# Conventions in Citation

In this volume two types of references to Yuan Haowen's poetry are used:

(1) *The 150 poems that are given full treatment*, including complete translation, are cited in the following format:

> For example, '**Poem 1.E.4 (#165)**' refers to Chapter 1, Section E, Poem 4 (within Section E). '#165' indicates the poem's discrete number among the 1,366 *shi* 詩 poems in Yuan Haowen's corpus (keyed to Wixted 1981a and to "Chinese and Japanese Commentary on the Poems" at the end of this volume).[1]

(2) *Other Yuan Haowen poems that are referenced* are cited in the following format:

> For example, '**YHW #510/406**' refers to poem '#510' in Yuan Haowen's corpus of 1,366 *shi* poems (keyed to Wixted 1981a). It is found on page '406' of the complete text of his poetry, *Yuan Yishan shiji jianzhu* 元遺山詩集箋注, edited by Mai Chaoshu 麦朝樞 (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1958; rpt. 1989).

The Mai Chaoshu edition (cited as YHW) served as the base text for poems included in this study. The volume also contains useful supplementary material (1–64, 675–741; cited as YYSJ). The two-volume *Yuan Haowen quanji* 元好問全集 (Taiyuan: Shanxi Renmin Chubanshe, 1990; cited as YHQ) was used as the base text for prose citations.

To avoid confusion, throughout the study the romanization 'Jin' is used to refer to the 金 dynasty (1115–1234), and 'Jinn' to refer to the 晉 dynasty (265–420) and

---

[1] In the "Introduction," 'Poem' is dropped from references and the format '1.E.4 (#165)' is used. Within chapter-sections, cross-references to other poems in the section are given without the poem-corpus number: e.g. 'see Poem 2.E.3 below.'

香港中文大學出版社．具有版權的資料

to the ancient state of 晉. Both Chinese characters would normally be romanized 'Jin.' ('Jin' is in the first tone, 'Jinn' the fourth.)

For Western-language material, single quotation marks (' ') enclose terms or phrases. Double quotation marks (" ") enclose an entire line or more of text, a chapter or poem title, or quoted text.

When quoting material from Western-language works, all Chinese names and terms in the text have been converted to *pinyin* (and from B.C. and A.D. to BCE and CE). But author names and book titles are cited throughout in the form in which they originally appeared in print: e.g. 'Tao Jing-shen' or '*Su Tung-p'o*.'

Wherever possible, Chinese characters for authors' names have been added to the "Bibliography of Works Cited" (with *pinyin* readings added in parentheses, where applicable): e.g. 'Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖 (Chen Xuelin)' and 'Wong Siu-kit 黃兆傑 (Huang Zhaojie).' Chinese- and Japanese-language names and titles of books and articles are given as they appear in the original text, in traditional or simplified characters, and the same convention has been followed for names cited in "Chinese and Japanese Commentary on the Poems."

In the footnotes, in addition to the date of publication for modern (i.e. post-1800) works, authors with Chinese surnames are cited by their full name: e.g. 'Di Baoxin 2011' and 'Hao Shuhou 1959.' But if their names are partly Western-language (e.g. 'Kenneth' or 'Joe'), an abbreviated form is used: e.g. 'K. Ch'en 1984' and 'J. Eng 1987.' Works by authors with non-Chinese surnames are cited by their last name only, along with the date of publication: e.g. 'Iiyama 2011,' 'Hennessey 1981,' 'Rickett 1977.' (But 'A.C. Graham' is distinguished from 'Wm. Graham'; 'S.C. Egan' from 'R. Egan'; 'Suzuki Torao' from 'Suzuki Shūji'; and 'Takahashi Kōkichi' from 'Takahashi Bunji.')

Citations of the following studies are to the revised edition only (even though the date of the original version is noted in the "Bibliography of Works Cited"): Hawkes 1985 (1959), Mather 2002 (1976), Wixted 2019 (1982). In each case, the treatment in the later text has been considerably modified from the original edition, along with the pagination.

For premodern names, dates of birth and death are generally provided at their first appearance and occasionally repeated later. They are also included in the "Index." Dates are approximate, as they sometimes vary, but usually by only one or two years. Pen names, etc., for individual authors are also included in the "Index" if they appear in texts quoted in the volume.

