

Visualizing an Emotional Realm: Dreamscapes in Chinese Romance Opera*

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This article focuses on how late Ming dramatists and publishers employed and interpreted dreamscapes to create affective realms. The literary trope of dreams features prominently on the theatrical stage and in the pages of illustrated publications of playscripts. This article examines the illustrations of male dreamscapes in such Ming dynasty theatrical texts as *Autumn Nights for the Tang Emperor: Rain on the Parasol Trees*, *Romance of the Western Chamber*, *Sorrow in the Han Palace*, and *Dream of Yangzhou*. This article first discusses the two most common modes of male dreamscape in Yuan and Ming operas. The first mode introduces a dream scenario as a means to recall a happier moment from earlier in the play, and the second mode imagines a new alternative reality that functions to supplant the more tragic circumstances depicted in the main storyline. Centered upon images, this study then elaborates on how the motif of the female gaze is used by male playwrights to visually transform female characters from an object of desire to a desiring subject. Through the depiction of the female gaze which traverses the boundary between dream and reality, these Ming illustrations became sites for men within and outside of the play to project their desire of being desired.

Keywords: visual culture, opera, female gaze, printing culture, dreamscape

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Introduction

In the Tang dynasty masterpiece *Changhen ge* 長恨歌 (The Song of Everlasting Sorrow), the poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) wrote about Emperor Xuanzong's (685-762) longing for the deceased Yang Yuhuan 楊玉環 (719-756), who was executed during their escape from the devastating An Lushan Rebellion (755-763):

悠悠生死別經年，魂魄不曾來入夢。

It has been years since the living and the dead were parted, yet never once did her wondering soul enter his dreams.¹

Unable to unite with his favorite concubine in dreams, Emperor Xuanzong resorts to the Daoist cult to search for her soul. His unattainable dream, however, was realized nearly half a millennium later when the playwright Bai Pu 白樸 (1226-1306) devised a dream plot in which the two lovers temporarily reunite in his *zaju* 雜劇 (a form of Chinese opera) *Tang Minghuang qiuye wutong yu* 唐明皇秋夜梧桐雨 (Autumn Nights for the Tang Emperor: Rain on the Parasol Trees, hereafter *Wutong yu*). Many other romantic Yuan *zaju* from this period also have plots that include dreams by male protagonists who are temporarily or permanently separated from their female lovers. The plot typically involves a reunion scene, in which the female protagonist visits the man in his dream, and concludes with him waking after her sudden exit. This paper focuses on texts about and illustrations of dreamscapes in the sleeping minds of men in Chinese libretti printed during the Ming dynasty. It examines how Ming men of letters deployed and interpreted dreamscape plots to create affective realms. Through the analysis of these dreamscapes and their visualized forms, this article argues that contemporary illustrations accompanying the texts enabled the projection of male desire

¹ Bai Juyi, "Changhen ge" 長恨歌, in *Bai Juyi shiji jiaozhu* 白居易詩集校註 (Annotation of Bai Juyi's Poems), ed. Xie Siwei 謝思緯 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 943. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

specifically through the portrayal of the female gaze. The first section of this research delineates the history of dream plots in Chinese literature and the relevant historiography. Next, the paper identifies and discusses in detail two dreamscape archetypes prevalent in Yuan *zaju*; they feature a man dreaming of his female lover. The third section explores the visual legacy of depicting dreamscape as realms of desire in printed books and identifies a pictorial convention originating in the Jin dynasty (1115-1234) that was used to depict dreamscape in illustrated opera libretti. Some operas published in single or limited editions follow the larger literary and visual prototype of the male dream, such as *Du Muzhi shijiu Yangzhou meng* 杜牧之詩酒揚州夢 (Du Muzhi Indulging in Dreams of Poetry and Wine in Yangzhou, hereafter *Yangzhou meng*) and *Po youmeng guyan hangong qiu* 破幽夢孤雁漢宮秋 (Apparition of a Lonely Goose in a Dark Dream in the Autumnal Han Palace, hereafter *Hangong qiu*). In other cases, popular dramatic works, such as *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (The Story of the Western Wing), have multiple published versions in which the dream illustrations also differ. Among these, certain libretti subvert the subject-object relation between the male dreamer and the dreamed female figure by depicting the latter as looking longingly at the former. The female gaze traverses the boundary between dream and reality by landing on the dreamer directly. The fourth and final section of this paper focuses on the implication of this female gaze for a male-dominated audience. Although the act of gazing places the depicted female figures in the position of desiring subjects, this feminine agency potentially responds to male readers' desires to be desired. Through this traverse of fantasy and real space, these Ming dynasty illustrations become sites for men within and outside of the play to project their desire.

Dreamscapes as Emotional Realms: History and Historiography

Premodern Chinese society conceived of dreams very differently than we do today. In her research on late Ming dream culture, Lynn A. Struve has shown how the states of dreaming and waking were understood in terms of the modalities of *yin* and *yang* as well as the concepts of *hun* and *po* (both of which roughly translate to “spirit” or “numen”). To be asleep entails the *yin* state, and to be awake, the *yang*. While one is in the *yin* dreaming state, *hun* temporarily separates from the earthly *po*; when one wakes up, the wandering *hun* returns to the physical body, and thus the souls are reunited.² In this context, dreams are more than fictional plots separate from reality—they become the medium for transcendental experiences beyond corporeal limitations. The separation of *hun* and *po* poses an imminent danger for the dreamer, especially in circumstances such as nightmares or other nonlucid states. The failure of *hun* to return to one’s body can potentially result in death.³ Dreams also have the potential to cause philosophical awakening. For example, a Ming literatus Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428-1500) composed poems about his dreams as intellectual reflections on Neo-Confucian moral philosophy.⁴

Dreams perform a variety of functions in Chinese literature as both plots and tropes. According to Wai-yee Li, dreams were already employed in early texts such as *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (Zuo Commentary Tradition, ca. fifth to fourth centuries BC) to “structure events and to impose order on human experience.”⁵ Many dreams in

² Lynn A. Struve, *The Dreaming Mind and the End of the Ming World* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019), 16-18.

³ Struve, *The Dreaming Mind and the End of the Ming World*, 18.

⁴ Struve, *The Dreaming Mind and the End of the Ming World*, 86-87.

⁵ Wai-yee Li, “Dreams of Interpretation in Early Chinese Historical and Philosophical Writings,” in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, eds. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

later writings inherited this “public and externalized dimension,”⁶ although the job of interpretation is sometimes left to the readers. Among the most famous of these stories are the Tang dynasty’s *Zhenzhong ji* 枕中記 (Record Within a Pillow) and the Qing masterpiece *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (The Dream of the Red Chamber). The dreamscapes in these stories often present a dialectical interplay of what Wai-yee Li calls “the enchantment and disenchantment,” in which the aesthetic illusion of dream and the imperative of enlightenment continually balance each other. Dreams can also function as a liminal space in literature, in which the protagonists can either foretell the future or appeal to supernatural forces. For example, in the *zaju* play *Ren jinshu gu’er xunmu* 認金梳孤兒尋母 (An Orphan Uniting with His Mother through the Golden Hairpin), the protagonist An Li’s 安禮 dream serves as a vehicle for the revelation of truth, propelling An to seek justice for his murdered father.

However, the majority of Ming dramatic works employ dreams to create a vortex of *qing* 情 (emotion). The trope of romantic dreams can be traced back to *Gaotang fu* 高唐賦 (The Gaotang Rhapsody), in which the author Song Yu 宋玉 (ca. 290-223 BC) tells the story of a king of Chu who shares a brief, intimate moment with the goddess of the Wu Mountain in his dream. A pivotal composition among the Ming dynasty dramatic pieces that feature romantic dreams as such is the celebrated *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (The Peony Pavilion). In this work, the female protagonist Liniang 麗娘’s feelings of love and desire in her dream were so intense that they caused her death.⁷ This drama celebrating the transcendence of *qing* has attracted extensive scholarship highlighting feminine emotion, subjectivity, and identity in the Ming literary world.⁸

⁶ Li, “Dreams of Interpretation in Early Chinese Historical and Philosophical Writings,” 18.

⁷ However, the dream also functions as an omen in this drama since Du Liniang’s dream of Liu Mengmei 柳夢梅 occurs prior to the two characters meeting. Bearing in mind the discussion of *hun* and *po*, one could interpret Liniang’s death as the failure of *hun* to return to her body.

⁸ See Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 47-88; Tina Lu, *Persons, Roles, and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2001).

Contemporary to the development of the cult of *qing* in literary productions was the rise of commercial publishing along the southeast coast.⁹ Many of these printed libretti contained illustrations. For plots that included a dreaming male protagonist, illustrations of dreamscapes became especially popular. Whether in the original textual narrative, the illustrated scenes, or the actual performance, the appearance of the female protagonist's image is the crucial element of the dreamscape—her figure not only represents the projection of the male character's desire and longing but also designates a space ontologically different from the theatrical "reality." As she enters the stage and occupies the same space as the man, the liminal boundary between dream and reality, past and present, now and then, and even life and death is bridged. However, unlike the phantom heroines that Judith Zeitlin has identified in some seventeenth-century Chinese literature who enter men's dreams as actual ghosts,¹⁰ these female images stem primarily from the man's inner yearning for the heroine, which is then substantiated as active agents in the realm of his dream. Her visual image in publications concretizes and externalizes this realm of *qing* in a material format. In these commercially available libretti, the emotional dreamscape becomes a semipublic scene that viewers indulge in and share with other readers. If entering and departing the dream state creates certain theatrical sensibilities, juxtaposing the dream and dreamer on the same pictorial plane alludes to the meta-theatricality of the scene. This encourages the readers to distance themselves from the emotional intensity of the male protagonist's ephemeral yet deeply convincing dreamscape.

The literary convention of employing dream plots has inspired a significant body of scholarship that analyzes dreams' symbolic role and emotional efficacy.

⁹ Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 33. Commercial publications made up only 10 percent of all publications in the first half of the dynasty, rising to around 90 percent in the second half. See Lucille Chia, "Publications of the Ming Principalities: A Distinct Example of Private Printing," *Ming Studies*, no. 54 (September 2006): 29.

¹⁰ Judith Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine: Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: 2007).

