

The Frustrations of Heaven's Fragrance:
An Analysis and Translation of Guan Hanqing's

Qian Dayin zhichong Xie Tianxiang

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the play *Qian Dayin zhichong Xie Tianxiang* (錢大尹智寵謝天香), written by the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) playwright Guan Hanqing 關漢卿 (c.1225–1302). The first chapter of this paper provides brief background information about northern style Yuan drama (*zaju* 雜劇) as well as a plot summary and notes about the analysis and translation. Through a close reading of the play, I hope to illustrate how the play's complicated ending and lack of complete resolution reveals why it has received relatively little attention from scholars who have previously discussed other strong, intelligent female characters in Guan Hanqing's plays. The second chapter of this thesis includes translation of the play that is comprised of a wedge preceding the four acts. Before each act of the play is a critical introduction and analysis of the act to follow. Although many of Guan Hanqing's plays have been translated into English, this play has never been translated.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Authorship

Yuan 元 dynasty (1271-1368) drama (*zaju* 雜劇) is a performance genre that originated in the northern region of China. The structure of this genre alternates between sung arias and spoken dialogue. The dialogue is usually comprised of colloquial vernacular of the time and occasionally some classical Chinese. The arias elegantly articulate the emotions of the singer, while the dialogue drives the plot. Due to the prosimetric style of Yuan drama and because it is a performance literature, it is normally thought to have stemmed from earlier performance genres including both transformation tales (*bianwen* 變文) as well as tales in all keys and modes (*zhugongdiao* 諸宮調).¹ The popularity of drama rose dramatically during the Ming 明 dynasty (1368-1644). In fact, the majority of the northern style Yuan plays that are extant today were written in the Ming dynasty. There are only thirty independent late Yuan editions of plays that are collected under the modern title, *Thirty Zaju in Yuan Editions* (*Yuan zaju sanshi zhong* 元雜劇三十種) currently extant today. Many Yuan *zaju* were revised and reprinted in the Ming dynasty. There are 162 *zaju* currently extant.²

Arguably the most prominent and talented playwright during the Yuan dynasty was Guan Hanqing 關漢卿 (c.1225–1302). The *Register of Ghosts* (*Lugui*

¹ “Literature from the late Jin to the early Ming: ca. 1230-ca 1375,” 620-50.

² “A Study in Appropriation: Zang Maoxun’s Injustice to Dou E,” 283.

bu 錄鬼簿) by Zhong Sicheng 鐘嗣成 (ca. 1279- ca.1360) provided a significant amount of the information we know about Yuan dramas and playwrights. This work documented many playwrights' compositions and also included short biographies, and it attributed sixty-seven plays to Guan. It is generally accepted, however, that he did not actually compose all of these plays, and thus it is uncertain how many he did write.³ The play that this paper examines was attributed to Guan and his authorship has never been questioned. This is probably because it was well crafted like his other plays, and even shares a character, Qian Ke, who was in another of his plays.⁴ Guan Hanqing can be considered a world-class dramatist, noted for his sympathetic portrayals of common folk and for the beauty of his language.⁵

Editions

Even though this play was originally written in the Yuan dynasty, no editions have survived from the Yuan. The earliest editions of the play are from the Ming dynasty. The play was actually reprinted in many Ming collections, which may be an indication of the play's popularity. Although not an exhaustive list, the play was collected in Zang Maoxun's 臧懋循 (1550-1620) *Selection of Yuan Plays* (元曲選 *Yuanqu xuan*), the Xu family of Longfeng's block-printed editions *Zaju by*

³ *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, 1.

⁴ *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, 5.

⁵ "Ling yizhong jingshen shijie de toushi: wei Guan Hanqing Xie Tianxiang yibian," 76.

the hands of famous authors (古名家雜劇 *Gu mingjia zaju*), and the same print edition preserved in the *Maiwang guan* (脈望館) collection by Zhao Qimei 趙琦美 (1553–1624) and published sometime between 1612 and 1617.⁶

Introduction to the Play

The play's full title, "Prefect Qian wisely bestows favor upon Xie Tianxiang" (*Qian Dayin zhichong Xie Tianxiang* 錢大尹智寵謝天香) introduces the lead of the play, Xie Tianxiang, as well as the Prefect Qian, whose formal name is Qian Ke. The historical poet Liu Yong 柳永(987–1053), who was known for his lyric poetry (*ci* 詞) and specifically the songs he wrote for singsong girls, is also a character in the play, but his role is more minor than that of Prefect Qian and Xie Tianxiang. He only appears on stage in the first and final acts.

The play begins with Liu Yong preparing to leave Xie Tianxiang to go to the capital to take the imperial examinations. It is clear that they have already developed a relationship. Liu decides to remain with Xie an extra day so that he can welcome the new Prefect who is also his old friend, Qian Ke. In act one, Liu goes to see Qian Ke and requests that he take care of Xie. Liu had been drinking the whole night, and he stupidly goes five times to request Qian's help to watch over Xie. The fifth time, Qian is outraged and rebukes Liu. Liu leaves, but before

⁶ For more information about these editions, see Stephen H. West, "A Study in Appropriation: Zang Maoxun's Injustice to Dou E," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111, no. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1991): 302–5.

he does, he composes a poem for Xie. Zhang Qian, the Prefect's main servant, secretly transcribes the poem.

In act two, Qian requests that Xie perform Liu's poem. There is a twist in the plot because the poem contains the Prefect's personal name, which in the Prefect's presence no one inferior to him is allowed to speak. Xie begins singing, and just as she is about to sing the Prefect's name "Ke,"⁷ Zhang Qian coughs, causing her to realize that she is about to fall into a trap. She quickly changes the words and then successfully changes the poem's rhyme. Prefect Qian is very impressed by her talent and he decides to remove her name from the Entertainment Bureau registry and make her a concubine in his home. Qian also reveals to the audience that he has a scheme planned.

The third act begins with Tianxiang indicating that three years have already passed. Two of the other concubines come to visit Xie and one of the girls decides that they should go to a pavilion to gamble. As they are gambling, Prefect Qian enters the pavilion, but it is unbeknownst to Xie. Her other sisters leave, and she makes slanderous comments against Prefect Qian. Once she realizes he has witnessed her remarks, she is mortified. In order to spare her, Qian requests that she perform for him. She successfully does so, and he rewards her by informing her that she is to become a second wife. Xie assumes Qian means a second wife in his home and is skeptical of his promises.

Liu Yong returns in the final act after he has officially become a top scholar. Prefect Qian invites him to a banquet. It is here that Qian reveals his

⁷ i.e. 可

hidden plot. He reunites Xie with Liu and they presumably resume their relationship.

Notes on Translation and Analysis:

This play has never been translated into a western language and there is little scholarship compared to some of the other plays by Guan Hanqing. One possible reason as to why scholars overlooked this play is because the lead character, Xie Tianxiang, although extremely intelligent, is actually secondary to Liu Yong's absurd actions and Prefect Qian's scheming.

One element for which Guan Hanqing is particularly known is his sympathy for women whom society oppressed. Many of his plays were written for a female lead, and that role is usually a very strong and compelling character. Normally, when discussing Guan Hanqing's treatment of women in his plays, scholars have chosen to develop their arguments based on the plays *Zhao Pan'er Flirts to Rescue a Harlot* (*Zhao Pan'er fengyue jiu fengchen* 趙盼兒風月救風塵), *Du Ruiniang Learns to Appreciate Gold Thread Pond* (*Durui Niang zhi shang jinxian chi* 杜蕊娘智賞金線池), *A Beauty Pining in her Boudoir: The Pavilion for Praying to the Moon* (*Guiyuan jiaren baiyue ting* 閨怨佳人拜月亭), and *Moving Heaven and Shaking Earth: The Injustice to Dou E* (*Gantian dongdi Dou E yuan* 感天動地竇娥冤) rather than *Xie Tianxiang*.⁸

⁸ The translations of the first two titles are from Dale R. Johnson's article "Courtesans, Lovers, and Gold Thread Pond in Guan Hanqing's Music Dramas." This article also includes a translation of *Durui Niang zhi shang jinxian chi*. *Jiu fengchen* is translated in Stephen Owen's *Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 744-770. The latter two

Xie Tianxiang is also a strong female lead; however, a close reading of the play demonstrates that she is not the same type of woman as the women in the previously mentioned plays. Because this play includes a strong female character, it is tempting to classify this play among other plays about women by Guan Hanqing, however Xie Tianxiang's talent and intelligence do not command the stage the entire length of the play. Unlike the other plays, the final two acts, and particularly the resolution of this play, is unsettling. Whereas in the other plays, the resolution is satisfying and the leading woman actually controls the plot, here Xie Tianxiang is essentially Prefect Qian's prop, and even though he is not the lead, his actions control the fate of the other characters as well as the plot of the play. Prefect Qian to some degree actually becomes the most important character in the play and his scheming overshadows Xie Tianxiang's character development.

Cultural customs and literary authority are recurring themes in the play and the narrative structure is unusual, with a partial resolution at the end of act two, a climax in the third act, and then a forced resolution in the final act. The unusual narrative arc complicates the play, and the final act, while it does resolve the drama to some degree, leaves the audience with unsettled and dissatisfied feelings. The ending feels abrupt and somewhat forced, and another reason that the play may be overlooked is because of these loose ends. However, rather than

titles are translated in *Monks, Bandits, Lovers and Immortals*, v, which also includes translations of the two plays. In the remainder of the paper, I will refer to these plays by their short titles: *Jiu Fengchen*, *Jinxian chi*, *Bai yueting*, and *Dou E yuan*, respectively.

continue to gloss this piece as simply another strong female role in Guan Hanqing's plays, through a close analysis, I hope to provide new insight and inspire continued reading and analysis of the play.

My translation is based on the *Yuanqu xuan* edition, edited by Zang Maoxun. Modern editions offer extensive notes that proved useful for translation. This play follows a tradition in consisting of four acts preceded by a wedge. The first act is noticeably longer than the other three, and also a significant proportion of the play's action occurs in it. Even though the first act is the longest, it actually has the fewest arias, which is because Prefect Qian and Liu Yong have larger roles than Xie Tianxiang. Xie has very few spoken lines in the entire play, but in accordance with the Yuan *zaju* form, she does sing all of the arias.

One of the important features in this play and in Chinese literary history is the use of pronouns. In most of the dialogue, the characters do not use "I," "you," or "he." Instead everyone calls one another by either their titles or family designations such as "elder brother." These serve an important role in establishing hierarchy, and the characters would have been constantly reminded of it. For the purpose of translation, however, I use a title the first time it is mentioned to refer to a specific character, but afterward may substitute a regular pronoun where it is appropriate. In the first act, for example, Liu Yong refers to Prefect Qian as "Brother," but then he literally begins every response with "Brother." At times the pronoun may be omitted altogether for the sake of reading fluency. However, it is

still important to recognize that these hierarchies existed and observe how they influence the themes in the play.

One final note on translation, I have not explained all idiomatic phrases in the footnotes simply because their meaning can easily be understood in the translation, and because the use of idioms had become a part of everyday speech in the Yuan dynasty. The same is true with some English idioms, such as “To thine own self be true.” It is unnecessary to cite *Hamlet* each time this phrase is used, because the general public knows the meaning of the phrase and it has become commonplace in everyday speech.

Chapter 2

Analysis and Translation of *Xie Tianxiang*

Dramatis Personæ in order of appearance

<i>Role Type</i>	<i>Name, family role, or social role</i>
Male lead	Liu Yong
Female Lead	Xie Tianxiang
Clown	Zhang Qian, Prefect Qian's Servant
Extra male	Prefect Qian Ke
Females	A group of singsong girls
Two Females	Prefect Qian's Household Concubines

The Wedge:

The play begins with the lovers Liu Yong and Xie Tianxiang on the eve of Liu's departure to go to the capital, Kaifeng, to take the imperial examinations. Liu opens the play by reciting a four-line poem in which he explains that he had no intention of falling in love, but had originally planned to "ascend to the clouds in the blue sky,"⁹ (步上青雲) meaning he was focused on becoming the top scholar in the examinations. It is immediately clear from the introduction that the relationship he has is not one that was socially acceptable. He is quite aware of his weakness for women, "In my life, I have given thought only to flowers and wine,"¹⁰ (平生以花酒為念) but recognizes that he no longer has the leisure to knock about, and must travel to the capital before examinations began. Liu's opening lines may seem to indicate that this play is romantic, but in fact Liu does not care too much for Xie and views her as an unplanned incident who is an obstacle in his path to success. Leaving her is difficult, but it is clear that he must leave.

Although Liu Yong's character in this play is not identical to him as a real historical person, his character is similar to the historical accounts of his life, and the audience would have had assumptions about him that are certainly true in this play, namely that he spent his time in the brothels and wrote poetry for singsong girls.¹¹

⁹ All quotations to my translation have been cross-referenced. See Wedge, p.13 of this document.

¹⁰ Wedge, 13. Here, "flowers" refers to women.

¹¹ *The Cambridge History of Chinese literature*, 441-442.

It was very common for love stories to be about the relationship between a scholar and a courtesan, so it is not surprising that this play replicates this theme and also depicts this type of relationship.¹² It is interesting, however, for Yuan playwrights to discuss this theme because the examinations were suspended during the Mongol-governed dynasty. Shi Zhengrong 施正荣 suggested that these authors longed to have the same prestige of passing the examinations and would instead live vicariously through the scholars in their writings.¹³

The next character on stage is Xie Tianxiang, the play's leading role. Her name has great meaning and is delightfully ambiguous. Her name can mean "fragrance to thank heaven," and simply Tianxiang can mean "sweet smelling flowers" or "a beautiful woman." She enters the stage to tell Liu that she has prepared his travel expenses; this already indicates that Liu is indebted to her and that their relationship is atypical in the sense that the woman is providing for the man.

Zhang Qian, in the role of clown, is the Head Clerk in charge of procuring entertainers and prostitutes. He is the Prefect's main servant and the go-between in the play. He informs Xie Tianxiang that a new Prefect, Qian Ke, has been appointed to govern in Hangzhou and that all of the entertainers are required to go and greet him. Xie Tianxiang is the Head of the Guild, meaning that she was in

¹² "Courtesans, Lovers, and Gold Thread Pond," 112.

¹³ For a discussion of Liu Yong's role in the play see Shi Zhengrong 施正荣, "Yanyi Yuandai wenren xintai de yige fuhao: zaju *Xie Tianxiang* xinxiang chuli zhitan" 演繹元代文人心態的一個符號: —雜劇《謝天香》柳永形象處理摭談, *Journal of Lianyungang Teachers College*, 4 (2004): 35-8.

charge of the other women in the entertainment and prostitution business. Her title as “Head of the Guild” means she was both the most talented and the most desirable woman.

It is at this point Liu realizes that the Prefect is his old friend. Because Liu wants to greet his friend and new Prefect he decides to leave the next day which allows him and Xie to have one more night together to spend drinking and philandering. Xie sings two songs simultaneously lamenting Liu’s impending departure and feeling grateful that they have one more night together because of the new prefect.

Prefect Qian Wisely Bestows Favor Upon Xie Tianxiang

Wedge

(OPENING MALE *costumed as Liu Qiqing*¹⁴ leading FEMALE LEAD *as Xie Tianxiang*,¹⁵ enters:) (LIU recites:)

Originally, I planned, with steady step, to ascend to the clouds in the blue sky¹⁶

Simply because of a rouged face, I lingered here.¹⁷

Old Heaven gave me birth, endowed me with imaginative power;

On the battlefield of wind and moon, am I willing to yield to others?

My family name is Liu, first name is Yong, and given name is Qiqing, and I am from Qiantang Commandery.¹⁸ My life has given thought only to flowers¹⁹ and wine, and I liked to ascend the flowery terrace to act as a playboy. I never

¹⁴ Liu Qiqing is the historical figure Liu Yong 柳永 (987–1053). He was a famous poet from the Song 宋 Dynasty (960-1279) and was also known as Liu the seventh 柳七. He had a reputation for spending his time in the courtesan's quarters and the Yuan audience would have been aware of these character traits

¹⁵ Xie Tianxiang 謝天香, this name could be translated literally a fragrance to thank heaven. Tianxiang, can mean sweet smelling flowers, incense to burn to the gods, and also a beautiful woman.

¹⁶ Here Liu is alluding to becoming the top scholar in the imperial examinations. He had planned to go to the capital and pursue an official career without hindrance, but he has unintentionally become sidetracked by his relationship with Xie Tianxiang.

¹⁷ This is referring to Xie Tianxiang.

¹⁸ Qiantang 錢塘 commandery is located near Hangzhou.

¹⁹ I.e., women.

expected my “wandering for study” to bring me here, and take the Number One Woman of the Guild, Xie Tianxiang as my companion. But I’ve come to the conclusion that, when the examinations are held this spring, should I miss by one day, I would have to wait three more years. So, I’d better take my leave from Elder Sister and go to the capital to take the imperial exams. Sister, you have treated me very well while I’ve been here. If I manage to get an official post at the capital, you will be a Noble Lady, complete with that five-colored letter of patent and a fragrant cart pulled by a four-in-hand.²⁰ (FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:) Qiqing, I have prepared clothing and travel expenses, so don’t miss your date with success because of me.

(CLOWN *costumed as ZHANG QIAN, enters and speaks*) I am Zhang Qian and am the Head Clerk in Charge of Procuring Entertainers.²¹ I manage Buddhist nuns, Daoist laywomen and entertainers. Anything to do with “greeting the new and sending off the old,”²² is my responsibility. Now, the newly appointed Prefect is surnamed Qian. Everyone who should go and greet him as the new official has done so, except for these prostitutes. The Head of the Guild here is named Xie Tianxiang. She’s in charge of these miscellaneous women. I must go and have a word with her. Here I am at the front door. Is Sister Xie home? (FEMALE LEAD

²⁰ The emperor used to confer the official titles on silk paper with five colored golden flowers on it.

