

## YELLOW MOUNTAIN TRAVELS: FOUR ACCOUNTS

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### Translators' Introduction

“Why is it that the humane find joy in the mountains?” “This is because it is the mountains that the Ten Thousand people gaze up upon; thereupon are the plants and trees born, do the Ten Thousand Things grow, the flying birds gather, and the roving beasts find respite. Therefrom do all four quarters derive benefit, those mountains that generate the clouds and lend direction to the winds. Soaring upwards as they do between Heaven and Earth, they bring completion to both, and thus tranquillity to state and family. That is why the humane find joy in the mountains.”

夫仁者何以樂於山也曰夫山者萬民之所瞻仰也草木生焉萬物植焉飛鳥集焉走獸休焉四方益取與焉出雲導風巖乎天地之間天地以成國家以寧此仁者所以樂於山也

Han Ying 韓嬰 (ca. 200–130 BCE),  
*Master Han's Outer Commentary to the Book of Odes*  
(*Han shi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳)<sup>1</sup>

Long ago, when I toured Yellow Mountain, I ascended Now-I-Believe-It Peak and gazed out over the area surrounding Eastern Creek Gate. Yesterday, as Master Su Yimen and I were in the midst of discoursing about the relative extraordinariness of the various peaks of Yellow Mountain and Creek Gate, I drew this painting, working entirely from my imagination. In this way, I toured with my brush and visited in spirit that which, thirty years earlier, had stood in front of my eyes. Yimen broke into praise for my efforts, and asked for the scroll, saying that it will serve as his guide when next he tours the mountain. Summer, fifth month of the *Gengchen* year (1700), by [Shitao]

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1 Qu Shouyuan 屈守元 (ed.), *Han shi waizhuan jianshu* 韓詩外傳箋疏 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1996), pp. 303–305. This exchange is doubtless inspired by *Analecets* (*Lunyu* 論語), VI.23 which, in the translation of Simon Leys, reads: “The Master said: ‘The wise find joy on the water, the good find joy in the mountains. The wise are active, the good are quiet. The wise are joyful, the good live long,’” for which, see Simon Leys (trans.), *The Analects of Confucius* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 27.

昔遊黃山登始信峰觀東瀨門一帶昨與蘇易門先生論黃瀨諸峰之奇想象寫此三十年前面目筆遊神往易翁叫絕索此紙以為他日遊山導引云庚辰夏五月清湘大滌子濟

Shitao 石濤 (ca. 1642–1707),  
 “Inscription to a painting entitled *A Painting of Yellow Mountain*”  
 (“Huangshan tu” 黃山圖)<sup>2</sup>

The man-of-letters may well find joy in touring the mountains and rivers, but how could those mountains and rivers possibly find joy in being toured by such men-of-letters? “Let us turn back the carriage of a worldly fellow,” this is the song sung by the pines and the birds, the rivers and the streams.

即文人喜遊山川山川豈喜此等文人遊乎請迴俗士駕松聲鳥聲水聲無不作是語矣

Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695),  
 “Preface to Jin Xiongfeng’s *Touring Yellow Mountain: Poems and Prose*” (“*Jin Xiongfeng You Huangshan shi wen xu*” 靳熊封遊黃山詩文序)<sup>3</sup>

It was the relative lateness of Yellow Mountain’s (Huangshan 黃山) instantiation as a site for travel and literary and artistic pilgrimage in late imperial China that helps explain, in part, the mountain’s immense attraction for the men-of-letters and artists of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties; on the one hand, the mountain’s

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- 2 *Zhilelou cang Ming yimin shuhua* 至樂樓藏明遺民書畫 [*Paintings and Calligraphy by Ming I-min from the Chih-lo Lou Collection*] (Hong Kong: Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1975), p. 21.
  - 3 Shen Shanhong 沈善洪 (ed.), *Huang Zongxi quanji* 黃宗羲全集 [Complete Works of Huang Zongxi] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1985), Vol. 10, p. 102. The internal quotation here is the penultimate line of Kong Zhigui’s 孔稚珪 (447–501) “Proclamation on North Mountain” (“Beishan yiwen” 北山移文), given here in the translation of James Hightower, for which see, John Minford and Joseph S.M. Lau (eds.), *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations: Volume I: From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty* (New York: Columbia University Press and Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2000), p. 613. Kong’s piece is an excoriating critique of the false recluse. By his own account, Huang’s trip to Yellow Mountain for the first time in 1691 at the invitation of his friend Jin Zhijing 靳治荆 (zi Xiongfeng 熊封), then serving in Xin’an 新安, was belated and once he was there, he found that he was “So infirm and dependent on my walking stick, pausing for some considerable time after every step, how possibly could I explore to the fullest the secluded perils of the mountain?” (龍鍾曳杖一步九頓豈能窮極幽險), for which, see his “Preface” to *Yellow Mountain Gazetteer: Continuation* (“*Huangshan xuzhi xu*” 黃山續志序), in *Huang Zongxi quanji*, Vol. 10, p. 85. Huang notes in this preface that his friend Shen Shoumin 沈壽民 (1607–1675), a Yellow Mountain local, had repeatedly invited him to tour the mountain with him over the years but that his mother’s infirmity had always prevented him leaving her side to do so.

very lack of a literary and artistic history offered one the possibility of a semblance, at the very least, of that unfiltered engagement with the beauties of the “Mountains and Rivers” that underpinned contemporary literary and artistic developments, whilst, on the other, a trip to the mountain seemed also to promise a degree of immortality to the products of one’s brush, to the extent that one could arrive at some striking metaphor or capture some unusual perception, before the sedimentation of cliché and stereotype prevailed. As the scholarly literature on the mountain has argued,<sup>4</sup> and as two of the accounts of trips to the mountain translated below make clear, it was only from the early 1600s onwards that, with the establishment (with distaff imperial sponsorship) by the monk Pumen 普門 (original surname Xi 奚, ming Huaian 淮安 [or Weian 惟安]; 1546–1625) of various Buddhist institutions throughout Yellow Mountain, and thus the provision of the infrastructure necessary for increased tourism (a network of paths and steps, accommodation, supplies of food and drink, guides and porters), the mountain became at all accessible to anyone other than the most intrepid of travellers. More mountain range than mountain with its thirty-six major and thirty-six minor peaks (magical numbers in Daoist numerology), the highest of which reach almost 2000 metres into the sky, today the Yellow Mountain World Heritage site stretches across some 150 square kilometres of south-eastern Anhui Province, straddling the former prefectures of Huizhou 徽州 and Ningguo 寧國 and bordering on the provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu. Traditionally, however, Yellow Mountain was neither part of the Five Marchmount (五嶽) configuration that served to define the four quarters and the centre of the Chinese cultural world and which held up the Chinese sky<sup>5</sup> nor the Buddhist (and later Daoist) system of the Four Famous Mountains (四大名山). Known in the earliest records as Blackmount (黟山), a name said to capture something of the hue of its mountains when seen from afar, it was renamed Yellow Mountain in 747 during the Tang dynasty (618–907) by the ill-fated Emperor Xuanzong (685–761; r. 713–756) in commemoration of the legend that it was to this mountain that the Yellow Emperor had come, late in his life, in search of the elixir of immortality. It acquired its belated empire-wide visibility through the circulation of literary accounts of its splendours, both prose, as below, and poetry, and of woodblock representations

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- 4 The mountain has occasioned a wealth of secondary literature in English. Apart from the titles referred to elsewhere in this introduction, see particularly Stephen McDowall, *Qian Qianyi's Reflections on Yellow Mountain: Traces of a Late-Ming Hatchet and Chisel* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009); and Jonathan Chaves, *Every Rock a Universe: The Yellow Mountains and Chinese Travel Writing* (Warren: Floating World Editions, 2013). McDowall’s book includes a complete and fully annotated translation of the account of Qian Qianyi’s trip to Yellow Mountain, excerpts of which are given below, with minor alterations; Chaves’s book includes a complete and annotated translation of Wang Hongdu’s 汪洪度 (1646–1721/2) exhaustive *A Record of Comprehending the Essentials of the Yellow Mountains* (*Huangshan lingyao lu* 黃山領要錄), first published in the 1770s.
- 5 “At least the Five Peaks/ Still support the Chinese sky” (至少五嶽還頂住中國的天), Yü Kwang-chung 余光中 (1928–2017), “Music Percussive” (“Qiaoda yue” 敲打樂). For a short introduction to this traditional mountain system, see James Robson, “The Marchmount System: Chinese Geologies,” in John Einarsen (ed.), *The Sacred Mountains of Asia* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1995), pp. 16–17.