For example, Ling Hon Lam has researched the topic of dreamscapes and emotion in Chinese drama. In his book, Lam traces the historical change in Chinese drama from “dreamscape” to “theatricality” between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹ Rejecting the idea that emotions are strictly interior to the subject, Lam claims that they are instead “structured through and through by theatricality.”¹² The theatricality in question refers to the emergence of a mode of spatiality marked by the transformation of the dreamer into a self-displaced spectator. In other words, his emotions are alienated from the feeling subject (protagonist as the dreamer). Instead, he performs the act of stepping back and sympathizing with the dreamer’s emotion (thus resulting in the protagonist as the spectator). Consequently, the emotion becomes externalized, to be observed by both the audience and the actor.¹³ Building on the complexity of Lam’s argument and his critique of established conceptualizations of theatricality and meta-theatricality, this paper analyzes the visualization of these dramas in printed books to examine his discussion of the medieval conception of dreamscape as an illusion and his claim that dreamers in dramas transform into onlookers. This paper asks whether a scene visualized on paper can be an illusion. What does it mean for a depicted figure to be an onlooker, or is he? Can printed illustrations be a tool to bridge an emotional dream that is illusionistic and the meta-theatricality that demands sympathetic observation?

In addition to addressing Lam’s work, this article responds to Zeitlin’s research on the phantom heroine in seventeenth-century Chinese literature. Zeitlin studies the meaning of ghosts in writings following the fall of the Ming dynasty when the literary image of these phantoms became increasingly feminized. The delicate and fragile female ghosts are brought back to life through the sexual power and *qing* of men. Associated with fallen dynasties and palace ruins, these heroines

¹¹ Ling Hon Lam, *The Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China: From Dreamscapes to Theatricality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 6.

¹² Lam, *The Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China*, 102.

¹³ Lam, *The Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China*, 6, 102.

signify the male author's "work of mourning."¹⁴ In the writings Zeitlin examines, the heroines are mostly presented as feminine objects of the male gaze, whose illusory bodies invite male readers' grief for a bygone regime. In this sense, the encounter between the male protagonist and the female ghost becomes a gendered exercise of emotion that extends its signification into the past.¹⁵ In these texts, the female ghosts who approach the male protagonists in erotic dreams are subjects longing for the men's love. In the broader social context, the use of a romance between a contemporary Chinese man and a female ghost from a past dynasty affirms and concretizes the Chinese literati's claim of lineage to a past that was rendered continuous and homogeneous.¹⁶ The lament and desire of the ghost defines the dynamic of the relationship—both between men and women and between the literati and the legacy of Chinese history—as mutual and commiserating. This phenomenon in literature is parallel to, yet contrasts with, many illustrations in printed libretti. This article examines the visual dimension of that longing: why are these women longing? What is the gender dynamic in the narrative of longing?

The dramas discussed in this paper, as indicated in the introduction, have plots that involve a male protagonist dreaming of his female lover. Male dreamscapes were chosen as a contrast to the well-studied drama *Mudan ting*.¹⁷ The latter is a pivotal work exemplifying the cult of *qing*, in which the heroine Liniang experiences her female desire and participates in the enchantment of love in her own dream.¹⁸ But what if the dreamer is male, and the dreamed is female? And

¹⁴ Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, 42, 52, 88, 104, 114.

¹⁵ Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, 96.

¹⁶ The nature of Chinese history in these writings is continuous in the sense that the present is perceived as a continuation of past dynasties. This sense of continuity is also symbolized by the romantic encounter between contemporary Chinese literati and female ghosts of the past.

¹⁷ Although in *Mudan ting*, both the female protagonist (Liniang) and the male protagonist (Liu Mengmei) are described to have dreamed of each other (or, as some commentaries have claimed, were in the same dream), the content of the dream is mainly portrayed from Liniang's perspective.

¹⁸ According to Wai-yee Li's reading, there is a further element of disenchantment: the

what if the dreamed woman no longer exhibits clear agency, unlike the longing ghosts? In the romantic dramas to be discussed in this paper, the male protagonists dream of lovers whose presence is unattainable. Because there is no active participation from supernatural powers, the dream content seems to be private for the male dreamers; thus this class of dreams is centered around masculine emotion.

Ming dynasty printed books provide abundant examples of illustrations depicting these scenes. In some of the illustrations, a specific mode of pictorialization bestows roles and power upon the heroines that are absent in the original text. By bringing attention to the visualization of these dramas, this article engages with the deployment of female agency in Chinese opera consumption, an issue discussed in Dorothy Ko's pioneering work on female readers.¹⁹ As Ko argues, in the male-dominated publishing industry, celebrating and granting agency to the female protagonist challenged neither the gender stereotypes nor the basic premise of the gender system.²⁰ Instead, these practices produced an "overly sentimental and oversexed" female image onto which contemporary men projected their desire.²¹ Following Ko's assertion, this paper attempts to reveal how this male-centrism operated through the gendered gaze in visual representations.

Male Dreamscape in Chinese Drama: Two Narrative Modes

A significant number of the extant works of Yuan *zaju* reproduced and printed during the Ming dynasty contain similar scenes of a male dreamscape.²² The

flower god in Liniang's dream. It is this dialectical interplay between "ardent longing" and "amused detachment" that resists any singular interpretation of this work's message. See Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 58-59.

¹⁹ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1995).

²⁰ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 110-111.

²¹ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 112.

²² It is important to keep in mind that in many Ming dynasty works reproducing Yuan *zaju*, literary revision of original texts occurred for political, ideological, or aesthetic reasons. See Stephen H. West, "A Study in Appropriation: Zang Maoxun's Injustice to Dou E,"

length of the dream scene is usually short. The dream begins with the male protagonist enchanted into the illusionistic, emotional affect of *qing* and ends abruptly after the retreat of the female.

This section identifies two archetypal modes of narrating male dreamscapes in Chinese dramas. The first mode creates a dream scene that resurrects a moment in the past before the male and female protagonists were forced to part ways. The other mode creates an alternative reality in the dream which justifies and allows a reunion of the two protagonists. These two narrative modes appear in a variety of dramas that will be introduced in the following paragraphs. Most of the dream plots implement one of these two modes, while more complex ones incorporate both of them to create a highly potent realm of emotion.

Among the Yuan-Ming period dramatic productions, a plot that employs the first mode appears in the fourth act of *Wutong yu*. The published libretto of *Wutong yu* in *Gu zaju* 古雜劇, edited by Wang Jide 王驥德 (1540-1623), exemplifies the narrative structure and performance cues of dream plots as such. In this act, Emperor Xuanzong falls asleep, and the event is marked by the song “*Tang xiucai*” 倘秀才:

悶打頰和衣臥倒，軟兀刺方才睡著。

Gloomily I lie down fully clothed; languidly I have just fallen asleep.²³

The term “just” (*fangcai*, 方才) above signals both the temporal and spatial shift from reality to the realm of dream. Immediately after this line, the female protagonist, or *dan* 旦, enters the stage:

(旦上，云)妾身貴妃是也。近日殿中設宴，宮娥，請主上赴席咱。

(The *dan* enters the stage and speaks.) Here I am, the royal concubine.

There is a banquet held in the palace these days. Palace lady, invite our

Journal of the American Oriental Society 111, no. 2 (June 1991): 283-302.

²³ “方才.” Bai Pu, *Wutong yu* in Wang Jide 王驥德, *Mingke gu zaju* 明刻古雜劇 (Ming Editions of Ancient *zaju*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2015), vol. 2, 698.

emperor to the celebration.²⁴

She introduces the occasion as the day of the Eternal Palace banquet and asks the court ladies to escort Emperor Xuanzong to the ceremony. At this point, it is clear to the audience that Consort Yang has long been dead at the Slope of Mawei (*mawei po*, 馬嵬坡). Her presence in the line (or on the stage) implies a transition, based on the line sung by the male protagonist, from the theatrical reality to a dreamscape. Xuanzong's dream relocates him back in time to the Double Seven Festival (*Qixi*, 七夕) banquet that took place at the beginning of the first act. In that setting, Consort Yang, then recently brought into the palace, enjoys the utmost favor from Xuanzong. The two pledge eternal love to each other using an inlaid box and golden hairpin.²⁵ Before the two make direct contact, Emperor Xuanzong sings:

忽見青衣走來報，道太真妃將寡人邀宴樂。

Suddenly I see a palace lady approaching to report, saying that the Consort Taizhen [Consort Yang] is inviting me to enjoy the feast.²⁶

Here, the word “suddenly” (*hu*, 忽) similarly acts as a marker of temporal shift. The line about a messenger sending for the emperor concerns more than the authenticity of the courtly setting, which demands formality. It functions as a narrative device that subtly signals the male protagonist's consciousness entering the dream.

The opera's perspective constantly shifts between an immersive acting mode and an observing descriptive mode. For example, in Consort Yang's line above, she first introduces herself, supposedly to the audience;²⁷ then directs her speech to

²⁴ Bai Pu, *Wutong yu*, 698.

²⁵ In Bai Juyi's original poem, the act of pledging eternal love on the seventh day of the seventh month in the Eternal Palace was presented in the last section: Consort Yang recounts her memory of it. The pledging episode became quite popular in plays and dramas such as *Wutong yu* and *Changsheng dian*.

²⁶ Bai Pu, *Wutong yu*, 698.

²⁷ “妾身貴妃是也。” Bai Pu, *Wutong yu*, 698.

the palace lady.²⁸ This line is followed by the *mo* 末 (here, the actor playing the male protagonist) singing about the palace lady (青衣); his song reveals the plot to the audience.²⁹ This meta-theatricality, apparent throughout the work, heightens the dramatic effect of the blending of reality and dream. As the emperor, who has just fallen asleep, perceives the palace lady, the arrival of the dream realm is supposed to be complete.

However, the sung line that introduces this most likely fictional role of a palace lady does not fully accomplish the emperor's self-relocation from the realm of reality to the dreamscape or from the present to the past in the subsequent scene. When the female protagonist appears on the stage, Emperor Xuanzong asks where she came from, seemingly unaware of his dreaming state:

妃子，你在那〔哪〕裡來？

My Consort, where do you come from?³⁰

The question seems to convey the emperor's confusion, not only about why she has appeared but also about how she has appeared. It is as if Emperor Xuanzong is subconsciously aware of Consort Yang's death and thus knows that she should not be here. However, instead of directly addressing the issue of her "resurrection," Xuanzong asks a more ambivalent question, blurring his own sense of existence by subtly rationalizing hers. The dream ends with Emperor Xuanzong "suddenly waking up" (*jingxing*, 驚醒) right after the stage prompt for the retreat of the *dan*. The emperor then describes the encounter as a dream and sings melancholily:³¹

……好夢將成還驚覺，半襟情淚濕鮫綃。

My startling awakening happens before my sweet dream could be fulfilled.

