

## INTRODUCTION



Barely four months after bidding farewell to his family, the early Qing scholar-official and dramatist You Tong 尤侗 (1618–1704) received the devastating news in the capital a thousand *li* away that his wife had passed away in his hometown more than a month earlier. To mourn his late wife, the distraught You Tong wrote an emotional biographical sketch. Tormented by the guilty feelings of not being at her bedside when she needed him most, You Tong wrote:

Alas, how sad! I don't know (*zhi* 知) how my wife died. We have been married for forty years. Then she died only one hundred days after I left her [for the capital]. I only know how my wife lived but I don't know how she died. For someone who knows how she died, his sorrow is probably not as deep as someone who only knows how she lived. Then if I don't know how my wife died, how could I really know how she lived? Our son Zhen came to me in his mourning clothes and pleaded: "I know a few things about the life of my mother but I am too distraught to write. My father, how could you bear to desert your children [by failing to keep alive the memories of their mother]?"<sup>1</sup>

Here the emotional intensity of a grieving husband is quite palpable, and the feeling of guilt dominates. Seemingly wondering about his own ability to truly "know" his deceased wife, You Tong emphasized the importance of *zhi* (understanding and knowing), implying he himself was nevertheless the most qualified person to reconstruct and record the "life" of his wife since they had lived together as husband and wife for so many decades. He concluded the sketch with the following passage:

We were a couple that had gone through all the hardships together and I have never had any concubines (*bingwu qieying* 並無妾媵). Being husband

and wife, we cherished each other as friends. Overwhelmed by my love for my deceased wife (*siqing* 私情; more literally, selfish feelings), I have ventured to pollute the eyes of respected gentlemen with this account of the intimate feelings between a man and a woman (*ernü zhi yan* 兒女之言), hoping that someone could write something [based on this account] to keep alive the memory of my wife, while I would be forgiven given the fact that I, as a visitor [stranded in the capital], have no one to confide in and that my son could only cry in the direction of our hometown. With tears in my eyes, I wrote this, not really knowing what I have just written.<sup>2</sup>

It had become quite common by the seventeenth century for a grieving husband to write a fairly long and emotional elegiac prose essay to honor his deceased wife in the form of a biographical account. You Tong felt the urgent need to turn her “life” into a scribed text, which was supposed to be endowed with the ultimate power to transcend death and time.

Considering himself the one who knew his wife best, he insisted he was the most appropriate person to author such a textualized life, whereas the tremendous pains of loss turned him into a particularly sympathetic as well as revealing biographer. At the same time, even with such conviction of a uniquely-privileged biographer, You Tong might still feel the pressure to apologize for his outpouring of *siqing* or “selfish feelings.” He felt the need to legitimate his elegiac act by suggesting that he wrote this biography at the request of their son, whose filial love for his mother, different from a husband’s *siqing* for his wife, hardly needed any apology given the Confucian notion of filiality. There was an obvious tension between the Confucian inhibitions over direct expressions of conjugal attachment and the desire to remember and commit to writing the detailed facts in the life of his wife in a way only he could do.

Despite his somewhat conventional reliance on the filial need of their son as an excuse for writing about the life of his late wife, You Tong’s biographical sketch points to what was then an emerging trend—a late imperial literatus’ increasing willingness to acknowledge that he was writing about the life of his wife not necessarily for her Confucian exemplariness or even for the purpose of preserving a record of her life for their decedents, but for the sake of his own memory: she was being remembered first of all as someone who had been very close to him. This was a project of personal remembrance based on intimate memory, which was often associated with *si* (the private or even the selfish), a rather reprehensible undertaking, at least in the eyes of the more conservative. It was the intimate, or “eye-polluting” (*chenmu* 塵目; to use a

variation of You Tong's own wording) details of the life they shared together that was most worth remembering.

As this study seeks to demonstrate, elegiac biographies such as You Tong's biographical sketch of his wife provide us with a rare opportunity for an intimate look into many aspects of the late imperial husband–wife relationship that so far have remained largely hidden from us. Texts such as this should help us explore the important question how intimate memory sought to find its expression and legitimacy in a culture where manifestations of conjugal intimacy were often viewed with suspicion.

