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# Revisiting the Eastern Fence: Tao Qian's Chrysanthemums

Susan E. Nelson

The poet and essayist Yuan Mei (1716–1798) was in his midsixties when Luo Ping (1733–1799) painted his portrait, and his aging face was marked by strong, distinctive features: a wedge-shaped beard, full, drooping mustache, flabby jowls, a tuft of hair at his ear, and a round, bald pate (Fig. 1). His animated, somewhat disputatious expression—brow furrowed, teeth and tongue exposed in his open mouth as he turns to speak—is distinctive as well. Under the firmly delineated garments, a compact, sturdy body makes its presence felt. It is the kind of portrait that looks for the unique personal character informing each detail of the sitter's physiognomy, posture, and expression. The sprig of chrysanthemums in Yuan Mei's hand has been furnished as another such telling detail.

Chrysanthemums were the favorite flower of Tao Qian (or Tao Yuanming, 365–427), a poet who retired in midlife to a small estate to live out his days in rustic obscurity, drinking wine and writing poetry. It was a rough period in Chinese history, with much of the land occupied by foreign invaders and the remainder governed by unstable and short-lived native dynasties. Tao chose to keep to himself. Private and quiet as his life was, though, his reputation grew steadily after his death, eventually reaching immense stature. Since the eighth century his poetry and life story have been familiar to every educated Chinese.

Tao kept a chrysanthemum patch by the eastern fence of his property, and from this one of the oldest extant paintings of him, a small scroll by the early thirteenth-century court artist Liang Kai, takes its name: *Scholar of the Eastern Fence* (*Dongli gaoshi*). The poet is pictured walking in the breeze by a grove of trees and looking off into the distance, a chrysanthemum in his raised right hand (Figs. 2, 3).<sup>1</sup> The presentation of the flower—pinched carefully between his fingers and held upright and level with his face—is unmistakably meaningful. Whether held in his hand, set in a vase, or growing in the ground nearby, it was to remain Tao's characteristic attribute in later images. An elegant eighteenth-century carving in the Shanghai Museum made from a bamboo root, roughly contemporary with the portrait of Yuan Mei, shows Tao strolling under a tree, chrysanthemums in hand (Fig. 4).<sup>2</sup> But as Yuan's portrait shows, Tao Qian's chrysanthemums had other uses. They served as a prop for the practice of suggesting Tao-like qualities in a patron or sitter. Just by holding or contemplating one of these flowers, a pictured figure claims a likeness to Tao—even in the absence of any other allusion to him in the image or the inscribed text.<sup>3</sup>

Why would an eighteenth-century gentleman—a witty, worldly bon vivant at that, who relished travel, society, honors, and creature comforts—want to be identified with a melancholy, impoverished recluse who lived over thirteen hundred years before? Yuan Mei was, in fact, hardly alone; thinkers and writers throughout Chinese history aspired to be

compared with him. What was the special quality of “Tao-ness” with which later people wanted to affiliate themselves? What, specifically, among the various ideas associated with Tao Qian, did the chrysanthemum signify as subject or attribute in the history of Chinese pictorial art? And how, indeed, is the evocation of Tao in Yuan Mei's portrait—face averted from the flower—intended?

This essay examines uses of the chrysanthemum as a theme and motif in Chinese art: key ideas embedded in chrysanthemum imagery, and ways it was deployed in various contexts. The project of mapping the chrysanthemum tradition and its dense web of signification necessarily calls for a broad perspective. The focus here is on the late imperial period—the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties—for, with a handful of exceptions, extant examples date from the fifteenth century on. With the help of written sources, though, the pictorial tradition can be traced much further back, for the titles of lost paintings and transcriptions of texts written on them are preserved in old catalogues and other compendia. Taken together, these resources allow us to observe the working life of a sign such as the chrysanthemum in the Chinese iconographic system.

Certain powerful forces in Chinese visual culture are at work in the material to be considered here. Alongside the tradition of chrysanthemum pictures, and frequently intersecting with it, is an extensive corpus of poetry about Tao Qian and his chrysanthemums. Some of these poems were occasioned by the viewing of Tao-inspired pictures, and many of the pictures are informed by the reading of Tao-inspired poems. This interaction of verbal and visual is characteristic of Chinese art—familiar enough in the form of inscribed paintings, but also at work in texts and images that are materially independent of one another. Also characteristic is the continual retrieval and reframing of old forms, as in Yuan Mei's portrait; early images and ideas are proactively, and knowingly, engaged by the new in an ongoing process of deconstruction and reinvention. Intertextual allusions are a pervasive part of this process and call for extended consideration, as forms and motifs drawn from different genres or categories of representation, variously combined or juxtaposed, absorb and coopt meanings from one another and realign themselves to new times and ends.

As a result, the history of motifs such as the chrysanthemum in Chinese art is a history of powerful continuities repeatedly destabilized, reconfigured, and revitalized. In the pictures and texts discussed below, the chrysanthemum is positioned to signify different, indeed, sometimes contradictory, ideas: contentment and yearning, wandering and domesticity, solitude and sociability, plainness and opulence, civilization and wilderness, mortality and survival. Some of these ideas are central in Tao Qian's own writing; others manipulate or skew his image while still claiming his authority.



1 Luo Ping (1733–1799), *Portrait of Yuan Mei*, hanging scroll. Muko, Japan, Shujirō Shimada collection



2 Liang Kai (active early 13th century), *Scholar of the Eastern Fence*, hanging scroll. Taipei, National Palace Museum



3 Detail of Fig. 2

Whatever meaning the chrysanthemum may carry in a given text or image, sympathy for that meaning—endorsement of it—is usually implicit, though under certain circumstances (notably in some late examples, Yuan Mei's portrait among them) the flower may be used ironically, to anatomize or subvert the very ideal it represents. The iconographic multivalence of Tao Qian's chrysanthemum testifies to the protean vitality that culture heroes like Tao have enjoyed in Chinese history; it also serves as a case study of how such signs function dynamically in Chinese pictorial systems.

#### Tao Qian's Garden

"The three paths are almost obliterated / But pines and chrysanthemums are still here!" With this exclamation of recognition and pleasure, Tao stepped back onto the grounds of his property early in his prose poem "Returning Home" (*Guiqulai xi ci*), an account of his personal odyssey, a manifesto of the values of rustic seclusion, and one of the most famous texts in Chinese literature. He had just resigned from his job—a minor post in the government bureaucracy, away from home—and was now resolved to spend the rest of his days in his well-loved garden. The garden is a pervasive presence in his poetry: haven from society and the contentious political scene of the day, stimulus and metaphor for his thoughts about self, nature, destiny, and the mortal condition. "How easy it is," he wrote, "to be content with a little space."<sup>4</sup>

Tao had made a choice between political and social engagement on the one hand, and withdrawal and self-cultivation on the other. Though most lives, of course, are lived along the continuum between these poles, in traditional Chinese discourse engagement and withdrawal are seen as the two basic orientations for a thinking person. Confucian teachings encouraged the former course, looking after one's

family and serving society and the state. The choice of withdrawal, on the other hand, implied a preoccupation with more spiritual and abstract values: recluses dedicated themselves to philosophical or religious pursuits, artistic activities, and attunement to nature. Eccentric and independent, they turned their back on worldly concerns—advancement, honors, power, wealth, conventions of all sorts. Recluses might be faulted for self-indulgence and irresponsibility, but the reverberations of their personal virtue were a contribution, too; indeed, they might eclipse the deeds of statesmen and generals as a legacy to the world at large.<sup>5</sup> Theirs was seen as, ultimately, the loftier way. Few were temperamentally equipped to follow it, and few did. Tao Qian stands out among those few.

In Tao, readers saw someone who had sought and found an inward as well as a physical seclusion. Other recluses of his day wrote in heightened language about the grand mountain settings of their retreats; their lives appear exotic and glamorous. In contrast, Tao situated himself among fields and gardens (*tianyuan*)—intimate, modest, domesticated spaces.<sup>6</sup> His thoughts, moving in and out of small daily experiences, are animated by a deep sensibility to the human lot in the broad design of nature. His language is uninflated and natural, sometimes even colloquial; his seclusion seemed lived-in and real. The image of his rustic retreat served over many centuries as a site where ideas on withdrawal from the world were explored and exchanged.

Tao's means were slim, and the farming produce and income from his property were the main source of his livelihood once he had given up his salary. As Craig Clunas has shown, the so-called Chinese garden—usually thought of as an intimate setting for leisurely scholarly and aesthetic pursuits—was often in fact a productive and commercial property.<sup>7</sup> Tao's many references to work in the fields, weather,

and crops show that these were matters of concern to him. His property was clearly a working farm. "Tao Qian's garden," however, as a historical construct was something quite different. In the literature and art of later times it was, in essence, Tao's way of life, his state of mind, and his personality envisioned as a physical space: the ultimate "scholar's garden."

The chrysanthemums and pines that welcomed Tao on his return were the defining features of his retreat, distinguishing it from generic garden scenes. He wrote about both of them elsewhere, too, and they became recognized fixtures of his private universe. As early as the early twelfth century, according to a contemporary text, "with pine and chrysanthemum" was the standard way to represent Tao.<sup>8</sup> This classic formulation is to be seen in Liang Kai's *Scholar of the Eastern Fence* of the thirteenth century, and, as the eighteenth-century bamboo statuette among many other works attests, it remained useful and appealing down to late imperial times (Figs. 2, 4).

Pine trees, to be sure, are ubiquitous presences in the Chinese painted landscape, and cannot be considered proprietary attributes of Tao Qian's iconography. The chrysanthemum, though—and the pine-chrysanthemum pair—is Tao's alone. Chrysanthemums are not a major theme in his writing; he mentions them only a few times, often more or less in passing, and never dwells on them for more than a line or two. A number of these references, however, occur in particularly famous poems, most notably in the fifth of his "Twenty Poems on Drinking Wine" (*Yinjiu ershi shou*). In this poem Tao describes what would seem an utterly insignificant episode in his uneventful life: picking chrysanthemums by the fence, his attention is caught by a glimpse of South Mountain. South Mountain was a name for nearby Mt. Lu, a landmark site in northern Jiangxi Province known as an abode of hermits, religious communities, and spirit beings. At the sight of the mountain, Tao's mind is stirred with images of broad spaces and ultimate homecomings:

I built my cottage in a peopled place  
Yet hear no sound of passing carts and horses.  
Would you like to know how this can be?  
If the mind's detached, the place will be remote.  
Gathering chrysanthemums by the eastern fence  
I catch sight of South Mountain in the distance;  
The mountain air is lovely as the sun sets  
And flocks of flying birds return together.  
There's an essential meaning in all this—  
I would explain it, but can't find the words.<sup>9</sup>

What readers understood Tao to have experienced at his eastern fence was a surge of insight into the wholeness of things: here and there, matter and mind, quotidian and absolute. This poem, especially the central couplet—gliding smoothly from the garden flowers to the far-off numinous mountain—seemed to many to encapsulate the ultimate meaning of garden reclusion. Liang Kai's *Scholar of the Eastern Fence* is an illustration of this couplet; holding one of the flowers up like a talisman, the poet looks off into the distance, lost in wordless thoughts (Figs. 2, 3). The image, like the poem, projects a sense of serene composure and at the same time a powerful turning to something beyond.



4 Deng Fujia (18th century), *Tao Qian under a Pine*, bamboo carving. Shanghai Museum (from Shen Zhiyu, 213)

In the absence of many motifs that figure in the poem, though—cottage, passersby, fence, homing birds, South Mountain itself—*Scholar of the Eastern Fence* cannot be called literary illustration in any ordinary sense of the term. In fact, of the objects that make up the picture's setting—stream, footbridge, path, rocks, and trees—not one is mentioned in the poem at all. The sole motif common to both poem and painting is the chrysanthemum, and the chrysanthemum is, in fact, the main clue for the identification of the figure as Tao Qian.<sup>10</sup> It is a decisive clue. Other powerfully symbolic plants have been identified with people who wrote about them with particular feeling and whose character or life story they seemed to represent; the plum, for instance, representing hidden talent, is often associated with the poet Lin Bu (967–1028), who cultivated plum trees and sang their praises.<sup>11</sup> But as symbols they remained basically independent, and they often appear in contexts having nothing to do with their poet-patrons. Not so the chrysanthemum, which remained closely attached to the culture of Tao Qian.

