Silk and Sacrifice: Gender, Death, and Adaptation in Two Chinese Literary Traditions

by

Xuan Wang-Wolf

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2021 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Stephen H. West, Chair
Young Kyun Oh
Huaiyu Chen
Xiaoqiao Ling

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2021

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the relationship between expressions of female virtue—predominantly chastity—and violence within two popular early Chinese literary traditions: Qiu Hu 秋胡 and Han Peng 韓朋. Both tales were in circulation by the Western Han (206 BCE–24 CE) and depict husbands and wives torn apart by conflict—the victims of drama instigated by men—and ultimately end with the righteous suicides of their female leads. Testifying to their enduring popularity, these stories were adapted by poets and prose writers alike, including prominent figures such as Fu Xuan, Yan Yanzhi, Li Shangyin, and Shi Junbao, as well as unknown composers of works discovered at Dunhuang. The results of their labor—poems, prose, and even a Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) stage adaptation—demonstrate the flexibility of these traditions as a means of exploring contemporary concerns regarding female integrity and talent, the dangers of beauty, women's roles in the family, as well as socio-economic issues. By providing the first study of the portrayal of women within these influential traditions across genre and time, this dissertation not only contributes to the understanding of both tales as elite representations of idealized femininity, but also highlights how such popular traditions were subject to competing pressures of social norms, genre, and audience expectation. By examining and contrasting these disparate works, this study argues that these traditions were less singular tales that owed their existence to any given work than they were a broad collection of topoi that could be shuffled into differing configurations to meet the need of a given author at a given moment.

DEDICATION

To my parents, my partner and friend, and All that shed light in my life

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to give my thanks to the many wonderful people who helped me along this journey. First, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Professor Stephen H. West for providing wisdom and guidance throughout my doctoral studies. Likewise, Professor Xiaoqiao Ling, Professor Young Kyun Oh, and Professor Huaiyu Chen have been extremely helpful and supportive throughout the years. They all went above and beyond in advising and helping me to reach my academic goals. Second, I want to thank Professor Madeline Spring, Professor Robert Joe Cutter, Professor Stephen Bokenkamp, Professor Carla Ghanem, Professor Andrew Ross, and Professor Bryan Smith for their support. I could not thank the above enough, as they have shown me through example what a good teacher, educator, and researcher should be.

I also would like to express gratitude to my academic department and the School of International Letters and Cultures for providing support via travel funding, fellowships, scholarships, and other awards that made this research study and conference presentations possible. On a related note, I would also like to thank the following institutions for providing me with additional opportunities for professional development and research: Carnegie Mellon University, University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, McMaster University, and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. I want to thank Dr. Xia Zhang for the opportunity to participate in the StarTalk Chinese Immersion Program and Professor Jianling Liao for entrusting me with leading various online course design projects.

I am grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work during my time at ASU, including but not limited to, Zuoting Wen, Lidan Liu, Avanna Peeples, Le Lu, Zhaokun Xin, Rachel Junlei Zhang, Kimberly Harui, Tyler Feezell, Wenbo Chang,

Yue Wu, and Shuo Liang. I especially would like to thank my colleagues Luying Zhao, Jiangnan Li, Frankie Hin Ming Chik, and everyone else who have been generous with their time and efforts to help me locate relevant materials during this difficult time.

Last but not least, I want to thank my parents for their continuous support, my partner and friend, Lucas Wolf, for editing and proofreading this research study, and our furry companions for being by my side rain or shine.

I could not have done this without you all. I am forever grateful to have you in my life. Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER Page

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration Page

CHAPTER 1

PERFORMING YIN: WOMEN AND DEATH IN MEDIEVAL CHINA

Human beings truly have but one death. There are deaths that seem heavier than Mount Tai, but to some death seems lighter than a piece of swansdown. The difference lies in what is done by dying.[1] -Sima Qian

The death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world[2]
-Edgar Allen Poe

This study opens on the banks of the River Ying 潁, where the folk hero Wu Zixu 伍子胥, weakened by exhaustion and pained by hunger, hears the distinctive sound of silk being beaten along the water's edge. Fearful, for he is being hunted by pursuers dispatched by King Ping of Chu, the ruler who executed his father and brother, he tentatively investigates. The "transformation tale" (*bianwen* 變文) version of the story, the "Wu Zixu bianwen" 伍子胥變文, describes the scene:

遙聞空裏打紗聲，	Afar, I hear the sounds of the beating of silk in the air,
屈節斜身便即住。	Cringing and crouching, I come suddenly to a standstill.
慮恐此處人相掩，	I am afraid there may be someone hidden here –
捻腳攢形而映樹。	Stealthily, I draw myself into the shade of the trees.
量久穩審不須驚，	Long and sober reflection tells me I need not be afraid;
漸向樹間偷眼覷。	Ever so stealthily, I peep through the trees.

[1] See Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca.87 BCE), "Letter in Reply to Ren An," ("Bao Ren An shu" 報任安書) recorded in the historian's biography ("Sima Qian zhuan" 司馬遷傳) in the *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Han*)*. See Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Han) (Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe 2004), 62.1297. Translation from Stephen Owen, ed., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature. Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), 139.

[2] Edgar Allen Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," in *Graham's Magazine*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (April, 1846): 165.

津傍更亦沒男夫，	Beside the river-ford, there are no men –
唯見輕盈打紗女。	I see only a nimble, shapely girl beating silk.
水底將頭百過窺，	A hundred times, she lowers her head and peers into the water;
波上玉腕千迴舉。	A thousand passes, her jade wrists dance over the waves.
即欲向前從乞食，	At once, I want to rush forward and beg food of her;
心意懷疑生猶豫。	But my heart is full of doubt and irresolution.[3]
進退不敢輒諮量，	Daring neither to advance nor retreat, I quickly reconsider;
踟躕即欲低頭去。	Though hesitant, I wish to go away meekly at once.[4]

The scene is rendered through the male gaze of its protagonist, himself transfixed by flashes of "jade wrists" and of her slender form beside the rushing water. Tormented by indecision, Wu Zixu's desire to rush out and beg food from the silk-washing girl is countered only by his fear of discovery. If this was a different tale, his hesitation could be misread as romantic intent—a reading that is strengthened by his observation that there is no one else present by the riverbank. The noted absence of other men serves two

[3] Reading *you* 遊 as *you* 猶.

[4] Translation taken from Victor Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 128. For the Chinese original (drawn from S.328), see Huang Zheng 黃征 and Zhang Yongquan 張涌泉, *Dunhuang bianwen jiaozhu* 敦煌變文校注 (Dunhuang Transformation Texts with Commentary) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 3. Mair estimates its original composition to around the year 720. He notes that the fact that there are four different extant fragments of manuscripts of the *bianwen* suggests its popularity and that it spread across China after its creation. See Ibid., 12. Also see both articles by Nemoto Makoto 根本誠, "Chūgoku bungaku no ichitokuchō (ue) Go Shiso henbun no jinbutsu byōsha no genkaisei" 中國文學の一特徵(下)―伍子胥變文の人物描寫の限界性 (The Special Characteristics of Chinese Literature, Part 1, The Limitations of Character Portrayal in the *Wu Zixu bianwen*) *Tōyō Bungaku Kenkyū* 東洋文学研究 (Studies of Eastern Literature) 14, (1966): 7–16, and Part 2, in *Tōyō Bungaku Kenkyū* 東洋文学研究 15, (1967): 38~49, as well as Ito Mieko 伊藤美重子, "Tonkō shahon go shisho henbun nitsuite: sono gorakusei" 敦煌写本「伍子胥變文」につ いて: その娯楽性 (On the Entertaining Nature of the Dunhuang Edition of the *Wu Zixu bianwen*), *Ocha no Mizu Joshi Daigaku*, *Chūgoku bungaku kaihō* お茶の水女子大学, 中国文学会報 (Bulletin of the Chinese Literature Society of Ocha no Mizu Women's University) 31 (2012): 25–40.

purposes for the scene: first it demands that Wu Zixu approach her—rather than a male intermediary—for aid; second it hints at the possibility of illicit sexuality, the unsupervised meeting of a man and woman, alone and outside of the controlled confines of the home. Confronted with the specter of impropriety, the silk-washing girl is suddenly vulnerable, not only to the predations of a potential attacker, but also to the more subtle dangers of the heart.

Catching sight of the ragged figure of Wu Zixu, the young woman is moved to pity. Rather than running away, she weighs the risks in an internal monologue:

> I have heard that, 'for a single meal given him in the mulberry grove, Ling Zhe propped up the chariot.' 'The Yellow Sparrow which was given a salve to heal its wounds requited the donor with a gift of white jade bracelets.' Though I have kept myself chaste, pure, and undefiled, it is fortune which has granted me this meeting with a gentleman here by the waterside as I beat my silk. True, our home is not well-provided but why should I grudge him this one meal?'[5]
>
> 乃懷悲曰：「兒聞桑間一食，靈輒為之扶輪；黃雀得藥封瘡，銜白環而相報。我雖貞潔，質素無虧，今於水上泊紗，有幸得逢君子，雖即家中不被，何惜此之一餐。」

The tale of Ling Zhe derives from the *Zuo Commentary* on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. In the tale, Zhao Dun 趙盾, a minister of Jin 晉, encounters a starving figure named Ling Zhe while on a hunt.[6] He shares some of his food with the man, who only

[5] Reading *bei* 備 for *bei* 被. Translation slightly modified from Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, 128–129 and Huang and Zheng, *Dunhuang bianwen jiaozhu*, 3.

[6] The tale is recorded in Duke Xuan 宣, 2nd Year, see Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 ed., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (The Zuozhuan Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals with Commentary), Vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 659–666. It also appears in Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (145–ca. 86 BCE) *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian), Vol. 1 (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 2004), 622–623. While in these early versions of the tale, Ling Zhe uses his halberd to fend off attackers, a later version of the story sees him foiling a plot to kill Zhao Dun that revolved around removing a wheel from his chariot to block his escape.

eats half, stating that he will offer the remaining dried meat to his mother upon his return. Later, when Duke Ling attempts to assassinate Zhao, Ling Zhe intervenes and assists in his escape. In a later version of the tale, Ling Zhe, a strongman, lifts the axle of Zhao Dun's chariot and runs while carrying it (hence "propping up the chariot"). The second reference is to a popular tale found in Gan Bao's 干寶 (286–336) *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (Record of an Inquest into the Supernatural) about a Yang Bao 楊寶 who one day discovered an injured yellow sparrow laying on the ground covered in ants. After brushing off the insects, he nurses it back to health. Soon after, he was visited by a child in yellow clothing who gifted him several white jade bracelets.[7] Both tales revolve around recompense for good deeds, Ling Zhe winning his life in exchange for a meal, Yang Bao earning riches for a simple act of kindness. The silk-washing girl, recognizing Wu Zixu by the sword at his belt, thus calculates her potential benefit upon first meeting the ragged figure. Moved by his tattered appearance (as well, perhaps, by his evident importance), she walks up the bank and addresses him, saying:

> Traveller, won't you stop a while? Where do you come from, my good swordsman? Of what kingdom are you the paragon? You have a spirited appearance and a lofty manner. What urgent business have you to be hurrying on this long journey, companionless, glancing about in fear, and distraught in spirit? Judging from the look on your face, your heart must harbour something for which you are seeking. If you are not a knight-

Ling Zhe aids Zhao Dun by lifting the axel and half-carrying the vehicle as they flee the ambush. This version of the story later appears in the Ming edition of the Yuan drama *The Orphan of Zhao*. See references in the wedge (*xiezi* 楔子) and in Act 4. In addition, as Mair notes, this version of events is described in encyclopedias also uncovered in Dunhuang, suggesting that the story was well known. See Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, 268.

[7] See Gan Bao 干寶, *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (Record of an Inquest into the Supernatural) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 210–213. For an English translation, see Gan Bao, *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record*, trans. by Kenneth J. DeWoskin and J. I. Crump, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 238.

errant who cherishes a grievance, then it must be that you are being pursued by King Ping. My home, though poor, is hospitable and I make bold to offer you a meal. How would you like that? I hope you will condescend to bend your path this way.[8]

遊人且住，劍客是何方君子？何國英才？相貌精神，容儀聳幹。緣何急事，步涉長途。失伴周章，精神恍惚。觀君面色，必然心有所求。若非俠客懷冤，定被平王捕捉？兒有貧家一惠，敢屈君餐。情裏如何？希垂降步。

Starving though he is, Wu Zixu, still fearing pursuit, asks directions to the road while at the same time refusing her offer. The silk-washing girl, determined to provide him a meal and earn his favor, provides a brief self-introduction to draw his interest. As if taking the stage in an opera, she provides her background and begs him join her.

兒家本住南陽縣，	‘From the beginning, I have always lived in Nanyang District;
二八容光如皎練。	Aged sixteen, the glow of my face is like soft, bright silk.
泊紗潭下照紅粧，	As I beat the silk, my red rouge reflects in deep pools;
水上荷花不如面。	The lotus flower floating on the water is no match for my beauty.
客行由同海泛舟，	My guest has come like a boat floating over the sea;
博暮皈巢畏日晚。	At dusk, the birds return to roost, fearing the close of day.
儻若不棄是卑微，	Should you not reject this humble offering,
願君努力當餐飯。	I pray you try your best to make a meal of it.’[9]

This shift in perspective from Wu Zixu’s appreciative gaze to that of the silk-washing girl is significant. Now it is no longer he who describes her appearance, but rather the young

[8] See Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, 129 and Huang and Zheng, *Dunhuang bianwen jiaozhu*, 3.

[9] Adapted from Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, 129–130. For the Chinese original, see Huang and Zheng, *Dunhuang bianwen jiaozhu*, 4.

woman herself who recounts how her youthful beauty reflects and overpowers the natural environment. The purity of the lotus is shamed in comparison to her, and the vibrant red of her cheeks is mirrored in the deep waters where she pounds the silk cloth. Her introduction provides her origins, her age, and a flattering description of her charms before offering an invitation to the tired hero. The potential romantic overtones of the scene are apparent, even if Wu Zixu himself remains blissfully unaware.

Unwilling to stay long, Wu Zixu accepts a few mouthfuls of food by the water's edge. About to leave, once again she asks him to stay and indulge in a meal with her. He agrees, ever more ashamed (*cankui* 慚愧) at his debt to her. Perhaps feeling that he owes her the truth, he introduces himself and states that he is on the run from King Ping and his men. Afraid that she will reveal his presence to his pursuers, he states: "Be so kind as not to let others know I have been here; I pray you understand my feelings" (*en ze bu yong yu ren zhi, xing yuan niangzi zhi huai bao* 恩澤不用語人知，幸原娘子知懷抱).[10] About to continue on his way, he is interrupted by a cry and the sound of weeping from behind. The girl, tears streaming down her cheeks, laments:

旅客煢煢實可念，	'Wanderer so mournful, I truly worry for you,
以死匍匐乃貪生，	Crawling in the face of death yet craving life.
食我一餐由未足，	You've had a meal from me but that seems not to be enough;
婦人不慊丈夫情。	A woman cannot satisfy a hero's heart.
君雖貴重相辭謝，	Although you solemnly rejected my offer,
兒意慚君亦不輕。	the embarrassment which you have caused me is not light either.'
語已含啼而拭淚	She paused to restrain her sobbing and wipe her tears:

[10] Ibid.

君子容儀頓憔悴，	'Your countenance has suddenly become haggard with care.
倘若在後被追收，	If, later on, you are taken by those who pursue you,
必道女子相帶累。	You will certainly say, “It was that woman who brought on my troubles.”
三十不與丈夫言，	Thirty years old, never before having talked to a man,
與母同居住鄰里。	I live together with my mother in our neighbourhood.
嬌愛容光在目前，	The graceful, charming glow of the face you see before you,
列女忠貞浪虛棄。	the faith and chasteness of a virtuous woman - all cast away in vain.
喚言仵相物懷擬，	‘My Lord Wu,’ she called out, ‘do not doubt me!’
遂即抱石投河死。	Then clasping a stone, she threw herself into the river and died.[11]

The suddenness of this suicide shocks the reader, just as it does Wu Zixu, who, watching her from afar, is horrified to see her clutch a rock and throw herself into the water. The seeming senselessness of her death, what Wu Zixu himself terms an “injustice” (*yuanwang* 冤枉), is inscrutable to him. The silk-washing girl occupies a world that he cannot and does not understand, one whose boundaries are curtailed by societal restrictions on female behavior. Yet while these restrictions may limit the reactions available to the silk-washing girl upon Wu Zixu’s sudden appearance, they also allow her to creatively resist and reimagine gendered norms.

On the one hand, Wu Zixu, in questioning her intentions by asking her to not reveal his presence—a request that demonstrates his fundamental mistrust—insults her integrity as a righteous woman. In order to demonstrate both her trustworthiness and resolve, she shames his unwitting insult by committing suicide to protect his secret. Wu

[11] Ibid.

Zixu appears naïve in his interaction with the silk-washing girl, or perhaps simply does not believe that a woman would react the same way as a man to such a slight. His mishandling of the situation is reminiscent of a similar mistake in the "Biography of Jing Ke," recorded within Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian).[12] There, Prince Dan 丹 of Yan 燕 conspires with his advisor, the cavalier Tian Guang 田光 to assassinate the King of Qin. After their plans are complete, Prince Dan offhandedly reminds Tian not to reveal their plans. Tian, assuming that the Prince doubts his sincerity, proves his loyalty by slitting his own throat. The Prince, much like Wu Zixu is left in disbelief, mourning the outcome of his words.

Yet ascribing the silk-washing girl's suicide entirely to matters of pride obscures the complexity of her character. For example, her proclamation to Wu Zixu reveals the bitter observation that just as the meal that she provided was insufficient, so too was she; for how could a woman be enough to satisfy his heroic desires? Her life of chastity and integrity, which up to that point had never been compromised, was rendered void due to her tentative invitation to him (one that was prefaced by acknowledgement of her beauty and marriageable age no less).[13] Yet despite her gamble to attract him, his failure to recognize her unspoken intent has destroyed her years of carefully cultivated virtue. As a result, the demands of chastity as a self-described "ardent woman" (*lienü* 列女) demand

[12] The biography is included within the "Biographies of Assassins," (Cike liezhuan 刺客列傳). See Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BCE), *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian) (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 2004), 86.1097.

[13] There is a potential incongruity in her age in the text. Originally, she describes herself as sixteen yet in her diatribe against Wu Zixu she says that she hasn't spoken to a man in thirty years. This may indicate a scribal error (of which there are many in the text) or a conflation between different versions of the tale.

nothing less than self-destruction. Add to that his impugning of her integrity by questioning her trustworthiness, and her options become even more limited. Rather than acting as her Ling Zhe or Yang Bao, Wu Zixu, through his failure to understand her instead brings about her death.

It is this complexity between the demands of integrity or chastity and the performative method of her death that makes her brief appearance in the "Wu Zixu bianwen" so memorable. She is not the only figure in the tale to commit suicide. A fisherman who helps the unlucky hero also throws himself into the river to ensure his escape—yet his death is treated rather perfunctorily and lacks the romanticized tragedy of the silk-washing girl. The tension between female beauty and the demands of integrity in such tales speaks to contemporary views of women by the elite men who by-and-large authored them. There are no shortage of such tales; whether serving as didactic tools or as mere entertainment, female suffering and self-destruction were clearly rich in performative potential. By performative in this context, I am not speaking necessarily of the broader "anthropology of performance" as elucidated by Victor Turner, who saw in every cultural product the "explanation and explication of life itself," though these materials do, indeed, function as such.[14] Rather I mean performance as an avenue to agency following the approach of Judith Butler who argued for the "reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains."[15] That is, the

[14] See Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), 13.

[15] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.

process of exercising agency through the performance of certain acts that reify social norms and "through which the subject is realized and comes to enact her agency."[16]

For the silk-washing girl above, the performative act of throwing herself into the river draws upon a long-established and popular traditions of female suicide, which, in conjunction with depictions of female suffering, carried with them different connotations to different audiences through time. On the one hand, we can view her self-destruction as an act of self-determination, of agency, and one determined and carried out at her own behest. However, we are also faced with the conundrum that the tale of Wu Zixu was no-doubt crafted by a man for a predominately male audience. Given these circumstances, what does such a tale say then about the woman it portrays, about her choices, and about her fate? Can such female characters, as rendered through the brushes of male writers be said to possess agency, or at least agency beyond the restrictive limitations of the genres and mediums in which they are found? Are they, instead, doomed to be caricatures of women, idealized portraits of male fantasy?

With these questions in mind and having been inspired by the ways in which such scenes of female sacrifice develop over time—accruing romantic (or sexual) elements in conjunction with increasingly rich and evocative characterizations—this study aims to explore the development of two important literary traditions in particular: the tales of Qiu Hu 秋胡 and Han Peng 韓朋. Much like the "Wu Zixu bianwen" and its account of the silk-washing girl above, these accounts concern female suicide, chastity, the dangers of

[16] See Saba Mahmood, "Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject," in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 189.

beauty, and themes of male failure. These tropes are employed in different configurations across time and genre by a variety of authors who engage with and adapt both tales for their own ends. They bring with them their own perspectives on gender, the roles of women and their integrity, and differing economic and social concerns. These adaptations are further subject to the expectations that accompany a shift in genre, in audience, and in performative context. These differences are revealing, not only in terms of the male imagination of female subjectivity and voice, but also in how they position women within a social framework that is often beholden to elite conceptions of integrity, chastity, and other rarified virtues.

The (predominately) elite authors who penned the narrative and poetic accounts of Qiu Hu and Han Peng tended to emphasize themes that appealed to male audiences. These include beauty, female longing, grief, and righteous indignation. Elements which may have disconcerted male readers such as depictions of female desire, discontent with wifely duties, and jealousy remain largely absent within these works. However, that is not to say that these traditions maintained their staid formats through time, rather they were subject to creative pressures both from writers as well as from the dictates of genre, forces which helped shaped their narratives and characters. Their vernacular adaptations in particular brought with them opportunities for greater complexity for their female characters, due, in part to their more expansive formats as well as different audience expectations. This is especially true in the case of Qiu Hu's dramatic adaptation in the Yuan, where ribald exchanges between men and women on stage were commonplace and the raucous nature of plays encouraged dramatic scenes of confrontation. These disparate adaptations of both traditions were not only tasked with celebrating their heroines as

paragons—models of chastity, ideal daughters-in-law, and patient wives—but also as figures of desire, possessed of the same beauty and integrity as the silk-washing girl and doomed much the same. In some cases, these adaptations or reworkings served to further explore male conceptions of female agency and psychology, in others, they worked to subvert the tradition as a whole by re-conceptualizing fundamental elements of the tales or by sympathizing with the plight of their protagonists.

MOTHERS AND MARTYRS: WOMEN AND SELF-SACRIFICE IN EARLY CHINA

Before examining these traditions in detail, this chapter will first address the performative aspect of suicide as a response to the demands of chastity. Yet what do such performances entail? How are such depictions of death imbued with significance for reader and listener alike? And what, then, were the purpose of such tales beyond a prurient fascination with the grisly details of death? In her evaluation of early Christian polemics on martyrdom, specifically the scenes of violence that defined the Roman arena, Elizabeth Castelli noted normative and performative role of death, specifically the sacrifices of women, as a means of constructing a "legible and intelligible narrative that entertained as it inculcated social, political, ethical, and religious values."[17] These violent scenes were instrumental in establishing a shared identity for early Christian communities through the creation of shared memories of suffering; memories that were often defined through the suffering of women, figures who would be lauded as saints and whose

[17] Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 119.

accounts were painstakingly memorialized from historical records (or created *ex nihilo*) so as to be recreated (and thus re-experienced) by the faithful.

Vivid tales surrounded popular early female martyrs such as Thecla the Iconian (1st century) who, inspired by the words of the Paul the Apostle, embraced a life of chastity and endured numerous public acts of violence, as well as Perpetua of Carthage (3rd century), a Roman wife who is arrested due to her faith, is forced to surrender her child to her family while in prison, and is ultimately killed in the arena.[18] Such accounts celebrated the trauma experienced by early Christian women in often gruesome detail and were rich in performative elements such as narrative repetition (for example, repeated encounters in which one of the women is given opportunity to recant or renounce her faith), exhortations to the crowd, dramatic soliloquys, etc. Equally important is the setting of such martyrdoms. In many cases, such as those of Thecla and Perpetua above, the death of such women was presented as public spectacle, set as they were in a performative space—the arena—and thus served as models for female behavior for centuries to come.[19] As Castelli notes, such ferocious women were seen to embody masculine traits, such as the ideal of stoic fortitude, causing even critics of female participation in the liturgical tradition to offer "praise for the woman who has managed to transcend superficial elements of sexual difference."[20]

[18] For a summary and analysis of Thecla and Perpetua's stories, see Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 134–171 and 69–103 respectively.

[19] Ibid., 143.

[20] Ibid., 122–123.

A similar tradition of reifying social mores and gender roles through collected accounts of female trauma and self-sacrifice had already been established in China several centuries before stories of Perpetua's death began circulating in Europe. By the end of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) tales of female exemplars had become enshrined as part of the literary canon with the compilation of the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (Arrayed Biographies of Female Exemplars), traditionally ascribed to the Han polymath Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 BCE).[21] The 104 biographies of female self-mutilation and suicide therein established an enduring model for accounts of women exemplars going forward.[22] To be female in a world in which such tales were heralded (or challenged) as ideal expressions of femininity meant navigating contemporary expectations of what it meant to be a woman—conceptions of which were often drawn from elite circles. As Rebecca Doran notes, despite early philosophical texts extolling the power of the female as represented by *yin* 陰 (part of a dyad, along with the masculine *yang* 陽), "already in late Warring States and Western Han times the identification of *yin* with passivity and the

[21] For the *Lienü zhuan*, see Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BCE) and Wang Zhaoyuan 王照圓 (1763–1851), *Lienü zhuan bu zhu* 列女傳補註 (Arrayed Biographies of Female Exemplars with Supplementary Material and Commentary), in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Continuation of the Complete Library in Four Sections), vol. 515 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 658–765.

[22] As Harriet T. Zurndorfer notes, the *Lienü zhuan* was influential enough to spur the creation of similar *lienü* sections within the majority of (fourteen out of twenty-six) official histories (*zhengshi* 正史) as well as within local gazetteers. See Harriet T. Zurndorfer, "Wang Zhaoyuan's Lienü zhuan bu zhu" in *Beyond Exemplar Tales: Women's Biography in Chinese History*, Joan Judge and Hu Ying eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 57. Later in the same volume, Nanxiu Qian also notes that Liu Xiang's work also inspired the "Virtuous and Talented Ladies" (*xianyuan* 賢媛) chapter within the influential *A New Account of Tales of the World* (*Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語) by the Liu-Song Prince Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–44). According to Qian, eighteen out of the thirty-five later *Shishuo*-inspired works themselves contained a *xianyuan* chapter. See Nanxiu Qian, "*Lienü* versus *Xianyuan*: The Two Biographical Traditions in Chinese Women's History," in *Beyond Exemplar Tales*, 70–87.

inner realm translated into the inferiority of women."[23] It was within such elite circles that restrictions on female segregation, behavior, and obedience were extolled and promulgated.[24] The women who were selected for inclusion in the *Lienü zhuan* commit acts that range from self-mutilation on behalf of one's mother-in-law to suicide to preserve one's virtue—actions that served to emphasize the importance of contemporary social mores such as filiality and chastity. Such deeds were both lauded and criticized by the elite, who alternately saw in them actions worthy of moral approbation or cases of extremism that went above and beyond contemporary social expectations.[25]

Much as in Europe, there was no static and unchanging conception of femininity in China.[26] Rather, a feminine identity in early China was the result of a constructed process of negotiation between the forces of outer (social and familial obligation) and inner (personal desires). As Bret Hinsch argues, in early China, it was impossible to differentiate performance from gender; rather than being essentialized, womanhood was instead a performative act that was constructed through daily life. He notes:

---

[23] See Rebecca Doran, *Transgressive Typologies: Constructions of Gender and Power in Early Tang China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016), 24–25.

[24] See for example the "Inner Rules" of the *Liji* 禮記 (Record of Rites) and the "Three Obediences" (*sancong* 三從), which demanded women follow the instructions of their fathers, husbands, and sons. See *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, (Correct Meaning of the Classic of Rites), with commentary by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–220) and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648), ed. by Li Xueqin 李學勤, 3 vols. (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999) 815.

[25] This is not to say, of course, that men were spared restrictive norms themselves. The genre of didactic works on female behavior could be aligned with similar works that provided normative guidelines for gentlemen as well.

[26] I use this term specifically to refer to the traditional geographical area that encompasses the historical Chinese cultural heartland as well as to refer to the array of cultural entities therein, not to suggest the existence of any monocultural continuity.

> One was not just born a woman by having a certain biology. One became a complete and successful woman only after assuming a wide range of positive female roles. Womanhood was not a fixed or static identity. To all but the most abstract thinkers, femininity lacked the timelessness of an abstract metaphysical element. A woman was a successful social actor. She played out her gender for all to see. In acting out a range of female roles, she created herself as a complete woman.[27]

Storytelling played an important role in establishing and reifying such roles. Through encountering tales of virtuous maidens and self-sacrificing wives in collections such as the *Lienü zhuan* and in later popular literature or on stage, women could inculcate the idealized virtues that these figures embodied and learn to emulate them in everyday life. Whether they decided to ultimately adopt or reject such models was largely immaterial; their very existence helped shape the options available to women as they navigated their roles within a society in which women's identities were often determined solely by their relation to men, both within and beyond the household.

Despite the complexity of these issues, modern conceptions of the historical experience of women in China are often rooted in popular understandings of Confucianism, expressions of patriarchy, and the later embodiment of female subjugation: the bound foot. However, as recent studies have shown, the richness and complexity of female lives within the range of cultures that are today termed "Chinese" cannot be simplified as the mere "subaltern," but rather tend to subvert easy classification.[28] Women in China played a wide variety of roles, depending on their age,

---

[27] See Bret Hinsch, *Women in Early Imperial China*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 8.

[28] For recent works (only focused on the Tang) that move beyond this shallow interpretation of female agency, see, for example, Ping Yao's recent exploration of "entombed epitaphs" (*muzhiming* 墓誌銘) which notes that, while they still skew towards moral stereotyping also reveal the a broader range of female experiences and intimate details during the Tang dynasty. Ping Yao, "Women's Epitaphs in Tang China

background, class, religious proclivity, marital status, possession of children, proximity to natal kin, as well as where and when they lived. Yet while the vast majority of their accounts were not recorded or were subsequently lost, some popular models of femininity upon which they may have drawn did survive the vicissitudes of time and conflict. Such works preserve the social expectations that circumscribed and guided the lives of women—what could perhaps be termed the "how's and why's" of womanhood.

Women in China, as elsewhere, drew upon (or reacted against) aspirational (or cautionary) tales of feminine behavior such as biographies of women, popular anecdotes, and historical accounts as they negotiated their self-identities vis-à-vis social expectations of what it meant to be a daughter, wife, or mother. While such tales could inspire the ways in which women lived, they could, conversely, inform the ways in which they died—ultimately privileging suicide and self-sacrifice as foundations of chastity and womanly virtue. The example of the silk-washing girl which opens this chapter demonstrates the longevity of these tales. Though her account first appears during the latter-half of the Han dynasty, it gradually expanded over time, both in scope and pathos, until it ultimately reached an audience on the periphery of Tang control. Though she is but a minor character in the epic tale of Wu Zixu, her sacrifice is emblematic of a well-established pattern of female suicide in elite writings. For such elites, the moral achievements of women were of great concern.

(618–907)," in *Beyond Exemplar Tales*, 139–157. Also see Jinhua Jia, *Gender, Power, and Talent: The Journey of Daoist Priestesses in Tang China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), and Beverly Bossler, "Faithful Wives and Heroic Maidens: Politics, Virtue, and Gender in Song China," in *Tang Song Nüxing Yu Shehui* 唐宋女性與社會 (Women and Society in Tang and Song China) (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 751–84, etc.

Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), compiler of the *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Han) himself attributed Liu Xiang's composition of the *Lienü zhuan* to the rising (and therefore threatening) power of women in traditionally male venues such as the court. He states:

> Xiang observed that customs had become extravagant and dissolute and that those who had risen from obscurity, such as Zhao and Wei, had overstepped the rites. teachings proceed from the domestic sphere to the public realm and originate from things close at hand. From the *Odes* and other documents he therefore selected records of worthy consorts and chaste wives who had contributed to the rise of states or made their families illustrious to serve as exemplars. He also included those who were depraved and favored and who caused chaos and destruction. He arranged them according to a specific sequence to create the *Categorized Biographies of Women* in eight *pian* as a warning to the Son of Heaven.[29]
>
> 向睹俗彌奢淫，而趙、衛之屬起微賤，踰禮制。向以為王教由內及外，自近者始。故採取詩書所載賢妃貞婦，興國顯家可法則，及孽嬖亂亡者，序次為列女傳，凡八篇，以戒天子。

Such interpretations, of course, were not uncommon, as traditional Chinese historiography had long associated dynastic decline with female interference in the public sphere. Figures such Empresses Lü 呂 and Wei 韋 in the Han as well as Wu Zetian 武則天 and Yang Guifei 楊玉環 in the Tang were often cited as destabilizing or disruptive elements.[30] Later

[29] See Liu Xiang and Anne Behnke Kinney trans., *Exemplary Women of Early China: The* Lienü zhuan *of Liu Xiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 3. For the original quote, see *Hanshu*, 36.902–903.

[30] For a summary of the account of Empresses Lü (Lü Zhi 呂雉) and Wei (Wei Zifu 偉子夫) see Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han, and Xin Periods (221 BC–24 AD* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 426–429 and 581 respectively. For Empress Wu, see Denis Twitchett and Howard J. Wechsler, "Kao-tsung (reign 649–83) and the empress Wu: the inheritor and the usurper," in *Cambridge History of China*, Vol. III, Pt. 1 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979), 244–272. Such traditional perspectives on historiography have even persisted to the modern day. See for example Lei Jiaji's 雷家驥, *Humei pianneng huoju: Wu Zetian jingshen yu xinli fenxi* 狐媚偏能惑主: 武則天的精神與心理分析 (The Bewitching, Delusional Autocrat: A Psychological Analysis of Wu Zetian) (Taibei: Lianming wenhua youxian gongsi, 1981). For a contradictory view, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, "A Medieval Feminist Critique of the Chinese World Order: The Case of Wu Zhao (r. 690–705)," *Religion* 28 (1998): 383–392.

historiographers were quick to embrace this association between dynastic chaos and female participation in public life. The statesman and historian Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), for example, placed "the political and moral decay of the Five Dynasties at the doorstep of women; their seduction of powerful men, their own rivalries, and their pitting of brother against brother, and father against son."[31] By infringing upon long-established divisions between male and female social spheres, such women were seen to invite the wrath of heaven and thus bring upon themselves (and their dynasty) disaster.[32]

As a response to such concerns, the compilation of the *Lienü zhuan* could then be viewed as a didactic project intended to valorize female behavior that accorded with traditional mores such as filial piety (*xiao* 孝), loyalty (*zhong* 忠), faithfulness (*xin* 信), compliance (*shun* 順), and righteousness (*yi* 義).[33] These values are apparent from the seven chapter titles that arrange the work: "maternal exemplars" ("Muyi zhuan" 母儀傳), "the wise and sagacious" ("Xianming zhuan" 賢明傳), "the humane and wise" ("Renzhi zhuan" 仁智傳), "the chaste and compliant" ("Zhenshun zhuan" 貞順傳), "the principled and righteous" ("Jieyi zhuan" 節義傳), "the accomplished rhetoricians" ("Biantong zhuan"

---

[31] Richard L. Davis, "Chaste and Filial Women in Chinese Historical Writings of the Eleventh Century," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 121, No. 2 (Apr. – Jun., 2001): 214.

[32] For an examination of these historiographical assumptions, see Doran, *Transgressive Typologies*, 23–65.

[33] For additional studies on the importance of filial piety and the *Lienü zhuan* tradition, see Lo Yuet-keung, "Rectitude and Compliance - The Wife in Liu Xiang's Lienü zhuan" 貞順——《列女傳》中的妻子, in *Qin Han sixiang yu wenhua* 秦漢思想與文化 (Thought and Culture in Qin-Han China), ed. by Xiong Tieji 熊鐵基 and Zhao Guohua 趙國華 (Singapore: Hope Publishing, 2005), 355–375, "Filial Devotion for Women: A Buddhist Testimony from Third-Century China," in *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*, ed. by Alan Chan and Sor-hoon Tan (London and New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2004), 71–90, and "Recovering a Buddhist Voice on Daughters-in-law: The Yuyenü jing," *History of Religions* 44.4 (2005): 318–350.

辯通傳), and "the depraved and favored" ("Niebi zhuan" 孽嬖傳). As Anne Kinney notes, the first chapter ("maternal exemplars") and the last ("the depraved and favored") provide a frame for the entire work, contrasting the virtuous influence of the former and its positive effect on clan and kingdom with the deleterious impact of the latter.[34]

The third category, the "chaste and compliant" is of special interest to the topic at hand. The majority of these accounts address challenges or crises impacting married women, many of whom are urged to remarry or are faced with violating taboos regarding the segregation of the sexes or unsupervised travel outside of the home. Kinney notes that about one-third of these accounts involve suicide or self-mutilation in order to avoid remarriage or to ward off unwanted suitors.[35] Viewed in such a light, the decision of the silk-washing girl to cast herself into the river rather than be subject to gossip in the community regarding her unsupervised interaction with a man seems less extraordinary. While it remains impossible to determine how the majority of readers would interpret such accounts of suicide (cautionary tale, example of ideological extremism, or action worthy of praise), accounts during the Han do suggest that at least some influential women were amenable to such tales. According to the *Hanshu*, Empress Wang 王皇后 (8 BCE – 23), the consort of the last emperor of the Former Han, Emperor Ping 平帝 (r. 1 BCE – 6) and daughter of his usurper, Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE–23 CE), cast herself into the flames engulfing the Weiyang Palace as her father's regime was overthrown by Han loyalists.[36]

[34] For a summary of these divisions and their contents, see Kinney, *Exemplary Women of Early China*, 24–36.

[35] Ibid., 30.

[36] See *Hanshu*, 97.2013–14.

Her account, like those of other female exemplars of the Han, was later added to the *Lienü zhuan* itself.[37]

POPULAR LITERARY TRADITIONS OF FEMALE SUICIDE

The initial stages of this study were spurred by a casual reading of the vast cache of material unearthed in the caves of Dunhuang in the early 20th century. Among the enormous trove of religious material, records, copies of philosophical works, and poetry therein, are a number of remarkable prosimetric works that have been termed "transformation texts" (*bianwen* 變文). While reading these materials, I was struck by the rich and evocative language of these works, especially in regard to their female characters. The women within these *bianwen* sparkle with life and are enriched by the combination of the coarse language of early vernacular and the vividness of poetic lines that comprise these works. These female characters do not merely die and disappear from the page as they do in the early anecdotal traditions (that often contain versions of these tales)—instead the women meet their ends with a performative flourish and dramatic soliloquy. Given my interest in these materials, I chose to focus my research on the depiction of women within the Dunhuang corpus. I decided not to explore two of the most popular story traditions preserved in Dunhuang that focus on female characters--namely the "transformation tales" of Meng Jiangnü ("Meng Jiangnü bianwen" 孟姜女變

[37] Her account is titled "Han xiao Ping Wang hou" (漢孝平王后) and is collected in the "Supplemental Biographies" ("Xu Lienü zhuan" 續列女傳). For the original, see *Lienü zhuan bu zhu* 8.17–8 in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 515.749.

文) and Wang Zhaojun ("Wang Zhaojun bianwen" 王昭君變文) as both have been treated in depth elsewhere.[38] Instead, I decided to trace the occurrence and reoccurrence of two specific traditions in material up to the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368).

Despite my initial focus on "transformation texts," this study ultimately includes material from a number of different genres across time that deal with the Qiu Hu and Han Peng traditions, including biography (located within the above mentioned *Lienü zhuan*), poetry, a prose rhapsody, a "transformation tale," and a stage drama. To keep this variety of sources from becoming unwieldy, I examine each work as part of a self-contained literary tradition, exploring the roles of the wives within (as well as later female additions to the tales) and analyzing their permutations across time and genre. It is to be expected that some genres will allow for greater complexity and expression for their characters (such as prosimetric works and drama), and thus the majority of my focus will be on these materials. However, I will also be exploring earlier versions of these tales so as to provide greater context for their development as well as analyzing a number of poetic interpretations of these traditions from the Six Dynasties (220–589) to the Tang (618–907). Such poems are useful in tracing not only the ways in which the story and its

[38] See, for example Wilt Idema's exhaustive exploration of Meng Jiangnü, including a full translation, background, and analysis in Wilt Idema, *Meng Jiangnü Brings Down the Wall: Ten Versions of a Chinese Legend* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008). For the classic tale of Wang Zhaojun, which relates the story of a Han palace woman forced to marry a nomadic chieftain, see Eugene Eoyang, "The Wang Chao-chün Legend: Configurations of the Classic," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1982): 3–22; Daphne Lei, *Uncrossing the Borders: Performing Chinese in Gendered (Trans)Nationalism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2019), 39–100, as well as Kimberly Besio, "Gender, Loyalty, and the Reproduction of the Wang Zhaojun Legend: Some Social Ramifications of Drama in the Late Ming," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 40, no. 2 (1997): 251–282.

heroine have changed over time, but also the ways in which the tradition has been reinterpreted and reimagined in verse.

First appearing within the *Lienü zhuan*, the tragi-comedic tale of the "Lu Qiu Jiefu" 魯秋潔婦 (The Chaste Wife of Qiu of Lu) relates how the titular Qiu Hu leaves his newly-wedded wife for an official position abroad. After years pass, he returns home, this time weighed down with the riches gained from his exploits. While passing through a mulberry grove near his home, he spots an attractive young woman and makes advances towards her. She rebuffs his offer, and he continues on home. Soon after he reaches the gate of his family compound and greets his mother, who is overjoyed at his return. She calls out to his young wife (unnamed in the tale) who, flush with excitement, hurries to greet her husband. Stricken with shame, he recognizes her as the woman he flirted with earlier in the mulberry grove. She berates him for his lack of filial piety (as he had offered her gold meant for his mother) and declares that, since he is disloyal and will surely leave her, she would rather embrace death than remarry. She flees the house and throws herself into a nearby river.

This simply constructed tale enjoyed widespread popularity and inspired a number of poetic, narrative, and dramatic recreations of the encounter that play with the dynamics of the couple's two confrontations, expanding in the process the psychological complexity of Qiu Hu's wife as well as the depictions of her loneliness and suffering. The popularity of the story is evident not only by the spate of references to it that appear before the Song (960–1279), but also by the number of poets who adapt or mention the tale. These include popular works by early Six Dynasties writers such as Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217–278) and Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 (384–456) as well as a Tang-era poem by Gao Shi

高適 (ca. 704–765). Each of these works tackles the themes of the Qiu Hu tale in a different fashion, emphasizing different perspectives of its characters and privileging certain tropes at the expense of others. The result is an ever-evolving dialogue regarding the tale and its themes of beauty, death, chastity, and the expected roles of men and women.

In addition, a "Transformation Tale of Qiu Hu" ("Qiu Hu bian" 秋胡變), the manuscript of which may date to the mid- to late-Tang, was uncovered among the cache of materials at Dunhuang. This version of the tale greatly expands the role of Qiu Hu's mother by detailing her relationship with her daughter-in-law. In the process it also emphasizes the precarious status of a young wife, alone and without allies in her husband's home, as it heightens the tragic nature of the young woman's suicide. Though the work is sadly incomplete, what does survive reveals a deeper examination of the female psyche in combination with dramatic elements that presage its later adaptation to the stage. Lastly, I examine the Yuan-era variety play (*zaju* 雜劇) "Qiu Hu Tries to Seduce His Own Wife" ("Qiu Hu xiqi" 秋胡戲妻) by the well-known playwright Shi Junbao 石君寶 (1192–1276).[39] This work survives in a Ming dynasty palace edition and differs greatly from its *Lienü zhuan* and *bianwen* roots. Rather than tragedy, the four-act play embraces the comedic potential of Qiu Hu's mistake and ends not with a suicide, but

[39] For studies on Shi Junbao, see Hatano Tarō 波多野太郎, "'Qiu Hu xiqi' geki no shūdai ni tsuite 秋胡戲妻劇の主題について (On the Main Themes of the play "Qiu Hu Flirts with his Wife"), *Chūgoku bungakushi kenkyū* 中國文學史研究 (Studies in the History of Chinese Literature) 13 (1963): 43–89 and Fukuda Toshiaki 福田俊昭, "'Qiu hu goji' oboekaki" 「「秋胡故事」覺書」(Notes on the Qiu Hu tale). *Daitō Bunka Daigaku Kangakkai shi* 大東文化大學漢學會誌 (Journal of the Chinese Society of Daitō Bunka University) 13 (1974): 33–44.

rather with reconciliation, emphasizing the importance of family cohesion (and forgiveness of husbandly errors) over righteous suicide.

The second tradition examined within this study is that of Han Peng 韓朋 (or Ping 憑) and his wife, elements of which extends back to at least the Western Han. However, its most influential appearance is within the aforementioned collection of strange accounts, the *Soushen ji*.[40] In this anecdote, set in the state of Song 宋 during the Warring States period (475-221 CE), the wife of the grandee (*daifu* 大夫) Han Ping attracts the attention of the ruler of Song, King Kang 康王, who obsesses over her beauty and ultimately seizes her for himself. After Han complains, the King imprisons him. His wife, distraught, smuggles him a letter which is intercepted after he reads it. The hidden meaning of the letter—professing her grief and intention to commit suicide—is couched in verse and deciphered by Han Ping, who kills himself after reading it. His wife follows him in death, throwing herself from a terrace. She is found clutching another message, this time requesting to share a grave with her husband. King Kang, enraged at her duplicity, denies the request and buries the couple on opposite sides of a lane. Despite his attempt at separating the couple, large catalpa trees sprout from both grave mounds, their branches intertwining over the road as one.

The tale became popular shorthand in poetry for romance, appearing in a number of works throughout the Tang and into the Song. By the 9th century, Han Ping's given name shifted to Peng 朋 and the couple became the subject of an anonymous rhapsody

[40] See Gan Bao, *Soushen ji*, 210–212. For an English translation of the tale, see DeWoskin and Crump, *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record*, 137–138.

that survives in manuscript form in Dunhuang. “The Rhapsody on Han Peng” (“Han Peng fu” 韓朋賦) expands upon the earlier tale, providing additional background for its titular hero, as well as a name for his wife, Zhenfu 貞夫 (lit. Chastity). In accordance with the original tale, Zhenfu is described as being literate, though in this case her skill with the brush proves her undoing. Separated from her husband due to his official duties, she writes him a stirring letter, expressing her longing for him. Han Peng, however, isn’t the only recipient of her letter, as the King of Song also reads it, and enamored with her words, offers a reward for any who can procure her for his harem. The story progresses similarly to its *Soushen ji* predecessor, yet with added emphasis on Zhenfu’s literary skill and accomplishment rather than her beauty.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Such tales of self-sacrificing and chaste women no doubt appealed to male audiences, who may have lauded their selflessness and defense of patriarchal values and sympathized with their unfair treatment. They may also, however, have been drawn in by the aesthetic tension such tales provide between beauty (or women) and death, which, as Elizabeth Bronfen notes, fascinates “not only because it is unnatural, but also because it is precarious.”[41] In other cases, the unflinching self-destruction by these women also earn them the condemnation of some literati, who, while they may have found their

[41] Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 5.

motivations laudable, criticized their actions as extreme.[42] Such exemplars served to reify elite values such as chastity, integrity, and self-abnegation on the behalf of husbands, sons, and other kin.

Intrigued by this tension between beauty and death, morality and self-destruction, this study will begin by examining the above literary traditions, tracing their development, outside influences, and the resulting depictions of their female characters, whether as objects of male fantasy or as didactic tools for female audiences. In the process, I will be asking a number of fundamental questions as I examine these materials. For example, what role does beauty play in the outcome of these stories and in the fate of their characters? Beauty itself has a fraught history in Chinese historiography, where a lovely woman herself was commonly referred to as a "city-toppling beauty" (*qingcheng* 傾城), capable of destroying kingdoms and bringing chaos. Yet while beauty itself has no innate moral quality; in its depictions by Chinese poets and writers it is often tied to the

[42] There is a great deal of scholarship on women and suicide in China, with the preponderance focusing on the late imperial period (Ming-Qing) and the influence of the so-called "cult of chastity." For a brief examination of the historical impulse to commit suicide among women as well as reactions to the same, see Andrew C. K. Hsieh and Jonathan D. Spence, "Suicide and the Family in Pre-modern Chinese Society," in *Normal and Abnormal Behavior in Chinese Culture*, ed. By Arthur Kleinman and Tsung-yi Lin (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1981), 29–47. For the late imperial period, especially see T'ien Ju-k'ang, *Male Anxiety and Female Chastity: A Comparative Study of Chinese Ethical Values in Ming-Ch'ing Times* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988). For a very useful overview of scholarly trends regarding suicide and other issues such as Confucianism, the May 4th Movement, and modernity, see Paul Ropp's "Passionate Women: Female Suicide in Late Imperial China—Introduction," in *Nan Nü* 3.1 (2001): 3–21. Also see Fei Siyan 費絲言, "You dianfan dao guifan: cong Mingdai zhenjie lienü de bianshi yu liuchuan kan zhenjie guannian de yange hua" 由典範到規範:從明代貞節烈女的辨 識與流傳看貞節觀念的嚴格化 (From the exemplary to the prescriptive: the increasingly rigid views on female chastity in Ming dynasty) (Taipei: Taida chuban weiyuanhui, 1998) as well as her "Writing for Justice: An Activist Beginning of the Cult of Female Chastity in Late Imperial China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 71.4 (2012): 991–1012; Katherine Carlitz, "Shrine, Governing-Class Identity and the Cult of Widow-Fidelity in Mid-Ming Jiangnan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56.3 (1997): 612–640, Janet M. Theiss, "Dealing with Disgrace: The Negotiation of Female Virtue in Late Imperial China" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1998), and chap. 5 ("Widows in the Qing Chastity Cult") in Matthew H. Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

collapse of order, not as a direct consequence of the women who bear it, but due to the inability of men to resist it. One of the most famous examples lay in the fate of King Fuchai 夫差 of Wu (r. 495–473 BCE) who was overthrown by his enemy, King Goujian 勾踐 of Yue (r. 496–465 BCE) when he became infatuated with the beauty of Xi Shi 西施. Presented by an agent of Goujian as a gift, Xi Shi (who also is associated with silk-washing) was said to be so beautiful as to dazzle fish and bring down geese (*chenyu luoyan* 沈魚落雁). Smitten with her, Fuchai ignored the pleas of his general, Wu Zixu, and ultimately had him executed.[43] While he was rescued by one woman, according to this version of the tale, Wu's ultimate fate was to be decided by another.

