

A Landscape of Mind: Liu E's Treatment of Time and Space in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*

Daniel Y. Hou

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* in view of traditional Chinese travel writing and analyzes Liu E's treatment of time and space. It explores Liu E's perceived relationship between self, society, and country as expressed in various temporal and spatial relations in the novel. Liu E's treatment often is infused with urgent private concerns and his descriptions of various locations frequently serve the purpose of self-expression. For example, the scenes of the prologue address Liu E's worries about China's future and his unpleasant encounters in life, the view of Lake Ming conveys his ambition to draw a picture in words, and the scenery by the Yellow River expresses his qualms in the face of death as well as his pride for past achievements. Far beyond the merit of producing some highly realistic scenes as commented by some scholars, through his adopted journey motif Liu E has written *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* into a rich story text woven with complex intents and desires, rendering the allotted space inside his fiction as a landscape of mind.

KEY WORDS

Liu E 劉鶚, *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* 老殘遊記, *yu-chi* 遊記, Lake Ming 明湖, the Yellow River 黃河, travels, time, space, self



I. Introduction

The very title *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* indicates that its story contents will consist of a series of travel accounts, and in unfolding the events during Lao Ts'an's fictive journey Liu E (1857–1909) certainly has cast his protagonist in the image of a traveler.¹

The term *yu-chi*, namely travel recordings, in the original Chinese title *Lao Ts'an yu-chi*, in fact, refers to a particular literary genre or set of genres with certain features and traditions. Nonetheless, since this term was initially used by the T'ang scholar Liu Tsung-yuan 柳宗元 in a title of his travel prose, no clear precise definition has ever been drawn for confinement and qualification of this literary term. In this regard Leo Ou-fan Lee states:

The traditional Chinese travel literature (*yu-chi*) is a mixed genre clearly connected with both prose and poetry, it is a flexible form which reflects man's closeness to nature. The tradition of cosmological thinking, in which man and nature interact in a harmonious universe, provides rich ground for the *yu-chi* writers to achieve artistic blending, in varying degrees, of subjective and objective elements. Thus we find a wide range of writing from the poetic depictions of natural beauty, in which a Taoistic impulse of eremitism is manifest, to the encyclopedic accounts of environmental and geographic data. (282)²

In spite of lacking a clearly drawn definition, *yu-chi* traditionally

means travel recordings that are written, often in a prose diary form, by literati since the T'ang, Sung, and later periods. During the T'ang dynasty, for example, Han Yu 韓愈, Li Ao 李翱, and Yuan Chieh 元結 wrote a few travel accounts.³ But it was not until Liu Tsung-yuan penned his "Eight Records of Yung Prefecture" 永州八記, depicting excursions into remote areas during his exile in Yung Prefecture, that the term *yu-chi* was coined and later travel writers found a paradigm for imitation. In the Sung period, famous travel accounts continued to abound. For instance, Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修 wrote "Tsui-weng-t'ing chi" 醉翁亭記 (The pavilion of an old drunkard), Fan Chung-yen 范仲淹 had "Yueh-yang-lou chi" 岳陽樓記 (The pavilion of Yueh-yang), and Wang An-shih 王安石 composed "Yu Pao-ch'an-shan chi" 遊褒禪山記 (The mountain where Monk Hui-pao meditated). Lu Yu 陸游 also wrote a travel diary, "Ju Shu chi" 入蜀記 (A journey into Shu [Szechwan]), and so did Fan Ch'eng-ta 范成大, who produced three excellent travel diaries: "Lan p'ei lu" 攬轡錄 (Register of grasping the carriage reins), "Ts'an luan lu" 驂鸞錄 (Register of mounting a simurgh), and "Wu ch'uan lu" 吳船錄 (Diary of a boat trip into the Wu region) which is particularly famous. Down to the Ming era, *yu-chi* writing was developed fully. Hsu Hung-tsu 徐宏祖, the first and most famous "professional" traveler in traditional China, wrote *Hsu Hsia-k'o yu-chi* 徐霞客遊記 (Travel diaries of Hsu Hsia-k'o) to accurately record his extensive geographic exploration into both familiar and little trodden landscapes in seventeenth-century China (Lee 283). Among these travelogues, as is often observed, writers not only take note of geographic and historical facts during excursions into remote provinces or alien lands, but they also express subjective opinions and personal interpretation of the visited sights, and display power of their individual imagination (Nienhauser 936–37).

Among traditional fiction, travel motifs frequently appear and at times this term *yu-chi* is even embedded into story titles. The most famous example is *Hsi-yu chi* 西遊記, translated as *The Journey to the West* in English, which drew its initial inspiration from the historical pilgrimage made by the eminent T'ang monk Tripitaka 三藏 to India in search of Buddhist sutras, and developed into a fantasy story depicting

imaginary monsters and Tripitaka's ordeals in exotic lands. Another popular travel story is *Hsi-yang chi* 西洋記 (Journeys to western oceans). Originally, this story depicts the Ming eunuch Cheng Ho's 鄭和 sea voyages to southeast Asia and then, again, turns into a fantasy featuring Cheng Ho's triumphant subjugation of ogrish barbarians to assert China's supremacy over neighboring lands. As for Li Ju-chen's 李汝珍 famous novel, *Ching-hua yuan* 鏡花緣 (Flowers in the mirror), it describes To Chiu-kung 多九公 and Li Chih-yang's 李之洋 journey throughout a series of fairylands and ends up with a sumptuous celebration of the T'ang dynasty's restoration. During the late-Ch'ing age, aside from Liu E's *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, many novelists also adopted travel motifs to construct stories. For example, Tseng P'u 曾樸 wrote his famed novel *Nieh-hai hua* 孽海花 (A flower in the sea of retribution), in which characters travel within China and to overseas countries. Another prolific novelist Wu Wo-yao 吳沃堯 even wrote several stories by making use of this motif, such as *Erh-shih-nien mu-tu chih kuai-hsien-chuang* 二十年目睹之怪現狀 (Strange events witnessed in past twenty years), *Chin shih-nien chih kuai-hsien-chuang* 近十年之怪現狀 (Strange events of the past decade), *Shanghai yu ts'an chi* 上海遊驂記 (Travel accounts of a roaming horse in Shanghai), and *Hen-hai* 恨海 (The sea of woes). As part of a rising fad for science fiction in that age, the writer Huang-chiang tiao-so 荒江釣叟 even imagined a travel story of Chinese people's departure from the earth to the moon for purposes of trans-planetary emigration.

Regarding this prevalent phenomenon of writing travel stories during the late-Ch'ing period, scholars have different interpretations. For example, Milena Doležlová-Velingerová notes that it reflects the very fact that China was in a process of modernization, and that Chinese people were endowed with increasing degrees of mobility and thus liberated from the old spatial confinement of one or limited loci as usually seen in traditional novels (9). Fan Cheng-yao 方正耀, also taking aspects of a changing society as well as new literary practices into consideration, asserts that two reasons account for the popularity of travel stories among late-Ch'ing writers. One reason is that the element of flexibility in travel stories allows novelists to employ an

episodic arrangement of the stories during serialization in newspapers or literary magazines. The other is that novelists, with attempts to imitate foreign fiction, could focus on only one or two major characters instead of whole hosts of characters as is the norm for traditional Chinese fiction and, via characters' encounters during journeys, novelists could build up story plots and organize their structures (271).

Ch'en P'ing-yuan 陳平原 also deals with aspects of this phenomenon in Chapter Eight of his *Erh-shih shih-chi Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih, 1897-1916* 二十世紀中國小說史, 1897-1916. He gives a more comprehensive study on novels with travel motifs and travelers' narrative functions in late-Ch'ing novels. According to him, among traditional fiction, travel stories in which travelers act as storytellers arose as a conspicuous phenomenon only during the late-Ch'ing time, and considerably transformed the narrative presentation of Chinese fiction. In Ch'en's view, characters' increased mobility and constant shifting of story background are indeed relevant to historical changes, but they are also intimately linked with authors' aesthetic pursuits in writing as well. He explains that authors, by adopting travelers to tell stories, can easily discard the traditional storyteller's omnipresent voice in novels, widen their scope of vision to explore formerly unseen vignettes in Chinese society as well as the world, and obtain structural coherence in their narratives through maintained control over limited points of view. Ch'en concludes that late-Ch'ing travel stories are designed to fulfill certain functions: to express themes of enlightenment, mend deficiency in records of official histories, provide narratives with limited points of view, achieve a sense of integration in novels, incorporate travel accounts into fiction, and investigate social malaises of that particular age.

In this paper, nonetheless, I will only pay attention to aspects of Liu E's treatment of time and space in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*—the so-called "chronotopic" dimensions, to borrow the Bakhtinian term—and focus my discussion on their relationships with Liu E's adopted travel motif for his story. My reason is that, as Ian Watt points out in *The Rise of the Novel*, an author's ideas will become particular only when both temporal and spatial circumstances are specified, and

characters of novels can be individualized only if they are cast in a special temporal and spatial background (21). Furthermore, in Leo Ou-fan Lee's article, he states that three levels of travel exist in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, namely an aesthetic trip through some memorable natural settings, an investigative tour of segments of late-Ch'ing society and local government, as well as a spiritual journey of self-discovery and self-revelation (284). My reading of the tempo-spatial dimensions in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* essentially expands on this line of interpretation, yet, to make discussion controllable, I will leave out Liu E's vehement castigation against the "pure officials" (*ch'ing-kuan* 清官) and his religio-philosophical exposition uttered in the Peach Blossom Mountain episode for other papers. In this paper, I follow Lao Ts'an's itinerary, his series of major chronotopic changes, from Teng-chou *fu* 登州府, Chi-nan *fu* 濟南府, Ts'au-chou *fu* 曹州府, to Ch'i-ho *hsien* 齊河縣 to present my exploration of Liu E's time and space treatment in his story.

After a scrutiny of Liu E's novel, I argue that far beyond the merit of simply producing a series of exquisite landscape representations often lauded by its commentators, the travel motif actually helps Liu E convey his wish for self-expression and address worries about his country and society. In particular, Liu E's tempo-spatial treatment in his story carries significant undertones: among his depiction of various sights, the spatial and temporal aspects from time to time blend into one another subtly, suggesting the author's urgent concerns. Liu E's landscapes, when seen from traditional literary perspectives, transcend a realistic resemblance to carry profound meanings for the author. Liu E's depiction of external realities embodies his inner qualms felt in the face of lurking threats of death, and crystallizes his cherished pride and sense of honor for past life. Although Lao Ts'an is cast in the image of a solitary traveler, in the process of story narration Lao Ts'an appears with no sense of loneliness at all. Sloughing off the drab atmosphere painted at the story's beginning, Lao Ts'an emerges as a figure who is neither "lao" 老 (old) nor "ts'an" 殘 (maimed). On the contrary, what he sets forth in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* is a portrait full of life that celebrates the joy of living and teems with jubilant youth and robust

vitality.

