read as a manual on how to do just that.



In *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu plucks the body from the grasp of medical knowledge and treatment, asking people to reconsider “health” and their experience of their own bodies. In fiction, he tested the nature of physicality and the malleability of the body by depicting people experimenting on their own flesh. He also told stories about what physicality would look like if bodies were exchangeable and available for purchase (quite plastic), which drew the reader’s attention to the place of the body within the logic of commodity exchange. At the same time, purchased bodies take center stage in *Xianqing ouji*, and it is in relation to those bodies that Li Yu, in a fascinating denouement, stumbles against the limits of his experimental methodology (to commodify and profit from his innovative designs for improving the everyday). There, he unpacks the body, describing and judging all of its physical characteristics in intimate detail. In doing so, he also locates something beyond his reach, something present-but-hidden in the difference between the body and all of the other things he is accustomed to manipulating, including the bodies of the characters in his fiction and plays. It is a quality of sustained and delightful unpredictability—a surprising movement, an inscrutable scene, a glimmer of spirit. Central to this quality is the delight of being with others, but just beyond their reach, that Li Yu experienced lying naked among the lotuses. It is one that he tries to approximate in his designs throughout *Xianqing ouji*.<sup>393</sup>

In asking readers to consider the relationship between a person and the physical body, Li Yu was responding to late-Ming writers who grappled with the meaning of the body in a number of cultural arenas. In literature, the earthy and straightforward narratives of vernacular short stories demonstrated a penchant for telling about the body, whether in the persistent signifying power of dead body parts, the furtive trysts among people satisfying physical desires, or the

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<sup>393</sup> In the previous chapter, I showed how in *Rouputuan* Li Yu taught readers that an exposed naked body, even that of a beautiful woman, if viewed too often, loses its erotic appeal.

incommensurability between one's body and individual identity.<sup>394</sup> The period also saw a proliferation of pornographic texts and illustrations.<sup>395</sup> In the realm of philosophy, the revisions of thinkers like Wang Yangming and Li Zhi to Neo-Confucian thought that valorized the body along with the innate qualities of the human mind led people to herald everyday embodied experiences—especially of the young and uneducated—as authentic.<sup>396</sup> Theater culture flourished during this heyday of Kunqu, leading cultural producers to focus on the art of performance that invariably entailed visual, and often physical, engagement of the bodies of actors.<sup>397</sup> At the same time, medical texts like the *Bencao gangmu* explored the potential of just about everything found in the wide world to interact with the human body to effect healing.<sup>398</sup> In the urban milieu of the late Ming, cultural producers delighted in embodied sensuality and pleasure, even as they warned of the danger of its excesses. From the vantage point of the early Qing, having experienced the upheaval and uncertainty of the protracted dynastic transition, Li Yu experimented in various genres with how to make sense of the people that remained.

### ***The Problem with the Medical Body***

Li Yu was born into a family of medical practitioners and pharmaceutical vendors, and he grew up surrounded by people steeped in knowledge about the medical body and the salient features, ailments, and treatments associated with it. *Xianqing ouji*, like his fiction, is peppered

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<sup>394</sup> See Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*; McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*.

<sup>395</sup> See McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*.

<sup>396</sup> See Maram Epstein, *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>397</sup> See Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*.

<sup>398</sup> See Carla Suzan Nappi, *The Monkey and the Inkpot: Natural History and Its Transformations in Early Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

with references to technical language from a range of medical texts as well as with detailed descriptions of the properties of various herbs and other medicinal materials.<sup>399</sup> There is also evidence that he was trading in medicine on some of his patronage journeys.<sup>400</sup> Yet even as this evidence makes clear that Li Yu possessed a thoroughgoing understanding of contemporary medical knowledge, he disavowed its epistemology and the way it proposed to diagnose and prescribe care for the body just as readily as he did the existence of spirits and the wisdom of the ancients.

In the final section of *Xianqing ouji*, *Yiyang bu* 頤養部 [On Nourishing the Body], Li Yu provides a tongue-in-cheek critique of the formulaic approach to curing illness in the *Bencao* 本草 [Materia Medica]. At that time, the most recent incarnation of the *materia medica* tradition was the massive *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 [Compendium of Materia Medica], a comprehensive natural history of pharmacology published by Li Shizhen 李時珍 in 1596, just fifteen years before Li Yu's birth.<sup>401</sup> It took a broad view of the proliferation of things in the vast world, and expounded on their natural properties and their effects on the human body. In many ways, Li Shizhen's cultural production looks a lot like Li Yu's: both subjected received knowledge to vigorous personal experimentation before acknowledging its truth claims, both published texts that changed the way readers would understand their relationship to the material world, and both managed to produce innovative texts that have withstood the test of time.

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<sup>399</sup> As Charlotte Furth has pointed out, *Xianqing ouji* is full of riffs on the medical classics, such as “seven medicines for the mind of the hedonist” from the seven harms of the *Huangdi neijing* 皇帝內經. Furth, *A Flourishing Yin: Gender in China's Medical History, 960-1665*, 203.

<sup>400</sup> See Huang Qiang 黄强, *Li Yu yanjiu* 李漁研究.

<sup>401</sup> See Li Shizhen 李時珍, *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目, 2 vols. (Hongkong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1974).

Yet Li Yu's project also differs significantly from Li Shizhen's comprehensive and systematic approach to the natural world. Li Yu's claim that the *Materia Medica* records the "constant properties of things" is similar to Carla Nappi's observation that Li Shizhen "was effectively creating an idea of how normal bodies operate in a natural universe full of metamorphoses and transformations."<sup>402</sup> In Li Yu's view, the "changes" of the *materia medica* were actually constants inasmuch as they could be observed, recorded, and fit into a systematic compendium. In keeping with the literati interest in recording the strange (*qi*) that had been thriving since the late Ming, he would seek to record what defies systematization.<sup>403</sup>

What the *Materia Medica* records are the constant (*chang*) properties of things, while what I am talking about are the aberrations (*bian*) in the principle of things. The *Materia Medica* takes people as its teacher: if people say that something is so, it also says that that thing is so, happy to seek out whatever is not erroneous. I take the heart-mind as my teacher, if my heart senses that something is so, I corroborate that feeling with my words. What need have I to slavishly imitate the world?

雖然，彼所載者，物性之常；我所言者，事理之變。彼之所師者人，人言如是，彼言亦如是，求其不謬則幸矣；我之所師者心，心覺其然，口亦信其然，依傍於世何為乎？<sup>404</sup>

For Li Yu, there is a significant difference between recording "what people say (*renyan* 人言)" and "what the mind senses (*xinjue* 心覺)." Underlying this quibble is the old distinction between "name" (*ming*) and "substance" (*shi*) that had long been used to differentiate between empty words and true reality, and an insistence on the authenticity of the direct perception of the world

<sup>402</sup> Nappi, *The Monkey and the Inkpot: Natural History and Its Transformations in Early Modern China*, 6.

<sup>403</sup> See Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*. See also Volpp, "The Discourse on Male Marriage: Li Yu's 'A Male Mencius's Mother'." Volpp analyzes the discourse of the aberrant sexual orientation as recorded in *biji* of the late Ming. She points to the similarities between the ethnographic mode of writing of both *biji* and fiction authors like Li Yu in describing such phenomenon, but resists a reading that would make their curiosity indicate tolerance or acceptance. For *qi* in the late Ming, see Bai, *Fu Shan's World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century*.

<sup>404</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 347.

by the mind that had been influential in the philosophy of Wang Yangming and Li Zhi.<sup>405</sup> Li Yu writes off the former as an inferior form of knowledge that builds on the claims of earlier writers without actually investigating the substance of the matter at hand. Such recycling and repetition went against Li Yu's insistence on continual renewal and the value of surprise and novelty. Yet Li Shizhen, who personally experimented with a great number of the materials included in his work, would have surely insisted that at the heart of his project too was a commitment to testing prior claims about the natural world.

It would not actually be possible to stage a conversation between the two, however, because one of Li Yu's primary aims with *Xianqing ouji* was to resist the formation of a comprehensive system of knowledge recorded in text. The publishing boom of the late Ming had led to the production and publication of many utilitarian texts that aimed for comprehensiveness. These included the *Bencao gangmu*, but also encyclopedias for daily use, how-to manuals (including painting manuals), exhaustive studies on such topics as vases, flowers, or inkstones for the connoisseur or collector.<sup>406</sup> In the prefatory material of *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu includes a list of the seven guiding principles he wished to uphold with the text at hand; four of these were aims, while the remaining three were prohibitions. The last of the prohibitions addressed comprehensiveness directly, arguing for the value of the non-comprehensive.<sup>407</sup> One might expect the brief explanatory essay under the heading "Against Miscellaneous Trifles" (*Jie zhili*

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<sup>405</sup> For more on the philosophical basis for Li Yu's position, see Huang Qiang 黄强, *Li Yu yanjiu* 李漁研究. For a synopsis of the *xiaopin* that were the literary expression of that philosophy, see Chou, *Yuan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School*.

<sup>406</sup> For more on these texts, see Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*. On encyclopedias for daily use in the late Ming, see Shang, "The Making of the Everyday World: Jin Ping Mei cihua and Encyclopedias for Daily Use," 190-91; Wei Shang, "Jin Ping Mei and late-Ming Print Culture," in *Writing and Materiality in China*, ed. Judith Zeitlin and Lydia H. Liu (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003).

<sup>407</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 4. See my translation in Chapter One.

*bucou* 戒支离补凑) to explain the level of comprehensiveness Li Yu has achieved with this text. Instead, it argues at length for the value of the miscellaneous, because it is easy to find fault with texts that aim to be comprehensive, and since Li Yu cannot claim to be an expert in all of the fields in which he writes, he would rather present what he does know than fill in the gaps in his knowledge with patchy guesswork.

Perhaps we can see Li Yu's contribution most clearly in his observation above that Li Shizhen's project intended to include whatever was "not erroneous." Li Shizhen sought to record information about the interaction between the material world and the human body that aimed for efficacy in the treatment of human illness. His project also imagined the world as a place of exhaustible knowledge that tacitly assumed that once we have investigated everything there is to investigate, we will have learned what there is to know about the world. Li Yu rejects both received knowledge and the ideal of comprehensive coverage in favor of his own contingent sensory experience of the world, necessarily incomplete and particular to him. In so doing, he shifts the idea of health and well-being away from that of a body acted upon by a multitude of external factors toward that of a diverse array of thinking bodies.

Li Shizhen relied on a textual tradition that made claims about the natural world that he himself had not seen, but he also insisted on using his own experience, and his own body, to test those things for which he found a text-based claim insufficient evidence. At the same time, given the epistemological basis of his project, he proceeded under that assumption that his body was fundamentally similar to other bodies. Li Yu, on the other hand, insists on the potential for difference in every person, that is, on each person's ability to have a unique and individual response to the things in the world. If the *Materia Medica* stakes a claim on that which can be confirmed to be generally true by experiment, Li Yu wants to focus instead on that which has

been shown to be possible, but remains, by its very definition, irregular, unique, and individualized—in this case, a unique living being irreducible to the epistemology of the medical body.

Li Yu, in his characteristic way, finds this epistemology limiting. He opens the “Health and Well-being” section of *Xianqing ouji* with an argument for opting not to take any medicine at all if one has access only to an average doctor.<sup>408</sup> His reasoning here echoes his position on a range of other topics, such as garden design, where he faults the wealthy for asking to have buildings or other features from famous gardens reproduced in their own gardens, rather than using their own minds to come up with something fresh. Applied to medical treatment, this revisionist stance suggests that it is undesirable to treat an illness based on a fixed catalogue of prescriptions. Rather, if the doctor does not have the skills to design the treatment based on the particulars, then it is better not to receive treatment at all. After all, a medicine that was actually poisonous would be much more dangerous to a patient than a medicine that he simply found not to his fancy.

Of course, Li Yu adds, people will always insist on using medicine even when it proves ineffective because they are not willing to sit by and feel like they are doing nothing. The conception of “medicine” as a way for people to reassure themselves they are doing something to forestall death points to the psychological underpinnings of illness and medical treatment that projects like Li Shizhen’s ignored. Li Yu makes the role of the psychological explicit when he addresses how people think about the role of medicine in their lives, and the social and emotional aspects of the use of medicine in treating illness:

The way I see it, in the entire world, there are only people who cling to life and fear death; there is no such thing as a medicine that can rescue a patient from a certain death.

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<sup>408</sup> For a translation and brief discussion of this opening essay, see Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 203-5.

“Medicine can only treat non-terminal illnesses; Buddha takes over those who are destined to go.” What an expression! We must not take it as a mere proverb. Nevertheless, we cannot abandon using medicine to treat illnesses any more than we can give up praying during a drought: We are well aware that the schedule of rainfall depends on the heavens, and that it is not something that will be delivered in response to our entreaties, yet who would ever sit idly by and watch as the seedlings and crops wither? People exhaust their hearts yearning for such things.

以予論之，天地之間只有貪生怕死之人，並無起死回生之藥。“藥醫不死病，佛度有緣人。”旨哉斯言！不得以諺語目之矣。然病之不能廢醫，猶旱之不能廢禱。明知雨澤在天，匪求能致，然豈有晏然坐視，聽禾苗稼穡之焦枯者乎？自盡其心而已矣。<sup>409</sup>

With these observations, Li Yu reiterates the limitations of the epistemology behind the *materia medica* by directing us to take note of the social and psychological aspects of medicine: People take medicine and give it to their loved ones, even when it is almost certain to have no effect.

This intervention consists of a call for a broader understanding of “health”—specifically one that includes the particular mentality and proclivities of the patient, and one that recognizes when medicine serves a mental or social purpose rather than a physical one—to supplement the *Bencao*’s nearly exhaustive study of pharmaceuticals.

Li Yu’s summary of the sorts of materials included in the *Bencao* highlights its comprehensiveness even as it hints that that very comprehensiveness borders on the ridiculous—we get a sense from his decision to include detailed references only to human excrements and animal urine that he would rather be a little sicker and in good spirits than a little healthier from ingesting things quite so unpalatable:

All of the requisite contents of a medicine bag are included in the collections of medical prescriptions. Everything that exists between heaven and earth, including grasses and trees, metals and stones, insects, fishes, and fowl, along with human excrement and the urine of oxen and horses is there—nothing is omitted. Such a collection can truly be called the book that contains everything, an unchanging classic of the ages.

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<sup>409</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 346.



