Scribes of Gastronomy

Representations of Food and Drink in Imperial Chinese Literature

Edited by Isaac Yue and Siufu Tang
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Food and the Literati

The Gastronomic Discourse of Imperial Chinese Literature

Siufu Tang and Isaac Yue

It has been observed that while all other life feeds, the human species eats.\textsuperscript{1} The act of ‘eating’, which distinguishes humans from other forms of life, has brought about the phenomenon of different cultures pursuing dissimilar diets and having distinctive ways of preparing food. Since for each culture, food is symbolic in a unique way, the study of one’s cultural gastronomical practices enables an introspective examination of one’s own cultural traditions as well as facilitates the understanding of other cultures around the world.

The Chinese take pride in their food culture and the fact that their ethnical culinary excellence is recognized internationally. To quote the late Chang Kwang-chih, ‘That Chinese cuisine is the greatest in the world is highly debatable and is essentially irrelevant. But few can take exception to the statement that few other cultures are as food oriented as the Chinese.’\textsuperscript{2} In fact, not only does gastronomy occupy a central role in the development of Chinese civilization, it also represents a theme of some importance in literary productions, with the language of food manifesting itself in multifarious ways throughout different eras, serving a variety of purposes, and encompassing genres. Examples can be as far-ranging as the stanzas on food and wine in the \textit{Classic of Poetry} (\textit{Shi jing} 詩經) or in Su Shi’s 蘇軾 (1037–1101) enunciation of the attainment of culinary perfection, and the articulation of the refinement of dining in \textit{The Dream of the Red Chamber} (\textit{Honglou meng} 紅樓夢). From these literatures, it is possible to extract different layers of interpretation in respect to the references to food, ranging from the historic to the aesthetic. As Roel Sterckx observes, ‘food is omnipresent in reality, in simile and in metaphor [of China]’.\textsuperscript{3} The unique appeal of food and its special cultural significance within Chinese society cannot be underestimated.

The purpose of this present volume is to engage the fledging genre of food literature in global academia from a Chinese perspective. By considering the textual representations of food in relation to the agendas of the writers, the type of text in which they appear, and the context under which nourishment is evoked as a literary motif, the contributors to this project hope to add to the understanding of the cultural and social significance of food in the Chinese literary tradition.
Food, Moral Education, and the Way of the Taotie

Whereas the English lexicon contains words such as gourmet, aristologist, gourmand, epicure, and gastrologer to describe a person who is acquainted with the fine art of dining, in Chinese this person would be referred to as a laotao, a derivative of the mythical taotie. As a beast of legend, the nature and the origin of the taotie continue to be a subject of scholarly debate. Traditionally, the taotie has been associated with a beast-like motif on ritual vessels on the one hand, and with voracious appetite on the other. Such an association was made as early as in the Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü (Lüshi chunqiu):

The taotie that is inscribed on the tripods of the Zhou dynasty has a head but not a body. It devours people but does not swallow them, and damages its own body as a result. This demonstrates retribution. It is the same for those who do immoral acts.

Three elements of the passage are worthy of our attention. First, the passage mentions the tripod of the Zhou dynasty, which is an important ritual vessel. In early China, rites (li) were originally performed as sacrifices to gods and ancestors and later became governing norms for social and political life as well. Ever since the elaboration of the concept by early Confucianism, especially in the hands of Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi, ‘rites’ has become an encompassing term for spiritual and moral norms, covering nearly every aspect of Chinese life. Second, the passage talks about eating. The mythical beast taotie eats human beings but does not swallow them, presumably choking itself out of hastiness. Eating in itself, in particular as a necessary means of life maintenance, is innocuous. However there are good and bad ways of eating. The taotie’s way of eating can be seen as wrong for two reasons. Not only does it eat human beings, but it eats them improperly by not swallowing. Such a bad way of eating thus brings about harm, not merely to others but especially to the taotie itself. The results of such an improper way of eating bring out the third important element of the passage, which is that of moral evaluation and moral education. The passage concludes that immoral acts lead to retribution and bring harms to the actor, just as the taotie harms itself by eating in the wrong way. This early passage about the taotie tactfully conjoins three elements: rites as moral norms, the act of eating, and moral education, and sets an example of using food for moral and cultural representation.

This linkage between food and moral education is also explored in another account of the taotie in The Chronicle of Zuo (Zuo zhuan). Here, the taotie, a depraved descendent of a certain Jinyun clan, is compared to the three
evils of the world and appears as greedy as it is voracious. Although the two accounts differ in the sense that the human origin of the taotie, as found in the latter, is completely replaced by elements of bestiality in the former, its connotation as an eater and a devourer conveys one consistent moral message: what is wrong with the taotie is not its love for food and drink, but its indulgence without limitations and at the expense of other concerns (which brings harms not only to others but also to itself).

This association of the taotie with the negative qualities of gluttony, ravenousness, and an insatiable appetite—a theme that remains relevant in such later work as Du Fu’s 《Muntjac》 (712–770) ‘Muntjac’ (ji 猚), in which the image of the beast as an eater is evoked to critique the self-indulging greed of the upper class during the Tang dynasty—is indicative of the conventional Chinese perception of an innate relationship between eating and moral education. The taotie, both as a motif on ritual vessels and as a symbol for gluttony, seems a perfect example of the cultural representation of food in China. Food, on the one hand, can be an essential element of the highest and the most solemn rites of China. Yet, on the other hand, it might also be the source of temptation, and be accompanied by moral corruption and deprivation. We believe, it is as a medium of myriad possible representations that food occupies a central role in Chinese culture and society.

The usage of food for moral education is, in fact, a tradition that is traceable to as early a time as was recorded in the Classic of Poetry. In the poem ‘Mian Man’ 《綿蠻》, for example, we find the following lines:

綿蠻黃鳥 There is that little oriole,
止於丘阿 Resting on a bend of the mound.
道之云遠 The way is distant,
我勞如何 And I am very much wearied.
飲之食之 Give me drink, give me food;
教之誨之 Inform me, teach me;
命彼後車 Order one of the attending carriages,
謂之載之 And tell them to carry me.

The two lines that concern us, ‘Give me drink, give me food; Inform me, teach me’, not only illustrate the way the two concepts are bound together in a matter-of-fact manner, but the fact that they are quoted with approval by Xunzi 荀子, who uses them to illustrate the two essential aspects of a kingly government—that of satisfying material needs and that of providing moral guidance—further demonstrates the degree to which these concepts have been adopted and
endorsed by Chinese thinkers. In *Mencius* (*Mengzi 孟子*), the importance of food for the cultivation of morality and virtue is also emphasized in the repetition of the belief that normal people must first be well fed and clothed before they can be taught virtue.\(^\text{12}\) Although Mencius also suggests that when someone is filled with virtue, it is possible for that person to have no regard for fine food, he returns to the point with another poem from the *Classic of Poetry*,\(^\text{13}\) which reads: ‘Having filled us with drink; Having filled us with virtue’ 既醉以酒，既飽以德.\(^\text{14}\)

While the exact meaning of these lines is open to interpretation, the perceptible analogy between spirits and virtue serves to validate an inherent connection between food and morality (with the former being regarded as prerequisite to the achievement of the later); that just as we might be drunk with spirits, we can also be full with virtue.

It is along this same vein that in the *Book of Rites* (*Li ji 禮記*), rites—the Confucian generic name for norms—are stated to have had their beginnings in food and drink. As James Legge surmises, it was first through various forms of food and drink that ancient people expressed their reverence to spirits and gods.\(^\text{15}\) The idea that food and drink could be invested with meanings and feelings so rich as to become the medium for cultural activities represents a parallel development to such classics as *Mencius* and the *Classic of Poetry*, in which the moral qualities of food are established and expounded. However, food and drink are more than simply the medium for rites and other cultural activities, and it is not as though they could be discarded and replaced by better means of expression. On the one hand, the fact that food and drink are the means of subsistence for all human beings, and could hardly be discarded is recognized and accepted. On the other hand, rites actually represent the proper way of living a good human life, including eating and drinking well. Xunzi, when explaining the origin of rites, also points out that the primary function of rites is to nourish people. By nourishment, Xunzi means the proper satisfaction of human desires, among which those for food and drink are prominent.\(^\text{16}\) Similarly, it is recorded in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong 中庸*) that Confucius once commented that while everybody eats and drinks, rarely do they know the flavours.\(^\text{17}\) It thus seems deducible that it is precisely through rites that someone can truly appreciate the flavours of food and drink. That is, food and drink gain their proper taste and proper meaning within a good human life only when structured by rites. Only in such a way can a person truly enjoy food and drink to their fullest. Xunzi suggests that only when nature (including desires of food and drink) is joined with artifice (*wei 位*, predominantly rites) can the true order of humanity be established.\(^\text{18}\) What Xunzi means is that a life that is truly human requires both the natural desires and their
embellishment in cultural forms like rites. Xunzi’s suggestion can also be seen as an elaboration of Confucius’ famous statement that the nobleman (junzi 君子) must be well-matched in raw substance (zhi 質) and cultural embellishment (wen 文).¹⁹ Given such an understanding, food and drink can be seen as essential medium for the embellishment of our natural desires. It is through the cultural and social representations invested in food and drink that we eat like humans and not merely feed like animals. Such a Confucian understanding might also help to explain the central roles played by food and drink in Chinese culture.

One example of Chinese cultural representations of food and drink can be found in sacrificial rites. As offerings in sacrificial rites, food and drink are not only compatible with rites, but in fact are mutually constitutive to a large extent. Throughout Chinese history, they occupy a central role not only in the mundane but also in the religious and spiritual dimension. Offerings of food and drink to ancestors have been the exemplary component of Chinese ancestor-oriented rites, which are identified by scholars as keys to Chinese culture.²⁰ One early description of the use of food and drink in various sacrificial rites appears in the Xunzi:

At the Grand Xiang sacrifice, the zun goblet holding the dark liquid is offered up, raw fish is placed on the zu offering table, and the grand broth is served first. This is to honour the root of food and drink. At the Xiang sacrifice, the zun goblet holding the dark liquid is offered first, and then distilled and sweet spirits are served as well; panicum and setaria millet are served first, and then rice and sorghum are offered as well. At the regular sacrifice, the grand broth is offered up, and then ample viands are served. This is to pay honour to the root but also make familiar employment.

