FENG MENGLONG AND HOU HUIQING: RECORDS OF ANGUISH IN FICTION AND SONG

by

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine Feng Menglong’s relationship with the courtesan, Hou Huiqing, in light of the ideological and social tensions of late Ming culture. Though romances between scholars and courtesans is not a new topic in the study of Chinese literature, I seek to explore a more personal side of Feng by analyzing his lesser-known collections of song poetry, specifically narrative sanqu in *Taixia xinzou* 太霞新奏 (Celestial Airs Played Anew, 1627). The study of these poems is important because they represent the only surviving song suites of Feng’s—a total of sixteen sets. I am centrally concerned with the representation of failed love affairs in song poetry, as seen through Feng’s personal experiences and the experiences of his close literati friends.

In analyzing his collections of fiction and song, I seek to establish a relationship between Feng’s writings on scholar-courtesan romance and his valorization of *zhengqing* 真情, or “genuine sentiment”. Though romantic love and genuine emotion are central preoccupations of Feng writings, they do not retain the same degree of importance throughout the different genres of his works. I argue that there is a great divide between the public themes of Feng’s fiction and the private sentiment of his songs. Feng’s songs are not only “private and particular,” but they are remarkable for their intensely emotional tone, articulated from a male perspective rather than being projected onto the figure of the woman who is jilted by her male lover. In fiction however, Feng’s depiction of scholars and courtesans reverts to a more conventional morality. In stories published after his separation from Hou, Feng sought to put traditional hierarchies in critical perspective but did not advocate a complete break from the traditional social order.
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Introduction

In the late Ming dynasty (1368 - 1644), Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) wrote and collected many stories, songs, and poems about the love affairs between scholars and courtesans. This was also a case of art mimicking life experience as Feng was a frequent patron of the Jiangnan pleasure quarters, where, in the seventeenth century, the social and literary visibility of courtesan culture reached its zenith in the region south of the Yangzi river. As a native of Suzhou, Feng was at the centre of an intellectual culture where disenfranchised literati romanticized their relationships with courtesans as ones of compassion, temperament, and intellectual compatibility. These women were especially praised in literature for their abilities to recognize talent (cai 才) and sentiment (qing 情) in previously unrecognized men.

As Timothy Brook has written, the last century of the Ming dynasty was “a time of cultural brilliance, innovative ideas, and endless pleasure, [but it was] also a time of confusion and anxiety.”¹ In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the monetization of silver and its flow into China from Japan and Spanish-America helped to stimulate commercial prosperity in the fertile region south of the Yangzi river. This prosperity accelerated cultural development and created an environment in which the arts and humanities flourished. Though this economic boom popularized education and spread literacy, it also had the negative effect of increasing the number of examination candidates competing for degrees.² From the late fourteenth century to the year 1600, the number of its

¹ Timothy Brook, The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1998), 154.
candidates taking the civil service examination grew exponentially, yet the bureaucracy that supplied official appointments for successful candidates did not grow accordingly. An unfair selection process that was designed more to eliminate candidates than select the best scholars disillusioned generations of men who had spent their entire lives preparing to sit the exams.

Many scholars of the late Ming who had fared poorly in their examinations, Feng Menglong included, came to live as city hermits (shiyin 師隱) in the metropolises of the Yangzi River Delta, particularly Suzhou, Hangzhou, and the former capital Nanjing, where economic and cultural capital was concentrated. Though these frustrated scholars dwelt in the urban centres, they valued eremitism and eccentricity as markers of their autonomy from a corrupt bureaucracy. Some men like Feng redirected their talents to professional writing in order to sustain a livelihood. Lamenting their lack of recognition, these disaffected scholars actively sought comfort in the “flower lanes” and pleasure quarters where they hoped to play out the male fantasy that a man’s failed career would somehow be compensated for by the love of a talented and charming woman.

Courtesans were seen as the ideal companions for frustrated scholars because of their ambiguous position in late Ming culture. In one sense, as Paul S. Ropp suggests, courtesans were honorary literati, who “occupied the only place in society where women

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3 Men who received the lowest degree of shengyuan 生員 (Licentiate) increased by twenty fold and at the provincial level (juren 舉人), only one out of every one hundred candidates could successfully pass. See Benjamin A. Elman, “Changes in Confucian Civil Service Examinations from the Ming to the Qing Dynasties,” in Benjamin A. Elman and Alexander Woodside, eds., Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 111-49.

could openly socialize with men who were not their husbands." 5 The late Ming courtesan who was celebrated in poetry and prose was not an ordinary prostitute, but a highly cultured entertainer skilled in the arts, music, and literature. 6 Courtesan culture flourished in the Jiangnan region, in part, as a response to the needs of literati. Though a courtesan often equaled or even surpassed her scholar lover in talent, it was her unwavering devotion to him that won high praise. In addition to her faithfulness, she was able to appreciate her lover’s talent (cai 才) and genuine sentiment (zhenqing 真情), which had previously gone unrecognized by the scholar’s politically ambitious peers and examiners.

At the upper levels of the profession, the most famous courtesans in China were able to transcend the social limitations imposed upon their gender and enjoy a renown unattainable by other women. 7 Yet despite these privileges enjoyed by the elite, a courtesan was still a woman who did not fit anywhere in the Confucian kinship system and it was precisely this is why disaffected scholars identified so strongly with her. If a frustrated scholar was a man without a lord, a courtesan was a woman without a family, probably sold into servitude by her impoverished parents. Therefore, even the most famous courtesan desired the redemption and respectability of marriage, hopefully to one of her wealthy, talented, and sensitive lover-clients. In becoming this man’s legal concubine, she could escape her notoriety and live a life of wifely virtue.


6 For more detailed studies on the talented and tragic Late Ming courtesan see, Dorothy Ko, Teachers of the Inner Chamber: Women and Culture in Seventeenth Century China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); "The Written Word and the Bound Foot: A History of the Courtesan’s Aura," in Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang, eds., Writing and Women in Late Imperial China, 74-100 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); and Wai-Yee Li, "The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Cultural Ideal," in ibid, 18-73.

7 Ropp, 18.
It was during this period when social, political, and individual values were in flux, that accounts of romances between talented scholars and courtesans became popular with the reading public. Many fictional romances were inspired by real-life love stories, such as that involving the late Ming poet Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608-1647) and the courtesan Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618-1664). As a marginal member of the intellectual elite and a frequent patron of the entertainment quarters, Feng Menglong’s own writings about scholar-courtesan romances were infused with both a strong sense of literati frustration and a deep sympathy for the women who occupied so much of his time. Though courtesans were at the bottom of the gender and social hierarchies, he saw in them the capacity for true feeling and magnanimous spirit. In life and in literature, courtesan lovers became for scholars the ultimate zhiyin 知音 or “one who understands the tune”.

Though Feng was a self-professed ‘lady-killer among courtesans’, his most ardent love was for the famous Suzhou courtesan, Hou Huiqing 侯慧卿 (dates unknown), a woman who would leave a lasting impression on Feng’s collections of popular literature, both fiction and song. Like most relationships of the heart, the details of their affair are speculative, but we do know for certain that Hou abandoned Feng to marry another man and consequently, he poured out his feelings for her by composing thirty poems under the title, “Yuanli shi” 悠離詩 (Poetry on Sorrow over Separation). In keeping with literary fashion, members of his social circle responded to Feng’s loss with their own compositions and together these...
poems were collectively printed in *Yutao ji 鬱陶集* (Records of Anguish), a work that is no longer extant.

Fortunately, there are other sources available to us that reveal a broader range of emotions that Feng felt for Hou before and after their eventual separation. These sources include his anthologies of popular song (*shidiao xiaoqu 時調小曲*), Feng's own art songs (*sanqu 散曲*), and selected stories from his famous *Sanyan 三言* (Three Words, ca.1620-1627) collection. This thesis seeks to examine Feng's relationship with Hou Huiqing by analyzing his collections of fiction and song through the spectrum of personal nostalgia and cultural attitudes in flux. Though scholar-courtesan romance was a favourite topic of Feng's writings, I am centrally concerned with the representation of failed love affairs in song poetry, particular Feng's personal experiences and the experiences of his close literati friends. What were his ethics on loyalty and love and how did the violation of such norms vary between genres? It was in the literature of the late Ming that the relationship between scholars and courtesans reached its highest level of creative expression, but to what extent was Feng's representation of this bond an idealized projection of romantic love, or the "salty cynicism" of a jilted lover?

Feng's ethics on loyalty and love resonated with the heartbeat of his time. He was deeply influenced by the late Ming philosophers, Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529 and Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602), whose radical ideas on individualism and spontaneity were reflected in the writings of many idealistic scholars, Feng Menglong included. Wang's notion of "innate knowledge" (*liangzhi 良知*) stressed that every person knows from birth the difference between good and evil. Such knowledge is intuitive and does not require social

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11 Hsu Pi-ching, "Courtesans and Scholars in the Writings of Feng Menglong," 43.
rules and institutions in order to be cultivated.  

Feng also followed the teachings of Li Zhi, whose theories elevated the husband-wife relationship to the head of all human relations, placing it above the subject-lord and parent-child relationships. Li believed love between a man and woman to be the most spontaneous and thus most sincere of all human emotions because it did not derive from any sense of obligation. It was Wang’s notion of “innate knowledge” and Li’s emphasis on the husband-wife relationship that helped to promote romantic love between the two sexes as the most powerful of human emotions. This spontaneous and genuine emotion (zhengqing 真情) stood in direct opposition to the falseness and corruption of the late Ming examination culture and allowed the devoted courtesan and talented scholar to unite in a companionate relationship.

Though romantic love and genuine emotion are central preoccupations of Feng’s writings, they do not retain the same degree of importance throughout the different genres of his works. In examining his collections, we find a great divide between the public themes of Feng’s fiction and the private sentiment of his songs. As Patrick Hanan suggests, Feng’s songs are not only “private and particular,” but their primary subject and value is love – as depicted in the affairs of Feng and his friends with courtesans. These poems are remarkable not just because they are the only surviving song suites by Feng, but because they provide readers with a rare glimpse into his emotional life. Feng’s song suites about Hou Huiqing exhibit a particular vulnerability and “extreme heartbreak in rejection.”

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13 Ibid, 865-71.


15 Ibid., 95.
There is no attempt to disguise Feng’s anguish over the loss of his *zhīyìn* 知音, the one who understands him. Feng presents the complications of failed affairs in a nuanced light where fickle lovers are both condemned for their breach of promise and sorely missed for their failure to return. Feelings are praised for the sincerity with which they are expressed, and are not judged by any measure of rationality.

In fiction however, Feng’s depiction of scholars and courtesans reverts to a more conventional morality. In stories published after his separation from Hou, Feng sought to put traditional hierarchies in critical perspective but did not advocate a complete break from the traditional social order. Though his failed affair with Hou left him devastated and bitter, this did not prevent him from writing compassionately about the lives of other singing girls. In his fiction, courtesans have the ability to transcend their gender and social roles, but are always reined in at the end of the story by Feng’s moral message that fidelity in love, not beauty and talent, is the surest way to a scholar’s heart. Feng’s concept of ideal love involved both sincerity of emotion and persistence in devotion. Any violation of this ethic was grounds for punishment – be it illness, death, or public humiliation, a fickle lover did not have a happy ending in Feng’s vernacular fiction.

It is not the intention of this thesis to emphasize the primacy of Hou Huiqing’s role in Feng’s writings, nor is it sensible to attempt a reconstruction of their romantic narrative. The literary remnants of their affair are not only incomplete, but also very one-sided. Hou exists only through the memories of her former patron and there is no record available of her own writings to or about Feng. Thus, she is, like most courtesans of this period, an object of the male literati gaze. We can learn about her life and character only through her influence.

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16 Hsu, 45.
on Feng’s life and works. The examination of his fiction and song does not reveal any singular portrayal of scholars and courtesans, but a spectrum of emotions that are bound only by the limits of Feng’s imagination. Ethics on loyalty and love, however, are bound by the conventions of genre. Be it private anguish in song or public adoration in fiction, the particulars of scholar and courtesan romances were a subject matter close to Feng’s heart. The goal of this essay therefore, is to examine the influence of personal love and loss on a man who celebrated above all else, the capacity for genuine sentiment (zhengqing 真情).
Chapter One
Seeking “the Genuine” in Popular Song: Hou Huiqing in Annotation

The earliest mention of Hou Huiqing is in Feng’s anthology of Suzhou folk songs, *Shange* (Mountain Songs), a ten *juan* collection of verses recorded in local Wu dialect. According to Oki Yasushi, *Shange* dates between 1611 and 1616 and merits attention for both its subject matter and linguistic style.\(^\text{17}\) Oki argues that Feng, by using local dialect, is able to express an authenticity in love far removed from the formal constraints of literary Chinese, albeit one that many readers considered vulgar (*li* 俚). Patrick Hanan further observes that “in their lusty celebration of sex, the [mountain] songs are unhampered by Confucian morality.”\(^\text{18}\)

Of particular interest to this paper is the first four *juan* of this anthology which are devoted to quatrains about secret love and intimate feelings. The women who appear in these four-line songs are remarkably bold and active, both in their expression of desire and pursuit of love. Many songs in *Shange* were performed in and inspired by brothels and tea houses where literati like Feng would take the opportunity to record them in writing. Thus it is no surprise that courtesans or, “singing girls” (*jinü* 娼女), feature prominently throughout this anthology and it is in a comment appended to one of these songs that Feng first mentions his beloved Hou Huiqing. In an interesting moment of personal reflection Feng takes issue with the rationale that governs the emotional behaviour of courtesans by commenting on the last line of the following song, “Many” (*Duo* 多):

\begin{quote}
In Heaven, when the stars are many, the moon does not shine.
In a pool, when fish are plentiful, the water is not clear.
\end{quote}


\(^{18}\) Oki, 131; Hanan, 89.
In court, too many officials disrupt the law.
If sister takes too many lovers, it disturbs her heart.\(^9\)

天上星多月不明。
池裏魚多水不清。
朝裏官多亂子法。
阿姐郎多亂子心。

In Feng’s annotation to this song, he once recalls asking a courtesan, Hou Huiqing, that as a woman in her profession, “you have known many men, is your heart not confused?” (卿輩閑人多矣，方寸得無亂乎). In response to his query, Hou explains that famous courtesans, such as herself, must keep their wits about them much like the shrewd examiner who ranks candidates in a logical sequence of merit:

We courtesans always have our own roster of names. Those who give me extra sums of money are not held up to this standard – but so few are they that I can count them on my fingers: first, second, up to ten. The sequence will be very clear. At times, a man’s affection for me may grow or diminish [as is expressed in gifts that increase or diminish in value], and his standing will rise or fall accordingly. If I happen to get a [man] of extraordinary stuff, there is no harm in demoting someone else to promote him. This is the outcome of my life. I look to this as my guide. I cannot exceed [this measure], and to turn my thoughts towards a different avenue would not be as satisfactory. How could I be confused?

我曹胸中自有致案一張，如捐額外者不論，稍堪屈指，第一第二以至累十，井井有序。他日情或厚薄，亦複昇降其間。倘獲奇材，不妨黜陟。即終生結果，視此爲圖，不得其上，轉思其次。何亂之有？\(^{19}\)

Upon hearing these words, Feng sighed in admiration, not just for her financial acumen, as Kathryn Lowry suggests, but also for her enlightened ability to detach herself from the

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\(^{20}\) My translation of Feng’s comment is based on Kathryn Lowry’s (2005; 321) translation, but differs significantly on the translation of this phrase, “there is no harm in demoting someone else to promote him” (*bufang chuzhi* 不妨黜陟). I believe Hou’s use of this phrase is made in relation to her roster of scholar names, though Lowry translates the phrase as, “it behooves me to take a risk”.

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sentiments of her clients, rearranging their relative positions as the need arises. In realizing the necessity of patronage to the “outcome of her life” (終生結果), Hou looked to the ranking of clients as her “guide” (tu 圖) because without it, her heart would be thrown into turmoil.

Feng’s humorous and affectionate tone when writing about Hou Huiqing suggests to me that the couple was still together at the time of Shange’s publication. Hou did not become famous until she was romantically involved with Feng and after their eventual break-up, she “married out of her profession” (congliang 從良). If, as Oki suggests, Shange was first published between 1611 and 1616, that would put Feng in his late thirties or early forties and would situate the writing of his comments in the frustrating years he spent preparing for the provincial examinations. In this less than fruitful period of study, Feng published and wrote many handbooks on the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu 春秋), his chosen exam specialty, but never succeeded in passing the exams himself. After devoting decades to the study of orthodox Confucian texts, Feng’s motivation behind the collection of these folk songs was twofold: the search for that which was genuine (zhen 真), and a desire to challenge entrenched notions of literary practice, no matter if or how it offended the likes of ‘respectable’ society.

Similar to the graphic sexual descriptions that run throughout the anthology, a courtesan’s frank discussion of monetary transactions would have been considered vulgar, especially to the frustrated scholars who projected their fantasies on to these women. Judith

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21 Lowry, The Tapestry of Popular Song, 321.

22 Feng published three important guidebooks for exam candidates specializing in the Chunqiu: Guide to the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu zhiyue 春秋指月, 1620), New Light on the Central Ideas of the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu dingzhi canxin 春秋定旨參新, ca.1623), and A Spring and Autumn Annals Thesaurus (Chunqiu hengku 春秋衡庫, 1625).
Zeitlin notes that a courtesan was expected to receive “gifts” rather than payments from her clients because “this shadowy and easily manipulated distinction implies that she, in turn, bestows her favours voluntarily as a return gift, rather than fulfilling a set payment for [sexual] service.” In Feng’s eyes, Hou’s confession on the necessity of the “gift economy” to a courtesan’s survival is bold.

Her rationale for listing clients is an obvious reversal of roles in the “flower registers” (huabang 花榜) – a male practice of ranking courtesans according to the grading system for top examination candidates, a practice in which Feng was an active participant. In Hou’s remarks, however, male clients become the object of female scrutiny and their standings will fluctuate according to their assessed value, financial or otherwise. Though we may never know the full context of her conversation with Feng, Hou’s remarks about fiscal discrimination would foreshadow a devastating turn in their affair. Despite repeated attempts at the provincial examination, Feng never obtained a title higher than Licentiate (shengyuan), the lowest position of degree holders, and sources suggest that Hou eventually left him to marry a wealthy merchant.

The earliest indication of their break-up is contained within another of Feng’s song anthologies, *Guazhi'er 贯枝兒* (ca. 1608 - 1617), a collection of folk songs all sung to the same popular tune, “The Hanging Branch.” Although this collection dates before the publication

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24 The two most famous rankings of courtesans are the *Beauties of Suzhou* (Wuji baimai 吴姬百媚, 1617) and the *Beauties of Nanjing* (Jinling baimei 金陵百媚, 1618). Both publications circulated freely among a literary public obsessed with the intrigues of courtesan romance. Feng provided commentary for the *Beauties of Nanjing*, an expensively illustrated publication featuring courtesans in garden settings. In her chapter, “Reproducing Wu-Dialect,” Lowry (2005) points out that a deluxe edition of *Shange* was published close on the heels of these courtesan rankings to feed a commercial demand for “rustic” (bili 郊俚) elegance, 282.
of Shange, it is in a later edition of Guazhi’er that we find the very last of Feng’s “Yuan li” 忍離 (Sorrow over Separation) poems:

The craze for poetry, the obsession with wine, no more!
In my sickness, I often shut my doors in daytime.
The utmost misery in one’s entire life
Is to try to summon the soul at the yuanyang grave.25

詩狂酒癖總休論，病里時時畫掩門。
最是一生凄絕處，鴛鴦冢上欲招魂。

Since Feng did not express any sense of resentment in his Shange comments on Hou Huiqing, the inclusion of the “Yuan li” poem in Guazhi’er seems very out of place if the couple was still together. A logical explanation for this, as Hsu Pi-ching suggests, is that the Guazhi’er extant today is not the first edition and must contain revisions Feng made after his loss of Hou Huiqing.26 If the “Yuan li” poem was the only available source about the end of their affair, readers would be led to assume that in writing these verses, Feng was mourning the death of his lover, as suggested by the imagery of the yuanyang grave (鴛鴦冢). Yuanyang are mandarin ducks who mate for life, and are thus a symbol of conjugal fidelity while a yuanyang grave implies that two lovers are buried together in death because unforeseen circumstances have forced them apart in life. In the “Yuan li” poem, Feng appears to be anguished by his futile effort to summon her soul back.

