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Between Reluctant Revelation and Disinterested Disclosure: Reading Xiao Tong's Preface to *Tao Yuanming ji*

Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), posthumously the Crown Prince of Resplendent Brilliance (*Zhaoming taizi* 昭明太子) of the Liang dynasty (502–557), is most famous for his compilation of the *Wen xuan* 文選, one of the most important anthologies in the Chinese literary tradition.¹ Yet the Liang prince made another contribution to the world of letters, namely, his fervent praise of Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427) that serves as a crucial link in the reception history of one of the greatest poets in China. The prince's promotion of Tao Yuanming is seen in three interrelated activities: rewriting Tao Yuanming's biography, collecting Tao's works, and composing for the collection a long preface (referred to here as the Preface). While the biography has proved a useful point of comparison for studying the canonization history of Tao Yuanming as a poet,² the Preface attracts scholarly attention for a

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¹ The most authoritative study on Xiao Tong's *Wen xuan* in the English language is that of David R. Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature, Volume One: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1982); *Volume Two: Rhapsodies on Sacrifices, Hunting, Travel, Sightseeing, Palaces and Halls, Rivers and Seas* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989); *Volume Three: Rhapsodies on Natural Phenomena, Birds, Animals, Aspirations and Feelings, Sorrowful Laments, Literature, Music, and Passions* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1996).

² See Li Jianfeng 李劍鋒, *Yuan qian Tao Yuanming jieshou shi* 元前陶淵明接受史 (Ji'nan: Qilu shushe, 2002), pp. 84–97; Liu Zhongwen 劉中文, “Lun Xiao Tong dui Tao Yuanming de jieshou” 論蕭統對陶淵明的接受, *Qishi xuekan* 求是學刊 30 (2003.2), pp. 91–96; Kang-i Sun Chang, “The Unmasking of Tao Qian and the Indeterminacy of Interpretation,” in Zong-Qi Cai, ed., *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2004), pp. 169–90; Xiaofei Tian, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture: The Record of a Dusty Table* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2005), pp. 56–94; Wendy Swartz, “Rewriting a Recluse: The Early Biographers' Construction of Tao Yuanming,” *CLEAR*

different reason – an apparent inconsistency in the Liang prince's attitude towards Tao.³

Wen xuan contains only eight poems and one prose piece by Tao Yuanming, a mere ten percent of the poet's oeuvre. This makes Xiao's larger, tripartite evaluation devoted to Tao seem an elaborate gesture of appreciation. Furthermore, the fact that Tao Yuanming was not a highly regarded poet at the time calls for more explanation.⁴ Current studies of the Preface generally ascribe this "puzzling" phenomenon to Xiao's own frustration in life, which led the prince to seek consolation in reclusion and find congeniality in the famed recluse Tao Yuan-

26 (2004), pp. 77–97, and *Reading Tao Yuanming: Shifting Paradigms of Historical Reception* (427–1900) (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), pp. 34–38.

³ See Hu Yaozhen 胡耀震, "Xiao Tong bian *Tao Yuanming ji de shijian ji qi shiwen* 'wu sihao taixi Yuanming chu'" 蕭統編陶淵明集的時間及其施文 '無絲毫胎息淵明處', *Jiang Han luntan* 江漢論壇 2004.11, pp. 109–111; idem, "*Tao Yuanming ji xu de xiezuo shijian he Xiao Tong ping Tao de duyizhongshuo, zixiangmaodun*" 陶淵明集序的寫作時間和蕭統評陶的獨異衆說·自相矛盾, in Zhao Minli 趙敏俐 and Satō Toshiyuki 左藤利行, *Zhongguo zhonggu wenxue yanjiu* 中國中古文學研究 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2005), pp. 469–80; Qi Yishou 齊益壽, "Xiao Tong ping Tao yu *Wen xuan xuan Tao*" 蕭統評陶與文選選陶, in *Wen xuan yu Wen xuan xue* 文選與文選學 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2003), pp. 526–56; Lin Qitan 林其鈺, "Lüe lun Xiao Tong weihe tebie zhong'ai Tao Yuanming" 略論蕭統為何特別鍾愛陶淵明, in *Wen xuan yu Wen xuan xue*, pp. 579–90; He Zhongshun 賀忠順, "Bainian wenyuan zhiji xu kong gu zhiyin: ping Xiao Tong de *Tao Yuanming ji xu*" 百年文苑知己序空谷知音, 評蕭統的陶淵明集序, *Changde shifan xueyuan xuebao* 常德師範學院學報 (Shehui kexue ban) 27.6 (2002), pp. 88–89, 101; Wang Xipo 汪習波 and Zhang Chunxiao 張春曉, "Song Tao cang xin qu qian yi bi xiong cai: lun Xiao Tong *Tao Yuanming ji xu de ling yimian*" 頌陶藏心曲謙抑避雄猜, 論蕭統陶淵明集序的另一面, *Zhongzhou xuekan* 中州學刊 133.1 (2003), pp. 59–62; Liu Wenzhong 劉文忠, "Xiao Tong yu Tao Yuanming" 蕭統與陶淵明, in *Wen xuan xue xin lun* 文選學新論 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1997), pp. 460–70, rpt. *Zhongguo wenxue yu wenlun yanjiu* 中國文學與文論研究 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2000), pp. 144–55; Wu Xiaofeng 吳曉峰, "Sanjiao heliu yi ru wei zhu de wenxueguan, cong Xiao Tong dui Tao Yuanming, Xie Lingyun shige de rentong tanqi" 三教合流以儒為主的文學觀—從蕭統對陶淵明、謝靈運詩歌的認同談起, in *Zhaoming Wen xuan yu Zhongguo chuantong wenhua* 昭明文選與中國傳統文化 (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2001), pp. 455–63; and Zhang Yaxin 張亞新, "Lun Xiao Tong de Tao Yuanming yanjiu" 論蕭統的陶淵明研究, in *Zhongguo Wenxuan xuehui bian* 中國文選學會編, *Wen xuan yu Wen xuan xue*, pp. 557–78.

⁴ In his lifetime and many years after his death, Tao Yuanming's reputation as a poet was not as great as his fame as recluse. Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 (384–456), Tao's only friend who held office, and the author of a dirge for Tao titled "Tao zhengshi lei" 陶徵士誄 ("Dirge for Tao, the Summoned Gentleman"), comments: "His [Tao's] writings have the merit of getting the meaning across 文取指達." For Yan's text, see *Wen xuan* 文選 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986) 56, pp. 2469–76. The official history of the Jin dynasty includes Tao Qian's biography in the section on recluses ("Yinyi" 隱逸, *juan* 94) rather than in the section for literary men ("Wen-yuan" 文苑, *juan* 92); see *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 94, pp. 2460–63. Liu Xie's 劉勰 (465–522) *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 makes no mention of Tao. Almost ninety years after Tao Qian's death, Zhong Rong 鐘嶸 (ca. 468–518), a 6th-c. judge of poetry, ranked him as middle-grade; see *Shi pin* 詩品. Even this small recognition is not meted out without ambivalence: Zhong reveals an overall rejection of the poet by citing contemporary critiques that used expressions like "peasant words 田家語" and "unadorned and direct 質直." See Cao Xu 曹旭, annot., *Shi pin ji zhu* 詩品集注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1994), p. 260. There are numerous studies of this topic. See Feng Xiaoli 馮曉莉, "Shi lun Tao Yuanming zai Nanbeichao shiqi de shiming" 試論陶淵明在南北朝時期的詩名, *Xi'an shiyou daxue xuebao* 西安石油

ming.⁵ While these studies are right in pointing out Xiao's interest in reclusion, they nevertheless fall short in delving deeper and explicating what reclusion means as a cultural and philosophical phenomenon during early-medieval times, how it was motivated by more than merely a yearning for peace and quiet, and what it meant to Xiao Tong as a ruler and a literary theorist. The purpose of this paper is to further the study of Xiao Tong's Preface through annotated translation and close reading. I will argue that Xiao Tong unravels and utilizes the intriguing philosophy Tao Yuanming represents as a recluse, and that the meaning of the Preface lies somewhere between and beyond what the Liang prince both reveals and tries to conceal in the Preface. First, a brief introduction to the historical background is in order.