Yet beauty could also suggest moral cultivation. In both the Qiu Hu and Han Peng traditions, the young beauty represents moral excellence in addition to sexual desirability. This no doubt speaks to elite male conceptions of a female ideal: young, educated (in that she can quote edifying passages from the classics), patient, compliant, and, of course, beautiful. Yet such beauty came with a price, as both traditions make plain. Through her physical attractiveness, the wife in such accounts attracts unwanted attention that ultimately brings about her own downfall. This view of beauty as inauspicious matches what Lisa-Ann Raphals describes as "exceptional beauty as a cause of conflict and chaos, through no particular moral fault of the woman who possesses it."[44]

---

[43] For the account, see *Wu Yue Chunqiu* 吳越春秋 (Springs and Autumns of Wu and Yue), ed. by Zhou Shengchun 周生春 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 9.147–148.

[44] Lisa-Ann Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*, (New York: SUNY, 1998), 62.

In addition to the above, I will be examining how the death or psychological suffering of women is depicted with these sources. Are there shared traits, descriptors, or modes of trauma which are commonplace when associated with women? Such descriptions are intended to evoke the tragedy of a woman's death by appealing to a male readership or audience by emphasizing the destruction of her physical form. For the wives of Han Peng and Qiu Hu, both of whom die in their youth, the destruction of self, while tragic, also allows their escape from depredations of age, and to preserve their beauty at the moment of death—a romantic element which no doubt added to the popularity of these works with audiences. In addition, how is this call to death undermined or subverted in later adaptations of these tale? What can these changes tell us about shifting audience or genre expectations with regards to the death of women? Lastly, by examining the evolution of these traditions over time and across genre, what is the relationship between these varying adaptations with regards to the circumstances of composition (genre, style, and status of authors/audience) and the traces of lived experience that survive in such works. By that I mean, what can we recover from within these works regarding matters of social roles, gender, and the conflict between rarified elite norms of behavior and the pressures of everyday life?

To do so, I will be examining these materials through the critical lens of performativity and agency and from the perspective of feminist theory. Over the past few decades a great deal of attention has been paid to the reifying power of performance to "signify or denote larger truths under the guise of make-believe situations."[45] The work

[45] Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 160.

of Judith Butler, which drew upon J.L. Austin's theory of the performative and Derrida's reinterpretation of the same, was instrumental in codifying the role of both body and speech acts in establishing the subjectivity of the individual—acts that must be continually reified in order to maintain the social norms by which that individual's identity is formed.[46] In essence, as she argues: "bodily *habitus* constitutes a tacit form of performativity, a citational chain lived and believed at the level of the body."[47] As a result, "the materiality of the subject comes to be enacted through a series of embodied performatives."[48] Such performatives reify social norms such as the expectation of chaste behavior or obedience to one's in-laws and husband. The very reliance on the reiteration of such norms suggests their fragility and the possibility that they can be challenged and requires their reification and inscription through text and performance. From such a perspective, the popularity of collections such as the *Lienü zhuan* itself suggests the existence of alternative forms of gendered performance—ones that subvert or reinvent the tales therein allowing new forms of female subjectivity.

However, rather than focusing on modern liberal definitions of agency as a means of resistance to power, I find it more fruitful to adopt Saba Mahmood's approach in exploring Muslim women's autonomy. She suggests reorienting our approach to agency, viewing it not as a "synonym for resistance to relations of domination but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create." By separating

[46] See J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[47] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 155.

[48] Saba Mahmood, "Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject," 200.

the concept of agency from resistance, we can "explore other structures of desire, political imaginaries, social authority, and personhood."[49] Thus, by distancing agency (and performativity) from a Western (and modern liberal) perspective, we can better approach different social contexts, such as China, and explore the roles of women therein not simply as actors resisting patriarchal oppression, but also as creative agents navigating imposed limitations and generating new identities in the process. This is not to say that women in imperial Chinese history did not experience oppression—the legal and social discrimination that women faced are well-documented—but rather that defining women solely as victims of subjugation robs them of personal agency and obscures the creative ways in which they did resist or redefine their roles through time. Though the majority of accounts of such women were penned by male authors, by examining literary accounts such as those of Qiu Hu and Han Peng we can ascertain how women were imagined, idealized, or demonized as social actors.

This study works to examine the depictions of such women through a close reading of these two textual traditions. By depictions, I mean the ways in which they are portrayed or presented in these materials through their actions, appearances, or speech. Common elements can include narrative focus on physical characteristics, emphasis on purity, chastity, or a lingering focus on female suffering or death. Such moments are rife with performative potential and help establish the context for the martyrdom that follows. As Castelli notes, when describing the act of martyrdom, "suffering violence in and of itself is not enough. In order for martyrdom to emerge, both the violence and its suffering must

[49] Ibid., 179–180.

be infused with particular meanings."[50] By examining these accounts closely, this study hopes to examine how such conditions for martyrdom are created (or overturned) in this Chinese literary context.

As a result of the above, this study will contribute to our understanding of these formative literary traditions by providing the first study of the portrayal of women within them throughout their permutations and across both genre and time. In the process, it will also aid our understanding of how such popular traditions were subject to competing pressures of social norms, audience expectations, and the restrictions imposed by genre—limitations that govern the ways in which such topoi are utilized or subverted. By examining these disparate works, this study will argue that both the Qiu Hu and Han Peng traditions are less concrete tales that owes their existence to any given work than they are a broad collection of themes that can be shuffled into differing configurations to meet the need of a given author at a given moment. Much as poetics became a game of employing well-known lines and images in new, startling ways, so too did the elements of each story allow writers to emphasize different virtues, affects, and ideologies by drawing upon topoi from a shared tradition.

PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP AND OVERVIEW

Despite the popularity of these literary traditions, there has been little to no in-depth examination of their significance from a feminist perspective. Moreover, the vast majority

[50] Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*, 34.

of scholarship (in Chinese, as little work has been done in English) has focused on the origin, language, and role of these tales in the overall development of Chinese literature, rather than on the role of their female characters. Despite this paucity of scholarship, there have been a number of valuable contributions made by scholars tracing the lived experiences and textual worlds of women. A great deal of scholarship has been done on the role of female chastity and biography from scholars such as Beverly Bossler, Joan Judge, Katherine Carlitz, Lisa-Ann Raphals, and Bret Hinsch, among others.[51] In addition, I have referred to Anne Behnke Kinney's translation and study of the *Lienü zhuan* in examining that text.[52] With regards to Dunhuang material, I have drawn heavily on the work of Victor Mair, in particular his *T'ang Transformation Texts*, which contains a translation of both the "Wu Zixu bianwen" and "Qiu Hu bian" as well as two articles by

[51] See Beverly Bossler, "Faithful Wives and Heroic Maidens: Politics, Virtue, and Gender in Song China," in *Tang Song Nüxing Yu Shehui* 唐宋女性與社會 (Women and Society in Tang and Song China), 751–84, Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003. Also see her "Gender and Empire: A View from the Yuan," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.1 (2004): 197–223. For Joan Judge, see *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, The West, and the Woman Question in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). Also see Katherine Carlitz. "The Daughter, the Singing-Girl, and the Seduction of Suicide," *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 3.1 (2001): 24–44. Lisa-Ann Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (New York: SUNY, 1998). Bret Hinsch has made a number of very useful contributions. See for example his *Women in Early Imperial China*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), his "Male Honor and Female Chastity," *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 13 (2011): 169–204, and "The Origins of Separating the Sexes in China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123.3 (2003): 595–616. Also see earlier contributions, such as Jennifer Holmgren, "Widow Chastity in the Northern Dynasties: The *Lieh-nü* Biographies in the *Wei-shu*," *Papers in Far Eastern History* 23 (1981): 165–87, and Wei-hung Lin, "Chastity in Chinese Eyes: *Nan-nü yu-pieh*," *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Research in Chinese Studies) (1991): 13–39. In addition, see the extremely useful volume edited by Joan Judge and Hu Ying, *Beyond Exemplar Tales: Women's Biography in Chinese History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

[52] For additional material on the *Lienü zhuan* and its development, see Bret Hinsch, "Cross-Genre Influence on the Fictional Aspects of Lienü Narratives," *Journal of Oriental Studies* Vol.41 No.1 (2006): 41–66, "The Composition of *Lie nüzhuan*: Was Liu Xiang the Author or Editor?" *Asia Major* (third series) 20.1, (2007): 1-23, and his "The Textual History of Liu Xiang's *Lie nüzhuan*," *Monumenta Serica* Vol.52 (2004): 95-112 and Michela Bussotti, "Editions of Biographies of Women as Examples of Printed Illustrations from the Ming Dynasty," *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Studies in Chinese) 28.2 (1999): 169-224.

David Johnson on the development of the former tradition.[53] Outside of English scholarship, there is a great deal of critical material on *bianwen* and other Dunhuang literary materials in Chinese. I am heavily indebted in particular to Xiang Chu's excellent work which provides detailed glosses and comprehensive notes on what are often difficult to read materials, as well as that by Huang Zheng and Zhang Yongquan.[54]

In terms of the poetic and dramatic material, prosodic elements related to these traditions have received attention from Hans Frankel, Joseph R. Allen, Tina Marie Harding, and Stephen Owen, among others. I have especially drawn on the work of Stephen West and Wilt Idema, not only in my approach to the dramatic adaptation of the Qiu Hu tale, but also in how I conceptualize the performative context of the late-Song and Yuan periods. There are two English translations of the Yuan-era Qiu Hu play, one by William Dolby and the other within the *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*.[55] Neither is without its faults, so I have taken to either modifying providing my own translations where needed. Even less work has been done on the Han Peng literary tradition outside of general overviews of its

[53] See David Johnson, "The Wu Tzu-hsu Pien wen and Its Sources: Part I," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* Vol. 40.1 (1980): 93–156 and "Part II" of the same in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40.2 (1980): 465–505.

[54] For collections of *bianwen* and other materials, see Xiang Chu 項楚, *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu* 敦煌變文選注 (Selections of Dunhuang Bianwen with Commentary) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), Huang Zheng 黃征 and Zhang Yongquan 張涌泉. *Dunhuang bianwen jiaozhu* 敦煌變文校注 (Dunhuang Transformation Texts with Commentary). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997, as well as Fu Junlian's 伏俊璉 *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu* 敦煌賦校注 (Rhapsodies of Dunhuang with Commentary) (Gansu renmin chubanshe, 1994) and "Dunhuang sufu zhi yanjiu fanchou ji sufu zai wenxue shishang de yiyi" 敦煌俗賦之研究及俗賦在文學史上的意義 (Scope of the Study of Dunhuang Vernacular Rhapsody and its Significance in Chinese Literary History) *Zhida zhongwen xuebao* 政大中文學報 (Journal of Chinese Literature at Zhengzhi University) 18, 2012: 35–56.

[55] See William Dolby, *Eight Chinese Plays: From the Thirteenth Century to the Present* (London: Elek Books, 1978), 53–83 and James M. Hargett, John Coleman, Kuan-Fook Lai, Gloria Shen, and Ming Wang trans., "Qiu Hu Tries to Seduce His Wife," in *The Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, ed. by C.T. Hsia, Wai-yee Li, and George Kao (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 299–329.

development and examination of its place among early performance literature.[56] Arthur Waley has provided a somewhat idiosyncratic English translation of the Han Peng Dunhuang rhapsody but does little to discuss its contents or the way which it converses with its poetic and prose forebears.[57] Given the above, it is not surprising, therefor, to find that there is no study on Han Peng (or Qiu Hu) in English at all, let alone one that examines the critical roles of the women therein.[58]

This study is divided into five chapters followed by a brief conclusion. Chapter 2 will provide an introduction to the Qiu Hu literary tradition, tracing development from its earliest extant roots in the *Lienü zhuan* to the imaginative poetic renditions of the tale that followed, each with its own view of the affect and psychology of Qiu Hu's wife—a character, who, though she becomes increasingly complex and nuanced, still lacks her own name. It explores the ways in which these disparate poetic adaptations of the tale respond to one another and convey their own interpretations, not only of the Qiu Hu

[56] The majority of such work has been done by Chinese scholars. See for example Fu Junlian and Yang Aijun 楊愛軍, "Research Into the Origins of the Tale of Han Peng" (Han Peng gushi kaoyuan 韓朋故事考源), in *Studies of Dunhuang* (*Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究), 3 (2007): 91–93, as well as Rong Zhaozu 容肇祖, "Dunhuang ben 'Han Peng fu' kao" 敦煌本《韓朋賦》考 (Research on the Dunhuang Edition of 'Rhapsody of Han Peng'), *Dunhuang bianwen lunwenlu* 敦煌變文論文錄 (Collected Articles on Dunhuang Transformation *Texts)*, Vol. 3, edited by Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 and Bai Huawen 白化文, 649–682, (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1985).

[57] See Arthur Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang: An Anthology* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1960), 56–63.

[58] For a sample of studies outside of English, see Hatano, "'Qiu Hu xiqi' geki no shūdai ni tsuite," 43–89, Luo Guolian 羅國蓮, "Lun *Qiu Hu xiqi* gushi zhong de Qiu Hu xingxiang – yi *Liennü zhuan* zhi *Qiu Hu xiqi* wei fanwei 論「秋胡戲妻」故事中的秋胡形象 ——以《列女傳》至《秋胡戲妻》為範圍 (On the Image of Qiu Hu in the tale of *Qiu Hu Flirts with his Wife* from the *Lienü zhuan* to *Qiu Hu xiqi*), *Dongwu zhongwen xianshang xueshu lunwen* 東吳中文線上學術論文 (Soochow Journal of Chinese Literature Online) 14 (2011): 27–52, Fukuda, "'Qiu hu goji' oboekaki," 33–44, Zhang Hongxia 張紅霞, "Qiu Hu gushi qi Xinxiang yanbian chutan" 秋胡故事妻形象演變初探 (Initial Exploration of the Development of the Image of the Wife of Qiu Hu), *Baishu baijia* 白數百家 (Hundred Schools in Art) 71 (2003): 39–43.

story, but also of the role of women, the allure of death the seductiveness of beauty, and ultimately the fallibility of man.

Chapter 3 will introduce and examine the *bianwen* version of the tale, providing a close reading of its heroine, her interactions with her husband, and the fleshed-out character of her mother-in-law, a figure that personifies the underlying precarity that brides faced in the patrilocal home. It will also explore the remarkable confrontations between husband and wife, as well as the richly detailed psychological turmoil that Qiu Hu's wife undergoes in the process. In the process, the chapter will also examine how the shift in genre from anecdote and verse to vernacular provides new opportunities for depictions of female subjectivity and offers richly performative potential.

Chapter 4 will examine the adaptation of the Qiu Hu tale for the stage. It will first provide a brief overview of the dramatic conventions of Yuan drama and a discussion of the context of performance in the period with regards to women, both as performers as well as denizens of the pleasure quarters where many productions were no doubt set. This apparent contradiction—staging a play that celebrates chastity among sex workers and tea houses—was no contradiction at all, and whatever dissonance was generated by such performances no doubt served to heighten the comedy or drama that such scenes evoked. This chapter will also discuss the ways in which the ferocious manner of Qiu Hu's wife has been tamed for urban audiences—privileging forgiveness and familial harmony over previous demands for honor, resulting in an ending more comedic than tragic, and, in the process subverting expectations for the tale.

Finally, Chapter 5 will explore the history and development of the Han Peng tale from its earliest roots in the Han dynasty to its inclusion in a popular work in the 4th

century. By exploring the various prominent themes that appear in the tale as well as their appearances in poems and other works, this chapter makes the case that despite its tragic ending, the romantic elements of love and self-sacrifice that are so ingrained in the Han Peng tradition enabled it to persist as a representation of steadfastness and loyalty. The remaining portion of the chapter is dedicated to the "Rhapsody on Han Peng" which, rather than solely focusing on beauty, also emphasizes the literary accomplishments of its central female character—demonstrating that women could bring about their own destruction through personal cultivation just as easily as through unwitting beauty.

CHAPTER 2

LOVE AND LOSS AMONG THE GROVE: THE TALE OF QIU HU

> I have heard of chaste men who do not remarry and ardent wives who commit suicide from antiquity to the present day, and today I have encountered one with my own eyes. Whichever clan in which she is wife of is worthy of inclusion in the *Historical Records*, where their fame would be transmitted for ten thousand generations! [59]
>
> 我聞貞夫烈婦，自古至今耳聞，今時目前交見。誰家婦堪上史記，萬代傳名.

Chastity is one of the most common motivators for the infliction of self-harm in early collections of the lives of women. Whether spurred by self-defense against attackers or brought about as a response to forced (re)marriage, tales of suicide with the aim of preserving one's integrity (*jie* 節) remained popular throughout the Chinese literary tradition. This enduring popularity was in part because such stories reinforced contemporary social norms regarding female sexuality, but also no doubt because they also represented the lived experiences of women in a society where female status depended largely on dependent relationships with men. Many of these tales are gruesome in tone, providing—before their final act of resistance—lurid details that emphasize the beauty and purity of the victim, her immaculate reputation, and the righteousness of her cause.

These descriptions of beauty and youth stand in stark contrast with the finality of death and all it brings with it: like the flowers they are described as, the beauty of such women withers away, the body rots, and only bones remain. Yet, much like the transient

[59] See the "Transformation Text of Qiu Hu" (*Qiu Hu bianwen* 秋胡變文) introduced in Chapter 3. For the whole work see Huang and Zhang, *Dunhuang bianwen jiaozhu*, 232–242. For this particular quote, see 234. As for the inclusion of the *Shiji* in this quote, there is the possibility that the rather than referring directly to Sima Qian's work, it could be referencing historical records in general.

nature of a performance on stage, which, once completed can never be repeated, the victim of suicide in such tales also gains a certain singular quality. Their acts are lauded, their beauty celebrated, their youth restored, and their final act is performed again and again through the medium of narrative (and, later at times, on the stage itself). Though the Chinese classical tradition is awash with stories of female suicide to preserve chastity (among other reasons), within this chapter I will be focusing on one narrative tradition in particular, not only for its antiquity and resounding popularity, but also because it demonstrates the ways in which depictions of integrity and suicide were reformulated, re-imagined, and re-inscribed by later writers working in different periods and across different genres. Yet while such adaptations engaged with a figure celebrated for her ferocious integrity and resulting suicide, they were often more interested in the conflicts and emotional turmoil that inspired her death than with her end itself.

THE TALE OF QIU HU'S WIFE

The account in question, that of Qiu Hu and his wife, represents one of the earliest and most popular tales of female chastity and suicide in the Chinese literary tradition. Dating back to at least the early Western Han (25–220), it first appears within two sources of the period: the aforementioned *Lienü zhuan* as well as Liu Xin's 劉歆 (d. 23) work, the *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 (Miscellaneous Records of the Western Capital). The *Lienü zhuan* version of the tale is the earliest surviving and the best known rendition. The tale is contained within chapter five ("Principle and Righteousness" [*Jieyi* 節義]) of the *Lienü*

zhuan, and is titled "The Chaste Wife of Qiu of Lu" ("Lu Qiu Jiefu" 魯秋潔婦).[60] The entry reads as follows:

> The chaste woman was the wife of Qiu Hu of Lu.[61] Five days after taking her as his wife, he left to serve as an official in Chen. Five years later, he returned. Before he got home, he saw a woman picking mulberry leaves by the wayside. Entranced by her, Qiu Hu got down from his carriage and said, "The sun is burning you as you pick mulberry leaves, and I have come a long way. I want to take advantage of the mulberry's shade, eat something, put down my baggage, and get some rest." The woman continued picking mulberry leaves. Qiu Hu said, "Toiling in a field is not as good as coming upon a year of abundant harvest; toiling among mulberry trees is not as good as meeting a minister of the state. I have gold that I wish to offer to you, My Lady." The woman replied, "Alas! I pick mulberry leaves and work hard to spin and weave so that I can provide for our food and clothing, support my parents, and serve my husband. I do not want the gold. What I want is for you to not have base motives, and for me to banish all licentious thoughts. Put away your baggage and the gold from your cache!" Qiu Hu thus left.
>
> When he reached home, he offered the gold to his mother and had someone send for his wife. She turned out to be the person picking mulberry leaves. Qiu Hu was ashamed. The woman said, "You tied back your hair, cultivated your person, took leave of your parents, and went off to serve in court. Returning after five years, you should be galloping in a cloud of dust, eager to see your parents as quickly as possible. But just now you were entranced by a woman on the road, put down your baggage, and offered her gold: this is to forget your mother; forgetting your mother is unfilial. To love sensual beauty and to indulge in licentiousness are to corrupt your conduct; corrupting your conduct is undutiful. He who is unfilial in serving his parents will be disloyal in serving his ruler; he who is undutiful in managing his family will ruin government affairs as an official. Having lost both filial piety and dutifulness, you will certainly not succeed. I cannot bear to see you remarry; and I too will not marry again." She left and went east, threw herself into the river, and died.[62]

---

[60] There are numerous English translations of the *Lienü zhuan* available. I largely follow Anne Behnke Kinney's work except when stated otherwise.

[61] Lu 魯 was a small kingdom during the Zhou 周 Dynasty centered roughly on modern-day Shandong province.

[62] Translation adapted from that found in the introduction to the translation of *Qiu Hu Tries to Seduce His Wife* in *The Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 299–300. For details on this play, see below. For Kinney's translation, see *Exemplary Women of Early China*, 156–158. For the original account, see *Lienü zhuan bu zhu* 5.11–13 in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 515.710–11.

潔婦者，魯秋胡子妻也。既納之五日，去而宦於陳，五年乃歸。未至家，見路旁婦人採桑， 秋胡子悅之，下車謂曰：「若曝採桑，吾行道飡，願託桑蔭下飡，下齎休焉。」婦人採桑不輟， 秋胡子謂曰：「力田不如逢豐年，力桑不如見國卿。吾有金，願以與夫人。」婦人曰：「嘻！夫採桑力作，紡績織絍，以供衣食，奉二親，養夫子。吾不願金，所願卿無有外意，妾亦無淫泆之志，收子之齎與笥金。」秋胡子遂去，至家，奉金遺母，使人喚婦至，乃嚮採桑者也， 秋胡子慚。婦曰：「子束髮脩身，辭親往仕，五年乃還，當所悅馳驟，揚塵疾至。今也乃悅路傍婦人，下子之裝，以金予之，是忘母也。忘母不孝，好色淫泆，是污行也，污行不義。夫事親不孝，則事君不忠。處家不義，則治官不理。孝義並亡，必不遂矣。妾不忍見，子改娶矣，妾亦不嫁。」遂去而東走，投河而死。

The reasons for the enduring popularity of this story are easy to determine. First there is the abrupt departure of Qiu Hu, leaving husband and wife separated mere days after their nuptials. Such distant official postings are common in later accounts, as in order to avoid favoritism and disrupt the power of landed gentry, officials were customarily assigned positions in different regions, often far from home. In this case, however, Qiu Hu departs the state of Lu (modern-day Shandong) for that of Chen (in eastern Henan) to seek a position during the tumultuous Warring States period. The brevity of their married life together adds extra pathos to the account; the newlyweds are separated within days of their marriage, leaving his (as yet unnamed) wife alone to care for his parents in a strange house and bereft of companionship.

However, rather than focusing on the common image of the lonely wife pining in her boudoir or on the misadventures of Qiu Hu on the road, the story is solely focused on the scene of their reunion. Later writers were especially drawn to dramatizing the moment of the meeting between Qiu Hu and his wife, from its pastoral setting amidst the mulberry trees (itself a common stage for this kind of encounter, as we shall see below),

to their awkward interactions, punctuated by Qiu Hu's attempted infidelity (even if, due to the machinations of fate, he attempted it with his own wife), culminating with her rejection of his flirtation. Perhaps the most dramatic moment occurs soon after, when Qiu Hu reaches home and shares a moment of recognition with his wife, leading to her scorning his behavior. Note, however, that her criticisms are predominately predicated on his failures as a son over those of a husband. She first attacks his lack of filial piety; the fact that he stopped to proposition a strange woman is secondary to the fact that he tarried at all in the first place. His duty, as she states, was to return at once to pay his respects to his parents. His second failing was offering to spend his gold on her, money which could have been put to better use supporting his family. His failure to do so was tantamount to "forgetting his mother" (*wang mu* 忘母), a lapse of character that, combined with his lasciviousness was a clear sign of his "corrupt conduct" (*wuxing* 污行). Such corruption, as the logical progression goes, is unrighteous (*buyi* 不義), violating the expected norms which govern social relationships according to established texts such as the *The Analects* (*Lunyu*) and *Mencius* and which were articulated through the Five Relationships (*wulun* 五倫).[63]

One can see the traditional equivalence between the state and the family at play in Qiu Hu's wife's words. From his unfilial behavior she judges that, unable to correctly serve his parents, he will fail to be loyal to his superiors; being unrighteous to his family, he will be unable to manage the affairs of office. These issues must then extend to the

[63] These are comprised of ruler and minister, elder and younger brother, father and son, husband and wife, and friends.

failure of their union and to his eventual rejection of her and subsequent remarriage. Faced with such a proposition, she finally states: "I cannot bear to see you remarry; and I too will not marry again" (*qie yi bu qu* 妾亦不嫁). Confronted with an impossible moral quandary, she leaves home and throws herself into a river to drown.

The *Lienü zhuan* account ends with the compiler—in the guise of the Gentleman (*junzi* 君子)—pronouncing his judgment on the tale. In this case, the judgment contains two portions: a critique of the failings of Qiu Hu and praise for the moral rectitude of his wife. The first judgment reads:

> The noble man says: "The chaste woman is finely discriminating when it comes to goodness. There is no greater violation of filial piety than not loving one's parents and loving someone else instead: Qiu Hu is guilty of that."[64]
>
> 君子曰：「潔婦精於善。夫不孝莫大於不愛其親而愛其人， 秋胡子有之矣。」

Echoing his wife's words, the judgment clarifies that it is Qiu Hu's lack of filial piety that is ultimately responsible for his failings as a husband and son, as well as his wife's ultimate suicide. Criticism of his actions does not include his attempted extra-marital affair, as indeed, there were no prescriptions on male monogamy in a China in which polygamy was commonplace. Instead, he is critiqued for stopping to speak to another woman because his actions 1) delayed his arrival back home, demonstrating his lack of propriety in paying immediate respect to his parents, and 2) acting as a wastrel, offering to spend money that belonged to the family and could support his mother (and wife) on

[64] Kinney, *Exemplary Women of Early China*, 157.

frivolous pursuits. Contrast this judgment with the second half, which praises the behavior of Qiu Hu's wife. It states:

> The noble man says, "Seeing goodness and fearful of not reaching it; seeing the negation of goodness and being vigilant as if touching boiling water." This refers to Qiu Hu's wife. The *Classic of Poetry* says, "Because he has a perverse heart, / He is singled out for censure." This is what is here meant.[65]
>
> 君子曰：「見善如不及，見不善如探湯。 秋胡子婦之謂也。」詩云：「惟是褊心，是以為刺。」此之謂也。

Here Qiu Hu's wife's behavior is equated with a well-known passage from *Analects* 16:11, in which Confucius is lecturing on the proper behavior for the ideal social paragon—the *junzi*.[66] Her husband, on the other hand is compared to a line from a poem from the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of Poetry), "Fiber Sandals" (*Ge ju* 葛屨, Mao 107). The poem is traditionally read as a rebuke of the ill-mannered, who are criticized (*ci* 刺) through the description (and implicit comparison with) the well-bred couple in the poem. The poem reads:

糾糾葛屨，	Twisted are the kudzu sandals,
可以履霜。	with them one can walk on the hoarfrost.
摻摻女手，	Delicate are the hands of the woman,
可以縫裳。	they can sew skirt and skirt-waist.

[65] Modified from ibid.

[66] The *Analects* passage reads in full: "Seeing goodness, and striving for it urgently, as if never able catch up; seeing badness, and recoiling as if scalded by hot water'—I have seen such people, and have heard such words." "'Dwelling in seclusion in order to pursue one's aspirations, practicing right- ness in order to realize the Way'—I have heard such words, but have yet to see such a person." 孔子曰：見善如不及，見不善如探湯。吾見其人矣，吾聞其語矣。隱居以求其志，行義以達其道。吾聞其語矣，未見其人也. See Edward Slingerland, *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Cambridge: Hackett, 2003), 196. For the Chinese original, see Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 ed., *Lunyu xiangzhu* 論語詳註 (The Analects with Comprehensive Commentary) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 177.

要之襞之	They make a jacket collar;
好人服之。	the handsome man wears them.
好人提提，	The handsome man is tranquil,
宛然左辟，	courteously he stands to the left.
佩其象揥。	In his girdle he carries his ivory comb-pin;
維是褊心，	to those mean fellows.
是以為刺。	he constitutes a rebuke.[67]

One can read Liu Xiang's application of these lines to Qiu Hu in an ironical fashion rather than a comparative one. For example, much like the unnamed exemplar in the *Shijing* poem, Qiu Hu possesses a model wife who cares for the household and its occupants. Yet here he is the weak moral link and stands in as the object of satire and criticism, rather than as the tranquil gentleman portrayed in the poem.

The *Lienü zhuan* entry ends with a poetic encomium (*song* 頌) that summarizes the account in full. It reads:

秋胡西仕，	Qiu Hu went west to take up official post;
五年乃歸。	Five years later he returned.
遇妻不識，	Upon meeting a married woman he did not know,
心有淫思。	His heart was filled with lustful thoughts.
妻執無二，	The wife upheld her belief that she should cleave to no other,
歸而相知。	But upon returning, she recognized him.
恥夫無義，	Ashamed that her husband was unrighteous,
遂東赴河。	She fled east and cast herself into a river.[68]

[67] Translation based on Bernard Karlgren, *The Book of Odes* (Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950), 69. For the Chinese original, see Li Jiasheng 李家聲, *Shijing quanyi quanping* 詩經全譯全評 (Classic of Poetry with Complete Interpretations and Commentary) (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2002), 177–78.

[68] Adapted from Kinney's translation, see *Exemplary Women in Early China*, 157–158.

Here the two critiques against Qiu Hu are, again, his unrighteous (*wuyi* 無義) behavior as well as his lustful or lascivious thoughts (*yinsi* 淫思) rather than a specific reference to filial piety. This distinction is not surprising, because, as Kinney notes, many of the tales within the *Lienü zhuan* in which women criticize men require a delicate balancing of roles. Much as in the same way in which officials instruct their lords, or sons their fathers, women were relegated to a subservient position and required to navigate complex webs of social hierarchy and gender politics in order to challenge traditional power dynamics. As a result, such women had to offer provisional solutions to a pressing issue. She states:

> A filial wife, however, may criticize her husband's political acts, but she will never completely assume his authority. The filial wife thus does not offer political advice to replace her husband any more than the filial son attempts to replace his father. Both must step back to their original roles after offering their critique, though the son steps aside only until his father dies.[69]

For Qiu Hu's wife there was no way to return to her original social role or to offer a provisional solution to the pressing problem of her husband's lack of filiality and integrity. Bereft of a solution, there was no chance to return to a status quo or to mediate an outcome that allowed her both to maintain her integrity and uphold her chastity. The result, according to the gendered calculus of the time, was pre-emptive suicide.

[69] Kinney, *Exemplary Women in Early China*, 32.

1. Illustration with text from *Xinkan Gu Lienü zhuan*. Facsimile of the 1825 edition.

THE *XIJING ZAJI* EDITION

Aside from the *Lienü zhuan*, the tale is also recorded in the *Xijing zaji*, often ascribed to the Han bibliophile and polymath Liu Xin 劉歆.[70] The son of Liu Xiang, Liu Xin no doubt had access to many of the same sources and materials as his prolific father, though his authorship of the *Miscellaneous Records* is anything but certain.[71] The collection of 132 anecdotes is very diverse in content and includes descriptions of plants, animals, imperial buildings, as well as gossipy accounts of the palace and its occupants. A short anecdote in *juan* 7 discusses the two versions of the Qiu Hu tale, one contemporary and one familiar from the *Lienü zhuan* entry. The first part of the passage presents the contemporary events, and reads:

> Qiu Hu of Duling was very knowledgeable in the *Book of Shang* and skilled at writing old seal script. Zhai Gong paid him reverence, desiring that he take [Zhai's] older brother's daughter in marriage.[72] Some said: "Qiu Hu has already taken a wife and is deficient in the rites; his wife thereupon drowned herself so that he could not marry [again]."[73]
>
> 杜陵秋胡者, 能通《尚書》，善為古隸字，為翟公所礼，欲以兄女妻之。或曰：" 秋胡已經娶而失礼，妻遂溺死，不可妻也。"

[70] For the *Xijing zaji*, see chapter five of Wang Genlin's 王根林, *Han Wei Liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan* 漢魏六朝筆記小說大觀 (*A Great Compendium of Brush Writings and Fiction of the Han, Wei, and Six Dynasties*), (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 73–118.

[71] Authorship of the collection is highly contested, with potential authors including the aforementioned Liu Xin, Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–363), Xiao Ben 蕭賁 (d. 549), and Wu Jun 吳均 (469–520). For an overview of these issues, see David Knechtges and Taiping Chang eds., *Ancient and Medieval Chinese Literature Vol. 3–4*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1648–1655.

[72] Located outside of modern-day Xi'an, in Shaanxi province.

[73] See *Han Wei Liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan*, 118.

The only similarities between this account and the more popular Qiu Hu tale lay in the shared names of the men involved, as well as the implied threat of remarriage and resulting suicide. This Qiu Hu, a native of the capital region, attracted the attention of the well-known Han dynasty official Zhai Gong 翟公 (mid 2nd c. BCE) due to his knowledge of the classics. Zhai Gong's name later became a byword for the fickleness of friendship and its ties to wealth and power due to an anecdote collected in the *Shiji* and later *Hanshu*.[74] According to these accounts Zhai Gong held the position of Commandant of Justice (*tingwei* 廷尉), one of the Nine Ministers (*jiuqing* 九卿) under Emperor Wendi (r. 180–157 BCE). During this period his residence was popular with visitors and well-wishers who wished to gain his patronage. Later, when he was dismissed the flow of courtiers was reduced to a trickle, before becoming a flood once more upon his reinstatement.

A connection to the prestigious Zhai family would represent a significant boon for Qiu Hu, who, though his family background isn't presented, doubtless arose from a less powerful clan. Zhai's plan to marry the scholar into his extended family is hamstrung, however, by the fact that he is already married. While we are not shown Qiu's response to the offer (or told whether it was ever formally made), the use of "someone" (*huo* 或) suggests that Zhai's intention was well-known and that gossip had found its way to Qiu Hu's current wife, who, slandered by the news and angry at Qiu's potential infidelity, drowned herself so as to avoid the shame of being forced to divorce and potentially remarry. The similarities between the events of this account and those of the circulating

[74] *Shiji*, 120.1443 and *Hanshu*, 19.331 and 50.1100 respectively.

tale of Qiu Hu may have led to their conflation. Perhaps aware of this potential for confusion, the author goes on to state that the "contemporary Qiu Hu is not the Qiu Hu of old" (*jin zhi Qiu Hu fei xi zhi Qiu Hu ye* 今之秋胡非昔之秋胡也). The entire anecdote reads:

> Chi Xiang said: "Once there was a Qiu Hu of Lu who, after three months of marriage, served as an itinerant official for three years.[75] When he was granted leave and was returning home, his wife was out in the wilds picking mulberries. When he reached her he did not recognize her, yet pleased by her [appearance], he offered her one *yi* of gold.[76] She said: "I have a husband who is an itinerant official and has not returned; in the depths of my boudoir I have dwelled alone. Yet in these three years I have never been disgraced more so than today." She picked [the mulberries] without paying him notice. Qiu Hu was ashamed and departed. When he reached home, he asked his household where his wife was. They said: "She walked to the wilds to pick mulberries and has yet to return." Upon her return, [he discovered] that his wife was the woman he had (attempted to) beguile.[77] Both husband and wife were ashamed. His wife went to the Yi River and drowned herself.[78] This contemporary Qiu Hu is not the Qiu Hu of old.[79]
>
> 馳象曰："昔魯人秋胡，娶妻三月而遊宦三年，休，還家，其婦採桑於郊，胡至郊而不識其妻也，見而悅之，乃遺黃金一鎰。妻曰：'妾有夫，遊宦不返，幽閨獨處，三年於茲，未有被辱如今日也。' 採不顧。胡慚而退，至家，問家人妻何在，曰：'行採桑於郊，未返。'既還，乃向所挑之婦也。夫妻並慚。妻赴沂水而死。今之秋胡，非昔之秋胡也。

[75] No details are available on Chi Xiang. It is possible that his name appears in the original source that Liu Xiang drew upon for the *Lienü zhuan* entry for the Qiu Hu story.

[76] An ancient measurement equivalent to 20 or 24 *liang* ("ounces")

[77] Reading *tiao* 挑 as *tiao* 誂 ("to seduce" or "beguile.")

[78] The Yi River flows through Linyi 臨沂 in modern-day Shandong province.

[79] See *Han Wei Liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan*, 118.

The remaining account is largely similar to the *Lienü zhuan* account, suggesting that they derive from the same source. Certain details do diverge, however, such as the amount of gold he offers his wife, the specific site of her death (near Linyi in modern-day Shandong), the length of their cohabitation and separation, and lack of mention of filial concerns. This final fact is of special significance, as the issue of chastity is brushed aside in the *Lienü zhuan* entry in lieu of matters of filial piety, a far easier criticism for his wife to make as it 1) allows her to borrow authority from established social hierarchy to criticize her husband (trading on the revered status of parents vis-à-vis children), and 2) avoid personal expressions of emotion or shame entirely, situating her primary complaint as a failing of his loyalty to his parents—a significant legal matter—rather than as a personal grudge. The *Xijing zaji* account eschews this more nuanced approach for a simpler expression of matrimonial resentment. Qiu Hu wronged her through his actions, shamed her before her family and community, and as a result she regains her honor and integrity through exercising her agency to end her life.

GENDERED POETICS IN THE MULBERRY GROVE

As a result of their association with female work and proximity to the raised paths that afforded travel throughout the countryside, mulberry groves had long served as sites of poetic imagination for impromptu encounters between men and women. As women had long been the primary participants in sericulture, poeticized themes of women, mulberries, and the silkworm trade date back to the earliest recorded poetic collection in Chinese history, the *Classic of Poetry*. Such poems are often characterized as field songs,

popular tunes sung by female laborers while they plucked mulberry leaves to feed to the silkworms under their care. The ode "Xi sang" 隰桑 (Mulberry on the Lowland, Mao 228) is representative of this romantic oeuvre. A verse reads:

隰桑有阿，	The mulberry trees of the lowlands,
其葉有難。	Their leaves are ample.
既見君子，	When I have seen my Lord,
其樂如何。	How should I not be happy?[80]

The opening affective image (*xing* 興) of the mulberry is matched here with the figure of the husband. The ample foliage of the trees in the verse represents the prosperity of the couple and the happiness of their marriage. Separated by their labor, she gives voice to her anticipation of reuniting with her husband. In this fashion, while the mulberry grove served as a feminized space, it was also one pregnant with the possibility of reunion, whether between husband and wife or separated lovers. It was also a site of potential danger as a result, as an anecdote preserved in the *Shuo yuan* 說苑 (Garden of Persuasions) compiled by Liu Xiang makes plain. In the account, an officer named Gong Lu 公盧 remonstrates with Zhao Jianzi 趙簡子 (Zhao Yang 趙鞅 d. 475 BCE) by means of a joke as the latter was plotting to attack Qi. He says:

> At the time for plucking the mulberries, a neighboring family, husband and wife were together in the fields. [The husband] saw a woman among the mulberry trees and pursued her, but he did not catch her, so he returned. His wife was furious with him and sent him away. I laugh at his desolation.[81]

[80] Translation adapted from Karlgren, *The Book of Odes*, 180–181.

[81] Liu Xiang, *Shuo yuan jinzhu jinyi* 說苑今註今譯 (Garden of Persuasions with Modern Commentary and Interpretation), comm. by Lu Yuanjun 盧元駿 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1977), 9.292. For an

當桑之時，臣鄰家夫與妻俱之田，見桑中女，因往追之，不能得，還反，其妻怒而去之，臣笑其曠也。

Zhao responded ruefully, "If now I attack a state I will lose a state, this is my desolation" (*jin wu fa guo shi guo, shi wu kuang ye* 今吾伐國失國，是吾曠也). Convinced, Zhao calls off the attack. The joke works a pun, as *kuang* bears the double meaning of "barren land" (and by extension desolation) as well as "unmarried" (such as in *kuangfu* 曠夫, e.g. a man who cannot find a wife). Gong Lu's persuasiveness aside, though his anecdote is presented as humorous (and is thus subject to the whims of exaggeration), its setting and events suggest that such encounters were not uncommon. Much like the Qiu Hu tale, Gong's jest raises the possibility of such unsanctioned and unprovoked encounters between men and women.

For poets then, this otherwise quotidian agricultural activity became a source of salacious possibilities. The mulberry grove provided them a concealed venue that not only served as a shady place to relax or indulge in a romantic interlude (ostensibly away from the prying eyes of household members), but also formed a liminal space between the confines of the inner chambers and the outside world. However, this conception of subsistence farming was no doubt heavily inspired by elite perceptions of the lives of the poor and ignored the fact that the vast majority of women in lower class households no doubt spent their days in the fields or among the groves (and were thus well outside the

overview of the text, see David Knechtges, "Shuo yuan 說苑" in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. by Michael Loewe (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993), 443–446. Though the title of this work is commonly rendered as *Shuo yuan*, it can also be written as *shui* 說 ("to persuade").

imagined confines of the home). Such elite depictions of women's lives relegated their subjects to the boudoir and isolated them from the larger world in a fashion impossible for such a communal and labor-intensive agricultural society. Survival necessitated productive members of the household and women's work in the fields or at the loom represented an important source of income. In the process, however, women risked being exposed to the eyes of strange men, neighbors and travelers alike, affording opportunities for romance or tragedy.

Given this tenson between the elite demand for reclusion and the pragmatic realities afforded by subsistence farming, the mulberry grove provided fecund soil for poets eager to explore the interactions between otherwise publicly segregated men and women. Among the most popular products of this creative crop where "music bureau" (*yuefu*) poems associated with the ballad tune "Mulberry on the Lane" ("Mo shang sang" 陌上桑). Examples of these "ancient-style *yuefu*" (*gu yuefu shi* 古樂府詩) are preserved in both the *New Songs from the Jade Terrace* as well as the *History of the Song* (*Song shu* 宋書) compiled by Shen Yue 沈約 between 492–493.[82] Such pieces commonly depict a long-suffering wife toiling in the mulberry grove and often focus on her grief at being separated from her husband and were imitated by diverse poets such as Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232), Li Bai 李白 (701–762) and Lu Guimeng 陸龜蒙 (d. 881).[83]

[82] For a discussion of the formative impact of these *yuefu* on later Chinese poetry see Anne Birrell, "Mythmaking and Yüeh-fu: Popular Songs and Ballads in Early China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Vol. 109, No. 2 (Apr. – Jun., 1989): 223–235, as well as Hans Frankel's essay, "Yüeh-fu Poetry," in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, ed. Cyril Birch, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, 69–107.

[83] Later variants also went by the title of "plucking mulberries" (*cai sang* 採桑) and include works by Wu Jun 吳均 (469-520)), Liu Miao 劉邈 (fl. 3rd century), Bao Zhao 鮑照 (ca. 414-466), Liu Xiyi 劉希夷 (ca. 651–ca. 680), Li Yanyuan 李彥遠 (fl. 790–815), and Wang Jian 王建 (767–830) among others. See Guo

The prototypical example of the "Moshang sang" tune, the ballad of Qin Luofu 秦羅敷, was popular enough to be part of any poet's repertoire by the Tang, and describes an encounter between a young beauty and the haughty lord who makes an advance towards her.[84] Luofu, much as Qiu Hu's wife, castigates the lord, reminding him that he already has a wife just as she has a husband. She then boasts of her husband's many fine qualities, driving off her pursuer in the process. Even apart from the shared setting of the mulberry grove, the similarities between the Luofu ballad and the Qiu Hu tale are immediately apparent: both involve young married women, who, through no fault of their own attract the attention of well-to-do suitors. Both men attempt to woo the young women with promises of wealth before being rebuffed and shamed by their intended conquests. These parallels did not go unremarked upon by writers up through the Tang. A number of prominent poets, including Wang Yun 王筠 (481–549), Liu Xiyi 劉希夷 (ca. 651–ca.680)—and even the aforementioned Li Bai—composed versions of the "Moshang sang" tune in which they drew direct parallels between the figures of Qiu Hu and Qin

Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041–1099), *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (Anthology of Music Bureau Poems), Vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 414–416.

[84] Allen suggests that the origins of the work may extend as far back as the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 141–187 BCE). It was included within both the early-Tang encyclopedia, the *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (*Collection of Literature Arranged by Categories*) compiled by Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641) as well as the educational primer *Fundamentals of Learning* (*Chuxue ji* 初學記) by Xu Jian 徐堅 (659–729). For details and discussion of other appearance of the tune, see Allen, "From Saint to Singing Girl," 324–333. Also see Yu Guangying 余冠英, *Han wei liuchao shixuan* 漢魏六朝詩選 (Selected Poems of from Han, Wei, and the Six Dynasties) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1961), 32–34 as well as his *Yuefu shixuan* 樂府詩選 (Selected Music Bureau Poems) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1954), 13–16. Also see Xiao Difei 蕭滌非, *Han Wei liuchao yuefu wenxue shi* 漢魏六朝文學史 (History of Literature of Han, Wei, and Six Dynasties Period) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984), 87–90. English translations are available in Frankel, "Yüeh-fu Poetry," 79-81, Allen "From Saint to Singing Girl," 354–356, and Arthur Waley under the title of "The Song of Lo-fu" in his *Chinese Poems, Selected from 170 Chinese Poems, More Translations from the Chinese, the Temple and the Book of Song* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946), 65–67.

Luofu.[85] The similarities between the two traditions are so striking that Yu Guanying argues that "the Luofu story appears to have developed from the Qiu Hu tale."[86] Whether that is the case or not, the two traditions clearly become intertwined over time.[87] The ballad, much like the Qiu Hu tale itself, is very early, possibly dating back to the Western Han, though Frankel suggests that the five-character line structure (among other internal evidence) of the "Moshang sang" ballad of Luofu is more suggestive of a late-Han provenance.[88] It reads:

日出東南隅，	From the southeastern corner emerges the sun[89]
照我秦氏樓。	To shine on our Qin family lofts;
秦氏有好女，	The Qin family has a fine daughter,
自名為羅敷。	Who names herself, "Luofu."
羅敷喜蠶桑，	Luofu delights in silkworm and mulberry,
采桑城南隅。	Plucking the mulberries at the wall's south corner.
青絲為籠係，	Azure threads serve for her basket ties,
桂枝為籠鉤。	And cinnamon branches for her basket and plucking hook.
頭上倭墮髻，	Down to her forehead droops her small chignon,
耳中明月珠。	And in her ears are moon bright pearls;
緗綺為下裙，	Cream-colored silk makes her skirt below,
紫綺為上襦。	Purple chiffon her short jacket above;
行者見羅敷，	Travelers, seeing Luofu,
下擔捋鬚須。	Drop their carrying poles to stroke their beards,
少年見羅敷，	Young men, seeing Luofu,

[85] For these three works (as well as many others based on the same theme), see Guo, *Yuefu shiji*, Vol. 1, 410–417. For works set to the "Luo Fu xing" tune, see 418. For additional analysis as well as full translations of each poem, see Allen "From Saint to Singing Girl," 354–356.

[86] See Yu Guanying, *Yuefu shixuan* 樂府詩選 (Selected Music Bureau Poems) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1954), 16.

[87] For examples, see Gao Guofan, 高國藩. "Dunhuang ben Qiu Hu gushi yan" 敦煌本秋胡故事研 (Study of the Dunhuang Edition of the Qiu Hu Tale). *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 (Dunhuang Studies) Issue 1 (1986): 88–89.

[88] See Frankel, "Yüeh-fu Poetry, 81.

[89] The shape of the earth was traditionally conceived of as a perfect square.

脫帽著帩頭。 Take off their hats and adjust bandanas covering their heads.
耕者忘其犂， Those who till lose all thought of their plows,
鋤者忘其鋤。 Those who hoe forget about their hoes.
來歸相怒怨， Coming back, they meet anger and resentment
但坐觀羅敷。 Just because they sat and closely watched Luofu.