Yet other sources indicate that Hou did not pass away, but actually left him to marry another. How then can we explain Feng’s use of grave imagery? The context of the song in Guazhi’er is key to our understanding. In “Gan’en” 感恩 (Grateful), the song to which Feng


26 Ibid., 57 n50.
appended his poem, the singer expresses a longing desire to grow old together with her lover: “eating and drinking together by day, and sharing a bed at night” (日裏同茶飯，夜間同枕席). And when death should happen to meet them, she looks towards the day when they will “be together below the earth” (地下同做鬼). In vowing to share “in life one room, in death one tomb” (生則願同衾, 死則願同穴), the singer’s sentiment resonated deeply with Feng but his decision to respond with his “Yuan li” poem suggests to me a cruel twist of fate: Hou’s abandonment turned his bed into a tomb where he lay alone in torment.27 Thus the soul he is attempting to summon is not his former lover’s, but his own broken spirit.

If we consider the arrangement of songs in Guazhi’er, Feng’s comments to “Gan’en”感恩 (Grateful) are significant in another light. Each section (bu 部) of this ten-chapter anthology is designated a one-word title that refers to “a zone of sentiment or a poetic form.”28 “Gan’en” appears in the second chapter of Guazhi’er under the sub-section of “Joy” (Huan 敬). As the title of the song suggests, the anonymous singer is so thankful for her lover that she feels “unable to repay her debt of gratitude” (無報答). In declaring the intensity of her passion for him, she makes a solemn vow to live together with him as one in life and death. Feng’s “Yuan li” poem is equally intense in its meditation on love but entirely opposing in its sentiment. Whereas “Grateful” is a joyous declaration of passion, Feng’s poem is a passionate cry of misery (qi 哭). The tie that binds these verses together therefore, is not the sentiment of the speaker, but the shared value of their “genuineness” (zhen 真), a quality Feng sought to express in all of his song anthologies. In reflecting on his

27 Hsu, Pi-ching, "Celebrating the Emotional Self: Feng Meng-lung and Late Ming Ethics and Aesthetics," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1994), 43.
28 Lowry, 217. These loosely defined section headings in chronological order are: Love (Si 爽), Joy (Huan 敬), Longing (Xiang 嚴), Parting (Bie 別), Grudges (Xi 恨), Resentment (Yuan 恨), Response (Gan 滿), Songs [on Objects] (Yong 詩), Mocking (Nue 悲), and Miscellaneous (Za 聲) pieces that include long narrative songs.
personal loss of Hou Huiqing, Feng diverges from the section's thematic unity but complements the singer's immediacy and sincerity of passion by revealing the agonies and ecstasies of love as merely two sides of the same coin.
Chapter Two  
Resenting the Fickle Lover: Hou Huiqing in Art Songs

The fact that Hou deserted Feng instead of passing away is made clear in his anthology, *Taixia xinzou* 太霞新奏 (Celestial Airs Played Anew), a collection of *sanqu* 散曲 (art songs) published in 1627. *Taixia xinzou* is significant because it is the only surviving work containing Feng’s songs, a total of sixteen sets with all but one or two having a clear personal reference. Though he was not a prominent official, nor was he regarded as a great poet, Feng judged his own *sanqu* compositions to be, “devoid of literary brilliance, but surpassing all others in one thing, that is, genuineness” (著曲絕無文才，然有一字過人，曰真). This sentiment is especially true of the five suites of songs directly relating to his loss of Hou Huiqing: “Duan’er yibie” 端二憶別 (In Memory of our Separation on the Second day of the Duanwu festival), “Yuan meng” 怨夢 (Resentful Dream), “Yuanli ci” 怨離詞 (Ci on Resentment at Separation), “You huai” 有懷 (Thoughts), and “Shi Ji” 誓妓 (Vow on Courtesans).

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29 Here *sanqu* is translated as “art song” to distinguish it from the more colloquial “popular song” (*xiaoqu* 小曲, literally “minor qu”) discussed earlier in this paper. James L. Crump translates *sanqu* as “free verse” (i.e. verse unattached to drama). See his *Songs from Xanadu: Studies in Mongol-dynasty song poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1983), 2.

30 *Taixia xinzou* (1627) is edited by Feng who also wrote a preface that is no longer included in modern facsimiles. The preface from the Ming edition at Beijing University Library is reprinted in Lu Shulun 呂樹倫, *Feng Menglong yanjiu* 鳳夢龍研究 (Research on Feng Menglong) (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 1987) 132-3.

31 Hanan, 95.

32 This comment follows one of Feng’s *sanqu* about Hou Huiqing, “You huai” 有懷 (Thoughts), *Taixia xinzou* 10:14.

Feng’s sanqu in Taixia xinzou do not express the romantic idealism of compositions authored by his friends, but rather the extreme heartbreak of failed love. As Oki Yasushi suggests, Feng’s song suites are remarkable for their intensely emotional tone, articulated from a male perspective rather than being projected onto the figure of the woman who is jilted by her male lover. The common theme that runs throughout his verses is a sentiment encapsulated by the Chinese term, yuan, which conveys the dual emotions of sorrow and resentment: sorrow over his separation from Hou and resentment towards her fickleness in love (boqing). In writing himself as the jilted lover, Feng oscillates between wallowing in self-pity and condemning Hou for her unfaithfulness. Though his sentiment could be judged as excessive by some, Feng makes no apologies for his genuine outpouring of feelings, a quality he was quick to defend over the merits of literary flair.

In his preface to “Duan’er yibie” (In Memory of our Separation on the Second day of the Duanwu festival), Feng sets a nostalgic mood for his song as he recalls the time and place of his break-up from Hou:

The sixth day of the fifth month is the one year anniversary of my loss of Hou Huiqing. With each day she recedes further into the distance, and even if I wished we could go back to the way things were last year on this day that we separated, it is impossible. I am so broken-hearted! I was composing verses in my studio when suddenly I finished [composing] a song in the shangdiao [mode]. Where can I find a singer whose voice is so powerful that, if the wind is favourable, this song will reach the ear of my beloved? Alas! Every year I have this day, and every year I am without Huiqing. What need is there for people to tell me how sad this is, for I am already sad?

34 Because Taixia xinzou was edited by Feng, it contains sanqu composed by many of his close friends including Dong Sizhang (1586-1628), Shen Boming (1583-1665), and Feng’s patron, Shen Jing (1553 - 1610) who was the founder of the Wu Jiang School of Drama (吳江派).

35 Oki Yasushi, “Fu Boryu to gijo” (Feng Menglong and Singing Girls), Hiroshima daigaku bunkakubu kiyō (広島大学文学部紀要) 48 (1989): 71-91.

36 Taixia xinzou, 11:15; translation is mine. See the Appendix for the full translation of the song.
The preface begins with a declaration of Feng’s loss (shi 失) which could be interpreted as Hou’s death, but is later revealed to be a physical separation from her as he expresses a desire for his song to “reach her ear”. Even though a year has passed since their initial break-up, Feng is obviously still devastated at the event of her leaving. He writes in the second verse, “Parted a year as if parted a lifetime, my thoughts are thousands upon myriads of love” (隔年宛似隔世懸，想萬愛千憐).

In the second and third songs of the suite, Feng recalls the sights and sounds of the Duanwu festival – the mildly warm weather, the commotion of dragon boats on the river, and the blooming of the pomegranate flower (liuhua 榴花) – all in an attempt to reconstruct the scene of their parting. In his dream-like state of misery, Feng can even remember the loveliness of her “grass-like eyebrows” (meicao 眉草) and the “flowered pattern of [her] skirt” (qunhua 裙花). In the third song, however, Feng shifts his attention to the present:

_To the tune “Jade Oriole”_

I imagine you now in red mansions and detached gardens,
Cutting new silk robes and trying them on.
Yesterday the Duanwu feasting began,
But I had no interest in attending the boat races.
How can the three-year old mugwort heal my sorrow and help me recover from this love sickness?
[Seeing] the wusesi every year adds to the misery of our separation.
Who can I blame for hanging the xiuhu in front of my window?
Once again, I am frightened awake by my nightmares.

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37 The mugwort (ai 艾) is believed by Chinese people to ward off evil spirits and heal a wide array of illnesses and ailments. This medicinal plant is especially associated with the Duanwu festival when it is the custom for every household to hang the mugwort inside their home.

38 The wusesi 五色絲 is a five-coloured anklet or necklace worn for good luck and protection from evil during the Duanwu festivities. The xiuhu 蟄虎 functions in much the same way as the wusesi but it is usually worn by children or hung inside of homes.
Once again it is suggested that Hou has not passed away, but is merely separated from Feng, apparently, as he envisions, in affluent surroundings where she is able to tailor fine silk robes at her leisure. The preparation of new clothing is also a symbol of celebration, and perhaps an assumption by Feng that she is oblivious to the pains of his love sickness. He cannot eat, nor can he sleep because he is frightened awake by nightmares. In the fourth song, Feng invokes the spirit of Qu Yuan (340 BC - 278 BC), the fateful hero of the Duanwu festival who took his own life in political protest.

To the tune “Yulin Oriole”

Do not cut the cattails,
Do not cook the millet,
For on this day,
I cannot swallow [any food].
In my study, I force myself to idly take my leisure,
And casually begin to read “Encountering Sorrow.”
I condole with Qu Yuan
Who could not question Heaven,
Yet I will ask Heaven [my question]. Heaven!

While forcing himself to take leisure in his study, Feng casually begins to read the “Li Sao” (Encountering Sorrow), an ancient poem included in Qu Yuan’s Chuci (Songs of Chu). This reference is suggestive of Feng’s unsuccessful “search for the goddess,” a beautiful woman who does not recognize his talents and who does not want to be his lover. In the “Li Sao,” Qu Yuan uses the erotic imagery of the shaman songs that were current in
his home state. The ruler that fails to heed Qu’s advice is presented as the passionately
desired but unattainable goddess, while the misunderstood official appears in the role of the
eager suitor. Feng’s identification with Qu’s plight could signify both romantic and
political failures.

The passionate outcry of the last line is a reference to another work in the Chuci,
attributed to Qu Yuan, “Heavenly Questions” (Tianwen 天問), which poses over one
hundred questions about Heaven, Earth and the affairs of men. These questions are of such
great importance that only Heaven could answer them, and so I argue that Feng’s invocation
of Qu Yuan here conveys a burning desire to have Heaven answer his question: why did
Hou Huiqing leave him for another man? This question, like Qu Yuan’s, remains
unanswered and Feng ends his song by expressing how much he still misses Hou. As the
suite concludes, he wonders whether or not she is happy and is only certain of his own gut-
wrenching misery.

Coda:

Knowing your happiness and resentment at this moment,
I am overwhelmed by my own despondent feelings and can no longer
endure this torture.
I am only afraid that if next year I think more about this day, I will surely go
insane.

[尾聲]
知卿此際歡和怨, 我自愁腸不耐煎, 只怕來歲今朝想更顛.

In another song suite, “Yuanli ci” (Ci on Resentment at Separation), Feng’s
despondent feelings turn to bitterness as he reflects on the reasons for the break-up with

Studies, 1997), 40. For translation and discussion of the “Li Sao” see David Hawkes, The Songs of the
South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets (London: Penguin Books,
1985).
Hou and the role he played in their affair. Hou is no longer the unattainable goddess of the previous suite, but a cold and fickle lover who has cast him aside in vain:

To the tune “Embroidered Belt”

Has it ever happened that one becomes accustomed to the misery of separation? Especially when subjected to this abuse. Can it be that I only took the place where you were lacking a lover, And you were only my fleeting wife? I slap my face. Had I known I would incur this unjust debt, would I have agreed to get involved? Others curse me for being a young vagrant. In the courtesan quarters there is no shortage of lovemaking between men and women, Yet I have become a foolish soul that longs for a place to rest.40

The mood of this opening song, like the title of the suite suggests, is resentment, yuan怨. Feng accuses Hou of using him as her substitute lover to fill the gaps of her emotional life.41 Whereas he held her up to the status of wife, she did not reciprocate the intensity of his feelings and would eventually replace him with another man. Feng depicts himself as the sole investor in the relationship, who has risked his heart and reputation for a woman who makes “a foolish soul” (chun hunling蠢魂靈) out of him.

In the second song, Feng blames Hou for failing to cherish their tender relationship, turning him into, “a young man who must suffer the long nights alone” (少年郎清清捱著長夜). This imagery of the desolate bedchamber calls to mind Feng’s “Yuanli” poem when he

40 Feng, Taixia xinzou, 7:8. Translation is mine. See the appendix for the full six verses.

41 Hsu Pi-ching, “Courtesans and Scholars,” 58.
compares his utmost misery to the mandarin duck grave (鴛鴦冢) where all attempts to summon his soul prove futile. The language of the sanqu, however, is less figurative and so too is the target of his resentment. Feng’s bitterness towards Hou increases as he recalls the apparent lack of remorse at her departure in the third song:

*To the tune “The Master’s Prelude”*

When she left, there was nothing to hold her back.  
At that time I was half numb [with grief].  
I had not offended her with so much as a single word,  
So how did she presume  
  to brush me off with a [parting] glance?  
The scent of a briar rose in the end runs to wildness,  
And the more I speak of it, the harder it is to forgive such fickleness in love.  
I cannot believe that you look upon [yourself] as an ordinary whore,\(^{42}\)  
Who would easily bury your peerless *pipa* out of sight.

The practical discrimination that Feng once held in such high regard, is now dismissed as coldness that numbs his body with grief. The once clever ranking of male clients has become the sharp sting of rejection and Feng struggles to cope with his fall from favour. He compares Hou Huiqing to the scent of a wild rose, a beauty that is both exquisite (because ephemeral) and wild (because it attracts the attention of others). Though this too is the nature of famous courtesans, Feng cannot bring himself to forgive such “fickleness in love”.

In the fourth song, Feng proclaims that Heaven is ignorant to “the bitterness of separation” (*ku libie* 萬離別) and does not understand the principles of correct match-making.

\(^{42}\) The term, *xiāxié* 侠邪, carries the meaning of ‘narrow and winding streets’ used of the districts where prostitutes resided. *See Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大辭典 (Great Chinese word dictionary) 13 vols., (Hong Kong and Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian, 1986-90), vol.5, 52b.
In the penultimate song of the sequence, he goes on to lament that the potential wealth of a scholar's learning cannot measure up to the actual wealth of a merchant:

_to the tune “Third Ranking Scholar”_

Suddenly, I think of plans carelessly made;  
And of the young Mole who was so gallant and brave.  
It is deceiving to say that "the study of books will earn you a thousand bushels of rice",  
Because, in comparison, the merchant['s wealth] is greater.  
I take these feelings and complain to my esteemed sister,  
For since our separation, I have become emaciated.

The implication is that Hou left Feng to marry a merchant, someone who could provide her with comforts that a man of shengyuan status could not possibly afford. As we shall see in Feng's fiction, particularly in his scholar-courtesan romances, it is usually an evil merchant who tears the lovers apart. Was this villainous portrayal of merchants representative of late Ming social tensions, or is Feng simply giving vent to a private desire to exact revenge on the man who robbed him of his true love?  

The publication of _Taixia xinzou_ in 1627 is not without significance. This year saw the third attempt by Feng to pass the triennial provincial examinations held in Nanjing. In the lower Yangzi region, the competition for provincial degrees (_juren_ 舉人) was especially intense and by no means fair. Because the quotas the government imposed on the numbers of successful candidates favoured culturally-less developed areas, only one percent of

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Mole 費勒 is the name of the Kunlun slave in a Tang _chuanqi_, whose ability to scheme on his master Cui's behalf enabled him to abduct a beautiful singing girl from the household of a powerful court official. This _chuanqi_ is authored by Pei Xing (dates unknown) and entitled "The Kunlun slave" (混奴奴).  

Hsu Pi-ching, "Courtesans and Scholars," 58.
candidates from this area could pass their exams. Feng travelled to the southern capital no less than three times: in 1618, 1624, and again in 1627. At the age of 53, he seems to have lost all hope in obtaining the juren degree and finally resigned himself to a livelihood of professional writing. In the closing song of “Yuanli cì” he writes: “After all, where in books is there a face of jade?” Having neither the success of an official career, nor the loyalty of his beloved Hou Huiqing, it is no wonder that Feng was in desperate need of an outlet for his frustrations.

In another of his art songs, “Yuan meng” 怨夢 (Resentful Dream), Feng continues his bitter lament about Hou by reflecting on the conflicting emotions he feels for her by day and by night. Though he earnestly tries to put her out of his mind, she foils his resolve by coming to him in dreams. He writes in the first song:

_To the tune “Great Victory”_
A beloved for life is difficult to expel from the depths of one’s heart,
She is like a golden cangue with a jade lock.
My love betrayed, her honour lacking, I can let her go.
As things are, it is a waste to recite verses [about her].
Besides she is no “state toppler” who cannot be found;
Just a maker of clouds and rain, what worth does she have?
[If] this hateful love in the end bore no fruit,
So I must hold up high the sword of wisdom,
And cut down this love demon.

[大勝樂]
活冤家難遣心窩，似金枷和玉鎖。恩辜義寡我也得過，直恁地費吟哦。又不是傾城傾國無見處，祇不過為雨為雲直甚麼？此恨終沒結果，則索高拏慧劍，斬斷情魔。

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46 The term qingchengqingguo is a famous literary cliche describing a woman beautiful enough to cause the fall of a city or state.

47 The term, huijian, is a Buddhist term for the ‘sword of wisdom’ which cuts through the illusions of the material world.

48 Taixia xinzou, 7:15. Translation is mine, see appendix for full translation.
In comparing Hou to "a golden cangue with a jade lock", Feng is expressing the exquisite pain of unrequited love, a special kind of torture that has paralyzed him with grief. She is to him, a yuanjia 元家 - a person that he both loves and hates. Feng is not only resentful about their break-up in this song, but feels betrayed by her apparent lack of honour. He continues his attack by relegating Hou to her profession: she is "just a maker of clouds and rain, what worth does she have?". After all, it is the nature of courtesans to have sexual encounters ("clouds and rain" or yunyu 云雨) with many men, and Feng must remind himself of this as he struggles to explain her departure.