香港中文大學出版社：具有版權的資料

Yuan Haowen's age is usually given in Western count. But in poem translations the original count (in *sui* 歲) is given.

Translations by others that are cited in the text as having been 'modified' are so identified because they were used as the starting point for the renderings here and substantially follow them. The alterations are not to be construed as either corrections or criticism of the originals.

Poems that are twelve lines or longer are numbered every fourth line.

The abbreviation 'ch.' refers to 'chapter' or *juan* 卷 ('fascicle').

香港中文大學出版社．具有版權的資料

香港中文大學出版社：具有版權的資料

# Introduction

## Synopsis

Yuan Haowen 元好問 (Yishan 遺山, 1190–1257) is perhaps the greatest Chinese poet of the past eight hundred years. He is the only writer of the period included by Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811–72) in his influential anthology of classical Chinese poetry, *Shibajia shichao* 十八家詩鈔 (Selections from Eighteen Poets). And in the important *Kanshi taikei* 漢詩大系 series on Chinese poetry published in the 1960s, the only other Chinese poets from the thirteenth century to the present who have volumes dedicated to them are Gao Qi 高啓 (1336–74) and Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634–1711).[1] The noted twentieth-century scholar, Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎 (1904–80), argued that, in terms of dignity and gravity, Yuan Haowen is probably the foremost poet, not just of the past eight hundred years but of the twelve hundred years since Du Fu 杜甫 (712–70).[2]

At the time Yuan Haowen was born, the Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234) was at its zenith. By the time he came of age, it was well into decline. Hemmed in on the north by the Mongols, to the west by the Xi Xia, on the south by the Southern Song, and to the east by the Pacific Ocean, its borders were under threat and shrinking.[3] The greatest danger came from the Mongols. In 1215 they captured the dynasty's central capital, Yanjing 燕京 (Beijing 北京), which had forced removal of the Jin government to its so-called southern capital of Bianjing 汴京 (Kaifeng 開封) the previous year. The campaign was temporarily relaxed when Chinggis Khan turned attention to the West, but was to resume under his successor. Kaifeng eventually fell in 1233 as did the dynasty a year later when Yuan Haowen was forty-four years old. The Mongol threat, ever in the background, comes increasingly to the fore in Yuan's poetry dating from his early years.

香港中文大學出版社・版權所有資料

Yuan Haowen's life and poetry can be divided into three periods that parallel what, in his world, was (a) the growing Mongol threat, (b) defeat by the Mongols, and (c) years under Mongol ascendency. The period predating the fall of the Jin dynasty, from 1190 to 1232, is treated in Chapter One, "The Earlier Years" (as well as in the first section of the following chapter). The focus of Chapter Two, "An Ever-Darkening World," shifts to poetry relating the events of 1233 and 1234 immediately before and after the fall of the Jin dynasty. And Chapter Three, "After the Storm," treats the poet's post-Jin life from 1235 to 1257.

Yuan Haowen is especially famous for his poems lamenting the 'death and disorder' (*sangluan* 喪亂) that accompanied the decline, fall, and aftermath of the Jin dynasty, when the Mongols took over North China.[4] Reading Yuan's poems, one feels his intense pain at the demise of the dynasty and his deeply felt need to preserve the historical and cultural record of civilization as he knew it.[5] One also comes to appreciate other dimensions of the poet: his contemplative nature, his sense of shared suffering with those around him, his lifelong attraction to the life of retirement, and his openness to a wide range of friends and acquaintances. The poems are distinguished by breadth of learning, linguistic creativity, and allusive depth. They also reveal an abiding sense of irony, and occasional self-directed wry humor. From series of poems written when visiting his grandchildren and when returning to the family retreat, one also feels the warmth he shared toward family members. It is no coincidence that Yuan Haowen is often paired with Du Fu,[6] as two intensely humane great writers deeply imbued with the poetic tradition and profoundly concerned with the world around them.

