

»Like an Image in a Mirror«— Or: A Portrait of the Ming-Qing Storyteller Liu Jingting

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The professional oral storyteller Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 (1592–1674/75), ancestor-patron for several performative storytelling traditions throughout China, has already been the subject of much thoroughgoing research, especially during the 1950s through 1970s, when interest in the alleged ‘folk arts’ was particularly strong.¹ Apart from some 200 premodern documents of various length, such as poems and short biographies, by contemporaries and subsequent generations attesting to his life and activities, Liu Jingting is probably best known to the modern reader as a key figure in the *kunqu* 昆曲 drama by Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648–1718), *Taohua shan* 桃花扇 (The Peach Blossom Fan; 1699).²

The author would like to thank Mr Chen Qide 陳啓德, owner of the Zeng Jing painting and proprietor of Rock Publishing International, for kindly granting copyright permission. My heartfelt thanks also go to Drs Zhou Qin 周秦 and Hua Rende 華人德 from Suzhou University for offering numerous suggestions and for their kind hospitality during a visit in Suzhou in the summer of 2010.

- 1 Among a plethora of articles, monographs and compilations on Liu Jingting, see for instance Chen Ruheng 陳汝衡 and Yang Tingfu 楊廷福, *Da shuosbujia Liu Jingting* 大說書家柳敬亭 [The Great Storyteller Liu Jingting] (Shanghai: Silian chubanshe, 1954), rev. ed. by Chen Ruheng 陳汝衡, *Suosbu yiren Liu Jingting* 說書藝人柳敬亭 [The Storytelling Artist Liu Jingting] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1979), and Hong Shiliang 洪式良, *Liu Jingting pingzuan* 柳敬亭評傳 [Critical Biography of Liu Jingting] (Shanghai: Shanghai gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1956).
- 2 For a complete translation of the drama, see K’ung Shang-jen, *The Peach Blossom Fan (Tao-hua-shan)*, tr. by Chen Shih-hsiang and Harold Acton, with the collaboration of Cyril Birch (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1976).

Liu Jingting, who specialized in non-versified, spoken narratives (*pinghua* 評話), was active from around 1610 until well into the 1670s. A »celebrity« during his lifetime, he was well connected to scholar-officials and other important figures of his day. In 1643, he entered the services of Zuo Liangyu 左良玉 (1599–1645), the last remaining powerful general fighting for the Southern Ming government in its resistance against the encroaching Manchu armies. After the fall of the Ming and the death of his benefactor in 1645, the impoverished storyteller had to resume his former life as an itinerant entertainer. Both as a socially active individual and as a performer, Liu Jingting is of the greatest interest to the social and literary historian, not only for his art but also because his life spanned the entire transition period from the Ming (1368–1644) to the Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, a time of traumatic events with far-reaching consequences for Chinese society.

Until recently, the only remaining pictorial evidence of Liu Jingting seemed to consist of one single half-body painting, showing the performer in his old age, dressed in Ming garb (Plate 1). In the painting, Liu is displayed holding a fan in a massive right hand vaguely reminiscent of the enormous claw of a fiddler crab. Sadly, the painting seems to have been lost at some point during the early 20th century and has come down to us only as photographic reproductions in a late Qing and an early Republican journal.³ Painted by the 19th-century artist Wang Su 王素 (1794–1877), it is itself a replica of another portrait of unknown origin and age.⁴ To make things worse, the journal reproductions are of inferior quality—as is arguably the painting itself. Considering these uncertainties, it is virtually impossible to tell how much the Wang Su painting resembled the real person. From an appraisal written by one of Liu Jingting's literati friends, we know that Liu possessed at least one portrait of himself.⁵ Whether the Wang Su copy was done from this or from another painting is open to speculation.⁶

3 See the plates »Ming ji pingshuojia Liu Jingting xiang« 明季評說家柳敬亭像 [Portrait of the Ming Period Storyteller Liu Jingting], *Yueyue xiaoshuo* 月月小說 13.2,1 (1908), no pag.; and »Ming mo shuoshuzhe Liu Jingting xiang« 明末說書者柳敬亭像 [Portrait of the Late Ming Storyteller Liu Jingting], in *Xiaoshuo shijie* 小說世界, supplement *Minzhong wenzue* 民眾文學 17,3 (1928), no pag.

4 As is the case with his portrait of Liu Jingting, Wang Su ordinarily signed with his *zi* Xiaomei 小梅, but in the ancient character form 小某. The painting was formerly owned by the Du 杜 family from Fuzhou, whose collector's seal is visible in the upper right corner (»Du shi zhencang« 杜氏珍藏). No information is available on the size of the painting, its former owners, or its whereabouts.

5 See Wu Weiye 吳偉業, »Liu Jingting zan« 柳敬亭贊 [Eulogistic Inscription for (the Painting of) Liu Jingting], in *Wu Meicun quanji* 吳梅村全集 [Complete Works of Wu Meicun], ed. by Li

This article concerns a multicoloured paper scroll painting of Liu Jingting by the late Ming painter Zeng Jing 曾鯨 (1564–1647),⁷ *zi* Bochen 波臣, which appears to be little known in sinological circles, both in China and abroad (Plates 2 and 3). Unaware of its existence, almost all authors and editors of books and articles on Liu Jingting and the performing arts wishing to adorn their publications with an illustration, consistently used the Wang Su painting or, alternatively, even chose not to reproduce the copy-painting itself but instead provide mere imitations of it.⁸ Other publishers have taken more liberty and come up with fanciful illustrations that depict Liu Jingting—whose nickname,

Xueying 李學穎, 3 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 3: 1078 [*juan* 53 (*wenji* 文集 31)]; also in *Meicun jiacang gao* 梅村家藏稿 [Meicun's Manuscripts from his Private Collection], 3 vols. (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1975), 3: 926 [*juan* 53 (*wenji* 文集 32: *jiwen, ming, zan* 祭文銘贊)].

- 6 In addition, other poems and descriptions attest that Liu Jingting owned at least two more paintings showing him standing side by side with his mentor and employer, General Zuo Liangyu. See, for instance, Chen Weisong 陳維崧, »Zuo Ningnan yu Liu Jingting junzhong shuojian tu ge« 左寧南與柳敬亭軍中說劍圖歌 [Song on the Painting of Zuo Ningnan and Liu Jingting Discussing Military Affairs in the Army]; various editions, e.g., in *Huhailou shiji* 湖海樓詩集 [Collection of Poetry from the Huhai Tower], *juan* 2, *Sibu congkan chubian suoben* 四部叢刊初編縮本: *Chen Jialing shi wen ci quanji* 陳迦陵詩文詞全集 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1967), 91: 255; *Xu Benshi shi* 續本事詩 [Poems on Original Incidents, Continued], comp. by Xu Qiu 徐鉉, *juan* 12 (being *Benshi shi* 本事詩, comp. by Meng Qi 孟啓; *Xu Benshi shi* 續本事詩, comp. by Nie Fengxian 聶奉先; *Xu Benshi shi*, comp. by Xu Qiu 徐鉉; *Benshi ci* 本事詞, comp. by Ye Shengxiang 葉申薌), ed. by Li Xueying 李學穎 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991), 372–373. All of these paintings are now lost.
- 7 Zeng Jing's dates are given as ca 1568–1650 in older publications, but have been re-established by Zhou Jiyin 周積寅 in *Zeng Jing de xiaoxianghua* 曾鯨的肖像畫 [Portraits by Zeng Jing] (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1981), 14.
- 8 For reproductions of the Wang Su painting, see, for instance, Chen Ruheng, *Shuoshu shibua* 說書史話 [A History of Storytelling] (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1958), 156; and Yao Zhenren, »Liu Jingting, Prince of Story-Tellers«, *The Courier: The spoken and the written word = Unesco Courier* 38 (Aug 1985), 29. For imitations of the painting, see, for instance, Che Xilun 車錫倫, »Gudai quyi xiangjin xiandai quyi de zhuanhua: Da shuoshujia Liu Jingting« 古代曲藝向近現代曲藝的轉化——明代：大說書家柳敬亭 [The Transformation of Premodern to Modern Minor Performative Arts. Ming Period: The Great Storyteller Liu Jingting], *Zhongguo quyi tongshi* 中國曲藝通史, ed. by Jiang Kun 姜昆 and Ni Zhongzhi 倪鍾之 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2005), ch. 6.7 [390–400]: 390.



Plate 1

Wang Su 王素 (1794–1877), *Portrait of Liu Jingting*
 (Reproduced from Yueyue xiaoshuo 月月小说 13.2, 1 [1908], no pag.).

after all, was Liu Mazi 柳麻子 or Liu Pockmarks—as a dashing, handsome young man.⁹

The painting by Zeng Jing not only happens to stand out for its superior artistic quality. It is also invaluable for the study of Liu Jingting in particular and of the Chinese performance arts and their socio-cultural context in general for several reasons: its lifelike authenticity and extraordinary technique convey a truthful impression of how the performer really looked at the height of his career; dated to the year 1640, it is a rare piece of early documentary evidence on Liu Jingting, whereas the great majority of documents date from the late 1650s to the 1670s, i. e., the early Qing period; last but not least, the seated figure is surrounded by sixteen appraisals plus one additional inscription from several of Liu Jingting's literati friends, some of them rather famous and influential, such as Fan Jingwen 范景文 (1587–1644), Liu Ruozai 劉若宰 (1595–1640?), and Mao Xiang 冒襄 (1611–1693). These inscriptions not only provide clues to the original target audience of such paintings but also reflect on the social circles in which Liu Jingting moved.

The lack of awareness concerning this painting comes as little surprise, as it has always been part of private collections and been little advertised by its owners. The author of this article himself only chanced upon it when he browsed the internet in search of information on the Wang Su painting and discovered it on a website established by a group of wealthy art connoisseurs from Taiwan.¹⁰

The painting is now owned by Chen Qide 陳啟德, a Taiwanese cement magnate and founding director of the art publishing house Shitou Shuwu 石頭書屋 (Rock Publishing International) in Taipei. It was reproduced in a catalogue for a special exhibition in 2001 of select items from Chen's art collection at the Hongxi meishuguan 鴻禧美術館 («Chang Foundation Museum») in Taipei, and is

9 As in Chen Ruheng, *Sbuosbu yiren Liu Jingting* (1979); *Pinghua zongsbi Liu Jingting* 平話宗師柳敬亭 [The *pinghua* Master Storyteller Liu Jingting], ed. by Jiangsu sheng Zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 江蘇省政協文史資料委員會 and Taizhou shi Zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 泰州市政協文史資料委員會 (Nanjing: *Jiangsu wenshi ziliao bianjibu*, 1995).