After conceding that his affair with Hou was "a banquet that had a beginning and an end" (官筵席有順有散) in song two, Feng describes how he is visited by Hou in his dreams in songs three to five. Though his every waking hour is consumed with thoughts of her, he cannot even escape her in sleep because her "fragrant soul" (fanghun 芳魂) comes to stir up his feelings at night: "How she vexes me! Soul and spirit coming and going, what a helpless situation!" (悩人魂來魂往索奈何). Hou appears before him as a disembodied spirit and arouses his desire to kiss her: "the tip of my tongue is dripping with sweet saliva" (舌尖滴滴香唾). Though he still bears the burden of his bitter feelings, in his mind he "falls again into a river of love" (愛河重墮). In the opening lines of the third song, Feng dreams of an encounter with a disembodied Hou (she is described as a "she-ghost," (guipo 鬼婆). They both have transformed into mandarin ducks, emblematic of enduring love, and build a nest together. This fantasy is interrupted by the chatter of birds at dawn, which abruptly terminates the dream. When Feng awakes, he experiences his loss of Hou anew.

In a sanqu titled, "You huai 思 (Thoughts), Feng continues to write about the troubling effects of his dream encounters. With lovesickness occupying all hours of his day,
Feng attempts to distract himself with writing but is entirely unsuccessful. He writes in the second song:

*To the tune “Qi’er”*

Unable to defend myself against soul-startling words [spoken] in a dream, I use my writing to overwhelm my lovesickness. Turning my thoughts to essay-writing, I cannot produce a single word, Everything I write is still a love poem. Brush and ink, ink stone and paper, How can you force a person like this? Even if [my writing were] to win me wealth and gold, This would not compensate for these words of lovesickness.

Perhaps it was during this period of writer’s block that Feng composed the six *sanqu* devoted to his break-up with Hou Huiqing. Though he tries to concentrate on more serious literary pursuits, every character that flows from his brush is a lament on his broken heart. He even blames his writing implements for coercing him into composing love poetry: “Brush and ink, ink stone and paper, how can you force a person like this?” It is not specified what kind of writing Feng wishes to pursue, but this song suggests he suffers from a lovesickness so severe that it cannot be remedied by the prospect of riches earned through literary success.

In the third song, Feng directs his resentment towards Heaven. In a manner similar to “Yuanli ci” where he accuses Heaven of being oblivious to the bitterness of separation, Feng takes issue with the powers-that-be for giving life to lovers who are destined to part.

*To the tune “Yellow Oriole”*

One pair contented in love, I reckon that even Heaven has not been kind.

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49 In “Yuanli ci” Feng writes, “Heaven is ignorant, so how can it know the bitterness of separation?” (tian wuzhi, zenshi de ku libie 天無知，怎識得苦離別).
Ready it was to let the two of us die of our love.
The tree leaves have branches,
And the male birds have females.
Old Heaven gave life to me, so why did it give life to you?
Vexation gives way to laughter.
If it were not for the cutting of the lotus root,
How could the threads that keep it together appear?

[黃鸝兒]
一對意孜孜，算天天也不慈，忍教兩下爲情死。木葉有枝，鳥雄有雌，
老天生我何生爾？惱還嗤，不因藕斷，怎顯得兩牽絲？

Though Feng appears frustrated at Heaven’s willingness “to let the two of us die of our love”, an abrupt change of attitude intrudes in the seventh line, as “vexation gives way to laughter” -- a bitter laughter perhaps, as Feng comes to the sudden realization that without the agony of separation, he might never have realized the power of his entanglement with Hou. The song’s concluding lines allude to a lotus root that has been cut, but whose clinging fibres remain tangled together. The image is a conventional figure for lovers who have been forcibly separated. Even though their affair has ended, love lingers on. Whether or not this refers to mutual love between Feng and Hou or Feng’s own lingering affections is ambiguous.

In the penultimate song of the sequence, Feng alludes to the reason for his break-up with Hou: it was neither a lack of love nor understanding, but a third party who came between them:

*To the tune “Clustered Imperial Park”*

Although there are romantic debts [to be paid],
And in the Ministry of Dewdrops
There is joy
And there is sorrow,
There has never been a joy and sorrow like this.
I myself cannot understand this strange affair:
When two people whose hearts are as solid as iron,
Who was the magnet that pulled us apart?

[簇御林]
誰則是風月寒，露水司，有歡娛，有怨咎，從無歡怨能如此。自不解
希奇事，兩人兒心堅似鐵，誰做箇石中磁？

In declaring his joy and sorrow as unrivalled by “ministry of dewdrops”, Feng dismisses all past romantic affairs when compared to the drama of his own. He then goes on to question the iron-like bond between himself and Hou. If their hearts were truly “as solid as iron” (心堅似鐵), what was the magnetic force that pulled them apart, or perhaps more appropriate, who was this person that came between them? Was this magnet the wealthy merchant Feng alludes to in “Yuanli ci”? It appears from these last two songs that Hou’s decision to leave her lover caught Feng by surprise and was made even more devastating because they loved each other still. If love was not the reason for Hou’s departure this could have sharpened the sting of rejection if she chose to abandon Feng for the wealth and security a merchant could provide.

In the last of Feng’s sanqu about his affair with Hou Huiqing, “Shi Ji” 誓妓 (Vow on Courtesans), Feng is so upset by his failed love affair that he swears a solemn oath never to return to the pleasure quarters again, a statement verified by his good friend, Dong Sizhang 董斯張 (1586-1628). For the only time in his writings about Hou, Feng implies that she also experienced sorrow and pain when the two parted ways, without downplaying his own suffering. In the opening song he writes:

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50 The “ministry of dewdrops” is an office in Heaven dealing with romantic affairs that take place outside the confines of proper marriage. The reference to dew drops implies that the man and woman meet secretly at night and wake up from their tryst amid the morning dew.

51 In an appendage to “Yuanli ci” 恨離詞 (Taixia xinzou, 7:8), Dong Sizhang comments on Feng’s abandonment of the pleasure quarters: “After Ziyou lost Huiqing, he completely gave up visiting courtesans – something he used to be fond of doing” (字猶自失意時，遂絕愛憐之好).
To the tune “Assemble the Worthy Guests”

[When] swearing an oath of love before the mountains and sea, who would dare to speak recklessly?
It seems that this failed affair is an abyss [that separates us].
Fruitless skills that dissemble at every turn
Have caused bitter resentment in both of us.
At Zhang Terrace ask Miss Liu, how could His Lordship Li confer her [on his friend Han Yi]?
Having truly been exposed,
She could not stop-up the gossip that leaked out like water in a wicker strainer.

[集賢賓]
盟山誓海誰亂誦？似敗約鴻溝。東掩西遮空費手，弄得箇兩邊偃僃。
章臺問柳李王孫如何傳授？貞出醜，塞不住箇箇多口。

Feng’s reference to Zhang Terrace is an allusion to the Tang chuanqi titled, “The Story of Miss Liu” (Liushi zhuan), by Xu Yaozuo (dates unknown). This story is about a beautiful concubine who was set on preserving her chastity, but could not because she was passed on to several different men against her will. It is unclear whether or not Feng is suggesting that Hou married another man under similar circumstances, but it is obvious that he sees himself in the role of Han Yi – the poor, but talented scholar who is powerless to reclaim his lover from a wealthier man. In “The Story of Miss Liu” it is a high-ranking general who tears the lovers apart, and in Feng’s case, it appears to have been a merchant.

This song also suggests that the break-up of their affair did not reflect positively on Hou, whose liaison with Feng had made her famous. Feng acknowledges the gossip that surrounded their affair, revealing that Hou suffered a loss of face in addition to his own

52 Miss Liu was originally the favourite concubine of Mr. Li who gives her as a gift to his good friend, Han Yi. See the Tang chuanqi, “The Story of Miss Liu” (Liushi zhuan), by Xu Yaozuo (dates unknown). For translation and discussion of the story, see Paul Rouzer, Articulated Ladies: Gender and Male Community in Early Chinese Texts (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 216-224.

53 Taixia xinzou 10:15. Translation is mine, see appendix for all four verses.
damaged reputation. Of all the five sanqu directly relating to his loss of Hou Huiqing, "Vow on Courtesans" appears to be the most balanced portrayal of their separation, providing the briefest of glimpses into the mindset of Hou. He writes in the second song:

_To the tune "Yellow Oriole"

I am a lonely boat lost in stormy weather;
I am weak and weary from lovesickness, so why do I remain here?
Only because my arms cannot free themselves from the knot of her black tresses.
My former love for the courtesan quarters
Has turned into resentment for flowers and hatred for wine.
In the place where young men gather, I am ashamed to have fallen behind others,
And I beg her to gather in
Her fast falling tears,
And direct them to some other love.

[黃鸝兒]
風雨掉孤舟, 病懸懷為甚留？只為臂間未解青絲扣. 把歌樓舞樓, 翻做花仇酒仇. 少年場羞落他人後, 館伊收, 雙行急淚, 別向有情流.

This last reference to her "fast falling tears" represents a reversal of roles from his previous portrayal of Hou in "Yuan li ci" (Ci on Resentment at Separation). She is no longer the stoic woman who numbs him with grief, but a tearful lover who inspires in Feng his own sense of indifference: since he is no longer the object of her affection, she should rightly direct her sorrows to the man who is. Are we to believe that this is a more faithful interpretation of their break-up scene or a clever revision of 'facts' to restore a small part of Feng's dignity? Like the details of their affair, the answer to this question remains unclear.

What we do know for certain is that Hou's departure had such a lasting effect on Feng that his previous love for the pleasure quarters "turned into resentment for flowers and hatred for wine". Any nostalgia for the love they once shared or hope for a reconciliation is now gone. Whereas Feng once recalled the red pomegranate flower that blooms in the

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54 See verse three of "Yuan li ci" in Taixia xinzou 7:8.
spring, he is now so defeated to compare his love for Hou to the winter Daphne (瑞香花), signalling that all beautiful things must come to an end. In the final verse of his song, Feng makes a solemn vow to never again visit the courtesan quarters: “I will abandon the rejected bordello and not go there” (棄箑謝卻青樓不去走). Though sources close to Feng indicate that he did indeed stay true to his word, there is contrasting evidence suggesting Feng had another courtesan lover after his breakup with Hou.

In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss the theories behind Hou’s abandonment of Feng and attempt to provide both a chronology of Feng’s collections and a time frame for the couple’s separation. In doing so I argue that the lure of the pleasure quarters was too strong for Feng to reject altogether. His continued involvement with courtesans and his intimate knowledge of their daily lives suggest a strong identification with the values these women upheld, values that could not be overshadowed by the pain of Feng’s personal loss.

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55 See verse one of “Duan’er yibie” in Taixia xinzou 11:15.
Dating Feng’s Collections and the Question of Yuan Zhongdao

In the summer of 1617 there appeared a “flower registers” (huabang 花榜) book for which Feng provided commentary. This book, the Beauties of Suzhou (Wuji baimai 吳姬百媚), was an expensively illustrated publication featuring courtesans in garden settings. Each singing girl in the register was assigned a particular flower and ranked like the top hundred candidates in the metropolitan examination. As Patrick Hanan mentions, Feng appears under pseudonym as the lover of one Liu Hanxiang, the ninth most beautiful courtesan in the ranking. The editor of the book, Wan Yuzi, credits Feng with discovering the courtesan before she became famous. Liu is included in a picture standing beside a bearded and moustachioed man in scholar’s robes, presumably Feng Menglong himself. As the story goes, Feng travelled to Hubei between 1612 and 1617 to study the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu 春秋), his chosen exam specialty. In the several years he was away, the courtesan’s affections for him cooled and “her door [became] as busy as a marketplace.”

If Feng’s affair with Liu Hanxiang was real then are readers to assume that his “vow on courtesans” (Shi Ji 誓妓) was not, or instead mere words composed in anger? Moreover, though we know for certain that Feng travelled to Hubei in the 1610s and published several manuals on Chunqiu in the 1620s, Liu Hanxiang is never mentioned in any of his extant works. Was this courtesan simply a fictional character in Feng’s life or perhaps a fictionalized account of Feng’s romance with Hou Huiqing? The personal account from his sanqu and the story offered from the flower register do not seem to corroborate one another.

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56 Zhou Zhibiao 周之楣, preface and comp, Wuji baimai 吳姬百媚 (Beauties of Suzhou), 2 juan and addenda fu (Hosa Bunkō, Nagoya, 1617).

57 Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story, 90.

58 Ibid, 90.
Feng is resentful towards Hou in his songs because she left him for another man, and not, as the other source suggests, because of cooled affections and a sudden surge in her popularity. Part of the reason why it is so difficult to confirm the details of their affair is the complications in constructing a time frame for their separation. With the exception of Taixia xinzou (1627), all of the works in which Hou Huiqing is mentioned have ambiguous publication dates. Guazhi'er is believed to have been published between 1608 and 1617, Shange between 1611 and 1616, and Yutao ji (Records of Anguish), the collection of poems written immediately after Feng's break-up with Hou, is no longer extant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Publication date</th>
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| Shange  
(Mountain Songs) | 1611 – 1616          |
| Yutao ji  
(Records of Anguish) | No longer extant     |
| Guazhi'er  
(The Hanging Branch) | 1608 – 1617          |
| Wuji baimei  
(Beauties of Suzhou) | 1617                 |
| Taixia xinzou  
(Celestial Airs Played Anew) | 1627                 |

Since Shange represents the earliest mention of Hou and gives every indication that the couple was still together at the time of publication, we can assume that Feng and Hou separated after 1611 but sometime before the summer of 1617 when the flower register picturing Feng with another courtesan was published. The compilation of Yutao ji must also fit between this six year period (1611-1617) since later editions of Guazhi'er (ca.1608-1717) include a “Yuanli shi” 怨離詩 (Sorrow over Separation) poem identified as being from this collection.

The surviving works in which Hou Huiqing is mentioned by Feng suggest that the couple separated in the 1610s, yet the modern Chinese scholar, Gao Hongjun 高洪鈞, has a different interpretation of events surrounding their break-up. He believes that in 1596, Hou Huiqing abandoned Feng to marry the famous literatus, Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道 (1570-1623),
the younger brother of Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610). According to personal accounts gathered from Yuan Zhongdao's anthology, *Kexue zhai qianji* 現雪齋前集 (Collection from Jade Snow Studio, 1618), Yuan failed the provincial examinations for the third time in 1595 and turned to the Suzhou pleasure quarters to seek comfort in the arms of courtesans.

Hsu Pi-Ching provides a narrative of his encounter with Hou Huiqing:

Yuan Zhongdao abandoned himself to the pleasure of the company of singing girls on the lake of Wulin from the seventh to the ninth month. He was then robbed, stricken by illness, and forced to beg in the courtesans' quarters in Suzhou. A courtesan took care of him and in the fifth month (presumably in 1596), he married her. In the ninth month of that year, his wife sent him a letter congratulating him for acquiring a new mate and urging him to return home for the sake of their children. In reply, he wrote that the new woman was of a lowly status and, knowing little about the wifely duties of sewing, weaving, and cooking, was no fit wife for him.

In two other poems from his studio collection, "Bie Huiqing" 別慧卿 (Saying goodbye to Huiqing) and "Ganhuai shi" 感懷詩 (Poems on aroused emotions), Yuan indicates that he left the courtesan and never returned to her, defending his actions by stating women were all bad karma and would only hold him down. In Gao Hongjun's explanation, Hou Huiqing abandoned Feng to marry Yuan Zhongdao and was herself in turn abandoned by Yuan.

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60 See the following works, "Fangge zengren" 放歌贈人 (Singing a song as a gift), "Nei ji" 內寄 (Letter from my wife), and "Da" 答 (Reply) in Yuan Zhongdao's anthology, *Kexue zhai qianji* 現雪齋前集 (Collection from Jade Snow Studio) (Taipei: Weiwen tushu chubanshe, 1976, modern facsimile edition of the original 1618 edition), 2: 16b-18a, 18a-b, 19a-b.

61 Hsu Pi-ching, "Celebrating the Emotional Self: Feng Meng-lung and Late Ming Ethics and Aesthetics," 44.

62 Ibid, 44; Yuan, *Kexue zhai qianji*, 2: 40a-b, 5: 5a-b.
Though this twist in Feng’s romantic narrative represents karmic retribution at its best, there are several problems with Gao’s theory on the man who robbed Feng of his zhiyin. First and foremost is that Yuan Zhongdao was not a merchant, but a struggling scholar just like Feng Menglong. Both men failed to pass the provincial examinations three times, but unlike Feng, Yuan went on to obtain his jinshi degree, albeit belatedly at the age of forty-six.

In Feng’s sanqu about his break-up with Hou, he makes several references to the bitter fate of a poor scholar when compared to that of a wealthy merchant. Though Yuan did become successful later on in his career, at the time of his marriage to Hou in 1596, he would have been twenty six years of age, and according to Gao Hongjun, in a dire state of poverty. That Hou took pity on this wretched man and cared for him as he begged in the courtesan quarters is not in keeping with the cold and fickle lover that Feng depicts in his songs.

Also problematic is the time frame of Yuan’s marriage to Hou and the probability that she did not even know Feng Menglong in 1596, who at that time, would have been a mere twenty-two years of age. If we accept Oki Yasushi’s dating of Shange as 1611-1616, and the assumption that Feng and Hou were still together at the time of its compilation, then Yuan Zhongdao would not have been a factor in their break-up. The Hou Huiqing in Yuan’s anthology was either different from the courtesan with whom Feng fell in love, or the same Hou Huiqing, but one who had long been separated from her former husband.

Also unlikely is the possibility that Feng abandoned the pleasure quarters at such a young age, yet still managed to write, publish, and collect so many stories about romantic affairs with the very women he claimed to reject. Furthermore, Taixia xinzou did not appear

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63 Together with his two brothers, Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610) and Yuan Zongdao (1560-1624), Yuan Zhongdao formed a literary club in Beijing known as the Grape Society (葡萄社). They were collectively known as the "three Yuan brothers from Gongan" (公安三袁) and used their Grape Society as a forum for literary reform.
until 1627 when Feng was fifty-three years of age. Could it be possible that the infamous separation which wrenched his heart happened more than thirty years before his sanqu were published? Without further information, we can only speculate.
Chapter Three
Tales from the Pleasure Quarters: Narrative sanqu in Taixia xinzou

This chapter continues my previous discussion of Feng Menglong’s songs by examining two of his narrative sanqu in Taixia xinzou, “Qinglou yuan” (A Courtesan’s Lament) and “Songyou fangji” (For a Friend Seeking a Courtesan). The theme of love affairs between scholars and courtesans is the same, but unlike Feng’s own compositions about his break-up with Hou Huiqing, the narratives about his friends’ relationships are written from a greater emotional distance. Though these sanqu also deal with the intimate experience of thwarted love, they do not convey the bitter resentment that Feng expresses about his own failed affair. Instead, courtesans are treated with a great deal of sympathy and are variously depicted as mournful beauties scorned by fickle men or powerless victims of fiscal opportunity. It seems that Feng’s separation from Hou did not deter him from writing compassionately about the lives of other singing girls.

Attached to each composition is an elaborate preface explaining the events of the romantic tryst and clearly defining the moral superiority of the faithful lover. The song suites that then follow reproduce the narrative set forth in the preface. The preface is crucial in contextualizing the many obscure allusions Feng uses to convey the sentiments of his speaker. In “Qinglou yuan” Feng takes on the voice of the jilted courtesan and in “Songyou fangji” he adopts the persona of the heroic scholar. Though the subject matter of these songs is not his own experience, it is still of a deeply personal nature and helps to lead readers to a clearer understanding of Feng’s attitudes on life and love.

