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# 中国历代名人书信选

Chinese Short Letters Through The Ages

谢百魁 陈启达 编选、英译

Compiled and translated by Xie Baiku & Chen Qida



中国出版集团  
中国对外翻译出版公司





本书上起先秦,下迄清代,共选历代书信一百篇。这些书信或提倡爱国主义和优良的民族传统,或讨论品德修养问题,或商榷治学方法和途径,或抒发个人真实的情感,或描绘祖国的大好河山,都是文字优美、富有情趣的短篇佳作。

This book selects 100 letters from the Qin Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. These short letters, either advocate patriotism, contemplate issues concerning character cultivation, discourse methods and approaches of learning, or express true personal feelings or portray the beautiful natural scenery of the country, and they are all written beautifully and are works of delightful interests.

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# 中国历代名人书信选

Chinese Short Letters Through The Ages

谢百魁 陈启达 编选、英译 杨 鑫 张 华 白话文翻译



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“中华传统文化精粹”丛书脱胎于我公司出版的 20 世纪八九十年代中国最富盛名的双语读物“英汉汉英对照一百丛书”。这套丛书曾经影响了几代英语和中华文化学习者、爱好者，深受读者的喜爱，以至今天还有许多翻译界、外交界、教育界等各界取得卓越成就的人士，对这套书籍仍怀有浓重的情结。这套书不仅仅是当初他们学习英语的课外启蒙读本，亦是他们的良师益友，是他们追求知识、拼搏向上的青春记忆。

这套丛书最初由中国对外翻译出版公司于 20 世纪八九十年代同香港商务印书馆合作陆续推出，丛书的编者和译者都是在各自领域做出贡献的学者、教授，使得该套丛书在读者中获得了很好的口碑，创造了良好的社会效益和经济效益。

为了将这一品牌发扬光大，我公司对“英汉汉英对照一百丛书”进行了修订、重组，聘请了享誉海内外的中国翻译界专家组成阵容强大的顾问团，在题材、选篇、译文、栏目设置等方面进行了严谨的论证、精心的编辑，打造出适应新时代读者需求以及提升中国文化新形象的精品图书——“中华传统文化精粹”。

“中华传统文化精粹”丛书内容丰富。秉承以中外读者为本的宗旨，我们增加了白话翻译、中文注释、汉语拼音、经典名句等栏目，删除了晦涩、冗长的篇目，使丛书更加通俗、实用。

“中华传统文化精粹”丛书整体性强、版式精致且与内容和谐统一，相信必将受到中外读者的喜爱。



## The Classics Bring a Modern China to the World



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# 前言

FOREWORD



短简产生于春秋战国时期,但在秦汉以前,它基本上是作为一种社会交往的实用工具而存在的;汉魏六朝,人们赋予了它鲜明的文学色彩。短简在唐代经过短暂的停滞,在宋代又得到复兴,并进一步受到重视而成为一种独具规模的文学样式。明清时期,短简的文学色彩更加鲜明,人们更为自觉地用文学创作的态度来写短简,使短简文学进入鼎盛时期。作为散文的一种形式,短简经历了漫长而曲折的发展演变,经过历代作家的艰苦创作,千锤百炼,它最终成为一种简洁便利、艺术性很强的文学形式。我国丰富的短简作品,是古人留下来的一项非常宝贵的文学遗产,具有很高的文学价值,也产生了很大的影响。

《中国历代名人书信选》时代上起先秦,下迄清代,共选历代名人书信一百篇。这些书信或提倡爱国主义和优良的民族传统,或讨论品德修养问题,或商榷治学的方法和途经,或抒发个人真实的情感,或描绘祖国的大好河山,都是文字优美、富有情趣的佳作。我们将这一百篇书信译成英文,以汉英对照的形式出版,旨在向英语世界的读者传播我们中华民族的文化,使他们了解我国古代文化对后人的影响以及在中国文学史上的价值。





# 前言

中国历代名人书信选 中华传统文化精粹

FOREWORD

本书的前五十篇由陈启达先生译出，后五十篇由谢百魁教授译出。

编者

1996.6



# Foreword

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Short letters originated in the Spring and Autumn (770–476 BC) and Warring States (475–221 BC) periods, but existed only as a practical means for social communication before the Qin (221–207 BC) and Han (206 BC–220 AD) dynasties. From the Han, Wei (220–265) and Six Dynasties (222–280) (317–589) period, a sharp feature of literature began to develop in short letters. After a short stagnant interval in the Tang Dynasty (618–907), short letters revived again in the Song Dynasty (960–1279), and developed into a unique form of literary form. In the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, the literary characteristic of short letters became more and more evident, and since people instinctively wrote short letters just as creating a literary work, short letters entered its heyday then. As a form of prose, short letters has witnessed a long, complicated process of development and evolution. With meticulous creation by men of letters generation after generation, it eventually developed itself into a literary form, simple yet precise, functional yet



# FOREWORD

## 前言

accessible, and a high artistic value. Short letters, rich as they are in China, are valuable literary legacy left over by the ascendants, are of high literary value and also are of magnificent impact.

*Chinese Short Letters Through The Ages* collects 100 short letters from the Qin Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. These short letters, either advocate patriotism, contemplate issues concerning character cultivation, discourse methods and approaches of learning, or express true personal feelings or portray the beautiful natural scenery of the country, and they are all written beautifully and are works of delightful interests. Here we have translated 100 short letters into English and present to you in the Chinese-English bilingual form, hoping to disseminate the culture of the Chinese nation among readers of English World so as to make them familiar with ancient Chinese culture and its influence on the descendants as well as its value and rule in the Chinese literary history.

The first 50 short letters of this book are translated by Mr. Chen Qida, and the latter 50 are translated by Professor Xie Baikui.

Editor

June, 1996

# 致选译者



“中华传统文化精粹”丛书,是根据我公司 20 世纪 90 年代出版的“一百丛书”重新编选、修订的。与本丛书有关的各项版权事宜,包括选译者的稿酬等,我公司已委托中华版权代理总公司代为办理。

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I

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ANCIENTS





yí dà fū zhǒng shū  
遗大夫种书

wú wén tiān yǒu sì shí chūn shēng dōng fá rén yǒu shèng shuāi tài zhōng  
吾闻天有四时，春生冬伐；人有盛衰，泰终

bì pǐ zhī jìn tuì cún wáng ér bù shī qí zhèng wéi xián rén hū lí suī bù  
必否。知进退存亡而不失其正，惟贤人乎？蠡虽不

cái míng zhī jìn tuì gāo niǎo yǐ sǎn liáng gōng jiāng cáng jiǎo tù yǐ jìn  
才，明知进退。高鸟已散，良弓将藏；狡兔已尽，

liáng quǎn jiù pēng  
良犬就烹。

fū yuè wáng wéi rén cháng jǐng niǎo huì yīng shì láng bù kě yǔ gòng huàn  
夫越王为人，长颈鸟喙，鹰视狼步，可与共患

nàn ér bù kě gòng chǔ lè kě yǔ lǚ wēi bù kě yǔ ān zǐ ruò bù qù  
难，而不可共处乐；可与履危，不可与安。子若不去，

jiāng hài yú zǐ míng yǐ  
将害于子，明矣！

fàn lí  
范蠡

wú yuè chūn qiū  
《吴越春秋》



# A Letter to Minister Wen Zhong



I have learned that just as there are four seasons in a year, with summer brave and winter bare, there are also vicissitudes in man's life. When good luck reaches its limit, misfortune is destined to follow. If there is one who knows well when to advance and when to withdraw and in the meanwhile always remains righteous and upright, he should be esteemed as a man of virtue and wisdom, shouldn't he? Humble as I am, I have come to know this regular pattern of advance and withdrawal. When high-flying birds have all flown away, strong bows will be cast; and when cunning hares have all been hunted, fleeting hounds will be cooked as food.

And now let us have a look at the King of Yue—long-necked and beak-mouthed, hawk-eyed and wolf-footed. He is a man with whom you can share trouble but not happiness; with whom you can weather danger together but not live in peace together. If you don't leave him now, he will harm you sooner or later. Isn't it clear enough?

Fan Li<sup>①</sup>

*History of the Kingdoms of Wu and Yue*



白话  
翻译



我知道一年有四个季节，春天生长，冬天砍伐；人的命运有盛有衰，好运气过后，就是坏运气。那些知道进退和存亡的道理，并且心怀公正的人也许就是贤人吧？我虽然不是聪明人，却也知道进退之事。高飞的鸟散尽的时候，好的弓箭也要藏起来了；狡猾的兔子没有了，好的猎犬就要被主人烹煮了。

越王这个人，脖子太长，嘴如鸟，目光如鹰，步履像豺狼，是一个可以患难与共，却不可以一起享乐的人；可以一起冒险，却不能一起平安相处的人。你如果不离开他，恐怕会伤害到你自己，知道吗？





**Note**

- ① Fan Li and Wen Zhong were both right hand men of the King of Yue in the late Spring and Autumn Period. They rendered meritorious service to the King in defeating the conqueror of his kingdom. But being a man of jealousy, the King began to entertain suspicion against them soon after the resurrection of the kingdom. Noticing this, Fan Li deserted the King and wrote this letter to Wen Zhong to persuade him also to do so. Unfortunately, Wen Zhong did not accept the advice and was finally killed by the King.





chóng bào qī shū

## 重报妻书

chē huán kōng fǎn shèn shī suǒ wàng jiān xù yuǎn bié hèn hèn zhī qíng gù  
车还空返，甚失所望，兼叙远别恨恨之情，顾

yǒu chàng rán  
有怅然！

jiàn dé cǐ jìng jì míng qiě hǎo xíng guān wén cǎi shì suǒ xī yǒu yì  
间得此镜，既明且好，形观文彩，世所希有，意

shèn ài zhī gù yǐ xiāng yǔ bìng zhì bǎo chāi yī shuāng jià zhí qiān jīn lóng  
甚爱之，故以相与。并致宝钗一双，价值千金；龙

hǔ zǔ lǚ yī liǎng hǎo xiāng sì zhǒng gè yī jīn sù qín yī zhāng cháng suǒ  
虎组履一纳；好香四种，各一斤；素琴一张，常所

zì tán yě míng jìng kě yǐ jiàn xíng bǎo chāi kě yǐ yào shǒu fāng xiāng kě yǐ  
自弹也。明镜可以鉴形，宝钗可以耀首，芳香可以

fù shēn qù huī shè xiāng kě yǐ bì è qì sù qín kě yǐ yú ěr  
馥身去秽，麝香可以辟恶气，素琴可以娱耳。

qín jiā  
秦嘉

yì wén lèi jù  
《艺文类聚》





## Again to My Wife



I was really disappointed to find that the carriage I had sent to fetch you returned without you. You can imagine how woebegone and melancholy I am to be separated so far away from you and for so long.

Recently I got a mirror, clear and pretty, that can reflect things in all their rich and bright colours. It's a rarity, and I treasure it very much. Now I decided to present it to you as a gift. Together with the mirror, you can find a pair of jewel-inlaid gold hair-pins that are of high value, a pair of silk-woven shoes with images of dragons and tigers embroidered on them, four bundles of incense sticks of different kinds (one *jin* each), as well as a *qin* (a stringed musical instrument) that I used to play daily. I earnestly hope that the mirror will reflect the image of your lovely face, the pins will beautify your hair, the incense will make your body fragrant, the musk will keep bad smell away from you, and the *qin* will sound sweet to your ears.

Qin Jia<sup>①</sup>

*Categorized Collection of Literary Works*

白话  
翻译



空车回来,我很失望,想到浓浓的离别之情,更是伤感惆怅!

偶然得到这方铜镜,既明亮又好用,表面还有灿烂的纹饰,真是人世间稀有的珍宝,我很喜欢它,因此送给你。还有一双宝钗,也是价值千金;还有龙虎形的鞋子一对;好的香料四种,每种一斤;还有一张琴,你可以时常弹奏。明镜可以用来映照你娇媚的面容,宝钗可以增添你的芳姿,芳香可以熏染你的玉体,麝香可以驱除恶气,琴瑟可以娱乐你的身心。





**Note**

- ① Qin Jia was a poet and official during the Eastern Han Dynasty. He and his wife Xu Shu loved each other dearly. Once when he was appointed to a new post at a distant place, his wife was at her own parents' home for recuperation of her health. After he arrived at the new place, he missed her so much that he sent a carriage to fetch her. But because of some reasons unknown, she did not come. So he wrote this letter and presented her with a lot of gifts.



bào qín jiā shū  
报秦嘉书

jì huì yīn lìng jiān cì zhū wù hòu yí yīn qín chū yú fēi wàng  
既惠音令，兼赐诸物，厚颐殷勤，出于非望！

jìng yǒu wén cǎi zhī lì chāi yǒu shū yì zhī guān fāng xiāng jì zhēn sù  
镜有文彩之丽，钗有殊异之观，芳香既珍，素  
qín yì hǎo huì yì wù yú bǐ lòu gē suǒ zhēn yǐ xiāng cì fēi fēng hòu zhī  
琴益好。惠异物于鄙陋，割所珍以相赐，非丰厚之  
ēn shú kěn ruò sī  
恩，孰肯若斯？

lǎn jìng zhí chāi qíng xiǎng fǎng fú cǎo qín yǒng shī sī xīn chéng jié chī  
览镜执钗，情想仿佛；操琴咏诗，思心成结。敕  
yǐ fāng xiāng fù shēn yù yǐ míng jìng jiàn xíng cǐ yán guò yǐ wèi huò wǒ xīn  
以芳香馥身，喻以明镜鉴形，此言过矣，未获我心  
yě xī shī rén yǒu fēi péng zhī gǎn bān jié yú yǒu shéi róng zhī tàn  
也。昔诗人有“飞蓬”之感，班婕妤有“谁荣”之叹。

sù qín zhī zuò dāng xū jūn guī míng jìng zhī jiàn dāng dài jūn huán  
素琴之作，当须君归；明镜之鉴，当待君还。  
wèi fèng guāng yí zé bǎo chāi bù shè yě wèi shì wéi zhàng zé fāng xiāng  
未奉光仪，则宝钗不设也；未侍帷帐，则芳香  
bù fā yě  
不发也。

xú shū  
徐淑

yì wén lèi jù  
《艺文类聚》





## A Reply to My Husband Qin Jia



I am grateful to you both for your letter and your gifts. Your heart-warming considerateness and affection showered upon me are beyond my expectations.

The mirror is beautiful in its colourfulness; the hair-pins are uniquely shaped; the incense sticks are valuable and the musical instrument is even more precious. I try to ask myself: if there is no true love and single devotion in him, how could a man be willing to present such rarities, even his treasures, to his wife?

Looking at the mirror and holding the hair-pins, I feel as if you were at my side. And playing on the instrument and reciting poems, I cannot but think of you all the more and the thread of my thinking has interwound into a knot in my heart from which I cannot extricate myself.

You asked me in your letter to burn the incense sticks to make my body fragrant and look in the mirror at my image. But I cannot agree to do that because I think it would be incorrect for me to do so. In the ancient times, the poets wrote verses to praise the ladies who did not even comb their hair during their husbands' absence. And the Lady Minister Ban<sup>①</sup> once sighed: "Since my lord is not with me, whom should I make up myself for?"

白话  
翻译



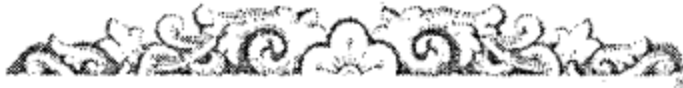
来信收到,又送我很多东西,浓情蜜意,大出所望,我很开心。

镜子图案很华丽,钗的样式很新颖,香料当然是很珍贵,琴瑟也很悦耳。能把这么好的宝物送给我,若不是有浓厚的感情,谁会如此?

照着镜子,拿着宝钗,仿佛你就在我身边;弹奏一曲,吟诗一首,思念在心里打结。你叫我用芳香熏身体,用明镜照面容,这并没有说出我的心思啊。古代诗人有“自伯之东,首如飞蓬”的感慨。汉代班婕妤曾经有“君不御兮谁为荣”的叹息。

琴瑟,等你归来的时候为你弹奏;宝镜,等你回来再映照;一日不见你,宝钗也不想佩戴;不为你铺床叠被,芳香又有什么用。





Only when you have come home, I would care to play on the instrument and look in the mirror. I will not wear the hairpins until I am in your presence, and I will not burn the incense sticks until I can wait on you in the bed.

Xu Shu<sup>②</sup>

*Categorized Collection of Literary Works*



### Notes

- ① Lady Minister Ban was a maid-of-honor-turned-imperial concubine and also a poetess. When she was a favourite of the emperor, she was granted a ministerial rank, but was later deserted by the emperor.
- ② Xu Shu was Qin Jia's wife.





蘇  
氏  
書  
齋  
PDG

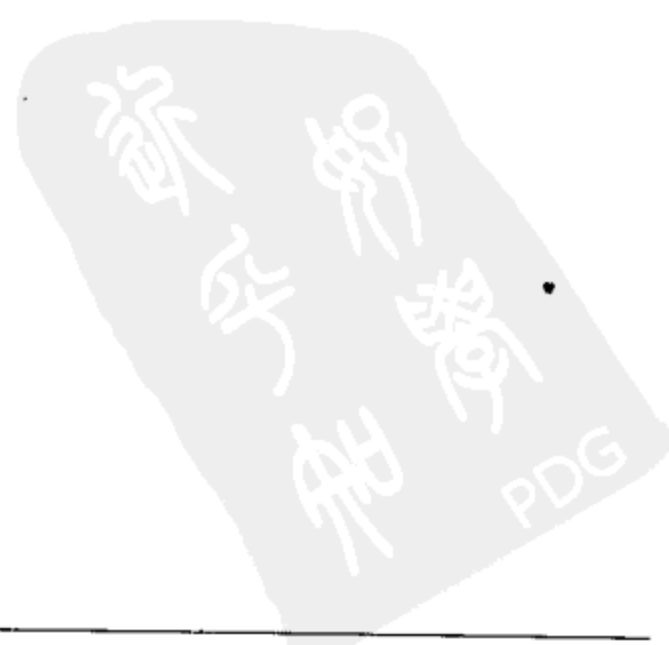


# II

wèi jìn nán běi cháo

魏晉南北朝

WEI, JIN AND THE  
NORTHERN & SOUTHERN  
DYNASTIES





yǔ xún yù lùn guō jiā shū  
与荀彧论郭嘉书

zhuī xī fèng xiào bù néng qù xīn  
追惜奉孝，不能去心。

qí rén jiàn shí shì bīng shì guò jué yú rén yòu rén duō wèi bìng nán fāng  
其人见时事、兵事，过绝于人。又人多畏病，南方

yǒu yì cháng yán wú wǎng nán fāng zé bù shēng huán rán yǔ gòng lùn  
有疫，常言“吾往南方，则不生还”。然与共论

jì yún dāng xiān dìng jīng cǐ wéi bù dàn jiàn jì zhī zhōng hòu bì yù lì gōng  
计，云当先定荆。此为不但见计之忠厚，必欲立功

fèn qì mìng dìng shì rén xīn nǎi ěr hé dé shǐ rén wàng zhī  
分，弃命定，事人心乃尔！何得使人忘之？

cáo cāo  
曹操

sān guó zhì wèi zhì guō jiā zhuàn  
《三国志·魏志·郭嘉传》

白话  
翻译



追思郭嘉，久久不能忘怀。

他这个人无论是看待时事还是战事，都有过人的地方。他本身多病，南方气候潮湿，常常发生瘟疫，他常常说“我到南方，一定不能活着回来”。但是和他商议天下大事，他总是说应该先平荆州。这不但可以看到他出谋划策是出于本心，出于忠厚，不惜生命为我立功啊。他对我忠心如此，叫我怎么能忘记他呢！



## A Letter to Xun Yu in Memory of Guo Jia



I miss Guo Jia so much that his image haunts me all the time.

His views on current and military affairs were head and shoulders above those of the others. People are generally afraid of illness, and there were epidemics in the South then. He said time and again, "If I go to the South, I would not be able to come back alive." But when I discussed our strategic plan with him, he suggested to attack Jingzhou first. This showed not only his loyalty and selflessness, but also his determination to discharge his duty and make contribution to our cause. He didn't believe in destiny, and he was so attentive to people's inclination. How can I forget him?

Cao Cao<sup>②</sup>

*The Biography of Guo Jia, History of the Three Kingdoms*



### Notes

- ① Xun Yu and Guo Jia were both Cao Cao's counsellors. Guo Jia died in confusion when he was only 39.
- ② Cao Cao was the prime minister of the last emperor of the Eastern Han Dynasty. But as a matter of fact, he was the overlord of the state. He was one of the three heroes in the history of the Three Kingdoms. He was also a poet.

yǔ wáng lǎng shū  
与王朗书

shēng yǒu qī chǐ zhī xíng sǐ wéi yī guān zhī tǔ wéi lì dé yáng míng  
生有七尺之形，死唯一棺之土。唯立德扬名，

kě yǐ bù xiǔ qí cì mò rú zhù piān jí  
可以不朽；其次莫如著篇籍。

yì lì shù qǐ shì rén diāo luò yú dú hé rén néng quán qí shòu gù lùn  
疫疠数起，士人彫落；余独何人，能全其寿？故论

zhuàn suǒ zhù diǎn lùn shī fù gài bǎi yú piān jí zhū rú yú sù chéng mén  
撰所著《典论》、诗赋盖百余篇，集诸儒于肃城门

nèi jiǎng lùn dà yì kǎn kǎn wú juàn  
内，讲论大义，侃侃无倦。

cáo pī  
曹丕

wèi wén dì jí  
《魏文帝集》

白话  
翻译



活着虽然有七尺长的身躯，死后也只能有一方棺材的土地。只有树功立德扬名，才可以成为不朽的人；退一步说，要不朽的话就只能著书立说了。

近来瘟疫疾病经常发生，士大夫很多都因此死去；我又有何德何能，能保全性命呢？因此，我撰写了一篇论述类著作《典论》、诗歌和赋共一百多篇，在肃城门外聚集诸位儒生，来讲说评论文章大义，侃侃而谈，不知道疲倦。





## A Letter to Wang Lang



While living, one can have a physical body; but after death, he cannot but return to the earth in a coffin. Only moral integrity and good name can make a man immortal. Second to that, another way to become immortal is through writing books and constructing theories.

In recent months, there have broken out successive epidemics and many of our celebrated scholars have passed away. And I am also a man. How can I be sure to be able to go to the natural end of my life? So I selected more than one hundred poems and writings, including my own book *On Literature*, and invited a number of scholars the other day to discuss them at a place inside the Sucheng Gate. We were engrossed in the discussions so deeply that nobody felt tired all the time.

Cao Pi<sup>①</sup>

*Complete Works of King Wen of the Kingdom of Wei*



### Note

- ① Cao Pi was the eldest son of Cao Cao and King of the Kingdom of Wei during the period of the Three Kingdoms. He was also a famous poet and literary critic.



jiè dì wěi  
诚弟纬

fū jiāo yǒu zhī měi zài yú dé xián bù kě bù xiáng ér shì zhī jiāo zhě  
夫交友之美，在于得贤，不可不详。而世之交者，  
bù shěn zé rén wù hé dǎng zhòng wéi xiān shèng rén jiāo yǒu zhī yì cǐ fēi hòu  
不审择人，务合党众，违先圣人交友之义，此非厚  
jǐ fǔ rén zhī wèi yě  
己辅仁之谓也。

wú guān wèi fěng bù xiū dé xíng ér zhuān yǐ jiū hé wéi wù huá ér bù  
吾观魏讽，不修德行，而专以鸠合为务，华而不  
shí cǐ zhí lǎn shì gū míng zhě yě qīng qí shèn zhī wù fù yǔ tōng  
实，此直揽世沽名者也。卿其慎之，勿复与通！

liú yì  
刘虞

sān guó zhì wèi zhì liú yì zhuàn  
《三国志·魏志·刘虞传》

白话  
翻译



结交朋友的关键，在于要得到良师益友，所以择友必须要谨慎。但是现在结交朋友，根本不审查和选择人品，只求能结党营私，这违背了圣人关于结交朋友的宗旨，不是善待自己、辅佐仁德。

我看魏讽这个人，不能完善陶冶自己的道德情操，而是专门以聚众结党为本职，外在华丽而没有真实本领，这真是欺世盗名的人呀！你要慎重对待，不要再与他来往！

# A Counsel to My Younger Brother Wei



The noble aim of making acquaintances is to make friends with men of virtue. This is something in which you must be very careful. Nowadays people are generally not careful in selecting friends but on the contrary are keen on forming cliques. This is in flagrant contradiction with the teachings of Confucius on making friends, and is not of any benefit either to oneself or to others.

In my view, Wei Feng<sup>①</sup> is a person without morality, wholly engaged in knocking together some cliques. He is showy but not substantial, and is really a man fishing for fame and honor. You must beware of him and don't have dealings with him any longer.

Liu Yi<sup>②</sup>

*The Biography of Liu Yi, History of the Three Kingdoms*



## Notes

- ① Wei Feng was a high official. He was later sentenced to capital punishment for plotting treason against the nation.
- ② Liu Yi was a high official during the late Han Dynasty.

jiè zǐ shū  
诫子书

fū jūn zǐ zhī xíng jìng yǐ xiū shēn jiǎn yǐ yǎng dé fēi dàn bó wú yǐ  
夫君子之行：静以修身，俭以养德。非淡泊无以  
míng zhì fēi níng jìng wú yǐ zhì yuǎn fū xué yù jìng yě cái xū xué yě  
明志，非宁静无以致远。夫学，欲静也；才，须学也。  
fēi xué wú yǐ guǎng cái fēi jìng wú yǐ chéng xué dǎo màn zé bù néng yán jīng  
非学无以广才，非静无以成学。惰慢则不能研精，  
xiǎn zào zé bù néng lǐ xìng  
险躁则不能理性。

nián yǔ shí chí yì yǔ rì qù suì chéng kū luò duō bù jiē shì bēi shǒu  
年与时驰，意与日去，遂成枯落，多不接世。悲守  
qióng lú jiāng fù hé jí  
穷庐，将复何及！

zhū gě liàng  
诸葛亮

zhū gě liàng jí  
《诸葛亮集》

白话  
翻译



德才兼备者的品行，要依靠内心安静，精力集中来修养身心，要依靠俭朴的作风来培养品德。不看淡世俗的名利，就不能明确自己的志向，不做到身心宁静，就不能实现自己远大的理想抱负。学习必须要静下心来，专心致志，增长才能必须要刻苦学习。不努力学习就不能增长才智，不明确志向就不能在学习上获得成就。过分追求享乐和懒惰散漫就不能振奋精神，轻浮暴躁就不能陶冶性情。随着光阴流逝，年华会老去，意志会消磨，最后都会像枯枝败叶那样，对社会没有任何用处；到时候，即使整天守在自己狭小的天地里，悲伤叹息，又有什么用呢！



## An Admonition to My Son



This is a way of life for a man of virtue: to cultivate his character by keeping a peaceful mind, and nourish his morality by a frugal living. Only freedom from vanity can show one's lofty goal of life; and only peace of mind can help him to achieve something really lasting. To be talented, one must learn; and to learn, one must have a peaceful mind. One cannot develop his talent without learning, and one cannot accomplish his learning without peace of mind. Frivolity will prevent one from going deep into learning, and impetuosity will prevent one from moulding a noble character.

One's age will flee with the time, and one's ambition will wane with each passing day. If he does not exert himself in time, his mind would wither away like flowers and he would become a good-for-nothing in the world. And in the end, he could only perch in his humble dwelling, lamenting for his lost prime that will never come back to him again.

Zhuge Liang<sup>①</sup>

*Collected Works of Zhuge Liang*





蘇  
氏  
知  
音  
PDG



### Note

- ① Zhuge Liang was the prime minister of Liu Bei, one of the kings during the Three Kingdoms Period. He is regarded as one of the most celebrated prime ministers in the history of China. His famous saying that “I will bend my back to the task until my dying day” has ever been remembered by the Chinese people.





fēng zhǎ fǎn shū zé táo kǎn  
封 鲐 反 书 责 陶 侃

rǔ wéi lì yǐ guān wù jiàn xiǎng fēi wéi bù néng yì wú nǎi yǐ zēng wú  
汝为吏，以官物见饷，非唯不能益吾，乃以增吾

yōu yě  
忧也！

zhàn shì  
湛 氏

tài píng yù lǎn  
《太平御览》

白话  
翻译

你作为一个官吏，送给我朝廷的东西，非但不是孝敬我，对我有益，反而会增加我的忧虑啊！





## A Note to Criticize My Son



As you are now a government official, you presented me with public property as a gift. But you should know that this will by no means benefit me. On the contrary, it has increased my worries about you.

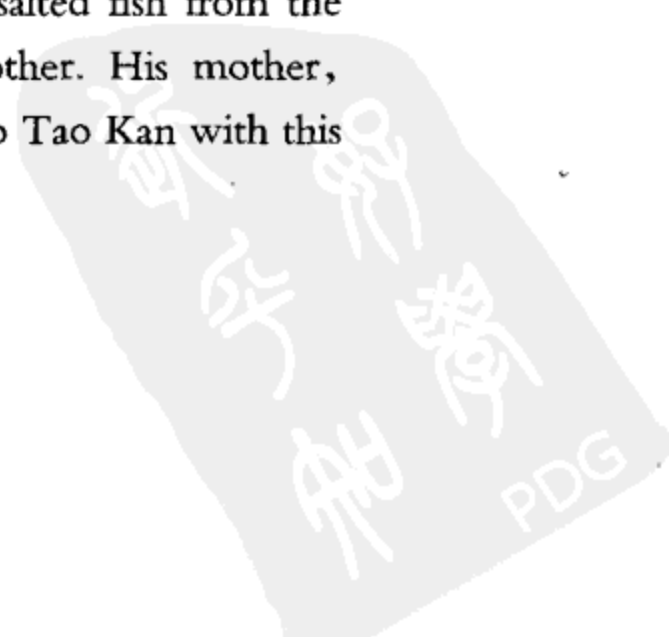
Mrs. Zhan<sup>①</sup>

*A Book of Peace and Tranquility for Royal Reading*



### Note

- ① Mrs. Zhan was mother of Tao Kan, a minister and general during the Eastern Jin Dynasty. When young Tao Kan was an official of a county, in charge of fishery, he once took a salted fish from the official depository and presented it to his mother. His mother, however, wrapped the fish up and returned it to Tao Kan with this note.



yǔ yáng yàn míng shū  
与杨彦明书

lù yún bái xǐng shì lěi zhǐ chóng cún wǎng huì yì yǐ zēng tàn  
陆云白：省示累纸，重存往会，益以增叹。

niǎn shí kě xǐ hé sù zhī shèn xī nián shào shí jiàn wǔ shí gōng qù  
年时可喜，何速之甚！昔年少时，见五十公去

cǐ shèn yuǎn jīn rì rǎn rǎn yǐ jìn zhī yǐ ěr shùn zhī nián xíng fù wéi yōu  
此甚远，今日冉冉已近之矣。耳顺之年，行复为忧

tàn yě kē shēng ér duō yuè lè chūn wèi yàn qiū fēng xíng jiè yǐ bēi luò  
叹也。柯生而多悦，乐春未厌；秋风行戒，已悲落

yè yǐ  
叶矣。

rén dào duō gù huān lè héng fá áo yóu cǐ shì dāng fù jǐ shí gè ěr  
人道多故，欢乐恒乏，遨游此世，当复几时？各尔

yǒng gé liáng huì měi lán huái xiǎng qīn ài wù mèi wú wàng shū wú suǒ xī  
永隔良会，每阑怀想亲爱，寤寐无忘！书无所悉。

lù yún  
陆云

lù shì lóng jí  
《陆士龙集》





## A Letter to Yang Yanming



I have received several letters from you. Reading the letters and remembering the days when we were together, I cannot help sighing and sighing again.

Alas, how fast the good old days have fled away! At that time, we were so young that we looked upon a man of fifty as someone remote from us. But now we are nearing that age. And when we are sixty, we shall lament again for the years that have passed.

Oh, how pleasant it is to see new branches grow out from the trees. But we have not yet enjoyed ourselves enough in the springtime and the autumn wind comes to warn us, and soon we have to mourn for the fallen leaves.

There are too many vicissitudes in one's life and pleasures are always scanty. I wonder how many years more we can continue to play as actors on this stage of life. Since we have been separated for so long, I miss you day and night, and the more so late at night. I am afraid this letter still cannot express my feelings in full.

Lu Yun<sup>①</sup>

*A Collection of Lu Shilong (Lu Yun)*

白话  
翻译



承蒙你多次来信，回想往昔相聚的时光，感慨很多。

年华带给我们欢喜，却又如此稍纵即逝！记得年少的时候，见到五十岁的长辈，觉得是如此遥远；而今已经慢慢接近了。到我六十岁的时候，或许会更加感叹。春天万物复生，我们是多么欢心啊！而秋天尚未到来，我们便开始悲叹落叶了。

人世太多变故，欢乐总是那么少；在这个世界遨游，不知还有多少岁月？如今你我隔断两地，我时常想念你，寝食不安！这是书信所不能表达的。





**Note**

- ① Lu Yun (262–303) was a poet as well as an official during the Western Jin Dynasty. Yang Yanming was his friend.





jiè xiè wàn shū  
诚谢万书

yǐ jūn mài wǎng bù xiè zhī yùn ér fǔ tóng qún bì chéng nán wéi yì yě  
以君迈往不屑之韵，而俯同群辟，诚难为意也。

rán suǒ wèi tōng shí zhèng zì dāng suí shì xíng cáng nǎi wèi yuǎn ěr yuàn jūn  
然所谓通识，正自当随事行藏，乃为远耳。愿君

měi yǔ shì zú zhī xià zhě tóng gān kǔ zé jìn shàn yǐ  
每与士卒之下者同甘苦，则尽善矣。

shí bù èr wèi jū bù chóng xí cǐ fù hé yǒu ér gǔ rén yǐ wéi měi  
“食不二味，居不重席。”此复何有？而古人以为美

tán jǐ fǒu suǒ yóu shí zài jī xiǎo yǐ zhì gāo dà jūn qí cún zhī  
谈。济否所由，实在积小以致高大。君其存之！

wáng xī zhī  
王羲之

jìn shū wáng xī zhī zhuàn  
《晋书·王羲之传》

白话  
翻译



以你那样高傲和不同于寻常人的个性，而要迎合大众，是多么困难的事情啊。然而，所谓的共识，就是要跟随事情的变化而确定自己的行为方式，这样才够。希望你能和战士们同甘共苦，那就尽善尽美了。

“吃饭不吃两样菜肴，睡觉不睡两床被子。”这怎么可能呢？但是，古人却把它当作是美谈。从细小的事情开始做起，这样才能取得大的功劳，这也是决定命运好坏的根由，希望你能记住这点。



## A Counsel to Xie Wan<sup>①</sup>



It is really difficult for a man like you with enterprising spirit and noble demeanor to stoop to mingling with ordinary people. But I think it is only proper for a sensible person to adapt himself to circumstances so that he can achieve something really enduring. I sincerely hope that you can always share joys and hardships with the officers and soldiers of the lowest ranks. That will help you to reach excellence.

An old motto goes: "Don't have more than one dish at meals or sleep on a double-decker mattress at night." To lead a humble life is a merit highly spoken of by our forefathers, but where is it now? The secret of a man's success, I am sure, lies in the fact that many a little makes a mickle. I hope you would kindly take this into consideration.

Wang Xizhi<sup>②</sup>

*Biography of Wang Xizhi, History of the Jin Dynasty*



蘇  
氏  
知  
音  
PDG





## Notes

- ① Xie Wan was a general during the Jin Dynasty and was very arrogant. As a friend of Xie's, Wang Xizhi wrote this letter to criticize him. But he refused to listen to it. In the end, the morale of his troops was shaken and he himself was banished by the emperor after he had lost an important battle.
- ② Wang Xizhi (321-379) was a general-cum-official during the Jin Dynasty. He is regarded as one of the greatest calligraphers of ancient China.



zá tiē  
杂 帖

jì yǔ zú xià bié èr shí liù nián yú jīn suī shí shū wèn bù jiě kuò  
计与足下别，二十六年于今，虽时书问，不解阔

huái xǐng zú xià xiān hòu èr shū dàn zēng tàn kǎi  
怀。省足下先后二书，但增叹慨！

qǐng jī xuě níng hán wǔ shí nián zhōng suǒ wú xiǎng qǐng rú cháng jì lái  
顷积雪凝寒，五十年中所无，想顷如常。冀来

xià qiū jiān huò fù dé zú xià wèn ěr bǐ zhě yōu yōu rú hé kě yán wú fú  
夏秋间，或复得足下问耳。比者悠悠，如何可言？吾服

shí jiǔ yóu wèi liè liè dà dū bǐ zhī nián shí wèi fù kě ěr  
食久，犹为劣劣，大都比之年时，为复可耳。

zú xià bǎo ài wèi shàng lín shū dàn yǒu chóu chàng  
足下保爱为上，临书但有惆怅！

wáng xī zhī  
王羲之

quán jìn wén  
《全晋文》

白话  
翻译

和您分别，到现在已经足足二十六年了，期间虽然有书信往来，但是并不足以减轻我的思念之情。接连收到您的两封书信，这更增加了我的感慨！

现在我这里大雪积得很厚，天气冷得就像是冻住了，这是五十年来不曾见到的，或许你那里还是如往常一样。希望来年的春秋之间，或许能够收到您的问候。如此种种，不知该从何处说起？我服食药物已经很久了，还是很不舒服，不过比之前稍微好点而已，因此还算是可以吧。

希望您能保重身体，书信写到此处，心情很惆怅。



## A Letter to an Old Friend



It has been twenty-six years since we bade farewell to each other. Though we have kept up correspondence, how could the letters remove my anxiety to see you again? When I read the two letters you sent me recently, all sorts of feelings welled up in my mind.

These days it has been snowing heavily and it is now the coldest in fifty years. I presume you must be well as usual. I hope to hear from you again in the coming summer or autumn. Having sunk into melancholy, what else can I say to you now?

I have taken medicines for health and longevity for quite a long time, but I am still not so well, only a little better than other people of my age.

I think the most important thing for you to do now is to take good care of your health. I am now overcome by a feeling of sadness while writing this letter.

Wang Xizhi

*Complete Works of Writers during the Jin Dynasty*



dá xiè zhōng shū shū  
答谢中书书

shān chuān zhī měi gǔ jīn gòng tán gāo fēng rù yún qīng liú jiàn dǐ  
山川之美，古今共谈。高峰入云，清流见底。

liǎng àn shí bì wǔ sè jiāo huī qīng lín cuì zhú sì shí jù bèi xiǎo wù jiāng  
两岸石壁，五色交辉；青林翠竹，四时俱备。晓雾将

xiē yuán niǎo luàn míng xī rì yù tuí chén lín jìng yuè shí shì yù jiè zhī  
歇，猿鸟乱鸣；夕日欲颓，沉鳞竞跃。实是欲界之

xiān dū  
仙都！

zì kāng lè yǐ lái wèi fù yǒu néng yǔ qí qí zhě  
自康乐以来，未复有能与其奇者。

táo hóng jǐng  
陶弘景

yì wén lèi jù  
《艺文类聚》

白话  
翻译



高山大川的美丽，古今的文人墨客都有论述。这里的山峰很高，好像要插入云霄一样，这里的小溪，清澈见底；小溪两岸的石壁，色彩斑斓，交相辉映；这里的树木竹林，青翠异常，四季如春。早上，雾气刚刚散去，猿猴和飞鸟你啸我唱；晚上，夕阳西下，潜伏的鱼儿竞相跃出水面。这真是人间仙境啊！

自从康乐公谢灵运以后，恐怕再也没有人像我一样知道这里的奇趣了。



## A Reply to Privy Councillor Xie<sup>①</sup>



It is acknowledged by people of both the past and the present that the scenery here is uniquely beautiful. The high peaks are crowned with clouds and the streams are so clear that one can see their bottom. The stone cliffs are brilliant with different colours, and the trees and bamboo groves are green all the year round. When the fog disperses in the morning, the monkeys begin to gibber and the birds chirp; and when the sun is going to set in the evening, the fish leap up in competition. This is really a paradise on earth.

I believe nobody else has enjoyed the beauty of the scenery so much as I do since the passing away of Xie Lingyun<sup>②</sup>.

Tao Hongjing<sup>③</sup>

*Categorized Collection of Literary Works*



### Notes

- ① Privy Councillor Xie was a friend of Tao's.
- ② Xie Lingyun was a famous poet during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. He was very fond of travelling.
- ③ Tao Hongjing (452–536) was a Taoist thinker and medical expert during the Northern and Southern Dynasties.



yǔ shī cóng shì shū  
与施从事书

gù zhāng xiàn dōng sān shí wǔ lǐ yǒu qīng shān jué bì qiān chǐ gū fēng  
故鄣县东三十五里，有青山，绝壁千尺，孤峰  
rù hàn lǜ zhàng bǎi chóng qīng chuān wàn zhuǎn guī fēi zhī niǎo qiān yì jìng  
入汉；绿嶂百重，清川万转。归飞之鸟，千翼竞  
lái qǐ shuǐ zhī yuán bǎi bì xiāng jiē qiū lù wéi shuāng chūn luó bèi jìng  
来；企水之猿，百臂相接。秋露为霜，春罗被径；“  
fēng yǔ rú huì jī míng bù yǐ xìn zú dàng lèi yí wù wù zhōng sǎn shǎng  
风雨如晦，鸡鸣不已”。信足荡累颐物，悟衷散赏。

wú jūn  
吴均

wú cháo qǐng jí  
《吴朝请集》

白话  
翻译



以前鄣县东边三十里的地方，有一座青翠的山，高耸入云，悬崖峭壁足有千尺；山上绿树环绕，恰似有一百重的屏障，小溪穿林转山，好像数以万计。傍晚倦飞的归鸟，密密麻麻地飞来，成千上万；溪边饮水的猿猴，上百地来去，成群结队。秋天，露水结成白霜。春天，绿萝铺满小径，“风雨交加，天色阴暗，鸡叫不停”。我深信，此处足以使得乏累荡然无存，让人能体会到大自然的真谛，领悟出人生的真理，从而修身养性。





## A Letter to Government Assistant Shi<sup>①</sup>



Thirty-five *li* to the east of Guzhang County, there is a lofty mountain. Its cliffs are a thousand feet in height and its highest peak touches the Milky Way. It has hundreds of green peaks and its clear streams have thousands of turns. The homecoming birds here fly in large numbers, and troops of monkeys link their arms to reach for water in the stream. In autumn, the dews become frost; and in spring, the narrow paths are all covered by lichen. As an ancient poem goes, "While the wind and rain sweep across the gloomy sky, the cocks crow without cease". I believe this mountain is really a place where one can lighten his sorrows and appreciate beauty of the nature, and also broaden his mind and relax his nerves.

Wu Jun<sup>②</sup>

*Collected Works of Wu Jun*



### Notes

- ① Mr. Shi was a friend of Wu Jun's.
- ② Wu Jun (469-520) was a high official and also a noted man of letters during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. This letter was written after his retirement.



jiè dāng yáng gōng dà xīn shū  
诫当阳公大心书

rǔ nián shí shàng yòu suǒ quē zhě xué kě jiǔ kě dà qí wéi xué yú  
汝年时尚幼，所阙者学。可久可大，其惟学欤！

suǒ yǐ kǒng qiū yán wú cháng zhōng rì bù shí zhōng yè bù qǐn yǐ sī  
所以孔丘言：“吾尝终日不食，终夜不寝，以思，  
wú yì bù rú xué yě ruò shǐ miàn qiáng ér lì mù hóu ér guàn wú suǒ  
无益，不如学也。”若使面墙而立，沐猴而冠，吾所  
bù qǔ  
不取。

lì shēn zhī dào yǔ wén zhāng yì lì shēn xiān xū jǐn zhòng wén zhāng  
立身之道，与文章异：立身先须谨重，文章

qiě xū fàng dàng  
且须放荡。

xiāo gāng  
萧纲

liáng jiǎn wén dì jí  
《梁简文帝集》

欽定四庫全書

PDG



## An Admonition to My Son Da Xin, the Duke of Dangyang



You are still young and what you are in need now is to learn more. You can be a great and prominent man, but that all depends on whether you would engage yourself in learning. Confucius said, "Once I did not eat anything the whole day and did not go to sleep the whole night in order to have more time to think. But that was of little avail. It would be much better for me to spend the time in learning." If one does not want to learn, he would be like a man who stands confronting a wall and can see nothing, or like a monkey which wears a man's hat. That is not what I want you to be.

The way to establish oneself is different from the way to write. While the latter needs free thinking, the former requires prudence.

