

Pleasure and Pain


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In the Papp Collection, there are four pictorial works, in different formats, that depict women (*shinii hua*, *meiren hua*) painted by three notable artists: Fei Danxu (Xiaolou 1801/02-1850), Gai Qi (Yuhu waishi 1773-1828), and Gu Luo (Ximei, 1763-after 1837).² Artistic conventions of representation, together with titles, allusive poetic inscriptions, and individual identifying names mark all the portrayed figures as historical literary or artistic subjects, religious or mythological beings, fictional characters, or elite women. Women are portrayed as visualized subjects drawn from text: poetry, *chuanqi* stories, drama, or vernacular fiction. The sixty-year span, which brackets the reign periods of Jiaqing (Emperor Renzong reigned 1796-1820) and Daoguang (Emperor Xuanzong reigned 1821-50), marks a high point in the development of the genre with respect to its popularity and significance.³ Together, images of women signal the "rupturing [of] the limited thematic scope of women of aristocracy" that characterizes earlier figuration in especially Tang and Song dynasties, as Shan Guoqiang observes.⁴ On the one hand, from the sixteenth century forward, depictions of women reflect the pervasive influence of printed books, frequently with illustrations, that include works of fiction in different genres.⁵ On the other, pictorial images facilitate the "construction of typological forms of women from different societal segments," thereby making visible a range of feminine subject-positions.⁶


Ambiguity Through Naming

Providing names to depicted figures and titles to paintings, verbal inscriptions function as guides to "interpretive discourse."⁷ They lead to both narrow the scope of interpretative possibilities and broaden the anticipatory horizon of interpretation. Whether attached to a painting at the time of production or recorded later in a colophon or catalog, a title can turn a relatively simple image into one of ambiguous reference and enhanced depth. Shifts in meaning emerge from the interplay of visual representation and verbal identification of human subjects. For instance, a personal viewing experience may encode an image by

a collector or critic in a given title or commentary.⁹ Or a feminine audience may retroactively direct or shape female images through later cartouches. I shall consider these aspects as I focus on the long handscroll by Fei Danxu, entitled *One Hundred Beauties* (figure 1).

Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou have provided in their catalogs the following description of the painting:¹⁰ The handscroll,  carries two seals of Fei Danxu, measures seven hundred and ninety-three centimeters, or more than twenty-six feet long, and thirty-two and half centimeters, or about a foot high. It portrays women attired in elaborate robes. With attendants, they are engaged in leisure and cultural activities: picking flowers, chasing butterflies, feeding deer, brewing tea, doing embroidery, playing *touhu* and *weiqi*, tuning a *qin*, reading, looking at the self in the mirror, painting, and viewing a dance performance. The space for these activities is appropriately luxurious. It flows around decoratively carved balustrades and low walls that are interspersed by standing screens. The area is dotted by screens, large platform-daisies, tables, stools, rocks, trees, and potted plants, and, toward the end of the scroll, a tent-like pavilion.

Done in "outline ink drawing" (*baimiao*), the brushwork is consistently steady and strong. That an earlier painting lies behind this execution is indicated by the seal *Xiaolou moben*, "Xiaolou's traced copy." Strikingly similar figural motifs are found among a set of twelve earlier "draft sketches" (*huagao*) that bear Fei's seals and signature.¹¹ The two extant executions of female figures reveal both the artist's practice of copying old paintings and the appeal of those faithful copies to collectors.

The handscroll is also linked to other images that portray stories and themes about women in palace settings, and which, in the words of Craig Clunas, carry an "erotic charge."¹² They depict a physical mingling with subjects of all genders that is contrary to the prescribed praxis of gender separation in most societies in the imperial era. An egregious example of this appears in a segment of the handscroll *In the Palace* (*Gongzhong tu*, an early twelfth-century, or later, copy of a work by Zhou Wenju, active circa 940-975), now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.¹³ Among the court ladies,  and one girl, there is a young man shown in a kneeling position with his thighs wrapped tightly round the left bent leg of the court lady of generous proportions who is sprawled on the floor intimately next

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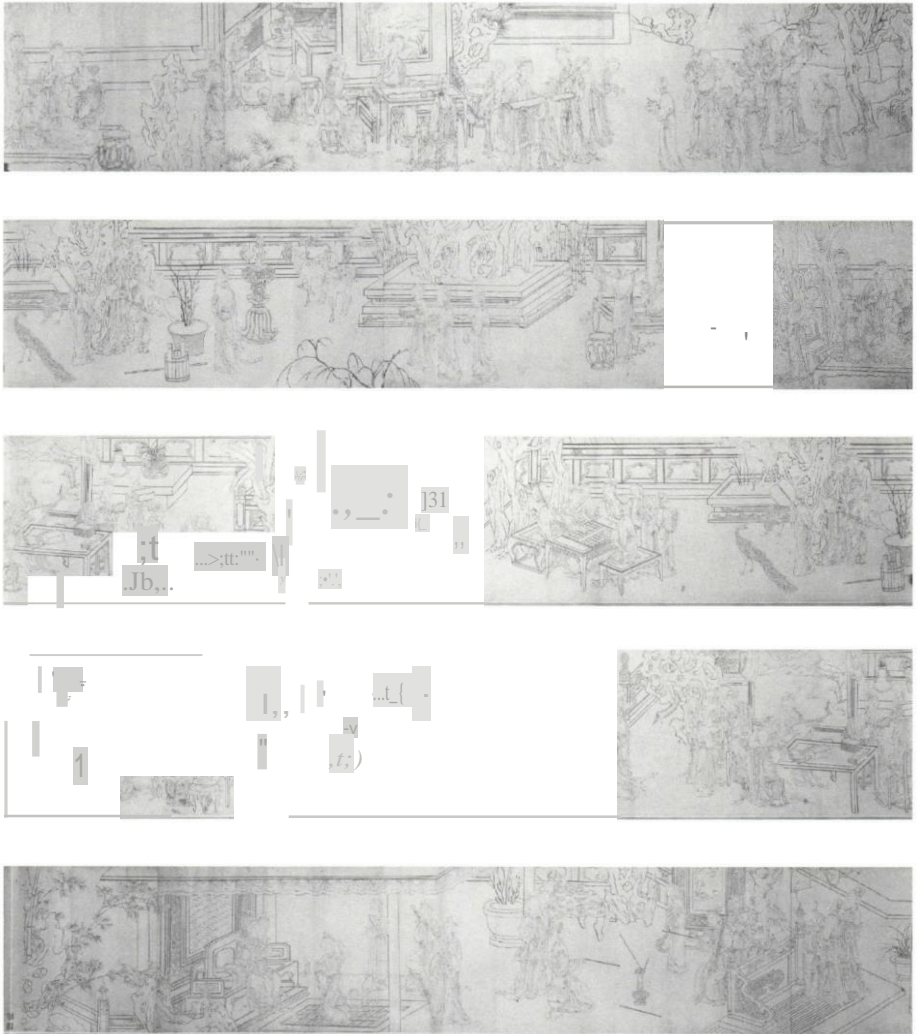


Figure 1. Fei Danxu (1802-50), *One Hundred Beauties*. Handscroll, ink on paper, 32.5 x 793 cm. The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection. Photo by Craig Smith, courtesy of Phoenix Art Museum.

to him.¹⁴ The couple is a visual emblem of transgression and which are iterated in textual descriptions of debauched practices at the courts from Western Han dynasty forward, and which provoke in the beholders moral indignation, lustful response, or flights of fantasy.

