

## Tope and Topos

### *The Leifeng Pagoda and the Discourse of the Demonic*

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A site is often a *topos* in that it both marks a locus and serves as a topic. It is a common place that can be traversed or inhabited by a public and a rhetorical commonplace familiar to both its author and his audience.<sup>1</sup> Although there is no exact equivalent in Chinese to the Greek word *topos* that conveniently collapses the dual senses of locus and topic, the notion of *ji* 蹟 (site, trace, vestige) comes close. A *ji* is a site that emphasizes "vestiges" and "traces." It is a peculiar spatial-temporal construct. Spatially, a landmark, such as a tower, a terrace, a pavilion, or simply a stele, serves as its territorial signpost or perceptual cue, and it is perceived to be a terrain distinct from the humdrum environment. Temporally, this plot of ground resonates with the plot of some vanished cause or deed. A landmark alone, however, does not make a site. No site in China is without an overlay of writing. To make a site is to cite texts. Listed in local gazetteers and literary anthologies, each site (*ji*) gathers under its heading a body of writing by a succession of authors of the past. It is therefore as much a literary *topic* as it is a physical locus; it comes laden with a host of eulogies and contemplations.<sup>2</sup> A site is therefore textualized.<sup>3</sup> Once a locus congeals into a topic, its associated body of writing imbues it with a conceptual contour and an aura of distinction. A site is thereby perpetuated in the textual universe or by word of mouth, and conse-



Fig. 11.1 Huang Yanpei, *Leifeng Pagoda at Sunset*. Photograph. 1914. After *Zhongguo mingshen* (Scenic China), no. 4: *West Lake, Hangchow* [Hangzhou], ed. Huang Yanpei et al., 2: 19 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1915).

quently its topographic features and its landmarks become a secondary and tangential matter.<sup>4</sup> Cycles of decay and repair may render the landmark into something widely different from the original. That matters little. The only function of the landmark, after all, is to stand as a perceptual cue or synecdoche for the proverbial construct called a "site," a somewhat deceptive notion premised on the primacy of physical place, topographic features, and prominence of landmarks. In reality, a site is a *topos* etched in collective memory by its capacity to inspire writings on it and the topical thinking it provokes. To visit a site is to take up that *topos*. In China, few literarily inclined visitors can resist that urge. All they need is a prompt from a stele or a pavilion, landmarks that purport or pretend to have links to the vanished past that the site once witnessed.

A pagoda site (Fig. 11.1) is a curious anomaly. With its soaring height, the pagoda is easily the most prominent kind of landmark that stakes out a site. Yet it is not an easy *topos*. Other architectural types are more favored for the *topoi* they facilitate. A terrace often marks the location of a bygone imperial palace and hence a reminder of an unfulfilled cause that occasions posterity's sighs and lamentations. A tomb is an easy *topos* for mourning a historical fig-

ure whose martyrdom can be appropriated as a mirror for self-pity. A pavilion with its command of an open view stretching to the horizon, inspiring an outpouring of transcendental sentiments, is a commonplace of literary exercises. Not so for a pagoda with its dark overtones of numinous otherness. As a Buddhist monument that commemorates the Buddha Sakyamuni's sacred traces, it was adapted in China as a ritual signpost that facilitates the deceased's journey into the afterlife. A pagoda borders on the numinous realm and evokes dark supernatural forces that it seeks to pacify. Traditional Chinese literati were ill-disposed in their outings to note such unsettling matters. Moreover, the dearth of established discursive precedents make the pagoda less of a topos. One exception is the displacement of a pagoda into a tower or a pavilion on a height; it then became co-opted into the topoi surrounding pavilions, a topic about transcendental immortality in the Daoist imaginary.

Precisely because of its otherness, a pagoda presents itself as a potential alternative topos, one that engages the supernatural, the numinous, and the demonic. In traditional China, it was taken up by writers who explored folkloric sources as a reaction against an archaizing orthodox taste. In modern times, it has engaged radical authors who tap the demonic other as a source of creative and subversive energy. To follow the perceptions and discursive use of a pagoda serves therefore not so much a purely architectural-historical interest as a literary one—it allows us to understand the role of physical signposts in generating a discourse. No other pagoda serves this purpose better than the Leifeng Pagoda 雷峰塔.

### *Tope and Texts: The Apocalyptic Prelude*

To the west of the city of Hangzhou lies one of its most famous attractions, West Lake. Stepping out of the city and walking toward the lake, one sees on the left a hilly promontory jutting into the lake. The promontory is called Leifeng, Thunder Peak,<sup>5</sup> an extension of the South Screen Mountain that lies to its south (Fig. 11.2). The pagoda, which stood on the hill until it collapsed in 1924, was popularly known as the Leifeng Pagoda. It was built by Qian Hongchu 錢弘俶 (929–88) and his consorts in A.D. 976. Qian was the last ruler of Wu-Yue 吳越, a state struggling for survival when most of China had been unified by the Song in the north. Qian paid homage to the Song court and made sure that none of his symbolic trappings and protocols displayed separatist ambitions.



Fig. 11.2 Anonymous, *West Lake*. Ink on paper. Handscroll. Southern Song (1127–1279) period. Shanghai Museum.

From the very beginning, the pagoda was deeply involved with writing and texts. Its brick tiles were molded with engraved names or cryptic ideographs. A vast number of the hollow tiles had holes in which were inserted a Buddhist *dhāraṇī-sūtra*,<sup>6</sup> prefaced with a votive inscription: "Qian Chu, Generalissimo of the Army of the World, King of Wu-Yue, has made 84,000 copies of this sūtra and interred them into the pagoda at the West Pass as an eternal offering. Noted on a day of the Eighth Month of the Yihai Year."<sup>7</sup> The content of the sūtra is strikingly congruent with the historical circumstances behind the construction of the pagoda and surprisingly prophetic of its fate. At the request of a brāhman named Vimala Varaprabha, the sūtra narrates, the Buddha leads his entourage to visit the brāhman's home to receive his offering. On his way, he passes a park with an ancient stupa in decay. "In decrepitude and shambles, the stupa was reduced to a mere earthen mount, overgrown with brambles and hazel grass, with debris strewn around." The Buddha circumambulates the stupa ruin for three rounds and then takes off his robe to cover it. "Tears begin to stream down his cheeks, mixed with blood. Having wept, he smiles. At that time, the Buddhas of Ten Directions, all weeping, fix their gaze on the stupa. Their radiance illuminates the stupa." Asked why he weeps, the Buddha explains: the mount used to be a seven-treasure stupa. Normally a structure enshrining a Buddha's "whole body" would have defied decay. But "in posterity that is overcome by the End of the Dharma when the multitude practice heresies, the Wonderful Dharma ought to disappear. . . . It is this reason," says the Buddha, "that causes me to shed tears."<sup>8</sup>



Fig. 11.3 Sutra frontispiece from the Leifeng Pagoda. 10th century.

A surviving copy contains an illustration of the passage cited above<sup>9</sup> that shows the Buddha present at the ruined mound and causing it to emit radiance. Behind the Buddha is the treasure stupa in its original form (Fig. 11.3). The graphic demonstration of the decaying of what initially is a splendid structure is a rather sobering visual parable.

The decision to place an illustrated version of this sūtra inside the Leifeng Pagoda was poignantly significant. Only three years after the construction of the pagoda, the prophecy of the "end of the Dharma" was fulfilled: the Wu-Yue kingdom was terminated.<sup>10</sup> Some five hundred years later, the pagoda itself was reduced to a ruin.

From the very outset, the pagoda was a breeding ground for fiction. Tradition has it that the pagoda was built for Qian's consort, Lady Huang 黃妃, and texts often refer to it as Consort Huang's Pagoda (Huangfeita 黃妃塔). In truth, there never was a Lady Huang.

A dedicatory inscription, written by Qian Hongchu and recovered from the pagoda, relates that the pagoda was built for pious reasons by a Buddhist layman, namely Qian himself, who "never stops reciting and poring over Buddhist sūtras in the little spare time between ten thousand administrative affairs." It identifies an "Inner Court" donor (a consort) who possessed a "lock of the Buddha's hair" and wished to have a pagoda built to enshrine it. Initially, she planned to build a thirteen-story affair. Financial strains made this impossible, and a seven-story tower was the compromise. Six hundred strings of cash were spent on the project.<sup>11</sup>

The identity of the "imperial consort" remains a mystery. According to a thirteenth-century copy of Qian's inscription, the pagoda was named after

Huangfei (Consort Huang). The standard history, which tends to be meticulous, if not entirely accurate, in documenting kings' and princes' consorts and family members, records that Qian had two consorts in succession, one named Sun and the other named Yu; neither of them was named Huang. The "Consort Huang" mentioned in the transcribed version of the inscription may well have resulted from a confusion between *wangfei* 王妃 (royal consort) and *huangfei* 黃妃 (Consort Huang), which in southern pronunciation are nearly identical. In the process of transcribing or typesetting the inscription, *wang* may have been rendered as *huang*.<sup>12</sup>

It is not clear which consort was the force behind the pagoda construction. Qian's wife Sun Taizhen 孫太真 accompanied her husband on his trip north to pay tribute to the Song court. Song Emperor Taizu made a controversial decision to confer the title "imperial consort of the Wu-Yue kingdom" on her, against opposition from his prime minister, who argued that a local prince's wife was not entitled to such an honor. Sun died in the first month of 977.<sup>13</sup> Qian's next wife was Lady Yu, who did not claim the title of "imperial consort." The near-coincidence between Sun's death and the date of the construction of the pagoda points to a connection with her, either during her sickness or her funeral, a standard practice in medieval China. In any event, a possible corrupt textual transmission may have spawned the fiction. Taking cues from the inscription, Wu Renchen 吳任臣, the Qing dynasty author of the *Spring and Autumn of the Ten Kingdoms* (*Shiquo chunqiu* 十國春秋), created a biography of this Consort Huang out of the profiles of Qian's two real consorts.<sup>14</sup> This he did in the spirit of writing history. In retrospect, the veiled association of the pagoda with a mystery woman is significant since women do figure prominently in the later popular tales that accumulated around the pagoda.<sup>15</sup>

### Pagoda and Pavilion

In the first two centuries after its construction, the Leifeng Pagoda did not become much of a site. Following the Wu-Yue Kingdom, the Song ruled the Hangzhou area. The Thunder Peak Pagoda underwent a succession of notable renovations in the twelfth century.<sup>16</sup> Although its presence on the hilltop is unquestionable, there is no indication until the mid-thirteenth century that visitors to the site paid much attention to it. Su Shi 蘇軾 (1036–1101), who twice held an official post in Hangzhou, wrote profusely and enthusiastically about various scenes around the lake. As the temple gazetteer



indicates, he visited the Jingci Monastery 淨慈寺, whose grounds included the Thunder Peak Pagoda, and bequeathed poems to the abbey. His poems fancifully conjure up the oneiric image of the "golden crucian carp" of the South Screen Mountain on which the Thunder Peak Pagoda stood (JCSZ, pp. 4020–21), but not the pagoda itself. In fact, nowhere in the huge number of works by Su Shi inspired by West Lake is the pagoda mentioned. Either the sight of the pagoda simply did not register with him, or it did not strike him as worthy of mention.<sup>17</sup> Lu You 陸游 (1125–1210) was another of the notable literary figures who visited South Screen Mountain. In his "Note on the South Garden," he mentioned that he did "look left and right" (JCSZ, pp. 4057–58). Still, the Thunder Peak Pagoda was simply not on his horizon. Likewise, Qisong 契嵩 (?–1071), an eminent monk of the Lingyin Monastery 靈隱寺 in the lake area, left a detailed description of an ascent of South Screen Mountain. Upon reaching the mountain top, with its sweeping view of the four quarters, he was overcome with lofty sentiments, but he spent not a drop of ink on the Thunder Peak Pagoda. Not that he was insensitive to landmarks. In fact, he took care to mark and punctuate his itinerary with pavilions. He began his trek with the Cloud-Clearing Pavilion and then passed by the Green-Gathering Pavilion, the Seclusion-Commencing Pavilion, and the White-Cloud Pavilion. He made a point of recording his trip "so that the future generation may admire [him] as a traveller."<sup>18</sup> In so doing, he also left a puzzle. One would imagine that unobtrusive pavilions are likely to be lost in the lush mountain forest. They simply do not compare in prominence with a pagoda on a hilltop. Why did Qisong pay meticulous attention to pavilions at the expense of the Thunder Peak Pagoda, which was no doubt in his visual field? His preference speaks volumes about the kind of values attached to these different architectural sites.

To a traditional Chinese writer, not all architectural sites make a topic. The monumental grandeur of the structure itself has almost nothing to do with this. Typically, the kinds of landmarks that serve as topics for a writer are towers, terraces, kiosks, and pavilions (*lou* 樓, *tai* 臺, *ting* 亭, *ge* 閣)—some for their nostalgic associations with imperial palaces or the vanished glories of remote or bygone eras; others for their open views of distant landscapes, which prompt transcendent aspirations.<sup>19</sup> In other words, landmarks and monuments are deemed worthy of remarking only when they accommodate two major topoi: contemplation of the vanished past (*huaigu* 懷古)



Fig. 11.4 Map of Ten Views of West Lake.

and journey to the lands of the immortals (*youxian* 遊仙), that is, immanent Confucian sentiment and transcendent Daoist yearning. The former may thus encompass a tomb of a martyr-minister or a chaste woman or the ruins of an imperial palace. Compared with these, Buddhist sites attract less profound discursive ruminations. The pagoda, the foremost example of Buddhist architecture, commands conspicuously less writing than a famous imperial consort's tomb. Whenever it does inspire writing, it is only because the pagoda is displaced in the mind of the writer and becomes a "cloud-scaling" tower (*lou*) good for immortal-aspiring thoughts. Even such an eminent monk as Qisong found little to say about the Thunder Peak Pagoda while leaving no stone unturned when it came to pavilions.<sup>20</sup>

The situation of the Leifeng Pagoda improved somewhat in thirteenth century. Some local dilettantes (*haoshizhe* 好事者; literally, "busybodies") divided the scenery of West Lake into ten topics known as "Ten Views of West Lake" (Fig. 11.4),<sup>21</sup> modeled after the popular imaginary topography of "Eight Views" of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers.<sup>22</sup> The "Fishing Village in



Fig. 11.5 Ye Xiaoyan, "Leifeng Pagoda at Sunset." Ink and color on silk. Album leaf from the set *Ten Views of West Lake*, 13th century. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Evening Glow" from the Eight Views of Xiaoxiang became "Thunder Peak in Evening Glow" of West Lake. The Leifengta became the centerpiece of this view (Fig. 11.5) and consequently the topic for eulogies. The writings inspired by the pagoda were, however, rather generic, the kind engendered by any tower or pavilion.

#### *Romancing the Pagoda: From "Ancient Site" to "Aberrant Site"*

In the Jiajing era (1522–66) of the Ming dynasty, there emerged a discursive interest in taking a pagoda on its own terms instead of treating it as a displaced tower. Some time before 1547, a well-known publisher named Hong Pian 洪樸 printed *Stories by Sixty Authors* (*Liushijia xiaoshuo* 六十家小說),<sup>23</sup> a collection of tales drawn largely from the oral storytelling tradition. Included in the collection is "The Story of the Three Pagodas."