Xiao Gang<sup>①</sup>

*Collected Works of Emperor Jianwen of the Liang Dynasty*



白话  
翻译



你年纪还小，所欠缺的是学习。要想成为一个伟大的永垂不朽的人，只能刻苦学习！所以孔子说：“我曾经整天不吃饭，整夜不睡觉，用来思考，但是这样一点好处都没有，不如把时间都用在在学习上。”假如一个人不思学习，就想着整天依靠着墙壁站立，像沐浴的猴子穿上人类的衣服，这是不好的；我不希望你变成这样的人。

一个人的言行举止，和写文章是两样的；为人处世必须要谨慎，而谈论文章只需要放纵心思，自由思考。





**Note**

- ① Xiao Gang (503–551) was emperor of Liang Dynasty during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. He was also good at writing.





yù zhōng shàng chén hòu zhǔ shū  
狱中上陈后主书

fū rén jūn zhě gōng shì shàng dì zǐ ài xià mín shěng shì yù yuǎn  
夫人君者，恭事上帝，子爱下民，省嗜欲，远  
chǎn nìng wèi míng qiú yī rì gàn wàng shí shì yǐ zé bèi qū yǔ qīng liú  
谄佞。未明求衣，日旰忘食。是以泽被区宇，庆流  
zǐ sūn  
子孙。

bì xià qǐng lái jiǔ sè guò dù bù qián jiāo miào zhī shén zhuān mèi hūn yīn  
陛下顷来酒色过度，不虔郊庙之神，专媚昏淫  
zhī guǐ xiǎo rén zài cè huàn shù nòng quán wù zhōng zhí ruò chóu chóu shì  
之鬼；小人在侧，宦竖弄权，恶忠直若仇讎，视  
shēng mín rú cǎo jiè gōng nǚ yè qǐ xiù jiù mǎ yú shū sù bǎi xìng lí sǎn  
生民如草芥；宫女曳绮绣，厩马余菽粟；百姓离散，  
jiāng shī bì yě huò huì gōng xíng tǎng cáng sǔn hào shén nù mín yuàn zhòng  
僵尸蔽野，货贿公行，帑藏损耗。神怒民怨，众  
pàn qīn lí kǒng dōng nán wáng qì zì sī ér jìn yǐ  
叛亲离，恐东南王气自斯而尽矣！

fù zǎi  
傅縡

chén shū fù zǎi chuán  
《陈书·傅縡传》





## A Memorial Sent from the Prison to the Last Emperor of the Chen Dynasty<sup>①</sup>



Being an emperor, one should be faithful to the gods and fatherly to his subjects; he should subdue his bodily desires and keep away from flatterers; and he should also get up early before dawn and eat late in the evening. Only then, his bounties can be bestowed to people all over the country and his fortune can be handed down to his descendants.

But Your Majesty has lately been wallowing in sexual pleasures, so much so that You no longer offer sacrifices to the gods and Your ancestors and only endear Yourself to the evil spirits of carnal desires. Now villains are surrounding You and eunuches are usurping Your power. You detest honest people as if they were Your enemies, and You look upon Your subjects as mere trifles. Your maids of honour are all clad in silk, and Your stables are filled up with grain to feed Your horses. But at the same time, countless people have been separated from their families, and forsaken corpses can be found everywhere. Bribery is practised publicly and the state treasury is being exhausted. As a result, the gods have got angry and the people are boiling with resentment. Indeed, You are opposed by the masses and deserted by Your followers. I

白话  
翻译



作为一个君主,要恭敬地事奉上帝,要像爱惜自己的孩子一样体恤臣子,要节制嗜好和欲望。远离小人。天还没亮,就要起床;太阳下山了,还不记得吃饭。这样才能让陛下的恩泽覆盖全国,让子孙享受您的余庆。

陛下最近酒色过度,对郊庙的神灵也不虔诚,反而为昏庸荒淫的小鬼迷惑;现在有小人在陛下的左右,宦官把持朝政,玩弄权术,讨厌忠臣就像是讨厌仇人一样,把平民百姓看得跟草芥一样不值一文;宫女穿着拖地的绮绣衣服,圈养的马吃着菽黍;而百姓却遭遇离散,尸横遍野,贪污受贿公然进行,国库亏空严重。神灵在发怒,百姓在哀怨,众叛亲离,我恐怕东南一带的王者之气,陛下的江山就要如此葬送了!





am afraid the destiny of the Dynasty is doomed now.

Fu Zai<sup>②</sup>

*Biography of Fu Zai, History of the Chen Dynasty*

- ① The Last Emperor of the Chen Dynasty, named Chen Shubao, was one of the most fatuous and self-indulgent emperors in the Chinese history.
- ② Fu Zai was an official historian during the Chen Dynasty. Just because he was honest and upright, he was hated by the Emperor's eunuchs, who trumped up a bribery charge against him. When he was in prison, the emperor sent him a message: "I want to pardon you, but can you change your mind?" Fu Zai replied, "My mind is like my face; only if my face can be changed, my mind can be changed, too." So he was executed.





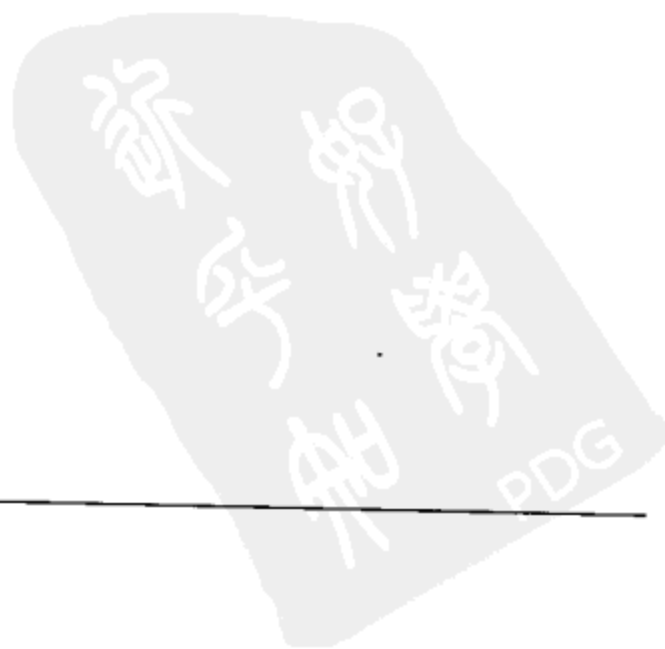
蘇  
氏  
知  
音  
PDG

# III

táng sòng

唐、宋

THE TANG AND  
SONG DYNASTIES



zài yǔ qíng qīn shū  
再与情亲书

mǒu chū zhì xiāng lú yán xún jiù yǒu qī nián zhě huà wéi yì wù shǎo  
某初至乡闾，言寻旧友，耆年者化为异物，少

zhuàng zhě xián wéi lǎo wēng shān chuān bù gǎi jiù shí qiū lǒng duō wéi chén jī  
壮者咸为老翁；山川不改旧时，丘陇多为陈迹。

gǎn jīn huái gǔ fǔ cún dào wáng bù jué tì zhī wú cóng yě  
感今怀古，抚存悼亡，不觉涕之无从也！

xún wèn zǐ zhī bǐ yì diào líng yǒng yán shāng qíng zēng yǐ bēi tòng  
询问子侄，彼亦凋零，永言伤情，增以悲恸。

sūi shēng sǐ zhī fēn tóng jìn cǐ tú ér cún wáng zhī qíng qǐ néng wú hèn  
虽生死之分，同尽此途，而存亡之情，岂能无恨！

zhōng qī zhǎn jiē yǐ shēn kuò huái qǔ cǐ yuè èr shí rì qī tóng chéng  
终期展接，以申阔怀。取此月二十日栖桐成

lǐ shì guò zhī hòu shǐ kě dé xíng qǐ xù shàng shē qīng xì hé jí gè yuàn  
礼，事过之后，始可得行。祇叙尚赊，倾系何极！各愿

zhēn xù yuǎn wú suǒ quán  
珍勳，远无所铨。

luò bīn wáng  
骆宾王  
luò lín hǎi jí  
《骆临海集》



## Again to My Relatives



I can still remember vividly what happened when I returned to my native place last time. At first I asked about my old friends I wanted to meet, but, alas, the elder ones had already gone to the other world, and the younger ones had also become aged. The hills and streams were the same as they had ever been, but the tombs had mostly become the only remains of the past. There I was, condoling the dead and consoling the living while remembering the past and pondering over the present. In such circumstances, how could I refrain from bursting into a flood of tears?

Then I asked about my nephews. To my great surprise, many of them had also withered away. My sorrow for the old was thus heightened by my lament for the young. Although death is the destined end of life for everybody, who can help but be overcome with grief for the dead?

Anyhow, I wish to meet you again to talk over everything in my mind. But as my nephew Qitong will be married on the 20th of this month, I can make the journey only after that. So there will still be quite a few days before our meeting. How I look forward to our reunion! Before that, let us both take



白话  
翻译

我刚到家乡的时候，说要寻访往日的朋友，发现年老的已经死去，年轻的也都成为垂垂老翁。山水都还是从前的山水，一丘一陇也多是我以前所见的。感慨于往日和今天，抚慰在世的朋友，悼念死去的乡亲，不觉得泪眼交错！

询问子侄，也有很多都先我而去了，这真是让我极其悲痛啊！虽然说，人总有一死，大家殊途同归，但是作为在世之人，又怎么能放下对死者的怀念呢！

很希望我们能见上一面，以宽慰我的思念。这个月的二十号是我侄子栖桐大喜的日子，等这件事一完，我就有时间可以去见你。虽然我们相见畅谈还是很奢侈的念想，但只要我们彼此珍重，相见一定不遥远。





better care of ourselves, and I won't go further into details.

Luo Binwang<sup>①</sup>

*A Collection of Luo Binwang's Works*



### Note

① Luo Binwang was a poet and official during the early Tang Dynasty.





shǒu zhèng tiē

## 守政帖

zhèng kě shǒu bù kě bù shǒu  
政可守，不可不守。

wú qù suì zhōng yán shì dé zuì yòu bù néng nì dào gǒu shí wèi qiān gǔ zuì  
吾去岁中言事得罪，又不能逆道苟时，为千古罪

rén yě suī biǎn jū yuǎn fāng zhōng shēn bù chǐ rǔ cáo dāng xū huì wú zhī  
人也。虽贬居远方，终身不耻。汝曹当须会吾之

zhì bù kě bù shǒu yě  
志，不可不守也！

yán zhēn qīng  
颜真卿

yán lǔ gōng wén jí  
《颜鲁公文集》

白话  
翻译



政治操守可以守住，而且不可以不守住。

我去年年中虽然因为直言而受到皇上的降罪，但还是不能违背政治道德而苟延残喘，成为千古罪人啊！虽然我被贬到偏远的地方，但我终生都不会感到羞耻。你们也必须要领会我的志向，政治操守不能不守！



## A Note on Political Principles



There are certain principles for statesmen to follow and they must be followed.

Last year I offended the court by my remonstrance and was punished. But I will never sacrifice principle for the sake of pandering to the prevailing ideas. If I did, I would have to stand condemned through the ages. Although I am now exiled to a remote place, I would not feel ashamed of it throughout my life. I hope you will comprehend what I mean and will never abandon the principles.

Yan Zhenqing<sup>①</sup>

*Collected Works of Yan the Duke of Lu*



### Note

- ① Yan Zhenqing (709–785) was a great calligrapher as well as a high official in the Tang Dynasty. He was a victim of political frame-up for several times. This note was written to his sons and grandsons during his exile.



dá yù chí shēng shū  
答尉迟生书

yù bái yù chí shēng zú xià fū suǒ wèi wén zhě bì yǒu zhū qí zhōng  
愈白。尉迟生足下：夫所谓文者，必有诸其中，

shì gù jūn zǐ shèn qí shí  
是故君子慎其实。

shí zhī měi è qí fā yě bù yǎn běn shēn ér mò mào xíng dà ér shēng  
实之美恶，其发也不揜！本深而末茂，形大而声

hóng xíng jùn ér yán lì xīn chún ér qì hé zhāo xī zhě wú yí yōu yóu zhě  
宏，行峻而言厉，心醇而气和，昭晰者无疑，优游者

yǒu yú tǐ bù bèi bù kě yǐ wéi chéng rén cí bù zú bù kě yǐ wéi chéng wén  
有余；体不备不可以为成人，辞不足不可以为成文。

yù zhī suǒ wén zhě rú shì yǒu wèn yú yù zhě yì yǐ shì duì  
愈之所闻者如是；有问于愈者，亦以是对。

hán yù  
韩愈

hán chāng lí jí  
《韩昌黎集》

白话  
翻译



韩愈说：尉迟生足下：所谓文章，必须要有真实的内容在其中，所以君子在道德、学问和情操等本质上要慎重，本质上的好坏，都毫不遮掩地表现在形象上；根基深才能枝叶茂盛，形状大的东西发出的声音才宏大，品性要端正，言谈要得当，心平气和；明白的人不会怀疑，闲散的人时间宽裕；身体四肢没有长大就不能算是成人，词章不足也不可能成为文章。我是这样听说的，有人问我，我也这样答复他。



## A Reply to Yuchi Sheng



The distinguishing feature of literature is that there must be something worthy in it. That is why true scholars are careful about the substance of literature.

Whether the substance is good or not is explicitly expressed and can not be hidden. The branches of a tree can be exuberant only if the roots are deep, and an instrument can sound loud only if it is big in size. Only a man of decent behaviour can speak to the point, and only a man with a benevolent heart can have a peaceful temperament. An article written with clarity will arouse no doubts, and an article written in a lively style will make the reader feel at ease. A man without complete four limbs cannot be called a healthy man, and an article without rich expressions cannot be regarded as a good article. This is what I have learned about literature. And this is also my reply to people who ask my opinion on literature.

Han Yu<sup>②</sup>

*A Collection of Writings by Han Changli (Han Yu)*



蘇  
氏  
知  
音  
PDG





## Notes

- ① Yuchi Sheng, also named Yuchi Fen, was a young scholar and an acquaintance of Han Yu's.
- ② Han Yu (768–824) was one of the great writers and poets in the Chinese history.





dá wú xiù cái xiè shì xīn wén qǐ  
答吴秀才谢示新文启

mǒu bái xiàng dé xiù cái shū jí wén zhāng lèi qián shí suǒ rǔ yuǎn shèn  
某白：向得秀才书及文章，类前时所辱远甚，  
duō hè duō hè xiù cái zhì wéi wén zhāng yòu zài zú fù chù zǎo yè zī zī hé  
多贺多贺！秀才志为文章，又在族父处蚤夜孜孜，何  
wèi bù rì rì xīn yòu rì xīn yě suī jiān bù fèng duì gǒu wén yì rì xīn  
畏不“日日新，又日新”也！虽间不奉对，苟文益日新，  
zé ruò jí jiàn yǐ  
则若亟见矣。

fū guān wén zhāng yí ruò xuán héng rán zēng zhī zhū liǎng zé fǔ fǎn shì  
夫观文章，宜若悬衡然，增之铢两则俯，反是  
zé yǎng wú kě sī zhě xiù cái chéng yù lìng wú fǔ hū zé mò ruò zēng zhòng  
则仰，无可私者。秀才诚欲令吾俯乎？则莫若增重  
qí wén jīn guān xiù cái suǒ zēng yì zhě bù chī zhū liǎng wú gù fú yīng ér  
其文。今观秀才所增益者，不啻铢两，吾固伏膺而  
fǔ yǐ yù zhòng zé wú fǔ zī shèn xiù cái qí mào yān gǒu zēng ér bù  
俯矣。愈重则吾俯兹甚，秀才其懋焉！苟增而不  
yǐ zé wú shǒu jù zhì dì ěr yòu hé jiān shū zhī huàn hū huán dá bù  
已，则吾首惧至地耳，又何间疏之患乎？还答不  
xī zōng yuán bái  
悉。宗元白。

liǔ zōng yuán  
柳宗元

liǔ hé dōng jí  
《柳河东集》



## A Reply to Xiucan Wu<sup>①</sup> to Express My Thanks for Sending Me His New Writings



I was very glad to have received your letter and writings. Compared with your old writings you sent me in the past, I found these new ones by far the better. Congratulations! Since you have made up your mind to engage yourself in writing and have been studying hard day and night at your uncle's, why should you be afraid that you cannot make improvement every day? We cannot be together very often, but if you can make improvements daily, that would be as good as frequent meetings.

To make an appraisal of a piece of writing is like to weigh something with a steelyard. If only one uses a small bit heavier weight, the beam will be lowered, and vice versa. One simply cannot be partial. Likewise, if you want me to stoop down, the best way is to increase the weight of your writings. Now that the improvement in your recent writings is of much more than a small bit, I have already stooped down. And the heavier the weight of your writings, the lower will I stoop down. Be courageous enough to exert yourself! And if the weight of your writings continue to get heavier incessantly, I am afraid I have to stoop down to the ground. In that case, why should

白话  
翻译



我看到您的书信和文章，比以前你赠给我的好多了，真是值得庆贺啊！您的志向就是要写好文章，又在您本族叔父那里日夜用功，孜孜不倦，怎么会不“一天比一天好”呢！虽然我们不经常见面，但看到你的文章写得日渐好起来，我真是急切想见你呀。

我看写文章的道理，和悬挂平衡木一样，增加了哪怕是一丁点的重量，都会沉下去；反之，就会往上扬起来，丝毫没有偏离。您是想让我的平衡木沉下去吗？如若不然，那就提高您的文章水平吧。我现在看你文章只提高了一丁点，我只要稍微弯腰就够了。您的文章提高得越快我就弯得更厉害了，您还需要努力啊！如果您的文章水平一直这样增长下去，那么我恐怕要头贴地了。如果是这样，亲疏又有什么要紧呢？其他不能一一答复。





we mind our separation?

Liu Zongyuan<sup>②</sup>

*A Collection of Writings by Liu Hedong (Liu Zongyuan)*



## Notes

- ① *Xiucan* Wu was a young scholar who asked the author to comment on his writings. His uncle, Wu Wuling, was also an exiled official, like the author.
- ② Liu Zongyuan (772–846) was a great writer and high official during the Tang Dynasty, but was later demoted by the emperor.





jiàn wáng níng qǐ  
荐王宁启

qián wèi nán xiàn lìng wáng níng qián jiàn guān shí yǒu lì cái chēng yú zhòng  
前渭南县令王宁，前件官实有吏才。称于众  
kǒu nián shào qiáng lì yī yě yù shì bì néng cái gē èr yě jì yùn zhì  
口，年少强力，一也；遇事必能裁割，二也；既蕴智  
néng wú tóu jiǎo kuā dàn sān yě lián zhí kě bǎo sì yě chǔ yú jiāo jiàng nèi  
能，无头角夸诞，三也；廉直可保，四也；处于骄将内  
chén zhī jiān bì néng hé tóng wǔ yě  
臣之间，必能和同，五也。

jīn zhě biān jiàng shēng shì zá lǚ qǐ róng bù yōu bīng jiǎ wéi zài kuì  
今者边将生事，杂虏起戎，不忧兵甲，唯在馈  
yùn mǒu guò chéng ēn jiǎng gù gǎn jiàn cái fú wéi qǔ shě zhī jiān tè cì shù  
运。某过承恩奖，故敢荐才，伏惟取舍之间，特赐恕  
chá jīn qǐ  
察。谨启。

dù mù  
杜牧

fán chuān wén jí  
《樊川文集》

白话  
翻译



前任渭南县令王宁，确实是一个很有才干的官吏。大家众口称赞，年轻力壮，这是其一；遇到再棘手的事情都能当机立断，这是其二；即使蕴藏着智慧才能，却从来不夸耀自己，这是其三；为官廉政，这是其四；身处在骄傲的战将和内臣之间，却能让他们和睦相处，这是其五。

现在边境上的将士生造事端，蓄谋造反，敌人又在起兵来犯，我们虽然没必要忧虑兵士的问题，却有粮草运送的麻烦。我承蒙您的恩惠和奖励，才敢举荐有才能的人，仔细思考了利害取舍问题，希望您能明察。



## A Letter to Recommend Wang Ning<sup>①</sup>



Wang Ning, former prefect of Weinan County, is really a man with superb governing ability. First, he is young and able-bodied and is spoken of highly by many people; secondly, he can deal properly with any kind of problems he meets with; thirdly, he is endowed with wisdom but never shows himself off; fourthly, his honesty is guaranteed; and fifthly, he can coordinate relations between, and work together with, the proud generals and the powerful favourite eunuches of the emperor.

Recently there have been frequent uprisings by generals and military transgressions by enemies on the borderlands. The difficulty the government is facing now is not shortage of troops or weapons, but how to transport supplies to the front. It is because you are kind enough to have a high opinion of me that I make bold to recommend talented people to you. I sincerely hope that you will kindly consider my suggestion when you make your decision on whether to use Wang Ning.

With my best regards.

Du Mu<sup>②</sup>

*A Collection of Writings of Fan Chuan*





蘇  
氏  
書  
齋  
PDG



## Notes

- ① Wang Ning was a friend of Du Mu's.
- ② Du Mu was a famous poet and official in the Tang Dynasty.





dá lín zhèng zì shū  
答林正字书

shí yī yuè rì fù shū zhèng zì zú xià rǔ kuàng cháng jiǎn cí zhǐ gāo  
十一月日，复书正字足下：辱 贶 长 笺，词旨高  
yuǎn xún huán pěng dú yù bà bù néng jiàn gù zhī shēn liáng zú kuì yě wú  
远，循环捧读，欲罢不能；见顾之深，良足愧也！吾  
zǐ yǐ lǎo chéng zhī zhì yùn jiù shì zhī xīn yī yán wù zhǔ fǔ shí chū shì suī  
子以老成之智，蕴救世之心，一言悟主，俯拾初筮。虽  
wèi wèi chōng liàng rán shēng wén tè dá chāo rán dú yì yì gǔ zhī suǒ nán  
位未充量，然升闻特达，超然独异，亦古之所难  
yě tuī shì ér wǎng qí dào kě zhī  
也！推是而往，其道可知。

xuàn yě bù cái wèi cè xiān dá suī fù shí bù néng jiàn zhī yú wèi zhào  
铉也不才，猥厕先达。虽复识不能见之于未兆，  
cái bù néng jǐ zhī yú yǐ xíng rán ér zhèn tiān xià zhī gōng yì jǔ tiān xià zhī  
才不能济之于已形，然而振天下之公议，举天下之  
gōng qì tuī gū hòu jìn xīn wú shì mò shù jī bù xià yú xī xián wú zǐ yì  
公器，推毂后进，心无适莫，庶几不下于昔贤；吾子异  
rì dāng zhī wèi bù wàng qí jīn gǔ zhī biàn ān wēi zhī shì hū hū wēi zāi wèi  
日当知为不妄。其今古之变，安危之势，忽乎微哉，未  
kě yī èr yǐ yán yǔ jìn yě jǐn qí xiá rì dāng jiē yú lùn liáo fèng huán dá fú  
可一二以言语尽也。谨俟暇日，当接余论，聊奉还答，伏  
wéi jiàn xī xú xuàn bái  
惟鉴悉！徐铉白。

xú xuàn  
徐铉

qí xǐng jí  
《骑省集》

## A Reply to Lin the Book Revisor<sup>①</sup>



This is to reply to your long letter to me, which is so profound and far-reaching in meaning that I read it again and again and still grudged parting with it. In your letter, you have shown so much solicitude for me that I feel I am not really worthy of it. With ripe wisdom and a patriotic mind, you won the heart of the emperor with an essay of your's. And you were enlisted in the official service as easily as to pick up something from the ground. Your present position is not equal to your ability, but you are already well known far and wide and stand out head and shoulders above your contemporaries. This has been something not easy for one to accomplish since the ancient times. Judging from these, your promising future is assured.

I am not a talented man. Only by chance I am now ranked among your prominent seniors. I have neither the foresight to see things before they happen, nor the ability to deal with them to perfection after they have occurred. But I have always been just and fair in supporting the consensus of public opinion, in recommending the universally acknowledged talents and in guiding and cultivating the young people. In these regards, I believe I have not lagged behind the celebrities in our history. You may know what I said is not false some time

白话  
翻译



十一月的某一天,回复您:承蒙您寄来长信一封,语言很优美,而且意义深远,反复读了很多遍,真是想停都停不下来;您对我真是照顾之极,想来真是惭愧,您能用你老成的智慧,满腔的救世心态。用一句话感悟主上,就拔到了头筹,虽然现在还没有充当要职,但以后的升迁肯定很快。超出别人,一枝独秀,按照古人的经验来说,是很难保全的,由此推论,这里面的道理就能明白。

我没有什么才能,侧身在先达的行列。虽然我的见识并不足以预见将要发生的事情,我的才能也不足以在事情发生之后做出反应;但是振奋天下的公道,为朝廷举荐人才,都是尽力而为的,可以说不比前人更差,你今后就会知道。古今的变化,安全和危险的形势,都很微妙,不能用一两句话来概括。等到有时间的时候,我们接着讨论。现在仅仅奉上我的答复,请你一看。





in the future. As to the vicissitudes of history and the security of a country, they are something always changing rapidly and covertly, and therefore, cannot be explained in a few words. I will discuss with you about them later when I have time to do so.

Xu Xuan<sup>②</sup>

*Collected Works of a Minister of Remonstrance*



### Notes

- ① Lin the book revisor was a low-ranking official. He wrote a letter to Xu Xuan to ask for promotion. But he was refused by the latter with this very polite letter.
- ② Xu Xuan (916–991) was a minister of remonstrance during the early Song Dynasty.





yǔ chén zhī fāng shū  
与陈之方书

mǒu bái chén jūn zú xià  
某白。陈君足下：

mǒu yōu huàn zǎo shuāi zhī rén yě fèi xué bù jiǎng jiǔ yǐ ér xìng shì zǐ  
某，忧患早衰之人也，废学不讲久矣。而幸士子  
bù jiàn qì rì yǒu lái wú mén zhě zhì yú cuì rán rén yì zhī yán wěi rán hóng  
不见弃，日有来吾门者。至于粹然仁义之言，跼然闳  
bó zhī biàn wèi rán zǔ lì zhī wén yuè yú wú mù duō yǐ ruò wú zǐ zhī wén  
博之辩，蔚然组丽之文，阅于吾目多矣。若吾子之文，  
biàn míng ér qū chàng jùn jié ér shū chí biàn dòng wǎng lái yǒu chí yǒu cún  
辩明而曲畅，峻洁而舒迟，变动往来，有驰有存，  
ér jiē yú zhòng jié shǐ rén xǐ mù ér bù yàn zhě chéng nán dé yě mǒu gù bù  
而皆于中节，使人喜慕而不厌者，诚难得也！某固不  
néng xī dé tiān xià zhī shì rán jìn mǒu suǒ jiàn rú wú zǐ zhī wén qǐ yī èr  
能悉得天下之士，然尽某所见，如吾子之文，岂一二  
kě shù zāi wéi ér bù zhǐ xíng ér bì zhì xù hòu ér fā yì yuǎn wú suī bù  
可数哉！为而不止，行而必至，蓄厚而发益远，吾虽不  
néng xī dé tiān xià zhī shì rán tiān xià zhī shì rú wú zǐ zhě kě yī èr ér shù yě  
能悉得天下之士，然天下之士如吾子者，可一二而数也。

mǒu lǎo yǐ xīn hào lì bèi yǒu suǒ bù néng tú xǐ hòu shēng zhī fèn yú  
某老矣，心耗力惫，有所不能，徒喜后生之奋于  
sī yě hèn bù dé míng yuè yú qí jiān ér cóng zhī gū fèng cǐ wèi xiè  
斯也，恨不得鸣跃于其间而从之。姑奉此为谢。

ōu yáng xiū  
欧阳修

ōu yáng xiū wén jí  
《欧阳修文集》





## A Letter to Chen Zhifang<sup>①</sup>



I am a man in distress, getting old before my time. So I have not given lectures for long. Fortunately, many young scholars do not desert me, and come to visit me daily. I should say I have read lots of writings which are precious in content, eloquent in argument and elegant in style. But I have rarely read such writings like yours, which are explicit yet elaborate in argument, accurate yet smooth in statement, and changeful yet always to the point in organization, and so have won the readers' hearts. It is granted that I cannot read the writings of all scholars in the country, but so far as I know, your writings are really something rare. You have been studying hard day and night, and doing every thing with a determination to achieve success. You have a rich accumulation of knowledge and an artistic way of expression. Although I cannot know all scholars in the country, I am certain a scholar like you is somebody rare.

I am now old, exhausted both in mind and body, and cannot do many things. But fortunately, our young scholars are devoting themselves to writing. How I wish I could join your ranks and sing and dance with you!

Ouyang Xiu<sup>②</sup>

*A Collection of Writings by Ouyang Xiu*

白话  
翻译

我，是一个多愁善感而又过早衰老的人，放弃讲学已经很久了。所幸的一些读书人并没有忘记我，时常有人登门来请教。而纯粹讲仁义道德的言论，气势雄伟博大的论辩，蔚然壮观，华丽多彩的文章，我已经看过很多了。然而像您的文章，论述道理如此明畅，语言又如此简略得当，快慢结合，变动有序，一张一弛，都符合规矩，读起来让人感觉欣喜羡慕、百看不厌的，实在是难得啊！我固然不能知晓全天下的读书人，然而就我所见，像您这么好的文章，也是数一数二的啊！努力学习，不知休息；按照好的方法练习，一定能到达写文章的最高境界；积蓄厚重的才学，这样才能达到更远的目标，这样的话，我虽然不能得到全天下的读书人，然而天下的读书人要都像您这样，有一两个也就足够了。

我老了，筋疲力尽，有些事往往力不从心，只能是看到后生们发愤学习，心中暗自高兴，真恨不得能够和他们一起争鸣啊。先写到这里，谢谢！





## Notes

- ① Chen Zhifang was a young scholar who wanted to learn from Ouyang Xiu.
- ② Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) was a great writer as well as a high-ranking official during the Northern Song Dynasty. He was known as one of the so-called “eight great writers during the Tang and Song Dynasties”.



xiè cáo xiù cái shū  
谢曹秀才书

gǒng dùn shǒu cáo jūn mào cái zú xià jiē hū shì zhī hào wù bù tóng yě  
巩顿首，曹君茂才足下：嗟乎！世之好恶不同也。

shǐ zú xià shì yú yǒu sī gǒng wèi fēng mí guān dé zú xià yǔ fāng zào mèng  
始，足下试于有司，巩为封弥官，得足下与方造、孟  
qǐ zhī wén ér dú zhī yǐ wèi yì zài gāo xuǎn jí lái qǔ hào ér sān rén zhě  
起之文而读之，以谓谊在高选；及来取号，而三人者  
jiē wú xìng míng yú shì wǔ rán zì huǐ xǔ yǔ zhī wàng jì ér tuī zhī tè shì  
皆无姓名，于是恍然自悔许与之妄。既而推之，特世  
zhī hào wù bù tóng ěr gǒng zhī xǔ yǔ qǐ guǒ wèi wàng zāi  
之好恶不同耳；巩之许与，岂果为妄哉！

jīn dé zú xià shū bù yǐ jiě míng shī dé zhì yú xīn ér jī jī yǐ xiāng  
今得足下书，不以解名失得置于心，而汲汲以相  
cóng jiǎng xué wèi shì qí bó guān yú shū ér jiàn yú wén zì zhě yòu guò yú gǒng  
从讲学为事，其博观于书而见于文字者，又过于巩  
xiàng shí zhī suǒ yǔ shèn shèng zú xià jiā jū wú shì kě yǐ yōu yóu yǐ jìn qí  
向时之所与甚盛。足下家居无事，可以优游以进其  
yè zì lì ér bù yǐ zé qí jìn shú néng yù zāi  
业，自力而不已，则其进孰能御哉？

shì zhī hào wù zhī bù tóng zú xià gù yǐ néng bù zhì yú xīn gù gǒng shì  
世之好恶之不同，足下固已能不置于心，顾巩适  
zì bèi zhào bù dé yǔ zú xià jiǔ xiāng cóng xué cǐ qíng zhī suǒ juàn juàn yě  
自被召，不得与足下久相从学，此情之所眷眷也。  
yòng cǐ wèi xiè bù xuān  
用此为谢，不宣。

zēng gǒng  
曾巩

yuán fēng lèi gǎo  
《元丰类稿》



## A Letter to Xiucai Cao<sup>①</sup> to Express My Regret



Alas, how people's tastes differ! In the beginning, when you went in for the official examination, I was in charge of sealing the examination papers. After reading the papers written by you as well as Fang Zao and Meng Qi, I thought that all you three would be among the best of the successful candidates. But when the list of successful candidates was published, the names of all you three were absent. Then I began to feel remorse for my misjudgement. But after thinking twice, I realized that it was all because of the difference in taste. Am I really wrong in my judgement?

I know now after reading your letter that you don't mind much about the results of the examination. Instead, you are anxious to come to study under my tutelage. I found in your letter that you had read so extensively that what was reflected in your writing was much more knowledgeable than what I had thought of you before. Now that you are to stay at home, you can take your time to further your learning. If you would rely on yourself and make unremitting efforts to improve yourself, who can prevent you from making progress?

Now you can be unmindful of the difference in people's tastes. But I cannot but tell you that I have just been

白话  
翻译



哎呀！世界上好坏真是的不尽相同。你当初来参加选官考试，我是密封卷子的官吏，读了你和方造、孟起的文章，以为你们三个一定会名列前茅而中选；等到来取号的时候，发现没有你们三个的名字，于是暗自后悔当初称赞的荒诞。后来仔细推理，也许是因为世上喜欢和讨厌有所不同，我的称许，难道果然是荒诞的吗！

现在得到你的书信，信中看出你并不以没有获得名次而耿耿于怀，只是很急切地把求学当作大事，从你的书信中看到 you 博览群书后的学养，较之以前我对你的赞誉进步了许多。你在家居住，没有什么大事，可以从容地增进学业，这样孜孜不倦地学习，进步的步伐又有谁能阻挡？

世上对文章的喜欢和讨厌的不同标准，你都能够做到不放在心上，回想我自从被应召以来，不能够和你一起相互学习，这是我始终很遗憾的事情。用这些来表达我的谢意，请不要宣扬。





summoned by the government to a new post somewhere else, and so shall not be able to do learning together with you. Oh, how I hate to part with you! This letter is written to express my regret to you.

Zeng Gong<sup>②</sup>

*Categorized Papers by Yuanfeng*



## Notes

- ① *Xiucan* Cao was a young scholar who asked to be a student of Zeng Gong, but failed because Zeng Gong was appointed to a new post at a distant place.
- ② Zeng Gong(1019–1083) was a great writer and high official in the Northern Song Dynasty. He was also one of the “eight great writers during the Tang and Song Dynasties.”





yǔ wú sī lù yì wáng féng yuán hūn shì shū  
与吴司录议王逢原婚事书

mǒu qǐ xīn zhèng fú wéi èr jiù dū cáo zūn tǐ dòng zhǐ wàn fú xiàng céng  
某启：新正伏惟二舅都曹尊体动止万福！向曾  
shàng zhuàng bù shěn dé dá zuǒ yòu fǒu wáng lìng xiù cái xiàn zài jiāng yīn jù  
上状，不审得达左右否？王令秀才见在江阴聚  
xué wén xué zhì shí yǔ qí xìng xíng chéng shì háo jié zhī shì huò chuán qí suǒ  
学，文学智识与其性行诚是豪杰之士。或传其所  
wéi guò dàng jiē bù zú xìn mǒu cǐ shēn chá qí suǒ wéi dà dǐ zhī shì shǒu  
为过当，皆不足信。某此深察其所为，大抵只是守  
jié ān pín ěr jìn rì rén cóng zhī xué zhě shèn zhòng yì bù zhì yú jué pín fá  
节安贫耳。近日人从之学者甚众，亦不至于绝贫乏；  
kuàng qí jiā kǒu guǎ yì yì wèi shàn zú suī rán bù yīng jǔ yǐ mǒu jì zhī  
况其家口寡，亦易为贍足。虽然不应举，以某计之，  
jīn yīng jǔ zhě wèi bì jí dì wèi bì bù kùn qióng gèng qǐng zhēn zhuó cǐ rén  
今应举者未必及第，未必不困穷，更请斟酌。此人  
dàn kǒng jiǔ yuǎn fēi zhōng kùn qióng zhě yě suī zhōng kùn qióng qí chù qī zī  
但恐久远非终困穷者也。虽终困穷，其畜妻子  
dāng yì bù zhì shī suǒ yě qú què wàng èr jiù yǒu xìn lái jué zhī qīn shì zhōng  
当亦不至失所也。渠却望二舅有信来，决知亲事终  
rú hé xìng yī cì bào yě  
如何。幸一赐报也。

shàng hán fú qǐ shàn bǎo zūn chóng  
尚寒，伏乞善保尊重！

wáng ān shí  
王安石

wáng lín chuān jí  
《王临川集》





## A Letter to My Uncle on the Marriage of Wang Ling<sup>①</sup>



It is New Year now. I earnestly wish you well and happy! I sent a letter to you not long since. I wonder if you have received it. *Xiucan* Wang Ling is now teaching in Jiangyin. So far as I know, he is a distinguished person both for knowledge and moral character. There are rumors saying that his behavior is often inappropriate. All these are incredible. I have looked deep into his behavior and found that all that is regarded as inappropriate of him is only his adherence to principles and willingness to suffer poverty. Nowadays more and more scholars are going to him for tutelage. So he will not be so poor. Moreover, his family is a small one and is easy to support. As to his refusal to go in for the imperial examination, I think you had better reconsider the matter, since not everybody who sits at the examination can pass it and avoid poverty. So far as I can see, this man will not be poor in the long run. Even if he should be poor all his life, he would at least be able to support his wife and family. He is anxious to receive a letter from you so as to know what result his proposal of marriage will have. Please kindly favour him with a reply.

白话  
翻译



新年了，衷心希望二舅身体健康！之前曾经写过一封书信给您，不知道您有没有收到？王令现在正在江阴教学，文学智慧和见识及其品性行为真可以称得上是一个豪杰。有人传言说他的行为不当，这些都不足相信，我特地深入地考察了一下他的所作所为，大致上是一个安心贫困，严格遵守操行的人。近期以来跟随他学习的人很多，所以他也不至于真的贫穷得一贫如洗；况且，他家里人丁稀少，因此也能自给自足。虽然他还没有中举人，根据我的看法，现在的读书人，不一定非要中举，也不一定非要不贫穷，这些都请您斟酌。王令这个人恐怕不是一个长久都处在贫穷困难之中的人。他虽然现在很贫穷，然而养活妻子，不至于让她流离失所还是做得到的。希望二舅能够来信，告知您对这门婚事的看法，希望您能给我回复。

天气还有些寒冷，希望您能保重身体。





It is still cold. I hope you will take good care of yourself.

Wang Anshi<sup>②</sup>

*A Collection of Wang Linchuan's (Wang Anshi) Works*



## Notes

- ① Wang Ling was a young scholar. He had made an offer of marriage to the daughter of Wang Anshi's uncle and asked Wang Anshi to help him in persuading his would-be father-in-law to accept it.
- ② Wang Anshi (1021-1086) was a prime minister and great reformer during the Song Dynasty. He was one of the "eight great writers during the Tang and Song Dynasties."





dá lǚ jí fǔ shū  
答吕吉甫书

mǒu qǐ yǔ gōng tóng xīn yǐ zhì yì yì jiē yuán guó shì qǐ yǒu tā zāi  
某启：与公同心以至异意，皆缘国事，岂有他哉！

tóng cháo fēn fēn gōng dú zhù wǒ zé wǒ hé hàn yú gōng rén huò yán gōng wǒ  
同朝纷纷，公独助我，则我何憾于公？人或言公，我

wú yǔ yān zé gōng hé yóu yú wǒ qù shí biàn shì wú bù zhī qí shuō yān  
无与焉，则公何尤于我？趣时便事，吾不知其说焉；

kǎo shí lùn qíng gōng yí zhāo qí rú cǐ  
考实论情，公宜昭其如此。

kāi yù chóng xī lǎn zhī chàng rán xī zhī zài wǒ zhě chéng wú xì gù zhī  
开喻重悉，览之怅然！昔之在我者，诚无细故之

kě yí zé jīn zhī zài gōng zhě shàng hé jiù wù zhī zú niàn rán gōng yǐ zhuàng  
可疑；则今之在公者，尚何旧恶之足念？然公以壮

liè fāng jìn wèi yú shèng shì ér mǒu nié rán shuāi chèn tè dài jìn yú shān  
烈，方进为于圣世，而某茶然衰疚，特待尽于山

lín qù shě yì lù zé xiāng xǔ yǐ shī bù rú xiāng wàng zhī yù yě xiǎng qù  
林。趣舍异路，则相响以湿，不如相忘之愈也。想趣

zhào zài cháo xī wéi liáng shí wèi shí zì ài  
召在朝夕，惟良食为时。自爱！

wáng ān shí

王安石

wáng lín chuān jí

《王临川集》



## A Reply to Lü Jifu<sup>①</sup>



We were of the same opinion at first and then held different views. All these were centered round state affairs. How can there be anything else? In the beginning when I was the target of attacks in the court, you were the only one to stand up to help me. So how can I have a grudge against you? And when you were criticized by some people, I never join them. So how can you have a grudge against me? To say whatever is current in the public opinion is not what I have learned to do. And to verify the facts and make rational judgements are what you should have learned to do.

Reading again your letter, I could not but feel sad. In the past, I have done nothing (even a trifle) that could be doubted by you. So how can you conceive an old hatred against me even today? You are now in the prime of your life and are a rising star in the current times. But I am tired and sick and am waiting for my life's end in hermitage. Since we have taken different roads, it would be better for us to forget each other than to help each other. I am afraid I may die at any time, and so I'll spend my days in eating something good. Please take care of yourself.

Wang Anshi

*A Collection of Wang Linchuan's Works*

白话  
翻译

无论我和您有志趣相投还是和你分道扬镳，都是因为国家大事，难道还有别的原因吗？朝廷的同事们都对我议论纷纷，而您却独独向着我，那么我对你又有什么可埋怨的呢？当初你被人家非议的时候，我并没有站在他们那边，一同攻击你，你对我也应该没有什么可埋怨的吧？顺应时事的发展，趋利避害是我从不放在心上的；而根据事情的真相做出判断，公正不阿也是你应该具有的品质。

重读您的书信，感觉非常惆怅！回想从前，我所做的事情，并没有一点对你的亏欠；而今日对于您来说，又为什么对我过去做的事情如此耿耿于怀呢？但是以您的雄壮的气势，正是在太平盛世的政治道路上高歌猛进的时候；而我却正在日渐衰退，日薄西山，正在等待隐居在山林之中，终老一生。自从我们选择了不同的道路，那么我们忘记彼此似乎比记得彼此更好。细想我的生命也快要走到尽头，所以不如抓紧时间，多享用一点人间的美食。也请你爱惜自己！





### Note

- ① Lü Jifu was Wang Anshi's chief assistant in the beginning of the reforms promoted by Wang but later became Wang's political opponent. After retirement, Wang wrote this letter to break all relations with him.



yǔ zhāng jiā fù  
与张嘉父

mǒu qǐ jūn wèi yù lì rén mìng zhì zhòng yuàn shēn jiā yì dà hán dà  
某启：君为狱吏，人命至重，愿深加意！大寒大  
shǔ qiū rén qiú sǐ bù huò jí bìng zhě duō wèi lì zú suǒ bù shì yǒu fēi bìng  
暑，囚人求死不获及病者，多为吏卒所不视，有非病  
ér zhì sǐ zhě pú wèi jùn shǒu wèi cháng bù gōng qīn àn shì ruò néng liú yì  
而致死者。仆为郡守，未尝不躬亲按视。若能留意  
yú cǐ yuǎn dào zhī fú yě  
于此，远到之福也。

sū shì  
苏轼

sū dōng pō quán jí  
《苏东坡全集》

白话  
翻译



你作为一个掌管刑狱的官吏，应该知道人命关天，希望你能够对此多多在意！天气太冷和太热，那些非死囚和没有生病的囚犯往往会被监狱里的病卒忽视，经常会有不是因为生病的原因死去的。我作为一个郡守，也经常亲自去监狱视察犯人的情况。倘若你能注意到这一点的话，那真是一件公德深远的善事啊。





## To Zhang Jiafu



You are a prison officer. Human life is the most valuable thing. I wish you would attach great importance to it. In severe winter or sultry summer, warders often neglect those prisoners who have either fallen sick or tried to end their life but failed. There are cases of people dying without any disease. I am the prefect of this prefecture, and will inspect the prisons in person. If you would pay attention to the health of the prisoners, it would be a favour done to me, a man coming from afar.

