Dreaming the Past
Memory and Continuity
Beyond the Ming Fall

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When historical visibility has faded, when the present tense of testimony loses its power to arrest, then the displacements of memory and the indirections of art offer us the image of our psychic survival. To live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalencies and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction, or its sundering and splitting performed in the work of art, is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity.

—Homi Bhabha, 1994

The “Displacements of Memory”

One of the more famous Ming sympathizers among important early Qing writers is the Zhejiang literatus Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1679). His best-known writings are nostalgic; significantly, many works produced decades after the Ming fall recreate events of the past as dreams, a model followed by others among his contemporaries.¹ But these dreamy

Epigraph: Homi Bhabha, “Introduction: Locations of Culture,” in The Location of Culture (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 18. Bhabha concludes this 1994 essay by referring specifically to Toni Morrison’s novel Beloved and generally to contemporary culture and writing; he does not utilize this perspective, as I intend to do here, to elucidate times past.

¹ As Zhang wrote in his preface to Tao’an mengyi, “When I think back to my life then, those of days of glory and extravagance, what I’ve seen has all disappeared, and in these fifty years have turned into dreams” (Zhang Dai 張岱, Zhang Dai shi wen ji 張岱詩文集, ed. Xia Xianchun 夏咸淳 [Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1992], p. 111). I return to the various degrees of sympathy for the fallen Ming at the end of this chapter.
representations were hardly limited to their authors’ own experiences: in their art, several late seventeenth-century writers turned to periods in the past that they apparently felt paralleled their own earlier lives. As Homi Bhabha suggests for other times and places, as traumatic events—or lost happier days—receded into the past, their art came to reflect on, rather than simply to reflect, their sense of loss. Many late seventeenth-century writers wrote about the Tang. Was this choice of subject matter fully conscious? I am not prepared to say that it was; certainly previous writers had created fiction, plays, and poems about events remote in time. My point here is only to demonstrate that there exists a noteworthy consistency among this socially elite group in their writerly concern with the fall of the glamorous “high Tang,” sheng Tang 盛唐. For this group of late seventeenth-century literati, writing about the cultural destruction caused by the rebellions and extensive warfare of the mid-eighth century seems to have allowed an exploration of the discomfort they felt with their own new, seemingly diminished, era. Perhaps the cultural and personal losses of that earlier time provided some solace: High Tang poets continued to be remembered, recited, quoted, and admired. In short, those earlier writers had “survived” a period of political and social chaos through their art. The ambiguities of these later artists’ writings would seem to reflect what Bhabha has termed the “ambivalencies and ambiguities” of their own fading memories of destruction and loss. Using Homi Bhabha’s phrases, and his critical insights, as my guide, I make these ambiguities my concern here.

Late in life Zhang Dai penned an “Epitaph for Myself” (“Zi wei muzhiming” 自為墓誌銘) on the model of a similar essay reportedly composed by the illustrious Six Dynasties poet Tao Qian 潛 落 昭 (Tao Yuanming 陶 清 義, 365–427) on his deathbed. Writing of himself in both the third and the first person, Zhang commented:

In his youth, he was a silk-stocking dandy incurably addicted to luxurious living. He was fond of fine houses, pretty maids, handsome boys, gorgeous clothes, choice food, spirited horses, bright lanterns, fireworks, the Pear Garden [i.e., the theater], music, fine antiques, flowers, and birds. In addition he indulged himself in tea and fruit and was infatuated with books and poetry. For half of his life he had been busy with all these, but then everything turned into dream and illusion. 劳碌半身，皆成夢幻。

When he was fifty years old, his country lay shattered, his family was broken up, and he took refuge in the mountains. 年至五十，國破家亡，避跡
Nothing was left in his possession except a rickety bed, a battered desk, a damaged bronze cooking vessel, a lute out of tune, several slipcases of incomplete books, and a cracked inkslab. He began to wear plain clothes and eat simple food, and still he often failed to have regular meals. Looking back, those days of two decades ago seem to have belonged to some other age.

Since the year 1644 I have lived as in a daze. I am neither able to enjoy life nor to seek death. With white hair fluttering all over my head, I am still among the living and breathing. I am afraid that I will one day disappear like the morning dew or rot away like grass and trees.

Surely there could be no more explicit feeling of living as an outsider, in an “unhomely world,” than that demonstrated here. Zhang had, by his own account, enjoyed a privileged life during the last decades of the Ming. He had traveled extensively in the lower Yangzi cultural centers, engaged in refined cultural activities, and made a name for himself as a prose writer. Then came the Manchu conquest, and this familiar world disappeared, and its “historical visibility” began to fade.

Zhang’s world changed catastrophically. For a time after the Ming collapse, Zhang Dai sheltered the Prince of Lu 魯 (Zhu Yihai 朱以海, 1618–62), a scion of the Ming ruling family, in his house in Shaoxing. Zhang also served in this pretender’s court briefly when the prince attempted to rally Ming loyalists against the invaders. (The Zhejiang scholar Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 [1610–95] was among Zhu Yihai’s strongest supporters during that period.) But this idealistic vision of a dynastic restoration, too, vanished: one of Zhu’s generals kidnapped Zhang’s son and demanded a ransom; later the same general sacked Zhang Dai’s home, destroying much of his library. In the summer of 1646, Zhang fled Shaoxing to a retreat in the mountains, where he lived out the remaining decades of his life. The poverty he describes in his elegy was

not exaggerated; after a childhood of privilege, he now frequently suffered hunger and cold.\(^3\)

Zhang Dai’s years in retirement were spent in writing about his memories of the late Ming. Although he did comment on political and military events, he is far better known for his collection of reminiscences of life in the cultural centers of the lower Yangzi. This was his *Tao’an mengyi* (Dream memories of Tao’s hut). Topics for these sketches include parties on West Lake (Xihu 西湖) in Hangzhou, lovely and virtually unobtainable courtesans such as Wang Yuesheng 王月生, marvelous individuals including the storyteller Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 (Pockmarked Liu 柳麻子), flowers, beautiful sites, and characters from the novel *Shuihu zhuan* 水浒傳 (Men of the marshes), to mention only a few.\(^4\) Some of the entries are unsettling, at least by modern standards. One such bad dream is the market in human flesh portrayed in his sketch of potential concubines in Yangzhou (“Yangzhou shouma” 揚州瘦馬) and how they were peddled by matchmakers there:

Arriving at the house of the “lean horses,” the person would be served tea as soon as he was seated. At once the woman agent would bring a girl


\(^4\) Zhang’s lengthy history of the Ming was entitled *Shikui cang shu* 石匮藏書 (Books stored in a stone casket); it may have served as an important source for later, more orthodox histories; see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, p. 54. For Zhang Dai’s entry on Wang Yuesheng, see *Tao’an mengyi*, 108–9, and Ye, *Vignettes*, pp. 95–96.
and announce, “Guniang, curtsy!” The girl curtsied. Next was said, “Guniang, walk forward!” She walked forward. “Guniang, turn around!” She turned around, facing the light, and her face was shown. “Pardon, can we have a look at your hand?” The woman rolled up her sleeve and exposed her entire arm. Her skin was shown. “Guniang, look at the gentleman!” She looked from the corner of her eyes. Her eyes were shown. . . . “Guniang, you can go back.”