10 The members of the club style themselves »Qingwan yaji« 清翫雅集 ('Scholarly assembly for elegant pastimes'). See <famehall.com/williamhuang/qingyuanyaji> (last retrieval 24 May 2011).

accompanied by a description from art historian Mei Yunqiu 梅韻秋.¹¹ A presentation by the renowned mainland calligrapher, Hua Rende 華人德, which was held at the museum on the occasion, has been turned into a paper and published separately.¹² Apart from the catalogue and the short article, apparently almost nothing has been written about the painting so far and, if so, then with a focus on the artist and his achievements, not on its significance for modern research on Liu Jingting and the nexus of the performing arts and literati circles during the late Ming and early Qing periods.¹³

The painting's seventeen inscriptions were, however, previously recorded in the art catalogue of Duanfang 端方 (1861–1911), the important late Qing dynasty collector of antiques, patron, educator and career imperial officer, who obviously

- 11 See *Yuemu: Zhongguo wanqi shubua* 悅目——中國晚期書畫 / *Enchanting Images: Late Chinese Painting and Calligraphy from the Shib-t'ou Shu Wu Collection*, 2 vols., ed. by Cai Yixuan 蔡宜璇 (Taipei: Shitou Shuwu, 2001), 2 (*tubanpian* 圖版篇): 169 (full), 170 (detail); description by Mei Yunqiu in vol. 1 (*jieshuopian* 解說篇), 66–67. The exhibition took place from 28 July to 31 October 2001. See the report by the Taiwanese Central News Agency (中央通訊社) of 18 July 2001, «Shitou Shuwu cangpinzhan jinri liangxiang jiang chengxian chuantong shuhua jingyun» 石頭書屋藏品展近日亮相將呈現傳統書畫精蘊 [Shitou Shuwu Collection Recently Declared It Will Present Its Excellent Holdings of Traditional Calligraphies and Paintings], accessible through WiseSearch at <prd7-wisearch.wisers.net> (last retrieval 24 May 2011). For the museum's website, see <www.changfound.org.tw>.
- 12 «Zeng Jing de xiaoxianghua he qi suo hui "Liu Jingting xiaoxiang tuzhou"» 曾鯨的肖像畫和其所繪《柳敬亭小像圖軸》 [Zeng Jing's Portraits and his «Scroll Painting of Liu Jingting»], in *Diancang gumeishu* 典藏古美術 no 107 (8/2001), 98–102.
- 13 Hua Rende, in his collection of pictures of historical Chinese personages, has replaced the Wang Su copy with the Zeng Jing painting. See *Zhongguo lidai renwu tuxiang ji* 中國歷代人物圖畫集 [Collection of Portraits of Historical Chinese Personalities], 3 vols., rev. ed. by Hua Rende (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 2: 1683. Another article by Hua Rende, «Zhongguo lidai renwu tuxiang gaishu» 中國歷代人物圖像概述 [Summary of Portraits of Historical Chinese Personalities], *Daxue tushuguan xuebao* 大學圖書館學報 22,3 (May 2004), 71–76 (Part 1); 22,6 (Nov 2004), 70–74 (Part 2), also contains some paragraphs on Zeng Jing in Part I, 73–74, and briefly mentions the Liu Jingting portrait in Part II, 70, but this is mainly recycled material from the earlier article. Wu Guohao 吳國豪 also mentions the painting briefly in his doctoral thesis «Wan Ming wenren de shufa shenghuo» 晚明文人的書法生活 [The Calligraphic Life of Literati from the Late Ming] (Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua daxue, 2008), 31 and 321.

must have been among its previous owners.¹⁴ The compiler's—probably Miao Quansun 繆荃孫 (1844–1919), perhaps Fan Zengxiang 樊增祥 (1846–1931)—transcriptions of the calligraphy (which was written in various styles and is often hard to decipher) are complete albeit sometimes faulty.¹⁵ Mercifully, the exhibition catalogue supplies all inscriptions and seals printed in modern type.¹⁶

The scroll measures 127.5 × 41 cm and consists of a main frame with the painting proper and two attached strips of paper: one with an eye-catching large inscription above, and one, made of different paper, with a colophon below. The main frame carries three collectors' seals: An oblong intaglio seal in the lower right corner reads »Xieyuan Jingshe« 褉緣精舍 (Jacket Hem Study), a square intaglio seal in the lower left corner gives »Qinbo suocang« 勤伯所藏 (From the Collection of Qinbo),¹⁷ and a third, square relief seal in the lower left corner has »Baisun qingwan« 柏孫清玩 (Baisun's Object of Virtue).¹⁸ The three seals probably belong to one and the same person: Li Shen 李慎, *zi* Qinbo 勤伯, *hao* Baisun 柏孫 (1828–?; *jinsbi* 1853). Born in Tieling 鐵嶺 in today's Liaoning province, Li served as prefect (*zhifu* 知府) of Fengxiang 鳳翔 around the year Guangxu 9 (1883), and was later appointed highest administrative commanding officer (*dubu* 都護) of Xi'an.¹⁹ Together with more than ten other literati, he was a member of

14 See »Liu Jingting xiaoxiang zhou« 柳敬亭小像軸 [A Portrait Scroll of Liu Jingting], in *Renyin xiaoxia lu* 壬寅消夏錄 [Record of Whiling Away the Summer in the Year *renyin* (1902)], reproduced in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, 2 vols. [1089–1090] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, [1995]), 1089: 613–614. The compiler has added the following specification: “畫幅——紙本、高二尺八寸、寬一尺三寸、兀傲一叟據石而生” [Picture: paper scroll painting, height 2'8", width 1'3"; showing a proud old man placed on a rock].

15 Some other, unspecified reader later corrected some of the entries. For a biography of Duanfang see *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 2 vols., ed. by Arthur W. Hummel (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943–44), 2: 780–782. Duanfang's formidable collection of jades, bronzes, paintings and sculptures, known as the »Taozhai« 陶齋 (Tao Studio) collection, was dispersed soon after he was murdered in 1911. For a general description of Duanfang's collection and its fate see Jason Steuber, »Politics and Art in Qing China: The Duanfang Collection«, *Apollo* 1 (Nov 2005), esp. 56, 58, and 60; and Thomas Lawton, *A Time of Transition: Two Collectors of Chinese Art* (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art, 1991), 5–63.

16 See Cai Yixuan, *Yumu*, 1: 65–66.

17 Duanfang reads »Ma Bo suocang« 馬伯所藏 (From the Collection of Ma Bo). The reading was subsequently corrected by the anonymous reader.

18 Duanfang reads »Baisun jinggai« 柏孫精賅, anonymous corrects to »Baisun jingwan« 柏孫精玩. My reading follows the *Yumu* catalogue by Cai Yixuan.

19 See the entry on Li Shen in *Huang Qing shushi* 皇清書史 [History of Calligraphy from the Imperial Qing], ed. by Li Fang 李放 and Ye Mei 葉眉, *juan* 23, quoting from *Mu Yelan fashu ji* 木葉庵法書記 [Notes on Model Calligraphy by Mu Yelan], in *Liaobai congsbu* 遼海叢書: “隸漢

the painting, calligraphy and poetry club Qingmeng pingshe 青門萍社, founded in 1888 by the official and author Fan Zengxiang 樊增祥 (1846–1931). The club was the first of its kind in the region and stayed active until the early years of the Republic. Several of the items collected by Li Shen and fellow club member Gong Erduo 宮爾鐸 are now in the collection of the National Palace Museum.²⁰

The painting has been inscribed and dated “崇禎庚辰重九，蔗園老人寫于秦淮畸舍——曾鯨” (‘painted by the Old Man from Sugarcane Garden in his Lopsided Hut in the Qinhuai [quarter] on the Double Ninth [Festival of the year] Chongzhen *gengchen*—Zeng Jing’) in the lower right corner, i. e., it was finished on October 23rd, 1640, in the artist’s studio in Nanjing in the area along the Qinhuai River, which in those times used to be a famous entertainment quarter.²¹ In 1640, Zeng Jing was in his 77th year, while the performer himself, born in 1592, must have been 49 *sui* old.

Information on the artist is sparse: Zeng Jing was born in 1564 in the coastal town of Putian 莆田 (situated in Fujian province between Fuzhou and Xiamen 廈門), travelled widely as an itinerant artist in the Hangzhou, Yuyao 余姚, Wuzhen 烏鎮, Songjiang 松江 and Ningbo 寧波 regions, but chose Nanjing as his main residence where he also died in 1647. During the Chongzhen period (1627–1644), Zeng became an official in the Ministry of Works (*gongbu* 工部). Owing to his superb talent and excellent connections, he was able to secure commissions from famous contemporaries and earn no little money with his art.

Zeng Jing is mentioned in several miscellanies (*biji* 筆記) from the late Ming and early Qing. A short entry in *Tubui baojian xuzuan* 圖繪寶鑑續纂 (Precious Mirror of Paintings, Further Compilation; 17th c.) states that he »excelled in portrait drawing. His large and small portraits are invariably just like drawn from

軍旗。官陝西布政使、西寧辦事大臣，工篆隸精，鑑賞收藏名跡極富” <www.guoxue123.com/other/lhcs/lhcs/300.htm> (last retrieval 24 May 2011). Also see <zhidao.baidu.com/question/32231854.html> and <shanbeiren.blogbus.com/logs/2009/09/d05.html> (last retrieval 24 May 2011).

20 <blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_50583bc1010083y3.html>; <blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_795b33cdo100qn0z.html> (last retrieval 24 May 2011).

21 The signature column is followed by two of the artist’s square intaglio seals, »Zeng Jing zhi yin« 曾鯨之印 (Seal of Zeng Jing) and »Bochen shi« 波臣氏 (Mister Bochen). Old Man from Sugarcane Garden (»Zheyuan Laoren« 蔗園老人) is one of two known *hao* used by Zeng Jing, the other one being Zhe’an 蔗庵 (Sugarcane Hut). The Shanghai Art Museum owns a joint painting by Zeng Jing and Xiang Shengmo 項聖謨 (1597–1648) of the scholar and painter Dong Qichang 董其昌 that bears a signature »painted by Zeng Jing in Sugarcane Hut« [Zhe’an Zeng Jing xiezha 蔗庵曾鯨寫照], which corroborates Zeng Jing as the creator of paintings signed »Zhe’an« or »Zhe’an Laoren«. See Hua Rende, »Zeng Jing de xiaoxianghua he qi suo hui “Liu Jingting xiaoxiang tuzhou”«, 101.

life. He had a feeling for both pen and ink, and clothes and folds were well matched, everything being appropriate.²² The late Ming connoisseur, Xie Zhao-liu 謝肇淛 (1567–1624), notes that Zeng Jing's »paintings are not vulgar in the slightest. His portraits can be more than two feet tall or as little as some inches small, and they all bear close resemblance [to the ones portrayed]« and that »with his art, he tours the whole empire and has allegedly amassed a thousand pieces of gold«. ²³ Yet, none of the major catalogues of painters through the 20th century lists his name. This hardly comes as a surprise when considering that portraiture as a sole specialization was deemed inferior to landscape painting, a special skill rather than the hallmark of true art.²⁴

The most significant statement on Zeng Jing's art was made by Jiang Shaoshu 姜紹書 (fl 1630–after 1679), who in his book on Ming painters, *Wubeng shi shi* 無聲詩史 (History of Poetry Without Sounds; completed 1679 or after, first edition 1720) praised the artist with the following words:

曾鯨，字波臣，莆田人，流寓金陵。風神休整，儀觀偉然，所至卜築以處，迴廊曲室，位置瀟灑，磅礴寫照，如鏡取影，妙得神情。其傳色淹潤，點睛生動，雖在楮素，盼睐嘖笑，咄咄逼真，雖周昉之貌趙朗，不是過也。若軒冕之英，巖壑之俊，閨房之秀，方外之踪，一經傳寫，妍媸惟肖，然對面時精心體會，人我都忘。每圖一像，烘染數十層，必匠心而後止。其獨步藝林，傾動遐邇，非偶然也。年八十三終。²⁵