Su Shi<sup>①</sup>

*Complete Works of Su Dongpo (Su Shi)*



### Note

- ① Su Shi (1037–1101), also named Su Zizhan and Su Dongpo, was one of the greatest writers and poets in Chinese history. He was also a high-ranking official during the Northern Song Dynasty but was finally demoted. This letter was written to a prison officer when he was the prefect of Hangzhou.

yǔ chéng xiù cái  
与程秀才

mǒu qǐ qù suì sēng shě lǚ huì dāng shí bù zhī wéi lè jīn zhě hǎi wài  
某启：去岁僧舍屡会，当时不知为乐；今者海外，  
qǐ fù mèng yě jù sǎn yōu lè rú fǎn fù shǒu xìng ér cǐ shēn shàng jiàn  
岂复梦也！聚散忧乐，如反覆手，幸而此身尚健。

dé lái xùn xǐ shì xià qīng ān zhī yǒu ài zǐ zhī qī qiǎng bǎo pāo huàn  
得来讯，喜侍下清安，知有爱子之戚，襁褓泡幻，  
bù xū liú liàn yě pú lí huì zhōu hòu dà ér fáng xià yì shī yī nán sūn yì  
不须留恋也。仆离惠州后，大儿房下亦失一男孙，亦  
bēi chuàng jiǔ zhī jīn zé yǐ yǐ  
悲怆久之，——今则已矣！

cǐ jiān shí wú ròu bìng wú yào jū wú wū chū wú yǒu dōng wú tàn xià  
此间食无肉，病无药，居无屋，出无友，冬无炭，夏  
wú hán quán rán yì wèi yì xī shù dà shuài jiē wú ěr wéi yǒu yī xìng  
无寒泉……然亦未易悉数，大率皆无尔。惟有一幸，  
wú shèn zhàng yě jìn yǔ xiǎo ér zǐ jié máo shù chuán jū zhī jīn bì fēng yǔ  
无甚瘴也。近与小儿子结茅数椽居之，仅庇风雨，  
rán láo fèi yì bù zī yǐ lài shí shù xué shēng zhù gōng zuò gōng ní shuǐ zhī  
然劳费亦不资矣。赖十数学生助工作、躬泥水之  
yì kuì zhī bù kě yán yě shàng yǒu cǐ shēn fù yǔ zào wù tīng qí liú  
役，愧之不可言也。尚有此身，付与造物，听其流  
zhuǎn liú háng kǎn zhǐ wú bù kě zhě gù rén zhī zhī miǎn yōu  
转，流行坎止，无不可者。故人知之，免忧。

zhà rè wàn wàn zì ài bù xuān  
乍热，万万自爱！不宣。

sū shì  
苏轼

sū dōng pō quán jí  
《苏东坡全集》



## To Xiucai Cheng<sup>①</sup>



We had frequent meetings at the temple last year, but I did not realize then how happy I was. Now I am far away in an overseas land. The past looks to me like a dream. Meetings and separations, happiness and sorrows are something easy to change from one into the other. Fortunately, I am still fine physically.

Reading your letter, I am glad to know that you are also well, but have been overwhelmed with the sadness over the death of your child. Small babies are like the foam easy to vanish, so you need not lament for his departure too much. After I left Huizhou, I also lost a grandson (my eldest son's child). I was much grieved for a long time, but now it is all over.

Here there is no meat for meals, no medicine for diseases, no house to dwell, no friends to meet, no coal in winter, and no cool streams in summer. . . It is really difficult to list all the shortages, and it can generally be said that there is almost nothing here. Nevertheless, there is one thing fortunate, and that is the absence of miasma. Lately, my youngest son and I built a thatched cottage for ourselves. Though only a shelter from the wind and rain, it costs us dearly, both in labour and money. And I felt very much

白话  
翻译



去年在僧人的寺庙里,我们时常见面,当时也并不知道这是一件多么幸福的事情;现在流落在海外,过去的一幕难道是梦境吗!人生的相聚和分离,欢喜和悲伤,就像是翻转手掌一样,幸好我现在身体都很健康。

收到你的来信,很欣慰你现在身体安康,也知道你疼爱的儿子不幸夭亡,处在襁褓之中的孩子都是一场泡影,你不要太过于留恋他。我离开惠州以后,大儿子那房也失去了一位孙子,当时也是极其悲痛,……现在已经好了。

这里吃菜基本上没有肉,生病了也没有药品医治,居住没有像样的屋子,外出没有谈心的知音好友,冬天,烤火没有炭;夏天,没有降温的泉水……在此不一一指出,大致可以说什么东西也没有。唯一值得庆幸的是,并没有沾染上瘴气,最近和我的小儿子盖了几栋茅草房子,仅仅能躲避风雨,而所耗费的资金也不多。依赖十几个我的学生帮助,运水和泥,说到这真是惭愧啊。人生到此,只有这孑然一身,把它交给造物主,听凭他的安排,生死由命,都无所谓。老朋友你应该知道,不要为我担忧。

天气突然热起来,请您千万要注意身体!这就不要我多说了。





ashamed to have to depend on my students here, numbering more than ten, to help me to do the plastering work.

Now I am still living. Henceforth I will submit myself to the will of Heaven, no matter what fortune may be for me in the future. For it makes no difference now for me whether it is good or bad. As, you are my old friend, I tell you all this, so that you don't have to worry about me.

It is warming up suddenly. Do take good care of your health.

Su Shi

*Complete Works of Su Dongpo*



### Note

- ① This letter was written by Su Shi to a friend after he was banished to the Hainan Island.





dá cān liáo  
答参寥

zhuān rén yuǎn lái rǔ shǒu shū bìng shì xīn shī rú huò yī xiào zhī lè shù  
专人远来，辱首书并示新诗，如获一笑之乐，数

rì xǐ wèi wàng wèi yě  
日喜慰忘味也！

mǒu dào biǎn suǒ bàn nián fán bǎi cū qiǎn gèng bù néng xì shuō dà lüè  
某到贬所半年，凡百粗遣，更不能细说。大略

zhǐ sì líng yǐn tiān zhú hé shàng tuì yuàn hòu què zài yī gè xiǎo cūn yuàn zǐ zhé  
只似灵隐、天竺和尚退院后，却在一个小村院子折

zú chēng zhōng yǎn cǎo mǐ fàn chī biàn guò yī shēng yě dé qí yú zhàng lì  
足铛中，糲糙米饭吃，便过一生也。得其余瘴疠

bìng rén běi fāng hé cháng bù bìng shì bìng jiē sǐ dé rén hé bì zhàng qì  
病人，北方何尝不病？是病皆死得人，何必瘴气？

dàn kǔ wú yī yào jīng shī guó yī shǒu lǐ sǐ hàn yóu duō cān liáo wén cǐ yī  
但苦无医药，京师国医手里死汉尤多。参寥闻此一

xiào dāng bù fù yōu wǒ yě gù rén xiāng zhī zhě jí yǐ cǐ yǔ zhī yú rén bù  
笑，当不复忧我也，故人相知者即以此语之，余人不

zú yǔ dào yě  
足与道也。

wèi huì hé jiān qiān wàn wéi dào shàn ài zì zhòng  
未会合间，千万为道善爱自重！

sū shì  
苏轼

sū dōng pō quán jí  
《苏东坡全集》



## A Reply to Can Liao



Your messenger coming from afar brought me your first letter and your new poems, which was like bestowing upon me the pleasure of a mirthful laugh, making me both gladdened and comforted to the extent of not heeding the taste of my food for several days.

I have lived in my place of banishment for half a year. I'll not give a minute account of all the trivial details of my life here. Roughly speaking, I am like a monk of the Lingyin or Tianzhu Temple, who, having retired from the monastery, muddled through his remaining life by cooking unhusked rice in a pot with a broken leg in a small village compound. As for the possibility of my being sick of miasma here—pray, is there any one immune from sicknesses in the north? And then, since any sickness may cause death, what need is there to make special mention of miasma? With regard to the lack of medical care here, I can only say that numerous are people who die at the hands of royal physicians. Seeing this remark, Your Honour may give it an understanding smile and be relieved of your worries on my account. Please tell this to my old friends and say nothing about it to others.

白话  
翻译



你的信使从远方带给我你的第一封信和你的新诗,这让我感到非常开心,连续几天都因为太高兴而食不知味。

我到贬官的地方已经快半年了,遭遇了很多事情,不能一一细说。大概就好像是灵隐寺和天竺的和尚从寺庙隐退,却在一个小村子的院子里,在一个断了脚的铁锅里,煮糙米饭吃,这样过完一生。这里有瘴疠病人,北方又何尝没有生病的人呢?只要是病都会死人,何必非是瘴气才能死人呢?只是苦于没有良药啊,京城所谓的国手里面的庸医很多。你听到这些一笑罢了,不要担心我。作为知心的老朋友,我才会这样说,至于其他人,我就不会和他们说了。

相聚之前,请多保重。







Chinese Short Letters  
through the Ages

Do take good care of yourself till we meet again!

Su Shi

*Complete Works of Su Dongpo*



dá xú zhōu chén shī zhòng shū  
答徐州陈师仲书

méng huì shū lùn shī, xǔ yǐ wǔ bǎi piān wèi huì jì zhī suǒ cóng xué shī zhī  
蒙惠书论诗，许以五百篇为惠。既知所从学诗之  
rén yòu zhī suǒ yǐ zuò shī zhī yì wǔ bǎi piān suī wèi zhì rán jiàn cǐ shū yǐ  
人，又知所以作诗之意，五百篇虽未至，然见此书，已  
yǔ jiàn shī wú yì yǐ yīng yuàn yán pò yú jiě zhōu yǒu shū bù néng jìn  
与见诗无异矣。应掾言：“迫于解舟，有书不能尽  
qǔ jí cǐ shī shì yē  
取。”即此诗是耶？

zhé shǎo hào wéi shī yǔ jiā xiōng zǐ zhān suǒ wéi duō shǎo lüè xiāng ruò  
辙少好为诗，与家兄子瞻所为，多少略相若  
yě zǐ zhān jì yǐ dé zuì zhé yì bù fù zuò shī rán jīn shì shì dà fū yì zì  
也。子瞻既已得罪，辙亦不复作诗。然今世士大夫亦自  
bù xǐ wéi shī yǐ shī míng shì zhě gài wú jǐ rén jiàn yǒu zuò zhě yóu zú guì  
不喜为诗，以诗名世者，盖无几人；间有作者，尤足贵  
yě gù pú měi dé qí suǒ wéi zhé fěng wèi zhōng rì pì rú xīn bìng yīn rén  
也。故仆每得其所为，辄讽味终日，譬如新病暗人，  
kǒu bù fù gē wén yǒu gē zhě yóu néng shǒu zú wǔ dǎo yǐ zì wèi shì zú  
口不复歌，闻有歌者，犹能手足舞蹈，以自慰释。足  
xià shàng néng yǐ wǔ bǎi piān jiàn huì yē gǒu yǒu yǐ wèi wǒ bù bì jīn zì kǒu  
下尚能以五百篇见惠耶？苟有以慰我，不必矜自口  
chū yě  
出也。

sū zhé  
苏辙

luán chéng jí  
《栾城集》



## A Reply to Chen Shizhong of Xuzhou



It is very kind of you to write a letter to me to give your views on poetry and promise to send me five hundred poems you have written. From your letter, I have known not only from whom you have learned to write poems, but also for what purpose you want to write them. Although the five hundred poems did not reach me, I think to read your letter is as good as to peruse your poems. My aide told me that the ship was soon to sail and there was no time to take all the books. Are these books the very poems you were sending?

I was keen on poem-composing when I was young, more or less like my elder brother Su Zizhan. But after he was punished by the authorities, I have not written a single line ever since. Nowadays scholars are generally not disposed to write poems. There are very few well-known poets in the country. And so it is all the more precious to have scholars who do compose poems sometimes. Whenever I get some lines written by them, I often recite them all the day, just like a man newly dumb, who can no longer sing but can still dance to other people's tune to console himself. Would you please favour me with your five hundred poems again? If you would kindly oblige me, you needn't say anything to recommend

白话  
翻译

承蒙您馈赠我你的书信和论诗的观点，并许诺送五百篇诗歌给我。既了解了所要师从学诗歌的人，又明白了所要做诗的真谛，虽然你的五百篇诗歌还没有到达，然而见到这封信，就已经和见到你的诗没有区别了。我的下属说：“迫于船马上要走，还有书不能够全部取来。”难道就是你的那些诗歌吗？

我小的时候就喜欢做诗，和我兄长子瞻（苏轼）的行为，大略有点相似。子瞻既然因为写诗获罪，我也不敢再做诗了。然而当今的士大夫也不怎么喜欢做诗，因为写诗而出名的人没有几个。因此有时听到有人写诗就更觉可贵，每当我得知诗人的新文新作时，就要吟上一整天，就好像刚刚失声的人，虽然自己不能再唱了，但听到其他人唱歌，还能够手舞足蹈，以这样的方式来自我安慰。你还能够以五百篇诗歌送给我？你送了我五百篇诗歌，就不必亲自自我推荐了。





yourself.

Su Zhe<sup>①</sup>

*Collected Works of Luancheng*



**Note**

① Su Zhe(1039–1112) was the younger brother of Su Shi. He was also a great writer during the Northern Song Dynasty.



yǔ wáng zǐ yǔ shū  
与王子予书

bǐ lái bù shěn dú shū hé sì xiǎng yǐ dào yì dí fēn huá zhī bīng zhàn  
比来不审读书何似？想以道义敌纷华之兵，战  
shèng jiǔ yǐ gǔ rén yǒu yán bìng dí yī xiàng qiān lǐ shā jiàng yào xū  
胜久矣。古人有言：“并敌一向，千里杀将。”要须  
xīn dì shōu hán mǎ zhī gōng dú shū nǎi yǒu wèi qì shū cè ér yóu xī shū  
心地收汗马之功，读书乃有味；弃书策而游息，书  
wèi yóu zài xiōng zhōng jiǔ zhī nǎi jiàn gǔ rén yòng xīn chù rú cǐ zé jìn xīn yú  
味犹在胸中，久之乃见古人用心处。如此则尽心于  
yī liǎng shū qí yú rú pò zhú jié jiē yíng rèn ér jiě yě gǔ rén cháng yù zhī  
一两书，其余如破竹节，皆迎刃而解也。古人尝喻植  
yáng gài yáng tiān xià yì shēng zhī mù yě dǎo zhí zhī ér shēng héng zhí zhī  
杨。盖杨，天下易生之木也，倒植之而生，横植之  
ér shēng yī rén zhí zhī yī rén bá zhī suī qiān rì zhī gōng jiē qì cǐ zuì  
而生。一人植之，一人拔之，虽千日之功皆弃。此最  
shàn yù  
善喻！

gù shuāi lǎo zhōng wú yì yú gāo míng zǐ yǔ yǐ wéi rú hé  
顾衰老终无益于高明，子予以为如何？

huáng tíng jiān  
黄庭坚



## A Letter to Wang Ziyu



How are you getting on with your studies lately? I suppose you must have overcome all spiritual obstacles in learning, looking like a general who has defeated the enemy with his moral superiority. There is an old saying which goes: "If you can concentrate all your forces to attack in one direction, you will be able to kill the enemy general even if he is a thousand *li* away. "What is the most important for you is to make up your mind to work in a painstaking way. Only thus can you cultivate your interest in learning. And then even if you leave aside the book and go to enjoy yourself, the influence of the book will remain in your mind. In this way you can realize by and by how our celebrated forefathers did their learning. So you should concentrate on reading one book or two, and then you would find the other books by far easier to apprehend. The ancient scholars often took willow-planting for example. Willow is a tree very easy to grow. Even if you plant it upside down or in a transverse way, it will grow all the same. But if one man plants it and another man pulls it out, the former will reap nothing even if he has worked for a thousand days. This is really an excellent illustration.

I am afraid I am now too old and weak to be of any help to

白话  
翻译



不知道你近来学习怎么样了？想必你已克服学习上的心理障碍，好比一位将领在道义上战胜敌人一样。古人说：“集中兵力，指向一个方向的敌人，这样千里之外，都能杀死敌将。”必须要下一番苦功，读书才能有味道；放弃书本和策论而游手好闲，书的味道还只在胸口中，久而久之才能体会到古人读书用功的地方。这样，只需要花心思专攻一两本书，其他的书读起来也就势如破竹，所有的困难都能迎刃而解了。古人曾经把读书比作栽种杨树。杨树，是天底下最容易生存的树木，即使把它倒着种植也能生存下去，横着种植也能生存。但是如果一个人种树，另一个人又把它拔掉，即使是种上一千天，也是毫无结果。这是最恰当的比喻啊！

想来我虽然已经有些衰老了，但绝不会变得更加聪明，你认为这样的吗？







a man as brilliant as you. What do you think of it?

Huang Tingjian<sup>①</sup>



### Note

① Huang Tingjian (1045-1105) was an official historian as well as a poet during the Northern Song Dynasty. He was a noted calligrapher, too. Wang Ziyu was a friend of his.



yǔ shào yàn zhān jiǎn  
与邵彦瞻简

mǒu dùn shǒu qǐ rì yuè bù xiāng jiè dài fèng wéi wèi jǐ yǐ fù qīng  
某顿首启：日月不相借贷，奉违未几，已复清

míng miǎn wéi hái zì zhū yì zūn lǚ shèng cháng qīn qǐ qīn qǐ  
明。缅惟还自诸邑，尊履胜常。钦企！钦企！

chūn sè suì ěr ěi rán cǎo mù yú niǎo gè yǒu jiā yì guǎng líng duō dēng  
春色遂尔蔼然，草木鱼鸟，各有佳意。广陵多登

lín zhī měi lín fēng bǎ zhǎn suǒ dé gù yīng bù zī gǔ yǔ yǒu zhī liáng  
临之美，临风把盏，所得故应不贲。古语有之：“良

chén měi jǐng shǎng xīn lè shì sì zhě nán bìng jīn yòu yǐ fēng liú cóng  
辰，美景，赏心，乐事，四者难并。”今又以风流从

shì cóng wén zhāng tài shǒu yóu huái hǎi jiā jùn qǐ bù wèi qī bìng nán dé  
事，从文章太守，游淮海佳郡，岂不为七并难得

hū shèn shèng shèn shèng  
乎？甚盛！甚盛！

yì zhōng shǎo suǒ huán wǎng dù mén hū hū wú yǐ zì yú dàn zhī zhěn  
邑中少所还往，杜门忽忽，无以自娱，但支枕

dú wò zhuī wéi jiù yóu ér yǐ yù nán qù shǔ sī gù wèi néng cì zhōu dàn  
独卧，追惟旧游而已。欲南去属私，故未能伺舟，但

zēng yǐn yì bù xuān mǒu dùn shǒu  
增引悒！不宣。某顿首。

qín guān  
秦观

huái hǎi jí  
《淮海集》



## A Letter to Shao Yanzhan<sup>①</sup>



How time flies! So soon after our separation, the Festival of Pure Brightness has come. I only hope that you have been well since you left Zhūcheng County. Oh, how I hope so!

Spring has come suddenly and it is so warm and flourishing. The grass, the trees, the fish and the birds—all things are displaying their beauty. Guangling where you now reside is a place known for its scenic hills. Now that you can drink to the wind on these hills, you must have reaped a great deal in your writing. There is an old saying that goes, "It is difficult for a man to have four things at the same time: a pleasant day, a lovely scene, a cheerful disposition and a happy event." But now that a talented official like you is making tour with a prefect-cum-writer like Su Shi in a beautiful place like Yangzhou, can't we say that you have seven things difficult to get at the same time? It is something wonderful, indeed.

I have few acquaintances here in the city, and so the door of my house is generally closed. Having nothing to amuse myself, I often lie alone in the bed, remembering and missing my old friends. I want to go to the South to have a reunion

白话  
翻译



时光荏苒，我们分开没有几天，又到清明了。我只希望你离开诸城之后身体健康，我是如此盼望我们再次见面。

春天悄然来临，绿色铺满大地，花草树木和鱼虫鸟兽都展示出各自美丽的一面。广陵这里有很多可以登高欣赏美景的地方，站在山顶，对着山风举杯，所能得到的乐趣应该不少。古人曾经说过：“好的时辰，美丽的景色，观赏的心情，快乐的事情，这四种好事很难凑在一起。”现在这里又有有才学而不拘礼法的从事，有像苏轼一样以文章著称的太守，相邀游览扬州这个美丽的郡县，难道不是七件好事凑在一起，很难得吗？真是盛事啊！

在这里没有多少往来，关上门没有其他的事情，只能摆好枕头，独自躺在床上，回忆以前游览的地方，仅此而已。想要去南方，但这又是属于私事，所以没有成行，只能徒增烦恼而已！这些就不用说了。





with my family, but sorry to say, there is no ship to go there.

Qin Guan<sup>②</sup>

*A Collection of Huai Hai*



## Notes

- ① Shao Yanzhan was Qin's friend and a subordinate of Su Shi when Su was the prefect of Yangzhou.
- ② Qin Guan (1049–1100) was an official-cum-writer during the Northern Song Dynasty. He was a student of Su Shi.



yí                      zhá  
遗                      札

jūn wù kōng zǒng   wèi huáng xiū hòu   gōng wéi tái lǚ kāng jí   fú jì wèi  
军务控僦，未遑修候。恭惟台履康吉，伏冀为

guó zì zhēn  
国自珍！

jìn dé dié bào   zhī nì yù jì fèi   lǚ cāng zú wèi néng zhèn bèi   hé luò  
近得谍报，知逆豫既废，虏仓卒未能镇备，河洛

zhī mín   fēn fēn rǎo rǎo   ruò chéng cǐ xìng diào fá zhī shī   zé kè fù zhōng yuán  
之民，纷纷扰扰。若乘此兴吊伐之师，则克复中原，

zhǐ rì kě qī   zhēn qiān zài yī qī yě   nǎi miào yì qì wú dīng suàn   tǎng chí  
指日可期。真千载一期也！乃庙议迄无定算，倘迟

shù yuè   shì shì jiāng bù kě zhī yǐ   qiè wéi gé xià sù qiè bù gòng zhī fèn   shóu  
数月，事势将不可知矣！窃惟阁下素切不共之愤，熟

chóu huī fù zhī cái   qǐ yú shàng qián lì zàn yú zhǐ   zé tā rì kuò qīng huá xià  
筹恢复之才，乞于上前力赞俞旨，则他日廓清华夏，

dāng tuī shǒu yōng yǐ  
当推首庸矣。

qīng dú qīng yán   bù shèng huáng hán   fēi zài dùn shǒu  
轻渎清严，不胜惶汗！飞再顿首。

yuè fēi  
岳飞

yuè wǔ mù jí  
《岳武穆集》



## A Letter Left behind by Yue Fei<sup>①</sup>



I have been too busy with military affairs lately to send my regards to you. I earnestly wish you every success and hope that you'll take care of your health for the good of our country!

Recently an intelligence report reached me, saying that the puppet emperor Liu Yu had been dethroned, that our enemy could not be ready for fighting again in a short period of time, and that the people living along the banks of the Yellow River and Luo River are now in a great turmoil. If we can grasp this opportunity to launch an offensive campaign, I am sure it would be only a matter of a few days before we can recover our lost territory in the Central Plains. This is really a golden chance one can have only once in a thousand years. But what a pity it is that the debate at the Court has not yet reached any conclusion. If the debate lasts a few months longer, it would be unpredictable how the situation would become. I think you bear a really hellish hatred against our enemy and are endowed with the ability to resurrect our country. So I beseech you to try your best to persuade His Majesty to make the decision. If so, you will be the man of the highest credit when our country is cleared of the enemy and be reunited.

I am afraid I have taken too much liberty to write all this to

白话  
翻译



由于最近军务繁忙,没时间传达我的问候。衷心希望你身体健康,为国家保重自己。

近来得到谍报,得知敌国刘豫被废黜,仓促之间并没有国君人选,河洛一带的人民,纷纷都有起义的动向。如果趁此机会发兵报徽宗、钦宗二位国君之仇,那么收复中原地区就指日可待了。这真是千载难逢的好机会啊!但是朝廷对于此事的议论并没有结论,如果再耽搁几个月的话,事态恐怕就变得不好预料了!我私自认为阁下您是平常怀有不和敌国共戴天的悲愤之情,而且是筹划恢复中原的人才,所以,请您能在皇上面前多称赞此事,那么有一天,当华夏大地都被光复,您的功劳应该是第一位的。

轻易地冒犯了您的尊严,很是惶恐,岳飞顿首!







you.

With my best regards.

Yue Fei

*A Collection of Yue Wumu's (Yue Fei) Works*



## Notes

① Yue Fei (1103–1142) was a great patriot and one of the greatest national heroes in Chinese history. As a general, he won many battles against the aggressors but was finally betrayed by the traitors. He lived a hero and died a martyr.

The receiver of this letter is unknown. Judging from the context of the letter, he must be a very high official having easy access to the emperor.





dá lǚ zǐ yuē  
答吕子约

shì yù lǚ lǚ bèi jiàn dǔ xué lì xíng zhī yì rán wèi miǎn jiào jì wù huò  
示谕缕缕，备见笃学力行之意，然未免较计务获  
zhī bìng zhù cǐ yì sī héng zài fāng cùn jiān rì xī fēn rǎo fēi suǒ yǐ jìn yú  
之病。著此意思，横在方寸间，日夕纷扰，非所以进于  
rì xīn yě  
“日新”也。

suǒ dú shū yì tài duō rú rén dà bìng zài chuáng ér zhòng yī zá jìn bǎi  
所读书亦太多，如人大病在床，而众医杂进，百  
yào jiāo xià jué wú jiàn xiào zhī lǐ bù ruò jìn lì yī shū lìng qí fǎn fù tōng  
药交下，决无见效之理。不若尽力一书，令其反覆通  
tòu ér fù yì yī shū zhī wèi yù gài bù wéi zhuān lì yì jiàn gōng fū qiě shì  
透，而复易一书之为愈。盖不惟专力易见功夫。且是  
xīn dìng bù zá yú hán yǎng zhī gōng yì yǒu zhù yě  
心定不杂，于涵养之功亦有助也。

yòu wèi bù yù dàn wèi wén jiàn zhī zhī cǐ gù dāng rán wén jiàn zhī zhī  
又谓不欲但为闻见之知，此固当然。闻见之知，  
yào fēi yì shì chéng wèi kě qīng yàn ér liè dēng yě  
要非易事，诚未可轻厌而躐等也。

zhū xī  
朱熹

zhū wén gōng wén jí  
《朱文公文集》



## A Reply to Lü Ziyue<sup>①</sup>



Your letter is so rich in content that it shows clearly how hard you have learned and put into practice what you have learned. However, you still can not avoid the weakness of being overanxious for immediate gains. If one is not free of this weakness in his heart and frets his mind day and night, he would not be able to make progress daily.

In my view, you have read too extensively. Suppose a man seized with serious illness. If he consults many doctors and takes many kinds of medicines at the same time, it would certainly be of no avail to him. I think it would be much better for him to concentrate upon one book and digest it thoroughly before turning to another one. Besides, doing one thing at a time will not only make it easier for him to master the thing itself, but also be helpful to him to cultivate his self-restraint through devotion to one thing without distraction.

You said that you will not be satisfied with knowledge acquired through seeing and listening. That is of course right. But I want to add that such knowledge is not easy to acquire either and, therefore, should not be neglected.

Zhu Xi<sup>②</sup>

*Collected Works of Zhu Wengong (Zhu Xi)*



白话  
翻译



你的信内容丰富,足见你的立志学习、用心实践的意愿,然而你还是没有避免急于求成的毛病。如果一个人不能克服自己的缺点,常常警醒自己,他就难以不断地取得进步。

读的书太多,就像生了大病躺在床上,很多的医生开出各种的药方,许多的药物同时起作用,一定是无法见效的。不如专心于攻读某一本书,反复研习,让它烂熟于胸,然后再换另一本来读,这样的方法更好。专心更能体现出读书的功力。如果心里安定没有杂念,这对于自己的涵养的锻炼也是有帮助的。

你又说不满足于通过所见所闻获取知识,这当然是对的。但是,我要补充的是,通过所见所闻获得知识,也不是件容易的事情,因此也是不能轻易放弃和忽略的。





## Notes

- ① Lü Ziyue was a young scholar.
- ② Zhu Xi (1130–1200) was one of the most influential idealist philosopher in Chinese history. His annotation of Confucius' writings were regarded as authoritative for hundreds of years.



dá huáng sōng lǎo  
答黄嵩老

dà dǐ rén qíng ruò gān yóu yù duō zhì yīn xún yī xiàng lǎn fèi jīn dàn xīn  
大抵人情若干犹豫，多致因循，一向懒废。今但心  
suǒ yù wéi xiàng qián biàn zuò bù yào chí yí děng dài jí zhī cǐ mù xià qǐng kè  
所欲为，向前便做，不要迟疑等待。即只此目下顷刻  
zhī jiān yì xū jiàn jiàn gōng xiào yì  
之间，亦须渐见功效矣。

nián yùn yì wǎng shí bù dài rén kuàng zhōng suì yǐ hòu yóu yí jī jī  
年运易往，时不待人，况中岁以后，尤宜汲汲  
yě  
也！

zhū xī  
朱熹

zhū wén gōng wén jí  
《朱文公文集》

白话  
翻译



一般来说，人的性情之中有一些犹豫不决的因素，这样造成了因循守旧以及懒惰成性。现在你如果想有所作为的话，不要迟疑和等待。你可以从眼前的瞬息之间开始做起，这也会逐渐地见到效果。

年复一年，时间并不会等待我们，况且人到中年以后，更需要积极地生活。



## A Reply to Old Huang Song<sup>①</sup>



People are generally apt to hesitate time and again before doing things, which often leads to delay or failure. If you want to do anything, just go ahead without any hesitation. Your efforts can begin to have effect even in a moment of time.

Time is fleeting and will not wait for us. Especially we middle-aged people should seize the day and race against time.

Zhu Xi

*Collected Works of Zhu Wengong*



### Note

① Huang Song was a friend of Zhu Xi's.



yǔ jì bó yīng  
与冀伯英

bó yīng yǒu zhì yú xué , qí shǐ yě zhèng 。 rán pú yú bó yīng hòu yǒu yī  
伯英有志于学，其始也正。然仆于伯英厚，有一

yán yuàn yǐ xiàn yě  
言愿以献也。

fū xué rú jī shuǐ , qí jī yù shēn zé qí liú yù yuǎn ruò yuē wǒ  
夫学如积水，其积愈深，则其流愈远。若曰：“我

rú shì , shì yì zú yǐ wú kǒng gōu huì zhī yíng qí hé kě dài yě wú lǐ yǒu  
如是，是亦足矣！”吾恐沟浍之盈，其涸可待也。吾里有

zǐ shǐ zǐ bó yīng hé cóng ér wèn zhī  
子史子，伯英盍从而问之！

zhāng xiào xiáng  
张孝祥

yú hú jí  
《于湖集》

白话  
翻译



伯英有志向要学习，而且有很好的开端。然而我是你很好的朋友，因此要跟你说说我对学习的看法。

学习，就好像是聚集流水，水积得越深，那么它就能流到更远的地方。就好像说：“我学到这样，也就可以了，足够了！”我恐怕这就像装满了的沟渠，干涸是指日可待的。我家乡有个姓史的读书人，伯英为何不向他请教呢？





## To Ji Boying<sup>①</sup>



You are bent on learning and have begun well. However, as an intimate friend of yours, I want to have a word with you on learning.

Knowledge is like water: the deeper it is, the farther it can flow. Somebody may say: "As it is, I have already got enough knowledge." But I am afraid that an overflowing ditch will dry up very soon. There is a gentleman named Shi in my neighbourhood, why don't you go to learn from him?

Zhang Xiaoxiang<sup>②</sup>

*A Collection of Yu Hu's (Zhang Xiaoxiang's) Writings*



### Notes

- ① Ji Boying was a young friend of Zhang's.
- ② Zhang Xiaoxiang (1132-1170) was a patriotic poet in the Southern Song Dynasty.

yǔ zēng jìng zhī  
与曾敬之

wéi xué rì jìn wéi wèi dú shū zuò wén yì shì wú rén shì dàn dú shū běn  
为学日进为慰。读书作文，亦是吾人事。但读书本  
bù wéi zuò wén zuò wén qí mò yě yǒu qí běn bì yǒu qí mò wèi wén yǒu běn  
不为作文，作文其末也。有其本必有其末，未闻有本  
shèng ér mò bù mào zhě ruò běn mò dǎo zhì zé suǒ wèi wén yì kě zhī yǐ  
盛而末不茂者。若本末倒置，则所谓文亦可知矣！

shì chū shū bù shí fù  
适出，书不时复。

lù jiǔ yuān  
陆九渊

lù jiǔ yuān jí  
《陆九渊集》

白话  
翻译



你的学习每天都有进步，我很高兴。读书和写作是我们的分内之事。但是读书并不是为了要写文章，写文章只是读书的延续。凡事有根本就有末尾，没有听说有根很茂盛而树枝树叶却枯萎的。如果本末倒置的话，那么所写出的文章也就可想而知了！

我近期有事外出了，所以此信未及早回复。



## To Zeng Jingzhi<sup>①</sup>



I am very glad to know that you have made daily progress in your studies. Learning and writing are both duties of us scholars. But the aim of learning is not writing, which is only the branch of the root—learning. If only there is the root, there will certainly be the branch. I have never heard a case where the root is vigorous but the branch is not thick with leaves. If one pays more attention to the branch than to the root, then everybody can guess what his writings would be like.

This reply has not been made earlier because of my absence from home for a period of time.

Lu Jiuyuan<sup>②</sup>

*Collected Works of Lu Jiuyuan*



**Notes**

① Zeng Jingzhi was a young friend of Lu's.

② Lu Jiuyuan (1139–1193) was a philosopher-cum-educator in the Southern Song Dynasty.



yú huáng xún zhōng  
与黄循中

mǒu shān jū jiǎng xí cū shì sù huái jīng mén zhī mìng gù chū miào cháo  
某山居讲习，粗适素怀。荆门之命，固出庙朝

bù wàng zhī yì rán yǎ wèi yǒu wéi lì zhī xìng xìng shàng chí cì kě xú jué qù  
不忘之意，然雅未有为吏之兴。幸尚迟次，可徐决去

jiù ěr  
就耳。

rén zhī bù kě yǐ bù xué yóu yú zhī bù kě yǐ wú shuǐ ér shì zhì shì ruò  
人之不可以不学，犹鱼之不可以无水！而世至视若

zhūi yóu qǐ bù shèn kě tàn zāi qióng rǎng jiān qiè qǔ fù guì zhě hé xiàn wéi  
赘疣，岂不甚可叹哉？穹壤间，窃取富贵者何限，惟

yōng rén bǐ fū xiàn zhī ěr shí zhě shì zhī fāng shēn lián qí mǐn shāng qí fù  
庸人鄙夫羡之耳。识者视之，方深怜其悯，伤其赋

rén zhī xíng ér bù qiú jìn rén zhī dào zhì yǔ yǐ chóng tóng qí bǎo shì hào wù  
人之形，而不求尽人之道，至与蚁虫同其饱适好恶，

xū shēng làng sǐ qí zài gāo wèi zhě shì zú yǐ bō qí yí chòu yí jūn zǐ jiān  
虚生浪死。其在高位者，适足以播其遗臭，貽君子监

jiè ér yǐ  
戒而已。

cǐ gù xún zhōng suǒ yí shēn xiǎo dì jū jīn zhī shì bù dé bù shēn yán  
此固循中所宜深晓。第居今之世，不得不申言

zhī liàng yì bù yàn yú cǐ yě  
之，谅亦不厌于此也。

lù jiǔ yuān  
陆九渊

lù jiǔ yuān jí  
《陆九渊集》



## To Huang Xunzhong



I have been teaching in this hilly area for years and the work accords with my aspirations fairly well. I know that the reason why I have been appointed as the prefect of Jingmen is that the Court wants to show that I am still remembered. But I am sorry to say that I have never been interested in becoming an official. Fortunately, the matter is not so urgent. I can still take time to make my decision on whether to accept the appointment or not.

Learning is indispensable to man, just as water is indispensable to the fish. But what a pity it is that learning is regarded by many as something superfluous nowadays. In this earthly world, some people become rich and powerful by foul means. They are admired only by mediocrities. Men of insight only take pity on them, thinking that these people, though having a human body, do not do what human beings should do but share likes and dislikes with ants and insects. They live in vain and also die in vain. Among these people there are high-ups, whose scandals are spread widely and become negative examples for the men of learning to take lesson from.

I think you must have already known all this. But in today's world, it is all the more necessary to expound it. And I suppose you would not feel tired of listening to what I

白话  
翻译



我居住在山里讲学，基本上还是符合我平日的想法的。荆门的命令固然是体现了朝廷对我的不忘，但我现在还没有为官的兴趣。幸好这件事还可以推迟，我也可以慢慢地决定自己的去留。

人不可以不学习，就好像是鱼儿离不开水一样！但是世道上还是有人把求学看做是毒瘤，这难道不值得叹息吗？天地之间，靠不正当手段窃取富贵的人不可胜数，只有一些愚蠢和卑鄙的人才会羡慕他们。有见识的人都怀着很怜悯的态度看待这些人，并感伤于他们虽然有着人类的形态，却没有实行正当的人道，以至于像蚂蚁虫子一样只知道饱暖好坏，生活在世界上只是醉生梦死。那些人身居高位，却恰好传播了他们的臭名，给君子提供借鉴的例子。

这些固然是你能够深切了解的，但是生活在当今这个世界上，我又不能不一再重申这样的观点，希望你能谅解，不至于惹你厌烦。





Chinese Short Letters  
through the Ages

have said.

Lu Jiuyuan  
*Collected Works of Lu Jiuyuan*





tuō gū. mǔ shì shū  
托孤母氏书

mǔ shì cí jiàn jiē hū qú láo zhī ēn jīn shēng yǐ yǐ miǎn zhōu shān  
母氏慈鉴：嗟呼！劬劳之恩，今生已矣。缅舟山

zhī jí tuǎn wú jūn hé zài tiào cháng huái zhī qīng liú wú fū hé zài xùn guó  
之急湍，吾君何在？眺长淮之清流，吾夫何在？殉国

xùn fū shě cǐ shàng huáng tā jí zāi  
殉夫，舍此尚遑他及哉？

gù nǚ yóu gǒu huó yú shì zhě yǐ mèng zhū fǔ èr líng wèi dé suǒ tuō jìn  
顾女犹苟活于世者，以梦珠甫二龄，未得所托。寢

lìng sān chǐ miǎo gū zhǎn zhuǎn rù yú zéi shǒu zé nǚ chéng xiè jiā zuì rén yǐ  
令三尺藐孤，展转入于贼手，则女诚谢家罪人矣。

huò gào yuán zéi shèn zhòng nǚ xù hū wèi háo jié qiě xià lìng bǎo quán jiā  
或告元贼甚重女婿，呼为“豪杰”，且下令保全家

shǔ shì wèi nǚ jì kě bù sǐ bìng kě bù bì rán ér bì zhòng yán gān zéi  
属。似为女计，可不死，并可躲避。然而币重言甘，贼

zhī guàn jì yě jiàn huàn shòu mìng yú fū fù zhī sù zhì yě fù cháo zhī xià  
之惯技也；见患授命，愚夫妇之素志也。覆巢之下，

níng yǒu wán luǎn nǚ gài jì zhī shóu yǐ  
宁有完卵？女盖计之熟矣。

wú āo suī yuàn zhí shì nǚ yǒu nián qí xīn wú tā mèng zhū shǔ bǐ qiǎn  
吴媪虽愿直，事女有年，其心无他。梦珠属彼，遣

tóu mǔ suǒ zǐ xiōng dì háng shàng qiú shàn shì zhī sì qí cháng chéng zhǔ  
投母所，子兄弟行，尚求善视之。俟其长成，嘱

yǐ wù shí xīn lù wù wàng guó chóu zé nǚ jiàn wáng xù yú dì xià huò wú cán  
以勿食新禄，勿忘国仇，则女见亡婿于地下，或无惭

sè ěr  
色耳。





# A Letter to My Mother to Entrust My Son to Her



Dear mother:

Alas! I can not pay you any more in my life my gratitude for bringing me up. I look into the distance for the currents around the Zhoushan Island where His Majesty the Emperor is known to reside now, but how can I find him? I look into the distance again for the flowing Yangtse and Huai Rivers where my husband used to live, but again how can I find him? It is high time for me to die for my country and my husband. What else can I afford to do?

The only reason why I have tried to live on is that my son Mengzhu is only two years old and there is nobody to whom I could entrust him. If the orphaned baby were to be got by the enemy by this way or that, I would become a person guilty to my husband's family, indeed. It is said that the enemy pay much regard to your son-in-law, calling him a "hero", and have given orders to protect his family. So if I were to take into consideration myself only, there would be no need for me to die or even to take refuge. But it is the enemy's old trick to offer rich rewards and pay high compliments, and it is the determined will of my husband and myself to sacrifice our lives for the country when it is in trouble. When the nest is ruined,

lín yǐng tì qì bù zhī suǒ yún  
临颖涕泣，不知所云！

lǐ shì  
李氏

guī mò cuì zhēn  
《闺墨萃珍》

白话  
翻译



亲爱的母亲：唉！您对我的养育之恩，今生无法报答了。想着舟山的湍湍流水，我的国君在哪里？远望长江淮河的清清的流水，我的丈夫又在哪里？除了殉国和殉夫，我还有其他的选择吗？

想来女儿我至今还苟且活在这个世界上的话，只因为梦珠刚刚两岁，还没有可以托付的地方。假使让我这三尺长的小孤儿，几经辗转落入敌人的手里，那女儿就真是谢家的罪人呢。有人告诉我说元朝贼人很敬重您女婿，称呼他为“豪杰”，而且下达命令要保全他的家属。这好像是在为我谋划，这样我就可以不殉国殉夫，也不用躲避。但是言而无信是敌人的一贯伎俩；碰到国难当头的时候要用生命来护国，这是我们夫妇一贯的志向。鸟巢倾倒了，难道还能有完好的鸟蛋吗？我已经考虑清楚了。

吴妈虽然很憨直，服侍我已经很多年了，她的心没有其他的杂念。就让她带着梦珠，去投奔母亲您。我希望梦珠的表兄妹们不要欺负他，替我好好照顾他，等他长大成人的时候，嘱咐他千万不要在新的朝廷为官，不要忘记了我们的国耻，这样女儿我一旦在地下见到亡夫，或许就不会有愧疚的颜色。

写信时不自禁地哭起来，看着书信，不知说些什么。



can the eggs remain unbroken? I have thought over the matter thoroughly.

My wet nurse named Wu, though illiterate and timid, has waited on me for years and is really faithful. I have entrusted my son Mengzhu to her and have asked her to bring him to you. I wish his cousins would treat him kindly. When he grows up into a man, do tell him not to be an official of the new regime and not to forget the national humiliation. If so, I think I shall not feel ashamed to meet my husband in the netherworld.

I have been weeping while writing. So I am not quite sure what I have written.

Mrs. Li<sup>①</sup>

*A Collection of Masterpieces by Lady Writers*



### Note

- ① Mrs. Li was wife of Xie Fangde (1226–1289), a high-ranking official and general in the late Southern Song Dynasty. When the armies of the Yuan Dynasty invaded the prefecture of Xinzhou where Xie Fangde was the prefect, his family dispersed in the fighting. Mrs. Li escaped narrowly with her only child and thought her husband had most probably died. So she made up her mind to die for the country. And before her death, she wrote this letter to her mother to entrust her son to her.

miǎn lín xué shì xī yì  
勉林学士希逸

mǒu sù yǒu xìng huò yǔ jiè dì tóng yín gōng yīn zhī yǒu yǐ xún jū chù zhù  
某夙有幸，获与介弟同寅恭，因之有以询居处著  
zuò zhī wàn yī bù qī qī dé sàng ér yán yǔ wén zhāng zú yǐ zhào jīn chuán  
作之万一。不戚戚得丧，而言语文章足以诏今传

hòu zhú xī xiān shēng hé hàn zāi  
后——竹溪先生何憾哉！

yī rì zhī hè hè zhě duō yǐ qiān zài ér hè hè zhě jǐ rén wèi yī rì jì  
一日之赫赫者多矣，千载而赫赫者几人？为一日计  
zhě wú qiān zài yě jué yǐ  
者，无千载也，决矣！

wén tiān xiáng  
文天祥

wén shān quán jí  
《文山全集》





# A Letter to Scholar Lin Xiyi<sup>①</sup> to Give Him Encouragement



I am fortunate enough to be a colleague of your brother's and therefore have the opportunity to know something about your living and writings. You are really a man who does not worry about his own personal gains and losses, and whose words and writings not only illuminate the present but will also go down to posterity. Such being the case, how could you have regret of yourself?

There can be many people who are bright and glorious for a period of time, but how many people can there be who are regarded as bright and glorious for a thousand years.