²¹ That is he was the “Yamen procurer” the official in Yamen in charge of singsong girls. The music entertainment bureau organized performers and also trained them.

²² I.e., prostitution.

acts out greeting, speaks:) Big brother, why did you call for me? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) Sister, a new Prefect has come to take over. Prepare to go and make a formal visit. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) Brother, who is this newly appointed official? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) He is Prefect Qian. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) Is it possible that he is the Persian Prefect Qian? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) Don't speak so crazily by using the taboo name of this great man!²³ I am going. Sister Xie, tomorrow morning come and make your formal visit.

(Exits)

(Liu speaks:) Sister, This is great! Prefect Qian is an old classmate and friend. I'll go with you tomorrow to meet him, and I'll ask him to look after you. Then I can go away to the capital without a worry. (FEMALE LEAD *sings:*)

XIANLÜ MODE: (*Shanghua shi*)

This one song will turn into a *Collection of Mixed Tears*;

The greatest bitterness is the Heaven of Separation's Regret so high;²⁴

Paired tears fall in front of the goblet.²⁵

²³ Prefect Qian's taboo name is Qian Kedao. Anyone who referred to any part of his name that was not of his same status would disrespect his superiority and would be punished.

²⁴ This is referring to the belief that heaven had thirty-three levels. The name of the top layer is “离恨天.” Here it is used as a metaphor to represent romantic lovers who are unable to see one another for a long time and are extremely grieved. A common saying in early vernacular literature: “Of the thirty-three heavens above, the heaven of parting's regret is the highest.” *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays*, 147.

²⁵ The tears fell from both lovers, which is why they were “paired”.

The mountains go on and on, the rivers run far away—
In sorrow I see you prepare your carriage for travel.

(Reprise)

To wait for the simurgh glue to mend the zither string;²⁶
I must gaze at the engraved saddle, hard to hold back by love alone.
Let's thank the newly appointed official;
True it is, "He makes things easier for the people,"²⁷
And we have one last night of the "double-headed lotus."²⁸

(All exit.)

²⁶ In a note in the article, "Tragedy and Melodrama in Early "ch'uan-ch'i" Plays: 'Lute Song' and 'Thorn Hairpin' Compared" Cyril Birch explains that the Han emperor Wu di used the simurgh glue to repair a string, which was supposedly the strongest glue, but it failed. See Cyril Birch, "Tragedy and Melodrama in Early "ch'uan-ch'i" Plays: 'Lute Song' and 'Thorn Hairpin' Compared," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 36, no. 2, (1973): 241.

²⁷ This is a common phrase to indicate that a good official made the life for his people better and was on their side. Here Xie feels this way because the new prefect's arrival has allowed them to spend one more night together.

²⁸ This refers to sexual intercourse.

Act One:

Act one is not only the longest act, but it is also the one with the most dialogue and action. The act opens by introducing Prefect Qian. His opening poem establishes his concern that as a new leader, in order to be considered good, he needs to know the condition of the people. He establishes that he already had a good reputation and this indirectly implies that he will need to prove himself in his new position, which foreshadows the ending of the play. This is one of many examples of foreshadowing in the play. In Qian's opening monologue, he coincidentally brings up his old friend, Liu Yong, with absolutely no prompting or any information that Liu Yong is in the same town. Zhang Qian, his head clerk, arrives to inform him of the precedent that was established by the previous prefect that all of the musicians come to pay their respects at formal occasions, including Qian's own appointment. Qian questions this, but since it was already established, he grudgingly goes along with it. The initial framing of his character already illustrates his attention to standards. He serves as the arbiter of propriety and respect in the play and demands that all people uphold cultural standards in his presence.

When the singsong girls arrive, he requests to see only Xie because she is the "head of the guild" and is in charge of the other girls, meaning she has the responsibility of making sure they behave appropriately. Xie Tianxiang immediately shows her fiery and keen personality. She does not hesitate to sing about her unfortunate circumstances and her frustration with the fact that she has no freedom. Her greatest complaint is the fact that she must always perform for

others and that she is constantly under the scrutiny of others who are anticipating she will make mistake. Her greatest fear is that she will act inappropriately or make a social faux pas that will ruin her life. She struggles with her fear throughout the play and it results in the turning point of her life. In her very first aria, she sings about her life as a singsong girl.²⁹

We discuss poetry and lyrics,
Laughingly chat on the market streets,
We imitate what is hard to emulate: willow floss blowing in the wind;
Our whole lives are always like this.³⁰

講論詩詞，
笑談街市，
學難似風裡揚絲，
一世常如此。

Her discussion and awareness of some agency, which appears to be very rare for women in real life, is an important characteristic of Guan Hanqing's writings. At this point in her life, she feels imprisoned in her career and unable to escape the life of an entertainer who is always forced to perform upon request. She compares her life to willow floss blowing in the wind, which is both an image of the delicate and refined walk of lithe young girls but also of how easily they are swept away by the vicissitudes of life. It is clear that she is forced to act in a way that she does not feel reflects her true spirit. She has a remarkable understanding

²⁹ For further reading about the lives of entertainers, see chapter two "The Institutional and Professional Organization of Entertainers" in Wilt L. Idema and Stephen H. West, *Chinese Theater 1100-1450: A Source Book* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982), 95-142.

³⁰ Act 1, *Xianlü* (仙呂) mode: *Dian jiang chun*, (點絳脣) 29.

of rhyme, language, and prosody; her character is strong and smart, but she is forced to behave in a soft and delicate manner.

In the next aria, Xie truly displays her literary talent. When discussing her role as Head of the Guild, she reinvents the common phrase “Teacher for a day, father for life” 一日為師，終身為父. She reverses the order of the phrase, “If you are going ‘to be a father your whole life,’ You must keep in mind ‘being a teacher for a day’”³¹ (但能勾終朝為父，也想著一日為師). This reversal of a common phrase, conventional enough in most plays, creates two threads. The first is that in her world of the guild, she has assumed the position held by patriarchs in outside society. In the second, it begins a string of linguistic play in which she splits apart concepts that would normally be understood as a single idea: “I have destroyed all of my prospects because of four things; these are simply: wisdom, wit, knowledge, and perspicacity.”³² (則為四般兒誤了前程事，都只為聰明智慧) She separates the two words normally meaning wisdom (*zhihui* 智慧) and intelligence (*congming* 聰明) to understand them as individual concepts. This ability to look beyond cliché begins to demonstrate her deeper understanding of literature and society that eventually leads to her disenchantment. Her talent and intelligence serve only to perpetuate her career as a singsong girl and keep her under the constant scrutiny of men. Her talent leads to her grief and, she believes, ruined her prospects of eventual marriage.

³¹ Act 1 *Hunjiang long*, (混江龍) 29-30.

³² Act 1 *Hunjiang long*, (混江龍) 29-30.

For men, being talented is advantageous; but for Xie it is actually a burden. She complains about her literary talent, because it is very thing that constrains her freedom. She compares her life in one of her early arias to that of a parrot: “‘In its golden cage a parrot can recite poems,’ This then is a good metaphor for us.”³³ (你道是金籠內鸚哥能念詩，這便是咱家的好比似。) She thinks of freedom as domestication, the ability to choose her own daily actions and to marry a person of her choice. At this point in her life, she has a freedom of movement denied women who are in the domestic realm: she can choose her daily routine, but only until she is called to perform. She also has the freedom to think about and question her life. She does not have, however, the freedom to break institutional bonds to vacate her career or change her social status. She is trapped in what is essentially a slave status in traditional China: she is on the tax rolls as an entertainer. The life of a married woman is the highest status that a woman could attain in her society. She is not free to leave her life as an entertainer and marry a noble man like Liu Yong. Ironically if she were not as talented, she would not be considered a desirable entertainer and could have her name removed from the Music Bureaus’ list of entertainers.

After this set of arias, she goes into greet Qian who hardly even acknowledges her. Her only feeling after meeting him is that he “has a cold face!”³⁴ (那官人好個冷臉子也!) Being the leader of the guild, she notes that she

³³ Act 1, *Youhulu*, (油葫蘆) 30.

³⁴ Act 1, 32.

has developed a healthy confidence in front of officials, but he instantly makes her uneasy and she believes he is someone to be feared. She not only is able to understand literature, but she can read people. She knows from their expressions and tone of voice what they are thinking. This is a quality that the comic character, Liu Yong, completely lacks. When Liu follows her to go meet the Prefect, it is initially a much warmer visit. Since Liu and Prefect Qian had been classmates, Qian welcomes him and tries to persuade him to stay awhile; however, Liu pleads that he cannot because of his obligation to take the examinations, and he leaves. But Liu Yong realizes that he forgot to say something and returns to see Prefect Qian once more before he leaves. Qian initially believes that he has come back to give him advice about something that Qian might have overlooked in his new position and he welcomes Liu. Liu instead requests that he “take good care of the one named Xie” (好觀謝氏).³⁵ Prefect Qian agrees to watch over “him,” but is immediately disappointed that Liu didn’t have something better and more important to say and also wrongly assumes that “Xie” refers to a scholar that he has yet to meet. But after Liu leaves, Zhang Qian reminds him that Xie is actually the singsong girl who had visited him earlier that morning. He now realizes that not only did Liu have no thoughtful advice about Qian’s new appointment, he is not even focused on his career and is only worried about a singsong girl.

Liu goes to report to Xie Tianxiang that Prefect Qian will watch over her, and Xie is immediately upset that Liu would even discuss her with the Prefect.

³⁵ Act 1, 35-6.

But Liu, who has been drinking all night and continues to drink with Qian is apparently intoxicated. When she explains to Liu that Qian was not as welcoming the second time since he had used Liu's personal name, Liu unhesitatingly returns. He asks Prefect Qian again to watch over her. Qian this time tells Liu "I will take care of her"³⁶ (敬重看待) and Liu goes out to report to Xie. Xie understands the implicit meaning behind the Prefect's words to which Liu is completely oblivious. She will not only prove herself better at composing songs and poetry compared to her lover Liu, but she is also a better reader of people. When Liu requests that Prefect Qian take care of her while he is gone, he is too drunk, and possibly too dense, to realize that Prefect Qian's retort is actually criticizing him. She explains the Prefect's words to Liu:

He said "I will take care of you", there were several things implicit in that:
 When he said "*kan*" he wants to see you fish out that huge sea tortoise with an eight-rhymed rhapsody.
 When he said "*dai*" he waits in expectation for you to snap off the cassia branch with a poem of five lines,
 When he said "*jing*" he respects the will that let you endure ten years of hard work,
 When he said "*zhong*" he meant values your becoming valedictorian in a single try.³⁷

他道敬重看待，
 自有幾樁兒：
 看則看你那釣鰲八韻賦，
 待則待你那折桂五言詩，
 敬則敬你 那十年辛苦志，
 重則重你那一舉狀元時。

³⁶ Act 1, 36.

³⁷ Act 1, *Jin zhan'er*, (金盞兒) 36-7.

Liu Yong completely misses the Prefect's true meaning. Xie has the ability to think about the world in a different and actually more critical manner. Liu Yong's inability to discern how to behave in such crucial social situations adds entertainment value to the play. Liu continues to completely dismiss Xie's wisdom. He decides to go in to talk with Qian again, and at this point his behavior is absolutely ridiculous. He behaves as a complete idiot who infuriates his old friend Qian.

This time, Qian tells Liu "You have planted peach flowers until they blossomed and hacked at bamboo until it broke, cutting the bamboo at its joint!"³⁸ (你種的桃花放，砍的竹竿折!) Liu, an imbecile, takes this as confirmation of his request, and again Xie has to rescue him from his stupidity. She explains it to him:

"He said 'you planted peach flowers until they blossomed and hacked at bamboo until it broke, cutting the bamboo at its joint.'
That is to say, you consider sex important and make light of being a gentleman!"³⁹

他道是種桃花砍折竹枝，
則說你重色輕君子！

Liu again disregards her wisdom and for the fifth time goes to talk with Qian. The fact that Liu goes to see the prefect five times violates the rule of three in writing. Liu is expected to visit the Prefect three times and no more, each additional visit makes the plot more unusual and unbearable. The fact that he goes five times is

³⁸ Act 1, 39.

³⁹ Act 1 *Zui fu gui*, (醉扶歸) 39-40.

not only uncomfortable for Xie Tianxiang, but also it would be uncomfortable, awkward, and perhaps even boring to the audience. At the fifth visit, Prefect Qian is entirely outraged. He uses several quotes from the classics to absolutely berate Liu's failure as a Confucian gentleman. Prefect Qian not only upholds social standards, but he actually sets the standards for Liu's potential achievement and finally makes him aware of proper behavior for a scholar. Before Liu leaves, Qian recites a four-line poem wherein he implies that Liu is a waste of resources. He has studied his whole life, and if he does not take the examinations seriously, then it will be a waste of his life. Liu has no response to Qian's reprimand. But, after Liu leaves, Qian whispers in Zhang Qian's ear to follow Liu and Xie as they set out for their parting banquet, because he wants him to copy down the parting words that Liu has for Xie.

Before Liu departs for the capital, he recites a poem that he composed for Xie. Zhang Qian secretly transcribes the poem as Liu recites it. On the surface, Liu's actions demonstrate the complete stupidity of the poet, and this is particularly true in this context because his lack of respected literary skill is then contrasted with his ability to compose romantic poems such as the one contained in this play. The plot hinges on this poem. Had he not composed the poem in this manner, he and Xie would have never been reunited. To the tune of "Ding Fengbo" (定風波) he recited:

Since it has turned spring,
I lament the green and sorrow over the red,
And my fragrant heart feels everything is needless and bland.
The sun rises on flowers' tips,

The orioles warble along a belt of willows, (5)⁴⁰
 And I am still lying here weighed down by this fragrant quilt.
 My milky warmth disappearing
 My oily clouds drooping,
 All day long too listless and tired to make myself up.
 There is nothing I can do! (10)
 Since that heartless wretch left
 There's not been a word or a letter.
 If I had known earlier it would be like this. . . .
 I regret that I did not hold back that carved saddle.
 Before by that "rooster window" (15)
 You arranged your silken stationery and ivory writing brush
 Made me match your verses.
 You stayed with me all day long and did not cast me away,
 I picked up my needlework and sat with you,
 Now match me, (20)
 Do not let the days and nights of our youth pass by with no meaning.

自春來慘綠愁紅，芳心事事可可。
 日上花梢，鶯喧柳帶，猶壓香衾臥。
 暖酥消，膩雲髻，終日慙慙倦梳裏。
 無奈，
 想薄情一去，音書無個！
 早知恁麼，悔當初不把雕鞍鎖。
 向雞窗收拾蠻箋象管，拘束教吟和。
 鎮日相隨莫拋躲，針線拈來共伊坐，
 和我，
 免使年少光陰虛過。

This poem has a rather pompous tone because Liu assumes Xie will never be able to move on from her love for him, and the fact that he does not promise to return or write does not make the poem seem very kind or indicate that he will also feel grief after leaving, instead he will remain with her even if only in memory; however, it is somewhat conventional for a male author to make himself the object of female desire in his writing. The poem is replete with irony and imagery.

⁴⁰ Line numbers were added for ease of reference in the discussion, and were not present in the original text. Act 1, 44-5.

Lines 1 and 2 refer to life among the courtesans' quarters. Liu's name means "willow" and courtesans are often alluded to as willows and flowers. In line 3, the final words in Chinese are *ke ke* (可_可), which also happens to be Prefect Qian's personal taboo name, Qian Ke (錢_可). The reference to Qian in the poem can be translated "needless and bland;" and it is clear that Liu is not alluding to the Prefect in a favorable manner.

In lines 7-10, Liu indicates that she will be so depressed and heartbroken that she will not have the will to get out of bed or comb her hair. Yet, in the rest of the play, Xie Tianxiang hardly grieves over his absence and especially not to the same degree that she is upset about her life as a singsong girl. In fact in the final act, she seems to have moved on from Liu. On two occasions she stops herself from dwelling on him, and she seems to find contentment in her assumption that he will never return. This poem is actually a very strange departing poem because rather than promising to return, in line 12, he imagines her upset with him for not having sent a single letter. Liu's presumptuous nature contributes to the rendering of his character as one that is insensitive to the feelings of others and also presents him as unpredictable and a ridiculously comedic character.

From line 15 of the poem, the perspective changes to discussing their literary relationship before he leaves, in which Liu directs composition and Xie is forced to match his verses. Once again this is ironic because she will actually prove herself superior to him in literary talent; their roles are completely reversed of society's expectation for them. Liu was expected to perform extremely well and pass the exams, which he ultimately does, however at the beginning of the

play it is clearly Xie, the lowly singsong girl, who understands composition. The final line reflects Liu's assumption of Xie's sentiment for him. He assumes that she recognizes once he enters public life he will reject her. She is pleading that he would stay with her and turn down success. The irony in this poem illustrates the portrayal of Liu as a comedic character.⁴¹ The fact that Liu goes back to talk with Prefect Qian five times cannot be dismissed as a mistake by this master playwright, but instead should perhaps be understood as intentionally portraying Liu as an imbecile in order to evoke negative feelings toward the scholar from the audience. It is possible that Guan Hanqing may have been expressing resentment toward scholars because of the helplessness of his own situation as a scholar who did not have the opportunity to take the examinations. The first act concludes after Liu recites this poem, then Xie sings one final aria, in which she reflects on the impact that Liu has had on her life. It seems that being with Liu has allowed her to experience a small escape from her pitiful life, but now she must return to her previous daily life. The romance of their relationship is continually downplayed, and their separation is mostly pragmatic. Their relationship is hardly important to the main themes in the play.