- 22 “善寫貌，大小影像，無不儼然如生。兼得筆墨之靈，衣紋配合，各得其當。” *Tubui baojian xuzuan*, 3 *juan*, comp. by Feng Xian 馮仙 & al., in *Huasbi congshu* 畫史叢書 [Collection of Works on the History of Painting], ed. by Yu Anlan 于安瀾, 10 vols. in 2 boxes (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin congshu chubanshe, 1963), box 1, fasc. 4: 9 [*juan* 1].
- 23 “下筆稍不俗。其寫真大二尺許，小至數寸，無不酷肖〔…〕挾技以游四方，累致千金云。” *Wuzha zu* 五雜俎 [Silk Braids from Multi-Coloured Strands], 16 *juan*, <zh.wikisource.org/wiki/五雜俎/卷07> [*juan* 7] (last retrieval 24 May 2011), compiled with Hua Rende, »Zhongguo lidai renwu tuxiang gaishu«, 73–74.
- 24 Zeng Jing is mentioned neither in Zhou Lianggong's 周亮工 (1612–1672) *Dubua lu* 讀畫錄 [Record About Reading Paintings], nor in Qin Zuyong's 秦祖永 (1825–1884) *Tongyin lumbua* 桐陰論畫 [Discussing Paintings in the Tung Tree's Shadow], nor in Dou Zhen's 寶鎮 (1847–after 1911) *Guochao shubua jia bilu* 國朝書畫家筆錄 [Records of Calligraphers and Painters from the Reigning Dynasty], Ye Ming's 葉銘 (1866–1948) *Guochao huajia shu xiaozhuan* 國朝畫家書小傳 [Letters and Biographical Sketches of Painters from the Reigning Dynasty], or Li Fang's 李放 (1883–?) *Huajia zhibi lu* 畫家知希錄 [Record of Painters and Connoisseurs]. Cf. Hua Rende, »Zeng Jing de xiaoxianghua«, 99; id., »Zhongguo lidai renwu tuxiang gaishu«, 73.
- 25 Jiang Shaoshu, »Zeng Jing«, in *Wubeng shi shi* 無聲詩史 [History of Poems Without Sound], *Huasbi congshu* 畫史叢書, ed. by Yu Anlan 于安瀾, 7 *juan*, 10 fasc. (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1963), box 1, fasc. 4: 71–72 [*juan* 4].

Zeng Jing, courtesy-named Bochen, was a native of Putian, Fujian, but took up residence in Nanjing. He was a man of neat and handsome looks, and of noble appearance. Everywhere he went, he always made his abode a pleasant residence, with graceful verandas and rooms built on an elegant and magnificent plan. The portraits he painted were all like images reflected in a mirror, with the expressions of the models skilfully captured. His use of colour was splendid, and he could make the eyes of his figures look very vivid, so that their every look or glance, smile or frown, though only on paper or silk, showed full of true life. His skill was such that not even Zhou Fang's portrait of Zhao Zong could surpass it. Whether the subject were a dignitary or a recluse, a beauty or a religious man, every inch of beauty or ugliness in his portraiture resembled the real person. When he was face to face with his subject, he would always concentrate his whole attention on it until the self and the subject would become interpenetrated.^[26] Every time a portrait was being painted, he would never tire of adding washes and shades, often tens of times, until he achieved real artistry. It is therefore not without reason that Zeng Jing was unequalled among contemporary artists and was famous far and wide. He died at the age of eighty-three.²⁷

Jiang Shaoshu's description of Zeng Jing's portraits and their technique as »images reflected in a mirror« reads as if he were discussing Western techniques, especially since in another instance he uses a similar wording for the description of Western images.²⁸ Indeed, the portrait of Liu Jingting—and the highly mimetic technique used for rendering the head in particular—strike us as almost Western in style. Zeng Jing's portraits, as James Cahill has observed, are generally »more realistic than any that had preceded them in China.«²⁹ Several scholars

26 The phrase “對面時精心體會，人我都忘” has been translated—arguably with more precision—by James Cahill as »When one stood looking at such a face, one forgot both the man and oneself in a moment of spiritual comprehension«. See Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 116; id., *The Distant Mountains* (New York; Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1982), 213.

27 Translation by Hsiang Ta, »European Influences on Chinese Art in the Later Ming and Early Ch'ing Period«, *Renditions* no 6 (Hong Kong, 1976), 164. Transcription converted to *Hanyu pinyin*, characters omitted.

28 Cf. Harrie Vanderstappen, S. V. D., »Chinese Art and the Jesuits in Peking«, in *East Meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582–1773*, ed. by Charles E. Ronan, S. J., and Bonnie B. C. Oh (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988), 108; Cahill, *Compelling Image*, 116, 120; id., *Distant Mountains*, 213.

29 Cahill, *Compelling Image*, 120. As Cahill observes with regard to other paintings, Zeng Jing »[like] other portraitists of the period, [...] often painted only the figure, or perhaps only the face, leaving the landscape or other setting for some other artist to fill in. The disparity in style between realistic face and conventional setting can have the slightly unsettling effect of making a real person seem to look out from a work of art«. Cahill, *Distant Mountains*, 214; cf. the discussion of this phenomenon in his *Compelling Image*, ch. 4.

have hence argued strongly for a Western influence on Chinese pictorial art during the late Ming, pointing to the »extraordinary realism of his and his followers' portraits« which was so unlike earlier Ming period portraiture.³⁰ While an influence for the 18th century, clearly visible in court paintings of the Kangxi (1671–1722), Yongzheng (1722–1735), and Qianlong (1735–1796) periods, has been widely accepted, these scholars opine that the most significant influence occurred earlier.

Supposing there had been exposure to the Western arts, especially portraiture, how would it have come about? Since no documented evidence exists with regard to Zeng Jing's pedigree as an artist—apart from the allegation that he learned from a certain Shi 史 from Putian,³¹ about whom nothing further is known—the proponents of the influence hypothesis point to Zeng Jing's life and activities in Fujian and Nanjing (where contacts with foreigners and foreign art were likely) and, more importantly, to the activities of Jesuit missionaries: Matteo Ricci (1553–1610), known in China as Li Madou 利瑪竇, arrived in Macao in 1582 and continued to live in the country until his death in 1610. He first came to Nanjing, Zeng Jing's home base, in the summer of Wanli 23 (1595) and then again in the summer of Wanli 26 (1598). Each time he stayed for only a short time, without engaging much in public activities. On 6 February 1599 (Wanli 27), however, he arrived in Nanjing again and this time erected a chapel and started to propagate the Christian religion more visibly. Those curious were able to take a look at a painting of the Mother of God inside a chapel which he had built. Ricci also used his time in Nanjing to prepare for an audience with the emperor in Beijing, which eventually took place in 1601. The gifts that he intended to present to the court included a crucifix inlaid with pearls, two clocks, a prism, a bible, one copy of a world atlas, a clavichord, as well as various devotional paintings of Christ, the Virgin and the Child with St. John, and the Mother of God, among others. Not only were these items put on public display but they were also paraded through the streets of Nanjing for a week. In addition, Ricci had also brought with him books illustrated with engravings which greatly fascinated the literati. Obviously, pictures were an important instrument for spreading the Christian faith, and local painters, too, must have been aware of Western pictorial art.³² Since Zeng Jing was a resident of Nanjing and no more

30 Cahill, *Distant Mountains*, 213.

31 *Wuza zu*, loc. cit. Cf. Hua Rende, »Zeng Jing de xiaoxianghua«, 99; »Zhongguo lidai renwu tuxiang gaishu«, 73.

32 See Hua Rende, »Zeng Jing de xiaoxianghua«, 100; »Zhongguo lidai renwu tuxiang gaishu«, 74; Hsiang Ta, »European Influences«, 155, 156, and 164; Michael Sullivan, »Some Possible Sources of European Influence on Late Ming and Early Ch'ing Paintings«, *Proceedings of the International*

than 35–36 years of age at the time when Matteo Ricci sojourned in the city, it is well conceivable that he was able to witness these displays, was impressed by what he saw and started to apply Western techniques.

The ‘influence hypothesis’ has spawned highly controversial discussions. Several art historians, especially from East Asia, retort that Zeng Jing developed his art strictly and solely on the basis of an already existent contemporary tradition of realist portrait painting which he merely refined and imbued with new life. Yang Xin 楊新, deputy director of the Palace Museum in Beijing and leading art expert, argues that

illusionism is an inherent part of the Chinese painting tradition. [...] The difference between the Western and Chinese traditions lies in the way the spatial illusion is achieved. Zeng painted portraits which capture each sitter’s reflection as in a mirror. He made no optical adjustments, kept his viewpoint level, and painted with lines and very few shadows, thereby preserving the natural protrusions and sunken parts of his subject’s face. What are known in painting as the ‘three white spots’ (the brow, nose, and lips) stand out. [...] A good observer, he was quick to capture human gestures and expressions, and was expert at using empty space in his compositions to emphasize them.³³

Symposium on Chinese Painting / Zhongguo gubua taolunhui 中國古畫討論會, *National Palace Museum, Republic of China, Taipei, 18th–24th June 1970*, ed. by Wang Chi-wu (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1972), 603; P. Johannes Bettray, S. V. D., *Die Akkomodationsmethode des P. Matteo Ricci S. I. in China* (Roma: Aedes Universitatis Gregorianæ, 1955), 53; Cahill, *Compelling Image*, 71. For a description of the objects and books and their effect see Gu Qiyuan 顧起元 (1565–1628), »Li Madou« 利瑪竇, *Kezuo zhuyi* 客座贅語 [Superfluous Words in the Reception Room], 10 *juan*, *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, [1995]), 1260: 192–193 [*juan* 6, fol. 23b–25a], translated by Hsiang Ta in »European Influences«, 156.

- 33 Yang Xin, »The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)«, *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, ed. by Yang Xin & al. (New Haven [etc.]: Yale University Press, 1997), 243. Cf. Kondō Hidemi 近藤秀実, »Sō Gei to Ōbaku gazō« 曾鯨と黄檗画像 [Zeng Jing and Ōbaku Portraits], *Nihon bijutsu zakkō: Sasaki Kōzō sensei koki kinen ronbunshū* 日本美術襍稿：佐々木剛三先生古稀記念論文集 [Collection of Papers on Japanese Art: Essays in Celebration of the 70th Birthday of Professor Sasaki Kōzō], ed. by Sasaki Kōzō sensei koki kinen ronbunshū henshū iinkai 佐々木剛三先生古稀記念論文集編輯委員會 (Tōkyō: Meitoku shuppansha, 1998), 512. As Kondō argues, Zeng Jing, even if he had indeed seen Matteo Ricci’s Mother of God painting in Nanjing, it would have left but a general impression on him, while he developed his style entirely based on traditional foundations. Cahill, too, avoids an extremist position by stating that Zeng Jing »would appear to have inherited a tradition that had survived for centuries on a functional basis, carried on by anonymous practitioners without emerging to the level of art, and to have elevated it through his own achievement to the status of a respectable genre of painting«. Cahill, *Distant Mountains*, 213.