Xiao Tong's tripartite activity concerning Tao Yuanming took place sometime in the last few years of the prince's life.⁶ Xiao died in 531 at the age of thirty-one *sui*. The official history of the Liang dynasty gives an account of the prince's life that is rather panegyric and hagiographical. Xiao Tong is portrayed as a child prodigy who mastered the complete Confucian classics at the age of seven, a filial son who tended to his bedridden mother day and night, and a compassionate ruler who distributed food and clothes to those in need. The image constructed out of detailed accounts of memorable incidents in the prince's lifetime is mostly consistent if not one-sided in presenting Xiao Tong as a "benevolent and virtuous" (*rende* 仁德) heir-apparent. An obvious problem that goes unaddressed in the Liang official history is the prince's death about which it is tersely stated that he "took ill in the third month" of 531 and "passed away in the fourth month."⁷ Given Xiao Tong's young age and generally good health reported elsewhere

大學學報 14.2 (2004), pp. 83-87; Li, *Yuan qian Tao Yuanming*, pp. 81-82; Liu, "Xiao Tong yu Tao Yuanming," pp. 146-47.

⁵ See Wu, "Sanjiao heliu," p. 462; Liu, "Lun Xiaotong," p. 92; and He, "Bainian wen-yuan," p. 88.

⁶ The traditional dating of Xiao Tong's compilation of Tao Yuanming's collected works is 527. In an old manuscript seen by the Japanese scholar Hashikawa Tokio 橋川時雄, the following line is found at the end of Xiao's Preface: "Compiled by Crown Prince Resplendent Brilliance [Xiao Tong] in the Datong Reign (527-529), the *dingwei* year (527), in the summer, the sixth month 梁大通丁未年夏季六月昭明太子蕭統撰"; see *Tō shū hanbon genryū kō* 陶集版本源流考 (Peking: Wen zi tong meng she, 1931), p. 4a. Tokio's idea has been largely adopted by most Chinese scholars; see Mu Kehong 穆克宏 and Guo Dan 郭丹, *Wei Jin Nan-beichao wen lun quanbian* 魏晉南北朝文論全編 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), p. 470; Yu Shaochu 俞紹初, *Zhaoming taizi ji jiaozhu* 昭明太子集校註 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2001), p. 201. Recently, Hu Yaozhen has argued for an even later date and placed Xiao's evaluation of Tao at 530, one year before his death; Hu, "Xiao Tong bian Tao Yuanming ji," pp. 470-73.

⁷ See *Liang shu* 梁書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973) 8, p. 169.

in the biography, the actual cause of death is an ineluctable question. Even though the Liang official history, for whatever reason, remains elusive on Xiao Tong's death, it reports that the prince's decease came as a "surprise and shock 惋愕."⁸

In the *History of the Southern Dynasties* (*Nan shi* 南史) Xiao Tong's death is recounted in terms of his deteriorated relationship with the emperor after lady Ding 丁貴嬪, Xiao Tong's birth mother, passed away in 526. It narrates a "wax geese incident" as the critical point at which the prince became estranged from his father. A translation of this much-cited passage is provided here.

Earlier, when Precious Consort Ding passed away, the crown prince had selected a good site. Before groundbreaking on the construction of the tomb started, there was a burial plot seller who proposed a sale through the eunuch Yu Sanfu, with the promise of one million cash commission out of a possible three million cash deal. Yu Sanfu secretly reported to emperor Wu and said the tomb site obtained by the crown prince would not be as auspicious as the new site as far as the emperor was concerned. The emperor was superstitious in his old age and therefore ordered the site to be purchased. After the burial, a Taoist who was an expert in configuring tomb sites reported that the new site would be adverse to the crown prince's fortune, but possibly the prince's lifespan could be extended through rites for suppressing [malevolent forces]. For that reason, wax geese and other objects were prepared and buried next to the grave at the spot reserved for the eldest son.⁹ There were two court supervisors, Bao Miaozi and Wei Ya, both of whom had been favored by the prince. Later on, Miaozi became alienated from Ya. He then secretly reported to emperor Wu: "Ya carried out suppressing rites for the crown prince." Emperor Wu clandestinely sent people to examine and dig up the grave. Indeed they found wax geese and other things. The emperor, greatly alarmed, was about to conduct a thorough investigation and only desisted after Xu Mian's firm dissuasion. As a result, only the Taoist was executed. From this point on, the crown prince was remorseful on account of this to the time of his death. This was why his son was not installed as heir [after the

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁹ The religious significance and efficacy of "wax geese" in what appears to be a popular Taoist rite remains a mystery to me. I have consulted several specialists in early-medieval burial rites and tomb studies and still have not found a satisfying explanation to why wax geese may have been used. Nor have I encountered similar mention of wax geese elsewhere.

prince's death].¹⁰ 初，丁貴嬪薨，太子遣人求得善墓地，將斬草，有賣地者因闖人俞三副求市，若得三百萬，許以百萬與之。三副密啓武帝，言太子所得地不如今所得地於帝吉，帝末年多忌，便命市之。葬畢，有道士善圖墓，云地不利長子，若厭伏或可申延。乃爲蠟鵝及諸物埋墓側長子位，有宮監鮑邈之、魏雅者，二人初並爲太子所愛，邈之晚見疎於雅，密啓武帝云：雅爲太子厭禱。帝密遣檢掘，果得鵝等物。大驚，將窮其事。徐勉固諫得止，於是唯誅道士，由是太子迄終以此慚慨，故其嗣不立。

By exposing an incident omitted in from Liang official history, the *Nan shi* account points an accusing finger at emperor Wu, who is said to have been “alarmed” by the conduct of the heir-apparent.

This has become a critical source for arguing that Xiao Tong, having fallen out of favor with the emperor, resorted to reclusive idealism and took to Tao Yuanming's writings. Such a reading is especially tempting given the sequence in which the above account places the events of lady Ding's death, the “wax geese” incident, Xiao Tong's death, and Xiao Tong's sons being denied the succession. Despite the well-recognized gossipy nature of *Nan shi*, its story about the Liang crown prince's death has not only guided speculations about Xiao Tong late in life and Liang court politics,¹¹ but also influenced how his Tao Yuanming Preface is read.¹² To what extent is this image of Xiao Tong as a persecuted and wronged prince true? Is reclusion merely a source of consolation? If not, what is at the center of Xiao Tong's discussion about reclusion? To answer these questions, let us first look at a full translation of the Preface.¹³

¹⁰ *Nan shi* 南史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 53, pp. 1312–13.

¹¹ Cao Daoheng 曹道衡, “Zhaoming taizi he Liang Wudi de jian chu wenti” 昭明太子和梁武帝的建儲問題, *Zhengzhou daxue xuebao* 鄭州大學學報 (zhxue shehui kexueban), 1994.1, pp. 47–53; Lin Dazhi 林大志 and Lu Shengjiang 盧盛江, “La'e shijian zhenwei yu Zhaoming taizi houqi chujing” 蠟鵝事件真偽與昭明太子後期處境, *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 2004.6, pp. 117–19 (rpt. Lin Dazhi, *Si Xiao yanjiu, yi wenxue wei zhongxin* 四蕭研究以文學爲中心 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007], pp. 47–53).