⁴¹ For a discussion of the humorous aspects of this play see Xu Zifang 徐子方, "Shixi Xie Tianxiang Jinxian chi de youmo ziju benzhi" 試析《謝天香》,《金線池》的幽默喜劇本質, *Journal of Southeast University (Philosophy and Social Science)* 4.5 (2002): ?-?.

Act One

(EXTRA *dressed as* PREFECT QIAN, *leading* ZHANG QIAN *enters, recites:*)

The late autumn cricket on an autumn night compels weaving,⁴²

The hoopoe on a spring morning urges on plowing.

If you say “officials do not understand the condition of the people,”

Then you must know why the birds and insects are chirping!

My surname is Qian and my first name is Ke and my given name is Kedao.⁴³ I am from Qiantang. From the time I passed the highest exam, time and time again I have been appointed to important positions and have gained a reputation as an official. Now I thank the emperor for his favor in appointing me Prefect in the capital Kaifeng.⁴⁴ Since childhood I have grown a long, full beard. Those soldiers and civilians who know me, and those who don't, all call me the Persian Prefect Qian. I have been thinking, I had a classmate and old friend in those days named Liu Yong, called Qiqing. To discuss this man's scholarship—he is as good as me. Separated from each other several years ago, I don't know whether he has fulfilled his ambition or not. This makes me anxious and worried about him. At present, I am going up into the hall to begin morning court. Zhang Qian, if there are any

⁴² The sound of the cricket was believed to imitate the click of a shuttle in the loom. *Monks, Bandits, Lovers and Immortals*, 154.

⁴³ West and Idema argue that although there have been some unconvincing attempts at arguing Qian Ke is a historical figure. *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, 5.

⁴⁴ Kaifeng 開封 was the capital of China during the Song dynasty.

documents that need to be signed, bring them and I will take care of it. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) Oh, I just want to tell you, Sire, the musicians have not yet paid their respects. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) How could the previous prefect have had such a precedent? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) We have had this a long time. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Since it is like this, have them come to pay respects. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) You musicians visiting the official, get a move on! (FEMALE LEAD *together with a group of FEMALES enters, speaks*:) Today a new official has taken his post so we should all go to pay respects. Be careful and attentive! (FEMALES *speak*:) We understand. (FEMALE LEAD *sings*:)

XIANLÜ MODE: (*Dian jiang chun*)

We discuss poetry and lyrics,

Laughingly chat on the market streets,

We imitate what is hard to emulate: willow floss blowing in the wind;⁴⁵

Our whole lives are always like this.

(*Hunjiang long*)

Day after day, I test you,

Earnestly wishing to teach you to become good persons,

If you are going “to be a father your whole life,”

You must keep in mind “being a teacher for a day.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The delicate and refined walk of the lithe young girls.

⁴⁶ Here she has split apart a saying that is normally one saying, “a teacher for one day, a father for life” (一日為師，終身為父).

But if there is one who dares to take over my status as the Head Mistress
of the Guild,

Then with all of my heart I give you this performing stage.

I have destroyed all of my prospects because of four things;

These are simply: wisdom, wit, knowledge, and perspicacity.⁴⁷

And because of this, I labor hard with no end.

(FEMALES *speak*:) Sister, look at that caged parrot reciting poetry. (FEMALE LEAD

speaks:) This is a metaphor for us. (*Sings*)

(*Youhulu*)

You say, “In its golden cage a parrot can recite poems,”

This then is a good metaphor for us.

It turns out that the more intelligent you are the harder to get out of the
cage!

The ability to play wind and stringed instruments equals: someone
watching you everyday like a spy,⁴⁸

Being used to singing songs equals: someone being sent out on a mission.

⁴⁷ Here she separates two words to understand them as individual concepts, *zhihui* 智慧 and *congming* 聰明.

⁴⁸ She is complaining about the fact that her life as a performer is always being criticized. As a singsong girl she was constantly watched and people were just waiting for her to make a mistake.

(*Speaks:*) I don't resent anyone else. (FEMALES *speak:*) Sister, who do you blame?

(FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) We can play and sing songs, so daily we are called to perform for officials; those who can't play and sing songs are the ones who get to be free! (*Sings:*)

I resent those clerks who are in the Office of Rites,⁴⁹

All officials who hold our lives in their hands,

First they remove the names of those who can't play and sing,⁵⁰

If I had known that, I would have acted a mute monkey bitch.⁵¹

(*Tianxia le*)

⁴⁹ Each Yamen had six offices 六部 that matched the six major offices of government. These included: Administration, Finance, Rites, War, Punishments, and Public Works.

⁵⁰ Here she is complaining that her talent has actually imprisoned her, because the inept were removed from the official tax registers and from the tax status as performers. Therefore, they no longer had to answer the official summons and, in her view, had freedom.

⁵¹ In Idema and West's *Chinese Theater 1100–1250* they explain this image: "Monkey-bitch: *nao* is an overall term for courtesans. The *nao* is a species of monkey and is a covetous beast. It delights in eating the liver and brains of tigers. When a tiger sees it, it loves the monkey-bitch and bears it on his back where the *nao* picks lice, but leaves their heads in. As soon as the tiger falls dead, the *nao* seeks out the brains, liver, and organs to eat. The ancients took this to make a simile: the tiger is like youth that delights in and loves sex. As for the monkey bitch: it entices youth and covets their wealth. So it comes about that these wastrels come to a sad end or lose their fortune." See, Wilt L. Idema and Stephen H. West, *Chinese Theater 1100-1450: A Source Book*. (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982) 139.

How can I plan any “fragrant reputation that penetrates the ears of everyone!”⁵²

I think, back then, not thinking thrice,⁵³

The more intelligent you are the more difficult to remain uninvolved with the outside.

Show off that you have a little skill,

Show off that you have a voluptuous form,

You’ll wind up being called a whore when you get older.⁵⁴

(ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) Sister Xie, how have you just now arrived? Stay here, I am going to go report. (*Acts out reporting, speaks*:) Reporting to you, Sire, so you may know, we have musicians arriving here to pay respects. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Don't send the others in, simply have the one who is the leader come and meet me. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) All others can go back home, only Sister Xie go in! (FEMALES *exit*.) (FEMALE LEAD *acts out greeting him and performing obeisance, and speaks*:) Ascending the hall, I, Head of the Guild Xie Tianxiang, sincerely come to pay respects. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Do not be late for your official duty. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:) I got it. (*Acts out going out the door, speaks*:) Father, that official has a cold face! (*Sings*:)

⁵² This is essentially a translation of her name Tianxiang 天香, and thus a reference to herself.

⁵³ She was not thinking ahead and got caught up in the moment.

⁵⁴ The term dizi 弟子 is used as a curse word to designate over-the-hill prostitutes. She is mainly upset about having no agency and no companion.

(Jin zhan'er)

After I had suddenly seen that guy's looks,

I mindlessly came down the steps of dais,

The final scene of my life will surely be to die in front of this office.

I always considered ranked officials and high officials like small children,

But he just said, "In performing your duty, don't be late,"

I opened my mouth but had nothing to say.

Just stood there long enough to eat one meal,

My heart was trembling as if it were the time needed to cook two.⁵⁵

(LIU enters, speaks:) Sister went to visit the official, I'm going to see her. *(Acts out greeting FEMALE LEAD, speaks:)* Sister, you've seen that official now. I am going in to see him. *(FEMALE LEAD speaks:)* Don't go see him, this lord is not like the others! *(LIU speaks:)* It doesn't matter, my brother doesn't treat me like others. *(Acts out greeting ZHANG QIAN, speaks:)* Older brother, go on and report that I am here: Hangzhou's Liu Yong has come specifically to pay his respects. *(ZHANG QIAN speaks:)* This is the guy who was at sister Xie's home early this morning.⁵⁶ You stay here. I will go report it.

(Acts out reporting, speaks:) Outside the Yamen gate is a certain Liu Yong from Hangzhou who has come specifically to pay his respects. *(PREFECT QIAN speaks:)*

⁵⁵ Here she is saying that she stood in front of him for a brief moment, but it felt like hours.

⁵⁶ It is clear from the context that this line is spoken to himself.

Did he say Liu Yong of Hangzhou? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) Yes. (PREFECT QIAN *laughingly speaks:*) The words were barely out of my mouth! I can't believe my dear brother has really arrived at this place, overwhelming me with happiness.

Tell him to come in!

(ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) Please enter. (LIU *acts out greeting* QIAN, *speaks:*) I have come to study at this place; I never thought it would be at exactly the same time that you were promoted! I firstly came to congratulate my elder brother and, secondly, to go off to seek my success. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) I have been separated from you, dear brother, for a long time; you have been on my mind, causing me to obsessively think about you. Now we have a chance to meet and it is truly my lucky day. Servants, bring wine! (LIU *speaks:*) I must leave in a hurry; there is no need to prepare a feast. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Although it is so,⁵⁷ it has been a long time. Why begrudge a bit of time? Zhang Qian, lay out the feast in the courtroom to treat our scholar! (LIU *speaks:*) Brother, this is the state's public office, not a place for me to be sitting. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) My dear brother, you are wrong! In the first place, you are my classmate and old friend, secondly, you are our generation's literary giant, and so you deserve to be treated well! I want you to stay here and relax for a few days. But it's well said that "a real man should consider success and fame first," therefore I shouldn't detain you. Dear brother, please drink a full cup! (*Acts out holding the wine*) (LIU *speaks:*) I have had plenty of wine! I will take my leave, and embark on my long journey.

⁵⁷ That you must leave.

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) I didn't get a chance to treat you well. When I hear you are successful another day, then I will make a special acclamation and celebration. Forgive me for not sending you off. (LIU *speaks*:) There is no need to send me off.

(*Acts out going out and greeting* FEMALE LEAD, [LIU] *speaks to himself*:) Liu Yong, why did you come in the first place? It was for her, how could you have forgotten? I am going back inside again! (FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:) Qiqing, don't go! This lord is not like the others. (LIU *speaks*:) It doesn't matter; Brother treats me especially well.

(*Acts out greeting* ZHANG QIAN, *speaks*:) Zhang Qian, go and report I am here again. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) What are you doing here again? (LIU *speaks*:) You tell him Liu Yong from Hangzhou has come again to pay respects, and has something to say.

(ZHANG QIAN *acts out reporting, speaks*:) Liu Yong of Hangzhou wants to see Your Excellency again, and has something to say. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Right! As the person in charge here there must be something I have overlooked, there is something I have missed. Tell him I request to see him! (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) Please come inside. (*Acts out greeting, PREFECT QIAN speaks*:) In my governance here, there are many places I have overlooked. I presume, dear brother, that you must have fine words and deeds with which to instruct me! (LIU *speaks*:) I have no other business with you, Brother, except to ask that you take good care of the

one named Xie. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Qiqing, I will respectfully take good care of him.⁵⁸ I am sorry I cannot see you off! (LIU *speaks*:) Many thanks, Brother.

(LIU *greets* FEMALE LEAD, *speaks*:) Sister, I spoke with him. He said he would, “respectfully take good care of you.” (FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:) Qiqing, do you know what he means by that? (LIU *speaks*:) I don't know. (FEMALE LEAD *sings*:)

(Zui zhong tian)

When you first went in he called you, “scholar,”

Precisely respectful;

This time he turned his body away from you and gave you instructions,

That noble one looked stealthily at you with cold eyes.

Just look how he raised his head from his chair,⁵⁹

Treating you differently from the time before,

He then dismissively called you by your courtesy name.

(LIU *speaks*:) Lest you are uneasy, I will go in again. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:)

Qiqing, don't go in. (LIU *speaks*:) It doesn't matter, Brother treats me especially well.

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Zhang Qian, come closer. Just now when Qiqing said, "Please take care of the one named Xie," it must be a famous literati who wears a tall hat and a wide-belt. Please clarify it for me. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) I will

⁵⁸ While there is no object pronoun in this phrase, Qian has clearly misunderstood this to refer to a man of significance instead of Xie Tianxiang.

⁵⁹ He did not rise to respectfully greet Liu when he came in.

report to you so you may know, it is that Xie Tianxiang, who visited you earlier this morning. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Huh? That Xie from this morning! Qiqing, you have misused your heart!

(LIU *acts out greeting* ZHANG QIAN, *speaks*:) Brother Zhang, go and report again: Liu Yong from Hangzhou is here again and has something to say. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) Why did you come here again? I don't dare go in. (LIU *speaks*:) There is no problem, say it again.

(ZHANG QIAN *acts out reporting, speaks*:) Liu Yong of Hangzhou has come to say something. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Send him inside. (LIU *acts out entering and greeting*) (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Qiqing, what do you have to enlighten me? (LIU *speaks*:) Brother, it's just that I really want you to take care of Miss Xie! (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Didn't I just say: "I will take care of her." I am sorry I can't send you off!

(LIU *greets* FEMALE LEAD, *speaks*:) The master said he "will take care of you" isn't that okay? (FEMALE LEAD *sings*:)

(Jin zhan'er)

When you pick up a pen to write some words,
You are simply a literary talent without a flaw,
But in this particular examination you do not clearly understand it,
You haven't carefully analyzed it:
He said "I will take care of you", there were several things implicit in that:

When he said “*kan*” he wants to see you fish out that huge sea tortoise
with an eight-rhymed rhapsody.⁶⁰

When he said “*dai*” he waits in expectation for you to snap off the cassia
branch with a poem of five lines,⁶¹

When he said “*jing*” he respects the will that let you endure ten years of
hard work,⁶²

When he said “*zhong*” he meant values your becoming valedictorian in a
single try.⁶³

(LIU *speaks*:) Sister, you are overly suspicious, I am afraid you can't let it go, I
will go in again. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:) Qiqing, don't go! (LIU *speaks*:) It doesn't
matter, Brother treats me especially well.

(*Acts out greeting* ZHANG QIAN, says) Brother Zhang, report that Liu Yong of
Hangzhou has come again and has something to say. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*) You
still have not left! Isn't this the wrong thing to do? (LIU *speaks*:) Don't worry.

⁶⁰ Here *kan* 看, meaning to look after, and in this phrase he is referring to hoping that Liu will pass the exams which required him to write this specific type of poem: an eight-rhymed rhapsody.

⁶¹ Similar to the previous note, *dai* 待, meaning wait upon, and in this phrase he is also referring to a type of poetry required on the examinations. “Snap the cassia” is also a reference to passing the examinations.

⁶² This is *jing* 敬 meaning to respect. The rest of the line is an allusion to the proverb: 十年窗下無人問、一舉成名天下知 Ten years I studied under the window, no one showed concern for me, / But making my name on the first attempt at the examination, the whole world knows.

⁶³ *Zhong* 重 here stands for the verbal use of *zhong* 中, meaning to hit the mark.

(ZHANG QIAN *acts out reporting, speaks:*) Liu Yong from Hangzhou has come again, and has something to say. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Bring him to me.⁶⁴

(*Acts out greeting, PREFECT QIAN speaks:*) Qiqing, what do you have to say? (LIU *speaks:*) Brother, take good care of Miss Xie! (PREFECT QIAN *acts out becoming angry, speaks:*) Qiqing, you have planted peach flowers until they blossomed and hacked at bamboo until it broke, cutting the bamboo at its joint.⁶⁵ (LIU *speaks:*) Many thanks, Brother.

(*Goes out to see FEMALE LEAD, speaks:*) I persuaded him to do it. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) What did he say? (LIU *speaks:*) The minister said: "you have planted peach flowers until they blossomed and hacked at bamboo until it broke, cutting the bamboo at its joint." (FEMALE LEAD *sings*).

(*Zui fu gui*)

You are suddenly completely clueless,

What is so hard about understanding these two things?⁶⁶

You yourself said this guy does not speak casually,

How could you not see what is inside of it?

He said you "planted peach flowers until they blossomed,

⁶⁴ He uses less formality and politeness, his tone has changed and he is getting angry.

⁶⁵ Here peach blossoms refer to women and bamboo refers to the integrity of the scholar-gentleman. This image essentially means, "You've taken good care of your woman, but you have destroyed your future as a true scholar gentleman." Liu is oblivious to what he means, taking it at face value.

⁶⁶ That is, the peach flower and bamboo branch.

And hacked at bamboo until it broke, cutting the bamboo at its joint.”

That is to say, you consider sex important and make light of being a gentleman!

(LIU *speaks*:) I am afraid you are overly worried, I am going to go in again and speak with him. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:) Qiqing, don't you go! (LIU *speaks*:) It doesn't matter, Brother treats me especially well.

(*Greets* ZHANG QIAN, *speaks*:) Brother Zhang, report again, Liu Yong from Hangzhou has something to say. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) There's someone there who can't see you! I dare not go report this. (LIU *speaks*:) I will go in myself.

(ZHANG QIAN *acts out reporting*) (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) I guess it's that Liu Yong again! (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) It is none other than him. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) You filthy beast! You only are concerned about this one thing!⁶⁷ Stand to the side for a moment. ⁶⁸

(LIU *speaks*:) Zhang Qian went in. How come I don't see him coming out? It must surely be that he isn't going to report for me. I will go in myself. (*Acts out going in and greeting, speaks*:) Brother....

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks angrily*:) Well could it be "take care of Miss Xie"? Zhang Qian, bring over the files! Qiqing, how shall we treat you? "If the scholar be not

⁶⁷ He is saying that Liu Yong is only concerned about one thing, Xie.