Wen Tianxiang<sup>②</sup>

*Complete Works of Wen Shan (Wen Tianxiang)*



白话  
翻译

我真幸运，能和您的兄弟同朝为官，因此才有机会得知一些您起居和著作的消息。您能够不为自己的得失而快乐或悲伤，并且，您的言语和文章不但能指引当今，更能流传千古——竹溪先生您又有什么可遗憾的呢？

在很短的时间内声名显赫的人很多，但是千年以后，还能保持显赫的又有几人？只追求一时显赫的人，就要失去千载的际遇，这是绝对的事情！





## Notes

- ① Lin Xiyi was a friend of Wen's.
- ② Wen Tianxiang(1236-1283) was a great patriot in the late Southern Song Dyasty. When he was one of the prime ministers, he was captured in a battle by the invading troops of the Yuan Dynasty. As he refused to surrender, he was imprisoned for three years and was finally killed.



zhēng yuè fù quàn xiáng shū

## 正月复劝降书

tiān xiáng huáng kǒng fèng fù zhì shǐ dū chéng shì láng tiān xiáng zhì tīng  
天祥惶恐，奉复制使、都承侍郎；天祥至汀

hòu jí jiàn fú yǐ cì lún shī cháo tíng yǎng shì sān bǎi nián wú sǐ jié zhě  
后，即建、福以次沦失。朝廷养士三百年，无死节者。

rú xīn xiān shēng chā qiáng rén yì bù zhī jīn guǒ sǐ fǒu āi zāi āi zāi  
如心先生，差强人意；不知今果死否？哀哉！哀哉！

zuò gū chéng zhōng shì lì qióng qū fàn guān yǔ zhòu wú yī kě wéi  
坐孤城中，势力穷屈，泛观宇宙，无一可为，

shèn fù wú píng shēng zhī niàn sān nián bù jiàn lǎo mǔ dēng qián yī xī zì tīng  
甚负吾平生之念！三年不见老母，灯前一夕，自汀

yí tún zhì lóng yán jiàn dào dé yǔ lǎo mǔ xiāng jiàn jí xià cóng xiān dì yóu fù  
移屯至龙岩，间道得与老母相见，即下从先帝游，复

hé yún suǒ dū xiāng gōng qù nián guǎn bàn yòng qíng shèn zhì cháng niàn zhī bù  
何云！唆都相公去年馆伴，用情甚至，常念之不

wàng gù  
忘故。

huí shū fù qiǎn luó huī lái yǒng jué yǒng jué fú qǐ tái zhào  
回书复遣罗辉来，永诀！永诀！伏乞台照！

wén tiān xiáng  
文天祥

wén shān quán jí  
《文山全集》





## Reply to a Letter Inducing Me to Capitulate<sup>①</sup>



I am in a state of bewilderment in making this reply to you. After my arrival at Tingzhou, the cities of Jianning and Fu'an fell consecutively to the enemy. Alas! The court of the Song Dynasty has cultivated scholars for about three hundred years, but there was none to die for the country. The only one barely satisfactory is Mr. Ruxin who is on a hunger strike. I don't know whether he is still living or has died. What a pity it is! What a pity it is!

Living in an isolated city with diminishing forces, I look around the world but can find nothing for me to do. This goes against my long-cherished aspirations, indeed.

I had not been with my old mother for three years until the eve of the last Lantern Festival. On that eve my troops moved to station in the city of Longyan. On the way I went by a path to see my mother. Now even if I have to follow the late Emperor in the netherworld, I have nothing to regret. Last year when I was detained by the enemy, Prime Minister Suodu<sup>②</sup> was assigned to be my companion. He treated me so well that I often remember him.

This reply is carried back to you also by Luo Hui<sup>③</sup>.

We'll part forever! We'll part forever! Please understand

白话  
翻译



我很惶恐地回复制使、都承侍郎：自从我到了汀州以后，随即建宁和福安也都先后沦陷。我朝养兵三百多年，却没有一个为丧国殉节的人。像如心先生，还算差强人意地做出了殉节的姿态，只是不知道他到底死了没有？悲哀啊！悲哀啊！

坐在被围困的孤城里面，兵力有限，看着天空，毫无办法，这很违背我平生的意愿！自从那晚灯前一别之后，我已经三年没有见过我的母亲。队伍从汀州转移到龙岩，顺便去看望了一下母亲；这样，我即使是追随先帝下黄泉，也没有什么遗憾了！唉都是我以前的同窗好友，感情很深厚，我经常 would 想念他。

这封回信还是请罗辉带给你，永别了，永别了！希望你能明白我的话。





what I said.

Wen Tianxiang  
*Complete Works of Wen Shan*



### Notes

- ① This letter was written in reply to two former officials of the Song Dynasty who had been in charge of defending the cities of Jianning and Fu'an but had failed and surrendered to the Yuan Dynasty. These two men sent a letter to Wen Tianxiang, trying to induce him to capitulate. At the time, Wen was commissioned to defend the city of Tingzhou and Longyan and was in a very difficult position. In this reply, he refused resolutely to surrender and expressed his determination to die for the country.
- ② Prime Minister Suodu was one of the prime ministers of the Yuan Dynasty.
- ③ Luo Hui was the messenger sent by the two former Song Dynasty officials.





蘇  
氏  
書  
齋  
PDG

# IV

liáo

jīn

yuan

辽、金、元

THE LIAO, JIN AND  
YUAN DYNASTIES

欽定四庫全書

PDG

lín zhōng yí zǐ shū  
临终遗子书

cǐ qù míng lù wú xīn hào rán gāng zhí zhī qì bì bù xià chén ér kě  
此去冥路，吾心浩然；刚直之气，必不下沉。儿可

wú lǜ  
无虑！

shì luàn shí jiǎn nǚ lì zì hù yōu míng suī yì níng bù jiàn ěr  
世乱时艰，努力自护。幽明虽异，宁不见尔！

hán yù  
韩玉

jīn shǐ hán yù zhuàn  
《金史·韩玉传》

白话  
翻译

现在我就要死了，但我的心里很坦荡；我的气节刚强正直，一定不会在死后遭受苦难，我儿你可以放心！

现在世道很乱，时事艰难，你要注意保护自己。虽然即将阴阳相隔，但是我相信我在那里能够见到你的。





## To My Son before My Death



Now I am going to the netherworld with an untainted heart. My spirit, resolute and unyielding, will never be subdued. You need not worry about me.

In this turbulent world and hard times, you must try your best to protect yourself. Though I am to be in a different world, I don't think I cannot see you from there.

Han Yu<sup>①</sup>

*Biography of Han Yu, History of Jin Dynasty*



### Note

- ① Han Yu was a famous scholar and official in the Jin Dynasty. (His name sounds the same as that of a great writer in the Tang Dynasty. But the two are different in Chinese characters. ) He was finally imprisoned in a framed-up treason case. This letter was written in prison.



yǔ lián xuān fū  
与廉宣抚

bié hòu nán guī dé shǒu qiū lǒng shū shì suǒ yuàn  
别后南归，得守丘陇，殊适所愿！

lǎo lái qíng sī kǔ yàn xuān zá kè dū ér tóng zhǒng tián dú shū suī  
老来情思，苦厌喧杂。课督儿童，种田读书，虽

zhuō móu xīn zì xǐ xìng nóng fū yě sǒu rì xī xiāng yù yǔ zhī huà yán  
拙谋，心自喜幸，农夫野叟，日夕相遇，与之话言，

gù bù jìn xiǎo yào qí zhōng wú shèn xiǎn zǔ shì kě shàng yī  
固不尽晓，要其中无甚险阻，是可尚矣。

yuǎn rǔ chéng jì liǎng wǎng shū jiào qiě chéng yǎ yì kěn shǔ xiāng jiān  
远辱承寄，两枉书教，且承雅意，肯属乡间。

yū kuò zhī wèi yì yǒu tóng zhě xǐ bù néng mèi zhù sì hǎo yīn bǐ rén yǒu  
迂阔之为，亦有同者，喜不能寐，伫俟好音，鄙人有

xìng xū dé huì hé qiè wàng qiè wàng  
幸，须得会合。切望！切望！

xǔ héng

许衡

xǔ lǔ zhāi jí

《许鲁斋集》



# To Lian<sup>①</sup> the Minister Governing the Borderland



I came to my native place in the south after our separation. To live in the countryside accords well with my cherished aspirations.

As I am getting old, I have become badly sick of noises and crowdedness. I am not good at supervising children's learning, doing farm work, or reading, but I am really pleased to do so. Here I meet with peasants and old vagabonds daily and often talk with them. Although we can not understand each other fully, I think there isn't any intrigue in their talks, and that is something commendable.

I was very glad to receive your two letters in succession, and the more so to know that you were coming to the countryside to see me. Indeed, I was too excited to fall asleep at night to know that there is somebody who agrees to my pedantic doings. I'll feel so happy to reunite with you and look forward to hearing from you again so anxiously, so anxiously!

Xu Heng<sup>②</sup>

*Collected Works of Xu Luzhai*

白话  
翻译



和你分别之后我回到南方，守在我在农村的家乡，这正好满足了我的愿望！

我年纪大了，不喜欢喧闹嘈杂。虽然我不善于督促小孩子读书，我一边种地一边读书，但是我很欢喜也很庆幸。我每天早晚都能遇见乡间的农民，与他们交谈，我们大概都不完全明白对方的意思，但是在他们的言语中，是不会有险恶的用意，这是非常可贵的。

非常感谢你从很远的地方两次寄信给我，我也非常高兴得知你也愿意将来在乡间居住。我这样迂阔的行为，竟也得到了你的认同，我高兴得晚上都难以入睡，等待着有好消息传来。我若是有幸能和你会合就好了！坐立不安地盼望你！





## Notes

- ① Lian was an old friend of Xu's when they were colleagues at the court.
- ② Xu Heng ( 1209–1281 ) was a high-ranking official in the early Yuan Dynasty. This letter was written after his retirement, expressing his ardent love for life in the countryside.



dá hé yǒu dào shū  
答何友道书

péng yǒu zhōng néng wén cí kě yǔ shāng lüè gǔ jīn zhě shě zú xià qí  
朋友中能文辞、可与商略古今者，舍足下其  
shéi zī méng huì shū lěi shù bǎi yán yán jiē yǒu yòng zhī shí ér fēi wú yì  
谁？兹蒙惠书，累数百言，言皆有用之实，而非无益  
zhī tán suī gǔ rén xiāng miǎn xiāng chéng zhī dào hé yǐ yú cǐ sān fù zhī  
之谈；虽古人相勉相成之道，何以逾此！三复之  
yú shí xí ér cáng zhī yǐ  
余，什袭而藏之矣！

xī shí zǐ dào jì wáng zhī yì bǐ mèng zǐ wèi zhū dà fū guó rén jīn shì  
昔时子道齐王之意，俾孟子为诸大夫国人矜式，  
qí yì shèn hòu ér mèng zǐ yì qǐ bù yù wéi cǐ zhě zāi yòu qǐ bù néng wéi  
其意甚厚，而孟子亦岂不欲为此者哉，又岂不能为  
cǐ zhě zāi ér yuē fū shí zǐ wū zhī qí bù kě yě mèng zǐ yán qí bù kě ér  
此者哉？而曰夫时子恶知其不可也。孟子言其不可而  
bù yán qí suǒ yǐ bù kě hé yú shì gù yǒu wèi yì yán zhě ér fēi kě yǐ yán  
不言其所以不可，何欤？事固有未易言者，而非可以言  
xiāng shòu shòu yě yì hán zǐ yǒu yún zhī yán zhī rén bù yán qí yì yǐ  
相授受也。抑韩子有云：知言之人，不言其意已  
chuán yōng jù zhī fū bù yán zhě zhī fēi shēn yán zhī yě yē  
传。庸讎知夫不言者之非深言之也耶！

zú xià zhī yán zhě yě qǐ dài yán ér hòu zhī gù yú dá zú xià zhī yì  
足下知言者也，岂待言而后知：故于答足下之意，  
bù yǐ yán ér yǐ bù yán wéi gāo míng liàng zhī bù xuān  
不以言而以不言，惟高明亮之。不宣。

wú chéng  
吴澄

wú wén zhèng jí  
《吴文正集》

## A Reply to He Youdao<sup>①</sup>



Excepting you, who else is the man among my friends who is good at writing and with whom I can discuss both history and current affairs? I have just received your letter, in which all the words, numbering a few hundred, are useful and meaningful and are far from empty talk. I think the friendship between us cannot be surpassed even by that between the ancient gentlemen, which was characterized by mutual encouragement and mutual complementation. After having read the letter thrice, I have stored it up as a treasure.

Once in the ancient time, Minister Shizi of the Kingdom of Qi<sup>②</sup> proclaimed a message of the King, saying that all scholars and countrymen should pay respect to Mencius and follow his example. It was really very kind of the King to do so. Didn't Mencius like that? Or, wasn't Mencius entitled to be treated like that? And how could Shizi know if it was impracticable? Mencius himself only said that it was impracticable, but he did not say why it was impracticable. What is the reason for that? It is because there are things that are not easy to be spoken of explicitly and cannot be communicated between people with words. The great writer Han Yu once said that the man who knows well how to speak could communicate his opinion to others without saying anything. Who knows that what one

白话  
翻译



在我的朋友之中，既文辞出众又可以讨论古今历史的人，真是非你莫属了！很荣幸又收到了你的洋洋数百言的来信，你的话都是非常实际有用的，没有一句没有益处；在古代也有相互勉励相互成就的先例，但是他们怎么能和你我的情谊相比呢？

古时候，时子转达齐王的意思，号召所有的读书人和百姓都要尊敬孟子并要遵从孟子的学说，齐王的情谊实在是深挚殷切。孟子难道会不想这样做吗？或者说，孟子怎么会不乐意被这样对待呢？那么，时子是怎么知道这样做是不行的呢？孟子自己只说不可以这样，却没有说为什么不可以，这是什么原因呢？这是因为，有些事情是不容易说清楚的，而且也是不能说清楚的。韩愈说过：真正善解人意的人，还没等说话的人开口，就已经领会了他的意思。有谁能够知道，一个人不想说的东西往往正是他最想表达的呢？

而您，正是一位善解人意的人，哪里需要我先说你才明白。所以，我不用再回答你的问题，我用不说来代替说，我希望您能够理解我的用意！





does not say is what he really want to emphasize?

You are one of those who know well how to speak. It is not necessary for people to say before you can understand them. So in this reply, I really mean what I don't say instead of what I would say. I wish you would forgive me for doing so.

Wu Cheng<sup>③</sup>

*Collected Works of Wu Wenzheng*



## Notes

- ① He Youdao was one of those friends of Wu trying to persuade him to serve the Yuan regime.
- ② Kingdom of Qi was one of the kingdoms in the Period of the Warring Kingdoms.
- ③ Wu Cheng (1249–1333) was a famous scholar born in the Song Dynasty but died in the Yuan Dynasty. He was many times recommended to be an official of the Yuan regime. But because of his loyalty to the Song Dynasty; he refused to accept them again and again. This letter is a telling example.





蘇  
氏  
書  
齋  
PDG



V

míng

qīng

明、清

THE MING AND  
QING DYNASTIES



欽定四庫全書  
PDG

yǔ wáng zhòng jìn shū  
与王仲缙书

mǒu bái bié hòu zhōng rì gǔ gǔ shēn ní zhōng zhí pèi jǐng jǐng měi yú  
某白：别后终日汨汨深泥中，执轡兢兢，每虞  
qīng diē xìng wú suǒ kǔ qián tú wèi zhī shāo shèng fǒu jǐng jǐn zhī wài yī tīng  
倾跌，幸无所苦；前途未知稍胜否？敬谨之外，一听  
zhī zì rán wú suǒ yòng xīn yě  
之自然，无所用心也。

lái shū yán xiāng niàn zhī yì shèn zēng gǎn tàn fāng jīn sī wén liáo luò  
来书言相念之意，甚增感叹！方今斯文寥落，  
suǒ wàng yú zú xià zhě qǐ yǒu yá zài wàng wù yǐ shèng xián zhī yán wéi kōng  
所望于足下者，岂有涯哉！望勿以圣贤之言为空  
tán zhī zhī yù zhēn jiàn zhī yù dǔ zì qī zhě yù yuǎn dà gù dī míng mìng  
谈，知之欲真，践之欲笃，自期者欲远大，顾谥明命，  
yǐ wù fù tiān zhī suǒ shòu shù jǐ qí kě ěr rú mǒu zhī wán yīn céng hé zú  
以勿负天之所授，庶几其可耳。如某之顽闇，曾何足  
xiào yē dāng yǐ qiān gǔ wèi shī sì hòu shì zhī jǐ wú bó yú zì dài ér qiǎn  
效耶！当以千古为师，俟后世知己，无薄于自待，而浅  
yú qiú hé kuàng xián wáng yǐ shēn shuài zhī yí wú dài yú qū qū zhī yán yǐ  
于求合；况贤王以身率之，宜无待于区区之言矣。

fāng xiào rú  
方孝孺

xùn zhì zhāi jí  
《逊志斋集》



## A Letter to Wang Zhongjin<sup>①</sup>



After our separation, my life has been like travelling on a muddy road. For fear of tumbling down, I ride very carefully. Fortunately I have not suffered much. I don't know if things would get better on the way ahead. I will be prudent in doing every thing. But besides that, I can only let things go their own course and pay my attention to nothing.

You said in your letter that you missed me much. That can only deepen my sadness. In today's world, there are not so many genuine scholars, and so ardent hopes have been laid upon you. I hope that you will not dismiss the teachings of the ancient saints as mere empty talk. You should go deep into the truth in learning and be earnest in putting into practice what you have learned. You should aim high and try your best to accomplish the task entrusted to you by Heaven so as to live up to His gift. That is what is expected of you. I am not a wise man. There is no reason for you to follow my example. You should learn from human history and wait for the posterity to understand you. You must not slacken the demand on yourself or do something only for the purpose of winning people's praises. I believe you will set an example to others in doing all

白话  
翻译



自从分别之后，我的生活就像陷入了泥潭之中的马车，我战战兢兢地握着缰绳，生怕会跌下来，幸运的是还没有受什么苦。我不知道前面的道路是否会平坦一些？我只能小心谨慎，其余一切都顺其自然，没有办法再去操心。

你的来信中表达了对我的惦念，让我更加感慨！当今的社会，读书风气比较衰落，因此你肩负着非常重大的责任与希望！希望你不要把圣贤的言论当作是空谈，你对他们理解得越透，实践得越多，自我的期望就会越远大，不要辜负了上天授予你的责任。像我这样顽固昏聩的人，是不值得你效仿的！你应当把历史当作自己的老师，并期望后世的人知道自己，不要对自己要求太低，去迎合大多数人的评价；我相信你会把自己作为他人的表率。实际上，你是不需要我说这么多的。





these. In fact, there is no need for me to say so much.

Fang Xiaoru<sup>②</sup>

*Collected Works of Xunzhizhai*



## Notes

- ① Wang Zhongjin was a friend of Fang Xiaoru's.
- ② Fang Xiaoru (1357–1402) was a famous writer in the early Ming Dynasty. He was so loyal to the emperor that after the emperor had been overthrown by his uncle, he refused to draw up the declaration of enthronement of the new emperor. He paid a horrible price for that. Not only he himself was torn to pieces in execution, but all his relatives, numbering over eight hundred, were also executed by the new regime.



jì zhāng shì wén  
寄张世文

zhí qiān wǎng wèn zhī yì shèn shèng xiāng yǔ shù yuè wú néng wéi yī zì  
执谦枉问之意甚盛，相与数月，无能为一字  
zhī yì nǎi jīn yòu jiāng yuǎn bié yī kuì fù kuì fù  
之益，乃今又将远别矣。愧负！愧负！

jīn shí yǒu péng měi zhì bù wú ér yǒu zhì zhě jué shǎo wèi shèng xián bù  
今时友朋美质不无，而有志者绝少；谓圣贤不  
fù kě jì suǒ shì yǐ wéi zhǔn dì zhě bù guò jiàn gōng míng xuàn yào yī shí  
复可冀，所视以为准的者，不过建功名炫耀一时，  
yǐ hài yú fū sù zǐ zhī guān tīng wū hū cǐ shēn kě yǐ wéi yáo shùn cān tiān  
以骇愚夫俗子之观听。呜呼！此身可以为尧舜，参天  
dì ér zì qī ruò cǐ bù yì kě āi yě hū gù qū qū yú yǒu péng zhōng měi  
地，而自期若此，不亦可哀也乎？故区区于友朋中，每  
yǐ lì zhì wèi shuō yì zhī wǎng wǎng yǒu yàn qí fán zhě rán zú bù néng  
以“立志”为说，亦知往往有厌其烦者。然卒不能  
shě shì ér zú yǒu suǒ xiān chéng yǐ xué bù lì zhì rú zhí mù wú gēn shēng yì  
舍是而卒有所先。诚以学不立志，如植木无根，生意  
jiāng wú cóng fā duān yǐ zì gǔ jí jīn yǒu zhì ér wú chéng zhě zé yǒu zhī wèi  
将无从发端矣。自古及今，有志而无成者则有之；未  
yǒu wú zhì ér néng yǒu chéng zhě yě  
有无志而能有成者也。

yuǎn bié wú yǐ wèi zèng fù shēn qí lì zhì zhī shuō xián zhě bù yǐ  
远别无以为赠，复申其“立志”之说。贤者不以  
wèi yū shù qín qín zhí qiān wǎng wèn zhī shèng xīn bù wèi xū yǐ  
为迂，庶勤勤执谦枉问之盛心，不为虚矣。

wáng shǒu rén  
王守仁

yáng míng quán shū  
《阳明全书》



## To Zhang Shiwen<sup>①</sup>



You were so modest as to have come to learn from me. We have been together for several months, but I have not been able to give you any help in your learning. And now I have to part with you and go to a distant land. I really feel sorry for that.

Among our acquaintances today, there are quite a few with fine character, but there are very few with lofty ideals. They say that it is no longer possible for one to become a saint. What they aim at is only to make some personal achievements in order to show themselves off for a time and to astound and cheat the ignorant. Oh, what a pity it is that these people who could be as noble-minded as the ancient saints and as great as the universe should have goals like this for their life! And so I have always been expounding among my friends the idea that man must have an ideal. I know that some people are tired of listening to me, but I still cannot give up this idea and insist on that first things must be taken first. I believe that to learn without an ideal is just like planting a rootless tree. There will be nowhere for the tree to get its vitality. Since the ancient times, there have been people who have ideals but do not succeed; there have never been people who do not have ideals but succeed.

白话  
翻译

你诚心诚意地来我这里学习,我们一起相处了好几个月,我却没能给你一个字的教诲。如今又要分别了,我真是十分地惭愧啊!

如今,在我们周围的朋友之中,外貌俊雅的不在少数,但胸怀大志的却几乎是没有。人们都说,很难再期待圣贤的出现了;许多人都在追求个人的名利,并以此炫耀一时,用来蒙蔽一些愚笨的普通人。唉,如果一个本身有尧舜那样才能的人,自我期望却这么低,不也是件可悲的事情吗?所以,我在朋友中经常宣扬“立身”的说法,我也明白经常会有人觉得厌烦。但是我仍然不能舍弃自己想法,最重要的事情就是要最先去做。我相信,没有目的的学习就像一棵无根的树木,是没有办法继续生长的。从古到今,有想法的人不能成功是有的,但是没有想法的人却都是不能成功的。

我要离开了,也没有什么东西可以送给你,我只能再次向你阐明我的“立身”之说。贤德的人不会认为我的说法很迂腐,如果你能这样看,也就不辜负了你诚心向我学习的心意了。





Before my departure, I have nothing to present to you. So I decide to reiterate to you my conviction in having ideals. If you do not regard it as a mere pedantic talk, I think it proves that you were really sincere in coming modestly to learn from me.

Wang Shouren<sup>②</sup>

*The Complete Works of Wang Yangming( Wang Shouren )*



- ① Zhang Shiwen was one of Wang's disciples.
- ② Wang Shouren(1472-1528) was a minister of defence in the Ming Dynasty. But he was best known as a great philosopher and educationist. His other name was Wang Yangming.



yǔ hóng fāng zhōu shū  
与洪方洲书

jìn lái jiào dé shī wén yī shì zhī shì zhí xiě xiōng yì rú yàn yǔ suǒ wèi  
近来觉得诗文一事，只是直写胸臆。如谚语所谓“

kāi kǒu jiàn hóu lóng zhě shǐ hòu rén dú zhī rú zhēn jiàn qí miàn mù yú xiá  
开口见喉咙”者，使后人读之，如真见其面目，瑜瑕

jù bù róng yǎn suǒ wèi běn sè cǐ wéi shàng chéng wén zì yáng zǐ yún shǎn  
俱不容掩，所谓本色，此为上乘文字。扬子云闪

suō jué guài yù shuō bù shuō bù shuō yòu shuō cǐ zuì xià zhě qí xīn shù yì  
缩谲怪，欲说又说，不说又说，此最下者。其心术亦

lüè kě zhī méi shān zǐ jí yǒu jiàn bù zhī hán zǐ jīng guó hé qǔ yān  
略可知。眉山子极有见，不知韩子、荆国何取焉？

jìn lái zuò jiā rú chuī huà hú xiǎo ér suǒ chuī ní gǔ sú wèi zhī huà  
近来作家如吹画壶（小儿所吹泥鼓，俗谓之画

hú hú hú tú tú bù zhī hé diào yòu rú cūn tú gē ròu yī piàn pí máo  
壶），糊糊涂涂，不知何调；又如村屠割肉，一片皮毛；

sī yì xià yǐ shì zhì zhī xiōng qí yǒu huì yān fǒu  
斯益下矣！试质之兄，其有会焉否？

táng shùn zhī  
唐顺之

jīng chuān wén jí  
《荆川文集》



## A Letter to Hong Fangzhou



An idea dawned on me of late. I have come to realize that what is for a writer to do is just to write down what is innermost in his mind and at the bottom of his heart. This is like what the popular saying goes: open the mouth and the throat is seen. When the people of the later generations read such writings, they would be able to see the true features of the author, with both his virtues and defects. These can be called writings in their natural colours, which I think are of the first class. Just opposite is the case with Yang Ziyun<sup>①</sup>, who always writes in a hesitant way and with crafty and queer words. He does not write what he really wants to say and writes what he does not really want to say. His writings should be rated as of the lowest grade. What is in his heart can be seen a little. Su Xun is quite right in his assessment of the man, but I can't understand the reason why Han Yu and Wang Anshi<sup>②</sup> should speak so highly of him.

Nowadays many authors are apt to write in the same way as the children play on painted kettles (the popular name of a drumshaped musical instrument made of clay). The tune sounds muddled and confused. Nobody can tell what the melody is. Such authors are also like the village butchers. They

白话  
翻译



最近,我觉得写诗作文这件事不过是直抒胸臆。就像一句谚语所说的“开口见喉咙”那样,让后人看到它,如同看到了诗人的真面目,好与不好都无法掩饰,这就是“本色”,这也是最上乘的文字。像扬子云那样的,语言闪烁怪异,想说又不说,不想说却要说,这是最差的文字。从文字的风格,也可以大略看出他的心术。苏洵对他的评价非常正确,但是我不明白为什么韩愈和王安石对他的评价这么高?

如今的作家都像在吹画壶(画壶是小孩子吹着玩的泥鼓,俗称画壶),糊糊涂涂,不知道吹的是什么调子;又像村里的屠夫割肉,皮毛都连在一起;这更加是要不得的!我试着向您请教这件事情,您对此有自己的见解吗?



leave a great part of the hair on the meat they cut. They are the worst of their kind. Now I would like to ask you a question: would you agree with me?

Tang Shunzhi<sup>③</sup>

*Collected Works of Jin Chuan*



## Notes

- ① Yang Ziyun was a writer in the Western Han Dynasty.
- ② Su Xun, Han Yu and Wang Anshi were all celebrated writers during the Tang and Song dynasties.
- ③ Tang Shunzhi(1507-1560) was a famous writer and high official in the Ming Dynasty.



fù wáng qī fēng qióng shān zhī xiàn  
复王七峰琼山知县

chéng bù xiá qì cì zhī huá hàn pěng sòng zhī xià gǎn jī bèi zhī  
承不遐弃，赐之华翰，捧诵之下，感激倍之。

qióng shān bǎi xìng rì jiù qiáo cuì zhèng yǐ shù shí nián lái wèi jiàn yī hǎo  
琼山百姓日就憔悴，正以数十年来未见一好

xiàn guān yě zhí shì mǎn huái jīng jì xiǎo shì gē jī gù cǐ pí yì hé xìng  
县官也。执事满怀经济，小试割鸡，顾此僻邑，何幸！

hé xìng shēng yì yǔ yān yòng shì rì rì nán wàng tái xià qiè zhān yǎng yě  
何幸！生亦与焉。用是日日南望台下，切瞻仰也。

jīn rén jū guān qiě mò shuō dà yǒu shǒu duàn wèi bǎi xìng xìng qí lì chú qí  
今人居官，且莫说大有手段，为百姓兴其利、除其

bì zhǐ shì bù rǎn yī fēn yī wén jìn zuǒ yòu rén bù dé wéi hài biàn chū shí tào  
弊，止是不染一分一文，禁左右人不得为害，便出时套

zhōng gāo gāo zhě yī cǐ bù zú wéi zhí shì dào yīn yǒu gǎn chù gū yī zhì  
中高高者矣。此不足为执事道，因有感触，姑一质

zhī  
之。

rén biàn jīn cǐ fèng hòu wài tiáo yuē èr cè chén lǎn yì jì zhí shì  
人便，谨此奉候。外《条约》二册尘览，亦冀执事

yǒu yǐ jiào zhī yǒu yǐ qǔ zhī yě zhū bù jí jìn zhě wéi tái jiàn  
有以教之，有以取之也！诸不及尽者，惟台鉴！

hǎi ruì  
海瑞

hǎi gāng fēng jí  
《海刚峰集》



## A Reply to Wang Qifeng, the Prefect of Qiongsan<sup>①</sup>



It is very kind of you to send a letter to me. After reading it, I feel thankful to you all the more.

Before your arrival here, the people of Qiongsan had been getting poorer and poorer, because there had never been an able and upright prefect for scores of years. You are a master of governing and benefiting the people. In a sense, it is a waste of your talent to be only the prefect of this remote county. But how fortunate it is for the people of Qiongsan to have you! I myself also benefit much. Now the people look southward to you daily to pay their respect.

Speaking of the officials nowadays, not to mention those with great ability who can help the people to promote what is beneficial and abolish what is harmful, even those who are clean themselves and forbid their attendants to do harm to the people are regarded as the brightest among them. It is perhaps not proper for me to speak of all this to you, but as I have such personal experiences, I want to discuss the matter with you.

As there is somebody to go to your place, I asked him to bring this letter to you to pay my respect. Enclosed are two copies of my book *The Regulations*. I sincerely invite your

白话  
翻译

承蒙您不嫌弃我，赐予我您华丽的词章，在拜读的同时，我感到由衷的激动。

在您来到之前，琼山地方的百姓日益贫穷，这是因为几十年来没有一任好县官。您满怀着经世致用的韬略，在这个偏僻的小县城里牛刀小试，对于琼山县的百姓而言，真是值得庆幸！值得庆幸啊！我也觉得这是一件值得庆幸的事情。因此，我天天期盼能见上您一面。现在为官的人，不要说有大的能力，能够为百姓兴利除弊，只要是能做到清正廉洁，两袖清风，能禁止身边的人不为害乡里，便可以称得上是世俗之中的佼佼者。这些都不足以和您相提并论，我只是因为偶有感触，才这样对比的。

如果您有时间又比较方便的话，我竭诚欢迎您能来我这里做客。此外，我写的两册《条约》，希望能有机会得到您的斧正，我们能互相切磋切磋！有很多事情不及细说的，希望您明白！







comments and criticism, and also wish that you would assimilate something from them. There are things I have not said in detail here. Please understand me.

Hai Rui<sup>②</sup>

*A Collection of Hai Gangfeng's (Hai Rui's) Works*



### Notes

- ① Qiongsan County was Hai Rui's native place.
- ② Hai Rui (1514–1587) was one of the most famous honest and upright officials in the Chinese history. He even dared to criticize the emperor. And so he was framed time and again.





dá zhāng tài shǐ  
答张太史

dāng dà xuě chén huì gāo yáng bàn bì jí shū jiǔ  
当大雪晨，惠羔羊半臂及菽酒。

pú lǐng cì zhì yǐ  
仆领赐至矣。

chén xuě jiǔ yǔ qiú duì zhèng yào yě jiǔ wú pò dù zàng qīng dāng guī  
晨雪，酒与裘，对症药也。酒无破肚脏，罄当归  
wèng gāo yáng bàn bì fēi hè fū suǒ cháng fú hán tuì nǐ shài yǐ guī xī  
瓮；羔羊半臂，非褐夫所常服，寒退拟晒以归。西  
xìng jiǎo zǐ yún fēng zài dài lǎo yé jiā guò xià wǒ jiā guò dōng yī xiào  
兴脚子云：“风在戴老爷家过夏，我家过冬。”一笑！

xú wèi  
徐渭

xú wén cháng jí  
《徐文长集》

白话  
翻译



正当下着大雪的早晨，您馈赠给我一件短袖裘衣和一瓮米酒。

我很荣幸地接受了您的礼物。

下着雪的早晨，送来米酒和裘衣，就像对症良药一样及时。如果不是因为喝酒伤害到了我的身体，你送来的酒瓮就要空着回去了；短袖裘衣不是像我这样的穷人天天穿的，等到寒冷的冬天过去，我将把它晒好送还给你。西兴脚子曾经说：“夏天的时候，风在戴老爷的家里；冬天的时候，风就在我的家里。”开个玩笑！



## A Reply to Zhang, Member of the Imperial Academy



(When it snowed heavily in the morning, Zhang presented me as gifts with a short-sleeved fur coat and a jar of wine. )

I received your gifts with the greatest gratitude.

On a snowy morning, wine and fur coats are exactly what people need. If the wine does not injure my stomach, the jar will be returned to you when it is empty. And as the short-sleeved fur coat is not an everyday wear for the poor, it will also be returned to you after being given an airing when the cold has ebbed away. It is well said by the porters of the Xixing Town: "The wind stays at the master's house in summer, but stays at our houses in winter." (This is only for fun. )

Xu Wei ①

*A Collection of Xu Wenchang's (Xu Wei) Works*



### Note

- ① Xu Wei (1521–1593) was a writer and painter in the Ming Dynasty. He was known as a man of humor. In this letter, one can discern a sense of gentle satire and his desire to keep a distance from the rich.

dá hè fān bó dàn ān shū  
答贺藩伯淡庵书

bié chǔ yī yī lǐng xī  
别楮一一领悉。

fū rén cái nán zhī zhī rén gù wèi yì yě bù gǔ píng rì wú tā cháng wéi  
夫人才难知，知人固未易也。不穀平日无他长，惟  
bù yǐ huǐ yù wéi yòng shě qí suǒ bá shí huò chū yú bēi jiǔ tán xiào huò wàng  
不以毁誉为用舍。其所拔识，或出于杯酒谈笑，或望  
qí fēng shén yì tài huò píng rì wèi shí yī miàn tú chá qí xíng shì ér dé zhī  
其丰神意态，或平日未识一面，徒察其行事而得之，  
jiē xū xīn dú jiàn fēi jiè rén yán gù yǒu yǐ jī tōng xiǎn ér qí rén zhōng shēn  
皆虚心独鉴，匪借人言；故有已跻通显而其人终身  
bù zhī zhě rú gōng suǒ yán xián jì yuán yú zhòng lì jiè yù yú xiān róng  
不知者。如公所言，咸冀援于众力，借誉于先容；  
ruò ér rén zhě yān zú yǐ dé guó shì ér shì yì shú kěn wéi zhī yòng zāi  
若而人者，焉足以得国士？而士亦孰肯为之用哉？

rǔ shì lüè chén suǒ yǐ zì shì chéng yí wàng yán yǐ  
辱示，略陈所以，自是诚宜忘言矣。

zhāng jū zhèng  
张居正

zhāng wén zhōng gōng quán jí  
《张文忠公全集》



## A Reply to He Dan'an<sup>①</sup>, the Provincial Governor



All your letters sent to me after our separation have been received one by one.

It is difficult to discover talents, because it is difficult to know man. I have no strong points in my life except that I never accept or reject a person according to other people's praises or denunciation of him. Those I have promoted were discovered either through talking over wine, or through watching their demeanor and expressions. And there are some others whom I have never seen but have selected through examining their doings. All these I have done by myself with an open mind. As a matter of fact, I never depend on other people's recommendations. And so there are some people who have become prominent but don't know what I have done for them all their lives. As you said, many people expect to have others' help to make their choices based on a reputation gained by artificially prettified deeds. How could these people recruit talents of the country? And how could the talents be willing to be employed by them?

It is because you told me your views about the matter that

白话  
翻译



别离之后的书信都一一收到。

人才很难被发现，因为知道和了解一个人本身就很难。我平日里没有什么特长，只是不会根据别人的诋毁和称赞去决定用人与否。我所赏识和提拔的人，有的只是通过喝酒聊天，有的只是看见他的神态和气质，有的平日里从来都没有见面，只是考察他的为人处世而起用，都是通过耐心的考察和单独的检验，没有听信别人的评说，所以才会有已经身居高官但却从来不知道是我提拔赏识的人。假如像你所说的那样，我所提拔的人都是依靠很多人的关系，或者是借助祖宗的声誉；如果我是这样的人，那怎么能得到真正的人才呢？而真正的人才又怎么能为我所用呢？

承蒙你说出你的想法，所以我略微谈论了一点我的观点，这些都是我真诚的话。





I tell you mine and speak without any restraint.

Zhang Juzheng<sup>②</sup>

*Complete Works of Zhang Wenzhong (Zhang Juzheng)*



### Notes

- ① He Dan'an was a friend of Zhang's.
- ② Zhang Juzheng (1525-1582) was a prime minister in the Ming Dynasty. He was known as a reformer of the agrarian system.





dá shào sī mǎ yáng èr shān shū  
答少司马杨二山书

bǐ lái shì xí rén qíng jiàn luò wǎn sòng kē jiù zhōng yǒu shí zhě suī xīn yōu  
比来士习人情，渐落晚宋窠臼中，有识者虽心忧

zhī ér bù gǎn yán pú bù chuǎi qiǎn lòu wàng yǒu suǒ chén wěi rǔ gāo míng  
之而不敢言。仆不揣浅陋，妄有所陈，猥辱高明，

tè chuí jiàn jiǎng gǎn xiè gǎn xiè  
特垂鉴奖，感谢！感谢！

jiǎ shēng yǒu yán shǐ guǎn zǐ ér yú rén yě zé kě shǐ guǎn zǐ ér shǎo  
贾生有言：“使管子而愚人也则可，使管子而少

zhī zhì tǐ zé qǐ bù wèi zhī hán xīn zāi jīn yù qīng míng zhī cháo dāng gǎi  
知治体，则岂不为之寒心哉！”今遇清明之朝，当改

xián zhī huì ér bù xiāng yǔ lì yì xié lì gòng tú shí shì yóu yù shǒu gù  
弦之会，而不相与励翼协力，共图实事，犹欲守故

zhé wù xū cí zé shì tiān xià zhī shì zhōng wú kě wéi zhī shí yǐ lái jiào wèi  
辙，骛虚词，则是天下之事，终无可为之时矣。来教谓

zì jīn zhǐ lùn shì gōng yǐ wéi chù zhì fán chēng qīng chēng gāo tán xuán jí yì  
“自今只论事功以为黜陟，凡称清称高谈玄及议

lùn wú shí zhě yī qiè chì zhī bù gù zhǐ zāi yán hū  
论无实者，一切斥之不顾”；旨哉言乎！

zhāng jū zhèng  
张居正

zhāng wén zhōng gōng quán jí  
《张文忠公全集》





# A Reply to War Minister Yang Ershan



Lately the gentry's way of thinking and behaving is getting into the rut of the Late Song Dynasty. Though people of sense are worried about it, they dare not speak of it. Not considering my shallowness, I presumed to state what I thought. Your Honour, not taking it as a disgrace, condescended to give me your commendation. I am grateful indeed, grateful indeed!

Jia Yi once remarked: "It would be allowable if Guan Zhong should have been ignorant of knowing people, but it would be deplorable if he should have been ignorant of the basic methods of administering a state." Now we have a holy and perspicacious reign and stand a good chance of effecting a change. If we fail to encourage each other and make a concerted effort in devising a practical reform, but, instead, still keep to the beaten tract and indulge in empty talks, then there would be no other opportunity for us to address ourselves to the issues of the country. Your letter carries a line, saying that "From now on promotions and demotions should only be meted out on merits. All those who are given to high-flown language and metaphysics and are fond of talking inanities, are to be repelled and ignored." How wonderful that

白话  
翻译

最近知识分子的习俗和人情世故，都有点晚宋时期的味道，一些有志之士虽然心里很担心这种状况，但不敢说出来。我不因为自己知识浅薄，胡乱说了一些我的看法，恐怕会被高明的人士笑话，没想到得到了你的嘉奖，感激之至！感激之至！

贾谊曾经说过：“如果让管仲成为一个愚昧的人还可以，但是如果要让管仲不明白事体，那样不是很让人寒心吗！”现在我们遇到一个清正严明的朝代，正是应当要改革的时候。但是如果不共同努力，协调一致去办好事情，而想要固守以前的法则，喜好虚妄的词汇，那么国家的事情，总有一天会不可收拾。您的来信教导我说“从今以后升迁官吏只以他办事的能力来考核，凡是自称为清高，只知道卖弄玄虚和高谈阔论而又华而不实的人，一律辞退不用”，这真是一语中的的啊！

资源分享网  
PDG



must be!

Zhang Juzheng  
*Complete Works of Zhang Wenzhong*





寄子书

wǒ ér xì xì dāo dāo qiān yán wàn yǔ zhǐ yù nǎi fù huí yá hé fēng  
我儿细细叨叨，千言万语，只欲乃父回衙，何风

shuāng qì shǎo ér nǚ qíng duō yē  
霜气少，儿女情多耶！

nǐ lǎo zi lǐng bīng bù néng tǎo zéi duō shǎo bǎi xìng bù dé ān jiā niè zhān  
你老子领兵不能讨贼，多少百姓不得安家；啮毡

guǒ gé cǐ qí shí yě ān néng xué chǔ qiú duì ér děng xiāng qì wéi tà yē yǐ  
裹革，此其时也，安能学楚囚对儿等相泣帔榻耶？以

hòu shì shì bù zhī ruò hé xìng ér chéng píng zé fù zǐ xiǎng tài píng zhī lè  
后世事不知若何？幸而承平，则父子享太平之乐；

bù xìng ér zhàn bù shèng zé fū sǐ zhōng qī sǐ jié zǐ sǐ xiào yǎo dìng  
不幸而战不胜，则夫死忠，妻死节，子死孝，咬定

yá guān dà jiā chéng jiù yī gè shì ér yǐ  
牙关，大家成就一个“是”而已。

kě yǔ rǔ mǔ yán zhī bù bì duō yán  
可与汝母言之，不必多言！

rén mǒu  
任某

méi huā cǎo táng jí  
《梅花草堂集》



## A Letter to My Son



Your garrulity aims at one thing: wishing your father to return to his official residence. Why so little masculine martial spirit and so much tender feminine feelings?

If your father, being a general, could not lead his troops to crush the bandits, how many common folks would feel unsafe in their homes? So it is high time for me to feed on felt and to be buried in dried horse skin for the security of the country. How can I follow the example of the prisoners of Chu to weep on my bed together with my sons? There is no telling how things would look like in future. If we fortunately have peace, then both you and I can enjoy the bliss of peace. If unfortunately we cannot win the war, then let me die in the name of loyalty, and my wife die in the name of chastity and my son die in the name of filial piety. Let us all go it tooth and nail to achieve what is right.

You may tell this to your mother, but no need to be garrulous !

A General Surnamed Ren<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Plum-Blossom Cottage*

白话  
翻译



孩子你絮絮叨叨，千言万语，只是希望为父早点回家，你这样真是男子汉的风云之气少，而儿女情长更多一点啊！

你父亲带兵如果不去讨伐贼人，有多少百姓将不能安居乐业啊；现在正是吃毡絮、裹草革的时候，我们怎么能像楚国的囚徒那样在床榻上相对哭泣呢？今后的国家形势不知道将会怎么发展下去，如果天下太平，那么我们父子都能享受天伦之乐；如果我们不幸战败的话，那么男子汉就要以死来报效国家，作为妻子的要以死来为丈夫守节，作为儿子的要以死来守孝道，我们大家都要咬紧牙关，大家一起抱着必死的信念，来成就一个正确的家国观念。

关于这个可以和你母亲说，但也没必要多说。





**Note**

- ① The full name of the writer of this letter is unknown.



yǔ lǐ jiǔ wò zōng bó  
与李九我宗伯

cóng jīng shī lái zhě yán zhàng shū shí bì yī huò yǐ zhàng wèi pín huò  
从京师来者，言丈蔬食敝衣。或以丈为贫，或  
yǐ zhàng wèi wěi fū shì rén hé zú yǔ yán zhēn wěi yě mǎ xīn yì zuò xiàn shí  
以丈为伪。夫世人何足与言真伪也。马心易作县，食  
cháng bù bǎo zhào zhòng yī wèi quán bù guī lái jǐ wéi suǒ zhài rén suǒ bì pín  
尝不饱；赵仲一为铨部归来，几为索债人所毙。贫  
ér shì shì suì bù pín yě  
而仕，仕遂不贫耶！

gǔ rén yún xiōng nú wèi miè hé yǐ jiā wéi cǐ shí yì fēi wú bèi zuò  
古人云：“匈奴未灭，何以家为。”此时亦非吾辈作  
jiā shí yě wéi zhàng yǒu yǐ zì lì  
家时也。惟丈有以自厉。

tāng xiǎn zǔ  
汤显祖

tāng xiǎn zǔ jí  
《汤显祖集》





## A Letter to Minister Li Jiuwo



I was informed by those coming from the capital that Your Honour lived on coarse fare and wore shabby clothes. Some thought you poor, others considered you hypocritical. What need was there for me to argue it out with the vulgar people whether it was true or false? When Ma Xinyi was magistrate of a county, he often had not enough to eat, and when Zhao Zhongyi came home from his official post in the Central Government, he was almost killed by his creditors demanding the payment of his debts. People believe that poverty disposes one to become an official. But can an official post prevent one from being poor?