Set in West Lake, the story concerns Xi Xuanzan 奚宣贊, a young man of Lin'an, who rescues a young girl named Bai Maonu 白卯奴 who has lost her way and reunites the young girl with her family. Xi meets the young girl's mother, a sensuous woman dressed in white, and the girl's grandmother, who is attired in black. Xi becomes the lover of the woman in white, who customarily kills her previous lover when she takes a new one. The same misfortune would have befallen Xi had it not been for the intervention of the young girl. Eventually a Daoist exorciser exposes the true identity of the three women: the young girl turns out to be a black chicken; the woman in white, a white snake; and the woman in black, an otter. The exorciser raises funds to build three stone pagodas in West Lake. The three monsters are subjugated beneath them. Xi becomes a religious layman.<sup>24</sup> The tale of the Three Pagodas is the oldest surviving story of the White Snake woman involving a pagoda.<sup>25</sup>

The story of a young man's romantic involvement with a snake-turned-woman has a long tradition in Chinese literature.<sup>26</sup> The *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, for instance, devotes four entire *juan* to narratives of human encounters with snakes. One story tells of a young man named Li Huang 李黃 whose erotic encounter with a white snake-turned-beauty ends in his horrible death in a deserted private garden.<sup>27</sup> In the same *juan* of *Taiping guangji*, a group of visitors to Mount Song gather under a pagoda. They kill a snake several *zhang* 丈 long encircling the inner pillar of the pagoda and in due time are struck down by thunder.<sup>28</sup>

For our purposes, what is remarkable about the story of the Three Pagodas is its interest in "ancient sites." It begins by noting the famous sites in the West Lake district: the Hall of Three Worthies, the Temple of Four Sages, the Vestige of Su Dongpo, and the Old Residence of Lin Bu, and so forth. It ends with the building of Three Pagodas to subjugate the three monsters. Moreover, it refers to the location of the Three Pagodas as "an ancient site that has survived up to this day."<sup>29</sup>

The author thus gives a bold new twist to the sense of an "ancient site." Technically, the Three Pagodas indeed qualified as "ancient sites" in the sixteenth century. Back in the late eleventh century, Su Shi, then prefect of Hangzhou, had built three pagodas on the lake, close to the islet near the south shore of West Lake, as territorial and boundary markers to control private farming activities on the lake. The site became one of the Ten Views



Fig. 11.6 Ye Xiaoyan, "Three Stupas Reflecting Moonlight." Ink and color on silk. Album leaf from the set *Ten View of West Lake*. 13th century. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

of West Lake in the thirteenth century (Fig. 11.6). In the late fifteenth century, the greed and corruption of monks of the Buddhist monastery on the nearby islet enraged Yin Zishu 陰子淑, a government inspector known for his strict and bold administrative decisions. Yin ordered the monastery and pagodas "instantly destroyed." So when "The Story of the Three Pagodas" was published, the Three Pagodas were either nonexistent or in ruins, since they were not rebuilt until 1611.<sup>30</sup> In either case, they were "ancient sites" (*guji* 古蹟).

Curiously, although any "traces" (*ji*) of Su Dongpo's activities are usually diligently catalogued and often invented,<sup>31</sup> the site of the Three Pagodas, which are unquestionably associated with him, was not accorded the prestigious designation "ancient site." For one thing, in the sixteenth century the criteria for the "ancient" or "archaic" (*gu*) were quite strict. Nothing short of Han prose and High Tang poetry qualified as "ancient." A site associated with a Song figure, despite his fame, was consequently not "ancient."

The location, however, acquired the august appellation "ancient site" in conjunction with a high tale of the demonic. This odd association reflects an inner tension of the period. The archaizing taste that put a premium on the literary standards of the Han and High Tang still dominated the first half of the sixteenth century. At the same time, a new interest in the contemporary "racy words from the streets," or folkloric ballads and tales, began to gather momentum. Open-minded scholars, such as Li Kaixian 李開先 (1502–68), were making a strong case for romance (*chuanqi* 傳奇) and other popular forms of folkloric literature.<sup>32</sup> Even Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1473–1530), the most prominent proponent of archaism and a major force in shaping antiquarian taste, conceded late in his life that "nowadays, authentic poetry comes in fact from folkloric sources."<sup>33</sup> The association of the snake-woman story with a physical location labeled an "ancient site" therefore either reconciles the two competing impulses or legitimizes the burgeoning interest in folkloric literature.

Nor is it entirely surprising that a tale of the demonic such as the White Snake should be sited in a pagoda. In the mid-sixteenth century when the tale of the White Snake was taking shape in printed and stage versions, several pagodas were likely candidates to become the setting of the tale. Quite a few sites of pagodas in the lake area were associated with snake lore. The pagoda on the Southern Peak, also built under Qian Hongchu in the tenth century, stood close to Bowl Pond (Boyutan 鉢盂潭), a name that prompts an association with the bowl used by the monk Fahai 法海 to contain the white snake, as described in a story in Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574–1645) collection (see below). Beside the pond is White Dragon Cave. A huge boulder nearby is allegedly the altar where a Daoist once pacified a monster.<sup>34</sup> The Baoshu Pagoda 保叔塔 on the Northern Mountain across the lake was also built in the tenth century. Toward the end of fifteenth century, a thunderbolt killed three itinerant monks inside the pagoda together with a "huge snake which weighed fifty pounds. In its belly were ten or so white embryos." Soon after, the pagoda collapsed into ruins.<sup>35</sup>

At some point the ruins of the Three Pagodas and, across from them on the south shore, the Leifeng Pagoda became the setting of the story in printed versions. It appears that in the mid-sixteenth century, the story was not yet linked to a specific pagoda. In his topographic account of West Lake, Tian Rucheng 田汝成 (*jinsshi* 1526) recorded a "popular saying" that the White Snake and Green Fish, two monsters from the lake, were imprisoned



beneath the Leifeng Pagoda.<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, he told a story of a young man named Xu Jingchun 徐景春 who has an amorous encounter on the lake with a beautiful woman attended by a maid. After a night of dalliance, the woman gives the man a "double-fish fan" as a souvenir. The man wakes up near the woman's grave.<sup>37</sup> The narrative resonates with the White Snake story in its cast and relationships, although it has no pagoda. Tian also noted, in a separate context, that the *taozhen* 陶真 performers of the lake area told stories set in the Southern Song (*taozhen* were a kind of *chantefable*, or "sing-speak," popular in the lower Yangzi region). Their repertoire included the tales of the Double-Fish Fan and the Leifeng Pagoda, which were treated as two separate stories. In the meantime, the White Snake lore was increasingly wedded to the Leifeng Pagoda. Surviving librettos of stage plays, with prefaces dated in the 1530s, include such titles as "Madame White Clapsed Under the Leifeng Pagoda for Eternity."<sup>38</sup>

The Leifeng Pagoda had its share of snake lore, an association that may have prepared the way for its linkage with the White Snake story. During the late Northern Song, the pagoda was damaged in warfare between the imperial army and peasant insurgents. The affiliated monastery was destroyed, leaving the pagoda alone "standing dilapidated" amid brambles. Around 1130, a Southern Song construction force decided to pull down the pagoda to use its materials to fortify the city walls of Hangzhou against the northern Jurchen invaders. "Suddenly," according to a twelfth-century record, "a huge python appeared, encircling the foundation [of the pagoda]. . . . The numinous site (*lingji* 靈蹟) has thus manifested itself." The curious happening stopped the demolition and led to the restoration of the pagoda later in the twelfth century.<sup>39</sup>

An incident in the mid-sixteenth century may have strengthened the association between the Leifeng Pagoda and the White Snake. In 1553, pirates and bandits harassed the coastal region, including the lake district.<sup>40</sup> A rogue army of 3,000 troops turned the monastery into their barracks, sending monks in flight, "scurrying like rats." The soldiers ruined the landscape: "All the bamboos were razed" (JCSZ, 4042a). During this period of military chaos, a fire broke out in the pagoda. It burned away all the wooded eaves and interior stairways and left the pagoda an "empty shell," a colossal ruin with rampant plants growing from its brick eaves (Fig. 11.7).<sup>41</sup> Before the fire, the exquisite architectural structure had evoked, by virtue of its association



Fig. 11.7 Leifeng Pagoda in ruins. 1920s. After Tokiwa Daijō, *Shina bukkyō shiseki hyōkai* (Buddhist monuments in China) (Tokyo: Bukkyō shiseki kenkyūkai, 1931), vol. 5, pl. 55.

with a Buddhist monastery, a kind of Chan tranquility that fulfilled people's expectations of a landscape vista. The fire fundamentally changed the character of the pagoda and gave it a desolate mood. The ruin may have spawned fantasies about the demonic and may have made its association with the White Snake lore all the more compelling. In the Wanli years (1573–1620), the tale circulated that "the Buddhist master contains the White Snake in a bowl and clasps it under the Leifeng Pagoda. Tradition has it that underneath the Leifeng Pagoda are two snakes, one green and one white."<sup>42</sup>

Certainly by the early seventeenth century, the link between the White Snake and the Leifeng Pagoda was cemented. Yu Chunxi 虞淳熙 (?–1621) noted in the 1609 edition of the *Qiantang County Gazetteer*:

According to a popular saying, the Leifeng Pagoda serves to subjugate the monsters White Snake and Green Fish. People, old and young, keep telling the story to one another. During the Jiajing period, the pagoda belched smoke that spiraled up into the sky. They said it was the two monsters spouting venom. A closer look revealed that it was only swarms of insects. The romance (*chuanqi*) is indeed false.<sup>43</sup>

Yu also wrote a poem on the Leifeng Pagoda, which ends with the line "The serpentine monster traverses the stone blocks."<sup>44</sup>

The definitive touch comes from the short story "Madame White Eternally Subjugated Under the Leifeng Pagoda," which is included in Feng Menglong's *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (1624). This narrative version is not only the earliest surviving comprehensive account of the subject,<sup>45</sup> but it also solidified the Leifeng Pagoda's position as the topographic locus for the story:

[Having turned Madame White and her maid into their original form of a snake and a fish], the venerable monk picked up the two tame creatures with his hand and dropped them into the begging bowl. He then tore off a length of his robe and sealed the top of the bowl with it. Carrying the bowl with him and depositing it on the ground before Thunder Peak Monastery, he ordered men to move bricks and stones so as to erect a pagoda to encase the bowl and keep it inviolate. Afterward Xu Xuan went about collecting subscriptions, and the pagoda eventually became a seven-tiered structure, so solid and enduring that, for thousands of years to come, the White Snake and Green Fish would be prevented from afflicting the world. When the venerable monk had subjugated these evil spirits and consigned them to the pagoda, he composed a chant of four lines:

When the West Lake is drained of its water  
And rivers and ponds are dried up,  
When Thunder Peak Pagoda crumbles,  
The White Snake shall again roam the earth.<sup>46</sup>

All subsequent narrative versions and dramatic adaptations of the story end with this scene. The pagoda site thus truly becomes a topos, a common place (hence a commonplace) that admits a concentrated topical thinking and invention, a foundation or a scaffolding on which fiction and drama could be built.

This is indeed what happened later. One of the major theatrical adaptations after the seventeenth-century short story was Huang Tubi's 黃圖璵 1738 stage play *The Leifeng Pagoda*. In Huang's play, the construction of the Leifeng Pagoda becomes the structural framework: the play both begins

and ends with it. In the opening scene, the Buddha anticipates the romance involving the White Snake and instructs Fahai to build a seven-story pagoda after the model the Buddha gives to him so that the "two monsters" can be subjugated under it for eternity. The play ends exactly as the opening anticipated.<sup>47</sup>

Nearly contemporary to Huang's adaptation is a script allegedly by a famous actor named Chen Jiayan 陳嘉言 and his daughter, a version that is staged more often. It survives in later copies and is still performed today.<sup>48</sup> In 1771, based on this version, Fang Chengpei 方成培 readapted the tale for the theater. Not only did Fang retain the title *The Leifeng Pagoda* and continue to use the pagoda construction as the structural framing device, but the pagoda looms even larger in his theatrical universe. Before the snake woman is subjugated and imprisoned under the pagoda, she gives birth to a child who grows up to succeed in the official examination system.<sup>49</sup> No longer is the final pagoda scene purely an act of subjugation. In an emotionally wrenching scene, the son pays a visit to his entombed mother and seeks her release. The pagoda, in fact, has become a prison. Obeying the traditional imperative of happy ending, the Buddha releases the snake woman and arranges for her and her husband to ascend to the Tushita Heaven.

By this point, the Leifeng Pagoda had become more than a mere setting and framing device; it is now truly a topos that can generate further narrative and dramatic possibilities. To intensify the emotional resonance of the play at its close, the playwright directs the audience's attention not to the characters in the play but to the pagoda itself. One of the Buddha's attendants suggests that the pagoda be destroyed. No, says the Buddha, it ought to be left for the posterity to look up to. The play thus ends first with the invitation: "Why not turn to West Lake and take a look at the soaring pagoda in evening glow?" This is followed by a poetic pastiche of eight lines, each taken from a Tang poet, celebrating the grandeur of the pagoda and the moral of the play. The pastiche thematizes the working of a topos: a pagoda is but a topic under which one can gather textual bits as building blocks to make a "soaring pagoda." To elaborate on the play is to build on the architectonic topos of the Leifeng Pagoda. It comes as no surprise that many subsequent playwrights seized on the pagoda scene to create dramatic situations. With the evocative pagoda as a locus and a cue, endless inventions and variations on the same theme become possible. In one Suzhou *tanci* 彈詞 (a story-telling performance to the accompaniment of string instruments), for in-



stance, the snake woman gives birth to a child right inside the pagoda.<sup>50</sup> The pagoda is where the drama is.

The evocative power of the Leifeng Pagoda as a topos derives not so much from its architectural monumentality as from its efficacy as a haunted ruin that puts people in touch with the strange and the otherworldly. The generic associations of a ruin constitute a sufficient cue for writers to elaborate on the topos. The libretto of a popular storytelling performance (*zidishu* 子弟書) on the Leifeng Pagoda paints a chilling word picture:

The pagoda top soars into the sky. In the morning and evening views, it blocks out the sun and the moon. It metamorphoses into unpredictable moods with cloud and smoke, varying with the sun and rain. . . . The bleak sight is certainly saddening. The melancholy cloud hovers closely around the pagoda top. Dark vapors surround its base. Mournful winds from the four quarters rattle the bronze bells; drizzles chill the green tiles of the thirteen stories. Strange birds on top of the pagoda crow dolefully as if decrying an injustice. . . . And this is the sight of the Leifeng Pagoda at sunset. What a strange view!<sup>51</sup>

Accuracy counts for little here; the Leifeng Pagoda has never been thirteen-story high, nor did it ever have green tiles. Either the writer had never seen the Leifeng Pagoda in person or he thought the empirical facts about the *real* Leifeng Pagoda irrelevant. For him and his audience, the Leifeng Pagoda was a topos to which one attaches words and situations. Whereas Huang Tubi, the author of the 1738 version of *Leifeng Pagoda*, was apologetic about the liberties he took with the Leifeng Pagoda and worried that they may have tarnished the reputation of the "thousand-year-old famous site," Fang Chengpei, the playwright of the 1771 version, was unrepentant about his project of "transforming the stinking decay into a miraculous wonder and alloying gold out of the debris of a ruin." In a preface to the play, Fang noted: "This pagoda, otherwise known as Huangfei Pagoda, was built by an imperial consort of the Wu-Yue kingdom. . . . It was ruined by fire during the Jiajing period. Whether the matter of the Buddhist master of Song subjugating the White Snake is true or not is simply irrelevant."<sup>52</sup> The pagoda is, as the closing lines of Huang's play would have it, "the site for visitors in the next thousand years to come to admire and sigh; it is what is left for the Buddhist community to perpetuate tales." Moreover, it is not just any ordinary topos, but one that allows posterity "to talk about sprites and spirits unlike humans, [a site where] a familiar situation may be transformed

into an extraordinary scenario."<sup>53</sup> In other words, it is a topos for the supernatural and strange.

