

HISTORY AND NARRATIVE: THE LITERARY AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN THE SONG DYNASTY CHINA

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ABSTRACT: *The literary autobiography in the Song Dynasty(960-1279) China is the highlight of Chinese Ancient literature. As the "literary master" of the Song Dynasty (960AD-1279AD) China, Ouyang Xiu (1007—1072)'s autobiography, Liu Yi Jushi Zhuan(The Biography of Hermit Six Ones), is an outstanding representative of Chinese autobiographical literature with profound connotations and significance. When viewed under the perspective of the historical culture of the Song Dynasty, it could deeply reveal the entertainment pleasure and personality ideal of the literati of Song in their leisurely, elegant daily life. It disclosed the historical value of the literati taste realm exceeding the high standard of the previous generations under the rich aesthetic cultural atmosphere of Song. With its creative contribution to the Chinese autobiographical literature, Liu Yi Jushi Zhuan deepened and expanded the aesthetic dimensions of autobiographies written thereafter that featured elegant taste and manifested self-image, provided superb narrative experience in the conveyance of ideological and moral characters with autobiographical narrative.*

KEYWORDS: Ouyang Xiu, *Liu Yi Jushi Zhuan*, historical culture of the Song Dynasty, Six Ones, Narrative

Entertainment pleasure and personality ideal: Historical value of the Autobiography of the Song Dynasty

Ouyang Xiu, an outstanding representative of the scholar-officials of the Northern Song Dynasty, achieved considerable success in numerous cultural fields. As American sinologist Ronald Egan put it, "Ouyang Xiu, played a formative role in the history of at least three of the fields under consideration. In fact, Ouyang was also a key contributor to the development of the song lyric in mid-century. In other words, the trajectory of the history of each of my topics passes through the life and creative energies of a single individual. Moreover, that same individual is generally recognized as being mentor to and important influence upon several leading figures of the generation that succeeded his. Certain of these younger men likewise figure prominently in more than one field dealt with here."¹ *The Biography of Hermit Six Ones* (or *A Biography of the Six-Ones Hermit*), an autobiography of Ouyang Xiu, was an incisive and vivid embodiment of the shining points of him in the perspectives of life experience, personality pursuit, value orientation, stone collection, aesthetic taste, and elegant style etc. It was an important text for the younger generations to know him better. It was hence of

outstanding historical values. *The Biography of Hermit Six Ones* was written in the third year under the reign of Emperor Shenzong of the Northern Song Dynasty (1070), two years before he passed away. Ouyang Xiu, 64 in that year, served as the magistrate of Caizhou. As shown in the chronological table, “Hermit Six Ones” was the last alias Ouyang Xiu adopted, which could hence be counted as his final manifestation of personality and spiritual conversion.

Liu Yi Jushi Zhuan(The Biography of Hermit Six Ones, By Ouyang Xiu (1007—1072)

Hermit Six Ones was relegated to the village of Chuzhou, he gave himself an alias: Old Drunkard. He is old, weak and ill. Now he is going to farewell officialdom, then goes to the side of Ying River, and plans to live out his life and die in peace. Therefore he changed his alias to Hermit Six Ones.

A guest asked, “What do Six Ones refer to?” The hermit replied: “I have collected 10,000 volumes of books, 1000 volumes of rubbings of ancient metal and stone tablets from the Xia (around 21st century BC- 16th century BC), Shang (around 1675 BC-1029 BC) and Zhou (the middle period of 11 century BC-256 BC) Dynasties; I have a musical instrument, a plate of chess pieces, and I often get ready a pot of wine.” The guest said, “Those only make five ones, but why do you call yourself ‘Six Ones’?” The hermit answered, “Plus me, one old man living among these five ones, will that not make ‘Six Ones’?”