My silky handkerchief is soaking wet with my chestful of sentimental

²⁸ “宮娥，請主上赴席咱。” Bai Pu, *Wutong yu*, 698.

²⁹ Bai Pu, *Wutong yu*, 698.

³⁰ Bai Pu, *Wutong yu*, 698.

³¹ “元來是一夢。” Bai Pu, *Wutong yu*, 698.

tears.³²

Hangong qiu, by the Yuan dramatist Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠 (ca. 1250-1321), offers an example of the male dreamscape utilizing the other narrative mode, that is, the invention of an alternative reality. The work centers on the tragic romance between Emperor Yuan of Han 漢元帝 (75-33 BC) and Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 (ca. 50-15 BC). Like *Wutong yu*, Emperor Yuan has to sacrifice his lover for his kingdom by sending her on a marriage alliance mission with the *chanyu* 單于 of the Xiongnu Empire. After the heroine drowns herself at the Han-Xiongnu border as a gesture of loyalty towards Emperor Yuan, the latter grievously dreams of her one night. The dream scene in *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選 (Selection of Yuan Plays), edited by Zang Maoxun 臧懋循 (1550-1620), is similar to that in *Wutong yu* in plot and setting. Zhaojun enters the stage after the male protagonist sings the lines announcing that he is falling asleep. However, Zhaojun's lines address the recent events relating to the marriage alliance instead of recreating an innocent and happy memory from the past. She claims to have escaped from the northern land to reunite with his majesty of the Han:

妾身王嬙，和番到北地，私自逃回。兀的不是我主人。陛下，妾身來了也。

This is Wang Qiang [Zhaojun]. I was married to the northern land. Now I have escaped back in secret. Isn't that my master? Your majesty, I have come [back].³³

Her magical escape in the dream is soon ended by pursuing Xiongnu soldiers who drag her away in a scene of horror that ends when the emperor wakes up. This narrative device that explains the survival and return of the heroine underscores the contingency of past tragic events. Within the context of Emperor Yuan's dream,

³² Bai Pu, *Wutong yu*, 698.

³³ Ma Zhiyuan, *Hangong qiu*, in Zang Jinshu 臧晉叔, *Yuanqu Xuan* 元曲選 (Selection of Yuan Plays) (Taipei: Zhengwen Shuju, 1970), vol. 1, 11.

the existence of the two protagonists' irreparable separation is mirrored to dramatize its emotional impulse—despite the ephemeral illusion of happiness, the weight of reality soon triumphs both within the dream (i.e., the Xiongnu dragging away the escaped Zhaojun) and through the male subject's loss of the dreamscape (i.e., Emperor Yuan waking). After waking, the emperor sings:

恰纔見明妃回來，這些兒如何就不見了？

Only just now I saw Consort Ming had come back. How has she disappeared now?³⁴

The term “how” (*ruhe*, 如何) questions more than the mere mechanism of her disappearance since Consort Ming was dragged away in front of both the emperor and the audience in the dreamscape setting. Instead, it seems to interrogate the transition between the dream and reality: how is the dream predicated upon reality? How does one tell what is real and what is not, if the dream is so viscerally convincing? This conundrum, which dates back to Zhuangzi's dream of turning into a butterfly, is complicated in these romances by the emotional factor, which seems to bridge the two ontological realms. As Emperor Yuan exits the dreamscape, the poignance of *qing* extends into the theatrical reality instead of disappearing with the dream, signified by his inability to distinguish the dream from reality. In a theatrical performance, the omnipresence of *qing* mirrors the spatial continuity between the distinct realms of dream and on-stage reality.

The two examples above present two basic ways in which male protagonists are shown dreaming of their lost female lovers. The first recreates a distant past before the separation has occurred. The second projects an alternative scenario onto reality in which the lover returns to the protagonist with a justification of the event. These two dream modes appear in various forms in many other dramatic pieces. For example, in one of the most popular dramas, *Xixiang ji* by Wang Shifu 王實甫 (ca. 1260-1336), the male protagonist Student Zhang 張生 is temporarily

³⁴ Ma Zhiyuan, *Hangong qiu*, 11.

separated from the heroine Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 while traveling to take the civil service examination in the capital. One night during the journey, Zhang dreams that Yingying decides to join him in his travel inn. The heroine, at first not identified as a dream figure, knocks on the male protagonist's door while singing a long ballad. She declares that she snuck out while her household slept and traveled through the night to join him on his journey. Her lengthy song expressing her inner longing for Student Zhang almost tempts the readers into thinking that it is a real expression of Yingying's feelings. Shortly after their reunion, however, a soldier from the camp of Zhang Feihu, a villain from a much earlier stage of the drama, appears at Student Zhang's doorway and takes Yingying away from him.³⁵ Thus in *Xixiang ji* the author combines the two modes of dramatic dreams: Yingying sneaking out after dark to unite with Student Zhang presents an alternative to the present reality, whereas the anachronistic employment of Zhang Feihu, who has no direct relationship to the protagonists' separation in this scene, as the element disturbing Yingying's visit in Student Zhang's dream resurrects a past timeline. In a 1592 printed edition, a commentator recognized the prototype for the act "A Startled Dream by Straw Bridge" (*caoqiao jingmeng*, 草橋驚夢) as "deriving from Letian [Bai Juyi]'s *Changhen ge*" (*ben Letian Changhen ge lai*, 本樂天長恨歌來).³⁶ Since Bai Juyi's original poem does not contain a dream featuring the heroine, the Ming commentator may have been referring to later variations of the narrative of Xuanzong and Consort Yang as the prototype for this dream plot in

³⁵ Wang Shifu [元]王實甫, "Caoqiao Jingmeng" 草橋驚夢 (A Startled Dream by Straw Bridge), in *Ying Ming Hongzhi ben xinkan qimiao quanxiang zhushi Xixiang ji* 影明弘治本新刊奇妙全相注釋西廂記 (Photoprint of the Hongzhi edition of A Newly Carved, Deluxe, Completely Illustrated and Annotated Romance of the Western Chamber) (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1961), 131-133.

³⁶ Wang Shifu, *Chongke yuanben tiping yinshi xixiang ji* 重刻元本題評音釋西廂記 (Reprint of the Yuan Edition of the Romance of the Western Chamber with Commentary and Sound Glosses) (Tokyo: Collection of the National Archives of Japan, 1592 [明萬曆二十年], printed by *Xiongshi Zhongzheng tang* 熊氏忠正堂), vol. 2, 28a.
Source: *Archives of Japan Digital Archive*,
<https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/DAS/meta/listPhoto?LANG=eng&BID=F1000000000000107563&ID=M2013090221092599929&TYPE=> (Accessed 28, January, 2019).

Xixiang ji. Like Emperor Xuanzong in *Wutong yu*, Student Zhang, the male protagonist of *Xixiang ji*, is separated from his lover and longs for her so acutely that he wishes to see her or actually sees her in a dream.

In a much later opera, Hong Sheng 洪昇's 1688 *Changsheng dian* 長生殿 (The Palace of Lasting Life), the author employs similar techniques, narrating the dreams with slight alterations. After the act in which Emperor Xuanzong falls asleep, two eunuchs enter the stage, bringing the joyful news that Consort Yang has escaped death at Mawei and is waiting there for her beloved Xuanzong. The elated emperor is then stopped by Chen Yuanli, the general responsible for Yang's death. Without hesitation, the emperor immediately executes Chen to avenge Consort Yang. When Emperor Xuanzong arrives at Mawei, the place appears deserted, with no trace of the heroine. The dreamscape then undergoes a sudden twist and dissolves into a scene of *Qujiang chi*, an imperial garden outside the capital, where a roaring monster emerges and leaps at the emperor. He wakes up horrified after the monster is chained by two golden-armored heavenly guardians, and never sees the concubine's image in the dream.³⁷ In the Qing opera, multiple spatiotemporal moments and memories are conflated in the dreamscape, with the addition of new elements of revenge and fear. The central object of the emperor's dream, the female image, finally disappears after her many resurrections in earlier dramas. Her absence in his dream follows Bai Juyi's original poem,³⁸ but the alternative scenario of Consort Yang escaping execution dramatizes the tragedy by initially raising the emperor's hope and twisting his deepest desire into a more painful, traumatic history.³⁹

³⁷ Hong Sheng [清]洪昇, *Changsheng dian jianzhu* 長生殿箋注 (Annotation of the Palace of Lasting Life), annotated by Takemura Noriyuki 竹村則行 and Kang Baocheng 康保成 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1999), 314-316.

³⁸ Hong Sheng claims in the preface that he "bases the drama only upon Bai Juyi's *Changhen ge* and Chen Hong's *Changhen ge zhuan*" (止按白居易長恨歌，陳鴻長恨歌傳為之). Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian jianzhu*, 1.

³⁹ Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, 187. This drama, however, does not embrace the original tragic ending. Instead, Hong Sheng's last act involves the reunion of the lovers as

The two modes introduced above for narrating dreamscapes in plays and operas provide the male protagonist with a gateway through which he can temporarily fulfill his desire of reuniting with his female lover. The mode that involves recreating a memory foregrounds a sense of nostalgia before the tragedy takes place. The other mode, by exploring an alternative scenario in which the tragedy is amended, further highlights the sense of desperation that the protagonist feels after waking up. The meta-theatrical sensibilities embedded in the libretto, which are exemplified by the continual shifts in perspective, subtly externalize the character's emotion on the stage.

Dreamscape Illustrations in Printed Books

The dream scenes of the dramas discussed in the last section are all visualized in one or more versions of their illustrated publications.⁴⁰ These illustrations correspond to and at times creatively depart from the original texts. The difference between the two narrative modes of male dreamscape is not necessarily reflected in these illustrations. Instead, the visual negotiation between the dream realm and reality becomes the central concern. This section first explores two examples of dreamscape images that closely match the written plots. It then examines in detail a style of depicting male dreamscapes that incorporates the portrayal of the female gaze. Found in many publications, the pictorial device visually subverts the subject-object relationship and introduces a new dynamic to the dream plot.

immortals “to be forever husband and wife” (*yongwei fufu*, 永為夫婦). See Hong Sheng, *Changsheng dian jianzhu*, 353-59.

