Playing Roles: Literati, Playwrights, and Female Performers in Yuan Theater

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates how Yuan *zaju* drama reshaped Chinese culture by bridging the gap between an inherently oral tradition of popular performance and the written tradition of literati, when traditional Chinese political, social, cultural structures underwent remarkable transformation under alien rule in the Yuan. It focuses on texts dated from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century by literati writers about playwrights and performers that have been treated by most scholars merely as sources of bio-bibliographical information. I interpret them, however, as cultural artifacts that reveal how Yuan drama caused a shift in the mentality of the elite. My study demonstrates that Yuan drama stimulated literati thought, redefined literati self-identity, and introduced a new significance to the act of writing and the function of text. Moreover, the emergence of a great number of successful female performers challenged the gendered roles of women that had been standardized by the traditional Confucian patriarchal system. This careful uncovering of overlooked materials contributes to a better understanding of the social and cultural world of early modern China.

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INTRODUCTION

The Mongol Yuan dynasty witnessed the golden age of *zaju* drama. Because of the unique political, social, and cultural circumstances of the Yuan, for the first time Confucian literati had an extensive and in-depth contact with popular culture. On the one hand, the abolishment of civil service examination for many decades and Mongol rulers' indifference to the content of literary production put an end to the dominance of orthodox Confucian ideology in the field of literature and intellectual thought; on the other hand, rapid development of commerce within the Mongol empire continued to swell the population in a variety of extremely large cities where urban popular culture flourished.[1] These conditions pushed traditional literati out of their elite roles in the ethical-meritocracy and into more contact with popular culture. As the culmination of urban vernacular performative genres, *zaju* drama was enjoyed by audiences from all walks of life and different social backgrounds, including members of the elite. Many high-ranking government officials and literati scholars were aficionados of *zaju* drama. They patronized *zaju* performers and had intimate interaction with them. Having lost political and social privilege by the cancelation of the civil examination, some literati were forced to participate in the production of *zaju*, either as playwrights or even actors in collaboration with people outside elite culture. Due to its remarkable success in urban centers, *zaju* theater was capable of mobilizing the social and cultural energies that circulated at that time.[2] While previous scholarship primarily focuses on literati

[1] See Patrick Hanan, "The Development of Fiction and Drama," in Raymond Dawson ed., *The Legacy of China*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 115-142.

[2] See Stephen H West, "A Study in Appropriation: Zang Maoxun's Injustice to Dou E," *Journal of the American*

contribution to the development of drama in the Yuan, I propose to study *zaju* drama's impact upon literati and how it facilitated the convergence of popular and elite culture. I am intrigued by this question: how did *zaju* theater interact with, challenge, and modify literati culture? To be more specific, how did *zaju* influence literati thought, conception of self-identity, and their social lives?

To answer this question, this dissertation closely reexamines three sets of texts that are reliably dated to the Yuan, namely, criticism of dramatic performances by Hu Zhiyu 胡祇遹 (1227-1295), *A Register of Ghosts* 錄鬼簿, a bio-bibliography of playwrights of the Yuan by Zhong Sicheng 鐘嗣成 (ca. 1279-1360), and *The Green Bower Collection* 青樓集, a memoir of outstanding female performers, by Xia Tingzhi 夏庭芝 (ca. 1300-1375). Since literati had only begun to take an interest in *zaju* performance in the Yuan, extant texts about *zaju* dated to this period are extremely rare, particularly when compared to the plethora of those dated to the Ming. Born as an oral performative genre, *zaju* had yet to be fully introduced into the textual tradition in the Yuan. These texts, though sporadic and brief, are valuable documents that illustrate the changes *zaju* effected in literati culture. Previous scholarship on *zaju* drama has treated these texts mainly as bio-bibliographic sourcebooks to retrieve piecemeal information about individual performers and playwrights, and to determine the authorship of circulating drama texts. Though important, the bio-bibliographic approach overlooks the more crucial significance of these texts: how they reveal the intellectual and cultural power of *zaju* in Yuan society. Writers of these texts were from three distinct strata of

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Oriental Society 111 (1991): 283-302.

literati: Hu Zhiyu was a prominent scholar-bureaucrat of the early- and mid-Yuan. Serving Emperor Kublai, first in the central government in Dadu and then in many branch provinces, Hu Zhiyu was a representative of northern Han literati who assisted Kublai in building a sinicized Mongol empire. In contrast, Zhong Sicheng was a disfranchised literatus who had given up the hope of entering the bureaucratic system. He earned his living in Hangzhou as an urbanite and commoner, supporting himself by writing *zaju* plays and colloquial songs. Xia Tingzhi was a wealthy literati gentleman who enjoyed a leisured and active social life in Songjiang (near modern Shanghai). He had survived the intense warfare in southeast China during the Yuan-Ming transition and wrote his collection of anecdotes about female *zaju* performers from memory. In spite of their different backgrounds and personal experiences, these three authors were all deeply attracted to *zaju* and to the people involved in *zaju* performance. This fact itself hints at how pervasive *zaju* was in various levels of the literati class. Moreover, each text has a unique standpoint from which to record the interaction of these writers and their friends with *zaju* and the influence *zaju* had on them. What makes their writings so valuable is that they were able to rid themselves of elitist bias against popular entertainment. They were ready to be inspired by *zaju*'s unique way of representing reality and to acknowledge the achievements of *zaju* performers. Their views were unaffected by the lowly status and moral ambiguity of urban theater, and they saw *zaju* performers and playwrights as talented individuals of great accomplishment. Receptive to new ideas and the practices of popular culture, these writers were able to modify both their Confucian beliefs and their sense of literati identity in order to adapt to the changing social and cultural contexts of Yuan society. For these reasons, their writings contain important clues

about how *zaju* theater contributed to the transformation of literati culture and identity. We can also see in their writings how *zaju* facilitated the confluence of elite and popular cultures. Even though they were criticized by conservative-minded Confucians as "deviating" from orthodox Confucian norms, they still, without exception, referred to core Confucian values, such as *ren* 仁 and *yi* 義, as the theoretical bases of their observations. By doing so, they subsumed both elite and popular cultures under the common ideological framework of Confucian ethics. Therefore, a careful reexamination of these texts within the context of contemporary Yuan society is necessary. And my approach is to interpret these writings as invaluable textual relics to uncover the intellectual, cultural, and social significance of *zaju* in the Yuan dynasty.

Chapter One analyzes a series of prefaces and poems dedicated to some of the most famous *zaju* performers of the day, written by Hu Zhiyu. These writings show how *zaju* performance, namely *zaju* performers' role play, inspired Hu to rethink the tension between individual identity and social roles. Instead of individualized characters, Yuan *zaju* was performed through role types (*jiaose* 腳色) which were essentialized social roles. With its limited, but varied array of role types, *zaju* performers were able to use these "types" to portray an encyclopedia of various social and moral types in action. The performance of various role types on the stage provided a foil for people's assumption of social roles in real life. In Hu Zhiyu's view, social roles and responsibilities they entailed were the root of people's suffering, and *zaju* performers' role play offered the audience temporary relief and liberation from their fixed place within the social hierarchy. By watching *zaju* performances, an audience could experience role-play as a game, an

amusing entertainment that allowed them to escape from the alienating strictures of their real social roles and duties. Deeply concerned with the welfare of an individual who constantly suffers from the pressures of his or her social role, Hu Zhiyu held a view of music (*yue* 樂) that deviated from the classical interpretation by incorporating popular music and, more broadly speaking, entertainment under that ethical rubric. He legitimized people's needs for relaxation and pleasure by claiming that the sages created *yue* in order to relieve people's depression caused by social regulation. He erased the line between refined and popular music, thus unifying the two by claiming that both had the same psychological effect, that is, to let people relax and dispel their anxieties.

In the various role types available to them, z*aju* performers could cross boundaries of social class, profession, gender, age, linguistic region, and moral types[3] that society used to hierarchically categorize individual humans. On the stage, *zaju* performers were able to shed their own ignoble social role and assume any role type, including even that of the emperor. Moreover, since skillful performers could capture the essence of any social role they portrayed, the assumed became more convincing and more truthful than the real thing. Their shaman-like power to shift between various roles reveals an infinite potential of the individual that could not be fixed to or defined by any particular social role. *Zaju* performance helped Hu Zhiyu see through the artificial nature of social roles as man-made artifacts contingent upon a series of circumstantial traits, a perceived notion that can be recreated, manipulated, and played with. Hu Zhiyu prioritized individuals over social roles. He was able to rid himself of social and moral bias against entertainers and saw people as individuals instead of mere instruments to

[3] Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書 discusses the hierarchy of moral values in Chinese traditional drama in his "Tragedy in Old Chinese Drama," *T'ien Hsia Monthly* 1, no.1 (1935): 37-45.

maintain social order. In his prefaces, Hu not only praised excellent *zaju* performers' achievements, but also recognized them as embodiment of the virtue of *ren* 仁, the internal driving force toward self-fulfillment that motivated incessant self-improvement. It was the fountainhead of self-renewal that enabled them to transcend the confinement of their social roles. In one preface, Hu encouraged a junior female performer to improve her skills and provided detailed instruction on how to do this in a way that she could fully actualize her inner potential. These skills did not belong specifically to any profession, gender, or social class. Therefore, in Hu Zhiyu's eyes, performers were first and foremost talented persons who could not be totally contained within their actual position within the social hierarchy.

Hu Zhiyu's prefaces indicate that he believed that individuals who possessed the quality of *ren* could infuse meaning and substance into any social role. Social roles devoid of *ren* were nothing more than an empty performance. Any society built upon empty social roles would ultimately lead to chaos and disaster just like the short-lived Latter Tang dynasty that he uses as an example. In an ideal world, *ren* called for a more open and fluid society that would allow individuals sufficient mobility across social class. The paradox of a top-notch actress who could truthfully portray any role type but who was condemned to her actual lowly status highlighted the tension between an individual's talent and the coercive nature of the social hierarchy. Hu Zhiyu's prefaces on accomplished *zaju* performers can also be read as a protest of a reality in which the hierarchical structure of social roles was more of a reflection of power than of personal virtue and ability. These insights lay well beyond the scope of orthodox Confucianism. Hu Zhiyu's poems on *zaju* performance also express ideas about the illusiveness of

reality. Through the essentialized truth of the stage, *zaju* could pierce the veneer of reality, not only to reveal the otherwise obscured truths of mundane life, but also to expose the artificial nature of all social performance. Blurring the line between authenticity and artificiality, Hu thus challenged the assumed validity of the hierarchical social order. *Zaju* offered people a space where they could explore whatever was suppressed in social life and in their selves.

Chapter Two studies Zhong Sicheng's 鐘嗣成 *The Register of Ghosts* (*Lu gui bu* 錄鬼簿) as a faithful record of the mentality and activity of a group of disenfranchised literati who applied their classical textual learning to the production of performative genres as a mode of self-realization in an age of crisis and opportunity. Stratification of the *shi* class had already begun in the Song. In the Yuan, cancellation of civil examination accelerated this process as it cut off the path that led directly from the mastery of classical learning to political and social status. Finding it difficult to maintain their traditional identity, Confucian scholars at the lower stratum of society gave up on the elite way of life to integrate into a more heterogeneous urban community. This process of "diffusion of elite roles"[4] in mass culture created a group of non-conformist literate class and had far-reaching influences in literati culture. Zhong Sicheng wrote *The Register* in order to define the identity of writers who were involved in *zaju* production and claim a permanent place for them in history as "ghosts who will never die" 不死之鬼.

Zhong Sicheng's book reveals two tendencies in a writer caught in transition between elite textual and popular oral traditions. On the one hand he displayed the

[4] I borrow this term from Frederic Mote. See Mote, "Chinese Society under Mongol Rule," in Herbert Franke and Denis C. Twitchett ed., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 616-664.

traditional literati's obsession with the "non-decaying" 不朽, a fame for writing that lived on through history, and he also subscribed to the elite notion of literature as the product of individual authors. On the other hand, he reveals the profound changes popular oral performative literature brought to literati. Zhong's obsession was evident in his effort to render "non-dying" fame to individual playwrights, a task that seemed impossible to achieve given their new circumstances when literati lost their political privilege in the Yuan. Most playwrights were obscure figures either marginalized in or alienated from the traditional career path of government service. They chose to lead a commoner's life in urban centers. Their lowly status nearly guaranteed that they would not be remembered in history. Moreover, these writers' works left no textual trace[5] for them to be remembered by, since *zaju*, as an oral performance genre, did not rely on texts for its transmission. And worse, *zaju* was the product of collaboration between playwrights, performers, troupe managers, and even the audience, and its innate fluidity resisted authorial control or textual stabilization.[6] In order to justify his claim, Zhong invoked the universality of Confucian core values of *ren* 仁 and *yi* 義 to cross the firm boundaries in an ethical hierarchy, thus making Confucian values more open and inclusive. By doing so, he eliminated status, wealth, profession, and family background as irrelevant when judging people's achievement. Embodying the virtues of *ren* and *yi*, they were still, in spite of their obscurity and lowly position, "Confucius' disciples" 聖門之徒. In addition, Zhong

[5] The *Thirty Miscellaneous Comedies [zaju] Printed in the Yuan* 元刊雜劇三十種 was produced for a different purpose to aid audience to understand arias, and palace editions of *zaju* were the result of court censorship. See West and Idema, "Introduction," *The Orphan of Zhao and Other Yuan plays: The Earliest Known Versions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 3-9.

[6] Cf. Wilt Idema, "The Many Shapes of Medieval Chinese Plays: How Texts Are Transformed to Meet the Needs of Actors, Spectators, Censors, and Readers," *Oral Tradition* 20, no. 2 (October, 2005): 320-334.

constructed a pseudo-textual tradition for *zaju*, which provides the bulk of the book's structure and contents. First, Zhong constructed a universal community of playwrights consisting of seven categories including those past and in the present, far and near. A closer look shows these writers actually fell into two major groups: those who were personally known to Zhong Sicheng and those who were not. His record of the first group is based on personal connection and contains first-hand information about his friends in the Hangzhou-based community. As for writers in the second group, Zhong virtually knew nothing about them except for vague hearsay. Yet their inclusion served the purpose of expanding Zhong Sicheng's local community into a larger and imagined community of talented men that extended from the past into the future. Zhong made abundant use of key concepts and terms from Confucian classics in his commentaries to these groups to cement this imagined universal community. Second, Zhong assimilated *zaju* into elite textual tradition by ascribing plays to individual writers, thus grafting the concept of individual authorship that was part of the elite textual tradition onto a popular performative genre. In other words, Zhong used authorial ascription as a strategy to give individuality to writers in an oral tradition.

Zhong's brief but deeply personal and emotive accounts of writers he knew well preserve invaluable information about the changes that writers active in the Hangzhou area underwent as they integrated into urban culture by way of their involvement in *zaju*. First, they expanded the meaning of cultural competency to cover not only classical textual knowledge but also expertise in urban popular entertainments. Distinct from traditional literati, they were more of composer, singer, performer, jester, riddler, or painter, than simply a scholar or poet. Second, their relationship to the act of writing also

changed. It was no longer a means to earn political privilege or to demonstrate moral uprightness; instead, it became a kind of entertainment to amuse people and a way to make money. Their literary talent was in service to the urbanites' need for pleasure rather than serving any ruler or socio-political ideology. Third, thanks to the development of commercial printing, texts of performative genres appeared in print form in the mid-late fourteenth century as a by-product of commercial performance. They were a commodity to recycle the success of live performance for profit in the book market. Because of the high cost to produce printed texts, which not every writer could afford, the relationship between writers and texts was further attenuated. Drama contributed to the rise of a new print culture by providing large amounts of material for the publishers. Last but not least, in terms of their social relations, these writers broke out of the boundary of elite class and established new connections with other social classes in the city. Their otherwise ignored talent was recognized not only by friends who were colleagues but also by the general populace of the urban community. Urban space played a key role as the major backdrop for the social and literary activities that enabled them to achieve self-fulfillment. These changes indicated the emergence of a new branch of "Confucius' disciples" who created a distinct identity all their own.

Chapter Three examines anecdotes about courtesan *zaju* performers of the Yuan that are recorded in *The Green Bower Collection* (*Qinglou ji* 青樓集) by Xia Tingzhi as a way to focus on the subtle influence of female performers on literati culture. Xia Tingzhi attributed the phenomenal success *zaju* theater in the Yuan dynasty mainly to the excellent skills of its performers.[7] He thought so highly of courtesan performers that, in

[7] Xia had planned to write two separate books on *zaju* performers, one devoted to male performers and the other

his view, they embodied the full splendor of an age of continuous peace. This led to a significant change in the perception of female performers' identity in his book: although prostitution was still part of their trade, female performers were first and foremost regarded as talented professionals of urban performative art. Judging by their actual social and moral status, female performers were outcasts victimized by institutionalized government exploitation, by their commodification in the entertainment marketplace, and by the stigmatization of orthodox Confucianism. However, female performers in QLJ demonstrated strong subjective agency and defied objectification either by the hierarchical patriarchal socio-moral order or commercialism as much as they could. Taking full advantage of whatever opportunities the *zaju* stage opened up for them, through their remarkable achievements, they proved themselves talented human beings. In spite of the hostile environment in which they lived, their inner resources enabled them to transcend circumstances and find self-fulfillment. Existing outside normative social structure, female performers subverted stereotypical gendered roles prescribed by the patriarchal Confucian order, and they fully embodied intelligence, feeling, desire, and will power.

The anecdotes collected in QLJ demonstrate that literati were attracted to female performers because of their skill, intelligence, and personality as much as by their physical beauty. Unlike those literati recorded in *The Register*, those in QLJ were high government officials of great power and wealth. Xia Tingzhi did not present them, however, as powerful patrons who simply consumed female talent and bodies. Instead, Xia framed their lives as victims of bureaucratic power and orthodox morality, trapped in

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one to female performers. Only *QLJ* was extant. The other one was either not finished or was lost.

the power network of their social roles. Self-alienation was one important symptom of the deep identity crisis that literati experienced in the Yuan. The processes of alienation are well documented in the narrative anecdotes in QLJ and in the three prefaces to the book. In Xia Tingzhi's own preface he candidly states his admiration of female performers. There are, however, two prefaces that Xia solicited from his friends Zhu Jing 邾經 and Zhang Ze 張澤, perhaps as a way to mitigate his own descriptions of these women by inviting ethical rationalizations of his judgements. From the tone of the two prefaces written by his friends, we can infer that Xia Tingzhi had seriously offended many readers with his book. And, we can understand the invited prefaces as deliberate misinterpretations of Xia's intent as a way to appease a morally stringent readership. The rhetoric they used to vindicate Xia and his book indicates that romantic feeling and desire had no place in orthodox morality. Literati had to distance themselves by seeing their relationship with courtesan performers as bouts of self-indulgence, or hypocritically cover their actions by obscuring desire within a discourse of ethical worth. It was ironic that although it was a fad among literati and bureaucrats to associate with female entertainers, they did not have the courage to deal with it honestly. One could assume the criticism of this book must have been so harsh that Xia Tingzhi was obliged to solicit prefatory camouflage of his book for self-protection. In this sense, Xia was also a victim.

What must have been most offensive to conservative-minded readers of the book is that it records literati in alliance with or accomplices of female performers in crossing status boundaries or even violating state law. Again the talent, feeling, and desire embodied in female performers prompted literati to reflect upon their own identity. They saw a situation that they could acknowledge as a mirror of how their own feeling and

desire were suppressed by orthodox Confucianism. The personal and local perspective represented by female performers introduced a powerful counter-point to challenge the orthodox ideology that monopolized value judgements. Though holding completely different social roles from female performers, literati were faced with the similar task of resisting objectification by bureaucracy or commercialism. In a sense, female performers were portrayed in QLJ as literati's best allies in the fight against self-alienation and moral hypocrisy to reveal their true self. Not only did the text legitimatize talent, feeling, and desire, but it also celebrated subversion of social, moral, and gender boundaries for the sake of personal subjective agency.

A compelling evidence of *zaju* theater's impact on literati culture is the fact that by the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, *zaju* had become a minor literary genre written not only by high-ranking officials but imperial princes of the Ming royal house. Yet in the process, *zaju* was also transformed as it entered the textual world dominated by Confucian ideology. Therefore, this dissertation concludes with a brief discussion of literati appropriation of *zaju* theater so as to offer a more balanced perspective on the issue of *zaju*'s interaction with literati culture. The text under discussion is *A Formulary of Correct Sounds in the Era of Great Harnomy* (*Taihe zhengyin pu* 太和正音譜) attributed to Zhu Quan 朱權 (1378-1448), the seventeenth son of the founding emperor of the Ming, the Prince of Ning 寧. It is not only the earliest formulary of northern-style *zaju* songs, but also is the first book that systematically introduces various aspects of *zaju* as a literary genre. It synthesizes previous literati criticism on *zaju* from the late Yuan, and tries to subsume *zaju* theater within orthodox ideology. Therefore, it represents a milestone in the history of *zaju* criticism and provides the theoretical basis of literati

appropriation of *zaju*.[8] My analysis of the book shows that *zaju* is subsumed into the Confucian "rite and music" (*li yue* 禮樂) system in service of imperial power and orthodox ideology.[9] An elite worldview is imposed upon the *zaju* corpus by means of denomination, categorization, and ranking. To ensure literati's monopolistic control over *zaju* theater, it not only deprives entertainers of the right to write *zaju*, but also dismisses entertainer performers as laymen, doing slave's work in service of literati playwrights. It demonizes female entertainers in particular, implying a deep anxiety and fear about the disturbing force of desire, the potency of which was found in abundance in *zaju* theater.

[8] On the issue of court and literati appropriation of *zaju*, see Stephen H. West, "A Study in Appropriation: Zang Maoxun's Injustice to Dou E," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111 (1991): 283-302; "Text and Ideology: Ming Editors and Northern Drama," in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, 329-73,

[9] About the emperor's direct control of theater in the early Ming, see Wilt L. Idema, "Stage and Court in China: The Case of Hung-wu's Imperial Theatre," *Oriens Extremus* XXIII (1976): 175-90. About the extent of imperial control on theater, see Tian Yuan Tan, "The Sovereign and the Theater: Reconsidering the Impact of Ming Taizu's Prohibitions," 149-69.

CHAPTER ONE

SUBVERTING SOCIAL ROLES:

HU ZHIYU (1227-1295) AND *ZAJU* PERFORMANCE

This chapter investigates how Yuan *zaju* performance provided a new perspective for literati audiences to contemplate the notion of social role. The texts under scrutiny are prefaces and poems dedicated to several top *zaju* performers by Hu Zhiyu, a literati-bureaucrat active in the early and mid-Yuan period. In these writings, Hu Zhiyu comments on these performers' amazing skills in role play. As a simulacrum of social roles in real life, dramatic roles enacted on stage may have immense socio-cultural implications. As Hu Zhiyu observes, *zaju* performers' adept shifting among dramatic roles metaphorically call into question the constraint of social roles constraint on individual human beings who are caught in the complicated network of relationships in mundane life. More significantly, *zaju* performers' ability to use these dramatic roles to create a character that is recognizably real and imbue it with a compelling humanity effectively disputes the authenticity of real social roles. It subverts the absoluteness of social roles and in turn the social hierarchical order built upon them. The amazing skill of accomplished *zaju* performers to capture the essence of various roles in their performance implies the infinite potential of individual beings. In contrast to the didactic view of music (*yue* 樂) in orthodox Confucianism, Hu Zhiyu emphasizes its function of providing the suffering individual a necessary antidote to the harms that daily worry and toil inflict upon mind and body. Drawing an analogy between dramatic role types and social roles, Hu Zhiyu brings new insights into important social and ethical issues from a refreshing

perspective inspired by *zaju* drama. By acknowledging the talent of *zaju* performers—a socially marginalized and morally stigmatized group—Hu demonstrates a belief in human perfectibility unimpeded by the prejudices of social hierarchy. Analysis of Hu Zhiyu's writings on *zaju* performers also demonstrates the capacity of Confucianism to accept the possibility of self-renewal and self-enrichment through assimilating elements from popular culture.

Hu Zhiyu 胡祇遹 was a representative figure in the Han literati-statesmen community in northern China that was active under Kubilai's reign.[10] Hu was well-connected to the Confucian literati serving as Kublai's advisors in his "Golden Queen River"[11] 金蓮川 headquarters. He never took the civil examination and held no *jinshi* degree. Upon the Grand Councilor of the Left in the Secretariat 中書左丞 Zhang Wenqian's 張文謙 (1216—1283) recommendation, Hu Zhiyu was appointed to a number of important official posts, both in the capital Dadu 大都 and in branch provinces including Shanxi 山西, Hubei 湖北, Shandong 山东, and Zhejiang 浙江. An intellectual trend of pragmatism had prevailed since the Jin dynasty moved its capital to Kaifeng. Zhao Bingwen 趙秉文 (1159-1232) and Xu Heng 許衡 (1209-1281) were two great Confucian scholars of the Jin-Yuan period who influenced Hu Zhiyu.[12] The cultural

[10] A comprehensive study of Hu Zhiyu can be found in Zhang Yan 張艷, *Hu Zhiyu wenxue yanjiu* 胡祇遹文學研究(PhD Dissertation, Nankai University, 2013). Another helpful work is Han Bo 韓波, *Hu Zhiyu yanjiu* 胡祇遹研究 (PhD Dissertation, Heilongjiang daxue, 2016).

[11] English name for the plant *trollius chinensis*, known in Chinese as *jinlian* 金蓮. About literati in Kublai's "Golden Queen River" headquarters, see Ren Hongmin 任紅敏, *Jinlianchuan fanfu wenren qunti zhi wenxue yanjiu* 金蓮川藩府文人群體之文學研究 (PhD Dissertation, Nankai University, 2010).

[12] Some scholars think that new development of *lixue* 理學 in Yuan dynasty played a positive role to boost the development of popular *zaju* performance. See Jiao, Fumin 焦福民 and Xu Zhengui 徐振貴, "Yuandai lixue yingxiang Yuandai xiqu piping lunlue" 元代理學影響元代戲曲批評論略, *Yishu baijia* 藝術百家 112.1 (2010): 103 – 6. An

climates of the regions where he grew up and where he served also left a deep impact on Hu Zhiyu. These were often regional centers like Zhangde 彰德, Dadu 大都, and Hangzhou 杭州 where popular performative arts flourished.[13] Hu Zhiyu interacted with people from all walks of life, and the pragmatism he exercised in central and local government helped him transcend the limits of Confucian orthodox ideology.[14] Hu Zhiyu inherited and combined the intellectual, cultural and literary legacies of northern China under alien rulers of the Khitan Liao, Jurchen Jin, down to Mongol Yuan dynasties.[15]

Unlike Hu Zhiyu, most of his contemporaries were reluctant to openly admit any serious interest in popular performance genres despite the fact that they were deeply attracted to these genres. In spite of the frequent social interaction of literati and entertainers, many were not as ready as Hu Zhiyu to openly lend their cultural and social authority to entertainers. Even when they did, they only wrote about entertainers in a sensual, romantic, or frivolous way.[16] Their discretion was well founded, because even after five hundred years, Hu Zhiyu was still criticized by editors of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 for his writings on entertainers:

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important evidence Jiao and Xu give is that the four major regional center of *zaju* activity—Dadu, Zhending, Dongping and Pingyang were also the centers of *lixue* development in northern China.

[13] See Zhang Yan, "Hu Zhiyu xiqu lilun xingcheng de diyu he shehui huanjing" 胡祇遹戲曲理論形成的地域和社會環境, *Hu Zhiyu wenxue yanjiu*, 59-62.

[14] According to the recipients of Hu Zhiyu's presented poems, prefaces, and inscriptions, he had a broad social network that included people from lowly social positions such as educational officials, clerks and entertainers. See Zhang, 78-93; 172-74; 179-184.

[15] Zhang, 5.

[16] For example, Hu Zhiyu's friend Wang Yun 王惲 (1227-1304) refused Cao Jinxiu's 曹錦秀 request for a preface to her on the pretext that he was old and without desire. He told her to ask young Hanlin academicians rich in romantic feelings instead to do that for her. In contrast, Hu's another friend Xu Yan 徐琰(1220-1301) wrote frivolous and bawdy songs about female entertainers in his "Ten Arias of Green Bower" 青樓十詠.

> [He even went so far as to write] such pieces as “Preface to A Poem Scroll to Ms. Huang,” “Preface to Poems to Zhao Wenyi, An Entertainer,” “Preface Presented to Ms. Song,” and so on. For a man whose job was to elucidate Daoxue, to compose words of close intimacy with entertainers is a blemish in an otherwise white jade disc. 甚至如黃氏詩卷序、優伶趙文益詩序、贈宋氏序諸篇。以闡明道學之人，作媟狎倡優之語，其為白璧之瑕。[17]

Siku editors were correct in their judgement of Hu Zhiyu’s intellectual bent to be “deep and substantive” 篤實, but their harsh criticism about his writings on entertainers as marks of moral blemish shows that their pompous “neo-Confucian” conservatism prevented them from recognizing the underlying intent of these texts. Close analysis of Hu’s writings on performance shows they are actually deeply couched in the terminology of Confucian *daoxue* discourse that he is supposed to “elucidate” in his discussion of entertainers. His commendation of excellent performers served as points of departure for intellectual reflection and social criticism. Hu Zhiyu’s central concern is about the tension between individuals and their social roles. *Zaju* performers’ role play lead Hu Zhiyu to a deeper insight into this issue.

The Preface Presented to Ms. Song 贈宋氏序

[17] See Yongrong 永瑢 (1744-1790) et al., ed., *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1933), 3479.

By way of praising a female performer's excellent skills, Hu Zhiyu draws attention to a fundamental paradox of human beings in this preface in that they are at the same time an individual and a social being. The focus is on the coercive nature of the society that enmeshes each individual in a web of social relationships where they are consumed and strangled by the various duties entailed by these relationships. The Confucian social and ethical order allotted each individual a particular place that designated a series of duties. As necessary as it was to maintain social order and stability, the strict hierarchies of Confucianism, if not perfectly executed, were fundamentally inhumane. For the sake of an individual's well-being, Hu Zhiyu believes that entertainment is important to ease the pains they suffer from the responsibilities of their social roles. And, in this sense, thanks to its system of role types z*aju* drama was particularly effective.

> Among the hundred things, nothing is more sentient, nothing more valued than humans. This may be so, but nothing is more sad or more miserable than humans. They rise at cockcrow and go to sleep at midnight, and in the twenty-four hours of the day, they are tangled in vexatious thoughts. They exert muscle and bone, and weary their thoughts and will. Outside of their own physical needs, they must serve parents above and nurture wife and children below; they have to mark auspicious and inauspicious events and offer condolences and congratulations in their neighborhood or village; they have to pay taxes and respond to corvée summons from government office and frontier guard posts. Of ten households, nine are in

want. 百物之中，莫靈莫貴於人，然莫愁苦於人。鷄鳴而興，夜分而寐，十二時中，紛紛擾擾。役筋骸，勞志慮，口體之外，仰事俯畜，吉凶慶弔乎鄉黨閭里，輸稅應役於官府邊戍，十室而九不足。[18]

Hu points to an existential paradox for human beings, at the root of which is the fact that every individual is first a social being with a series of complicated social roles to play. These roles stipulate one's status, prerogative, and responsibilities within the family, the local community, and the state. Other living things only need to worry about how to satisfy the needs of "mouth and stomach" (*kouti* 口體) for basic survival. For humans, concern over needs beyond "mouth and stomach" is why they are superior to others as well as why they are more miserable. In addition to satisfying his personal needs, an individual has to fulfill his duty as a son by serving his parents and, when grown up, his duty as a husband and father by providing for his wife and children (*yangshi fuxu* 仰事俯畜). Moreover, he has to sustain relationships with his relatives and neighbors by conducting proper rituals for weddings, funerals, and other communal rites (*ji xiong qing diao* 吉凶慶弔). The most demanding task of all is the need to pay taxes and perform corvée labor (*shushui yingyi* 輸稅應役), a demand that is so heavy and grueling that "of ten households nine are in want" (*shishi er jiu buzu* 十室而九不足). A person's responsibilities are fulfilled only at his own expense:

Eyebrows wrinkled, heart knotted, depressed and unable to relax, most

[18] Hu Zhiyu 胡祇遹, "Zeng Song shi xu" 贈宋氏序, *Zishan daquanji* 紫山大全集 8.56a, in Ji Yun et al., eds. *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書.

> expressions of the seven emotions are out of synchronicity and perversely off course. Let him have three or four hours to relax on pillow and mat, then dreams frighten him in his sleep and there he finds no peace either. Morning, evening, day and night, up and about or at rest in bed, his single mind and hundred bones seldom find peaceful harmony. This is why he moans without a real ailment and declines before he is fifty. 眉顰心結，鬱抑而不得舒，七情之發，不中節而乖戾者，又十常八九。得一二時安身於枕席，而夢寐驚惶，亦不少安。朝夕晝夜，起居寤寐，一心百骸常不得其和平，所以無疾而呻吟，未半百而衰。[19]

This ceaseless labor and toil as well as the crushing pressure of social responsibilities are, in Hu Zhiyu's view, the source of man's sorrow and misery. Ethical, social, and legal demands put so much pressure on any person that he or she feels such intense physical, mental, and emotional pain that one finds no rest or peace, day or night, awake or asleep. These pressures are more harmful to the individual's wellbeing than even illness and old age. They cause one to "moan and groan even when plagued by no disease and to wither even before reaching fifty." So vulnerable is the individual that he can be easily strangled by the "dusty web" and crushed under "worldly cares" from whence there is no escape. This suffering makes him "the most sorrowful and miserable" of all living things.

Of course, one cannot simply throw social roles away or cut off one's ties to other people. In Confucianism, social relationship lies at the foundation of the four cardinal virtues that separate human from beasts, as Mengzi said,

[19] *Zishan daquanji* 8.56a-b.

From this we can see that if one is without the feeling of compassion, one is not human. If one is without the feeling of disdain, one is not human. If one is without the feeling of deference, one is not human. If one is without the feeling of approval and disapproval, one is not human. The feeling of compassion is the sprout of benevolence. The feeling of disdain is the sprout of righteousness. The feeling of deference is the sprout of propriety. The feeling of approval and disapproval is the sprout of wisdom.[20] 由是觀之，無惻隱之心，非人也；無羞惡之心，非人也；無辭讓之心，非人也；無是非之心，非人也。惻隱之心，仁之端也；羞惡之心，義之端也；辭讓之心，禮之端也；是非之心，智之端也。[21]

These feelings of compassion, disdain, deference, approval and disapproval, that is, *ren* 仁, *yi* 義, *li* 禮, and *zhi* 智, are what distinguish human beings from other living things, and make them the most spiritual and most noble of all. But, they are virtues to be perfected only through human interaction. As a result, humans are caught in an existential dilemma: they are both elevated and doomed by what culture mandates as the very defining characteristic of human beings—their roles and obligations in the society. Moreover, social roles are the building blocks of social hierarchies. Chaos, of course, would come from a person's rejection of social roles or hierarchies, because, as oppressive as they are, they help keep human society in order. Maintenance of the hierarchical order that is authorized in the Confucian classics was an important goal for

[20] *Mengzi* 2A6.4, translated by Bryan W. Van Norden. See Norden trans., *Mengzi: with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008), 46.

[21] Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849) and Lu Xuanxun 盧宣旬 comp., *Chongkan Song ben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji* 重刊宋本十三經注疏附校勘記 (Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965), 65b.

Confucian literati who saw bringing order to the world (*jingshi* 經世) as their primary responsibility. Hu Zhiyu is honest enough to expose the gloomy side of social order and its potential to strangle or alienate the individual. He is concerned about the welfare of the individual and full of compassion for the individual yearning for relief and comfort from the excruciating pressure of his or her social roles.

> At precisely these times, if there is nothing to untie the web of the dusty world, to dissolve the cares of the world, to lead to happiness and pleasure, to contentment and freedom, or to lead little by little to joy and a sense of fullness in order to completely dispel suffering, then how hard would it be for a person to be "human"! This is the reason why the sage created music to relieve men's depression, and why musicians and entertainers are also to be cherished. 於斯時也，不有解塵網、消世慮、熙熙皞皞、暢然怡然，少導歡適者一去其苦，則亦難乎其為人矣！此聖人所以作樂以宣其抑鬱，樂工伶人之亦可愛也。[22]

Hu Zhiyu believes one can find relief from the responsibilities of social roles in music (*yue* 樂), or more broadly speaking, in entertainment. In Hu Zhiyu's opinion, entertainment functions to alleviate the tension between the individual psyche and social expectation. Departing from the canonical theory of entertainment expressed in the *Book of Music* 樂記, Hu Zhiyu thinks that the sages created music to ease the pain and suffering of one's social duties rather than as a means to reinforce social regulation of the

[22] *Zishan daquanji* 8.56b.

individual.[23] If the social institutions of ethics, rites, and laws were created by the sages for the survival of human society as a whole, then musicians and entertainers were also the sages' making to ensure the survival of the individual subject to the pressures and anxieties of life.

> The sounds of music are interwoven with politics, and likewise the performances of entertainers change with the trends of the times. In recent times, outside of the short farcical plays of the Palace Entertainment Bureau, it has transformed into variety plays. And why "variety"? Above it is the successes and faults of the policies of the ruler and his ministers at court, below it is about the ethical quality of the relationships between spouses, brothers, and fathers and sons in small villages and bustling markets. It can even reach to the human feelings and principles of business found among physicians and apothecaries, diviners and prognosticators, Buddhists and Daoists, and merchants and traders. The customs and languages of different quadrants and foreign areas are not the same, but in every single action or thing this actress gets the essence of it and exhausts its external representation. That one single woman can assemble unto herself the actions of what ten thousand others do truly delights the eyes and ears, and relaxes the heart and mind. How can former ancient female performance of dancing and singing be compared with it? Who can fully embody this *yi*? I see it in Ms. Song.
> 樂音與政通，而伎劇亦隨時所尚而變。近代教坊院本之外，再變而為雜劇。

[23] The canonical view holds that former kings created music to teach people ethical rules and to regulate their behaviors 是故先王之制禮樂也，……將以教民平好惡而反人道之正也；是故先王之制禮樂人為之節. See "Yue ji" 樂記, in *Chongkan Song ben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji*, 665b-667a.

既謂之雜，上則朝廷君臣政治之得失，下則閭里市井、父子兄弟夫婦朋友之厚薄，以至醫藥卜筮、釋道商賈之人情物理，殊方異域風俗語言之不同，無一物不得其情，不窮其態，以一女子而兼萬人之所為，尤可以悅耳目而舒心思. 豈前古女樂之所擬倫也！全此義者吾于宋氏見之矣。[24]

Following the classical view of music in the "Great Preface" to *Shijing* that it is related to political governance 樂音與政通, Hu Zhiyu introduces the concept of "the trends of times" (*shishang* 時尚) and states that "entertainers' performances" must change as trends shift. Adopting a dynamic and evolutionary view, Hu Zhiyu regards *zaju* drama as the most current form of performance art. Even though the form changes as time goes by, the aim of relieving people's depression and the anxieties remains the same. There is no absolute, timeless form of entertainment. This easily crosses the fine line between refined and vernacular entertainment, unifying the two within the realm of relaxation and pleasure. More than any previous form of entertainment, *zaju* drama is particularly effective for this purpose thanks to its unique system of role types (*jiaose* 腳色).

Instead of individualized characters Yuan *zaju* drama used role types, a system developed out of earlier forms of performative genres such as Song dynasty "variety show" 宋雜劇 and Jin dynasty "performers' texts" 金院本. It allowed performers to enact a specific category of dramatic personae, providing an infinite space to explore both performative skill and social meaning. The female role type was called a *dan* 旦, and the

[24] *Zishan daquanji* 8.56b-57a.

male, *mo* 末. The other major role type was the *jing* 淨, or "comic." Several other role types defined a social role by age, status, occupation, or position. For example, a child was played by the role type of *lai'er* 徠兒 according to the age, emperor by the role type of *jiatou* 駕頭 and official by the role type of *gu* 孤 according to position.[25] The role-type system is the most fundamental feature of *zaju* and Chinese drama in general. Aimed at being realistic and symbolic at the same time, the role-type system actually requires a lot of talent from performers. According to Xie Yufeng, their task is two-fold: to play a character and a type at the same time. The individual character enacted by performers is "not like" 不似 what that character should be in real life, so it is symbolic; yet the type acted out by performer can always "seem like" 似, so it is also realistic or mimetic.[26]

Successful demonstration of the social and moral type of a dramatic character was contingent upon the skills and talent of the performer, because only through the performer's skillful enactment can the dramatic character and role type be brought to life. According to Zeng Yongyi's definition of role types (*jiaose* 腳色), it is the seamless integration of the dramatic character's social type and moral character into the performer's acting skills:

> "Role type" (*jiaose* 腳色) is kind of a symbol in Chinese traditional drama, and it can be revealed only through the performer's enactment of the dramatic

[25] For a detailed explanation of the role type system, see Stephen H. West and Wilt Idema, "Introduction," *Monks, Bandits, Lovers and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2010), xvii-xviii.

[26] See Xie Yufeng 解玉峰, "Jiaose zhi zuowei Zhongguo xiju jiegou tizhi de genbenxing yiyi" 腳色制作為中國戲劇結構體制的根本性意義, *Wenyi yanjiu* 文藝研究 5 (2006): 86-94.

> character. For the dramatic character, which is performed on stage, it symbolizes one's [social] type and [moral] character; for the performer herself, it indicates her artistic talent and position in his troupe. Therefore, it is a perfunctory simplification to explain "role type" merely in terms of "the performer." 中國古典戲劇的"腳色"只是一種符號，必須通過演員對於劇中人物的扮飾才能顯現出來。它對於劇中人物來說，是象徵其所具備的類型和性質；對於演員來說，是說明其所應具備的藝術造詣和在劇團中的地位。所以光以"演員"釋"腳色"，難免粗疏之譏。[27]

Hu Zhiyu's explanation of the word *za* 雜, meaning literally "variety," highlights two features of *zaju* that make it the best distraction. First of all, its all-inclusiveness of every social type of people and every aspect of social life far and near, makes the stage an encyclopedia (*leishu* 類書) of various social and moral types in action. Each role type is performed with such subtle truthfulness that it captures the essence of the social role it portrays, an essence often obscured in reality. Just like an encyclopedia that collects and organizes knowledge, *zaju* is an encyclopedia of social roles and the stage is a microcosmic panorama of social life in which performers reenact the world. Moral judgements, human feelings, principles of business, customs and languages are minutely and truthfully demonstrated in the context of dramatic reenactment of the complicated network of human relationships on stage. Secondly, *zaju*'s "role type" system allows one

[27] Zeng Yongyi 曾永義, "Zhongguo gudian xiju jiaose gaishuo" 中國古典戲劇腳色概說, *Zeng Yongyi xueshu lunwen zixuanji* vol. 2 曾永義學術論文自選集乙編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 116.

single female performer to enact the complex activities of countless people both social and otherwise, expanding from “one” to “a myriad.” By her role play on the stage, this “one single woman” shows the audience that she is able to move seamlessly through all role types. Thereby, the root of suffering—social roles and responsibilities involved in complicated relationships—is externalized, objectified, and toyed with by the female performer. It provides the audience a vicarious experience and subtly questions what makes social roles real. *Zaju,* by “pleasing the audience’s ears and eyes, and relieving their minds and thoughts,” has the potential to liberate them from “worldly concerns” 世慮 and the “dusty networks” 塵網 of the world. And this is done as a play, a fictional re-enactment of the social world. *Zaju*, as the most current and most popular form of entertainment (*yue* 樂), offers a microcosmic representation of social relationships through a single female performer. By watching *zaju* performance, the audience can see through roles as a game, “a play,” temporarily to fend off the alienating control of real roles and duties.

