

SURFACES AND SOLIDS: DECORATIVE OBJECTS, PEOPLE, AND TEXTUAL  
READING OF WU WEIYE'S *SPRING IN MOLING*

by

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(Under the Direction of Karin Myhre)

ABSTRACT

Wu Weiye's *Spring in Moling* is one of the sixteenth and seventeenth century classical Chinese plays deserving thorough reevaluation. Set during a dynastic transition, this play takes as its main thread the romance between two lovers. More importantly, the complexity and depth of this work surpass period literary conventions. In attempting to explore the creative intricacies of this play, this thesis focuses on the significance of four decorative objects in historical and cultural context – the Khotan jade cup, the precious mirror, the rubbings of Jin and Tang dynasties, and the scorched-tail pipa. In particular, the confusion caused by discrepancies between the surfaces and the solids of these decorative objects is explored.

INDEX WORDS: Surfaces, Solids, *Ren*, *Shen*, Wu Weiye, *Spring in Moling*

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## INTRODUCTION

When considering sixteenth-seventeenth century Chinese romantic dramas, it becomes clear that Wu Weiye's 吳偉業 (1609-1671) *Spring in Moling* 秣陵春 merits a closer inspection. Completed during the transition between the Ming and Qing dynasties, this play is Wu's most complicated and profound literary creation. In this play, built upon historical events and figures, Wu creates a world filled with miracles and fantasies developed around four signature decorative objects.

Set in the transitional period between the Southern Tang 南唐 (937-975) and Song 宋 (960-1279) dynasties, this forty-one act play takes as its central thread the romance between Xu Shi 徐適, the son of deceased Southern Tang official Xu Xuan 徐鉉, and Huang Zhanniang 黃展娘, the daughter of General Huang Ji 黃濟 and the niece of the Southern Tang Emperor Li Yu 李煜 (937-978) and his imperial consort Huang Baoyi 黃保儀.<sup>1</sup> The plot features a match arranged by marriage affinity in the heavenly world. This match has its impetus when Zhanniang sees Xu Shi's image in the Khotan jade cup 于闐玉杯, which Xu exchanges for the Huang family rubbings of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361) and Zhong You 鐘繇 (151–230).<sup>2</sup> Immortal Geng 耿先生 in the heavenly world converts the “Yiguan” precious mirror 宜官寶鏡 (a treasure of the

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<sup>1</sup> Emperor Li of Southern Tang Dynasty is also known as “The last ruler Li” 李後主.

<sup>2</sup> Wang Xizhi: a calligrapher traditionally referred to as “the sage of calligraphy” 書聖, who lived during the Jin Dynasty. He is considered as one of the most esteemed Chinese calligraphers of all time. Zhong You: a calligrapher and politician who lived in the late Eastern Han Dynasty.

Huang family) into a spirit and guides Zhanniang's disembodied soul to rush to Luoyang 雒陽.<sup>3</sup> There Xu Shi seeks his fortune after he takes leave of Jinling 金陵.<sup>4</sup> In Luoyang, Xu Shi pays a visit to a family friend Dugu Rong 獨孤榮 and lends him one set of rubbings. Once in his possession, Dugu refuses to return the rubbings to Xu Shi and evicts him forcibly. Feeling disappointed, Xu obtains the precious mirror as a gift and discovers Zhanniang's image in the mirror. Assisted by Zhanniang's deceased family, Xu and Zhanniang consummate their marriage in the immortal world.

In the midst of these events, Xu Shi assists Emperor Li in defeating his enemy, Liu Chang 劉鋹 (942-980) (who is also a ghost) in the immortal world.<sup>5</sup> Afterwards, Xu Shi and Zhanniang return to the mortal world, bringing along with them the scorched-tail pipa 燒槽琵琶. One day Zhen Qi 真琦, the neighborhood wastrel, and Musician Cao 曹善才 who served in Emperor Li's court, hear Zhanniang's pipa playing and identify the sound as that of a lost pipa from the coffer of the Song dynasty. During a subsequent raid by imperial guards, Xu Shi is arrested for stealing the pipa from the treasury. Zhanniang's disembodied soul is frightened away and returns to her home in Jinling thereafter reintegrating with her physical form, which had been resting bedridden. Xu's friend Cai Keqing 蔡客卿, who serves as the judge of Xu's case, helps Xu win his freedom. Xu composes an impressive pipa-themed essay – the Song emperor

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<sup>3</sup> Immortal Geng: lived in the region of present-day Nanjing during the Southern Tang dynasty, in which her father served as a high-ranking official. She exhibited intelligence in reading and writing and was knowledgeable about Taoist magic arts of subduing ghosts or alchemy. See *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women, Volume II: Tang through Ming 618-1644*, ed. Lily Xiao Hong Lee and Sue Wiles. (Hongkong: University of Hong Kong Libraries Publications), 81.

<sup>4</sup> Jinling: in present day as Nanjing 南京 in Jiangsu 江蘇 province. It was also known as Moling 秣陵 since the Qin dynasty (221 BC - 206 BC). Jinling was the capital of the Southern Tang dynasty.

<sup>5</sup> Liu Chang: originally known as Liu Jixing 劉繼興. He was the fourth emperor of Southern Han 南漢 (917-971) during imperial China's Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms 五代十國 period, reigning from 958 until his country was annexed by the Song army.



was so taken with it that he selected Xu as a *zhuangyuan* 狀元 scholar.<sup>6</sup> After Xu reunites with Zhanniang in Jinling, the two encounter Musician Cao in Emperor Li's shrine. Suddenly, Emperor Li, Baoyi, Immortal Geng, and his retinue appear in the shrine. In looking back upon the people and events from the previous dynasty, the play comes to an end.

In Hua Wei's article about the commentary of *The Peony Pavilion* 牡丹亭,<sup>7</sup> she raises a question: "How dangerous can the peony be?"<sup>8</sup> in order to draw attention to the appreciation of sensual passion. In the late Ming period, an increasing number of playwrights were especially keen on employing decorative objects – such as hairpins or mirrors – in their works to link the protagonists and to interweave their plots. Considering the cultural milieu of late Ming society, it is not coincidental that Wu Weiye tends to depict people's obsession with objects. It follows, then, that we take Hua Wei's lead when reading Wu's play and ask, "How dangerous can an object be?" Similarly, we might ask, "Is it really dangerous, and if so, for whom?"

Although Wu does emphasize and thematize objects in ways that are common in that period, he also moves beyond many conventions of his era, using objects in an overarching way throughout the play in a way that infused originality into the narrative. Of note, the features of those decorative objects not only reflect the specific cultural milieu, but also allude to the playwright's deep inner reflections. To most thoroughly display the playwright's mentality in the context of his time, this thesis primarily takes inspiration from and integrates the following

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<sup>6</sup> *zhuangyuan*: refers to the scholar who achieved the highest grade on highest level of the Chinese imperial examinations.

<sup>7</sup> *The Peony Pavilion*: written by the Ming Dynasty playwright Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1616) in 1598. It is the most popular play in Ming dynasty and emphasizes the power of human desire (or *qing*, sentiment). This play focused on the love story between Bridal Du 杜麗娘 and Liu Mengmei 柳夢梅, taking as the narrative thread that Du dies of the attachment to the young scholar in her dream, her soul drifts around to meet with Liu and asks him to exhume her body from the grave. After her resurrection, two lovers consummate their marriage at the end of this play.

<sup>8</sup> Hua Wei, "How Dangerous Can the 'Peony' Be? Textual Space, 'Caizi Mudan ting,' and Naturalizing the Erotic Author(s)" *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 69, no.2 (2006), 741-762.

recent scholarly pieces: Jonathan Hay's analysis of the "surface" of decorative objects, which provides new angles from which to ruminate over the value of objects; Tina Lu's argument concerning the "surfaces" and "solids" in Chinese drama, examining from an interdisciplinary research perspective;<sup>9</sup> Judith Zeitlin's interpretation of "intermediate zone,"<sup>10</sup> which delves into the fantastic literature in the Qing Dynasty. Furthermore, concerning the decorative objects in this play, Tina Lu and Dietrich Tschanz's work provide me with not only the thought-provoking insights but also the substantial materials, which greatly facilitate the process of my research.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having their own characteristics, the four signature objects in this play share in common a "surface": the surface of the wine in the jade cup, the reflective surface of the precious mirror, the rubbings, and the sound of the scorched-tail pipa (with its sound as the "surface"). In this sense, they are all equipped with the capacity to connectively "think with" people.<sup>12</sup> More precisely, they can shape the beholders themselves. Furthermore, in replacing the objects with people, the "surface and solid" relationship is used as a means through which to explore how people interact with society – that is, through this model, we are better enabled to discover the relationship between "what others think we are" and "what we really are" (the surface and the solid, respectively). By extension, it facilitates our examination of how easily

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<sup>9</sup> Tina Lu, "Solids and Surfaces in Chinese Drama," YouTube video, 3:54-58:00, from a lecture televised by UC Berkeley on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011, posted by "UC Berkeley Events," November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJ7TOR-58fU>. Lu begins her lecture with the discussion about the decorative objects, then explores the issue of "surfaces" and "solids" in not only literary area but also economic, ideological, history fields of late-Ming period.

<sup>10</sup> Judith Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 185.

<sup>11</sup> Dietrich Tschanz, "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)." PhD diss., Princeton University, 2002. Tschanz's work offers a detailed interpretation of four signature objects in *Spring in Moling*. Also, he divides these objects into three groups, introduces their different functions in overarching the play, and infuses them with specific meanings, respectively.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: the Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 61.

people do or do not change their surfaces. And finally, through reading Wu's play, we question: how much solid truth we can gain from the textual surface?

This thesis offers an examination of these questions by focusing on one object in each chapter, respectively. In chapter one, which narrates the fantastic experience of Zhanniang seeing Xu Shi's image in the jade cup, a detailed re-examination will be provided to demonstrate the affective potential of the surface appealing to its beholders. Chapter two focuses on the experience of Zhanniang's disembodied soul as it follows the mirror and becomes stranded in the mirror. Additionally, chapter two gives an interpretation of the evocative power of the precious mirror and thus explores how this mirror constructs real and unreal, a recurring topic throughout the play. In chapter three, centering on the rubbings, Xu Shi's experiences in the heavenly world reaffirm the boundary between real and unreal. Beyond that, in chapter four, the symbolism of the pipa highlights the border between real and unreal, and the border is stabilized and spatialized by Emperor Li's shrine. Moreover, Musician Cao's final abode epitomizes the literati's ideal dwelling in the transitional period when confronted with mental conflicts. The thesis will conclude with a reversed analytic perspective: What if people are treated as objects and are observed by the other people (i.e., the society)? With the portrayal of two villains, Dugu Rong and Zhen Qi, it is made clear that people also have "surfaces". Moreover, in terms of textual reading, can the "surface" also be reminiscent of the reading experience? How much truth we can gain from the textual surface of this play? How dangerous would it be if we are incapable of differentiating the surface (in our eyes and minds) from the solid?

Wu Weiye was born in Taicang 太倉.<sup>13</sup> During the Ming dynasty, he was granted a *Jinshi* 進士 degree in 1631 and selected for an Academician Compilation in *Hanlin* Academy 翰林院. In Southern Ming 南明 he was granted the position of Vice Supervisor of the Household of the Heir Apparent.<sup>14</sup> Shortly thereafter, he took a leave and returned home due to discordance among the people who held high posts at court. After the period of dynastic transition, he initially refused to take any post in Qing court until 1653. Pressured by the Qing authorities as well as urged by his relatives and friends, he agreed to serve the new dynasty and was subsequently appointed Chancellor of the Commission for Education. In 1657, he excused himself from court life as a result of his mother's illness. He then spent the rest of his days leading a secluded existence until his death.

During the Ming dynasty, Wu's family was one of the most prominent scholarly families in Jiangsu area. Under this circumstance, Wu achieved great success in his career at an early age. Admiring of Wu's talent, the Chongzhen Emperor propelled his career with unwavering support. However, this public fame brought Wu a series of troubles: not long after the palace examinations, Wu was accused of obtaining his degree by fraudulent means. At this point, the Chongzhen Emperor himself reviewed Wu's examination papers, exonerated him from the fraud charges, and spoke highly of Wu's work: "[the theme is of] profoundness and elegance; [the writing] is flowery and graceful."<sup>15</sup> 正大博雅，足式詭靡 Later on (1638), Wu was dragged into

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<sup>13</sup> Taicang: a county-level city in Suzhou, which has been known for its profound cultural heritage.

<sup>14</sup> Southern Ming (1644-1662) was a loyalist movement regime that was active in southern China following the Ming dynasty's collapse in 1644. Loyalists fled to Nanjing, where they enthroned the Prince Fu. The Nanjing regime lasted until 1645, when the Manchu captured Nanjing. Later on, a series of princes held court in various southern Chinese cities.

<sup>15</sup> Feng Qiyong 馮其庸 et al., eds. *Wu Meicun nianpu* 吳梅村年譜 (Wu Meicun's biographical chronicle) (Nanjing: Jiangsu classics publishing house, 1990), 42.

a factional strife upon showing sympathy to Huang Daozhou 黃道周 (1585-1646),<sup>16</sup> who criticized the Chongzhen Emperor for his credulity and bias toward certain officials. After Huang was exiled, with the exception of Wu Weiye, everyone involved in this incident were severely demoted. Hence, Wu's lifelong commitment to the Chongzhen Emperor can most likely be traced back to these events, although his commitment could also be at least partially attributed to his family's rich academic tradition throughout the Ming dynasty.

A sudden turn of domestic events played a significant role in negatively altering the course of Wu's life: the nation's fall and the Chongzhen Emperor's suicide. Wu at first resolved to keep his loyalty to Chongzhen by aspiring to recover lost territory through continuous service under the Southern Ming court. Unfortunately, his plan was ruined by not only the decline of the Southern Ming government but also the increasingly dominant power of Qing authorities. Shortly thereafter, the new regime sought to capitalize on Wu's renown (particularly among literati and scholars), pressured him to serve. As a result, Wu's regret over Ming's collapse and his failure to secure allegiance tormented him until the end of his life. *Spring in Moling* was written right before he determined to serve under the Qing dynasty. In this sense, this play cannot be understood in the simple capacity that it seems to display. In the preface he wrote for Zou Shijin's 鄒式金 *Three Collections of Zaju* 雜劇三集:

I believe that all songs have their own truth: the ways of the world are long drawn-out, human life appears to be like a dream, and the whole life seems to be upside down, [in this case] who can distinguish between unreal and real? As for stage performances, call it unreal, but it somewhat looks like real; call it real, but it is indeed unreal. [To find enlightenment] amidst the real and the unreal, the

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<sup>16</sup> Huang Daozhou: a scholarly official in the Ming Dynasty. He was known for providing candid advices to the Emperor Chongzhen so that made the emperor unpleasant quite often. As a result, Huang was demoted and sent to prison. In his late years, he volunteered to fight the Manchurian invasion. He was captured and then killed by the Manchurian army due to his refusal to surrender.

ultimate realization of the Zen school lies in this.<sup>17</sup> Only someone who attains this enlightenment can discuss about this [with me].

余以為曲亦有道也：世路悠悠，人生如夢，終身顛倒，何假何真？若其當場演劇，謂假似真，謂真實假，真假之間，禪家三昧，惟曉人可與言之。<sup>18</sup>

His viewpoint is reaffirmed in the preface of *Spring in Moling*:

I have been staying at home idle and gloomy, in my heart I feel gloomy and depressed; walking back and forth, I am overwhelmed by yearning. It sometimes appears that I can make out with my eyes what I am longing for; and it seems that I might be able to step [into this unreal] with my feet as if it actually exists. If this unreal actually exists, this is why I kept chanting and then compose this play. Does this play really have a deep implication or not? Even I myself do not know about this.

余端居無憀，中心煩懣，有所徬徨，感慕髣髴，庶幾而將遇之，而足將從之，若真有其事者，一唱三歎，於是乎作焉。是編也，果有託而然耶？果無託而然耶？即余亦不得而知也。<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, in Wu's play, we see evidence of his inner emotions displayed throughout the text, which is consistently "availed by singing, shouting, laughing, and scolding of the people in the past, vents my (i.e., the playwright) own feelings of ennui and indignation in breast." 借古人之歌呼笑罵，以陶寫我之抑鬱牢騷 as he wrote in the preface of Li Yu's 李玉 (c. 1610-1671)

*The Expanded and Corrected Formulary of Northern Songs*. 北詞廣正譜<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Zen school: a school of Mahayana Buddhism, which developed in China during the Tang dynasty as Chan. Zen emphasizes rigorous meditation practices, insights into Buddha nature, and personal understandings of this insight in daily life.

<sup>18</sup> Wu, Weiye, *Wu Weiye's Collected Works* (Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1990), 1212.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 728.

<sup>20</sup> Wu, *Wu Weiye's Collected Works*, 1213.

## CHAPTER 1

### JADE CUP: SURFACES, SOLIDS, AND IMAGE

The Khotan jade cup is the first signature object to be introduced into the plot, and it plays a significant role in the development of Xu Shi and Huang Zhanniang's romance. Xu inherits this exquisite and priceless heirloom from his father Xu Xuan and trades it in (along with his Yiguan mansion) for Zhanniang's rubbings that can equally be seen as hereditary treasure in the Huang family. Also, it brings fantastic elements to the play that Zhanniang mysteriously encounters with a young man's image when she tries to drink from the jade cup. In this sense, the jade cup deserves a thorough examination. Yet, before focusing on the scene in which Zhanniang sees Xu Shi's image in the jade cup, we will engage in a close analysis of this jade cup. Hence, the initial thrust of the following paragraph will focus on the roles played by the decorative objects themselves within the story, with an exploration and character study of the protagonists to follow thereafter.

In Ming-Qing China, appreciating decorative objects is "an effort of self-fashioning" because these objects ought not to be regarded as merely passive and inanimate.<sup>21</sup> Put another way, they are equipped with the affective capacity to interact with the beholders. Jonathan Hay argues:

[The decorative object] is not constituted by simply passive objects, produced and used by human beings as the subjects who make art history. On the contrary, it is

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<sup>21</sup> Hay, *Sensuous surfaces*, 40; for "self-fashioning," see also Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 1-3.

part of the modern understanding of luxury that decorative objects have an effect on the beholder – they impress, dazzle, beguile, seduce, and stimulate envy. But they are characterized as doing so in the service of social processes that are not specific to decoration...In the process it has demonstrated that the visual structures of decorative objects were coded to embody the socialized nature of vision.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, in what way do decorative objects affect and shape human minds? In juxtaposing the objects and people, Hay brings up a pair of notions – *ren* and *shen* – to elaborate their corresponding subjectivities:

[This subjectivity] involved a tension between two competing pulls. When the individual subject defined himself or herself consciously or unconsciously as a person *ren* 人, (s)he evoked the networked self that resulted from the constant need to locate oneself within a web of hierarchical relationships, involving family, friends, profession and the state. *ren* personhood centrally involved responsibility: it was the part of subjectivity that, in a sense, did not belong to the individual.<sup>23</sup>

And yet, “people were not only persons (*ren*), they were also individuals (*shen* 身, literally, ‘bodies’),” including desire, love, pleasure, pain, and many others. In this circumstance, when people appreciate the decorative objects: on the one hand, the decorative objects can bring forth the *ren* sense within people: “[decorative objects turn] the residential interior into a constant reminder of the individual’s responsibilities to the collective, beginning with the immediate family, and vice versa. The hierarchical relations of scale and position in arrangements of furniture and other objects were one way of moulding the domestic environment in this direction.”<sup>24</sup> For instance, “the projecting elements and large size of high-status chairs drew attention, contrasting with the simplicity of the stools used by the less important (or more deferential) people in attendance, who might also remain standing.”<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the luxury or decorative elements of those objects have more to do with fashioning people in the

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<sup>22</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 61.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



*shen* sense. Rather, they speak to “the opposing pull of subjectivity towards personal psychophysical agency as the part of the person that escaped the networked self...Luxury spoke to people’s capacity for a relative psychic autonomy and self-determination, constrained as this was by the competing demands of the networked self.”<sup>26</sup>

In addition, the dynamic between luxury of the decorative objects and the beholders is not unidirectional. Since people’s aesthetic need for the decorative objects have already been addressed by many scholars, the center of our attention should be placed on how the objects need people. For example, if one is confronted with a decorative object – say the jade cup, due to its culturally representative role among many valuable antiques in Chinese history – one will certainly be impressed by its smooth surface which seems to possess a sheen of gloss, its rim on top flaring out like a flower, and even the handles seamlessly integrating as one into the whole cup. All of the above elements are sending signals, or more to the point, are appealing to the beholder’s hand and eye, which Hay names “what the object wants from us”.<sup>27</sup> Put another way: the decorative objects are born with wants from the surrounding non-living beings (i.e., inanimate objects) or living beings (i.e., humans or animals), always awaiting responses from them. Accordingly, as we see with our eyes, we lift the cup by holding its handle (s), touch the smooth surface made of priceless jade, fill the cup with wine, drink from the rim of the cup, and keep fondling and caressing it repeatedly.

In so doing, one might find that a sense of pleasant completeness is generated. Hence the question: from what origin does this kind of pleasant feeling spring? Considering the aforementioned “wants” from the object and what the beholders do to it, the symbiotic bidirectional relationship between beholder and object is made quite clear. The beholder usually

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<sup>26</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 41.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

performs the actions – gazing or touching – based on the ways in which (s)he fondles the decorative objects’ exquisite appearances. This aesthetic need of the beholders is, however, far from enough to explain the origin of the pleasure they derive. In fact, pleasure is produced during such an interactive process: on the one hand, the object projects its desires by sending out signals, but on the other hand, the beholders satisfy the objects’ needs by gazing and touching. Given that the objects are satisfying the beholders’ needs in the meantime, it is the mutually beneficial relationship, which Hay names “transaction”, between beholder and object that is responsible for bringing forth our pleasure. In other words, “it is by giving the object what it wants that one derives pleasure from it.”<sup>28</sup>

Something still stands in the way, however, preventing us from a thorough understanding of this pleasure. When and where is the pleasure generated? How can we define the notion of “pleasure” generally and specifically in the case of the jade cup? Before stepping out on our journey of inquiry, it is important to bear in mind that what we experience with the decorative object is greatly different from what we experience with an unglazed homely mug we drink milk from when having breakfast for we never hesitate before we drink out of it. This kind of hesitation comes into being to evoke many more complexities. Hence, a more thorough and careful observation of the decorative object itself is necessary.

Let us illustrate the above claims through the example of the jade cup, the most important agency facilitating the romance of two protagonists in the play. The actions involving eyes and hands are both naturally and involuntarily taken when the beholders are confronted with an appreciably exquisite object. More precisely, “gazing” is what the beholders choose to do in the first place for the jade cup owns visually pleasurable features, or aurally-satisfying features if the

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<sup>28</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 61.

object utters sound as does a musical instrument. Yet, the elegant surface of the jade cup results in the delayed response action of touching. The beholders' eyes are delayed, in turn, for the characteristics of the material to touch – in this example, the smoothness and hardness of the jade. It is noteworthy here that these two kinds of senses should be coexisting, or inseparable. The sense of vision is following behind the sense of touch (or vice-versa). When we look at a decorative object (at the same level as our eyes), our actions are firstly delayed because of the color or the pattern of the surface. Yet at that exact moment we are suddenly made aware of the unknown, or unseen place on the back of the cup since there are always some places where the eyes cannot reach at that moment. The beholders, as a result, are drawn to place the cup on their palm using one hand, to hold the handle using the other hand, or even to turn the cup around. Similarly, the eyes are postponed in observing the decorative object, with fairly “seductive” material, which in this particular example is the jade. Hay conceives the term “metaphoric and affective potential,”<sup>29</sup> which actualizes itself through a “pleasurable experience of the objects,”<sup>30</sup> to indicate the importance of the bodily senses, mainly consisting of vision and touch. Furthermore, neither of the senses can be denied its capacity to actively evoke and react with the other. Only within this mutual interaction, wherein each instance of looking evokes a corresponding action of touching or vice-versa, can a complete “surface” formulate, which “has no beginning, no end, either for the hand or for the eye”.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, it is the decorative object's “surface” that functions as an intermediary, through which the “transaction” between the object and the beholder is greatly facilitated and the pleasure is hence produced.

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<sup>29</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 61.