⁶⁸ The previous line is addressed to Liu Yong; this line is addressed to Zhang Qian.

grave, he will not call forth any veneration, and his learning will not be solid."⁶⁹

How can you be so frivolous! This place is the local officials' yellow hall, not some courtesans' quarter, you are only concerned with "Miss Xie", Miss Xie!"

Qiqing, I am Prefect, not the one who finds musicians and singers! In the past I entertained you and not lightly, but for what reason? It is because you have talent.

The ancients said, "As for virtue surpassing talent, that will become a gentleman; as for talent surpassing virtue, that is a little man." Now in view of your behavior, it is precisely excessive talent and a lack of virtue. The *Book of Rites* says: As for a noble man "Notes that are evil and depraved, and sights leading to disorder, and licentiousness, are not allowed to affect his ears or eyes."⁷⁰ Laozi said: "Color's five hues from the eyes their sight will take; Music's five notes the ears as deaf can make."⁷¹ As for great men, "They worry prior to all under heaven worrying and they are happy only after all under heaven are happy."⁷² It is well said, "to be

⁶⁹ Quoted from James Legge's (1815-1897) translation of "Studying" 學而 chapter eight in the Analects 論語 by Confucius (551-479 BC). See, James Legge, *The four books: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and The Works of Mencius: With original Chinese text: English translation and notes by James Legge*, (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1966), 7.

⁷⁰ Quoted from James Legge's translation of the "Book of Music" 樂記 in the *Book of Rites* 禮記 by Confucius. James Legge trans., *The Sacred books of China: the texts of Confucianism* (New York: Gordon Press, 1976), 110.

⁷¹ Quoted from James Legge's translation of the *Daodejing* in chapter twelve by Laozi 老子 (6th Century BC). James Legge trans., *The Sacred books of China: the text of Taoism*, (New York: Gordon Press, 1976), 55.

⁷² This is a famous quote from Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052), a politician during the Song Dynasty. Fan Zhongyan's 范仲淹 (989-1052) *Yueyang louji* 岳陽樓記 (Xianggang: Shangwu yinshuguan youxian gongsi, 2002).

above the power of riches and honors to make dissipated, of poverty and mean condition to make swerve from principle, and of power and force to make bend - these characteristics constitute the great man!"⁷³ Now you are taking leave, I would have said, "he must have fine words and deeds," but you did not even have one thing to say; all because of a common whore, you have gone back and forth several times. Even a mean and despicable fellow has shame to some extent; how much more so someone dressed in the hat and clothes of a scholar. Why are you not ashamed? Qiqing, rather than you spending your time in the streets of flowers and alleys of willows,⁷⁴ for the time being go and be attentive in pursuit of becoming an official. Isn't it said, "at thirty you are established!"⁷⁵ Now, Wang Yuanzhi⁷⁶ was able to write at the age of seven, as for his official position he occupies the third rank, right now he is academician at the Imperial Academy; aren't you ashamed, Qiqing! (*Speaks in verse:*)

Your body is completely wrapped in brocade and embroidery,

Your belly stuffed with learning.

⁷³ Quoted from James Legge's translation of "The Works of Mencius", from "Tengwen gong xia" 滕文公下 (Duke Wen of Teng Part two). See, James Legge, *The four books: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and The Works of Mencius*, 651.

⁷⁴ I.e. the courtesans' quarters.

⁷⁵ From the "Practice of Government" 為政 in the *Analects* 論語 by Confucius. See, *The four books: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and The Works of Mencius*, 14.

⁷⁶ Wang Yuanzhi, 王元之 also went by the name Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954-1001) and was a Song dynasty poet.

But you don't study the works of Minister Wang,⁷⁷

And only speak about Xie Tianxiang.

Zhang Qian, please come before me. (*Acts out whispering in his ear, speaks:*)

This is the right thing to do. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) I understand. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Servants, beat a drum as I retire from the hall, I will return to my private residence.

(*Exits*)

(LIU *acts out greeting* FEMALE LEAD) (FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) What did I tell you? You simply provoked him to anger! (LIU *speaks:*) Sister, relax. I am going to the imperial palace in the capital. If I obtain an even a minor post, Qian Kedao, even if you are holding the position of Prefect, don't let the end of your axle rub against mine, or you will be in for it! Sister, today I will begin my long journey. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) I will send you off to the outskirts of the city to the little wine shop to give you a farewell dinner!

(ZHANG QIAN *enters, speaks:*) Wait for me. I, Zhang Qian, am also coming to send off Mister Liu. (LIU *speaks:*) This is too much trouble! Sister, before I leave, I wrote a few words, the words of the song “Ding fengbo,” this is in the mode of *Shangjiao*, I am giving it to you to express my feelings.⁷⁸ (*Recites:*)

Since it has turned spring,

⁷⁷ Referring to Wang Yuanzhi, whom he just mentioned.

⁷⁸ This is an actual poem of the historical poet Liu Yong.

I lament the green and sorrow over the red,
And my fragrant heart feels everything is needless and bland.
The sun rises on flowers' tips,
The orioles warble along a belt of willows,
And I am still lying here weighed down by this fragrant quilt.
My milky warmth disappearing
My oily clouds drooping,
All day long too listless and tired to make myself up.
There is nothing I can do!
Since that heartless wretch left
There's not been a word or a letter.
If I had known earlier it would be like this. . . .
I regret that I did not hold back that carved saddle.
Before by that "rooster window",⁷⁹
You arranged your silken stationery and ivory writing brush
Made me match your verses.
You stayed with me all day long and did not cast me away,
I picked up my needlework and sat with you.
Now match me,⁸⁰
Do not let the days and nights of our youth to pass by with no meaning.

⁷⁹ That is, his study.

⁸⁰ Referring to the rhyme and rhythm of poetry.

(ZHANG *acts out transcribing, speaks:*) I will go back first.

(*Exits*)

(FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) Qiqing, you go now, but what will I do? (LIU *speaks:*)

Sister, please calm down, I won't be gone long. (FEMALE LEAD *sings:*)

(*Zhuansha*)

In these offices I have had to serve,
Being summoned and dispatched at arbitrary times.
From now on I will sigh and grumble
And be as polite as possible in front of officials who burn you at the touch.
If I even so much as cough, some court case will arise.
Only after the banquet is over and I arrive back home,
Do I have a moment to recall you.
This is a result of the pure songs from my white teeth,
My very conversations about matters of love,
And dances that make me sweat until my sleeves are soaked.

(*Exits*)

Act Two:

The second act begins with Zhang Qian reporting to Prefect Qian the departing poem that Liu wrote. Prefect Qian requests a recitation, and Zhang Qian boldly brags of his ability to remember the poem. An interesting twist in the plot occurs here because the poem contains the Prefect's personal name that in the Prefect's presence no one inferior to him is allowed to speak without suffering the consequences. As soon as Zhang Qian reaches the point in the poem that contains the Prefect's name he chokes and stops speaking. He then belittles himself and claims that he "like a child" has stupidly forgotten. Instead, he presents a manuscript of the poem to Qian. When the Prefect realizes what Liu Yong has done, he decides to try to catch Xie Tianxiang in a trap so that, in the name of friendship, Liu will not be able to take her as a wife if he returns. He has Zhang Qian summon her so that she can perform the poem for him.

When Zhang Qian goes to summon Xie, she becomes alarmed. She was accustomed to responding to the call of officials, but she knows that Qian is different. In an aria she sings: "All because [Liu] lost all sense of appropriateness? And despite the fact that I am ugly and unkempt, who told him to vaunt me in front of prefect Qian?" (只因他忒過當。據妾身貌陋殘妝，誰教他大尹行將咱過獎?).⁸¹ Xie once again mentions her fear of acting inappropriately in the presence of an official. In the next aria, she directly criticizes Prefect Qian's

⁸¹ Act 2, *Nanlü* (南呂) mode: *Yizhi hua*, (一枝花) 54.

misunderstanding of the fact that Liu's "weakness" for women may actually serve to make him a better minister. She sings:

Secretly he wrinkles his brow in sorrow and curses Zhang Chang,
Could he know that the wonderful talent used in the realm of clouds and
rain,
Also understands how to harmonize yin and yang?"⁸²

背地裡鎖著眉罵張敞，
豈知他滯雨尤雲俏智量，
剛理會得變理陰陽。

Zhang Chang was known for painting on his wife's eyebrows and thus was viewed as a man infatuated with his wife to the point of unseemliness. Xie understands Liu's comparison of Liu to the man is not negative, because she argues that the role of a leader, which is to "harmonize yin and yang," would actually benefit from understanding romantic relationships between men and women.

When Xie arrives, she already knows that she will be required to perform and states that she would give her whole family's fortune to avoid it. Before she is asked to perform Liu's poem she sings an aria with an allusion to an anecdote about Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1037-1101) poem "Manting fang" 滿庭芳 that made fun of Wang Anshi's 王安石 (1021-1086) wife, and Xie is suggesting that his banishment was because of this single lyric.⁸³ She is extremely afraid of making a

⁸² Act 2, *Liangzhou diqi*, (梁州第七) 55.

⁸³ A discussion of Su Shi's and Wang Anshi's relationship and its portrayal in literature is discussed in Idema's article: W. L. Idema, "Poet Versus Minister and Monk: Su Shi on Stage in the Period 1250-1450," *T'oung Pao* 73, no. 4/5 (1987): 203-5. Idema also includes a translation of the poem.

mistake like Su Shi's and suffering the ridicule and disastrous consequences that would certainly result. Prefect Qian immediately requests that she sing the poem that Liu had composed for her to the tune *Ding fengbo*. She begins singing, and just as she is about to sing the Prefect's name "Ke," Zhang Qian coughs, causing her to realize that she is about to step into a trap. She quickly changes the word from "ke" (可) to "yi" (已). Since this change happens with the character that should rhyme in the line, it changes the entire rhyme of the *ci* poem from the rhyme class *ge ge* (歌戈) to the rhyme class *qi wei* (齊微). Prefect Qian tells her she must now sing the entire song with the new rhyme rather than the original one or he will punish her. The actual changes in meaning of the poem are very subtle. The most important change is the line that used to contain the Prefect's name. Instead of her heart feeling that everything is "needless and bland" now everything "comes to an end". This foreshadows the moment that is actually the end of her forced career as head of the guild. Xie ingeniously changes the poem from Liu's voice to her own voice. Her impromptu display of talent confirms that her literary skills are equal to that of Liu Yong's.

Since she successfully sings the lyric set to the new rhyme, Prefect Qian is very impressed by her talent and experiences a change of heart. Rather than punishing her, he decides to remove her name from the Entertainment Bureau registry and makes her a concubine in his home. Her performance reinforces the characterization of her as a superior literary talent in the first act. She feels undeserving of the Prefect's graciousness because she sees her humble status as a singsong girl as making her unworthy of such kindness. She knows that she is not

a suitable match for Qian Ke, and is baffled by his actions. The final two arias she sings reflect her feelings that her future as a concubine is ominous due to the expectations of this new role. Xie now knows that her one desire to “marry Liu Qiqing” and “act as a free person” is now lost⁸⁴ (指望嫁杭州柳耆卿，做個自在人). Seeing the freedom she had experienced as an entertainer slipping away, she realizes she has avoided one trap only to fall into another.

Prefect Qian is actually the one who controls this act. He requested that Xie perform this poem, and he decides to grant her freedom from her career, and appropriately he has the final words of the scene. After Xie exits, Qian concludes the act by revealing his intentions to the audience that he has no plan to pursue a relationship with Xie, and that he is only saving her for Liu’s return. Even though Xie sang many arias and performed magnificently, she was ultimately a prop with which Qian used to control the action of the plot and create drama. If it were not for Qian, the play would appropriately conclude here, but he reveals that he has a plan to return Xie to Liu and thus the play continues.

⁸⁴ Act 2, 61.

Act Two

(PREFECT QIAN *enters, speaks:*)

Don't let things bother you,
Those things that bother you drive you crazy.

I am Prefect Qian. Yesterday I ordered Zhang Qian to do something, but I have yet to see him come back to report. Servants, go keep watch at the front gate, when he arrives come and report it to me.

(ZHANG QIAN *enters, speaks:*) I am Zhang Qian. I am coming back after carrying out my master's order. Now I will go see him. (*Acts out greeting*, PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Zhang Qian, have you completed the task I gave you? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) I received your orders, and I went with those two to the little wine shop to give him a farewell dinner. Liu Qiqing composed a lyric before he left to the pattern "Ding fengbo." I memorized it. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) You memorized it? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) I remember it so well that I could recite it forwards and backwards. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Recite it. (ZHANG QIAN *recites saying:*)

"Since it has turned spring,
I lament the green and sorrow over the red,
And my fragrant heart feels everything is...

(*Acts out not speaking*, PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) What happened? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) Master, I, like a child, have forgotten. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) But that is unreasonable; I thought you remembered it forwards and backwards? (ZHANG

QIAN *speaks*;) I, like a child, after I saw you, became afraid, and then I forgot it.

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*;) Do you have a written copy? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*;) Yes.

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*;) Bring it to me to read. (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*;) It's a good thing that I have it here.

(Acts out handing it over, PREFECT QIAN acts out accepting and reading it, speaks:)

Since it has turned spring,
I lament the green and sorrow over the red,
And my fragrant heart feels everything is needless and bland.
The sun rises on flowers' tips,
The orioles warble along a belt of willows,
And I am still lying here weighed down by this fragrant quilt.
My milky warmth disappearing
My oily clouds drooping,
All day long too listless and tired to make myself up.
There is nothing I can do!
I am angry: since that heartless wretch left
There's not been a word or a letter.
If I had known earlier it would be like this. . . .
I regret that I did not hold back that carved saddle.
Before by that "rooster window"
You arranged your silken stationery and ivory writing brush

Made me match your verses.

You stayed with me all day long and did not cast me away,

I picked up my needlework and sat with you.

Now match me,

Do not let the days and nights of our youth to pass by with no meaning.

Wow! Qiqing, you are really talented.⁸⁵ Now if you applied a talent like this to five syllable poems, the eight-rhymed *fu*, or the ten thousand word policy, what high post could you not hold! I will read it again: "From the time of spring until now grieving over the leaves and sorrowing over the blossoms, a young woman's heart treats everything as if it were nothing," Qiqing, you have gone and rebuked me! My surname is Qian and my name is Ke, my sobriquet is Ke Dao. This use of these two words "*ke ke*" is obviously a sarcastic reference to me.⁸⁶ Just a bit ago Zhang Qian said he had completely memorized the poem, but when he recited it and got to "everything", he pretended to forget the poem when he reached the words "*ke ke*." If he had actually read out these two words, then he would have violated the rule of speaking my taboo formal name, I should have punished him on the spot with forty strokes of the cane. It turns out this guy really is smart!

⁸⁵ He is making a point about writing in the *ci* genre, which is the form of this poem. He is accusing Liu of wasting his time by writing *ci*, a lower form of poetry.

⁸⁶ At the end of the line "treats everything as if it were nothing" the characters here are *ke ke* 可 可 which are the same as the character that is in his name Qian Kedao 錢可道.

(ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) I surely am! (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Now I will summon Xie Tianxiang to come, and have her sing this “Ding fengbo” poem,

Since it has turned spring,

I lament the green and sorrow over the red,

And my fragrant heart feels everything is needless and bland.

If she sings the two words "*ke ke*," then she will have violated the rule of speaking my taboo name, then I will punish her on the spot with forty lashes. If I beat the woman Xie, then she will have violated the law and become a criminal. This will make it inconvenient for Qiqing to go to her house. Qiqing, I will carry this out because you are my friend. I will end the morning Yamen hours and retire to the rear hall, Zhang Qian, use my name to summon Miss Xie here! (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) Understood.

(*Acts out summoning, speaks*:) Is Xie Tianxiang at home? (FEMALE LEAD *enters, speaks*:) Who is calling at the door? (*Acts out greeting, speaks*:) It turns out to be brother Zhang Qian, why did you call me? (ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) Sister Xie, My lord summons you in his name! (FEMALE LEAD *sings*)

NANLÜ MODE: (*Yizhi hua*)

Normally being summoned by an official I can relax my kohl black brows

in joy,

But today a throat calling me to service rings with a summons.

It turns out to be you, a ruthless head clerk,⁸⁷
I would have said, “who was yelling in front of me?”
I just put on a smiling face to respond—
How can I let him see my face in such a bad situation as this,
All because he⁸⁸ lost all sense of appropriateness?
And despite the fact I am ugly and unkempt,
Who told him to vaunt me in front of Prefect Qian?

(Liangzhou diqi)

This is not a transaction involving Xie Tianxiang sending bribes,
It was that Liu Qiqing who became negligently unrestrained after
drinking.

This Lord remembers his grudges and will not let them go easily,
How can I avoid being implicated in this?

There is no way to prevent it.

When I think how inappropriately I was used,

And that you didn't do anything to help

What feeling lies behind your summons?

When I think my talented man, now gone. . . .

Stop! Stop! Stop!

⁸⁷ She calls him a head clerk, which here is used as his pronoun. He was the top servant, or head clerk of Prefect Qian.

⁸⁸ I.e., Liu Yong when he became drunk and repeatedly bothered Prefect Qian by asking him to take care of Miss Xie.

I must control my errant heart I can't discuss it,
He! He! He!
He originally wanted to be my advocate,
Och! Och! Och!
Who expected him to stir up this wind and frost?
This grandfather is calculating and considering,
And wants to become chancellor all in a single step—
Secretly he wrinkles his brow in sorrow and curses Zhang Chang⁸⁹
Could he know that the wonderful talent used in the realm of clouds and
rain⁹⁰,
Also understands how to harmonize yin and yang?⁹¹

(ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) Sister, don't go right now. Wait for me to hide, and then
you can go to see him. (FEMALE LEAD *acts out meeting, speaks*:) That guy's face is
so cold! (*Sings*.)