⁴⁰ An exception is *Changsheng dian*. I conjecture that the “yumeng” 雨夢 (dream in the rain) in *Changsheng dian* is not illustrated because there is no female image in the dreamscape, which would have made it difficult for the illustrator to follow any established convention.

(1) *Depicting the Desired Realm: Dreams from Text to Image*

For most publications, illustrations of dreams have three crucial elements: the dreamer, the content of the dream, and a pictorial device differentiating between the two. In the context of our discussion, the dreamer is the male protagonist, visually present or symbolized; the dreamed content is his meeting with the female protagonist; finally, a motif shaped like a balloon divides the dream realm from reality. The pictorial strategy of using a balloon-shaped frame to demarcate a dreamscape can be traced to the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279).⁴¹ In Ming dynasty woodblock-printed books, the dream balloon became a staple in depictions of dreamscapes.⁴²

One example of dreamscape illustration is found in a published libretto of *Wutong yu*. Two known printed editions of this drama have nearly identical illustrations of the dream scene. One of its earliest visualizations appears in the edition of *Gu Zaju* compiled by Wang Jide and printed by the *Guqu zhai* 顧曲齋 Studio during the Wanli era (Fig. 1). In the illustration, the imperial status of the sleeping figure is symbolized by the palatial architecture on the bottom right. Auspicious curling clouds envelop the building and heighten the ethereal ambience of the dream setting. A dream balloon occupying the top portion of the image emanates from a closed curtain and contains a scene of the two lovers under several parasol trees. Within the dream balloon, Consort Yang holds a feathered fan while her dress tassels flutter without wind, a conventional motif used to indicate strong inner emotion.⁴³ Her garment is decorated with a cloud pattern—attire that she did

⁴¹ One example is *Zhongxing ruiying tu* 中興瑞應圖 (Pictures of the Auspicious Omens for Dynastic Revival), in the Tianjin Museum.

⁴² As Struve argues, the employment of a dream balloon to depict dreamscapes is consistent with the contemporary view that “dreams are just as real, or even more real, than waking reality.” See Struve, *The Dreaming Mind and the End of the Ming World*, 138.

⁴³ The tradition of depicting goddesses with flying tassels goes back to the fifth and sixth centuries. These women were idealized feminine images onto which men projected their desiring gaze. See Hung Wu 巫鴻, *Zhongguo Huihua Zhongde* “Nüxing Kongjian” 中國繪畫中的女性空間 (Feminine Space: An Untold Story of Chinese Pictorial Art)

not wear in any of the illustrations in the previous episodes. In this manner, Consort Yang is no longer depicted in Emperor Xuanzong's dreamscape as the palace lady that she appears to be in the original text. Instead, the illustrator intentionally chose attire resembling that worn by heavenly goddesses, hinting at Bai Juyi's original poem in which Consort Yang became an immortal after her death. The dominance of the dreamscape within the composition and the omission of the figure of the dreamer create the illusion of a happy ending (i.e., a reunion), which contrasts with the original gloomy scene in which Xuanzong wakes in despair. In addition, the perspective of the walkway and the parasol tree plantings in the dream setting resemble those in the imperial garden scene depicted in the realm of reality immediately below. This setting seems to correspond to the plot in the texts; Consort Yang is described as visiting Emperor Xuanzong in his dream at the place where he falls asleep. The realm of reality, with its empty yard, appears bleak by contrast with the dream scene with which it is juxtaposed, leaving the viewer with a lingering sense of dismay at reality's tragedy.

In contrast to the conflated image in *Wutong yu*, the dreamscape in the 1498 Hongzhi edition of *Xixiang ji*, namely the *Xinkan dazi kuiben quanxiang canzeng qimiao zhushi Xixiang ji* 新刊大字魁本全相參增奇妙註釋西廂記 (A Newly Carved, Deluxe, Completely Illustrated Annotated Romance of the Supplemented Western Chamber with Large Font and Size, hereafter the Hongzhi edition), takes the form of a series of images (Fig. 2).⁴⁴ As existing scholarship has noted, this version employs the format of "picture above-text below," with scenes on consecutive pages sometimes connected to form continuous pictorial narratives over as many as eight pages.⁴⁵

(Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2018), 97-109.

⁴⁴ Da-jun Yao, "The Pleasure of Reading Drama: Illustrations to the Hongzhi Edition of The Story of the Western Wing," in *The Moon and the Zither: The Story of the Western Wing by Wang Shifu*, eds. and trans. Stephen H. West and Wilt L. Idema (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 449.

⁴⁵ Yao, "The Pleasure of Reading Drama," 449. Also see Wen-chin Hsu 徐文琴, "You qing zhi huan—Ming kanben *Xixiang ji* banhua chatu tanjiu" 由「情」至「幻」——明刊本《西廂記》版畫插圖探究 (From Sentiments to Metaphysics—the Research upon Ming Print Books of The Story of the Western Wing), *Yishu xue yanjiu* 藝術學研究 (Journal

The dreamscape illustrations occupy six frames and contain three individual scenes, beginning with Student Zhang asleep in bed. A dream balloon emerges from his head, its limits defined by two twisting and turning lines. The balloon continues into the next scene where Yingying's figure appears within the blank dreamscape, which then materializes in the following scenes of reunion and separation. Overall, the illustrations of dreamscape loyally respond to the original text by depicting the two climactic moments: Yingying's appearance at Student Zhang's doorway and her capture by Zhang Feihu's soldiers.⁴⁶ The transition from the real realm of Student Zhang's sleeping bed to his dreamscape is accomplished by the use of the dream balloon, which descends towards the left. Within the balloon, the figure of Yingying faces in the same direction, anticipating the next scene, which depicts her reunion with Student Zhang.⁴⁷ The awakening of Student Zhang is not illustrated. Instead, the last scene shows him gazing towards the morning star, in a moment of solitude that immediately follows his waking from the dream. The seemingly rapid and sudden change from the dream scene to reality in this series of images serves to reinforce the ontological difference between Student Zhang and the dream figure of Yingying. During the encounter with the soldier in the last part of the dream, Student Zhang is not depicted; having been asked by Yingying

of Art Studies), no. 6 (May 2010): 70-75; Meng-ching Ma 馬孟晶, "Ermu zhi wan—cong *Xixiang ji* banhua chatu lun wanming chuban wenhua dui shijuexing zhi guanzhu" 耳目之玩——從《西廂記》版畫插圖論晚明出版文化對視覺性之關注 (Discourses upon the Publishing Culture's Focus on Visuality from the Illustrated Images in the Story of the Western Wing), *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 國立臺灣大學美術史研究集刊 (Taida Journal of Art History), no. 13 (September 2002): 209.

⁴⁶ This version was published by the Yue family from the Jintai district, Beijing. By the time it was published, the story of The Western Wing was said to be known among the general population as indicated in the epilogue (*paiji*, 牌記): "若西廂，曲中之翹楚者也，沉閨閭小巷，家傳人誦，做戲頒演，切須字句真正，唱與圖應。" It is therefore reasonable to assume that the series of illustrations of various lengths in this edition were made to accompany and correspond to the singing.

⁴⁷ In this version of the publication, the illustration of Yingying ascending as a dreamed figure appears on the right-hand page and the reunion scene on the left. Therefore, as the readers look at the open book, Yingying's gaze seems to be directed towards the next scene across the gutter.

to step behind the door while she speaks to the intruder,⁴⁸ he is supposedly standing in the doorway behind her. The architectural structure in the waking scene that follows continues, although not precisely, from the previous scene in which Yingying is positioned outside of the doorway. Student Zhang stands in the inner quarter facing right as if substituting for the figure of himself that is in the same location in the dream but unseen. The dream extends across several illustrations and does not formally cease at the border of the balloon. The illustrations thus break the liminal boundary between dream and reality because they are depicted continuously on the same pictorial plane. However, an image title at the right of Zhang's waking scene, "awakening," pauses the spatial continuity, creating an unbridgeable gap between the realms of dream and reality.

(2) *From the Desirer to the Desired: Male Dream, Female Gaze*

Aside from the two examples discussed in the last section, most dreamscape illustrations for dramas featuring a man who dreams of an unattainable female lover follow a standard pictorial style. The Hongzhi edition already exhibits certain features of this mode: the figure of Yingying within the dream balloon is depicted as gazing towards the next scenic unit on the left, showing her reunion with Student Zhang. This feature can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, it acts as a pictorial transition between different scenic units and ontological realms. On the other hand, Yingying, the object of desire in Student Zhang's dream, is visually transformed into the active subject who takes on the role of looking. In this sense, Yingying becomes the audience for Student Zhang's deepest desire.

In several later printed editions of *Xixiang ji*, the longing female gaze turns back towards the sleeping male figure, as if it could cross the boundary between

⁴⁸ "You stay close to my back. I will open the door to talk with him" (你近後，我自開門對他說); "Do not talk, step back a little" (休言語，靠後些). See Wang Shifu, *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (The Story of the Western Wing), in *Ying Ming Hongzhi ben xinkan qimiao quan xiang zhushi Xixiang ji*, 133.

the realm of dream and reality. This type of dreamscape illustration is exemplified by *Chongke yuanben tiping yinshi xixiangji* 重刻元本題評音釋西廂記 (Reprint of the Yuan Edition of the Romance of the Western Chamber with Commentary and Sound Glosses), published by Xiong Longfeng 熊龍峰 (fl. 1590s) of Zhongzheng tang 忠正堂 (hereafter the ZZT edition) in the twentieth year of the Wanli era (1592) (Fig. 3).⁴⁹ The illustrations of the Hongzhi edition are best characterized as narrative painting, which Cedric Laurent says is “made up of a sequence of scenes that represent different actions related to the same story, the hero returning regularly to the composition, following the scene sequence.”⁵⁰ The ZZT edition, conversely, showcases “a splitting of the story,” in which the illustrations are characterized by “a discontinuous sequence of scenes.”⁵¹ Each of the individual plots, which are disconnected from one another in the texts, are transposed into graphic scenes that correspond to distinct spatiotemporal moments in the story. In this edition, the illustration of the “Startled Dream” takes the form of a single-page image of the entire episode. It features a four-character title in the top middle, “A Startled Dream by Straw Bridge” (*caoqiao jingmeng*, 草橋驚夢), and a pair of original couplets on the side acting as the frame:

勞役不堪投宿休嫌村店小，別離難捨夢魂豈憚路途遙

Exhausted from the work, [Zhang] lodges in a village inn without caring that it is small. Torn from separation [with her lover], [Yingying's] spirit of the dream does not fear the toil of a long journey.⁵²

⁴⁹ There are two extant editions of the *Chongke yuanben*. The other was published by Liu Longtian around 1608 and was based on the version by Xiong Longfeng. See Xing-yu Jiang 蔣星煜, *Ming kanben Xixiang ji yanjiu* 明刊本西廂記研究 (Studies on Ming Published editions of the Romance of the Western Chamber) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1982), 38-66.