II. *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*: A Landscape of Mind

a. *Teng-chou fu*

The Travels of Lao Ts'an starts with a short paragraph:

The story tells that outside the East Gate of *Teng-chou fu*, in Shantung, there is a big hill called P'eng-lai Hill, and on this hill a pavilion called the P'eng-lai Pavilion. It is most imposing with its "painted roof-tree flying like a cloud" and its "bead screens rolled up like rain." To the west it overlooks the houses in the town, with mist hanging over ten thousand homes; to the east it overlooks the waves of the sea, undulating for a thousand *li*. It is a regular custom for the gentlemen of the town to take wine cups and wine with them to the pavilion and spend the night there, to be ready the next morning before it is light to watch the sun come up out of the sea.

(3)

In *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, Edward W. Said states: "Beginning is not only a kind of action; it is also a frame of mind, a kind of work; an attitude, a consciousness" (xi). How a novel starts, in his eyes, is hardly incidental but results from a purposeful choice. A beginning is a point for a novel to embark upon something that is closely connected to a designated point of departure; a beginning is always the first step from which something will follow spontaneously; and a beginning definitely plays a crucial role, even if it is not clearly understood (xii). Thus Said asserts: a beginning is a special designation, "a moment in time, a place, a principle, or an action," and is "designated in order to indicate, clarify or define a *later* time, place, or action"; in brief, a beginning is "the first step in the intentional production of meaning" (5). When read in such light, the opening paragraph of *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, as Liu E's point of departure for a transmuted life story which is heavily studded with silhouetted past

events, is certainly pregnant with meanings.⁴

To begin with, Liu E's selection of the locale Teng-chou as the background for his story's start catches our attention because it brings forth rich connotations. Since olden days Teng-chou has been known for mirages that appear over the sea surface during certain seasons of a year. For example, the famous Sung poet Su Shih 蘇軾 once wrote this poem "The Ocean Mirage at Teng-chou" ("Teng-chou hai-shih" 登州海市) to mark his experience and sentiment after witnessing the mirages in 1085. His first two stanzas read:

In the cloudy sea off to the east,
 There is emptiness on emptiness,
 Where immortal hosts appear and vanish
 In an empty radiance.

As this drifting world is swept along
 There are thousands of images born,
 But how could there really be cowry gates
 Hiding palaces of pearls? (Owen, *An Anthology* 672)⁵

However, in numerous depictions of mirages seen at Teng-chou, as is meaningfully intimated in Su Shih's stanzas, the distant ethereal apparitions with brief duration often provoke writers' feelings of emptiness and intangibility in mind that easily lead to morose sentiments borne of reflections upon their own ephemeral existence in a mundane world. Such a feeling of desolation is explicitly displayed in Su Shih's concluding stanzas for his poem:

In thousands of miles of dying sunlight
 A lone bird sinks away,
 Then all I see is the sapphire sea
 Polishing its green bronze.

This new poem of mine and its fancy words,
 Have they any more point than this?—

They will join it, change and vanish away
 Along with the eastern wind. (673)⁶

Manifest in these two stanzas, Su Shih laments that his fancy words used to describe the anomaly of ocean mirages at Teng-chou will eventually disappear, just as his human existence will also change and vanish along with the gushing winds.

In Liu E's opening paragraph another locale P'eng-lai 蓬萊 also deserves our close attention. Particularly this place name is mentioned twice, lending it a prominent position within the paragraph. According to numerous legends, myths, and imaginary works from the past, P'eng-lai is understood as a paradise island which is inhabited by immortals and located somewhere in the remote eastern oceans. Thus the term P'eng-lai usually stands for a fantasized utopia and a symbol of longevity and eternity. At this point we must take heed of one commentary Liu E himself gives on Chapter One, then we will realize that his choice of the location P'eng-lai assigned at his story's start is exceptionally full of meanings. Liu E comments:

Pai Chu-yi 白居易 says: "Once I was an official waiting upon the Jade Emperor at his desk. Although banished, I am still allowed to live at P'eng-lai." The *Travels of Lao Ts'an* begins with the P'eng-lai Pavilion, so we can tell its protagonist is also an immortal official banished into the mundane world. (12)⁷

Such a remark, as the first item among Liu E's fiction comments on his own work, puts us on alert speculating what might be his possible motives, leads us to recall various significant associations, inside as well as outside *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, and raises a train of questions. In the act of appointing a tramp doctor as his fictional *alter ego*, does Liu E insinuate his being stripped of the official title *chih-fu* 知府 in reality that occurred only a few years before he set upon writing his shadowed life story? Liu E's comment also helps shed new light on our understanding of various layers of meanings in Monk Lan Ts'an's 懶殘 story.⁸ Seemingly Lan Ts'an's tale is not told merely to

provide a genesis of the nickname “Lao Ts’an” for the novel’s protagonist to be named after. When mentioning the story about an extraordinary mendicant monk, does Liu E proclaim a conceited appraisal of his unusual talents and imply that Lao Ts’an—and the author himself by extension—is much like a banished deity, whose sojourn in the human world bears the resemblance of an exilic journey? Or, to interpret Liu E’s ambiguous remark from another angle, does his thoughtful note on a “banished deity” emphasize the “abandoned” aspect, suggestive of those unpleasant encounters in real life which are so mournfully and concretely represented in his allegorical dream? By this expression “banished deity,” is Liu E referring to the stigma of being labeled as “traitor” to his motherland, his good will misunderstood and rejected by his countrymen, and those repeated failures in enterprises despite his possession of exceptional abilities and far-seeing vision?

Reading the opening paragraph and its correspondent comment on *The Travels of Lao Ts’an* in light of their significant associations, then from the very start Liu E has already infused a highly elegiac tone into his story. In this beginning he gives a note of lamentation over transient nature of human life, and disillusion about the impalpable qualities that underlie human existence. His beginning also emits a feeling of bitterness towards the unpleasant encounters and unjustified treatment of him during his earlier life. What’s more, his story beginning also sounds like a rueful reproach of himself for wasting talents and failing to exert his endowed gifts to the full. Overall, Liu E’s meaningful beginning evokes a forlorn sense of loss and displacement, mourning over living at a wrong time and at a wrong place.

The geographic setting Liu E adopted to start *The Travels of Lao Ts’an* is ambiguous, so is his temporal treatment at that point of departure. Seemingly, in an attempt to echo his spatial setting, Liu E gives no clear indication with regard to the temporal background for his story’s beginning. In the second paragraph of Chapter One, he briefly introduces his protagonist: “It is further told that there was once a traveler called Lao Ts’an. His family name was T’ieh . . .” (3). After reading this passage, Liu E’s purposeful evasion to designate a finite

temporal framework for his story reminds us that his treatment is following the practice seen in some traditional novels—among them the most renowned is *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hung-lou meng* 紅樓夢)—that never give tangible clues for their temporal settings from beginning to end. Nevertheless, the special social milieu where Liu E was situated makes us think twice whether his intentional dodge of clear time references could be out of pragmatic consideration, a similar reason for some preceding novelists. His erasure of temporal background might be a savvy maneuver of writing, as it helps avoid potential troubles in an age rife with turbulence and unpredictability, particularly for a novel studded with blatant political allusions and for a writer whose extravagant lifestyle and ignominious past always bring up topics of controversy.

Although no explicit temporal setting is indicated at the story's beginning, in what follows many clues are revealed to help us pinpoint a very specific timeframe for *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*. With the story's unfolding, we can discern that the duration of the story is meant for a recording of what happens within one year approximately: from Lao Ts'an's visit to Teng-chou in early spring to the moment before the arrival of lunar New Year. The story's major events actually take place between the autumnal solstice and the New Year, with the first half of the year only mentioned in passing within a couple of paragraphs. Also, in spite of Liu E's deliberate elusion of specific time reference at the story's opening, many hints scattered within the fictional contents intimately correspond to the author's contemporary surroundings. As is pointed out by C. T. Hsia in a bibliographical note, "In the *Hsiu-hsiang Hsiao-shuo* version and its commentaries no disguise for Yu Hsien and Chang Yao has been attempted by substituting 玉 for 毓 and 莊 for 張" (*"The Travels"* 61).⁹ By taking real names from contemporary political figures, Liu E has made his readers clearly aware that the temporal setting of his fiction is rooted in their contemporary age and those events dealt with inside his novel refer to none other than current issues. Furthermore, during Lao Ts'an's nightly chat with Huang Jen-jui, Huang Jen-jui once tells Lao Ts'an that he arrived in Chi-nan in the year of *keng-yin*, 1890, and the catastrophic man-made flood occurred

in the *chi-ch'ou* year, 1889. Therefore, on the basis of these tangible clues, we can infer that their conversation ought to take place in 1891.¹⁰

Liu E's insinuation to the contemporary age, preoccupation with current issues, and revelation of his own past are most manifest in his allegorical dream put inside the story's prologue. Indeed, as scholars often point out, Liu E's dream is in the form of a complete and concrete political allegory, which sets forth observation and opinions about contemporary situations that his country and countrymen are facing. But Liu E's allegorical dream has, in fact, also provided him with a venue to present a condensed life story and give out lamentation that life is really like a dream.

The spatial setting in Liu E's dream is full of symbolic meanings that refer to vital issues of his age. While telling this dream, even before the symbolic ship of China appears in the ocean, the ambiance Liu E creates for geographic settings of the dream has already been filled with profound significance. In the company of Te Hui-sheng and Wen Chang-po, Lao Ts'an wishes to see a sunrise above the horizon; nonetheless, the desired magnificent sunrise, indicative of a bright future, is nowhere to be found at that moment; on the contrary, what encounters them is only the sight of turbulent waters surrounded by a suffocating atmosphere. The weather is windy and gloomy, with a leaden sky overcast by foreboding clouds. Liu E describes these clouds:

The clouds in the sky were piled up, one layer upon another. In the north was one big bank of cloud that floated to the middle of the sky and pressed down upon the clouds that were already there, and then began to crowd more and more upon a layer of cloud in the east until the pressure seemed insufferable. The whole spectacle was most ominous. A little later the sky became a shining strip of red. (6)

As a matter of fact, via the depiction of ominous clouds, Liu E, writing his novel in 1903, is referring to accumulation of tension between Russia (the clouds from the north) and Japan (the clouds of the east) in Manchuria; and through "a shining strip of red" he predicts an

imminent outburst of confrontation between these two powers that indeed took place in 1904.