of its fantastical peaks, eccentric pines growing out of seemingly soilless cracks in the rock faces, and the ever-shifting patterns of the circulating clouds,<sup>6</sup> whilst to its heights it attracted a number of the most important late imperial artists. As it developed in the hands of artists such as Hongren 弘仁 (1610–1663), Shitao, and Mei Qing 梅清 (ca. 1623–1697), the Anhui (or Xin'an 新安) School of painting focused especially on these aspects of the mountain, painted with dry brush and in a manner that was consciously individualistic.<sup>7</sup> Over time, such features of the mountain-scape became increasingly numinous, as perhaps best captured in Min Linsi's 閔麟嗣 (1628–1704) *Manual of the Pines and Rocks of Yellow Mountain* (*Huangshan song shi pu* 黃山松石譜) in which he names, describes, and locates nine pines (and two cypress trees) and forty-four rocks.<sup>8</sup> For his part, Huang Zongxi found the delights of the mountain to be inexhaustible: “If the mountains and the rivers have fixed form, they certainly have no fixed emotions, shifting endlessly from dawn to dusk each day. This is why in the boundless imaginations of talented men and literary gentlemen they acquire such variation. That which later men see is not necessarily the same as that which had been possessed by earlier visitors” (山川有定形而無定情朝暮之變不知凡幾才人文士之胸懷正復汲之無盡後人之所見未必前人之所有).<sup>9</sup>

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- 6 Chen Ding 陳鼎 (zi Dingjiu 定九; fl. 1644–1661) concludes his *Outline History of Yellow Mountain* (*Huangshan shi gai* 黃山史槩) in this manner: “This, then, is a rough sketch of Yellow Mountain. Most extraordinary of all are the illusionary clouds as they ‘Spread the Sea’ after a fall of rain, so filling the mountain valleys that gazing out over them, it seems as if they are boundless and resemble nothing other than the vast ocean” (此黃山之大略也尤奇者幻雲鋪海雨後瀾漫山谷一望無際儼若滄溟), for which, see *Zhaodai congshu* 昭代叢書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), Vol. 1, p. 446.
- 7 On this school generally, see Joseph P. McDermott, “The Making of a Chinese Mountain, Huangshan: Politics and Wealth in Chinese Art,” *Asian Cultural Studies* 17 (1989): 145–176; J. Cahill (ed.), *Shadows of Mt. Huang: Chinese Painting and Printing of the Anhui School* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1981); and J. Cahill, “Huang Shan Painting as Pilgrimage Pictures,” in Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (eds.), *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 246–292. On Hongren, see James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 146–183; and Jason Kuo, *The Austere Landscapes: Paintings of Hung-jen* (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1998). On Shitao, see Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Hsu Wen-Chin, “Images of Huang-shan in Shih-T'ao's Paintings,” *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 27. 1&2 (1992): 1–37. For a set of beautifully reproduced paintings by Mei Qing of Yellow Mountain, see *Mei Qing Huangshan tuce* 梅清黃山圖冊 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1980). In a colophon attached to a painting, the Nanjing-based artist Gong Xian 龔賢 (1619–1689) labels this group of artists the Heavenly Capital School (Tiandu pai 天都派), for which, see “Ti shanshui juan” 題山水卷, in Wang Shiqing 汪世清 and Wang Cong 汪聰 (eds.), *Jianjiang ziliao ji* 漸江資料集 (Hefei: Anhui renmin chubanshe, 1984), p. 196.
- 8 For the text of this manual, see *Zhaodai congshu*, Vol. 1, pp. 52–54. The trees that so define the reception of the mountain are native to China and were identified as *Pinus Hwangshanensis* (or, in Chinese, 黃山松) by W.Y. Hsia in 1936.
- 9 “*Huangshan xuzhi xu*,” *Huang Zongxi quanji*, Vol. 10, p. 86.

In all likelihood, the earliest of the trips made to the mountain narrated in the four accounts translated below was made sometime in the mid-1590s; the last is dated 1783. The second and third accounts, documenting trips taken in 1641 and 1672 respectively, straddle the divide of cataclysmic dynastic collapse and dynastic consolidation, as the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) was replaced by the Qing (1644–1911), years during which Yellow Mountain acquired a set of new associations connecting reclusion on the mountain with lingering loyalty to the fallen dynasty.

The texts of the four accounts translated below are those anthologised in Li Yimang's 李一氓 (1903–1990) *A Collection of Accounts of Yellow Mountain by Men of the Ming and Qing* (*Ming Qing ren you Huangshan ji chao* 明清人遊黃山記鈔).<sup>10</sup> In all four cases, reference has also been made to the collected works of the four authors translated. The translations of placenames on or around the mountain follow or are adapted from Stephen McDowall's Qian Qianyi's *Reflections on Yellow Mountain*; we have taken the unusual step of including the Chinese at each instance, since the names of individual sites and sights at the mountain had by the late imperial period become somewhat muddled and were often used inconsistently, even within individual texts. Indeed, the problem of accurately matching names with locations was a matter of some anxiety, which perhaps in part explains why our four authors seem so preoccupied with naming in the accounts below.<sup>11</sup>

Writing in 1982 in the “Preface” (“Xu” 序) to his anthology, Li Yimang, scholar, diplomat, and noted calligrapher, is quite explicit about its intended purpose: “No traveller to Yellow Mountain can possibly hope to exhaust the delights offered by the mountain, nor to experience for himself all the various transformations of nature as the seasons alternate the one after the other, from spring to summer, from autumn to winter, or as the sky clouds over or dawns clear, in rain or in snow. Neither does any traveller to the mountain ever set off with a bundle of gazetteers or guidebooks in hand. In view of this and in keeping with my own passion for the natural beauty of this mountain, I have compiled this anthology... in the hope that it may serve to enhance the afflatus of travellers to Yellow Mountain as they browse through it, either resting at night or when perched upon a stone precipice enjoying the scenery before them, during the course of their travels upon the mountain. It may well be the case that these records contain such ridiculous notions as ‘the Yellow Emperor becomes an Immortal’ or ‘Rongcheng obtains the Way,’ but these are certainly not at all the point of this anthology and such things are perhaps best passed over in silence.”<sup>12</sup>

The travel restrictions and quarantine requirements of the continuing Covid-19 global pandemic prevent the three of us even contemplating a trip to Yellow Mountain,

10 Hefei: Anhui renmin chubanshe, 1983.

11 McDowall, *Qian Qianyi's Reflections*, p. 38. Qian is unnerved in 1642 by the fact that of the famous ‘Thirty-six Peaks,’ of Yellow Mountain, “...scholars and officials are unable to settle on all of their names, while monks and shepherds are unable to point out all of their locations” (p. 137).

12 *Ming Qing ren you Huangshan ji chao*, p. 4.

either separately or together.<sup>13</sup> In time-honoured fashion, however, reading the accounts of trips made to Yellow Mountain over the course of the late imperial period may allow us (and readers) to engage in a spell of “Recumbent Travel” (臥遊).<sup>14</sup> In the “Introduction” to his magisterial *Landscape & Memory*, Simon Schama suggests that if we in the West are not to be “...trapped in the engine of our self-destruction,” then we must relearn something of the “...richness, antiquity, and complexity of our landscape tradition.”<sup>15</sup> It strikes us that in the twenty-first century as ordinary Chinese citizens become ever more aware of the degradation of the physical fabric of their world, it is precisely by recapturing something of the numinosity of those landscapes that alternative ways into the future will be found.<sup>16</sup> And it is through a reading of accounts of mountains and rivers such as those translated below that this might best be done.