From the aforementioned we know that decorative objects have “wants”, it is now time to bring in their capacity of “connective thinking.”<sup>32</sup> This notion in fact initiates our thought processes toward how objects “think with us.”<sup>33</sup> Hay states that:

If art in general is a form of catalysis, inventing and making things happen, then decoration through resonances and linkages specifically catalyses connection between different orders of experience and different categories of being: in this sense, it is a wholly affirmative mode of art-making. But art is also a communication system (albeit of an indirect kind, irreducible to any one ‘message’), which is to say that it has a function of mediation. Through form, art mediates our relation to the world in which we are already included as actors. Decoration, by the particular importance it gives to formal resonances and linkages, gives this mediation a thoroughly connective character.<sup>34</sup>

Hence, it touches upon this question – why people feel attached, and sometimes even indulgent toward certain objects – that scholars in many academic fields attempt to address across generations. To unravel the reason for their thinking with things, it is insufficient to simply consider “pleasure”, as discussed above, which is catalyzed by the mutual needs of the decorative object and the beholder. Through “connective thinking”, many more complexities, such as sexual desire, fondness, appreciation, and even illusion, come into being within the dimension constructed by the surface.<sup>35</sup> In *Spring in Moling*, both Xu Shi’s experiences with the jade cup and Zhanniang’s encounters with the image in the cup when it is filled with wine qualify as explanations in this respect. At the beginning of scene two “jade appreciation” 話玉, Xu Shi and his best friend Cai Keqing have a casual gathering and enjoy some tea. Here, the

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<sup>32</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 81.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>35</sup> Hay emphasizes the pleasure or sensuous perfection in his argument about “connective thinking”, I extend its implication by adding more human feelings in this category.

surface of the jade cup is described by Cai as “the foremost antique of the Southland” 江南第一件骨董.<sup>36</sup>

[Yichun ling] [on the jade cup] there are patterns of cloud and thunder, son and mother dragon, I admire the expert craftsman whose “kun” knife can cut through jade as if it was mud.<sup>37</sup> The luster and smoothness of this cup is unprecedented. It is like layers upon layers of earth’s flower,<sup>38</sup> snow-white skin and fine granule,<sup>39</sup> jade grease is smooth. Spotted with cherry red dots, the cinnabar well is mercury red; dyed with dark green,<sup>40</sup> the “Yuezhou” tea ware is emerald green.<sup>41</sup> (singing together) At a bright window, we enjoy tasting tea, holding this cup, which is a remaining favor from the previous dynasty.

[宜春令] 雲雷篆，子母螭，羨良工昆刀切泥。那包漿侵法，從來沒有。土花如砌，雪膚鈿粟瓊膏膩。點櫻桃丹井砂紅，染空青越州磁翠。（合）晴窗，鬥茗持杯，舊朝遺惠。<sup>42</sup>

Cai’s description reveals this jade cup, with fine design and subtle coloration, is a relic from the defunct dynasty. Further, Xu Shi contrasts the glorious past and the depressing present not only of his family but also of the country:

[Qianqiang] The “you” vessel of a Minister of Education and the “yi” vessel of a Grand Minister,<sup>43</sup> they are coming back from thanking the emperor and are carried by their owners who wear the red garment of an official. (By now,) among embroidered cushions and carved tables, that the cup should be empty is a humiliation to the jar.<sup>44</sup> The oath to protect the land is indefinitely broken,<sup>45</sup> the

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<sup>36</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1237.

<sup>37</sup> “kun” knife: Mountain Kunwu is a mythical mountain mentioned in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經. It is famous for its copper which could be made into extremely sharp knives. See Anne Birrell, *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), 245.

<sup>38</sup> earth’s flower: refers to either moss or traces of corrosion on the objects buried in the earth. In the case of jade cup, it might be a reference to the process of how jade is formed in the earth.

<sup>39</sup> fine granule: refers to a kind of decoration on the surface of gold, silver, or jade.

<sup>40</sup> cinnabar well: refers to a well which is used for alchemy to make pills of immortality, similar to the jade cup conferred to the owner longevity.

<sup>41</sup> Yuezhou: present day Shaoxing in Zhejiang province, which is famous for its celadon teaware. Here refers to the cup for their exteriors bear the similar color.

<sup>42</sup> Wu Weiye, *Spring in Moling*, 1237. For the translation, I consulted Tschanz’s in his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 138-39. Some changes were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>43</sup> You and Yi: both refer to wine vessel.

<sup>44</sup> This indicates the closeness between the cup and the jar. Book of Songs, “Minor Odes,” “Thick Tarragon.” 《詩·小雅·蓼莪》：“餅之罄矣，維罍之耻”。Trans. Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 184.

“zhao” jade has now been returned.<sup>46</sup> Although the cup is intact, the “chai” kiln is destroyed together with its country.<sup>47</sup>

[前腔] 司徒貞，尚父彝，拜恩回朱衣捧持。（到今日呵，）錦茵雕幾，一朝零落瓶罍恥。河如帶趙玉今完，甌無缺柴窯同碎。<sup>48</sup>

Based on the portrayal of the jade cup, it can be seen that the evocative power of the surface arouses Xu and Cai’s nostalgia toward the previous dynasty. Through a historical imagination, Xu implies a metaphorical similarity between the survived cup and the destroyed kiln as well as the *yimin* 遺民 (literally, remnant) and the defunct dynasty.

The playwright Wu Weiye lived in the period of Ming-Qing transition, in which collecting or treasuring decorative objects as representative of the literati’s taste had long been prevalent. Influenced by this kind of cultural milieu, the hero Xu predictably acts in the way of being “foolish” and even “fevered” about his favorite jade cup. The way in which he fondles the jade cup provides us an example. In scene seven “cup fondling” 惜杯 he sings:

[Jixianbing] At a bright window, in front of a small table, I pour a drink into the jade cup, it just so happens that the flowers bloom at the south pavilion.<sup>49</sup> At hundreds of gallon of clear spring after a fresh rain, I listen to the wind in the pines and boil tea water next to my recliner. The steam of the tea is half-transparent, in leisure I spend my daytime with my books and paintings. I taste the tea taking a couple of sips, how gentle my good friend is.

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<sup>45</sup> the oath: refers to an oath made by Han officials to protect the realm. See Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 427: “Though the Yellow River become no broader than a girdle, ... it shall be handed down to my descendants after me.”

<sup>46</sup> “zhao” jade: refers to a precious jade ring belonged to King Huiwen of Zhao. King Zhao of the Qin forced King Huiwen to deliver it to him and promised to exchange fifteen Qin cities with Zhao. When the Zhao emissary realized that King Zhao had no intention of fulfilling his promise, he had the jade ring smuggled out of Qin and back to the original owner King Huiwen.

<sup>47</sup> “chai” kiln: refers to a kiln established by the second ruler of the Latter Zhou 後周, Zhou Chairong 周柴榮 (921-959). This kiln is famous for the superior quality of its china. It is used here to indicate fine quality shared by the china and the jade cup.

<sup>48</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1237. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 139-40. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>49</sup> south pavilion: alludes to Yu Liang 庾亮 (289-340), a writer and general in Eastern Jin dynasty 東晉 (317-420), who went to the southern pavilion with his friends to enjoy the autumn scenery.

[集賢賓] 晴窗小幾傾玉甌，遇花發南樓。百斛清泉新雨後，聽松風活火床頭。  
茶煙半透，閑伴著圖書清晝，嘗數口，好溫潤我家良友。<sup>50</sup>

Within the fresh surroundings, Xu is enjoying his leisurely and comfortable time with the company of collections of books, fine tea, and, of course, the jade cup. His pleasure is summarily materialized and personified as his “good friend”. The ink along Xu’s line between real and unreal is smeared.

In addition to considering the jade cup a good friend, Xu Shi’s foolishness, as a further demonstration of the powerful surface, is depicted in the following psychological activities. A lonely Xu laments that no more company is available for him, saying: “Even if I enjoy this so much, I still feel too lonely. It would be cheerful if a beauty could sing and hold [the cup] with her slim fingers to make a toast.” 雖然如此，這般享用，還覺太寂寞些，必得個女客，唱只曲兒，筍條般指頭捧來，才是快活。<sup>51</sup> Xu’s words here require careful examination. Only having the jade cup in the beauty’s slim fingers can bring him happiness. The confusion is unavoidable: who is the subject that Xu is talking about? Or more to the point, who will be delighted when getting a beautiful girl as a companion? Taking into account the evocative capacity of the jade cup enabling Xu to consider it as a good friend, the cup, in Xu’s eyes, can be replaced with himself when he is longing for a beauty as his companion. In this sense, the one who is with the imaginary beauty should either be the personalized jade cup, as Xu Shi himself, or the objectified Narcissus, Xu Shi as jade cup itself.

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<sup>50</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1252. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 145-46. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>51</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1253.

Xu Shi's desire gradually intensifies during this process, as evidenced by the switching of perspectives between his and the jade cup's in that he equalizes himself and the jade cup. He sings:

[Qianqiang] A finely crafted jade [cup] with [the decoration of] a pair of phoenix heads, vintage wine is being filtered. I urge her (i.e., the girl) to sit and encourage her to drink; she is eighteen, drunk from the heavenly wine I sing the tune "Liangzhou".<sup>52</sup> She rubs her jade-like fingers of rounded shape, slightly hidden in the sleeves of her crimson silk garment, when she is about to drink wine, she smiles, lifts the cup, and offers birthday wishes.

[前腔] 良工美玉雙鳳頭，正嘉醞新籌。促坐傳觴人二九，醉流霞歌按《涼州》。圓搓玉手，微襯著絳羅衫袖，將進酒，笑擎起美人為壽。<sup>53</sup>

The first half of his singing takes up Xu Shi's own perspective, displaying the fact that he imagines a scene where a lovely girl is holding the jade cup. Yet in the second half, the beauty's lovely hands, silk garment, and postures to offer wishes can be seen as pretext for the personified perspective expressed by the jade cup. Therefore, through a series of actions, gazing, touching, imagining and so on, happiness and pleasure are created via the interaction between the beholder Xu and the jade cup. Consciously or otherwise, Xu's attachment to the jade cup is transported with empathy into his imagination of the beautiful girl by replacing himself with the jade cup.

After that, during the discussion with Cai about trading in Xu's jade cup and mansion for the rubbings of Huang family, Xu's pleasant imagination of the beauty is then crystallized by what Cai says: "General Huang, a military man, does not know how to appreciate. His daughter seems like a connoisseur though." 黃將軍武人，不知賞鑒，倒是他女兒像個識貨的。<sup>54</sup> Cai's admiration is reaffirmed by what Xu sees from the inscriptions on the rubbings, "there are

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<sup>52</sup> Liangzhou: refers to a melody from the North-Western China.

<sup>53</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1253. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 146. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



several lines of preface and postscript beautifully written on the back of the rubbings”. 這法帖後面，有幾行題跋，寫得楚楚可愛。<sup>55</sup> At this moment, Xu feels that it is totally unnecessary to worry whether the future owner of his jade cup will be someone unable to appreciate its full beauty because he has a lovely and intelligent girl in his mind, saying that “this white jade cup will end up in her hands...the girl should be very fond of the cup.”這白玉杯一定落他手中……吾想他愛玩此杯呵。<sup>56</sup> He then sings:

[Hupo maoer zhui] The beautiful look of the Goddess of “Luo” river, on the bottom of the cup her bright eyes are reflected. (I am not as good as this cup.) When holding the wine cup, the old owner sighs over it by chanting. While in front of her mirror, the new owner holds the wine cup. Gently. Tipsy from drinking only a little wine, her eyebrows are as gracefully curved as the far-off hills.

[琥珀貓兒墜] 雒川姿首，盞底照明眸。（我倒不如這個杯了。）舊主持觴嗟瓦缶，新人臨鏡把瓊舟。溫柔。淺酌微醺，遠山眉秀。<sup>57</sup>

The first verse of his singing certainly takes on the personalized cup’s perspective, viewing the beautiful girl from the bottom, instead of his own, indicating his thinking of the interchangeability between himself and the exquisite cup. Out of his admiration to the future owner, Xu even takes on a self-deprecating tone, saying “I am not as good as this cup.” From the discussion above of Xu’s experience with his jade cup, one should sense that Xu’s internal implications and erotic imagination are evoked and externalized onto the surface of the jade cup.

Before further examining Zhanniang and the jade cup’s interaction, we should enlarge our horizon by considering the surrounding context for this passage. This is the first time that Zhanniang takes a tour in the Yiguan mansion, which Xu trades for the rubbings from the Huang family. The display of the mansion belonging to Xu’s family is described in detail: “[T]he

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<sup>55</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1253.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 147. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

windows carefully and beautifully framed constitute an attractive scenery; the peonies are scattered in riotous profusion; the house and porch are both deep and serene. Even the poems and essays on the walls or rocks are all inscribed by refined scholars.” 疏窗文砌，種種宜人；花藥紛披，房廊窈窕。就是壁間屬詠，石上留題，落筆皆妙楷名篇，聯句亦高人雅士。<sup>58</sup> Here, we see Zhanniang’s attention and admiration are enticed not only by the literati tastes fully embodied in the garden but also by Xu’s “foolish” behavior of trading in his legacy jade cup and mansion for the rubbings of Huang family. On this topic, Zhanniang comments: “it is uncommon for him to give up his property for rubbings as well as to depart his hometown to become a foreigner elsewhere. Given such a behavior, Scholar Xu must have a charming personality.” 棄產收書，辭家作客，名流行徑，自是不凡。以此思之，徐君風調定可人也。<sup>59</sup> Embedded in such a display is the massive power or “affective potential” of the jade cup in all its splendor. And the display of the garden and the jade cup echo and complement each other beautifully. Put another way, “[The] surfacescapes resonate with each other, in sympathy or in counterpoint, creating a pleasurable enveloping environment.”<sup>60</sup> Are the surroundings or the jade cup emotionally affecting Zhanniang? It seems this question bears no answer since the surface cannot be disassembled. Within this enlarged decorative display, the image of jade cup is enriched and completed in the beholders’ eyes.

After the interpretation of Zhanniang and the object’s interaction at a macro-level, our analysis will return to focus on the object itself once again. The jade cup and the mansion work together as symbols in the text, and they are all the while affirming their capacity to impress Zhanniang. At the moment when Zhanniang unpacks the wrapping, she admires that “[The jade

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<sup>58</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1259.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 68.

cup] is packed and wrapped layers after layers by Sichuan brocade and Huzhou cotton; everything including rhino brand and box are all well-made,” 蜀錦湖綿，重重襯裏；犀牌鈿匣，事事精工<sup>61</sup> indicating that her sense of vision and sense of touch are invited and therefore greatly sated, or, to put it transitively, perhaps the jade cup’s “wants” are sated. Furthermore, we see that the cup’s feature of “smoothness and luster”潤澤光瑩 arouses Zhanniang’s exclamation over the cup,<sup>62</sup> “[it must receive] much love and fondling”. 許多摩挲愛惜<sup>63</sup> Given the affective potential of the surface of the jade cup, it should be no wonder that Zhanniang juxtaposes her inner desire favorably against the jade cup. She describes the beauty they share as “*Biyu* at marriageable age.” 碧玉破瓜，瑤英待嫁<sup>64</sup> Moreover, she feels that her life is incomplete just as much as is the jade cup’s with regards to purpose, saying that “it is fairly useless (or no one would ever appreciate) that the texture of jade is purely white; and the pestle is yet to be used to make heavenly medicine.” 肌理空誇白璧，杵臼未搗玄霜<sup>65</sup> As a continuation, she sighs, “Now even this cup can be filled with good wine and fondled in jade-like hands; when will it be passed on among the flowers to amuse the people sitting around the feast table?” 今日將此杯回環玉手，傾倒瓊漿；幾時得花底傳觴，尊前索笑？<sup>66</sup> Though she depicts the scene where the cup is fondled in jade-like hands, passed among the flowers, and amuses the guests, she at this point takes over the jade cup’s perspective as Xu did. In doing so, Zhanniang imagines for herself a girl who eagerly waits for lover since she superimposes her own need upon the cup’s need.

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<sup>61</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1259.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Biyu: literally, jasper. It refers to the name of the Prince of Runan’s beloved concubine in Liu-Song dynasty 劉宋 (420-479). Later it generally refers to young and lovely girls from humble families; Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1259.

<sup>65</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1259.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, her lament “how lonely it is” 好不冷落人也<sup>67</sup> is uttered for not only the jade cup but also her own destiny.

It is worth stressing that one of Zhanniang’s bodily senses is “fondling and love”. That is to say, beyond the erotic desire evoked while she is touching the jade cup, she is also aware of the former owner(s) of the cup. In Chinese material culture, the “fondling” or “stroking” plays an important role in the interaction of people and jade since these actions can remove the impurities on the surface thereby bringing out the essence of the jade in adding a shine of a gloss. As Jesuit Matteo Ricci noted, “they (i.e., owners) desire them (i.e., the objects) with a certain particular corrosion”.<sup>68</sup> Though his observation is made about for bronze vessels and specifically refers to the patina brought by oxidization, it still has instructional meanings in the case of jade in that these traces, which shaped by the history or the previous owners, are significant elements enriching the surface. Thus, Zhanniang feels connected to the former owner(s) for they share in common the feeling of cherishing and action of fondling. The surface of the exquisite jade cup empathically fuses with the bodily senses which strike Zhanniang as an irresistible impulse, or more precisely, erotic pleasure.

When fondling the jade cup alone after her maid Niaoyan takes a leave, Zhanniang strangely discovers an image within the jade cup. She is “squinting at the surface of the wine, a sprig of pear blossom brings forth the spirit of the spring” 玉顏斜照，梨花一枝春動搖；<sup>69</sup> and then she becomes confused about what she sees:

[Xiangbianman] (How come that reflection does not look like me?) When I carefully observe it, this is not at all my look. (Ya! This looks like a man.) His headscarf and his rhino hairpin are small, the silk belts of his light garment sway

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<sup>67</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1259.

<sup>68</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1259.

in the wind. (How graceful and charming, what an absolutely fabulous look!) Although I am good at disguising, even I could not simulate a handsome man.

[香遍滿] (怎麼不像我的?) 仔細端相非奴貌。(呀! 竟像個男子。) 幅巾犀導小, 輕衫羅帶飄。(風風流流, 絕好一個標緻的模樣) 便俺會作喬, 也做不出男兒俏。<sup>70</sup>

By looking around, she firstly rules out the possibility that “someone peek at her” 莫不是有人窺俺麼 and then says to herself:<sup>71</sup> “My mother has strict control over me, she would never spare me (even) I look at a man’s image in pictures,” 俺娘親拘管幾曾饒, (便算是) 畫裡兒郎不許瞧<sup>72</sup> which means since her birth, she has led a life in a secluded compound where no male could possibly enter. Both of the above serve to emphasize the impossibility of encountering a man due to the external pressures of filial piety and rigid family education. We do in fact see that her repressed desire is accordingly ignited: “On the window screen the plum branch is dimmed by the sunlight, which makes the people look smaller. Only my embroidery of mandarin duck knows how to play in the water.” 紗窗日上暗梅梢, 一點窺人小。卻是俺繡出鴛鴦解弄潮。<sup>73</sup> Having nowhere to hide, Zhanniang feels bashful and nervous: “how can I pour forth my feeling of shyness and annoyance? He looks like floating willow catkins; how can my marriage be arranged from the reflection on the bottom of the water?” 教我含嬌向恁嬌, 欲惱和誰惱?... 他好似一絲粉絮風前裊, 難道我八字紅鸞水底撈?<sup>74</sup> Zhanniang then conjectures that what she sees looks like “a romantic dream that was cut short by the dawn at Mountain Wu.” 除非是

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<sup>70</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1259. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 148. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 1260.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

春風夢割巫山曉<sup>75</sup> As for the handsome young man, Zhanniang wonders if he is actually “a slender and elegant ghost” 瘦身奇俏魂灵. Moreover, she thinks that “his ghost might also escape into an ethereal form when he dreams.” 他梦也寻常向影里逃。<sup>76</sup> Thinking of the preceding things depicted by Zhanniang, the image appearing on the surface of wine, the “window screen”, and the “bottom of the water,” all succeed in drawing a boundary between object and its reflection, the solidity of the item and the non-solidity of the image, the form and the shadow, or the reality and the illusion (or reflection, dream). A great deal more of these couplings occur afterwards, indicating that the playwright is purposefully disturbing the boundary of presence and representation.

So far, what Zhanniang sees from the jade cup is so vague that it is hard for one to recognize its precise identity. The only fact that we are certain about is that he is dashing and elegant in Zhanniang’s mind. Nonetheless, we see Niaoyan’s depictions of Xu Shi in the previous scene: “It is the talented and romantic scholar Xu, who lives in the north of the city, is knocking at the door,” 風流少俊，叩響雙環，城北徐君<sup>77</sup> combining with her confirmation of the jade cup’s ownership “that white-jade cup belongs to him as well.” 那白玉杯也是他家的。

<sup>78</sup> Here, the imagery of the lover has been crystallized in Zhanniang’s mind and lightens her complexity, in the form of unspeakable “pleasure” without clarification of its origin. Prior to her interaction with the jade cup, as a matter of fact, the poetic mansion already seems appealing to Zhanniang in the aspects of aesthetic appreciation of the surroundings and admiration of the

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<sup>75</sup> Mountain Wu: refers to the legend about the goddess of Wu Mountain 巫山神女. According to Song Yu’s 宋玉(319 BC-298 BC) *Poetry of Gaotang* 高唐賦, King Qingxiang of Chu 楚襄王(?-263BC) dreamt about a beautiful woman addressing herself as “the daughter of Mountain Wu” and expressing her willingness to make love with him. Later this legend becomes an allusion referring to joyful dates of lovers; Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1260.

<sup>76</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1260.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 1246.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 1259.

former owner's taste. Her maid Niaoyan interrupts and adds the description of how well Xu looks and how talented he is: "The day before yesterday I got a glimpse of his charming looks and unwittingly told you about him, for which you blamed me. Today we take a tour in his garden and imagine how talented he is; if we can meet this cultured gentleman in person, I believe he must be much better than our imagination." 前日裊煙瞥見丰姿，無心閑講，倒被小姐絮了幾句。今日移他池館，想見風流；若睹彼才華，清韶蘊藉，當不啻如此。<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, Zhanniang is also reminded by the same title "Yiguan" shared by the mansion and the precious mirror, both of which are granted by Emperor Li. Impressed by Zhanniang as "an auspicious omen" 預占先兆 that forebodes a predestined relationship,<sup>80</sup> she finds herself influenced by Niaoyan: "This jade cup (formerly) belongs to Xu Family. [The image in the cup] must be Xu Shi." 這杯是徐家的，一定就是十郎的影兒。<sup>81</sup> At this moment, Zhanniang is convinced that what she sees in the jade cup turns out to be Xu's image.

In ending this chapter centering on the jade cup, the significance of the surface comes into view per its bearing of "affective potential" to evoke the beholder's desire, which becomes "observable" in his/her eyes. And yet, the non-solidity of the image of the object, or the externalization of one's desire, is far from enough to bring these two lovers together. What will happen to the romance of Xu Shi and Zhanniang? It will be told in the next chapter.

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<sup>79</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1259.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1261.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRECIOUS MIRROR: REAL, UNREAL, AND “INTERMEDIATE ZONE”

It goes beyond mere a coincidence that the second signature object, the precious mirror, turns out to be a more important agent in Xu Shi and Zhanniang’s romance because Wu Weiye’s arrangement of the mirror obviously steps far beyond the literary conventions so as to implicate more complexities.<sup>82</sup> The most practical use of a mirror is to provide a reflection for the beholder, and in this sense the reflective surface of the mirror bears the desire-stimulating quality as much as does the jade cup. The characteristics shared by these two decorative objects, flat screen and affective potential, possess the capacity to bring forth that which resides within the beholder’s mind. In other words, during constant physical interactions with the objects, for instance gazing and touching, one’s inner world will unconsciously be “actualized” onto the surface of the object in the beholder’s eyes. In other words, the surface of the object, in this circumstance, becomes an externalization of the beholder’s projection.

Zhanniang’s intimate relationship with her precious mirror parallels the relationship between Xu Shi and his jade cup. As a treasure received from the court of Emperor Li and his imperial consort Huang Baoyi, it is no wonder that Zhanniang prizes the mirror as a keepsake to remember her deceased family. Moreover, talented and beautiful girls like Zhanniang live in a secluded compound and they barely step outside of their boudoirs until they get married.

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<sup>82</sup> As a literary trope in classical Chinese literature, mirror was widely used as a love token between lovers. In addition, the image on the mirror can also be seen as an externalization of one’s interiority, for instance, Bridal Du’s reflection on the mirror in Tang Xianzu’s *The Peony Pavilion*.



Dressing up, reading, writing, and needlework become their major entertainments. In this sense, the mirror will naturally be the owner's closest and most loyal friend. More to the point, the beholder can pass the time with the silent company offered by the reflection in the mirror.

The appearance of the mirror is attractive without a doubt. Zhanniang's mother hands over the mirror to Zhanniang, singing:

[Yu baodu] (Look at) [this mirror] decorated with embossed pattern of chestnut-blossoms,<sup>83</sup> a brocade bag with the pattern of coiling dragon tied with a five-color silk string. It can sweep away the spring listlessness brought by two peaks of cold mountain; it can cut away the fall melancholy aroused by the scenery of southern lake.<sup>84</sup> (Child,) your silk garments have still retained the fragrance of the palace, you should have your eyebrows in the shape of "character eight,"<sup>85</sup> your forehead has to be painted yellow.<sup>86</sup>

[玉胞肚] (你看) 這六花浮漾，五絲繩盤龍錦囊。掃寒山兩點春愁，剪南湖一片秋光。(孩兒，) 你羅衣猶打內家香，少不得八字宮眉捧額黃。<sup>87</sup>

In addition to the exquisite decoration of the mirror itself and the fine brocade bag, the mirror and its packaging both refer to the unusual background of the Huang family since they are relatives of Emperor Li. Growing up in such a family, girls like Zhanniang undergo a strict schooling at home. Nonetheless, the rigid parental education cannot keep Zhanniang's sentiments and emotions in check.