使君從南來， A Prefect came from the south,
五馬立峙躇。 His five horses immediately stop and hesitate.
使君遣吏往， The Prefect sends a man to her
問是誰家姝？ Who asks, “What family is this beauty from?”
秦氏有好女， “The Qin family has a fine daughter[90]
自名為羅敷。 Who calls herself Luofu”
羅敷年幾何？ “How old is Luofu?”
二十尚不足， “Still not enough for twenty
十五頗有餘。 But somewhat more than fifteen.”
使君謝羅敷， The Prefect inquires of Luofu,
寧可共載不？ Would she ride with him?
羅敷前置詞， Luofu advances and finds her words:
使君一何愚！ “How foolish is this Prefect?
使君自有婦， The Prefect, himself, has a wife

羅敷自有夫。 And Luofu herself has a husband.
東方千餘騎， In the East, among over a thousand horsemen
夫壻居上頭。 My husband holds the top position.
何用識夫壻？ How can you recognize my husband?
白馬從驪駒。 A white horse follows a black colt.
青絲繫馬尾， Azure silk threads bind the horse’s tail,
黃金絡馬頭。 Yellow gold halters the horse’s head.
腰中鹿盧劍， At his waist lay an ornate sword[91]
可直千萬餘。 Its value worth more than a million.
十五府小史， At fifteen he was a county clerk,
二十朝大夫， At twenty, a provincial court councilor,
三十侍中郎， At thirty, a palace attendant,
四十專城居。 And at forty a governor.
為人潔白晳， His complexion is pure and white,

[90] That is to say “good,” both in terms of her ethical and physical beauty.

[91] *Lulu jian* 鹿盧劍 refers to a sword whose hilt is bound with silk thread that is wound so as to be similar in appearance to a pulley (*lulu*) that was set atop wells to draw water. Such swords were synonymous with authority and convey the power that Luofu’s husband wields.

鬑鬑頗有須。 His beard fine and light.
盈盈公府步， With deft bearing he paces his office,
冉冉府中趨。 With stately steps he moves within the residence.
坐中數千人， Seated among thousands of others there,
皆言夫婿殊。 They all say my husband is unique."[92]

The destabilizing force of female beauty is a central theme of the Luofu ballad. By her mere presence in the orchard, Luofu causes chaos throughout the community, making men forget their errands and neglect their work with a comedic description of slack-jaws gawking at her and earning the scorn of their wives. Her effect on them is not intentional, as she does not appear to provoke their interest; rather she is depicted as a loyal wife, immune from the advances of others.

The poem opens with the sun rising on the family home, an image suggestive of her radiance and beauty (as well, perhaps, the constant attention to which she is subject). Her clothing is flowery and festive, the bright colored silks and chiffons suggestive of a blossom amongst the greenery. Aside from the dyes and fabrics, her ears are festooned with "moon-bright pearls" suggesting that these are the clothes of a well-off woman, rather than those of a pauper. The azure (*qingsi*) thread that secures her basket is evocative of the darkness of her hair, which hangs down in a chignon and also echoes the ties that bind the tail of her husband's horse. The hook that she uses for pulling down the mulberry branches is made of cinnamon or osmanthus (*gui*), a fragrant wood that appears within the "Nine Songs" ("Jiu ge" 九歌) of the *Chuci* 楚辭 (Lyrics of Chu) in association with separation. In one, "Da siming" 大司命 (The Senior Master of Lifespans), a

[92] Translation based on both Allen "From Saint to Singing Girl," 325–326 and Frankel, "Yüeh-fu Poetry," 79–80.

distraught figure is plaiting a wreath of cinnamon in the hopes of bringing back their Lord, in another, "Xiang jun" 湘君 ("The Lady of the Xiang River"), the shaman in desperate search of the goddess uses a cinnamon-wood oar to paddle out into the current. In the same spirit, here Luofu performs her labor with cinnamon in hand, hoping for reunion with her own beloved.[93]

However, the unintended effect of her beauty, combined with the erotic potential of the mulberry grove leads to potential disaster in the approach of the southern lord who offers her gold. Just as in the case of the Qiu Hu tale, Luofu declines, this time through a boastful description of her husband's wealth and power. Where Qiu Hu's wife shamed him by invoking the yoke of filial piety (how dare he first approach her, rather than head directly home to check on his mother), Luofu mocks the figure of her would-be suitor by comparing him (unfavorably) with her husband. In the figure of her spouse the ballad paints an idealized portrait of a man: handsome, correct in manner, and possessing a lofty position. This aristocratic gentleman is matched with the feminine ideal in Luofu, a young (less than twenty the poem assures us), beautiful, and morally upright woman. In this, Luofu, like Qiu Hu's wife is an idealized representation of femininity. She is beautiful not simply because of what she wears or how she looks, but because of the ideals that she has inculcated, ideals that are demonstrated through her behavior. With integrity, both traditions appear to say, comes beauty; the challenge lay in how one

[93] For translations of both, see Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 157–158. For the Chinese originals, see Wang Siyuan 王泗原, *Chuci jiao shi* 楚辭校釋 (The Songs of Chu, Collated and Annotated) (Beijing: Renming jiaoyu chubanshe, 1980), 221–227.

responds to the inevitable attention that such beauty (both external and internal) attracts outside of the household.

Notably, the figure of Luofu appears within another early piece, "Kongque dongnan fei" 孔雀東南飛 (Southeast Fly the Peacocks).[94] The lengthy ballad (it remains the longest such work before the discoveries at Dunhuang) has been traditionally dated to the Jian'an period 建安 (196–220), though it may have been composed during the Six Dynasties instead.[95] The ballad tells the story of the minor prefectural clerk, Jiao Zhongqing 焦仲卿, and his bride Liu Lanzhi 劉蘭芝. Though deeply in love with one another, Liu is sent away by her overbearing mother-in-law, who demands her son remarry. She returns home to her parents, and soon after is pressured by them to marry the son of a district magistrate. When Jiao Zhongqing learns of her upcoming wedding, he is distraught, and goes to see her. She vows never to remarry, but rather to wait for him in the Yellow Springs. He agrees and the two return home to commit suicide; he by hanging, and she by throwing herself in a pool of water. While her suicide is reminiscent of the Qiu Hu tale, the poem also makes a direct reference to the figure of Qin Luofu. As Jiao's mother is disparaging Liu Lanzhi, she urges her son to remarry and find a more compliant wife. She suggests a replacement.

東家有賢女,	The family to the east has a virtuous daughter,
自名秦羅敷。	She calls herself Qin Luofu.
可憐體無比,	Lovely is her form, without peer.

[94] The work is also known as "Jiao Zhongqing qi" 焦仲卿妻 (The Wife of Jiao Zhongqing).

[95] For an in-depth examination of the ballad, discussion of problems of dating, as well as a translation, see Hans Frankel, "The Chinese Ballad Southeast Fly the Peacocks,'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies,* Vol. 34 (1974): 248–271.

阿母為汝求。　　Mother will seek her for you.[96]

Here Luofu appears as shorthand for male desire, representing as she does the finest of inner (virtue) and outer (sexual desirability) qualities. Continuing the theme of faithfulness within the Qiu Hu tradition, however, both Jiao and Liu commit suicide rather than remarry. By incorporating Luofu, the ballad emphasizes the affection that Jiao feels through his rejection of the idealized wife celebrated in "Moshang sang" in lieu of Liu Lanzhi. He, unlike the southern lord or Qiu Hu is constant in his affections and unwilling to be swayed by a pretty face.

For those who are drawn to beauty no matter the cost, however, the reoccurring theme within both traditions is of male failure. In the tale of Qiu Hu, for example, a man is shamed and scorned by his wife (despite his status and wealth), a scene of humiliation that only grows more visceral and detailed within later adaptations. In that of "Moshang sang," every man within the ballad is subject to Luofu's charms, and all come off poorly as a result. The local men are reduced to buffoons, unable to even function in her presence, while the dashing figure of the southern lord is humiliated by her bold rejection of his offer, despite his wealth and finery. Both women demonstrate a strength of purpose and loyalty that punctures the male ego, leaving their would-be suitors helpless. Yet where Luofu's confidence in her husband is preserved (or exaggerated through braggadocio), that of Qiu Hu's wife is ultimately shown to be misplaced. The result in the latter case is death marking yet another failure of Qiu Hu, this time in the guise of her husband. Thus, in a sense, the account of Qiu Hu works to subvert the figure of the

[96] Translation provided by Frankel, "'The Chinese Ballad Southeast Fly the Peacocks,'" 250. For the original Chinese edition, see Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji*, 1034–37.

virtuous wife that is represented by ballads such as “Moshang sang” (or the latter, perhaps, serves as a response to the former). Luofu is Qiu Hu’s wife before her husband’s return, unburdened by betrayal and optimistic for the future.

BEAUTY UNYIELDING: TWO POEMS BY FU XUAN

The tale of Qiu Hu itself was adapted into verse by a number of poets during the period of disunion that followed the collapse of the Han Dynasty in 220. The earliest extant example are two poems by the Cao-Wei/Jin era poet Fu Xuan 傅玄 (styled 休奕) (217–278). A native of Yaozhou 耀州 (modern-day Shaanxi), Fu was a prolific writer of *yuefu*, which represent some eighty of his over one hundred surviving works (more than any other poet of his generation). He appears to have taken special interest in the female perspective in his poems, as several of his works lament the plight of women, such as his “Yu zhang xing ku xiang pian” 豫章行苦相篇 (Yuzhang xing: Bitter Fate) which opens with the memorable lines: “A bitter fate to be a woman/so low and base beyond repeating” (*kuxiang shen wei nü, beilou nan zai chen* 苦相身為女, 卑陋難再陳).[97] While it was not uncommon for poets to assume the voices of women, Fu showed a special facility for exploring topics of female suffering, injustice, and resentment. His adeptness at adapting old themes and exploring social issues in a poetic space “set the tone for

[97] See *Yiwen leiju*, 41.742. Fu also wrote a version of the Luofu ballad in his “Yange xing” 豔歌行. See Guo, *Yuefu shiji* 28:417–418. For an analysis of this *yuefu* versus the earlier “Moshang sang” ballad, see Allen, “From Saint to Singing Girl,” 327–333.

much of the subsequent history of *yüeh-fu*."[98] Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673–1769), in his *Gushi yuan* 古詩源 (Origins of Ancient Verse) praised Fu's *yuefu* over his *shi* yet noted that while his verse demonstrated brilliance at times, it was also plagued by constricted lines (*leiju* 累句).[99]

Surviving among his works are two of the earliest extant poetic treatments of the Qiu Hu story, works which serve as examples of the adaptation of popular folk traditions to the *yuefu* format.[100] The *yuefu*, both titled the "Ballad of Qiu Hu" ("Qiu Hu xing" 秋胡行) drew on the name of a popular ballad tune to retell the account from the *Lienü zhuan*.[101] The first poem ("Qiu Hu xing I" is preserved in *Yiwen leiju* compiled by Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 in 624. It reads:

秋胡子	Mr. Qiu Hu
娶婦三日， 會行仕宦。	Had taken his wife for but three days, When he had to leave on official duty.

[98] Robert Joe Cutter, "Poetry from 200 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.," in *Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. by Victor Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 260. For more on Fu Xuan, see Wang Huijie 王繪絜, *Fu Xuan jiqi shi wen yanjiu* 傅玄及其詩文研究 (The Prose and Poetry of Fu Xuan) (Taibei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1997) and Kong Xurong, "Fu Xuan's 傅玄 (217–278) Rhapsodies on Objects 詠物賦," PhD Dissertation (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2005).

[99] Shen Deqian, *Gushi yuan* 古詩源 (Origins of Ancient Verse) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chuban, 1977), 7.150

[100] See Xiao, *Han Wei liuchao yuefu wenxue shi*, 178.

[101] The popularity of the tune is evident by the number of famed writers active during the Three Kingdoms and Northern and Southern Dynasties periods (220–589 CE) that composed poems set to it, including Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), Ji Kang 嵇康 (223–262), Lu Ji 陸籍 (261–303), Xie Lingyun 謝凌雲 (385-433) Wang Rong 王融 (234–305), Xie Huilian 謝惠連 (407–433) and Xiao Lun 蕭綸 (507–551). Cao Cao's, Cao Pi's and Ji Kang's poems are unrelated to the Qiu Hu story and merely share the title of the ballad, while Lu Ji's and Xie Lingyun's are only a verse or two in length. As a result, most of these poems have no direct connection with the Qiu Hu tradition. For other poetic treatments of this ballad, see Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji*, 526–533.

既享顯爵，	Once he had enjoyed an illustrious rank,
保茲德音。	He then maintained his noble reputation.
以祿頤親，	By emolument he supported his parents,
韞此黃金。	Saving up *this* yellow gold.
睹一好婦，	He spied a fine woman,
採桑路傍。	Picking mulberry leaves beside the road.
遂下黃金，	He presented her with yellow gold,
誘以逢卿。	Enticing her with “meet the minister.”[102]
玉磨逾絜，	When jade is polished it is purer,
蘭動彌馨。	When thoroughworts move they are more fragrant.
源流潔清，	The spring flows pure and clear,
水無濁波。	Its water has no turbid waves,
奈何秋胡，	And what about Qiu Hu?
中道懷邪。	Wasn’t he smitten along the road!
美此節婦，	Lovely was this chaste woman,
高行峨峨。	Of moral character lofty and high,
哀哉可愍，	How sad, how pitiful!
自投長河。	That she threw herself into the long river.[103]

While the content of Fu Xuan’s poem follows the *Lienü zhuan* account, it does so solely from the perspective of Qiu Hu himself. His wife is reduced to a passive actor in the poem, bereft of agency and voice. The structure of the poem itself is sectional and somewhat modular, with the first three sections establishing Qiu Hu’s departure, acquisition of the gold, and his subsequent return. The next two verses provide images suggestive of her integrity: polished jade, the fragrance of thoroughwort (long symbolic

[102] “Meet the minister” here, is of course referring to Qiu Hu’s comment that “toiling among mulberry trees is not as good as meeting a minister of the state.”

[103] Translation adapted from Allen, “From Saint to Singing Girl,” 342.

of refined character), and the clear stream that reflects her purity (and, somewhat morbidly, presages her fate—suggesting a connection between her ardent integrity and her suicide). Rather than recording her words, then, Fu Xuan essentializes her character into natural objects and scenes, a process that, while it elevates her above the crude invitation of Qiu Hu, also robs her of any sympathetic human qualities. Instead, the poem provides her with a eulogy, celebrating her character and mourning her untimely death. Yet at no point does the poem paint the picture of a woman, merely an idealized conception of female virtues.

The depiction of Qiu Hu, on the other hand, seems somewhat sympathetic. He is celebrated in the first several sections of the poem, both for his attentiveness in supporting his parents as well as his fine reputation. Contrast this description with that of the earlier *Lienü zhuan* account, where he is termed "unrighteous" and "unfilial" (*buxiao* 不孝) within the judgement and encomium. This Qiu Hu, on the other hand, is "smitten" (*huai* 懷) by the beauty of the young woman beside the road, and appears a victim to timing and happenstance. Fu's first poem is not interested in teasing out complex matters of fidelity, filial piety, or loneliness. Indeed, it is unclear how much time has passed from his departure—note that their time together has been shortened from five to three days, no doubt to heighten the pathos of the account. Rather he is seemingly struck by the unluckiness of their encounter (truly a "Bitter Fate" indeed). Rather, like a tossed stone, the poem skips across surface of the tale, providing a brief outline before disappearing with her body into the depths. The rhetorical question "what about Qiu Hu?" (*naihe* 奈何) is immediately answered within the poem: he is a victim to his own desires.

While his first poem is a short summary of the events of the *Lienü zhuan* account, the second ("Qiu Hu xing II") is quite lengthy, comprised of ten couplets in five-character lines and summarizes the tale in its entirety. It is preserved in a Southern dynasty (420–589) collection of romantic verse, the *Yutai xinyong* 玉台新詠 (New Songs from the Jade Terrace), compiled by the official Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–583) while under the patronage of the Liang prince (and soon to be emperor) Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551).[104] This version too takes special care to focus on the moment of accidental meeting along the roadside, detailing in particular the appearance of Qiu Hu's wife through the eyes of her husband. The first four sections of the poem set up the narrative and describe the couple's separation:

秋胡納令室,	Qiu Hu had just taken in a worthy bride,
三日宦他鄉。	Three days later he was dispatched elsewhere.
皎皎潔婦姿,	Radiant was this pure woman's demeanor,
泠泠守空房。	Silently she kept the empty house.
燕婉不終夕,	Their bliss did not last a night.
別如參與商。	Separated like Orion and Scorpio,[105]
憂來猶四海,	Sadness came as vast as the four seas.
易感難可防。	Easy to feel and difficult to avoid.
人言生日短,	They say the days of a human life are short,
愁者苦夜長。	But melancholy makes the sad nights last forever.
百草揚春華,	The various plants raised their spring flowers,

[104] See Xu Ling, Wu Zhaoyi 吳兆宜 and Cheng Yan 程琰, *Yutai xinyong jianzhu* 玉台新詠箋注 (New Songs from the Jade Terrace with Notes and Commentary), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), 78–79.

[105] Shen and Shang are two of the twenty-eight lunar lodges. Shen is comprised of the seven stars of the Orion constellation and appears in the western region of the sky. Shang, also known as Xin 心 ("Heart") is located in Scorpio and is located in the eastern quadrant of the sky. Thus, like Orion and Scorpio, Qiu Hu and his wife are perpetually separated. Allen translates Scorpio as Lucifer (Venus), which, while it rises in the East, also traverses the sky through the course of the night. I leave it as Scorpio, to better represent its actual location.

攘腕採柔桑。　　With wrists bared she was picking tender mulberry leaves.

素手尋繁枝，　　With white hands she searched the tangled branches,
落葉不盈筐。　　The leaves shed did not fill her basket.[106]
羅衣翳玉體，　　A gauze blouse veiled her jade-white body.
回目流彩章。　　Turning her head, her eyes scintillated.[107]

Whereas the previous poem privileged the background and experiences of Qiu Hu, these verses appear more concerned with the dynamics of their separation and the emotional toll it exacted. The first couplet wastes no time in introducing the tale, while the second and third describe the newlyweds' suffering at their separation before transitioning into descriptions of Qiu Hu's wife amidst the mulberry leaves. Loneliness is the prevailing them of this first half of the poem, from how she "silently kept the empty house" (with *lingling* 泠泠 also implying the empty chill of his absence) to the astronomical images of Orion and Scorpio, two asterisms that appear in opposite quadrants of the sky (and never together), thus indicating their perpetual separation. While one could read the "melancholy nights" of couplet four as a description of both of their suffering, the immediate transition to her point of view suggests that it is she that is passing the nights in grief. The following image of greenery sprouting in Spring serves to contrast her own diminishing beauty with the passage of time.

The above scene, in Fu Xuan's imagining, is staged for romance. Spring blossoms are commonly associated with young women and love, signifying sexual availability and reproductive potential. The voyeuristic details of these verses serve to emphasize the

[106] In that the fallen leaves were too few to fill the basket, so she was picking them off of the tree.

[107] *Caizhang* 彩章 is difficult to render here as it refers to something brightly variegated or adorned. The image implies the shining brightness of her eyes as her gaze shifts.

beauty of her form and the sexual tension is heightened by the pathos in the preceding lines. Note how the poet's gaze moves across her body: a flash of wrists, a glimpse of white hands, and the mere shape of her body, concealed under thin gauze. This descriptive movement stops when it reaches her eyes, which shift to catch his (our?) gaze to complete the alluring portrait. Like Luofu, she charms without intention. The stage set, Qiu Hu enters the scene:

君子倦仕歸，	A gentleman, tired from duty, was returning home.
車馬如龍驤。	The horses of his carriage were like dragon steeds.
精誠馳萬里，	With true spirits they galloped ten thousand li.
既至兩相忘。	When he arrived the two had forgotten each other.
行人悅令顏，	The traveler was taken by her beautiful face,
請息此樹傍。	And took a rest beside those trees.
誘以逢郎喻，	He enticed her with the line about "meet the minister,"
遂下黃金裝。	Then presented her with yellow gold in wrapping.
烈烈貞女忿，	Fiercely the upright woman was angered,
言辭厲秋霜。	Her rebuke was as chilling as autumn frost.
長驅及居室，	Thus he rode on to his home,
奉金升北堂。	There he offered the gold in the north hall.[108]
母立呼婦來，	His mother immediately called in his wife;
歡情樂未央。	Their feelings of joy not yet realized.
秋胡見此婦，	When Qiu Hu saw she was *that* woman,
惕然懷探湯。	He quailed "as if embracing boiling water."
負心豈不慚，	"To betray me, how can you not be ashamed?
永誓非所望。	Eternal oaths were not to be hoped for.
清濁必異源，	The clear and turbid must flow in separate streams,
鳧鳳不並翔。	The duck and phoenix do not fly together."
引身赴長流	Thus she withdrew to the deep currents.
果哉潔婦腸。	So resolute was the chaste woman's heart.

[108] The "north hall" refers to the rear, innermost chambers occupied by the women of the household, in particular the mistress of the house. In this case, it refers specifically to Qiu Hu's mother.

彼夫既不淑，	That man completely unfaithful,
此婦亦太剛。	But this woman was also too unyielding. [109]

The second half of the poem recounts the couple's two reunions and marks the first appearance of the mother-in-law, who will go on to play a prominent role in both the *bianwen* and dramatic adaptation of the tale. The poet plays with identity in the fifth and sixth couplets, as Qiu Hu is referred to not by his name (as he is in the first and eighth couplets), but rather indirectly, as the "gentleman" (*junzi* 君子) or the traveler (*xingren* 行人). In doing so, Fu Xuan stages the romantic scene that he has created, distancing the would-be lothario from the Qiu Hu tale and casting him as the protagonist of any number of romantic ballads. This identity mirrors the way in which Qiu Hu views himself: the hero in his own romance who has just come across a worthy conquest. Thus, when his wife gives him a rebuke "as chilling as autumn frost," the effect is not just dispiriting, but also disorienting; suddenly his heroic demeanor and the descriptions of dragon-like steeds are deflated and diminished by her ferocious rejection. His attempt to treat her affection as a transaction—a reoccurring theme throughout the entire tradition, and one that speaks to popular notions of the economic value and objectification of women—has failed.

Driven off by her display of anger, he returns home to gift his mother with the gold that he tried to use to bribe the young woman's favors. When they come face-to-face once more, Qiu Hu quails, and Fu Xuan quotes *Analects* 16:11, referring back to the

[109] The translation of this poem was adapted from Allen, "From Saint to Singing Girl," 343–345. For the Chinese original see Xu, et. al., *Yutai xinyong jianzhu*, 78–79.

poetic judgment at the end of the *Lienü zhuan* entry, which compared his apprehension with one about to test boiling water with their hand. Rather than omitting their interaction entirely, as in the previous poem, Fu's longer work relishes the emotional turmoil of the scene, from Qiu Hu's shame at his actions being exposed, to the blistering response of his wife, who, for the first time, is granted a voice in the proceedings. However, rather than couch his failures in terms of filial piety (as in the *Lienü zhuan* account), here she takes them as personal affronts. He has betrayed her (*fuxin* 負心) and broken the oaths that they swore together. Once again Fu Xuan employs the metaphor of the clear stream to represent her integrity, but here it is matched with her husband's turbid, muddy equivalent. So too, she is compared with a phoenix and he with a duck. Refusing to diminish herself by staying with him, she casts herself in the river and dies.

Given the forcefulness of these comparisons, it is little wonder that Fu Xuan ends his poem by noting that, although Qiu Hu was guilty of poor conduct, her behavior was "too unyielding" (*taigang* 太鋼). While *gang* could be a quality celebrated in men, its opposite, "suppleness/softness" (*rou* 柔) was traditionally prized in women. Such criticisms were repeated later by other voices, such as the Tang historian Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721) who disparaged her as an "overbearing shrew (*qiangliang zhi hanfu* 強梁之悍婦).[110] The implication of inflexibility and wrongdoing on her part suggests Fu Xuan (and other critics) expected the male proclivity to promiscuity to be met with forgiveness

[110] See *Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋 (Complete Explications on the Generality of History) 23.90. Such criticisms were not uncommon. As Wai-Yee Li notes, the Ming playwright and prince Zhu Youdun 朱有燉 (1379–1439) also commented on the story, sympathizing with Qiu Hu and stating "that wife of his is simply too vicious" (*ta na laopo ye te hendu xie* 他那老婆也忒狠毒些). See Wai-Yee Li's introduction to "Qiu Hu Tries to Seduce His Wife," *The Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 300.

rather than confrontation—or, at the very least, without the threat of suicide. In sum, while her integrity is worth acknowledging in such poetic accounts, her rigid interpretation of morality and strict adherence to the dictates of righteousness (ultimately resulting in her death) are themselves a failing—not in men, who were traditionally celebrated for such displays of unyielding moral clarity—but for a woman who was expected to swallow her pride and accept her husband's flaws.

BROKEN STRINGS: YAN YANZHI'S "QIU HU XING"

A common theme in the general development of poems on the Qiu Hu story is a growing fascination with the subjective psychology of his wife, and, by extension, the emotional world of the inner chambers. While Fu Xuan's work was influential on the later tradition surrounding the tale, it paled in comparison to the popularity of a longer work composed by the Liu-Song literatus Yan Yanzhi (styled Yannian 延年). Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), in his biography of Yan in the *Songshu* 宋書 (History of the Song) praised the poet, stating that he was equally renowned as Xie Lingyun, and that "since the age of Pan Yue and Lu Ji, there have been none to compare with them" (*wenshi mo ji ye* 文士莫及也).[111]

[111] See Shen Yue *Songshu* 宋書 (History of the Song) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 73.1904. Both Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300) and Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) were renowned for their rhapsodies and their work was later collected in the *Wen xuan*. David Knechtges has translated a number of Pan's rhapsodies, see Knechtges, *Wen Xuan, Vol. 1*, 39–52, 153–164, and 181–236, and *Wen Xuan Vol. 3: Rhapsodies on Natural Phenomena, Birds and Animals, Aspirations and Feelings, Sorrowful Laments, Literature, Music, and Passion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 13–20, 145–158, 179–192, and 303–314. For Lu Jj, see 171–178 and 211–232 in the same volume. For studies on Yan Yanzhi, see Tina Marie Harding, "Echoes of the Past: Yan Yanzhi's 顏延之 (384–456) Lyric *Shi* 詩," PhD Dissertation (University of Colorado, Boulder, 2007), Huang Shuiyun 黃水雲, *Yan Yanzhi ji qi shiwen yanjiu* 顏延之及其詩文研究 (The Poetry and Prose of Yan Yanzhi) (Taibei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1989), and Chen Meizu 陳美足,

The *Wen xuan* clearly echoed this assessment, as it contains twenty-six pieces by Yan. Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (ca. 468–518), in his *Shipin* 詩品 (Grading of Poets), praised Yan for both the structure and compact arrangement of his works, yet also criticized him for his dense allusions and complex parallelisms which tended to constrict his writing. This led Zhong to accuse Yan's works of lacking sincerity and thus being deficient in their expression of emotion.[112]

Despite this criticism, Yan's "Qiu Hu xing" remains one of the poet's most celebrated works, leading Shen Deqian to praise it as one of his best works, calling it "pure and true, towering and uninhibited" (*qing zhen gao yi* 清真高逸).[113] This pentasyllabic work of ninety-lines is double the length of Fu Xuan's second poem. Yan's rendition of the "Ballad of Qiu Hu" ("Qiu Hu xing" 秋胡行) was collected in both the aforementioned *Yutai xinyong* as well as the *Wen xuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature), compiled by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531), where it is organized under the category of "Declamations on History" (*yongshi* 詠史).[114] Where Fu Xuan's poems were reserved in their description of Qiu Hu's wife outside of her beauty, vacillating between admiration for her integrity and criticism of her inflexibility, Yan's delights in the

---

Nanchao Yan Xie shi yanjiu 南朝顏謝詩研究 (Poetry of Yan Yanzhi and Xie Lingyun of the Southern Dynasties) (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1989).

[112] Zhang Rong, *Shipin jizhu* 詩品集注, ed. Cao Xu 曹旭 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 270.

[113] See Shen, *Gushi yuan*, 10.224 and 10.231.

[114] See *Yutai xinyong jianzhu*, 1999, 134–138. Also see Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), *Wen xuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature), Vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 1002–1006. One of his rhapsodies, "Zhe bai ma fu" 赭白馬賦 ("Rhapsody on the Russet and White Horse") is translated in Knechtges, *Wen Xuan*, Vol. 3, 64–75.

complex psychological motivations of her character and experiments in shifting perspectives between both husband and wife.

Aside from its length, the most immediately striking aspect of Yan's poem are its frequent allusions. As Tina Marie Harding notes, the work incorporates multiple references to both the *Shijing* and the *Chuci*. The former is especially prevalent in the poem: there are nine allusions to the "Guo feng" 國風 (Airs of the States) eight from the "Xiao ya" 小雅 (Lesser Elegantiae), and one each from the "Da ya" 大雅 (Greater Elegantiae) and "Song" (Hymns) alone.[115] These references are employed with "remarkable precision," providing a dense, second layer of signification in the work, whereas the allusions to the *Chuci* "serve to deepen the feeling [of] separation and loneliness within the poem."[116]

The ballad itself is divided into nine sections. The first details the couple's brief joy as newlyweds, the second and third Qiu Hu's departure and subsequent journey. The fourth describes his wife's loneliness in his absence and the fifth his return and reunion with her. In the sixth she spurns his offer and in the seventh he returns home where they meet once again. The climax of the poem, the eighth and ninth sections, present her plaint against him and end with her declaring her intention to commit suicide. The ballad is immediately distinct from Fu Xuan's work in its shifting perspectives. Rather than privileging Qiu Hu's voice, Yan Yanzhi gives ample attention to his wife as well. This grants the poem a greater emotional complexity as it shifts quickly back and forth from

[115] Harding, "Echoes of the Past," 80.

[116] Ibid.

the road-weary figure of Qiu Hu to the isolated form of his wife. In addition to playing with such perspectives, the poet also makes use of time and space to recreate the ever-growing distance between the lovers, creating in the process a remarkably realistic portrayal of a couple falling out of love—a perspective ignored by both Fu Xuan and the *Lienü zhuan* account. The entirety of the ballad is presented below:

秋胡行	"The Ballad of Qiu Hu"[117]
椅梧傾高鳳	Idesia and pawlonia incline toward the lofty phoenix,
寒谷待鳴律	Cold Valley awaits the sounding of the pipes.[118]
影響豈不懷	How can one not yearn for both sound and image,
自遠每相匹	From distant places they always find their mate.
婉彼幽閑女	Lovely was that delicate, retiring woman,
作嬪君子室	Who became lady in the Lord's house.
峻節貫秋霜	Her jutting integrity pierces through autumn frost,
明艷侔朝日	Her radiant gorgeousness is a match to the morning sun.
嘉運既我從	"Excellent fortune already follows us,
欣願自此畢	I happily hope that it will always be so.
燕居未及好	Happy newlyweds, our joy was curtailed,
良人顧有違	My good man thinks of "slowing his departure."
脫巾千里外	Yet must unwind his headscarf a thousand *li* away,
結綬登王畿	To tie the seal ribbon and ascend the royal domain.[119]
戒徒在昧旦	He warns his subordinates to come at break of dawn,

[117] The following translation is largely adapted from Harding with some reference to Anne Birrell. See Harding, "Echoes of the Past," 81–83 and Birrell (titled "A Pure Wife") in *Chinese Classical Literature: An Anthology of Translations Vol. 1: From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty*, John Minford & Joseph S.M. Lau, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 543-545.

[118] *Ming lü* 鳴律 refers to a story found in Liu Xiang's catalog *Bie lu* 別錄 (Separate Records) which contains an anecdote on the Warring States philosopher Zou Yan 鄒衍 (305–240 BCE) in which, finding himself in a barren valley in which no grains would grow, he played a pitch pipe (*chui lü* 吹律) and the warmth of his breath allowed the grain to sprout. *Lü* refer specifically to the six masculine pitches (*yang sheng* 陽聲) of the traditional Chinese system of twelve pitches.

[119] *Shou* 綬 "seal ribbons" were silk cords that affixed official seals or other marks of official office, often to ones belt. According to the *Lienü zhuan* account, Qiu Hu traveled from Lü to Chen to serve as an official. He would be entering the area around the royal capital in Chen and taking up his new position.

左右來相依	Left and right they come to attend at his side.
驅車出郊郭	Driving his chariot, he emerges into suburbs and faubourgs,
行路正威遲	The road he travels long and winding.
存為久離別	Existence becomes an eternal separation,
沒為長不歸	Death becomes an everlasting departure."[120]
嗟余怨行役	"Oh! How I detest drafted service!
三陟窮晨暮	My 'Three Ascents' extended from day till night.[121]
嚴駕越風寒	Preparing my chariot, I must rise past wind and chill,
解鞍犯霜露	Loosening my saddle, I must brave the frost and dew.
原隰多悲涼	Plains and wetlands increase my lonely misery,
迴飇卷高樹	As eddying winds curl the tall trees.
離獸起荒蹊	Fleeing animals are flushed from wild paths,
驚鳥縱橫去	Startled birds dart in every direction.
悲哉遊官子	Despondent indeed, is the wandering official,
勞此山川路	Who toils along these mountain and riverways."
超遙行人遠	"Ever more distant, the traveler is further away,
宛轉年運徂	Smoothly turning the passage of years goes on.
良時為此別	The best of times; by these circumstances we are parted,
日月方向除	Days and months will soon begin a new year.[122]
孰知寒暑積	Who knows how many seasons of hot or cold,
俛俛見榮枯	In a flash, I see their glory wither away.
歲暮臨空房	At year's end, I face the empty chamber,
涼風起座隅	As a chill wind lifts the corner of my mat.
寢興日已寒	Whether asleep or awake, the days have already turned cold,
白露生庭蕪	White dew appears on weeds choking the courtyard."

[120] *Chang bugui* 長不歸 (lit. nevermore return). Here *gui* 歸 (return) is a pun on *gui* 鬼 (ghost), e.g. he will become a ghost that will never return to her.

[121] *San zhi* 三陟 refers to three descriptions of ascent in Mao 3 of the *Shijing* ("Juan Er" 卷耳). They include ascending a "lofty peak" (*zhi bi cuiwei* 陟彼崔嵬), a "towering crag" (*zhi bi gaowang* 陟彼高罔) and ascending a "rocky hill" (*zhi bi qi yi* 陟彼砠矣). These trials came to be known as the "three ascents" (*sanzhi*) and represented arduous and dangerous journeys. See Li, *Shijing quanyi quanping*, 5–6. Metaphorically, these stages of his journey can also be extended to represent his career.

[122] Birrell translates this line as "Days and months are drawing closer to summer." However, the *locus classicus* of this line lay in one of the "Xiao ya" from the *Shijing*, "Xiao Ming" 小明, which describes a similarly arduous journey. It reads: "Formerly, when I set out/the sun and moon had renewed the year" (*xi wo wang yi ri yue fang chu* 昔我往矣日月方除). As the fall is turning to winter and the end of the year is approaching, I believe this reading makes much more sense. Ibid., 407-9.

勤役從歸願　“Diligent in my official travel, I can now follow my desire to return,
反路遵山河　The road back follows mountain and river.
昔辭秋未素　Long ago when I bid farewell, the autumn had not yet whitened,
今也歲載華　Yet now harvests year upon year have borne flowers.
蠶月觀時暇　During the silkworm month, I see a time a rest,
桑野多經過　The mulberry fields have all been worked over.
佳人從此務　A lovely girl attends to her task, [123]
窈窕援高柯　Fair and graceful, she draws the high branches down.
傾城誰不顧　A ‘city-toppler,’ who wouldn’t pay her attention?
弭節停中阿　I slow my pace, halting half-way up the ridge.”

年往誠思勞　Years passing, truly he was worn down by thinking of her.
事遠闊音形　Duties distant, he grew further from her voice and form.
雖為五載別　Though it was but a five-year separation,
相與昧平生　Each was ignorant of the other’s life.
捨車遵往路　He alights from his chariot and walks the traveled road,
鳧藻馳目成　Happy as a lark, he signals his intent.[124]
南金豈不重　“Southern gold, how could it not be valued?”; he says,
聊自意所輕　“Yet to me at the moment, it counts as little.
義心多苦調　A righteous heart often sings a bitter tune,
密比金玉聲　But I hear something close to the sound gold and jade.”

高節難久淹　Her lofty integrity was hard to drown,
揭來空復辭　At last, in vain, he takes his leave.
遲遲前塗盡　Slowly, stintingly, moving to his journey’s end,
依依造門基　Resistant, reluctant, he reaches the gate-post.
上堂拜嘉慶　He ascends the hall and offers his mother respectful greetings,[125]
入室問何之　Then entering the inner chamber, he inquires about his wife.
日暮行采歸　“At sunset she comes home from picking mulberries;”
物色桑榆時　The shapes and colors of mulberry and elm grow dim. [126]

[123] *Jiaren* 佳人 refers to either a man or woman of quality. It often describes a person of talent, physical beauty, or who possesses desirable connections.

[124] *Fuzao* 鳧藻 (“duck pondweed”) refers to a joyous and carefree attitude, similar to a mallard swimming among aquatic grasses. As English lacks a similar duck-themed simile, I chose one that maintains the bird imagery. *Mucheng* 目成 means to indicate that one is looking for a romantic partner.

[125] *Jiaqing* 嘉慶 (lit. “auspicious celebration”) refers to the return of a traveler after a long journey, and, in particular, to their ceremonial greeting of their parents after the trip.

[126] E.g. dusk. Sunset was associated with mulberries and elm, as an idiom from the Eastern Han history *Dongguan Han ji* 東觀漢記 (Annals of the Eastern Watchtower of the Han) attests. It states: “To lose at

美人望昏至	A beautiful girl arrives towards dusk,
慚歎前相持	Shocked and amazed, each held the other in their gaze.
有懷誰能已	Who could suppress the feelings of one's heart?
聊用申苦難	For a time, she could only express her pain and hardship.
離居殊年載	"We've lived apart for year after year,
一別阻河關	Once parted river and pass separated us.
春來無時豫	There was no occasion of joy at the advent of spring,
秋至恆早寒	There was always early cold by the autumnal equinox.
明發動愁心	The light of a new dawn moved my sorrowing heart,
閨中起長歎	In my room I rose with long sighs.
慘悽歲方晏	Sad and lonely as the year drew to a close,
日落遊子顏	And the sun set on my wanderer's face."
高張生絕弦	Tightening a zither produces broken strings,
聲急由調起	Causing anxious sounds to arise within the tune.
自昔枉光塵	"From long ago I humbled myself before you,[127]
結言固終始	And bound myself in covenant to assure what we started would last to the end,
如何久為別	Is it not you who made our parting so long?
百行譽諸己	And in whose activities the blame resides?
君子失明義	If a gentleman forsakes clear principles,
誰與偕沒齒	Who will be there to share the end of his life with him?
愧彼行露詩	Disgraced like the woman in the 'Dew-laden Path,'
甘之長川汜	I gladly go to drown myself in the long river."

The ballad opens with a pair of allusions that set the tone for the piece. The first, portraying a phoenix atop the idesia and pawlonia (*wutong* 梧桐) trees is drawn from "Juan a" 卷阿 (Mao 252), the relevant portion of which reads:

sunrise and gain at sunset" (*shi zhi dongyu shou zhi sangyu* 失之東隅，收之桑榆). See Wu Shuping 吳樹平, *Dongguan hanji* 東觀漢記 (Records of the Eastern Watchtower of the Han), Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1987, 314.

[127] "Radiant dust" (*guang chen*) is an honorific term that originally derived from the *Dao de jing* 道德經, which states that the Sage should "merge with the brilliant/become one with dust" (*he qi guang tong qi chen* 和其光同其塵). See Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 (1899–1972), *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋 (The Laozi with Commentary and Glosses) (Shanghai: Longmen lianhe shuju, 1958), 12.

鳳凰鳴矣,	A male and female phoenix sing,
於彼高岡。	Atop the lofty hill.
梧桐生矣,	Idesia and pawlownia grow there
於彼朝陽。	On the east-facing slope.
菶菶萋萋,	Lush and luxuriant they grow,
雝雝喈喈。	While in harmony their calls resound.[128]

In the *Shijing* poem the scene is celebratory, as both male and female phoenixes sing in harmony. In "Qiu Hu xing" only the female phoenix remains, the male is absent. This image is immediately matched with a reference to the philosopher Zou Yan, who played his pipes to warm the ground of a valley to help sprouts grow. Both allusions involve music (a theme which will return near the end of the poem—this time with the tightening of strings), in the first, harmony has been shattered by the absence of a mate, she is lonely and without a singing partner; in the second she likens herself to the chilled, barren land of the valley, longing for the warm breath of her lover to restore her to life. This first section also marks the first appearance of her voice, in which she celebrates their good fortune and, like all young couples, hopes that it will continue.

Of course, soon after Qiu Hu must make his journey, leading to the couple's separation. His hesitation in departing (*youwei* 有違) references "Gu Feng" 古風 (Mao 35), wherein a wife is sent away from her husband after he replaces her with another woman. It reads: "I travel the road lingeringly/In the core of my heart I am unwilling" (*xing dao chichi*, *zhongxin youwei* 行道遲遲, 中心有違).[129] Here the traditional reading is inverted, with the husband leaving the wife, though the core theme of betrayal and

[128] See Li, *Shijing quanyi quanping*, 522.

[129] See Karlgren, *The Book of Odes*, 22. For the original poem, see Li, *Shijing quanyi quanping*, 57–60.

infidelity presages what is to come. Note also that while Qiu Hu delays his departure out of affection for his wife, he also delays (*chichi* 遲遲) and slows (*yiyi* 依依) his return as he grows ever closer to home. The concerns of his previous life seem to have diminished in importance as a consequence of his experiences on the road.

Section three switches to Qiu Hu's perspective, following his arduous journey (itself, perhaps a metaphor for the slow ascent of his career). Note how, unlike the *Lienü zhuan* account, Qiu Hu never appears to arrive at his destination, instead his time away from home is spent in the untamed wild, surrounded by birds, beasts, and the dangers of the road. In section four, the perspective shifts back to his wife, a movement that follows the distancing of Qiu Hu from in space and time ("Ever more distant; the traveler is further away/smoothly turning the passage of years goes on"). From an optimistic figure seeking love in the first stanza, she is now a lonely shadow in her chamber, accompanied only by a chill autumn wind. By contrasting the viewpoints of its two central characters, Yan Yanzhi's ballad elegantly conveys their ever-growing distance—not only physically and temporally—but also in terms of their affections for one another. Thus, when Qiu Hu at last makes his return and spots his wife amidst the mulberry trees, he does not recognize her. Instead, his memories of her have worn him down, the constant repetition of recollection has left him unable (or unwilling?) to discern reality from fantasy as "he grew further from her voice and form" (*kuo yin xing* 闊音形). The poem emphasizes this point, declaring that though they had only been separated for five years, "each was ignorant of the other's life." Thus, disconnected and discombobulated, he makes his offer of gold to the young woman before him.

This scene, handled explicitly in Fu Xuan's longer poem, is described only from Qiu Hu's perspective here, essentially recording half of the conversation. After nonchalantly offering her the gold and affirming that it matters little to him (a boast that suggests his great wealth), he says: "A righteous heart often sings a bitter tune/But I hear something close to the sound gold and jade." The bitter tune is no doubt her rejection of his offer, yet he is so smitten by her that all he hears are the "sounds of gold and jade," that is, the musical tones of her voice. The next section opens with him admitting defeat, noting that the "her lofty integrity was hard to drown." Here *yan* 淹 (to drown or submerge) is cognate with *yan* 掩 (to cover or suppress). Not only does the image suggest his attempt to suppress her intentions, it also cleverly ties her integrity with her ultimate decision to commit suicide.

Qiu Hu's wife, for her part is portrayed sympathetically throughout the poem. She laments their interrupted "best of times" (*liangshi* 良時) (a reference perhaps to the honeymoon period after marriage) as well as the steady passing of seasons and the gradual dissipation of her youth. The shifting weather reflects her emotions as the romantic warmth of spring is gradually supplanted by the cold of autumn. When the couple once again come face to face, she is unable to contain herself any longer and gives voice to her emotions. Her outburst begins as grief, lamenting how her loneliness numbed her to the passage of the seasons. The section ends with contrasting images of husband and wife, he in motion and framed by the sun, she in stillness and shrouded by the darkness.

By the ninth section, the tenor of her outburst has shifted to righteous anger. This transition is marked by the image of zither strings tightened to the point of snapping. Li

Shan, in his commentary to the *Wen xuan* remarks that the tension of the strings is a metaphor for her integrity (perhaps because tightly wound strings also produce the purest and highest sound).[130] The anxious sounds that result, he suggests, are the words that arise from her deep resentment (*xing yu hen shen* 興於恨深).[131] While the display of female rage in Fu Xuan's poem led the poet to classify her as "too unyielding," the expression of blame in Yan's version is even more bitter. Qiu Hu's wife quickly traces her history with her husband, presenting herself as blameless, before castigating him for his behavior. "Is it not you who made our parting so long?", she accuses, reminding him that he is the one who left and extended their separation. She compares herself to the woman in "Xing lu" 行露 ("Dew-laden Path," Mao 17), which depicts a woman's refusal to marry a wealthy man despite his family pressuring her and attempting to force her to submit via lawsuit. The *Shijing* poem ends with her restating her refusal in no uncertain terms:

誰謂鼠無牙,	Who says that the rat has no teeth?
何以穿我墉。	By aid of what else could it break through my walls?
誰謂女無家,	Who can say that you do not have family?
何以速我訟。	By aid of what else could you urge me on a litigation?
雖速我訟,	But though you urge me on a litigation,
亦不女從。	I still will not follow you.[132]

[130] The image of broken zither strings could also refer to the death of one's soulmate, as in the tale of the famed zither player Boya 伯牙 who broke the strings of his zither upon the death of his friend, Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期. For an example of such usage, see Cao Pi's "Yu Wu Zhi shu" 與吳質書 (Letter to Wu Zhi), which makes reference to the story. See *Wen xuan*, Vol. 1, 42.1896.

[131] See Li, *Shijing quanshi quanping*, 26–27.

[132] Translation from Karlgren. *The Book of Odes*, 10.

With the much the same verve as the woman in "Xing lu," Qiu Hu's wife too rejects the expectations of a man, declaring their relationship forfeit due to his forsaking of the "clear principles" (*mingyi* 明義) that attend to their marriage. Her resentment vented; she is then free to take her own life.

THE GIRL FROM HANDAN: GAO SHI'S "QIU HU XING"

While Fu Xuan's adaptations of the Qiu Hu tale toyed with the expression of female emotion, and Yan Yanzhi's ballad experimented with shifting perspectives, resulting in a complex portrayal of her affective state, it was the Tang poet Gao Shi 高适 (704–765, styled Dafu 達夫) who first gave her voice full prominence in his own version of the Qiu Hu ballad. Gao, a native of Cangzhou 沧州 (modern-day Hebei province), was the grandson of Gao Kan 高侃 (fl. 650–672), a general under Emperor Gaozong. During his travels Gao became acquainted with Li Bai, Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), and Wang Changling 王昌齡 (698–756), among others. He was well-known for his frontier poetry and bold stylings. Hu Shi praised him as a courageous poet, one who was "able to employ his liberating poetic form to elevate the *yuefu* song lyrics of the day."[133] Sun Qinshan

[133] Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), *Baihua wenxue shi* 白話文學史 (History of Vernacular Literature) (Shanghai: Shanghai xinyue shudian, 1928), 192.

extolled his lyric poetry, claiming that it displayed "special clarity" and represented a "towering accomplishment."[134]

According to Liu Kaiyang, it was in 747, and at forty-two *sui*, that Gao composed his "Ballad of Qiu Hu" ("Qiu Hu xing") while on a trip to Rencheng 任城 county in southwestern Shandong.[135] The *Shandong tongzhi* 山東通志 (Comprehensive Records of Shandong) compiled by Du Zhao 杜詔 (1666–1736) records a Qiu Hu Temple atop a hill some fifty *li* south of Jiaxiang 嘉祥 County, directly to the west of Rencheng. The description notes that while the temple was referred to by Qiu Hu's name, it was dedicated to his wife, née Shao 邵, to whom sacrifices were made. While Du's compilation of the *Shandong tongzhi* took place some eight hundred years after Gao Shi's visit, it is possible that the area preserved a special association with the Qiu Hu tale, one that may have inspired Gao's composition of his poem.[136]

The work itself is comprised of eight stanzas in seven-character lines and is included in the *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩 (Complete Tang Verse).[137] Written entirely from the perspective of Qiu Hu's wife, the poem provides an intimate insight into her motivations and emotional state. Its structure is economical, tracing the couple's history in the first two stanzas, describing their meeting the grove in the third and fourth, her

---

[134] Sun Qinshan 孙钦善, *Gao Shi ji jiaozhu* 高适集校注 (The Collected Works of Gao Shi, Checked and Annotated) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1984), 12.

[135] Liu Kaiyang 劉開揚, *Gao Shi shij bian nianpu zhu* 高適詩集編年箋注 (Collected Poetry and Chronology of Gao Shi with Commentary and Notes) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 13.

[136] Ibid.