Western scholars, too, have cautioned that the occasional early expressions of enthusiasm for Western art and its illusionistic techniques should not be overrated, especially since artists themselves would never admit to such an influence and since this enthusiasm is also not reflected in later writings.³⁴

The question standing unresolved, there is little dispute, however, that Zeng Jing's style and technique were imitated by a handful of students and artists of later generations such as Xie Bin 謝彬 (1604–1681), Shen Shao 沈韶 (1605–after 1681), Zhang Yuan 張遠 (1765–1833), Guo Gong 郭鞏, Xu Yi 徐易, Liu Xiangkai 劉祥開, Zhang Qi 張琦, and Shen Ji 沈紀 (all dates unknown), who are collectively referred to as the *Bochen pai* 波臣派 (Bochen school). His style even reached Japan during the 17th century and led to the creation of highly mimetic paintings known as 'Ōbaku portraits' (*Ōbaku gazō* 黄檗画像) by monks of the Ōbaku School of Zen Buddhism.³⁵

Zeng Jing and the other painters of the 'Bochen school' employed two kinds of techniques for portraits: with the »bone-immersing convexities-concavities method« (*mogu aotufa* 沒骨凹凸法), the artist first applied black watery ink in several dozen layers as the chief means of description, especially when working out the facial features, and then supplemented the structure with light colours. No black ink outlines or other structural lines ('bones') were used. The other technique (*goule tiancai fa* 鈎勒填彩法) started with thin contour lines in ink for a light preliminary sketch (*goule*). After this, multiple layers of colour washes were added (*tiancai*).³⁶

Zeng Jing excelled in both techniques, even though most of his surviving portraits, including the present one of Liu Jingting, belong to the first type. In all cases, the specific technique was employed only for the face, while the rest of the sitter's body was done in conventional style. Compared with the figure's almost transparent hands, the natural realism of Liu Jingting's head becomes all the more apparent: after he had drawn Liu's face in 'immersed-bone work', the

34 See Cahill, *Distant Mountains*, 214; Osvald Sirén, »Influences from European Painting«, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles*, 7 vols. (London: Lund Humphries, 1958), Part II: *The Later Centuries*, V: *The Later Ming and Leading Ch'ing Masters*, 88–94. Sirén, although not denying early impulses, likens the influence of Matteo Ricci & al. to »slight ripples on the surface« (p. 90), since interest in Ricci's items »was limited to the circle of his personal acquaintances and was more in the nature of a passing curiosity than of a systematic study« (p. 89).

35 See Kondō, »Sō Gei to Ōbaku gazō«.

36 Cf. Cahill, *Distant Mountains*, 213–214; Zhang Geng 張庚 (1685–1760), entry on Gu Ming 顧銘 & al., »Guochao hua zhenglu« 國朝畫徵錄 [Evidential Records of Painters from the Reigning Dynasty], in *Huashi congshu* 畫史叢書, box 2, fasc. 5: 38–39 [*juan* 2]; Hsiang Ta, »European Influences«, 164–165.

artist daubed it with layers of ochre and other colours, thus producing a three-dimensional effect of the facial bones and skin texture.

The painting has a very intimate character to it: upon closer inspection, it becomes obvious that Zeng Jing worked out even minute details such as wrinkles, eyelashes, and discolorations. Unlike the majority of portraits of the time, the man in the picture is shown here not as an type figure but with coarse skin, half-closed, almost limp eyelids, and bent posture as the outward signs of the inner self. The performer, who is looking directly at the beholder, seems to harbour thoughts without enunciating them.³⁷

As several contemporary authors attest, Liu Jingting was nicknamed 'Liu Pockmarks' (Liu Mazi 麻子) and considered rather ugly.³⁸ Zhang Dai in his description of Liu Jingting's performances mentions that Liu had a 'swarthy complexion' (*libei* 黧黑) and that his face was full of 'bumpy scars' or 'pimples' (*balei* 疔瘡).³⁹ Obviously, no such disfigurements are to be detected in this portrait. Since Zhang had met Liu and listened to him perform two years prior to the painting in 1638, the scars could not have been the result of a later pox infection or other disease. Liu Jingting may have requested that they not be included, or Zeng Jing may have opted to ignore Liu's ugly features, as was also the custom with idealized portraits of the time, in favour of a stronger focus on the performer's »inner essence«.⁴⁰

37 Cf. the description by Mei Yunqiu in the *Yuemu* catalogue, op. cit., 66–67.

38 See, for instance, Cao Zhenji 曹貞吉, »Diao Liu Mazi« 吊柳麻子 [Lament for Liu Pockmarks], *Kexue sanji* 珂雪三集, quoted in Zhu Xiaogui 朱小桂, »Qingchu wentan “zeng Liu” xianxiang kaolun« 清初文壇“贈柳”現象考論 [An Investigative Discussion of the Phenomenon of »Dedicating to Liu« in Literary Circles of the Early Qing] (M.A. thesis, Changchun: Jilin daxue, 2008), 120; Wei Geng 魏耕, »Liu Mazi shuoshu gexing« 柳麻子說書歌行 [Song Poem on Liu Pockmarks Telling Stories], *Xuoweng shiji* 雪翁詩集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1985), 81–82 [juan 5 (*qiyangu* 七言古)]; Xu Jian 徐緘, »Liu Mazi xing« 柳麻子行 [Song Poem on Liu Pockmarks], in *Tianxia mingjia shiguan* 天下名家詩觀, comp. by Deng Hanyi 鄧漢儀, *chujì* 初集 (Ji'nan: Qi-Lu shushe, 2001), 139 [j. 5]; Yan Ermei 閻爾梅, »Liu Mazi xiaoshuo xing« 柳麻子小說行 [Song poem on Liu Pockmarks and his narrations], *Baidashanren shiji biannian zhu* 白奩山人詩集編年注, ed. by Wang Rutao 王汝濤 and Cai Shengyin 蔡生印 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2002), 519–521. Numerous other sources also mention this nickname as part of the text.

39 Zhang Dai 張岱, »Liu Mazi shuoshu« 柳麻子說書 [Liu Pockmarks Telling Stories], *Tao'an mengyi* 陶庵夢憶, in *Shuoku* 說庫, ed. by Wang Wenru 王文濡, 60 fasc. in 6 boxes (Shanghai: Wenming shuju, 1915), box 3, fasc. 38, juan 5, fol. 3ab.

40 Cf. Hua Rende, »Zeng Jing de xiaoxianghua«, 102. As Hua Rende demonstrates, Zeng Jing and his school did not generally shy away from painting ugly features.

The painting shows the storyteller wearing a *wujin* 烏巾, or official's square hat, and clad in a white gown, the—inexpensive and modest—dress of a late Ming man of letters.⁴¹ Although he is seated and his body generously covered by the gown, Liu Jingting obviously had a tall figure. In terms of overall composition, the portrait is very similar to Zeng's portrait of Wang Shimin 王時敏 (1616) and particularly to those of Zhang Qingzi 張卿子 (1622) and the reclining Ge Yilong 葛一龍 (1614?) who are likewise shown with white gowns and black hats.⁴² Apart from the rock on which the performer rests, there are no other props, attributes or landscape details, only empty space, thus drawing the viewer's attention even more strongly to Liu Jingting's face, posture and body language. As Yang Xin has pointed out, »highlighting a persona's character and aspirations by surrounding the figure with empty space is the most characteristic feature of Zeng Jing's portraits«. In particular, »large areas of empty space are associated with the elegant manner of a scholar and recluse. Thus, even though the size of the figure is small, his character looms large«. ⁴³

With his highly effective technique, Zeng Jing thus managed to catch the ups and downs of a performer who leads an arduous life, while the spatial arrangement and clothing suggest a man cultivating the attitude of the elegant but modest literatus who keeps himself detached from worldly concerns.

The Inscriptions

As was the custom for portraits of the Ming-Qing period, sitters often invited distinguished contemporaries and good friends to leave inscriptions or 'appraisals' (*zan* 贊). The phenomenon can be seen on several of Zeng Jing's portraits, including the one of Ge Yilong, and such is also the case with the portrait of Liu Jingting. Fifteen appraisals were written on the main frame surrounding the figure, while one appraisal (1) was prominently attached above on a special band of paper, most likely after the other inscriptions had been added. In addition, a separate band of paper with an undated colophon by a friend of one of the appraisers has been mounted below the main frame.

Appraisal 1, by Fan Jingwen, is dated »spring of Chongzhen *renwu*«. Since this particular year (Chongzhen 15) lasted from 30 January 1642 to 18 February

41 The *geshan* 葛衫 is a garment with a grained surface, the warp being made from silk and the woof from 'kudzu vine' or 'ko-hemp' (*ge*).

42 For a description and a reproduction of the portrait of Wang Shimin, see Yang Xin, »The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)«, 243 and 245; of Zhang Qingzi, 243 and 246; of Ge Yilong, 247.

43 Yang Xin, »The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)«, 243.

1643, Fan must have written it down some time during the three months from the end of January to late April 1642. Appraisals 2–9 were obviously added in chronological order from the upper right down to the lower left. Number 9 carries the date »autumn of the year *gengchen*« which, if taken literally, lasted from 17 August through 12 November 1640. Accordingly, and since the painting was finished on 23 October, these first appraisals must have been added within a short three-week period after the painting's completion, perhaps even during a single session. Summing up our calculations, we may state that all appraisals (i.e., inscriptions 1–16) were written down within a period of one and a half years after the painting had been finished, between late October 1640 and late April 1642, while the majority were probably added within just a few weeks after completion.

〔一〕淵乎若人，縱心條暢，居屈志伸，幽遐超曠，為俠為禪，亦文亦史，人見其表，未測其裏，其塵外霞蹤，足〔意〕對山水者乎。時崇禎壬午春日范景文題于白門之餐冰齋中。〔Oblong relief seal at the beginning of inscription, upper right corner:〕思仁堂。〔Square intaglio seal:〕范景文印。〔Square relief seal:〕大司馬。

- [1] How profound is this man! Giving free reign to his sentiments, he prospers and flourishes, [but] is forced into an inferior position to unfold his aspirations. Deep and serene he is, far-sighted and broad-minded, a chivalrous warrior and a monk, [proficient] in literature as well as in history. People [merely] behold his exterior but do not grasp his interior: beyond his [earthly] footprints the rosy-clouded traces [of a saint], fully intent to match the mountains and rivers!—Date: Inscribed by Fan Jingwen at Canbingzhai [Ice-Eating Hall] in Baimen [i. e., Nanjing], in the spring of the year Chongzhen *renwu*. (Sirentang [Thinking of Benevolence Hall]; Seal of Fan Jingwen; Minister of War).