¹² See Hu, “Xiao Tong bian Tao Yuanming ji,” p. 472.

¹³ The Preface is written in *pianwen* 駢文 or “parallel prose” style. For a discussion of basic features and problems involved in translating parallel prose, see David R. Knechtges, “Han and Six Dynasties Parallel Prose,” *Renditions* 33–34 (1990), pp. 63–110. I divide the work into four sections. Each is indented whenever parallel phrasing is present. The numbers to the left are meant to keep track of these parallel-prose units rather than individual lines. This will emphasize the functioning of the overall structure, with its 34 parallel-prose units. For the Chinese text, see *Zhaoming taizi ji jiaozhu*, pp. 199–201. Also see *Tao Yuanming ji*, “Preface” (SBCK edn.); Yan Kejun 嚴可均, comp., *Quan Liang wen* 全梁文, in idem, *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958) 20, pp. 7a–b.

Preface to Tao Yuanming ji 陶淵明集序

I

夫 In any particular case

1 自衒自媒者 Flaunting oneself is a despicable conduct for a man;

士女之醜行 Serving as one's own matchmaker is deplorable behavior for a woman;¹⁴不伎不求者 Those who are not envious or acquisitive,¹⁵

明達之用心 Have a heart of perspicacity and astuteness.

是以 Therefore,

2 聖人韜光 A sage conceals his light;¹⁶

賢人遁世 A worthy man escapes the age.

其故何也 Why is this so?

3 含德之至 For harboring virtue to the utmost,

莫踰於道 Nothing surpasses the Dao;

親己之切 For caring for oneself to the extreme,

無重於身 Nothing is weightier than one's own life.

故 Therefore

4 道存而身安 If the Dao prevails, then one's life is secured;

道亡而身害 If the Dao perishes, then one's life is threatened.

5 處百齡之內 One lives within the limit of a hundred years;

居一世之中 One resides in the midst of this one age.

6 倏忽比之白駒 The swift course of one's life is like a white colt seen darting past a crack in the wall;

¹⁴ Note that this unit contains a chiasmus and hence my translation. For early uses of this idiom, see *Guanzi* 管子, "Xingshi" 形勢, "a woman who serves as her own match-maker is despicable and untrustworthy 自媒之女丑而不信" (SBCK) 1, p. 7a; also see *Mozi* 墨子 (SBCK) 12, p. 8b, "it is similar to the case of a beautiful woman: when staying in her boudoir, she refuses to go public; when people strive to woo her, gradually she flaunts herself 譬如美女處而不出人爭求之行而自炫." Cf. Cao Zhi's 曹植 "Qiu zi shi biao" 求自試表: "In any particular case, flaunting oneself is a despicable conduct for a man and serving as one's own matchmaker is deplorable behavior for a woman 夫自衒自媒者士女之醜行也"; *Wen xuan* 37, p. 1682.

¹⁵ The phrase *buji buqiu* 不伎不求 is first found in *Shi jing* 詩經, Ode 33 "Xiong zhi" 雄雉 ("Male Pheasant"). The last stanza reads: "All you gentlemen know not of my virtuous conduct. I am neither envious nor acquisitive. What is it that is not good about me?" 百爾君子, 不知德行. 不伎不求, 何用不臧; *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (SSJZS *fu jiaokan ji* 附校勘記 edn.; 1815; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987) 2, p. 34b.

¹⁶ For *taoguang* 韜光, see Kong Rong's 孔融 (153-208) "Lihe zuo jun xingming zi shi" 離合作郡姓名字詩 ("An Anagram-Poem Containing My Home County, Last Name, and Style Name"), a line of which reads: "Patterned agate obscures its sparks; fine jade hides its brightness 玳琤隱曜美玉韜光"; Lu Qinli 魯欽立 (1911-1973), *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983) 7, p. 196. By using *taoguang* in the case of a sage, Xiao Tong compares him and/or his virtue to precious stone, a common motif in classical texts.

- 寄寓謂之逆旅 The temporary stay of one's life is like a
traveler's sojourn.¹⁷
- 宜乎 How fitting that
- 7 與大塊而盈虛 In accord with the Great Clod, things be-
come full and empty;¹⁸
- 隨中和而任放 Following the rhythm of central harmony,
one acts free and untrammled.¹⁹
- 豈能 How could one
- 8 戚戚勞於憂畏 Fretfully get weighed down by worries and
fears;
- 汲汲役於人間 Anxiously carry out duties in this human
realm?²⁰

II

- 1 齊謳趙舞之娛 The pleasure of Qi songs and Zhao
dances,²¹

¹⁷ The *locus classicus* of the white colt metaphor can be traced to *Zhuangzi* 莊子, "Zhibei-you" 知北游, in which we read: "That human beings live between heaven and earth is similar to a white horse crossing a small passageway. It is but an instant 人生天地之間若白駒之過隙忽然而已"; *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (1844-96), comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961; rpt., 1985) 7B, p. 746. The sojourner metaphor is best known from poem 13 "Qu ju shang dongmen" 驅車上東門 ("Driving the Carriage, I Ascend the East Gate") of the "Nineteen Old Poems" 古詩十九首, in which one couplet reads: "Life is brief as a sojourn; / the years are not constant like metal or rock 人生忽如寄, 壽無金石固"; *Wen xuan* 29, p. 1348. According to Li Shan's 李善 (630-689) commentary, the metaphor of human life being a sojourn is first seen in the Taoist text *Laolai zi* 老萊子, which is no longer extant. Note that *Laolai zi* is sometimes identified as *Laozi*; *Wen xuan* 29, p. 1344.

¹⁸ The origin of the term *dakuai* 大塊 is *Zhuangzi*, "Da Zongshi" 大宗師: "Dakuai burdens me with form and labors me with life 大塊載我以形勞我以生." Cheng Xuan-ying's 成玄英 (ca. fl. 631-650) subcommentary explains *dakuai* as "nature 自然"; *Zhuangzi jishi* 3A, p. 242. For the phrase *yingxu* 盈虛, *Zhaoming taizi ji* 昭明太子集 (SBCK) 4, p. 42a, has *rongku* 榮枯 or "prospering and declining" instead.

¹⁹ The term *zhonghe* 中和 is found in the two passages of "Zhongyong" 中庸, *Liji* 禮記: "Holding back emotions of joy, rage, sorrow, and happiness is called *zhong*; releasing these emotions with restraint is called *he* 喜怒哀樂之未發謂之中發而皆中節謂之和"; also "Upon achieving *zhonghe*, heaven and earth are [properly] positioned, and the myriad things are [properly] nurtured 致中和天地位焉萬物育焉"; *Liji zhushu* 禮記註疏 (SSJZS edn.) 52, p. 297b.

²⁰ Phrasing similar to these two lines is found in Yang Xiong's 楊雄 (53 BC-18 AD) *Han shu* 漢書 biography and Tao Qian's pseudo-autobiography "Wuliu xiansheng zhuan" 五柳先生傳, which reads: "One does not hustle and bustle for wealth and honor. One does not fret and frown over poverty and wretchedness 不汲汲於富貴不戚戚於貧賤"; *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 87A, p. 3514. See also *Tao Yuanming ji jiao jian* 陶淵明集校箋, Gong Bin 龔斌, annot. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1996), p. 421. Tao Qian attributes these noble words to Qianlou's 黔婁 wife, who is mentioned in Liu Xiang's 劉向 *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (SBCK) 2, p. 18b.