The *Story of the Three Pagodas*, the earliest surviving printed version of the White Snake story, is reticent about the demonic nature of the pagoda site where the subjugation of the monsters takes place. It chooses to veil it with the phrase "an ancient site and surviving trace" (*guji yizong* 古籍遺蹤).<sup>54</sup> By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such reticence was no longer necessary. The site of the Leifeng Pagoda was recognized as the "aberrant site" (*guaiji* 怪蹟).<sup>55</sup> Mo Langzi 墨浪子, a southern writer of the Kangxi period (1662–1722), cast his stories in a purely topographic framework. Each of the sixteen stories published in his *Wonderful Tales of West Lake: Sites Ancient and Modern* (*Xihu jiahua gujin yiji* 西湖佳話古今遺跡) is attached to a specific "site" (*ji*). Moreover, each is characterized as a particular kind of site: an "immortal's site," an "administrative site," a "man of talent's site," a "poetic site," a "dream site," a "drunken site," a "laughing site," a "romantic site," an "imperial site," a "regretting site," and so on. The Leifeng Pagoda is the "aberrant site" (*guaiji*), and Mo made a point of defending the "aberrant":

I used to bear in mind Confucius' dictum that one ought not to speak of the aberrant. Hence I considered it trifling to bother with devious actions and matters that border on absurdity and would leave them aside. But, given the immensity of the universe, is there anything that does not happen? Absurdities are indeed not worth accounting for, but what if a matter can be traced [to its origin] and its site still survives? Take, for example, the Leifeng Pagoda prominent on West Lake. Researching its origin, one finds that it was built to subjugate monsters. It has survived up to this day. The Leifeng Pagoda in Evening Glow has become one of the Ten Views of West Lake. The aberrant has been normalized. The tombs of royal martyrs and hills of immortals have received detailed narration and provided pleasurable viewing for thousands of years. Why should the matters that are at once aberrant and normal be a taboo? Why can't they lend themselves to a delightful hearing?

He ends his story with the advice: "Those who admire the Leifeng [Pagoda] should visit the site and mull over the aberrant happenings (*guaiishi*) associated with it."<sup>56</sup>

Here Mo Langzi takes on the Confucian bias against "the aberrant, the violent, the spiritual, and the strange." The traditional moral taxonomy underlying canonical "sites," such as Confucian virtues of loyalty and the Daoist ideal of immortality, is found to be wanting. New categories of "sites" are

needed, such as the "aberrant sites," if only to revise our rigid classification system and expand our cognitive horizon, "given the immensity of the universe." Strategically, Mo Langzi tries to make his case by blurring the line between the aberrant and the normal. The force of his argument for the "aberrant sites" lies in its subversion of traditional value systems. It is not that the aberrant sites have virtues in themselves; rather, there is something fundamentally wrong with their banishment from the cultural and moral topography. Mo Langzi's sixteen kinds of sites are a new cognitive mapping that reconstitutes cultural topography; the "aberrant site" is one of the new features.

The recognition of the aberrant sites had been anticipated at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In 1609, Yang Erzeng 楊爾曾, also known as the Dream-Traveling Daoist of Qiantang (Qiantang woyou daoren 錢塘卧遊道人), compiled and published the *Strange Views Within the [Four] Seas* (Hainei qiguan 海內奇觀). According to Yang, he was motivated by a desire to educate the armchair traveler: "There are metamorphoses of clouds, fogs, winds, and thunders under the blue sky and the bright sun; there are strange and weird people, creatures, and plants in the sandy region of the Ganges River. The mountains and rivers yonder are truly quaint and unpredictable. . . . [I] have therefore marked them out to show what one's eyes and ears cannot reach."<sup>57</sup> The book includes a woodblock print of the "Leifeng Pagoda at Sunset," presumably as a specimen of "the truly quaint and unpredictable." Two young scholars, accompanied by an old rustic, stand at the foot of the pagoda and look up, apparently riveted by the spectacle of this ruined pagoda. Behind the scholars, two attendant boys are busy laying out inkstones and other instruments so that their masters can write down their thoughts on the spot (Fig. 11.8). The print visually makes a case for the pagoda as a topos: visit to the site occasions writing about it.

Yang Erzeng matches the print with a poem on the same subject by Mo Fan, 莫璠, a mid-Ming writer (Fig. 11.9):

The setting sun bathes the ancient pagoda in ever-dimming red,  
The shadows of mulberries and elms half-shroud the houses along  
the western shore.  
The reflection of the evening glow lingers on the waves like  
washed brocade,  
This Buddhist kingdom amid a cloud of flowers is no mundane realm.  
Ten miles of pleasure boats nearly all beached on the shore,



Fig. 11.8 Chen Yiguan, "Leifeng Pagoda in Evening Glow." Carving by Wang Zhongxing of Xin'an. In *Strange Views of the World* (Hainei qiguan), 1609, comp. Yang Erzeng. After *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan erbian* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 8: 269.

The lake reverberates with the chants of fishermen and water  
chestnut gatherers, a landscape apart.  
In a lakeshore pavilion, a person waits for the moon to rise,  
Red curtains rolled up, the railings await the return of the visitor.<sup>58</sup>

There is a glaring disjuncture between the print and the poem attached to it. The poem, written before the fire reduced the pagoda to a ruin, rhapsodizes about the celestial splendor of the edifice and the idyllic landscape surround-

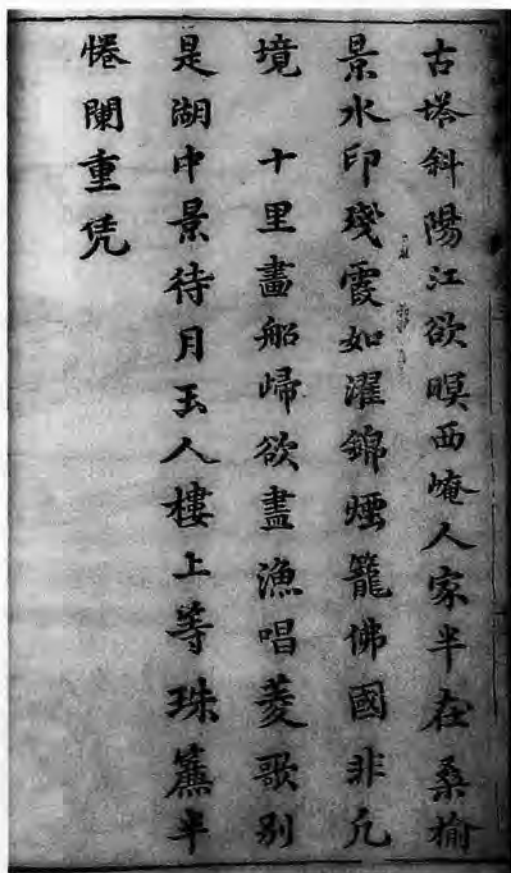


Fig. 11.9 Mo Fan (16th c.), "Leifeng Pagoda in Evening Glow." In *Strange Views of the World*, 1609, comp. Yang Erzeng. After *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan erbian* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 8: 269.

ing it; the print, made half a century after the fire, frankly presents the bizarre, fire-damaged pagoda as a curious sight. The print is more consistent with Yang's professed interest in the strange as articulated in his preface rather than the mellow poem anachronistically yoked to it. The disjuncture may have resulted from the compiler's intent to legitimize the newfound interest in the strange by a touch of elegance. It makes the indulgence in the strange sight as displayed in the print all the more an illicit pleasure.

### An Alternative Topos: The Supernatural Naturalized

The strained yoking in *Strange Views* of the woodblock print of a strange sight with a poem praising serenity betrays an anxiety about the legitimacy of the strange.<sup>59</sup> The same kind of inner tension is also discernible in Huang Tubi's play. Once "a gigantic pagoda" is set on the stage, as we read from the script, the monk Fahai exclaims: "What a treasure pagoda!" He then sings:

[I shall] embrace the white cloud and green hill and fill them in  
the void of the pagoda.  
The spirits' craftsmanship and demons' axes make it a model of  
extraordinary shape.  
They are indeed a splendor of gold and blue hues.  
From now on, among the Six Bridges and Ten Ponds,  
The Leifeng Pagoda ranks as the top one.  
It occasions poems with staying resonances.  
It spawns paintings of a vast serenity and cool mood.<sup>60</sup>

The otherwise demonic White Snake and Green Fish are poeticized into innocuous "white cloud and green hill." The unruly supernatural intimation of ghosts and spirits is displaced into a supernatural force harnessed for construction of the pagoda, a trope often deployed in praising an architectural splendor. Moreover, the poems and pictures generated from this architectural topos are just one of those landscape pieces.

The Leifeng Pagoda indeed constitutes a topos of the strange, yet its strangeness ranges from the eerily supernatural and darkly demonic to the blithely transcendent. At one end of the spectrum is the bleak vision of the pagoda shrouded in "dark vapors" and "melancholy clouds," with strange birds perched on its chilling "green tiles" "crowing dolefully" in the "mournful wind."<sup>61</sup> At the other end is the pastoral serenity of "white cloud and green hill," endowed with a touch of otherworldliness. Working with the same topos of the strange localized in the Leifeng Pagoda, dramatists and novelists, closer to folkloric culture, are more likely to toy with the dark force of the unruly monsters and spirits; the elite, on the other hand, tend to naturalize the supernatural, harmonize the disruptive, and use this topos, an intimation of the otherworldliness, to express eremitic aspirations.

Li Liufang 李流芳 (1575–1629), a literati-painter who frequented West Lake, is most responsible for propagating a transcendent topos out of the co-



lossal ruin of the Leifeng Pagoda. In a colophon on his *Leifeng Pagoda in Twilight*, Li wrote:

My friend [Wen] Zijiang once said: "Of the two pagodas on the lake, the Leifeng Pagoda is like an old monk; the Baoshu Pagoda [across the lake] a female beauty." I really like this line. In 1611, while viewing lotus flowers in the pond with Fang Hui, I composed a poem: "The Leifeng Pagoda leans against the sky like a drunken old man." [Yan] Yinchu saw it and jumped to his feet, exclaiming that Zijiang's "old monk" is not as good as my "drunken old man" in capturing the mood and mannerism of the pagoda. I used to live in a pavilion on a hill overlooking the lake. Morning and evening, I faced the Leifeng [Pagoda]. There he is—a sagging old man hunched amid the mountains shrouded in twilight and violet vapor. The sight intoxicated me. I closed my poem with the line: "This old man is as poised and aloof like clouds and water." I did base myself on Zijiang's "old man" trope. Written after getting drunk in the Tenth Moon of 1613.<sup>62</sup>

Much of this mood is captured in his painting of an old monk (Fig. 11.10).

Li Liufang earned his *juren* degree in 1606. The failure of his subsequent attempts at the advanced degree crushed any hopes he may have had of an official career. Frustrated, he settled for earning a living by tutoring and selling his writings. He took to drink to escape from financial embarrassments, severe illness, and the bleak late Ming political landscape.<sup>63</sup> The images of the monk and a drunken old man he and his friend projected onto the Leifeng Pagoda are very much self-portraits: a convention-defying tipsy monk who rises above the world and plays his own games. Li curbed the mutinous energy of the image by qualifying the otherwise crazy monk with a mellowing old age and a "sensibility as placid as the mist and water," that is, anything but melodramatic, too old and exhausted to be swashbuckling despite inebriation. The Leifeng Pagoda plays right into Li's emotional needs. Decrepit and strange, it nevertheless stands still.

The characterization of the pagoda as a drooping old drunkard or a monk proved to be an infectious topos that attracted a massive following. Even a fiercely imaginative writer such as Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1679) seems never to have got enough of this topos. Four poems in his *Tracing West Lake in a Dream* are devoted to it:

Master Wen portrays the Leifeng Pagoda—  
An old monk with his robe hanging there.  
He watches West Lake day and night,  
and never has enough of it in all his life.



Fig. 11.10 Li Liufang (1575–1629), "Monk Under a Tree." Ink on paper. Album leaf from *Landscapes and Flowers*. Shanghai Museum. After *Zhongguo meishu quanji huibian Mingdai huibian*, ed. Yang Han et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1988), 8: 99, pl. 92.4.

Fragrant breezes come, every now and then,  
West Lake is a couch for drunkards.  
There he is, standing upside down, the old drunken man,  
In one breath, he gulps down the entire lake and all.<sup>64</sup>  
The bleak and desolate Leifeng [Pagoda]  
How can it stand the sunset at all?  
Its body is all smoke and vapor,  
Like an old man who lifts his long beards and howls.<sup>65</sup>

Elsewhere, he wrote about the "Leifeng Pagoda at Sunset" as one of the "Ten Views":

The crumbling pagoda borders on the lake shore,  
A sagging drunken old fool.  
Extraordinary sentiment resides in the rubble,  
Why should the humans meddle with it at all?<sup>66</sup>

The trope of the Leifeng Pagoda as a drunken old monk is richly suggestive and apt for disgruntled literati. Its "strange" and freakish overtones serve as a canvas for the projections of their disenchantment with worldly affairs and their aloofness and withdrawal from them; at the same time, the image is mellow enough to keep them free of any suspicion of strident excess and dark and demonic riotousness, examples of bad taste and lack of elegance to be studiously avoided. Hence few of the literati who visited the Leifeng Pagoda were inclined to evoke the White Snake even though they were thoroughly familiar with the lore. The old drunkard or old monk suited their taste better. They could live with, and relate to, the sedate, sagging old-man-like pagoda ruins, but not the monstrosity, hailing from the theatrical universe, that haunts it.