Having spent many years as an itinerant entertainer in the Jiangnan region, by the 1630s or perhaps earlier Liu Jingting had fixed his abode in the 'Southern Capital', Nanjing. There, it appears, he made his living mainly through private invitations (so-called *tanghui* 堂會) and was able to secure long-term engagements with prominent households, among them that of Fan Jingwen (1587–1644), *zi* Mengzhang 夢章, *hao* Siren 思仁, Canbingzhai 餐冰齋, etc.⁴⁴ Fan had come to Nanjing in 1634 to serve as Censor-in-Chief to the Right (*you du yushi* 右都御史),

44 In *Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記 [Miscellaneous Records from Wooden Plank Bridge], Yu Huai 余懷 (1616–1696) mentions that »the Minister of War Fan [Jingwen] from Wuqiao 吳橋 and Chancellor He [Ruchong] 何如龍 [d1641] from Tongcheng 桐城 engaged him as a guest-retainer of honour [*shangke* 上客]. See »Banqiao zaji«, in Yu Huai, *Banqiao zaji*; Zhuquan Jushi 珠泉居士, *Xu Banqiao zaji* 續板橋雜記; Jin Sifen 金嗣芬, *Banqiao zaji bu* 補 (Nanjing: Nanjing chubanshe, 2006), 26 [juan 3].

and was soon appointed President of the Nanjing Board of Military Affairs (*Nanjing bingbu shangshu* 南京兵部尚書). Not long after the Manchu troops had started to move south in 1638, he was dismissed from office for submitting a critical memorial but continued to live in Baixia 白下, which is nowadays a district of Nanjing. Fan was rehabilitated in the autumn of 1642 and moved to Beijing where he continued to serve as President of the Board of Public Works (*gongbu shangshu* 工部尚書). Two years later, when Beijing was conquered by the rebels under Li Zicheng, Fan committed suicide, as was expected of a loyal official, by drowning himself in a well.⁴⁵ Since the inscription was composed in the spring of 1642, before his rehabilitation, Fan's use of a seal Minister of War (*da sima*), strictly speaking, was of course not entirely appropriate although it reflected his honorary status.

The text has not been included in the »xiangzan« 像贊 ('portrait appraisals') section of Fan Jingwen's collected works,⁴⁶ but this was a choice made by later editors. Nonetheless, it is an interesting and also touching piece of literature, for Fan is quoting almost verbatim several short sections from Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247–300) »Xiahou changshi lei« 夏侯常侍誄 (Funeral Dirge for Regular Attendant Xiahou).⁴⁷ Pan, a leading poet of his time, had befriended Xiahou Zhan 夏侯湛 (243–291) when the two began their careers at a young age in the 260s.⁴⁸ The dirge bespeaks Pan's deep-felt affection for and sorrow over the death of his friend. Even though Fan Jingwen's words were written in a different context and to a different purpose, borrowing from Pan's composition implies that the minister considered Liu Jingting not simply as an entertainer who could be engaged and dismissed at discretion but as a good friend whom he trusted and who shared the same ideals. His appraisal in a nutshell echoes several of the sentiments and attitudes towards Liu Jingting that the other inscribers had already presented in their own inscriptions.

45 See Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 & al., *Ming shi* 明史 [History of the Ming], 28 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 22: 6834–6835 [juan 265 (*liezuan* 列傳 153)]; cf. also Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 229–230.

46 Cf. *Fan Wenzhongji* 范文忠集, 9 juan (Taipei: Huanqiu shuju, 1966).

47 There, we find “人見其表，莫測其裏。〔…〕，居屈志申。〔…〕淵乎若人！縱心條暢。” See *Wenxuan* 文選 [Selection from Literature], 6 vols., ed. by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 6: 2449–2453 [juan 57].

48 For the biography of Xiahou Zhan see Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 & al., *Jin shu* 晉書, 10 vols., 130 juan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 5: 1491 [j. 55]. Both men were famous for their handsome looks. See Liu Yiqing 劉義慶, *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 [New Account of Tales of the World], juan 14, no 9; translation in *A New Account of Tales of the World*, tr. by Richard B. Mather (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 310.

〔二〕大地不過幅紙耳，幾何而能容□ [erased] 子，吾聞□ [do.] 子箕踞遨遊，則善容莫如□ [do.] 子，獨吾所對者，方巾葛衫筇 [Duanfang reads 節] 杖，視此丹青便殊，抑愈進而古處，而風流漸不親乎。廬陵社小弟趙嶷題。[Square intaglio seal:] 趙嶷之印。[Square relief seal:] 少阜。

- [2] The world does not exceed a sheet of paper. How many times can it fit the [—] master? I have heard that the [—] master roams about at pleasure, seated [on the floor] with his legs stretched out; then, for a good fit, nobody would be better than the [—] master! There is only me whom he is facing, with his square hood, kudzu gown, and bamboo walking staff. Looking at the casual, outstanding [quality] of this picture, I should better proceed and live according to those principles of old—but the romantic ideal is gradually becoming less familiar.—Inscribed by your little club brother from Luling,^[49] Zhao Yi. (Seal of Zhao Yi; Shaofu).

Zhao Yi,⁵⁰ presumably the first inscriber on the scroll, used the opportunity to highlight Liu Jingting's boundless imagination and ability to send his listeners on flights of thought. In his performances and discussions, the artist presented patterns of behaviour that were appealing but already deemed old-fashioned by his contemporaries and too demanding.

The three missing characters could have been a Qing-period taboo word which had to be removed. More likely however, Zhao Yi had used Liu Jingting's nickname 'Mazi' (Pockmarks), perhaps with the explicit purpose of teasing the performer, perhaps simply unaware of Liu's sensitivities regarding his exterior. By erasing the offensive first character, the performer, or someone else in his stead, turned the unflattering sobriquet into a respectful form of address, »zi« (master). This assumption is corroborated by the fact that the portrait, contrary to Zeng Jing's usual practice, does not show Liu's scars (see above).

〔三〕溫然其顙 [Duanfang reads 貌]，戟乎鬚眉，澄滌 [corrected from 襟, as indicated in small script at the end of the inscription] 胸臆，伉直忤時，豪邁逸世，狂傲不羈，風流文采，蘊古弋奇，霜蹄剛 [Duanfang reads 剛] 足，伏櫪志期，片石跌坐，優游自宜。劉若宰。[Square intaglio seal:] 劉若宰印。

- [3] Of gentle appearance his forehead, like a halberd his beard and eyebrows,^[51] purified of defiling illusion his bosom. Upright and non-conforming, bold and unconstrained,

49 Luling refers to the city of Jizhou 吉州, nowadays known as Ji'an 吉安, Jiangxi province.

50 I was not able to find out much about this person, apart from the information that he was the author of a work titled *Baiyun shigao* 百韻詩稿 [Draft Poems in One-Hundred Rhymes], 1 *juan*. See the entry in *Fanshu ouji* 販書偶記 [Occasional Notes on Purchasing Books], *juan* 7. <news.artxun.com/jinxiangben-569-2843871.shtml> (last retrieval 24 May 2011).

51 The *ji* 戟 ('halberd') has a two-pointed crescent-shaped blade.

domineering and uninhibited—an unconventional spirit with elegant literary taste, who enwombs the old and sheathes the strange. [He is like that old warhorse] with frosted hoofs and strong feet [which stands in the stable], bent over its trough, [but full of] aspirations [despite its old] age.^[52] There he has placed himself on a solitary rock,^[53] carefree and self-composed.—Liu Ruozai (Seal of Liu Ruozai).

Liu Ruozai (1595–1640?), from Huaining 懷寧 (today's Anqing 安慶, Anhui province), was an eminent and influential contemporary of Liu Jingting: The fourth son of the Provincial Administration Commissioner (*chengxuan buzheng shi si* 承宣布政使司) of Shandong, Liu Shangzhi 劉尚志, he had passed the palace examination as the top-scoring candidate (*zhuangyuan* 狀元) in 1628 and had quickly risen through the ranks.⁵⁴ Liu Ruozai excelled as a calligrapher and painter and was interested in Buddhism. A tasty glutinous rice dish (*Huizhou zhuangyuanfan* 徽州狀元飯) is named after him. In 1638 (?), he had to memorialize the emperor five times before being granted permission to return home and care for his ailing mother.

The concept of loyalty was apparently very important to Liu Ruozai, and he always tried to promote people who shared his ideals: In 1629, he recommended the later Minister of War and defender of Yangzhou, Shi Kefa 史可法 (1601–1645), for appointment as grand coordinator of Anhui. In the following year, he sponsored Ruan Zhidian 阮之鈿 (d.1639), who became magistrate (*zhixian* 知縣) of Yicheng 穀城, Huguang 湖廣 province.⁵⁵ Ruan refused to surrender the magistrate's seals to rebel soldiers dispatched by their leader Zhang Xianzhong

52 Cf. the well-known line from the war song »Buchu Xiamen xing: gui sui shou« 步出夏門行·龜雖壽 [Song of Going Out of Xiamen: Though the Tortoise Lives Long] by Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220): »老驥伏櫪，志在千里；烈士暮年，壯心不已« [An old war-horse lying in his stall, / Still longs to gallop a thousand miles; / A noble-hearted man in his evening years, / Stout-hearted, never abandons his proud aspirations].

53 *Diezuo* 跌坐 usually denotes a stylized movement in theatre, by which the actor suddenly falls down and sits on the stage. This is used as an expression of indignation or wrath. However, the term can also refer to the dignified posture of a sitting Buddha, which is probably meant here.

54 For Liu Ruozai's biography see the Kangxi period »*Anqing fu zhi*« 安慶府志 [Gazetteer of Anqing Prefecture], in *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng* 中國地方志集成: *Anhui fuxian zhi ji* 安徽府縣志輯 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1998), 10: 405 [juan 16, fol. 19a]. Cf. <www.aqdfz.gov.cn/news_show.asp?id={DAE21-9565-42AC-BB70-17AD13C25187}> (last retrieval 24 May 2010). The site »Guangdong Huainingren« [People from Huaining in Guangdong] reports that Liu had passed the provincial examination the year before, i.e., in Tianqi 7 (1627). See <www.gdhnr.com/huaining-view.asp?id=449> (last retrieval 24 May 2010).

55 The Ming province of Huguang included roughly the equivalent of modern-day Hunan and Hubei provinces plus parts of modern-day Guangdong and Guangxi.

張獻忠 (1606–1647) and was killed on the spot. It is easy to imagine that Liu Jingting, who was later to be given an opportunity to prove his own loyalty in the camp of Zuo Liangyu, was much to Liu Ruozai's liking.

Liu Ruozai's biography in *Anqing fu zhi* does not specify the year of his death, only that he was posthumously awarded the name Zhanshi 詹事 (also a title, 'Head of the Household Administration of the Heir Apparent'), that he was conferred the title of Chief Minister of the Court of the Imperial Stud (*taipu qing* 太僕卿) and that he was granted burial sacrifices. According to the additional information given in the few online sources by local researchers, his mother died in the 1st month of the year Chongzhen 13 (i.e. between 23 January and 21 February 1640), and he himself succumbed to illness on 13 April 1640, at the age of 46 *sui*. This date, however, is at odds with the date of the painting which was finished more than six months after Liu Ruozai's alleged death. Unless the Liu Ruozai of the appraisal is different from the historical person described above—which can hardly be the case, since the colophon (17), below, confirms his identity—or unless the painting was not finished well before October 1640 (see 14 and 16), the date of his death needs to be re-established.

〔四〕坐臥石上，如聽泉音 [to be corrected from 聲, as indicated in small script at the end of the inscription]，南陽未老，抱膝何吟，茗甌松壘，詩意禪心，貌樸而文，氣靜以深。楚公安社弟袁恭壽。 [Signature stamp at beginning of inscription:] 袁。 [Square intaglio seal:] 袁恭壽印。

[4] [There he] sits, reclining on a rock, as if he was listening to the sound of a spring. [This] Nanyang is not yet old, holding his knee [in contemplation] and humming some [tune]. Debates over a cup of tea,^[56] in poetic mood and with a meditative mindset, his appearance simple and cultured, his spirit still and profound.—Your younger club brother from Gong'an in the Chu region,^[57] Yuan Gongshou (Yuan; Seal of Yuan Gongshou).

