

COURTESANS, LOVERS, AND
'GOLD THREAD POND' IN
GUAN HANQING'S MUSIC DRAMAS

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No other playwright of the Yuan and early Ming periods was quite so prolific as Guan Hanqing 關漢卿 (m. Yizhai 已齋, h. Yizhaisou 已齋叟 or Jizhaisou 己齋叟) [ca. 1240–ca. 1320], author of some sixty-four northern style music dramas (*bei zaju* 北雜劇), fourteen of which survive.¹ We know the lost dramas only by their titles, but in some cases either their “name” and “title” (*zhengming* 正名 and *timu* 題目) or fragments of arias have survived in later Yuan and Ming period works, providing evidence about their subject matter.

The range of dramatic subjects addressed in these works is very broad, embracing characters from all walks of life and all social and economic classes. Many of the plots are based on historical events and cast with characters from the pages of the histories, among them famous emperors and their consorts and concubines and famous lovers like Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 and Zhuo

1. Sixty-four dramas are attributed to Guan Hanqing in Shao Zengqi 邵曾祺 ed., *Yuan Ming beizaju zongmu kaolue* 元明北雜劇總目考略, pp. 1–38. Shao questions the authorship of four dramas traditionally attributed to Guan Hanqing. He does not believe that Guan wrote the drama titled *Bao Daizhi zhi zhan Lu Zhailang* 包待制智斬魯齋郎 (YQX 49; YQX and WB refer to the serial arrangement of dramas in *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選 and *Yuanqu xuan waibian* 元曲選外編; see the Appendix to this article), an opinion shared by Zheng Zhenduo (Shao, op. cit., pp. 565–66). Although Guan Hanqing is designated its playwright in the YQX, the *Gumingjia zaju* 古明家雜劇 edition does not name an author. The authorship of *Jin'guogong Pei Du huandai* 晉國公裴度還帶 (WB 103) is attributed by Shao to Jia Zhongming (Shao, op. cit., pp. 29, 444). *Yuchi gong danbian duoshuo* 尉遲恭單鞭奪槊 (YQX 67) is attributed to Shang Zhongxian in both the YQX and the *Gumingjia zaju*, but to Guan Hanqing in the *Maiwangguan chaoben* 脈望館鈔本 edition. Shao (pp. 561–62) safely assigns it to the “author unknown” category, as he does the play *Liu Furen qingshang Wuhou yanhui* 劉夫人慶賞五侯宴會 (WB 109). For a full list, categorized by YQX number, of the extant plays of Guan Hanqing mentioned in this essay, see the Appendix.

Wenjun 卓文君; others tell stories about poets like Qin Guan 秦觀 and Yan Jidao 宴幾道 and their courtesan girlfriends. But, excepting three dramas about poor but diligent boys struggling to educate themselves and become scholars, some eight others that retell political or military events of bygone eras, and some plays about noble mothers training their sons to become officials or virtuous wives avenging their aggrieved husbands, there are very few in which love and its disappointments or fulfillments do not form the underlying web of the plot.²

Although many of the titles of lost dramas bear the names of well-known fictional or historical persons, their plots are unknown today; but of those plays whose plots are known, or that can be guessed with a degree of certainty, at least twenty-six are about the vicissitudes of love—love between courtesans and scholars, love between young men and women of good character from both elite and common social backgrounds, or love stories involving princesses, emperors, and their consorts and concubines.

Six dramas treat royal persons. *Tang Minghuang ku xiangnang* 唐明皇哭香囊 (*Tang Minghuang Weeps over the Sachet Bag*) tells of Emperor Minghuang's famous consort Yang Guifei, whose silk sachet bag, buried with her in death, is recovered and presented to him as a grievous memento of her love. *Yueluo Jiang Mei yuan* 月落江梅怨 (*Jiang Mei Repines Beneath the Setting Moon*) is most likely a tale of unrequited love or separation be-

2. In an examination of the non-dramatic *qu* 曲 (the *xiaoling* 小令 and the *taoshu* 套數) of Guan Hanqing, A. W. E. Dolby reached a very similar conclusion—that the verses speak predominantly of the rewards or frustrations of love from the female perspective. The contents are filled with metaphors of the gay, romantic life: “flowers and willows,” the “road of mists and flowers” (the gay quarters or brothel districts), the “brocade ranks” and “embankments of flowers” (the ranks of the courtesans), the “brocade snare” (tender trap), that is, the world of teahouses, parties, and poets, the beautiful and talented entertainment ladies and their victims, and the lonely, and abandoned women, unlucky in love. By specific tally, eleven of the eighteen verses by Guan published during the Yuan dynasty are about love (Dolby, p. 48 and note 121); and of twelve other poems seen in Ming dynasty works, poems either known to be by Guan's hand or strongly suspected to be his compositions, only one does not speak directly to the theme of romance. But that one is a lament over a lady's broken fingernails no longer able to perform the skillful arts of love-making. Even in verses where one would not necessarily expect to encounter the theme of love, the author subtly manages to turn our attention to it. In a verse he wrote on resisting old age Guan extols his prowess in lovemaking and espouses the party life of wine, music, and courtesans. In two poems about football—a medieval Chinese game associated with the entertainment life—women are the players on whom Guan dwells lovingly, as he describes their skill and the beauty of their movements. See Dolby, A. W. E., “Kuan Han-ch'ing,” in *Asia Major*, n.s., 16: 1–2 (1971), 1–60.

tween that same Emperor and Jiang Mei, or Jiang Caiping 江采萍, a favorite concubine who died during the An Lushan rebellion. Judging by its title, *Cuihuafei duiyuchai* 翠華妃對玉釵 (*The Concubine Cuihua and the Jade Hairpin*) is most likely a love story in a light vein. *Han Yuandi ku Zhaojun* 漢元帝哭昭君 Emperor Yuan of Han Weeps for Zhaojun is another version of Ma Zhiyuan's famous play *Hangongqiu* 漢宮秋 (*Autumn in the Palace of Han*, YQX₁), wherein the emperor is forced to relinquish the beautiful Wang Zhaojun in marriage to the barbarian Khan. *Luyuan gongzhu sandanshe* 魯元公主三噉赦 (*Princess Luyuan Secures a Pardon through Multiple Pleas*) tells of Han Gaozu's daughter's (ultimately successful) attempts to secure a release for her husband Zhang Ao 張敖, who had been imprisoned by her father. *Chuyun gongzhu Leijiangyue* 楚雲公主酌江月 (*Princess Chuyun at the River Lei by Moonlight*) suggests a frustrated noble lady pining away in loneliness.

Five love dramas about historically famous non-royal persons include *Xu furen xuehen Wanhuatang* 徐夫人雪恨萬花堂 (*Madam Xu Seeks Exoneration at Wanhua Hall*), which draws on events in the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 about Madam Xu's desire to avenge her husband. In *Jinguyuan Lü Zhu zhuilou* 金谷園綠珠墜樓 (*Lü Zhu Leaps to her Death in Gold Valley Gardens*), Lü Zhu's estate has been surrounded by the bandit Sun who demands her as ransom. Her suicide is a noble, heroic act taken to prevent the violation of her person, but it is also an apology to her husband, whose integrity and authority have been compromised because of her beauty. *Yan Shuyuan fengyue Zhegutian* 宴叔原風月鷓鴣天 (*Yan Shuyuan's Romantic Poem Zhegutian*) is about the poet Yan Jidao's separation and eventual reunion with a courtesan. The plot of *Gusutai Fan Li jin Xi Shi* 姑蘇臺范蠡進西施 (*Fan Li Introduces Xi Shi at Gusu Terrace*) is unknown, but it casts two of the great romantic beauties of the Warring States period—Zheng Dan 鄭旦 and Xi Shi 西施.³ The play *Shengxianqiao Xiangru tizhu* 聲仙橋相如題柱 (*Xiangru Inscribes a Verse on the Pillar of Shengxian Bridge*) tells the well-known story of Sima Xiangru's love for Zhuo Wenjun.

3. Xi Shi (5th century B.C.) was a beauty who was enlisted by a minister of the state of Yue, Fan Li, to subvert the state of Wu by distracting the King Fu Chai with her good looks and many charms. There are two accounts of her fate after the fall of Wu: in one account she went away with Fan Li; in another, the people of Yue, fearful of the effects of her beauty on their own monarch, drowned her in the Yangzi. Whichever the case, she has become the literary archetype of the *femme fatale*.

The remaining love dramas all depict love between ordinary citizens, and all but two involve prostitutes like Du Ruiniang in *Gold Thread Pond*. *Su Shi jinzhi jinhuiwen* 蘇氏進織錦回文 (*Lady Su Embroiders a Palindrome*) tells of the historical Dou Tao on military service, whose wife sends him an embroidered palindrome verse. In one version Dou takes his concubine when he goes to take up office but leaves his wife behind because she has abused the concubine. He is moved to seek reunion with her when he receives the palindrome, a verse containing over eight hundred characters embroidered on an area of only eight square inches. *Lü Mengzheng fengxue poyaoji* 呂蒙正風雪破窯記 (*Lü Mengzheng Endures Wind and Snow in an Abandoned Kiln*) dramatizes the popular legend of Lü's spectacular rise to fame and fortune. The historical Lü Mengzheng (946–1011) was descended from a family of officials—both his grandfather and father held high office—and he was himself a man of high position, having passed the metropolitan examinations as *zhuangyuan* (“valedictorian”) in 977. But in popular lore Lü was transformed into the archetype of the poor struggling student who, solely due to his literary talent and perseverance, passed the examinations. The play is set in Luoyang where the daughter of a rich man strikes Lü with an embroidered ball to attract his attention. They elope and set up house-keeping in an abandoned kiln, which in popular literature is portrayed as a common refuge place for homeless people. Without the boy's knowledge her father finances his education, and with degree in hand, he rejoins his wife and is reunited with his estranged father-in-law. Although *Xianxiaofu fengxue shuangjiache* 賢孝婦風雪雙駕車 (*A Worthy, Filial Woman braves Wind and Snow to Share a Carriage*) is a courtesan story, nothing is known about the plot. My translation of the title is conjectural, but the *zhengming*, which has been preserved, clearly indicates that the young protagonist's wife came out of the pleasure quarters and that he is rewarded in some unknown manner by her noble suffering. Another leading lady likely to have been a prostitute is Liu Panpan in the drama *Liu Panpan nao Hengzhou* 劉盼盼鬧衡州 (*Liu Panpan Raises Cain in Hengzhou*). She also appears in a Yuan *sanqu* that depicts the love stories of famous beauties and femmes fatales. In the *sanqu*, we are told that one of eight panels of a folding screen in a lady's apartments depicts a dramatic scene entitled “Liu Panpan meisha Ba guanren” 劉盼盼昧殺八官人 (*Liu Panpan Benightedly Slaughters Big Wig Ba*). Her appearance in this context reinforces the likelihood that Liu Panpan was a famous prostitute.