Liu E's depiction of the ship of China stranded in stormy weather is unmistakably meant to relate to the grim reality. He describes this battered old ship undulating in rough waves:

After about an hour the boat was so near that by looking closely through their telescopes the three men could see that it was a fairly large boat, about twenty-three or twenty-four *chang* long. The captain was sitting on the poop, and below the poop were four men in charge of the helm. There were six masts with old sails and two new masts, one with a completely new sail and the other with a rather worn one, in all eight masts. (7)

Then Liu E continues to describe salient features of this ship:

It was a great ship, twenty-three or twenty-four *chang* long, but there were many places in which it was damaged. On the east side was a gash about three *chang* long, into which the waves were pouring with nothing to stop them. Farther to the east was another bad place about a *chang* long through which the water was seeping more gradually. No part of the ship was free from scars. The eight men looking after the sail were doing their duty faithfully, but each one looked after his own sail as though each of the eight was on a separate boat: they were not working together at all. (7)

As frequently pointed out by scholars, Liu E's ship refers to conditions of his contemporary China with remarkable accuracy. In his presentation of the allegorized ship Liu E's depiction is both geographic and political, also including different social strata, uprisings, and dissension. Various implications of China's situation in the allegory are clearly indicated by Harold Shadick in his notes. Shadick states, "The whole description of the boat . . . is symbolic of the Chinese ship of state. The twenty-three or twenty-four *chang* represent the twenty-three or twenty-four provinces into which China

was divided before the revolution of 1911.” For the meanings of the crew, he notes, “The captain is the Emperor. The four helmsmen are the four Grand Secretaries or perhaps the members of the *Chun-Chi Ch’u* or Grand Council of State.” As for implications of the masts, Shadick explains, “The Six masts with old sails are the six boards, or government departments. Of the two new masts the one with slightly worn sails is probably the *Tsungli Yamen* or Foreign Office, which was created in 1861,” and “The new mast with new sails is probably the *Haichun Yamen* or Board of Admiralty, created in 1890.”¹¹ He continues, “The men looking after each mast are the two presidents of each board, one a Chinese and the other a Manchu” (238–39). Yet, apart from a political dimension of contemporary China, Liu E’s presentation of the ship is also highly geographic. This aspect is also noted by Shadick on physical features of this ship. Shadick writes, “The gash three *chang* long represents Manchuria, usually referred to in China as the Three Eastern Provinces. At the beginning of the twentieth century these were already threatened by Japan and Russia,” and “The other ‘bad place to the east’ is Shantung, already threatened by Germany and Great Britain” (238–39).

Reading varied temporal and spatial implications put into meanings of this allegory, Liu E’s choice of an “ocean” as the fundamental locale to present his prologue becomes an intriguing subject worthy of our attention. At first glance, his use of an ocean as the very background is the most natural befitting locus to carry a ship of China; as well, the depicted stormy weather has ominously forecast a sense of danger over the vast waters, with numerous unpredictable threats constantly awaiting. But it is precisely through the medium of a hostile ocean that Liu E is able to deliver his critical message—the crises and plight that China is facing result less from outside intrusion and encroachment by foreign powers than from domestic strife and discord, particularly embodied in the dissension and mutiny of those radical revolutionaries.

If this allegorical ocean is a sea of sorrow and plight, then it does not simply refer to China and her people but this ocean, to a great extent, also becomes a locus of interior turbulence and agitation, a reflection of

Liu E's state of mind. In this allegorized tableau, Lao Ts'an's actions and consequent changes of positions speak volumes for the author's psychological states. Standing inside a pavilion on a promontory that overlooks the ocean, Lao Ts'an's position subtly intimates a state of marginalized existence of bordering on two entities—solid ground on one side and a mercurial sea on the other. Lao Ts'an's elevated position tacitly echoes Liu E's evaluation of Lao Ts'an's worth as a "banished deity" in disguise, who is abandoned to the human world. But Lao Ts'an's position of being on the edge has even more lucidly highlighted an interior ambivalence and turmoil that Liu E himself might have constantly faced in reality—his hesitation, qualms, and misgivings about his repeated endeavors and failures to rescue China. Lao Ts'an's eventually making up his mind and taking actions to save the ship concretely bespeaks Liu E's ultimate resolution. Lao Ts'an's moves from solid ground to mercurial waters, from security to unpredictability, from a cautious distance to total engagement, and from a mind of imperturbability to a state of furor indicate Liu E's ultimate decision of taking immediate measures and completely tossing off personal concerns. In possession of superior intelligence and broad vision, when seeing China in jeopardy, Liu E can no longer stand aside but wants to take pains rescuing his country and consign himself to flounder in a sea of plight along with the masses. Then, the denouement for this dream—Lao Ts'an's being rejected by his countrymen and drowned in an ocean of sorrow—not only reflects those fatal blows to Liu E's past endeavors to save China, but also emits his elegiac conclusive note for bygone years, a sign that life indeed resembles a dream.

Speaking of dreams, then another conspicuous statement made by Liu E in his Preface for the Sequel to *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* deserves our attention.¹² In the voice of The Scholar of a Hundred Temperings from Hungtu (Hung-tu pai-lien-sheng 鴻都百鍊生), Liu E begins his preface by posing a question to his readers as well as himself: "People say that life and dreams are alike. But, is human life really like a dream? Could it be simply a groundless parable made up by Chuang Tzu? I really don't know." Then in the following passages, imitative of Chuang Tzu's philosophical parables, The Scholar of a Hundred

Temperings from Hungtu sets out upon his quest by asking different wise men for answers. Chao-ming (The Brilliance) replies that the undeniable existence of various materials in his surroundings gives solid proof of his existent self, which is surely unlike dreams that do not contain any tangible substance. Later Yao-ming (The Immense) answers him: the existence of his self is only a minimal residue from his fifty years of past life that have already fled away swiftly, and surely so will his next fifty years in the coming future. Since there is no difference between the past and the future, Yao-ming thus concludes that human life is equivalent to a dream (225–26).¹³

In the third paragraph of the Preface, The Scholar of a Hundred Temperings from Hungtu ends up his quest:

Constantly shifting like phantasmagoria, sentiment and contents of a dream can hardly be regained and I, who am telling stories of the dream, am much like its residue. After a period of one hundred years, I wonder where I will be; I am afraid that by that time, although with one hundred years of dreamlike stories in memory, I might be no longer here to tell all the stories. One hundred years of human life is really emptier than a single dream! (226)

After uttering lamentation over the futility of worldly pursuits, The Scholar of a Hundred Temperings from Hungtu concludes,

Although I cannot retain my past fifty years of time, yet all the alarming, joyful, laudable, and mournful events from the past are still deeply kept in my memory refusing to slip into oblivion. I cannot forget the alarming, joyful, laudable, and mournful events from my bygone fifty years of dreamlike life. Neither will my dreams, which occurred during those fifty years and carried their own alarming, joyful, laudable, and mournful memories. My dreams also refuse to be forgotten. Since I cannot forget my past fifty years laden with their dreams, this is why I continue to write the Sequel to *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*. (226)

Leaving aside the potential philosophical import involved in his presentation of parables, in this Preface Liu E deftly and inseparably weaves together dreams, life, his past, personal sentiments, as well as his current writing. Yet, in the act of writing about past events, stories fetched from his once-lived life render him strong dreamlike feelings. Thus, similarly, Liu E's arrangement of an allegorical dream put at the very beginning of Text Proper of *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* cannot be incidental at all; rather, it is a purposeful device borne out of intricate design. His dream is a summary: it is his retrospective stare at past years, a recapitulation of unforgettable memories, as well as an encapsulation of his alarming, joyful, laudable and mournful life stories.

Liu E's Preface and the allegorical dream indicate that Liu E's past memories still tenaciously occupy his mind and constitute an onerous burden upon his psyche. It is clear that while writing both the Text Proper and the Sequel, Liu E has keenly felt conscious of the arrival of old age and a foreseeable end to his life. In one diary entry written on February 1st, 1908, Liu E states that the fiftieth year of age is the very threshold of entering into states of senility (Liu Te-lung 281). Thus, we can infer that while writing *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* Liu E is writing an adumbrated life story under the lurking shadow of death. Liu E's act of storytelling, engraving inalienable memories onto paper, narration of past events, and laying bare his private world to the public mean significantly to Liu E himself. *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* works as his means to bid farewell to bygone days and carve an indelible niche for the future; yet his writing also serves a therapeutic purpose of helping him remove the onus of haunting memories, and relieve anxiety over ineluctable old age and hovering shadows of death.

b. Chi-nan fu

After Lao Ts'an wakes up from his dream and arrives in the provincial capital Chi-nan in Chapter Two, it is Liu E's beginning of traditional *yu-chi* (travel accounts) writing for *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*. Expressing wishes to visit the scenic Lake Ming and taking his leave from the major-domo of the Huang household, Lao Ts'an sets out upon

his journey. The story depicts pleasant views that Lao Ts'an sees on his way to the capital:

The road was among autumn hills covered with red leaves and gardens full of chrysanthemums so that he did not feel at all lonely. When he reached Tsinanfu [Chi-nan *fu*] and entered the city gate, the houses with their springs and the courtyards with their weeping willows seemed to him even more attractive than the scenery of Chiangnan. (13)

With its cheerful tone and brisk style of depiction, this brief passage marks a departure from the former gloomy presentation in Chapter One and introduces the beginning of Liu E's different type of narration in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*. For his ensuing landscape descriptions—where Liu E demands readers to also read his travel accounts—esthetic appreciation of nature and careful delineation of various sights, although fictionalized, show how traditional *yu-chi* works are read and appreciated. In his attached fiction criticism on Chapter Three, Liu E notes: “The first half of Chapter Two should be read as ‘The Travel Account of Lake Ming,’ while the former half of this chapter is tantamount to a recording of ‘Famous Springs in Chi-nan *fu*’” (32).

Once Lao Ts'an arrives at Lake Ming, Liu E depicts the beautiful scenery through Lao Ts'an's eyes:

When he reached the T'ieh Kung Temple Lao Ts'an looked toward the south and saw facing him on the Thousand Buddha Hill groups of monastic buildings among the gray-green pines and blue-green cypresses. The trees were crowded together, some red with a fiery red, others white with the white of snow, some indigo blue, others jade green, a few patches of maple red showing among the rest. It was as though a great painting by the Sung artist Chao Ch'ien-li had been made into a screen several tens of *li* long.

He sighed with sheer delight. Suddenly the sound of a fisherman's song reached him. He bent his head to see where the sound came

from and found that the Ming Lake had become as smooth and clear as a mirror. The Thousand Buddha Hill was reflected in the lake and appeared with perfect clarity. The buildings, the terraces, and the trees down there were extraordinarily gay and varied and seemed even more beautiful and clear than the hill above. He knew that beyond the south shore of the lake was a busy street, but a bank of reeds completely concealed it. It was now their blossom time, and the stretch of white bloom reflecting the vapor-filled beams of the setting sun was like a rose-colored velvet carpet forming a cushion between the hill above and the hill below. It was indeed a fascinating sight. (13-14)

It is indeed a fascinating view that flows from Liu E's pen in the style of traditional travel writings. Liu E's depicted landscape presents to us a rendering full of visual audible delight and ebullient with poetic feelings. In this description Liu E's eyes not only see those Buddhist temples which tower among thick foliage of trees and rise above a cushion of reeds in full blossom, but his ears also hearken to the sound that is melodiously sent out of and contained within the scenery. The note heard from a distant fisherman tending daily chores breaks the lull of tranquility over Lake Ming, and enlivens the charming landscape in a sudden. The fisherman's leisurely singing amplifies the idyllic aura of the lake and blends ingredients of human interest into the natural settings. However, no sooner has the singing broken the slumberous silence than it recedes, only leaving the landscape in a new trance of serenity and clarity. After the singing voice trails away, Liu E depicts, Lake Ming is "as smooth and clear as a mirror" and "the Thousand Buddha Hill was reflected in the lake and appeared with perfect clarity."