The *Scholar of the Eastern Fence* is the oldest extant, but earlier paintings of Tao with chrysanthemums are known from written records. Reliable sources cite a number of exam-



5 *Chrysanthemums in a Vase*, round fan, Song dynasty. Beijing, Palace Museum (from *Zhonghua wuqiannian wenwu jikan: Song hua*, vol. 4, 85)

ples, among them a painting called *Yuanming at the Eastern Fence* by Li Gonglin (ca. 1041–1106), inscribed with a poem by Su Shi (1037–1101)—a redoubtable pair, among the most important figures in elite culture of the late eleventh century—and two anonymous *Gathering Chrysanthemums (Caiju)* pictures inscribed by the literatus Han Ju (d. 1135). The inscriptions are recorded in a late twelfth-century text.<sup>12</sup> Documents of Ming and Qing date record information about other lost Song (960–1279) and pre-Song paintings of Tao with chrysanthemums, such as a small hanging scroll in ink and color on silk described as “Yuanming holding a chrysanthemum and walking”—it sounds much like the *Scholar of the Eastern Fence*—by Wang Qihan, an early tenth-century painter.<sup>13</sup> Versions by Zhao Lingrang (fl. ca. 1070–1100) and by Liang Kai’s contemporary Ma Yuan (fl. ca. 1190–1230) are also recorded.<sup>14</sup> Inscriptions for paintings of Tao gathering chrysanthemums written by distinguished Song and Jin (1115–1234) men of letters are also preserved in Ming and Qing sources.<sup>15</sup> These late compilations cannot be considered reliable records of early iconography, but they offer good evidence for contemporary assumptions about it. By Ming and Qing times Tao with chrysanthemums was a fixed idea and image.

If Tao is closely associated with chrysanthemums, chrysanthemums are as closely linked to Tao. Even when pictured all by itself the flower alluded to Tao and his garden, as accompanying inscriptions attest.<sup>16</sup> A round fan painting now in Beijing is an early instance of this practice (Fig. 5). A bouquet of chrysanthemums in a long-necked vase is displayed in an elegant stand; isolated against a blank ground and exquisitely arranged, it presents itself as emblematic, meaningful. A poem complements the image:

The autumn breeze and sunshine suffuse the eastern fence,

Ten thousand rosy layers [of petals] crowd the green stalks.

Were their fragrant shapes mingled with the massed colors [of other flowers],

No one would know the time is early autumn.

These flowers, we are told, had grown at the eastern fence. The viewer is reminded that it is autumn—the season when chrysanthemums are the only flowers still thriving; the unmixed bouquet signals the end of the year, and appropriate thoughts of the mortal span. As the breeze stirred by the fan wafts an imagined scent of chrysanthemums toward him, its owner is invited to share Tao Qian’s experience of serene detachment. The painting is unsigned, but a label ascribes it to Yao Yuehua, an unrecorded artist who, it has been suggested, may have been a woman painter at the court of Emperor Ningzong (r. 1195–1224)—the time of Liang Kai’s own activity.<sup>17</sup>

Inscribed chrysanthemum paintings of the Song dynasty, recorded or extant, are few,<sup>18</sup> but the genre proliferated in Ming and Qing, and inscriptions on these later works invoke Tao again and again. These verbal allusions—usually a reference to some familiar phrase or image from Tao’s poetry, such as the eastern fence, the South Mountain view, the three paths, or the five willows at his gate (“Master Five Willows,” he sometimes called himself)—position the pictured chrysanthemum firmly in the poet’s iconic garden. Any number of examples might be cited.<sup>19</sup> Here, two, by a reclusive sixteenth-century literatus and a well-born eighteenth-century woman, may serve to suggest some of the forms they could take.

Lu Zhi (1496–1576) was a member of the cultivated elite of Suzhou during that city’s heyday in the sixteenth century and something of a scholarly recluse himself. Many of his poems and paintings attest to his admiration for Tao Qian. The chrysanthemum picture in his album of ten flower studies (*Hua sheng*) of 1536 offers the viewer a few blossoms and leaves sketched in a wetly fresh, spontaneous style against a plain background (Fig. 6). The image is accompanied by a quatrain, equally informal and brief:

Holding a staff, he approached the frosty path;  
Beyond the woods, marveled at the snowy flowers.  
Opening my carriage, I inquire of a lad—  
“Tao has already gone back home.”

The first two lines call up an image of Tao’s person, one close to that in Liang Kai’s painting: the poet, staff in hand, walking past some trees to his chrysanthemum patch in the autumn chill. But Tao is no longer to be found; he has moved on, in time and space. The pictured chrysanthemums remain as his trace, their lightly, loosely drawn leaves and blossoms mirroring the man’s own freedom, naturalness, and modesty. Into a casual flower sketch Lu’s poem reads the whole resonant story of Tao’s homecoming.<sup>20</sup>

*Chrysanthemums and Insects* by Ma Quan strikes a different note (Fig. 7). Her array of chrysanthemums is painted in an elegant, closely worked, unabashedly accomplished style. It is also richly descriptive: several varieties of the flower can be distinguished, autumnally full-blown, and in their natural grassy, buggy setting they exude a late seasonal warmth. In a



6 Lu Zhi (1496–1576), *Chrysanthemums*, leaf from a ten-leaf album, *Studies from Life*. Taipei, National Palace Museum

witty inscription Ma calls attention to her artistry, cultivating chrysanthemums with her brush rather than tending to real ones:

A special kind of autumn fragrance—where does it come from?  
 Its roots lie deeper than the green moss.  
 Dots and washes from my rabbit's hair [brush] blossom out into patterns of frost—  
 Just like what Yuanming planted by his fence.  
 All my life I've loved the chrysanthemums by the eastern fence,  
 But I'm lazy by nature—what's more, I have no place to plant them.  
 Whenever inspiration comes, I till with brush and ink;  
 Without care or watering, they'll still blossom forth!<sup>21</sup>

Ma needs no carriage, hers is no distant quest; she does not even need a garden. Without leaving her studio, she tells us, she can conjure up her own eastern fence. Her lush, tactile painting justifies her claim to Tao-ness in one way, as Lu Zhi's abbreviated, expressive sketch does in another. However striking their differences, the two works circle around the same idea: as both inscriptions remind us, the reclusive life symbolized by Tao's chrysanthemums is to be found in the mind, not in physical spaces—its roots, as Ma says, go deeper than the garden soil.

There are, to be sure, many chrysanthemum paintings whose inscriptions make no reference to Tao Qian's garden; the generic wishes they represented for well-being and contentment could function independently of the literary tradition. Chrysanthemums are also a common decorative motif on ceramics, lacquer, woodwork, and textiles, affixing their happy associations to objects not intended for thoughtful



7 Ma Quan (18th century), *Chrysanthemums and Insects*, hanging scroll. Hong Kong Museum of Art

contemplation. All the same, to the well-read viewer the pictured flower is likely to carry a tinge of Tao associations even in the absence of explicit verbal prompting. Indeed, some chrysanthemum paintings that the artist left untitled



and unscribed have at some point in their histories acquired labels such as *Autumn Colors at the Eastern Fence* (*Dongli qiuse*), evidence of their owners' familiarity with the flower's literary heritage.<sup>22</sup> Making, owning, or admiring a chrysanthemum painting were all ways to assert one's Tao-like qualities and siphon off some of his prestige.

### Chrysanthemums and Longevity

As a late fall flower, the chrysanthemum was generally associated with peaceful, reflective, late-life pastimes and moods. Chrysanthemum paintings were commonly given or displayed on the occasions of mature birthdays or retirements, signifying wishes for health, long life, and a retirement, like Tao's, of freedom, ease, and contentment. But a certain bitter aura also hung about the flower; the last in bloom among sere grasses, fallen leaves, and rimy dawns, it stirred thoughts of the decay of the year, of wanings and endings, of decline and death. This is a familiar theme in poetry, as in the following lines by the Tang (618–907) poet Zhang Jie:

How sad is the autumn atmosphere!  
The year wanes and comes to an end.  
Chrysanthemum flowers can be picked,  
Crystallizing the morning dew, they hold the light;  
The leaves of the trees scatter down,  
Swept off by a chilly wind they whirl up confusedly. . . .<sup>23</sup>

In Tao Qian's poetry as well, chrysanthemums are usually mentioned in contexts that draw on the flower's powerful seasonal associations, where ideas about life and death, vigor and decline, past and future time intersect.

Though Tao appreciated his chrysanthemums' autumnal beauty, he was really interested in them for a rather specific reason. For the chrysanthemum was a medicinal plant, thought to promote longevity and keep old age at bay, and it was Tao's practice to steep its petals in wine to make a longevity potion. The therapeutic effects of the brew, enhanced by intoxication, comforted and reassured him. Most of his references to chrysanthemums occur in connection with drinking and with thoughts, often drink-induced, of mortality and immortality. "Wine serves to exorcise all our cares," he wrote, "chrysanthemums keep us from growing old"; and

The fall chrysanthemums have lovely colors.  
I pluck the petals that are wet with dew  
And float them in this Care Dispelling Thing  
To strengthen my sense of leaving the world.<sup>24</sup>

This "Care Dispelling Thing," of course, is wine; "leaving the world" here conflates the ideas of reclusion, death, and immortality. It was understood to have been for this purpose that Tao went to gather chrysanthemums at his eastern fence in the fifth "Drinking Wine" poem. Many a later poet recapitulated Tao's chrysanthemum gathering amid similar thoughts of aging and death, drinking and release. Bai Juyi (772–846), for instance, wrote these lines on "Enjoying Chrysanthemums in the Eastern Garden" (*Dongyuan wanju*):

My youthful years have long since passed away,  
The years of my prime now are fading too. . . .  
I stand in my garden a long time, alone;  
The sun is weak, the wind and dew are cold,  
Autumn grasses tangled and decayed,  
The fine trees also in decline.  
Only a few chrysanthemum clusters remain,  
Newly opened by the fence.  
I brought a bottle, meaning to have a drink. . . .

Bai goes on to reflect on how readily wine had cheered him up when he was young; now the feeling of elation is more elusive, and he fears that in old age even strong drink will do nothing for him.

So I ask why the chrysanthemum flowers  
In this late season alone are fresh?  
Of course I know that it was not for me!  
Still, thanks to them, my face is cheered a while.<sup>25</sup>

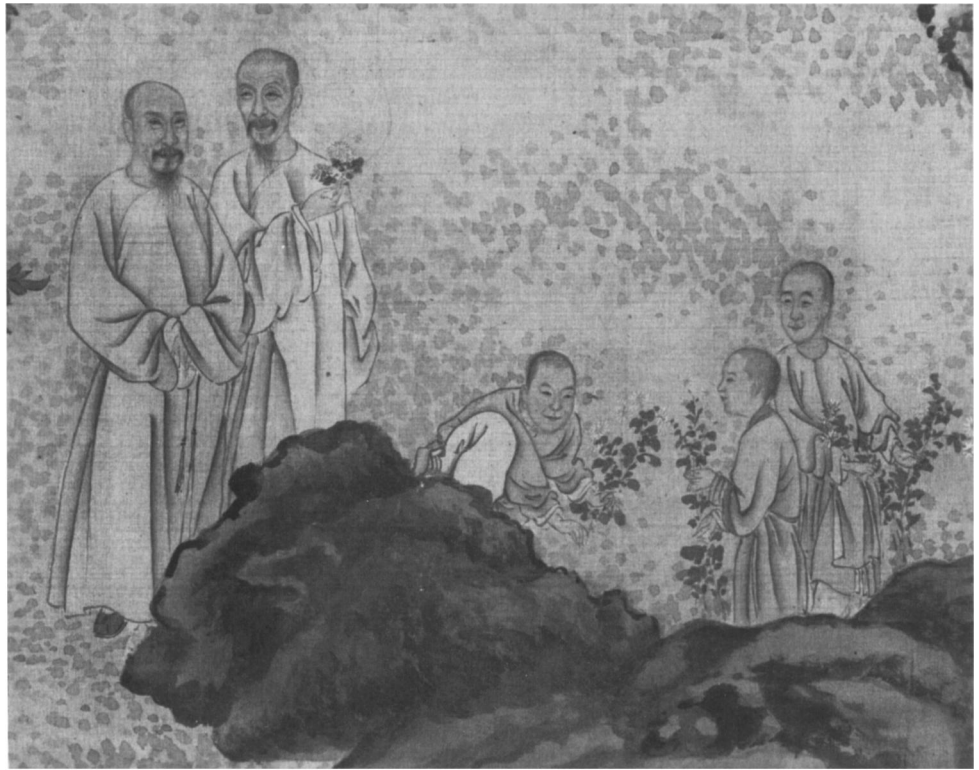
Bai's poem suggests the mingling of mortal sadness and wan hope Tao's chrysanthemum came to represent. For the harbinger of death paradoxically also represented life by showing its colors in the season when all seems lost.