Cui Yuxiao danshui jiao huadan 崔玉簫擔水澆花旦 (*Cui Yuxiao Carries Water to Douse a huadan*) most likely involves a prostitute or actress in a light, perhaps romantic, comedy. In *Qin Shaoyou huajiu Xichuntang* 秦少遊花酒惜春堂 (*Qin Shaoyou Enjoys a Party at Cherish Spring Hall*), the famous northern Song poet Qin Guan plays the lead. A prostitute named Han Meiying is mentioned in the *zhengming*—*Han Meiying yingwu Mingkexiang* 韓梅英影舞鳴珂巷 “Han Meiying Dances like a Flower’s Shadow in Tinkling Jade Lane,” and since love stories about Qin Shaoyou abound in popular literature, this is undoubtedly another ‘talented literatus and courtesan’ tale. *Liuhuating Li Wan fuluochang* 劉花亭李婉復落娼 (*At the Willow Blossom Pavilion Li Wan again becomes a Courtesan*) concerns a prostitute who marries but somehow lapses again into the profession. Although precise details of the plot are unknown, later versions of this story exist. In one, Li Wan is ardently devoted to her lover, but since he is also surnamed Li, their marriage is taboo. In some versions of the story they are eventually reunited. The *zhengming* in *Fengliu langjun sanfuxin* 風流郎君三負心 (*Thrice Betrayed by a Handsome Lover*) suggests a prostitute escapes from the profession through marriage only to be later abandoned by her husband. This was a common theme in the Song-Yuan era. In *Huangfen meizhu guituan yuan* 荒墳梅竹鬼團圓 (*The Plum and Bamboo in Barren Graves are United in the Spirit World*) the *zhengming*—“Wuxie yanhua shengjianzu” 舞榭煙花生間阻 “Romance Obstructed in the Pleasure Quarters”—reveals the girl to have been a prostitute. She loves a young man, but like Du Ruiniang, her desire to marry is thwarted by the madam. The couple is eventually reunited in death.

As for the fourteen extant dramas of Guan Hanqing, seven are love stories or quasi-love stories (YQX 6, 9, 12, 72, 92; WB 102, 107), three of which involve prostitutes (YQX 9, 12, 72). In eleven of the fourteen extant plays, women star in the lead singing roles (YQX 9, 12, 37, 72, 86, 95, WB 102, 104, 106, 107, 108). These heroines are strong, courageous, determined women possessed of great inner strength, women who undertake heroic acts to control their own destinies, or who defend others weaker or less fortunate than themselves.⁴

None of Guan’s heroines are the equal of Dou E in *Gantian dongdi Dou E yuan* 感天動地竇娥冤 (*Moving Heaven and Shaking Earth: the Injustice*

4. Broad-ranging discussions of Guan’s extant dramas and his leading characters, who are predominantly women, can be found in Seaton, Jerome, P., “A Critical Study of Kuan Han-ch’ing: the Man and his Works” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1969).

to Dou E, YQX 86). She is a simple, untutored village girl, a noble victim of unusual mettle and courage, and a woman of considerable complexity. She has been deftly drawn and analyzed by Perng Chinghsi.⁵ Dou E lost her mother at the age of three and was sold by her father at seven. With the death of her young husband, she is destined for a life of widow's weeds and the concomitant affliction of intolerable loneliness. By sacrificing herself for her mother-in-law she approaches "sainthood" in a class with Jean d'Arc, save that her self-sacrifice is not associated with national destiny. Rather, her sacrificial act allies the purity of the human spirit with the ultimate power of Heaven, reaffirming that Heaven, in its awesome majesty, is just and impartial in acknowledging human virtue, without regard to rank and social station.

A contrast to Dou E, who upholds the Confucian sanction against remarriage, is Tan Jie'er, the heroine of the drama *Wangjiangting zhongqiu qiekuaidan* 望江亭中秋切鱸旦 (*Preparing a Fish for Mid-Autumn Festival at Riverview Pavilion*, YQX 95). Like Dou, she is a widow, and she takes the vows of a nun because she finds all men to be lustful, licentious creatures out to dupe and seduce women. But there are chinks in her moral armor. She is willing to consider remarriage, but only to a man who loves her as much as her late husband did. This fact prepares the plot development in act 1. The abbess, fearing trouble in the convent if Jie'er remains a widow, concludes that Jie'er will make a better wife for her nephew than she will a nun, and threatens a beating and a lawsuit unless she agrees to the marriage. Jie'er agrees to marry on two conditions: the groom must promise never to divorce her, and he must conduct himself according to Confucian principles. The villain is the powerful Lord Yang, a man so consumed with jealousy that he plots to murder Jie'er's new husband, who bested him in competing for her on the death of her first husband. Unflinching, she steps out to meet the challenge, undeterred by her husband's remonstrations for her safety and vowing "I will

5. Perng Chinghsi, *Double Jeopardy: a Critique of Seven Yuan Courtroom Dramas* (Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies 35, 1978, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan), pp. 42–46, 109–120. Perng observes that Dou is "more than an advocate for filial piety. She is also . . . a youthful widow 'full of sorrow' and with 'years of suffering' . . . she is preoccupied with the emotional as well as spiritual aspect of fulfilled conjugal love. . . . The court decision to torture her mother-in-law suddenly offers her a way out: by sacrificing herself she can end this life, which she tells us is meaningless, and help secure for herself a better next life which is all she can—and does—look forward to. Death for Tou Ngo is a blessing in thin disguise."

make him kowtow to me like a lamb going to the slaughter.” A clever and confident strategist, Jie’er is unequalled in her manipulation of Yang through the female arts of seduction. Disguised as a fishwife, she prepares a fish for Yang’s Mid-Autumn Festival celebration. She lures him into her net by flattery and cajolery, aided by the stupidity of his two loose-lipped henchmen, who willingly spill all the details of the murder plot when she pumps them for information. Plying them with drink, she weakens Lord Yang’s defenses with titillating sexual suggestions, which include an interesting exchange of erotic poetry. Never faltering in her skillful manipulation, she emerges triumphant when Lord Yang is removed from power.

In *Wen Taizhen yujingtai* 溫太真玉鏡臺 (*Wen Taizhen and the jade mirror stand*, YQX 6), Wen visits the house of his aunt and discovers, to his great delight, the presence of his cousin Miss Liu, whom he is expected to tutor in music and calligraphy. Aided by his aunt, he reveals his romantic feelings by presenting her with a betrothal present of a jade mirror stand. Exceedingly stubborn, Miss Liu rebuffs all attempts to win her affections. Governor Wang, whose services are solicited, invites the prospective couple to dinner and requests that Wen compose a verse. His reward will be wine and a gold hairpin for the prospective bride. If he refuses, he must drink water from a crock and Miss Liu must wear a weed smeared with bird’s ink. Fearful of the unpleasant consequences, Miss Liu urges him to comply and the verse is so pleasing that the Governor hosts a large wedding banquet in their honor.

Wang Ruilan, in the drama *Guiyuan jiarén bāiyuè tīng* 閨怨佳人拜月亭 (*Beautiful Young Ladies Express Regrets at Moon-worship Pavilion*, WB 102), is a sheltered young girl from an elite family, who shows courage and resilience when she is separated from her parents during a military coup. Faced with unprecedented uncertainties, she wisely throws in her lot with young Jiang, with whom she falls in love and marries. She never loses hope even when her father separates her from her husband. Once peace is achieved, the family is reunited, and Ruilan is restored to Jiang as his wife with her father’s blessings. The loss of dialogue in this drama makes an accurate assessment of Ruilan’s personality problematic.

The heroine Yanyan in *Zha’nizi tiaofengyue* 詐呢子調風月 (*A Deceitful Hussy Toys with Romance*, WB 107) also seems to be a strong and forceful character. Warm and affectionate as a coquette, she can be haughty, saucy, stubborn, and indignant when provoked. She endures the uncertainties of her

relationship with the male protagonist, only to emerge victorious with the right to share him with the mistress, all the while demonstrating resourcefulness unusual in a girl of her station. Nor is she above fabricating a fortuneteller's prognosis when she needs a weapon with which to berate the bridegroom. But as was the case in *Guiyuan jiaren baiyue ting*, the dialogue is missing in this drama, which prevents one from accurately gauging her personality.