The above passage is aimed at explicating the guiding principle of rites, which is to pay honour to the root but also make familiar employment. The ubiquitous presence of food and drink in these sacrificial rites clearly illustrates their essential role in early China’s spiritual activities. Such a central role of food and drink is confirmed by a similar yet less detailed account in the Book of Rites, where it is said that blood is used for the border sacrifice (jiao 郊), raw flesh for the great offering (da xiang 大饗), sodden flesh for sacrifices of three presentations (san xian 三獻), and roast meat for sacrifices of one presentation (yi xian 一獻).²² If anything was considered sacred in early China, it was the sacrificial rite. The border sacrifice which made an offering to Heaven (tian 天) and the great offering to the imperial ancestors surely ranked among the most solemn of ceremonies.
The fact that food and drink are an integral and essential component of sacred rites testifies to their potency of spiritual representation.

In summary, in Chinese culture food and drink are more than mundane items for bodily nourishment. As E. N. Anderson suggests, ‘As a marker of social status, ritual status, special occasions, and other social facts, food became less a source of nutrients than a means of communication.’ Regardless of whether there is a sharp contrast between the sacred and the mundane in Chinese culture, it remains true that food and drink constitute a versatile medium for bridging aspects of life and for bearing various cultural images. It is such a rich potentiality, we would like to suggest, that has been captured and extended by literary works in imperial China with nearly endless representations.

The Politics of Food and Drink as a Literary Motif

In the Romance of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo yanyi 三国演义), having finally defeated the barbarian leader Meng Huo 孟获 and brought lasting peace to the Southern regions, one final challenge stands before Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234) and his endeavour to refocus his attention on the war effort against Sima Yi 司馬懿 (179–251):

It was autumn, the ninth month of the year, when the vanguard reached the River Lu. Suddenly, thick clouds darkened the sky and fierce winds blew. Told that the troops could not cross, [Zhuge] Kongming turned to Meng Huo for advice. Meng Huo said, ‘An evil spirit has cursed this water; those who would pass must appease him by sacrifice.’ ‘What would appease the spirit?’ Kongming asked. ‘In olden times,’ Meng Huo explained, ‘when the god worked his wrath, they sacrificed forty-nine human heads—seven times seven—a black ox and a white sheep; then the winds would ease, the waters would subside, and years of plenty would follow.’

Zhuge, the protagonist of the novel and the embodiment of traditional Chinese virtues such as wisdom and compassion, is understandably reluctant to pacify the volatile spirit with live human sacrifices. He comes up with an alternative solution:

[Kongming] ordered his army cooks to slaughter oxen and horses and to compound a doughy preparation in the shape of a human head with a stuffing of beef and lamb; it was called ‘dough-head’. That night on the bank of the Lu, Kongming set up an incense stand, laid out the offerings, and lined up forty-nine lamps. He then
raised streamers high to summon lost souls and placed the dough-heads on the ground. At the third watch Kongming, wearing a gilded headdress and a cloak of crane feathers, personally officiated at the sacrifice as Dong Jue read out the text.

Although historically, the novel is probably incorrect in attributing the invention of the dough-head (mantou 麵頭) to Zhuge—the idea is first recorded in the Song dynasty text Compound Source of Matters and Facts (Shiwu jiyuan 事物紀原)\(^\text{26}\)—the portrayal of his replacement of a human sacrifice with the sacrifice of the dough-heads demonstrates the significance of food as a literary motif—one which is consciously evoked by the story to enhance the characterization of Zhuge as a humanitarian captain of war. In addition, it highlights several important cultural facts, the most important being its reflection of society’s cultural value in the emphasis of the moral superiority (and legitimacy) of the Han state, which is demarcated from the southern barbarians through the concepts of compassion and benevolence (ren 仁). Thus, although Romance is not a work that is commonly associated with food and drink, especially when compared to other classical novels such as Red Chamber, Gold, Vase, and Plum Blossom (Jinpingmei 金瓶梅) or the Scholars (Rulin waishi 儒林外史), the political importance of gastronomy to Chinese society is effectively demonstrated not only on the literary level as a powerful entity that contributes to the progress of the plot, but culturally as an important tool to distinguish the symbolic superiority of the Han culture.

Such gastronomic and culinary discourse reaffirms our reading of the role of food within the Chinese literary convention—as a concept that connotes more than straightforward carnal pleasures. We have seen that in ancient China, a perceived connection between gastronomy and morality was central to writings on food and other food-related concepts (such as the taotie). We have also suggested that such an illustration is actually dependent on the understanding that food and drink constitute the medium for cultural representation. It seems natural then, that following the legitimization of Confucianism during the Han dynasty and its subsequent politicization, the representation of food in literature also became more and more complex over time, especially since the distinctions between morality, politics, and culture became blurred to the point that ‘neither politics nor morality had its independence, and the boundary between them was not clearly determined’.\(^\text{27}\) In the rich repository of food metaphors in China’s poetic tradition since the Tang dynasty, we not only find evidence of the continuation of the ancient tradition of associating morality with the gustatory, but also
traces of the apparent expansion of this tradition—in the sense that the usage
of food imagery as a means to express a wider range of personal and cultural
politics became increasingly common. Examples include Li Shangyin’s 李商隱
(c. 812–858) three interlinked and inter-implicated poems—‘The Teasing of the
Cherry by a Hundred Fruits’ (Bai guo chao yingtao 百果嘲櫻桃), ‘The Response
of the Cherry’ (Yingtao da 櫻桃答) and ‘Teasing the Cherry’ (Chao yingtao 嘲櫻
tao)—in which the conventional application of food as an allegory to beauty
(aesthetics) is powerfully combined with the poet’s observation of contemporary
corruption and moral degradation, which interjects a political dimension to the
overall message of the poems,28 and the image of the rotten fruit in many of Du
Fu’s poems, which serves as a parallel reflection of the physical and psychologi-
cal decline of the elderly poet, who lived in poverty and drifted from place to
place.29 Besides reaffirming China’s rich tradition of interleaving morality, along
with its expanding implications, in the literary presentation of food, such evoca-
tions also implicate the Imperial Chinese writers’ expanding awareness of the
significance of the subject of food as a medium for the conveyance of issues of
more wider ranging and profound social phenomena.

It should, however, be noted that the transcendence of food from physical
nourishment to literary device, on which various moral, cultural, and political
associations are formulated, is observable beyond the contextual characteristics
of a text. For instance, in the Notes from Chouchi (Chouchi biji 仇池筆記), we
find the following poem concerning a steamed pork dish that is allegedly composed
by a monk dressed in purple (Ziyi shi 紫衣師):

Its snout is long and its coat is short,
With a bit of fat it is raised on mountainous herbs;
It is wrapped in a layer of banana leaf and steamed,
When cooked it is eaten with an apricot sauce;
Its colour is red and it is served on a golden plate,
Its texture is soft enough to be picked apart by jade
chopsticks;
To compare it to a dish of lamb,
The lamb is as fitting as the rattan.30

Regardless of the authenticity of the story, the fact that the topic of food is
approached in such a playful manner illustrates the extent to which writers
began to look to food, as both a type of sustenance and an art form, for various
literary articulations. Moreover, such a poetic approach to both the process of
eating and the preparation for the meal shows a new appreciation of food as
delightful and worthy of celebration—an important psychological development that paves way not only for the expressiveness of such poems on food by Su Shi and Lu You 陸游 (1125–1210), but also for the legitimization of recipe writing as an art form, in anticipation of the emergence and popularity of such texts as Yuan Mei’s 袁枚 (1716–1797) *The Recipes from the Sui Garden* (*Suiyuan shidan* 隨園食單). To borrow Ye Jiaying’s 葉嘉瑩 comment on the ‘wine poems’ of Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427)—that beyond the poet’s personal experience and philosophies on life they also embody ‘the historical belief and cultural values of ancient China’³¹—there may indeed be no better way to appreciate the politics of Chinese writings than through the subject of gastronomy.

Having observed a number of ways that Chinese literature deals with the theme of food, there is one rational question that needs to be answered: Why food? According to Michel Jeanneret:

> We live in a divided world, a world in which physical and mental pleasures are compartmentalized and ordered into a hierarchy: they either conflict with each other or are mutually exclusive. All sorts of ideological barriers exist between sense and the senses, between intellectual activity and the consumption of natural produce … the banquet is the one thing that overcomes this division and allows for the reconciliation of opposites … The combination of words and food in a convivial scene gives rise to a special moment when thought and the senses enhance rather than just tolerate each other.³²

Although the scope of Jeanneret’s research focuses on the European Renaissance, his statement nevertheless reflects a universal truth that fittingly summarizes the attraction of food to the Chinese writers, as well as the development of their fascination with the interrelationship between thought and the senses. This is especially the case given that food and drink in Chinese culture traverse the mundane and the solemn and bridge natural desire and cultural embellishment. Besides the tradition that is invested in the moral implications of food, through writing about the acts of eating and drinking, it becomes possible for the writer’s personal experiences to transcend the microscopic level to reflect a greater cultural ideology shared by society. By charting the way the motif of food reveals and reflects such cultural, social, and political ideologies, as well as the strategy behind the individual authors’ engagement and interaction with gastronomy and its literary implications, the potential of Chinese food literature not only holds the key to the long tradition of development of nutrition and culinary practice in ancient China, but more importantly, is reflective of the way Chinese society saw and interpreted the world throughout the imperial dynasties and up through modern times.
Chinese Food Literature through the Imperial Dynasties

The aim of this volume is to consider the cultural, social, and personal significance of the subject of food in imperial Chinese literature. We hope to do this by exploring the ways these themes are presented in the writings of different periods and by authors of dissimilar backgrounds, in order to illuminate some of the many important implications of literary representations of the trope of gastronomy.

If the evocation of food and drink in ancient Chinese literature holds special significance in the embodiment of moralistic ideals, then wine, as an intoxicating agent and a somewhat extravagant commodity, brings a unique perspective to this intrinsic relationship between gastronomy, literature, and Chinese morality. In ‘From Conservatism to Romanticism: Wine and Prose-Writing from Pre-Qin to Jin’, Tak Kam Chan draws our attention to the unique place of wine within the trope of food literature by charting the changing prosaic conceptualization of this substance from the pre-Qin era to Wei-Jin period. By observing the way wine in Pre-Qin prose is mostly alluded to in a restrictive manner and in association with the aristocracy’s sacrificial rites and social feasts, Chan notes the existence of a clear moral censure of over-drinking, which changed in Han times when wine drinking became a common activity among the literati class. Although moral censure retained its influence throughout this transition, wine increasingly took up the role in poetry as an intensifier of sensation or a reliever of sorrow and worry. The positive perception of wine culminated in its synonymity with spiritual independence in the Wei-Jin era.