Inherent in paintings on this theme is the ideal spectator, configured as an emperor and, by extension, all dominant masculine or masculinized subjects. Scopophilia, or the desire to obtain sexual stimulation by looking, is among the component instincts of sexuality (sexual drive) and, in Freud's psychoanalytic theorization, it is associated with the "instinct for knowledge."¹⁵ The desire to control is linked to a young (male) child's compulsion to see and understand the concealed bodily parts including genitalia. Although the instinct in individuals is modified later by other factors in the constitution of the ego, it continues as the basis of erotic looking for masculine pleasure.

The Act of Beholding

In the case of the Papp handscroll II, the naturalized spectator is joined and perhaps displaced, temporarily, by a female viewer, the well-known modern painter Li Zuyun, usually referred to as Li Qiujun (1899-1973).¹⁶ Her presence is inscribed in the following passage, from the opening commentary to the painting (figure 2):

My oldest brother Zuhan recently obtained in Suzhou the *Hundred Beautiful Women* handscroll [*Baimei ren tujuan*], painted by Mr. Xiaolo (Fei Daxu). Elegantly beautiful, the figures flow easily. Their presence seems to sparkle; tops and skirts flutter as if moving. They are unseen in the world.

He (Zuhan) conceded them to be my fine companions in Ouxiang guan. When the mounting was done in the second month of *jisi* year [11th March - 9th April 1929], it came to me for the first time of the frontispiece.

With such beautiful attraction before me, I could not but feel ashamed of my ugly form. My oldest brother often kept my inaptness hidden away, so as not to let the village woman ride the same chariot with Xishi,¹⁷ thereby causing turmoil and panic throughout the state.

*Qiujun, the Woman Li Qiu*¹⁸

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The passage includes an encomium of the pain ting . The designated title *Hundred Beautiful Women* alludes to the influential book *New Songs on the Hundred Beautie s with Illu strations and Biographies* (*Baimei xinyong tuchuan*), which was printed in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁹ It comprises a hundred drawings of historical, religious , o mythological subjects that are accompanied by individual biographical accounts of different lengths, and an elaborate apparatus of commentarial writing.²⁰ The prefaces, individual or collective poems (*jiyong*) , and colophons were composed by, in addition to the compiler Yan Xiyuan, officials, poets and painters of both genders , and professional literati. The most well-known among them is Yuan Mei (1716-1798,jinshi 1730). The artist of the illustrations is Wang Hui (Bo ch i) , whom Yan refers to as a painter who had worked in the inner court of Qianlong emperor (reigned 1736-1795).

Li Qiujun's passage , which touches on familial relationships and her personal response to the handscroll, contains a tightly packed ambiguity. Zu han , her oldest brother, was an artist and successful businessman .²¹ Qiujun warmly acknowledges Zuhan for his gift of the handscroll and overall brotherly care. In addition , the passage articulates a gesture of self-de precation . The "ugly form " (*x in ghui*)²² connected to the metaphor for beauty , "jade mountain" (*yushan*)²³ in the penultimate line, indicates simultaneous humilities for Qiuju n's supposed lack of artistic accomplishment (calligraphic skill) and her physical appearance.

This response of Qiujun injects a real human form into the idealized world of the painting. If we follow Lacan, the moment when a

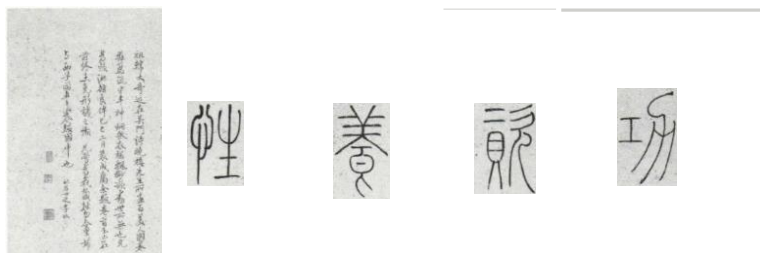


Figure 2 . Li Qiujun (1899-1973), frontispiece to the handscroll in figure 1. The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection. Photo by Craig Smith, courtesy of Phoenix Art Museum .

young child recognizes her/his own image in the mirror is critical for the constitution of the ego. The reflected self is more complete than the simple I. The mis-recognition projects the body outside of itself and the alienated subject, introjected in return as an ego ideal, then engages in preparation for identification with others. The mirror stage is the primordial matrix for the making of the self in the realm of the imaginary, according to Lacan's theorization.²⁴ Homologous to a reflection in the mirror, the women portrayed in the handscroll symbolize an imaginary moment of self-identification for QiuJun. The image that unfurls with the long handscroll then seeks to define such identity in both the represented object and the introjected subject of QiuJun. At the level of narration, the conventional content of the handscroll is a constituent, a refraction, of QiuJun's own story with its colorful turns and pathos that were partially imposed by historical circumstance. She was from an affluent Ningbo family that had relocated in Shanghai, socially well-connected through the influence of native-place associations.²⁵ QiuJun's family situation freed her from the need to seek a livelihood, although she sold paintings and took in women students.