(*Gewei*)

I see him with his serious appearance sitting right next to the silk curtain,

⁸⁹ Zhang Chang 張敞 (d. 48 BC) was known for painting his wife's eyebrows, which was seen as degrading to his masculine identity. Here Liu Yong is compared to Zhang Chang.

⁹⁰ Clouds and rain, here is a metaphor for romantic love between a man and woman.

⁹¹ This is a phrase used for a great Minister. The ability of the minister to correctly apportion yin and yang indicates his understanding of the people and also legitimizes Liu Yong's use of ci poetry.

How can this figure as “lovely as ethers of spring filling the painted hall!”
What I am most worried about is when I have to send out a song right at
the beginning,
But if there were just one girl performing here,
Then I guarantee I would squander all my family fortune until she was
rewarded.⁹²

(ZHANG QIAN *speaks*:) Sister, if you go in, be very respectful. (FEMALE LEAD *acts out meeting, speaks*:) Ascending the hall is the Head of the Guild, Xie Tianxiang. I sincerely pay my respects. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Oh, is this Xie Tianxiang of Liu Qiqing's heart? (FEMALE LEAD *sings*)

(*He xinlang*)

Ai, Thinking of the Dongpo's "Manting fang" ⁹³

Just say one phrase "Incense smoke curls upward from the engraved dish,"

And already disaster descends from heaven! ⁹⁴

⁹² Meaning that she would do anything to not have to perform. She knows that this cannot turn out well.

⁹³ This poem by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) also known as Dongpo, is called “Man Ting Fang” 滿庭芳. This refers to a spurious anecdote about Su Shi’s poem in which he criticized Wang Anshi’s wife. Xie is suggesting that this one lyric is what led to the banishment of Su Shi, and so she compares herself to him because she is worried that for singing one wrong lyric it could also lead to her demise. For the complete Chinese text see Tang Guizhang 唐圭璋 comp., *Quan Song ci* 全宋詞 (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 278. And for a translation of the poem see, W. L. Idema, "Poet Versus Minister and Monk: Su Shi on Stage in the Period 1250-1450," *T'oung Pao* 73, no. 4/5 (1987): 203-5.

⁹⁴ She may be reading this as a play on her own name: “incense with which he thanks heaven.” The implication is that talent leads to disaster.

I was being ridiculed, then and had nothing to stop it

I beg you, my lord, with resonant magnanimity

Why don't you carefully think it over?

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) How can you stand before me attempting to bribe me?

(FEMALE LEAD *sings*:)

Even if I bribed you as much as I could,

How could I be taken off the tax registers, and no longer a prostitute,

Cast off this baseness and become a good person?

He was only idly making up lies while he was drinking.

If you calculate that I am originally of the class who responds to summons

at Kaifeng Prefecture,

How could I be the Xie Tianxiang in Liu Qiqing's heart?

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Zhang Qian, bring the wine so that I may drink one cup,

and teach Xie Tianxiang to sing a song. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:) Command the

mode. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) The *shangjiao* mode. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:)

Command the format of the song. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) "Ding Fengbo."

(FEMALE LEAD *sings*:)

Since it has turned spring,

I lament the green and sorrow over the red,

And my fragrant heart feels everything

(ZHANG *acts out coughing*.) (FEMALE LEAD *changes her speaking*:).

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) This kind of intelligence and resolute is what is called talent, and your nature is honest and even-tempered. I had her sing the song "From the time of spring until now grieving over the leaves and sorrowing over the blossoms, a young woman's heart treats everything as it were nothing "ke ke." If she sang "ke ke" these two words, then she would have broken the law that one cannot speak a superior official's taboo name, and I would have punished her on the spot with forty lashes. Listening to Zhang Qian when he coughed, she took the words "ke ke" and changed them to "yi yi"⁹⁵. Oh but this "ke" word belongs to the rhyme class "ge ge,"⁹⁶ "yi" this word has the rhyme of "qi wei". Now Xie Tianxiang, I have an ancient rhyme book in front of me, if you lose the rhyme, mistake the level and inflected tones it will be off, or mess up the modes of *gong* and *diao*⁹⁷ they will be in chaos, and on the spot I will punish you with forty lashes. Now sing it in accordance with the *qi* and *wei*!! If you sing it and it is mistaken, Zhang Qian, prepare a big club!

(FEMALE LEAD *sings*:))

Since it has turned spring,

I lament the green and sorrow over the red,

⁹⁵ She changes *keke* 可可 to *yiyi* 已已.

⁹⁶ The word *ke* 可 belonged to the class *gege* 歌戈, and *yi* 已 belonged to the class *qiwei* 齊微. Because *ke* was the first word in the end rhyme pattern of the *ci* poem, this forced her to change the rest of the rhyme in order to correctly perform the poem.

⁹⁷ *Gong* 宮 and *diao* 調 refer to the key and mode in which the poem would be performed.

Everything in a young woman's heart comes to an end.

The sun rises on flowers' tips,

The orioles warble along a belt of willows,

And I am still sleeping here weighed down by this fragrant quilt.

My milky warmth disappearing

My oily clouds drooping,

All day long too listless and tired

She combs her hair and washes it.

Alas, when she thinks ever since that heartless lover left,

There have been no news and no letters.

If I had known earlier it would be like this,

Regretting at first I did not tie up the carved saddle.

At the rooster window I arrange elegant stationary and ivory brush,

I would have restrained him and sung about the flavor of this situation.

All day long stay with me; don't abandon me,

I pick up my needlework and sit across from you,

And together with me,

We could avoid causing the days and nights of our youth to be wasted empty.

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Wow! Now I know why Liu Qiqing loves her! After I have seen this, I can't help but be moved myself. Zhang Qian, come here, you should act as a matchmaker, and I will give you a generous reward. You say to Xie Tianxiang: "I won't give you the status as the first wife of a great man, but as the second wife." Today in the registry of musicians, after I have removed her

name, give her something to wrap her hair, something to clothe her, and an embroidered handkerchief. Zhang Qian, speak with her!

(ZHANG QIAN *acts out meeting with the* FEMALE LEAD, *speaks:*) Sister, the master said: "You will not have the status as wife of a great man, but as a concubine. Today in the registry of musicians your name will be removed, here is something to wrap your hair, something to clothe you, and an embroidered handkerchief." What do you think of this? (FEMALE LEAD *sings.*)

(Muyang guan)

My lord, your reputation is spread to all the empire,
My status is singer in the Entertainment Bureau;
Consider that I am just a singsong girl who performs.
You are a famous Confucian of these times,
And I just entertain some guests, and sing them a few songs.
I am a golden floss willow that faces the road,
You are a golden pillar that spans the ocean;
I feel your mind is not seeing correctly
Your heart covets the wrong things—
How can it be a match of equals,
A pair of peers?

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Zhang Qian, have Tianxiang sent here to my residence.

(FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) Hangzhou's Liu Qiqing, you had better stop thinking of me! (*Sings*)

(Er sha)

Your little student candidate's future is like "a fish tossed in the waves,"

The future of great men is like a "dog testing the water."⁹⁸

When we who are concubines in service enter the bedchamber,

It is for nothing more than giving him a washcloth,

Where we can show off a bit.

When I put on the pinafore is when I will draw near him,

But when I comb his hair my breasts will barely touch his spine,

When will this ever be: "a girl and a boy become a pair"?

(Speaks:) All I wanted was to marry that Liu Qiqing of Hangzhou, and act as a free person, but now how is it possible? *(Sings:)*

(Reprise)

Stop, stop, stop,

I just escaped a blow from his club but not from his cudgel,⁹⁹

I got out of the bamboo basket but went into a hamper—

He's caught me in a silky net.

Don't try to get out,

Don't hold out hope—

It's just like a hundred foot door of stone,

⁹⁸ This is a metaphor meaning the future is dangerous.

⁹⁹ This means that she escaped being beaten for the lyric, but now she has to serve as Prefect Qian's second wife. It is roughly equivalent to "going from bad to worse."

There's no way I can think to move it.

Even if I used up every bit of cleverness,

It would do no more than break my heart.

I can't find any "golden cicada escaping its cocoon," — that is an outright
lie.¹⁰⁰

(Exits.)

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Zhang Qian, take Xie Tianxiang to my private residence.

(*Recites*:) I have a matter on my heart, and have not dared to clearly speak it. Wait
for Liu Qiqing, he will explain the central issues.

(Exits.)

¹⁰⁰ Essentially she is saying that there will be no trick to escape, the saying is a complete lie.

Act Three:

Three years pass between the end of the second act and the beginning of the third. In Xie's opening lines she indicates that she has "completely erased her singsong girl's heart."¹⁰¹ (將我那歌妓之心消磨盡了也。) In the first two arias of the act, she expresses her feelings of loneliness and her grief because she lacks companionship. These arias appropriately set the erotic theme that is played with throughout this act. In her previous life, she was always being watched and scrutinized as a singsong girl and now as a concubine she is being completely ignored in Qian's home. She expresses her loneliness and indirectly a need for greater intimacy. It is understandable that a person who went from a career as a prostitute to being an ignored concubine would experience withdrawal symptoms.

Two other concubines enter the scene and question her about her acts of intimacy with Qian. She replies that she has never been intimate with him and blames it on her humble and lowly background that makes her a poor match for him. The other concubines encourage her to vie for the Prefect's attention and she explains that she has a profound fear of saying anything that might offend him. The girls reassure her that she has not yet done anything wrong. She repeats the fear of having the old facts of her life resurface: "I have to measure the tempo and pace of the situation. . .all those old 'rights and wrongs' will be carried to the Prefect's ears"¹⁰² (我則是斟量著緊慢遲疾. . .相公的耳朵裡風聞那舊是非).

¹⁰¹ Act 3, 68.

¹⁰² Act 3, *Gun xiuqiu* (滾繡球) and *Tang xiucui*, (倘秀才) 69-71.

She remains careful and hesitant. Even though she has been removed from the list of entertainers, she is still terrified of offending Qian or of embarrassing herself. There is significant tension within her that builds to the climax of the play as she tries to cope with her fears and her desires.

One of the concubines then suggests they should go to a pavilion to gamble. They agree and begin a discussion on gambling. Gambling was certainly one of the most vulgar hobbies of Yuan society.¹⁰³ Gambling was a release of tension for Xie in the same way that having intercourse was a release of tension. The fact that the girls regularly gamble is likely representative of their sexual frustrations. As the scene unfolds and Xie Tianxiang competes against the other concubines, the gambling also takes on the metaphorical guise that parallels competition among the concubines for Qian's affection. Xie wins each time. This is a pivotal scene in the drama since Xie, who has considered her life as a prostitute then a concubine unlucky, now has unexpected turns of good fortune. The girls gamble with dice or *shai*[zi] (色) which can also mean erotic or lewd, further strengthening the erotic undertones of the act. As they are gambling, Prefect Qian enters the pavilion unbeknownst to Xie. He then rather maliciously teases her by placing his cane on her shoulder, but she mistakes it for the concubines and curses them. When she realizes it is the Prefect putting his cane on her shoulder and not the women, she is mortified by her behavior. This is the realization of her greatest fear: she has embarrassed herself and offended Qian and must now suffer the consequences. She sings:

¹⁰³ “Yuan zaju zhong de dudou youxi xisu,” 1-2.

Frightening me so much I promptly fall to my knees,
 Unconsciously rain tears in torrents,
 He came slipping stealthily up behind me;
 Standing there without a word.
 I see those two have craftily and cleverly crept away to avoid him,
 My lord teased me with his walking stick,
 I should never have lost proper form of address in that searingly sarcastic
 mouth of mine.
 This is Tianxiang's offense.¹⁰⁴

唬的我連忙的跪膝，
 不由我淚雨似扒推；
 可又早七留七力來到我跟底，
 不言語立地；
 我見他出留出律兩個都回避。
 相公將必留不刺拄杖相調戲，
 我不該必丟不搭口內失尊卑，
 這的是天香犯罪。

Qian, recognizing her fear, asks her if she wants to be spared by performing for him, and he picks the topic of “dice” on which she must create a song. He is not truly demonstrating sympathy for her in this action. Instead he creates a form of courtship between them and by choosing such an erotic topic he is certainly taking the opportunity to tease her and taking advantage of his superiority in their relationship. She cleverly constructs an appropriate poem in which she compares herself to the dice, the “lowly bones,” (低微骨) which are placed in Qian's hands and left to his whims. She articulates her submissiveness and he controls this erotic encounter. The dice also serve as an excellent metaphor for her life, in that they represent luck and for Xie she is totally helpless when it comes to controlling her own fate. Qian recites a poem to match the one she has just recited. He also

¹⁰⁴ Act 3, *Zui taiping*, (醉太平) 74.

uses the metaphor and says, “The color of the dice has a significant meaning”¹⁰⁵ (色緣有深意). Again the term here for dice can also be translated beauty or desire for a woman. This line could also be read “There was originally a deep intention in the fate of this beauty.” Her talent once again saves her, but it is clear that she is not only talented, but is also quite fortunate.

Prefect Qian displays “moral” disinterest in Xie in order to respect his friendship with Liu Yong, but it is clear that the emotional and sexual tension in their exchange of poems represents the climax of the play. Qian informs Xie that he will select an auspicious day to make her a second wife. She assumes that he means he will take her for himself as a second wife. This once again could represent a resolution to the play if it were not for the scheme that Qian has planned. Once again, this demonstrates the authority of Qian in the play as the character who creates drama and ultimately determines the narrative of the play.

Xie is very skeptical about his promise and therefore tests him. Her anxiety about the match between her lowly status and his high position continues to plague her. In three separate arias, she expresses a concern about the certainty of his promises. She is secure in the strength of her own analytical abilities and cannot accept Qian’s inappropriate promise without question. She is convinced of her ability to read others and sings in the final aria:

You are not being sincere and you take me to be inexperienced,
And this is not in the flower lanes and willow alleys,
And those “hollow branches”,
And “broken down bridges in the fog,”

¹⁰⁵ Act 3, 75.

It is me who can recognize you! ¹⁰⁶

你不委心為自家沒見識，
又不是花街中、柳陌裡，
那一個徹梢虛、霧塌橋，
渾身我可也認的你！

The two images are metaphors for customers who feign sincerity. On the outside, a branch seems sound, but it turns out to be hollow, or a bridge that is seemingly intact inside the fog turns out to be broken as one loses one's footing. She fears that although Qian makes these promises, he will ultimately rescind his words. Incorrectly guessing that Prefect Qian does not have good intentions, she is nevertheless right in seeing through to the fact that he is not intending to keep her around. Once knowing that no matter how pleased Qian was with her talent, it did not lead to any sexual relationship, she assumes that her ability to improvise a poem on the spot cannot possibly mean that they are going to become a true husband and wife. From this point on, her life changes and she is ultimately able to attain her greatest desire, but it is only as a result of acting in a way that was her greatest fear.

¹⁰⁶ Act 3 *Shawei*, (煞尾) 77-8.

Act Three

(FEMALE LEAD *enters and speaks*:) I am Xie Tianxiang. It has already been three years since I entered into the home of the great Prefect Qian, and I have completely erased my singsong girl's heart. (*Sings*:)

ZHENG GONG MODE: (*Duanzheng hao*)

I was always in a world of wind and dust, acting the singsong girl,
But I've only seen a few banquets,
And coming home I have to be a free ghost;
Now I have been placed in a cage with no bottom!

(*Gun xiuqiu*)

When I rise in the morning I deliver water for him to wash his face,
When night comes I have to spread out the bed and pile up the duvet,
Everything I do in service is all inside the gauze curtain,¹⁰⁷
I just now unfolded my bedding
Just like a lonely ghost,
And can't help but sleep in the fetal position.
For three whole years I have "had the name but not the reality."¹⁰⁸
Originally I was a companion to Liu Yong, having sex and a romantic
affair,

¹⁰⁷ She is referring to a bed. Chinese beds were very large with curtains around the perimeter.

¹⁰⁸ This is an idiom meaning that she has had the name "wife," but that has not been her reality. She has had virtually no relationship with Prefect Qian.

Now I am the wife of Prefect Qian, receiving his care but held at a
distance—

Who could have guessed?

(Two FEMALES, dressed as beautiful concubines enter; one speaks:) We are two
concubines of Prefect Qian. Today we have nothing to do, and we are off to see
our older sister, Miss Xie. *(Acts out greeting FEMALE LEAD, speaks:)* Sister, we
have come straightaway to see you today. *(FEMALE LEAD speaks:)* My two sisters,
please sit. *(Two FEMALES speak:)* Sister, you have been inside this house for three
years, has our master ever been intimate with you? *(FEMALE LEAD sings:)*

(Tang xiucai)

If ever spent the night,

Only the heavens and the earth would know—

Who knows whether he sleeps crossways or longways in his bed!

Compared to when I was first summoned here,

He makes himself even more scarce.

I think that my original background

Was just too low and insignificant,

He was afraid of I would besmirch his magnificent form.

(Two FEMALES speak:) Sister, although it is like this, you should try to be more
intimate. *(FEMALE LEAD sings:)*

(Gun xiuqiu)

You older sisters are willing to instruct me,

But isn't it out of malice?

But, in front of our lord, would I dare say anything that would offend him?

(*Two FEMALES speak:*) Sister, you've done nothing wrong. (*FEMALE LEAD sings:*)

You say "I have done nothing wrong,"

Putting it that way,

Can you sisters do such a thing or not?

I have to measure the tempo and pace of the situation,

I pressure He Yan with all my charm, but he won't apply any powder ¹⁰⁹

And besiege that fierce Zhang Chang, but he isn't willing to blacken my
brows.

