Parting Ways: Writing Trauma and Diaspora in the Poetry of Mid-Sixth Century China

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In the Chinese cultural imagination, the North and South have long been associated with a set of fixed characteristics: the North is tough, harsh, austere; the South, soft, warm, sensuous. It is not difficult to identify these two sets of attributes with conventional gender characteristics and to conceive the North as masculine, the South as feminine. And yet, instead of "reflecting reality," these images are no more than cultural constructs which were first formed during the period known as the Southern and Northern Dynasties (317-581). At that time, China was politically divided into the South and North, with each side asserting political legitimacy and cultural dominance, each claiming to be the true upholders of Han Chinese culture. The formation of the images of the "North" and "South" in the literature of this period, situated within a larger historical and cultural context, is a consequence of the active construction of regional identities in discursive forms. The process of such a formation had started as early as in the third and fourth centuries, but did not reach its culmination until the Liang 梁 dynasty (502-557), and became firmly established only in the Sui 隋 (581-618) and Tang 唐 (618-907), the conquest dynasties that finally unified China and brought the North and South together.

The Liang was one of the Southern Dynasties. It was founded by Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (464-549), better known as Emperor Wu of the Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502-549), an energetic ruler and an enthusiastic patron of literature and arts. Under his rule, literary activities were carried out on an unprecedented scale, and the capital, Jiankang 建康 (modern Nanjing), was the world's most populous city in its day, a flourishing cultural and commercial center.[1] In 548, Hou Jing 侯景 (d. 552), a defecting Northern general, rebelled, and in the following year captured Jiankang after a bloody siege of five months. Emperor Wu died shortly after. The South was devastated by the Hou Jing rebellion: the once populous Jiankang was reduced to ruins, and a large number of elite members and commoners died in the siege and in the

subsequent civil war that broke out in the South. The much weakened Liang was overthrown by a Southern general, Chen Baxian 陳霸先 (503-559), in 557, who founded the Chen 陳 dynasty. Even though the Chen managed to rule the South for another thirty years or so, the fall of the Liang marked the end of a glorious era. The old balance of power, maintained for over two hundred years between the North and South, had been tipped; socially and culturally the Chen was a mere afterglow of the Liang, lacking in magnitude, boldness, and imagination.

This essay deals with the Southern poets' responses to the destruction of the old social and cultural order caused by the Hou Jing Rebellion. During the chaotic years, a number of Southern court poets were either captured by the Northern army or detained on their diplomatic trips to the North. Some of them, like Xu Ling 徐陵 (507-583) and Shen Jiong 沈炯 (502-560), eventually returned to the South; others, like Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (ca. 531-591) and Yu Xin 庾信 (513-589), never went home again. Such emigration enabled these poets, who were survivors of traumatic historical and social changes, to obtain a distance across time and space to reflect on, and make sense of, what had happened to their state, their families, and themselves. At the same time, the traffic of the Southern poets entering the North contributed to the "fusion" of the Northern and Southern cultures, and made a true comparison of North and South possible.

We will particularly focus on the works of Yan Zhitui and Yu Xin, two Southern courtiers detained in the North. They were rather different in temperament, and yet, both were intensely aware of their Southern identity and their status as survivors. Yan Zhitui to a large extent represented the average Southern courtier: well-educated, sophisticated, proud of his elite clan lineage, and keen to pass on the family's cultural heritage to his descendents. To Yan Zhitui, the fall of the Liang almost equaled the devastation of civilization itself, as he felt its impact in a much more cosmic way than he would about the collapse of just one dynasty; and yet, his sense of responsibility to family and clan ultimately transcended that to the state. Yan Zhitui was intent upon the survival of his family on many levels: physical, moral, and cultural; and he sought to deal with his grief over the fall of the South in a rational, pragmatic way. Although his choice of family over state might be frowned upon by austere neo-Confucian moralists in later times, it reflected the social reality of early medieval China.

In many ways, Yan Zhitui's writings provide the perfect background for Yu Xin. If Yan Zhitui was prosaic in his sentiments and in his choice of literary medium, then Yu Xin was the quintessential poet. He, too, served a series of official posts in the North, but unlike Yan Zhitui, he seemed to have never been able to accept the fate of the South with the same kind of resignation. Yu Xin's poetry in the North was haunted by a sense of guilt,

shame, and pain. These feelings were brought under a remarkable formal control, a delicate restraint that characterized the poetry of a Southern court poet. The intricate parallelism of the Southern court poetry was employed with a much simplified diction and an apparently casual ease, which, combined with Yu Xin's frequent description of a bleak and sparse Northern landscape in autumn and winter, convey a particular emotional force.

Survivors' Accounts I: Yan Zhitui

Many courtiers, after the fall of Jiankang to Hou Jing's troops, had fled to Jiangling 江陵 (in modern Hubei Province) to join the entourage of Emperor Wu's seventh son, Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508-555), also known as Emperor Yuan of the Liang 梁元帝 (r. 552-555). In the winter of 554, the new Liang capital, Jiangling, fell to the army of the Western Wei 西魏. Many people, including Emperor Yuan himself, were killed. A courtier Yin Buhai 殷不害 (505–89) lost his mother in the chaos. It was bitterly cold at the time, raining snow and sleet, and the streets were filled with frozen corpses. Yin Buhai searched for his mother throughout the city, turning over every corpse in the ditches. He found her body after seven days.[2] In another part of the city, three brothers who begged to die in place of one another ended up being killed together.[3] A large number of survivors, about a hundred thousand in all, were taken to the North as captives. Because of the inclement weather and the harsh treatment, two or three out of every ten died on the way; the rest, except for top-level officials and their families, became slaves. Only a few were eventually released and made their way back to the South.[4] Among the captives, there was a gentry member surnamed Liu who had lost his family during the Hou Jing Rebellion and only had his youngest son with him. He carried the child in his arms and was unable to advance quickly because of the muddy road. Liang Yuanhui 梁元暉, a northern general, forced him to abandon the child. Liu begged to no avail: the soldiers snatched the boy from Liu's arms and tossed him in the snow. As he was being beaten and dragged away, Liu looked back at every step, crying his son's name and weeping. Because of the physical abuse, fatigue, and sorrow, he died in a few days.

This anecdote was recorded by a fellow-captive, Yan Zhitui, a well-known writer and scholar, in a work entitled *The Record of the Wronged Souls* (*Yuanyun zui* 冤魂志).[5] A devout Buddhist who believed in divine justice, Yan Zhitui added that Liu's ghost appeared to Liang Yuanhui every night and asked for his son's life. Liang fell ill and died a year later.

Yan Zhitui's account, intended to illustrate the principle of retribution, inadvertently preserves a local detail—the tragedy of one man and his little boy—from a vast canvas of brutality and devastation. Yan Zhitui himself and his family were among the captives traveling the hard winter road north.

But he was one of the lucky ones: his literary talent was appreciated by the Western Wei general Li Mu 李穆 (510–86), who dispatched him to Hongnong 弘農 (in Henan province) to be a secretary to his brother Li Yuan 李遠 (?–557), the Duke of Yangping.

In 555, the Northern Qi sent Xiao Yuanming 蕭淵明, a nephew of Emperor Wu of the Liang, to the South to be the new emperor of the Liang, along with many detained Liang courtiers, including Xu Ling. Yan Zhitui heard the news and thought that he might have a better chance to return to the South if he were in the Northern Qi. Taking advantage of the rise of the Yellow River, he gathered his family onto a boat and escaped to the Qi capital, an act of courage much admired by his contemporaries.[6]

Unfortunately, not long after Yan Zhitui arrived at the Qi court, the political situation in the South underwent a radical change: Chen Baxian killed Wang Sengbian, the general who supported Xiao Yuanming, deposed Xiao, and established Xiao Yi's teenage son as the new emperor. Liang and Qi were soon at war. In the winter of 557, Chen Baxian dethroned the Liang emperor and founded the Chen dynasty. The stateless Yan Zhitui stayed on at the Northern Qi. Twenty years later, on the eve of the fall of the Northern Qi, Yan Zhitui advised the Qi emperor Gao Wei 高緯 (r. 565–76) to flee to the South. His advice, although favored by the emperor, was opposed by the ministers, all of whom were Northerners. Yan Zhitui missed his last chance to return to the South. After the Qi fell, he was taken as a prisoner of war to Chang'an and given a minor post several years later.

A middle-aged man now, Yan Zhitui composed a *fu* entitled "Contemplating My Life" ("Guan wo sheng fu" 觀我生賦), giving a detailed account of his life during this chaotic age.[7] To highlight the autobiographical aspect, Yan Zhitui annotated the *fu* with comments in unrhymed prose, explaining references and furnishing details. These annotations recount the author's personal circumstances and explain larger historical events. Yan Zhitui was clearly writing with an audience in mind—people who he feared might not be acquainted with what had transpired in the South: northerners perhaps, but also future generations.

Like Yu Xin in his monumental *fu*, "The Lament for the South" ("Ai Jiangnan fu" 哀江南賦),[8] Yan Zhitui tried to rationalize the fall of the Liang by enumerating what Emperor Wu had done wrong. This was done in the spirit not of angry finger-pointing but of regret and disappointment. Beneath the polished surface of the courtier's stylized prose, one hears the painful question: "How could all this have happened?"