²¹ Women from Qi are known for their beauty and singing; cf. Mei Sheng's 枚乘 "Qi fa" 七發: "Yue girls serve in the front and Qi lasses wait at side 越女侍前齊姬奉後"; *Wen xuan* 34, p. 1561. Also see Lu Ji's 陸機 "Wu qu xing" 吳趨行: "Chu consort, please do not sigh; Qi maiden, please do not sing 楚妃且勿嘆齊娥且莫謳"; *Wen xuan* 28, p. 1308. Women from Zhao are famous for their good looks and dancing. See also Zuo Si's "Jiaonü shi" 嬌女詩: "Graceful are the Zhao dancing girls; their extending sleeves resemble flying feathers 從容好趙舞延袖像飛翮"; Lu, *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 7, p. 736.

- 八珍九鼎之食 The food of Eight Delicacies and Nine
Cauldrons,²²
- 結駟連騎之榮 The glory of multiple horse teams with
joined bridles,²³
- 侈袂執圭之貴 The honor of wearing wide sleeves and
holding jade tablets.²⁴
- 2 樂則樂矣 All are truly enjoyable,
憂則隨之 But when pleasure is over, grief follows.
- 3 何倚伏之難量 How hard it is to predict the fluctuations of
fortune!²⁵
- 亦慶吊之相及 It is just that celebration and lamentation
follow each other.
- 4 智者賢人居之 The way sagacious and worthy people treat
them
- 甚履薄冰 More cautiously than treading on thin ice;²⁶
愚夫貪士競此 The manner in which foolish and greedy
men compete for these
- 若泄尾閭 Is similar to going down the drain of the
Eastern Sea.²⁷
- 5 玉之在山 Jade in the mountain,
以見珍之終破 Gets broken because it is valued;
蘭之生谷 Thoroughwort growing in the valley,

²² *Bazhen* 八珍, according to Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), refers to the eight different ways of cooking in the Zhou royal kitchen; see *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮註疏 (SSJZS) 4, p. 21c. The term is also widely used as a general reference to delicacies. In late-imperial times, specific food items such as dragon liver, phoenix marrow, wild camel, and deer lips are named under different lists of eight rare and precious foods. *Jiuding* 九鼎, first cast by Yu 禹, is the emblem of nine Chinese regions and hence also symbolizes the ruling house. As a food utensil, the number of *ding* that a household may use is contingent upon the family status. Therefore, while *jiuding* literally refers to royal dining, it may simply connote a luxurious lifestyle.

²³ For *lianji zhi rong* 連騎之榮, *Zhaoming taizi ji* 4, p. 42a, has *lianbiao zhi you* 連鑣之遊, or, “roaming with bridles joined.”

²⁴ “Wide sleeves” is a synecdoche for office garment and jade tablets are official insignia.

²⁵ The phrase *yifu* 倚伏 is probably shorthand for the *Laozi* 老子 passage: “Disaster is whence good fortune derives. Good fortune is where disaster hides 禍兮福之所倚, 福兮禍之所伏”; *Laozi* (SBCK) 2, p. 10b.

²⁶ The phrase *lǚbóbīng* 履薄冰 or “treading on thin ice” alludes to *Shi jing*, Ode 195 “Xiaomin” 小旻, and Ode 196 “Xiaoyuan” 小宛, both of which end, in a slightly different order, with the following lines: “Apprehensive and careful/ As if one were treading on thin ice 戰戰兢兢, 如履薄冰”; *Maoshi zhengyi* 12, pp. 181c, 184b.

²⁷ The *locus classicus* of *weilü* 尾閭, which I translate as “the drain of the eastern sea,” is the “*Qiu shui*” 秋水 sect. of *Zhuangzi*: “Of all the waters in the world, none is greater than the sea. All streams flow into it. No one has heard of the stopping of the streams, but the sea is still not filled. Through *weilü*, the sea drains its water. No one has heard of the stopping of the process, yet the sea is never empty 天下之水莫大於海萬川歸之不知何時止而不盈尾閭泄之不知何時已而不虛”; *Zhuangzi jishi* 6B, p. 563.

雖無人而自芳 Emits fragrance for its own sake even without people around.²⁸

III

故 Therefore

- 1 莊周垂釣於濠 Zhuang Zhou went fishing on the Hao River;
 伯成躬耕於野 Bocheng toiled in the fields.²⁹
 2 或貨海東之藥草 Some sold herbs east of the ocean;
 或紡江南之落毛 Others wove fallen bird feathers south of the river.³⁰
 3 譬彼鴛鴦 They compare with that Yuanchu bird.³¹
 豈競鳶鷂之肉 How could it vie for the flesh of the owl's [prey]!

²⁸ This couplet alludes to *Huainanzi* 淮南子, “Shuoshan xun” 說山訓: “If jade is present in a mountain, then the vegetation is nurtured therein. If ponds produce pearls, then grass nearby does not wither... Thoroughwort grows in a secluded valley, and it does not stop emitting fragrance because no one wears it. A boat is found on the ocean and it does not stop floating because no one rides it. A gentleman practices propriety and he does not stop because no one knows him... The jade disc of Mr. He and the pearl owned by the Marquis of Sui are produced from the essence of the mountain and deep pool respectively. When a gentleman wears them, it brings auspiciousness and serenity. When kings and marquises treasure them, they help rectify the world 玉在山而草木潤, 淵生珠而草不枯... 蘭生幽谷, 不為莫服而不芳, 舟在江海, 不為莫乘而不浮, 君子行義, 不為莫知而止休... 故和氏之璧, 隨侯之珠, 出于山淵之精, 君子服之, 順祥以安寧侯王寶之為天下正”; *Huainanzi* (SBCK) 16, pp. 1b-3b.

²⁹ This couplet contains two references to *Zhuangzi*, “Qjushui.” The first seems to contain a graphic error: the character 濠 should be 濮. The Hao 濠 River is where the well-known discussion about “whether the fish are happy or not” takes place between Zhuangzi and his friend Huizi 惠子. The Pu 濮 River is where Zhuangzi goes fishing and, upon being found by recruiters for the King of Chu 楚, declines to serve. According to Yu Shaochu, this error suggests Xiao Tong’s confusion of the two stories, which is hard to believe; *Zhuangzi jishi* 6B, pp. 603-4. In the “Tiandi” 天地 chapter of *Zhuangzi*, we find the story about Bocheng, who is a minister of the sage king Yao 堯 and also known as Bocheng Zigao 伯成子高. When Yao abdicated his throne to Shun 舜 who then abdicated to Yu 禹, Bocheng resigned his position and took up farming. When Yu paid him a visit, he found Bocheng working in the field; *Zhuangzi jishi* 5A, p. 423.

³⁰ This couplet contains references to two recluses – Anqi sheng 安期生 and Laolaizi. There are a number of different stories about Anqi sheng, who is sometimes portrayed as a Taoist immortal, other times a hermit. According to Huangfu Mi’s 皇甫謐 (215-282) *Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳, Anqi sheng was from Langye 瑯琊 and sold herbs by the Eastern Sea instead of serving in office. Laolaizi was a recluse who engaged in agriculture before the king of Chu came to seek his advice. Laolaizi consented to being recruited by the king’s envoys, but upon his wife’s return, he was dissuaded from it. Together they went away and settled south of the Yangzi. There, the couple made a living by weaving birds’ feathers. See *Gaoshi zhuan* (SKQS) 1, pp. 10b-11a; and 2, pp. 11a-b. See also Alan Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement: The Practice and Portrayal of Reclusion in Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2000), p. 112.

³¹ Yuanchu 鴛鴦, also written as 鴛雛, was a phoenix-like bird finicky about its abode and food. According to the *Zhuangzi* parable, the owl was alarmed by the *yuanchu*’s flying over while the owl was making a meal of a rat; the owl feared (wrongly) that the *yuanchu* wished to snatch away the rat. Zhuangzi told this to his friend Huizi, who was concerned that Zhuangzi would try to steal his position at the Liang court, something Zhuangzi compared to a rotten rat; *Zhuangzi jishi* 6B, pp. 605-6.