The guest laughed saying, “You must be someone that wants to evade the reputation (keep a low profile), that’s why you changed your names so often? Just like the man mocked by Chuang Tse would often run into the sunshine for fearing his shadow, I will see you behave like that man, running fast, gasping deeply, and dying out of thirst, and yet still unable to escape from fame.” The hermit explained: “I know I cannot escape from fame and I also know I do not need to; I give myself this name just used to indicate my pleasure.” The guest asked, “What is your pleasure like?” The hermit answered, “How can I speak enough of my pleasure! When I am intoxicated while playing among these five ones, I cannot see Mount Tai even if it is just before me, and I am not surprised even if the thunder splits the pillar; even if the ancient music Jiushao [Name of a piece of music during Shun Times (2255 BC-2208 BC)] was played on Dongting Lake and I could watch big battles in the field of Zhuolu, all of these can hardly depict my pleasure and comfort. Nevertheless, I often worry that I cannot indulge myself among these five ones and the reason is that I have been tied up by affairs of my life. Among them, there are two big affairs. The first is that the official vehicle, robe, passport and seal make me feel tired from outside; and the second is that worries and anxieties make me feel tired inside. These make me look ill when I am not sick and spiritually exhausted when I am not old; how can I find leisure to play among these five ones? Even though this is the case, I have pled to the imperial court for retirement for three years, if one day the emperor took pity on me and my old bones, letting me return to pastoral with my five ones; then I can hopefully realize my long-cherished dream. This is the reason for indicating my pleasure.”

The guest laughed saying: “You only know the official vehicle, robe, passport and seal may wear you out, but don’t you know that these five ones may also make your heart feel tired?” The hermit said:

“These are not the same. I am worn out by the official affairs because I am already tired and I have many worries; but when attracted by these five things, I feel comfortable and I rejoice that there is no disaster. What choice shall I make?” So saying, the hermit stood up with the guest, shook his hands and laughed: “Let us stop arguing. Such trifles are not worth our concern .”

Later, the hermit sighed: “A scholar began his official career when he was young. Till he becomes old and retires, he normally can hardly wait for his retiring age of 70. I usually admire such people, so this is the first reason I want to retire. I have been working for the court, but till now I have not made any achievement worthy of praise. This is the second reason I want to retire. When young and strong, my career was just so so, now I am old and ill, with a weak body I can hardly support to pursue the undeserved official position and the salary; this goes against my normal will, just like eating my own words. This is the third reason that I should retire. I have these three reasons to retire, even if there are no five ones to attract me, leaving office is sensible. What else should I say!”

Sep. 7th, the third year of Xining(reign title of Emperor Song Shenzong, the third year of Xining is 1070),Hermit Six Ones wrote autobiography by himself

In this autobiography, Ouyang Xiu, in the mode of naming himself, adopted a quite different approach from the classical pattern that Chinese ancient literati developed for autobiographies since Tao Yuanming with *A Biography of the Five-Willow Gentleman*. It gave expression to the cultural fashion of the Song Dynasty that “advocated elegance and sincerity.”² We may take a look at the annotation of the literary quotation of “Six Ones” in the beginning of the essay:

Hermit Six Ones was relegated to the village of Chuzhou, he gave himself an alias: Old Drunkard. He is old, weak and ill. Now he is going to farewell officialdom, then goes to the side of Ying River, and plans to live out his life and die in peace. Therefore he changed his alias to Hermit *Six Ones*.

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The interpretation of the six “ones” contains profound, rich aesthetic cultural connotations. Such type of autobiographies as *The Biography of Hermit Six Ones* could be traced back to Tao Yuanming’s *A Biography of the Five-Willow Gentleman*. Tao named himself at will with the five willow trees in front of his house, a mode deliberately concealing his identity. Qian Zhongshu said that “If ‘Nobody knows his native place, his surname or his styled name,’⁴ wouldn’t that be he made an autobiography but had no idea what his name and native place were? He was merely irritated that people of the world are fond of showing off their reputation and hierarchy, and wanted to eliminate this bad ambiance.”⁵ Different from the implication in the naming of “the Five-Willow Gentleman”, which implicitly acted

in opposition to the current malpractice, the naming of “Hermit Six Ones” clearly expressed a distinctly different intention, alive with refined pleasure of the literati imbued in the rich atmosphere of the time.

Besides, if we say that the previous literary name of Ouyang Xiu, “Old Drunkard”, ran in the same groove with that of Bai Juyi (772—846), “Master Singing When Intoxicated”, as in *The Biography of Master Singing When Intoxicated, The Epitaph of Master Singing When Intoxicated, with Preface*, the renamed “Hermit Six Ones” enriched and intensified the aesthetic significance and personality connotation of names and alias. It was an innovative contribution of Ouyang Xiu to the development of Chinese autobiographical literature to adopt elegant symbols of era characteristics to set off his aspirations in autobiographies. It also incarnated the distinctly different features of the times between the Song and Tang societies.