Our understanding of traditional Chinese women has seen great advancement in the recent two decades or so.<sup>3</sup> Impressive strides have been made in recovering late imperial Chinese women's writings, and much light has been shed on the important question of how women viewed and represented themselves.<sup>4</sup> However, in traditional Chinese culture, as in many other premodern cultures, most writings about women were produced by men rather than women themselves. That is, most images of women from traditional China accessible to us today were constructed through the mediation of male consciousness. A careful examination of the nature of this male mediation is crucial to an adequate understanding of the social as well as cultural constructions of women and men as gendered beings during that period.

Probably nowhere is such male mediation more prominent and more complex than in the memorial writings on the deceased women written by their grieving male relatives, such as their surviving husbands. This study focuses on male literati's elegiac or *daowang* 悼亡 (mourning) biographical narratives of their deceased spouses in late imperial China (approximately the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries).<sup>5</sup> It seeks to examine how womanhood was constructed and defined by men in a polygamous society and how such male reflections on womanhood in turn helped define these grieving authors' own manhood in relation to their spouses as well as their male peers, offering us a rare opportunity for a close look at many aspects of the construction of these two different genders in close juxtaposition.

In late imperial China, one of the most likely as well as most legitimate occasions for a man to feel the urge or the need to write about the life of a woman who was very close to him was when she had passed away. This was also the moment he was most likely to feel justified in revealing aspects of her life that he might have qualms broaching on other occasions. On the other hand, if an elegy or epitaph was conceived as a ritual being performed for the benefit of the living along with the apparent subject of its eulogizing—the deceased,

it was at least as much about the mourning “self” as about the mourned “other.” The way a deceased spouse was being eulogized and remembered is closely related to the self-image the bereaved husband attempted to construct for himself. Our understandings of men and women as different gender beings have to be achieved in close juxtaposition since genders are seldom conceptualized in isolation.

Mourning and remembering are closely associated, or could even be considered two aspects of the same act, as memory is often a result of the absence of its object, while death amounts to permanent absence. Remembering often aims at perpetuating the existence of a person who no longer exists. Fearful that memory will fade—thus the triumph of the eternal absence—one then feels the need to commit memory onto paper to give it a material form in the hope that what is remembered about a person will never be lost again in his or her eternal absence. Thanks in part to its belatedness, the act of remembering/mourning also brings about a distance that enables one to look at the absent person from a new perspective precisely as a result of his or her absence, just as the early sixteenth-century scholar-official and poet Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1472–1529) famously confessed: “It took the death of my wife for me to really know her.”<sup>6</sup> What makes mourning a unique occasion for remembrance is the radicalization of absence—the death of a person makes the bereaved all the more appreciative of the deceased and much more willing to take a different look at someone whose presence was long taken for granted. The belatedness inherent in an act of remembrance injects into the bereaved a special sense of guilt for having previously failed to see or appreciate what in the deceased he or she is now able to see or appreciate. It is this new understanding and appreciation of the deceased, as well as the simultaneous guilty feelings of belatedness, that make the act of elegiac remembrance so intriguing, especially when the mourned and mourner are closely related to each other and when intimate memory assumes a major role in the mourning process.

Browsing through the *wenji* 文集 (collected writings) by many late imperial Chinese literati, one is often struck by the large number of biographical writings devoted to the memories of the deceased female relatives in these collections. Most of them are in the forms of epitaphs (*muzhiming* 墓誌銘), biographical sketches (*xingzhuang* 行狀),<sup>7</sup> sacrificial litanies (*jiwen* 祭文), and occasionally, biographies (*zhuan* 傳).<sup>8</sup> Despite the longstanding Confucian anxiety over women as biographical subjects, as expressed in the Confucian classic *Liji* 禮記 or *The Book of Rites*—“Outside affairs should not be talked of inside the threshold (of the women’s apartments), nor inside (or women’s) affairs outside it” (外言不入於梱，內言不出於梱)<sup>9</sup>—the late imperial period witnessed

a dramatic increase of biographical writings on women.<sup>10</sup> Besides the female exemplar biographies that abound in official and local histories and in the literati *wenji*, individual literati authors also produced many biographical writings on their female relatives, often not necessarily for their exemplariness but for the obvious but important reason that these female subjects were their close kin.