- 猶斯雜縣 And are like this Zaxuan,
 寧勞文仲之牲 How could he accept the sacrificial offering
 of Wenzhong!³²
- 至於 As for
- 4 子常、寧喜之倫 People such as Zichang and Ningxi,
 蘇秦、衛鞅之匹 The ilk of Su Qin and Wei Yang:
- 5 死之而不疑 They died for a cause and did not have
 qualms;
 甘之而不悔 They savored something and felt no re-
 gret.³³
- 主父偃言: Zhufu Yan once said:
- 6 生不五鼎食 “If I do not eat from the five tripods in this
 life,
 死則五鼎烹 I shall die from being cooked in the five
 tripods.”³⁴
- 卒如其言, 豈不痛哉! He died as he himself had predicted. Isn’t
 this a shame!
- 又 Furthermore,
- 7 楚子觀周 The Viscount of Chu reviewed [troops] at
 Zhou,
 受折於孫滿 Only to be thwarted by [Wang]sun Man.³⁵

³² Zaxuan 雜縣 is the name of a sea bird that also known as Yuanju 爰居, the earliest account of which is found in *Guo yu* 國語. Once the Yuanju came to perch outside the Lu city gate, (Zang) Wenzhong 臧文忠 had a sacrifice made to the bird. This was considered an excessive act. See *Guo yu* (SBCK) 4, p. 7a; also see *Erya zhushu* 爾雅註疏 (SSJZS) 10, p. 83a.

³³ Zichang 子常 was the corrupt prime minister of Chu who had to escape his own state due to war; *Guo yu*, “Chu yu” 楚語 (SBCK) 18, p. 6b. Ning Xi 寧喜 killed duke Shang of Wei 衛殤公 in an effort to reinstate duke Xian of Wei 衛獻公 to the throne. Ning Xi was in the end executed for appropriating state power. See Yang Bojun 楊伯駿, annot., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), pp. 1111–13. Su Qin 蘇秦, the famous Warring States persuader, died at the hands of envious rivals; see *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 69, pp. 2241–77. Shang Yang 商鞅 was famous for assisting duke Xiao of Qin 秦孝公 (r. 361–338 BC) and carrying out effective reform measures that strengthened the economy of the state of Qin. Despite his political success, Shang Yang is said to have incurred grudges from his families and relatives during his ten years service of the Qin. After Duke Xiao died, the new ruler of Qin, king Hui 秦惠王 (r. 337–309 BC) sentenced Shang Yang to the most severe punishment – “splitting the body with five carts” and his entire clan was sentenced to death; *Shi ji* 68, pp. 2227–39.

³⁴ Zhufu Yan 主父偃 was an important official at emperor Wen of Han’s 漢文帝 (r. 179–157 BC) court. He is famous for making the following remarks: “Since I started to pursue learning as a young adult, it has been over forty years. I still have not accomplished anything. My parents do not regard me as their son, and my brothers do not accept me. My guests and retainers have left me. The days since I was caught in this miserable fortune have been many. Now serving as a grandee, if I cannot, one day, dine from the five tripods, I shall die of being boiled in them.” This statement is meant to show Zhufu Yan’s resolution to become prominent even at the cost of his own life. Somehow his words become realized both ways in that he lost his own life in the pursuit of wealth and honor. See *Han shu* 64A, p. 2803.

³⁵ An ambitious man, the viscount of Chu 楚子 lived during the Spring and Autumn period. He descended upon the Zhou 周 border on his way to a military campaign against the

- 霍侯驂乘 Marquis Huo accompanied the emperor in a chariot;
 禍起于負芒 His disaster originated by making the emperor feel as if he had a thorn in his back.³⁶
- 饕餮之徒其流甚衆 Those who are greedy for food or money come in throngs.
- 8 唐堯四海之主 Tang Yao was a ruler of the world,
 而有汾陽之心 But he harbored a longing for Fenyang;³⁷
 子晉天下之儲 Zijin was crown prince of the Zhou royal house,
 而有洛濱之志 Yet he had a resolve for the banks of the Luo River.³⁸
- 9 輕之若脫屣 They disprized this as just taking off one's shoes,
 視之若鴻毛 They regarded it as light as a goose feather,³⁹
- 而況於他人乎 Not to mention others!⁴⁰

Rong 戎 tribe. The alarmed king Ding of Zhou 周定王 (r. 606–586 BC) sent Wangsun Man 王孫滿 to meet with the viscount, who inquired about the nine tripods, thus revealing an intention to take over the emblem of Zhou sovereignty. Wangsun Man replied, saying that the weight of tripods lies in the virtue of Zhou, not in the vessels themselves, chastising the viscount's lack of virtue. The viscount of Chu then withdrew his troops and halted his plan to attack Zhou. See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, pp. 669–72; also David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), pp. 60–61.

³⁶ Huo Guang 霍光 was titled as great general, under emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 140–87 BC). Enfeoffed as marquis of Bolu 博陸侯 in 87 BC, Huo Guang's power became unchecked after the emperor's death. Suspected of murdering the successor emperor Zhao 漢昭帝 (r. 86–74 BC), Huo Guang was a source of apprehension for emperor Xuan 漢宣帝 (r. 73–49 BC), who was installed as emperor through Huo's aegis. Once the young emperor went on a visit to emperor Wu's temple. Huo Guang rode in the same carriage with the emperor, who was made extremely uncomfortable as if a thorn were in his back. After Huo Guang's death, his entire family was executed by the resentful emperor Xuan. See Huo Gang's biography in *Han shu* 68, pp. 2931–56.

³⁷ The place name Fenyang 汾陽 literally means north of the Fen River, which flows out from Taiyuan 太原 and goes west to join the Yellow River. The terms Fenshui 汾水, Fenyang, and Fenyang 汾射 all have become references to reclusion due to the following passage in *Zhuangzi* 莊子: "Yao governed people of the world and managed affairs within the borders. However, when he went to see the four [reclusive] masters living in Guye Mountain, to the north of the Fen River, suddenly, he lost his hold on the world 堯治天下之民, 平海內之政, 往見四子於姑射之山, 汾水之陽, 窅然喪其天下焉"; *Zhuangzi jishi* 1A, p. 31.

³⁸ Zijin 子晉 was the crown prince of king Ling of Zhou 周靈王 (r. 571–545 BC) and he is also known as Wangzi Qiao 王子喬. The prince roamed along the Luo River, riding a phoenix and playing the panpipe. Lord Fuqiu 浮丘公, a Taoist immortal, brought him to Mount Song 嵩山. After thirty some years, the prince also became an immortal. For the surrounding lore, see Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BC), *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 (SKQS) 1, pp. 13b–14a.

³⁹ The implied subjects of these lines are Tang Yao and Wangzi Qiao. The way the two ancient rulers leave behind their secular life is as effortless as slipping out of shoes; they regard matters of state and government as being as light as feathers.

⁴⁰ The SBCK and SKQS editions omit the character *ren* 人, in which case, the line may be

- 是以
聖人達士因以晦跡
- Therefore,
a sagacious person and a perspicacious man,
for these reasons obscure their “traces.”
- 10 或懷玉而謁帝
或披褐而負薪
- Some embraced jade and came to see the
emperor;
Some wore coarse clothes and carried fire-
wood on their backs.⁴¹
- 11 鼓楫清潭
棄機漢曲
- Some tapped the gunwales of their boat on
clear pools;⁴²
Some abandoned their tools by the bank of
the Han River.⁴³
- 情不在於衆事
寄衆事以忘情者也
- Their nature did not accord with the multitude
of things,
Which they relied on to forget their true self.⁴⁴

IV

- 有疑陶淵明之詩
篇篇有酒
吾觀其意不在酒
亦寄酒爲跡者也
- Some people surmise that in Tao Yuanming’s
poems,
Each and every one involves drinking.
My observation is that his real intention did
not lie in drinking;
He relied on drinking to make his “traces.”
- 1 其文章不群
辭采精拔
- His writing is singular;
His use of words is vigorous and distinctive.
- 2 跌宕昭彰
獨超衆類
- Dynamic and clear,
He surpasses all other writers;

rendered as “Not to speak of things other than [a throne].”