藥籠應有之物，備載方書；凡天地間一切所有，如草木金石，昆蟲魚鳥，以及人身之便溺，牛馬之溲渤，無一或遺，是可謂兩者至備之書，百代不刊之典。<sup>410</sup>

To make his point about the limits of the *Bencao*, he proposes a contest that would reward anyone who could add to or correct the drug information contained in that comprehensive text, and claims that he would triumph over all of the great pharmacologists of the past who would be at a loss to suggest even the smallest amendment to such a comprehensive text. Li Yu's assumption that he alone would win hinges on his observation that pharmacologists are all working within a selfsame epistemology of the medical body, while he is proposing a fresh alternative which points to the deficiencies in that epistemology. His treatments *just might* cure a person, such as glimpsing something that is particularly delightful or frightening *to that person*. Such treatments are unique to the person with the ailment, based on their personal inclinations.

Elsewhere in the essay, Li Yu reveals that he uses the same methodology to develop medical treatments that he does to write his books.

I have been prone to illness my whole life, and now in my old age I do not take medicine. I have tried all of the many herbal remedies, to the point that I'm practically a reincarnation of the Divine Husbandman. Yet, beyond rhubarb for treating blockage, I have not seen that there is anything that when subjected to testing proves effective. In my life, I have established myself by authoring books, not one of which is not pure fiction, and my method for treating disease is the same. Every time I contract an illness, I consider how it came to be, and once I have the cause, I come up with a prescription and cure it with medicine. Now, what I call "a prescription" is not culled from those collections of medical prescriptions, but rather is a prescription based on the *feeling* that arises from the particular situation, one that draws its theory from the facts at hand. What I call medicine is not the kind of medicine that the *Materia Medica* is sure to include, but rather medicine obtained by following that which delights my heart, and by making use of whatever is at my fingertips. I am well aware that such baseless claims cannot be used to instruct the world, but there is no harm in stating my views for what they are worth for the people of the world to hear if they so choose. As for everyone who reads this work, retain that which you find credible and reject that which you find dubious. Please do not distort my diction by pointing to my language or my intention with my diction. This is all I ask of those who read the books of Liweng.

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<sup>410</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 347.

予善病一生，老而勿藥。百草盡經嘗試，幾作神農後身，然於大黃解結之外，未見有呼應極靈，若此物之隨試驗驗者也。生平著書立言，無一不由杜撰，其於療病之法亦然。每患一症，輒自考其致此之由，得其所由，然後治之以方，療之以藥。所謂方者，非方書所載之方，乃觸景生情，就事論事之方也；所謂藥者，非《本草》必載之藥，乃隨心所喜，信手拈來之藥也。明知無本之言不可訓世，然不妨姑妄言之，以備世人之妄聽。凡閱是編者，理有可信則存之，事有可疑則闕之，不以文害辭，不以辭害志，是所望於讀笠翁之書者。<sup>411</sup>

Such a “prescription, based on the *feeling* that arises from the particular situation, one that draws its theory from the facts at hand,” echoes the versatility with which we see Li Yu imbue his clever fictional characters, be they thieves, maids, caring friends, or kidnapped wives.<sup>412</sup> The sick body, for Li Yu, cannot be understood without reference to the sensual, pleasure-seeking body with a story of its own, one that does what it will despite indisputable medical knowledge to the contrary. One of Li Yu’s complaints about the *Materia Medica* is that, adhering to its prescriptions, one might end up eating things that one does not like because they are supposed to benefit one, while also not eating what one likes because it does not benefit one.<sup>413</sup> With this observation, Li Yu reiterates the centrality of pleasure in his world view, even as he points to the limits of medical discourse of “health” as the basis for the pursuit of a satisfying and fulfilling life—yes, one could follow the strictures of the *Materia Medica* to a tee, but one might miss out on much of what is enjoyable about life along the way. His distinctive brand of frugal hedonism lies outside the purview of the *Materia Medica* with its meticulous calculations of ostensibly demonstrated efficacy. Bodies are for more than healthy reproduction or longevity, they are houses for the mind and the senses, and these aspects should be valued as well.

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<sup>411</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 347.

<sup>412</sup> For more on this quality, which is also a stock fictional disposition of such characters as Li Yu’s thieves, see McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*, 26.

<sup>413</sup> For this reference, see Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 335.

Li Yu concludes this introductory essay somewhat counter-intuitively, with the claim that the sorts of medicine included in his text are not simply his own creation, but rather have their origins in the collections of medical prescriptions.

Now, it may seem that what I am saying is something I have fabricated, but the fact is that it is not just my creation. It has its origins in a line from the collections of medical prescriptions: "To treat illness is to think." To use thinking as a treatment is effective eight or nine times out of ten, but it does not work without a particular person to do the thinking. I want to tell all those fortune-tellers who analyze characters or guess at upturned bowls to stop divining and start treating illnesses. Maybe this method will be practicable, and they will avoid being misled by a fixed and unchanging collection of medical prescriptions.

究竟予言似創，實非創也，原本於方書之一言：“醫者，意也。”以意為醫，十驗八九，但非其人不。吾願以拆字射覆者改卜為醫，庶幾此法可行，而不為一定不移之方書所誤耳。<sup>414</sup>

Throughout the essay, Li Yu tries to put a thinking person back into the equation of medical treatment. Here again, we see links to his diatribe against copying the design of famous gardens, in which he argued that the master of the garden—its owner—had a responsibility to express himself through the creation of his garden. Likewise, a doctor whose knowledge is limited to the claims of medical texts is deficient because he has stopped thinking. The many examples Li Yu provides in the short essays that follow this one argue that the thinking doctor must consider the patient as a thinking person. This space for the reader to have his own thoughtful experience is something he was teaching through the very form of *Xianqing ouji*, as I have discussed in Chapter One.

At the end of *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu asks us to think of the text as *Liweng bencao* 笠翁本草 (*Li Yu's* Materia Medica). He has turned the epistemology of the *bencao* on its head, suggesting that even if patients recover from their illness, they will still not have learned how to

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<sup>414</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 347.

live. Li Yu pointed out that any body, despite all human efforts to the contrary, could survive at most some one hundred years, often less, and almost none any more. In his view, the project of the materia medica is limited because in scouring the earth for medicinal properties in an attempt to extend that life by fits and starts, it has overlooked the fleeting but vital qualities of individual perception, feelings, desires. The medicines Li Yu describes are not specific materials—the thing that one craves, the thing which is most crucial to someone, the thing which one loves, the thing which one has never seen, the thing which one has admired for a long time, the thing in which one delights, the thing which one hates. Instead, they are all based on individual experiences and penchants, and they invite the patient to think of his own life story and the world at his fingertips. These unique life stories resist treatment by medical texts like *Bencao gangmu*, which were invested in the conception of an interchangeable and productive body.<sup>415</sup> Li Yu resists theorizing in a way that would draw material analogies among bodies and drugs, focusing instead on a treatment that acknowledges the limitations of the human lifespan and then celebrates thought, difference, and creativity. A sick person, for him, is one who fails to interact creatively and thoughtfully with the world around him.

### ***New Stories about the Body***

With *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu asked people to reconsider the notion of a healthy body and formulated an alternative medicine that invited people to think of their bodies within the trajectories of their own lives and experiences. In his fiction and plays, Li Yu invented fictional bodies and set them in motion with stories that would invite readers to notice their physicality.

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<sup>415</sup> See Clunas, *Fruitful Sights: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*. Clunas discusses the shift from productive gardens to ornamental gardens in the late Ming, and the reflection of this in the manuals of the time that would list even productive plants as ornamental and separately from food, which was enjoyed as another refined pleasure, separate from its production.

By putting unusual bodies at the center of narratives, he experiments with alternatives for the body that decenter basic assumptions about them, such as what they should look like, what they should do, what might happen if a male body and female body end up alone together, what makes them virtuous, what is forbidden, and what is desirable. With these stories, Li Yu asks readers to pause and think about the body as an unfamiliar, objective thing.

Patrick Hanan has noted that Li Yu's stories and plays are "full of ribald, shocking references to things rarely treated in literature: diarrhea, menstruation, castration, a "stone maiden" (girl without a vagina), and so forth."<sup>416</sup> I would suggest that the range of topics relating to the body that Li Yu broaches in his stories and plays is not in general more shocking than the way the body and its functions were described in the often sensational late-Ming stories, erotic fiction, and plays.<sup>417</sup> The fiction of the late Ming reveled in drawing out erotic scenes of people in the throes of passion as well as the violent ends with which they often met as a result. The difference between the depiction of bodies in the late Ming and in Li Yu's fiction can be located, rather, in a different signifying potential of the body: in late-Ming fiction the body was vulnerable to transgression, while in Li Yu's fiction it is another tool that invites people to come

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<sup>416</sup> Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 51.

<sup>417</sup> See Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*; McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*. McMahon notes that the social transgressions portrayed with "unbridled descriptiveness" in the late Ming gave way to a more "cerebral approach" in the early Qing, when narrative began to sound more "like a treatise" (130). On the explicit portrayal of bodily functions, sexual encounters, and the grotesque in Ming-Qing fiction, see Tina Lu, *Accidental Incest, Filial Cannibalism, & Other Peculiar Encounters in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008); McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*; Ding, *Obscene Things: Sexual Politics in Jin Ping Mei*; Yenna Wu, *Ameliorative Satire and the Seventeenth-Century Chinese Novel, Xingshi Yinyuan Zhuan* (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1999). One could argue that Li Yu paid more attention to the execution of crass language and earthy humor in his plays than other playwrights, which would be in keeping with his more general emphasis on the spoken parts, but he upheld common practice in limiting these comments and attitudes to the baser characters. See Mengjun Li, "'Delightful Yet Not Lascivious': Sexual Jokes and Confucian Entertainment in Li Yu's Plays" (paper presented at the Association for Asian Performance Annual Conference, Chicago, IL, August 10-11 2011).

up with new ways to put it to use. The clever people who populate Li Yu's stories are thoughtful, calm, and calculating; some of them take charge of their bodies, while others make do with theirs. Rather than pair a graphic erotic encounter with a violent punishment, Li Yu ignores the reader's shock and moves sedately ahead with his masterful plots. In this way, he forces the reader to think of those bodies moving through time and space, deflating the intensity of the explicit snapshots as soon as he presents them.

Li Yu's fiction and drama feature many strong characters who use their wit and imagination to solve problems or benefit themselves or others; beyond the creativity of the characters is the often iterated ingenuity of their author, Li Yu.<sup>418</sup> These characters burst with ideas, and Li Yu emphasizes their agency in creating a fiction-worthy sequence of events out of the stuff of their everyday lives. For example, in "Guizheng lou 歸正樓 (Return-to-Right Hall)," a wily thief with a mind to reform uses his understanding of the chemical properties of things to trick prospective benefactors into believing that he possesses supernatural powers. In one instance, he uses turtle urine, "a substance that penetrates through wood and resists all efforts to scrub or plane it off," to leave an indelible message on an official's gate. To astonish another prospect, he inserts a hollow sword of tin and lead into a calabash filled with quicksilver, causing the sword to decompose. For these sequences, both Li Yu the author and his character set their minds to determining the characteristics of real-world things and ascertaining how they act on one another.

In some stories, characters turn their attention to their own bodies in the service of a clever plan. A pair of stories in Li Yu's first collection, *Wushengxi* 無聲戲 (Silent Operas), both

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<sup>418</sup> Patrick Hanan has suggested that "the indispensable feature in a Li Yu work is a novel idea that is elaborated with a craftsman's ingenuity and more than a few surprises and shocks. In many stories the ingenuity is that of the characters themselves; because of his delight in invention, he was much drawn to themes of cleverness." *The Invention of Li Yu*, 76.

feature protagonists who manipulate their bodies out of devotion to their husbands. Each of the stories combines a novel idea with an exploration of the potential of a very common thing—the body—just as “Guizheng lou” did with the properties of tin and quicksilver. The parallel titles suggest the overcoming of physical limitations by juxtaposing well-known historical figures with disjunctive gender markers: “*Nan Mengmu jiaohe sanqian* 男孟母教合三遷 (A Male Mencius’s Mother Raises Her Son Properly By Moving House Three Times)” and “*Nü Chen Ping jisheng qichu* 女陳平計生七出 (The Female Chen Ping Saves Her Life with Seven Ruses).”<sup>419</sup>

In “*Nü Chen Ping*,” the adult female protagonist, Geng Erniang, uses several ploys to preserve her chastity when she is captured by bandits during the Ming-Qing transition. Her strategy takes into account the particulars of the female body, and exploits them to trick her captor several times. Before she is captured, she collects some menstrual rags and buys some croton beans, which she sews into her clothes. Upon capture, she first fakes menstruation while exhibiting affection for her captor, successfully persuading him to wait a few days before having sex with her—he sniffs the rags to confirm her story, smells blood, and desists. When her time runs out, she rubs the oil from the croton beans on her genitals to cause them to swell up. The description, narrated through the eyes of the bandit captor, reads, “Jade-white flesh that has risen high, Held in a purple glow. Deep cleft swollen to a shallow slit, With no gate to enter. Two parts forming a single whole, With a crack that it hard to open. Like a bun left steaming three whole nights, Or a dried mussel soaked for ten days. 玉膚高聳，紫暈微含。深痕漲作淺痕，無門可入；兩片合成一片，有縫難開。好像蒸過三宿的饅頭，又似浸過十朝的淡菜。”<sup>420</sup> In

<sup>419</sup> See Volpp, “The Discourse on Male Marriage: Li Yu’s ‘A Male Mencius’s Mother.’” She points to three distinct genders (boy, woman, man) and three femininities (natural woman, artificial woman, virtuous woman) in the text.

<sup>420</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 8.100. Translations adapted from Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 89.

this description, Geng Erniang's genitals can no longer be read as female. With "no gate to enter," she has become a useless body to her captor who captured her in the first place solely for the purpose of relieving his sexual desires. Finally, she slips one of the croton beans into his food, causing him to experience bout after bout of diarrhea.

With her first ploy, Geng Erniang buys time by exploiting the process of menstruation and the taboo against sex with a menstruating woman. With the others, she uses her knowledge of the properties of croton oil first to transform her own body, effectively ridding it of its female vulnerability for a time, and second to transform the body of her captor from that of a vigorous bandit to that of a very ill person at the mercy of his body. She has turned the tables on him, taking charge of the "gate" to his body, while shielding hers from him. In effect, she has used her cunning to reverse the roles of their bodies, taking on the active role and relegating him to the passive captive.