Liu E's presentation of Lake Ming scene is truly charming, ornate, and pastoral, and provides readers with abundant visual as well as audible delight; yet, we also find that such scenery has a purposeful design in mind. First of all, we must take notice that in this passage on Lake Ming, Liu E's writing about landscape in an elaborate "*yu-chi*" style has a manner of depiction and tone that is very different from his

landscape writings in later chapters. In his ensuing depictions, Liu E uses a totally new mode of vernacular description, with highly graphic imagery and minute firsthand observation, to describe various scenes of nature, the icebound Yellow River in particular. But for this passage, aimed to portray an enthralling view at Lake Ming, it creates the impression that Liu E is attempting to paint a traditional landscape scroll which is framed in poetic language and put inside a novel composed in vernacular prose. Liu E's depiction of Lake Ming scenery is embedded with many traditional images, stock phrases, and trite expressions that are easily fetched from inscriptions on traditional landscape paintings and readily regurgitated by memory from the rich quarry of poetic traditions.

It would not be too difficult for a traditional painter to lay out a scene on paper according to this description, or for a literatus to compose a poem to inscribe upon such a painting. Reflected through Lao Ts'an's eyes, Liu E states in his story that the beautiful sight of Lake Ming can be compared to "a great painting by the Sung artist Chao Ch'ien-li," which has "been made into a screen several tens of *li* long." Nonetheless, in the self-evaluation put in his attached commentary, Liu E notes on his Lake Ming depiction with self-congratulation for its remarkable achievement. Adopting the voice of an independent fiction critic, Liu E remarks: "The author says: 'The scene at Lake Ming is like a picture made by Chao Ch'ien-li.' Yet I would rather say that what has been ably pictured by the author in this story might be completely impossible to paint by that Sung artist" (22). In this piece of comment, Liu E brazenly displays his sense of achievement and satisfaction in his capacity of fully representing Lake Ming's pulchritude and in his phenomenal literary skills under a command of dexterous hands.

In comparison with works left by other travelers who also visited Lake Ming, Liu E's beautiful description of Lake Ming emerges like a product of aesthetic imagination, instead of a record of experiences. In several of his other landscape descriptions in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, such as the view at the Golden Thread Spring, the lotus ponds with ancient inscriptions at the T'ieh Kung Shrine, and particularly his vivid

picture of the wintry Yellow River, Liu E shows a strong bent for realistic representation to portray landscapes. Yet, as mentioned by Hu Shih 胡適 in a prefatory article, Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei's 蔡元培 daughter also toured Lake Ming by using *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* as her guidebook, but the moment when she read this sentence, "The Thousand Buddha Hill was reflected in the lake and appeared with perfect clarity," she could not help laughing out loud at Liu E's apparent error in depiction. According to her, Liu E's mistake is too obvious to ignore not only because the lake surface is covered with overgrown reeds, but also because a reflection of The Thousand Buddha Hill on Lake Ming is essentially impossible in reality (394). Her findings can be well supported by another earlier travel account. Even one hundred years before Liu E's time, during Emperor Chia-ch'ing's regime, Lake Ming was already covered with immense spans of reeds, as is clearly indicated in Huang Yueh's 黃鉞 travel recording (Lao 41). In his preface, Hu Shih wonders if Liu E committed such an egregious error due to his fading and blurred memories (394). However, highlighted by Liu E's comment on the depicted Lake Ming scenery and his feelings of satisfaction for his literary achievement, all suggest that his "mistake" might not be the result of a slip of memory but rather of purposeful design with an eye to creating beautiful effects for the *yu-chi* account contained within his novel. Reading Liu E's landscape depiction in such light, then his lake scene is no different from an artificial work that has been actively selected, edited, cut, and pasted onto pages from his remnant memories about Lake Ming. By manipulation of a writer's sleight of hand Liu E paints a delicate picture for his lake view, embellishes his travel story with literary glamour, and hopes to provoke empathetic responses from the readers through his aesthetic imagination.

Aside from the fondness of ancient music, antique books, poetry, and methods for flood control, through depiction of Lao Ts'an's sojourn in Chi-nan, Liu E shows aspects of his interest in and reverence for sites of cultural heritage that build a continual linkage between the past and the present. In addition to paying a visit to those sites concerned with Emperor Shun, while touring around Lake Ming and

famous springs in Chi-nan, Lao Ts'an's eyes also avidly search for relics which carry interesting anecdotes and historical significance. For example, at the Golden Spring Academy, Lao Ts'an pays attention to the famed T'ou-hsia Well (Linchpins-throwing well) where Ch'en Tsun of the Western Han dynasty allegedly entertained his guests. According to the amusing story told by locals, because of Ch'en Tsun's exuberant hospitality, in an effort to detain guests longer he ordered his servants to throw the linchpins of his guests' carriages into that well. Long derived from this historical anecdote, it explains how that well gets its peculiar designation. Moreover, at Lihsia Pavilion by the shore of Lake Ming, Lao Ts'an reads an inscribed couplet left by the great T'ang poet Tu Fu:

In Lihsia this pavilion is the oldest;
In [Chi-nan] there are many famous scholars. (13)¹⁴

Tu Fu's couplet is a solid testimony for the time-honored charm of this pavilion, and it also immensely enhances glamour of that site when viewed from a cultural and literary perspective.

Lao Ts'an's visit to those springs and Lake Ming turns out to be a journey of "*lan-ku*" 覽古 —namely, contemplating antiquity (Strassberg 25). At those spots cultural relics are harmoniously juxtaposed with and blended into scenic beauty, particularly during Lao Ts'an's trip to Lake Ming. It is an excursion to a place where literary traditions have richly accumulated and where the encounter with nature is "inextricably linked with language and history" (Strassberg 6). Following the footprints of preceding poets, calligraphers, and scholars, Lao Ts'an's visit to the same historical loci is his way of leaving his own mark at those famed spots in which numerous literati have also paid their visits centuries or even millennia ago. While verifying accuracy of preceding literati's statements or chiming in with their appraisal of the scenic sites, Lao Ts'an's visit is also his act of sharing views and pleasure that his predecessors experienced at those locations. As such, his trip to the culturally significant loci constitutes an intimate unbroken linkage with the past. At those sites a steady flow of time

goes on; the former literati's joyful experience and sentiment are avidly rekindled and relived by Lao Ts'an without interruption. By the same token Liu E is clearly aware that, through his inscription of Lao Ts'an's fictive journey and his exquisite delineation of Lake Ming and its adjacent surroundings, in consequence his travel accounts will also be incorporated into a cultural collective memory, a corpus of texts to appreciate and praise the beauty of that renowned lake.¹⁵

In Liu E's depiction of Lao Ts'an's travels, the Provincial *Yamen* 衙門 of Chi-nan *fu* is also seen as a place of interest, not only for being the spot where the famous Pearl Spring is located but also for its archaic buildings and rich historical background. In a short paragraph of Chapter Three, Liu E writes about Lao Ts'an's entry into the Provincial *Yamen*:

Wearing his ordinary clothes, Lao Ts'an went with Kao Shao-yin to the Provincial *Yamen*. Now this Shantung Provincial *Yamen* was formerly the palace of Prince Ch'i of the Ming dynasty, and many parts of it still keep the old names. They reached the third hall, called the Entrance to the Palace. To one side was Kao Shao-yin's office; opposite it was the room where the governor signed official documents. (37)

Then, in his attached commentary on Chapter Three, Liu E writes,

The Provincial *Yamen* of Chi-nan *fu* is allegedly the Palace of Prince Ch'i during the Ming dynasty. Inside the *yamen* those names of various buildings, such as East Morning-meeting House, West Morning-meeting House, Entrance to the Palace, Eastern Palace, Western Palace, Five-phoenixes Tower, and Five-dynasties Gate, are derived from names in ancient days and continue to be used nowadays. (32)

In the voice of a veteran tour guide, his fiction commentary along with the story excerpt bespeaks Liu E's thorough knowledge about specific appellations, compartmental layout, and historical background of the

Provincial *Yamen* in Chi-nan. In so doing, Liu E not only shows that he is well versed with that particular site, but he also highlights the aspect of “truthfulness” in his geographic depictions for his readers. His emphasis on the element of truthfulness in landscape presentation is echoed in his claim regarding the wintry Yellow River scene in Chapter Twelve. In his commentary written on that scene, Liu E shows proud confidence in his vividly detailed presentation of an icebound Yellow River, which is, he believes, uniquely different from views of the river during any other season. In addition to Liu E’s stress on verisimilitude for representation of the Provincial *Yamen*, there also exists another amusing dimension that lies beneath his sketch of this government institute. Under Liu E’s pen, this Provincial *Yamen* has been totally stripped of its austere façade and no longer seems to be the place where justice and punishment are meted out on a daily basis. Instead, with its reputed spring and eminent long history, this Provincial *Yamen* appears as an ordinary and even amicable place hardly different from other renowned tourist destinations of Chi-nan *fu*.

c. Ts’ao-chou *fu*

In contrast to the provincial *yamen* of Chi-nan, the “pure official” Yu Hsien’s *yamen* in Ts’ao-chou *fu* is a gruesome and intimidating entity in Lao Ts’an’s eyes. Before Lao Ts’an sets out upon his journey to Ts’ao-chou, during his sojourn in Chi-nan, Lao Ts’an has already heard much praise as well as critical condemnation of Yu Hsien’s administration. Thus, because “seeing is believing,” Lao Ts’an decides to take a trip to Ts’ao-chou for finding out the truth in person. On his way to Ts’ao-chou, what he hears and sees only increases his belief that Yu Hsien is not so much a “pure official” as a governor of extreme cruelty. However, standing in front of Yu Hsien’s *yamen*, the sight Lao Ts’an sees there confuses him:

After [Lao Ts’an] had eaten, he went to the gate of the *yamen* to see what he could see and he found that the main gate was hung with red silk. There were indeed twelve wooden cages by the gate, but all were empty; there was not a single person in them. Greatly

surprised he said to himself, "Surely all the accounts I heard on the road were not false!" (62)

Lao Ts'an's perplexity is soon cleared up by Shen Tung-tsao, who informs him that Yu Hsien, thanks to his excellent administration at Ts'ao-chou *fu*, has been recommended by Governor Chuang for promotion to a higher position. Thus for three days prisoners are temporarily released from the wooden cages so that people can go to congratulate and celebrate with Yu Hsien for his promotion.