»Nanyang«, a city in the province of Henan, is a reference to Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234), the brilliant and loyal chief-strategist to the great warlord and founder of the kingdom of Shu Han 蜀漢, Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223). As the saga goes, Liu

56 *Songzhu* 松壘, literally, 'pine [branches as a] stag [whisk]'. The *zhu* was a kind of deer, possibly a yak. During the Wei-Jin period (220–420), literary celebrities, Daoists, and other debaters would yield a whisk made from the tail of this animal (*zhuwei* 壘尾) in their *qingtan* 清談 ('pure talks'), the intellectual activity fashionable during the 3rd and 4th centuries. Cf. the expression *zbutan* 壘談 ('stag's tail pure talk').

57 »Chu« 楚 refers to the central parts of the Ming province of Huguang, roughly equivalent to the territory of modern-day Hunan and Hubei.

Bei had to make three attempts before he was finally able to meet Zhuge Liang at the latter's farm on Reclining Dragon Ridge (Wolong Gang 臥龍崗, i.e., the 'ridge of the undiscovered talent') near Nanyang and was able to persuade Zhuge into serving as his adviser.⁵⁸

Yuan Gongshou's hometown Gong'an, on the banks of the Yangtze River in Hubei province and now a district under the administration of Jingzhou 荊州, was a place of great strategic importance during the period of the Three Kingdoms (220–280). The area still abounds with sites marking major historic events and visits by important warriors and rulers. Gong'an Gate, in the southeast of the Ancient City wall of Jingzhou, is said to be the one by which Liu Bei entered the city whenever he passed through. By comparing Liu Jingting to one of the key figures of this important historical period, Zhuge Liang, Yuan Gongshou expressed a special connection to the performer and stressed his qualities as an able strategist and adviser.

〔五〕蒼雅端凝，文若之像：俊偉風流，文若之狀。畢懋良。[Square intaglio seal:] 畢懋良印。

[5] Elegant and dignified deportment: a likeness of Wenruo. An aura of greatness and distinction: the manner of a Wenruo.—Bi Maoliang. (Seal of Bi Maoliang).

Bi Maoliang (*jinsbi* 1595), *zi* Shigao 師皋, *hao* Jiansu 見素, was from Xixian 歙縣, Huizhou 徽州 prefecture.⁵⁹ Having serving in several medium-ranked appointments, Bi had eventually been promoted Vice President to the Right on the Board of Revenue (*Hubu you shilang* 戶部右侍郎), but had been dismissed when he refused to cooperate with the clique of Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 (1568–1627). In the Chongzhen period, he rose to Vice President to the Right on the Nanjing Board of Military Affairs (*Nanjing bingbu zuo shilang* 南京兵部左侍郎). Bi would later resign in 1644 when Li Zicheng conquered Beijing.

This is the first of several inscriptions referring to the performer by the sobriquet »Wenruo« 文若, which was the *zi* of Xun Yu 荀彧 (163–212), a successful strategist and eminent statesman of the Three Kingdoms period. Xun began his government career in 189 and served different warlords for some time before Cao Cao, who had recognized his enormous talent, appointed him army commandant in 191. Xun Yu proved invaluable to Cao's military projects and

58 See ch. 38 of *Sanguo zhi yanyi* 三國志演義 (literally 'Exposition on the Annals of the Three Kingdoms', commonly known as »Romance of the Three Kingdoms«).

59 See *Zhongguo lidai renming dacidian* 中國歷代人物大辭典 [Comprehensive Dictionary of Personal Names from Chinese History], 2 vols., ed. by Zhang Huizhi 張搗之 & al. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 1: 519.

became his most important and trusted adviser. In 211, however, he greatly displeased Cao Cao when the latter signalled his wish to be raised to the rank of duke (*gong* 公) and Xun opposed the move because he upheld his loyalty to the Han emperor whom he saw weakened. Xun's death in the following year gave rise to much suspicion.⁶⁰

Perhaps it is mere coincidence, but Xun Yu's posthumous name (*shi* 謚) was Jinghou 敬候, which of course shares the first character with the performer's personal name, »Jingting«. He was described in the historical sources as a tall and handsome gentleman – which no doubt must have pleased Liu Jingting.

〔六〕熱面筆中，熱腸筆外。受盡艱難，於斯自在。文若無文，茲文實賴。坐石不言，笑傲覆載。西陵社弟劉韜。[Square intaglio seal:] 劉韜。

[6] A glowing face when he writes, glowing enthusiasm when not. Having suffered plenty of hardship, here he is at ease. A Wenruo without written words [*wen*]: such cultivation [*wen*] is truly reliable. He sits on a rock and does not speak, laughing irreverently at heaven and earth.—Your younger club brother Liu Wei from Xiling.^[61] (Liu Wei).

There are other instances attesting to the fact that Liu Jingting, unlike the majority of entertainers of his time, was able to read and write on a level that went clearly beyond basic literacy. However, Liu Wei's lines suggest that the performer needed to concentrate hard when writing, like someone not in full control of his activity. Liu Jingting's literary dilettantism is corroborated by a remark by one of his educated friends, Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664), poking fun at the performer as a would-be literatus.⁶²

60 For the biography of Xun Yu see Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, 5 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 2 [*Wei shu* 魏書]: 307–332 [*juan* 10]. Cf. the entry in Rafe de Crespigny, *A Biographical Dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms (23–220 AD)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 928–929.

61 Xiling was the former name of the town of Xixing 西興, near the city of Xiaoshan 蕭山, Zhejiang.

62 »Qian Muzhai once said to someone: “In what does Liu Jingting excel?” The other said: “In storytelling.” Muzhai said: “Not so. His strength is in written correspondence,” for Jingting very much liked to compose letters and insert learned references, but the pages were riddled with erroneous characters, and Muzhai thus made fun of him« (錢牧齋嘗謂人曰：「柳敬亭何所優長？」人曰：「說書。」牧齋曰：「非也，其長在尺牘耳。」蓋敬亭極喜寫書調文，別字滿紙，故牧齋以此諧之。) Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲, »Liu Jingting zhuan« 柳敬亭傳 [Biography of Liu Jingting], »Nanlei wending« 南雷文定 [Nanlei's Definitive Prose Writings], *Congshu jicheng jianbian* 叢書集成簡編, ed. by Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1965) 1: 165 [*qianji* 前集, *juan* 10].

- 〔七〕擊石火出，火原非石；呼墨肖人，人原非墨。兩物非非，風幡石泐，謂文若真在於斯耶？豈不知子之英標朗襟遍海內，而茲獨蹲石以兀兀。古宛社弟孫曰繩。
 [Olive-shaped relief seal at beginning of inscription:] 墨守□□ [Hua Rende proposes:⁶³ 墨守白雲隅]。[Square relief seal:] 孫曰繩。[Square relief seal:] 墨守。
- [7] Strike a stone, and fire comes out, yet fire originally is not a stone. Breathe out ink to portray a man, yet man originally is not made of ink. [These] two things are not [completely] unreal [illusions], [just like] the flag in the wind or cracks in a rock. Does it mean that Wenruo really is to be found here? Who would not know that your literary grace and broad ambitions are [noted] throughout the country? And there you squat alone on a rock, motionless.—Your younger club brother from Guwan, Sun Yuesheng. (Vigilantly guarding the [—]; Sun Yuesheng; The Vigilant Guardian).

The author, Sun Yuesheng (*zi* Zhigong 直公, *hao* Buyan 不岩) was a native of Huacheng 宣城, Anhui province. He would later, in Shunzhi 13 (1656), become a tribute student (*gongsheng* 貢生) and Assistant Instructor (*xundao* 訓導) at the Confucian school of Fengxian 豐縣. Sun was a gifted poet and painter of landscapes and flowers and belonged to the so-called Huacheng school of painting (Huacheng huapai 宣城畫派), also known as the Huangshan school (Huangshan huapai 黃山畫派).⁶⁴

The inscription bears testimony to the fascination which the striking realism of Zeng Jing's portraits held for scholars from the late Ming. Sun Yuesheng engages the question of the illusionist nature of objects and their relationship to an abstract truth or inner essence which they represent. With his metaphor of the flag in the wind (*feng fan* 風幡), Sun is of course referring to the *kōan* (*gong'an* 公案) on the Sixth Zen Patriarch Huineng 慧能 (638–713) who overheard two monks debating whether it was a flag that was moving or the wind. By stating his opinion that neither the flag nor the wind moved, only their minds, Huineng argued strongly for the non-duality of subject and object, of external nature and buddha-mind.⁶⁵

63 Personal communication, Sep 13, 2010.

64 See Qiao Xiaojun 喬曉軍, *Zhongguo meisujia renming cidian* 中國美術家人名辭典 [Dictionary of Names of Chinese Artists]: *Buyi erbian* 補遺二編 [Second Addendum] (Xi'an: San Qin chubanshe, 2007), 189. Cf. <www.xcdafz.gov.cn/news/UploadFile/200911/20091109102601320.doc>. The Huacheng school of painting included artists from the Mei clan of Xuancheng, such as Mei Qing 梅清 (1623–1697), Mei Geng 梅庚, Mei Wei 梅蔚, Mei Chong 梅翀, Mei Zhuocheng 梅琢成, as well as Cai Zhenchun 蔡秦春, who was also born there, and Shi Tao 石濤 (1642–1718), who lived in the area for some decades.

65 The story has been included as case 29 in Wumen Huikai's 無門慧開 (1183–1260) collection of Zen *kōan*, *Wumen guan* 無門關 (The Gateless Gate; preface 1228); T.48.2005.296c.18–20, online

〔八〕昔壺子善弢神，季咸三視尚 [Duanfang reads 而] 反走。茲文若兄影徑 [Duanfang reads 經, but anonymous reader also suggests 徑] 尺耳，可定而不可定者，胸吞雲夢、氣超塵景 [corrected from 長 by inscription author]，時而巖巖松立，時而汪汪千頃，又時而狂笑狂歌，放跡萍梗，雖然神無方而易無體，似 [Duanfang reads 以] 是影 [Duanfang also reads 影, but anonymous reader suggests 彰] 文若兄之影 [Duanfang also reads 影, but anonymous reader suggests 彩] 與？升恒而並永。溫陵宗社弟嘉翔。[Square intaglio seal:] 嘉翔。

- [8] In former times, Master Hu concealed his spiritual force very well: Ji Xian saw him thrice and ran away. The image of this elder Wenruo brother is merely one foot wide and can be determined—or not: His bosom [can] swallow [an area the size of the] Yunmeng [marshes], his vital force transcend the worldly realm. At times, he stands majestic like a pine, at times, he is boundless like a watery expanse of thousands of acres, and at other times, he laughs and sings lustily. He roams about from pillar to post and has no fixed abode. And even though a spirit has no set location and turns formless, does this image not appear to be the image of the elder Wenruo brother? May he prosper and last forever!^[66]—Your younger clansman and club brother from Wenling, [Cao] Jiexiang. (Jiexiang).