"Nan Mengmu" features a teenage protagonist, You Ruilang, who takes charge of his body by castrating himself after his older male lover, Xu Jifang, convinces him that his developing penis will cause their relationship to come to a premature end. Jifang expresses concern that when Ruilang's body fully develops, he will no longer be content to play the passive role in their relationship. He drives home the urgency of the situation with the quick repetition eight times in just a few lines the words "each day." "This thing of yours is growing by the day, so my luck is shrinking by the day. Your semen is increasing by the day, and my pleasure is decreasing by the day. 如今你的此物一日長似一日，我的緣分一日短似一日了。你的腎水一日多似一日，我的歡娛一日少似一日了。"<sup>421</sup> It is worth considering the way in which Ruilang actively and successfully asserts his desire to play a passive role permanently in

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<sup>421</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 8.120; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 118.



light of the role reversal in “Nü Chen Ping.” While such a clever and palpable preservation of female chastity was certainly new and entertaining, Geng Erniang’s story can nevertheless be read in a long tradition of heroic and virtuous women. The changes she made to her body were temporary, and upon returning home, her body proves able to function as before. Ruilang’s decision to render his own body unproductive marks a permanent decision to give up his ability to father children of his own, even as it marks his ability to manipulate his body to achieve his desired ends. The narrative speeds his healing process: “Remarkably enough, whereas if other people nicked their little finger it took a considerable time to heal, Ruilang’s wound, as if by divine help, closed up in less than a month. Even more remarkably, the resulting scar looked just like a woman’s vagina. 卻也古怪，別人剔破一個指頭，也要害上幾時；他就像有神助的一般，不上月余，就收了口，那疤痕又生得古古怪怪，就像婦人的牝戶一般。”<sup>422</sup> The relationship between Ruilang’s body and time in the story is indicative of how comfortably and easily a particular kind of body is suited to a particular kind of story. Whereas in the beginning the narrative had been happy to declare him more feminine and desirable (to a man) than any woman, when he gets a little older, time speeds up, unable to accommodate his maturing body. After he takes control of his body, time slows down again by speeding along his recovery, and he is able to play his role as Jifang’s wife.

Others of Li Yu’s stories work by depicting a clockwork fictional world in which the supernatural and the natural world correspond perfectly and karmic retribution is doled out by the author’s exacting hand. In what amounts to a parody of late-Ming stories that attribute outcomes to karma or fate, Li Yu ensures that not one action goes unaccounted for. The most

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<sup>422</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 8.122; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 121.

extended version of this sort of plot is that of *Rouputuan*, in which every sin of the wayward protagonist is repaid with interest. The transactional nature of the world of these stories lends itself to precise accounting, sometimes in specific quantities of silver. The physical body exhibits a marked plasticity in a world that runs on economic exchange. Characters undergo physical transformations as a result of supernatural economic exchange that invite readers to reconsider the boundaries between male and female, physical and social, body and commodity.

With “*Chou langjun pajiao pian deyan* 丑郎君怕嬌偏得艷 (“An Ugly Man Fears Beauties but Obtains Them”), Li Yu upends the scholar-beauty romance, positing that in real life, beauties actually end up with ugly husbands. The story is a sweet tale of initial repulsion followed by good-natured accommodation, as three wives share the burden of interacting with their repulsive, but well-meaning husband. Li Yu adapted this story into the *chuanqi* play, *Naihetian* 奈何天 (*What Can You Do About Fate?*, 1657), a lengthier genre that also demanded the comedy of a happy ending rather than fiction’s grudging accommodation to life’s contingencies.

Scene twenty-eight of the play, “*Xingbian* 形变 (Transformation),” opens with the self-introduction of a *bianxing shizhe* 變形使者 (Envoy of Transformation):

For all time, I have possessed a matchless skill;  
Even the Creator cannot approach my subtle power.  
Do not say that form is hard to change;  
If you wish to change your body, first change your heart-mind.

絕技曾經擅古今，微權造化不能侵。世人莫道形難變，欲變形骸早變心。<sup>423</sup>

This envoy has come to bathe the play’s male protagonist, Que Lihou, in an effort repair his many physical defects and to dissipate the nauseating stench that emanates from his body. The

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<sup>423</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 5.88.

occasion for the visit is Que's recent appointment to office due to his donation of a sum of silver to a military effort. After his bath, Que is surprised when others fail to recognize him, only to be shocked when he finally regards his own face in a mirror. His wife attributes the transformation to the power of spirits (*guishen zhi li* 鬼神之力), the only explanation available to her, she says, given the speed with which his body was completely transformed.

The envoy is the sort of fantastical character who frequently shows up in Li Yu's plays to facilitate destined meetings or to adapt the human world to some fated outcome.<sup>424</sup> Such otherworldly characters are generally absent from Li Yu's fiction, as in *Rouputuan*, when Weiyang sheng shouts in vain at the Lord of Heaven, "Even if bodily material can't be exchanged once people have been endowed, why not take some flesh from my own legs, some sinew from under my skin, some of my body's strength, and redistribute it here?"<sup>425</sup> The adept in *Rouputuan* effects a physical transformation, but he does so in a way that is decidedly not supernatural. Rather, it is described in all of the grisly detail of stubborn flesh.

In *Naihetian*, before he bathes Que, the envoy tries to persuade the audience of the malleability of the physical body in an extended monologue: "The people of this world only know that the senses, limbs, spirit, and deportment are all generated by heaven and earth, nourished by the parents, and that at the moment that the baby is born, good and bad qualities are already fixed such that later on there is no changing them. 世上的人，只曉得五官四肢與規模舉動，都是天地生成，父母養就，胞胎落地時節，就定下好歹，以後再一改不得的。"<sup>426</sup> He explains that, quite to the contrary, he can easily change people from unsightly to beautiful and

<sup>424</sup> See also Szekely, "Playing for Profit: Tracing the Emergence of Authorship through Li Yu's (1611-1680) Adaptations of his Huaben Stories into Chuanqi Drama," 75.

<sup>425</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 108.

<sup>426</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 5.88-89.

back again. Lest the audience write off his trade as absurd, the envoy continues with examples that would have been rather more familiar to a contemporary audience: “Now, in the world today, there is always that impoverished scholar, who, judging by his appearance and manner, looks extremely wretched—he actually looks no different from a beggar. When, one day, he finally ascends the heights and starts to be an official, not only does he harbor a new spirit and cultivate a new body, such that his spirit is completely different from what it was previously, but even his bones and skin are changed absolutely from their previous state. 如今世上，盡有那一介貧儒，看他的形容舉止，寒酸不過，竟與乞丐一般；一旦飛黃騰達，做起仕宦來，不但居移氣，養移體，那種氣概與當初不同，就是骨骼肌膚，也絕不是本來面目。”<sup>427</sup> He follows this with an example of a newly wealthy man who becomes pleasantly plump after striking it rich. If a spirit sent by the Jade Emperor to earth to makeover an ugly man with a physical transformation was absurd, the image of an impoverished scholar, disheveled and beleaguered, who dreams of just such a transformation, would have been recognizable to all. Li Yu expected his audiences to have personal knowledge of such instances of manifest physical transformation, and he dramatizes those shifts in social role as necessitating changes in physical form, gait, and demeanor as well.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 5.89.

<sup>428</sup> Sophie Volpp has suggested that the mismatch between character and role-type in this play “underscores the distinction between the nouveaux-riches’ lack of cultivation and their social status.” Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China*, 29. She points out that not only is *Naihetian* the first *chuanqi* play to cast a *chou* 丑 [clown] role-type as the male protagonist (only to transform the character, Que Lihou, into a person who looks like a *sheng* 生 [young male lead] role-type), but that the story also features the failed performance of a character who is a *sheng* role actor hired to stand in for Que on one of his visits to a prospective bride (a gentry woman can see through the posturing of this actor).

This emphasis on the distinctions among social roles, experimentation with the potential of theatrical performance to comment on the contemporary social scene, and the commodification of ever more aspects of culture, led Li Yu to turn his attention to the physical body itself, mining it for meaning and potential. On the one hand, the Envoy of Transformation instructs people to begin with their heart-minds if they want to transform their bodies (the compound the Envoy uses is *xinghai* 形骸, or human form and skeleton). I suspect that this focus on the transformation of the naked physical body, including the internal organs, in discussing the social relations is a direct result of the status system and external markers of social identity having spun out of control. Such an intimate physical transformation seems to be almost indispensable to accompany a change in status in these narratives. If we are to take the envoy at his word, a change in a person's heart-mind is all that is required to effect a change in his body.

This episode is also important for the dialectical relationship it illustrates between social life and its representation by literati writers. In the play, Que is rewarded with this transformation as a direct result of his donation of a sum of silver to the military effort. He has, in essence, purchased a new body with his donation, one that comes with his new rank, available for purchase. Silver is a currency that has the power to elicit both social and physical transformation. At the same time, the normal path to an official career remained success in the civil service examination. Even though he has donated money in hopes that he might be rewarded with an official rank, Que is still surprised when the runner arrives at his door with the good news of his official appointment. He insists that his household “does not have anyone who reads books or takes the examinations 我家又沒人讀書, 沒人赴考,”<sup>429</sup> and so is unlikely to be visited with any good news. Reading and writing are still prime currency in discourse, but they seem to have lost

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<sup>429</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 5.90.

their purchasing power here as a shrinking percentage of educated men succeeded by means of the traditional path. In this context, the marginal comment that accompanies the Envoy's opening soliloquy is of interest for the power it attributes to the brush of the literatus: "That the illusory becomes real and the doubtful becomes believable is all due to this soliloquy. Is the brush of a man of letters not a Creator? 變幻為真，破疑為信，全在此段賓白。文人之筆，那得不是化工。"<sup>430</sup> The term I have translated as "Creator" here is not the term *zaohua* 造化, which Li Yu usually uses when comparing his own creations favorably to nature, but the related term, *huagong* 化工, which emphasizes both the impetus behind the transformations of nature and the craft involved in orchestrating them. In the play, money has the power to command a spirit to transform the body, while outside the play, men of letters exercise the same power with their brushes on the page, as in Li Yu's designing and managing all aspects of the worlds he invented, in fiction, and in *Xianqing ouji* in the real world. Transformation of the physical body was the ultimate test of these experiments.

What kinds of stories would we tell about bodies were they completely commoditized is the central question of another story, "*Biannü weier Pusa qiao* 變女為兒菩薩巧 (A Daughter is Transformed into a Son by a Bodhisattva)." In this story, it is not the purchase of an official position that proves able to transform an ugly, illiterate man into the one worthy of his new station, nor is it instantaneous like that transformation. Rather, a calculating miser manages to purchase an living son from the Bodhisattva Cundi (*Zhunti pusa* 准提菩薩) for seven or eight thousand taels of silver. The purchasing power of silver is absolute, and this transformation takes place in slow motion to reiterate that fact. The story tells of a wealthy salt-worker, Shi Daqing,

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<sup>430</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 5.89.

who is approaching sixty and childless. For twenty years, he had remained devoted to the Bodhisattva Cundi praying only that she grant him a son.<sup>431</sup> Finally, on the eve of his sixtieth birthday, the bodhisattva appears to him in a mirror in a dream. The bodhisattva explains that Daqing has not been destined to have a son, and only after Daqing offers to do anything to repent for his sins does the bodhisattva agree to strike a deal. Being a wealthy and avaricious man, Daqing will have to donate seventy to eighty percent of his wealth to charity; if he can manage to do that, the bodhisattva promises she will grant him a son. Daqing holds up his end of the bargain fastidiously, and just one year later, when he has dispensed twenty percent of his cache, he learns that one of his concubines has become pregnant. True to his miserly reputation, he immediately begins calculating about providing for the unborn child, and slows his donations almost to a halt.

Whether it's a boy or a girl," he thinks, "it will be my flesh and blood. If it's a girl, I shall have only a son-in-law, but I'll still need to save up some money for a dowry! If the baby should be a son, he'll certainly want to inherit my property, but it I've given everything away, how will he exist?"

明日生出來的無論是男是女，總是我的骨血，就作是個女兒，我生平只有半子，難道不留些奩產嫁她？萬一是個兒子，少不得要承家守業，東西散盡了，教他把甚麼做人家？<sup>432</sup>

What follows is one of very few instances in Li Yu's fiction where an event or sequence of events is attributed to bona fide supernatural intervention. Yet here, as in *Rouputuan*, the precision with which the supernatural causality plays out tends to turn it into a mockery of itself. In this case, it turns out that two thousand taels of silver (the equivalent of twenty percent of Daqing's wealth) suffice to purchase a live-born baby, but not a sex. As soon as he hears the

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<sup>431</sup> See Patrick Hanan's note about the ceremonies common to the worship of this bodhisattva. Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 144.

<sup>432</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 183; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 150-51.

baby's cry, Daqing inquires after the child's sex ("male or female?" *shinan shinü* 是男是女): the midwife, upon "feeling beneath the baby's belly, and seeing that there was nothing in the way of her hand 把小肚底下摸了一把，不见有碍手的东西" at first declares it a girl, then, upon further inspection, changes her mind and announces that it is a boy.<sup>433</sup> She broaches the topic of the baby's ambiguous genitalia by asking him if he wants to raise it, given that it is not a son or a daughter. What kind of a "thing *dongxi* 東西" could *that* be, Daqing wonders, before he looks for himself.

What he sees defies description:  
 Below the navel, Between the thighs,  
 A clove in seed, Lacking form, a mere trace;  
 A nutmeg in bud, Open outside, closed within.  
 Neither concave, Nor convex, But like a wonton rolled out flat.  
 Round it was, Yet incomplete, Like a dumpling newly made.  
 It fled the bounds of *yin* and *yang*, And fell between male and female.

肚臍底下，腿脰中間，結子丁香，無其形而有其跡；含苞豆蔻，開其外而閉其中，凹不凹，凸不凸，好像個壓扁的餛飩；圓又圓，缺又缺，竟是個做成的肉餃。逃於陰陽之外，介乎男女之間。<sup>434</sup>

The father's gaze (along with those of the narrator and reader) zooms in on the baby's genitals and hovers there. The narrator struggles to find some semblance of the sight in the natural world, using no fewer than four metaphors in an attempt to analogize that strange thing—clove, nutmeg, wonton, and meat dumpling. All four feature something encased in a skin-like wrapper that obscures them from view. While none of the metaphors link the genitals to anything approximating the human body, that the thing inside the wonton and dumpling wrappers would have been ground pork might have prompted readers to imagine genitals made of ground, cooked

<sup>433</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 184; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 152.