[137] See *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩 (Complete Tang Poems) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 213.2216.

return home in the fifth, and leaving the remaining three stanzas for their confrontation and her declaration of suicide. Eschewing the sweeping vistas of Yan Yanzhi's poem, Gao instead focuses on the orchard and home, the twin domains of female productivity. Qiu Hu's mother is absent in the poem, adding to the sense of isolation and the intimacy of their reunion. Overall, the work is evocative, not only of the emotions that it conjures, but also the voice of the woman it imitates. It reads in full:

妾本邯鄲未嫁時	Before marriage, I was a girl from Handan
容華倚翠人未知	Of my flowery face and halcyon brows, no one knew.[138]
一朝結髮從君子	One morning I tied up my hair to follow you,
將妾迢迢東路陲	Far, far away to the end of the eastern road.
時逢大道無難阻	The times were those of peace, without hardship or obstacle,
君方游宦從陳汝	Yet suddenly you went off to serve in Chen and Ru.
蕙樓獨臥頻度春	In orchid chambers alone I slept, often passing the Spring,
彩落辭君幾徂暑	My beauty faded, how many summers ago did I bid you farewell?
三月垂楊蠶未眠	In the third month, weeping willows, silkworms not yet resting,
攜籠結侶南陌邊	I carried my basket with companions along the southern path.
道逢行子不相識	I met a traveler on the way, I did not recognize him,
贈妾黃金買少年	He offered me yellow gold to purchase my youth.
妾家夫婿輕離久	My husband left me easily a long time ago,
寸心誓與長相守	In devotion I pledged to remain true forever.

[138] *Yicui* 倚翠 (lit. "inclining towards halcyon") is difficult to translate in English. *Cui* refers to the color of the pigment used to decorate women's brows, and the term later becomes part of the expression "*weihong yicui*" 偎紅倚翠 ("to cuddle with the red and incline towards halcyon") which implied becoming intimate with a woman. Here she is noting that no one had yet come close to her or recognized her beauty.

願言行路莫多情	I want to say, “Go on your way, no more thoughts of love,”
送妾貞心在人口	You will put my chaste heart into the mouths of others.[139]
日暮蠶饑相命歸	The day wanes, the silkworms hungry, I must return home.
攜籠端飾來庭闈	Basket in hand, properly attired, I enter the women’s quarters.
勞心苦力終無恨	I work with all my heart, but in the end have no righteous anger.
所冀君恩那可依	How can I rely on the obligation of care that I hoped for from you?
聞說行人已歸止	I hear that my traveler has already come home,
乃是向來贈金子	And he is the very one who offered me gold.
相看顏色不復言	Seeing each other face to face—we will not speak of it,
相顧懷慚有何已	What end will there be to the shame with which we regard each other?
從來自隱無疑背	I have always hidden away without any suspicion of betrayal,
直為君情也相會	And now appear only because of the sentiment you showed.
如何咫尺仍有情	Why is there still feeling if only a foot apart?
況複迢迢千裏外	Let alone in a repeat of a distant separation of a thousand miles.
此時顧恩不顧身	I shall pledge to think of your kindness, not of myself,
念君此日赴河津	Remembering you, I run this very day to the river ford.
莫道向來不得意	Do not say, “You’ve always been unhappy,”
故欲留規誡後人	I am determined to leave this warning for those who come after. [140]

[139] That is, his words will cause others to question her integrity.

[140] Translation heavily modified from Allen, “From Saint to Singing Girl,” 350–351.

The poem begins, and, for the first time, we are given a brief introduction of the heroine in her own voice. By opening the work with statement that she comes from Handan, she is establishing a sense of identity and history—one that extends to before her marriage. She describes her beauty, reminding him of their first meeting and of the fact that he took her away from her family, "far, far away to the end of the eastern road." The good times that followed (*shi feng dadao* 時逢大道) are reminiscent of Yan Yanzhi's description of their brief joy (*liang shi* 良時) before his sudden (*fang* 方) departure. The use of *fang* indicates a sense of spontaneity in his decision to leave, one that is reinforced in stanza four, when she says that "my husband left me easily (*qing* 輕) a long time ago." His sense of ease in abandoning her informs much of her frustration in the poem. She doesn't feel the right to resent his abandonment of her, as when states "I work with all my heart, but in the end have no righteous anger" (*wuhen* 無恨). He has given her no outright cause to earn her wrath (after all, he has departed for work to ostensibly support the family), yet his unreliability has eaten away at her trust of him, so she completes the verse, asking "How can I rely on the obligation of care that I hoped for from you?" This obligation (*en* 恩) binds them together, he to care for her, her to follow him and care for him and his family. While she has maintained her side of the bargain, he has forsaken his. This emotional progression, from suppressed anger to resentment, as she tries to explain away her feelings while admitting the impossibility of rejecting them, helps reveal the complexity of her character within the poem.

The work is also more revealing of the lived experiences of women, albeit presented through the imagination of the male elite. Unlike Fu Xuan's or Yan Yanzhi's

works, there is no male gaze tracing the contour of her body or romanticizing her amidst the flowers and trees. She provides no details of sumptuous clothing or fine jewelry, rather she describes herself and the other women, baskets in hand, engaged in agricultural work. When Qiu Hu offers her the gold, she does not berate him or make a scene, indeed, it is unclear if she even speaks at all. The line reads that she "wants to say" (*yuan yan* 願言) her rejection to him, but her immediate concern is the affect such a confrontation will have on her reputation. "You will put my chaste heart into the mouths of others," she thinks—a fear of damaging her reputation that will find its way into both the "transformation text" and dramatic versions of the tale. Rather than explode at him in righteous fury, she tries to disengage from the situation without drawing the attention of others. Their final meeting continues this reticence towards confrontation, as, once they recognize each other, neither will speak out of shame (*bu fu yan* 不復言), and indeed cannot even bear to look at one another.

If read as a plaint against male inconsistency, the poem reaches its peak in the final two stanzas. "I've always hidden away without suspicion of betrayal," she begins, a line which not only speaks to her integrity, but also contrasts her current situation with her innocent origins in Handan, where (also hiding away), she had yet no inkling of what awaited her. "And now only appear because of the sentiment you showed," she continues, fulfilling once again the obligation (*en*) that she owes him. Yet even in the midst of her anger and betrayal, she is conflicted by a flash of her old affection for him. "Why is there still feeling if only a foot apart/Let alone in a repeat of a distant separation of a thousand miles?", she asks herself. Unlike Fu and Yan's poems, which explain their emotional

distance as a result of their physical and temporal separation, Gao Shi acknowledges that familiar feelings of affection can persist in even the moments of greatest anger or hurt.

Perhaps inspired by these remnant feelings, in the final stanza she says: "I shall pledge to think of your kindness (*en*), not of myself/Remembering you, I run this very day to the river ford." This remarkable verse accomplishes several tasks. First, it reorients their relationship back to one of obligation and requital. Focusing on his kindness towards her rather over her own well-being, she intends to pay back his behavior with her own death. In "remembering you," the reader is left to ask whether she is remembering the "times of peace" that they enjoyed together, or the pervasive shame that arose from his proposal. Both could spur her to take her own life, the former out of a need to preserve the memory of their love, the latter as justification to end it. Her final statement may provide a clue in this regard, as she says: "Do not say, 'You've always been unhappy'/I am determined to leave this warning for those who come after." Here her words serve to preempt his recasting of her actions as being a result of her unhappiness with her lot. She did not commit suicide, she affirms, because she was miserable (thus removing the blame from him), but rather to leave a message for posterity.

The content of this message and the way that it is formulated varies across the poems examined above. In their disparate works Fu Xuan, Yan Yanzhi, and Gao Shi each explore fragments of an imagined and constructed female psychology. Not content with privileging the perspective of Qiu Hu, Yan and Gao themselves play with the female voice of the heroine. Such creative pantomime was not unusual, of course, mournful portrayals of female loneliness were fundamental components of the boudoir lament, in

which poets imitated the aggrieved voice of the neglected palace woman.[141] Read against this template, Gao Shi's rendering of the Qiu Hu tale aligns with the stylistic choices of such works, yet rather than leaving her bemoaning her fate, he gives her a stirring and righteous exit, one in which she is the arbiter of how history will remember her.

The variety of depictions of Qiu Hu and his wife in this chapter demonstrate the ways in which the tradition was enriched by generations of writers. While some elements of the tale were excised, others were expanded; familiarity with the story allowed poets to paint the overarching plot in broad strokes and focus their attention on dramatic scenes of catharsis. In the process, the characters subject to the terse economy of the original *Lienü zhuan* account become ever more complex owing to the capacity of the poetic medium to richly convey the emotional state of its subject. So too, the shared space of the mulberry grove, at once a site of economic production, simultaneously became a space fraught with the possibility of the illicit encounter. The early ballad of Luofu, which enjoyed its own popularity through the centuries, makes plain the potential of the mulberry grove for romance—even if such advances were unwanted and unrewarded. The resulting tensions that the mulberry grove engendered, predicated between seduction and danger and desire and integrity, ultimately lay at the center of the Qiu Hu tradition and helped shape the imaginations of the poets that walked its shaded paths.

[141] For a brief overview of the boudoir and its appearance in verse, see Jack Chen, "Sites I" in *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature*, 429–431.

CHAPTER 3

HALF A SKY OF GOLD: THE "TRANSFORMATION TEXT OF QIU HU"

In 1900 a chance discovery near Dunhuang, an ancient region situated along the Silk Road in China's northwest Gansu province "revolutionized the study of Chinese culture from the fourth to the tenth centuries."[142] There, within Cave 16 of the Mogao Grottoes and sealed behind a painted brick wall was a side chamber containing over 50,000 manuscripts preserved by the desert conditions since the library's sealing in the early 11th century. Among the manuscripts were many works thought lost in the bibliocaust that accompanied the end of the Tang. They included works of poetry, treatises on astronomy and hemerology, local administrative records, Buddhist scriptures, vernacularized rhapsodies (*su fu* 俗賦), and, most important for the discussion at hand, a genre unknown before the cave's opening: the "transformation text" (*bianwen* 變文). It is among these latter works that the tale of Qiu Hu reappears in a new and expanded form.

The unearthing of these materials has forced a reevaluation of our understanding of the development of Chinese literature from a number of different perspectives. As the cave library was situated in Dunhuang, on the frontier of the Tang (an area often under Tibetan and later Tangut control), it incorporated materials from a range of languages and cultures throughout Central Asia, providing evidence of the rich interplay and exchange of ideas between the Tang and its neighbors. In addition, the cool, dry environs of the cave preserved thousands of examples of Tang-era manuscripts. These not only provided

[142] Wilt Idema, "Dunhuang narratives," *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, ed. by Stephen Owen and Kang-yi Chang (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 374.

copies of materials believed lost but also early variants of works that were later changed by Song or Ming dynasty editors. These manuscripts offer a precious opportunity to view works *in situ*, including such marginalia as correction marks, notes, and drawings.[143]

STYLES AND CONVENTIONS OF *BIANWEN*

Bianwen were unearthed alongside other newly-discovered narrative works, such as "sutra lectures" (*jiangjing wen* 講經文), "seat-settling texts" (*yazuo wen* 押座文), and "narratives of dependent origination" (*yuanqi* 緣起). Many of these texts have explicitly Buddhist themes, serving as explications for major works such as the *Vimalakirti Sütra* or recounting parables and stories such as the popular tale of Mulian 目連 (Maudgalyayana). Yet while largely related to Buddhist matters, a significant number of these texts also deal with historical events or personages, such as the "Li Ling bianwen" 李陵變文 ("Transformation Text on Li Ling) and the "Wang Zhaojun bianwen" 王昭君變文 ("Transformation Text on Wang Zhaojun"), both of which adapt popular tales of figures from the Han dynasty.[144]

Debate continues as to the exact definition of what constitutes a "transformation text" or how they were utilized. They predominately exhibit a prosimetric structure and

[143] For various examples of such errata, see *Studies in Chinese Manuscripts: From the Warring States Period to the 20th Century*, ed. by Imre Galambos (Budapest: Institute of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2013), and, in particular 191–210.

[144] Li Ling was a general under Emperor Wu who surrendered to the Xiongnu. After his family was executed by the Emperor, he joined his captors in response. Wang Zhaojun was a famous beauty who was married off to a Xiongnu chieftain; accounts of her tale often emphasize her sorrow upon leaving the central plain and being forced to live beyond the Han frontier.

are composed in a mix of vernacular and a high literary style.[145] The majority of such works preserve markers of orality (formulaic expressions, repetition, etc.) that suggest that they were products of an oral tradition of storytelling that were preserved in written form.[146] Victor Mair, in his *Tang Transformation Texts* proposes a number of criteria that, in his estimation, define a *bianwen*. Among these criteria include 1) whether the work includes either *bian* 變 or *bianwen* 變文 in the title; 2) a specific verse-introductory formula; 3) expository phrasing that references picture storytelling; 4) a prosimetric form; 5) the use of heptasyllabic verse; 6) and vernacular language, etc.[147] Such strict definitions reduce the overall number of "true" *bianwen* to fewer than twenty works from a potential pool of over one-hundred and do little to tell us how contemporary writers and audiences interpreted such texts.[148] For example, according to the above criteria, the "Qiu Hu bian" is not a *bianwen* as such, as it only includes two of the required elements: it

[145] The debate over the origins and function of *bianwen* is too complex to summarize here. Zheng Zhenduo argued for the connection between *bianwen* and Buddhist texts, claiming that the term refers to "transformed" versions of sutras. According to Zheng, such texts worked in conjunction with *bianxiang* 變相 ("transformation tableaus") in narrating the events of such sutras. This has since become a popular definition See Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, *Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* 中國文學研究 (Studies in Chinese Literature) Vol. 2. (Nanyang: Guwen shuju, 1961), 190. Mair echoed these claims in *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–7. For an analysis of *bianxiang*, see Wu Hung, "What is Bianxiang - On the Relationship between Dunhuang Art and Dunhuang Literature," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52 (1992): 111–192. Sun Kaidi, for his part, argued a broader definition for *bian*, claiming that the term shared connotations with *shenbian* 神變 or *lingbian* 靈變, that is a tale that conveys something miraculous or unique. Such a definition extends the term beyond the Buddhist materials to include the number of historical tales or popular adaptations of works such as Qiu Hu or the tale of Han Peng 韓朋 which do not include overt Buddhist elements. See Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, *Sujiang shuohua yu baihua xiaoshuo* 俗講說話與白話小說 (Popular Preaching and Vernacular Fiction), Vol. 1 (Peking: Zuojia chuban she, 1956), 241.

[146] See Shuyun Crossland-Guo, "The Oral Tradition of Bianwen—Its Features and Influence on Chinese Narrative Literature," PhD Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 1996, 14–62.

[147] See Victor Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 9–32.

[148] Ibid., 14.

contains *bian* in the title and is written in early vernacular.[149] Yet rather than containing the prosimetric elements common in other *bianwen,* the work is constructed entirely of prose.

Were such works the product of local storytelling traditions, passed down and eventually recorded in written form? The great differences between texts makes generalization regarding their origins difficult. For example, as Mair notes, some works are strongly prosimetric, where the relationship between prose and verse are integral (for example, the "Wu Zixu bianwen" which opens Chapter 1), while others are full prose such as "Qiu Hu bian" and "Tang Taizong ru ming ji" 唐太宗入冥記 ("Record of Emperor Taizong Entering Hell"). Similarly, rhyme schemes vary between texts, and, in terms of prose, some works employ what Mair terms a "highly conversational" style, while others opt for a "pronounced euphuistic parallelism."[150]

In addition, the authorship of such works remains unknown, and with it the social contexts in which *bianwen* were composed is unclear.[151] Whereas the works of Fu Xuan or Yan Yanzhi were written by authors of a specific status and (ostensibly) intended for an audience of peers or patrons, the ambiguity surrounding the composition and

[149] Ibid., 25. However, while in the end such categorizations may be helpful in identifying patterns in composition or structure, they can also divorce us from the provenance of such materials. For the copyist who transcribed the tale, the work was apparently deserving of the title "transformation text."

[150] Ibid., 7.

[151] Arthur Waley suggested that they may have been written by "people of the scribe or village schoolmaster class" (i.e., not the elite literati), while Victor Mair has argued that they were composed/copied by lay students in monastery schools in Dunhuang. See Arthur Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Dunhuang* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960), 239 and Mair, "Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative: An Inventory of Tun-huang Manuscripts," *Chinoperl Papers* 10 (1981): 5–96.

circulation of *bianwen* makes such determinations difficult. The mistakes that riddle many of the surviving copies suggest that the scribes who copied them were prone to error or were transcribing them from oral recitation (allowing for the common mistaken homophonous characters that populate their manuscripts), but how such works were intended to be consumed and in what circumstances remains unknown.

The existing manuscript copy of the tale (S.133), preserved in the British Library, is comprised of almost 3,500 characters in a mediocre hand and is riddled with errors.[152] The work is sadly incomplete, starting and stopping *in media res*. Fading and discoloration have also rendered some characters (particularly at the beginning) largely indecipherable. As such the "Qiu Hu bian" begins not with the meeting and marriage of the couple, but rather as Qiu Hu is about to set off from home in search of his fortune. The ending too is omitted, with the manuscript stopping mid-conversation between Qiu Hu's wife and her mother-in-law—a character who is given a much larger role in the "transformation text." While the date of composition of the *bianwen* is unknown, the period the cave library was sealed can reasonably be narrowed down to 1035 or 1036, providing a reliable *terminus ante quem*. The earliest manuscript within the library has been dated to 405 and the "Qiu Hu bian" itself includes a reference to the *Wen xuan* as one of the books included in Qiu Hu's curriculum, implying that the text was composed sometime after the 6th century. All of this suggests a Tang composition for the tale,

[152] The manuscript measures 27 x 300 cm. The Qiu Hu tale appears on the verso side of the manuscript and is followed by anecdotes about famous figures. Its recto facing is devoted to a fragment of the *Zuo Zhuan*. It is composed in a mediocre hand and is riddled throughout with errors.

though it could also have been recopied later, during the Five Dynasties period (907-979).[153]

Though incomplete, the "Qiu Hu bian" preserves the majority of the tale, including Qiu Hu's journey, his wife's care for her mother-in-law, the couple's accidental meeting in the grove, as well as their reunion in the home. Unlike Yan Yanzhi's allusion-rich poem, the *bianwen* makes only a few references throughout, each of which would be common knowledge to those possessed of a modest education. These include an allusion to *The Analects* in one line as well as references to well-known historical figures. The work itself is written in a clear, concise vernacular prose, easy to read in comparison with the dense parallelism of the previous poetic accounts of the tale.

PRECARIOUS LIVES: WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE "QIU HU BIAN"

While the poetic adaptations of the tale focus predominately on the interplay between husband and wife as well as on the emotional turmoil of the same, the *bianwen* is the first to examine the dynamics between women's relationships [i.e., between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law], demonstrating in the process the ever-shifting nature of affinal ties versus those of blood. The work marks the first significant appearance of Qiu Hu's

[153] Wang Zhongmin suggests that the manuscript dates from the Six Dynasties with an additional segment appended in the Tang. See Wang Zhongmin 王重民, *Dunhuang guji xulu* 敦煌古籍敘錄 (Index to the Dunhuang Collection) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 56–57. Chen Tiefan 陳鐵凡 for his part argues that the Qiu Hu account was copied from an excerpt of the *Zuo zhuan* within the *Qun shu zhi yao* 群書治要 (Essentials on Governance from Assorted Writings) submitted to the throne in 631 by the historian and official Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643), who was also the compiler of the *Suishu* 隨書 (History of the Sui). Wang's estimate would make the providence of the *bianwen* quite early.

mother, a figure who will be given an even greater role in the dramatic adaptation of the tale examined in the next chapter. The young wife proves to be an ideal daughter-in-law, diligently caring for Qiu Hu's mother and managing the work of the household. In the process she earns the affection and sympathy of her mother-in-law, providing her with a potential ally beyond her natal kin. However, as the *bianwen* progresses, this sympathetic relationship is at once undone by suspicion and accusation upon Qiu Hu's return, a betrayal that reveals that while her actions may be celebrated and her conduct admired, the place of a wife in a patriarchal and patrilocal kin system is often precarious. To examine the ways in which this precarity is revealed within the tale, I will examine several key scenes of interaction between Qiu Hu and the female members of the household within the "Qiu Hu bian."

The *bianwen* opens with Qiu Hu speaking with his mother. He expresses his desire to leave home to complete his education in the hopes of securing a good position. He makes plain his ambition to attain success, stating "if I am not riding in a Grandee's Cart and wearing a seal of office, then I vow I shall not return" (*bu cheng xuan pei yin, shi yi bu huan guxiang* 不乘軒佩印, 誓亦不還故鄉).[154] He then invokes the figures of Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 and Su Qin 蘇秦, noting that they only attained fame due to their studies. He says:

> "I would take leave of you mother, and far away study for three years. I hope you will assent." As his mother heard these words of her son, tears sprang to her eyes unbidden, and she replied to Qiu Hu, saying: "Come forward for the moment and heed your mother's words. A secular text

[154] See Xiang Chu 項楚, *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu* 敦煌變文選注 (Selected Dunhuang Transformation Tales with Annotation) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuzhu, 2006), 363.

> says: ‘when one’s father and mother are alive, a son should not roam far; if he does roam, then he must have a clear destination [or goal].’[155] Moreover, you lost your father when only a youth. I have raised you on my own until you attained adulthood. Now you have decided to set me aside, so it is all the more imperative that you think carefully about this. I think about you out there, [a leaf] buffeted and withering; my child, when you come to regret it, it will be too late.[156]
>
> 「兒今辭孃，遠學三年間，願孃賜許！」其母聞兒此語，不覺眼中流淚，喚言秋胡：汝且近前，聽孃口之語「外書云，『父母在堂，子不得遠遊，遊必有方。』況汝少小失阿耶，孤單養汝，成立汝身。今捨吾求學，更須審思。念汝在外飄零，子乃悔將何及。

Qiu Hu’s mother responds to his classical allusions with one of her own, drawn from *Analects* 4.19. He counters by citing the case of Zengzi 曾子 (505–435 BCE), who left his parents to serve Confucius, and, in the process “fully comprehended the ‘Nine Classics’[157] in order to reveal the [teachings] of the ancestors, and [in so doing] left a name [that will persist] for a myriad generations” (*dongda jiiujing, yi xian xianzong, liuming wandai* 洞達九經，以顯先宗，留名萬代).[158] Undeterred, his mother readies her most potent weapon: maternal guilt. Still weeping, she continues:

> You and I are mother and child, the obligatory kindness I owe you is deep, and the righteous action you owe me is weighty. I am not inclined grant you leave to study afar. For now, if you study at home, what worry can there be that your skills and arts will not be developed?[159] Even if I set you

[155] A reference to *Analects* 4.19, which reads *fumu zai, bu yuan you, you bi you fang* 父母在, 不遠遊, 有必有方. See Yang, *Lunyu xiangzhu*, 40.

[156] Xiang, *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu*, 363. *Piaoling* 飄零 conjures the image of a leaf in a gale stripped off of its branch. In effect, it means that Qiu Hu will be homeless and without anyone to rely on.

[157] The composition of these vary but serve here as a general reference to the classics.

[158] Ibid.

[159] The character between *en* 恩 and *yi* 義 is missing in the original. I read it as *shen* 深 (deep) as the resulting expression *enshen yizhong* 恩深義重 (to be deeply indebted to another for their kindness and

> free to find a master [as you roam to study], how can you quickly become an official? It would be better if you can endure the thought of staying home, to plow deeply and plant shallowly, more widely employ silkworm labor, and study in the three spare times; how then could you not obtain your desire and excel?[160] It is better to gather with your mother, as well as often see your youthful new bride. Good things you can enjoy together; repugnant things you can feel shame about together, talk and laugh while you are happy together, and enjoy both passion and embarrassment.[161] If you put space between us now, you will be lonely and alone, traveling on foot and holding back your tears. Even if you succeed outside, how will you get to see me when you return? You must think twice, thrice about this—should you end up abandoning me to travel for study, you must strive and be conscientious, return home as swiftly as you can and do not cause me to worry.[162]
>
> 吾與汝母子，恩□義重，吾不辭放汝遊學。今在家習學，何愁伎藝不成！縱放汝尋師□，起即立成官宦?[163] 汝不如忍意在家, 深耕淺種，廣作蚤功，三餘讀書，豈不得達！好與孃團圓，又與汝少年新婦常相見。好即共有，惡即自知，語笑同歡，情羞作用; 阻隔孃孃，孤惸寂寂，徒步含啼。縱汝在外得達，廻日□豈得與吾相見？汝今再三，棄吾遊學，努力懃心，早須歸舍，莫遣吾憂。

Qiu Hu's mother's words reveal the tensions inherent in any predominately agricultural society between the need for labor and the desire to engage with the wider world. She meets Qiu Hu's arguments on his own terms, matching his classical allusions with her

---

propriety) was common enough to be cited in the early 7th century encyclopedia *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (Textual Excerpts from the Northern Hall) by Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558-638). The meaning also fits well with what Qiu Hu's mother is saying, as she reminds him of his filial responsibilities to her and tries to dissuade him from departing. See *Beitang shuchao* 93.3b, is collected in the Qing collection, the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Sections) vol. 889 (Taibei: Taiwan shangyu yinshuguan, 1983).

[160] The "three spare times" (*san yu shi* 三餘時) refer to periods where agricultural activities were limited, such as during winter, rainstorms, or at night. She is suggesting that Qiu Hu avail himself of these periods of leisure to study.

[161] That is to "share both the good and bad together." As the couple are newly married, they are still getting to know one another.

[162] Xiang, *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu*, 363–364.

[163] Reading *qi* 起 as *qi* 豈.

own, and, when he responds with the example of Zengzi, a paragon of Confucian orthodoxy, she retaliates with the more mundane yet pressing matter of economic survival. She doesn't want him to depart, both for his own safety, but predominately because she requires his help to tend to the land and their silkworms. Rather than leaving, then, she suggests that he study in his free time at home, that way securing the economic stability of the family while pursuing his own goals. When she realizes that reasoning will not work, she mentions his new bride, urging him to enjoy his life as a newlywed rather than risk his life on the road. Ultimately, however, she realizes the futility of her task, and concedes that if he is to depart, he must be sure to be conscientious of his responsibilities and return home as quickly as possible. With that he departs after gaining her reluctant blessing.

Next he visits his wife's chambers, where, upon entering, he finds her "sorrowful brows unpainted, a completely changed look, tousled temple hairs hanging long [i.e., to worried to put her hair up], tears of weeping in her eyes" (*choumei bu hua, dun gai rongyi, pengxu chang chui, yanzhong qilei* 愁眉不畫，頓改容儀，蓬鬢長垂，眼中泣淚).[164] Confronted with her grief-stricken form, he declares (*qi* 啟) to her the following:

> Husband and wife [of the binary pairs of the Five Relationships] are most important, their rites unite Heaven (*qian*) and Earth (*kun*).[165] Above [on earth] they are tied by the deep bonds of gold and thoroughwort, below

[164] Ibid., 369.

[165] The Five Relationships (*wu lun* 五倫) categorize the essential binary relationships that comprise society. They include ruler and official, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, and ties between friends.
Qian and *kun* are drawn from the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), with the former representing Heaven (and the masculine principle, *yang* 陽) and the latter the Earth (and the feminine principle *yin* 陰).

> [under the surface] they share the same coffin.[166] Our two forms merged as one, our naked bodies matched together in harmony, one's body will be buried together with the other's bones and I will turn to dust alongside you."[167] Just now I received my mother's instruction, and I shall follow it to study afar; I do not yet know if you will assent or not?[168]
>
> 夫妻至重，禮合乾坤，上接金蘭，下同棺槨。二形合一，赤體相和，附骨埋牙，共娘子俱為灰土。今蒙孃教，聽從遊學，未季娘子賜許已不？」

Though Qiu Hu begins by praising the primacy of the institution of marriage and invoking the eternal nature of their physical bond, which extends beyond this world and into the next, he also portrays his mother's grudging permission of his departure as her instruction, thus implying his leaving her is an obligation, rather than a result of his own inclinations. The detailed description of their bodies decaying together before being interred side-by-side also serves to remind the audience of her eventual fate, and the fact that they will not share the same grave. Separated in life, so too will they be they divided in death. Moved by her husband's words, she responds to him, feeling "pained at heart, her words full of grief":

> "Husband! Alive I am not a member of [your] family, dead I will not be a ghost [of your] clan.[169] Even though masters of a prestigious family, I will

---

[166] Here thoroughwort (*lan* 蘭) carries the connotation of affection rather than simply integrity. Gold and thoroughwort derives from the "Great Treatise" ("Xici" 繫辭) in the *Yijing*, which states: "When two men are of the same heart, their benefit will cut metal. As for the speech of united men, its fragrance is like that of the orchid [thoroughwort]." 二人同心，其利斷金。同心之言，其臭如蘭。See Edward L. Shaughnessy trans., *I Ching: The Classic of Changes* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 195.

[167] Huang et. al. read *ya* 牙 ("tooth") as *shen* 身 ("body"). See Huang, *Dunhuang bianwen jaozhu*, 232 and Xiang, *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu*, 370. Whether this means that they will bury "their eyeteeth and bones together" or just the bones of the deceased is unclear, though the overall meaning remains the same: the couple will be interred together.

[168] Reading *ji* 季 ("season") as *wei* 委 ("to entrust" or "accumulate"). Ibid.

[169] That is, as an outsider who married into the family, she will not be provided sacrifices after death.

> not be controlled or restricted by my parents. Entrusted to their care, they raised me for fifteen years, [yet] in the end my intention was to depart. Alive, I have a direction towards an outside [family] and am willing to follow you for a thousand miles. I am now matched to and joined with you, husband. For good or bad I shall heed your commands. Your decision to seek out learning alone is something that matches my own sense. Reaching the culmination of your learning one morning, you must immediately return to your home ten-thousand miles away!"[170]
>
> 「郎君！兒生非是家人，死非家鬼，雖門望之主，不是耶孃檢校之人。寄養十五年，終有離心之意。女生外向，千里隨夫，今日屬配郎君，好惡聽從處分。郎君將身求學，此愜兒本情。學問得達一朝，千萬早須歸舍！」

In response to Qiu Hu's inquiry of her willingness to let him depart, she makes plain her own standing in their relationship. As a wife, and married into the Qiu family, she stands outside the familial line, rendering her an outsider in life and a spirit without kin in death. Although women were buried with their husbands, "the ritual canon instructed that the inscription to be placed over a woman's coffin feature her natal surname and her order of birth among her sisters rather than identification with her husband's family."[171] Moreover, as she notes, she has already departed her own home, leaving behind her parents (whom, she suggests enjoy some prestige in the community, *menwang zhi zhu* 門望之主). As a result of these decisions, she has no choice but to cast her lot with him and thus to accord with his decisions. Yet revealing her own anxieties at their separation, she urges him to return as soon as possible. While Qiu Hu does not require his wife's permission to depart, he no doubt intends to rely on her to see after the home, manage the

[170] Ibid., 369.

[171] Hinsch, *Women in Early Medieval China*, 40.

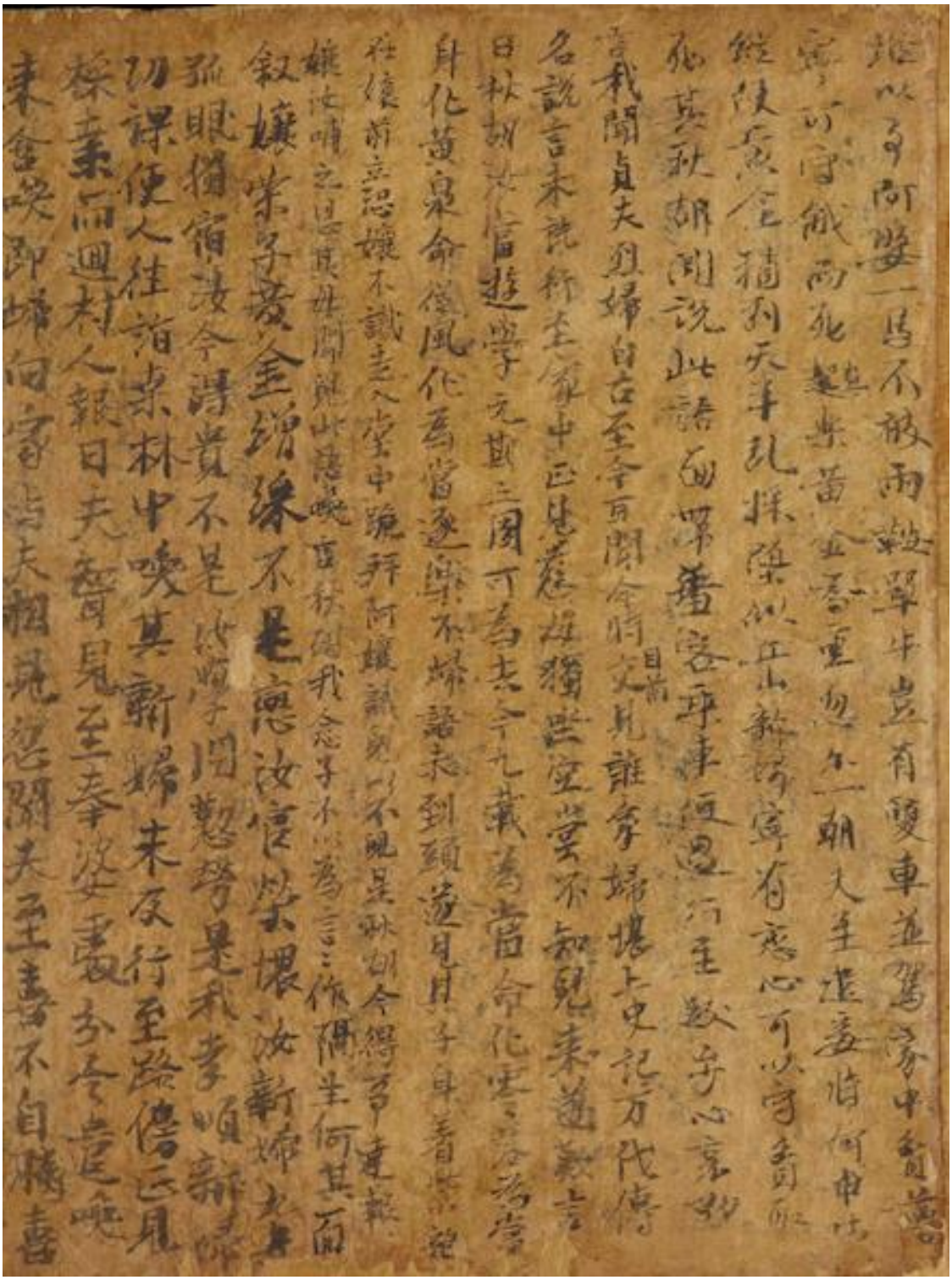
cultivation of its silkworms, and care for his mother. By ensuring her agreement with his plan, he can leave without worry, his filial obligations met. After bidding farewell to his wife, Qiu Hu packs his books—the list of which comprises the essentials for any aspiring scholar, such as the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Classic of Filial Piety* 孝經, *Classic of Poetry*, the *Classic of Rites*, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, and the *Wen xuan*—then departs.

The "transformation text" then describes the hardships that Qiu Hu encounters on the road, much as Yan Yanzhi previously did in poetic form. After several weeks he ascends Teng Mountain 騰山, described as towering ten thousand fathoms in height, its cliffs brushing past the sun and moon. Qiu Hu follows a creek into a valley and continues along its course until he finds its source:

> The path was rugged and precarious, [leading] to where the fount of the spring trickled and collected. He ventured deep into the mountain range—as for the terrain, the mountains and peaks were towering and luminous, [covered with] the roots of myriad trees; flowers and medicinal herbs flourished [amidst the] woods, white sandalwood and black poplar, camphor, sappanwood, catalpa, sandalwood, wisteria and cypress vine—all of which reduced the wind and [emitted] a perfumed scent.[172] Peach, plum, and olive trees enclosed the finest coralwood, its scent unlike that of black cardamom and betel palm.[173]
>
> 道路崎嶇，泉原滴澹。行至深嶺，地居形勢，山岫高明，林木萬根，花藥茂樹，並是白檀烏楊，歸樟蘇方，梓檀藤女，損風香氣，桃李橄子，含美相思，氣非益智檳榔。

[172] Following Huang Zheng's reading of *teng* 騰 as *teng* 藤 (kudzu) and the gloss of *nü* 女 as *nüluo* 女蘿 (cypress vine). See Huang, *Dunhuang bianwen jianzhu*, 233.

[173] Xiang, *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu*, 371.



2. Excerpt from Stein 133 “Qiu Hu bian.” British Library. International Dunhuang Project

The final line provides a play on words. By reading *binlang* 檳榔 (betel tree) for *binlang* 賓郎 (visiting gentleman) and *gan* 橄 (olive) as the largely homophonous *gan* 感 (to stir), the line could read: "Peach and plum stirred him, he held in thoughts of beauty and love, for their scent did not benefit the wisdom of the visiting gentleman." Both peach (*tao*) and plum (*li*) were often synonymous with female beauty, suggesting that Qiu Hu, freshly departed from his wife, was distracted by thoughts of love.

There, amidst the greenery, he finds a stone cottage occupied by a "several thousand-year old transcendent" (*shu qian nian lao xian* 數千年老仙).[174] This immortal erudite educates Qiu Hu for three years, at which point he has attained mastery of the nine classics. The description of Teng Mountain and its interior, isolated from the outside world, is evocative of the "Peach Blossom Spring" ("Taohua yuan ji" 桃花源記) by the Eastern Jin poet Tao Qian 陶潛 (d. 427, Tao Yuanming 陶淵明). There, the utopian land discovered by the fisherman contains the remnants of a community dating from the Qin dynasty, six hundred years prior. Cut off from the chaos of the world, they dwelled in peace and self-satisfaction, free from want or violence. Here the idyllic scene is described in similar terms.

After he completes his studies, he journeys to Wei in search of an official position. The King of Wei refuses to meet him at first, but Qiu Hu charms him with a memorial and ultimately earns a high position in his court, where he is awarded tax rights to three thousand households, as well as brocades, silks, and one hundred thousand cash. In addition, the king granted him "beautiful women to sing and strum, that he could

[174] Ibid.

choose from at his whim, [as well as] slender and plump servants to do with as he pleased" (*getan meinü suiyi jian jiang xizhuang nubi renqing duoshao* 歌彈美女，隨意簡將，細壯奴婢，任情多少).[175] The inclusion of these women as objects of entertainment and sexual gratification is significant, especially since they are referenced directly before the narrative perspective switches back to his wife, where the *bianwen* details her loneliness and suffering during his long absence. This contrast serves to highlight her loyalty and steadfastness versus his lack of fidelity. The passage reads:

> As for Qiu Hu's wife, six years passed after her husband [ventured off] to study abroad; no letters reached her, and she was cut off from news [of his whereabouts].[176] She did not know whether or not he [was alive]. From then on, she filially cared [for her mother-in-law] with a devoted heart; when going out she was as a slave, when entering she was as a servant. In the winter she bore the cold, in the summer she bore the heat, taking care of the silkworms. In order to] serve her mother-in-law, day and night she labored without even a temporary respite.
>
> As for Qiu Hu's mother, she was ashamed to see the new bride keep her to empty room alone, with nothing on her mind, so she summoned her, and said: "When my son departed, originally [he was supposed to return] in the third year, how can it be that he has not returned by the sixth year?[177] I do not know if his fate transformed [leaving him] "withered and wasted."[178] Raising my head, I am ashamed that that you, a newlywed, are without a husband, and must share poverty and the cold with me; I am deeply grateful to you. It's not right to have a new wife sleep alone in an empty room. You cannot always guard your empty chamber. You should marry another as you choose. I do not dare ask you to remain, but I have not yet examined your feelings on the matter. How about it?"

---

[175] Ibid., 373.

[176] Huang takes this *yin* 陰 as *yin* 音 and reads *fu* 符 as a mistake for *xin* 信. He justifies this by noting that the four-character phrase *yin xin ge jue* 音信隔絕 appears later in the *bianwen*. See Huang, *Dunhuang bianwen jianzhu*, 240.

[177] *Xin wu yi xiang* 心無異想 "no errant thought in her mind," except, perhaps, work and her husband.

[178] In other words, dead.

As his wife listened to her mother-in-law's words, she did not realize the pain pressing on her heart, and all at once started to weep softly. She came forward and spoke to her mother-in-law, saying: "My parents' original intent in making the marriage was to have me assiduously and respectfully serve you. Your son has not yet returned, and it is right that I exhaust myself to support and care for you. How [can you raise] the matter of remarriage? It cuts deep into my heart! You [may] instruct me [to remarry], and I dare not disobey your words, yet if your son suddenly returns and sends me away, what explanation could I offer?" As her mother-in-law listened to these words, she unconsciously let loose a great sob and departed. Both of them put the matter aside.[179]

其秋胡妻，自從夫遊學已後，經歷六年，書信不通，陰苻隔絕。其妻不知夫在已不？來孝養勤心，出亦當奴，入亦當婢，冬中忍寒，夏中忍熱，桑蠶織絡，以事阿婆，晝夜懃心，無時暫捨。其秋胡母，愧見新婦獨守空房，心無異想，遂喚新婦曰：「我兒當去，元期三年，何因六載不皈？不知命化零洛？仰愧新婦無夫，共貧寒阿婆，不勝珍重！不可交新婦孤眠獨宿。不可長守空房，任從改嫁他人。阿婆終不敢留住，未審新婦意內如何？」其新婦聞婆此語，不覺痛切於心，便即泣淚，向前啟言阿婆：「新婦父母疋配，本擬恭懃阿婆；婆兒遊學不來，新婦只合盡形供養，何為重嫁之事，令新婦痛□心割於心！婆教新婦，不敢違言；於後忽爾兒來，遣妾將何申吐？」婆忽聞此語，不覺放聲大哭，泣淚成行，彼此收心。

The expanded role of Qiu Hu's mother serves two purposes in this version of the tale. First, she embodies the burden of filial responsibility, one that is neglected by her own son—who is remiss in informing her of his own safety, let alone sharing his success in Wei with the family. The responsibility for her care falls to her daughter-in-law, who is shown to be meticulous in her service and selfless in her labor on behalf of the household. Second, by accepting the possibility that her son is dead and urging his wife to remarry, she provides an acceptable justification for the young woman to escape her

[179] Xiang, *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu*, 376.

current state of limbo as a pseudo-widow. That she refuses this opportunity and instead rebukes her mother-in-law serves to demonstrate her outstanding integrity.

Yet the way in which she demurs the offer to remarry is revealing. She references her parents' agreement to the marriage, noting that she is bound to respect their wishes in serving Qiu Hu's family. Such service is part and parcel of her role as his wife, and, even in his absence, provides her with identity and purpose. Her mother-in-law's words undermine that and threaten her sense of security (and may, in fact, even constitute a test of her integrity). In addition, her final (and most pressing) concern involves his potential survival. The shame of Qiu Hu returning and sending her away (especially after all she has sacrificed on his account) is enough to make the concept of remarriage repellent. Her dismay is enough to quash the older woman's suggestion. By failing to return or send word to the family, her husband has left her trapped in the precarious space between marriage and widowhood.

As the *bianwen* continues, it describes how, after nine years away from home, Qiu Hu is suddenly struck with pangs of concern about the fate of his mother. He begs the King of Wei for an absence, so that he can visit her, as he "does not know whether she yet lives" (*si huo bu zhi* 死活不知).[180] The king, moved by his plea, grants him leave as well as "one hundred gold ingots and a thousand pieces of assorted silk" (*huangjin bai ding luan cai qian duan* 黃金百挺亂採千段) for him to offer to his mother upon his arrival.[181] He departs Wei and makes the journey back to Lu. The *bianwen* describes his

[180] Ibid., 377.

[181] Ibid., 378.

arrival during the mulberry picking season, riding atop a carriage, clothed in a purple robe of state and wearing a golden belt.[182] His finery in the scene is reminiscent of that of the southern lord from the "Moshang sang" Luofu ballad.

As he arrives at the mulberry grove, he disembarks his carriage, and, in a key detail, decides to change his clothes before reembarking and proceeding on (*bian fu qian xing* 變服前行).[183] This deliberate act speaks to his desire for anonymity—to conceal both his rank and identity—before he enters the grove. It also signals that he is acting now, not as a high official, saddled with the responsibility and expectations associated therewith, but rather as a wealthy individual free to pursue his personal desires. As the *bianwen* continues, it sets the stage for reunion between husband and wife:

> The trees shaded the ground in their lush fullness, and the branches both concealed and revealed him. He was hoping to find someone to inquire about the news within the household. He raised his head and abruptly saw his chaste wife, picking leaves alone in the mulberry grove. Her appearance had changed; her face was not adorned by makeup, and her disheveled hair hung long as she picked mulberry leaves with a sorrowful heart. [As soon as] Qiu Hu suddenly caught sight of her, he inspected her facial characteristics closely for a time—her appearance and demeanor were graceful and lovely; her face like white jade, her cheeks like red lotuses, her waist like a willow branch, and her delicate brows tapered short. He reigned in the horses for a moment and moved forward to take a full look at her. However, because he did not recognize her as his wife, he gifted her a poem:
>
> Jade features reflect red powder,

[182] As Xiang Chu notes, during the Tang, only officials of the upper three ranks were allowed to wear purple garments while those of the fifth rank were bestowed golden belts. The King of Wei refers to him being granted the title of *zaixiang* 宰相, sometimes translated as prime minister, but which by the Tang could refer to Grand Councilors who worked in cooperation with the Department of State Affairs (*Shangshu sheng* 尚書省), one of the Three Departments and Six Ministries that comprised the bureaucracy in the Tang. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, Inc., 1985), 554.

[183] Xiang, *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu*, 381.

your golden hook is hidden picking mulberries.[184]
Kohl-dark eyebrows appear between the branches,
The silken hem of your blouse is hidden among the leaves.
Your cheeks vie with spring peach and plum,
and your body is like white snow and frost.

Qiu Hu called out to her, saying: "Miss! Have you not heard the saying: 'Picking mulberries isn't as good as meeting a young man, and toiling in the field isn't as good as [coming upon a] year of abundant harvest?' I wish to offer you two taels of gold and a bundle of assorted silks, so that I may ask to spend a while in your embrace. I do not yet know if you would grant me this or not."
His wife climbed down from the tree, gathered herself, and, not knowing it was her husband, called out to him: "My husband studies abroad and has been gone for nine years. I have had no word from him, and all communication has been cut off. My mother-in-law is old in years and sits alone in the hall. [As for me], I would rather bear the chill in winter and the heat in summer, and care for the silkworms so that I may serve her. A horse does not bear two saddles, and how could a single ox draw two carts? [Though] our household is poor and meager, I would rather keep [my integrity] and die of starvation. How could I find pleasure in the weight of your gold? If my husband should arrive of a sudden and send me away, what explanation could I offer? Even if you filled half of the sky with gold or piled up assorted silks so that they resembled a hill or mountain, I would rather possess my fond thoughts [of him], hold fast to poverty, and choose death."[185]

其樹赴覆地婆娑，伏乃枝條掩映。欲覓於人，借問家內消息如何。舉頭忽見貞妻，獨在桑間採葉，形容變改，面不曾粧，蓬鬢長垂，憂心採桑。 秋胡忽見貞妻，良久瞻相，容儀婉美，面如白玉，頰帶紅蓮，腰若柳條，細眉段絕。停蹔住馬，向前上熟看之，只為不識其妻，故贈詩一首：玉面映紅粧，金鈎弊采桑。眉黛條間發，羅襦葉裏藏。頰奪春桃李，身如白雪霜。秋胡喚言道：「娘子！不聞道：採桑不如見少年，力田不如豐年！仰賜黃金二兩，亂綵一束，蹔請娘子片時在於懷抱，未委娘子賜許以不？」其婦下樹，斂容儀，不識其夫，喚言郎君：「新婦夫婿遊學，經今九載，消息不通，音信隔絕。阿婆年老，獨坐堂中，新婦寧可冬中忍寒，夏中忍熱，桑蚕織絡，以事阿婆。一馬不被兩鞍，單牛豈有雙車並駕！家中貧薄，寧可守餓而死，

[184] *Jin gou* 金鉤 "golden hook" refers to the grapnels or hooks used to pull down high branches in the orchard. Here it works as a synecdoche for the young woman laboring in the field.

[185] Ibid., 382.

豈樂黃金為重！忽而一朝夫至，遣妾將何申吐！縱使黃金積到天半，
亂綵埒似丘山，新婦寧有戀心，可以守貧取死。」

Note how the description of Qiu Hu's wife in the grove mirrors that of the last time he saw her in her boudoir. In both cases she is described as possessing a "changed look" (*gai rongyi* 改容儀 versus *xingrong biangai* 形容變改), not wearing makeup and leaving her hair loose rather than drawn up in a bun. Unlike Qiu Hu, who now drives a coach and possesses fine clothes and wealth, her life has continued unchanged from the moment that he left. Like Yan Yanzhi, who played with contrasts of light and shadow, movement and quietude, in order to present the diverging experiences of husband and wife, the *bianwen* uses this repetition to depict the stagnancy of her life versus the vibrancy of his.

The poem that he offers her praises her beauty and highlights the tantalizing flashes of her body that appear among the branches and leaves. He first notices her "jade features," flushed with exertion, then brief glimpses of her eyes and cheeks amidst the branches. The poem culminates with imagined details of her body, which he describes "like white snow and frost." After attempting to flatter her, he employs the same line that appears in the *Lienü zhuan* version, noting that meeting a young man is preferable to picking mulberries. Unlike that earlier account, however, the *bianwen* includes the full details of his proposal as he offers her two taels of gold and a bundle of silks in exchange for a sexual liaison. Her refusal is couched in the terms of chastity (employing once again the adage about a horse bearing two saddles) as well as her responsibility and role as a wife to care for her mother-in-law and the family property. Revealing the extent of the household's poverty serves to heighten the impact of her refusal of his offer. "Even if you filled half of the sky with gold or piled up assorted silks so that they resembled a hill or

mountain," she says defiantly, "I would rather possess my fond thoughts [of him], hold fast to poverty, and choose death." The ferocity of her words shame Qiu Hu, who marvels at her integrity as he says:

> I have heard of chaste men who do not remarry and ardent wives who commit suicide from antiquity to the present day, and today I have encountered one with my own eyes. Whichever clan in which she is wife of is worthy of inclusion in the *Historical Records*, where their fame would be transmitted for ten thousand generations! [186]
>
> 我聞貞夫烈婦，自古至今耳聞，今時目前交見。誰家婦堪上史記，萬代傳名.