As soon as the girl went in, another came out, and the same thing was repeated.

One might expect that Zhang Dai probably found nothing morally questionable about this practice of parading these young potential sex partners for the benefit of the prying—and paying—male gaze. But significantly, Zhang recorded that he found the experience exhausting and, in the end, somewhat distasteful—at least for the way the matchmaker took her leave: upon delivering the chosen girl and receiving her pay, she precipitously “rushed off to look for other customers.”

Obviously the text here was not written by a young Zhang Dai celebrating his recent sexual exploits; the author was the aging and disgruntled idler who had little but his memories to sustain him.

**Deeper Visions**

One of the most revealing pieces in Zhang’s collection is the last, entitled “The Blessed Land of Langhuan”; here we see Zhang’s attempt at a kind of psychic survival, his effort to recover a more serene and predictable state of mind, a dream quest for confirmation of his abilities and of the values that he had learned long before.

Perhaps because of some previous karmic cause, in my dreams I often dream of a stone grotto hidden among masses of crags. Flowing in front is a rapid and

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5. Zhang Dai, *Tao’an mengyi*, pp. 76–77; translation (first line modified) by Lin Yutang in Victor H. Mair, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 597–98. In a note (p. 597), Mair identifies “lean horse” as “a local name for matchmakers.” However, an anonymous reviewer of this chapter correctly pointed out that the “lean horses” were the young women instead. Translations of Zhang Dai’s writings from his *Tao’an mengyi* can be found in Mair, pp. 94–98, including on pp. 595–96 his reminiscence of the well-known professional late Ming storyteller Liu Jingting (see *Tao’an mengyi*, p. 68). A more extensive set of Zhang Dai’s sketches in translation can be found in Ye, *Vignettes*, pp. 86–103. Ye (p. 132) explains that Zhang Dai greatly admired the reclusive poet Tao Qian and hence named his studio “Tao’s Hut.” Mair (p. 594) mistranslates the name as “Studio of Contentment.”
winding stream, where water cascades down like snow. Ancient pine trees and oddly shaped rocks stand interspersed with prized flowers. I dreamed that I sat down inside. A boy served me tea and fruit. The bookshelves were filled with books. I opened a few at random to take a cursory look, and they were mostly printed in a kind of seal script that resembled tadpoles, the footprints of birds, or thunderbolts. Yet in my dreams I can read the script and seem to understand everything in spite of it abstruseness.

On days when I have had nothing particular to do, I have often dreamed at night about the place. And after waking up, my thoughts are filled with it. I wish to own such a fine place. It would be a rock-ribbed small hill in the suburbs, with plenty of green bamboo growing on it. . . . At the end of the mountain path there would be an elegant-looking cave, where I would build a burial place for myself, in preparation for my exuviation. . . . The front gate would face a great river, with a small tower on its wing, on top of which one might command a view of Censer Peak, Jingting, and the other mountains. A gate would be constructed below the tower, with a horizontal board inscribed “The Blessed Land of Langhuan.”

The Blessed Land of Langhuan, according to the Yuan period writer Yi Shizhen 伊世珍 in his Langhuan ji 琅環記, was visited by Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300) during the Jin 晉 period. It was a strange world inside a cave; arrayed in many rooms were books that chronicled events of highest antiquity. Amplifying this story in the second juan of his own prose collection, an entry significantly entitled Langhuan wenji 琅環文集, Zhang Dai recorded Zhang Hua’s response to these treasure troves as being “completely at a loss” (shuangran zishi 奄然自失). His aged host demurs when Hua asks to read the books, and once outside the cave all traces of its entrance disappear.

Zhang Hua was a child prodigy at the court of Wei Emperor Wen 魏文帝 (Cao Pi 曹丕, 187–226); later he was to play a major role in the conquest of the Three Kingdoms on behalf of the Jin court. Ultimately, however, he took the losing side in a factional struggle and was executed; his was a time of intense political rivalry, civil war, and court struggles. Zhang Hua is best known for his Bowu zhi 博物志 (A display of all things), a compilation of anecdotes of the strange and curious, of interest alike to folklorists, historians, and students of fiction; it may have influenced the better-known col-

Thus to a startling degree, Zhang Dai concluded his major collection of reminiscences with narratives of what can only be termed wish-fulfillment dreams—in contrast to the events of the past that had taken on a dream-like quality. Explicitly, he would identify with that earlier writer named Zhang in finding the records of the past, a past in which he could lose himself as he might have done in his own collection before his library was looted and burned. The past that he seeks in this story is manifestly not that of his own memories. This “past,” events far removed in time and essence, constitutes a much more idyllic alternative to his own tawdry experiences during the Ming, itself so thoroughly remote from his present in the Qing that he can only fantasize about it. By concluding his Dream Memories of Tao’s Hut on this note of frustration, he suggested the sensation of displacement experienced by many survivors and their fruitless efforts to create a new and solid basis for psychic—and social—stability in the new age, toward the end of the seventeenth century, well after the Manchus had established firm control.

Displacements to the Tang

Zhang Dai paraphrased the story of Zhang Hua and alluded to other early writers through the title of his collection of reminiscences and his studio name. Yet in his elegy for himself he followed a pattern that is

7. See Ye, Vignettes, p. 131; and the entry on Zhang Hua in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 215–16. Zhang Dai included his narrative of Zhang Hua’s experiences under the title “Langhuan fudi ji” in his Langhuan wenji; see Zhang Dai shi wen ji, pp. 148–49. Yang Ye does not acknowledge that Zhang also compiled a short Tao’an mengyi bu (Supplement) in which he recorded more recent marvels, including the smoking of tobacco (see Tao’an mengyi, pp. 120–240); thus this account of a fantastic dream is not the way he ultimately concluded his reminiscences. The last entry of the Supplement purports to be a dream he had while painfully making his way out of the mountains to accept an invitation from Qi Biaojia (1602–43), a Shaoxing bibliophile and Ming official who drowned himself to avoid serving the Manchus. In this final dream, Qi advises him to return to his mountain hideaway and stay there (Tao’an mengyi, pp. 123–24). This anecdote would seem to be a self-justifying dream, authorizing his retreat by reference to a noted literatus who suffered martyrdom for the Ming cause.
noteworthy for the frequency of its appearance in early Qing writings. That is, Zhang specifically referred to several Tang writers, poets of the early Tang—including Wang Ji 王績 (585–644), who lived through the fall of the Sui and the successive conquest, and the immortal Li Bai 李 白 (701–62), a favorite poet at the self-destructing court of Tang Minghuang 明皇. As others have demonstrated elsewhere in this volume, certain early Qing writers looked to events of the Song as analogous to the turbulence they themselves had experienced. But for many authors the more common approach was to refer to, or even to write extensively about, the Kaiyuan 明元 (713–41) and Tianbao 天寶 (742–55) reign periods, later known as the High Tang, when Li Longji 李隆基 occupied the throne as Minghuang. A number of writers of the late Shunzhi and Kangxi reign periods apparently embedded the trauma of the Ming fall in their reflective re-visions of this much more distant past.