This is best demonstrated by the Qianlong emperor's response to the pagoda site. Between 1751 and 1784, Qianlong made six tours of inspection to south China. Each time, the itinerary included West Lake, including the Leifeng Pagoda site. To entertain the emperor during his long boat trip, salt merchants recruited a group of celebrated actors and commissioned a new adaptation of the *Leifeng Pagoda*, which resulted in Fang Chengpei's *Romance of the Leifeng Pagoda* (1771). A stage was then constructed on two boats that preceded the emperor's boat, facing the emperor. Qianlong was thus able to watch the play on his way to its real site. He thoroughly enjoyed it.<sup>67</sup> His visits to the Leifeng Pagoda led to a total of eight poems, six on the view of the pagoda at sunset and two on the pagoda itself. The drama of the White Snake woman must have been fresh in his mind when he composed these poems. Yet none mentions it. Two themes run through his poems: a eulogy of the sunset view, and a lament over the "ancient site" that tells of the "rise and decline" of an imperial cause. In other words, Qianlong was just churning out poems that utilized two time-honored topoi associated with famous scenic sites and ruins. Had Qianlong written the poems in his study, he might have been under less pressure and turned out something better than these run-of-the-mill literary exercises. The palpable immediacy of the ruins must have made him realize the inadequacy of the topoi he used to measure up to the striking spectacle of the real. The supernatural riot conjured up on the stage, to which he had been freshly exposed, must have tempted him. Yet long ingrained in the traditional literati culture, Qianlong did not have the boldness to play with the themes provided by the

dramatists. At one point, he nearly did: "[The pagoda site] demonstrates that all appearances (*se* 色) are emptiness (*kong* 空), such as this one."<sup>68</sup> The interplay between appearances and emptiness is a commonplace and is the refrain chanted as the moral at the close of the *Leifeng Pagoda*. The shadow of the snake woman apparently lurks behind the line, yet Qianlong reverted to the less disquieting images of "the pristine moonlight shadows" spreading up "lattice windows." The colossal ruin strained this old lyrical topos, and Qianlong resorted to conventions of the *huaigu* (contemplating the ancient), treating the ruin literally as an ancient site of the Wu-Yue imperial cause. This is a bungling effort nonetheless. It is generically unconventional to seize on a pagoda ruin as a vestige of an imperial cause,<sup>69</sup> and very few Chinese literati have considered the Leifeng site fitting for *huaigu*, for the inept Wu-Yue kingdom had never been seen as worthy of lamentation: one sighs only for those causes that follow periods of rise, those whose fall is all the more emotionally and cognitively unsettling.

The same site struck an Englishman in a different way. On November 14, 1794, Lord Macartney, the English ambassador to Qianlong's court, "travelled in a palanquin . . . in passing through the city" of Hangzhou. The entire West Lake struck him as "very beautiful," yet only one feature, one single landmark, leaped out and found its way onto his diary: the Leifeng Pagoda:

On one side of the lake is a pagoda in ruins, which forms a remarkable fine object. It is octagonal, built of fine hewn stone, red and yellow, of four entire stories besides the top, which was moldering away from age. Very large trees were growing out of the cornices. It was about two hundred feet high. It is called the Tower of the Thundering Winds, to whom it would seem to have been dedicated, and is supposed to be two thousand five years old.<sup>70</sup>

It is no surprise that the pagoda ruin should appeal to the taste of the British Ambassador, whose sensibility had been finetuned by the contemporary English preoccupation with moss-grown ruins with their Gothic overtones.<sup>71</sup> The Chinese emperor, however, would not take the ruin on its own terms and see it as it is; he preferred what it once was. In his poems, he insisted that one should not let the present lamentable sight of the pagoda ruin tarnish its former splendor. This discomfort with the ruinous pagoda is reflected in a painting, originally by Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1768) and then copied by Ji Ruinan 輯瑞南, depicting Qianlong's tour of the lake, with the Leifeng Pagoda in the background. Despite the documentary

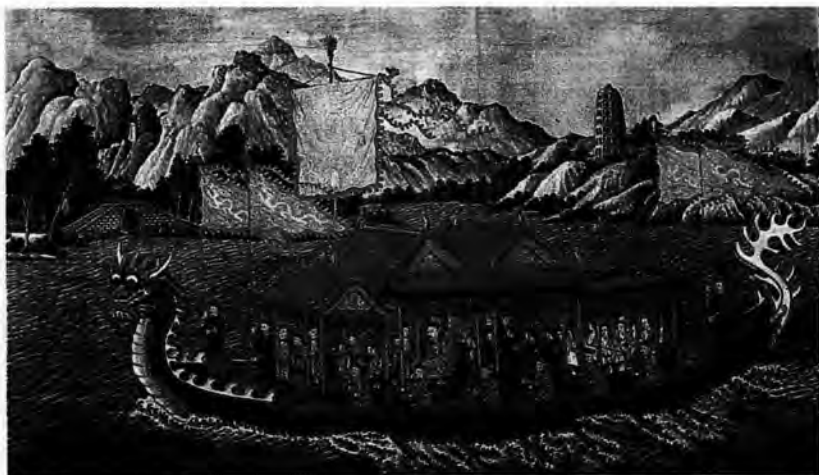


Fig. 11.11 Ji Ruinan, *Emperor Qianlong's Tour of West Lake*. Ink and color on silk. 18th century. Copy after Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1768). Private collection.

orientation of the painting, the painter restored the pagoda to its imagined pre-fire condition (Fig. 11.11). Contemporary prints from the Suzhou area betray a similar attitude toward the pagoda.<sup>72</sup> The compositions show a tendency to minimize the role of the Leifeng Pagoda in the sunset view. One, entitled *Leifeng in Evening Glow* (Fig. 11.12), combines the picture with a poem, inscribed above the composition. The poem was originally written by Yin Tinggao 尹廷高, a thirteenth-century poet, who described the Leifeng Pagoda before the fire:

The mist-shrouded mountains are blurred in the hazy light,  
The thousand-yard tall pagoda alone leans against the sky.  
The pleasure boats have all but turned ashore,  
Leaving the lonely hill to retain a piece of the sunset red.<sup>73</sup>

The choice of this poem as the inscription suggests a quixotic clinging to the past. The print designer was probably embarrassed by the present state of the pagoda. In the picture, the shabby pagoda is downscaled in the distance, even though this runs the risk of undermining the inscribed poem that celebrates "the thousand-yard tall pagoda alone lean[ing] against the sky." The central position usually occupied by the pagoda is here ceded to a bell tower, premised perhaps on the idea that the reverberating bell in the evening air may still retain the old mood of sunset-bathed Leifeng. The discrepancy



Fig. 11.12 Anonymous, *Leifeng in Evening Glow* [poem by Yin Tinggao (13th c.)]. 341 x 266. Woodblock print from Suzhou. 18th century. Tenri University Library, Japan. After Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan, comp., *Chūgoku no yōfūga ten: Minmatsu kara Shin jidai no kaiga, hanga, sashiebon* (Tokyo: Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan, 1995), p. 379, pl. 108.

between the thirteenth-century lyrical vision of the sunset pagoda and the pictorial diminishing of its eighteenth-century remnant demonstrates all too clearly a commonly shared sense of embarrassment, if not dismissal, toward this fire-ravaged monstrosity.

Another Suzhou print of identical style compresses six of the Ten Views into one coherent vista. Although the view of the Leifeng Hill in Evening Glow apparently occupies the high prominence, the print omits the pagoda altogether; in a stroke of visual ingenuity, there is instead an open pavilion sheltering a stele on which is inscribed "[Leifeng xizhao," Leifeng in Evening





Fig. 11.13 *Leifeng in Evening Glow*. 344 × 523. Woodblock print from Suzhou. 18th century. Kyoto, private collection. After Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan, comp., *Chūgoku no yōfuga ten: Minmatsu kara Shin jidai no kaiga, hanga, sashiebon* (Tokyo: Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan, 1995), p. 393, pl. 121.

Glow. Long shadows are cast over the water surface toward the east, thereby reinforcing the idea of a sunset view (Fig. 11.13). Every poem that eulogizes Leifeng in Evening Glow associates it with the pagoda. In fact, the pagoda is the view: "Each time the sun sets in the west," writes the author of the *West Lake Gazetteer*, "the soaring pagoda casts its long shadow; this view (*jing*) is unsurpassed."<sup>74</sup> Now, it can be dispensed with, only because it could be an embarrassment to those seeking the picture-perfect view, and their notion of what constitutes a perfect picture and a good view cannot accommodate a monstrosity. The pagoda in its fire-stripped decrepitude makes a mockery of all that is traditionally deemed lyrical, pictorial qualities that make a landscape a "view."

To the eighteenth-century emperor and many of his contemporaries, the White Snake lore associated with the Leifeng Pagoda was a monstrosity to be confined to the world of make-believe on the stage; it was unthinkable in relation to the real physical colossus. Yet the stirring demonic matter that roils the stage cannot but cast its shadow over the eerie ruin and turn it into a monstrosity of sorts. Even freed from the association with the tale of the demonic, the pagoda ruin is itself a monstrosity in another sense: it strains

the traditional literati's entrenched cognitive stock of tropes and topoi, none of which is adequate to this moldering colossus. That would have to await the arrival of a more modern age, able to take it up unflinchingly, completely on its own terms.

### *Xu Zhimo, Leifeng Pagoda, and the Modernist Topos*

At 1:40 P.M. on September 25, 1924, the quiet of West Lake was disturbed by the sudden collapse of the Leifeng Pagoda, which raised a soaring dust column that "blocked out the sun" and sent clouds of crows and sparrows swarming the sky. It was quite a while before the dust settled. The seven-story edifice was reduced to a mammoth heap of rubble, and only one story remained standing. Soon, the site drew tens and thousands of spectators who combed the ruin for artifacts. Police were called in, and a protective wall was built to keep looters out. Half a month later, some soldiers, allegedly commissioned by a certain Mr. Ju in Beijing, broke in and took away copies of the sūtras inside brick tiles. That opened the floodgates. They were followed, some twenty or so days later, by a thousand soldiers who destroyed and plundered what remained. Local peasants followed suit. What was left of the Leifeng Pagoda was "a heap of yellow earth."<sup>75</sup>

The crumbling of the pagoda sent a shockwave throughout China and became an absorbing topic of conversations, inquiries, ruminations, and spasms of hand-wringing. For some, the collapse of the pagoda brought an epistemological crisis. It suddenly dawned on people that even the natural scheme of things was subjected to change and decline. For all its arbitrariness as a cultural construct, the Ten Views of West Lake—of which Leifeng in Evening Glow was one—had since the thirteenth century been fossilized into a natural given and presumed to be impervious to change and decay. Now with the tenfold vista suddenly incomplete, the "natural" landscape seemed to be dented. This realization "jolted many out of the slumber" that had sustained a dream of "completeness."<sup>76</sup> For others, the collapse of the pagoda was an academic topic, for it yielded unexpected archeological treasures. The number of sūtras recovered from the ruin was second only to those discovered at Dunhuang two decades earlier. That these woodblock-printed sūtras were produced only a century after the invention of woodblock printing highlighted the significance of the discovery.<sup>77</sup> The finding galvanized intense research by distinguished scholars such as Wang Guowei 王國維 and others.<sup>78</sup> To still others, not surprisingly, the collapse was a

topic for elegy and spawned a renewed round of nostalgic outpouring in the form of poetry and painting. One painter-poet spoke of his heart "being pounded"; to his sensitive ears, the reverberating evening bell was "choking with tears."<sup>79</sup>

Radical intellectuals, however, reveled in the news of the collapse of the structure, for they saw a larger significance in it beyond the mere crumbling of the pagoda itself. The timing of the collapse was apocalyptically pointed: it occurred at the juncture when China was caught between an imperial past that had just recently ended and an uncertain future of possibilities. Awareness of the temporal disjuncture and anxiety about the transition from the old to the new intensified the perceptions of old buildings and ruins to which the weight of the past was attached. Zhou Zuoren 周作人, still a radical thinker at this time, argued in 1922 that nostalgia for the past was not a good reason for conserving ancient ruins. For him, ruins and historical sites should be landmarks that point to the future instead of the past. The modern travesty of ancient sites, such as Zhejiang cloth merchants' "vulgarizing" cosmetic touches to the Orchid Pavilion, repelled him. Zhou would rather see the "original fragmented vestige of dignity."<sup>80</sup>

Corresponding to the preoccupation with physical ruins were ruins as topoi in discourse. Metaphors of architecture and ruins often framed contentious arguments over the fate of Chinese culture, couched in the stark opposition between the old and the new, past and future, and oppression and liberation. In addressing the tension between traditional China and the modern West, Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 proposed a three-way scheme. He framed it by way of a central architectural metaphor: "a dilapidated house." The three major civilizations—China, India, and the West—he argues, would harbor different attitudes toward it. The Western response would be to demolish it and build a new one; the Chinese answer would be to repair it with care; and the Indian attitude, rooted in Buddhist quietism, would be to renounce the desire for housing altogether.<sup>81</sup> Embedded in this rhetoric is a preoccupation with the dialectics of destruction and construction.<sup>82</sup> The ruin topos played into this purpose with renewed relevance. The traditional Chinese meditation on ruins is an understated recollection in tranquility of a past event, at times traumatic. It is premised on a poignant resignation toward the leveling effect of the passage of time, which neutralizes and distances the drama of history, and on a recognition of the permanence of nature, which eclipses all dynasties and enterprises. A ruin is accepted as a

larger historical fact; it rarely prompts visions either of willful destruction or of construction, even though a ruined site is perpetually caught in the cycle of decay and physical reconstruction. In the early twentieth century, the ruin topos underwent a change. It spawned visions of what Rose Macauley calls the "ruin-drama staged perpetually in the human imagination, half of whose whole desire is to build up, while the other half smashes and levels to the earth."<sup>83</sup>

Macauley's assertion that the "ruin is always over-stated" may not be always true with regard to traditional Chinese discourse; it certainly obtains with regard to two natives of Zhejiang: Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1896–1931) and Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936), the most influential writers of 1920s China to harbor a radical vision. Both took up the Leifeng Pagoda topic and "over-stated" it in Macauley's sense.

Both savored a symbolic triumph in the collapse of the pagoda. On September 17, 1925, one year after the crumbling of the pagoda, Xu wrote the poem "The Leifeng Pagoda, No Longer to Be Seen." Seeing the pagoda reduced to "a deserted colossal grave," the speaker senses an urge to lament but quickly checks it with a self-interrogation: Why should I lament the "destruction by the passage of time," "the transfiguration that ought not to be"?

What is it to lament about? This pagoda was oppression; this tomb is burial.

It is better to have burial than oppression.

It is better to have burial than oppression.