The irony of this statement within the context the tale is apparent. The woman whose integrity will be lauded is his own wife; the clan which will become infamous is his own family, and the cause of such scandal will be his own lapse in righteous behavior. This lack of awareness provides a satirical element to his character as the "elite gentleman." Renowned as "filial and loyal" (*you xiao you zhong* 有孝有忠) by the King of Wei, the moment that Qiu Hu is outside of public view he removes his official regalia and attempts to spend funds entrusted to him by his lord on a sexual misadventure.[187] Read in such a light, it is easy to imagine the figure of Qiu Hu as a bastardization of the upright official who engages in scandalous activities while claiming the mantle of moral superiority.

Soon afterwards, Qiu Hu reaches his home and pays visit to his mother, who is sitting along in the hall, lamenting his absence.

---

[186] Ibid.

[187] See Ibid., 378.

"Qiu Hu, when you first left to study, [you were to return] within three years, why did you leave for nine? Did your fate transform [leaving you] withered and wasted? Did your body transform [and enter] the Yellow Springs? Did your life follow the manners of the age, so that you pursued pleasure rather than return?" She had not yet finished speaking when she saw her son. He was wearing a purple robe and standing before her. Afraid that she would not recognize him, he entered into the hall and knelt, paid obeisance to her, and spoke: "Do you recognize your son? I am Qiu Hu. Now that I have achieved my goal, I will repay the obligation I incurred by your nursing me."[188] His mother heard her son speak these words and called out to him, saying: "I was thinking of you and did not realize I had spoken, yet my words served to [bridge] the divide between life [and death]. How is it that I am speaking to you face-to-face? I take pleasure in your yellow gold and silks; I am not enamored by your glory as an official, [rather] I am ashamed for your wife, who for nine years has slept alone and passed the nights in solitude. As for the nobility that you have obtained, it is not due to your assiduous study, but rather is due to the meritorious devotion of my filial and obedient daughter-in-law."
He sent someone to the mulberry grove to summon his wife. They had not yet reached the edge of the road when they spotted her returning from picking mulberry leaves. The villager reported to her, saying: "Your husband has arrived. He is greeting your mother-in-law and sent me to summon you back."[189]

秋胡汝當遊學，元期三周，何為去今九載？為當命化零落？為當身化黃泉？命從風化，為當逐樂不歸？」語未到頭，遂見其子，身著紫袍，在孃前立。恐孃不識，走入堂中，跪拜阿孃：「識兒以不？兒是秋胡。今得事達，報孃乳哺之恩。」其母聞兒此語，喚言秋胡：「我念子不以為言，言作隔生，何其面敍。孃樂子黃金繒綵，不是戀汝官榮，愧汝新婦，九年孤眠獨宿。汝今得貴，不是汝學問懃勞，是我孝順新婦功課。」使人往詣桑林中，喚其新婦。未及行至路傍，正見採桑而迴，村人報曰：「夫婿見至，奉婆處分，令遣喚來。」

Qiu Hu's mother's joy is tempered in this scene by her shame at the suffering of her daughter-in-law. She welcomes her son's success, delighting in the gold and silks that he

[188] That is, in raising him. The expression *rubu zhi en* 乳哺之恩 (reading *ru* 汝 as *ru* 乳) literally refers to the debt of kindness a child owes their mother for suckling them as an infant.

[189] Ibid., 384.

has brought to support the household, yet is nonplussed by his noble title. Her concern—as it has been from the beginning—is the survival of the family, whereas his interest, quoting the glories of figures such as Sima Xiangru and Su Qin, tended as much towards the rewards of fame (*ming* 名) as it did wealth. Her reaction here is notable because she differentiates the two. His studies may have won him nobility (*gui* 貴), but they did nothing for her over the nine years of their separation. Instead, she tells him that the acclaim belongs to "the meritorious devotion of my filial and obedient daughter-in-law." By including the term "filial" in her description of the young woman, she is reminding him of his failings as a son.

The narrative then shifts to Qiu Hu's wife's perspective, allowing the audience a glimpse into her tumultuous mind as she processes the news of her husband's return.

> As soon as she heard that her husband had arrived, she was so overjoyed that she could not restrain herself. Happiness lay in her heart, and a smile was set on her face. When she reached home, she headed towards the north hall, hoping to see her husband. She caught sight of his mother and paid her respects, then entered her own chamber. She fetched a mirror from atop her dressing table, adorned herself, and dressed to meet her husband. She drew kingfisher-blue brows and brushed a lotus flower [onto her face].[190] She dressed in her nuptial jacket and skirt, with a gauze fan covering her face, desiring to appear just as she had during their wedding. When she reached the front of the hall, she set up the ritual implements to aid her mother-in-law in the joyous event [of his arrival].
>
> [When her mother-in-law] saw her approach, she felt shame and gratitude at her filial care and meritorious service over the past nine years, and so descended the stairs of the hall, tears flowing and called out to her: "Daughter-in-law! My son has arrived. His studies have ended in success; carriage and seal follow him, and he serves as a minister of the

[190] Brushing (*fu*) a lotus may refer in this case to the common practice among Tang women of either painting flower designs or affixing metal or jeweled carvings of flowers (among other themes) on their foreheads. The designs (*huazi* 花子 for the illustrations or *huatian* 花鈿 for the metal or jeweled variants) were either drawn or applied with glue and could be removed later with water.

kingdom.[191] [He offered me] yellow gold and silks, I am ashamed and grateful for your filial kindness, so I hope you will accept them." Receiving her mother-in-law's words, she turned her head and paid her respects to her husband. She stared at him intently, then [realized] that he was the high official who had offered her gold in the mulberry grove.

In her heart she felt dismay, and her expression changed and she began to weep. Her breath caught and she [could] not speak. Her mother-in-law, [viewing her reaction] as exceedingly strange, repeatedly questioned her [about it], and said: "My son has been gone for nine years and you have earned a filial reputation, why, now that you see him, are you suddenly so dismayed? You must have a private affair among the neighborhood—why not quickly spill out your true feelings? If you do not have feelings for another, it is not fit to act like this!" As she heard her mother-in-law speak these words, she wept [once more]. In response, she implored her mother-in-law to hear the reason for her unhappiness. "I have no private affair, only righteous anger and unease towards two matters involving your son. The first is his unfilial behavior to family, the second is his disloyalty to the kingdom."

Her mother-in-law responded to her: "If my son is disloyal to the kingdom, then how did he obtain an official post in glory and return home? If he is unfilial to the family, then surely, he would not have shown me the gold and silks [he brought]? If you do not have feelings for another, then why are you rambling on so?" She declared to her mother-in-law, saying: "If your son is compassionate and filial to the family, then heaven in its grace granted him gold that he may return home and repay the kindness of your nursing him, [yet suppose that] before he had arrived to see his mother he had already offered [gold and silks] to someone among the mulberries—that would be disloyal to the kingdom and unfilial to the family. As for my parent's making this marriage for me, I have handled matters [on your behalf] for nine years. I have provided and cared for multiple households, yet now you proclaim that I am lacking in the rites. Mother-in-law, I implore you to [consider me as] a filial and compassionate wife…"[192]

忽聞夫至，喜不自勝，喜在心中，面含笑色。行至家，向北堂覓見其夫，得見慈母。新婦欲拜謝阿婆，便乃入房中，取鏡臺粧束容儀，與夫相見。乃畫翠眉，便拂芙容，身着嫁時衣裳，羅扇遮面，欲似初嫁之時。行至堂前設禮，助婆歡愷。見新婦來至，愧謝九年孝養功勞，便下堂階，哭泣喚言：「新婦！我兒來至，遊學必功，軒即隨身，身為國相，黃金繒綵，愧謝孝恩，願新婦領受。」得婆語迴面拜夫，熟

[191] Thus fulfilling the oath he made to his mother before he left.

[192] Ibid., 384–385.

向看之，乃是桑間繒金宰貴。情中不喜，面變淚下交流，結氣不語。阿婆甚怪，重問新婦：「我兒九年不在，新婦今得孝名，何謂今見兒來，忽尔今朝不愷。新婦必有私，在於隣里，何不早吐實情，若無他心，不合如此！」新婦聞婆此語，泣淚交流，復願阿婆聽說，不喜由緒。「新婦實無私情，只恨婆兒二種事不安：一即於家不孝，二乃於國不忠。」阿婆喚言新婦：「我兒於國不忠，豈得官榮歸舍！若於家不孝，金綵亦不合見吾。若無他心，何故漫生言語？」新婦啟言阿婆：「兒若於慈孝，天恩賜金，交將歸舍，報娘乳哺之恩。今即來及見母，桑間已繒於人，所以於國不忠，於家不孝。新婦父母，疋配本身，承事九年，供養多門，宣少之儀，阿婆願希慈新婦…

Unfortunately, the *bianwen* fragment ends there, leaving us to imagine his mother's response and to speculate as to whether this adaptation of the tale also ends with his wife's suicide. Such lacunae aside, however, the above scene is exceptional at building up and ultimately subverting dramatic anticipation. When his wife returns to her chamber to prepare to meet her husband she is portrayed as unable to restrain her joy. Her immediate inclination is to recreate the conditions of their wedding (*si chujia zhi shi* 似初嫁之時)—their last period of joy together—by donning her nuptial clothes, adorning herself with makeup, and fetching a gauze fan. This is the first time that the *bianwen* has depicted her changing her appearance since her husband's departure nine years prior. By changing into her wedding clothes, she is declaring her intention to restart a life that has been on pause since his departure. Her anticipation only serves to heighten the drama as the audience is drawn along by her exuberance and excitement towards the trauma to come.

When that moment comes, shattering her brief respite of optimism, it is made all the worse by the presence of her mother-in-law. Whereas Gao Shi made the scene of shared recognition a private one, a space where neither were willing to speak and

acknowledge their shame, the *bianwen* recognizes the dramatic potential that Qiu Hu's mother offers. While throughout the work she appears to express appreciation and support her daughter-in-law (even offering her the gold and silks that Qiu Hu brought back as requital for her filial service), she is also the first to question her integrity when the couple are reunited. That moment of recognition is played out as a recreation of Qiu Hu spotting her in the grove, as she first "looked intently" at him (*shu kan* 熟看 is used in both instances) before recognizing him as the man who made advances towards her. Her reaction is visceral, arising from inside (as dismay), then progressing outside (as tears). Her breath catches and she is unable to speak—she is robbed of her voice. When her mother-in-law sees her reaction, she immediately becomes suspicious and mistakes her shock for guilt. "You must have a private affair among the neighborhood," she asserts, "why not quickly spill out your true feelings?" This impromptu accusation stuns Qiu Hu's wife, and she begins weeping even harder. The years of service that she had rendered to her mother-in-law are undone in one moment, at which point their relationship shifts from convivial to accusatory. The swiftness of this metamorphosis demonstrates both the precarious and provisional nature of a wife's place in the household. She is an eternal outsider (especially before the birth of a son to establish and cement her position within the family), and as such, is subject to the whims of her in-laws and husband.

Whereas in previous accounts the accusations that she makes against her husband's behavior stand on their own, here she has to confront him through the intermediary of his mother. She accuses him of being unfilial and disloyal (following the account of the *Lienü zhuan*), both charges of which his mother rejects. This leads his wife

to provide a hypothetical, suggesting that he offered his liege-given gold to someone in the mulberry grove before he visited his mother. Note that she doesn't name herself as the would-be recipient; even at this stage she is trying to avoid the shame such an accusation will bring. Her final words in the *bianwen*, before it unceremoniously ends, are in defense of her integrity (and suggest that she is potentially caring for multiple households), as she implores her mother-in-law to regard her as a "filial and compassionate wife" (*xiaoci* 孝慈). Qiu Hu, for his part never says a word.

Although unfinished, the chance discovery of the "Transformation Text of Qiu Hu" amongst the trove of materials in Dunhuang offers a rare glimpse at the development of the tale beyond the evocative yet terse poetic adaptations examined in Chapter 2. Its use of vernacular and lack of restrictive format provided the tale with new opportunities for dramatic exposition, foreshadowing, and character complexity. Elements such as its use of costuming to convey personal desire, in conjunction with its savvy use and subversion of anticipation speak to a mature and confident narrative tradition that excelled in portraying the psychological complexity of its female characters. One can see in the *bianwen* the culmination of the psychological experiments in Yan Yanzhi's and Gao Shi's verse, as well as a dramatic style that presages its eventual adaptation for the stage.

CHAPTER 4

FROM RAGE TO RAPPROCHEMENT: SHI JUNBAO'S *QIU HU XIQI*

Before the discovery of the vast cache of manuscripts sealed within the caves of China's northwestern frontier, the most popular adaptation of the Qiu Hu tale was to be found on the stage. Much as elsewhere, the performative arts had a long and complex history within China. Whether traced back to costumed ritual or to the spectacle of gymnastics and feats of strength (*baixi* 百戲), the antecedents of the elements that we associate with the pageantry of the Chinese theater were mainstays of the temple grounds and the marketplace. The development of this tradition has been treated in depth elsewhere, as have the earliest references to the skits and staged performances that would no doubt come to be expanded and refined into the dramas and comedies that graced the Song (960–1279) and Yuan stages (1271–1368).[193] The role of the *bianwen* in this gradual process is still of some debate. James Hightower speculated that at least some forms of popular entertainments within the Song dynasty (the "Drum Song" *guci* 鼓詞, for example), which comprised of narratives interspersed with sung portions, were derived from the *bianwen* model.[194] William Dolby goes even further, suggesting that, through both content and form, the *bianwen* may have influenced the later development of drama (and literature) as a whole in China.[195] Such a claim is tenuous, however, for though

[193] See, for example, William Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama*, (London: Elek Books Ltd, 1976), 1–13, as well as Idema and West, *Chinese Theater 1100–1450: A Sourcebook* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982), 4–6 and 95–100.

[194] James Hightower, *Topics in Chinese Literature*, (Cambridge: Mass, 1953), 94–96.

[195] Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama*, 12–13.

bianwen appear to be have been performed in some capacity, there remains a gap of several centuries between the "transformation texts" of Dunhuang and the earliest preserved drama scripts in the 12th century.[196] For now, however, we can include them under the broader category of the Chinese storytelling tradition (*shuochang wenxue* 說唱文學).

Yet whatever the ultimate relationship between *bianwen* and later performative genres may be, there is no debating the burgeoning popularity of professional storytelling in the alleys and teahouses of the Song. Wilt Idema and Stephen West note a confluence of factors that led to the rise of the professional storytelling class.[197] These include rapid economic changes spurred on by the growth and diversity of trade that fostered a vibrant urban culture, one dependent on the inter-connected waterways that transferred goods and capital throughout the empire. Another important development involved the gradual replacement of the long-standing northern aristocratic families—their ranks reduced by the devastating conflicts that ravaged the north—with a new class of gentry: the professional exam-goer. The universal examination system that flourished under the Song drew its attendees not only from the families of the political elite, but also increasingly from those of merchants and the nouveau riche. The scions of these clans flooded the urban centers of the Song, bringing with them cash and a desire to indulge in the

[196] For a discussion of the evidence suggesting the performance of *bianwen*, see chap. 6 of Mair, *T'ang Transformation Tales*, 152–170. Also see Wilt Idema and Lloyd Haft, *A Guide to Chinese Literature, Part 1* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 58.

[197] This is not to say that such professional entertainers did not exist or even flourish before the Song, they assuredly did, but, as Idema and West note, we lack detailed sources to say much about such communities before the advent of the 12th century. See Idema and West, *Chinese Theater 1100–1450*, 4–6.

pleasures of the city.[198] The result was a flourishing of the performative arts, whether the aforementioned "Drum Songs," "Strumming Songs" (*tanci* 彈詞), or the complex and prosimetric narrative song suites termed "in all keys and modes" (*zhugongdiao* 諸宮調) that proliferated under the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) and into the Song.

The form that would come to have the most lasting impact on the development of Chinese drama, however, and the one which most directly involves the tale of Qiu Hu, is that of the "variety play" (*zaju* 雜劇). The *zaju* (or *beiqu* 北曲, "northern songs") developed in the north of China by the 13th century, after the Mongols had conquered the Jin Dynasty and were setting their sights on the remnants of the Song to the south. This northern style play is marked by a number of stylistic conventions that are worth brief mention. In general, each *zaju* is comprised of four acts with an optional demi-act (or "wedge" *xiezi* 楔子) that can be inserted between any two acts or used to intro the play. The songs (*qu* 曲) within each act are restricted to a single "mode" (*lü* 律), though "modes" can change between acts. Similarly, there is only one singing role per act (or even throughout the entire play), though other characters can engage in dialogue and offer self-introductions. The latter was especially common when characters initially appeared or reappeared in a different act. This dialogue, as well as scene prompts (*binbai* 賓白) were often excluded from script books, which only included the rhymed arias that the leading role needed to memorize.[199] As a result, these spoken sections may have been

[198] Ibid., pp. 6–8.

[199] For more details, see James I. Crump, "The Elements of Yüan Opera," *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 17, No. 3 (1985): 417–419. As significant plot details and characterization were often revealed during these spoken sections, it was quite easy for later editors or emendators to modify or recast the plots to such plays as they saw fit. For an example of such Ming-era meddling, see Stephen West, "A Study in Appropriation:

subject to improvisation, and introductory scenes so commonplace in Yuan *zaju* may have often set the scene for what followed with comedic interludes and slapstick routines that justified the term "variety play."

The characters within these plays were determined by role types based on gender and function. The most basic were some variation of the following: male (*mo* 末), female (*dan* 旦), and clown (*jing* 淨).[200] While these roles were nominally gendered, men or women could play any of the three. The nature of the role type determined the performance of the role itself as well as its related costuming and makeup. For example, the *jing* portrayed characters that were villainous, lecherous, or comedic in nature, while the *dan* tended to be morally upright and virtuous. While stage decorations were largely sparse and simplistic, this is not to say that Yuan drama was without stagecraft. Painted backdrops were commonplace, and some on-stage directions suggest the existence of mechanisms to lift the performers.[201] The simplicity of these requirements—needing only a stage, space for audience, and musical accompaniment—suggests the potential ubiquity of drama by the Yuan. A play could be staged anywhere, from the village market, to the grounds of a temple, or in the bustling tea houses and brothels within the capital.

Zang Maoxun's Injustice to Dou E," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 111, Issue 2 (Apr.–Jun. 1991): 283–302.

[200] For a concise summary of these role types, see Wang, Shifu 王實甫 (1250–1337?) Wilt Idema, and Stephen West. *The Story of the Western Wing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 42–43.

[201] See David Hawkes, "Some Reflections on Yüan tsa-chü," *Asia Major* 16 (1971): 69–81. In addition, the Yuan *zaju* "Lan Caihe" 藍采和 provides a description of the stage and its surroundings, as does a song suite by Du Shanfu 杜善夫 (c. 1197–1270), "Country Cousin Knows Nothing about the Stage" that describes a country hick's first experience in the urban theater. For translation and analysis of the former, see Idema and West, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), 283–313. For the latter, see the "Introduction" to the same, xii–xv.

This latter point, that of setting, is itself of some importance when discussing the role of women in drama, especially those in the moralistic vein, such as the tale of Qiu Hu and his wife. The performers of such dramas were often wandering individuals or troupes, sometimes attached to winehouses or brothels within the pleasure quarters of the great urban spaces of Kaifeng, Hangzhou, or Dadu. Such performers included sing-song girls (*changji* 娼妓 or just *ji* 妓) who were registered with various government-owned wineshops or worked off the tax rolls. These women, sex workers by trade, doubled as singers and performers of comedies and dramas within the teahouses and bars that dotted the urban landscape and were frequented by the young scholars flush with coin that flooded the cities.[202] The popularity of such women is attested to in works such as the *Qinglou ji* 青樓集 (Collection of the Green Bower) by Xia Tingzhi 夏庭芝 (ca. 13th century), a work that collects and reminisces on performers esteemed by the author, who notes the source of their fame (skits, singing certain songs, etc.) as well as details about their availability, physical appearance, etc.[203] So too, Jin Yingzhi 金盈之 (fl. 12th century) in his *Zuiweng tanlu* 醉翁談錄 (Record of Discussions of the Drunken Gaffer)

[202] For details of these figures, see Idema and West, *Chinese Theatre*, 118–119.

[203] For more on the *Qinglou ji*, see Yu Weimin 俞為民, "Yuandai Xia Tingzhi 'Qinglou ji' yanjiu 元代夏庭芝《青楼集》研究 (Study on the Yuan Dynasty "Collection of the Green Bower" by Xia Tingzhi), *Yishu baijia* 藝術百家 (The Hundred Schools of Art), Vol. 27.3 (2011): 140–147.

provides a description of the uncertain fates that such performers, especially women, faced within the Pingkang Ward 平康里 of Chang'an:

> In their off-days, they assemble in the Golden Lotus Theater, where each shows off what he or she can do. Those who come to observe are the rich young dandies of the Five Hills and the wastrels of powerful and noble families. Among the entertainers, some have a bewitching loveliness that strikes the eye and, when they disperse, they visit their homes and feast there. The base and common prostitutes live all around the wall of the whole section. As for those sing-song girls whose names are entered on the official rolls, they offer their services in turn whenever the officials must find a means to sell wine. Even when their turns are combined, it is only one or two days in a whole month.[204]
>
> 暇日群聚金蓮棚中，各呈本事。來觀之者皆五陵年少及豪貴子弟，就中有妖艷入眼者，俟散訪其家而宴集焉。其循墻一曲，卑下凡雜之妓居焉。三曲所居之妓，繫名官籍者，凡官設法賣酒者，以次分番供應。如遇併番，—月止一二日也。

Such women relied on their beauty and talents to attract the eyes (and financial support) of male patrons in order to survive. The relationship between the stage and sex work is made even clearer elsewhere, such as in Nai Deweng's 耐得翁 (fl. 13th century) *Ducheng jisheng* 都城紀勝 (Exhaustive Description of the Capital), a work that describes life in the Southern Song capital of Hangzhou (then Lin'an 臨安). It states:

> Convent wine shops: This means that there are sing-song girls inside with whom one can indulge in pleasure, and that they have beds stuck away in the wine-halls. Lanterns with red handles are put up above the doors and come rain or shine they are covered with a bamboo shade to make a sign by which they may be recognized. In other large wine shops sing-song

[204] Translation provided by Idema and West, *Chinese Theater*, 125. For the original, see Jin Yingzhi 金盈之, *Zuiweng tanlu* 醉翁談錄 (Record of Discussions of the Drunken Gaffer), (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1958), 58.41–42.

> girls simply accompany men as they sit. If you should wish to purchase their pleasure, then generally you go to where they live.[205]
>
> 庵酒店，謂有娼妓在內，可以就歡，而於酒閣內暗藏臥床也。門首紅梔子燈上，不以晴雨，必用箬蓋之，以為記認。其他大酒店，娼妓只伴坐而已。欲買歡，則多往其居。

This clear association between female performers and sex work no doubt had an influence on the ways in which dramas were consumed by their audiences. Tales like Qiu Hu—which itself was popularized through the pages of a collection that celebrated chaste and virtuous women—were performed on stages within teahouses and wineshops by actors and actresses engaged in the very behaviors that the tale criticizes. Some plays provided satirical renditions of socially upright figures, such as lecherous monks (no doubt played for laughs), or the romanticized and sexualized figure of the Buddhist or Daoist nun, the latter of which appeared in a number of plays reminiscent of the "scholar-beauty" romances popularized after the success of the *Xixiang ji*.[206]

The world of the entertainment quarter itself was also subject to drama, as in the case of the play *Yueming heshang du Liu Cui* 月明和尚度柳翠 (The Monk of Moonlight Saves Liu Cui), wherein the titular heroine, Liu Cui, originally a sprig of willow within the Bodhisattva Guanyin's vase, is reincarnated on earth due to its "affinity with the polluting dust [of the secular world] (*ou wu weichen* 偶汙微塵)—that is, the corrupting

[205] Translation within Idema and West, *Chinese Theater*, 143. For the original, see Nai Deweng's *Ducheng jisheng*, collected within Meng Yuanlao's 孟元老 *Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄 (Dreams of Splendor of the Eastern Capital), (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 92.

[206] For a discussion of these as well as a summary of these character types, see Zhao Xiaohuan, "Love, Lust, and Loss in the Daoist Nunnery as Presented in Yuan Drama," *T'oung Pao* 100, (2014): 80–119.

force of desire.[207] After being raised within the entertainment quarter as a sex worker, Liu Cui is rescued by the irascible Monk of Moon's Light, ultimately entering a convent. One can imagine the ironical scene of a singing-girl performing the role of Liu Cui, herself a sex worker, being urged by a freewheeling monk to abandon her lifestyle and become a nun. While it is deeply sympathetic to the plight of Liu Cui herself, it is hard to ignore the satirical elements at work in the play given the matter of staging and performance that, while distantly removed on the page, must have been patently obvious to the audience. Still other plays, like the adaptation of the Qiu Hu story detailed below present the tale with a straight face, leaving its interpretation to a raucous audience and performers who may at times have doubled as drinking and bed companions.

The range of female characters in Yuan drama reflects a sober awareness of the suffering experienced by many of the women who portrayed them on the stage. For every young and beautiful heroine born to class and wealth there is a Liu Cui, for every wealthy daughter of privilege there is a Dou E 竇娥 (see below), herself victim to a corrupt justice system that favored the words of men of wealth and status over those of women in general, much less those embroiled in the world of the pleasure quarters. The composers of such plays themselves were no doubt aware of the injustices of the day, just as they themselves were faced with the consequences of Mongol rule after the Yuan conquest of the Jin and the Song. While the insistence of some scholars that the rise of drama in the Yuan was borne out of Chinese resentment under the yoke of Mongol rule is perhaps

[207] The description of the willow sprig that would go on to be incarnated as the unfortunate Liu Cui appears within the wedge of the play. See Zang Maoxun 臧懋循 (1550–1620), *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選 (Selections of Yuan Drama) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 1335. For the entire play, see 1335–1352.

exaggerated, the role of women (and their bodies) as vessels for male anxieties about social and cultural change remains valid.[208]

Such anxieties resulted in the flourishing of writings on loyalty, commemorating the valiant martyrs of Jin and Yuan incursions as well as the steadfast women who resisted not through conflict, but largely through the preservation of self (by avoiding the polluted "other") through suicide or refusal of remarriage.[209] Such accounts proliferated during the Southern Song and represented a discourse wherein "a woman's body was analogous to the political jurisdiction of the male official, an analogy explicitly articulated in writings of the time."[210] The multiplicity of meanings inherent within such symbolism allowed for different representations of female loyalty. A woman could be loyal to her husband by remaining chaste, to the empire by resisting invaders (and destroying herself in the process), or even to her culture by upholding traditions. This flexibility allowed such tales of female heroic suicides to be reframed in such a way that

[208] Such resentments stemmed, of course, from the inability to sit for the imperial examination for the first fifty years of the Yuan as well as discrimination against Chinese scholar-officials (especially those from the Southern Song). For an early example of this argument, see Zhu Jing's 朱經's preface to the *Qinglou ji* in Yu Weimin 俞為民 and Sun Rongrong 孫蓉蓉, eds., *Lidai quhua huibian: Tang Song Yuan bian* 歷代曲話彙編 唐宋元編 (Collection of Theatrical Discussions, Tang, Song, and Yuan) (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2006), 466. However, as Idema and West note, *zaju* as a genre was most likely established before the Yuan and would flourish for some time afterwards. See Idema and West, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, x.

[209] The rapid rise in accounts of female suicide during the Song was also noted by Andrew Hsieh and Jonathan Spence in their examination of the records of women's biographies in official histories from the Jin to the Ming. While the number of accounts of women that ended in suicide remained relatively low in the *Jin shu* 晉書 (History of the Jin) [7 accounts out of 34 total] and *Xin Tang shu* (New History of the Tang) [8 accounts out of 43], the numbers double in the *Song shi* 宋史 (History of the Song) [16 out of 38], more than triple in the Yuan (59 out of 95), and increase ten-fold in the Ming (147 out of 223). See Hsieh and Spence, "Suicide and the Family in Pre-modern Chinese Society," 32.

[210] Beverly Bossler, "Gender and Empire: A View from the Yuan," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.1 (2004): 203.

they served not merely as examples to be emulated by women, but also by men. As a result, accounts of female suicides were directed at recalcitrant officials with the intention of shaming them, as if stating: "if a woman is capable of such things, why aren't you?"

Such idealized representations of female loyalty find perhaps no better representation than in Guan Hanqing's 關漢卿 (c.1245–1322) famed play *Gantian dongdi Dou E yuan* 感天動地竇娥冤 (Moving Heaven and Shaking Earth: The Injustice to Dou E).[211] In the play Dou Duanyun 竇端雲 (later renamed Dou E 竇娥, Beauty Dou) is sold into marriage at the age of seventeen by her father to make good on a debt he owes to a moneylender, Madame Cai, as well as to finance his attempt to gain a government position. The moneylender marries Dou E to her son, but the young man dies shortly after. A scheming doctor soon appears and attempts to kill Madame Cai, but she is saved by a man named Zhang and his son, a local tough named Donkey. Rather than accept financial reward for their actions, Zhang demands that Madame Cai marry him while Dou E marries his son. Mindful of a bedside promise that she made to her dead husband, Dou E refuses his offer. Donkey schemes to kill Madame Cai by poisoning her soup, intending to seize Dou E once and for all. The plan is thwarted when his father, Zhang, drinks the soup instead of Madame Cai, leading to his death. Donkey frames Dou E for the misdeed and she is arrested and taken before corrupt and incompetent officials who torture her. When faced with the possibility of her mother-in-law being beaten, Dou E confesses, and is sentenced to be beheaded. Before she faces the executioner's blade, she makes three lasting oaths, 1) declaring that her blood will fly upward, 2) that snow

[211] For an excellent summation of the play, its origins, and authorship as well as a full translation, see Idema and West, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, 1–104.

will fall in midsummer, and 3) that there would be a three-year long drought. Heaven, acknowledging the injustice done to her carries out her three requests. Eventually her ghost is reunited with her father, now an official responsible for overseeing executions. She pleads her case to him, and he investigates, ultimately punishing those responsible for her death.

The searing descriptions of Dou E's suffering—both at the hands of Donkey—and later the court remain as compelling now as they must have been when performed in the Yuan. Yet such scenes of suffering require context and meaning to convey an affective impact on an audience. For, as Castelli notes:

> Martyrdom is not simply an action. Martyrdom requires audience (whether real or fictive), retelling, interpretation, and world- and meaning-making activity. Suffering violence in and of itself is not enough. In order for martyrdom to emerge, both the violence and its suffering must be infused with particular meanings.[212]

The terrible suffering that Dou E undergoes resonates with audiences (then and now) because it speaks to universal themes: injustice, greed, righteousness, and the weight of familial ties. While such themes are commonplace on the Chinese stage, as Idema and West note, "its force is magnified here both by the powerless position of women (even those with money) and by the inability of ethical behavior to bring order to everyday life."[213] Dou E's case represents the precarious position that lower-class women inhabited in the period. It also takes place in a world defined by economic transaction. Dou E is treated like a commodity (much in the same vein as Qiu Hu's overtures to his wife in the

[212] Castelli, *Martydom and Memory*, 34.

[213] Idema and West, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, 3.

mulberry grove) to be bought and sold and indebtedness defines the relationships between the characters of the play. Both Madame Cai and Dou E are bereft of husbands and thus vulnerable to predation by unsavory men who desire to acquire both their bodies and property. For Madame Cai, Dou E's refusal to remarry is nonsensical. Why deprive herself of the safety that marriage affords? For Dou E, Madame Cai's casual acceptance of remarriage is unimaginable, and, despite her forced marriage to her son (and its brevity), she is resolved to maintain her chastity. The true villains of the piece are the various male characters who either scheme to force the women into marriage, attempt to harm them, or plot murder. The legal system serves their ends and is staffed and run by men as capricious and cruel as the doctor, Zhang, or Donkey. Only Dou E's father, forced to sell her to ensure the survival of the clan and its eventual resurgence is portrayed in a positive fashion, and despite his best efforts, he is ultimately too late to help his daughter and can only enforce justice after his daughter's torture and execution.

The sympathy that the play shows to Dou E stems not only from the fact that she is wrongfully accused and unjustly executed, but that, as a woman, bereft of the protection of a father and husband, she had little to no chance of survival. Guan Hanqing demonstrates a remarkable empathy towards Dou E, a woman of integrity set amongst the dregs of society. The richness of her characterization and the emphasis on her suffering, detailing even the strokes of the cane on her skin, her blood, torn flesh, and cries, all speak to the performative appeal of female suffering on the stage. One can imagine the impact of the following aria on a spellbound crowd:

呀！是誰人唱叫揚疾，　Ai! Who cries and shouts so loud and fast?
不由我不魄散魂飛。　I can't stop wailing and weeping.

恰消停，	My sentient soul just returns to me
才蘇醒，	And I revive
又昏迷。	Only to fall dizzy and pass out.
捱千般打拷，	Struggling to get through a thousand kinds of beating and whippings—
萬種凌逼，	Look at the fresh blood dripping and dropping—
一杖下，	One stroke falls,
一道血，	One rivulet of blood,
一層皮。	One layer of skin![214]

The drama of the scene is heightened by two factors, the beauty of its victim and the spotlessness of her integrity. For the male audience the play functions on several levels: it provides a sympathetic perspective on the hardships of women and criticism on the callousness of society, especially the ineptness and corruption of the legal system; yet it also offers the prurient spectacle of the torture of a young beauty—a character most likely played by a woman in a venue situated amongst the moneylenders and winehouses that supplied characters like Madame Cai and Donkey Zhang. While *Dou E yuan* is one of the best-known Yuan *zaju* to deal with such themes, it is by no means the only, and next I shall examine a dramatic retelling of the Qiu Hu tale, one altered and expanded for the stage.

[214] Translation taken from Idema and West, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, 23.

3. Illustration from *Lu daifu Qiu Hu xiqi* in Zang Maoxun, *Yuanqu xuan tu* 元曲選圖.

QIU HU TRIES TO SEDUCE HIS WIFE: AN OVERVIEW

The most popular (and by extension perhaps, the most influential) adaptation of the Qiu Hu tale is the four-act drama, named (*zhengming* 正名) *Lu daifu Qiu Hu xiqi* 魯大夫秋胡戲妻 (The Grandee of Lu, Qiu Hu, Tries to Seduce His Wife) and titled (*timu* 題目) *Zhenliefu Meiying shouzhi* 貞烈婦梅英守志 (Chaste Wife Meiying Preserves Her Intent) by the Jin/Early-Yuan playwright Shi Junbao.[215] Much as the *bianwen* edition of the tale expanded upon the dialogue and characterization of Qiu Hu and his family, so too does the play greatly build upon the otherwise simple tale, adding new characters, sub-plots, and replacing the original tragic ending with one of rapprochement and reunion. In the process, the character of Qiu Hu's wife, now provided with a name of her own, is subjected to the twin forces of chastity and filial piety—a conflict that reflects contemporary concerns of women determined to avoid remarriage. It also, much like *Dou E*, concerns itself with matters of class and the pernicious corruption of the law.

Qiu Hu xiqi, much like the *Lienü zhuan* tale from which it is derived, is set once more in the state of Lu during the Zhou dynasty. Act One of the play opens on the marriage feast of Qiu Hu and a daughter of the wealthy Luo clan (Luo dahu 羅大戶), Plum-Blossom (Meiying 梅英), played by the Male Lead (*zhengmo* 正末) and Female Lead (*zhengdan* 正旦) respectively. Attending the festivities are Qiu Hu's mother, neé

[215] Two English translations of this play are available. See William Dolby's *Eight Chinese Plays from the Thirteenth Century to the Present*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 53–83. Also see C.T. Hsia, Wai-yee Li, and George Kao eds., *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 299–329.

Liu (played by the Older Female, *laodan* 老旦), their matchmaker (*meipo* 媒婆), and the young bride's parents, Squire Luo and his wife, played by the Comic (*jing* 淨) and Second Female (*chadan* 搽旦). Trouble soon arises, however, when amidst the celebrations a recruiting sergeant arrives with an order conscripting Qiu Hu into the army. Unable to delay his departure, Qiu Hu is forced to accompany the sergeant while Meiying laments their separation, grieving that: "All for one night of affection, my bosom is filled with grief" (*dou ze wei yixiao de en'ai, chuaiyu wo zhe man huai choumen* 都則為一宵的恩愛，揣與我這滿懷愁悶).[216]

Act Two begins ten years after Qiu Hu's departure. The Luo family has since fallen on hard times and the scene begins by introducing Squire Li, a local magnate who boasts that he possesses "money, grain, land, riches, and treasures—everything but a pretty and charming wife" (*yi ge biaobiao zhizhi de laopo* 一個標標致致的老婆).[217] Squire Li decides to ask Meiying's father for her hand, claiming in the process that Qiu Hu is dead, and offers to forgive a debt that the Luo family owes as well as reward them with food and finery. He gives Squire Luo betrothal gifts of food and silk and then departs, heading off to visit Qiu Hu's mother. Upon arriving, Squire Luo also gives presents to Madame Liu—under the guise of family gifts—for her and her daughter-in-law to enjoy. As soon as she accepts the food and silk, Squire Luo declares the bridal

[216] Translation adapted from *Qiu Hu Tries to Seduce His Wife* in the *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 305. Subsequent quotations from the play included below are all adapted from this volume. Modifications have been made to formatting, and, in some cases certain terms have been modified or changed outright. For the Chinese original, see *Yuanqu xuan*, 543

[217] Ibid. 308 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 545.

contract with Squire Li official and threatens Madame Liu with a lawsuit if tries to back out.

Soon after, Squire Li, the Luo family, and a wedding entourage arrive at Madame Liu's residence. Meiying hears of the arrangement and scolds her parents, who insult her in kind, demanding that she think of their wellbeing as well as her own as recipients of Squire Li's largesse. Li for his part tries to win over the righteously angry Meiying, who shifts between lamenting her long years of suffering while caring for the ailing Madame Liu, and physically and verbally abusing him. The act ends with her mother and father acknowledging the impossibility of the match (and washing their hands of the consequences), stating that: "It is all because your union with Meiying is destined not to be/it's not because my daughter has been putting on an act."[218]

Act Three switches perspective to Qiu Hu, who relates how he swiftly rose in rank in the army before gaining a position as a high official under Duke Zhao of Lu. The Duke, sympathetic to his tale of departing home ten years prior, bestows a gold ingot on Qiu Hu and allows him to return home to check on his aged mother. The following events follow the traditional tale fairly closely, with his stumbling upon his wife gathering mulberry leaves in the family grove and offering a poem to her to gain her attention. Here, however, the confrontation between the two escalates in intensity, with Qiu Hu first propositioning her, then attempting to restrain her physically, before attempting to bribe her (as well as threaten her) before finally relenting. Meiying, for her part, continuously

[218] Ibid., 315 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 549.

insults and threatens her would-be suitor, ultimately driving him from the grove in shame.

Act Four sees Qiu Hu returning home and meeting his mother. Upon their joyous reunion, he offers her the golden ingot and asks about his wife. Meiying enters and recognizes him as her accoster from the mulberry grove. The two verbally spar, with her trying to force him to admit to attempting to seduce another man's wife, and him feigning innocence. Meiying's righteous anger intensifies until she calls for divorce papers, at which time Squire Li, accompanied by Squire Luo and his wife enter. Qiu Hu confronts them, learning of Li's extortion and attempts to marry his wife and takes him into custody to be punished by the local magistrate. Madame Liu, hearing that Meiying refuses to take her son back, threatens to kill herself if her daughter-in-law does not relent. Faced with the demands of filial piety, Meiying has no choice but to agree to return to Qiu Hu and the play comes to a sudden, and somewhat unceremonious close. Rather than ending with the fracturing of the family, there remains an uneasy peace, with Qiu Hu attempting to justify his previous flirtation as a ploy to test his wife's resolve and Meiying admitting that only her fear of violating the dictates of filial piety quieted her rage.

AUTHORSHIP AND EDITIONS

Though little is known about Shi Junbao's life, he is recorded in Zhong Sicheng's 鍾嗣成 (c. 1279–c.1360) *Lu gui bu* 錄鬼簿 (A Register of Ghosts) as the author of ten plays,

only three of which are still extant.[219] One of these works is *Qiu Hu xiqi*, which is recorded within the *Lu gui bu* with the topic of "The Mulberry Picker, Meiying, Expresses her Righteous Anger" (*Caisangnü Meiying suhen* 採桑女梅英訴恨). He is included under the section of "talents of a previous generation who composed works transmitting the miraculous and whose works still circulate in the world" (*qianbei cairen you suo bian chuanqi xing yu shizhe* 前輩才人有所編傳奇行於世者) as a man of Pingyang 平陽 (near Linfen 臨汾 in modern-day Shanxi).[220] Sun Kaidi has argued that Shi Junbao was of Jurchen descent, and was in fact named Shizhan Deyu 石琖德玉, styled Junbao, who was known as a painter of bamboo and friend of the literatus Wang Yun 王惲 (1227–1276).[221] As West and Idema note, it was not uncommon for Jurchen doubled-surnames to drop the second syllable, and, though Wang Yun's funerary

[219] The two extant plays are the aforementioned *Fengyue ziyun ting* 諸宮調風月紫雲亭 (Wind and Moon in the Courtyard of Purple Clouds), *Lu daifu Qiu Hu xiqi*, as well as *Li Yaxian huajiu Qujiang chi* 李亞仙花酒曲江池 (Li Yaxian Amid Flowers and Wine at the Winding Stream) in four acts. The former is preserved in Huang Peilie's 黃丕烈 (1763–1825) *Yuankan zaju sanshi Zhong* 元刊雜劇三十種 (Thirty Variety Plays Published in the Yuan Dynasty). For a modern edition, see Zheng Qian 鄭騫, *Jiaoding Yuankan zaju sanshi Zhong* 校訂元刊雜劇三十種 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1962). The latter is collected in Wang Jide's 王驥德 (ca. 1560–1623) *Gu zaju ershi Zhong* 古雜劇二十種 (Anthology of Twenty Ancient Plays). See Shi Junbao and Wang Jide, *Gu zaju: Li Yaxian huajiu Qujiang chi* (Shanghai: Shanghai guju chubanshe, 1995). The other seven plays are *Dongwu Xiao Qiao ku Zhou Yu* 東吳小喬哭周瑜 (Xiao Qiao of East Wu Weeps for Zhou Yu), *Zhao Ershi zuizou Xuexiang ting* 趙二世醉走雪香亭 (Zhao the Second Drunkenly Wanders the Snowy Fragrance Pavilion), *Zhang tianshi duan suihan sanyou* 張天師斷歲寒三友 (Celestial Master Zhang Severs the Three Friends of Winter), *Shinü Qiu Xiang yuan* 士女秋香怨 (The Resentment of the Maid Qiu Xiang), *Liu Mei'er jinqian ji* 柳眉兒金錢記 (Tale of Liu Mei'er and the Gold Coin), *Lü taihou hai Peng Yue* 呂太后醢彭越 (Empress Lü Turns Peng Yue into Mincemeat), and *Hongxiao yi* 紅綃驛 (Red Silk Posthouse). See Zhong, *Lu gui bu wai si zhong*, 23.

[220] Ibid.

[221] See a summary of Sun's argument in *Shi Junbao xiqu ji* 石君寶戲曲集 (Collected Plays of Shi Junbao) ed. by Huang Zhusan 黃竹三 (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1992), 1–3. Dolby also argues for a Jurchen origin for Shi. See his *Eight Chinese Plays*, 11–13.

inscription for Shizhan Deyu listed his native place to the northeast in Gaizhou 蓋州 in Liaodong, this was possibly the hereditary registry of the family and may not have reflected his actual origins in Pingyang.[222]

Common themes run through the surviving works of Shi Junbao. These include the importance of family, the dangers of unrestrained passion and sexual tension, as well as the conflicts that derive from each. Two of his surviving plays, *Ziyun ting* and *Li Yaxian*, revolve around unsanctioned romances between courtesans and young men of the scholar-official class. In both cases, the passions of the young couples lead to chaos within the family and a rupture in the relationship between father and son. Both plays end with family reunions and the happy continuation of the lovers' relationships. *Qiu Hu xiqi* too ends with a happy ending, though the author strains to justify the dramatic changes in the play from the grim ending of the original. Rather than meeting a watery end, Qiu Hu's wife now reconciles with her husband due to the intervention of her mother-in-law. The dramatic end of the original tale is now replaced with a comedic denouement that, while it robs the original of much of its dramatic power, provides the cheerful ending that audiences of such plays may have expected.

However, before examining the content of the play itself, it is important to note that the earliest surviving edition of the work is found in Zang Maoxun's 臧懋循 (1550–1620) *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選 (Selections of Yuan Drama).[223] This work, published in two installments in 1615–1616 is also known as the *Yuanren baizhong qu* 元人百種曲 (One

[222] See Idema and West, *Chinese Theater*, 236–239.

[223] For the play, see *Yuanqu xuan*, 542–556.

Hundred Plays by Yuan Authors) and remains the most influential collection of early drama in the Chinese literary tradition. However, as scholarship over the past few decades has demonstrated, the works in Zang's collection had undergone extensive editing and emendation and varied significantly from their Yuan progenitors.[224] Part of this was due to the fact that Zang sourced a number of texts from "palace editions," versions held by the eunuch agency responsible for imperial entertainment. These editions were later popularized through printed editions and found their way into Zang's collection. Not content with these commercial editions, which in some cases had already removed content deemed vulgar or politically sensitive, Zang took upon himself the role of editor, correcting mistakes in the texts, adding glosses for a reading audience, changing the rhymes for arias, and deleting or adding content at his whim. The result "turned the plays from scripts that originally were the product of collective social, cultural, and theatrical energies into reading literature that supposedly mirrored an individual psyche."[225]

The resulting anthology became the de facto standard after its publication. Part of the reason for its popularity lay in the impeccable quality of its printed editions, as well as their helpful glosses and simple layout which aided the eager reader who, previously, often had to contend with poorly printed versions that lacked speaking prompts or retained Yuan-era colloquialisms. However, the resulting popularity of Zang's collection

[224] For a summary of Zang Maoxun's influence and approach to these texts, see Idema and West, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, xxviii-xxxi. Also see Wilt Idema, "Why You Have Never Read a Yuan Drama: The Transformation of *zaju* at the Ming Court," in *Studi in onore di Lanciello Lanciotti*, ed. by S.M. Carletti et. al. (Napoli: Istituto Universiatorio Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, 1996), 765–791.

[225] Idema and West, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, xxxi.

of Yuan drama led to a widespread acceptance of his revised editions as the definitive representations of the original works. This approach overlooks the dramatic changes that Zang Maoxun inflicted on the plays he edited; changes that brought their content and characters into line with his ideological views with regards to Confucian propriety, female mores, and perceived vulgarity.[226] This is all to state that, as Shi Junbao's *Qiu Hu xiqi* is only preserved through Zang's *Yuanqu xuan,* we should be wary of assuming that it represents the Yuan original, for it no doubt underwent significant editing and emendation, not to mention potential changes in plot and characterization.

WIELDING A PIERCING TONGUE: FEMALE RAGE IN *QIU HU XIQI*

Perhaps the most consistent quality of Qiu Hu's wife across anecdotal and poetic accounts is her righteous anger from her treatment at the hand of her husband. The two most memorable scenes—the ones that span almost every adaptation of the tale (the attempted seduction and subsequent meeting)—are also center stage for female anger and resentment. One would thus expect much of *Qiu Hu xiqi* to be devoted to the expression of a woman's rage, first at the attempt to rob her of her intention to remain loyal to her husband (as well as avoid remarriage), and second, at the betrayal that repaid her ten years of loyalty and self-sacrifice with duplicity. The anger of Qiu Hu's wife in the *Lienü*

[226] For an incisive examination of the types of changes that Zang made and the ways in which they recast characters and their motivations, see Stephen West, "A Study in Appropriation: Zang Maoxun's Injustice to Dou E," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111.2 (1991): 283–302. For a discussion of how Zang shaped texts through the process of annotation, editing, and publishing, see Patricia Sieber, *Theaters of Desire: Authors, Readers, and the Reproduction of Early-Chinese Song Drama, 1300-2000* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 83–122.

zhuan edition of the tale, as well as later poetic imaginings, ultimately resulted in her own death. This is what Elizabeth Bronfen terms "suicide as self-textualization," where, by "undoing her body, she undoes the gender construction that places her in an inferior position."[227] Such rage is productive in that it allows for the expression of female subjectivity, yet it is also potentially destructive, especially towards restrictive social mores and male chauvinism. It was, in that sense, highly dangerous and worthy of criticism or suppression.

Before discussing the ways in which the play subverts narrative expectations, both freeing Meiying from the onus of chastity-driven suicide as well as deflating the confrontation between husband and wife, let us first examine two scenes of female rage in the play, both of which are triggered by male instigators—the villain (Squire Li) and the ostensible hero (Qiu Hu himself). The failures of these male characters drive forward the plot and ultimately provide Meiying with opportunities to demonstrate her integrity at their expense. For example, while Qiu Hu finds success abroad, it is his failure to stay in touch or to announce his return (as well as his subsequent flirtation) that forces his wife to spurn him and shame him before the neighborhood. For Squire Li, it is his boorishness and swaggering ignorance that makes him a target of Meiying's insults, and, ultimately, leads to his downfall.