Ancients said: "While the Huns are not annihilated, one has no time for home." At present it is also not the proper time for us to give thought to our homes. I hope Your Honour will know how to orientate yourself.

Tang Xianzu<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Tang Xianzu*

白话  
翻译



有从京城回来的人说您布衣素食，生活很简朴。有人认为这是因为您很穷，也有人认为这是因为您很虚伪。这些世俗的人怎么能知道真的和假的呢。马心易当县官，吃都吃不饱；赵仲一从朝廷参加考核回来，多次被讨债的人殴打。贫穷的人当官，难道会因为当官了而不贫穷了吗？

古人说：“匈奴还没有灭亡，哪有时间成家。”这个时候也不是我们成家的时候。我就希望您能够严厉地要求自己。





### Note

- ① Tang Xianzu (1550–1616), born in Linchuan of Jiangxi in the Ming Dynasty, was one of China's greatest dramatists. *Peony Arbour*, which sings of freedom of love, is his most representative masterpiece.





dá liú niàn tái  
答刘念台

dù mén xiè kè zhèng shì cǐ shí dào lǐ bǐ yù shā shí qǐ dù mén suǒ  
杜门谢客，正是此时道理。彼欲杀时，岂杜门所  
néng táo rán jí sǐ shì jìn dào ér sǐ fēi lì yán qiáng ér sǐ yě kuàng wú  
能逃；然即死，是尽道而死，非立岩墙而死也。况吾  
bèi yī shì zhī zhōng zì yǒu qiān qiū zhī yè tiān jiǎ liáng yuán ān dé dāng miàn  
辈一室之中，自有千秋之业，天假良缘，安得当面  
cuò guò dà dǐ xiàn qián dào lǐ jí píng cháng bù kě zhù yī fēn pà sǐ yì sī  
错过？大抵现前道理极平常，不可著一分怕死意思，  
yǐ hài shì jiào bù kě zhù yī fēn pà sǐ yì sī yǐ hài shì shì  
以害世教；不可著一分怕死意思，以害世事。

xiǎng zhàng yú jí tòng fèn shí wèi zhī sī yě  
想丈于极痛愤时，未之思也。

gāo pǎn lóng  
高攀龙

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》

白话  
翻译



这个时候正应该闭门谢绝客人。但是如果他们要杀你，又岂是关上门就能逃脱的；然而即使是一死，也是为了道义而死，不是没有意义地死去。何况在书房里面，我们可以为了永恒的真理而著书立说，这是上天赐予的机缘，怎么能当面错过？大概现在的道理很简单，我们不可以有一丝怕死的想法，从而丧失了传统的气节；我们不能有一丝怕死的意思，从而危害了社稷大事。

或许您在极其悲痛的时候，没有想到这些而已。



## A Reply to Liu Niantai<sup>①</sup>



Close your door and receive no visitors—that is precisely the way to deal with the present situation. If they want to kill you, could you escape by closing your door? If you should die, you will be dying for the sake of the truth—not dying in vain. And then, since we must be confined to our private rooms, we can devote ourselves to a writing career of eternal value. How could we coldshoulder such a God-sent opportunity? Upon the whole, your present way of proceeding is very simple—never show the least fear of death, so as not to mar the Confucian teachings and impair the State affairs.

I am afraid that this point has slipped your consideration in your grief and indignation.

Gao Panlong<sup>②</sup>

*Laigu Chamber's New Edition of Letters of Celebrities*



### Notes

- ① Liu Niantai, a philosopher, was one of Gao's comrades in the struggle.
- ② Gao Panlong(1562–1626), born in Wuxi of Jiangsu Province, was a scholar and official in the Ming Dynasty, who fought and died heroically in the struggle against the wicked and despotic eunuch Wei Zhongxian.

jì zhèng mèng lín  
寄郑孟麀

jiā shì zhì dé shǒu shū shèn wèi jiān xī jìn kuàng  
家室至。得手书甚慰，兼悉近况。

shuǐ bù zì bù è ér hé shàng wēng yóu bù è sú yán fēn fēn dàn  
水部自不恶，而河上翁尤不恶。俗言纷纷，但

huàn pín ěr ér pín fēi bù nìng suǒ huàn yě lǎo mǔ zài táng bù fá shū  
患贫耳！而贫非不佞所患也。老母在堂，不乏菽

shuǐ xiān rén bǐ lú zú yǐ bì fēng yǔ bǎi mǔ zhī tián zú yǐ gòng zhān  
水；先人敝庐，足以蔽风雨；百亩之田，足以供饘

zhōu shì yī èr shàn guān zhě chéng pín huí shǒu zuò cuò dà shí yǐ guò  
粥。视一二善官者，诚贫；回首作措大时，已过

zhī yuǎn yǐ  
之远矣！

wú cháng wèi rén shēng gǒu cún yī zhī zú zhī xīn hé guān bù kě wéi  
吾尝谓人生苟存一知足之心，何官不可为？

hé dì bù kě jū rú bù zhī zú zé qīng xiàng bù yǐ bì sī dì wáng  
何地不可居？如不知足，则卿相不已，必思帝王；

dì wáng bù yǐ bì sī shén xiān shén xiān bù yǐ bì sī zuò yù huáng dà  
帝王不已，必思神仙；神仙不已，必思作玉皇大

dì ér yuán huì yùn shì bǎi liù yáng jiǔ zhī qī yú xīn shàng yǐ wéi wèi zú  
帝。而元会运世、百六阳九之期，于心尚以为未足

yě  
也。

lì guān gǔ jīn rén suǒ wéi zhī zhǐ zhī zú bù tān dé bù jìng jìn zhě jiē  
历观古今人所为，知止知足、不贪得、不竞进者，皆

xū yán ěr yǐ jìng tōng zhòng xiáng sāi mén bù shì zuǒ duì rú rén yòu gù  
虚言耳。以敬通、仲翔，塞门不仕，左对孺人，右顾



## A Letter to Zheng Menglin



My wife came and brought me your letter. It gave me a great comfort and also informed me of your recent situation.

The Department of Water Conservancy is certainly not bad, and a water-conservancy official is even more so. The vulgar people speak of them disapprovingly, just because they fear poverty, which, however, is not what I am afraid of. For my old mother who is still alive can do with simple fare, and the shabby house inherited from my ancestors is good enough to protect us from wind and rain, and our land of a hundred *mu* is sufficient to provide us with thick gruel. Compared with a few highly salaried officials, I am certainly poor. But if I look back over the time when I was just a poor scholar, I have become richer by a long chalk!

I used to think that if one has the capacity for contentment, what official post is too low and what place is too bad for him? In the opposite case, one would feel dissatisfied with the position of a prime minister and must covet the status of an emperor, and by the same token, must further dream of the bliss of deities and even the glory of the supreme being. For such a man unlimited longevity would also bring him no contentment.

Judging by the words and deeds of ancients as well as

zhì zǐ      cǐ tiān xià zhī zhì lè      ér yóu rán yuàn tiān yóu rén      jī zhì cháng  
稚子——此天下之至乐，而犹然怨天尤人，赍志长  
hèn      zhì wèi      sǐ zhī rì      yǐ qīng yíng wéi diào kè      shǐ tiān xià yǒu yī rén zhī  
恨，至谓“死之日，以青蝇为吊客，使天下有一人知  
jǐ      sǐ bù hèn      níng zhī zhī jǐ zhī yǒu wú      yú zì jiā běn lái miàn mù fēn háo  
己，死不恨”！宁知知己之有无，于自家本来面目分毫  
yǒu hé gān shè      cǐ pú suǒ cháng kǎo jìng qiān gǔ      ér bù shèng qiè xiào zhě yě  
有何干涉？此仆所常考镜千古，而不胜窃笑者也！

xiè zhào zhè  
谢肇淛

míng èr bǎi míng jiā chǐ dú  
《明二百家尺牍》

白话  
翻译



我的家人来了，带来了你的书信，我很欣慰，并知道了你的近况。

水利部门事实上并不是坏衙门，而且做一个治理河流的官员也不是坏差事。庸俗的观点纷纷扰扰，都是因为他们害怕贫穷啊！而贫穷并不是我所害怕的。家里有老母亲，并不缺乏饮食；我有祖先的破屋，足能够遮蔽风雨；家里有百亩田地，足够供应我们的食用。现在虽然是在这么一个清水衙门，但回首和当初作为一个穷书生的时候相比，已经好得多了！

我曾经说过，人如果有了一颗知足的心，有什么官不能当？什么地方不可以居住？如果不知道知足，那么即使当了宰相卿侯也不停息，还想做帝王；即使做了帝王，还不满足，必然想做神仙；即使做了神仙，也还不满足，必然想要做玉皇大帝。那么，长生不老对于这样的人来，也都会认为没有得到满足的。

我遍观古今人们的行为，知足，不贪得无厌，不争强好斗，都是空谈。例如冯衍、虞翻这样过着普通生活的人，关





contemporaries, contentment, continence and humbleness have never been anything but empty talk. Take Feng Yan and Yu Fan for example, they lived as commoners behind closed doors and in the company of good wives and innocent children. Although this was indeed the greatest blessing one could have in this world, yet they still complained against Heaven and man, harbouring a lasting sorrow, and went so far as to say: "When I am dying, I'll have a blow fly as my sole mourner. If only there is in the world a man who knows me, I'll die without regret! " Pray, what has it to do with one's true character whether there is a man who knows him or not? That is how I often examine the ancients and can't help laughing at them!

Xie Zhaozhe<sup>①</sup>

*Letter of Ming Dynasty's Two Hundred Notables*



**Note**

- ① Xie Zhaozhe, born in Changle of Fujian Province, was a man of letter and official in the Ming Dynasty. He was also well versed in water conservancy.



起门来过日子,不当官,在家陪伴夫人和子女——这是天底下最快乐的事情,但还是要怨天尤人,壮志未酬。于是说“死的那天,只有苍蝇是我的吊唁者,在这个世界上只要有一个人知道我,我就死而无憾了!”可知知己的有无,和自己的本来面目有什么关系?这是我时常借鉴古今,而又忍不住要笑的事情。





蘇  
氏  
書  
齋  
PDG



fù tài shǐ jiāo zuò shī  
复太史焦座师

guó wú wǔ bèi wéi rì jiǔ yǐ yī cháo xìn qǐ suì bù kě zhī qǐ cái  
国无武备，为日久矣；一朝衅起，遂不可支。启才  
lì zhí shì jiē bù yí bīng róng zhī yì ér yì wú zuò shì yǐ fù guó ēn yǔ shī  
力、职事皆不宜兵戎之役，而义无坐视，以负国恩与师  
mén zhī jiào wàng yǒu lùn liè jì dāng shì cǎi yòng fēi bì shēn wéi zhī yě  
门之教。妄有论列，冀当事采用，非必身为之也。  
dú cháo xiǎn yī xíng zì xìn fēi qǐ bù kě xíng zé bì shù chǐ cùn zhī xiào ér  
独朝鲜一行，自信非启不可，行则必树尺寸之效；而  
wù rǔ zhǔ zhī wěi yǐ cǐ zhōng bīng shì xuán niàn qǐ zhī suǒ yán wú yī jiàn  
误辱主知，委以此中兵事。旋念启之所言，无一见  
yòng tú yǐ shì rèn zé chéng bǐ rú yī rén zhì bìng bù nèn qí fāng bù yòng  
用，徒以事任责成，比如医人治病，不恧其方，不用  
qí yào ér yǐ tā rén zhī fāng yào qiáng lìng pào zhì xiū hé dài yú bù xiào shéi  
其药，而以他人之方药强令炮制修合，迨于不效，谁  
zhí qí jiù hū  
执其咎乎？

jīn zī yī shēn jìn tuì wéi gǔ yì yì zú wéi duō yán zhī jiè yǐ shēn  
今兹一身，进退维谷，抑亦足为多言之戒矣！矧  
kāi tiě jì shī běi guān xuán xiàn yí fēn rì è zhèng wèi zhī huò luàn suǒ dǐ  
开、铁既失，北关旋陷，夷氛日恶，正未知祸乱所底  
yě  
也。

xú guāng qǐ  
徐光启

xú guāng qǐ jí  
《徐光启集》



## A Reply to Jiao Hong, Member of the Imperial Academy



It is a long time since the State had no armaments. Once war provocations arise, it has no way to cope with them. My ability and my office are not equal to doing military service. But my sense of justice dictated that I should not sit with folded arms and forget the beneficence given me by the State as well as the teaching of Your Honour. I presumed to make some suggestions, hoping that they would be adopted by the authorities concerned. But I didn't mean that they were to be put into practice by myself. Only I believed that I was in duty bound to make the trip to Korea and to make it a success as well. I was however misunderstood by the Sovereign, who committed me with the training of new recruits. On the other hand, none of my suggestions were adopted, though I was enjoined to accomplish the task. It is like ordering a physician to cure a person without using his own prescriptions and his own drugs, while imposing upon him other doctors' prescriptions and obliging him to cook a decoction accordingly. If it should fail, who is to be held responsible for that?

Now I have really been brought to a dilemma, though this might serve a warning to those who are too officious! Since Kaiyuan and Tieling were lost and Beiguan also fell as a result,

白话  
翻译



国家没有战略储备已经很久了，一旦战事发生，恐怕不可支撑。我的才能和职位都不足以充当军事职位，但又不能坐视不管，以至于辜负了国家的恩惠和老师您的教育。我大胆地说出一些建议，希望能被当时的官吏采用，并不一定要自己身体力行地实现它。唯独去往朝鲜，我觉得非我不可，如果我去的话必然会取得一定的成就；但是这触犯了主上，把军队的差事委托给了我。然而，我之前所说的军事方法，没有一个得到了采纳，只是以其他的事情来责成我办理，这就好像是给病人治病，不依据自己的药方，不用自己的药方上的药，而用其他医生的药方强行治疗，这样不但不能治好病，而其中的责任又由谁承担呢？

我现在孑然一身，进退维谷，或者是作为我多言的惩戒吧！现在开元和铁岭都失守了，北关也要沦陷，敌人的气势日益嚣张，而我们却不知道这种战祸是从何开始的。





the threat of the enemy is becoming more and more serious. I really have no idea where the disastrous development is leading to.

Xu Guangqi<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Xu Guangqi*



### Note

- ① Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), born in Shanghai, was an eminent scholar and official in the Ming Dynasty. He was one of the first ancient Chinese scientists who tried to introduce western sciences into China.





yǔ lǐ lóng hú  
与李龙湖

xiǎo xiū tiē lái zhī wēng zài xī xiá bǐ zhōng yǒu hé rén shì kě yǔ yǔ  
小修帖来，知翁在栖霞，彼中 有何人士可与语  
zhě shēng zài cǐ shèn xián shì dé yī yì guān shū xué zhōng yòu yǒu niàn yī  
者？生在此甚闲适，得一意观书。学中又有廿一  
shǐ jí gǔ wén wén jí kě dú qióng guān bù xū jiè shū yóu shì kuài shì  
史及古文文集可读。穷官不须借书，尤其是快事！

jìn rì zuì dé yì wú rú pī diǎn ōu sū èr gōng wén jí ōu gōng zhī  
近日最得意，无如批点欧、苏二公文集。欧公之  
wén jiā wú lùn qí shī rú qīng jiāng dǎo hǎi yù bó zhòng shǎo líng yǔ zhòu jiān  
文佳无论，其诗如倾江倒海，欲伯仲少陵。宇宙间  
zì yǒu cǐ yī zhǒng qí guān dàn hèn jīn rén wèi xiān rù è shī suǒ zhàng nán  
自有此一种奇观，但恨今人为先入恶诗所障难，  
bù néng xū xīn jìn dú ěr sū gōng shī gāo gǔ bù rú lǎo dù ér chāo tuō biàn  
不能虚心尽读耳。苏公诗高古不如老杜，而超脱变  
guài guò zhī yǒu tiān dì lái yī rén ér yǐ  
怪过之；有天地来，一人而已。

pú cháng wèi liù cháo wú shī táo gōng yǒu shī qù xiè gōng yǒu shī liào yú  
仆尝谓六朝无诗，陶公有诗趣，谢公有诗料，余  
zǐ lù lù wú zú guān zhě zhì lǐ dù shī dào shǐ dà hán liǔ yuán  
子碌碌，无足观者。至李、杜，诗道始大。韩、柳、元、  
bái ōu shī zhī shèng yě sū shī zhī shén yě bǐ wèi sòng bù rú táng zhě  
白、欧，诗之圣也；苏，诗之神也。彼谓宋不如唐者，  
guān chǎng zhī jiàn ěr qǐ zhēn zhī shī wéi hé wù zāi  
观场之见耳。岂真知诗为何物哉！

yuán hóng dào  
袁宏道

yuán zhōng láng quán jí  
《袁中郎全集》





## A Letter to Li Longhu<sup>①</sup>



I was informed by my brother's letter that you are now staying in Qixia County. Have you there someone to talk with? I am quite at leisure here, so I can devote myself to reading. And then *The Twenty One Histories* and some collections of ancient essays are available at the local county school. So I, a poor official, don't have to borrow books. It is indeed something fortunate!

What is most gratifying to me these days is none other than the study of the collections of essays by Ouyang Xiu and Su Dongpo.

Ouyang's essays are indisputably excellent; whereas his poems are also like billowing waves in the sea, truly on a parity with those of Du Fu. They simply represent a wonder in the world. What a pity that our contemporaries, prepossessed by unworthy poems, are hindered from reading them thoroughly with an open mind. Su's poems, though not as lofty and antique as those of Du, surpass the latter in terms of detachment and unconventionality. He has been the only poet with such unique talent since the beginning of the world.<sup>①</sup>

In my opinion, there was simply no poetry during the period of the Six Dynasties. Tao Yuanming had a taste for poetry, and Xie Lingyun had the making of a poet, while the

白话  
翻译

收到我兄弟的书信,才知道您在栖霞,那里有什么人可以交谈呢?我在这里很闲散,所以有时间一心看书。学校里又有二十一史和古文文集可以阅读。作为一个穷官,不需要借书来读,真是一件快活事啊!

最近最得意的事情,就是批点欧阳修、苏东坡两位的文集。欧阳修的文章好那是毋庸置疑的,他的诗歌也跟翻江倒海一般,很有气势,简直和杜甫的诗歌不相上下。想不到宇宙之间还有这样好的诗歌,但是让人痛恨的是现在人因为先受一些坏诗的影响,形成了障碍,不能够虚心地去读这些诗。苏轼的诗没有杜甫那么高古,但却比之更超脱和变怪;能做到这样的,在有天地以来,也就他一个人而已。

我曾经说六朝没有诗歌,陶渊明有诗趣,谢灵运有诗料,其他的人都碌碌无为,不足以提及了。到了李白、杜甫,诗歌的境界道路才开始扩大。韩愈、柳宗元、元稹、白居易、欧阳修,都是诗歌中的圣人;苏轼,是诗歌中的神仙。那些认为宋朝诗歌不如唐朝诗歌的人,见解都很肤浅,他们真的知道诗歌是什么东西吗?



others were mediocrities, not worth mentioning. When it came to Li Bai and Du Fu, poetry began to grow in stature. Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan, Yuan Shen, Bai Juyi, Ouyang Xiu were "saints" of poetry, whereas Su Dongpo was the "god" of poetry. Those who assert that the Song Dynasty was inferior to the Tang in poetry are merely echoing other people's views, having no idea what poetry is!

Yuan Hongdao<sup>②</sup>

*Complete Works of Yuan Hongdao*



## Notes

- ① Li Longhu, or Li Zhi, was a famous philosopher and man of letter in the same period.
- ② Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610), born in Gong'an of Hubei Province, was a famous essayist and literary critic in the Ming Dynasty.





dǎ wáng yǐ míng  
答王以明

jìn rì shǐ xué dú shū jìn xīn guān ōu jiǔ lǎo sū zēng zǐ gù chén tóng  
近日始学读书，尽心观欧九、老苏、曾子固、陈同  
fǔ lù wù guān zhū gōng wén jí měi dú yī piān xīn jī kǒu qù zì yǐ wéi  
甫、陆务观诸公文集。每读一篇，心悸口呿，自以为  
wèi cháng shí zì rán xìng bù nài jìng dú wèi zhōng zhì yǐ hū léi mǎ cù zhū  
未尝识字。然性不耐静，读未终帙，已呼羸马，促诸  
nián shào chū yóu huò féng jiā shān shuǐ dān wán jìng rì  
年少出游，或逢佳山水，耽玩竟日。

guī ér zì zé wán dùn rú cǐ dāng hé suǒ chéng nǎi yǐ yī bì zì jiān  
归而自责，顽钝如此，当何所成？乃以一婢自监。  
dú shū shāo juàn lìng dé hē zé huò tí qí ěr huò qiāo qí tóu huò cā qí  
读书稍倦，令得诃责，或提其耳，或敲其头，或擦其  
bí xū kuài xǐng nǎi zhǐ bì bù rú mìng zhě fá zhì zhī  
鼻，须快醒乃止。婢不如命者，罚治之。

xí jiǔ jiàn guàn kǔ dú gǔ rén wēi yì huò yǒu yī èr wù jiě chù zhé  
习久，渐惯苦读，古人微意，或有一二悟解处，辄  
jiào hào tiào yuè rú kě lù zhī bēn quán yě cáo gōng yuē lǎo ér hào xué wéi  
叫号跳跃，如渴鹿之奔泉也！曹公曰：“老而好学，惟  
wú yǔ yuán bó yè dāng zhī dú shū yì shì nán shì  
吾与袁伯业。”当知读书亦是难事。

qiú zhī yú jīn ruò lǎo tū qù huá ruò hóu qí rén qù huá yì jiě  
求之于今，若老秃、去华、弱侯其人。去华《易解》，  
yǐ tuō sān gǎo ér qiú jīng bù yǐ shēng jīng shén sǎn huǎn shèn zhàng cǐ lǎo  
已脱三稿，而求精不已。生精神散缓，甚仗此老



## A Reply to Wang Yiming<sup>①</sup>



It's quite recently that I began to apply myself to reading. I read with great concentration the collections of essays by Ouyang Xiu, Su Shi, Zeng Gong, Chen Tongfu and Lu You. Whenever I went over one, I found my heart palpitating and my mouth opened with wonder, for I felt as if I had never been taught literacy. But, without being inured to a quiet life, I would, before finishing a volume, call for my crock and urge my young associates to go out for an excursion. If we happened to find a scenic spot, we would frolic there all day long.

As soon as I returned, I would feel self-reproach, thinking that, being so naughty and obtuse, I would be unable to accomplish anything. So I caused a maid to be my superintendent. When I got drowsy in my reading, she was authorized to scold me, pulling me by the ear, or knocking me on the head or rubbing me on the nose till I was awakened. If the maid failed to do as I commanded, she was to be penalized.

With the lapse of time I was gradually accustomed to the hard job of reading. When I succeeded in penetrating into some hidden and delicate implications of ancient writings, I would cry and leap, as happy as a thirsty deer running to a spring! Cao

wéi yào shí bì jìng jiù xí nán chú yě  
为药石，毕竟旧习难除也。

yuán hóng dào  
袁宏道

yuán zhōng láng quán jí  
《袁中郎全集》

白话  
翻译



最近几天才开始学着读书，耐心地看了欧阳修、苏轼、曾巩、陈亮、陆游等的文集。每读到一篇，就会感到心悸口干，感觉自己从来就不认识字一样。但是我的个性耐不住寂静，还没读完一篇，便叫人牵来瘦弱的马，叫上几个少年朋友一起出游，或者碰到好山好水，便流连忘返，游玩一天。

回来以后就自责，自己这样顽皮迟钝，什么时候才能有所成就啊？于是叫一个婢女在旁边监视我。我读书一感到倦怠，便叫她责骂啊。或者提耳，或者敲头，或者擦鼻，必须要尽快把我叫醒。如果她不听从我的命令，也要处罚她。

久而久之，我渐渐习惯了苦读，古人的微言大义，或许有一两处能够领悟了解到的地方，就叫着跳跃起来，就好像是饥渴的鹿跑向清泉！曹操曾经说：“年纪大了还爱好学习，只有我和袁遗。”由此可知，读书也是一件难事啊。

求学到现在，我已经和老秃、去华、弱侯一样，热爱读书。去华的著作《易解》，已经完成第三稿了，但还是精益求精。我的精神有点散漫，想依赖他，以他作为医治的良药，毕竟，旧时的习惯很难改掉啊。



Cao once said: "Yuan Boye and I are the only two who are fond of learning at an advanced age." So reading is also something very difficult.

As for today, we have great learners like Li Zhi, Pan Quhua and Jiao Ruohou. Pan's *Exposition of the Book of Change* has gone through three modifications. Yet he is still striving for its further improvement. As I am lax and lacking in spirit, I depend on him a great deal, regarding him as a sort of remedy, for it is after all very difficult to get rid of my old ways.

Yuan Hongdao

*Complete Works of Yuan Hongdao*



### Note

① Wang Yiming was once Yuan's teacher.



jì sǎn mù  
寄散木

sǎn mù jìn zuò hé zhuàng  
散木近作何状？

rén shēng hé kě yī yì wú chéng yě zuò shī bù chéng jí dāng zhuān jīng  
人生何可一艺无成也！作诗不成，即当专精

xià qí rú shì suǒ chēng xiǎo fāng xiǎo lǐ shì yě yòu bù chéng jí dāng yī  
下棋，如世所称小方、小李是也。又不成，即当一

yì cù jū qiā tán rú shì suǒ chēng zhā bā shí guō dào shì děng shì yě fán yì  
意蹴鞠掐弹，如世所称查八十、郭道士等是也。凡艺

dào jí jīng chù jiē kě chéng míng qiáng rú shì jiān fú fàn shī míng bǎi bèi xìng  
到极精处，皆可成名，强如世间浮泛诗名百倍。幸

wù yī bù chéng liǎng bù jiù bǎ jīng shén luàn pāo sǎ yě  
勿一不成、两不就，把精神乱抛撒也。

zhī zūn duō yì gù cǐ xiāng dǐ miǎn zhī zāi  
知尊多艺，故此相砥，勉之哉！

yuán hóng dào

袁宏道

yuán zhōng láng quán jí

《袁中郎全集》





## A Letter to Gong Sanmu<sup>①</sup>



How are you recently?

Can one imagine having not a single accomplishment in one's life? If one fails in versifying, he should devote himself to the art of chess, following the examples of Xiao Fang and Xiao Li, who are chess champions. If that is not practicable either, he should apply himself to playing football or playing the lute, like Zhabashi and Taoist Guo, who are respectively expert at the former and the latter. When one's art attains perfection, one is sure to make a name in the world, a hundred times better than the vain fame of a trivial poet. I hope earnestly that you will never end up in doing nothing and accomplishing nothing, so as not to let your vigour go to waste.

Knowing your versatility, I am writing this letter to you by way of encouragement.

Yuan Hongdao

*Complete Works of Yuan Hongdao*



白话  
翻译



散木,最近还好吗?

人生在世,怎么可以一事无成呢?作诗不能成功,就应该精通下棋,就好像小方、小李一样。如果学棋还不成功,就要一门心思学踢球或者弹琴,就像传说中的查八十、郭道士。但凡艺术极其精湛的人,都能成名,这在世间虚幻的诗歌强一百倍。却是不要高不成低不就,再把精神搞恍惚了。

我知道你多才多艺,因此特地互相砥砺,与你共勉。





**Note**

① Gong Sanmu was Yuan's maternal uncle.





yǔ chén méi gōng  
与陈眉公

xiāng jiàn shèn yǒu qí yuán shì hèn qí wǎn rán shǐ qián shí nián xiāng jiàn  
相见甚有奇缘，似恨其晚。然使前十年相见，  
kǒng shí lì gè yǒu wèi jiān tòu chù xīn mù bù néng rú shì zhī xiāng fā yě péng  
恐识力各有未坚透处，心目不能如是之相发也。朋  
yǒu xiāng jiàn jí shì nán shì bǐ yì yòu yǐ wéi bù huàn bù xiāng jiàn huàn xiāng  
友相见，极是难事。鄙意又以为不患不相见，患相  
jiàn zhī wú yì ěr yǒu yì yǐ qǐ yóu hèn qí wǎn zāi  
见之无益耳。——有益矣，岂犹恨其晚哉！

zhōng xīng  
钟惺

yīn xiù xuān jí  
《隐秀轩集》

白话  
翻译



我们相见实在是 有缘，有相见恨晚的感觉。但是如果让我们早十年相见，恐怕我们还没有这样深透的见识能力，我们也不会像现在这样互相理解，互相启发。朋友相见，是很难得的事情。我认为，不怕不相见，就怕相见了也没有什么益处啊。如果有益处，又怎么能抱怨认识得太晚了呢？



## A Letter to Chen Meigong



A strange opportunity seemed to have brought about our chance meeting, which we thought to be too belated. However, if we had seen each other ten years ago, our insight into man's character would not have been so penetrating, and our mutual understanding would not have been so profound. The meeting of true friends is something extremely difficult. But, in my humble opinion, what is really regretful is not the lack of opportunity for people's meeting each other, but the lack of spiritual benefit from such a meeting—given spiritual benefit, there would be no reason to regret its being somewhat belated!

Zhong Xing<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of the Chamber of Hidden Beauty*



### Note

① Zhong Xing (1574–1625), born in Jingling of Hubei Province, was a scholar and man of letter in the Ming Dynasty.

yǔ qiū xiǎo lǔ  
与丘小鲁

mǒu wèi shuāi ér lǎo diān máo zhǒng zhǒng měi gù yǐng zì tàn chún fǔ  
某未衰而老，颠毛种种，每顾影自叹。唇腐  
miàn zhòu yú bā gǔ zhōng ér yòu sì bù yuàn chù qí luó lǒng zhī nèi sī niàn wǒ  
面皱于八股中，而又似不愿处其罗笼之内。私念我  
bèi jì yòng tiē kuò yīng zhì zhèng rú wǎng zhōng yú niǎo dù wú tuō lǐ tǎng  
辈，既用帖括应制，正如网中鱼鸟，度无脱理。倘  
ān yì qí zhōng shàng kě yí zhī pén yāng chù zhī fán lóng suī bù yǒu lín hè  
安意其中，尚可移之盆瓮，畜之樊笼，虽不有林壑  
zhī lè yóu shù jī gǒu quán lín yǔ dé wéi rén ěr mù jìn wán yī huò shì yǒng  
之乐，犹庶几苟全鳞羽，得为人耳目近玩；一或恃勇  
tiào yuè jī xìng jué wǎng ér chū qí lì yù dà qí fù yù jí bì zhì cuī jì  
跳跃，几幸决网而出，其力愈大，其缚愈急，必至摧髻  
sǔn máo zhī zēng jiǒng kǔ  
损毛，只增窘苦。

rú mǒu dé wú lèi shì fù jí lì juàn zhèng bù zhī chū tuō hé rì rì  
如某得无类是？缚急力倦，正不知出脱何日日！

xiǎo lǔ hé yǐ jiào zhī  
小鲁何以教之？

zēng yì zhuàn  
曾异撰

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》



## A Letter to Qiu Xiaolu



Although I am not yet afflicted with infirmities, I already find myself senescent. Whenever I contemplate myself in the mirror, I regret to see my hair grizzled, my cheeks wrinkled and my lips wizened because of the study of the eight-legged essays. And I don't seem to be reconciled to my being caught in its snare. But on second thought, I judge that, since we are prepared to take the imperial examination in conformity with its stereotyped regulations, we are already comparable to fish or birds entangled in nets and there is definitely no escaping from them. If we are resigned to it, we can yet hope to be transferred to some basins or vats or kept in some cages.

And despite the loss of pleasure only to be enjoyed in a forest or in a valley, we can expect to keep our plumage and scales intact and become people's pets. If we should venture to jump out with courage and try the luck to escape, then the greater the force we exert, the tighter we'll be caught in the meshes until we are deprived of our fins and feathers and are caused greater misfortune.

Am I not in a situation like this? As I feel I am exhausted with the tight binding, I really have no idea when I shall be

白话  
翻译



我的年纪还不大,就已经衰老了。我的头发毛躁蓬乱,让我每每在镜子前感叹。在学习八股文章的过程中,我的嘴唇和面孔都长起了皱纹,但我不愿意被困在这样的罗网中。但是我又想到,我们这辈人,都要适应科举应制考试,就像被网罗住的鱼和鸟,估计是没有逃脱的机会了,如果安心其中,还可以被转移到盆瓮之中,养在笼子里,虽然没有在山林野壑之中的快乐,但仍然可以苟且保全鳞角和羽毛,能够成为别人的耳目赏玩的对象;如果凭借勇气奋力跳出,好像有机会从网中逃出,但是力气使得越大,就被绑得越紧,这样会弄坏羽毛,只会增加窘迫和痛苦。

我不正是这种情况吗?我被捆绑得太紧,已经筋疲力尽,真不知道什么时候才能脱困。你可以指点我吗?







freed. Could you tell me?

Zeng Yizhuan<sup>①</sup>

*Laigu Chamber's New Edition of Letters of Celebrities*



**Note**

- ① Zeng Yizhuan, born in Jinjiang of Fujian Province, was a poor scholar at the end of the Ming Dynasty.



wèn yú xī zhī zú jí  
问余希之足疾

xiōng jìn lái zú jí zhī wèi tuō rán pō yí xiōng bù néng shèn jí  
兄近来足疾，知未脱然，颇疑兄不能慎疾。

wǒ bèi shào nián shí hào fèi jīng qì wú yì pò jiā dòng zǐ zhōng nián dé  
我辈少年时，耗费精气，无异破家荡子。中年得

bìng cǐ zhài zhǔ chí zhàng bù lái dēng mén shí yě dàn néng rěn jié shì yù shāo  
病，此债主持账簿来登门时也。但能忍节嗜欲，稍

cháng yī èr bǐ yì yǒu shí ér qù rán sù fù wèi wán yī èr yuè hòu bù  
偿一二，彼亦有时而去。然宿负未完，一二月后，不

néng bù zài lái wèn wǒ shǐ zhuó shí shěng sè jī jù bù qiàn tián mǎn yī qù  
能不再来问我。使着实省啬积聚，逋欠填满，一去

sù bù fù lái yī  
遂不复来矣。

xiōng zhī zú dì zhī fèi shū wéi tóng bìng liú cǐ yī shuāng jiǎo tā rì  
兄之足，弟之肺，殊为同病。留此一双脚，他日

xiǎo zé bài guì shàng guān pián zhī mín shì dà zé kuà mǎ jù ān chí qū tiān  
小则拜跪上官，胼胝民事；大则跨马据鞍，驰驱天

xià jí wéi yào yòng wù shì bù kě bù shàn yǎng zhī yě  
下。极为要用物事，不可不善养之也！

zēng yì zhuàn  
曾异撰

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》



## Inquiring after Yu Xi about His Foot Trouble



So far as I know, your foot trouble has not yet recovered. I suspect that you have not been careful enough in grooming your feet.

In our adolescence we used to waste our vigour, which was much the same as playing the prodigal. To contract diseases in our middle age is just like our being demanded for debts by our creditors who, carrying their debt books, are calling us at the door, if we exercise abstinence and continence and pay a small part of the debts, the creditors may leave us alone for some time. However, since the old debts as a whole are still outstanding, they are sure to call again after one or two months. But if we really practise thrift and lay up savings, thus having the old scores totally wiped out, then they will never come again.

Your foot trouble and my lung disease are of the same nature. To have feet and legs in good form will enable us, to say the least of it, to kowtow to our superiors and to run the people's errands, and furthermore, to ride on horses and race all over the country to achieve our ambition. They are indeed

白话  
翻译



听说兄长您最近脚疼的毛病又犯了，还没有痊愈，我猜想是因为您不能慎重地对待它。

像我们这样正处在年少气盛的时候，如果白白地耗费精气，这和败家子没什么区别。人到中年的时候生病，就好像是债主拿着账簿上门来催债。如果能节制欲望，还能稍微偿还一点债务，病痛的债主或许暂时就离开了。但陈年的拖欠没有还完，一两个月以后，债主会再来催我还债。如果能够做到真正的小心积聚，一下子把所欠债还清的话，那病痛的债主也就一去不复返了。

兄长您的脚和我的肺都有病痛。留着这一双脚，日后从小里说可以跪拜上司，体察民情；往大里说可以跨上马，驰骋天下。所以说，脚是至关重要的，不可不善待啊。





very useful things and must be taken good care of!

Zeng Yizhuan

*Laigu Chamber's New Edition of Letters of Celebrities*



yǔ liào fù shēng  
与廖傅生

yè lái hán yuè jiǎo dàn wàng shuǐ lián yuè sè tóng huà lú huā rù zhěn  
夜来寒月皎淡，望水帘月色，同化芦花。入枕

dàn wén xī lì yè xiǎng cǎo shēng yí xuě yí yǔ zhōng mò néng dìng mèng  
但闻淅沥，叶响草声，疑雪疑雨，终莫能定。梦

qù yóu zài shuǐ jīng guó dí tiào qiān bǎi kē zhāo liáng zhū  
去犹在水晶国，余粟千百颗招凉珠。

fù rǔ zhōu  
傅汝舟

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》

白话  
翻译



夜晚降临，银白色的月亮发出淡淡的寒意，看着帘布般的水流和月色都融进芦花丛中。头枕着枕头，听到淅淅沥沥的草叶声响，以为是下雪了，又以为是下雨了，始终不能确定是雨是雪。梦里仿佛自己身在水晶的国度，买卖着千百颗招来凉意的珍珠。



## A Letter to Liao Fusheng



All through the night the moon looked chilly and pale. The curtain-like waterfall and the moonlight all seemed to be fading into the reed flowers. Reclining on my bed, I heard but the rustling sound of the spraying water mingled with that of grass and leaves. I doubted whether it was snowing or raining, and could hardly make sure which was the right answer. In my dream I felt as if I were in the crystal palace of the Dragon King, marketing myriads of cold-inducing pearls.

Fu Ruzhou<sup>①</sup>

*Laigu Chamber's New Edition of Letters of Celebrities*



### Note

- ① Fu Ruzhou, born in Nanjing of Jiangsu Province, was a Taoist-minded poet in the Ming Dynasty.

fù yǒu rén  
复友人

fán liǎng sòng zhě gè jù suǒ jiàn wú bù záo záo tīng sòng zhī ěr hé yóu  
凡两讼者，各据所见，无不凿凿。听讼之耳，何由

jiàn bié  
鉴别？

wéi cóng qí mí fèng jí gōng chù biàn zhī qí jí pò zhàn chù gài tiān xià  
惟从其弥缝极工处，便知其极破绽处。盖天下

zhī rén wú gù ér duō yī yǔ cǐ yǔ bì yǒu suǒ wèi qí jí gōng chù nǎi qí  
之人，无故而多一语，此语必有所为。其极工处，乃其

jí zhuō chù ruò fū lǐ zhí zhě qí yán zì jiǎn liǎo wú qū zhé fǎn yǒu zhuō  
极拙处。若夫理直者，其言自简，了无曲折；反有拙

lòu gù wàng ér zhī qí chéng wěi yě  
漏，故望而知其诚伪也。

lǐ chén yù  
李陈玉

tuì sī táng jí  
《退思堂集》

白话  
翻译

诉讼的双方，各执己见，都有确凿的证据。审判的人，该如何鉴别真伪呢？

只有从其中很细小的地方入手，才可以知道其中的破绽。因为天底下的人，无缘无故多出一句话，肯定是有目的的。这句话最工巧的地方，反而也是最拙劣的地方。在理的一方，他们的话是简短的，并没有曲折；反而那些漏洞百出的话，一看就知道肯定是假话。





## A Reply to My Friend



A plaintiff and a defendant argued against one another, each standing on his own ground with their arguments all sounding convincing and conclusive. How could a judge pass his judgement?

He need only find out the most elaborately knit points in their debate in order to discern the greatest loopholes thereof. For people of the world never say a word that is superfluous if it is not meant for a specific purpose. Therefore the most elaborately knit points turn out to be the clumsiest ones. If one has justice on his side, his words must naturally be simple and straightforward. Any clumsy loopholes in speech can only reveal its untruthful character.

Li Chenyu<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Tuisi Chamber*



**Note**

① Li Chenyu, born in Jishui of Jiangxi Province, was a scholar at the end of the Ming Dynasty.

yǔ yǒu  
与 友

shàng gǔ zhī rén wǒ xiāng qīng kěn tīng rén yán dà běn míng néng qǔ rén  
上古之人我相轻，肯听人言大本明。能取人

shàn rì jiǔ zì rán rì jìn  
善，日久自然日进。

jīn rén xí qì shēn zhòng jì bù néng biàn zé shì fēi yòu xiōng zhōng jù  
今人习气深重，既不能辨择是非，又胸中踞

dīng yī wǒ xiāng rèn tā rén měi yì liáng zhēn wèi kěn xiáng xīn yuè fú wéi shì  
定一我相，任他人美意良箴，未肯降心悦服。惟是

dú gǔ rén shū yuán lái wǒ zhǒng zhǒng bìng tòng jiē yǐ chān qián dào pò zhǒng  
读古人书，原来我种种病痛，皆已搀前道破；种

zhǒng yī fāng yòu shuō dé xiàn xiàn chéng chéng gǔ rén fēi zhǐ zhāi wǒ pì rú  
种医方，又说得现现成成。古人非指摘我，譬如

xuán shè lǜ lìng wǒ zì fàn tiáo gǔ rén yòu bù zài miàn qián suī yǒu piān xīn  
悬设律令，我自犯条。古人又不在面前。虽有偏心

shèng qì hé chù rě dòng yú shì kuì hán huān xǐ yī shí bìng jí bù jué shì  
胜气，何处惹动？于是愧汗欢喜，一时并集，不觉释

huí ér zēng měi yǐ  
回而增美矣！

gù bù fú shàn zhě yóu lài dú shū  
故不服善者，尤赖读书。

chén lóng zhèng  
陈龙正

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》



## To My Friend



People of ancient times thought little of themselves and were willing to listen to others. As a result they were enlightened on the principal truth of the world. Since they could learn the good points of others, they naturally made progress from day to day in a long period of time.

But people nowadays are deeply prejudiced. They cannot distinguish between right and wrong and, in addition, are self-assertive, refusing to be convinced at heart by other people's opinions, however good and sincere they may be. Nevertheless, if only one could read books written by ancients, then he would perceive that his troubles were made clear by the books a long time ago, with all the prescribed remedies readily available. As for criticisms contained in a book, the author did not have any specific person as his object of reproach. It can only be, as it were, a case of others putting up commandments on the wall, and one admitting of his free will his violation of them. And then the ancients could not be standing before him, how could his biased and obdurate mind get offended as in the ordinary time? Thus shame and joy well up in his heart and he unconsciously repents of his faults and gains in understanding.

Therefore, those who are reluctant to be persuaded by

白话  
翻译



上古的人们考虑自己的时候少,更愿意聆听别人的想法;所以他们更明了世界的本来面目。正因为他们能倾听别人的好建议,他们就能取得长足的进步。

现在的人坏习惯很多,既不能辨别是非,又以自我为中心,不管他人有多么良好的意见,都不肯心悦诚服地接纳。只有读古代人著作的时候,发现原来我的种种弊端,都已经被说明道破;种种医治的药方,都有现成的。古代人并不是在指责我,他们好像是悬挂了一条命令,是我触犯了这条命令。而且,古代人又不在我面前,我虽然有偏心和傲气,又有什么地方可以发泄呢?所以只好惭愧的同时又高兴,不自觉地改正了错误!所以对于那些不服从善道的人来说,最需要读书。





other people's wise opinions must particularly have recourse to reading books.

Chen Longzheng<sup>①</sup>

*Laigu Chamber's New Edition of Letters of Celebrities*



**Note**

- ① Chen Longzheng, born in Jiashan of Zhejiang Province, was a scholar and official in the Ming Dynasty.



yǔ zhì xū mèi zhàng  
与致虚妹丈

zuó xiāo lè shèn bì tiān yī sè chéng chè rú zhòu yòu sōng zhú yǐng jiāo  
昨宵乐甚！碧天一色，澄彻如昼，又松竹影交  
jiā cuì yǐng bèi miàn yuè guāng luò jiǔ bēi zhōng bō dòng yǐng yáo chuī dòng  
加，翠影被面，月光落酒杯中，波动影摇。吹洞  
xiāo shù què qīng hé wǎn miào tīng zhī yí rán xiǎng jué yú yīn yóu rào ěr jiān  
箫数阙，清和婉妙，听之怡然；响绝余音，犹绕耳间  
bù tuì chū hù yī wàng kōng kuàng wú jì dà zuì hòu bǐ mò liáo luàn yǐ bù  
不退。出户一望，空旷无际。大醉后笔墨撩乱，已不  
fù jì yì  
复记忆。

jīn chén yú xiù zhōng dé zhǐ fú chū ér shì zhī zé suǒ wèi bǐ mò liáo  
今晨于袖中得纸幅，出而视之，则所谓“笔墨撩  
luàn zhě yě rán yì shū kě ài yǐ wéi yǒu dài dàng zhī qù bǎ bǐ xiào zhī  
乱”者也。然亦殊可爱，以为有骀荡之趣。把笔效之，  
bù néng jí yǐ yīn jí yǐ zuó rì suǒ jiù zhě qǐng zhèng  
不能及已。因即以昨日所就者请正。

gāo ěr yǎn  
高尔俨

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》



# To My Brother-in-Law Zhixu



How happy I was last night! The sky was light blue all over and was as clear as in the day. The shadows of pine branches and bamboos interwove and cast a shade of greenish colour on my face, while the moonlight fell into my winecup, presenting a microscopic scene of undulating waves and shaking shadows. Someone blew on the *Xiao* several times, and the music so produced was tranquilizing and fascinating. I was delighted by it, for I felt that it was lingering at my ears long after the playing had ceased. I went out of the door and all I saw was the boundless vacant space. How I used writing brush and Chinese ink to draw in an irregular and disorderly way after my inebriation—that was something I forgot.