Nurturing a flying tiger endowed with wings, 養傅翼之飛虎
Emperor Wu of the Liang accepted the refugee Hou Jing and gave him command, which became the foundation

of Hou's later rebellion.

the emperor adopted a greedy wild wolf as his son.	子貪心之野狼
At first, Emperor Wu adopted Zhengde, the son of the Prince of Linchuan, as his heir; after the Crown Prince Zhaoming was born, Zhengde was returned to his natal family and received the special title of the Prince of Linhe. Feeling resentful, Zhengde defected to the North. After he came back to the South, he accumulated wealth and gathered soldiers, always harboring ulterior intentions.	
He first courted disaster from a faraway region,	初召禍於絕域
then again brewed trouble within palace walls.	重發釁於蕭牆
Zhengde asked the emperor's permission to fight against Hou Jing. When he arrived at Xinlin with his forces, he defected to Hou Jing, who then set up Zhengde as his master and attacked the Palace City.	
Although separated by the river of ten thousand miles,	雖萬里而作限
one reed leaf helped them cross over.	聊一葦而可航
Aiming at the golden tower with their long spears,	指金闕以長鎩
the rebels opened their strong bows on the imperial boulevard.	向王路而蹶張
Over a hundred thousand troops came to the rescue,	勤王踰於十萬
but none of them could relieve the strangled throat.	曾不解其捻吭
How sad that those upright generals and ministers	嗟將相之骨鯁
should all bend their knees to a dog and sheep.	皆屈體於犬羊
After the Palace City fell, the rescue armies all sent greetings to the emperor and the crown prince and paid their respects to Hou Jing.	
The Martial Emperor suddenly grew weary of the world,	武皇忽以厭世
the white sun was eclipsed and lost its brilliance.[9]	白日黯而無光
He had enjoyed the throne for fifty years—	既饗國而五十
how could the end have not come off well?	何克終之弗康
His successor submitted to the great evildoer,	嗣君聽於巨猾
ever anxious and uneasy, as if with thorns on his back.	每凜然而負芒

The Eastern Jin had sought a shelter from the catastrophe,	自東晉之違難
and lodged the rites and music at the Yangzi and Xiang rivers.	寓禮樂於江湘
Since then, it has been almost three hundred years,	迄此幾於三百
while those wearing lapels on the left spread to all sides.[10]	左衽浹於四方
I chant the poems about suffering from the barbarian invasion, and heave long sighs;	詠苦胡而永歎
I recite Confucius' remark about Guan Zhong, which only increases my grievances.[11]	吟微管而增傷

Yan Zhitui went on to describe the fall of Jiangling:

Countless people became captives;	民百萬而囚虜
a thousand carts of books turned into ashes.	書千兩而煙煬
Under the vast sky,	溥天之下
this culture of ours had come to total ruins.	斯文盡喪
The North has less than one-third the number of books that once existed in the South. During the fall of the Liang, the southern book collection became scattered and lost. Emperor Yuan gathered the remaining books, which amounted to over a hundred thousand scrolls: an unprecedented number in history. He had all of them burned after his defeat; so there is no more library within the four seas now.	
I pitied the innocent young children,	憐嬰孺之何辜
and was moved by the cruelties shown to the elderly and sick:	矜老疾之無狀
babies were snatched from parents' arms and abandoned in grass;	奪諸懷而棄草
the elderly and sick fell on the road, their possessions robbed.	踣於塗而受掠

Yan Zhitui's narration of the fall of the Northern Qi in the second half of his *fu* does not come close to this passionate lament over the destruction of "this culture of ours." To him, the fall of the Liang seemed to equal the devastation of civilization itself, and he felt its impact in a much more cosmic way than he did the collapse of one dynasty:

As for the banners carried by the five oxen,	若乃五牛之旌
the imperial carriage drawn by the nine	九龍之路

dragons,[12]
the gnomon template used for measuring the sun's shadow, 土圭測影
the astrolabe for calculating the stars— 璿璣審度
they were either fashioned and designed by the former sages, 或先聖之規模
or created as canons and precedents by the previous kings, 乍前王之典故
but now have all but vanished with the divine cauldrons, 與神鼎而偕沒
evoking our eternal longing for the immortal bow.[13] 切仙弓之永慕

Yan Zhitui also related how he had felt upon first setting foot on northern soil. What he had read about only in history books suddenly became real in front of his eyes, and yet, only the geography remained the same as before, not the "customs and teachings" of the ancient times. We see in this a gap opening between book knowledge and empirical experience. Although the author "knew better," he was unable to reconcile the North he saw with the source of orthodox Chinese civilization he had read about.

The customs and teachings of the sixteen states, 爾其十六國之風教
the land passed down by the seventy generations,[14] 七十代之州壤
though separated from the ear and eye in the past, 接耳目而不通
were well imagined in the course of my readings. 詠圖書而可想
Yet how different are their people today— 何黎氓之匪昔
only mountains and rivers still retain their former looks. 徒山川之猶曩

Yan Zhitui claimed that he had contemplated becoming a recluse but was afraid that it might get him in trouble; yet, even as he served the Wei, he yearned for his homeland.

I often thought of withdrawing to the rivers and lakes, 每結思於江湖
but I feared ending up in traps and nets. 將取弊於羅網
I listened to the sad music of the Dai, 聆代竹之哀怨
or the clear, sharp sound of "Going Out of the 聽出塞之嘹朗

Frontier."

Facing the bright moon added to my sorrow; 對皓月以增愁
even sweet wine failed to bring relief. 臨芳樽而無賞

In *Family Instructions of the Yan Clan*, Yan Zhitui explained in greater detail why he and his brothers decided to serve in the North:

> My brothers and I would not have entered public service except for the decline of the fortunes of our clan. We have few powerful clansmen and few close relatives. Wandering off to a foreign land, we were no longer protected by our family heritage. I feared that you might be degraded to becoming servants and grooms and bring shame to our ancestors. For this reason, we risked the shame of advancing in the society and did not dare to let our family status fall. Besides, the political culture in the North is so stern and harsh that there no one goes into reclusion.[15]

What this passage reveals is that one's responsibility to family and clan transcends that to the state. Although this would be frowned upon by austere Confucian moralists in later times, it reflected the social reality of the Six Dynasties.

Toward the end of the *fu*, Yan Zhitui reflected somberly on his experiences. Instead of complaining about cosmic or divine injustice, he was full of self-reproach—a final attempt to make sense of what had happened. In a way, it would have been much more comforting for Yan Zhitui and many other survivors of the Hou Jing Rebellion to believe that human error, rather than the will of Heaven, had caused all the misfortunes.

This one life of mine has undergone three transformations, 予一生而三化
filled with bitterness, sufferings, and hardships. 備荼苦而蓼辛
When I was in Jiankang, Hou Jing assassinated Emperor Jianwen and usurped the throne; then, at Jiangling, Emperor Yuan was defeated and killed; by now [i.e., the fall of the Northern Qi] I have been a man of the fallen state thrice.
A bird of the burned forest has its wings clipped, 鳥焚林而鎩翮
a fish taken out of water exposes its scales in the sun. 魚奪水而暴鱗
I lament and feel ashamed that in such a vast universe, 嗟宇宙之遼曠

there should be no place to lodge this body of mine.	愧無所而容身
. . . . .	
Suppose that I had hidden myself under a thatched hut,	向使潛於草茅之下
content to be a man plowing the fields,	甘爲畎畝之人
having never studied books or practiced swordsmanship,	無讀書而學劍
nor clasped my hands and pursued self-interest,	莫抵掌以膏身
but rather let this bright pearl be abandoned, taking pleasure in debasement,	委明珠而樂賤
turning down the offer of the white jade and remaining complacent in poverty,	辭白璧以安貧
then even [sage emperors like] Yao and Shun could not have brought glory to my simplicity,	堯舜不能榮其素樸
nor could [tyrants like] Jie and Zhou have stained my purity;	桀紂無以汙其清塵
and where would this adversity have come from,	此窮何由而至
and how could I have suffered from humiliation?	茲辱安所自臻
Thus, from now on,	而今而後
I shall not complain of heaven or weep for the captured unicorn.[16]	不敢怨天而泣麟也

Despite his claim that he would have been better off had he been an ignorant man, Yan Zhitui exhorted his sons to study. The author was compelled by the need to give an explanation for his sufferings in an autobiographical account contemplating his life, but in giving instructions to his sons, he had to fulfill the role of a responsible father, who wants the best for his children.

Yan Zhitui's most poignant work is a prose work that does not explicitly deal with, and yet is a direct result of, the fall of the South. This was *The Family Instructions of the Yan Clan*, which had been written over a long period of time, from the 570s when Yan Zhitui was serving the Northern Qi until after the Sui unified China in 589.[17] In this work, Yan Zhitui laid out a series of rules of conduct for his descendents. The man emerging from these lucid, well-written essays provides a fascinating character study. In many ways, Yan Zhitui represented the "average" Southern Dynasties courtier: he was a learned scholar and a talented writer, and yet he lacked the flair of a Yu Xin or a Xu Ling; admitting that he had

no interest in the abstract discourse of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, he manifested a down-to-earth, pragmatic bent in his philosophy of life.[18] The topics discussed in this work range from children's education to household management, remarriage, scholarship, literary writing, maintenance of good health, mastery of miscellaneous arts such as calligraphy and painting, and various ethical codes. The work demonstrates a sixth-century Chinese man's vision of the world and shows a displaced southerner's self-conscious comparison of the South and the North. More important, Yan Zhitui's *Family Instructions* is characterized by his quest for an honorable *and* safe way of life in a dangerous age and by his painful attempt to establish an enduring value system when everything familiar had crumbled and things were in constant flux.

Going from the South to the North, Yan Zhitui witnessed the degradation of many members of the southern elite and the rise of those who had been commoners: a change in social order that would have been unimaginable for a southerner if not for the devastation of the South. "In these chaotic times," he said, "I have seen many captives. Those who could read the *Analects* and *The Classic of Filial Piety*, despite being [descended from] low-born men for a hundred generations, became instructors; those who knew nothing about reading or writing, even though descended from a noble lineage of a thousand years, had no choice but to plow the fields or herd horses." This led him to counsel his sons to acquire useful skills, and "of valuable skills easy to acquire, nothing compares to reading books."[19]

Yan Zhitui's grandfather had starved himself to death to protest Emperor Wu of the Liang's deposing of the last Qi emperor,[20] but Yan Zhitui expressed a rather different attitude toward the issue of loyalty to the state:

> Not surrendering to monarchs with different surnames—this is the integrity of a Boyi and a Shuqi; whoever one serves is one's ruler—this demonstrates the righteousness of a Yi Yin and a Jizi. Ever since the Spring and Autumn period, there have been many [cases of] families becoming split and going into exile, and of states being conquered and destroyed: there is no constant relationship between a prince and his subject.