It is in the plays about courtesans that we find some of Guan's most colorful heroines. This would certainly apply to Zhao Pan'er, a courtesan in the drama *Zhao Pan'er fengyue jiufengchen* 趙盼兒風月救風塵 (*Zhao Pan'er Flirts to Rescue a Harlot*, YQX 12). She is impressive for her cool, confident, and worldly wise nature, and she is a shrewd judge of human nature, but her profession as a prostitute has not robbed her of human longings. Though she yearns to be free of the pleasure quarters, she is too practical to give herself over to pining and resentment, and she is capable of sympathy for the plight of others, a result of her tough schooling in the brothel houses. She, too, has known one-night stands and what it is like to wake up jilted in the morning. Like the drinker, she can sympathize with the drunkard. She never forgets a grudge, but instead of being controlled by anger, she keeps the hurt to herself. Her perspective on the gap between well-born ladies and courtesans like herself is a realistic one: "Born a lady, always a lady; born a courtesan, always a courtesan." "Ladies," says she, "know to powder their faces lightly, but we plaster it on, the thicker the better." "Ladies behave properly, but we act like wild monkeys in a locked room." She is genuinely empathetic, however, when she learns that her new husband is abusing her "sister" in the trade. She moves boldly and confidently to carry out her plan of rescue. Knowing her strong suit and how to use the tricks of her trade, she easily draws the sucker into her "tender" steel trap.

In *Qian Dayin zhichong Xie Tianxiang* 錢大尹智寵謝天香 (*Governor Qian Wisely Lavishes his Affections on Xie Tianxiang*, YQX 9), Guan places a courtesan in a compromising situation which tests her faithfulness to her boyfriend, a young scholar named Liu.⁶ Liu is deeply in love with Xie Tianxiang, but he must leave her and journey to the capital to sit for the civil service examinations. Apprehensive about his absence, he thrice entreats the new governor, Mr. Qian, to protect her, only to be upbraided for his excessive

6. The boyfriend in this play is in fact the Northern Song poet Liu Yong, whose poems to courtesan lovers are the subject of the article by Lap Lam in this volume.

concern for her safety. After Liu's departure, Qian moves Xie into his house and repeatedly tries to win her affections, but she constantly rebuffs him. Qian suddenly announces one day that she is to be married two days hence, which causes her considerable anxiety, but unbeknownst to her, Liu has returned as the intended groom.

The heroine of *Gold Thread Pond*, Du Ruiniang, is also a courtesan, a prostitute who has lost the blush of youth (she is approaching age thirty). Nurturing strong hopes of escaping the brothel, she falls in love with Han Fuchen, a student who must be several years her junior. Attracted by her beauty, as every young student seems to be, he proves more vulnerable than some to female charms. At the slightest suggestion, he moves into her apartments, and his established, older colleague, Governor Shi, goes out of his way, on more than one occasion, to poke fun at this weakness. Although Han seems an attractive fellow, the courtesan is most impressed by his poetic prowess when he composes a verse for her. Han's academic skills, we should conclude, are his major attributes in the eyes of the lady, for passing the examinations and securing employment.

Mother, contrary to the usual situation where "mother" is really the madam of the establishment, seems to be Ruiniang's birth mother, but she is in every way cut from the hardened-procuress cloth, and her single interest is money. After half a year of billing and cooing and a decline in income once Han's money is spent, the old lady drives him out and puts her daughter back to her profitable trade. Ruiniang mounts a stiff resistance, but in the end loses the battle and Han storms out without saying goodbye. The old lady then sows the seeds of suspicion in Ruiniang's mind by telling her that Han has spurned her for another courtesan. By the time he returns to apologize for bad behavior, Ruiniang's anger is shifted to him and she rejects his efforts to reassure her of his loyalty. Her fierce sense of pride obstructs any sympathetic response to his attempts at reconciliation. Ruiniang is hosted to a party at Gold Thread Pond to soften her resistance, but this fails as well, because she breaks the rules of her own drinking game and becomes intoxicated after having to down several cups of wine. The irony here is that the game was entirely of her own devising, a means to get Han off her mind. She is forced to drink because she inadvertently keeps mentioning Han's name, which is taboo by her own rules. When Han joins the party, confident that Ruiniang's "sisters" have cajoled her into a good mood, and that in a happy, slightly tipsy state she will forgive him and take him back, he is soundly repulsed.

Our sympathies usually rest with Ruiniang. Han Fuchen, although we know he has been faithful, is foolish. He is not only guilty of having walked out without saying goodbye; he waited twenty days before contacting her. He has also squandered on Ruiniang all his funds for his trip to the capital. Even his colleague, Governor Shi, makes wry comments on his flabby professional resolve and his weakness for women and parties, a failing highlighted when Han is reduced to kneeling at Ruiniang's feet to beg forgiveness; in final desperation, he begs her to slap his face. When she remains firm, his only recourse is to throw himself on the mercy of the governor, who clearly prefers to stay out of "affairs of the bedroom." Han blackmails the governor by threatening to kill himself on the steps of the court and mar the governor's professional record. The impasse is resolved by a forced marriage, a common technique in Yuan dramas to bring women to the altar.⁷ In the final scene at court, Ruiniang must beg Han to save her from a beating, which he agrees to do provided she promises to marry him.

At the most fundamental level the plot of *Gold Thread Pond* is modeled on an old tale about Su Xiaoqing 蘇小卿 and Shuang Jian 雙漸 (sometimes Shuang Tong 雙通),⁸ a story that riveted Jim Crump's attention in the seventh chapter of *Songs from Xanadu*.⁹ This was perhaps the most popular of all romances between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries until it was supplanted by the *Xixiangji* 西廂記 (*Tale of the West Wing*). The story is repeatedly referred to in practically all comedies on the student/courtesan/merchant triangle. It is the tale of Shuang Jian and his romance with the prostitute Su Xiaoqing, their estrangement, and their eventual reunion, in which the madam of the "Garden of Beauties" (*Lichunyuan* 麗春園) brothel plays a villainous hand.

7. Guan used it in *Yujingtai* (YQX 6) when Governor Wang forces Miss Liu to marry her cousin or be compelled to wear straw in her hair and have her face painted black, and again in *Wangjiangting* (YQX 95) where Tan Jie'er is forced to marry the nephew of the Abbess under the threat of a beating and a lawsuit. In Qiao Mengfu's drama *Jinqian ji* (YQX 2) it is the young man who is forced to marry. Han Feiqing has relentlessly pursued his young lady all through the drama, but balks at marriage in act 4. He is forced to take his vows by the poet Li Bai who acts on imperial authority.

8. Short titles for the drama are also *Qianlichuan* 千里船 (*The Thousand League Boat*) and *Fanchachuan* 販茶船 (*The Merchant Tea Boat*).

9. Crump, James I., *Songs From Xanadu, Studies in Mongol-dynasty Song-poetry (san-ch'ü)* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1983), pp. 171–92.

After Shuang's departure for the capital to sit for the examinations, Su is determined to remain faithful to him; but her madam tricks her into believing that Shuang has betrayed her and she allows herself to be married off to Feng Kui, a rich but repugnant tea merchant from Jiangxi. He takes her on his boat down south and they visit the Gold Mountain Monastery where Su inscribes a poem on the walls bemoaning her fate. Shuang, newly appointed to the magistracy, passes by and sees the poem. He pursues Feng's boat, overtakes it, and abducts Su. Authorities in Nanchang, who are well disposed towards Shuang, dismiss Feng Kui's claims to the girl.

The links between *Gold Thread Pond* and the Su/Shuang tale would be very tangential if based on plot alone, because the stories diverge in half a dozen ways; but close consideration leaves little doubt that the Su/Shuang tale was continually on Guan's mind as he wrote the drama. Guan recalls some aspect of the story in every act except act 1. In the demi-act which opens the drama, Du Ruiniang makes reference both to Su Xiaoqing and to her mother, and in the final aria "Duanzheng hao" 端正好 (the repeat form) she vows never to be married to a tea merchant like Feng Kui. In act 2, Guan mentions the Lichun yuan "Garden of Beauties" in the closing line of the *shi*-style verse which introduces the act. Later in the aria "Caichage," in an argument with her boyfriend Han Fuchen, Ruiniang likens him to Shuang Jian, whom she blames for leaving Su Xiaoqing and causing her sale to the tea merchant Feng Kui. An entire aria in act 3 ("Yaominge") is devoted to retelling the Su/Shuang tale: the "Garden of Beauties" is named, as is the flight by boat, the inscription on the wall at Gold Hill temple, and the trip to Yuzhang city. Ruiniang concludes the aria in a blaze of resentment and self-pity declaring that she would be better off marrying a tea merchant than putting up with a fickle-hearted Shuang Jian. And, as the drama concludes, in the final line of the final aria in act 4 ("Shoujiangnan"), Ruiniang again recalls the story. Having just been married to Han Fuchen, who now has been awarded an official post, she concludes "Now there's no need to be helped weeping onto a merchant's boat."¹⁰

10. Guan refers to the Su/Shuang story in one of his other dramas, *Jiu fengchen* (YQX 12), in the final aria in act 1. The story is also referred to in *Zhugongdiao fengyue ciyunting* 諸宮調風月紫雲庭 (Sui Shusen 隋樹森, *Yuanqu xuan waibian* 元曲選外編, Vol. 2, p. 345) in the

Du Ruiniang plays the pipa at the party on Gold Thread Pond; Su Xiaoqing, in one version of the story, plays her pipa on the tea merchant's barge, but in Su's case the lyrics of her song become the key to her rescue. The madam, or mother, in each plot is a heartless, devious old crone with an eye only for money. Shuang Jian and Han Fuchen are not at all alike except in their perseverance to be reunited with their ladies, although we know very little about how Shuang Jian became separated from Xiaoqing.

Given Guan's stature as a playwright during the flourishing of Yuan/Ming drama, it is surprising that apart from the much-translated play *Dou E yuan* (YQX 86), almost no one has turned to translating Guan's works since the Gladys and Hsienyi Yang anthology was published in 1953. A short list of readable contemporary translations of the plays of Guan Hanqing can be found in the Appendix to this article.

*Appendix: Extant plays of Guan Hanqing
mentioned in this article*

References are to Zang Maoxun's 臧懋循 *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選 (YQX 1–100) and Sui Shusen's 隋樹森 *Yuanqu xuan waibian* 包元曲選外編 (WB 101–162).