In both cases it is Meiying who browbeats the male offenders, castigating them for their failings in insult-laden arias that strip them of their pride. Such expressions of humor are present throughout the play, first in the character of the matchmaker, who

[227] Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body*, 143.

suggests as an aside that Meiying leave her impoverished husband to find a wealthier man, then in the shattering of Qiu Hu's ego in the grove, as well as in the figure of the hapless and good-for-nothing Squire Li, who sees his dreams of matrimony quashed and spouts tortured literary references throughout.

The first scene is set in Act Three and involves Qiu Hu. It begins with Meiying entering the mulberry grove, lamenting the years of suffering and destitution that she and her mother-in-law have suffered since her husband departed. As she walks among the trees, she describes the scene in song:

放下我這采桑籃，	I'll set my mulberry basket down
我揀著這鮮桑樹。	And pluck from this lush mulberry tree.
只見那濃陰冉冉，	All I see are thick shadows, soft and tender,
翠錦哎模糊。	Like a brocade of kingfisher green, and, oh, so hazy.
衝開他這葉底煙，	I'll penetrate this mist beneath the leaves,
蕩散了些梢頭露。	And scatter dewdrops clinging to the tips of branches.[228]

The mist-filled mulberry grove combined with the shadowy depths of the trees lends the scene a dreamlike quality. Warmed by the sun, she takes off her blouse and drapes it over a branch. At that moment, Qiu Hu enters the scene. There is an undisputable romantic element to the staging of the scene. In another drama, such as *Xixiang ji*, this would be the moment of meeting between two would-be lovers, as the young scholar spies the beauty, unaware, in a garden or temple yard. The play is clearly aware of the potential erotic tension in the scene, as before she strips off her blouse, Meiying sings of her

[228] *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 316 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 550.

labors, stating that "I'm just a country wife, used to gathering cocoons and spinning silk/But now I am one plucking flowers and playing with willows" (*wo benshi zhaijian saosi zhuangjia fu, dao zuo liao ge nianhua nongliu de renwu* 我本是摘繭繅絲莊家婦，倒做了個拈花弄柳的人物).[229] The expression "plucking flowers and playing with willows" (*nianhua nongliu*) is a common reference to womanizers who frequented the pleasure quarters. In this line, the normally strait-laced Meiying is acknowledging the romantic trappings of the scene, providing a wink and a nod to the audience. Here she is sweat-soaked, alone, and partially disrobed, and he, reading the scene as the putative romantic hero (and not a long-departed and married high official) makes a sexual overture to her. When he tries to grab her and fails, he resorts to offering her the ingot of gold intended for his mother. The following scene demonstrates the effectiveness of Meiying's sharp tongue. It reads:

> (MEIYING): You beast! Listen! Don't you know that when a man sees gold he mends his ways, and when a woman sees gold, she dares not allow her resolution to weaken? Seeing that I refuse, you beast, you drag out your gold. Do you think that this is its proper use? (*Sings*:)
>
> (*Wan hai'er*)
> Don't you know that in books there are women as beautiful as jade?
>
> (QIU HU): Alas! How she taunts me relentlessly!
>
> (MEIYING):
> You offer money, hoping to buy the amorous sport of clouds and rain.[230]

[229] Ibid.

[230] The "sport of clouds and rain" (*youyun zhiyu* 尤雲滯雨) is a euphemism for sexual activity that derives from the tale of the meeting between King Xiang of Chu 楚襄王 and the spirit of Shamanka Mountain 巫山 as recounted in Song Yu's 宋玉 (fl. 298–263 BCE) "Rhapsody on the High Terrace" ("Gaotang fu" 高唐賦). In the rhapsody, Song Yu recounts the meeting between the king and the goddess. After they share a

Don't you know that you ought to spend your gold on book collecting?
Ai! You are a fine gentleman,
Accustomed to pearls, and relying on money-laden pockets,
To throw your weight around.
Haven't you heard that a gentleman uses money wisely?
I can no longer hold back my anger.
I curse this monkey, scrubbed and capped like an official,
This ox, this horse bedecked in robes.[231]

兀那禽獸，你聽者！可不道男子見其金，易其過；女子見其金，不敢壞其志。那禽獸見人不肯，將出黃金來，你道黃金這般好用的！(唱)
【耍孩兒】可不道書中有女顏如玉。
(秋胡云) 呀！倒吃了他一個醬瓜兒！
(正旦唱)你將著金，要買人猶云殢雨，卻不道黃金散盡為收書。哎，你個富家郎，慣使珍珠，倚仗著囊中有鈔多聲勢，豈不聞財上分明大丈夫，不由咱生嗔怒。我罵你個沐猴冠冕，牛馬襟裾！

Shocked by her sudden insults, Qiu Hu tries to quiet her by offering to marry her—an offer that she also meets with ridicule. Off balance and unsure of how to proceed, he then threatens her physically.

(QIU HU): Stop talking like that, young lady. If you still refuse, I'm not going to fool around anymore. I have no choice but to beat you to death…
(MEIYING): Whom are you going to beat? (QIU HU): I'll beat you.

(MEIYING *sings*):

(*Third to Coda*)
If you so much as peek at me,
I'll brand you on the forehead.

bed, she describes herself thus: "I live on the sunny side of Shaman Mount/Among the defiles of a lofty hill. Mornings I am Dawn Cloud/Evenings I am Pouring Rain. Dawn after dawn, dusk after dusk/Below the Sun Terrace." The imagery of clouds and rain as well as references to Gaotang became common shorthand for sexual encounters. See Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531) and David Knechtges, *Wen Xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature, Vol. 3 – Rhapsodies on Natural Phenomena, Birds and Animals, Aspirations and Feelings, Sorrowful Laments, Literature, Music, and Passion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 327. For the entire *fu*, see 324–339.

[231] See *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 319 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 552.

Tug at me,
And I'll lop off your hands and feet.
Lay a finger on me,
And I'll crack your backbone.
Pinch me,
And I'll have you banished a thousand miles away.
Embrace me,
And I'll have you mount the wooden donkey at the crossroads.[232]
Aiya! You who will suffer countless hackings from the law:
I have not torn up your family burial grounds,
Nor killed off your kith and kin.

(QIU HU): This woman has no manners at all! If you refuse, we'll just forget about it. Why do you have to curse me like that? (MEIYING *acting out picking up the mulberry basket, sings*:)

(*Coda*)
With bulging eyes, the wretch looks on as I berate this corpse of his;
Shamefaced, he watches me curse his forefathers.
Who told you to try to seduce a genteel woman in the mulberry garden?
Even if your ancestors from seven generations back leaped out,
They could not come to your assistance. (*Exits*.)[233]

(秋胡云)小娘子，休這等說。你若還不肯呵，我如今一不做二不休，拚的打死你也。(正旦云)你要打誰？(秋胡云)我打你。(正旦唱)
【三煞】你瞅我一瞅，黮了你那額顱；扯我一扯，削了你那手足；你湯我一湯，拷了你那腰截骨；掐我一掐，我著你三千裏外該流遞；摟我一摟，我著你十字階頭便上木驢。哎，吃萬剮的遭刑律。我又不曾掀了你家墳墓，我又不曾殺了你家眷屬！
(秋胡云)這婆娘好無禮也！你不肯便罷了，怎麼這般罵我？(正旦提桑籃科，唱)
【尾煞】這廝睜著眼，覷我罵那死屍；腆著臉，著我咒他上祖。誰著你桑園裏戲弄人家良人婦！便跳出你那七代先靈，也做不的主！(下)

[232] The "wooden donkey" (*mulü* 木履) was a public form of punishment like the cangue in which offenders were placed.

[233] Adapted from *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 320. See *Yuanqu xuan*, 552–53.

We see here the subversion of Qiu Hu's expectations; the romanticized setting of the mulberry grove should be the ideal setting for a tryst, and he, stumbling upon a partially clad beauty, interprets it as such. That the woman he is surreptitiously propositioning—a woman who ultimately curses him and his line for seven generations—is his wife, adds to the farcical nature of the scene. One can imagine the reaction of an audience, one perhaps familiar with figures like Qiu Hu, rich and powerful officials or merchants, used to lording their wealth and influence over others, upon seeing his repeated humiliation at the hands of his wife. By contrasting the bawdy presentation of the above with the mournful and reticent depictions of their confrontation in the poetic works in Chapter 2 or the *bianwen* in Chapter 3, one can see how the potential for humor and performative exaggeration in the *zaju* genre grant the tale a vivacious new energy.

Yet there is explicit danger in this scene as well. Meiying is confronted, alone and partially disrobed, by an unfamiliar man in an isolated setting. From the audience's perspective, armed with the knowledge of the identities of both figures, and with the expectations that such knowledge brings, the scene has comic effect. Yet for Meiying herself, the confrontation is reminiscent of any number of similar assaults that play out in texts such as the *Lienü zhuan* and result in resistance, and, often, the suicide of the victim in order to preserve her chastity. Qiu Hu's sudden shift from flattery to coercion, including his attempt to restrain her and cut off her escape from the grove, displays his moral failings just as Meiying's stubborn resistance demonstrates her integrity. Seeing his confidence and bluster collapse under the weight of Meiying's insults defuses the tension and threat of violence and replaces it with humiliation at his expense.

Yet despite Qiu Hu's behavior, he avoids any consequences for his behavior. There are a number of reasons for this lack of accountability. First, as her husband, the force of the law is on his side. While he is free to divorce his wife for any number of reasons, she requires his permission to leave him. In Act Four, after confronting Qiu Hu about his behavior in the grove, Meiying repeatedly asks him for divorce papers, requests that he refuses to acknowledge. Second, the play demands the happy reconciliation of the couple and that requires both parties to swiftly forget about his transgressions and to instead celebrate the couple's reunion. To facilitate this, the play punishes the comical and unsympathetic figure of Squire Li in Qiu Hu's place.

Squire Li, himself a comedic character (and portrayed by the clown role), is a bumbling representation of the *nouveau riche* who arose in the bustling market cities of the Song. His sole motivation in the play is to procure a wife, and he utilizes his fortune to do so. Upon hearing that Meiying's father has consented to give her away in exchange for forgiveness of the family debt, Squire Li celebrates:

> Now, armed with mutton, wine, and clothes, I will take Meiying as wife. Just wait until she comes to my house—how I'll spin her around and get down to business! What fun that would be! This is just what people have in mind when they say:
>
> 'The night of painted candles in the bridal chamber
> When a pounding mallet hangs on the golden rooster.'[234]
>
> 如今將著羊酒表裏取梅英去，待他到我家中，抅搭幫放番他就做營生，何等有趣！正是：洞房花燭夜，金榜掛擂槌。

[234] Adapted from *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 309. For the Chinese original, see *Yuanqu xuan*, 546.

The original form of the aphorism that Squire Li quotes should read "A night of painted candles in the bridal chamber/When one's name hangs on the golden roster" (*dongfang huazhu ye, jinbang gua ming shi* 洞房花燭夜，金榜掛名時) and refers to the twin joys of a young scholar's life: his wedding night and his name appearing among the rolls of successful candidates in the civil examination. Squire Li, though he lacks the education of Qiu Hu and cannot match him in erudition, longs nevertheless for the pleasures of the wedding chamber.

In Act Four, Li arrives amidst the argument between husband and wife. While he was previously the villain, now he is played solely for comedy:

> (SQUIRE LI *enters along with* LUO, SECOND FEMALE *[playing his* WIFE*], and extras*.)
> (LI:) She has accepted my betrothal gift, and yet she abuses me! Can I just forget about the whole matter? I have brought several brawny attendants along and will force her to marry me!
> LUO *and* SECOND FEMALE *speak*: Today is a fine day. We'll help you with the abduction! (*They act out seeing* MEIYING *and speak*:) Isn't this our daughter, Meiying?
> (MEIYING *sings*):
>
> > (*Victory Song*)
> > Their coming is like adding frost to snow.
> > Earlier I refused to yield even to "one who caught the great turtle,"[235]
> > Ai! How dare you, cowherd, harbor similar hopes?
>
> (QIU HU *shouting*:) Hey there fellows, what are you doing in my house? (LI *acts surprised and speaks*:) *Aiya*! He has become an official and no longer serves in the army! I heard you'd returned home with honors, so I have come especially to offer my congratulations. (LUO and SECOND FEMALE speak:) Pooh! You said he was dead! (LI *speaks*:) He's not dead, but I soon will be! (QIU HU *speaks*:) So that wretch has fabricated this story in order to steal my wife! Attendants, place him under arrest and take him to Juye County. Ask the magistrate there to pass a heavy sentence on him!

[235] That is, one with great ambition or bearing. Ao 鼇 refers to an enormous mythical sea-turtle that was said to bear the sacred isle of Penglai (among others) upon its back.

(ATTENDANTS *act out binding him*.) (LI *speaks*:) This wasn't my idea; it was your in-laws'! They owed me forty piculs of grain and offered to me their daughter to even accounts. (QIU HU *speaks*:) This is even more reprehensible! It is clear that you have been giving out loans illegally and then forcing your debtors to sell their daughters to you. Attendants, go to the magistrate of Juye County and tell him to pass the following sentence: forty heavy strokes on the back, three months in jail, and a fine of one thousand piculs of grain to be given to victims of famine. Tell the magistrate not to deal with him lightly! (ATTENDANTS *speak*:) Yes sir. (LI *speaks*:) I yearned foolishly for a night in the vernal bridal chamber. Who'd have thought that the person with the pounding mallet on the golden roster would materialize?[236]

(李大戶同羅、搽旦、雜當上，李云)他受了我紅定，倒被他搶白一場，難道便罷了？我如今帶領了許多狼僕搶親去也。(羅、搽旦云)今日是個好日辰，我和你搶他娘去！(做見科，云)兀的不是我女兒梅英！(正旦唱)
走將來雪上更加霜。早足俺這釣鼇客咱不認，哎，你個使牛郎休更想！(秋胡喝云)兀那廝！你來我家裏做甚麼？(李驚云)呀！元來他做了官，不是軍了也。我聞知你衣錦榮歸，特來賀喜。(羅、搽旦云)呸！這等你說他死了也。(李云)他不死倒是我死。(秋胡云)元來那廝假捏流言，奪人妻女。左右，與我拿下，送到鉅野縣去，問他一個重重罪名。(祇從做縛科)(李云)這也不是我的主意，就是你的岳翁岳母，欠了我四十石糧食，將他女兒轉賣與我的。(秋胡云)這等一發可惡，明明是廣放私債，逼勒賣女了。左右，你去與縣官說知，著重責四十板，枷號三個月，罰谷一千石。備濟饑民，毋得輕縱者。 (祇從云)理會的。(李云)一心妄想洞房春，誰料金榜擂槌有正身。

On the surface, the actions of Squire Li, while reprehensible, are little worse than those of Qiu Hu himself. Li, lacking the education required for an official posting, utilizes his ill-gotten fortune to pressure a family into marrying their daughter to him. Qiu Hu, having attained a powerful position, and the wealth and respect afforded it, tries to do the same thing to Meiying in the mulberry grove. However, whereas Squire Li is looking for marriage, Qiu Hu is only looking to dally. Both threaten physical violence, both offer

[236] Ibid., 324-25 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 555.

money to achieve their ends (in Qiu Hu's case, the gold ingot is itself a gift from his lord for his own mother—a representation of his filial responsibility that earns him his wife's disgust in each version of the tale). However only Squire Li is eventually punished. This is because the play needs a villain to receive their comeuppance so that Qiu Hu himself can be forgiven. Squire Li—an embodiment of the coarse and uneducated *nouveau riche*—is put in his place, just as Qiu Hu, a representation of the scholar elite is venerated. By the end of the play, not only will the social order be restored, but so too will the family be reunited. To do, however, requires the pacification of Meiying and the subversion of the classic tale.

AWKWARD REUNIONS: SUBVERTING THE QIU HU TALE

As mentioned above, the greatest plot difference between *Qiu Hu xiqi* and its forebears lay in its reworked finale. Whereas his wife threw herself in the river in the original *Lienü zhuan* tale, in the dramatic adaptation the family reunites under the pressure of Meiying's mother-in-law. This reestablishment of the status quo comes at the expense of Meiying's emotional agency by the climax of the play. This dramatic change may signify a response to audience expectations to the tone of the tale—which, played as a romantic comedy, would be ill matched with a scene of spousal suicide, or, perhaps the author(s) of the play were looking to subvert the well-known ending and supply something fresh. No matter the inspiration, the dramatic change to the conclusion of *Qiu Hu xiqi* not only recasts the tale as a romantic comedy from its more serious roots, it also pushes back against the inevitability of female suicide as a response to male inconsistency. The end result is a

sudden and farcical conclusion that attempts to erase a decade of separation between Qiu Hu and his wife by burying their differences under the weight of social expectations and the burden of filial piety.

Before addressing the conclusion directly, it is worth examining how the play portrays Meiying as an independent, complex, and nuanced character. At the onset of the play, we are told that the Luo clan is wealthy and that the Qiu clan has fallen on hard times. As the family is preparing for the third day wedding feast, the matchmaker teases Meiying about her nuptial choice:

> (MATCHMAKER *says*): Young lady, you should have chosen a rich man from the start; then you could have enjoyed fresh food and pretty dresses all your life. How could you marry into the poverty-stricken Qiu family? (MEIYING *says*:) Old Lady, what kind of talk is this? (*Sings*:)
>
> (*Oily Gourd*)
> As for how their pots are covered with spider webs, pans with dust—
> That is none other than my fate.
> Just think: generals and ministers of old came from humble families.
> Now we are forced to live on leeks and salt,
> But it is just like the dragon that has yet to receive the beckoning of wind and thunder. You see him as a commoner in a barren house—
> But I contend he is a minister of the Gilded Chamber.[237]
> When he made his marriage proposal,
> For me it was love at first sight.
> You know: there is neither rhyme nor reason
> For poverty and riches.
>
> (MATCHMAKER *says*): Young lady, Qiu Hu at present has neither money nor position. If you want to marry a rich man, it's still not too late! (MEIYING *sings*:)

[237] In the Han dynasty the chambers of high officials (*san gong* 三公) such as the prime minister (*chengxiang* 丞相) and Chief Defender (*taiwei* 太尉) painted their halls yellow. The term *huangge* 黃閣 later became a reference to such powerful figures.

(*Joy for All Under Heaven*)
People void of treasures in their bellies are destined to a life of poverty.
You suggest I marry another, oh, another man—
Yet I would rather suffer first from poverty!
Have you ever seen a noble lady emerging fully fledged from childhood?
In this whole world, there are womenfolk aplenty;
Everywhere under heaven, there is no lack of talk.
But who ever heard of a girl born with her husband's title and rank?[238]

(媒婆云)姐姐，你當初只該揀取一個財主，好吃好穿，一生受用。似秋老娘家這等窮苦艱難，你嫁他怎的？(正旦云)婆婆，這是甚的言語也！(唱)
【油葫蘆】至如他釜有蛛絲甑有塵，這的是我命運。想著那古來的將相出寒門，則俺這夫妻現受著齏款困，就似他那蛟龍未得風雷信。你看他是白屋客，我道他是黃閣臣。自從他那問親時，一見了我心先順，咱人這貧無本、富無根。
(媒婆云)姐姐，如今秋胡又無錢，又無功名，姐姐，你別嫁一個有錢的，也還不遲哩！(正旦唱)
【天下樂】咱人腹內無珍一世貧。你著我改嫁他也波人，則不如先受窘。可曾見做夫人自小裏便出身？蓋世間有的是女娘，普天下少甚麼議論，那一個胎胞兒裏做縣君？

Despite his impoverished origins, Meiying is determined to marry Qiu Hu based on the potential that she sees in the young man. Whereas she is treated as a commodity throughout the entirety of the play—sold by her parents to Squire Li, wooed with gold by her own husband—Meiying has settled on her choice based on belief in Qiu Hu's potential as a scholar as well as the love that sparks upon their meeting. While no doubt her parents consented to the match because of Qiu Hu's promising future (the pairing of the wealthy beauty and penniless scholar being a common one, see for example *Xixiang*

[238] *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 304 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 542–543.

ji), this aria makes it plain that Meiying could have refused the match (as she does Squire Li) if she were so inclined.

The scenes with Squire Li in Act Two reveal the depth of her determination to make her own decisions. During the ten years of Qiu Hu's absence, Meiying reveals that his mother has grown increasingly ill and requires a doctor. She, herself, has worked odd jobs to support the family. The Luo clan is of no help, as they too have fallen on hard times (and borrowed money from Squire Li as a result). After Squire Li informs Mother Qiu that he will be marrying Meiying, she avoids telling the young woman, and instead only hints at Li's coming by encouraging her to make herself up. Meiying, in a fit of pique, snaps at her:

> (*Daiguduo*)
> Granny stated her view;
> I ought to put on something new.[239]
> But am I really the kind of woman who doesn't know the ins and outs of
> decent grooming?
>
> (MEIYING *Speaks*:) Oh Qiu Hu! (MEIYING *sings*:)
>
> He's been gone five years—ten years;
> A thousand mountains, ten thousand rivers lie between us.
> Previously Mother-in-law was left with no one to rely on,
> And now mother and daughter haven't enough to live on!
>
> (OLD WOMAN *speaks*:) Daughter-in-law, why are you "throwing a gourd and pitching a ladle?"[240] (MEIYING *sings*:)
>
> How dare I "throw a gourd and pitch a ladle?"

[239] Meiying refers to her mother-in-law throughout colloquially as *nainai* 奶奶 (granny) as well as mother-in-law (*poniang* 婆娘).

[240] That is, flying into a rage.

(*Speaks*:) Granny is telling me that when the peddler comes, I ought to buy some rouge and powder for makeup. But, I say, Qiu Hu has been away for ten years and we've had to go without clothes and food. (*Sings*:)

Granny, who has the spare cash to patch a bamboo colander?[241]

【呆骨朵】奶奶道你婦人家穿一套兒新衣袂，我可也直恁般不識一個好弱也那高低。(帶云)秋胡呵，(唱)他去了那五載十年，阻隔著那千山萬水。早則俺那婆娘家無依倚，更合著這子母每無笆壁。(卜兒云)媳婦兒，你只待敦葫蘆摔馬杓哩。(正旦唱)媳婦兒怎敢是敦葫蘆摔馬杓？(云)奶奶道，等貨郎兒過來，買些胭脂粉搽搽。我梅英道，秋胡去了十年，穿的無，吃的無，(唱)奶奶也，誰有那閒錢來補笊籬！

At this moment Squire Li, accompanied by Meiying's father and mother enter and announce her impending re-marriage. Meiying declares the declaration nonsense, to which her mother responds: "My child, haven't you heard that to follow the words of one's parents is considered great filial piety? You'd better marry him" (*hai'er ye, kebudao shun fumu yan, hu wei daxiao*? *Ni jiale ta ye ba* 孩兒也，可不道順父母言，呼為大孝？你嫁了他也罷).[242] This is the second time that filial piety is brought up before Meiying in the play. In the first occurrence, in Act One, Qiu Hu reminds his new bride to be filial to her mother-in-law. Now, Meiying's own mother attempts to weaken her resolve by making her marriage a matter of filial piety, and thus make her decision not to remarry a moral quandary. Filial piety will later also be employed, to great effect, by Mother Qiu, who forces the couple to reunite by threatening to kill herself if they separate. In all three cases Meiying's choices are circumscribed by her obligations to

[241] Translation adapted from Ibid., 311. See also *Yuanqu xuan*, 547. The phrase "patch a bamboo colander" (*bu zhaoli* 補笊籬) means to do something wasteful or useless, in this case spending their limited cash on cosmetics for an absent husband.

[242] IIbid., 312 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 548.

older female figures, though her mother-in-law, as the new site of her responsibilities wins out in the end.

The confrontation between Squire Li and Meiying plays out in a similar fashion to that between husband and wife in Act Three. Meiying verbally abuses Li, even shoving him to the ground in anger, while he complains about being ill-treated. However, two exchanges within the act are worth examining in full. The first is the conversation between Meiying and her parents, upon the latter's insistence that she marry the oafish Li. She begins by declaring her intention to remain true to Qiu Hu:

> (*Rolling Embroidered Ball*)
> With the rooster I married I will fly together.
> Father and Mother, you made this match.
> Whether rich or poor, my lot is the marital knot.
> From morning till evening,
> My lips have touched neither rice nor water.
> What's there to say about food and clothes in abundance!
> The chills that run up and down my spine
> Are from the frigid cold that I have weathered;
> The growling of my stomach
> Is from the starvation I have endured.
> Don't think I would ever deviate from the right path!
>
> (LUO *speaks*:) Just stop all this fuss! Your mother-in-law has already accepted the betrothal gift of red silk. (MEIYING *speaks*:) How could that be! I'll go and ask my mother-in-law. (*Acts out seeing* OLD WOMAN, *speaks*:) Granny, Qiu Hu has been away for ten years, and I've been doing odd jobs to support you. How could you marry me off to another man? What good is my life? I might as well kill myself.[243]
>
> 【滾繡球】我如今嫁的雞，一處飛，也是你爺娘家匹配，貧和富是您孩兒裙帶頭衣食。從早起，到晚夕，上下唇並不曾粘著水米，甚的是足食豐衣！則我那脊樑上寒噤，是捱過這三冬冷；肚皮裏淒涼，是我舊忍過的饑，休想道半點兒差遲。
> (羅云)你休只管鬧，你家婆婆接了紅定也。(正旦云)有這等事？我問俺奶奶去。(見卜兒科，云)奶奶，想秋胡去了十年光景，我與人家擔

[243] Ibid.

好水換惡水，養活著奶奶；你怎麼把梅英又嫁與別人？要我這性命做甚麼？我不如尋個死去罷！

This is the first and only time that Meiying raises the specter of suicide in the play. Instead of killing herself in Act Four, she instead demands divorce papers from Qiu Hu—an action far removed from the character as she appeared in the *Lienü zhuan* tale. There, one justification for her suicide was the fear that her husband would leave her, forcing her to remarry, and thus to violate her strict integrity. Her vow to remain true to Qiu Hu in the face of hunger is reminiscent of her words in the *bianwen*, where she states how she prefers starvation over his proffered gold. Much as in that earlier account, she claims loyalty to Qiu Hu not simply due to the dictates of morality, but also because of her fond feelings towards him.

This devotion is best exemplified in an aria that ends Act Two. Disgusted by his attempt to force her into marriage, Meiying responds to Squire Li in an exchange that immediately brings to mind Luofu boasting about her love to the southern lord in "Mosang shang."

(MEIYING *sings*:)
I curse you as a villain who'll taste the blade of death at the marketplace execution ground in Yunyang."[244]
Yokels and hooligans are your kin,
Rich village heads your chums.
Ai! You ignorant country fellow,
What do you know of officialdom?
Where is my husband at this moment?
Perhaps, surrounded by embroidered curtains,
He rides a black-canopied carriage with carved wheels;

[244] As Idema and West note, Yunyang has long served as shorthand for an execution ground, perhaps due to its association with the site of the public execution of Li Si 李斯 (d. 208 BCE) by the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty. See Idema and West, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, 343.

Or, with bridle of jade and a golden saddle,
He sits astride a noble steed,
Two lines of runners standing in attendance,
The pitchers and silver basins arranged in rows.
As big as a peck, the golden seal of office is carried close behind him;
As big as a curtain, the banner of his chariot bears the word "General."
But when he remembers that his mother is almost seventy,
Soon he will return to his native village, where his roots run deep,
Where mother and son, husband and wife will be united once again.
You ass, you bumpkin, you've made an enemy of me!
Who knows on what day he will be nearby—
Then, like wolves and tigers, his runners will seize you!
Qiu Hu will ask, 'Who has tried to seduce my wife? Who has been mistreating my mother?'[245]

(正旦唱)我則罵你鬧市云陽吃劍賊，牛表牛筋是你親戚，大戶鄉頭是你相識。哎！不曉事莊家甚官位？這時分俺男兒在那裏？他或是皂蓋雕輪繡幕圍，玉轡金鞍駿馬騎，兩行公人排列齊，水罐銀盆擺的直，鬥來大黃金肘後隨，箔來大元戎帥字旗。回想他親娘今年七十歲，早來到土長根生舊鄉地，恁時節母子夫妻得完備。我說你個驢馬村夫為仇氣，那一個日頭兒知他是近的誰？狼虎般公人每拿下伊，(帶云)他道誰迤逗俺渾家來？誰欺負俺母親來？

Contrast this imagined (and hopeful) portrait of Qiu Hu with Luofu's boasting of her husband's merits examined in Chapter 2:

And Luofu herself has a husband.
In the East, among over a thousand horsemen
My husband holds the top position.
How can you recognize my husband?
A white horse follows a black colt.
Azure silk threads bind the horse's tail,
Yellow gold halters the horse's head.
At his waist lay an ornate sword
Its value worth more than a million.
At fifteen he was a county clerk,

[245] See *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 314 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 549.

At twenty, a provincial court councilor,
At thirty, a palace attendant,
And at forty a governor.
His complexion is pure and white,
His beard fine and light.
With deft bearing he paces his office,
With stately steps he moves within the residence.
Seated among thousands of others there,
They all say my husband is unique."

In both cases the women are fending off unwanted attention from male suitors. Yet whereas Luofu attempts to shame her harasser with a glittering portrait of her husband's qualities, Meiying takes a more prosaic approach, suggesting that any unwanted attention will earn the wrath of her husband, who will use his newfound authority to punish them. In both cases the imaginative voices of these women also paint portraits of their idealized husbands; young men who are able to protect them from predators and provide them and their family support. *They*, unlike the coarse Squire Li or arrogant southern lord, possess class and sophistication and thus balance the elite ideal of wealth and erudition that the "yokels" "hooligans," and "rich village heads" (*dahu xiangtou* 大戶鄉頭) lack.

Yet the figure that Meiying crafts of her husband is built upon a decade of longing and imagination. Her steadfast loyalty is predicated on one night that they shared and the belief of a future together. When that belief is shattered by his behavior in Act Three, she does not resort to suicide, as in the earlier tale, but rather repeatedly asks for a divorce in Act Four. Meiying, unlike her progenitors does not wish to die for a man, but rather to live for herself. This development reveals changing expectations regarding female behavior, a shift reflected in the independence of Meiying, and suggestive of Bossler's contention that depictions of female exemplars in the Yuan spoke reveal as much or more

of male flaws as they do women's excellence.[246] The Qiu Hu stage adaptation is an example of this development. Meiying, as the self-sacrificing wife and daughter-in-law represents the capacity of female sacrifice on behalf of the family, while Qiu Hu embodies the figure of the scholarly wastrel. If the play ended with Meiying's divorce, or Qiu Hu's begging her to forgive him or to stay, then it could remain true to those signifiers. Instead, it forces a reconciliation that deflates any dramatic tension and leaves both characters' development unsatisfied.

This is best exemplified in the final exchange between husband and wife. After Meiying repeatedly demands a divorce from Qiu Hu, his mother steps into the argument with an ultimatum:

> (MOTHER QIU *speaks*:) Daughter-in-law, if you refuse to take him back, I will kill myself! (MEIYING *sings*:)
>
> (*Victory Song*)
>
> I am so flustered,
> My heart beats like a fawn in flight:
> Let us talk this over.
>
> (*Speaks*:) Granny, I will take him back. (MOTHER QIU *speaks*:) Daughter-in-law, you have taken him back, and I'll not kill myself! (MEIYING *speaks*:) Fine, fine, fine! (*Sings*:)
>
> We womenfolk give in too easily!
>
> (MOTHER QIU *speaks*): Daughter-in-law, since you have agreed to take back Qiu Hu, go comb your hair and freshen up a bit. Then you and Qiu Hu may come and pay obeisance to me. (MEIYING *exits and then reenters with new clothes*. MEIYING *and* QIU HU *first pay obeisance to* MOTHER QIU, *then to each other*.)[247]

[246] Bossler, "Gender and Empire: A View from the Yuan," 203.

[247] *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 325 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 555.

(卜兒云)媳婦兒，你若不肯認我孩兒呵，我尋個死處！(正旦唱)嚇的我慌忙，則這小鹿兒小心頭撞。有的來商也波量，(云)奶奶我認了秋胡也。(卜兒云)媳婦兒，你認了秋胡，我也不尋死了。(正旦云)罷、罷、罷！(唱)則是俺那婆娘家不氣長！(卜兒云)媳婦兒，你既認了，可去改換梳洗，和秋胡孩兒兩個拜見咱。(正旦下，改扮上，同秋胡先拜卜兒，次對拜科)

Meiying is cowed into submission by the threat of her mother-in-law, who then forces husband and wife to change clothes and recognize both her authority as well as one another. In so doing Mother Qiu demonstrates the shifting range of female power, transitioning from a helpless figure, unable to resist Squire Li's demands and threat of legal force, to the ultimate arbiter in the family, one to whom both Qiu Hu and Meiying are beholden. The scene continues as Meiying launches into her final aria:

(*Mandarin Ducks Coda*)
If it were not for fear that no one would serve dear Mother in her old age,
The bond of husband and wife would have been almost hopelessly broken.
I shall from now on remove my bramble hairpin
And change into finer attire,
So that a lifetime of glory and splendor
Will be ours to share.
It was not because I pretended to be stubborn,
Or was putting on a show of defiance,
But the principle of wifely authority has to be upheld.
Compare me not to Luofu,
Who only told tall tales of her husband.[248]

【鴛鴦煞】若不為慈親年老誰供養。爭些個夫妻恩斷無敢望。從今後卸下荊釵，改換梳妝，暢道百歲榮華，兩人共用。非是我假乖張，做出這喬模樣，也則要整頓我妻綱。不比那秦氏羅敷，單說得他一會兒夫婿的謊。

[248] Ibid., and *Yuanqu xuan*, 556.

This aria lays out Meiying's reasoning for suppressing her anger and re-accepting Qiu Hu. First, she acknowledges the demands placed upon her by filial piety, the need to safeguard her mother-in-law. The decision made, she cheerfully accepts their new wealth and standing. Note, however, that the previous language of love has been superseded by terms such as "glory and splendor" (*ronghua* 榮華). She offers a final defense, stating that her earlier anger was not false, but rather a requirement of the social expectations placed upon a virtuous wife. Thus, the author(s) seems to suggest that, in fact, she did not truly feel the righteous anger that she spoke of, but rather was playing the part required of her—a role nested within a role upon the stage. She ends by contrasting herself with Luofu (a direct reference of what is more subtly invoked in Act Two), suggesting that unlike that mulberry picker, she wasn't boasting of her husband's attributes. This statement falls flat in retrospect, of course, because her imaginative description of Qiu Hu in Act Two mimicked Luofu's actions completely.

Lastly, the play ends with a poetic excursion by Qiu Hu himself, in which he summarizes their relationship. The latter half of the poem provides his own justification for his actions, as he recites:

到桑園糟糠相遇，	While passing by the mulberry garden, I chanced upon my own wife,
強求歡假作癡迷。	Pretending to be infatuated, I tried hard to seduce her.
守貞烈端然無改，	But her virtue and faithfulness never changed,
真堪與青史標題。	Her name deserves to go down in history.
至今人過鉅野，	To this day, if you should pass by Juye county
尋他故老，	And ask an old-timer,

猶能說魯秋胡調戲其妻。 He still can tell you the story of Qiu Hu of Lu, who dallied with his wife.[249]

Whether added as an attempt to divert blame or to make their reunion more believable, here Qiu Hu claims that his flirtation with Meiying was a test of her integrity, and that he had recognized her all along. Such a claim rings hollow as he never hinted of his recognition of her during his soliloquys in Act Two. Instead, both Meiying's final aria and her husband's poetic encomium to the play suggest the lengths that the playwright (or later editors) had to go to reshape the narrative from a tragedy to that of a comedy. While the result is beneficial to Meiying's survival, it ultimately serves to undermine her character. Her rage isn't ameliorated, rather it is subjugated under the yoke of filial piety. Her tensions with her husband are not resolved, instead they are waved away as misunderstanding or as the result of moral posturing. While *Qiu Hu xiqi* recasts the role of the tragic suicide from the *Lienü zhuan*, establishing her as an independent and strong-willed woman who would rather see divorce than her own demise, it also undermines her character for an unearned reconciliation.

Yet rather than suggesting that the play quashes Meiying's voice as a woman, we need to ask whether the possibility exists for women to express their voice within such works at all. Female characters within Yuan drama operate within the confines of staged agency, serving as plot devices that progress scenes forward and creating conflicts that spur male characters to take action. Whatever agency they can muster is mediated through the lens of social and legal norms and is shaped by both the requirements of staging as well as by audience expectations. Burdened by such requirements, it is not

[249] Ibid., 326 and *Yuanqu xuan*, 556.

surprising that Meiying does not challenge the supremacy of the family or the inequalities of the social order, but rather silences her protestations, quiets her anger, and returns to the traditional roles that define her identity as a woman.

Yet while this development may prove dissatisfactory in terms of consistent characterization, it also offers new opportunities for interpretation. By subverting expectations, the playwright(s) refashions the Qiu Hu tale from a grim paean to chastity by way of female suffering to a ribald comedy that continually punctures the male ego and in which the female characters are the arbiters of family cohesion. Rather than embracing death, Meiying looks to divorce; rather than allowing the couple to separate, Qiu Hu's mother employs the cudgel of filial piety to reinforce her will. By the play's conclusion, Qiu Hu's success, which previously led to family tragedy, now serves as its salvation. His return protects her from predatory figures like Squire Li and lifts the household out of poverty.

The resolution of the play reveals contemporary concerns about social class and its ties to moral cultivation (an anxiety embodied by the figure of Squire Li). Though Qiu Hu hails from a poor family, he acquires his wealth and standing through elite-sanctioned methods of education and service. In the process he inculcates the moral qualities by which the elite identify themselves. Yet whereas earlier adaptations of the tale criticized Qiu Hu's actions and painted his wife as a victim and martyr, the playwright is faced with the quandary of presenting him as a representative of the male ideal of the successful scholar and righteous official while also sanctioning his unfilial and disloyal behavior. The play attempts to resolve these incongruities by painting Qiu Hu's actions as a test of Meiying's integrity. Yet rather than exonerating Qiu Hu, such a motivation merely

heightens his callousness, as instead of flirting with a stranger, he is depicted as cruelly testing the virtue of the woman who has cared for his household and mother for a decade in his absence.

CHAPTER 5

LOVERS ENTWINED: THE TALE OF HAN PENG AND HIS WIFE

To talk at all interestingly about death is inevitably to talk about life.[250]

How can one's life be light as feather?
One ought to treat their death as weighty as a thousand gold.
A spring breeze above the gravemound, joined branch and bough;
It is merely Han Ping meeting with her heart.[251]

豈是人生輕一羽，要知身死重千金。
春風冢上連枝樹，只有韓憑會此心。

While the tale of Qiu Hu verged on the tragi-comic, playing with themes of recognition, chastity, and the preservation of integrity, it could hardly be considered a love story. Though later writers worked hard to emphasize the suffering of Qiu Hu's wife during her husband's absence, providing increasingly moving accounts of her loneliness and isolation, the romantic trappings of their brief time together were inevitably eroded by their eventual confrontation in the mulberry grove and her subsequent suicide. Even the later Yuan dynasty stage adaptation struggled to bring the tale to a satisfying close and was forced to rely on the dictates of filial piety to ensure the couple's reunion and thus provide a requisite—if sudden—happy conclusion to the tale. In so doing, it replaced the suicide of Qiu Hu's wife—her final declarative act of resistance—with an unconvincing (if subversive) scene of reunion. Her righteous anger and impugned integrity are, instead, subsumed by her social roles as wife and daughter-in-law, ultimately overriding her

[250] D.J. Enright, ed., *The Oxford Book of Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), title page.

[251] The above verse is drawn from a longer work by the Yuan-era poet literatus Gong Shitai 貢師泰 (1298–1362). For the whole poem, see "Ti Sichuan Zhang Wanhu furen zhenjie juan" 題四川張萬戶夫人貞節卷 (On the Pure and Principled Wife of Zhang Wanhu of Sichuan). See Gong Shitai, *Wanzhai ji* 玩齋集 (Collected Works of Gong Shitai) 4.7, in *Siku quanshu* 1215.554.

desire to separate from her husband. As a result, the fundamental concern of maintaining the status quo served to remove any possibility other than that of reconciliation (as the fractured social unit of the family must be restored, no matter the personal cost). Set against the mandate of upholding social stability, there could be no space for romanticism, as there was no opportunity to engender love between Qiu Hu and his wife, no matter how the playwright strove to soften this calculus in the final arias of the play.

The account of Han Peng 韓朋 (or Ping 憑), on the other hand, is celebrated largely for its depiction of a husband and wife whose love for one another transcends life itself, and whose depth of feeling is recognized by heaven through its miraculous manifestations after their untimely deaths. The resulting tale portrays a devoted couple whose tragic end becomes a byword for romantic sacrifice and undying loyalty. Where the relationship of Qiu Hu and his wife is sabotaged from within, the lives of Han Peng and his wife, née He (何氏) are torn asunder, not by internal strife, but rather by the greed and desire of a tyrannical king. In so doing, the account raises age-old matters of class, rank, and the division of one's duty between the interior (family life and responsibilities) and the exterior (one's role as subject and official). In the tale of Han Peng this delicate balance is thrown askew by the whims of an arbitrary and cruel ruler, leading to the fracturing of the relationship between subject and sovereign, and ultimately to tragedy.

The changes that the tale undergoes over time and through its various adaptations speaks to the continued popularity of the Han Peng story as it was gradually updated to reflect the political and social milieu of the age. At its core, Han Peng, unlike Qiu Hu, is a tale of lovers encountering tragedy as a result of the machinations of another; an antagonist who violates social conventions to satisfy their own desires for the beauty and

talent of a woman. Yet while they differ in plot and characterization, both the Han Peng and Qiu Hu literary traditions share certain similarities, both in the circumstances of their origin and development, as well as in the ways in they were later adapted into poetry and prose.

EARLY ORIGINS: THE *LIEYI ZHUAN, SOUSHEN JI* AND BEYOND

Before tracing its origins, it would be useful to review the story proper by examining the most well-known version of the tale, and the one which would come to serve as a foundation for later poetic and performative adaptations. This version of the account survives in the eleventh fascicle of Gan Bao's early 4th century collection: the *Soushen ji*.[252] This immensely popular and influential work had an indelible impact on audiences and writers alike, and serves as one of the most famous collections of "tales of the strange" (*zhiguai* 志怪), accounts of ghosts and oddities that enjoyed wide circulation throughout Chinese literary history.[253] That the tale of Han Peng remained one of the

[252] For an examination of the *Soushen ji* account as well as later versions of the narrative, see Gao Guofan 高國藩, *Dunhuang suwenhua xue* 敦煌俗文化學 (Study of Vernacularization in Dunhuang) (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shangdian, 1999), 459–480.

[253] The popularity of such tales can be measured by the fact that thousands of accounts derived from over sixty collections survive from the Six Dynasties through the Tang dynasty alone. For a summary of the history and conventions of such works, see Campany, *Garden of Marvels* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), xix–xliv as well as Karl Kao, *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and Fantastic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 1–51. As for the *Soushen ji* itself, its influence can be summarized by another great Chinese storyteller from the Qing dynasty, Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640–1715), who, in his introduction to his momentous work the *Liaozhai zhi yi* 聊齋誌異 (Strange Tales from Liaozhai Studio), said, "My talents pale beside/those of Gan Bao, Whom I follow/In his quest for weird spirits" (*cai fei* Gan Bao, *ya ai soushen* 才非干寶, 雅愛搜神). See Pu Songling and John Minford*: Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 454.

most popular accounts within this storied collection is a testament not only to the long-lasting appeal of a romantic tragedy, but also to its literary quality and its eternal themes of righteousness, self-sacrifice, and love. The account reads:

> King Kang 康王 of Song had a retainer named Han Ping who married a woman of the He 何 family. She was very beautiful, and the king took her. Ping was angry, so the king had him arrested and sent off to labor at building garrison walls.
>
> Ping's wife clandestinely sent him a letter in which she carefully encrypted (*mi* 密) her thoughts. "The rain falls steadily; the river is broad; the water deep. The sun rises, shining on my heart."
>
> The king got hold of the letter and showed it to his advisers, but none could figure out what it meant. One minister, named Su He 蘇賀, offered an explanation, "'The rain falls steadily' means her thoughts are filled with sorrow. 'The river is broad; the water deep' means they are unable to see one another. 'The sun rises shining on my heart' means that in her heart she has made a vow unto death."
>
> Ping committed suicide right away. His wife secretly let her clothing rot and weaken. Then when she climbed a terrace with the king, she threw herself off.[254] Attendants grabbed her, but they could not get hold of her clothing, and she plunged to her death. A last testament was tucked in her belt: "Your majesty favored him in life. I will favor him in death. I beg that my remains be buried together with Ping's."
>
> This enraged the king, who ignored her plea. He instructed the villagers to bury them apart, facing each other. The king then pledged, "The two of you loved each other without end. If you are able to bring your graves together, I will not stand in the way."
>
> Within a day, a catalpa tree sprung up at the head of each grave. Within a fortnite, both trees had filled out completely. The trunks of the trees bent toward each other. Beneath the ground their roots tangled, and above the ground their branches intertwined. Then there came a pair of mandarin ducks to perch in the trees, one male and one female. They were always there, morning and night. With their necks wrapped together, they sang a most piteous song, very moving to all around. The people of Song felt deeply about this and nicknamed it the "tree of mutual love." That name originated with this incident.
>
> In the south people are accustomed to saying that mandarin ducks represent the spirits of Han Ping and his wife. In Suiyang [Henan

[254] I translate *tai* 臺 as terrace here, rather than tower, which is often associated with *lou* 樓 (a multi-story building). Neither translation is perfect, as *tai* indicates either a raised platform or an estrade from which one could survey the area below.

Province] today there is the wall built by Han Ping, and there are still ballads sung recounting this tale.[255]

宋康王舍人韓憑娶妻何氏，美，康王奪之。憑怨，王囚之，論為城旦。妻密遺憑書，繆其辭曰：「其雨淫淫，河大水深，日出當心。」既而王得其書，以示左右，左右莫解其意。臣蘇賀對曰：「其雨淫淫，言愁且思也。河大水深，不得往來也。日出當心，心有死志也。」俄而憑乃自殺。其妻乃陰腐其衣，王與之登台，妻遂自投臺，左右攬之，衣不中手而死。遺書於帶曰：「王利其生，妾利其死，願以屍骨賜憑合葬。」王怒，弗聽，使里人埋之，冢相望也。王曰：「爾夫婦相愛不已，若能使冢合，則吾弗阻也。」宿昔之間，便有大梓木，生於二冢之端，旬日而大盈抱，屈體相就，根交于下，枝錯于上。又有鴛鴦，雌雄各一，恒棲樹上，晨夕不去，交頸悲鳴，音聲感人。宋人哀之，遂號其木曰「相思樹。」「相思」之名，起于此也。南人謂：此禽即韓憑夫婦之精魂。今睢陽有韓憑城，其歌謠至今猶存。

This account provides the fundamental elements that will later come to be associated with the Han Peng narrative. These include 1) the tyrannical ruler who seizes Han Peng's wife for her beauty (though later, as we shall see, his desire is sparked by her literary accomplishments); 2) the association between literary composition and death, particularly poetic lines that are coded and require the talents of an erudite to explain; 3) the righteous and self-sacrificing figure of Han Peng's wife (here surnamed He, though she later acquires a given name by the Tang) who outwits the tyrant to follow her husband in death, and 4) the post-mortem miracle of the entwined trees that sprout from their graves and symbolize their eternal pledge to one another. Though the details may change (and, in a later dramatic adaptation become all but unrecognizable), most of these elements remain present in later versions of the tale.

[255] Adapted from DeWoskin and Crump, *In Search of the Supernatural*, 1996, 137–138. For the original text, see Gan Bao, *Soushen ji*, 210–212.

The story itself is set amidst the waning days of the chaotic Warring States period in the kingdom of Song 宋. King Kang (Dai Yan 戴偃)—a historical figure of note—seized the throne in 328 BCE from his own brother, Ticheng 剔成, killing him in the process. He saw early success in resisting incursions from the neighboring states of Qi, Chu, and Wei, and ultimately annexed the small state of Teng in 297. However, in 286 the trio of hostile states engaged in a joint expedition against Song and overwhelmed its defenses. King Kang fled to Wei and ultimately died there soon after. The *Shiji* paints a critical portrait of Kang, noting that his cruelty and lasciviousness inspired the various lords to refer to him as the "Jie of Song" (桀宋), and lamenting that "If Song resumes the behavior of Zhou, then he must be killed" (Song *qi fu wei* Zhou *suowei*, *bukebu zhu* 宋其復為紂所為, 不可不誅).[256] Jie and Zhou reference the tyrannical final rulers of the Xia and Shang dynasties respectively. Both were made infamous for their cruelty and excesses, the extents of which were said to have inspired the overthrow of their rules and the end of their dynasties. Whether Dai Yan was worthy of such comparison or was simply subjected to historiographical trends (associating the collapse of a state with the poor moral character of its ruler) is unknown. What is clear is that King Kang is a figure that, by the end of the Western Han had become associated with capricious and wanton behavior.

Han Peng, we are told is a retainer (*sheren* 舍人) of the King of Song, a position that no doubt required his loyalty. When the king seizes his wife after hearing of her

[256] See *Shiji*, 600.

beauty, Han Peng justifiably reacts poorly. The result is his sentencing to forced labor constructing garrison walls, the remains of which, the account relates, can still be found in Suiyang (near modern-day Shangqiu 商丘), the capital of the Song state. Such details serve to testify to the account's accuracy and ground it in a time and place. In this sense, it functions as a local tale, recording regional traditions and beliefs, such as the proclivity to refer to mandarin ducks as the souls of Han Peng and his wife, for example, or the explanatory reference to the "tree of mutual love" (*xiangsi shu*) that demonstrates both origin and etymology through a tragic tale. I will return to this notion of regionalism and the tale below.