The fact that the male biographer personally knew or was even quite close to the woman he was writing about had important implications: his direct personal knowledge of his female subject could make him more able as well as more inclined to reveal aspects of her life that a typical commissioned biographer or epitaph writer, who tended to follow the Confucian biographical conventions more diligently, might otherwise be unable or unwilling to divulge; his closeness to his female subject complicated as well as highlighted the specific perspectives from which he interpreted the meanings of her life, with the resultant writing more likely to deviate from the norms of the Confucian exemplar discourse. Writing the biography of a woman once very close to the biographer himself tended to increase the possibility of the Confucian biographical and gender uniformity being undermined, as she was more likely to be remembered as an individual rather than a “faceless” abstraction of the Confucian moral precepts for women.

Whereas the perceived intimacy between a grieving husband and his late spouse might present itself as a liability in the eyes of the more conservative in terms of “over-indulgence,” a topic to be further explored in chapter 1, such intimacy could cause him to be franker in writing about her, leading to insights into the aspects of the husband–wife relationship otherwise rarely revealed in other kinds of discourses from that period. Precisely because of the special closeness between the male author and his female subject, the uniqueness of his perspective as a husband in shaping her representation became all the more significant in our effort to reach a better appreciation of the gendered implications of male mediation through which most extant images of late imperial women were being constructed. It helps to shed new light on the special dynamic between the autobiographical “self” and the biographical “other” often dramatized in such an intimate act of personal remembrance.

While there was a long and sophisticated *daowang* poetic tradition in pre-modern China, which was closely related to the *daowang* works in prose this study focuses on, I am mainly interested in the question how a grieving husband tried to construct the life narrative of his spouse(s) based on his personal memories, a task much more likely to be accomplished in various biographical and memorial genres in prose. However, some authors’ *daowang* poems are included in discussion whenever they become relevant. The relationship

between *daowang* poetry and other elegiac genres in prose is also an important question I explore at some length.

Chapter 1 is an overview of what I would call the phenomenon of “secularization of memory” that took place during the late imperial period as well as the special roles played by intimate memory in this secularization process and the resultant changes memorial writings underwent during that same period. For lack of a better term, I use the word “secularization,” which originally refers to the declining influence of a particular religion, to refer to *shisu hua* 世俗化, a much broader Chinese concept, in order to describe this process through which Chinese memorial writings were becoming more plebeian (more ordinary people became represented in these writings) and significantly less constrained by the various rigid moral Confucian precepts. The American theologian Harvey Cox defines secularization as “the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage, the turning of his attention away from other worlds and toward this one.”<sup>11</sup> Sharing aspects of Cox’s definition of secularization, the term *shisu hua*, which, in fact, was originally coined to translate the Western term “secularization,” has also been employed by Chinese historians to refer to what are considered compatible with those phenomena resulted from the secularization movements in the West. However, the specific social and cultural phenomena in the Chinese historical context thus referred to were not necessarily the results of the declining influence of any particular religion. This broadening of the original meaning of the term “secularization” is, to a certain extent, necessitated by the fact that the kind of dichotomy between the sacred and the secular often seen in Western history was never strong in premodern China since Chinese society was relatively secular to start with. Some Chinese historians have employed the term *shisu hua* to characterize what happened as a result of the waning influence of the strict moral precepts associated with Confucianism in premodern China (whether Confucianism could be considered a religion is still a hotly debated issue) or even the diminished reach of the Communist ideology in post-Mao China.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the term *shisu hua* has also been used to characterize how certain Confucian moral values began to lose their influence or relevance as the Chinese society became more urbanized and more commercialized during the late imperial period.<sup>13</sup>