From a relatively young age through art and art-related activities, QiuJun began to be known as an active painter, curator, and donor.²⁶ In 1929, when the passage above was inscribed, she both exhibited in and helped organize the First National Exhibition of Art held in Shanghai under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.²⁷ Like some women painters in the early Republican period, QiuJun led an unconventional personal life.²⁸ She was never married. In middle age, she was fascinated by the art of Zhang Daqian (Zhang Zhengchuan, 1899-1983) and the two had a close personal relationship. Her feeling for Zhang remained unrequited and he is rumored to have continued to honor her, in spite of the belief that he had rejected a marriage proposal by QiuJun's family. QiuJun lived for the rest of her life with her brother Zuhan before committing suicide in the second half of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

The consideration of Li QiuJun's imprint, as viewer/collector of the handscroll, also leads us to the significance of the act of beholding and of painting—the two linked roles are connoted by the embedded depiction of three figures in the middle segment of the painting. One woman is looking at herself in the mirror. Watching her closely is another woman on her right, who is in the position usually occupied by a male, according to naturalized expectation. Toward the other end

of the same section is the painter standing in front of a six-fold screen, decorated with a landscape of mountain ranges. She is painting a sprig of flowers on a hanging scroll placed on the table; the performative gesture configures her to be homologous to the painter of the handscroll.

The trope of a male painting a beauty seated before him, or beholding a finished portrait, is a familiar one. Narrated in historical stories, works of fiction, and paintings, its importance is embedded in the common double-edged assumption. Beautiful women are rare, in the words of Yuan Mei, as "the perfect Jade of Mr. He and the Sword of Kunwu."²⁹ These women "must rely on persons capable of recognizing culture (*wenshi*) to make them manifest to the world,"³⁰ because they are dangerous unless contained by male culture. Such danger is merely a projection of male desire and fantasy. Within this expressed desire, unharnessed beauty would lead to the destruction and ruin of men who are incapable of controlling desire through culture and ethics. They include rulers and, by extension, the nation. In literary and pictorial representations, such beauties are marked by their physical presence, by their conspicuous absence, or by the substituted effigy portraits.

Portraits of Iconic Beauties

A famous example is found in the stories of Wang Qiang, usually referred to as Zhaojun, who became the feminine icon that defined the relationships between China and its northern subject states.³¹ Emperor Yuandi of Former Han (reigned 48-33 BCE) "gave her" in marriage to Huhanyue, the Khan of the Xiongnu in 33 BCE. Her biographical data are recorded in the dynastic histories of the Former and Latter Han Dynasty.³² Zhaojun is described in the latter to have voluntarily assented to the union, having been a neglected palace woman for many years. When Yuandi met her prior to her departure, he wanted to keep her but did not do so. In the later *Miscellaneous Records of the Western Capital* (*Xijing zaji*, fifth or sixth century CE), Zhaojun's story had evolved into a different one. The circumstance that led her to the union with the Khan was contingent on her portrait. Yuandi had commissioned portraits of the numerous palace women who frequently paid large bribes to the court painters. Wang Zhaojun refused to do so and did not receive an audience with the emperor until just before her departure. Yuandi reluctantly kept his promise to the Khan and bade her farewell.

As a result, after a full investigation, all the court painters were executed. Among them was a portraitist of great skill, Mao Yanshou.

The court painter's role was expanded and re-figured to be the central villain in the *Yuan zaju* play by Ma Zhiyuan (circa 1260-circa 1325), *Autumn over the Palaces of Han* (*Hangong qiu*). Mao Yanshou was instrumental in organizing a search for virgins to fill Yuandi's palaces, albeit for selfish motives; "I'll have the Emperor see less of his Confucian ministers and indulge more in women and sex. Only then will my favored position be secure."³³ In the drama, Zhaojun's ~~status~~ was downgraded from a good family to a modest farming family in Chengdu, Sichuan, that could not afford to bribe the painter. Rather than reject her outright, the official/painter decided to "add some blemishes" below Zhaojun's eyes in her portrait so "she will suffer all her life" in the "cold palace," as a feminine subject out of favor with the emperor. Ten years after her arrival in the palaces, the two met when her lute playing (*pipa*) attracted Yuandi's attention.

Zhaojun was made the imperial consort and, at her request, Yuandi granted favors to her family. The emperor ordered Mao Yanshou arrested and beheaded but the latter had already escaped. He had taken an unblemished portrait of Zhaojun that he presented later to Huhanyue. The Khan then demanded the imperial consort in a marriage alliance, with the threat otherwise of a military invasion. Zhaojun persuaded Yuandi to sacrifice his love for the integral well-being of the state and she accepted the arrangement in gratitude for imperial kindness and favor. Her portrait in the Han palaces was involved in their reunion in Yuandi's dream, following his viewing of it. "We have not held court for a hundred days. Confronted now with this desolate nighttime scene, I am overcome by vexation. I will hang up her portrait to relieve my gloomy thoughts a little."³⁴ At the time, Zhaojun was already ~~dead~~. She had jumped into the Black Dragon River (Heilong jiang) between the Han state and the northern borders, after she had exchanged Han clothes for those of the Xiongnu and poured the libation of wine as farewell to Yuandi and the Han state.³⁵

In his earlier farewell speech sung while sharing a drink with Zhaojun, Yuandi asked rhetorically: "Today Zhaojun goes beyond the border. When will she, like Su Wu, return to her native land?"³⁶ Wang Zhaojun's subjectivity set her apart from the famous Western Han male general who had lived among the Xiongnu for nineteen years before returning as a patriotic hero. As the feminine icon that embodied the

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"liminal space" between the Han and the northern periphery (with regard to shifting territorial claims and ethnic differences), Zhaojun defined her identity when she committed ritual suicide. It was about her refusal to cross the border, that is, be "stained" by the Khan, and her heroism against the Xiongnu.³⁷ Her death was instrumental to national well-being and helped to reinstate the hierarchical relationship of "uncle and nephew" between the Han state and the Xiongnu.³⁸ Huhanyue returned Mao Yanshou "to the Han court for punishment!"

According to one suggestion, one segment of the long *Spring Morning in the Han Palaces* (*Hangong chunxiao*), by Qiu Ying (1494-1552), depicts Mao Yanshou's performative act of painting the portrait of Zhaojun.³⁹ A corresponding moment is depicted in the Papp folding-fan by Gu Luo on another famous personage, *Painting A Portrait of Yang Consort* (*Yang Pei xiezhao tu*) (figure 3). Yang Precious Consort (Yang Guifei, Yang Yuhuan 719-756) was the consort of Emperor Xuanzong (reigned 712-755), and her death by strangling beneath the slopes of Mawei to the west of Xian helped restore peace to the state. The "waves of unrest" observed in the "rocks and trees" on the painted fan,⁴⁰ which are rendered by Gu Luo in agitated brushwork with white high lights, mark the specter of upheaval and turmoil caused putatively by Yang Guifei's presence at the court. She was the foil of Wang Zhaojun in the sense that her behavior and relationship with Xuanzong were defined by moral transgression. Yang Guifei had been the secondary wife of