In light of Shen Tung-tsao's words explaining the unusual sight at Yu Hsien's *yamen* and Lao Ts'an's realization of the deeper truth about the nature of Yu Hsien's government, Liu E's depiction of the prefectural *yamen* turns out to be an understatement charged with a sense of irony and an undertone of horror. These twelve empty wooden cages for execution stand in stark contrast to the bright red silk cheerfully hung at the *yamen*'s gate, and the absence of evidence for cruelty only heightens the undeniable existence and severity of it. The initially misleading sight at Yu Hsien's *yamen* is a forcible verification of the rumors that Lao Ts'an hears at the tavern and a reconfirmation of people's misery which he personally witnesses on the road. The sight is also an implicit criticism by Liu E that the masses' suffering will only be incessantly prolonged and enormously aggravated with Yu Hsien's promotion to a higher government post.

d. Ch'i-ho *hsien*

When Lao Ts'an travels to Ch'i-ho prefecture, he is stopped at banks of the Yellow River by harsh weather that brought huge chunks of ice flowing down and blocking up the river. During Lao Ts'an's forced sojourn at a local tavern, Liu E presents us with his most innovative and exquisite landscape description for *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*. His detailed vivid portrayal of the wintry Yellow River has long caught critics' attention and already won their frequent praise; moreover, because of its outstanding literary merits, Liu E's Yellow River depiction is often excerpted as a sample prose work to be included in high school textbooks for students to emulate.

Many scholars regard the verisimilar aspect of Liu E's description and his innovative use of vernacular language in this scene as the most remarkable achievement in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*; some scholars even infer that Liu E's realistic depiction must have borrowed writing techniques from Western novels, particularly those written during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries in Europe. In his prefatory article, Hu Shih states that Liu E's highly descriptive language in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* is his most important contribution to the history of Chinese literature and that, particularly in the Yellow River scene, thanks to firsthand minute observation and fresh creative use of the vernacular, Liu E is able to present a most lively picture of a river in winter (392–94). Based upon Liu E's landscape depiction, along with the mention of Sherlock Holmes in his story, some scholars speculate that Liu E's realistic mode of landscape presentation must have drawn inspiration from foreign novels introduced into China around his age. Shih Meng 時萌 made such suggestions in his article published in 1986. Yuan Ti-yung 袁荻涌, in one article written in 1995, provides even more analyses and explanation in support of this speculation. Yuan agrees with Hu Shih that Liu E's descriptive landscape writing is his most crucial contribution to the development of Chinese fiction. Yuan further surmises that Liu E's acceptance of Western science enhances his ability at close observation, and influences from translated realistic and science fiction render Liu E more capable of using detailed specific language to delineate subtle shapes, movements, and sound of his targeted subjects (104).

If one reads Liu E's verbal geographic illustration from the perspective of traditional Chinese literature, however, his landscapes can easily transcend a façade of realistic representation. They are intently charged with emotion able to reveal profound meanings that go beyond simply being an act of mimetic endeavor. Liu E's scenery, in fact, reflects keenly-felt personal concerns.

Before we start to explore the emotional dimensions in Liu E's landscape, we must take heed of the fact that Liu E's technique in realistic depiction of landscapes might not be entirely an imitation of foreign novels; instead, they could also be derived from indigenous

resources. In addition to Ch'en P'ing-yuan's observation about late-Ch'ing novelists' attempt to incorporate *yu-chi* accounts into fiction, concrete examples of landscape presentation in a realistic mode can also be found in traditional vernacular stories. One salient example is taken from Wu Ching-tzu's 吳敬梓 work, *The Scholars* (*Ju-lin wai-shih* 儒林外史). In the first chapter, Wu Ching-tzu depicts a pastoral scene that gives the key character, Wang Mien, inspiration to become a painter:

One sultry day in early summer, tired after leading the buffalo to graze, he sat down on the grass. Suddenly dense clouds gathered and there was a heavy shower of rain. Then the black storm clouds fringed with fleecy white drifted apart, and the sun shone through, bathing the whole lake in crimson light. The hills by the lake were blue, violet and emerald. The trees, freshly washed by the rain, were a lovelier green than ever. Crystal drops were dripping from a dozen lotus buds in the lake, while beads of water rolled about the leaves. (Hsia, *The Classic* 215)

Liu E's adoption of a realistic mode to present the Yellow River scenery could have in part drawn inspiration from indigenous resources, whereas his underlying lyrical sentiment infused into landscape depiction is unmistakably an inheritance, continuation, and transformation of traditional Chinese writings. In the article "Lyric Vision in Chinese Narrative: A Reading of *Hung-lou meng* and *Ju-lin wai-shih*," Kao Yu-kung indicates that both traditional novels, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* and *The Scholars*, are narrative fiction with lyrical visions. In his article on Liu E's work, C. T. Hsia also notices that *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* is a novel with lyrical pathos and, in his opinion, Liu E's manner of strong subjective expression in the story makes his fiction much closer to modern lyrical novels than traditional ones. Hsia states that the merits of Liu E's writing lie in his "achievement in transforming the old novel into a lyrical vehicle capable of dwelling lovingly over a character's innermost feelings and thoughts"; and as such *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* "has far more in

common with the modern lyrical novel” than traditional types of fiction (“*The Travels*” 43). Thus Hsia comments: “But for its adherence to the form of a third person narrative, *The Travels of Lao Ts’an* could have been the first Chinese lyrical novel in the first person” (“*The Travels*” 41).

As pointed out by scholars, Liu E’s writing is also indebted to other sources of traditional literature, landscape poetry and travel accounts in particular. In traditional poetry on nature, poets are inclined to blend two elements—“*ching*” 景, the scene of external world, and “*ch’ing*” 情, the sentiment of poets’ subjective feelings—in their acts of describing scenery (Owen, “A Monologue” 247–48). As for traditional travel recordings, usually “in the descriptive portion of a *youji* [*yu-chi*] . . . we find a writer displaying his linguistic talents”; thus in Liu Tsung-yuan’s travel essay, “Record of Reaching Little Stone Tarn West of Little Hillock,” we see “a word picture alive with motion and dynamism” (Hargett 3, 22). Also, in the prose of travel accounts, we often detect poetic underpinnings in writers’ depiction of surrounding reality so that physical images of landscapes in traditional travel writings are “undeniably colored with emotion” (Hargett 23–24).

Reading Liu E’s landscape passages in light of indigenous literary traditions, his depicted scenes by the Yellow River surely transcend a simple intent of flaunting descriptive techniques for realistic representation of scenery, and carry much deeper meanings. It ought not to be that, as John D. Coleman criticizes, these “highly lyrical and skillfully crafted” passages are nothing but “jejune traditionalism” that are “detached and simply float above the rest of the novel like pleasant irrelevancies” (76). On the contrary, as stated by David Rolston, it should be that “in China the ‘investigation of things’ was often an intuitive and solipsistic pursuit,” and “interest in things outside oneself commonly was investigation not so much of the other as of the self in the other” (170). Thus Liu E’s descriptive passages are, to borrow Richard E. Strassberg’s words, his attempt “to inscribe the landscape with the perception of the self” (12). Reading *The Travels of Lao Ts’an* as a novel with autobiographical consciousness and a story silhouetting its author’s past, the scenery that Lao Ts’an sees at banks of the Yellow

River does speak volumes. In Chapter Twelve, which contains Liu E's two most famous scenes, the snowy mountains reflect his qualms in the face of lurking shadows of death whereas the Yellow River embodies his sense of personal achievement and pride in past life.

In the story, while strolling down embankments along the river, Lao Ts'an sees mountains covered with snow appear in the distance.

He raised his head and looked up at the hills to the south. The snow-white line reflected the light of the moon; it was extraordinarily beautiful. The mountain ranges rose tier on tier, but they could not be clearly distinguished. A few white clouds lay in the folds of the hills so that you could hardly tell cloud from hill unless you looked intently. The clouds were white, and the hills were white; the clouds were luminous, and the hills were luminous too. Yet because the moon was above the clouds and the clouds beneath the moon, the clouds were luminous with a light which had penetrated from behind. This was not true, however, of the hills; the light there flowed directly from the moon and was then reflected by the snow, so that the light was of two kinds. But only the nearer parts were like this. The hills stretched away to the east farther and farther until gradually the sky was white, the hills were white, and the clouds were white, and nothing could be distinguished from anything else. (131–32)

After writing this subtly perceptive passage to describe intermingled colors of moonlight, clouds, snow, mountains, reflection, shades, and the sky, Liu E continues with a paragraph which shows, according to C. T. Hsia, "Liu E's sure artistry as a lyrical novelist" (*The Travels* 48).

Faced with this landscape where the brightness of snow and moon met, Lao Ts'an recalled the two lines of Hsieh Ling-yun's poem:

Clear moon lights up snow drifts;
North wind strong and doleful.

If you haven't experienced the bitter cold of the north, you cannot

know how well chosen the word “doleful” is, in the line: “North wind strong and doleful.” By this time the moonlight was making the whole earth bright. Lao Ts’an looked up. Not one star appeared in the sky except for the seven stars of the Dipper which could be seen clearly, gleaming and twinkling like several pale points. The Dipper was resting slantwise on the east side of the “Imperial Enclosure,” the handle on top, the bowl below. He thought to himself, “Months and years pass like a stream; the eye sees the handle of the Dipper pointing to the east again; another year is added to man’s life. So year after year rolls along blindly. Where is an end to be found? Then, remembering the words of the *Book of Odes*,

In the North there is a Dipper

But it cannot scoop wine or sauce,

He mused, “Now indeed is a time when many things are happening to our country; the nobles and officials are only afraid of bringing punishment on themselves; they think it is better to do nothing than to risk doing something, and therefore everything is allowed to go to ruin. What will the final result be? If this is the state of the country how can an honest man devote himself to his family?” When he reached this point in his thinking, unconsciously the tears began to trickle down his face, and he had no heart left for the enjoyment of the scenery. He went slowly back to his inn. As he walked along, he felt that there was something sticking to his face. He touched it with his hand and felt on each cheek a strip of smooth ice. At first he couldn’t understand it. Then he understood and smiled to himself. The tears he had just shed had immediately frozen solid in the cold air. There must have been many other “frozen pearls” on the ground. He returned to his inn feeling very melancholy and immediately went to bed. (132–33)

Regarding the above passage, C. T. Hsia notes that “the prose passage follows with fidelity the workings of the hero’s consciousness as it juxtaposes freshly received impressions with lines of poetry suddenly received from memory and reverts to melancholy thoughts in

contemplation of the signs in the sky" (*The Travels* 48). For Lao Ts'an's "poignant moments of rumination," Hsia also comments, "so alien was the concept of the subjective hero to the tradition of Chinese fiction that it was nothing short of extraordinary for Liu E to grope toward the stream-of-consciousness technique not only here but in many equally remarkable passages as well" (*The Travels* 48). Indeed, in the depiction of a wintry scene, adjacent surroundings, and Lao Ts'an's emotional response to changes in nature and affairs of society, Liu E presents us with a concrete example of a lyrical scene that deftly blends external landscapes and inner feelings in harmony. However, reading the depicted scenery and Lao Ts'an's wistful reactions, when put in the context of Liu E's autobiographical awareness and self-expressive intent manifest in his prologue and prefaces, we find that those snowy mountains bear rich meanings and deserve closer examination.