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- 13 For a wonderful account of the visit of two New Zealand poets to the mountain to attend a poetry festival held there, see Murray Edmond, “It’s A Lot Bigger Than In The Photographs’: Poetry Festival In Huang Shan, China, 16–21 October, 2007,” *ka mate ka ora: a new zealand journal of poetry and poetics*, No. 5 (March, 2008): 170–183. Over the years, many have been the poets who have clambered up the mountain in order to discuss aspects of their craft.
- 14 This concept derives, distantly, from the biography of the Liu Song dynasty artist Zong Bing 宗炳 (375–443), author of the famous “Preface to the Painting of the Mountains and the Rivers” (“Hua shanshui xu” 畫山水序), where we are told that bemoaning the arrival of old age and the onset of illness, he retired to his home in the hope that he would be able to continue to roam the mountains from his bed. For this, and for a translation of Zong Bing’s preface, see Alison Hardie and Duncan M. Campbell (eds.), *The Dumbarton Oaks Anthology of Chinese Garden Literature* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Texts in Garden and Landscape Studies, 2020), pp. 32–34. In a colophon to an album of paintings of Yellow Mountain, Mei Qing confesses that: “Ever since I toured Yellow Mountain, more than half of what I paint whenever I pick up my brush takes as its subject Yellow Mountain. Although this album may not be able to capture all the various splendours of its thirty-six peaks, nonetheless if one happens to open it up it may yet provide one the opportunity for a brief spell of recumbent travel” (余遊黃山後凡有筆墨大半皆黃山矣此冊雖未能盡三十六峰之勝然而略展一過亦可聊當臥遊), for which, see *Mei Qing Huangshan tuce*. Famously, another local Anhui artist, Li Liufang 李流芳 (1575–1629), entitled two of his collections of colophons on his paintings *Colophons on Paintings of My Recumbent Travels on West Lake (Xihu woyou tu tiba* 西湖臥遊圖題跋), and *Colophons on an Album of My Recumbent Travels Through Jiangnan (Jiangnan woyou ce tici* 江南臥遊冊題詞). For a short English-language biography of this man, see L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (eds.), *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1976) (hereafter, DMB), Vol. 1, pp. 838–839.
- 15 *Landscape & Memory* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 14.
- 16 Ideas of the numinous have not been entirely forgotten in the People’s Republic of China, of course. A plant smuggler entering New Zealand from China was stopped at the border recently, having secreted upon her person some 1000 succulents and endangered cacti. Some 500 of the succulent leaves had incised on them the Chinese character that best expresses the idea of the numinous, *ling* 灵 [靈], written in the simplified form of the character, a version of the writing script that over time the tutelary gods of ancient China have obviously learned to read. In exciting and exemplary manner, a number of the essays contained in Olivier Krischer and Luigi Tomba (eds.), *Shades of Green: Notes on China’s Eco-civilisation*, Made in China Notebooks 2020 (The University of Sydney) seek to explore the role of China’s past in China’s possible future. The fourth of the convictions of what is required to face the challenge of our collective environmental crisis to the minds of the editors, as outlined in their introduction to this stimulating collection of essays (“Another Kind of Intervention:

*A Record of My Trip to Yellow Mountain* (“You Huangshan ji” 游黃山記)

By Yuan Zhongdao (1570–1623)

Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道 (*zi* Xiaoxiu 小修; *hao* Shangsheng jushi 上生居士), the youngest of the three famous Yuan brothers of Gong'an 公安 (in Huguang 湖廣) during the late Ming period, never quite achieved either the official success of his eldest brother, Yuan Zongdao 袁宗道 (*zi* Boxiu 伯修; *hao* Shipu 石浦; 1560–1600), or the literary reputation of the most famous of the three, Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (*zi* Zhonglang 中郎; *hao* Shigong 石公; 1568–1610). His diary, entitled *Notes Made Whilst Travelling and at Repose* (*Youju feilu* 遊居柿錄), provides a detailed record of the years 1608–18, a period during which both Yuan Zhongdao's father and his beloved brother Hongdao died, whilst Zhongdao himself belatedly achieved the examination success long expected of him and took up the first of his official posts. Above all, it tells of the pleasure Yuan derived from his riverine travels throughout some of the most scenically beautiful parts of southern China, of the friends he encountered along his way, and of the private collections of painting and calligraphy to which he was given access. Yuan's account of Yellow Mountain is not dated; evidence suggests that the trip that occasioned it took place sometime in 1595 when Zhongdao was in his twenty-sixth year.<sup>17</sup>

It was only after I had made my way along River She Banks 歙浦 for about a *li* or so that I was able, finally, to catch sight of the Cloud Gate Peak 雲門峰 of Yellow Mountain, the contours of the summit of which appeared as sharp as the blade of a sword, as removed from other mountains as is an immortal from the common man. To the traveller suddenly finding this peak looming up before him, it is as if the spirit of the mountain itself, in anticipation of his visit, has dispatched a servant to receive him.

Skirting the mountain and with the stream at our side, we progressed within the shade of a hedge of pines. Here we could rest. By the time we reached the entrance to the mountain, the ranges were again in sight, and by Fragrance Hamlet 芳村 the

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16. – *ctd.* Discussing the Anthropocene in China”) is the need for a new language: “This new language would be a different way of communicating, that may result from more than an updated alphabet, to accept the power of the symbolic and artistic creation, the experimental and the forensic or archaeological, the simplifying power of technology and the ethical concerns of philosophy, the spiritual and the divine” (p. 7). In her “Dreams of Shanshui: China's Environmental Modernization and Landscape Aesthetics,” Andrea Riemenschnitter interrogates “...the conceptual undercurrents of the China Dream at the intersection of nation-building, landscape representation, and cultural reconstruction,” seeking also to “...unravel the negotiation of ideas and images between official and unofficial,” for which, see *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, Special Issue: Anthropocene Matters. Envisioning Sustainability in the Sinosphere (guest edited by Andrea Riemenschnitter and Jessica Imbach), 2018. In this connection, it is important to remember that the contemporary post-Cultural Revolution and pre-Covid 19 tourist boom in the People's Republic of China, both domestic and international, was inaugurated by a speech that Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1904–1997) gave (subsequently known as the “Yellow Mountain Talks” 黃山談話) in July 1979 after he had spent three days touring the mountain, for an account of which, see Sang Ye, “1979: Huang Shan, Selling Scenery to the Bourgeoisie: An Oral Account of Chinese Tourism, 1949–1979,” *China Heritage Quarterly*, No. 18 (June 2009).

17 For short English-language biographies of all three Yuan brothers, by C.N. Tay, see DMB, Vol. 2, pp. 1635–1638.

slopes danced to our left and right. As we entered Hot Springs Mouth 湯口, again the mountains hid themselves from us, as if, having appeared thrice to admit their guests, they now chose to retreat inside. From this point onwards, we travelled beside a wide stream, the roar of which resounded in our ears. Before us rose three peaks, standing erect like handsome men, tall, thin and somewhat emaciated, their complexions all smudged in the thick brume, these being those three supreme peaks of Amethyst 紫石, Cinnabar 硃砂 and Old Man 老人, waiting in serried rank for the arrival of their guests.

Hot Springs Temple 湯寺 stands here, bisected by the stream. Crossing over the stream at this point, we made our way up the foothills of Cinnabar Peak 硃砂峰 until we came to Hot Springs 湯泉 itself. The water of these springs is unmatched in its sweet purity. Having bathed in these waters, we went on, skirting the rock face and passing beneath a series of three waterfalls. Crossing back over the stream again, we rested at Lotus Hermitage 蓮花菴 and watched as the brume swallowed up the various peaks. Advancing up the stream we came to Elixir Copper 藥銚, this being where the Yellow Emperor had concocted the elixir of immortality. Here too is White Dragon Pool 白龍潭 where the water flowing over the rocks sings with such sweet melody. We rested besides the stream before following the foothills of Old Man Peak 老人峰, passing Tiger Head Cliff 虎頭巖 and listening to the gurgle of the Spring of the Humming Strings 鳴絃泉. This spring flows down into the stream from the very peak of the mountain, and from half-way down, where a rock face interrupts its passage, it seems as if suspended in nothingness. The water crashes down finally with a veritable roar of joy. All the way from Hot Springs Temple 湯寺 until this place, it is as if a river-borne musical troupe was performing amidst the mountains, the muffled sounds of string and pipe coming to one as if they were announcing the arrival of an honoured guest.