⁵⁰ Cedric Laurent, “Narrative Painting Viewed as Major Art in Sixteenth-Century Suzhou,” in *On Telling Images of China: Essays in Narrative Painting and Visual Culture*, eds. Shane McCausland and Yin Hwang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 145.

⁵¹ Laurent, “Narrative Painting Viewed as Major Art in Sixteenth-Century Suzhou,” 145.

⁵² Wang Shifu, *Chongke yuanben tiping yinshi Xixiang ji*, vol. 2, 27b.

By calling the figure of Yingying “a spirit of the dream” (*menghun*, 夢魂) who “does not fear the toil of a long journey” (*qidan lutu yao*, 豈憚路途遙), the second line of the couplet insinuates that her spirit infiltrates Student Zhang’s dream. Such an anti-psychoanalytic reading of the original plot projects onto Yingying the literary figures of divine goddesses or amorous ghosts who enter the dreams of male protagonists (such as the goddess of Wu Mountain). This paratextual projection is mirrored in the illustration. Within the image, Student Zhang is asleep on a desk.⁵³ Yingying appears in the dream balloon emerging from his head while she is being forcibly whisked away by the soldier. Unlike the Hongzhi edition, in which she gazes at the dream content in the next image, the ZZT edition depicts Yingying gazing mournfully back at the sleeping Student Zhang, whose concerned look suggests that he too is sad about the parting. Yingying’s gaze, which penetrates the boundary between reality and the dream realm marked by the balloon, signifies a liminal state in which the dreamer and the dreamed share a single space. Despite the ontological distinction between dream and reality, the two figures become the boundaries through gazes that demarcate the space of their intimacy.

This mode of depiction is reused in the same publication for the illustration of *Qiantang meng* 錢塘夢 (A Dream by the Qiantang River), a short story that acts as the prologue to the main story of *Xixiang ji* (Fig. 4).⁵⁴ *Qiantang Meng* relays the mysterious dream encounter of a scholar named Sima You 司馬樵 (fl. late eleventh century), the nephew of the renowned Northern Song scholar-official Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086), with a ghostly female figure that occurs after he excavates a

Source: *Archives of Japan Digital Archive*,
<https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/DAS/meta/listPhoto?LANG=eng&BID=F1000000000000107563&ID=M2013090221092599929&TYPE=> (Accessed 28, January, 2019).

⁵³ Peng-fei Yuan has speculated on why the male figure is sleeping in a chair in many Ming-Qing drama illustrations. He links the posture with theatrical practice from the Jin-Yuan period. See Peng-fei Yuan 元鵬飛, “Zang Maoxun *Yuanqu xuan de mengjing tu jiqi banyan*” 臧懋循元曲選的夢境圖及其搬演, *Yiyuan* 藝苑 (Forum of Arts), no. 1 (January 2013): 61-64.

⁵⁴ Fan Jeremy Zhang, “Dreams, Spirits, and Romantic Encounters in Jin and Yuan Theatrical Pictures,” in *Visual and Material Cultures in Middle Period China*, eds. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Susan Shih-shan Huang (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 115.

skeleton beneath his residence. This piece of writing is based on a popular tale about Sima You and Su Xiaoxiao 蘇小小 (d. ca. 501). The story, which began to emerge during the Northern Song period (960-1127) in various *biji* texts such as *Yunzhai guanglu* 雲齋廣錄 (Extended Records from Yunzhai), was incorporated into a *zaju* opera by Bai Pu (now lost).⁵⁵ In the opera, the spirit of the heroine appears in the young scholar's dream and sings a lyrical song informing him that they will reunite in Hangzhou. The idea that "pre-determined fate ultimately decides the outcome of all love affairs" highlighted in stories as such continued to be exploited in later operas such as *Mudan ting*, although in the latter it is the male scholar who visits the female dreamer to inform her of a future meeting.⁵⁶ The illustration is accompanied by a line of verse on each side:

石匣葵〔葬〕孤骸月下遙聞來玉珮，錢塘懸夜夢窗前驚醒續瑤篇。

The stone casket contains her desolate remains. Under the moonlight, he hears the jade clappers coming from the distance. Over the Qiantang River hangs one night's dream. He suddenly awakens and thus our story continues.⁵⁷

The couplet not only highlights a vision but also an acoustic experience in the dream, the sound of the jade clappers. On the theatrical stage, sound often acts as a medium for crossing physical boundaries.⁵⁸ The evocation of acoustic elements

⁵⁵ Qi Shi 施錡, "Sima you meng su xiaoxiao yu jin yuan zhi ji de yinyue biao yan xing tai" 《司馬樞夢蘇小小圖》與金元之際的音樂表演形態 (Sima Caizhong's Dream of the Courtesan, Su Xiaoxiao & Forms of Music Performance in Jin and Yuan), *Meishu guan cha* 美術觀察 (Art observation), no.1 (January 2019): 53-55.

⁵⁶ Zhang, "Dreams, Spirits, and Romantic Encounters in Jin and Yuan Theatrical Pictures," 121.

⁵⁷ Wang shifu, *Chongke yuanben tiping yinshi Xixiang ji*, vol. 1, 15b.

Source: *The National Archives of Japan Digital Archive*, https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/DAS/meta/listPhoto?LANG=eng&BID=F1000000000000107563&ID=&NO=1&TYPE=JPEG&DL_TYPE=pdf (Accessed 28, January, 2019).

⁵⁸ For a discussion of sound in Chinese theatrical practices, see Paize Keulemans, "Listening to the Printed Martial Arts Scene: Onomatopoeia and the Qing dynasty Storyteller's Voice," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 67, no.1 (June 2007): 51-87.

in the text both reflects an actual practice in the theatre and alludes to the nature of crossing boundaries between distinct realms in this scene. In the core image, the male protagonist is sleeping in bed, and a female figure in a dream balloon looks at him, holding a musical instrument in her hand. Unlike the dream figures of Yingying or Consort Yang, the figure of Su Xiaoxiao in this image fits more neatly into the genre of literary ghost stories discussed by Zeitlin, in which an amorous female phantom visits her living male lover through various paranormal mediums, including dreams. The illustrator seems to be identifying her as a ghostly presence by depicting the dream balloon as descending to the floor instead of floating upwards. Despite her ghostly nature, Su Xiaoxiao's feet stand solidly on the steps to Sima You's bed, suggesting her physical/spectral arrival in the man's dream.⁵⁹

The illustration of Sima You's superhuman/dream encounter in this publication has a prototype in a painting by the Jin dynasty Painter Liu Yuan 劉元, *Sima Caizhong's Dream of the Courtesan, Su Xiaoxiao* (Fig. 5).⁶⁰ The painting employs atmospheric clouds instead of a balloon to indicate the ethereal ambience of her entrance into the dreamscape of the dreamer. With one hand holding a musical instrument similar to that seen in the illustration in the ZZT edition and the other hand covering her mouth, the heroine Su Xiaoxiao gazes melancholily at Sima You, who is asleep with his head turned away. In this type of story, the dreamed female figure is no longer contained within the male protagonist's emotional projection; she is an apparition wandering in the realm of reality, actively joining the man's dream realm instead of being created by his psyche. As a being independent of the dreamer, the apparition's longing stems from within herself, and she trains her gaze upon the sleeping man rather than being summoned by his desire.

Arguably, the illustrator of the ZZT edition borrowed the "ghostly gaze" from

⁵⁹ Her presence is both physical, in that she has concrete form in the realm of reality, and spectral, in that she belongs to an alternate paranormal space.

⁶⁰ A number of other visual media such as ceramic pillows also bear this image. See Zhang, "Dreams, Spirits, and Romantic Encounters in Jin and Yuan Theatrical Pictures," 117.

these phantom illustrations to render the dream figure of Yingying,⁶¹ casting her as desirous of the sleeping male. Similar renderings with creative variations can be seen in later Ming editions of *Xixiang ji*. For example, in an edition of *Xixiang ji* printed and annotated by Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644), the illustration of the dream scene shows the figure of Yingying crossing the thatched bridge towards the hut where Student Zhang is living (Fig. 6). He is asleep at a table in the hut, seemingly unaware of her presence and her gaze. The ontological boundary between the realms of dream and reality is dissolved by the elimination of the dream balloon. The dreamed figure comes alive under the moonlight, and Yingying's gaze is unobstructed by any marker that might divide the two realms. The dissolution of the dream balloon reveals the creativity of the *Xixiang ji* illustrations. These illustrations were designed in response to the opera's extreme popularity during the late Ming dynasty, which created a demand for different editions. An underlying message in all of these illustrations is the tension between a Confucian student's efforts to earn his degree and the distraction resulting from amorous pursuits. The tension dissipates when the male protagonist achieves both love and degree.