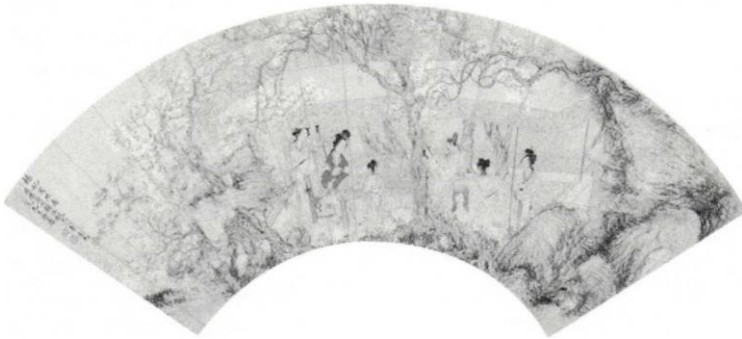


Figure 3. Gu Luo (1763-after 1837), *Painting a Portrait of Yang (Precious) Consort*. Folding fan, ink and color on paper, 18 x 57-1 cm. The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection. Photo by Craig Smith, courtesy of Phoenix Art Museum.

Prince Shou, the eighteenth son of Xuanzong, before her elevation to imperial consort. ⁴¹ Her family members were granted high positions at the court and government bureaucracies; her brother Yang Guozhong was reviled in his tenure as the prime minister before his execution just prior to that of his sister. Yang Guifei had also carried on an amour with the treacherous An Lushan, of Turkic ethnicity and her adopted son.

The female historical figure is the subject of numerous works of fiction that include Bai Juyi's (772-846) famous *Song of Everlasting Sorrow* (*Changhen ge*). ⁴² The evocative description of the love affair between Yang Guifei and Xuanzong and its tragic end was the basis of the story written by Bai's close friend Chen Hong (*jinshi* 805) that is collected in the large encyclopedic compilation *Extensive Records of the Reign of Supreme Stability* (976-983 *Taiping guangji*). ⁴³ Yang Guifei was further because of her implication in the senile Xuanzong's fascination with and fervent belief in the Taoist arts. Such an un-Confucian fetish on the part of Xuanzong was thought by some historians to be one of the major causes of the collapse of the ruling order in his reign.

A leaf in the Papp album, painted by Gai Qi and dated in accordance with 1799, also portrays Yang Guifei (figure 4). The title "Conversion to Daoism of the Jade Realized One" (*Yuzhen rudao*) ⁴⁴ and the accompanying quatrain with seven-character lines, that describes the painted subject's Daoist practice, was composed by the woman poet-calligrapher Cao Zhenxiu (Moqin 1762-after 1822). ⁴⁵ Yang Guifei's temporary stay in a Taoist nunnery was a ploy by Xuanzong to "purify" her from her status as wife of Prince Shou and to make her his own imperial consort. In the storyline of the *Song of Everlasting Sorrow* and the *chuanqi* story, a Taoist practitioner summons the soul of the deceased Guifei. She reappears to pledge her love to Xuanzong by returning half of the gifts given her earlier by the doting emperor, a part of a golden hairpin and a leaf from the cover of an inlaid box. She also promises to be reunited with him on the seventh day of the seventh month, when magpies fly up to heaven and form a bridge so that the Cowherd (Altai) and the Weaver (Vega) can cross the milky way and be reunited. In the later *zaju* play, *Autumn Nights of the Lustrous Emperor of Tang: Rain on the Wutong Tree* (*Minghuang qiuye wutong yu*) by Bai Pu (1227-1306), the viewing by Xuanzong of the effigy portrait of Yang Guifei precedes their brief reunion in his dream that is broken by the sound of raindrops on the wutong tree. This episode is an allusion

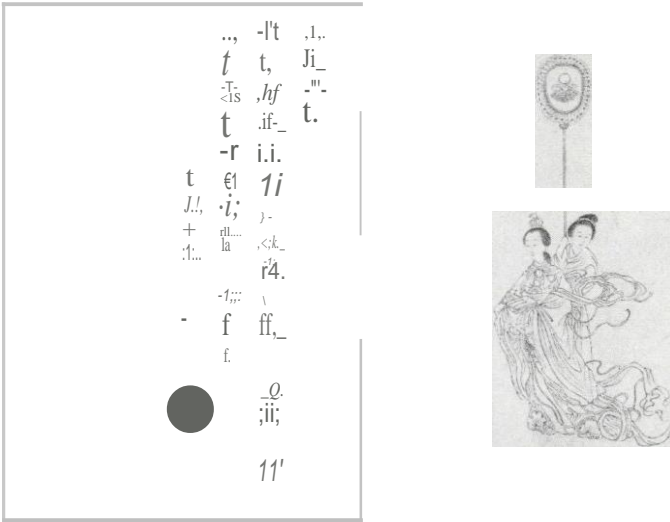


Figure 4. Cao Zhenxiu (1762-after 1822) and Gai Qi (1773-1829), *Conversion of Yang (Precious) Consort to Daoist sm*. Leaf from *Album of Famous Women*, dated 1799. Album of 16 leaves, ink on paper, paintings: 25 x 17.4 cm. The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection. Photo by Craig Smith, courtesy of Phoenix Art Museum.

to the earlier occasion on the seventh day of the seventh month when the two pledged everlasting love under a wutong tree in the Palace Of Eternal Life.⁴⁶

In the two plays, the deceased Wang Zhaojun and Yang Guifei appear to the respective grief-stricken male beholders as painted images. Feelings of loss and grief that are shared by Yuandi and Xuanzong are temporarily assuaged in their manifest dreams (figure 5). A more complex line of development, which centers on the portrait of the female protagonist, structures the well-known *chuanqi* play *The Peony Pavilion and Return of the Soul (Mudan ting huanhun ji)* by Tang Xianzu (1550-1617).⁴⁷ The protagonist Du Liniang (Bridal Du), 16 years of age, painted the self-portrait before she died of love-sickness. Entombed with her body, it was later found by Liu Mengmei (Willow Dreaming of Apricot), her dream-lover. After their passionate affair, Liu was instrumental in Du Liniang's resurrection. Richard Vinograd