“Such an unprecedented intense, challenging innovative consciousness was precisely an embodiment of the spirit of independence of the Song people.... The artistic innovation of the Song people was first derived from the need to manifest personality.”⁶ “Second, artistic innovation was also an inevitable requirement of the emerging aesthetic idea. As the Song society was shaped up and got matured, it became prominently different from the Tang society. People’s aesthetic idea would naturally change along with it.... Reading became a fashion to prevail the whole society. The beauty of elegance and the style of scholars went up to be a mainstream, and the fashion of the Tang Dynasty emphasizing military affairs and chivalry changed thus far.”⁷

As a result, the first “one” in *The Biography of Hermit Six Ones* -- 10,000 volumes of collected books of Ouyang Xiu was evidently a model that scholars of the time followed. The rich collection of books was closely linked with the scholarly attainments of the collector. “In the perspective of sociology, book collection constituted a social behavior. Since books were a special material carrier and medium of human culture, the behavior of collecting books also made up a special cultural activity. An important feature of the cultural activity, as observed in the angle of sociology and culturology, was that such a behavior was directly associated with the cultural attainments of the behavioral agent, and consciously observe the behavior with its own cultural consciousness.... The book collection culture (of the Song Dynasty) reached a historically new height. It was more than general prosperity. In each prefecture, there emerged a large number of book collectors. And the book collection culture was mutually combined with other cultural elements to interact with each other, promoting the expansion, generation and prosperity of the new academic sector, and contributing to the major academic transformation of the Song Dynasty.”⁸ It also fully reflected the spirit of the Song Dynasty that advocated “elegance” and “profoundness”. Ouyang Xiu’s collection of rubbings of inscriptions on ancient bronzes and stone tablets incarnated this, and presented significant vanguard implications and unique values in the history of Chinese epigraphy development at that time and later.

Zhu Xi(1130-1200), the top philosopher of the Song Dynasty affirmed Ouyang Xiu’s contribution to the founding of the epigraphy science, saying that “In the very beginning, no one collected

inscriptions on ancient bronzes and stone tablets. The practice might be initiated with Ouyang Xiu.”⁹ Ouyang Xiu did not explicitly state his identity as the founder of ancient Chinese epigraphy science in *The Biography of Hermit Six Ones*. He simply listed the amount of his collections as the second “one” of the “six ones”. *Jigulu (Collected Records of the Past)* consisted of 1,000 volumes, reminding readers the hard collection process, long consumed time, tedious calculation, and numerous and jumbled preservation with the magnitude. However, the message that was left out in the autobiography, and hidden behind the “1,000” figure, was clearly expressed in his letter to Cai Xiang(1012-1067), the famous politician and calligrapher of the Song Dynasty :

“When I stayed in Heshuo, I felt restless to be unoccupied. So I tried to gather rubbings of inscriptions on ancient bronzes and stone tablets, and amazingly found so many rare ancient articles and characters since the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties. During the period, I was exiled by unfair treatment and moved around, in a critical condition and ill luck. Despite all the sufferings, I did not forget about them for even one day. In the 18 years from 1045 to 1062, I collected 1,000 such rubbings of inscriptions. So you see how diligent I was. They are also great wealth in my eyes, it may be called rich. I say to myself I have a completely different taste from common people. I am indulged in gathering what they abandon for fear that I might be too late to pick them up. And this is so ridiculous. I give an account of this, to show my inspirations. As I look at the writing, I find it is so humble, not good enough to show to others.”¹⁰

Despite the arduous process, Ouyang Xiu was alive with pride and satisfaction. The self-assessment, “it may be called rich”, disclosed his affirmation and praise of the self-worth now that he was obsessed with inscription collection for 18 years, with a reserve of 1,000 volumes. Ouyang Xiu showed unique aesthetic vision and perspective in developing and exploring the aesthetic objects neglected by people of the time. In *Jigulu Muxu (The Preface of Collected Records of the Past)*, he formulated his firm purport and interest in the collection of rubbings of inscriptions, saying “I am ignorant in nature and have a liking for the ancient. I have no desire at what common people are greedy for. So I have found my inclinations here. As I am so earnest with my hobby, I could manage to deliver it, though it seems a bit beyond my power.... Someone mocks me, saying ‘With many objects, it certainly will be hard to gather them. Having gathered them for a long time, it certainly will come loose. So there is no need to constantly worry about it.’ I replied, ‘As they are enough to meet my preferences, it is fine to play them and grow old. People are fond of raking in ivories, rhinoceros horns, gold and jade, could they really keep them in lifetime? I simply cannot change my mind for those reasons.’”¹¹ Reading *The Biography of Hermit Six Ones* in reference with other writings of Ouyang Xiu with autobiographical features, we may see more definitely that in the eyes of Ouyang Xiu, roaming in the other five “ones”, and freeing him from the unbearable, tedious miscellaneous affairs of officialdom and worldly fetters were the true pleasure of life. From this he unraveled the theme of “Six Ones”, which was to highlight his unique characters and high-standard personality pursuit. The historical values of *The Biography of Hermit Six Ones* was maximized in the presentation of the entertainment pleasure and personality ideal of the literati of the Northern Song Dynasty.