Once we had reached the summit, Cinnabar Peak 硃砂峰 appeared to our right, Old Man Peak 老人峰 at our left, both standing there as if to welcome their guests. We followed Cinnabar Spring 硃砂泉 until we reached Cinnabar Hermitage 硃砂菴. By now, the brume had thickened, and we could barely make out the outlines of the trees growing upon the slopes above us. We rested a short while once we had reached Cinnabar Cliff 硃砂巖.

A fellow traveller turned to me to say: “Usually, from this spot here, you can take in a complete vista of Heavenly Capital Peak 天都峰, but today it is hidden behind the brume.”

“How very malevolent is the brume,” I sighed in response, “to so hide the mountains thus. What very great harm it does!”

In a moment, however, a grey-haired old man cried out: “Look! The Spirit of the Sun is about to appear!”

“But a brief moment’s sunlight will do nothing to dispel this brume, I fear,” I began to reply, but even before I had finished speaking, the brume suddenly dropped away, leaving the orb of the sun hanging in the empty firmament, the solitary Heavenly Capital Peak 天都峰 appearing as if in a painting. The host, it seems, having held his breath for so long, could now finally relax and greet his guest. We all clapped our hands with delight and shouted out in joy at the sight that had just been revealed to us.



I was suffering from the occasional cramp in my foot, so I sat down upon the grass to massage it, all the while unable to wrest my eyes away from Heavenly Capital Peak 天都峰. Standing erect in the firmament, its skeleton strong and angular, how exceptional its shape; with its light brume the colour of pale ink, as if clothed by the brume, how exceptional its hues; its warm jade-like rocks and glistening cliffs, tactile and almost edible, how exceptional its crust; its ten thousand twists and turns all within the compass of a single inch, how exceptional its bearing; its stunted pines, like the feathers of the kingfisher, thrust out of an earth without a fistful of soil, how very exceptional its adornment. Indeed, whereas one can characterise those mountains that I have become used to seeing as having the feet of a Daoist and the tonsure of a Buddhist, were I to attempt to depict this mountain I would find it altogether too strange of appearance, and therefore not at all like a mountain.

In a moment's time, the brume descended again, leaving revealed the peaks of the various mountains, Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰 now appearing with the vague resemblance to Heavenly Capital Peak 天都峰 but with a more bewitching beauty about it. Whereas Heavenly Capital 天都峰 appears especially august, Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰 seems somewhat more animated. I struggled up Heavenly Capital Peak 天都峰, and at the very top found myself standing in front of Mañjuśrī Cloister 文殊院. The rock screen here stands precisely at the intersection of the steps leading up to Heavenly Capital 天都 and Lotus Blossom 蓮花 Peaks respectively. From here, we descended to Lotus Cavern 蓮花洞 where we viewed the various peaks of Prime Minister's Source 丞相源 before taking the steps upwards. It was as if we had suddenly broken through a wall, and we encountered ladders and catwalks leading off in various directions. We took rest in a hermit's cell. To the left of us stood Heavenly Capital Peak 天都峰, with such peaks as Peach Blossom 桃花峰 standing at its shoulder, whilst to our right rose Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰 with the Blue Phoenix 青鸞峰 and other peaks at its shoulders, like guests who have just arrived at the banquet and who are paying their initial respects to their host. Before then, the brume had dropped away and transformed itself into a vast sea, with the tips of the peaks now decorating its surface. "What a delight is this brume,"<sup>18</sup> I sighed, "for without it we could not call this sight a sea."

As we descended and turned towards the west, the rock screen came into sight to our right at the height of our shoulders, Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰 loomed up before us and Heavenly Capital 天都 appeared at our backs. One could now enumerate the marvellous peaks that surround Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰. We approached Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰 and ascended its summit, like ants scrambling upon a petal. By the time that we had arrived, the wind had blown up a gale, and we found that we could not tarry long. We descended then, and thus having exhausted the sights of Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰, it was now the summit of Great Pity Crest 大悲頂 that appeared to our right, as we faced Lion Peak 獅子峰 with Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰 behind us. The marvellous peaks that surround Lion Peak 獅子峰 could now, in their turn, all be enumerated.

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18 On this occasion, we follow the reading given in Yuan Zhongdao's collected works, Qian Bocheng 錢伯城 (ed.), *Kexuezhai ji* 珂雪齋集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), Vol. 2, p. 694, of "What a delight is this brume" (快哉霧也) rather than the "How strange is this brume" (怪哉霧也) found in Li Yimang, *Ming Qing ren you Huangshan ji chao*, p. 13.

From Mañjuśrī Cloister 文殊院 and Jade Screen 玉屏 to this point, the two mountains begin to merge into one another completely, and one's feet begin to tire of finding purchase upon the ground, just as one's eyes can only intermittently search out the sky as the two mountains begin to merge. Pulled upwards by hawsers, lowered downwards upon ropes, gaining egress by means of ladders and groping our ways across the gaps, one moment we were like fish swimming in nothingness, the next found us on all fours like dogs, all the while as fearless as ghosts in the night, as if the passage presented us with no danger whatsoever. To the extent that I could, I closed my eyes to the strangeness of a branch here and the unusualness of a rock there, such things not being at all what makes this mountain so very important.

From the ordinary, therefore, we obtained the truly extraordinary when, once we had ascended Illumination Terrace 光明臺 to the north, all thirty-six of the peaks of Yellow Mountain became visible to us. It was as if we had entered a vast audience-chamber and the host for the occasion had just made an appearance, in order to entertain his guests. Even those unnamed peaks that are not included in the pantheon of the thirty-six seemed quite extraordinary, this truly being a circumstance where "...even the servants and retainers prove to be of immortal talent."

Having passed such splendours as Anterior Sea Gate 前海門, we found ourselves encircled by Alchemists' Terrace 鍊丹臺, Alchemists' Peak 鍊丹峰, Verdant 翠微峰, and Immortal's Palm Peak 仙掌峰. Once we had passed Level with Heaven Promontory 平天砦 in order to gaze at Posterior Sea 後海, we found ourselves encircled by such splendours as the Stone Screen that Flew Here 飛來石幢 and Stūpa 寶塔 and various other peaks. And then, once we had made it to Stalagmite Promontory 石筍砦, we were encircled by the splendours of Now-I-Believe-It 始信峰 and other peaks. Whereas the Three Seas 三海 peaks are like a hank of floss silk, Stalagmite Promontory 石筍砦 is like a polished gem; if Three Seas 三海 resembles a bronze tripod, then Stalagmite Promontory 石筍砦 resembles a sword or a halberd.

In summary, then, Yellow Mountain constitutes the acme of both the extraordinary and the illusory, the numinous and the living, its appearance proves infinitely changeable, its shape constitutes the very embodiment of all seven emotions, as if the various Buddhas themselves, in order to entertain their guests, had each made display of their respective supernatural powers of transformation. At Pine Valley Hermitage 松谷菴 it is the spring that is especially noteworthy, lending its great beauty to Stalagmite Promontory 石筍砦. We departed the mountain by way of the route that took us past such sites as Prime Minister's Source 丞相源 and the Hermitage of the Lamp of the Sage 聖燈菴, all of which seemed like secret chambers within which guests could sit and read or rest their wearied legs. As we were quitting the mountain, the thunderous sound of Nine Dragons Spring 九龍泉 reached our ears from below, like the drums and horns serving to farewell guests. We returned by way of the route we had followed when entering the mountain, our guides accompanying us as far as River She Banks 歙浦 before they took their leave of us.