The Preface to the Poem Scroll for Ms. Zhu 朱氏詩卷序

The “Preface Presented to Ms. Song” was about how the suffering individual from the pressure of social roles obtains temporary relaxation and relief by watching *zaju*. Then in the “Preface to the Poem Scroll for Ms. Zhu,” another well-known actress “Pearl Curtain Beauty” 珠簾秀 Zhulian xiu, Hu Zhiyu further demonstrates an individual’s

infinite versatility and reveals the artificial nature of social roles by observing the actress's skillful shifting through and construction of various types of roles. With her superb talent, Zhu manages to assume different role types with convincing truthfulness on the stage. Hu Zhiyu marvels at her uncanny performance of various role types:

> If one works hard to study one's profession, one can become seasoned in one's art, yet still cannot be called "skillful." Yet as a young woman, [Zhu] gathers the multitude of skills simultaneously together. 學業專攻積久，而能老於一藝，尚莫能精。以一女子，衆藝兼并。
>
> She puts on a tall cap and becomes a Daoist; she makes her pate bare and becomes a Buddhist monk; she clothes herself in a loose gown, and becomes a Confucian scholar; she dons a warrior's hat, and becomes a soldier. Wearing short-sleeved garments, then she scurries about managing the affairs [of the ancestral temple]; holding a shark tablet in hand, she is a noble minister [standing in the imperial court]. She becomes a prognosticator and explains disasters and fortunes; becomes a doctor and determines death and life. 危冠而道，圓顱而僧，褒衣而儒，武弁而兵。短袂則駿奔走，魚笏則貴公卿；卜言禍福，醫決死生。
>
> As a mother, she is kind and worthy; as a wife, she is filial and chaste. A matchmaker, she is assured and eloquent; a maiden within the boudoir, she is gentle and graceful. 為母則慈賢，為婦則孝貞。媒妁則雍容巧辨，閨門則旖旎娉婷。
>
> [She can play any of] nine tribes of barbarians or eight clans of savages or any of the hundreds of gods and myriad spirits, [embody the] local custom of any region;

[imitate] the tones and sounds of various circuits, [recreate the] traces of deeds from antiquity, and [represent the] canonical punishments of consecutive dynasties. 九夷八蠻，百神萬靈，五方之風俗，諸路之音聲，往古之事迹，歷代之典刑。

[She can be a] lower clerk who is corrupt and muddle-headed or a higher official is impartial and upright. 下吏汚濁，官長公清。

As for commerce, [she is] a traveling merchant or a fix-placed trader; laboring her four limbs, [she can be] a weaving woman or a plowing man. 談百貨則行商坐賈，勤四體則女織男耕；

Within the family, [she is] a compassionate father or a filial son; standing in the court, [she is] a sagely emperor or a wise minister. 居家則父子慈孝，立朝則君臣聖明。

At splendid banquet of farewell parties, or in the quiet courtyard in a branch villa, [she] plays the *se*-zither of spring winds and plucks the *zheng*-zither of bright moons. 離筵綺席，別院閒庭，鼓春風之瑟，弄明月之箏；

If she must be simple and plain, she wears a thorn hairpin and a coarse cloth skirt; [if she portrays someone who] is wealthy and gorgeous, then there will be a golden chamber and a silver screen. 寒素則荊釵裙布，富艷則金屋銀屏。[28]

Probably out of his fascination at the mercurial nature of her role play on the stage, Hu Zhiyu refers to Ms. Zhu simply as “a young woman” 一女子, in deliberate avoidance of labelling her by her lowly profession of an entertainer. She skillfully shifted from one

[28] *Zishan daquanji* 8.9a-b.

role type to another across the boundaries of social class, occupation, age, gender, and ethnicity—as if freed from the constraints of any social boundaries. Her role play challenged the notion of social type as a stable or intrinsic category of being. For her, social roles were masks that could be put on or taken off. This impression it left in the audience's mind produced a sense of liberation from the tyranny and imprisonment of their own social place. Now, in traditional Chinese society, the structure and constituents of social groups were fairly stable. People were classified into different categories in a hierarchical system according to occupation, education, place of birth, gender, and rank. The government stipulated sumptuary laws, in which colors and texture of clothing, types of carriages drawn by horses or mules, and housing were stipulated by ritual order, to make the distinction even more ingrained in people's mind. Therefore, most people were fixed in their roles with a prescribed set of looks, manners, and moral qualities, tied to the obligations these roles required of them, and never had the chance to make any significant change to their place except under extraordinary circumstances. It is against this real and symbolic context that the apparent "fickleness" of Ms. Zhu's role playing was so amazing and delectable. What seemed to be permanently unalterable for most people—boundaries that divided people into different categories in which they were fixed throughout their life—was effortlessly crossed by the actress as she assumed roles on the stage with freedom and ease. It made her almost superhuman to the audience. According to a contemporary biographical account of famous courtesan-performers, titled *Green Bower Collection* (*Qinglou ji* 青樓集), Ms. Zhu was nicknamed Zhu *niangniang* 朱娘娘,[29] a designation usually used to refer to a goddess of a higher order of being who had

[29] Xia Tingzhi 夏庭芝, *Qinglou ji* 青樓集, *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jichen* vol. 2, 中國古典戲曲論著集成

power and freedom beyond the reach of ordinary human beings. Her skills in role construction and transformation into different types of people made her more like a goddess who *played with* social roles than an ordinary person who was *bound by* them.

What makes it possible for her to do that is, as Hu Zhiyu's description of her performance shows, that role play is essentially a matter of perception. As a theatrical norm, acceptance of the performer's constructed role was preconditioned by the audience's tacit agreement to suspend their disbelief when watching the performance. However, with such an excellent performer as Zhu Lianxiu, the audience was willing to expand that suspension of disbelief even after her performance was over. As a result, Zhu's constructed roles on stage encroached upon her social role off stage. Her constructed roles were so convincing that people were induced—including Hu Zhiyu—to believe her to possess the inherent qualities pertaining to each role type. Assuming these roles she could shed, momentarily, the actual role society imposed upon her—a lowly female entertainer. Needless to say, it was through reception—the perception and judgement of Hu Zhiyu and the audience that Ms. Zhu was granted those skills, not that she necessarily mastered them *for real*. Off stage, she was unlikely to be able to perform any Daoist or Buddhist ritual, nor able to diagnose and cure a patient or to pronounce judgements as an official. Even less likely could she have possessed the skills in needle work and be a "chaste" wife. Therefore, the actress's "possession of multiple skills" 眾藝兼併 was a *perceived* rather than an *empirical* truth. Yet interestingly, Hu Zhiyu was still willing to believe that she *was* what she *performed*, so that she *possessed* the skill of any role she assumed. In other words, for Hu Zhiyu, Zhu's constructed role overrode her

第二冊 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1959), 19.

social role, and for the moment the perceived truth of the stage she was acting superseded the empirical truth of her mundane social life. The audience's willingness to prioritize her artificial role over her social role reflects a growing interest in the "aesthetics of artificiality" in Chinese urban culture since Song period which was most evident in the popularity of mock food and drama.[30] Knowing the fact that she was *not* what she performed, the audience could enjoy the staged conflict of the real and the assumed. This made her enactment of artificial roles even more appealing and enjoyable, because the audience was willing to accept her as what she was *not*. Therefore, audience's collaboration either wittingly or not was important to the actress's success as well.

Very helpfully, these passages also contain important details about the devices that Zhu aptly employed to construct her roles on stage so as to manipulate the audience's perception. They include special garments, hairstyles, and tools unique to particular social groups; stocks of terms and topics uttered in particular trades; distinct ways of behavior of certain occupational or age groups; enacting the social role of the place one belonged to; and, last but not least, the moral character prescribed for any particular gender, age, or class groups. In Hu's description, Zhu Lianxiu's brilliant employment of these devices in role construction reached such a level that, in the eyes of the audience, she merged with the role she constructed. In fact, the devices Zhu used are the same with those employed in the actual construction of social roles, i.e., stereotypical labels that categorize different types of people in social life. Thus what we learn from her role play on the stage can be applied to social roles in real life as well. A careful examination of the devices Zhu employed reveals two essential features of social roles. First, rather than an

[30] Cf. Stephen West, "Playing with Food: Food, and the Aesthetics of Artificiality in the Sung and Yuan," *HJAS* 57.1 (1997): 67-106.

absolute and unitary entity, the role is contingent upon a series of circumstantial traits that include clothing, hairstyle, accent, manners, and so on. Second, it is largely a notion of the perception of others, and thus can be constructed and manipulated at will if one knows how. Since social roles are essentially not different from *zaju*'s role types, both are artifacts that can be recreated and manipulated under any given condition.

A performance art distinguished by its dazzling array of role types and stock dramatic personae, *zaju* drama derives its primary force just from *zaju* performer's successful representation of the essence of each role type she enacts. Watching *zaju* performance offers people an opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the truth of social roles in real life.

> Of the nine professions and hundred arts she gathers all of the beauty and all of the flower. Outwardly, she gives full expression to their appearances; inwardly, she thoroughly probes their feelings. Her mind-heart has obtained *samadhi*, and she has naturally become seasoned perfection. She both reveals the way a single generation has been brought up and brings delight to a hundred years of ascending peace. 九流百伎，衆美羣英。外則曲盡其態，內則詳悉其情。心得三昧，天然老成。見一時之教養，樂百年之昇平。[31]

Constructed role types in *zaju* theater have the potential to convey a higher level of truth about reality than the actual social roles, for the reason that they embody the creative

[31] *Zishan daquanji* 8.10a.

imagination and skillfulness of performers. Stephen West remarks on Chinese theater that "[It], like other forms of Chinese literature (biography for example), relies on classified moral or social types. … The authenticity that Chinese theater strives for is one that is essentialized in form and action, yet one retaining a generalized, recognizable relationship to the more random and chaotic experiences that mark real life."[32] Hu Zhiyu would agree, because he sees in Ms. Zhu's performance a distilled truth that transcends ordinary perception and experience. Ms. Zhu was able to assemble both external form (*tai* 態) and internal feeling (*qing* 情) of the social roles people played in real life and employ them in her performance to construct a stage character so truthful and convincing that it eclipsed even its archetypal source. Her penetrating insight seemed as uncanny as the arcane wisdom of *samadhi,* and made her far more mature than her age. Artificial roles are perceived to be more truthful than real social roles. If the "false" monk enacted by Zhu on stage demonstrated more of the essence of "monkhood" than a "real" monk in everyday life, a clear-cut line between authenticity (*zhen* 真) and artificiality (*jia* 假) would become too ambiguous and complicated even to retain any meaning. Even if tested by functional standards, there is no guarantee that every socially recognized monk would be competent enough to meet the standards of "monkhood" and abide by all of the required regulations to prove that he embodies more truth of "monkhood" than the one presented on stage. After all, a monk in real life is too much a flesh-and-blood person to compare with a dramatic role that is carefully distilled and performed on stage. When *performing* appears more truthful than *being*, it problematizes the absoluteness of the actual and threatens to diminish its inherent qualities as simply a meaningless social

[32] West, "Playing with Food: Food, and the Aesthetics of Artificiality in the Sung and Yuan,"105.

performance, thereby revealing the artificiality of all roles. When the “unreal” became more convincing than the “real,” validity of the “real” inevitably raises a second thought in people’s mind.

Zhu Lianxiu obtained the essence of each role she played so that her rendition demonstrated a unity of outer appearance and inner feelings. It shows a mind in perfect harmony with nature whereby she reached a moment of perfection so that she could move freely in various roles. In Hu Zhiyu’s words, she embodied the cultivation of an entire generation and the peace of a hundred years. Zhu Lianxiu’s marvelous ability to shift through roles provoked the audience to reflect upon the artificiality of all social roles, which inevitably led to this crucial question: if social roles can be constructed and artificial, what, then, is the essence that makes social roles substantive? Therefore, beneath Hu Zhiyu’s interest in *zaju* and his admiration of female *zaju* performer’s skills in role play, lies a deep concern with the very essence of social roles that makes them authentic and meaningful. Confucius criticized petty “village worthies” 鄉原 to be “thieves of virtue” 德之賊 because their faultless performance of their social roles lacked genuine virtue. They are a perfect contrast to Zhu Lianxiu. The answer to the above question can be found in Mengzi’s explanation to his disciple about why Confucius held such a low opinion of them:

> Mencius replied, “If you try to condemn them, there is nothing you can point to; if you try to censure them, there is nothing to censure. They are in agreement with the current customs; they are in harmony with the sordid era in which they live. They seem to dwell in devotion and faithfulness; their actions seem to be blameless and

pure. The multitude delight in them; they regard themselves as right. But you cannot enter into the Way of Yao and Shun with them. Hence, Kongzi said they are "thieves of virtue."[33] 曰：非之無舉也，刺之無刺也；同乎流俗，合乎汙世；居之似忠信，行之似廉潔；眾皆悅之，自以為是，而不可與入堯舜之道，故曰德之賊也。[34]

Tu Weiming interprets the village worthies' violation of virtue in terms of the creative tension between *ren* 仁 and *li* 禮. In his view, "though he acted as if he was following the Confucian norms, was actually following only the convention without being consciously engaged in moral practice at all. Confucius called this type of person 'the thief of virtue,' because the magic touch, self-cultivation, the conscious effort to bring oneself in line with *li*, is absent."[35] In other words, the essence that renders social roles substantive, in Tu's view, is *ren*, "the virtue of the highest order in the value system of Confucianism" that "gives meaning to all the other ethical norms."[36] Thus, lacking the inward driving force of *ren*, the village worthies' apparently impeccable adherence to the imperatives entailed by their social roles was nothing but a meaningless social performance and a parody of true virtue. In this sense, Zhu Lianxiu actually embodied *ren* by actualizing her personal potential to the fullest extent toward self-perfection through her convincing enactment of various roles.

The subjective agency inherent in *ren* is further brought to the fore when Hu Zhiyu points out the coercive social reality Zhu had to cope with. The dramatic world

[33] *Mengzi*, 7B37.11, translated by Norden, 195.

[34] *Chongkan Song ben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji*, 263a.

[35] Tu Weiming, "Creative Tension between *Jen [Ren]* and *Li*," *Philosophy East and West 18* (1968): 38.

[36] Tu, 31.

created by the goddess-like Zhu Lianxiu is one of ever-lasting aesthetic and affective beauty resisting the passage of time, while the real world in which the mortal-being Zhu Lianxiu resided was one where "fragrant years easily pass and longevity is hard to preserve." No matter how much talent and creativity she possessed to construct and move freely through all kinds of roles in a way more convincing and believable than those in social life, as a social being, there was no way for Zhu Lianxiu to get away from her place in the social hierarchy stipulated by state law and social convention. Therefore, Hu Zhiyu regrets poignantly at the contrast of a goddess-like Zhu Lianxiu on stage and a mortal-being Zhu Lianxiu in reality:

> So regrettable! She spits out the lingering resonance of a grove oriole or of a dewy orchid to provide a lasting sounding all day long. Even though one song could receive three sighs of admiration, I am afraid it is not the way to cherish her fragrant age and preserve a long life. An old man's talk is fatuous, and a drunkard's handwriting is all askew, whereby I have created a preface that writes the truth in order to cap [introduce] the assembled poems. Yet [by doing this] I come close to imitating Ouyang Xiu, who held the brush of the historian to create memoirs for the entertainment officials. 惜乎！吐林鶯露蘭之餘韻，供終日之長鳴。雖可一唱而三嘆， 恐非所以惜芳年而保遐齡。老人言耄，醉墨欹傾，因冠羣詩以為寫眞之序，又庶幾效歐陽文忠，執史筆而傳伶官也。[37]

Even though Zhu's art could deliver the audience beyond worldly cares, as a person of

[37] *Zishan daquanji* 8.10a.

the world, she remained tightly bound to the implacable dusty social network. Hu Zhiyu's grief is even more keenly felt due to the contrast between the Zhu on stage with her shaman-like power to transform into any role and the Zhu off stage as an entertainer at the mercy of a dominant social hierarchy that left her with no control over her own body or talent. There is evidently a sense of empathy in Hu Zhiyu expressed in his authorial self-reference at the end of the preface for Zhu Lianxiu as a talented individual yet constrained by her social role and status. He refers to himself as an old drunkard whose talk is fatuous and whose handwriting askew. It is this old drunkard, however, who sees the essence of Zhu Lianxiu and writes the truth of the female entertainer (*xiezhen* 寫真) that no one else is able to. Hu Zhiyu is aware of the social taboo that his warm-hearted preface to the lowly woman violates, and foresees jeers and criticism this act would bring to his reputation. Hu Zhiyu identifies with the paradox of Zhu Lianxiu, because he himself is also caught in the dilemma either to be truthful to his genuine admiration for the actress or to adhere to what is deemed appropriate to his social role as a Confucian literati-bureaucrat. The solution Hu Zhiyu resorts to is typical of Confucian literati, that is, to entrust final judgment to the authority of historiography. By imitating Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, the great literati official in Song dynasty who wrote biographies of exemplary entertainers in the standard official history of the Five Dynasties, Hu Zhiyu claims moral justification of his act. Most importantly, "the pen-brush of the historian" allows both Zhu Lianxiu and Hu Zhiyu to metaphorically bypass the limits imposed by their social roles in unavoidable reality and to arrive at the state of timelessness in historical text. Neither Zhu Lianxiu nor Hu Zhiyu was totally in passive submission to the circumscription of their social roles.

The Preface to Poems of Zhao Wenyi, An Entertainer 優伶趙文益詩序

The issue of what gives substance to social roles is also dealt with in the “Preface to Poems of Zhao Wenyi, An Entertainer” from a different angle in the case of a male entertainer. Here, Hu Zhiyu expresses his view on the ideal relationship between the individual and their social roles: social roles should be a truthful manifestation of one’s ability of self-renewal, or *ren*, rather than an absolute given. Since *ren* is an ever on-going process of change and growth, social roles should be open and fluid as well. Citing historical precedents, Hu warns of the grave danger when social roles are disconnected from the individual’s moral mind of *ren:* they degenerate into a meaningless social performance that would eventually result into the collapse of the entire social structure.

> Vinegar, salt, ginger, and cinnamon: when someone skilled blends them harmoniously, the resulting flavor is far beyond the ordinary tastes of sour, salty, piquant, or sweet. He renews the mixture daily and does not follow what is old or ordinary, so those who eat them are never weary. Humor and jokes are just like this. The clumsy simply tread in the path of the clichéd and practice the old, incapable of transforming them anew, making the audience disgusted with hearing them and tired of watching. In later times the way of the people became ever more adroit and clever so that even people from rustic and mountainous regions know how to make joking banter and understand, too, how to make fun of people and play jokes. And how much more does this hold true for young folks from great and wealthy families who

are rich in the experience of the bustling market areas? People understand that the newly clever laughs and lowest forms of joy produced by entertainers have, against expectation, that which is similar to the true nature of the acting [the catching of reality] of players from the entertainment bureau. At this time, how difficult it is to be an entertainer! This may be the way it is, but the world, once having something it wants, will always have someone who excels at it. 醯鹽薑桂，巧者和之，味出於酸醎辛甘之外，日新而不襲故常，故食之者不厭。滑稽詼諧，亦猶是也。拙者踵陳習舊，不能變新，使觀聽者惡聞而厭見。後世民風機巧，雖郊野山林之人，亦知談笑，亦解弄舞娛嬉，而況膏腴閥閱，市井豐富之子弟？人知優伶發新巧之笑，極下之歡，反有同於教坊之本色者。於斯時也，為優伶者亦難矣哉！然而世既好尚，超絶者自有人焉。[38]

For both the cook and the entertainer, their qualification to assume their social roles is contingent upon their ability of innovation, or self-renewal. To attract people's appetite all the time, a cook must be able to create a new flavor each day by innovatively blending ingredients. By the same token, if an entertainer fails to make fresh jokes and simply repeats his old stock, he or she will tire out the audience and drive them away. Once they lose that ability, they are automatically disqualified and will have to forfeit their social roles. The ability of "daily renewal" conveys strong ethical implication, as it is said in the "Great Learning": "If you can one day renew yourself, do so from day to day. Yea, let

[38] *Zishan daquanji* 8.13b-14a.

there be daily renewal" 苟日新，日日新，又日新.[39] "New" or "renewal" (*xin* 新) is a key concept in Confucianism. It refers to, according to Wei-ming Tu, the "everlasting and continuous effort within" in the process of self-realization. Its very foundation "relies upon the moral mind, or in Confucian the mind of *ren*."[40] Tu defines *ren* as "basically linked with the self-reviving, self-perfecting, and self-fulfilling process of an individual."[41] Therefore, the difference between the skilled one 巧者 and the clumsy one 拙者 is not just a matter of skill, but a matter of personal morality. "Skillfulness" (*qiao* 巧) is actually what is achieved through one's moral effort to make oneself "anew" 新 driven by the mind of *ren* 仁. Read in this context, the compound "newly clever" 新巧 neatly sums up both the moral effort and the moral achievement one is able to made out of the mind of *ren*. The "skilled ones" are the people of *ren* (*renzhe* 仁者) who are able to push themselves further and further beyond their limit toward self-perfection. By contrast, the "clumsy ones" are those who have lost their mind of *ren* (*buren* 不仁) and consequently are disqualified from their social roles. Moreover, changing social reality also increases the urgency of self-renewal. The challenge for an entertainer to improve oneself was especially great in an age when, according to Hu Zhiyu, people in both urban and rural areas possessed the wisdom 知 and ability to understand 解 all kinds of humorous skits and plays. A more knowledgeable and more sophisticated audience such as that would demand the entertainer's even greater ability of innovation, thus lifting the

[39] *Chongkan Song ben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji,* 984a.

[40] Tu, "Creative Tension between Jen and Li,"32.

[41] Tu, 34.

threshold to qualify for the social role of entertainers. Those who manage to meet the challenge and elicit "newly clever laughs and lowest forms of joy" 新巧之笑極下之歡 indeed demonstrate the "original color" 本色 of the acting of players from the entertainment bureau, that is, the essence of performance, the ability of self-renewal. Therefore, even for social roles as lowly in the social hierarchy as cooking and entertaining, they are not something to be taken for granted at all. These roles are not static to be "possessed" by any individual for good; rather they are assumed by those who "excel at" them 超絕者. Efforts made by a cook to make dishes of new flavors or by an entertainer to produce fresh humor and jokes essentially have no difference from Confucian literati's effort at self-cultivation, simply because all are driven by the universally same mind of *ren* toward self-fulfillment. Subjective agency to make constant improvement and push oneself further even beyond the limit of one's older self is vital to fulfill the responsibility demanded of one's social roles. It requires a continuous process of improving one's skill toward self-realization of all the potential talent. Therefore, Hu Zhiyu admits that to be an entertainer is difficult, for the reason that it requires not only excellent skills, but, ultimately, the entertainer's cultivation of his or her ethical self. Only the best ones could remain in the market to entertain the audience.

> Among the several brothers in the Zhao family is one who is called Wenyi, who delights in reading, knows history well, and who proceeds to take on the role of a gentleman scholar. Therefore, he is shamed to trod in the world-weary clichés of his profession and, by taking the new and clever to replace the clumsy, goes far beyond that of which ordinary people can conceive. And in a moment's time he can make

audiences appreciate that which the custom of the world has never experienced. When encountering a noted scholar, he inevitably requests some poems, writing, calligraphy, or painting. He seems to have understood something on his own in his learning, which is already refined; yet he seeks to be even more refined, never considering himself satisfied on his own and never being arrogant with his peers. Now, a person like this, a simple entertainer, can still make progress again and again without stopping. 趙氏一門，昆季數人，有字文益者，頗喜讀，知古今，趨承士君子，故於所業恥蹤塵爛，以新巧而易拙，出於衆人之不意，世俗之所未嘗見聞者，一時觀聽者多愛悅焉。遇名士，則必求詩文字畫。似於所學有所自得，已精而求其益精，終不敢自足，驕其同輩。吁！如斯人者，伶人也，尚能進進而不已。[42]

In Hu Zhiyu's description, Zhao Wenyi's continuous effort to improve his skill is a process of self-cultivation to awaken, nourish and realize his inner moral potential. His interest in reading history and submission to the way of a gentleman scholar helped him cultivate moral judgements. Using the summary particle, "for that reason" (*gu* 故), Hu Zhiyu seems to imply these practices combined to awaken an inner ethical awareness that made him "shamed to tread in the world-weary clichés of his profession" 故於所業恥從塵爛. His conscious effort to always come up with the "new and clever" reflects his mind of *ren*, the ultimate inner drive toward self-realization. As a result, Zhao brilliantly fulfilled his social role to entertain the audience. The humor and jokes that go "far

[42] *Zishan daquanji* 8.14a-b.

beyond what the common herd can imagine" 出於眾人之不意 and have "never been seen or heard of in the world before" 世俗所未嘗聞見者 are achievements of his self-cultivation and externalization of his interior moral soundness. Yet Zhao's remarkable success did not put an end to his effort at self-improvement, so much so that it pushed him beyond his designated role of an entertainer. Zhao seized every opportunity to learn from literati gentlemen. He asked renowned scholars for their works of poems, writing, calligraphy, and paintings, which likewise were manifestations of these literati gentlemen's interiority. Therefore, Zhao was able to learn not only their skills but also their inner ethical strength. Hu Zhiyu observes that Wenyi "seems to have understood something on his own in his learning" 似於所學有所自得, recognizing the immense progress Zhao Wenyi has achieved. The key point is "understanding for himself" 自得, because it emphasizes the priority of internal motivation over external stimulus or pressure. Attainment of the Way depends first and foremost on one's own efforts, as Mengzi elucidates:

> Mengzi said: "The gentleman deeply attains it [the subject of his study], following the Way, desiring to understand it for himself. Understanding it for himself, he dwells in it peacefully. Dwelling in it peacefully, he deeply relies upon it. Deeply relying upon it, he draws upon it left and right, encountering its source. Hence, the gentleman desires to understand it for himself."[43] 孟子曰：“君子深造之以道，欲其自得之也。自得之，則居之安；居之安，則資之深；資之深，則取之左右逢

[43] *Mengzi* 4B.14.1, translation by Van Norden with modifications of mine; See Norden, 106

其原，故君子欲其自得之也”。[44]

Even more remarkable is Wenyi's incessant pursuit of self-perfection, of "having been already refined, seeks to be even more refined" 已精而求其益精. This obviously alludes to Zhu Xi's commentary to *Analects 1.15*:

"An ode says, 'As if cut, as if polished; / As if carved, as if ground.'" [45] 如切如磋、如琢如磨:

As for the working of bone and ivory, once having cut it, then polish it; as for working jade, first carve and then smooth it. If you have worked it in a fine way, then seek to further refine it. 言治骨角者，既切之而復磋之；治玉石者，既琢之而復磨之；治之已精，而益求其精也。[46]

In Hu Zhiyu's judgement, Zhao Wenyi is an excellent embodiment of *ren*, the highest virtue in Confucian moral system. Concentrating on self-realization, Zhao never regards his fellow entertainers (literally "same kind") 同輩 as his rivals or shows any arrogance toward them. Ultimately all the effort is for the sake of the fulfilment of self, not for the sake of others. Therefore, even though by profession Zhao was merely an entertainer, his

[44] *Chongkan Songben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji*, 144a-b.

[45] English translation is from Edward Slingerland, trans., *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, 7. Slingerland explains the metaphor, "Here the task of self-cultivation is understood metaphorically in terms of the arduous process of roughly shaping and then laboriously finishing recalcitrant materials."

[46] Zhu Xi 朱熹(1130-1200), *Dianjiao Sishu zhangju jizhu* 點校四書章句集註 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 53.

commitment to self-perfection and moral effort at getting “ever more refined” elevated him far beyond that social role. Obviously Hu regards Wenyi as a gentleman 君子 *de facto* in spite of his profession and status. He addresses him by his courtesy name Wenyi 文益, an honorific title normally used only among peer literati gentlemen, rather than his stage name 藝名,[47] as a way to show his respect to Zhao Wenyi. In fact, as an individual of great inner drive of *ren,* Zhao should not be judged by his social role.

Hu Zhiyu broadens the meaning of *ren* and recognizes the infinite potential of *ren* in an entertainer. He believes in the universality of *ren* in all humans regardless of class, gender, or profession. Through the example of Zhao Wenyi, Hu Zhiyu expresses his belief in the enormous inner potential of the individual as well as the fluidity of social roles that, in an ideal world, should accord with the individual’s mind of *ren*. However, in the real world, correspondence between the individual’s ability of self-renewal and their social roles was usually cut off. Even if some people, particularly those in high social positions, have lost their mind of *ren* and their social roles are reduced to an empty social performance, they can still occupy their place under no pressure to forfeit their social roles at all. Citing the notorious example of Emperor Zhuang of Latter Tang dynasty 唐莊宗 (885-926) and his short-lived reign, Hu Zhiyu warns of the grave danger of social roles being nothing more than an empty name with no substance 有名無實. As a result, the social hierarchy fails as a way to order society and becomes simply a source of chaos that can, in its most extreme form, leads to dynastic downfall.

[47] Yet in Ming dynasty, calling an entertainer by his courtesy name was harshly denounced by Zhu Quan 朱權 who declared that entertainers should not have courtesy name at all, and this act was abhorred and deplored by Shen Defu 沈德符. This point will be discussed further later in the Conclusion.

Personally, I am affected by the age of Zhuangzong in the Latter Tang at the end of the Five Dynasties (r. 923-926), famed for famous names who had no substantive learning. Those in important posts had no substantive talent and had no personal sense of shame that "their reputation exceeds the reality." Everyone in this age was the same, no matter which profession or craft they practiced. The examples of what Confucius meant by "A *gu* that is not a proper *gu*" [the name and reality do not accord] were too numerous to be singled out. But there was no one to criticize those who abandoned what they should be doing and were incapable of fulfilling their responsibilities, and no one to deride their "possession of the title and absence of substance." People were so accustomed to it that they took it as a matter of fact. Now being an actor is a trivial and base art. But should one of their jokes miss the mark, the whole audience will give them [false] applause and sneer at them; miss it more than once and no one goes to see them anymore. Everyone has a heart that knows right and wrong—to chide an actor but not a "worthy" is laughable indeed, something to sadly sympathize with, indeed. 竊有感五季唐莊宗之世，享大名無實學，居要職者無實材，聲聞過情，不自以為恥，以至九流百工，莫不皆然。聖人所謂"觚不觚"者，又不可以枚數。然而無有責其廢事而不勝任者，無有譏其有名而無實，習熟見聞，以為當然。優伶，賤藝也。談諧一不中節，闔座皆為之撫掌而嗤笑之，屢不中，則不徃觀焉。是非之心，人皆有之，責備優伶而不責賢者，可笑也夫，可哀也夫！[48]

[48] *Zishan daquanji* 8.14b-15a.

People in the Latter Tang dynasty in every profession and at all levels of society had no sense of shame. They were like the *gu* 觚 criticized by Confucius that only bears the name but lacks the proper size, shape, feature or function.[49] They simply acted out their social roles without investing any moral effort, because their mind of *ren* was benighted or blocked. Such general failure to fulfil social roles signals moral degeneration. Hu Zhiyu expresses his criticism through the words of Mengzi:

> Mengzi said, "It gushes from the spring, not letting up day or night, only advancing after filling up the hollows and going on to the Four Seas. Things that have a source are like this. If it merely fails to have a source, the rain collects during the rainy season, and the drainage ditches are all full. But you can just stand and wait and it will become dry. Hence, gentlemen are ashamed to have their reputation exceed what they are inherently." [50] 孟子曰：源泉混混，不舍晝夜。盈科而後進，放乎四海，有本者如是，是之取爾。苟為無本，七八月之閒雨集，溝澮皆盈；其涸也，可立而待也。故聲聞過情，君子恥之。[51]

Mengzi compares the relationship between reputation and substance to that of water and the fountainhead: reputation without substance is like rootless rain water that would dry

[49] *Analects* 6.25 : The master said, "A *gu* that is not a proper *gu*—is it really a *gu*? Is it really a gu?" 子曰："觚不觚，觚哉！觚哉！" Translated by Slingerland, 61.

[50] *Mengzi* 4B.18, Norton, 107, with minor changes made by me.

[51] *Chongkan Songben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji*, 145a.

out soon. Therefore, “gentlemen are ashamed to have their reputation exceed what they are inherently.” The fountainhead of gushing water is none other than the mind of *ren*. Zhu Xi further comments: “If people’s actions are not genuine, but they get an empty reputation, they will be unable to last long” 如人無實行，而暴得虛譽，不能長久也.[52] Hu Zhiyu clearly has Mengzi’s words and Zhu Xi’s commentary in his mind when he criticizes those people’s shameless occupation of their social roles that they were not competent in at all. Therefore, the downfall of the Latter Tang dynasty in Emperor Zhuang’s hands was almost inevitable.

What is noteworthy is that Hu Zhiyu does not attribute that general failure to these shameless shams alone. His criticism is also targeted at people around them who turned a blind eye and just allow those incompetents turn their social roles into empty names. Had they been deprived of their social roles and replaced by people of real ability, the downfall of the Latter Tang dynasty might have been avoided. Drawing a comparison between people’s permissive attitude toward those so-called “worthy ones” 賢者 and their strict judgement of entertainers, Hu Zhiyu draws attention to an alarming yet usually neglected fact, that the higher echelon a social role is in the social hierarchy, the less people are watchful of its substance. In other words, people tend to be more tolerant about the individual’s incompetency when that person is in a social role of great power and influence than one in a lowly and insignificant role. This sounds ridiculous, but sadly it is true, as Hu Zhiyu sighs. Any mistake made by entertainers would be immediately noticed and sneered at by the audience. They must amend their performance so that they

[52] Zhu Xi, *Dianjiao Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 293. .

would never make that mistake again. Or they would be disqualified from their social role of an entertainer by the audience refusing to watch their performance anymore. In contrast, nobody blames those in high positions for their mistakes, even if these mistakes would cause more serious consequences than an entertainer's. Although "everyone has a heart that knows right and wrong" 是非之心人皆有之, it only functions when the person under judgement is in lowly status. It is readily cast away when it involves high-ranking and powerful people, to the effect that their glaring incompetence is normalized. Thus people of status and power are allowed to stand above normal social relationships, which results into their further and further alienation from *ren*. They are exempted from any social pressure that would urge them to improve and refocus on the responsibilities of their social roles. The sudden downfall of the short-lived Later Tang dynasty was exactly the result of a dysfunctional social and political system literally reduced to mere "social performance" that was caused by the double failure of their inner self and social relations—*ren* and *li*. Hu's conception of social roles and social hierarchy is an open system of efficient upward and downward mobility built upon the distribution of responsibilities according to each individual's actual ability. It is Hu's protest against the reality that social hierarchy is more based on power and exploitation rather than ability.

The Preface to a Scroll of Poems for Ms. Huang 黃氏詩卷序

In this preface, Hu Zhuyu draws up a list of "nine beauties" for Ms. Huang, an aspiring and talented entertainer, that gives detailed instruction on how to improve herself

in order to become a superb performer. In a sense, it is like a checklist of imperatives that the social role of female performer requires of the individual to make it substantive.

Among hundreds of performative skills of female entertainers, “singing and speaking” [were the most important]. 女樂之百伎，惟唱說焉。

First, her faculties and substance are of condensed essence; her radiant colors can move people. 一姿質濃粹，光彩動人；

Second, as for deportment, she is serene and elegant, with none of the worldly vulgar bearings. 二舉止閒雅，無塵俗態；

Third, as for mind and thoughts, she is perspicacious to penetrate the disposition and appearance of everything. 三心思聰慧，洞達事物之情狀；

Four, as for the use of language, she is eloquent and articulate; [her pronunciation] is precise in word and clear in every sentence. 四語言辨利，字真句明；

Five, as for singing voice, hers is pure and harmonious, circling and twirling, piling up continuously like stringed pearls. 五歌喉清和圓轉，纍纍然如貫珠；

Six, as for the expression of the eyes, she can make each person understand [her thoughts and feelings]. 六分付顧盼，使人人解悟；

Seven, when she sings or speaks, the stress and tempo both fit the rhythm and accord with the measure. Although she memorizes her lines thoroughly in complete detail, she does not recite in the same way as an old monk chanting sutras. 七一唱一說，輕重疾徐中節合度，雖記誦閑熟，非如老僧之誦經；

Eight, as for manifesting ancient people's [feelings of] joy, anger, sorrow, happiness, worries, sadness, enjoyment, leisure, their words, deeds, accomplishments and careers, she can make the audience feel as if [everything happens] in front of their eyes, and listen so carefully that they forget about their weariness, only worrying that they cannot hear her. 八發明古人喜怒哀樂，憂悲愉佚，言行功業，使觀聽者如在目前，諦聽忘倦，惟恐不得聞；

Nine, she can "gain new insights through reviewing old material," frequently produce something new and novel in key words and phrases, and make people unable to fathom the limit of her potential. 九溫故知新，闕鍵詞藻，時出新奇，使人不能測度為之限量。

Having accomplished in the nine fine qualities, she would be matchless among her peers. 九美既具，當獨步同流。

In recent years those who are excellent in these are: Li Xinxin, Zhao Zhen and Qin Yulian. Now Ms. Huang starts to follow the trace of her predecessors, which is indeed a pleasing and gratifying matter. She held a scroll and asked me for some words, so I instruct her thus. 近世優於此者：李心心、趙真、秦玉蓮。今黃氏始追蹤前學，可喜可喜。持卷軸乞言，故諭之如此。[53]

If we take a careful look at the "nine beauties," we can see that it is a comprehensive list that covers one's physical state, personal style, intellectual power, linguistic skills, artistic flair, communicative ability, emotional richness, and innovative potential. If taken out of

[53] *Zishan daquanji* 8.13a-b.

this context and considered separately one by one, it is hard to pinpoint any of them to any single social role definable by gender, age, profession, education, moral type, or social class. They are worthy qualities universally admired and dreamt of by all. In fact, many of these qualities are even normally associated with the elite class, particularly male literati-scholars who are traditionally entrusted with the grand responsibilities of bringing order to the world, transmitting cultural legacy, and rectifying social customs. Therefore, when a female performer is encouraged to improve herself upon these qualities, it creates a curious sense of misplacement. To be an excellent female performer, she should polish herself into one who is so profusely endowed with refined essence that she has a shining color. Whoever sets eyes on her would be immediately moved by her. A woman practicing a morally suspicious profession in commercial entertainment quarters, yet she is able to maintain a serene and elegant deportment, having an inner self strong enough to resist any contaminating influence of the dusty world. Her perspicacious mind allows her to intuitively see through any disguise and find the truth of everything. Her employment of language is superb but yet still not the only way for her to communicate her ideas and emotions. Her euphonious voice, expressive eyes, and gestures convey even more than words. Most amazingly, boundaries of time, space, and single-person perspective seem to have all disappeared for her, because she is able to reenact the feelings, speech, and actions of ancient sages so effectively that people, totally drawn to the imaginative space she creates, forget about reality. In the end, able to “understand the new through reviewing old knowledge” 溫故知新, her power of self-renewal is formidable to such an extent that people find her “beyond any measure that would limit her” 不能測度為之限量. In fact, anyone who could possess all these qualities in the

"nine beauties" Hu Zhiyu draws up for the female performer would make a success in any profession, of any social status. In traditional Chinese popular literature, talented female entertainers are usually portrayed as "banished immortals" (*zhexian* 謫仙).[54] There is a recurring motif in the subgenre of deliverance plays in *zaju* drama that feature courtesan-entertainers as the protagonist under punishment and trial in the human realm of "wind and dust" (*fengchen* 風塵) before she is eventually restored to her place in the celestial realm. This motif very well illustrates the confusion caused by the ambiguity of talented female entertainers and the difficulty people found to pin them down to any ready social categories. The list of "nine beauties" defies stereotypical perception of female entertainer as a social role and corroborates Hu Zhiyu's observation, "how difficult it is to be an entertainer," he expresses in the preface to Zhao Wenyi.

Obviously, Hu Zhiyu had great confidence in Ms. Huang's potentiality toward self-perfection, as is demonstrated in the high standards set up in the "nine beauties." This point is particularly evident in the last two "beauties," which actually places her not only in the role of an entertainer, but also the role of a cultural propagator and innovator. By enacting ancient people's stories and making the audience vividly re-experience the ancients' feelings, deeds, and accomplishments, the female performer entertains and educates at the same time. The audience is so absorbed into the world she constructs that they forget the immediate and real world. The double role of entertainer-cum-educator is well illustrated in Hu Zhiyu's song-lyric "Presented to a Sing-song Girl" 贈歌妓 to the

[54] Inspired by Li Fengmao's 李豐楙 lecture "Banished to the Mundane Realm: Extra-ordinary Renditions in Masterworks of the Ming Novel," at Tempe, on March 28, 2016.

tune of *Mulanhua man* 木蘭花慢:

> She tells a story of dynastic rise and fall through the ages, so for the moment now, just listen to what is right and what is wrong. In love with sea rains and river winds, tender oriole and baby phoenix responding to and urging each other [in singing]. Slowly a single clear voice rises up, stirring up dust on the beam to fall and not letting colorful clouds fly away. Press down jade fingers and stop the ivory clapper, gently pour out myriad *hu* of pearls and gems. 話興亡千古，試聽取，是和非。愛海雨江風，嬌鶯雛鳳，相和相催。泠泠一聲徐起，墜梁塵，不放彩雲飛。按止玉纖牙拍，細傾萬斛珠璣。
>
> Or it is like encountering the rhetoricians Su Qin or Zhang Yi, for whom the Six States were a child's game. Watching her maneuvers of political groups, among strong and weak states east and west—a complete turnaround of a moment of crisis. Thousands of people cleanse their minds and listen attentively, and on the tips of flowered branches they are unaware of the upward movement of the shade. Daily new melodies and wonderful songs, what is there in the human realm that could make us knit our brows? 又如辯士遇秦儀，六國等兒嬉。看捭闔縱橫，東強西弱，一轉危機。千人洗心傾耳，向花梢不覺日陰移。日日新聲妙語，人間何事顰眉？[55]

In her performance described in this song-lyric, the subject is the grave matter of dynastic

[55] Hu Zhiyu, *Zishan daquanji*, 7.67a-b.

rise and downfall and morally lessons behind that. Yet, all are played out through the female entertainer's euphonious singing voice accompanied with beautiful percussion and pipe music. She makes history and politics such as the intricate diplomatic maneuver and political scheme in the Warring States Period like an interesting game attractive to a much broader audience than just a few elite literati officials, historians, and scholars. In addition to the historical and moral lessons they learn, their deep and full immersion in her performance also make them unaware of the passage of time and relieved of all the worries and stresses in their mundane life. Even though she has no cultural authority at all, this song-lyric portrays her actually a much more popular and effective educator than a Confucian scholar. The female performer actually plays a crucial role in transmitting cultural and historical legacy bequeathed by the ancients. Moreover, her ability to follow Confucius' instruction "to gain new insights through reviewing old material" in the last item of "nine beauties" indicates that in Hu Zhiyu's view, female performers are as capable of following the sage's teaching to cultivate the mind of *ren* as literati gentlemen.

Two Poems Presented to the Entertainer Zhao Wenyi 贈伶人趙文益

In the following two poems "Presented to the Entertainer Zhao Wenyi,"[56] Hu Zhiyu embeds his reflection on social roles and reality in his praise of the entertainer's innovative performance.

[56] *Zishan daquanji* 7.61b-62a.

其一	One
富貴賢愚共一塵	The rich, the noble, the worthy and the stupid all share a single dusty world,
萬紅千紫競時新	Myriad shades of red and a thousand hues of purple compete to be what is new in the age.
到頭誰飽黃粱飯	In the end who eats their fill of “Yellow Millet Meal”?
輸與逢場作戲人	[It is] given over to those who are ever ready to perform a play on the spot.

其二	Two
抹土塗灰滿面塵	Smudge dirt and smear ash—a face covered in dust.
難猜公案這番新	A case hard to guess is new this time.
世間萬事誰真假	Who is true and who is false in the myriad affairs of this world?
要學長安陌上人[57]	We should learn from people in the streets of Chang’an.

Both are occasional poems to compliment and comment on the theatrical performance produced by Zhao Wenyi and his troupe. Hu Zhiyu may have watched the

[57] Hu Zhiyu, *Zishan daquanji* 7.61b-62a.

deliverance play *Yellow Millet Dream*[58] and a courtroom play before he wrote the two poems. He takes the opportunity to contemplate the relationship between the stage and the social reality, between actors and audience, and between artificiality and truth.

The first poem begins with an observation of a shared reality. People are divided into different categories according to their wealth, status, moral character, intellectual power, and so on. Yet in spite of the different labels they wear, all reside in the same dusty world. The flower metaphor of "myriad shades of red and a thousand hues of purple" in the second line aptly plays with the word *se* 色 that means both "color" and "type." Thus, the competition to be "what's new in the age" (*shixin* 時新) is as much about people who struggle to win fame and profit as it is about flowers. The third line brings the theme of the *zaju* performance into focus. In the play *Yellow Millet Dream*, Lü Dongbin was a student on his way to the capital eager to seek his name and fame (*gongming* 功名). In order to enlighten him, Zhongli Quan made him have a dream and experience all of the vicissitudes of human life. Zhongli transformed into various roles at different junctures of the dream and afterward helped Lü renounce wine, sex, money, and anger. When Lü woke up, the yellow millet meal being cooked as he fell asleep was still not ready yet. Lü Dongbin was suddenly enlightened. He cut off all social ties and became an immortal. The theme of the play causes Hu Zhiyu to reflect upon people still competing with each other in the "dusty world" mentioned in the first two lines. He knows the difficulty to escaping from that world and asks the rhetoric question in the

[58] The title *Yellow Millet Dream* 黃粱夢 is recorded in *Lu gui bu* 錄鬼簿 as a collective work by Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠, Li Shizhong 李時中, Hua Li lang 花李郎 and Hongzi Li'er 紅字李二. Extant text of the play is found in two different editions, one in *Gumingjia zaju* 古名家雜劇 anthologized in Maiwangguan collection, and the other one in *Yuan qu xuan* 元曲選. Even though there is no way to know exactly what version Hu Zhiyu watched, the core story of "yellow millet meal" denotes it must be a deliverance play. See Li Xiusheng 李修生 et al. eds., *Guben xiqu jumu tiyao* 古本戲曲劇目提要 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu, 1997), 26-27.

third line. The one who eats his or her fill of "yellow millet meal" is one who is enlightened to the truth of social life. But such a person is rare in real life, and enlightenment is only possible in the artificial realm of the stage. Therefore, the fourth line states that it is transferred or given over to the *zaju* performers to enact in a deliverance play. What is given over to the performers or, to be more exact, to their performance, in my opinion, is the wisdom and insight one needs to reach enlightenment, suggested in a line in the aria sung by Zhong Liquan played by the male lead (*zhengmo* 正末):

> I'll make this
> One granule of rice store the fortune of time,
> This half-pint pot cook all of heaven and earth.
> 我教這
> 一顆米內藏時運，半升鐺裏煮乾坤 [59]

By dramatizing Lu Dongbin's renunciation of social ties on stage, this play attempts to both entertain and enlighten the audience who are just like Lü in the beginning of the play. They are trapped in the pursuit of *gongming* on the larger stage of the world. In this sense, the pre-enlightened Lü Dongbin is "Everyman" with a desire and ambition typical of most people in the world off-stage. Only those who relinquish their desires are able to reach the eventual enlightenment as he does. *Zaju* performers' enactment of Lü's experience on the stage provides the audience an opportunity to be shaken out of their

[59] Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠, Act One, *Handan dao xingwu huangliangmeng* 邯鄲道省悟黃粱夢, Zang Maoxun 臧懋循 ed., *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 780.

own perspective, to watch and reflect, as if from a distance, upon their problems.