By combining observations of the surface and the solidity of the jade cup, what emerges on the mirror becomes fairly problematic. The mirror keeps inviting the beholder's gaze, and

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<sup>83</sup> chestnut-blossoms: refers to the blossom of the water-chestnut which consists of six petals. Mirror in this kind of shape, or with the same kind of pattern is often called "water-chestnut-blossom-mirror". 菱花鏡

<sup>84</sup> southern lake: refers to Lake Dongting 洞庭湖 in Hu'nan 湖南 Province.

<sup>85</sup> shape of "character eight": refers to a custom of women tracing the eyebrows in the shape of Chinese character for the number eight. See Zhou Xun 周汛 et al., eds. *Zhongguo lidai funü zhuangshi* 中國歷代婦女裝飾 (The ornaments of women in ancient China) (Hongkong: Sanlian, 1988), 124-25.

<sup>86</sup> painted yellow: refers to a fashion during Six Dynasties and Tang dynasty that women painted their forehead yellow. See Zhou Xun et al., eds. *Zhongguo lidai funü zhuangshi*, 132.

<sup>87</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1240. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 141. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text

even touch, and the beholder does so in return. During this mutually-satisfying process, Zhanniang's desire gradually grows. Zhanniang's inner world is, in the first place, mainly expressed as her self-pity, which is aroused by her longing for the fleeting spring. One morning, Zhanniang heaves a sigh when looking around, and says: "The flowering peach tree overlooks the clean pond; the sprig nearing the surface of the pond is about to fall into the water. [The scene] seems like the [person in the] bright mirror on the dresser, which cherishes the fleeting time. What a pitiful scene!" 夭桃一樹，俯映清池，落處依枝，飛還入水。恰似妝台曉鏡，戀惜流光。煞是可憐人也。<sup>88</sup> Zhanniang juxtaposes the reflection of sprig in the pond and the reflection of the beholder in the mirror, indicating that both of these things endeavor to capture the best moment in their life. Noticing her mistress's sentiment, Niaoyan advises Zhanniang to look into the mirror. Yet Zhanniang shows no enthusiasm for doing so, retorting:

Alas! This season of falling petals makes me feel listless. If the flowers at the pond wane away, how can I hope to preserve my youth in this bower? Niaoyan, I fear that my best years have passed too quickly, who will take pity on my silky temples? In a glimpse, I, Zhanniang, will no longer be like the person in the mirror.

咳！我看此落花時節，心緒無聊，若比他池上衰紅，安能常保我樓頭凝黛。裊煙，只怕芳年易過，曼鬢誰憐。轉盼之間，我展娘呵，便不似鏡中人矣。<sup>89</sup>

Zhanniang once again compares the withered flowers with her fleeting youth. Vainly, she is trying to preserve this moment of youth. Although Zhanniang keeps addressing the reflection in the mirror as "the person in the mirror" instead of "I", one cannot deny that this kind of surface represents her actual real self. Gazing upon her own reality intensifies her anxiety about passing her prime. In other words, her obsession with the person in the mirror "has no separate identity

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<sup>88</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1245.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 1246. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 144. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

or independent emotions.”<sup>90</sup> Instead, it allegorically represents Zhanniang. It should not be understood as “a form of alterity, but as a self-reflexive act: it is not the self loving the other, but the self loving the self.”<sup>91</sup>

Cherishing the coming of spring, often understood as *sichun* 思春 (literally, longing for a lover), is a very common trope in ancient Chinese literature. Zhanniang worries that her beauty will remain unknown to the outside world, and thus the sentiments aroused by the fleeting spring are intensified and eroticized. In order to please her mistress, Niaoyan again urges Zhanniang to look into the mirror, singing that “[Tuitui ling] Your sickly drowsiness hurts your feelings; and your arched eyebrows indicate your sadness...you need to come near to the painted screen, in front of the mirror, and see how beautiful you are through the image on the mirror.” [忒忒令] 你睡懨懨桃腮鎖春，砵可哥柳眉堆恨…還索向畫屏邊，鏡臺前，菱花底，自認定個俏影。<sup>92</sup> In Niaoyan’s opinion, the best way to soothe her mistress’s melancholy is to let her see her own beautiful reflection in the mirror. As mentioned above, unlike Niaoyan, when Zhanniang sees her reflection in the mirror, what she sees turns out to be unpleasant. She sings,

[Chenzui dongfeng] [I] see from the mirror my frown brought up by the sorrowful sentiments; [I] see from the mirror my half bashfulness and slight smile...[I] see from the mirror my aging beauty. Behind the other people’s backs, nearing the grillwork-patterned window, there is someone else having tearstains on her face. [The mirror] does not only provide a beautiful image for me.

[沉醉東風] 照見咱閒愁暗釐，照見咱半羞微哂…照見咱翠消紅損。背人自勻，瑣窗淚痕，非單照咱嬌香一麗人。<sup>93</sup>

In Zhanniang’s eyes, the image in the mirror displays a melancholy and sentimental girl. As a continuation, while appreciating her own make-up by looking into the mirror, Zhanniang

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<sup>90</sup> Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 74.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>92</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1246.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

discovers the loneliness of the person in the mirror, speaking to Niaoyan, she laments, “How lonely the person in the mirror is!” 這鏡中人好不淒冷也！<sup>94</sup>

Whether cherishing the fleeting beauty of youth or longing for a lover, through interacting with the mirror, Zhanniang’s projection is externalized in the form of the person in the mirror. This externalization of her inner feelings has special meaning because Zhanniang’s bashfulness and strict family education has made her hesitant to express her own feelings, even to her maid Niaoyan. As a result, Zhanniang has no choice but to displace her true voice with that of the person in the mirror. Even when she feels deeply troubled by her fleeting youth or her loneliness for not having a lover, she gives expressions to her intense expectation via the mouth of the person in the mirror. She sings to herself that:

[Yue shang haitang] ...when I consider this, the decorated tip of the hairpin is hidden among the flowers. No matter dressed up or made up plainly or heavily, who will serve me tenderly? (Now I remember, I live all by myself deeply in my boudoir, pining and waning. Now I have met this person in the mirror, share sorrow and joy with her like a form and its shadow, which is really enough. I pity you and send my smiles eagerly; you pity me, we look at each other [and find] we both look like doomed beauties.)<sup>95</sup>

[月上海棠] 還自忖，釵頭媚子花邊隱。盡淡妝濃抹，誰與溫存？（我想起來，獨處深閨，淒涼憔悴，今日遇見那鏡中人，同愁共笑，形影相知，也索穀了。我憐卿送笑殷勤，卿憐我相看薄命）。<sup>96</sup>

Her singing enables us to sense that in separately depicting herself and the girl in the mirror, Zhanniang, as a matter of fact, admits their inseparability as “form and shadow”, which

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<sup>94</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1246.

<sup>95</sup> The last two lines are reminiscent of Feng Xiaoqing 馮小青’s famous quatrain “Standing on the lakeside, gazing at the figure, gaunt and pale. Nobody ever cares for me, so I shall sympathize with myself.” 瘦影自臨春水照，卿須憐我我憐卿。

<sup>96</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1246. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 189. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

introduces us to another instance of the pairing of the solidity of the object with the non-solidity of the image.

Despite the fact that Zhanniang keeps addressing herself and the person in the mirror as “I” and “you”, and values their mutual sympathy and understanding, Niaoyan mistakes “you” for a man on whom her mistress is awaiting since she is unable to understand her mistress completely. Even so, she, without any awareness, still blurts out Zhanniang’s longing for a male companion at this moment. Slightly proud of herself, Niaoyan says: “I know what you mean... Spring’s arrival brings listlessness, one single red thread [indicating marriage affinity],<sup>97</sup> a certain someone is missing. I should not hide this from you, yesterday I saw someone at the main gate.” She continues, “[Wu gongyang] The talented and romantic young scholar Xu from the northern part of the city knocks the gate of our house...Mistress, he steals a glance at you and pretend he want to come in, his body is already half through the curtain.” 我曉得小姐的意兒了...春來悶，一縷紅絲，少個人人。不瞞小姐說，裊煙昨日在門首，倒見個人兒。...[五供養] 風流少俊，叩響雙環，城北徐君...小姐，他偷睛佯欲進，半簾身。<sup>98</sup>

Niaoyan’s words immediately remind Zhanniang of the rubbings that her parents gave to her along with the precious mirror. She orders Niaoyan to fetch the rubbings, admiring:

Look, what beautiful and authentic rubbings from the Jin and Tang [dynasties], on the front there is a seal titled “purified-heart hall”, which shows that Emperor Li and our Baoyi cherished it. On the back it says “inscribed by Minister Xuan.” Ah, as I remember, my father mentions a certain scholar Xu Xuan, I think this must be him.

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<sup>97</sup> red thread: refers to the old man in the moonlight (a heavenly immortal) who takes a sack of red threads with which he binds the feet of men and women who are destined to marry each other.

<sup>98</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1246-47.

看好個晉、唐真跡，前面“澄心堂”小印，是李主與保儀姑娘鑒賞。後面“臣鉉題”。嘎，我聽得老爺說，有個徐鉉學士，想就是他了。<sup>99</sup>

Without making any comment about Xu Shi (Xu Xuan's son), Zhanniang asks Niaoyan to store the rubbings carefully. She says at the end of this scene that: "It is still the person in the mirror that can offer me her company all the time. In my leisure time I look into the mirror in the early morning. Meanwhile, I find that my look today is freshly charming and stylish."還是鏡裡人兒相見得穩。閑看明鏡坐清晨，並覺今朝粉態新。<sup>100</sup> It deserves mentioning that Zhanniang's emotions fluctuate from sad to slightly positive feelings, for example, when she comments on her appearance after being made up. She has, according to her, a "charming and stylish look," which reverses the heavy sentimental, and somewhat melancholy, tone suffusing the earlier text. This scene now takes on a slightly more pleasant and breezy tone. Taking into account the changes in Zhanniang's feelings after Niaoyan's depiction of Xu Shi, at this moment she in fact takes over Xu Shi's perspective on the reflection she sees in the mirror because she believes that Xu successfully caught a glimpse of her. As Wai-yee Li argues about Bridal Du in *The Peony Pavilion*, "the willful intensity of passion is rooted in the act of looking into the mirror, of perceiving the self from the viewpoint of the desiring other".<sup>101</sup> Subsequently, the person in the mirror turns out to be delightful. At the very end, Zhanniang worries that "[Sima] Xiangru probably already takes a peek at [Zhuo Wenjun],<sup>102</sup> one does not know who will be the lucky girl capturing the chance to be with him."料得相如偷半面，不知風月屬何人。<sup>103</sup> This clearly

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<sup>99</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1247.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 1247-48.

<sup>101</sup> Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 54.

<sup>102</sup> Sima Xiangru (c.179-117 BC) was the most famous and leading poet, literary master, musician and politician in Han Dynasty. He was also famous for eloping with Zhuo Wenjun (c.175-121 BC), the widowed daughter of Zhuo Wangsun 卓王孫, a wealthy iron manufacturer. The couple was only able to support themselves by running a wine shop. Ultimately, Zhuo's father was forced by public shame into recognizing their marriage.

<sup>103</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1248.

expresses that her serene mindset is now disturbed by the idea of the scholar Xu Shi, whom she has yet to see. As compared to the story about Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun, though not explicitly, Zhanniang's words still ignite her hope of becoming Xu's lover, since Niaoyan's depiction undoubtedly clarifies Zhanniang's erotic longing by bringing the image of Xu Shi into her mind.

Ordered by Zhanniang's aunt Huang Baoyi in the heavenly world, the immortal Geng attempts to bring Xu Shi and Zhanniang together by employing magic. After ordering the mirror (i.e., the spirit of the mirror) to go to Luoyang, Geng transforms into an antiques vendor and gives the precious mirror to Xu for free, saying: "This extraordinarily precious mirror cannot be compared to those regular ones, so it cannot be sold. Since you are predestined to have this mirror, I will just give this to you for free." 這是寶鏡，不比尋常。相公是有緣的，論不得價，竟相送便了。<sup>104</sup> Out of curiosity about the enigmatic words of the antique dealer, Xu Shi in his leisure time takes out the precious mirror and fondles it, marveling: "Look, [the mirror] is placed in a small and exquisite box made of jade and is attached with golden tassel. Needless to say, it must have come from the palace. Why does the breeze waft the smell of fragrance? It must be the rouge and powder left by a lovely girl who fondled it." 你看：碧玉玲瓏匣，黃金宛轉繩。不消說是宮禁中流傳出來的。為甚拂拂有些香氣，多應是女娘愛玩，留些粉澤脂香。<sup>105</sup> All of these characteristics of the mirror's surface, with a likeness of the traces caused by repeated fondling on the jade cup, reveal to Xu that the former owner ought to be a lovely girl. Shortly afterwards, to his amazement, he discovers a girl's image in the mirror, exclaiming that:

Ya! There is a most beautiful girl in the mirror, could it be that I am merely dizzy?  
[Taishi yin] I am startled, who sends this gorgeous girl to my side? How

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<sup>104</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1266.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 1272.

picturesque her gently painted eyebrows are! The chilly and awakened moonlight pours on the pear blossom. Her postures and clothes are all elegant; she has grown into a priceless beauty. At the red gate, orioles sing, crimson gauzes hang, and the spring scenery arrives at your house in a riotous manner.

呀！鏡裡絕好一個女子，難道我眼花不成？[太師引] 猛嗟呀，這是誰撒下，豔非常生香俊娃。看澹掃蛾眉如畫，冷惺忪月在梨花。盡舉措衣裳閒雅，出落的春風無價。朱扉亞、鶯聲絳紗，亂分春色到儂家。<sup>106</sup>

With a very strong sense of *déjà vu*, Xu begins attempting to recall when and where he saw this beautiful girl. Her exquisite beauty and deportment strike him as unique and he can only think that she must come from a good family. He addresses her and tells her how fortunate he feels that she appears in the mirror and that he can look at her as much as he wants to. Even though the separation of the sexes and the distinction between the different classes would make such an encounter impossible in real life, the mirror enables them to meet at this moment. Staying half-unconscious, Xu believes that the girl in the mirror is real instead of solely existing in his imagination. He even wonders if the girl in the mirror could join him for fear that she might be cold in the mirror, singing: “[*San duan zi*] Fortunately you walk here with your three-inch ‘golden lotuses,’<sup>107</sup> however, don’t you fear anything? ... Mistress, you should step out from the mirror. It is cold and lonely standing in there. It will be terrible if your fragrant soul is frozen.” [三段子] 虧你三寸金蓮走將來，難道不害怕？…小姐還該下來，那鏡子裡站著，好不冷也！只怕凍徹香魂，須不當耍。<sup>108</sup>

Shortly after indulging in his fantasy, Xu’s consciousness is little by little restored. He speaks to himself:

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<sup>106</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1273. For the translation, I consulted Tschanz’s in his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 151. Some changes were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>107</sup> golden lotuses: refers to woman’s bound feet, also known as “lotus feet”, a symbol of beauty in imperial China.

<sup>108</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1273.



Hey! I become foolish again. This image is unreal. How can I take it as real? On second thought, however, it cannot be counted as unreal. Generally speaking, someone's likes, body and spirit, dreams and thoughts all move with that person. Take my jade cup [that I exchanged it for the rubbings] for example, only because I was always very fond of it so that my mind seems to aimlessly wander lately; being quite confused and stupefied, I feel as if I were in the cup. This mirror must be the most favorite thing of the young lady. It has ended up in my hands, so her innermost concern must have found its form in this reflection. Although all of this seems so unreal, it nevertheless has to be considered real.

咳！我又癡了，這影是假的，怎生認真起來？仔細一想，卻又算不得假。大凡人心所好，形神夢想，與之俱移。就如我換去的玉杯，止因平生愛玩，近來出神閑想，恍恍惚惚，如在杯裡。那鏡子一定是這小姐心上極愛的，流落在我手中，他心頭牽掛，逗出個影兒。雖是假，也要算是真的了。<sup>109</sup>

In his monologue, “unreal” does not mean fake; rather, the relationship between real and unreal resembles that between form and shadow, the solidity of the object and the non-solidity of the image. Xu Shi's daydreaming continues for he realizes the object's affective power can be so strong that it creates a split between form and its shadow. In support of his conjecture, he discovers that the girl in the mirror, who he believes to be a shadow, is about to move: “Look, [her] eyes are moving, her feet are moving; she is about to step out of the mirror. How happy I am!” 你看眼兒活動，腳步兒有些挪移，像個要下來的了，我好喜也！<sup>110</sup> At this point, Xu's observation makes us wonder whether the girl in the mirror is real, instead of merely an illusion in Xu's mind caused by his projection of erotic desire onto the surface of the mirror.

In the meantime, as Immortal Geng arranged, while Xu speculates about the identity of the girl in the mirror, Zhanniang goes through a series of bizarre and strange experiences. Driven by the burning desire for the lost mirror onto which she attaches a lot of affection, Zhanniang's disembodied soul presses the button entering into a wonderland, more precisely, the immortal world. In this sense, her body splits into two parts: her physical body (form) rests bedridden and

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<sup>109</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1273. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 152. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 1274.

semi-comatose in her hometown Jinling, while her disembodied soul (shadow) retains her exterior appearance and interior mind. In this state she drifts about searching for her lover, or the mirror, or both.

It is important to note that the literary convention of the “disembodied soul” 離魂 is not, as a matter of fact, Wu Weiye’s original creation. It is, instead, inherited from a literary prototype: a girl named Shi from the story “Pang E” 龐阿 in Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (c. 403-444)’s collection of tales entitled *Records of the Netherworld and the Visible World* 幽明錄.<sup>111</sup> This simple story is meticulously adapted and fully developed in Zheng Guangzu 鄭光祖 (c.1264-?)’s play *Dazed behind the Green Ring Lattice, Qiannü’s Soul Leaves Her Body*. 迷青瑣倩女離魂<sup>112</sup> In Zheng’s play, the heroine’s strong desire is equipped with unimaginable power so that her disembodied soul departs her home to seek her lover. More than three-hundred years after Zheng’s rewriting of the original story, the playwright Wu Weiye, who lives during the Ming-Qing transition, breaks new ground by adapting this traditional story and adding the additional active element of the precious mirror. The use of the mirror as a plot device was an excellent bit of storytelling in that it allows the author to provide a more nuanced insight into the complexities

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<sup>111</sup> For the Chinese version of “Pang E” story, see Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936), ed. *Gu xiaoshuo gouchen* 古小說鉤沉 (Collected Lost Old Stories), in *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 (Complete works of Lu Xun) (Beijing: People’s Literature Publishing House, 1973), 417. See also Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) et al., eds. *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive recordings from the Taiping reign period) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1961), 358. 2830. For the English translation, see Karl S.Y. Kao, *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 145-46.

<sup>112</sup> For the Chinese version of Zheng’s play, see Zang Maoxun 臧懋循 (1550-1620), ed. *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選 (Selection of Yuan plays) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1958), 4. 1512. For the English translation, see Stephen H. West and Wilt L. Idema, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays* (Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), 195-236. This play serves as one of the major models for *Spring in Moling*. In Zheng’s play, two lovers are promised to each other even before their birth. As they grow up, they fall in love with each other. However, the girl’s mother objects to their marriage and makes the scholar’s passing the civil service examination as the condition for their marriage. After the scholar takes leave to attend the examination, the girl’s disembodied soul is mainly motivated by her suspicion and worries that her lover might abandon her after his success in career and marry another woman. The scholar and the girl’s disembodied soul reunite with each other in the capital and live a happy life for a few years. At the end, the scholar achieves his success and returns home with the girl. To everyone’s surprise, the girl’s physical body and her soul are integrated.

of Xu and Zhanniang's romance. In this play, during Xu's encounter with the precious mirror at the antique store in Luoyang, Zhanniang gets sick at home due to her lost mirror. In scene fifteen "mirror missing" 思鏡, Niaoyan believes that the lost mirror is causing Zhanniang's sickness. She relates that "[My mistress] says well: someone else's image appears in her eyes when she is looking at the jade cup; having no sense of where her soul goes when the mirror is mentioned." 他也說得好：看見杯兒，別人的樣子倒在眼前；提起鏡來，自己的魂靈不知何處。<sup>113</sup> Niaoyan's words reaffirm the evocative power of these two objects. Feeling drowsy and tired, Zhanniang says that:

My body moves with a floating and light feeling. I do not know why I feel that I stay in the mirror. [Erlang shen] Within this quiet place, the curtains are layer upon layer. The lingering illness feels like drowsiness brought up by the drunkenness in those spring days. [I see] there is a shadow staying outside my body. For no reason I can vaguely see a person who is stepping toward me, frowning or smiling.

我虛颺颺一個身子，不知怎麼，正像在鏡子裡一般。[二郎神] 重簾靜，漫淹煎似春醒未醒。見等翠分紅身外影，無端對面，依稀顰笑逢迎。<sup>114</sup>

As for this unknown person, she is bothered by the confusion and then endeavors to make sense of her memory, saying that: "I cannot remember who he is. I am struggling to recall who that man is. My dream circles around the incense smoke. Having no patience with the one who is calling me, I all of a sudden wake from a dream with a start." 我也記不得那個。我夢繞遊絲難記省，知道他誰家薄幸。一枕暗魂驚，不耐煩聽人喚作卿卿。<sup>115</sup> Seeing her mistress struggling with thinking of the mysterious man, Niaoyan tries to disentangle Zhanniang from that perplexity, telling her:

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<sup>113</sup> Wu Weiye, *Spring in Moling*, 1275.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 1276.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

Mistress, you are so clever that you will easily fall into the delusion and cause troubles accordingly. You, do as your wishes, in your leisure time play too much by taking the unreal as real. The whole thing makes me feel anxious about you whenever you appreciate the flowers. I worried to death because what you see in fact derives from your sentiment...You [and the one in your imagination] come together as shadows, no forms.

小姐，你千伶百俐，遊思妄想，只管生出事來。你所事聰明人物整，隨心慣性，閑拖逗貪耍成真。倒教我一度看花一度驚，沒亂煞生情見景...兩下兒牽來有影無形。<sup>116</sup>

Here, Niaoyan reaffirms that one's mind is the prerequisite for generating the non-solid reflection in one's eyes.

Niaoyan's words, however, have very little commonality with what Zhanniang feels at this moment. Zhanniang says: "In the daytime I am able to see things but can only follow a ray of light in the night. I have no idea where I am going. Stumbling around, only until that moment when cock crows can I return home." 我日裡還是眼中看見，晚頭竟隨著一道光走，悠悠揚揚，不知到那裡去，直待雞鳴時候才收得轉來。<sup>117</sup> Zhanniang's description indicates that her body and soul are about to separate. Niaoyan, however, still considers her mistress's illness as "being collapsed and entranced." 虛脫出神 She tells Zhanniang: "Mistress, you are incredibly beautiful and charming. Even if you simply take a step, the people [around you] will certainly be impressed; In addition, you are so occupied with sensitive thoughts that the realm you see is just guided by your imagination." 小姐如花似玉，行一步，別人的眼睛也亮一亮兒；何況心坎玲瓏，虛空想像，自然現出這個境界來。Niaoyan insists that what Zhanniang experiences is either a mental illness or a psychological illusion. She rejects the notion that "the mirror can really summon one's soul." 鏡子真會攝你的魂兒。<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Wu Weiye, *Spring in Moling*, 1276.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 1276-77.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 1276.

Zhanniang's soul, according to the above, is in fact summoned by the heavenly immortals. Ordered by immortal Geng, the spirit of mirror guides Zhanniang's disembodied soul out of her physical body and into the heavenly world. In the meantime, Zhanniang's physical body remains seriously ill on her bed, where "[she] falls into coma and cannot be awakened by any means". 沉迷起來，再三叫喚不醒。<sup>119</sup> This would tend to indicate a boundary between the world of the living where Zhanniang's physical body stays and the world of the dead (the heavenly world) where Zhanniang's disembodied soul drifts around. As mentioned, Wu Weiye's use of "the disembodied soul" builds upon previous literary conventions in ways that go beyond focusing on just the unimaginably strong power of one's desire. With the depiction of two worlds actualized through the mirror, Wu's real purpose turns out to be unexpectedly intricate and bewildering.

In the widespread version of the "disembodied soul" story, the protagonists manage to meet in the end after enduring a series of hardships. And yet, the mirror in this play infuses literary convention with new vitality. Zhanniang's experience in the mirror should be understood as a mechanism obliquely alluding to the way of overarching the entire play rather than merely a narrative device within this romantic tale. Distinct from the normal function of the mirror providing the beholder's reflection on its surface, the mirror here should be treated as a transparent screen in which people standing on either side can see through it. Two worlds, the mortal world and the immortal world, are consequently constructed. In scene seventeen "shadow's appearance" 影現, the plot begins with Zhanniang's disembodied soul departing from her physical body, thus preventing her from recognizing her surroundings. The fact that Niaoyan is strangely missing from the scene also intensifies Zhanniang's fear. She sings:

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<sup>119</sup> Wu Weiye, *Spring in Moling*, 1278.