YQX 6: *Wen Taizhen yu jingtai* 溫太真玉鏡臺 *Wen Taizhen and the Jade Mirror Stand* (in YQX Vol. 1, 84–97).

YQX 9: *Qian Dayin zhi chong Xie Tianxiang* 錢大尹智寵謝天香 *Governor Qian Wisely Lavishes his Affections on Xie Tianxiang* (YQX Vol. 1, 141–55).

YQX 12: *Zhao Pan'er fengyue jiufengchen* 趙盼兒風月救風塵 *Zhao Pan'er Flirts to Rescue a Harlot* (YQX Vol. 1, 193–205).

aria "Zuizhongtian" 醉中天, where Su Mama, Shuang Jian, Su Xiaoqing, Feng Kui, the tea barge, and the district of Linchuan are all mentioned. The earliest references to dramatic forms of this story may be found in Dong Jieyuan's *Xixiangji zhugongdiao* 西廂記諸宮調 (*juan* 1, p. 2) in the aria "Zheziling" 柘枝令: 也不是雙漸豫章城 "Nor is it Shuang Jian in Yuzhang city." Interestingly enough, two other stories named in that same aria are incorporated verbatim in the aria "Duanzhenghao" from the demi-act of *Gold Thread Pond*: "Zheng Liu encounters a fox-vixen" 鄭六遇妖狐 and "Cui Tao meets a tigress." 崔韜逢雌虎. Finally, in the *Chuogeng lu* 輟耕錄 by Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (ca. 1330–1400), *juan* 25, title ninety-nine under the heading "Zhuza daxiao yuanben" 諸雜大小院本 ("Various greater and lesser yuanben") is listed *Tiao Shuang Jian* 調雙漸 *Teasing Shuang Jian*, which would seem to be some version of the story lost to us today. Stephen H. West discusses the Su/Shuang tale in Jin dynasty literature in *Vaudeville and Narrative: Aspects of Chinese Theater*. (Muchener Ostasiatische Studien Band 20, Weisbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977), pp. 172–79.

- YQX 37: Bao Daizhi sankan hudiemeng 包待制三勘蝴蝶夢 *Judge Bao Thrice Investigates the Butterfly Dream* (YQX Vol. 2, 632–46).
- YQX 72: Du Ruiniang zhishang Jinxianchi 杜榮娘智賞金線池 *Du Ruiniang Learns to Appreciate Gold Thread Pond* (YQX Vol. 3, 1251–64).
- YQX 86: Gantian dongdi Dou E yuan 感天動地竇娥冤 *Shaking Heaven and Moving Earth: The Injustice to Dou E* (YQX Vol. 4, 1499–1517).
- YQX 95: Wangjiangting zhongqiu qiekua 望江亭中秋切鱸 *Preparing Minced Fish for the Mid-Autumn Festival at Riverview Pavilion* (YQX Vol. 4, 1656–69).
- WB 102: Guiyuan jiaren baiyueting 閨怨佳人拜月亭 *Beautiful Young Ladies Express Regrets at Moon-worship Pavilion* (WB Vol. 1, 7–17).
- WB 104: Deng Furen kutong ku Cunxiao 鄧夫人苦痛哭存孝 *Madam Deng Weeps with Pain for Cunxiao* (WB Vol. 1, 42–57).
- WB 105: Guan Dawang dufu Dandaohui 關大王獨赴單刀會 *The Grand King Guan Yu Goes Alone to a Single Sword Meeting* (WB Vol.1, 58–70).
- WB 107: Zha Nizi tiaofengyue 詐呢子調風月 *A Deceitful Hussy Toys with Romance* (WB Vol. 1, 81–90).

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- Chang, H. C., *Chinese Literature; Popular Fiction and Drama* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1973). YQX 37 (act II only)
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- Shih, Chung-wen, *Injustice to Tou O (Tou O Yuan): a Study and Translation* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972). YQX 86
- Yang, Gladys and Yang, Xianyi, *Selected Plays of Kuan Hanching* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1953). YQX 6, 12, 37, 86, 95; WB 104, 105

GOLD THREAD POND

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS BY GUAN HANQING

DRAMATIS PERSONAE
(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

- GOVERNOR SHI (*wai*): Administrator of the Ji'nan District
 ZHANG QIAN: The Governor's manservant
 HAN FUCHEN (*mo*): A young student and school acquaintance of Governor Shi; he is en route to the capital to sit for the civil service examinations
 DU RUINIANG (*zhengdan*): Chief Courtesan of the Upper Chambers, and courtesan entertainer at Governor Shi's court
 MOTHER LI (*chadan*): Mother of Du Ruiniang, and madam of a courtesan house
 PLUM BLOSSOM: Du Ruiniang's personal maid
 MAMA ZHANG (*waidan*): A sister courtesan of Du Ruiniang
 AUNTIE LI: A sister courtesan of Du Ruiniang
 BIG SISTER MIN: A sister courtesan of Du Ruiniang

ACTS AND SCENES

- Demi-Act: At the private apartments of Governor Shi
 Act I: At the courtesan house of Mother Li
 Act II: At the courtesan house of Mother Li
 Act III
 Scene I: At the court of Governor Shi
 Scene II: At Gold Thread Pond
 Act IV: At the court of Governor Shi

Demi-Act (xie'zi)

(A *wai* dressed as Prefectural Governor Shi enters with his manservant Zhang Qian.)

GOVERNOR SHI: (Recites a verse in *shi* style)

I was known and established from boyhood
 in the examination halls.
 But still I wear, though white of hair, the
 robes of courtly dress;
 I've plied my pen for many years, my feelings
 to relate;
 Have I recourse if his Princely Grace declines
 to grant me rest?

This old one, Shi, is called Min, and courtesy-named Haowen. As a young man I was graduated a *jins*hi. Having been successively promoted during my many years of service to the Court, I have, at last, been favored by His Sagely Grace and appointed Governor of Ji'nan. I have an old schoolmate Han Fuchen. At present he is either striving to build his reputation, or simply traveling the world in search of knowledge, but since I have had no news of him of late, I am considerably concerned. Today I have no special duties to perform so I am relaxing in my private apartments. Zhang Qian, Watch the gate. Should a guest arrive, report to me.

ZHANG QIAN: Very well.

(A *mo* dressed as Han Fuchen enters.)

HAN FUCHEN: (Recites a verse in *shi* style.)

How many more springs will I wander the world
 Enduring the bitter hardships of the road?
 But, what luck! the twitter of a magpie's welcome;
 In Ji'nan, today, is an old friend's abode.

I am surnamed Han, called Fuchen, a native of Luoyang. In my youth I rehearsed the Classics and the Histories, and I read a lot of the Songs and the Histories, but a belly-full of literature has not brought me

fame. At present I am off to the Court to compete in the examinations. Since my route takes me right through Ji'nan Prefecture where my sworn brother Shi Haowen is on duty, I will pay him a call before I undertake the long journey. And, in the time it takes to tell, here I am at his office gate. Attendants! Report that Han Fuchen has come especially to pay his respects.

ZHANG QIAN: (Reports.) This is to inform you sir, that Han Fuchen is at the gate.

GOVERNOR SHI: With the words still on my lips younger brother has arrived. Quickly invite him in.

ZHANG QIAN: Enter please.

(They greet each other.)

HAN FUCHEN: Elder brother, I have not seen you these several years and I have been remiss in inquiring after your health. Please ascend the hall and receive your younger brother's bows.

GOVERNOR SHI: Many seasons have passed since we parted in the capital. It is a surprise today to receive your kind attentions and a great comfort to my humble heart. Worthy brother, please be seated. Zhang Qian, serve the wine.

ZHANG QIAN: Here is the wine.

(They take up their cups.)

GOVERNOR SHI: Drink a full cup brother.

HAN FUCHEN: (Returns the toast.) And a toast to you too, brother.

GOVERNOR SHI: A feast without music is a feast without joy. Zhang Qian, summon the Chief Courtesan of the Upper Chambers, Du Ruiniang, to attend brother in a few cups of wine.

ZHANG QIAN: Very well. Coming through this gateway here, I have arrived at Du Ruiniang's door. Is elder sister Du at home?

(The *zhengdan* dressed as Du Ruiniang enters.)

DU RUINIANG: Who is at the door? I will open it and see. (looks out)

ZHANG QIAN: You are summoned to the hall.

DU RUINIANG: Need I wear my court robes?

ZHANG QIAN: It's an informal party, you can dispense with court robes.

(They walk.) Sister, wait here until I announce you.

(Announces her.)

GOVERNOR SHI: Have her enter.

(They greet each other.)

DU RUINIANG: (Performs appropriate rituals of being received at court.)
What are your orders, Your Honor, that you summon me?

GOVERNOR SHI: I summon you precisely because this "cabinet member to be" is an old friend of mine. Please extend to him a proper ceremonial greeting.

(She bows.)

HAN FUCHEN: (Hastily bowing in return.) Sister-in-law please rise.

GOVERNOR SHI: Brother, she is the Chief Courtesan of the Upper Chambers, Du Ruiniang.

HAN FUCHEN: Pardon me, brother, I mistook her to be my sister-in-law.
(aside to the audience) What a fine woman.

DU RUINIANG: What a fine scholar.

GOVERNOR SHI: Bring the wine. Ruiniang, commence the drinking. (she serves Han Fuchen three cups of wine) Wait, wait, brother! I'll have a cup too.

HAN FUCHEN: Ah, you've forgotten to serve elder brother.

DU RUINIANG: (Serves wine to the Governor.) May I ask the scholar's honorable name?

HAN FUCHEN: I am a man of Luoyang, named Han Fuchen. To what family does the young lady belong? What is your name?

DU RUINIANG: My name is Du Ruiniang.

HAN FUCHEN: I see that meeting you face-to-face is better than just hearing your name.

DU RUINIANG: How could one be a scholar and also unattractive?