Different from the first poem, the second begins with a description of the performer's make-up. Judging by the convention of *zaju*, probably Zhao Wenyi played the role of clown (*jing* 淨) here. The second line is Hu's compliment to Zhao on the originality of this newly made courtroom play. The investigation of the case about who is guilty and who is innocent, the courtroom interrogation, the revelation of the truth, and the final judgement are all likely sources of suspense in the audience's expectations. In the third line, Hu Zhiyu shifts the focus from the dramatic realm on the stage to reality in the world (*shijian* 世間). No matter how unexpected, how many twists and turns there might be on the stage, the play must have an ending and it entails that truth must be found out, or the audience would not be satisfied. In the real world, however, there is no guarantee that it will. A well-seasoned official-bureaucrat who had the experience of serving in the capital and local government, Hu Zhiyu must know very well how complicated or impossible it is to find the truth and pass a just judgement to each party involved in the case. Again, the courtroom enacted on the stage is a simulacrum of the real one that Hu Zhiyu is utterly familiar with. It throws into sharp relief the difficulty to tell who is true and who is false in a real case or, to be more general, in all kinds of affairs in the world. The best way to find the clue is, as Hu tells us in the fourth line, to learn from strangers in the streets. They have no connection, no conflict of interest, and no bias whatsoever against or toward anyone involved. In a word, strangers are outside the complicated social network that enwraps each party and which makes the line between the true and the false just a matter of different perspectives of those involved. Outsiders are more likely to be able to give objective observation and witness that would lead to the

truth.

To sum up, this chapter focuses on Hu Zhiyu's writings on entertainers and investigates how drama provides a challenging perspective for elite literati to ruminate on such issues as the function of entertainment, the nature of social role, its relationship with the individual, what gives substance to social role, and how to release the infinite potential of the individual. These writings help to reveal what is so special in drama that it increasingly attracted serious literati interest. His contemplation on *zaju* performance, particularly female performers' role play, represents both a personal and a social response of the elite class to the development of popular oral performative genres. His insights mark a significant break-through in Confucian intellectual history by their assimilation of popular culture. Hu Zhiyu's prefaces are convincing evidence of the convergence and mutual influence between the culture of elite literati and that of common urban spaces.

CHAPTER TWO

RECREATING ELITE ROLES:

PLAYWRIGHTS AND *THE REGISTER OF GHOSTS*

The Register of Ghosts (*Lu gui bu* 錄鬼簿, hereafter referred to as *The Register*) by Zhong Sicheng 鐘嗣成 (ca. 1279–1360), preface dated 1330, is a book that provides a then contemporary record of the life and works of playwrights who were active in the golden age of Yuan northern drama (*zaju* 雜劇). From the Ming dynasty onward, the text has been used by editors and literary historians of Yuan northern drama as a reliable source for attributing authorship to drama texts that, prior to that time, had remained mostly anonymous. Moreover, modern drama scholars use it as the basis for charting the periodization of *zaju* and especially the shift of the center of *zaju* production from the north to the south.[60] However, this chapter challenges previous interpretations of *The Register* as a bio-bibliographic sourcebook and argues instead that it represents Zhong Sicheng's construction of a pseudo-textual tradition for popular oral performative literature. Zhong's purpose was to rescue himself and his friends who were engaged in performance literature from the anonymity of an oral tradition. He did this by creating a lineage of writers and attributing a body of virtual texts (promised only by play titles) to each individual writer. As a matter of fact, Zhong's knowledge of most of the writers, except for those personally known to him, was minimal. Production of drama was in fact a corporate endeavor and its transmission did not rely on texts. Therefore the reliability of

[60] Previous scholarship on *The Register* is summarized by Wang Gang 王鋼 in his "Qianyan" 前言, in *Jiaoding Lu gui bu sanzhong* 校訂錄鬼簿三種 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1991), 1-34.

his attribution is at best untestable even if we do not dismiss it as utterly conjectural.

At its core, *The Register* is a memoir by Zhong Sicheng about his friends and how they found meaning in urban life that lay outside the normal parameters of an elite way of life in that confused age. It provides a personal and subjective account of a closely-connected community of writers largely centered in Hangzhou. Possessing various degrees of textual training, they actively participated in the production of urban oral and vernacular literature. From an insider's perspective, *The Register* records judgements about these writers' social life, literary activities, and literary skill. Their social and literary activities represented an alternative and meaningful mode of cultural production in an age when elite literature itself had lost much of its social and cultural meaning. These activities, at the confluence of popular oral and elite textual traditions, were a complicated process that involved far-reaching changes in the conception of cultural competency, the meaning of writing, the function of texts, literati identity, and social relationships. Zhong Sicheng believed writers involved in popular oral literature had achieved such great success that they deserved a "non-decaying" (*buxiu* 不朽) status in history.[61] Engagement with urban popular genres caused fundamental changes in the identity of traditional literati. Thus, *The Register* captures and records a critical moment when the identity of some writers underwent significant changes, and when the colloquial and vernacular moved from the periphery into the center of Chinese culture. This was an

[61] Th earliest articulation of the connection between writing and "non-decaying" fame is found in *Zuo's Commnetary* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳) , Xiang 24, where the phrase"to die but not perish" (si er bu xiu 死而不朽) is explained thus: "Uppermost by far there is establishing virtue; next thre is establishing meritorious deeds; and next there is establishing one's words" 大上有立德，其次有立功，其次有立言. In his "Essay on Literature, from *Normative Essays*" (*Dian lun Lun* wen 典論論文) , Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) makes an important proclamation about writing as a means to immortal fame: "Literature is an important achievement in the governing of the state, an imperishable grand affair" 文章經國之大業，不朽之盛事. Yet "writing" here refers only to elite literature. Cf. Robert Joe Cutter, "To the Manner Born? Nature and Nurture in Early Medieval Chinese Literary Thought," in Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey eds., *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200-600*, 53-71.

age, to borrow Stephen H. West's words, "when a nonconformist literate class developed; when classical Chinese literature was, if not undermined, at least shaken by a rising colloquial tradition fed by shared interests across class lines and by the possibilities of a new print culture."[62] They were connected by common interests in urban popular genres as well as by emotional ties that developed from mutual understanding and support as a self-defined literary group. In Zhong's eyes, talent and feeling surpassed status and profit as the most cherished values. Moreover, this community of writers was part of the larger urban populace of Hangzhou, one of the great metropolises of the Yuan dynasty. Adapting to urban life and culture, they departed from traditional modes of literary production to dedicate their talents to the production of popular entertainment literature. Through this commitment, new social, cultural, and personal connections were established. By carefully reading Zhong's narrative, comments and laments over writers he knew personally, we can achieve a rare glimpse into the process of literati writers' alienation from orthodox values and their integration into urban performance culture.

Preface and Postscripts

Prefaces written by Zhong Sicheng himself, as well as by his friends Zhu Kai and Shao Yuanchang explain the intent and meaning of *The Register* from three separate but related perspectives. Since Zhu Kai's preface contains important biographical information about

[62] Stephen H. West, "Literature from the late Jin to the early Ming: ca 1230—ca 1375," in Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen ed., *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature* vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 650.

Zhong Sicheng that can help us understand the other two pieces, I will begin with this one.

Postscript by Zhu Kai 朱凱後序

Prose is for recording biography; songs are for lamenting the past: [both] cause those in the past to be reborn and those in the future to study with all their energy. The compilation of *The Register of Ghosts* is not a useless business at all. Mr. Zhong of Da Liang, named Sicheng, also known as Jixian, titled Studio of the Ugly One, is a distinguished student of Chancellor Deng Shanzhi [Deng Wenyuan 鄧文原] (1259—1328)[63] and Minister Cao Keming [Cao Jian 曹鑑] (1271—1335).[64] He was tested several times by those in office, but it was his fate that he was not to succeed. As for becoming a clerk, neither would those in office appoint him, nor would he deign to take such a position. Therefore, he borrowed this book as a metaphor for what he was obsessed about, so, in truth, it was expressed for his own sake. 文以紀傳，曲以吊古，使往者複生，來者力學。《鬼簿》之作，非無用之事也。大梁鍾君，名嗣成，字繼先，號丑齋，善之鄧祭酒、克明曹尚書高弟也。累試於有司，命不克遇；從吏則有司不能辟，亦不屑就。故其胸中耿耿者，借此為喻，實為己而發也。

Zhong passed copies of his colloquial songs, both short tunes and long suites

[63] Deng Wenyuan was Chancellor of the Directorate of Education (*guozi jian jijiu* 國子監祭酒).

[64] Cao was Minister in the Ministry of Rites (*libu shangshu* 禮部尚書).

and grand selections, but never kept a copy of his manuscripts. So these works cannot be arranged in a compilation. As for his plays such as *Feng Xuan Collecting Tallies,*[65] *Pretending to Go to Yunmeng,*[66] *A Discourse on the God of Money,*[67] *Beheading Chen Yu,*[68] *Willows along the Zhangtai Street,*[69] *Duke Zhuang of the State Zheng,*[70] *Banquet of Immortal Peaches,*[71] and so forth, they were all performed on stages in other places. As a result, people nearby have no idea of these plays and everyone takes them lightly [or disparaged them]. Mr. Zhong's moral achievements shine radiantly and his literary practice is fecund. How can we, in later generations, hope to attain his level [of greatness]? Alas! People in the future will judge us living

[65] The original story is recorded in *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策. Feng Xuan was a retinue of Lord Mengchang 孟嘗君 in the State of Qi. Feng was once sent by the lord to his enfeofed land Xue to collect the debts local people owed to him. Unexpectedly, once arrived at Xue, Feng declared that the lord had decided to cancel all the debts and he burned the debt tallies in front of everyone. Local people were deeply moved and grateful to Lord Mengchang. A year later, the King of Qi dismissed Lord Mengchang from his post in the government and the lord had to return to his enfeofed land where he received warm-hearted welcome from local people. The play is now lost.

[66] The original story is recorded in *Shiji* 史記. Liu Bang 劉邦 schemed to rid of Han Xin 韓信 after he became the first emperor of Han dynasty because he believed this powerful old-day ally was his the number one threat now. He adopted Chen Ping's 陳平 plot and informed enfeofed kings of his imperial tour to Yunmeng. As the King of Chu State, Han Xin was obliged to greet Liu Bang in Yunmeng when Liu Bang ordered his arrest and later killed him. The play is now lost.

[67] The plot of the play, now lost, is unknown. There is a namesake rhapsody by Lu Bao 魯褒, active in Western Jin dynasty, in which two fictional characters, Lord Sikong 司空 and Master Qimu 綦母 have a discussion on the power of money in the capital.

[68] Chen Yu 陳餘 (d. 205 BCE) was one of the warlords in support of the King of Zhao during the Qin-Han transition period. He was defeated by Han Xin and Zhang Er 張耳 in the battle of Jingxing 井陘 and killed later. The play is now lost.

[69] This is probably based on the love story of Han Hong 韓翃 and his lover Miss. Liu (literally Miss "Willow"), originally recorded in a Tang tale by Xu Yaozuo 許堯佐 titled "A Biography of Willows along the Zhangtai Street" 章臺柳傳. The play now is lost.

[70] This play is probably about Duke Zhuang of Zheng's (BCE 757-701) conflict with his seditious younger brother Shuduan 叔段 backed by their partial mother. After Shuduan was defeated and exiled, Duke Zhuang swore he would never meet his mother again unless in the Yellow Spring. Afterwards, he regretted and bypassed his oath by digging a tunnel so that he and his mother met under earth. The play is now lost.

[71] In popular belief a grand banquet was held each year to celebrate the birthday of Queen Mother of the West. All the immortals were invited and immortal peaches were served. Two plays with the theme of immortal peaches and birthday party are preserved in *A Collection of Zaju Plays of the Past and the Present Collated and Scribed at Maiwang Studio* 脈望館校鈔本古今雜劇 by Zhao Qimei 趙琦美, but both were agreed by scholars to be compiled and performed by the Entertainment Bureau of Ming dynasty.

today in the same way we who are living today judge people in the past. “The sun rises and the moon goes down”—can we not work hard? On an auspicious day in the ninth month of the first year during the Zhiyuan reign period (1330), prefaced by Zhu Kai, also known as Shikai. 樂府小曲，大篇長什，傳之於人，每不遺藁，故未能就編焉。如《馮諼收券》、《詐游雲夢》、《錢神論》、《斬陳餘》、《章台柳》、《鄭莊公》、《蟠桃會》等，皆在他處按行，故近者不知，人皆易之。君之德業輝光，文行浥潤，後輩奚能及焉。噫！後之視今，亦猶今之視昔也，日居月諸，可不勉旃。至順元年九月吉日[72]朱凱士凱序。[73]

Zhu’s postface was dated only about two months after the date of Zhong’s self-preface. Zhu Kai was a close friend of Zhong Sicheng, and his biography is found under the category of “Talented Men of Our Present Generation Whom I Know Well in Person” 方今才人相知者.

From childhood, Zhu Kai, also known as Shikai, always stood alone, not of the common, and there were only a few with whom he got along. He has written an extremely large number of short songs. He compiled *Yuefu During Long-Lasting Peace* and riddle collections *Embracing Heaven and Earth* and *Riddle Rhymes*. All of them are prefaced by me. 朱凱字士凱，自幼孑立不俗，與人寡合。小曲極多，

[72] Any day from Oct. 13 to Nov. 10, 1330.

[73] *Lu gui bu* 錄鬼簿, *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* 中國古典戲曲論著集成 vol. 2, 138.

所編《昇平樂府》及隱語《包羅天地》、《謎韻》，皆余作序。[74]

According to the biography of Zhu Kai in *The Register,* Zhu's collections of colloquial songs (*yuefu* 樂府) and riddles (*yinyu* 隱語) were all prefaced by Zhong Sicheng. Writing prefaces or postfaces was a way to demonstrate and to consolidate friendship and connections. These facts testify to the depth of their friendship and mutual trust in each other's judgment. Zhu Kai's preface defends *The Register* against accusations of being "useless," by pointing out its significance to "those gone past" (*wangzhe* 往者) and "those yet to come" (*laizhe* 來者). This naturally establishes a broad lineage of writers and makes Zhong Sicheng their representative voice. An outstanding disciple of great Confucian scholar-officials Deng Shanzhi and Cao Keming, Zhong Sicheng was well-trained in Confucian classics, presumably with the shared socio-political ambition of the literati to "bring order to the world." However, repeated failure in the examinations[75] frustrated his ambition to serve as a government official. Even the position of a clerk, which he would deign to take, was beyond his reach because those in power would not appoint him. Zhong Sicheng seemed to be so disillusioned with government service, as Zhu Kai tells us, that he "disdained to take on" even the position of a clerk. Zhong was obsessed with his talent not being recognized by the government. Therefore, Zhu Kai interprets *The Register* not only as a work that commemorates predecessors and encouraging newcomers, but also a way for Zhong Sicheng to assert his personal value

[74] *Lu gui bu*, 135.

[75] Civil examination was abolished in Yuan dynasty for about seventy years, and it was reopened under the decree of Emperor Ren of Yuan 元仁宗 from the first year of Yanyou 延佑 reign period (1314). Judging by his age, Zhong Sicheng could have had the chance to sit in the examination multiple times. Still, it is unclear the of examination to which this statement refers.

that went unrecognized by the authority. Zhong believes that he and writers like him all deserve to be remembered by posterity as “ghosts that will never die.”

Zhong’s belief is shared by his friends. It is noteworthy that Zhu Kai’s defense is focused on *The Register* only and does not extend to Zhong’s writing of songs and drama. In his introduction of Zhong’s works, Zhu shows no genre anxiety at all about the “inferiority” of popular performance literature. On the contrary, Zhu takes it for granted that songs and drama provided a legitimate avenue for Zhong Sicheng to apply his otherwise unused talent. Zhu Kai’s high judgment of Zhong’s moral and literary achievements is surprising at first sight. It is unlikely for a person who was fated “not to meet his time” 命不克遇 to be able to fully realize himself in the traditional sense of this phrase. After all, Zhong’s political career was a failure and all he had written were “frivolous” works of songs and drama that have not left any textual traces. What is worse is that knowledge of his plays was limited only to the area in which they were performed, and people elsewhere were unaware that Zhong was a great playwright. These details show first the absence of text in the transmission of performative genres; second, that the circulation of plays was performance-based and consequently limited within the geographical area in which they were performed. Thus clearly it was orally performed literature to which Zhong Sicheng devoted his literary talent. If judged by traditional standards, Zhong Sicheng’s moral achievements and literary practice fell far short of the epithet of “shining radiantly” 輝光 and “being fecund” 浥潤, and his works far short of “imperishable legacy.” Therefore, Zhu Kai’s praise of Zhong implies a confidence in an alternative colloquial oral tradition comparable in value to that of eite textual production. For writers in the oral tradition, a successful political career was irrelevant to one’s moral

achievement; textual traces were not necessary to be a prolific writer. Zhu Kai's comment conveys a broadening conception of literature 文 that includes non-textual, orally transmitted vernacular performance genres, which had until his own time never been recognized as literature at all.

From Zhu's description of Zhong Sicheng's works, we can also see the innate problem that frustrated Zhong's goal to leave a permanent personal mark in history. Oral transmission eliminated the need for texts and circulation of performative works was therefore limited by time and space. Writers participating in the oral performative tradition could not retain their authorial identity because they had no direct control over the production or circulation of their works. Songs and drama could even be corporate products that involved the work of performers, managers, and audience response, so they remain open, fluid, and unstable. As a result, most writers of oral performance genres easily sank into oblivion of anonymity after a generation or two. Faced with this diemma, Zhong began to systemtically resurrect a textual tradition for writers who lived only in the consciousness or in memory. *The Register* represented Zhong Sicheng's effort to cut across the barrier between oral and textual traditions to reclaim a presence for writers of songs and drama that would live on in textual form. This move destabilized existing genre hierarchies and foreshadowed an assimilation of popular performative genres into elite textual tradition that would gain speed over time. We can see this point more clearly in Zhong Sicheng's "Self-Preface."

Self-Preface by Zhong Sicheng 鐘嗣成自序

Zhong Sicheng's "Self-Preface" is an assertion of meaningfulness on behalf of writers of popular oral performative genres. In spite of his "not meeting his time" 不遇, Zhong expresses no frustration or resentment toward that fate at all. Granting that fate is beyond his control, Zhong shifts his focus to the subjective agency of the individual to create meaning out of whatever fate allots them.

> Principles [behind the allotment] of worthiness and stupidity, longevity and premature death, death and life, disaster and good luck, have to be considered in tandem with one's fate. Sages and worthies have always discussed this. The [reciprocal] contraction and expansion of *yin* and *yang* are the lives and deaths of humans and ghosts. Being human, if people could understand the proper way of life and death, comply with and accept its rectitude, then how would there be adversity of standing beneath crumbling walls or approaching death in fetters? Even if it is so, people are born into *this* world, and only know that people already dead are ghosts, but have not yet understood that people still alive are also ghosts. 賢愚壽夭、死生禍福之理，固兼乎氣數而言，聖賢未嘗不論也。蓋陰陽之屈伸，即人鬼之生死，人而知夫生死之道，順受其正，又豈有岩牆桎梏之厄哉！雖然，人之生斯世也，但知以已死者為鬼，而未知未死者亦鬼也。
>
> As for those people who are wine-sacks and rice-bags, who are drunk or dreaming like a clod of muddy earth—even though they are alive, how do they differ from ghosts already dead? I have no time to discuss this category. There are also

those who know a little of right principle and speak benevolent words. Yet as for the "way of learning and inquiry," they readily ruin and abandon it. After they come to their end, they fall into oblivion never to be heard of again. They are not even as good as those clod-like ghosts. I have seen those "ghosts not yet dead" mourning for ghosts already dead; they have never thought about this: there is only a moment's time between them. Why do people not know that, from the separation of heaven and earth, from antiquity until today, undying ghosts have always been amongst us? There are sage kings and worthy ministers, loyal scholar-officials and filial sons, small acts of goodness and great achievements that have been recorded in the staves of history, radiant as the sun and bright as the moon, like soaring mountains and flowing rivers, everlasting through tens of millions of kalpas. These are indeed ghosts who are not ghosts. 酒罌飯囊、或醉或夢、塊然泥土者，則其人雖生，與已死之鬼何異？此曹固未暇論也。其或稍知義理，口發善言，而於學問之道，甘於暴棄。臨終之後，漠然無聞，則又不若塊然之鬼之愈也。余嘗見未死之鬼吊已死之鬼，未之思也，特一間耳。獨不知天地闔闢，亙古迄今，自有不死之鬼在。何則？聖賢之君臣、忠孝之士子，小善大功、著在方冊者，日月炳煌，山川流峙，及乎千萬劫無窮已，是則雖鬼而不鬼者也。

By discussing fate (*qishu* 氣數) and *yinyang*, Zhong Sicheng raises a fundamental question: What is the proper attitude toward fate? Since most aspects of it are determined by cosmic forces beyond human control, it is better to accept the rectitude, the fair judgement of the way of life and death. Such an attitude of acceptance shows clear

influence from Mengzi.

> Mengzi said, “Everything is fate. But one only complies with and accepts one’s proper fate. For this reason, someone who understands fate does not stand beneath a crumbling wall. To die through fathoming the Way is one’s proper fate. To die as a criminal is not one’s proper fate.”[76] 孟子曰：莫非命也！順受其正；是故知命者不立乎岩牆之下。盡其道而死者，正命也；桎梏死者，非正命也。[77]

According to Mengzi, it is futile to deny or contrive to change one’s fate, which would only hasten one’s death so that he or she loses the opportunity to “fathom the Way,” that is, to fully explore one’s inner potential through self-cultivation. This implies that Zhong Sicheng has reconciled with his own fated allotment of “not being able to meet his time” 命不克遇 however frustrating that might be. Zhong’s acceptance, however, does not mean passive resignation. His somewhat idiosyncratic concepts of “ghosts already dead” 已死之鬼, “ghosts not yet dead” 未死之鬼 and “ghosts who will never die” 不死之鬼 clearly separates meaning from the physical state of being alive or dead. In Zhong’s view, all people are ghosts destined to die someday. To be alive is just a transient phase before one enters the permanent realm of death and merges with the Way. So, the real purpose is to live in a way that makes life meaningful. While humans cannot control or change their fate, it is up to them to make the effort to fully fathom the Way and create meaning out of

[76] *Mengzi* 7A2. The English translation is by Bryan W. Van Norden with minor modifications made by me. See Norden, *Mengzi: with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008), 171.

[77] Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849) and Lu Xuanxun 盧宣旬 comp., *Chongkan Song ben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji* 重刊宋本十三經注疏附校勘記 (Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965), 229a.

their lives that would allow them to transcend their temporal limits. Without that effort, leading a meaningless life turns one simply into a ghost that is still breathing. To illustrate this point, Zhong Sicheng singles out two types of such "ghosts not yet dead." The first are those who live a life in drunkenness or in dreams, purely driven by carnal desire for wine and food. Totally ignorant of the proper ways of being a human, they are "clods of earth" and being alive or dead does not make any difference to them or to us. The second type is those who understand and talk human ethics yet still deliberately discard the proper way of "learning and inquiry" 學問之道, that is, the way of *ren* 仁 and *yi* 義 according to Mengzi:

> Mengzi said, "Benevolence is the human heart and righteousness is the human path. To leave one's path and not follow it, or to lose one's heart and not know to seek for it—these are tragedies! If people lose their chickens or dogs, they know to seek for them, but if they lose their hearts, they do not know to seek for them. The Way of learning and inquiry is no other than to seek for one's lost heart."[78] 孟子曰：「仁，人心也；義，人路也。舍其路而弗由，放其心而不知求，哀哉！人有雞犬放，則知求之；有放心，而不知求。學問之道無他，求其放心而已矣。」[79]

Ren 仁 and *yi* 義 are the two most important virtues in Confucian discourse. The heart of *ren* is potentially present in every human being, but it requires active effort to seek for it so as to make it follow the right path of *yi*. Therefore, people have to engage themselves

[78] *Mengzi* 6A11, Norden, 154-55.

[79] *Chongkan Song ben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji*, 202b.

in social life and cultivate their heart of *ren* by constantly practicing the path of *yi*. That is the only way to make life meaningful. The key issue was ren 仁, that is, to actualize one's potential through moral effort. Those who are "wine-sacks and rice-bags" do not activate their heart of *ren* and they know nothing about the path of *yi*. However, even worse are those who understand both *ren* and *yi* yet still make no effort to put them into practice. For them, it is not a matter of ignorance, but lack of moral determination. "Ghosts who will never die" 不死之鬼 are exactly those who have created meaning that will not disappear with their physical demise. Sagely rulers, worthy ministers, loyal literati officials, and filial sons created eternal meaning through their practice of "small acts of goodness and great merit." Recorded in history, their moral achievements transcend not only death, but even time, space, and the cosmos.

> On my leisure days, I think fondly of my old friends. Their family status was lowly, positions not prominent, yet their talent was at the highest level and their knowledge was broad. They all have something that is worth recording. Yet, as time goes by, they sink into oblivion not to be heard of again. Thereupon I pass along the facts of their lives and lament them with song-lyrics. As for those who died even before [my old friends], I have recorded their names and written out here the names of their works. I hope scholars who just are beginning to learn will sharpen their attention on song-lyrics. Should they make "ice that is colder than water and blue bluer than the indigo plant,'' then I would be lucky. I entitle this book *The Register of Ghosts*. Alas, I too am a ghost. But if I can make both ghosts already dead and ghosts not yet dead ghosts that will never die, transmitting them far and long through

history, how much luckier would I be! As for those high-minded scholars and students of "nature and principles," who think I have offended the sage's teaching—well, my faction will just eat clamsand talk separately with those who can understand the real taste.[80] 余因暇日，緬懷故人，門第卑微，職位不振，高才博識，俱有可録，歲月彌久，湮沒無聞。遂傳其本末，吊以樂章；複以前乎此者，敘其姓名，述其所作。冀乎初學之士，刻意詞章，使冰寒乎水，青勝於藍，則有幸矣。名之曰《録鬼簿》。嗟乎！余亦鬼也，使已死未死之鬼，作不死之鬼，得以傳遠，余又何幸焉！若夫高尚之士、性理之學，以為得罪於聖門者，吾黨且噉蛤蜊，別與知味者道。

On the twenty-second day of *jiashen* month (the seventh month) in the first year of *zhishun* reign period, or the year *gengwu* (Aug. 6, 1330). Self-prefaced by Zhong Jixian from the ancient city of Bianliang. 至順元年龍集庚午月建甲申二十二日辛未古汴鍾繼先自序。[81]

Since the heart of *ren* and path of *yi* were present for anyone willing to make the effort, status, power, or wealth were irrelevant to the accomplishment of eternal meaning. This provided theoretical justification for Zhong Sicheng to expand the scope of *ren* and *yi* to include writers engaged in urban popular performative genres, thus endowing an eternal significance to their life that was comparable to sage rulers, worthy ministers, loyal ministers and filial sons.

[80] On how to understand the metophrorcal use of the phrase "the taste of clams," see Zha Hongde 查洪德, "Yuanqu 'geli wei' shuo xianyi" 元曲‘蛤蜊味’說獻疑, *Wenyi yanjiu* 文藝研究 2 (2009): 163-65.

[81] *Lu gui bu*, 101.

Unlike these paragons of orthodox virtues, the people Zhong Sicheng desired to immortalize were obscure figures of lowly status and inferior professions. The only recommendable quality they had was their "high talent and broad learning" which, however, were demonstrated in unorthodox genres of colloquial songs and drama. Yet in spite of all that, they managed to find an alternative avenue outside elite culture for self-fulfillment. Within the limits imposed by fate, they strived to fully realize their potential of *ren*. Thus, Zhong's compilation of this book was motivated by his desire to commemorate those who created eternal meaning through their works of unorthodox genres in oral and vernacular literature by claiming a permanent place in history for them and due recognition to their works. For that purpose, Zhong first constructed a living community of writers engaged in oral literary tradition that extended from the past to the future. The community consisted of two major groups of people according to his personal and local perspective. The first group includes his friends (*guren* 故人) and the second group are writers of a previous generation that had passed away. Moreover, the community would extend to the future to include those who come later (*laizhe* 來者). Zhong's proclaimed purpose is two-fold: first, for the sake of everlasting memory of all the writers recorded in *The Register*, including Zhong himself, so that they can become ghosts that will never die; second, for the sake of the genre of *cizhang* to be continued and developed among new generations of writers.

Still, there were two problems Zhong had to deal with, an ideological one and a practical one, both touched upon in his preface. As for the ideological problem, Zhong Sicheng's claim to non-decaying historical memory for writer of popular oral literature challenges existing literary, cultural, and social hierarchies. Up till the composition of

The Register, writers of popular performative literature seldom left any mark in literary history. Zhong clearly knows the unconventionality of his book and expects to encounter harsh criticism from orthodox-minded readers. He solves the problem by simply dismissing them. His unapologetic stance evinces not only Zhong's confidence but also the ideological self-sufficiency of his community. As for an elite authority who could not even appreciate the "flavor of clams," his approval or disapproval meant nothing to Zhong Sicheng. Zhong's uncompromising attitude was remarkable. Traditional political and cultural authorities no longer monopolized social and cultural resources thanks to the growth of cities and development of urban culture particularly since the twelfth century. It is important to note that, holding steadfast to basic Confucian values of *ren* and *yi*, Zhong Sicheng is definitely not rebelling against Confucian teachings as many scholars believe. What makes *The Register* offensive to orthodox-minded Confucians is rather that Zhong subverted existing hierarchical boundaries when he expanded the scope of Confucian values to be more open and inclusive. He believes writers of drama and colloquial songs had created eternal meaning with their talent that was equivalent to orthodox Confucian values embodied by exemplary figures in official history. In this sense, Zhong committed the same crime as did Hu Zhiyu, as their universalistic interpretation of Confucian values was too unorthodox to be accepted by mainstream Confucian literati. Zhong Sicheng represented a new branch of "Confucius' disciples" 聖門之徒, a faction of literate men who had departed from traditional paths of elite literati to actively engage in popular urban culture in a new identity adapted to urban life. Talent and sentiment matched ethical action in defining a worthy character. Given this, we can also view the composition of *The Register* as an act of self-empowerment, as Zhong

Sicheng assumes the role of a historian/biographer himself to authorize meaning created by writers in urban culture. As for the technical problem, Zhong Sicheng was faced with the anonymity of writers except for those of whom he had personal knowledge as well as the lack of textual corpus, due to the nature of oral performance literature. His solution was constructing a pseudo-textual tradition by modelling the structure of the book upon the elite textual tradition. We will examine his strategy in detail later in the next section.

Postscript by Shao Yuanchang 邵元長後序

In Shao Yuanchang's postscript, we find yet another way to interpret the meaning of *The Register*: it is a book of friendship, demonstrating Zhong Sicheng's deep feeling for his friends who wrote for oral performative literature.

> I live a secluded life in the small county of Mercy Creek, and often I sigh over my isolation and ignorance. I have heard about the grand name of Mr. Zhong Jixian for a long time, but did not have the honor of making his acquaintance. In the early autumn of *dingchou* year (1337),[82] by chance I met him at Eastern Filed Study, but he was in a hurry to leave for Mao city.[83] When he returned to the Creek in mid-autumn, he showed me his newly compiled *The Register of Ghosts*, a book about

[82] The first month of autumn in the third year during Zhiyuan reign period 至元三年 (1337), seven years after Zhong Sicheng finished the first version of *Lu gui bu* as dated in his self-preface.

[83] Ningbo in modern time.

current eminent officials and renowned gentlemen who compose songs and lyrics circulating in the world. Zhong was worried that their name would sink into oblivion in the future, so he arranged them in order in a compilation, recorded their biography and talent first, and he then composed lamenting songs for them after. [He hoped] to make them ghosts that will never die, still known after hundreds of thousands of years. Mr. Zhong's intention is indeed venerable and praiseworthy. At his departure, I bade him farewell with a song to the tune of "Consort Xiang." 余僻居慈溪小縣，每嘆孤陋，側聽繼先鍾先生大名久矣，莫遂識荊。丁丑孟秋，邂逅於東皋精舍，忽忽東之鄞城，中秋複回溪上，示餘以新編《録鬼簿》，皆當今顯宦名公詞章行於世者，恐後湮沒姓名，故編次成集，紀其出處才能於其前，度以音律樂章於其後，千萬載之下，知其為何如人，直欲俾其為不死之鬼也。先生之用心，誠可嘉尚。於其行，遂歌〔湘妃曲〕以別：

高山流水少人知	*High Mountain and Flowing Water* is a tune known to very few people.
幾擬黃金鑄子期	And [his hook] is nearly like Boya casting a golden [statue of] Ziqi.
繼先既解其中意	Since [Zhong] Jixian already understands the inner meaning [of this song and of the anecdote as well],
恨相逢何太遲	[My] only regret is that we meet so late!
示佳編古怪新奇。	He showed me this fine compilation, both eccentric and novel:

想達士無他事，	I think that this accomplished *shi* has no other thought,
録名公半是鬼，	[But to] keep a register of renowned gentlemen, half of whom are ghosts,
嘆人生不死何歸。[84]	And to sigh that a person who is born but does not die has no place to return.[85] human life: if not to death, where else do we return?

Little is known about Shao Yuanchang, but according to his self-description Shao was probably a county scholar who had little connection with the community of writers active in urban space. Yet, Zhong Sicheng's "great reputation" was so widespread that it even reached Shao. Although an outsider to the community, Shao was deeply moved by Zhong Sicheng's intention to write the book. In Shao's eyes, Zhong Sicheng was a *zhiyin* 知音 to the writers in *The Register* and their relationship was comparable to that between Boya and Ziqi.[86] Zhong wrote *The Register* for the purpose of preserving the names and stories of these writers so that they will be remembered forever. In the song "Tune of Consort Xiang," Shao compares the book to the golden statue that Ziqi had planned to cast for Boya after Boya passed away. Textual record, just like a golden statue, would never decay in spite of the passage of time.

Interestingly, Shao describes the book as "eccentric and novel" 古怪新奇 in the

[84] *Lu gui bu,* 138-139.

[85] This is a reference to the old pun on *gui* 鬼 "ghosts" as gui 歸 "to return."

[86] Boya 伯牙 was good at playing zither and, by lisitening to his music, Ziqi was able to tell exactly what was on Boya's mind. After Ziqi passed away, Boya smashed his zither and never played again. They embodied exemplary friendship, also known as *zhiyin* 知音。

song, implying its deviation from a presumed norm. Shao clearly saw the unconventionality of *The Register*, because it was a rare attempt to cross the line between the oral performative and the written traditions. From Shao's postface, we can infer some very important information. Shao refers to writers recorded in *The Register* as "prominent officials" 顯宦 and "renowned gentlemen" 名公. However, despite the "prominence" and "renown" they enjoyed, they were in the danger of being forgotten had Zhong Sicheng not made the effort to record their names, stories, and accomplishments. Moreover, given their "prominence" and "renown," it is puzzling that Shao says in the song that their works are "known to very few people" 少人知. The only explanation is that these writers' fame was established and circulated only within the oral tradition, including Zhong Sicheng's "great reputation" as well. More than likely, their fame was local, transient, and bound to become anonymous as time passed by. Their being "known to very few people" was true in the sense that their fame was only regional, and they were unrecognized in the written tradition. From this, we can clearly see two parallel traditions running side by side. Writers of the oral tradition were able to win recognition and fame through their works, but they were subject to the restriction of space and time due to the scope of oral transmission. Moreover, recognition and fame earned in oral performance genres were hard to translate into a textual tradition with deep-rooted genre and cultural hierarchies set by literati. In fact, there was no clear-cut boundary between writers of the two traditions; they still belonged to the same, but more stratified and varied educated community. It is a fact that the colloquial oral tradition attracted ever more attention from the elite, and many of them became aficionados and even writers of drama and colloquial songs. Zhong Sicheng himself was a student of renowned Confucian scholars and

received a classical textual training. Still, in their public pose, these same literati strove to maintain hierarchical boundaries, though these boundaries became more abstract and artificial through time. Publicly, they still refused to acknowledge the value of colloquial performance art as proper literature. *The Register* was Zhong's effort to cross that boundary on behalf of his fellow playwrights and song-writers so that they could break into the written tradition and have the same kind of literary immortality. Shao agreed with Zhong Sicheng's judgement and was a sympathetic supporter of Zhong's efforts. Shao's postscript was evidence of his tacit acknowledgement of the value of colloquial songs and drama, and he lent support to Zhong's challenge of the hierarchy between written and oral traditions and, in turn, between elite and urban cultures. Shao Yuanchang's support was at least one proof of the growing influence of urban writers beyond the urban community and its ability to reach other literati scholars. With *The Register*, Zhong Sicheng managed to promote popular performative genres among literati scholars who were not closely involved in urban culture.

It is remarkable that none of them—Zhu Kai, Zhong Sicheng, and Shao Yuanchang—were apologetic or defensive about Zhong's involvement in popular performative genres. On the contrary, they demonstrate unmistakable assertiveness of the value of their drama and lyrics, particularly Zhu and Zhong. Writing for the performative tradition was not self-abandonment. This is in sharp contrast to the way in which later literati writers and critics retrospectively justified writing in these genres. Late Yuan and Ming critics explain Yuan literati interest in popular genres as a protest to the specific political and social context of Mongol rule, either out of loyalty to Jin dynasty or to Chinese culture. These critics are biased toward high culture and they believe the oral

tradition was a path taken by marginalized literati because they had no better choice. However, as Stephen H. West points out, they had a time-honored lyrical tradition to vent their frustration and millions of easier ways of self-abandonment, so it is against common sense that writing plays or composing songs could be a good choice to indulge oneself.[87] The root of these later theories was elite arrogance toward vernacular culture and writing as crude, vulgar, and lesser, badly in need to be redeemed of redemption and refinement by condescending elite literati who, if not for the particular social and political circumstances introduced by the Mongols, would never deign to stoop so low. As evidenced by Zhong's self-preface and the two postscripts, literati became interested in drama because of its own inate value as literature and performance, rather than using it to vent their frustration. Popular performative genres for them in many ways were even superior to traditional forms of literature. They were closely integrated to urban life and offered a more attractive mode of expression. As will be discussed in the following sections, popular performative genres helped them redefine their identity, create meaning for their life, and build social connections in urban communities. Within these genres, literati were liberated from the limits imposed by the traditional poetic convention.

Construction of a Pseudo-Textual Tradition

Zhong Sicheng constructs a pseudo-textual tradition by creating a lineage of writers (of

[87] See Stephen H. West, "Mongol Influence on the Development of Northern Drama," in John D. Langlois Jr. ed., *China under Mongol Rue* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 437-443.

vastly different background) and attributing works (that are actually not attributable) to them. In addition, he alludes constantly to Confucian classics and he appropriated Confucian ethics to rationalize what are in fact the innate problems of an oral tradition. The lineage consists of seven categories of writers roughly arranged in chronological order as well as thir personal relationship (*xiangzhi* 相知) to Zhong.

1. 前輩已死名公，有樂府行於世者 Renowned gentlemen of the elder generation, already dead, who had music lyrics circulating in the world

2. 方今名公 Renowned gentlemen of our generation

3. 前輩已死名公才人，有所編傳奇行於世者 Renowned gentlemen and talented men of the elder generation who passed away and who had *chuanqi* [*zaju*] complied by them to circulate in the world

4. 方今已亡名公才人，余相知者，為之作傳，以凌波曲弔之 Renowned gentlemen and talented men of our generation, already gone, whom I knew in person, for whom I write their biographies, and whom I mourn with a song to the tune of *Lingbo qu.*

5. 已死才人不相知者 Talented men already dead, whom I did not know well.

6. 方今才人相知者，紀其姓名、行實并所編 Talented men of our generation whom I know well in person, and whose names, careers and works I record here

7. 方今才人，聞名而不相知者 Talented men of our generation, whose name I have heard but whom I do not know in person

All these writers share one common identity—famous sires and talented men 名

公才人, but under that big umbrella they were very different. It was a hybrid group of diverse socio-political, cultural, and ethnical backgrounds. The activity of writing colloquial songs (*yuefu* 樂府) and/or drama (*chuanqi* 傳奇) brought them together into one community. As someone who "had *yuefu* or *chuanqi* circulating in the world," writing *yuefu* 樂府 and/or *chuanqi* 傳奇 was obviously just one among many things they did. In other words, they were not professional song writers or playwrights, at least in Zhong Sicheng's opinion. In terms of their relation to Zhong Sicheng, they can be divided into two groups: those who were personally known to Zhong 相知者 and those who were not 不相知者. For "those who he knows personally," Zhong knew their talent through personal contact, so their biographies are characterized by a personal touch and some individuation. They belonged to the inner circle of his community. For "those whom he did not know personally" 不相知者, separated from Zhong by either death or geographical space, he learned of their talent through their reputation 名. They are people Zhong has "heard of" (*xiangwen zhe* 相聞者). Their individuality had long faded into the oral tradition. They formed the outer circle of the community. With knowledge gained through his own personal contact as well as that heard from others, Zhong Sicheng built a universal community of talented men across time, space, and the limit of his personal knowledge.

The first and second categories:

1. 前輩已死名公，有樂府行於世者 Renowned gentlemen of the elder generation, already dead, who had musical songs circulating in the world

2. 方今名公 Renowned gentlemen of our generation

Most of the first two categories of writers were well-known ministers and officials in high government posts, and they are recorded differently from those other less prominent writers who inhabited other categories. Zhong deliberately marks out their official titles. There is no consistency in the naming system. We find *ming*, *zi*, *hao*, or even nickname are used in a mixture and the title of their official position is far from accurate either.[88]

Dong 董 (*xing*, surname) *Jieyuan* 解元 “Master” (nickname): Master Dong

Taibao 太保 “Grand Guardian” (official post) Liu 劉 (*xing*, surname) *gong* 公 “Duke” (honorific title) Bingzhong 秉忠 (*ming*, name): Duke Liu Bingzhong, the Grand Guardian

Shi 史 (*xing*, surname) *zhongcheng* 中丞 “vice censor-in-chief” (official post): Vice Censor-in-chief Shi

Sa 薩 (*xing*, surname) 天錫 (*zi*, courtesy name) *zhaomo* 照磨 “account clerk” (official post): Sa Tianxi [Sadula], Account Clerk

Hu 胡 (*xing*, surname) Zishan 紫山 Purple Mountain (*hao*, title) *xuanwei* 宣慰 “pacification commissioner” (official post): Purple Mountain Hu, Pacification Commissioner

Zhang 張 (*xing*, surname) Jiu 九 “the Ninth” (family rank) *yuanshuai* 元帥

[88] Wang Gang lists some examples about the inaccuracies. See Wang Gang, “Qianyan,” 11-15.

(official post)

The way they are referred here in *The Register*—"one's name + his office title"—carries special connotation, something similar to a performer's stage name. These "stage names" introduce the identity they established in the popular oral culture as songwriters instead of government officials. In the oral tradition, their identity of songwriters prioritized their identity of ministers and officials. Unlike other categories, none of them were attributed with any works of *yuefu*, even though their "*yuefu* have been circulating in the world" 有樂府行於世. This is perhaps due to the practical reason that popular *yuefu* songs could not definitely be attributed to any one person, since oral transmission could radically change songs that, once performed nd popular, reverted to a kind of common reservoir. Moreover, like Zhong Sicheng, most writers would not keep the manuscript of their songs and collect them like essays or poems. Probably they never thought of putting their names down for such "trivial" writings, let alone collect them afterwards. Publishing them in a printing house was a different matter: it could be profitable, a point I will discuss later. Besides, these writers' names and official titles already carry enough cultural currency among his community that there was no need for Zhong Sicheng to go out of his way to invent a list of their works to add weight to their names ad legitimatize their place.

Zhong Sicheng's commentary on the first two categories:

Ministers and officials in high positions recorded on the right side were all men of high talent and prominent fame, and they also took an interest in musical tunes.

Their [classical] writing and governance set the exemplar for an entire generation, for this is what they studied every day. In contrast, as for music and songs, because kindness and gentleness accumulated inside, the fine blossoms [of their musicl tunes] naturally were produced outside. Since the emergence of lyrics set to music, those who have made a name [for their skills in it] are exhaustively listed here. Romantic subtlety comes from innate nature, while rustic roughness is not worth mentioning at all. 右前輩公卿居要路者，皆高才重名，亦於樂府留心。蓋文章政事，一代典型，乃平日之所學；而歌曲辭章，由於和順積中，英華自然發外。自有樂章以來，得其名者止於此。蓋風流蘊藉，自天性中來；若夫村樸鄙陋，固不必論也。[89]

The implied message of this commentary is that talent demonstrated in composing music and songs (*gequ cizhang*) 歌曲辭章 is equal to that shown in writing classical essays and administering the state. The reason is that the former is all natural and spontaneous, an authentic expression of the inner harmony, while the latter is acquired through deliberate effort and is completely instrumental. Such a view is closely related to Mengzi's idea of "genuine capacity" (*liangneng* 良能) or "genuine knowledge" (*liangzhi* 良知).

Mengzi said, "That which people are capable of without learning is their genuine capability. That which they know without pondering is their genuine

[89] *Lu gui bu*, 104.

knowledge.[90] 孟子曰：人之所不學而能者，其良能也；所不慮而知者，其良知也。[91]

Classical writings and governance were what they studied every day because of their role as ministers and officials in high position, so their expertise in these two areas is a product of constant education and socialization which is removed from their natural inclinations. In contrast, songs and music are vehicles for uncensored expression of inner feelings. Zhong Sicheng implicitly appropriated Mengzi's ideas on ethics to promote the status of performative tradition to be ever higher than orthodox endeavors of literati to write classical essays or govern the state. Relying on the authority of Confucian classics, Zhong Sicheng reverses the conventional hierarchy of skills. Since the key was unmediated inner harmony, Zhong has to remove whatever rustic and vulgar 村樸鄙陋 elements out of the picture.

The third category:

3. 前輩已死名公才人，有所編傳奇行於世者 Renowned gentlemen and talented men of the elder generation, who compiled *zaju* that have been circulating in the world

Zhong's commentary on the third category:

[The list of] renowned gentlemen of the previous generation who composed *zaju* ends with this passage. "Isn't it true that talents are difficult to find?" I live off

[90] *Mengzi* 7A15, in Norton, 174.

