

水間湖西



persons for my third marriage, and even to perform the good office of go-between. My parents were undecided, and they bade me go to the Temple of Patriarch Lü⁵⁷ at the Leaping Spring⁵⁸ in Tsinan, the capital of Shantung Province, to pray for enlightenment. There I obtained an oracular sortilege, saying: "The pledge revealed in the former dream." Just then the *ssu-ma* Wang Ku-yu 王古愚⁵⁹ came to discuss a marriage proposal from the young lady Ch'eng Chia 程佳 of the Plain White Chinese Banner. Her year of birth tallied with the prediction in the "dream document,"⁶⁰ and so the decision was taken, a proposal of marriage was offered and accepted, and a formal engagement, a 'presentation of fowl', was made and announced.⁶¹ Since our marriage, the lady has been dutiful in her attendance and service to the elders and has educated our sons and daughters with wisdom. Consequently during all my official peregrinations through Anhui, Honan, Kweichow and Huai-an, I have never had the least worry about family matters. This celestially ordained union of ours was thus revealed to me long beforehand in a dream.

All the illustrations in this book of mine represent real scenes and actual experiences, except for this dream and the "Roaring Waves at the Gate of the Emperor Yu,"⁶² which are imaginary scenes included to commemorate propitious omens.

*Paying my Compliments to West Lake*⁶³

In the first month of the year *ping-yin* [1806], my father was appointed Prefect and assigned to the province of Chekiang. He proceeded there immediately. In the following month my mother and I accompanied my great-grandmother on the river-trip to the South. When we were about to weigh anchor, I received a poem sent to me as a parting gift by Uncle⁶⁴ Chü Shan-t'ao 車珊濤.⁶⁵ The poem included the following lines:

The year contains so little spring enchantment;
When you visit West Lake, enjoy it to the full.

When I did reach Hangchow it was already the beginning of the sixth month. Just then Uncle Li K'ang-chieh 李康皆⁶⁶ came from Shan-yin⁶⁷ and invited me to visit West Lake with him. That very day, accompanied by my brother Chung-wen, we went to the Water Pavilion outside the Yung-chin Gate⁶⁸ of the city, and hired a boat to sail downstream. All around us the hills stood like screens of azure and jet, while purple halls and crimson palaces shone to right and left, as if we could pluck them from our very sleeves. Then we paid our respects at the Temple to the Prince of the Water Immortals.

Evening was approaching as we sailed into the thick of the lotus flowers; we smelt the fragrance of the wind on the gentle ripples of the water, and became oblivious of the cruel heat. I cut a lotus stem and used it as a straw with which to sip my wine. The moon was up by the time we left.

⁵⁷ (YTH) Lü Yen 呂岳, or Lü Tung-pin 呂洞賓, known as Ch'un Yang-tzu 純陽子, a historical person in the T'ang dynasty, who later became in popular Taoist legend one of the Eight Immortals and was referred to as Patriarch Lü.

⁵⁸ (Ed) See the photograph on p.19 of Harold Shadick's translation of Liu E's 劉鄂 (1857-1909) *The travels of Lao T's'an* (New York: Morningside, 1990).

⁵⁹ Name Shu-wu 殊渥 Master of Arts, native of Chihli. (YTH) Again the detestable and disgusting way of designating a Prefect, using an ancient name which was abrogated and became defunct a thousand years ago.

⁶⁰ (YTH) This refers to the Year of the Pig (*hai*), the year of birth of this young lady and also of the author, both having been born in the year *hsin-hai* (1791) in the reign of Ch'ien-lung.

⁶¹ (YTH) A traditional literary expression for the formal pledge and engagement, since a goose was regularly offered in ancient days as a token from the man's family.

⁶² (Ed) Series I, no.42.

⁶³ (YTH) *Wen* 問 is used here in the ancient classical meaning, to 'pay compliments with a gift', as in "The Ruler of Wei sends his compliments to Tzu-kung (a notable pupil of Confucius) with the gift of a weapon." This did not mean that the Ruler of Wei 'asked some questions' about the bow. See also *Tso Chuan*, 11th year of Duke Ch'eng (576 bc).

⁶⁴ (YTH) The term used here, *chang* 丈, is the common Chinese courtesy appellation for a father's close friend or a family close friend of rather advanced age. The word literally means an elder, senior, venerable old man.

⁶⁵ Name Wangdorgi 旺多爾濟, a Mongol and a Student in the Imperial Academy, admitted by Special Grant.

⁶⁶ Name Pu-ying 步瀛, Academy Student from Shan-yin, later served as Chief County Education Officer.

⁶⁷ (Ed) Shao-hsing.