Such a statement might be offensive to a neo-Confucian philosopher and even sound jarring to an orthodox-minded modern scholar; it nevertheless reveals the state of mind of many a Six Dynasties courtier. Yan Zhitui went on to advise his sons to avoid denouncing one's former ruler if they ever found themselves in such a situation: "However, when a gentleman breaks off friendship with a person, he does not speak ill of the latter. If one has to

bend one's knees and serve another, he should not change his thoughts [about his former ruler] even if [his former state] no longer exists."[21] This, Yan Zhitui decided, was the best one could do. Again, this might fall short of neo-Confucian moral standards, but Yan Zhitui was setting rules for his children on pragmatic grounds. There is nothing pretentious and high-sounding here, for the twelve-chapter work is more than a patriarch's "family instructions"—it is a survival guide.

Yet, when he was penning this guide, Yan Zhitui could not have foreseen the fate of his second son Minchu 愍楚.[22] Minchu was a well-known scholar at the Sui court and authored a work on pronunciation.[23] In the chaos ensuing from the collapse of the Sui in 617, he was captured by a ruthless rebel general, Zhu Can 朱粲 (?–621). At first, Zhu Can treated Minchu with respect, but as his army ran out of food, Zhu Can ordered his troops to make food of people. Minchu and his family were eaten by Zhu Can's soldiers.[24]

Survivors' Accounts II: Yu Xin

In many ways, Yu Xin formed a sharp contrast with Yan Zhitui. Yu Xin was the son of Yu Jianwu 庾肩吾 (487?-551), one of the most prominent courtier poets in the literary circle of Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503-551), Emperor Wu of the Liang's third son and appointed successor, the ill-fated Emperor Jianwen 簡文 (r. 549-551). When Xiao Gang was the Crown Prince between 531 and 548, he and his literary coterie began writing a new verse known as the Palace Style Poetry (*Gongti shi* 宮體詩).[25] Yu Jianwu and his son Yu Xin, along with another court poet Xu Chi and his son Xu Ling, were all foremost practitioners of this new verse, so much so that the Palace Style was also called the "Xu/Yu Style" 徐庾體. While Xu Chi and Yu Jianwu passed away not long after the Hou Jing Rebellion, the fates of their sons, Xu Ling and Yu Xin, mirrored each other like a finely wrought parallel couplet. Xu Ling had been sent on a diplomatic mission to the Eastern Wei in the summer of 548. No sooner had he left than the Hou Jing Rebellion broke out. Xu Ling was trapped in the North, unable to return home, despite his repeated supplications. It was not until 555 that Xu Ling was finally sent back to the South. He was to serve the Chen for another sixteen years before he passed away in 581.

Yu Xin's story was quite different. On December 9, 548, Hou Jing's rebel army had penetrated to the capital city Jiankang. Xiao Gang put Yu Xin, then thirty-five years old and the mayor of Jiankang, in charge of a thousand soldiers defending the Red Sparrow Pontoon Bridge to the south of the Palace City. Xiao Gang had ordered Yu Xin to sever the great pontoon, but Xiao Zhengde 蕭正德, Emperor Wu's nephew who was conspiring with Hou Jing, opposed the decision on the grounds that it would

send the people of Jiankang into a panic. Unaware of Xiao Zhengde's collusion with the enemy, Xiao Gang took his advice, and Yu Xin just waited by the Qinhuai River with his soldiers.

As the Qinhuai River glistened in the cold December sun, Yu Xin was chewing on a stick of sugarcane, which, like the betel nut, was a favorite Southern snack, believed to "dispel irritability and alleviate hangovers."[26] A big fellow with a stout build, Yu Xin was no stereotypical "effeminate southerner" or man of letters.[27] Nor was he a stranger to warfare: in 542, when a rebellion broke out in Jiangzhou, he had discussed "river battles" with Xiao Yi, then the governor of Jiangzhou.[28] That rebellion was suppressed within two months, and Emperor Wu reportedly praised Yu Xin for his military astuteness. Xiao Gang no doubt had faith in Yu Xin's ability to prevent Hou Jing from crossing the Qinhuai River; Yu Xin perhaps trusted himself no less.

As soon as Hou Jing's army appeared on the south shore, Yu Xin ordered his soldiers to sever the pontoon. They had scarcely cut away one of the floats when Hou Jing's men, wearing armor under their dark green robes, loomed into full view. At the sight of their iron masks, Yu Xin and his soldiers fell back to the Red Sparrow Gate. An arrow struck the gate pillar, and the sugarcane in Yu Xin's hand fell on the ground at the twang of bowstrings. At that point, he turned and fled, followed by his troops, and the defense collapsed.

The rest was history. With no defenders left on the north shore, a member of Xiao Zhengde's faction had the pontoon bridge reconnected; Hou Jing's army crossed the Qinhuai River effortlessly and joined forces with Xiao Zhengde. Xiao Zhengde's men had been clothed in crimson robes with green linings; they reversed their robes so that the lining faced out and completely merged with Hou Jing's warriors. They advanced to the Xuanyang Gate of the Palace City, meeting little resistance on the way. A five-month siege began, which was to end with the disintegration of the Liang empire and the ruin of the South.

After Jiankang fell, Yu Xin escaped to Jiangling and joined the entourage of Xiao Yi, who was crowned emperor in 553. In the early summer of 554, Yu Xin was sent to Chang'an, the capital of the Western Wei, as an envoy. Five months later, when Yu Xin was still in Chang'an, the Western Wei launched a massive attack on Jiangling. In the deep winter of 554, Xiao Yi was captured and killed. Yu Xin was detained in Chang'an and never again returned to the South.

Thus Xu Ling and Yu Xin, scions of the two grand literary families of the Liang, went separate ways: one managed to go home to the war-torn and devastated South; the other remained in the North. Back in the southern court, Xu Ling was revered as the grand literary master, but it was Yu Xin,

in the North, who made the most of his life situation. A complicated man, Yu Xin seemed constantly tortured by guilt, shame, regret, and homesickness. These sentiments are reflected not only in his monumental *fu* "The Lament for the South" but also in his shorter prose pieces and poetry as well. Perhaps because he spent the rest of his life in the North, Yu Xin had the time and distance to reflect on the fall of the Liang, and he saw the impending doom of the South more clearly than did Xu Ling. Dying within two years of each other, neither lived to see the unification of China under Emperor Wen of the Sui, but if Xu Ling might still have entertained the illusion of a lasting southern court, Yu Xin finally brought himself face to face with the northerners—this time without the iron masks or a river between them. He came to recognize their ruthlessness, their determination, their untiring persistence. The last datable poem in his corpus, written in the last months of his life, envisioned the end of the South in no sentimental terms. It may be fashionable to state that how one tells one's life matters more than how one lives it, but the statement is not true, because how one lives one's life ultimately informs the way in which one tells it.

Not many classical Chinese poets have stirred such opposite reactions as Yu Xin did. Du Fu, arguably the greatest Chinese poet, deeply admired Yu Xin, but the Qing historian Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705–55) claimed that Yu Xin was simply a shameless man, and Lu Tongqun 魯同群, a modern scholar who wrote a critical biography of Yu Xin, tried hard to see the worst motives behind many of Yu Xin's poems and prose pieces, even interpreting "The Lament for the South" as a veiled request for office in the northern court.[29] What has troubled people about Yu Xin is perhaps not the fact that he served the enemy of his state, but that he kept vocalizing his feelings of guilt and shame in a body of extraordinary writings—extraordinary in no small measure due to the pain and regret expressed in them. Sometimes one cannot help wondering if Yu Xin preferred to stay in the North just so that he could write about it.

According to *The History of the Zhou* (*Zhou shu* 周書) and *The Northern History* (*Bei shi* 北史), after Chen and Zhou renewed diplomatic relations, the Chen court asked for the release of Wang Bao, Yu Xin, and a dozen others, but Emperor Wu of the Zhou "begrudged [Wang and Yu] and did not send them back, only releasing people such as Wang Ke 王克 and Yin Buhai."[30] Wang Ke had, in fact, been released in 555, before Emperor Wu of the Zhou was enthroned, and Yin Buhai returned to the South as late as 575. Emperor Xuan of the Chen (r. 569-582) did make an attempt to get Wang Bao and Yu Xin back in the early 570s; his request was immediately blocked by the Zhou emissary.[31]

There is, of course, no reason to doubt that Yu Xin was forcibly detained by the northerners, especially when he first arrived in the Western

Wei court as the Liang envoy, but it would also be perfectly understandable if Yu Xin did not want to return to the South after a number of years, for he had nothing to go back to. Whereas Xu Ling's family remained in the South for the entire time of his detainment, Yu Xin's family was brought to Chang'an after the fall of Jiangling; soon after that, the Liang collapsed—which had not yet happened when Xu Ling returned to the South. Moreover, Yu Xin was no common Liang courtier: he had been close to the top members of the Liang royal house. Without Xiao Gang and Xiao Yi, the South would never have been the same for Yu Xin, not to mention the fact that the Liang had been overthrown by the Chen. With no family and state to beckon Yu Xin, it was as he said in the twentieth poem of the "In Imitation of Linked Pearls" ("Ni lianzhu" 擬連珠) series:[32]

When the moats of Chu are flattened out,	楚塹既塡
the roaming fish has no place to lodge itself;	遊魚無託
the palace of Wu has been burned down,	吳宮已火
so where should the returning swallow nest?	歸燕何巢

And again in the last piece of the same series:

As the boat moored on the Wu River,	烏江艤檝
one already knew that there was no way to return;	知無路可歸
the white wild goose clutched a letter,	白雁抱書
and yet, there was no family to carry it to.	定無家可寄