Why lament? This pagoda was oppression; this tomb is burial.<sup>84</sup>

By "burial," Xu alluded to the White Snake imprisoned under the pagoda. It is easy for the romantic poet known for his defiance of conventional marriage and his passionate pursuit of free love to identify with Madame White. To him, the "affectionate spirit" suffers only because she took a "good-for-nothing" lover, and is thereby condemned to the base of the pagoda.<sup>85</sup> Xu was always sensitive to the symbolic overtones of tall structures. During the years of his study in the United States, he came to admire Voltaire and William Godwin—father of Mary Shelley—men who had the courage to "destroy many false images and to knock down many a tall building" in their times. He became enamored of the writings of Bertrand Russell, whose "gold shafts of light" had the power of bringing down the Woolworth Building, the imposing 58-story edifice towering over the city of New York, a symbol of the establishment and mighty structures in general.<sup>86</sup> The first



time Xu visited the site of the pagoda in 1923, he was struck by its shaky condition: "The four big brick pillars inside the pagoda have been dismantled to the point where they stand as inverted cones. It looks extremely precarious." One wonders whether the pillars were not in fact displaced in a different context as organizing tropes for his polemic against conservatism:

Those who mentally embrace the few big pillars left over from ancient times, we call quasi-antiquarians. The posture itself is not laughable. We suspect he is firm in the conviction that the few pillars he clings to are not going to fall. We may surmise that there are indeed a few surviving ancient pillars that are infallible, whether you call them "cardinal guides" (*gang* 綱) or "norms" (*chang* 常), or rites (*li* 禮) or ethical tenets (*jiao* 教), or what have you. At the same time, in fact, the authentic is always mixed with the sham. Those reliable real pillars must be mingled with double their number of phantom pillars, rootless, unreliable, and sham. What if you hug the wrong pillars, taking the sham as the real?<sup>87</sup>

Lu Xun also resented the symbolic implication of the Leifeng Pagoda. He wrote two essays in response to its collapse. The first, "The Collapse of Leifeng Pagoda," appeared one month after the event. He had seen the pagoda before it collapsed: "a tottering structure standing out between the lake and the hills, with the setting sun gilding its surroundings." He was unimpressed.<sup>88</sup> As we have seen, traditional literati normally responded to it as the Leifeng Pagoda in Evening Glow, one of the Ten Views of West Lake, while ignoring the stormy dramatic romance of the White-Snake woman. Lu Xun, like his contemporary Xu Zhimo, saw the pagoda primarily in connection with the snake-woman romance—related to him by his grandmother—and hence, as a symbol of oppression.<sup>89</sup> "A monk should stick to chanting his sūtras. If the white snake chose to bewitch Xu Xuan, and Xu chose to marry a monster," observed Lu Xun, "what business was that of anyone else?" "Didn't it occur to him [the monk Fahai] that, when he built the pagoda, it was bound to collapse some day?" The "tottering structure" was an eyesore to Lu Xun whose "only wish . . . was for Leifeng Pagoda to collapse. . . . Now that it has collapsed at last, of course every one in the country should be happy."<sup>90</sup>

It may appear ironic that Xu and Lu should celebrate the collapse of the pagoda, for both were deeply attached to ruins. Their attraction to ruins, however, differed fundamentally from the *huaigu* topos of the traditional literati. The latter works more by way of *temporality* and *disjuncture*: I sigh over a ruin only because it evokes a past that is no more and that is separated from

the present world by a gap to which the writer is resigned. To Chinese modernists, such as Xu and Lu, ruins signify primarily by way of *spatiality* and *subversion*. For them, ruins beckon not because they evoke a vanished past but because they embody imaginary realms and alternative modes of existence that threaten to take over and eclipse reality.

Xu may have resented the symbolic oppression signified by the Leifeng Pagoda; however, he found the eerie charm of the moonlit pagoda casting its shadow over the lake irresistible. Traditionally, the nearby site of the Three Pagodas was the primary *locus amoenus*, or "pleasant place," that attracted eulogies of moonlit scenes.<sup>91</sup> Xu Zhimo, however, made his dislike of "the so-called Reflections of the Three Pagodas" explicit. He was, instead, thoroughly enamored of the "utter serenity of the reflection of the moonlit Leifeng [Pagoda]." "For that," he vowed, "I would give my life."<sup>92</sup> After the collapse of the pagoda, he observed with a note of sadness: "It is rather regrettable that in our south, Leifeng Pagoda remains the only surviving ancient site (*guji*) cum art work. . . . Now the reflection of Leifeng Pagoda has eternally departed from the heart of the lake surface!"<sup>93</sup>

This observation comes out of a most unexpected context: his exposition of John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale." A number of points of contact link Keats' poetic imaginaire to Xu's situation. To begin with, Keats's yearning to leave the world of "leaden-eyed despairs," of "weariness, the fever, and the fret / . . . where men sit and hear each other groan"<sup>94</sup> spoke directly to Xu Zhimo, who likewise felt the "pervasive pain and distress of our time." Keats listened to a nightingale singing and yearned to "fade away into the forest dim" in a moonlit night and to fly to some exalted, ethereal state of transcendence. In explicating the poem to his Chinese audience, Xu wrote of the "purist realm of imagination, the embalmed, enchanted, beautiful, and tranquil state."<sup>95</sup> In a similar mood, Xu could write about the moonlit Leifeng:

*Leifeng Pagoda Under the Moon*

I give you a reflection of Leifeng Pagoda,  
The sky is dense with cloud dark and white;  
I give you the top of Leifeng Pagoda,  
The bright moon sheds its light on the bosom of the slumbering lake.  
  
The deep dark night, the lonely pagoda reflection,  
The speckled moonlit luminance, the delicate wave shimmerings,  
Suppose you and I sail on an uncovered boat,  
Suppose you and I create a complete dream world!<sup>96</sup>



The relevance of Keats to Xu's world of Leifeng Pagoda does not stop here. In *Lamia*, Keats takes an ancient romance and reworks it into verse. Lycius, a young man of Corinth, encounters a beautiful woman named Lamia. They fall in a "swooning love" with each other. Their bliss is brought to an abrupt end by the arrival of Apollonius, an old philosopher, who sees through Lamia and proclaims her a "serpent," upon which, "with a frightful scream she vanished." Lycius dies in his marriage robe.<sup>97</sup> The story was first recorded in European literature by Philostratus. Resurfacing in the seventeenth century, it found its way into Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which is the source Keats acknowledges. The Lamia story has striking parallels with the Chinese White Snake story.<sup>98</sup> Xu Zhimo was evidently familiar with both the Chinese tale and Keats's famous poem. There were even scholarly inquiries into the connection between the two in academic journals of his time.<sup>99</sup> The Western romantic treatment of a matter familiar to the Chinese inevitably had an impact on the sensibility of someone like Xu who was receptive to Western imagination. *Lamia* provides a new lens for viewing not only the White Snake romance but, more important for our purpose, the landscape of the Leifeng Pagoda that is the backdrop of the story. The new impulse is the demonic enchantment that suffuses an imaginary landscape with an oneiric quality and an eerie beauty. True, this poetic mood is not alien to Chinese tradition. Yet the long-lasting and ever-deepening Confucian wariness about the demonic has considerably tempered Chinese aesthetic taste over time. By Xu's time, the Chinese imaginary repertoire had been so sterilized and cleansed that the injection of the Keatsian demonic aesthetics had a refreshing impact.

The effect of the demonic enchantment on Xu Zhimo did not hinge entirely on his awareness of *Lamia*. Keats's poetry is shot through with it. In "Ode to a Nightingale," which Xu Zhimo knew by heart, the demonically charged landscape is just as striking. Enwrapped in the "embalmed darkness" of a bower, the speaker envisions "verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways" and "charm'd magic casements . . . in faery lands forlorn."<sup>100</sup> Nothing of this was lost on Xu Zhimo, who likened the experience of the ode as "a child descending into a cool basement, half-terrorized." In any event, it is apparent that Xu wholeheartedly embraced and internalized the eerie beauty of Keats's poetic world, a conflation of an ethereal transcendent otherness and a haunting demonic enchantment. It was thus inevitable that his poetic meditation on the Leifeng Pagoda departed from the traditional

*huaigu* topos. The demonic specter that haunted the site in folkloric literature and was largely banished from the literati discourse was welcomed back with a vengeance. Xu described the pagoda as the "ancient tomb of Madame White," "an affectionate demonic enchantress . . . [buried] deep in the wild grass" (1: 168).

It has been thousand and one hundred years  
Since she was pitifully clasped under Leifeng Pagoda—  
A decaying old pagoda, forlorn, imposing,  
Standing alone in the evening bell of Mount South Screen. (1: 169)

Elsewhere, he saw the pagoda as a "desolate colossal grave, with entwining cypresses atop" and "one-time illusive dream and one-time love" buried underneath. In these poems, we can sense a resonance of Keats ("Forlorn! the very word is like a bell").<sup>101</sup>

The first time Xu visited the pagoda on October 21, 1923, he was struck by its "ineffably mysterious grandeur and beauty," which partly derived from its ruinous state. The paths leading to the pagoda were overgrown with brambles. The forlorn sight and site had repelled other visitors. A group of Xu's contemporaries climbed to the top of the Leifeng Hill in 1917 and saw the famed pagoda "standing in isolation": "So, this was what they call the Leifeng Pagoda! Underneath it, all the walls and fences were about to crumble. The broken tiles and fragmented bricks were everywhere, making it hard to tread through. The thistles and thorns of the undergrowth kept hooking our clothes. Disappointed, we all left."<sup>102</sup> Xu, however, was fascinated by the forlorn features of the site. His palanquin-carriers identified two bramble-overgrown tombs nearby the pagoda as those of Xu Xuan and the White Snake woman. Seven or eight mendicant monks in tattered robes, "with swan-like figures and turtledove-like faces . . . begged for money while reciting sūtras." A hawker claimed that a yard-long snake he was holding was the Little Green Snake, maid to Madame White, and offered to release it should anyone pay for it. Xu paid twenty cents and "saw the man tossing the snake into a lotus pond." He knew that before long "she would fall into his hands again." Others would have seen these events as pathetic and laughable. Xu, however, found the experience "rather poetic."

The pagoda ruin is indeed a historic site (*guji*) that dates to the Wu-Yue kingdom. Its association with the popular romance (*chuanqi*) of snake woman is largely confined to the realm of entertainment and make-believe. Few "serious" literati would transpose the romance to the actual pagoda site,

preferring to leave it as a prop on stage. Xu, however, marries the romance with the physicality of the *real* pagoda. Early topographic descriptions distinguish between an "ancient site" (*guji*) and an "aberrant site" (*guaiji*) on the premise that a site cannot be both. Xu made the Leifeng Pagoda site both: it is at once a site heavy with historical memory and enlivened with romantic associations. "It has been thousand and one hundred years," he wrote longingly, "since she [White Snake] was pitifully clasped under Leifeng Pagoda." Not that he believes this to be an empirical fact, but, as a romantic, he insisted that the fiction of the White Snake take precedence over lackluster reality. "I would like to become a little demon," he wrote in his diary, "in the enchanting shadow of the Leifeng Pagoda, a demon who does not return to the shore, forever. I would! I would!"<sup>103</sup> This refusal to choose between dreaming and waking states characterizes Xu's perceptual mode. Thus in a memorial for Xu Zhimo, Lin Yutang observed: "Nothing that impinged on his eyes . . . was the contour of real things. It was invariably the shape of the fantastic constructs of his mind. This man loved to roam; and he saw spirits and demons. Once hearing an oriole, he was startled. He jumped to his feet, exclaiming: this is [Keats'] Nightingale!"<sup>104</sup>

#### *Lu Xun's Visionary Worlds: Ruins Haunted by Serpentine Spirits*

Lu Xun's loathing of the Leifeng Pagoda, fully articulated in his first essay on the collapse of the pagoda, is easily recognizable. What is less acknowledged is the role of the site in the making of his fiercely imaginary world. The contradiction between his resentment of the "rottering" pagoda and his attraction to ruins is in fact less self-evident than it first appears. The pagoda is no more than a locus and an analogue that allows him to string together often related thoughts into a coherent discursive ground. Both of his essays on the pagoda were written in the distinct genre of "miscellaneous writings" or "impromptu reflections." Such essays tend to respond to a current event or topic. The discussion usually extends beyond the immediate circumstances to their larger significance and, in the case of Lu Xun, the character of Chinese culture. Central to such an excursion is an organizing image or analogue. Foreigners' praise of a Chinese banquet provoked his reflections on the Chinese propensity to feast their conquerors and one another, reflections that brought him to his graphic claim that "China is in reality no more than a kitchen for preparing these feasts of human flesh." In this case, the banquet was the organizing motif.<sup>105</sup> The pagoda ruin is another such ena-

bling analogue. It provided him with a platform to address two seemingly unrelated issues: the depressing cultural stasis of China and the dialectic between destruction and construction. Two attributes of the Leifeng Pagoda—that it is one of the Ten Views of West Lake and that it exists as a ruin—permit Lu Xun's reflection. He first took up the public regret over the collapse of the pagoda for destroying the wholeness of the Ten Views of West Lake. To Lu Xun, the dogmatic clinging to this arbitrary construct, with its falsifying wholeness, betrayed a cultural resistance to change. The Ten Views of West Lake embody a cultural landscape of stasis. Ruin, the second motif he extrapolated from the Leifeng Pagoda site, provoked thoughts on destruction and construction, first in the physical or material sense, then in the symbolic or metaphorical sense.

Men like Rousseau, Stirner, Nietzsche, Tolstoy or Ibsen are, in Brandes' words, "destroyers of old tracks." Actually they not only destroy but blaze a trail and lead a charge, sweeping aside all the old tracks, whether whole rails or fragments, that get in men's way, but making no attempt to pick up any scrap iron or ancient bricks to smuggle home in order to sell them later to second-hand dealers.<sup>106</sup>

The motif of symbolic destruction soon leads to the topic of drama and connects with the first motif of Ten Views of West Lake:

All the world is a stage: tragedy shows what is worthwhile in life is shattered, comedy shows how what is worthless is torn to pieces, and satire is a simplified form of comedy. Yet passion and humor alike are foes of this *ten-sight disease*, for both of them are destructive although they destroy different things. As long as China suffers from this disease, we shall have no madmen like Rousseau, and not a single great dramatist or satiric poet either. All China will have will be characters in a comedy, or in something which is neither comedy nor tragedy, a life spent among the *ten sights* which are modeled each on the other, in which everyone suffers from the *ten-sight disease*. (*Selected Works*, p. 97; italics added)

The theme of ruins allowed him to attack both the static traditionalism that resisted change and the pervasive pettiness of looting public properties. On the one hand, he envisioned China as a colossal ruin whose inhabitants are perennially given to mending the decaying structure rather than reconstructing a new state. Foreign invasions and internal unrest bring about "a brief commotion," only to be followed by the patching up of "the old traditions . . . amid the ruins." "What is distressing is not the ruins, but the fact that the old traditions are being patched up over the ruins. We want wreckers who



will bring about reforms" (*Selected Works*, p. 99). The destruction Lu hailed is an overhauling of the entire old system, not the petty pilfering of public properties. To Lu, "the theft of bricks from the Leifeng Pagoda," which caused its collapse, was alarming not in and of itself, but because it betrayed a deeper social malaise that "simply leaves ruins behind; it has nothing to do with construction" (p. 99).

What Lu Xun got out of the Leifeng Pagoda as an analogue in the second essay demonstrates the workings of a topographic site as a topic. The locus generates arguments and brings out hidden relationships between domains of experiences that would otherwise remain unrelated to each other. As a consummate man of letters, Lu Xun worked on and through an imaginary ruin on which he launched his own symbolic destruction and construction all at once.

This is just part of the story. There is more to ruins and the Leifeng Pagoda than what Lu Xun articulated here. Granted, he identified Nietzsche and company as the forces of symbolic destruction much needed in China. But that remains a theoretical abstraction and program. It has yet to crystallize into visual images and tropes that are the stuff of Lu's mind and sustain the intensity of his thinking. The question then becomes: As he yearned for drama, what kind of symbolic drama did he envision?