<sup>434</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 184; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 152.



meat.<sup>435</sup> The message is clear—readers are to join Daqing in his repulsion at the sight of this non-human “thing.” It is worth noting that the body is described as “between” male and female” but “outside” *yin* and *yang*. This repulsion at the ambiguously sexed, but otherwise normal, body points both to an understanding of sex as dichotomous, essentialized, and linked to an expected social role and gender, and also to an understanding of *yin* and *yang* as equated with the female and male body, respectively.<sup>436</sup>

After this examination of the baby’s genitals, the narrator declares: “The baby was a half-female, non-male stone girl 原来是个半雌不雄的石女.”<sup>437</sup> The construction *ban/bu* (half/not) usually means neither/nor, which means that a good translation of this phrase would be “neither male nor female,” but given that the child is declared a “stone girl,” directly following, I think we might retain the specifics of the difference between “half” and “non.” That the child is only half female, yet fully a “stone girl,” is in keeping with Charlotte Furth’s suggestion that in late imperial medical texts, bodies that were not clearly male would default to a female

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<sup>435</sup> The extended description of her genitals here is about the same length as that of the female genitals transformed by croton oil in “Nü Chenping.” In that case, the “missing” vagina is the solution to a problem, while here it is the problem to be solved.

<sup>436</sup> This story has interesting implications for conceptualizing the range of seventeenth-century conceptions of the transformations of *yin* and *yang* and the sex/gender system. Following Tani Barlow, recent scholarship has resisted assuming that there was a fundamental and essential distinction between the male and female body. Often drawing on Charlotte Furth’s work on sex changes as occurring naturally as a result of the play between *yin* and *yang*, scholars have pointed out that sex and gender were much more fluid than they are in the European West. (See Furth, “Androgynous Males and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century China; Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*; Epstein, “Inscribing the Essentials: Culture and the Body in Ming-Qing Fiction.” The discourse on intersex bodies and sex transformations does show people changing sex/gender with some success by practicing a social role over a period of time. But the crisis that ambiguous bodies caused in fictional narrative and the repulsion that they inspired in those to whom they were to be related make clear that the physical body played a central role in establishing one’s social identity. If there was more fluidity and flexibility of bodies at that time—such that a sex change, or even a permanently cross-dressed person, could fulfill the role of a virtuous family member (see Volpp, “The Discourse on Male Marriage: Li Yu’s ‘A Male Mencius’s Mother’.”) The ambiguous body housed a non-person until it could be understood as one of those gender roles.

<sup>437</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 8.184; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 153.

designation.<sup>438</sup> “Half a daughter” is apparently where Daqing draws the line, and he rejects the child. The narrative has already made clear that, for him, a girl is worth only half a boy: When Daqing hears that the child is female, his “heart grew half-cold 心上冷了一半。” The “half” here matches precisely the value he had placed on a daughter when he declared that if the baby were a girl, at least he would have a son-in-law—literally “a half-son *banzi* 半子。” Li Yu’s play with the numbers is not unintentional: One quarter of a son, incidentally, is just what Daqing paid for (he had given away 2000 taels of the requested 7000 or 8000).

The precise equation of the baby with the amount of silver he has given to charity only intensifies as the narrative moves forward. Daqing berates the bodhisattva for not making good on her promise, despite Daqing’s good-faith efforts: “Other donors give a single beam or pillar to a Buddhist temple and get any number of things in return. If you took everything I’ve donated to a silversmith, he could make several silver children (*yin haizi*) out of it. Surely you can give me one son in exchange for all that? 別人在佛殿上施一根椽，捨一個柱，就要祈保許多心事；我捨去的東西，若拿來交與銀匠，也打得幾個銀孩子出來，難道就換不得一個兒子?”<sup>439</sup> The bodhisattva explains that her actions are a direct result of Daqing’s failing to keep his end of the bargain, and that if Daqing will simply uphold their agreement, she will be happy to grant him a son. Daqing continues to dole out money, expecting another of his concubines to become pregnant, until about half of his wealth is gone (此時家私將去一半).<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> See Furth, "Androgynous Males and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century China." She argues that ambiguously sexed bodies were almost always classified as female. The sorts of non-males included in *Bencao gangmu* were all non-males because of sexual dysfunction, while the category of non-females included all people who were not obviously male.

<sup>439</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 185; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 153.

<sup>440</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 185; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 153.

Half a year has gone by when one day a maid thrusts the baby into Daqing's arms in her haste to get to the toilet. Daqing notices its fine features, and implores it "What evil did you do in your past life that you've been turned into this thing (*dongxi*) as a punishment? (你在前世作了甚麼惡，就罰你做這樣一件東西?)"<sup>441</sup> Upon checking between the child's legs, he discovers that something is different. The narrator explains:

When the child was born, it had both male and female things in the spot where it urinates, except that the male one was retracted internally and the female one displayed externally, which is why it looked neither male nor female. Now, for some unknown reason, the female one had gradually flattened out, while half of the male one protruded. No one knew when the change had occurred.

那孩子生出來的時節，小便之處男女兩件東西都是有的，只是男子的倒縮在裡面，女子的倒現在外邊，所以男不像男，女不像女；如今不知甚麼緣故，女子的漸漸長平了，男子的又拖了半截出來，竟不知是幾時變過的？”<sup>442</sup>

Rather than the father's initial assumption that the child was not male or female, it had in fact been born with both male and female parts. It was only because of how the sex organs were situated that they had appeared unusual, since his body had obscured the male sex organ. The narrator's explanation of the physiological basis for the turn of events remains secondary to the precise equation between Daqing's donation of half his wealth, and the tiny half-protruded penis between the legs of his child.<sup>443</sup>

<sup>441</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 186; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 155.

<sup>442</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 187; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 156.

<sup>443</sup> Daqing concludes that the gender trouble is due to the creativity of the bodhisattva: "I imagine that at the child's birth [the bodhisattva] left the two alternatives open so as to test my devotion to charity. Maleness, femaleness, and not-male-nor-female-ness, would all be determined by her. 想当初降生的时节，他原做个两可的道理，试我好善之心诚与不诚，男也由得他，女也由得他，不男不女也由得他。” Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 187; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 156. It is worth noting in this passage that when attributing the bodhisattva's deliberate choice to allow the child to begin life with ambiguous genitals, Daqing phrases it as two alternatives, even as he lists three as a possible outcomes. This inability to allow the third possibility room in language is echoed below in the comment that he had been unable to give the ambiguous child a name—even the name "Strange-born." While the child was

The fluidity of the child's sex becomes a test of Daqing's generosity and commitment, a threat against which he must struggle, but also one about which he must calculate. At this point, no story time elapses between the narrator's report of Daqing's recent donations and its account of the growth of the child's penis. "In just a few months [Daqing] had given away two or three thousand more taels, after which he took another look at the child. Not only had its penis (interestingly the neutral term *rendao*, literally, "human way") lengthened a great deal, the scrotum and testicles had also descended. 不上數月，又捨去二三千金。再把孩子一看，不但人道又長了許多，連腎囊腎子都褪出來了。"<sup>444</sup> The sum of half of his wealth, which he had given previously, and this final two or three thousand taels comes out to exactly the seventy or eighty percent of his wealth the bodhisattva had first demanded of him in exchange for a son.<sup>445</sup>

The focus in this story is on the fact that the baby grows into the sex that is purchased for him—that of a productive male heir—in *direct proportion* to the amount of silver his father gives to charity. Here, retribution is a zero-sum game.<sup>446</sup> Many stories had treated the likes of Daqing—calculating misers who hoard their wealth. Li Yu departs from these not only by

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neither male nor female (*buci buxiong*), Daqing had been unable to give it a name. But now that he was certain it was a boy, he chose the name Strange-born because of the strange circumstances of the child's birth 以前達卿因孩子不雌不雄，難取名字，直到此時，方才拿得定是個男子，因他生得奇異，取名叫做奇生。” Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 187; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 156.

<sup>444</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 8.188; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 157.

<sup>445</sup> Li Yu concludes the story with a message to his readers: "I would urge all of you gentlemen without sons to stop calculating your karma and start giving away some of your money, to make way for a son. 世上無嗣的諸公，不必論因果不因果，請多少散去些，以為容子之地。” Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 8.188; Li Yu 李漁, *Silent Operas*, 157.

<sup>446</sup> On the precise calculation of karmic retribution, see Cynthia J. Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991). See also Siao-chen Hu, "In the Name of Correctness: Ding Yaokang's *Xu Jin Ping Mei* as a Reading of *Jin Ping Mei*," in Martin W. Huang, *Snakes' Legs: Sequels, Continuations, Rewritings, and Chinese Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 75-97; Andrew Cheung, "Popular Conceptions of Karma, Rebirth, and Retribution in Seventeenth-Century China," *Chinese Culture* 36, no. 1 (1995).

making a son into a commodity with a fixed purchase price, but also by narrating in vivid prose what a cheaply procured baby's body would look like. That a son can be purchased through such a precise and immediate economic transaction, regardless of one's destiny or karma, pokes fun at the logic of that whole belief system, which never functions so flawlessly in the real world. At the same time, the crux of the story remains the unexpected plasticity of the child's body, first deficient, then excessive, in its physical expression of sex (and in its relationship to its father). The extended narration of the baby's penis—growing at a snail's pace and in direct proportion to his father's donations—is a clever and memorable sequence outrageous enough that it readers might stop and reconsider the body's place in a world that runs on the circulation of commodities.

The image of the multiple “silver sons” Daqing insists he could have already had cast out of the silver he has donated echoes the prologue to another of Li Yu's stories, “Ersun qi haigu, tongpu bensang 兒孫棄骸骨，童僕奔喪 (Son and Grandson Abandon His Corpse; His Servant Hurries to Make Funeral Arrangements). In that prologue, silver displaces the need for a flesh-and-blood son entirely. There are two old friends: One is childless and the other has two sons. When the latter is about to divide his property between his two sons, his friend warns against it, counseling him to retain some of his savings to support himself. He does not heed that advice, and soon his two sons have squandered their inheritance and he has no one to look after him in his old age. His childless friend invites him over for two feasts, ostensibly given by each of his sons in turn. After they have enjoyed their meals, his friend asks to meet his sons, so the man pulls a packet of silver out of each pocket, and says, “These are my two little sons.” His friend replies, “These are packets of silver, why would you call them your sons?” What follows is an explanation of just how silver has come to take the place of sons in this man's life:

It is precisely this silver that is my sons. Of all the sons in the world, which is as filial as my silver? If I want wine, it becomes wine; if I want meat, it becomes meat. I need not worry; I need not plead with it—what a creature [*tixin*]! It was borne of the labor of my bones, and should thus be counted as my own flesh and blood [*zija guxue*]. At first I had it share a home with me, not able to bear the thought of living apart. But after you did not listen to me the day you divided your home [property among your sons], when I urged you to reserve a portion to care for yourself in your old age, I came home and divided them between two places, one on the left, and one on the right, and I had them take turns supplying food in order to see if your family or my family was more filial.

無嗣的道：“銀子就是兒子了，天下的兒子哪裡還有孝順似他的？要酒就是酒，要肉就是肉，不用心焦，不消催促，何等體心。他是我骨頭上掙出來的，也只當自家骨血，當初原教他同家過活，不忍分居，只因你那一日分家，我勸你留一分養老，你不肯聽，我回來也把他分做兩處，一個居左，一個居右，也教他們輪流供膳，且看是你家的孝順，我家的孝順？”<sup>447</sup>

In this story, there is no question of whose “sons” are the more filial, nor need a bodhisattva intervene to provide a son. The silver is described as the childless man’s own flesh and blood, since he produced it with his own labor; it lives with him, provides for him, and conforms with his wishes when it comes time to divide the home. That silver, unlike sons, is loyal, selfless, and fungible, instantly becoming wine or meat according to the desires of its owner.

One of the *Shi'er lou* 十二樓 (*Twelve Towers*) stories, “Shijin lou 十香樓 (Tower of Ten Weddings),” approaches the issue of a female-assigned ambiguously sexed body from the perspective of a young man encountering his bride. In this account, unlike the baby in “Bian nü wei er,” whose gender is determined solely by its genitals, the woman in “Shijin lou” is judged first by her external appearance, which makes her husband significantly more sympathetic to her plight. When the groom, Yao Zigu 姚子穀, lifts his new wife’s veil, he is delighted to find that she is an exquisite beauty:

A pair of moon-hung brows, cheeks of rosy mist;  
Skin of timely snow, locks coiled into propitious clouds.  
Litheness and grace are not unusual —

<sup>447</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 9.210.

Her charm was that she was naively picturesque.  
 You could say she was willowy and dignified,  
 but you would certainly not be intending to rhyme.  
 On the ground, she lifts her lotus-feet,  
 I mistook them for two writing brushes.  
 Those jade wrists holding the chalice,  
 I mistook them for glass.  
 She is truly an incomparable beauty,  
 an otherworldly immortal.

月掛雙眉，霞蒸兩靨；  
 膚凝瑞雪，髻輓祥雲。  
 輕盈綽約不為奇，妙在無心入畫；  
 裊娜端莊皆可詠，絕非有意成詩。  
 地下拾金蓮，誤認作兩條筆管；  
 樽前擎玉腕，錯呼為一盞玻璃。  
 誠哉絕世佳人，允矣出塵仙子。<sup>448</sup>

Yao Zigu cannot wait to get his beautiful wife into bed, but as soon as he does, he sees that although she is the picture of an ideal beauty, there is “no gate for him to enter (無門可入).” He describes her body as a mountainous wilderness that repels his attempts to locate a path.

Gazing out at Wu Mountain, path lost too soon,  
 Searching everywhere, finding no place to enter the clouds.  
 The jade peak too tall, the jade gully lacks depth,  
 Five strong men sadly driven back after an attempt.  
 What a surprise—the millstone seems fine, why is there no navel?

望巫山，路早迷，遍尋沒塊攜雲地。  
 玉峰太巍，玉溝欠低，五丁惜卻些兒費。  
 漫驚疑，磨盤山好，何事不生臍。<sup>449</sup>

The description here is not as graphic than those in “Nü Chen Ping” and “Bian nü wei er”; her genitals are not compared to edibles like meat dumplings or dried seafood. Instead, the extended metaphor of a mountain without a path glosses over the physicality of the body, describing what

<sup>448</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 9.193.

<sup>449</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, 9.193.

is missing rather than what is there. The absence of a gate is much more confusing as part of a body that has already been read as female. The question is no longer whether a body is male or female, but whether it is a functional female or non-functional female. This is perhaps because the woman's vagina is all that interests the speaker, but I think it is also because he is conceiving of her genitals in the context of her whole body.