⁶⁸ (Ed) Cf. the lines by Chao Ch'ung-chih 晁沖之 (c.1090): "Outside Yung-chin /OVER

/Gate you'll be free of the red dust"; and Yu Ch'ien 于謙 (1398–1457): "Outside Yung-chin Gate the willows are like smoke." (Angus Graham's translation in *Poems of the West Lake* [London: Wells weep, 1990].)

⁶⁹ (YTH) A form of short poem with four lines which is supposed to be an abbreviated or truncated form of the 'regulated verse'. The form was started in the T'ang dynasty and almost all the great masters employed it. Many wrote perennially renowned and touching compositions in that form, which became more and more popular in Ming and Ch'ing days. But alas! Waning popularity and lack of inspiration make it a less and less honoured form.

⁷⁰ (YTH) The auspicious South Wind which symbolises Well-being and Happiness.

⁷¹ (YTH) A variant name of Hangchow.

⁷² (Ed) Li Tao-yuan (d.527).

⁷³ (YTH) Li Pi 李泌 (722–89), a fascinating, enigmatic and talented character in Chinese history.

⁷⁴ (YTH) The courteous name for Po Ch'ü-i 白居易, the famous poet and renowned civil administrator of the T'ang dynasty.

⁷⁵ Name Wei 魏, Provincial Academy Student of Kiangsu. (Ed) Hummel, or rather Fang Chao-ying, in the biography of T'ien Wen-ching, gives Li's dates as (?1687–1738), and leaves a somewhat different impression of the man: "A provincial official highly favoured by Emperor Shih-tsung (Yung-cheng) . . . Although in his term at Hangchow he improved greatly the architecture and scenic beauties of West Lake, he saw nothing incongruous in having an image of himself placed in the main hall dedicated to the Spirit of the Lake, a divinity known also as the Spirit of the Flowers. In a smaller structure to the rear of this image was placed a group of figures representing himself and his wives. When, some five decades later (in 1780), Emperor Kao-tsung (Ch'ien-lung) visited Hangchow he ordered these figures removed and replaced by others more in harmony with the Spirit of the Lake."

During my days as an official in the Capital, I would recollect this happy experience, and fly there in my imagination.

I have written a series of sixteen "truncated poems"⁶⁹ entitled "Reminiscences of West Lake," and I beg to append one here:

Outside the Tower to Welcome Auster⁷⁰
 the green flow is rich;
 Visitors are loth to leave
 the fragrance drifting these many miles;
 If this mortal frame can change
 into a butterfly dreaming,
 Surely tonight it will fly
 around the lotus flowers.

On investigation there are altogether in our Empire thirty-one expanses of water bearing the name West Lake, but the Ming-sheng Lake of Ch'ien-t'ang⁷¹ is the most famous. In the ancient Han dynasty, there occurred the miracle of the Golden Cow, as recorded in Li Tao-yuan's 酈道元⁷² *Notes on the Water Classic*. And West Lake is not merely a picturesque scenic spot, it is also a useful source of water. In the T'ang dynasty, the Duke of Yeh⁷³ drilled six wells, Po Hsiang-shan 白香山⁷⁴ constructed stone conduits to irrigate the farm land, and Su Tung-p'o of the Sung dynasty introduced vegetable farms. The economic benefits of West Lake have been enhanced from age to age. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties, it was left unattended and came to be more and more in need of dredging. In the present dynasty, during the second year of the Yung-cheng Reign [1724], the Governor of Chekiang, the posthumously canonised Lord Li Min-ta 李敏達⁷⁵ received an Imperial order to dredge the Lake and make other necessary improvements. The Lake thus came to be of great benefit to the livelihood of the people in the western part of Chekiang. Moreover the same Governor restored the antiquities and revised the gazetteers. He certainly did much for West Lake, and it is fitting and proper that he should be worshipped together with the Prince of the Water Immortals.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ (YTH) First of all, this has nothing to do with the narcissus, though the narcissus is regularly known as *shui-bsien bua*. Here *shui-bsien* 水仙 means the various Immortals of the Water, just as there are Immortals of Heaven and of Earth. Some of the most famous Immortals of Water were formerly mortals, e.g. Wu Yun 伍員 and Kuo P'u 郭璞. But the Prince of Water Immortals here is not a former mortal. In the Sung dynasty there was a Temple for the Prince of Water Immortals which was actually a Temple for the Dragon

/King in Hangchow, near the small temple for the poet Lin Pu 林逋 (967–1028). When Su Tung-p'o was the Civil Administrator of Hangchow, he ordered that Lin Pu be worshipped together in this Temple of the Prince of Water Immortals. Hence the temple is mentioned in Huang T'ing-chien's 黃庭堅 poetical works. So here you have a happy marriage (or ridiculous confusion) of Taoist religion, popular folklore, poetic licence, official arbitrary power and cultural diversion and amusement.