The two essays on the Leifeng Pagoda themselves offer clues. The first celebrates the collapse of the pagoda as an oppressive symbol in the context of the White Snake; the second calls for a drama of destruction and construction. Is there a connection between the two? Is drama the thread that links the two essays and divulges Lu Xun's imaginary site? There appears to be more to the Leifeng Pagoda ruin in Lu Xun's mind than his essays spells out. We should not let Lu Xun's avowed aversion toward the Leifeng Pagoda beguile us into thinking that this is his attitude toward the site. That site, invigorated by the White Snake drama, is the imaginary stage on which Lu Xun's envisioned drama unfolds.

The paradigm is set up in his "From Hundred Plant Garden to Three Flavor Study," an account of his childhood. The essay is topographically structured; it turns on a binary opposition between the Hundred Plant Garden, the deserted backyard of his family estate, and the Three Flavor Study, the private school in which he was sent to study. The garden is an imaginary realm open to the wonders of nature and where fantasies about the supernatural could be sustained; the school is a confining place of rigid

discipline and Confucian indoctrination where fantasies are banished. The garden is suffused with the imaginary presence of the "Beautiful Woman Snake—a creature with a human head and the body of a snake," who, as Lu is told by his nanny, once nearly seduced a young scholar, and would have succeeded had it not been for the intervention of an old monk, who detected "an evil influence on [the young man's] face." The young Lu Xun is therefore always in rapt anticipation, mindful of the "beautiful snake woman," when he "walks to the edge of the long grass in Hundred Plant Garden." In contrast, the Three Flavor Study is no place for the fantastic and the monstrous. The young Lu Xun, full of curiosity about the supernatural, visibly displeased his teacher when Lu asked about the nature of a legendary strange insect called "Strange Indeed" (*guaizai* 怪哉) associated with Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, an ancient magician.<sup>107</sup>

It is significant that Lu Xun mapped the White Snake story to his childhood memory of the deserted garden of his family home. A ruin haunted by a serpentine spirit was the symbolic topography on which many of Lu's imaginary scenarios unfolded. His fascination with the White Snake lore underlay his resentment of the Leifeng Pagoda, but the *imaginary* site of the pagoda, or a ruin, haunted by a serpentine spirit, is precisely the stage for his imaginary drama. In "Dead Fire," published in April 1925, the speaker envisions a surreal spectacle: "From my body wreathed a coil of black smoke, which reared up like a wire snake."<sup>108</sup> In "Stray Thoughts," which appeared in May 1925, three months after he wrote the second essay on the Leifeng Pagoda, Lu urged: "Whatever you love—food, the opposite sex, your country, the nation, mankind—you can only hope to win if you cling to it like a poisonous snake, seize hold of it like an avenging spirit."<sup>109</sup> In "The Good Hell That Was Lost," which came out in June 1925, the speaker "dreamed [he] was lying in bed in the wilderness beside hell. The deep yet orderly wailing of all the ghosts blended with the roar of flames, the seething of oil and the clashing of iron prongs to make one vast, intoxicating harmony, proclaiming to all three worlds the peace of the lower realm." He is then told that this "good hell" is lost to man who "wielded absolute power over hell . . . reconstructed the ruins. . . . At once the mandrake flowers withered."<sup>110</sup> In "Tomb Stele Inscription," also dating to June 1925, Lu Xun wrote:

I dreamed of myself standing in front of a tomb stela, reading the inscription. The tombstone seemed to have been made of a sandstone, moldering substantially, moss-grown, leaving only limited words— . . . There was a wandering spirit, metamor-



phosed into a snake, with venomous teeth in its mouth. It does not bite human beings; instead, it gnawed into its own body until it perished. . . . Go away! . . . I circled around the stela, and saw a forlorn tomb in barren ruins. From its opening, I saw a corpse, its chest and back all deteriorating with no heart and liver in its body. . . . I was about to leave. The corpse sat up, its lip unmoving, but said—

"When I turn into ashes, you shall see my smile."<sup>111</sup>

In "Regret for the Past," written in October 1925, Lu Xun envisioned a glimmer of hope in a landscape of despair:

There are many ways open to me, and I must take one of them because I am still living. I still don't know, though, how to take the first step. Sometimes the road seems like a great, grey serpent, writhing and darting at me. I wait and wait and watch it approach, but it always disappears suddenly in the darkness.<sup>112</sup>

Lu Xun's dramatic vision of the spirit-haunted ruin was rooted in a memory of the village opera he saw in his childhood in his native place, Shaoxing. Foremost in the repertoire was the *Mulianxi* 目連戲, or *Dramatic Cycle of the Tale of Mulian* (*Maudgalyayana*). Based on a medieval Chinese Buddhist tale, the play shows the descent of Mulian, one of the Buddha's disciples, into hell to search and eventually rescue his mother who is condemned there for her sins. The stage play as Lu Xun saw it as a child typically began at dusk and ended at dawn of the next day.<sup>113</sup> The cycle opens with a ritual ceremony of "Summoning of the Spirits," "those who had died unnatural deaths":

This ceremony signified that the manifold lonely ghosts and avenging spirits had now come with the ghostly king and his ghostly soldiers to watch the performance with the rest of us. There was no need to worry, though. These ghosts were on their best behavior, and would not make the least trouble all this night. So the opera started and slowly unfolded, the human beings interspersed with apparitions: the ghost who died by fire, the ghost who was drowned, the one who expired in an examination cell, the one eaten by a tiger.<sup>114</sup>

This is followed first by a "Hanging Man Dance" and then a "Hanging Woman Dance," which features a female ghost who complains about the miserable life that led her to suicide. Now she seeks revenge. The female ghost in particular fascinated Lu Xun. Many years later he recalled her terrible beauty with fondness.<sup>115</sup>

Two qualities in Lu Xun's memory of the village opera informed his dramatic sensibility. First, it is inhabited by ghosts and spirits, in particular,

female ones. Second, it has a twilight or hazy mood. Not only was the "Summoning of the Spirits" enacted at the sunset, but the haziness exists in Lu Xun's mind in the form of *recollection*: "the hazy, moonlit outlines of a temporary stage erected on the empty strand between the village and the river . . . the faintly discernible abode of Daoist Immortals, bathed in a halo of torchlight that shrouded it like the sunset glow of evening."<sup>116</sup> These twin qualities—the twilight mood and the spectral energy—are precisely what the Leifeng Pagoda evoked: the view of the pagoda at sunset and the romance of the White Snake woman trapped under it. Indeed, Lu Xun was unimpressed with the sight of the "tottering structure standing out between the lake and the hills, with the setting sun gilding its surroundings," and he had no patience for the "Ten Views syndrome." What troubled him was the stale view of the "Pagoda at Sunset" divorced from the drama of the White Snake spirit. His two essays are attempts to restore drama, in its different senses, to the otherwise stagnant site. In other words, Lu Xun reconstituted the traditional Leifeng Pagoda in Evening Glow and refined it as a modernist topography.

A set of circumstances combined to intensify his vision. On April 8, 1924, five months before the Leifeng Pagoda collapsed and six months before he wrote his first essay on the subject, Lu Xun bought *Symbolism of Depression*, by Kuriyagawa Hakuson (1880–1923), a Japanese art critic. Five months later, he translated the book. The book apparently excited him, for it took him just 21 days to finish the project. He began translating another book by the same author, *Out of the Ivory Tower*, in late 1924 and finished it on February 18, 1925. Meanwhile, he was teaching at universities in Beijing, and he lectured on the *Symbolism of Depression* and made mimeographed copies of his galley proofs and distributed them as assigned reading.<sup>117</sup>

Kuriyagawa Hakuson was a prominent art critic in Japan in the early twentieth century. A graduate of Tokyo Imperial University, he continued his studies in the United States. He returned to Japan and taught at universities in Tokyo, Kyoto, and various places. He died in the 1923 Tokyo earthquake. The *Symbolism of Depression* was retrieved, as a friend recalled, "from the ruins of the master's residence."<sup>118</sup> Kuriyagawa was a follower of Bergson and Freud. His position, as spelled out in the two books that Lu Xun translated, is a rehash of Bergson and Freud: the ultimate motor driving artistic creation is the melancholy resulting from depression and oppression of the

life force; art is capable of creating a world of individuality with total imaginative freedom; art can project mental images through concrete "symbols," and so forth.

Kuriyagawa's style is fierce, and his social criticisms scathing. From a radical stance, he relentlessly lampooned the problems that plagued Japanese society and the Japanese mentality. In this, he was not unlike Lu Xun. Kuriyagawa's appeal for Lu Xun should be obvious. From Kuriyagawa, Lu Xun acquired the Freudian calculus—the valorization of desire, the affirmation of the energy of the libido, and the awareness of its repression as the ultimate source of the eruptive "life force."<sup>119</sup> This new language gives his old sensibility—molded out of his rural upbringing—a new spin. It releases the demonic forces: the female ghost of the village opera, the spirits that populate the Buddhist hell, the demonic energy associated with the White Snake woman, and the monstrous union between a mortal being and a supernatural creature, and so on took on a new life in the theoretical light of modernism. The ruin of the Leifeng Pagoda lent itself as a primal site for Lu Xun to play out his modernist vision.

More specifically, Kuriyagawa was one of the first Asian scholars to introduce Keats's *Lamia* story to Asia and to note its similarity to the Chinese White Snake lore and its derivative treatment in Japan. Many of his works were translated into Chinese in the 1920s by several distinguished scholars, including Feng Zikai 豐子愷 and others.<sup>120</sup> As someone who consistently valorized sexual desire as the creative force, he was drawn to what he called "serpentine sexuality," and he praised the sympathetic treatment of snake lore by both Keats and Theophile Gautier, French romantic author of *La Morte amoureuse*. "Instead of loathing the demonic woman," he wrote, "they make one feel what is ineffably beautiful, a quality that can be characterized as chillingly bewitching." In comparison, he found the Japanese treatment of the matter wanting.<sup>121</sup> Kuriyagawa here reinforced a nearly forgotten traditional aesthetic category: "chillingly bewitching," *sai'en* 悽豔 (Ch. *qiyan*). It describes a curiously paradoxical effect, evocative at once of a chilly, mournful desolation and an irresistible enchantment—the twin qualities of the darkly suggestive landscape of the Leifeng Pagoda with its serpentine enchantress.

Lu Xun's life in the 1920s was deeply caught up with pagodas. From August 2, 1923, to May 25, 1924, he lived in a neighborhood in Beijing called "Brick Pagoda Alley." On April 17, 1924, on a lecture trip to Xi'an, he visited

the Great Goose Pagoda of the Daci'en 大慈恩 Temple. The day before he wrote "On the Collapse of the Leifengta," he bought Kuriyagawa's book *Out of the Ivory Tower*, whose title contains the kanji-character to 塔 (*ta* in Chinese; "pagoda"). He was to live with this book for an extended period as he proceeded to translate it.<sup>122</sup> These circumstances may have cued his writing on the topic of pagodas.

Pagodas and women, unrelated to each other except in the Leifeng Pagoda lore, came to a head in the 1920s, a period that saw the surge of the women's liberation movement. Appointed to the faculty of Beijing Women's Normal College in July 1923, Lu Xun was actively involved in the women's cause. In April 1925, two months after Lu Xun wrote the second essay on the Leifeng pagoda, a heinous event rocked the country. Four female college students visiting an "ancient site," the Iron Pagoda at Kaifeng, were brutally raped by six soldiers. After this abominable act, the brutes ripped strips from each of the women's skirts as "souvenirs" and hung their clothes on the top of the pagoda. The women had to endure further humiliation at the hands of their school's administration. Fearful that the scandal might tarnish the school's reputation, they chose to silence the victims' voices and publicly denied the incident. The four women committed suicide. Zhao Yintang (1893–?), a lecturer in Chinese at Beijing Normal University, wrote on the event with anguished sarcasm:

Who asked them [the women] to visit the Iron Pagoda in that desolate place? The pagoda is indeed an extremely famous ancient ruin. Only the governor should be allowed to climb up and view the scenery; only celebrities and scholars should be allowed to inscribe their names there. Or to put it in a less dignified tone, only male students should be allowed to climb to the top to yell and scream. These women—what right did they have to visit [this site]? Unqualified with this right, they went anyway. Wasn't that indecorous? Shouldn't they die?<sup>123</sup>

The incident also enraged Lu Xun (LXQJ, 7: 274). Indeed, it occurred in the wake of Lu Xun's two essays on the Leifeng Pagoda, yet it epitomized an enduring social reality in which the weight of traditional values kept crushing innocent victims, particularly women. It dramatized the pagoda—a signpost of tradition in modern times—as the oppressive symbol and symbolized the social injustice women had to bear. The tragedy at the Iron Pagoda is almost an uncanny modern re-enactment of the Leifeng Pagoda and its subjugation of the White Snake woman. It testifies to the relevance of Lu





Fig. 11.14 Tao Yuanqing, cover design for Lu Xun, trans., *Kumon no shōchō; Kumen de xiangzheng* (Symbolism of depression) by Kuriyagawa Hakuson (1880–1923) (Shanghai: Weimingshe, 1924).

Xun's two essays and makes Lu Xun's loathing of the pagoda as an oppressive presence and his sympathy with the White Snake woman all the more compelling.

Much as the landscape of the pagoda ruin served as a symbolic topography for modernist writers such as Lu Xun and Xu Zhimo and gave shape to their discursive energy and imaginary universe, their work in turn inspired visual constructs. Lu's vision found its visualizer in an able young artist named Tao Yuanqing 陶元慶 (1892–1929), also a native of Shaoxing. Tao's cover design for Lu Xun's translation of *Symbol of Depression* shows a nude female figure imprisoned in a claustrophobic circle, wriggling among four crimson patches of monsters threatening to gnaw into her. With her hands seemingly entangled, the woman holds a trident with one foot, whose prongs



Fig. 11.15 Tao Yuanqing, cover design for Lu Xun, trans., *Zōge no to o dete; Chule xiangya zhi ta* (Out of the ivory tower) by Kuriyagawa Hakuson (1880–1923); (Shanghai: Weimingshe, 1924).

touch her lifted chin (Fig. 11.14). Tao's design for the cover of *Out of the Ivory Tower* again features a female nude, somewhat startled, standing against a wavy and wriggling line (Fig. 11.15). It may be far-fetched to take the serpentine line in both cover designs as a coded visual allusion to the White Snake woman, but the evocation of oppression, desire, and destruction in the first design and the connection between woman and pagoda in the second are all very suggestive. Lu Xun's dramatic vision of the Leifeng Pagoda is precisely about these diverse impulses.