The idea that the chrysanthemum was not just a symbol of survival but also a nostrum for it is of considerable antiquity. Cao Pi (186–226) had written of the chrysanthemum's late-season vigor, proof of its medicinal potency: by late fall nothing else is growing, but "the fragrant chrysanthemums abundantly bloom by themselves. If they did not contain the pure harmony of Heaven and Earth and embody the clear essence of fragrance, how could they do so? . . . For supporting the body and prolonging life nothing is as valuable as these." Cao made these remarks in a letter to a friend; he goes on to offer him a bunch of chrysanthemums "to aid in the art of Pengzu," a legendary figure said to have lived for many centuries before disappearing mysteriously into the west.<sup>26</sup>

Long before Tao Qian and Cao Pi, around the turn of the third century B.C.E., the poet Qu Yuan had written of eating chrysanthemum petals, clearly as a tonic.<sup>27</sup> Old legends told of many other users. Wu Bin, a master of longevity techniques, taught his ninety-year-old former wife to make a concoction including chrysanthemums; she regained her vigor and was still living over a hundred years later.<sup>28</sup> Ge Hong (283–343), a famous immortality seeker and author of a book of advice on the subject, offers a recipe for chrysanthemums mixed with the brains of an exotic blue fox-like beast, said to ensure five hundred years of life.<sup>29</sup>

By and large, though, by Tao Qian's time, the chrysanthemum seems to have been regarded as a moderately efficacious drug to boost one along in later life, somewhat like the popular vitamin supplements of today. The flower's name was a kind of advertisement for its life-lengthening powers: the Chinese word for chrysanthemum (*ju*) is phonetically close to that for remain, or dwell. Further, the traditional day for picking the flowers was the "Double Ninth," the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, and nine in Chinese (*jiu*) is homophonous with the word that means a long time. The inevitable chrysanthemum puns on the themes of lastingness

8 Fang Shishu (1692–1751) and Ye Fanglin (late 17th–early 18th century), *Ninth-Day Gathering at the Xing'an Retreat*, detail of a handscroll, 1743. The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Severance and Greta Millikin Purchase Fund, 1979.72 (photo: © Cleveland Museum of Art, 2000)



and perpetuation reinforced and popularized this symbolism.<sup>30</sup>

The Double Ninth, or Ninth Day as it was commonly called, was traditionally celebrated with a pleasant fall excursion. In a custom going back at least to the early third century, people would climb a scenic hill, drink chrysanthemum wine, and compose poetry. Tao's famous eastern fence outing and poem correspond to this practice, and his verses quoted above on floating chrysanthemum petals in "this Care Dispelling Thing" were written on the Double Ninth. In later times the holiday became in some measure a commemorative Tao Qian occasion.<sup>31</sup> From the eighth century on, poems composed on the Double Ninth frequently mention him or paraphrase his verses; Double Ninth paintings allude to him as well. His presence in several guises, for example, can be traced in a handscroll painting of a literary gathering that took place at an elegant estate in the city of Yangzhou on the Double Ninth of the year 1743 (Fig. 8); detailed written accounts of the event accompany the picture. In the section illustrated here, gardeners are tending chrysanthemum plants as one of the guests holds a sprig up in his hand; his gesture mimics conventional representations of Tao Qian such as Liang Kai's (Fig. 3). Further on in the scroll, members of the party are shown admiring a portrait of Tao by Qiu Ying (1495–1552), a brilliant professional painter of the previous dynasty, which has been taken out for the occasion. Finally, colophons to the painting speak of "the Ninth Day, which commemorates Master Tao," of Tao's chrysanthemums and wine, and of his noble character. They also report that, with Qiu Ying's portrait for inspiration, each guest was asked to compose an occasional poem to be affixed at the end of the scroll.<sup>32</sup> This eighteenth-century homage to a figure of the fourth to fifth century through commemorative

reenactment, text, and image, with nods to earlier representations of him, is typical of the multilayered process of retrieval or "revisiting" mentioned earlier in this study.

Tao's intention of eating his chrysanthemums is suggested rather pointedly in a number of paintings dating from the early Qing. In a small hanging scroll by Zhang Feng (d. 1662), *Tao Yuanming Sniffing Chrysanthemums* (*Yuanming xiuju*), in the Palace Museum in Beijing, the poet is shown as if returning from his eastern fence, walking with his frame hunched forward the better to inhale and absorb the blossoms he presses to his lips (Fig. 9).<sup>33</sup> He appears to be both sniffing them (as Zhang's inscription has it) and tasting them—as Tao himself spoke of doing in "Living in Retirement on the Ninth Day" (*Jiuri xianju*): with no wine at hand, he wrote, "I vainly drink the blossoms."<sup>34</sup> He might, in fact, almost be kissing them. The angular drape of his sleeve and the dark accent of his head scarf bracket the petals and fingers, dramatizing their hopeful delicacy. He looks thoughtful, even grave—longevity, after all, is serious business. Similarly, in the opening scene from Chen Hongshou's (1598–1652) *Episodes in the Life of Tao Yuanming* (*Tao Yuanming gushi*), a handscroll of 1650 in Honolulu, Tao's nose and mouth are buried in his bunch of flowers as his unfocused eyes tell of faraway thoughts (Fig. 10).<sup>35</sup> In these pictures and others like them, Tao holds the flowers very close to his face; they are, after all, to be ingested.<sup>36</sup>

Taking drugs and potions was a common practice in literati circles in the third and fourth centuries, and many users entertained hopes of indefinitely extended vigor and vitality. The borders between extended and eternal life are porous in traditional Chinese thought, and longevity practices and longevity imagery shade readily into the domain of immortality and supernatural states. Indeed, reclusion—leaving the



9 Zhang Feng (d. 1662), *Tao Yuanming Sniffing Chrysanthemums*, hanging scroll. Beijing, Palace Museum (from Yang Xin, ed., *Gugong bowuyuan cang Ming Qing huihua*, 79)

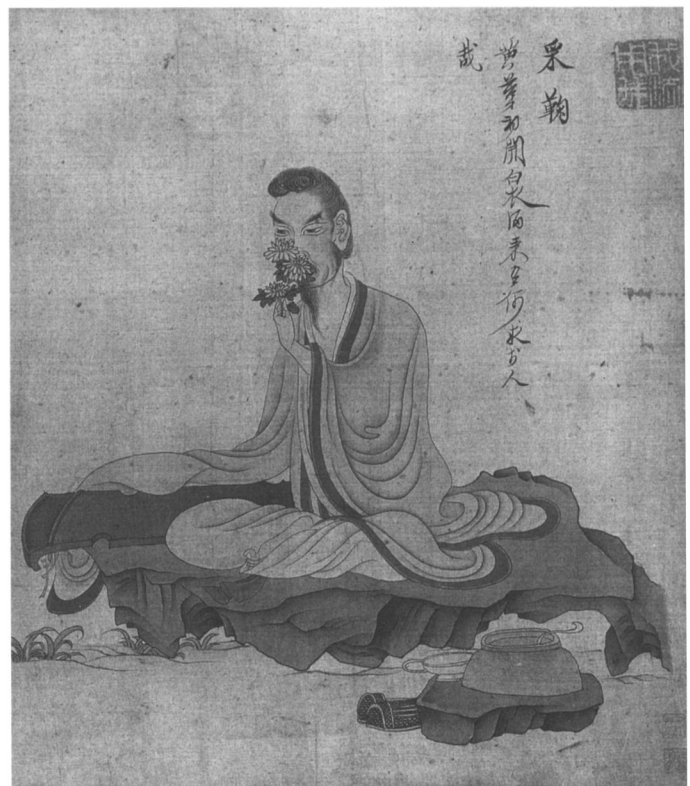
world—was in itself a reorientation away from ordinary time and place. Wolfgang Bauer has described the traditional Chinese understanding of the recluse's path as a journey through successive stages of withdrawal to ever more remote places (village, countryside, mountains and marshes) and ever more uncanny states of being. He becomes an "earthly immortal" (*dixian*) dwelling in fabulous realms and magic isles; in the final stage, he ascends to the sky as a true immortal—a state, as Bauer writes, "necessarily associated with the idea of death, although this is rarely expressed; or it may even be interpreted, by means of inversion, as an overcoming of death."<sup>37</sup>

Bauer speaks of the more advanced stages in the hermit's progress as "imaginative." They were quite real, however, to many of Tao's contemporaries, ecstatically described in their poetry, and the goal of widely practiced disciplines. In addition to eremitism, many of them studied dietary and other arts in the hope of husbanding and refining their vital energies in an elastic, open-ended continuum of existence. Tao had no such illusions; in "Drinking Alone in the Rainy Season" (*Lianyu duyin*) he queried pointedly, "If the immortals Song and Qiao [really] ever lived, where do you suppose they are today?" This line is often cited as evidence of his skepticism about immortality.<sup>38</sup> Longevity, on the other hand, was certainly of interest to him. As Wang Yao has pointed out, Tao circles around thoughts of extended life in many poems, among them "Substance, Shadow, Spirit" (*Xing ying shen*), "Returning to the Fields to Dwell" (*Gui yuantian ju*), "Living in

Retirement on the Ninth Day," and several of the twenty "Drinking Wine" poems.<sup>39</sup>

The great life-extending, transformative plants in Chinese lore are no garden-variety flowers but rare "numinous herbs" (*lingzhi*) found growing in hidden and remote places, especially the magic lobed mushrooms believed to confer immortality on those who eat them. That Tao's chrysanthemum represented yearnings that might be understood as a quest for transcendence is vividly suggested in the bamboo statuette in Shanghai, which shows a *lingzhi* fungus growing at the base of the pine tree (Fig. 4). Instead of gazing off at South Mountain, as in the fifth "Drinking Wine" poem, Tao turns to look sharply down. The fungus seems to offer itself for gathering along with the flowers already in his hand; the implication is that both kinds of plants have magic potency. Tao's body language also suggests the revelatory "catching sight" of the fifth "Drinking Wine" poem, in the brisk twist of his shoulders and the flick of his robes. The fungus in this carving ambivalently stands for the flower he gathers and the mountain he aspires to—that is, the means and the end of the poet's otherworldly hopes.

The pine tree of Tao Qian iconography also participates in these ideas. A man under a tree, as James Cahill has said, is the oldest sign for "man in nature" in Chinese images;<sup>40</sup> both Liang Kai's painting and the bamboo sculpture (Figs. 2, 4) represent this ancient idea. The pine tree's massive energy and protective attitude in *Scholar of the Eastern Fence*, at once shielding and bolstering, is also in keeping with recognized themes in Tao's poetry, for he mentions pines in many poems. There was one on his property, standing somewhat



10 Chen Hongshou (1598–1652), *Episodes in the Life of Tao Yuanming*, section of a handscroll, 1650. Honolulu Academy of Arts

apart from other trees, for which he had a special fondness. This attachment has been noted by many commentators, among them Hong Mai (1123–1202), in a passage on “Yuanming’s solitary pine”:

“Returning Home” says: “As the sun’s rays grow dim and disappear from view / I walk around a solitary pine tree, stroking it.” One of his twenty “Drinking Wine” poems [the eighth] says: “A green pine grows in the east garden / Its beauty hidden by surrounding growth. . . .” [Hong quotes the first six lines of that poem, on the pine neglected despite its merits]. This is the very [tree] he called the solitary pine. He was comparing it to himself.<sup>41</sup>

Wu Shidao (1283–1344) was another who pointed out Tao’s identification with the pine. Citing a selection of his pine passages, Wu concluded, “all this is about himself. People think old Tao just loved chrysanthemums; they don’t know about this.”<sup>42</sup> Wu overstated the case; though chrysanthemums were indeed Tao’s best-known attribute, the pine was also a standard feature of his historical image, mentioned again and again in later poems about him and often included in his portraits.<sup>43</sup>

The pine’s emphatic presence in the *Eastern Fence* painting—despite its absence in the fifth “Drinking Wine” poem—acknowledges its special place in Tao’s personal symbology. It is the sturdy frame for his retirement; along with the tiny chrysanthemum, it seems to complete his world. But the tree complements the flower as well as contrasting with it, for evergreen trees are auspicious presences in their own right: oblivious to the seasons and the passage of time, they represent longevity, strength, and integrity. Nor was the pine merely a symbol of longevity; the beneficial effects of eating pine nuts, pine sap, and pine needles are mentioned in various sources. Pine substances were used as longevity drugs by such savants as Chisongzi (“Master Redpine”), according to an account in the *Biographies of the Immortals* (*Liexian zhuan*), a text dating from the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.).<sup>44</sup> The potent *lingzhi* mushroom was also thought to flourish in conjunction with pine trees, like the one in the bamboo statuette. Both the *Huainanzi* (second century B.C.E.) and the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji*, ca. 100 B.C.E.) refer to a thousand-year-old pine tree at whose foot grows a large fungus, *fuling*; according to the latter text, people who eat it will never die. Eating pine resin is recommended as well.<sup>45</sup> Ming and Qing paintings of fungi growing from the trunk of a pine tree or clustered around its base attest to the currency of this apotropaic image in later times, when the evergreen tree itself became a common motif in birthday and retirement pictures.<sup>46</sup> A hanging scroll of 1897, in the Royal Ontario Museum, of pine and fungus arrayed in the shape of the character *shou* (longevity) by the Qing Dowager Empress Cixi (1835–1908) is a striking image of these ideas (Fig. 11).<sup>47</sup>

Between doses of pine and chrysanthemum, according to a poem by Fan Yun (451–503), one can do without the fabled mineral decoctions of alchemy:

In spring, ferment scorched pine needles,  
In autumn, steep chrysanthemums in a cup.  
Meeting up, the better to get drunk,  
We certainly won’t study cinnabar!<sup>48</sup>



11 Dowager Empress Cixi (1835–1908), *Pine and Fungi*, hanging scroll, 1897. Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum

In Tao Qian imagery the pine-chrysanthemum pair, narrowly construed, denotes his reclusive garden; broadly construed, though, it signifies awareness of mortality and longings for transcendence.