When Lao Ts'an inadvertently catches sight of the mountain ranges that appear in the distance, those anonymous mountains covered with moonlit snow carry an image of death. To begin with, the mountains are in a mournful white color and resemble the form of enwrapped shrouds. Undeniably, Liu E's depiction of those mountains renders an imagery of exquisite beauty, yet such sense of beauty transmits a peculiar aura—serenity, purity, soberness, coldness, and aloofness. This enthralling imagery is also distinctly characterized by an ambience of mystery, ever alluring, inviting, and enchanting in its phantasmagoric web of interwoven light and reflections. What's more, those mountains constitute a subject of confusion, with the hardly distinguishable mixture of colors and shades of moonlight, clouds, snow, mountains, as well as the sky. On one harsh wintry day, the snow-covered mountains display their most exclusive, mystic, and restful charm only for a discerning individual's eyes.

Lao Ts'an's melancholy over the cruelty of time's passage is elicited by his sight of those snowy mountains showered in pale moonlight. As already pointed out in earlier discussion, Liu E's temporal design for Text Proper of *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* is the duration of one year to frame an encapsulated life story. Through

depiction of changed positions of heavenly bodies, in this scene put in the middle of *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, we get a marker of time clearly indicating that the end of one year is approaching before the story reaches its formal ending with the imminent arrival of lunar New Year. Moreover, Lao Ts'an's quotation of a couplet taken from Hsieh Ling-yun's 謝靈運 poem, "End of the Year" ("Sui-mu" 歲暮), implicitly bespeaks the elapse of a one-year period, his elegiac response to inevitable changes of nature, as well as his awareness of limitation of various realities in life. Seen in Lao Ts'an's eyes, those massive mountains and celestial bodies stand as signs of stability in contrast to a tramp doctor's rootless drifting from place to place before reaching his final destination; also, they are reminders of eternity in juxtaposition with human beings' ephemeral existence and incessant vicissitudes in a mundane world.

To read Liu E's snowy mountains in such light, then the character Lao Ts'an's fixed gaze in the story, his attempt to figure out intermingled light, reflections and shades over the mountain ranges, can be read as the author's reflective look back at his past, a probing into the depths of a locus full of entangled ambiguities. That intent gaze bespeaks Liu E's search into the meanings of his existence at that particular moment of writing his own life story. It is a gaze of self-introspection and self-inquisition in his current state of being amidst hectic quotidian pursuits, memories of past fervent yet futile endeavors, the public's misunderstanding and his irrevocably defamed reputation. It is also an anxious gaze that concretely embodies Liu E's unassuaged sorrows and qualms in the face of a foreseeable end to his transient human life. However, as the rays of light cast upon and radiating from those mountains are not transparent but are opaque and unintelligible, what can be yielded from that fervent gaze is a state of confusion at most; Liu E still feels unable to tease apart enmeshed strands of thoughts, interior complexes, and complications in various affairs continually arising before him. Albeit imbued with the whiteness of death imagery, under Liu E's pen those snow-covered mountains do not appear intimidating at all but instead they are painted with a desirable atmosphere. They show up as a serene and restful

abode suitable for a fatigued soul that declares itself to be “*lao*” and “*ts’an*,” already decrepit, maimed, and remnant. With his desolate sentiment for the fleet passage of time and his sorrows over his impotence to make changes in reality, Lao Ts’an’s tears for the national plight are a concrete testimony to Liu E’s spiritual nature. In addition to being a token of lamentation over cruelty of time and worries about the country’s affairs, those “frozen pearls” also serve as an interesting footnote for the very word “doleful” cited in the poetic lines. Not only do they highlight bitterness of the northern weather, but they also congeal Liu E’s inalienable sentiment towards his past, mourning over a transient life, and obsession with his self into a most concrete form.

The Yellow River functions like a leitmotif inside *The Travels of Lao Ts’an*, appearing at the story’s beginning, middle, and ending. The Yellow River certainly carries an association with death in the story, clearly shown in the horrendous casualties reported by Ts’ui-huan from that man-made flooding: “Not one of them but wept aloud. Crying out for fathers, calling for mothers, weeping for husbands, wailing for children—a continuous sound of lamentation more than five hundred *li* long” (151). Nevertheless, Liu E’s exquisite landscape description of the Yellow River also turns it into a symbol of life and a landmark of personal pride:

When Lao Ts’an had washed his face and arranged his baggage, he locked his room and walked out to the river dike to see what was happening. The Yellow River came from the southwest and, making a bend here, went due east. The bed of the river was not very wide, the two banks being not more than two *li* apart. Lao Ts’an saw piled up before him layers of packed ice which rose seven or eight inches above the surface. He wandered up the river a couple of hundred paces. The ice from above kept coming down block after block, until at this point it was caught by the ice in front, couldn’t move, and came to a standstill. More ice came and pressed it with a rustling sound, *ch’ih-ch’ih*, until the ice behind, pressed harder by the flowing water, simply jumped on top of the ice in front. Pressed down in this way the ice in front gradually went

under. The surface of the water was not more than a hundred *chang* wide. In the middle the main stream was not more than about twenty or thirty *chang*, and on both sides was smooth water. This smooth water had long before been frozen over completely and the surface of the ice was smooth but had been covered with dust by the wind so that it looked like a sandy desert. The main stream in the middle, however, continued to roar on with noise and power, pushing the packed ice so that it jumped away on both sides, until the ice on the smooth water was crushed by the pieces from the main stream and driven five or six feet up on the shore. Many broken pieces of ice were stood on end by the pressure, forming a low screen. Lao Ts'an watched it for about an hour, until the packed ice was wedged solid. (130–31)

Obviously Liu E is very proud of his remarkable depiction skills in presenting such an impressive scene to readers, as is attested by his commentary written for Chapter Thirteen. With an evaluative note on his highly descriptive passage, Liu E poses six questions to readers:

What is the scenery when still water gets frozen?

What is the scenery when flowing water gets frozen?

What is the scenery when a small river gets frozen?

What is the scenery when a large river gets frozen?

What is the scenery when the section of the Yellow River in Honan Province gets frozen?

Then what is the scenery when the section of the Yellow River in Shantung Province gets frozen? (146)

Immediately, he provides the answer: “One must realize that what is depicted in the preceding chapter is the Yellow River’s freezing in Shantung Province” (146). Liu E truly has good reasons to feel self-congratulatory about his achievement. The literary merits in this brilliant passage, with its vivid, lively, unique, and insightful description, have carved an indelible niche in the development of the history of Chinese fiction, and rightfully deserve praise from scholars

ever since the story's initial publication. Also, what might be lost on modern readers is the impact of Liu E's innovative use of vernacular language to present a tableau of the Yellow River especially when it is in juxtaposition with a classic language poem written in an old style to deal with the same subject.¹⁶ That poetic work sounds trite and stuffy and is easily surpassed by its prose counterpart. In this regard, C. T. Hsia notes, "But so richly poetic is the prose account that in comparison the poem itself appears a conventional distillation of feeling little suggestive of the unique experiences that have gone into its composition" (*The Travels* 46). Furthermore, in Liu E's depiction of the Yellow River, his language is fresh and images original, totally different from those used to describe the Lake Ming scenery that is mainly studded with imagery and language transplanted from classic poetry and painting traditions.

Liu E's keen sensibility and insightful observation endow his Yellow River scene with distinct qualities. In the depth of a cold winter, the Yellow River displays its most exceptional splendor. In this rarely-attended occasion it turns out to be a river full of life and ebullient with dynamic power; it utters sound incessantly from ice pressing and clashing and creates a spectrum of geographic formations among blocks of floes, paved snow, and running currents. Liu E's lively depiction of the Yellow River in an active stage of the wilderness displays ceaseless dramatic tableaux at every moment; the ice, snow, and waves, with their boisterous pushing, chasing, and crushing in the river, seemingly have taken on a life of their own. Liu E's insight in appreciating the unusual wintry charm of the Yellow River counterbalances the river's notorious association with perennial inundation and fearful menace deeply imprinted in people's minds. Liu E seems to suggest that the nature of many things often depends on how they are managed; if it is possible to find the right person to do the right job, then many misfortunes in real life might be completely avoidable. Of course, as far as controlling floods of the Yellow River is concerned, Liu E has confidence that he will be the right person able to do the right job.

In *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, the Yellow River also looms large in

the background during Lao Ts'an's counsel to Governor Chuang about flood control methods, and in his argument for superiority of his preventive measures to the ones proposed by Inspector Shih. As a matter of fact, right at the beginning of the story, when Lao Ts'an is invited to give medical treatment to Huang Jui-ho in Chapter One, Liu E displays his inseparable relationship with the Yellow River and asserts his excellence in curbing the river's monstrous flooding. The name "Huang Jui-ho" 黃瑞和 phonetically hints "*huang-shui-ho*" 黃水河—"a yellow-watered river"—to indicate an allegorized Yellow River. In taking care of Huang Jui-ho's chronic gangrene ailment, an implication of the Yellow River's perennial inundation, Lao Ts'an is fully confident in his extraordinary medical skills. Liu E writes in the story:

Lao Ts'an arrived at this place in the spring, and the major-domo of the Huang household asked him if he had a cure for the disease. He said, "I have many cures; the only thing is that you may not do as I tell you. This year I will apply a mild treatment to try my skill. But if you want to prevent the disease from ever breaking out again, this too is not difficult; all we need do is to follow the ancients whose methods hit the target every time. For other diseases we follow the directions handed down from Shen Nung and Huang Ti, but in the case of this disease we need the method of the great Yu.¹⁷ Later, in the Han period, there was a certain Wang Ching who inherited his knowledge, but after that nobody seems to have known his method. Fortunately I now have some understanding of it." (4--5)

Liu E concludes Lao Ts'an's great success: "The Huang household therefore pressed him to stay in the house and to give his treatment. Strange to say, although this year there was a certain amount of festering, not one open sore appeared, and this made the household very happy" (5).

The Yellow River is a stalwart landmark of Liu E's pride for his flood-control capabilities and is a locus of memory especially engraved by that disastrous man-made flooding. If we take Liu E's biographical

background into consideration, then we realize that the Yellow River is intimately tied with Liu E's past and those ties have affected the temporal and spatial settings of his shadowed life story. According to his biographers, Liu E's arrival in Shantung in 1890 was a result of his success in controlling the Yellow River's inundation in Honan Province. Because of his outstanding achievement, he was recommended by a superior and later sought by the governor of Shantung Province, Chang Yao, to work as a flood control expert in the provincial government. Furthermore, Liu E wrote several books concerned with the Yellow River, such as *Chih ho ch'i shuo* 治河七說 (Seven essays on the Yellow River conservancy), *Li-tai Huang-ho pien-ch'ien t'u k'ao* 歷代黃河變遷圖考 (Maps and studies on historical changes of the Yellow River), and *San sheng Huang-ho t'u shuo* 三省黃河圖說 (Maps of the Yellow River in three provinces). Thus, in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, the Yellow River occupies a prominent position as a locus of Liu E's unforgettable memories and a landmark of his life's pride.