Lu Xun's imaginary ruins, haunted sites invigorated with supernatural forces, became a topos widely shared by his contemporaries. It prompted a group of young followers of Lu Xun in the 1920s and 1930s to cast their mournful eyes to their own native places. They evoke ruins of the past and



Fig. 11.16 Li Jiqing, cover design for Tai Jingnong, *Jiantazhe* (Pagoda builder), 1928. (Beiping: Weiming she, 1930). After Tai Jingnong, *Jiantazhe* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984).

aspire toward the landmarks heralding the future. Among the group was Tai Jingnong 臺靜農, whose short story "Pagoda Builder" relates the tale of an imprisoned young woman put to death by her oppressors. The thin narrative is premised on the conviction that "our pagoda is not built on soil and rocks, but on the foundation of our blood-congealed blocks."<sup>124</sup> The "Pagoda Builder" became the title for the author's collection of stories, published in 1928. Its cover, designed by Li Jiqing, shows a leftward-tilting grid of dark lines crossed by a red crescent band. An intersection generates a square in which a mason—apparently the "Pagoda Builder"—hammers a drill rod into a stone block. A tall tower soars above clouds, set against the sun. The more realistic scene inside the box thus thematically echoes the abstract coordinates outside it: illuminating the grid as a soaring structure in the making and the red band as a vague evocation of the sun, and by extension, a hopeful future. Consistent with the geometric mood, the characters of the book title are rendered in "art script" (*meishuzi* 美術字), as opposed to the traditional calligraphic scripts, to register a touch of modernism. In color scheme, the design thrives on a sharp contrast between red and black, set

against a white background (Fig. 11.16). It is a modernist reworking of the Pagoda in Evening Glow: not only is the soaring structure, explicitly mentioned in the title as a *ta* (pagoda), envisioned as an obelisk with its foreign—hence, for the Chinese at the time, modernist—overtones, the sun—presumably anything but a setting sun—evokes blood, sacrifice, and passion, as evidenced in Tai's narrative. This futuristic-utopian pictorial construct brings this story of the Leifeng Pagoda to a close. The pagoda site, which began innocently as no more than a circumstantially rooted monument, ends up becoming an enduring signpost in the Chinese mental universe and a topos that generated an ever-increasing body of writing for centuries.



## Notes

The following abbreviations are used in the Notes and Works Cited list:

- JCSZ *Jingcisi zhi* (Gazetteer of the Jingci Monastery), comp. Ji Xiang (1805). In WZC, vol. 13.
- LXQJ *Lu Xun quanji* (Complete works of Lu Xun). 16 vols. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981.
- NJSZ Dahuo, *Nanping Jingcisi zhi* (Gazetteer of the Jingci Monastery of Nanping) (1616). In *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, vol. 719 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995–99).
- WZC *Wulin zhanggu congbian* (Compendium of local histories of Wulin), comp. Ding Bing (1888). 12 vols. Taipei: Taitian guofeng chubanshe, 1967.
- YWSQ *Yingyin Wenyuange siku quanshu*. 1,500 vols. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–86.

1. David Leatherbarrow, *The Roots of Architectural Invention: Site, Enclosure, Materials* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 3–6.

2. See Stephen Owen, *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 26.

3. Richard E. Strassberg, "Introduction," in *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 6–7.

4. Stephen Owen (pers. comm.) first made this point to me. See also his commentary on the body of writing in connection with the Level Mountain Hall in Yangzhou, in his *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginning to 1911* (New York: Norton, 1996), p. 634. Addressing the issue of visibility and the creation of place, Yi-Fu Tuan (*Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977], p. 178) also observes that "deeply-loved places are not necessarily visible. . . . Identity of place is achieved by dramatizing the aspirations, needs, and functional rhythms of personal and group life."

5. This commonly adopted translation may not be entirely adequate, for it ignores the origin of the character *lei*. *Lei* may have been a reference to a Daoist hermit named Xu Lizhi 徐立之, otherwise known as Mr. Huifeng 回峰, who once lived on the site. The name "Huifeng" may have changed into Leifeng over time. Another theory has it that a man named Leijiu 雷就 once lived on the site. Hence, the hill was named after him as Thunder Peak. See Qian Yueyou 潛說有, *Xianchun Lin'an zhi* 咸淳臨安志 (Xianchun [period] gazetteer of Lin'an), YWSQ, vol. 490, pp. 873–74; Tian Rucheng 田汝成, *Xihu youlan zhi* 西湖遊覽志 (Notes on touring West Lake) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), p. 33; and Chen Xingzhen 陳杏

珍, "Leifengta de mingcheng ji qita" 雷峰塔的名稱及其他 (The name of the Thunder Peak Pagoda and other issues), *Wenwu tianqi*, no. 6 (1977): 40–44.

6. The complete title is *Yiqie Rulai xin bimi quanshen sheli baoqieyin tuoluoni jing* 一切如來心秘密全身舍利寶篋印陀羅尼經 (Sanskrit: *Sarvatathāgata-adhistāna-hṛdaya-guhyā-dhātu-karandamudrā-dhārāṇī-sūtra*). It was first translated into Chinese by the Indian monk Amoghavajra (705–74), who went to China around 720, where he became a disciple of Vajrabodhi. The sūtra can also be found in Bunyiu Nanjio, *A Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), no. 957. See also Sören Edgren, "The Printed Dhārāṇī-sūtra of A.D. 956," *Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (Östasiatiska Museet)*, no. 44 (1972): 141; and Zhang Xiumin 張秀民, "Wudai Wu-Yue guo de yinshua" 五代吳越國的印刷 (The printing technology of the Wu-Yue kingdom of the Five Dynasties), *Wenwu* 1978, no. 12: 74–76.

7. See Yu Pingbo 俞平伯, "Ji Xihu Leifengta faxian de tazhuan yu cangjing" 記西湖雷峰塔發現的塔碑與藏經 (Note on the tiles and hoarded sutras inside the Leifeng Pagoda), in *Yu Pingbo sanwen zawn lunbian* 俞平伯散文雜文論編 (Prose and miscellaneous notes by Yu Pingbo) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 123; Zhang Xiumin, "Wudai Wu-Yue guo de yinshua," p. 74.

8. Edgren, "The Printed Dhārāṇī-sūtra of A.D. 956," pl. 3.

9. See *ibid.*, p. 141. For other copies, see Zhang Xiumin, "Wudai Wu-Yue guo de yinshua," p. 76.

10. Yu Pingbo ("Ji Xihu Leifengta faxian de tazhuan yu cangjing," p. 126) first noted the poignant circumstantial referentiality of the sūtra in the pagoda with regard to the fate of the pagoda itself.

11. The inscription is contained in Qian Yueyou, *Xianchun Lin'an zhi*, p. 874. The pagoda was most likely built in 976, based on the dated sutras and woodblock prints excavated from the pagoda. The *Baoqieyin jing* retrieved from the pagoda is dated 975, which points to the date of the beginning of the construction. The woodblock print bearing a pagoda image retrieved from the hollow bricks is dated 976. Since Qian Hongchu's votive inscription records that the pagoda was built "within a moment of finger snap," and considering that the Wu-Yue Kingdom ended in 978, it is very likely that the construction was completed in 976 or shortly after, but not beyond 978. See Chen Xingzhen, "Leifengta," p. 42.

12. Chen Xingzhen ("Leifengta," p. 42) argues convincingly that the *huang* (yellow) is a misprint in the *Xianchun Lin'an zhi*; it should be *huang* 皇 (imperial) or *wang* 王. Similar observations were also made by Qing scholars; see Hu Jing 胡敬, comp., *Chunyou Lin'an zhi jiyi* 淳祐臨安志輯逸 (Chunyou gazetteer of Lin'an, with scattered fragments reconstituted), WZC, vol. 24.

13. Tuotuo 脫脫 (Toghito), *Songshi* 宋史 (Standard history of Song) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 480.13900–901, 13909. Wu Yue beishi buyi 吳越備史補遺

gives the eleventh month of 976 as the date of her death; see Chen Xingzhen, "Leifengta," p. 43.

14. Wu Renchen 吳任臣, *Shiguo chunqiu* 吳越春秋 (Spring and autumn of the Ten Kingdoms), YWSQ, 466: 112.

15. The *Jingci sizhi* (4034a) records a popular saying that circulated widely in the region: tidal lappings on the Qiantang shore "produce imperial consorts." In particular, it mentions Qian Hongchu's consort, Sun Taizhen.

16. A fire during the war in the Xuanhe era (1119–25) razed everything around the pagoda to the ground, leaving the latter standing alone. The pagoda apparently sustained some damage. It was renovated in 1171 and 1199; see Qian Yueyou, *Xianchun Lin'an zhi*, p. 804.

17. Su Shi himself was not upright about discussing outlandish matters. He is closely associated with the telling of ghost stories as a literati pastime. He also authored a *zhiguai* 志怪 collection titled *Dongpo zhilin* 東坡志林 (I thank Judith Zeitlin for alerting me to this fact). However, his response to the Leifengta site is still conditioned by the stock generic impulse; in any case, the pagoda site did not inspire him to poetry.

18. Qisong, "You Nanpingshan ji" 游南屏山記 (Touring South Screen Mountain), in *Xihu youji xuan* 西湖遊記選, ed. and annot. Cao Wenqu 曹文趣 et al. (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1985), pp. 224–25.

19. For an excellent study of the literary association of these architectural types, see Ke Qingming [Ko Ching-Ming] 柯慶明, "Cong ting tai lou ge shuoqi: lun yizhong linglei de youguan meixue yu shengming xingcha" 從亭臺樓閣說起: 論一種另類的遊觀美學與生命省察 (Of kiosks, terraces, towers, and pavilions: notes on the aesthetics of excursions into otherness and existential introspection), in idem, *Zhongguo wenxue de meigan* 中國文學的美感 (Aesthetic modes of Chinese literature) (Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2000), pp. 275–349.

20. The first source is Zhu Mu 祝穆, writing in 1240, according to whom the Ten Views are: (1) "Autumn Moon Above the Placid Lake," (2) "Spring Dawn at Su Dike," (3) "Remnant Snow on Broken Bridge," (4) "Thunder Peak Pagoda at Sunset," (5) "Evening Bell from Nanping Mountain," (6) "Lotus Breeze at Qu Winery," (7) "Watching Fish at Flower Cove," (8) "Listening to the Orioles by the Willow Ripples," (9) "Three Stupas and the Reflecting Moon," (10) "Twin Peaks Piercing the Clouds" (see Zhu Mu, *Fangyu shenglan* 方輿勝覽 [preface dated 1240], cited in *Xihu bicong* 西湖叢書 [Compendium of writings on West Lake], ed. Lu Jiansan 陸鑒三 [Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1981], p. 26). Half a century later, the same Ten Views were cited in Wu Zimu's 吳自牧 *Mengliang lu* 夢梁錄, although in a different order. The author attributes this tenfold landscape taxonomy to "recent painters who claim that the most remarkable of the four seasonal scenes come down to ten" (see Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu* [Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chu-

banshe, 1980], pp. 103–6). For a good introduction to the subject, see Huishu Lee, "The Domain of Empress Yang (1162–1233): Art, Gender, and Politics at the Southern Song Court" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1994), pp. 47–48.

21. See Zhai Hao 翟灝 et al., *Hushan bianlan* 湖山便覽 (Easy guide to the lake and mountains) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1998), p. 27; Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, pp. 103–6.

22. For studies of the pictorial representation of Xiaoxiang views, see A. Murck, "Eight Views of the Hsiao Hsiang by Wang Hung," in *Images of the Mind: Selections from the Edward L. Elliot Family and John B. Eliot Collection of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting*, ed. Wen Fong et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 214; Richard Barnhart, "Shining Rivers: Eight Views of the Hsiao Hsiang in Sung Painting," in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Chinese Art History* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1992), 1: 45–95; and Valérie M. Ortiz, "The Poetic Structure of a Twelfth-Century Chinese Pictorial Dream Journey," *Art Bulletin* 76, no. 2 (1994): 257–78.

23. For the book, see Patrick Hanan, "The Early Chinese Short Story: A Critical Theory in Outline," 179n21.

24. Hong Pian 洪楩, ed., *Qingpingshantang huaben* 清平山堂話本 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1989), pp. 25–36.

25. Most scholars agree that the story could date to the Southern Song. Many traits of the story (e.g., the place-names and official titles mentioned, the style of the prose) point to an early date. The story was in circulation at least by the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368). A catalogue of the Yuan *zaju* 雜劇 lists a play by the same title, now lost. See *ibid.*, p. 25; and Huang Shang 黃裳, *Xixiangji yu Baishezhuo* 西廂記與白蛇傳 (Romance of the West Chamber and Story of the White Snake) (Shanghai: Pingming chubanshe, 1954), pp. 36–39.

26. The subject has spawned a huge scholarly literature. See, e.g., Nai-tung Ting, "The Holy and the Snake Woman: A Study of a Lamia Story in Asian and European Literature," *Fabula* 8 (1966): 145–91; Wu Pei-yi, "The White Snake: The Evolution of a Myth in China" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1969); Yen Yuan-shu, "Biography of the White Serpent: A Keatsian Interpretation," *Tamkang Review* 1, no. 2 (1970): 227–43; Hsu Erh-hung, "The Evolution of the Legend of the White Serpent," 2 pts., *Tamkang Review* 4, no. 1 (1973): 109–27, no. 2: 121–56; and Whalen Lai, "From Folklore to Literate Theater: Unpacking Madame White Snake," *Asian Folklore Studies*, 51 (1992): 51–66.

27. Li Fang 李昉 et al., comps., *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 10: 3752. *Juan* 456–59 (pp. 3720–62) are devoted to snakes.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 3745.

29. Hong Pian, *Qingpingshantang huaben*, pp. 25–36.

30. Tian Rucheng, *Xihu youlan zhi*, 2.20; Zhai Hao et al., *Hushan bianlan*, p. 70.



31. Zhong Jingwen 鍾敬文, *Zhong Jingwen minjian wenxue lunji* 鍾敬文民間文學論集 (Essays on folkloric literature by Zhong Jingwen) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1985), 2: 85.

32. Li Kaixian 李開先, *Li Kaixian ji* 李開先集 (Complete works of Li Kaixian) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), p. 6.

33. Li Kongtong 李空同, juan 50; cited in Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞 et al., eds., *Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan* 中國歷代文論選 (Selected Chinese literary criticism of successive dynasties) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1980), 3: 55.

34. Tian Rucheng, *Xihu youlan zhi*, 3.38; Zhang Dai 張岱, *Xihu mengxun* 西湖夢尋 (A dream search for West Lake), in *Tao'an mengyi Xihu mengxun* 陶庵夢憶西湖夢尋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), 4.67.

35. Tian Rucheng, *Xihu youlan zhi*, 8.86.

36. Ibid., 3.33.

37. Ibid., 26.481.

38. The earliest surviving libretto is titled *Yuhuatang zizhuan Leifengta chuanqi* 玉花堂自傳雷峰塔傳奇 (Romance of the Leifeng Pagoda composed by Yuhuatang [Jade Flower Hall]), with a preface dated 1530, in the collection of Dai Bufan 戴不凡. Another libretto known as *Nanxi yiyangqiang Jiajing shinian Jiguzhai keben Leifengta* 南戲弋陽腔嘉靖十年汲古齋刻本雷峰塔 (The Leifeng Pagoda in the Yiyang variety of Southern Drama from the Jigu Atelier, a woodblock print dated the tenth year of Jiajing), with a preface dated 1531, is in the collection of Wu Jingrang 吳敬塘. Since these two librettos have not been published, their content remains unknown. The connection made between the two monsters-turned-beauties and the pagoda is confirmed by another libretto, in print in 1532, titled *Bainiangzi yongzhen Leifengta chuanqi* 白娘子永鎮雷峰塔傳奇 (Madame White clasped under the Leifeng Pagoda for eternity, a romance). See Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 et al., "The Relationship Between the Romance of the White Snake and Folklore" (in Chinese), in *Baishhezhuang lunwenji* 白蛇傳論文集 (Papers on the tale of White Snake), ed. Zhongguo minjian wenyi yanjiuhui, Zhejiang fenhui 中國民間文藝研究會浙江分會 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1986), p. 121.