[Nan ge zi] The red wall seems blocks off the Milky Way; magnificent pavilions decorated with green curtains seem empty. Fearing the east wind the fine willow branches look soft and weak. In the moonlight the shattered dreams are blown away. I lie in bed due to the unknown sickness, feeling faint and weak. Listlessly I fix my hair; floatingly moving I have no sense of where I am going. All of a sudden I am struck with some fear; but it ends up being a rush of chilled feeling. Where am I? I don't even see Niaoyan coming with me.

[南歌子] 銀漢紅牆隔，珠樓翠箔空。柳絲無力怯東風，吹去一床殘夢，月明中。奴家著床鬼病，死沒騰那，懶設設扶起頭梢，虛颺颺不知腳步。猛可裡添些害怕，落來的一會淒涼。這是甚麼所在？連裊煙也不見跟來。<sup>120</sup>

Bewildered by the misty surroundings, she accidentally discovers the rubbings that belong to her family on the desk in front of her. Out of curiosity, she attempts to take the rubbings that are seemingly quite easy to pick up. To her surprise, she fails and even has difficulty in touching the items. Realizing this, she narrates the following scene:

Ah, obviously this is set two of the Jin and Tang rubbings (in regular script) belonging to my family. Why can I not touch it? Let me trim the candle wick and try again. (failing to trim the wick) It is too strange that the candle wick cannot be trimmed. It seems to me that there is a thin curtain of sheer silk fabric covering up everything, though everything seems to stay in bright surroundings. The incense smoke blow toward me, turning out to be floating clouds and heavy fog. Tucking up my sleeves I try in vain to take a whiff of the fragrance.

呀！明明是我家晉、唐小楷下卷，為何取他不著？待把燈頭剔亮了再看。（剔不去介）卻又作怪，那燈花剔他不去。像眼前有一層輕綃薄幔，件件明亮，件件是遮住的。便是寶鴨香煙，吹到我身邊，倒做了澹雲重霧，把袖兒籠去，一些薰不上來。<sup>121</sup>

The sheer curtain and the incense smoke both allude to the presence of a transparent screen standing in Zhanniang's way. Zhanniang cannot step forward, and as she tries in vain to do so she discovers that the place behind her, which is shrouded in pure darkness, prevents her from stepping back. What is worse, she cannot recall where she comes from. In this circumstance, one might have already sensed that Zhanniang is trapped inside a place constructed by the transparent screen in front of her and the pure darkness behind her.

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<sup>120</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1281.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

On the other side of the mirror, Xu Shi returns from a party and notices the different standing posture of the girl in the mirror. He says to himself: “I have never seen her back. Why is she standing with her back to me? Her figure and posture look light and graceful, except for her careless dressing and melancholic look. Beautiful girl, beautiful girl, what do you pine for?” 我從不曾見他後影，今日為何背立在此？腰肢體度，更是翩躚；只是懶髻愁鬟，不施裝束。美人，美人，你有甚憔悴來？<sup>122</sup> In responding his question, the girl in the mirror “turns around and sends a sweet smile [to Xu]”. 忽地回頭，笑的輕圓。<sup>123</sup> To his delight, Xu then recognizes that the jade cup in the girl’s hands belonged to him:

Ya! To my surprise, the jade cup held in the beauty’s hands looks like mine. Oh, Cai Keqing told me the other day that General Huang has a daughter when he [helped me] exchange [my treasures] with the rubbings of the Huang family. Could this beautiful girl be the Mistress Huang? If so, let me show her the inscriptions on the rubbings. She must be able to recognize her own handwriting.

呀！美人手裡擎著一隻玉杯，竟像是我的。嘎，前日蔡客卿將去換黃將軍家法帖，原說他有個女兒，難道美人竟是黃家小姐不成？只是果然是他，那帖後有小姐的題跋，我且翻出來，他自家的筆跡，一定認得的。<sup>124</sup>

Xu reads the inscriptions: “inscribed by Huang Zhanniang.” 黃展娘題。Zhanniang in the mirror is surprised with what she just heard, asking:

[Xiashan hu] That scholar just got a glimpse of me. How could he know my courtesy name? Oh! That is what I inscribed on the rubbings. As I can recall, the traces of the rouge and powder are still fresh on the yellow silk. This scholar actually looks like the image in my jade cup...I would like to throw a sprig at him. Why can I not pick off the sprig and the flower? All in front of me is just like a painting. Could it be said that I as a traveler try to draw painted barge adrift on the lake?

[下山虎] 秀才才半面，小字誰傳？嘎！就是我題在帖後的了。記得題黃絹，粉痕尚鮮。這生竟像我玉杯裡的影兒。…我待要撚花枝打少年，為何花也攀不下，無計將花拈。丹青儼然，難道是隔水遊人書畫船。<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Wu Weiye, *Spring in Moling*, 1281.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Wu Weiye, *Spring in Moling*, 1282.

At this moment, Zhanniang is fairly confused by what she sees: if it is unreal, for what reason is Xu Shi able to know her courtesy name from the inscription left on the rubbings? If it is real, how come she is prevented from getting in touch with Xu Shi?

Meanwhile, Xu observes that: “The beautiful girl fixes her eyes on the rubbings. She must be the rubbings’ owner.” 美人一雙俊眼，不住在法帖上，一定是他的了。<sup>126</sup> Thus, at this point, both Xu Shi and Zhanniang have successfully identified each other through their respective objects, the jade cup and the rubbings. Amidst this excitement, Xu invites Zhanniang to step out of the mirror, “drink with him,” 也該與我吃一杯兒 “play the zither,” 有素琴一張，可試一彈 and “inscribe again on the rubbings.” 再題幾行兒。<sup>127</sup> It is rather disappointing that Xu receives no reply from the other side. Zhanniang, however, feels the same way, saying: “He has not paid any attention to all of my words...In the old days I felt regret about the wordless shadow in the jade cup. Could it be possible that I am also a shadow as I stand here?” 我在此有許多言語，他全然不省……我往日嫌玉杯裡的影不會講話，難道我站在此，竟是個影兒？

<sup>128</sup> Xu Shi believes that the reason for their mysterious encounter is that they are in possession of each other’s favorite object, asking rhetorically, “Is it a coincidence that I own her precious mirror, and she owns my jade cup?” 難道我的玉杯在他處，他的寶鏡又在我處，天下有這樣湊巧的事麼？<sup>129</sup> According to Xu, he believes that it is the objects, the jade cup and the precious mirror, that bring these two lovers together by offering them the chance to see each other’s reflections.

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<sup>125</sup> Wu Weiye, *Spring in Moling*, 1282.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Wu Weiye, *Spring in Moling*, 1283.



The mirror in which Zhanniang is stranded is the reminiscent of “The Painted Wall 畫壁” in *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* 聊齋志異,<sup>130</sup> by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715), a renowned fiction writer of the Qing dynasty. In the story “The Painted Wall”, the protagonist scholar Zhu has an experience similar to Zhanniang’s. The scholar Zhu, also driven by his attachment to a girl on the surface of a painted wall, enters the wall and thereby successfully crosses the boundary between the real and the unreal. After making love to the girl, the girl is frightened by a raid and Zhu is left entirely alone after the girl escapes through “a small door in the wall.” Stranded in the dark and unable to see anything at all, Zhu cannot recall from whence he came: “[A]s though another wall has been built inside the wall that Zhu has entered, and he is now imprisoned in a blind intermediate zone between the two worlds inside and outside the mural. Since the outside world has already receded in his memory, his only thought in this moment of crisis is to rejoin the newly acquainted world of the painting.”<sup>131</sup> At this moment, the traces of his first entrance into the wall are wiped out by the second boundary, the wall within the wall, for he can no longer remember where he belongs. In this sense, the previously existing boundary is effaced. Similarly, Zhanniang is also trapped between the mirror and “the transparent screen within the mirror”. She can neither step out of the mirror nor recall where she is from. Taking into account their experiences, the boundary between real and unreal is crossed and then changed. One can no longer distinguish where the unreal begins and real leaves off. In this sense, the wall or mirror is far beyond the ordinary, rather, it is more like “a passageway, a transitional zone that ostensibly connects two places but seems to lead nowhere.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> For the Chinese version, see Pu Songling, *Liaozhai zhiyi huijiao huizhu huiping ben* 聊齋志異會校會注會評本 (The complete collated and annotated Liaozhai’s Records of the Strange) (Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1978), vol.1, 14-17. For the English translation, see Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 216-18.

<sup>131</sup> Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 185.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 9.

The desire-stimulating surfaces of both mirror and wall become the most significant reason for the beholders crossing the boundary that demarcates two distinct zones: one inside and one outside, the real and the unreal. It deserves particular attention here that a boundary, as Glen Dudbridge points out, “not only defines the separation of autonomous regions, but also their point of contact.”<sup>133</sup> This dual nature of the boundary is perfectly embodied in the case of the wall or the mirror: a “suddenly permeable membrane, it becomes the point of entry that allows Zhu to cross over into the properly separate realm of the painting, but when Zhu returns to the human world, once again through the wall, it reverts to a solid barrier dividing the two lovers forever.”<sup>134</sup> Zeitlin also states that “when viewed by Zhu in the temple, this same image also emphasizes the now-unbridgeable gulf separating the two lovers.”<sup>135</sup> In a similar way, in Wu’s play, though there is permeability between two intersected worlds aroused by the desire of the protagonists, the sense of unattainability still exists and prevents people in these two separate worlds from successfully communicating due to the gap between them, in a metaphorical sense.

In this circumstance, a compelling question emerges: what causes the permeability and unattainability between two intersected worlds? As discussed in previous chapters, Hay juxtaposes people and decorative objects to interpret the term “subjectivity” of Ming-Qing China, which “involved a tension between two competing pulls,”<sup>136</sup> specifically speaking, *shen* and *ren*. With a balance shifting “now towards one, now towards the other”, this kind of tension between *shen* and *ren* subjectivity, between “people’s capacity for a relative psychic autonomy and self-determination” and “the networked self,”<sup>137</sup> becomes a prevalent topic in many plays during this

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<sup>133</sup> Glen Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa: Study and Critical Edition of a Chinese Story from the Ninth Century* (Oxford Oriental Institute Monograph, 1983), 63.

<sup>134</sup> Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 193.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>136</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 40.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

period and even earlier. This is not a coincidence and can be exemplified by many plays, such as *The Story of the Western Wing*, 西廂記,<sup>138</sup> *The Peony Pavilion* 牡丹亭 and *The Peach Blossom Fan* 桃花扇 and so on.<sup>139</sup>

The dynamic between *shen* and *ren* is strongly associated with another pair of conceptual terms, *qing* 情 (literally, sentiment or desire) and *li* 理 (literally, reason or rationality). In *Spring in Moling*, Zhanniang's incapacity of stepping out of the mirror justifies the existence of the unattainability caused by the *li*. More importantly, her dilemma once again makes the conflict between *qing* and *li* visible. Zhanniang's predicament in the mirror is later reiterated in scene twenty-seven "narrating the shadow" 敘影 after they complete the heavenly marriage and return to the mundane world. In this scene, Xu and Zhanniang (still as her disembodied soul) finally get a chance to ask about each other's backgrounds. Accompanied by the tune of a pipa playing, Zhanniang starts relating her former encounters, telling Xu that:

[Yingji yulin chun] In the past my father lived an extravagant and luxurious life, now he is old and weak. Only with me, an ignorant little devil,<sup>140</sup> can he not part. My family owns a mirror, which is stored in embroidered bag. I received it and hid it tight in front of my chest; in a hurry did I knot a coiling dragon tie. Who would have thought that it got lost and could not be found? I longed so much for it that I fell ill.

[鶯集禦林春] 我爹行舊日豪奢，為年老困劣。只我癡小冤家難割捨。我家有一面寶鏡，舊菱花故家囊篋。把與俺胸前緊揣，百忙裡打就個盤龍結。誰知失去杳無蹤，枉教我苦思量、病沾惹。<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *The Story of the Western Wing*: written by the Yuan Dynasty playwright Wang Shifu 王實甫(1260-1307). It is a famous romantic comedy about two lovers Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 and Scholar Zhang 張生, without approval from parents, finally consummate their love after enduring a series of hardships.

<sup>139</sup> *The Peach Blossom Fan*: written by the Qing Dynasty playwright Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648-1718) in 1699. This play features a love story between scholar Hou Chaozong 侯朝宗 and courtesan Li Xiangjun 李香君 in the chaotic upheaval of Ming-Qing transition.

<sup>140</sup> little devil: specifically refers to how the parents name their naughty child.

<sup>141</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1311-12. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 168. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

Her description of “hid it tight in front of my chest” reinforces the eroticization of the mirror and makes even clearer why the loss of the mirror leads to the loss of the soul. Continuing on, Zhanniang relates her experience after her disembodied soul departs. The two lovers share the following conversation:

Zhanniang: [Qiufan huangying'er] I felt so timid deep in my heart, I almost fell down but luckily, a white-haired granny grasped my sleeve.

Xu: What did she say when she grasped your sleeve?

Zhanniang: She said, “You turned your back on your father and deceived [your] maid servant. Hence, it cannot be avoided to experience a series of troubles in no time.” She led me to a place where there are magnificent buildings with dragon and phoenix patterns, palace ladies were lined up. [She said:] “this is your aunt, pay a formal visit to her.”

旦：[囚犯黃鶯兒] 我心性忒嬌怯，腳蹤兒擦一跌，有個白頭奶奶將咱衫袖扯。

生：他扯著你說甚麼？

旦：他說道：你背了俺爹，瞞過侍妾。當不得乞留磕搭路周折。把我一引引到一個所在，龍樓鳳闕，宮娥擺列，這是你姑娘拜謁。<sup>142</sup>

In Zhanniang's narrative, the white-haired granny (i.e., Immortal Geng) tells her that she turns her back to her parents and her maid Niaoyan in the dark about her doings. It deserves a special mention here that these words could be interpreted as coming from Zhanniang's conscience and express her moral judgement of her own action.

The conversation progresses. Xu then tells Zhanniang what he encounters with the person in the mirror:

Xu: [Qianqiang] On that day I was pie-eyed and had to squint to see her, and I called out to her: “Mistress.”

Zhanniang: You called out to her? How did she react?

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<sup>142</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1313. For the translation, I consulted Tschanz's in his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 168–69. Some changes were made to better reflect the original text.

Xu: She received me with a smile and blushing checks. I asked her to accept my greetings. (bowing with hands folded)

Zhanniang: Hey! You greeted that shadow. How come you have now bowed in front of me!

Xu: I was afraid that her white and smooth skin would freeze through and through,<sup>143</sup> therefore I grasped the end of her sleeves and pulled her toward me in order to warm her up. (pulling Zhanniang to him) Miss, as a man of such strong amorous feelings, I was totally infatuated.

生: [前腔] 我那日醉眼乜斜, 叫一聲兒小姐。

旦: 你也叫他麼? 他便怎的?

生: 他笑靨迎來紅半頰, 告求他受你男兒一啣。(揖介)

旦: 啐! 你拜那影兒, 倒作起我的揖來!

生: 怕他冰肌凍徹, 把袖梢攬定偎他熱。(作攬旦介) 娘子, 是這樣強風情, 俺十分兒待癡也。<sup>144</sup>

The depictions of Zhanniang's encounters within the mirror reveals how, in scene seventeen, though she fails repeatedly, upon Xu's teasing, she struggles to approach what exists outside the mirror. In other words, she is eager to communicate with Xu Shi. Nevertheless, in scene twenty-seven, she seems disturbed due to moral constraints, and she worries that her inappropriate behavior will possibly be seen as an elopement. Thus, she is reluctant to admit that she is the person in the mirror. At this point, Zhanniang's actions remind us of Bridal Du in *The Peony Pavilion*: "daring and defiant of conventions only in her dream and when she is 'a disembodied wandering soul' after death. After her resurrection she becomes all propriety, a virtuous young lady protesting her virginity as well as the necessity of the proper nuptial rites."

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<sup>143</sup> white and smooth skin: this is an allusion from Zhuangzi 莊子(370 BC-287 BC) Xiaoyao You 逍遙遊: "Far away on Mount Kuyeh there dwells a spirit man whose skin is like congealed snow and who is gentle like a virgin". Trans. Victor Mair, *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 6.

<sup>144</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1312. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609-1672)," 170. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>145</sup> This generates confusion. Why is there a disparity between what Zhanniang actually did and what she narrates about what she did within the mirror? Could it be related to the reason for her being stranded in the mirror? Taking into account the argument of *qing* and *li*, the contradiction between what Zhanniang actually did and what she narrates about what she did within the mirror is readily solved. Zhanniang's entrance in the immortal realm is mainly lead by her *qing* to Xu Shi. In addition, it may well be her *li* preventing her from the actual union with Xu Shi, which is materialized as the transparent screen standing in her way.

In line with the above discussions of the mirror and the wall, in scene twenty-three “shadow evoking” 影覺 the reader is presented with the notion of “halo” 圓光 magic.<sup>146</sup> After Zhanniang's disembodied soul departs, her parents, entirely in the dark as to what happened to their beloved daughter, are so worried that they decide to hire a Taoist practitioner to use a divination “halo” in order to discover the truth of their daughter's strange illness. Since this kind of divination requires the assistance of a virgin boy to observe the image on the screen, Zhen Qi's servant A Ji is asked to help. At the beginning, A Ji discovers an unusual light on the screen and exclaims: “Ah! There is a light! A round circle. It looks like the moon...a young lady appears.” 咦！果然有些亮光，圓圓的一圈，好像月亮一般……有一個姐姐走出來了。<sup>147</sup> General Huang, who cannot see anything on the screen, is fairly confused about the identity of the mysterious girl on the screen and says: “What I am concerned about is the one who is ill (i.e., her daughter). How come there is another [person] in the mirror?” 俺心中事，在病人中，何來

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<sup>145</sup> Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 54.

<sup>146</sup> The tradition of “halo” magic could date back to Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202) *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 (Record of the listener) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981), 1529-1530. This magic is used to discover the cause of illness, exorcise evils, or invoke blessings.

<sup>147</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1300.

鏡中身？<sup>148</sup> The Taoist practitioner explains that, “it is nothing else but your daughter’s spirit.” 這不是別個，一定就是令愛的元神現出來了。<sup>149</sup> A Ji continues to describe what he observes on the screen, a scholar and a beautiful girl get married in a magnificent palace, which is exactly consistent with the content of scene twenty-two “heavenly marriage” 仙婚 in which two lovers indeed consummate their marriage in heaven.

The Taoist practitioner also concludes that: “According to the halo, your daughter has reached maturity and wants to look for a lover; that is why she dreamt up this fantasy and got sick. All of this was clearly shown in the halo”. 據這光景看起來，想是令愛年紀長成，思想要招女婿，虛空模擬，鬱鬱成病，所以現出這光景來。<sup>150</sup> A Ji is much less diplomatic in his choice of words and calls the girl’s illness as “yearning for a husband.” 想老公病<sup>151</sup> Nonetheless, General Huang by no means believes that the illness of his chaste daughter is caused by longing for a lover. He accuses the Taoist practitioner and A Ji of making up what happened on the screen and chases them out with great anger, shouting “I know! There is no such image in the halo. It is these guys who make things up to smear the reputation of my family.” 我曉得了！光裡邊原沒有這些影像，都是這一班人憑空捏造，玷家門。<sup>152</sup>

A close reading of this scene makes clear that it should be understood as deep and profound, and not as a farce. It resembles the dream or illusory experience that half a year in the immortal realm lasts just a moment (on the “halo” screen) in the mortal world. As Zeitlin argues about the painted wall: “The spatial and temporal disjunction between the human world and the

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<sup>148</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1300.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1301.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

painting resembles that of dream and waking...As in the condensation of dream time, a few minutes in the human world are the equivalent of more than two days in the immortal realm of the painting.”<sup>153</sup> Therefore, the temporal discrepancy between the mortal world and the immortal world is negated. Also, considering the realness of Xu Shi and Zhanniang’s marriage in heaven, what appears on the screen is indeed real.

The people in the mundane world, for instance General Huang, might doubt the reality of this halo and see it as mere dreams or illusions, but this is only because the surface (i.e., the screen) creates a sense of unattainability and unreachability of the other world. For people like the Taoist practitioner and virgin boy, who are believed to possess supernatural power, the permeability of the surface enables them to see what takes place in the other world. It bears mentioning, however, that in “halo”- related plots, the permeability and unattainability between two realms is not caused by the dynamic between *qing* and *li* but the possession, or lack, of magical power. This ambiguity is made by the playwright on purpose to blur his real intention, as it were.

The other importance of “halo” magic lies in its bearing precise similarity to a theatrical experience. What shows on the screen seems to be a “play within a play”. As Zeitlin argues, the theater resembles a dreamy experience or the unreal: “parting and reunion, sorrow and joy, are not real emotions; wealth and honor, poverty and dishonor, are not real states. In such a fashion, the world also passes before our eyes.”<sup>154</sup> Her point can be proved by the audiences’ theatrical experience of watching the play *Spring in Moling* on stage. In terms of the “play within the play”, however, the audiences imaginatively place themselves in the scene where the play on stage is in progress. At this moment, what the characters can observe from the screen is verbalized on the

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<sup>153</sup> Zeitlin. *Historian of the Strange*, 189.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 170.



stage and accordingly shared by the audiences off the stage. In this sense, their imagination is greatly expanded as such.

The “play within the play” is in accordance with “the transparent screen within the mirror” in *Spring in Moling* and “the wall within the wall” in *The Painted Wall* that repeatedly disturb the boundary between real and unreal. Deeply immersed in the play, the audiences fling themselves into the onstage world and forget about the boundary between the onstage world and the offstage world. And yet, when confronted with the “halo” screen that causes permeability and unattainability in the meantime, the audiences would have the same confusion as much as that of Zhanniang or Scholar Zhu.

Chapter one and the first half of this chapter focus on the evocative power of the surface and how the non-solid image of the object comes into being. Therefore, no matter what kind of surface is, be it the attractive image on the mirror, the exquisite painting on the wall, or the compelling theatrical performance, the beholders are constantly guided to see the non-solidity instead of the solidity. Later, unexpectedly, the reflective image is even materialized as an otherworldly realm, as opposed to the mundane world. Combining the understanding of the tension between *qing* and *li*, the experiences in the “intermediate zone” between two worlds can be comprehended. In other words, it is *qing* that directs the people to the non-solid world, while it is *li* that extricate them and enable them to realize the solidity of the world.

## CHAPTER 3

### RUBBINGS: PRESENT, PAST, AND MENTAL CONFLICT

Chapter one and chapter two mainly center around the study of the sensual pleasure and erotic desire stimulated by the surface of decorative objects. The third signature object, the rubbings, displays Wu's innovative conception when compared with contemporary works because the rubbings are no longer playthings for amusement and enjoyment. The rubbings, unlike the exchange of the jade cup and precious mirror between the two lovers, endure several changes of ownership.<sup>155</sup> They are carefully stored by the Huang family, and then exchanged for Xu Shi's mansion and jade cup. Afterwards, Dugu Rong cheats Xu Shi out of one set when Xu pays him a visit in Luoyang. In the end, Xu Shi is granted the title of *zhuangyuan* and receives the rubbings returned from Dugu. Finally, Xu Shi sends the rubbings to General Huang as a betrothal present. This kind of circular trajectory of rubbings' circulation, as opposed to linear exchange as we see in the case of the jade cup or the precious mirror, forms a community of like-minded people who share the same interest and capacity to recognize the rubbings' value, and exclude some people from this community due to their ignorance of the significance of these objects. Furthermore, the plots concentrating on the rubbings invest the entire play with a strong sense of nostalgia, epitomizing the vicissitudes of the previous dynasty so as to interweave the individual lives of the characters with the destiny of the nation.

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<sup>155</sup> Tschanz and Tina Lu have the similar observations in their works. See Tschanz, "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 184; Tina Lu, "Solids and Surfaces in Chinese Drama," 13:55-16:04.

Calligraphy is by nature a form of personal entertainment. And the rubbings usually serve as indispensable supplies to appreciate and practice calligraphic masterpieces. What is a rubbing?

Wu Hung depicts it by comparing to a block print,

Like a block print, a rubbing is made by directly transferring a sign – be it a text or a picture – from a sign-bearing object to a piece of paper. Unlike a block print, however, what is imprinted in a rubbing is a mirror image. When a print is made, ink is applied to a block, and the paper is then placed face down on it. The reversed writing or image carved on the block is thus reversed again and appears as a black imprint on a white background. When a rubbing is made, however, the paper is laid face up over an engraved object, and the ink is then applied to the paper to register the entire surface of the object; the sunken inscription or image shows up as white against a black background. No reversing of images is involved. If a print duplicates carved signs, a rubbing duplicates a sign-bearing object and converts the object from a three-dimensional entity into a two-dimensional representation.<sup>156</sup>

This kind of surface, like “a skin peeled off the original object,”<sup>157</sup> not only captures or freezes certain historical moment but is also replete with significance provided by the inscriptions as evidence to reconstruct their bygone times. On the one hand, the inscriptions make the rubbings even more valuable because they are a documentation of their history of transmission. On the other hand, as a delicate way of conveying the spirit of the object, the collectors and connoisseurs often “wrote next to or even on a rubbing, commenting on its origin, history, condition, and significance...such messages would become part of a rubbing: [they] supplied a layer of exegesis bridging the rubbing and the onlooker.”<sup>158</sup> In this vein, the richness “derived from the original stele and those accumulated later seem to be intermingled in a rubbing in an undifferentiated manner.”<sup>159</sup> Accordingly, the inscriptions on the rubbings compose an

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<sup>156</sup> Wu Hung, “On Rubbings: Their Materiality and Historicity” in *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan*, ed. Judith T. Zeitlin & Lydia H. Liu, with Ellen Widmer (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 29.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>158</sup> Wu Hung, *Double Screen: Medium and Presentation in Chinese Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), 47.