In ‘The Morality of Drunkenness in Chinese Literature of the Third Century CE’, Nicholas Morrow Williams follows up Chan’s scholarship and examines the textual representation of wine during the Wei-Jin era. Unlike Chan’s macroscopic registration of the transformative evocation of wine through several centuries of Chinese prose, Williams microscopically considers the polarizing approaches to alcohol by the Han dynasty Daoist and Confucian traditions and focuses upon the contention between the former’s celebration of drunkenness and the latter’s prohibitive stance. He draws our attention to the fact that writers of the third century CE not only recognized but endeavoured to resolve this dilemma in their writings. For example, in spite of their different political agendas and affiliations, representative figures from the period, ranging from Cao Cao (155–220) to Ruan Ji (210–263) to Liu Ling (221–300), all, to different extents, endeavoured to make sense of these two extreme interpretations of wine in their writings and displayed the predilection to debate the issue.
with moralizing overtones. By paying close attention to their writings, Williams examines the political, social, and philosophical ramifications that are achieved by these writers in their literary representation of drunkenness and considers their significance in terms of establishing a literary convention for the integration of the ‘authenticity and spontaneity of drunkenness into their everyday lives and convictions’.

In ‘Making Poetry with Alcohol: Wine-Consumption in Tao Qian, Li Bai, and Su Shi’, Charles Kwong demonstrates the significance of the wine eulogy in the poetic works of Tao Qian, Li Bai 李白 (701–762) and Su Shi. Noting the importance of wine as an ancient poetic motif in China’s literary tradition, Kwong begins his argument by examining the way the various associative dimensions of wine came to their first apex of expression in the poetry of Tao Qian. As the masters of Tang poetry continued to develop existing themes of wine in relation to various facets of literati life, the extraordinary quality and flavour of Li Bai’s poems, with celestial ingredients and seasonings, exemplified another height of the literary representation of wine. Song poetry and beyond took on a ‘popular turn’, featuring more wine drinking among the common folk. The usage of wine as a means of social criticism by these poets also received broader attention. The symbolic use of wine became more restricted in ci词 poetry and was largely limited to associations with negative feelings such as sadness or frustration. Yet there was a minority of song lyrics marked with tones of ‘alcoholic vitality’, especially in the works of Su Shi. Kwong’s study demonstrates how certain aspects of wine, such as its use as a social catalyst, as an intensifier of emotions, and as an anaesthetic, have largely remained constant and how other aspects have been transformed through the enlightening experiences of philosophy and art.

In ‘The Interplay of Social and Literary History: Tea in the Poetry of the Middle Historical Period’, the historical and social importance of drink in Chinese literature is once again at the centre of investigation; but instead of wine, Ronald Egan considers the importance of tea in China’s poetic tradition and proposes the possibility of using it as a means to gain a better understanding of the economic, cultural, and political changes that took place within the Tang-Song transition. By juxtaposing such changes with the dissimilar treatments of tea in the poetries of these two periods, Ronald Egan notes a similar change in the poetic expressiveness of tea and contemplates its potential as a means to gauge society’s changing attitude toward leisure and connoisseurship. Because like alcohol, tea is a beverage that is not only popular in China but also appeals to generations of writers as a subject of poetic expression, through paying close attention to the differences of tone in the poetic elucidation of tea in the Tang-Song period and
by charting its parallel migration from the confinement of the monasteries to the urban setting, Egan’s study importantly highlights the interest in food as a poetic motif during the Tang and the Song dynasties and reminds us once more of the implicit connection between this subject and society at large.

As food became more and more of an item associated with luxury and extravagance after the Song dynasty, its literary evocation also gained a different connotation in its reflection of this social change. In ‘The Obsessive Gourmet: Zhang Dai on Food and Drink’, Duncan M. Campbell contributes to our understanding of this growing culture of connoisseurship with a fascinating discussion of the Ming dynasty essayist Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1684?) and his philosophies of diet and food. Although Zhang’s most representative work in this area, Laotao ji 老饕集, is no longer extant, by referencing his other food-related writings such as an epistolary on Zhang Donggu 張東谷 and the preface to Laotao ji (which has fortunately survived), Campbell is not only able to determine Zhang’s stance on gastronomy and trace a correlation between his taste in food and his upbringing and outlook on life, but more importantly to consider the significance of food writing in relation to historicity. As Campbell surmises, ‘Zhang Dai’s engagement in this discourse of food and eating, and his compilation of his book of recipes, should best be understood in terms of a specific moment in time, the late Ming dynasty.’ It is through such a perspective that Campbell acutely demonstrates an existing interrelationship between food and society in which, as shown by Zhang’s presentation of food, gastronomy effectively becomes a reflective paradigm of the literati’s social concerns. Campbell’s conclusive statement concerning the importance of food as ‘a highly moralized [discourse] that had implications of the most serious kind about political legitimacy and historical continuity’ further emphasizes the importance of food literature during this period, as evidenced on both the micro level of the individual and the macro level of how the extant societal and cultural discourse on food is interpreted through the act of writing.

Along similar veins, Isaac Yue, in ‘Tasting the Lotus: Food, Drink and the Objectification of the Female Body in Gold, Vase, and Plum Blossom’, looks at the interconnection between literary conception and the implications of gastronomy as manifested in late Ming society. Instead of approaching the subject from a historical and social perspective and contemplating the textual representation of food as reflective of such cultural paradigms, Yue concentrates on the materialization of this discourse in the novel tradition and examines the significance of the motif of food in Gold, Vase, and Plum Blossom—an important novel that is considered by C. T. Hsia to be full of ‘contradictory moral and religious assumptions’ that are typical of the late Ming period. In examining this text that is
primarily conceived of in terms of its sexual politics and eroticism, and appreciated by critics such as Martin W. Huang for its ‘ramifications of private desires and how people are simultaneously driven and consumed by these desires’, Yue argues for the importance of food in the work as not only illustrative of the dining habits of late Ming society, but as a strategic literary theme that is consciously intended by the author to complement the overt sexual politics of the novel. His study of the linguistic and contextual evocation of food in the novel, beside shedding light on the self-positioning of the work within the tradition of food literature in China, also highlights the way this tradition is evoked/ manipulated by the author as a means to establish the social position of women as well as the overall gender dynamics of the text.

Next we move from one canonical novel to another, in ‘Eating and Drinking in a Red Chambered Dream’, Louise Edwards examines the significance of gastronomy in the most celebrated novel in imperial China, The Dream of the Red Chamber by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹. The premise of Edwards’s argument concerns the way food and drink are entwined with the key messages of the novel—the tragedy of impermanence and the impossibility of maintaining purity in an impure world—and the evocation of these tropes delineate the boundaries between purity and profanity. For example, while alcohol consumption within the Prospect Garden (Daguan yuan 大觀園) by pure, young women brings no ill effect and is in fact likened to a magical fairy party, excessive drinking outside of the garden results in disaster. Similarly, although a separate kitchen is set up to specially serve the residents of the Prospect Garden so as to protect the purity inside, there is no stopping the entry of outside food which signals the polluting effect of the profane world outside. By considering the ways in which such examples from the novel bear testimony to the close relationship between food and ethical values, Edwards reveals the extent to which the concept of eating and drinking is used by Cao to set up the gradual and inevitable pollution of the purity of the Prospect Garden by the profane world outside.

In David Knechtges’ opinion, the subject of food in Chinese literature is ‘as inexhaustible as the vast variety of Chinese cuisine’. By investigating textual representations of food in relation to the agendas of the writers, the types of text in which they appear, and the context under which nourishment is evoked as a literary motif, it is hoped that this project will not only contribute to the understanding of the cultural and social significance of food in the Chinese literary tradition, but also lead to other studies of this kind and encourage more discussion on China’s rich and unique gastronomic tradition from a literary perspective.
Chapter 1

5. Some scholars, however, remain unconvinced by the equivalence of taotie and the beast-like motif on the bronzes. Wang Tao, for example, points out that while the beast-like motif was already common in Shang bronzes, taotie as a literary term appeared relatively late in Zhou. He suggests that since the meaning of the term taotie was not necessarily the original meaning for the Shang people, it is better to use the term ‘two-eyed motif’ instead of the taotie when referring to the motif on the bronzes. For more information, see Wang Tao, ‘A Textual Investigation of the Taotie’, in Ritual Bronzes, 102–18.
8. Because the taotie is commonly featured as a decorative pattern of the tripods (ding 鼎) since the Shang era, Sarah Allan theorizes that a connection is eventually forged between its insatiable greed and the motif of eating for which the tripod is designed. For more information, see Sarah Allan, The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China (New York: SUNY Press, 1991), 145–48.
9. Du Fu’s critique is clearly indicated by the last line of the poem, which compares a thief who tries to pretend to be otherwise to the appetite of the taotie: ‘A thief in spite of fancy attires, like a feasting taotie’ 衣冠兼盜賊，饕餮用斯須.


25. Ibid., 1084.

26. Several decades before the time of Zhuge, a type of food called the ‘steamed cake’ (*zhengbing* 蒸餅), which bears very close resemblance to the dough-head, has already been documented by Liu Xi 劉熙. Zhuge, therefore, is unlikely to have been the first person to come up with this idea. See Liu Xi 劉熙, *Shiming* 釋名, in *Zhongguo gudai gongjushu congbian* 中國古代工具書叢編 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1999), 20.


33. Its ubiquitous omission in *The Travels of Marco Polo*, for example, is one of the most often cited reasons for critics to doubt the authenticity of the work.

35. Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center), 93.


### Chapter 2

1. Liu Xiang 劉向, *Zhanguo ce 戰國策* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), ‘Wei ce 魏策二’, 846–7. This story of Yu 禹 is cited by the ruler of Lu 鲁 to exhort King Hui of Wei 魏惠王 during a banquet with other feudal lords at Fantai 范台.


5. Ibid., 59; quotation from the ‘Zihan 子罕 chapter in *The Analects*.


7. Ibid., 3.685.


18. For instance, Zou Yang’s ‘Wine fu’ briefly states the various purposes of drinking according to the drinkers’ social status: ‘The populace drink for merriment; gentlemen drink for rites’ 庶民以為歡，君子以為禮. See Zou Yang 鄒陽, ‘Jiu fu’ 酒賦, in
Quan Hanfu jiaozhu 全漢賦校注, ed. Fei Zhen’gang 費振剛 (Guangzhou: Guangdong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005), 54.