This morning I took the scroll out of my sleeve and had a look at what was "irregularly and disorderly drawn". But it turned out to be rather lovely, as I thought it had an element of freedom and unconstraint. I tried to make another copy of the picture, but the new one fell short of the original. So I presented to you this original one made last night for your kind comments.

Gao Eryan<sup>①</sup>

白话  
翻译



昨夜非常快乐！天空碧蓝，万里无云；月光照耀天地，恍如白昼，又有松竹的影子交响摇动，翠绿色的影子印在脸上，月光掉进酒杯，微微荡漾。吹奏几曲洞箫，乐声清和婉约，听众怡然忘忧；乐声突然停下，余音不绝，仿佛围绕在耳边，迟迟不肯离去。出门一看，空旷的田野没有尽头。大醉之后挥笔，缭乱地写字，已经不记得写什么了。

今天早上从袖子里找到那幅字，拿出来观看，发现昨夜所谓的“笔墨潦草”，也很可爱，觉得它有放荡的气势。于是拿笔想仿效一番，却怎么也达不到那样的境界。因此只能以昨天写成的那幅字向你请教了。







### Note

- ① Gao Eryan, born in Tianjin, was a scholar at the end of the Ming Dynasty, and became an official at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty.



sù shǒu yǔ yǒu rén shū  
岁首与友人书

yì shào shí dài jiǎ miàn jù yǐ pà fù shǒu yǔ ér tóng xiāng zhèn yā  
忆少时带假面具，以帕覆首，与儿童相镇压，

cǐ lè rú nǎng rì yě ér jīn zì shì yǐ chéng lǎo wēng dàn wèi bào sūn ěr  
此乐如曩日也。而今自视，已成老翁，但未抱孙耳。

měi jiàn qún shào nián xuàn fú mò shàng kuà hǎo mǎ dié xiè lòng yǐng zhé  
每见群少年袷服陌上，跨好马，蹀躞弄影，辄

piāo rán yǒu yù cóng zhī sī ér gù bǐ yì sè shū bù yǐ cǐ xiāng xǔ yòu jiàn  
飘然有欲从之思。而顾彼意色，殊不以此相许。又间

sù dōng chūn wú shì xǐ zuò qǐ cí shāo zhú yè bàn bù néng zì yǐ jīn nián  
岁冬春无事，喜作绮词，烧烛夜半，不能自己，今年

cǐ yì yì fù dōu jìn dàn jiàn chūn huā shǐ fā liú yīng chū dòng yī wǎng sī  
此意亦复都尽。但见春花始发，流莺初动，一往思

sān shí nián shì lì lì kě shù  
三十年事，历历可数。

xiǎo yuán xī qiáng jiǎo xià yǒu chuí liǔ yī zhū zì ruò guān shí jiàn qí shuān  
小园西墙脚下，有垂柳一株，自弱冠时见其桢

zhí jīn yǐ pó suō qí zhī yǎn yǐng chí shàng huán xuān wǔ yún shù yóu rú  
植，今已婆娑其枝，掩映池上。桓宣武云：“树犹如

cǐ rén hé yǐ kān cǐ yán zhèng fù kě niàn ěr  
此，人何以堪！”此言正复可念耳。

lǐ wén  
李雯

liǎo zhāi quán jí  
《蓼斋全集》



## A Letter to My Friend on New Year's Day



I remember that when I was a child, I used to wear a mask and cover my head with a kerchief to play hide-and-seek with other children. The pleasure of it makes me feel as if it were a thing of yesterday. But I know I am actually an old man except that I have no grandchildren as yet.

Every time I saw the youngsters, dressed in fine clothes, riding on ambling horses and playing with their own shadows, I would feel an urge to follow their examples. But their looks seemed to be not quite encouraging to my intention.

And in the past several years, when there was nothing to do in winter and spring, I was much given to writing poems. I would burn candles even at midnight to light me and simply could not stop my versifying. But this year this inclination has come to an end. Yet seeing the spring flowers just blossoming and the orioles beginning to warble, I would look back over the past thirty years, and find every thing so distinct in my memory.

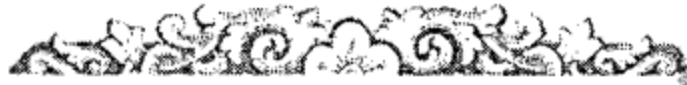
At the foot of the western wall of my garden there is a drooping willow, which I saw was planted when I was twenty. Now it is full-grown, with its branches overshadowing the pond. Huan Xuanwu of the East Jin Dynasty said: "If trees can

白话  
翻译

记得小时候带着假面具,用手帕盖在脸上,和玩伴嬉戏打闹,这种快乐就好像是在昨天一样。现在看自己,已经是一个老翁了,只是还没有抱孙子而已。

每当见到一群少年穿着炫丽的衣服在田间小路上,骑着好马,来去徘徊弄影,就立刻有想跟随的意思。但看着他们的神情,好像不能应许我的要求。去年冬春之际,闲来没事,喜欢写一些艳词,往往能写到半夜,不能自己,今年这些兴趣都没有了。但是看见春花刚刚开放,飞来飞去的夜莺,想起三十年前的事情,都历历在目。

我家小园西墙的脚下,种了一棵垂杨柳,这是我二十岁的时候种的,现在已经树枝婆婆,掩映在池面上了。桓温说:“树尚且如此,人怎么能忍受呢!”这正是我想说的。



so easily pass their prime, how can man be otherwise!" This remark indeed gives food for thought.

Li Wen<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Liao Chamber*



### Note

- ① Li Wen (1607–1647), born in Shanghai, was a scholar at the end of the Ming Dynasty and became an official at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty.



yí fū rén shū  
遗夫人书

sān yuè jié lí biàn zāo dà biàn ér lèi shū nǚ xiāng yī wài jiā wèi  
三月结缡，便遭大变，而累淑女，相依外家，未  
cháng yǐ jiā mén shèng shuāi wēi jiàn yán sè suī dé yào jì méi wèi kě xiāng  
尝以家门盛衰，微见颜色。虽德曜齐眉，未可相  
yù xián shū hé xiào qiān gǔ suǒ nán  
喻！贤淑和孝，千古所难。

bù xìng zhì jīn wú yòu bù dé bù sǐ wú sǐ zhī hòu fū rén yòu bù dé bù  
不幸至今吾又不得不死；吾死之后，夫人又不得不  
shēng shàng yǒu shuāng cí xià yǒu yī nǚ zé shàng yǎng xià yù tuō zhī shéi  
生。上有双慈，下有一女，则上养下育，托之谁  
hū rán xiāng quàn yǐ shēng fù hé liáo lài wú tián fèi dì yǐ wěi zhī màn cǎo  
乎？然相劝以生，复何聊赖？芜田废地，已委之蔓草  
huāng yān tóng qì lián zhī yuán děng yú gé fū xíng lù qīng nián sàng ǒu cái  
荒烟；同气连枝，原等于隔肤行路。青年丧偶，才  
jí èr jiǔ zhī qī cāng hǎi héng liú yòu dīng bǎi liù zhī huì qióng qióng yī rén  
及二九之期；沧海横流，又丁百六之会。茕茕一人，  
shēng lǐ jìn yǐ  
生理尽矣。

wū hū yán zhì cǐ gān cháng cùn cùn duàn zhí bǐ xīn suān duì zhǐ lèi  
呜呼！言至此，肝肠寸寸断，执笔心酸，对纸泪  
dī yù shū zé yī zì jù wú yù yán zé wàn bān nán tǔ wú sǐ yǐ wú  
滴。欲书，则一字俱无；欲言，则万般难吐。吾死矣！吾  
sǐ yǐ fāng cùn yǐ luàn  
死矣！方寸已乱。

píng shēng wèi tā rén zhǐ huà liǎo liǎo jīn rì wèi fū rén yī sī jiū jìng biàn  
平生为他人指画了了，今日为夫人一思究竟，便



## A Letter Bidding My Wife Farewell



Soon after we were married in the third month, we met with a great cataclysm in the same year. Though you were obliged by necessity to go and live with your parents, you did not show the least discontent, in spite of the rapid decline of our family. This was much more than Meng Guang's profound love and respect to her husband. Your goodness, amiability and filial piety are indeed rarely found in a millennium.

How miserable it is that I have to die, while after my death you have to live. As there are my mother, my adopted mother and our daughter to provide for, who but you could take care of them? Though I am persuading you to live on, but pray, what could you depend on for a living? Our homestead is desolated, and the land is overgrown with weeds and grass. Our brothers and sisters behave as though they were total strangers to us. At a young age of eighteen, you'll lose your spouse, for the turn of the tide has brought you this sinister fate, leaving you alone in this world. There is evidently no cause for you to live on.

Alack! I feel so heart-rending when I am coming to this point. Holding my pen, choked with anguish, I can't help shedding tears on the note-paper. Though I wish to write a great deal, I found myself at a loss for words and, though I

rú luàn sī jī má shēn hòu zhī shì yī tīng cái duàn wǒ bù néng dào yī yǔ  
如乱丝积麻，身后之事，一听裁断，我不能道一语  
yě tíng bǐ yù jué qù nián jiāng dōng chǔ èr dàn shēng gè guān fēng diǎn jù  
也，停笔欲绝。去年江东储贰诞生，各官封典俱  
yǒu wǒ yì céng dé fū rén fū rén nǚ yì xiān cháo mìng fù yě wú lèi  
有，我亦曾得。夫人，夫人，汝亦先朝命妇也，吾累  
rǔ wú wù rǔ fù hé yán zāi wū hū jiàn cǐ zhǐ rú jiàn wú yě  
汝，吾误汝，复何言哉？呜呼！见此纸如见吾也。

wài shū fèng qín zhuàn xì jūn  
外书，奉秦篆细君。

xià wán chún  
夏完淳

xià wán chún jí  
《夏完淳集》

白话  
翻译

我们结婚才三个月，就遭遇了巨大的变故，连累了你回到父母家去居住。对于我们家庭的衰败，你没有表现出一点的愁苦。这比孟光“举案齐眉”的品德更加可贵，你贤淑和孝敬的品德在历史上也是非常难得的。

不幸的是，现在我不得不勇赴国难，而我死之后，夫人你又不不能不继续活下去。我的母亲和你的母亲都还健在，我们膝下又还有一个女儿；除了你之外，又有谁能接受我的重托，去侍奉二位母亲，养育幼女？我劝你继续活下去，却不知道你可以有什么借以谋生？我们的田地早已荒芜，长满了野草；我们的兄弟姐妹，都已经与我们形同陌路。你才十八岁，就将失去配偶；沧海横流，又到了世事动乱的时际了！你一个人孤零零地在这个世界上，没有任何维持生计的凭依。令人悲伤呀！说到这里，我肝肠寸断，拿着笔心中痛酸，唯有对着纸流泪；想写却一个字也写不出来，想说却一句话也说不出。我就要死了，就要死了！心中已乱！平





want to speak to you, I can't unbosom myself, for there seem to be myriads of feelings to give vent to. I am dying! I am dying! My heart is all in turmoil.

Although I used to plan things for others with much clarity, today, when I am trying to map the future out for you, I find that everything is so confused. My posthumous affairs are all up to you to handle and solve and I simply can't say a word about them. I am concluding this letter with a broken heart. Last year the Crown Prince was enthroned east of the River, and a multitude of officials and their family dependants were given great distinction. I am also on the list of honour. Oh, my dear! my dear! You are also a distinguished woman of the fallen dynasty. It is I who have brought you to this pass. What more can I say? Alas, to read this letter is the same as to see me in the face!

Written to my wife Qinzhuan

Xia Wanchun<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Xia Wanchun*



### Note

- ① Xia Wanchun(1631-1647), born in Shanghai, was a young hero, who, together with his father, fought against the Qing aggressors and died a martyr's death. This letter to his newly-married wife was written in prison before he had been executed.



生常替他人出谋划策,能侃侃而谈,今天想为夫人你的将来安排一下,思绪却像是乱丝积麻。我死后的事,只能全凭你裁度处理,我什么也说不上、说出来了!放下笔吧!

去年在江南扶立新君继位,大家都得到了新君的典封,各有官职,而唯独我不曾接受。夫人啊夫人,你也算是大明遗臣的夫人呀!我连累了你,我耽误了你,我还有什么可说呀!呜呼悲哉!见这信如同见我!

写给我的夫人秦篆。





蘇  
氏  
書  
齋  
PDG



yǔ jiā bó cháng wén chāng  
与家伯长文昌

shī fēi yì wù zhī shì rén rén xīn tóu shé jiān suǒ wàn bù huò yǐ bì yù  
诗非异物，只是人人心头舌尖所万不获已，必欲  
shuō chū zhī yī jù shuō huà ěr rú zhě zé yòu yǐ shēng píng làn shóu zhī wàn  
说出之一句说话耳。儒者则又以生平烂熟之万  
juàn yīn ér yǔ zhī cái chéng wén zhāng rùn zhī chéng wén zhě yě fū shī zhī  
卷，因而与之裁成文章，润之成文者也。夫诗之  
yǒu zhāng yǒu wén yě cǐ gù rú zhě zhī suǒ jīn wéi dú néng yě ruò qí yuán  
有章、有文也，此固儒者之所矜为独能也。若其原  
běn bù guò zhī shì rén rén xīn tóu shé jiān wàn bù huò yǐ bì yù shuō chū zhī  
本，不过只是人人心头、舌尖万不获已，必欲说出之  
yī jù shuō huà zé gù fēi rú zhě zhī suǒ dé jīn wéi dú néng yě  
一句说话，则固非儒者之所得矜为独能也。

jīn rén ruì  
金人瑞

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》



# To My Uncle Jin Changwen



Poems are nothing strange. They are but a few words kept in everybody's heart or hanging at the tip of everybody's tongue that must be given utterance one way or another, whereas men of letters, based on their fabric, provide them with tissue and structure, and grace them with verbal ornaments. Thus poetry, invested with a refined form, becomes something which the literati are proud of and claim to have the monopoly of. But when traced to its origin, it is nothing but a few words kept in everybody's heart and hanging at the tip of everybody's tongue, which must be given utterance one way or another, and not to be claimed by the literati as their monopoly.

Jin Renrui<sup>①</sup>

*Laigu Chamber's New Edition of Letters of Celebrities*

白话  
翻译



诗并不是奇异的东西，它们是常常出现在人人的心头和舌尖上，必须要说出来的一句话而已。读书人却总是在那些烂熟于心的典籍书卷中剪裁出一些文字，润色成文章。诗是有章法、有文采的，这总是读书人自以为唯独他们才可以做的事情。但是追溯诗的本源，不过是常常出现在人人的心头和舌尖上，必须想说出来的一句话而已，并不是读书人自以为唯独他们才可以做的事情。





### Note

- ① Jin Renrui (1608–1661), whose penname is Jin Shengtan, was born in Suzhou of Jiangsu Province and was a prominent literary critic, essayist and poet at the end of the Ming Dynasty.





yǔ rén shēng zhī  
与任升之

dì yú shì jiān bù wéi bù tān shì yù yì gèng bù tān míng yù xiōng qián  
弟于世间，不惟不贪嗜欲，亦更不贪名誉。胸前

yī cùn zhī xīn juàn juàn wéi shì gǔ rén jǐ běn cán shū zì lái rǔ zài ní tú zhě  
一寸之心，眷眷惟是古人几本残书，自来辱在泥涂者，

què bù zì chuāi lì ruò bì yù yǔ zhī zhāo xuě zhī cǐ yī shì shì dì qián jiàn  
却不自揣力弱，必欲与之昭雪。只此一事，是弟前件！

qí yú dì jiē bù xī  
其余弟皆不惜。

jīn rén ruì  
金人瑞

táng cái zǐ shī jí  
《唐才子诗集》

白话  
翻译



活在这个世上，我不贪图个人的欲望，也不贪图名誉。在我胸中，唯有古人留下的几本残破的书籍，我不自认为能力有限，致力于挖掘出它们巨大的价值。只这么一件事，是我的首要大事！其余的事情，我都不在乎。





## A Letter to Ren Shengzhi



Living in this world, I am not anxious to gratify my physical desires, much less to court fame. What is cherished by my heart is only several books left over by our forefathers, which have all along been buried in oblivion. Not considering my inadequate ability, I am determined to bring to light their great value. This and only this is my first concern and all the rest can be ignored.

Jin Renrui

*Anthology of Tang Talents' Poems*





yǔ huáng jī shū  
与黄济叔

jūn yǒu suǒ bù zú yú shì shí yē hàn yù zhī wài miào mò guò yú shì shí  
君有所不足于市石耶？汉玉之外，妙莫过于市石，  
dòng zé qí zuì xià zhě ěr bù xiào xù lǎo kēng dòng zuì duō yì fù zuì shàn  
冻则其最下者耳。不孝蓄老坑冻最多，亦复最善。  
liǎng nián yǐ lái jìn mài qián hú kǒu mǎi zhě dàn yù dé wú dòng ěr qǐ zhī hǎo  
两年以来，尽卖钱糊口，买者但欲得吾冻耳，岂知好  
shǒu juān zhuàn biàn yì suí zhī qù yē bǐ mǎi dòng zhě jí dé miào zhuàn shì bì  
手镌篆便亦随之去耶？彼买冻者即得妙篆，势必  
mó qù yì yǐ jǐ zhī xìng míng gù shì shí zhī xíng bǎi nián rú gù dòng rù yī  
磨去，易以己之姓名。故市石之形，百年如故；冻入一  
jiā zé āi yī cì bù shù shí nián jiē zhū rú yǐ bù xiào dòng zhāng wú yī  
家，则矮一次，不数十年，皆侏儒矣。不孝冻章无一  
cún ér miào zhuàn fǎn yīn shì shí wēi rán rú lǔ líng  
存，而妙篆反因市石巍然如鲁灵。

chéng zāi hàn yù zhī wài miào mò guò yú shì shí yě zú xià gǒu ài xī  
诚哉！汉玉之外，妙莫过于市石也。足下苟爱惜  
miào zhuàn dāng yǒng yǒng jiè juān lǎo dòng zhuān lì yú shì shí  
妙篆，当永永戒镌老冻，专力于市石。

zhōu qí  
周圻

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》



## To Huang Jishu



Do you think ordinary seal stones unsatisfactory? But in fact, apart from jade, nothing is better than stone for carving a seal, and crystal is the worst for that purpose, I used to possess the largest amount of crystals which could claim to be the best of their kind. But in the past two years, I have sold them all to scrape a living. The buyers only cared for the crystals themselves. So the marvellous *zhuan*-style ideograms carved on them were also lost! A buyer, having gained such a good crystal, was sure to grind away the names so wonderfully carved and substitute his own for them. Thus an ordinary seal stone can retain its shape as long as a century, while a crystal is dwarfed each time it changes its owner. It would take only several decades before they all become pygmies. Though I have not a single crystal seal left in my possession, the excellent *zhuan*-style carvings are kept intact just because of the use of ordinary seal stones.

How true it is that apart from jade, nothing is better than stone for carving a seal. If Your Honour cherishes excellent *zhuan*-style carvings, you should always guard against using crystals, but give your preference to ordinary stones.

Zhou Qi<sup>①</sup>

白话  
翻译



你对普通的印石不满意吗？除了汉玉之外，印石是最适宜篆刻的材料了，而水晶石则是其中最劣等的。我自己存有很多老水晶印石，也是一般人认为成色最好的。近两年中，我都把它们拿去卖钱糊口，买的人只想得到一块水晶，怎么会想到优良的篆刻字迹也随之而去了呢？那些买走水晶印章的人，认为得到了篆刻的好材料，一定会磨掉原来的篆刻，换上自己的姓名。所以，普通印石的形状百年如故；而水晶石进入一家则被磨去一层，不过数十年就都形同侏儒了。我没有存下一块水晶印章，而优良的篆刻反而因为刻在普通印石上而岿然不动。

真的是这样！汉玉之外，最好的篆刻材料就是普通印石了。你如果真的爱惜自己的篆刻，应当永远摒弃水晶，而专力于普通印石。





**Note**

- ① Zhou Qi, born in Fuzhou of Jiangxi, was a scholar at the end of the Ming Dynasty.





yǔ wēng jì lín  
与翁季霖

dì yǐ wǔ yuè chū liú zhì jiāng běi zhì jiǔ yuè guī kūn shān zhī rén jiàn  
弟以五月出，留滞江北，至九月归。昆山之人，见  
zhě jiē jīng gài chuán qí sǐ jiǔ yǐ àn wǔ xíng zhì fán é yán jiē shǔ zāi  
者皆惊，盖传其死久矣。按《五行志》，凡讹言皆属灾  
yì rú é yán huáng lóng jiàn é yán dà shuǐ zhì jiē jì zhī yú shǐ jīn suì dì  
异。如讹言黄龙见，讹言大水至，皆记之于史。今岁地  
zhèn shuǐ yì cǐ zāi yì zhī jiàn yú tiān dì zhě yě jiāng nán mín é yán guī shēng  
震水溢，此灾异之见于天地者也。江南民讹言归生  
sǐ cǐ zāi yì zhī jiàn yú rén shì zhě yě bù zhī jīn rì shǐ guān yì dāng bìng shū  
死，此灾异之见于人事者也。不知今日史官，亦当并书  
zhī fǒu yī xiào  
之否？一笑。

dì cháng wèi dòng tíng chéng jú yú shān fēng yè hǎi bīn jú huā jiē shǔ  
弟尝谓洞庭橙橘，虞山枫叶，海滨菊花，皆属  
shèng guān ér bìng zài yī shí dì fēi tóng lù shì nán jiān dé zhì qiū dōng zhī  
盛观。而并在一时，地非同路，势难兼得。至秋冬之  
jiāo dāng yǐ yī xiǎo zhōu yú hé gān rèn fēng chuī zhī zhì dōng zé dōng xī zé  
交，当舫一小舟于河干，任风吹之，至东则东，西则  
xī lián rì xī fēng jǐn jiāng chuī dào dōng hǎi zhī bīn jú huā cóng zhōng yǐ shān  
西。连日西风紧，将吹到东海之滨菊花丛中矣。山  
zhōng dān bāo zhū shí zhī yǐ làn rán  
中丹苞、朱实，知已烂然。

xī zāi jīn suì wú yuán wéi dāng mèng yóu ěr  
惜哉！今岁无缘，惟当梦游耳。

guī zhuāng  
归庄

guī zhuāng jí  
《归庄集》



## To Weng Jilin



I set out in the fifth month on my trip to the north of the Yangtse River and returned in the ninth. People in Kunshan, at the sight of me, were dumbfounded. For it was rumoured that I had died long before. According to the *Records of the Actions of the Five Elements*, all rumours had reference to disasters. For example, some were related with the emergence of the yellow dragon, others with the occurrence of serious floods, which were recorded in the history. This year's rumours of earthquakes and inundations are calamities of a natural character, whereas the Southeastern people's rumour of my death is a disaster of human character. I wonder whether historians would give them a paralleled account.

I have often said that oranges of Lake Dongting and maple leaves of Yushan as well as chrysanthemums on the seashore are fascinating views. Since they appear at the same time, yet in different places, it would be difficult to enjoy them all at once. At the juncture of autumn and winter, I will row a boat in the river and leave it at the caprice of the wind—to be driven either to the east or to the west. These days the west wind is blowing hard, I'll most probably be blown to the chrysanthemum grove on the shore of the East Sea, where, I know, the red buds and scarlet fruit on the mountains must be

白话  
翻译

我五月的时候离开家，一直滞留江北，直到九月才回来。昆山的人见到我都非常惊讶，因为人们谣传我很早就已经死了。根据《五行志》的说法，但凡传言都可以预言灾异。比如传言出现了黄龙，传言将发大水，都被史书记载了下来。今年有地震和水灾的传言，是灾异在自然界的表现。江南的人民谣传我已经死了，这是灾异在人事上的表现。不知道现在的史官是否会一起记录进史书呢？这只是开个玩笑。

我曾说洞庭湖的橘树、虞山的枫叶、海滨的菊花都是壮丽的景色。但是它们都出现在一年的同一个时节，又不在一个地方，是不能同时见到的。到了秋冬之交，我将在河里划一条小船，任它随风漂浮，到东就是东，到西就是西。最近总是刮西风，那我最有可能被吹到东海之滨的菊花丛中去了。在那里，红色的花朵和果实都已经让山上一片烂漫了。

可惜呀！今年没有机会去，我只能在梦中游览了。





very nice by now.

What a great pity that this year there is no chance for that.  
I can only take the trip in my dream!

Gui Zhuang<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Gui Zhuang*



### Note

- ① Gui Zhuang (1613–1673), born in Kunshan of Jiangsu Province, was a man of letter, who took part in the struggle against the Qing aggressors, and after its failure, escaped under the disguise of a monk.

<



yǔ pān cì gēng zhá  
与潘次耕札

dú shū bù duō qīng yán zhù shù bì wù hòu xué wú zhī bá guǎng yùn  
读书不多，轻言著述，必误后学，吾之跋《广韵》

shì yě suī qīng zhǔ dú shū sì wǔ shí nián yì tóng cǐ jiàn jīn fèi zhī ér bié zuò  
是也。虽青主读书四五十年，亦同此见。今废之而别作

yī piān bìng sòng lǎn yǐ zhì wú guò  
一篇，并送览，以志吾过。

píng shēng suǒ zhù ruò cǐ zhě wǎng wǎng duō yǒu fán zài xú chù jiù zuò kě  
平生所著若此者，往往多有，凡在徐处旧作可

yī zì bù cún zì liàng jīng lì wèi shuāi huò wèi jù sǐ chí chí zì yǒu dìng běn  
一字不存。自量精力未衰，或未遽死，迟迟自有定本

yě  
也。

gù yán wǔ  
顾炎武

tíng lín wén jí  
《亭林文集》



## A Letter to Pan Cigeng



If one has read just a few books and presumes to write one in a casual manner, he is sure to mislead future readers. My epilogue to the book *On Rhythm* is a case in point. Although Fu Qingzhu has engaged in his studies for forty or fifty years, he is of the same opinion. As I want to throw that article overboard, I have written a new one, which I am sending to you for your scrutiny, so as to make up for my fault.

There must be numerous writings like this epilogue during my whole life. My previous works kept at my nephew's can be totally discarded, as I think that I am still vigorous enough and shall not die very soon, and there must be a final version in due course.

Gu Yanwu<sup>①</sup>

Collection of Gu Yanwu



**Note**

① Gu Yanwu (1613–1682), born in Kunshan of Jiangsu Province, was a famous thinker and scholar, who in his youth took part in the

白话  
翻译



如果一个人不先多读书就轻易去写著作，必然会耽误后人，比如我为《广韵》作跋就是这样。青主读了四五十年的书，也是与我的见解一样。现在我另外作了一篇来代替以前的那篇，并送给你过目，来弥补我的过错。

在我一生所作的文章中，像这个样子的很多；但凡在我侄儿那里的旧作一个字都可以不留。我自认为精力还未衰退，还不至于很快就死去，慢慢地我会做出最后的定本来。





struggle against the despotic eunuch Wei Zhongxian and afterwards joined the people's uprisings against the Qing invaders, keeping up his patriotic spirit to the end of his life.



dá zǐ dé shū  
答子德书

jiē dú lái shī mí zēng kuì cè míng yán zài zī bù chī kǒu chū gǔ rén  
接读来诗，弥增愧侧！名言在兹，不啻口出，古人  
yǒu zhī rán shǐ zú xià méng péng dǎng zhī jī ér lǎo fū shòu xū míng zhī huò  
有之。然使足下蒙朋党之讥，而老夫受虚名之祸，  
wèi bì bù yóu yú cǐ yě hán bó xiū bù yù nǚ zǐ zhī míng zú xià nǎi yù bō  
未必不由于此也。韩伯休不欲女子知名，足下乃欲播  
wú míng yú shì dà fū qí qù xī xián zhī jiàn hé qí yuǎn hū rén xiāng wàng  
吾名于士大夫，其去昔贤之见，何其远乎？人相忘  
yú dào shù yú xiāng wàng yú jiāng hú ruò měi zuò yī shī zhé xiāng tuī zhòng  
于道术，鱼相忘于江湖，若每作一诗，辄相推重，  
shì xī rén biāo bǎng zhī xí ér dà yǎ jūn zǐ suǒ fú wéi yě  
是昔人标榜之习，而大雅君子所弗为也。

yuàn lǎo dì zì jīn yǐ wǎng bù fù guà lǎo xiǔ rén yú bǐ shé zhī jiān zé  
愿老弟自今以往，不复挂老朽人于笔舌之间，则  
suǒ yǐ quán zhī zhě dà yī  
所以全之者大矣。

gù yán wǔ  
顾炎武

tíng lín yí shū  
《亭林遗书》



## A Reply to Li Zide



I have read the poems you sent to me, and I have become all the more uneasy and ashamed. Singing one's praises in written form, and not merely verbally, was something not unusual with ancients. But if you should invite the slander of forming a clique with me and I incur a disaster because of an undeserved fame, this might very well be the root cause of it. Formerly the drugseller Han Boxiu didn't wish a woman to know his name, yet Your Honour wants to spread my name among the gentry. What a far cry it would be from the thoughts of ancient sages! People forget themselves in their mutual cultivation of virtues and learnings, and fish forget themselves in rivers and lakes. If one writes some poems and invariably gets others' praises—that would lead to the custom of logrolling as seen among the literati of the past, not to be followed by noble gentlemen.

I hope you, brother, will never repeat my name in your writings or your speech. That would be of great benefit to me.

Gu Yanwu

*Posthumous Letters of Gu Yanwu*

白话  
翻译



读了你寄来的诗,我更增加了惭愧和不安。古人有很多的名言就在嘴边,我却不好意思借用,那些都是古人说过的。但是你蒙受了朋党之争的讥讽,我也因为虚名而遭遇祸患,这很有可能就是因为这样的原因。韩伯林不想让女子知道他的名字,你却想把我的名声传播到士大夫当中,我们的作为距离前代贤人的见解是多么地遥远啊!人们因为道德和知识而忘记了彼此,鱼因为江湖的水而迷失了自己,每作一首诗都要拿出来换得名声,这是以前人们标榜的习惯,而并非高尚的君子所为。

希望你从今以后,不要把我的名字挂在嘴上,挂在笔上。这也是大大的保全我了。







蘇  
氏  
書  
齋  
PDG

yǔ yè rèn ān shū  
与叶仞庵书

qù dōng hán yuán shào shū lái yán céng yù wèi zhí shì jiàn jí bǐ rén yǐ  
去冬韩元少书来，言曾欲为执事荐及鄙人，已  
ér zhōng zhǐ qǐng wén shǐ jú zhōng fù yǒu wù sè jí zhī zhě wú lùn hūn mào zhī  
而中止。顷闻史局中复有物色及之者。无论昏耄之  
zī bù néng miǎn miǎn cóng shì ér zhí shì tóng lǐ rén yě yī shēng huái  
资，不能勉勉从事；而执事，同里人也；一生怀  
bào gǎn bù zhí chén zhī zuǒ yòu  
抱，敢不直陈之左右。

xiān bǐ wèi jià guò mén yǎng gū bào sì wèi wú zhōng dì yī qí jié  
先妣未嫁过门，养姑抱嗣，为吴中第一奇节，  
méng cháo tíng jīng biǎo guó wáng jué lì yǐ nǚ zǐ ér dǎo shǒu yáng zhī liè lín  
蒙朝廷旌表。国亡绝粒，以女子而蹈首阳之烈，临  
zhōng yí mìng yǒu wú shì yì dài zhī yán zài yú zhì zhuàng gù rén rén kě  
终遗命，有“无仕异代”之言，载于志状。故人人可  
chū ér yán wǔ bì bù kě chū yǐ jì yuē jiāng yí fù mǔ lìng míng bì  
出而炎武必不可出矣！《记》曰：“将贻父母令名，必  
guǒ jiāng yí fù mǔ xiū rǔ bì bù guǒ qī shí lǎo wēng hé suǒ qiú zhèng  
果；将贻父母羞辱，必不果。”七十老翁何所求？正  
qiàn yī sǐ ruò bì xiāng bī zé yǐ shēn xùn zhī yǐ yī sǐ ér xiān bǐ zhī dà  
欠一死！若必相逼，则以身殉之矣！一死而先妣之大  
jié yù zhāng yú tiān xià shǐ bù lèi zhī zǐ dé fù yǐ chéng míng cǐ yì rén  
节愈彰于天下，使不类之子得附以成名，此亦人  
shēng nán dé zhī zāo féng yě  
生难得之遭逢也！

jǐn cǐ fèng wén  
谨此奉闻。

gù yán wǔ  
顾炎武

tíng lín yí shū  
《亭林遗书》

## A Letter to Ye Ren'an



Last winter Han Yuanshao wrote to me, saying that he had wished to recommend me to Your Honour, but later gave up the idea. Recently the Bureau of History was also said to have singled me out for an appointment. I shall not dwell on the fact that, being senile, I am already not in a position to apply myself diligently to that job. But, as Your Honour is a townsman of mine, I cannot but represent to you without reservation my lifelong aspiration.

My late adopted mother came to our Gu family, though she failed to marry my adopted father, as the latter had died before marriage. However, she looked after her mother-in-law and took care of me, her adopted son. Being a woman most noted for her chastity and fidelity, she was honoured with a distinction by the court. After the State had fallen, she, refusing to eat, followed the martyrdom of Boyi and Shuqi. In her testament was the injunction of "never serving another dynasty", which was recorded in her biography. Therefore, others may come out to serve, but never should I! *The Book of Rites* says: "To impart one's parents a good name, one is bound to come to a good end; to impart one's parents disgrace, one is bound to come to no good end." Being an old man of seventy, what am I to court? Nothing but death!

白话  
翻译



去年冬天，韩元少写信来，曾说要向您举荐鄙人，但是后来他放弃了这个想法。随后，史局中又想重新推举我。我的资质愚钝，也很年迈了，难以勤勉地工作；而您是我的同乡，我一生的抱负，怎么敢不直接向您交代？

我的继母还未过门就开始守寡，她侍奉婆婆、养育子嗣，作为一名节烈的女子，她被称为是吴中的第一传奇，并受到了朝廷的表彰。在国家灭亡的时候，她绝食而亡，她以一个女子的身份而实践了男子的忠烈事迹，她的临终有“不要为另一个国家做官”的遗言，并被记载进她的传记中。所以说，即便是每个人都能够出来做官，而唯有我不能！《礼记》说：“如果要做善事，想到这会给父母带来好的名声，就一定会去做。反之，如果想去做坏事，但想到会给父母带来羞辱，就一定不会去做。”我一个七十岁的老头还能有什么要求？正好只欠一死。如果你们苦苦相逼，那么我只能以生命去殉节了。我一死，那么我先母的大节更加会彰显于天下，这也能使得我这个不孝之子可以被附带成名，这也是人生难得的大好机会啊！

谨以这封信表达我的问候！





Should an appointment be forced upon me, I can but lay down my life. If my death could render the integrity of my late mother more resplendent in the world, thus making her unworthy son also achieve a good name—that would be indeed the greatest fortune in my life!

I hereby pay you my deep respects.

Gu Yanwu

*Posthumous Letters of Gu Yanwu*



yǔ rén shū  
与人书

jūn shī zhī bìng , zài yú yǒu dù jūn wén zhī bìng , zài yú yǒu hán ōu  
君诗之病，在于有杜；君文之病，在于有韩、欧。

yǒu cǐ qī jìng yú xiōng zhōng , biàn zhōng shēn bù tuō yī bàng èr zì duàn  
有此蹊径于胸中，便终身不脱“依傍”二字，断  
bù néng dēng fēng zào jí  
不能登峰造极。

gù yán wǔ  
顾炎武

tíng lín yí shū  
《亭林遗书》

白话  
翻译



你的诗歌的毛病在于学习了太多杜甫的东西，你的文章的毛病在于吸取了太多的韩愈和欧阳修的东西。在心中有了这样的捷径，你便终身都脱不开“依傍”二字，肯定是无法登峰造极的。



## A Letter to My Friend



The defects in your poems and in your essays consist in the fact that one may detect an element of the influence of Du Fu in the former and of Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu in the latter. With such influence in your mind, you can hardly be free of certain dependence upon these authors, and can never expect to make the summit in your literary creation.

Gu Yanwu

*Posthumous Letters of Gu Yanwu*





yǔ                  rén  
与                  人

yú rén yǒu fú zé yuè xìng yǒu huò zé hèn tàn bǐ fú wèi bì zēng huò  
于人有福则悦幸，有祸则恨叹；彼福未必增，祸  
wèi bì qù yě ér dé zhī zhě zhì yǐ yú rén yǒu huò zé yuè xìng yǒu fú zé hèn  
未必去也，而德之者至矣。于人有祸则悦幸，有福则恨  
tàn bǐ huò yì wèi bì zēng fú yì wèi bì qù yě ér yuàn zhī zhě zhì yǐ jiè  
叹；彼祸亦未必增，福亦未必去也，而怨之者至矣。戒  
zāi  
哉！

wèi yì jiè  
魏裔介

jiān jì táng jí  
《兼济堂集》

白话  
翻译



如果别人有福你会快乐，别人有难你会悲叹；虽然别人的福不会因此增加，别人的难不会因此减少，但是这是品德高尚的重要表现。如果别人有难你却快乐，别人有福你却嫉恨，虽然别人的福不会因此增加，别人的难不会因此减少，但是这是品德低劣的重要表现。要以此为戒！





## To My Friend



If you feel happy for other people's fortune and sigh with regret for their mishap, you will not increase the one or eliminate the other, yet they are sure to be grateful to you. By the same token, if you feel happy for other people's mishap, and sigh with regret for their fortune, you will likewise not increase the one or eliminate the other, yet they are sure to be resentful to you. Take care of this!

Wei Yijie<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Jianji Chamber*



### Note

- ① Wei Yijie (1615-1686), born in Boxiang of Hebei Province, was a scholar and official at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty.



yǔ rén  
与人

wèi rén zuò mù zhì míng bù tián shì jī zé qiú zhě bù gān duō tián shì  
为人作墓志铭，不填事迹，则求者不甘；多填事  
jī zé jiàn zhě bù xìn qí zhì wú kě chēng shù bù dé yǐ zhuǎn chāo huì yǔ jí  
迹，则见者不信。其至无可称述，不得已转抄汇语及  
zhòng jiā kè běn yǐ yīng zhī pì rú chuán shén xiě zhào xiàng sǐ rén miàn shàng  
众家刻本以应之，譬如传神写照，向死人面上  
tuō gǎo yǐ bù kè xiāo kuàng xiě lù rén xíng mào hū  
脱稿，已不克肖，况写路人形貌乎？

wú yuàn shì rén shēng qián xíng xiē hǎo shì zuò gè hǎo rén wù lìng zuò zhì míng  
吾愿世人生前行些好事，做个好人，勿令作志铭  
zhě zhí bǐ chóu chú dài wèi zhē gài yě  
者执笔踌躇，代为遮盖也。

wèi xiàng shū  
魏象枢

míng èr bǎi míng jiā chǐ dú  
《明二百家尺牍》

白话  
翻译



为别人写墓志铭的时候，如果不对墓主人的平生事迹加以润色，那么来求墓志铭的人就不会高兴；但是如果添加了很多墓主人的平生事迹，那么读墓志铭的人就不会相信。如果墓主人实在是没有任何值得称述的事迹，写墓志铭的人会不得不从其他的记载和书籍中去摘抄一些来敷衍，这好比说，描画一个已经去世的人的肖像神情就已经很不符合事实了，何况再去描摹一个不相干的人的形貌作为替代呢？

我希望世上的人生前多做些好事，做个好人，不要让为你做墓志铭的人提笔时感到为难，想尽办法代你遮盖短处。



## To My Friend



Writing an epitaph for someone without showing the deeds he had done in his life would make the solicitor of it dissatisfied. But loading it with a lot of good deeds would make the readers incredulous. As for the case in which a person died with no recommendations to speak of, and the writer of his epitaph had to quote from the laudatory utterances of various scholars for the occasion, it was simply like painting one's portrait from his death mask, which bore little likeness to his original face—to say nothing of painting a portrait of a total stranger!

I wish that people in the world would do some good deeds and be respected as a good man in their lifetime, so that writers of epitaphs might not think hard in order to fill such blanks for them.

Wei Xiangshu<sup>①</sup>

*Letters of Ming Dynasty's Two Hundred Notables*



**Note**

① Wei Xiangshu (1617–1687), born in Yuzhou of Hebei Province, was a scholarly official at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. He was bold in fighting corruption among dignitaries.

shì ér yàn  
示儿燕

chū dú gǔ shū qiē mò xī shū xī shū zhī shèn bì zhì gāo gé biàn xū  
初读古书，切莫惜书；惜书之甚，必至高阁。便须  
dòng juàn diǎn wéi shì kàn huài yī běn bù fáng gēng mǎi yī běn gài xī shū shì  
动圈点为是，看坏一本，不妨更买一本。盖惜书是  
yǒu lì zhī jiā cáng shū zhě suǒ wéi wú pín rén wèi huáng xiào cǐ yě pì rú chá  
有力之家藏书者所为，吾贫人未遑效此也。譬如茶  
bēi fàn wǎn míng zhī shì jiù yáo dāng zhēn xī rán pín jiā zhǐ yǒu cǐ qì jiāng  
杯饭碗，明知是旧窑，当珍惜；然贫家止有此器，将  
rěn kě rěn jī zuò zhēn cáng jì hū ér dāng zhī zhī  
忍渴忍饥作珍藏计乎？儿当知之！

sūn zhī wèi  
孙枝蔚

gài táng wén jí  
《溉堂文集》

白话  
翻译



刚开始读古书的时候，一定不要太爱惜书本，过分地爱惜书本，势必会将它们束之高阁。读书时要多圈圈点点，看坏一本不妨再买一本。爱惜图书，是有财力的藏书家的作为，我们这些穷人不能盲目效仿。就好像说，茶杯饭碗，明明知道是旧窑出品的，应当珍惜；但是贫穷的家庭只有这一点器物，难道还要收藏起这些茶杯饭碗忍饥挨饿吗？我的儿子啊，你应当记住这些！



## To My Son Sun Yan



At the initial stage of reading ancient books, you should not be too sparing of them. Otherwise they are sure to be put on the shelf. The proper thing for you to do is to make plenty of marks on a book, such as circling the important words in red ink. Once a book is worn out, you just buy another one. As you know, keeping books in good form is a concern of wealthy bibliophiles. We poor men cannot afford to follow their examples. For instance, though we know for certain that a teacup or a rice bowl is a rare antique and ought to be much cherished, yet, since it is the only one in our poor family, how could we possibly suffer thirst or hunger just because we wish to keep it as a rarity? You should know this !

Sun Zhiwei<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Gai Chamber*



### Note

① Sun Zhiwei (1631–1698), born of a rich merchant's family in Sanyuan of Shaanxi Province, was a poet at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty.



fù qián cháng rén  
复钱长人

hū jiàn huā jiān shèn zhuó qǔ qí zuì hóng zhě qiā zhī zhī nǎi bù hóng qí  
忽见花间甚灼，取其最红者掐之，汁乃不红；其  
rǎn hóng zhī zhì zhě wèi hóng huā huā zé wèi shǐ hóng yě zhì rǎn sè zhī chū  
染红之至者为红花，花则未始红也。至染色之初，  
nóng zhī shàng qì zhī wú suǒ yòng zhì xǐ zhī lù zhī ér hòu zhēn hóng shǐ chū  
浓汁尚弃之无所用，至洗之漉之，而后真红始出。  
rán zé hóng zhě huā zhī suǒ wèi cháng yǒu yě  
然则红者，花之所未尝有也。

wèi wén ér bù jiā yǐ xǐ lù qiú qí yàn rú huā nán yǐ  
为文而不加以洗漉，求其艳如花，难矣！

xú rì jiǔ  
徐日久

míng èr bǎi míng jiā chǐ dú  
《明二百家尺牍》

白话  
翻译



我忽然见到一些明艳的花，就掐下了其中最鲜红的一朵，但是它的花汁却不红；颜色最红的往往被称作是红花，但在这些花本身还没有开始变红。在花染色最初的时候，浓艳的汁液还没有被用上，直到它经历过再三的洗滤，真正的鲜红色才会显现出来，但是这种红色却是花还未曾有过的。

写文章如果不经过几番修改润色，想让它像花一样鲜艳美丽，是多么地难啊！



## A Reply to Qian Changren



As I suddenly caught sight of some bright flowers, I took the reddest of them and gave it a pinch. But its juice didn't look red. The one which yields the reddest dye is safflower. Yet the flower itself is by no means red. When it is used for dyeing purposes, the thick juice produced at the beginning is discarded as of no use. Only after it is washed and rinsed again and again, will the truly red colour be brought to light, though it is apparently not inherent in the flower.