*A Record of My Trip to Yellow Mountain* (“You Huangshan ji” 游黃山記)

By Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664)

“For fifty years he reigned supreme over the world of letters” (主文章之壇坫五十年), the historian Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695) was later to say of Qian Qianyi in his *Recalling Friends of Old: A Record* (*Sijiu lu* 思舊錄). Poet, historian, essayist, sometime official under both the Ming and Qing dynasties, husband of one of the most talented courtesans of his age, owner of the most exquisite private library ever assembled in China, Qian was posthumously to so earn the animus of the Qianlong emperor (1711–1799; r. 1735–1796) that his entire corpus was proscribed, fortunately to no lasting effect. Born in Changshu 常熟, the prosperous market town some 40 kilometres north of Suzhou, the last decade of his long and eventful life was spent in one or other of his beautiful garden estates on Mount Yu 虞山 working on various large and complex scholarly projects, including his extraordinary anthology of the poetry of the Ming dynasty, *A Collection of the Poetry of the Various Reigns* (*Liechao shiji* 列朝詩集), edited with his celebrated wife Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618–1664) and published by his friend Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599–1659) at his Changshu printing works, the Pavilion for Drawing on the Ancients (Jiguge 汲古閣). An extensive history of the Ming dynasty that he was said to have been working on was lost in the conflagration that in 1650 destroyed his Tower of the Crimson Clouds (Jiangyunlou 絳雲樓). The loss of his book collection is said to have been largely responsible for his developing interest in Buddhism towards the end of his life. In nine sections with a preface in the original, this preface and Part VI are offered here.<sup>19</sup>

**Preface**

In the spring of the *Xinsi* year (1641), Cheng Jiasui 程嘉燧<sup>20</sup> and I planned to make a trip to Yellow Mountain, arranging to meet at Western Creek in Hangzhou when the flowering plum blossoms came out. When a month had passed with Jiasui still not having arrived, I found that I had matters to attend to at White Mount, and my passion for the Yellow Mountain trip abated somewhat. It was a letter from Xu Zhiyuan 徐之垣<sup>21</sup> that came to rouse me again—having read it my arms wanted to stretch out and take flight,

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19 For a short English-language biography of the man, see A.W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644–1912)* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943) (hereafter, ECCP), p. 148–150.

20 Cheng Jiasui (*zi* Mengyang 孟陽; *hao* Jian 偁庵, Songyuan shi lao 松園詩老; 1565–1644) was a poet and artist, from Xiushui 秀水 in Anhui. For a short English-language biography of the man, see ECCP, pp. 113–114.

21 Xu Zhiyuan (*zi* Weihuan 維翰; *hao* Zaijianlou 在澗樓), a native of Yin County 鄞縣, Zhejiang.

so I grabbed Wu Shi 吳拭<sup>22</sup> and set out. Wu Dazhen 吳大震<sup>23</sup> made ready a carriage and prepared us some grains and dried meats, and the cousins Zihan 子含 and Wenli 聞禮<sup>24</sup> goaded each other to come, but in the end neither of them could make the trip.

Zhiyuan's letter to me read:

The White Mount 白岳 is remarkably steep, but it stands like one of those miniature scenes of landscape painters, and even its sheerest and most remote rocks have been scribbled over by vulgar Daoists. The remarkable peaks of Yellow Mountain, though, drive up from the ground, with the taller ones rising a few thousand *zhang*, and even the smallest rising several hundred. There is no way to approach the summit, as there is simply nothing on which to rest one's feet. The rocks have a sleek green quality, delicately exquisite with their intricate bends, and wherever a fissure appears there is always a pine cutting through it. With their short needles and ancient trunks, and truly myriad in their various forms, these pines all take the rocks for their earth.

I have travelled as far as the Eastern and Southern Marchmounts 東南二嶽, roamed further north than Baha 叭哈, reached Potalaka 落迦, Hermitage 匡廬 and Nine Blossoms 九華 Mountains in the south, and nothing I have seen can compare to Yellow Mountain. Mere description cannot begin to exhaust its wonders, nor can the imagination approach them. Although it will waste a good many days, and the climb itself is arduous labour, in the end it is a labour that one simply cannot forgo.

On my trip to Yellow Mountain, I completed over twenty poems, and afterwards, finding myself idle before my cold window, I supplemented this collection with a prose account in nine parts. When this essay was finished, I immediately regretted writing it, and wondered whether, with Zhiyuan's description having already done full justice to Yellow Mountain, there had been any real need to take up my brush. Later though, a guest heard of my account, and soon those demanding to see it became too many; I could not refuse them. So now, I have arranged in order the nine parts to form a fascicle, and am sending them to Cheng Jiasui at Zhanghan Hill 長翰山, including, as a starting point, this brief reference to Zhiyuan's letter.

This preface written in the first month of the *Renwu* year (1642) by Qian Qianyi, the Old Man of Yu's Hill.

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22 Wu Shi (*zi* Quchen 去塵) was a native of Xiuning, and a man who, according to Qian, "loved to roam the famous mountains and waterways" (好遊名山水), for which, see *Liechao shiji xiaozhuan* 列朝詩集小傳 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), Vol. 2, p. 636.

23 Wu Dazhen (*zi* Zhangyu 長字; *hao* Zhangru 長儒), also a native of Xiuning.

24 No information about the first of the cousins mentioned here, Zihan, can be found, but Wu Wenli (*zi* Qufei 去非; *hao* Yunxin 筠心) was a native of Hangzhou.

## Part VI

Rising at daybreak, I found the wind gusty and unruly. We selected the way of the Cloudladder 雲梯, where the wind blew against our faces, pushing us backwards, and then at our backs, knocking us prostrate. Hurlled backwards and forwards, it felt as if I were being lifted by the armpits; I have never known wind to be of such strength. The end of the Cloudladder 雲梯 is the foot of Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰, the path resembles the stem of a lotus, bending around and concealing itself in the belly of the peak. Where the steps end, the path bursts back out of the peak's belly; climbing is like following the lotus root up to its double stage of petals. As the wind became ever more severe, I was no longer able to drag myself upwards against it, so I sat cross-legged against a rock, and waited for the other climbers to arrive. We followed the path back down, but I longed to turn back, and every time we passed a rock or a pine my head would turn as if I had caught sight of an old friend. A monk said: "Amongst the Thirty-six Peaks there is not one from which it is easy to part. Why not hasten to the Temple of Compassionate Radiance 慈光寺, where one can call upon all of the various peaks, while one's hand never leaves the railing?"

Compassionate Radiance 慈光 is situated on a branch ridge of Heavenly Capital 天都, nestled up against Peach Blossom 桃花 and Lotus Blossom Peaks 蓮花峰. Cinnabar 硃砂, Blue Phoenix 青鸞 and Amethyst Peaks 紫石峰 stand on its left, while to its right, Folding Screen 疊嶂 and Cloud Gate Peaks 雲門峰 are both poised facing outwards. Pumen, the Master of Tranquillity, who had previously established a monastery at Bracing Mountain 清涼山, achieved a vision of Yellow Mountain while at meditation, and so from Bracing Mountain 清涼山 moved to this site. When he entered the gates of the capital, with powerful resolve and in touch with the unfathomable realms, the Empress Dowager Cisheng 慈聖皇太后<sup>25</sup> opened up the imperial treasury to the shaven-headed ones, and presented them with purple robes, pennants and staffs. The Emperor Shenzong 神宗 bestowed a name-tablet inscribed with the words "Compassionate Radiance" 慈光, and issued a decree of protection and support.

Today the temple houses a set of sūtras that Cisheng had adorned as a gift from the imperial house. There is a four-faced gold Buddha figure, in seven layers, with each layer containing four Venerated Ones, making twenty-eight of these in total. Each Venerated One sits on a Lotus Blossom Throne, and each throne boasts seven depictions of the Bodhisattva Cundi among its leaves. On each leaf there sits a Buddha, and of these there could not be fewer than ten thousand. All of this was put into effect by Cisheng and the imperial palaces.

Prior to the construction of this four-faced hall, Pumen crafted a model of it out of wood. Within its four corners and four beams not even the most trifling detail was neglected, and the model is still stored here today. Pumen single-handedly created the

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25 Empress Dowager Cisheng (1546–1614) was a concubine of the Longqing emperor (1537–1572; r. 1567–1572) and mother of the Wanli emperor (1563–1620; r. 1573–1620), referred to here as the Emperor Shenzong; for a short English-language biography of this woman, originally surnamed Li 李, see DMB, Vol. 1, pp. 856–859.

monastic presence on this mountain, establishing here the burning lamp. At that time, as the imperial palaces bestowed their compassionate favour, this temple bulged with treasures from within the four seas, truly transporting the heavenly realm of Tushita down to this world of man. The transformation of a wasteland of thorn and brushwood into a Buddha-realm was a marvellous achievement indeed.