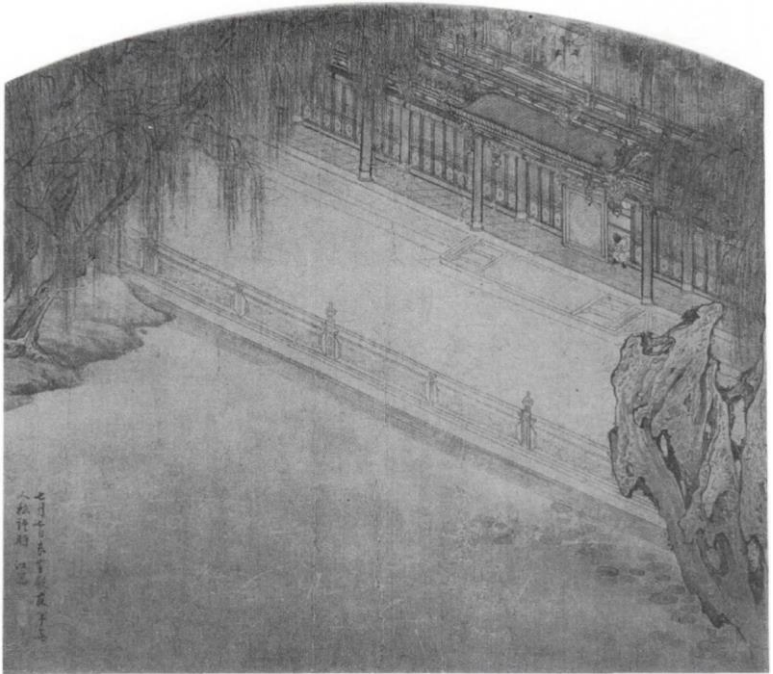


Figure 5. Yuan Jiang (active circa 1680-1740), *The Everlasting Sorrow*. Framed panel, ink and color on silk, 36 x 41.1 cm. The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection. Photo by Craig Smith, courtesy of Phoenix Art Museum.



Detail of Figure 5.

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comments that the concerned "portrait is a self-image that tries to fix an already lost moment, impossible to recapture, of sexual awakening in a dream."⁴⁸

In a recent literary study, Tina Lu suggests another line of enquiry for the drama, one that is built around the issue of human identity, as an alternative to the conventional one centered on passion and desire (*qing*).⁴⁹ According to Lu, the self-portrait, which is an idealized rendering of the painter's dream image, is one of four "versions" of Du Liniang. The others are the girl before death, the ghost, and the resurrected girl. This interpretative strategy considers the protagonist as being without a "unitary identity." The schism between selves, as explained in Lu's schema, figures in Du Liniang's artistic act of self-fashioning and self-determination at the intersection of life and death. Her portrait, the "central artifact" of the play, is a bodiless identity. In some ways, it parallels Wang Zhaojun's ritual suicide in *Autumn over the Palaces of Han*. Her suicide at the exact boundary that separates Han from Xiongnu defines her identity as more than a marginal subject; she disappears as a distinct physical identity, creating a symbol of valor that denies her body and its subjugated standing in either male world, Chinese or barbarian.

Epilogue

These stories bring life to the consideration of the act of beholding and of painting by obliquely calling into the present the configuration of female representation and its relationship to identity and politics. The motif posits a gendered reader, just as it posits a female subject, but complicates that image by evoking pain, in terms both of the painful memories and feelings of loss that preoccupied Yuandi and Xuanzong on viewing the effigy portraits of Wang Zhaojun and Yang Guifei, and of feelings of grief and tormenting pain "felt" by the women in their dying moments. It was also at these moments of self-abnegation that they reveal their own subjectivity, Zhaojun and Du Liniang through self-determination, and Guifei, the iconic dangerous beauty contained by strangling. Pain and disappearance define the subjectivity of these women. But in the stories, their death is usually glossed over, or quickly "acted out" (by Zhaojun in *Autumn Over the Palaces of Han*), their psychological pain repressed (with the exception of Du Liniang in the *Peony Pavilion*), and great physical suffering unarticulated. The silent treatment given to bodily pain "felt" by the women is revealing

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and indicative of its nature, according to the literary scholar Elaine Scarry in her study on pain.⁵⁰ Severe physical pain is directly expressed only by "the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned." Pain's "resistance to language" is almost universal, observed across systems of language in different cultures. In order for physical pain to be diagnosed for medical treatment, or "shared" with others in empathy, it has to be represented metaphorically in words, thereby externalized and "objectified."

When the pictures of these female subjects are viewed together with their literary representations, the images take on rich narrative content. At the perceptual level, the visual portrayals of these women, however, are quite conventional in that they elicit the scopophilic pleasure of a naturalized masculine viewer. In the circumstance, however, emanating from the pictorial representations are both masculine pleasure at the perceptual level and pain at the narrative level "felt" momentarily by the female subjects. "Pleasure" inheres in the images and "pain" remains invisible to the eye, merely gestured toward by the narrative subtext. Circulation of the images serves multiple audiences, and any particular reading is contingent on the critical reception of the beholder, on his or her strategy for reading, and personal context in which to place the stories about female subjects.

Notes

1. I thank Yun-chiu Mei and Stephen West for discussions in the preparation of the paper.

See Shan Guoqiang, "*Gudai shini hua suotan*" (Desultory Remarks on Ancient Genteel Women), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan*, 1981:2, 44-45, for the etymology of the terms. In contemporary usage, semantic differences among such terms as *shinii*, *meiren*, and *meinii hua* are elided, and they are usually translated as "beauties," "beautiful women." For a methodological critique of the study of paintings of women, see Wu Hung, "Beyond Stereotypes: The Twelve Beauties in Qing Court Art and the 'Dream of the Red Chamber,'" *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chiang, editors (Stanford, 1997), 306-365.

2. The four paintings of women in the Papp Collection are the long handscroll *One Hundred Beauties* by Fei Danxu, the album of *Famous Women* that comprises sixteen pairs of rectangular leaves (each with poetic inscription and illustration) by Cao Zhenxiu and Gai Qi, the folding fan entitled *Painting a Portrait of Yang (Precious) Consort*, and the hanging scroll that portrays *Lin Daiyu Burying Fallen Blossoms*. Both the fan and the hanging scroll were painted by Gu Luo.

The Fei Danxu handscroll, the painted fan by Gu Luo, and the pair of leaves that portray Yang Guifei from the album are reproduced in figures 1-4. The entire album is reproduced in Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Journeys on Paper and Silk: The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection of Chinese Painting* (Phoenix, 1998), 136-146. *Lin Daiyu* is reproduced in color in Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire 1796-1911* (Phoenix, 1992), number 32. For additional information on the *Lin Daiyu* and its painter Gu Luo, see Ju-hsi Chou's discussion in Brown and Chou, *Journeys*, 150-153. For the important understanding of these paintings by Fei Danxu and Gu Luo as images that anticipated practices of the "Shanghai School" painters, see Claudia Brown, "Precursors of Shanghai School Painting," *Studies on Shanghai School Painting (Haipai huihua yanjiu wenji)* (Shanghai, 2001), 932-952.