A main argument outlined in chapter 1 and further buttressed in the following chapters is that there was something particularly “secularizing” inherent in intimate memory, which, especially when allowed to assume an important role in the mourning process, compelled a grieving husband to remember his late spouse more as a specific and mundane individual, quite

different from those saint-like images one frequently encounters in the typical Confucian exemplar discourse, such as the biographies of exemplary women in the standard and local histories produced in late imperial China.<sup>14</sup> She was often remembered by her grieving husband as someone not necessarily perfect but with flaws, thus, rather ordinary. Intimate memory tended to be able to resist more successfully the kind of moralistic abstraction typical of the Confucian biographical tradition, while *daowang* discourse was one of the most important venues where such memory found its expressions despite strong Confucian aversion to conjugal intimacy and especially its public display. This chapter also briefly traces the significant changes some popular genres of memorial writings underwent during that period as a result of the increasingly important role assumed by intimate memory in the mourning process, an interesting phenomenon related to the much-elevated status of *qing* 情 (emotions) in the cultural discourses of the second half of the Ming dynasty and the popularity of companionate marriage in certain circles of the cultural elite at that time.<sup>15</sup> As demonstrated in the discussions of many specific *daowang* works in the following chapters of this study, the importance of the forms memory is capable of assuming cannot be underestimated. The most innovative and most compelling works of *daowang* are often those that successfully challenge and even transcend the conventions of the existing genres of memorial writings.

Chapter 2 is an examination of how the guilt felt by a surviving husband compelled him to delve deep into his memories of his late wife to rethink the issue of what constituted a virtuous wife as he, directly or indirectly, questioned many aspects of the traditional Confucian prescriptions for a woman. His grief and the accompanying sense of guilt as a surviving husband tended to make him more willing to look at things from the perspective of the woman he was writing about. A polygamous husband in mourning was more inclined to demonstrate sympathy for his late wife for the jealousy she might have felt when he took a concubine, while a self-claimed monogamous husband, such as You Tong, as discussed above, attempted to present his claim of monogamy as a proof of his unwavering love for his late wife. In their eagerness to underscore the many hardships their deceased wives had gone through as daughters-in-law, some of these grieving husbands alluded to the tensions between their wives and their own mothers, even casting the latter in a somewhat unflattering light, an act quite remarkable on the part of a son, given the Confucian emphasis on filial piety. Consequently, the self-images conjured up in these *daowang* biographies are often those of a grieving husband who could be unusually sympathetic and sometimes even “indulgent” as well as

“indulging,” confirming, almost by default, the dangers of conjugal intimacy many orthodox Confucian moralists had repeatedly warned against.

If intimate memory had a tendency to compel some grieving husbands to deviate from the Confucian biographical norms of the exemplary in writing about their deceased wives, chapter 3 focuses on what is seemingly the opposite: the different implications of intimate memory when a grieving husband decided to embark on a hagiographical project on his deceased wife to explicitly celebrate her as a female chastity martyr (*lienü* 烈女), the ultimate female Confucian exemplar. This is a particularly intriguing topic given the rising cult of female chastity during that period.<sup>16</sup> One of my arguments is that the proliferation of the Confucian hagiography of female virtues, a seemingly “sacralizing” trend, paradoxically, might have aided the secularization of memory by providing more biographical “spaces” for those less saint-like women when their male relatives decided to write about them. These biographers of ordinary women could feel more justified in talking less about the Confucian exemplariness of their biographical subjects since there was another special form of biography (hagiography) now readily available to be employed to celebrate those extraordinary female exemplars.

According to Zhang Zhen 張貞 (1637–1712), a late seventeenth-century writer, his wife, before she died, refused food for several days, believing Zhang was about to succumb to his severe illness. She eventually died, but he himself miraculously recovered. Initially, Zhang Zhen wrote a quite moving and intimate biographical sketch of his wife to mourn her, but seventeen years later, apparently having changed his mind, he began to actively solicit well-known literati figures to produce a hagiography of chastity martyrdom for her. In this proposed hagiographical project, however, “forgetfulness” was urged, whereas intimate memory in particular became something to be shunned and deliberately suppressed. The case of Zhang Zhen underscored, by default, the secularizing power of intimate memory in the construction of the image of a wife.

The Ming loyalist writer and scholar Qian Chengzhi 錢澄之 (1612–1693) also attempted to celebrate his late wife—who committed suicide rather than facing the danger of being defiled by bandits—as a female chastity martyr in her biographical sketch. Here, personal memory was appropriated to authenticate the historicity of the image of his wife as a chastity martyr and to enhance his own narrative authority as a Confucian historian, who considered recording such heroic deeds the solemn duty of a historian. Juggling between his private role as a commemorating husband and his public role as an objective historian, Qian tried hard to underscore, with the help of his personal memory, his value as a historical witness. This chapter further complicates the



implications of intimate memory in the secularizing process of late imperial memorial writings by showing the diverse roles it could assume.