Following this revelation, Zigu and the girl engage in a conversation. This is another important difference from the stories discussed above that in which a “useless (*wuyong* 無用)” body is allowed to speak for itself. He asks her how a fine woman like her could have such a defect. She replies that all she knows is that she was born that way, begs him to keep her on as a watchdog despite her defect. By just taking on a few concubines, he could spare both their families the embarrassment of sending her back. He replies that having her around would be like having a spread of tasty delicacies but be unable to taste them, and that he would not be able to stand it. She says that it is hard for her too, which inspires sympathy in him, and they make do by having anal sex. Despite their mutual sympathy, he tells his parents about the problem, and they take her back to exchange her for one of her sisters while he is out. After nine failed attempts to marry other women, including the two sisters of the first (one is already five months pregnant, and the other wets the bed), Yao Zigu makes a final attempt, and ends up back with his original wife. Because she is impenetrable, she has also passed through ten or twenty households since leaving his. When he learns who the bride is, he is ambivalent: happy to see an old friend, but sad that she cannot fulfill the proper duty (*zhengshi* 正事) of a woman. It seems like something of an afterthought, when, at the story's end, her genitals emerge from beneath her skin because she has finally fulfilled her karmic burden.



At the end of the first chapter, Li Yu suggests that by telling the story of a man who is dissatisfied with even such a beautiful woman as her simply because she lacks a vagina, he has shown that those men who claim to have tender feelings toward women (*lianxiang xiyu* 憐香惜玉) are really just lechers who care nothing for beauty. Here, Li Yu uses a plastic body—a beautiful woman without a vagina who eventually develops one—to deconstruct the significance of female beauty. He shows that lurking behind all descriptions of beautiful women is the expectation that they will be sexually available to the male viewer. At the same time, Li Yu tells a story in which a man slowly realizes that compared with the many imperfect women in the world, a beautiful woman—even one without a vagina—may be the most desirable option. If “Nan Mengmu” asks whether a castrated male body in women’s garb can be a virtuous woman, this story asks whether a woman who lacks both a capacity for reproduction and for vaginal intercourse can be a good wife. Zigu’s conversation with his wife, the sensual pleasures they enjoy together, and their eventual happy, if ambivalent, reunion suggest that he is a man who is torn between his appreciation of her beauty, his desire to enjoy vaginal intercourse with her, and his duty to carry on the family line. In this story, Li Yu teases apart the various aspects of what men look for in a wife, inviting readers to reconsider what they see when they look at other people.

With his fiction Li Yu resisted the objectification of the body, whether by medical discourse, the filial imperative to reproduce, or the money economy. Setting all kinds of bodies into narrative time, he exposed the their contingencies both by making the normal seem strange and the bizarre seem mundane. Li Yu’s stories depict characters making new uses out of their bodies, finding alternatives for “useless” bodies that cannot reproduce in a conventional way. They juxtapose the messy process of embodied reproduction with the fungibility and seemingly

limitless purchasing power of silver. The open-ended, plastic bodies in those stories invite readers to ponder the meanings and value they assign to the body, the body's quality of being alive, and the subjectivity of its inhabitant. With these stories, Li Yu deflates the sensational discourse of the strange by casting strange bodies in everyday situations. At the same time, he exposes the strange, and often ridiculous, quality of the most familiar things. In Li Yu's stories, to expect donations and prayer to bring us a son might be stranger than being a woman without a vagina. What was the significance of these stories beyond flaunting the author's ability to astonish and impress his readers?

### *Bodies of Leisure*

To resist the objectification of the body in discourse meant to tell new stories about it, to show it doing or being in ways that defy readers' expectations. With *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu asked readers to join him in scrutinizing the material environment of their everyday lives, and consider with him: what other uses could I make of this? How could I make this work more efficiently? How could I make this seem to move on its own? In *Xianqing ouji*, the "strange (*qi* 奇)" is equated with the "new (*xin* 新)," and it is certainly a central quality. Surpassing the simply new, however, are the notions of *shen* 神 (enchanting or captivating), *bian* 變 (changing), and *hua* 化 (transforming). All of these qualities lend a preternatural touch to inanimate things, such that a surprising movement or an inexplicably elegant functionality appear to be effected by divine intervention. As in his fiction, in his writing about everyday life, Li Yu takes bodies as an important locus of analysis and experimentation. Unlike fictional bodies, however, these real bodies resist new stories: Li Yu finds that he can tinker with their external appearance, but he also finds in them something he cannot name and upon which he cannot improve.

As I have discussed in Chapter Three, in *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu contrasted the function of a wife and a concubine by analogizing them to different sorts of utilization of land. He likens a wife to an estate that produces all of life's necessities, while the concubine is a garden that may contain any sort of plants, since the owner's most basic needs, both in terms of production and reproduction, are already met in the person of his wife. That entry is found in the section of *Xianqing ouji* entitled "On Voice and Countenance (*Shengrong bu* 声容部)," which incidentally was the section with which Li Yu recommended at least two contemporary readers begin their experience of the text.<sup>450</sup> In it, Li Yu provides detailed practical suggestions and guidelines for men of means looking to assess, purchase, and train these ornamental women.

The introductory essay to this section opens with a riff on a quotation from the Confucian classic, *Zhongyong* 中庸 (*Doctrine of the Mean*), that justifies and promotes the purchase of concubines. Li Yu goes so far as to claim that it would be improper for men of means *not* to acquire a few: "Confucius said, 'In a position of wealth and honor, he does what is proper to a position of wealth and honor.' If people have the means and yet do not purchase one or two concubines with which to amuse themselves, this is surely a case of someone in a position of wealth and honor doing what is proper to a poor and low position. 孔子云：‘素富貴，行乎富貴。’人處得為之地，不買一二姬妾自娛，是素富貴而行乎貧賤矣。”<sup>451</sup> Li Yu divides "Voice and Countenance" into four categories, which roughly proceed outward from the physical attributes of the body to care of the body, then to external adornments, and finally to instruction. Each opens with an introductory essay followed by several subsections: "Natural Endowment"

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<sup>450</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>451</sup> The translation of *Zhongyong* is from James Legge, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), XIV.2.

(skin, eyebrows and eyes, hands and feet, demeanor); “Embellishments” (washing and combing, fragrance, cosmetics); “Attire” (jewelry, clothing, shoes and stockings); and “Training and Skills” (poetry, musical instruments, song and dance).<sup>452</sup>

The body described in this section is a superfluous one that has been declared exempt from usual productive and reproductive imperatives. It is, rather, a luxury good intended for elite consumption, and, significantly, it is the only expensive thing Li Yu singles out as an exception to his usual insistence on thrift in *Xianqing ouji*. In the reader’s guide in the prefatory material to the book, Li Yu touts the work as a great equalizer available to anyone who can read, and he emphasizes his commitment to egalitarianism in his designs:

In creating a new system, I want to avoid leading people toward extravagance. If I preach extravagance, then the poor will be unable to put my designs into practice, while the households of the wealthy and ranked will grow more wasteful by the day. That would be a book that destroys our customs, not one that sustains the great moral teachings. In this collection, only in the sections “Performing Plays” and “Voice and Countenance,” which are topics that delight eminent men, did I fail to come up with an economical method. As for the other sections, which comprise more than half of the volume—“Residences,” “Things,” “Food and Drink,” “Plants,” and “Well-being”—thrift is built into the system, and extravagance is cast aside: the man who owns the whole world and the man who has nothing alike can practice it.

創立新制，最忌導人以奢。奢則貧者難行，而使富貴之家日流於侈，是敗壞風俗之書，非扶持名教之書也。是集惟演習、聲容二種，為顯者陶情之事，欲儉不能，然亦節去靡費之，半其餘如，居室，器玩，飲饌，種植，頤養諸部皆寓節儉於制度之中，黜奢靡於繩墨之外，富有天下者可行，貧無卓錫者亦可行。<sup>453</sup>

The young women Li Yu treats in the “Voice and Countenance” section are the same that are trained to perform plays in the former section, and the reason he cannot economize in both sections is the high cost of the young female body. Although Li Yu was not independently wealthy, his social and cultural capital as an author, entrepreneur, and bon vivant allowed him to

<sup>452</sup> My translation of these section titles generally follows that of Ko, *Cinderella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*, 272, n. 19.

<sup>453</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 6.

acquire as gifts at least four young women who would otherwise have been prohibitively expensive, and his experience with them informed these sections.<sup>454</sup>

As with all of the topics he deals with in *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu was concerned with developing innovative designs to improve these women. What lent his book value, after all, was his ability to tell new stories about things that would delight the reader and that he could try out in his own home, or perhaps more likely in the case of these women, enjoy vicariously by reading the book. The first entry in “Voice and Countenance” opens with advice to prospective buyers to pay attention to first to the “basic substance” of a woman’s body—the color of her unadorned skin—citing a passage in the *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*). In the original passage, Confucius’s disciple, Zixia 子夏, exegetes a few lines on female beauty from the Odes to illuminate the practice of the rites. In Li Yu’s hands, conversely, the topic of female beauty is rescued from metaphor and deemed worthy of investigation in its own right, while Confucian musings on ritual go unmentioned: “Of a woman’s many charms, her complexion is foremost. Does the Book of Odes not say, ‘Patterns of color upon plain silk?’ ‘Plain’ here means white. As for women’s basic substance, white is the most difficult to attain. 婦人嫵媚多端，畢竟以色為主。詩不雲乎 ‘素以為絢兮’？素者，白也。婦人本質，惟白最難。”<sup>455</sup> The female complexion,

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<sup>454</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>455</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 109. The translation of the *Analects* passage is from The full passage reads: “Zixia asked, ‘Her entrancing smile dimpling; Her beautiful eyes glancing; Patterns of color upon plain silk.’ What is the meaning of these lines?’ The Master said, ‘The colors are put in after the white.’ ‘Does the practice of the rites likewise come afterwards?’ The Master said, ‘It is you, Shang, who have thrown light on this text for me. Only with a man like you can one discuss the Odes.’” 子夏問曰：“巧笑倩兮，美目盼兮，素以為絢兮。’何謂也？”子曰：“繪事後素。”曰：“禮後乎？”子曰：“起予者商也！始可與言詩已矣。” Confucius and D. C. Lau, *The Analects (Lunyu)* (Harmondsworth; New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 68. Lau notes in his translation that the first two lines of this quotation can be found in Ode 57, but not the third, which is the only line that Li Yu quotes in *Xianqing ouji*, and which he attributes to the Odes.

according to Li Yu is the result of the relative quantities of semen (which is white) and blood (which is purplish red), and he cautions that given its origins in the womb, an inferior complexion cannot be improved (though locking oneself in a dark room might help).

He discusses the many variations in complexion, including shades of skin tone, discrepancies in complexion between the face and body, and ways to enhance the original substance regardless of its quality. For example, Li Yu's comments on attire point to the way that clothing can enhance the appearance of the skin tone, if one pays attention to the color of the fabric:

So many are the excellent qualities of the color dark blue they cannot be enumerated. To speak only of its benefits for women, it makes light complexions even lighter, and if those with darker complexions wear it, the darkness of their complexion is less easily discerned: this is how it is easy on the face. If young people wear it, they appear younger still, while if older people wear it, they no longer seem quite so old: this is how it is easy on years.

然青之為色，其妙多端，不能悉數。但就婦人所宜者而論，面白者衣之，其面愈白，面黑者衣之，其面亦不覺其黑，此其宜於貌者也。年少者衣之，其年愈少，年老者衣之，其年亦不覺甚老，此其宜於歲者也。<sup>456</sup>

To these he adds practical benefits: dark blue fabric is less prone to staining than most other colors and so will last longer since one need not worry about re-dying it.

Naturalness for women, however, as with so many natural phenomenon improved by Li Yu's designs, indicates a quality that can and should be improved upon through appropriate embellishment. A new and improved nature might be effected by juxtaposing like things that have been long separated, such as adding a hairpiece to one's hair in lieu of ornaments: "Women's heads cannot be without adornment; since ancient times this has been so. When compared with pearl and jade ornaments, is it not better to use a hairpiece? Although the

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<sup>456</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 134.

hairpiece is false, it originated from the head of a woman, and when she uses it as an adornment, it can be said that it is returning to its proper place. 婦人之首，不能無飾，自昔為然矣，與其飾以珠翠寶玉，不若飾之以髮。髮雖云假，原是婦人頭上之物，以此為飾，可謂還其固有。<sup>457</sup> Li Yu mocks the efforts of his contemporaries to affect a pose of naturalness by

disavowing any intervention of artifice whatsoever:

Nowadays people avoid mentioning rouge and powder, continually insisting that it sullies people. There are women whose entire face is covered in powder, yet who claim that no powder is on their face; those whose lips are thick with rouge, yet who say that no rouge touches their lips. These people go too far in their adherence to the Tang poem [...] Rouge and powder don't sully people, people sully themselves!

今世諱言脂粉，動稱污人之物，有滿而是粉而云粉不上面，遍唇皆脂而曰脂不沾唇者，皆信唐詩太過，[...] 噫，脂粉焉能污人，人自污耳。<sup>458</sup>

Rather than create artificial beauty, cosmetics enhance the beauty of already-beautiful women.

On the other hand, when unattractive women apply powder and rouge, it simply highlights their fundamental unsightliness through contrast. Something of the original substance shines through in the enhanced version of the body.

The methodology and aesthetics of these first few sections on women remind one of Li Yu's approach to the many inanimate facets of everyday life he deals with in *Xianqing ouji*. His penchant for simplicity and naturalness can be seen in his comments on everything from designs for garden paths to his concern that audience members understand the content of new plays on a first hearing. His foremost requirement of windows was that they be sturdy (*jian* 堅), against the contemporary trend to among his contemporaries to experiment with ornate new designs (and to be sure, page upon page of variations are included in the manual for garden design, *Yuanye*), but

<sup>457</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 131.