19. Cao Zhi’s ‘Wine fu’ describes officials and common folk sharing merriment in drinking irrespective of social status: at such moments ‘inferior people forget their humbleness, destitute ones forget their poverty’. See Zhao Youwen 趙幼文, Cao Zhi jì jiaozhu 曹植集校注 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984), 125.

20. Partly as a result of frequent drinking, Cao Zhi finally lost his father’s trust, and the right to succession was conferred on his elder brother Cao Pi 曹丕. Cao Zhi paid a heavy political price partly for the love of wine.

21. ‘Duanjiu jie’ 斷酒戒 can be found in juan 72, ‘Shiwu bu’ 食物部, in Yiwen leiju 藝文類聚, ed. Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua, 1973), 1250–1. Allusions are cited to support the sacredness of wine. ‘Springs of sweet water gushed in primeval times’ 體泉涌於上世 suggests that Nature provides ample resources for man to make wine, while ‘the Plough shines brighter than all other stars’ 懸象煥乎列星 implies that the asterism is named to exalt drinking (a plough for dipping wine). ‘He who killed the serpent [after getting drunk] rose to power’ 斷蛇者以興霸 refers to Liu Bang 劉邦 slaying a white serpent and starting an uprising after he got drunk. The source for ‘he who settled disputes [while intoxicated] left his good name to posterity’ 折獄者以流聲 is uncertain, but possibly refers to the early Han statesman Cao Shen 曹参 (?–190 BCE), who loved drinking and ruled the country in a simple way, thus earning himself a good name.


28. For example, the early Tang writer Wang Ji 王績 wrote a ‘Biography of Mr. Five Decalitres’ (Wudou xiansheng zhuan 五斗先生傳) modelled on Tao Yuanming’s prototype, and a piece entitled ‘Drunkenland’ 醉鄉記. In ‘Drunkenland’, he mentions an imaginary place without seasonal changes or land elevations; different from the hardworking peasants in Peach Blossom Spring, its inhabitants are more like a group of drunkards who indulge in drinking all day without worldly concerns, living freely and easily. See Wang Ji, Wang Wugong wenji 王無功文集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 181–2.

Chapter 3

2. I will generally translate jiu 酒 as ‘wine’ in this chapter in the interest of euphony, even though ‘ale’ would be a more accurate description of what Chinese people were actually drinking in this period. On the other hand, note that ‘wine’ in common English can be used to refer to a generic term for alcoholic drinks, not merely grape wine, e.g. ‘rice wine’ or ‘plum wine’. Moreover, grape wine was one of the beverages consumed by the Chinese even as early as the third century; see David R. Knechtges, ‘Gradually Entering the Realm of Delight: Food and Drink in Early Medieval China’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 117 (1997), 237.

3. Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 説文解字注 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2007), 14B.1296a. According to Duan Yucai’s commentary, Xu Shen has drawn his retelling of the origins of wine from the Warring States text *Shiben* 世本.


5. Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢, ed., *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), 72.1247. The *Shenyi jing* was originally attributed to Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154–93 BCE) but probably dates in fact to the Six Dynasties.

6. Li Bai 李白, ‘Sharing a Drink Beneath the Moon’ 月下獨酌, in *Li Bai ji jiaozhu* 李白集校 注, ed. Qu Tuiyuan 瞿暾園 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 23.1332.


12. Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 has an interesting discussion of prohibitions of drinking in Chinese history: ‘Jiu jin’ 酒禁, in *Ri zhi lu* [ji shi] 日知錄集釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 28.15a–17b. Like American Prohibition, these Chinese efforts were never entirely successful.

13. See Yan Kejun 嚴可均, ‘Quan Hou Han wen’ 全後漢文, 83.8–9, in *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958). Note that Yan’s text is a reconstruction from *Yiwen leiju* 72.1251 and Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 70.2273, n. 1. Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 12.372, n. 1, also quotes a speech by Kong Rong that overlaps with part of the letter.

14. Recalling *Mao shi*, Ode 14: ‘Once I have seen him, / Once I have met him, / My heart will then be calm’ 亦既見止、亦既覩止、我心則降.
15. This section is preserved only in the *Yiwen leiju*. The transition from this section to the next seems awkward and suggests textual instability.


17. This section is preserved in the *Hou Han shu* but not in the *Yiwen leiju* text.

18. The Wine Stars form a three-star constellation in Leo (consisting of the stars ω, φ, and χ). It is also known as the Wine Banner (jiu qi旗) and that is in fact the *Yiwen leiju* variant. We have already discussed the Wine Spring above.

19. This seems to have been a common proverb derived loosely from the *Analects*, which state that Confucius had a high tolerance for alcohol and was never drunk (e.g. 9/16). Cf. *Kong congzi* 孔粲子 (*Congshu jicheng*, v. 517), B.87: ‘The thousand cups of Yao and Shun, the hundred goblets of Confucius’ 堯舜千鍾，孔子百觚, identifying the phrases as an ‘old proverb’ 遺諺. This text was traditionally attributed to Kong Fu孔肅 (c. 264–208 BCE), but was probably compiled later.


21. A servant rescued the King of Zhao from captivity in Yan by a clever intrigue. See Sima, *Shi ji*, 89.2576–2577 and Ban Gu 班固, *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 32.1833–1834. Like the previous example, it was a case of boldness instilled by drinking. In fact alcohol does not appear in the *Shi ji* or *Han shu* records of the incident.


23. A.k.a. Yuan Ang 愛盎 (?–148 BCE). An officer who owed Yuan a favour saved him from the insurgent Prince of Wu’s army by offering the soldiers two shi 石 of strong wine, and thereby incapacitating them. See Sima, *Shi ji*, 101.2743

24. Yu Dingguo 于定國 (?–40 BCE) was renowned for his fair judgments as a chamberlain for law enforcement, and was especially judicious after drinking to excess.

25. Liu Bang refused to see Li Shiji 李世濟 (?–203 BCE), thinking he was a Confucian scholar, until Li declared himself a ‘drinker of Gaoyang’ and was received as a follower of Liu Bang, whom he then helped to conquer China. See Sima, *Shi ji*, 97.2704.

26. This line alludes to the famous speech of the fisherman criticizing Qu Yuan 屈原, ‘Yufu’ 漁父, in *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 7.179–180: ‘The sage does not let himself get stuck in things, but can move along with the world. All the people in the world are dirty, so why not stir up their muck, and raise some waves? The masses are all drunk, so why not feed off the dregs, and drink up the light wine?’ 聖人不凝滞於物，而能與世推移。世人皆濁，而揚其波？紅人皆醉，何不舖其糟而飲其醴。

27. This section is preserved in both the *Hou Han shu* and *Yiwen leiju* texts with some variants.

28. See Wu Yun 吳雲, ed., *Jian'an qizi ji jiaozhu* 建安七子集校注 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2005), 93, n. 23.


32. See Yan Kejun, ‘Quan Jin wen’, 85.2b–3a. For more on Ling ale, see Knechtges, ‘Gradually Entering the Realm of Delight’, 238.

33. For general discussions of the Seven Worthies, see Donald Holzman, ‘Les Septs Sages de la Forêt des Bambous et la société de leur temps’, *T’oung Pao*, 44 (1956), 317–46; and He Qimin 何啟民, *Zhulin qixian yanjiu* 竹林七賢研究 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1966).

34. On nonconformity, see Mather, ‘The Controversy Over Conformity and Naturalness in the Six Dynasties’.


36. Henry Reeve, trans., *Democracy in America* (New York: Langley, 1840), 2.98. Cf. Nylan (25): ‘a term coined by the political commentator Alexis de Tocqueville that denotes the freedom of the individual to operate in a self-directed, self-contained, and comparatively unrestrained fashion, without undue government interference or institutional control (including control by the family).’


39. The adoptive relationship of these insects first appears in *Mao shi*, Ode 196, but there is an elaboration in Yang Xiong’s *Fayan*: ‘The moth larvae were hiding, when they met the wasp, who encouraged them saying: ‘Be like me! Be like me!’ So after a time they begin to resemble the wasp in fact. So swiftly did the seventy disciples come to resemble Confucius’ 烏孫之子殞而逢蝶蛻，祝之曰：類我，類我。久則肖之矣。連倉，七十子之肖仲尼也. See *Fayan yishu* 法言義疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 1.9.


41. Modern entomologists know that the wasp actually uses them as food, casting a new satirical hue on the traditional allegory.

42. Liu, *Shishuo xinyu*, 23.51.

43. Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (211–265), who did not actually assume the title of emperor during his lifetime, but posthumously after his son Sima Yan 司馬炎 (236–90) established the Jin as Emperor Wu.

44. Over 16 gallons.

45. Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 49.1360–61. Donald Holzman discusses these in *Poetry and Politics*, 48–9, but downplays the significance of alcohol in the anecdotes.


49. Ibid., 23/7.

50. See Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu 魏籍集校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 161–92.


52. On the particular place of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang relative to *xuanxue*, see Yu Dunkang 余敦康, *Wei jin xuanxue shi* 魏晉玄學史 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2004), 299–324.


54. Ibid., 370–4. Bao Jingyan’s doctrines are known only from chapter 49 of the *Baopuzi* 抱朴子, which critiques them.


56. An intriguing variant has *da* 達 for *yi* 達. There are all kinds of possible interpretations of this line, including Hightower’s ‘To strengthen my resolve to leave this world’ (‘T’ao Ch’ien’s “Drinking Wine” Poems’, in *Wen-lin* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968], 14), but I prefer this reading simply because it is challenging, one of those surprising twists that occur frequently in Tao’s poetry.

57. No. 7 in the series. See Lu Qinli 達欽立, *Tao Yuanming ji* 陶淵明集 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 90.

58. As Wang Yao points out, it was Tao Qian’s special contribution to write drinking into his poetry, unlike the earlier poets who had kept it mostly separate. See ‘Wenren yu jiu’, 45.


**Chapter 4**

1. The Chinese term *jiu* 酒, translated as ‘wine’ for convenience, is usually not grape wine but an alcoholic drink made from one of a number of fruits or grains; see references to it in Kwang-chih Chang, ed., *Food in Chinese Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

2. For instance, in Poem 3 wine serves as an anaesthetic ‘to still the heart’s pain’ of homesickness and longing; in Poem 191 the sad feelings themselves are figuratively likened to the physiological effects of drunkenness: ‘The [people’s] hearts are worried like a bad hangover’. See also Poems 65 and 132.