39. Yang Kang 楊亢, "Record of Renovation" (dated 1199), in Hu Jing, *Chunyou Lin'an zhi jiyi*, 24: 7358.

40. Traditional sources identify the bandits as Japanese. Recent study shows that the mid-sixteenth-century coastal piracy involved ethnic Chinese just as well. See Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000-1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

41. Lu Ciyun 陸次雲, *Huru zaji* 湖濡雜記, in WZC, 4:2087. Qing authors attributed the fire to the Japanese invaders who suspected an ambush inside the pagoda; see *ibid.*; and Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅, *Langji xutan* 浪蹟續談 (More travel-

logues), vol. 4 of *Biji xiaoshuo daguan xubian* 筆記小說大觀續編 (Collection of biji fiction: a sequel) (Taibei: Xinxing shuju, 1979), p. 4234.

42. Tian Rucheng, *Xihu youlan zhi*, 3.33. Wu Congxian 吳從先, *Xiaochuang riji* 小窗日記, cited by Xu Fengji, *Qingbo xiaozhi* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1999), p. 77.

43. Yu Chunxi 虞淳熙, *Qiantang xianzhi* 錢塘縣志 (Gazetteer of the Qiantang county), reprint of 1893, "waiji," p. 33.

44. NJSZ, p. 407. The poem was written before 1616, since it was collected in Dahuo's 大壑 *Nanping Jingcisi zhi* 南屏淨慈寺志, published in 1616.

45. Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, comp., *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984), pp. 435-64.

46. Ibid., p. 464; trans. from H. C. Chang, *Chinese Literature: Popular Fiction and Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), p. 260.

47. Huang Tubi 黃圖琬, *Leifengta* 雷峰塔, in *Baishhezhuang ji* 白蛇傳集 (A collection of White Snake stories), ed. Fu Xihua 傅惜華 (Shanghai: Shanghai chubangongsi, 1955), pp. 282-338.

48. Fu Xihua, "Preface," in *idem*, ed., *Baishhezhuang ji*, p. 5; Huang Shang, *Xixiangji yu Baishhezhuang*, p. 43.

49. The invention of this plot is credited to actor Chen Jiayan and his daughter who adapted the White Snake materials for the stage, since Huang Tubi's version was considered not quite fitting for stage performance. Fang inherited Chen's plot. See A Ying 阿英, *Leifengta chuanqi xulu* 雷峰塔傳奇敘錄 (Introduction to the Romance of the Leifeng Pagoda) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), p. 2.

50. *Baishhezhuang lunwenji*, p. 161.

51. "Mourning in Front of the Pagoda," a print from the Guangxu era (1875-1908), in Fu Xihua, ed., *Baishhezhuang ji*, pp. 110-11.

52. Fang Chengpei 方成培, "Preface to *The Leifeng Pagoda*," in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu xuba huibian* 中國古典戲曲序跋彙編 (Collection of prologues and postscripts to traditional Chinese drama), ed. Cai Yi 蔡毅 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1989), 3: 1941.

53. Huang Tubi, *Leifengta*, p. 338.

54. Hong Pian, *Qingpingshantang*, p. 36.

55. Huang Tubi (*Leifengta*, p. 335), for example, explicitly refers to the Leifeng Pagoda as a "an aberrant site (*guaiji*) that bears viewing."

56. Mo Langzi 墨浪子, *Xihu jiahua* 西湖佳話, ed. and annot. Shao Dacheng 邵大成 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1985), pp. 266, 284.

57. Yang Erzeng 楊爾曾, *Hainei qiguan* 海內奇觀, in *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan erbian* 中國古代版畫叢刊二編 (Compendium of traditional Chinese prints, 2d series) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), p. 26.

58. The compiler of the *Hainei qiguan* did not disclose the source of this poem. I have been able to identify Mo Fan, a mid-Ming poet, as the author of this poem; see

*Zhejiang tongzhi* 浙江通志 (Zhejiang gazetteer) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1934), 4: 4867a.

59. For a survey of the historical trend in legitimizing the strange in the late seventeenth century, see Judith T. Zeidler, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 17–25.

60. Huang Tubi, *Leifengta*, p. 337.

61. "Mourning in Front of the Pagoda," in Fu Xihua, *Baishhezhuang ji*, pp. 110–11.

62. Li Liufang 李流芳, *Tanyuanji* 檀園集 (Collection of the Sandalwood Garden), YWSQ, 1295: 394.

63. Waikam Ho, ed., *Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang* (Seattle: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and University of Washington Press, 1992), 2: 104.

64. The line alludes to a famous Chan-Buddhist motto. The lay Buddhist Pang Yun is reported to have asked Daoyi (709–88): "What kind of man is he who is not linked with all things?" To which Daoyi replied: "Wait until at one gulp you can drink up all the water in the West River, and I will tell you" (Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953], 2: 393).

65. Zhang Dai, *Xihu mengxun*, p. 66.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

67. Xu Ke 徐珂, comp., *Qingbai leichao* 清稗類鈔 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 1: 341.

68. JCSZ, p. 3702a.

69. There are, indeed, notable exceptions arising out of special historical circumstances. These include the pagoda at the Linggu Temple, next to the tomb of the Ming founder, and the so-called Porcelain Pagoda at the Bao'en Temple, built by the Yongle emperor; they were associated, after the fall of the Ming, by the loyalists with the Ming dynastic enterprise. I thank Jonathan Hay for bringing these to my attention.

70. J. L. Cranmer-Byng, ed., *An Embassy to China: Being the journal kept by Lord Macartney during his embassy to the Emperor Ch'ien-lung, 1793–1794* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1963), p. 179. Macartney mistook "Leifengta" as 雷風塔, thereby translating it as "the Tower of the Thundering Winds."

71. See Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 46–65.

72. Most Suzhou prints are undated. Based on a few dated prints of a similar style, these date to the Yongzheng (1723–35) and Qianlong (1736–95) reigns. One telltale sign in the prints is the phrase "Leifeng in Evening Glow" (*Leifeng xizhao* 雷鋒夕照) instead of the usual "The Leifeng Pagoda Bathed in West Sunset," a change in the wording made by the Kangxi emperor when he visited the site. Qianlong used Kangxi's phrase in his poem on the view in 1751. However, by 1757, he had

reverted to the pre-Kangxi phrase "Leifeng in Evening Glow." It is likely therefore that the Suzhou prints here, in following the old phrase, must have been dated to the second half of the eighteenth century. For the dating of the Suzhou prints in general, see *Chūgoku no yōfuga ten: Minmatsu kara Shin jidai no kaiga, hanga, sashiebon* (Exhibition of the Western-influenced style in Chinese painting, prints, and illustrated books from Ming to Qing dynasties) (Tokyo: Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan, 1995), p. 376.

73. The print does not reveal the source of the poem. I have been able to identify the late Song–early Yuan poet Yin Tinggao as its author; for the full text of the poem, see JCSZ, p. 3918a.

74. Li Wei 李衛 et al., comps., *Xihu zhi* 西湖志 (Gazetteer of West Lake) (1735 ed.), 3: 32–33.

75. Tong Danian 童大年, "Leifengta Huayanjing canshi zhenxing tiba" 雷峰塔〈華嚴經〉殘石真形題跋 (Comment on the fragmented stones with the Flower Garland Sutra from the Leifeng Pagoda); cited in Mei Zhong 梅重 et al., *Xihu tianxia jing* 西湖天下景 (West Lake: view of the world) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang sheying chubanshe, 1997), p. 86; Yu Pingbo, *Yu Pingbo sanwen zalun bian*, p. 116; and A. C. Moule, "The Lei Feng T'a," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1925: 287.

76. Shen Fengren, *Xihu gujin tan* (West Lake: past and present) (Shanghai: Dadong shuju, 1948), p. 3.

77. Yu Pingbo, *Yu Pingbo sanwen zalun bian*, pp. 121–22.

78. Wang Guowei 王國維, "Xiande kanben Baoqieyin tuoluoni jing ba" 顯德刊本寶篋印陀羅尼經 (Postscript to the Baoqieyin Dharani sutra), in idem, *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1992), 21.22.

79. Lou Xu 樓虛, "Song to the tune of Yu the Beauty," colophon to his painting *The Leifeng Pagoda*; cited in Pan Chenqing 潘臣青, *Xihu huaxun* 西湖畫尋 (In search of paintings of West Lake) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1996), p. 149.

80. Zhou Zuoren 周作人, "Guanyu chongxiu Congtai de shi" 關於重修叢臺的事 (On rebuilding the Cong Terrace) (1922), in idem, *Tanhuji* 談虎集 (Speaking of tigers: essays) (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1928), 2: 463–66.

81. Guy Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 83; Jonathan D. Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution, 1895–1980*, p. 208. Italics added.

82. See Spence, *Gate of Heavenly Peace*, p. 276.

83. Rose Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984), p. 100.

84. Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, *Xu Zhimo quanji* 徐志摩全集 (Complete works of Xu Zhimo) (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), 1: 246.



85. Ibid., p. 169.
86. Spence, *Gate of Heavenly Peace*, p. 191.
87. Xu Zhimo, "Shoujiu yu 'wan'jiu" 守舊與"玩"舊 (Holding on to the old and "playing" with the old), in idem, *Xu Zhimo quanji*, 3: 2.
88. *Selected Works of Lu Hsun* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1957), 2: 82.
89. For a convincing demonstration of the impact of Freudian theory on Lu Xun with regard to Lu's perception of the Leifeng Pagoda, see Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House: A Study of Lu Xun* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 119, 219n21.
90. Translation from *Selected Works of Lu Hsun*, 2: 82-84, with slight modifications.
91. On *locus amoenus*, see E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. William R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), pp. 192-202; and Michael Leslie, "Gardens of Eloquence: Rhetoric, Landscape, and Literature in the English Renaissance," in *Toward a Definition of Topos: Approaches to Analogical Reasoning*, ed. Lynette Hunter (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 17-19.
92. Lu Xiaoman 陸小曼, ed., *Zhimo riji* 志摩日記 (Zhimo's diary) (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1992), p. 24.
93. Xu Zhimo, *Xu Zhimo quanji*, 3: 65.
94. John Keats, *Complete Poems*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 280.
95. Xu Zhimo, *Xu Zhimo quanji*, 3: 65.
96. Ibid., 1: 41-42.
97. Keats, *Complete Poems*, pp. 342-59.
98. Their similarity has spawned speculation about a distant and obscure common source, initially oral, not yet identified in Asiatic folklore. See G. R. S. Mead, *Apollo-nius of Tyana* (London, 1901), *passim*; Takeshiro Kurashi, "On the Metamorphosis of the Story of the White Snake," *Sino-Indian Studies*, 5 (1957): 138-46; and Charles I. Patterson, Jr., *The Daemonic in the Poetry of John Keats* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 185n3. Other scholars attribute the parallel to the workings of archetypes and assume the universal character underlying both narrative traditions; see, e.g., Henry Eckford, "The 'Lamia' of Keats," *Century Magazine*, n.s. 9 (Dec. 1885): 243-50; and E. G. Pettet, *On the Poetry of Keats* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 215, 229-31. For a most comprehensive study of both Asian and Western sources, see Ting, "The Holy and the Snake Woman," pp. 145-91.
99. For a discussion of Keats's *Lamia* in connection with the Chinese White Snake romance, see Qin Nü 秦女 and Ling Yun 凌雲, "Study of the Romance of White Snake" (in Chinese), *Zhong Fa daxue yuekan* 中法大學月刊 (*Revue de l'université Franco-Chinoise*) 2, no. 3/4 (1932): 107-24.
100. Keats, *Complete Poems*, pp. 279-81.

101. The passage is a familiar one: "Forlorn! the very word is like a bell / To toll me back from thee to my sole self! / Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf. / Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades / Past the near meadows, over the still stream, / Upon the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep / In the next valley-glades (Keats, *Complete Poems*, p. 281).
102. Fang Shaozhu 方紹翥, "Lüxing Hangxian Xihu ji" 旅行杭縣西湖記 (Journal written after a trip to West Lake of Hangxian), in *Xin youji huikan* 新遊記匯刊 (A collection of new travelogues) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1920), 1.25.
103. Xu Zhimo, *Xu Zhimo quanji bubian* 徐志摩全集補編 (Complete works of Xu Zhimo: sequel) (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1993), 4: 6.
104. Chen Congzhou 陳從周, *Xu Zhimo nianpu* 徐志摩年譜 (Xu Zhimo: a chronicle) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1981), p. 76. Lin Yutang here mistakenly attributed Keats's famous *Nightingale* to Shelley, who is better known for his skylark.
105. David E. Pollard, "Lu Xun's Zawen" in *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, ed. Leo Ou-fan Lee (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 65. I adopt Pollard's suggestion of "analogue," which is particularly revealing about Lu Xun's discursive habits.
106. Lu Xun, "More Thoughts on the Collapse of Leifeng Pagoda," in *Selected Works of Lu Hsun*, p. 96.
107. Lu Xun, "From Hundred Plant Garden to Three Flavor Study," in *Selected Works*, 1: 387-93.
108. *Selected Works*, 1: 340.
109. LXQJ, 3: 49; trans. *Selected Works*, 2: 143-44.
110. LXQJ, 2: 199-200; trans. *Selected Works*, 1: 343-44.
111. LXQJ, 2: 202-3.
112. LXQJ, 2: 129; trans. *Selected Works*, 1: 260.
113. Zhou Zuoren, "On the Miracle Play of Mulian," in *Tanlongji* 談龍記 (Speaking of dragons: essays) (Shanghai: 1927), 140; Tsi-an Hsia, "Aspects of the Power of Darkness in Lu Hsün," in idem, *The Gate of Darkness: Studies on the Leftist Literary Movement in China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), pp. 156-57.
114. Lu Xun, *Selected Works*, 1: 435.
115. Ibid., pp. 437-38.
116. Lu Xun, "Village Opera," in William A. Lyell, trans., *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), pp. 210-12.
117. Feng Zhi, *Lu Xun huiyi lu* (Memoir of Lu Xun) (Shanghai: Wenyi chubanshe, 1978), 1: 84.
118. Lu Xun 魯迅, *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 (Complete works of Lu Xun) (Shanghai: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1973), 13: 129.
119. LXQJ, 10: 231-35.
120. Lu Xun was not the only translator of Kuriyagawa's *Symbolism of Depression*. Feng Zikai's translation appeared about the same time as Lu's, in March 1925. See

Feng Zikai 豐子愷, trans. *Kumen de xiangzheng* 苦悶的象征 (Symbolism of depression) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1925).

121. Kuriyagawa Hakuson, "The Western Serpentine Sexuality," in Lǚ Jiao 綠蕉 and Liu Dajie [劉]大杰, trans., *Zouxian shizi jietou* 走向十字街頭 (Walking toward the crossroads) (Shanghai: Qizhi shuju, 1928).

122. The translation was finished on Feb. 18, 1925.

123. *The Women's Weekly*, supplement of *Jingbao*, no. 21, May 6, 1925.

124. Tai Jingnong 臺靜農, *Jiantazhe* 建塔者 (Pagoda builder), 1st ed. 1928 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984), pp. 121-25.

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