Xiang Yu 項羽 (232-202 B.C.) was defeated by the founding emperor of the Han and chased to the shores of the Wu River. Turning down the village head's invitation to cross the river in the only boat available, Xiang Yu said:

> It is heaven's will to destroy me; what good would it do to cross the river? Besides, in the old days I have crossed the river and marched west with eight thousand sons from the land east of the river; now if I return alone, even if their fathers and elder brothers take pity on me and make me their king, how could I bear to face them? Even if they don't say a word, wouldn't I feel ashamed?[33]

Xiang Yu committed suicide by the Wu River. The wild goose alludes to Su Wu 蘇武 (ca. 143–60 B.C.), the loyal Han envoy detained by the Xiongnu. When a Han emissary demanded Su Wu's return, the Xiongnu court claimed that Su Wu had died. The Han emissary countered the lie by making up a story about the Han emperor shooting down a wild goose with a letter

attached to its feet—a letter written by none other than Su Wu. The Xiongnu court gasped, and Su Wu was henceforth released.[34]

Yu Xin was neither Xiang Yu nor Su Wu, although he shared Xiang Yu's shame and Su Wu's homesickness. *The History of the Zhou* makes a famous comment on Yu Xin: despite the prominent status he achieved in the North, "he always harbored thoughts of the homeland."[35] And yet, Yu Xin's homesickness was of a rather different quality than Su Wu's: to Yu Xin, the South was not merely a physical space, it was also a land of the past. What Yu Xin had lost and lamented was more than his state, even more than his prince; it was an entire era, a way of life. Such a sense of loss is more profound than that brought about by separation from one's native land.

Yu Xin's twenty-seven poems in the series "In Imitation of 'Singing of My Feelings'" ("Ni Yonghuai" 擬詠懷) have often been cited as best illustrating his "hopeless regret for what has happened, hopeless frustration with the present,"[36] and yet, despite their fame, these poems are not Yu Xin's finest or most characteristic. They are passionate outbursts uttered with too much agitation and disquietude to translate into successful poetry. The reader may be touched by the poet's anguish, but it is hard to suppress the feeling that the poetry suffers somewhat from an absence of restraint.[37] Indeed, Yu Xin was at his best only when he maintained his cultivated grace, framing the intensity of his emotions with that elegant discretion characteristic of a Liang court poet.

The following poem is entitled "Encountering Snow When I Was in the Suburbs" ("Jiaoxing zhixue" 郊行值雪):

Wind and clouds—both harsh and bleak;	風雲俱慘慘
the plain, a blurred expanse.	原野共茫茫
The snow flowers blossom in six petals;	雪花開六出
pearls of ice shining like the lamp of nine lights.	冰珠映九光
It is like driving a horse of jade,	還如驅玉馬
and, for a while, hunting silver roebucks.	暫似獵銀獐
Formation of clouds remain entirely still;	陣雲全不動
nothing in the cold mountain is fragrant.	寒山無物香
The one white fox fur coat of the Lord of Xue;	薛君一狐白
a pair of frosty chargers of the Marquis of Tang.	唐侯兩驌驦
At the cold pass, it is about to turn dark;	寒關日欲暮
braving the snow, I walk onto the river bridge.[38]	披雪上河梁

The poem opens with a desolate scene only to subvert it in the next couplet: suddenly, snow flakes become spring flowers, and ice glistens like pearls in the lamplight. The "harsh and bleak" wintry landscape is transformed into an enchanted world of light and delight, and the magic continues as the poet

feels, with almost a childlike joy, that he is riding on a horse of jade, chasing after a silver roebuck.

The phrase "for a while" (*zan* 暫) in the sixth line is crucial, since it reveals the temporary nature of the magical ambiance. As the roebuck runs away, it shakes off whatever snow had clung to its back. The spell is broken. Clouds, like formation of soldiers, remain ominous still and bode more snow, but the snowflakes no longer seem like flowers, for, after all, they are cold and give off no sweet scent. The poet pauses on the snowy plain: both sky and mountain are cold, immense, and immobile, pressing down on him with a primitive, threatening force. It is at this moment that he thinks of something warm—

The one white fox fur coat of the Lord of Xue 薛君一狐白

The Lord of Xue, better known as the Lord of Mengchang 孟嘗君, was a prince of Qi who lived in the third century B.C. and was detained in the state of Qin. The Qin king imprisoned the Lord of Mengchang and planned to have him killed. The Lord of Mengchang sent one of his retainers to the king's favorite palace lady and asked for her help; the lady requested the Lord of Mengchang's white fox fur coat in return. Unfortunately since the fur coat had been presented to the king as a gift, another retainer had to steal the coat from the palace storage and give it to the lady. The lady, as promised, put in a good word for the Lord of Mengchang, who was released and went back to his home state.[39]

The snow, the cold, and perhaps the silver roebuck being hunted make the poet yearn for the white fox fur coat, but he is no Lord of Mengchang. After all, that legendary white fox fur coat was one of a kind: "It was worth a thousand in gold," the historian said, "and was absolutely peerless in the whole world. After presenting it to King Zhao of Qin, [the Lord of Mengchang] had not another fur coat left." The poet longs for the fur coat in vain—after all, the Lord of Mengchang had given it away—there is no going home.

But the poet's imagination has been stimulated, and he keeps on dreaming in the snow:

a pair of frosty chargers of the Marquis of Tang 唐侯兩驌驦

In a *Zuozhuan* 左傳 story, the Marquis of Tang had a pair of frost-colored horses. Zichang 子常, the powerful minister of Chu, coveted them, but the marquis refused to give them to him. Thereupon Zichang had the marquis detained in Chu for three years. Finally, the people of Tang stole the horses and presented them to Zichang, who then let the marquis go.[40] Again, the

poet is not as fortunate as the marquis.

The horse of jade and roebuck of silver in the real world are bound up with legendary animals in the poet's imagination. These beautiful white animals, as soon as they are conjured up by the poet's word magic, are negated by a reminder of their uniqueness, which makes them unobtainable. They disappear into the snow-covered plains.

The last couplet echoes the opening lines of a poem attributed to Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 B.C.), the Han general who was captured by the Xiongnu army, surrendered, and remained in the Xiongnu court for the rest of his life: "Hand in hand, we walk onto the river bridge: / it is dusk now—where is the wanderer going?" 攜手上河梁, / 遊子暮何之? The poem was supposedly addressed to Su Wu right before his return home.[41] Yu Xin's couplet changes these lines slightly, but significantly:

At the cold pass, it is about to turn dark;	寒關日欲暮
braving the snow, I walk onto the river bridge.	披雪上河梁

In a world that is growing dark, the poet steps onto the river bridge, alone. The question put forth in the original poem, "Where is the wanderer going?" is merely implied here, but becomes more poignant in its repression.

Yu Xin's forlornness is expressed just as effectively in a lavishly depicted spring scene, as in the following poem, "Seeing People Going on a Spring Outing" ("Jian youchun ren" 見遊春人):

Chang'an has narrow lanes,	長安有狹斜
the Golden Grotto abounds in luxuries.[42]	金穴盛豪華
Before mounting the steed, one is urged to drink many a cup;	連盃勸上馬
fruits are tossed at random toward the moving carriages.[43]	亂果擲行車
Dark red: the allure of the lotus seed;	深紅蓮子豔
fine brocade with the pattern of phoenix.	細錦鳳凰花
How could I learn to spew the wine?	那能學噀酒
There is no way to imitate Luan Ba.[44]	無處似欒巴

The poet appears in this poem as an observer: he looks on at the flirtatious drinking and fruit tossing, neither joining in the jovial crowd nor sharing their lightheartedness. The second couplet uses several verbs to describe a series of actions; in contrast, the third couplet is striking in its sudden stillness, since it is composed of only nouns and adjectives. A sensuous, yet enigmatic detail: lotus seeds are, so far as we know, never "dark red," and we can only assume that the color reminds the poet of something as

"alluring" (*yan* 艷) as lotus seeds, *lianzi*, which puns with "loving you." The next line confirms the impression that the poet is talking about fabric—a fine brocade imprinted with a phoenix pattern. Perhaps the clothing worn by one of the people on the spring outing has caught the poet's eye. The abrupt transfer from the hustle and bustle of the merrymaking crowd to a still close-up of a textile creates an unexpected effect; in this moment of focused vision, the poet's mood seemingly also experiences a shift.

As in most of Yu Xin's poems, the reader's familiarity with the allusions ultimately provides the key to understanding the message of the poem. The last couplet refers to the story of the Eastern Han official Luan Ba 欒巴. At the grand court gathering on New Year's Day, Luan Ba, a Daoist adept, was the last to arrive. At the banquet, instead of drinking the liquor, he spewed it out toward the southwest. He was subsequently charged with showing disrespect. Luan Ba defended himself by saying that his hometown, Chengdu, was having a fire, and so he spat out the liquor in order to make it rain and put out the fire. The emperor sent an emissary to Chengdu, and it turned out that on New Year's Day a fire had indeed broken out in the Chengdu marketplace, but at dinnertime a rain came from the northeast and extinguished the fire. Moreover, the rain smelled like liquor. Luan Ba was exonerated. Later, during a great thunderstorm, Luan Ba disappeared into the fog. Not long after, it turned out that he had returned to Chengdu on that day and taken leave of his relatives and friends, saying that he would not come back again. The historical Luan Ba committed suicide while imprisoned for a memorial he wrote to Emperor Ling of the Han (r. A.D. 168–89), but according to Daoist legend Luan Ba ascended to heaven as an immortal.[45]

In the last couplet of his poem, Yu Xin claimed that he could not imitate Luan Ba: there was a lot of drinking going on around him, and he was probably drinking too, but he had no magic power to make rain with his liquor and assuage the sufferings of his homeland, nor could he disappear, return to his hometown, and bid farewell to his relatives and friends. The emotional force of the ending couplet very much depends, however, on the build-up in the preceding lines. The cheerful, flirtatious crowd enjoying a spring outing reminds the poet of something as unseasonal as out-of-reach: lotus seeds, which with all their amorous implications evoke the sensuous allure of the South. The third couplet is the pivotal point: the poem would be dominated by the giddiness of the crowd without these lines, which exemplify the focused attention on a detail characteristic of the Liang court poetry. The textile provides a still center for the poet's longing as well as a figure for his pain, whose intensity is woven into beautiful patterns, controlled and balanced.