⁴¹ The first line refers to the famous story of Mister Bian He 卞和 and his jade; see Ying Shao’s 應劭 (153–196) commentary, *Shi ji* 83, p. 2471. The second line refers to Zhu Maichen 朱買臣 (?–115 BC) of Western Han who sold firewood before becoming assistant to the prime minister; *Han shu* 64A, p. 2791.

⁴² This line alludes to the fisherman whom Qu Yuan encountered in his time in exile. The story is found in the “Yu fu” 漁父. After Qu Yuan had been banished, he wandered along river banks and through a marshland. He looked haggard and emaciated. The fisherman saw him and advised him to follow the trend of the world. See Hong Xingzu 洪興祖, annot., *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Taipei: Da’an, 1995), pp. 275–80.

⁴³ Huangfu Mi’s *Gaoshi zhuan* has an account of one Hanyin Zhangren 漢陰丈人 whom Zigong 子貢 came across on his trip to Chu. The old gardener refused to take advantage of the water-fetching device because the name of its critical part was “machination” or *jixin* 機心, a pun for “conniving heart.” The story is also found in the “Tiandi” 天地 chapter of *Zhuangzi*; *Zhuangzi jishi* 5A, pp. 433–34.

⁴⁴ I translate the word *qing* as “true self” based on an understanding of the term in its original sense of being the fundamental, essential, and unmodified state of anything. See Christoph Harbsmeier, “The Semantics of *Qing* 情 in Pre-Buddhist Chinese,” in Halvor Eifing, ed. *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 69–148.

- 抑揚爽朗 Rhythmic and refreshing,
莫之與京 None can compare with him.
- 3 橫素波而傍流 [His writing] traverses white waves and broadly flows;
千青雲而直上 It flies into the cerulean clouds and rises straight up.
- 4 語時事則指而可想 When he refers to current affairs, his ideas are easily understood;
論懷抱則曠而且真 When he discusses his innermost feelings, he is approachable and genuine.
- 加以貞志不休 In addition, his firm intention was never abandoned;
- 安道苦節 He was content with the Way and through hardship he maintained his integrity.
- 5 不以躬耕爲耻 He did not take plowing the field as disgraceful;
不以無財爲病 Or consider lack of assets shameful.
- 自非大賢篤志 Unless one were a great sage who maintained a firm resolve,
- 與道污隆 Following the rise and fall of the Way,
孰能如此乎 Who could be like this?
- 6 余愛嗜其文 I am an enthusiast of his writing,
不能釋手 And cannot stop reading him;
尙想其德 I admire his virtue,
恨不同時 And wish that I had been born in his age.
- 故加搜求 Therefore, I have collected his writings;
粗爲區目 I have made a rough categorization.
- 白璧微瑕 The only minor flaw on the white jade [i.e., his writings],
- 惟在閒情一賦 Is the “Fu on Stilling the Passions.”
楊雄所謂 It is what Yang Xiong called
勸百而諷一者 “One hundred encouragements and one admonition.”⁴⁵
- 卒無諷諫 Since there, after all, is no admonition in this piece,
- 何足搖其筆端 Why did he wield his brush and write such a piece?
- 惜哉 What a pity!
忘是可也 It would have been better if Tao had never written this piece.

⁴⁵ See Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶, *Fayan yishu* 法言義疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), p. 45; also *Shi ji* 117, p. 3073.

with such enticements, people may assume two divergent attitudes: “sagacious and worthy men treat them like treading on thin ice; however, the manner in which foolish and greedy men compete in life is similar to [rivers] going down the drain of the Eastern Sea.” Calamities follow those eager yet unenlightened seekers, while men of virtue preserve their integrity by avoiding worldly involvement.

Section III makes full use of historical allusions, a salient feature of parallel prose. Xiao cites examples of two types of men: those who renounce the world, leaving their talent and virtue unused, and those who strive for worldly gain even at the cost of their lives. The former group includes men who maintain independence from the court by engaging in mundane activities such as fishing, farming, collecting herbs, and weaving. For those who die in various pursuits, Xiao Tong expresses his sympathy while affirming the truth and value of disengagement. When he evokes examples of reclusive-minded rulers such as the sage-king Yao and the Zhou prince Wangzi Qiao, he expresses heart-felt admiration.

Xiao's discussion takes a deeper philosophical turn after promoting the virtue of passivity and asceticism, the usual rhetoric of reclusion. Toward the end of section three, a subtle change is seen in the structure of the Preface. Up to unit 9 of section III (III.9), the parallel units are strung together with short transitional phrases such as *shiyi* 是以, *gu* 故, *zhiyu* 至於, etc. Parallel couplet is the dominant form until the end of section III when these units become interspersed with longer unparallel prose lines: following units 9 and 11 in section III, preceding unit 1, following units 5 and 6 in section IV. These sections, shedding grammatical regularity and semantic predictability, now assume an argumentative tone by making affirmations as well as negations. The author seems to engage an audience who is familiar with a discourse on reclusion that is beyond the immediate context of the Preface. By utilizing terms such as *qing* 情, *yi* 意, and *ji* 跡, Xiao concludes his analysis of reclusion in general and leads into the specific case of Tao as a recluse. And it is here that Xiao offers a more nuanced view. The corrective tone one finds in this section indicates a personal insight rather than a widely accepted opinion. In a similar way in which the long prose section following IV.6 discusses an exception in Tao's writings that Xiao would like to take issue with, namely, the “Fu on Stilling the Passion,” the transition from section III to IV offers a subtle refinement on the topic of reclusion, necessary to define a “real” recluse, in other words, a worthy one. In several places in the first three sections, Xiao uses words *sheng* 聖 and *xian* 賢 to denote recluse. In section IV,

he also refers to Tao as a “great sage.” What lies behind this equation of sage with recluse? What is a sage recluse?

The concept and practice of “exemplary eremitism,” elusive as they were, became particularly complicated by the duplicity and hypocrisy that were prevalent throughout early-medieval times.⁴⁷ Reclusion was sometimes used as a way to gain honor and recognition at court. Reacting against those “attention-seeking profiteers” who made a display of physical aloofness, there emerged a new measure for gauging sincerity and to maintain the purity of genuine recluses. Holding great sway in the discourse that shifted the emphasis from physical aloofness to spiritual disengagement were various thinkers of “Abstruse Learning” (*xuanxue* 玄學) and Buddhist interpreters.⁴⁸ Hence the distinction between one’s “inner state” and one’s “overt action” was central to the early-medieval discourse on reclusion. For example, a genuine recluse would be praised in the following terms: “[his] overt traces are confined to the towering halls, yet his spirit roams beyond the rivers and seas.”⁴⁹ What such a statement reveals is a fascination with the freedom of the mind and, hence, the self. Shen Yue’s statement on reclusion in the *Song shu* 宋書 makes this clear:

The word ‘being in reclusion’ means that one’s traces are not seen overtly and that one’s way is not to be known [by others]. If for a thousand years of silence no Sage emerges, then it is because great Worthies keep themselves obscured...When one does no more than preserve one’s life and keep far from harm, there is no necessity of cave-dwelling or cliff-perching...the purport of [a worthy recluse] is in making vanish his inner principle, not in hiding himself away.⁵⁰ 夫隱之爲言，跡不外見，道不可知之謂也。若夫千載寂寥，聖人不出，則大賢自晦...止於全身遠害，非必穴處巖栖...義惟晦道，非曰藏身。

In the above passage by Shen Yue, a recluse is defined as someone whose “way,” as well as “traces,” is hidden and that “obscuring inner principle” is more fundamental than “hiding the physical self.” Xiao, in his Preface, employs the phrase “obscuring traces 晦跡” in discussing reclusion generally, but when his topic shifts to Tao Yuanming, he says that the recluse “relied on drinking to make his traces.” The phrase *weiji* or “making traces,” presenting an apparent opposition to

⁴⁷ See Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement*, pp. 137–38.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 140–44.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁵⁰ *Song shu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 93, pp. 2275–76. See Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement*, pp. 178–84; also Tian, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture*, pp. 62–67. The translation is based on that of Berkowitz.