### Homebodies and Mountain Men

The image of Tao Qian holding his chrysanthemum like a prize, walking staff in hand (Figs. 2, 3), puts a distinctive visual spin on his chrysanthemum-gathering activities: it positions him in the exotic company of herb gatherers. These were the fellows, historical or legendary, known for roaming the countryside in search of medicinal plants: people such as Chisongzi, “Master Redpine”—the “immortal Song” (“immortal Pine”) Tao mentions skeptically in a poem cited



12 *Herb Gatherer*, hanging scroll, Liao dynasty (916–1125). Yanbei District Material Culture Workstation, Shanxi (from *Zhongguo meishu quanji: Huihua bian*, vol. 3, pl. 53)

above; or Tao's contemporary Liu Ziji of Nanyang (Tao mentions him, too, in "Peach Blossom Spring," *Taohua yuan*), an eccentric hermit who refused office, preferring to spend his time foraging for herbs in the mountains and swamps.<sup>49</sup> Herb gatherers are broadly to be counted among the immortality seekers, since their quest was for substances that would extend life indefinitely and confer extraordinary vital powers. Some, indeed, were pictured in popular lore as having achieved forms of superhumanity, whether as elegant perfected gentlemen or as strange, spritelike beings.

The *Scholar of the Eastern Fence* is typologically allied to pictures of these herbalists, such as a painting judged to be from the Liao dynasty (916–1125) of a foraging mountain man (Fig. 12).<sup>50</sup> He is perhaps Shennong, the legendary emperor of high antiquity who taught the people agriculture and the uses of medicinal plants. Jacketed in leaves and a shaggy cape, sashes streaming ahead of him, he heads barefoot down a hillside; pickax, dragon-headed staff, straw hat, gourd, fly whisk, and a wicker knapsack full of his take complete his equipment. His prize find is a *lingzhi* fungus,

which he carries before his face pinched between thumb and forefinger, just as the eastern fence scholar holds his chrysanthemum (Fig. 3); it is a gesture typically used by figures holding objects of talismanic significance. In the same company are the Tang immortal Lü Dongbin, pictured in an anonymous painting in Taibei with his beard and clothes blowing, a basket of plants in one hand and a prime specimen held up in the other,<sup>51</sup> or Wu Wei's (1459–1508) *Herb Immortal (Zhixian)*, gazing up and ahead like Tao, an animal pelt tied at his waist and a mushroom in his hand (Fig. 13).<sup>52</sup> Even the outlandish, hairy Wuquan—an immortal of Han lore—holding up his trophy of potent grasses in a Ming illustrated edition of the *Biographies of the Immortals (Liexian quanzhuan)* is akin to the chrysanthemum-gathering Tao (Fig. 14).<sup>53</sup> Wuquan's grotesquerie and Tao's svelte elegance are a world apart; nonetheless, the similarities in their postures and gestures imply similarities in their aims and doings.

Along with his chrysanthemum, Tao is characteristically shown carrying a walking stick; in the *Eastern Fence* picture this is what occupies his other hand. He mentions it several times in his writings: "staff in hand I walk and rest," as he says in "Returning Home," where he also speaks of "planting my staff to take up a hoe"; and in other poems, "staff in hand I went back to my hut in the west"; "depressed, I came back alone, staff in hand."<sup>54</sup> All this is ordinary enough, and the cane is hardly a significant object or symbol in his writing. It was to become one, however, in his iconography. It is one of the image maker's contributions to the construction of his image, extending the idea of his movements beyond the borders of his garden toward more distant destinations. The spotted fur cape Tao wears in many pictures—something he never mentioned—reinforces this wilderness imagery.

What's in a staff? So ubiquitous is this piece of gentlemanly equipment in Chinese painting that the viewer barely notices its presence. People rarely leave home without it. But surely they are not all so decrepit, or attempting hikes so ambitious, that they need it for practical reasons.

Of course, the walking stick is a sign of class. Its holders are likely to be people of sedentary, indoor pursuits and wardrobes, who move about in a deliberate manner in their long, encumbering garments, in contrast to the peasants, barelegged or in leggings, going staffless and nimble about their work. When, in "Returning Home," Tao speaks of "planting my staff to take up a hoe," he is exchanging a gentleman's role for a farmer's. Chiefly, though, the staff is a sign of character. It suggests to the viewer that even if the scholar is just strolling in his garden, he does so in the spirit of a real journey, one taking him deep into the country; he is a "mountain man" (*shanren*) at heart. In one of his "Poems in Praise of Ancient Farmers," Tao Qian writes of "the Old Man with the Staff" who "was content never to return to the world."<sup>55</sup> The staff is the signal attribute of this solitary sage (perhaps himself). Elsewhere, describing his misguided venture into a worldly career, he wrote: "I dropped my staff and had my luggage packed / And for a time took leave of fields and garden."<sup>56</sup>

In addition to signifying sagehood and wilderness travel, the staff also carries meaning as a potent tool in Daoist lore, where it plays various roles to assist the adept's escape from the earthly world. Staffs could serve as body doubles for



13 Wu Wei (1459–1508), *Herb Immortal*, hanging scroll. Taipei, National Palace Museum

transmundane voyagers. Isabelle Robinet has described the “liberating transformation” of Daoist immortals who, departing for higher realms, leave their bodies behind in the guise of their staff or sandals.<sup>57</sup> When trimmed with amulets, a staff also offered protection against danger on mountain forays to gather magic herbs; when inset with talismans of the five colors, directions, and sacred peaks and properly handled, it would give the bearer power over the spirit world. According



14 *Wuquan*, woodblock print, Ming dynasty (1368–1644) (from *Liexian quanzhuan*, in Zheng Chenduo, *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan*, vol. 3, 35)

to the text known as the “Jade Instructions” (ca. 400), “If you point the staff at the heavens, the heavenly spirits will do obeisance; if you point it at the earth, the earthen powers will all come to greet you. If you point it at the northeast, the myriad demons will be bound and will come to you. . . .” The text recommends an incantation that runs in part: “The spirit staff with its holy talismans / Controls the hundred sectors with its might. / Formed together with me, / Born together with me, / After ten thousand kalpas, / It will replace my form. . . .” After nine years of practice in the arts of the staff, the adept would be able to ride it on celestial journeys.<sup>58</sup> Such a journey is illustrated in a hanging scroll by Ma Yuan in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, where a sage astride a dragon rides the wind, accompanied by an attendant spirit holding his magic dragon-headed staff.<sup>59</sup>

These miraculous powers are in play in many a tale, among them one about the Han dynasty adept Fei Changfang; two talented bamboo staffs figure in his story. Fei decided to leave home to study Daoist arts under the tutelage of an ancient



15 Chen Hongshou, *Enjoying Chrysanthemums*, hanging scroll. Taipei, National Palace Museum

sage. He convinced his family that he had died by leaving behind a bamboo stick, which appeared to them to be his body, and which they mourned and buried. When years later he was to return,

The old man presented him with a bamboo staff, saying: "Astride this, no matter where you are going, you will be able to get there in a moment of time. When you reach home, take the staff and throw it into the Bean Pool." Riding on the staff, Changfang flew back in a second. . . . Without delay he threw his staff into the pool, and as he watched it transformed into a dragon.

Fei told his incredulous family, " 'What you buried long ago was only a bamboo stick.' Thereupon they dug up the grave



16 Carved lacquer box, 14th century. Shanghai Museum (from Shen Zhiyu, pl. 197)

and broke open the coffin and, sure enough, found the stick still inside."<sup>60</sup>

In the "Jade Instructions," the seeker is advised to carry the staff on his person at all times; the walking scholars in Chinese paintings seem to have taken this admonition to heart. Though its meaning has paled through overexposure, the lore of the staff's magic—in addition to its more pedestrian function—lingers among the layered meanings of these scenes. And in some Tao Qian paintings, the poet's staff is clearly acknowledged as an emblem of otherworldly quests. In compositions by the late Ming painter Chen Hongshou, for instance, it is given eye-catching roles and positions. A leaf from Chen's album *Sixteen Views of Living in Seclusion* (*Hua yinju shiliu guan*, 1651) in the National Palace Museum in Taipei depicts a Tao Qian-like figure grasping a staff with a chrysanthemum tied to it; at first glance, stick and flower seem to be a single organism.<sup>61</sup> Conjoined to the staff in this way, the chrysanthemum becomes a plant worthy of the far-wandering herb gatherer's quest. In Chen's *Enjoying Chrysanthemums* (*Wanju*), also in Taipei, a Tao-like gentleman sits pensively in front of a vase of chrysanthemums, a tall walking staff prominent in his hand (Fig. 15).<sup>62</sup> The staff suggests that the flowers are the result of a long quest, and at the same time the beginning of a journey elsewhere. The man, of course, need never leave his seat; these seekings and findings are journeys of the mind.

Through these devices and motifs, memories of Tao Qian's escapist aspirations are imported into the image. In Liang Kai's *Scholar of the Eastern Fence* (Fig. 2), staff and chrysanthemum also conjointly suggest mountain-going, herb-gathering, immortality-seeking pursuits. Similarly, as engraved on the lid of a round lacquer box made in the fourteenth century, Tao stands under a pine with a lad nearby carrying the flowers in a vase. He has walked no further than his eastern fence; it is just behind him (Fig. 16).<sup>63</sup> All the same, his attitude—facing into the distance, robes and scarf blow-

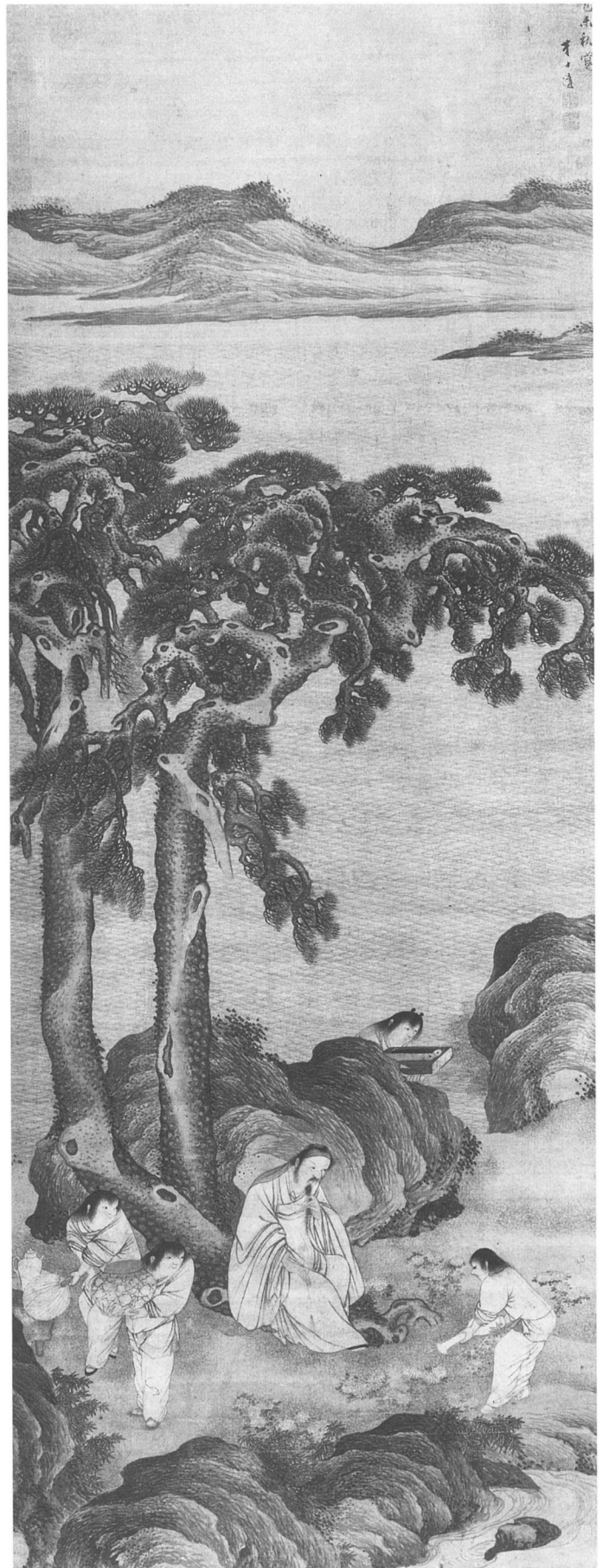
ing, walking staff in hand—associates his modest chrysanthemum-picking excursion with thoughts of distant, perhaps transmundane voyages.