If a writing does not go through the similar process of washing and rinsing, it would be difficult to have it as splendid as flowers!

Xu Rijiu<sup>①</sup>

*Letters of Ming Dynasty's Two Hundred Notables*



**Note**

① Xu Rijiu, born in Xi'an of Shaanxi Province, was a man of letter in the Ming Dynasty.

yǔ lǐ xiǎo yǒu  
与李小有

dì yǔ rén xiōng cái bù gǎn wàng bǎi yī ér fú lì zhī gǎn yuē lüè xiāng  
弟与仁兄，才不敢望百一，而伏枥之感，约略相  
shì shì rén wàng wǒ bèi jī sì táo huā yuán zhōng jǐ bǎi suì gǔ lǎo rén rán dì  
似。世人望我辈，几似桃花源中几百岁老年人。然弟  
qiè zòng lǎn gǔ jīn yīng xióng cóng qiáng shì hòu fēi yáng chuō lì jiào zhū zhòu  
窃纵览古今英雄，从强仕后飞扬踔厉、较诸驷  
yíng zhòu hé zhě fǎn yǒu cháng kāng dàn zhè zhī wèi yīn niàn xuān shèng sì shí wú  
盈驷涸者，反有长康啖蔗之味。因念宣圣四十无  
wén yǔ zhī wèi hòu shēng xià qián chuí ěr lǎo ér hào xué wéi mèng dé yǔ bó  
闻语，只为后生下钳锤耳；老而好学，惟孟德与伯  
yè bǐng zhú jì rì yóu bù huǎn chí kuàng wèi zhì bǐng zhú zhě hū  
业。炳烛继日，犹不患迟；况未至炳烛者乎？

céng dá yǒu rén shī yǒu yún yàn tái jùn gǔ yóu shēng rì hàn diàn é méi  
曾答友人诗有云：“燕台骏骨犹生日，汉殿娥眉  
wèi lǎo shí zì bēi zì wèi yì zì lì yě  
未老时。”自悲自慰，亦自厉也。

gù xián zhèng  
顾咸正

míng èr bǎi míng jiā chǐ dú  
《明二百家尺牍》





## To Li Xiaoyou



Although my ability is inferior to yours by a long chalk, we have approximately the same ambition of accomplishing more in our old age. People may look upon us as centenarians living in a cloud-cuckoo-land. But as I see it, many heroes in ancient and contemporary times often begin to start with flying colours after they have reached forty. In comparison with some young men who sink and swim erratically, they can claim to enjoy a sweeter and sweeter taste of life like Gu Changkang chewing a sugar cane from the unsavoury end to the delicious end. So I think that Confucius' remark about a man's obscurity in his forties being nothing to be feared is in fact an admonition to youth. As for assiduity in learning in old age, I think Cao Mengde and Xu Boye should be our good examples, for they used to learn in the candle light after the fading of daylight. If they didn't feel it too late to strive for erudition, how much less should those who are younger than they!

I have written some verses in reply to a friend of mine, which reads: "Like the fine steed bought at Yantai still in its prime, like the queen of the Han Dynasty in the height of her charm." This verse, having a hint of self-pity and

白话  
翻译



我的才能和你相比不值得一提，但是对于年老的感受，我们大约是相似的。世人也许会把我们看作生活在桃花源中的百岁老人。但是我私下里纵览古今英雄的事迹，发现他们从四十岁开始稳步地成就事业，比那些突然兴盛突然衰落的人更能笑到最后，就像顾长康吃甘蔗一样。所以我认为，孔子四十岁的时候还默默无闻，这是对后生们的警戒；越老越是好学，唯有曹孟德与袁伯业。白天过后，夜晚秉烛读书，仍然不算晚；何况还没有到秉烛之年的我们呢？

我曾在答友人的诗里写道：“燕台骏骨犹生日，汉殿娥眉未老时。”这句诗既有自我悲慨也有自我安慰，更是自我激励啊。





selfconsolation, is in fact one of self-encouragement.

Gu Xianzheng<sup>①</sup>

*Letter of Ming Dynasty's Two Hundred Notables*



### Note

① Gu Xianzheng, born in Kunshan of Jiangsu Province, was a famous man of letter at the end of the Ming Dynasty.



jǐ sì jiǔ yuè shū shòu bān  
己巳九月书授放

rǔ xiōng dì èr rén zhèng rú wǒ liǎng zú suī zuǒ yòu yì xiàng zhèng yǐ  
汝兄弟二人，正如我两足，虽左右异向，正以  
xiāng chéng ér bù xiāng lì kuàng běn wú kě zhēng dàn yǐ yī wǎng zhī qì suì  
相成而不相戾。况本无可争，但以一往之气，遂  
gè xié suǒ huái xiāng wéi yí jì xiān rén xiào yǒu zhī fēng zhuì zé jiā bì bù  
各挟所怀，相为疑忌。先人孝友之风坠，则家必不  
cháng tiān xià wú xiàn nì zhě shùn zhě qiè fù zhī wú kě rú hé ér tú yú  
长。天下无限逆者、顺者，且付之无可如何，而徒于  
xiōng dì yī yán bù píng yī sè yī lìng bì cáng zhī sù zhī hū  
兄弟一言不平，一色一令，必藏之宿之乎？

shì fǔ shǒu sī zhī  
试俯首思之！

wáng fū zhī  
王夫之

chuán shān yí shū  
《船山遗书》



## A Letter to My Son in the Ninth Month of the Year Jisi



You and your brother are like my two feet. Though one in the left and another in the right, they complement each other and in no way contradict each other. And then you have originally nothing to dispute between you; the question was that you two just couldn't keep your temper, and both bore mutual grudge and suspicion. If the good tradition of our forefathers in treating parents and brothers with love should be lost, our family could not be expected to remain prosperous for long. There are countless people in the world who may either oppose you or agree with you, and you can do nothing about it. Now, when it comes to your brother's inappropriate words or unpleasant mien, why must you keep them in mind?

Just think it over seriously.

Wang Fuzhi<sup>①</sup>

*Posthumous Letters of Wang Fuzhi*

白话  
翻译



你们兄弟二人，就像我的双脚，虽然左右两只分别朝向不同的方向，但是它们是相辅相成的，而不是互相牵制和矛盾的。何况本来就没有什么可以争辩的，但是你们却各自抱定自己的想法，互相猜疑。先辈遗留的孝敬、友爱的家风一旦丧失，那么家庭就难以长久地维系。普天之下，会有许多人同意你的想法，也同样会有许多人反对你的想法，还会有很多人认为这根本都不重要。现在，你们兄弟之间只有一些言语的不和，行为的不同，为什么要这样放在心上呢？

你们应该低下头来，认真反思！





### Note

- ① Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692), was a famous thinker at the end of the Ming Dynasty. After the fall of the latter, he showed himself as a staunch patriot who fought against the Qing aggressors and later retired into a deep mountain, devoted to teaching philosophy.



yǔ zhōu lù fēng  
与周鹿峰

shì zhī chēng zhī jǐ zhě qí zuì zé lián qí cái chēng yù zhī yuán yǐn  
世之称知己者，其最，则怜其才，称誉之，援引  
zhī qí cì zé shēn jì qí cái ér bì yù shā zhī qí zuì bù néng kān zhě  
之；其次，则深忌其才，而必欲杀之；其最不能堪者，  
shì qí rén wú zú qīng zhòng qí rén zì shēng zì sǐ zì pín jiàn qiě lǎo yú  
视其人无足轻重，其人自生、自死、自贫贱，且老于  
tiān dì zhī jiān yī bù jiè yú xiōng zhōng yě  
天地之间，一不介于胸中也。

wèi xiàng gōng shū zuò jiàn gōng sūn yāng yú huì wáng wèi wáng ruò bù  
魏相公叔座荐公孙鞅于惠王，谓“王若不  
néng yòng bì shā zhī yāng yuē wáng bù néng yòng chén yòu ān néng  
能用，必杀之”。鞅曰：“王不能用臣，又安能  
shā chén fū tiān xià néng shā cái shì zhī rén jí néng lián cái shì zhī rén yě  
杀臣？”夫天下能杀才士之人，即能怜才士之人也；  
gù fán yù shā wǒ zhě jiē wǒ zhī jǐ yě kě gǎn yě dù fǔ zhī huái lǐ bái  
故凡欲杀我者，皆我知己也，可感也。杜甫之怀李白  
yě yuē shì rén jiē yù shā yì màn yǔ ěr bǐ qí shí zhī lǐ bái zhě yǒu  
也，曰：“世人皆欲杀”，亦谩语耳，彼其时知李白者有  
jǐ rén zāi  
几人哉？

wǒ shì yǐ tàn zhī jǐ zhī nán dé ér wǒ cái bù zú yǐ zhì zhī jǐ zhī yù shā  
我是以叹知己之难得，而我才不足以致知己之欲杀  
wèi kě kuì yě  
为可愧也。

jì dōng  
计东

gǎi tíng wén jí  
《改亭文集》





## A Letter to Zhou Lufeng



Those who are one's appreciators may, best of all, cherish his ability and praise it, wishing to recommend it for use, or on the contrary, may be jealous of it, wishing to have one killed, which is in fact the next best. The worst thing for one is to be reckoned as of no account, be left in the cold, to be allowed to live or die, suffer poverty or decrepitude, and to be forgotten altogether in the world.

When Gongshu Zuo, premier of Wei, wanted to recommend Gongsun Yang to King Hui of Wei, he said: "If the King does not use you, he must kill you." Gongsun however remarked: "If the King cannot use me, how can he kill me?" For, as a matter of fact, those who kill talents in the world are in truth appreciators of talents. Therefore, he who wishes to kill me appreciates me, and I should be grateful to him. When Du Fu thought of Li Bai and said: "People in the world all wish to kill him", he was in fact making an emotional utterance. Just think, how many people had come to appreciate Li at that time?

I can only sigh for the difficulty of having an appreciator of one's talent and can only feel ashamed that my ability is not sufficient to get me someone who appreciates me and wishes

白话  
翻译



某人称另一个人是他的知己，最好的可能是尊敬他的才能，称赞他，宣扬他的言论和事迹；其次的可能则是深深地妒忌他的才能，一心想杀掉他；而最不好的可能就是，认为这个人无足轻重，对自己来说，不管那个人是生是死，贫贱与否，一概不放在心上。

魏国的相国公叔座向惠王举荐公孙鞅的时候说：“大王您如果不用这个人，就一定要杀掉他。”公孙鞅说：“如果大王不用微臣，又怎么能杀我呢？”在这个世界上，能够去杀有才能的人的人，往往就是能够任用他们的人。所以，但凡要杀我的人，都是我的知己，我应该感谢他们。杜甫怀念李白的时候说：“世上的人都想杀了他。”这是句玩笑话罢了。试想一下，那个时候，能有几个人真正地理解李白呢？

我只是在感叹知己的难得，而当自己的才能不及别人的时候却想去杀他，实在是值得愧疚的啊！





to kill me!

Ji Dong<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Remade Arbour*



### Note

① Ji Dong (1623–1675), was a talented man of letter in the Qing Dynasty, much given to travels.



yǔ mén rén wú xǔ shū  
与门人吴诒书

zhuāng zǐ yǔ huì zǐ zhī jiāo zuì huān yě zhuāng zǐ píng shēng zhī jiāo gài  
庄子与惠子之交最欢也，庄子平生之交盖  
shǎo yě huì zǐ mò zhuāng zǐ nǎi qǐn tán zhù shū yù yǐ bù sǐ qí yǒu yě  
少也。惠子没，庄子乃寝谈著书，欲以不死其友也。  
gù yú nèi piān dì yī piān liǎng jǔ huì zǐ wèi zhuāng zǐ jié zhī yú dì wǔ  
故于内篇第一篇两举惠子为《庄子》结之，于第五  
piān yì rán qí yú huò xù huì zǐ wéi xiàng ér jǐ wǎng jiàn zhī huò xù tóng yóu  
篇亦然。其余或叙惠子为相而已往见之；或叙同游  
yú háo liáng zhī shàng huò xù jǐ qī sǐ ér huì zǐ diào zhī zé qí bù kū  
于濠梁之上；或叙己妻死，而惠子吊之，责其不哭；  
huò xù huì zǐ sǐ ér jǐ guò qí mù fán jǐ suǒ yǔ wèn dá lùn biàn zhī rén huì  
或叙惠子死而已过其墓。凡己所与问答论辩之人，惠  
zǐ wài wú jǐ rén yān  
子外无几人焉。

nǎi qí zú piān zé shèng dǐ huì zǐ zhī shū dào chuǎn bó ér yán bù  
乃其卒篇，则盛诋惠子之书，道舛驳而言不  
zhōng fán qū xù huì zǐ guài guǐ zhī shuō shù bǎi yán bù xiū qiè yǐ xī hū  
中，凡曲叙惠子怪诡之说，数百言不休，且以“惜乎，  
bēi fū sān tàn huì zǐ yǐ zhōng sān shí sān piān zhī yì  
悲夫”三叹惠子，以终三十三篇之意。

ruò jīn rén bù dé qí jiě zhě bì yǐ zhuāng zǐ huǐ qí hǎo yǒu wèi fù yǒu  
若今人不得其解者，必以庄子毁其好友为负友  
yǐ wū hū qǐ zhī zhuāng zǐ huì zǐ zhě zāi fū shèng chēng qí yǒu zhì yì  
矣。呜呼！岂知庄子、惠子者哉？夫盛称其友，至溢  
qí shí shǐ bù xìn yú tiān xià bù chuán yú hòu shì cǐ yōng rén zhī suǒ wéi  
其实，使不信于天下，不传于后世，此庸人之所为，



# To My Student Wu Xu



Zhuangzi<sup>①</sup> had very few friends all his life; he used to be on the best of terms with Huizi. After the latter's death, the former never spoke of writing books, and wished to perpetuate the memory of his friend in this way. In addition, we can see that the first chapter of the interior part of *Zhuangzi* is concluded twice with his dialogues with Huizi, as is also the case with the fifth chapter. Among the rest, he described his visit to Huizi who had become a prime minister, and his trip with him along a moat. In the meantime he related how Huizi had come to condole with him upon the loss of his wife and reproached him for not shedding tears, and how he himself bemoaned Huizi at his tomb after his death. In fact, it was Huizi, and scarcely any others, who represented the interlocutor for all the catechisms and debates in his philosophical writings.

Nevertheless, in the last chapter of *Zhuangzi*, Huizi's works were severely censured by him with the criticism that they were perverse to the truth and their arguments were not to the point, while several hundred words were written to enumerate his chimerical ideas. And the thirty third chapter of *Zhuangzi* ends with the words "how regrettable and how deplorable", repeated thrice as his sighing for Huizi.

fēi suǒ wéi yú zhǎng zhě yě  
非所为于长者也！

jì dōng  
计东

gǎi tíng wén jí  
《改亭文集》

白话  
翻译



庄子平生的交游非常少，而他与惠子的交往却非常愉快。惠子去世的时候，庄子不再谈论读书的事情，希望通过这种方式来纪念他的朋友。另外，我们可以发现，在《庄子》内篇的第一篇中，两次以惠子的事迹来举例，在第五篇中也是这样。其余的地方，还有记载惠子做宰相的时候自己曾去看望他，还有记载与惠子一同在濠梁游玩，还有记载妻子去世，惠子前来吊唁，责备庄子不哭的事情，还有记载惠子死后自己经过他的墓地。大凡与庄子问答辩论的人，除了惠子之外几乎没有几个人了。

但是，在《庄子》最后的篇章，却都是大力批评惠子的内容，说他虽然想辨明事物的真相但是语言却很难抓住要害，庄子大凡提到惠子古怪诡异的学说，往往会大段地予以驳斥，并且以“可惜，可悲”多次慨叹惠子，以此作为《庄子》的结束。

如果现在的人不理解他们，必定会认为庄子诋毁惠子是辜负了朋友。唉！谁又能真正了解庄子和惠子呢？如果夸大地称赞自己的朋友，使得天下人都不相信了，那么朋友的事迹就会不传于世，这是庸人的做法，而非智者的所为！



People of today who fail to understand this must think that Zhuangzi's repudiating his good friend was an act of betrayal. Alas, do they really know the two sages? To extol one's friend and exaggerate his merits beyond the truth, thus making him lose credit with the world and causing him to be rejected by the posterity—this can only be done by mediocrities, not by men with wisdom!

Ji Dong

*Collection of Remade Arbour*



### Note

- ① Zhuangzi, born in Shangqiu of Henan Province, was a great Chinese thinker and philosopher in the period of the Warring States. Huizi was his good friend, also known as a thinker of that period.





yǔ                  yǒu  
与                  友

niǎo zhī fēi yě yíng fēng    yú zhī yóu yě nì shuǐ    cǐ rú dà shì dāng qián  
鸟之飞也迎风，鱼之游也逆水，此如大事当前，  
xū yǐ shēn rù    fāng dé jiù lǐ    ruò huí shēn tuì bì    xiǎn bù cuī bài    xǐ xīn tuì  
须以身入，方得就理。若回身退避，鲜不摧败！洗心退  
cáng    cǐ shì píng rì yán zhī    lín shì shū bù ěr ěr  
藏，此是平日言之，临事殊不尔尔。

zhū jiǔ dǐng  
诸九鼎

cáng jǔ jí  
《藏弃集》

白话  
翻译



鸟总是迎着风飞，鱼总是逆着水游，这就好像是大事当前，必须全身心地投入进去，才能明白其中的道理。如果转身退避，很少有不遭到失败的。怀着平静的心情退居世外，这是我们平日里经常提倡的，但是一旦遇到了特殊的事情，就不能那样了。





## To My Friend



Birds fly, braving the wind, fish swim, braving currents. By the same token, when confronted with grave issues, one must plunge himself into them before he can learn their intricacies. If he tries to turn round and beat a retreat, he can scarcely avoid his failure! To say that one's best policy is to retire into oneself with a clean heart—that is but a remark usually made in the ordinary time. It is quite another thing when one is facing grave issues!

Zhu Jiuding<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Cang Ju*



### Note

- ① Zhu Jiuding, born in Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province, was a man of letter at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty.

yǔ jiǎ xī nán  
与贾徙南

měi dú shǐ jí zhū zhuàn bù sān sì háng jí dìng qí rén shàn zhōng yǔ  
每读史及诸传，不三四行，即定其人善终与  
fǒu zhì zhuàn mò shī zhě jǐn shí zhī yī è rán bù yú qí shēn yòu jiàn yú qí  
否；至传末，失者仅十之一二。然不于其身，又见于其  
zǐ sūn yī  
子孙矣。

wǒ bèi lì shēn xíng jǐ dāng yú qián sān sì háng jǐn shèn wéi zhī wú lìng  
我辈立身行己，当于前三四行谨慎为之；毋令  
hòu zhī dú shǐ zhě fū kāi juàn yǒu yǐ dìng wǒ zhī shēng píng yě  
后之读史者，甫开卷有以定我之生平也。

zhōu wén wēi  
周文炜

sì liú táng jí  
《四留堂集》

白话  
翻译



每当我阅读历史和传记，不过三四行，就能够确定地猜出这个人是否会善终；一直读到了传记的末尾，我判断错误的非常少。有些报应，没有出现在他自己身上，就一定会出现在他子孙的身上。

我们立身行事，一定要在最开始的时候就十分谨慎，不要让后世读历史的人，一打开我们的传记就能预见我们的生平。



## A Letter to Jia Xinan



Whenever I read histories and biographies, I invariably concluded, after going over three or four lines, whether a man came to a good end or not. As I approached the end of his biography, I found that I had made few, if any, mistakes in my previous conclusion. If the reward or retribution did not descend upon the man himself, it overtook his offspring.

So, when one begins his life, he must be careful in "writing the first three or four lines", so that the future readers of his biography might not be able to make conclusions to his life after they have just opened the book.

Zhou Wenwei <sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Siliu Chamber*



**Note**

① Zhou Wenwei, born in Kaifeng of Henan Province, was a scholar at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty.



yǔ wú jiè zī  
与吴介兹

yě lí suān sè lèi zhǐ duàn táo gēn jiē zhī shāo kě dàn zài jiē zhī sān  
野梨酸涩类枳；断桃根接之，稍可啖；再接之，三

jiē zhī gān cuì yuǎn guò yú āi lí kě jiàn rén bù kě bù xiāng yǔ hǎo rén  
接之，甘脆远过于哀梨——可见人不可不相与好人

yě  
也。

duàn yī jié  
段一洁

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》

白话  
翻译



野梨的味道就像枳一样酸涩，如果把它嫁接在桃树根上，就会稍微好吃一点了。嫁接第二次和第三次之后，它变得又甜又脆，比哀梨还要可口——由此可见，一个人应该多和品德高尚的人在一起。



## A Letter to Wu Jiezi



Wild pears taste sour and astrigent like trifoliate oranges. If grafted into peach cuttings, they taste a little better. When given another and yet another such graftings, they become far sweeter and crisper than the best pears ever grown in this country—hence it is clear that one simply can't afford not to associate with good people.

Duan Yijie<sup>①</sup>

*Laigu Chamber's New Edition of Letters of Celebrities*



### Note

- ① Duan Yijie, born in Changyuan of Henan Province, was a man of letter in the Ming Dynasty.

yǔ wáng zhōng shū shū  
与王钟淑书

fán bǎi kě rěn wéi xián nán nài suǒ jū gù yǐng qī qī guǎ huān ān dé  
凡百可忍，唯闲难耐，索居顾影，戚戚寡欢。安得  
lì qiān chǐ fēng tóu yòu dāng guǎng mò zhī fēng zuǒ lǎn cāng míng zhī rì hū xī  
立千尺峰头，右当广漠之风，左揽沧溟之日，呼吸  
ér tōng dì zuò bèi fā ér xià dà huāng yī tǔ xiōng zhōng yōu fèn fǒu zé yǔ  
而通帝座，被发而下大荒，一吐胸中幽愤。否则与  
èr sān zhī jǐ jù yán yī shì jiǔ hān ěr rè bó dé yī chǎng xī xiào nù mà  
二三知己，聚颜一室，酒酣耳热，博得一场嘻笑怒骂，  
chóu xiāo jì pò yóu shèng zuò kùn yī shì duō duō shū kōng yě  
愁销寂破，犹胜坐困一室，咄咄书空也。

táng jì  
唐际

lài gǔ táng míng xián chǐ dú xīn chāo  
《赖古堂名贤尺牍新钞》



# A Letter to Wang Zhongshu



Everything is bearable, only idleness is unbearable. Living in solitude, having nothing but my own shadow for company, I can only be sad and have no mirth. How I wish that I could stand on the summit of a high peak, braving the desert wind from the right and holding the red sun in the left, with my breath reaching the constellations, and then walking down the distant mountain with loosened hair, thus venting all my pent-up feelings. Or I wish I would have a get-together with two or three confidants, laughing and bawling after our intoxication so as to drive away our sadness and solitude—all this would be far better than sitting in a narrow room, doing nothing but tracing characters with my finger in the empty air!

Tang Ji ①

*Laigu Chamber's New Edition of Letters of Celebrities*



白话  
翻译



很多事情都是可以忍耐的，唯有闲着无聊是最难忍耐的。一人独居，形影相吊，冷冷清清，郁郁寡欢。怎么才能站立在千尺高的山峰之上，右边是大漠的风沙，左边是天地之间的太阳，一呼吸就可以吹到天帝的宝座，披散着头发走向无穷的荒野，将胸中的幽愤痛快地吐出。或者，与两三个知己好友，欢聚一堂，痛快地饮酒直到耳根发热，大家开怀嬉笑怒骂，忘记忧愁，打破寂寞；这远远胜过困坐在狭窄的屋子里，让自己的手指停留在虚无的空气中。







**Note**

- ① Tang Ji, born in Nanjing of Jiangsu Province, was a man of letter in the Ming Dynasty.





yǔ chéng kūn lún  
与程昆仑

lín mào zhī xiān sheng jīn nián bā shí yǒu sān wén yuàn zūn sù cǐ wèi shuò  
林茂之先生今年八十有三，文苑尊宿，此为硕

guǒ yì kūi rán lǎo líng guāng yī  
果，亦岿然老灵光矣。

qǐng xiāng jiàn xún qí píng shēng zhù shù jiē cáng lì shuǐ zhī rǔ shān  
顷相见，询其平生著述，皆藏溧水之乳山

zhōng shī zì wàn lì jiǎ chén wèi fù zǎo lí mào wēng pín qiě shèn bù néng  
中。诗自万历甲辰，未付枣梨。茂翁贫且甚，不能

zì móu bǎn xíng xíng kǒng jìn lún yān cǎo jīn rén huáng kǒu cái xué hào shà lián  
自谋板行，行恐尽沦烟草。今人黄口才学，号嘎连

piān lěi zhì biàn bù tōng dū cǐ lǎo fù shèng míng qī shí nián zhì bù néng  
篇累帙，便布通都。此老负盛名七十年，至不能

chuán yī zì yú hòu shì kě xī yě  
传一字于后世，可惜也！

dì yì xiān jiǎn diǎn qí jìn zuò yuē hào shì zhě rén rèn yī juàn jī shí wéi  
弟意先检点其近作，约好事者人任一卷。积石为

shān jí cuì chéng qiú dà shì jiā huà gù tóng zhì liáo liáo ěr  
山，集翠成裘，大是佳话，顾同志寥寥耳。

wáng shì zhēn  
王士禛

dài jīng táng quán jí  
《带经堂全集》

## A Letter to Cheng Kunlun



Lin Maozhi Esquire is eighty three years of age, being the only survival of the older generation of respectable writers and upholding alone his admirable dignity.

I met him recently, and having asked about the works he had done during his life, was informed that they were stowed away somewhere on Ru Mountain by the Lishui River. Since the thirty second year of the Wanli Period his poems have never been put in print. As he is very poor and can't afford to have them printed, they would probably be buried in oblivion. Nowadays some youngsters, even with a little learning, are clamouring that they have written volumes of books and have them disseminated in many large cities. Yet this old gentleman, having had a renown for seventy years, would not be able to pass on a single writing to the posterity—what a great pity!

I suggest that we first collect his recent writings and interest some people in each taking up one volume of his, so as to finish the whole job in the manner of many a little making a mickle. But this would probably prove to be a wishful thinking, as I fear that those who have the same willingness might be very few.

Wang Shizhen<sup>①</sup>

白话  
翻译



林茂之先生今年八十三岁，他是值得尊敬的老一辈文人，是仅存的硕果，是当之无愧的文坛泰斗。

我刚刚拜见了，他，询问他平生的著述在哪里，原来都已经藏在溧水旁的乳山之中了。万历三十二年之前，他的诗都未曾刊印。茂翁非常贫穷，无法自己完成刊印，他的作品恐怕就要湮没在荒烟衰草中了。现在的一些年轻人，只有一点点的学问，就号称他们已经写了很多的书，并且在重要的集市中都有发行。这位林老先生七十年来久负盛名，如果一个字都不能流传后世，那是多么地可惜！

我建议我们应该首先收集他近期的著作，激起一些人的兴趣，让他们每人负责一卷的刊印。积石成山，集腋成裘，这会是一件很有意义的事情，但是我很担心有这个兴趣的人会非常地少。





**Note**

- ① Wang Shizhen (1634–1711), born in Xincheng of Shandong Province, was a famous poet as well as a successful high official in the Qing Dynasty.



yǔ wáng sī kòu  
与王司寇

chǐ shū jiǔ gěng dàn féng běi lái rén yī xùn xìng jū wén kāng qiáng yóu  
尺书久梗，但逢北来人，一讯兴居，闻康强犹

xī wéi zhòng tīng jiàn yǔ mǒu děng qiè yǐ cì cì zhě bù rù yú ěr zé suǒ suǒ  
昔，惟重听渐与某等。窃以刺刺者不入于耳，则琐琐

zhě bù yíng yú huái zào wù zhī fèi wú ěr zhèng suǒ yǐ níng wú shén cǐ fēi  
者不萦于怀，造物之废吾耳，正所以宁吾神，此非

è kuàng yě bù zhī yǐ wéi rán fǒu  
恶况也，不知以为然否？

méng huì xīn zhù rú huò gǒng bì lián rì pī dú suì wàng zhòu xūn jiàn  
蒙惠新著，如获珙璧，连日披读，遂忘昼曛，间

yǒu yí jù sì fù dú hòu zài qǐng yè ěr  
有疑句，俟复读后再请业耳。

shì yǒu suǒ wén bù dé bù wàng wéi zī bǐng bì yì yǒu jī dù kāng lì  
适有所闻，不得不妄为咨禀：敝邑有积蠹康利

zhēn jiù nián wèi cáo liáng jīng chéng qī guān hài mǐn yǐ féi sī tuó suì shǐ  
贞，旧年为漕粮经承，欺官害民，以肥私橐，遂使

xià yì pín mǐn pí gǔ jiē kōng dāng shí zé yǒu fán yán qú nǎi yāo chán wàn  
下邑贫民，皮骨皆空。当时喷有烦言，渠乃腰缠万

guàn fù dé bù guī zuó hū yáng yáng ér fǎn zì míng dé yì yún yǐ dé lǎo  
贯，赴德不归。昨忽扬扬而返，自鸣得意，云已得老

xiān sheng jiàn shū míng nián fù rèn jīng chéng yǐ yú shì hé xiàn jiē jīng shì  
先生荐书，明年复任经承矣。于是阖县皆惊，市

zhōng wǎng wǎng ǒu yǔ xué zhōng shù rén zhí yù dēng lóng fù sù mǒu kǒng  
中往往偶语；学中数人，直欲登龙赴诉。某恐

jiǎo náo qīng kuàng gù ní qí háng ér bù chuāi bēi lòu qián zhì cǐ qíng kāng  
搅挠清况，故尼其行，而不揣卑陋，潜致此情。康



## A Letter to Minister Wang



I have not had your letters for a long time. However, every-time I met someone coming from the north and inquired about your health, I was invariably told that you were as hale and hearty as before, only becoming hard of hearing as I myself. In my humble view, with our ears defended against garrulity, our hearts may be free of trivial worries. So the Creator impairs our hearing just to mollify our mind—it's anything but bad. No idea whether Your Highness agrees to this or not.

I felt privileged to have been given your new work, which I deem a great treasure and have read it over within several days, oblivious of dawn or dusk. As for a few occasional questions, I'll seek your instructions after I have read it over again.

Recently I heard of something important, which I presume, as in duty bound, to report to Your Highness: There is in my hometown an inveterate evildoer, Kang Lizhen by name, who used to be an official in charge of the grain transportation by the canal. As he had all along feathered his nest by cheating his superiors and injuring the interests of the people, the impoverished inhabitants of our small town were reduced to skeletons. There being a lot of grumbling against him, he made away with millions of coins and stayed away in

yì guǒ jì mén rén jì gāng qǐng yù wú gōng bié jiā qīng mù wù shǐ fù sī cáo  
役果系门人纪纲，请谕吴公别加青目，勿使复司漕

zhèng zé fú yán xī yǐ cǐ yì hǎo shì gù gǎn wàng jí  
政，则浮言息矣。此亦好事，故敢妄及。

hē dòng cǎo cǎo  
呵冻草草。

pú sōng líng

蒲松龄

pú sōng líng jí

《蒲松龄集》

白话  
翻译

很久没有收到你的书信了。但是，每当我遇见从北方来的人，就询问你的健康，我很高兴得知你仍然和以前一样健康强壮，唯有耳聋逐渐与我差不多了。我私下认为，嘈杂的声音不入我们的耳朵，那么琐碎的事情也不会萦绕在我们心中。老天让我的耳朵残废，正是想安宁我的精神，这并不是什么坏的状况。不知道你会怎么认为？

很高兴得到你新的著作，我如同得到了珍贵的玉石，我接连几天都在读它，于是就忘记了白天和黑夜，偶尔遇到了有疑问的句子，等我再读一遍之后去请教你。

我刚刚听说一些重要的事情，不得不冒昧地告诉你，我们家乡有个贪官，名字叫做康利贞，以前做管理粮食运输的官吏的时候，欺蒙长官，祸害百姓，想方设法满足自己的私欲，使得乡里的贫民饱受剥削。当时民间也有一些不好的传言，但是他腰缠万贯，就一直在德州不回来了。昨天他忽然气派十足地回来了，洋洋自得，说已经得到了老先生的推荐书，明年又可以再次担任管理粮食运输的官吏。于是整个县里都非常惊讶，人们私下都在议论；学院里的一些书生，甚至想去京城告御状。我担心这样的事情会打扰你的清净，所以阻止了这些学生去告状，并且不顾自己





Dezhou. But yesterday he suddenly returned with great elation, boasting that by the recommendation of Your Highness he is to resume his previous office next year. So the whole county was shocked and whisperings about it were heard in the town. Several students in the County School even thought of visiting your official residence and appealing to Your Highness against the appointment. As I fear lest this action should disturb your quietude, I have held them back from the intended trip. And not considering my humbleness, I am sending you in secret this information. If Kang is really one of your men, please tell Governor Wu to give him another post and disallow him the resumption of the office of canal grain transportation. In that case, the grumbling gossips would cease by themselves, so I venture to make this known to Your Highness, deeming it the proper thing for me to do.

Excuse me for my writing this letter hastily in the freezing weather.

Pu Songling<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Pu Songling*



**Note**

① Pu Songling (1640–1715), born in Zibo of Shandong Province, was a celebrated writer in the Qing Dynasty. He was famous for his most popular short stories dealing with myth and fantasy. Minister Wang refers to Wang Shizhen.



的卑微身份，偷偷写信给你通报情况。如果康利贞真的是你的门生，请告诉吴公给他一个另外的差事，不要让他再回来掌管粮食运输，这样传言自然就平息了。这也是一件好事，所以我胆敢这样做。

很抱歉在这样寒冷的天气匆匆写上此信。





蘇  
氏  
書  
齋  
PDG

yǔ zhèng rǔ qì  
与郑汝器

kè jīn líng jiā lì zhī xiāng yù zhōng qiū chéng qīng zhī yuè fēng wù tài  
客金陵佳丽之乡，遇中秋澄清之月。风物太  
píng rén qíng huān yù xiāo gǔ zhī shēng tián jiē yì xiàng gài yǔ mǎn chéng  
平，人情欢豫，箫鼓之声，阗街溢巷，盖与满城  
tóng sǒu tóng cǐ yī lè zhě yě shì rì jìn xiè háo guì zhī zhào yǎ jù gāo  
童叟，同此一乐者也；是日尽谢豪贵之召，雅聚高  
zhāi yǐn cáng jiǔ shì míng chá shǎng jiàn gǔ shū tiē gài yǔ mǎn zuò qí yīng  
斋，饮藏酒，试名茶，赏鉴古书帖，盖与满座耆英，  
tóng cǐ yī lè zhě yě  
同此一乐者也。

dú shì xiān shēng rǎn rǎn bái xū tiě bì yù wǎn cāo zhōng shān zhī zhōu  
独是先生冉冉白须，铁臂玉腕，操中山之帚，  
rú běi míng zhī chí yī shí chóng yú fēi yuè kē dǒu pán xuán lìng qún guān zhě  
濡北溟之池，一时虫鱼飞跃，蝌蚪盘旋。令群观者  
ěr mù jīng shén yí yú shāng zhōu liǎng hàn zhī nián cǐ yī lè shéi gǎn xiàng xiān  
耳目精神，移于商周两汉之年。此一乐谁敢向先  
shēng duó qǔ hū suǒ shū zhī zì dà xiǎo zòng héng bù xià shí shù zhǐ huò  
生夺取乎？所书之字：大小纵横，不下十数纸。或  
guāng wǒ zǔ miào zhī gōng qiáng huò biǎo wǒ jiù shān zhī xián zhé huò biāo wǒ  
光我祖庙之宫墙，或表我旧山之贤哲，或标我  
huāng zhāi huò yào wǒ zǔ juàn pú hé rén sī ér cǐ yī lè dú bǐ pú yī rén xiāo  
荒斋，或耀我祖卷。仆何人斯，而此一乐独俾仆一人消  
shòu zhī jì qù nián yǒu jù yún nán lái dé yì cǐ zhōng qiū bù yì jīn nián  
受之？记去年有句云：“南来得意此中秋。”不意今年  
zhī dé yì yòu shèng qù nián wèi zhī míng nián yòu zài hé chù cóng cǐ nián nián zhì  
之得意又胜去年！未知明年又在何处？从此年年至

## To Zheng Ruqi



Living as a stranger in the beautiful city of Nanjing, with a harvest moon shining in the serene sky, and peace reigning everywhere, I could sense the mirth of the townsfolk, as I heard the streets and lanes overflowing with the sounds of flutes and drums—an indication that people of the whole town, both young and old, shared the same joy. That day I declined all invitations of the dignitaries, for I had a party with my friends in my high pavilion. We drank vintage wine, sipped famous tea and appreciated ancient calligraphic albums. So the whole assembly of aged celebrities also shared the same joy.

Most noteworthy was that Your Honour, with your white flowing beard and your powerful arm and wrist, held your miraculous brush in your hand, and having dipped it in a huge inkstone, soon conjured up the scene of flying insects, leaping fish and wriggling tadpoles. Thus the attention and thoughts of the spectators were instantly brought back to the times of the Shang, Zhou and Han dynasties. Such a joy as yours—who can take away from you? The characters written by you, big or small, vertical or horizontal, took up a dozen pieces of paper, some extolling the temple of my noble ancestor, some honouring that great sage of our family, some for gracing my humble study, some exalting our genealogy. Who am I? To be

cǐ rì jí nián nián yì cǐ lè gèng nián nián yì xiān sheng zhī gǔ dào gāo huái ,  
此日，即年年忆此乐；更年年忆先生之古道高怀，  
lián wán lì nuò yǔ míng yuè qīng fēng yǒng wú jìn jìng ěr .  
廉顽立懦，与明月清风永无尽境耳。

kǒng shàng rèn

孔尚任

hú hǎi jí

《湖海集》

白话  
翻译



在美丽的南京城作客，恰好遇到中秋时节，一轮满月挂在天上。到处是欢乐祥和的景象，街上到处是箫鼓的声音，全城的男女老幼都在分享同样的欢乐。这一天，我谢绝了所有豪门贵族的邀请，和朋友们在家中欢聚，拿出珍藏的酒和名贵的茶，鉴赏古代的书帖，与满座的英雄豪杰分享同样的快乐。

最值得一提的是，老先生您白须冉冉，却运用有力的胳膊和手腕，操控着中山的斗笔，蘸取北海的水，一时间仿佛昆虫和游鱼都被惊动了，墨汁就像黑色的蝌蚪一样具有了生命。这让观看的人精神振奋，仿佛又回到了商周两汉的时代。这样的快乐谁能从老先生您那里夺取呢？您老的字，大小不一，千姿百态，不下几十张。有的是称赞我们祖庙的宫墙，有的是称述我们前辈的圣贤，有的是褒奖我简陋的书斋，还有的是赞耀我们祖先的著作。我是谁啊，可以独自享受这样的快乐？去年我写过这样的诗句：“南来得意此中秋。”没想到今年的快乐又胜过了去年！不知道明年我会在哪里呢？从今以后，每年到中秋的时候，我都会想起这样的快乐，每一年都会想起老先生您高尚的道德和胸怀，这样我可以不断去除顽钝，砥砺节操，这件事对我的帮助会与明月清风一样，永无止境。



privileged alone to have this joy! I recall the verse I wrote last year: "Gratifying is this trip to the south at the mid-autumn festival. "I didn't expect that this year I have been more gratified than the last. Who knows where I shall be next year? But henceforward, when this memorable day comes round yearly, I'll recall this joy yearly. And yearly shall I bring to mind Your Honour's ancient ways and lofty mind, which can cleanse the corruptible and strengthen the coward and will be as everlasting as the fresh wind and the bright moon.

Kong Shangren<sup>①</sup>

*Lakes and Seas*



**Note**

- ① Kong Shangren (1648–1718), born in Qufu of Shandong Province, was a famous playwright in the Qing Dynasty. He was a descendant of Confucius.



yǔ chéng ruò hán shū  
与程若韩书

lái shì yù yú zhì yǒu suǒ zēng cǐ wèi dá yú wén zhī yì fǎ yě xī wáng  
来示欲于志有所增，此未达于文之义法也。昔王  
jiè fǔ zhì qián gōng fǔ mǔ yǐ gōng fǔ dēng jiǎ kē wéi bù zú dào kuàng suǒ  
介甫志钱公辅母，以公辅登甲科为不足道，况琐  
suǒ zhě hū cǐ wén nǎi yòng ōu gōng fǎ ruò cān yǐ tuì zhī jiè fǔ fǎ shàng  
琐者乎？此文乃用欧公法。若参以退之、介甫法，尚  
kě sǔn sān zhī yī jiǎ ér zhōu qín rén wéi zhī zé cún zhě shí èr sān ěr cǐ  
可损三之一；假而周秦人为之，则存者十二三耳。此  
zhōng chū rù lí hé zú xià dāng néng biàn zhī  
中出入离合，足下当能辨之。

zú xià xǐ sòng ōu gōng wén shì sī suǒ shóu zhě wáng wǔ gōng dù qí  
足下喜诵欧公文，试思所熟者，王武恭、杜祁  
gōng zhū zhì hū yì huáng mèng shēng zhāng zǐ yě zhū zhì hū rán zé zài wén  
公诸志乎？抑黄梦升、张子野诸志乎？然则在文  
yán wén suī gōng dé zhī chóng bù ruò qíng cí zhī dòng rén xīn mù yě ér kuàng  
言文，虽功德之崇，不若情辞之动人心目也，而况  
zhí shì zú yīn zhī xiān xī hū  
职事、族姻之纤悉乎？

fū wén wèi yǒu fán ér néng gōng zhě rú jiān jīn xī cū kuàng qù rán hòu  
夫文未有繁而能工者，如煎金锡，粗矿去，然后  
hēi zhuó zhī qì jié ér guāng rùn shēng shǐ jì hàn shū cháng piān nǎi  
黑浊之气竭而光润生。《史记》、《汉书》长篇，乃  
shì zhī tǐ běn dà fēi àn jié ér fēn cùn zhī bù yí yě qián wén céng gèng xuē  
事之体本大，非按节而分寸之不遗也。前文曾更削  
jiǎn suǒ wèi cān yòng jiè fǔ fǎ zhě yǐ tōng tǐ jìn běi sòng rén bù néng gèng  
减，所谓参用介甫法者，以通体近北宋人，不能更



## A Letter to Cheng Ruohan



Your letter gives me to understand that additions should be made to the epitaph I wrote at your request. But I think it incompatible with the guiding principle of writing. Formerly, when Wang Anshi wrote an epitaph for the mother of Qian Gongfu, he thought Qian's obtaining the first-rank official post through the imperial examination not worth mentioning, let alone insignificant trifles. I wrote the epitaph with the method of Ouyang Xiu. If the methods of Han Yu and Wang Anshi are referred to, the length of the article can be reduced by one third, whereas by the standard of the authors of the Zhou and Qin dynasties, the epitaph would only have twenty or thirty percent of its content retained. I think the discrepancies in the methods used by different writers can certainly be perceived by Your Honour.

Your Honour is fond of reading the essays of Ouyang Xiu. I wonder if you are familiar with the epitaphs written by him for Wang Wugong and Du Qigong, or for Huang Mengsheng and Zhang Ziye. However, so far as a writing is concerned, it can be distinguished not so much by listing a man's great merits and deeds as by its emotional quality which can move people's hearts. How much more superfluous would be the detailed enumeration of a man's official positions and family relations?

jìn yú gǔ jīn bìng fù lǎn xìng yǐ jiě qí bì bì yù zēng zhī zé zhì cǐ ér  
进于古；今并附览，幸以解其蔽。必欲增之，则置此而

bié qiú néng zhě kě yě  
别求能者可也。

fāng bāo  
方苞

wàng xī quán jí  
《望溪全集》

白话  
翻译



你来信想要对墓志铭的内容有所增补，这是因为你不明白文章的义法。以前王安石为钱公辅的母亲写墓志铭，认为公辅中举并不足称道而不肯加入，何况你这些琐碎的事情？我这篇墓志铭用的是欧阳修的文法，如果是按照韩愈、王安石的文法的话，这篇墓志铭还需要删减三分之一；假如用周秦的文法，那留下来的内容恐怕只有十分之二三了。这里面的出入和离合，你应当能辨别。

你喜欢诵读欧阳修的文章，请你回忆一下你所熟悉的篇章，是要像《武恭王公神道碑》、《杜祁公墓志铭》这样的墓志铭吗？还是要像《黄梦升墓志铭》、《张子野墓志铭》这样的墓志铭？就文论文，前两篇虽然叙述了很多他们的功德业绩，但还是不如后两篇那么语言生动，情感动人，更何况写的都是细小的事情呢？写文章没有能够写得既繁琐又优美的，这就好像是熔炼金子和锡，都是先去掉粗矿，然后烧掉黑浊的气体，之后就能看到耀眼的光泽。《史记》、《汉书》等长篇著作，之所以写得好，是因为其记叙的事情本来就很大，不是由于作者不懂得文章需要简洁，巨细不遗地桩桩件件都要写到。之前的墓志铭都曾经经过删减，也是参照使用了王安石的文法，文法和体裁都更接近北宋人，不能再模仿更古的文法了，现在一并送上，一遍阅览，希望能改正之前的弊端。如果你一定要我增加内容，那你就姑且另请高明吧。



A writing can hardly be both sophisticated and excellent. It is like metal-melting—only when the coarse ore is done away with, and the black and dirty gases are eliminated that the bright and glossy metal can be brought to light. *Historical Records* and *The Book of the Han Dynasty* are lengthy works. Although they can boast a great literary magnitude, they do not deal with all facts and incidents, nor do they refuse to omit a single trifle. The previous version of the epitaph was even more shrunken in length, as it was written with reference to the method of Wang Anshi. So it was closer to the writings of the North Song authors, and was not intended to be more ancient in style. Now I have it enclosed with the present one and send it to Your Honour, so as to dispel your doubts. If Your Honour insists on making additions to it, you might as well put it on the shelf and seek the help of other people who are capable of doing so.