Yu Xin's two sons (we don't know if he had more than two sons) and

one of his daughters died during the Hou Jing Rebellion. After he went to the North, a grown-up daughter and a grandson also passed away. He wrote "*Fu* on a Grief-stricken Heart" ("Shangxin fu" 傷心賦) to mourn their untimely deaths. But even in the most melancholy life, there can be some small measure of joy. When a son was born to him in his middle age, he wrote an unusually jubilant poem, "Getting Drunk upon a Happy Occasion" ("Youxi zhizui" 有喜致醉), in celebration. Fortunately for Yu Xin, he never lived to see what was to happen to his son.

Sometimes pleasure had a bittersweet flavor to it, as he caught sight of a popular Southern fruit in the North:

Upon Suddenly Seeing the Betel Nut	忽見檳榔
Green pod with a thousand ripe nuts;	綠房千子熟
on a purple stalk, a hundred flowers blossoming.	紫穗百花開
Don't tell me that you have traveled ten thousand miles—	莫言行萬里
once upon a time, we were acquaintances. [46]	曾經相識來

The use of a numeral in each line, except for the last, creates an unexpected twist and effectively builds up the momentum of the ending.

Sometimes the poet imagined that he was still in the South, as in "Gazing at the Wei River" ("Wang Wei shui" 望渭水):

Trees are like those on the shore of Xinting;	樹似新亭岸
sand seems to be of the Dragon Tail Harbor.	沙如龍尾灣
One still thinks that at today's darkening ford,	猶言今暝浦
there should be a returning boat with dropped sails. [47]	應有落帆還

Both Xinting and Dragon Tail Harbor were southern place-names. Xinting, a suburb of Jiankang, had a special association. A *Shishuo xinyu* story relates that in the early fourth century northern refugees would often gather on the grass at Xinting, drinking and feasting. On one occasion, Zhou Yi remarked with a sigh: "The scenery is not dissimilar [from that of the old capital], and yet the mountains and rivers are different!"[48] Everyone present was moved to tears, except for Wang Dao, who changed his countenance and said: "We should strive together to work for the royal house and recover the sacred prefectures; what is the point of sitting here and facing one another like the captives of Chu?"[49] Yu Xin's quatrain is an ironic reversal of the *Shishuo xinyu* story: the poet is in the North now, and the scenery

took on a likeness of the southern landscape in his eyes.

The last two lines of the quatrain allude to a poem by the Liang poet He Xun 何遜 (d. ca. 518), "Sleeping Over at the Southern Isle Ford" (Su Nanzhou pu" 宿南洲浦).[50] This poem describes the traveler's hardship and homesickness, ending with the statement: "I sit up at night, with tears flowing; / on this evening, I have a particular longing for my hometown." Yu Xin's lines were inspired by the second couplet of He Xun's poem:

We untied the boat in time for the morning breeze,	解纜及朝風
and dropped sails at the darkening ford.	落帆依暝浦

Imagining that he will see a returning boat with dropped sails "at today's darkening ford," Yu Xin not only fuses North and South but also past and present.[51]

Although Yu Xin did not live to see the conquest of the South, he most likely saw it coming. In 577 the Northern Qi capital fell to the Zhou; a grand victory over the Chen army and the capture of Wu Mingche took place in the following spring. The unification of China seemed imminent.[52] The end, however, was not to come quite so soon. In the summer of 578, Emperor Wu of the Zhou died; his son, Emperor Xuan 宣帝 (559–80), was a ruthless and senseless young man. He had always been apprehensive of his uncle, the astute and capable Prince of Qi, and the first thing he did after being enthroned was to have the prince strangled. He delegated more and more power to his father-in-law, Yang Jian, and commanded his surviving uncles, including the Prince of Teng and the Prince of Zhao, both generous patrons of Yu Xin, to leave the capital for their fiefdoms on June 30, 579. The Prince of Teng edited Yu Xin's literary writings into a collection in twenty scrolls and sent it to Yu Xin from his fiefdom. In a letter expressing his gratitude, Yu Xin revealed that he had not been in good health.[53]

Some time that year or the next, Yu Xin decided to retire. Old age and deteriorating health were, however, not the only factors in his decision. A more important concern was probably with the state of the court. Emperor Xuan was a tyrant, and his mind was focused on trivial matters such as devising various titles for himself and his four empresses or building extravagant palaces and inventing elaborate dress codes. On April 1, 579, he ceded the throne to his young son and proclaimed himself "Emperor of Heavenly Beginning" (*Tianyuan huangdi* 天元皇帝).[54] As was customary, Yu Xin wrote a memorial congratulating the emperor on what he referred to as an "extraordinary affair."[55]

Yu Xin had lived through enough political coups by now to recognize that the Zhou ruling house was having serious problems. In September 579,

he composed "Returning from Tongzhou" ("Tongzhou huan" 同州還).[56] This poem gives an account of one of Emperor Xuan's many trips to Tongzhou and conveys a strong sense of anxiety about the trouble brewing just underneath the flashy surface of the imperial outing:

The Crimson Embankment winds around a new village,	赤岸繞新村
the emerald city wall rises with its splendid gate.[57]	青城臨綺門
Fan Ju was recently appointed the prime minister,	范雎新入相
while the Marquis of Rang has just left for his fiefdom.	穰侯始出蕃
In the Shanglin Park, the clamor of hunting;	上林催獵響
people competing to cross, noise on the river bridge.	河橋爭渡喧
Fleeing pheasants fly across the stretching ravine;	竄雉飛橫澗
a fox in hiding enters the broken plain.	藏狐入斷原
The general's lofty banquet lasts late into the night,	將軍高宴晚
and he pays a visit to the park of emerald bamboos.	來過青竹園

The Marquis of Rang was the maternal uncle of King Zhao of Qin. Fan Ju, newly appointed as the prime minister, persuaded the king to reduce the power of the marquis, and in 271 B.C., the Marquis of Rang was sent away from the capital to his fiefdom. This couplet is generally understood as an allusion to Emperor Xuan's appointment of Yang Jian as one of the four prime ministers on February 12, 579, and his rustication of the princes to their fiefdoms a few months later. What deserves note is the subtext of this allusion. At the end of "The Biography of the Marquis of Rang" in *Shi ji* 史記, the historian makes the following comments about the marquis: "He was the very reason why the state of Qin could expand its eastern territory and weaken the other states, so that the whole world bowed to Qin. When his status and wealth reached their zenith, one man gave the king some advice, and then the marquis was deprived of his power and eventually died of distress. [If this was what happened to someone as close to the king as the marquis,] how much more so for a minister serving in a foreign state?"[58] "A minister serving in a foreign state" was exactly how Yu Xin always regarded himself. The hunt, an intimate part of the elite life in the North, seems ominous against such a political background. As pheasants and foxes

sought shelter, the poet was probably thinking of withdrawing from public life as well.

The last couplet of Yu Xin's poem refers to the Qi Park: the Qi Park in the old Shang capital of Zhaoge was famous for its bamboo groves. The Eastern Han general Kou Xun 寇恂 (?–36) ordered his soldiers to cut down the bamboos in the park and had a million arrows made out of them for the purpose of defending the prefecture of Henei against rebel troops.[59] With this hint at preparations for war, Yu Xin's poem ends on a menacing note. Indeed, despite all the palace intrigues, the Zhou never slowed its pace in attempting to unify the realm. In December 579, Zhou generals captured three Chen cities, including Guangling, which was right across the Yangzi River from Jiankang.[60] With the capture of these cities, all the land to the north of the Yangzi River was in northern hands.

It was perhaps in the early summer of 580 that Yu Xin wrote a poem in response to Yan Zhitui's brother Yan Zhiyi, "A Companion Piece for Grand Master Yan's 'Newly Cleared Skies'" ("Tong Yan dafu chuqing" 同顏大夫初晴):

Vapors over water consume evening's light,	夕陽含水氣
rays thrown back shine on the river's high banks.	反景照河隄
Sopping petals blow away, but not far,	濕花飛未遠
shadowy clouds draw in, though still hanging low.	陰雲斂尚低
Swallows dry up and again turn to stone,	燕燥還爲石
the dragon falls apart and once more is mud.[61]	龍殘更是泥
A sweet-smelling spring pours a chilly torrent,	香泉酌冷澗
a small skiff fishes in a brook of lotuses.	小艇釣蓮溪
If only the mind could take all things as equal—	但使心齊物
why feel distress that things are not equal at all?[62]	何愁物不齊

There might be a touch of irony directed at the ritual of praying for rain in the sixth line: if the poem was indeed written in the summer of 580, Yu Xin is discreetly mocking the young emperor's supplications for rain on behalf of the people he hardly cared about. The metamorphoses of swallow into rock and dragon into clay are nevertheless wonderful illustrations of the last couplet, which echoes Zhuangzi's argument that all things, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, are on the same level. The poet seems to be suggesting to Yan Zhiyi to go with the flow; and yet, the advice about tolerance and acceptance is shadowed by the question: "Why feel distress that things are not equal at all?" In reality, things are "not equal," and this cannot but affect

a person's equanimity.

On June 22, 580, the young Emperor Xuan died. Power fell completely into the hands of Yang Jian. The Prince of Zhao and the Prince of Teng were killed on charges of conspiring against Yang Jian. In the following spring, Yang Jian forced the abdication of the child emperor. He assumed the throne himself and founded the Sui dynasty.