64 Taixia xinzou 12:9 ; 5:2.
I will begin my discussion of Feng’s narrative *sanqu* with “Qinglou yuan”. This particular composition is as long as it is complex: a tale from the pleasure quarter in thirteen sets of meetings, partings, and unfilled promises. Though this poem bears the character of “sorrow and resentment” (yuan 怨) in its title, the same character that defines the sentiment of Feng’s compositions about Hou Huiqing, “Qinglou yuan” conveys the emotions of lament, rather than indignation, hence my choice of translation. The narrative follows the real life affair of Feng’s friend, Mr. Liu 劉, and his courtesan lover, Bai Xiaofan 白小樊. He writes in the preface:

My friend, a certain Mr. Liu from Dongshan, had been on intimate terms with Bai Xiaofan. Later the two were separated. Again not too long ago, however, I accompanied him to visit her. The couple exchanged their loving thoughts on the past six years, weeping all the while. It was a short visit, but they secretly agreed to meet again soon. Liu, however, never did show up again. Now, every time I happen to see Xiaofan, she is in tears. Oh, in this world, is there really a man as heartless as Li Shilang? I have thus composed this *sanqu* for Xiaofan.65

The composition of this *sanqu* represents a reversal of roles for Feng. Apart from the introduction, Feng writes his verses in the voice of Bai Xiaofan, the jilted courtesan who is abandoned by her scholar lover. Though male literati writing themselves as abandoned women is nothing new in Chinese literature, Feng seems to identify strongly with the plight of this particular singing girl, so much that he dedicates the composition to her. Perhaps he saw visions of his own failed affair with Hou, or perhaps he was moved by the loyalty of her love. In any case, it is made clear to readers who the wronged party is. Feng compares his

friend, Mr. Liu, to the heartless Li Shilang 李十郎, a character based on the Tang poet, Li Yi 李益 (748-827), and immortalized in the classical tale by Jiang Fang 蔣防 (fl. early 9th century), “The Biography of Huo Xiaoyu” 霍小玉傳. Li Shilang is the unfaithful lover of Huo Xiaoyu 霍小玉, a beautiful courtesan. He abandons her after pledging his eternal love. Not only does he never send for Huo, but he marries another woman at his mother’s urging. Huo Xiaoyu dies of grief and proceeds to haunt Li and his wives as a vengeful ghost.

In “A Courtesan’s Lament,” Mr. Liu and Bai Xiaofan renew their pledge of love after six years of separation, but Liu breaks his commitment and never returns to her. Bai regrets the promise she made and the feelings she revealed, and Feng is left to witness her tears, showing his sympathy for the courtesan by composing the *sangu* in her voice, not his friend’s. He writes in the first song:

*To the tune “Step by Charming Step”*

In the lonely autumn wind autumn leaves dance,
And I think of all the sad autumn rhapsodies ever written.
Time passes in the blink of an eye,
[But] where have you put
The time for our lover’s tryst?
I scratch my head and regret that back then,
I confessed my true feelings to you for no [good] reason.

[步步嬌]
萧索秋風秋葉舞, 想遍悲秋賦。流光轉盼詰, 把燕約鶯期, 置在何所?
搔首悔當初, 沒來由便把真情訴。

Though the theme of the abandoned woman in traditional Chinese literature is often associated with frustrated male ambition, it is clear in Feng’s composition that his identification with Bai Xiaofan is of a personal nature: both were rejected by fickle lovers. In the first song of the sequence, Feng invokes the sorrowful mood of autumn as Bai reflects on the passing of time and the realization that her beloved will not return to her: “where have
"you put the time for our lover's tryst?", she asks him. This song stands in contrast to the previously discussed sanqu, "Duan'er yibie" (端午憶別), in which Feng recalls a springtime scene: his parting from Hou on the second day of the Duanwu Festival. Images of mildly warm weather and blooming pomegranate flowers are used to create a nostalgic mood for the song. In "Qinglou yuan," however, Bai looks back on her love affair with Liu from the perspective of "lonely autumn" (蕭索秋), the season signalling the end of beautiful things.

The second song of the sequence is a lament on the couple’s six years of separation, or rather Liu’s separation from Bai Xiaofan. The lyrics to this song emphasize that the courtesan remained loyal to her lover despite his prolonged absence and in spite of the ridicule she received from others. Feng writes:

To the tune “Cassia over the Southern Bough”

I earnestly think of you and genuinely long for you;  
I suffer through the day and suffer through the night.  
Although the cold mouths of others ridicule me,  
I still earnestly take your side.  
Nowadays, this is becoming questionable;  
I see before me six wasted years.  
What treacherous water or fiery volcano is there,  
To prevent the traveler from [coming to me]?  
There is no trace of him,  
Nor sound.  
And were I to seek him in a dream, no dream would there be.

That Bai Xiaofan suffered so diligently in anticipation of her lover’s return is a classic narrative from the Chinese lyrical tradition of self-pitying male literati comparing themselves to deserted women. Yet, in writing himself as this mournful courtesan, Feng is

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66 Taixia xinzou, 11:15.
not lamenting a lack of recognition from his lord, but simply projecting the heartache of his
own experience. Not only does Bai wait patiently for Liu to return to her, but she ardently
defends his absence: “Although the cold mouths of others ridicule me, I still earnestly take
his side” (隨他冷口諷嘲, 元自熱心回護). It is not until the last half of the song that she begins
to question his commitment and her once stubbornness turns into defeat.

In the third song of the sequence, Bai Xiaofan appears to have given up hope that Liu
will return to her, but Feng later reveals through allusions that the couple enjoys a bitter-
sweet reunion after many years of hardship. He writes:

To the tune “Willow’s Shaking Gold”

In hidden room with crimson door,
I lazily open my fragrant trousseau.
Passion has dissipated.
Futile for Passing Rain to think of Chu;
The wandering spirit [still] wishes to encircle Wu.
Fortunate it was for [Sima] Xiangru to come to his senses,
And pay another visit to his “stove minder”.
I hear him speak about his innermost feelings, and it was not his intention [to
leave me] after all.
Sweet are the fruits of hardship,
Like grass that has wilted and again revives.
Tonight we should defer the talk of our joy and love
And first we should expound on my sorrow.

It is also mentioned by Feng in his preface that Liu and Bai meet and part several times, but
for the unsuspecting reader (or listener), this information would be hard to glean. At this
point in the narrative, scholar and courtesan have reunited after six years of separation, an
event to which Feng himself was a witness: “I accompanied [Liu] to visit her” (傾偕子往), he
writes in his preface. The key to understanding their story lies in interpreting Feng’s use of
allusion to two famous love affairs, one between a king and goddess, and the other between
a scholar and beauty. The first affair implies separation, and the second implies reunion.

In the second song of “Qinglou yuan,” Bai Xiaofan is obsessed with love, and now in
the third song, she is languishing in its deprivation. Since “passion has dissipated” (凰月興
金疏), she is even reluctant to care for her appearance: “I lazily open my fragrant trousseau”
(香箋懶鋪). In the next line of the song, Feng reinforces the notion of separated lovers by
making reference to the affair between King Xiang of Chu 楚襄王 and the goddess of Wu
mountain 巫山神女, a union so brief it takes place in a dream. Feng writes, “futile for
Passing Rain to think of Chu” (行雨空懷楚). This sentence alludes to the Chinese
euphemism “clouds and rain” (yunyu 雲雨), or lovemaking, made famous by Song Yu 宋玉,
a third century BC official from the kingdom of Chu. In the preface to the poem attributed to
him, “Rhapsody on Gaotang Peak” (高唐賦), Song Yu provides the most famous version of
the King’s encounter with the goddess:

Once upon a time, King Xiang of Chu visited the high terrace at Yunmeng
(Dream of Clouds) with Song Yu, when he gazed off toward the lodge of
Gaotang. Above it was a mass of cloudy vapors [...] And the king asked
Song Yu, "What vapor is that?” Whereupon Song Yu replied, "That is what
they call ‘the clouds of dawn’.” And again the King: "What is meant by ‘the
clouds of dawn’.” Song Yu: “Once upon a time one of the kings before you
visited Gaotang. He grew weary and lay down to rest during daytime. He
dreamed then of a woman, who said to him, “I am the Goddess of Wu
Mountain and am a sojourner here at Gaotang. When I heard that my lord
was visiting Gaotang, I wanted to share a bed with you.” Then the king
enjoyed her. And when she left, she said on parting:

I am found on Wu Mountain’s sunlit slope,
On the steeps of the high hill.
In the early morning I am the clouds of dawn,
In the evening I am the passing rain.
Every morning and every evening beneath the Terrace of Light.\(^{67}\)

昔者楚襄王與宋玉游於雲夢之臺，望高唐之觀，其上獨有雲氣 [...] 王問玉曰：此何氣也？玉對曰：所謂朝雲者也。王曰：何謂朝雲？
玉曰：昔者先王嘗游 高唐，怠而晝寢，夢見一婦人曰：妾巫山之女也，為 高唐之客，聞君游高唐，願薦枕席。王因幸之。去而辭曰：妾
在巫山之陽，高丘之岫 / 旦為朝雲，暮為行雨 / 朝朝暮暮，陽臺之下。

Feng’s allusion to this story is meant to suggest a passionate affair that is cut short. Though the couple’s union is fleeting, their separation becomes permanent. The king, however, is so moved by his dream encounter with “passing rain” (xingyu 行雨), the evening manifestation of his goddess lover, that he decides to build a temple in her honour.\(^{68}\) In “Qinglou yuan”, Feng reverses the sentiment of Song Yu’s tale and it is Passing Rain who yearns for King Xiang, or Bai Xiaofan who longs for Liu, even though she has accepted the fact that he will not return.

In the next line of the same song, Feng makes reference to another famous love affair, that between the celebrated fu poet, Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179 – 117 BC), and his wife, Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 (fl. 150-115 BC), also a talented poet. Whereas the previous allusion to “clouds and rain” is meant to invoke feelings of separation, the allusion to this famous couple signifies a long awaited reunion. Feng writes: “Fortunate it was for [Sima] Xiangru to come to his senses, and pay another visit to his ‘stove minder’” (何幸相如醒悟，再訪舊當墟). The key to understanding Feng’s message lies in the narrative of this love affair: Zhuo Wenjun was the beautiful daughter of a wealthy Sichuanese family who was widowed at the age of seventeen. When she returned home to live with her parents, she fell in love with a


\(^{68}\) The temple is called “Clouds of Dawn” (Chaoyun 朝雲), the daytime manifestation of the goddess.
poor writer, Sima Xiangru. She eloped with him and was soon disowned by her family. The two lovers opened a shop together where Zhuo was in charge of heating the wine. Thus, "stove minder" (danglu 当壠), or "shop minder", refers to Zhuo. When Sima Xiangru later became famous he thought of obtaining a concubine, but Zhuo Wenjun was so enraged at this idea that she threatened to break it off with her husband and it is said she composed a poem, "Baitou yin" (A Song of White Hair) to express her fury. Upon reading this poem, Sima Xiangru was so moved that he returned to his wife.

The circumstances surrounding Mr. Liu’s return to Bai Xiaofan are unclear. Perhaps he had a change of heart like Sima Xiangru, or perhaps his return to the courtesan was a meeting of convenience. As Feng explains in his preface, “the couple exchanged their loving thoughts on the past six years, weeping all the while” (逝六年別意，淚與聲落). In the second half of the third song, the courtesan learns that it was not her lover’s intention to leave her, but no explanation is provided for his absence. While she acknowledges the happiness of their reunion, Bai Xiaofan is quick to inform Mr. Liu of the pain he has caused her: “Tonight we should defer the talk of our joy and love and first we should expound on my sorrow” (今夜裡慢叙歡情，先將愁數).

The fourth song is a continuation of the courtesan’s lament. Feng writes, “I didn’t think that he would leave me alone for so long, I didn’t think that he wouldn’t write a letter for so long” (不道是鶯交久孤，不道是魚書久遞). Though we know that Mr. Liu left Bai to wait for six long years, we also learn from Feng’s preface that he leaves her a second time shortly after their reunion with the promise to meet again soon. In the fifth song, Bai Xiaofan expresses her sorrow at the scene of his departure:
To the tune "River Water"

Unkind Heaven at the time of dawn;
Indifferent boat as it once again hurries away.
I look on helplessly and cannot think of anything to stop Jiaofu.  
I take my recent sorrow and continue on with my past record.
This temporary joy is sent off on a road without end.
If happy, then happy on the order of the eastern wind,
Yet I worry that this ill-fated beauty,
Cannot endure the injuries of former days.

[江兒水]
不做美的天方曉，不知心的舟又促，眼睜睜無計留交甫。把近來愁緒
上當年箇，為暫時歡送上無窮路。喜則喜東風分付，還愁薄命紅顏，
經不起從前擔誤。

Though Feng mentions in the preface that their meeting is brief, it appears from this song
that Liu takes his leave of the courtesan with the breaking of day, hurrying away by boat
while she looks on helplessly. Whereas in previous songs, Bai Xiaofan ardently defends her
lover’s promise to return, the sentiment expressed in this song is one of doubt and
scepticism. Not only is her joy temporary, but it is “sent off on a road without end”. Her
lover has abandoned her before, so she has every reason to question his sincerity.

In the last line of the same song, Biao Xiaofan reflects on the unfortunate lives of
beautiful girls (薄命紅顏) and states, “[I] cannot endure the injuries of former days”. In the
sixth song, however, the courtesan appears to have once again taken her lover’s pledge to
heart and is waiting patiently for his return.

To the tune “Jade Branch"

I stopped singing and dancing
And wait for the mandarin ducks to call “jidu.”
Willing to be a plain-rice thorn-hairpin wife

69 This is an allusion to Zheng Jiaofu 鄭交甫 of the Zhou dynasty (1022 BC-256 BC) who met two
fairy maidens while traveling by the Han River. The tale dates back to at least the Western Han period
(206 BC-9 AD), to Liu Xiang’s 劉向 (79-8 BC) Liexian zhuan 列仙傳 (Biographies of Exemplary Immortals),
but its location does not appear to have been specified then.
I do not envy others' heavy powder and thick rouge.
The way of Dongting Lake is deep enough to make a teary-eyed chart.\textsuperscript{70}
Moli Peak is high enough to block my sorrow.\textsuperscript{71}
Lip-biting teeth tear at mouth's rouge.
I endure the dusk and wear out my embroidered skirt.

[玉交枝]
收羅歌舞，待雙雙飛即都。甘為淡飯荊釵婦，不羨他豔抹濃塗。洞庭湖道深好做淚眼圖，莫鬱高幹只當憂愁堵。咬唇牙
傷殘口朱，耐黃昏磨穿繡襦。

In the first line of the song we learn that the courtesan turns away from her profession and stops taking clients, all in the hopes that she may someday be Mr. Liu's “plain-rice thorn-hairpin wife”. The status of the poorest wife was still higher than that of a famous singing girl and as Bai Xiaofan envisions her future with Liu, she looks down upon her courtesan sisters who adorn themselves with “heavy powder and thick rouge”. It seems as if the lure of wifely respectability was more than enough to fuel Bai's hopes that her lover would return, despite his failure to do so previously. In the second half of the song, however, the distress of uncertainty finally catches up with Bai and her confidence begins to wane. She waits for him by day and by night, wearing out her embroidered skirt and biting her lips in worry.

In the seventh song, Bai Xiaofan continues to express her doubts about Liu's return while her own commitment to their pledge seems as strong as ever. Though her lover may not hold up his end of the bargain, she is determined to remain loyal.

\textit{To the tune “Jade chemise”}

The love of my man was like the morning dew.

\textsuperscript{70} The phrase, “teary-eyed chart” (\textit{leiyantu 流眼圖}), may play on the Confucian idea that rivers at times produce charts with markings on them; usually the omens are auspicious.

\textsuperscript{71} Moli Peak 莫莉峰 is one of the seventy-two peaks on Junshan 君山 island in the middle of Dongting lake 洞庭湖 in Hunan.
Cast aside since that day, our love was doomed to fail.
Why would he seek again his old sword?
Probably because old loves are slow to wither.
From now on, I will strictly observe the Jiantai mandate.
Nights will be long, and my musings many.

[玉抱肚]
想人情朝露，自當時成敗局。為甚的股故劍重求？多應是活念難枯。
從今死守淵台符，良夜迢迢倍揣摩。

In the first line, the courtesan acknowledges that Mr. Liu's affections were short-lived like
the morning dew. His fickleness stands in contrast to Bai Xiaofan's dedication and Feng
uses two allusions in this song to draw out the theme of loyalty between men and women.
When the courtesan asks, “Why would he seek again his old sword?” (為甚的股故劍重求),
she is questioning a man's loyalty to his first love. The “old sword” (gujian 故劍) is an
allusion to Emperor Xuan (91BC - 49BC) of the Western Han dynasty (206BC - 9AD), who
remained loyal to his former consort against the advice of his ministers and elevated her to
the position of Empress once he assumed the throne (referring to her as the “old sword of
my youth”. Henceforth “old sword” came to refer to a former (and first) consort (yuanpei 元
配). In the context of this song, however, “old sword” refers to Bai Xiaofan, an old lover.

Though she hopes that their love will be “slow to wither”, Bai has no guarantee that
Liu will remain faithful to her. He has broken his word of honour before, yet, this does not
deter her from making a pledge to “strictly observe the Jiantai mandate” (守淵台符). This
mandate is an allusion to a terrace named Jiantai 漣臺 in the district of Jiangling 江陵 in
Hubei (which is near the Yangzi river). As the story goes, King Zhao of Chu 楚昭王 left his
wife at this place while he went on a tour and when the Yangzi flooded the terrace collapsed,
causing his wife to drown (because she refused to leave the terrace and save herself).
Because of her unwavering loyalty to the king, Liu Xiang 劉向 (79 - 8 BC) included her
biography in *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (Biographies of Exemplary Women). Bai Xiaofan’s adherence to the Jiantai mandate is thus symbolic of loyalty unto death. It is interesting to note here the double standard for proving oneself. A man shows loyalty by choosing a single woman from among many. A woman shows loyalty by sacrificing her life.

In the eighth song, Liu’s prolonged absence begins to take a serious toll on the courtesan, so much that she finds it difficult to function in daily life: “I cannot speak my mind straightforwardly and in front of others I force myself to act lively” (語言吞吐，向人前精神強扶). She is so distraught with lovesickness that she blurts out Liu’s name unintentionally, incurring the ridicule of others. The ninth song of “Qinglou yuan” represents a turning point in the *sanqu*. Bai Xiaofan has lost all hope that her lover will return for her. When she realizes that she has been abandoned, not once, but twice, by the same man, her doubt turns into despair and despair turns into resentment. Though Feng writes in the voice of the jilted courtesan, her words could easily become his own denunciation of Hou Huiqing: “You will never understand my passionate heart, and once again, as before, [you] are a fickle lover” (一片熱心渾不悟，還依舊是薄倖夫).

Bai continues her bitter lament on Mr. Liu in the tenth song by reflecting on the wasted years she spent in limbo. “I suffered years of neglect from him, and only won a single night of happiness” (受盡他幾年孤苦，博得我一夜歡娛). This single night refers to their brief reunion after six years of separation. But, as Feng writes in the preface, “Liu never did show up” and never made good on his promise to return. “Now, every time I happen to see Xiaofan, she is in tears.” This broken promise inspires Bai Xiaofan to compare her fickle lover to the notorious Yong Wu: “Speaking of the taste of the one I love, he is qualified to be a Yong Wu” (論相思滋味，堪做瘟巫). This is an allusion to a self-serving man who lived
during the Spring and Autumn period (722 BC – 481 BC). Yong Wu 雍巫, also known as Yi Ya 易牙, impressed Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (died 643 BC) with his culinary skills by boiling his own son in a soup and offering it to his lord.\(^2\) The Duke had stated previously that he had tasted many things in his life, but never had the opportunity to eat boiled infant. When Yong Wu complied with the Duke’s wishes, he became synonymous with men who know how to please their superiors. In this particular song, however, the allusion to him takes on a different meaning. Feng’s reference to Yong Wu implies a man willing to hurt the one he loves most in order to get ahead.