“obscuring traces,” signifies a fundamental difference between Xiao’s interpretation of Tao and that of his teacher Shen Yue. As Tian Xiao-fei’s comparison of Tao Yuanming’s early biographies shows, Xiao “may have been dissatisfied with Shen Yue’s version [of Tao’s biography]...and his decision to write an account of Tao’s life may indicate a concern to transmit a ‘correct’ version.”⁵¹ A similar revisionist effort is also true in Shen’s words, and the purpose is to rectify how Tao’s drinking was construed, especially when this aspect of Tao’s life was taken into consideration of his reputation as a recluse. Previous illustrations by Shen Yue and Yan Yanzhi all give prominent attention to Tao’s drinking.⁵² It is sometimes described as an indispensable trait of Tao; other times it is dubbed as Tao’s “nature,” or called a “virtue.” Drinking is even associated tightly with Tao’s inner self. We have, for example, “By nature, he entertains the virtue of drinking 性樂酒德,”⁵³ “By nature, he is addicted to drinking 性嗜酒,”⁵⁴ and “Each time when he was deep in his cups, he would play [his stringless zither] to give expression to his intention 每有酒適輒撫弄以寄其意.”⁵⁵

Xiao, however, remarks that drinking, instead of being Tao’s real intent, is only a “trace” made by Tao. In order to understand the larger context of how *ji* was used and the role it played in the early-medieval philosophical discourse about reclusion, it is necessary to look at its occurrence in the following *Zhuangzi* passage, “Tianyun” 天運 (“The Turning of Heaven”), where Laozi is shown addressing Confucius, saying:

The Six Classics are stale *ji* or traces of former kings. How could they be that which makes the traces? The speech you have just made is also a trace. A trace is that which is left by a shoe. Therefore, how could the trace be the same as the shoe?⁵⁶ 夫六經，先王之陳迹也。豈其所以迹哉！今子之所言，猶迹也。夫迹，履之所出而迹豈履哉！

According to *Zhuangzi*’s shoe analogy, “that which makes a trace” is the entity itself. “Trace” is the mark left behind by the entity, and hence the proposition is that an entity makes a trace. What this also implies is that there is a gap between external “traces” and internal “selfhood.”

Guo Xiang 郭象 (252–312) eradicates this gap while maintaining the difference between the inner and the outer, when he remarks: “That which makes a trace is true nature 所以跡者真性也,”⁵⁷ and “That which makes a trace has no trace 所以跡者無跡也.”⁵⁸ Taken together,

⁵¹ Tian, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture*, p. 34.

⁵² See Swartz, *Reading Tao Yuanming*, p. 28.

⁵³ See *Wen xuan* 57, “Tao zhengshi lei” 陶徵士誄, p. 2471.

⁵⁴ *Song shu* 93, p. 2286.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2288.

⁵⁶ *Zhuangzi jishi* 5B, p. 532.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

these two statements lead to the conclusion that “true nature has no trace.” That is to say, what can be, and is, revealed to the world is not the same as one’s true nature, which cannot be traced and cognized. In Tao’s case, ale drinking, zither playing, poetry writing, and self-expression are all traces. Yet, none of these leads an outside observer to Tao’s true nature which is ultimately beyond cognition, even to Tao himself. Any knowing or “cognition pertains only to traces,” or external activities, whereas the true self of a worthy recluse is an “indiscernible darkness.”⁵⁹ Therefore, for a genuine and worthy recluse, there is neither the imperative to “hide traces,” nor is there apprehension about “making traces.” It is in an utterly spontaneous and self-so state that someone with a true, reclusive nature becomes a great worthy. Therefore, in a certain sense, hiding is not as good as revealing. In here, we see the varying treatments of and thus different attitudes toward *ji* or “traces.” If Shen’s definition has made “hiding physical traces” (*huiji*) secondary in defining reclusion, Xiao, through decoding Tao, has taken a step further in announcing that “traces” can be made (*weiji*) and the making of traces does not necessarily detract from the inner principle of a recluse.

Xiao’s relatively more nuanced statement about reclusion brings into relief what makes Tao’s reclusion unique. Tao’s patriarchal status as a recluse was not coincidental. The fact that he wrote about his reclusion, an act of “making traces” that would have canceled out his being a recluse, gives the cultural phenomenon a whole new meaning.⁶⁰ To a large degree, the new mode of reclusion that Tao represents embodies the philosophical development that Guo Xiang’s commentary has brought to the *Zhuangzi*. As Brook Ziporyn has pointed out, Guo’s commentary harmonizes the relationship between Ruism and Taoism and this harmony is a dialectical one in the sense that the two teachings are neither oppositional nor are they entirely identical. “Purposivity” and “spontaneity” are mutually independent and generative.⁶¹ Guo’s philosophical feat to abolish a rigid dichotomy between substance and function, the outer and the inner, relied on the concept of *ji*. In his estimation, then, external traces, all that which is cognizable, including but not limited to words and deeds, are at the same time independent of and yet essential to the inner principle. Thus, “making traces” is equal, if not in a philosophical sense superior, to “hiding traces.” The

⁵⁹ Brook Ziporyn, *Penumbra Unbound* (Albany: SUNY, 2003), pp. 18–19.

⁶⁰ Tian, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture*, pp. 25–26.

⁶¹ Ziporyn, *Penumbra Unbound*, p. 26.

Zhuangzi, filtered through Guo's commentary, is Xiao's philosophical underpinning in interpreting Tao.

From Tao's drinking, Xiao's discussion moves on to Tao's writings. Words as unreliable conveyor of meaning is a well-explored subject in the early-medieval period. The following *Zhuangzi* analogy is often quoted to illustrate the point.

A fishing basket is the means to catch fish. When one catches the fish, he forgets about the basket. A trap is the means to catch a hare. When one catches the hare, one forgets about the trap. Words are the means to locate the meaning. When one gets the meaning, one forgets about the words.⁶² 荃者, 所以在魚, 得魚而忘荃; 蹄者, 所以在兔, 得兔而忘蹄; 言者, 所以在意, 得意而忘言。

The paradox of language and meaning, as illustrated above, calls for "forgetting." Clinging to performed action and professed intention is as absurd as holding on to the trap and basket. Xiao also uses the word "to forget" and it refers to Tao's "forgetting of the true self" *wang-qing* 忘情. Such a self-forgetting state is when Tao vanishes into the self and thus cannot discern the self. Any discerning/cognizing/describing, *bian* 辨 or 辯, is not only futile but also harmful. Language, the most important tool for such discerning, is but an external human faculty allowing people's attempts to approach the ineffable. As someone who truly understands such quandary, Tao cannot help but apologize in his "Drinking Poem," Number 5: "There is true meaning in this. But even if I would like to discern/describe it, I have lost the words (or words have lost me.)" 此中有真意欲辨已忘言.⁶³

If words and deeds, as extraneous traces, do not disclose one's true self, what is their value? Why would Xiao even engage in collecting and prefacing Tao's writings? Here again, according to Guo Xiang's interpretation, "traces" are the reflection of the agent in one time and place, and the value of "traces" lies in and of themselves. Hence, the external and the internal achieve "oneness."⁶⁴ For this reason, Xiao treats Tao's writings as what they are, not as a medium to reach the "true nature" of Tao. Xiao Tong comments, at the beginning of the Preface's section IV, on the literary value of Tao's writing, which he describes as "singular" (*buqun* 不群), "distinctive" (*ba* 拔), "conspicuous" (*zhaozhang* 昭彰), "surpassing" (*chao* 超), and "peerless" (*mozhi yujing* 莫之與京). Following

⁶² *Zhuangzi jishi* 9A, p. 944.