3. He Yan zhe, "*Jiaqing Daoguang shiqi de shini hua*" (Paintings of Genteel Women in the Reigns of Jiaqing and Daoguang), *Meishi yanjiu* 63 (1991:3), 51-56; Nie Chongzheng, "The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)" in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven, 1997), Yang Xin, Richard Barnhart, and others, 290-291.

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4. Shan, "Guda i," 47.
5. Shan Guoqiang has indicated that paintings of women from the sixteenth century forward are characterized by the imbrication of "literary nature" (*wenxue xing*) (Shan, "Gudai," 46-48). For the significance of prints in the Ming dynasty, see Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton, 1997), 29-41. Jonathan Hay discusses the influence of printed books with illustrations on the practices of painters in the first half of nineteenth century in "Painters and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-century Shanghai," *Art at the Close of China's Empire*, Ju-hsi Chou, editor, *Pheebus* volume 8, 145-149.
6. Shan, "Guda i," 47.
7. John Fisher, "Entitling," *Critical Inquiry*, 21 (1984), 292; see also Iso Hin-cheung Lovell, "A Question of Choice, A Matter of Rendition," *Renditions*, 6 (Spring 1976), 63-69, for the importance of translation to the understanding of painting titles.
8. For a persuasive explanation of the experiential effect of viewing with respect to the scholar-amateur mode of paintings from the early fourteenth century forward, see Richard Vinograd, "Private Art and Public Knowledge in Later Chinese Painting," *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation*, Suzanne Kuchler and Walter Melion, editors (Washington, DC, 1991), 176-245.
9. Fei Danxu was from Huzhou by the southern shores of Lake Tai in northern Zhejiang province. From the late 1820s forward, he was a close associate, at different times, of three influential figures, Tang Yifen (1778-1853), the talented, well-connected military official, Wang Yuansun (1794-1836) whose family in Hangzhou was famous for its library *Zhenji tang*, and Jiang Guangxu (1813-1860) in Raining nearby with his notable publishing house *Bixia zhai*. Fei's other friends included such painters as Zhang Xiong (1803-1886) and Gu Luo (who was a native of Hangzhou) as well as a number of educated professionals. The latter were engaged in tasks of collecting, editing, and publishing epigraphical studies, commentaries to Confucian classics, compilations on local interests, and contemporary literary anthologies. Fei's oeuvre comprises poetry, calligraphy, and paintings. He was noted for his male portraits, images of women, and the illustrations in a popular morality book. For an informative monograph on the artist, see Huang Yongquan, *Fei Danxu. Zhongguo huajia congshu* series (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1962). For published sources on Fei, see Chou, "Fei Danxu," Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Scent of Ink: The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection of Chinese Painting* (Phoenix, 1994), 132-133.

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10. Brown, "One Hundred Beauties," Brown and Chou, *Transcending Turmoil*, 94-95; Chou, "Fei Danxu," Brown and Chou, *Scent of Ink*, 132-141.
11. Xiang Yuan, "Fei Danxu de meiren hua" (*Fei Danxu's Pictures of Beautiful Women*), *Yishujia* number 99 (1983:8), 200-211. The reference is cited in Brown and Chou, *Scent of Ink*, 132.
12. Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality*, 153. In his discussion of erotic images in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Clunas points out that a number of critics in the sixteenth and seventeenth century shared the belief that "spring pictures" (*chunhua*) had emerged among practices at the courts of the Han (206 BCE-211 CE). A well-known poetic work, albeit post-Han in date, that narrates desire is the *Rhapsody on the Luo Goddess (Luoshenfu)* by Cao Zhi (192-232). (For a recent translation, see *Wen Xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature by Xiao Tong*, translated with annotations by David Knechtges, volume 3, Princeton, 1996, 355-365.)
 For discussion that yokes poetry to the iconography of palace women, see Ellen Laing, "Chinese Palace-Style Poetry and the Depiction of a Palace Beauty," *Art Bulletin* LXXII: 2 June 1990, 284-296.
13. Wen C. Fong, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy S⁶-14⁶ Century* (New York, 1992), plate 5 on pages 34 and 35. The reproduced segment with three others extant make up a copy of the original painting by Zhou Wenju that is referred to in later descriptions as *In the Palace*, or *Spring Morning at the Tang Palace (Tanggong chunxiao tu)*. The three other segments are in the Villa I Tatti (Bernard Berenson collection), the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Fogg Art Museum.
 For various discussions on both the differences among the four segments and of the reconstructed order of the original scroll, see Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 34-39; Laurence Roberts, and others, *The Bernard Berenson Collection of Oriental Art at Villa I Tatti* (New York, 1991), 27-31; Wai-kam Ho, "Danyan jushi Zhang Cheng kaoliie binglun 'Mo Zhou Wenju Gongzhong tujian' bahou zhi 'Jun Sima yin' ji qita weiyin" (Examining the Identity of Danyan Recluse Zhang Cheng with Discussion of the "Adjutant Seal" and other Fake Seals Posterior to the Colophon of the *Copy of Zhou Wenju's In the Palace Handscroll*) *Shanghai bowuguanjikan* 4 (1987), 35-50.
14. The male figure has been identified as the "youthful Southern Tang ruler Li Yu" who is viewing a painting. (Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 67, note 31.)
15. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, translated and revised by James Strachey with a new introduction by Steven Marcus (New York, 1975), 60-72.
16. In "The Changing Face of Narrative in Early Chinese Painting: Three

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Milestones from the Metropolitan Museum , " *Oriental Arts* 28/11 (December 1997), 20-26, Maxwell Hearn provides what may be considered the normalized reading of a painting that depicts court women and their attendants in a palace setting. Entitled *Palace Banquet (Qiqiao tu)*, the large hanging scroll, which is attributed to the tenth century, presents in a bird's eye view of the private chamber and its surroundings in an inner palace. Hearn's suggested narrative, that is built on the assumed absence of the imaginary emperor, conceives the viewer to be a voyeur. The scene is identified as the celebration of the seventh day of the seventh month, the same festival that is highlighted in the stories and plays of Yang Guifei and Xuanzong.