Chapter 4 is a reading of *Fusheng liuji* 浮生六記, or *The Six Records of a Floating Life*—hereafter referred to as *Six Records*—by Shen Fu 沈復 (b.1761), arguably the most sophisticated, as well as the most complex, work of intimate memory in premodern China. Never before had a grieving husband delved so deeply into his personal memory as Shen Fu did to recollect the intimate details of the life he shared with his late wife; never before had a grieving husband depicted in such a detailed fashion as he did the tensions between other members of his extended family and themselves as a couple, especially the tensions between his father and himself, a daring “unfilial” act on the part of a son, given the unconditional authority enjoyed by parents at that time. Shen Fu’s remembrances of his late wife were carefully embedded and framed in his autobiographical reflections on his own past “selves” as he tried to come to terms with his own gender identity as a marginalized literatus. The tremendous empathy he exhibited in recounting the tragic life of his late wife was inseparable from his own experience of emasculation, offering us a rare glimpse into the deep gender psyche of a man dogged by poverty and career failures throughout his life. *Six Records* is a remarkably innovative work of *daowang* in many aspects: its unprecedented length, its intricate chapter structure, its focus on the intimate details of daily conjugal life, its daring exposure of family tensions, and its challenges to the many conventions of traditional memorial writings. It is an elegiac narrative, a memoir as well as an autobiography, all at once.

A few generations younger than Shen Fu, Jiang Tan 蔣坦 (b. 1823) authored a quite different memoir about his wife, titled *Qiudeng suoyi* 秋燈瑣憶, or *The Fragments of Memory under the Autumn Lamp*—hereafter referred to as *Fragments*. As suggested by its title, the memoir is made of random remembrances that do not provide a coherent picture of the couple’s married life. Chapter 5 is an attempt to read this memoir in close juxtaposition with Jiang Tan’s many *daowang* poems, focusing on his anxieties as a man, husband, and son-in-law, partly caused by his wife’s independence and her unusually close ties with her natal family. Compared with Shen Fu’s *Six Records*, Jiang Tan’s remembrances of his wife present an intricate picture of a very different kind of family tension. His case also gives us a chance to explore some of the new literary functions assumed by these two different elegiac genres, *daowang* poetry and prose memoir.

Given the widespread practice of polygamy among the elite in late imperial China, one should not find it surprising that significant parts of *daowang*

writings were devoted to the deceased concubines. Chapter 6 explores the matter of how concubines were mourned and remembered differently and/or similarly by their polygamous husbands. Thanks to the ambiguities associated with the status of a concubine and the great variety of roles she played in a polygamous family (from a slave/maid or a minor wife to someone assuming the full power of a primary wife), she, as the subject of an elegiac narrative, often invited very diverse approaches from her mourning husband when he tried to reconstruct her life. A concubine's relatively low status seems to have given her polygamous husband the license to be more autobiographical about himself in her biography than in that of his primary wife. On the other hand, feeling less constrained when writing about a concubine, he could be much bolder, as well as more innovative, as a *daowang* writer. It is probably not a coincidence that one of the most innovative *daowang* works from the period is *Yingmei an yiyu* 影梅庵憶語, or *The Remembrances of the Convent of the Plum Shadow* (hereafter referred to as *Plum Shadow*) by the seventeenth-century writer Mao Xiang 冒襄 (1611–1693), a lengthy memoir on his deceased concubine, Dong Xiaowan. For the first time, a *daowang* work in prose explicitly advertised itself as a memoir or “words of remembrances” in its title. The emphasis is not so much on her typical “wifely virtues” or her contributions to the “public” interests of a patrilineal family but more on her unique companionship in her husband's various aesthetic pursuits, testifying to the different roles a concubine sometimes assumed in the life of a polygamous husband, not necessarily as a woman whom a man married for the purpose of progeny when his principal wife was deemed deficient in her procreative capacity, a justification usually presented as the most legitimate reason for concubinage. The chapter explores the many different ways concubines were mourned and remembered as well as how such memories were manipulated by their polygamous husbands for very different autobiographical agendas.