<sup>159</sup> Wu Hung, “On Rubbings: Their Materiality and Historicity,” 48.

indispensable part of the surface. In this way, the interior reality of the onlookers (or owners), either in form of an effort of retrieving the unrepeatable and vanished past or a self-expression of their own in the here and now, will be brought up in the course of appreciating rubbings. Moreover, by taking rubbing as a model, one tends to read the former owner's inscriptions and even leaves one's own. As a way of manifesting scholarly tastes, the inscriptions on the rubbings, in the forms of preface, postscript, or even just a seal, enable the traces of ownership to be clearly visible and recognizable. Put another way, "a history of the rubbings' collecting and viewing" can thereby be reconstructed.<sup>160</sup> In this sense, in the process of its circulation, the inscriptions not only reflect the writer/owner's interior but also mentally and emotionally link together these people so as to formulate a community of like-minded people.

The rubbings are first introduced in the play as a token meant to keep alive the memory of deceased family members. In scene three "education in the boudoir" 閨授, General Huang sadly recalls a dream from the previous night in which his sister, Baoyi, and his brother-in-law, Emperor Li, make their presences known and tell Huang of their hope to arrange a marriage for Zhanniang. This dream reminds him of the same promise that Emperor Li and Baoyi made before they died. Realizing the insurmountable gap between the dead and the living, General Huang remains doubtful as to whether it is really a dream or if, in fact, it is Baoyi and Emperor Li's apparitions. He asks himself, "As I think, she as an imperial concubine is already dead. How could she look after the girls in the world of the living?" 我想他是亡過昭陽，怎照顧得人間燕婉？<sup>161</sup> His wife seems to believe that the marriage affinity can be arranged by heavenly immortals, remarking, "Baoyi loves Zhan'er (i.e., Zhanniang) very much. It is beyond doubt that

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<sup>160</sup> Wu Hung, "On Rubbings: Their Materiality and Historicity," 50.

<sup>161</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1239.

she appears in your dream and sends us the good omen of an ideal son-in-law.”展兒是保儀極愛的，他在夢裡鶴馭還歸，要做我們乘龍佳兆，這是喜信，何足多疑？<sup>162</sup> General Huang continues to think sorrowfully over the rubbings, pointing out: “Look how fresh these inscriptions are, the seal is exactly like before. The things are there just as before though their owner is dead. How heartbroken I am!”你看題跋宛然，圖記如故，人亡物在，可傷可傷！<sup>163</sup> The seemingly fresh inscriptions by Baoyi engender General Huang’s sorrow and longing for her. Hence, in order to cherish their memory of his deceased family members, General Huang and his wife determine to have their daughter Zhanniang, the beloved niece of Baoyi and Emperor Li, in charge of the rubbings, declaring: “On my book shelves there are two sets of calligraphies by Zhong [You] and Wang [Xizhi]. I will also give them to our daughter so that she can copy and trace them day and night.”吾書架上鐘、王墨蹟二卷，也要付與孩兒朝夕臨摹。<sup>164</sup>

As the play continues, General Huang’s sadness is not only caused by his personal loss but also by a strong sense of nostalgia for the former dynasty. He sighs to his wife, “all of us are deeply indebted to the favors that we received from our in-laws, and yet, Emperor Li’s tomb in Bianliang has not been tended by anyone.”夫人，我一家大小，盡沾戚裡餘恩。今日他汴梁抔土，無人澆奠。<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, interweaving his memories of olden days gone by, he turns to Zhanniang and says:

Although your aunt is a woman, she was especially adept at calligraphy. Emperor Li had her in charge of the original calligraphies by Zhong You and Wang Xizhi, which have still been preserved at our house. The inscriptions on the back were written by Baoyi in her own hand. My child, copy these too. [Qianqiang] Precious rewards from the palace are gold-speckled writing papers and brush stand made in

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<sup>162</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1239.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

colored glaze. You may laugh at Yang [Xin] whose calligraphy like a maid who apes her mistress, but you should admire [Cai] Wenji for being a female *zhonglang*.<sup>166</sup> (As for me,) how can I ever forget that I fought for my post as a general? (My child,) practice a few lines using *guannu*.<sup>167</sup>

你姑娘雖是女流，專工筆墨，後主教他掌管鐘、王真跡。傳流二本，尚在我家，後面題跋，都是你姑娘親筆。孩兒，你也臨一臨兒。[前腔] 禁林清賞，冷金箋琉璃筆床。笑羊家婢作夫人，羨文姬女類中郎。（便是我呵，）將軍爭坐可曾忘，（孩兒）你玉潤《官奴》習幾行。<sup>168</sup>

With the aid of the inscriptions, General Huang is at this moment mentally and emotionally connected to the previous owners of the rubbings, Baoyi and Emperor Li. The inscription stirs within him a swelling of gratitude for the favors received from the emperor, and he regrets not tending Emperor Li's tomb. He also mourns the loss of his dead sister who used to be the emperor's closest company. In fact, in the flood of emotions he also laments that he did not do more in military service to the previous dynasty and he hopes that his child, Zhanniang, will keep alive the memory of the bygone dynasty. In other words, General Huang's mourning for his own family gets fused together with other emotions and sentiments that are raised by his recollections of the rubbings, for these rubbings provoke reminiscence and are a symbol of loyalty. Thus, they represent far more than just a materially valuable treasure inherited from the palace. In this scene, the rubbings, as a particular kind of *yiwu* 遺物 (literally, the leftover thing) of a defunct dynasty, epitomizes the essence of *yiwu* in itself. As Wu Hung summarizes, first, a rubbing can be a "leftover thing" of an original object in the sense that "it is the skin of an object pulled off object's body" so that registers vanished past; second, "a leftover thing of a rubbing collection";

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<sup>166</sup> Yang Xin 羊欣(370-442) who closely imitated Wang Xianzhi's 王獻之(344-386) calligraphy but still somewhat fell short; Cai Yan 蔡琰 (177-249) whose courtesy name is Wenji 文姬, a poet and musician who lived in the late Eastern Han dynasty 東漢 (25-220 AD); Zhonglang refers to Cai Wenji's father Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133-192), a famous scholar of the Eastern Han Dynasty.

<sup>167</sup> *guannu*: refers to the calligrapher Wang Xianzhi's nickname. Later on, it was widely used to indicate the model of calligraphy for practice.

<sup>168</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1240. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 186-87. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

lastly, “a leftover thing of a former self” in that the surviving rubbings represent “the ruins of the collectors’ former selves who suffered from personal or national tragedies.”<sup>169</sup>

As with General Huang, Xu Shi’s interest in the rubbings is originally an outgrowth of his personal affection for them. In scene four “dissatisfaction with the mocking” 恨嘲, out of fondness for the rubbings, Xu Shi and Cai Keqing visit Huang’s family with the intention of borrowing the rubbings. Thereafter, the following conversation takes place with Niaoyan:

Niaoyan: The rubbings are kept by my mistress. It is a pity that the master is not home at this moment.

Xu: If your master were home, would he let me borrow [the rubbings]?

Niaoyan: My master (sings) [Qianqiang] has famous decorative objects from the previous dynasty. Since he collected them with a purpose, he will certainly welcome people who want to see them.

Xu and Cai: We will be back once your master returns. But please tell him that we came to see him.

Niaoyan: Aren’t you the young Master Xu from next door?

Xu: [gently smiling] Yes. [turning around and talking to Cai] Mister Huang is truly an expert; not only is the master expert and virtuous, but even the young maidservant’s words are kind.

貼：法帖倒是我家小姐收管，只可惜老爺不在家。

生：若是你老爺在家，肯借麼？

貼：我老爺呵，[前腔] 他有舊朝名玩，既是有意收藏，也要人來看。

生、末：待老爺回來，但說徐次樂、蔡客卿兩人來訪罷了。

貼：莫不是間壁徐十郎官人麼？

生：（微笑介）正是。（回對末說介）那兼公畢竟是在行的，休說主人翁，心性賢；便是小梅香，話兒軟。<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Wu Hung, “On Rubbings: Their Materiality and Historicity,” 60.

<sup>170</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1243. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 187–88. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

This conversation demonstrates that in focusing on the rubbings, General Huang, Zhanniang, Niaoyan, Xu, and Cai form a community of like-minded individuals who share the same interest and capacity to recognize the rubbings' value. This scene, in fact, is in line with the cultural milieu of the period in which Wu Weiye lives.

In addition, a touch of romantic coloring is added to this individual entertainment because Xu Shi and Zhanniang's love story is very much intertwined with the story of what happens to the rubbings. Upon learning that the rubbings were inscribed by Xu Shi's father as well, Zhanniang's favorable impression of Xu Shi is in concert with her fondness for the rubbings as a family treasure received from the imperial court. In scene five "looking at the mirror" 攬鏡, Niaoyan encourages Zhanniang to inscribe on the rubbings, because "your mirror's brocade bag with the coiling dragon pattern is gathering dust; your calligraphy practices conceal your sorrow for spring's lapse. With delicate calligraphic fonts the traces of rouge and powder are left on the rubbings. Our readings and writings in the boudoir should be revealed to the outside people". 你盤龍鏡囊生暗塵，韭花帖尾藏春恨。印纖纖青編粉痕，要見咱香閨解文。<sup>171</sup> Zhanniang meditates in silence for a while as she contemplates how to proceed. On the one hand, she tends to leave her feelings in the form of inscriptions on the rubbings: "[Yu jiao zhi] The slim fingers hold the writing brushes fully dipped with ink. The red lips are about to open reciting some beautiful verses." [玉交枝] 玉搓春筍，吮霜毫芳流絳唇。<sup>172</sup> On the other hand, she is afraid that the rubbings will be lent to an outsider, which is considered an inappropriate behavior for an unmarried girl. She worries that "my readings and writings are too immature to lend to the

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<sup>171</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1247.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.



neighbor”. 女兒識字塗鴉嫩，怕真個借與東鄰。<sup>173</sup> Even so, with a mixture of her scholarly interest cultivated by her family and her admiration for the talented young scholar Xu, she finally resolves to leave inscriptions on the rubbings.

In many respects, Xu Shi experiences a spiritual journey similar to that of Zhanniang. Thus, Xu Shi's feeling toward the rubbings alternate between affection based upon loyalty to the previous dynasty and a more individual sentiment. In scene seven, after finding out what General Huang asks for in exchange for the rubbings, Xu Shi is unable to make up his mind immediately. As he contemplates what to do, he asks himself: “This jade cup is what the emperor rewarded my father with. The descendants should carefully treasure it. How can I give this to the other people?” 我想這杯是先學士賜物，子孫世守，豈可與人？<sup>174</sup> Upon further thinking, he also notes that: “The title on the back of the rubbings was written by my father. I as the son should seek my ancestors' handwritings rather than treasure their playthings.” 那法帖後面標題，又是我父親手筆，做兒子的守定祖、父的玩器，還不如搜尋祖、父的筆跡。<sup>175</sup> His thinking here suggests two potential reasons why he is determined to give up his interest in the plaything by trading in the jade cup for the rubbings. For one, in Xu's mind, the rubbings are a symbol of loyalty and this has to take precedence over the jade cup as a plaything. In addition, the rubbings elicit a much stronger affective response than the jade cup because his father's inscriptions constitute part of the surface, which serves as a physical mark transmitted through generations within a family. After all, these inscriptions make it possible for there to be emotional and mental communication amongst family members, regardless of whether they are living or dead. In fact, earlier in this play (in scene two), Xu Shi already refers “bronze and jade” 銅玉 as “hard goods”

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<sup>173</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1247.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 1252.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

硬貨 and comments: “These hard goods can easily be appreciated. They are not worthy of too much attention of a collector. People who possess and know the paintings and calligraphies deserve to be regarded connoisseurs.” 這些硬貨易看，算不得甚麼眼睛，畢竟有法書名畫，才是收藏家。<sup>176</sup> It can be concluded from Xu’s words that for the viewers the “hard goods” bear less strong “affective potential” than the paintings and calligraphies do.

Later on, Xu Shi’s yearning for the rubbings of the Huang family is once again romantically strengthened due to Cai Keqing’s depiction of Mistress Huang, a lovely girl who happened to be a genuine connoisseur of antiques. According to Cai, Mistress Huang shows readiness to engage in this transaction even though her father hesitates to do so. Cai tells Xu that, “[General Huang] does not agree. The mistress orders her maid to come out and say that ‘he knows how to appreciate. Give it to him.’” 他還不肯，倒是裡面小姐差使女出來，說老兄是賞鑒的人，與了他罷。<sup>177</sup> Cai’s report strikes Xu Shi as familiar that “on the back of the rubbings there are a few lines of comments”, which should be “written in [the] neat and lovely hand” 就是這法帖後面，有幾行題跋，寫得楚楚可愛 of Mistress Huang.<sup>178</sup> At this moment, it is perceivable that Xu and Zhanniang as soul mates spontaneously interweave the rubbings with their own romance.

As above, through the rubbings and the inscriptions on them, one can sense that the nostalgia toward the previous dynasty and the pursuing of individual happiness are harmoniously coexisting within one’s mind. Put another way, the political integrity and nostalgia toward the

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<sup>176</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1237.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 1253.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

collapsed nation and aesthetic pleasure in individual life, balance each other upon a collective appreciation for the rubbings.

However, this kind of harmonious relation between one's private self and public self is then destroyed. In scene twelve, we know that Xu Shi is associated with the rubbings by Dugu Rong, a family friend. In scene twenty "encounter emperor's hunting" 遇獵, after being cheated by Dugu Rong out of one set of the rubbings, and having failed to get it back, Xu's desperation is intensified because of the sense that the rubbings are a reification of his loyalty and the historical significance of the dynasty from whence they came. He says:

[Huanglong gun] Having no justified reason you entrap me, throwing your weight around you bully me, a defenseless person. I hate myself for being as blind as a bat and regret over my mistake (that I trusted you)...I travelled all the way here for seeking a shelter. Who would ever expect things to turn out this way? The family friendship and bond between fellow brothers is all ruined!"

[黃龍滾] 你憑空設網羅，憑空設網羅，逞勢欺柔懦。我眼內無珠，自悔當時錯...千里相投，這場結果。通家誼，師弟情，多蒙荷!<sup>179</sup>

In the meantime, looking down upon the mortal world, Emperor Li witnesses Xu's roaming around the suburb sadly and aimlessly and thus decides to lead him to the heavenly palace in order to preside over a marriage between Xu and Zhanniang's disembodied soul. In scene twenty-six "feast in the heavenly palace" 宮餞, the farewell banquet, Xu Shi expresses his reluctance to part with Emperor Li. The following scene ensues, however:

Li: How can I bear to part with you? However, scholarly honor and official rank is important, and you still have a long way ahead of you. You cannot stay here for too long.

Xu: Ya! Speaking of scholarly honor and official rank, are you saying that I should discard you, go somewhere else, and look for another opportunity [to serve]? Even though you want to avoid arousing suspicion on giving official posts

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<sup>179</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1288.

to relatives, it would certainly be feasible to assign any kind of low-ranking post to me.

Li: Hai! Don't you know? This is not the world [of the living] here.

小生：孤家豈忍舍卿夫婦？只是功名事大，前程路遠，不能久留。

生：呀！若說起功名，難道丟了皇上，走到別處，另有個際遇麼？就是外戚避嫌，那閒散官職也還做得。

小生：咳！卿那裡曉得？不是這個世界了。<sup>180</sup>

Unexpectedly, Emperor Li rejects Xu's request to serve him. Furthermore, Emperor Li urges Xu Shi:

[Sheng ru hua] You have to leave. Don't waste your time. [The immortal world] is not where you can obtain mundane happiness. So it is difficult for you to stay here as an emperor's son-in-law. Why not return to your hometown and plan to be a *zhuangyuan* scholar as early as possible? ... Wearing light furs and riding on stout horse [you will] ride the crest of your success. Don't complain about how far and rough your way home is, for you and your congenial wife mutually support each other, for you and your congenial wife mutually support each other.

[勝如花] 君須去，莫浪遲。這裡呵不是你尋常富貴。難留做駙馬隨朝，卻還他書生故里，早圖個狀元歸第。…裘馬輕肥，趁春風得意。休埋怨關山迢遞，恰相攜美滿夫妻，恰相攜美滿夫妻。<sup>181</sup>

Emperor Li even plans out Xu Shi's life in the mortal world: "I arranged for you another mansion outside the Bianliang city, including two hundred *qing* of fertile land and a dozen of maid servants<sup>182</sup>... They are enough for your daily life to use. And Immortal Geng will protect you [on the way home]. No worries." 卿此去有別館在汴梁城外，良田二百頃，奴婢十余人，盡足供你兩人受用。又得耿先生護送前行，不必過慮。<sup>183</sup>

In the end, Emperor Li makes clear the significance of the rubbings to him and implies that individual or worldly happiness bears much more importance than the kingdom:

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 1308-09. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 196. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>181</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1309.

<sup>182</sup> qing: unit of area. 1 Qing = 6.7 hectares

<sup>183</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1309.

I owned two sets of rubbings in the regular script of the Jin and Tang dynasties. In the past they were kept at the Huang family. Later on, you exchanged your jade cup for them. Afterwards, Dugu Rong cheated you out of one set of them. Don't worry about it. Each thing may have its owner. These rubbings will come back to you in the end. Hai! I [as an emperor] in my all life was unable to let go of these treasured objects and even did not care about the kingdom, let alone the scholar's (like you) fondness of the rubbings and paintings. The rubbings in the small regular script were my most favorite possessions. [Yi duojiao] Calligraphies are written in the clerical script; stone rubbings are in the cursive script<sup>184</sup>. I wrapped them in Sichuan brocade and hand them over to Baoyi, with my small seal "purified heart" I sealed them with purple ink. Still fresh are the precious traces, still fresh are the previous traces, these are your father's old inscription.

孤家有晉、唐小楷二冊，向在黃家，卿曾把玉杯打換，後被獨孤榮騙去一冊，少不得物各有主，這帖終到卿手。咳！不要說書生見識，愛的是書畫；就是孤家，社稷江山都不在意，只生平幾件寶玩，畢竟放他不下。那小楷就是孤家第一賞鑒的了。[憶多嬌] 小隸書，草聖碑。俺把蜀錦裝成付保儀，小印澄心封紫泥。寶墨淋漓，寶墨淋漓，有你先公舊題。<sup>185</sup>

To Xu Shi's surprise, Emperor Li knows all about what happened to the rubbings and Xu's hardships in Luoyang. Accordingly, Xu is all of a sudden struck by confusion about what he has experienced so far, which precipitates the following conversation:

Xu: I was a humble scholar leading a wandering life in poverty in Luoyang. My previous encounters took place in an entirely unexpected way. Now you asked me to go back, which confuses me about where I come from. [Qianqiang] Who would expect that I suddenly joined the army in a military government after leading a miserable life as a traveler? Later I become a proud son-in-law. Then I return to my units Xiqing.

Li: You don't need to hesitate. You will know [all cause and effect] later.

Xu: [turning his back] He said that I will know everything. Yet, I currently feel suspicious about my form and shadow. It seems vague to me that my soul enters the magnificent buildings. How can I easily part? I do not know when I can again pay respect to you. I do not know when I can again pay respect to you.

生：微臣雒陽城裡流落書生，一朝遭際，本出意外。今日教臣回去，覺往時蹤跡也疑惑起來。…[前腔] 豈料淒涼客裡，驀忽地北府參軍，落可便東床愛婿，又早是西清歸騎。

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<sup>184</sup> regular script, clerical script, and cursive script: refer to three popular script styles of Chinese calligraphy.

<sup>185</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1309. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 195. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

小生：不必沉吟，後日自然曉得。

生：（背介）他道俺心知意知，俺卻是形疑影疑。魂夢依稀，到紅樓遊戲，怎禁得別離容易。問何年再拜丹墀，問何年再拜丹墀。<sup>186</sup>

Xu Shi's suspicion about "form and (its) shadow" emphasizes again the predicament that Zhanniang encounters within the mirror. Out of his sense of political integrity and nostalgia to the previous dynasty, Xu attempts to stay in the immortal world pledging loyalty to Emperor Li. Unexpectedly, Li persuades him to go back to the mortal world in order to pursue wealth, reputation, individual interests, and conjugal happiness. In attempting to step back, Xu feels confused about where he comes from, which is identical to Zhanniang's feeling when stranded in the mirror. This moment of "uncertainty and of turning round and looking back" not only "unfolds the internal logic of self-conscious enchantment" but also implies the opposite counterforce preventing him from the final realization.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, the playwright's intention buried deep inside should not be ignored. Two choices are laid out in front of Xu Shi: either abandon worldly happiness to fulfill his obligations of loyalty to the previous emperor, or pursue individual well-being by sacrificing political integrity. Here, through Emperor Li's mouth, it is not difficult to see the playwright's answer. Emperor Li's persuasion undoubtedly soothes Xu's suffering and sadness caused by this unattainability between the dead and the living, the former and current dynasties.

Aside from the above, which occupies a large portion among the rubbings-related plots, the importance of villain Dugu Rong ought not be neglected. After Xu completes the transaction with the Huang family and goes to Luoyang to seek his fortune, he decides first to pay a visit to Dugu, a former student of his father. Dugu has recently been promoted to the Post of Military Commissioner in Luoyang. His career is also greatly facilitated by Xu Shi's father, Xu Xuan,

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<sup>186</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1309.

<sup>187</sup> Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 7.

who helps him with recommendations to rise in the military hierarchy. Although satisfied with his current position, he is still eager to climb even higher.

Driven by this ambition, he believes it is necessary to please his superiors even if that means to turn one's back to people whose favor one once received, saying:

Find something interesting, pull the strings, and fawn upon [the superiors in order to get a] promotion. I heard that the [Song] emperor has ordered Wang Zhu to collect classic and modern rubbings, which offers me a perfect chance to show [my attitude]. People in Luoyang like to collect antiques. How about I look for some rubbings from the Jin and Tang dynasties and offer them up [to my] superiors? On the one hand, it appears that I know how to appreciate the poems and essays. On the other hand, it seems that I respectfully offer [those treasures] to them.

要尋個題目，通些線索，獻些殷勤，才好做內召的張本。聞得朝廷命王著搜集古今法書，倒是個絕好的機會。我想雒陽好古的人家最多，何不尋些晉、唐墨蹟，做一本獻上。一者見留意詞章，二者明有心進奉。<sup>188</sup>

The rubbings play an important role in Dugu's plan because he regards them as an effective way to attract the authorities' attention and to promote his case. His words indicate his incapacity to grasp the essence of the rubbing. Instead, he merely treats it as a functional object and a means to his personal ends. In Dugu's mind, the rubbings are reduced to mere functionality. They are commodity that can be exchanged for a faster promotion.

Moreover, during Dugu and Xu Shi's conversation about the current situation of Xu's family, Dugu is merely concerned about those valuable things, for example, Dugu asks Xu: "teacher (i.e., Xu Shi's father) was born into a rich family with a distinguished ancestry; he must have left you a huge inheritance. Could it be said that it (i.e., Xu's inheritance) cannot be kept?" 老師舊家盛族，遺產必多，難道就不能守麼？<sup>189</sup> As follows, he mentions the properties that belong to Xu's family, for instance, "the wealthy family," 家世膏粱 "the brothers holding high

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<sup>188</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1267.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 1268.

post,” 兄弟朱輪笏滿床 “the fertile land,” 田連湖熟 “the place for coinage hammering,” 冶占梅根 “the mansion with a clear stream,” 第夾清漳 “Master Xu’s treasured sword,” 徐公寶劍 “the Mountain Jing wine accessory sets,” 景山酒具 and “the fine horses with rich experiences”. 宛雒風霜<sup>190</sup> Also, Dugu asks Xu Shi’s servant Tingjiao: “your master must have many servants. Why are you the only one left? ... you are shabbily dressed too”. 你老爺有許多家人，難道只存你一個？…你身上也襤褸得緊。<sup>191</sup> Unwilling to give up, Dugu continues to ask Xu Shi if his father left him any paintings and calligraphies. Xu answers, “All my father’s collections were dispersed and lost. However, I have obtained some authentic rubbings from the Jin and Tang dynasties.” 家君所藏，盡都散失。倒是晚弟近日置得些晉、唐真跡。<sup>192</sup> To his satisfaction, Dugu asks his servant to borrow one set of the rubbings from Xu Shi, though later in this scene he forcibly keeps it and expels Xu Shi from Luoyang. In this vein, one can clearly see that Dugu lacks the aesthetic capability to appreciate the rubbings as well as the gratitude to his teacher and the loyalty to the defunct dynasty that he should have conveyed. On the contrary, in Dugu’s mind, no matter how compelling the surface is, all significance of those antiques is reduced to a pecuniary consideration.