香港中文大學出版社・具有版權的資料

## Four Views of Yuan Haowen's Poetry

Two estimations of Yuan Haowen's poetry dating from his own era are noteworthy, and two from modern times are particularly helpful in appreciating his work.[7] In Yuan's official biography, dating from a century after his death, his poetry is characterized as follows:

> 爲文有繩尺，備眾體。其詩奇崛而絕雕劌，巧縟而謝綺麗。五言高古沈鬱。七言樂府不用古題，特出新意。歌謠慷慨，挾幽、并之氣。其長短句，揄揚新聲，以寫恩怨者又數百篇。 (*Jinshi* 126.2742)

> Yuan Haowen's literary writings are carefully measured and display proficiency in all genres. His verse is singularly imposing, yet never dressed up or belabored; dexterously splendid, it eschews over-refinement. His pentasyllabic verse is classically simple and somber in tone. Fresh ideas are especially prominent in his heptasyllabic poems and *yuefu* ballads, which forgo old themes. His songs are heroic, infused with the spirit of the Youzhou and Bingzhou regions of the North. And his *ci* 詞 song-poems of long and short lines, famous for achieving new effects when expressing affection or discontent, also number several hundred.

Couched rather differently, the best description of Yuan Haowen's poetry in modern times is that in Japanese by Yoshikawa Kōjirō (1963: 31):

> 彼の詩の性質の中心となるものは、重厚である。彼のがんらいの性格は、激情の人であり、外からの刺激に鋭敏に反応する詩人的素質にあったと思われるが、彼はその鋭敏な反応を、すぐさま軽率に表現にうつすことを、好まない。刺激は丹念に熟視され、熟視は対象の各部分にゆきわたる。そのためその詩には、無意味な空虚な句が、甚だ少ない。そうして熟慮による表現が、丹念に練りあげられ、重厚という点では、杜甫以後の大一人であるかも知れぬ。

> The central characteristic of Yuan Haowen's poetry is its dignity and gravity. Although he was a man of intense feeling with a poet's temperament that reacted sensitively to external stimuli, Yuan disliked giving hasty expression to his keenly-felt reactions. He would painstakingly scrutinize the stimuli to which he was responding, examining every aspect of a subject. For this reason, there are exceptionally few meaningless or empty phrases in his poetry. The product of mature deliberation, his expressions were carefully polished, which further intensified their dignity and gravity. It may well be that in this regard Yuan Haowen is the foremost poet since Du Fu.[8]

Yuan Haowen's disciple, Hao Jing 郝經 (1223–75), waxed rhapsodic about the Master in a funeral inscription for him, couching his expression in traditional critical

香港中文大學出版社・具有版權的資料

language where writer, work, and the feelings inspired by the writer's work can meld into one:[9]

> 天才清贍，邃婉高古，沉鬱大和，力出意外。巧縟而不見斧鑿，新麗而絕去浮靡，造微而神采粲發。雜弄金璧，糅飾丹素，奇芬異秀，洞蕩心魄。(遺山先生墓銘; YYSJ 675–76)
>
> Pure and plentiful in heaven-given talent, noble and antique in profound geniality, amply gentle amid deep melancholy—his was a strength beyond imagining. Rich in skill that leaves no evidence of axe or awl, fresh and beautiful yet still avoiding superficial prettiness—unworldly splendor radiates forth, subtly creative. Gold and jade in varied play, plain and red in blended ornament, marvelous fragrance and unusual blossoms—these penetrate and purge mind and soul.

Key features shared by these three characterizations go to the heart of Yuan's poetry. The 'skill that leaves no evidence of axe or awl' finds its counterpart in what is termed 'carefully measured' verse that never appears 'belabored'; these are complemented by reference to 'carefully polished' expression that is 'the product of mature deliberation.' The poetry is described in similar terms as 'eschew(ing) over-refinement,' 'avoiding superficial prettiness,' and having 'exceptionally few meaningless or empty phrases.'[10]

An additional formulation, one by Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), is helpful in understanding another defining quality of Yuan Haowen's poetry: namely, the way in which scene and self fuse, seeming to meld into each other. Wang posited a difference between what he called the 'personal state' and the 'impersonal state' in Chinese poetry: 有我之境，以我觀物，故物我皆著我之色彩。"In the personal state, the poet views objects in terms of himself, and so everything takes on his own coloring." 無我之境，以物觀物，故不知何者爲我，何者爲物。"In the impersonal state, however, the poet views objects in terms of objects, so one cannot tell what is the poet himself and what is the object." As an example of the latter, he cites a couplet by Yuan Haowen: 寒波淡淡起，白鳥悠悠下。(YHW #009/076, 穎亭留別) "The cold waves rise smoothly, quietly / White birds glide softly down."[11] The formulation is apropos, since Yuan seldom directly inserts himself when portraying nature or events. Yet his treatment of phenomena goes well beyond describing them: the language he uses is deeply imbued with literary and historical associations, conveys his feelings indirectly, and is fraught with meaning.[12]