GOVERNOR SHI: Ruiniang, ask the scholar for a rare gem or two.

HAN FUCHEN: How dare I take up the pen before my elder brother? That would be like wielding an axe before Ban's gate in Lu;¹ I'd make myself a mere laughing-stock.

GOVERNOR SHI: Brother, don't be modest.

HAN FUCHEN: Well then, I will offer something inferior.

(Writes.) There, it's finished. Ruiniang, you try it out.

DU RUINIANG: (Reads.) A ci lyric on the "Nanxiangzi" pattern.

(Recites.)

Slender and graceful, dainty and delicate,
 Perfect adornment for an ornamental screen;
 She speaks in the oriole's liquid trill, or the swallow's voice,
 Like a painting!
 But how can bird songs be captured by paint?
 Does she not but stir your heart?
 She starts to speak, as though she knows me,
 but shyly shows restraint;
 The toast of the Chu, land of song and dance;
 In grace and elegance,
 First in the realm.

(Speaks.) What a talent!

HAN FUCHEN: Brother, I am on my way to the capital to compete in the examinations, but since we have been parted for so long I made a detour to visit you, to gaze again on your honorable face and enjoy a feast with you. But, examination time is drawing near and I can't delay. When the feast is over I must respectfully take my leave.

1. Ban of Lu was renowned for his cabinet-making skills during the Spring and Autumn period.

GOVERNOR SHI: Worthy brother, don't leave. Stay a few more days while I raise the money for your traveling expenses. You won't be unnecessarily delayed. Zhang Qian, tidy up the library in the rear gardens so the scholar can take up lodgings there.

HAN FUCHEN: The garden is too lonely, it doesn't suit me.

GOVERNOR SHI: Well, in that case, why not just move in with Ruiniang?

HAN FUCHEN: Whatever you wish.

GOVERNOR SHI: A-ha! coax him once and he yields. Ruiniang, he is one of my closest friends. Take these two ingots of silver to your old mother as pin money, and please take good care of the scholar.

DU RUINIANG: Many thanks, Your Honor.

HAN FUCHEN: Thank you, elder brother. Elder sister, let's go to your home and pay respects to your mother.

DU RUINIANG: Scholar, mother is overly fond of money.

HAN FUCHEN: Never mind, elder sister. I'll give her a little extra for good measure.

DU RUINIANG:

(Sings in the *xianlü* mode to the pattern of "Duanzheng hao.")

Zheng Liu met up with a fox-vixen,
Cui Tao encountered a tigress.
Men in the classic songs were poor scholars all their lives,
Come to think of it, all daughters in literate families
Long to be scholars' wives.

(Sings repeat stanza.)

Were it not for his refined sensitivities,
How could I cater to his every wish?
Su Xiaoqing couldn't tell the worthy from the stupid;²
But if it takes fifty years for me to find a mate,

2. "Su Xiaoqing couldn't tell a worthy from someone stupid" doesn't conform to the story of the relationship between Su Xiaoqing and Shuang Jian as we know it (see discussion in introductory essay).

Don't label me a Mother Su,
 Nor a drunken ass.
 I am of her loins born,
 Not female chattel;
 Torture me till my flesh falls away,
 Roast me till my bones are brittle.
 But I'll never marry a tea-merchant like Feng Kui.

(Exits with Han.)

GOVERNOR SHI: Just observe my brother. He has the character of a scholar, but a weakness for drink. He has made a departure, but not the one that he intended. He has run off with Ruiniang instead. In a few days I will send a runner to inquire about him. There's an old saying: "There is no joy like meeting someone new." Isn't it the truth?

(Recites a verse.)

Abruptly before the sumptuous feast had ended,
 He hurried away clasping red-sleeved arms;
 No matter how close old friendship's bonds,
 It fades in the passion of a new love's charms.

(Exits.)

Act One

(The *chadan* enters dressed as an old woman and recites a *shi* style verse.)

MOTHER:

We don't spin hemp or silk, or till the soil,
 Heaven gives clothing and our daily dole;
 They say our house is a man-fleecing den
 And we earn our keep by traffic in men.

(Speaks.) I am a woman, surnamed Li, of Ji'nan prefecture, and my husband is surnamed Du. Our daughter is Du Ruiniang, Chief Courtesan of the Upper Chamber. Recently a graduate named Han Fuchen was sent by Governor Shi to keep company with my daughter.

This little girl of ours wants to marry him with all her heart, and he wants to marry her too, but I disapproved and drove him out. I wonder where that girl has gone. Could she be chasing after that fool again? I will call her. Ruiniang, you hussy, where are you?

(The *zhengdan* attended by her maid PLUM BLOSSOM enters center stage and speaks.)

RUINIANG: Scholar Han, hide yourself in my room and don't come out. I'm going to have it out with the old witch.

HAN FUCHEN: I understand.

RUINIANG: Han Fuchen and I have been living together for half a year and we want to marry with all our hearts, but my mother is opposed and will not agree to the wedding. When I think of the hundred of ways of making a living, how could I have ended in such a low calling?

(Sings in the *xianlü* mode to the "Dianjiangchun" pattern.)

The business of this unrighteous house
Is not to buy and sell,
Of capital we have no need;
We earn our money on five little words:

(Speaks.) And what five words are these?

(Sings.) 'Corruption,' 'perversity,' 'malice,' 'treachery,' and 'cruelty.'

(Sings to the "Hunjianglong" pattern.)

If the penniless wish to cuddle me up close,
It'll only be when asses grow horns and crocks sprout roots:
Holy Buddha established four hundred and eighty walks of life,
But I invoke the seventy-two cruel demons only;
For, just as I was ready to retire from this life of shame
by accepting a sprightly youth,
Along comes this battle-ax who can't recognize a man of true
worth;
Those who come to me defy their fathers, harm their mothers,
Starve their children, freeze their wives;
Break up their homes and sell their plots,

Reduced to begging, they beat on the beggar's pot;
 They who should be kind to others,
 Spend their efforts thwarting lovers.

(Speaks.) Plum Blossom, look and see what mother is doing.

PLUM BLOSSOM: Madame is reciting the scriptures.

RUINIANG: Mother's tongue will be her undoing. With a heart like hers,
 the more scriptures she recites, the deeper she sinks into sin.

(Sings to the "Youhulu" pattern.)

God of the hearth, Patron Saint of funerals and burials
 From you we've naught to fear;
 But the grizzled, wry-faced old witch,
 Clutching her strings of pearls and seals
 She terrifies young men into submission;
 Whirling her staff, she turns love to cruel alienation;
 In the teahouses the old crones of the trade,
 Work their idle tongues over cups of wine;
 Persistently obstructing love's affection,
 They drive him from the gate in three nights' time.

PLUM BLOSSOM: Sister, there is something wrong in what you say. In the
 brothel houses we delight in welcoming young men; they are money
 in the door. And, we cater to their every whim and wish to make
 them stay. We're always afraid that we can't hold them here. What's
 this about "driving them out the door after three nights?" It makes no
 sense.

RUINIANG: Plum Blossom, you have no idea!

(Sings to the "Tianxiale" pattern.)

She wants me to bed a man each night, so long as he is new,
 Be fawning, attentive, but smother true affection.
 I'm called unfilial if I rebel;
 She knocks my head to the ground,
 Sprays me with her hot venom,
 And faults the one I love.

(Looks in and speaks.) Mother, what's for dinner?

MOTHER LI: Ha! only a couple of wicks burning on the grill; not much of a meal.

RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Zuifugui” pattern.)

Many my ardent pleas to you old lady,
 And many my soft confidings to our neighbors;
 Each falling petal shortens Spring,
 Though not old yet, I'm no young thing;
 Ah! young ones, your resolve must be bold,
 For none will court you when you're old.

(Speaks.) Mother, marry me off, I'm no longer young.

MOTHER LI: Well then, Plum Blossom, bring me the tweezers. I'll pluck out any white hair at your temples so you can still bring in the money.

RUINIANG: Oh mother! how can you be so cruel to your own daughter?

MOTHER LI: Age has mellowed me, or I would have doubled you up for making me angry.

RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Jinzhaner” pattern.)

You say age has made you mellow?
 But, I say cruelty is your intent;
 Speak of love and you pretend not to comprehend.

(Speaks.) How many whoring young men have had to pawn their combs and toothbrushes for enough money to get home?

(Sings.)

But long since your ears closed, your sight has dimmed;
 A front-gate customer flush with coin,
 Soon a back-door playboy, his money gone;
 I rub my tear-brimmed eyes,
 And try to keep my spirits high.

(Speaks.) Mother, agree to my marriage.

MOTHER LI: Without my consent who will marry you? Was there ever such an undutiful daughter as you?

RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Zuizhongtian” pattern.)

It isn't that I'm forward by nature,
 It's that you lack sympathy;
 You make us stand in the market, lightly powdered or
 gaudily painted,
 Just to increase your hoard of money.

MOTHER LI: (In anger.) You cheap little hussy, you're barely twenty this year. If you don't bring in money who will?

RUINIANG: (Sings.)

You say I'm barely twenty,
 But the day my makeup pales and my perfume fades,
 Isn't that called dying old in the lusty dust?

(Speaks.) Mother, let me marry.

MOTHER LI: You little hussy, who would you marry?

RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Jishengcao” pattern.)

It would be farewell to the pleasure lanes
 If I could marry Han Fuchen
 Never again would this paper-thin water jar near the hot stove,
 Never again would this iron skillet render clear oil muddy
 Never again would this brass handle turn the grind stone.

MOTHER LI: I will never consent to your marriage to that poor scholar Han Fuchen.

RUINIANG: (Sings.)

How can you shatter heaven-blessed love like a broken
 incense stick?
 Don't expect a fallen flower to rejoin the ranks of the deluded.

MOTHER LI: What is so special about Han Fuchen that you want to marry him?

RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Zhuansha” pattern.)