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<sup>190</sup> fine horses with rich experiences: refer to black horses with white mane. They were usually sent from west Asia to Chinese courts as valuable gifts; Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1268.

<sup>191</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1268.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.



## CHAPTER 4

### SCORCHED-TAIL PIPA: SHRINE AND ULTIMATE ENLIGHTENMENT

The scorched-tail pipa does not take up a large portion of the play and is less firmly integrated into the romantic plots. In fact, the pipa is played only three times from the beginning to the end. Nonetheless, the pipa should still be seen as the most significant agent in that it not only brings about all of Wu Weiye's complexities and predicaments but also creates a mode for playwriting that persists throughout this specific historical period. Admittedly, the pipa shares some commonalities with the aforementioned objects such as the jade cup, the precious mirror, and the rubbings since they all bear an exquisite surface. Yet, the interaction between the beholders and the instrument are quite distinct. Specifically, beyond being merely gazed upon and touched, the pipa is also played. Hence, its sound is added in a manner that creates additional elements to formulate an aural dimension as a kind of surface. Indeed, instruments attain their truest vitality only when they produce sound. This kind of vitality is produced by the physical interaction and mental communication between the instrument's sound and the listeners.

First, the reader understands that this scorched-tail pipa is no mere ordinary instrument. Its name, "scorched-tail" is an allusion to a *jiaowei qin* 焦尾琴 (literally, scorched-tail zither),<sup>193</sup> a renowned fine instrument made of timber that possesses an unusual quality: when burnt, it emits beautiful sounds. In this sense, "scorched-tail" has become a synonym for an extraordinary

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<sup>193</sup> The anecdote about the scorched-tail qin can be found in the biography of Cai Yong 蔡邕 in Fan Ye's 范曄 *Hou hanshu* 後漢書 (Book of Later Han) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1965), 60, 2004.

instrument. More deeply, this name's metaphorical allusion is to a virtuous person who endures the flames of many hardships and misfortunes in their life. Not only do they keep their qualities, but they also carry forward their spirit to the people around them.

Wu Weiye seems to have a particular fixation with instruments, especially the pipa. Pipa features heavily in his essays, poems, and plays. At the core of these depictions is a profound closeness between the people (both players and listeners) and the pipa. This relationship can be explained in the following ways. First, the instrument's versatility plays a large role in the pipa's popularity. The pipa can accompany almost all kinds of musical performances, usually singing, which establishes its irreplaceable position in entertaining activities. Second, though there are many Chinese instruments, the pipa has a particular visual-metaphorical value in that the unique pose of the player resembles bodily intimacy: the pipa is "clasped in the arms, lying across the lap, and manipulated with the slim fingers,"<sup>194</sup> revealing to us the evocative power of its look. Finally, the pipa was introduced into the central plains of China by nomadic peoples from the western regions more than two thousand years ago. Hence, in many works of Chinese literature, pipa is often invested with ideas and emotions attached to homesickness and nostalgia. Wu Weiye builds upon these inherited literary conventions by delivering to us his unspeakable suffering in a meticulous and allusive way. Wu's friend, Mao Xiang 冒襄 (1611-1693) once adopts a "geomantic metaphor" to "identify the pipa as the focal point of Wu's play":<sup>195</sup> "The pipa is the 'dragon cave'. The spectators should realize that all the arteries of the play converge

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<sup>194</sup> Judith Zeitlin, "The Cultural Biography of a Musical Instrument: Little Hulei as Sounding Object, Antique, Prop, and Relic," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 69, no. 2 (2009): 408.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 406; Tschanz, "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 274.

here.” 琵琶是全部龍穴，觀者須知其來脈。<sup>196</sup> Therefore, in this play, each time the pipa is played deserves a thorough interpretation.

The first playing of the pipa occurs in scene six “music appreciation” 賞音. At the very beginning, Musician Cao introduces himself by singing,

[Qing ge'er] The “Rainbow skirt” was the best tune in that bygone era.<sup>197</sup> When visiting the “Five tombs”, who can still recognize the old people? Among empty roof beams the swallows fly close to the people. They twitter as if they wanted to speak, but they do not even know in what era they are. [Xijiang yue] I remember in the past I served in the “Huaqing” Palace, pipa disciples performed their songs. Their sound did not return to the Gong tune; instead, there were more close to the Yu tune, when they performed the last section of the tune “Nian jia shan”. I see again the fine scenery in Jiangnan,<sup>198</sup> in the season of falling blossoms I passed by this place. When we meet, do not sing the tune “Ding feng bo”, who would respond my song “Ao nong” (literally, “Regretful me or you”)? I am Musician Cao. After the Tianbao era, there remained two disciples of Duan Shi, Musician Cao and Mu. Their children and grandchildren have transmitted quite a bit of their musical traditions. When the Emperor Li searched all over the Jiangnan area in order to recover the old scores of the “Rainbow skirt” tune which was lost during the upheavals (of the An Lushan rebellion), he met me, a direct descendant from a music master of the “Imperial Pear Garden” and a person from a family of court musicians. Hence, he gave me this name: Musician Cao. At that time his majesty’s composition “Ruan lang gui” was just finished, he had me sing the song and beat the meter, the Younger Empress Zhou plucked the scorched-tail pipa, and his majesty played the flute himself. [On that occasion] he drank wine from the Khotan jade cup and was extremely merry. Many years passed, I still feel heartbroken about the old times and have resolved not to play any new melodies. Huang Fanchuo died in Chang’an and Li Guinian was wandering around in Jiangnan.<sup>199</sup> When one thinks about the immortal world and the mortal world, they are all like a dream.

[青歌兒] 《霓裳》部當年第一，五陵遊舊人誰識。空梁燕子傍人飛，呢喃欲語，不自知何世。[西江月] 憶昔華清供奉，琵琶弟子徵歌。宮聲不返羽聲多，

<sup>196</sup> Tschanz, “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 274. For the poem, see “Buhe Xu Shuxue xiansheng guan xiao you yan jijiu Wu Meicun Moling chun” 步和許漱雪先生觀小優演祭酒吳梅村秣陵春, in Mao Xiang 冒襄, *Tongren ji* 同人集 (The collection of Tongren), in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書 (Complete library in four sections) (Jinan: Qilu Press, 1997), 10.65b.

<sup>197</sup> Rainbow skirt: refers to the music of Tang dynasty “Rainbow skirt and feather gown” 霓裳羽衣曲.

<sup>198</sup> Jiangnan: refers to the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River.

<sup>199</sup> Huang Fanchuo: a musician at the court of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang dynasty. He was exiled later in his life due to his surrender in the rebellion; Li Guinian: a musician at the court of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang dynasty. He led a frustrated and destitute life after the rebellion.

演《念家山》入破。又是江南好景，落花時節經過。相逢莫唱《定風波》，一曲《懊儂》誰和？自家曹善才是也。天寶之後，段師弟子有曹、穆二善才，子孫頗傳遺法。後主皇爺以《霓裳》舊譜遭亂失傳，遍訪江南，得某于梨園樂籍，道是善才嫡派，即賜名善才。那時禦制《阮郎歸》初成，命某按節而歌，小周後撥燒槽琵琶，皇爺自吹玉笛，酌于闌白玉杯，極歡而罷。數年以來，傷心舊事，絕意新聲，黃幡綽陷沒于長安，李龜年流落于江左，天上人間，思之如夢。<sup>200</sup>

Cao belongs to a long line of musicians who trace their ancestry back to the most distinguished court musicians of the Tianbao era of the Tang dynasty. Like the Mu family, the Cao family are also the disciples of the famous musician Duan Shi. Emperor Li finds Cao when he is looking for the scores of the most famous musical piece played at the court of the Tang emperor Xuanzong, the tune “Rainbow skirt”. Cao seems to have transmitted this piece to Emperor Li and he was also often part of the musical sessions the emperor had with his consort. After the fall of the Southern Tang, however, this musical culture which is heir to the most illustrious era of the Tang period collapsed and some of the best musicians like Huang Fanchuo or Li Guinian either died or had to live a vagrant life. Cao is known for his high standards and his strictness in music. He complains that people of the current age look down upon the older generation, which makes him feel that he lives out of tune with the times. At the end, in retrieving the memory of the “old times”, Cao juxtaposes the pair of “immortal world” and “mortal world” as well as that of “dream” and “reality”, implicating the unattainability of the bygone era.

In this heartbreaking moment, the past and the present are switching scenes in Cao’s mind. Hearing the pipa’s sound, Cao could not hold back his tears, recalling:

[Zao luopao] I remember the fine scenery of the “Qinhuai” river, playing the flute on the “Zhenglu” bridge. Hearing He Kan’s songs “At midnight” and “Crows roost”, the hometown was no more the same. At the banquets of Prince Qi who

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<sup>200</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1248. For the translation, I borrowed Tszchanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 199-200. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

could I meet at this moment? The bright moon is over the “Huai” River; partridges crow alone. Strolling in the spring breeze, willow catkins are flying in a disorderly manner; upon finishing the “Yizhou” song, [my] tears flow in thousand streams.

[皂羅袍] 記得秦淮佳麗，正露橋吹笛，《子夜》《烏棲》，何戡曲裡故園非，岐王席上誰相會。月明淮水，鷓鴣自啼。春風游騎，楊花亂飛。《伊州》唱罷千行淚。<sup>201</sup>

Here, Musician Cao’s laments over a bygone era are vividly and thoroughly conveyed through the vicissitudes of songs, which fully present the evocative power of the pipa’s surface, its sound.

As a “remnant” from the previous dynasty, Musician Cao does not have any place to use his talent in the current dynasty. Having nothing better to do, Cao resolves to teach Zhen Qi how to play pipa upon his wish to follow the cultural trends. In the meantime, Zhanniang and her maid Niaoyan happen to take an outing and overhear Cao’s playing. Zhanniang whispers to Niaoyan: “That pipa is played so beautifully. The lyrics are adapted from Emperor Li’s *ci*.”<sup>202</sup> The playing is so touching that it moves me to tears.” 那琵琶彈得好聽也。都是李後主小令，隱括成歌，嘈嘈切切，使我聞之不覺淚下。<sup>203</sup> Out of curiosity, she orders Niaoyan to find out if it is the case. Answering with pleasant surprise, Musician Cao says: “what a bosom friend [who can recognize the tunes]...These lyrics are indeed adapted from the Emperor Li’s *ci*.” 好知音！…這詞委實是皇爺的詞曲。<sup>204</sup> To the external audience like Zhanniang, Musician Cao’s nostalgic singing and playing of the splendor and the fall of the past is really meant to evoke

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<sup>201</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1249. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 201. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>202</sup> *Ci*: a type of lyric poetry of classical Chinese poetry. The rhythmic and tonal pattern of the *ci* is usually made based upon certain fixed musical song tunes. *Ci* was the most popular poetic form in Song dynasty and was revived during Ming and Qing dynasties when applied into the writing of *chuanqi* drama.

<sup>203</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1250.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

those memories of the old dynasty. The term *zhiyin* 知音 (literally, to know the tunes),<sup>205</sup> originating from a fully musical relationship between Bo Ya 伯牙 (413 BC-354 BC) and Zhong Ziqi 鐘子期 (387 BC-299 BC), reveals to us the value of mutual understanding and appreciation between friends. Upon hearing the sound, brought up by the resemblance of their sadness and nostalgia when looking back the defunct dynasty, Cao's tears stream down his cheek. In the meantime, Zhanniang is moved to tears as well. Zhanniang describes this process by noting that "[playing with] merely four strings expresses hundreds and hundreds of words; [singing] only one song can speak thousands upon thousands of feelings." 四弦千遍語，一曲萬重情。<sup>206</sup> Through statements like this Zhanniang shows her capacity to appreciate Cao's playing, in stark contrast, the clumsy and ignorant Zhen Qi has no appreciation for either the music or the lyrics, instead saying that "hearing the playing for a while, I could only hear some sounds 'bang, bang' rather than understand the meaning of them. How come the mistress knows better than I do?" 我聽了半日，只覺彭彭響，不曉得一句。怎小姐偏識詞中意思，比俺老真更覺知音些。<sup>207</sup> Zhen's ignorance of what he hears is associated with Dugu's incapacity of appreciating the rubbings. They both merely regard those decorative objects, although enriched with historical and cultural meanings, as functional items.

The second time the pipa is played occurs in scene twenty-seven after Zhanniang and Xu Shi leave the immortal world. One day, to the accompaniment of pipa playing, Zhanniang starts relating her former encounters. At this moment, her playing is overheard by Cao, who happens to

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<sup>205</sup> Zhiyin: Bo Ya was an extraordinary zither player and composer in the Spring and Autumn Period or the Warring States period. Zhong Ziqi was a woodcutter and excelled in appreciating the music played by Bo Ya. After Zhong died, Bo Ya split his zither, broke the strings, and resolved not to play zither any longer. This story exemplifies the ideal of friendship in ancient China. And the term *zhiyin* is widely used to describe the close and sympathetic friendship.

<sup>206</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1251.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 1250.

be taking a walk with Zhen Qi. Cao is firstly struck by the quality of Zhanniang's playing, noting that "this way of playing the pipa is the authentic one." 彈頭竟正路<sup>208</sup> And he quickly recognizes the tune and the instrument: "This particular way of playing the pipa is the one which was practiced at the palace, and the sound of the pipa is strangely familiar to my ears, exactly like the scorched-tail pipa which I used to play in front of his majesty." 那彈頭不消說起，是俺內府裡傳的。這琵琶的聲音一發奇怪，竟像我當初在御前彈的那燒槽琵琶。<sup>209</sup> Cao is surprised to hear this sound because the contemporary performers seem to be oblivious of the old tradition that he represents. Earlier in this play, during Cao's stay in Kaifeng he listens to many musicians and finds that those people do not seem to live up to his standards: "Everybody who listens to these zither players and singers praises them for their playing techniques and cheers in chorus, they barely know that next to them stand the best pipa player of the Academy of Heavenly Sound." 聽那彈箏的、唱曲的，個個誇能，人人道好，不曉得道旁邊立著俺仙音院第一手琵琶的老樂工哩。<sup>210</sup>

Cao's recognition of the tune and the particular instrument Zhanniang plays remind us of scene twenty-two where Xu Shi and Zhanniang are about to leave the heaven:

Baoyi: Zhaner, do you still remember the pieces of [pipa] music that I taught you the day before yesterday?

Zhanniang: I have already memorized some of them.

Baoyi: In your uncle's Academy of Heavenly Sound there was an old musician called Musician Cao, he knows this "chuantou."<sup>211</sup> I will hand this scorched-tail pipa over to you. This is an extremely rare treasure, very similar to the jade cup and the precious mirror.

小旦：展兒，我前日教你的琵琶，可記得麼？

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<sup>208</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1312.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1311.

<sup>211</sup> chuantou: refers to musical tradition, more specifically, the playing techniques and styles.

旦：兒已記得幾曲。

小旦：你姑爺仙音院裡有個老樂工曹善才，曉得這傳頭。我這燒槽琵琶交付你帶去。這是希世之寶，與玉杯、寶鏡差不多兒。<sup>212</sup>

Similar to Cao's "way of playing the pipa" 彈頭, Baoyi's "chuantou" 傳頭 also refers to the musical tradition (i.e., playing techniques or styles) that one can only inherit from the court.

To Cao's surprise, he hears the playing of a scorched-tailed pipa, an instrument that should have been stored in the coffer of the Song dynasty. He thus rightly wonders how it was possible to hear its sound and melody (i.e., specific musical tradition) elsewhere. We as the readers get to know that early in this play, Emperor Li orders Immortal Geng to facilitate Xu and Zhanniang's marriage by playing magic on the pipa:

I think the jade cup and the mirror are after all like the moon in the water and the Khapuspa flowers in the sky.<sup>213</sup> And yet, there is another precious object of the Southern Tang court, that is, the scorched-tail pipa. This pipa is in the big coffer of the Song dynasty at this moment. I have already ordered Immortal Geng to fetch the instrument; I have also asked Baoyi to teach Zhanniang several melodies. Later on, a marriage affinity will be completed through this pipa.

我想玉杯鏡子，畢竟水月空花。我南唐還有一件寶貝，是燒槽琵琶，在宋朝大庫中，已曾令耿先生飛身取來，隨令保儀傳授展娘數曲。後來一段姻緣，倒在琵琶上收成結果。<sup>214</sup>

Not knowing about the existence of the heavenly world, however, Cao believes that someone must have stolen the pipa from the coffer of the Song dynasty. Though the playwright skims over this scene on purpose, Cao's realization about the pipa for the first time clarifies the line between two worlds. That is, the slippery boundary between real and unreal in the previous scenes is established by the pipa's sound. Similar to those physical objects, such as bracelets and rings,

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 1309-10. For the translation, I consulted Tszchanz's in his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609-1672)," 203. Some changes were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>213</sup> moon in the water and Khapuspa flowers in the sky: both are Buddhist terms and refer to the illusionary quality of the human experience.

<sup>214</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1308. For the translation, I borrowed Tszchanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609-1672)," 161. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.



supplied in *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* brought back from the dream world to the waking world, the pipa, as a proof, “resolve(s) the unresolvable by proving the material reality of the dream(y) experience” in the other world.<sup>215</sup>

Among these series of three pipa performances, the last one in the final scene “heavenly shrine” 仙祠 is the most important. In Ming-Qing plays, the last scene traditionally ends with a *da tuanyuan* 大團圓 (literally, grand reunion): the hero and heroine finally consummate their love relationship and “thereby a new social equilibrium was established.”<sup>216</sup> Wu Weiye, in stepping forward, arranges scene forty-one after two lovers’ “real marriage” in scene forty “mortal marriage” 真婚.

Earlier in this scene, shrouded by loneliness and desperation, Musician Cao sighs, saying that,

The white-haired court servant is old He Kan, who plans to go into the mountains and stay in a temple. Saddened by the fact that the mist and trees of the emperor’s tomb are far away, I sing in a loud voice three strophes of “Looking toward Jiangnan.” I am Musician Cao. On my way back from Bianliang, I have seen with my own eyes the rise and fall, waxing and waning of dynasties. This has stirred up many kinds of my emotions. Accordingly, I plan to abandon the mundane life and become a Taoist. Therefore, I have already changed my garment to be a carefree Taoist.

白頭供奉老何戡，擬向山中住一庵。惆悵茂陵煙樹遠，長歌三闋《望江南》。  
自家曹善才。從汴梁回來，眼見興亡盛衰，添出許多感慨，思量棄家入道，  
因此改換裝束，做個清閒道人。<sup>217</sup>

Upon witnessing the vicissitude of the nation, Cao resolves to become a Taoist and look for a temple to live out his life, thereby forsaking all of his worries and troubles of the mundane world.

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<sup>215</sup> Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 152.

<sup>216</sup> Dietrich Tszanz, “Wu Weiye’s Dramatic Works and His Aesthetics of Dynastic Transition,” in *Trauma and transcendence in early Qing literature*. ed. Wilt L. Idema. et al (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 443.

<sup>217</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1355. For the translation, I borrowed Tszanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 204. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

Shortly afterwards, he chances on a meeting of Xu Shi and Zhanniang in front of the shrine for Emperor Li in Nanjing. In their encounter, Cao learns about their mysterious romance and requests to have the pipa from them as a keepsake from the previous dynasty. The following conversation occurs:

Cao: I think the jade cup belongs to the *zhuangyuan* (i.e., Xu Shi), the precious mirror belongs to his wife, and the pipa should be left here in the shrine so that [I] can tell the story of the Tang House.<sup>218</sup>

Xu: That would be perfect, but there is no one to take care of it.

Cao: I don't plan to go anywhere. All I want is to become a Taoist, play the pipa, and make offerings to Emperor Li. Only in this way would I not lose my fidelity [to the emperor] as an old entertainer.

Xu: Since you are willing to remain here, I will just leave the pipa to you.

Cao: (thanking) [Wu ye'er] I will convert the tune "Roosting crows" into the tune "Pursuing the female phoenix", comparable to your couple as a match that is inseparable through the luan glue.<sup>219</sup> I, on the other hand, will hold the pipa tilted [while playing the instrument], sleep with the instrument, and watch over it closely in my monk's room. It is worthwhile doing so because in this way I can pay back the favors I have received [from the emperor].

外：我想玉杯是狀元的，寶鏡是夫人的，琵琶還該舍在皇爺廟裡，做個唐家故事。

生：這也極好，只是無人收管。

外：貧道不去別處去了，就在這廟裡出家，常把琵琶彈一曲供奉皇爺，也不失我舊伶人的意思。

生：老丈既肯在此出家，就把琵琶相送便了。

外：（謝介）[梧葉兒] 俺將那《烏棲曲》改做《求凰操》，比似你做夫妻恰配上鸞膠。長則是將他斜抱，同著他睡覺，緊緊的守在僧寮。也不枉伏侍他一場。<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Tang house: refers to Tang dynasty (618-907). However, in Cao's singing, the Tang House indicates the Southern Tang, whose founding emperor claimed that he was the descendant of the Tang's.

<sup>219</sup> luan glue: refers to a strong glue made of unicorn's horn and phoenix's beak. It has been used to describe the intimacy between husband and wife.

<sup>220</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1357-58; for the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609-1672)," 206. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

At this moment, the shrine for Emperor Li, emerging with the pipa, spatializes and stabilizes the immortal world and the mortal world.

Musician Cao's loyalty is intensified upon Emperor Li and Baoyi's arrival. On his way to the annual Peach Banquet held by the Queen Mother of the West, Emperor Li hears music and stops at the shrine to see who is playing. Facing his old master, Cao engages his former master in conversation:

Cao: My lord, do you still recognize me?

Li: You must be Musician Cao from the Academy of Heavenly Sound. As I remember, eighteen years ago, on the third of March, (pointing at Xu Shi) your father, on the occasion of my birthday, composed a *ci* for me called "Everlasting joy", Muscian Cao played it on the pipa [according to the *ci*] and Baoyi offered her birthday wishes with wine in the Khotan jade cup. How could I ever forgotten?

外：萬歲爺，可認得老臣麼？

小生：你是仙音院裡曹善才。記得十八年前，也就是三月三，（指生介）你父親為我的聖節，進一首詞，叫做《萬年歡》，善才將琵琶度曲，保儀把於闐玉杯送酒稱賀，難道我就忘了？<sup>221</sup>

As Tschanz mentioned in his dissertation, this master-servant encounter happening on the Emperor Li's birth and his birthday party eighteen years ago form a "cycle."<sup>222</sup> And yet, in my viewpoint, these two times of reunion taking place in mortal world and immortal world in fact mirror the bygone historical real and collective memory, or imagination, toward the old dynasty, respectively.

In looking back on his life in a flashback, Li Yu asks Cao to recount what happens to some of his favorite places and objects that he enjoyed in his palace:

Li: Isn't that instrument you just played the scorched-tail pipa? I have not heard your play for a long time, play another song and tell me what happened after I left [the palace].

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<sup>221</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1357.

<sup>222</sup> Tschanz, "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 207.

Cao: Yes, my lord.

Li: [What happened to] my “Purified heart” hall?

Cao: [Houting hua] At the “Purified heart” hall the horse fodder is piling up.

Li: [What about] the “Crystallized essence” palace?

Cao: The “Crystallized essence” palace is overgrown with wild grasses.

Li: [What about] the many trees in the “Imperial flower” garden?

Cao: The trees are all cut down and burnt as firewood.

Li: [What about] those books I loved most deeply?

Cao: The books [and calligraphies] have been disassembled; nobody mounts them any longer.

小生：方才彈的就是燒槽琵琶？我久不曾聽得你彈了，再與我彈一曲，把我去後的光景說一遍。

外：領旨。

小生：我那澄心堂呢？

外：[後庭花] 澄心堂堆馬草。

小生：凝華宮呢？

外：凝華宮長亂蒿。

小生：御花園許多樹木呢？

外：樹木呵，砍折了當柴燒。

小生：那書籍是我最愛的？

外：書呵，拆散了無人裱。<sup>223</sup>

The desolated scene depicted in their conversation makes it observable to us that all the bygone glories. The halls, palaces, trees, and books are either destroyed or decaying, becoming mere shadows of what they used to be.

This painful and desolate mood is soothed, however, when Cao sees the memorial temple as a consolation for Emperor Li's loss and offers to stay here as custodian and company of Li:

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<sup>223</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1358.

Cao: Fortunately, you have a son-in-law so skilled, a *zhuangyuan* so handsome; he secured you this shrine. As for me, I will serve you in this shrine as Taoist.

Li: That is really hard for you to do so.

Cao: [Houting hua] The “Three islands [of the immortals]” swept away the furious billows; black crows flap against the branches; empty cities reverberate with the cries of plaintive ghosts. Fearing that you might sit alone in sorrow, I will play the pipa until daybreak.

外：虧了個女婿妝喬，狀元波俏，才掙這搭兒香火廟。善才也做廟裡道人了。

小生：這也難為你。

外：[後庭花] 三山卷怒濤，烏鴉打樹梢，城空怨鬼號。怕的君王愁坐著，則把俺琵琶彈到曉。<sup>224</sup>

Cao's choice to remain at the shrine again symbolically merges the pipa and place together, as Cao will stay at the shrine and play the pipa to pay respect to his master. Thus, whether one sees this scene as the pipa being played in the shrine or the shrine having possession of the pipa, it should be seen not so much a keepsake of the old dynasty as the creation of a locus that is at once in the middle of the world of the living and the world of the dead.