Yet there was no single use of that historical period in their writings, no “obsession” with particular Tang events; their use of that particular period may have been the result of complex motivations. It is conceivable that some may even have been unaware of the parallels between the late Ming and the High Tang as represented in their writing. But why, then, did so many writers choose the Tang for their historical subject? It is significant that their topics are separated from them by a wall of time, nearly a millennium, over which they heard perhaps with less than perfect clarity, but that does not matter: their literary visions of past grandeur are freely invested with imagination, what Bhabha terms the “indirections of art.” This may have been why the distant Tang sparked their interest more than the relatively recent Song, to say nothing of painful memory fragments of the Ming itself. An age recorded as much in romantic poetry as by historians, the Tang offered “ambivalencies and ambiguities” that could be freely reused and adapted to familiarize their own “unhomely world” of the early Qing. Like the novel Sui Tang yanyi 唐演義 (Romance of the Sui and the Tang; ca. 1675, but printed only in 1695), many late seventeenth-century writings about the Tang have as their main theme seemingly irreparable loss, in which the distinction between that past time and their

8. See Li Mei 李玫, Ming Qing zhi jishuo zhoujiaqun yanjiu 明清之間蘇州作家群研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2000) for comments on plays written throughout the seventeenth century, especially during the Ming-Qing transition.
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present did not necessarily constitute an opposition or even a difference. In this, they seem to echo the strain heard through the reminiscences of Zhang Dai: although the past may be gone, it still lives in memory, dream, and art.

One example of the way that Tang events were appropriated and appreciated can be found in Yu Huai’s 余懷 (1616–96) preface to his own Banqiao zaji 板橋雜記 (Miscellaneous records of the Plank Bridge), first published in Zhaodai congshu 昭代叢書 in 1697.⁹

These [anecdotes] are just woven together from the rise and fall of an age and all the feelings about a time. They are not only descriptions of the petty and minor or records of the pretty and attractive. Jinling has always been referred to as a place of great beauties; in dress and objects, it is the glory of the lower Yangzi region. It is pre-eminent within the seas for its rich culture and gay spirit... I was born late and was not able to witness the “mists and flowers” of the south or the young rakes of Yichun [this region]. But in my youth I was fortunate enough to grow up in a time of peace, and I happened to ramble to a northern location. There beside the long Plank Bridge, with intoning and reciting I hoped to make a brave impression... But since the dynastic transition, times have changed and things are not the same; my decade-long dream of the past has become no different from that one about Yangzhou. 此一代之興衰，千秋之感慨所系，而非徒狭邪之事也，賢治之是偶也。金陵古稱佳麗地，衣冠文物盛於江南，文采風流甲於海內，白下青溪，桃藥開扇，其為賢治也多矣。余生也晚，不及見南部之煙花，宜春之弟子，而猶幸少長承平之世，偶為此里之道，長板橋逢一笑一笑，顧盼自雄。矗矗鼎革以來，時移物換，十年舊夢，依約揚州一片。¹⁰

Yu’s last line refers to a famous poem by the late Tang poet Du Mu 杜牧 (803–53):

Ten years later I wake from my Yangzhou dream
With no more than a reputation for my time in
the brothels.\textsuperscript{11}

At least one modern bibliographer has placed Yu’s collection of anecdotes about his romantic adventures in Nanjing in the same category as the Tang collection of fictionalized reminiscences about the courtesan quarters in Chang’an, \textit{Beili zhi} 北里志 (Notes on the Northern Precincts). Yu Huai himself identified this collection with the nostalgic \textit{Dongjing meng hua lu} 東京夢華錄 (Dreams of the glories of the Eastern Capital), compiled during the Southern Song period. Yu’s friend You Tong 尤侗 (1618–1704) was to remark, “The lovely ladies of the south seem to be still before my eyes, and there can be no exaggeration of their glory to one who has seen them. Yet within my own lifetime these beautiful women have turned to dust. In a turn of the head it’s all a dream of past glories—how can one avoid lamenting its loss!”

Yu Huai’s short collection of anecdotes about Jinling (Nanjing) prostitutes during the late Ming may well be his best-known writing. \textit{Banqiao zaji} describes the splendor and riches of that now-lost place and time with nostalgic reverence for the women who served their male patrons along the Qinhuai River in the years before the Ming fall. But


\textsuperscript{12} Ding Xigen, \textit{Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo xuba ji}, pp. 440, 441–42. Paul Rouzer discusses the \textit{Beili zhi} in his \textit{Articulated Ladies: Gender and Male Community in Early Chinese Texts} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), pp. 249–83. Despite his protestations that the account is not necessarily historically accurate, Rouzer relies on the \textit{Beili zhi} to reconstruct relationships between historical literati and prostitutes during the post–High Tang era. Written as reminiscence, the piece reflects several character types conventional in contemporary \textit{chuangqi} fiction; I conclude, therefore, that it is an imaginative re-creation to a large degree. I am confirmed in this conclusion by the fact that its author included a long anecdote about his relationship with a prostitute that “bears an uncanny resemblance in some respects to Yuan Zhen’s much more famous \textit{Tale of Yingying}, particularly in the way it contrasts female and male perceptions of the same relationship” (see Rouzer, pp. 273–83).
Yu Huai’s depiction is a highly controlled vision; he made no references to venereal disease and other less desirable facets of that “romantic” life. His loving descriptions linger over the general aura of these demure ladies, their abilities in music and the arts, and their refined tastes. The melodious notes of flutes and amorous songs that filled the evening air pervade his anecdotes. Even so—the appealing images of these young women and their companions notwithstanding—his stated purpose was to warn readers against this sort of self-indulgence. More likely his goal was to demonstrate, by combining dreamy memory with artistic elaboration, how much had been lost because of the conquest.\(^{13}\)