Narrative strategy :Conveyance of ideological and moral characters by narrative as autobiography of the Song Dynasty

Autobiography, as a unique narrative relating to self-expression and self-discourse, undoubtedly has an irreplaceable value in the delivery of ideological and moral characters. At times, autobiographies may straightly convey the thoughts and characters of the writers, as in the cases of Sima Qian (145-86 BC) with *Taishigong Zixu (Autobiographical Preface of the Grand Historian)*, Tao Yuanming (352/365-427) with *Wuliu Xiansheng Zhuan (A Biography of the Five-Willow Gentleman)*, Li Qingzhao (1084-1151) with *Jinshilu Houxu (Epilog to Records on Metal and Stone)*, Wen Tianxiang (1236-83) with *Zhinanlu Houxu (Preface to Poetry Anthology of the South-Pointing Compass)*, Xu Wei (1521-93) with *Zi Wei Muzhiming (Self-written Epitaph)*, and Shen Fu (1763-1825 after) with *Fusheng Liuji (Six Chapters of a Floating Life)*, which were all outstanding representatives of autobiographies in ancient China. However, autobiographies do not necessarily express the writer's pure personal thoughts and characters. They might be pursuit or admiration for certain ideas and values, some realms they yearned for though could not reach. They should not merely be taken as the practical condition and possessed ideological status of the writer. But they clearly represented the ideological values of the writer, such as Yang Weizhen (1296-1370) with his fictional illusory *Tiedi Daoren Zhuan (The Autobiography of Iron Flute Daoist)*. *Liuyi Jushi Zhuan (The Biography of Hermit Six Ones)* apparently belonged to the former in conveyance of the writer's ideological and moral characters, as it straightly passed on the thoughts and characters of the writer himself. In his autobiography, Ouyang Xiu delivered his thoughts and characters explicitly and profoundly, sinuous and implicit in techniques.

Compared with *Zuiyin Xiansheng Muzhiming Bing Xu (The Epitaph of Master Singing When Intoxicated, with Preface)* of Bai Juyi (772-846), Tang Dynasty, which looked back in the perspective of standing in the terminal of life, recounting his whole life, Ouyang Xiu's *Liuyi Jushi Zhuan (The Biography of Hermit Six Ones)* apparently adopted a quite different style of writing: "But to the extent that the autobiography is a story of the author's inward life, its natural concluding point is not his death but the point at which the author comes to terms with himself, realizes his nature, assumes his vocation."¹² "The impossibility of autobiography becoming scientific combines with the non-availability of death as a satisfactory form of resolution to keep autobiography with the realm of narrative art. Those histories and biographies which aspire to artistic status tend to move away from merely chronological narrative toward more aesthetically satisfying patterns."¹³ Obviously, Ouyang Xiu did not construct his autobiography with mere timeliness narrative. As shown in the setting of title, he set out with the mentality of highlighting the art taste to plan the composition, enabling his autobiography to go into the "more aesthetically satisfying patterns" in the very beginning.

However, at the outset, he located the autobiography to a particular time: "Hermit Six Ones was relegated to the village of Chuzhou, he gave himself an alias: Old Drunkard. He is old, weak and ill. Now he is going to farewell officialdom, then goes to the side of Ying River, and plans to live out his life and die in peace. Therefore he changed his alias to "*Hermit Six Ones*."¹⁴ This paragraph was full of profound meaning, serving as the background screen for the entire narrative. Everything delivered