- 17- Xishi is surnamed Shi, also known as Yiguang. As an icon of female beauty, her historical existence remains doubtful although her name is recorded in such early compilations as the *Guanzi* and *Mozi*. The reliability of the standard account in *Wuyue chunqiu* (circa 40 CE) about her role as instrumental in the defeat by the Yue state by Wu is questioned by Zeng Yongyi in "Xishi gushi zhin i" (Doubting the Record of the Xishi Story), *Zhongguo gudian wenxue yanjiu congkan, xiaoshuo zhibu 1*, Ke Qingming and Lin Mingde, editors (Taipei: Juliu tushu, 1977).
18. The passage, inscribed on the frontispiece (*yinshou*), is preceded by four large characters that Li Qiujun wrote in the seal script "gong huo(?) 工
 兮," whose overall meaning remains to be determined.
19. Zheng Zhenduo has indicated that the *New Songs on the Hundred Beauties* was first printed in 1755 (Zheng Zhenduo, *A Selected Collection of Chinese Ancient Woodblock Prints, Zhongguo gudai mukehua xuanji*, volume VI, reprint edition, Beijing, 1985, for the reproduction of one of the illustrations, and Zheng's comment is on page 83 in volume IX). The edition I have used is a replica of the woodblock-reprinted edition, published by Zhongguo shudian in 1998 in Beijing. It includes a preface by the compiler Yan Xiyuan dated in correspondence with 1787, a 1790 preface by Yuan Mei, and a third 1792 prefatory essay by Yan that precedes the collective poems. These dated essays would suggest the edition was printed in 1792, or shortly after. If the compilation was first printed in 1755 and reprinted in later times, as Zheng Zhenduo suggests, we could reasonably assume the later edition(s) contain additional commentarial material.

New Songs on the Hundred Beauties had counterparts among the later illustrated books that include Li Yaomeng, *Pictures of A Hundred Beauties (Li Yaomeng baidie tu)*. Printed in 1827, the compilation could be the source of butterfly designs that populated women's robes, screens, and decorative

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panels in the nineteenth century (See the reproduction of an illustration in Zheng, *A Selected Collection*, VII). *Five Hundred Famous Worthies of Wu with Illustrations*, *Biographies*, and *Encomia* (*Wujun wubai mingxian tu zhuanzan*) was compiled by Gu Yuan, and printed probably in 1825 (Zheng, *A Selected Collection*, volume VII).

Jonathan Hay indicates *New Songs on the Hundred Beauties* and the contemporaneous *Poems to Famous Elegant Beauties of History* (*Lidai mingyuan shici*, printed in 1773) informed the later *One Hundred Commented Pictures of Beautiful Ladies* (*Xinzheng baimei tushuo*, 1887), which was compiled by Qiu Shouyan. The later compilation was, by turn, the probable model for some of the drawings by Wu Jiayou (Youru ?-1893), who was the notable illustrator of newspaper pictorials in late nineteenth-century Shanghai. (Jonathan Hay, "Painters and Publishing," 148). Images from Wu's two series that are entitled *Pictures of A Hundred Beauties* (*Baimei tu*) and *The Hundred Gorgeous Women of Shanghai* (*Hai shang baiyan tu*) were published in issues of the *Pavilion of Flying Shadows Pictorial Newspaper* (*Feiyang ge huabao*) from 1890 forward. The two series are reprinted in the *Pictorial Treasury of Wu Youru*, *Wu Youru huabao*, reprint edition, Shanghai, 1983, volume I.

20. In *New Songs on the Hundred Beauties*, the commentarial writing consists of several sections: eight prefaces, a collection of song lyrics (ci) on some of the hundred beauties, a long poem with a hundred rhyming lines of five characters on the hundred beauties, a hundred quatrains with seven-character lines also on the beauties, and Yan 's 1792 preface to poems that also refers to the illustrator Wang Hui. The prefatory material precedes the main content, illustrations, and the biographical accounts of the hundred beauties. The main body is followed by the elaborate postface apparatus that comprises Yan 's preface to the collective poems, the poems, and four colophons.

Among writers of the commentarial material is Shi Jirong (*jinshi* 1771), an official at the courts of Qianlong and Jiaqing (*Daqing jifu xianzhe zhuan* compiled by Xu Shichang in *Qingdai zhuanji congkan*, Zhou Junfu, editor, Taipei, 1985, volume 198, 424-426). Others include Xiong Lian, a famous woman poet (*Qingdai guige shiren zheng'jie* compiled by Shi Shuyi in Zhou, *Qingdai zhuanji*, volume 25, 361-363), and the (male) painter Guan Tao.

21. Dated in accordance with 22 March 1929, Li Zuhan's colophon begins with praise for Fei Danxu, whose artistic achievement surpassed his antecedent Gai Qi. The passage ends with these lines, "In the silence of night, I trimmed the light before unrolling and looking at it [*One Hundred Beauties*] again and again.... Preoccupied by miscellaneous chaotic matters,

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I have not been able to benefit from making tracing and freehand copies of paintings. When will I succeed in learning to paint? For the moment, I could only hold the scroll and heave a long sigh."

22. *Xinghui* translates to "physical form that is ugly." An example of its usage is in a passage in the *Jinshu*, compiled in the early seventh century. Wei Jie who served at the Western Jin court and who was one of the grandsons of Wei Guan was extraordinarily good-looking. Jie's uncle, Wang Ji, who was quite handsome himself, commented that whenever he saw the young Jie: "With Zhuru (Wei Jie) by my side, I feel ugly (*Jue wo xinghui*)."
Jinshu by Fang Xu and others, reprint edition, Beijing, 1967, volume 4, 1067.
23. Pei Kai (237-291) was a close friend of Wang Rong (234-305), one of the *Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove*. Pei was well-known for his pleasing appearance. People in his own time used to say: "Seeing Pei Shuze (Pei Kai) is like being next to the Jade Mountain that casts a light, as reflection, on us." (Fang, *Jinshu*, 1048)
24. Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience," *Ecrits: A Selection*, translated by Alan Sheridan (London, 1977), 1-7.
25. For an account of Li Qiujun's life, see Julia Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, "Traditionalism as a Modern Stance: The Chinese Women's Calligraphy and Painting Society," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, 11:1 (spring, 1999), 12-15.
26. Li Qiujun was also active in the organizations and associations of artists. She was among the six founders of the *Chinese Women Calligraphy and Painting Society (Zhongguo nuzi shuhua hui)*, established in Shanghai in 1934. (The other five were Gu Qingyao 1901-1978, Chen Xiaocui 1907-1968, Feng Wenfeng 1900-1971, Gu Fei, and Yang Xuejiu.) In the same year, the Association organized its first exhibition, which showed for sale paintings and calligraphy done by its members. The event was held at the influential Ningbo Club. Qiujun was involved in other organizations, such as the influential *Chinese Painter Association*. Andrews and Shen, "Traditionalism as a Modern Stance," 6-11.
27. For another perspective on the importance of the First National Exhibition of Art, with respect to the art of Xu Beihong, see David Der-wei Wang, "In the Name of the Real," *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*, Maxwell Hearn and Judith Smith, editors (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 29-59.
28. For brief biographical information on Li Qiujun's contemporaries (Feng Wenfeng, Wu Qingxia born 1910, and Yang Xuejiu), see Andrews and Shen,

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"Traditionalism as a Modern Stance," 8-9 and 15-20.