To be sure, cast as a mountaineering herb gatherer, Tao is made to enact a narrative he never wrote. The chrysanthemums of his poetry are all growing at home, part of his snug garden world. He admires them in his front yard on his return, and gathers them in his courtyard or at his eastern fence.<sup>64</sup> And the Tao Qian ideal is precisely that of the homebody, cultivating a grand vision in a narrow space. His chrysanthemum gathering is often portrayed in this domestic context as well, with the flowers tended in pots or culled from a cutting garden rather than hunted down in the wilderness, and his staff nowhere in evidence. In Li Shida's (active late sixteenth–early seventeenth century) *Tao Yuanming Appreciating Chrysanthemums* (1619) in the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Tao sits on the bent trunk of a pine tree, gravely stroking his beard as he watches one of his men watering a clump of flowers; other servants hold an album of books for his perusal and a gourd of wine at the ready (Fig. 17).<sup>65</sup> In *Facing Chrysanthemums (Duiju)*, a painting by Shitao (1642–1707) in the Palace Museum in Beijing, Tao stands in his courtyard by the garden wall holding a square flowerpot with the help of a servant.<sup>66</sup> His back is to the fence and the broad, high riverscape and mountains beyond; he faces in toward his garden where two pines are growing, their trunks intertwined and their branches fanning out above. Though Tao's garden is part of a large landscape setting in this painting, it retains its intimacy and sense of sheltered isolation, just as the theme signaled by the label, “facing chrysanthemums,” centers the meaning in the local space. Images such as these bring the chrysanthemum as emblem of Tao's mentality back into Tao's garden—a setting where many of his later admirers liked to imagine themselves.

Many, indeed, sought to re-create it for themselves. Features of Tao's homestead mentioned in his poems—the five willows at his front gate, a solitary pine tree, a spot commanding a distant mountain view, three grassy paths, a chrysanthemum patch by a rustic fence—were replicated in the artfully landscaped gardens of well-to-do literati from the eighth century on. To judge from his description of it, one Song gentleman's retreat, “The Cottage of Master Returning-Home,” was a veritable Tao Qian theme park,<sup>67</sup> and the spare little shelter represented in a famous fourteenth-century painting was named the “Little-Space Pavilion,” after Tao's line in “Returning Home” on being “content with a little space.”<sup>68</sup> His retreat is also commonly invoked in the garden paintings that proliferated in Ming and Qing times, where the pictured space offered to the patron or recipient was the imagined world of Tao's reclusion: a sheltered spot for solitary or social pastimes, abloom with chrysanthemums, with pleasant shelters and lads to garden or serve.

### Charades and Impersonations

I have spoken above, in connection with paintings by the seventeenth-century artist Chen Hongshou, of “Tao-like” figures—anonymous figures furnished with some of the common signs of Tao's iconography (chiefly, chrysanthemums), though the settings or contexts in which they appear may not be those specifically associated with the poet's life or writings.



17 Li Shida (active late 16th–early 17th century), *Tao Yuanming Appreciating Chrysanthemums*, hanging scroll, 1619. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1960/1.184





18 *Reciting Poetry*, fan, ink and color on silk, Yuan dynasty (1279–1368). Beijing, Palace Museum

Like Lu Zhi and many other painters, Chen empathized with Tao's alienation and admired his unworldliness and independence, and Tao Qian imagery served him as a code to suggest these sensibilities in himself and other individuals. Some Tao-like figures may be the artist's own alter egos; others represent the patron or recipient of the painting, who is visually eulogized by the implicit comparison between himself and the classic poet-recluse. We can be sure that Tao Qian allusions were often specified by the patrons; for example, a seventeenth-century document requesting a picture of a retreat stipulated, among other details, five willows at the gate.<sup>69</sup> We can also be sure that these allusions were readily recognizable to the viewer. As Chen Shu (1660–1736) wrote on her sketch of two men relaxing in a snug fence-enclosed garden, cups raised, amid chrysanthemums, pine, and willows, as a third man approaches shouldering a jug: "Holding a cup and facing chrysanthemums—not hard [to guess the subject]! If wine's brought, too, that's all it takes to make one think of the Rhymester."<sup>70</sup>

It need hardly be said that many patrons and sitters eulogized in this way were nothing like Tao at all. From the Tang and Song dynasties on, paintings of garden retreats circulated mainly among well-established members of society, men of property, station, and worldly accomplishments.<sup>71</sup> Even the minor gentry and retired officials among them were generally well connected with local or national structures of power. Not only had Tao supposedly not led such a life, but the very act on which his reputation rested was his decisive rejection of it. Tao's way of life presented a direct challenge to theirs and, indeed, to the social system they sustained and depended on. Within a century or so of his death, in fact, he was recognized as a threat to the social order. An essay written by Emperor

Yuan of the Liang dynasty (r. 552–54) describes the attractions of the reclusive life, making unmistakable allusions to Tao Qian: "three paths at home," "five willows trailing by the gate," "pouring out a measure of wine, and singing of South Mountain." But, the emperor goes on to say, a reclusive state of mind need not be incompatible with wealth, power, and social involvement.<sup>72</sup> Between the lines we can read both the appeal of Tao's model to the lordly classes of the sixth century and concern over the difficulties this appeal might pose to the stability of the elite establishment and the state. It was the perennial tug-of-war between engagement and withdrawal. The engaged did not relinquish the dream of an ideal garden retreat; indeed, entertaining the dream, even without pursuing it, was a mark of high-mindedness. So Tao remained a hero to the world's movers and shakers, as well as to its hermits and retired scholars. This ambiguity in the culture of Tao Qian was never resolved; in different guises, refitted to different times and circumstances, it can be glimpsed in pictures and texts throughout later history.<sup>73</sup>

The garden of the wealthy sensualist in *Reciting Poetry*, a round fan in the Palace Museum in Beijing by an anonymous artist probably of the fourteenth century, may represent something like the compromise Emperor Yuan had in mind (Fig. 18).<sup>74</sup> The figure here is Tao's, closely modeled on the *Eastern Fence* type in stance and dress, presenting himself to the viewer at the same angle, wearing a similar scarf and cape, robes and sashes swishing (compare Fig. 3). He holds a wine cup in one hand, a flower in the other: the Double Ninth recipe is about to be demonstrated. No trace of introspection or longing is to be found, however; attended by two eager servants, the hero strolls on a terrace with elaborate balustrade and plantings and a large table laden with food, books, and ornaments. Any sense of the downside of withdrawal—doing without—has been written out of the picture. One might almost think that the chrysanthemum wine has outdone itself here, and transported the lucky gentleman straightaway to paradise.

Imagining Tao, as here, in opulent surroundings necessitated a departure from the testimony of his writings and his historically constructed image. But this departure was made again and again in paintings that reflect the co-option of his tradition in high society. After all, following Tao Qian's example meant sacrificing more of the amenities of privileged life than many were willing to contemplate—even in a picture. One might, however, set aside times and places for the exploration of Tao's world without making a lifetime commitment to it. Gardens designed to replicate his—with, perhaps, three paths and five willows—could be stage sets for occasional bouts of drinking and "singing of South Mountain" (that is, chanting Tao's poetry or composing poems inspired by him). Pictures could also interweave the Tao ideal with tokens of a worldly life or associate it with an individual whatever his actual temperament and circumstances. The essential feature of Tao's life, as reimagined in these guises, is not alienation or otherworldly thoughts but the unencumbered enjoyment of leisure and comfort.

Though the signs of wealth are somewhat more subtly displayed, *Autumn Colors at the Eastern Fence* (*Dongli qiuse*), a large hanging scroll on silk in the National Palace Museum probably datable to the early Ming, offers an idyllic vision



19 Li Xiang, *Autumn Colors at the Eastern Fence*, detail, hanging scroll, early Ming dynasty. Taipei, National Palace Museum

comparable to that of the round fan (Fig. 19).<sup>75</sup> In the detail shown here, a Tao-like recluse relaxes elegantly on a couch by a thatched shelter, admiring the flowers that line his brushwood fence, as a guest approaches bringing wine—the subject, as Chen Shu said, is obvious. At first glance the place seems rustic, but the man’s princely posture as well as the grandiose mountain scenery rising mightily in the background contribute an air of consequence. And indeed, every comfort and luxury are at hand: a bevy of servants, wife and child at a window, and a lavish villa—his main residence—glimpsed uphill to the left. This is not the hideaway of an obscure man; it is the “Tao garden” a wealthy aesthete has constructed on the grounds of his estate.

In other pictures re-creating Tao’s garden for his latter-day admirers, the setting may be comparatively modest and unpretentious, yet many of these scenes are suffused with a lighthearted air of pleasure and gaiety that is, in its way, as much a departure from the poet’s own descriptions as the

aristocratic accoutrements in the two paintings discussed above. Often one or two congenial friends have come to pass a delightful afternoon; lightness, mildness, and playfulness are the keynotes of these amiable scenes, and thoughts of “essential meanings” seem far away. Backs to a looming South Mountain and unmoved by the grave, grand thoughts it represents, host and guest chat and enjoy the flowers while awaiting their drink in Tang Yin’s (1470–1524) *Appreciating Chrysanthemums* in Shanghai, as servants busy themselves nearby.<sup>76</sup> In Lu Zhi’s *Planting Chrysanthemums* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, a man stands on the veranda of his cottage in a clearing, supervising a servant planting the flowers along a fence; a friend is arriving at the gate, his own servant bearing a trayful of chrysanthemum plants (Fig. 20). As we know from his inscription, Lu Zhi in fact received a gift of chrysanthemums from a friend, and he evidently painted this picture in thanks. The friend was named Tao, and the inscription as well as the image plays



20 Lu Zhi, *Planting Chrysanthemums*, hanging scroll. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Edward Elliott Family Collection, Gift of Douglas Dillon



21 Lu Zhi, *Traces of Tao Qian*, album leaf, 1523. Taipei, National Palace Museum

with allusions to Tao Qian: "I hear you have opened up a 'Tao path' by the shore. . . . May I share some of your autumn colors by my eastern fence?"<sup>77</sup> Lu's homestead is in the foreground, set between wedges of rock; the view back is open, though, with a deep valley zigzagging into the distance, where a visionary crystalline mountain hovers in the air, its base dissolved in mist—the promise of South Mountain, shining over the chrysanthemum-planting scene below. The scene is shimmering and dreamy, in tones of yellow and pale blue; the escapist theme is in the air here, but in an altogether mellow and optimistic vein.

Earlier, we looked at a chrysanthemum painting by Lu Zhi (Fig. 6) and noted his special interest in Tao Qian. He was also (not coincidentally) a great chrysanthemum fancier, and the pride of his own garden at the foot of Mt. Zhixing near Suzhou were the many thousands of chrysanthemums he cultivated there.<sup>78</sup> His passion for Tao's flower must have been well known to his friends, for another of his pictures, this one an informal portrait dated to 1523, was also painted in appreciation of a gift of chrysanthemums. The scene, again, is suffused with a limpid serenity. Seated alone on a rocky hillside, a man leans comfortably back against a pine tree, holding up a chrysanthemum as he gazes off into the distance (Fig. 21). The painting is called *Traces of Tao Qian*

22 Hua Yan (1682–1756), *Enjoying Chrysanthemums*, detail, hanging scroll, 1753. St. Louis Art Museum, William K. Bixby Asian Art Fund



23 Chen Hongshou, *Portrait of Nan Shenglu*, section of a handscroll, 1649. Zurich, Rietberg Museum, C. A. Drenowatz collection (photo: Wettstein and Kauf)



(*Pengze gaozong*; literally, “eminent traces of Pengze,” after a town where Tao once held office). It is often spoken of as a portrait of Tao, and indeed the figure is modeled on a familiar generic Tao Qian portrait; as the inscription indicates, however, the man is in fact Lu Zhi himself.<sup>79</sup> The chrysanthemum in his hand is the Tao “trace,” the Tao frame of mind Lu here claims as his own; in a sense, it is the very chrysanthemum that stands for Tao, who had “already gone back home,” in the leaf from Lu’s flower album in Taibei (Fig. 6).

The paintings discussed above, and many other Ming pictures of Tao Qian themes, seem largely unencumbered by the thoughts of mortality, of drunken oblivion, and of elusive goals usually associated with the chrysanthemum in Tao’s poetry. Many were intended as birthday or retirement gifts, and their sunny, welcoming vision is appropriate to such celebratory occasions. There is a certain romantic innocence to them, a quality also to be found in many paintings of the following Qing dynasty, such as Hua Yan’s (1682–1756) amiable *Enjoying Chrysanthemums* (1753) in St. Louis (Fig. 22).<sup>80</sup> The proprietor is sitting in an airy garden house; in the open plot in front of him stand a couple of dozen pots of chrysanthemums, tended by several servant boys under his pleased

eye. A stone wall edges his property to the right, where a willow tree reinforces the allusion to Tao Qian. As conceived here, his life was a simple one of ease, pleasure, and boundless free time.