The author of this inscription, Cao Jiexiang,⁶⁷ chimes in and continues the thoughts expressed by the preceding author about the illusionary nature of objects and appearances. Once more Liu Jingting is compared to Xun Yu (Wenruo) whose veritable reincarnation he appears to be. He is also compared to Master Hu Qiu 壺丘 (Hu Lin 林), a Warring States (475–221 BCE) philosopher from the state of Zheng 鄭 and teacher of Master Lie (Liezi 列子). The reference here is to the book *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Master Zhuang) which relates the anecdote about Hu's test of strength with the sorcerer and fortune-teller Ji Xian 季咸:

at <http://www.cbeta.org/result/normal/T48/2005_001.htm> (last retrieval 17 Oct 2011). See also *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 [Records on the Transmission of the Lamp from the Jingde Era], Kōshōji 興聖寺 edition, photographic reprint *Rokuso dankyō shobon shōsei* 六祖壇經諸本集成 [Grand Compendium of All Works by the Sixth Patriarch on the »Platform Sūtra«, ed. by Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山 (Kyōto: Chūbun shuppansha, 1976), pp. 52f–53a.

- 66 The expression *shengheng* 昇恆 is a reduction from the verse in the *Shijing* 詩經 [Book of Songs], »Xiaoya« 小雅 no 6, »Tianbao« 天保: “如月之恆，如日之升” (‘like the moon constant in phase, like the sun arising’). The compound was later used as a congratulatory phrase for the flourishing of enterprises and careers.
- 67 I was not able to find any information about this individual. Wenling refers to the city of Quanzhou 泉州, Fujian province. Liu Jingting's original clan name was Cao, his personal name Yongchang 永昌.

The people of Zheng, *Zhuangzi* tells us, were scared of Ji Xian since he was able to predict how soon an individual would die. Master Hu decided to test Ji Xian: The sorcerer visited, and when he left, he mentioned to Liezi that Hu was soon going to die. In tears, Liezi reported this to Hu. Hu asked Ji Xian to come over again the next day. This time, Ji Xian gained the impression that Hu Qiu had been completely healed. When Ji Xian visited for a third time, he found Hu's condition unstable again. The following day, Ji Xian once more came to see Huzi but all of a sudden ran off, obviously since he had finally realized that the master had all the time deceived him by manipulating the appearance of his inner self.⁶⁸

[九] 錯錯落落俗不容，峨峨厲厲道所宗。洗以越水西溪東，畫以楚山白蘂冬，須知有劍象芙蓉。黃岡弟一翥贊。庚辰秋日。[Oblong intaglio seal at the beginning of inscription:] 秋景堂。[Square intaglio seal:] 王一翥印。[Square relief seal:] 子雲。
[9] Gorgeous and dignified, [something] the vulgar do not comprehend; majestic and fierce, modelled on the Dao. Washed with waters from Yue, east of West Brook.^[69] Painted in a winter with white tree stumps at a mountain in Chu. Behold that sword, [sharp and quick]!^[70]—Inscription by your younger brother Yizhu from Huanggang. In the autumn [of the year] *gengchen*. (Qiujiangtang [Autumn Scenery Hall]; Seal of Wang Yizhu; Ziyun).^[71]

- 68 See *Zhuangzi* [Master Zhuang], *neipian* [Inner Chapters], ch. 7, »Ying diwang« 應帝王 [For the Use of Emperors and Kings], section 5. Cf. *Liezi*, ch. 2, »Huangdi« 黃帝 [The Yellow Emperor], no 13. For a complete translation of the passage in *Zhuangzi* by Nina Correa see <www.daosopen.com/ZZ7.html> (last retrieval 24 May 2011).
- 69 The Chunqiu and Warring States period (770–221 BCE) state of Yue 越 was situated in the area of present-day Zhejiang province. »West Brook« (Xixi 西溪) refers to a wetland area in the western suburbs of Hangzhou with a history that reaches back more than 1800 years.
- 70 »Furong« 芙蓉 (lit. 'lotus'): The king of Yue, Goujian, was in possession of a precious sword named »Chunjun« 純鈞. A foreign guest and sword expert from the state of Qin exclaimed in amazement that the sword was more lustrous and exquisite than lotus (*furong*) that had just started to grow on the river. The expression was later used figuratively for precious sharp swords. See Yuan Kang 袁康 (fl 40 CE), *Yue jueshu* 越絕書 [Historical Records of Yue], *juan* 11, »Yue jue wai zhuanji baojian« 越絕外傳記寶劍, online at <202.101.244.103/guoxue/史部/其他/越绝书/yuejue.htm> (last retrieval 24 May 2011). One of Goujian's swords was discovered in 1965, in excellent condition. See <baike.baidu.com/view/142504.htm> (last retrieval 24 May 2011).
- 71 Wang Yizhu, *zi* Ziyun 子雲, *hao* Bu'an 補庵, was from Huanggang 黃岡 in Huguang 湖廣 province (now part of Hubei province). He was a famous calligrapher who excelled in both standard and cursive styles. In the Tianqi era (1621–1627), he came to Beijing. When Wei Zhongxian tried to win him as a secretary, he fled. He received his *juren* degree in Chongzhen 3 (1630). After the fall of the Ming, he lived in seclusion and dressed in plain clothes. See *Zhongguo lidai renming dacidian*, 1: 160; *Zhongguo gujin shubua mingren dacidian* 中國古今書畫名人

The exact meaning of the individual phrases in this appraisal are yet unclear to me. Perhaps the passage on the state of Yue, West Brook, the ‘white tree stumps’ (*bainie* 白蘗; provided that the calligraphy has been rendered correctly), the mountain, and the sword are to be understood as references to Goujian 句踐 (*reg* 496–465 BCE), king of Yue, who was eventually able to conquer and annex the neighbouring state of Wu 吳 after years of patient perseverance and owing to his wise choice of advisers.

Wang Yizhu, besides Chen Liang (11), Mao Xiang (14) and Gan Yuanding (16), is one of four known members of the reformist Fushe 復社 (Restoration Society) movement on this scroll.

〔十〕淵然其靜以藏，偉然其崛以蒼；鳴猶淒遲不高岡，羽何標炳鍾文章；抑將觀風乎大國，與季子千古同邀翔。為文若盟社兄，弟金嘉會。[Square relief seal:] 金嘉會印。

[10] How profound his calmness in concealment, how impressive he rises majestically into the sky! [His] cries still sad and slow on a low ridge, why are his feathers so sparkling and splendid when [he] focuses on [his] writings? Perhaps to look for opportunities in [our] great nation, he roams about eternally with his youngest son.—For my older sworn club brother Wenruo, your younger brother Jin Jiahui. (Seal of Jin Jiahui).

Apart from the exuberant choice of words to describe a performer’s talent, the appraisal is interesting since the author likens Liu Jingting’s wanderings around the country to those of itinerant strategists of the Zhou period who were in constant search of employment. It also becomes clear that the performer would intermittently leave Nanjing to travel, accompanied by one of his sons (the fact itself that Liu had family and children is already known from other sources). It remains unclear whether his predominant activity and main source of income was through long-term engagements within the city of Nanjing (as with Fan Jingwen, the author of appraisal 1) or rather in the form of rotating performances in the greater Jiangnan area.

The following three appraisals (11–13) more or less speak for themselves and can be largely left uncommented upon:

〔十一〕君凝眸若有縈，吟時少一字耶？渴時少一杯耶？當寂不孤，惟此詩酒，雖足自怡，莫忘湖柳。弟陳梁。[Round relief seal:] 梁。

大辭典 [Comprehensive Dictionary of Famous Ancient and Modern Chinese Calligraphers and Painters], ed. by Chen Binghua 陳炳華 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1998), 26.

- [11] Your gaze is focused as if [you were] entangled [by thoughts]: When you were reciting, did you omit a word? When you were thirsty, did you drink a cup too little? Lonely, yet not alone; but: although poems and wine may be enough for self-amusement, do not forget the Willow [*liu*] on the lake!—Your younger brother Chen Liang. (Liang).^[72]

Chen Liang was a member of the Fushe (Restoration Society), like Wang Yizhu (9) and Gan Yuanding (16).

〔十二〕坐空今古升沉思，賦就詩凌石上雲。眷社小弟朱定之 [Duanfang reads 未定之]。[Square intaglio seal:] 朱定之印。

- [12] Meditating on the present and the past, thoughts on the vicissitudes of an official's life. The poems he composes soar to the clouds above the rock.—With deep affection, your little club brother, Zhu Dingzhi. (Zhu Dingzhi).

〔十三〕蒼松翠柏，鬱然其神；秋水白雲，澹然其襟；踞石撫膝，洞 [Duanfang reads 洞] 然於太虛之庭。南州社弟朱統鏞。

- [13] Luxuriant like verdant pines and emerald cypresses his spirit; indifferent [towards gain] like autumn water and white clouds his ambitions. He sits on a rock, stroking his knee, [like a] clear [stream of water] in the palace of the Great Void.—Your younger club brother from Nanzhou, Zhu Tongcang.

72 Chen Liang (originally Chen Changying 陳昌應), *zi* Mengzhang 夢張 and Zeliang 則梁, various *hao*, was from Haiyan 海鹽, Zhejiang province. He was later to become a famous calligrapher and painter. After the fall of the Ming, he dressed like a monk and became a hermit. See *Zhongguo gujin shubua mingren dacidian*, 487; *Zhongguo lidai renming dacidian*, 1: 1348; *Mingren shiming biecheng zibao suoyin* 名人室名別稱字號索引 [Index of Studio, Alternative, Initiation and Style Names of Ming Individuals], 2 vols., ed. by Yang Tingfu 楊廷福 and Yang Tongfu 楊同甫 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 2: 411.

〔十四〕其詩古而遒，其人穆而幽，爾其千秋之顧虎頭耶？樸巢冒襄題。〔Horizontal rectangular relief seal:〕冒襄之印。〔Horizontal rectangular intaglio seal:〕字辟疆。

[14] His poems ancient and vigorous, solemn and mysterious the man. And what about the eternal painter?^[73]—Inscribed by Puchao Mao Xiang. (Seal of Mao Xiang; Courtesy Name Pijiang).

Around thirty years old when he inscribed the portrait scroll of Liu Jingting, Mao Xiang (1611–1693), *zi* Pijiang 辟疆, *hao* Chaomin 巢民, Pu'an 樸庵 and Puchao 樸巢, is probably the most notable inscriber on this scroll. Born into a gentry family from Rugao 如皋 (Jiangsu), he was a precocious child who published his first collection of poetry when he was only thirteen. Soon after, he became the student of the eminent scholar, painter and calligrapher Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636), and became an acclaimed calligrapher himself. Mao Xiang was a member of the reformist Restoration Society (Fushe) and, cultivating a loyalist attitude, withdrew to his estate in Rugao after the downfall of the Ming and refused to cooperate with the new regime.⁷⁴ The inscription is one of relatively few pieces of Mao Xiang's outstanding calligraphy that have survived to this day.

The question raised by Mao Xiang about the painter—if it was not a rhetorical device—leaves us with two possible implications: either Mao Xiang really did not know who Zeng Jing was, or else Zeng Jing initially had not signed the painting but only did so *ex post*. In the latter case, the painting could well have been finished before October 1640, which in turn might possibly resolve the contradiction between the dating of the painting and Liu Ruo'ai's date of death, pointed out above.