Fang Bao<sup>①</sup>

*Complete Works of Fang Bao*



**Note**

- ① Fang Bao (1668–1749) born in Tongcheng of Anhui Province, was a famous essayist in the Qing Dynasty.

huái ān zhōu zhōng jì shè dì mò  
淮安舟中寄舍弟墨

yǐ rén wéi kě ài ér wǒ yì kě ài yǐ yǐ rén wéi kě wù ér wǒ yì kě  
以人为可爱，而我亦可爱矣；以人为可恶，而我亦可  
wù yǐ dōng pō yī shēng jiào dé 'shì shàng méi yǒu bù hǎo de rén zuì shì tā hǎo  
恶矣。东坡一生觉得世上没有不好的人，最是他好  
chù  
处。

yú xiōng píng shēng màn mà wú lǐ rán rén yǒu yī cái yī jì zhī cháng yī  
愚兄平生漫骂无礼，然人有一才一技之长，一  
xíng yī yán zhī měi wèi cháng bù zé zé chēng dào tuó zhōng shù qiān jīn suí  
行一言之美，未尝不啧啧称道。橐中数千金，随  
shǒu sàn jìn ài rén gù yě zhì yú quē è qī wēi zhī chù yì wǎng wǎng dé rén  
手散尽，爱人故也。至于缺厄欹危之处，亦往往得人  
zhī lì hào mà rén yóu hào mà xiù cái xì xì xiǎng shā xiù cái shòu bìng zhī  
之力。好骂人，尤好骂秀才。细细想杀，秀才受病，只  
shì tuī kuò bù kāi tā ruò tuī kuò dé kāi yòu bù shì cái le qiě zhuān mà xiù  
是推廓不开；他若推廓得开，又不是才了。且专骂秀  
cái yì shì yuān qū ér jīn shì shàng nǎ gè shì tuī kuò dé kāi de  
才，亦是冤屈，而今世上那个是推廓得开的？

nián lǎo shēn gū dāng shèn kǒu guò ài rén shì hǎo chù mà rén shì bù hǎo  
年老身孤，当慎口过，爱人是好处，骂人是不好  
chù dōng pō yǐ cǐ shòu bìng kuàng bǎn qiáo hū  
处。东坡以此受病，况板桥乎！

lǎo dì yì dāng shí shí quàn wǒ  
老弟亦当时时劝我。

zhèng xiè  
郑燮

zhèng bǎn qiáo jí  
《郑板桥集》



## A Letter to My Brother during My Boat Trip to Huai'an



To think others lovely makes one also lovely; to feel others hateful makes one also hateful. In the eyes of Su Dongpo no one appeared to be bad all his life—that was his strongest point.

I have been given to upbraiding people all my life. However, if I have perceived in others a single ability or a single virtue, I have never been sparing of my praises. And thousands of taels of gold in my bag I would scatter to others for my love of man. In my straitened or dangerous circumstances I was also often helped by them. None the less, I am given to scolding people—especially the scholars. But on second thought, I find the evils of the scholars lie in their narrow-mindedness. But if they can avoid it, they are no longer to be regarded as scholars. And then to make them my sole target of censure is indeed a great wrong done to them, for who could be broadminded in this world?

Living in decrepitude and solitude, one should guard against verbal offences. Loving people is a merit and scolding people is a demerit. If Su Dongpo still thought the latter a shortcoming of his, how much more should I, Zheng Banqiao?

白话  
翻译

认为别人是可爱的，自己会因此变得可爱；认为别人是可恶的，自己会因此变得可恶。苏东坡一生觉得世上没有不好的人，这是他最可贵的品质。

我平生喜欢无礼地谩骂别人，但是别人若有一些才能和技艺的长处，或一些言行表现出美德，我也会啧啧称道。我曾有千金的资产，都随手散尽了，这都是我热爱他人的缘故。当我遇到困难和短缺的时候，也常常能得到他人的帮助。我喜欢骂人，特别是喜欢骂秀才。细细想来，秀才总是被人批评，是因为脱不开科举的束缚，但是如果能脱开束缚，就又不可能考中秀才了。我专门骂秀才，他们也实在是冤屈，当今世上，有谁能完全脱开束缚呢？

我年纪大了，又很孤独，应当谨慎口头的过错，爱他人是好事，骂别人是坏事。苏东坡就因为这一点遭人诟病，而我郑板桥又怎能例外呢？

老弟你也应当经常提醒我。



And you should also often admonish me against it.

Zheng Xie (Zheng Xie)<sup>①</sup>  
*Collection of Zheng Banqiao*



### Note

① Zheng Xie, or Zheng Banqiao (1693–1765), born in Xinghua of Jiangsu, was a famous poet and painter in the Qing Dynasty.



jiāo shān dú shū jì sì dì mò  
焦山读书寄四弟墨

sēng rén biàn mǎn tiān xià bù shì xī yù sòng lái de jí wú zhōng guó zhī  
僧人遍满天下，不是西域送来的，即吾国之  
fù xiōng zǐ dì qióng ér wú guī rù ér nán fǎn zhě yě xuē qù tóu fa biàn shì  
父兄子弟，穷而无归，入而难返者也。削去头发便是  
tā liú qǐ tóu fa hái shì wǒ nù méi chēn mù chì wéi yì duān ér shēn wù  
他，留起头发还是我。怒眉嗔目，叱为异端，而深恶  
tòng jué zhī yì jiào tài guò fó zì zhōu zhāo wáng shí xià shēng qì yú miè  
痛绝之，亦觉太过。佛自周昭王时下生，迄于灭  
dù zú jī wèi cháng lǚ zhōng guó tǔ hòu bā bǎi nián ér yǒu hàn míng dì shuō  
度，足迹未尝履中国土。后八百年而有汉明帝说  
huǎng shuō mèng rě chū zhè chǎng shì lái fó shí bù wén bù xiǎo jīn bù zé  
谎说梦，惹出这场事来，佛实不闻不晓。今不责  
míng dì ér jì shēng mà fó fó hé gū hū  
明帝而齐声骂佛，佛何辜乎？

kuàng zì chāng lí bì fó yǐ lái kǒng dào dà míng fó yàn jiàn xī dì  
况自昌黎辟佛以来，孔道大明，佛焰渐息，帝  
wáng qīng xiàng yī zūn liù jīng sì zǐ zhī shū yǐ wéi jì jiā zhì guó píng tiān  
王卿相，一遵六经四子之书，以为齐家、治国、平天  
xià zhī dào cǐ shí ér yóu yán bì fó yì rú tóng jiāo là ér yǐ  
下之道，此时而犹言辟佛，亦如同嚼蜡而已。

hé shàng shì fó zhī zuì rén shā dào yín wàng tān lán shì lì wú fù míng  
和尚是佛之罪人，杀盗淫妄，贪婪势利，无复明  
xīn jiàn xìng zhī guī xiù cái yì shì kǒng zǐ zuì rén bù rén bù zhì wú lǐ wú  
心见性之规；秀才亦是孔子罪人，不仁不智，无礼无  
yì wú fù shǒu xiān dài hòu zhī yì xiù cái mà hé shàng hé shàng yì mà xiù  
义，无复守先待后之意。秀才骂和尚，和尚亦骂秀  
cái yǔ yún gè rén zì sǎo jiē qián xuě mò guǎn tā jiā wū wǎ shuāng lǎo  
才。语云：“各人自扫阶前雪，莫管他家屋瓦霜。”老





## To My Fourth Brother—while Reading at Jiaoshan



Monks are all over the country. Apart from those coming from India and its neighbourhood, most of them are aged or young people of China who, being destitute and homeless, have entered the religion and can hardly leave it. Having been shaven of his hair, a man becomes a monk, but having his hair restored, he remains his former self. If a monk is looked at with furious glances, reproved as a heretic, and treated with the utmost repugnance and abomination—that would be too much. From the time when Bodhisattva was born in the period of Emperor Zhao of the Zhou Dynasty until his nirvana, he was never found to have left his footprints on the land of China. It was not until eight hundred years later, when Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty raved in his dream about him that the whole thing had come to pass. And Bodhisattva must have been ignorant of it. Now we do not reproach Emperor Ming with it, but scold this Indian instead. Pray, what after all was he guilty of?

And then since Han Yu repudiated Buddhism, Confucianism has shone with great brilliance and the zeal of that religion has gradually dwindled. Emperors, kings and premiers all followed the teachings of the Six Scriptures and the Four Classics and

dì yǐ wéi rán fǒu  
弟以为然否？

ǒu yǒu suǒ chù shū yǐ jì rǔ bìng shì wú fāng shī yī xiào yě  
偶有所触，书以寄汝。并示无方师一笑也。

zhèng xiè  
郑燮

zhèng bǎn qiáo jí  
《郑板桥集》

白话  
翻译



满世界都是僧人，不是从西域送来的，就是我们中国的父子兄弟，他们因为贫穷没有依靠，一旦入了寺庙就不能出来了。削去头发就是僧人，但如果留起头发就又是他自己了。如果对他们十分凶狠，把他们当作异端，对他们深恶痛绝，也是太过分了。佛从周昭王的时候诞生，直到最后升天，他的足迹没有踏入中国的土地。八百年之后，因为汉明帝谎称自己做了一个梦，才惹出这样的事情来，佛自己实在是毫不知晓。现在的人们不去责备汉明帝，而都去责骂佛，佛是多么的无辜啊！

何况自从韩愈排斥佛教以来，孔子的学说得到光大，佛的影响渐渐消除，帝王和大臣，都遵从六经和四子的著述，把他们作为齐家、治国、平天下的方法。这个时候再说清除佛教，就如同嚼蜡一样没有意义。

和尚都是佛家的罪人，他们杀人、盗窃、荒淫妄为、贪婪势利，不再遵循明心见性的规矩；秀才也都是孔家的罪人，他们不仁不义，不再存有遵守先辈训诫、教导后人的心思。秀才骂和尚，和尚也骂秀才。俗语说：“各人自扫门前雪，莫管他人瓦上霜。”你怎么看待这种说法呢？

我偶尔有了一些感触，就写信给你。希望能够博你一笑啊。



observed them as the guidance for "giving a good management to families, a good government to the State, and a good order to the world". If at such a time like this, we still stand on the repudiation of Buddhism, it would be as insipid as chewing wax.

Monks are sinners of Buddhism, capable of murder, robbery, adultery and lies as well as greed and profit-seeking. They are already strangers to the tenet of becoming a Buddha by discovering one's nature. By the same token, Confucianists are also sinners of Confucianism, having neither benevolence nor wisdom, devoid of politeness and righteousness. They are already strangers to the tenet of adhering to the teachings of their predecessors and edifying the oncoming generations. Confucianists upbraid monks and vice versa. A proverb goes: "Everybody had better sweep the snow off his own stone steps, taking no care of the frost on other people's housetops." What do you think of it, Brother?

This thought having occurred to me, I jotted it down. I am sending this letter to you and hope you will show it to Master Wufang for his amusement.

Zheng Xie

*Collection of Zheng Banqiao*

wéi xiàn shǔ zhōng yǔ shè dì mò dì èr shū  
潍县署中与舍弟墨第二书

shū hòu yòu yī zhǐ  
书后又一纸

suǒ yún bù dé lóng zhōng yǎng niǎo ér yǔ yòu wèi cháng bù ài niǎo dàn  
所云不得笼中养鸟，而予又未尝不爱鸟，但

yǎng zhī yǒu dào ěr  
养之有道耳。

yù yǎng niǎo mò rú duō zhǒng shù shǐ rào wū shù bǎi zhū fú shū mào mì  
欲养鸟，莫如多种树。使绕屋数百株，扶疏茂密，

wéi niǎo guó niǎo jiā jiāng dàn shí shuì mèng chū xǐng shàng zhǎn zhuǎn zài  
为“鸟国”、“鸟家”。将旦时，睡梦初醒，尚展转在

bèi tīng yī piàn zhōu jiū rú yún mén xiǎn chí zhī zòu jí pī yī ér qǐ huì  
被，听一片啁啾，如云门、咸池之奏。及披衣而起，赍

miàn shù kǒu chuò míng jiàn qí yáng huī zhèn cǎi shū wǎng shū lái mù bù xiá  
面、漱口、啜茗，见其扬翬振采，倏往倏来，目不暇

jǐ gù fēi yī lóng yī yǔ zhī lè ěr yǐ  
给，固非一笼一羽之乐而已。

dà suài píng shēng lè chù yù yǐ tiān dì wéi yuán jiāng hàn wéi chí gè  
大率平生乐处，欲以天地为囿，江汉为池，各

shì qí tiān sī wéi dà kuài bǐ zhī pén yú lóng niǎo qí jù xì rén rěn hé rú  
适其天，斯为大快！比之盆鱼笼鸟，其巨细、仁忍何如

yě  
也？

zhèng xiè  
郑燮

zhèng bǎn qiáo jí  
《郑板桥集》



## Postscript to My Second Letter to My Brother at My Office in Weixian



I said that it wouldn't do to keep birds in cages. But I am by no means apathetic to birds. The point is that birds should be kept in the right way.

The best way of keeping birds is to plant hundreds of trees to surround a house with due density so as to set up a realm of birds or a home for birds. Then in the early morning, when one has just wakened from his dream and is still lingering in bed, he can hear the loud chirping of birds like the music produced for the pleasure of Emperor Huangdi. With his dress draped over the shoulders, one begins to rise, wash his face, gargle his mouth and drink some tea, and he can see the birds fluttering their plumes, flying hither and thither—too numerous to sight them one by one. This is indeed far more than the joy imparted to him by a single caged bird.

Generally, the joy of life lies in taking the universe as its stamping ground and the seas and rivers as its swimming pools, as this alone suits its inclination, and gives it the greatest satisfaction. As compared with the cases of basin-kept fish and caged birds, how evident is the difference between man's largeness and benignity on the one hand and his

白话  
翻译



我曾说不要在笼中养鸟,我并非不爱鸟,只是认为要用合适的方法来养鸟。

想要养鸟,不如多种树,使得屋子周围有数百棵树,枝叶茂密,成为“鸟国”、“鸟家”。天快要亮的时候,人睡梦初醒,但是还在被窝里辗转,如果能听见一片啁啾的鸟叫声,如同黄帝所听到的云门、咸池的音乐。等到穿衣起身,洗脸,漱口,喝茶,看见鸟儿挥舞着翅膀,倏忽地飞来飞去,让人目不暇接,这岂是在笼中养一只鸟的乐趣可以比拟的。

大概一个人平生的乐处,就是以天地为院落,以大江大河为池水,并且适应天然,这才是最大的快乐!与盆里的鱼和笼中的鸟相比,这有着多么巨大的差别啊!





smallness and cruelty on the other?

Zheng Xie

*Collection of Zheng Banqiao*



zài dá yīn gōng  
再答尹公

méi jiàn fàn yī yuè yǐ qǐ jū xìng rú píng shí wéi xíng tǐ wèi chōng wǔ  
枚健饭一月矣，起居幸如平时，惟形体未充，五  
shí bù wài bù néng lí zhàng ér xíng qián méng fū zǐ qiǎn shǐ wèn jí méi yù  
十步外不能离杖而行。前蒙夫子遣使问疾。枚欲  
qū hán zhàng nài chūn hán bī rén máo fà xī sǎ qiě bì hù bàn nián yī zuò  
趋函丈，奈春寒逼人，毛发析洒；且闭户半年，一作  
chū shān zhī yún zé chóu yīng rú má ér qǐ shì yǐ jīng qí liǎng zhì bái mén ér  
出山之云，则酬应如麻而起。是以旌旗两至白门，而  
yě hè gū mián jìng wú yíng sòng zì tàn gōng mén táo lí biàn zuò xiǔ mù nán  
野鹤孤眠，竟无迎送。自叹公门桃李，变作朽木难  
diào tāng jié jiè qīng míng cǐ shēn yǔ cǎo mù tóng mào dìng dāng xiān yì píng  
雕。倘节届清明，此身与草木同茂，定当先诣平  
quán lǐng lüè shí yǔ chūn fēng yǐ juān chú sù jí yě  
泉，领略时雨春风，以捐除宿疾也。

chéng xiǎo shī shù zhāng qīn bǐ téng xiě fū zǐ dú shī qíng wǎn zhuǎn xǐ  
呈小诗数章，亲笔誊写。夫子读诗情宛转，喜  
qí gù tài zhī cún jiàn zì jī qī xié lián qí wàn lì zhī ruò wǔ liù liǎng gōng  
其故态之存；见字迹欹斜，怜其腕力之弱。五六两公  
zǐ wèi zhī yǐ dù jiāng fǒu fèng huái shī fù shū yú hòu  
子，未知已渡江否？《奉怀诗》附书于后。

yuán méi  
袁枚

suí yuán quán jí  
《随园全集》





## Second Reply to Yin Jishan Esquire



I have regained my appetite for a month, and my life is going on as usual. Only I have not yet fully recovered and can hardly dispense with a stick after walking fifty paces by myself. Some time ago Your Honour sent a messenger to inquire after me. Although I was ready to visit you in return to your kindness, I was nevertheless baffled in my intent, as the spring weather was so freezing, and I had got totally bald. Besides, having stayed behind closed doors for half a year, I found that, after I had come out of my hermit's life, I was simply beset with unbearable social intercourses.

Thus, the two visits Your Highness paid me in Nanjing were not honoured by me with any greeting or seeing-off ceremonies. Resembling a hibernating wild crane, I could not help sighing in private that I, a student of yours, should have become so unworthy. If, with the coming of warm spring, my health would improve as rapidly as the plants thrive, I will first of all go to your place, so that I may bask in your benign and edifying influence and get rid of my long illness.

I am sending to you some of my verses, which I transcribed with my own hands. If Your Highness could sense their sincere poetic feelings, I hope you will be glad to know



白话  
翻译



最近一个月我的饭量大增，生活已经恢复到平常的状态了，只有身体还没复原，走五十步以离不开拐杖。感谢您派遣使者来询问我的身体状况。我很想去看望您，但是春天仍然很寒冷，让我毛发直竖，而且我已经半年没有出门了，担心一旦传出要出门消息，各种应酬会很多。因此，您两次来南京看我，我却像睡着的野鹤一样，竟然没有接待您。我自己也感叹，我曾经是您的学生，而如今已经成了朽

木，无法雕琢了。如果在清明节前后，我的身体状况与草木一样强健起来，我一定会先去平泉您的住所，您的教诲会像春风春雨一样，祛除我剩余的疾病。我呈上几首毛笔书写的诗，您会觉得它但诗情婉转，会为我仍然保留着原先的风格而高兴；您看见我的字迹歪斜，会怜惜我的腕力太弱。您的第五个儿子和第六个儿子，不知道他们渡江了没有？我的《奉怀诗》附在信的后面。在此之前，我闭门不出，已经有一年半了。因此，您两次来南京看我，我却像睡着的野鹤一样，竟然没有接待您。我自己也感叹，我曾经是您的学生，而如今已经成了朽

with undesirable social intercourse.

visits Your Highness paid me in Nanjing

with any greeting or seeing-off

with crane, I could not

have

my





that your student remains what he used to be. If Your Highness sees that my handwriting is too irregular, I hope you will have pity on me for my feeble wrist. Your fifth and sixth sons—have they already crossed the River? Enclosed is my poem *Longing for My Teacher*.

Yuan Mei<sup>①</sup>

*Complete Works of Sui Garden*



### Note

- ① Yuan Mei (1716–1797), born in Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province, was a famous poet and prose writer in the Qing Dynasty. Yin Jishan was once his teacher.





dá zhèng wén yòng mù shū  
答郑文用牧书

lì shēn shǒu èr zì yuē bù gǒu dài rén shǒu èr zì yuē wú  
立身，守二字：曰“不苟”；待人，守二字：曰“无

hàn shì shì yù bù gǒu yóu wèi néng guǎ chǐ rǔ niàn niàn qiú wú hàn yóu wèi  
憾”。事事欲不苟，犹未能寡耻辱；念念求无憾，犹未

néng miǎn yuàn yóu cǐ shù shí nián dé yú háng shì zhě qí dé yú xué  
能免怨尤。——此数十年得于行事者。其得于学：

bù yǐ rén bì jǐ bù yǐ jǐ zì bì bù yǐ yī shí zhī míng yì bù qī hòu shì  
不以人蔽己；不以己自蔽；不以一时之名，亦不期后世

zhī míng yǒu míng zhī jiàn qí bì èr fēi pǒu jī qián rén yǐ zì biǎo bó jí  
之名。有名之见，其弊二：非掎击前人以自表褻，即

yī bàng xī rú yǐ fù jì wěi èr zhě bù tóng ér bǐ lòu zhī xīn tóng shì yǐ  
依傍昔儒以附驥尾。二者不同，而鄙陋之心同。是以

jūn zǐ wù zài wén dào yě  
君子务在闻道也。

jīn zhī bó yǎ néng wén zhāng shàn kǎo hé zhě jiē wèi zhì hū wén dào  
今之博雅能文章、善考核者，皆未志乎闻道。

tú zhū shǒu xiān rú ér xìn zhī dǔ rú nán běi cháo rén suǒ jī níng yán zhōu  
徒株守先儒而信之笃，如南北朝人所讥“宁言周、

kǒng wù mò dào zhèng fú fēi yì wèi zhì hū wén dào zhě yě sī zhì chuān  
孔误，莫道郑、服非”，亦未志乎闻道者也。私智穿

záo zhě huò fēi jìn pǒu jī yǐ zì biǎo bó jī fēi chéng shì ér wú cóng zhī  
凿者，或非尽掎击以自表褻，积非成是，而无从知，

xiān rù wéi zhǔ ér huò yǐ zhōng shēn huò fēi jìn yī bàng yǐ fù jì wěi wú  
先入为主，而惑以终身；或非尽依傍以附驥尾，无

bǐ lòu zhī xīn ér shī yǔ zhī děng gù xué nán yán yě  
鄙陋之心，而失与之等。故学难言也。



## A Reply to Zheng Wenyong



In my conduct and behaviour I observe the principle of strictness and in my relations with people I seek to have a conscience without regrets. Even though I strive to be strict with everything, I still can't be free of mortifications, and even though I am anxious to have no regrets in dealing with others, I still can't be free of their complaints. This is what I have come to know from my experience of life over dozens of years.

As for what I have gained from my learning, it can be summed up in these words: Never be deceived by others, nor deceive yourself. Never seek a passing fame, nor expect a fame in the future. The courting of fame has two evils: You must either attack your predecessors to show off yourself or count on former scholars for borrowed plumes. Though the two manifestations are different, they disclose the same ugly mentality. Therefore, a gentleman must aim at learning the truth.

Nowadays those who are well-read and well-cultivated, capable of writing and good at the collation of classics, are not set on learning the truth. They merely adhere to the teachings of former scholars with unshakable faith, in the same light as what was mocked by people of the Northern and Southern dynasties: "Better get mistaken in quoting Jidan and Confucius

hǎo yǒu shù rén sī guī ér gòng jiǎng míng zhèng dào bù rù sì zhě zhī  
好友数人思归，而共讲明正道，不入四者之  
bì xiū cí lì chéng yǐ sī hòu xué qí huò tīng huò fǒu huò chuán huò zhuì  
弊，修辞立诚，以俟后学。其或听或否；或传或坠  
huò zūn xìn huò fēi yì shù gǔ shèng xián zhī dào zhě suǒ bù jì yě  
或尊信、或非议；述古圣贤之道者，所不计也。

dài zhèn  
戴震

dài dōng yuán jí  
《戴东原集》

白话  
翻译



砥砺自己的品格，得严守这样两个字，就是“不苟”；对待他人，也得严守这样两个字，就是“无憾”。我每件事情都一丝不苟，仍然不能减少耻辱，我一心想着不要留遗憾，仍然不能避免别人的埋怨责怪。——这是我几十年做人做事的心得。

通过学习，我了解到：不能因为别人而迷失自己，更不能自我迷失；不要迷失于一时的名声，更不要期望后世的名声。出名有两点不好：不是攻击前人来衬托自己，就是依托别人来抬高自己。这两者虽然有不同，但是卑劣的用心是一样的。因此，君子的目标必须是追求真理。

如今擅长读书写文章的人，善于研究考证的人，都没有把自己的志向定位于追求真理。他们只是守住先人的木桩，并且深信不疑，就像南北朝人所讥讽的“宁可说周公、孔子错，也不说郑玄、服虔错。”这些人也没有把真理当成自己的追求，是用自己的理解对经典穿凿附会；他们当中的一些人，并不是攻击前人来衬托自己，而是把错误的当成是正确的，自己却不知道，这种对经典先入为主的见解会耽误他们一生；他们当中的另一些人，也不是依托别人来抬高自己，他们没有卑劣的用心，但是与用心卑劣的人



than citing Zheng Xuan and Fu Qian, the later scholars." Such persons are also not set on learning the truth. As for those who search for it subjectively with their scanty wisdom, there may be two different cases. Some of them, not entirely bent on attacking others to show off themselves, would, nevertheless, take for granted what is habitually deemed right without their being conscious of it, and owing to prepossession, they become befuddled all their lives. Others, though unlikely to be keen on borrowed plumes and having no such ugly mentality, would suffer the same losses as the above-mentioned people.

Several friends of mine and I are thinking of going back to our hometown, endeavouring to expound the sound principles without falling into the four evils as set forth before. We shall strive to make the expression of true thoughts and feelings the main purport of our writings, in the hope of benefiting future learners. As for whether our writings will be attended to or ignored, whether they will be passed on or buried in oblivion, whether they will be respected and believed or subjected to criticism and censure, we, having in mind only the exposition of the truth of ancient sages, shall not care about these questions.

Dai Zhen<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Dai Dongyuan (Dai Zhen)*



的错误是一样的。所以说,学习这件事情真是难以说清。

我和一些好友都想回到家乡去,一同宣扬真理,防止出现前面所说的四种错误,我们将致力于对经典的正确解读,对后来的人产生好一点的影响。不论我们的文章会被接受还是被否定,不论它们能不能流传下去,不论它们会被遵从信服还是遭受非议,我们都不在乎,因为我们是在传述古代圣贤的真理。







### Note

- ① Dai Zhen (1723–1777), born in Xiuning of Anhui Province, was a famous scholar and thinker in the Qing Dynasty.



fù qīn jūn shàn shū  
复钦君善书

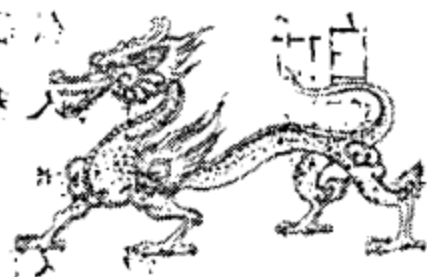
qīn jūn zú xià rǔ cì shū bìng shì suǒ wéi wén yī piān zú xià jī shì  
钦君足下：辱赐书并示所为文一篇。足下，畸士  
yě qí wén yì jī wén yě fū wén jì ěr fēi dào yě rán gǔ jí yǐ dá  
也；其文，亦畸文也。夫文，技耳，非道也。然古籍以达  
dào qí hòu wén zhì ér jiàn yǔ dào yuǎn suī hán tuì zhī ōu yáng yǒng shū bù  
道，其后文至而渐与道远，虽韩退之、欧阳永叔不  
miǎn bìng cǐ ér kuàng yǐ xià zhě hū zú xià zhī wén bù tōng yú sù ér yì  
免病此，而况以下者乎？足下之文不通于俗，而亦  
bù jìn hé yú gǔ bù qiú gōng yú jì ér yì bù jìn dāng yú dào zì shì jǐ  
不尽合于古；不求工于技，而亦不尽当于道。自适己  
yì yǐ dé qí xìng qíng suǒ ān gù yuē jī wén yě  
意，以得其性情所安，故曰“畸文”也。

qí huán gōng jiàn wèng yāng dà yǐng yuè zhī ér shì quán rén qí dòu jiān  
齐桓公见瓮瓮大瘿，说之，而视全人其脰肩  
jiān zú xià wèi bù yù yǐ rén shǒu jiā jǐ shēn qí yì shàn yǐ ér yù pú  
肩。足下谓不欲以人首加己身，其意善矣；而欲仆  
shéng xuē qí wén pú bù néng ǒu sù lüè yǒu lèi zú xià ěr qǐ néng yǐ qū  
绳削其文，仆不能偶俗，略有类足下耳。岂能以区  
qū wén fǎ wèi zú xià shéng xuē dì rú qí huán zhī shì wèng yāng dà yǐng shì zhī  
区文法为足下绳削？第如齐桓之视瓮瓮大瘿视之  
ér yǐ  
而已。

yáo nài  
姚鼐

xī bào xuān quán jí  
《惜抱轩全集》

## A Reply to Mr. Qin Shan



I have received the letter and the enclosed essay you condescended to send to me. Your Honour is indeed a freakish talent and your essay a freakish writing. The art of writing is only a skill, having nothing to do with the principle. But in ancient times, it was used to be a vehicle of the principle. Afterwards, when it had attained perfection it was gradually alienated from the latter. Even great authors such as Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu were not immune from this weakness, much less those inferior to them! Your Honour's writing is not touched with vulgarity, nor is it entirely conformable with ancient classics. It does not strive at skill, nor does it entirely accord with the principle. You just try to make it suit your own disposition, and agree with your own personality. That's why I call it "freakish writing".

Duke Huan of Qi once saw someone with a large jugular tumour and was quite amused, so much so that he felt a normal person had too small a neck beside him. Your Honour said that you didn't wish to have an alien brain imposed upon you—that was indeed a good idea. As for your wish that I would judge your writing with our insignificant grammar, I can only say that I am not one to follow the vulgar practice, and in this sense can claim to be on a par with you. So how could I

白话  
翻译

钦君您好！感谢您的来信和信中的那篇文章。您是难得的人才，您的文章也是难得的好文章。写文章是技艺而不是道德。但是古代的典籍注重道德追求，后来写文章慢慢地又注重起文采，与道德追求逐渐分离。即便是韩愈和欧阳修都不能避免这样的失误，其余的人就更是如此了。您的文章和世俗是有区别的，同时和古代的文章也不完全相同；您既不盲目追求技艺的工巧，也不是完全为道德而写文章。您总是随着自己的意愿和性情来写文章，所以说您的文章是“奇文”。

齐桓公见有个人长着像大瓮一样的肿瘤，觉得很可笑，那个人的脖子看起来实在是太短小了。您说不想把别人的头放在自己的身体上，这是很好的见解。但是您又希望我减少一点文章中的文采，我不能与世俗沟通，这一点和您是有些相似的。怎么能让这些作文的法则成为您的绳索和羁绊呢？这就好像齐桓公看到别人长着瓮一样大的瘤子，他也只是看看而已。



possibly gauge your essay with our insignificant grammar? I would, however, regard it in the same light as Duke Huan of Qi looking upon the man with a large jugular tumour.

Yao Nai<sup>①</sup>

*Complete Works of Xibao Chamber*



### Note

- ① Yao Nai (1731–1815), born in Tongcheng of Anhui Province, was a famous essayist in the Qing Dynasty.



yǔ yǒu rén shū  
与友人书

fú wén mǒu yǐ yán cí wǔ yì zú xià shèng nù chì zhī qiè wèi guò yǐ  
伏闻某以言辞忤意，足下盛怒斥之，窃谓过矣！

mǒu jūn zǐ yē wèi wén nù jiā jūn zǐ ruò xiǎo rén sī bù zú nù yǐ  
某，君子耶？未闻怒加君子。若小人，斯不足怒矣。

fū nù cháng rén zhī qíng míng zhě rěn zhī yán shì fàn ér bù jiào huái  
夫怒，常人之情，明者忍之。颜氏犯而不校。淮

yīn chū kuà xià fēi wú yǒng yě néng rěn ěr hàn gāo chū wén hán xìn qǐng jiǎ  
阴出胯下，非无勇也，能忍耳。汉高初闻韩信请假

wáng ér nù jí zhāng liáng chén píng cù zú zé fān rán biàn jì zhū gé kǒng  
王而怒，及张良、陈平蹴足，则翻然变计。诸葛孔

míng sòng jīn guó yǔ sī mǎ zhòng dá gān shòu bù cí cǐ èr shì zú xià suǒ xí  
明送巾帽与司马仲达，甘受不辞。此二事足下所习

wén yǔ yún xiǎo bù rěn zé luàn dà móu bù rěn wèi yǒu bù nù zhě yǐ  
闻。语云：“小不忍则乱大谋。”不忍，未有不怒者矣。

chén qiān shào shí wèi xià hóu xuán suǒ wǔ yì sè zì ruò huò fèn quán yù ōu liú  
陈骞少时为夏侯玄所侮，意色自若。或奋拳欲殴刘

líng líng xú yuē jī lèi bù zú yǐ ān zūn quán péi xiá yǔ rén wéi qí xíng  
伶，伶徐曰：“鸡肋不足以安尊拳！”裴遐与人围棋，行

jiǔ zhě zuì yè xiá duò dì xiá xú qǐ hái zuò fù qí rú gù cài xì yǔ xiè  
酒者醉，曳遐堕地，遐徐起还坐，复棋如故。蔡系与谢

wàn zhēng yán xì tuī wàn luò chuáng wàn fú yī jiù xí wèi xì yuē qīng  
万争言，系推万落床；万拂衣就席，谓系曰：“卿

jī huài wǒ miàn pú jiàn chóng zhī rú nù zhě mò rú táng láng qí bì guǒ  
几坏我面！”仆见虫之如怒者，莫如螳螂，其臂果

néng dǎng chē hū niǎo zhī hào nù zhě mò rú hé gāng dòu yǐ bì ěr gǔ jīn rén  
能挡车乎？鸟之好怒者莫如鹞，戇斗以毙耳。古今人



## A Letter to My Friend



I heard that someone had offended you verbally and you had upbraided him in great anger. I thought it was going too far. Was that person a gentleman? I never heard that a gentleman should be the object of one's anger. Was that person a villain? Then he was unworthy of your anger.

Anger is indeed a feeling common to everybody, but a wise man can endure it. Yan Hui, the Confucian disciple, used to ignore any anger directed against him. Han Xin, the Marquis of Huaiyin, once took up the insulting challenge of creeping between a boy's divided legs. That didn't account for his lack of courage but for his great forbearance. Liu Bang, the First Emperor of the Han Dynasty, was infuriated when he just heard that Han Xin pretended to the status of viceroy, but his mind soon recovered its ballast when Zhang Liang and Chen Ping gave him slight kicks by way of remonstrance. When Zhuge Liang sent a woman's scarf to Sima Yi as a present, provoking him to come out of the town gate for an encounter, the latter accepted it placidly without being provoked. These two historical episodes must be familiar to Your Honour. As the saying goes: "The lack of endurance of petty annoyances would confound plans of great consequence." For the lack of endurance is bound to give rise to anger. Chen Qian, a mere

wēi shēn bài shì wèi yǒu bù yóu yú nù zhě yě ér kuàng nù xiǎo rén zāi  
危身败，事未有不由于怒者也，而况怒小人哉！

yàn yuē jǐ shì ér bǐ fēi bù dāng yǔ fēi zhēng bǐ shì ér jǐ fēi  
谚曰：“己是而彼非，不当与非争；彼是而己非，

bù dāng yǔ shì zhēng fù wèi cǐ kě zuò fàn ér bù jiào zhù jiǎo  
不当与是争。”馥谓此可作“犯而不校”注脚。

guì fù  
桂馥

wǎn xué jí  
《晚学集》

白话  
翻译



听说有人言语上忤逆了您，您非常生气，斥责了他，我认为您做得有些过分了。那个人，是君子吗？我从未听说有人会对君子动怒；如果他是小人，那您就更不值得为他发怒了。

发怒，是人之常情，但智慧的人都会克制住。颜回被冒犯了，却不放在心上。韩信能够忍受胯下之辱，不是他不勇敢，而是他能忍耐。汉高祖刘邦刚得知韩信想要称王的消息，非常愤怒，但是经过张良和陈平稍加劝解，就立即改变了主意。诸葛亮把女人的头巾送给司马懿，司马懿却很高兴地接受了，没有推辞。这几件事情都是您所熟悉的。常言说：“小不忍则乱大谋。”有不会忍耐的人，没有不会发怒的人。陈骞小的时候，曾受到夏侯玄的侮辱，却连神色都没有改变。有人想挥拳去打刘伶，刘伶却说：“我瘦得就像鸡肋，你的拳头打着也不舒服。”裴遐和人下围棋，有个喝醉酒的人把他拉着摔到地上，裴遐自己爬起来又坐下了，继续下棋。蔡系和谢万争辩，蔡系把谢万推倒在地，谢万拍拍衣服就坐了起来，对蔡系说：“你差点把我的脸摔破了。”我见过的最愤怒的昆虫莫过于螳螂了，但是它的手臂真的能挡住车辆吗？我知道的最愤怒的鸟莫过于鹞鸟，但是它们总会





child, was able to keep his countenance when he was insulted by Xiahou Xuan. Liu Ling, being threatened by someone with a fisticuff, said unhurriedly: "These chicken-ribs of mine are not good enough to let your fist settle in ease!" When Pei Xia played someone a game of Weiqi, a drunkard dragged him down violently, causing him to fall on the ground, yet he stood up quietly and resumed the game as if nothing had happened. Once Cai Xi disputed with Xie Wan, and in his anger pushed him down from the bed. But the latter just wiped his clothes and sat composedly with the gentle remark: "Your Honour almost ruined my face!" As I observe, no insects are more capable of anger than mantis—but can it really stop a cart with its arms? And no birds are more given to anger than a brown-eared pheasant—but its foolish fighting spirit can only cause it death. Since time immemorial it has always been anger that is the undoing of man and his life. More is the pity that it should be anger caused by villains!

As the saying goes: "If one is right and others are wrong, he ought not to fight it out with those in the wrong. If one is wrong and others are right, he ought not to fight it out with those in the right." I think this might serve as an interpretation of Yan Hui's "ignoring any anger directed against me".

Gui Fu<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Later Studies*



在战斗中毙命。从古到今,出现危险和衰败的景况,都是因为发怒引起的,何况是对小人发怒呢!

有谚语说:“如果自己对了,别人错了,那你不应该与错误争辩;如果别人对了,自己错了,那你更不该与正确争辩。”我把这句话看作是“犯而不校”的注脚。

Collection of Later Studies  
Gui Fu





jì zōu lùn yuán  
寄邹论园

pú guī lǐ hòu nèi zǐ yǐ zì bìng wēi nǎi bù shù rì jiān jù rán huà qù  
仆归里后，内子已自病危，乃不数日间，遽然化去。

yǐ shù shí nián tóng jiān gòng kǔ zhě ér mù zhōng hū wú cǐ rén jué méng  
以数十年同艰共苦者，而目中忽无此人，觉“蒙

chǔ yī shī zì zì jiē wèi wǒ bèi huà chū lèi hén fāng zhī cǐ zhǒng shāng xīn  
楚”一诗，字字皆为我辈画出泪痕，方知此种伤心，

gù zì tóng yú qiān gǔ tè pú bù xìng shì rán gòu zhī cǎn cǎn hé yǐ  
固自同于千古。特仆不幸，适然覩之，惨惨何已！

wú xī qí  
吴锡麒

yǒu zhèng wèi zhāi jí  
《有正味斋集》

白话  
翻译

我回家以后，我夫人就已经病危，没过几天，便离我而去了。我们在一起几十年同甘共苦，而现在突然之间眼前不见了伊人，才知道《葛生》这首诗，每一个字都是我们这些人泪痕的写照啊！现在才知道这种伤心，千百年来都是一样的。独独我是这么不幸，让我遭遇到这样的伤心，真是悲惨啊！



## To Zou Lunyuan



Upon my return I found that my wife was dying from illness. And it was only a few days later that she passed away. To see her suddenly no more after several decades of our common hard life, I feel that every word in the elegiac poem *Mengchu* is meant to bring forth my tears and to convey my grief. And I have come to know that this kind of grief is virtually shared by people from time immemorial. But I must be illstarred indeed to have this mishap fall upon me. How heartrending it is!

Wu Xiqi<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of You-Zheng-Wei Chamber*



### Note

① Wu Xiqi (1746–1818), born in Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province, was a man of letter in the Qing Dynasty.

yǔ chén bó shì jiǎn  
与陈博士笺

jìng ān bó shì zú xià zì gǔ yǐ yīn yáng wǔ xíng zhàn yàn zāi yì yǔ tuī  
静庵博士足下：自古以阴阳五行占验灾异，与推  
bù jiā shù jué bù xiāng tóng bù néng bìng wéi yī jiā zhī yán zǐ shèn bì zào  
步家术绝不相同，不能并为一家之言。梓慎、裨灶  
zhī liú wú néng tuī rì shí zhě kuàng yuè shí jìn shì tuī rì yuè shí jīng yǐ  
之流，无能推日食者，况月食？近世推日月食精矣，  
wéi huì xīng zhī chū gǔ wú zhuān shū yì wú tuī fǎ  
惟彗星之出，古无专书，亦无推法。

zú xià hé bù qǐng yú zhèng qīn wáng qǔ qīn tiān jiān lì lái huì xīng jiù dǎng  
足下何不请于郑亲王，取钦天监历来彗星旧档  
àn bèi chá chū tuī chéng yī shū zé cǐ shì yì yǒu dìng shù yǔ rì shí děng  
案彗查出，推成一书；则此事亦有定数，与日食等  
ěr zì zhēn zuì wù jīng fáng zhī yì liú xiàng zhī hóng fàn yǐ wéi bān  
耳。自珍最恶京房之《易》，刘向之《洪范》，以为班  
shì wǔ xíng zhì bù zuò kě yě cǐ shū chéng kě yǐ cuī shāo hàn cháo tiān shì  
氏《五行志》不作可也。此书成，可以摧烧汉朝天士  
zhī miù shuō yǐ  
之谬说矣。

gōng zì zhēn  
龚自珍

dìng ān wén jí  
《定庵文集》



## A Letter to Doctor Chen



Since ancient times people have used the doctrine of the interactions of *Yin* and *Yang* and the five elements to predict natural calamities and social cataclysms. Such a practice is absolutely different from the use of calendar based on astronomical calculations and the two are not to be mentioned in the same breath. But our ancient astronomers like Zishen and Bizao couldn't predict solar eclipses, let alone lunar eclipses. The prediction of the two kinds of eclipses in modern times is very precise. However, so far as the occurrence of comets is concerned, there were no specific books dealing with it or any methods of predicting it.

Why doesn't Your Honour consult Prince Zheng and borrow from the Imperial Observatory the files concerning comets accumulated through the ages, and having made research into them, compile a book, showing that there must be a law governing their occurrence in the same light as the occurrence of solar and lunar eclipses? As you know, I have the greatest aversion to *The Book of Change* by Jingfang and *Hong Fan* by Liu Xiang. And I think *Calamities Explained by the Interactions of the Five Elements* by Ban Gu should not have been written. If your book proves a success, the fallacies preached by the astrologers of the Han Dynasty can be

白话  
翻译



自古以来,人们都用阴阳五行来占卜灾异的事件。这与推步家的方法是一点都不相同的,不能把它们看作是一家的学说。梓慎、裨灶这样古代的阴阳家,连日食都推算不出来,何况是月食呢?近年来,日食和月食两种现象的发生都能够被准确地推算出来,只有彗星的出现,因为古代没有这方面专门的著作,也没有推算的方法。

您为什么不向郑亲王请求,从钦天监拿出历来关于彗星的旧档案,把它们结集成一本书;我相信彗星的出现也是有规律的,和日食一样。我最不喜欢京房的《易》和刘向的《洪范》这两本书,我还认为班固的《五行志》这本书根本不用写。如果我们的这本书能够做成,可以凭借它来推翻汉朝天人感应的错误说法。

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PDG





exploded root and branch.

Gong Zizhen<sup>①</sup>

*Collection of Gong Zizhen*



### Note

- ① Gong Zizhen (1792–1841), born in Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province, was an outstanding thinker and man of letter in the late Qing Dynasty.