I have to recognize my proper station.¹¹⁰

(*Two FEMALES speak:*) I venture to ask you sister, have you collected all of
master Liu the Seventh's "Collection of Musical Poems" yet? (*FEMALE LEAD
sings:*)

(*Tang xiucai*)

Don't bring up that dashing Liu the Seventh,

¹⁰⁹ He Yan 何晏 (190-249) was married to the Princess of Wei and was known to wear women's clothes and put white powder on his face. This term refers to men who enjoy wearing embellished clothing and take care of their looks like a woman.

¹¹⁰ This means that she does not deserve to be the wife of the Prefect, and that her proper station was as a singsong girl.

If he hears here is there,
All those old “rights and wrongs” will be carried to the Prefect’s ears.
Don't just be concerned about those lines,
The stench of rotten yellow pickles I remember too well. ¹¹¹

(Two FEMALES *speak*:) Sister, but which lines are they? Recite them so we may listen. (FEMALE LEAD *sings*:)

(*Qiong hexi*)

Sisters, who dares speak of that “Collection of Musical Poems” I have tucked inside my sleeve,
And which has ruined my whole life.
But just remember, when meeting in front of others
What we speak of now, never speak of again.

(Two FEMALES *speak*:) Let’s all go to the Pavilion of Bamboo Clouds to gamble.

(FEMALE LEAD *speaks*:) Alright, sisters, let’s go. (*Sings*:)

(*Gun xiuqiu*)

Thinking of those days when we played elephant chess,
We reached an agreement that we would gamble for a handkerchief,
You took that jade decorated rattan chest of mine but didn't put anything
in it and returned it empty.

¹¹¹ Scholars stank because they were given a stipend for food, but it only consisted of pickled vegetables.

And just recently,
On a day it rained, you lost a pair of embroidered shoes to me,¹¹²
But whenever we talked again, you never raised the issue.
Why would you break trust for just a little betting game?
And turn an ugly face over just a bit of profit or loss,
And think I am not smart enough to catch on.

(*Two FEMALES speak:*) Sister I threw a few dice, I lost. Sister, you should have a throw. (FEMALE LEAD *acts out taking the dice*) (*Sings:*)

(*Tang xiucai*)

One, four, five are cast together as a “pinched ten;”
Two, three, two make a “bookended seven;”
Casting it one more time,
I should get, one, two, and three, a “rat’s tail.”¹¹³
The one gambling for money isn’t happy about this.
Sister, you cast again.

(*Two FEMALES speak:*) Wait, I will cast again. . . . I lost again. Your turn to roll the dice. (FEMALE LEAD *sings:*)

(*Dai gудuo*)

¹¹² One sister gambled for a handkerchief, and the other one for the shoes.

¹¹³ These were names of specific combinations of numbers on the dice usually representing the image that the numbers evoked, just like in gambling rolling two die with the outcome of one pip on each is called, “snake eyes”.

I take these dice and set them down gently in the dice cup,
Two, three, and a five I rolled a “raven-black ten,”
Gambling without betting money, I beat you twice.
It’s all really clear from what just happened,
We don’t need to bring up the dice I’m throwing now—
Look, sister, I’ve got a “full house,” three fives!
What do you have to say now that I have won today?

(PREFECT QIAN *enters leaning on a cane*) (Two FEMALES *surprised, exit.*) (FEMALE LEAD *sings:*)

(Tang xiucai)

Don’t be impolite and begin creating a stir,
I will never ever wrangle with you,
Set your stinking corpse down
And sit quietly by the side.

(QIAN *acts out taking his cane and setting it on the FEMALE LEAD’S right shoulder*)

(FEMALE LEAD *acts out moving it, sings:*) Stop fooling around!

(QIAN *acts out taking his cane and setting it on the FEMALE LEAD’S left shoulder*)

(FEMALE LEAD *acts out moving it, sings:*) Stinky donkey’s hoof! (QIAN *again acts out placing the cane on the FEMALE LEAD’S right shoulder*) (FEMALE LEAD *acts out grasping it firmly and turning her head, sings:*) Who are you? (PREFECT QIAN

speaks:) Tianxiang, who are you scolding? (FEMALE LEAD *acts out crouching in fear*) (*Sings:*)

(*Zui taiping*)

Frightening me so much I promptly fall to my knees,

Unconsciously rain tears in torrents,

He came slipping stealthily up behind me;

Standing there without a word.

I see those two have craftily and cleverly crept away to avoid him,

My lord teased me with his walking stick,

I should never have lost proper form of address in that searingly sarcastic
mouth of mine.

This is Xie Tianxiang's offense.

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Tianxiang, are you afraid? (FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*)

Obviously, I am afraid. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Do you want to be spared?

(FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) Of course I want to be spared. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*)

Since you want to be spared, give me a verse—poem or lyric—to look at, and I

will spare you. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) Please choose a topic. (PREFECT QIAN

speaks:) Simply take these dice from the cup as a topic. (FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) I
have a poem. (*Recites a poem:*)

Once I take these lowly bones,¹¹⁴

And placed them in the hands of the Prefect,

¹¹⁴ She is actually referring to her own body as well as the dice.

I anticipated he would hate their being besmirched,
And cast them away, leaving them to the eastern wind.

(PREFECT QIAN *acts out laughing, speaks:*) A sage said: "The affections are stirred within and take on form in words. If words alone are inadequate, we speak them out in sighs. If sighing is inadequate, we sing them. If singing them is inadequate, unconsciously our hands dance them and our feet tap them."¹¹⁵

The general intent of her four lines of poetry is that I took her as my concubine, and she's been in my house for three years but I have paid no attention to her. How could she know my intention? Tianxiang, I will match these four lines of poetry. I will recite them; you listen. (*Recites a poem:*)

Just because you get four and six,¹¹⁶

I temporarily lifted you in my hands.

The color of the dice has a significant meaning,¹¹⁷

Who speaks of "horse and cow on the wind"?¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ This is a quotation from the Great Preface 大序 of the *Book of Poetry* 詩經 and the translation is quoted from Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, Vol. 30. (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992), 41.

¹¹⁶ Referring to types of poetry, meaning he knows how to write poetry.

¹¹⁷ The term *se* 色, used for "dice" also means "beauty," so the last two lines could be understood as "There was originally a deep intention in the fate of this beauty, who says that I don't care?"

¹¹⁸ This reference is from "Duke Xi's Fourth Year" 僖公四年 in the Spring and Autumn Zuo Chronicles 春秋左傳 and is a metaphor meaning "who says there is nothing between us." That is, there is a reason why he has kept her from harm.

Tianxiang, you have been in my house three years. Stop worrying, I will select a special day and hour, and within two days I will establish you as a second wife.

What do you think? (FEMALE LEAD *sings*.)

(*Ersha*)

Normally he never paid attention to me, it was all no interest,

Today he has changed his mind, and there's no hint of delay.

I fear my lord's words are not quite right,

And as he spoke them to me, I begin little by little to worry about them.

My lord is not laughing and playing,

And is not drunk,

And is not deluded;

I want to say these are crazy words spoken while asleep—

Are you not a pure and just judge?

(*Speaks*.) My lord, could it be a lie? (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*.) I have never once drunk wine, how could I have lied? I simply cherish your intelligence and talent and feel sympathy for your vexation and grievous crying. (FEMALE LEAD *sings*.)

(*Yisha*)

My Lord, once you have uttered these words, how can you regret them?

A four-in-hand of galloping horses cannot chase them down.

I will come and go from this orchid hall,

For the complete Chinese passage see Yang, Bojun, 楊伯峻(1909-1992), *Chun qiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左传注 (Beijing Shi: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 289.

Reside in a decorated hall,
Have a fragrant cart to travel in,
Sleep within gauze curtains.
My lord, it has been three whole years,
I have been well instructed,
And there has been waxing or waning,
I never thought that this morning you would wrongly love this foul
 prostitute
I weep because of your kindness to me.

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Tianxiang, Go to the rear hall to change clothes. (*Exits.*)

(FEMALE LEAD *sings*:)

(*Shawei*)

This time I have elegantly applied my talented skills,
Before I trembled with lack of energy.
My lord, even if you put your words up on a stele,
I still would not dare trust them completely.
You are such a great official,
With such an important position—
You gave out your promise all too quickly.
You are not being sincere and you take me to be inexperienced,
And this is not in the flower lanes and willow alleys,
And those “hollow branches”,

And “broken down bridges in the fog,”¹¹⁹

It is me who can recognize you!

(Exits.)

¹¹⁹ These two lines are used for customers who feign sincerity. They are like branches that seem to be sound, but are hollow, or like broken down bridges in the fog on which one can easily lose one’s footing. The implicit meaning is that because she can recognize the shows and shifts of customers and will not be taken in, she also recognizes or hopes that he is not that kind of person.

Act Four:

The final act begins with Prefect Qian telling Zhang Qian that Liu Yong has passed the examinations as head of the list and has returned. He instructs Zhang Qian to insist that Liu Yong come for a banquet to celebrate his accomplishment. Zhang Qian goes to find Liu Yong, who has been participating in the traditional three-day parade of the top scholar in the examinations through the streets of Hangzhou. Upon his return to the stage, Liu recites a poem about his wasted youth and his transformation into a person of good character and reputation demonstrated by his success in the examinations. He immediately moves from discussing this success to the fact that he believes his old friend Qian has betrayed him. He goes only grudgingly to the banquet.

In the opening scenes, Liu was so besotted with wine and women that he caused Qian to become irate, and in his scene of return, he refuses to drink, “I am not the same man today compared to who I was in the past. There are restrictions that come with my post, what I think about now are success and honor, how could I dare drink wine?” (小官今非昔比，官守所拘，功名在念，岂敢饮酒?)¹²⁰ Even though Liu believes that he is a changed person, he is still foolish. He has just expressed his fury that Prefect Qian has presumably stolen his girlfriend, but rather than confront the issue at hand, he simply squirms under the pressure that Qian puts on him to drink. Qian continues to mock and tease Liu about not drinking wine in order to arouse and aggravate him, which Liu does not address but instead is manipulated by Qian. Although it appears that Liu has learned a

¹²⁰ Act 4, 86.

degree of responsibility from his experience at the examinations, he is still a very weak and humorous character. Prefect Qian then whispers to Zhang Qian to summon Xie Tianxiang to come and greet his guest.

We then see Xie Tianxiang in her boudoir at peace, brewing up an ointment for her skin. It is clear that, once Xie Tianxiang became the Prefect's second wife, she found the contentment that she has desired the entire play. Her tone and confidence have completely changed. It is here, in Qian's home where she has the greatest mental freedom and the least amount of responsibility. As she turns her attention toward making lotions she realizes:

Compared to when I was that person waiting for the Music Procurer from
the Yamen gate,
Today I am no longer so filthy.
Although I am not some house or mansion's main wife,
I am still a concubine of a great person,
Which is better than being Head of the Guild at that brothel.¹²¹

比俺那門前樂探等著官身，
我今日個不醜醜。
雖不是宅院裡夫人，
也是那大人家姬妾，
強似那上廳的祇候。

As a singsong girl she would have been constantly interrupted and called upon to perform at any time. She has finally abandoned her low status, trading it for a life of leisure and quietude in Qian's house. She does not appear lonely, but satisfied to live within this guarded space where she can act and think for herself. She has accepted a life that no longer includes Liu Yong. Even though her physical space

¹²¹ Act 4 *Zui chunfeng* (醉春風), 87-8.

is not as free as when she was a singsong girl, because she is now confined to one home, her mental space has blossomed in the daily routine of her life: she no longer has the anxiety of being scrutinized by men nor the fear of acting improperly. As she takes joy in the fact that she is now free, she is called into the front room of Qian Ke's estate.

Xie decides to peer into the front chambers to see who is the special guest that Prefect Qian is entertaining. She immediately recognizes that it is Liu who has returned from the examinations. Her reaction to him is more of a resentment that he abandoned her, and she reverts to her old fear thinking that this is Qian's plan to embarrass her in front of him. Once she enters the room, she acts properly and does not show any favor or emotion toward Liu. She reasserts her loyalty to Qian, because she assumes that he has planned to make her his wife. Qian tells her to encourage Liu to drink, which she misunderstands because she thinks Qian is just trying to assuage Liu's anger and rekindle their friendship. In her discomfort, she begins singing and tells Qian to not blame her if this plan does not turn out well. She compares her feelings of discomfort to her days as the head of the guild and all of the freedom that she has just experienced is instantly taken away, "I have no freedom of movement now." (我如今在這裡不自由).¹²² Qian finally interrupts the scene and explains his original motive.

Qian explains his whole plan from the beginning of the play. He recalls his disapproval of Liu because of the time Liu spent with Xie as well as Liu's neglect

¹²² Act 4, *Shang xiaolou* (上小樓) reprise, (幺篇) 90.

of the pursuit of success. He then describes the scene with the recitation of the *ci* lyric and that Xie was tested while reciting it because it contained his taboo name. After her performance and his change of heart, Qian decided at that moment to protect Xie by taking her as a concubine. He assures Liu that he has never laid a hand on her. In doing this, he restores the friendship between the two of them that was previously destroyed. It is unclear as to whether the purpose of restoring their friendship was to illustrate a Confucian philosophical understanding of a true friendship, or whether it was simply a byproduct of Qian Ke's scheme. The stronger argument seems to be that it was Xie's talent that caused Qian Ke to have a change of heart, which was unrelated to his friendship with Liu Yong.¹²³

Qian also lives up to his reputation that he touted at the beginning of the play because of his concern for Liu Yong in his new position. Qian alludes to one of Xie's early arias in the wedge in which she hoped that the mythological "simurgh glue" would once again bring the two back together and repair the metaphorical string that was broken once she and Liu were separated (鸞膠續斷弦).¹²⁴ Qian ends his monologue with the line that gives the play its title: this scheme was the favor bestowed upon Xie Tianxiang.

Xie sings three arias reflecting on the events of the past three years and her excitement in being reunited with Liu. Her character has changed significantly

¹²³ For a discussion of Qian and Liu's friendship in this play see Peng Yin 彭茵, "Niu jie sangang zhong jiexu shilun Yuandai lunli daode ju" 紐結三綱重接續試論元代倫理道德劇, *Nanjing Science Society*, 10 (2000): 74-8.

¹²⁴ Act 4, 93.

from the beginning of the play; she has become completely tame and domesticated at this point and believes that she is no longer a lowly singsong girl. Her unconventional role as a singsong girl transforms into a normative role as a domestic wife, which is what she desired at the beginning. It is in this role reversal that scholars suggest Guan Hanqing is criticizing society, but this is simply the reality of gender roles in a strict hierarchical society. The final aria of the play illustrates Xie's complete shock that her life could have been so fortunate. Even though on the surface she thinks of her life as unlucky, she is actually fortunate throughout the entire play.

Although the fourth act resolves Prefect Qian's scheme, it does not completely resolve all tensions in the play. The more important discussion regarding this final act is understanding why there are issues left unresolved and unaddressed. At the beginning of the play, Xie indicates that her ultimate desire is to be free of her career as a prostitute, but once this is granted to her, she realizes that she is still unfulfilled; she lacks intimacy with and attention from a man. Once Prefect Qian decides to make her a second wife, it is clear that she has completely moved on from her relationship with Liu Yong. In fact, when she sees Liu again, she resents him for abandoning her. Consequently, once Qian reveals his original motive, her arias about her excitement that they are reunited seem to be forced. It is difficult to understand her songs as expressing genuine happiness, and thus she obfuscates the sense of true resolution in the play. Their reuniting is not one of two people madly in love but instead Xie is forced to be with the man whom she feels abandoned her. Liu never once expresses his feelings of love to

Xie, but only his gratitude to Qian, further giving the impression of unresolved tension. Since Liu has not proven himself to be a scholar worthy of respect or a man of conviction, he still appears as weak, and it almost seems as though he is the one who is unworthy of Xie and undeserving of his good fortune. The fact that the play actually concludes with the resolution of Qian's scheme is further evidence that his actions control the narrative, and he is the one who occupies the most important role in the play.

Act Four

(PREFECT QIAN *leading* ZHANG QIAN *enters, speaks:*) I am Prefect Qian. Who ever expected Liu Qiqing to pass as “head of the list” in a single try, he has been on the streets parading for three days.¹²⁵ Zhang Qian, prepare to lay out a banquet. You go out on the street, and block him. Tell him Prefect Qian invites him to dine; if he is not willing to come at that time, you simply take his horse's saddle, and don't let him go on, make sure you invite him to come. If he comes, report it to me so I may know.

(*Exits.*)

(LIU *riding a horse leading attendants enters, recites a poem:*)

In former days so befouled with her, nothing to brag about,
Today completely unrestrained and free, no bounds to my thoughts.
Completely satisfied in the spring winds, my horse's hooves are quick,
“In one day I see all of the flowers¹²⁶ in Chang'an.”¹²⁷

I am Liu Yong. After Xie Tianxiang and I separated, I went to the imperial capital and, in one try I scored highest on the exams. I borrowed the prime minister's entourage and have been celebrating on the street for three days as top graduate. I

¹²⁵ Liu passed the imperial examinations with the highest score, and it was customary to parade in the streets for three days afterward.

¹²⁶ These flowers also refer to women.

¹²⁷ Chang'an 長安 is modern day Xi'an 西安.

heard that Prefect Qian married Xie Tianxiang. Qian Kedao, you knew perfectly well that Miss Xie was the person in my heart. How could I bear to see you?

Servants, clear the road, slowly go on.