Illustrations of other romantic dramas, including scenes of men dreaming, also incorporate an active female gaze. For example, an image from *Du muzhi shijiu Yangzhou meng* by Qiao Ji 喬吉 (1280-1345) (Fig. 7) shows a scholar who has fallen asleep on a desk. A dream balloon emerging from his head projects a female figure outside his window. She pays respect with a gesture as she gazes at the sleeping figure; the tassels of her clothing fluttering in his direction reveal her intense affection for him. The male figure is the Tang dynasty poet Du Muzhi 杜牧之 (803-852). He is described in the opera as a brilliant young scholar and dandy who indulges in sensuous pleasures. In the second *zhe* 折, Du Muzhi pays a visit to Niu Sengru 牛僧孺 (779-848), the magistrate of Yangzhou. There, he encounters

⁶¹ I created this term based on Zeitlin's notion of the "ghost body" in her first chapter. See Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, 13.

the heroine, the singing girl Zhang Haohao 張好好 (fl. 9th century), whom he had met three years before in the home of his friend Zhang Fang 張紡 (fictional character). Zhang Haohao is now Niu's adopted daughter and, critical of Du's idiosyncratic demeanor (*jiubing shimo*, 酒病詩魔), Niu decides to turn him away. Du falls asleep in dismay while visiting Niu's Terrace of Jade Cloud (*Cuiyun lou*, 翠雲樓) and dreams that Zhang Haohao comes to visit him. The romantic setting in this play is slightly different from those in the plays previously discussed. At this point, the male protagonist has not yet established any intimate relations with the female protagonist.⁶² The two characters have only met on two occasions when Du Muzhi attended banquets held by the girl's masters. On each occasion, she was summoned to perform and serve him wine. Du Muzhi's special affection towards Haohao before this dream plot is subtly expressed by the lines he sings when she appears at the banquet: "It is as if I have once met this girl somewhere."⁶³

In this dream, Haohao appears to attend to him with four maidens named Plum (*Yumei*, 玉梅), Bamboo (*Cuizhu*, 翠竹), Peach (*Yaotao*, 夭桃), and Willow (*Meiliu*, 媚柳). The eroticism embedded in the names of these maidens foregrounds the sensuous nature of Du's dream, which projects his romantic and erotic yearning for the girl. The depiction of the female dream figure gazing at the male figure in the illustration inverts the gendered roles of desire found in the original context; the emphasis on the sleeping posture of the desirous scholar turns him into a passive figure and grants the female the active role of gazing. In the lines following Du's waking, the author makes explicit that this dream is a reflection of the male protagonist's inner feelings by giving a servant the following words: "You, sir, are

⁶² The lack of a "love-pledging" plot in this play is probably also due to Du Muzhi's nature as a playboy.

⁶³ "這女子恰似在何處曾會見他來。" Qiao Ji [元]喬吉, *Du Muzhi shijiu Yangzhou meng* 杜牧之詩酒揚州夢 (Du Muzhi Indulging in Dreams of Poetry and Wine in Yangzhou), in Meng Chengshun [明]孟稱舜, ed., *Gujin minju hexuan* 古今名劇合選 (A Newly Carved Famous Dramas throughout History Collection of Willow Branches) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1958), vol. 3, 8a. It seems that the term "as if" (*qiasi*, 恰似) plays an important role in establishing a sense of ambiguity—is it true that they have met before, or is it not? This ambiguity echoes the state of dreaming, which seems real but isn't.

thinking about that person; then [you] have dreams [of her]. I don't think about anyone; where would I even get a dream [like that]?"⁶⁴ The fact that his servant is observant and comments on the dream, although he is not part of it, can be read in two different ways. On the one hand, his claim that "I don't think of anything" can be interpreted as a denial of the interiority of *qing* for lower-class servants; alternatively, the exchange between Du Muzhi and the servant may also function as a comic satire of a deluded scholar distracted by his lust. Either way, the romantic subjectivity of the scholar class is confirmed through its absence in his servant, even if the servant voices this quality as a criticism.

The female gaze appears in other illustrations of male dreams less conspicuously. In Zang Maoxun's compilation of *Yuanqu xuan*, there are two illustrations of *Hangong qiu* (Fig. 8). The one on the left depicts the scene just before Zhaojun commits suicide. Zhaojun, already en route, melancholically turns back at the water bank, showing her reluctance to move any further towards the north. In the direction of her gaze across the page is an illustration of a later plot, in which Emperor Yuan dreams of Zhaojun's return; the clouds looming above the architecture symbolize the emergence of the dream realm. The two successive pages are curiously arranged in reverse chronological order. This "misplacement"—if not a printer's error—results in a certain visual linkage between the two images: the riverbank in the scene with Zhaojun ends at the point where the tilted steps in the other image begin; the trees winding to the right also continue into the next image where they spread their branches and twigs. Although Zhaojun does not appear to be a dream figure if the illustration is examined individually, the two images are designed and placed in a way that seems to allow the heroine's gaze to travel across the pages and land in the realm where Emperor Yuan's sleeping figure is located. The visual cue of Zhaojun's ghostly, longing gaze towards the right is enhanced by the right-leaning trees and the right-flowing water.

⁶⁴ “相公則是想着那個人兒。便有夢。我也不想甚麼。那裡得夢來。” Qiao Ji, *Du Muzhi shijiu Yangzhou meng*, 12a.

Consequently, the two illustrations enable the displacement of emotion from the man to the woman. Her image before the tragic suicide fuses with her appearance in Emperor Yuan's dream, which grants her *qing* a transcendental force unconstrained by life and death. Her gaze penetrates not only the pictorial frame but, once again, the boundary between dream and reality, geographical distance, and the passing of time. Zhaojun's gaze towards her homeland lingers in the world like a phantom after her death, much as she appears in her lover's dream.

Additionally, her boundary-crossing gaze potentially functions as a metaphor for the theatre. The gaze she directs at Emperor Yuan signifies what Ling Hon Lam describes as the exteriority of *qing*. It transgresses temporal and spatial boundaries and the physical page, becoming omnipresent. In other words, Zhaojun's *qing* is perpetually embedded in the affective power of her poignant gaze, which makes her figure more real than ever. In a meta-theatrical sense, the act of viewing opera involves on-stage to off-stage communication through visual, acoustic, and even olfactory means. As the audience looks at the stage, the boundary between dramatic performance and worldly reality is blurred. Therefore, it is precisely due to the audience's gaze that opera becomes enchantingly real despite its illusionistic nature.

Printed illustrations of the dream plots discussed in this section take various forms. Whether through the faithful reproduction of the written content, such as the examples in *Wutong yu* and the Hongzhi edition of *Xixiang ji*, or the adaptation of the image of a phantom heroine, as in later *Xixiang ji* editions and many other libretti, these images construct a realm that permits readers to observe a man's emotions and desires. The latter examples, by making the dreamed figure "look," function as more than pictorial translations of the original texts. The woman's longing gaze transcends the boundary between dream and reality and subverts the relationship between the dreaming subject and dreamed object, thereby subtly hinting at the spectatorial nature of theatricality. Furthermore, it produces new meanings about gender and desire, an issue to be discussed in the next section.

Gender, Gaze, and Transposed Desire

What does it mean to assign the act of gazing to a dream figure, and what does it mean for the dreamer to be gazed upon by the person conjured from his own longing? Extant scholarship has extensively discussed the gender dynamic involved in the portrayal of female figures as objects of “the male gaze,” a term coined by Laura Mulvey in 1975.⁶⁵ This phenomenon has also attracted scholarly attention in the field of Chinese art history. For example, under the brush of the Ming painter Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 (1598-1652), women are often rendered in sensuous environments. The way these female figures pose and interact with their surroundings, as convincingly argued by Wang Cheng-hua 王正華, can be contextualized in late Ming visual and material culture in the Jiangnan area which foregrounds the descriptions of human senses, such as gazing, touching, and smelling.⁶⁶ Wang notes the similarities in structure and content between contemporary writing about women and about objects, such as *Yuerong bian* 悅容編 (On Appreciating Women) and *Zunsheng bajian* 遵生八箋 (The Eight Treatises on Life), which both focus on sensorial qualities which are “pleasing to the eye and heart” of literati men.⁶⁷

Interestingly, the depicted women in Chen’s paintings are not all passive beauties gazed upon by their male companions. For example, the leaning woman in *Xieyi xunlong tu* 斜倚熏籠圖 (A Lady Perfuming Her Sleeves) looks amorously towards the parrot, exhibiting, in Wang’s words, “the active agency of women to

⁶⁵ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (October 1975): 6-18.

⁶⁶ Cheng-hu Wang 王正華, “Nüren, wupin yu ganguan yuwang: Chen Hongshou wanqi renwu hua zhong Jiangnan wenhua de chengxian” 女人、物品與感官慾望：陳洪綬晚期人物畫中江南文化的呈現 (The Late-Ming Culture of Sensibility: Women and Objects in Ch'en Hung-shou's Late Figure Painting [1645-1652]), *Jindai Zhongguo funü shi yanjiu* 近代中國婦女史研究 (Research on Women in Modern Chinese History), no. 10 (December 2002): 1-51.

⁶⁷ Wang, “Nüren, wupin yu ganguan yuwang,” 4.

display desire.”⁶⁸ This tension between women as objects of desire in discursive writings versus women as desiring subjects in paintings can also be identified in some of the illustrations of dreamscapes.

The images discussed above all contrast with the original libretti in terms of who is looking. In the texts, it is almost always the male figure who eyes the heroine, appreciating and praising her beauty in extravagantly sensuous poems and songs. For example, when Zhang Haohao serves wine to Du Muzhi, he sings the following line:

他剛嚥了三個半口，險浣了內家妝束紅鴛袖。越顯出宮腰婀娜纖楊柳。倒添上些芙蓉顏色嬌皮肉。白處似梨花粧冷[冷]粉酥凝。紅處似海棠暈暖胭脂透。

She only drank three and a half swallows, but it almost tainted the red sleeves of her dress, which were embroidered with mandarin ducks. [The drink] makes her waist seem even more slender and shaky than the willow trees. Some lotus-shaded tint is added to her delicate skin. Like a pear flower, her fair complexion under the snowy powder appears soft and smooth. Like a Chinese quince, her blush warms up her face and makes the rouge seem translucent.⁶⁹

Sensuous descriptions of women's bodies appear frequently in these romantic dramas, emphasizing the overwhelming beauty of the female characters. In the lines above, Haohao is tender and delicate, sensuous yet innocent. She is also drunk, a state making her beauty even more luscious in the eyes of the male protagonist. Her every gesture and expression, narrated by the actor playing Du Muzhi, feed his (and maybe also the male readers') gaze and desire, while the performativity of the theatre requires the description of such beauty to be spoken aloud and shared with the audience. By performing this amorous gaze, the male singer adheres to Lam's

⁶⁸ Wang, "Nüren, wupin yu ganguan yuwang," 4.