3. By Liu Yangzhong’s 劉揚忠 count, 48 of the 305 poems in *Shi jing* (16%) are related to wine: 9 of 160 (5%) in ‘Airs of the States’, 22 of 74 (30%) in the ‘Minor Odes’, 10 of 31 (32%) in the ‘Major Odes’, and 7 of 40 (18%) in the ‘Hymns’. See his *Shi yu jiu* 詩與酒 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1994), 33.
4. Joseph Allen notes that ‘wine is mentioned four times more often in “The Minor Odes” than in the rest of the collection. And rather than the sombre libations of the ancestral rituals [seen in the “Hymns”], it is boisterous drinking that celebrates the here and now: “Set out your dishes and meat-stands, / Drink wine to your fill; / All you brothers are here together, / Peaceful, happy, and mild.” (164)’ See Arthur Waley, trans., The Book of Songs, ed. Joseph R. Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 131. Note that Liu’s figures and Allen’s general statement do not exactly match each other.

5. A similar use of wine can be found in the ‘Major Odes’, e.g. Poem 239.

6. See also Poems 161 and 164.

7. For instance, he makes a formal ‘Announcement against Drinking’ 酒誡 to Yin subjects in the former Shang capital area, and a similar exhortation to King Cheng 成王 in ‘No Idle Comfort’ 無逸. Indeed, even the deposed King Zhou’s 紂 elder brother and senior adviser purportedly admit to the alcoholic overindulgence and dissolution of the Yin kings in ‘Viscount of Wei’ 微子.

8. Suffice it to quote a saying from Proverbs 20.1 in The Old Testament: ‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.’ Note that this does not entail teetotalism; Jesus himself drank wine, which is also part of the sacrament.


10. See also D. C. Lau, trans., Mencius (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003), 4B.20, 7B.34.

11. See also Chapters 53 and 63.


13. The use of wine to lure back dead spirits in ‘Zhao hun’ 招魂 and ‘Da zhao’ 大招 is derived from its sacrificial use; see ‘Donghuang Taiyi’ 東皇太一 and ‘Dong jun’ 東君 in the Nine Songs 九歌, in Jin Kaicheng, Dong Hongli and Gao Luming 金開誠、董洪利、高路明, Qu Yuan ji jiaozhu 屈原集校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 1.187–95, 255–65.

14. The authorship of ‘Yu fu’ is a matter of dispute, but the force of the poet’s voice remains unaffected. Qu Yuan does seem to stay sober, for instead of mentioning wine in ‘Li Sao’ 離騷, he prefers to be loaded with fragrant plants.

15. See, for instance, the late Han ‘Three Poems to Su Wu’ 蘇武三首 attributed to Li Ling 李陵 (?–74 BCE): ‘I only have this full jar of wine, / To seal a close bond with you.’ 獨有盈觴酒，與子結緕縈.

16. For a discussion of the carpe diem theme in the Han yuefu poems, see Anne Birrell, Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1993), 78–93. The carpe diem theme has been expressed before in the Shi jing, in Ode 115 ‘On the Mountain is Thorn-Elm’ 山有樫; see also Ode 217 ‘Pointed is the Cap’ 頭弁.

17. For some other examples, see ‘Xianghe geci, shanzai xing (guci)’ 相和歌辭·善哉行 (古辭), in Yuefu shiji 楯府詩集, ed. Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 2.535–6; ‘Gushi shijiu shou’, No. 3 古詩十九首其三; Ruan Yu’s 阮瑀 ‘Qi ai shì’ 七哀詩, Jian’an qizi ji 建安七子集, ed. Yu Shaochu 俞紹初 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), 160.
20. ‘Congjun shi wu shou’, No. 1 從軍詩五首其一, in Jian’an qizi ji 慶宣帝行幸集, 90.
21. For instance, Ruan Ji regularly stays drunk to protect himself and to avoid expressing political opinions; see his biography in Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., Jin shu 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 5.1360.
24. For instance, Bao Zhao 畢卓, who often neglected his official duties because of drinking, says that ‘holding a wine cup in my right hand and a crab’s pincer in my left will suffice for spending the rest of my life’; in Jin shu, 5.1381.
25. One critic has suggested that over forty per cent of Tao's poems are related to wine; see Lu Kebing 魯克兵, Zhizhuo yu xiaoyao—Tao Yuanming yinjiu shiwen de shennme guanzhao 昭篤與霞霙——陶淵明飲酒詩文的審美觀照 (Hefei: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2009), 82. However, the first editor of Tao's works, Xiao Tong, states in his ‘Preface to Tao Yuanming’s Collected Works’ 陶淵明集序 that ultimately, the poet’s ‘spirit lies not in wine’.
27. Routinely translated as ‘drunk’ in English due to the lack of a semantic equivalent, the word 醉 can range from a mildly tipsy state to a total loss of consciousness.
29. ‘Zashi shier shou’, No. 5 雜詩十二首其五 and ‘Gan shi buyu fu’ 感士不遇賦; in Gong (1996), 296, 365.
32. For instance, Bao Zhao writes of wine as a ‘sealant’ of friendship in ‘Dai zhi chao fei’ 代稚朝飛, and wine also features in occasional and trivial contexts in the palace-style poetry of the Southern Dynasties.
34. See, for instance, her ‘Pusa man’ (feng rou ri bo Chun you zao) 婆薩蠻·風柔日薄春猶早, in Quan Song ci 全宋詞 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 2.927 and ‘Su zhongqing’ (ye lai chen zui xie zhuang chi) 訴衷情·夜來沈醉卸妝遲, in Quan Song ci, 2.930.
35. See Li Bai’s ‘Jinling yu zhuxian song Quan Shiyi Zhaoyi xu’ 金陵與諸賢送惱十一昭夷序, in Quan Tang wen 全唐文, ed. Dong Gao 諭等 et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 2.1566, where he calls himself an ‘elderly banished immortal’.

36. Of course, as seen in Wang Changling’s ‘frontier poems’ (e.g. ‘Congjun xing qi shou’ 從軍行七首, in Quan Tang shi 全唐詩 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960], 4.1443) show, wine is not a necessary ingredient in heroic poetry.

37. See also Wang Wei’s ‘Wangchuan xianju zeng Pei xiucai di’ 王川仙居增裴秀才迪, in Quan Tang shi, 6.1858.

38. See respectively ‘Qiupu Songs’, No. 15 秋浦歌其十五 and ‘Mengyou Tianmu yin liubie’ 梦游天姥吟留别; in Quan Tang shi, 5.1723 and 5.1779.

39. For another classic example, see ‘Duzuo Jingtingshan’ 道坐靖亭山, in Quan Tang shi, 6.1858.

40. Examples abound, e.g. ‘Zi qian’ 自遣, ‘Kezhong xing’ 客中行和 ‘Xinglu nan’ 行路难; in Quan Tang shi, 6.1858, 6.1842, and 6.1684.

41. Examples are too numerous to reckon in detail, but see for instance Du Fu’s ‘Deng gao’ 登高, in Quan Tang shi, 7.2467; Li Shangyin’s ‘Fengyu’ 風雨, in Quan Tang shi, 16.6155; Du Fu’s ‘Ke zhi’ 客至, in Quan Tang shi, 7.2438; Bai Juyi’s ‘Wen Liu Shijiu’ 閻劉十九, in Quan Tang shi, 13.4900; Sikong Shu’s ‘司空曙’ 云阳馆与韩绅宿别, in Quan Tang shi, 9.3317; Li Bai’s ‘Kezhong xing’; Dai Shulun’s ‘戴叔伦 之江乡故人偶集客舍, in Quan Tang shi, 9.3073; Li Bai’s ‘Zeng Meng Haoran’ 孟浩然, in Quan Tang shi, 5.1731; Li Bai’s ‘Zi qian’ respectively. Some poets also mention wine in the context of pleasure in entertainment quarters, e.g. Li Bai’s ‘Shaonian xing’ 少年行, in Quan Tang shi, 5.1708; and Du Mu’s ‘Shouqian’ 送钱, in Quan Tang shi, 16.5998.

42. See Du Fu’s ‘Zi jing fu Fengxianxian yonghuai wubai zi’ 自京赴奉先詠懷五百字, in Quan Tang shi, 7.2265–6; and Du Mu’s ‘Zengbie er shou’, No. 2 聘别二首 (其二), in Quan Tang shi, 6.15988.

43. Respectively Ouyang Xiu’s ‘Ti Chuzhou Zuiwengting’ 题滁州醉翁亭, in Ouyang Xiu shiwen ji jiaojian, waiji 歐陽修詩文集校箋·外集, ed. Hong Benjian 洪本建 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), 3.1350; Su Shi’s ‘Shieryue ershiba, meng’en zeshou jianxiao shuibu yuanwailang Huangzhuo tuanlian fushi, fuyong qianyuan er shou’, 謝安歸來·贈別二首 (其一), in Su Shi shiji 蘇軾詩集, ed. Wang Wen’gao 王文浩 (Beijing; Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 3.1005; Lu You’s ‘Zuihou caoshu geshi xizuo’ 醉後草書歌詩戲作, in Lu You ji: Jianman shigao 陸游集·劍南詩稿 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), 1.120; and He Jingming’s ‘Wu Wei Jiangshantu ge’ 吳偉江山圖歌, in Ming shi zong 明詩綜, ed. Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 3.1528.

44. The three excerpts are taken from poems entitled ‘Bie sui’ 别歲, ‘Zhengyue ershiri yu Pan, Guo ersheng chujiao xunchun, huji qianyuan shiri tongzhi Nüwangcheng zuoshi, nai he qianyun’ 正月二十日與潘、郭生出郊尋春，忽記去年是日同至女王城作詩，乃和前韻，和 ‘Xin qiao’ 西新橋; in Su Shi shiji, 1.160, 4.1105 and 7.2199 respectively. For some other examples by Song poets, see also Zhang Lei’s ‘Tianja san shou’ 田家三首, in Quan Song shi 全宋詩 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1991–1998),
20.13124; Huihong’s 惠洪 ‘Chuxia si shou’, No. 2 初夏四首（其二）, in Quan Song shi, 23.15306; and Lu You’s ‘You Shanxi cun’ 遊山西村, in Lu You ji, 1.29, etc.