(ZHANG QIAN enters *speaks*:) Head-of-the-list, Prefect Qian has an invitation for you! (LIU *speaks*:) I won't go. (ZHANG QIAN *pulls on the horse, speaks*:) No matter what, "I am inviting" you to go see Prefect Qian. Come!

(All Exit.)

(PREFECT QIAN *enters, speaks*:) This morning Zhang Qian invited Liu Qiqing to come, how come I don't see him? (ZHANG QIAN *and* LIU *enter together*, [ZHANG QIAN] *speaks*:) Top Scholar, wait one moment; I will go report that you are here.

(Acts out reporting, speaks:) The Head-of-the-list you wanted is here. (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Tell him to come in.

(Acts out greeting LIU) (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Brother, there is a day to have luster, and there is a day to have success; isn't this great! Bring the wine, today I offer my brother congratulations. *(Acts out taking the wine, speaks)* Drink a full cup. (LIU *speaks*:) I don't have much capacity; I won't drink it! (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) In the past all you thought about was wine and women, so why won't you drink today? (LIU *speaks*:) I am not the same man today compared to who I was in the past. There are restrictions that come with my post, what I think about now are success and honor, how could I dare drink wine? (PREFECT QIAN, *speaks*:) In such a case your success will be a short time in coming. You have really

achieved great scholarly honor at this time. You really won't drink wine, could it be that you have a grudge against me? Zhang Qian, come here. (*Acts out whispering in his ear, speaks:*) It must be this way... (ZHANG QIAN *speaks:*) I understand.

(*Acts out summoning, speaks:*) Madame Xie, my lord has a guest in his front chambers, please come Madame!

(FEMALE LEAD *speaks:*) How could I ever think I would be so well off! (*Sings:*)

ZHONG LÜ MODE: (*Fendie'er*)

Before I take off this apron,

I'll first use up that sweet smelling soap made out of wheat husk liquor,

I will warm up just enough to smooth it on the surface of my hand;

I will mix it with some powder,

And add to it the dew from a hedge rose;

I'll break open the fragrant oil of the liquid ambar tree,

I am afraid the tip of the jujube branch will scorch it and make the oil
stink.

(*Zui chunfeng*)

How would I dare deeply dip a finger into it to spread on?

I should use a cotton fluff to twirl in it,

Compared to when I was that person waiting for the Music Procurer from
the Yamen gate,

Today I am no longer so filthy.

Although I am not some house or mansion's main wife,

I am still a concubine of a great person,

Which is better than being Head of the Guild at that brothel.

(Speaks) My lord, the front hall has guests, I am not about to go in, I will just try to peek inside. *(Sings:)*

(Shiliuhua)

I'd say that the one sitting there is that handsome Confucian type,¹²⁸

Here I inspect him intently and concentrate my gaze—

Turns out it's that guy who was unwilling to go to Hangzhou for three
years,

Discarding me, making me less than others,

Having a state to which I cannot return!

Could it be that he's just enticing me¹²⁹

To particularly make me do something ugly and embarrass myself?

See how those guys dressed in fine official clothing are so loyal and true
to each other,

Never ever asking for any reason.

(Dou anchun)

¹²⁸ She is talking about Liu Yong.

¹²⁹ This refers to Qian Ke.

Moreover, there is no public revenge for a private affair,
And instead you have spread a banquet for me.

(Continues in speech:) If I go over, what is the right thing to say?

(Sings:)

All I can do is pretend not to acknowledge him,
Dare I say, “I’ve come to extend my compliments?”

(Acts out greeting) (PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Tianxiang, please pay honor to
Qiqing. (FEMALE LEAD *sings:*)

Here I finish extending my courtesies
And deeply bow my head in front of these officials.

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Tianxiang, come closer. (FEMALE LEAD *sings:*)

Who dares say “I am leaving your side?”
I had better wait upon you here at a side,
I had better hasten to the front and then hurry to the back.¹³⁰

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks:*) Tianxiang, you and Qiqing take a cup of wine! (FEMALE
LEAD *speaks:*) Understood. *(Sings:)*

(Shang xiaolou)

I want to begin my performance now,
But don’t know if he is possibly laying some snare for me—

¹³⁰ She means run back and forth as she waits on him.

It would be better of I feign befuddlement
And urge on the goblets for this Lord of Spring,¹³¹
But if he gets drunk¹³²
Don't even think about cursing me.

(LIU *speaks*:) Tianxiang, come here. (FEMALE LEAD *sings*:)

How can this not compare to when I was Head of the Guild ?

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Tianxiang, raise your cup, make this scholar to drink
these full cups. (*Acts out making him drink.*) (LIU *speaks*) I won't drink. (FEMALE
LEAD *sings*:)

(*Reprise*)

Over there he simply raises his hand,
Here, I restrain these weepy eyes;
Dare one call this “Asking how one another are,”
“Have anything to do with each other,”
Or “embracing or giving each other love taps—”
I have no freedom of movement now.

(LIU *speaks*) Sister, why did you get so thin. (FEMALE LEAD *sings*:)

¹³¹ She does this on Qian Ke's behalf, he is “Lord of the Spring” in order to urge Liu Yong to drink.

¹³² She is referring to Liu Yong because he got drunk the last time he was with Prefect Qian.

You see how the flesh has been sucked out of my skin,
Don't you ask me why my bones are jutting out and my face is a haggard
yellow.

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Qiqing, why aren't you drinking? (LIU *speaks*:) I can't drink! (PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Enough! Enough! "If a word is unspoken it remains unknown; if no awl tests the tree it will never be bored through; if ice is never rubbed the hands never get cool." "A gentleman takes advantage of the opportunity when it comes, he does not wait until the day is over."¹³³ Qiqing why did you come to this so late!¹³⁴ Back then I saw you were interested only in Xie and you indulged yourself in the Alley of Tinkling Chimes, sunken in the pleasures of the eyes and ears, neglecting your ambition for success and fame. This is why I spoke so candidly then and made you march off sulking and depressed. When you left, I sent someone to keep track of you and he reported that you had written a poem to the tune "Ding fengbo" as you were getting ready to leave. I sent Zhang Qian to summon Miss Xie, Zhang Qian set out the wine, and Miss Xie got ready to sing and I ordered her to sing that "Ding Fengbo" poem. I thought she was going to violate my taboo name and never thought she would change the rhyming words. I really love her talent, soon after that I removed her name from the music bureau's tax records; I took her as a concubine

¹³³ This quote is from the *Rectification of the Book of Changes* 周易正義 in the second part of "Commentary on the Appended Statements" 繫辭. See Li Xueqin 李學勤 *Zhouyi zhengyi: Shisan jing zhushu zhengli ben* 周易正義十三經注疏 整理本 (Taipei: Taiwan shufang chuban youxian gongsi, 2001), 346.

¹³⁴ Here he means, why are you just now coming to this understanding.

in my home. I deliberately did not avoid what other people might think about this, but did it all for my friendship with you, my younger brother. If we were to have let her continue “welcoming in the new and sending off the old,” wouldn’t you have besmirched your reputation as a great talent?

I have ruled here three years, and have “taken neither water nor rice”¹³⁵ from the common citizens, and have not touched the slightest hair on Tianxiang. Wanting to trim back that willow of yours that was “near the road,” and lopping off “those flowers that stuck out beyond the wall,” was so that the two of you would be a match. It was all because of that one song, “Stilling the Windy Waves,” because she could fill in the lyrics to match the tune, and could skillfully change the modes and notes, it made me “think of a match when I saw a worthy,”¹³⁶ turned my anger to joy. So I had her emulate the palace style adornment and put on that golden phoenix headdress, and had her quit performing with that jade tinkling simurgh at her belt. I bore unimaginable suffering to bring to a conclusion your lifetime wish. If you were unwilling “To part long from the misty moonlight for the golden halls of the palace,” I was just worried that “This fine flower would be shipped off to the son of a rich family.” All because of this, I nourished this peony

¹³⁵ This is a metonymy to mean that he has acted uprightly and not accepted gifts from commoners.

¹³⁶ This saying is from the *Analects* in chapter seventeen of the section called “Dwelling among Benevolence” 裡仁. For the original Chinese and an English translation see *The four books: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and The Works of Mencius*, 45.

for three years, just waiting for you to rise first to the plaque of tigers and dragons with a single try.

Brother, think about this! How could a singsong girl become the concubine of a great official? I thought, if you fulfilled your ambition, but then I was worried that officials within the official ranking system are not allowed to take a prostitute as a wife, and so I locked away this mandarin duck and made a nest for this kingfisher, in order to bind the lovers in harmony like the *qin* and *se*.¹³⁷ You might say, “I have vainly locked away the mirror on the phoenix terrace,” but I “fixed the broken string with simurgh glue.” Why would I separate two birds with paired wings, except to have you reunited as a single lotus with a double head? I falsely made her my little wife, solely to wait for my true friend’s realization of his ambition. I am not going to waste words. Tianxiang, lay out your feelings face to face and say what you are going to do! (Recites saying:)

I have selected this rouge-faced woman in brocade and embroidery,
To hand over to you, a white faced gentleman on a silver saddle.
Liu Qiqing, feel no more enmity to the lord of Kaifeng,
This is “Prefect Qian Wisely Bestows Favor on Xie Tianxiang.”

(LIU *speaks*) Wow! Many thanks brother, for showing me so much concern!

Sister, how did you get to the lord's mansion after I left? Explain as I listen.

(FEMALE LEAD *sings*)

¹³⁷ The *qin* 琴 and *se* 瑟 are two types of zithers.

(*Shao pian*)

From the time my talented man left,
A fragrant wind blew through the Lord's window curtains.
There were neither wine tallies lying scattered about,
Nor a single client to drink with on his leisure roamings,
From the Yamen court he urgently called me there,
And the Music Procurer hurried to summon me,
Frightening me so much I could not control myself, help myself,
All I could do was to go to serve him the public hall.
He did not ask me to dance and twirl,
But simply ordered me to sing.
I poured wine in the Phoenix cup to give him,
Filled in the lyric pattern to the *shangjiao* mode, searched for the rhymes.
And when I reached, “—Since it has turned spring,
I lament the green and sorrow over the red,
And my fragrant heart feels everything is needless and bland—”
I immediately shut my mouth.

(*Shua hai'er*)

It had the Lord's complete name,
So I lightly cadged another rhyme to use;
In no time at all, my name was removed from the music bureau,
And he let it be known that we would be a couple, tightly bound.
For three years, did I ever occupy his bedding?

For a thousand days, did I ever rest on his pillow?

My lord's intention

Was difficult to understand.

I was originally a piece of flying floss stained with mud,

And then an orphan boat without a mooring!¹³⁸

(Er sha)

Seeing my spirit compared to apricots and peaches bursting with energy,

How could I be together with this lord?

Seeing Tianxiang's face like the color of spring at its full,

Viewing the flowers is not the equal of viewing my fair charms,

And if one drinks it must be a giant flagon.

But who was there to sniff this pure fragrance?

I was deeply enclosed at the base of the fence,

And no other blossom was ever stuck in!

(PREFECT QIAN *speaks*:) Zhang Qian, quickly get the horses and cart in order, and send off Madame Xie to her top scholar's home!

(LIU *with the* FEMALE LEAD *act out formal gratitude, speaks*:) I am deeply grateful for your kindness, my lord! (FEMALE LEAD *sings*)

(Reprise)

¹³⁸ This is a metaphor for herself, because as a singsong girl she lived an unrestrained life like an unanchored boat.

This Tianxiang never thought that sunny weather would come,
I would have said “It’s without passion, let it go and be done”!
Who ever thought this peony blossom would be plucked and put into the
hands to the Lord of the East,¹³⁹
Today to be shared with a Mr. Willow beside the road to Zhangtai.¹⁴⁰

Title: Liu Qiqing mistakenly resents the leader of Kaifeng.

Name: Prefect Qian bestows favor on Xie Tianxiang.

¹³⁹ Also God of the Spring, Prefect Qian.

¹⁴⁰ Zhangtai 章台 is the courtesan’s quarters, and this is referring to Liu Yong whose name means willow.

Conclusion:

After a close reading of the play, it is clear that Prefect Qian's authority over the plot illuminates why this play is not included in discussions about women in Guan Hanqing's plays. *Jiu Fengchen*, *Jinxian chi* and *Dou E Yuan* each illustrate Guan Hanqing's ability to value women in a society where they were mistreated and often humiliated.¹⁴¹ Xie Tianxiang is an impressive literary talent and, like other women in Guan Hanqing's plays, she too struggles with issues such as constantly being under the scrutiny of males, but ultimately the resolution of the play does not address all of Xie's concerns. The play is Prefect Qian's story to tell. Because of these unresolved issues and Qian's authority, the play does not lend itself to the same classification as Guan's other plays about women.

Ning Zongyi 宁宗一 offers an argument regarding the play's forced resolution. He suggests that Guan Hanqing was under pressure from other authors to write plays with happy endings in order to please to the audience. The fourth act in most Yuan plays is intent on restoring social and familial harmony, and in this play the same is true; Xie Tianxiang and Liu Yong are unexpectedly reunited. Ning argues, however, that it was not truly a happy ending because it was not a blissful reuniting of lovers who were madly in love, but instead only a pair who wind up together as a result of Prefect Qian's scheming. For Ning, this reveals a

¹⁴¹ See "The Feminist Issues in Yuan Tsa-Chü: Rereading Kuan Han-ch'ing's *Chiu Feng Ch'en*," 305-325 and "Courtesans, Lovers, and Gold Thread Pond in Guan Hanqing's Music Dramas," 111-7.

dark and gloomy side of the society at the time, but only because an outcome as happy as this one was very unlikely for a prostitute.¹⁴²

Although Ning believes Xie is truly happy, I argue instead that her happiness is bittersweet. She is truly grateful for her emancipation from her career as a prostitute, but her relationship with Liu is more complex. There are no stage directions or text to indicate that Xie is either sad or resentful, but because of her initial reaction to seeing Liu, it is clear that she has mixed emotions about seeing him. It is possible that Guan Hanqing was not purposely trying to criticize society, but instead illustrate the reality of the world for women in his time.

Patricia Sieber argues that the second half of the play may have undergone radical editing during the Ming.¹⁴³ Many Yuan dramas did undergo a significant amount of revision before republication and, as a result, the ideology of the Ming was also written into the plays.¹⁴⁴ Yuan writers were disenfranchised and this was reflected in their writing. Because of these circumstances, Sieber argues that Ming editors, specifically Zang Maoxun, would not have agreed with the idea of a woman surpassing men in literary talent or to have the freedom that Xie Tianxiang seemingly had. While it seems likely that this play was edited, it is very difficult to know exactly what was changed. The second half of the play does not contain common features of Ming editing, such as fewer arias or arias performed by actors other than the lead, and the language seems no different from

¹⁴² “Ling yizhong jingshen shijie de toushi,” 86.

¹⁴³ “Rhetoric, Romance, and Intertextuality,” 261.

¹⁴⁴ “Text and Ideology,” 237–83.

that of the first two acts.¹⁴⁵ Also there are no other examples of plays where editors only edited one half of the play. Xie Tianxiang remains superior to Liu in literary talent even at the end of the play, and Liu still acts as a stupid fool. Because of these reasons, it seems Sieber's argument is overly speculative.

Each of the play has a sequence of events to thrill the audience and make the play popular. The linguistic games, Xie's talent, and Liu's stupidity would have both impressed and amuse the audience. Xie's escape from the trap that Qian created as well as the rewriting of a Song dynasty *ci* poem is the highlight of the second act. The audience would have certainly been engrossed in the erotic tension and continued playing with language from act three and the reunion of Liu and Xie as the culmination of Qian's scheme and of the play. It is only the story's emotional content that would have left the audience feeling dissatisfied. Xie Tianxiang sings about her emotions in arias throughout the play and she is the protagonist to whom the audience or reader is drawn closest. But her emotions are not addressed in the plot of the play, and ultimately Prefect Qian emerges as the storyteller and the greatest authority both in the world of the play and its narrative. There is tension both between Xie and Liu and between Xie and Qian that is never confronted. Thus the seemingly abrupt ending complicates the sense of resolution and this is likely the reason that the play survived the stage but has been avoided by scholars.

¹⁴⁵ "Text and Ideology," 251–53.