⁶⁹ Qiao Ji, *Du Muzhi shijiu Yangzhou meng*, 6b (my translation).

definition of theatricality, in which he seems to “pause in front of” both the female image as well as his own aroused emotion, trying to “sympathetically identify with” the appraisal.⁷⁰ Therefore, he represents both his own gaze and that of the audience, in which the beauty of the female body is revealed.

The illustrations of these men’s dreams, however, seem to tell a different story. The female protagonists are transformed into the active beholders and the male figures into the passive, unconscious subjects of their gazes. Moreover, the dream figures, supposedly reflecting the men’s deepest desires, gain the agency to trespass liminal boundaries and transform the desirer into the desired by their gazes. This process cannot always be recreated on the stage as the male actor sometimes needs to interact with the female dream figure instead of lying in apparent sleep. The woodblock-printed illustrations, therefore, construct a different gender dynamic for their readers—the man becomes the passive figure to be gazed upon and desired in this intimate setting. These representations touch upon issues such as desire, the self, the sexual other, and subject-object relationships, of which the analysis benefits from Rainier Lanselle’s recourse to Lacanian theoretical tools in his paper on the “bad dream” in *Xixiang ji*.⁷¹ According to Lanselle’s analysis of Lacan’s Diagram L (Fig. 9), the self (the male dreamer’s) communication with the other (the dreamed woman) is mediated through the ego, which is “no more than a projection of the subjectivity.”⁷² According to this interpretation, when the male dreamer conjures a dream figure of the female other who is longing after something, the desire of the female is directed towards his alter ego.⁷³ Thus, his dream marks his desire to be transposed to the place of the alter ego, revealing his desire to be

⁷⁰ Lam, *The Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China*, 6. In this sense, certain elements of theatricality seem to already exist in these Ming-modified Yuan *zaju*.

⁷¹ Rainier Lanselle, “This Fearful Object of Desire: On the Interpretation of a Bad Dream in Wang Shifu’s Story of the Western Wing Glossary,” *Extreme-Orient Extreme-Occident*, no. 42 (December 2018): 205-237.

⁷² Lanselle, “This Fearful Object of Desire,” 221.

⁷³ Since in attempting to relate to others as an alter ego, one does so on the basis of what one “imagines” about them.

desired.

Such an interpretation of the literary dream plot sees its explicit manifestation in the illustrated dreamscape in which the female figure gazes at the male dreamer. This mechanism for projecting desire is extended from the pages of the opera libretto to act upon its readers. Before making any conjectures about the effect these images may have had on their viewers, however, one must first attempt to identify the targeted audience. Most of the publications discussed in this paper, such as Wang Jide's *Gu zaju* and Ling Mengchu's *Xixiang ji wujuan*, explicitly appeal to "an imaginary community of erudites" in their prefaces.⁷⁴ As noticed by Patricia Sieber, not only are the several prefaces in Wang's edition carved in different calligraphic forms, but his edition also replaced the "basic explanatory interlinear glosses" seen in the Hongzhi edition with "discussion of philological points," a feature potentially appealing to the literati.⁷⁵ Ling's edition claims that *Xixiang ji* is a "refined piece of literature" (*wenzhang*) instead of "a staged song-drama" (*xiqu*).⁷⁶ Although the prefaces do not specify the gender profile of the targeted readers, it would be too optimistic to assume that this imagined community of erudites would have contained as many women as men.⁷⁷ A contemporary default reader of these printed dramas would probably have been a *shengyuan* 生員, or officially registered Confucian student, who was attending a government-run school to prepare for civil service examinations.⁷⁸ With strong

⁷⁴ Patricia Sieber, *Theaters of Desire: Authors, Readers, and the Reproduction of Early Chinese Song-Drama, 1300-2000* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 139.

⁷⁵ Sieber, *Theaters of Desire*, 140.

⁷⁶ Sieber, *Theaters of Desire*, 132.

⁷⁷ Evelyn Rawski estimated that even during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), "30 to 45 percent of the men and from 2 to 10 percent of the women in China knew how to read and write." See Evelyn Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), 40.

⁷⁸ The Ming civil service examination was directly linked to the public school system. One could only obtain the student status required to take the exam by passing tests in the government-run public schools. These schools began to be established in every prefecture and county during the reign of the first Ming emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, in 1369, for systematic regulation of the pool of candidates. The Ming court also instituted several measures to encourage more citizens to receive education, including exempting those

governmental and ideological support, the schools had as many as half a million *shengyuan* by the end of the dynasty in 1644, compared with around fifty thousand in the 1500s. From this large pool of literate candidates came “a much larger non-official public of readers, writers, playwrights, and intellectuals of all sorts.”⁷⁹ Many late Ming publications featured elevated tones that advertised their literary prestige to capitalize on the growing demand for cultural products from this body of consumers. In addition, the dramas discussed in this paper are mainly narrated from the male protagonist’s perspective. Unlike some late Ming plays, such as the above-mentioned *Mudan ting* and Li Yu’s *Lianxiang ban* 憐香伴 (The Fragrant Companion), which give more focus to female interiority and desire, *Xixiang ji*, *Yangzhou meng*, and *Wutong yu* prioritize those of male figures. In the former two, the identity of the male protagonists (Student Zhang and Du Muzhi) as learned men would have particular appeal for literate students.

This paper first argues that the superstructure of the literati culture during this period is male-dominated, and thereby the *intended* readers of these publications were mainly men. With the male protagonist asleep on the page, a male reader of the drama, probably a man of letters sitting at his desk or leaning on his bed, could easily project himself onto the sleeping figure—a similarly literate Chinese man falling asleep at the desk. The solo reading experience thereby viscerally enhanced the intimate setting portrayed in the book. In this manner, both the boundary between dream and reality internal to the opera narrative as well as the external division between the printed pages and the reader’s situated environment are blurred. It is noteworthy that in every illustration examined in this essay, the sleeping male protagonist is accompanied by a servant boy who is also sound asleep. The servant boy, who could potentially be a witness to the female gaze as he shares the same pictorial plane with the dreamscape, is denied this opportunity.

enrolled in public schools from government labor, providing free board and a monthly stipend, etc. See John W. Dardess, *Ming China, 1368-1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 66-68.

⁷⁹ Dardess, *Ming China, 1368-1644*, 87.

The lack of any conscious third party not only hints at the idea that people of low status or limited education are unable to experience the interiority of *qing* and dreamscape, but it also renders the female gaze entirely private to herself within the picture. In this sense, even the man fails to be an observer of his feelings and ego. On the one hand, the audience is assigned the task of grappling with the man's emotions through the symbolic dream figure of the female; on the other hand, the male readers' projection of self onto the male figure enables the former to adopt the psychological position of the latter. This self-projection is achieved through their male gender identity as well as the visibility of the male protagonist's dream: the male readers watch the dreamscape illustrated on the page, viewing the hero's stream of consciousness as the latter appears to sleep. By observing the dreamscape, the readers temporarily assume the position of the dreaming subject, who becomes their alter ego. The desirers—both the male figure within the picture and the male readers outside its boundaries—cannot help but be awestruck by the power of her gaze, succumbing for a moment to their desire to be desired.

Although this paper focuses on the male-dominated audience targeted by these illustrations and their intended viewing experience, a sizable body of female readers and writers had the opportunity to participate in the literati culture. This phenomenon has been examined in numerous works, such as those by Dorothy Ko, Ellen Widmer, Grace Fong, and Kang-i Sun.⁸⁰ Some of the literate women left written records of their experiences and reflections on reading Ming and Qing dramas; Hua Wei has analyzed the elements of sympathy and self-expression in these women's commentaries.⁸¹ Unsurprisingly, the most popular drama among

⁸⁰ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*; Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang, eds, *Writing Women in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Grace S. Fong and Ellen Widmer, *The Inner Quarters and Beyond: Women Writers from Ming through Qing* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010).

⁸¹ Hua Wei 華瑋, "Xingbie yu xiqu piping—shilun Ming Qing funü zhi juping tese" 性別與戲曲批評——試論明清婦女之劇評特色 (Gender and Drama Criticism: Characteristics of Ming-Qing Women's Commentaries on Plays), *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 (Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy), no. 9 (September 1996): 193-232.

female commentators was *Mudan ting*, which they sometimes compared with those discussed in this paper. For some of these women, the male-centric agenda of many of the dramas was a point of contention. For example, an early Qing female poet, Lin Yining 林以寧 (1655-1735), criticized *Xixiang ji*'s Tang dynasty archetype *Huizhen ji* 會真記 (Yingying's Biography) and claimed that it was produced by Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831) to defame his cousin Lady Cui after Yuan failed to seduce her.⁸² In contrast, Lin praises *Mudan ting* as an extraordinary fiction celebrating Liniang's pursuit of *qing* without damaging her chastity.⁸³ Bodily chastity was important to Lin, who usually had a conservative take on popular dramas' didactic functions.⁸⁴ However, instead of condemning the female protagonist for engaging in premarital sex, she points out the power of male writers to impose a promiscuous image on a daughter of the gentry and thereby tarnish her name. Another example of a female commentator who reflected on female gender roles in theatrical works is Huang Shusu 黃淑素 (fl. 17th century) in her *Mudan jiping* 牡丹記評 (Commentaries on the Peony Pavilion). Huang brings attention to the phrase "It seems that since ancient times women often have had discerning eyes" in the forty-ninth chapter of *Mudan ting* and jokingly suggests that the role of discerning true talent is often relegated to women while very few men are described as having done so.⁸⁵ Huang's comments reveal a certain sensitivity toward or even criticism of male protagonists' need for recognition: unlike the heroines' physical beauty which is immediately noticeable, the worth of a poor Confucian scholar who has yet to

⁸² "Previously, Yuan Zhen wanted to court his cousin but failed to do so, and then he produced *Huizhen ji* to make a false accusation of her" (昔元稹欲亂其表妹而不得，乃作《會真記》誣其事). See Lin Yining 林以寧, "Huanhun ji tixu" 還魂記題序 (Preface of *The Peony Pavilion*), in *Wu Wushan sanfu heping Mudan ting huanhun ji* 吳吳山三婦合評《牡丹亭還魂記》 (Wu Wushan's Three Wives' Combined Commentary to *The Peony Pavilion*), 1a-2b. Quoted in Hua Wei, "Xingbie yu xiqu piping," 199.