45. For some poetic examples of social criticism through wine imagery, see, for instance, Mei Yaochen’s 梅堯臣 ‘Cunhao’ 村豪, in Mei Yaochen shixuan 梅堯臣詩選, ed. Zhu Dongrun 朱東潤 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1980), 122; Zhang Shunmin’s 張舜民 ‘Da mai’ 打麥, in Quan Song shi, 14.9670–1; and Liu Kezhuang’s 劉克莊 ‘Kuhan xing’ 軾寒行, in Quan Song shi, 58.36256–7.

46. Some traditional critics have considered ‘farmers’ language’ 田家語 unworthy of poetic writing, an attitude that stubbornly lingered as late as the Qing, as criticism of Tao Qian’s ‘vulgarisms’ attest. See Mao Xianshu’s and Wang Fuzhi’s remarks collected in Tao Yuanming yanjiu ziliao huibian 陶淵明研究資料彙編, eds. Department of Chinese, Peking University and Beijing Normal University (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 1.178–9, 1.184. Since Song times, however, more and more poets have written on farming subjects, often with poem titles including the term 䊥.

47. See, for instance, Li Yu’s 李煜 ‘Wu ye ti: linhua xieliao chunhong’ 烏夜啼·林花謝了春紅, in Quan Tang Wudai ci 全唐五代詞 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), 1.750; Feng Yansi’s 馮延巳 ‘Que ta zhi: shuidao xianqing paozhi jiu’ 釀踏枝·誰道閒情拗取久, in Quan Tang Wudai ci , 1.650; Yan Jidao’s 晏幾道 ‘Lin jiang xian: menghou loutai gaosuo’ 臨江仙·夢後樓台高罷, in Quan Song ci, 1.221; and Li Qingzhao’s 李清照 ‘Shengsheng man’ (xunxun mimi) 生生滿 (尋尋覓覓), in Quan Song ci, 2.932.


49. In terms of line length, the traditional tune pattern for ‘Yu gezi’ 漁歌子 is 7–7–3–3–7 (27 characters); here Su Shi’s new pattern is 3–3–6–7–6 (25 characters).

50. Fang, in Jin shu, 5.1362, ‘Biography of Ruan Ji’ 潘籍傳.

51. See respectively ‘Jianglou chuidi yinjiu dazui zhong zuo’ 江樓吹笛飲酒大醉中作 and ‘Dui jiu’ 對酒; in Lu You ji, 1.245 and 3.1436.

52. Liu Yangzhong notes that Tang wine cups are smaller than those in previous times, and the term ‘shao jiu’ 酒 (distilled wine) appeared in the Tang; in Shi yu jiu, 29.

Chapter 5


2. Jiaoran, ‘Qiao Cui Shi shi jun’ 趙側石使君, Quan Tang shi, 821.9260.

3. Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., Jin shu 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 49.1381.

4. Lu Yu’s Classic of Tea identifies him as a Han dynasty immortal, see Chaqin 茶經 in Zhongguo lidai cha shu huibian 中國歷代茶書匯編, ed. Zheng Peikai 鄭培凱 and Zhu Zizhen 朱自振 (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2007), vol. 1.

5. Li Deyu 李德裕, ‘Guren ji cha’ 故人寄茶, Quan Tang shi, 475.5394. This poem has a second attribution, to the court official Cao Ye 曹邺, see Quan Tang shi, 592.6872. For the discussion here, it matters little which attribution is correct, since it is clear that the author, whoever he was, was residing in the Tang capital.
6. Adopting the textual variant chen 沉 in place of liu 流 because it makes a better parallel with the matching line.
7. Liu Yuxi 劉禹锡, ‘Xishan lanruo shicha ge’ 西山蘭若詩茶歌, Quan Tang shi, 356.4000.
8. Lu Tong 盧仝, ‘Zoubi xie Meng jianyi ji xincha’ 走筆謝孟議寄新茶, Quan Tang shi, 388.4379.
10. Ibid., 195–6.
12. Smith, Taxing Heaven’s Storehouse, 53–6.
17. The alternate title is found in the collation notes, Su Shi shiji, 10.519, n. 71. ‘Sunzhi’ is presumably another name for Master Qin in the other version of the title. The monk is unidentified.
21. Cai Xiang 蔡襄, ‘Diancha’ 點茶, Chalu 茶錄, in Zhongguo lidai chashu huibian, 1.78; cf. p. xiv, where this passage is discussed.
23. Ban Gu 班固, Han shu 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 20.2317 and 47.3247.
24. Huang Ru 黃儒, Pincha yaolu 品茶要錄, in Zhongguo lidai chashu huibian, 1, 92–3, n. 20.
25. Ban Gu, Han shu, 81.3351 and 3366.
27. Ouyang Xiu, Guitian lu, 1.1915.

30. Ouyang Xiu, ‘Ciyun zaizuo’ 次韻再作, Jushi ji, 1.7.115.

31. Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959) 92.2611. Ouyang may also be thinking of another *Shi ji* passage, in which Han Gaozu is holding seals of office in his hand, ‘fingering them’ (nongzhi 弄之) as he tried to decide who to appoint censor-in-chief, *Shi ji*, 96.2679.


**Chapter 6**

1. An early version of this paper was presented at the New Zealand International Conference on Asian Studies (12th Conference) held at Massey University, Palmerston North, 26–29 November 1997 and was subsequently included in a series of working papers published by the Asian Studies Institute of Victoria University of Wellington. I am grateful to the Director of the Institute, Stephen Epstein, for his permission to publish this revised version of the paper. More recently, I am most grateful for the enlivening conversations I have had about this paper with the food historian Allen Grieco. Circumstances have prevented me from responding, immediately, to all the comparative questions he raised after favouring me with a close reading of the paper.

2. ‘For kings, the people are Heaven, for the people, food is Heaven’, opined Li Yiji 懐飮其 (d. 203 BCE), the self-styled ‘Tippler of Gaoyang’ (Gaoyang jiutu 高陽酒徒), in the course of advising Liu Bang 劉邦 (247–195 BCE), the future founding emperor of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), for which, see Ban Gu 班固, ‘Li Lu Zhu Liu Shusun zhuan’ 鄴陵朱劉叔孫傳, *Han shu* 漢書 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1970), 5.2108. Li Yiji was later ordered boiled (peng 煪) to death by Tian Guang 田廣, the King of Qi, under suspicion of betraying him.

3. *Langhuan wenji* 琅嬛文集, ed. Yun Gao 雲告 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1985), 201. Dongpo is the great Song dynasty scholar and poet Su Shi 蘇軾 (1036–1101), a man who, as we see below, Zhang Dai believed was one of the few to have preserved ancient knowledge about the art of eating; the father of the brothers Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊, those two ancient paragons of dynastic loyalty who, by legend, chose to starve themselves to death rather than eat the grain of the Zhou dynasty (c. 1027–256 BCE) once it had replaced their own Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1028 BCE), was Lord of Solitary Bamboo (Guzhujun 孤竹君).


6. The particular vicissitudes of Zhang Dai’s age—the cataclysmic collapse of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and its replacement by the Qing (1644–1911)—meant that only one of his books was published in his lifetime, this being his Gujin yilie zhuan 古今義烈傳, published (according to its various prefaces) sometime between 1628–32; for a note on this book and its publication history, see Hu Yimin, Zhang Dai yanjiu, 206–7.

7. In particular, Sishu yu 四書遇 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1985); Kuaiyuan daogu 快園道古 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1986); Ye hang chuan 夜航船 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1987); and most importantly, Zhang Dai’s magisterial history of the Ming dynasty, Shigui shu 石臘書, in Xuxiu siku quanshu 繪修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), vols. 318, 319, and 320.

8. The preface is undated; judging from its tone, however, I believe that the work to which it is attached was compiled before the fall of the dynasty in 1644, and the consequent and drastic change in Zhang Dai’s circumstances. The prefaces to two other books by Zhang Dai particularly germane to the concerns of this paper, his Cha shi 茶史 and his Taoan zhouhoufang 陶庵肘後方, have also been preserved in this collection, the manuscripts of the books themselves, it seems, having been lost to us forever.


13. ‘Zhang Donggu haojiu’ 張東谷好酒, in Xia Xianchun and Cheng Weirong 程維榮, eds., Taoan mengyi: Xihu mengxun 陶庵夢憶：西湖夢尋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 128–9. Zhang Dai’s family were of course also Shaoxingers.

14. Zhang Dai’s ‘Author’s Preface’ (Zixu 自序) is dated 1646. To a considerable extent, his memories of the culinary indulgences of his youth must have been coloured by his experience of the extreme famine that struck his home district in 1641 and his involvement in local efforts of food relief. For a recent discussion focused particularly

15. According to the earliest sources, the ‘Five Flavours’ (wuwei 五味) were: the sour (suan 酸), the bitter (ku 苦), the pungent (xin 辛), the salty (xian 鹹), and the sweet (gan 甘).

16. The specific definition of what constituted this particular category of luxury food (bazhen 八珍) seems to have differed over time. One early Ming source, Tao Zongyi’s 陶宗儀 (1316–1403) *Chuogeng lu 輻耕錄*, published around 1366, gives: (1) *tihu* 醴腐 (a type of liquor skimmed off boiled butter); (2) *zhukeng* 脣吭 (said to be either a wine made of horse milk of perhaps of a roebuck); (3) *yetuoti* 野駝蹄 (hoof of a wild camel); (4) *luchun* 鹿唇 (lips of a deer); (5) *tuorumi* 駝乳糜 (camel curds); (6) *tianezhi* 天鵝炙 (roasted crane); (7) *ziyuijiang* 紫玉漿 (pulp of purple jade—said to be grape wine from the western regions); and (8) *xuanyujiang* 玄玉漿 (pulp of wondrous jade—said to be horse curds). Allen Grieco makes the suggestion that *zhukeng* here (number two above) is likely to be a reference to *koumiss*.