The fresh, lighthearted celebration of the Tao Qian tradition in scenes like these, though, is supplanted by a more ambiguous vision in a number of paintings from the seventeenth century on, especially after the Manchu conquest of 1644 had radically complicated the image of Tao’s life and garden and given a new urgency to questions of engagement and withdrawal. With the traumatic fall of the Ming dynasty, the crushing of loyalist resistance, and the outrage of alien occupation, the cheery chrysanthemum gardens of mid-Ming paintings like Tang Yin’s and Lu Zhi’s must have seemed, in the modern term, irrelevant. Portraits of gentlemen with chrysanthemums from this period often have a new look, knowing and ironic—a look by no means entirely at odds with what Tao’s writings tell us of his own self-image, similarly formed in circumstances of political stress. Chen Hongshou’s Tao-like figures illustrated above exemplify this new weariness and wariness (Figs. 10, 15). They have a pessimistic air; attitudinizing and almost self-parodying, they are far re-



24 Yu Zhiding (1647–after 1716), *Wang Yuanqi Appreciating Chrysanthemums*, handscroll. Beijing, Palace Museum (from *Zhongguo lidai huihua*, vol. 8, 100–102)

moved from the serene sense of wholeness expressed in Lu Zhi's Tao-inspired people and scenes.

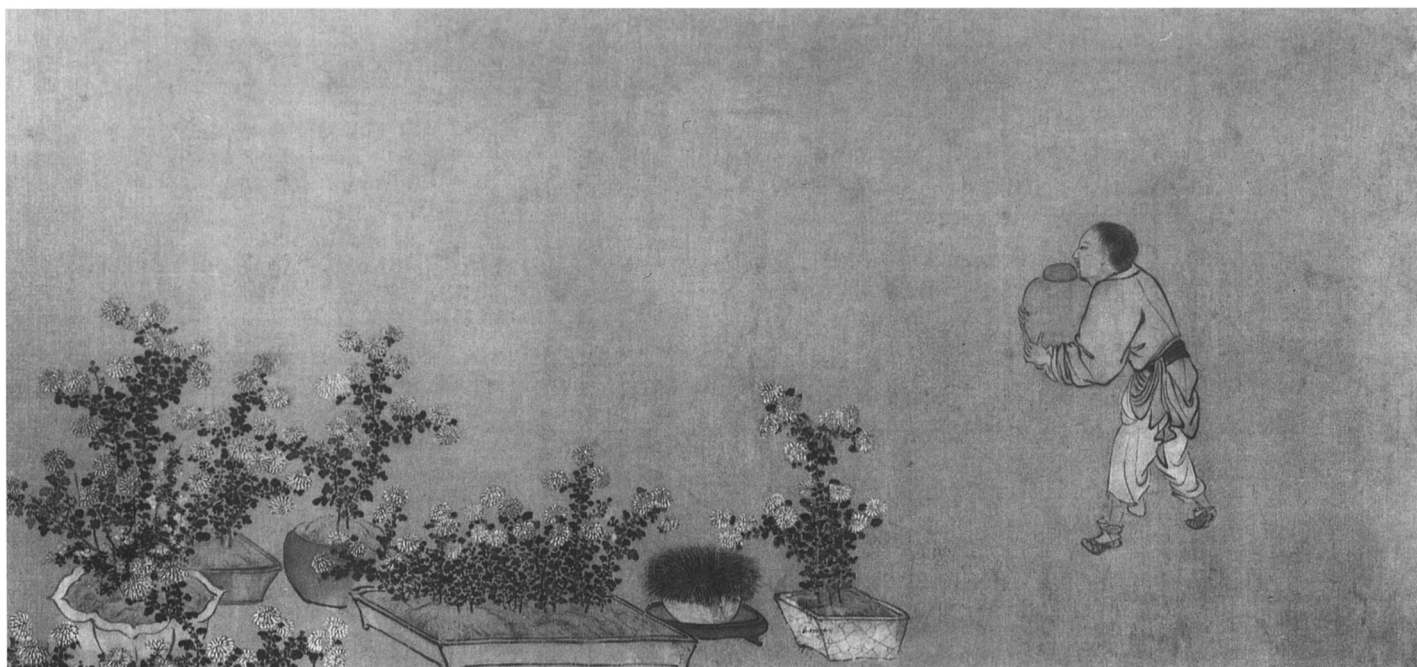
Chen was one of several seventeenth-century painters whose art—and whose use of Tao Qian imagery—vividly reflects the disillusionment of Ming loyalists under the Qing regime. His portrait of Nan Shenglu (1649) exemplifies this altered view. The sitter wears a getup of Tao's spotted fur cape and staff; sprigs of chrysanthemums stuck jauntily in his hat complete the Tao Qian masquerade, and the accompanying poem carries it forward with references to Mt. Lu and chanting poetry (Fig. 23).<sup>81</sup> Poem and picture are captioned "Drunken Chanting" (*Zuiyin*), and with his giddy headdress and jovial expression Nan Shenglu does seem to have had a few cups. There is nothing spontaneous about his manner, however, as he looks out to the viewer with an expectant expression, inviting amused appreciation, his long sashes splayed out to the sides in symmetrical mannered arcs. Is he parodying Tao, or parodying his own Tao pretensions in this latter age?

Yu Zhiding's (1647–after 1716) picture of Wang Yuanqi (1642–1715) "appreciating chrysanthemums" in Beijing is another such pictured performance. The powerful early Qing dynasty official and painter is portrayed here seated on a dais, leaning on an armrest with a self-congratulatory air (Fig. 24).<sup>82</sup> Books and scrolls are nearby, as are servants attending him with a wine pitcher and bringing a large covered jar. Surveying with satisfaction the masses of potted chrysanthemums in front of him, Wang raises a cup to his lips. In paintings like these, the sitter is flattered by the comparison to Tao without being asked to imagine himself putting up with Tao's deprivations or weighed down by his melancholy. At the same time, there is no pretense here that Wang Yuanqi is really like Tao; he is just striking a pose. It is something of a joke—his joke. Visitors to tourist spots in China today can have their faces photographed on the necks of life-size cut-

outs of imperial figures in dragon robes; Wang Yuanqi's role-playing as Tao Qian is much like theirs as the emperor of China. One could say the same of the gentlemen at the Double Ninth gathering of 1743 depicted in a handscroll discussed above (Fig. 8), reenacting Tao's chrysanthemum gathering as an amusing seasonal tradition. Each participant's face is a portrait, and each is identified and named in one of the colophons following the scroll; an important function of the painting was to document their presence at a prestigious garden party. Like Wang Yuanqi, the actors in this Tao Qian playlet seem aware of the incongruity between their prosperous, gregarious lives and Tao's inwardness and intensely private pursuits. It does not appear to trouble them.

Luo Ping's portrait of Yuan Mei with which we began is another instance of identifying the sitter—in this case, a famous poet in his own right—with Tao Qian in a compromised and ambiguous way (Fig. 1). Yuan Mei is walking to the left against a blank ground, a sprig of chrysanthemums in his raised right hand; his stance is not unlike that of Liang Kai's *Scholar of the Eastern Fence* (Figs. 2, 3), except that his head is turned sharply to look back in the opposite direction, and his mouth is ajar as if speaking. Whereas Tao's expression projects a luminous, inspired calm—emulated by Lu Zhi in his self-portrait with a chrysanthemum (Fig. 21)—Yuan's is transient, contingent, and seemingly annoyed. He gives no sense of encountering any "essential meaning"; everything about him is in the here and now—everything, that is, except for the chrysanthemum, symbol of Tao's timeless garden ideal, which he carries like a flag and at the same time bluntly ignores. It is an altogether distinctive manipulation of the Tao image system.

As it happens, Yuan Mei was not pleased by this portrait, which he returned to the painter with a long explanatory inscription written in the upper portion of the scroll. Although he does not say so directly, vanity was probably an



issue; the face in the portrait is not a handsome one. Yuan hated the signs of age on his face, as we know from remarks he made on other occasions, and his family made no secret of their dislike for the portrait. In his inscription, Yuan manages to distance himself from his likeness without exactly faulting either the work or the painter. Instead, he discusses it in terms of representation and reception. Richard Vinograd's superb, penetrating analysis has illuminated many aspects of this remarkable text which, at once bantering and serious, plays on ideas about self and identity.<sup>83</sup> Yuan writes of the "me" in the painter Luo Ping's eyes, and the "me" familiar to his own family; "the me's of former or future lives"; and other selves to be seen in the portrait by viewers yet unknown. Since the members of his own household do not recognize him in it, Yuan consigns it to Luo Ping's keeping, where both subject and painting will find a better reception among Luo and his guests.

There is something in the tenor of Yuan Mei's inscription—a mix of vivid engagement and resistance—that seems to vindicate Luo Ping's conception of him; he sounds like his portrait. As the sitter holds himself aloof from what he holds in his hand, the inscriber distances himself from his pictured "me" without disallowing it outright. Yuan makes no mention of the chrysanthemum or the Tao Qian allusion, and Vinograd does not consider what he may have thought of it. In the absence of supporting materials, it would indeed be rash to attempt too specific an interpretation. But the disjuncture between Tao's raised, emblematic chrysanthemum and Yuan's averted attention is striking and disturbing. While its meaning here remains to be fully understood, in simultaneously making and questioning a comparison between the sitter and Tao, the image is very much of its time.

Paintings such as these by Chen, Yu, and Luo (Figs. 23, 24, 1) take the sitters' claims to Tao-ness with a grain of salt (generally, we may assume, with the sitters' collaboration and approval); in a sense, they take the Tao-ness of Tao himself

the same way. How does one live a life of noble reclusion in the real world? When the pictured chrysanthemum-holder wryly invites questions over his claim to the chrysanthemum, he opens to those questions not only the imitators Nan Shenglu, Wang Yuanqi, and Yuan Mei but also the model Tao Qian. And Tao's own writing certainly sanctions those questions, seasoned as it is with self-interrogation and moments of cosmic despair. In his inscription, Yuan Mei riddled over his portrait by Luo Ping: "perhaps although the me of this life is not like this, the me's of former or future lives—how does one know that they are not like this?" It may be that Yuan was thinking of Tao Qian as a former "me" who, like his eighteenth-century reincarnation, did not take chrysanthemums all that seriously to begin with. Whether he did or not, though, his remark reminds us that as Tao's chrysanthemum passed from hand to hand in later painting, so did the idea and meaning of his iconic garden and its eastern fence, which so many people, seeking their many versions of his experience, have revisited to gather chrysanthemums of their own.

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## Notes

I would like to thank the editor of the *Art Bulletin* and an anonymous reader for their helpful comments. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

1. See *Yuanming yizhi tezhan tulu*, 7 (hereafter, *Yuanming yizhi*). Tao, the poet's surname, rhymes with *how*; Qian, his given name, is pronounced *ichyen*.  
 2. For a color reproduction of this carving by Deng Fujia, see Shen Zhiyu, 213.

3. On Luo Ping's portrait of Yuan Mei, see Vinograd, 84–91, pl. 12 (printed in reverse) and detail. As Vinograd states (85), the chrysanthemum here "carries inevitable associations of the early recluse-poet." For a biography of Yuan and translations of many of his writings, see Arthur Waley, *Yuan Mei: Eighteenth Century Chinese Poet* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970).

4. *Tao Jingjie ji*, 75–77; trans. Hightower, 268–70. The phrase "three paths," an allusion to an earlier text, had come to signify withdrawal. For a recent monograph on Tao and his oeuvre, see Charles Yim-tze Kwong, *Tao Qian and the Chinese Poetic Tradition: The Quest for Cultural Identity* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1994).

5. Yuan Mei remarked on the fame of a rock where Tao Qian had once passed out drunk: "... a scrubby piece of stone / Has been cherished and admired for more than a thousand years. / Golden couches and jade stools have always existed in plenty; / But does anyone know the names of those who have taken a nap upon them?"; trans. Waley (as in n. 3), 153–54. Tao's "Drunken Rock" (*zuishi*) at Chestnut Village in the foothills of the Lu Mountains is a tourist attraction to this day.

6. Tao is considered the father of the "field-and-garden" genre of poetry celebrating simple country life. See, among other studies, Lin Wenye, "Tao Yuanming: Tianyuan shi he tianyuan shiren," in *Shanshui yu gudian* (Taipei: Sanmin, 1996), 151–60. On Chinese eremitism, see Alan J. Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement: The Practice and Portrayal of Reclusion in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

7. Craig Clunas, "The Fruitful Garden," in *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 16–59.

8. *Xuanhe huapu* (preface 1120), scroll 6, in Yu Anlan, comp., *Huashi congshu* (Shanghai: Renmin, 1963), vol. 2, 7.74.

9. *Tao Jingjie ji*, 41; trans. Hightower, 130 (with slight modifications). For a study of this poem in connection with the iconography of Mt. Lu, see Susan E. Nelson, "Catching Sight of South Mountain," *Archives of Asian Art* 52 (2000).

10. Certain details of his dress, signifying other dimensions of his constructed image, are also characteristic, among them his cape and head scarf. I have discussed the latter item in Susan E. Nelson, "The Thing in the Cup: Pictures and Tales of a Drunken Poet," *Oriental Art* 46, no. 4 (2000): 49–61.

11. On Lin Bu in pictorial art, see Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 41–42. On plum painting, see Maggie Bickford, *Ink Plum: The Making of a Chinese Scholar-Painting Genre* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and further references provided there. There are no comparable studies of chrysanthemum culture in a Western language; a generous compilation of primary materials will be found in *Gujin tushu jicheng* (Taipei: Yiwen, 1958), ce 538–39, scrolls 87–92.