**Prefaces to and About the Past**

Looking backward through time from the age of sixty, the Qing poet and administrator Wang Shizhen 王士禛 (1634–1711) confessed his love for old books and their contents. “Time has poured by at a gallop” 流光如馳, he declared, and yet “when I hold these old things, it is like meeting an old friend” 撫此舊物，如遇故人. His passion for books unabated through the years, he was still an avid collector of old volumes “to amuse me in my old age and to help me forget my poverty” 可以娛吾之老而忘吾之貧. Wang wrote prefaces and colophons for several, including one collection of historical anecdotes from the Tang. These brief comments by Wang share Zhang Dai’s concern with transience, with lost time and with lost times—which, as Wang observed, have been preserved, if imperfectly, in old books. He also indicated that even these treasures provided instructive comments (xun 緣) for his age. But unlike Zhang Dai, Wang Shizhen had easy access to books as physical objects, not primarily as the stuff of dreams inaccessible in waking reality.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{13}\) See the introductory comments of translator Howard Levy in his *Feast of Mist and Flowers*, (Yokohama: privately printed, 1967), pp. 4–5; Yu Huai “had deplored the destruction of the brilliant culture of the Ming through Manchu occupation” (p. 3). He and others who wrote on the pleasure quarters in other cities “felt an empathy for events gone by, mourned the inevitable passing of youth and beauty, and tried to preserve for posterity some inkling of the wondrousness of the renowned prostitutes of their age” (p. 4). Levy rightly refers to the work “mainly as a literary effort and secondarily as a historical contribution” (p. 13).

\(^{14}\) See Wang’s two colophons to *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, in Ding Xigen, *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo xuba ji*, pp. 266–67. The Tang work was by Gao Yanxiu 高彦休 (b. 854); since a major portion of it was lost, Gao titled it *Tang que shi*
Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609–72), as a somewhat older man, was far more directly affected by the Ming fall. He was, of course, already mature when it occurred. In a 1655 preface to *Yujian zun wen* 玉劍尊聞 (Anecdotes as precious as a jade sword) by the seventeenth-century bureaucrat Liang Weishu 梁維樑, Wu contemplated one aspect of his personal loss. Like Liang, Wu had compiled a great collection of old references to the eccentric behavior of literati and their witty comments (like *Yujian zun wen*, presumably, on the model of the well-known Six Dynasties compilation *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, of about 430). Others had chided him for his obsession, and as a result Wu burned his trove of materials. “Soon thereafter the world was in great chaos,” he wrote.

High officials and old friends alike were dead or destroyed; those, like me, who were so fortunate as to survive were scattered and impoverished, utterly depressed in spirit. Even sitting among a group of my fellows, when we tried to recall a few of such old matters, no one could remember them any more, and so I began to regret that my book was gone and could never again be recovered. "天下大亂。公卿故人。死亡破滅。其幸而存者余者。流離疾苦。精神昏塞。或於獨人憂坐間。藏一二舊事。都不復記憶。於是始悔其書之亡而不可復及也已。"^15^

Wu Weiye likened the experience to the loss of classical writings during the wars of the Zhou and excused his humble words on the basis of his meager reading of late. The compiler of the collection he prefaced, on the other hand, was the scion of a learned house. Having served in two courts, he had seen and heard much, and his life provided the anecdotes in his collection. Wu Weiye wrote this before his historical study of late

唐閏史 (An incomplete Tang history; 884). For Wang’s preface, see Ding Xigen, p. 318. It reads, in part, “It appears that this book, like *jianjie lu* 箴戒錄, must have been the work of some down-and-out scholar 擢才; it appears to be far from the standard of Li Zhao’s 李肇 [history] *Guoshi bu* 國史補.” Wang also derided the work for the poor behavior it presents, making it unworthy for moral instruction. Wang Shizhen, in a 1691 preface to his own collection *Chibei outan* 池北偶談 (Random comments from north of the pond), commented with pride on how his random jottings about the people and events he had witnessed or heard about later in his life had accumulated to the point that they could constitute a separate section of this larger collection (see Ding Xigen, pp. 452–53).

^15^ Ding Xigen, *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo xuba ji*, pp. 445–46; for a brief biographical sketch of Wu Weiye, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 822–23. See also Wai-yee Li’s perceptive chapter on Wu in this volume.
Ming insurrections was banned and soon after he himself had taken a position in the new Qing government.

That texts served as embodied, replacement memories for Wu Weiyue and his peers is not surprising; many of them retreated into borrowed art apparently to relieve their sense of displacement, their sense of “unhomeliness” in being cut off from recent experience. Thus it is noteworthy that a number of late seventeenth-century writers sought to re-establish ties with the past—as experienced through texts—by writing prefaces to new editions as the publishing of books recovered something of its late Ming level. As Kai-wing Chow has observed, a preface “visually and spatially separated the paratext from the text proper. Its aesthetic and personal quality put the preface on a higher ground where opinion expressed there would merit exceptional attention.” Some prefaces were printed in facsimiles of their authors’ own handwriting. Prefaces thus served as vehicles for the representation of deep feelings and profound interests as visually strong self-assertions. Large numbers of books in the broad xiaoshuo bibliographical category were reprinted early in the Qing; their prefaces, like those by Wang Shizhen, can provide a useful insight into literati attitudes toward times past as they relied on this paratextual position to shape how these old materials were to be read in their new era. Through their additions to earlier texts, these seventeenth-century writers appropriated earlier writings—often from or about the Tang—to re-establish their own artistic ties with what had been violently wrenched away by dynastic change.

The “Indirections of Art” in the “House of Fiction”

Although I have written about Sui Tang yanyi on several occasions, I return once more to the late seventeenth-century historical novel. It is curious that of all the novels narrating the events of the Tang period this one work remained popular for more than three centuries; I have already advanced several explanations for why I think this was the case.

In both organization and style, the novel is unsatisfactory compared to several of its predecessors in the historical novels genre and, especially, to the two novels from which its author, Chu Renhuo 褚人穫 (ca. 1630–1703+), copied well over half its content. I have come to believe that the one significant way in which Sui Tang yanyi differs from these other works, and from its successors, is its innovative handling of the deaths of its protagonists.\footnote{17} To this extent, Chu’s novel may serve as an emblem of late seventeenth-century literati attempts to search in the “house of fiction” to recover something of what was lost, particularly their own past days of grandeur and art.