In the eleventh song of the sequence, Bai Xiaofan accepts her miserable fate as the abandoned woman, but still wishes to make her feelings known to Mr. Liu. Though her words suggest a sense of closure, the courtesan desperately seeks validation for the suffering she endures, validation from the very man who causes her so much pain.

To the tune “Rowing the river”

He is not one to rely on
And I reckon that our marriage destiny is at an end.
How can I send my humble feelings by ‘flying slave’?\(^3\)
Spreading open letter paper, I first stained it with tears.
When waiting for him, I was so infatuated,
And when cast aside by him, I was so pained.

[原文]
難惡據，算前程已矣乎。寸心兒怎寄飛奴？拂雲箋先將淚污。等他時癡殺奴，撇他時痛殺奴。

\(^2\) This story is recorded in the chapter titled, Xiaocheng 小城, of the book Guanzi 話子.

\(^3\) The term feinu 飛奴, or “flying slaves”, refers to carrier pigeons. This term was popularized by the famous Tang poet and minister, Zhang Jiuling 張九齡 (678-740) who reared pigeons at home. When he needed to send letters to his friends or relatives, he tied the letter to a pigeon’s leg and the pigeon would “deliver the letter to wherever he told it to go” (依所教之處飛往投之). Zhang called them “flying slaves.” This story is recorded in Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi 開元天寶遺事 (Forgotten matters of the Kaiyuan (713-741) and Tianbao (742-756) periods), compiled by Wang Renyu 王仁裕.
Since she cannot rely on him to keep his word, the courtesan’s dreams of “marrying out of the profession” (congliang 從良) are over. Her response to this realization is to write down her feelings on tear-stained paper, and hope that her letter will reach him. In Feng’s lament on Hou Huiqing, “Yuanli ci”, he also wants his fickle lover to understand his pain: “I take these feelings and complain to my esteemed sister” (將此情訴知賢姐姐). As Feng well knows, the anguish of abandonment is being left behind and wondering whether or not your lover knows your suffering.

In the penultimate song of the sequence, the courtesan looks towards a future without Liu and worries what will become of a woman who has wasted her youth on the wrong man.

*To the tune “Good luck”*

I only worry that [my beauty] has withered with the [summer] grass,
And that one less pair of ducks will fly off [this year].
Our secret appointment was for the new autumn,
But autumn is already old.
Every day I ask little sister about my haggard face.

[Bai Xiaofan’s concerns are quite conventional for a singing girl, but also very real. Since she spent six years of her life and career waiting for Liu to return, her days as a famous courtesan are probably over. Broken in mind, body, and spirit, she can only think of the pair of ducks that will not fly off together this year. In realizing that the date of her lover’s tryst has long since passed, she becomes paranoid about her fading looks and seeks daily reassurance from the maid: “every day I ask little sister about my haggard face.”]
As “Qinglou yuan” concludes, Feng returns once more to the allusion of King Xiang and the goddess of Wu mountain, a love affair suggesting permanent separation.

Coda

All over Yang terrace, I will search for King Xiang
And as soon as I see him, I will die [for him]
Thus, winning the reputation of being a woman who defends her honour to the death.

[尾聲]
陽臺邁把襄王募，一見將身命殂，也落得烈性稱呼。

In Song Yu’s interpretation of the story, the king cherishes his encounter with the goddess, but does not actively seek her out. In Feng’s interpretation, however, Bai Xiaofan takes the role of “passing rain” (the goddess) and returns to the terrace of their lover’s tryst. She then waits for the king and offers her life as sacrifice to him, the ultimate act of loyalty. That the courtesan is willing to “defend her honour to the death” is a quality in women that moved Feng greatly and it is no coincidence that he chooses to leave this final impression on his readers.

In fact, Feng was so moved by the courtesan’s dedication that he was inspired to write a play about the couple’s affair. We learn this information from a comment appended to the end of “Qinglou yuan”:

Ziyou later wrote the play, Shuangxiong ji (A Pair of Heroes), projecting Bai Xiaofan in the role of Huang Suniang, and Mr. Liu as Liu Shuang. This play so moved Mr. Liu that he eventually married Xiaofan and thereby got her name removed from the list of courtesans. Who says that a writer’s brush cannot work miracles?

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74 See page 35 for my discussion of Song Yu’s rhapsody.
75 Translation of by Hua-yuan Li Mowry, 33.
Shuangxiong ji (A Pair of Heroes) was Feng's first play and, as Patrick Hanan suggests, was possibly written as early as 1602. This publication date is puzzling because it precedes Taixia xinzou (1627) by twenty-five years, yet the comment appended to the sanqu clearly identifies the play as written later than the sanqu. It is possible that the song suite was composed long before its publication, but the reasons for doing so are unknown. Though the plot of the chuanqi focuses on the misadventures of two sworn brothers, the love affair between Liu Shuang (Mr. Liu) and Huang Suniang (Bai Xiaofan) is central. The courtesan in the play is described as having a "noble and romantic" spirit, an irresistible combination that prompts Feng's real-life friend, Mr. Liu, to return for Bai Xiaofan and fulfill his promise to marry her, removing her name from the list of courtesans. Though the real Xiaofan could not inspire her lover to return, in the end, it is Feng's fictional creation of a woman that succeeds in moving a man's heart. "Who says that a writer's brush cannot work miracles?"

In the second narrative sanqu I will be discussing, "Songyou fangji" (For a Friend Seeking a Courtesan), Feng composes five song suites about the interrupted love affair between his friend, Yuan Shudu 袁書都 (styled Wuya 無涯, dates unknown), a famous publisher, and the courtesan Wang Shengdong 王生冬. Similar to the structure of "Qinglou yuan", this sanqu is also prefaced by an elaborate introduction that narrates the couple's meeting and separation. Feng writes:

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76 Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story, 91.

77 Yuan Shudu 袁書都 was most famous for his 120 chapter edition of Shuihu zhuan 水湖傳 (The Water Margin).

78 Taixia xinzou 5:2.
Wang Shengdong was a famous beauty and no sooner did she meet my friend, Wuya, than they formed an intimate attachment. In the future, they planned to share a long companionship, but Shengdong was compelled to support her family, and by [the time of Wuya's] next visit, she had already been sold to be a courtesan in Yue. Wuya is truly a man rich in feeling. He found out that the house [into which she was sold] was surnamed Hou and determined [the location of] the establishment. That very day he packed his bags and was about to visit her in the Six Bridges Quarter. I have composed this poem to see him off.

In this love story, Feng is inspired by the heroic scholar, Yuan Wuya, a man he describes as being “rich in feeling” (duoqing zhong 多情種) – the opposite of the fickle Mr. Liu. Though his encounter with Shengdong is fleeting, his attachment to her is strong, so much that he sets off to find her after she has been sold to another establishment in Hangzhou, the Six Bridges Quarter (六橋花柳). In “Qinglou yuan” we never learn the reason why Bai is abandoned, but in “Songyou fangji” is it clearly stated that Wuya and Shengdong are forced apart by financial difficulties, specifically those of her family. It is impossible to determine whether or not this burden implies her natal family, or instead the business transactions of her courtesan ‘mother’ (i.e. the madam). Whatever the case, it is likely that the person who sold Wang Shengdong received a generous payment for the famous beauty. Though Shengdong is the inspiration for Wuya’s call to action, Feng speaks in the voice of the heroic scholar in this poem, and not the singing girl who has been sold against her will. Feng admires Wuya for his loyalty to the courtesan, his commitment to their pledge, and his willingness to pursue his love at any cost.

79 The Six Bridges (liuqiao 六橋) are associated with a famous scenic view of the West Lake (西湖) in Hangzhou, called “Spring Dawn on the Su Causeway” (蘇堤春曉).
In the opening song suite the scholar is upset to discover that his beloved is gone.

No sooner did the couple form an intimate attachment (moqi 默契) than the courtesan was sold into another establishment, and by the time of Wuya’s next visit, Wang Shengdong is already on her way to Hangzhou where she will take up residence in the Six Bridges Quarter.

Feng writes:

*To the tune “The Happy Disciple”*

Affairs of the heart are hard to discern;
No hero appeared in the green bowers [to rescue her for me].
Cherished pearl and hidden jade,
Are snatched away in mid-journey.
Oh despair!
The roadside willow is pulled up by its roots.
The wall flower is also moved to another place.
I myself should not have been drawn in by love’s charms,
[But] the sweetness it stirred in me is truly fine,
Hard to give up at once.

When Wuya laments that “no hero appeared in the green bowers” (不見了青樓豪俠), he is alluding to the the Tang tale by Xu Yaozuo 許堯佐 (dates unknown), “The Story of Miss Liu” (Liushi zhuan 柳氏傳), in which a xia 俠 (hero) rescues a beautiful concubine on behalf of her lover, a poor scholar. This is not the only time Feng refers to this tale. In “Shi Ji” 誓妓 (Vow on Courtesans), Feng compares himself to Han Yi 韓翊 – the poor, but talented scholar who is powerless to reclaim Miss Liu from a high-ranking general. In Feng’s affair, it is a wealthy merchant who steals Hou Huiqing and in “Songyou fangji”, Feng projects his friend in the same role of disenfranchised scholar whose “cherished pearl and hidden jade are snatched
away” by some other man. Though Wuya chastises himself for “being drawn in by love’s charms,” he cannot bear to give up the sweetness it stirs in him.

In the second song, the scholar reflects on the bright future he envisioned with Wang Shengdong, a “long companionship” (jiuyao) that could have led to marriage. The lines from this suite as well as Feng’s preface suggest that the couple was only together for a single night, despite the intimate bond they formed. The brevity of their affair, however, is matched only by the lover’s incendiary passion and Feng uses images of flame and fire to play up the intensity of their feelings.

To the tune “Path of Tied Brocade”

I sigh repeatedly;
At that time our bright future was already planned.
I only hoped for a slow and peaceful [life].
Who could have known that fire soon would separate Wu from Yue?
How I miss the happiness of her two smiling dimples;
How I miss the sound of her warbling tongue.
Adorable, from first glance so warm,
I whisper secret thank-yous in my lovely maid’s ear.
Just as our feelings burst into flame,
Who was it that restricted the night to [only] five watches?
It is like at the way station where you must part with [a lover] in such a short moment.

[銘軸道]
自差迭，錦前程當初已設。只指望慢亭枯，又誰知一火兒早分吳越。
想殺喜孜孜笑容兩鬚，想殺您的溜溜聲弄鶯舌。可喜瞥見便親切，
耳根邊向多嬌私謝。情懷正火熱，誰限定五更一夜？似郵亭俄頃易離別。

The couple plans to grow old together and enjoy a “slow and peaceful [life]”, but their new world is soon turned upside down. Feng compares the lover’s separation to the fires of war that divided the kingdoms of Wu and Yue, two powerful states during the Spring and
Autumn Period (770 BC – 476 BC). He then goes on to describe the buildup of their mutual attraction as “feelings [that] burst into flame” (情懷正火熱) after only one night. As Wuya recalls the five watches of their time spent together, he envisions the happiness of her smile, the sound of her voice, and the warmth of her presence: “Adorable, from first glance so warm, I whisper secret thank-yous in my lovely maid’s ear” (可喜瞥見便親切, 耳根邊向多嬌私謝).

The third song suite is full of allusions that suggest the end of an affair, but most interesting is Feng’s allusion to the famous Hangzhou courtesan, Su Xiaoxiao 蘇小了. He writes: “At Xiling Mound, [Su Xiaoxiao is buried, yet still she waits] in varnished carriage with broken wheel; her lovers’ knot has come undone, but the mundane world in which her flower blossomed remains” (西陵畔油壁車輪折，傎同心散卻花結). Su Xiaoxiao, also alluded to in Feng’s preface, was a famous courtesan and poet from Qiantang in the Southern Qi Dynasty (479-502). Feng informs us that Wang Shengdong was “sold to be a Su Xiao in Yue” (鬻為越中蘇小矣), or in other words, she was sold to be a courtesan in Hangzhou, as Qiantang is present day Hangzhou and former capital of the Yue kingdom.

A common story surrounding the life of Su was her affair with a young scholar traveling to the capital to write the examinations. Because he was in a dire state of poverty, Su Xiaoxiao gave the scholar several taels of silver, but sadly he never returned to her after completing the examinations. In any event, it seems that she did not wish to marry out of her profession, preferring to share her beauty with the common people while showing a certain disdain for the wealthy. In her late teens, Su Xiaoxiao developed an illness and died at the age of 19. For more than a thousand years, her tomb was situated beneath the Western

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80 The war between Wu and Yue is recorded in the Wuyue Chunqiu 吴越春秋.
Mound (Xiling 西陵) in Hangzhou before it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). On her gravestone was a quatrain believed to have been penned by the courtesan herself. It reads as follows:

“Su Xiaoxiao’s song” 錢塘蘇小歌
I ride the coach with varnished sides, 妾乘油壁車
My love rides a dark mottled horse. 郎騎青驄馬
Where will we tie our lover’s knot? 何處結同心
Under the pine and cypress of Western Mound. 西陵松柏下

Su Xiaoxiao’s life and works would later inspire the Tang dynasty poet, Li He 李賀 (790-816). Famous for his unconventional and imaginative style, Li He took the courtesan’s quatrain and transformed it into a ghostly apparition, “The Tomb of Su Xiaoxiao” (蘇小小墓). In this reworked poem, the dirt, grass and trees of Xiling mound become the furnishings of a ghost carriage in which the spirit of Su Xiaoxiao waits patiently for her lover to return. In Feng’s allusion to the courtesan, it is unclear to which poem he is referring. Xiling mound is mentioned in both, but in Su’s quatrain it is the place of her lover’s tryst, and in Li’s poem, it is the place of her burial. Su Xiaoxiao clearly refers to Wang Shengdong, a courtesan whose

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82 The full text and translation of Li He’s poem. Translation by Stephen Owen, Ibid., 490.

Little Su’s Tomb 蘇小小墓
Dew on the hidden orchid 幽蘭露，
Is like an eye with tears. 如啼眼。
Nothing that ties a true-love-knot, 無物結同心，
Flowers in mist, can’t bear to cut. 烂花不堪剪。

The grass like the riding cushion, 草如茵，
The pines like the carriage roof. 松如蓋。
The wind is her skirt 風為裳，
The waters her pendants. 水為佩。
The coach with polished sides. 油壁車，
Awaits in the twilight. 夕相待。

Cold azure candlelight 冷翠燭
Struggling to shine. 勞光彩。
Beneath the Western Mound 劍陵下，
Wind blows the rain. 風吹雨。
“lover’s knot” (jié tongxin 結同心) has also come undone, but why has the wheel of her carriage broken down? Does this imply the ravages of time? A woman who will wait for her lover even in death? Or does it suggest the physical evidence of a long journey on the road. Perhaps it is Shengdong’s journey away from Wuya as she leaves to take up residence in a new establishment.

In the fourth and penultimate song of the sequence, Yuan Wuya questions how a love pre-destined by karma could be ended in a single day. The heroic scholar is building up the courage to reclaim his beloved courtesan, but first he must convince himself of their fated union. Had he known sooner of their eventual separation, would it have been better if the lovers never met, or would he have bought Shengdong her freedom on that very day?

To the tune “Ancient Wheel Terrace”

I stamp my feet in vain;
These lovebirds do not yet have a marriage certificate,
And the double star is destined to part before its time.
I have seen the flower house and moon pavilion with their singing and dancing girls,
But more and more I think of my former romance.
Could she be a goddess of love, an immortal beauty?
[Our love] predestined by karma?
One night’s pledge [led to] a brief union.
How could I possibly describe it?
It would be better if we never met each other in the first place.
Had I known sooner that this affinity of three lifetimes,
Marriage destiny of one hundred years,
Would be cast aside in a single day,
How could I have begrudged emptying my coffers [to buy out her contract]?
From now on, it would be useless to speak of jade pestles or Indigo Fields.

[古輪台]
腳空跌，鴛鴦未寫合歡牒，雙星早遇分離劫。見了些花蹤月榭，舞女歌兒，越想我昔時風月。敢是神仙奇侶，前緣宿業。一宵相許暫和協，教我難摹怎寫？到不如不遇時節。早知三生緣分，百年姻契，一朝拋捨，何惜盡囊簪？從今去，蘭田玉杵也空說。
The “double star” (*shuangxing 雙星*) that is destined to part before its time refers to the legend of the Weaving Maid (*qiannü 織女*) and Herdboy (*niulang 牛郎*), two celestial lovers who are separated and only permitted to meet once every year on the seventh day of the seventh month (*qiqiao 七巧*). Yuan Wuya then compares Shengdong to “an immortal beauty” and “a goddess of love”. He returns to the pleasure quarters to seek comfort for his failed affair, but this only serves as a reminder of his former romance. In reflecting on their union of just one night and their affinity of past, present, and future, Wuya declares that he would have emptied his coffers to buy out her contract. But, since the courtesan has already been sold, he remarks that it is “useless to speak of jade pestles and Indigo fields” (藍田玉杵也空說). This is an allusion to the Tang *chuanqi*, “Pei Hang” (裴航) by Pei Xing 裴鈞 (825-880) about a young man who uses a jade pestle and mortar as betrothal gifts to propose to a goddess. The two then enjoy a happy and long lasting marriage. Thus, Feng is implying that it is useless for Wuya to speak of marriage proposals. Since Shengdong is not present to accept, no amount of jade from Lantian mountain (famous for its jade), would secure the couple’s happiness.

In the coda, Wuya declares his intention to seek out the courtesan:

> The wealthy household is like a sea, but in the end, I must follow her there. Having found out bits and pieces [of information], I head towards the Six Bridges Quarter to look for her all over.

[尾聲]
侯門如海終須躥，討得三分枝共葉，拚向花柳六橋覓遍者。

We learn from Feng’s preface that Wuya determined the name and address of the establishment into which Shengdong was sold. It was surnamed Hou 侯, which also carries the meanings of wealth and nobility. In the first line of the coda, Feng writes, “the wealthy
household is like a sea, but in the end, I must follow her there” (侯門如海終須隔). This refers to a line from a poem attributed to Cui Jiao 崔郊 (Yuanhe 806-20, xiucai), “To a servant girl” (Zengqu bi 赠去婢). The speaker of the poem loses his lover when she marries into a wealthy household and it is so difficult to see her again, it is like entering a deep sea (houmen yiru shenruhai 侯門一入深如海). It is very likely that the Hou household that purchased Shengdong was also very wealthy, but we never find out for certain. This narrative, like the love affair between scholar and courtesan, is interrupted before its time. As Wuya heads towards the Six Bridges Quarter to reclaim his lover, we can only imagine the possible outcomes of his journey.