12. Sun Shaoyuan, *Shenghua ji* (Record of paintings with sound) (preface 1187; Shanghai: Yiwen, 1996), 1.21a–b, 6.13a–b.

13. Wu Qizhen, *Shuhua ji* (preface 1677; Shanghai: Renmin, 1962), 746.

14. Zhao's *Yuanming Appreciating Chrysanthemums* (*Yuanming shangju*) is recorded in Wu Sheng, *Daguan lu* (preface 1712; Taipei: Hanhua, 1970), 12.64a–66b (vol. 3, 1553–58). A handscroll of two men in a waterside pavilion surrounded by chrysanthemums (presumably Tao and a friend), under Zhao's name but of later date, is extant in two redactions (*Yuanming yizhi*, 52; *Tō Sō Gen Min meiga taikan* [Tokyo: Ōtsuka kōgeisha, 1929], 37), and a hanging scroll version of the same composition is reproduced in *Shina meiga hōkan* (Tokyo: Ōtsuka kōgeisha, 1936), vol. 1, 448. A pair of scrolls by Ma Yuan, *Yuanming shangju* and *Hejing guanmei* (Lin Bu watching plums), is recorded in Wang Keyu, *Shanhuawang hualu* (preface 1643; Chengdu: Guji, 1985), 1342.

15. See inscriptions by Wang Shipeng (1112–1171), Zhao Bingwen (1159–1232), Yuan Haowen (1190–1257), and Liu Yin (1249–1293), recorded in Chen Bangyan (1603–1647), ed., *Yuding lidai tihua shilei* (Taipei: Shangwu, 1976), 37.6a–b.

16. To quote Jonathan Chaves, "virtually any painting of chrysanthemums is likely to be inscribed with a poetic allusion to Tao's work or may itself be taken as a pictorial allusion implying his presence" (*The Chinese Painter as Poet* [New York: China Institute in America, 2000], 60). Chrysanthemums sometimes appear in pictorial assemblages of "flowers of the four seasons" or of four

plants representing scholarly virtues. There are no overt allusions to Tao Qian here, though thoughts of him may nonetheless be invoked on some level in the mind of experienced viewers.

17. *Zhonghua wuqiannian wenwu jikan: Song hua* (5000 years of Chinese art: Song painting) (Taipei: Zhonghua wuqiannian wenwu jikan bianji weiyuanhui, 1986), vol. 4, 85. An earlier date has also been proposed; Xu Bangda, who has studied the inscription and calligraphy, thinks it may have been written by Emperor Gaozong's consort Empress Wu (1115–1197); Xu Bangda, *Gu shuhua wei'e kaobian* (Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji, 1984), pt. 2, 206–7.

18. None is listed in the Song anthology *Shenghua ji* (Sun Shaoyuan [as in n. 12]), though there are many of bamboo and plum. The 17th-century compilation *Yuding lidai tihua shilei*, which lists numerous chrysanthemum inscriptions from Ming and Qing times, offers just one (by Su Shi) from Song; Chen Bangyan (as in n. 15), 89.8a–16b; also 90.13b.

19. To note a few: chrysanthemum paintings by Shen Zhou (1427–1509) and Tang Yin (1470–1524) have inscribed references to the eastern fence (see Anne De Coursey Clapp, *The Painting of Tang Yin* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], 210, 208). Of the seven chrysanthemum poems on Tao Cheng's (fl. 1480–1532) handscroll *Chrysanthemum and Cabbage*, six mention Tao and his eastern fence, five willows, or the scarf he was said to have used to strain his wine (*Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting* [Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980], 170–72). The eastern fence and South Mountain are named in the inscription for the chrysanthemum leaf in Xiang Shengmo's 1639 album in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Inscribing his painting of many-colored chrysanthemums and rocks, Yun Shouping (1633–1690) claims to be "speechless" before the flowers, an allusion to "can't find the words" (*wangyan*) of Tao's fifth "Drinking Wine" poem, cited in n. 9 above (*Treasures from the Shanghai Museum* [Shanghai: Shanghai Museum; San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 1983], colorpl. 41). Shitao's (1642–1707) inscription on the chrysanthemum painting in his album of flowers and fruits reproduced in *Suqian Wang shi Xinfang ge cangben* (n.p., n.d.) alludes to Tao's homecoming and his three paths. Li Fangying's (1695–1754) for the corresponding leaf in an album of his own speaks of his preoccupation in old age with thoughts of eastern fence chrysanthemums (Chou Ju-hsi and Claudia Brown, eds., *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735–1795* [Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1985], 187). In the quatrain accompanying his unpublished *Chrysanthemum, Bamboo, and Rock* in the Museum of East Asian Art in Berlin, Hua Yan (1682–1756) speaks of "yearning for South Mountain." Yu Xing's (1736–1795) hanging scroll of chrysanthemum and rocks mentions the three paths (Liang Baiquan, ed., *Selected Chinese Bird-and-Flower Paintings from the Nanjing Museum* [Jiangsu: Nanjing Museum, 1992], pl. 86). A folding fan of chrysanthemums and autumn grasses by Tao Guan, dated 1848, alludes to the eastern fence (*Illustrated Catalogues of Tokyo National Museum: Chinese Paintings* [Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1979], 168)—and so on. In each case, the artist's inscription equates the painted chrysanthemum with core experiences of Tao's life.

20. For a color reproduction, see *Ming Lu Zhi zuopin zhanlan tulu* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1992), 32; the whole album is reproduced in black-and-white on pp. 60–61.

21. My translation of this poem is indebted to the version in Marsha Weidner et al., *Views from Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists, 1300–1912* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1988), 133.

22. See, for example, the paintings reproduced in *Gugong shuhua tulu*, vol. 9 (1992), 123, vol. 10 (1992), 215. The naming of unnamed paintings was largely a practical matter: since scrolls were rolled up for storage, labels were affixed to their mounting so they could be identified. In many cases, it is not known when and by whom a painting was given the title it is known by today.

23. From Zhang Jie's *Huang fu* (Fu on [the color] yellow), in *Quan Tang wen* (Taipei: Huiwen, 1961), vol. 9, 405.1b–2b. Autumn as a mournful season of decline and death has been the subject of many prose poems, most famous among them Ouyang Xiu's "Sounds of Autumn" of 1059. For translations, see A. C. Graham in *Anthology of Chinese Literature from Early Times to the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Cyril Birch (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 368–69; and Ronald C. Egan, *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 127–29.

24. From "Living in Retirement on the Ninth Day" (*Jiuri xianju*) and the seventh "Drinking Wine" poem, in *Tao Jingjie ji*, 15, 42; trans. Hightower, 47, 133 (modified; on the many ambiguities of the last line, see 134–35). In "Returning Home" as well, Tao's attention glides swiftly—almost predictably—from chrysanthemums to wine: "Pines and chrysanthemums are still here. . . / I draw the bottle to me and pour myself a cup. . ." A late Ming woodcut of Tao in a garden setting offers a particularly blunt illustration of the chrysanthemum-wine connection. The picture is captioned "Yuanming Appreciating Chrysanthemums." Tao is paying no heed to the flowers at the fence nearby, though; instead, he is "appreciating" the object held up to him by a kneeling servant: a pot helpfully labeled "wine" (*Guwen zhengzong* [1593], fig. 166; reprinted in *Zhongguo gudian wenxue banhua xuanji* [Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 1981], vol. 1, 250). People interested in recipes for chrysanthemum wine will find some in Hu Shanyuan, ed., *Gujin jiushi* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1987), 45, 91, 284. The last item remarks that Tao's method of soaking the petals and drinking the wine right away was incorrect, for the brew is not ready until the following year.

25. *Bai Xiangshan shiji* (Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1927–36), *Changqing ji* 6.5a.

26. Cao's letter to Zhong You (151–230) is translated by A. R. Davis, *T'ao Yuan-ming (AD 365–427): His Works and Their Meaning* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), vol. 1, 45. Here and elsewhere, I have converted Wade-Giles to pinyin romanization in quoted passages.

27. See David Hawkes, trans., *Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 24. Qu Yuan's use of chrysanthemums is also mentioned in Cao Pi's letter.

28. For Wu Bin's biography in the Han dynasty text *Liexian zhuan* and a French translation, see Maxime Kaltenmark, *Le Lie-sien tchouan: Biographies légendaires des immortels taoïstes de l'antiquité* (Beijing: Université de Paris, 1953), 165–66.

29. James R. Ware, trans., *Alchemy, Medicine, Religion in the China of A.D. 320: The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung (Pao-p'u tzu)* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966), 184–85. “True” chrysanthemum, the potent kind, is rare, according to this text (191–92). For a modern study, see Akira Akahori, “Drug Taking and Immortality,” in *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*, ed. Livia Kohn (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1989), esp. 75–83, the section on “crude drugs and Taoism.”

30. “Common people delight in its name [Double Ninth] and believe it appropriate to long life,” according to Cao Pi's letter (as in n. 26).

31. See A. R. Davis, “The Double Ninth Festival in Chinese Poetry: A Study of Variations upon a Theme,” in *Wen-lin: Studies in the Chinese Humanities*, ed. Chow Tse-tung (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 45–64. For a collection of early materials on this annual observance, see Ouyang Xun (557–641), comp., *Yiwen lei ju* (A categorized collection of literary writing) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shu ju, 1965), vol. 1, 81–84.

32. On this scroll, a collaborative project of the two painters Fang Shishu and Ye Fanglin, see *Eight Dynasties* (as in n. 19), 372–76, and Chou and Brown (as in n. 19), 133–38. A colophon by Li E (1692–1752) identifies each of the guests; the one holding the chrysanthemum is Li himself. Their poems, whether never attached or removed at some point, are not appended to the scroll in its present form.

33. In color in Yang Xin, ed., *Gugong bowuyuan cang Ming Qing huihua* (Beijing: Zijincheng, 1994), 79.

34. See n. 24 above. In a Double Ninth poem Li Bai (701–762) speaks of “pouring” the flowers, as Tao had of “drinking” them, again suggesting the equivalence of the chrysanthemums and the wine; see Davis (as in n. 31), 52.

35. The scroll is reproduced in color in Hongnam Kim, *The Life of a Patron: Zhou Lianggong (1612–1672) and the Painters of Seventeenth-Century China* (New York: China Institute in America, 1996), 76–77; see also Tseng Yu-ho, “A Report on Ch'en Hung-shou,” *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 13 (1959): 75–88.

36. See also Shitao's leaf of a figure holding chrysanthemums to his lips from an album in the Sackler collection. As in Zhang Feng's painting, only a sliver of the poet's face is visible—here, lifted as if fixing his eyes on South Mountain (Marilyn Fu and Shen Fu, *Studies in Connoisseurship: Chinese Paintings from the Arthur M. Sackler Collection in New York and Princeton* [Princeton: Sackler Foundation, 1976], 192). In a painting by Huang Shen (1687–1772), Tao's lips are pursed toward the chrysanthemums he carries in a vase (*Tianyin tang minghua xuan* [Tokyo: n.p., 1963], vol. 1, 97).

37. Wolfgang Bauer, “The Hidden Hero: Creation and Disintegration of the Ideal of Eremitism,” in *Individualism and Holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values*, ed. Donald Munro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 159–60.

38. *Tao Jingjie ji*, 22; trans. Hightower, 71. The remark was actually something of a cliché, for a number of 3rd-century poets had voiced the same doubts about the legendary immortals Song and Qiao; see Lin Wen-yueh, “The Decline and Revival of *Feng-gu* (Wind and Bone),” in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 148. Tao's skepticism, however, apparent from a number of other passages as well, is genuine.

39. Wang Yao, “Wenren yu yao” (The literati and drugs), in *Zhonggu wenxueshi lunji* (Shanghai: Guji, 1956), 9–10.

40. James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 110.

41. Hong Mai, *Rongzhai suibi*, quoted in *Tao Yuanming yanjiu ziliao huibian* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962), 66 (hereafter, *Huibian*). Hong emphasizes the point that Tao's pine was a real tree, not just a literary invention: “All of Yuanming's poetry and writings record actual things; this was the case even when he was using flowers and bamboo [as a device] to express his feelings.”

42. Wu Shidao, quoted in *ibid.*, 130. James Hightower discusses Tao's use of pine imagery in “Returning Home,” “Reply to Secretary Guo,” and the fourth and eighth “Drinking Wine” poems in “The *Fu* of T'ao Ch'ien,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 17, nos. 1–2 (1954): 169–230; see esp. 225–27; reprinted in John L. Bishop, ed., *Studies in Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 45–106.

43. Pines figured in a number of Tao's early portraits, to judge from recorded titles, among them a *Tao Yuanming under a Pine* (*Songxia Yuanming*) by Li Gonglin, inscribed by Huang Tingjian (*Shanggu quanji, neiji* [Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1927–36], 9.2b–3b; see also *Shenghua ji*, which records Huang's inscription without giving the painter's name; Sun Shaoyuan [as in n. 12], 1.2b–3a). The 17th-century compilation *Yuding lidai tihua shilei* also records several paintings of Tao under or stroking a pine with Yuan inscriptions

(Chen Bangyan [as in n. 15], 37.7a–b); some of these may have been of pre-Yuan date.