[91] *Chongkan Song ben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji,* 232a.

in a secluded corner, so the range of what I hear and see is narrow and limited. With talented people so scattered in the empire, how can there be any place that that has no talents of its own? If heard of, they must be distinguished; if encountered, they must be known. For now I simply record their names here. As for the plays they compiled, my friend Lu Zhongliang obtained [the list of titles] from Mr. Wu Kezhai, but it is not enough to cover all the details. I was born too late to attend their company at the end of table and mats, and I know nothing about their life and career. Therefore I would not presume to write their biography or songs to lament them. 右前輩編撰傳奇名公，僅止於此，才難之云，不其然乎？余僻處一隅，聞見淺陋，散在天下，何地無才？蓋聞則必達，見則必知矣。姑敘其姓名於右。其所編撰，余友陸君仲良，得之於克齋先生吳公，然亦未盡其詳。余生也晚，不得預几席之末，不知出處，故不敢作傳以弔云。[92]

In contrast to writers in the first two categories, writers in the third category are obscure names of much lower social position. Zhong Sicheng attaches lists of play titles under the names of playwrights and, by doing so, claims authorial rights on behalf of these writers. Instead of catchy official titles, it is the play titles ascribed to them that lend these writers weight. With the kernel of a shared story potently evocative of collective cultural memory, these titles effectually tap into the resources of shared cultural repertoire so as to enhance the reputation of these writers' names. According to Zhong, the play lists attributed to each playwright were provided by his friend Lu Zhongliang who obtained

[92] *Lu gui bu,* 117.

them from another mutual friend Wu Kezhai.[93] Zhong Sicheng himself could not vouch for the validity of the lists or the attribution of titiles to names. Both Lu and Wu were recorded in *The Register* under the category of "talented men of our generation whom I know well in person"方今才人相知者. It is unclear who is responsible for the authorial attribution of these play titles to individual writers, Wu Kezhai, Lu Zhongliang or Zhong Sicheng. On the one hand, Zhong made a clear disclaimer of responsibility of any inaccuracy, omission, and mistakes in the lists. On the other hand, Zhong still list these plays and attributes them to individual writers. While fully aware of the unreliability, or even improbability, of the list of writers and attribution of plays, Zhong nonetheless includes them in his book, making a stretched effort to assimilate production of drama to the production of literary textual genres. By doing so, he intentionally misled readers, who turned out to be more than willing to accept the ascription, thanks to an ingrained notion of authorship and the relationship between text and character of the writer. Zhong's strategy worked out well, because for hundreds of years, people have been using *The Register* as the primary source to ascribe authorship to extant play texts, to reconstruct the historical development of *zaju*, and to map the geographical distribution of dramatists in the Yuan, seldom questioning the reliability of Zhong's record or his attribution of texts to author. The relationship between a title, a play and play text is so tenuous that the very concept of "authorial attribution" is ill-founded in the context of drama in the Yuan period.[94] The performative nature of *zaju* determines that it

[93] Wu Kezhai's courtesy name (*zi* 字) was Renqing 仁卿, and Kezhai was his sobriquet (*hao* 號). For more information on him, see Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, "Wu Renqing," in *Yuanqu jia kaolue* 元曲家考略 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 144-45.

[94] On the issue of "authorship" in Yuan drama, see Stephen H. West, "Text and Ideology: Ming Editors and Northern Drama," in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, 329-73, particularly his discussion on the

intrinsically did not rely on text for its production and transmission. A play title is not necessarily linked to only a single play; rather it might point to multiple plays (the so-called *erben* 二本 or *ciben* 次本, second texts). Likewise, a play can potentially generate a different text each time it is performed on the stage.[95] The role of a literati writer in *zaju* production was fundamentally different from his role in other literary genres: he had to collaborate with other parties including performers, musicians and perhaps even the audience, rather than play solo as in writing poetry or prose. Therefore, Zhong Sicheng's ascription of individual plays to a definite authorial identity following the model of traditional, text-based literary genres is essentially a sleight of hand. A telling detail that illustrates Zhong's agenda is that there is no play title in *The Register* that is not ascribed to an individual author and simply labeled as "anonymous" 無名氏, a unique feature that distinguishes *The Register* from other drama catalogues before and after it. For instance, *The Sequel to The Register of Ghosts* (*Lu gui bu xubian* 錄鬼簿續編) and *A Formulary of Correct Sounds in An Era of Great Harmony* (*Taihe zhengyin pu* 太和正音譜) both contain a section of "plays by anonymous playrights." This is an early tradition, beginning with the list of farce plays entitled "A Categorization and Account of Official Scripts of Farce" ("Guanben zaju duanshu" 官本雜劇段數) in Zhou Mi's 周密 late Song *Wulin jiushi* 武林舊事 and "A Title List of Northern Farces from the Guild" ("Yuanben mingmu" 院本名目) in Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 *Nancun chuogenglu* 南村輟耕錄 which

earliest text of Yuan *zaju* on pp. 331-334

[95] Cf. Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, "Shi *Lu gui bu* suowei ciben" 釋錄鬼簿所謂次本, *Cangzhou ji* 滄州集, in *Sun Kaidi wenji* 孫楷第文集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 266-71; Wilt L. Idema, "Emulation through Readaptation in Yüan and Early Ming Tsa-chü," *Asian Major* 3.1 (1990): 113-128; Kang Baocheng 康保成, "Yuan zaju zhong de *ciben*" 元雜劇中的次本, *Wenxue pinglun* 文學評論 6 (2003): 15-21.

mention no authors at all. The conspicuous absence of plays by anonymous playwrights in *The Register* suits Zhong's overall purpose to memorialize talented people through biography and a bibliography. But, by giving credit only to the playwright, he essentially ignores the contributions of other parties in the collective production. Though understandable and essential to achieve his purpose, it remains a disingenuous act of imposing the elite practice of ascribable authorship for a real or presumed text of a popular performative genre.

Lack of personal knowledge forced Zhong to rely entirely on their reputation and hearsay to collect information about these writers. He seems to have been aware that any reputation transmitted orally was unreliable and seriously limited by space and time. Zhong's solution to this problem was to over-rely on reputation of a scarce body of talents (*cainan* 才難), an obvious allusion to the *Analects*, which says,

> Shun had five ministers and the world was well governed.
>
> King Wu said, "I have ten ministers in charge of establishing order."
>
> The Master commented, "*It is said that talent is difficult to find—is it not the case?* Virtue flourished as never before after the reigns of Yao and Shun, and yet [even among King Wu's ten ministers] there was a woman included, so he really only had nine good men."[96] 舜有臣五人而天下治。武王曰：“予有亂臣十人。”孔子曰：“才難，不其然乎？唐虞之際，於斯為盛。有婦人焉，九人而

[96] *Analects* 8.20, Edward Slingerland, *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 84.

已。”[97]

Adopting a flexible standard, Zhong summons up Confucius' statement that there were always more neglected than recognized talent. Thus his stated geographical limitation provides a good pretext for him to use hearsay evidence at the expense of accuracy. Furthermore, Zhong takes an expedient approach to equate reputation (*wen* 聞) to real accomplishment (*da* 達). Anyone familiar with Confucian classics would easily see that this apparently confident assertion is actually a parody of Confucius' words in *Analects*,

> Zizhang inquired, "What must a scholar-official be like before he can be considered accomplished (*da* 達)?" 子張問：“士何如斯可謂之達矣？”
>
> The master replied, "What do you mean by 'accomplished'?" 子曰：“何哉，爾所謂達者？”
>
> "Sure to be renowned (*wen* 聞), whether serving the state or a noble family." 子張對曰：“在邦必聞，在家必聞。”
>
> The master said, "*That is merely being 'renowned,' not being 'accomplished*.' Someone who is accomplished is upright in his native substance and fond of rightness. He examines other people's words and observes their demeanor, and always takes the interests of his inferiors into account when considering something—no matter whether serving the state or a noble family. Someone who is renowned, on the other hand, adopts the appearance of Goodness but violates it in his actual

[97] *Chongkan Songben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji*, 72b.

conduct, all the while never doubting that he deserves to be called Good. Thus, he is sure to be renowned, whether serving the state or a noble family."[98]子曰：“是聞也，非達也。夫達也者，質直而好義，察言而觀色，慮以下人。在邦必達，在家必達。夫聞也者，色取仁而行違，居之不疑。在邦必聞，在家必聞。”[99]

Confucius corrects his disciple Zizhang's confusion of being "renowned" and being "accomplished" by drawing a distinct line between the two. Being *da* means the unity of one's interior moral character and exterior social practice. On the contrary, being *wen* can mean a false reputation brought about by a virtuous appearance yet not substantiated by the exercise of one's inner nature of *ren*. No doubt Zhong Sicheng would not seriously believe these two were the same. It was rather an act of expediency, as implied by the word *gu* 姑. His limited scope due to geographical isolation from other regions made it difficult to know talents elsewhere. As Zhong Sicheng honestly admits, born too late to have the chance to meet the writers in this category, he knew practically nothing about them except for their names. Individually, these writers were merely empty names of vague, faceless figures, whose personality submerged into the oral or performative tradition. It is only the accumulated weight of names, titles, and plays pushed together that gives them meaning and a place in *The Register.* In doing this Zhong created an imagined community of "renowned gentlemen" and "talented persons" to which he and his friends could belong. But as we will see later on, when it comes to the inner circle of writers personally known to Zhong Sicheng, paradoxically, mere reputation is insufficient

[98] Slingerland, 134-35.

[99] *Chongkan Songben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji*, 110a.

to prove their talent and earn them a spot in *The Register* anymore. The equation of "being renowned" 聞 and "being accomplished" 達 applies only to the outer circle.

The fourth category:

4. 方今已亡名公才人，余相知者，為之作傳，以凌波曲弔之 Renowned gentlemen and talented men of our generation, already gone, whom I know well, for whom I write a biography, and whom I mourn with a song to the tune of *Lingbo qu.*

Zhong's commentary on the fourth category:

> The world does not lack for people who have read myriads of books, composed civil examination essays of three fields, seized top plac in the candidate list, and ascended to the first rank. As for those who are content with [a recluse's life in] hills and vales, find delight in the Way and preserve their intent, they are also many. But, rare indeed are those who, in their spare moment from scholarship or a brief spell of relaxation from work, whose spring-trigger of the mind miraculously tranforms and adapts, who have thorough insight into the rules of the world, who can transpose modes and change keys [to compose music], or ferret through the strange and curious [to collect stories], or take fine writing to create something that is playful and fun. This is why I have to compose these lamenting songs. I would consider myself lucky if readers do not sneer at me. 若以讀萬卷書、作三場文，占奪巍科、首登甲第者，世不乏人。其或甘心巖壑、樂道守志者，亦多有之。但於學問之餘，事務之暇，心機靈變，世法通疏，移宮換羽，搜奇索怪，而以文章爲戲玩者，誠絶無而僅

有也。此哀誄之所以不得不作也，觀者幸勿誚焉。[100]

Writers of this category occupy a special place in *The Register*. Each of them is given an individualized biography that describes not only their family background and profession, but also their looks, personality, specialty, and even idiosyncrasies. Zhong also recounts in their biography his close relationship and bond with these writers, as well as his deep sorrow over their death. Some of them were best friends for decades. In addition to a short biography, a lament song is dedicated to each of them too, in which Zhong Sicheng summarizes their achievements and expresses his reminiscences of them in a lyrical form. None of the writers in any other category receives such a song of lament by Zhong Sicheng, and this fact alone shows the place these writers held in Zhong's esteem. Moreover, nearly every writer in this category has a list of play titles attributed to them. The longest list is that of Zheng Guangzu's 鄭光祖, and includes seventeen plays, a realistic number even for a prolific playwright, particularly if we remember the unbelievably long list of about sixty plays attributed to Guan Hanqing.[101] Their works of colloquial songs, riddles, and other genres of popular arts are mentioned in their biographies, including collections published in print form.

Zhong's commentary on these writers is as good as a proud declaration of their new identity as a group of non-conformist literati distanced from the orthodox paths. He first describes two types of literati opting for paths of worldly success through passage of the civil examination, or moral purity by preserving the Way in reclusion. Both are

[100] *Lu gui bu*, 131.

[101] See *The Register*, 104-6.

respectable choices within social convention for elite literati. Writers under this category are different. They devoted themselves to reading and studying, but not for the purpose of preparing for the civil examination. Unlike the second type, they embraced and enjoyed social life to the full. They knew the way of the world very well, but their learning and wisdom prevented them from drowning in the petty calculations of quotidian existence and helped them cultivate interests in music and strange stories in their leisure time. Most significantly, writing for them was a game to play (*xiwan* 戲玩), a completely different attitude about textualproduction from that of traditional Confucian literati. Though a marginalized group, Zhong is very proud of them, even if only due to their sheer rarity and their pioneering spirit unrestrained by conventional rules. Zhong obviously thinks of them more highly than the first two types of literati who were merely following clichéd paths. Zhong Sicheng's confidence is impressive and well demonstrates the rapidly growing self-awareness and pride of a community of writers who deviated from the elite textual tradition to participate in popular performative text. They ushered in a new era of Chinese literature and culture.

The fifth category:

5. 已死才人不相知者 Talented men already dead, whom I do not know well.

In spite of the name of this category, we find quite a few writers Zhong Sicheng clearly "knew" or was "acquainted with." Hu Zhengchen 胡正臣 was a friend of Jin Renjie, Chen Yiren, and other writers within Zhong's social circle (*zhugong* 諸公). Hu's son,

Cunshan 存善 was definitely known to Zhong Sicheng, judging from the praise that Zhong lavished on Cunshan's filial acts. Li Xianqing 李顯卿 once met Zhong but had lost touch. Li Qixian 李齊賢 and Liu Xuanzi 劉宣子 were fellow students with Zhong, even if they seemed later never to meet again. One way to explain Zhong's apparent inconsistency, as suggested by Wang Gang, is not to interpret the phrase "not known to me" 不相知 literally. In his opinion, the terms *xiangzhi* and *bu xiangzhi* 不相知 in Zhong Sicheng's usage means instead whether they "stayed in contact with Zhong and kept each other updated about their lives or not" 是否還保持聯繫或知其下落.[102] Wang's explanation makes sense to some extent, since "knowing" someone is a graded notion contingent upon the closeness of the two persons, which by itself is in constant change. If we look at this from the perspective of lineage construction, it is more plausible that this category is a rhetorical device meant to balance the lineage so that it includes writers both known and unknown to Zhong Sicheng, either dead or alive. Therefore, he simply grouped all the dead writers he knew, but with whom he had no emotional tie roughly under this category without paying attention to the nuanced spectrum of meanings of the phrase *bu xiangzhi*. Moreover, there is no commentary on this category of writers specifically, which further indicates they are probably perfunctorily inserted somewhat later.

The sixth category:

[102] A kind of quasi-membership to the community of writers Zhong belonged to is implied by the term *xiangzhi*. If a writer was a member, he naturally should be in constant contact with Zhong Sicheng. See Wang Gang 王鋼 ed. and annot., "Preface" 前言, *Jiaoding* Lu gui bu *sanzhong* 校訂錄鬼簿三種, 11.

6. 方今才人相知者，紀其姓名、行實并所編 Talented men of our generation whom I know well, and whose names, careers and works I record here

Zhong's commentary on the sixth category:

Famous gentlemen of current age are recorded here: their talents and works are all more or less at the same level of excellence so that it is hard to judge who is better. About half of those who took over from predecessors are now underworld Gentlemen of the Cultivation of Literature.[103] Those those whose names are bandied about today all deserve respect and admiration from young scholars. "The years do not wait for us," so hurry and work hard! Nonetheless, there are those whose writings are well-crafted but they are unwilling to display their works. There are also those who are just slap things together and eagerly send them off to have printing blocks cut. These are just like merchandise that evades taxation—how can they be allowed to circulate in the market without being checked and verified? For this reason, even though these people have achieved certain fame, I would not record their names here.

右當今名公，才調製作，不相上下，蓋繼乎前輩者半為地下修文郎矣！其聲名藉藉乎當今者，後學之士，可不斂衽而敬慕焉。歲不我與，急為勉旃！ 雖然，其或辭藻雖工，而不欲出示；或妄意穿鑿，而亟欲傳梓，政猶匿稅之物，不經批驗者，其何以行之哉？故有名而不錄。[104]

[103] After Su Shao 蘇韶 died, his spirit came back to visit his sons. He told them that Yan Yuan 顏淵 and Bu Shang 卜商 were Gentlemen for Cultivation of Literature in the underworld government. See Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) et al. comp., *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 2528-30. The title *xiuwen lang* 修文郎 is used to refer to talented men who met an untimely death.

[104] *Lu gui bu*, 136.

Writers still alive are an important link in the lineage. They are successors to writers already passed away, and they will join their predecessors after they die and become underworld officials in charge of writing. The community is thus extended to the underworld, crossing the gap between life and death. Moreover, they establish models from which young scholars can learn, thus extending the community into the future. The imperative that urges the living to work hard conveys a strong sense of urgency due to the passage of time. Although the community of talented writers knows no boundary of time or space as they are all "ghosts that will never die," the life of any individual simply is transient. There is, in these passages, a sense of poignancy felt when Zhong had to move certain writers from the category of "living" to "already dead" in the process of compiling *The Register*. It is noteworthy that when it comes to writers personally known to Zhong Sicheng, reputation or talent alone was not enough to guarantee an entry in *The Register*. Two types of writers are excluded from *The Register* in spite of their reputation: first, those who are too reserved to share their works with others; second, those who are so profit-driven that they hastily send off their shoddy works to the printer. This exclusion allows Zhong Sicheng to distance his imagined community from popular writers, with whose values he cannot agree.

The seventh category:

7. 方今才人，聞名而不相知者 Talented men of our generation, whose name I heard but whom I do not know in person

Zhong's commentary on the seventh category:

The list of those who I heard about stops here. There are so-called "*shi* of the

village," "*shi* of a region" and "*shi* of the sub-celestial realm." For people of illustrious repute, their names would spread from a village to a state, until they reach throughout the realm under heaven. Therefore, I did not record the names that are not heard. 已上有聞者止如此。蓋有一鄉之士，一國之士，天下之士，名譽昭然者，自鄉及國，可及天下矣，故無聞者不及錄。[105]

Although living in the same age, spatial distance prevented Zhong Sicheng from any personal contact with writers in this category. It was only their reputation that traveled into regions beyond where they were active. The gradually enlarging groups of *shi* "in a village," "in a state", and "in the world" indicates the wider and wider areas where one's reputation can reach. Although these terms are borrowed from *Mengzi*, their connotation and focus are completely different,

Mengzi said to his disciple Wan Zhang, "*If you are one of the finest nobles in a village, then befriend the other fine nobles of that village. If you are one of the finest nobles in a state, then befriend the other fine nobles of that state. If you are one of the finest nobles in the world, then befriend the other fine nobles of the world.* If befriend with the other fine nobles of the world is still not enough, then ascend to examine the ancients. Recite their *Odes* and read their *Documents*. But can you do this without understanding what of sort of people they were? Because of this, you must examine their era. This is how friendship ascends." [106] 孟子謂萬章曰： "一鄉

[105] *Lu gui bu*, 137.

[106] *Mengzi* 10.8 , Norton, 141.

之善士，斯友一鄉之善士；一國之善士，斯友一國之善士；天下之善士，斯友天下之善士。以友天下之善士為未足，又尚論古之人。頌其詩，讀其書，不知其人，可乎？是以論其世也。是尚友也。”[107]

In *Mengzi*, the terms *shi* “in a village,” “in a state,” and “in the world” refer to three different stages of self-cultivation one goes through by continuous effort. As one befriends people at the same level as oneself, each stage of development expands that circle of friendship. Therefore, “a village,” “a state,” and “the world” are less geographical than they are a metaphor denoting the level of one’s moral accomplishment. This is corroborated by the highest level, that is, to befriend the ancients, overcoming the boundary of time by studying their texts and examining their context. By contrast, Zhong Sicheng changes that back to their literal meaning of the geographical space one’s reputation covers. Again, he appropriated quotes from classical texts on personal ethics to justify his creation of an all-encompassing community of writers of oral performative texts.

To sum up this section, the purpose of *The Register* is for the sake of constructing a community of writers in the past, the present and the future, as well as for the sake of Zhong himself as an individual person. The community was in a sense the individual writ large. Even though some male performers are recorded in *The Register,* they are included in their capacity as writers rather than performers. No female performer is recorded in *The Register* at all.

[107] *Chongkan Songben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji,* 188b.

Zhong Sicheng's Local Community in Hangzhou

The structure of *The Register* and, indeed, the universal community of writers Zhong constructs are centered upon his personal and subjective perspective, delineated by concentric circles of friends that radiate out from his own subject position. Those writers personally known to Zhong Sicheng were at the center of his community. They were people with whom Zhong Sicheng was most familiar and with whom he could identify with. Their biographical accounts and lamentative songs were written with such a strong personal touch and deep emotional involvement that we can see vividly their personalities and even idiosyncrasies. This is extremely rare in any oral tradition and therefore the most valuable part of *The Register*. Weaved together, their biographies depict a local, personal, and autonomous space, a community populated by writers participating in popular oral performative literature. They reveal a significant and far-reaching reorientation of literati culture manifested in changed ideas about cultural competency, about writing and text, as well as changed social roles that led to new social relationships among themselves and within the heterogeneous urban community.

New Conception of Cultural Competency

From Zhong Sicheng's description of these writers' talent and accomplishment, we find a significant change in the conception of cultural competency. Although classical textual learning was still an important quality for most of the writers, expertise in popular performative genres and urban entertainment was even more important. "Lofty talent and

broad learning" 高才博識 emphasizes more one's familiarity and versatility in urban culture than Confucian scholarship or elite genres such as poetry and prose writing. Zhou Wenzhi 周文質, also known as Zhongbin 仲彬, was Zhong Sicheng's best friend for twenty years. Zhong thus describes Zhou's talent:

> [Wenzhi was a man of] slim frame and look, of broad and profound learning, a refined nature and innovative literary style. His family for generations was registered as a *ru* household, so he had to stoop to take the post of route clerk. He was good at painting, dancing and singing. Moreover he was an expert in music suites and harmonizing music notes. His character was generous and gallant, ever ready to help other people and attentive to his guests. 體貌清臞，學問該博，資性工巧，文筆新奇。家世儒業，俯就路吏。善丹青，能歌舞，明曲調，諧音律。性尚豪俠，好事敬客。[108]

Zhao Liangbi 趙良弼, also known as Junqing 君卿, had been Zhong Sicheng's classmate from the time they were small children. They studied together under the instruction of the same scholars Deng Shanzhi, Cao Keming and Liu Shengzhi and were fellow students in the prefectural academy as well. Basically, they shared the almost the same educational background. About him, Zhong wrote:

> There was no area—from debating on [topics in] classics and history and

[108] *Lu gui bu*, 128.

exchange of poetry and prose, up to music suites and short songs, riddles and plays—that he did not probe in depth. He compiled *Pear Flower Rain*, and its lyrics were very beautiful. … Zhao was an expert in divination by splitting characters, and good at painting. But, since these were only trivial skills, I therefore do not record them in detail. 公經史問難、詩文酬唱，及樂章小曲，隱語傳奇，無不究竟。所編《梨花雨》，其辭甚麗。……能裁字，善丹青，但以末技，故不備録。[109]

Fan Kang 范康, also known as Zi'an, was well-versed in both orthodox Confucianism and popular genres.

[He] understood the "nature-and-principle" discourse [of the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism] and was good at elaborating it [to others]. He could write song-lyrics and had a grasp of musical scales and modes. Because Wang Bocheng had produced a play *Li Taibai Banished to Yeliang*, Fan then wrote a new one *Du Zimei Roaming at Serpentine Pond*. As soon as he plied his pen-brush, he could produce novel and marvelous works. No one could reach his level. 明性理，善講解，能詞章，通音律。因王伯成有《李太白貶夜郎》，乃編《杜子美游曲江》，一下筆即新奇，蓋天資卓異，人不可及也。[110]

Shen He 沈和, also known as Hefu 和甫, was credited as the initiator of combining

[109] *Lu gui bu*, 124-25.

[110] *Lu gui bu*, 120.

southern and northern tunes.

> [He was] good at belle-lettres and was skilled in bantering and joking. Born with a refined and elegant nature, he was at the same time a virtuoso of music. The blending of southern and northern tunes started with Hefu. His compositions such as *Eight Scenes of Xiao and Xiang Rivers, Bitter-Sweet Foe,* and others were exquisitely crafted. In his late years he moved to Jiangzhou and passed away only a few years ago. He was the one that people of Jiangxi called "A Sourthern Guan Hanqing." 能詞翰，善談謔，天性風流，兼明音律。以南北調合腔，自和甫始，如《瀟湘八景》、《歡喜冤家》等曲，極為工巧。後居江州，近年方卒。江西稱為"蠻子關漢卿"者是也。[111]

In the biography of Wu Benshi 吳本世, also known as Zhongli 中立, Zhong Sicheng wrote,

> [He was] perspicuous and intelligent by nature, and fond of writing lyrics, riddles, and colloquial songs. He has left behind a short manuscript *Popular Songs by the Studio of Original Way* and several thousand poetic riddles. 天資明敏，好為詞章、隱語、樂府。有《本道齋樂府》小藁，及詩謎數千篇。[112]

[111] *Lu gui bu*, 121.

[112] *Lu gui bu*, 127-28.

Although Hu Zhengchen was under the category of “Talented Men Already Dead, Whom I Do Not Know in Person,” he was a friend of many of Zhong Sicheng’s friends who appear in *The Register*. Thus Zhong’s description of Hu’s talent should be reliable enough.

> He could sing all of the *Story of the Western Wing* by Dong jieyuan, from “The virtuous transformative power of our emperor” [the very first line] up to the very last stanza. As for ancient *yuefu*, slow songs, and *zhuanling* by Li Shuangya, there was nothing he did not know thoroughly. 董解元《西廂記》自“吾皇德化”，至於終篇，悉能歌之。至於古之樂府、慢詞、李霜涯賺令，無不周知。[113]

Lu Dengshan 陸登善, also known as Zhongliang 仲良, was the person who gave Zhong Sicheng the list of play titles attributed to writers of the previous generation who wrote plays, which he got it from another friend Wu Kezhai. Zhong Sicheng wrote about his achievements:

> [He] is skilled in composing song lyrics and singing. His works include popular songs and hidden meanings. 能詞、能謳，有樂府、隱語。[114]

Different from traditional literati’s image of a scholar-poet-official, writers in Zhong Sicheng’s local community strike us more as a composer, a lyricist, a singer, a riddle-

[113] *Lu gui bu*, 129.

[114] *Lu gui bu*, 135.

maker, a witty conversationalist, or even a painter. Unorthodox in the conventional curriculum of a literati gentleman, these skills became indispensable for writers in Zhong's circle. Their classical learning actually lent them an advantage to become master of urban culture and performative genres. In terms of their skills in performative genres and entertainment, we can see a clear parallel between these talented writers and courtesan performers whom we will discuss in the third chapter.

New Meaning of Writing

Changes in the connotation of cultural competency took place hand in hand with changed attitude toward writing (*wenzhang* 文章). In Zhong's commentary on the fifth category of writers, he says that they "took writing as a game to play" 以文章為戲玩. From traditional conception of *wenzhang* as "an important achievement in the governing of the state, an imperishable grand affair" 經國之大業，不朽之盛事 [115] to "a game to play," this is a fundamental shift of attitude. Writing in popular culture is mainly for the purpose of entertainment and self-realization. It does not have to be a vehicle for political ambition, social concern, and moral teachings. Popular genres facilitated such a change of attitude toward writing in the writer's mind. More specifically, colloquial songs and drama allowed the writer to freely adopt different dramatic personae to express feelings inappropriate for the image of a literati-scholar. A good example is found in Liao Yi's 廖毅 biography which recorded both a colloquial song (excerpt) and a quatrain poem by him.

[115] This statement is found in Cao Pi's 曹丕 "*Dian lun* Lun wen" 典論論文. Cf. Robert Joe Cutter, "To the Manner Born? Nature and Nurture in Early Medieval Chinese Literary Thought," 53-71.

[Liao] Yi, also known as Hongdao, was from Jiankang. In the spring of the third year of Taiding reign period, or the year *bingyin* (1326), I first met him via my friend Zhou Zhongbin, and immediately we were like old friends who had known each other all our lives. From time to time he would show me one or two pieces of his old work, and all of them were outstanding. For example, “A Flicker of Numinous Light” to the tune of Yue employed a lantern as a metaphor; the “*Zhuansha*” coda in *Xianlü* mode goes:

> “Just because Wang Kui was shallow in his feeling
> And betrayed Guiying’s love,
> Now those impudent wenches of floss and flowers would never value us peachy students!”

[They were full of] vigor and novelty, never imitative at all. …. He used to inscribe on the wall in the Temple of King Wu a song-lyric “Zhegui ling,” as well as a quatrain that goes:

> Vast and boundless is the ambition that soars above the clouds,
> Grand and lofty is the mind to serve the state.
> A loyal soul like evening and morning tides,
> Will never disappear or sink away [i.e., emotionally also “to fall into despair”].

The intensity of his feelings vainly increases one’s joyless melancholy.

毅字弘道。建康人。泰定三年丙寅(1326)春，因余友周仲彬與之會，即敘平生歡。時出一二舊作，皆不凡俗。如〔越調〕“一點靈光”，借燈為喻；

〔仙呂・賺煞〕曰：“因王魁淺情，將桂英薄幸，致令得潑煙花不重俺俏書生。”發越新鮮，皆非蹈襲。……題伍王廟壁有〔折桂令〕一曲，及有絕句：“浩浩凌雲志，巍巍報國心。忠魂與潮汐，萬古不消沉。”其感慨激烈，徒增悵怏。[116]

Zhong Sicheng recognized Liao's talent through his works of colloquial songs and they became good friend upon the first meeting. Skill in writing colloquial songs was regarded as a legitimate means to demonstrate one's literary talent as good as skill in writing poetry or classical essay. Liao's early death put an end to his talent and ambition. Zhong Sicheng's comment on the song focuses on its technical novelty, while his comment on Liao's quatrain poetry focuses on its emotive intensity of his political ambition to serve the court and the people. In the colloquial song, Liao Yi adopts in first-person 俺 the dramatic persona of a lovesick student snubbed by his prostitute lover. Heart-broken and dizzy-headed, he ridiculously ascribed his love being unrequited to Wang Kui's 王魁 betrayal of Guiying 桂英, a well-known story in popular literature. By accusing Wang Kui, the archetypal faithless lover who betrayed love for fame and status, of ruining the credit of other Confucian students among prostitutes, the student prioritizes romantic love over ambition.[117] In contrast, in the quatrain poem inscribed on the wall of Wu Zixu's 伍

[116] *Lu gui bu*, 125-126.

[117] Wang was a poor student who fell in love with Guiying and promised to marry her. With Guiying's help Wang was able to travel to the capital and was selected as the top candidate in the examination. He was appointed an official and later married a girl of a big family. Sorrow stricken, Guiying committed suicide. In her vengeful punishment, Wang was haunted by her ghost to death. The story of Wang Kui and Guiying was recorded in 侍兒小名錄拾遺 and also in Luo Ye's 醉翁談錄. It was adopted into southern play in Southern Song period according to Xu Wei's 徐渭 Nanci xulu 南詞序錄, into *zaju* in Yuan period under the title *Wang Kui's Betrayal of Guiying* 王魁負桂英, attributed to Shang

子胥 temple, Liao gave voice to a persona dictated by poetic convention of 詩言志 to reflect the normative identity of any literate man—a literati-scholar with great ambition for status and fame, and his undying loyalty to serve the state. Both personae involved certain degree of performance, but only the ambitious, loyal literati one was sanctioned by Liao Yi's social role in real life, while the lovesick student one would hardly be allowed Liao Yi's own voice without a disguise. Such an image is condemned in Confucian orthodox teaching, but colloquial genres provided a perfect means to develop this image of a romantic talent 風流才子. Therefore, the genre of colloquial songs and drama offered writers more freedom of expression behind the safe mask of dramatic persona, a literary game through which they could freely explore and experiment with their literary talent.

It should be pointed out that even though regarded as a game, writing songs and drama was a very serious endeavor that demanded as much talent and hard work as high literature. This is well illustrated in the biography of Bao Tianyou and the lamenting song dedicated to him.

> Tianyou's courtesy name is Jifu. He is a native of Hangzhou. In his early years, [Tianyou] devoted himself to Confucian studies. When he was older, he served as a clerk [in the local government]. Yet the drudgery of dealing with registers and ledgers was not where his ambition was. Even between footsteps, his sole preoccupation was to ferret for strange and archaic [stories]. Therefore most of his

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Zhongxian 尚仲賢 according to *Lu gui bu.* In addition, the story was frequently alluded to in extant dramatic texts and stories, indicating its wide circulation and popularity almost like household knowledge during Yuan dynasty.

works moved people and were recited and sung by many. I used to discuss with him tips of writing plays, and up to today I still benefited from his good method. Great talent always encounters bad fate—the same is true both for nowadays and for in the antiquity. Bao died a prefectural clerk of Kunshan. 天佑字吉甫。杭州人。初業儒，長事吏，簿書之役，非其志也。踆步之間，惟務搜奇索古而已。故其編撰，多使人感動詠嘆。余嘗與之談論節要，至今得其良法。才高命薄，今猶古也，竟止昆山州吏而卒。

Lingbo qu 凌波曲

平生词翰在宫商	Letters and inks of your whole life are poured into the *gong-shang* music scale.
两字推敲付锦囊	Scrupulously weighing two words you entrust your pick to the brocade sachet.
耸吟肩有似风魔状	Reciting poetry, you raise your shoulders as if demented.
苦劳心呕断肠	Work your mind to bitterness and heave up your guts into pieces.
视荣华总是乾忙	You see glory and success as invariably futile hassle.
谈音律论教坊	Talking about music pattern or speaking of entertainment bureau,
唯先生占断排场 [118]	Only you sir is able to seize the entire ground on the stage to yourself.

Bao Tianyou's *zhi* 志 was not to be a scribal clerk occupied in ledgers and registers, but

[118] *Lu gui bu*, 122.

to compose colloquial songs and plays. He devoted his talent, energy and attention to them so much so that he appeared a madman. The allusion of "pushing or knocking" (*tuiqiao* 推敲) relates Bao's meticulousness to the famous Tang poet Jia Dao 賈島, whose deliberation over two words for a better choice represents utmost pursuit of poetic expressiveness and subtlety. Bao was so engrossed in the world of words and music that he did not only appear to be demented 風魔狀, but was physically consumed as he "worked his mind to bitterness and heaved up his guts into pieces" 苦勞心, 嘔斷腸. However, his talent did not translate into high position or great power, and he died in obscurity. For Bao, worldly glory and success (*gongming* 功名) were futile hassle while the "game" is more meaningful, fulfilling, and real. In fact, like Bao Tianyou, most of the writers in Zhong's close circle were amateur song writers and playwrights whose livelihood depended elsewhere. Writing did not bring them socio-political privilege, and they wrote for fun and personal fulfilment.

New Functions of Texts

Text functioned differently for orally transmitted performative genres. In *The Register*, there is no mention of drama being printed out or published at all, but we see that for works of colloquial songs and riddle poems. According to Zhong's short biography on writers known to him, even if they did have their songs and riddles published in print, they did not do that on their own. It seems that like Zhong Sicheng, most writers did not care much about keeping the textual trace of their works. All the collecting, compiling, editing, and even publishing work was done by somebody else

who was not necessarily a good songwriter. For example, Hu Cunshan 胡存善, the son of Hu Zhengchen, was praised to be "an outstanding one among all the gentlemen" (*shilin zhi qiaochu* 士林之翹楚) not for his own works, but rather for the compiling and editing work he had done for other writers.

> His [Hu Zhengchen's] son Cunshan is able to carry on his endeavor. From *New Sound of the Golden Threads* by Renqing, *Lingering Sound from Poetry and Wine* by Ruiqing, up to *A Multitude of Jade and Pearls*, [Cunshan] collected the works of these gentlemen and organized them in good order. Moreover, he took an ancient edition of [a certain book] and went directly to Tanzhou for The Yi's [printing house] to print it. Never has an error been found in the [pronunciation or punctuation?] of the original texts [in books compiled by him], and [those book] were all printed and sold at bookstores. Indeed he is an outstanding one among all the gentlemen. 其子存善，能繼其志。《小山樂府》，仁卿《金縷新聲》，瑞卿《詩酒餘音》，至於《群玉叢珠》，裒集諸公所作，編次有倫；及將古本□□，直取潭州易氏印行。元文□讀無訛，盡於書坊刊行，亦士林之翹楚也。[119]

According to the biography of Zhang Kejiu 張可久, Wu Renqing 吳仁卿, and Zeng Rui, Hu Cunshan's compilation are the only textual records they have of their colloquial songs. In addition to publishing books by a single writer, Hu also edited and published collected songs by a group of different writers. Hu Cunshan was also responsible of

[119] Hu Cunshan's biography is found under his father's entry, See "Hu Zhengchen" in *Lu gui bu*, 129.

commissioning the print job to printing houses and putting the books into circulation in the book market. Book printing should be quite expensive then and not everyone could afford it no matter how much they wanted to publish their works, as we can see from Qiao Ji's 喬吉 experience:

> [Ji] composed over a hundred pieces under the title "Inscribed on the West Lake: Tender Leaves of *wutong*,"[120] and some renowned gentleman prefaced this collection. For forty years of his life between rivers and lakes, [Ji] desired to publish his works, but there was no one who helped him accomplish that. 有題西湖梧葉兒百篇， 名公為之序。江湖間四十年，欲刊所作，竟無成事者。[121]

Creative composition seemed to be more and more separated from the production of books. It is true that some writers published their own works in print form such as Gu Derun 顧德潤,[122] but the high cost and particularly the market-oriented purpose for profit made the production of books and creative writing two different enterprises more than ever. In other words, texts of songs and riddles survived not as a means of transmission (because they were transmitted orally rather than textually), but as a commodity or an artifact.

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[120] *Firmiana platanifolia*, commonly referred to as "Chinese Parasol tree"

[121] See Qiao Jifu's biography in *Lu gui bu*, 126-27.

[122] Gu printed two volumes of *Popular Songs and Riddle Poems by Nine Mountains* 九山樂府詩隱 ("Nine Mountains" being Gu's title) and sold them in commercial bookstores. See *Lu gui bu*, 133.

New Social Roles and Relationships

Changes in the conception of cultural competency, the meaning of writing, and the function of texts led to changes to literati's self-identity as well, which in *The Register* is demonstrated firstly in the diverse backgrounds of members in Zhong's local community of writers, and secondly in the new roles they play in the urban community in Hangzhou. Growing expertise in urban cultural forms particularly popular performative genres helped literati overcome various social boundaries to establish new social connections with a much wider range of social classes far beyond the literati circle. This is what Frederic Mote characterizes literati's place in the Yuan dynasty as "the diffusion of elite roles." In Mote's view, "Yuan China provided a far broader spectrum of elite—and ex-elite—social patterns that was normal for China." The cultivated elite class stratified and those who stayed at the lower spectrum "often were forced into broader interaction with the lives of common people and into creative roles in mass culture in an age that was conducive to innovation. This was true not only in drama but also in thought and popular religion, in government at the lowest levels in which men of elite qualifications would not normally have served, in extending applied technology (as in agriculture and medicine), and no doubt in other ways that scholars have not yet identified and studied."[123] While their impact on the entire social life was certainly substantial and far-reaching, their engagement in local common people's lives and mass culture also reshaped them. This is exactly what we find about the community of writers, even if limited to those personally known to Zhong Sicheng—a diversified group of people in

[123] Frederick W. Mote, "Chinese Society under Mongol Rule," in Herbert Franke and Denis C. Twitchett ed., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 640-42.

terms of their profession and socio-economic backgrounds. There were sub-official clerks in local government, [124] local educational officials, [125] religious practitioners, [126] physicians, [127] merchants, [128] fortune-tellers, [129] heads of salt field, [130] even wealthy idlers,[131] and so on. Yet shared interests in songs, music, and drama brought these people from different backgrounds together to become good friends and form a cohesive community. For example, the home of Shi Hui, a merchant in Hangzhou, was a headquarter of friendly gatherings:

Shi Hui 施惠

> Hui, courtesy name Junmei, was a native of Hangzhou. He lived in front of the city-god temple at Mount. Wu[132] and was a merchant by trade. Mr. Shi was large-eyed, his cheeks and chins adorned with beautiful whiskers. He loved talking and joking. Zhao Junqing, Chen Yanshi and I used to frequent his home and were always warmly received. Most of the time, he would make brilliant remarks [in our conversation]. In his spare time from composing poetry and wine-drinking, he was

[124] For example, Zheng Guangzu, Jin Renjie, and Bao Tianyou.

[125] For example, Gong Tianting.

[126] For example, Qian Lin 錢霖.

[127] For example, Xiao Dexiang 蕭德祥.

[128] For example, Shi Hui 施惠.

[129] For example, Zhao Shanqing 趙善慶.

[130] For example, Wang Yong 王庸.

[131] For example, Chen Yiren 陳以仁.

[132] Mount. Wu was also known as Mount. City Moat 城隍山 or Mount. Xu 胥山. It was located in the southeast to the West Lake.

engaged only in filling lyrics and matching songs. 惠字君美。杭州人。居吳山城隍廟前，以坐賈為業。公巨目美髯，好談笑。余嘗與趙君卿（趙良弼）、陳彥實（陳無妄）、顏君常至其家，每承接款，多有高論。詩酒之暇，惟以填詞和曲為事。[133]

Even in times of sickness and death, friendship among this community was still solid and reliable, a bond that sometimes even replaced family tie, as in the case of Shen Gong and Chen Yiren:

Shen Gong 沈拱

Gong, also known as Gongzhi, was from Hangzhou. He was endowed with a receptive and intelligent mind in a balanced blend of refined culture and natural simplicity. However, only that he could not socialize with people for practical gains, so he preferred not to seek government employment. He composed a large number of *sanqu*, more than anybody else. He had no offspring when he reached old age, and thus had nobody to rely on when struck by sickness. Cunfu, or Chen Yiren, hosted Gong at his own house [to take care of him]. He passed away in less than ten days and Cunfu arranged his funeral, for the sake of the deep feeling for a dear friend. 拱字拱之。杭州人。天資穎悟，文質彬彬，然惟不能俯仰，故不願仕。所編樂府最多。以老無後，病無所歸，存甫館於家，不旬日而亡。存甫殯送之，重友誼也

[133] *Lu gui bu*, 123.

。[134]

Chen Yiren 陳以仁

> Yiren, courtesy name Cunfu, was a native of Hangzhou. Backed by family affluence, he never sought after social eminence or political success, but spent every day in socializing with literati both from the north and the south. Servants served [his guests] with tea, wine and fruits to their fill, and Chen never showed any displeasure on his face. For this reason, his good repute grew ever more. He was a connoisseur of antiques and was good at chanting and singing. From time to time he wrote one or two pieces of music songs that always contained lines of ornate beauty. 以仁字存甫，杭州人。以家務雍容，不求聞達，日與南北士大夫交游，僮僕輩以茶湯酒果為厭，公未嘗有難色也，然其名因是而愈重。能博古，善謳歌。其樂章間出一二，俱有駢麗之句。[135]

For lack of any offspring at old age, Shen Gong 沈拱 had nobody to rely on when he was ill. Chen Yiren received Shen to stay at his home. After Shen passed away, Chen arranged his funeral.[136] Zhong Sicheng praised Chen Yiren to be a person who “values friendship” 重友誼. In Chen’s biography, we are told that he had an active social life with literary people. Being a wealthy man, he had no ambition for worldly success and was always

[134] *Lu gui bu*, 124.

[135] *Lu gui bu*, 122.

[136] See Shen Gong’s biography in *Lu gui bu*, 124.

generous with friends. In the lament song, there are two lines:

錢塘風物盡飄零，	All the customs and artefacts of Qiantang have fallen and faded away,
賴有斯人尚老成。	[Their continuance] depends on this person, still mellow and sophisticated.

These lines speak more about Chen's significant role in cementing the social bond among members of the community than his cultural and artistic achievements 博古善謳歌.[137] Shen Gong's was not an isolated case of solid friend tie. Liao Yi spent the last days of his life in sickness at the home of a friend Jiang Hanqing 江汉卿, who with the help of another mutual friend took care of his funeral and the expense. In contrast, Liao's family did not show up until at his cremation ceremony.

> In the spring of the second year of Tianli reign period (1329), Yi was struck by disease and passed away at the home of a friend Jiang Hanqiang. Hanqing and Huang Huanzhang bought a coffin, shrouded and encoffined his corpse. They summoned his relatives and cremated him at a temple outside the city. 天歷二年(1329)春，抱疾喪於友人江漢卿家。漢卿與黃煥章買棺具斂，召其親來，火葬城外寺中。[138]

[137] See Chen Yiren's biography in *Lu gui bu*, 122-23.

[138] *Lu gui bu*, 126.

We find many cases of mutual support and collaboration among writers in *The Register*. Zhong Sicheng received instructions that benefited him ever since from Zeng Rui and Bao Tianyou, who were presumably more experienced writers than him.[139] Writers not only collaborated in producing plays,[140] but also in producing song collections.[141] They wrote prefaces or postscripts for each other's books,[142] and helped with collecting, editing, and even publishing friends' works.[143] It is not to say that there was no competition among them, but within Zhong's community, mutual support and bonding outweighed competition.

For writers in *The Register*, writing in popular genres was not only a means to exercise their literary talent, but more importantly to build social connections in the urban community in Hangzhou. This prosperous, diverse, and vibrant metropolis in Yuan dynasty figured prominently in *The Register* as the major backdrop. Although there was little interaction between Zhong's circle of writers to famous elite literati either of official ranks or not,[144] they were deeply integrated into urban life, respected and loved by

[139] *Lu gui bu*, 120, 122.

[140] Bao Tianyou 鮑天佑 and Wang Mianzhi 汪勉之 co-complied the play *Cao E Weeping Besides the River*, see *Lu gui bu*, 134.

[141] Wang Ye 王曄 and Zhu Kai 朱凱 collaborated to produce *Questions and Answers between Shuangjian and Xiaoqing*, see *Lu gui bu*, 135.