As Chu wrote in his preface, he reincarnated one pair of characters, the historical Sui Emperor Yang 隋炀帝 (r. 605–81) and his fictional favorite consort, Zhu Guier 朱貴兒, to become a second pair, Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 and Tang Emperor Minghuang, in order to tie the end of the novel to its beginning. Appropriately, the second couple learns about their earlier existences through dreams. Chu Renhuo took the idea, he claimed, from a “lost history” 逸史, which has usually been interpreted as the title of a yet undiscovered book. It may equally be a generic term indicating the insubstantiality of such a fantastic recovery. The novel has no other explicit unifying plot devices. Although superficially a relatively mechanical application of transmigration as a popular religious motif, reincarnation occurs as well in the anonymous novel Fengshen yanyi 封神演義 (The canonization of the gods; ca. 1620?). Chu Renhuo’s reprinting of that novel in 1695 may corroborate his interest in this narrative possibility. (Chu’s edition quickly drove out of circulation all earlier versions of Fengshen, it would appear; his is the basis for all later editions.) Reincarnation also figures centrally in the early proto-novel Sanguo zhi pinghua 三國志平話 (Plain tale on The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms; printed edition 1321–23). In each of these three lengthy prose narratives, death is transcended; all appeared several

\footnote{17} I have argued that Sui Tang yanyi was popular because it preserved much of the text from the most imaginative late Ming novels about the Sui and the Tang and that it satisfied the early Qing fashion for a “balance” of story elements in works of fiction. Most recently I have discussed characterization in the novel in my essay “Conclusions: Judgments on the Ends of Times,” in Dynastic Decline and Cultural Innovation: From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond, ed. David Wang and Shang Wei (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Studies Center, 2005), pp. 523–48. The edition I refer to is Chu Renhuo 褚人穫, Sui Tang yanyi 隋唐演義 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1956).
decades after the traumatic fall of a dynasty, the Southern Song in 1280 and the Ming in 1644. These parallels suggest a level of meaning beyond the mere expediency of closing the narrative circle by tying the ends of stories to their beginnings, however simplistically.

Nor were the two works published under the auspices of Chu Ren-huo’s studio the only late seventeenth-century novels to rely heavily on reincarnation to avoid the finality of loss. The anonymous *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* (A marriage to awaken the world; ca. 1661) likewise stresses continuity through the rebirths of central characters and works out the karma of the first group through the lives of the second. So, too, does karma “balance” the acts of the earlier couple in *Sui Tang yanyi*. One might even conclude that the juxtaposition of contrastive story elements (political intrigue, romance, the fantastic, the artistic) in *Sui Tang yanyi* has implicit political significance in this regard, as a means to reassert balance in a society and harmony in a world so devastated by war within the authors’—and their initial readers’—lifetimes. Yet it seems intuitively true that reincarnation might have been used by any Ming or Qing novelist at any time: it was a tenet of popular Buddhist belief, and it confirmed earlier conceptions of the moral structure of the universe. Novelists regularly availed themselves of materials from the full cultural spectrum in constructing their works, from the practices of the working folk to the philosophical speculations of the literati, and from the local to the nationally known.

But in the case of *Sui Tang yanyi*, the rebirths of these protagonists obviate the need for any more conclusive ending. It also embodies an artistic hope for recovery in some dream-like, idyllic realm, when so much of significance has been lost in the human world.

Continuity in plot gives meaning to narrative in premodernist fiction, a point that literary theorist Peter Brooks has termed at once


19. See my “Conclusions” on how this and other contemporary novels avoid creating conclusive endings. On his last pages, Chu Renhuo briefly suggested the appropriateness of a sequel, but he made no attempt to write one.
banal and grim: “Man is ambulatory, but he is mortal. Temporality is a problem, and an irreducible factor of any narrative statement. . . . It is my simple conviction, then, that narrative has something to do with time-boundedness, and that plot is the internal logic of the discourse of mortality.” This conception has been articulated most clearly by Walter Benjamin, who reaffirms that just as death is the element that confers meaning on a life, in narratives endings supply needed retrospection and thereby suggest meaning for the events narrated.20

By mechanically transcending even mortality in post-Ming narratives, reincarnation suggests continuity beyond the ending of any individual story, whether of an individual or of the cultural-political entity that was a dynasty in imperial China. Brooks has also observed: “We have [in the twentieth century] no doubt foregone eternal narrative ends, and even traditional nineteenth-century ends are subject to self-conscious endgames, yet still we read in a spirit of confidence, and also a state of dependence, that what remains to be read will restructure the provisional meanings of the already read” (italics added).21 Brooks’s argument here concerns the essential features of plot in narrative generally, but his comments suggest a reason for the importance of this motif in late seventeenth-century Chinese fiction: reincarnation reflects on, and confirms, the validity of personal continuity beyond catastrophe and loss. In this, fiction resembles classical poetry, which provides life beyond the grave for the remembered poet. Thus like poetry,


21. Brooks, Reading, p. 23; this concludes his review of arguments about reading the preterite tense conventionally used in narrative in French as if it were “a kind of present.” Brooks also questions whether readers actually read the verbs of narrative conventionally presented in past tense in English as indicating completed action. Although completion of action is often not indicated in the Ming-Qing vernacular-narrative language style, this dependence on the narrative to provide meaning through closure is nonetheless present in premodern Chinese readings, in my reading. To my knowledge, the first to use the term “post-Ming” with this significance, was Patricia Sieber in her “Turning Lethal Slander into Generative Instruction: Laws, Ledgers, and Changing Taxonomies of Vernacular Production in Late Imperial China,” in The Magnitude of Ming: Essays on Command, Allotment, Life and Fate in Chinese Culture, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009), pp. 000–00.
Dreaming the Past

fiction of the seventeenth century was also called upon as a vehicle for nostalgia and a means to reaffirm cultural confidence. Obliquely, fiction was employed to witness and lament the fall of the late Ming “high culture” through indirect and ambiguous artistic representations.22

Changing the Melody

Of the many Qing period narratives using the Tang as a temporal setting, those concerning the flautist Li Mo were among the more freely adapted from their sources. In the oldest of these texts, Li Mo is simply the most extraordinary musician of the High Tang.23 Toward the end of the 100–chapter novel *Sui Tang yanyi*, the musician is given a series of new adventures. One night as he passes by the imperial palace, he overhears someone practicing an extraordinary melody; it is a celestial tune learned by the Emperor Minghuang during a dream. Quickly Li transcribes the notes. When subsequently he practices it himself, the emperor in turn overhears him and takes the musician into the imperial orchestra because of his exceptional skill.24

Judith Zeitlin explores a nearly identical tale in Scene 14 of the contemporary *chuangqi* (southern-style) play by Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian* (The Palace of Lasting Life; 1688). There Li Mo happens to learn of the existence of a wonderful new

22. See Wai-yee Li’s Introduction to the Poetry section in this volume; she indicates how early Qing poets used poetry to intervene directly in literary debates of the Ming for the purpose of maintaining cultural continuity. Many of the early Qing poets reflected on or used as their models poets of the High Tang such as Du Fu and later Tang poets as well.