in the work happened in this point in time. As a result, as shown in the opening paragraph of the writing, the name “Hermit Six Ones” was by no means merely a symbol of the elegant taste and personality played up later. It was a token of a special time, special stage of life, and special state of thought. Since “Hermit Six Ones” was the last literary name Ouyang Xiu gave to himself, it contained the loneliness, sorrow, and pessimism in the declining years after exile. Demotion + declining years + disease + retirement, they were the actual background for the naming of “Hermit Six Ones”. They also laid the emotional keynote for the full story that Ouyang Xiu was lonesome, desolate, and yet with the strength of character despite falling ill in the declining years. The conversion of Ouyang Xiu’s literary name from the “Old Drunkard” to the “Hermit Six Ones”, though told in a simple, straightforward way, was permeated with bitterness. The name of “Old Drunkard” conveyed broadmind and unfettered optimism, while “Hermit Six Ones” was devoid of the unrestrained, proud air, vividly portraying the mentality in the evening of his life, retiring from the world and public life passively. This also hinted the change of Ouyang Xiu’s mentality and thoughts. All these were concealed behind the short narrative, waiting for readers to chew the profound meaning by themselves. In other words, the opening of the writing had actually pointed out the theme idea. “*The Biography of Hermit Six Ones*” was not narrated around the elegant taste and high-standard artistic pursuit, but centered on the ideological state of Ouyang Xiu in his old age. What was to be expressed truly was the experience, thinking and planning of his life by Ouyang Xiu, sickly in his declining years.

Thereupon, Ouyang Xiu, with superb narrative, presented us a splendid story of ups and downs, emotions and reasons. The soul of autobiography, the ideological and moral characters of the writer, was authentically exposed and revealed in the layer upon layer of intensive analysis and exhibition. The ideological and moral characters of the writer were not buried in the prominent skills and plots, but hereupon manifested more perfectly, because “What we respond to in the greatest narratives is the quality of mind transmitted to us through the language of characterization, motivation, description, and commentary—the intelligence and sensitivity...the accuracy and insight of the artist’s picture of the brazen world in which we live, or the beauty and idealism of the golden world created in the fiction. Quality of mind (as expressed in the language of characterization, motivation, description, and commentary) not plot, is the soul of narrative. Plot is only the indispensable skeleton which, fleshed out with character and incident, provides the necessary clay into which life may be breathed.”¹⁵

In his autobiography, Ouyang Xiu expressed his view that one could not, and also need not, escape from fame. He voiced his inclination to wander in elegant hobbies, and his disgust and evasion of the troublesome, perilous official circles.... These were presented one by one by virtue of Q&A, arguments and soliloquies. They were profound insights into the real world, and vivid sketch of the ideal world. The form of autobiography in the question-and-answer style could be dated back to Wang Chong(27-97AD) of Eastern Han Dynasty in the history of Chinese autobiography literature. In the autobiographies, the writers constantly illuminated their views on conducting themselves in society in the question-and-answer style, showing their noble ideological and moral characters vividly in such a plot design. KAWAI Kōzō put it that “Compared with self-inspection, the tradition stressing self-

identification, as with Wang Chong, extended continuously in the Chinese autobiographical literature thereafter, a feature widely different from the autobiographies in modern western Europe.”¹⁶ Ouyang Xiu placed such a narrative mode in such a circumstance that he, in his declining years, suffered from the dual converging attacks of ageing ailment and political frustration. His expression and writing of the ideological and moral characters were hence added with the gloomy, sentimental features of life, compared with *Lunheng·Zijipian* (*Lun Heng·Chapter Autobiography*) of Wang Chong. This endowed his autobiography with richer connotation and exposition space, elaborately delivering the writer’s thoughts and characters in the autobiographical narrative.

CONCLUSION

Making a comprehensive survey of the full text of *Liuyi Jushi Zhuan* (*The Biography of Hermit Six Ones*), we will easily see that in addition to the rich cultural contents and high objectives as shown in the aesthetic combination of the six “ones”, as the masterpiece of the autobiographical writing of the Song Dynasty, Ouyang Xiu, as the “literary master”, to present the ideological implication of the autobiography, adopted the following aesthetic dimensions in the narrative strategy:

First, Ouyang Xiu completed his presentation of the pursuit of personality and the state of mind in seemingly fresh and vivid scenes, with the hypothetical dualistic antithesis angle of elegance and vulgarity, and the mode of interaction of subject and object and the combination of narrative and argumentation.

Second, in the clarification of whether “escaping from fame”, the autobiography of Ouyang Xiu was quite different in the spiritual core, containing inheritance and abandonment, though it inherited the style of Tao Yuanming, a man of virtue of the older generation. As autobiographies of the same style, Tao’s eradicated the earthly malpractice of false embellishment and exaggeration in the naming mode of concealing his identity, while Ouyang’s preached his aesthetic purport and spiritual enjoyment with the naming mode.