[142] Zhu Kai wrote a postscrip to The Register and Zhong Sicheng wrote prefaces for Zhu Kai's books *Popular Songs in an Age of Long lasting Peace* 昇平樂府 and *Rhymed Riddles Encompassing Heaven and Earth* 包羅天地謎韻, see *Lu gui bu*, 135.

[143] Qian Lin 錢霖 categorized works by writers within the community and compiled them into *A Collection of Pure Thoughts in Rivers and Lakes* 江湖清思集. See *Lu gui bu*,133.

[144] According to Yoshikawa, he cannot find almost no textual traces of social interaction between Zhong's circle and contemporary great writers either in government service, such as Yu Ji 虞集 (1272-1348), Jie Xisi 揭傒斯 (1274-1344), etc., or Song loyalists gathered in or close to Hangzhou, who refused to serve, such as Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298), Qiu Yuan 仇遠 (1247-1326), Zhang Yu 張雨 (1283-1350), Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374), and so on, in their literary

members of the urban community at all levels. They found both recognition and affection and established a more open social network that broke down strict social hierarchy. According to their biographies, we find at least three writers living in the commercial center of Hangzhou: Shi Hui lived in front of the city-god temple of Mount Wu 吳山城隍廟前, Fan Juzhong lived in front of the Three Primes Tower 三元樓前, and Qiao Ji 喬吉 lived in front of Taiyi Daoist Temple 太乙宮前. Even though we are not clear about the other writers, but the places they live strongly suggest they were a group of urbanized literati and actively involved in the social activities of city life.

The biographies of Zeng Rui 曾瑞, Zheng Guangzu 鄭光祖, and Fan Juzhong 范居中 describes their intimate connection with the local city population. Traditional hierarchical barriers between the cultured class and the common populace were practically obliterated. They were literally "one" with the city dwellers, a phenomenon that well proved the prosperity of urban society and the maturity of urban culture in Yuan dynasty.

Zeng Rui 曾瑞

> [Zeng] Rui, courtesy name Ruiqing, was a native of Daxing.[145] He migrated from the north to the south, and, attracted by the multitudinousness of human talents in Jiang-Zhe region and admiring the exuberance of natural sceneries in Qiantang

collections and other records. Yoshikawa concludes that Zhong's circle of writers and those famous elite writers belonged to two separated communities. See Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎 (1904-1980), Zheng Qingmao 鄭清茂 trans. *Yuan zaju yanjiu* 元雜劇研究 (Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1960), 150.

[145] Daxing Prefecture 府 was under Dadu Route in the Yuan dynasty.

(Hangzhou), he settled here. His spirit and color were extraordinary, and his attire and cap decorous. He leisurely roamed in the marketplace with such grace that he struck people as one of the immortals. His intent would not bend to others, so he was not willing to serve in the government. He styled himself the title "Man Clad in Roughspuns." In every season [around the year] people of accomplishments in Jiang-Huai region offered him gifts continuously; thereby he was able to wander about unhurriedly throughout his years. On the day he was dying, those who visited to offer condolence numbered in thousands. I used to have the honor to meet and talk with him in person, when he said many words of encouragement to me that had enormously inspired me ever since. He was good at painting and could make riddles. He had collection of short songs *Lingering Sound from Poetry and Wine* published and circulated in the world. 瑞字瑞卿。大興人。自北來南，喜江浙人才之多，羨錢塘景物之盛，因而家焉。神采卓異，衣冠整肅，優游於市井，灑然如神仙中人。志不屈物，故不願仕，自號褐夫。江淮之達者，歲時饋送不絕，遂得以徜徉卒歲。臨終之日，詣門吊者以千數。余嘗接音容，獲承言話，勉勵之語，潤益良多。公善丹青，能隱語，小曲有《詩酒餘音》行於世。[146]

Zeng Rui was a northerner who migrated to the south and lived in Hangzhou attracted to the city's "human talents" 人才 and "natural sceneries" 景物. He renounced the career of government service and preferred a commoner's status. Although a commoner, Zeng's manners, looks, and talents won him love and respect from all walks of life, as the

[146] *Lu gui bu*, 120-121.

following lines in his lamenting song describe:

江湖儒士慕高名，	Confucian literati among rivers and lakes admire your eminent name,
市井兒童誦瑞卿。	Children in the market and streets chant “Ruiqing.”

Instead of the state, Zeng employed all his talent to serve the local community. He deeply integrated into the urban community and was accepted as an indispensable member of it. Not only was he given generous material support and social recognition from the urban populace, on the day when he passed away, he had the large numbers of condolers grieving at the loss of him. Zeng’s generous help of other writers like Zhong Sicheng as well as his works in popular arts also enriched urban life. Zeng Rui’s case shows the openness and fluidity of urban space, which in turn boosted its vigor and dynamics.

Zheng Guangzu 鄭光祖

> Guangzu, also known as Dehui, was from Xiangling County of Pingyang Route. As a Confucian scholar, he was [recommended] to supplement the staff of clerks of Hangzhou Route.[147] By personality he was square and straight, and not easy to get along with. As a result, most gentlemen belittled him. Only [those who] had known him for a long time could see the depth of his feeling was beyond the reach of

[147] In the early Yuan, Confucian scholars obtained government employment either to serve as clerks or educational officials. To be appointed as a clerk, one had to be recommended for that post first. Vacancies were few and they had to work with professional clerks even if they were hired. To be an educational official seemed more desirable than to be a clerk for most Confucian scholars, but as we can see in Gong Tianting’s case, it was difficult to keep that job either. See Zhang Qizhi 張豈之, Guo Chengkang 郭成康, Wang Tianyou 王天有 and Cheng Chongde 成崇德, *Yuan Ming Qing shi* 元明清史, (Hongkong: Wunan tushu, 2002), 60.

anybody else. He died of sickness and was cremated at Numinous Mushroom Temple near West Lake.[148] Each of the many condolers had a prose and poem of mourning to offer him. There is no need to list in detail Mr. Zheng's works. His name was well-received all over the sub-celestial realm and reached the inner chambers of womanly quarters. Entertainers addressed him as "Old Master Zheng," and everyone knew it referred to Dehui. Regrettably he was inclined to overuse jests and jokes, which unavoidably made his works overly contrived and artificial. Yet this is a different matter. 光祖字德輝，平陽襄陵人。以儒補杭州路吏。為人方直，不妄與人交，故諸公多鄙之，久則見其情厚，而他人莫之及也。病卒，火葬與西湖之靈芝寺，諸弔送客各有詩文。公之所作，不待備述，名香天下，聲振閨閣，伶倫輩稱"鄭老先生"，皆知其為德輝也。惜乎所作，貪於俳諧，未免多於斧鑿，此又別論焉。[149]

Zheng Guangzu was also a northerner who migrated to Hangzhou because of government appointment. By profession Zheng was a clerk, but his social identity in the urban space was not defined by his profession at all. He was not a professional playwright either, and writing plays was his pastime, like Bao Tianyou. People socialized not according to their social roles or places assigned by the state or society. Zheng earned social recognition and respect firstly by his works of drama and song, and his fame even reached the

[148] Also known as Temple of Numinous Mushroom of Sublime Blessing 靈芝崇福寺, it was located outside Gate of Surging Metal 湧金門. See *Xianchun Lin'an zhi* 咸淳臨安志, in *Song Yuan fangzhi congkan* 宋元方志叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 4072a.

[149] *Lu gui bu*, 119.

normally secluded “inner chambers of womanly quarters” 閨閣. The appellation of “Old Master Zheng” 鄭老先生 given to him by entertainers symbolized Zheng’s identity in the urban space outside the bureaucratic system. It conveyed a sense of respect and endearment out of his age, erudition, and most importantly his social intimacy with them. This also points to Zheng’s close collaboration with performers as a playwright. Interestingly, this is the only time that performers are mentioned in *The Register*. Secondly, Zheng’s “deep feeling” (*qinghou* 情厚) earned him admission into the inner circle by *zhugong* 諸公. He was despised at first for his unsocial personality, but they changed their attitude after they found out beneath that was profound affection. The poems and essays condolers offered at Zheng’s cremation are evidence of the solid social and emotional ties that connected Zheng Guangzu to other writers.

Fan Juzhong 范居中

> [Fan] Juzhong, also known as Zizheng, his title name Ice Gourd, was from Hangzhou. He father Jade Gourd was a renowned senior Confucian scholar, but had to earn a living as a fortune-teller. They lived in front of the Three Primes Tower in Hangzhou. Each year on the night of the Lantern Festival, or the fifteenth day of the first month of Lunar New Year, he always inscribed [poems about] current affairs on paper lanterns. People of Hangzhou gathered together to watch them, so far and near all knew the names of both father and son. Mr. Fan was a man of outstanding spirit and immense erudition. He once boasted unreservedly that his pen-brush always ran as his ideas flew and his writing never allowed him to set down his pen-brush. We all

knew his talent, so no one would question him on that. Juzhong was good at playing the zither and calligraphy. His sister was also reputed for her writing. One year during the Dade reign period (1297-1307, reigned by Emperor Cheng of Yuan 元成宗), she was summoned by imperial decree to the capital, and Juzhong accompanied her trip to the north. In spite of his high talent, he found no employment in the government, and died at home. [As for his works], there was *sanqu* and music both in southern and northern tunes circulating in the world. 居中字子正，冰壺其號也。杭州人。父玉壺，前輩名儒，假卜術為業，居杭之三元樓前。每歲元夕，必以時事題於燈紙之上，杭人聚觀，遠近皆知父子之名。公精神秀異，學問該博，嘗出大言矜肆，以為筆不停思，文不閣筆。諸公知其有才，不敢難也。善操琴，能書法。其妹亦有文名，大德年間被旨赴都，公亦北行。以才高不見遇，卒於家。有樂府及南北腔行於世。[150]

Judging from the titles of Fan Juzhong's father and his own—Jade Gourd and Ice Gourd, Fan must have inherited his father's profession and was a fortune-teller by trade. He was not a professional playwright or song writer either. Their profession allowed them frequent contact with the city populace. Moreover, as the job of a fortune teller was to give advice to people who needed guidance in their mundane life and to provide solution to their problems that could not be solved in ordinary methods, they played an important role in city life. The place they lived in Hangzhou—in front of the Three Primes Tower, one of the most famous landmark wine house located in the "Central Entertainment

[150] *Lu gui bu*, 123.

Quarters" (*zhongwa* 中瓦),[151] further indicates that they were active players in the social drama daily performed in the city. Lantern Festival was one of the grandest events of spectacles, entertainment, and performance in the urban social stage where everyone participated both as an actor and an audience at the same time. The political commentaries Fan inscribed on lanterns ingeniously conveyed "serious" messages about state governance by means of "frivolous" objects of spectacle and consumption. The novel discordance between the subject matter and the media effectively caught people's attention and it became an attractive spectacle itself. The timing, the medium and the topics were carefully calculated to engage the attention of a large number of people most rapidly and efficiently in a shared public space, which perfectly showed Fan's urban savviness. Moreover, this design successfully spread the names of the father and the son far and near. While Fan won wide social recognition in the local community in Hangzhou, his talent was not appreciated by the state at all.

Urban space was an alternative source of recognition, respect and also financial income, which replaced government employment to give meaning and dignity to their life. Most of the writers in Zhong Sicheng's community found meaning in their new social roles and engagement in popular performative genres. However, there are some who still stick to the conventional ideal of literati to serve the government and could not adjust well to their new roles, such as Huang Tianze 黃天澤, Gong Tianting 宮天挺, and Chen Wuwang 陳無妄.

[151] According to *Xianchun Lin'an zhi,* Central Entertainment Quarters were located at north of the marketplace and south of the residential areas. In the sixth year of *xianchun* reign period (1270), yet one more edifice, Three Primes Tower, was built there. There is detailed description about Three Primes Tower in the section of "Winehouses" 酒樓 in Zhou Mi's 周密 *Wulin jiushi* 武林舊事. See *Xianchun Lin'an zhi,* in *Song Yuan fangzhi congkan,* 3549a; Zhou Mi, *Wulin jiushi,* in *Dongjing meng Hua lu (wai si zhong)* 東京夢華錄(外四種), 440-42.

Huang Tianze 黃天澤

Tianze, courtesy name Derui, is a native of Hangzhou. He was a younger half-brother of Shen Hefu born of the same mother. His rich and subtle refinement was no less great than his elder brother. In his tender age he was willing to take the job of keeping ledgers and registers. He first served in the water transport bureau and later was transferred to the prefectural office, but [in both capacities] he was depressed by his thwarted ambition. He waited to be summoned to fill a vacant position of prefectural clerk in Kunshan, but again did not get the appointment to his great chagrin and frustration. Eventually he passed away [in Kunshan], never to return to [Hangzhou]. Mr. Huang wrote music songs, and they were transmitted by ears and eyes of people. Smart or stupid, they all enjoyed and applauded his works. 天澤字德潤。杭州人。和甫沈公同母弟也。風流醞藉，不減其兄。幼年屑就簿書，先在漕司，後居省府，鬱鬱不得志。崑山聽補州吏，又不獲用，咄咄書空而已，然亦竟不歸而終。公有樂府，播於世人耳目，無賢愚皆稱賞焉。

一心似水道為鄰，	A heart-mind [as even] as water, the Way is your neighbor
四體如春德潤身。	Four limbs like spring, virtue moistures your body.
風流才調真英俊，	Your elegant talent and style are truly heroic and outstanding
軼前車、繼後塵。	Overtake carriages ahead while continue [the trail of

	dust] behind.
謾蒼天委任斯文。	To no avail the Heaven entrusted “this culture” to you.
岐山鳳、魯甸麟，	Phoenix [singing] in Mount. Qi,[152] kirin [captured] in the suburb of Lu,[153]
時有亨屯。	There are good times (*heng*) and bad times (*tun*).

Huang Tianze was determined to serve in the government service, because that was where his *zhi* went. However, he was repeatedly frustrated and he passed away in disappointment. His talent was never valued by the government. Even though he was willing to serve on the post of a scribe that was far beneath his ability, Tianze was still neglected and unable to realize his ambition. When his hope to be appointed as a prefectural clerk in Kunshan was thwarted, it became the last blow that finally broke him. Tianze died in disappointment and frustration away from his hometown. In contrast to the constant neglect he suffered in the government, his talent was well recognized by city dwellers. Composing *yuefu* 樂府 was not his *zhi* 志, but the songs he wrote circulated widely and were appreciated by everyone “no matter worthy or stupid.” There seems to be mixed feelings Zhong Sicheng’s regret at Huang’s untimely death, as revealed in these lines in the lamenting song,

[152] Legend goes that before the rise of Zhou, phoenix was heard to sing in Mount. Qi. It was an auspicious sign that symbolized the virtue of King Wen of Zhou.

[153] Kirin was an auspicious animal that was supposed to presage the rise of a sage ruler. However, a kirin was captured in the fourteenth year of Duke Ai of Lu State, when there appeared no sage ruler at all. Confucius was depressed by the failure of auspicious omens and therefore stopped writing *Spring and Autumn*.

謾蒼天委任斯文。	To no avail the Heaven entrusted “this culture” to you.
岐山鳳、魯甸麟，	Phoenix [singing] in Mount. Qi, kirin [captured] in the suburb of Lu,
時有亨屯。	There are good times (*heng*) and bad times (*tun*).

Popular oral performance genres were so lowly that even Huang himself did not take his success in that seriously. He still believed that government service was the best way to realize his value. However, that required 天時, which was not controlled by human will. While blaming the government, Zhong Sicheng also implicitly criticizes Tianze’s single-mindedness in pursuing a dead-end and refusal to “accept his proper fate” (s*hun shou qi zheng* 順受其正). It was important for a gentleman to have sound judgement on timing (*shi* 時). Even for sages like King Wen of Zhou and Confucius, timing played a crucial role in deciding whether they would succeed in realizing their political ambition or not. In Zhong’s view, Huang’s tragedy was partly due to his inability to rid himself of illusive ambition in government service.

Even for those who obtained a post and had a seemingly successful career, they could not protect themselves from worries and attacks. In fact, the path of government service was full of pitfalls and traps. The careers of Gong Dayong 宮大用 and Chen Wuwang 陳無妄 represented two major paths available for Confucian scholars in Yuan dynasty—to serve as educational official or as clerk—toward political success. However, both their options proved to be equally gloomy.

[Gong] Tianting, style name Dayong, was from Kaizhou of Daming route. He served as an educational official and was appointed as the dean[154] of Fisherman's Terrace Academy.[155] Tianting was slandered by some man of great power. The case was investigated and he was cleared of the charge; nonetheless Tianting was dismissed from his post. He died in Changzhou. My late father and Gong were best friends, so I often got the chance to attend his company. I witnessed the strength of his writing in poetry and prose that no one could compete with. As for songs and music, they were merely spare-time activities for him. 天挺字大用，大名開州人。歷學官，除釣臺書院山長。為權豪所中，事獲辨明，亦不見用。卒於常州。先君與之莫逆交，故余常得侍坐，見其吟詠文章筆力，人莫能敵；樂章歌曲，特餘事耳。[156]

Chen Wuwang 陳無妄

[Chen] Wuwang, courtesy name Yanshi, was a native of Dongping. He, I and Junqing were fellow students. By nature he was a taciturn and serious person and did nothing in a cursory and careless way. He took stringency as obligation and outspokenness as loyalty. He did not like to socialize with people, so people were also difficult with him. Chen was interested in colloquial songs and riddles. He was

[154] Dean, common designation of the head of an instructional Academy (*shuyuan* 書院), private or state-sponsored. See Hucker, 405. A dean was responsible for both teaching and administrative affairs in the academy.

[155] Fisherman's Terrace Academy was first established by Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹, and it was renovated for several times by the prefects. See Zheng Yao 鄭瑤 and Fang Renrong 方任榮 et tal., *Jingding Yanzhou xuzhi* 景定嚴州續志, in *Song Yuan fangzhi conkan*, 4359b-4360a; 4369a-b.

[156] *Lu gui bu*, 118.

appointed to fill in the vacancy of clerk in Quzhou Route. Later he was transferred to Wuzhou, promoted to be a judicial clerk and then dispatched to Fujian Circuit. In the third month of the second year during Tianli reign period (1329), he died of distress. His younger brother managed his funeral and burial. He wrote quite a lot of colloquial songs, but regretfully they did not get circulated much. 無妄字彥實。東平人。與餘及君卿同舍。性資沉重，事不苟簡，以苛刻為務，訐直為忠。與人寡合，人亦難之。公於樂府、隱語無不用心。補衢州路吏，後遷婺州，升浙東憲吏，調福建道。天歷二年三月，以憂卒，其弟彥正殯葬之。樂府甚多，惜乎其不甚傳也。

Morally impeccable with great learning and literary talent, Gong Dayong was well-qualified to his appointed position, first as an education official and then the dean of a state-run Confucian academy. Chen Wuwang used to be Zhong Sicheng's fellow student learning together under the instruction of renowned Confucian scholars. His quiet and meticulous personality, his commitment to stringency and straightforwardness made him a paragon of judicial clerk. Therefore, they both possessed the best qualities required for a literati-official or a bureaucrat-clerk and perfectly competent in their jobs. Yet both were slandered by malicious enemies. Even if Gong was cleared of the charge against him later, still he was deposed as dean. Chen was even more unfortunate. He was consumed and died of distress in his post. In the following lines, the allusion to the Han general Ma Yuan slandered even after his death expresses Zhong's indignation, while the allusion to the dream of Huai'an shows his disillusionment with government service:

薏苡生讒間，	Coixseeds grew among slanders.
甘心願就閒。	Resignedly succumbing to [the scheme of] alienation.
轉回頭夢入槐安。	You turn back around and enter the State of Locust Tranquility in a dream

Compared to the treacherous path of public service, the private space populated with friends of common interests in urban popular genres was full of mutual appreciation, affection, and trust. Even though songs and music were nothing more than just “leisure-time activities” 餘事 for Gong Dayong and Chen Wuwang, these works represented the best of their talent and character, and connected them into a community of writers where their memory was cherished forever.

CHAPTER THREE

CROSSING GENDERED ROLES:

FEMALE PERFORMERS IN *THE GREEN BOWER COLLECTION*

The Green Bower Collection (*Qinglou ji* 青樓集, hereafter QLJ) is a record of an urban literati's personal memory of courtesan-performers' achievements and lives, their interaction with patron literati-bureaucrats, and their impacts upon literati culture. Its author Xia Tingzhi was a wealthy literatus deeply attracted to popular performative genres.[157] Like most of the literati recorded in the book, he was a huge fan of *zaju* and admired *zaju* performers. The seriousness of his interest and sincerity of his admiration distinguished him from most of his contemporaries to actually write a book entirely devoted to female performers. Even though QLJ was the target of quite a lot of criticism and attacks when it first came out, because Xia was ahead of his time with his honesty and unbiased point of view, this book is a uniquely important text in literary and cultural history.

Prefaces and Critical Reception

[157] There is a short biography of Xia Tingzhi 夏庭芝 recorded in *A Sequel to the Register of Ghosts* 錄鬼簿續編: "Xia Bohe had the sobriquet 'Fisherman in Straw Snow Cloak." He hailed from Songjiang and was the descendent of an old and respected family. Throughout his life, Xia purchased laughter with gold. He was a man of urbane charm. His writing was beautiful, including an extremely large amount of colloquial songs and riddles. Yang Lianfu [Yang Weizhen 楊維楨] (1296-1370) was his private tutor. People compared him to Kong Beihai [Kong Rong 孔融] (153-208) and Chen Menggong [Chen Zun 陳遵] (fl. 100-20 B.C.E.)." 夏伯和號雪蓑釣□，松江人。喬木故家，一生黃金賣笑，風流蘊藉。文章妍麗，樂府、隱語極多。有《青樓集》行於世。楊廉夫先生，其西賓也。世以孔北海陳孟公擬之。 See *A Sequel*, in Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng 中國古典戲曲論著集成 vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiqu chubanshe, 1959), 285.

There are three prefaces to QLJ, one by the author himself and two by the author's friends. These prefaces contain important information about the author's intent with the book, how it was received by its contemporary readers, and possible interpretations to justify its subject matter apparently too inappropriate for all "decent" literati scholars.

A Note on *The Green Bower Collection* 青樓集誌 [158]

In his self-preface to QLJ, Xia delineates a quasi- literary history of urban genres since the Tang dynasty up to the Yuan, culminating in the full-fledged *zaju*. Then he explains what motivates him to record the stories of extraordinary courtesan-performers.

> At the time of the Tang dynasty, there was *chuanqi*, all compiled by literati and similar to unofficial history, only to provide playful jokes. It was not until the emergence of *xiwen* in the Song dynasty that there appeared arias, spoken lines, and banters. In the Jin period, *yuanben* and *zaju* were joined into one thing. When it came to our dynasty, *yuanben* and *zaju* split up into two. When *yuanben* was first produced, generally there were altogether five persons: one called *fujing*, otherwise called "adjunct" in ancient time; one called *fumo*, otherwise called "hawk" in ancient time, for the reason that *mo* can attack *jing* in the same way as the hawk

[158] Xia Tingzhi, "*Qinglou ji* zhi," *Qinglou ji* 青樓集, in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* vol. 2, 7-8. An earlier partial translation of this text is found in Idema and West, *Chinese Theater, 1100-1450*, 157-58.

attacks its prey; one called the troupe leader; one called *moni*; the last one called *gu* (official). [*Yuanben*] was also called “Five Flowers Playing Cuan.” It is said that when Emperor Hui of the Song dynasty saw diplomats from the State of Cuan who came to have an audience with him wearing their clothes, shoes, scarves, make-ups of powders and inks, and posturing like such, he ordered entertainers to imitate them for play. Accordingly, it was named “Cuan Play.” In the early years of our [Yuan] dynasty, among the three leaders of the palace entertainment bureau Wei, Wu and Liu, Wei specialized in spoken-lines, Wu in somersault, and Liu in mime routines. Until today [the model they set up] are still in practice. There are also “flame sessions” which are similar to *yuanben* but much simpler. [It is thus named] probably because it is like flames easy to ignite and easy to extinguish. 唐時有“傳奇”，皆文人所編，猶野史也，但資諧笑耳。宋之“戲文”，乃有唱念，有諢。金則“院本”、“雜劇”合而為一。至我朝乃分“院本”、“雜劇”而為二。“院本”始作，凡五人：一曰副淨，古謂參軍；一曰副末，古謂之蒼鶻，以末可撲淨，如鶻能擊禽鳥也；一曰引戲；一曰末泥；一曰孤。又謂之“五花爨弄”。或曰，宋徽宗見爨國來朝，衣裝鞋履巾裹，傅粉墨，舉動如此，使優人效之，以為戲，因名曰“爨弄”。國初教坊色長魏、武、劉三人，魏長於念誦，武長於筋鬥，劉長於科泛，至今行之。又有“爺段”，類“院本”而差簡，蓋取其如火爺之易明滅也。

Zaju, on the contrary, has female and male roles. The female-role script is performed by a female lead named *zhuangdan se* (fake female type), and the male-role script by a male lead named *moni*. The rest who perform on stage are all called

"extra roles." By role types, there are emperors, [ladies of] "boudoir laments," *bao'r* (mother of courtesan-prostitutes), "flowery females," officials, "rags and tatters" (poor students),[159] "green woods" (bandits), clerks, immortals, Daoist transformations, relationships within the family and in the neighborhood, and the like. Inside at the capital or outside in prefectural towns—all have quarters called *goulan* where performers gather together registered as entertainers. Audiences shower money upon them. "雜劇"則有旦、末。旦本女人為之，名粧旦色；末本男子為之，名末泥。其余供觀者，悉為之外腳。有駕頭、閨怨、鴇兒、花旦、披秉、破衫兒、綠林、公吏、神仙道化、家長裏短之類。內而京師，外而郡邑，皆有所謂構欄者，辟優萃而隸樂，觀者揮金與之。

Mostly *yuanben* are no more than playful and lascivious banters, but *zaju* are not like such. On lord-minister relationship [there are plays] such as *Yiyin Assisting King Tang* and *Bi Gan Cutting Open his Abdomen*; on mother-son relationship [there are plays] such as *Bo Yu Weeping over the Flog* and *Cutting Her Hair and Treating his Guests*; on husband-wife relationship [there are] *Slaughter the Dog to Advise Her Husband* and *Whetting the Knife to Admonish his Wife*; on brothers relationship [there are] *Tian Zhen Weeping for the Tree* and *Yield Zhao Li for His Corpulent Brother*; on friendship [there are] *Guan Zhong and Bao Shuya Dividing Cash* and *Chicken and Millet Appointment of Fan Shi and Zhang Shu*—all can be used as means to reinforce cardinal human relationships and beautify moral

[159] According to Li Huimian 李惠綿, "rags and tatters" (*poshan'r* 破衫兒) referred to clothes worn by poor people. The so-called *poshan'r zaju* means plays in which the leading role was a poor student. This type of *zaju* usually have a happy ending when the student passes the examination. See Li Huimian, "Cong *huangdan xing* xilun Yuan dai wenshi ju: yi *poshan'r zaju* wei lunshu" 從 "荒誕性"析論元代文士劇——以 "破衫兒" 雜劇為論述, in *Xiju yanjiu* 戲劇研究 vol. 16 (July, 2015): 1-49.

transformation of local customs. It is not something that Tang's *chuanqi*, Song's *xiwen* or Jin's *yuanben* can even aspire to compare with. "院本"大率不過謔浪調笑，"雜劇"則不然，君臣如：《伊尹扶湯》、《比幹剖腹》，母子如：《伯瑜泣杖》、《剪發待賓》，夫婦如：《殺狗勸夫》、《磨刀諫婦》，兄弟如：《田真泣樹》、《趙禮讓肥》，朋友如：《管鮑分金》、《範張雞黍》，皆可以厚人倫，美風化。又非唐之"傳奇"、宋之"戲文"、金之"院本"所可同日語矣。

Most of the information about urban genres in the first passage can also be found in a passage of "A Catalogue of *yuanben* Titles" 院本名目 in Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 *Leisure from Ploughing the Land in the South Village* 南村輟耕錄. [160] Explanation of specific terms such as the "black hawk" 蒼鶻, the "play of *cuan*" 爨弄, and the "flame section" 燄段 is almost verbatim. Yet in spite of their similarity, Tao's text is a rather loose assemblage of peculiar knowledge aiming to stoking the reader's curiosity, whereas Xia's gives a brief yet lineal and coherent critical history of the development of urban genres from the Tang to the Yuan dynasties. Unlike Tao, Xia Tingzhi singles out one genre for each dynasty as the representative dynastic genre—Tang tales 唐傳奇, Song *xiwen* 宋戲

[160] Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀, *Nancun chuogeglu* 南村輟耕錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 306. "The Tang dynasty had *chuanq*-tales. The Song had *xiqu*-playlets, bawdy singing, and prosimetric performance. The Jin had *yuanben*, *zaju*, and all-keys-and-modes. Yuanben and zaju were in fact one and the same thing. In our Yuan dynasty, they began to be separated into two different genres…. By chance, I obtained a list of *yuanben* titles. Hence I record it here to provide those of broad knowledge a look at them. 唐有傳奇。宋有戲曲、唱諢、詞說。金有院本、雜劇、諸宮調。院本、雜劇，其實一也。國朝, 院本、雜劇始釐而二之。……。偶得院本名目，用載于此，以資博識者之一覽。Translation of this entire passage can is found in Idema and West, *Chinese Theater, 1100-1450*, 85. Judging from the title of a poem collected in Tao Zongyi's *Nancun shiji* 南村詩集, Tao and Xia were friends: "A Visit to Chen Menggang With Shao Qingxi, Zhang Linquan, Hu Wanshan, and Xia Xuesuo" 與邵青谿張林泉胡萬山夏雪蓑訪陳孟剛. See Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, "Xia Bohe," in *Yuanqu jia kaolue* 元曲家考略, 90.

文, Jin *yuanben* 金院本, and Yuan *zaju* 元雜劇. In addition, with the help of temporal adverbs such as “by then” (*nai* 乃), “until then” (*ze* 則), “up to” (*zhi* 至), “initially” (*shi* 始), and so on, these genres were linked together not just in a chronological order but as different stages in an evolutionary process. Each one that appeared later was more developed than the one before it, until the emergence of Yuan *zaju*. More significantly, Xia adds a critic’s perspective as he evaluates and compares the merits of these genres. Not surprisingly, his conclusion is that *zaju* represented the highest level of achievements, not only in terms of its wide range of role types, thematic matter, popularity, commercial success, but also socially transformative ethical values that none of these genres in previous dynasties contained.

Needless to say, Xia’s brief quasi- literary history of urban genres is modelled upon that of elite genres. It seems singular that the Tang *chuanqi* is included here alongside with popular oral performative genres, because after all it is written by literati authors in classical language intended for a literati readership. Yet we should remember that they were all products of urban culture and to a large extent shared a common repertoire of motifs and tropes. Significantly, in Xia’s view, *chuanqi*, the “pure” literati genre is inferior to later popular performative genres. Moreover, Xia’s emphasis of *zaju*’s ethical values 厚人倫美風化 despite it being a popular commercial performative genre, indicates that for Xia Tingzhi Confucian morality and commercial entertainment were not necessarily incompatible with each other. Xia’s interest in urban genres, particularly in *zaju*, is serious enough for him to construct a parallel literary history of genres across linguistic register, mode of representation, ideological difference and so on. This

represents a more open and broad-minded conception of literature.[161]

> Alas! It has almost been a hundred years since our dynasty unified the universe; female entertainers of songs and dances under heaven numbered even more than hundreds and millions! However, those whose beauty and art are so outstanding as to impress people's ears and eyes were indeed not many. I heard the green bower from their fragrant names and beautiful courtesy names. I know some by meeting them in person, some by hearing about them. Even though I know the details about these people, I did not have time to record [them]. Now wind and dust [of war] are rife, and many towns are desolated. I recall my old roaming in the past and it is as indistinct as dreams, stirring up feelings in my mind. Therefore, I put them together and compiled this book, and entitle it *The Green Bower Collection*. I forgot and left out quite a lot; the arrangement [of characters] is not in order. Hopefully scholars who "understand the tune" will add to and improve it, so as to make later generations know that in the days of long-lasting peace, there had emerged somebody even among female entertainers—[an age that] can be called flourishing indeed! As for *moni,* I will list them in another record. I recorded this on the fifteenth day of the third month in the spring of the year *yiwei*.[162] If given the honor

[161] Between Xia's and Tao's texts, we cannot determine whose narrative came out first and whether the one that came out later was on the basis of the other earlier text, but that is not important to my discussion. It suffices to say that a shared body of texts is proof of literati interests in urban genres and the intrusion of popular oral genres into elite textual culture. Their different takes indicates that they were open to free manipulation and adaption by different hands to serve different purposes, a phenomenon that is typical of vernacular literature. On the issue of intertextuality in colloquial Chinese performance literature, see Stephen H West, "Intertextuality and Desire: Mimesis in *The Story of the Western Wing* and *the Departed Soul of Qiannü*," Wang Qiugui 王秋桂 ed., *Jinian Yu Dagang xiansheng baisui danchen xiqu xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 紀念俞大綱先生百歲誕辰戲曲學術研討會論文集 (Taibei: Guoli Taibei yishu daxue, 2009), 376-397.

[162] Because there was no *yiwei* year under Zhizheng 至正 reign period, Sun Kaidi takes 己未 as a typo of 乙未,

to be viewed [by readers] in the future, it may elicit a smile.[163] 嗚呼！我朝混一區宇，殆將百年，天下歌舞之妓，何啻億萬，而色藝表表在人耳目者，固不多也。仆聞青樓於方名艷字，有見而知之者，有聞而知之者，雖詳其人，未暇紀錄，乃今風塵頌洞，群邑蕭條，追念舊遊，慌然夢境，於心蓋有感焉；因集成編，題曰《青樓集》。遺忘頗多，銓類無次，幸賞音之士，有所增益，庶使後來者知承平之日，雖女伶亦有其人，可謂盛矣！至若末泥，則又序諸別錄云。至正己未春三月望日錄此，異日榮觀，以發一笑云。

Since the Yuan *zaju* combined the highest accomplishments of urban genres, those who produced *zaju* deserved to be remembered and extoled. As an audience, Xia Tingzhi naturally attributed the phenomenal success of *zaju* to performers, as they were on the center of the stage and their performance the focus of all attention. It also explains Xia Tingzhi's writing plan of two separate books for female and male performers respectively: since *zaju* were divided into female-role scripts 旦本 and male-role scripts 末本, it is fitting that *zaju* actresses and actors be recorded in two books. Therefore, courtesan-performers were regarded in QLJ first and foremost as professionals possessing excellent skills that contributed to the prosperity of urban theaters. It is true that

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dating the preface to the fifteenth year of Zhiheng reign period (1355), see 孫楷第, *Yuanqu jia kaolüe* 元曲家考略, 89. However, scholars in recent years have pointed out that it should be a typo for 乙亥, postponing the date to the nineteenth year of Zhizheng reign period (1359). See Pu Hanming 浦漢明, "Xia Bohe santi" 夏伯和三題, *Qinghai minzu xueyuan xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 青海民族學院學報（社會科學版）, no. 3 (1993): 32-35; Lu Lin 陸林, "Xia Tingzhi shenghuo shidai ji qita" 夏庭芝生活時代及其他, *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產, no. 5 (2002): 40.

[163] This sentence is rendered "as for my good reputation in later days, I smile about it" by Idema and West, and they interpret it as indication of his concern that writing such an unorthodox book about sing-song girls might harm his reputation. See *Chinese Theater, 1100-1450*, 158.

prostitution was also part of their livelihood, but Xia Tingzhi did not see them as prostitutes, and this is exactly what renders QLJ a uniquely sympathetic and refreshing perspective toward female entertainers. It is worth noting that every courtesan-performer's story always begins with an introduction of her skills while description of their physical beauty is minimal. Sometimes Xia even went out of the way to point out their mediocrity, ugliness, or physical defects.[164] For Xia, rather than brothels, the "green bower" represented a symbolic idea created by these female performers with their talent and art.[165] Xia Tingzhi refers to female performers with "fragrant names" 芳名 and "beautiful courtesy names" 艷字, because as the creator of the dynastic genre of the Yuan dynasty, they demanded no less respect than the literati writers of *chuanqi* in the Tang dynasty.

QLJ was written retrospectively when the age of peace and prosperity in urban centers was put to an end by civil wars in the last years of the Yuan dynasty. Desolate scenes of cities ravaged by warfare triggered Xia to recall his "old roaming" only retrievable now in his memory. It was a memory complex that comprised a world populated with talented female performers and appreciative audiences, both engaged in and enjoying a seemingly never ending play on and off the stage in urban centers in a time of peace. The nostalgic feeling when Xia revisited the people and places in his memory, the incomplete and fragmentary nature of these accounts, and particularly its

[164] For example, Xia records Sai Lianxiu 賽簾秀 who was blind in both eyes, Guo Taixiang 郭太香 and Pingyang nu 平陽奴 who were both blind in one eye, Zhu Jinxiu 朱錦繡 and Miliha 米里哈 who were mediocre in their looks, as well as Zhu Linaxiu 朱簾秀 and Wang Ben'r 王奔兒 who were both slightly hunchbacked.

[165] See Du Guiping 杜桂萍, "Se yi guannian, mingjue yishi ji wenren qinghuai: lun *Qinglou ji* suo tixian de Yuanqu shishang" 色藝觀念、名角意識及文人情懷：論《青樓集》所體現的元曲時尚, *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 no. 5 (2003): 97-109.

analogy to a dream,[166] relate the book to the tradition of urban memoirs initiated by *A Record of Dreaming of Hua [Xu] in the Eastern Capital* 東京夢華錄 authored by Meng Yuanlao 孟元老,[167] another record of the splendidness of urban culture that was finally destroyed by the downfall of Kaifeng under Jurchen invasion. Strikingly similar sentiment is expressed by Meng Yuanlao in his "Preface:"

> Now, I push my thoughts back and turn my head [to the present] in disappointment—is this not awakening from the dream of Hua Xu? I have entitled [this work] *A Record of the Dream of Hua Xu*. But from all that widespread bustle in the capital, of those places I myself never ventured but only heard of from others, there cannot but be omissions. If an old, virtuous man of my home village should be met who could supplement or add to this record and thus bring it to fullness and completeness—would that not be great fortune?[168]

In a sense, Xia Tingzhi's recollection of top female performers and their stories recorded in QLJ is a personalized history of an age from an alternative perspective other than that of orthodox historiography. Xia invites "literati who appreciate the tunes" 賞音之士 to supplement his stories, hoping to piece together a whole picture of the age represented by

[166] Xia Tingzhi named his studio in Sibei 泗北 after he survived the warfare in Songjiang as "Doubtfully A Dream" 疑夢軒.

[167] Cf. Stephen H. West, "The Interpretation of A Dream: The Sources, Evaluation, and Influence of the *Dongjing Meng Hua Lu*," *T'ougn Pao* LXXI (1985): 63-108. "Green bower" is mentioned in the "Preface" to *Meng Hua lu*, and there are sections devoted to entertainment quarters where all kinds of performance, including proto-*zaju* of the Song dynasty, were described.

[168] Ibid., 70.

top female performers. That Xia expresses this hope in the preface indicates that he knew he was not alone to be attracted to and admire these amazing women's arts. What he did not realize, however, was that while he was right on that point, few dared to publicly admit that, not to mention writing a book about courtesan-performers. What's worse, his book was obviously attacked by so many exasperated or derisive readers that Xia had to seek help from his friends to defend his name. The two prefaces, one by Zhu Jing 邾經 and the other by Zhang Ze 張擇, were exactly such friendly efforts to vindicate QLJ. Both Zhu Jing and Zhang Ze were known for their writing of colloquial songs, and they are recorded in *A Sequel to The Register of Ghosts*.[169] However, in their defense of Xia Tingzhi, both had to completely disregard or misinterpret not only Xia's proclaimed intent for the book explicitly explained in his note, but also the content of the book as well. The most significant was that all was done with the author's full acknowledgement and support. We can infer that critical pressure upon QLJ must be so unbearable for Xia Tingzhi that he would rather ask his friends to help conceal his true intent for the book. Since the two prefaces are specifically written to address readers' criticisms by offering ideologically acceptable (mis)interpretations of the book, a careful examination of the rhetoric each preface resorts to is helpful to reveal the subtle mentality of QLJ's contemporary readers.

[169] See "Zhu Zhongyi 邾仲宜" and "Zhang Mingshan 張鳴善" in *A Sequel*, 282, 285.

A Preface to the *Green Bower Collection* 青樓集序 by Zhu Jing 邾經 [170]

As for how to deal with this life, as a gentleman, who does not desire his talent to be employed to benefit people, and his deeds to fulfill himself? How can anyone be content with self-abandonment? Timing can be unfortunate or fortunate, and allotted fate can be unsuccessful or successful. Consequently, talent may not be bridled and acts may not be polished. When timing is fortunate and one's fate successful, bells and drums in parks are delightful with no limit: the gentleman is congruent with that. When timing is bad and his fate unsuccessful, in poetry and wine between rivers and lakes one is lost knowing no return: the gentleman simply cannot contain himself. 君子之於斯世也，孰不欲才加諸人，行足諸已，其肯甘於自棄乎哉？蓋時有否泰，分有窮達，故才或不羈，行或不掩焉。當其泰而達也，園林鐘鼓，樂且未央，君子宜之；當其否而窮也，江湖詩酒，迷而不復，君子非獲已者焉。

When our resplendent Yuan dynasty first united the realm, remnant subjects of [the previous] Jin dynasty such as Useless Man Du (i.e. Du Shanfu 杜善夫), Orchard Valley Bai (i.e., Bai Pu 白樸), and Self Studio Guan (i.e., Guan Hanqing 關漢卿) all despised service and advancement [in the Yuan government]. So they composed songs about the wind and played with the moon, lingering about in beautiful scenes. Commoners slighted them, while those who served in the government sneered at them. The minds of these three gentlemen were indeed hard

[170] An earlier English translation of this text is found in Idema and West, *Chinese Theater, 1100-1450*, 159-60.

to recognize. 我皇元初並海宇，而金之遺民若杜散人、白蘭谷、關已齋輩，皆不屑仕進，乃嘲風弄月，留連光景。庸俗易之，用世者嗤之。三君之心，固難識也。

Less than a hundred years had passed before the dynastic fortune declined in halfway. Literati lost their career, so their ambitions were frustrated. Drinking wine bears danger and writing poetry brings unpredictable calamity. How to dispel their anguish? At a small chamber living in solitude, they gaze into their dreams. The offspring of Sire Huang from Shangyan called Straw Snow Cape (Xia Tingzhi) brought his *Green Bower Collection* to show me. He also asked me to write a preface to it. I read his notes and find it has already detailed [everything]. Why do I need to add any words? 百年未幾，世運中否，士失其業，志則郁矣。酤酒載嚴，詩禍叵測，何以紓其愁乎？小軒居寂，維夢是觀。商顏黃公之裔孫曰雪蓑者，攜《青樓集》示余，且征序引。其誌言讀之，蓋已詳矣，余奚庸贅？

In my personal view, in time of long-lasting peace, Straw Snow Cape received remnant beneficence of wealth and nobility, so how could he earn himself the repute of "heartlessness"[171] like Du Fanchuan [Du Mu 杜牧 (803-852)]? However, Fanchuan was confident in his exceptional moral integrity and was not prim about insignificant matters. When it came to elaboration of grave matters, such as in "Guilty Words,"[172] "On the Necessity to Restore the Sixteen Garrisons,"[173] Two

[171] It refers to Du Mu's self-description in his poem "Expressing My Thoughts" 遣懷:

十年一覺揚州夢　　From this ten-year dream of Yangzhou, once wake up;
贏得青樓薄倖名　　I win the repute of being "heartless" within the green bower.

[172] Du Mu, "Zuiyan" 罪言, *Fanchuan wenji* 樊川文集 2.1a-5a, *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 edition.

Discourses on "Battle"[174] and on "Defense,"[175] "A Proposal on Military Strategy with the Incumbent Prime Minister,"[176] and "Memorial on River Bandits,"[177] he penetrated past and present and investigated successes and failures. Comparing to the "All's safe" Secretary Du[178] in the past, how about him now? It is regrettable that Heaven harmed the power of the general or the minister,[179] not letting them fully scrutinize Du's schemes, so that [his plans] simply circled around the Purple Tenuity (i.e. the imperial court) and his writings were nothing but empty words. Yet how would he recall the old dream of Yangzhou? Now Straw Snow Cape's compilation of the *Collection* probably also signaled his waking up from that dream. Otherwise, such clear and detailed [accounts of] singing and dancing courtesans of the green bower would make it an amorous history of a whole generation to be transmitted. The conduct of Straw Snow Cape is no less [honorable] than current worthies, so how could he deign to do that (i.e. write an amorous history)? I fear that the world might suspect Straw Snow Cape due to *The Green Bower* and could not understand his intentions. For that reason, I discuss him

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[173] Du Mu, "Yuan shiliu wei" 原十六衛, *Fanchuan wenji* 2.5a-8a, *Siku quanshu* edition.

[174] Du Mu, "Zhan lun" 戰論, *Fanchuan wenji* 2.8a-10b, *Siku Quanshu* edition.

[175] Du Mu, "Shou lun" 守論, *Fanchuan wenji* 11a-13a, *Siku Quanshu* edition.

[176] The full title is "Shang Li situ xianggong yongbingshu"上李司徒相公用兵書, in *Fanchuan wenji* 8.1a-6b, *Siku quanshu* edition.

[177] Du Mu, "Shang Li taiwei lun jiangzei shu" 上李太尉論江賊書, *Fanchuan wenji* 8.6b-10b, *Siku quanshu* edition.

[178] Du Mu used to be appointed as prefectural secretary in Yangzhou by Niu Sengru 牛僧孺. Du was in the habit of roaming and partying in the pleasure quarters at night. Concerned with his safety, Niu sent street patrolmen to secretly protect Du and report back to him on a note that says "All's safe." Here it refers to the unrestrained life Du Mu led in Yangzhou.