⁸³ According to Lin, Liniang preserved her chastity because her intimate moments with Liu Mengmei took place in her dream or when she took a ghostly form. Hua Wei, "Xingbie yu xiqu piping," 199.

⁸⁴ Hua Wei, "Xingbie yu xiqu piping," 200.

⁸⁵ "看古來婦女多有俏眼兒;" "幾見青眼中多男子，白眼行為女子耶?" Quoted in Hua Wei, "Xingbie yu xiqu piping," 213.

obtain any high position is hidden pending validation. For the female protagonists in these plays, to discern a true talent in a scholar is to fall in love with and thus desire him. In this sense, the desiring female gaze depicted in the male dreamscape illustrations is contextually predicated upon the woman's ability to recognize the man's brilliance even before he has demonstrated any tangible achievements. Although it is too far-fetched to infer from these rare commentaries how a female reader like Lin or Huang would feel when they looked at the illustrations of male dreamscapes, one wonders whether/how her keen sense of the constructedness of gender roles and character types in these works would filter the enchanting effect of the images: would she project herself onto the dream figure of the heroine as a desired and desiring object? Alternatively, would she recognize the male scholars' need to be desired by the heroine as a desiring subject? These questions about female subjectivity and emotion call for intersectional analyses of women's readership and viewership.

Conclusion

This paper has examined how several Yuan *zaju* harness the device of illusory dreams to dramatize the male protagonist's desperate desire for his lost lover and how Ming illustrated printed books pictorialized these dreamscapes, in some cases going beyond mere visual translation of the original texts. The late Ming print industry and reading culture impacted the ways in which readers consumed these illustrations. During this period, opera libretti served both theatergoers and armchair readers. Therefore, to an extent the text-image relationship in the book intersects with the relationship between the acts of reading a libretto and viewing a performance. For those who use these books as textual references for plays, the texts and illustrations function as cues that correspond to the performance on the stage. The paratext of the image, sometimes including tropes pertaining to one's senses, mirrors the multisensory nature of theatrical performance. For many others

who read these illustrated books at home, the images were more than visual companions to the text, instead communicating meanings that supplemented or resisted the written plot. This phenomenon can in part explained in terms of marketing. To compete with other publications, publishers and editors explored the innovative potential of illustrations to provide their readers with fresh reading experiences. However, these printed illustrations touch upon the ideas of theatricality and meta-theatricality through a two-dimensional visual medium instead of a three-dimensional theatre stage. For example, Zhaojun's gaze in the *Hangong qiu* illustration in *Yuanqu xuan* traverses the boundaries between dream and reality, present and past, life and death, and physical pages, challenging the convention of viewing each printed illustration as an individual, self-contained entity. It juxtaposes book-reading and opera-viewing by drawing attention to the crossing of boundaries necessitated by the act of looking.

Some of these works, when they were recreated during the Ming dynasty, while not directly engaging with the ever-popular phantom stories, adopted the motif of a ghostly heroine joining the male protagonist's dream. This motif originated in paintings from the Jin dynasty. In it, the dreamed figure of the heroine is no longer a passive projection of the man's desire. Instead, she transforms the sleeping male figure into a docile image of the desired by casting her longing gaze upon him. This displacement of desire from the male dreamer to the female lover who is conjured through his dream symbolizes the projection of the man's subjectivity onto the female other. By picturing her as longing after him, these illustrations present a desired man: the alter ego of both the male protagonist and his empathetic male audience. The dreamscape becomes an emotional realm expressing not only his desire but also the intimate desire of men to be desired. These printed productions, largely dictated by cultural trends among the literati, demand further research on female readership and viewership.

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Illustrations



Figure 1. *Qiuye wutong yu* 秋夜梧桐雨 (Rain on the Parasol Trees on an Autumn Night)

Source: Wang Jide [明]王驥德, ed., *Gu zaju* 古雜劇 (Ancient *zaju*) (Shanghai: shangwu yinshu guan, 1958), vol. 5, 19a.



Figure 2. Zhangsheng caoqiao dian yemeng Yingying 張生草橋店夜夢鶯鶯

(Student Zhang Dreaming of Yingying at Night in a Lodging by the Straw Bridge)

Source: Wang Shifu [元]王實甫, *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (Beijing: Collection of Beijing University Library, 1498, woodblock prints, 25 x 16 cm), in *Ying Ming Hongzhi ben xinkan qimiao quan xiang zhushi Xixiang ji* 影明弘治本新刊奇妙全相注釋西廂記 (Photoprint of the Hongzhi edition of A Newly Carved, Deluxe, Completely Illustrated and Annotated Romance of the Western Chamber) (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1961), 131-133.



Figure 3. *Caoqiao jingmeng* 草橋驚夢 (A Startled Dream by Straw Bridge)

Source: Wang Shifu, *Chongke yuanben tiping yinshi Xixiang ji* 重刻元本題評音釋西廂記 (Reprint of the Yuan Edition of the Romance of the Western Chamber with Commentary and Sound Glosses) (Tokyo: Collection of the National Archives of Japan, 1592 [明萬曆二十年], printed by *Xiongshi Zhongzheng tang* 熊氏忠正堂), vol. 2, 27b.

Image courtesy of the National Archives of Japan Digital Archive:

<https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/DAS/meta/listPhoto?LANG=eng&BID=F100000000000107563&ID=M2013090221092599929&TYPE=> (accessed 28, January, 2019).



Figure 4. *Qiantang meng* 錢塘夢 (A Dream by the Qiantang River)

Source: *Chongke yuanben tiping yinshi Xixiang ji*, vol. 1, 15b.

Image courtesy of the National Archives of Japan Digital Archive:

https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/DAS/meta/listPhoto?LANG=eng&BID=F10000000000000107563&ID=&NO=1&TYPE=JPEG&DL_TYPE=pdf (accessed 28, January, 2019).



Figure 5. Liu Yuan 劉元 (active Jin dynasty 1115-1234), *Sima Caizhong's Dream of the Courtesan, Su Xiaoxiao* (*Sima You meng Su Xiaoxiao tu*, 司馬樞夢蘇小小圖).

Early 13th century. Handscroll. Ink and color on silk. 30 x 411.2 cm.

Source: Cincinnati Art Museum (1948.7.9): <https://cincinnatiartmuseum.org/art/explore-the-collection?id=11911846> (accessed 28, January, 2019, image license offered by Bridgeman Images).



Figure 6. *Caoqiao dian meng Yingying* 草橋店夢鶯鶯 (Dreaming of Yingying at Night in a Lodging by the Straw Bridge)

Source: Wang Shifu [元]王實甫, *Xixiangji* 西廂記 (Ming dynasty edition, printed by Ling Mengchu [明]凌濛初, with red and black inks), in *Guojia tushu guan cang Xixiangji shanben congkan* 國家圖書館藏西廂記善本叢刊 (Compendium of the Ancient Rare Editions of the Romance of the Western Chamber Housed in the National Museum of China) (Beijing: Guojia tushu guan chubanshe, 2011), vol. 9, 420.



Figure 7. *Du Muzhi Shijiu Yangzhou Meng* 杜牧之詩酒揚州夢 (Du Muzhi Indulging in Dreams of Poetry and Wine in Yangzhou)

Source: Meng Chengshun [明]孟稱舜, ed., *Xinjuan gujin mingju liuzhi* 古今名劇合選 (A Newly Carved Famous Dramas throughout History Collection of Willow Branches) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1958), vol. 1, 5a.



Figure 8. Illustrations of *Hangong qiu* 漢宮秋 (Sorrow in the Han Palace)

Source: Zang Jinshu [明]臧晉叔, *Yuanqu Xuan* 元曲選 (Selection of Yuan Plays)

(Taipei: Zhengwen Shuju, 1970), vol. 1, plate 2.

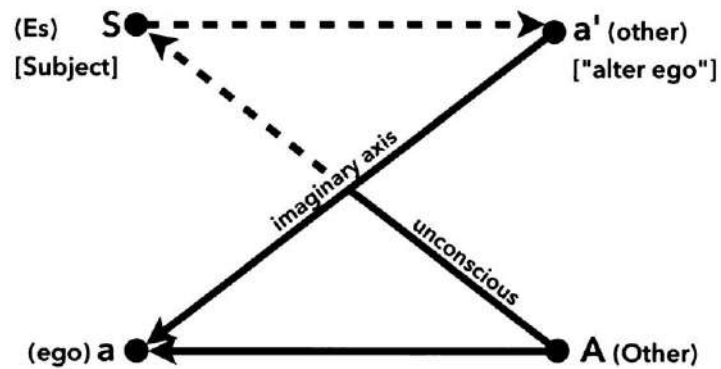


Figure 9. *The Lacanian Diagram L.*

Source: Rainier Lanselle, "This Fearful Object of Desire: On the Interpretation of a Bad Dream in Wang Shifu's Story of the Western Wing," *Extreme-Orient Extreme-Occident*, no. 42 (2018): 220.

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由夢生情——從明代戲曲版畫中的女性凝

視論男性慾望之投射

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本文以明代印行的戲本為主要研究對象，探討晚明的戲曲家與發行商如何運用及闡釋男性夢境（dreamscape），以創造兩性的情感空間。夢境作為諸多中國古代戲劇文學的重要情節之一，以各種形式多次被呈現於舞台上與話本中。筆者以《梧桐雨》、《西廂記》、《漢宮秋》、《揚州夢》等戲劇作為研究文本，探討明代刊物中以男性為主體的夢境插圖。本文首先闡述元明戲劇中塑造男性夢境最常見的兩種模式：其中一種夢境時光回溯到離別發生前更早的節點，第二種夢境則塑造一個替代腳本（alternative scenario），合理地消解現實的悲劇。其次，本文以圖像為中心，重點討論其中「女性凝視」（female gaze）的母題如何使男性夢境中的女方由慾望的客體轉為視覺上的主體。通過描繪女性穿越夢境與現實的視線，這些明代戲劇插圖成為一種對同時代男性文人被欲求之渴望的顯像。

關鍵詞：視覺文化、戲曲、女性凝視、出版文化、夢境

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