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83 Cui Jiao’s 崔郊 poem and my translation of, “To a servant girl” (Zengqu bi 赠去婢):

公子王孫逐後塵，綠珠垂淚滴羅巾。
侯門一入深如海，從此麋鹿是路人。

The wealthy sons follow one by one;
Green pearls fall [like] teardrops on a woven towel.
The wealthy household is like entering a deep sea;
From now on, this dejected lad is a stranger.
I will now turn my attention to Feng’s popular fiction, specifically two short stories from his *Sanyan* (Three Words)\(^4\) collection that are romances rewritten from earlier source stories. Departing from the expression of private sentiment prevalent throughout his songs, Feng’s anthologies of popular fiction adopt a more didactic approach when extolling the merits of romantic love, especially love between scholars and courtesans. Though “genuineness” (*zhen* 真) is still prized over orthodox Confucian values, Feng requires his fictional couples to endure more rigorous tests of character before they can end up together happily. In his popular and art song anthologies, genuine sentiment is praised indiscriminately for its challenge to the norm, but in fiction, Feng emphasizes fidelity in love as the key to romantic success, especially for women. Men were tempted by wealth and social rank, but could move between lovers at their leisure. Yet, because it was so difficult for courtesans to remain sexually faithful to a single man, a woman possessed of such moral integrity would be praised over any other with only beauty and talent to their name. Was this the missing quality that Feng so desperately sought in his beloved Hou Huiqing? And to what extent did Feng project his own persona into these romances? As we shall see in the following discussion, Feng did not hesitate to cut across gender and social boundaries when sympathizing with his characters, suggesting both a personal and public demand for loyalty and recognition.

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\(^4\) Feng anthologized three collections of vernacular fiction under the common title of *Sanyan*. These collections in chronological order are, *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 (Stories Old and New, c.1620), also known as *Yushi mingyan* 善世明言 (Illustrious Words to Instruct the World), *Jingshi tongyan* 慶世通言 (Comprehensive Words to Admonish the World, 1624), and *Xingshi hengyan* 霞世恆言 (Constant Words to Awaken the World, 1627).
Of all the stories edited and written by Feng, by far the most revealing of his personal anxieties is Feng's revised romance of Liu Yong, a famous poet of the Northern Song dynasty (960-1126). The historical Liu Yong was a gifted lyricist of *ci* 词, a frustrated pursuer of an official career, and the darling of the entertainment quarters - a man with whom Feng could identify. Liu was remembered as a talented but eccentric man whose refusal to conform to 'respectable' society earned him plenty of criticism from his peers. Precisely for these reasons, Feng admired Liu as a man possessed of genuine feeling (*zhenqing* 真情).

Like Feng, Liu spent much of his days in the company of singing girls who adored him for his obvious talents. His sensual lifestyle was made infamous in a sixteenth century popular tale, "The Story of the Wanjiang Tower" (Liu Qiqing shi jiu Wanjiang Lou ji 柳耆卿詩酒玩江樓記), in which Liu is implicated in a sexual scandal. In this earlier source story, Liu allegedly has a courtesan kidnapped and raped because she has refused him sexual service - a vulgar depiction of a kindred soul that Feng found completely unacceptable. In rewriting the Liu Yong romance, Feng defends Liu as a man of good taste and refinement and attempts to repair the damage to his reputation.

In Feng's revised version of this story, "Famous courtesans mourn Liu the Seventh in the spring breeze" (Zhong mingji chunfeng diao Liuqi 翠名姬春風吊柳七), Liu Yong is redeemed and takes on the role of the romantic hero, using his powers as a county magistrate to save a beautiful courtesan and reunite her with her lover. In the earlier source

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85 Hsu Pi-ching, "Courtesans and Scholars in the Writings of Feng Menglong," 40.

86 This tale is probably of Yuan (1279 - 1368) origin but was first recorded in Hong Plan's 洪槩 (fl. 1522-66, *Liushijia xiaoshuo* 六十家小説 (Sixty Stories), compiled under the title *Qingpingshan tang huaben* 清平山堂話本 (1550) (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe; Beijing: Wenxue guji, 1955), juan 1.

87 Feng Menglong, *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 (Stories Old and New, c.1620), chapter 12.
story, Liu is depicted as a heartless brute who orders a courtesan shamed in the most violent of ways, but in Feng’s revision it is a wealthy merchant who takes on the role of villain. In fact, villainous merchants play a significant role in the story and serve to test the strength of a courtesan’s devotion.

Though Liu is the most coveted patron of courtesans in all the land, he reserves his deepest love for the singing girl, Xie Yuying 謝玉英, a courtesan of remarkable beauty and learning. His affection for her, however, stems not from these qualities, but for her ability to recognize his poetic talent. She is to him a zhiyin 知音, one who understands him and appreciates his talents and inner worth. When they meet for the first time in Jiangzhou, Xie Yuying shows him a collection of his own lyrics handwritten in fine penmanship, not knowing that the man who stands before her is the author himself. She explains to him, “These are poems by the gifted scholar Liu the Seventh of the Eastern Capital. I am a great admirer of his poems. Every time I hear his works read out loud, I write them down and bind the pages into volumes”(此乃東京才子柳七官人所作，妾乎昔甚愛其詞，每聽人傳誦，輒手錄成帙). In narcissistic fashion, Liu draws out her praise for him before finally revealing his identity. Upon hearing his confession, Xie Yuying is so overcome with love and admiration for him that she swears a solemn vow to serve him as a wife. When he leaves her eventually to take up a minor post she promises to turn away all other patrons and wait for his return in three years time.

It is during these three years of office that Liu comes across the beautiful courtesan, Zhou Yuexian 周月仙, who falls prey to the machinations of an evil merchant. This villain is the reincarnation of Liu Yong in the source story and is aptly named by Feng, Squire Liu.

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"the second" (Liu’er yuanwai 劉二員外). In Feng’s revised romance, the hero and villain are separated: it is Squire Liu who uses his wealth to shame Zhou into submission and force her to become his exclusive mistress; conversely, it is Magistrate Liu who intervenes on her behalf and uses his own money to marry the courtesan to her lover. In order for Feng to identify so strongly with Liu Yong, it was necessary for him to restore his character’s moral integrity. He even adds a marginal comment stating that his version of the incident is the “authentic one”, and not to be confused with the vulgar “Wanjiang Tower.”

After reuniting the young couple, Liu is moved to recall his own devoted lover, Xie Yuying, and travels back to Jiangzhou to see her. Upon arrival, he is dismayed to discover that she has resumed her old profession and taken up with a wealthy merchant of her own, Squire Sun 孫與君. Feng is quick to point out that this merchant is lacking in literary taste, but lavishes more than a thousand taels of silver on Yuying over the span of a year. This distinction serves a dual purpose: it reveals both the courtesan’s greed and the implication that merchants must pay money for the services of courtesans, a vulgar relationship in the eyes of the author, yet, as Hou Huiqing once confessed, an unpleasant in the case of courtesans.89

Though Xie Yuying does keep her promise for a year and turns away all patrons, she soon runs out of money and cannot afford to cover her daily expenses. The fiscal realities of courtesan devotion required a great sacrifice by the woman. For Xie Yuying to prove her loyalty to both Liu and the author, she would have had to live a life of destitution, comforted only by the thought of her zhiyín’s return. Her physical suffering would validate her moral worth, but this is a test that she does not pass and Squire Sun steps in to fill her financial

89 See Feng’s comments about Hou Huiqing in Shange 4:9.
needs. After a year has passed without any word from Liu, Xie Yuying begins to question his sincerity and is easily persuaded by others to start taking clients again.

Though he has not seen her for three years, Liu is still devastated that she has gone back on her word. In verses reminiscent of those Feng wrote lamenting his loss of Hou Huiqing, Liu composes a ci and posts it on the wall for Yuying to find:

To the tune “Tapping the Wutong Tree”
With lovely dimples and bewitching charm,
Bestowed by heaven a beauty divine,
Tenderly she attended to my needs
Using her artful ways to win my heart.
On parting, she promised to meet again
And pledged to me the rest of her life,
That such fragile feelings might vanish
Has ever since been preying on my mind.

Now here I am, but the house is empty,
Without a sincere word of love.
Goaded by evil counsel,
She broke her word of honour.
I ask Song Yu of Lantai,
Fine poet and man of many talents:
Where is one to turn now for more clouds and rain?

[擊梧桐]
香態源源，姿姿媚媚，雅格奇容天与。
自識伊來便好相承，會得妖顚心素。
臨歧再約同歡，定是都把乎生相許。
又恐恩情易破難成，未免千般思慮。

近日重來，空房而已，苦殺四四言語。
便認得听人數當，擬把前言輕負。
見說蘭台宋玉，多才多藝善詞賦。
試與問，朝朝暮暮，行雲何處去？

90 Song Yu 宋玉 was a famous poet from the third century BC who is supposed to have lived in the state of Chu. Anecdotes about Song Yu portray him as the ideal courtier: a handsome and well-spoken man who was as talented in composition as he was popular with women. Liu, and his alter-ego, Feng Menglong, would have viewed him as a kindred spirit.

These contrasting verses, a common feature of ci poetry, represent the conflicting emotions of Liu’s heartbreak. In the first stanza, Liu pays tribute to Yuying’s beauty and talent, artful skills that first captured his attention. He then goes on to recall the scene of their parting and the devotion with which she pledged her chastity. In the second stanza, however, Liu’s emotions turn to resentment as he contemplates her breach of promise. In the words of his protagonist, we can distinctly make out Feng Menglong’s own voice, harping on the perennial theme of fickle love.

This would have been an appropriately tragic ending to the story, but Feng rewrites the romance in favour of a happy ending and the fickle courtesan has a change of heart. Upon reading the poem left by Liu, Xie Yuying is completely overcome with shame at the realization that he has kept his promise and returned for her. She immediately packs her belongings and abandons Squire Sun without so much as a parting word. Her rejection of the wealthy merchant in favour of her true lover, a talented but unrecognized scholar, represents a sweet scene of vindication for both Liu Yong and Feng. She travels to the Eastern Capital in search of her zhiyin who welcomes Yuying’s return and allows the courtesan to fulfill her original promise to serve him as devoted wife.

The end of the story depicts Liu’s unjust removal from office at the hands of a vengeful Prime Minister. When he hears the news of his dismissal, Liu’s reaction is one of bitter indignation: “All those holding office nowadays are nothing more than benighted illiterates. How can such men be expected to tolerate a gifted poet like me?” Stripped of his official title, Liu withdraws completely from scholarly life and takes up residence in the pleasure quarters. As Feng

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92 Ibid., 219.
prepares to conclude his tale he makes a final effort to elevate Liu Yong’s poetic talent and also to defend his own revisions to the earlier source story. Instead of merely passing away of sickness or disease, Liu is summoned by the Jade Emperor to lend his divine talent to the rewriting of an unacceptable tune. In leaving the world behind him, Liu answers a higher calling of service when he is finally recognized by the ruler of Heaven. Though he dies without a penny to his name, his courtesan admirers all pool their money together to give Liu Yong an honourable burial. On the day of his funeral, the city is blanketed in a sea of white silk as the singing girls descend upon his grave to pay their last respects. The officials, on their part, are overcome with shame at their failure to recognize a man of such great worth.

The theme of recognition (or misrecognition) finds further expression in the second story of our discussion, “Du Shiniang Sinks the Jewel Box in Rage” (Du Shiniang nu chen baibaoxiang). This is another example of a scholar and courtesan romance that Feng revised from an earlier source story; in this case it is a late Ming classical tale by Song Maocheng (1569-1620) titled, “The Faithless Lover” (Fuqing nongzhuan). Compared with the previous tale about Liu Yong in which Feng lends his sympathies to the male protagonist, the story of Du Shiniang represents a reversal of roles, both gender and social. In this story, the famous courtesan, Du Shiniang is morally stronger than the weak-minded scholar, Li Jia, who fails to recognize his lover’s worth.

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94 Feng Menglong, *Jingshi tongyan* 聪世通言 (Comprehensive Words to Admonish the World, 1624), juan 12. Later the story is included in his anthology, *Qingshi leiyue* 情史類略 (A Classified Outline of the History of Love, ca. 1628), under the shortened titled, *Du Shiniang* 杜十娘.

As Yang Shuhui suggests, Du Shiniang is an allegorical *yin* figure, symbolizing the position of a loyal minister who is unappreciated by his lord.96 In sympathizing with her plight, Feng Menglong is invoking the Chinese lyrical tradition of self-pitying male literati comparing themselves to deserted women. With this in mind, it is not difficult to see why Feng goes to great lengths in elevating the courtesan in both moral and political power.

Feng’s renaming of this story represents a shift of emphasis from male scholar to female courtesan. Song Maocheng’s classical tale is entitled, “The Faithless Lover,” which suggests in its highly accusatory tone, a narrative centred on Li Jia. In changing the title of his vernacular tale to “Du Shiniang Sinks the Jewel Box in Anger,” Feng Menglong is inverting the hierarchy of superior male and inferior female by making Shiniang the focal point of his story. Not only does he identify with the *yin* position of the deserted courtesan, but he celebrates the story of her devotion as a model of ideal love.

From the onset of the story, it is clear that the young scholar, Li Jia, is not a man of talent, but someone who has purchased his place in one of the Imperial colleges, despite having never passed the provincial examination. In fact, there is very little mention of literary skill in this story and no exchange of poetry, as in the relationship between Liu Yong and Xie Yuying. Though Du Shiniang is already a famous courtesan when she first encounters Li, her greatest value, as portrayed in this version of the story, is her sincere devotion to her scholar-husband, not her beauty or talent. In the same line of reasoning, Li is not deficient because he lacks poetic talent, but because he loves money and fails to reciprocate the loyalty of his courtesan-wife. It is the couple’s inability to see each other in

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their true colours that makes for one of the most passionate and tragic endings of Feng’s romantic tales.

Though Du Shiniang is the most famous courtesan of the pleasure quarters, she eventually gives in to Li’s untiring pursuit. The scholar, for his part, is immediately taken with her beauty and spares no expense in gaining her favour. At the beginning of the story, Shiniang appears impressed by the young scholar’s attentions, and even more so by his lavish spending on her. As the proverb says, “a friendship based on money will end once the money is spent” (yi li xiangjiao zhe, li jin er shu 以利相交者，利盡而疏), but Shiniang’s devotion to Li seems only to increase with the diminishing of his funds, proving that her affection for him is genuine. The more time the couple spends together, the more deeply in love they fall and eventually they swear solemn vows never to love anyone else.

But, in order to be together as husband and wife, Feng requires that the couple encounter several obstacles. The first of these is Du Shiniang’s lack of freedom. It is no surprise that the mistress does not want to part with her most celebrated singing girl. Instead, she concentrates all of her efforts towards separating the lovers. Li has long since exhausted his wealth in the pleasure quarters and the mistress sees him as a financial liability, monopolizing Shiniang’s time without spending any money. When efforts to shame him away from her establishment fail, the mistress offers to release Shiniang if her scholar-lover can buy her out, knowing full well that he can never afford the required sum.

Though Shiniang has accumulated considerable wealth as a famous courtesan, she places the responsibility on Li to come up with the money, urging him to ask his friends for help. As Patrick Hanan suggests, Shiniang is testing Li’s commitment when she hides her

wealth from him. In order to collect three hundred taels in ten days, Li will have to humble himself before his friends in the name of love. Like the proverb says, “to speak of a loan is to put an end to a friendship” (shuo zhu qian bian wuyuan 說著錢便無緣). Shiniang knows that none of his friends will lend him the money, but she wants to see that her lover is willing to make an effort for the sake of their happiness. Just as she predicts, all of Li’s friends refuse his requests citing various reasons of financial hardship, but in truth, they recognize him as a young libertine who would waste their money on a worthless singing girl. It is not until Shiniang offers to provide half of the sum herself that Li is able to beg a friend for the other half, securing the couple’s freedom.

The contrast between weak scholar and strong courtesan is made even sharper in the scene where Shiniang bids farewell to her courtesan sisters. As a condition for her release, Shiniang must leave behind all of her valuable possessions – the beautiful clothing and expensive jewellery that she received as gifts from wealthy patrons. That she follows him loyally, despite his lack of funds suggests to readers the intensity of her love. Fortunately for Shiniang, her fellow singing girls do not see it fit to send their sister away in rags. The scene of the farewell banquet represents a crucial moment of recognition. Like the courtesans who collectively mourn at Liu Yong’s grave, the sisters of the pleasure quarters pool their monies together to send Shiniang and her lover off in style, presumably to live a happy life of companionate marriage. They celebrate her release from the demimonde as a tribute to her greatness: “You were the chief among us” (shizi wei fengliu lingxiu 十姊為風流領袖), said the

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98 Hanan, “The Making of the Pearl-Sewn Shirt and the Courtesan’s Jewel Box,” 148.

99 Yang, The Courtesan’s Jewel Box, 251.
In recognition of Shiniang’s worth, all of her courtesan friends attend the banquet to provide the couple with entertainment - music, singing, and dance - each taking her turn to honour their sister. Whereas scholar Li’s friends dismissed him as a foolish rake and turned down his requests for money, Shiniang’s sisters bestow upon her generous gifts of clothing, money and jewellery - gifts that she chooses to keep secret from her lover.

As the couple makes arrangements for their journey home, Shiniang doles out just enough money to cover their expenses, never letting on to the true extent of her fortune. Li Jia, on the other hand, is shamed at his financial dependence and is kept by his wife in a perpetual state of uncertainty. In every instance that she produces yet another fifty taels of silver, he is surprised and delighted at their stroke of seeming luck. It is on this fateful journey that scholar and courtesan encounter their greatest test of devotion, once again in the form of an evil merchant, Sun Fu 孫富, a salt merchant from Xinan. When the lovers are on a boat that is docked for the evening, Sun Fu hears Shiniang singing and vows to make her his own. He arranges a meeting with Li and proceeds to convince the young scholar to sell the courtesan to him.

Feng makes several changes to the tavern scene where Li Jia succumbs to the evil merchant. In the original text of Song Maocheng’s classical tale, the anonymous Xinan merchant preys upon scholar Li’s fear of his father and chastises him for his lack of propriety. To marry a singing girl was a very unfilial act and would not make up for Li’s failure to pass the examinations. The merchant warns him against incurring the rage of his father by returning home empty handed. Furthermore, he plants the seed of suspicion in Li

100 Ibid., 256.

101 See Patrick Hanan’s full translation of the classical tale in his article “The Making of the Pearl-Sewn Shirt and the Courtesan’s Jewel Box,” 139-46.
Jia's mind by suggesting that Shiniang is a fickle courtesan who is bound to abandon him in favour of another lover. In the vernacular tale, however, Feng manipulates the tavern scene by emphasizing the role of money – Sun Fu's possession of it, and Li Jia's desire for it. The vulgar transaction of 'money-for-courtesan' is meant to offset the purity of Shiniang's devotion. In the classical tale, the Xinan merchant urges Li to give up his lustful desires in favour of filial duty and offers a "gift" of money as reward. In contrast, Sun "the wealthy" (fu 富) in Feng's vernacular tale proposes a direct payment of one thousand taels for Shiniang. Scholar Li is not persuaded on any moral grounds, but because he fears the financial repercussions of his father's displeasure: in marrying a courtesan, Li would prove "unfit to inherit his family's property" (bukan chengji jiaye 不堪承繼家業). Thus, he agrees to the merchant's offer in order to extricate himself from a difficult situation, accepting the money and betraying his lover in a single transaction.