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melody being played in the imperial palace (the melody having been received from a celestial messenger by the dreaming Yang Guifei, not by the emperor). Anxious to learn it, the flautist stations himself at the palace wall just outside where the imperial musicians are practicing; in order to memorize it more effectively, he quietly accompanies the orchestra as they perform the melody.25

It would appear that these writers have played on the ambivalence in Li Mo’s act of appropriation, and about the nature of the melody itself, to reflect on the past in divergent ways. But before exploring their separate nostalgic engagements with the past, we should consider the tune and its symbolic function in these two seventeenth-century narratives. To summarize Judith Zeitlin’s observations elsewhere in this volume, in Palace of Lasting Life it is the melody for the dance that captured so many imaginations, the Wu nishang 舞霓裳 (Rainbow skirts) performed by the beauteous Yang Guifei. Her feet are naturally so tiny that she can dance on a small platter or disk. The dance and its lost music represented the essence of court refinement during that most glorious period of the Tang. But of course High Tang culture collapsed ignominiously during the rebellion of An Lushan 安禄山 and the devastating wars that continued for years after his death.

This is how the novel Sui Tang yanyi describes this process of transmittal. In Chapter 86, Minghuang is enjoying himself on a bright moonlit night by having numerous colorful lanterns hung around his palace. Soon the emperor hears a clamor from outside. These are the voices of the capital’s residents crowded into the street to enjoy the beautiful lanterns. The emperor’s first thought is to order them to be silent and to have a few punished to emphasize his command. But one of his courtiers suggests that the emperor share his enjoyment with his subjects by having the imperial orchestra play for them; this will surely quiet them. Although the noise does subside somewhat, the throng becomes subdued only when Li Mo begins to play his flute.

The novel then explains this situation in a flashback introduced by addressing the reader directly, in the conventional guise of a profes-

sional storyteller. How, you may ask, was Li Mo’s flute so marvelous?” This is because once in a dream the emperor heard a band of heavenly musicians play a haunting melody that they identified as Zi-yun hui (The purple cloud turns); an immortal maiden invites him to memorize it, and he does. The emperor begins to practice it as soon as he awakes, and before long he has it down perfectly. Then several days later, when he is walking through the streets incognito with Gao Lishi, they hear the same melody being played some distance away. The emperor sends Gao to locate the musician, who turns out to be Li Mo. Li had been passing by the palace wall on the night the emperor began practicing the piece; struck by its beauty, he memorized it while writing it down with his fingernail. He had been practicing when the emperor overheard him. Thereupon Li Mo is summoned to become the leader of the Pear Garden orchestra in the palace and in this capacity he quiets the crowds with his extraordinary artistry.

Much later, after An Lushan rebels, Sui Tang yanyi gives Li Mo two further adventures. To evade the Tang armies during their disordered retreat, the flautist takes refuge in a temple. There he plays his flute to ease his mind. Before long a huge figure with the head of a tiger enters to demand another tune. When the were-tiger falls asleep, Li Mo climbs a tree where he remains until morning, safely out of the reach of the monster’s band of more normal tigers. In the second episode, he is playing his flute one evening for a friend while sailing across a lake. An old man poles up in a light skiff to listen and offers suggestions on the tune the emperor had heard in heaven. This ancient figure is the one who had ultimately driven the tigers away. He is in fact an immortal, come to correct the human flautist’s errors in performance.

The chuanqi play inserts an additional artistic layer of poignant memory between the source and the remembering of this great melody.

26. This conventional “storyteller’s manner” has been most completely described by Patrick Hanan, among other places, in his Chinese Vernacular Story (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 20–22. During the Wanli period, this set of rhetorical devices became the most common way for novelists to introduce the narrator’s comments and shifts of narrative line. However, the relationship between these turns of phrase and the stock elements of contemporary professional oral narration was not particularly close, it would seem.


28. Ibid., chap. 95, pp. 730–33. Li Mo plays again for the emperor in chap. 98, but this time it is a new composition; see p. 757.
In Scene 38 of Changsheng dian, Li Guinian 李龜年, former director of the Emperor’s Pear Garden conservatory, performs at a village market. Having survived the civil war by fleeing south to the Lower Yangzi region, the now-elderly Li is penniless and must sing for food. Among his audience is the musician Li Mo, who had learned part of the famous Rainbow Skirts melody surreptitiously years before. But he never learned the whole of it, and he hopes to do so by listening to this aging minstrel. During Li Guinian’s performance, Li Mo is moved to tears when he hears how Yang Guifei was put to death. A merchant standing at his side is surprised by his emotional response and exclaims: “This is just a performance—how can you take it so seriously?” 這事唱唱，老兄怎麼認真掉下淚來! Li Mo ignores the comment as Li Guinian continues his descriptions of Yang Guifei’s burial and the desolation of the capital after the rebels sack it. By this time the audience has lost interest and has drifted away, leaving only Li Mo to offer shelter to the old man in return for instruction in the celestial music.

In the following scene, Li Guinian and two former palace maids who have since become nuns weep over the “vicissitudes of fortune” (xing-wang). This is the last reference the play makes to these characters. Although further mention is made of the haunting melody, to me the musicians and their responses are far more interesting. The relevance of the melody here is that the pregnant memory of it—for Li Mo, an incomplete memory—motivates his actions and rationalizes his emotional responses. In Scene 36 he had seen and lamented over the stocking left behind when Yang Guifei’s corpse was buried; this is as close as he ever came to seeing the lady herself. For the older musician Li Guinian, who had frequently performed for her, the famous dance was directly connected with the rebel uprising and all the suffering, both personal and national, that it brought in its wake. Furthermore, Yang Guifei’s story as poetic narrative based on recollection moves only certain members of his audience. The listeners who are most deeply shaken by hearing the tale are those who lived through the historical events, those former members of the court who experienced the cataclysm directly and who can share in testimony of their loss. Others are simply less engaged by the tale. Memory is multifaceted and variable; its

30. Hong Sheng, Changsheng dian, p. 207; Hung Sheng, Palace, p. 244.
particularity, hence its validity, is thus thrown into question here: copious tears flow from those who were there, but Li Mo as the musician who merely went through the motions of learning the melody with his flute—who thus knows it only at second hand—remembers it only imperfectly. Moreover, his personal suffering was less intense. Consequently his emotional response is more moderate when he hears again of the Rainbow Skirts dance and what happened after it was last performed than when he saw the stocking, a physical object that serves as a synecdoche for persons now dead. His experience of the melody is primarily one of displacement from that romantic world, a world now reduced to art—for the artist, and for his audience.