Ten-fold my desire to improve my life,

Nine times over she withholds consent;
 None to auger my eight signs and make me a wife,
 In vain, I long for a seven-step talent known far and near,
 My relatives to the sixth degree celebrating my new career,
 Consort to a five-flower noble,
 Riding a four-horse carriage draped in embroidered trappings,
 Three-fold blessings for future, past, and present,
 For us two, good fortune's won;

MOTHER LI: Good fortune? Good fortune? You are bent for the poor house. You want to marry Han Fuchen, who will never amount to anything in a thousand years? You'll end up singing the beggar's "Fallen Waterlily" song.

RUINIANG: (Sings.)

How can she watch my springtimes pass, one by one?

MOTHER: My daughter has set her heart on marrying that scholar Han. I will not agree, come what may. I think that scholar is a fair-weather lover. Once he hears my idle gossip he will be sure to lose his temper and stomp out. Then I can turn my daughter against him, and when they are at odds, I can have my way by introducing her to another rich, young playboy. Young women may love good-looking boys, but madams love money, and I can keep wealth coming into the house only by cooling her affections towards this lover of hers.

(Exits.)

Act II

HAN FUCHEN: (Enters and recites a *shi* style verse.)

I have been lucky in my affinities with fair ladies,
 Ever since Chang'e romanced a youth;
 So long as I have this body of true-worth gold,
 This Garden of Beauties to me must be sold.

(Speaks.) I, Han Fuchen, set off to the capital to make my name, but I passed through Ji'nan prefecture on the way where elder brother,

Shi Haowen, happens to be an official. He sent me to Du Ruiniang's house where I have been living for over half-a-year. We have fallen in love and not only do I want to get married, but luckily she wants to marry me too. Unfortunately that witch thwarts us every way she can, I think, not only because my purse is empty, but also because she knows that Governor Shi's appointment has expired, and she thinks it will not be renewed; so, she takes advantage of me all the more. She said this and that, just to drive me away. How can a talented fellow like me with the world at his feet endure this situation? Well, I abruptly moved out in a fit of anger well over twenty days ago. You ask why I don't leave, and why I still linger in Ji'nan prefecture? Contrary to what you think, it is not that I'm hoping my brother will be reappointed so that I can take Du Ruiniang to court, but because she loves me with all her heart. She continually has terrible fights with the old hag, all because of me. Now I am a hot-tempered man, but Ruiniang's temper is even hotter. Having left angry that day without so much as a word of explanation, I know she is certain to harbor a grudge against me, and she is justified. I was wrong from the start. This is why I have been pondering the dilemma over and over and why I can't very well leave this place. But I must see Ruiniang once again to reach a clear understanding. If she and the old witch are of the same mind and she will not marry me, then there is no hope for me here. I'm better off going to the capital, taking the examinations, and making my name. But, if she still loves me, wants to marry me, and holds me no grudges, then no matter how much anger the old hag vents, how can I turn my back on her? Today I learned that Ruiniang is joining her friends for tea at the teahouse. I must tuck my pride in my breast and go see her.

(Recites a *shi* style verse.)

I, a scholar bent on riding the clouds,
 Am now tormented by this unscrupulous, nasty hag;
 If by Heaven, Shi Haowen is reappointed to Ji'nan,
 I will go to court and have her banished.

(Exits.)

DU RUINIANG: (Enters with her maid servant.) I love Han Fuchen with all my heart and desire to marry him, but my mother objected and drove

him out the door with her relentless nagging. I have never uttered half a word to provoke him, so why has he failed to visit me in over twenty days? How could he expect me not to worry? Mother says he's a fair-weather lover, and that he has taken up with another courtesan whom he likes better than me. I don't believe her. There isn't a courtesan in the Ji'nan entertainment ranks who wasn't personally trained by me, so how could they be better? If he has really left me for another, it will be a long, long time before I can face people on the streets again.

(Sings in the *nanlü* mode to the "Yizhijia" pattern.)

All the Eastern sea waters can never wash my face of shame,
 Mt. Western Flower can never hide the ugly stain upon
 my name;
 No god of super strength can unlock my furrowed brow.
 No mighty river spirit can lance the anguish in my bowels;
 I have a country but no refuge place.
 Was the pain of parting at Nanpu worse?
 Curse you, my love? but you leave me no recourse;
 An affair is clearly over when love is spent,
 But I'll keep hoping till earth stands still and Heaven is rent.

(Sings to the "Liangzhou diqi" pattern.)

Though the wretch wandered casually out of sight,
 He's still in my care-laden heart, curse his loving hide.
 Confident, he strolls at leisure, to gaze at distant peaks and
 View below, the water's flow;
 Where he walks she follows, she trails his every step,
 Who knows the site of his next tête-à-tête?
 Or why he takes new lovers?
 Handsome brute! with me you played at morning clouds and
 evening rain;
 But, evil woman! now you sip his teas of leisure, his wines of
 romance;
 But this good woman! can she ever escape this house of pleasure?
 I have never caused others to eye me askance.
 The good I accept, the bad I reject;
 If fated, it will come to pass,
 If not fated, I suffer unjustly;

I can only beat the earth and rend the sky;
I ask you, why?

PLUM BLOSSOM: Sister, stop fretting; he will return sooner or later.

DU RUINIANG: Plum Blossom, bring me my pipa; it will help soothe my mind and ease my sorrow.

PLUM BLOSSOM: (Brings the pipa prop.) Sister, here is your pipa.

(DU RUINIANG plays it)

HAN FUCHEN: (Enters and speaks.) Here I am at Sister Du's gate. Why, in the half-month's time I've been away, has no one swept the entryway? The place is overgrown with moss as though it were completely deserted.

DU RUINIANG: (Listens and speaks.) The wretch has come. I'll pretend I don't see him.

HAN FUCHEN: (Enters and looks about.) Elder sister, I salute you.

DU RUINIANG: (Continues to play and sings to the "Muyangguan" pattern.)

When I don't see him I recall,
How once our minds were one;
But to see him is like the snap-crackle of oil-fed flames;
I'm just like the fish that swallows the hook,
Or the goose felled by an arrow.

HAN FUCHEN: Ah, you're your old self, still playing and singing.

DU RUINIANG: (Rises, bows, and continues to sing.)

You wonder that I still play and sing?
Well, you're still flirting and carousing!
If you won't give up "the cup,"
Should I let my fingers lose their touch?

HAN FUCHEN: The day your mother drove me away, I could only bite my tongue and move out. But it was wrong of me to leave without saying good-bye.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Mayulang” pattern.)

It was mother who broke up the loving mandarin ducks.
It was no evil trick of my devising;
But after you threw me over for another,
How dare you trouble your precious feet
To walk back to my door?

HAN FUCHEN: Sister, why do you speak this way? You promised to marry me.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Ganhuangen” pattern.)

I'm just a low-class prostitute;
How can I marry you, a handsome scholar?

HAN FUCHEN: That was the vow we made.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings.)

Mutual promises on the pillow,
Mutual oaths amid the flowers
All now are empty lies.

HAN FUCHEN: I left your house just half-a month ago. How has everything turned into empty lies?

DU RUINIANG: (Sings.)

Oh, you say you left me
Only half-a month ago,
But the loneliness feels more like three long autumns.

HAN FUCHEN: (Kneels.) Sister I was wrong. I kneel to ask your forgiveness.

DU RUINIANG: (Pays no attention.) Who wants you to kneel?

(Sings.)

Oh, make your show of
Words getting sweeter,
Your knees weaker,
And your love deeper.

HAN FUCHEN: In life we are destined to share one quilt, in death to share one grave.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Caichage” pattern.)

I used to share your bed,
But that’s all over now.
All the watery games of prostitution are at an end.

HAN FUCHEN: Sister, if only you would marry me. Even Zhuo Wenjun was willing to become a barmaid.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings.)

Don’t speak to me of Miss Zhuo in the tavern serving wine,
The Wanjiang Pavilion romance was Shuang Tong’s
to undermine.

HAN FUCHEN: (Kneels.) Sister, don’t torture me this way. Give me a few slaps.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Sansha” pattern.)

Such a faithless one as you!
Don’t expect my nails ever to touch your skin again.
I’m angered so, I could beat you till your bones protrude,
But I fear the years they’d take to heal;
Let’s break off relations now, and avoid the heartache and sorrow.

HAN FUCHEN: If you don’t grant me leave to rise I will remain on my knees even until tomorrow.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings.)

Oh! as flirtatious and naughty as ever;
It is not my fortune to play your matchmaker
Like the orioles, swallows, bees, and butterflies,
I’m content to be a disappointed mourning dove.

(Sings to the “Ersha” pattern.)

When love is deep and passionate, embrace it freely and openly,
If it’s love you steal in secret, then move confidently and boldly;

Why cleave to my house where you're so badly treated?
 By taking oaths and swearing your devotion,
 Sleeping here, sleeping there,
 Speaking deceitful lies and dark-hearted promises,
 How can your hand stay the gossiping lips?
 Such talk won't end till tongues grow tired.

(Sings to the "Weisha" pattern.)

Figures thrice superior to mine are not so able,
 Reputations ten times mine they say are everywhere;
 Practice your wiles, pull your tricks,
 Use your skills, keep trying, don't despair;
 Roll up your Spring robe's wine-stained sleeves,
 Extend your laurel-winning fingers,
 But pluck your branch of wayside willow elsewhere, if you please.

(Exits.)

HAN FUCHEN: Ah! Du Ruiniang. She acknowledges me no longer now. She truly will have nothing more to do with me. I thought the old hag wanted to drive me out because of money, but I never dreamed Du Ruiniang's heart could change too. How can I suffer such abuse at her door? I will wait a few days for news from elder brother before I decide. (Recites a *shi* style verse.)

Forceful, demanding women aren't always old,
 Lipstick and powder can turn a pure heart cold;
 Today's youth's surprised to learn, once he's bedded
 That his handsome appeal is based on gold.