〔十五〕神傳於容，畫技之工；德傳於神，畫之莫窮。文飾其德，葉公之龍；文若其德，如龍點瞳，巍巍乎欲超色相煙霞外，堂堂乎聊結因緣翰墨中。永嘉海賢贊。

〔Square intaglio seal:〕笑魯。〔Square intaglio seal:〕海賢之印。

[15] If the spirit is transmitted through [the subject's] countenance, [this can be attributed] to the painter's workmanship and skill. But if [beyond that, the subject's] virtuous character is transmitted through the spirit, the painting becomes illimitable. The virtue of rhetorical flourish is [merely] like Ye Gong's dragon. The virtue of [this] Wenruo is like [bringing] a dragon [to life] by adding its eyes. Loftily he

73 The phrase *qianqiu zhi Gu Hutou* (literally 'a Gu Hutou of a thousand years') refers to the famous Eastern Jin painter Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca 344–405), whose *zi* as a youth used to be Hutou 虎頭. The name was later also used metonymically for painters in general.

74 Cf. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 566–567.

[soars], wishing to transcend the material appearance of things [and reach the realm] beyond the mists and rosy clouds. Bold is his vision when he chats on the nexus of cause and effect in brush and ink.^[75]—Inscription by Hai Xian [Haixian] from Yongjia. (Xiaolu [The Laughing Fool]; Seal of Hai Xian).

The author of this inscription continues the discussion on the efficaciousness of illusionary painting and its relation to reality, stating that the artist was able to catch Liu Jingting's true essence, that of a man of virtue. What then was Liu Jingting's virtue? To make his point, Hai Xian first refers to the anecdote of Lord Ye Being Fond of Dragons (*Ye gong hao long* 葉公好龍), narrated by Confucius' student Zizhang 子張 to castigate the superficial belief in appearances and the blindness towards real talent.⁷⁶ Admiring Liu Jingting merely for his excellent rhetorical skills, the inscriber holds, would be to treat him simply as a entertainer with a talent for showmanship. Liu Jingting's performances, however, are superior since he knows how to add finishing touches to a story or a discussion in such a way that he imbues them with life and turns them into something sublime.⁷⁷

75 »Brush and ink«: i.e., writing, painting, and calligraphy.

76 When Zizhang heard that the Duke of Lu was in search of talented advisers, he went to see him but after seven days still was not granted an audience. Upset, Zizhang left and had the following anecdote related to the duke as a message: Shen Zhuliang 沈儲梁 was a nobleman and magistrate during the Chunqiu period (770–476 BCE) in the city of Ye 葉 in state of Chu 楚, and so he was called »Lord Ye« (*Ye gong* 葉公) by everybody. Shen was very fond of dragons and had his whole house and fitments decorated with dragon motifs. When the dragon of heaven heard this, he decided to pay him a friendly visit. However, when he landed and his massive body almost overwhelmed the house, Lord Ye was not happy but felt scared. Obviously, Lord Ye loved only depictions of dragons, not the real creatures. See Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BCE), *Xinxu* 新序 [New Preface], ch. 5 »Zazhi wu« 雜事五 [Miscellaneous Affairs, no. 5] <zh.wikisource.org/wiki/新序/05> (last retrieval 24 May 2011).

77 The phrase on 'adding pupils to a dragon's eyes' derives from another well-known *chengyu* (*hua long dian jing* 畫龍點睛). Originally, the phrase referred to the ingenious technique of the Liang dynasty (502–557) painter Zhang Sengyou 張僧繇 (dates unclear), but was later adopted as a metaphor for someone's ability in writing literature or in oral conversations of adding just a little detail in the right spot and thus turning the whole into a vivid, meaningful piece of art. According to the anecdote, Zhang once painted a mural of four dragons in a temple in Jinling 金陵 (Nanjing) but did not paint their eyes. Asked for the reason, he replied that since the eyes represented the dragons' inner essence, they would fly away if he painted them. When the bystanders started laughing incredulously, Zhang demonstrated the effect by adding the eyes to one of the dragons. As a result, dark clouds started scudding across the sky, thunderous flashes lit up, and the dragon rose up, leaving everyone stupefied. See the section on Zhang Sengyou 張

The Buddhist theme raised in this inscription suggests that the author might have been a monk (Haixian being a typical monk's name) or had at least strong Buddhist inclinations.

〔十六〕坐石撫膝，其容穆然，何人捉筆，繪此 [Duanfang reads 者, but anonymous reader corrects to 此] 遺賢。雖無言 [Duanfang reads 乏 and gives 言 as an alternative] 也，眉端頰際，風雅翩翩。江右社弟甘元鼎。[Square intaglio seal:] 甘元鼎印。

[16] Sitting on a rock and stroking his knee, dignified his mien. Who wielded the brush and painted this ancient sage? Although he utters no word, the space between his eyebrows and his cheeks bespeak his elegance and grace.—Your younger club brother from Jiangyou [i.e., Jiangxi], Gan Yuanding.^[78] (Seal of Gan Yuanding).

As in the inscription by Mao Xiang above, the question posed by Gan Yuanding suggests that the painter, Zeng Jing, was either not well known among Liu Jingting's literati friends or else had not yet signed his painting.

Gan Yuanding is one of four confirmed members of the Fushe movement on this scroll.

Finally, written on a paper strip below the painting proper, we find the following colophon confirming the identity of Liu Ruozai in appraisal no 3:

〔題跋〕劉若宰，懷寧劉方伯尚志子，崇禎戊辰進士狀元。良 [Duanfang reads 至] 春坊諭德。兄 [Duanfang reads 貌] 居易錫。

[Col] Liu Ruozai, son of provincial administration commissioner Liu Shangzhi of Huaining, passed the *jinsbi* examinations [of the year] Chongzhen *wuchen* [1628] as the top-scoring candidate and advanced to [至] adviser to the heir apparent [*chunfang yude*]. [From his] elder brother Ju Yixi.^[79]

僧繇, in Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠, *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 [Notes on Famous Paintings from Past Dynasties] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936): 236–241 [*juan* 7].

78 Gan Yuanding (*ming* or *zi* Yufu 禹符), renowned poet, is listed as a »club president« (*shezhang* 社長) at the beginning of *Ming shi pinglun erji* 明詩平論二集 [Discussion of Ming Poetry, Second Collection], 20 *juan*, ed. by Zhu Kui 朱隗, reprinted in *Siku jinbui shu congkan* 四庫禁燬書叢刊 [Collection of Prohibited and Burnt Books from the Four Bibliographic Divisions], ed. by Wang Zhonghan 王鍾翰, 311 vols. ([Beijing:] Beijing chubanshe, 2000), vol. 169.

79 The translation here follows Duanfang's reading *zhi* 至 instead of *gen* 良, proposed in the *Yuemu* catalogue.

Some Conclusions

The painting of Liu Jingting by Zeng Jing provides us with a number of significant details and new clues about the performer and his career during the 1630s and early 1640s, a period not well covered by other documents. It also supports previous conclusions based on fragmentary evidence on Liu Jingting's educational background, societal relations, and political stance. Several inscriptions on the scroll, for instance, confirm that Liu Jingting not only knew how to read and write but even dabbled in literary composition. This is less surprising if we consider that he specialized in entertaining highly educated literati, very much like the high-class courtesans in the Qinhuai entertainment district of his day who often composed poetry themselves, engaged in witty conversations, or excelled at painting orchids and other motives.

Even after the fall of the Ming, Liu Jingting was well received and held in high esteem by an extensive group of literati, many of whom had formerly been associated with the reformist Donglin 東林 and Fushe movements. These 'remnant subjects' (*yimin* 遺民) from the old dynasty, like the scholar, poet and drama author Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609–1672), would maintain close contacts with the performer whom they regarded as a veritable incarnation of the old order, to be placed outside the ranks of ordinary entertainers. Not only did people like Wu Weiye cherish Liu Jingting's extraordinary storytelling skills, they also enthused about his abilities as an itinerant political strategist (*zonghengshi* 縱橫士),⁸⁰ his noble sentiments, and his upright and lofty attitude.

But how and when did the performer take on this iconic character? Certainly *yimin* appreciation of Liu Jingting can be attributed in part to Liu's association with general Zuo Liangyu and his fight for the Southern Ming against the Manchus.⁸¹ In the opinion of Chen Ruheng and others,⁸² Liu Jingting's experiences as a young man on the run and his exposure to army life in Zuo's camp had been conducive to his developing a »valiant spirit«. However, this can only be half the truth. As the appraisals on the painting by Zeng Jing make clear, the same assessment and appreciation of Liu Jingting's qualities already prevailed years before the fall of the Ming: Liu Jingting is characterized by these literati with epithets like 'far-sighted and broad-minded' (*chaokuang* 超曠), 'chivalrous'

80 Wu Weiye, »Liu Jingting zhuan« 柳敬亭傳 [Biography of Liu Jingting], in *Wu Meicun quanji* 吳梅村全集, 3 vols., ed. by Li Xueying 李學穎 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 3: 1059 [juan 52].

81 See, for instance, Chen Ruheng, *Shuosbu shibua*, 158–159.

82 *Ibid.*, 167 and *passim*.

(*xia* 俠), ‘majestic and fierce’ (*e’e lili* 峨峨厲厲), or ‘bold and unconstrained’ (*haomai yishi* 豪邁逸世). But he is also said to be like a wise man or saint who manages to conceal his true essence behind a worldly exterior. Already at this point, the performer is being compared to the famous strategist-adviser Zhuge Liang and addressed as »Wenruo«, the *zi* of Xun Yu, a nickname that does not reappear in later sources.

As if foreshadowing his later employment with the famous general, the inscribers seem to have recognized that Liu Jingting was a man of high aspirations and outstanding breadth of mind and vision, who had the misfortune of being trapped in an inferior position without official mission and recognition. In this situation, the appraisals were also meant to encourage Liu Jingting and express comfort.

Forming societies among literati was the vogue at the time. At least four, if not more of the seventeen inscribers were also members of the reformist Fushe movement. Liu Jingting was in contact with these circles at an early age, long before the fall of the Ming. In their inscriptions, these men—except for Fan Jingwen (1), Liu Ruozai (3), Bi Maoliang (5), Hai Xian (14), and Mao Xiang (15)—style themselves *shedi* 社弟 (‘younger club brother’) or *she xiaodi* 社小弟 (‘little club brother’) or direct their appraisal to their *mengshe xiong* 盟社兄 (‘older sworn club brother’). One of the functions of this otherwise unnamed literary society appears to have been that of a political debating club, with Liu Jingting as a regular member. It is well conceivable that Liu’s active and impressive counselling at this or similar literati gatherings would later have prompted general Du Hongyu 杜宏域 to recommend him to Zuo Liangyu as an adviser.

Returning to the painting itself, we may be tempted to interpret Liu Jingting’s bent posture, half-closed eyelids and faint look as pointers to the strenuous, tiring life of an itinerant performer who had overexerted himself. Yet the men who inscribed Zeng Jing’s painting preferred another reading, that of Liu assuming the pose of a Chan monk or a Daoist saint, self-composed and dignified. All we know is that Liu Jingting, 49 *sui* old, was to live for at least another thirty-three years after Zeng Jing had finished his portrait, experiencing great adventures and facing formidable tasks but also going through great deprivation and travail. Perhaps appearances are deceptive after all and painting indeed is just an illusion.

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