Unlike the early Qiu Hu tradition, which prized the perspective of the wandering husband over that of his long-suffering bride, the Han Peng tale is centered on the character of his wife. The events of the story hinge on her actions alone. It is her secret missive which inspires the suicide of Han Peng; her weakening of her garments (in the later rhapsody she soaks the fabric in vinegar to rot it) that allows her to follow him in death, and ultimately her final testament that inspires the King to bury them near one another. That he chooses to violate her final wish to share the same grave with her husband is of no concern, for the depth of their love, combined with heaven's approval, leads to the joining of the two catalpa trees, allowing them in death what they could not attain in life: unity.

Yet although the best-known rendition of the Han Peng tale lay in the *Soushen ji*, it is not the first surviving appearance of the account. The earliest textual evidence of the Han Peng narrative was uncovered in 1979, during an archaeological dig in Maquanwan 馬圈灣, northwest of Dunhuang. There, buried within the ruins of a beacon tower dating

back to the Han dynasty, the excavation team uncovered a cache of abandoned wooden writing slips. The earliest of these materials dates back to the third year of the *benshi* 本始 reign period of Han Xuandi 宣帝 (71 BCE) and the latest to 22 CE, providing a potential window that spans the late-Western Han to the Xin interregnum of Wang Mang 王莽 (9–23).[257] Among the collection of jumbled and scattered slips was a fragmentary reference to the tale of Han Peng (rendered as Gan Peng 榦傰).[258] Some of the characters remain obscured, while others were written in archaic variants. The excerpt reads:

> …letter, and summoned Han Peng, questioning him about it. Han Peng replied, saying: "I was married but for two days and three nights before I left her to travel. For three years I have not returned and my wife…"[259]
>
> …書，而召榦傰問之，榦傰對曰：臣取婦二日三夜，去之來游，三年不歸，婦…

As Fu Junlian notes, the letter in question is most likely referring not to the letter that the wife smuggles to her husband, inspiring his suicide, but rather a letter that she sends to him to express her loneliness and yearning for his return.[260] This plot point does not exist in the *Soushen ji* account, but does factor as a fundamental element in a rhapsodic

---

[257] For details on the discovery as well as dating discussions, see Gansusheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 甘肅省文物考古研究所, *Dunhuang hanjian* 敦煌漢箭 (Han Slips of Dunhuang), 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991).

[258] For a discussion of name variants in the Han Peng story, including variants in the Maquanwan slips as well as the shift from Han Ping to Han Peng (and versions including Ping 馮 among others), see Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, "Hanjian zhong suojian Han Peng gushi de xin ziliao" 漢箭中所見韓朋故事的新資料 (New Materials on the Story of Han Peng From Within Han-era Slips), in *Fudan xuebao (shehui ke xueban)* 復旦學報 (社會科學版) [Journal of Fudan University, Social Sciences edition] no. 3 (1999): 110–112.

[259] See *Dunhuang hanjian*, Vol. 1, 1991, 238 (no. 496a, photo 25).

[260] Fu Junlian, "Han Peng gushi kao yuan," 92.

adaptation discovered at Dunhuang. It is this letter, so beautifully realized in its portrayal of love and affection that kindles the desire of the King of Song and thus prompts her kidnapping. That this detail is present in the earliest recorded trace of the tale suggests the possibility of two narrative branches, the well-known *Soushen ji* account, and the earlier Maquanwan account, which may later have been adapted into the rhapsody. Our knowledge of the latter is entirely due to two fortuitous archaeological discoveries, a humbling fact that makes one wonder how many so-called "dominant" versions of tales won their acclaim by simply surviving the bibliocaust at the end of the Tang.

Though short, this passage is also evocative of the tale of Qiu Hu, especially in the brief time the newlywedded couple spends together before the husband is called away. Interestingly, this passage does not appear in either the better known *Soushen ji* account or in later adaptations of the tale, though elements of it are reminiscent of the "Rhapsody on Han Peng" (examined below), particularly in that the rhapsody includes the line that Han Peng "departed and served the King of Song; for three years he was gone, for six autumns he did not return" (*chu you, shi yu Song guo, qi qu san nian, liu qiu bu gui* 出遊, 仕於, 宋國，期去三年, 六秋不歸).[261] As a result, Qiu Xigui has suggested that the Maquanwan fragment may bear a closer connection to the "Rhapsody on Han Peng" than it does to the *Soushen ji* account.[262] Unfortunately, while the reverse side of the Maquanwan slip is numbered (112), indicating that the fragment was part of a greater whole, the rest of the account remains missing, suggesting that, for now at any rate,

[261] Fu Junlian, *Dunhuang fu jaozhu*, 364.

[262] See Qiu Xigui, "Hanjian zhong suojian Han Peng gushi de xinziliao," 111

scholars can only speculate as to the connections between this early forebear of the tale and its later permutations.

The antiquity of the tale is further attested to by an excerpt that appears within the Tang encyclopedia *Yiwen leiju*. There, an entry attributed to the *Lieyi zhuan* 列異傳 (Arrayed Marvels), an early collection of tales of the strange ascribed to the Wei Emperor Cao Pi 曹丕 (d. 226) makes reference to Han Peng. Unfortunately, as the *Lieyi zhuan* itself does not survive, we are reliant upon sources such as the *Yiwen leiju* to reconstruct its contents. The entry states:

> King Kang of Song buried Han Ping (馮) and his wife. Overnight catalpa trees sprouted [out of the graves]. A pair of mandarin ducks always perched atop the trees; day and night their necks were wrapped around one another and their calls moved the people.[263]
>
> 宋康王埋韓馮夫妻，宿夕文梓生，有鴛鴦雌雄各一，恆栖樹上，晨夕交頸，音聲感人。

The identical phrasing between this and the (putatively) later *Soushen ji* account suggests several possibilities. One is that Gan Bao's version of the tale was based on the earlier *Lieyi zhuan* account—a prospect that is not without merit. It is also possible, however, that the account within the *Lieyi zhuan* that survived into the Tang had been reworked to more closely mimic the well-known *Soushen ji* version of the story. No matter the case, if the attribution is correct, then we can—in conjunction with the Maquanwan slip—confidently extend the origins of the Han Peng tale back to at least the middle of the Han dynasty.

[263] See *Yiwen leiju,* 1604.

TERRACES AND BUTTERFLIES: IMAGERY AND POETICS IN HAN PENG

By the Jin dynasty (266–420) a number of important narrative elements become associated with the account. These motifs were all drawn from the natural world and signified romantic love throughout the Chinese literary landscape, not just within the Han Peng narrative. The use of natural images to refer to or represent emotional states dates back, of course, to the songs of the *Shijing*, which is flush with images of greenery, wild animals, birds—motifs which are set alongside voices professing love, grief, and complaint. The mapping of human emotions on the natural world was thus a common feature of the poetic tradition and one that drew upon popular associations between the appearances and/or behaviors of certain plants and animals and human traits. Below, I will briefly summarize these natural motifs (as well as a manmade one) and the ways in which they occur in the Han Peng tale.

The first involves the transformation of Han Peng's wife into butterflies. As Gao Guofan notes, the Song-era *Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記 (Record of Universal Geography from the Taiping Era), compiled by Yue Shi 樂史 (930–1007) contains an excerpt from an early edition of the *Soushen ji* account of Han Peng.[264] It quotes the text as follows:

> King Kang of Song seized her; Ping was resentful of the king and killed himself. His wife secretly rotted away her garments and ascended the

[264] Gao, *Dunhuang suwenhua xue*, 461.

> terrace with the king. As she threw herself off, attendants grabbed at her, yet whatever their hands met turned into butterflies.[265]
>
> 宋康王奪之，憑怨王，自殺；妻陰腐其衣，與王登台，自投台下，左右攬之，著手化為蝶

Butterflies enjoyed a long association with the pleasures of spring, and thus, by extension love and beauty. This connection was made infamous in the tale of the "Butterfly Lovers" Liang Shanbo 梁山伯 and Zhu Yingtai 祝英台 that is examined below. Butterflies also represented the transformative and ephemeral nature of things as well as our perception of them. This concept, of course, was most famously articulated in the *Zhuangzi*, when Zhuang Zhou awakes from a dream in which he was a butterfly, flitting from one branch to the next.[266] Upon awakening, he was unable to discern one cognitive state from the other; dream blended into reality, and reality was indistinguishable from dream. Here, upon abandoning her physical form and embracing death, Han Peng's wife also undergoes a metamorphosis, transforming into a creature associated with love, beauty, and the liminal state between the conscious and unconscious realms. She dies, but in so doing her soul (*hun* 魂) wanders freely, either in the guise of the butterfly or sitting atop the twisting trees that sprouted from her and her husband's graves, where they mournfully cried in the guise of mandarin ducks—another potent symbol of romantic love.

---

[265] See Yue Shi, *Taiping huanyu ji*, 281.

[266] See Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 49.

One of the most characteristic elements associated with the Han Peng account are the intertwined trees that sprout out of the graves of the dead lovers. This powerful image has resonance the world over and suggests the power of human feeling to bend the natural world in sympathy. [267] Oftentimes described through entangled roots or entwined leaves and branches, this natural motif could serve a wide range of emotional signifiers, such as the devoted wife, the pledged lovers, or even depictions of homoerotic love. Yet much like the butterfly imagery, this motif appears elsewhere, most notably in several accounts preserved within chapter 389 of the *Taiping guangji*. Two of them are ascribed to the *Shu yi ji* 述異記 (Records of Strange Things) by Ren Fang 任防 (460–508). The first item, titled the "Tree of Mutual Love" (*xiangsi mu* 相思木) is immediately evocative of the *Soushen ji* account, which identified the merged catalpa trees that rose from the twin graves as the *xiangsi shu*. The brief account reads:

> When Jin made war with the other states, and Wei frequently caused hardship to Qin, people of [Qin] made an expedition to garrison [the borders of the state] and were unable to return. The wife [of one of them] longed for [her husband] and died. When she was buried, a tree grew upon her tomb. Its branches and leaves all inclined towards the direction of her husband. For this reason, it was called the "Tree of Mutual Love."[268]
>
> 晉戰國時。衛國苦秦之難，有民從征，戍秦不返。其妻思之而卒，既葬，塚上生木，枝葉皆向夫所在而傾，因謂之相思木。

[267] Aside from its appearance throughout early Chinese tales, the image of entwined trees sprouting out of the graves of lovers can be found throughout the world, such as in Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe*, as well as some variants of the popular tale of *Tristan and Isolde*.

[268] See Li Fang 李昉, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Era), Vol. 10 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 3099–3100.

Bereft of her loved one, here the scene is of the natural world reflecting the desires of the human one. Separated by distance and conflict, the woman in this account appears to have died of grief from their parting. Yet while the branches and leaves of the tree atop her grave incline towards the object of her affections, their outstretched boughs are left solitary, a poignant reflection of her loneliness.

The second account drawn from the *Shu yi ji* is set during the Three Kingdoms era (220–263), in the southern kingdom of Wu 吳 during the Huanglong 黃龍 period (229–231). The tale involves a loving couple, Lu Dongmei 陸東美 and his wife, née Zhu 朱氏, who are reported as inseparable (*cun bu bu xiang li* 寸步不相離, literally "not straying an inch from the other"). Their dedication to one another was so strong that people of the period described them as living "shoulder-to-shoulder" *bijian* 比肩 (perhaps a closer English idiom would be "joined at the hip.") Upon née Zhu's death, Lu's grief was so deep that he stopped eating, and soon passed away. The couple were buried together (again, shoulder-to-shoulder), and, before the year was out, catalpa trees sprang from the graves. They shared the same roots, which enwrapped the bodies of husband and wife, and each entwined with the other to form a single tree (*xiang bao er he cheng yi shu* 相包而合成一樹). The account notes that Sun Quan 孫權 (182–252) himself sighed when he heard the tale.[269]

The motif of lost lovers and entwined branches also appears in the famous account of two male lovers, Wang Zhongxian 王仲先 and Pan Zhang 潘章. According to

[269] Ibid., 3,104.

the item in the *Taiping guangji*, Wang, who hailed from Chu, heard of the surpassing beauty of Pan and sought to become his acquaintance. After Pan accepted, the two men became fellow students. Soon after they came to "share pillow and sleeping mat" (*tong qin gong chen* 同衾共枕), their "affections being like those of husband and wife" (*qing ruo fuqi* 情若夫妻).[270] When both later died, their kin mourned them and buried them together on Mt. Luofu 羅浮山 in Guangdong. Soon after a tree sprouted from the grave, its branches and leaves growing tangled and entwined. The locals, the account states, marveled at its form and called it the "Shared Pillow Tree" (*gongzhen shu* 共枕樹). The tale has been celebrated as an expression of an otherwise largely concealed world of homosexual desire in traditional Chinese literature. It is remarkable in the way that it employs the traditionally heterosexual motif of the entwined trees to tell a tale of same-sex romance. As a love story, the account of Pan Zhang and Wang Zhongxian is simple yet compelling. It presents a tale of love at first sight (*yi jian xiang ai* 一見相愛) and proves that gender and heterosexuality are of no account when it comes to the expression of feeling and its reflection in the workings of the natural world.[271]

There is one final example of the tree motif that is worth mentioning here, not only for its potential antiquity, but also for the potential connections it has with the Han Peng (and Qiu Hu) tale. The ballad "Kongque dongnan fei" (which is discussed briefly in Chapter 2) ends with a suicide pact by Jiao Zhongqing and Liu Lanzhi. After the young

[270] Ibid.

[271] For more on the tale and the topic of homosexuality in early Chinese culture, see Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 24–25.

couple dies, their families agree to bury the two together on the slope of Mt. Hua, and then plant trees around the gravesite. Two *wutong* trees sprout on the left and right of the graves and entwine around one another. Amongst their leaves, according to the ballad, are perched a pair of mandarin ducks, calling to one another in the dusk.

While motifs such as the entwined trees and butterflies came to serve as universal representations of love and devotion, such associations no doubt arose locally before being circulated more widely through ballads, poems, and idioms. Traces of such regionality are still preserved in the association between the Han Peng tale and mandarin ducks (*Aix galericulata*), themselves one of the most ubiquitous romantic motifs in the Chinese literary world. Recall that the *Soushen ji* account noted that it was southerners who referred to the spirits (*jinghun* 精魂) of Han Peng and his wife as mandarin ducks. This association is echoed by later accounts as well. For example, the *Yiwen leiju* fragment of the *Lieyi zhuan* is arranged under the category "Yuanyang" 鴛鴦 and the famed Northern Zhou poet Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581) makes reference to the tale in his "Rhapsody on Mandarin Ducks" ("Yuanyang fu" 鴛鴦賦).[272] However, the Han Peng association with love birds was not limited to the mandarin duck alone. The late 9th century *Lingbiao lu yi* 嶺表錄異 (Strange Records From Beyond the Mountains), compiled by Liu Xun 劉恂 (fl. 889–908), which offers detailed descriptions of flora and fauna of the south, includes a description of a "*hanpeng* bird" (*hanpeng niao* 韓朋鳥). The entry reads as follows:

[272] See Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581) and Ni Fanzuan 倪璠纂, *Yu Zishan ji* 庾子山集 (Collected Works of Yu Xin), in *Siku quanshu*, 1064.62–64.

> The *hanpeng* bird is of the same kind as [the waterbirds] *fu* and *yi*. These birds always fly in couples and float along the shores of rivers. Amongst the waterbirds, stream-ducks *xichi*, mandarin ducks *yuanyang* and the pond-heron *jiaojing* can all be found to the north of the mountains, only the *hanpeng* bird hasn't been seen [there].[273]
>
> 韓朋鳥者，乃鳧鷖之類。此鳥每雙飛，泛溪浦。水禽中鸂鶒、鴛鴦、鵁 鶄，嶺北皆有之，惟韓朋鳥未之見也。

Likened to the *fu* 鳧 (wild duck) and *yi* 鷖 (seagull), the *hanpeng* bird was no doubt some form of waterfowl. Its description of traveling in pairs and floating along waterways is evocative of the mandarin duck, but its native habitat appears to lay in the south, suggesting that the name (as well as the bird itself) were the product of a local tradition. The widespread popularity of the Han Peng tale is suggested not only by its being mapped onto a variety of romanticized waterfowl, but also in the geographic range of such associations. These (in conjunction with the *Soushen ji*) suggest that this aspect of the tale had especial popularity in the south, where the association between the wandering souls of the lovers and the denizens its ubiquitous waterways was strong.

A fourth element, and one that also appears during the Jin, involves a correlation between née He's suicide (*toutai* 投臺) in Gan Bao's account with Han Peng's construction of the Qingling Terrace 青陵臺. Yuan Shansong's 袁山松 (d. 399) *Junguo zhi* 郡國志 (Treatise on Administrative Geography) provides a reference that states:

[273] Translation and details provided by Chiara Bocci and Robert Ptak, "The Entries on Birds in Lu Xun's *Lingbiao lu yi*," *Bulletin de l'Ecole français d'Extrême-Orient* 102 (2016): 334–335. For the original, see Liu Xun 劉恂 (fl. 889–908), *Lingbiao lu yi* 嶺表錄異 (Strange Records From Beyond the Mountains), ed. by Lu Xun 魯迅 (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1983) as well as an almost identical entry in *Taiping guangji*, 3,804.

"Wuchang county in Junzhou contains a Qingling Terrace in Xiqiu city, it was built by Han Ping on order of the King of Song" (*Yunzhou Xuchangxian you Xiqiu cheng Qingling tai, Song wang ming Han Ping zhu zhe* 鄆州須昌縣有犀丘城青陵臺，宋王令韓憑筑者).[274] Whereas the extant *Soushen ji* version of the tale depicts Han Peng laboring on fortifications (*cheng* 城), in this version he is said to build the very edifice that his wife uses to commit suicide. The irony of the fruits of his corvée labor enabling her death (just as her carefully crafted letter does his) no doubt contributed to the popularity of the association between the site and the Han Peng tradition.

Qingling Terrace thus becomes a common reference to the tale, and during the Tang appears within poems by such well-known figures as Li Bai 李白 (701–762) and Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813–858).[275] The former references it in his "White Hair Lament" ("Baitou yin" 白頭吟) where it appears in both refrains. The original "White Hair Lament" is famously ascribed to Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君, the poetess and young widow who eloped with Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 in the Western Han. According to the *Xijing zaji*, near the end of his life, Sima Xiangru was planning on taking a young concubine.[276] When Zhuo Wenjun heard of his intentions, she wrote the "White Hair Lament" to

[274] Near present day Dongping County 東平縣 in southwestern Shandong. The quote is preserved in the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽. See Li Fang 李昉 (925–996), *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperial Overview of the Taiping Era), Vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 868.

[275] Aside from Li Bai and Li Shangyin, however, references to the tale appear in the works of a host of other, lesser-known Tang poets such as Wang Chu's 王初 "Ji xi" 即夕 (Approaching Evening), Chu Sizong's 儲嗣宗 (*jinshi* 859) "Songzhou yueye ganhuai" 宋州月夜感懷 (Sentimental Thoughts on a Moonlit Night in Song), and Liu Qiu's 羅虯 (ca. 9th century) "Bi hong'er shi" 比紅兒詩 (Poem on Comparing Hong'er). See *Quan Tang shi*, 491.5559, 594.6887, and 666.7625–7631 respectively.

[276] See *Han Wei Liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan*, 99.

dissuade him.[277] It proved successful. The work, thus, is imagined as a complaint against the inconsistency of male devotion. Li Bai's version references the tale of the famous Han lovers and ends with the following:

覆水再收豈滿杯,	Spilled water, even if collected, how can it fill the cup?
棄妾已去難重回。	Having already cast her aside, it is impossible to once more return.
古來得意不相負,	Since ancient times, of those proud to have never betrayed the other,
只今惟見青陵台。	One can now only see Qingling Terrace.[278]

Thus, in Li Bai's view, even though Sima Xiangru ultimately relents against bringing a concubine into the household, like the spilled water, the damage has already been done. His betrayal of his earlier vows cannot be taken back and, their relationship, like the cup itself, cannot be restored to its original state. Only Han Peng and his wife, Li asserts, maintained their intent (*deyi* 得意) to remain loyal to one another, leaving only the ruins of Qingling Terrace as a monument to their love. Constancy, even in death, then, served as a fundamental feature of the Han Peng tale.

Li Shangyin's work, too, is worthy of note, for its evocative imagery and playful reimagining of the account.[279] His poem, also titled "Qingling Terrace," reads as follows:

---

[277] For a translation of the *yuefu* ascribed to her, as well as the longer anonymous version, see Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 110–112.

[278] *Quan Tang shi*, 163.1692–93.

[279] Li Shangyin's poem "On Bees" ("Feng" 蜂) also makes a brief reference to the "Qingling butterfly" (*Qingling fendie* 青陵粉蝶) as well, suggesting the commonality of the image. See *Quan Tang shi*, 539.6169.

青陵臺畔日光斜,	Qingling Terrace, flanked by slanting rays of sun,
萬古貞魂倚暮霞	Ancient steadfast souls cleave to the rosy clouds of dusk.
莫訝韓憑為蛺蝶,	Do not be startled when Han Ping becomes a butterfly,
等閑飛上別枝花。	Or when in idle leisure he flutters to another flower branch.[280]

His poem combines both of the above elements into a mournful tableau. The dying light of the sun touches the side of Qingling Terrace, the site of her suicide. The ancient souls of the lovers are still present, drifting amidst the reddish mist of sunset. Here, however, the poet warns us not to be startled by Han Ping's transformation into a butterfly, nor his willingness to stray (the reference to "visiting other flower buds" (*fei shang bie zhihua* 飛上別枝花). Thus, in contrast to Li Bai's assertion that Qingling Terrace stood as the sole monument to fidelity in a history of inevitable betrayal, here Li Shangyin appears to suggest that even Han Peng—that supposed beacon of fidelity—may not be as faithful as he appears.

This subversion of the traditional tale has been read as political allegory, detailing Li's dissatisfaction with the factionalism of the first half of the 9th century, in which he was an unwilling participant.[281] Thus, the warning regarding transformation and departure may have been referring to his own career prospects as he faced criticism and abuse. Regardless, it is fascinating to see how Li reshapes the Han Peng tale, drawing

[280] See Li Fang, *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature), Vol. 2, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), 1612.

[281] Referring more specifically to the vicious struggle between factions led by Niu Sengru and Li Deyu. For details see Michael T. Dalby, "Court Politics in Late T'ang Times," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3, ed. by Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 639–654. For details on the poem, see Ye Zongqi 葉總奇, *Li Shangyin shiji shuzhu* 李商隱詩集疏注 (The Collected Poems of Li Shangyin with Notes and Commentary), Vol 1 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985), 211.

upon its romantic themes and suggesting the possibility of detachment and separation. While Qingling Terrace stands in the dusk, a symbol of his wife's sacrifice, Han Peng himself wanders about, renewed and changed, free of the quotidian concerns of love and responsibility.

Despite its tragic ending, the above themes of dedication and eternal love (Li Shangyin's playful reworking to the contrary) may have granted the tale of Han Peng a certain cachet among newlyweds. Unlike Qiu Hu's wife, who only finds agency in ending her own life, née He is a proactive force within the tale. She is talented and well-educated, courageous and beautiful. Her dedication to remaining with her husband is matched only by his willingness to die rather than endure separation from her. It is little wonder that the tale may have become associated with popular marriage traditions, as a mid-Tang poem seems to suggest.

Written in 846 by the lyricist Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (ca. 812–ca. 870), "A Song of the Harvest in a *Bingyin* Year in the Huichang Era" ("Huichang bingyin fengsui ge" 會昌丙寅豐歲歌) commemorates the richness of the harvest and includes images of celebration and life.[282] Among these vignettes are scenes from a wedding. The lines read:

羋茸單衣麥田路，	Flourishing in his unlined robe he walks amid the wheat fields,
村南娶婦桃花紅。	To a village south he goes to take a wife, peach-flower red.
新姑車右及門柱，	The new bride descends her carriage on the right and reaches the door post,

[282] The Huichang era (841–847) was the reign period of Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (Li Chan 李瀍 or Li Yan 李炎).

粉項韓憑雙扇中。	Her powdered neck [concealed] among the paired fans of Han Peng.[283]

After setting off to retrieve his bride from another village, the husband-to-be in the poem escorts her back to his home. Upon descending from the matrimonial carriage, she hurries to the door, concealing her features from curious onlookers. The "paired fans" shielding her face were most likely of the hand-held variety and may have earned the name "Han Ping *shuang shan*" due to their decorations, perhaps being adorned by representations of one or more of the above motifs (butterflies, mandarin ducks, etc.). This association between the Han Peng tale and popular marriage practices argues for what Gao Guofan terms the "rich and auspicious symbolism" of the tale.[284]

Despite its tragic ending, references to the story were clearly not perceived as unlucky, but rather intended to encourage the same degree of fidelity and love between prospective couples as is depicted between Han Peng and his wife. The terms and images associated with the tradition—be they mandarin ducks, intertwined trees, Qingling Terrace, or butterflies—each stood as signifiers to a romanticized whole. Unlike the tale of Qiu Hu, the story of Han Peng may have represented something aspirational for female audiences. Much like romantic tragedies such as Romeo and Juliet or Tristan and Isolde in the West, the deaths of the protagonists did not devalue the affection between them, but rather heightened it. Later adaptations of the tale, as we shall see below, only

[283] See Liu Xuekai 劉學鎧, *Wen Tingyun quanji jiaozhu* 溫庭筠全集校注 (Collected Works of Wen Tingyun with Commentary and Annotations), Vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 144–147.

[284] Gao, *Dunhuang suwen hua xue*, 1999, 462.

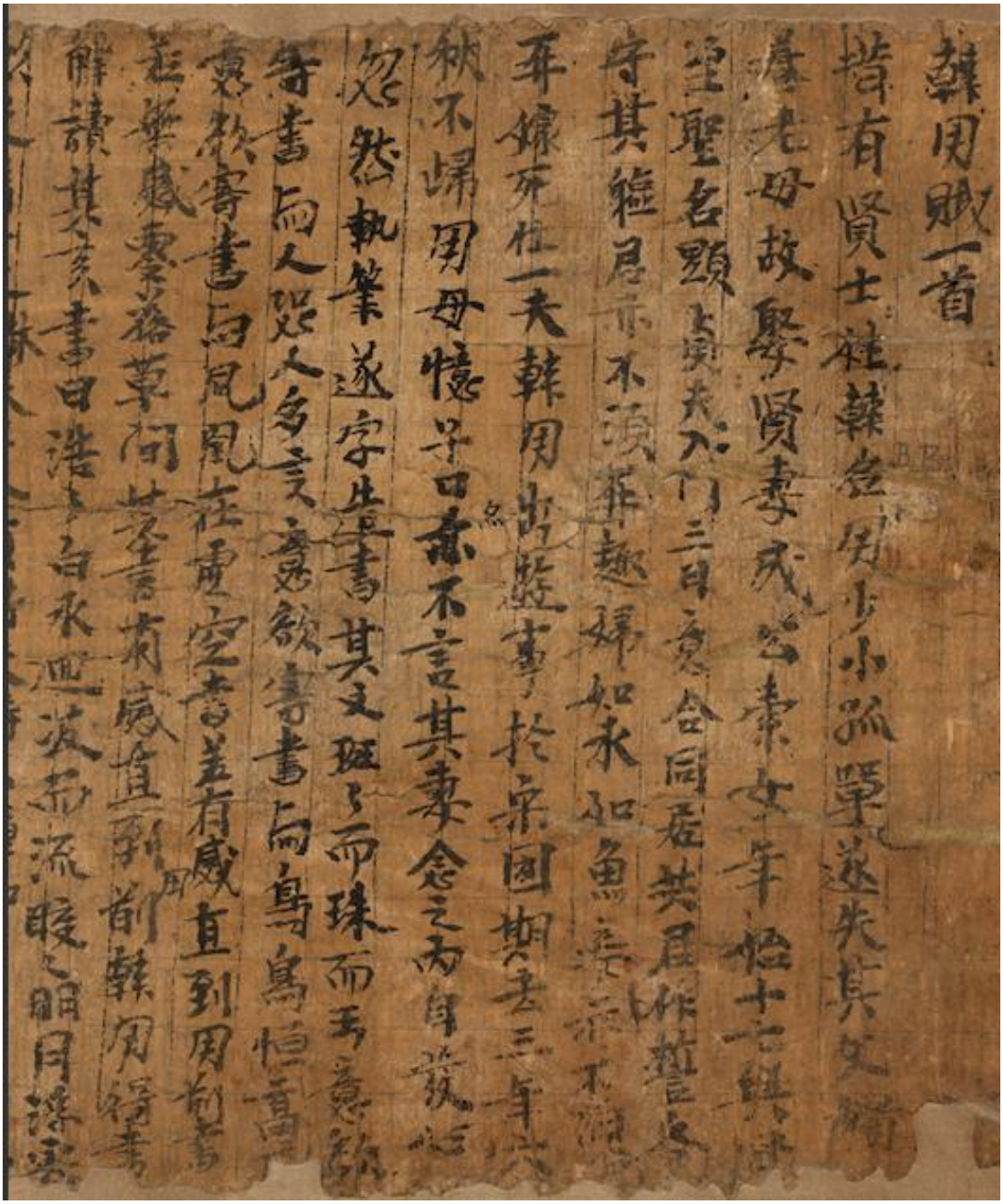
enriched the dramatic sacrifice of Han Peng and his wife, adding greater pathos and detail to her death.

KILLING WORDS: WRITING, GENDER, AND DEATH IN "HAN PENG FU"

Yet above imagery aside, the most striking element in the Han Peng tale, and the one most-expanded in its lyrical treatment during the Tang is the literary talent of its female protagonist. Even in the earliest traces of the tale, in the Maquanwan strips, we see evidence that née He is writing a letter to Han Peng, and in the *Soushen ji* edition of the account, even as her poetic lines confuse the King of Song, they also have the power to spur her husband to suicide. Her mastery over the written word is such that it requires the king's erudite (Su He in Gan Bao's tale, and Liang Bo 梁伯 in the rhapsody below) to decode her hidden meaning. The accomplishment of her compositions, however, ultimately serves to draw the attention of the greedy King Kang, leading to disaster for the unlucky couple. Thus, despite her best intentions she inadvertently moves beyond the inner quarters and becomes embroiled in the affairs of public life.

This association between learning and tragedy for women was not uncommon in a Chinese literary landscape that viewed the talented woman at best, as a marvel, and at worst as an aberration that threatened the patriarchal status quo. As a result, many classical texts portrayed women as dull or incapable of complex thought.[285] Even supporters of female education tended to focus on moral rectitude over book learning.

[285] See Hinsch, *Women in Early Medieval China*, 117–126.



4. Excerpt from Stein 3227 “Han Peng fu.”

The message was clear: while a woman should be good, she was not required to be educated, especially in written matters.[286] The classical example of such, of course, was the mother of Mencius, who, through self-sacrifice and menial labor kept her son on the right path towards moral cultivation. Again, however, she taught through moral example, not through the mechanics of composition or under the guise of philosophy. Even well-educated women of the age, such as Ban Zhao 班昭 (45–117), who completed her older brother Ban Gu's mammoth *Hanshu* following his death and taught the women of the emperor's harem, composed a sternly didactic work in her *Nüjie* 女戒 (Admonitions for Women). This text urged a woman to be compliant and reticent in her behavior, and to be "like an echo and a shadow" in her actions.[287]

The dangers of stepping foot outside the inner chambers were recorded in didactic works such as the *Lienü zhuan* and in tales such as Qiu Hu, wherein unsupervised interactions with men led to threats, both against one's integrity as well as their physical wellbeing. In a similar sense, education too provided its own threat, both by expanding a woman's horizons (and thus encouraging her to question traditions) as well as enabling the products of her creativity to reach beyond the household. The threat that learning posed is well-articulated in one of the most famous love stories in the Chinese literary canon, the tale of Liang Shanbo 梁山伯 and Zhu Yingtai 祝英台, the earliest version of

[286] For an insightful discussion on the complexities of female literacy and the ways in which both men and women reacted to women's writing, see Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 89–99. For associations between talent and death, see especially 99–103.

[287] Ibid. 129. For a summary of the contentious history of scholarly treatment of Ban Zhao and her work, see Paul Goldin, "Ban Zhao in Her Time and Ours," in *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese Philosophy*, ed. by Paul Goldin (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 112–118.

which dates back to the Tang, though the tale itself is set during the Eastern Jin dynasty.[288] In the longer account Zhu leaves home and poses as a man in order to attend schooling. While there, she falls in love with Liang, a fellow student, who does not suspect that she is, in fact, a woman. Zhu Yingtai encourages him to visit her home and to ask for the hand of her "sister" (who is, in fact, herself) in marriage, but when she returns home, discovers that she has already been promised to another. When Liang arrives at her home, his request is turned down. Soon after he dies, Zhu requests that her wedding procession pass by his newly dug grave. As they travel past, she throws herself into the hole, after which it closes. The account ends with a pair of butterflies fluttering around the fresh grave.

As Idema notes, the account of Liang and Zhu demonstrates the "impossibility of a woman's pursuing a higher education and venturing out in the world of men," not to mention engaging with a literary world that "reflect[ed] male fantasies, male fears, and a male view of society and culture."[289] This sentiment is summed up by an idiom that flourished during the Ming and Qing to the point of cliché: "To be a woman without talent is a virtue" (*nüzi wu cai bianshi de* 女子無才便是德). This is not to say that women writers did not exist, nor that educated women were unheard of. Women such as Cai Yan 蔡琰 (born ca. 170), Xue Tao 薛濤 (ca. 770–832), and Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084–ca. 1155) were talents of their age, lauded by their male compatriots and

[288] For an overview of the development of the tale and its influence beyond China's borders, see Sookja Cho, *Transforming Gender and Emotion: The Butterfly Lovers Story in China and Korea* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 14–51.

[289] See Idema and Haft, *A Guide to Chinese Literature*, 44–45.

celebrated by later writers. However, they were no doubt exceptions to the rule which minimized female participation in the public sphere by dissuading the education of girls and diminishing their contributions to the literary world.

This matter of female education and literary achievement is directly relevant to the extended rhapsodic narrative of Han Peng and his wife as we shall soon see. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the "Rhapsody of Han Peng" ("Han Peng fu") was uncovered within the sealed library cave in Dunhuang at the beginning of the twentieth century. Unlike "Qiu Hu bian," "Han Peng fu" is thankfully complete, and spans a number of manuscripts and fragments.[290] The primary edition, Pelliot 2922, is comprised of eighty-nine lines in total. The text is fragmented in the middle, but the missing lines are largely provided elsewhere in the Dunhuang corpus. The manuscript ends with the title "Rhapsody on Han Peng in one fascicle" ("Han Peng fu" *yi juan* 韓朋賦一卷) along with the date of its copying and the name of the scribe: "written on the eighth day of the third month of a *guisi* year by Zhang Youdao" (*guisi nian san yue ba ri Zhang Youdao shu le* 癸巳年三月八日張忧道書了).[291] As this signature lacks a specific reign period, Fu Junlian speculates that it may have been copied during the seventy-year period (781–850) in which the Dunhuang area was under Tibetan rule. As there is only one *guisi* year within that span, the eighth year of the Yuanhe period 元和 of Emperor Xianzong 顯宗 (813), Fu suggests that it may originate from the early ninth-century.[292]

[290] See also Pelliot 2653 (fifty-five lines) and 3873 (seventy-one lines, with the first nineteen lines missing), as well as Stein 3227 (thirty-seven lines), 3904 (twenty-five lines), and 4901 (twenty-seven lines). For additional details, see Wang Zhongmin, *Dunhuang guju xulu*, 332–335.

[291] See Fu Junlian, *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu*, 364–401, and 368 for this line in particular.

[292] Ibid., 369.

Rong Zhaozu, in his foundational work on the *fu* and its historical development, suggests that the rhapsody is part of a greater literary tradition of the "narrative rhapsody" (*gushi fu* 故事賦), the origins of which he extends back to the works of Song Yu 宋玉 (fl. 298–263 BCE).[293] While rhapsody had long served as a vessel for literary showmanship, a means of demonstrating one's talent (and thereby attracting potential patrons), Rong argues that later writers borrowed themes from popular tales that had been memorialized in rhapsodic form by Song, inspiring works such as Cao Zhi's 曹植 "Luo shen fu" 洛神賦 (Rhapsody on the Luo River Goddess)—which was adapted from Song's "Shennü fu" 神女賦 (Rhapsody on the Goddess)—as well as later works that retold other tales, such as Yu Xin's "Kushu fu" 枯樹賦 (Rhapsody on the Withered Tree) and Xie Zhuang's 謝莊 (421–466) "Yue fu" 月賦 (Rhapsody on the Moon). In the process, Rong suggests, such popular folk tales were also adapted into rhapsodic form using vernacular language. While the majority of these popular adaptations were no doubt lost, a fraction of them survives in Dunhuang, including the vernacularized rhapsody of Han Peng.[294]

In terms of overall plot, "Han Peng fu" is similar to the earlier *Soushen ji* account. The work begins by introducing the eponymous figure, who is described as a "virtuous man" (*xianshi* 賢士) whose father had passed away in his youth. He is raised by his

---

[293] Rong Zhaozu, "Dunhuang ben 'Han Peng fu' kao," 679.

[294] Other examples from Dunhuang include "Yanzi fu" 燕子賦 (Rhapsody on the Swallow) and "Yanzi fu" 晏子賦 (Rhapsody on Yanzi).

mother, and, when he comes of age, he decides it best to depart from home and seek service in another court to support her. Worried about leaving her alone, he decides to marry so that his wife can remain and look after his mother. His new bride is described thusly:

> [She] was an accomplished virgin, who had just turned seventeen. She was named Zhenfu (lit. "Chaste/Steadfast Wife"). Virtuous to the point of being a saint, a flower conspicuous and unique in her beauty. In appearance more charming and graceful than any other girl under heaven. Though she was but a girl, she clearly understood the classics and writings. And all that she did, was in accordance with the will of Heaven.[295]
>
> 成功索女，始年十七，名曰貞夫。已賢至聖，明顯絕華，形容窈窕，天下更無。雖是女人身，明解經書。凡所造作，皆令天符。

Here, for the first time we are granted a given name for Han Peng's wife, one that provides her a descriptive and emblematic function as the embodiment of the chaste or loyal wife. Aside from the stereotypical descriptions of youth and beauty, however, we also see that she is highly educated, and therefor probably came from a well-off family that was able to procure her a tutor. More importantly, she appears to have inculcated the teachings of the classics as well, such that her behavior is without fault, and indeed, does not deviate from the intention of heaven itself. Although originally considered as a caregiver for his mother, Han Peng becomes smitten by Zhenfu, and after three days of living together, the couple make a vow to stay true to one another. Rather than her husband initiating the vow, here it is Zhenfu herself who voices the pledge. She says:

---

[295] Translation adapted from Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-Huang*, 1960, 56. Reading *ling* 令 as *he* 合 due to their graphic similarities. See Fu Junlian, *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu*, 372. For the original passage, see Ibid. 364.

> You will never take another bride; we will be to each other as water to the fish.[296] I also will never marry anyone else, but serve one husband till death.[297]
>
> 君不須再取婦，如魚如水；妾亦不再嫁，死事一夫。

After this proclamation of fidelity, Han Peng departs home and goes to Song, where he remains for six years. Zhenfu, thinking of him all the while, writes him a letter to give vent to her emotions (*faxin* 發心). Her writing is described as being "most elegant, every phrase a fragment of gold. It was like pearls, like jade" (*qi wen banban, wenci sui jin, ru zhu ru yu* 其文斑斑，文辭碎金，如珠如玉.[298] The letter—being the pure expression of her feelings—causes her anxiety in case it might fall into another's hands. The rhapsody expresses this fear of exposure elegantly, as she notes that she would deliver it through human means, but worries that the sender would gossip, that she would entrust it with the birds or the wind, yet both were sadly out of reach. As a representation of pure sentiment, Zhenfu is aware of the potential vulnerability that the letter represents, yet her desire to express her feelings to her husband causes her to overcome her hesitation.

One continuous theme throughout the "Rhapsody of Han Peng" (as well as its forebears) is the notion that the strength and purity of one's feelings can be expressed not only through words, but through the mechanics of the natural world. Before dispatching her letter, Zhenfu declares: "If my letter has feeling, let it go straight to Han Peng; but if

---

[296] Reading *qu* 取 as *qu* 娶.

[297] See Fu, *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu*, 364 and Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-Huang*, 56.

[298] Ibid., and Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-Huang*, 57.

it does not, let it fall amongst the grass," (*shu ruo yougan, zhidao Peng qian*; *shu ruo wugan, ling luo cao jian* 書若有感，直到朋前；書若無感，零落草間).[299] Waley translates this line as "if my feelings have power," which, though it provides the fundamental meaning, fails to convey the deeper connotation. *Gan* 感 not only suggests emotion, but more the ability to move another, and to ultimately to inspire a reaction or response (*ying* 應). This spiritual process of stimulus and response (*ganying*) relied on the strength and clarity of one's feeling to bring about a reaction. One could stir another person through an expression of emotion, or they could, as in the case of Dou'E in Chapter 4, shake the heavens themselves through their depth of emotion, and inspire miraculous events as proof of heavenly reciprocation of one's feelings or actions. Thus, with her declaration, Zhenfu is not only conveying her deepest emotions to her husband, but she is also displaying them before heaven, thereby putting their sincerity and purity to the test. In this sense, perhaps one could translate the line as "If my letter has that which stirs (you)…" In any case, clearly it did possess this nebulous quality, for the text immediately notes that Han Peng received her letter and understood its meaning. It read:

> Far spread the white waters; they flow in eddies. Dazzling the bright moon, shining through the clouds. The blue, blue waters; winter and summer have their seasons. If one misses the season and does not sow, corn and beans do not thrive. Ten thousand things sprout and change, never countering Nature's times. It is long since we met, but I do not cease to yearn for you. A hundred years we will be true, and in the end good times will come back. Do you not think of your dear ones? Your old mother's heart is sad. I, your wife, am desolate; every night I roost alone, all the while in great sorrow. They say that when a bird loses its mate, its cry is mournful. When evening comes, I lie alone; I am restless all the long night. When Mt. Tai first emerged, high and low there were

[299] Ibid.

precipices.[300] On the top there are two birds, on the bottom the holy tortoise. Day and night they sport and play, always going home together. What crime have I done that I alone should be in darkness? The waters of the sea stretch endless, without wind they make their own waves. Those that stand by one are few; those that break one are many. On the southern hill there is a bird; on the northern hill a net is spread. If the bird flies high, what can the net do to it? May you be well and in peace! With me there is nothing wrong.[301]

浩浩白水，回波如而流。皎皎明月，浮雲映之。青青之水，冬夏有時。失時不種，禾豆不滋。萬物吐化，不違天時。久不相見，心中在思。 百年相守，竟好一時。君不憶親，老母心悲。妻獨單弱，夜常孤棲，常懷大憂。蓋聞百鳥失伴，其聲哀哀；日暮獨宿，夜長棲棲。太山初生，高下崔嵬。上有雙鳥，下有神龜，晝夜遊戲，恆則同歸。妾今何罪，獨無光暉。海水蕩蕩，無風自波，成人者少，破人者多。南山有鳥，北山張羅，鳥自高飛，羅當奈何。君但平安，妾亦無他。

This remarkable letter richly conveys the grief and hope that Zhenfu feels towards her long-absent husband. The frequent reference to water, both vast and turbulent under a brilliant sky, suggests the depth of her emotions that threaten to overwhelm her. The repeating images of birds both treat the motif of lovers (the two birds sitting together) and loneliness—note the foreshadowing of the mandarin ducks perched in the trees together, along with the mournful cries denoting their separation. Yet interspaced in these natural scenes are flashes of her day-to-day life, grief, and even resentment at his departure. "What crime have I done that I alone should be in darkness?" (*qie jin he zui, du wu*

[300] Waley translates the line *taishan chusheng, gaoxia cuiwei* 太山初生, 高下崔嵬 as "when one reaches the Great Mountain, high and low there are precipices" an odd reading at best. Fu follows Guo Zaiyi 郭在貽 and others in taking *taishan* as describing vast height and *chusheng* as referring to emerging sprouts, that is, something very small. I read the line differently, taking it to be a description of the scenery of Mt. Tai (Taishan 泰山) that sets the stage for the line that follows. See Ibid., 377.

[301] Ibid.

guanghui 妾今何罪，獨無光暉) she asks accusingly, revealing her frustration at her situation.

The lines that follow become increasingly inscrutable. The first image describes the vast sea and the waves that arise of their own accord and threaten one's safety. In such circumstances, she warns, "those that stand by one are few; those that break one are many." This could be read as her warning against the dangers of the world, or perhaps as a description of their own personal circumstances, reminding him that they are surrounded by those who would harm their reputations. Faced with the unpredictability of the world, one must seek out allies—in this case one another. The image that follows, of the soaring bird and the net is drawn from another *Soushen ji* account, the tale of "Ziyu and Han Zhong" ("Ziyu yu Han Zhong 紫玉與韓重). In this tale, Ziyu, the daughter of King Fuchai 夫差 of Wu (r. 495–473 BCE) falls in love with a young man named Han Zhong. When her father refuses the match, Ziyu dies from grief.[302] Grieving, Han Zhong visits her tomb, whereupon he meets her ghost. She explains their separation, and then sings:

南山有烏，	There is a crow in the southern mountain,
北山張羅。	And a net spread over the mountain in the north.
烏既高飛	But the crow flies away;
羅將奈何。	What can the net do?[303]

[302] Literally a "constriction of pneuma/breath" (*jie qi* 結氣).

[303] English translation provided within Kao, *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural*, 93–95. For the original account, see *Soushen ji*, 302–304.

This verse is immediately recognizable from Zhenfu's letter to Han Peng. Whether the lines are drawn from the *Soushen ji* account, or the two share a different origin is immaterial. Both represent female grief at being left behind by the object of their affections—Ziyu in the stillness of death, and Zhenfu in the living equivalent. In both, the soaring bird represents their lovers, far away and out of reach. Ziyu and Han Zhong are divided by the rigid boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead while Zhenfu and Han Peng are blocked by the equally impossible boundary that separates the sexes. She cannot keep him at home, the limits of her world, just as the net cannot contain its prey. By venturing beyond reach, Han Peng is free of constraint, and Zhenfu (so the logic goes) is unable to fulfill her basic role as a wife, much in the same way as the net loses its value when the bird avoids its snare.

The scenes of the natural world in the letter act to contrast the unnatural state of their marriage. Even the birds, she seems to say, spend the days and nights together among the crevices of the mountains, while she is isolated and alone. The seasons progress and the grains ripen, but only if they are tended in their season. The years are passing, and her youth is passing with it. Yet there are also hints of affection and optimism. "A hundred years we will be true, and in the end good times will come back" she asserts, as if to convince herself and to remind him of his pledge to her that they will grow old together.[304] The stream-of-consciousness quality of the letter, shifting between tones and vacillating between longing and grief is evocative of the flow of one's thoughts when trying to sum up the emotions and experiences of a long separation. After providing

[304] This line could also be read as a continuation of her lament, however, perhaps something like: "A hundred years we will be true, yet in the end we only had a moment of happiness." Here I follow Waley's reading.

such remarkable imagery, she then concludes the letter with a common farewell, asking him to be safe and stating that all is well.

Han Peng is so moved by the depth of her emotion that he stops eating for three days and considers returning home. He carries the letter on his person, until, one day, it falls out of his robe and is found by the King of Song himself. King Kang is deeply intrigued by its contents and summons his ministers, offering any one of them a thousand catties of gold if they can bring him Han Peng's wife. Liang Bo agrees to do so, and the king provides him with a lavish escort and carriage. When he arrives at the Han family home, he claims to be a friend and colleague of Han Peng and says that he has brought a private letter from him to deliver to his wife. While Han Peng's mother takes the news as a good omen, his wife feels otherwise, and describes a nightmare that she had had the night before, one that seemed to presage the royal emissary. As a result, she refuses to leave the door, claiming that she would only do so if her husband himself were outside waiting for her. She asks her mother-in-law to provide the excuse that she is sick and unable to meet visitors.

The envoy, upon hearing her message suggests that her reticence to meet is due to her embarrassment from carrying out an affair with a neighbor. When Han Peng's mother relates the envoy's words to Zhenfu, her complexion changes and, her emotions high, she speaks:

> What the stranger has said—that I am in love with someone else—when I try to grasp his meaning, I cannot make sense of it. If you make me go and welcome these strangers, a mother will lose her wise son forever, a mother-in-law her daughter-in-law, a daughter-in-law will lose her mother-in-law![305]

[305] Fu, *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu*, 365 and Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-Huang*, 59.

> 如客此語，道有他情，即欲結意，返失其理。遣妾看客，失母賢子。姑從今已後亦失婦，婦亦失姑。

Here Zhenfu demonstrates her ability to foresee the outcome of events. Aware that the envoy's words are lies, she knows that once she departs the home neither she nor Han Peng will return. However, despite that fact, the irresistible requirements of integrity force her to disprove the envoy's accusation, much the same way that Qiu Hu's wife is forced to respond to her mother-in-law against similar slander. In both cases the inner quarters provide no sanctuary against matters of chastity and integrity or the accusations that arise from women behaving in a fashion deemed suspicious or irregular.