(Exits.)

Act III

GOVERNOR SHI: (Enters and speaks.) I am Shi Haowen. Having completed a three-year appointment I returned to the capital for reassignment, and because the emperor has found me worthy, able, pure and just, he reappointed me to office in Ji'nan. I don't know whether my

brother Han Fuchen has passed his examinations and established his reputation or if he's still dallying at the house of Du Ruiniang. He has been constantly on my mind of late, so I have sent to inquire of his whereabouts, but no one has returned to report. Zhang Qian, watch the main gate. Inform me when the messenger returns with news of Han Fuchen.

HAN FUCHEN: (Enters and speaks.) I heard that elder brother was reappointed to Ji'nan. I waited a long time for this. Now here I am at the Ji'nan Prefectural office gate. Zhang Qian, report that Han Fuchen has come to pay a special visit.

ZHANG QIAN: (Reports.)

GOVERNOR SHI: Bid him welcome.

(They greet each other.)

HAN FUCHEN: Congratulations, brother, on your reappointment to this famous post. Having lived here, now, for a long time as your guest my purse is depleted, so I can't even treat you to a cup of wine while you wash the dust from your shoes. I am much ashamed.

GOVERNOR SHI: (Laughs.) I have been telling people that like soaring on a great ten-thousand mile wind, you have passed the examinations and established your name, but doesn't your dallying still in the courtesan houses reveal much about the strength of your ambition?

HAN FUCHEN: But my anger over being duped and insulted is killing me, so please don't talk anymore about establishing my name.

GOVERNOR SHI: It is true when a man's expenses are depleted he cannot be cheerful, but who dares to take advantage of you?

HAN FUCHEN: You would never guess, brother; it is bad enough to be duped by the old procuress of the Du household, but even Ruiniang herself has tricked me. Brother, please intercede on my behalf.

GOVERNOR SHI: This is an affair of the bedroom; how can I set it right?

HAN FUCHEN: I salute you with a bow.

GOVERNOR SHI: (Ignores his bow.) I can bow, too, you know.

HAN FUCHEN: Then I kneel before you.

GOVERNOR SHI: (Continues to ignore him.) I, too, can kneel.

HAN FUCHEN: Brother, if you're truly unwilling to set things right, to whom can I turn? While in Ji'nan Prefecture I rely completely on your authority. Who doesn't know this? But, I've been unjustly deceived by those two women. How can I hold up my head in public? I may as well dash my brains out on these steps and end it all. (Leaps to his feet; GOVERNOR SHI quickly restrains him.)

GOVERNOR SHI: Why be so short-sighted? How can I help?

HAN FUCHEN: Brother, dispatch someone to bring those two women here before the court and give them forty strokes with the cane. I think that will vent my anger.

GOVERNOR SHI: No difficulty in that, but if Du Ruiniang is still willing to marry you, do you want her?

HAN FUCHEN: How could I not want her?

GOVERNOR SHI: My worthy brother, you don't seem to realize that once an official courtesan undergoes punishment, she is considered a criminal and can never be the wife or concubine of a scholar. I am thinking of a place nearby called Gold Thread Pond, a very scenic spot. Here are two ingots of silver. Use them to slaughter a sheep, buy some wine, and throw a party. If you invite her sister courtesans to the party at the pond and entreat them to apologize on your behalf, she will be certain to take you back. Wouldn't that be better?

HAN FUCHEN: (Bows.) Many thanks brother, for your generosity. I will go today to Gold Thread Pond and arrange for the wine and food.

(Exits.)

GOVERNOR SHI: He has gone; Somehow I will bring them together. Brother will be sure to send me news.

(Recites a verse in the *shi* style.)

Though wine be the catalyst of love,
Money makes the heart grow fond;

Observe the Mandarin Ducks on the wing
As they return by pairs to the pond.

(Three *waidan* enter and speak.)

MAMA ZHANG: I am Mama Zhang, this is Auntie Li, and this is big sister Min. We are Ruiniang's relatives. Our special goal in coming to Gold Thread Pond today is to persuade Han Fuchen and Du Ruiniang to reunite. But, we did not plan this party. Fearing that Du Ruiniang would refuse to come if she knew that it was paid for by her former lover, we told her it was our treat. At the party we will perform a good deed by carefully urging her to change her mind and take him back. But, with our story still in the telling, Du Ruiniang has arrived.

DU RUINIANG: (Enters and they greet each other.) Who am I that you ladies should honor me with such a party? How can I accept?

(Sings in *zhonglü* mode to the "Fendie'er" pattern.)

It is well-known that the student class,
Is ungrateful and fickle as a lot;
So let him wander the land from end to end;
But without any warning,
He pressed me with his affections,
And I thrilled to the joy of being mated;
Usually I win in bouts of love,
But I must keep my wits if love's ill-fated.

(Sings to the "Zuichunfeng" pattern.)

In plain view one can heed the open trap,
But there is no protection from the well at your back;
I'm embarrassed, before others, to take a headlong splash,
When will fools ever learn? learn?
Karma stems from a former act,
Events today reflect that fact;
All things are predetermined.

COURTESANS: This is the seat of honor sister, please be seated.

DU RUINIANG: But, how depressed I am to see Gold Thread Pond.

(Sings to the “Shiliuhua” pattern.)

Like the tenuous strands of a broken lotus root,
 Or the flowers' brightness reflected in a broken mirror,
 Is this watery sheet stretched before me, green and clear,
 Since I was last at Dongguan, it's been fully half a year.
 Were the scene before me the Tushita paradise,
 Oh! we'd never leave my apartments, if he were here;
 We'd stay in that low room, eyes staring in contention,
 Afflicting each other in the grip of depression.

(Sings to the “Douanchun” pattern.)

Bright days and gentle breezes on us is waste,
 Splendid scenery and perfect seasons are not to our taste;
 Trouble always dogged our every step,
 At every turn someone upset;
 So restrained, everything changed in the turn of an eye,
 We now go separate ways and bid good-bye,
 I'll ply my trade again at home,
 He'll leave hearth and home to roam.

COURTESANS: Let's all drink a toast to sister.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Putianle” pattern.)

Your little sister loves the lotus,
 And you so love and honor her;
 Treating me so well and kindly,
 As you treat me to tea;
 But your little sister also finds hard jade good company,
 And can hold herself aloof as well.³

COURTESANS: Sister, why this lamenting and sighing. On such a beautiful day amid such splendid scenery, you should open your heart and drink joyfully, and make this a glad celebration.

3. I believe that this section conceals a riddle or contains puns, but I am unable to find them.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings.)

Just the mention of people in joyous celebration
 Makes the mandarin ducks entwine their necks and gently coo;
 Such a sudden sight,
 Brings a flush to my face
 And an ache to my heart.

COURTESANS: Sister, if we drink this way we will all get depressed.

DU RUINIANG: Then I'll propose a drinking game. Answer well you get to drink; lose and you have to drink the cold waters of Gold Thread Pond.

COURTESANS: We will all play your game sister.

DU RUINIANG: While drinking, we are not allowed to mention the three words *han*, *fu*, or *chen*. Anyone who utters them must forfeit by drinking a large goblet.

COURTESANS: We understand.

DU RUINIANG: Name a song that contains the names of flowers.

COURTESANS: We don't know any.

DU RUINIANG: Or a verse that closes with a three-line coda?

COURTESANS: We don't know one.

DU RUINIANG: How about a word riddle, or a verse with thimble-phrasing?

COURTESANS: We don't know any.

DU RUINIANG: Or a verse on a theme appropriate to our feast, or the lute?

COURTESANS: Since we don't know one, we will all have to forfeit a cup.

DU RUINIANG: A word riddle, thimble phrasing, to pluck the *zheng* and strum the *ruan*, you don't know any of these? Ah! you're not so good as Han Fuchen.

COURTESANS: Ah, sister, you've broken the rules. Bring the wine. You must down a large full goblet.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Shi’eryue” pattern.)

In my mind I can’t stop admiring that fool,
A perfect talent, heaven-sent;
Though in his heart he’s insincere,
In other respects he’s intelligent;
Basically honest and reliable,
But in his affections, cleverly inconsistent.

(Sings to the “Yaominge” pattern.)

Pretty Suqing of the Garden of Beauties,
Knew student Shuang could not win her hand;
She left her name on Goldhill wall that day,
And on a pleasure boat to Yuzhang sailed away;
Why pretend not to comprehend?
All students have such shallow affections;
I’d sooner accept Feng Kui’s wedding band.

(Speaks with a sigh.) I should never have mentioned Han Fuchen;
now I’ll have to forfeit by drinking.

COURTESANS: Sister, you broke the rules again. You forfeit another large goblet.

DU RUINIANG: (Drinks and sings to the “Shangxiaolou” pattern.)

Cast off, alone and solitary,
In speech, disordered and confused;
In the old days at the slightest call,
Bending down in a humble bow, I answered yes to one and all.
In the sober state people harshly criticize,
They twist their words to make them seem right.
One’s heady with wine does one’s true nature come to light.

(A little tipsy, she stumbles; the courtesans help her up. HAN FUCHEN enters and greets the courtesans, who then exit.)

DU RUINIANG: (Sings to the “Shangxiaolou repeat” pattern.)

Recalling his old affections
Makes me hopeful;

How lavish his attentions,
 How understanding, how generous,
 So considerate, so kind;
 Not that I can't compose my mind,
 Or that my memory's on the wane;
 Acts go awry as the words multiply,
 Young man who assists me, what is your name?

HAN FUCHEN: It's me, your humble Han Fuchen.

DU RUINIANG: Ha! you are Han Fuchen? step back!

(Sings to the "Shuuhai'er" pattern.)

For you I resigned as court entertainer.

(Speaks an aside.) Thanks to you, Lord Governor.

(Sings.)