In *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, Liu E's ending to conclude Lao Ts'an's journey uses an intriguing device worthy of our attention. His ending is a finale to Text Proper of *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, yet it is also an echo of the story's prologue and a forecast of new beginnings—"a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement" (Bakhtin 244). Lao Ts'an's story ends with the moment before the arrival of lunar New Year, which marks the final moment of the year gone by, namely the assigned duration for Lao Ts'an's journey. Thus Lao Ts'an's inadvertent reunion with Te Hui-sheng by the Yellow River at this point echoes contents provided at the story's beginning and gives *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* the feeling of completing a whole cycle. Te Hui-sheng's express worries over the rising of warfare in Manchuria clearly correspond to those ominous clouds described in the prologue. Moreover, Lao Ts'an's brief and sketchy recapitulation of what happens in the preceding twenty chapters to Te Hui-sheng is also a device frequently used by traditional novelists to round off their stories as complete units, such as Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in's 曹雪芹 *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, Li Po-yuan's 李伯元 *Kuan-ch'ang hsien-hsing chi* 官場現形記 (An exposure of

officialdom), and Wu Wo-yao's *Erh-shih-nien mu-tu chih kuai-hsien-chuang* (Strange events witnessed in the past twenty years). But it is also Te Hui-sheng with whom Lao Ts'an finds company again when heading south to set upon a new journey. With Lao Ts'an's new journey in view at the moment before the arrival of a new year and with his recent marriage to Huan-ts'ui (formerly known as Ts'ui-huan) giving her a new life, Liu E's ending to *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* actually bespeaks fervent anticipation of many new beginnings and harbored wishes for happiness in the future. In the narrative structure of *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, this special denouement indicates that the ending is only provisional, instead of the ultimate one by which the author will end up his entire story. Lao Ts'an's journey is cast in a state of incompleteness, for "Travel in order to be meaningful has to remain incomplete, and to have an inbuilt capacity of continuing the mysterious" (Jain 224). Liu E's ending completes an already-told story but also leaves many things unfinished and, by doing so, he indicates that many new beginnings for more travel stories are in store waiting to be told at another opportunity.

Liu E's ending for *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* subtly corresponds to the story's beginning and promises more new beginnings for the future. His particular use of beginning and ending, to borrow Bakhtin's words, "lie in different worlds" and "in different chronotopes," they "can never fuse with each other or be identical to each other," but they are "at the same time, interrelated and indissolubly tied up with each other" (255). From beginning to end, through Lao Ts'an's series of moves inside the story, Liu E sets up a specific tempo-spatial framework for *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* that constitutes a personal universe and allows him to understand, articulate, and even universalize his past experiences. Considering the story of Text Proper as a whole, in this special symbolic universe we find that Liu E has endowed his fictionalized *alter ego* Lao Ts'an with the image of a solitary traveler; yet, although Lao Ts'an might be alone, he does not seem that lonely at all. Lao Ts'an appears neither "lao" (old) nor "ts'an" (decrepit); instead, his story is a portrayal of an individual who is full of life and constantly in action. In light of James Olney's idea of a silhouetted life

story, Liu E obtains his sense of order and thereby satisfies his need for order through a presentation of Lao Ts'an's journey (30).

In *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, Lao Ts'an travels alone for the majority of his journey; only at the story's end does he marry Huan-ts'ui thanks to Huang Jen-jui's entrapment. Lao Ts'an's solitary figure is best captured in an image described by Tu Fu's couplet:

Wind-tossed, fluttering—what is my likeness?—
Between Heaven and Earth, a single gull of the sands. (Owen, "The Self's" 96)¹⁸

Although cast in the image of a solitary traveler, Lao Ts'an does not appear lonesome at all, for his spirit finds solace everywhere. He exemplifies the long-cherished Confucian adage, "The wise man delights in water; the good man delights in mountains" (*jen-che yao shan, chih-che yao shui* 仁者樂山,智者樂水) (Waley 120). In the pose of a Taoist recluse, he conducts a "Free and Easy Wandering" (*hsiao-yao yu* 逍遙遊) to harmoniously melt his spirits into nature and breathe in unison with the universe. Beauty of the wilderness lends Lao Ts'an the best consolation and the most soothing power during his journey in a mundane world. His sightseeing of lakes, springs, mountains, and rivers provides him with a spiritual abode of "self-containment" and "self-contentment" (Kao Yu-kung cited in Strassberg 11). But Lao Ts'an's human contacts also give him much comfort and companionship. In his attendance on the ill and the needy, in his success with medical skills, in appreciation of his talents by high officials, in warm fellowship of old friends, and particularly in his open-minded attitude of always welcoming new encounters and relationships with others, Lao Ts'an finds companionship and gains a sense of achievement.

Although Liu E chooses the ignominious name "Lao Ts'an" for his protagonist, he is presented as neither "*lao*" nor "*ts'an*" in the story; on the contrary, it is a portrayal of a life full of vigor and teeming with actions. All along his journey, Lao Ts'an never fails to display inexhaustible interest in various everyday things, paying close attention

to even trivial phenomena and showing strong curiosity in trying to figure out feasible principles underlying their operations. Moreover, Lao Ts'an also expresses immense compassion towards the vulnerable, the underprivileged, and the victimized; in his attentive listening and empathetic understanding, Lao Ts'an proves himself a genuine humanist ready to commiserate over plights and misfortunes of other people. As well, far from a "left-over" or "maimed" psyche, Lao Ts'an carries out his journey with a positive triumphant attitude. In particular, after arriving at Ch'i-ho *hsien*, suddenly his journey is charged with vivacity and alacrity; Lao Ts'an upholds justice of his story by defeating the "pure official" Kang Pi, solving that strange murder case, arresting real criminals, reviving poisoned victims, and rescuing an unfortunate prostitute out of her misery.

In *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, Liu E's adoption of the travel motif surely employs a clichéd metaphor—"the path of life" (Bakhtin 120). By way of Lao Ts'an's journey and its particular tempo-spatial treatment, Liu E obtains a sense of order through the framing and presentation of his shadowed life story. As Tzvetan Todorov notes, "The journey in space symbolizes the passing of time; physical movement symbolizes interior change" (287). After Lao Ts'an's arrival at Ch'i-ho *hsien* in Chapter Twelve, in the middle of the text, Liu E's narrative tempo for his storytelling slows down for more actions are taken by Lao Ts'an and more activities are depicted in detail. Liu E's switch of narrative style and the conspicuous discrepancy in quality between the first and second halves of his story have led scholars to speculate that Liu E was experimenting with ideas of becoming a professional writer (Tarumoto, "Liu T'ieh-yun" 331–32). But such shift could just as easily tell of his adopting a new attitude towards his personal story. Taking the story in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* as a whole, Liu E's employment of an enlivened note to accelerate the plot advance and slow down the narrative pace while finishing up his story has endowed his fictionalized life story with a sense of order—albeit an order in the guise of disorder and a coherence in the semblance of incoherence.

Sloughing off drab atmosphere painted at the story's beginning,

Liu E's shift in narrative style bespeaks his change of attitude and perspectives towards his past as well as the very moment of writing about his past. Instead of continually dwelling upon morose aspects of life in a dreamlike state of transience made of past regrets, the onus of memory, and inescapable social misery, Liu E would rather divert his attention to more positive aspects of living and explore new possibilities presented by the future. In particular, his special way to end up his story, with Lao Ts'an's rising up and lashing out in the last few episodes, has suggested a positive message of *carpe diem* inside the story; seemingly, Liu E feels that life, however limited, still needs to be actively lived to its full and lived in the here and now. Despite the bleak suffocating social milieu, he believes that one can gain tremendous strength via self-reliance and one must show compassion towards others to help them get through difficulties to a more promising future. Although there is a playful touch in his use of lethal poison and its magical antidote, such a supernatural storytelling device could also suggest Liu E's new realization that his former trepidation about ephemeral existence and insurmountable boundaries between life and death are no longer of consequence; they can be erased, surmounted, and transcended. Liu E wraps up Lao Ts'an's journey in Text Proper on an exalted note: the genuine traveler is in no need of a destination, his journey is always on the go, he never feels lonely, and he will incessantly exert his vitality and jubilation to face a bright tomorrow.

III. Conclusion

We examine Lao Ts'an's itinerary and find out that, by way of the adopted journey motif along with features in traditional travel writing, Liu E's time and space treatment in his story is freely imagined and created with an infusion of many private concerns. His depictions of various locations often serve the purpose of self-expression. They address Liu E's worries about China's future, those unpleasant encounters in life, the ambition to draw a picture in words, reflections upon the transience of human existence, qualms in the face of death, as

well as his pride for past achievements. In the story, we see that Lao Ts'an appreciates and imbibes the beauty of nature yet he also witnesses various social malaises of the late-Ch'ing world. Albeit cast in the image of a solitary traveler, observed from his encounters with people, Lao Ts'an readily feels sympathetic towards the underprivileged and shows himself as a person with tender affection for this mundane world and strong passion for living. Indeed, much more than the merit of producing some unforgettable realistic scenery, through his travel story and its fictional alter ego, Liu E has written *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* into a rich complex text densely woven with his intents, aspirations, desires, and even anxiety, rendering the allotted space inside his novel as a unique landscape of mind.

NOTES

¹ This paper is adapted from the second chapter of my dissertation, "Between Revelation and Concealment: An Exploration of Liu E's Self-Representation in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*," University of Toronto, 2003. In this paper, Chinese quotations are taken from *Lao Ts'an yu-chi* published by Kuei-kuan ch'u-pan-she 桂冠出版社 in 1986. English quotations are from *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, translated by Harold Shadick in 1952. Following the procedure in Shadick's translation, the romanization in this paper uses the Wade-Giles system except for direct quotations from secondary sources. Also, on the grounds that the "Sequel" (*erh-pien* 二編) consists of only nine chapters with little intricate linkage and structural coherence inside the sequential story and that "Fragment" (*wai-pien* 外編) is uncertain in its authorship, I use "Text Proper" (*ch'u-pien* 初編) as my major basis for discussion. Yet, when crucially relevant, I quote certain contents from "Sequel" or "Fragment" to lend support to my discussion at hand.

² For more detailed English introduction about "*yu-chi*," see Richard E. Strassberg's and James M. Hargett's books.

³ See Lao Yi-an's collection entries.