When Li Jia reveals his change of heart to Shiniang, she pretends to support his decision and willingly boards the merchant's vessel. She then waits for the money to exchange hands before accusing her lover of betrayal and taking dramatic action. Shiniang calls back for her case of personal belongings and proceeds to dump priceless jewels into the ocean to the shock and horror of both Li and Sun. She cries:

I have opened this box in front of all these people to show you that a paltry thousand taels is nothing to me. I had jewels in my casket, but you, alas, had no eyes. Fate must be against me. I escaped from the bitter lot of a courtesan only to be cast aside by you!\(^{102}\)

今日當眾目之前，開箱出視，使郎君知區區千金，未為難事。妾積中自有玉，恨郎眼內無珠。命之不辰，風塵困瘁，甫得脫離，又遭棄捐。

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\(^{102}\) Yang, *The Courtesan's Jewel Box*, 270.
Here Shiniang, and by proxy, Feng Menglong, is invoking the theme of *youyan wuzhu* 有眼無珠, or "eyes without sight", a common lament of frustrated scholars who feel unrecognized by their lords. Shiniang is heartbroken at her lover's lack of devotion, but she is equally guilty of her own accusation: though Li Jia fails to recognize her worth as a loyal concubine, she in turn fails to perceive the weakness of his moral integrity – a character flaw that remains unchangeable despite her repeated efforts. It is their shared failure to recognize worth, good or bad, that leads to the tragic suicide of Du Shiniang, who, after losing the faith of her lover, throws herself into the river and dies. In this final moment of resolve, the courtesan succeeds in upholding her chastity and securing her place above the fickle scholar.
Conclusion

The aim of this essay has been to examine Feng's relationship with Hou Huiqing in light of the ideological and social tensions of late Ming culture. In analyzing his collections of popular and art song, we catch a rare glimpse into the emotional life of a man deeply affected by personal love and loss. In the late Ming dynasty, courtesans became figures onto which scholars projected their anxieties and in Feng's case, Hou Huiqing became his personal emblem of failed love and political frustration. When the couple was still together at the time of *Shange*’s publication, Feng admired the courtesan for her exquisite sense of discrimination. Hou was not only possessed of beauty, talent, and genuine feeling, but she was also able to recognize the inherent value of men, a quality desperately sought after by the literati of the time. In the stifling examination culture of late Ming China, generations of disaffected men sought comfort in the arms of equally marginalized courtesans. The relationships they formed and the love affairs they shared were ones based on mutual recognition.

Though Feng had several lovers before and after his affair with Hou, his break-up with the Suzhou courtesan would be the most devastating emotional event of his life, as recorded in the numerous song suites he wrote about her. The private themes of his *sanqu* emphasize the primacy of genuine feeling, especially where lovers are concerned, but in his own poems to or about Hou, heartbroken rejection leaves the most lasting impression. Whereas he once praised Hou for her financial acumen, his depiction of her in art song is much less flattering. In *Taixia xinzou*, Hou’s infidelity is vilified and her abandonment of Feng for a wealthy merchant is the cause of many sleepless nights. Though he tries to put
her out of his mind, the courtesan comes to him in dream encounters, stirring his emotions to delirious heights. Yet despite his outpouring of sorrow and resentment, which may be judged as excessive by some, Feng takes a stand against the falseness of ‘respectable’ society and succeeds in turning his personal anguish into a passionate celebration of qing.

Feng’s failed affair with Hou left him broken in spirit, but this did not prevent him from writing sympathetically about the lives other singing girls. In the narrative sanqu I discussed in chapter three, "Qinglou yuan" and "Songyou fangji", Feng has written two song suites about the affairs of his friends with famous courtesans. Though lacking in the bitter resentment of song suites about Hou, these sanqu capture the complex emotions of love, longing, and regret. In the figure of Bai Xiaofan, Feng speaks in the voice of the jilted lover, a persona with whom he is familiar. The courtesan is admired for her pledge of chastity, but it is her persistence in loving a man undeserving of her affections that makes Bai a model of Feng’s ideal love. In “Songyou fangji”, Feng speaks in the voice of the heroic scholar, his friend and disciple, Yuan Wuya. Whereas Bai Xiaofan is measured against a female standard of loyalty in love, Yuan is celebrated as a man who is rich in feeling. His affair with Wang Shengdong is remarkable because of his decision to pursue her after only one night together. His devotion to this single courtesan and the intimacy of their bond inspires Feng to narrate their story.

Though romantic love and genuine feeling are the ruling values of Feng’s songs, they do not retain the same importance in Feng’s fiction, where emotional vulnerability gives way to the dictates of Confucian morality. In rewriting romances between scholars and courtesans, Feng sought to address the social concerns of his time by celebrating qing as the inspiration for heroic action. In the stories of Liu Yong and Du Shiniang, the sensuous
experience of courtesan romance is variously expressed as trials of moral integrity, where the temptations of wealth and power serve to expose the unworthy. Women in particular, are held to higher standards of sexual fidelity but could surpass their male lovers in virtue for their devotion to the principle of true feeling.

Though Feng Menglong did not advocate a complete break from the social order, his writings about scholars and courtesans put traditional hierarchies in critical perspective and helped to bring marginalized men and women to the centre of cultural ideals. In a time of great uncertainty and rapid change, his attitudes on love, life, and literary pursuits placed him in a unique position when compared to his contemporaries. Love between men and women was a constant theme in Feng's writings, yet still we know little about the personal affairs of a man who wrote so passionately on the subject of romance. The songs suites I have discussed in this thesis is a starting point in probing the depths of Feng's emotional candour, but further study is needed of Taixia xinzou in order to construct a more complete profile.
Appendix
Translations of Feng Menglong’s Songs

“Many”
In Heaven, when the stars are many, the moon does not shine.
In a pool, when fish are plentiful, the water is not clear.
In court, too many officials disrupt the law.
If sister takes too many lovers, it disturbs her heart.103

[多]
天上星多月不明，池裏魚多水不清。
朝裏官多亂子法，阿姐郎多亂子心。

I once asked a famous courtesan, Hou Huiqing, “as a courtesan, you have known many men, is your heart not confused?” She replied:

No. We courtesans always have our own roster of names. Those who give me extra sums of money are not held up to this standard – but so few are they that I can count them on my fingers: first, second, up to ten. The sequence will be very clear. At times, a man’s affection for me may grow or diminish (as is expressed in gifts that increase or diminish in value), and his standing will rise or fall accordingly. If I happen to get a [man] of extraordinary stuff, there is no harm in demoting someone else to promote him. This is the outcome of my life. I look to this as my guide. I cannot exceed [this measure], and to turn my thoughts towards a different avenue would not be as satisfactory. How could I be confused?

For a long time, I sighed in admiration for her. Although Huiqing’s explanation is master’s dictum, there is another type of person who could remain undisturbed [by so many lovers]. In this world, there still exist people with unwavering appetites for sex and no understanding of the heart. Conversely, the one whose mind can be thrown into confusion is a mediocre maid.104

余嘗問名妓侯慧卿云：“卿輩閱人多矣，方寸得無亂乎？”曰：“不也。我輩胸中自有致案一張，如捐額外者不論，稍堪屈指，第一第二以至十，井井有序。他日情或厚薄，亦複昇降其間。倘獲奇材，不妨黜陟。即終生終，視此為圖，不得其上，轉思其次。何亂之有？”餘歎美久之。雖然，慧卿自是作家語，若他人未必心不亂也。世間尚有一味淫食，不知心為何物者。則有心可亂，猶中庸阿姐。


104 My translation of Feng’s comment is based on Kathryn Lowry’s (2005; 321) translation, but differs significantly on the translation of this phrase, “there is no harm in demoting someone else to promote him” (bufang chuzhi 不妨黜陟). I believe Hou’s use of this phrase is made in relation to her roster of scholar names, though Lowry translates the phrase as, “it behooves me to take a risk”.

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“In Memory of our Separation on the Second day of the Duanwu festival”

Preface:
The sixth day of the fifth month is the one year anniversary of my loss of Hou Huiqing. With each day she recedes further into the distance, and even if I wished we could go back to the way things were last year on this day that we separated, it is impossible. I am so broken-hearted! I was composing verses in my studio when suddenly I finished [composing] a song in the shangdiao [mode]. Where can I find a singer whose voice is so powerful that, if the wind is favourable, this song will reach the ear of my beloved? Alas! Every year I have this day, and every year I am without Huiqing. What need is there for people to tell me how sad this is, for I am already sad?

“Huang ying’er”
Today is the Duanwu festival and the weather is mildly warm,
I calculate that this day is the exact one year anniversary of our separation.
I have felt lovesickness during each of the four seasons,
The pomegranate flower is once again in bloom.
The dragon boats are creating a stir [on the river],
And I again can recognize the scene of our parting.
I am too miserable to speak,
For each new day you recede further into the distance
And my new regrets link up with old sorrows.

“Ji ying’er”
Parted a year is as if parted for a lifetime,
My thoughts are thousands upon myriads of love.
[I remember] your grass-like eyebrows and the flowered pattern of your skirt
were so very loving,
Just like an obscure dream in which we live as husband and wife.
[My] love for you was deep, but my luck was shallow;
I am not worthy enough to be your lover.
In cloistered garden,
Your face is [beautiful] like a peach blossom,¹⁰⁵
But [now] that you are gone] who will sing the verses of our story?

¹⁰⁵ The phrase “Xiejia” 謝家 is a generic name for a cloistered beauty (an allusion to a story about a beauty surnamed Xie, who was kept fast within a garden by her admirer. The phrase, “taohua renmian” (桃花人面) is a reference to the poem, “In the Capital’s Southern Village” (首都城南庄), by the Tang dynasty poet, Cui Hu (797 jinshi):

One year ago today, I stood inside this gate and saw,
A young woman’s face and a peach blossom tree complement each other in beauty.
This beautiful face, I do not know where she has gone,
But the peach blossom tree is as before, swaying happily in the spring breeze.

去年今日此門中, 人面桃花相映紅。
人面不知何處去, 桃花依舊笑春風。
“Yu ying’er”
I imagine you now in red mansions and detached gardens,
Cutting new silk robes and trying them on.
Yesterday the Duanwu feasting began,
But I had no interest in attending the boat races.
How can the three-year old mugwort heal my sorrow and help me recover from this love sickness?
[Seeing] the wusesi every year adds to the misery of our separation.
Who can I blame for hanging the xiuhu in front of my window?
Once again, I am frightened awake by my nightmares.

“Yulin ying”
Do not cut the cattails,
Do not cook the millet,
For on this day,
I cannot swallow [any food].
In my study, I force myself to idly take my leisure,
And casually begin to read “Encountering Sorrow.”
I condole with Qu Yuan
Who could not question Heaven,
Yet I will ask Heaven [my question]. Heaven!

“Mao’er zhu Huang ying”
The clever wife and boorish husband,
How bitter and resentful they are!
But it is especially [tragic] for the talented scholar and beautiful woman not to be whole
And thus, every year on this day my tears stream down.
I am so ashamed
That my unrequited love is absolutely worthless, not even good for half a copper coin.

Coda:
Knowing your happiness and resentment at this moment,
I am overwhelmed by my own despondent feelings and can no longer endure this torture.
I am only afraid that if next year I think more about this day, I will surely go insane.

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106 The mugwort is believed by Chinese people to ward off evil spirits and heal a wide array of illnesses and ailments. This medicinal plant is especially associated with the Duanwu festival when it is the custom for every household to hang the mugwort inside their home.

107 The wusesi is a five-coloured anklet or necklace worn for good luck and protection from evil during the Duanwu festivities. The xiuhu functions in much the same way as the wusesi but it is usually worn by children or hung inside of homes.
端二憶別

[有序]
五月端二日，即去年失慧卿之日也。日遠日，即欲如去年之別，亦不可得。傷心哉！行吟小齋忽成商調，安得大喉嚨人，順風唱入玉耳耶？噫！年年有端二，歲歲無慧卿，何必人言愁，我始欲愁也？

[黃鶯兒]
端午檳統天，算離人恰一年。相思四季都遍遍，榴花又妍。龍舟喧，別時光景重能辨。慘無言，日遠，新恨與舊愁連。

[集鶯兒]
隔年宛似隔世懸，想萬愛千憐。眉草影花曾婉態，半模糊夢裡姻緣。情深分淺，攀不上嬌嬌美眷。謝家園，桃花人面，教我詩向誰傳？

[玉鶯兒]
想紅樓別院，剪新羅成衣試穿。昨朝便起端陽宴，偏咱懶赴遊船。三年艾怎醫愁病痊？五色絲華華添別怨。怪窗外，誰懸簾幕？又早喚醒我睡魔纏。

[羽林鶯]
蒲休剪，黍莫煎，這些時，不下咽。書齋強自開消遣，偶闖本離騷傳。弔屈原，天不可問，我偏要問天天。

[貓兒逐黃鶯]
巧妻村漢，多少苦埋冤！偏是才子佳人不兩全，年年此日淚漣漣。好羞顏，單相思萬億不直半文錢。

[尾聲]
知卿此際歡和怒，我自愁腸不耐煎，只怕來歲今朝想更顚。

“Ci on Resentment at Separation”

“Xiu Dai’er”
 Has it ever happened that one becomes accustomed to the misery of separation? Especially when subjected to this abuse. Can it be that I only took the place where you were lacking a lover, And you were only my fleeting wife?
I slap my face.
Had I known I would incur this unjust debt, would I have agreed to get
involved?
Others curse me for being a young vagrant.
In the courtesan quarters there is no shortage of lovemaking between men
and women,
Yet I have become a foolish soul that longs for a place to rest.

"Qi'er huan"
Wretched sinner;
How can a thousand thoughts tugging at one’s heart,
Pour forth like a wave that rushes down with the current.
There is no sign of tender flattery,
Not to mention skillful attentiveness.
With sorrow in my throat,
By chance I will ask the flying swallow, “Do you miss Wang Xie, of former
times?” 108
In my heart, I am mindful of her feelings,
But to no avail, I remain a young and lonely man who lies awake during the
long night.

"Dashi yin"
When she left, there was nothing to hold her back.
At that time I was half numb [with grief].
I had not offended her with so much as a single word,
So how did she presume
to brush me off with a [parting] glance?
The scent of a briar rose in the end runs to wildness,
And the more I speak of it, the harder it is to forgive such fickleness in love.
I cannot believe that you look upon [yourself] as an ordinary whore, 109
Who would easily bury your peerless pipa out of sight.

"Qi'er"
Oftentimes my inner turmoil is difficult to part with,

108 The phrase, "暫時王謝" is a literary cliche, originating from the famous Tang dynasty (618-907)
poem, "Raven Robe Lane" (烏衣巷) by Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842). The Wangs and the Xies are two very
wealthy and talented families that produced many high officials and talented authors in the Wei Jin period
(5 dynasties). Wang Xie is meant to mean Feng Menglong, a talented, but not wealthy scholar. The
following translation is by Stephen Owen, Classical Chinese Literature, Vol. I: From Antiquity to the Tang
Dynasty (New York: Columbia University Press), 862:

Beside Red Sparrow Bridge wild plants are in flower,
At the entrance to Raven Robe Lane evening sunlight sinks down:
The swallows that once were before the halls of the former Wang’s and Xie’s
Now fly into the homes of the common peasantry.

109 The term, xiaxie 侠邪, carries the meaning of ‘narrow and winding streets’, used of the
districts where prostitutes resided.
And once again I must reign in crazy thoughts and wicked [inferior] schemes.
They say that Zhaojun brought peace [to the empire] when she left to marry another
And the Han emperor [could do nothing] but cast her aside and discharge her.
The fate that brings lovers together, their partings and meetings, all of these
are Heaven’s decree.
If Heaven is willing to tolerate people’s shiftless ways,
Then we would sing out to Heaven one hearty “Yes Sir!”
But since one cannot alter the decree of Heaven, Heaven is ignorant,
So how can it know the bitterness of separation?

“San xueshi”
Suddenly, I think of plans carelessly made;
And of the young Mole who was so gallant and brave.¹¹⁰
It is deceiving to say that “the study of books will earn you a thousand bushels
of rice”,
Because, in comparison, the merchant[‘s wealth] is greater.
I take these feelings and complain to my esteemed sister,
For since our separation, I have become emaciated.

“Qi’er”
There is no end to this unsolved case of lovesickness;
How is it that I spent the better part of my life entangled [in this affair]?
After all, where in books is there a face of jade?
I am filled with such emptiness as I sit before my window and read five
cartloads of books.
I take these feelings and complain to my esteemed sister:
Since we have parted have you become emaciated?

怨離詞
[繡帶兒]
離情憐何曾慣者?特受這個折磨. 終不然我做代缺的情
郎,你做過路的妻妾. 批額. 早知這般冤情誰肯惹? 被人
罵做後生無藉, 青樓裡少甚調風和弄月, 直恁鬼魂靈依
戀著傅舍.

¹¹⁰ Mole 備勒 is the name of the Kunlun slave in a Tang chuanqi, whose ability to scheme on his
master Cui’s behalf enabled him to abduct a beautiful singing girl from the household of a powerful court
official. This chuanqi is authored by Pei Xing 皮錫 (dates unknown) and entitled “The Kunlun slave” (昆陵
奴). For an English translation of the story, see Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and Fantastic,
"Dream of Resentment"

"Da sheng yue"
A beloved for life is difficult to expel from the depths of one's heart,
She is like a golden cangue with a jade lock.
My love betrayed, her honour lacking, I can let her go.
As things are, it is a waste to recite verses [about her].
Besides she is no "state toppler" who cannot be found;
Just a maker of clouds and rain, what worth does she have?
[If] this hateful love in the end bore no fruit,
So I must hold up high the sword of wisdom,
And cut down this love demon.

111 The term qingchengqingguo 倾城傾國 is a famous literary cliché describing a woman beautiful enough to cause the fall of a city or state.

112 The term, huijian 慧劍, is a Buddhist term for the 'sword of wisdom' which cuts through the illusions of the material world.

113 Taixia xinzou, 7:15. Translation is mine, see appendix for full translation.
“Qi’er”
Even if, compared to you, [she were] as unique and rare as the Jade Flower,
Having been plucked [by others], [love] cannot be.
If like you she [swore] she couldn’t forget me amidst flowers by moonlight,
[Her oath] would be sworn in vain, how could it conquer [my heart]?
Well I knew that this [affair] was a banquet that had a beginning and an end.\textsuperscript{114}
Yet I was afflicted with a lingering sickness that knew no day or night.

“Bu shi lu”
Mistake in a dream:
We transform into mandarin ducks and make a nest,
I know that she is a female ghost\textsuperscript{115} on earth and in heaven,
Ha-ha!
In an instant we asked about each other and offered our congratulations;
How lucky you are to jump free from the clear, vast, and bottomless wave.\textsuperscript{116}
Our love like fire,
Our happiness as vast as the sky,
Is broken by the song of a bird.

“Diao jiao’er xu”
Before my eyes is [your spirit], illusory and whirling,
The tip of my tongue is dripping wet with sweet saliva.
Upon my shoulders I still bear the burden of bitterness,
In my mind I fall again into a river of love.
I think of her as a willow that sprouts,
A flower like a bud,
A shadow difficult to grasp,
Wind difficult to tie down,
[A woman] who has spread her net in the bustling marketplace.\textsuperscript{117}
In the past, our meetings were few,
But nowadays my dreams are many.
How she vexes me!
Soul and spirit coming and going,
What a helpless situation!

\textsuperscript{114} The phrase, \textit{guanyanxi} 宫延席, is a large feast to the standards of an official. The phrase, \textit{youtuan yousan} 有團有散, has a literal meaning of "convening and dispersing" so I translate it in this poem as the beginning and end.

\textsuperscript{115} 鬼婆(婆), \textit{guipo (guipopo): HYDCD (12-453A)} gives two meanings for \textit{guipo:} a term of abuse used for Wu Zetian, and in dialect, a term used for a widow. For \textit{guipopo} it has two meanings: 1) a female goddess, 2) a female ghost. The second of the second set of meanings appears best to fit this context.