香港中文大學出版社・具有版權的資料

## Treatment of Poems in the Volume

In this book, the author hopes to communicate what makes Yuan Haowen's work compelling by introducing, interpreting (via translation), and explicating the poetry for which he is famous, rather than simply assert its importance.[13] The volume is meant to serve as a general introduction to the poet, whether those approaching it are versed in Chinese language and Chinese poetry or not. The aim throughout is to help the reader understand and appreciate Yuan Haowen's poetry.[14]

Although in theory it might seem desirable to let Yuan Haowen's poems speak for themselves without mediation or explication—an approach toward poetry and translation current in the West in the early second half of the twentieth century—it would be disengenuous to do so. With a poet like Yuan Haowen who so copiously refashions earlier expression and so abundantly employs allusions, such treatment at best only skates over the surface of poems.[15] Yuan masterfully weaves much of his poetry from antecedent material: echoing earlier expression, making direct reference to past writings, and occasionally incorporating earlier phrasing verbatim, all in creative synthesis. Without explanation, this dimension to his writing is lost. Also, Yuan is a richly 'allusive' writer.[16] For example, as a 'poet of history' par excellence,[17] he frequently refers to a wide range of earlier figures and events, implicitly contrasting past and present. Without clarification of the background to both, the interplay between them is completely lost. Furthermore, since Yuan's poetry is invariably compressed and highly condensed, it demands explication. Since it is often expressed in verse forms of considerable density—regulated verse and quatrains—without explanation of the rhetorical strategy at work, several of his poems might come across as but a sequence of unrelated couplets and references.[18]

In an attempt to communicate as much as possible the meaning behind Yuan Haowen's poems, the following strategy has been employed for their treatment in this volume:

> A short introduction is provided to each of the fourteen sections of the book, which contain several poems each. The sections are organized either chronologically (as with "Refuge South of the River" and "Internment and the Bitter End") or thematically ("Family"). The grouping of the poems is explained and a line or more introduces each of the section's poems or series of poems.

香港中文大學出版社・版權所有資料

> With few exceptions, at the heading of individual poem translations, the circumstances of the piece's composition, or some idea of what it is about, is given in brief. For certain of the poet's more complex pieces (usually regulated verses), the text's argument is outlined.
>
> The poems proper are then presented couplet-by-couplet (which is *the* basic building block of Chinese poetry), including the following: Chinese text, romanization (caesurae and rhyme words highlighted), and English translation.[19]
>
> Footnotes then appear on the same (and/or following) page as the original text and English renderings. They paraphrase lines or couplets, explicate allusions, cite examples of usage that adumbrate a passage, or provide other pertinent information.

*The rendering of each poem in the volume is the sum of the above.*[20] Some poems need more explanation than others. Many, especially Yuan Haowen's more famous ones, are virtually meaningless without such treatment.[21]

香港中文大學出版社・具有版權的資料

## The Biographical Dimension

The emphasis in the volume is on the poetry of Yuan Haowen and only secondarily on his biography. For the latter, the aim has been to let Yuan Haowen's *poems* reveal as much as possible about him and his life circumstances. As is true of most premodern Chinese authors, there are vast lacunae in the biographical record; for example, we know next to nothing about Yuan Haowen's two wives. Some of what we do know about him has been presented in a largely formulaic way: for example, that he started composing poetry at age six or seven and was early declared a prodigy. And important dimensions of the life go beyond the scope of this volume: for example, disentangling the relationships at play—the nexus of politics, social connections, and personal finances—in the poet's large corpus of prose writings, notably grave inscriptions written in his later years at the request of others. Another important dimension is the vast web of friends, mentors, patrons, and acquaintances that he cultivated at every stage in his life—reflected not only in his prose and poetry but also in what he carefully preserved of, and wrote about, their writings and lives.[22] Although these are not the focus in this volume, much about the poet's social world is revealed in the poetry that is treated.[23] The introductions to the book's fourteen sections, which