[179] Referring to the prime minister and the defender-in-chief Du Mu's last two memorials were addressed to. They failed to recognize the value Du Mu's proposals and put his schemes into practice.

alongside with Du Mu. 竊惟雪蓑在承平時，嘗蒙富貴余澤，豈若杜樊川贏得薄倖之名乎？然樊川自負奇節，不為齪齪小謹，至論列大事，如《罪言》、《原十六衛》、《戰守二論》、《與時宰論兵》、《論江賊書》，達古今，審成敗，視昔之平安杜書記為何如邪？惜乎天慦將相之權，弗使究其設施，回翔紫薇，文空言耳！揚州舊夢，尚奚憶哉。今雪蓑之為是集也，殆亦夢之覺也。不然，歷歷青樓歌舞之妓，而成一代之艷史傳之也。雪蓑於行，不下時俊，顧屑為此? 余恐世以青樓而疑雪蓑，且不白其誌也，故並樊川而論之。

Alas, entertainment is a base art, and music is enfeebling. In writings good things [about them] are usually transmitted. As for those sank into oblivion never to be heard of again, there are also a lot. Thanks to Du Fu, Madame Huang the Fourth had her name preserved. How fortunate she alone was![180] People who peruse this collection should be moved by a scholar who did not meet his time. On the sixteenth day of the sixth month of *jiachen* year during *zhizheng* reign period (1364), respectfully prefaced by Zhu Jing from West Long Mount, also known as Man of the Way Who Observes Dreams. 噫！優伶則賤藝，樂則靡焉。文墨之間，每傳好事；其湮沒無聞者，亦已多矣。黃四娘托老杜而名存，獨何幸也！覽是集者，尚感士之不遇。時至正甲辰六月既望(1364)觀夢道人隴右朱經謹序。

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[180] Du Fu 杜甫, “Walking Alone Along the Bank of Yangtze River in Search of Flowers, no. 6” 江畔獨步尋花七絕句之六

黃四娘家花滿蹊	At Madam Huang the Fourth’s abode, flowers fully cover the footpath
千朵万朵压枝低	Tens and thousands of them [heavily] weigh the braches down so low.
留连戏蝶时时舞	Lingering around, sporting butterflies are constantly dancing,
自在娇莺恰恰啼	Unconfined, tender orioles twitter and chitter.

See Gao Chufang 高楚芳 (1255-1308) ed., *Ji qianjia zhu Du gongbu shiji* 集千家注杜工部詩集 7.24b-25a, *Siku quanshu* edition.

Zhu Jing's approach to justify Xia Tingzhi's writing of QLJ is to interpret the book as the means of a "scholar who do not meet their time" 士不遇 to vent his frustration and complaint. While consenting to the orthodox view that any Confucian scholar should aspire for office holding, Zhu points out that timing or fate actually played a decisive role in their choice of career path that was out of their control. For a scholar who does not meet his time, he should not be blamed if he withdraws from office holding into an unrestrained life of poetry and wine. However, when the timing is favorable, there is no excuse for literati scholars to refuse public service. Even loyalty to the previous dynasty could not fully justify the rejection by remnant subjects of the Jin, such as Du Shanfu, Bai Pu, and Guan Hanqing, to be employed by the Yuan government.[181] They were either looked down upon or sneered at by people. Zhu's unsympathetic comment on their mind—"indeed hard to recognize" 固難識也—shows that the correlation between serving and good timing and, in turn, self-abandonment and bad timing is rather stiff and does no leave much room for the individual to make their own choice. As Xia Tingzhi lived in an age of dynastic declination when all scholars lost proper employment and were filled with frustration, he should not be blamed for abandoning himself and writing a book about female entertainers. Even though that was even more excessive than simply indulging in "mocking the wind and playing with the moon" 嘲風弄月, Xia should be excused because the aggravated situation demanded a higher level of self-abandonment when poetry and wine were no longer safe means to give vent to sorrow. Borrowing Xia's

[181] Zhu Jing's claim that Du Renjie, Guan Hanqing and Bai Pu rejected to serve in the government out of their loyalty to the former Jin dynasty is not based on reliable historical facts, but out of the purpose to establish them in the role of "compulsory eremite" See Stephen H. West, "Mongol Influence on the Development of Northern Drama," 436-37.

metaphor of his memory as a dream, Zhu alleviates Xia's transgression and compares his writing of QLJ to gazing at a dream. Such interpretation actually deprives Xia Tingzhi, and indeed any literati in general, of the subjective agency to make their own choice about what kind of career or life they want to have.

Yet there is one more issue to cope with: while Xia wrote QLJ in the turbulent years of civil wars, it was in a time of peace that he collected stories about courtesan-performers through intimate interaction with them. The sanctuary of bad timing could not protect Xia from such debauchery of frequenting entertainment quarters, because back then he enjoyed both wealth and high status, not a frustrated scholar at all. Zhu Jing solves this issue tactfully by citing the precedent of Du Mu 杜牧, a great poet and essayist in the late Tang period. Even though Du Mu used to lead a notoriously dissipated life and "earned the name of being heartless in the green bowers" 贏得青樓薄倖名 when he was young, his moral integrity was never compromised, as he was able to write a lot of insightful political memorials later in his career. Du Mu recalled his dream-like life in Yangzhou in a poem, only to vent his complaint for his neglected talent. The same was true with Xia Tingzhi. Very likely the title of the book that contains the phrase "green bowers" and its content about courtesan-performers had already made readers suspicious of the nature of the book to be an ignominious "amorous history" 艷史. To dispel their doubt, Zhu Jing appeals to Xia's reputation of upright conduct and ensure them it was beneath him to do that.

In addition, Zhu Jing even went so far as to invoke social and ethical hierarchy to emphasize the base social status of entertainers and moral degeneracy of entertainment in order to clear Xia Tingzhi of any serious interest in them. If any courtesan-performer got

their names passed down by virtue of QLJ, it was merely by accident rather than Xia's deliberate intent. Female entertainers were no more than expedient sensual objects for male literati to dispel frustration and compensate for thwarted ambition of public service. It betrays a male-centered view that instrumentalizes female entertainers as object of desire, which was diametrically opposite to Xia's expressed view, but supposedly agreed with the view of QLJ's critics. To vindicate Xia Tingzhi and his QLJ, Zhu Jing makes every effort to deny everything Xia Tingzhi tries to convey in his self-preface and his book.

A Preface to *The Green Bower Collection* 青樓集敘 by Zhang Ze 張擇

Green Bower Collection is a book that records families of entertainers in the south and the north. Why is it entitled "Green Bower"? [The phrase] is taken from a line by Qin Guan.[182] Who is the person that keeps the record of entertainers? It is collected by Mr. Xia from Wusong. Mr. Xia Bohe was born in an ancient house of bibliophile that can be traced back to the Song and passed through the Yuan dynasty for more than two hundred years. Always wealthy and noble, he regards wealth and nobility as [valueless as] dirt and withered grass. 《青樓集》者，紀南北諸伶之姓氏也。名以青樓者何？蓋取秦少遊之語也。記以諸伶者誰？吳淞夏君之集也。夏君百和，文獻故家，起宋歷元，幾二百余年，素富貴而土苴富貴。

[182] Qin Guan quoted Du Mu in his lyric "Manting fang" 滿庭芳 in a line that says "In vain, I have earned the repute of being "heartless" in green bowers" 謾贏得、青樓薄倖名存.

When Xia just reached his adolescent age, a guest capable of physiognomy[183] told him: “Your spirits are pure and your aura lofty. Roaming and flowing, you are like a crane in the cinnabar empyrean. In less than twelve years, the southeast is to be plagued by warfare. You are to encounter disaster and your family property is to be swept away. If you can ‘diminish it and again diminish it’[184] in advance, probably that would help you avoid the disaster.” Bohe held a mirror in his hand and sighed over his shape and color. [Since then], no matter it were exiled officials, impoverished gentlemen, or commoners in the neighborhood, he was always ready to help those in urgent needs or destitution. He made friends with every worthy literati. He admired Kong Beihai [Kong Rong 孔融] (153-208),[185] so seats [in his hall] were always full of guests, and drinking vessels were never empty of wine. All day long grand parties were held and feast opened. Multitudinous entertainers all arrived, and for this reason, the scope of what he heard and saw was extensive, and his repute grew ever more prominent. Soon afterwards, Zhang Shicheng seized Gusu,[186] and he levied hundreds types of taxes to provide for military supplies. As for those rich families that had been stingy with money before, their houses were ravaged and furniture overthrown, and no one could bear to set their eyes upon that.

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[183] Earl Citing 雌亭侯 refers to a famous woman physiognomist Xu Fu 許負 in Western Han dynasty.

[184] Quoting Laozi, “He who devotes himself to learning (seeks) from day to day to increase (his knowledge); he who devotes himself to the Dao (seeks) from day to day to diminish (his doing). He diminishes it and again diminishes it, till he arrives at doing nothing (on purpose)” 為學日益，為道日損。損之又損，以至於無為。Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 ed., *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋, *Xinbian zhuzi jicheng* series no. 1 新編諸子集成第一輯 (Beijng: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 192. English translation is by James Legge.

[185] Kong Rong was well-known as a generous host who loved to banquet with guests at home.

[186] In the second month of the sixteenth year during zhizheng 至正 reign period (1356), Zhang Shicheng’s troops seized Pingjiang route 平江路.

Yet Bohe led a leisured life in a shabby thatched hut, teaching his sons to read. Tying up the hair in a scarf [like a commoner] and holding a bamboo stick [like a recluse], he roamed freely in the forest and mountain, having no desire for fame or wealth at all. 方妙歲時，客有挾明雌亭侯之術，而謂之曰：君神清氣峻，飄飄然丹霄之鶴。厥一紀，東南兵擾，君值其厄，資產蕩然，豫損之又損，其庶幾乎？伯和攬鏡，自嘆形色。凡寓公貧士，鄰裏細民，輒周急贍乏。遍交士大夫之賢者，慕孔北海，座客常滿，尊酒不空，終日高會開宴，諸伶畢至，以故聞見博有，聲譽益彰。無何，張氏據姑蘇，軍需征賦百出，昔之吝財豪戶，破家剝床，目不堪睹。伯和優遊衡茅，教子讀書，幅巾笻杖，逍遙乎林麓之間，泊如也。

[Bohe] traced back in his memory of families of entertainers in the past and compiled this collection. Some active persons sneered at him for not studying classics or histories, but recording stuff as trivial as rice or salt. They asked me, the Stubborn Old Man, about my opinion. I said: It is very easy for the worthy to sneer at Xia, but after all they do not understand his real intent. Our Sage Emperor Shi of the Yuan dynasty[187] acceded to the throne. At first, he rose to power in the remote northern regions, and then unified the realm and took delight in [regulating] laws and rules. [His achievements] are as glorious as Tang Yao.[188] The traces of famous ministers have been recorded in detail in verifiable history. Now Bohe records families of entertainers, firstly for the purpose to demonstrate the splendor of a

[187] Kublai's (1215-1294) temple name, also known as Ancestor Shi of Yuan 元世祖.

[188] A sage emperor in antiquity.

prosperous age when common people were joyous together and, secondly, for the purpose to reveal that the evils of mediocre men drowning in murky currents which led to the great disaster today. His record is very profound in meaning. In official histories are recorded biographies of entertainer officials, maid-servants are compiled into collections, and righteous prostitutes are subjects of official documents. Even small talks of petty officials are heeded by worthy gentlemen. Bohe records [the deeds] of the lowly and base. The conducts of even them cannot be surpassed by people in future generations, let alone that of great families and outstanding worthies? You should investigate Xia's meaning beyond the collection itself, and not seek after the names within it." Bohe clasps his hands and says: "You Sir do understand me!" 追憶曩時諸伶姓氏而集焉。喜事者哂之，弗究經史而誌米鹽瑣事，質之於頑老子，曰：賢哂其易易，竟弗究其所以然者。我聖元世皇禦極，肇興龍朔，混一文軌，樂典章，煥乎唐堯。若名臣方躅，具載信史。茲記諸伶姓氏，一以見盛世芬華，元元同樂，再以見庸夫溺濁流之弊，遂有今日之大亂，厥誌淵矣哉。史列伶官之傳，侍兒有集，義倡司書，稗官小說，君子取焉。伯和記其賤者末者，後猶匪企及，況其碩氏巨賢乎？當察夫集外之意，不當求諸集中之名也。伯和拜手曰：先生知予哉！

Respectfully prefaced by Zhang Ze, known as Mingshan and the Stubborn Old Man, in the spring of the year *bingwu* [the twenty-sixth year] (1366) under the reign period Zhizheng. 至正丙午春頑老子張擇鳴善謹敘

The preface by Zhang Ze defends Xia Tingzhi from a different kind of criticism:

accusation for being obsessed with trivial matters while neglectful of serious study. To counter that criticism, Zhang interprets QLJ to contain profound political and moral meanings. More than that, even Xia Tingzhi's spendthrift life style is given a hidden purpose by an anecdote that justifies Xia's association with courtesan entertainers and his intent in QLJ.

According to the anecdote, a guest expert in physiognomy examined Xia's looks and advised him to dispense with his wealth. He informed Xia of impending warfare that would take place in twelve years and this was the only way to avoid misfortune. Consequently, Xia's previous contempt of wealth and status gained new meaning and even his otherwise controversial extravagant life style was rationalized as proactive actions to cope with future calamities. After all, even if Xia's charitable help to people in need and active social life with literati friends did not contradict Confucian morality, continuous drinking, feasting, and partying with entertainers in his house all day long definitely crossed the line of propriety. Yet such was the typical mode of life for wealthy literati like Xia Tingzhi in the consumerism-oriented urban culture. More pertinently, the anecdote also explains away Xia's familiarity with entertainers and their stories necessary for his writing of QLJ: It was a by-product of Xia's proactive wealth-dispensing scheme. Zhang takes particular care at his word choice to make clear that they "arrived at" 至 Xia house rather than "being summoned" 召 by Xia. He uses the gender-neutral term "many entertainers" 諸伶 instead of "female entertainers" 女伶 even though QLJ is solely about female performers. The purpose is to absolve Xia Tingzhi from any suspicion of willful indulgence in sensual pleasures. Apparently, Zhang is even more prudent than Zhu Jing about intimate relationship with female entertainers. It is necessary to cast Xia in the

image of a cool-minded perspicacious host able to see through the surface of life and reach the depth of truth in order to support Zhang Ze's interpretation of QLJ.

According to Zhang Ze, critics who accuse Xia Tingzhi of wasting time on trivialities fail to comprehend Xia's real intent beneath the surface meaning of QLJ. He places the book under the tradition of "small sayings by lowly officials" 稗官小说 that glean small bits of information usually left out in serious writings like official history to convey nonetheless important messages. Therefore, even though QLJ is a book about "the base and the lowly" 賤者末者, their stories are used to demonstrate the prosperity of a splendid age under the sagely rule of Emperor Kublai. In addition to the eulogistic function, it also criticizes by exposing the evils of mediocre men that caused the great chaos in the current age. Therefore, far from being trivial, QLJ's intent is as serious and profound as official histories. Appealing to the methodology of classical textual exegesis, Zhang Ze advices readers of QLJ to reading between the lines to get its true meaning rather than stay with the literal meaning on the surface, thus opening up new interpretation that is justified within the ideological framework of Confucianism.

However, Zhang's approach creates problems that confined Xia's life and his book into a closed teleological system. To begin with, the anecdote potentially demeans Xia Tingzhi because it turns Xia's generosity with wealth and his active social life with friends and entertainers into a carefully-calculated, self-serving expediency for the sake of self-preservation rather than a volitional choice of his own. More importantly, the validity of Zhang's argument hinges entirely upon the anecdote's truthfulness. Indeed, it is impossible to verify whether this anecdote is factual or fictional even for its contemporary readers, not to mention modern readers like us. Many scholars simply let it

pass as true and even use it as reliable biographical source to reconstruct Xia Tingzhi's life.[189] However, we should not rule out the other possibility that Zhang Ze fabricated this story to serve his agenda. Last but not least, since the hidden meaning must be in line with Confucian ideology, it denies any other interpretations that may challenge the orthodox. It seems to be open-minded to regard female entertainers as paragons of orthodox Confucian virtues in spite of their lowly social and moral status, at least more so than Zhu Jing's rhetoric, but it distorts the true values they embody, which makes such an interpretation even more dangerously misleading. As we will see later in our discussion, their stories actually challenge rather than reinforce orthodox Confucian ideology.

Xia Tingzhi solicited the preface from Zhu Jing and expressed his gratitude toward Zhang Ze for "understanding" him, even though it is evident that both distorted Xia's meaning not only in his self-preface but also the content of the book. The purpose of their prefaces is to defend QLJ and its author from moral criticisms, not to introduce or evaluate its true value. From this we can infer the social pressure Xia faced for writing QLJ that forced him to accept any friendly help he could get. What he asked for from Zhu and Zhang was moral support rather than true understanding. Judging from the rhetoric that Zhu and Zhang use respectively to defend Xia, potential readers of QLJ, if not the two prefacers themselves, were still very conservative-minded and could not accept a book devoted to courtesan-performers without questioning the moral character of its author (the same old literary inquisition by the literati readership, if not by the Mongol court). If we think about Xia's hope expressed in his self-preface that readers who also

[189] For example, Arthur Waley, "*The Green Bower Collection*," *The Secret History of the Mongols: and Other Pieces* (London : Allen & Unwin., 1963), 89-107; Sun Chongtao 孫崇濤 and Xu Hongtu 徐宏圖, "Qianyan" 前言, *Qinglou ji jianzhu* 青樓集箋注 (Beijing: Zhonguo xiju chubanshe, 1990), 1-19.

thought highly of courtesan-performers should supplement his stories, obviously Xia was too optimistic about people's consistency in their acts and speeches. The Yuan dynasty is known for the sudden increase of literati interest in popular culture. Even though confluence of elite and popular cultures accelerated with the rise of urban popular culture and highly skilled entertainer had become increasingly an indispensable part of literati's social life, they refused to acknowledge let alone to reflect upon that. The hostile critical reception of QLJ among its contemporary readers suggests that ideologically most late Yuan literati were not yet able to come to terms with what they were actually doing in reality. Even the harshest denouncers of popular performative genres and female entertainers were fond of writing colloquial songs, visiting commercial theaters, and patronizing female entertainers.[190] Ironically, if we follow the Zhang Ze's interpretation of QLJ, those "mediocre men" 庸夫 who drowned in murky currents and caused the disaster in late Yuan dynasty should be no other than themselves.

Social Status versus Cultural Accomplishment

Top courtesan-performers were experts of urban culture and their interaction with literati highlighted the convergence of urban culture and literati culture. Status barrier was the central issue and the focus of QLJ was how it was crossed with the joint effort of courtesan-performers and literati who shared a common cultural reservoir.

QLJ records many instances of courtesan-performer receiving gifts from literati

[190] See my analysis of the two stories "Fan Xiangge" 樊香歌 and "Golden Oriole" 金鶯兒 later in this chapter.

bureaucrats in forms of poetry, essay, calligraphy, and painting, which was extremely popular in the Yuan dynasty. It was a unique phenomenon that revealed the social dynamic and cultural exchange between courtesan-performers and literati-scholars in a complementary relationship. The most famous two were Zhu Lianxiu 珠簾秀 and Zhang Yiyun 張怡雲, and their gifts were sent from the most prominent official or scholar of the day, including Hu Zhiyu, Feng Zizhen 馮子振 [Feng Haisu 馮海粟] (1257-1314), Zhao Songxue 趙松雪 [Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫] (1253-1321), Shang Zhengshu 商正叔 [Shang Dao 商衜] (fl.1190-1260), and Gao Fangshan 高房山 [Gao Kegong 高克恭] (1248-1310) among others.[191] Yet as we can see, many less well-known courtesan performers also received such cultured gifts from literati. Therefore, it was a common practice in the interaction between courtesan-performers and literati.

Little E Beauty 小娥秀

> Surnamed Pi, her named has been passed on through generations as “Miss Pi the Third.” She was good at soft singing and capable of slow songs. Grand Counselor Zhang Ziyou showed her much love and respect. Reputed literati officials in court wrote so many poetry and essays as a gift for her that they filled a scroll. 姓邳氏。世傳“邳三姐”是也。善小唱，能曼詞。張子友平章甚加愛賞。中朝名士，贈以詩文盈軸焉。[192]

[191] *QLJ, Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* vol. 2, 17, 19.

[192] *QLJ*, 21.

Auspicious Song Zhou 周喜歌

Her courtesy name was The Pleasant One. Her looks was not particularly beautiful, but her deposition was gentle and soft. Zhao Songxue (i.e. Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫) pen-brushed her courtesy name. Xianyu Kunxue (i.e. Xianyu Shu 鮮于樞), Wei Shanzhai (i.e. 衛 謙), Investigation Comissioner Du, and other reputed gentlemen all wrote her song-lyrics as gift for her. Up to today, her family stored them up as treasures. 字悅卿。貌不甚揚，而體態温柔。趙松雪書“悅卿”二字，鮮于困學、衛山齋、都廉使公、及諸名公，皆贈以詞，至今其家寶藏之。

Miss Yu the Fourth 于四姐

Her courtesy name was The Smart One. She was especially good at playing pipa. Her singing with pipa accompaniment was the crown of an age. Reputed gentlemen and literati officials all wrote poetry for her as a gift. 字慧卿。尤長琵琶，合唱為一時之冠。名公士夫，皆以詩贈之。[193]

The dialogue between Wang Yun 王惲 (1227-1304), the great Jin-Yuan literati scholar, and Brocade Beauty Cao 曹錦秀, a famous courtesan-performer who solicited him to write for her, vividly reveals underlying impetus of exchange of elite and popular cultural products between literati and courtesan-performers.

The entertainer Cao Jinxiu, with her gentle and pure songs, one day came over

[193] *QLJ*, 28.

to toast long life for me. Thereupon I asked her: You are from a well-known household. Talented, beautiful, and with your gentle elegance, you enjoy great fame in the capital. You don't even have enough time to manage invitations from powerful and rich families for you to display your wonderful skills and accompany pure joy. I do not know what I could do for you to make you do this for me. 樂籍曹錦秀，緩度清歌。一日來為余壽，因詢之曰：汝以故家人物，才色靚麗，風韻閒雅，知名京華。為豪家招致，逞妙藝而佐清歡，日弗暇及，不知何取於予而得此哉？

Cao replied: as stupid as I am, I can regonize quite a few simple characters. Every time before I present stories about rise and fall of dynasties from the past to th present or admonishments targeted at the womanly quarters with my humble petty skills, I always do a thorough research of historical and literary works in order to learn the whole story and accurately exhaust the gist. Having been doing that for a long time, I have got quite a lot of thoughts and feelings, and desire to follow suit. I would like to beg for a word from you to publicize me and make my name appear at the bottom of inscriptions by rennowed lords and talented scholars of the current age. Hopefully by touching the lofty air of the "Greater Odes" I can increase my price immediately; by drinking the auspicies dew on nouminous mushrooms my seven orifices issue forth fragrance so that I am distinguished from those fallen flowers and flying flosses that entrust their traces within dusts. Would you sir be willing to do that for me? 曰：妾雖不慧，頗解之無，猥以薄技，陳述古今興亡，閨門勸誡，必探窮所載紀傳詩詠，掇采端倪，曲盡其趣。久之，頗有感悟，

> 欲為效顰，願乞一言為發越，俾妾姓名得見於當代名公才士題品之末，庶幾接大雅之高風，一時增價；飲靈芝之瑞露，七竅生香，不同落花飛絮委跡於塵間耳。先生無意乎？[194]

A famous courtesan performer of immense popularity in the capital, Cao was not content with a career just to entertain the wealthy and powerful, no matter how successful it was. Thanks to her professional training in urban performance, she was literate and had the opportunity to learn history and literature. That made her ambitious to reach the realm of high culture and have her name recorded by literati poets. According to Cao, recognition by cultural authority would also enhance her market value and distinguish her from ordinary sing-song girls. What is remarkable is that Cao believed in the transformative power of culture which would, like that of "auspicious dews of numinous mushroom," elevate her cultural status in spite of her being a lowly entertainer. This suggests that she was aware of a split between social and cultural status, which emboldened her to put her social status aside and solely pursue cultural elevation. Yet Wang Yun declined to write for Cao under the excuse of old age and retirement, but he did tell her whom she should turn to.

> In Hanlin Academy of Scholarly Worthies there are so many of those who excel in refined literature and sufficient of talent and feeling, who long for fragment warmth with infinite gentleness, that their shoulders rub and their feet join each other's soles. They chisel their liver and kidney to produce brocade and damask; they

[194] Wang Yun, "Yueji Caoshi shiyin" 樂籍曹氏詩引, *Qiujian ji* 秋澗集 43.8a-8b, *Siku quanshu* edition.

> cough out saliva that turn into pearls and gems. For them, whether to depict the shape of orioles and flowers, or to give expression to the feelings of the moon and the dew, it only takes a moment as short as waving the pen-brush. You should go there to ask them and you will get what you want. Just like Du Qiuniang who was good at singing Golden Threads, or Editor Xue with beautiful eyebrows, both Counselor-in-chief Yuan [Yuan Zhen 元稹] (779-831) and Du Fanchua [Du Mu 杜牧] sent them poems fresh in meaning and relished by many. You can rely on them and transmit your name never to decay. 惟集賢翰林諸名勝擅文雅而足才情，念芳溫而餘蘊藉者，肩相摩而踵相接也。琢肝腎而制錦綺，因咳唾而成珠璣，摹寫鶯花之狀，形容月露之情，只有揮毫之頃耳，彼往求而得之，如杜秋娘之善謳《金縷》，薛校書之秀峨眉，元相國、杜樊川皆寄贈詩什，語意清新，膾炙人口，自可因之，以傳不朽。[195]

In a sardonic tone, Wang Yun referred Cao to Hanlin academicians who would be more than willing to write for her. Writing was compared to a refined artistry like “brocade and damask” 錦綺 and “pearls and gems” 珠璣 purely for aesthetic and affectionate values. Like performances of courtesan-performers on the real stage, these gifts were in a sense performance of literati on the metaphorical stage of paper, both demonstrate their cultural accomplishments, be it popular or high culture. Actually, these male literati needed courtesan-performers give them the occasion of literary performance to showcase their literary talent and refined feeling. Therefore, these gifts were not simply tokens of literati

[195] Wang Yun, *Qiujian ji* 47.8b-9a.

recognition of courtesan-performers' art; they were proof of courtesan-performers' ambition as well an avenue for literati to showcase their own literary talent and emotional richness.

In QLJ there seemed to be a tacit consensus between accomplished courtesan-performers and sympathetic literati that social status was secondary to cultural status. In the following stories of Beauty Cao E 曹娥秀, Fragrant Song Fan 樊香歌, and Ugly in Everything 般般醜, important status markers such as appellation and ritual ceased to denote class distinction.

Beauty Cao E 曹娥秀

> Cao E'xiu was a famed courtesan in the capital. She was intelligent by nature and superb in both her beauty and her art. One day Xianyu Boji[196] held a banquet and all the guests were prominent literati scholars. Having to withdraw in the inner chamber for certain business, Xianyu ordered Cao to serve wine. Just when everyone had taken his turn, Xianyu came back. The guests urged: "Boji has not drunk yet." Cao also said: "Boji has not drunk yet." The guests laughed and teased: "You address him as 'Boji,' so you two must be extremely intimate." Xianyu feigned anger and chided: "Little devil head,[197] how dare you be so disrespectful?" Cao answered: "How come that I may not address you as Boji, but you alone may

[196] Xianyu Shu 鮮于樞 (1246-1302), courtesy name Boji 伯機, a bureaucrat-scholar in the early Yuan. He was also a good poet and a great calligrapher comparable to Zhao Mengfu. About his life and works, see Wang Deyi 王德毅, and Li Rongcun 李容村 et al., ed., *Yuan ren zhuanji ziliao suoyin* 元人傳記資料索引 (Taibei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1979-982), 2052-53.

[197] Usually refers to a naughty and lovely child.

call Wang Xizhi [by his name]?" All the guests burst into great laughter.[198] 京師名妓也。賦性聰慧，色藝俱絕。一日鮮于伯機開宴，座客皆名士。鮮于因事入内，命曹行酒。適遍，公出自内，客曰："伯機未飲。"曹亦曰："伯機未飲。"客笑曰："汝以伯機相呼，可為親愛之至。"鮮于佯怒曰："小鬼頭，敢如此無禮！"曹曰："我呼伯機便不可，却只許爾叫王羲之也。"一座大笑。[199]

Naming system was an important aspect of social hierarchy. Cao addressed Xianyu in front of his guests by his courtesy name (*zi* 字) "Boji" when urging him to drink. Conventionally, courtesy names were used only among social peers. Being a lowly performer, Cao's act was a flagrant violation of social taboo and it was instantly noticed by a guest. He raised the issue in a delicate manner probably in order not to embarrass the host and other guests, but the implied criticism was unmistakable. The phrase "feigned to be angry" 佯怒 accurately sums up Xianyu's mentality at this awkward moment. He acted out being angry because he was responsible to maintain social order or he risked scandalizing himself. Yet his anger was "feigned" (*yang nu* 佯怒), indicating he actually did not mind Cao calling him "Boji" at all. It was but a performance he put up in front of his guests necessitated by his social role, which Cao tacitly understood very well. Therefore, Xianyu's seemingly harsh reprimand of her being "lacking propriety" (*wuli* 無禮) made her even more audacious in her witty response. First, she used status-neutral

[198] An earlier English translation of this entry is found in Arthur Waley, "The Green Bower Collection," 96.

[199] *QLJ*, 18.

pronouns *wo* 我 to refer to herself and *er* 爾 to refer to Xianyu, violating social hierarchy in her choice of appellation once more. Second, she pointed out Xianyu's own "transgression" when he called the great Eastern Jin calligraphy Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361) by his given name (*ming* 名). Normally, one's given name should never be used by people outside one's family. But in this case, because Wang was a well-known ancient, rigid adherence to such naming formalities would be ridiculous. A renowned calligrapher himself, Xianyu must respect Wang Xizhi the most among all the people living or dead, regardless what appellation he used to address Wang. By drawing a parallel between her calling Xianyu by his courtesy name and Xianyu's calling the Eastern Jin calligrapher by his given name, Cao tactfully exposed the emptiness and relativity of status demonstrated by appellation. The laughter her response elicited from the guests shows that everyone was won over by her repartee.

Fragrant Song Fan 樊香歌

> She was a famous beauty in Jinling (i.e. Nanjing), marvelous [in her skills] at singing and dancing, good at conversing and bantering. She read classics and history quite extensively as well. Even though the horn on the caps worn by Censorate officials was lofty,[200] they all loved and admired her. Literati gentlemen visited her lodge, laughing and talking [with her] all day long. Regrettably, she did not live a long life and passed away at the age of twenty-three *sui*. She was buried

[200] The cap worn by executive officials in the Censorate was in the shape of the legendary animal *xiezhi* 獬豸, so it was called *xiezhi* cap. Xiezhi was believed to be a unicorn capable of discerning right from wrong, innocent from guilty, and it would hit the guilty with its horn.

outside South Pass. When warm-hearted people took a springtime outing, they always brought wine and offer a libation at her tomb. Up to this day, it has been generally accepted as a norm.[201] 金陵名姝也。妙歌舞，善談謔，亦頗涉獵書史。臺端雖麾角戛戛，悉皆愛賞；士夫造其廬，盡日笑談。惜壽不永，二十三歲而卒，葬南關外。好事者春遊，必携酒奠其墓，至今率以為常。[202]

Fan's expertise in popular performance and her learning in classics and history made her a courtesan-performer conversant with both popular and elite culture, an attribute that contributed to her popularity among literati officials. Both before and after her death, Fan was treated in a way far surpassing what was commensurate to a lowly entertainer. Even high-ranking officials in the Censorate who were normally the most stringent within the bureaucratic system loved her, and literati scholars enjoyed her company so much that they even put aside their study. Their love for her did not stop even after her early death, and she continued to receive offerings of wine at her tomb each spring. It was quite abnormal for an entertainer to enjoy such offerings after death and those who did that violated ritual propriety due for her lowly social and moral status. However, we are told by Xia Tingzhi that it had become a new local custom taken for granted by all 率以為常. Social, ethical, and ritual order gave way to the aesthetic and affective value Fan embodied.

[201] An earlier English translation of this piece is found in Arthur Waley, "*The Green Bower Collection*," 101.

[202] *QLJ*, 30.

Ugly in Everything 般般醜

Surnamed Ma, also known as Suqing (Literally: the Plain One). She was good at poetry and conversant with music. Her name spread widely in Yangtze and Xiang regions. At that time there was a certain Liu Tingxin,[203] a younger cousin of Liu Tinghan censor of the southern terrace, coarsely called "Dark Liu the Fifth." Riotous and unbridled, he was good at jests and intelligent by nature. When it came to composing song lyrics, he simply intoned the lines out without thinking. As for vulgar and slangy speeches of the market street, he transformed and employed them so innovatively and unexpectedly that he could say what other people did not know how to put into words. He and Madam Ma had heard about each other but never met before. 姓馬，字素卿。善詞翰，達音律，馳名江湘間。時有劉廷信者，南臺御史劉廷翰之族弟，俗呼曰“黑劉五”，落魄不羈，工於笑談，天性聰慧，至於詞章，信口成句，而街市俚近之談，變用新奇，能道人所不能道者，與馬氏各相聞而未識。

One day they encountered with each other on the street. People who

[203] There is an entry "Liu Tingxin" 鎦廷信 in *Lu gui bu xu bian* [*A Sequel to The Register of Ghosts*]:

> Formerly his name was Tingyu. He ranked the fifth [among his siblings]. Tall and dark-skinned, people all called him "Black Liu the fifh." He was extremely close to my late father. His unfettered yet urbane charm supasesed his peers. In the wind at dawn and under the moon at dusk, he was totally occupied with filling lyrics. He composed "Pillow Mark like a Thread Imprinted by Her Fragrant Cheek" to the *shuangdio* mode. A lot of people wrote matching lyrics to his, but no one was better than his. He also had song lyrics such as "Threadlike Willow Branches Stirred up by the Wind" and "Golden Wind Sending Off Night Chill" to the *nanlü* mode, all written in superbly beautiful language. People throughout the world all sing these songs. His brother Tinggan served as administration vice commissioner in Hu-Guang province. For that reason, he [Tingxin] passed away in Wuchang. 先名廷玉。行五，身長而黑，人盡稱“黑鎦五舍”。與余先人至厚。風流蘊藉，超出倫輩。風晨月夕，唯以填詞為事。有“枕頭痕一線印香腮”雙調，和者甚眾，莫能出其右。又有“絲絲楊柳風”、“金風送晚涼”南呂等作，語極俊麗，舉世歌之。兄廷幹，任湖藩大參，因之卒于武昌。

See *A Sequel*, 286-7.

accompanied them said “The two of you please meet each other.” And they introduced “This is Young Master Liu the Fifth.[204] This is Ugly in Everything Ma.” Having greeted each other, Lu gazed upon Ma carefully and said “You deserve your name.” Ma left with a smile on her face. Since then, they visited each other back and forth very frequently. The song lyrics they composed together numbered extremely a lot, and are still circulating on everybody’s lips till today.[205] 一日，相遇於道，偕行者曰：“二人請相見”。曰：“此劉五舍也；此即馬般般醜也。”見畢，劉熟視之曰：“名不虛得”。馬氏含笑而去。自是徃來甚密，所賦樂章極多，至今為人傳誦。[206]

Ma was one of those homely courtesan-performers in QLJ who earned their name purely by their talent.[207] Yet with her excellent skills in literature and music, she turned her otherwise derogatory name, “Ugly in Everything,” into a proud statement that challenged stereotypical conception about courtesan-performers as merely objects of male sexual desire. Moreover, Ma’s success also shows that her audience prioritized her skills over her looks, and regarded her as professional artisan rather than a prostitute. Her courtesy name “the Plain One” 素卿 reiterated the message in her given name in a refined way.

[204] In the Song-Yuan periods, young playboys of noble or wealthy families were called *sheren* 舍人. Liu ranked the fifth among his siblings.

[205] An earlier English translation is in Idema and West, *Chinese Theater, 1100-1450*, 165.

[206] *QLJ*, 37.

[207] Even average looking and handicapped entertainers such as Ugly in Everything 般般醜, Zhu Jinxiu 朱錦繡, Sai Lianxiu 賽簾秀, Miliha 米里哈 etc., could become very successful and won respect. Attainment of superb performing skill by itself is a demonstration of female performers’ subjectivity in their physical agility, intellectual strength as well as effort and stamina to achieve such level.

Conventionally, only men and some women of elite status had courtesy names, but in QLJ we find quite a few reputed courtesan-performers who also had courtesy names.[208]

By contrast, Liu Tingxin 劉廷信, the male literati whose brother was a Censorate official, had a vulgar name 俗呼 "Black Liu the Fifth" 黑劉五, oddly similar to the stage name of an entertainer. Liu's interests warranted that connection, because rather than office holding, his favored outlet to showcase his talent was making jokes, improvising colloquial songs, and innovative use of slangs of the market place, just like an urban entertainer. Thus, like Ma, Liu also challenged the traditional image of elite literati by actively embracing and engaging in the production of urban popular culture. In this respect, Liu resembled urban writers in Hangzhou recorded in Zhong Sicheng's *The Register.*

In a sense, Ma was Liu's equal in terms of their talent, interests, and social fame. Their meeting for the first time and brief exchange of words on the street symbolized the perfect mutual understanding between two persons that annulled the boundaries of status, upbringing, and gender between them. Liu's remark was both an insult and a compliment to Ma, because the "name" 名 could refer to either her given name "Ugly in Everything" or her fame as a talented female entertainer. Such a remark accorded with Liu's witty and unrestrained personality very well. Ma's reaction—she "left with a smile on her face" 含笑而去—was a perfect response that answered to both levels of Liu's remark at the same time. She left, because it was an insult on her ugliness, but with a smile on her face,

[208] For example, Zhou Xige's 周喜哥 courtesy name was Yueqing 悅卿, Yu the Fourth's 于四姐 was Huiqing 慧卿, and Shun Shixiu's 順時秀 was Shunqing 順卿.

because she knew behind the insult Liu was complimenting her talent. Ma was Liu's true 知音.

Two Sides of the Literati Identity

The romantic poet side of literati officials is prioritized over their moralist-politician side in QLJ as legitimate and laudable. Traditionally, women who caused men to deviate from moral integrity were condemned as evil seducers. However, adopting a female-oriented perspective, QLJ stories depicted them as positive figures resourceful, audacious, and lovable enough to prompt literati-officials to break free from moral hypocrisy and bureaucratic inhumaneness. Literati found an ally in courtesan-performers who helped them liberate from social and ethical confinements that suppressed their inner feelings. Intimacy with courtesan-performers was not regarded a sign of moral degeneration. It gained new meaning and transformed the identity of literati-official. When personal feeling was in conflict with political duty, in the narrative of QLJ, it was the former that was advocated. Condemnation and punishment meted upon them were even regarded as proof of their sincerity like a "badge of honor."

Seasonable Beauty 順時秀

Surnamed Guo, also known as Shunqing, she was the second child in her family, so people called her "Miss Guo the Second." She was gentle and elegant in her deportment. As for *zaju*, she was the best in playing "boudoir lament." Her

performance of the emperor's role and other female-lead scripts was also felicitous. Edict Attendant Liu Shizhong [Liu Zhi 劉致] (fl. 1290-1322) once compared her voice and song with "golden reed and jade pipe, *feng*'s warbling and *luan*'s singing." 姓郭氏，字順卿，行第二，人稱之曰"郭二姐"。姿態閑雅，雜劇為閨怨最高，駕頭、諸旦本亦得體。劉時中待制嘗以"金簧玉管，鳳吟鸞鳴"擬其聲韻。

Throughout her life, Guo was intimate with Wang Yuanding.[209] On one occasion she was sick and had a craving for horse intestine. Wang immediately killed his steed for her to eat. Assistant Grand Counselor Aluwei[210] was in the Secretariat, and desired to favor Guo. One day he teased her by asking: "How am I compared to Wang Yuanding?" Guo answered: "You assistant grand counselor is a court minister, while Yuanding is a literati scholar. As for ordering state affairs, serving the emperor and benefiting the people, Yuanding is not a match for you sir; yet as for mocking the wind and play with the moon (i.e., composing poetry), appreciating jade and valuing fragrance (i.e., rich romantic feeling), you sir is not as good as Yuanding." Aruqui gave it a laugh and let her go. 平生與王元鼎密。偶疾，思得馬板腸，王即殺所騎駿馬以啗之。阿魯温參政在中書，欲矚意於郭，一日戲曰："我何如王元鼎？"郭曰："參政，宰臣也；元鼎，文士也。經綸朝政，致君澤民，則元鼎不及參政；嘲風弄月，惜玉憐香，則參政不敢望元

[209] For more information about Wang Yuanding, see Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, "Wang Yuanding" 王元鼎, in *Yuanqu jia kaolue* 元曲家考略, 5-8.

[210] About Aluwei (Aruqui), see Sun Kaidi, "Aluwei" 阿魯威, in *Yuanqu jia kaolue*, 8-9. .

鼎。”阿魯温一笑而罷。[211]

Guo was a versatile *zaju* performer specializing in playing the lady's role of "boudoir lament" as well as the emperor's role and so on. Her enactment these highborn dramatic personae must be so convincing that her voice was described to be like gold and jade, phoenix and simurgh, epithets normally reserved for the most refined music. She was able to be liberated from her real social role on stage, but in reality she only possessed the qualities of social elites but without their status or privileges. In this sense, she embodied the general condition of literati scholars in the Yuan dynasty whose cultural accomplishments could not necessarily translate into real political power thanks to the abolishment of civil examinations.

Guo's story reveals an important reorientation of literati's self-identity. Guo's sick-time craving for horse meat prompted her lover Wang Yuanding to slaughter his own horse without second thought. Traditionally a man's horse was a symbol of his status, power, and even virility, valued by all men of ambition more than their women. It should be even more so in the Mongol Yuan dynasty whose rule was mainly founded upon its formidable military power on the horseback. Wang's act was significant because it signaled a major shift of emphasis in the two sides of literati official's identity: from the ambitious politician who valued power and status to the romantic poet who cherished talent and feeling. These two sides were furthermore concretized into Arugui the court minister 宰臣 and Wang Yuanding the literati scholar 文士 when Arugui tried to compete with Wang for Guo's love. The courtesan-performer played the role of a judge. While the

[211] *QLJ*, 20.

court minster represented the Confucian social and ethical duty of bringing order to the world, the literati poet represented literary talent and emotional sensitivity. Guo's preference of the latter to the former indicated that literary talent and emotional sensitivity were more valuable to her than power and status. Literati scholars found their most ardent supporter in courtesan-performers who appreciated them for their talent and feeling, in disregard of orthodox Confucian moral and political imperatives. Although these ideas were always condemned vehemently by orthodox-minded Confucians, they had a significant impact on literati culture. Arugui's good-natured acceptance of Guo's choice validated her opinion.

Genuine Song of Phoenix 真鳳歌

> She was a famous entertainer in Shandong, good at singing ditties. Peng Tingjian (1312-1354) served vice prefect of Yizhou. He strictly adhered to moral principles and was abstinent from licentious behavior. Assured of her quick intelligence and eloquence, Zhen desired to court Peng. One day it snowed heavily. Peng banqueted guests and they did not left until late into the night. Zhen did not leave upon the pretext of cold weather. Instead, she directly went to Peng's room. Unexpectedly, Peng did not refuse her. Later his affection [toward her] was very deep. 山東名妓也。善小唱。彭庭堅[212]為沂州同知，確守不亂。眞恃以機辨圓轉，欲求好於彭。一日，大雪，彭會客深夜方散，眞托以天寒不回，直造彭室。彭竟不辭。

[212] Peng passed the civil service examination in the fourth year of *zhizheng* 至正 reign period (1344) and was one of the few *jinshi* of Han Chinese background in the Yuan. He was a disciple of Zhang Shiyao 章仕堯, a scholar of Cheng-Zhu Confucianism.

後意甚密。[213]

In this story, the gendered roles in a stereotypical romantic relationship between the man who pursues and the woman who is pursued were reversed. Peng Tingjian's moral discipline and asceticism placed him in the role of a chaste woman. In contrast, Zhen's self-confidence, shrewd manipulation of the situation (late at night and heavy snow), and unbashful advancement upon Peng placed her in the role of an impudent playboy. It is worth noting that Zhen's confidence came from her awareness of her own acumen and facileness, instead of her physical beauty. The adverb "unexpectedly" (*jing* 竟) highlighted the readiness Peng the "chase woman" surrendered to Zhen the "impudent playboy" without any resistance. Moreover, rather than an impulsive momentary lapse, their romance obviously continued and Peng developed a very deep affection toward Zhen afterwards. The purpose of the story is not to question Peng's moral character or smear his name. After all, it is officially acknowledged that Peng was a capable and upright official when alive, and died a martyr when quelling rebellious troops in 1354. He was bestowed the posthumous title of "Marquis Loyalty in Hard Times" (*zhongmin* 忠愍).[214] In my understanding, the story is firstly a compliment to the courtesan-performer who won over Peng's heart. More importantly it is a celebration of the triumph of intelligence and feeling over moralistic asceticism. Zhen's success could not have been achieved without Peng's acquiescence. This story's unorthodox perspective reveals Xia's

[213] *QLJ*, 35-36. An earlier English translation of this entry is found in Waley, 105.

[214] See Peng Tingjian's biography in *Yuanshi* 元史, 4419-20.

distance from Confucian moral standards.