<sup>458</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 125.

faults them for tending toward the overly delicate, which, according to Li Yu, guarantees that they will be short-lived. Li Yu extended his insistence on sturdiness over the ornate to women as well: Dorothy Ko has used the term “aesthetics of function” to describe Li Yu’s opinion that bound feet should not be too small, lest they impinge on a woman’s mobility.<sup>459</sup>

As a foundation for his designs in multiple areas, Li Yu promoted the ideal of a *tabula rasa*: a bright, transparent, and unsullied canvas that would allow him maximum freedom to achieve particular visual effects. He sought to demonstrate the benefits of such an approach across his writing about women’s bodies, windows, and interiors in general. Simple cleanliness in the interior of a home is one “blank” element that would transform even a small space, making it seem much larger than it is: “The hut of a reclusive scholar is necessarily modest, and although the low cannot be raised to a new height and the narrow cannot be expanded to a new breadth, the filthy and the cluttered can indeed be removed to make it clean. If it is clean, then the low will be[come] high and the narrow will be[come] wide 處士之廬，難免卑隘，然卑者不能聳之使高，隘者不能擴之使廣，而污穢者、充塞者則能去之使淨，淨則卑者高而隘者廣矣。”<sup>460</sup> Li Yu devotes quite a bit of space in *Xianqing ouji* to detailing the appropriate methods for sweeping (one should sprinkle water first, otherwise he will just push the dust around, for one), storing clutter in drawers and cases, and even a plan for keeping refuse until it can be disposed of. Li Yu’s comments on women’s toilet follow a similar mode of reasoning, providing instructions about washing oil off the face, instructing that women take great care not to use the cloth for anything else. In both cases, cleanliness has a transformational effect, accomplished by

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<sup>459</sup> Ko, *Cinderella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*, 156.

<sup>460</sup> Francesca Bray suggests that Li Yu’s emphasis on cleanliness may have been due to his poverty, or that it “may also reflect a symbolic view, expressed in both Confucian and Buddhist thought, of dust as polluting.” *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*, 79.



following meticulously detailed instructions for altering the material and physical stuff of the everyday.

Windows are another part of the home that can be easily transformed by following Li Yu's instructions. Transparency in picture windows allows them to capture views that are "just like paintings" and incorporate them into the interior of the home. Even lattice windows were prized for these qualities: after sturdiness, "it is of primary importance that lattice windows be clear and transparent 窗櫺以明透為先."<sup>461</sup> Transparent windows would open out the space of a room and incorporate exterior elements into it, as in one instance in which Li Yu describes himself as happening upon the method by accident:

I noticed that though the object [a small mound] was small, what it contained was large. Truly it gave off a sense of 'a tiny mustard seed containing the great Mount Sumeru.' I sat there all day beholding it, unwilling to close the window, when I suddenly exclaimed with a start: this is a mountain, but it can be a painting. It is a painting, but it can be a window.

後見其物小而蘊大，有‘須彌芥子’之義，盡日坐觀，不忍闔牖，乃瞿然曰：“是山也，而可以作畫；是畫也，而可以為窗。”<sup>462</sup>

The framed open space of the window, like pale skin set off by dark clothes, invites a viewer's gaze to linger and watch its potential unfold. Yet whereas the mountain is pictured as captured by the window, traveling first into visual representation as a painting and then into the open space of the window, the picture of a woman needs no frame to invite pictorialization because the surface of her skin is already a visual representation of her:

It scarcely needs to be said that a girl's learning to read and write brings untold benefits, but there is also something for the observer to enjoy when she is just beginning her studies. All she need do is spread her books on the desk and pinch the tip of her writing brush as she sits by a green-gauze window or a kingfisher-blue screen; already [she/it] is

<sup>461</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 164.

<sup>462</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 170.

a picture. Ban Zhao continuing the Han History or Xie Daoyun describing a snowfall were no more beautiful than she. What need is there to criticize her poem before you enjoy her company? Ah! How many such pictures there are! And what a terrible pity it is that the men in these situations regard them as commonplace!<sup>463</sup>

婦人讀書習字，無論學成之後受益無窮，即其初學之時，先有裨於觀者：只須案攤書本，手捏柔毫，坐於綠窗翠箔之下，便是一幅畫圖。班姬續史之容，謝庭詠雪之態，不過如是，何必睹其題詠，較其工拙，而後有閨秀同房之樂哉？噫，此等畫圖，人間不少，無奈身處其地，皆作尋常事物觀，殊可惜耳。

Having excised the medium of a singular painting, Li Yu's design for living pictures obviously locates true appreciation of art in the superior vision of the observer. Li Yu demonstrated his own ability to see all the world as so many pictures throughout *Xianqing ouji*, and he invites the reader to do the same. Here again, the notion of paintings as singular and authentic objects of art is deflated of its value, rendered nothing more than a mimetic replica of any view.

What is the relationship in *Xianqing ouji* between the self, women, and things? In the late-Ming cult of *qing*, objects of connoisseurship, or collections of beloved objects, had invited engagement and response by things to intense devotion of the collector. As Judith Zeitlin has noted in her study of obsession during this period, “once the relationship between someone and the object of his obsession was conceptualized as *qing*, it was not such a difficult leap to declare that the object itself could be moved by its lover's devotion and reciprocate his feelings. Since, for the most part, the objects of obsessions were not human, this meant anthropomorphizing the object, adopting the view that animate and inanimate things alike are capable of sentiment.”<sup>464</sup> In her study of collecting and connoisseurship from the Ming to the Qing, Wai-yee Li suggests that *Xianqing ouji* “shows how the dangers of radical subjectivity may be ameliorated with a new emphasis on pleasure, playfulness, practicality and compromise,” and that this replaces the “aura

<sup>463</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 143. Translated in Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 67.

<sup>464</sup> Zeitlin, “‘The Petrified Heart’: Obsession in Chinese Literature, Art, and Medicine,” 8.

of the object” through which individuals articulated their subjectivity in the late Ming.<sup>465</sup> She suggests further that “by showing how women as aesthetic objects are fashioned or may be improved to enhance male pleasure, [Li Yu] dispels the aura of romantic longing.”<sup>466</sup> And in his study of decorative objects in seventeenth-century China, Jonathan Hay expounds on the notion that an emphasis on pleasure has replaced obsession with *qing*, suggesting that the portrayal of “the beautiful woman” (*meiren* 美人) in paintings and on decorative objects “functioned as a metaphor for the decorative object itself as a pleasure source,” and that it was “an image of agency as much as of objecthood” because it borrowed those qualities from the woman it depicted, who exercised an active agency of her own.<sup>467</sup>

In all of these analyses, there is a more or less explicit equation between things and women: for Zeitlin, the object of obsession is capable of coming to life to prove its devotion, just as the great icon of the cult of *qing*, Du Liniang, did. For Li, the transition into the early Qing marks a similar change in the way both objects and women are perceived, and both lose their aura for a more light-hearted engagement. For Hay, objects in the early Qing are essentially *like* women, capable of interacting “as a subject in the process of contemplation.” While Hay has made a very compelling case for the circumscribed agency of decorative objects in contemporary

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<sup>465</sup> She juxtaposes Li Yu’s “more complacent and measured hedonism” with the late-Ming tendency to promote a radical notion of subjectivity by “emphasiz[ing] excess and an intense, personal relationship with object” and other writings that “allow the individual to articulate his difference and to be integrated into elite culture.” Li, “The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility,” 300.

<sup>466</sup> Li, “The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility,” 302.

<sup>467</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China*, 393. Hay goes on to point out that the image of a beautiful woman was active, and the fact that her agency “was important to decorative artisans and artists is visible in the fact that the *meiren* does not passively await the beholder’s gaze; she is active, as reader, as writer, as interlocutor, as connoisseur, as pleasure-taker, as a subject in the process of contemplation, of thinking [...] In its formal function the *meiren* motif not only metaphorizes the agency of the object and its capacity for thinking with; it also serves to focalize the pleasure-taking attention of the beholder, female or male, and thus to thematize the connective visual attention that decoration solicits.” Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China*, 393.

interiors, I would suggest, rather, that images of beautiful women and the decorative objects Li Yu describes in *Xianqing ouji* are attempts to capture, or refer to, particular aspects of a beautiful woman, but always only a single aspect: in the former case, her appearance, in the latter, her texture or color. Through Li Yu's technical interventions—his framing of views, his juxtaposition of life with flat visual representation, his sleek incense chop—many of the objects depicted in *Xianqing ouji* are prompted into motion, and thereby lent a quality of *shen* or improved by *bian* (change) or *hua* (transformation). Li Yu certainly paid attention to the materials and the craftsmanship of the things he wrote about in *Xianqing ouji*, but he attributes their appeal largely to his own innovative designs. Like the characters in his fiction, they heed his every whim, and the result is enchanting. In *Xianqing ouji*, the effects of his designs are what cannot be readily expressed in visual or textual representation:

No one has seen these new designs before, so even if I explain them in great detail, it is hard to describe it completely, so I will have to prepare some pictures as a model. However, there is also that which pictures can depict and that which they cannot depict. That which it cannot depict is about nine-tenths of what is there; what it can depict amounts to no more than one-tenth.

新制人所未見，即縷縷言之，亦難盡曉，勢必繪圖作樣。然有圖所能繪，有不能繪者。不能繪者十之九，能繪者不過十之一。<sup>468</sup>

The female body is dissected and analyzed in parts just like the objects in *Xianqing ouji*. Three of the four essays on a woman's physical body are full of clever hints and marvelous techniques, but in the fourth, Li Yu confesses that he is unable to suggest any improvements: “While methods for evaluating the face, skin, eyebrows, eyes can be explained with words, with the evaluation of *taidu*, my mind can sense it, but my mouth cannot articulate it.”<sup>469</sup>

<sup>468</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 157.

<sup>469</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 116.

He opens his essay on the elusive characteristic of *taidu* (which we might translate alternately as demeanor, charm, manner, or even aura) with the assertion that truly moving beauty is not found in any particular features, but in a particular aura of the living body.

The ancients said, "A rare thing (a beautiful woman) is enough to move people." What is this "rare thing"? It is *tai*. People don't know this, and take it to mean a woman's beauty, not realizing that although her countenance is beautiful, it is [merely] a thing--how could it manage to move people? If *tai* is added to it, it becomes a both a "thing" and "rare." If you claim that women's physical beauty is also a rare thing that can move people, then why does the beauty of the silken dolls of our day and the delicate beauties in paintings, which is ten times greater than that of living people, not move people to lovesickness and cause them to fall into depression?" From this we can know that an enchanting *tai* is essential. Charm is on the body just as fire flickers, light glows, or pearls, shells, gold and silver shine—it is a thing without form, not something that has form. Now precisely because it is a thing and yet not a thing, because it is without form, yet seems to have form, this is why it is called a "rare thing."<sup>470</sup>

古云：“尤物足以移人。”尤物維何？媚態是已。世人不知，以為美色，烏知顏色雖美，是一物也，烏足移人？加之以態，則物而尤矣。如云美色即是尤物，即可移人，則今時絹做之美女，畫上之嬌娥，其顏色較之生人，豈止十倍，何以不見移人，光，珠貝金銀之有寶色，是無形之物，非有形之物也。惟其是物而非物，無形似有形，是以名為“尤物”。之有寶色，是無形之物，非有形之物也。惟其是物而非物，無形似有形，是以名為“尤物”。<sup>471</sup>

The phrase “they take it to mean female beauty *yiwei meise* 以為美色,” which blames contemporaries for thinking that beauty is what moves people about women, echoes the contempt of the narrator in the short story “Shijin lou” for men who claim to love beauty when what they actually want is sex. Just as the impenetrability of that beautiful woman revealed what

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<sup>470</sup> Patrick Hanan translates the end of this passage: “Charm in a woman is like the flame in the fire, the glow in the lamp, the lustre of jewels and precious metals—something without form rather than with form. It is precisely because it is a thing and yet not a thing, because it is formless and yet seems to possess form, that I call it a transcendent thing. A ‘transcendent thing’ means something uncanny, something that cannot be explained in words.” Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*. Jonathan Hay interprets it as suggesting that surfacescape objecthood “is founded on the virtuality of movement and change” and to illustrate his notion of surfacescape: “a kind of force field that is not directly available to the senses and whose existence can only be registered through sensation associated with the surfacescape itself.” Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China*, 381-82.

<sup>471</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 115.

men really want from women, so Li Yu's reference to silken dolls aims to criticize those who think that what captivates them about women is their beauty (*meise* 美色).

*Taidu*, for Li Yu, is a characteristic that is particular to *living* bodies, the way a woman interacts, the choices she makes, a particular grace she displays when compared to others. Movement releases her from representing all women because it shows her doing something particular to the current moment—it brings her into the present. Paintings, in Li Yu's reckoning, no matter how skilled the painter, were static, and the flawless women in them “silken dolls.” Even as Li Yu protests that he cannot explain this elusive quality, he deigns to try to convey something of the flavor through an anecdote.

I recall that once when caught in the rain on a spring outing, I took shelter at a roadside pavilion where I saw a number of women, some good-looking, others not, tottering toward the pavilion. Among them was a poor woman of thirty-some years dressed in white mourning clothes. Seeing that there was no space inside, she hovered under the eaves while the others rushed in. While the rest of the women all shook out their clothes, fretting that they were soaked, she alone let things follow their natural course. The rain was encroaching under the eave, and no effort of hers would prove effectual—it would do little more than display an unattractive demeanor. When the rain was about to let up and they were to set off again, she alone hesitated at the back. They had gone no more than a few steps when the rain started up again, and she dashed into the pavilion. She was the first to enter, and turned around in anticipation in order to squat down and claim her spot. Even though she was now in pleasant surroundings, she did not show any sign of arrogance. When she saw those who entered after her standing under the eaves, clothes soaked several times more than before, she shook their clothes out for them, and her demeanor showed forth. It was as if Heaven had gathered together a crowd of ugly women for the sole purpose of demonstrating the beauty of one woman.

記曩時春遊遇雨，避一亭中，見無數女子，妍媸不一，皆踉蹌而至。中一縞衣貧婦，年三十許，人皆趨入亭中，彼獨徘徊檐下，以中無隙地故也；人皆抖擻衣衫，慮其太濕，彼獨聽其自然，以檐下雨侵，抖之無益，徒現醜態故也。及雨將止而告行，彼獨遲疑稍後，去不數武而雨復作，乃趨入亭。彼則先立亭中，以逆料必轉，先踞勝地故也。然臆雖偶中，絕無驕人之色。見後入者反立檐下，衣衫之濕，數倍於前，而此婦代為振衣，姿態百出，竟若天集眾醜，以形一人之媚者。自觀者視之，其初之不動，似以鄭重而養態；其後之故動，似以徜徉而生態。然彼豈能必天復雨，先儲其才以俟用乎？<sup>472</sup>

<sup>472</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 116-17.