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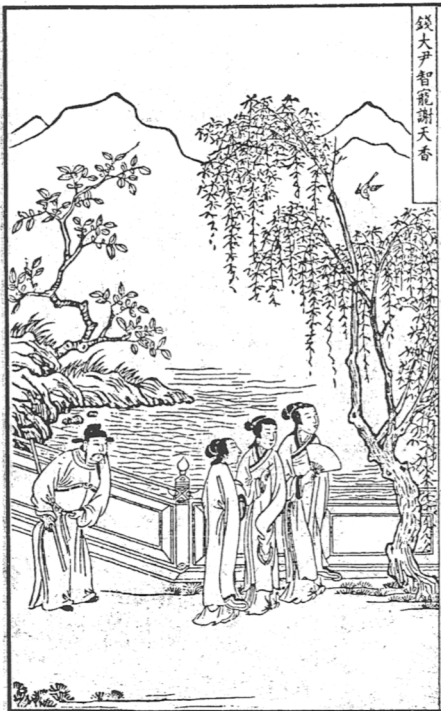
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APPENDIX A

PREFECT QIAN WISELY BESTOWS FAVOR UPON XIE TIANXIANG:

CHINESE TEXT

元曲選插圖



錢大尹智寵謝天香

《謝天香》插圖



做李嚴筆

柳耆卿錯認閨封王

卷之三

外人家善也實濟貧救苦捨了倍多錢今日個着他
後人兒還貴顯

評扮府尹領抵從人上云老夫姓李名志字國用

官拜府尹之職奉聖人的命勸賜勢劍金牌着老
夫通行天下專理街寬負屈不平之事今有金獅
子張員外被賊徒陳虎圖財害命是老夫體察具
實奏過聖人今日親身到此判斷這樁公案聞知
都在金沙院裏可早來到也張義舉香來恁一行
望闕跪者聽老夫下斷詞云奉勅旨採訪風傳為
平民冤枉伸冤張員外合家歡樂李玉娥重整姻
緣將陳虎碎屍萬段梟首級號令街前李府尹今
朝判斷拜皇恩厚地高天

音釋 咬音 恰干 數音 臨半 詰溪 贈傷
按 句切 史 戒切 入聲 估切
去聲 處 兒音 爽音 咳低 鼻希 交切

題目 東嶽廟夫妻占玉琰

正名 相國寺公孫合汗衫

相國寺公孫合汗衫雜劇

錢大尹智寵謝天香雜劇

元大都關漢卿撰

明吳興臧晉叔校

楔子

評扮柳耆卿引正旦謝天香上柳詩云本關平
步上青雲直為紅顏滿此身老天生我多才思風
月場中肯讓入小生姓柳名永字耆卿乃錢塘郡
人也平生以花酒為念好上花臺做子弟不想游
學到此處與上廳行首謝天香作伴小生想來今
年春榜動選場開便了一日又等三年則今日離
了大姐便索上京應舉去大姐小生在此多蒙管
待小生若到京師闕下得了官呵那五花官誥朝
馬香車你便是夫人縣君也正旦云耆卿衣服整
備我都準備停當你休為我慢了功名者淨張千
上云小人張千在這開封府做着個樂探執事我
管的是那僧尼道俗樂人迎新送舊都是小人該
管如今新降來的大尹姓錢一應接官的都去了
止有妓女每不曾去此處有箇行首是謝天香他
使管着這班門戶人須索和他說一聲去來到門
首也謝大姐在家麼正旦見科云哥哥叫做甚麼張
千云大姐來日新官到在準備參官去且云哥哥
這上任的是甚麼官張千云是錢大尹且云真
不是波廝錢大尹麼張千云你休胡說喚大人的
名諱我去也謝大姐明日早來參官下柳云大姐
你歡喜咱錢大尹是我同堂故友明日我同大姐
到相公行分付着看戲你我也去的放心正旦唱
仙呂賞花時則這一曲翻成和淚為最苦偏高離恨

天雙淚落尊前山長水遠愁見履行軒

么篇待得鸞膠斷絃欲盼雕鞍難顧戀謝他新理

任這官員常好是與民方便咱又得個一夜並頭蓮

第一折

評扮錢大尹引張千上詩云寒蛩秋夜忙催織
勝春朝苦勸耕若遇民情官不理須知蠹鳥為何
鳴老夫姓錢名可字可道錢摠人也自中甲第以
來累蒙擢用頗有政聲今謝聖恩加老夫開封府
尹之職老夫自幼修辭滿部軍民識與不識皆呼
為波廝錢大尹暗想老夫當時有一同堂小友姓
柳名永字耆卿論此人學問不在老夫之下相離
數載不知他得志也不曾使老夫懸懸在念今日
升堂坐起早衙張千有該僉押的文書將來我發
落張千云稟的老爺知道還有樂人每未曾參見
哩錢大尹云前官手裏曾有這例麼張千云舊有
此例錢大尹云既是如此着他參見張千云參官
樂人走動正旦同張千上云今日新官上任咱參
見去來你每小心在意者張千云理會的且唱
仙呂點絳脣講論詩詞笑談街市學難似風裏鷓鴣
一世常如此
混江龍我逐日家把您相試乞求的教您做人時但
能勾終朝為父也想着一日為師但有箇敢接我這
上廳行首案情願分付與你這粧演戲臺兒則為四
般兒快了前程事都只為聰明智慧因此上辛苦無
解
宋且云姐姐你看籠兒中鸚鵡念詩哩且云這便

我試再看自春來綠愁紅芳心事事可着卿
怪了老夫去了也老夫姓錢名可字可道這詞上
說可二字明明是錢韻老夫恰纔張千說記的
韻到爛熟他念到事將可二字則推忘了他
若念出可二字來便是誤犯俺大官諱字我扣
廳責他四十這廝倒聰明着哩張千云也頗頗的
錢大尹云我如今喚將謝天香來着他唱這定風

波詞自春來綠愁紅芳心事事可着卿唱出可
可二字來呵便是誤犯俺這大官諱字我扣廳責
他四十我若打了謝氏呵便是典刑過罪人也使
着卿再不好往他家去看卿也俺爲朋友直如此
用心我今升龍早衙在這後堂開坐張千與我題
名喚將謝天香來者張千云理會的說說科云謝

天香在家張千云是謝家門哩做見張科云
原來是張千哥哥叫我做甚張千云謝大姐老
奇題名兒叫你官身哩張千云

南日一枝花往常時喚官身可早着驚舒今日箇叫
祇候喉嚨響原來是你這狠首領我則道是那箇商
前桑恰纔陪着笑臉兒應昂怎說我這查梨相只因
他忒過當據妾身貌陋殘粧誰教他大尹行將過
獎

梁州第七又不是謝天香其中關節這的是柳着卿
酒後疎狂這爺爺記恨無輕放恣當那橫枝羅惹不
許提防想着俺用時不當不作周方兀的喚是麼牽
腸想俺那去了的才郎休休執迷心不許商量他
他本意待做些主張晦晦誰承望惹下風霜這
爺爺行思坐想則待一步兒直到頭廳相背地裏鎖

謝天香(關漢卿)

着眉罵張敞豈知他帶雨耽雲借智量剛理會得雙
理陰陽
張千云大姐你且休過去等我過着你是看咱正
但看科云這爺爺好冷臉子也

隔尾我見他嚴容端坐挨着羅幌可甚麼和氣春風
滿畫堂我最愁是劈先裏通一聲唱這裏但有個女
娘坐場可敢烘散我家私做的賞
張千云大姐你過去把臉面着正且見科云上廳
行首謝天香謹奉錢大尹云則你是柳着卿心上

的謝天香張千云
賀新郎呀想東坡一曲滿庭芳則道一個香靨雕盤
可又早禍從天降當時嘲撥無欄當乞相公寬洪海
量怎不的仔細參詳錢大尹云怎麼在我行打關節
那正且唱小人便關節怎生勾除籍不做娼棄踐
得爲良他則是一時間帶酒開支謊量妾身本開封
府轄下承應董怎做的柳着卿心上謝天香

錢大尹云張千將酒來我吃了一盃敬謝天香唱一
曲調唱正且云告官調錢大尹云商角調正且云
告曲子名錢大尹云定風波正且唱自春來綠愁
愁紅芳心事事張張咳科正且改云已錢大尹
云聰明強毅謂之才正直中和謂之性老夫着他
唱自春來綠愁紅芳心事事可着他若唱出可
可二字來便是誤犯俺大官諱字我和廳責他四
十響的張千咳嗽了一聲他云可二字改爲已
已噴這可字是歌戈韻已字是齊微韻兀那謝天
香我跟前有古本你若是失了韻脚差手平仄亂
了官商押韻責你四十則依着齊微韻唱唱的差

了呵張千雅備下大棒子者正且唱自春來綠
綠愁紅芳心事事已已日上花梢鶯喧柳帶猶壓
綉衾睡煖酥消膩雲昏終日厭厭倦梳洗無奈薄
情一去音書無寄早知恁的悔當初不把羅襪繫
向羅寬收拾蠻腰象管拘束教吟味蠟日相隨莫
拋棄針線拈來共伊對和你免使少年光陰虛費
錢大尹云嗚可知柳着卿愛他哩老夫見了可不
由的也動情張千你近前來你做個落花的媒人
我好生賞你對謝天香說大夫人不與你與你
做個小夫人咱則今日樂籍裏除了名字與他包
鬘團衫油手巾張千你與他說張千見正且云大
姐老爺說大夫人不許你看你做箇小夫人樂籍
裏除了名字與你包鬘團衫油手巾你意下如何
正且唱

牧羊關相公名譽傳天下妾身樂籍在教坊量妾身
則是箇妓女排場相公是當代名儒妾身則好去待
賓客供些優唱妾身是臨路金絲柳相公是架海紫
金梁想你便意錯見心錯愛怎做的門廝敵戶廝當
錢大尹云張千着天香到我宅中去住正且云杭州
柳着卿早則絕念也

二煞則這秀才每活計似魚翻浪大人家前程似
狗探湯則俺這待妾每近幃房止不過供手巾到他
行能勾見些模樣着護衣須是相親傍止不過梳頭
處俺胸前靠着香染幾時得兒女成雙
云指望嫁杭州柳着卿做個自在人如今怎了也
正且唱

煞尾罷罷罷我正是閃了他閃棍着他棒我正是出

八

了筵籃入了筐直着咱在羅網休摘離休指望便似一百尺的石門教我怎生撞便使盡些夜倆乾愁斷我肚腸兒不的箇脫殼金蟬這一箇說

錢大尹云張千送謝天香到私宅中去了也詩云我有心中事未敢分明說雷待柳香謝他自解開

箇

音釋 爲音 死音 禱音 變音 呢胡 喃之 尤音 行音 學音 誑切 精切

第三折

正旦上云妾身謝天香自從進到錢大尹相公宅內又早三年光景將我那歌妓之心消磨盡了也

隨

正官端正好往常我在風塵爲歌妓止不過見了那幾箇是席到家來須做箇自由鬼今日箇打我在無底磨牢籠內

滾繡毬到早起過洗面水到晚來又索鋪牀疊被我伏事的都入羅幃我恰纔舒鋪蓋似孤鬼少不的蹉躓寢睡整三年有名無實本是箇見交風月者卿伴教我做這受恩情大尹妻端的誰知

二旦扮雜貨上云俺二人是錢大尹家侍妾今日無甚事去望姓謝的姐姐走一遭去見旦科云姐

姐俺二人竟來望姐姐二旦云二位姐姐請坐二旦云姐你在宅中三年相公曾親近你麼二旦云

倘秀才俺若是曾宿睡呵則除是天知地知相公那鋪蓋兒知他是橫的豎的比我那初使喚如今越更稀想是我出身處本低微則怕展污了相公貴體

二旦云姐姐雖然如此你也自當親近些二旦云

滾繡毬姐姐每肯教誨怕不是好意爭奈我官人行怎敢便話不投機二旦云姐姐你又無甚麼過失二旦云

你道是無過失學恁的姐姐每會也那不會我則是斟量着緊慢遲疾強何即旆旄煞難捺粉根張敵央及教怎畫眉要識箇高低

二旦云敢問姐姐當日柳七官人樂草集姐收的好麼二旦云

倘秀才便休題花七柳七若聽得這裏是那裏相公的耳朵裏風聞那舊是非休只管這幾句濫黃齏我也記得二旦云姐姐可是那幾句兒說一遍兒我聽得二旦云

窮河西姐姐每誑敢道袖裡藥草集都則是斷送的我一身虧怕待學大曲子我從頭兒唱與你本記的人前會掛口兒從今後再休題二旦云

滾繡毬想前日使象棋說下的則是箇手帕兒賭戲你將我那玉束納藤箱子便不放空回近新來下兩的那一日你輸與我繡鞋兒一對掛口兒再不曾題那裏爲些些賭賽絕了交契小小輪贏醜了面皮道我不精細

二旦云姐姐這色數兒俺輸了也姐姐可該你贏二旦云

倘秀才么四五般着箇撮十二三二越着箇夾七一箇打箇色兒也當得么二三鼠尾賭錢的不伶俐

姐姐你可便再擲二旦云

二旦云等我再擲俺又輸了也可該你擲二旦云

呆骨朵我將這色數兒輕放在般盆內二三五又擲箇鳥十不下錢打賽我可便贏了你兩回這上箇分明見色數兒且休題姐姐我可便做樁兒三箇五你今日這般輸說甚的

錢大尹把住杖暗上二旦云

倘秀才你休要不君子便將鬧起我永世兒不和你厮極場着那臭尸骸一壁穩坐的錢大尹將杖放在右肩上二旦云

醉太平說的我連忙的跪膝不由我淚雨似扒推可又早七雷七力來到我跟底不言語立地我見他出雷出律兩箇都迴避相公將必留不刺拄杖相調戲我不該必丟不搭口內失尊卑這的是天香犯罪錢大尹云天香你怕麼二旦云可知怕哩錢大尹云你要錢麼二旦云可知要錢哩錢大尹云既然要錢或詩或詞作一首來我看我便饒了你二旦云

二旦請題目錢大尹云就把這般盆中色子爲題二旦云詩有了詩云一把低微骨置君掌中料應嫌點泥拋擲在東風錢大尹笑科二旦聖人道在心爲志發言爲詩情動於中而形於言言之不足故嗟嘆之嗟嘆之不足故歌詠之這四句詩中大意道我要他做小夫人到我家中三年也不厭不問豈知我的意思天香我也和了四句詩我念你聽

詩云爲伊通四六聯擊在手巾色綠有深意誰謂
馬牛風天香你在我家三年也你心中休須惱我
揀箇吉日辰辰則在這兩日內立你做箇小夫人
你心下如何正日哩

二欲往常時不曾掛眼都無意今日回心有甚遲相
公的言語更怕不中委付委身教我轉轉猜疑相公
又不是戲笑又不是沉醉又不是昏迷待道是顛狂
睡驪元的不青天這白日

〔大尹〕相公莫不是謬語錢大尹云我又不曾吃酒豈
有謬語我只愛惜你那聰明才學可憐你那煩惱
悲啼〔正旦〕

一欲相公你一言既出如何悔駟馬奔馳不可追委
身出入蘭堂身居畫閣行有香車宿在羅幃相公整
過了三年可便調理無箇消息不想道今朝錯愛我
這匪妓也則是可憐見哭啼啼

〔大尹〕天香後堂中換衣服去〔正旦〕
欲尾則今番文傷傷的施才藝從來個撲款款沒氣
力相公這一句言語可立碑我也不敢十分相信的
許來大官員德來大職位發出言詞試口疾你不委
心爲自家沒見識又不是花街中柳陌裏那一箇微
梢虛霧塌橋渾身我可也認的你

音釋 兩星 聽聽 睡音 實細 的音 失傷
疾精 下聲 施尼 七念 得雷 以切
葉切 日切 十切 移切 投切 移切
推切 流音 異音 息喪 移切
利音 以切 異音 攪切 更切

謝天香(關漢卿)

錢大尹引張千上云老夫錢大尹是也誰想柳青
解一舉狀元及第誇官三日張千安排下迎開你
去衙街裏闌住新狀元柳青鄉道錢府尹請狀元
他若不肯來時你只把馬帶着休放了過去好牙
請他來若來時報的老夫知道下柳騎馬引帳
上詳〔正旦〕日隨銀不足誇今朝放蕩思無涯春風
得意馬蹄疾一日看盡長安花小官柳青自與謝
天香分別之後到於帝都闕下一舉狀元及第今
借宰相頭踏誇官三日我聞知錢大尹娶了謝天
香爲妻錢可道也你情知謝氏是我的心上人我
看你怎麼相見左右的擺開頭踏慢慢的將去
〔張千〕云狀元錢大尹相公有請柳青我不去
〔大尹〕云我好歹請狀元見他相公去來同下錢
大尹上云早聞着張千請柳青去了怎生不見
來張千同柳上云狀元少待我報復去報科云請
的狀元到了也錢大尹云道有請柳青見科錢大
尹云賢弟爭榮有日奮發有時兀的不壯哉將酒
來今日與賢弟作賀肥酒科云賢弟滿飲一盃柳
青念今日如何不飲柳青小官今非昔比官守所
爲念今日如何不飲柳青小官今非昔比官守所
柳功名在念豈敢飲酒錢大尹云若是這般呵功
名成就多時了你端的飲酒敢有些怕我麼張
千近前來做耳語科云只除是酌飲千這理會的
謝夫人相公前聽待客請夫人理〔正旦〕天香謹
想有今日也何哩

薔薇露和就被開那蘇合香油我嫌棘針梢療的來
油臭
醉春風那裏敢深蘸着指頭揉我則索輕將綿絮紐
比俺那門前樂探等着官身我今日箇不醜醜雖不
是宅院裏夫人也是那大人家姬妾強似那上廳的
祇候
〔大尹〕相公前聽待客我且不過去我試望咱哩
石榴花我則道坐着的是那箇俊儒流我這裏猛窺
視細睇原來是三年不肯往杭州閃的我落後有
國難投莫不是將咱故意相迤逗特敬的露醜呈羞
你覷那衣服每各自施忠厚百般兒省的甚綠由
關鴛鴦並無那私事公譽到與俺張筵置酒需云我
這一過去說些甚麼的是哩我則是伴不相聊怎敢
道特來問候〔大尹〕天香與者卿施禮咱
〔大尹〕我這裏施罷禮官人行緊低首錢大尹云天香
近前來些〔正旦〕誰敢道是離了左右我則索侍立
傍邊我則索趨前稜後
〔大尹〕天香與者卿把一盃酒者〔正旦〕理會
的哩
上小樓我待要題箇話頭又不知他可也甚些機較
倒不知只做朦朧爲着東君奉勸金甌他若帶酒是
必休將咱傷德〔大尹〕天香近前來些〔正旦〕這裏可
便不比我做上廳行首
〔大尹〕天香把盃敬狀元滿飲此盃通酒科柳
〔大尹〕我吃不的了也〔正旦〕

中呂粉蝶兒送的那水護衣爲頭先使了熬楚費細
香澡豆煖的那溫泔清手面輕揉打底乾南定粉把