The Survival of Art

Of these two newly created adventures, the novel as textual medium focuses on the intellectual acts of memorizing and of transcribing into text, whereas the play as performance text further adapts the tale by having the musician embody its production in order to commit it to memory. Were there two versions in circulation earlier, or did these two authors freely draw on the same source, each adapting it creatively? If this latter alternative is so, as it seems to be, are the differences in the means of memorization significant? Is there some differential in value between these versions of how Li Mo learns the tune? Just what characteristics of this extraordinary musician attracted these two writers?

And what are we to make of this powerful scene from the play, this scene of recognition and commiseration through a (performed) text that represents memory? In contrast to the novel Sui Tang yanyi, which, despite its limited initial circulation among friends of the author, was intended to be printed and sold, this play was created for very select audiences, the wealthy and highly cultured. As Judith Zeitlin notes, it was performed for such worthies as the Kangxi emperor’s favorite Cao Yin 曹寅 (1658–1712), grandfather of the novelist who penned the immortal Honglou meng 红樓夢. That this scene contains a performance is doubtless significant because it embodies the increasing displacement of present feelings from the events of the past through the passage of time.

31. Writing for a considerably different purpose, Homi Bhabha defines an approach that I find useful here nonetheless: “The critic must attempt to fully realize, and take responsibility for, the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present” (“Introduction: Locations of Culture,” p. 12).
and a lesser degree of personal involvement: meta-theatrically, it also shows its audiences how to view, and how to understand, the narration of tragedy. We see a range of responses, from idle curiosity from those who are temporarily moved by the tale to profound grief from those reminded of their own losses. But Li Mo, who tried to capture and then to recapture the culture of that now-distant time, becomes emblematic of both playwright and, I would suggest, the audience of Hong Sheng’s generation. By the waning years of the seventeenth century, art had crystallized the emotional essence of historical events and had provided a means of psychic solace—and perhaps social solidarity among literati—by representing commiseration with others over shared losses through frank expressions of grief.

Textual Memories, Textualized Memories

To writers of the late seventeenth century, parallels between the collapse of Tang court life and the fall of the Ming were not difficult to find. But so, too, were differences. As recreated in Kong Shangren’s 孔尚任 (1648–1718) slightly later play Taohua shan 桃花扇 (Peach blossom fan; 1699), the Ming could not have been renewed—its rulers were far too immersed in pleasure-seeking and frivolity to offer an effective defense against either the rebels who overran Beijing or the invaders who suppressed them, the Manchus. The Palace of Lasting Life represents Tang Emperor Minghuang’s successor as having the political resourcefulness and the military might to expunge the scourge and to restore some semblance of Tang authority.

The difference between Changsheng dian and Sui Tang yanyi is constituted by how memory is represented and to what end. Hong Sheng used the story of Li Mo to represent recovery after a fall—of art, in the form of music, which was degraded from heaven to earth but eventually restored. In the process, the music is further refined by Yang Guifei. But in Chu Renhuo’s version, the music loses its divine qualities to become just another object for exchange in the cultural marketplace. For Hong Sheng the melody is made perfect through divine intervention—in restoring what had been celestial artistry from the start. Re-

covery of this insubstantial, otherworldly melody is therefore complete. And to parallel this process, the losses and dislocations of the emperor and his court, the separation through death of the lovers, are made right again as the emperor joins his lady in heaven. The empire can return to a state of peace; the music, like the manifestations of the divine Yang Guifei, has come full circle. Perhaps because the novelist Chu wrote only thirty years after the fall of the Ming, his handling of the remembered music is more pragmatic, less refined, and more ambiguous. Interestingly, Hong Sheng was ten or so years younger than Chu Renhuo; he wrote his play a decade or more after the novel was completed. One might see them, to use Wilt Idema's distinction presented elsewhere in this volume, as two different “generations” of writers, despite their similarity in age. Their responses to the political cataclysm, social upheaval, and cultural destruction—commercial practicality versus artistic transcendence—might have addressed different degrees of psychic need.

Even so, these writers wrote from the same cultural space. They were at least acquaintances, perhaps friends. Both Chu Renhuo and Hong Sheng can be placed securely in a single Jiangnan literati community during the first half of the Kangxi period. Although Homi Bhabha writes in reference to cultures of the late twentieth century, a perspective borrowed from him may again help clarify this situation. The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with “newness” that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as a social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent “in-between” space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present.33

The “border” area of the late seventeenth century, the period between the cultural glory of the late Ming and an as yet unclear future of art under Manchu control, necessarily provoked a kind of “newness” in expression. Within their community, these and other writers created a

33. Bhabha, “Introduction: Locations of Culture,” p. 7. Bhabha (p. 5) clarifies that there is an “overwhelming evidence of a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities” in that many cultures use events/conflicts from other cultures as allegories for their own situations. I would suggest simply that early Qing writers used art from other times to create allegories of their own age.
culture that was not based merely on recollections; a precise re-creation of the past was not a viable option. To them, and to their cohort, memory was surely tinged with nostalgia, and it had an implicit agenda, even if they were not fully aware of it. That is, their sense of loss of the cultural glory that was the Ming was displaced into writings about other periods, particularly the end of the High Tang, as well as into their numerous published recollections. Their inherent project was to heal the wounds, to create something new thereby—a culture that was reminiscent of the past but necessarily different from it. The early Qing was a different time from the late Ming; no literatus could harbor illusions to the contrary. These new cultural texts were hybrids, within which there were, as in our own present, dissonant strains and elements that were unfamiliar and disturbing. By demonstrating both the commercial uses and the ephemeral quality of art, these two texts suggest the ambivalence of narratives from and about the past as they are translated independently into disparate artistic forms. Their separate treatments of Li Mo’s melody suggest something of the intermediacy and indeterminacy of both novel and play concerning the traumas of memory as memory and of dream inextricably interwoven in their art.