From inside the shrine, Cao looks upon his master and would very much like to follow him into heaven, saying: “now that I have met my old master again my only regret is that I am a mere mortal and cannot follow you to heaven.” 我今日見了舊主人，只恨凡夫俗骨，跟不得上天去。<sup>225</sup> He thus determines to stay at the shrine: “How should I not be able to keep watching over this shrine? [Gaoguo langli lai] Though this cannot be compared to the three islands of Penglai where heavenly musician can ride on his cloud, I can still play the pipa and sweep the pine needles quite often.” 難道這廟兒還守不得麼？[高過浪裡來] 俺比不得蓬萊三島，仙部

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 1358-59. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 208-09. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>225</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1359.

雲敖，則常是背檀槽手把松花掃。<sup>226</sup> Turning around, Cao then addresses the young couple in order to assuage their perceptions of the guilt of the previous dynasty, telling them:

*Zhuangyuan*, rest assured, I will always be here. Feel free to leave and become an official as early as possible. [He] is wearing a jade belt and [a hat decorated with] golden mink tail, [holding a seal] with a purple ribbon attached and [wearing] a red robe; she is having white teeth and a slender waist, [wearing a robe with] emerald green sleeves and a headgear dotted with pearls. The mirror highlights her cheery-like mouth; the cup is filled with grape wine. [I wish that you will be] a happy couple, inseparable like a form and its shadow, until old age.

狀元放心，有貧道在這裡呵。憑著你兩個早去做官僚。玉帶金貂，紫綬緋袍，皓齒纖腰，翠袖珠翹，鏡點櫻桃，杯泛葡萄，好一對形影的夫妻直到老。<sup>227</sup>

Similar to Emperor Li, Cao encourages the young couple to embrace the mundane life and join the mortal world, which is ruled by a new order.

Be that as it may, Cao still points out the futility of joining the mortal world and detaches himself from the mortal world shortly afterwards. At the end of this scene, Cao remains along on the stage and sings the final aria of the play:

[Sui diao sha] I think that marriage affinities in the mundane world are no more than a shadow-like reflection. No matter how much you love to hide your beauties in golden house, to indulge yourself in music and song, and to surround yourself with [girls whose headwear decorated with] pearls and jades, you cannot escape from the romantic destiny. How can this be compared with the life of an immortal riding on a crane and playing a flute, leisurely and carefree?

[隨調煞] 則我看世上姻緣，無過是影兒般照。一任你金屋好藏嬌，受用殺笙歌珠翠繞，脫不得這風流底稿。怎及那仙人鶴背自吹簫。<sup>228</sup>

It appears that Cao's singing renders this final aria more ambiguous. For one, Cao makes it explicit that the romantic tie between the two lovers is of illusionary quality. For another, Cao

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<sup>226</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1359.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. For the translation, I borrowed Tszchanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 210. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>228</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1359. For the translation, I consulted Tszchanz's in his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 210–11. Some changes were made to better reflect the original text.

seems to imply that one's final detachment can only be obtained after going through a phase of attachment and that there is no shortcut to this.

By deciding to stay in the shrine, Cao's experience mirrors that of Zhanniang's experience in the "intermediate zone" and Xu Shi's dilemma in the heavenly world which were discussed in chapter two and chapter three, respectively. In Zhanniang and Xu Shi's cases, one by no means knows when and where the boundary between the two worlds comes into being. Precisely speaking, it is an unclear demarcation that prevents them from stepping forward or stepping backward to whence they came. Unlike them, confronted with a conflict between the current and previous dynasties, Cao's interior is evoked by the pipa's sound and spatialized by the shrine that connects the dead and the living. As Tschanz concludes, "for one thing, Cao decides to renounce the world and stay in the shrine to serve his former master. For another, Cao's decision to stay in the shrine gives Xu Shi the peace of mind to pursue a career under the new dynasty."<sup>229</sup> As above, on the one hand, Cao chooses not to follow the deceased emperor into the immortal world so that he stays in this place of remembrance and keeps his loyalty to the former dynasty. On the other hand, he realizes the impossibility for himself to rejoin the mortal world, exclaiming "I am a person whose time has passed" 老夫是過時的人。<sup>230</sup> As such, the temple becomes Cao's last refuge. The place where Cao stays has become "a vanishing point on which the lines of the past converge but from which there are no lines leading into the future."<sup>231</sup> In the end, while Li and the lovers leave, Cao is the only one to stay in the temple and to tell "the story of the 'Tang house.'"

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<sup>229</sup> Tschanz, "Wu Weiye's Dramatic Works and His Aesthetics of Dynastic Transition," 447.

<sup>230</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1249.

<sup>231</sup> Tschanz, "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 216.

The tensions between the loyalty to the former dynasty and the pursuit of worldly goals are accordingly soothed in that Cao no longer feels attached to or burdened with any of them. In other words, “a true sense of finality is achieved. The last act, with the shrine at its center, is emblematic of this resolution.”<sup>232</sup> Disillusioned and disenchanted with the mortal world and the immortal world, the conflict within Cao is thereby transcended. Musician Cao’s ultimate enlightenment or transcendence bears likeness to the “disenchantment” that is defined by Wai-ye Li as “the awareness of enchantment (the process of being drawn into another world that promises sensual and spiritual fulfillment) as mere enchantment”.<sup>233</sup> Cao reaches the state of transcendence in that he realizes the needlessness of joining the heavenly world and the mortal world, which respectively symbolize the fallen and the current dynasties.

Also, sadness and anxiety amidst the play is eventually relieved by Cao’s comparison between the past and the present of the shrine:

[Jixianbin] Hanging around the emperor’s chair are narrow flags made of ochre yellow silk. On this side the officials’ statues are displayed. On that side there are drums, bells, and cymbals.<sup>234</sup> In the air the red clouds are floating, surround which is misty incense smoke. (Nowadays,) the new dynasty has replaced the old one, the reign title of the old dynasty has been removed from the plaque. All left is the sound of the river which flows surrounding the old temple; the shadow of the temple towers over the cold tides of the river.

[集賢賓] 只見赭黃羅帕禦床高。那壁廂擺列著官員輿皂，這壁廂鋪設的法鼓鐘鐃。半空中一片彤雲，簇捧著香煙縹緲。（如今呵，）新朝改換了舊朝，把禦牌額盡除年號。只留得江聲圍古寺，塔影掛寒潮。<sup>235</sup>

In his words, it seems that nothing is changed but the reign title on the plaque. The intense pain and deep sorrow caused by the conflict between the past era and present dynasty is thereby diluted. Eventually, the play comes to the end in a peaceful manner.

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<sup>232</sup> Tschanz, “Wu Weiye’s Dramatic Works and His Aesthetics of Dynastic Transition,” 447.

<sup>233</sup> Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 3.

<sup>234</sup> Drums, bells, and cymbals: refer to musical instruments used in a Buddhist or Taoist mass.

<sup>235</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1356.



In addition to Musician Cao, Xu Shi's series of emotional rises and falls can also be related to the pipa and Emperor Li's shrine. First, it bears mentioning that the pipa gives rise to a series of difficulties for Xu Shi. After being charged with stealing the pipa, Xu Shi, with Cai's help, writes up a pipa-themed essay and is then selected by the Song emperor as *zhuangyuan* as an unusual exception. Hesitating to accept this degree from the monarch of a new dynasty, Xu feels caught in a predicament, exclaiming:

Alas! [First,] I was alone and down on my luck, then I suddenly found a suitable match; afterwards I was charged with committing a crime and detained in prison, later I got a chance to participate in the civil service examinations, all of which should be counted as extremely unusual experiences. However, my wife is still missing, how could I have the mood to be an official? What is more, Emperor Li was also the ruler of a dynasty. Since he entrusted me with the care of his young niece, if I do not abstain from taking office in order to search for her, how could I be able to face Emperor Li when I meet him again? The reputation and sense of justice of a man rests on [keeping his promise], even if it means sacrificing his life. This trifling *zhuangyuan* [degree] means nothing to me.

咳！我徐適孤身落魄，配合婚姻；負罪羈囚，遭逢科第，也算是非常奇遇了。只是我妻子失散，那裡還有興做官？況兼李皇也是一代官家，他把幼女弱息，託付於我。若不棄職追尋，他日重見李皇，有何面目？大丈夫名義所在，性命也不顧，區區一個狀元，于我有何輕重？<sup>236</sup>

Upon this point, Xu's gratitude at receiving appreciation from the Song emperor and his loyalty to the dead Emperor Li conflict with each other: On the one hand, if he accepts the post with the new dynasty, this could be construed as a betrayal to the previous dynasty; but on the other hand, if he refuses to be in service of the new dynasty and infuriates the Song emperor, Zhanniang will certainly not be taken good care of, which also means disloyalty to Emperor Li due to his failure to fulfill his promise.

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<sup>236</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1324. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 100. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

Second, regarding Xu Shi's association with the Emperor Li's shrine, in scene eleven "temple fair" 廟市, Xu Shi encounters the dilapidated shrine for Emperor Li. The following scene makes clear the desolate state of the shrine:

The plaque reads "Shrine for Emperor Li of the Southern Tang dynasty." After Emperor Li died in Bianliang, he was buried here, so this is his shrine. Look at how the rats move along the pearl-beaded curtain, how heavy soil covers the former prisoner, and how crows on barren trees keep watch over the remaining tomb and broken pagoda. As a shrine for an emperor of a dynasty, distressed like this, how can this not make one feel hurt? Let me step forward and do my obeisance. [Qi Yan hui] On mossy walls it says "Southern dynasty", [I shed] endless tears at the emperor's shrine. Lingered regret is over the rivers and mountains and under the gloomy sky and fragrant grasses. (Ya!) This plaque was inscribed by my father. Facing the wind I mourn the dead, [suddenly] I recognize the handwriting of my father, a broken tablet [telling the story of] rise and fall. (Hai!) We, father and son, received much favor from the previous dynasty but I don't have a way to repay these favors. (wiping away tears) When passing through the "Yi" gate, the "Liangxiao" terrace is empty; going to Luoyang Lu Ji is still young.<sup>237</sup>

牌額上寫道“南唐國主李王之廟”。嗟！就是後主，死葬汴梁，遺廟在此。你看野鼠緣朱帳，陰塵蓋畫衣，受用些落木寒鴉，看守著殘山廢塔。一代帝王，憔悴至此，好不傷感人也！我且向前一拜。[泣顏回] 蘇壁畫南朝，淚盡湘川遺廟。江山余恨，長空黯淡芳草。（呀！）這匾上是我父親手筆。臨風悲悼，識興亡斷碣先臣表。（咳！）我父子受國厚恩，無由答報。（作拭淚介）過夷門梁孝台空，入西雒陸機年少。<sup>238</sup>

Xu is moved to tears by the site and reiterates the indebtedness of his family to Emperor Li. A strong impulse of fulfilling responsibility to the previous emperor is aroused in Xu's mind. It is obvious that he endures mental anguish for having no chance to repay the favors received from the defunct dynasty. And yet, at the end, he refers himself as Lu Ji who after ten years of living the life of a recluse rejoined the mundane world and entered together with his brother the service of Prince Lun of Zhao. Therefore, while he passed through "Yi" gate and "Liangxiao" terrace,

<sup>237</sup> "Liangxiao" terrace: refers to a Terrace in memory of Han Prince Liu Wu (c.184–144), who was posthumously named Prince Xiao of Liang; Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303), a writer and scholar in state Wu of the Three Kingdoms period. He later surrendered to Western Jin dynasty 西晉 (215-316).

<sup>238</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1264-65. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 213-14. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

Xu actually resolves to visit Luoyang and to join the mundane world from his self-chosen seclusion.

The aforementioned mental conflict never ceases to linger in Xu's mind. In the last scene, all of the protagonists are confronted with a newly-built magnificent shrine for Emperor Li. According to Cao's introduction at the beginning of this scene, "this shrine is also built by him (i.e., Xu)." 這廟宇也是他蓋造起來的。<sup>239</sup> Nonetheless, a discrepancy regarding who built the shrine occurs because Xu gives a different version of the shrine's history. Xu Shi tells Zhanniang that "this shrine was built by imperial decree after Keqing reported our otherworldly marriage to the emperor [of Song dynasty]." 這是客卿將我兩人仙婚奇事奏知皇上，奉旨造的。<sup>240</sup> It seems that the truth is blurred by the playwright on purpose. Given what Cao and Xu Shi said, the shrine could be built by the emperor of Song dynasty or Xu Shi himself, though he gives credits to the former.

In any event, this inconsistency, or more precisely, this ambiguity in narrative implicitly conveys the playwright's reconciliation toward the new dynasty. Xu's acknowledgement of the Song emperor's involvement in the construction of the shrine is important because it makes clear that the conflict between the two former rivals have ceased to exist and that Song emperor lives up to his obligation to pay respect to the defunct emperor. Although Cao's remark that "with Xu's success in the examinations and the construction of the shrine for Emperor Li, old matters need not to be raised again. 如今狀元掙了一世前程，李皇爺立了千秋香火，舊事不須提起了<sup>241</sup> specifically refers to the Kaifeng incident, it is also in tune with the atonement in this final

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<sup>239</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1356.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 1355.

<sup>241</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1356.

scene in a more general sense: even though the old matters are raised again, they do not seem to pose a threat to the reconciliation between the old and the new.

## CHAPTER 5

### TEXT: SURFACES, SOLIDS, AND LITERARY CREATION

The previous four chapters mainly discuss how people as beholders observe the surface of the decorative objects. However, what if people serve as objects for observation? How would people appear in the eyes of others? Earlier in this play, a clown-like Zhen Qi is depicted in scene four, vividly displaying the instructive meaning in this regard; this scene is not so much an impromptu comic moment as a thought-provoking interpretation of how outsiders treat people based on their surfaces (or appearances) and the degree of the ease with which people change their surfaces.<sup>242</sup>

Zhen Qi, a wastrel living in the neighborhood of Xu and Huang's family, was born rich but unintelligent. Earlier in this scene, Zhen Qi complains about people mocking his ignorance by nicknaming him "really boring" 真無趣 behind his back, but flattering him to his face, describing him as being "truly [an] expert." 真在行 In attempt to ingratiate himself with the general public, Zhen Qi then decides to follow the cultural trends, renaming himself as a "real antique," 真古董<sup>243</sup> pretending to be a connoisseur of antiques, and joining the antique circle. Nonetheless, he remains worried, for he knows nothing about antiques. In comparison with Xu

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<sup>242</sup> Tina Lu, "Solids and Surfaces in Chinese Drama," 9:02-9:11. She brought up a series of questions: "what makes us who we are?" "How easily can we change who we are?" What is the relationship between "what others think we are" and "what we really are"? Lu's questions broaden my perspective and provide insights into this chapter.

<sup>243</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1239.

Shi's "connoisseurship in antiques and stylish look," 做人透骨時樣<sup>244</sup> Zhen Qi believes that he will still be mocked due to his behavior of "having no sense of *suyi* but [ironically] earning himself a stylish name". 無一毫蘇意, 吃得這個譚名。<sup>245</sup>

Following a long conversation with his servant A Ji, Zhen continues to describe his astonishingly ugly appearance by using plenty of antiques terms, during which he seems to consider himself as a decorative object, more precisely, an antique: "I was born like a bloody exorcistic fetish, in growing I become a totem to ward off evil. With mynah bird eyes, my skin is like a yellow eel's stomach; with dragon patterning, my face resembles that of a butterfly beast." 我生出來血侵厭勝, 長成是土繡辟邪。鵪鶉眼、黃鱔肚皮, 夔龍紋、蝴蝶獸面。<sup>246</sup> He wonders about how he could improve his surface. A Ji proposes that his master should undertake a makeover of sorts by suggesting this approach using references to antique objects: "Ladies in these days like to have the old jade made up like the new. My master, maybe you could do the same thing by rinsing yourself with acacia water and plum juice." 如今女客家還要舊玉新做, 大爺何不用些皂莢水、烏梅湯刷沅刷沅。<sup>247</sup> Zhen points at his face, saying:

Look at this thing of mine, a field of wax of mercury blush, pomegranate skin with speckles of cinnabar, cracks in the skin like sesame seeds, ghost face wrinkles, crab-shell wrinkles, all of which are like smudging old paintings; Or like these patterns: plum blossom cracks, snake belly, cow hide, and all other lacquer cracking patterns. Cold gold (gilt paper) and hard yellow (wax-marked paper), calligraphic models filled in with ink.

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid. For the translation, I consulted Tina Lu's from her lecture "Solids and Surfaces in Chinese Drama," 7:10-7:24.

<sup>245</sup> *suyi*: refers to cultural fashion of Jiangnan area 江南 in Ming and Qing dynasties. People in Jiangnan area (for example, Suzhou) are good at producing, using, and appreciating exquisite decorative objects. Therefore, *suyi* indicates people's capacity to keep up this fashion in a general sense; Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1239.

<sup>246</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1242.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

你看我這東西，蠟查地一片水銀古，石榴皮幾搭朱砂斑。芝麻皴、鬼面皴、蟹殼皴，煙薰舊畫；梅花斷、蛇腹斷、牛皮斷，黑漆斷紋。冷金硬黃，再增子雙勾填墨。<sup>248</sup>

A Ji then informs his master that the worth of an antique is raised by putting it in a *zitan* 紫檀 (rosewood) box and wrapping it with a brocade cloth. Zhen Qi sighs, “If I wear a cloth in chestnut color or powder blue, I will look exactly like a Jiangxi kiln mistake; crabapple red or melon green, people will laugh at me as He’nan speckled glaze.” 穿子栗殼色、粉皮青，活像江西窯變；海棠紅、瓜皮綠，笑是河南燒斑。<sup>249</sup>

Within this long pun there are many terms describing the aesthetic features of antiques’ surfaces. In doing this, the playwright, through Zhen Qi’s mouth, enables us to tackle the following questions in a comparative manner: when observing an object, what is the relationship between its surface and solid? Is it possible to change the surface? If considering human beings as objects, what kind of relationship would exist between their surfaces and solids? Can their surfaces be changed? To this last question, the play demonstrates Zhen Qi’s opinion – a resounding “no”; in his mind, a surface can hardly be changed.

However, the other villain Dugu Rong seems to have confidence in this respect. Through the previous discussion, it is clear that he is ignorant toward decorative objects bearing historical and cultural meanings. In his mind, all significance of antiques is reduced to a pecuniary consideration. In attempting to realize his ambition, Dugu schemes to collect rubbings in order to please his superiors. He thinks that “on the one hand, it appears that I know how to appreciate the poems and essays. On the other hand, it seems that I respectfully offer [those treasures] to them.”

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<sup>248</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1242. For the translation, I consulted Tina Lu’s from her lecture “Solids and Surfaces in Chinese Drama,” 7:48-8:20. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

一者見留意詞章，二者明有心進奉。<sup>250</sup> He adopts two words to describe how his behavior appears in the eyes of outsiders: “appear”見 and “seem”明. It can be seen that the playwright sought to emphasize how people would judge one another based on their appearances or surfaces. In this sense, Dugu’s case reveals that the surfaces of people cannot always be trusted. In other words, the surface that appears in the beholders’ eyes becomes problematic. What exactly can we learn from the surface of an object, a person, or a literary work?

When it comes to the textual reading, the interaction between surface and solid bears a particular significance. Before engaging in a discussion about how Wu created the surface of his play, we ought to adequately stress the importance of Musician Cao in this regard, as Cao’s musical creation resembles Wu Weiye’s play writing to a great extent. In chapter four, Zhanniang’s comment that “[the] lyrics are adapted from Emperor Li’s *ci*.” 都是李後主小令，隱括成歌。<sup>251</sup> “Adaption” *yinkuo* 隱括 has been a common literary technique since the advent of *ci*, and it describes a process of selecting, modifying, and tailoring the existing verses (or literary allusions) before finally making them fit the tune. This is done with consideration given to each tune’s set rhythm and melody. When Cao plays the pipa and sings the lyrics, the lyrics he makes and adapts, and the tune he plays must be a seamless match.

In this sense, Cao is not only a musician, but also a composer. Similar to how Lady Yang fashions the score in Hong Sheng 洪升 (1645-1704)’s *Palace of Lasting Life* 長生殿<sup>252</sup>, Cao’s song is imbued with his “subjectivity”, and thus he is turned into a “culturally privileged

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<sup>250</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1267.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> *The Palace of Lasting Life* 長生殿: written by Hong Sheng 洪升 (1645-1704) in 1688. This play recounts the love story of Emperor Tang Xuanzong 唐玄宗 and his favorite consort, Lady Yang Yuhuan 楊玉環.



‘author’”.<sup>253</sup> Further, he continuously alters his lyrics for better suitability in the course of playing. Distinct from the way we understand the job of European composers, in Chinese opera “there was no composer per se...instead, pre-existing tunes were adapted by the playwright-composer to suit the dramatic and structural purposes of the play, so that one is always in the position of writing new words to music that is already somehow ‘out there’”.<sup>254</sup> In this sense, this scene of Cao’s pipa playing can be reflexively interpreted as a miniature of the *chuanqi* playwright in creatively elaborating his/her drama. Ostensibly opposite, but essentially similar to Lady Yang’s effort in setting the music to words, that is, “fashioning a score”: “to adjust pre-existing tune patterns to fit the content, word pitch, and pronunciation of a set of lyrics in order to make the melodic contour of the old tune fit tightly with the new lyrics while preserving the melodic core,”<sup>255</sup> Musician Cao’s adaption of Emperor Li’s lyrics comes closer to what a *chuanqi* playwright would do. In this sense, each moment of harmonizing the lyrics and the music explicitly reveals to us “two main temporal orders of historical drama, the past of the story being told and the present of the playwright and audience, are self-consciously superimposed.”<sup>256</sup>

With the discussion above about the resemblance between Musician Cao’s fashioning of lyrics according to the set tunes and the texts of *chuanqi* creation, the playwright creates a textual surface for the play through which the readers are able to project their inner complexes onto the text. Hence, the play should be treated as a device or medium to efficiently draw connections between the private thoughts of the playwright and the sentiments of the readers. For literati living in the period of dynastic transition, the following questions are brought about for further

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<sup>253</sup> Judith Zeitlin, “Music and Performance in Hong Sheng’s Palace of Lasting Life,” in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*. ed. Wilt L. Idema. et al (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 466.

<sup>254</sup> Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge, University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>255</sup> Qi Senhua 齊森華 et al., eds. *Zhongguo quxue dacidian* 中國曲學大辭典 (The dictionary of Chinese classical drama study) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Education Press, 1997), 692.

<sup>256</sup> Zeitlin, “Music and Performance in Hong Sheng’s Palace of Lasting Life,” 485.

examination: how do they react to the unprecedented catastrophe when a nation collapses? How do they deal with the internal struggle caused by the conflict between the “private” and the “public”, the playwright and the readers? How do they claim, excuse, and defend what they do to secure their “continuity” and “entirety” of self when “self” is disturbed by the crisis caused by upheaval during the Ming-Qing transition? In Wu’s literary expression, how could he convey the aforementioned internal struggles via his construction of the play’s surface?

Musician Cao finally chooses to stay in his final abode (the shrine), resolves his internal tension between private self and public self, and detaches himself from the emotional burdens caused by the fallen dynasty and the current dynasty. However, the truth beneath the textual surface, that is, Wu Weiye’s interior reality, turns out to be opposite. Therefore, we must closely examine how he “seize[s] others’ cup and pour[s] the wine on one’s own block [metaphorically, soothe his/her own depression]” 借他人之酒杯，澆自己之塊壘 so that creates the surface of this play.

First, Wu absorbs an abundance of nutrients from his literary predecessors. In *Spring in Moling*, before Immortal Geng attempts to practice her magic to facilitate their marriage affinity, she says:

This young man is elegant and refined, truly a good person. But despite his betrothal to Zhanniang, they are still apart like a form and its shadow. Therefore, I am going to use Helü’s jade cup and Xuanyuan’s precious mirror.<sup>257</sup> Through their transformations I am going to show my magical power. To throw red plums by the girdle, no sleep or dream is needed; to have him meet Yuxiao behind the curtain,<sup>258</sup> I do not use a painting.<sup>259</sup> Many variations of unreal and real would

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<sup>257</sup> Helü’s jade cup: Helü (514 BC-496 BC), the king of the state of Wu toward the end of the Spring and Autumn Period. He buried a jade cup in his beloved daughter’s tomb; Xuanyuan’s precious mirror: Xuanyuan refers to Yellow Emperor 黃帝. He had fifteen mirrors owing magic power to defeat his enemies.

<sup>258</sup> Yuxiao: a girl’s name, literally, jade flute. In Tang dynasty, Wei Gao 韋皋 (746-805) met a beautiful maid-servant named Yuxiao when he had yet to be an official. They fell in love and were betrothed to each other.

rather be considered “mistaken identities.” The ever-recurring cycles of life and death should not be called “the returned soul.”