By the late imperial period, the development of *daowang* writings had reached such a stage that there was a markedly keener sense of competition among the literati for the honor of being a great “mourner.” Chapter 7 examines this increasingly acute self-consciousness on the part of many *daowang* writers. Being perceived as a good *daowang* writer was now an important badge of one's cultural sophistication. At the same time, mourning and writing about one's late spouse were also becoming a cherished occasion for literati networking and social exchanges. A grieving husband was sometimes almost an “eager” mourner, taking special pride in showing off his elegiac talents. Now intimate memories of one's own late spouse were being turned into a cultural object for social circulation to enhance one's literary reputation and

expand one's social circles. Some grieving husbands actively solicited condolence writings from their peers and friends and assembled these writings into a special volume, which would then be distributed among his friends to seek more endorsement writings in a seemingly perpetual process of social circulation, whereby the mourned female was sometimes replaced by the mourning male as the focus of celebration in this communal process of commemoration.

Although this study concentrates on a late imperial Chinese man's elegiac biographical writings on his spouse, the last chapter turns to look at his writings on his deceased married sister, in order to better examine how wifely qualities could be conceived of differently when the mourned was a mourner's close female relative rather than his spouse. I understand that it would be helpful if discussions of how mourners wrote about other close female relatives, such as mothers and daughters, could also be included here, but I have confined my discussion in this chapter to a married sister partly due to space constraints, but also because, like his relationship with his wife but unlike his relationships with his mother and daughters, a man's relationship with his married sister tended to be a lateral relationship, and thus a more equitable comparison. Furthermore, as a sibling, a brother was more likely to look at his sister's marriage from her perspective rather than her husband's since her husband—from the brother's perspective—was a member of another family.

Family tension here became a much easier topic to broach, and even dwell on, especially if he felt his sister was not treated fairly in her husband's family. It is here in the writings of a grieving brother that we encounter some of the harshest denunciations of the incompetence and even abusive behaviors on the part of a husband. A brother often found himself torn between his desire to present his married sister as someone he could still relate to as a member of his own family and the reality that she was now a wife and daughter-in-law in another family, drawing attention to the possible conflicts between the interests of the two families. Mourning a married sister, a brother, who was also married himself, was more inclined to rethink the obligations of a man/husband because of his own changed positionality from that of a husband to that of a brother.

Less vulnerable to the Confucian censure for being "selfish" or "indulgent," as in the case of writing about one's own wife, a man might feel less the need to underscore his sister's exemplariness in order to legitimate his writings about her life. This is probably why we have found in Qian Chengzhi's epitaph of his sister such a remarkable life story of a woman who, precisely because of her unremarkableness as a Confucian female exemplar, provides an interesting contrast to the image of a female chastity martyr constructed

in the hagiography he wrote for his own late wife. It seems that mourning one's deceased sister gave a literati author a unique opportunity to produce a biography for an ordinary woman without the need to feel apologetic, helping push the process of secularization of memory to its new limits. In fact, Qian showed far more personal feelings in writing about his sister than in writing about his wife, in part because his epitaph of the former was more like a *personal* memoir, while his biographical sketch of the latter was a hagiographical project intended as a *public* tale of a female chastity exemplar. This epitaph throws new light on the very different roles a literati biographer could assume in reconstructing the lives of different women, even when all the women were his close kin.

One of the conclusions of this study is that during the late imperial period—when women were still supposed to be remembered for their Confucian virtues, as in the earlier periods—the particular characteristics that constituted virtues were becoming increasingly contested. For example, what could be celebrated as admirable wifely behaviors began to vary greatly, especially when surviving husbands were the ones doing the remembering. What was worth remembering about a deceased wife could still be her wifely obedience, a conventional female virtue, but, more often, it could also be her ability to provide sound advice to her husband on various matters, from domestic issues to those involving his career. Here her practical wisdom and her decisiveness could become one of the most cherished qualities, which were not necessarily consistent with the typical Confucian expectations of wifely obedience; on the other hand, even her personality flaws could now be part of her husband's cherished memories about her because she was now remembered as a lost companion rather than an exemplary woman. Consequently, the images of women presented in these elegiac works are often far more diverse and much more complicated than what we usually encounter in a typical work of Confucian female exemplar discourse.<sup>17</sup> In these intimate elegiac works, female exemplariness tends either to receive less emphasis or has become a more contested quality.