A few months later, the Sui emperor launched a massive military campaign against the Chen, appointing Gao Jiong 高熲 as the commander in chief. Yu Xin's friend Liu Zhen 劉臻 (?–598) was made Gao Jiong's secretary.[63] Liu Zhen, like Yu Xin, had served under Xiao Yi, and was taken to the North after the fall of Jiangling. Before embarking on the journey, he exchanged poetry with Yu Xin, who composed a quatrain, "In Reply to Director Liu Zhen" ("He Liu yitong Zhen" 和劉儀同臻). This was the last known poem written by Yu Xin.

To the south I climbed the banks of Guangling,	南登廣陵岸
and turned my head to gaze on the Shooting Star Fortress:	回首落星城
who would have thought of facing the former shore again	不言臨舊浦
only to see beacon fires illuminating the river?[64]	烽火照江明

In this quatrain of twenty characters are two place-names: Guangling and the Shooting Star Fortress. The Shooting Star Fortress was to the west of Jiankang; Guangling was north of the Yangzi River and had been taken over by the Zhou army in 579. Yu Xin had never participated in any of the campaigns; his description of Guangling and the Shooting Star Fortress was imagined from his friend's perspective.

The first two lines are directly taken from Wang Can's well-known poem "Seven Sorrows" ("Qi ai shi" 七哀詩). In 192, during the chaos of a civil war, Wang Can was forced to flee Chang'an and went to the South. On his way, he turned back and looked at the once-prosperous metropolis for the last time:

To the south I climbed the slope of Ba Mound,	南登霸陵岸
and turned my head to gaze on Chang'an.	回首望長安
And I understood why someone wrote "Falling Stream"—	悟彼下泉人
I gasped and felt that pain within.[65]	喟然傷心肝

The Ba Mound, or Baling, was the tomb of Emperor Wen of the Han (r. 179–157 B.C.), whose peaceful reign formed a poignant contrast with the

present war-torn Chang'an. The "Falling Stream" ("Xia quan" 下泉) is the title of a poem in *The Classic of Poetry*, which, according to traditional commentators, expresses longing for a wise king:

Biting chill, that falling stream	洌彼下泉
that soaks the clumps of asphodel.	浸彼苞蕭
O how I lie awake and sigh,	愾我寤嘆
thinking of Zhou's capital.[66]	念彼京周

Yu Xin's quatrain is thus like a "Chinese box," with one layer containing another containing another. And yet, these literary echoes would have been so obvious to Yu Xin's contemporaries or any educated premodern Chinese reader that the quatrain, rich with associations, remained transparent. Just as Wang Can looked back at the old capital at Chang'an before going to the barbarian South, Yu Xin imagined his friend ascending the riverbank at Guangling to gaze on the Shooting Star Fortress, the very place where the Liang troops had eventually overpowered Hou Jing's rebel army. As a matter of fact, the general who set up a camp at the Hill of the Shooting Star was none other than Chen Baxian, who later founded the Chen. Of all the place-names in the vicinity of Jiankang, Yu Xin chose the Shooting Star Fortress: Was this an acknowledgment of the supreme irony of history—that the Chen was facing its own nemesis now? Perhaps Yu Xin could also have selected this place-name simply to avoid a direct reference to Jiankang, or because the image of the shooting star matches so beautifully with that of the beacon fires raging along the Yangzi River.

In many ways, Jiankang itself was a shooting star of a city, whose brilliance was transient. During the reign of Emperor Wu of the Liang, Jiankang reached a dazzling height of cultural glory. But in the late sixth century, Jiankang had already fallen from its former splendor: devastated by the Hou Jing Rebellion, its light had long dimmed. Eight years after Yu Xin's death, following the conquest of the Chen, Yang Jian, now Emperor Wen of the Sui, ordered the destruction of the entire city: its walls, palaces, and houses were all to be demolished and the land returned to agriculture.[67] Yu Xin's quatrain turned out to be a "poetic prophecy" (*shichen* 詩讖) in a way he would never have intended: the star had fallen from the sky; once the raging beacon fires died out, it would be dark.

From the time when he left Jiangling in 554 until his death in 581, Yu Xin not only never returned to the South but never even got close to Jiankang or Guangling. His last datable poem envisioned his old capital engulfed in a night illuminated by a blazing light. The pathos was born not just of witnessing the destruction of one's birthplace but also of the fall of

an empire, the end of an era. The Chinese like to situate a poem in the context of a poet's life and age: indeed, without the background story, we would never know how much emotional power, intensified by restraint, is packed into a quatrain of twenty words.

Coda I: The Willow Song

Cui Tu 崔塗 was a southerner living in the late ninth century and took first place in the civil service examination in 888. To him was attributed the following poem, "Upon Reading Yu Xin's Collection" ("Du Yu Xin ji" 讀庾信集):

Four dynasties, ten emperors: you lived through all of them with panache;	四朝十帝盡風流
wandering, inebriated, in both Jianye and Chang'an.	建業長安兩醉遊
There is, however, just this one "Willow Song"	唯有一篇楊柳曲
that makes one sad for you, from South to North. [68]	江南江北爲君愁

One detects a hint of irony in describing Yu Xin's life in Jiankang and Chang'an as inebriated wandering,[69] but the Tang poet's attitude toward Yu Xin is more complicated than simple disapproval, since he singles out the "Willow Song" ("Yangliu ge" 楊柳歌) in Yu Xin's collection and expresses sympathy for its author. Yu Xin was famous for using tree imagery—barren, half-dead trees—to convey his sense of failure, loss of vitality, and lack of joy. His "*Fu* on the Barren Tree" ("Kushu fu" 枯樹賦) is perhaps the best-known example,[70] and the "Willow Song" may well be considered its poetic counterpart.

The "Willow Song" opens with the figure of a willow tree growing by the river, threatened by wind and waves. Such an allegorical treatment of a plant lodging its roots in the wrong place already had a long tradition,[71] but Yu Xin's poem soon departs from the willow and goes into a labyrinth of fragmentary, metaphorical images of memory and pain. In the dazzling display of textual allusions, wit, and linguistic ingenuity, we can nevertheless discern a narrative thread: the poet is reminiscing about his youthful years, the Liang court, and the Liang princes, perhaps especially Xiao Gang, Yu Xin's "understanding friend," [72] whose tragic fate is epitomized in a powerful poetic image of a white jade tablet falling into the gaping mouth of a bronze beast.

The willow tree by the river had boughs of a hundred feet,	河邊楊柳百丈枝

its long branches hanging curling to the ground.	別有長條踠地垂
The currents rushing and dashing, the roots of the willow in danger,	河水衝激根株危
suddenly it was blown by wind and waves into the river.	倏忽河中風浪吹
How pitiful—the young phoenix in the nest on the willow tree!	可憐巢裏鳳凰兒
Somehow, back then, it was severed from its home.	無故當年生別離
Once the drifting raft went off, it rose to the Pool of Stars,	流槎一去上天池
and should be taking away the loom-stone of the Weaver.[73]	織女支機當見隨
Who would believe that all it needed to shelter several states	誰信從來蔭數國
was only one little southeastern branch?[74]	直用東南一小枝
The young lord who in the old days made outings at Nanpi,	昔日公子出南皮
where can one find him now on the banks of Xuanwu Pond?	何處相尋玄武陂
A handsome charger galloping toward the northwest,	駿馬翩翩西北馳
to left and right the rider arched his bow, shooting at the Yuezhi.[75]	左右彎弧仰月支
The mudguard patterned with stringed coins got soiled in crossing the brook,	連錢障泥渡水騎
and the white jade tablet fell into the mouth of the coiled dragon.[76]	白玉手板落盤螭
New pipes of the phoenix, Xiao Shi had played them;	鳳凰新管簫史吹
through the spring window of vermilion bird, the Jade Maiden was peeping.[77]	朱鳥春窓玉女窺
The wine goblet containing clouds was made of red agate;	銜雲酒盃赤瑪瑙
the food vessel of purple glass reflected the sun.	照日食螺紫琉璃
If you think that a man has no ambition,	君言丈夫無意氣
let me ask you—how did Mount Yan acquire its stone stele?[78]	試問燕山那得碑
And yet, what has lasted a hundred years of frost and dew all at once withers,	百年霜露奄離披
suddenly one morning, accomplishments and fame are out of reach.	一旦功名不可爲

It must be that King Huai had erred in his plan,	定是懷王作計誤
recanting for no reason and trusting Zhang Yi.[79]	無事翻覆用張儀
Ah, one had better get drunk at the Gaoyang Pond,	不如飲酒高陽池
coming back at day's end, wearing one's cap upside down.[80]	日暮歸時倒接離
Who had transplanted the willow from the Wuchang city gate?	武昌城下誰見移
How could one still recognize it in front of the Guandu encampment?[81]	官渡營前那可知
I alone still remember the days when its catkins were blown around like goose feathers;	獨憶飛絮鵝毛下
today, there are no more silk threads hanging like the green horse-binders.	非復青絲馬尾垂
I would like to leave a song about the willow, a companion piece for "Plum Blossoms," [82]	欲與梅花留一曲
so as to play the tunes together on a long flute.[83]	共將長笛管中吹

The figure of the willow tree returns toward the end of the poem, in allusions of uprooting, transplantation, and metamorphosis. The willow is now barren: its green leaves all gone, the catkins dispersed by a gusty wind. The only consolation is to write a song about it—*this* song—a self-referential gesture typical of the Liang *yuefu* poetry.