These days, with military unrest daily more worrying, and famines raging year after year, the tolling of the great fish bells has all but ceased, and there is barely even enough coarse grain to go around. Recalling the drums and bells that would ring out from the Palace of Eternal Faith 長信宮, and counting up the monasteries that once stood in Luoyang, one cannot but sigh for own's ruined and disordered age. Such, indeed, was the cause of Li Gefei's 李格非 lament over the famous gardens.<sup>26</sup>

Pumen's stūpa sits at the rear of the Temple of Compassionate Radiance 慈光寺. The white rocks have all been worn down; rinsed smooth by a stream of floating peach blossoms that winds its way around in front of the stūpa. In comparison to this, one can see that the graveyards of the world of man, with their tomb mounds that look like the Qilian mountains 祁連山, are truly contemptible.

On this evening, I once again bathed at the Hot Springs 湯池, and lodged at Peach Blossom Source Hermitage 桃花源庵. The mountain monk who had accompanied me could not bring himself to stay, and as he solemnly took his leave, I sent word to Heavenly Capital 天都, Lotus Blossom 蓮花 and the other peaks, just as the men of Wu

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26 This is a reference to Li Gefei's (*zi* Wenshu 文叔; 1041?–1101) celebrated “Account of the Famous Gardens of Luoyang” (“Luoyang ming yuan ji” 洛陽名園記), written in 1095, in which Li describes nineteen of the celebrated gardens of the former capital, before adding this important commentary: “Luoyang lies at the centre of the world. It holds the strategic pass between Mount Yao and Min Lake, and sits astride the access point to Qin and Long; and was the old stamping ground of Zhao and Wei. So it is a place that is bound to be contended over from all four quarters. When the situation in the world is normal, then this all ceases, but if there are disturbances Luoyang is the first to experience war. This is why I hold that the prosperity or decline of Luoyang is an indication of whether the world is well governed or in chaos. For in the Zhenguan (627–649) and Kaiyuan (713–741) periods of the Tang dynasty there were reputed to have been more than a thousand residences and palaces built by senior ministers and imperial relatives in the Eastern Capital (of Luoyang). When chaos and disruption set in, and these continued in the miseries of the Five Dynasties (907–960), the lakes and pools, bamboos and trees were trampled by the carriages of war, and abandoned to become a wasteland. The high pavilions and great gazebos were consumed in smoke and fire and turned to ashes. They were annihilated and destroyed with the Tang dynasty itself, and not a wrack remained. That is way I hold that the rise and fall of these gardens is an indication of the prosperity or decline of Luoyang. So if the good government or chaos of the world may be known since they are indicated by the prosperity or decline of Luoyang; and if the prosperity or decline of Luoyang may be known since they are indicated by the rise and fall of its gardens, then my writing of this Record of Famous Gardens has surely been to some purpose.” for which, see Philip Watson (trans.), “Famous Gardens of Luoyang by Li Gefei: Translation with Introduction,” *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 24.1 (2004): 38–54.

say, “I will be waiting for word of thee.” Wang Zemin 汪澤民<sup>27</sup> of the Yuan era wrote, “Lodging at the Springs Temple, I heard the sounds of the birds, chirping away as if echoing each other in song, now *presto*, now *largo*. This bird is called the Mountain Singing Thrush 山樂鳥, and off the mountain, there is not one to be seen.” I was just then experiencing my own “Southern Shore parting,”<sup>28</sup> so when I heard them, I felt a tug at my wretched heartstrings. I bade farewell to Yellow Mountain, and it took a day’s effort to return home.

### Yellow Mountain Travelogue (“Huangshan youji” 黃山游記)

By Shi Runzhang (1618–1683)

The poet, scholar and sometime official Shi Runzhang 施閏章 (*zi* Shangbai 尚白; *hao* Yushan 愚山) was a native of Xuancheng 宣城 in present day Anhui who, in his prose and poetic engagements with Yellow Mountain, expressed a somewhat proprietorial interest in it. Much celebrated for the benevolence of his administration as intendant of the Hu-Xi Circuit 湖西道 in Jiangxi, Shi was later to sit for and pass the special 1679 *Boxue hongci* 博學宏詞 examinations, whereupon he was appointed to the Hanlin Academy to work on the composition of the *History of the Ming*. Having once served as an examiner for the 1658 Shandong provincial examinations at which the writer Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640–1715) earned his Flourishing Talent degree, Shi was later immortalized as a clever and upright judge in a story entitled “Rouge” (“Yanzhi” 胭脂) in Pu’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異).<sup>29</sup>

The crowning glory of all the mountains south of the Yangtze River is Yellow Mountain. It rises four thousand *ren* high, so that even Eyes of Heaven Mountain 天目山 to the west of Hangzhou would barely reach its ankles. Long ago it was called Blackmount 黟山, but it acquired its current name, so the story has it, as it is here that the Yellow Emperor’s sacred ceremonial tripods are to be found. On the eighth day of the eighth month of the Renzi year (1672), I arrived here from Wanling 宛陵, lodging

27 Wang Zemin (*zi* Shuzhi 叔志; 1285–1355).

28 The phrase used here (南浦之別) derives from a line in “The River Earl” (“He Bo” 河伯), the eighth of the “Nine Songs” (“Jiuge” 九歌) of the *Chuci* 楚辭 which, in David Hawkes’s translation, reads: “Eastward you journey, with hands stately folded,/ Bearing your fair bride to the southern harbour,” for which, see David Hawkes (trans.), *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* (Penguin, 1985), p. 115. Over time, the “Southern Shore,” as we have rendered it, became a symbol of separation.

29 For a short English-language biography of the man, see ECCP, p. 651. For a translation of Pu’s story, see John Minford (trans.), *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), pp. 408–420. Jonathan Chaves translates a number of Shi’s Yellow Mountain poems in his *Every Rock a Universe: The Yellow Mountains and Chinese Travel Writing*, including his “A Chant for Yellow Mountains: Presented to Cao Binji” (“Huangshan yin: zeng Cao Binji” 黃山吟贈曹賓及), a poem that contains a line, in praise of his young friend Cao Fen 曹鈞 (b. ca. 1655), “In exploring the mountains his sole endeavour—to be the mountains’ scribe:/ Each and every rock and stream to record and annotate” (尋山直欲作山史一石一泉皆記注), that could apply equally to all four of the authors translated here.

beneath Cinnabar Peak 硃砂峰. I bathed in the hot springs, before proceeding on to stay at Peach Blossom Source 桃花源. There we encountered rain, delaying us for a full three days. I looked over White Dragon Pool 白龍潭, the waterfall of which is truly spectacular.

When the rain finally let up, I espied, from the monastery at the hot springs, a cliff inscribed with the calligraphy of Luo Longwen 羅龍文,<sup>30</sup> the famous maker of ink, before we set off, by way of Temple of Compassionate Radiance 慈光寺, to pay my respects to Old Man Peak 老人峰. As dusk approached, I reached the very pinnacle of the central peak, scrambling up ladders and along wooden catwalks, until, as if emerging from the depths of a well, I found myself at Mañjuśrī Cloister 文殊院. That night, a splendid moon hung suspended in the sky. When dawn arrived, I ascended Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰, my stomach pressed hard up against the rock face as I groped my way up the last little distance. Once there, I perched upon a cliff for a good long while. Then I proceeded several *li* westwards, through Turtle Cavern 鰲洞, to stay the night at Point-at-the-Moon Hermitage 指月菴 on Alchemists' Terrace 煉丹臺. Here, too, we encountered rain and mist, and the air turned bitterly cold. On the fifteenth day, again the rain let up, and I proceeded by way of Flew Here Peak 飛來峰 and Lion's Forest 獅子林 to West Sea Gate 西海門, whence through the various sights of Now-I-Believe-It Peak 始信峰 and Stalagmite Promontory 石筍砦. As the sun set, I became grandly drunk and, singing away, gazed up at the moon from Illumination Crest 光明頂. At dawn the next day, we took the north path to Cloud Valley 雲谷 and returned to Hot Springs Mouth 湯口 by way of Desolation Keep 蕪塞, taking a side-track in order to see Nine Dragon Pool 九龍潭. I slept in a monk's cell beneath Alms Bowl Peak 鉢盂峰, and the next day, departing the mountain through Hot Springs Mouth 湯口, I returned home.