⁶³ See Gong Bin 龔斌, annot., *Tao Yuanming ji jiao jian* 陶淵明集校箋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1996), pp. 219–20. In *Wen xuan*, this is put under the title of *zashi* 雜詩, or, unclassified poem.

⁶⁴ Ziporyn, *Penumbra Unbound*, pp. 38–39.

these rather laudatory words, Xiao criticizes Tao's "Fu on Stilling the Passions" (閒情賦 "Xianqing fu").⁶⁵ For the Liang prince, moral efficacy is another critical reason to read Tao's literary works. Therefore, Tao's writings are worth promoting for the recluse's embodiment of the "ineffable Way" and his pronouncement of the Way.

While proposing a more profound reading of Tao's personhood together with his writings, Xiao Tong encourages, if only implicitly, his reader to approach the Preface beyond the obvious. Besides, "preface" as a genre in the early-medieval tradition is never meant to be just about the subject and has seldom been written with an aloof tone.⁶⁶ Sima Qian and his "Self-Narration" are a great example of this. More often than not, a preface provides an opportunity for the author to make a point and it often reflects the author's preoccupation in one time and place. Xiao's Preface is clearly about the topic of reclusion in light of its fixation on self-preservation. But does it really mean that we can conclude that the Liang prince wanted to give up his courtly life and become a recluse? Far from it. It is the philosophical indication embodied by Tao and development by Guo Xiang that the prince was fascinated with because it helps to illuminate about life situations in general. More aptly, Xiao was interested in exploring questions about the "self." What constitutes "the self"? How to secure "the self"? Can "the self" be written? The first statement in the Preface, one that sets the tone, recommends obscuration of "the self." Any self-promotion or self-revelation is harmful and also futile, as the reader is led to believe later on.

Scholars have concluded that the prince who would die within the year was a victim of a father-son conflict at the Liang court. Among current readings of the Preface, here are some typical comments: "[Xiao Tong] finds solace in Tao Yuanming's reclusion,"⁶⁷ "he is a soul mate of Tao,"⁶⁸ "he sympathizes with Tao's political climate from the prince's own experience,"⁶⁹ and "he discovers Tao's literary merit."⁷⁰ Though all of these are true to a certain degree, they fall exactly into the trap that Zhuangzi or Xiao has warned them about, namely, that language should not be taken at face value and the very act of using language

⁶⁵ Xiao Tong's moralistic criticism does not seem to be shared by others, such as Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), Chen Hang 陳沆 (1785-1826) of the Qing dynasty, and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929), who all took Xiao Tong to task on this. See Chen Hang, *Shi bi xing jian* 詩比興箋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), p. 78.

⁶⁶ Chu Binjie 褚斌傑, *Zhongguo gudai wenti gailun* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1984), pp. 362-64.

⁶⁷ Wu, "Sanjiao heliu," p. 462.

⁶⁸ Liu, "Lun Xiao Tong," p. 91.

⁶⁹ He, "Bainian wenyuan," p. 88.

⁷⁰ Chang, "The Unmasking," p. 176, and He, "Bainian wenyuan," p. 88.

distorts the meaning of what is said. Therefore, while Xiao assumes a highly yielding and submissive tone in philosophizing about life and “the self,” he inadvertently allows other agendas to fall into place. He fulfills his public role as an advocate of morality by forcefully proclaiming the didacticism and pragmatism of Tao’s writing. By doing so, he also affirms his own morality. Xiao’s morality does not entail aggression, as it is enshrouded in Taoist quietism. Therefore, the prince’s morality is disclosed disinterestedly, his gesture of obedience is expressed through a reluctance of revealing. As someone who occupies the position of “second in the entire realm,” a yielding gesture like this cannot but be directed to the one and only emperor. When three hundred years earlier Cao Zhi wrote his “Petition Seeking to Prove Myself” (“Qiu zi shi biao” 求自試表), the Wei prince’s appeal to his father became a public document.

夫	In any particular case
自衒自媒者	Flaunting oneself is despicable conduct for a man;
士女之醜行也	Serving as one’s own matchmaker is deplorable behavior for a woman;
干時求進者	Fitting in with the times and seeking advancement,
道家之明忌也	These are ostensible taboos of the Taoist school.
而臣敢陳聞于陛下者	Yet the reason your vassal dares present his words to Your Majesty
誠與國	It is indeed due to the fact that
分形同氣	I share your form and breath,
憂患共之者也	I share your worries and concerns.
冀以塵露之微補益山海	I hope to use the slightness of dust and dew to add to the mountain and ocean;
螢燭末光增輝日月	Use the faint light of firefly and candle to complement the sun and moon.
是以敢冒其醜而獻其忠	This is why I risk this deplorable behavior so as to present my loyalty.
必知爲朝士所笑	Necessarily, this will incur jeers from court gentlemen.
聖主不以人廢言	A sagacious ruler does not invalidate words because of the man.
伏惟陛下稍垂神聽	I respectfully hope Your Majesty will deign to give his divine attention.
臣則幸矣	This will be my greatest fortune. ⁷¹

⁷¹ *Wen xuan* 37, p. 1862.

Xiao Tong's familiarity with the above petition surely preceded his including it in the *Wen xuan*. By the fifth and sixth centuries, Cao's piece was probably a memorized classic, since he was particularly admired for such petitions.⁷² It would have been impossible for anyone to read Xiao's Preface without calling into mind Cao's petition. So for that reason, the Liang prince did not need declare his motive of self-justification and self-explanation. Granted, Xiao's Preface was about a literary collection. Yet because of who he was, the Preface would certainly become a public document to be read for all that was intended and unintended. By alluding to Cao, therefore, Xiao made a public plea to "lent the emperor's ear."

Further conjectures about what exactly went on at the Liang court are not altogether important for interpreting the Preface. It suffices to say that one has to read between the lines and beyond, as the prince instructs us to do through his analysis of Tao's reclusion. The metaphysical paradox that permeates the language of the Preface precludes a simplified reading. In addition to Tao's personality and poetry, there was something else that prompted Xiao to write it. Tao merely served as a tool for the Liang prince to talk to his father, even if it would be a unilateral conversation. If anyone comes away from reading the Preface believing that Xiao's death was a result of persecution, then the Liang prince had, paradoxically, succeeded in avenging his victimization through words. Like Tao, happily "vanishing into his self" (*huiji*) by claiming "words have lost me," Xiao would have been content in leaving the Preface as a "trace" (*weiji*) so as to preserve "the self."

⁷² See Robert Joe Cutter, "Personal Crisis and Communication in the Life of Cao Zhi," in David R. Knechtges and Eugene Vance, eds., *Rhetoric and the Discourses of Power in Court Culture: China, Europe, and Japan* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2005), pp. 149–68.