Golden Belt Wang 王金帶

> She surnamed Zhang and ranked the sixth [among her siblings]. Her beauty and art were peerless. Vice Prefect Wang of Dengzhou took her, and she bore him a son. Someone slandered him in front of Grand Preceptor Boyan [Bayan] (1236-1294), and desired to take her into palace entertainment bureau to attend official summons. Wang via a nun pleaded and asked [for help] from the lady of Grand Preceptor, so she got exempted. 姓張氏，行第六。色藝無雙。鄧州王同知娶之，生子矣。有譖之於伯顏太師，欲取入教坊承應。王因一尼為地求問於太師之夫人，乃免。[215]

Legal injunctions issued by the Yuan court in 1279 forbade the officials, the powerful and the wealthy households from marrying female entertainers in order to stop the drain of skillful entertainers from the court entertainment bureau and to maintain clear-cut class lines. A precedent dated 1312 cited an official who was punished by death penalty for marrying an entertainer as a serious warning to all that dared to transgress the law.[216] Although actual execution of these laws might be slack since QLJ records many instances of female entertainers married to officials as concubines, the risk was always there. In this story, even after Golden Belt had married Vice Prefect Wang and gave birth to a

[215] *QLJ*, 24. An earlier translation is found in Waley, 98.

[216] See *Yuan dianzhang* 元典章 [*Da Yuan shengzheng guochao dianzhang* 大元圣政國朝典章], (Taibei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1976), 18.46a, 46.18b. For an English translation of the two items, see *Chinese Theater, 1100-1450*, 146-47.

child, she was in grave danger of being snatched back to the entertainment bureau when her marriage was reported to the authority. Vice Prefect Wang's official post and even his life were also potentially at stake for his violation of the law. Legalized inhumaneness threatened to trample on human feeling and cardinal human relationship between husband and wife (concubine) as well as between mother and child in order to serve the bureaucratic system and maintain social hierarchy. Thankfully, the authority here, Grand Preceptor Boyan, was still a human being entangled in human relationships. Vice Prefect Wang, the nun, and Lady Boyan[217] weaved a personal network that connected Golden Belt and Grand Preceptor Boyan up so that she was exempted. Crooking the law through personal connection and bribery was condemned in orthodox ideology, but in this case it marked the triumph of human feelings over institutionalized cruelty legitimized by law, order, and morality. Xia's sympathy is obviously with the law-breakers, as we can see from his nuanced use of the word "to slander" (*jian* 譖, or *zen* 譖 in different versions) to describe the reporter's act.

Golden Oriole 金鶯兒

> She was a famous beauty in Shandong of fine form and features, good at conversing and jesting. As for playing the zither and singing along to the music, she rarely had a match. Jia Bojian took the office of assistant censor-in-chief in Shandong. Upon seeing her for the first time, Jia instantly fell in love and became immensely intimate with her. Later he was appointed censor of the Western Branch

[217] According to Waley, Lady Boyan was a great-grand-daughter of Kublai Khan. See Waley, 98.

Censorate,[218] but he could not forget his feeling for her. He composed a song "Red Embroidered Shoes" to the tune of *Zuigaoge* and sent it to her, which said: 山東名姝也。美姿色，善談笑，撦箏合唱，鮮有其比。賈伯堅任山東僉憲，一見屬意焉，與之甚昵。後除西臺御史，不能忘情，作"醉高歌紅繡鞋"曲以寄之，曰：

樂心兒比目連枝	Happy minds, like paralleled-eyes fish and intertwined branches,
肯意兒新婚燕爾	Agreeable feelings, of the newly-wedded intimacy.
畫船開	The painted boat sailed off,
拋閃的人獨自	And tossed us to be separate and alone.
遥望關西店兒	Gazing afar into the hostel at the West Pass,
黃河水流不盡心事	Yellow River's water does not flow as endlessly as thoughts in my mind;
中條山隔不斷相思	Middle Strip Mount[219] cannot cut off our longings for each other.
常記得	Always remember:
夜深沉人靜悄	When night was deep, people quiet

[218] In the Yuan dynasty, two Branch Censorates (*xing yushitai* 行御史臺) were established to assist the metropolitan Censorate at Beijing, one in Shanxi 陝西 and the other in Yangzhou 揚州 (later moved to Hangzhou 杭州). The new appointment transferred Jia Bojian from Shandong to Shanxi. About the Branch Censorate, see Hucker, 247.

[219] Middle Strip Mount 中條山 is located in south Shanxi 山西 province.

自來時	you came over [to my chamber] by yourself
來時節三兩句話	The time you came: three or two words,
去時節一篇詩	The time you left, a piece of poem:
記在人心窩兒裏	Remember that in the deep socket of heart,
直到死	Until death.

> Because of this the Censorate got to know [their affair], and [Jia] was impeached and dismissed. Till today, Shandong [people] still took it as a laudable story. 由是臺端知之，被劾而去。至今山東[220]以為美談。[221]

Jia Bojian's impeachment typified the conflict and incompatibility between the two sides of the literati official's identity. In orthodox ideology, the romantic poet rich in feelings should always be suppressed and yield to the government official occupied with political and moral duties. Jia was punished because he could not let go of his feeling for Golden Oriole 不能忘情 and wrote her a love song when he was transferred to his new post in Shanxi. In other words, Jia's violated the taboo of male literati-official for not treating Golden Oriole as a replaceable object of desire but instead cherishing her with genuine love. In the eyes of the authority, that alone was a sign of moral degeneration and negligence of duty. As a Censorate official, Jia was not allowed to possess any romantic

[220] Jia Bojian was a native of Shandong, and his hometown was Yinzhou 沂州.

[221] *QLJ*, 36.

feeling at all. What was ironic though is that we know from the story of Fragrant Song Fan 樊香歌, even the highest ranking officials in the Censorate were not immune from the charm of female entertainers.

Significantly, a different perspective is introduced at the end of the story that countered the authoritative point of view. Jia's love story with Golden Oriole and his impeachment for that was passed on with approval 以為美談 within the local community of Shandong. This evidenced the disintegration of monolithic orthodox discourse about literati identity at the local level. It celebrated the triumph of Jia as a man of genuine feeling and literary talent over him as a moralist and politician.

Reciprocity and Subjective Agency

As we have discussed earlier, it was a grave violation of imperial legal code for good families to marry female entertainers punishable by death. In addition, literati gentlemen were strongly advised not to take entertainers concubines for moral and financial considerations as well. Those who did that risked being punished by imperial law and condemned by guardians of mainstream morality. Likewise, it also took courage and determination for the female entertainers to marrying into a good family. Firstly, she had to overcome objection from her family who depended on her as the major source of income. Secondly, she had to face prejudice and hostility because her past as an entertainer would be her permanent stigma in good society. The social role of a concubine may turn out to be a trap that pinned her down under strict domestic hierarchy and

obligations with no due rights. Worst of all, if she married the wrong man her life would be like hell. Some Yuan *zaju* gave realistic description of the miserable life courtesan-performers suffered after they married into a good family.[222] Therefore, pragmatically speaking, marrying into a good family (*congliang* 從良) was a risky decision for both the men and the women, ultimately because they challenged the status quo of existing social and ethical orders. While for some the motivation to take that risk was lust and greed, for some as illustrated in the stories of Wang Qiao'r 王巧兒, Green Lotus Beauty 翠荷秀, and Wang Lianlian 汪憐憐, the motivation was reciprocity of love and respect. Their subjective agency was best shown in their refusal to compromise with the world.

Wang Qiao'r 王巧兒

> Her singing, dancing and her beauty were well known in the capital. Chen Yunqiao [Chen Bai 陳柏] (ca. 1269-1339) was intimate with her, and Wang desired to marry him. Her mother privately sent her likes (i.e., other entertainers) to counsel her. They said, "Master Chen's wife is the daughter of Grand Preceptor Temuder. Her jealousy and maliciousness are unspeakable. If you marry into his family, you'll surely suffer from her torment and humiliation." Wang answered: "Qiao'r is a base entertainer, but fortunately I have received Master Chen's deep affection. If I could serve him [as my husband], I rather would die with no regrets." Her mother

[222] The marriage of Song Yinzhang 宋引章 to the two-sided playboy Zhou She 周舍 in the play *A Rescue of Wind and Dust* 救風塵 is a perfect example of how an ill-considered match may lead to a fatal disaster to the courtesan-performer. Another example is Zhang Haitang 張海棠 who is accused of adultery and murdering her husband by the principal wife in *Huilan ji* 灰闌記. Cf. Tao Muning 陶慕寧, *Qinglou wenxue yu Zhongguo wenhua* 青樓文學與中國文化 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1993), 119-126.

knew she could not force [Qiao'r] to bend her will, so surreptitiously she took her family along to a remote place, which Chen did not know. 歌舞顏色，稱於京師。陳雲嶠與之狎，王欲嫁之。其母密遣其流輩開喻曰："陳公之妻乃鐵太師女，妬悍不可言，爾若歸其家，必遭凌辱矣。"王曰："巧兒一賤倡 ，蒙陳公厚眷，得侍巾櫛雖死無憾。"母知其志不可奪，潛挈家僻所，陳不知也。

Ten days later, Wang secretly sent someone to Chen and told him that "It is my mother's scheme to put me at a certain location. A rich merchant has made an appointment to come over on a certain day. You should make a plan [to stop him], or I am afraid it would be too late." When the day came, the merchant indeed arrived. Wang excused herself for being sick and wailed bitterly high and low. [The merchant] drank till midnight, and when he desired to go to bed, Wang pinched him [so bad] that both his skin and flesh were wounded. As a result he did not get to have sex with her. After the fifth drum, as Chen had planned in advance with the sheriff,[223]they broke the door open, tied the merchant up and would take him to the ministry of justice. The merchant was greatly terrified. He pleaded Lord Chen: "I didn't know [your relationship with her] at first. I hope to settle this matter and am willing to offer you two hundred strings of cash to defray your cost of betrothal gift [on her]." Chen laughed: "It is not necessary." Then he paid her mother a large sum of money, and took Wang back to Jiangnan region with him. 旬日後，王密遣人謂陳曰："母氏設計，置我某所。有富約某日來，君當圖之，不然恐無及矣。"

[223] *Hulahan* 忽剌罕 means thieves in Mongolian. It is also transcribed as 虎剌孩, 虎剌海, or 虎辣孩 in Chinese. *Hulahan chi* 忽喇罕赤 means those who capture thieves, that is, policemen or sheriffs. See Fang Linggui 方齡貴, *Yuan Ming xiqu zhong de Menggu yu* 元明戲曲中的蒙古語 (Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe, 1991), 12-14.

至期，商果至，王辭以疾，悲啼宛轉。飲至夜分，商欲就寢，王掐其肌膚皆損，遂不及亂。既五鼓，陳宿搆忽刺罕赤排闥，縛商欲赴刑部處置。商大懼，告陳公曰："某初不知，幸寢其事，願獻錢二百緡，以助財禮之費。"陳笑曰："不須也。"遂厚遺其母，攜王歸江南。

After Chen passed away, Wang and his main wife Temuder both were able to keep his family property. Many people admired her and related her story. 陳卒，王與正室鐵氏，皆能守其家業，人多所稱述云。[224]

Qiao'r was a strong-willed and fearless woman. Moved by Chen Yunqiao's deep affection for her, she was determined to repay his affection by marrying him. The warning about Chen's principal wife, daughter of Grand Preceptor Temuder notorious for her jealousy and violent temper did not intimidate her; on the contrary, she was even more resolute in her decision that "she would not regret it even if dead" 雖死無憾. When her mother tried to cut her off from Chen by hiding her away, Qiao'r secretly sent a message to Chen instructing him to rescue her. Her resistance of the wealthy merchant before Chen's arrival showed the fiercest side of her: lying, crying, stalling, and pinching—she used every means available to thwart the merchant's desire. Rather than a passive prize waiting for her lover to come and rescue her, Qiao'r not only initiated her own rescue, but also participated in the fighting herself. Nicknamed "Madman Chen" 陳顛.[225] Chen Yunqiao

[224] *QLJ*, 26-27. An earlier translation of this entry is found in Waley, 99-100.

[225] Chen Yunqiao was of a free and unrestrained personality, and people called him "Madman Chen." See Yang Yu 楊瑀, *Shanju xinhua* 山居新話, in Bao Tingbo 鮑廷博 (1728-1814) comp., *Zhibuzu zhai congshu* 知不足齋叢書, 12a-13a.

was a nonconformist according to contemporary records, who valued genuine feeling and talent highly above power, status, and money.[226] His deep affection moved Qiao'r so much that she would risk her life to marry him. He proved to be a trustworthy lover in Qiao'r's rescue. At that moment, Chen the romantic lover overshadowed Chen the government official. He laughed away the merchant's bribery of two hundred strings of coins and later paid Qiao'r's mother generously as a compensation. Qiao'r was not harmed by Chen's wife, and she even inherited part of Chen's family property after Chen passed away so that she could keep it with Chen's principal wife. We can infer from this detail that Chen protected Qiao'r very well.

Qiao'r's mother was a foil of Qiao'r because she resigned to her allotment. Obviously she was scared of Chen Yunqiao's principal wife, so she thought that would

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[226] A story about Chen Yunqiao is recorded in Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (1329-1410), *Respite from Plowing in the Southern Village* (*Nancun chuogeng lu* 南村輟耕錄), 291. under the titile of "Lord Chen" (Chen gongzi 陳公子)

> Chen Yunqiao, also known as Chen Bai, was from Sizhou. By character he was heroic, unrestrained and sociable. His grandfather Pingzhang, was a commissioner of the former [Southern] Song dynasty. He was no other than the person who was ridiculed by Long Linzhou in his inscription on Pipa Pavilion. [Yunqiao] had altogether accumulated seven chambers of money, but only within several years he scattered all [with nothing left]. He used to serve as imperial attendant. Senior ministers in Imperial Academy and prominent officials in central and provincial government all lowered their generation and rank in order to befriend him. They all called him "lord." 陳雲嶠柏，泗州人。性豪宕結客。其祖平章，故宋制置，即龍麟洲題琵琶亭以譏之者。凡積金七屋，不數年，散盡。嘗為侍儀舍人，館閣諸老、朝省名公，莫不折輩行與交，咸稱之曰公子。
>
> His wife was the daughter of Grand Preceptor Temuder. Backed by her family wealth, status and close tie to the royal house, she once said an insolently arrogant word to Chen. Thereafter, Chen refused to see her through the rest of his life. 其妻，鐵大保女也。恃富貴近戚，偶以一言驕之，遂終身不見。
>
> Chen once was ordered to monitor the casting of sacrifice utensils in Hangzhou. Out of admiration of his repute, Ni Yuanzhen [Ni Zan 倪瓚] (1301-1374) from Wuxi came to meet him. [Ni] held a feasting party beside lake and mountain, exquisitely set out to extremity. After they toasted farewell in the end, [Ni] gifted him with one hundred *dan* of rice with a voucher. Yunqiao ordered attendants to move [the rice] beside him. Holding up a giant wine horn, he told entertainers, musicians and horseboys to come forward and distributed all the rice among them. He looked at Ni in the eye and said "I knew your name very well when I was still in the capital. It was said that among southern literati, you are the purest one. It turns out your good repute is after all purchased with rice. Please allow me to sever our connection from now on." Then he [went on] cursing those who had praised [Ni]. Zhang Boyu was present as a guest and he felt unbearably embarrassed. [Chen's] heroic spirit was typically like this. 嘗被命監鑄祭器于杭。無錫倪元鎮慕其名，來見之。張燕湖山間，羅設甚至，酒終為別，以一帖饋米百石。雲嶠命從者移置近所，舉巨觥，引妓樂騶從者而前，悉分散之。顧倪曰："吾在京時，即熟爾名。云南士之清者，它無與比。其所以章章者，蓋以米沽之也。請從今日絕交。"且罵諸嘗譽之者。時張伯雨在坐，不勝跼蹐。其豪氣類如此。
>
> See Tao Zongyi, *Chuogeng lu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 291.

also scare Qiao'r and make her change her mind. She was afraid of the idea of stepping out of the marginal lowly social status of entertainers and was content with making money through commodification of herself and then her daughter. Her objection to Qiao'r's marriage to Chen was out of both her fear of power and her greed for money. She was a victim of social hierarchy and commercialization, but she helped perpetuate that process of victimization due to her fear and greed, which turned her into an accomplice of that unequal and exploitative system.

Green Lotus Beauty 翠荷秀

> She was surnamed Li. Her *zaju* performance was highly commended at her time. From Yangzhou she came to Yunjian (also known as Songjiang), and Myriarch Shi settled her down at a branch villa. After Shi passed away, *Li vowed not to go anywhere else.* All day long she shut out visitors to burn incense and chant sutras. Shi's son Myriarch Yunhe and grandson Myriarch Boyu went [to her residence] to visit her at seasonal festivals. I met her at her seventies, with hair on the temple as white as snow and fingernails of both hands over a foot long. 姓李氏，雜劇為當時所推。自維揚來雲間，石萬戶置之別館。石沒，李誓不他適，終日却掃，焚香誦經。石之子雲壑萬戶，孫伯玉萬戶，歲時徃拜之。余見其年已七旬，鬢髮如雪，兩手指甲皆長尺餘焉。[227]

Li was a travelling *zaju* performer. She stopped at Yunjian where Myriad Shi took her as

[227] *QLJ*, 33. Earlier English translations of this story are found in Waley, 103; Idema and West, *Chinese Theater, 1100-1450*, 163.

his concubine. However, Green Lotus Beauty was treated with special care and respect by Myriach Shi that was unusual for an ordinary concubine. Instead of a “side chamber” 側室, she resided in a branch villa 別館 set up for her by the myriach. After he passed away, Green Lotus Beauty still stayed there. It was true that she took an oath not to leave, but she would not be able to do that without the permission of Shi’s family. After all, it was not uncommon that courtesan-concubines were driven out of the household after the husband was dead. It was highly probable that Myriad Shi on his death bed had made arrangements for her. The seasonal visits his son and his grandson paid to her when they inherited the title and became the new myriach further implied her special place in the Shi family. Myriad Shi’s care about Green Lotus Beauty was passed down to his heirs just like his hereditary title. Seen in this light, her vow not to leave was her way to repay Shi’s care for her. Even after Shi died, they were still faithful to each other. She cut off all her social connection. Somehow Xia Tingzhi was granted the privilege to meet her in person when she was over seventy. The witness description of her temple hair and finger nails provided by Xia Tingzhi added an aura of otherworldliness to Cuihe xiu. Her hair symbolized her constancy in spite of the passage of time, and her long finger nails symbolized she was not a person of this world. Her existence was solely to fulfill her vow to Myriad Shi.

Wang Lianlian 汪憐憐

> She was a top-class entertainer in Huzhou, beautiful in form and looks, skillful at performing *zaju*. Registrar Nie Gubo loved her very much. Wang told him “If you don’t mind my lowly paltriness, you should treat me as your side-chamber [as

your concubine].” Upon that, Niegubo thoroughly performed the whole wedding ritual to take her (as a concubine). She dutifully fulfilled the womanly way, and nobody ever spoke one word of reproach on her. Several years later, Nie passed away, and Wang shaved her hair to become a nun. Many high-ranking ministers and literati officials went to visit her. Wang deformed herself so as to extinguish the multitude’s unrestrained desire for her and preserve her body unmolested till the end of her life. 湖州角妓，美姿容，善雜劇。涅古伯經歷甚屬意焉，汪曰：“若不棄寒微，當以側室處我。”涅遂備禮納之，克盡婦道，人無間言。數年，涅沒，汪髡髮為尼。公卿士夫多訪之，汪毀其形，以絶衆之狂念而終身焉。[228]

Wang was self-conscious of the lowly status she was imposed upon as an entertainer. However, her choice of the first person pronoun *wo* 我 instead of the humilific *qie* 妾 for self-reference when talking to Niegubo implies she did not take him as her social superior. The insolent tone added by the modal verb *should* (dang 當) makes her request for Niegubo to marry her as his concubine somehow a challenge to social hierarchy as well a test to the sincerity of Nie’s affection to her. Nie’s meticulous observance of the wedding ritual manifested his love for Wang as a respectful woman rather than as a lowly entertainer. After Nie Gubo passed away, apparently there was no place for her in the Nie household, so the nunnery was the only sanctuary where she could continue her role as Nie’s widow. However, even that space was constantly intruded by visitors whose desire

[228] *QLJ*, 34. Earlier English translations are found in Waley, 104; Idema and West, 163.

for her threatened to deprive her of that role. The extreme action Wang took to drive away visitors by self-mutilation was a testament both to her truthfulness to Nie as well as their previous agreement that did not expire with Nie's death. Therefore, Wang's dutiful fulfilment of womanly virtue after her marriage and, indeed, even after Nie's death, should be interpreted as a repayment of Nie's love for her. Her initial request to Nie actually entailed a tacit agreement: should Nie treat her as his concubine, she would treat him as her husband. It was reciprocity of feeling and respect between two persons, rather than dogmatic adherence of social morality.

All the three courtesan-performers—Wang Qiao'r, Green Lotus Beauty, and Wang Lianlian—were truthful to their literati husbands because these men were able to rid of social and moral prejudice against entertainers and treat them with feeling and respect. In their reciprocal relationship built upon mutual feeling and respect, they were faithful to keep their words, even if that meant they had to fight against the world and renounce their social connections. That was an act that required immense courage and subjective agency. Interestingly, these three courtesan-performers' stories are also found in Tao Zongyi's *Chuogenglu*. However, they are told in such a way that instead of challenging dominant social and moral hierarchy, they became paragons of orthodox Confucian womanly values and were mad to fit the moral type of "Courtesan-Concubines Who Abode by Chastity" 妓妾守節.[229]

Courtesan-concubines Who Abode by Chastity

[229] See Beverly Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines and the Cult of Female Fidelity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 294. Bossler missed the difference between Xia Tingzhi and Tao Zongyi in their similar but subtly different narratives of the same story about the same performer.

People who have courtesan-concubines extracting love by means of beauty and skills, jealous of their favor within the family, also admit, “It is my wealth and status that moved the innermost of them.” If they meet any disasters and become poor or sick, those [courtesan-concubines] will surely get anxious and find a way to extricate themselves. How would they be willing to remain faithful and not betray [their husband]? Courtesans like Green Pearl in Golden Valley Garden,[230] Panpan in Swallow Tower,[231] Han Xiang toward Lord Ye,[232] and Aiai toward Zhang Cheng,[233] were indeed rare and exceptional. Since the great Yuan dynasty unified the realm, there emerged only three. 妓妾之以色藝取憐，妒寵於主家者，亦曰我之富與貴有以感動其中耳。設遇患難貧病，彼必戚戚然求為脫身之計，又肯守志不貳者哉？如金谷園綠珠、燕子樓盼盼、韓香之於葉氏、愛愛之於張逞者，真絕無而僅有也。大元混一以來，得三人焉。

Green Beauty Li[234] was a famous courtesan in Yangzhou. Myriarch Shi Jiushan took her and settled her down at a branch mansion. When Shi passed away, *Li vowed that she would never leave to marry another man to sully her body*. All day long she closed the gate to chant sutras, and that is all. Her age reached over

[230] Green Pearl was a beautiful courtesan of Shi Chong 石崇 in Western Jin dynasty, known for his wealth and extravagance.

[231] Guan Panpan was a courtesan in Tang dynasty who later became Zhang Yin’s 張愔 concubine. After Zhang died, Panpan retired to Swallow Tower, living alone for fifteen years as a chaste widow.

[232] Han Xiang was a beautiful and talented courtesan. She was in love with the son of a general surnamed Ye. General Ye was angry when he knew his son’s affair with the girl, so he made some arrangements and married Han Xiang to an old soldier. Han After the wedding ceremony, Han Xiang committed suicide by hanging herself to death. Her story is recorded in Tao Zongyi, *Shuofu* 說郛, 3.40a.

[233] Yang Aiai was a courtesan in Northern Song dynasty. She fell in love with Zhang Cheng and they eloped to the capital. After Zhan’s father found it out, he forced Zhang home, leaving Aiai behind alone. Aiai remained truthful to Zhang and died in poverty in the capital.

[234] This is a variation of name of Green Lotus Beauty 翠荷秀 in *QLJ*.

seventy years old, and Myriad's son and grandson went to visit her at seasonal festivals, which was transmitted among entertainers as a magnificent event. 李翠娥，維揚名倡也，石九山萬戶，納置別業。石沒，李誓不適他姓以辱身，終日閉閤誦經而已。年及七十餘，萬戶之子若孫，遇歲時咸往拜之，樂籍中相傳以為盛事。

Wang Qiao'r was a superior beauty in the capital. Vice Prefect Chen Yunqiao was intimate with her and took her to Hangzhou. After Chen passed away, Qiao'r respectfully attended Chen's main wife Ms. Temuder. She lived the rest of her life in purity, prudence, diligence, and frugality. 王巧兒，京師上色也，陳雲嶠同知與之狎，攜至杭。陳卒，奉正室鐵氏，以清慎勤儉終其身。

Wang Lianlian was a top-class entertainer in Huzhou. Registrar Niegubo *often* loved her. Wang said to him "If you sir don't mind my lowly paltriness, you should place me in your side-chamber [to be your concubine]. *As for slinking and stealing like rats or dogs, I would never bring myself down to that level.*" Thereupon Nie sent for a matchmaker, prepared betrothal gift and took her (as a concubine). Three years after their marriage, Nie died. Wang shaved her hair at a nun's temple. From time to time, some high-ranking ministers and literati officials went to visit her. For this reason, Wang deformed herself so as to extinguish their unrestrained desire for her. Eventually she spent the rest of her life in the temple. [Prostitutes] like them could also match the fine virtues of antiquity. 汪憐憐，湖州角妓也，涅古伯經歷常屬意焉。汪曰：君若不棄寒徵，當以側室處妾，鼠竊狗偷，妾決不為此態。涅乃遣媒妁，備財禮，娶之。經三載，死。汪髡髮尼寺。時公卿士夫有往訪

之者，汪故毀其身形，以絕狂念，卒老于尼。若此者，亦可以追前古之懿德矣。[235]

Tao Zongyi was deeply prejudiced against courtesan-concubines. In Tao's opinion, their relationship with their literati husbands was purely an exchange of their beauty and entertaining skill for their husbands' wealth and status. They knew nothing about loyalty. As for those few exceptions who did remain faithful to their husbands, Tao attributed their loyalty to womanly morality of antiquity 前古之懿德. They were either grasping whores or chaste widows to Tao, but not real human beings capable of genuine feeling and devotion.

If we read Tao Zongyi's stories against Xia's, the most obvious difference is that while Xia always introduces them first of all as excellent *zaju* performers with a focus on their professional skills, they are simply beautiful courtesans in Tao's narrative. This subtle shift of their identity from skillful performers to pretty prostitutes significantly diminishes their personal achievements and autonomy. Whatever they did, they did it in strict according to Confucian moral requirement for women. This actually cancelled out any meaningful part men played in their relationship, since once these women assumed the role of a wife or concubine, whatever they did was just to fulfill the obligation necessitated by their role and thus had nothing to do with the men anymore. For example, In Xia's narrative, Li's decision to stay was valuable because that was a voluntary choice of hers to repay Shi's affection for her. Whereas in Tao's narrative, not only her decision not to leave the branch villa 誓不他適 was changed into not to marry any other men, but

[235] Tao Zongyi, *Chuogeng lu*, 181.

also became a moral imperative to keep her chastity 誓不適他姓以辱身. Likewise, in order to tailor Qiao'r for a chaste widow, none of Qiao'r's fearless and unwavering determination to marry Chen Yunqiao, her fight with her mother and the wealthy merchant was mentioned in Tao's narrative. She dutifully obeyed patriarchal domestic hierarchy and womanly virtues, accepting the role of an inferior concubine and attended Chen's principal wife. She was credited for her ability of erasing her desire and will to abide by external moral principles of "purity, prudence, diligence and frugality" 清慎勤儉 throughout her widowhood. By contrast, in Xia's account, "Wang *and* [Chen's] principal wife, Lady Temuder, were *both* able to preserve his family property. This was praised and narrated by many people" 陳卒，王與正室鐵氏，皆能守其家業，人多所稱述云 hierarchical relationship between Qiao'r and Chen's wife is downplayed by the conjunction "and" 與 and the adjective "both" 皆 in their ability to keep Chen's family property. By the same token, the assertive, almost insolent request Wang made to Niegubo to marry her in Xia's narrative was softened by the use of "my lord" 君 and "your humble maid" 妾 that strictly demarcated the proper hierarchy. Moreover, the reason she made that request was not to challenge social hierarchy or to test Nie's sincerity, but to uphold her moral uprightness here. No matter how far-fetched it sounded for a courtesan-performer, Tao Zongyi's Wang Lianlian was very judgmental of intimate relationship not sanctioned by marriage. Behind her self-proclaimed moral uprightness lay deep-seated despise and abhorrence of the whole social class of female entertainers and their profession. However, as Niegubo's simply "prepared betrothal gift" 備財禮 rather than "thoroughly performed the wedding ritual" 備禮 when marrying her, in

essence she was still a commodity Nie purchased in Tao's narrative, which reinforced the stereotype that courtesans married into good families for the reason of wealth and status.

Indeed, reciprocity of feeling and respect between courtesan-performers and literati officials may be easily confused with loyalty and chastity in Confucian morality, because courtesan-performers faithful to their literati lover (or husband) tend to attract more attention than vice versa among a dominantly male readership. The idea of a virtuous courtesan loyal to her literati lover was a major ego-booster for male literati. To make that distinction clear, the story of Fan Shizhen is a good example.

Fan Shizhen 樊事貞

> She was a famous courtesan-performer in the capital. Consultant Zhou Zhonghong took her as his favorite [sing-song girl]. When Zhou had to return to Jiangnan region, Fan saw him off with wine out of Qihua Gate. Zhou said to her "Preserve yourself (i.e. your chastity) well after I leave, and don't invite other people's sneer." Fan poured the wine on earth and pledged that "If this humble maid fails her lord, she should scoop out one eye to apologize to the lord." Shortly afterwards, a young man from a rich and powerful family came. Fan's mother was not only pressed by his power but also covetous of his money. In the beginning Fan was resolute, but eventually she could not help but give in. 京師名妓也。周仲宏參議嬖之。周歸江南，樊飲餞于齊化門外。周曰："別後善自保持，毋貽他人之誚。"樊以酒酹地而誓曰："妾若負君，當剟一目以謝君子。"亡何，有權豪子來，其母既迫於勢又利其財，樊則始毅然，終不獲已。

> Later Zhou came to the capital, and Fan said to him: “Since you left, it is not that I did not want to preserve myself, but in the end I was forced [to give in] to the rich and powerful. Yet how can the vow of the previous day just be made in vain?” Upon that, she drew off her golden hairpin and pricked it at her left eye. Blood spurted out all over the ground. Zhou was terrified by scene. Thereby he made up with her and they were happy again just like before. People who were interested in this stuff compiled her story into a *zaju*, titled *Fan Shizhen Pricked Her Eye with a Golden Hairpin* that has been circulating in the world.[236] 後周來京師，樊相語曰：“別後非不欲保持，卒為豪勢所逼。昔日之誓，豈徒設哉？”乃抽金篦刺左目，血流遍地，周為之駭然，因歡好如初。好事者編為雜劇曰《樊事眞金篦刺目》行於世。[237]

Zhou Zhonghong had no real respect for Fan. The verb *bi* 嬖 accurately conveys that his feeling for her was characterized by his condescension to a sing-song girl, an object of desire. It was not serious enough for him to ignore her lowly status. Zhou’s requirement of Fan to preserve herself from intimacy with other men was out of his vanity and possessiveness. It was actually he himself rather than Fan that Zhou was worried to be the butt of ridicule if the courtesan girl was with other men. Fan was well aware of the nature of their relationship too, and that awareness translated into her choice of pronouns that strictly followed their status hierarchy. Unlike Beauty Cao E and Wang Lianlian we have discussed before, Fan addressed Zhou as “my lord” (*jun* 君) and herself as “your humble

[236] Earlier translations of this entry are found in Waley, 99; Idema and West, 161.

[237] *QLJ*, 25.

maid" (*qie* 妾) when she made her vow. Since she knew that Zhou only regard her as his favorite sing-song girl rather than his wife or concubine, there was no need to pledge chastity with her life. Yet, because Zhou did show her favor, Fan was indebted to him and an eye was just the right price to pay had Fan failed Zhou. In spite of her initial resistance, she surrendered to her mother's pressure and received the powerful young suitor. She did not fight as fiercely as Wang Qiao'r nor disfigured herself to drive away her suitors like Wang Lianlian, but she was already prepared to lose an eye at that moment. When Fan stabbed her eye in front of Zhou after he returned, she fulfilled her vow and cleared her debt to Zhou. Fan was an admirable woman because she was truthful to her words and acted strictly according to the principle of reciprocity. Actually she was also truthful to her feeling: it was simply not deep enough for her to risk her life for Zhou like Wang Qiao'r did for Chen Yunqiao or Wang Lianlian did for Niegubo, for the reason that Zhou never loved or respected her that much. This answers Feng Menglong's (1574-1646) question that why Fan did not prick her eye earlier when she was pressed by the powerful young client.

> Had the [act of] pricking with a golden hairpin shifted to the time when she was pressed by the powerful young man, the previous vow would not be broken in the first place. However, if Zhou Zhonghong were a man as [faithless as] Li Shilang,[238] would not that one prick be in vain? Only when Zhou came back did

[238] Li Shilang, or Li Yi 李益, is a fictional character in the Tang tale *The Biography of Huo Xiaoyü* 霍小玉傳 by Jiang Fang 蔣防. He was Huo Xiaoyü's lover but later betrayed her love and married a girl from a big family arranged by his parents. Heart-broken for being abandoned by Li, Xiaoyü pined away. See Jiang Fang 蔣防 (792-835), "Huo Xiaoyu zhuan" 霍小玉傳, in William H Nienhauser, *Tang Dynasty Tales: A Guided Reader* (Singapore; Hackensack, N.J.: World Scientific, 2010), 233-259.

she prick [her eye]; she pricked her eye and it made Li terrified, so their intimate affection grew even deeper. Indeed Fan was skillful at taking advantage of [the act of] pricking. 使金篦之刺，移於權豪子相逼之時，則舊約可無負矣。然使周仲宏為李十郎者，不枉卻一刺乎！周來而刺，刺而周駭然，情昵益篤，樊蓋善用刺者也。[239]

According to Feng, Fan did not prick her eye until Zhou came back and she had to do it in front of Zhou only because it was all part of Fan's careful scheme to terrify Zhou and move him into loving her more. Since things happened as she had planned, Feng judged Fan as a skillful manipulator. First of all, Feng was simply wrong when he accused Fan of failing to keep her previous vow. He obviously was mistaken about the exact words of her vow and took it for granted that she would prick her eye to defend her chastity. Second, rather than Fan's careful calculation, it is more likely that she did not expect Zhou to be terrified by her act and then change his mind to make up with her at all. She was only fulfilling her promise and that was all. In fact, Zhou's reaction to the bloody scene made him a faint-hearted clownish foil to Fan's unflinching resoluteness. Clearly, unlike Fan, Zhou was not at all aware of the grisly consequence his requirement and her vow would entail in reality. He resumed their intimate relationship more likely because he was awed by her courage and determination that he lacked, rather than because he was a forgiving and loving person as Feng assumed. Although Feng Menglong was sharp to see that Fan's act was not a good example of Confucian womanly virtue, he mistakenly

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[239] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646), "Fan Shizhen," in *Qingshi leilue* 情史類略 6.22a, quoted in Sun Chongtao, *Qinglou ji jianzhu*, 139-40.

interpreted it as an act of shrewd manipulative calculation.

The Variable and The Essential

From the looming threat of Chen's principal wife in Wang Qiao'r's story, we have a glimpse of the somber side of a courtesan-performer's marriage into a good family 從良 as concubine. Even though she was able to get out of the entertainer's register, and move upward from the bottom into the polite society, a good status could not necessarily improve her life. Wang Qiao'r, Green Lotus Beauty, and Wang Lianlian were fortunate to marry for mutual love and respect, but for most courtesan-performers who were less fortunate, marrying into a good family would not make any real change to their situation as victims of objectification and exploitation. Even for the fortunate ones, most of them lost their good status and became entertainers again after their husbands passed away. In QLJ, there are several such stories of courtesan-performers who fell back under the register of entertainers again 復落娼. However, thanks to their talent and autonomy, they were all loved and respected by people around them and lived a fulfilled life at old age.

Jade Lotus Zhang 張玉蓮

> Most people called her "Mother Zhang the Fourth." As for ancient songs whose music was not passed down, she could sing them all by following the tune and rhyme patterns. She was skilled in both strings and pipes and thoroughly familiar with every gambling game. Her jests were enlivening and her cultured

refinement was of a perfect blend. She could compose northern or southern song lyrics on the spot. Her expertise in tunes and modes had no rival in the current age. 人多呼為“張四媽”。舊曲其音不傳者，皆能尋腔依韻唱之。絲竹咸精，蒲博盡解，笑談亹亹，文雅彬彬。南北令詞，即席成賦，審音知律，時無比焉。

Most of those who frequented her house were young nobles. Having accumulated a lot of wealth, she liked to play hostess to literati scholars. Moreover, she squandered money like dirt and did not grudge even the slightest bit. Registrar Ailin used to place her in his side room [as his concubine], but later she registered herself under the household of entertainers again. Ban Yangong [Ban Weizhi 班惟志] (fl. 1330) [240] was very intimate with her. When Ban completed his tenure as supervisor of Confucian scholarship and [had to] leave for the north, Zhang composed a short song [to the tune of] *Plucking the Sweet Osmanthus* to present him. The last line went: 徃來其門，率多貴公子。積家豐厚，喜延款士夫，復揮金如土，無少靳惜。愛林經歷嘗以側室置之，後再占樂籍。班彥功與之甚狎。班司儒秩滿北上，張作小詞【折桂令】贈之。末句云：

朝夕思君　　From early morning to late night, I think of you,

泪點成班　　My tear drops become speckles [on bamboos].[241]

These lines were delightful on their own. Also there was a couplet that went: 亦自可喜。又有一聯云：

[240] For more information about Ban Yangong, see Sun Kaidi, “Ban Yangong,” *Yuanqu jia kaolue*, 126-129.

[241] This line contains a clever pun that plays on Ban Yangong’s surname that also means “speckle.”

側耳聽門前過馬，
Tilting my head on one side, I listen to horses passing in front of my door,

和淚看簾外飛花
Pacifying my tears, I look at flowers flying outside my curtain.

It was especially well-loved and catchy. She had several daughters including Qianjiao and Fen'r, all with superb skills. Afterwards, they dispersed and left her because they married good commoners. In recent years I met her in Kunshan. Over the age of sixty, her temple hair was as good as black and her color still lustrous. Her elegant style and witty conversation were just as good as when she was young.[242] 尤為膾炙人口。有女倩嬌、粉兒數人，皆藝殊絶，後以從良散去。余近年見之崑山，年餘六十矣，兩鬢如黛，容色尚潤，風流談謔，不減少年時也。[243]

Zhang's unrivaled talent in music, instruments, gamble games, jesting, and song lyrics, as well as her cultured sophistication made her extremely popular and attracted a lot of noble clients. Thanks to the commercialization of entertainment in *goulan*, she was able to convert her talent and popularity into a large income and, even better, good social status through marriage. However, neither material wealth nor a good commoner's status was essential to her. Instead of hoarding, Zhang was lavished with money and liked to host literati scholars at her own expense. Her generosity with money and penchant for

[242] Earlier English translations of this entry can be found in Arthur Waley, 101-2; Idema and West, 162.

[243] *QLJ*, 31.

hosting literati guests at her house made her in a sense similar to Xia Tingzhi, both taking advantage of their financial affluence to seek cultured and congenial social life. Thus, the entertainer became the one who was entertained, a *de facto* social being equal to men and of considerable social, economic power. She obtained commoner's status by becoming Registrar Ailin's concubine, but that status was not permanent and she reverted to the entertainer's status again. After all, a good status obtained through a man could be lost through the man as well, either because of his death or any change of his mind.

While material wealth and social status were impermanent, Zhang's talent and feeling were her most constant assets. The song lyric she composed for Ban Yangong was remarkable for the literary ingenuity and emotional sensitivity she displayed. The courtesan-performer did not have to resort to a male literati poet to assume her voice and express her love-sickness anymore; she got a voice of her own and could write even better. [244] Zhang also debunked the stereotype of exploitative mother-daughter relationship in entertainer households. Not only did Zhang pass down her skills to them and train them into top-level performers like she was, she also helped them get what she could not give them—a good social status—by marrying them to good commoner families. Like all great mothers, she did her best to prepare her daughters with everything she believed useful for a good life. Zhang's long-lasting vigor, beauty, and wit Xia Tingzhi witnessed when she was over sixty years old evidenced a fulfilled life of a courtesan-performer who unbound herself from the yokels of wealth, status, and age with her intelligence and affection.

[244] Stephen West discusses the performativeness of poetry by female entertainers, that reveals "how poetry operates in the extraliterary world: they show us the usefulness of poetry as a tool, a method of operation, a way to win favor or fame, and through those actions as a means of attaining some security and wealth in a highly literate and powerful segment of Chinese society." See West, "Yuan Entertainers," 116.

Natural Beauty 天然秀 [245]

Surnamed Gao, being the second [among her siblings], people call her “Little Sister the Second.” Her mother Ms. Liu used to serve Area Commander Shi (i.e. Shi Tianze 史天澤) (as his concubine). Gao’s quiet elegance had an extremely ethereal quality. Her talent and art particularly surpassed her peers. As for playing *zaju* of “boudoir lament” she was the top one among all. As for the roles of “flower female” and the emperor, her performance was also wonderful. Initially she married to Prime Handsome Wang an entertainer. After Wang passed away, she remarried to Jiao Taisu *zhizhong*. Later on Jiao passed away, so she fell under the register of entertainers again. People all felt deeply sorry for her, the descendant of a noble family. Yet still she was noble-minded and modest. Bai Renfu (i.e. Bai Pu) and Li Jizhi particularly thought highly of her.

姓高氏，行第二，人以小二姐呼之。母劉，嘗侍史開府。高丰神艷雅，殊有林下風致，才藝尤度越流輩。閨怨雜劇為當時第一手，花旦、駕頭亦臻其妙。始嫁行院王元俏，王死，再嫁焦太素治中。焦後沒，復落樂部。人咸以國香深惜。然尚高潔凝重，尤為白仁甫、李溉之所愛賞云。[246]

Double-Hill Gu 顧山山

She was the fourth child in her family, so people called “Missy Gu the Fourth.”

[245] Earlier Translation of this entry is found in Arthur Waley, 97.

[246] QLJ, 23.

> Originally she was from a good family, but because of her father all [the family members] lost their good status. She was intelligent and her art was superb. In the beginning she was married to Little Big Li an entertainer. After Li passed away, Halabuhua, the county magistrate of Huating, placed her in his "side-chamber" (married her as his concubine), and their marriage lasted altogether for twelve years. Later on, she was registered as an entertainer again, and grew old in Songjiang to this day. Yet [when performing] the role of flowery female in *zaju*, she still retained her postures when she was an adolescent. Furthermore, young performers received instruction from her. Many people praised and thought highly of her.[247] 行第四人，以顧四姐呼之。本良家子，因父而俱失身。資性明慧，技藝絶倫。始嫁樂人李小大，李没，華亭縣長哈剌不花置于側室，凡十二年。後復居樂籍，至今老于松江，而花旦雜劇，猶少年時體態，後輩且蒙其指教。人多稱賞之。[248]

The stories of Natural Beauty 天然秀 and Double Hills Gu 顧山山 highlight the inconstancy and arbitrariness of social status caused by the vicissitudes of fate. Both of them were born in good families. It was implied that Natural Beauty was the daughter of Shi Tianze by his concubine, the powerful Area Commander in northern China and the right Counselor-in-chief appointed by Emperor Kublai. How did she become an entertainer was a mystery. As for Gu, her family was degraded the entertainer's status as a

[247] An earlier English translation is found in Idema and West, 147.

[248] *QLJ*, 34.

punishment meted out to her father. Therefore, even the status one was born into was subject to change. It was true that both managed to change their status back once more through marriage with officials, yet they lost their good status and became entertainers again when their husbands passed away. In both times it was not their fault at all. They were simply victims of fate's vagaries.

However, in spite of the changes of their social status, their intrinsic qualities resisted the ups and downs of circumstances and remained the same. Even though Natural Beauty lost her noble status, the nobility of her character and style distinguished her as the favorite actress of two great literati writers of her day. As the best actress in playing *zaju* of boudoir lament, it suggested that the role on stage as a noble lady was more commensurate with her true quality than her role in reality as a base entertainer. The same was true with Gu. In addition to the vagaries of life, her talent, art, and youthfulness endured the passage of time as Xia tells about her adolescent-like postures in her performance at old age. More importantly, by passing her skills down to young performers, her art even outlasted her own life.

CONCLUSION

RECTIFYING ROLES:

A FORMULARY OF CORRECT SOUNDS IN THE ERA OF GREAT HARMONY

Perhaps the most compelling proof of *zaju* theater's impact on literati culture is the fact that "[b]y the fourteenth century, comedy [*zaju*] had established itself as a minor literary genre and a number of high-ranking officials wrote plays; in the fifteenth century, two of the leading playwrights, Zhu Quan 朱權 (1378-1448) and Zhu Youdun 朱有墩 (1379-1439), were imperial princes."[249] In the previous chapters, I have discussed how *zaju* influenced literati thought, conception of self-identity, and their social lives, especially their interaction with female entertainers. Yet, it is important for us not to forget that *zaju* was also constantly under the influence of literati culture until it was transformed into a literary genre that ultimately disappeared from popular urban theater in the fifteenth century. Since influence was two-directional, focusing on one side at the expense of the other risks losing perspective of the whole picture. Therefore, I would like to conclude my dissertation with a brief survey of literati's appropriation of *zaju* by an analysis of *A Formulary of Correct Sounds in the Era of Great Harmony* (*Taihe zhengyin pu* 太和正音譜, hereafter referred to as *A Formulary*) attributed to Zhu Quan, the seventeenth son of Zhu Yuanzhang, the Prince of Ning 寧王.[250] This book represents a milestone in literati

[249] Idema and West, *Chinese Theater, 110-1450*, 130.