此子風神韶令，真是可兒。但與展娘雖定婚姻，還分形影。用是假闔閭之玉杯，與軒轅之寶鏡，因其變化，示我神通。投朱李于帶邊，無煩夢寐；遇玉簫於帳裡，不假丹青。假假真真，寧云錯認；生生死死，匪曰還魂。<sup>260</sup>

Though she rules out electing “the dream”, “the painting”, and “the returned soul” as magic to bring the two lovers together, in *Spring in Moling* the plots of “the disembodied soul”, “the image in the mirror”, and the “reborn” Zhanniang (after her soul returns home) actually all echo Tang Xianzu from afar, facilitating the marriage between two lovers. Notably, in the Immortal Geng, Wu Weiye creates “a persona for himself as a playwright,”<sup>261</sup> who can move freely between the mortal and immortal worlds, and is “conversant with the rules of both.”<sup>262</sup> Therefore, the magic that Geng uses is also that of Wu the playwright. Therefore, through Geng’s words, we can learn how Wu “could avail himself when he wrote the play.”<sup>263</sup>

Second, Wu sets his fictional creation into a historical background marking the same feature of Ming-Qing transition: the post-conquest society between Southern Tang and Song dynasties. Also, both the Ming and Southern Tang dynasties made Nanjing their capitals. Regarding the protagonists, his selective recreation of historical characters (and, more importantly, those characters which he sought to fictionalize) merits attention. Except for Huang Zhanniang, her parents, her maid Niaoyan, Cai Keqing, Zhen Qi, Dugu Rong, Xu Shi’s servant Ting Jiao – who are purely fictional – the other characters can readily be compared to their

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However, Yuxiao died of love sicknesses when waiting for Wei to come back. After her death, Yuxiao’s reincarnation finally became Wei Gao’s concubine. Yuxiao is then widely used to refer beautiful young girls.

<sup>259</sup> painting: refers to Bridal Du’s self-portrait in Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖’s *The Peony Pavilion* 牡丹亭. Bridal Du draws a painting of herself before her death caused by the infatuation (or *qing*, “sentiment”) with her dream lover.

<sup>260</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1262. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz’s from his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 155. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.

<sup>261</sup> Tschanz, “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 154.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

historical counterparts. The most noteworthy recreation is the case of Xu Xuan and Xu Shi. The historical Xu Xuan (916-991), an eminent scholar, once served Emperor Li of Southern Tang. After the nation's collapse, he was pressured to serve under the new regime (i.e., the Song dynasty) and was subsequently tortured by guilt and regret over the fallen dynasty. Obviously the playwright sensed a parallel between Xu Xuan's predicament and his own. Yet, the historical Xu Shi is not Xu Xuan's son and lived more than one hundred years later, during the early Southern Song period. Following in the footsteps of his great-grandfather Xu Huiyan 徐徽言(1093-1129), who died a martyr's death in the conflict between the Jin and Song, Xu Shi, too, perished in this conflict: thus, his heroic deed acts as a source of inspiration for the playwright.<sup>264</sup>

Third, Wu visualizes his conflicting selves by projecting individual elements of his personality onto different protagonists in this play<sup>265</sup>. It is noteworthy that Wu's conflicting "selves" is reminiscent of the dynamic between *shen* and *ren*, *qing* and *li*, private self and public self, as discussed throughout this thesis. The juxtaposition of these conceptual pairs provides us with insights into the competing pulls within human mind: rationality and desire, social responsibility and individual sentiment, private and public, and many others. Although *Spring in Moling* cannot be said to be an autobiographical play in the strictest sense, Wu as the playwright successfully projects the different aspects of his "self", and through these projections we see manifestations of different periods of his "self" superimposed onto multiple protagonists via the portrayal of a dynamic development of the multiple "selves". In other words, though a tension exists betwixt the "selves" of the playwright and the different characters residing in distinct periods, Wu still manages to unify these into a comprehensive narrative within his play. In this

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<sup>264</sup> See Tuotuo 脫脫, *Song shi* 宋史 (History of the Song dynasty) (Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua Book Company, 1981), vol.19, 441.

<sup>265</sup> Wang Ayling 私情化公：清代劇作家之自我敘寫與其戲劇展演 *Presenting Private Sentiments to the Public: The Self-Narration and Dramatic Performance of the Qing Dramatists* 2003. 81-157.

kind of diachronical and synchronical process, Wu's conflicting and developing "selves" are fully exposed to the readers.

According to Wang Ayling's observation, Xu Shi, General Huang, and the Musician Cao are all specific embodiments of different aspects of playwright's "self". First, as a talented young scholar, Xu Shi is comparable to Wu himself, who was born into a family of officials and literati for generations, and had an extraordinary talent in literature and antiques. After the nation's collapse, he could not serve the new regime, and instead passed his time browsing antique stores. Next, Wu communicates his sorrow and grief regarding the previous emperor through General Huang's actions and lines. According to the play, General Huang earned his reputation through a series of military exploits. As a result, he received many favors from Emperor Li. Equally important is the fact that Xu's younger sister Huang Baoyi is Emperor Li's favorite consort. In this case, his unbearable sadness is greatly exacerbated by not only the nation's collapse, but also the unfortunate death of a close family member. In a similar way, the playwright Wu Weiye's literary talent was greatly championed by Emperor Chongzhen, which accelerated Wu's career growth. Moreover, since the Chongzhen Emperor and Wu were roughly the same age, their mutual understanding and appreciation for one another (i.e., *zhiyin*) moved far beyond the normal relationship between emperor and minister. In 1631 the emperor even allowed Wu to take a leave of absence to return home and establish his own family. Wu's third embodiment, the Musician Cao, represents the idealistic enlightenment that the playwright endeavored to attain; that is, Cao represented transcendence over the two conflicting aspects Wu found within himself. Unlike Musician Cao, Wu Weiye was unable to find his abode home. In 1671, Wu died of an illness. In his will, he left the following words:

I have experienced a lot in my whole life. Many things cause troubles and anxieties to me. There is no moment when I do not experience difficulties; there is no place where I do not endure hardships. I am indeed the most miserable person in the world! After my death, please bury me wrapped in the monk clothing, entomb my body next to the Mountain Dengwei and Lingyan,<sup>266</sup> and establish a tombstone in front the grave, with the following inscription on it: “The poet Wu Meicun’s grave.” Do not build up any ancestral hall for me. Do not ask any people to write eulogies for me.

吾一生遭際，萬事憂患，無一刻不曆艱難，無一境不嘗辛苦，實為天下大苦人。吾死後，殮以僧裝，葬吾于鄧尉、靈岩相近，墓前立一圓石，題曰詩人吳梅村之墓，勿作祠堂，勿乞銘於人。<sup>267</sup>

It is noteworthy that Wu Weiye wished to be addressed merely as “the poet” – without any official title. On the one hand, he was unwilling to admit that he served the Qing dynasty; on the other hand, he felt ashamed for failing to fulfill his responsibility to the Chongzhen Emperor. One can reasonably infer that Musician Cao’s final abode is, in fact, a symbol of Wu Weiye’s ideal dwelling.

Aside from projecting multiple complexities onto various protagonists, through conveying Xu Shi’s shifts in his mental activity, it can be sensed that Wu himself is undergoing his own change of attitude toward the new dynasty. According to the play, Xu was arrested and wrongly accused stealing the pipa. As the imperial guards burst into their house, Zhanniang’s disembodied soul was frightened away. Xu seemed deprived of any capacity to prove his innocence and protect his family; however, the Song emperor had no intention of punishing Xu and severely punished Zhen Qi (who framed Xu Shi). In a surprising move, the emperor showed a great appreciation for Xu’s talent, and asked Xu to write a pipa-themed essay, assigned him an official post, and even rewarded him with the pipa, which was the symbol of the previous dynasty. Thus, Xu accepted the *zhuangyuan* degree and felt grateful for the Song emperor’s trust and esteem, exclaiming: “I would like to thank the current emperor for his tolerance and lenience,

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<sup>266</sup> Mountain Dengwei and Lingyan: both are famous mountains with wonderful scenery in Suzhou.

<sup>267</sup> Wu, *Wu Weiye’s Collected Works*, 1404.

which enables me, a literate unwilling to submit previously, to be sincerely moved and convinced at this moment.” 謝當今聖上寬洪量，把一個不伏氣的書生欸欸降。<sup>268</sup>

The most thought-provoking arrangement of Wu Weiye as a playwright is the negation of the opposition between the previous and current dynasties by placing them into immortal and mortal realms. Unexpectedly, these two dynasties (and emperors) maintain a harmonious coexistence within the text. For instance, they complete Xu and Zhanniang's marriage in heaven as well as the sublunary world, respectively. Not only that, but they express tolerance and show respect to each other. For instance, Emperor Li encourages Xu Shi to serve the new dynasty for a promising future. In a similar manner, the Song emperor does not discourage people from commemorating the previous dynasty. More than that, the Song emperor goes as far as building a new shrine for Emperor Li of the previous dynasty. As such, Xu's acute sadness and grief is dissolved so that the play concludes in a tranquil and peaceful manner.

Despite Wu Weiye resorting to scripts and texts to mask himself in his time, based on what Tschanz observes in his dissertation, Wu's painful struggle continued until the last moment of his life. His autobiographical text, which was penned less than a month before his death, proves that he could never manage to escape from the “intermediate zone” where his protagonists – Zhanniang, Xu Shi, and Musician Cao – once resided. In 1671, in “Memorial addressed to my son [Wu] Jing,” 與子暉書 Wu recorded his thoughts, feelings, and experiences during the period between 1644 and 1653:

[Afterward Huang Daozhou incident], I was successively promoted to the position of a Companion for the Heir Apparent and to the position of Advisor to the Heir Apparent. However, I did not assume any of these positions because I had already resolved to stay away from public office. Soon thereafter, the country fell into

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<sup>268</sup> Wu, *Spring in Moling*, 1328.

chaos. As an emperor was set up in the South, I served at the court only for two months and then asked for a sick leave and returned my home. After the new dynasty began, I stayed behind closed doors and did not associate with any one. Nonetheless, whenever a case [of literary inquisition] arose in this southeast area, I always worried that henchmen would come to my door, resulting in me being placed as a victim for being involved with these incidents. This made me feel uneasy and insecure. Ten years passed, and when I had become less worried, I told myself that I could take care of my parents until they died. Unexpectedly, I was recommended for an official position in the capital and was forced in many ways to accept this position despite my internal unwillingness. My parents were frightened [as a result of the political persecution]; so they wept bitterly and implored me to go. Also, there were many of my former colleagues who wanted to use me as a sharp arrow [in the factual strife at the court]. That is how I was called to duty and why I could not manage to avoid serving under the new regime. Before I left [for the north], I was deeply depressed and fell into grave illness; after I arrived at the capital I fell sick again and received the Shunzhi Emperor's full consolation. When I left the capital in order to take care of the funeral of my uncle's second wife, the emperor bestowed medical pills on me in person. In the last twenty years, I owe much to the current dynasty as I have been able to live a peaceful and secluded life. The only reason why I did not intend to serve under the new dynasty was because I had received the highest degree and several promotions from the previous dynasty. However, out of filial duty to my parents I did not fulfill my commitment to the previous dynasty and ultimately lost my integrity [after accepting to serve under the new regime]. I will feel regretful and ashamed of this forever. How will I be able to face the Emperor Zhuangli [i.e., the Chongzhen Emperor], Boxiang [i.e., Yang Tinglin], and all the others [in the immortal world after I die]? And I will certainly be laughed at by the Confucian scholars of later generations.

於是升公允、公論，吾絕意仕進，而天下亂。南中立君，吾入朝兩月，固請病而歸。改革後吾閉門不通人物，然虛名在人，每東南有一獄，長慮收者在門，及詩禍史禍，惴惴莫保。十年，危疑稍定，謂可養親終身，不意薦剡牽連，逼迫萬狀。老親懼禍，流涕催裝，同事者有借吾為剡矢，吾遂落穀中，不能白衣而返矣。先是吾臨行時以怫鬱大病。入京師而又病，蒙世祖皇帝撫慰備至。吾以繼伯母之喪出都，主上親賜丸藥。今二十年來，得安林泉者，皆本朝之賜。惟是吾以草茅諸生，蒙先朝巍科拔擢，世運既更，分宜不仕，而牽戀骨肉，逡巡失身，此吾萬古慚愧，無面目以見烈皇帝及伯祥諸君子，而為後世儒者所笑也。<sup>269</sup>

In this autobiographical document, Wu recorded what he experienced after Ming's collapse, that is, how he obeyed the Qing government and undertook an official post in the court.

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<sup>269</sup> Wu, *Wu Weiye's Collected Works*, 1132. For the translation, I borrowed Tschanz's from his dissertation "Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672)," 11–12. Slight modifications were made to better reflect the original text.



He emphasized that before becoming a Qing official he indeed intended to retain his allegiance and loyalty to the previous dynasty. As a degree-holder and official of the Ming dynasty, he felt obligated to maintain his loyalty and considered it inappropriate to serve under the new regime. Furthermore, he would feel ashamed when facing people like Yang Tinglin, who were martyred or greatly sacrificed to exhibit their allegiances to the Ming dynasty. However, Wu claimed that he was being forced to serve under the Qing due to the following pressures: first, his parents urged him to obey the order lest his entire family be put in grave political danger; second, some of his colleagues recommended him for court to at once assuage their own guilt (for serving the new dynasty), and to use Wu's fame to advance their own careers; and third, the Qing emperor's tolerance and care – which Wu repeatedly mentioned – proved the authenticity of his favor and helped with his reception amongst the Qing authorities. From this text, he seemed to take great pains to place himself into a situation where he can not only make apparent his loyalty to the previous dynasty but also avoid offending the current regime.

Nonetheless, as Tschanz summarizes, “things are not as simple as Wu portrays in this text.”<sup>270</sup> Similar to the ambivalence occurring within Xu Shi in the play (e.g., he claims that he has no interest in an official post, but goes to Luoyang to seek a fortune and a career), in Wu's autobiographical text there are several discrepancies caused by the contrast between his assertions and his actual activities based on other historical records.<sup>271</sup> First, Wu did not sequester himself at home between 1644 and 1653. On the contrary, he visited his friends many times and travelled around the Taihu area starting in 1647. More importantly, he did not at all shun friends who already served as Qing officials. For instance, he visited and frequently

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<sup>270</sup> Tschanz, “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 16.

<sup>271</sup> For the discrepancies between Wu Weiye's assertions and his actual activities, I am indebted to Tschanz's illustration in his dissertation “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 13-18.

corresponded with Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664), who “surrendered to the Qing authorities in 1645 and served as senior vice-president of the Board of Ceremonies between 1646 and 1647”.<sup>272</sup> In addition, he showed interest – enthusiasm even – in the activities of (the Qing dynasty’s) literary societies. For example, in 1652 Wu agreed to mediate between two rivaling literary societies and accepted their invitation to attend a gathering at Tiger Hill in Suzhou. “Both literary societies acclaimed Master Meicun as their leader,” 兩社俱推戴梅村夫子<sup>273</sup> wrote Wang Bian 王抃, one of Wu’s disciples, in his biography.

Except for the above discrepancies, Wu’s self-portrayal revealed his view that his “agency is always located in others, never in himself,”<sup>274</sup> emphasized his weakness and helplessness, and claims that it is not his own will impelling him to accept the new order. He reiterated his sickliness and filial piety – which made him physically and mentally vulnerable – to hint at his limited capability of making righteous choices. He mentioned several times the unavoidable “destiny” of people and historical principle that is always “replacing old with the new”. It is explicit that he tended to lay the blame for his adversity on outside pressure: his physical condition, his family, his colleagues, and so on.

As Tschanz notes, the word “unexpectedly” – which Wu used to “shift the agency from him away to something or someone else”<sup>275</sup> – does not appear for the first time here. Earlier in his autobiography, when he related his success in the civil examination in 1631, he implied that his success was not of his own making: “When I was a bit older than twenty I unexpectedly

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<sup>272</sup> Tschanz, “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 16.

<sup>273</sup> Meicun: refers to Wu Weiye’s courtesy name; Wang Bian 王抃, “Wang Chaosong’s biographical chronicle 王巢松年譜”, in *Wu zhong wenxian xiao congshu zhi si* 吳中文獻小叢書之四 (Small series of Suzhou documents, volume four) (Suzhou: Jiangsu Suzhou library, 1939), 23.

<sup>274</sup> Tschanz, “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 14.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

garnered first place in the metropolitan examinations. I felt that this was largely attributable to luck and was really frightened [by what was in store for me].” 應童子試，四舉而後入穀。不意年逾二十，遂掇大魁。<sup>276</sup> In this circumstance, in his mind, his tragedy and political choice should not have been subjected to public denunciation. In other words, regardless of his luck or adversity, he saw all outcomes as somehow being caused by someone or something outside of himself.

The last discrepancy that deserves a close examination is that in Wu’s autobiographical text he did not at all mention the Chongzhen Emperor when he recalled Ming’s collapse, let alone how he reacted when the news of the emperor’s suicide reached his hometown. It is hard to believe that such an omission was unconsciously made, as the Chongzhen Emperor was the most important person in his life, and served as a symbol of the previous dynasty. In fact, according to Gu Shishi 顧師軾 (1798-1884):

After the upheaval of the year Jiashen (i.e., 1644), Mister (i.e., Wu Weiye) lived at home [when heard about the emperor’s death]. Failing to follow the emperor to death, Wu was so inconsolable that he even wanted to commit suicide. His behavior was noted by his family members. Madame Zhu [i.e., Wu’s mother] grasped him and wept bitterly: “If you die, what should we elderly people do?”

甲申之變，先生裡居，攀髯無從，號慟欲自縊，為家人所覺。朱太淑人抱持泣曰：“兒死，其如老人何？”<sup>277</sup>

This omission in his autobiographical document becomes all the more thought-provoking given that on the contrary, later in Wu’s life, he wrote a poem “Passing by Huaiyin I have feelings, Second of Two” 過淮陰有感其二 conveying how regretful he was for not following the Chongzhen Emperor to the death: “I am like the chickens and dogs of the Prince Huai, but I cannot follow him to heaven – I could only [fall] back to the world of men.” 我本淮王舊雞犬，

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<sup>276</sup> Wu, *Wu Weiye’s Collected Works*, 1131.

<sup>277</sup> Feng, *Wu Meicun’s Biographical Chronicle*, 45.

不隨仙去落人間。<sup>278</sup> According to the legend, Prince Huainan found the elixir of immortality and ascended to heaven. Licking the elixir left behind by him, his chickens and dogs also ascended to heaven by following their master. In making this comparison, Wu lamented over his decision not to follow his old master; he could only “live an ignoble existence.”偷活草間<sup>279</sup>

Combing these discrepancies and omissions in his text, and his play, it does not really matter if the truth – his committing suicide – can be sought out. Taking into account *Spring in Moling*, the discrepancies should be considered not so much as self-defensive in nature, but rather, as self-portraits that mirror the confusion, helplessness, uneasiness, and struggle that Wu Weiye suffered throughout the latter half of his life. Considering the mutually beneficial relationship between the decorative object and the beholder, there is also a similar association existing between the playwright’s play and the readers. Wu Weiye painstakingly recreates and reconstructs the textual surface of his play in order to present himself to the readers as the man he wished to be.

Tina Lu’s observation of Zhen Qi offers an instructive account from which to end this chapter. It appeared that Zhen Qi used a series of puns to emphasize the equally ugly solid beneath his surface. The significance of the pun, as Lu concludes, is saying *this* but referring to *that*.<sup>280</sup> Puns enable us to learn that the outside and the inside, or the surface and the solid are not always consistent.

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<sup>278</sup> Wu, *Wu Weiye’s Collected Works*, 398. Trans. Jonathan Chaves, *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 375.

<sup>279</sup> Wu, *Wu Weiye’s Collected Works*, 766.

<sup>280</sup> Tina Lu, “Solids and Surfaces in Chinese Drama,” 27:35-27:42. She mentioned that “on one level they see something literal, but the classical reference makes punning obviously something else.”

## EPILOGUE

Lu Xun, the most renowned writer of 20<sup>th</sup> century in China, says: “The most painful thing of life is that there is no way to proceed when one is awake,” 人生最苦痛的是夢醒了無路可以走<sup>281</sup> which holds true for the crisis that has caused literati-wide mental predicaments throughout the generations. In the case of *Spring in Moling*, it is not difficult to unpack the contents of the hero Xu Shi’s spiritual journey: he first moves from defiance to resignation, and then from resignation to a final sense of resigned accommodation when he faces the post-conquest social reality. Zhanniang’s confusion when stranded inside the mirror, Xu Shi’s bewilderment by the authenticities of two worlds, and Musician Cao’s final abode in the shrine, reflect the playwright’s life experiences, to a certain degree. The play comes to an end with an air of serenity when Musician Cao finds enlightenment in the shrine. Earlier parallels suggest that such an ending is indicative of the playwright’s own spiritual transcendence; however, Wu’s interior reality was characterized by pain and suffering throughout the latter half of his life – in direct contradiction to the textual surface in which all protagonists find their ideal places to stay. Therefore, the historical records and resources could be treated as mediums through which we the readers can explore, more or less, the historical reality and the playwright’s true self underneath the textual surface.

At the very beginning of this thesis, I borrowed Hua Wei’s question in order to emphasize the “danger” of the decorative object, which, in the traditional viewpoint, is regarded

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<sup>281</sup> Lu Xun, “What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?” in *Lu Xun: Selected Works*, Trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1985), 90.

as bearing a “tendency to delight in the artificiality of the form without taking into account the moral implications of such seemingly gratuitous artistry and playfulness.”<sup>282</sup> Now, I would like to focus on my own explanation and understanding of the “danger” at the levels of the decorative objects, the people, and literary texts.

Contemplating the decorative object, the “danger” is brought up by those exquisite and evocative surfaces so that lead us to encounter the image that infused with our “thinking” and sentiment.<sup>283</sup> This kind of “danger” keeps growing, shapes our identities, and compartmentalizes the different “selves” within us more neatly. If we observe other people, their “dangerous” surfaces will directly form both our primary and lingering impressions of them. When we read the literary works, the meaning we gain at the textual level provides the first clues as we approach the interior of the writers. In this sense, the “danger” could refer to the readers’ involvement in a labyrinth of perplexities that the playwright creates. From another point of view, as long as the readers are capable of extricating themselves from the text, the “danger” may very well threaten to overwhelm the textual stability elaborately constructed by the writer. Therefore, the gap between the textual surface and real underlying interior could also offer a means through which we can comprehend the literary work and ruminate over its social background in a more thorough manner.

In conclusion, *Spring in Moling*’s position in literary history should be reevaluated on account of its richness and complexity. Although this play has been marginalized over the last few decades, its irreplaceable role of connecting its preceding and following plays ought to be affirmed. For instance, Wu Weiye clearly absorbed the quintessence of Tang Xianzu’s *The Peony Pavilion*. Tang’s key scenes and spirits of the play – the reborn soul, the dreamlike realm,

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<sup>282</sup> Tschanz, “Early Qing Drama and the Dramatic Works of Wu Weiye (1609–1672),” 225.

<sup>283</sup> Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces*, 81.

and the unbearable power of sentiment – are skillfully inherited and flourish beautifully in *Spring in Moling*.

More importantly, Wu's play has provided playwrights of later generations a source of inspiration. Not long after *Spring in Moling*'s completion, two extraordinary *chuanqi* plays, Hong Sheng's *The Palace of Lasting Life* and Kong Shangren's *The Peach Blossom Fan*, present to us how Wu Weiye, more or less, influenced the literary creation of subsequent generations. The concentrated expression of decorative objects, such as the gold hairpin along with a golden casket as well as the peach blossom fan, not only serve as love tokens but also link together the world of the living and the world of the dead, the individual sentiment and the public expectation. These objects put into motion a complex play of "sorrow and joy, separation and reunion" 悲歡離合 and are infused with various symbolic meanings embedded in the theme of dynastic transition.

Moreover, Wu foregrounds the theme of dynastic transition in a genre in which historical context is generally of secondary importance. Although there are earlier examples of plays in which the themes of romantic comedy and dynastic transitions are closely interconnected, *Spring in Moling* is nonetheless the first play to foreground the integration of these two themes and to exploit the tension that exists between the romantic story and the historical framework. In this vein, Hongsheng's and Kong Shangren's later playwritings are clearly beholden to Wu Weiye.

Last but not least, in *Spring in Moling* Musician Cao's final abode in the shrine opens up a new possibility for playwriting. In fact, Wu's play contains two modes of play ending, the "lyric solution" and the "philosophical solution." When comparing *The Palace of Eternal Life* and *The Peach Blossom Fan*, Wai-ye Li points out that the former "represents the lyrical

solution: the willful reaffirmation of *Qing* and the invention of mythic context to accommodate it. By contrast, there is the philosophical solution of *The Peach Blossom Fan*, which stipulates that collapse and disintegration in the public realm leave no room for private passions.”<sup>284</sup> It is not difficult to detect Wu’s influence on these two plays: in scene twenty-two “the heavenly marriage” Xu Shi and Zhanniang complete their wedding with the help of their dead ancestors in the heavenly world, which resembles the reunion of Tang Xuanzong and Lady Yang in the mythic realm. At the end of Wu’s play Musician Cao voluntarily chooses to stay in the shrine, which parallels the final enlightenment awakening Hou Chaozong and Li Xiangjun and thereby disenchanting them from the mortal world.

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<sup>284</sup> Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 80.



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