17. In another item in *Dream Memories of Taoan*, entitled ‘The Sweet Tangerines of the Chen Clan of Fanjiang’ (Fanjiang Chenshi ju 樊江陳氏橘), Zhang Dai writes: ‘The Chen clan of Fanjiang had established an orchard (guoyuan 國園) on a patch of land they had cleared, enclosing it with a fence of hardy orange tree. The staple grown here is the betel vine, the leaves of which are made into paste; the glutinous rice is used to ferment wine. This wine, fragrant in the extreme and a dull amber colour, has won the praises of all serious drinkers. The fruit and the melons produced by the orchard are steeped in honey to make comfit. More than a hundred Xie’s tangerine trees have been planted here, the fruit of which is not picked when still green or when still sour. Only once the fruit has turned orange on the trees after the first falls of frost are they picked, and even then this is done so by cutting them off the trees with their stems still attached. When such a procedure is followed, the skins of the tangerines prove thick and easy to peel, their colour is deep orange, their flesh firm, their segments easily divided, their taste sweet and fresh. The tangerines produced at Fourth Gate, Tao’s Embankment, Daoxu, even Tangxi, cannot stand comparison with them. Each year I would insist on visiting this orchard, even if it was late in the season and the tangerines were expensive and few to be had. Once I had made my purchase, I would store the tangerines in earthenware vats upon a mat of rice straw from Zhancheng or dried pine needles. Every ten days or so, whenever the straw had begun to moulder, I would have it replaced, and in this way the tangerines could be made to last until towards the end of the third month, as sweet and crisp as when first picked. The Master of Hardy Orange Township earns himself a hundred bolts of silk a year from his hundred or so tangerine trees, these trees truly living up to their sobriquet ‘Wooden Slaves’ (munu 木奴)’ (*Taoan mengxun: Xihu mengxun*, 82–3). In his annotations to this item, Xia Xianchun notes that Xie’s tangerines were produced by the descendants of Xie Xuan 謝玄 in their family orchard.
18. On Zhang Dai’s involvement in the development of this type of tea, see ‘Orchid Snow Tea’ (Lanxue cha 蘭雪茶), Taoan mengyi: Xihu mengxun, 44–5.

19. ‘Xiehui’ 蟹會, Taoan mengyi: Xihu mengxun, 132–3. For an alternative translation of this item (under the title ‘Crab Parties’), see Yang Ye, trans., Vignettes from the Late Ming: A Hsiao-p’-in Anthology (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1999), 96–7. In her How to Cook and Eat in Chinese (Penguin, 1965), Buwei Yang Chao, the wife of the celebrated linguist Yuen Ren Chao (1892–1982), includes the following note in the ‘Special Eating Parties’ section of her book: ‘Crab Parties are for many the favourite form of eating parties. Though often called Plain Boiled Crabs, they are really steamed rather than boiled. Each guest is served a dish of Chinkiang vinegar with minced ginger, with optional soy sauce. The steamed crabs are served whole and each guest eats them in great detail one by one, accompanied by wine or spirit. Six large crabs eaten in about sixty minutes form an average serving. Some restaurants give special tools, nutcrackers and hammers, etc., for eating crabs, but your teeth and fingers are the chief means of eating. The satisfaction you can get out of a meal of crabs depends on how messy you are willing to get. You really must make a mess of it to make a meal of it. According to old traditional Chinese medicine, the crab is one of those things which are supposed to have a “cold nature” and has to be supplemented by a cup of hot drink of brown sugar and ginger. Whatever the truth is, it certainly gives a nice contrasting taste after the crabs. Another popular theory is that crabs will crawl in your stomach, so that the more crabs you eat the hungrier you get. It is therefore customary to serve some light lunch or refreshments or even a full meal immediately after a crab party. Because no fat or starchy food is eaten with the crabs, the stomach with crabs in it does usually feel like having something more meaty to stay it. So a crab party usually turns out to be a sort of overgrown hors-d’œuvre (260–1).’ This neglected treasure of a book, first published by Faber and Faber in 1956 and which carries a foreword by Hu Shi and a preface by Pearl Buck, must have been one of the earliest attempts to introduce to American and British homes both the practicalities and the splendours of Chinese cuisine. Buwei Yang Chao’s husband’s contribution to the book is a hilarious recipe for ‘Stirred Eggs’: ‘To test whether the cooking has been done properly observe the person served. If he utters a voiced bilabial nasal consonant with a slow falling intonation, it is good (168).’

20. For a highly readable treatment of these issues, see Timothy Brook, The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999).

21. For this, see Frederick Mote, ‘Yüan and Ming’, in Kwang-chih Chang, ed., Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives, 247. Mote argues that this period saw the ‘second phase of an agricultural revolution’ (198) that had started during the Song dynasty and which was brought about, in part, by the introduction of a range of new crops, including maize, sweet potatoes, peanuts and tobacco. With the introduction of tobacco came also the habit of opium smoking, and not surprisingly Zhang Dai’s family seem quick to have picked up the habit, Zhang Dai’s grandfather Zhang Rulin 張汝霖 (d. 1625) being apparently the first Chinese person to comment in writing that opium could be smoked, for which see Jonathan Spence, Chinese
Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 231. On sumptuary laws, see Craig Clunas, ‘Regulation of Consumption and the Institution of Correct Morality by the Ming State’, in Norms and the State in China, ed. E. Zürcher (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 39–49. Other areas of life during the late-Ming period seem equally prone to such lavish and ostentatious display, and the inevitable countervailing discourse. Sarah Dauncey, in her ‘Sartorial Modesty and Genteel Ideals in the Late Ming’ (in Daria Berg and Chloë Starr, eds., The Quest for Gentility in China: Negotiations Beyond Gender and Class [London & New York: Routledge, 2007], 134–54), examines the extent to which contemporary men-of-letters became concerned at what they saw as the increasingly opulent clothing being worn by women. Xia Xianchun, in his Wan Ming shifeng yu wenxue (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 1994), 62, cites the Shaoxinger Tao Shiling (1571–1640) to the effect that: ‘When I was a young man there were certainly no gardens to be found in Shaoxing, such things having only become numerous in recent years’ and Qi Biaojia as declaring that the construction of gardens in the district began with Zhang Dai’s great-great-grandfather Zheng Tianfu. For an important analysis of this garden ‘mania’, see Joanna F. Handlin Smith, ‘Gardens in Ch’i Piao-chia’s Social World: Wealth and Values in Late-Ming Kiangnan’, The Journal of Asian Studies, 51 (1992), 55–81.

22. Interestingly enough, such anxieties about artificiality were in evidence during the Song dynasty as well, as shown by Stephen West, ‘Playing with Food: Performance, Food, and the Aesthetics of Artificiality in the Sung and Yuan’, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 57 (1997), 67–106.


24. Ibid., 8.

25. As both Clunas and Timothy Brook have pointed out, such handbooks also served the social and cultural purposes of precisely those they were intended to stigmatize. As Brook puts it: ‘The texts of connoisseurship available on the book market in the late Ming, ironically perhaps, served both sides of the cultural barrier between gentry and merchants. They set what highly educated gentlemen of the age felt were the appropriate standards by which luxury goods should be consumed. But they also commoditized the knowledge that was needed to participate in this rarefied realm of cultural exchange’, for which, see his ‘Communications and Commerce’, in Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, eds., The Cambridge History of China: Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 706.

26. According to legend, Shennong was the second emperor of pre-dynastic China and was attributed with the invention of the first plough, the practice of animal husbandry and the discovery of the various usages of medicinal herbs.


28. He Zeng (199–278), an extravagant man whose kitchens, according to his biography in the Jin shu, produced cuisine of a quality that exceeded even that of the palace.

29. A man of the Tang dynasty who served as an official during the reign of the Empress Wu Zetian (r. 649–83).

30. A member of the Hanlin Academy, also during the Tang, and a skilled cook.
31. An official in the Kingdom of Qi during the Southern Dynasties whose family was renowned for their recipes. It is said that on one occasion the emperor asked him for some recipes but Yu Cong refused the request.

32. For a translation of this prose-poem, see Cyril Drummond le Gros Clark, trans., *The Prose-Poetry of Su Tung-p’o* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1964), 205–11.

33. In his *Dream Memories of Taoan*, Zhang Dai provides the following portrait of this man: ‘The storied houseboats that now ply West Lake were in fact the invention of the Surveillance Vice Commissioner of the Education Intendant Circuit Bao Yingdeng. They come in three sizes; in the largest, one can lay out a banquet, accompanied by singing boys; the middle sized ones are sufficiently large to transport one’s books and paintings; in the smallest, there is just room enough to hide away a beautiful young maiden or two to keep one company. Bao Yingdeng’s singing girls were beyond comparison with ordinary maids-in-waiting, and, in imitation of the practice of Shi Chong and Song Qi of old, he frequently ordered them to appear before his guests. Painted of face, they would amble in like ponies with mincing step as sauntering slowly, lingering leisurely, they threaded their way through the willows, all to bring joy and laughter to their audience. Standing in front of the bright railings and windows decorated with silken filigree, they would stretch out their song, play their flutes and pluck their zithers, the music they made akin to the warbling of the golden oriole. As guests arrived, the singing boys would begin the opera, dancing in rows, singing as they kept time with their drums. Their skills quite excelled those of others. When the mood took him, Bao Yingdeng would take his performers touring, sometimes not returning home for ten days or more, and attracting huge crowds, all of whom would ask where the troupe was next to perform. Bao’s South Garden was sited beneath Thunder Peak Pagoda, his North Garden below Flew-Here Peak. Rocks abounded in both gardens, heaped up here and piled up there all higgledy-piggledy, but always forming the most eccentrically shaped precipices. In some places, rocks were used to construct a bridge over a brook, but in such instances, unlike the artificial mountains found upon the hill, these bridges were ingeniously designed and crafted. The ridgepoles of the main halls were held in place by cantilevers, thus obviating the need for pillars at all four corners, making the halls spacious enough for lion dancers to perform within. In North Garden, a chamber was built in the form of the Eight Trigrams, with a round pavilion partitioned into eight sections and shaped like a fan. Eight beds were placed horizontally in the narrow corners of each partition, curtained off on both sides. When the innermost curtains were lowered, the beds faced outside, and when the outermost curtains were lowered, the beds would face each other. Old man Bao would sit in state in the middle of the chamber with clear windows in his doors, and as he lay there propped up against his pillow burning incense, he could see each and every one of the eight beds. In such an excess of extravagance and wantonness did he grow old beside West Lake for more than twenty years, the splendour of his gardens not a jot inferior to those of Golden Valley or Mei Village, nothing less than the apotheosis of luxury and magnificence, what the locals of Hangzhou however were wont to dismiss by saying: ‘Well, that’s just how it is.’ The grand families of West Lake wanted for nothing, and at the time is
seemed as if the West Lake had been encased within a Golden Chamber. It was only the impoverished and pedantic scholars who would mutter amongst themselves: “Tut! tut! What a very strange business.” (‘Bao Hansuo’ 包涵所, Taoan mengyi: Xihu mengxun, 53–4).