44. See Kaltenmark (as in n. 28), 53–54, 135–36, 142, 159–60, 165.

45. Rolf A. Stein, *The World in Miniature: Container Gardens and Dwellings in Far Eastern Religious Thought*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 96, 306 n. 203.

46. See examples ascribed to Lu Zhi and others in the National Palace Museum, reproduced in *Gugong shuhua tulu*, vol. 8 (1991), 35, 207, 257, vol. 9, 205; and a handscroll dated 1697 by Shitao in *Yiyuan duoying* 36 (1987): 18–19.

47. For a color reproduction, see Weidner et al. (as in n. 21), 158.

48. Wang Yao (as in n. 39), “Wenren yu jiu” (The literati and wine), 167.

49. The biography of Liu Ziji (or Liu Linzhi) is recorded in the *jin shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974), vol. 8, 2447–48. For Tao's “Peach Blossom Spring,” see *Tao Jingjie ji*, 81–82; trans. Hightower, 254–58.

50. In color in *Zhongguo meishu quanji: Huihua bian* (Shanghai: Wenwu, 1987–89), vol. 3, pl. 53.

51. In *Gugong shuhua tulu*, vol. 1 (1989), 47–48 (labeled as an anonymous Tang painting).

52. *Ibid.*, vol. 6 (1989), 329–30. See also the picture engraved on a small stone plaque of the late Qing period of a scholar with his staff, looking up at a pine tree branching over him, accompanied by a servant carrying stalks of the divine fungus (*Chinese Jade Carvings from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Harold L. Tomkin* [University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Museum of Art, 1983], 37).

53. *Liexian quanzhuan*, reprinted in Zheng Chenduo, ed., *Zhongguo gudai banhua congan* (Shanghai: Guji, 1988), vol. 3, 35. “Immortal Wu” is described in the *Liexian zhuan* as having feathers all over his body, square eyes, and the power of flight; he was known for eating pinecones, and tried unsuccessfully to convert the legendary sage-emperor Yao to this diet. Those who adopted it all lived two or three hundred years (Kaltenmark [as in n. 28], 53–55). For another pictorial variation on this theme, see an anonymous court portrait of the Yongzheng emperor (r. 1723–35) got up as a Daoist adept on an herb-gathering expedition in the mountains (Wu Hung, “Emperor's Masquerade—‘Costume Portraits’ of Yongzheng and Qianlong,” *Orientalia* 26 [July–Aug. 1995]: 35). The royal forager's retinue includes a white deer—mascot of the immortals—and a goddess carrying a basket with their precious harvest. A *lingzhi* fungus is in his hand. Several details of dress and surroundings are close to those seen in the *Scholar of the Eastern Fence*: the emperor's short shoulder cape and breezy clothes, the slab bridge over a stream, and the brittle-topped pines.

54. “To Match a Poem by Liu, Prefect of Chaisang” and “Returning to the Fields to Dwell,” no. 5, *Tao Jingjie ji*, 23, 17; trans. Hightower, 76, 55.

55. The first of Tao's “Poems in Praise of Ancient Farmers,” *Tao Jingjie ji*, 36; trans. Hightower, 105.

56. “Lines Written as I Passed through Qu'e,” *Tao Jingjie ji*, 34; trans. Hightower, 95.

57. Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity*, trans. Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Girardot (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 168.

58. *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* (*Zhengtong daozang* [Taipei: Yiwen, 1962], vol. 178, 1:23a–b). I am grateful to Stephen Bokenkamp, who brought this passage to my attention, as well as a related one with instructions for equipping a “spirit-staff” with amulets (in *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshu jing* [*Zhengtong daozang*, vol. 26], 1:39a–b). The translation is his.

59. For a color reproduction, see *Gugong shuhua tulu*, vol. 2 (1989), 225.

60. Lionel Giles, *A Gallery of Chinese Immortals* (London: John Murray, 1948), 80–81. On this and other staff stories, see Stein (as in n. 45), 99–101, also 50, 67. Transcendents in Han and Southern Dynasties imagery also carry staffs; see, for instance, Audrey Spiro, “Shaping the Wind: Taste and Tradition in Fifth-Century South China,” *Ars Orientalis* 21 (1991): 102–4.

61. On this album, see Kohara Hironobu, “An Introductory Study of Chen Hongshou,” pt. 2, *Oriental Art* 33, no. 1 (1987): 67–83. This leaf is reproduced in color in Wen Fong and James Watt, eds., *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1996), 414, pl. 210b. Staff and chrysanthemum, lying in the foreground, are similarly conjoined in Chen's playing-card picture of Tao slumped, eyes shut, by his wine pot; see Vinograd, 34.

62. In color in *Yuanming yizhi*, 17. Staff and chrysanthemum also stand out among the attributes of a pair of divinities in auspicious attendance on a birthday party, in Chen's *Birthday Celebration* painting of 1649 (in color in Alice R.M. Hyland, *Deities, Emperors, Ladies and Literati: Figure Painting of the Ming and Qing Dynasties* [Birmingham, Ala.: Birmingham Museum of Art, 1987], 55). Host and guest are drinking wine at a stone slab table; drinking and immortals' games are the subject of the artist's inscription. A tall immortal stands behind them, both hands clasping a long dragon-headed cane, which obtrusively bisects his face. Beside him a female divinity holds a covered pot of wine or elixir, chrysanthemum blooms bunched into the cloth over her head. The host himself, wearing a bandanna, is of the suggestively Tao-like type common in Chen Hongshou's paintings.

63. The box was found in a Yuan tomb near Shanghai; for a color reproduction, see Shen Zhiyu, pl. 197. For a painting with much the same composition and air, see Du Jin's (active ca. 1465–ca. 1509) *Portrait of Tao Qian* in the



Metropolitan Museum of Art, reproduced in Richard Barnhart, *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School*, exh. cat., Dallas Museum of Art, 1993, fig. 143.

64. "Returning Home," "Double Ninth, in Retirement," the fifth "Drinking Wine" poem.

65. For a color reproduction and discussion of this painting, see Marshall P.S. Wu, *The Orchid Pavilion Gathering: Chinese Painting from the University of Michigan Museum of Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999), 96–100.

66. For a color reproduction, see *Zhongguo lidai huihua* (Beijing: Renmin, 1978–91), vol. 7 (1991), 49. Other homey chrysanthemum-gathering scenes include a hanging scroll in Dai Benxiao's (1621–1693) set of twelve scenes after Tao's poems in Yangzhou (*Ming Qing Anhui huajia zuopin xuan* [Anhui: Anhui meishu, 1988], 120–25), with an inscription citing Tao's fifth "Drinking Wine" poem.

67. The proprietor used phrases from "Returning Home" to name various sites in this garden (among them a "Pine and Chrysanthemum Hall"), putting up placards with the name for each. Coming and going among them, he explained in an essay, he felt as if he were in silent conversation with Tao, sharing his life and his contentment; "wherever I walk, I am 'returning home.'" See Chao Buzhi (1053–1110), *Guilaizi ming Mincheng suo ju ji* (Record of Master Returning-Home naming the sites of his residence in Mincheng), in *Jilei ji*, ed. Sibu congkan (Taipei: Shangwu, 1975), 31.208–9. On this and other Tao-inspired Song gardens, see Robert E. Harris Jr., "Art and Identity in the Northern Sung Dynasty: Evidence from Gardens," in *Arts of the Sung and Yuan* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 147–63.

68. "Little space" is, literally, "accommodate-the-knees" (*rongxi*)—just room enough to sit in. For the painting by Ni Zan (1306–1374), see Fong and Watt (as in n. 61), 318, pl. 157.

69. Cited in Ginger Cheng-chi Hsü, *A Bushel of Pearls: Painting for Sale in Eighteenth-Century Yangchow* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 65.

70. *Gugong shuhua tulu* (1989), vol. 11, 207. Tao receiving a gift of wine is a standard formulation in the poet's iconography.

71. On aspects of garden painting and patronage in the 16th century, see Clapp (as in n. 19), chaps. 2, 3; and Clunas (as in n. 7).

72. Ouyang Xun (as in n. 31), vol. 1, 377–78.

73. Compositions, extant or recorded, attributed to members of the Song royal family attest to imperial fascination with the modest pleasures of Tao's chrysanthemum retreat. One attributed to Zhao Lingrang, *Shangju* (Appreciating chrysanthemums), known in several later versions, depicts Tao and a friend drinking informally in a waterside pavilion (reproduced in *Yuanming yizhi*, 52). A 17th-century catalogue credits Zhao Bosu (1124–1182) with a painting entitled *Binju tu* (Visiting chrysanthemums), inscribed by Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–62); described as a short handscroll of two men drinking in a pavilion facing blossoming chrysanthemums, it sounds similar to the work by Zhao Lingrang (Gu Fu, *Pingsheng zhuangguan* [preface 1692; Shanghai: Renmin Meishu, 1962], 8.22).

74. Ellen Johnston Laing identified the figure as Tao, pointing out the distinctive Tao-style robe, in "Six Late Yuan Dynasty Figure Paintings," *Oriental Art* 20, no. 3 (1974): 305. See also a late Song album painting of a princely gentleman seated on a terrace bordered with chrysanthemums and pines, attended by deferential visitors, a pet crane, and servants offering wine (*A Garland of Chinese Paintings* [Hong Kong: Cafa, 1967], vol. 1, 24).

75. The whole painting, signed by an unknown artist, is reproduced in color in *Yuanming yizhi*, 16.

76. Reproduced in color in Shen Zhiyu, 131.

77. For a color reproduction and detail and a translation of the inscribed poem (slightly modified here), see Richard M. Barnhart, *Peach Blossom Spring: Gardens and Flowers in Chinese Painting* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 75–77. In Lu Zhi's *Enjoying Chrysanthemums* hanging scroll of 1572 in the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, a man tends chrysanthemums with some servants in a setting where a mountain and a rock arch allude conjointly to South Mountain and Tao's tale of the Peach Blossom Spring.

78. Chrysanthemums, including edible varieties, were among the items proudly cultivated by Ming garden proprietors; see Clunas (as in n. 7), 169–71. An illustrated woodcut chrysanthemum manual by Gao Song, a Ming artist, gives some idea of the astonishing number of varieties known to the chrysanthemum connoisseur; see *Gao Song jupu*, reprinted in *Zhongguo lidai huapu huibian* (Tianjin: Guji, 1997), vol. 16, 499–620. For a description of Lu Zhi's chrysanthemum garden by Wang Shizhen (1526–1590), see Howard Rogers and Sherman E. Lee, *Masterworks of Ming and Qing Painting from the Forbidden City* (Lansdale, Pa.: International Arts Council, 1988), 134.

79. The painting is reproduced in color in *Yuanming yizhi*, 11; and *Ming Lu Zhi zuopin* (as in n. 20), 7, among other places. Lu inscribed the work a second time a half century later, in 1572. For this portrait type, see the scene of Tao receiving a gift of wine included in many handscrolls illustrating *Episodes in the Life of Tao Yuanming* (an example is reproduced as the frontispiece to *High-tower*); and the small half-length portrait by an anonymous Yuan artist used for the frontispiece to an album of transcriptions of Tao's poems in the National Palace Museum (*Yuanming yizhi*, 6).

80. In color in Steven D. Owyong, *Chinese Paintings, Bulletin of the Saint Louis Art Museum* 17 (summer 1985): 18. An album leaf by Jin Nong (1687–1764) is similar in composition, with a man seated in a pavilion enjoying the vase of chrysanthemums on his table; the picture is inscribed with the text of "Returning Home" (Chu-ting Li, *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines: Chinese Paintings in the Charles A. Drenowatz Collection*, 2 vols. [Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1974], vol. 2, fig. 51A).

81. The Tao allusion here is mediated by references to Bai Juyi, himself among Tao's admirers and emulators (and author of the "Eastern Garden" poem cited above at n. 25), who styled himself "Drunken Chanting." For color reproductions and a discussion of this scroll, which includes three other views of the patron, see Li (as in n. 80), vol. 1, 29–40, vol. 2, colorpl. viii–ix. Chen Hongshou's lost portrait of Zhou Lianggong (1612–1672), a patron and collector of contemporary painting, in a Tao Qian guise is thought to have been intended to admonish Zhou for holding office under compromising circumstances. On the messages encoded in this and other Tao pictures Chen painted for Zhou—among them his scroll *Episodes in the Life of Tao Yuanming* in Honolulu (a detail is reproduced in Fig. 10)—see Kim (as in n. 35), 74–84. Among other portraits of 17th-century people posing as Tao, James Cahill (as in n. 40), 121–22, has noted Xie Bin's 1648 picture of an unidentified "Shiren" walking with a staff between chrysanthemums and pines.

82. In color in *Zhongguo lidai huihua* (as in n. 66), vol. 8 (1991), 100–102. See Vinograd's comments on this painting, 53–55.

83. Vinograd, 84–91. Yuan's inscription is dated 1781, and the painting was probably made not long before.