My name is expunged from the courtesan roll
 I've renounced strange friends, and wild companions.
 My gate is scrubbed clean, my house is in order;
 On the touch stone you've been assayed,
 On a nice balance you've been weighed;
 As long as I am upright,
 With my fairness of figure,
 Should I despair of a prosperous future?

(Sings to the "Ersha" pattern.)

When thieves tunnel through walls as grubs bore into trees,
 I must endure it.
 And when men pet and paw me, I can't protest;
 It's railing, shouting, and causing scenes that I detest.
 I dislike clawing men like scratching cats,
 Or raising welts on them like thirty pinching devils;
 But when I catch you moving from stable to stable,
 I'll part the clouds and rain with a hand clap,
 Like the twang of lute strings when they snap.

(Sings to the "Shawei" pattern.)

Our house was united in love and affection
 We shared quilt and pillow over half-a year;
 I'll be a full thirty years when next comes spring;

(Says aside.) I'm old. Why should you want me now?

(Sings.)

Let your fickle heart wait a long, long time. (she flounces off)

HAN FUCHEN: Ah, she is truly displeased with me. All hope is gone. What can I do but report this to elder brother?

(Exits.)

Act IV

GOVERNOR SHI: (Enters with his manservant ZHANG QIAN and recites a *shi* style verse.)

This three-year assignment has been trouble-free,
 No lingering problems hanging on my mind;
 Excepting an old friend's Mandarin Duck reunion,
 And how Gold Thread Pond events unwind.

(Speaks.) I am Shi Haowen. I arranged for my younger brother Han Fuchen and Du Ruiniang to be reconciled at Gold Thread Pond. Since I have had no news, perhaps that has been accomplished. Zhang Qian, post the notice that Court is in session.

HAN FUCHEN: (Enters and speaks.) Guard, report that Han Fuchen has come with a complaint and requests audience.

(ZHANG QIAN reports; HAN FUCHEN enters for an audience and speaks.) Elder Brother, my humble respects.

GOVERNOR SHI: Brother, have the two of you been reconciled?

HAN FUCHEN: If we had, we would still be in bed, and I would have no cause to come here to court. Du Ruiniang won't take me back, so I have come to file a complaint.

GOVERNOR SHI: If she really is unwilling, then that's that! What can I do about it?

HAN FUCHEN: Elder brother, so, you won't intervene? Then I salute you with a bow.

(Bows.)

GOVERNOR SHI: (Ignores him.) Well, I do not return your bow.

HAN FUCHEN: Then, I kneel to you. (Kneels.)

GOVERNOR SHI: (Ignores him.) Nor will I kneel.

HAN FUCHEN: If you persist in refusing to intervene, then I will die right here in your courtroom, and you will be accused of misgovernance. (Dashes himself against the steps.)

GOVERNOR SHI: (Hurries to restrain him.) No womanizer is so impulsive as you! Enough, enough, enough! I will reunite you. Zhang Qian, bring Du Ruiniang here before me.

ZHANG QIAN: I understand. (Summons her.) Du Ruiniang, you are needed at court.

DU RUINIANG: (Enters and speaks.) Why do you summon me sir?

ZHANG QIAN: You have neglected your official duties and His Honor is fuming at court.

DU RUINIANG: (Oh, what a day!) What should I do?

(Sings in the *shuang* mode to the "Xinshuiling" pattern.)

An official summons came to Garden of Beauties,
 Dismissing me from the entertainment rolls;
 Now aside from donning my dancing skirts and singing,
 fan in hand,
 I will be lucky at festival or year's end,
 In the grip of winter's cold,
 To get a coin or two for serving my cup of tea,
 I beg you, Sir, take pity on me.

(Speaks.) Here we are at the Court. Sir, please screen me while I peek inside.

ZHANG QIAN: This is permissible.

DU RUINIANG: (Peeps inside and hears harsh voices within.)

(Sings to the “Chenzui dongfeng” pattern.)

I thought I was happily needed at a banquet,
 But why do they angrily prepare the club and ready the whip?
 My heart is pounding fearfully, before I take a step;
 It's like sliding felt along a carpet against the pile;
 Usually I would steel my courage, thrust out my chest and
 march right in,
 But I fall down shaken by a hundred fears.

ZHANG QIAN: (Reports.) Your Honor, Du Ruiniang is here.

GOVERNOR SHI: Bring her over.

HAN FUCHEN: Brother, be tough now.

GOVERNOR SHI: I understand.

ZHANG QIAN: Now, face the court.

DU RUINIANG: Your Worship, Du Ruiniang is come.

GOVERNOR SHI: Zhang Qian, prepare the large cane, bring the cangue,
 and dispatch her to the detention house for interrogation.

DU RUINIANG: Alas, who is to save me now? (Looks all around.) Isn't that
 Han Fuchen? I will have to bear the shame and importune him.

(Sings to the “Gumeijiu” pattern.)

This is no time for modesty,
 I must grasp at any help convenient;
 Oh, shame-faced, let me beg, and hope that he is lenient;

(Speaks.) Han Fuchen, please make a plea on my behalf.

HAN FUCHEN: Why did you shirk your official responsibilities? His Honor
 is hopping mad.

DU RUINIANG: (Sings.)

Please make some clever excuse,
 That His Honor's wrath we might reduce.

HAN FUCHEN: So now I can be of use to you, eh? But I will not speak on your behalf unless you consent to marry me.

DU RUINIANG: All right, I'll marry you.

(Sings to the "Taipingling" pattern.)

From now on I will truly be your wife,
But quickly find a way to resolve this strife.

HAN FUCHEN: I can make a plea for you, but what if His Honor is unmoved?

DU RUINIANG: (Sings.)

I recall when he first entered my bed chamber,
I complied with his every wish,
Now his paper heart seeks to deceive me again;
I suffer a thousand insults to my reputation;
Ah, none's so ready as you, fickle playboy, to change your mate.

GOVERNOR SHI: Zhang Qian, bring in the large cane.

HAN FUCHEN: Elder brother, look on my poor face and pardon Du Ruiniang, on the ground that it is her first offense.

GOVERNOR SHI: Zhang Qian, bring Du Ruiniang over. (DU kneels.) You have served faithfully in my Yamen for many years, and with distinction. How could you be ignorant of the Yamen laws which hold that neglect of official duty is punishable by forty strokes and a penalty for nonconformity? Since Scholar Han is here asking clemency for you, I will forgive you the forty strokes, but I cannot pardon you for nonconformity.

HAN FUCHEN: Du Ruiniang has promised to marry me. I request that Your Honor pardon her even for her nonconformity.

(Kneels.)

GOVERNOR SHI: (Hurriedly helps him to his feet.) Du Ruiniang, are you willing to marry Scholar Han?

DU RUINIANG: Yes, I am truly willing to marry him.

GOVERNOR SHI: In this case, I will give your mother one hundred ounces of the finest silver as a wedding gift. Now arrange the painted candles and the wedding feast, so that you can marry Han Fuchen.

HAN FUCHEN: Many thanks, elder brother, for arranging this happy event.

DU RUINIANG: Many thanks, Your Honor, for pardoning me.

(Sings to the “Chuanbozhao” pattern.)

Everyone says our happy match
Is entirely Heaven's due;
So, should adversity overtake my good fortune,
And, should I be unwittingly entangled in hapless love,
Obstructed as by mountains and seas,
Can our moon ever be full anew?

(Sings to the “Qidixiong” pattern.)

Soon we'll face each other, shoulder-to-shoulder,
By our green silk-framed window;
Forever granted our life-long dreams,
You at the blue lamp, writing poetry on yellowed reams,
I snipping embroidery threads of reds and greens.

(Sings to the “Meihuajiu” pattern.)

I recall when we parted last year,
Like mandarin ducks separated from their mates,
Or a fragrant water lily with a broken stem,
Our happiness stifled;
It was my mother who made us desperate,
By keeping us apart.
With frustration mounting on each side,
We should thank His Honor for his kindly heart.

(Sings to the “Shoujiangnan” pattern.)

Was buying flowers in Springtime a waste of money,
If it spared a handsome couple from sleeping apart?
Now that he's an official, to Linchuan⁴ I'll elope,

4. Linchuan is the seat of Shuang Jian's official post in Song Fanghu's *sanqu* suite; see *Quan*

Following my scholar;
 No need to help me weeping onto a merchant's boat.

HAN FUCHEN: (Bows with DU RUINIANG in thanks.) Elder brother, ascend the bench and accept your younger brother's bows in thanks.

GOVERNOR SHI: (Bows.) Worthy brother, congratulations, on being reunited. But this is a court and a place where people get separated, not united. Zhang Qian, come forward and hear my instructions. Take these twenty ounces of silver to the Director of the Entertainment Bureau, and have him arrange for an orchestra to send off Scholar Han from the Yamen to Du Ruiniang's home. And, prepare a huge banquet, and invite her relatives who helped them conclude this happy reunion at Gold Thread Pond to come and celebrate with the Scholar and his bride. When the feast is concluded, return and report to me. (A verse in *ci* style says.)

Scholar Han, rosy cloud guest of honor,
 Du Ruiniang, bewitching beauty of flowers and moon,
 Yours is a heaven-sanctioned union,
 Deliberately thwarted by an old hag.
 He roamed to greener pastures, a thwarted man,
 She, a cast-off woman in her lonely apartment pining;
 Had the governor not devised a clever measure,
 How could happiness ever be restored in the lofts of pleasure?

Title Couplet: Scholar Han casually turns his back on a love affair
 An old hag interrupts the mating season of swallows and orioles

Standard Name: Shi Haowen is reappointed to Ji'nan Prefecture
 Du Ruiniang learns to appreciate Gold Thread Pond.

yuan sanqu [Complete Yuan dynasty *sanqu*], edited by Sui Shusen, Rpt., (Taipei: Chunghua shuju, 1969) pp. 1303-4.