The narrative of *taidu* requires a particular character animating her body. Narrative—a story about a particular person—is the only place, outside of lived experience, where we can observe a glint of *taidu*. In this passage, Li Yu removes all other qualities that might make the protagonist conventionally attractive to recount a few moments of the life of a poor, middle-aged woman. He fittingly narrates her dressed in plain white (which elsewhere he suggests might attract our attention with an innovative design more than luxurious cloth of worn-out design), so that we may focus our attention on that single ineffable quality.

Patrick Hanan noted that Li Yu's description of *taidu* echoes a description of “that equally ineffable quality of *qu*, zest” by the late-Ming literary giant Yuan Hongdao.<sup>473</sup> Yuan wrote,

What men find difficult to obtain is *qu*. *Qu* is like color on mountains, taste in water, bloom in flowers, posture in women [...] People nowadays admire the idea of *qu*, and strive after its semblance. So they indulge in debates about calligraphy and painting, browse among antiques, thinking it “rarefied.”

世人所難得者唯趣。趣如山上之色，水中之味，花中之光，女中之態，雖善說者不能一語，唯會心者知之 [...] 今之人，慕趣之名，求趣之似，於是有辨說書畫，涉獵古董，以為清。<sup>474</sup>

It is worth reiterating that these forums—calligraphy, painting, and antiques—in which people sought out the quality of *qu* are elite arts that Li Yu explicitly left out of his *Xianqing ouji*. What is more, the Li Yu emptied out the aura of mountains, water, and flowers, showing that every aspect of those things could be improved by his innovations and interventions; not only that, but

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<sup>473</sup> “The outstanding quality in a woman’s beauty is *taidu* or *meitai*, a dynamic principle that activates her otherwise lifeless perfection. In English, perhaps only the words “charm” and “grace” will do. Abandoning the effable for once, Li Yu admits that the quality is beyond his powers of definition. His attempt appears to mimic a well-known passage by Yuan Hongdao on the equally ineffable quality of *qu*, zest.” Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 68.

<sup>474</sup> “Xu Chen Zhengfu *Huixinji*” In Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道, *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao* 袁宏道集箋校, ed. Qian Bochong 錢伯城 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 1.463.

he also developed methods for improving some of those aspects of things—including the color and scent of women. The *tai* of a woman, for Yuan Hongdao, was just the last in a list of analogies to describe a greater quality of ineffable zest in any medium. For Li Yu, it is not until he encounters a woman's *tai* that he finds something that he cannot improve in language.

Li Yu features women in two of *Xianqing ouji*'s eight chapters, and he is even willing to divert from his conviction of frugality to do so. Even so, the place of women in the text is a curious one. In earlier manuals of connoisseurship, like *Zhangwu zhi* and *Zunsheng bajian*, women are generally excluded from the aspects of everyday life worth including in a text. As Craig Clunas has made clear in his study of these texts, in *Zhangwu zhi* at least, women are usually mentioned only when some item is clearly intended for the “women's quarters”—and this never a positive assessment.<sup>475</sup> In earlier texts women are always metaphor, only ever the idea of women, reminiscent of the representation of female body in much of the fiction of the time: “Dissolute women, ambitious shrews and libidinous strumpets [...] with their leaking bodies and permeable skins, provide cathartic sites where the late-imperial fascination with and fear of desire can be projected and then eradicated.”<sup>476</sup> In *Xianqing ouji*, by contrast, the singularity and irreducible difference of each woman—the story she tells about herself through her actions—outwits the mastermind author, and even he stops to listen.

As I have discussed in Chapter Three, Li Yu makes a case for focusing on these women's beauty and intelligence alone, rather than judging them by the standards of female virtue. He saw virtue as preempting a woman's ability to move freely, and to be possessed of herself and her

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<sup>475</sup> See Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, 58.

<sup>476</sup> Epstein, “Inscribing the Essentials: Culture and the Body in Ming-Qing Fiction,” 26.



own body. He saw in a female body of leisure a freedom, and a composed self-determination, that was a rare treat in the bustling urban spaces and social networks in which he toiled.

As for those people who cannot afford to purchase concubines or do away with the requirement of female virtue, Li Yu has a method for renewing the home and family, and giving it a semblance of continually refreshed delight. In the section in *Xianqing ouji* titled, “Method for Taking Pleasure in the Home 家庭行樂之法,” he describes his method:

The home is the most pleasurable place in the world. "The first joy is to have parents healthy and brothers well." The pleasure of the sages did not exceed this, yet the inclinations of people of later ages have frequently differed from them. Whatever the sages enjoyed, they thought of as a hardship; whatever the sages found troubling, they took to be pleasure, and they sank into it. For example, they would disregard their own father to accept another man's father, reject their own brothers to favor a stranger, turn away from female beauty in pursuit of young boys, put aside domestic chickens for wild ducks—all of these things are contrary to reason, yet all throughout the world they are practiced and no one seems to mind. The reason for all such behavior is that people disregard the old and ordinary for the new and different. This being the case, people will also find the physical body that they have had since birth to grow stale and off-putting, and want to exchange it for a new one. Today your soul would adhere to one body, and tomorrow to another: would you find it lovelier the more you changed it and made it new? The reason it cannot be changed and updated is that it is fixed from birth. But if you want to change and update it, there is also a method. Change your cap and robe frequently, change the bed curtains and seat covers with frequency, then look at it in a mirror and it will seem that you have changed the whole place. If you apply this method with regard to your parents and brothers, your own wife and children, with all of the money you would have wasted making connections, you can freshen up their clothes and ornaments, and you will live in a different environment and care for a different body. In one year you can change their form several times, and you won't have to worry about calling someone else your father or mother, or calling your classmates your brothers. ... Looking at it this way, it is not that a person is beautiful, it is the clothing that makes one beautiful.

世間第一樂地，無過家庭。“父母俱存，兄弟無故，一樂也。”是聖賢行樂之方，不過如此。而後世人情之好尚，往往與聖賢相左。聖賢所樂者，彼則苦之；聖賢所苦者，彼反視為至樂而沈溺其中。如棄現在之天親而拜他人為父，撇同胞之手足而與陌路結盟，避女色而就變童，捨家雞而尋野鶩，是皆情理之至悖，而舉世習而安之。其故無他，總由一念之惡舊喜新，厭常趨異所致。若是，則生而所有之形骸，亦覺陳腐可厭，胡不並易而新之，他今日魂附一體，明日又附一體，覺愈變愈新之可愛乎？其不能變而新之者，以生定故也。然欲變而新之，亦自有法。時易冠裳，迭更幃座，而照之以鏡，則似換一規模矣。即以此法而施之父母兄弟、骨肉妻孥，以結交濫費之資，而鮮其衣飾，美其供奉，則居移氣，養移體，一歲而數變其形，

豈不憂之謂他人父，謂他人母，而與同學少年互稱兄弟[...]由是觀之，匪人之美，衣飾美之也。<sup>477</sup>

Li Yu articulated himself through his manipulations of objects in language that was then circulated in print, such that his name might be associated with any number of reproducible versions of that thing. With *Xianqing ouji*, he writes himself onto everyday objects, which, rather than simply reflect back onto him, projected him into the homes of his readers by inviting readers to practice with him. All of his technical innovations to the material served to create a centrifugal subjectivity that hollowed out objects and associated them with Li Yu, though he did not possess them. Women's *taidu* is the only part of Li Yu's garden that stands on its own, not covered with and animated by his language. In scrutinizing the living body and finding it already self-possessed of something he cannot improve, Li Yu acknowledges value in that body that exceeds what he can create with words, and the female body becomes for him the one thing that money can buy that is not transferable.

### **Conclusion**

Li Yu did away with the imperative placed on the gendered body to represent the social, political, or moral macrocosm. As he removed layers of representation and signification from the female body, he found there a composed self-expression that could serve as a model for (male) private life. When, at the beginning of his career, Li Yu sold his rural residence at Yishan and moved to the city, he laid claim to it in writing, thereby creating a version of himself that would be portable, that could be reproduced any number of times with minimal labor, and he tinkered with and developed that self-in-print for the remainder of his life. As I have shown, he did so

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<sup>477</sup> Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, 314.

with constant reference to the social and material world, exploring new ways to make language interact with the material world and change the way people experienced it. His innovative method pushed the limits of different media to make them function in new ways, and he expanded the limits of how text could affect its reader, contain and transport its author, and transform the minutiae of the everyday material environment. Yet finally, in his experiments on the physical body, he comes up against the limits of his method. In creating a habitat on the page, he, like countless writers before him, had identified with that disembodied voice, becoming what he made of himself in writing. After decades of cultural entrepreneurship that used language, print, and practice to manipulate the world and create innovative experiences that would throw the material world into relief, even while he claimed the designs for his own, Li Yu stops short of altering the expression of these bodies. True to his practice of tireless cultural entrepreneurship, he opts instead to sell the idea of their distinction and value.

Far from his mountain retreat, these bodies—bodies of leisure, available for purchase, physically optimized by his design, and at least nominally removed from the responsibility of reproduction—are what made the world (the garden, the stage, and even the text of *Xianqing ouji*) habitable. It was in embracing the surplus of their presence, that part of them that resisted representation, that Li Yu could recover momentarily a sense of his own carefree embodied self—naked and hidden from sight at his mountain retreat—from its representation.

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## APPENDIX I: List of Li Yu's works with participant figures

Year	Title	Type	Number of Participants
1651	Women in Love 憐香伴	play	3
1652	The Mistake with the Kite 風箏誤	play	3
1653	Ideal Love Matches 意中緣	play	2
1655	The Jade Clasp 玉搔頭	play	2
1656	Silent Operas 無聲戲	short story collection	1
1657	Silent Operas, A Second Collection 無聲戲二集	short story collection	1
1657	You Can't Do Anything About Fate 奈何天	play	2
1657	The Carnal Prayer Mat 肉蒲團	novel	0
1658	Twelve Towers 十二樓	short story collection	1
1659	The Illusory Tower 蜃中樓	play	2
1659	Mr. Li's Five Plays 李氏五種	play collection	2
1660	A First Levy of Letters 尺牘初徵	edited volume of letters	92
1661	Paired Soles 比目魚	play	2
1663	A New Aid to Administration, A First Collection 資治新書初集	edited volume of court cases	81
1663	Preserving Life 求生錄	edited volume of court cases	1
1664	Discussions of the Past 論古 (1665 Liweng's Revised and Expanded Discussions of the Past 笠翁增訂論古)	essays on history	43
1665	Woman in Pursuit of Man 鳳求鳳	play	3
1667	Be Careful About Love (drama) 慎亂交	play	2
1667	A New Aid to Administration, A Second Collection 資治新書二集	edited volume of court cases	105
1668	The Ingenious Finale 巧團圓	play	3
1668	A Second Levy of Letters, in progress 尺牘二徵	edited volume of letters	1
1671	A First Collection of Parallel Prose 四六初徵	edited volume of parallel prose	147
1671	Leisure Notes 閒情偶寄	essays	19
1672	Independent Words, A First Collection 一家言初集; 1673/7 A Second Collection 二集 1673/7; 1678 A Complete Collection 全集	complete works	84
1678	Singable Lyrics, Or Liweng's Further Collection 笠翁餘集, 耐歌詞	lyrics	15
1679	Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual 芥子園畫傳	painting manual	3

**APPENDIX II: Notes on editions of Li Yu's *Liweng yijiayan* 李翁一家言**

Editions of Li Yu's *Liweng's Independent Words* (*Liweng yijiayan* 李翁一家言) include *Liweng's Independent Words: A First Collection* (*Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言初集, published in 1672 or 1673), *Liweng's Independent Words, A Second Collection* (*erji* 二集, after 1673, before 1678), as well as a combined edition, *Liweng's Independent Words, a Complete Collection* (*quanji* 全集) (published in 1678). In the appendix to Patrick Hanan's *Invention*, he discusses a number of editions of *Independent Words*. Hanan did not have access to a copy of the first collection that included a title page. A facsimile version of such an edition has been reprinted in the *Siku jinhuishu congkan buyi*, vol. 85, 1-185. (The text is credited in the *Siku* to an edition held at the Nanjing University Library, but this is erroneous. No such text is held there). In this edition, the title page clearly indicates that Li Yu had intended this to be the first installment of his collected works, and that he intended to follow it up with a second installment at a later date. The title page reads: "*Liweng's Independent Words, First Collection* Master of Yisheng tang Studio 笠翁一家言初集 翼聖堂主人." It includes publisher's note: "The world is brimming with Mr. [Li's] books, yet all of these are scattered miscellanea. They are not the source of his literary creation. Now, every time distinguished persons from throughout the land enter this bookshop they inquire after a complete collection of his poetry and prose. It is hard to reply to them as they insistently entreat me to circulate it. I also fear that the pieces are so numerous as to inconvenience the customer, so I've divided it into various collections to be published one after the other. This is the first. Recorded by the Master of Yisheng tang" 先生之書充滿六合 皆屬零星雜刻。非其著述本來。茲因海內名流。每入坊間。即詢詩文全集。答不勝答。是用固請流傳。又恐篇帙浩繁。購者不易。分為數集。次第刊行。此其發端者也。翼聖堂主人識

(*Siku* ed. 補 85-2). The preface of this edition is dated 1670. The Malian combined edition, held in the Peking University Library's collection, reprints the original *Second Collection* (*erji* 二集) using the original Yisheng tang blocks. Hanan observed that there were several reprints of the combined edition throughout the Qing, and he indicated that these were reprinted from the original Yisheng tang blocks.

My study of a number of extant editions suggests that there were at least two other sets of blocks carved from the Yisheng tang blocks prior to the release of the combined Mustard Seed Garden edition in 1730. First, there is a 16-volume version of the combined edition held at Beijing Normal University (X/810.72/4037.3), which indicates that it is reprinted from *Mustard Seed Garden* blocks (*Jieziyuan cangban* 芥子園藏版), and on its title page includes a reference to it being “the original Mustard Seed Garden edition.” Another 16-volume combined edition, held by the Shanghai Library (448917-36) seems to have been printed from the same blocks, except that the characters “*Mustard Seed Garden blocks* (*Jieziyuan cangban* 芥子園藏版)” appear on the fold of each page. The title page of this edition attributes the carving of the blocks to the publisher Shidetang 世德堂, a Nanjing commercial publisher. Finally, fragments of another edition (vols. 1-7, 14), held at Beijing Normal University (847.2/292-03, 108), appear to also be printed from *Mustard Seed Garden* blocks (the characters *Mustard Seed Garden blocks* [*Jieziyuan cangban* 芥子園藏版] appear on the folds between pages like in the above edition). However, the title page of this edition also claims the *Mustard Seed Garden* blocks (*Jieziyuan cangban* 芥子園藏版), whereas the title page of the other “Mustard Seed Garden” edition simply includes the characters “Blocks of this shop (*benya cangban* 本衙藏版).” Shen Jin has argued,

based on his analysis of a number of fictional works bearing the characters *benya cangban*, that this was a way for commercial publishers to publish banned books anonymously.<sup>478</sup>

I believe that all of these “Mustard Seed Garden” editions predate the 1730 integrated Mustard Seed Garden edition. The primary evidence for this is that there are a number of minor changes to the 1730 edition of the text, none of which are followed in the above combined editions (for example, the term “*shengren* 聖人,” or sage, is replaced with “*zhiren* 至人,” which also means sage, and the order of the characters “does not surpass this,” or “*bushiguo* 不是過,” is changed to “*buguoshi* 不過是”). The reference to the Mustard Seed Garden original edition is of interest not least because the original editions, including the first, second, and combined collections, were all published by Yisheng tang, not Mustard Seed Garden. If I am correct, then the fact that there are at least two other editions circulating before the publication of the 1730 integrated edition might indicate the popularity of these editions during and just after Li Yu’s lifetime.