At the same time, from their writings on their late spouses and sisters, what could we learn about these literati authors' self-images as Confucian men in mourning? First of all, he could be a man emotionally much more complex than he would appear to be on other occasions: in grief, he might be less inclined to present himself as a straight-faced Confucian; his views of women could be very different in that he was now much more ready to appreciate a wife's plight, and thus be more tolerant or even more understanding of her "mistakes" or "flaws." A mourning husband was often a man of conflicting

emotions: he could be torn between his attachment to his late wife and his filial obligations toward his own parents,<sup>18</sup> a topic very few men at that time would openly broach on other occasions. Sometimes in showing sympathy for his late wife for the unfair treatment she received in the family, a grieving husband might even present himself as a victim of this same unfair treatment, identifying himself with his wife and revealing aspects of his gender identity otherwise rarely visible, as Shen Fu has done in his *Six Records*. Here *daowang* becomes an act of double grieving: grieving for the loss of his wife and over his own failures as a man and husband.

Intimate memory sometimes helped to considerably complicate the image of an otherwise quite conservative Confucian, as we are to see in the case of the early Qing neo-Confucian essayist, Fang Bao 方苞 (1668–1749). Fang was invariably an orthodox Confucian patriarch when he was writing his “household instructions” (*jiaxun* 家訓) for the members of the younger generation, and a strict Confucian moralist when advising others on how to manage a gentry household. Here female members of the family were more likely to be viewed with suspicion, a source of family disharmony. However, his image changed from that of a straight-faced Confucian patriarch to that of a much more sympathetic husband or brother when he was mourning his wife and his sisters, giving us a rare glimpse into a late imperial man’s complex emotional world. A late imperial Chinese literatus, under different circumstances, at different stages in his life and assuming different social roles, could be a man capable of very different views on women. Such inconsistencies are one of the topics this study seeks to explore.

For some literati husbands, mourning and grieving for a deceased spouse became much more than a private act of personal remembrance. It became an important part of a cultured man’s carefully choreographed effort of self-fashioning. It was turned into a social act of literati networking. Intimate memory of one’s deceased spouse could become a cultural object of social circulation for the purpose of literati self-aggrandizement—a man good at remembering and writing about his deceased spouse was now being celebrated as befitting the refined image of a Confucian gentleman of cultural sensibility.

Remembering and writing about someone who was at once so close, such as one’s own spouse, is inevitably also an act of self-expression and self-representation.<sup>19</sup> It seems that by the seventeenth century, this became a much more pronounced feature of literati *daowang* writings in general, culminating, a century later, in Shen Fu’s *Six Records*, in which the mourning of a female “other” and the mourner’s attempt to vindicate his own male “self” become acts virtually inseparable. Memory, especially intimate memory, is often

self-reflexive as well as revisionist in that it could be carefully manipulated for the sake of vindicating and reconstructing the mourner's past and present "selves," highlighting the special dynamic between the biographical and the autobiographical.

The epilogue is a brief discussion of how the early nineteenth-century poetess and woman scholar Wang Duan 汪端 (1773–1839) inscribed her elegiac memory, and how she had to negotiate between the biographical and the autobiographical under the more intense pressure for discretion in a female elegiac author. The epilogue is meant to offer some preliminary thoughts on the matter of how our understanding of gender implications of intimate memory can become even more nuanced when elegiac works by men are examined in careful juxtaposition and comparison with those by women authors from the same period.

In this study of quite limited scope, there are many other kinds of interesting *daowang* works not included in discussion: for example, a substantial discussion of how other important female relatives such as mothers and daughters were mourned or remembered by the literati could go a long way to enhance our understanding of the complicated role of male mediation in the representation of women.<sup>20</sup> However, such discussions must be based on further research, and thus must wait. I hope that this preliminary study leads to more substantial studies that will further enhance our appreciation of the complex roles played by the male literati in the construction of various models of womanhood, as well as how such construction complicated their own self-images as educated males in late imperial China.