Memory and Political Realities

Playwright Hong Sheng was born in 1645, the second year of the Shunzhi reign period. The fighting involved in establishing the Manchu empire was to continue sporadically for decades, of course, but the new dynasty was in firm control of the capital by that time. Novelist Chu Renhuo was a teenager at the time of the conquest and surely could remember it or remember hearing of it from those caught in the vortex. Chu wrote of the Tang, and yet he eschewed narrating a conventional dynastic cycle incorporating both the rise and the fall of a ruling house. Instead his romantic tale of selected individuals leaves the Tang in a state of irresolution; his novel declines to comment explicitly on whether the cultural glory of Minghuang’s reign might ever be recovered. Given the circumstances under which he wrote, Chu’s decision to conclude his novel in a state of political indeterminacy can only have been deliberate.34

34. For a discussion of this indeterminacy in relation to more conventional novels of the time, see my “Conclusions.”
Wai-yee Li, in her chapter “History and Memory” in this volume, notes that Wu Weiye, in his long poem “Songshan ai” 松山哀 (The lament of Mount Song) questions the justification for the war that brought down the Ming. Elsewhere he “demonstrates how the concatenation of events that culminated in the Manchu conquest of China was fortuitous and avoidable, tied to accidental passions and obsessions.” This, too, is reminiscent of the passions that provoked the An Lushan rebellion that ended the High Tang era. Wu’s poem “Yonghe gong ci” 永和宮詞 (Song of Yonghe Palace) makes explicit comparisons between events of the late Ming and of the High Tang, Li observes, but “the fall from grace here [during the seventeenth century] is more traumatic, and the death and destruction more devastating.”

Of the writers mentioned earlier in this chapter, Yu Huai spent the last decades of his life, after the fall of the Ming, in retirement in Nanjing. His friends included You Tong (mentioned above), the editor Du Jun 杜濬 (1611–87), and Du’s close associate, the playwright and impresario Li Yu 李漁 (1610–80). You Tong, by the way, wrote a preface to a portion of Chu Renhuo’s collection of anecdotes about, among other topics, members of this community, Jianhu ji 堅瓠集 (The hard gourd collections; 1691–1703). Clearly You was a part of this community, and, by extension, it would seem that Yu Huai would have considered him a peer as well.

One element that has been used to divide and categorize these men was, of course, their expressed political affiliations. Zhang Dai had held office in the Ming administration; after the fall of that state, he chose never again to serve in any official capacity. Others, such as the then-young Wang Shizhen, quickly took posts in the new government. Wu Weiye and his cohort delayed joining the Qing administration and then poured out their feelings about their collective loss in powerful poetry.35 Chu Renhuo’s case seems to be different from these. His informal or “courtesy” names, Jiaxuan 健軒 and Xuejia 學稼 (Learn from Jia[xuan]), refer to the Song loyalist hero Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140–1207), whose hao 號 was Jiaxuan 健軒. Xin was a native of the Ji’nan region of Shandong, an area of armed resistance to the Jin invaders. At the age of twenty-one, Xin organized an uprising; then in 1162 he traveled to the Song capital of Hangzhou to beg the emperor to aid the peasant rebellion against the Jin that he had joined. Thereafter he petitioned the

35. See the chapter on Wu Weiye by Wai-yee Li in this volume.
Song throne on several occasions to conquer lost territories in the north, but his appeals always fell on deaf ears. His career was spent as a local administrator in the Yangzi region. Despite all this, his literary reputation is based on being the most prolific writer of ci poetry of the Song period. Many of these poems express his patriotic fervor. It would appear that Chu Renhuo’s use of this earlier poet’s name followed the pattern seen in Zhang Dai’s references to Tao Qian in his informal names, but like Zhang Dai’s, Chu’s names are ambiguous. That is, Chu’s family may have been generally supportive of the Qing cause, even though Renhuo apparently chose to represent significant ambivalence about the current regime.36

One might conclude, therefore, that simple loyalty to the lost Ming was not the factor that motivated or shaped the appearance of nostalgic references in writings from the early Qing. Instead, such manipulations of memory—through dream, reminiscence, or ambivalent artistic re-creation—were the common response to the “unhomeliness” of this new situation of Manchu control, even decades after control was formalized and the government was functioning normally. Regardless of political stability and economic recovery, links with the cultural past had become attenuated by the disastrous fall of the Ming; the continuity of its transmission had been ruptured. And regardless of individual political allegiances, the hybrid cultural artifacts of this new age, especially the regular references to the mutability of cultural expression, reveal the culturally liminal space occupied by the writers discussed here, all of them survivors in one degree or another. It is not surprising that so many of them used the liminal space of dreams to seek avenues to psychic survival.

Chapter 87 of Sui Tang yanyi begins with an exceptionally long discourse on fate. Not only are the births and deaths of humans fated, 

36. For an earlier discussion of Chu’s names, his family, and his acquaintances, see my "Sui T’ang yen-yi and the Aesthetics of the Seventeenth-Century Suchou Elite," in Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays, ed. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 139–71. See also the biographical sketch by Yu Shengting 于盛庭 in Zhou Juntao 周鈞釧 et al. eds., Zhongguo tonggu xiaoshuo jia pingzhuan 中國通俗小說家評傳 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji, 1993), pp. 167–76. Yu (p. 167) adduces evidence to suggest that Chu’s family seem to have been Qing adherents from the beginning. I am grateful to Martin Huang for providing me with this reference and for very fruitful discussions about the nature of political resistance and accommodation among late seventeenth-century writers.
but also the lives of the smallest of creatures are destined. But portents always appear that herald a person’s end, as they do for every sentient being. Nor can one struggle against destiny, the chapter’s introductory comment declares; wealth and rank may not be won by striving for them. Heaven is rational (\textit{li}, “orderly,” “principled”). One who attempts to achieve wealth and rank through unprincipled means only serves to bring retribution down on himself, it concludes.

Chu Renhuo ended his novel with an even more pointed discussion of heavenly retribution. Some would say that because suspicion had caused Minghuang to kill three of his own sons and because he had appropriated the consort of his son Prince Shou, he had offended proper human relations and thus deserved to lose his beloved consort and, in effect, his state as well. No event is fortuitous, the narrator declares; the “lost histories” record it all. The affairs of Tang Minghuang and Yang Guifei conclude at the end of the novel in order to demonstrate to readers the principles of cause and effect.\textsuperscript{37} Again, why retribution as a way to conclude the novel? To give it structure? Surely the need for continuity, a sense of solidarity in the linkage between past and present, would be served through this injunction—if one could take it at face value. Yet the jocularity of some of the narrator’s comments seemingly undercut their seriousness. Is the “lost history” a book that the novelist received from an older contemporary? I suspect, rather, that it refers to an abstraction, to the sense of the past that was lost when the Ming fell, the stuff of artistically reconfigured memories Chu and his contemporaries sought to invoke through a variety of texts in which events of the past are so often embodied in fictional memories and dreams. Some of these dreams are nightmares; some seem to fulfill waking wishes. But, given the context, none are simple in their signification.

\textsuperscript{37} Chu Renhuo, \textit{Sui Tang yanyi}, p. 669. Other introductory sections explicitly addressing destiny are those for chap. 41, p. 306; chap. 49, p. 369; chap. 51, p. 385; chap. 57, p. 434; chap. 70, p. 542; chap. 80, p. 614; chap. 97, p. 744. See the introductory comments for chap. 100 on p. 766.