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<sup>478</sup> Chum Shum 沈津, “Shuo benya cangban 說本衙藏版,” in *Chang Bide jiaoshou bazhijinwu shouqing lunwen ji* 昌彼得教授八秩晉五壽慶論文集, ed. Chang Bide 昌彼得 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 2005). According to Cynthia Brokaw, this phrase—“retention of the original blocks—is a customary expression to indicate that a publisher had a proprietary claim to blocks in his possession. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods*, 178-9.

### APPENDIX III: Guide to Editions of Li Yu's Works

The study of Li Yu has been greatly facilitated by Helmut Martin's facsimile reproductions of some of Li Yu's major works in his *Li Yu quanji* (1974), and more recently by the widely available *Zhejiang guji* simplified character *Li Yu quanji* (1992). Most recent studies of Li Yu rely on one or both of these collections. In the course of my research on Li Yu's works, I consulted many early and rare editions of his work, and I have included notes on the most relevant of these below, as well as information on some of the recent good facsimile reproductions of early editions.

#### *Yijiayan* 一家言 (*Independent Words*)

Typeset edition: Li Yu 李漁. *Liweng yijiayan* 笠翁一家言. *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集. 20 vols. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1992. Vols. 1-2.

#### *Original and facsimile editions:*

1. 笠翁一家言初集文集 4 卷詩集 8 卷 (*Liweng's Independent Words, A First Collection: Four Volumes of Prose, Eight Volumes of Poetry*)

Location: Siku jinhui shu congkan bianzuan weiyuanhui 四庫禁毀書叢刊編纂委員會.  
*Siku jinhui shu congkan bu* 四庫禁毀書叢刊補. 311 vols. Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997. Vol. 85, 1.

Edition: Yishengtang print 翼聖堂刻本, preface dated 1672

This is the earliest edition of *Independent Words*, now rare.

2. 笠翁一家言全集：文集 4 卷 詩集 8 卷 二集 12 卷 別集 4 卷 (*Liweng's Independent Words, A Complete Collection: Four Volumes of Prose, Eight Volumes of Poetry, Twelve Volumes of the Second Collection, and Four Volumes of a Separate Collection*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館 MX/810.72/4037 馬廉特藏  
Edition: Yishengtang print 翼聖堂, dated 1678

Includes prose and poetry from the "First Collection" (from above first edition) and the "Second Collection." The separate collection is a version of *Lungu* 論古 (*Discussions of the Past*).

3. 笠翁一家言全集：28 卷 (*Liweng's Independent Words, A Complete Collection: 28 volumes*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, 810.72/4037.1:1, 2

Edition: Extant volumes correspond to the combined Yishengtang edition (2).

Missing many volumes. Edition and date unknown, but existing volumes include the fourth volume of prose, eight volumes of poetry, and six volumes of the second collection.

4. 笠翁一家言全集: 文集 4 卷, 別集 10 卷, 偶集 6 卷 (*Liweng's Independent Words, A Complete Collection: Four Volumes of Prose, Ten Volumes of a Separate Collection, Six Volumes of an Occasional Collection*)

Location: Shanghai Library 上海圖書館 448917-36

Edition: Shidetang print 世德堂, from Jieziyuan blocks 芥子園藏板

This version is very close to above Kangxi period Yishengtang editions. Both of these editions differ markedly from the 1730 Jieziyuan combined edition. “Jieziyuan blocks 芥子園藏板” indicated on the fold of each page.

5. 笠翁全集: 詩文集 10 卷 閒情偶寄 6 卷 (*Liweng's Independent Words, A Complete Collection: Ten Volumes of Poetry and Prose, Six Volumes of Leisure Notes*)

Location: Beijing Normal University Library 北京師範大學圖書館, 847.2/292-03, 1-8.

Edition: Printed from Jieziyuan blocks 芥子園藏板

Volumes 1-7 and 14 extant. “Jieziyuan blocks 芥子園藏板” indicated on the fold of each page, but different from all other editions, including the Shidetang print and the 1730 edition. Many of the names of commentators blacked out.

6. 笠翁一家言全集: 詩文集 10 卷, 閒情偶寄 6 卷 (*Liweng's Independent Words, A Complete Collection: Ten Volumes of Poetry and Prose, Six Volumes of Leisure Notes*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, X/810.72/4037.3

Edition: Jieziyuan original edition, blocks kept by “this” shop 芥子園原本 (本衙藏板)

This contains the same content as other sixteen-volume complete collections, but using different blocks. Textual variants follow the earliest (Yishengtang) editions, not the 1730 Jieziyuan edition.

7. 笠翁一家言全集 16 卷 (*Liweng's Independent Words, A Complete Collection: Sixteen Volumes*)

Location: Nanjing University Library 南京大學圖書館, and many other collections

Edition: Jieziyuan 芥子園, 1730 雍正 8 年

This 1730 edition is printed on entirely new blocks, and has been significantly edited. It integrates the second collection into the respective categories of the first edition. It is now the most common version of Liweng yijiayan available: the *Yijiayan* in the 1992 *Li Yu quanji* follows this edition, and this is the edition reproduced in Helmut Martin's *Li Yu quanji*. This edition includes *Xianqing ouji*, this version of which is also reproduced in facsimile in Martin's *Li Yu quanji*.

### ***Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶寄 (Leisure Notes)**

Typeset edition: Li Yu 李漁. *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記. Li Yu quanji 李漁全集 20 vols.

Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1992. Vol. 3.

*Original and facsimile editions:*

1. 閒情偶寄: 16 卷 (*Leisure Notes: Sixteen Volumes*)

Location: "Xuxiu Siku quanshu" bianzuan weiyuanhui 續修四庫全書編纂委員會. *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1995. *Zibu* 子部, *Zajia lei* 雜家類 1186, 483-722.

Edition: Yisheng tang 翼聖堂 1671 康熙辛亥

This widely available facsimile reprint of the first edition of *Xianqing ouji* is missing only the title page.

2. 閒情偶寄：16 卷 (*Leisure Notes: Sixteen Volumes*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, X/9301/4433

Edition: Yishengtang 翼聖堂, 1671 康熙 10 年

Missing title page, but same as above edition. Quality of printing is significantly inferior (many folded pages, etc.)

3. 閒情偶寄：16 卷 (*Leisure Notes: Sixteen Volumes*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, X/818.2/4037.1

Edition: Yishengtang 翼聖堂? 1671?

Missing title page, but same as above editions.

4. 閒情偶寄：16 卷 (*Leisure Notes: Sixteen Volumes*)

Location: Beijing Normal University 北京師範大學圖書館, 701/292.7-20

Edition: Yishengtang 翼聖堂? 1671?

Missing title page, but same as above editions.

5. 閒情偶寄：16 卷 (*Leisure Notes: Sixteen Volumes*)

Location: Shandong Provincial Library 山東省圖書館

Edition: Yisheng tang 翼聖堂 1671 康熙辛亥

Same as above editions, but includes on title page: The second [secret book of Liweng] "Independent Words" will be issued soon 第二種一家言即出.

6. 笠翁偶集：6 卷 (*Leisure Notes: Six Volumes*)

Location: Shanghai Library 上海圖書館, 線普長 81172-77

Edition: Jieziyuan 芥子園, 1730?

This edition is the most widely available, and is included as part of the 1730 *Liweng yijiyan quanji*. It is called *Liweng ouji* (*Liweng's Occasional Collection*) rather than *Xianqing ouji* (*Leisure Notes*).

## Letter Collections

Typeset edition: none

*Original and facsimile editions:*

1. 尺牘初徵十二卷 (*A First Levy of Letters: Twelve Volumes*)

Location: Siku jinhui shu congkan bianzuan weiyuanhui 四庫禁毀書叢刊編纂委員會.



*Siku jinhui shu congkan* 四庫禁毀書叢刊. 311 vols. Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997. *Jibu* 集部 153, 499-704 (from a copy held in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Library 中國科學學院圖書館).

Edition: 1660, 清順治十七年

2. 尺牘初徵十二卷 (*A First Levy of Letters: Twelve Volumes*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, sb/818.1086/4037

Edition: 1684 康熙甲子

Missing first three pages of preface. Date of preface changed to date after the death both of its author and Li Yu. Blocks are not identical to above, but similar.

3. 古今尺牘大全 (*A Complete Collection of Letters Old and New*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, 818.108/4037

Edition: not known

***Siliu chuzheng ershi juan* 四六初徵二十卷 (*A First Levy of Parallel Prose, Twenty Volumes*)**

Typeset edition: none

*Facsimile edition:*

1. 四六初徵二十卷 (*A First Levy of Parallel Prose, Twenty Volumes*)

Location: Siku jinhui shu congkan bianzuan weiyuanhui 四庫禁毀書叢刊編纂委員會.  
*Siku jinhui shu congkan* 四庫禁毀書叢刊. 311 vols. Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997. *Jibu* 集部, vol. 135 (from a 1671 edition held in the Shanghai Library, Kangxi 10).

***Zizhi xinshu* 資治新書 (*A New Aid to Administration*)**

Typeset edition: Li Yu 李漁. *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集. 20 vols. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1992. Volumes 16-17.

*Original edition:*

1. 新增資治新書初集 (*A Newly Increased New Aid to Administration, A First Collection*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, r/4603/4433

Edition: Printed from Jieziyuan blocks

**Plays**

Typeset editions:

1. Li Yu 李漁. *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集. 20 vols. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1992. Volumes 4-5.

The ten extant plays known to be written by Li Yu.

2. Li Yu 李漁. *Liweng chuanqi shizhong jiaozhu* 笠翁傳奇十種校注. Edited by Wang Xueqi 王學奇 2 vols Tianjin: Tianjin guji, 2009.

Includes detailed annotations.

3. Li Yu 李漁. *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集. 20 vols. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1992. Volumes 6-7.

Eight additional plays edited and approved by Li Yu.

*Original and facsimile editions:*

1. 笠翁傳奇十種 (*Liweng's Ten Plays*)

Location: Li Yu 李漁, and Helmut Martin. *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集. 15 vols Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1970.

Edition: Shidetang 世德堂, Kangxi period 康熙

This is a facsimile reprint of the earliest known edition of this work.

2. 風箏誤傳奇 (*Mistake with a Kite*)

Location: "Xuxiu Siku quanshu" bianzuan weiyuanhui 續修四庫全書編纂委員會. *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1995. *Jibu* 集部, *Xiqu lei* 戲曲類, 1775, 507-576.

Edition: 1659, 順治 16 年

Round illustrations.

3. 風箏誤傳奇 (*Mistake with a Kite*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, SB/812.7/4037a

Edition: 1659, 順治 16 年

This is the version reproduced in the *Xuxiu siku quanshu*. Also includes first of the illustrations, which is missing from the *Xuxiu* edition. These and the two following examples include the same comments, but the latter two are printed from different blocks.

4. 風箏誤傳奇 (*Mistake with a Kite*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, 812.7 4043

Rectangular illustrations.

5. 繡像風箏誤 (*Illustrated Mistake with a Kite*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, 814.77 7780

This is a later edition with different scene titles.

6. 奈何天 (*You Can't Do Anything About Fate*)

Location: Beijing Normal University Library 北京師範大學圖書館, 855.6 723

Round illustrations, appears to be a 1659 print, but no indication of date in the text.

7. 笠翁十種曲 (*Liweng's Ten Plays*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, SB/812.08/4037

These are the ten plays accepted as having been written by Li Yu. Rectangular illustrations, later edition.

8. 笠翁傳奇五種：10 卷 (*Liweng's Five Plays: Ten Volumes*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館

Edition: Jieziyuan on the Lake 湖上芥子園, date unknown

These plays (萬全記, 十醋記, 雙鍾記, 偷甲記, 魚籃記) were likely not written by Li Yu. They are recorded as being written by a Mr. Fan 範氏, and are here presented by Li Yu.

9. 笠翁新三種傳奇 (*Liweng's Three New Plays*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, MSB/812.087/4037

Edition: Unknown. Only indication: “blocks held by ‘this’ shop 本衙藏板”

These plays (關公補天記, 周處雙瑞記, 四元記) were also edited and approved Li Yu rather than written by him.

10. 笠翁閱定傳奇八種 (*Eight Plays Edited and Approved by Liweng*)

Location: Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館, X/812.08/4032

The plays include the “five plays” from the eighth edition listed here, in addition to the three new plays in the ninth (萬全記一名富貴仙, 十醋記一名滿床笏, 補天記一名小江東, 雙瑞記一名中庸解, 偷甲記一名雁翎甲, 四元記一名小萊子, 雙鍾記一名合歡鍾, 魚籃記一名雙錯香錦).

### Short Stories

Typeset edition:

1. Li Yu 李漁. *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集. 20 vols. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1992. Volumes 8-9.

*Original and facsimile editions:*

The edition of *Wusheng xi* reproduced in Martin's *Li Yu quanji* (vols. 12-13) is a reprint of a Japanese manuscript, while *Shi'er lou* is a 1658 first edition (vols. 14-15), an original version of which is at the Peking University Library (813.35/4037.1).

For more information on editions of Li Yu's short story collections, see Patrick Hanan's introductions to his translations and his notes in *The Invention of Li Yu*.

1. Li Yu 李漁. *Silent Operas*. Translated by Patrick Hanan. Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990.
2. Li Yu 李漁. *A Tower for Summer Heat*. Translated by Patrick Hanan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
3. Patrick Hanan. *The Invention of Li Yu*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.