Coda II: How It Really Ended

The Old Tang History contains the biography of a northern rebel general Xue Ju 薛舉, who started an uprising in 617, one year before the Sui fell. Xue Ju's son, Xue Ren'gao 薛仁杲, was described as a greedy and ruthless man who enjoyed killing. In an offhand note, the historian stated that Xue Ren'gao captured Yu Xin's son, Yu Li 庾立. Enraged by Yu Li's refusal to surrender, Xue Ren'gao had Yu Li spitted over a glaring open fire, sliced, and fed to his soldiers.[84]

There seems to be a dark humor in the turn of events, as the offspring of southern writers such as Yan Zhitui and Yu Xin were literally ingested and consumed by the northerners—a peculiar gastronomic unification of China. Hu Sanxing, the *Zizhi tongjian* commentator who was ever keen to uncover moral lessons in history, added this note to the narrative of the Yu Li incident: "The historian shows us that Xue Ren'gao could not gather upright men of letters around him and honor them. This was why he came to a bad end."[85] Such a reading was no doubt intended to bring out the cosmic justice inherent in the workings of human history, but it in fact exposes the commentator's deep-seated anxiety about the essential

irrationality and senselessness of the grand scheme of things. Just as Yu Xin had said in a poem presented to the Marquis of Yongfeng, a member of the Liang royal family who eventually surrendered to the Western Wei, "Benevolence and righteousness, to one's surprise, destroyed the state of Xu" 仁義反亡徐.[86] In the end, Yu Li's fate only serves to illustrate the violence of the age and the triumph, however temporary, of sheer brutal force.

Yu Xin might have been ashamed of his flight from Hou Jing's warriors on that fatal day in the winter of 548, and yet, we should be grateful that he did not hold out like his son, for he would almost certainly have been killed. And if Yu Xin had died that day, we would have been deprived of one of the best chroniclers of the conquest of the South and of the life of an individual at a time of profound historical changes. In the final analysis, that moment when the Liang court poet laid eyes on the iron masks of Hou Jing's troops summed up the encounter between the North and South. Yu Xin was to win the ultimate victory, but his conquest was of a different kind: much less tangible, much slower, and bringing almost no joy to the victor.

Endnotes

1. Jiankang's population may have reached over one million people, "including Han Chinese, aboriginal peoples, and foreigners (especially merchants and members of the Buddhist Sangha)." See Shufen Liu, "Jiankang and the Commercial Empire of the Southern Dynasties: Change and Continuity in Medieval Chinese Economic History," in *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm: 200-600*, Scott Pearce, Audrey Shapiro, and Patricia Ebrey, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Asia Center Press, 2001), pp. 35-36.
2. *Chen shu* 陳書, Yao Silian 姚思廉, comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), 32.424–25.
3. Yan Zhitui, *Yanshi jiaxun jijie* 顏氏家訓集解, Wang Liqi 王利器, annot. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 1.44–45.
4. Yuwen Tai 宇文泰, the Western Wei minister, freed several thousand gentry members from slavery in response to a Liang official Yu Jicai 庾季才 (d. 603). *Bei shi* 北史, Li Yanshou 李延壽, comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 89.2948.
5. Alternatively known as *The Record of Retribution for Grievances* (*Huanyuan zhi* 還冤志) or (*Huanyuan ji* 還冤記). Wang Guoliang 王

國良, *Yan Zhitui Huanyuan zhi yanjiu* 顏之推還冤志研究 (Taibei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1995), p. 115. Luo Guowei 羅國威, *Yuanhun zhi jiaozhu* 冤魂志校注 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2001), pp. 88-89.

6. A poem entitled "Passing Dizhu at Night on My Way from Zhou to Qi" ("Cong Zhou ru Qi ye du Dizhu" 從周入齊夜度砥柱) and attributed to Yan Zhitui in the Northern Song encyclopedia *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (comp. 986) supposedly relates the poet's night-time escape. However, this poem appears as an anonymous piece in the Tang work *Wenjing mifu lun* 文鏡秘府論, and, under a different title, is attributed to the monk Huimu 惠慕 in the Ming anthology *Gushi ji* 古詩紀. See *Quan bei Qi shi* 2.2283, in Lu Qinli 逯欽立, ed., *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995).
7. Toward the end of this *fu*, Yan Zhitui lamented that "I have one life, but went through three transformations," referring to Hou Jing's assassination of Emperor Jianwen, the death of Emperor Yuan, and the fall of the Northern Qi. We thus know that the *fu* must have been written before the new dynasty he was serving, Zhou, was overthrown in 581. For the text of the *fu*, see *Bei Qi shu* 北齊書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972) 45.618–26; and *Quan Sui wen* 全隋文, 13.4088–90, in Yan Kejun 嚴可均, comp., *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han sanguo liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987). For an English translation of this *fu*, see Albert E. Dien, *Pei ch'i shu* 45: *Biography of Yen Chih-t'ui* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976).
8. The *fu* has been translated in its entirety and analyzed in detail by William Graham in *The Lament for the South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
9. "Growing weary of the world" is a euphemism for death.
10. "Wearing lapels on the left" was a way of "barbarian" dress.
11. The poems about suffering from the "barbarians" refer to the two poems attributed to the Eastern Han woman writer Cai Yan 蔡琰 (fl. late 2nd century). *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, Fan Ye 范曄, comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 84.2801. Confucius said of Guan Zhong 管仲, the prime minister of the state of Qi: "If not for Guan Zhong, all of us would have spread our hair and bared our left shoulders by now." See *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, Ruan Yuan 阮元, comp. (Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1955), 14.127. To spread one's hair and bare one's left shoulder was a non-Han custom; Confucius implied that the Chinese heartland would have fallen under

"barbarian" rule if not for Guan Zhong.

12. The five oxen drawing the imperial carriage carried banners on their backs. *Jin shu* 晉書, Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 25.754. The nine dragons refer to the legendary steeds acquired by Emperor Wen of the Han. See *Xijing zaji quanyi* 西京雜記全譯, Cheng Lin 成林 and Cheng Zhangcan 程章燦, annot. and trans. (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1993), p. 52. Wang Liqi believed that the nine dragons were patterns decorating the imperial carriage (Yan Zhitui, *Yanshi jiaxun*, p. 610).
13. The "divine cauldrons," the symbol of imperial power, disappeared in chaotic times and reappeared in an age of peace and prosperity. The "immortal bow" belonged to the Yellow Emperor; it dropped to the ground when he ascended to Heaven, and those of his courtiers who were unable to follow him clasped the bow and wept over his departure (*Shi ji* 史記, Sima Qian 司馬遷, comp. [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959], 12.465, 28.1394).
14. The sons of King Wen of the Zhou were enfeoffed with "the sixteen states." See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義, in *Shisanjing zhushu*, 15.255. The phrase "seventy generations" alludes to the descendents of the legendary Shennong emperor (*Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 [Taibei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1974 reprint], 78.494). The Qing commentator Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717–96) believed that it refers to seventy-two ancient lords who held the *fengshan* ritual at the Mount Tai. See Yan Zhitui, *Yanshi jiaxun*, p. 611. Both the sixteen states and seventy generations indicate the ancient Han civilization of the Chinese heartland.
15. Yan Zhitui, *Yanshi jiaxun*, 20.534. Yan Zhitui had two elder brothers: Yan Zhiyi 顏之儀 (523–91) and Yan Zhishan 顏之善. For a complete translation, see Yen Chih-t'ui, *Family Instructions for the Yen Clan: Yen-shih chia-hsün*, Teng Ssu-yü, trans. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968).
16. Confucius had wept at the capture of a unicorn, an auspicious beast appearing only in times of peace and prosperity. See *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏, in *Shishanjing zhu shu*, 28.356.
17. Yan Zhitui said, "I was recently appointed a gentleman of the palace gate [i.e., one of the imperial secretaries]"; this occurred in 572. In the last chapter, he mentioned the unification of China, which took place in 589. See *Yanshi jiaxun*, 13.319, 20.534.
18. Ibid., 1.179.
19. Ibid., 8.153.

20. *Liang shu* 梁書, Yao Cha 姚察 and Yao Silian 姚思廉, comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 44.727.
21. Yan Zhitui, *Yanshi jiaxun*, 9.240.
22. Minchu's name literally means "feeling sad for the Chu," Chu being a reference to Jiangling, a city in the ancient Chu region.
23. *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書, Liu Xu 劉昫 et al., comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 46.1985.
24. Ibid., 56.2275.
25. For a discussion of the nature of Palace Style poetry, see Chapters 4 and 5 of my book, *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang (502-557)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center Press, 2007).
26. *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, Sima Guang 司馬光, comp. (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), 161.4986.
27. Yu Xin's dynastic biography describes him as being "of a height of over six feet and having a waist of ten armfuls." See *Zhou shu* 周書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), 41.733.
28. Yuwen You 宇文逌, "Preface to Yu Xin's Collection" in Yan Kejun, ed., *Quan hou Zhou wen* 全後周文, 4.3902.
29. Lu Tongqun, *Yu Xin zhuan lun* 庾信傳論 (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1997), pp. 160–61, 356.
30. *Zhou shu*, 41.734; *Bei shi*, 83.2794.
31. *Zhou shu*, 39.703.
32. Yan Kejun ed., *Quan hou Zhou wen*, 11.3938–39. "Linked Pearls" is a genre.
33. *Shi ji*, 7.336.
34. *Han shu* 漢書, Ban Gu 班固, comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 54.2466.
35. *Zhou shu*, 41.734.
36. See William T. Graham, Jr. and James Hightower, "Yu Hsin's 'Songs of Sorrow,'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43, no. 1 (June 1983): 6. The entire set has been translated into English by Graham and Hightower.
37. The late Ming critic Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692) offered an interesting analysis of this poem series. He singled out No. 21 for praise. "As for the rest, it is not that they do not have coherence of thought, but on the whole they are too scattered and cannot be discussed as poetry." See *Gushi pingxuan* 古詩評選, Zhang Guoxing 張國星, ed. (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1997), p. 290.
38. Lu Qinli, ed., *Quan bei Zhou shi*, 3.2381.