A fellow guest asked for an account of my trip, to which I replied, "I made none, for just as Yellow Mountain proved no easy journey, neither does the journey make for easy telling."<sup>31</sup> Even whilst in exile in Liuzhou, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元<sup>32</sup> of the Tang found something aesthetically pleasing in the sight of every single hill and dale he

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30 Luo Longwen (*zi* Hanzhang 含章; *hao* Xiaohua 小華; fl. 1540s) was a political associate of the notorious Grand Secretary Yan Song 嚴嵩 (1480–1565).

31 For the scholar-gentry elite of imperial China, if movement throughout empire was necessitated by their bureaucratic careers (both the serving in office and the going into exile), their peripatetic lifestyles also, however, increasingly, afforded them both aesthetic and scholarly opportunities. At the same time, once one had acquired something of a literary or artistic reputation, such travel imposed upon one the obligation to capture in text or image some record of one's trip. We are told, for instance, that when visiting Hermitage Mountain (廬山) for the first time the great Song dynasty writer Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) resolved not to write any poems about it, such was the "eccentric beauty of its peaks and valleys" (山谷奇秀). Fortunately for us, he found that he could not resist the importunate requests of the monks of the mountain, upon whom he was dependant both for their hospitality and their local knowledge, thus producing a number of poems, one of which included the immortal couplet: "Of Hermitage Mountain I cannot make out the true face, / For I am myself lost in the heart of the very place" (不識廬山真面目只緣身在此山中). One notes that as he toured the mountain he was reading the account of it written by his friend Chen Lingju 陳令舉 that had recently been sent him (且行且讀).

32 The prose writings of Liu Zongyuan (*zi* Zihou 子厚; 773–819) written whilst in exile earned him (posthumously) a place as one of the so-called Eight Masters of the Tang and Song.



happened upon. There are any number of mountains famous for their peaks, of which only a bare few are at all extraordinary; and yet Yellow Mountain has a full thirty-six peaks of note, which draw themselves up ten thousand *ren* to prick at the firmament above, and each one of which stands aloof like a jade official tablet held high above a minister's head. Every one of these peaks is, in and of itself, deserving of the fame accorded to the sacred Marchmounts. There are still other clusters, several score of peaks making one together, with pines cupped in the crannies of their rock, writhing and twisted into forms now bizarre, now noble, so that even were one to be blessed with a hundred eyes, one could not take in all their various manifestations. Again, in the mists that swirl out from the caves and grottoes, all is light and dark by turns, and when dark, even the glare of the sun seems smudged. Thus, some travellers stay ten long days and more upon the mountain, but see not a single peak, only to leave with all their fondest hopes thwarted.

And so it is, that, for no two men are the sights afforded by this mountain the same. For my part, I was favoured with several clear days. So when I climbed up to Mañjuśrī Cloister 文殊院, then, I saw arrayed on either side of me both Heavenly Capital Peak 天都峰 and Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰, both of them standing as upright as a screen. Of all the throng of other peaks, none dared boast their peer. From here the path led north-westwards. And stooped, we wound our way upwards like clambering ants, emerged from the foliage, and looked straight across to Heavenly Capital 天都, now seemingly as close at hand as if it were an object sitting upon one's desk.

Then there was Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰, a peak that from a distance resembles Nine Blossoms Mountain 九華山, or Hermitage Mountain 廬山; and then, Now-I-Believe-It Peak 始信峰, where the stone face fell away like the cliffs of a gorge and pines reached out to tug at one's arms, while below could be seen Scattered Blossoms Dell 散花塢, embroidered criss-cross in yellow and cinnabar; and Alchemists' Terrace 鍊丹臺 and Seagate 海門, where we faced a bottomless gully with gushing spires and steep walls upon which appeared a thousand forms of man and demon, bird and beast, or objects of manufacture; or Stalagmite Promontory 石筍砒, where stood a thicket of swords, here and there like companions dallying on their way and exchanging confidences, or clustering to throw up a feathery thatch in quivering rows; or Illumination Crest 光明頂, poking like a hat from the broad forehead of the 'Anterior and Posterior Seas' 前後海. To the east of the Crown, it is called Anterior Sea 前海, and to the west, Posterior Sea 後海; as the clouds lie seething, the many protruding peaks come and go like islets washed by the ocean's swell. When the sky clears after a long fall of rain, the clouds return to the valleys, piled ten thousand layers thick. This is called the 'Spreading of the Sea' 鋪海, and the traveller will not necessarily have the good fortune to strike it. But on the night of the mid-autumn moon, I was perched on Illumination Crest 光明頂 howling in harmony with the heavens, the moon at my eyebrows. Only the sight of the 'Spreading of the Sea' 鋪海 could have added to my joy. As it happened, the wind rose and the clouds flew by, casting the mountains and valleys into shadow. All was altered a hundredfold each instant, and in these metamorphoses the sights yielded me their soul.

"Mountain scenes like these, with their highland mists and shooting rainbows, the sunlight glinting on snow and ice, the oddly shaped and the wondrously coloured, and their countless moods and faces—were such scenes to have moved a Li Daoyuan 酈道

元<sup>33</sup> to write of them, or a Xie Lingyun 謝靈運<sup>34</sup> to sing their praises, could even their brushes have managed to convey each nuance of pregnant emotion, or enumerate all to the last detail?”

My interlocutor asked, “Yellow Mountain sounds so vast and so very extraordinary, but it is also rugged and perilous in the extreme; don’t one’s feet get calloused in the climb?”

I snorted, saying, “Access to the immortal’s isle of Penglai 蓬萊 is guarded by treacherous waters; and Xihua 西華 has ravines of a thousand feet which can only be scaled on the end of a rope. Now Yellow Mountain is the Heavenly Emperor’s capital, home to crowds of Immortals, and not even snakes or tigers make their lairs there. It does not welcome climbers. In all the billion years since antiquity, it only became accessible once the monk Pumen had opened up some trails. Now we are lucky enough that we can sightsee there, taking in all the wonders that it offers. And you, Sir, would have it defiled by horse and carriage so that it can become some bauble for the facile gratification of the senses?” My visitor’s jaw dropped, and a stunned silence ensued.

I bathed in the Hot Springs and then departed, my soul as light as if I was borne on a wind drawn chariot. I was first importuned for the record of this travel by Master Cheng Shou 程守 and was accompanied on it by Masters Hong Meizhou 洪美周 and Xu Xuehuai 許雪懷. On a number of occasions, when the ladders and trails came to an end, Master Jiang Zhu 江注 strode ahead into danger.<sup>35</sup> I relied on his fearlessness, and so dubbed him my “Yellow Mountain guide and teacher.”

### *A Record of My Trip to Yellow Mountain (“You Huangshan ji” 游黃山記)*

**By Yuan Mei (1716–1798)**

Yuan Mei 袁枚 (*zi* Zicai 子才; *hao* Jiangzhai 簡齋, *Cunzhai* 存齋, *Suiyuan* 隨園), born in Hangzhou, became the most important poet of the eighteenth century. Also a prolific essayist, letter writer, critic, short-story writer, gourmet, and scholar, Yuan had a particular concern for both history and the source and function of poetry. Having been invited to sit the special *Boxue hongci* 博學鴻詞 examinations of 1736 and failed, Yuan Mei succeeded at the examinations of 1739 and was appointed to a post in the Hanlin Academy. His inability at Manchu, however, saw him appointed to a series of minor and local posts as District Magistrate. In 1752, Yuan Mei retired permanently from

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33 Li Daoyuan (ca. 466–527) was the author of the *Footnotes to the Classic of the Rivers* (*Shuijing zhu* 水經注), an important early geographical work.