34. In his ‘Ji Zhou Jianbo wen’ 祭周儉伯文, Zhang Dai describes Huang Ruheng as one of his ‘Friends in the Examinations’ (juye zhiji 素業知己), for which see Langhuan wenji, 274.

35. Yi Ya 易牙, a master chef who served under Duke Huan of Qi during the Spring and Autumn period and who was said to have had a palate so fine as to be able to distinguish between the water of these two rivers, both of which are to be found in present-day Shandong Province. It is also said of him that on one occasion, in order to please his master, he used the head of his own son to add flavour to a soup he was preparing.

36. According to his biography in the Jin shu, Fu Lang 符郎 so understood the taste of food that his palate was able to make these distinctions.

37. This relates to an anecdote found in the ‘Technical Understanding’ (Shujie 術解) chapter of the Shishuo xinyu 世説新語: ‘Xun Xu was once sitting with Emperor Wu of Jin eating bamboo shoots along with cooked rice. He said to those seated with him, “This has been steamed over firewood which has seen heavy service.” Someone in the company did not quite believe him, and secretly sending to inquire about it, found that they had indeed used old carriage axles’, Richard B. Mather, trans., Shih-shuo Hsin-yii: A New Account of Tales of the World (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 359.

38. Leys, The Analects of Confucius, 46: ‘If it is not properly cut, he does not eat it.’

39. Zhang Dai provides a description of this studio in his Dream Memories of Taoan, for which see Taoan mengyi: Xihu mengxun, 33–4. It ends: ‘Here I loosened my clothes and gave myself over the place, never wishing to leave it whatever the season. Thinking about it now, it seems as if it was another world.’

40. Ni Yuanlu 倪元璐 (1594–1644), an important late Ming official. He committed suicide on the day that Peking fell to the troops of Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606–45). For a short biography of him, see Hummel, 587.

41. According to Zhuang Yifu 莊一拂, this no longer extant opera was written by Xu Sanjie 許三階 of the Wanli period, see his Gudian xiqu cunmu huikao 古典戲曲存目彙考 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1982), 2.952–3.

42. ‘Shanju zhuolu’ 山居 olu, Qi Biaojia wengao 祁彪佳文稿 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe), 2.1087.

43. ‘Author’s Preface’ (Zixu 自序), Taoan mengyi: Xihu mengxun, 3.


45. ‘Inscription for My Own Tomb’, Langhuan wenji, 199.

47. ‘Inscription for My Own Tomb’, Langhuan wenji, 200–1.

Chapter 7


2. This novel is more commonly known to the Western audience as The Golden Lotus or The Plum in the Golden Vase, according to its two most famous English translations by, respectively, Clement Egerton and David Tod Roy. However, because part of the aim of this chapter is to refute the conventional interpretation of this title, a more literal translation of the three Chinese characters which made up its original title—gold, vase, and plum blossom—is thus preferred. All quotations from this text are taken from Mei Jie 梅節, ed., Mengmeiguan jiaoben Jinpingmei cihua 夢梅館校本金瓶梅詞話 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2007), 3 vols. The translations of the passages from the novel are all mine unless specified.


8. Hu Yannan 胡衍南, Yinshi qingse Jinpingmei 飲食情色金瓶梅 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2004), 177.


15. Ge Hong 葛洪, Baopuzi 抱朴子 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 81–2.

17. In China, gold and poison further share a common connotation to death in the sense that the swallowing of gold (tun jin 吞金) represents a popular means of committing suicide. During the Ming dynasty, a well-known case of suicide by such means is that of the eunuch Zhang Min 张敏 who, having saved Emperor Xiaozong’s life by lying to Noble Consort Wan (Wan guifei 萬貴妃), killed himself by swallowing gold following the death of the emperor.


20. This is also how Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡 understands this name. See Zhang Zhupo, 'Piping diyi qishu Jinpingmei dufa' 彭貴妃一史書金瓶梅譯法, in Qishu siping 奇書評, ed. Song Jian 宋儉, 391–408. In particular, see ‘Entry 48’, 401.

Chapter 8

1. Unless otherwise stated all English quotations from Cao Xueqin’s novel are drawn from the David Hawkes’ translation of the first eighty chapters of the novel (Cao Xueqin, The Story of the Stone Vols 1–3, trans. David Hawkes [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, 1977, 1980]). This translation is used because it is the most eloquent currently available and the original Chinese is also included with each excerpt to enable readers ready access to the flavour of the original. The chapter and page numbers are given in parentheses after the quotations, for example, (1.6.54) refers to Volume 1, Chapter 6, Page 54. For the Chinese I have used Cao Xueqin, Ba jia pingpi Honglou meng 八家評批紅樓夢, ed. Feng Qiyong 馮其庸 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1991). The same book, chapter, page reference system after each Chinese language quotation.


4. Zhan Haiyan argues that tea is used to form bridges that connect segregated groups of people in the novel—across classes and through marriage. Anthony Yu reminds us of the Buddhist frame of the novel and mentions that the enjoyment of good food and wine are fundamental human ‘desires’. No doubt Cao Xueqin used the excessive and exquisite nature of the foods consumed in the mansion as part of his thick
description of the ‘red dust’ of the world. Similarly, Li Wai-yee reminds us of the dialectical nature of Cao’s description of desire—the illusion of worldly living can only be revealed through the experience of desire. While her discussion relates specifically to love, the excessive desire for food and wine on the part of the Jia mansion residents forms a significant part of their material experience of worldly illusion as well. See Haiyan Zhan, ‘Tea in The Story of the Stone: Meaning and Function’, ICU Comparative Culture, 39 (2007), 83–118; Anthony C. Yu, Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); and Wai-yee Li, Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).


7. Cao Xueqin’s attention to details of daily life and his use of this detail to mark crucial themes within his novel is well recognized. For a digestion-related example, Chi-hung Yim has explained how Cao Xueqin presented readers with forewarning of the results of the love triangle between Daiyu, Baoyu and Baochai through his masterful use of illness, medicine and prescriptions. See Chi-hung Yim, ‘The “Deficiency of Yin in the Liver”: Dai-yu’s Malady and Fubi in “Dream of the Red Chamber”’, Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles and Reviews, 22 (2000), 85–111.


9. See my chapter in Jerome Silbergeld and Dora Ching for a discussion of the role Picture plays in symbolizing the impermanence of divisions between purity and pollution and image and reality.

10. Hierarchies within space through food had already been established in hierarchies within individuals in the family as well. Prior to his entrance to the garden, Baoyu’s unique and superior status in the family order was confirmed by his superior food provision through Grandmother Jia’s household. Daiyu joined this premier wing of the household upon her arrival to the mansions as well. Food stands as a marker of status even within the already privileged residents of the mansions.

11. Fears about Baoyu being scalded and actual incidents where Baoyu is burned thread through the novel. In the chapter following the tea pouring incident with Crimson, Baoyu is actually burned, but not by food. While he is drunkenly harassing Sunset, Jia Huan’s favourite maid, Jia Huan purposefully knocks over a candle and spills wax on Baoyu’s face. These repeated references to heat invoke the alchemic aspect of the fire element within the novel’s mystical frame. Jing Wang has argued that in most legends of stone in Chinese literature the wood element stands as a complement
to stone. But, in *Honglou meng* ‘its [wood] subtle interplay with stone seems overshadowed by the intervention of the third element, that of fire’ (Jing Wang, *The Story of Stone: Intertextuality, Ancient Chinese Stone Lore, and the Stone Symbolism in Dream of the Red Chamber, Water Margin and The Journey to the West* [Durham: Duke University Press, 1992], 48). While Jing Wang is specifically referring to the moulding of stones in the process of repairing heaven described at the very start of the novel, we can also extrapolate this alchemic influence to the realm of food and drink through the repeated fears of Baoyu, the precious left-over stone, being burned.

12. After the Chrysanthemum poetry party following the crab banquet readers also learn from Patience that Xifeng has been illegally lending household money to earn interest and delays payments to the household members when the principal fails to be paid back in time (2.39.263).

13. In Chapter 77 Cook Liu and Fivey help to smuggle Baoyu back into the garden after he has sneaked out to see the dying Skybright. This incident happens at the height of the surveillance of the garden and reveals the inevitable cracks in the protective walls even during this period of close attention to ‘border security’.

14. Hawkes translates this as Lycoperdon Snow but Fuling is not Lycoperdon but rather another fungus called Poria Cocos sometimes known as Tuckahoe in English.


17. The Hawkes’ translation ‘my own heart’s blood’ skips over the literal meaning of the phrase Cao Xueqin used in describing the origin of the breast milk. Nannie Li literally says ‘milk changed from my own blood’ or ‘milk derived from my own blood’. This phrase reflects the close link between these two bodily fluids.

18. Baoyu is not the only man faced with pollution from his wet nurse. In Chapter 16 Nannie Zhao visits Jia Lian to seek employment for her two sons and explains her request in terms of reciprocity: ‘To think I reared you up on the milk of my own bosom, Master Lian! And a fine young man you’ve growed into, thanks be!’ She continues saying that ‘they’ll starve to death’ if the sons can’t get work (1.16.311). She had fed Jia Lian as a baby; now she request to be fed by him.

19. On this same day, a young servant man, Zhou, was found drunk and abusive at work. Xifeng moved to have him fired but was persuaded to keep him employed by the senior women servants who begged for him to be punished and given a second chance.

20. David Hawkes has romanized ‘Liu An’ as ‘Lu-an’.

21. Dai Qing’e 戴清娥 and Yang Chenghu 楊成虎, ‘*Honglou meng* Yingyi ben yinshi ming-cheng fanyi de duibi yanjiu’ 紅樓夢英譯本飲食名稱翻譯的對比研究, *Yunnan shifan daxue xuebao (Duiwai Hanyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu ban)* 雲南師範大學學報（對外漢語教學與研究版）, 7 (2009), 81.

23. Hawkes translates ‘purity and simplicity’ as ‘buoyant lightness’: ‘When did stored rain water have such a buoyant lightness?’ (2.41.315)

24. Hawkes translates ‘Girls’ tea’ as ‘strong Pu’er’ but this elides the significance of the ‘girls’ world party’ that is about to happen in Green Delights.

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