Determined to prove her innocence, even though she knows the eventual outcome, Zhenfu bids farewell to her loom and other various objects of the home. The scene has a funereal quality as she departs the inner chambers of the home, her weeping causing the neighborhood distress. The envoy escorts her to the carriage and together they depart, leaving Han Peng's mother grief-stricken. Upon her arrival, the king is pleased by her appearance and makes preparations for their wedding. However, though she dwells in the palace, her misery remains apparent. The King of Song enquires about her unhappiness, to which she replies:

> I left my father's house and parted from my kinsmen, coming to serve Han Peng. Life and death each have their place; high and low cannot go together. The rushes have their ground, the brambles their thicket. The panther and the wolf have their mates; the partridge and hare go in pairs. The fishes and turtles have their waters, and would not prefer the high hall. Swallows and sparrows fly in flocks, and would not prefer the

> company of the phoenix. I am a commoner's wife and cannot be happy as the King of Song's bride.[306]
>
> 辭家別親，出事韓朋，生死有處，貴賤有殊。蘆葦有地，荊棘有蓁，豺狼有伴，雉兔有雙。魚鱉有水，不樂高堂。燕雀群飛，不樂鳳凰。妾是庶人之妻，不樂宋王之婦。」

The king, upset by her words, looks to his advisors for solutions. Liang Bo suggests that Zhenfu's misery lay in the fact that Han Peng is young and handsome (in contrast, one assumes with the king). He suggests that King Kang ruin his appearance and sentence him to hard labor. The king does so, knocking out Han Peng's two front teeth and sending him to build the Qingling Terrace. When Zhenfu hears of his actions, she is greatly upset and asks the king for permission to visit the construction site. Upon her arrival she sees the haggard figure of Han Peng covering his face with hay. They engage in a mournful dialogue:

> Zhenfu said: 'The King of Song gives me clothes, but I do not wear them. When he gives me food I do not put it to my lips. I think of you always, as a thirsty man does drink. To see your sufferings cuts my heart to the quick. Of the disfigured state you're in I shall certainly inform the King of Song. How comes it that you are ashamed, that you cover your face with the hay and hide yourself from me?' Han Peng said: 'On the southern hill there is a tree; its name is the prickly thorn. On every branch there are two stalks; the leaves are small and their center flat. In my disfigured state, I cannot be loved. It is said that the waters of the eastern pool have no room for the fish of the western sea. You have left the humble and gone over to the mighty. What possessed you to do it?'[307]
>
> 貞夫曰：「宋王有衣，妾亦不著；王若有食，妾亦不嘗。妾念思君，如渴思漿。見君苦痛，割妾心腸。形容憔悴，決報宋王，何以羞恥，取草遮面，避妾隱藏.」韓朋答曰：「南山有樹，名曰荊棘，一枝兩

[306] See Fu, *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu*, 366. Adapted from Waley's translation, see *Ballads and Stories from Tun-Huang*, 60.

[307] Fu, *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu*, 367 and Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-Huang*, 61–2.

莖，葉小心平。形容憔悴，無有心情。蓋聞東流之水，西海之魚，去賤就貴，於意如何.」

Feeling betrayed and heartbroken, Han Peng accuses Zhenfu of abandoning him for the wealth and influence of the king. The reference to prickly thorn (*jingji* 荊棘) is a play on words. He describes it possessing two stalks and small leaves that are flat in the center (*xin ping* 心平), an expression which could also mean that "passions have settled."

Han Peng's criticism of his wife is a unique to the Dunhuang rhapsody, and one that serves to heighten the psychological torment of its heroine as it expresses his grief and anger. The rhapsody, unlike the earlier anecdote accounts (or more prosaic poetry references) provides, for the first time, the emotional state of both husband and wife. Han Peng's scathing words—born from anger and hurt—are understandable given his physical and emotional torment, yet they also betray his lack of trust in his wife. Zhenfu, on the other hand, who has spurned the King's gifts and advances, and bartered her way into finally reuniting with her beloved husband, is instead met with cold contempt and accusations of betrayal.

Wounded by Han Peng's words, Zhenfu departs, and, weeping, tears a three-inch scrap of silk from her dress, bites her finger to draw blood, and writes him another letter. She ties it to the head of an arrow and fires it towards Han Peng, who, upon reading its contents, dies. The king, astonished by his death, asks his ministers about its cause:

"Did he die from himself, or was he slain by another?" Liangbo replied:
"When Han Peng died, there was no wound to be seen. But a letter on three inches of silk was tied to his head."
The King of Song took it and read it. Zhenfu's letter said:

> ‘The rain pours down from the sky, the fish wander in the pool. The big drum is silent, the little drum does not sound.’
>
> The King of Song said, “Who can explain it?’
> Liang Bo answered, “I can explain it. The rain that pours down from the sky is her tears. The fish that wander in the pool are her thoughts. The big drum that is silent is her breathing; the little drum that does not sound is her yearning. All under heaven are in her words—great is their meaning!” [308]

> 「若為自死？為人所煞？」梁伯對曰：「韓朋死時，無有傷損之處。唯有三寸素書，系在朋頭下。」宋王即取讀之。貞夫書曰：「天雨霖霖，魚游池中，大鼓無聲，小鼓無音。」宋王曰：「誰能辨之？」梁伯對曰：「臣能辨之。天雨霖霖是其淚，魚游池中是其意，大鼓無聲是其氣，小鼓無音是其思。天下是其言，其義大矣哉！」

Where the *Soushen ji* account clearly describes Han Peng’s death as suicide (*zisha* 自殺), here the cause of his death is more nebulous. While it is possible that he hung or strangled himself (see the specific phrasing of the letter “tied below his head” *xi zai* Peng *tou xia* 系在朋頭下) it seems just as probable in the context of the rhapsody that he died from grief as a result of reading her poem.

The concept that poetry served as a cipher to interpret the true intentions of another is an early one, and is famously articulated in the “Great Preface” (“Daxu” 大序) of the *Shijing*. Through an almost physiological process of expression, one’s personal intent (*zhi* 志) is translated through the medium of language into the poem (*fa yan wei shi* 發言為詩).[309] One who is capable of correctly interpreting the poem, could, then, directly

[308] Fu, *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu*, 367 and Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-Huang*, 62.

[309] For a translation of the passage, see Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, 65. For the Chinese, see Fang Yurun 方玉潤 (1811–1883), *Shijing yuanshi* 詩經原始 (Origins of the Classic of Poetry), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 69.

connect to the intent of its writer, and, in the process, glean a deep understanding of them as a person.[310] For Han Peng the process of reading Zhenfu's poem is not merely interpretive, it also involves the internalization of her emotional state, as he decrypts her meaning and comprehends the depth of her feelings and her determination to hold true to their vow. His death, then, is a response to her poem, an affirmation of their pledge, and perhaps also an apology for his earlier doubts of her sincerity.

The king, however, lacks the required insight to parse Zhenfu's words and needs a translator. Liang Bo, who serves that function in the rhapsody, marvels over the depth of meaning in her letter, which, though short, is enough to encompass the world.

However, for all its abstruse significance, for the second time in the tale, a composition by Zhenfu has led to tragedy. Yet given the nature of the confrontation between Han Peng and Zhenfu one is tempted to read her immediate sending of the final letter as a spur of the moment challenge to his integrity, one borne out of her own hurt and anger at his reaction to her appearance. Would she have sent the letter had he greeted her as wife rather than as enemy? Could Han Peng and his wife have survived in spite of their travails, as they do in a later Ming stage adaptation of the tale? That the rhapsody raises such questions at all speaks to the psychological complexity and ambiguity of their interactions within the rhapsody.

The letter itself is worth deeper examination to tease out this ambiguity. The images as interpreted by Liang Bo are clear. The rain depicts her tears, pouring into a

---

[310] For a more detailed articulation of this process and of the influence of the "Great Preface" on the interpretation of poetry in early Chinese discourse, see Stephen Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 52–79.

pond inhabited by fish that represent her thoughts. This simple sequence of images denotes her suffering, and suggests that her grief is affecting her memories, ostensibly of Han Peng. From here, as he explains "large drum" represents the stilling of her breath, that is, her death and the "and the "little drum that does not sound" the ceasing of her yearning (*si* 思). Yet this final set of images could be taken in two ways. In the first, the stilling of the two drums represents the process of death—the stopping of breath and the subsequent cessation of thought. In the second, and perhaps more interestingly, it suggests that upon her death her warm feelings for him too will end. This mirrors Han Peng's veiled comment that his feelings had cooled towards Zhenfu and suggests that her letter—what is essentially a suicide pact—was written in the heat of the moment and in the throes of her anger.

Yet it is not the act of writing itself which kills in the Han Peng tale, but rather the act of female expression of emotion through words that is deadly. Whether serving to draw unwanted attention through expressing her longing, or bringing about the death of her husband, Zhenfu's compositions inevitably inspire disaster. In both cases the profundity of her writing as a means of expressing female desire and emotion has an immense impact on their intended audience (Han Peng), just as it does on those who inadvertently encounter it (the king and Liang Bo). Though the king cannot understand her words, he is savvy enough to recognize their remarkable quality, and that is enough to inspire his need to possess them (and her). For a woman, then, to be seen was to be desired and to be read was to be sought after. For such women, the tale of Han Peng says, even remaining within the darkness of the inner quarters was no guarantee of safety, not when the brilliance of one's talent threatened their exposure.

From then on, the rhapsody progresses much the same as the *Soushen ji* edition, with the exception of the details of Zhenfu's death. After Han Peng dies, his wife requests that he be given an honorable burial, to which the king assents. She then requests to visit the site. When she arrives, she walks around the grave several times and begins wailing in grief. She calls out to Han Peng (to no avail), and then addresses her attendants, thanking them for their service before repeating the common expression that just as "a horse doesn't wear two saddles, a woman doesn't serve two husbands" (*yi ma bu bei er an, yi nü bu shi er fu* 一馬不被二鞍，一女不事二夫).[311] Soon after she returns to her chambers where she soaks her clothing in vinegar before throwing herself into Han Peng's grave. Much as atop Qingling Terrace, when the attendants grab at her, they are unable to hold her back, and she slips out of their grasp. A great rain begins to fall and the grave collapses inward, burying husband and wife together.

The king sends men to retrieve her body, but they cannot find her. Instead, they only find two stones, one blue and one white. After seeing them, the king buries the blue stone to the east of the road and the white to the west.[312] Soon after a cinnamon tree sprouts from the former and a *wutong* tree from the latter. The king visits the site and sees the entwined trees and asks once again for an explanation. Liang Bo again explains:

> The branches that touch are their thoughts. The leaves that intertwine are their love. The roots that join are their life-breath (*qi* 氣). The fountain that flows beneath is their tears.[313]

[311] Fu, *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu*, 367.

[312] Corresponding to the traditional association of colors with west and east.

[313] Fu, *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu*, 368 and Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-Huang*, 63.

> 枝枝相當是其意，葉葉相籠是其思，根下相連是其氣，下有流泉是其淚。

The king orders a man to chop the trees down. Blood flows from the axe blows and two wooden chips fall into the water and transform into a pair of mandarin ducks that return to their home (*huan wo ben xiang* 還我本鄉). A feather drops from one of the birds, and the King of Song obtains it. When he strokes it against his neck to feel its softness, his head falls from his body. The account ends with the judgement that, because he "carried off a commoner's wife and willfully slew the innocent, in less than three years' time the kingdom of Song was annihilated" (*sheng duo shuren zhi qi, wang sha xianliang, wei zhi san nian, Songguo miewang* 生奪庶人之妻, 枉殺賢良, 未至三年，宋國滅亡).[314]

The "Rhapsody on Han Peng" provides a beautifully rendered and expanded version of the ancient love story. The emphasis on poetic composition that appeared in the *Soushen ji* edition of the tale takes center stage, while female beauty (although still valued) becomes secondary to literary accomplishment. The performative potential of the tale, as an expression of love, grief, and female suffering reaches its apogee in these surviving materials from Dunhuang. The work presents a confident and expanded version of the tale, one that is evocative of the earliest fragments of the story and may have been built upon a long-standing performance tradition. Recall that the *Soushen ji* account concludes with Gan Bao's note that the tale was still the subject of ballads (*geyao* 歌謠) throughout the south. One could easily imagine the "Rhapsody on Han

[314] Ibid. As for Liang Bo, he is said to have been exiled to the frontier.

Peng" deriving from one such balladic tradition and being performed by storytellers or singers in markets and fairs across China.[315]

Central to the rhapsody's appeal is the larger-than-life figure of Zhenfu. In her, the tale provides a heroine, who, though capable of interpreting omens and predicting disaster, is still hamstrung by the requirements of female propriety, and ultimately becomes a participant in her own demise. The rhapsody is rich in evocative language and imagery, from the complex psychology of her letter to Han Peng, to the scene of his death, worn down and broken, head wrapped in her blood-stained poetry—itself the expression of her deepest feelings. Though it must end in tragedy—the audience knows it, as does Zhenfu before she even departs from home—the rich depiction of her death is what, ultimately, enables the couple to fulfill their vows. In her letter to Han Peng, his wife writes longingly of the paired birds who play together in the day and, who, at night, are "always going home together." Through death and metamorphosis, the souls of Han Peng and Zhenfu themselves transform into mandarin ducks that are described as "returning home." Even in death, then, it seemed her fate was tied to the written word.

[315] Both Han Peng and his wife (now named Li Cuiyun 李翠雲) appear again in a Ming-era southern drama (*chuanqi* 傳奇) called *Han Peng shiyi ji* 韓朋十義記 (Han Peng and the Ten Righteous Ones). The work, the author of which is unknown, is a retelling of another Ming play, the *Bayi ji* 八義記 (Eight Righteous Ones) by Xu Yuan 徐元, which was itself an adaptation of the popular Yuan drama, *Zhaoshi gu'er* 趙氏孤兒 (The Orphan of Zhao) by Ji Junxiang 紀君祥 (fl. 13th c.). Han Peng and his wife are layered over characters from the *Bayi ji*, and, aside from the villain of the piece winkingly referring to himself as King Kang in one line, bears little relationship to the Han Peng tradition. For more on the development of the *Bayi ji* from *Zhaoshi gu'er*, see Yu Weimin 俞為民, *Song Yuan nanxi kaolun* 宋元南戲考論 (On Southern Plays of the Song and Yuan) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 239–268. The *Han Peng shiyi ji* itself survives in a Wanli era (1572–1620) printed edition titled *Xinkan yinzhu chuxiang Han Peng shiyi ji* 新刊音註出像韓朋十義記 (Han Peng and the Ten Righteous Men, Newly Printed with Phonetics, Annotations, and Illustrations) by the Fuchun tang 富春堂 of Jinling 金陵 (modern-day Nanjing). Other adaptations of the *Shiyi ji* continued afterwards. For a summary of one such, see Eugene Cooper, *The Market and Temple Fairs of Rural China: Red Fire* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 221–222.

CONCLUSION

The materials examined within this study represent only the extant traces of broader traditions related to the Qiu Hu and Han Peng narratives. That the tales were popular at numerous levels of Chinese society is made evident by the variety of forms they took over time as they were adapted to new genres and presented to new audiences. Yet these surviving adaptations, like an iceberg, surface only a small fraction of what must have been a much greater whole; concealing from our view the bulk of popular transmission and interpretations of both stories. Yet even restricted to extant materials, we may garner a glimpse into the ways in which these traditions were reimagined and repurposed by authors across genre and throughout time. Whether in the form of poetry, prose, or drama, these works portrayed and engaged with matters such as conceptions of female integrity, the roles of women in the family, representations of ideal marriage (as duty versus romance), the failures of men, female talent and literacy, as well as the ways in which social and economic pressures helped shape women's lives.

As this study demonstrates, these adaptations of the Qiu Hu and Han Peng traditions differed greatly in form and content, shaped as they were by the genres they inhabited, the pressures of social norms, and the expectations of audiences. The poetic works presented in Chapter 2 demonstrate the variety of ways that elite male authors imagined topoi of female longing and loneliness, both romanticizing women's suffering as well as exalting demonstrations of their virtue. In the process, by exploring these artificial expressions of female subjectivity, poets such as Fu Xuan, Yan Yanzhi, and Gao Shi rendered ever more complex portrayals of the character of Qiu Hu's wife. They were

doubtless drawn to the contrast of the mulberry grove, both as a site of potential romance as well as agricultural production. The figure of Luofu, like Qiu Hu's wife, represents this duality between integrity and beauty, virtue and desire. Later authors engaged these two figures in conversation, with Meiying renouncing a comparison with Luofu and asserting in the process her own superiority as wife of an ideal husband.

As Chapter 3 demonstrates, the "transformation text" version of the tale, though incomplete, serves to provide us a link between popular vernacular adaptations of the Qiu Hu tale and its elite permutations. While details of its authorship remain unknown and the *bianwen* remains difficult to place in the grander scheme of Tang literature, its use of foreshadowing, costuming, and anticipation as a tool to evoke drama suggest that it was the product of a mature literary tradition. Several elements of the *bianwen* would later find their way into its dramatic adaptation, such as the expanded role of the mother-in-law, as well as her attempt to gift his wife the gold that Qiu Hu brought home to assuage her guilt at the young women's suffering. This raises the possibility that these elements were either already part of the larger narrative tradition (and thus influenced the Yuan drama as well as the *bianwen*), or that some plot elements of the *bianwen* survived into the 13th century. No matter the case, the *bianwen* adaptation provides a glimpse into the concurrent prose development of the Qiu Hu tale, which may have been flourishing in its vernacular form while poets such as Gao Shi were refining its life in verse.

As this study has shown, both literary traditions have repeatedly examined the wages of beauty and the ways in which women were always at risk, even when married and ensconced within the home. The dangers of exposure to men, the pernicious threat of gossip, and the eventual need to demonstrate one's surpassing integrity—even at the cost

of one's life—continued to remain relevant throughout the tradition. However, the *zaju* edition of the Qiu Hu tale chooses to eschew his wife's suicide in lieu of a reunion between the couple under the auspices of her mother-in-law. Meiying, as a result of the conventions of drama, portrays a dramatically different character than her forebears. Ferocious in defense of her integrity, she is just as liable to strike those who impugn her virtue as she is to insult them. Yet rather than pursuing death, she seeks emancipation through divorce. Canny with money and aware of her own value, she is forced again and again to navigate the seas of commodification upon which she finds herself. As a product of the urban culture in which it was created and staged, *Qiu Hu xi qi* demonstrates not only the vitality and verve of the Yuan *zaju*, but also the complex relationship of women to drama, especially regarding works which celebrate female chastity and were no doubt staged amongst the wine-houses of the pleasure quarters. It is telling that among the materials examined herein, it is Meiying—a product of this urban performative tradition—who is first to bear her own name and the only to subvert the tragic end that ultimately befalls Qiu Hu's wife.

The tradition of Han Peng, on the other hand, builds upon a tale of romance and tragedy to encompass broader notions of female talent and literacy, a dangerous combination that gives voice to the central figure of Zhenfu in the "Rhapsody on Han Peng" while simultaneously incurring the couple's destruction. Though the Han Peng tale is emblematic of fidelity and self-sacrifice, it too undergoes creative reimagining at the hands of poets such as Li Shangyin (for whom Han Peng has become something more akin to a lothario, flitting from blossom to blossom rather than staying true to his wife) and Wen Tingyun, who demonstrates the degree to which elements of the tale were

repurposed within popular culture, such as in the wedding scene that he captures in which the themes of the tale become signifiers for marital bliss. In addition, the various elements of the tradition; the entwined trees, butterflies, mandarin ducks, and even the Qingling Terrace itself all form part of a larger set of romantic signifiers that are repeated throughout any number of anecdotes, poems, and dramas. These romanticized motifs were then drawn upon by authors to evoke the love and dedication of their subjects or as shorthand for the passions of youth.

No doubt these two traditions maintained their popularity in part because the themes they addressed remained just as relevant for the authors who composed their adaptations as they did for the audiences that consumed them. The debate over the strictures of female chastity only became greater over time, as the number of accounts of female exemplars began to skyrocket from the Yuan onwards. So too, concerns about women's roles in the family and the interactions between the denizens of the inner quarters and the outside world remained a pressing issue (among elites, in any case; less, perhaps among the lower classes who lacked the economic wherewithal to isolate productive members of the family). Both Qiu Hu and Han Peng, in their various adaptations reveal these tensions between the elite feminine ideal and the lived experiences of women. Both traditions comment on matters such as education, agricultural work, marriage, personal relations between women, and the perpetual threat of outside influence on the household. Both depict strong, capable women who are hamstrung by men who either fail them or betray them outright. In this sense, these traditions speak to a broader literature of female suffering as a result of male failure.

The two narrative traditions examined herein speak to early conceptions of suicide and integrity as imagined by men and—at least in the case of Qiu Hu—presented for the edification of women. Both heroines approach the act of self-destruction from different perspectives, Qiu Hu's wife as a means of ensuring her personal integrity and as a precaution against the possibility of remarriage, and Han Peng's as a means of preserving her marriage and chastity through the finality of death. The continuing popularity of both tales, and their frequent adaption into different genres (whether poetry, rhapsody, transformation tale, or drama) not only speaks to their dramatic potential for audiences, but also the range of potential meanings that each tale encompassed and the ways in which creative authors could reimagine or repurpose them. Like the silk-washing girl who opened this study, both heroines of these traditions ultimately won their fame by ending their lives in the name of virtue. These tales thus serve as examples of the ways in which gendered suffering could reify and amplify one's reputation, either as a ferocious and upright wife or as a faithful and loving spouse. They also serve as warnings, inscribed by broken or waterlogged forms, that neither the mulberry grove nor the inner chambers were safe from the reaches of male desire; though some, like the plucky Meiying, could still win out in the end.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Joseph Roe III. “From Saint to Singing Girl: The Rewriting of the Lo-fu Narrative in Chinese Literati Poetry.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 48/2 (Dec. 1988): 321–361.

Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Han). 3 vols. Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe, 2004.

Bell, Catherine. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Besio, Kimberly. “Gender, Loyalty, and the Reproduction of the Wang Zhaojun Legend: Some Social Ramifications of Drama in the Late Ming.” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 40, no. 2 (1997): 251–282.

Birrell, Anne. “Mythmaking and Yüeh-fu: Popular Songs and Ballads in Early China.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 109, No. 2 (Apr. – Jun., 1989): 223–235.

Bokenkamp, Stephen R. “A Medieval Feminist Critique of the Chinese World Order: The Case of Wu Zhao (r. 690–705).” *Religion* 28.4 (1998): 383–92.

Bossler, Beverly. “Faithful Wives and Heroic Maidens: Politics, Virtue, and Gender in Song China.” In *Tang Song Nüxing Yu Shehui* 唐宋女性與社會 (Women and Society in Tang and Song China), 751–84. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.

_____. “Gender and Empire: A View from the Yuan.” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.1 (2004): 197–223.

Bronfen, Elizabeth. *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.

Bussotti, Michela. “Editions of Biographies of Women as Examples of Printed Illustrations from the Ming Dynasty.“ *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Studies in Chinese) 28.2 (1999): 169-224.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

_____. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Campany, Robert. *Garden of Marvels*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015.

Carlitz, Katherine. "Shrine, Governing-Class Identity and the Cult of Widow-Fidelity in Mid- Ming Jiangnan." *Journal of Asian Studies* 56.3 (1997): 612–640.

_____ "The Daughter, the Singing-Girl, and the Seduction of Suicide." *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 3.1 (2001): 24–44.

Castelli, Elizabeth. *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Chen Meizu 陳美足. *Nanchao Yan Xie shi yanjiu* 南朝顏謝詩研究 (Poetry of Yan Yanzhi and Xie Lingyun of the Southern Dynasties). Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1989.

Cho, Sookja. *Transforming Gender and Emotion: The Butterfly Lovers Story in China and Korea*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018.

Cooper, Eugene. *The Market and Temple Fairs of Rural China: Red Fire*, New York: Routledge, 2012.

Crossland-Guo, Shuyun. "The Oral Tradition of *Bianwen*—Its Features and Influence on Chinse Narrative Literature," PhD. Dissertation. University of Hawai'i, 1996.

Crump, James I. "The Elements of Yüan Opera." *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 17, No. 3 (1985): 417–419.

Cutter, Robert Joe. "Poetry from 200 B.C.E. to 600 C.E." In *Columbia History of Chinese Literature*. Edited by Victor Mair. 248–273. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Dalby, Michael T. "Court Politics in Late T'ang Times." In *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3, edited by Denis Twitchett. 561–682. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Davis, Richard L. “Chaste and Filial Women in Chinese Historical Writings of the Eleventh Century.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 121, No. 2 (Apr. – Jun., 2001): 204–218.

Diény, Jean-Pierre. *Pastourelles et magnanarelles: Essai sur un theme litteraire chinois*, Paris: Libraire Droz, 1977.

Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: Elek Books Ltd, 1976.

_____. *Eight Chinese Plays from the Thirteenth Century to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

_____. “Yuan Drama.” In *Chinese Theater from its Origins to the Present Day*. Edited by Colin Mackerras. 32–59. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1982.

Doran, Rebecca. *Transgressive Typologies: Constructions of Gender and Power in Early Tang China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016.

Enright, D.J, ed. *The Oxford Book of Death*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Eoyang, Eugene. “The Wang Chao-chün Legend: Configurations of the Classic.” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1982): 3–22.

Fang Yurun 方玉潤 (1811-1883). *Shijing yuanshi* 詩經原始 (Origins of the Classic of Poetry). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986.

Fei Siyan 費絲言. “You dianfan dao guifan: cong Mingdai zhenjie lienü de bianshi yu liuchuan kan zhenjie guannian de yange hua” 由典範到規範: 從明代貞節烈女的辨識與流傳看貞節觀念的嚴格化 (From the exemplary to the prescriptive: the increasingly rigid views on female chastity in Ming dynasty). Taipei: Taida chuban weiyuanhui, 1998.

_____. “Writing for Justice: An Activist Beginning of the Cult of Female Chastity in Late Imperial China.” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 71.4 (2012): 991–1012.

Frankel, Hans. "Yüeh-fu Poetry." In *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, edited by Cyril Birch, 69-107. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

_____. “The Chinese Ballad Southeast Fly The Peacocks.’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 34 (1974): 248–271.

Fu Junlian 伏俊璉. *Dunhuang fu jiaozhu* 敦煌賦校注 (Rhapsodies of Dunhuang with Commentary). Gansu renmin chubanshe, 1994.

_____ and Yang Aijun 楊愛軍. "Han Peng gushi kaoyuan" 韓朋故事考源 (Research Into the Origins of the Tale of Han Peng). In *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 (Studies of Dunhuang), 3 (2007): 91–93.

_____. "Dunhuang sufu zhi yanjiu fanchou ji sufu zai wenxue shishang de yiyi" 敦煌俗賦之研究及俗賦在文學史上的意義 (Scope of the Study of Dunhuang Vernacular Rhapsody and its Significance in Chinese Literary History). *Zhida zhongwen xuebao* 政大中文學報 (Journal of Chinese Literature at Zhengzhi University) 18, 2012: 35–56.

Fukuda Toshiaki 福田俊昭, "'Qiu hu goji' oboekaki" 「「秋胡故事」覺書」 (Notes on the Qiu Hu tale). *Daitō Bunka Daigaku Kangakkai shi* 大東文化大學漢學會誌 (Journal of the Chinese Society of Daitō Bunka University) 13 (1974): 33–44.

Galambos, Imre. *Studies in Chinese Manuscripts: From the Warring States Period to the 20th Century*. Budapest: Institute of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2013.

Gan Bao 干寶 (286–336). *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (Record of an Inquest into the Supernatural). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009.

_____. *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record*. Translated by Kenneth J. DeWoskin and J. I. Crump. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

Gansusheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 甘肅省文物考古研究所. *Dunhuang hanjian* 敦煌漢簡 (Han Slips of Dunhuang). 3 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991.

Gao Guofan 高國藩. "Dunhuang ben Qiu Hu gushi yan" 敦煌本秋胡故事研 (Study of the Dunhuang Edition of the Qiu Hu Tale). *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 (Dunhuang Studies) Issue 1 (1986): 77–89.

_____. *Dunhuang suwenhua xue* 敦煌俗文化學 (Studies of the Vernacularization in Dunhuang). Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shangdian, 1999.

Goldin, Paul. "Ban Zhao in Her Time and Ours." In *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Paul Goldin. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005.

Gong Shitai 貢師泰 (1298–1362). *Wan zhai ji* 玩齋集 (Collected Works of Gong Shitai). In *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Sections). Vol. 1215. Compiled by Ji Yun 紀昀 et.al. 509–743. Taibei: Taiwan shangyu yinshuguan, 1983.

Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041–1099). *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (Anthology of Music Bureau Poems). 4 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998.

Harding, Tina Marie. "Echoes of the Past: Yan Yanzhi's 顏延之 (384–456) Lyric *Shi* 詩." PhD Dissertation. University of Colorado, Boulder, 2007.

Hatano Tarō 波多野太郎. "'Qiu Hu xiqi' geki no shūdai ni tsuite 秋胡戲妻劇の主題について (On the Main Themes of the play "Qiu Hu Flirts with his Wife"). *Chūgoku bungakushi kenkyū* 中國文學史研究 (Studies in the History of Chinese Literature) 13 (1963): 43–89

Hawkes, David. "Some Reflections on Yüan tsa-chü." *Asia Major* 16 (1971): 69–81.

Hightower, James. *Topics in Chinese Literature*. Cambridge: Mass, 1953.

Hinsch, Bret. *Passions of the Cut Sleeve*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

_____. "The Origins of Separating the Sexes in China." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123.3 (2003): 595–616.

_____. "The Textual History of Liu Xiang's *Lie nüzhuan*." *Monumenta Serica* Vol.52 (2004): 95-112.

_____. "Cross-Genre Influence on the Fictional Aspects of Lienü Narratives." *Journal of Oriental Studies* Vol.41 No.1 (2006): 41–66.

_____. "The Composition of *Lie nüzhuan*: Was Liu Xiang the Author or Editor?" *Asia Major* (third series) 20.1, (2007): 1-23.

_____. "Male Honor and Female Chastity." *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 13 (2011): 169–204.

_____. *Women in Early Imperial China*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011.

Holmgren, Jennifer. “Widow Chastity in the Northern Dynasties: The *Lieh-nü* Biographies in the *Wei-shu*.” *Papers in Far Eastern History* 23 (1981): 165–87.

Hsia, C. T., Wai-yee Li, and George Kao eds. *The Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

Hsieh Andrew C. K. and Jonathan D. Spence. “Suicide and the Family in Pre-modern Chinese Society.” In *Normal and Abnormal Behavior in Chinese Culture*, edited by Arthur Kleinman and Tsung-yi Lin. 29–47. Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1981.

Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962). *Baihua wenxue shi* 白話文學史 (History of Vernacular Literature). Shanghai: Shanghai xinyue shudian, 1928.

Huang Shuiyun 黃水雲. *Yan Yanzhi ji qi shiwen yanjiu* 顏延之及其詩文研究 (The Poetry and Prose of Yan Yanzhi). Taibei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1989.

Huang Peilie 黃丕烈 (1763–1825) and Zheng Qian 鄭騫. *Jiaoding Yuankan zaju sanshi Zhong* 校訂元刊雜劇三十種 (Revised Editions of Thirty Variety Plays Printed in the Yuan). Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1962.

Huang Zheng 黃征 and Zhang Yongquan 張涌泉. *Dunhuang bianwen jiaozhu* 敦煌變文校注 (Dunhuang Transformation Texts with Commentary). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997.

Hucker, Charles O. *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Taipei: Southern Materials Center, Inc., 1985.

Idema, Wilt. “Why You Have Never Read a Yuan Drama: The Transformation of *zaju* at the Ming Court.” In *Studi in onore di Lanciello Lanciotti*, edited by S.M. Carletti et. al. 765–91. Napoli: Istituto Universiatorio Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, 1996.

_____. *Meng Jiangnü Brings Down the Wall: Ten Versions of a Chinese Legend*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008.

_____. “Dunhuang narratives.” In *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*. Edited by Stephen Owen and Kang-yi Chang. 373–380. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

_____ and Beata Grant. *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

_____ and Lloyd Haft. *A Guide to Chinese Literature, Part 1*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

_____ and Stephen West. *Chinese Theater 1100–1450: A Sourcebook*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982.

_____. *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010.

Ito Mieko 伊藤 美重子. "Tonkō shahon go shisho henbun nitsuite: sono gorakusei" 敦煌写本「伍子胥變文」につ いて: その娯楽性 (On the Entertaining Nature of the Dunhuang Edition of the *Wu Zixu bianwen*). *Ocha no Mizu Joshi Daigaku, Chūgoku bungaku kaihō* お茶の水女子大学, 中国文学会報 (Bulletin of the Chinese Literature Society of Ocha no Mizu Women's University) 31 (2012): 25–40.

Ji yun 紀昀 (1724–1805) et. al. comps. *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Sections). Taibei: Taiwan shangyu yinshuguan, 1983.

Jia, Jinhua. *Gender, Power, and Talent: The Journey of Daoist Priestesses in Tang China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

Jin Yingzhi 金盈之 (fl. 12th century). *Zuiweng tanlu* 醉翁談錄 (Record of Discussions of the Drunken Gaffer). Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1958.

Johnson, David. "The Wu Tzu-hsu Pien wen and Its Sources: Part I." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* Vol. 40.1 (1980): 93–156.

_____. "The Wu Tzu-hsü Pien-wen and its Sources: Part II." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40.2 (1980): 465–505.

Judge, Joan. *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, The West, and the Woman Question in China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.

_____ and Hu Ying eds. *Beyond Exemplar Tales: Women's Biography in Chinese History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Kao, Karl. *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and Fantastic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Karlgren, Bernard. *The Book of Odes*. Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950.

Knechtges, David. “Shuo yuan 說苑.” In *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, edited by Michael Loewe. 443–446. Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993.

_____ and Taiping Chang eds. *Ancient and Medieval Chinese Literature Vol. 3–4*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Ko, Dorothy. *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Kong, Xurong. “Fu Xuan’s 傅玄 (217–278) Rhapsodies on Objects 詠物賦.” PhD Dissertation. University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2005.

Lagerwey, John. “The Annals of Wu and Yüeh, Part 1: with a study of its sources.” PhD Dissertation. Harvard University, 1975.

Lei, Daphne. *Uncrossing the Borders: Performing Chinese in Gendered (Trans)Nationalism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2019.

Lei Jiaji 雷家驥. *Humei pianneng huoju: Wu Zetian jingshen yu xinli fenxi* 狐媚偏能惑主: 武則天的精神與心理分析 (The Bewitching, Delusional Autocrat: A Psychological Analysis of Wu Zetian). Taibei: Lianming wenhua youxian gongsi, 1981.

Li Fang 李昉 (925–996). *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Era). Vol. 10. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961.

_____. *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperial Overview of the Taiping Era). Vol. 1. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960.

_____.*Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature). Vol. 2. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966.

Li Jiasheng 李家聲. *Shijing quanyi quanping* 詩經全譯全評 (Classic of Poetry with Complete Interpretations and Commentary). Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2002.

Li Wai-yee. “Figures.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature (1000 BCE – 900 CE)*, edited by Wiebke Denecke, Wai-yee Li, and Xiaofei Tian, 450–470. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Liji zhengyi 禮記正義 (Correct Meaning of the Classic of Rites), with commentary by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–220) and Kong Yingda 孔穎達

(574–648). Edited by Li Xueqin 李學勤. 3 vols. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999.

Lin, Wei-hung. "Chastity in Chinese Eyes: *Nan-nü yu-pieh*." *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Research in Chinese Studies) (1991): 13–39.

Liu Kaiyang 劉開揚. *Gao Shi shij bian nianpu zhu* 高適詩集編年箋注 (Collected Poetry and Chronology of Gao Shi with Commentary and Notes). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981.

Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BCE) and Anne Behnke Kinney trans. *Exemplary Women of Early China: The* Lienü zhuan *of Liu Xiang*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

_____. *Shuo yuan jinzhu jinyi* 說苑今註今譯 (Garden of Persuasions with Modern Commentary and Interpretation). Commentary by Lu Yuanjun 盧元駿. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1977.

_____ and Wang Zhaoyuan 王照圓 (1763–1851). *Lienü zhuan bu zhu* 列女傳補註 (Arrayed Biographies of Female Exemplars with Supplementary Material and Commentary). 8 fascicles. In *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Continuation of the Complete Library in Four Sections), vol. 515. 658–765. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002.

Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 CE). *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 (Miscellaneous Records of the Western Capital). In *Han Wei Liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan* 漢魏六朝筆記小說大觀 (A Great Compendium of Brush Writings and Fiction of the Han, Wei, and Six Dynasties), compiled by Wang Genlin 王根林. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999.

Liu Xuekai 劉學鎧. *Wen Tingyun quanji jiaozhu* 溫庭筠全集校注 (Collected Works of Wen Tingyun with Commentary and Annotations). Vol. 1. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007.

Liu Xun 劉恂 (fl. 889–908). *Lingbiao lu yi* 嶺表錄異 (Strange Records From Beyond the Mountains), edited by Lu Xun 魯迅. Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1983.

Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721). *Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋. Commentated on by Pu Qilong 浦起龍. Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1988.

Lo Yuet-keung. "Filial Devotion for Women: A Buddhist Testimony from Third-Century China." In *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*. Edited by

Alan Chan and Sor-hoon Tan. 71–90. London and New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2004.

_____. “Zhen shun – *Lienü zhuan* Zhong de qizi”貞順——《列女傳》中的妻子 (“Rectitude and Compliance --- The Wife in Liu Xiang’s Lienü zhuan”). In., *Qin Han sixiang yu wenhua* 秦漢思想與文化 (Thought and Culture in Qin-Han China). Edited by Xiong Tieji 熊鐵基 and Zhao Guohua 趙國華.355–375. Singapore: Hope Publishing, 2005.

_____. “Recovering a Buddhist Voice on Daughters-in-law: The Yuyenü jing.” *History of Religions* 44.4 (2005): 318–350.

Luo Guolian 羅國蓮. “Lun *Qiu Hu xiqi* gushi zhong de Qiu Hu xingxiang – yi *Liennü zhuan* zhi *Qiu Hu xiqi* wei fanwei 論「秋胡戲妻」故事中的秋胡形象 ——以《列女傳》至《秋胡戲妻》為範圍 (On the Image of Qiu Hu in the tale of *Qiu Hu Flirts with his Wife* from the *Lienü zhuan* to *Qiu Hu xiqi*). *Dongwu zhongwen xianshang xueshu lunwen* 東吳中文線上學術論文 (Soochow Journal of Chinese Literature Online) 14 (2011): 27–52.

Mahmood, Saba. “Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject.” In *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, edited by Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, 177–224. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Mair, Victor. “Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative: An Inventory of Tun-huang Manuscripts.” *Chinoperl Papers* 10 (1981): 5–96.

_____. *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

_____. *Tang Transformation Texts.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Milburn, Olivia. *The Glory of Yue: An Annotated Translation of the Yuejue shu*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Minford John, and Joseph S.M. Lau, eds. *Chinese Classical Literature: An Anthology of Translations Vol. 1: From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Nai Deweng 耐得翁 (fl. 13th century). *Ducheng jisheng* 都城紀勝 (Exhaustive Description of the Capital). In Meng Yuanlao 孟元老. *Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄 (Dreams of Splendor of the Eastern Capital), 89–110. Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957.

Nemoto Makoto 根本誠. “Chūgoku bungaku no ichitokuchō (ue) Go Shiso henbun no jinbutsu byōsha no genkaisei” 中國文學の一特徵(下)─伍子胥變文の人物描寫の限界性 (The Special Characteristics of Chinese Literature, Part 1, The Limitations of Character Portrayal in the *Wu Zixu bianwen*). *Tōyō Bungaku Kenkyū* 東洋文学研究 (Studies of Eastern Literature) 14, (1966): 7–16.

_____. “Chūgoku bungaku no ichitokuchō (shita) Go Shiso henbun no jinbutsu byōsha no genkaisei” 中國文學の一特徵(下)─伍子胥變文の人物描寫の限界性 (The Special Characteristics of Chinese Literature, Part 2, The Limitations of Character Portrayal in the *Wu Zixu bianwen*). *Tōyō Bungaku Kenkyū* 東洋文学研究 (Studies of Eastern Literature) 15, (1967): 38~49.

Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641). *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Collection of Literature Arranged by Categories), Vol. 1. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982.

Owen, Stephen ed. *An Anthology of Chinese Literature. Beginnings to 1911*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996.

Poe, Edgar Allen. “The Philosophy of Composition.” *Graham’s Magazine*, Vol. 28, No. 4, (April, 1846): 163–167.

Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640–1715) and John Minford. *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Qian Nanxiu. “*Lienü* versus *Xianyuan*: The Two Biographical Traditions in Chinese Women’s History.” In *Beyond Exemplar Tales: Women’s Biography in Chinese History*, edited by Joan Judge and Hu Ying, 70–87. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭. “Hanjian zhong suojian Han Peng gushi de xin ziliao” 漢箭中所見韓朋故事的新資料 (New Materials on the Story of Han Peng From Within Han-era Slips). *Fudan xuebao (shehui ke xueban)* 復旦學報 (社會科學版) [Journal of Fudan University, Social Sciences edition] no. 3 (1999): 109–113.

Quan Tangshi 全唐詩 (Complete Tang Poems). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960.

Raphals, Lisa-Ann. *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*, New York: SUNY, 1998.

Rong Zhaozu 容肇祖. “Dunhuang ben ‘Han Peng fu’ kao” 敦煌本《韓朋賦》考 (Research on the Dunhuang Edition of Rhapsody of Han Peng). In *Dunhuang bianwen lunwenlu* 敦煌變文論文錄 (Collected Articles on Dunhuang Transformation Texts), edited by Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 and Bai Huawen 白化文, Vol. 3. 649–682. Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1985.

Ropp, Paul. “Passionate Women: Female Suicide in Late Imperial China—Introduction.” *Nan Nü* 3.1 (2001): 3–21.

Shaughnessy, Edward L. *I Ching: The Classic of Changes*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.

Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673–1769). *Gushi yuan* 古詩源 (Origins of Ancient Verse). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chuban, 1977.

Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513). *Songshu* 宋書 (History of the Song). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974.

Shi Junbao 石君寶 (1192–1276). *Shi Junbao xiqu ji* 石君寶戲曲集 (Collected Plays of Shi Junbao), edited by Huang Zhusan 黃竹三. Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1992.

_____ and Wang Jide 王驥德 (ca. 1560–1623). *Gu zaju: Li Yaxian huajiu Qujiang chi* 古雜劇: 李亞仙花酒曲江池 (Ancient Variety Plays: Li Yaxian Amid Flowers and Wine at the Winding Stream). Shanghai: Shanghai guju chubanshe, 1995.

Sieber, Patricia. *Theaters of Desire: Authors, Readers, and the Reproduction of Early-Chinese Song Drama, 1300–2000*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BCE). *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian). 2 vols. Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 2004.

Slingerland, Edward. *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Cambridge: Hackett, 2003.

Sommer, Matthew H. *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Sun Kaidi 孫楷第. *Sujiang shuohua yu baihua xiaoshuo* 俗講說話與白話小說 (Popular Preaching and Vernacular Fiction). Peking: Zuojia chuban she, 1956.

Sun Qinshan 孙钦善. *Gao Shi ji jiaozhu* 高适集校注 (The Collected Works of Gao Shi, Checked and Annotated). Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1984.

Theiss, Janet M. "Dealing with Disgrace: The Negotiation of Female Virtue in Late Imperial China." PhD dissertation. University of California at Berkeley, 1998.

Turner, Victor. *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1982.

Twitchett, Denis and Howard J. Wechsler. "Kao-tsung (reign 649–83) and the empress Wu: the inheritor and the usurper." In *Cambridge History of China*, Vol. III, Pt. 1, edited by Denis Twitchett. 244–272. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Van Zoeren, Stephen. *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Waley, Arthur. *Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang: An Anthology*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1960.

Wang Huijie 王繪絜. *Fu Xuan jiqi shi wen yanjiu* 傅玄及其詩文研究 (The Prose and Poetry of Fu Xuan). Taibei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1997.

Wang Shifu 王實甫 (1250–1337?), Wilt Idema, and Stephen West. *The Story of the Western Wing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Wang Siyuan 王泗原. *Chuci jiao shi* 楚辭校釋 (The Songs of Chu, Collated and Annotated). Beijing: Renming jiaoyu chubanshe, 1980.

Wang Zhongmin. 王重民, *Dunhuang guji xulu* 敦煌古籍敘錄 (Index to the Dunhuang Collection). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979.

Watson, Burton. *The Complete Works of Chuang tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.

West, Stephen. "A Study in Appropriation: Zang Maoxun's Injustice to Dou E." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 111, Issue 2 (Apr. – Jun. 1991): 283–302.

Wu Hung. "What is Bianxiang - On the Relationship between Dunhuang Art and Dunhuang Literature." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52 (1992): 111–192

Wu Shuping 吳樹平. *Dongguan hanji* 東觀漢記 (Records of the Eastern Watchtower of the Han). Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1987.

Wu Yue Chunqiu 吳越春秋 (Springs and Autumns of Wu and Yue). Edited by Zhou Shengchun 周生春. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997.

Xiang Chu 項楚. *Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu* 敦煌變文選注 (Selections of Dunhuang Bianwen with Commentary). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006.

Xinkan yinzhu chuxiang Han Peng shiyi ji 新刊音註出像韓朋十義記 (Han Peng and the Ten Righteous Men, Newly Printed with Phonetics, Annotations, and Illustrations) (1573–1619). In *Guben xiqu congkan* 古本戲曲叢刊 (Compendium of Old Editions of Drama), 4th series, box 4, vol. 5. Compiled by Guben xiqu congkan bianji weiyuanhui 古本戲曲叢刊編輯委員會編. Shanghai: Shanghai wuyin shuguan, 1954.

Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–583), Wu Zhaoyi 吳兆宜 and Cheng Yan 程琰. *Yutai xinyong jianzhu* 玉台新詠箋注 (New Songs from the Jade Terrace with Notes and Commentary). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999.

Xiao Difei 蕭滌非. *Han Wei liuchao yuefu wenxue shi* 漢魏六朝文學史 (History of Literature of Han, Wei, and Six Dynasties Period). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984.

Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature), Vol. 1. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986.

_____ and David Knechtges. *Wen Xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature, Vol. 3 – Rhapsodies on Natural Phenomena, Birds and Animals, Aspirations and Feelings, Sorrowful Laments, Literature, Music, and Passion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 ed. *Lunyu xiangzhu* 論語詳註 (The Analects with Comprehensive Commentary). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980.

_____ ed. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (The Zuozhuan Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals with Commentary). 4 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981.

Yao, Ping. "Women's Epitaphs in Tang China (618–907)." In *Beyond Exemplar Tales: Women's Biography in Chinese History*, edited by Joan Judge and Hu Ying, 139–157. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Yu Guanying 余冠英. *Yuefu shixuan* 樂府詩選 (Selected Music Bureau Poems). Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1954.

_____. *Han Wei liuchao shixuan* 漢魏六朝詩選 (Selected Poems of from Han, Wei, and the Six Dynasties). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1961.

Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638). *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (Textual Excerpts from the Northern Hall). In *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Sections). Vol. 889. Compiled by Ji Yun 紀昀 et.al. 1–850. Taibei: Taiwan shangyu yinshuguan, 1983.

Yu Weimin 俞為民. "Yuandai Xia Tingzhi 'Qinglou ji' yanjiu 元代夏庭芝《青楼集》研究 (Study on the Yuan Dynasty "Collection of the Green Bower" by Xia Tingzhi). *Yishu baijia* 藝術百家 (The Hundred Schools of Art), Vol. 27.3 (2011): 140–147.

_____. *Song Yuan nanxi kaolun* 宋元南戲考論 (On Southern Plays of the Song and Yuan). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014.

_____ and Sun Rongrong 孫蓉蓉. *Lidai quhua huibian: Tang Song Yuan bian* 歷代曲話彙編 唐宋元編 (Collection of Theatrical Discussions, Tang, Song, and Yuan). Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2006.

Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581) and Ni Fanzuan 倪璠纂. *Yu Zishan ji* 庾子山集 (Collected Works of Yu Xin. In *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Sections), vol. 1064, compiled by Ji Yun 紀昀 et.al. 297–790. Taibei: Taiwan shangyu yinshuguan, 1983.

Yue Shi 樂史 (930–1007). *Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記 (Record of Universal Geography from the Taiping Era). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007.

Zang Maoxun 臧懋循 (1550–1620). *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選 (Selections of Yuan Drama). 4 Vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958.

Zhang Hongxia 張紅霞. "Qiu Hu gushi qi Xinxiang yanbian chutan" 秋胡故事妻形象演變初探 (Initial Exploration of the Development of the Image of the Wife of Qiu Hu). *Baishu baijia* 白數百家 (Hundred Schools in Art) 71 (2003): 39–43.

Zhang Rong 鍾嶸 (ca. 468–518). *Shipin jizhu* 詩品集注, ed. Cao Xu 曹旭. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994.

Zhao Xiaohuan. “Love, Lust, and Loss in the Daoist Nunnery as Presented in Yuan Drama.” *T’oung Pao* 100, (2014): 80–119.

Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸. *Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* 中國文學研究 (Studies in Chinese Literature). Vol. 2. Nanyang: Guwen shuju, 1961.

Zhong Sicheng 鍾嗣成 (c. 1279 – c.1360). *Lu gui bu wai si zhong* 錄鬼簿外四種 (A Register of Ghosts). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978.

Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 (1899–1972). *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋 (The Laozi with Commentary and Explication). Shanghai: Longmen lianhe shuju, 1958.

Zurndorfer, Harriet T. “*The Lienü zhuan* tradition and Wang Zhaoyuan's (1763–1851) production of the *Lienü zhuan buzhu* (1812).” In *Beyond Exemplar Tales: Women’s Biography in Chinese History*, edited by Joan Judge and Hu Ying, 55–69. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.