34 Xie Lingyun (385–433) was an early and important landscape poet.

35 Jiang Zhu (*zi* Yunning 允凝; *hao* Ruomifang 若米肪), from She County in present-day Anhui, was a noted artist. He had been a student of his relative Hongren 弘仁 (1610–1664), the most celebrated of the Yellow Mountain artists.

office and for the remaining half century of his life he lived off his writings, managing to avoid entanglement in the various literary inquisitions that characterized his age. Throughout this period, with few interruptions, he lived in his garden, Suiyuan 隨園, variously translated as Harmony Garden or Garden of Accommodation. Ignoring the moralistic criticisms of a number of his contemporaries, Yuan Mei, a man committed to the education of women, gathered around him a group of talented female poets, publishing their writings under the title of his garden.<sup>36</sup>

Upon finishing a tour of White Mount 白岳 on the second day of the fourth month of the *Guimao* year (1783), I went to bathe at Hot Springs on Yellow Mountain. The spring waters were sweet and pellucid, and the rock face loomed above them. That night I slept at the Temple of Compassionate Radiance 慈光寺. The next morning, a monk told me: “From here on the mountain roads are jagged and treacherous. There is no room for a basket chair, and yet, should you walk, Sir, you would find it quite hard going. Luckily, there are certain local lads who are practised in bearing travellers on their backs. They are called ‘Sea-horses’ 海馬. Perhaps you should employ them.” He brought five or six fine and sturdy youths to me, each of whom was carrying many yards of cloth. I laughed to myself, thinking: “So! Now I’m old and feeble, it’s back to my swaddling clothes, is it?” Initially, then, I pushed myself obstinately onwards by foot; but once really exhausted, I was trussed up and mounted upon a man’s back. I went thus, sometimes walking and sometimes carried, until we reached Cloud Nest 雲巢, where the track petered out. Then we trod the rungs of a ladder instead. Above, a thousand peaks pricked at the sky; below, the Temple of Compassionate Radiance 慈光寺 was lost at the bottom of a vast vat. That evening, we arrived at Mañjuśrī Cloister 文殊院 and slept there.

The next day dawned wet and very cold, so that even by midday, everyone still wore heavy furs and huddled besides the brazier. The clouds tumbled in and took possession of the room, and in an instant, all was an inchoate blur, so that two companions sitting together could only be distinguished by their voices. When the cloud lifted, I walked to Stand-in-the-Snow Terrace 立雪臺. There grows an ancient pine, its body flung to the west, and its head facing the south, where it pierces a rock and emerges from a fissure on the other side. The rock seems alive, and hollow, so the tree can lie concealed within it and become one with it. Or else, it seems that the tree dares not grow upwards, fearing the heavens; so that while it is several arm-spans round, it is not two feet high. Thus also innumerable other pines. In the evening, the sky above was clear, and all the peaks nodded and dropped like a brood of children. Yellow Mountain is renowned for its ‘Anterior Sea’ 前海 and ‘Posterior Sea’ 後海. Here, with a turn of the head, we took in both at once.

The following day, turning left and descending from the terrace, we traversed Hundred-Step Cloud Ladder 百步雲梯, and the track disappeared again. Suddenly we saw a rock shaped like a vast “Atlas” turtle, its mouth gaping open. There being nothing else for it, we walked into the turtle’s mouth, and passing through its belly and out its

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36 For a short English-language biography of this man, see ECCP, pp. 955–957.

back, found ourselves in another world altogether. We went up to Alchemists' Terrace 鍊丹臺 and climbed Illumination Crest 光明頂, which stands triangulated with Lotus Blossom Peak 蓮花峰 and Heavenly Capital 天都峰, three lofty peers set like three feet of a caldron. Buffeted by the wind, we could not stand, but fortunately the pine needles were spread two feet thick and proved very soft, so that we could sit. In the evening we went and stayed at Lion's Forest Temple 獅子林. Taking advantage of what sun remained, we climbed Now-I-Believe-It Peak 始信峰. There are three peaks. From a distance one sees two standing jammed together, but if one peers hard enough, a third lies hidden behind them. These peaks are high and perilous and overlook a "bottomless stream." When I stood on the brink with my toes hanging over a couple of inches, the monk hauled me back in alarm. I laughed, saying:

"It wouldn't have mattered if I'd fallen anyway."

"How so?"

"If the stream is bottomless, then there should also be no end to one's fall. You'd just float and float, until you threw down your bedroll who knows where. Besides, even if there was a bottom, it would still take an age to get there. There'd surely be a few seconds in which to effect an escape. It's a shame we've no rope—I'm sure that with a plumb-line we'd find it isn't that far down after all!" The monk had a good laugh at that.

The following day, we climbed the greater and lesser Cool Clear Terraces 清涼臺. Below, peaks jutted up like writing brushes, like arrows, like bamboo shoots or bamboo groves, like halberds and the masts of boats; as if the Emperor of Heaven had taken all the weapons in his armoury and scattered them over the earth in play. As we ate, threads of white silk began winding themselves around the trees and the monk said delightedly: "The clouds are 'Spreading the Sea.'" At first a fuzzy mist, all melted silver and frayed brocade, then thickened after a time into a single mass, which left bare the horns of the blue-green mountains. The whole resembled bamboo shoots and chunks of meat standing in a great dish of congealed lard. Before long, the mist lifted, revealing countless clusters of peaks as they had been before. I sat there above the pines, harshly broiled by the sun, until a cloud suddenly rose up to make a shady canopy. Only then did I realize that clouds too have their own "Ranks and Orders," or higher and lower, and are not all of one class.

The daylight thinned towards twilight, and we set off towards West Sea Gate 西海門 to watch the sunset. The grass grew higher than man, and the road again dwindled, so we had to call several dozen fellows to mow a path before we could move on. To the east, peaks were arrayed like screens; in the west, they rose with abrupt savagery from where they skewered the earth; and in the middle were a few score in a higgledy-piggledy hodge-podge, like Jade Terrace 瓊臺 of Celestial Terrace Mountain 天臺山. The flaming sun was ready to drop, and a single peak met it head on, hesitating between gulping it down and holding it aloft. I was perforce sans hat, lest the wind whip it off, sans socks, lest they be drenched; dared not use my cane, for fear it sink into the soft sand, nor glance upwards for fear that the rock might collapse and crush me. Craning my neck back and forth, eyes darting all ways at once, I wished I could transform myself into a billion bodies and visit every peak in turn. My "Sea-horse" mount went as swift

as a gibbon, careering headlong onward; and the mountains, as if taking their cue from us, also took helter-skelter to their heels hurtling by blurred like a surging tide. Weird peaks awaited in the chasm underfoot, and the consequences of a single wrong step did not bear contemplation. But since things had already come to such a pass, quaking timidly was of no use, and should I reign my mount in, I would think myself a coward; so, there was nothing doing but to place my life in his hands and let events follow their own course. I felt the downy weightlessness of immortality. When the Huainanzi 淮南子 speaks of "...the gall bladder giving rise to the clouds," it speaks the truth.<sup>37</sup>

On the Ninth Day of the month, we made a turning descent behind Heavenly Pillar 天柱峰, passed White Sand Promontory 白沙砦, and came to Cloud Valley 雲谷, where my family had a sedan chair waiting to meet me. In all, we had walked more than fifty *li* and spent seven days in the mountains.

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Duncan M. Campbell has taught (Chinese language, modern and classical; Chinese literature, modern and classical; and aspects of Chinese history and civilisation) at the University of Auckland, Victoria University of Wellington, and the Australian National University in Canberra. In 2015, he was the Curator of the Chinese Garden with The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, USA. He had yet to make it to Yellow Mountain.

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Michael Radich formerly taught at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and is now Professor of Buddhist Studies at Heidelberg University. His Harvard Ph.D. (2007) was entitled "The Somatics of Liberation". He is author of *How Ajātaśatru Was Reformed* (2011), and *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra and the Emergence of Tathāgatagarbha Doctrine* (2015). He was a Humboldt Fellow in Hamburg (2015), and Shinnyo-en Visiting Professor of Buddhist Studies at Stanford (2019).

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37 Chen Guangzhong 陳廣忠 (ed.), *Huainanzi yizhu* 淮南子譯注 (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 1990), p. 304.