29. Mr. He's Jade (*Heshi zhibi*) was a unique piece of jade, and it is the subject of a few historical stories. The one recorded in *Han Peizi* is about the importance of perspicacious persons to people of talent and rare beauty. Bian He was a loyal subject in the Chu state. He presented the special but unpolished jade to two successive rulers, Liwang and Wuwang. Neither believed him and, as punishment, they amputated both of his legs. At the succession of Wenwang, Bian He left the capital for the mountains with his jade. A court official asked him the reason for his lament; he replied, like the priceless jade that was mistaken for a worthless stone, he, as the virtuous subject, had the reputation of being untrustworthy and deceitful. The verbal exchange was reported to Wenwang who had the jade polished and named it Mr. He's Jade.

The blades of the swords from Kunwu (*Kunwujian*), which is in Hami county in Xinjiang, were unusually sharp. Zhou Muwang used a Kunwu sword that had been presented to him to cut iron as effortlessly as if it were mud.

30. Yuan Mei, the first Preface in *New Songs on the Hundred Beauties*, Xu (Preface), 1-2.
31. Two studies have informed my account of the stories of Wang Zhaojun: Daphne P. Lei, "Wang Zhaojun on the Border: Gender and Intercultural Conflicts in Premodern Chinese Drama," *Asian Theatre Journal* 13:2 (Fall, 1996), 229-237; the introduction to and translation of Ma Zhiyuan's "A Lone Goose in the Autumn over the Palaces of Han," Stephen West and Wilt Idema, *Twenty-five Chinese Dramas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).
32. *History of the (Former) Han Dynasty (Hanshu, 206 BCE-8 BC)* was compiled in the first century of this era, and the *History of the Latter Han Dynasty (Hou Hanshu, 25-220)* in the fourth century. For citations to Zhaojun in both historiographical compilations, see Lei, "Wang Zhaojun," 230-231.
33. West and Idema, *Twenty-five*, "A Lone Goose," the beginning Wedge.
34. West and Idema, *Twenty-five*, "A Lone Goose," Act Four.
35. For a typified representation of Zhaojun depicted at the border between China and the Steppes, see the 1843 hanging scroll by Fei Danxu in the Palace Museum in Beijing. Zhaojun is shown in a Chinese robe beneath an unusual fur headdress, standing beside her spirited horse. Holding her *pipa* wrapped under a loose cover, she is turning her head to the left. Wild geese are flying high above toward the same direction. Zhaojun's colorful costume and cheerful facial expression posit a striking contrast with the

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- somber dark background covered by patches of gray wash. (*Chinese Art Comprehensive Selections, Zhongguo meishu quanji*, 11, Shanghai 1988, number 133, 49.)
36. West and Idema, *Twenty-five*, "A Lone Goose," Act Three. According to *Hou Han shu*, after Khan Huhanyue's death, Zhaojun petitioned the Han court for permission to return to China, but the request was denied. (Lei, "Wang Zhaojun," 231.)
 37. Lei, "Wang Zhaojun," 233-234.
 38. West and Idema, *Twenty-five*, "A Lone Goose," Act Three, and the introduction to the play.
 39. For a suggested reading of the pictorial segment, which putatively portrays Zhaojun seated across from Mao Ya ngshou, made in the context of the narration of Wang Zhaojun in *Xijing zazi* and *Hang ong qiu*, see Richard Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self- Chinese Portraits, 1600-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 15-16.
Spring Morning in the Han Palaces is in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. For a good reproduction of the discussed section, see Wen Fong, James Watt, and others, *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York and Taipei, 1996), 400-401, plate 203. The entire handscroll is reproduced in black and white in Liu Fang ru, and others, *Glimpses into the Hidden Quarters: Paintings of Women from the Middle Kingdom (Shinii hua zhi mei)* (reprint edition, Taipei, 1987), 70-71.
 40. Chou, "Painting a Portrait of Yang Guifei," Brown and Chou, *Journeys*, 154.
 41. The introduction to and translation of the "Autumn Nights of the Lustrous Emperor of Tang: Rain on the Wutong Tree," West and Idema, *Twenty-five*.
 42. Li Fang, and others, *Taiping guangji* (reprint edition, Beijing, 1961), X, 3998-4000; a recent translation of *Changhen ge* is in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, edited and translated by Stephen Owen (New York, 1996), 442-447.
 43. Chen Hong's *Changhen ge chuan* is in Li Fang, *Taiping guangji*, 4000-4001, and a translation in Owen, *Changhen ge*, 448-452.
 44. During her "purification" stay at the Supreme Realized Palace (Taizhen gong), Yang Guifei was given the Daoist name, the Supreme Realized One (Taizhen). Her abode in the underworld is the Garden of the Jade Consort, the Supreme Realized One (Yufei Taizhen yuan). Yuzhen is probably the abbreviation of Yang Guifei's two given names, Yufei and Taizhen.
 45. Cao Zhenxiu was a notable poet and calligrapher from a family known for accomplishment in the arts. She was the oldest of three daughters of Cao Rui, who was living in Suzhou after retirement from the Warden's Office in

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the capital. Cao Zhenxiu was the wife of Wang Jisun (1735-1797), a teacher and writer and a close friend of Gai Qi in Huating.

Cao Zhenxiu's quatrain poems, composed to be illustrated (*tihua shi*), signal overall a predilection for the quotidian and a feeling of intimacy toward female subjects. For an account of Cao Zhenxiu and her family, see *Molinjinhua* compiled by Jiang Baoling and Jiang Chaisheng (1852) (Shanghai: Shaoye shanfang, 1925), *juan* 2, volume 1, 6b. For the translation of Cao Zhenxiu's quatrain, the state of the partial preservation of the album, a brief account of Gai Qi's Uighur ancestry, and his relationship with Wang Jisun, see Chou, "Gai Qi," Brown and Chou, *Journeys*, 136-146.

46. West and Ide ma , *Twenty -five* , "Autumn Nights," Acts Four and One .
47. *The Peony Pavilion (Mudan ting)*, Tang Xianzhu, translated by Cyril Birch (Bloomington, 1980.)
48. Vinograd, *Boundaries*, 16.
49. Tina Lu, *Persons, Roles, and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press , 2001), 28-62.
50. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) , 1-59 and 161-181.