⁴ The story in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* contains a strong autobiographical motivation. See various scholars' articles and entries in Liu E's biographies, particularly Chiang Yi-hsueh's *Liu E nien-p'u* and Liu

Hui-sun's *T'ieh-yun hsien-sheng nien-p'u ch'ang-pien*. The first chapter of my dissertation also deals with this subject and is published as "The Travels of Lao Ts'an: A Delineation of Metaphoric Self" in *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*.

⁵ The original text reads:

東方雲海空復空，
群仙出沒空明中。
蕩搖浮世生萬象，
豈有貝闕藏珠宮？

⁶ The original text reads:

斜陽萬里孤鳥沒，
但見碧海磨青銅。
新詩綺語亦安用？
相與變滅隨東風。

⁷ This comment is my translation. Shadick does not translate the attached commentaries on *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*. Although Chang Ya-ch'uan raises doubt regarding the authorship of those commentaries, here I follow the conventional opinion which argues that Liu E himself wrote fiction criticism on his own work.

⁸ Lan Ts'an was the nickname of a Buddhist priest of the T'ang period, who was alleged to possess exceptional abilities. See Shadick's note, p. 238.

⁹ In C. T. Hsia's note, he gives the Chinese characters instead of English romanization. Also, in the original Chinese text, sometimes "Chuang" 莊 is inconsistently replaced by "Chang" 張. Shadick's translation uses "Chuang." In this paper I use "Chuang" as the fictitious surname for Governor Chang Yao 張曜.

¹⁰ Both C. T. Hsia and Tarumoto have discussion on the exact year used as the story's temporal background (Hsia, "The Travels" 50-51; Tarumoto, *Shinmatsu* 96). Here I follow Tarumoto's opinion.

¹¹ Some scholars have slightly different interpretations regarding institutes represented by these masts.

¹² These English terms "Text Proper" (*ch'u-pien*), "Sequel" (*erh-pien*), and "Fragment" (*wai-pien*) are made by Timothy C. Wong in his article "Notes on the Textual History of the *Lao Ts'an Yu-chi*."

¹³ The English translation of this Preface is mine.

¹⁴ The original text is “歷下此亭古，濟南名士多。”

¹⁵ Donald Holoch, in “*The Travels of Laocan: Allegorical Narrative*,” asserts that Liu E’s use of allegory in the story does not merely stop at the end of Chapter One, but is maintained in the Lake Ming scene as well. Yet, after a careful scrutiny, it proves that Holoch’s argument can hardly hold. See the discussion in the second chapter of my dissertation.

¹⁶ This poem in Chapter Twelve is translated as:

The earth cracks; the north wind howls;
An ice sheet covers the river below.
Ice behind pursues the ice before,
Piling up and pressing down.

The river bend jams solid;
It forms a jagged silver bridge.
The homeward-bound sigh long sigh,
The traveler vainly groans and plains.

Only a narrow strip of water,
But a canopied carriage cannot cross;
An elegant feast with girls and music
Makes a riot of the bitter night. (140)

The original text is:

地裂北風號，
長冰蔽河下。
後冰逐前冰，
相陵復相亞。

河曲易為塞，
嵯峨銀橋架。
歸人長咨嗟，
旅人空歎咤。

盈盈一水間，
軒車不得駕。

錦筵招妓樂，
亂此淒其夜。(137)

¹⁷ Shadick notes: "Yu the Great [大禹] was the first institutor of flood control and reputed to have been the successor of the mythical Emperor Shun [舜帝]," p. 238.

¹⁸ The original text reads "飄飄何所似，天地一沙鷗。"

WORKS CITED

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- Chang, Ya-ch'uan 張亞權. "Lao Ts'an yu-chi yuan-p'ing k'ao-so" 老殘遊記原評考索 (Textual studies on the original commentary in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*). *Wen-hsueh yi-ch'an* 文學遺產 3 (1988): 122-23.
- Ch'en, P'ing-yuan 陳平原. *Erh-shih shih-chi Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih, 1897-1916* 二十世紀中國小說史, 1897-1916 (The history of twentieth-century Chinese fiction, 1897-1916). Peking: Peking UP, 1989.
- Chiang, Yi-hsueh 蔣逸雪. "Lao Ts'an yu-chih k'ao-cheng" 老殘遊記考證 (A textual research on *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*). *Lao Ts'an yu-chi* 老殘遊記 (The travels of Lao Ts'an). Taipei: Kuei-kuan ch'u-pan-she, 1986. 459-99.
- . *Liu E nien-p'u* 劉鶚年譜 (The annalistic biography of Liu E). Chi-nan: Ch'i-lu shu-she, 1981.
- . "Liu T'ieh-yun nien-p'u" 劉鐵雲年譜 (The annalistic accounts of Liu T'ieh-yun). *Lao Ts'an yu-chi tzu-liao* 老殘遊記資料 (Sources and materials related to *Lao Ts'an yu-chi*). Ed. Wei Shao-ch'ang 魏紹昌. Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chu, 1962. 134-86.
- Doležlová-Velingerová, Milena. "Introduction." *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century*. Ed. Milena Doležlová-Velingerová. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1980. 3-17.
- Fang, Cheng-yao 方正耀. *Wan-ch'ing hsiao-shuo yen-chiu* 晚清小說研究 (Studies on late-Ch'ing novels). Shanghai: Hua-tung shih-ta UP, 1991.

- Hargett, James M. *On the Road in Twelfth Century China: the Travel Diaries of Fan Chengda (1126–1193)*. Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1989.
- Holoch, Donald. "The Travels of Laocan: Allegorical Narrative." *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century*. Ed. Milena Doležlová-Velingerová. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1980. 129–49.
- Hou, Daniel Yu-ming. "Between Revelation and Concealment: An Exploration of Liu E's Self-Representation in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*." Diss. U. of Toronto, 2003.
- . "The Travels of Lao Ts'an: A Delineation of Metaphoric Self." *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 1.5 (2004): 29–43.
- Hsia, C. T. *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Columbia UP, 1968.
- . "The Travels of Lao Ts'an: An Exploration of Its Art and Meaning." *The Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, New Series 7.2 (1969): 40–66.
- Hu, Shih 胡適. "Ya-tung pan Lao Ts'an yu-chih hsu" 亞東版老殘遊記序 (Preface to *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, published by Ya-tung Bookstore). *Lao Ts'an yu-chi* 老殘遊記 (The travels of Lao Ts'an). Taipei: Kuei-kuan ch'u-pan-she, 1986. 375–96.
- Jain, Jasbir. "Self-Reflexivity of the Travel Motif: Naipaul's Anchored Transcendence." *Proceedings of the XIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, Vol. 2: Space and Boundaries in Literature*. Ed. Douwe Fokkema. Munich: indiciu verlag, 1990. 220–25.
- Lao, Yi-an 勞亦安. *Ku-chin yu-chi ts'ung ch'ao* 古今遊記叢鈔 (Past and contemporary travel accounts). Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chu, 1924.
- Lee, Leo Ou-fan. "The Solitary Traveler: Images of the Self in Modern Chinese Literature." *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*. Ed. Robert E. Hegel and Richard L. Hessney. NY: Columbia UP, 1985. 282–307.
- Liu, E 劉鶚. *Lao Ts'an yu-chi* 老殘遊記 (The travels of Lao Ts'an). Taipei: Kuang-ya ch'u-pan-she, 1984.
- . *Lao Ts'an yu-chi* 老殘遊記 (The travels of Lao Ts'an). Taipei:

- Kuei-kuan ch'u-pan-she, 1986.
- . *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*. Trans. Harold Shadick. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1952.
- Liu, Hui-sun 劉蕙蓀. *T'ieh-yun hsien-sheng nien-p'u ch'ang-pien* 鐵雲先生年譜長編 (A long chronological biography of Liu E). Chi-nan: Ch'i-lu shu-she, 1982.
- Liu, Te-lung 劉德隆, Chu His 朱禧, and Liu Te-p'ing 劉德平, eds. *Liu E chi Lao Ts'an Yu-chi tzu-liao* 劉鶚及老殘遊記資料 (Sources and materials related to Liu E and *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*). Ch'eng-tu: Szechwan jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1985.
- Nienhauser, William H., Jr., ed. *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986.
- Olney, James. *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972.
- Owen, Stephen. "A Monologue of the Senses." *Yale French Studies* 61 (1981): 244-60.
- , comp. and trans. *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*. NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996.
- . "The Self's Perfect Mirror: Poetry as Autobiography." *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*. Ed. Lin Shuen-fu and Stephen Owen. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986. 71-102.
- Said, Edward W. *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. NY: Basic Books, 1975.
- Shadick, Harold. "Hsi-yang wen-jen tui-yu Lao Ts'an yu-chi te yin-hsiang" 西洋文人對於老殘遊記的印象 (A Western scholar's impressions about *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*). *Lao Ts'an yu-chi* 老殘遊記 (The travels of Lao Ts'an). Trans. Liu Ts'un-jen 柳存仁. Taipei: Kuei-kuan ch'u-pan-she, 1986. 421-33.
- . "Translator's Introduction." *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1952. vii-xxiii.
- Shih, Meng 時萌. *Chung-kuo chin-tai wen-hsueh lun-kao* 中國近代文學論稿 (Essays on modern Chinese Literature). Shanghai: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1986.
- Strassberg, Richard E. *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from*

- Imperial China*. Los Angeles: U of California P, 1994.
- Tarumoto, Teruo 樽本照雄. "Liu T'ieh-yun yu *Lao Ts'an yu-chi*" 劉鐵雲與老殘遊記 (Liu T'ieh-yun and *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*). *Wan Ch'ing hsiao-shuo yen-chiu* 晚清小說研究 (Studies on late-Ch'ing fiction). Trans. Hsieh Pi-hsia 謝碧霞. Ed. Lin Ming-te 林明德. Taipei: Lien-ching ch'u-pan-she, 1988. 313-38.
- . *Shinmatsu shōsetsu ronshu* 清末小說論述 (Essays on late-Ch'ing fiction). Kyoto: Horitsu bunkasha, 1992.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. "The Journey and Its Narratives." *Transports: Travel, Pleasure, and Imaginative Geography, 1600—1830*. Trans. Alyson Waters. Eds. Chloe Chard and Helen Longdon. New Haven: Yale UP, 1996. 287-96.
- Waley, Authur, trans. *The Analects of Confucius*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938.
- Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1959.
- Wei, Shaoc-ch'ang 魏紹昌, ed. *Lao Ts'an yu-chi tzu-liao* 老殘遊記資料 (Sources and materials related to *Lao Ts'an yu-chi*). Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chu, 1962. 134-86.
- Wong, Timothy C. "Notes on the Textual History of the *Lao Ts'an Yu-chi*." *T'oung Pao* 69.1-3 (1983): 23-32.
- Yuan, Ti-yung 袁荻涌. "Liu E yu wai-kuo wen-hsueh" 劉鶚與外國文學 (Liu E and foreign literatures). *Kuei-chou she-hui k'e-hsueh* 貴州社會科學 133.1 (1995): 100-03.