39. *Shi ji*, 75.2354.
40. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi*, 54.944.
41. The attribution is almost certainly spurious, but what mattered was that people believed in it. Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501-531) *Wen xuan* 文選 contains a series of poems by Li Ling and Su Wu, including the one to which Yu Xin alludes. *Wen xuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 29.1353. See also Lu Qinli, ed., *Quan Han shi*, 12.337.
42. "Chang'an has narrow lanes" is a line from a *yuefu* poem (*Quan Han shi* 9.266). "Golden Grotto" was used to refer to the house of Guo Kuang 郭況, the brother of Empress Guo in the Eastern Han, (*Han shu*, 10.403).
43. This alludes to the Pan Yue story. Pan Yue, the Western Jin poet, was a good-looking man. When he went out, women always tossed fruit into his carriage to show their admiration of him, and he would come home with a carriage full of fruit, (*Jin shu*, 55.1507).
44. Lu Qinli, ed., *Quan bei Zhou shi*, 4.2386–387.
45. *Hou Han shu*, 57.1842; Ge Hong, *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, in *Liexian zhuan jinyi/Shenxian zhuan jinyi* 列仙傳今譯神仙傳今譯, Qiu Heting 邱鶴亭, annot. (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1996), p. 285.
46. Lu Qinli, ed., *Quan bei Zhou shi*, 4.2408.
47. Ibid., 4.2406.
48. The Western Jin capital of Luoyang resembled Jiankang geographically in that it was surrounded by mountains with rivers running through it, hence Zhou Yi's remark about the scenery being similar. But the names of the mountains and rivers were different.
49. Liu Yiqing 劉義慶, *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏, Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, annot. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), 2.92.
50. Lu Qinli, ed., *Quan Liang shi*, 8.1691–92.
51. The third line of Yu Xin's quatrain has a textual variant: "One still thinks of chanting poetry at the darkening ford" 猶言吟暝浦. This would evoke the earlier poet's presence in a more explicit manner.
52. The historian thus described Emperor Wu of the Zhou: "After the conquest of the Northern Qi, he planned to exploit the full potential of his army to overpower the Turks as well as subdue the South, so as to unify the entire world within a couple of years—such were his aspirations," (*Zhou shu*, 6.107).
53. Yan Kejun, ed., *Quan hou Zhou wen*, 10.3933.
54. *Zhou shu*, 7.119.
55. Yan Kejun, ed., *Quan hou Zhou wen*, 9.3928.

56. Tongzhou was the former place of residence of the Zhou royal family and the birthplace of Emperor Xuan. The Zhou emperors made frequent trips to Tongzhou. This poem has been dated to the year 580, because in the *Zhou shu* biography of Emperor Xuan, a passage about an outing to Tongzhou in 580 mentions "the Marsh of Crimson Embankment" (Chi'an ze 赤岸澤); see Lin Yi 林怡, *Yu Xin yanjiu* 庾信研究 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2000), p. 163. This trip lasted from April 5 until April 14, (*Zhou shu* 7.123). But Emperor Xuan would have passed by the Marsh of Crimson Embankment on every Tongzhou trip. He visited Tongzhou twice in 570: once from September 7 until September 19; once from December 14 until December 18. The phrasing in Yu Xin's poem corroborates the dating of this poem to September 579, both because of the reference to contemporary affairs and because autumn is the traditional hunting season.
57. The Emerald City Gate (Qingcheng men 青城門) was one of the city gates of Chang'an, also known as the Splendid Emerald Gate (Qingqi men 青綺門); see Li Daoyuan 酈道元, *Shuijing zhushu* 水經注疏, (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1989), 19.1585. The gate's spontaneous collapse in 577 was considered a bad omen. See *Bei shi*, 10.369. *Sui shu* claimed that it did not bode well for the crown prince (later Emperor Xuan), for emerald was the color of spring, and the crown prince's palace was usually referred to as the Spring Residence. (*Sui shu*, 22.632).
58. *Shi ji*, 72.2329–30.
59. *Hou Han shu*, 16.621.
60. *Zhou shu*, 7.121. Guangling was the capital of South Yanzhou in the Liang, where Xiao Gang had served as governor from 510 to 513.
61. According to a legend, the stone swallows of Lingling turned into real swallows when it rained and then became stone again after the rain stopped. Dragons made of clay were used in sacrifices for rain.
62. *Quan bei Zhou shi*, 3.2380; translation (modified) from Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), p. 330. Yan Zhiyi, who had been tutor to the crown prince, was made Grand Master after Emperor Xuan took the throne in 578. The season of the poem is clearly early summer. The poem hints at a drought before the rain and the ritual of praying for rain, which might refer to the drought that had led Emperor Xuan to issue an amnesty edict on May 23, 580, and to pray for rain three days later. It rained on that day. (*Zhou shu*, 7.123–24).

63. Liu Zhen's father was a famous man of letters in the Liang court. Liu Zhen himself was an expert in the studies of the *Han shu* and *Hou Han shu* (*Bei shi*, 83.2809).
64. Lu Qinli, ed., *Quan bei Zhou shi*, 4.2401.
65. Translation from Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, p. 252.
66. Ibid., p. 253.
67. *Zizhi tongjian*, 177.5516.
68. *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 679.7785. Also attributed to an anonymous author. *Ibid*., 785.8863.
69. Yu Xin made frequent references to drinking in his poems written in the North. In his "Willow Song," cited below, he explicitly states that one had better drown one's sorrows in drinking.
70. For a full English translation of this *fu*, see Stephen Owen, "Deadwood: The Barren Tree from Yü Hsin to Han Yü," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 1, no. 2 (1979): 157–79.
71. See Po Qin's 繁欽 (d. 218) poem "On Sweet Basil" ("Yong hui" 詠薫). Lu Qinli, ed., *Quan Wei shi*, 3.385. Also see Tao Yuanming's 陶淵明 No. 9 of "Imitations of Old Poems" ("Ni gu" 擬古), (*Quan Jin shi*, 17.1005).
72. No. 6 of Yu Xin's "In Imitation of 'Singing of My Feelings'" begins with these lines: "In the past I was treated as a gentleman of the state;/all my life I am grateful to a lord who understood me," (*Quan bei Zhou shi*, 3.2368).
73. Legend has it that as the Han envoy Zhang Qian 張騫 was looking for the source of the Yellow River, his raft arrived at the Heavenly River, and he obtained the stone used by the Weaving Girl to support her loom. See *Taiping yulan*, 51.379, citing Zong Lin's 宗懍 *Jing Chu suishi ji* 荆楚歲時記.
74. In a fragment from Sun Chuo's *Sunzi*, a man of the mountain tells a man of the sea that a huge tree of the Deng Grove may shelter several states, (Yan Kejun, ed., *Quan Jin wen*, 62.1815). This couplet refers to the former might of the willow tree and suggests the past power and glory of the Liang.
75. In these lines Yu Xin alludes to a number of writings by the Cao princes: in one of his letters, Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) recalled their outings at Nanpi in the old days; Cao Pi's poem "Written at the Xuanwu Pond" ("Yu Xuanwu pi zuo" 於玄武陂作) begins with the line: "Brothers go on an outing together." Cao Zhi's "Ballad on the White Horse" describes the military accomplishments of a chivalrous

knight-errant; see Yan Kejun, ed., *Quan sanguo wen*, 7.1089; and Lu Qinli, ed., *Quan Wei shi*, 4.400, 6.432–33.

76. It was said that the minister Wang Ji's horse had to cross a stream but feared staining the precious mudguard it was wearing. See *Jin shu*, 42.1206. Emperor Ming of the Jin (r. 322–24), while still a little boy and the crown prince, put his white jade tablet in the open mouth of a bronze coiled dragon; the jade tablet slipped in and could not be recovered, (*Taiping yulan*, 692.3222).
77. Xiao Shi was the son-in-law of the Duke Mu of Qin. Playing on his panpipes, he summoned a phoenix and rode away with his wife, (*Taiping guangji*, 4.25). In *Han Wudi gushi* 漢武帝故事, Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 was said to have peeped at the Queen Mother of the West through the vermilion bird window. See Lu Xun 魯迅, ed., *Gu xiaoshuo gouchen* 古小說鉤沉 (Taibei: Pangeng chubanshe, 1978), p. 346. The peeping Jade Maiden is an allusion to a line from the Eastern Han writer Wang Yanshou's 王延壽 (fl. 163) "Rhapsody on the Hall of Numinous Brilliance in Lu" ("Lu Lingguang dian fu" 魯靈光殿賦): "The Jade Girl, peeping from a window, looks below," *Quan hou Han wen*, 58.790; translation from David R. Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 263.
78. The Eastern Han general Dou Xian inscribed his grand victory over the Xiongnu army on a stone stele on the Mount Yanran 燕然, (*Hou Han shu*, 23.814).
79. King Huai of Chu was duped by the Qin minister Zhang Yi and severed relations with the state of Qi. King Huai later died in Qin. See *Shi ji*, 40.1724.
80. Toward the end of the Western Jin, the state was beset with troubles, but Shan Jian 山簡, the governor of Xiangyang, cared only about drinking. He often drank by a scenic local pond, which he referred to as his "Gaoyang Pond," Gaoyang being a reference to the Western Han figure Li Yiji 酈食其, the self-styled "Drunkard of Gaoyang." A song was made about Shan Jian coming home drunk and wearing his cap upside down. See *Jin shu*, 43.1229–30.
81. The Eastern Jin general Tao Kan once recognized a willow transplanted from the west city gate of Wuchang. See *Jin yangqiu* 晉陽秋, cited in Liu Xiaobiao's 劉孝標 (463-522) annotation in Liu Yiqing, *Shishuo xinyu* 3.179. Cao Pi, in the preface to his "*Fu* on the Willow" ("Liu fu" 柳賦), relates that he had planted a willow at Guandu in 200; now, fifteen years later, the tree had grown a great deal, and "many of my followers had died." See *Quan Wei wen*, 4.1075.

82. Both “Breaking the Willow Branches” and “Plum Blossoms Fall” (“Meihua luo” 梅花落) were popular *yuefu* titles in the Southern Dynasties.
83. Lu Qinli, ed., *Quan bei Zhou shi*, 2.2353.
84. *Jiu Tang shu*, 55.2247.
85. *Zizhi tongjian*, 184.5746.
86. *Quan bei Zhou shi*, 4.2390. When the state of Xu was being invaded, King Yan, who “practiced benevolence and righteousness,” did not want to involve his people in battle and was subsequently conquered. See *Hou Han shu*, 85.2808.