[250] While Zhu Quan's authorship of *A Formulary* is agreed upon by most scholars, some, such as Zeng Yongyi, thinks that it was actually written by Zhu Quan's retainers serving him at his princely court. See Zeng Yongyi,"*Taihe zhengyinpu* de zuozhe wenti"《太和正音譜》的作者問題, *Zeng Yongyi xueshu lunwen zixuanji* vol. 2 曾永義學術論文自選集乙編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 30-43. About Zhu Quan's life and dramatic works, see Zeng Yongyi 曾永義, *Ming zaju gailun* 明雜劇概論 (Taibei: Xuehai chubanshe, 1979), 115-122. More information about Zhu

transformation of *zaju* theater to be co-opted into elite culture. The earliest formulary of songs of *zaju*, it provides playwrights a guidebook about how to write northern-style *zaju* songs in correct tones 聲調, tunes 曲牌, and modes 宮調. In addition, it is the first systematized introduction of *zaju* theater, amalgamating materials from previous critical works on *zaju* by literati of the Yuan, such as *Discourse on Singing* 唱論, *Sounds and Rhymes of the Central Plain* 中原音韻, *The Register of Ghosts*, *The Green Bower Collection*, and so on, to be synthesized within its own theoretical framework. As sounds (*yin* 音) or, by extension, music in traditional Chinese culture correlate to cosmological, socio-political, and ethical order, the title alone—*A Formulary of Correct Sounds in the Era of Great Harmony*—proclaims authority upon itself supported by orthodox ideology and imperial power. Its author's identity as a Ming prince further lends an aura of imperial authority to the book. Therefore, this book is much more than just a playwright manual to compose northern songs or a reference book to glean knowledge about *zaju* theater. Actually we need to be very cautious about the information in *A Formulary* and not to take it at face value, because this book has an explicit agenda to dissociate *zaju* from entertainers and commercial theater. Yet this is exactly why it is worth study, because it provides ample textual evidence on court and literati appropriation of *zaju* theater in the early Ming dynasty. In my discussion, I pay particular attention to how *A Formulary* transformed *zaju* by reinterpreting its socio-political significance in relation to orthodox ideology and imperial rule, and how the roles of playwright and performer,

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Quan's political career, intellectual activity, and his religious belief in Daoism, see Yao Pinwen 姚品文, *Wangzhe yu xuezhe: Ningwang Zhu Quan de yisheng* 王者與學者：寧王朱權的一生 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), and Richard G. Wang, *The Ming Prince and Daoism: Institutional Patronage of an Elite* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

particularly that of the female performer, changed alongside *zaju*'s integration into elite literary tradition. Therefore, this study can further show us the unique role *zaju* played in the confluence and conflict between elite and popular culture

The "Preface" to *A Formulary* incorporates *zaju* into the canonical "rite and music" (*li-yue* 禮樂) system and emphasizes its socio-political significance to serve the imperial power. According to the "Preface," the wide-spread popularity and emotional evocativeness of *zaju* make it the best form of *li-yue* that helps the Ming emperor strengthen his control over the people, manifest the greatness of his benevolent rule, and therefore legitimatize the Ming Empire.

> Ah, how prosperous! It has been a long time since the proper order of the sub-celestial realm was restored. The flourishing of rites and music as well as the beauty of reputation and moral teaching, have reached everywhere within our territory and beyond. All have benefited from the benevolent transformative power under the emperor's fecund grace. It has already been more than thirty years now. From prefectures and towns nearby the capital within the distance of one thousand li, to mountains and forests far from the capital for two thousand and five hundred *li* away, people old and young, deaf and blind, all sing and dance, taking joy in the well-ordered governance of our resplendent Ming. 猗歟盛哉，天下之治也久矣。 禮樂之盛，聲教之美，薄海內外，莫不咸被仁風於帝澤也，於今三十有餘載矣。近而侯甸郡邑，遠而山林荒服，老幼瞶盲，謳歌鼓舞，皆樂我皇明之治。
>
> Even though rites and music come from the human mind, there is nothing

except the harmony in the human mind by which to manifest the harmony in rites and music. Harmony in rites and music has no way but through the prosperity of great peace to bring about harmony in the human mind. Therefore it is said, “The tone of a well-governed age makes people at peace and of joy, and thus the government is in harmony.” For this reason, numerous worthies have given form to it [harmony] through *yuefu* that widely circulated in the world. People relish them [*yuefu*] as if they are roasted finely-cut fish. Like striking metal and beating jade, clanging and tinkling, [*yuefu*] were transmitted [as far as into] the four borders. As a result, no matter it were people speaking shrike’s tongue or tattooed on the forehead, people who by custom hang their hair loosely down or who pressed their lappet on the left side—whoever hear [*yuefu*] all feel happy and joyful. Even though their languges are different, their minds are the same. The power of sounds and tones to stimulate people’s mind is tremendous! 夫禮樂雖出於人心，非人心之和，無以顯禮樂之和；禮樂之和，自非太平之盛，無以致人心之和也。故曰治世之音，安以樂，其政和。是以諸賢形諸樂府，流行于世，鱠炙人口，鏗金戛玉， 鏘然播乎四裔， 使鴂舌雕題之氓，垂發左衽之俗，聞者靡不忻悅。雖言有所異，其心則同，聲音之感於人心大矣。

At my leisure time, I selected songs composed by talented men of our age, as well as works by old Confucians of the Yuan dynasty. I determined tones according to sounds, divided scales based on names. I collected them in two volumes and entitled [this book] *A Formulary of Correct Sounds for an Era of Great Harmony*. I examined tunes and then settled pitches. I compiled them into one volume and

entitled [this book] *Elegant Rhymes in a Jade Grove*. I searched a multitude of expressions and compiled into four volumes. I entitled [that book] *An Assembly of Rhymes from the Best Lines*. I presented them for printing to serve as exemplars of [composing] *yuefu*. Hopefully [they would] be handy for those who are interested and helpful for those who are leaning [to compose *yuefu*] even a tiny little bit. Ah, just compare to a good carpenter, even though he can wield the ax, he still has to follow [the rules laid out by] the line and ink. 余因清燕之餘，採摭當代群英詞章，及元之老儒所作， 依聲定調，按名分譜，集為二卷，目之曰《太和正音譜》；審音定律， 輯為一卷，目之曰《瓊林雅韻》；搜獵群語，輯為四卷，目之曰《務頭集韻》；以壽諸梓，為樂府楷式，庶幾便於好事，以助學者萬一耳。籲！譬之良匠，雖能運於斤斧，而未嘗不由於繩墨也歟。

Prefaced in the year of *wuyin* (the thirty-first year under the reign period of Hongwu, or 1398).[251] 時歲龍集戊寅序。[252]

According to the "Preface," the succession of the Mongol Yuan dynasty by the Ming

[251] Doubts on the date have been raised by many scholars, because Zhu Quan was only twenty-one years old in 1398. It was unlikely for him to write *A Formulary* and the other two books at that time. Besides, the names used in the seal signatures beneath the preface—Hanxu zi 涵虛子 and Master Danqiu, are sobriquets Zhu Quan used in his latter years. Zeng Yongyi holds the view that the preface together with the date was faked by some transcriber to enhance the value of the book. Yao Pinwen thinks the preface was written by Zhu Quan but the date was faked. See Zeng Yongyi, "*Taihe zhengyinpu* de zuozhe wenti", 30-43; Yao Pinwen 姚品文, "Taihe zhengyin pu xiezuo niandai ji yingxie Hongwu keben wenti" 《太和正音譜》寫作年代及影寫洪武刻本問題, *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 no. 5 (1994): 115-117; and also Zhou Weipei 周維培, "*Taihe zhengyin* pu chengshu kaolun" 《太和正音譜》成書考論, Nanjing daxue xuebao: zhexue, renwen kexue, shehui kexue 南京大學學報・哲學、人文科學、社會科學 no. 4 (1990): 38-41. However, since the key issue under discussion here is what this book tell us about literati appropriation of *zaju* into elite culture, whether this preface was written by Zhu Quan himself or not, or even whether the book was written by Zhu Quan himseof or not, is in fact irrelevant.

[252] Zhu Quan, *Taihe Zhengyinpu, Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* vol. 3 中國古典戲曲論著集成第三冊 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1959), 11.

ushered in an era of long-lasting peace. All the people far and near benefited from the ethical, social, and political order bestowed by the Ming emperor's benevolent rule. Regardless of their location or situation, people were happy with the socio-political order laid down by the emperor. His sage governance evoked a feeling of "happiness" or "joy" (*le* 樂) in people's mind that was so strong that it was externalized into physical movements of singing and dancing. Everyone was heartily grateful to the emperor; yet their gratitude was demonstrated through their spontaneous feeling of happiness rather than the moral obligation of "loyalty" (*zhong* 忠). Such emotional attachment implied a more personal and therefore much tighter bond between the emperor and his subjects. Moreover, its spontaneity further proved the emperor's virtue of benevolence that moved rather than forced people to submit happily to the imperial power.

Drawing on the "Rite of Music" 樂記 as well as the "Great Preface" to *Shijing* 詩大序, the "Preface" establishes a correlation between socio-political order 政和, harmony in the human mind 人心之和, and harmony in rites and music 禮樂之和. As the "Preface" tells us, all three factors have been realized under the Ming emperor's sagely rule. What is significant here is that *yuefu*, here referring mostly to songs of *zaju*, but also including colloquial songs, was incorporated into the orthodox system as a legitimate form of "rites and music" to embody the harmony in human mind and the great peace 太平. Though a popular performative genre, it is elevated to the status equal to classical poetry as "sounds of a well-governed age" 治世之音. Reasons are also implied here: first, *zaju*'s popularity enables it to be widely circulated among as many people as possible, even across linguistic or ethnic barriers to include those who speak different

languages or follow various customs. This is particularly important for the multi-ethnic Ming Empire and none of the classical forms of "rite and music" can compare to; second, *zaju* is so emotionally contagious that it can make everyone who listens to it happy and joyful as if their minds are the same 其心則同. In other words, *zaju* has the great power to move different peoples' minds into uniformity. Though previously an urban popular performative genre, *zaju* is expected to play the function of bringing harmony into people's mind and propagandizing greatness of the Ming rule even more effectively than canonical forms of rites and music exactly because of its popularity. Therefore, composing *zaju* is a serious matter that could only be entrusted to "worthy people" 諸賢, that is, elite writers whose social and moral status qualifies them to produce "correct sounds."

The elevation of *zaju* into the canonical status of "rite and music" and its rectification imply a number of consequences for the production and consumption of *zaju*. Emphasis on "correct" sounds and "joyous" feelings denies the subjective agency of both playwrights and audience. Writers living in an age of great peace are obliged to produce "sounds of a well-governed age" 治世之音 only. Producing plays to make people "happy" with the status quo becomes an imperative, or they risk being punished for smearing the "well-governed age" and therefore being ungrateful or disloyal to the emperor. As for the audience, their minds are reduced to a passive receptacle of external ideological inculcation. Their emotions are simplified to be only determined by the political, social, and ethical situations of the state. Moreover, such moral and political function assigned to *zaju* decides that it does not matter whether *zaju* truthfully depicts social life. Instead of capturing the "distilled truth" of reality, this view of *zaju* requires it

to cover truth, if truth did not serve the throne's purpose.

In order to make sure that the grave task of composing "correct" *zaju* songs is properly done, Zhu Quan or his persona has undertaken an extensive writing project consisting of three books that provide instruction and models for writers to follow. Each book covered a different aspect in *zaju* writing. It is of great significance that this undertaking is attributed to a royal prince, because it establishes the imperial house as the authority of *zaju* production as well as the most powerful patron of *zaju* theater. By laying down rules and regulations to compose "correct sounds," Zhu Quan with his books becomes the ultimate arbiter of *zaju* who monopolizes the power to define, evaluate, interpret, and categorize *zaju* theater. Those who do not follow the rules set by Zhu Quan or fall outside his value system are judged "incorrect" and therefore eliminated from the picture. In this sense, his writing project actually signifies the concentration of cultural authority in the field of *zaju* into the persona of Zhu Quan and, by extension, the imperial power he represents.

The elevation of *zaju* to the orthodox *li-yue* system marks the official transformation of *zaju* into an elite genre in terms of ideology, even though in terms of form it still uses vernacular language and popular music. *A Formulary* follows Zhong Sicheng's ascription of *zaju* plays to individual authors in *The Register of Ghosts*. However, while Zhong used authorial ascription as an expedient strategy to give individuality and "non-decaying" fame to writers in an oral tradition, Zhu Quan actually equated *zaju* to classical poetry as belonging to the elite textual tradition with individual authorship as a matter of fact. In order to domesticate *zaju* into that tradition, Zhu Quan

denominates fifteen schools of *zaju* song style. In addition, *zaju* plays are categorized into twelve department (*ke* 科) and ranked according to their relative importance.[253] As categorization, denomination, and ranking are important means of control, they are crucial steps to reorganize and reinterpret the *zaju* corpus within the framework of the elite textual tradition with its particular aesthetics and values.

Fifteen schools of yuefu styles, and names of parallel format newly fixed by me

予今新定樂府體一十五家 [254]

1.丹丘體 Master Danqiu Style	6. 江東體 East to the Yangtze River Style	11. 草堂體 Thached Hall Style
2. 宗匠體 Superb Artisan Style	7. 西江體 West to the Yangtze River Style	12. 楚江體 Chu River Stye
3. 黃冠體 Yellow Cap (Daoist) Style	8. 東吳體 Eastern Wu Style	13. 香奩體 Lady Style
4. 承安體 Inherited Peace Style	9. 淮南體 South to the Huang River Style	14. 騷人體 Poet Style
5. 盛元體 Prime Yuan Style	10. 玉堂體 Jade Hall Style	15. 俳優體 Entertainer Style

From the fifteen schools of *yuefu* styles, we notice an elite conception of playwright persona that is very much the same as a literati scholar. According to the ways these schools are named, they can be divided into five groups. The first group includes the first three schools. They are named after their writers' personal features. Zhu Quan's own style

[253] Some useful articles that discuss Zhu Quan's system of fifteen schools of *zaju* styles and twelve departments of *zaju* plays are Wan Weicheng 萬偉成, "Zhu Quan de xijuxue tixi jiqi pingjia" 朱權的戲劇學體系及其評價, *Xiju* 戲劇 no. 4 (2008): 72-80; Yu Weimin 俞為民, "Zhu Quan *Taihe zhengyinpu* yanjiu" 朱權《太和正音譜》研究, *Zhejiang yishu zhiye xueyuan xuebao* 浙江藝術職業學院學報 9.2 (June, 2011): 7-16.

[254] *Taihe zhengyinpu*, 13-14.

is ranked at the top and it is defined to be “heroic abandonment with no restraint” 豪放不羈. Such a special place derives from Zhu Quan’s royal privilege as an imperial prince. It reveals Zhu Quan’s idealized self-image projected in his *zaju* writing as totally free and following no rules. Superb Artisan style is characterized by the writer’s well-seasoned writing skills, while Yellow Cap style is by the writer’s belief in Daoism and his “feeling of the Way” 道情. A common feature of these styles in the first group is they are not contingent upon external circumstances but solely on intrinsic characteristics of their writers: one’s royal blood, literary talent, or Daoist belief. The second group includes the next two schools—Inherited Peace style and Prime Yuan style. Both are defined by reign periods regarded as golden ages in the Jin or the Yuan dynasties: the former refers to the Cheng’an 承安 reign period (1196-1200) under Emperor Zhang of Jin 金章宗 (r. 1189-1208), and the latter refers to the Yuanzhen 元貞 (1295-1297) and Dade 大德 (1297-1307) reign periods under Emperor Cheng of Yuan 元成宗 (r. 1294-1307). Therefore, these two schools are historically contextualized by times when the state was governed by wise rulers. The third group includes the next four schools defined by regions. Therefore they are geographically contextualized by the place where their writers hailed from, an important part in literati identity. The fourth group includes the following five schools, and each reflects one aspect of literati personae in different situations in their political career, depending on success or alienation from the government. Jade Hall style refers to literati in high office, while Thatched Hall style those who leading a commoner’s life in the countryside. Chu River style refers to literati whose talent is unrecognized and political ambition frustrated and Poet style refers literati who use

writing to satirize. Lady Style is defined by gender, but in Chinese literary tradition the female voice is usually assumed by male literati. The last group is Entertainer style, the only one that is defined by profession and does not belong to the elite class. Unlike the others, its description alone is derogative: "treacherous and excessive, the so-called licentious lyrics" 詭喻婬虐，即婬詞.

Judging from the order these schools are ranked, styles defined by personal status, literary skill, and religious enlightenment are prioritized. Considering Zhu Quan's fame as a literary genius and his Daoist belief, the first schools are external projections of Zhu Quan's own self-image. Compared to the other styles, they are less affected by external factors such as time, space, and life's vagaries, and therefore difficult to achieve for most writers. Styles defined by reign periods and regions reveal how time and space are integrated into the style of *zaju* songs which, according to classical poetic theory, manifests the author's personality. The fourth group most tellingly shows how *zaju* is regarded as a vehicle of self-expression in stereotypical personal situations well-explored in literati poetic tradition. To single out Entertainer style and place it at the bottom further proves that all the other styles are ascribed to elite writers. Its harsh denigration is consistent with Zhu Quan's overall agenda to dissociate *zaju* from entertainers and incorporate it into the orthodox "*li-yue*" system.

Since the stage world is a simulacrum of the real world, the way *zaju* plays are categorized and ranked in *A Formulary* corresponds how mundane life is perceived, made sense of, and organized. It is another way to impose literati worldview onto the originally disorderly *zaju* corpus. Zhu Quan divides *zaju* plays into twelve departments (*ke* 科) and ranks them in the following order,

Twelve Department of *zaju* 雜劇十二科 [255]

一曰神仙道化。	The first class is called “immortals delivering mortals into the Way.”
二曰隱居樂道。 又曰林泉丘壑。	The second class is called “living an reclusive life and being content with the Way.” Also called “forest spring and mountain valley”
三曰批袍秉笏。 即君臣雜劇。	The third class is called “wearing the court robe and holding the official tablet,” that is, zaju on lord-minister relationship.
四曰忠臣烈士。	The fourth class is called “loyal ministers and men lofty ambition.
五曰孝義廉節。	The fifth class is called “filial piety, righteousness, uprightness and integrity.”
六曰叱奸罵讒。	The sixth class is called “chiding the wicked and cursing the slanderous.”
七曰逐臣孤子。	The seventh class is called “exiled ministers and orphaned children.”
八曰鏺刀趕棒。 即脫膊雜劇。	The eighth class is called “sabers and clubs,” that is, *zaju* on “bare arms.”
九曰風花雪月。	The ninth class is called “wind, flower, snow and moon.”

[255] *Taihe zhengyinpu*, 24.

十曰悲歡離合。	The tenth class is called “sorrow, happiness, separation and reunion.”
十一曰煙花粉黛。即花旦雜劇。	The eleventh class is called “prostitutes wearing makeups in powder and black,” that is, *zaju* featuring flowery female role.
十二曰神頭鬼面。即神佛雜劇。	The twelfth class is called “deity’s head and ghost’s face,” that is, *zaju* of deities and Buddhas.

Again, these twelve departments can be further classified into three groups, so that we can have a better idea about it works. The first group includes the first two departments. Plays of the first one “immortals delivering mortals into the Way” is also known as “deliverance plays” 度脫劇. The dominant motif is cutting off one’s social ties and abnegating one’s desires to transcend into the realm of immortality. The second one is about recluses who, tired of all the restraints in social and political life, seek personal freedom in nature. Both departments convey a sense of disillusionment with reality, although the first one does so in a much greater degree than the latter. They prioritize individual freedom or moral integrity over responsibility to one’s family and the state. The second group includes the following five departments from the third to the seventh. If we look at them closely, it is clear that they are actually about the same motif: dramatization of virtues ascribed to literati officials being displayed or tested in various situations. Plays under these categories could teach audiences, probably mainly

consisting of literati officials, about their duties to the throne either at court or in exile, and also warn them not to abuse their power or commit any vices. Imperial authority and orthodox morality are two themes that figure most prominently in this group. The third group includes the rest, from the eighth department to the twelfth. Instead of the public life of literati officials, they cover all the other aspects of mundane social life: violence (the eighth), romantic love (the ninth), basic human conditions and feelings (the tenth), desire (the eleventh), and supernatural power (the twelfth). These three groups corresponds to *zaju*'s three different functions, namely, a means to pursue personal liberation from one's social responsibilities, a means of moral teaching, and a means of entertainment. Their ranking reflects the relative importance Zhu Quan assigns to each function. Zhu Quan was closely guarded by the suspicious Zhu Di 朱棣, or Emperor Yongle 永樂(1360—1424, r. 1402—1424) who regarded Quan as a potential threat ever since Zhu Di's usurpation of the throne from his nephew Emperor Jianwen 建文 (1377—?). Therefore, for Zhu Quan, personal freedom is dreamed of yet hard to obtain, so plays about immortals or recluses are placed on top. The public life of a literati official that emphasizes orthodox morality takes the central place. Though the topics are quite limited in terms of variety, they are explored from multiple perspectives and thus gain depth. Rich and complex mundane life supplies abundant materials more fascinating than the former, but they are ranked lower than morality plays.

In order to cut off *zaju*'s inherent ties to urban entertainment quarters, Zhu Quan jealously guards *zaju*'s authorship against non-elite writers, particularly entertainers. In the following passage, he reiterates the correlation between *zaju* and the era of "great

peace" to emphasize *zaju*'s socio-political significance:

> *Zaju* is a magnificent affair [in the era of] great peace; if not for the great peace, *zaju* would not emerge. Now I record those I have seen with my eyes and those I have heard with my ears in the formulary. Talents in the sub-celestial realm do not number just one. With the narrow scope of one single person it is impossible to know them all. I hope people in future generations who understand music could add more [talents] to it. 蓋雜劇者，太平之勝事，非太平則無以出。今以耳聞目擊者收入譜內。天下才人非一，以一人管見，不能備知，望後之知音者增入焉。[256]

Since *zaju* is regarded as a "magnificent affair," playwrights could not just write *zaju* to amuse the audience and make money. More importantly, they must take it as their mission to propagandize the great peace with their works. As a result, even though Zhu Quan still refers to playwrights as "talented men" (*cairen* 才人), talent alone is not enough for a person to fulfill the task. Social status and moral character are even more important factors than talent to qualify a person to write "correct" *zaju.* In *The Register of Ghosts* 錄鬼簿, Zhong Sicheng records four entertainer playwrights, and a number of plays are attributed to them. *A Formulary* transcribes these writers—Bright Mirror Zhao 趙明鏡, Dire Poverty Zhang 張酷貧, Red-Tattooed Li the Second, and Flowery Gallant Li 花李郎—and their works from *The Register*. However, he places them in a separate category "Altogether Eleven Plays by Four Male Entertainers Not Counted as Worthy

[256] *Taihe zhengyinpu*, 43.

Talents” 娼夫不入群英四人，共十一本 to be differentiated from the other three categories: “Five Hundred and Thirty-Five Plays by Playwrights of the Yuan” 元五百三十五, “Thirty-three Plays by Playwrights of Our Dynasty” 國朝三十三本, and “A Hundred Plays by Anonymous Playwrights in the Past and Present” 古今無名雜劇一百一十本. In *A Formulary*, the lowly status of entertainer not only disqualifies entertainer-playwrights’ works to be regarded as *zaju*, but also deprives them of the right to have courtesy names, even if historical evidence proves otherwise. In the voice of Zhao Mengfu, Zhu Quan thus explains,

> Master Zhao Zi’ang [Mengfu 趙孟頫] (1254-1322) said: “Lyrics composed by male entertainers are called ‘green scarf lyric.’ Even if there are some good works, they cannot be counted as *yuefu*.” Therefore, they are registered under the list of male entertainers. 子昂趙先生曰：“娼夫之詞，名曰“綠巾詞”。其詞雖有切者，亦不可以樂府稱也”。故入於娼夫之列。
>
> Male entertainers have existed since Spring and Autumn periods. They take pseudo surnames even if they do not belong to that clan, and have only names but no style names. Clear Mirror Zhao was falsely called Zhao Wenjing, which is wrong. Dire Poverty Zhang was mistakenly called Zhang Guobin, wrong again. Since ancient times, male entertainers such as Fanchuo Huang,[257] Newly Polished Mirror,[258] Sea-blue Thunder[259]—all of whom were famous entertainers in the past—

[257] A male entertainer favored by Emperor Xuan of Tang 唐玄宗 in Tang dynasty; also known as 黃幡綽.

[258] Also known as 敬新磨, a male entertainer who used to use jokes to admonish Emperor Zhuang of Tang 唐莊

are called only by their nicknames. They never had style names. 娼夫自春秋之世有之。異類托姓，有名無字，趙明鏡訛傳趙文敬，非也；張酷貧訛傳張國賓，非也。自古娼夫，如黃番綽、鏡新磨、雷海青之輩，皆古之名娼也，止以樂名稱之耳；亙世無字。

Sumptuary laws in the Yuan demanded that male entertainers should wear green scarves on their head to differentiate themselves from commoners. This law was continued in the Ming.[260] Now the "green scarf" is not only used as a status marker to discriminate against their body, but is transferred to discriminate plays attributed to them. Even if their plays are of high quality, they have to be excluded from "correct" *zaju* and named in such a way as to reflect their writer's lowly social status. Consequently, status hierarchy ensures that authorship of *zaju* is monopolized by elite playwrights. Furthermore, Zhu Quan's impulse to "rectify sounds" 正音 even extends to "rectify names" 正名. As we know, highly accomplished entertainers, both male and female, had courtesy names in the Yuan dynasty. Yet this phenomenon was vehemently criticized by orthodox-minded literati as a symptom of the social disorder and moral degeneration in the Mongol Yuan. By invoking the authority of antiquity, Zhu Quan denied entertainers the right to have courtesy names in order to maintain strict class boundaries that were supposed to remain unchanged forever. However, Zhu Quan's rectification of names is not based on historical fact, but

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宗 in Five Dynasties period.

[259] A male entertainer in Tang dynasty.

[260] See Yuan dianzhang, 1056-57. This law was not carried out well so that in early Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang had to reissue an order to inforce the law. Cf. Zhang Jia 張佳, "Chapter 2. Chongzheng yishang: Hongwu shiqi de fushi gaige" 第二章 重整衣裳：洪武時期的服飾改革, in *Xin tianxia zhi hua: Ming chu lisu gaige yanjiu* 新天下之化：明初禮俗改革研究, 52-110.

on the authority of orthodox ideology. His claim that the names of Zhao Wenjing and Zhan Guobin were “erroneous transmission” 訛傳 is untestable. And the two names he believes to be their original names—“Bright Mirror Zhao” and “Dire Poverty Zhang”—sound more like some haphazard fabrication based on similar pronunciation with Wenjing and Guobin than real names.

As much as Zhu Quan attempts to endow literati personae to *zaju* writers and impose literati worldview to *zaju* plays, when it comes to evaluating the style of individual playwrights, his comments betray a serious lack of interest in them as real people. Each writer’s song lyrics 其詞 is compared to an image summarized in four characters. They are mostly images of auspicious animals, plants, beautiful natural scenes, or sometimes portraits of an imagined character. For example,

> Ma Dongli’s [Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠] lyrics are like phoenix singing to the rising sun.
> 馬東籬之詞，如朝陽鳴鳳。
> Bai Renfu’s [Bai Pu 白樸] lyrics are like a *peng*-bird striking high in the heavens.
> 白仁甫之詞，如鵬搏九霄。
> Li Shouqing’s lyrics are like a spring dawn at paradise within immortals’ caverns.
> 李壽卿之詞，如洞天春曉。
> Wang Shifu’s lyrics are like a beauty surrounded by flowers.
> 王實甫之詞，如花間美人。
> Guan Hanqing’s lyrics are like a drunken guest at a splendid banquet.

關漢卿之詞，如瓊筵醉客。

Wang Ziyi's lyrics are like a giant whale drinking the sea.

王子一之詞，如長鯨飲海。

Yang Jingyan's [Yang Ne 楊訥] lyrics are like flowers in the rain.

楊景言之詞，如雨中之花。[261]

These metaphorical images are simply about Zhu Quan's impressionistic judgement, but other than that there are no serious evaluations of these writers' works. He frames these writers' works up into static and stereotypical images, without providing any further information about what works or what aspects of their works he is referring to. As for those prolific writers who were versatile in different styles, these pictorial judgments are obviously too fragmentary and superficial to be meaningful at all. Therefore, any serious critic would find Zhu Quan's commentary problematic, such as Wang Jide 王驥德 who says incisively:

"Each Yuan writers listed in *A Formulary of Correct Sounds in the Era of Great Peace* is evaluated and ranked, but that is not reliable. Master Hanxu's stated principles do not quite make sense, and his evaluations are mostly laughable. Besides, the first eighty-two persons are each given an evaluation, but the last hundred and five get nothing at all. He simply has exhausted his words. It is not that he really differentiates them from one another." 《太和正音譜》中所列元人，

[261] *Taihe zhengyinpu*, 20-23.

各有品目，然不足憑。涵虛子於文理原不甚通，其評語多足付笑。又前八十二人有評，後一百五人漫無可否，筆力竭耳，非真有所甄別其間也。”[262]

Among playwrights active in the Ming, Zhu Quan probably knew some of them in person, who might even serve him in his princely court. Yet his comments show no interest in them as real persons either. Thus, Zhu Quan's evaluation of these writers' song lyrics is completely isolated from their social backgrounds or personal experiences. Although *A Formulary* copies the authorial ascription of plays in Zhong Sicheng's *The Register of Ghosts*, it does not follow the bio-bibliographical tradition of dramatic criticism focusing on writers initiated by Zhong. He did not transcribe anything Zhong Sicheng wrote about these writers, so information about playwrights is even less than in *The Register.* For Zhu Quan, playwrights do not matter as real persons. In fact, it does not even seem to matter whether they were *zaju* writers or not. Zhu Quan's evaluation by means of picture-metaphor is too vague and general, so these phrases can be readily applied to evaluation of poetry, painting, calligraphy, music, or even dancing. His attention is solely focused on defining the general aesthetic appeal of their works to determine their socio-political value to decorate the era of great peace.

In *A Formulary*, appropriation of *zaju* into elite culture is not just about literati authorship but also include performance. Zhu Quan differentiates two types of *zaju* performance: that by performers of good families and that by entertainers. Contrary to

[262] Wang Jide 王驥德 (1540-1623), *Qulü* 曲律, *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* vol. 4, 中國古典戲曲論著集成第四冊, 147.

common usage of the two terms, he judges the former to be "expert's job" 行家生活 and the former "layman's game" 戾家把戲:

> *Zaju* performed by entertainers are called "prostitute's play," and hence named "commercial theater" (*goulan* 勾欄). Master Zhao Zi'ang said "*Zaju* performed by sons of good families are called 'expert's job;' those performed by prostitute-entertainers are called 'layman's game.' People of good families value their shame, so their performances have been few, and now there are even fewer. [As a result] prostitute-performers instead are referred to as 'experts." This cannot be more wrong!" When asked why, he answered that "*Zaju* are written by renowned Confucian scholars or literati poets, and they are all people of good families. If [good commoners] like us did not write *zaju* first, what's there for prostitute-entertainers to perform? Just probe into the source and then you will understand the reason. That is why I regard them [entertainers] as 'laymen.'" Guan Hanqing remarked "[*Zaju* performance] is not their professional skill but our job. They are just doing slave's work, offering laughter and service to attend our likes. [*Zaju*] performed by sons of good families are wind and moon [loves and romances] of our school." Playful remarks as they are, they make good sense, so I quote them here.[263] 雜劇，俳優所扮者，謂之"娼戲"，故曰"勾欄"。子昂趙先生曰："良家子弟所扮雜劇，謂之'行家生活'，娼優所扮者，謂之'戾家把戲'。良人貴其恥，故扮者寡，今少矣，反以娼優扮者謂之'行家'，失之遠也"。或問其何故哉？則應之曰：

[263] An earlier English translation of this passage is found in Idema and West, *Chinese Theater, 1100-1450*, 129.

“雜劇出于鴻儒碩士、騷人墨客所作，皆良人也。若非我輩所作，娼優豈能扮乎？推其本而明其理，故以為‘戾家’也。”關漢卿曰：“非是他當行本事，我家生活，他不過為奴隸之役，供笑獻勤，以奉我輩耳。子弟所扮，是我一家風月。”雖是戲言，亦合于理，故取之。

Among sons of good families there are some who are conversant with music scales. In addition, they are born into an era of prosperous great peace and take joy in the well-ordered governance of harmony and happiness. They desire to bring back the ancient way to move people at present, and embellish the great peace [with performance]. What they perform was named “Play of Broad Thoroughfares” in the Sui dynasty, “Music of the Pear Garden” in the Tang, “Play of the Flowery Grove” in the Song, and “Music of Great Peace” in the Yuan. 良家之子，有通於音律者，又生當太平之盛，樂雍熙之治，欲返古感今，以飾太平。所扮者，隋謂之“康衢戲”，唐謂之“梨園樂”，宋謂之“華林戲”，元謂之“升平樂”。[264]

The distinction between “professional”行家 or “layman” 戾家 was originally made based on the proficiency in performative skills.[265] It had nothing to do with performers’ social and moral status. However, in Zhu Quan’s discussion, social and moral status becomes the decisive factor. He first defines *zaju* performed by entertainers as “prostitute’s play.” The moral degeneracy implied by that name distinguishes “commercial theater” (*goulan*

[264] *Taihe zhengyinpu*, 24-25.

[265] Sun Kaidi traces the origin of *lijia* 戾家 to be Hangzhou dialect in the Song dynasty. In the Yuan it became a common word used nationwide. See Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, “Shi *lijia*,” *Cangzhou ji* 滄州集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 426-28.

勾欄) from *zaju* performed by performers of good commoner status as two completely different kinds of *zaju*. Through the voices of Zhao Mengfu and Guan Hangqing,[266] Zhu Quan redefines the meaning of "expert's job" and "layman's game" and justifies the new definitions on the basis of literati authorship of *zaju.* Because *zaju* plays are written by literati scholars or poets of good family background, only *zaju* performed by actors of the same background can be called "expert's job." As Zhu Quan has already eliminated entertainers from *zaju* playwrights, literati's monopoly of *zaju* authorship is guaranteed. Now elite authorship leads to elite performer-ship, and performers of entertainer status are dismissed as "laymen," merely slaves in service of elite writers. As a result, performative skill gives way to social status, and the distinction between "experts" and "laymen" becomes a class boundary marker rather than judgement of performative skills. However, in spite of Zhu Quan's intention to prioritize *zaju* performance by good commoner performers over those by entertainer performers, he cannot change the fact that there are few performances by good commoners on real stages. With the popularity of commercial theater, there is no way to rid *zaju* of entertainer performers in the same way as to rid it of entertainer playwrights. As a result, Zhu Quan had to construct an artificial *zaju* tradition exclusive to performers of good families who undertake the task of "bringing back the ancient way to move people at present, and embellish the great peace [with performance]" 返古感今以飾太平. He lists a number of performative genres supposedly by good commoner performers in the Sui, the Tang, the Song, and the Yuan

[266] It is extremely doubtful that Zhao Mengfu and Guan Hanqing had said the words quoted in this passage. The credibility of these quotes has been questioned by many scholars. Very likely these were Zhu Quan's own words and he just put that into their mouths. See Zeng Yongyi, "Mingdai diwang yu xiqu" 明代帝王與戲曲, *Zeng Yongyi xueshu lunwen zixuanji* vol. 2 曾永義學術論文自選集乙編, 254.

dynasty, in order to aggrandize the alternative *zaju* tradition with imaginary historical legacy.[267] Yet as we know, these performative genres bear no little relation to *zaju* theater. Zhu Quan's purpose is for the elite class to exercise complete control over both play-writing and performance.

In *A Formulary*, Zhu Quan gives a famous explanation of nine role types in *zaju*. It shows us yet another strategy employed in literati appropriation of *zaju*: transcriptional substitution under the cover of spurious etymological rectification. Moreover, his explanation of female roles reveals his deep aversion and fear of female entertainers.

> Master Cinnabar Hill [Zhu Quan] says: both *zaju* and *yuanben* have nine role types and they are designated as: male lead (*zheng mo*), second male lead (*fu mo*), female role (*dan*), official (*gu*), clown (*jing*), Old Bitch (*bao*), Bitch (*nao*), *jieji*, and the Play Leader (*yinxi*). Who does not know these names? [These names] for their parts have their origins. Now I write them down in this formulary to present it to future generations who are curious about such matters. 丹丘先生曰：雜劇院本，皆有“正末”、“付末”、“狚”、“孤”、“靚”、“鴇”、“猱”、“捷譏”、“引戲”九色之名。孰不知其名，亦有所出。予今書於譜內，以遺後之好事焉。
>
> … …
>
> Male lead 正末: the male who performs on stage is called *mo*. *Mo* narrates the

[267] For more information on this topic, see Jing Xiaoqing 敬曉慶, "Zhu Quan 'liangjia zidi' xi tongxu shiliao gouchen" 朱權“良家子弟”戲統緒史料鉤沉, *Wenhua yishu yanjiu* 文化藝術研究 3.4 (July, 2010): 166-173.

story. Commonly he is called *moni*. 當場男子謂之“末”。末，指事也。俗為之“末泥”。

Second male lead 付末: in antiquity he was called a “grey hawk,” so he is the one who can strike the clown (*jing*). *Jing* means fox. Just as the hawk can hit the fox, likewise the second male lead holds a club to beat the clown (*jing*). 古謂“蒼鶻”，故可以撲“靚”者。“靚”謂狐也；如鶻之可以擊狐。故“付末”執槭瓜以撲“靚”是也。

Female role 狚: the prostitute performing on stage is called a *dan*. The *dan* is a female monkey, also named *biandan*. By nature it is lustful. The common designation, *dan* 旦, is wrong. 當場之妓曰“狚”。“狚”，猿之雌也，名曰“猵狚”，其性好淫。俗呼“旦”，非也。

Official: the one who is costumed as the official on stage. 當場妝官者。

Clown (*jing* 靚): the one who wears powder and ink on his face is called the clown (*jing*). He is the one who provides laughter and flattery. In antiquity he was called the “adjunct.” In written language the fox is called “adjunct in the field,” therefore the reason why the second male lead is called a “grey hawk” is because he can beat the fox. As for the clown, white powder on the face and bluish ink on the brow are called “*jing*-makeup,” so he is called “the role type that wears the *jing*-makeup.” He is designated *jing* 淨, but that is wrong. 付粉墨者，謂之“靚”，獻笑供諂者也。古謂“參軍”。書語稱狐為“田參軍”，故“付末”稱“蒼鶻”者，以能擊狐也。“靚，”粉白黛綠謂之“靚妝”，故曰“妝靚色”；呼為

“淨”，非也。

Old Bitch (*bao* 鴇): Old prostitutes are called *bao*. *Bao*-bird resembles a goose but is larger in size. It has no hallux (hind toe) and its plumage pattern is striped like a tiger. It loves sexual intercourse and never gets enough. When any bird makes advances to it, it immediately gives in. Commonly it is called “lone cougar” (*du bao* 獨豹). What people nowadays call “bustard” is just it. 妓女之老者曰“鴇”。鴇似雁而大，無後趾，虎文，喜淫而無厭，諸鳥求之即就，俗呼為“獨豹”。今人稱鶻者是也。

Bitch (*nao* 猱): *nao* is a general term for prostitutes. *Nao* is a species of ape and is a greedy beast. It likes to eat tiger’s liver and brain. When a tiger sees a *nao*-ape, the tiger immediately loves it, and carries it on the back for the *nao* to pick the tiger’s lice. Yet as soon as the *nao* leaves the tiger’s head, the tiger dies at once, [because the *nao*] merely seek out the tiger’s brain, liver and intestines to eat. Ancient people drew a simile out of this: the tiger is like the young playboy, who takes delight in and loves the prostitute’s sexual allures; the prostitute is like the *nao*, who seduces the playboy and covets his wealth. Therefore this leads to the playboy’s losing both his life and fortune. 妓女總稱謂之“猱”。“猱”，猿屬，貪獸也，喜食虎肝腦。虎見而愛之，負其背而取虱，遺其首即死，求其腦肝腸而食之。古人取喻：虎譬如少年，喜而愛其色，彼如“猱”也，誘而貪其財，故至子弟喪身敗業是也。

Jieji 捷譏: In antiquity he was called *huaji*. In *yuanben*, he is the one who is always quick to satirize and ridicule. Entertainers call him the music official. 古謂之“滑稽”。院本中便捷譏謔者是也。俳優稱為“樂官”。

Play leader 引戲: the female role in *yuanben*. 院本中“狚”也。[268]

The most noteworthy thing in Zhu Quan’s clarification is that he replaces the original character in some of these names with homophones of special connotations. Even though the sound value remains the same, but as the new character has its own set of semantic meaning, such replacement significantly changes the connotation of the name and, by extension, implications the role type is associated with. For example, whatever the original meaning of the character for “clown” (*jing* 净) is,[269] Zhu Quan determines it is wrong and uses a different character *jing* 靚 to transcribe the sound. As he explains, “white powder on the face and bluish ink on the brow are called ‘*jing*-makeup’” 粉白黛綠謂之“靚妝,” the clown derives his name *jing* 靚 simply because he wears exactly this type of make-up and is therefore called “the role type that wears the *jing*-makeup” 妝靚色. In this way, a new layer of meaning not denoted by the original character *jing* 淨, that is, the role type’s particular make-up, is added to the role type.

While the replacement of *jing* 淨 with *jing* 靚 for the clown does not import any explicit value judgement by Zhu Quan, it is quite a different story to replace *dan* 旦 with *dan* 狚 for the female role. The explanation of female role as “prostitutes performing on stage” 當場之妓 already passes Zhu Quan’s moral judgement on female entertainers. In

[268] *Taihe zhengyinpu,* 53-53. An earlier English translation of this passage is found in Idema and West, *Chinese Theatr 1100-1450,* 138-139.

[269] For a discussion on the meaning of jing 淨, see Zeng Yongyi, “Zhongguo gudian xiju jiaose gaishuo” 中國古典戲劇腳色概說, in *Zeng Yongyi xueshu lunwen zixuanji* vol. 2, 71-118, particularly 80-84. Zeng points out that using *jing* 靚 to replace *jing* 淨 is started by Zhu Quan in *Taihe zhengyinpu* and there is no precedent before him in extant records.

contrast, he explains the male role as “men performing on stage” 當場男子, simply denoting the gender with a morally neutral term *nanzi*. Therefore, Zhu Quan’s bias against female entertainers is even deeper than against male entertainers. According to Zhu Quan, *dan* 狚 refers to a species of female monkey that is lustful by nature. By substituting *dan* 旦 with *dan* 狚, Zhu Quan renders an extremely derogatory layer of connotation to the female role by naming her after horny female monkeys. And this is done surreptitiously, understood exclusively only by the literate class, because the illiterate class would not tell the difference at all. Extant records on *yanben* and *zaju* show that the role type of old woman is called *bu* 卜 or *bu’r* 卜兒.[270] He chooses *bao* 鴇 to be included here instead of the more commonly used term *bu* 卜, perhaps in order to highlight his point that female performers, young or old, are all prostitutes. This implies that Zhu Quan tends to confuse female performer’s social role in reality with the dramatic roles they assume on stage. Moreover, a second meaning of *bao* 鴇 referring to a species of bird also allows Zhu Quan to transfer the bird’s alleged promiscuity and shamelessness to female entertainers. The inclusion of *nao* 猱 into the list of role types is odd. Even though prostitution is part of female performer’s trade and even the major source of their income,[271] not all prostitutes are capable of *yuanben* or *zaju* performance. It is fallacious to state that all prostitutes are performers. The fact that he actually takes a general term for prostitutes as a role type indicates Zhu Quan is guilty of this fallacy. However, it serves his agenda well because the etymological tracing of *nao* to *nao*-ape again transfers

[270] See the section on *bu’r* 卜兒 in Zeng Yongyi, “Zhongguo gudian xiju jiaose gaishuo” 中國古典戲劇腳色概說, 90.

[271] Idema and West, *Chinese Theater, 1100-1450*, 142.

the *nao*-ape's greediness, deceptiveness, and murderousness to female performers. By tracing the origin of female role names to the *dan*-monkey 狚, *bao*-bird 鴇, and *nao*-ape 猱, Zhu Quan successfully bestializes female performers into inhumanly creatures that are lustful, shameless, and dangerous. His aversion to female performers betrays a deep anxiety or even fear over their sexual aggressiveness that reversed the gender hierarchy established by Confucianism. The comparison of playboys to tigers that are killed by *nao*-ape due to their vulnerability to the ape's seduction reveals what Zhu Quan is anxious about is actually male literati's own desire that can be easily aroused by female entertainers. It tends to run out of control and will lead to the male's eventual self-destruction. Therefore, demonization of female entertainers is as good as demonization of male desire that has no place in orthodox Confucian socio-ethical order.

Therefore, as we can see from the above analysis, *A Formulary* transforms *zaju* through a series of interrelated strategies. First of all, it subsumes *zaju* into the canonical *li-yue* system to legitimatize the Ming Empire by propagandizing the great peace and making people happy with Ming rule. Second, the categorization and ranking of *zaju* style into fifteen schools further helps to endow literati personae to playwrights, while the categorization and ranking of *zaju* plays into twelve departments reinterpret the *zaju* corpus under literati worldview. Third, it deprives talented entertainers of authorship of *zaju* as well as the right to use courtesy names. Status hierarchy overrides merit and ensures literati's monopoly of *zaju* authorship. Furthermore, it also uses social status instead of acting skill to determine the quality of *zaju* performance and thus dismisses entertainer performers as "laymen" while elevates performers of good families "experts." As a result, it dissociates *zaju* from entertainers in terms of both writing and performing.

The rectification of role type names, particularly the names of female roles, most typically demonstrates how *zaju* is subjugated to orthodox values and morality. The demonization of female performers betrays a deep anxiety and fear toward desire, either male or female, that threats to disturb the hierarchical social order.

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