With regard to the obvious consciousness of Tao Yuanming to “escape from fame” in the naming of “the Five-Willow Gentleman”, Ouyang Xiu claimed that “I know I cannot escape from fame and I also know I do not need to”¹⁷ It sounded more broad-minded compared with the classical naming of the previous generation autobiographies. It also expressed explicitly the true fundamental aim in naming himself “Hermit Six Ones” -- “I give myself this name just used to indicate my pleasure.”¹⁸

Third, in the interpretation of “pleasure”, Ouyang Xiu took the technique of “rise first, then fall”, to make the writing reaching lofty artistic conception at the end, affording for thought.

“Ouyang Xiu took ‘pleasure’ as a purely individual mental activity. Such ‘pleasure’ was a realm of personality, accessible only to those who ‘understanding doctrines’. But he also realized that such individual spiritual joviality was contradictory with realistic care of the subject. You could not have both at one and the same time.”¹⁹ He went ahead first with description of real love of the five “ones”

and the blissful spiritual experiences they brought about, creating an illusion that “How could I live a single day without these gentlemen?”²⁰ However, he turned abruptly in the last paragraph, voicing his anticipation that he would cast aside all the miscellaneous affairs of the official circles, determined to retire. He spoke outright that even if he could not have the five ones, he would not change the ideal. His real intention hence came out in the wash, clear and distinct. As Sun Cong of the Qing Dynasty commented, “This autobiography gave an account of his aspiration for retirement. He was not indulged in the five objects, as shown in the final part. So in the essay, the writer argued that he was not to escape from fame, or seek pleasures. He was merely fearing he might be put to the trouble in officialdom, and feel fatigue in excessive contemplation. So he definitely decided to retire, and take delight with the five objects. After that, he wanted to cast away the five objects, evidence he was a free and easy man.”²¹

Fourth, the fantastic setting of the relations of the matter and me was of significant effect and taste in the presentation of self. Ouyang Xiu’s “self” in the writing was kept at an arm’s length with the other five “ones”. The fade-in and fade-out of the matter and me were put in juxtaposition and fusion, separation and incorporation, featuring obsession to the matter and detachment. Behind the paradox was a metaphor suggesting withdrawing from society and living in solitude after frustrated in officialdom. Su Shi once put it, “Today, the hermit called himself Six Ones, suggesting that he himself was identical with the five objects. We have no idea he had the objects, or the objects had him. The hermit and objects were actually not to be possessed. So who could buy and keep them for a lifetime? In this sense, we say the hermit was a man having attained wisdom. In spite of that, as we observe the five with the one, the hermit may still be visible. Make six with the five, and the hermit became invisible. The hermit was going to seclusion.”²² Ouyang Xiu precisely adopted this “Six Ones” naming mode and the “self” as implied in “I have these three reasons to retire. Even if there are no five ones to attract me, leaving office is sensible.”²³ to keep all in one with the five objects. Ever and again he placed himself outside, making the reclusion ambition surfacing as a “taste out of taste”. As Mao Kun of the Ming Dynasty evaluated, “A profound scholar, Mr. Ouyang freed himself hereon.”²⁴ To sum up, Ouyang Xiu, an outstanding representative of the scholar-bureaucrats of the Song Dynasty writing autobiographies brought his elegant taste and preferences into the writings. His creative contribution to the Chinese autobiography literature showed that in the strong aesthetic cultural atmosphere of the Song, the literati temperament and interest realm exceeded the high-standard historical values of the previous generations, which deepened and expanded the aesthetic dimensions of autobiography narrative thereafter to manifest self-image with elegant taste and preferences. Ouyang Xiu’s brilliant exploration in the narrative strategy widely collecting the merits of the worthy predecessors and boldly exceeding them provided people of later generations with valuable models of ingenious style of writing and radiant splendor. It was not only an original creation of the Song Dynasty, but also a landmark masterpiece in the Chinese and even world biography literature history, bound to shine through the ages.

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The allusion of “How could I live a single day without these gentlemen(何可一日无此君?)” is from a story of *A New Account of Tales of the World* 世说新语 “Wang Hui-chih 王徽之 (who died in 386 A.D.) was once temporarily lodging in another man’s vacant house, and ordered bamboos planted. Someone asked, ‘Since you’re only living here temporarily, why bother?’ Wang whistled and chanted poems a good while; then abruptly pointing to the bamboos, replied, ‘How could I live a single day without these gentlemen(何可一日无此君?)’ ” Bamboo is a symbol of rigidity in Chinese ancient culture. So the person who living with bamboos means an elegant spice of life, he looked on bamboos as his confidant. The virtue of bamboo was also the pursuit of him.