\textsuperscript{117} The term, \textit{zhangluo} 張羅, \textit{(HYDCD 4-130B):} to spread a net (to catch something). I think it refers to the lady, a prostitute, who plies her trade in the market place. The contexts for this phrase given in \textit{HYDCD} had a mostly negative cast.
"Qi'er"
I made an oath for this lifetime to never think of her,
But who could have known that she would come into my dreams and remind me.
A happy meeting during the day is difficult to seek for,
But how can I avoid this evil lovesickness during the night?
I hate her for leaving without a trace,
And coming without a shadow;
Yet I have grown accustomed to losing face.
Frequently I toss and turn
And this sleepy brother cannot doze off.

Coda
Sweetheart, the way you conduct yourself is so fickle,
And oftentimes your fragrant soul comes [to me in dream] to stir up my sentiments;
I might as well paint her portrait and offer sacrifices to her.

怨夢

[大勝樂]
活冤家難遣心窩，似金枷和玉鎖。恩怨義貎我也須得過，
直恁的費吟哦。又不是傾城傾國無覓處，祇不過為雨為雲直甚麼？此恨終沒結果，誰秦高擎慧劍，斬斷情魔。

[其二]
便比你做賽瓊花獨一無多，被攀折須不可。假如你在花前月下難忘我，也只是空記念怎勝那？明知是有團有散官筵席，反害了無夜無明久病疴。

[不是路]
夢裡差訛，化作鴛鴦做一窠，知他是人間天上鬼婆婆，笑呵呵，霎時相間還相賀，虧殺你跳出清洪萬丈波。情如火，一場歡喜天來大，被鳥聲啼破。

[掉角兒序]
眼兒前恍惚婆婆，舌兒尖淋漓香唾。肩兒上愁擔還挑，意兒中愛河重墮。想他柳如芽，花似朵，影難拿，風難繚，閨市張羅。當初曾少，如今夢多。惱殺人，魂來魄去，可奈他何！
[其二]
誓今生决不念他，又谁知夢中提我？喜相逢白日難求，惡相思夜間怎躲？恨他去無蹤，來無影，慣懐羅。頻跌蹉，瞌睡哥哥。

[尾聲]
冤家做事多顛簸，常把芳魂來料我，索性畫個貞兒供養他。

“Thoughts”

“Ji xianbin”
I am lovesick all hours of the day;
What moment is there when I am not lovesick?
I ask, of past cases, whose lovesickness could possibly compare to mine?
Were she in future to recite a thousand lines of love poetry,
No matter how glib her tongue,
She would not sway my mind in the smallest bit.
From the day we parted up until now,
An excess of tears has stained my gown.

“Qi’er”
Unable to defend myself against soul-startling words [spoken] in a dream,
I use my writing to overwhelm my lovesickness.
Turning my thoughts to essay-writing, I cannot produce a single word,
Everything I write is still a love poem.
Brush and ink, ink stone and paper,
How can you force a person like this?
Even if [my writing were] to win me wealth and gold,
This would not compensate for these words of lovesickness.

“Huang niao’er”
One pair contented in love. I reckon that even Heaven has not been kind.
One pair contented in love,
I reckon that even Heaven has not been kind.
Ready it was to let the two of us die of our love.
The tree leaves have branches,
And the male birds have females.
Old Heaven gave life to me, so why did it give life to you?
Vexation gives way to laughter.
If it were not for the cutting of the lotus root,
How could the threads that keep it together appear?
"Cu yulin"
Although there are romantic debts [to be paid],
And in the Ministry of Dewdrops
There is joy
And there is sorrow,
There has never been a joy and sorrow like this.
I myself cannot understand this strange affair:
When two people whose hearts are as solid as iron,
Who was the magnet that pulled us apart?

Coda
When we suddenly met by chance,
It was Heaven-sent.
If we didn’t see each other even for a short time, I was lovesick.
It is fitting to call you a master adept at controlling the crazy demon of love.

有懷

[集賢賓]
相思一日十二時, 那一刻不相思？問往事相思誰可似？ 演將來有千段情詞。任你伶牙俐齒, 說不透
(我胸中一二。衫淚漣, 從別後到今不次。

[其二]
魂驚夢語不自支, 倩文章壓倒相思。想遍文章無一字, 寫出來依舊是情詞。筆墨硯紙, 你何須逼人如是？便博箋金共紫, 比相思也不償些字。

[黃鸝兒]
一對意孜孜, 算天天也不慈, 忍教兩下為情死。木葉有枝, 鳥雄有雌, 老天生我何生爾？惱還嗤, 不因藕斷, 怎顯得兩牽絲?

[簇御林]
雖則是風月寒, 露水司, 有歡娛, 有怨客, 從無歡怨能如此。自不解希奇事, 兩人兒心堅似鐵, 誰做箋石中磁？

[尾聲]
乍相逢, 如天賜, 些時不見又相思, 合喚你是箋慣治風魔女教師。
“Vow on Courtesans”

“Ji xianbin”
[When] swearing an oath of love before the mountains and sea, who would dare to speak recklessly?
It seems that this failed affair is an abyss [that separates us].
Fruitless skills that dissemble at every turn
Have caused bitter resentment in both of us.
At Zhang Terrace ask Miss Liu, how could His Lordship Li confer her [on his friend Han Yi]?
Having truly been exposed,
She could not stop-up the gossip that leaked out like water in a wicker strainer.

“Huang ying’er”
I am a lonely boat lost in stormy weather;
I am weak and weary from lovesickness, so why do I remain here?
Only because my arms cannot free themselves from the knot of her black tresses.
My former love for the courtesan quarters
Has turned into resentment for flowers and hatred for wine.
In the place where young men gather, I am ashamed to have fallen behind others,
And I beg her to gather in
Her fast falling tears,
And direct them to some other love.

“Yu culin”
From now on,
Our love is cancelled with the stroke of a brush.
Each winter Daphne
Has its own blossom.
In the game of love our three encounters are finished.118
Even if we had the chance to meet again, we cannot be intimate like the days of the past.
I will not hesitate,
Like her, to slip away.
I cannot summon up a river full of sorrow.

Coda
I will pursue, at leisure, this passionate heart [of mine].
A forced intimacy in the end, was only a temporary affection.
I will abandon the rejected bordello and not go there.

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118 The phrase sanhe 三合 has numerous meanings according to HYDC (1-196A), among them: 1) the convergence of Yin qi 氣, Yang qi, and the qi of Heaven; 2) To meet three times; 3) three bouts or rounds (of a contest); 4) The combining of three into one (entity); and other more arcane meanings.
A Courtesan’s Lament

Preface:
My friend, a certain Mr. Liu from Dongshan, had been on intimate terms with Bai Xiao'an. Later the two were separated. Again not too long ago, however, I accompanied him to visit her. The couple exchanged their loving thoughts on the past six years, weeping all the while. It was a short visit, but they secretly agreed to meet again soon. Liu, however, never did show up again. Now, every time I happen to see Xiao'an, she is in tears. Oh, in this world, is there really a man as heartless as Li Shilang? I have thus composed this sanqu for Xiao'an:

“Bubu jiao”
In the lonely autumn wind autumn leaves dance,
And I think of all the sad autumn rhapsodies [ever written].
Time passes in the blink of an eye,
[But] where have you put
The time for our lover’s tryst?
I scratch my head and regret that back then,
I confessed my true feelings to you for no [good] reason.
“Guihua bian nanzhi”
I earnestly think of you and genuinely long for you;
I suffer through the day and suffer through the night.
Although the cold mouths of others ridicule me,
I still earnestly take his side.
Nowadays, this is becoming questionable;
I see before me six wasted years.
What treacherous water or fiery volcano is there,
To prevent the traveler from [coming to me]?
There is no trace of him,
Nor sound.
And were I to seek him in a dream, no dream would there be.

“Liuyao jin”
In hidden room with crimson door,
I lazily open my fragrant trousseau.
Passion has dissipated.
Futile for Passing Rain to think of Chu;
The wandering spirit [still] wishes to encircle Wu.
Fortunate it was for [Sima] Xiangru to come to his senses,
And pay another visit to his “stove minder”.
I hear him speak about his innermost feelings, and it was not his intention [to leave me] after all.
Sweet are the fruits of hardship,
Like grass that has wilted and again revives.
Tonight we should defer the talk of our joy and love
And first we should expound on my sorrow.

“Yuanlin hao”
I didn’t think that he would leave me alone for so long,
I didn’t think that he wouldn’t write a letter for so long,
I didn’t think that he would cross the Peach Blossom Spring again,\textsuperscript{119}
And even less did I think that he would take to the road so soon
And again become a rootless [wanderer].

“Jiang’er shui”
Unkind Heaven at the time of dawn;
Indifferent boat as it once again hurries away.
I look on helplessly and cannot think of anything to stop Jiaofu.\textsuperscript{120}
I take my recent sorrow and continue on with my past record.

\textsuperscript{119} See Tao Qian’s 陶潜 (365-427) famous poem, “Peach Blossom Spring” (Taohua yuan 桃花源).

\textsuperscript{120} This is an allusion to Zheng Jiaofu 鄭交甫 of the Zhou dynasty (1022 BC-256 BC) who met two fairy maidens while traveling by the Han River. The tale dates back to at least the Western Han period (206 BC-9 AD), to Liu Xiang’s 劉向 (79-8 BC) Liexian zhuan 列仙傳 (Biographies of Exemplary Immortals), but its location does not appear to have been specified then.
This temporary joy is sent off on a road without end.
If happy, then happy on the order of the eastern wind,
Yet I worry that this ill-fated beauty,
Cannot endure the injuries of former days.

"Yujiao zhi"
I stopped singing and dancing
And wait for the mandarin ducks to call “jidu.”
Willing to be a plain-rice thorn-hairpin wife
I do not envy others’ heavy powder and thick rouge.
The way of Dongting Lake is deep enough to make a teary-eyed chart.\(^1\)
Moli Peak is high enough to block my sorrow.\(^2\)
Lip-biting teeth tear at mouth’s rouge.
I endure the dusk and wear out my embroidered skirt.

"Yubao du"
The love of my man was like the morning dew.
Cast aside since that day, [our love] was doomed to fail.
Why would he seek again his old sword?
Probably because old loves are slow to wither.
From now on, I will strictly observe the Jiantai mandate.
Nights will be long, and my musings many.

"Yushan gong"
I cannot speak my mind straightforwardly.
In front of others I force myself to act lively.
I cannot help but show my tail when trying to hide my head.
There is nothing to stop the butterflies and bees from calling out to me.
When busy or drunk,
I suddenly blurt out your name,
so I cannot blame others for insulting me.
How can I make excuses?
The drinking and feasting will eventually end and the sun will go down.

"San xueshi"
Our karmic debt gave rise to hate, when will it end?
How many coins must I spend divining [the future]?
All day I desperately gaze into the distance,
But no letter comes; all news of you conveyed [by others] is baseless.
You will never understand my passionate heart,
And once again, as before, [you] are a fickle lover.

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\(^{121}\) The phrase, "teary-eyed chart" (leiyantu 淚眼圖), may play on the Confucian idea that rivers at times produce charts with markings on them; usually the omens are auspicious.

\(^{122}\) Moli Peak 莫釐峰 is one of the seventy-two peaks on Junshan 岳山 island in the middle of Dongting lake 洞庭湖 in Hunan.
“Jiao sancheng”
I suffered years of neglect from him,
And only won a single night of happiness.
Since the day I tenderly saw him off and returned home in shame,
My brow creased [in frown] and has never smoothed.
In vain each morning I praise Buddha and burn incense.
In vain each evening I ask everyone I meet to send my letter [to him].
So worried, I cannot manage.
Speaking of the taste of the one I love,
He is qualified to be a Yong Wu.

“Chuan bozhao”
He is not one to rely on
And I reckon that our marriage destiny is at an end.
How can I send my humble feelings by ‘flying slave’?\(^{123}\)
Spreading open letter paper, I first stained it with tears.
When waiting for him, I was so infatuated,
And when cast aside by him, I was so pained.

“Jiao jiao ling”
I only worry that [my beauty] has withered with the [summer] grass,
And that one less pair of ducks will fly off [this year].
Our secret appointment was for the new autumn,
But autumn is already old,
And every day I ask little sister about my haggard face.

Coda
All over Yang terrace, I will search for King Xiang
And as soon as I see him, I will die [for him]
Thus, winning the reputation of being a woman who defends her honour to the death.

青樓怨

余友東山劉某，與白小樊相善也，已而相違。傾僧子往，
道六年別意，涙與聲落，匆匆訂密約而去，去則復不相聞。
每瞼小樊，未嘗不哽咽也。世果有李十郎乎？為寫此詞。

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\(^{123}\) The term *feinu* 飛奴, or "flying slaves", refers to carrier pigeons. This term was popularized by the famous Tang poet and minister, Zhang Jiuling 張九齡 (678-740) who reared pigeons at home. When he needed to send letters to his friends or relatives, he tied the letter to a pigeon's leg and the pigeon would “deliver the letter to wherever he told it to go” (依所教之處飛往投之). Zhang called them "flying slaves." This story is recorded in *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi* 前元天寶遺事 (Forgotten matters of the Kaiyuan (713-741) and Tianbao (742-756) periods), compiled by Wang Renyu 王仁裕.
[步步倉]
萧索秋風秋葉舞, 想遍悲秋賦。流光轉盼徂, 把燕約鴛期, 置在何所? 招首悔當初, 沒來由便把真情訴。

[桂花樓南枝]
我是真思真慕, 捱朝挨暮。隨他冷口讒朝(嘲), 兀自熱心回護。到如今可疑, 眼見六時負。有甚弱水炎山。做把行人阻。影也無, 風也無, 待向夢中尋夢還無。

[柳揺金]
曲房朱戶, 香窗懶鋪, 風月興全疎。行雨空懷楚, 游魂欲繞吳。何幸相如醒悟, 再訪舊當壘。聽他訴出衷情, 果是原非特故。甘來苦盡, 似草偃重甦。今夜夜慢敘歡情, 先將愁數。

[園林好]
不道是鸞交久孤, 不道是魚書久逋, 不是桃源重渡, 更不道便登途, 更不道又漂浮。

[江呑水]
不作美的天方曉, 不知心的舟又促, 眼睜睡無計留交甫。把近來愁織上當年篳, 為靜時歡送上無窮路。喜則喜東風分付, 還愁薄命紅顏, 經不起從前擔誤。

[玉交枝]
收羅歌舞, 待雙雙飛即都。甘為淡飯荊釵婦, 不羨他豔抹濃塗。洞庭湖道深好做淚眼圖, 莫擬峰高復只當愁啫。唾脣牙傷殘口朱, 耐黃昏磨穿織繰。

[玉抱肚]
想人情朝露, 自當時成敗局。為甚的劍重求? 多應是活念難枯。從今死守漸台符, 良夜迢迢倍揣摩。

[玉山供]
語言吞吐, 向人前精神強扶。不禁支露尾藏頭, 沒遮欄蝶喚蜂呼。忙中醉裡, 猛可的名兒錯呼, 論不得人譴侮。怎支吾? 酒筵將散日將哺。
Wang Shengdong was a famous beauty and no sooner did she meet my friend, Wuya, than they formed an intimate attachment. In the future, they planned to share a long companionship, but Shengdong was compelled to support her family, and by [the time of Wuya's] next visit, she had already been sold to be a courtesan in Yue. Wuya is truly a man rich in feeling. He found out that the house [into which she was sold] was surnamed Hou and determined [the location of] the establishment. That very day he packed his bags and was about to visit her in the Six Bridges Quarter. I have composed this poem to see him off:

“Yanzi le”
Affairs of the heart are hard to discern;
No hero appeared in the green bowers [to rescue her for me].
Cherished pearl and hidden jade,
Are snatched away in mid-journey.
Oh despair!
The roadside willow is pulled up by its roots.
The wall flower is also moved to another place.
I myself should not have been drawn in by love’s charms,
[But] the sweetness it stirred in me is truly fine,
Hard to give up at once.

“Jinchan dao”
I sigh repeatedly;
At that time our bright future was already planned.
I only hoped for a slow and peaceful [life].
Who could have known that fire soon would separate Wu from Yue?
How I miss the happiness of her two smiling dimples;
How I miss the sound of her warbling tongue.
Adorable, from first glance so warm,
I whisper secret thank-yous in my lovely maid’s ear.
Just as our feelings burst into flame,
Who was it that restricted the night to [only] five watches?
It is like at the way station where you must part with [a lover] in such a short moment.

“Putian le”
At Wuling stream,
You can pass through [on entrance] but [upon your return] the stream dries up;\(^{124}\)
Midst smoke at Chu Terrace,
Passion was quenched.\(^{125}\)
At Xiling Mound, [Su Xiaoxiao is buried, yet still she waits] in varnished carriage with broken wheel;
Her lovers’ knot has come undone, but the mundane world in which her flower blossomed remains.
I blame he who
By some lucky chance stole perfume, pilfered jade.

“Guluntai”
I stamp my feet in vain;
These lovebirds do not yet have a marriage certificate,
And the double star is destined to part before its time.
I have seen the flower house and moon pavilion with their singing and dancing girls,
But more and more I think of my former romance.
Could she be a goddess of love, an immortal beauty?
[Our love] predestined by karma?
One night’s pledge [led to] a brief union.

\(^{124}\) See Tao Qian’s 陶潜 (365-427) famous poem, “Peach Blossom Spring” (Taohua yuan 桃花源). At Wuling stream (武陵溪), a fisherman discovers the entrance to utopia, but upon his return, he cannot find his way back.

\(^{125}\) This refers to the love affair between the goddess of Wushan (巫山神女) and King Huai of Chu.
How could I possibly describe it?
It would be better if we never met each other in the first place.
Had I known sooner that this affinity of three lifetimes,
Marriage destiny of one hundred years,
Would be cast aside in a single day,
How could I have begrudged emptying my coffers [to buy out her contract]
From now on, it would be useless to speak of jade pestles or Indigo Fields.

"Coda"
The wealthy household is like a sea, but in the end, I must follow her there.
Having found out bits and pieces [of information], I head towards the Six Bridges Quarter to look for her all over.

送友訪伎

王生冬，名姝也，與余友無涯氏，一見成契。將有久要，而冬迫於家累，比再訪，已鑿為越中蘇小矣。無涯氏固多情種，察其家侯姓，並其門巷識之，刻日治裝，將詣之六橋花柳中，詔以送之。

[顏子樂]
心事好難說，不見了青樓豪俠，懷珠藏壁，一似半途遭劫。傷嗟，路柳和根拔了，隔牆花又向別處移接。自不合把風流味惹，惹下些甜頭正美，難便割絕。

[錦繡道]
自差迭，錦前程當初已設。只指望慢寧帖，又誰知一火兒早分吳越。想殺喜孜孜笑容兩齧，想殺您的淒淒聲弄鶯舌。可喜瞥見便親切，耳根邊向多嬌（女）私謝。情懷正火熱，誰限定五更一夜？似郵亭俄頃已離別。

[普天樂]
武陵溪，通還竭；楚台煙，興還滅。西陵謁游壁車輪折，俏同心散卻花結。風塵尚且怪前人，甚福把香盃玉竊。

[古輪台]
腳空跌，鴛鴦未寫合歡牒，雙星早遇分離劫。見了些花樓月榭，舞女歌兒，越想我昔時風月。敢是神眷仙姝，前緣宿業。一宵相許暫和協，教我難摹怎寫？到不如不
遇時節。早知三生緣分，百年姻契，一朝拋捨，何借盡囊箋？從今去，藍田玉杵也空說。

[尾聲]
侯門如海終須躋，討得三分枝共葉，拋向花柳六橋覓過者。
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